

8.0 COLCHESTER TO LANGHAM

8.1 Landscape Context

- 8.1.1 The small linear settlement of Langham is situated approximately 2.2km to the north of Colchester and is centred along Wick Lane and Park Lane (see Figure 8.1). The two settlements are separated by an area of open countryside, which comprises a wide belt of arable farmland and several small blocks of woodland. The A12 dual carriageway borders the northern part of Colchester in this area, but veers north to pass alongside the eastern edge of Langham.

8.2 Baseline Review

Topography

- 8.2.1 Langham and the northwest edge of Colchester occupy a plateau with each settlement being situated at about 45m AOD. Much of the area between them is relatively flat, but is bisected by the headwaters of two small streams that flow east to west across the area. These are Salary Brook which lies north of the A12 near Colchester and an unnamed stream that begins south of Park Lane Farm. The streams have shallow valleys, with the bottom of Salary Brook being at around 35m AOD, and the unnamed stream at 40m AOD near its crossing of the A12. As a result, they provide gentle undulations to the landscape, rather than steep slopes (see Figure 8.2).

Land Use

- 8.2.2 Land use between Langham and Colchester is dominated by large geometric arable fields, which are delineated by hedgerows. Two small reservoirs lie along the course of the small unnamed stream. An airfield was developed in this area (known as Boxted) during World War II (see Photograph 8.2) with resultant loss of small-scale fields.
- 8.2.3 The wooded parkland of Langham Lodge is located in the south-western part of this area, and the agricultural field pattern becomes smaller south and east of the Lodge. South of the Lodge is a large block of deciduous woodland. Adjacent to the Lodge and set within deciduous woodland are numerous wartime buildings that provided support for the airfield.
- 8.2.4 The southern edge of Langham comprises predominantly small scale residential buildings. The north-western edge of Colchester consists mainly of a business park with large-scale industrial and commercial buildings, two- to three-storey office buildings, and a hotel. This is bordered

to the north by the A12 roadway and its intersection with the A1232 and the A120. On its northeast, the roadway is bordered by agricultural fields, small clusters of housing, and farmsteads. Adjacent to the A12 are clusters of housing, a hotel, a driving range, and farmsteads.

Vegetation

- 8.2.5 Vegetation in the area between Langham and Colchester consists mainly of mature deciduous hedgerows along the boundaries of agricultural fields. These hedges are typically trimmed with few hedgerow trees.
- 8.2.6 Woodland in the area between the two settlements consists of a large deciduous woodland block south of Langham Lodge and other smaller woodlands surrounding the former airfield buildings. Mature trees are within the Lodge parkland and Salary Brook also contains a belt of mature deciduous trees along its course.
- 8.2.7 Roads on the edge of Colchester, including the A12 and its intersection with the A12, A120 and A 1232, are surrounded by belts of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs that enclose most views of the roads. Further north, the A12 is lined with trees, woodland and hedgerows that block many views from and to the road.
- 8.2.8 South of the intersection of Park Lane and the A12 are several small-scale fields and clusters of housing which are surrounded by mature trees and dense treebelts. One of these treebelts lines the A12 and separates Langham from the A12. Housing in this area also contains mature garden vegetation. The effect of this vegetation is to either enclose views or soften glimpses of housing, and to give the local area a well-wooded feel.

Settlement Edges

- 8.2.9 The southern edges of Langham are generally softened by rear-garden vegetation, the woodland block to the east of the settlement, and the deciduous hedgerows along agricultural fields to the south.
- 8.2.10 In spite of roadside vegetation, the north-western edge of Colchester is only partially enclosed from views to the north, due to the large-scale of the buildings in this area. Trees along Salary Brook reinforce the visual filtering and enclosing effects of this vegetation.

Public Rights of Way

- 8.2.11 A few public footpaths cross the open countryside between Langham and Colchester. However, these do not provide a continuous path between the two settlements. One footpath begins near the A12 intersection with the A120 and continues northwest past Langham Lodge, then splits into two branches that both connect to Langham Lane. Another footpath passes southwest of Langham, connecting Park Lane with the A12. This connects to a footpath that runs east-west through Langham.

Landscape Character

- 8.2.12 This area of open countryside is situated within the Langham Farmland Plateau (B7), as identified within the Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment (November 2005). Its key characteristics are listed below:

- Langham airfield – clipped straight hedges adjacent to Park Lane;
- Silver birches within field boundaries to the east of disused Langham airfield;
- Large-scale arable fields with some remnant orchards now cover the large expanse of airfield;
- Paddocks, surrounded by wooden post and rail fences;
- Airfield dominates field pattern.

- 8.2.13 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. Located on a plateau, this area was once covered by a small-scale field pattern and orchards. In the 1940s, a World War II airfield was placed in the area, and, since its decommissioning, open agricultural fields follow its former geometry. A smaller-scale, more intricate field pattern, comprising regular small fields, enclosed by hedgerows with mature deciduous trees lies close to Langham. The A12 is a significant feature of the area, but dense treebelts surrounding the road limit its impact on the rural landscape.

Inter-visibility

- 8.2.14 There is no inter-visibility between Langham and Colchester due to the long distance between the two settlements and the screening effects of intervening treebelts, hedgerows, woodland, and landform. Views from the northern edge of Colchester are enclosed by the well-treed edges of the A12 and its densely vegetated intersection with the A120 and A1232 (see Photograph 8.1).

- 8.2.15 Views from the southern edge of Langham are generally enclosed by hedgerows and woodland between Langham and Colchester (see Photograph 8.2).

Intra-visibility

- 8.2.16 Intra-visibility (i.e. the ability to see settlement edges of both Colchester and Langham from a single point) is difficult to perceive, due to the distance between the settlements and the screening effects of woodland, landform and field boundary hedgerows.
- 8.2.17 A mixture of partial and open views of industrial buildings on the northern edge of Colchester may be obtained from the southern parts of Langham Lane (see Photograph 8.3) and from the public footpaths that pass through the agricultural fields east of the lane. These views are softened along much of the settlement edge by deciduous trees along the A120, Salary Brook, and roads within the industrial buildings. There are no views of the settlement edge of Langham from either the lane or the footpath.
- 8.2.18 Views from the A12 and A120 road corridors do not contain views to both Langham and Colchester from a single point, due to the effect of a gently curving alignment to the road, and treebelts that line these road corridors.

8.3 Evaluation

- 8.3.1 From the A12's intersection with the A120 and the A1232, the contrast between the large-scale buildings of the industrial park at Colchester's edge contrasts greatly with the predominantly rural character of the landscape north of the intersection. The well-treed A120 and A12 roads are perceived as forming the northern edge of Colchester.
- 8.3.2 Salary Brook provides a subtle topographic transition in this area, and while the edge of Colchester is visible from Runkin's Corner, a slight incline in the topography to the north blocks views into the fields and the settlement of Langham beyond (see Photograph 8.3). These fields provide long, open views which contribute to a sense of open countryside in views toward Langham from Langham Lane.
- 8.3.3 The contribution made by various areas of land between Colchester and Langham 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 8.3.

High Contribution

- 8.3.4 The lack of inter-visibility and intra-visibility between the settlements contributes to a strong sense of separation between them. Dense tree plantings along the A12, and around its intersection with the A120 and A1232 provides visual enclosure to the business park that occupies the northwestern parts of Colchester. Mature trees surrounding Langham Lodge and the World War II airfield buildings, provide visual enclosure to areas north of them which further heightens the sense of separation between the two settlements.
- 8.3.5 Fields to the north of Langham Lodge provide long views across the landscape, and these heighten the sense of distance and separation between the two settlements.

Medium Contribution

- 8.3.6 None of the land assessed is considered to provide a medium contribution to the separation of settlements.

Low Contribution

- 8.3.7 Immediately to the south of Langham's Local Plan residential boundary near the A12 are several fields and a cluster of buildings. This area appears as a continuous extension of the settlement, and is visually separated to a degree from the remaining parts of the countryside further south. To the south, there are several small-scale fields surrounded by dense treebelts and mature trees, which provide robust screening from the surrounding fields. Further visual enclosure is provided by a dense block of woodland along the edge of the A12 at its intersection with Park Lane. In this context, this land provides a low contribution to the separation of settlements.

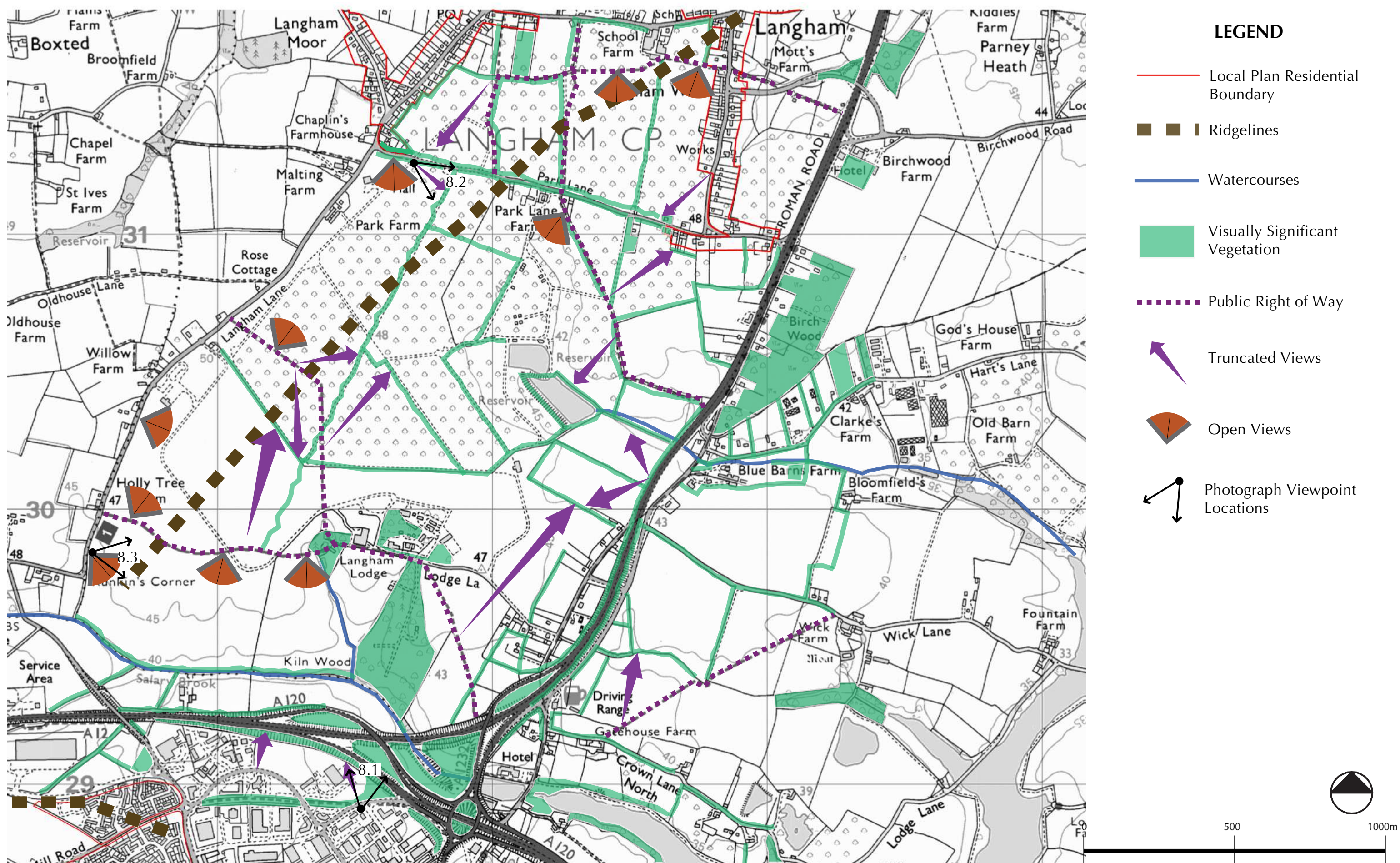
8.4 Conclusions

- 8.4.1 Any new built development, as defined, between Langham and Colchester is likely to seriously undermine the sense of settlement separation and the rural character of the intervening land, as perceived by people moving along public rights of way between Langham and Colchester, or along the A12. Any such development is likely to result in visual coalescence with Colchester and/or Langham and also visual coalescence with existing houses alongside A12, particularly as perceived from the public rights of way across the adjacent farmland. This visual coalescence is likely to seriously undermine the sense of settlement separation and the predominantly rural character of this land. The sense of leaving one settlement and entering another would also be significantly diminished.

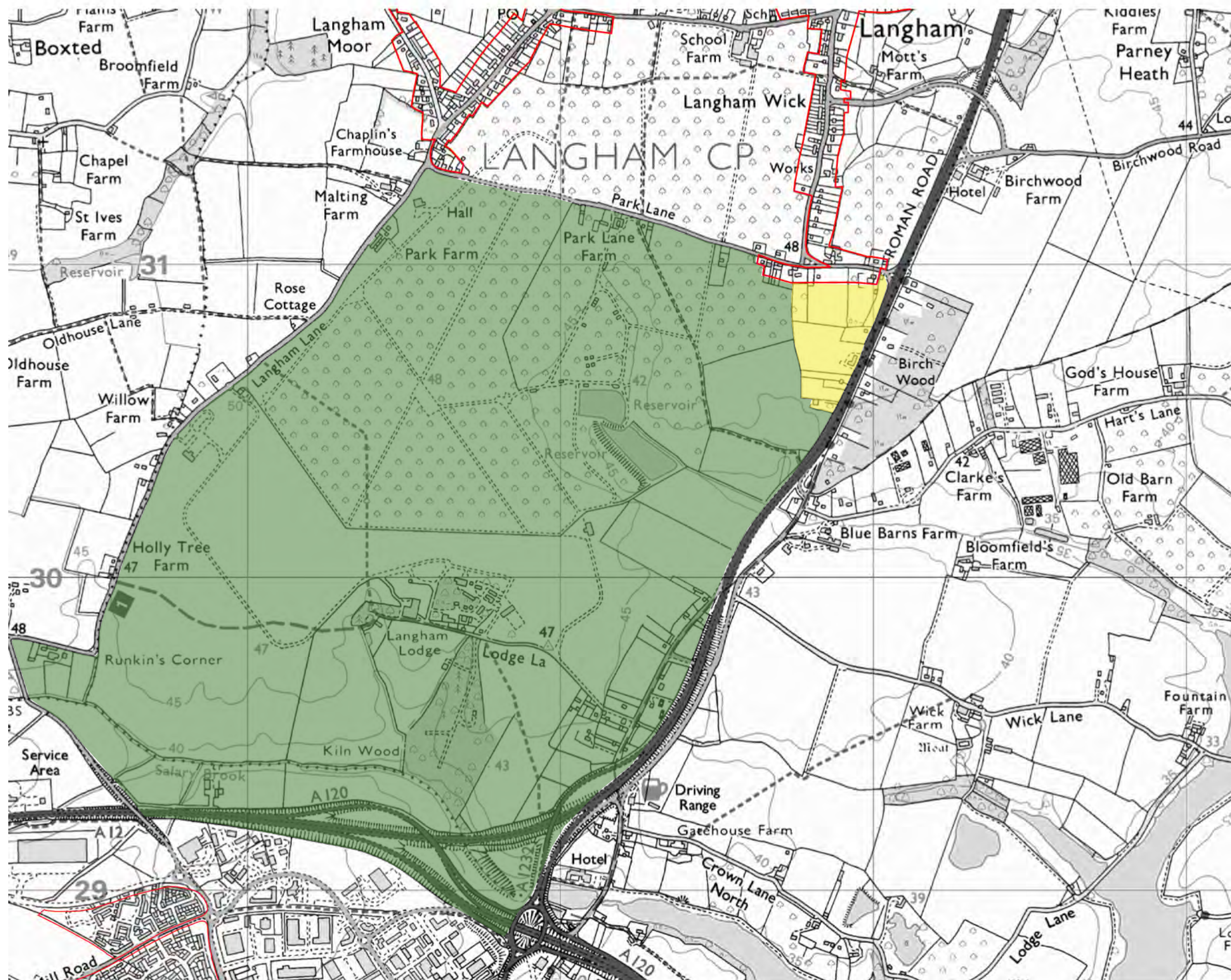


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LEGEND

- Local Plan Residential Boundary
- High
- Medium
- Low

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ASSESSMENT OF OPEN COUNTRYSIDE BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS IN BOROUGH OF COLCHESTER

COLCHESTER-LANGHAM FIGURE 8.3 : CONTRIBUTION TO SEPARATION OF SETTLEMENTS PLAN

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April 2009



Photograph 8.1
View from edge of Colchester looking north toward Langham.



Photograph 8.2
View from Park Lane near Langham looking south toward Colchester.



Photograph 8.3
Pan from Colchester to Langham over fields from Runkin's Corner.

9.0 COLCHESTER TO BOXTED

9.1 Landscape Context

- 9.1.1 The village of Boxted is situated to the north of Colchester along Straight Road, and the two settlements are separated by an area of open countryside (see Figure 9.1). The A12 dual carriageway lies between the two settlements. It passes some 2.5km to the south of Boxted and generally forms the northern extent of Colchester's North Growth Area, although it extends some 400m north of the A12 in the vicinity of Straight Road.
- 9.1.2 Boxted lies on the western side of Straight Road, although a few scattered houses are also located on the eastern side of the road. Between Colchester and Boxted there are scattered houses and farmsteads along Straight Road, as well as along roads that intersect with it.

9.2 Baseline Review

Topography

- 9.2.1 The northern part of Colchester lies on a flat plateau at approximately 50m AOD. To the north of this area, the land remains relatively level between the town and Boxted (see Figure 9.2). However, there is greater topographical variation in the area northwest of Straight Road and north of the A12, where the land slopes down to form St. Botolph's Brook.

Land Use

- 9.2.2 Large-scale farmland extends north from the A12, with the scale and pattern of fields becomes more variable near Boxted.
- 9.2.3 Clusters of houses and farmsteads line several of the roads between Colchester and Boxted, particularly along Straight Road, Accommodation Road, Horkesley Road, and Langham Road. These buildings are generally surrounded by small-scale fields delineated by hedgerows or garden vegetation. Just south of Boxted, there is a cluster of housing and two large farms to the east of Straight Road.
- 9.2.4 Land to the north of the A12 lies within the North Growth Area and has been identified as a potential Park and Ride site.

Vegetation

- 9.2.5 Vegetation between the two settlements is dominated by deciduous hedgerows with occasional trees lining the edges of agricultural fields, and includes a few small blocks of deciduous woodland. These trees and hedgerows cumulatively provide views of layers of vegetation between the two settlements. St Botolph's Brook is lined by mature trees in many places.
- 9.2.6 Roads in the area are generally tree-lined, and there are mature deciduous trees on both sides of Straight Road. Deciduous tree belts also line the A12 road corridor, generally enclosing it from external views.

Settlement Edges

- 9.2.7 The southern settlement edges of Boxted are softened by rear garden vegetation, which includes mature trees and hedges. However this vegetation does not completely enclose the buildings in views obtained from outside the settlement.
- 9.2.8 To the south of Boxted, lie several small-scale agricultural fields with farms and clusters of housing interspersed amongst them. These properties are surrounded by hedges and garden vegetation which soften and sometimes enclose views of the buildings in this area. The arrangement of these buildings in relation to Boxted is such that the settlement edge seems to be further to the south than it actually is.
- 9.2.9 The northern settlement edge of Colchester is generally softened or enclosed by mature vegetation, particularly along the A12. As a result of the planned growth area in this part of Colchester, new development is likely to increase the visibility of the town's northern edge when viewed from areas north of the A12. Existing screening along the A12, and the strong landscape structure to the north of the A12 will help reduce the extent of that visibility.

Public Rights of Way

- 9.2.10 There is a network of public footpaths north of the A12. These footpaths generally follow hedgerow boundaries, and sometimes cross agricultural fields. They connect Boxted with Langham Lane to Straight Road south and east, and with Horkesley Heath to the west.
- 9.2.11 Two public footpaths connect to the northern edge of Colchester, one leading west from Boxted Road/Straight Road to Horkesley Heath and the other heading north to the A12, then east along the A12 to Severalls Lane.

- 9.2.12 The area between the A12 and Langham Road does not contain footpaths. In addition, the area between the A12 and Horkesley Road contains only one short length of footpath connecting the edge of Colchester with Horkesley Heath.

Landscape Character

- 9.2.13 This area of open countryside is situated within the Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau Landscape Character Area (B6), as identified within the Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment (November 2005). The key characteristics of this area are listed below:

- Small to medium scale arable fields with concentrations of mature trees at field boundaries;
- Interesting field pattern consisting of small, regular fields to the south of Boxted and also to the east of Great Horkesley;
- Orchards in close proximity to Great Horkesley;
- Farmland plateau crossed in a north-south direction by two straight roads, which connect with Colchester's northern settlement fringe. Linear settlement pattern extends from the layout of these roads;
- A network of narrow lanes (sometimes sunken), which are lined by trees and hedges connect the remainder of the character area with the two main north south roads;
- Hedgerows are diverse and well managed/ clipped in most places.

- 9.2.14 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. This character area is located in an area of gently rolling plateau, and contains a generally small-scale, regular linear field pattern. It contains a straight, branch-like arrangement of roads. At the south end of the area, linear, regular fields abut Colchester's northern settlement edge. Very small patches of deciduous woodland are found across the area, with some more linear mature belts along some field boundaries. Generally, hedged field boundaries appear to be well managed and clipped in places. Poplars are prevalent within parts of the area where they create striking field boundaries. Views from roads within the character area are limited by hedgerow vegetation and trees. The strength of rural character is not significantly diminished by the A12 as this highway is substantially enclosed from view by landform and roadside vegetation, and is located close to the boundary of Colchester.

Inter-visibility

- 9.2.15 Inter-visibility between Colchester and Boxted is difficult to perceive on account of intervening vegetation. Visual enclosure of Boxted in views from Colchester is reinforced by trees lining the A12 (see Photograph 9.1).
- 9.2.16 Views towards Colchester from the southern edge of Boxted are enclosed and screened by hedgerows that line agricultural fields, as well as hedges and trees adjacent to the roads in the area (see Photograph 9.2).

Intra-visibility

- 9.2.17 Intra-visibility (i.e. the ability to see both settlement edges from a single point) is difficult to perceive between Boxted and Colchester, due to the distance between the settlements and/or the screening effect of field boundary hedgerows and trees adjacent to roads. Straight Road does not provide views of both settlements due to the long-distance between them, and the screening effect of boundary hedgerows and trees adjacent to the road (see Photograph 9.4 and Photograph 9.5). There is no point at which views of both settlements may be obtained at one time because of intervening vegetation.
- 9.2.18 Views from the public footpaths north of the A12 are generally enclosed by the cumulative screening effects of trees along the southern edge of Boxted, field hedgerows, and trees alongside the A12 (see Photograph 9.6 and 9.7).

9.3 Evaluation

- 9.3.1 Vegetation and distance play the primary role in providing a strong sense of separation between these two settlements. The two settlements lie on a raised plateau that extends northwards from Colchester, and each is located at approximately the same elevation. However, the long distance between the settlements combined with intervening layers of vegetation prevent both inter-visibility and intra-visibility between the two settlements.
- 9.3.2 Perception of settlement separation is heightened by the experience of leaving the urban area of Colchester by crossing a bridge over the A12 and moving through a rural landscape with farms and scattered houses. The contrast between the densely developed northern parts of Colchester, with its large-scale buildings and sports stadium, and the small-scale rural character of the countryside between the two settlements provides a clear sense of arrival and departure from Colchester. However, the presence of large farm buildings and clusters of housing to the

south of Boxted has the effect of extending the perceived extent of the settlement. The sense of settlement separation is diminished at night time by the visual effects of flood-lighting associated with the existing sports stadium.

- 9.3.3 The contribution made by various areas of land between Colchester and Boxted 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 9.3.

High Contribution

- 9.3.4 Most of the countryside between Colchester and Boxted is considered to provide a high contribution to the visual and physical separation of the settlements. The numerous field hedgerows, the tree belts alongside the A12, and the mature trees that line the area's roads visually combine to enclose views across the local landscape. This vegetation, combined with the lack of inter-visibility and intra-visibility, imparts a strong sense of rural character and a strong sense of settlement separation. Furthermore, the A12 presents a physical barrier that effectively separates Colchester's built-up area and the rural countryside. Although many of the area's roads are bordered by scattered houses and farms, these are generally small in scale. As a result, they are more strongly associated with their rural setting than with the settlements of Boxted or Colchester.
- 9.3.5 Land to the west of the northern protrusion of the North Growth Area at Cuckoo Farm provides a high contribution to the separation between Colchester and both Great Horkesley and Boxted. The potential development of a Park and Ride facility in this northern protrusion of the North Growth Area is likely to involve the introduction of new artificial lighting to the north of the A12. However, this lighting is likely to be seen in the context of the existing sports stadium lighting and its effects are likely to be mitigated by the use of directional lighting and by the introduction of a robust belt of peripheral vegetation along the northern edge of the Growth Area.

Medium Contribution

- 9.3.6 The area just south of Boxted is considered to have a medium contribution to the sense of separation between the two settlements. This area seems more densely developed than areas further to the south. Existing built development within this area results in the perceived point of entry into Boxted being at the intersection of Queen's Head Road and Straight Road, instead of at Boxted's Local Plan residential boundary. There is a lack of inter-visibility with Colchester at this point, due to intervening vegetation and the distance between this intersection and the

A12 being only 2.2km. There is a strong sense of separation between Colchester and this area on this basis.

Low Contribution

- 9.3.7 None of the land that has been assessed north of the A12 is considered to provide a low contribution to the separation of settlements.

9.4 Conclusions

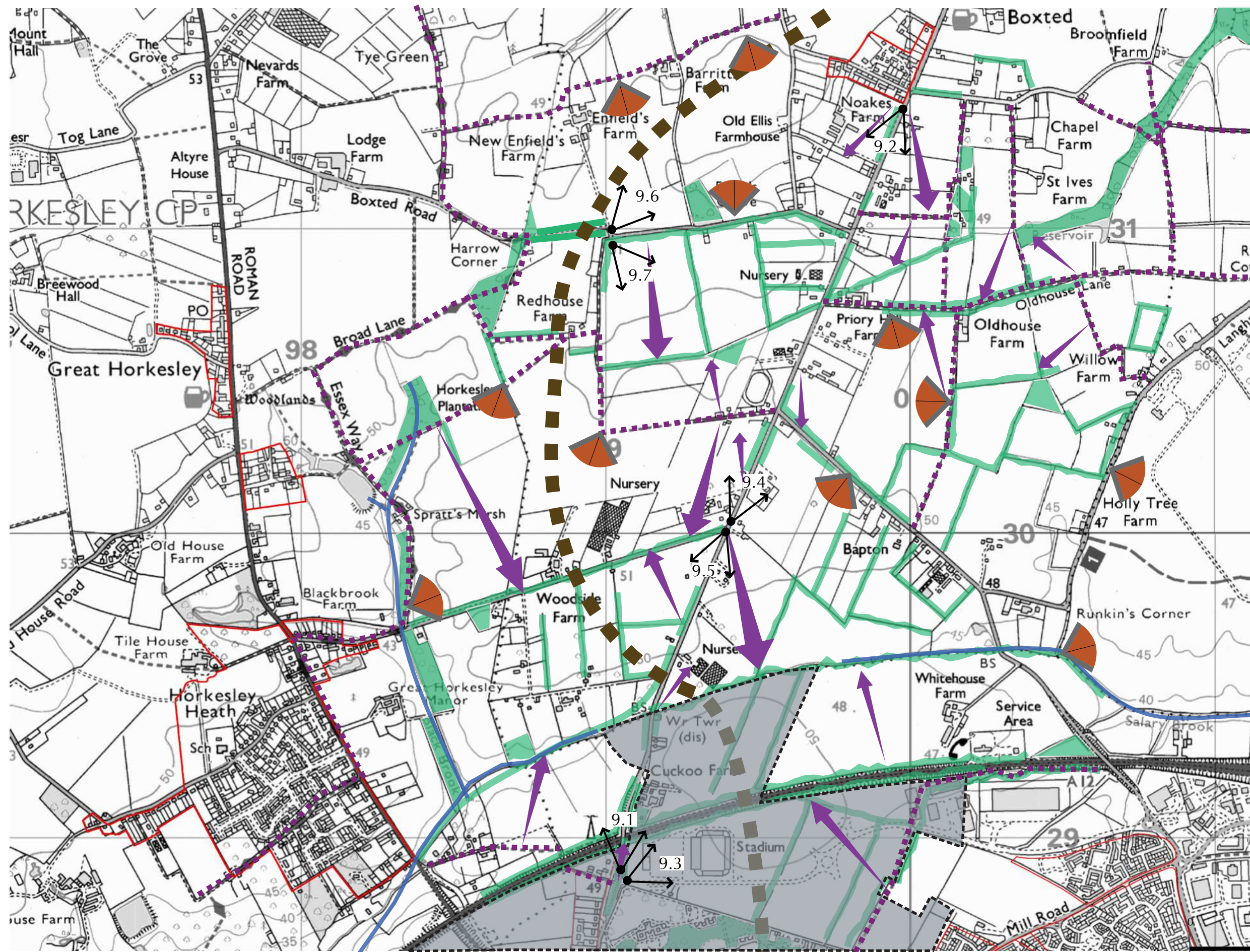
- 9.4.1 There is a strong sense of separation between these two settlements. The contrast between the densely developed northern parts of Colchester, with its large-scale buildings and sports stadium, and the small-scale rural character of the countryside between the two settlements provides a clear sense of arrival and departure from Colchester. This perception is heightened by the experience of leaving the urban area of Colchester, by crossing a bridge over the A12 and then moving through a rural landscape.
- 9.4.2 Any new built development, as defined, between Boxted and Colchester is likely to seriously undermine the sense of settlement separation and the rural character of the intervening land, as perceived by people moving along public rights of way between Boxted and Colchester, or along Straight Road. Any such development is likely to result in visual coalescence with Colchester and/or Boxted and also visual coalescence with existing houses alongside Straight Road, particularly as perceived from the public rights of way across the adjacent farmland. This visual coalescence is likely to seriously undermine the sense of settlement separation and the predominantly rural character of this land. The sense of leaving one settlement and entering another would also be significantly diminished.



North
Growth
Area



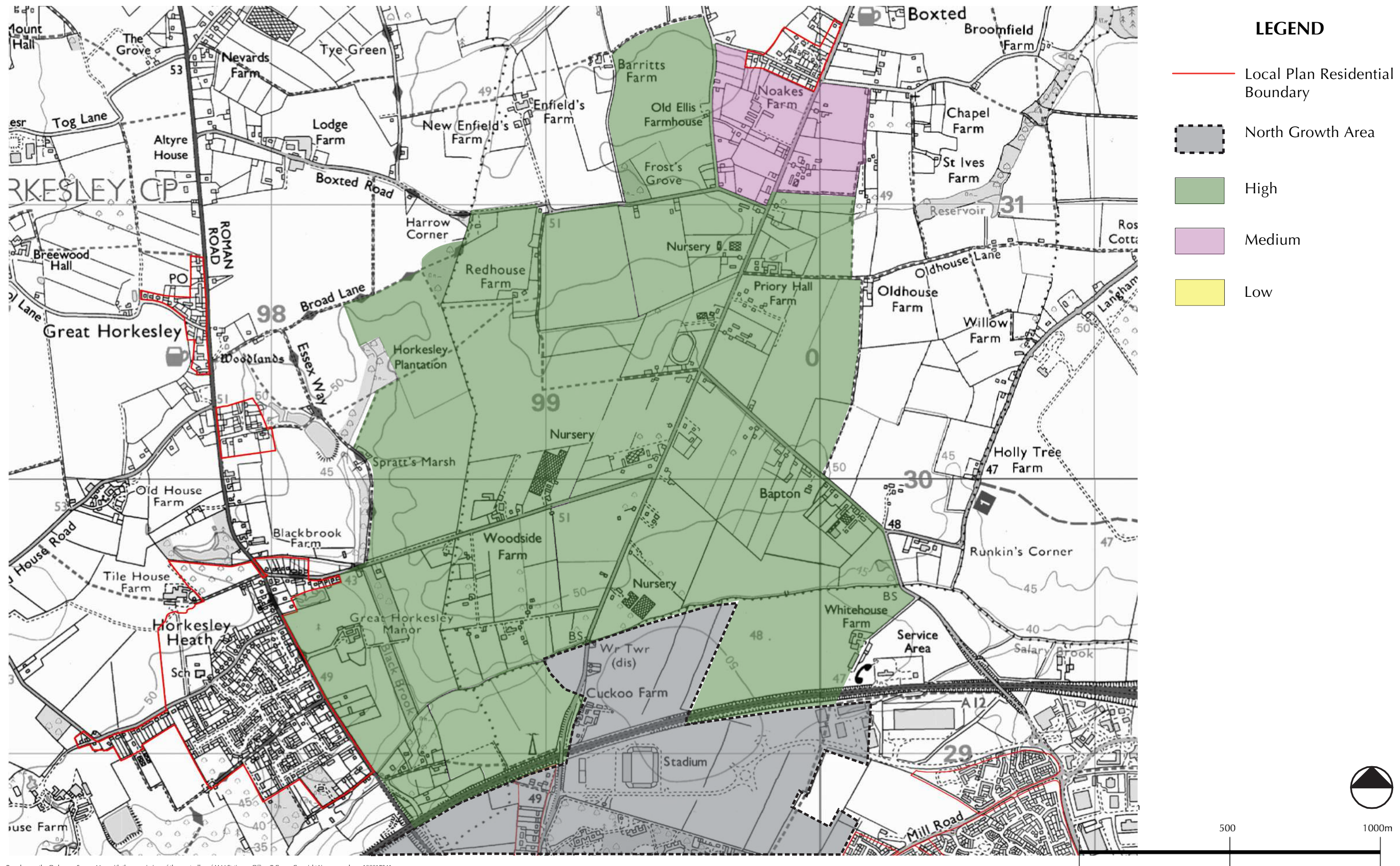
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- LEGEND**
- Local Plan Residential Boundary
 - - - Ridgelines
 - Watercourses
 - Visually Significant Vegetation
 - - - Public Right of Way
 - ↖ Truncated Views
 - ◊ Open Views
 - North Growth Area
 - Photograph Viewpoint Locations

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ASSESSMENT OF OPEN COUNTRYSIDE BETWEEN
SETTLEMENTS IN BOROUGH OF COLCHESTER

April 2009

COLCHESTER-BOXTED
FIGURE 9.3 : CONTRIBUTION TO SEPARATION OF
SETTLEMENTS PLAN



Photograph 9.1
View from the edge of Colchester looking north toward the A12 along Boxted Road.



Photograph 9.2
View from the edge of Boxted looking south toward Colchester along Straight Road.



Photograph 9.3
View northward across Western Homes Community Stadium towards A12.



Photograph 9.4
View toward Boxted from the intersection of Langham Road and Straight Road.



Photograph 9.5
View toward Colchester from the intersection of Langham Road and Straight Road.



Photograph 9.6
View towards Boxted from public footpath at the intersection of Redhouse Lane and Queen's Head Road.



Photograph 9.7
View towards Colchester from public footpath at the intersection of Redhouse Lane and Queen's Head Road.