

12.0 MARK'S TEY TO EASTHORPE

12.1 Landscape Context

12.1.1 The small village of Easthorpe is situated approximately 2km south of the village of Mark's Tey, and the two settlements are separated by a belt of open countryside containing medium-scale arable fields and small blocks of woodland with occasional farms (See Figure 12.1). The A12 passes through the northern part of the area, and a railway line passes alongside the main part of the settlement.

12.1.2 Easthorpe is a small nucleated village located in open countryside, and is connected with adjacent settlements by small rural roads. There is no direct road connection between Mark's Tey and Easthorpe.

12.2 Baseline Review

Topography

12.2.1 Mark's Tey and Easthorpe both lie on a plateau that overlooks the Roman River further to the north and east. Land between the two settlements slopes gently downward from Mark's Tey to Easthorpe, with the southern edge of Mark's Tey situated at 40m AOD and Easthorpe being at 35m AOD.

Land Use

12.2.2 Land use between Mark's Tey and Easthorpe mainly comprises open countryside, which is dominated by a pattern of medium-scale arable fields, but includes small areas of woodland, scrub and tree belts. Several small farmhouses are located within these fields.

12.2.3 A railway corridor and the A12 dual carriageway both pass near the southern edge of Mark's Tey in a northeast to southwest alignment, and are generally lined by belts of mature trees. The railway skirts the southern boundary of the main part of the settlement, and the A12 lies approximately 350m to the south. Large-scale sheds in a works site, some greenhouses, and housing occupy much of the space between these two transport routes. A petrol station is located south of the A12, across from the works site.

12.2.4 West of Easthorpe, along Easthorpe Road, is Easthorpe Hall, which is a manor house surrounded by mature trees. East of the settlement lies St. Mary's Grange, an old rectory house

surrounded by mature trees and pasture. Scattered houses line Easthorpe Road, both east and west of these features. Other than these buildings, much of the land along Easthorpe Road, is pasture.

Vegetation

- 12.2.5 Arable fields occupy much of the area between Mark's Tey and Easthorpe. Many of these fields are delineated by mature deciduous hedgerows and intermittent large trees. Several small blocks of woodland also occupy space between these fields. Farm buildings set within the agricultural fields are typically surrounded by mature trees and hedges.
- 12.2.6 Easthorpe Hall to the west of Easthorpe, and St. Mary's Grange to the east, are both surrounded by parkland and belts of mature trees. The northern edge of Easthorpe is lined with numerous mature trees.
- 12.2.7 The southern edge of Mark's Tey, northeast of Dobbies Lane, contains a mature belt of vegetation both north and south of the railway line. Northwest of this lane, the settlement is bordered by hedgerows of adjacent agricultural fields. A mature tree belt lines portions of the A12 between the two settlements, but this belt is gappy and fairly narrow. The petrol station south of the A12 is surrounded by trees and scrub (see Photograph 12.1).
- 12.2.8 The works site and greenhouse areas north of the A12 and south of the railway line are surrounded by mature trees and hedges, which enclose most views of these features. Houses to the east of these facilities contain mature garden vegetation, which gives the area a well-treed appearance. Agricultural fields between the A12 and railway line are generally surrounded by mature treebelts or hedgerows.

Settlement Edges

- 12.2.9 The southern settlement edges of Mark's Tey are softened and partially enclosed by a combination of vegetation within gardens, and by mature deciduous hedgerows within adjacent fields.
- 12.2.10 The northern settlement edges of Easthorpe are softened and partially enclosed by mature trees north of the church and by hedgerows of adjacent fields. Agricultural fields directly border the northern edge of the churchyard, providing a countryside setting for the village (see Photograph 12.2).

12.2.11 Land between the A12 and the railway line also contains hedgerows, trees and scrub that soften both the edges of Mark's Tey and the built development between the A12 and the railway line. This vegetation includes the hedgerows and mature trees that surround the works and greenhouse site, garden vegetation of houses to the southeast of the works site, and vegetation within fields to the east of the housing. Furthermore, trees and hedgerows along the southern edge of the A12, and the trees and scrub surrounding the petrol station help to soften the edges of these built elements, thereby restricting views of buildings from the countryside further south to glimpsed views seen through trees surrounding this built development.

Public Rights of Way

12.2.12 A network of public footpaths connects Mark's Tey and Easthorpe across the countryside between the two settlements. Several footpaths leads south from the A12, including one that commences near the petrol station. Near to Easthorpe, this footpath branches out, one of which leads directly into the village.

12.2.13 Between the A12 and the railway, there are two short-distance footpaths that connect the A12 to the northern edge of the settlement.

Landscape Character

12.2.14 This area of open countryside is situated within the Easthorpe Farmland Plateau (B2) and Easthorpe Farmland Plateau Sub-Area (B2a) Landscape Character Areas, as identified within the Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment (November 2005). The key characteristics of each area are listed below:

Easthorpe Farmland Plateau (B2)

- Raised farmland plateau, dissected by the wooded Roman River valley in the east;
- A mixture of small, medium and large irregular, predominantly arable fields;
- Small patches of deciduous woodland and several ponds/ reservoirs;
- Area crossed by a network of narrow, sometimes winding lanes;
- Airfield, surrounded by large open fields has a dominant influence on the landscape character in the south of the area;
- Settlement pattern consists of small villages and hamlets with scattered farmsteads amongst predominantly arable agricultural land.

Easthorpe Farmland Plateau Sub-Area (B2a)

- Linear settlement corridor extending from the western edge of Colchester Urban Area, including the western edges of Colchester, Copford village and Marks Tey in the west;
- Northern boundary delineated by main A12 and railway corridor which is a dominant visual feature within the character area;
- Visually dominant major road junctions/ roundabouts within the character area;
- Landscape character is disturbed by the visual, movement and noise intrusion of cars on the A12 and also by frequent trains on the main railway line.

12.2.15 The character of the landscape between the settlements has been examined in further detail as part of this study to ascertain the degree to which variation in landscape character contributes to the separation of settlements. The area predominantly comprises a patchwork of medium to large-scale arable fields, which have a variable sense of enclosure as a result of field boundary hedgerows of varying robustness. Views across the farmland plateau from roads and public rights of way are limited and framed by hedged field boundaries and farmhouses surrounded by trees; however, it is generally possible to obtain medium-range views across arable farmland. The degree of enclosure provided by hedgerows and trees alongside the A12 is such that the highway does not detract visually from the strong rural character within this area. Works buildings between the A12 and Mark's Tey blend with the settlement's edges, but surrounding trees and agricultural fields contribute to the sense of Mark's Tey being situated within a rural area. Easthorpe contains an attractive cluster of buildings including Easthorpe Church and a timber-framed house opposite. These are landmarks that may be viewed on approaches to Easthorpe via footpaths and Easthorpe Road.

Inter-visibility

12.2.16 There is no inter-visibility between Easthorpe and Mark's Tey. The distance between the two settlements combined with intervening trees and hedgerows serve to visually separate the two settlements.

12.2.17 The A12 forms the southern boundary of Mark's Tey, and the petrol station south of the road is also perceived as forming the boundary of the settlement. This is surrounded by open fields, and combined the large distance between the two settlements, and intervening hedgerows and woodland blocks. Because of these features, no views of Easthorpe are available from this area (see Photograph 11.1).

12.2.18 Similarly, the agricultural fields to the north of Easthorpe combined with hedgerows and woodland blocks prevent views from the settlement to Mark's Tey.

Intra-visibility

- 12.2.19 Intra-visibility (i.e. the ability to see both settlement edges of Mark's Tey and Easthorpe from a single point) is difficult to perceive, due to the long-distance between the two settlements combined with the screening effects of intervening trees and hedgerows (see Photograph 12.3). From sections of footpath close to Mark's Tey, glimpsed views of built development may be obtained, including views of the A12 and the petrol station south of the road. These features are perceived as forming the edge of Mark's Tey.

12.3 Evaluation

- 12.3.1 There is a very strong visual separation between Mark's Tey and Easthorpe on account of the effects of distance and the screening effects of vegetation. There is no road corridor directly linking the two settlements, and the area between them contains open countryside with medium-scale arable fields. The relatively long-distance between the settlements heightens the sense of separation, allowing the effects of successive hedgerows at field boundaries to effectively block views between the two settlements. The A12 provides a physical boundary for the western part of Mark's Tey, whilst further east, visual separation is also provided by the parkland surrounding Mark's Tey Hall.
- 12.3.2 The steeple of the Easthorpe village church is a landmark in the countryside. It is visible well-before other views of the village are available from footpaths to the north.
- 12.3.3 The contribution made by various areas of land between Colchester and Easthorpe to the separation of settlements has been assessed below according to whether they provide a high, medium, or low contribution. These assessment findings have been mapped on Figure 12.3.

High Contribution

- 12.3.4 Most of the land between Mark's Tey and Easthorpe makes a high contribution to the physical and visual separation between the two settlements. In addition to the relatively significant distances between the villages, vegetation provides strong visual separation between the settlements. Hedgerows and scrub south of the petrol station and the treebelt along the A12 provide a visual enclosure to the A12, the petrol station and the edge of Mark's Tey beyond. Mark's Tey Hall is surrounded by parkland and mature hedgerows that enclose views of Mark's Tey from nearby footpaths. Small belts of woodland and trees surrounding farmsteads in the area between Easthorpe and the A12 contribute to layers of vegetation that separate the two villages, and substantially prevent intra-visibility between them.

Medium Contribution

- 12.3.5 At the western end of Mark's Tey, arable fields on either side of Dobbies Lane provide a contribution to separation between the two settlements. They are perceived as being part of a rural landscape in views from the A12 and from the public footpath to the south. In a more rural setting, these fields would be deemed to provide a high contribution to the sense of separation between settlements because of their associations with rural land uses (see Photograph 12.5). However, these large scale buildings are located adjacent to an industrial site and a petrol station on the opposite side of the A12. Consequently, they appear more as an extension of the adjacent settlement rather than isolated features in the countryside. In this context, these fields and their associated greenhouses are considered to have no more than a medium contribution to the sense of separation between Mark's Tey and Easthorpe.

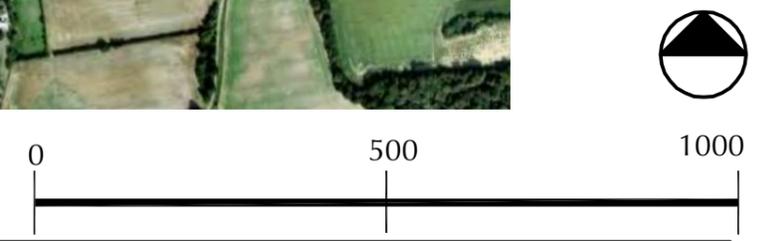
Low Contribution

- 12.3.6 There is an area of hardstanding extending southeast from Mark's Tey, south of the intersection of the A12 and A120, which serves as storage for buses and trailers. It has a predominantly urban fringe character and makes a low contribution to the sense of separation between the settlements. The adjacent field is enclosed by built development on three sides and also makes only a low contribution to the separation of settlements.

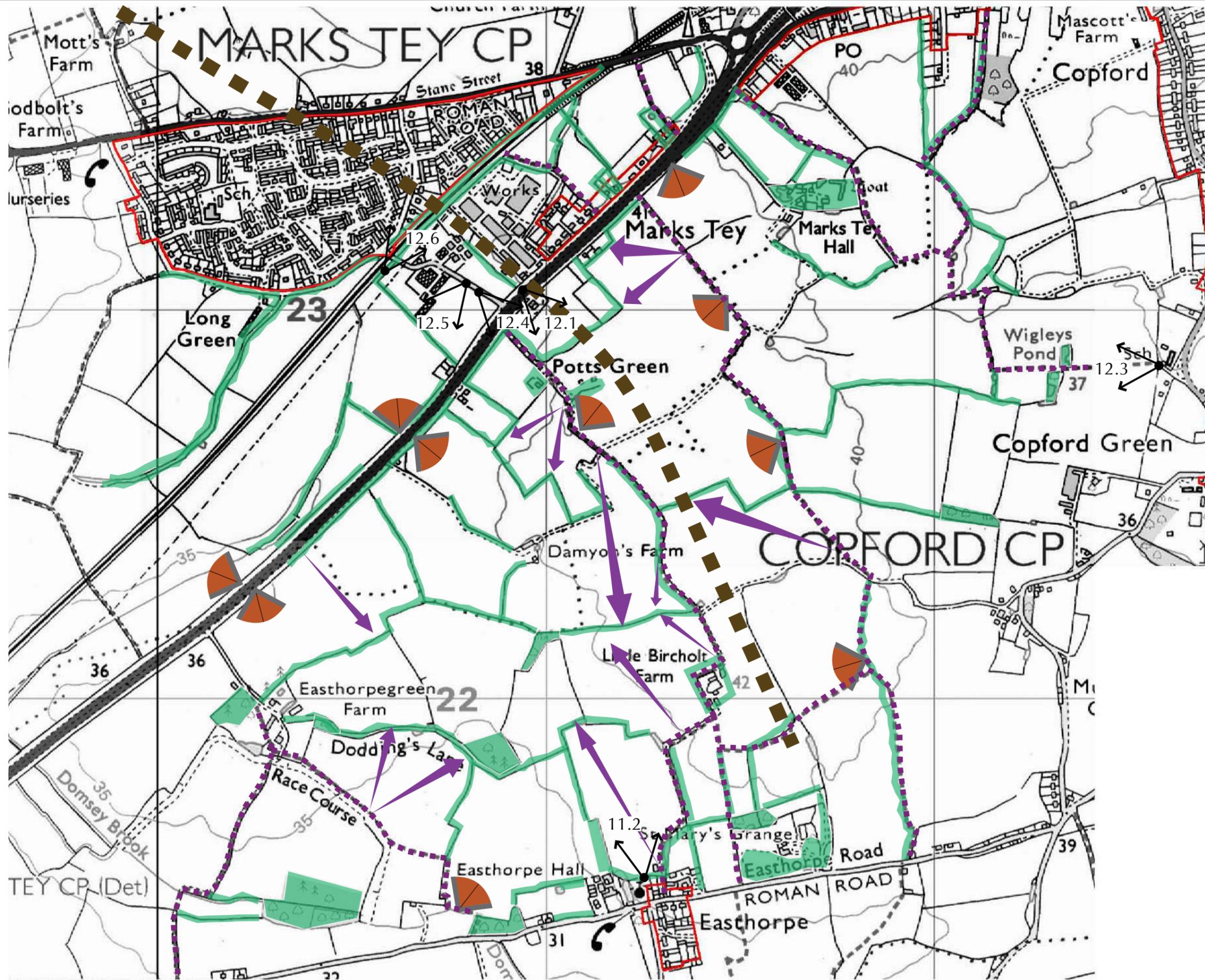
12.4 Conclusions

- 12.4.1 Any new built development, as defined, on the land identified as providing a high contribution to the separation of settlements is likely to seriously undermine the sense of settlement separation and the strong rural character of this farmland. In spite of the visual enclosure provided by field boundary hedgerows and blocks of woodland, new development would result in a reduction in rural character of the land and a diminished sense of leaving one settlement and entering another for people travelling along the public footpaths between the settlements.
- 12.4.2 One parcel of land between the southern edge of Mark's Tey and the A12, identified as providing a medium contribution to the separation of settlements, has some potential to accommodate new built development without significantly diminishing the sense of separation between the settlements or the rurality of the remaining undeveloped land. This land parcel is located adjacent to an industrial site and opposite a petrol station on the A12, which separates the land from the wider belt of countryside to the south.

12.4.3 One parcel of land on the southern edge of Mark's Tey, identified as providing a low contribution to the separation of settlements, has the most potential in relative terms to accommodate new built development, as the land is under a strong urban influence and is already partly developed as a vehicle storage area.



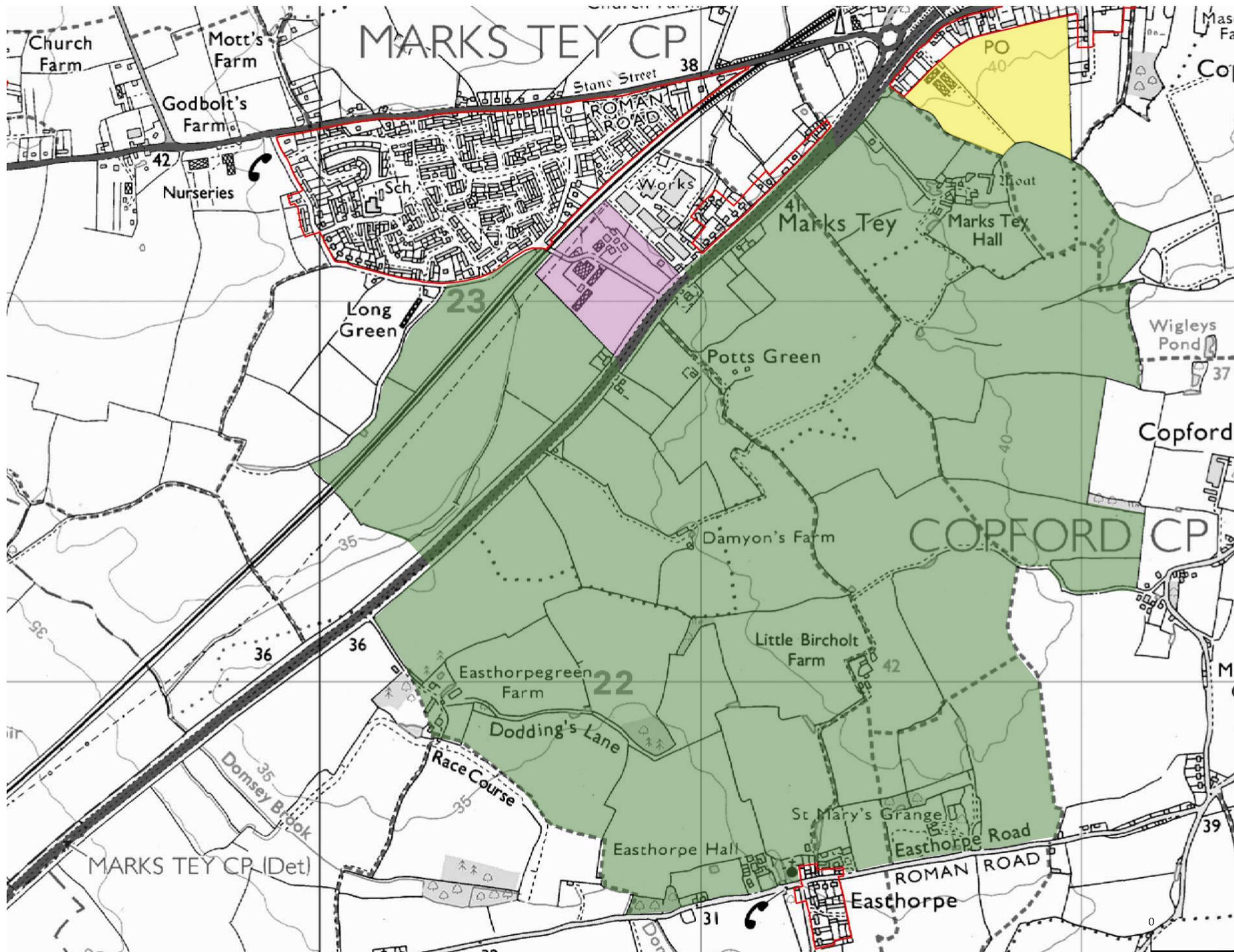
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- LEGEND**
-  Local Plan Residential Boundary
 -  Ridgelines
 -  Visually Significant Vegetation
 -  Public Right of Way
 -  Truncated Views
 -  Open Views
 -  Photograph Viewpoint Locations

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LEGEND

- Local Plan Residential Boundary
- High
- Medium
- Low

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Photograph 12.1
View from the edge of Mark's Tey across the A12 and the petrol station towards Easthorpe.



Photograph 12.2
View from Easthorpe Churchyard north toward Mark's Tey.



Photograph 12.3
Pan from footpath near Copford Green toward Mark's Tey and Easthorpe.



Photograph 12.4
View southward from Mark's Tey on Dobbies Lane toward petrol station south of the A12.



Photograph 12.5
Field southeast of Greenhouses, on the south side of Mark's Tey.

13.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

13.1.1 National planning policy, as set out in Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, recognises that the countryside is a major environmental asset, contributing significantly to the quality of life for local communities. This Planning Policy Statement sets out some of the Government's objectives for rural areas, which include "to raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas" through the promotion of, amongst other things, "good quality, sustainable development that respects and, where possible, enhances local distinctiveness and the intrinsic qualities of the countryside", and "the continued protection of the open countryside for the benefit of all, with the highest level of protection for our most valued landscapes and environmental resources".

13.1.2 The work carried out by CBC as part of the Core Strategy consultation confirmed that the existing pattern of settlements in the Borough is strongly valued by local people. CBC commissioned CBA in September 2008 to undertake an assessment of the contribution provided by open countryside in maintaining the physical and visual separation between Colchester and adjacent settlements. The study included the open countryside between the following settlements:

1. Colchester to Rowhedge
2. Colchester to Wivenhoe
3. Colchester to Great Horkesley
4. Colchester to West Bergholt
5. Stanway to Copford
6. Colchester to Eight Ash Green
7. Colchester to Layer-de-la-Haye
8. Colchester to Langham
9. Colchester to Boxted
10. Copford to Mark's Tey
11. Mark's Tey to Little Tey
12. Mark's Tey to Easthorpe

13.1.3 The study considers that protection of this open countryside is essential to the maintenance of the distinct character of the above settlements. Adopted Core Strategy Policy ENV1 – Environment of the adopted Core Strategy states that "Where new development needs, or is compatible with, a rural location, it should demonstrably (amongst other things) protect, conserve or enhance landscape and townscape character, including maintaining settlement separation;"

- 13.1.4 The findings of this study confirm that the limitations on inter-visibility (i.e. visibility between settlements) and intra-visibility (i.e. the ability to see the edges of two or more settlements from a single point in the intervening landscape) resulting from visual enclosure by landform and vegetation in the open countryside, and the strength of rural character cumulatively provide a significant contribution to the actual and perceived separation of settlements in many instances (i.e. a high level of contribution to the separation of settlements and to maintaining their distinct character). On the basis of the work carried out for this study, areas that provide a high contribution to the separation of settlements are considered to be essential in helping retain the character and identity of the Borough's key settlements, and should be safeguarded from inappropriate development. Any new built development on this land is likely to seriously undermine the sense of settlement separation and the strong rural character of the land.
- 13.1.5 However, there are also some parts of the open countryside between the following settlements that provide a less significant contribution (i.e. medium level) to settlement separation::
- Colchester to Rowhedge (see Figure 1.3)
 - Colchester to Wivenhoe (see Figure 2.3)
 - Colchester to Boxted (see Figure 9.3)
 - Copford to Mark's Tey (see Figure 10.3)
 - Mark's Tey to Easthorpe (see Figure 12.3)
- 13.1.6 Land identified as providing a medium contribution to the separation of settlements has some potential to accommodate new built development without significantly diminishing the sense of separation between the settlements or the rurality of the remaining undeveloped land. This land is typically not visually prominent in views from the wider landscape and its character is influenced by existing built development.
- 13.1.7 The study also identified a number of areas located close to edges of certain settlements, where open countryside provides a much more limited contribution to settlement separation. Areas that provide a low contribution to settlement separation have the potential to accommodate some new built development, if required, subject to appropriate design, and appropriate landscape and visual mitigation measures. Parts of the open countryside between the following settlements provide only a limited contribution (i.e. low level) to settlement separation:
- Colchester to Rowhedge (see Figure 1.3)
 - Colchester to Wivenhoe (see Figure 2.3)
 - Colchester to Great Horkesley (see Figure 3.3)

- Colchester to West Bergholt (see Figure 4.3)
- Colchester to Eight Ash Green (see Figure 6.3)
- Colchester to Layer-de-la-Haye (see Figure 7.3)
- Colchester to Langham (see Figure 8.3)
- Mark's Tey to Little Tey (see Figure 11.3)
- Mark's Tey to Easthorpe (see Figure 12.3)

13.1.8 Land identified as providing a low contribution to the separation of settlements has the most potential in relative terms to accommodate new built development and is land is typically either under a strong urban influence or has a high degree of visual containment. Any new built development on these land parcels would not significantly diminish the sense of separation between the settlements or the rurality of the remaining undeveloped land.

13.1.9 Any development within areas identified as having low or medium contribution to settlement separation must ensure that the strength of rural character and sense of separation between settlements in the remaining areas of open countryside is not significantly diminished, and that the distinctiveness of the settlements is maintained. Further studies at a more detailed level would be required to establish the capacity of these areas to accommodate new built development.



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