

3.0 BOROUGH-WIDE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER PROFILES

3.1 General

3.1.1 This section provides a detailed inventory and description of the Borough's landscape character types and areas.

3.2 Landscape Character Types

3.2.1 'Landscape Character Types' are broad tracts of land that share common characteristics of geology, landform, vegetation, land-use and settlement. They are generic landscapes which reoccur throughout the Borough.

3.2.2 The distribution of the seven Landscape Character Types defined within the Borough are shown on Figure 6, and their key characteristics are summarised below:

A - River Valley

- V-shaped valley landform which dissects Boulder Clay/ Chalky Till plateau;
- Main river valley served by several tributaries;
- Flat or gently undulating valley floor;
- Intimate character in places;
- Wooded character in places.

B - Farmland Plateau

- Elevated gently rolling Boulder Clay/ Chalky Till plateau landscape;
- Network of narrow winding lanes and minor roads;
- Medium to large-scale enclosed predominantly arable fields;
- Long distance views across valleys from certain locations;
- Well wooded in places (with several areas of semi-natural and ancient woodland), interspersed with orchards.

C - Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats

- Flat, low-lying and open landscape;
- Areas of saltmarsh, mudflats, shingle spits and tidal creeks adjacent to the coast;
- Generally tranquil and undisturbed character;
- Feeling of remoteness and wilderness on the open beaches and salt marshes;
- Visible sea walls separate drained former marshland and current saltmarsh/ mudflats;
- Lack of trees or hedgerows.

D - Drained Estuarine Marsh

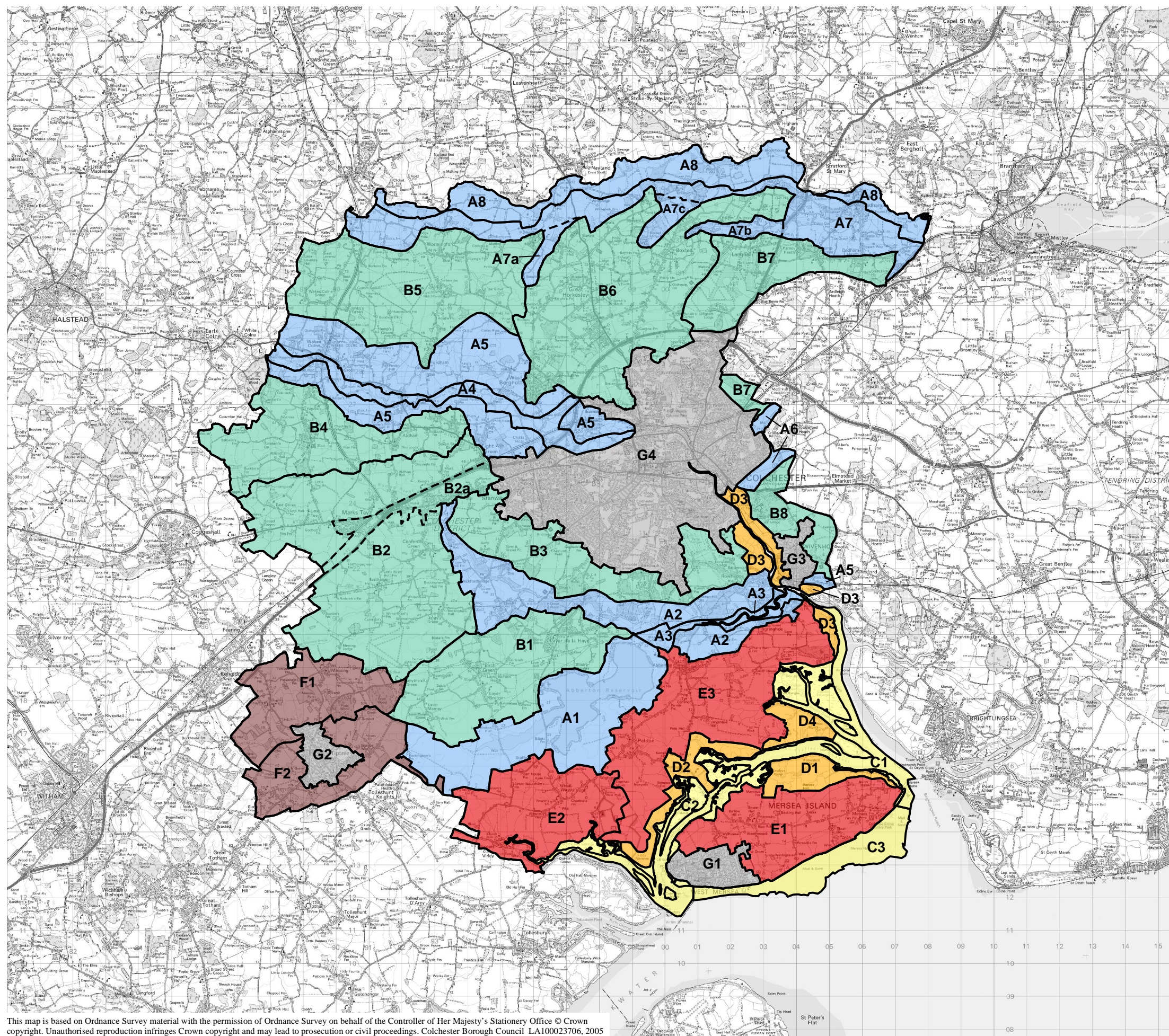
- Areas of flat, artificially drained former salt marsh currently grassland and cultivated fields;
- Visible sea walls separate drained former marshland and current saltmarsh/ mudflats;
- Lack of large areas of trees or woodland;
- Network of visible drainage ditches.

E - Coastal Farmland

- Predominantly flat, low-lying landscape, sloping gradually upwards to the north;
- Framed views of Blackwater Estuary and coastline from several locations;
- Arable farmland on underlying heavy clay soils;
- Lack of large patches/ areas of woodland;
- Sparse settlement pattern with small, relatively isolated settlements.

F - Wooded Farmland

- Elevated broad ridge landform (part of SW-NE aligned ridge);
- Mixture of arable and pasture farmland;
- Several nucleated settlements, with a clustered settlement pattern;
- Well wooded with woodland blocks (including areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland); copses and hedges;
- Framed views of the Blackwater Valley through gaps in hedgerows;
- Enclosed character in places.



KEY

Landscape Character Area

A River Valley

- A1 Abberton Flooded River Valley
- A2 Wooded Roman River Valley
- A3 Roman River Valley Floor
- A4 Colne River Valley Floor
- A5 Colne River Valley Slopes
- A6 Ardleigh River Valley
- A7 Stour River Valley Slopes
- A8 Stour River Valley Floor

B Farmland Plateau

- B1 Layer Breton Farmland Plateau
- B2 Easthorpe Farmland Plateau
- B3 Southern Colchester Farmland Plateau
- B4 Great Tey Farmland Plateau
- B5 Rochfords Farmland Plateau
- B6 Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau
- B7 Langham Farmland Plateau
- B8 Wivenhoe Farmland Plateau

C Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats

- C1 Fingringhoe Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats
- C2 Strood & Salcott Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats
- C3 West Mersea Estuarine Marsh/Mudflats

D Drained Estuarine Marsh

- D1 Mersea Island Drained Estuarine Marsh
- D2 Feldy Drained Estuarine Marsh
- D3 Colne Drained Estuarine Marsh
- D4 Pyefleet Drained Estuarine Marsh

E Coastal Farmland

- E1 Mersea Island Coastal Farmland
- E2 Great & Little Wigborough Coastal Farmland
- E3 Langenhoe Coastal Farmland

F Wooded Farmland

- F1 Messing Wooded Farmland
- F2 Tiptree Wooded Farmland

G Principal Urban Areas

- G1 West Mersea Urban Landscape
- G2 Tiptree Urban Landscape
- G3 Wivenhoe Urban Landscape
- G4 Colchester Urban Landscape

Colchester Borough Boundary

0 2 4 km

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F2 TIPTREE WOODED FARMLAND

Key Characteristics

- Located at the eastern end of a broad, ridge that extends west into Braintree District;
- Many small patches of woodland;
- Character area influenced by nucleated Tiptree settlement within the centre of the area;
- Mosaic of small to medium-sized, predominantly arable fields, with a predominantly small-scale field pattern;
- Tiptree Heath as an important landscape feature of nature conservation importance;
- Linear settlement pattern, consisting of Tiptree Heath and the northern extent of Tolleshunt Knights, which extends outside the character area to the southeast.

Overall Character

3.3.118 This area of wooded farmland encapsulates the south, east and western edges of Tiptree settlement and extends outside the Borough boundary to the southeast. A mosaic of small to medium-sized arable fields create predominantly small-scale field pattern, which is interspersed with many small patches of mixed woodland. Settlement pattern is predominantly linear, including Tiptree Heath and the northern extent of Tolleshunt Knights, which extends to the southeast of the Borough boundary. Farmsteads are also scattered throughout the area. To the south of the village of Tiptree Heath, a large area of remnant heathland, containing areas of acidic grassland and dwarf shrub heath, provides a visually distinctive landscape belt, particularly when gorse, surrounding the edges of the heathland, is in bloom. Land-uses within Tiptree's fringes (such the orchards at Tiptree preserves factory and sewage works to the east) assert a human influence over landscape character in this area. The landscape pattern is more fragmented and chaotic than in other parts of the area. Although woodland cover is not as extensive as within Messing Wooded farmland, the high frequency of small patches of woodland, leads to an overall wooded feel within the character area.

Visual Characteristics

- Short distance, framed views across Tiptree Heath from roads leading out of the settlement;

- Long-distance framed views across adjacent Abberton flooded river valley to the east and other farmland areas to the south;
- Views to the north restricted by large areas of woodland (Pods Wood and Layer Wood within Messing Wooded farmland);
- Short-range views to Layer Marney tower from the eastern edge of the character area.

Historic Features

- Remains of prehistoric rampart to the south of Haynes Green (consisting of double banks).

Ecological Features

- 3.3.119 The ecological character of this area is held within small pockets of woodland, heathland and a former gravel pit interspersed within farmland. The pits are known as Tiptree Lakes SINC and have an excellent complex of habitats for wildlife including acidic grassland, bare sandy cliffs and emergent flora.
- 3.3.120 Tiptree parish field is also designated as a SINC for its composition of grassland and scattered oak trees and scrub. Tiptree heath SSSI is the largest surviving fragment of heathland in the County shows the complete succession from acidic grassland and dwarf shrub heath. Rare plants of Essex found here include all-seed *Radiola linoides* (and uncommon in the UK) and uncommon plants in Essex include heath spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, yellow sedge *Carex viridula* subsp. *oedocarpa* and bristle sedge *Isolepis setacea*.
- 3.3.121 Woodland designated as SINC include Birch Wood, Ransomes Grove, Cadger's Wood and part of The Rampart. Much of the woodland contains a hornbeam, oak and ash canopy, coppiced hornbeam with overall species-rich ground flora of bluebell and in wetter woodlands pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*.
- 3.3.122 Green Lane, Tiptree to Paternoster Heath SINC is an ancient lane with many native trees such as small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*, Midland hawthorn *Crateagus laevigata* and field maple *Acer campestre* as well as oak *Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea*. There is also a ground flora of bluebell and species such as primrose *Primula vulgaris*).

Key Planning and Land Management Issues

- Potential for visually intrusive development within adjacent character areas;
- Potential for visually intrusive expansion to the settlement edges of Tiptree and Tiptree Heath;
- Pressure of increased traffic on rural and minor lanes;
- Potential visually intrusive development of new farm buildings;
- Existing visually intrusive farm buildings.

Landscape Strategy Objective

3.3.123 Conserve and Enhance.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Tiptree and Tiptree Heath settlements;
- Ensure that any appropriate new development responds to historic settlement pattern and uses materials, which are appropriate to local landscape character (refer to the Essex Design Guide for Residential and Mixed Use Areas, Essex Planning Officers Association, 1997, for further information). Such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape;
- Encourage the planting and of tree groups around visually intrusive modern farm buildings;
- Small scale development should be carefully sited in relation to exiting farm buildings;
- Introduce measures to ensure restoration of gravel workings maximises benefits to wildlife and provides areas for recreation.

Land Management Guidelines

- Conserve and restore the existing hedgerow network;
- Conserve, manage and enhance smaller patches of woodland;
- Conserve historic lanes and unimproved roadside verges;
- Safeguard Tiptree Heath SSSI from encroachment of development.