

place
services

COLCHESTER BOROUGH PROTECTED LANES ASSESSMENTS

December 2015



Colchester Borough Protected Lanes Assessment

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1 Introduction

Essex County Council's Place Services Team were commissioned by Essex Highways to undertake an assessment of the Counties existing Protected Lanes using the new Protected Lanes criteria developed by the County Council (ECC 2009) for Chelmsford Borough Council.

The work was undertaken in two stages, comprising an initial stage of desk-based assessment followed by field survey. The field survey stage was undertaken in September 2015. Following the assessment, the scores for each Protected Lane were checked against the threshold for determining Protected Lane status. This report summarises the methodology and results of the project.

2 Background

2.1 Historic Lanes in Essex

The greater part of the road network in the Essex countryside derives from at least as far back as the medieval period. Much of it undoubtedly existed in Saxon times and it is likely that many roads and lanes were formed long before that. These lanes are part of what was once an immense mileage of minor roads and track-ways connecting villages, hamlets and scattered farms and cottages. Many were used for agricultural purposes, linking settlements to arable fields, grazing on pasture, heaths and greens; and other resources such as woodland and coastal marsh. Generally these roads were not deliberately designed and constructed; written records of the establishment of roads during the medieval period are rare (Rackham, 1986, 264). Instead they would have started life as track-ways without a bearing surface, although often with defined boundaries including hedgerows, ditches and banks.

The width of ancient roads depended then, as now, on the traffic using them but historic lanes tend to be very variable in width, often within a short distance. Before metalling the roads became rutted in wet weather and the traffic would move over less rutted areas to the sides. Principal roads between towns tended to be wide for this reason. Wide verges and linear roadside greens were also grazed by cattle, sheep and geese being driven through the countryside to market. Roadsides often had ponds associated with them for watering livestock, although it is clear from The Court Rolls that these frequently began life as extraction pits for clay and gravel

(Emmison, 1991, 287). Many lanes had ditches along one or both sides of the lane to demarcate the highway and to assist drainage. These boundaries are frequently even more sinuous than the road itself. On the clay lands, the roads inevitably became water courses during heavy rain; the water would pour off the fields and wash away the muddy surface. They were also eroded through continuous use; over the centuries lanes on hillsides tended to become sunken. Lanes with marked differences in the level between two sides of a lane are also apparent on sloping ground, caused by lynchets formation – the gradual shift of soil down-slope caused by ploughing over hundreds of years. When roads became properly metalled in the 19th century and 20th centuries they became in a sense fossilized; the carriageways were fixed as metalled strips and the verges were formed from the marginal land between the carriageway and the highway boundary (Hunter, 1999).

Today, historic lanes are an important feature in our landscape: they continue to have an articulating role, providing insights into past communities and their activities through direct experience of a lanes historic fabric; contain the archaeological potential to yield evidence about these past human activities and to provide insights into the development of a landscape and the relationship of features within it over time; have considerable ecological value as habitats for plants and animals, serving as corridors for movement and dispersal for some species and acting as vital connections between other habitats; and allow people to enrich their daily lives by accessing cherished historic landmarks and landscapes, encouraging recreation within the countryside, thereby promoting well-being.

2.2 Protected Lanes Policy in Essex

The policy to preserve Essex historic lanes has been in operation for over a quarter of a century and is summarized in a document prepared by Essex County Council (ECC, 1998). However when Local Authorities decided to re-assess their existing Protected Lanes as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Frameworks, precise information on the criteria used to assess historic lanes for Protected Lane status and the original survey guidelines for making this assessment were found to be no longer available. Essex County Council's Historic Environment Specialists were commissioned by Chelmsford Borough Council to develop robust and defensible criteria for its Local Development Framework, Core Strategy and Development Control Policies (Policy DC 15) on Protected Lanes (CBC, 2008, 75) and then to apply these criteria to Protected Lanes in the Borough (ECC, 2009). The

criteria used for Chelmsford was found to work well and therefore has been used to assess those lanes in Uttlesford and Braintree. The Historic Environment Consultants have now been commissioned to extend this to the remainder of the Protected Lanes across the County.

2.3 Protected Lanes Policy in Colchester Borough Council

Colchester Borough Council in defining their Core Strategy and Development Control Policies wanted to retain their Protected Historic Lane Policy from their present Local Plan (Policy CO7) which identified a total of 31 lanes, however, there was a lack of supporting information for this policy and the Lanes had not been assessed for a period of at least 25 years.

3 Reason for the project

Development Policies can have significant effects and so it is important that the criteria for decision making and the evidence base on which decisions are made is comprehensive, robust and defensible. Consistency and transparency of judgment is crucial to public acceptability and fairness of the process. Detailed criteria for Protected Lane status and a methodical articulation of how a lane does or does not meet such criteria, which clearly illustrates the rationale behind a lanes selection, will make a major contribution to achieving that acceptability.

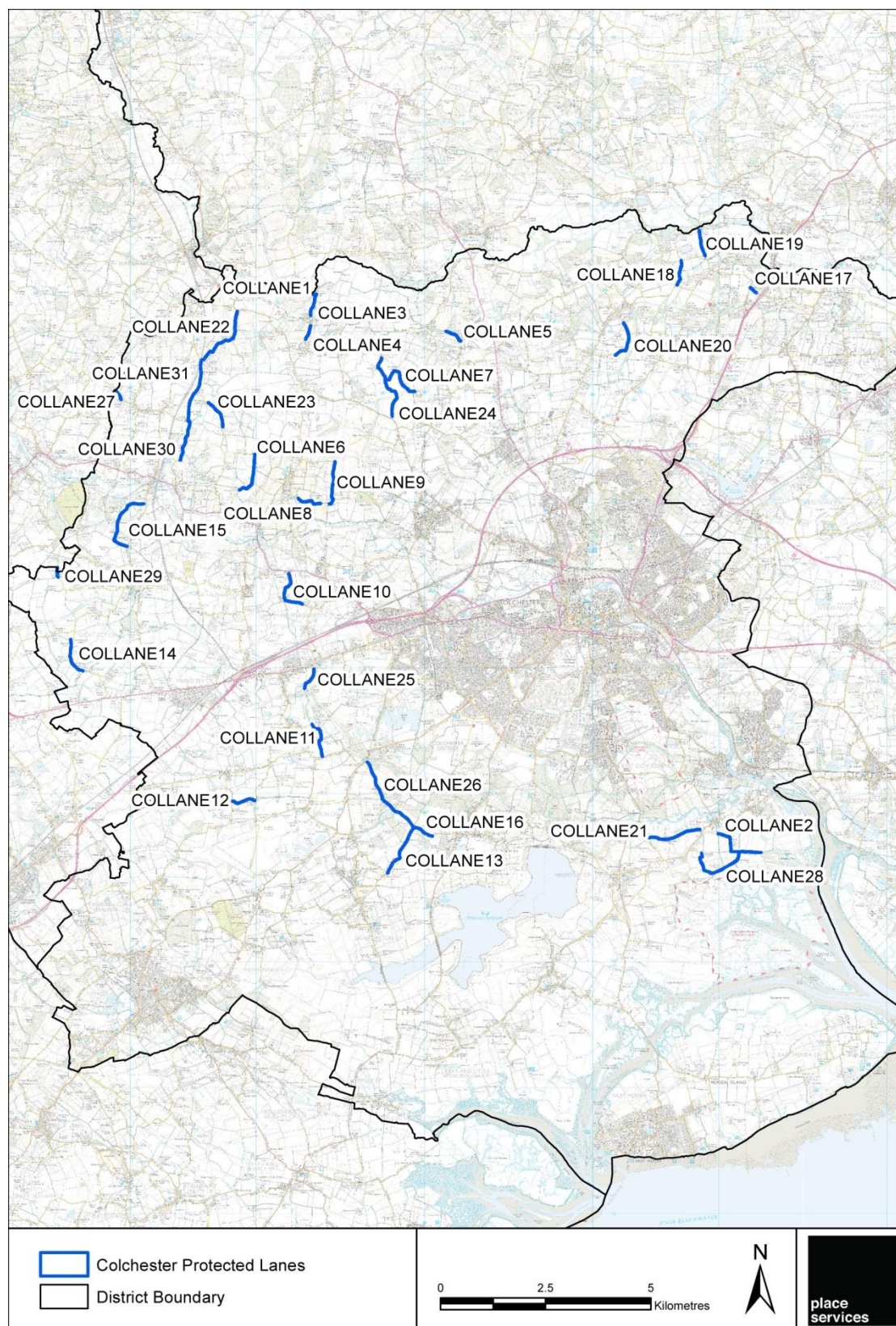


Figure 1 - Location of the protected lanes at the start of the survey

4 Protected Lanes Assessment Procedure Criteria and Scoring System

The following section describes the processes undertaken in the assessment of each of the protected lane within the Borough. This comprised both office based and on site assessment with all of the lanes visited. Figure 1 shows the location of all of the protected lanes.

4.1 Units of Assessment

Each Protected Lane was originally identified by Parish name. As part of the project each lane was assigned a unique number (using COLLane 1 etc). A desk based assessment using Google Earth and Google Earth Streetview, Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER), and GIS data relevant to the criteria was undertaken. Examples of the GIS data used includes ancient Woodland, Special Verges, County Wildlife Sites, heritage assets including designated sites, and SSSI's. The use of Google Earth Streetview allowed a detailed assessment to be made along the length of the lane as part of the desk based assessment.

As part of this initial assessment the lane names were identified by the National Street Gazetteer. Where more than one lane of the original protected lanes was identified with the same National Street Gazetteer name these were merged to form a single unit unless the separate lengths were of significant difference. In some cases the lane had two street names but was a single lane, in which case both names were added to the recording sheet.

For the purposes of the field assessment, further details were added to the sheets undertaken for the desk based phase of assessment. These forms were completed in digital format being based on individual **units of assessment**. For a lane which was largely intact along the whole of its historic length (as identified on the first edition OS map), a single **unit of assessment** was identified and only one form completed. However, there were cases where extensive alterations had occurred along a historic lane, or where a lane had been broken by a new road which meant that these lengths of lane automatically fell out of the criteria and as such either the lane was broken into separate units or were reduced in length. So for each named lane, one or more assessment forms had to be completed.

From the original 31 lanes protected by the present Local Plan the above work reduced this number to 24; these are listed in Appendix 1.

4.2 Field Assessment

Each historic lane was assessed in good weather conditions by a team of two historic environment specialists. Digital assessment sheets were updated as each lane was inspected.

4.2.1 Photographic Record

Most units of assessment had a colour digital image taken of it and the photo stored on the unit assessment folder within the computer project. Photographs were taken which illustrated the range of forms that a lane took and its historic features e.g. banks, ditches, veteran pollards, hedges etc. Also specific photos were taken of areas of damage or significant alterations to the lanes.

4.2.2 Data Fields:

For each unit of assessment, the following data fields were completed:

- *Name* – name of historic lane
- *Unit* – the number of the unit of assessment
- *Highway / Byway Classification* – Class III, Unclassified or Byway Open to all Traffic (BOAT)
- *NGRs* – X and Y numbers for each end of the units of assessment. These were generated from the GIS after completion of the assessment. To allow this, the assessment maps (one for each historic lane) were marked at the beginning and end points of each unit of assessment during the field visit and the map annotated with the number of the unit.

4.2.3 Diversity

Description of form and features – this was a description of the historic lane for the length of the unit of assessment. The description included information on the following where possible:

- Form(s) that the lane took e.g. sunken, flat, raised, or lynchet (positive lynchet on uphill side and/or negative lynchet on down hill side).



Figure 2 - Change in form of lane from wide lane with grass verges to thin lane within woodland (COLLane 5)

- Carriageway surface(s) e.g. tarmac, stone, dirt, road planings etc.
- Verges – width, flat, sloping etc.



Figure 3 – Verges and banks on undulating lane at Aldacar Road (COLLane11)

- Banks and ditches including approximate dimensions and profiles
- If sunken – depth of sunken lane and amount of variation etc

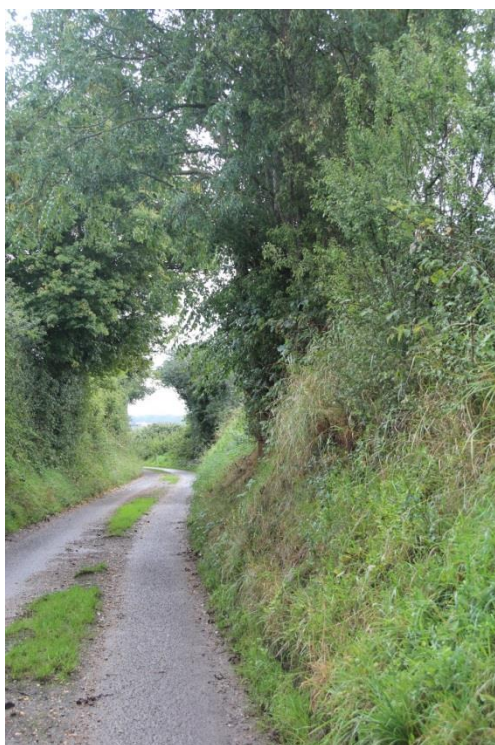


Figure 4 - Sunken lane at Oak Road (COLLane 35)

- Associated vegetation e.g. hedgerows (with an indication of species mix i.e. largely single species, large variety of woody species etc, veteran trees (including pollards, coppice stools), mature trees, grass / flowering plants on verges and banks.



Figure 5 – Changing vegetation along the length of the lane(COLLane 29)

4.2.4 Historic Integrity

Description of erosion damage – this was a description of erosion damage to the structure of the lane from vehicular traffic along the length of the unit of assessment. The description included information on damage to banks, verges and surfaces.



Figure 6 - Shows area of disturbance from traffic and agriculture up to the edge of the lane (COLLane 10)

Description of improvements – this was a description of any significant improvements that had been made to a lane along the length of the unit of assessment. The description included information on the type and extent of traffic calming measures and other ‘improvements’ such as widening, kerbing etc.



Figure 7 – Coles Oak Lane showing improvements of kerb stones (COLLane 17)

4.2.5 Archaeological Potential

Archaeological potential of the lane and its associated features such as the ditches, banks and greens etc. These features can all contain important archaeological remains that relate to the development and human interaction with the landscape.



Figure 8 - Greens at South Green Road forming part of the important historic farmstead associated to this lane (COLLane 28)

4.2.6 Aesthetic Value

Views – notable views, which are particularly scenic, unusual or which include contemporary historic features of note e.g. a parish church, listed building, farm complex or landscape that are framed by the lane and/or its associated vegetation were identified.



Figure 9 – Penlan Hall lane with view of Lane curving down the slope with Chappel church in the background (COLLane 6)

4.3 Protected Lane Scoring System

The criteria and associated scoring system that were developed during the project and used to evaluate existing Protected Lanes in Colchester Borough through a combination of desk based and field assessment are set out below:

PROTECTED LANES SCORING SYSTEM			
Criterion	Type of assessment	Description	Score
Historic Integrity	Field assessment	Significant improvements or damage evident; erosion of historic fabric affecting significant length of the lane (excluding significant hedgerow loss)	1
		Moderate improvements or loss to historic fabric of the lane (excluding significant hedgerow loss)	2
		Limited or discrete erosion/damage to the historic fabric of the lane and/or significant hedgerow loss	4
		No improvements to the lane and well preserved historic fabric	6
Diversity	Field assessment	The lane has limited diversity of features, form, alignment, depth and width	1
		The lane has a moderate range of features but limited form, alignment, depth and width or vice versa	2
		The lane has a moderate range of features and form, alignment, depth and width	3
		The lane has a wide range of features, form, alignment, depth and width	4

Group Value (Association)	Desk-based assessment	The lane has limited association with historic landscape features and other heritage assets of broadly the same date	1
		The lane has direct association with one or more historic settlements or other significant heritage assets of broadly the same date	2
		The lane has association with a moderate range of contemporary historic landscape features and other heritage assets	3
		The lane has a strong association with numerous and/or designated historic landscape features/other heritage assets of broadly the same date	4
Archaeological Association	Desk-based assessment	The lane has no known association with a non-contemporary archaeological feature	0
		The lane has a single association with a non-contemporary archaeological feature	1
		The lane has limited association with non-contemporary archaeological features	2
		The lane has a strong association with non-contemporary archaeological features	3
Archaeological Potential	Field assessment	The lane has limited potential for archaeological evidence	1
		The lane includes components which have the potential to contain archaeological evidence	2
		The lane contains a wide range of components with potential to contain archaeological evidence	3
Biodiversity	Field and desk based	The lane has limited biodiversity assets e.g. grass verge or bank, single species	1

	assessment	hedge e.g. garden hedge or has suffered significant hedgerow loss	
		The lane has significant lengths of intermittent hedge (with or without occasional mature trees) and verge surviving and single non-designated assets e.g. pond, or lane or is adjacent/connected to designated asset e.g. Ancient Wood, SSSI	2
		Non-designated assets including continuous mixed species hedgerows, mature trees (including TPOs), grass verge with flowering plants, ponds etc.	3
		Designated assets e.g. LOWS, Special Verge, veteran pollards, Ancient Species Rich hedgerow(s) associated with the lane or its component parts	4
Aesthetic Value	Field assessment	The lane has limited variety of aesthetic features, or forms/alignment and no significant views	1
		The lane has a variety of aesthetic features or forms/alignment and / or a significant view	2
		The lane has a wide variety of aesthetic features or forms/alignment and / or more than one significant views	3

5 Application of the threshold for Protected Lane Status

After completion of the assessment and scoring of the Protected Lanes in the District (Appendix 1), the final step in determining whether assessed lanes should be designated as Protected Lanes was to apply a threshold score (of 14 which was established in the original project within Chelmsford Borough) to each of the historic lanes to identify lanes that were deemed worthy of Protected Lane status.

The threshold score was determined by the following method:

- *Stage 1 – The lane must score a minimum of 2 for integrity.*

If a lane fails to score 2 for integrity it is not taken forward to the next stage.

- *Stage 2 – The combined score for integrity and diversity must be 5 or more.*

If a lane fails to score 5 for its combined integrity and diversity scores it is not taken forward to the next stage.

- *Stage 3 – The sub total for integrity and diversity (5 or more) from Stage 2, when combined with the scores for group value, archaeological association, archaeological potential, aesthetic value and biodiversity value must be 14 or more.*

The threshold score of 14 was arrived at by adding the minimum score of 5 points from Stage 2 to a score of 9 which is equal to the combined total of the second highest scores attainable for each of the remaining criteria i.e. Group Value score of 2, Archaeological Association score of 1, Archaeological Potential score of 2, Aesthetic Value score of 2 and Biodiversity score of 2. A lane which scores the maximum score of 10 during Stage 2, from a combination of the maximum integrity and diversity scores, must score the second highest score on at least one of the remaining criteria to qualify.

Applying the threshold score to the assessed lanes resulted in a final tally of 24 Protected Lanes in Colchester Borough that were deemed worthy of Protected Lane status under the Policy in the future Site Allocations and Development document (Table 1 and Figure 1).

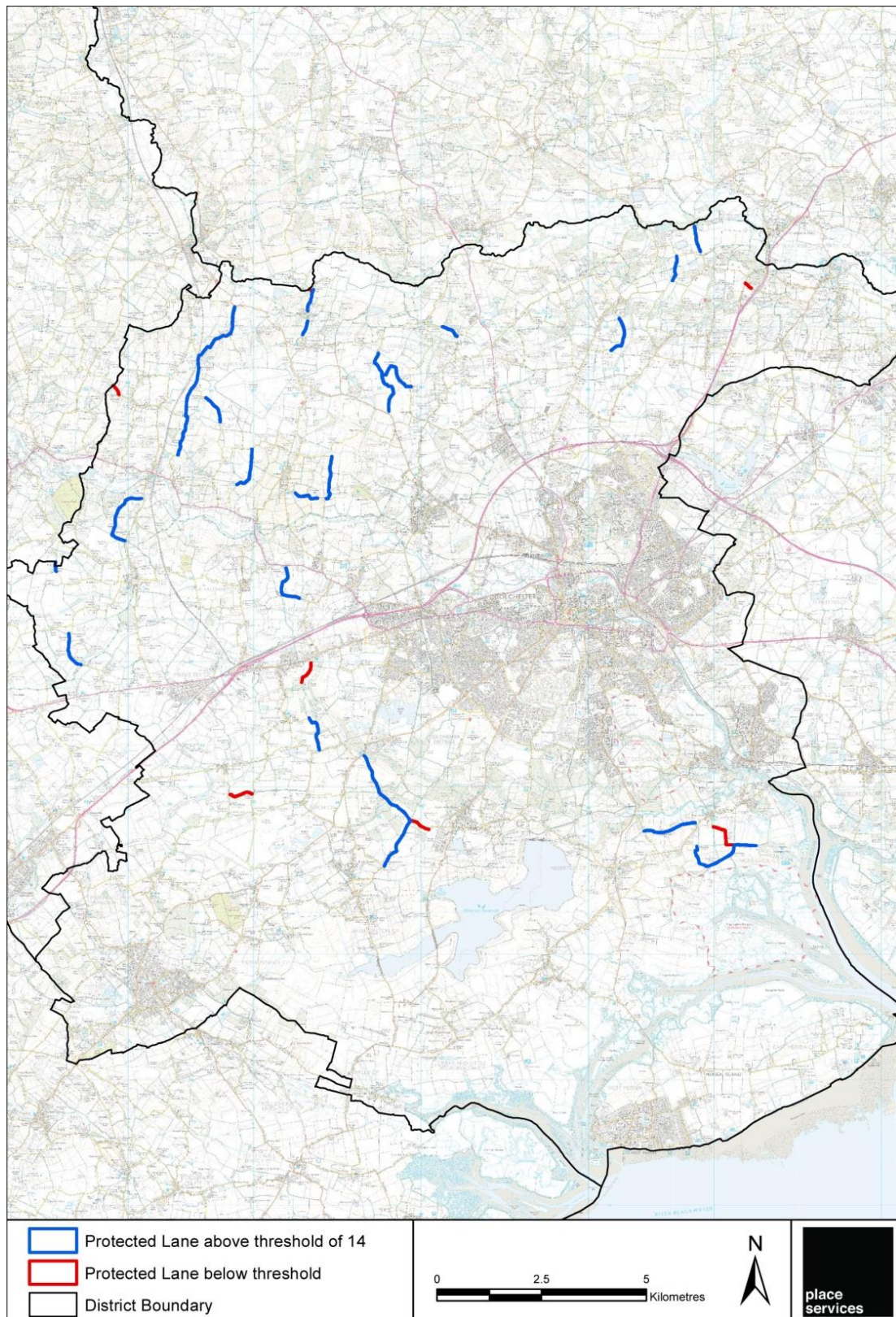


Figure 11 – Lanes which meet the criteria and score above 14 in blue and those below in red

Table 1 Scores for the Protected Lanes that exceed the threshold

LANE_ID	LOCATION	National Street Gazetteer Name (NSG)	NSG_NAME2	Diversity	Integrity	Potential	Aesthetic	Biodiversity	Group value	Arch association	Total
COLLANE3	Wormingford	Church Road		4	4	2	3	3	1	1	18
COLLANE4	Wormingford	Church Road		4	4	2	2	2	1	0	15
COLLANE5	Little Horkesley	Fishponds Hill		3	4	2	2	3	1	0	15
COLLANE6	Fordham	Penlan Hall Lane		4	4	2	3	2	2	0	17
COLLANE7	Little Horkesley	Workhouse Road		3	4	2	2	2	2	1	16
COLLANE8	Church End	Fossetts Lane		4	4	2	3	2	2	2	19
COLLANE9	Church End	Fossetts Lane		3	4	2	2	2	2	0	15
COLLANE10	Green Acres	Foxes Lane	Daisy Green	4	2	2	2	3	2	2	17
COLLANE11	Copford Hall	Aldercar Road		4	6	2	2	4	1	1	20
COLLANE13	Birch Green	Garlands Road		3	2	2	3	2	2	1	15
COLLANE14	Great Tey	East Gores Road		3	4	2	2	2	3	1	17
COLLANE15	Chappel	Oak Road		4	4	2	3	2	1	1	17
COLLANE18	Langham	Water Lane		3	4	1	2	2	1	4	17
COLLANE19	Langham	Low Lift Cottage Road		3	6	1	2	1	1	4	18
COLLANE20	Boxted	Cage Lane		3	2	2	2	4	2	2	17
COLLANE21	Fingrinhoe	Upper Hay Lane		4	6	2	2	2	2	0	18
COLLANE22	Mount Bures	Peartree Hill	Bells Hill, Dowling Road	4	2	2	3	2	3	1	17
COLLANE23	Fordham	Creeping Hall Road		2	4	2	2	2	1	1	14

LANE_ID	LOCATION	National Street Gazetteer Name (NSG)	NSG_NAME2	Diversity	Integrity	Potential	Aesthetic	Biodiversity	Group value	Arch association	Total
COLLANE24	Little Horkesley	Holts Road	Crabtree Lane	4	6	2	2	2	2	2	20
COLLANE26	Heckfordbridge	Birch Park		4	4	3	3	4	4	2	24
COLLANE28	Fingrinhoe	South Green Road		4	4	2	3	4	2	2	21
COLLANE29	Great Tey	Burnthouse Road		2	4	3	2	2	2	1	16
COLLANE30	Janke's Green	Boarded Barn Road		4	4	3	2	2	2	0	17
COLLANE31	Mount Bures	Jankes Green Road	Fordham Road	3	4	2	2	2	2	1	16

6 Conclusions

The project has applied robust and defensible criteria consistently and methodically to existing Protected Lanes in Colchester Borough in order to determine lanes that are worthy of Protected Lanes status under the new Colchester Borough Council's Local Plan.

Of the 31 lanes assessed 7 failed to meet the new revised criteria.

Within Colchester the reasons the lanes failed to meet the appropriate score were varied. Lane 25 had suffered considerably from erosion to the verges and the creation of a sewage farm along part of its length reduced its historic integrity. There was also considerable damage caused through parking for access to walks in the local woodland. Two of the lanes, 1 and 17, were too short to have a wide enough diversity to meet the initial requirements. Lane 17 had been cut by the construction of the A12 which reduced the surviving length of the lane considerably. In the case of Lane 2 this has been totally destroyed by the construction of the quarry and now lies somewhat lower in the landscape than it would have been in the 1970's. Lanes 12, 16 and 27 passed the first stage of the assessment but had no or limited associated attributes, such as archaeological, historical or biodiversity assets so did not meet the threshold.

Protected Lane status may not in itself be enough to secure the long term future of these important historic landscape features. Consideration should therefore be given to exploring options and partnerships for influencing user behaviour and applying intelligent and positive measures of highway management that will serve to encourage local journeys to be made on bicycle or foot, and for recreation, and reduce the impact of vehicles on the historic fabric of lanes, whilst maintaining their local character (e.g. CPRE, 2003).

7 References

Chelmsford Borough Council	2008	'Our Planning Strategy for the Future: Core Strategy and Development Control Policies'
CPRE	1996	'Lost Lanes: An investigation into the impact of rising traffic levels on England's country lanes'
CPRE	2003	CPRE's guide to Quiet Lanes
Department of Transport	2006	'The Quiet Lanes and Home zones (England) Regulations'
Essex County Council	1998	'Protected Lanes'
Essex County Council	2009	'Protected Lanes Study for Chelmsford Borough Council: Summary Report'
Emmison, F G	1991	'Elizabethan Life: Home, Work and Land'
Hunter, J	1999	'The Essex Landscape'
Rackham, O	1986	'The History of the Countryside'

	Location	Nsg_name1	Nsg name 2	Diversity	Integrity	Potential	Aesthetic	Biodiversity	Group value	Archaeol association	Total	Stage 2 total
COLLANE1	Wormingford Bridge	Mill Hill		2	2	1	1	2	2	0	0	4
COLLANE2	Fringrinhoe	Furneaux Lane		1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
COLLANE3	Wormingford	Church Road		4	4	2	3	3	1	1	18	8
COLLANE4	Wormingford	Church Road		4	4	2	2	2	1	0	15	8
COLLANE5	Little Horkesley	Fishponds Hill		3	4	2	2	3	1	0	15	7
COLLANE6	Fordham	Penlan Hall Lane		4	4	2	3	2	2	0	17	8
COLLANE7	Little Horkesley	Workhouse Road		3	4	2	2	2	2	1	16	7
COLLANE8	Church End	Fossetts Lane		4	4	2	3	2	2	2	19	8
COLLANE9	Church End	Fossetts Lane		3	4	2	2	2	2	0	15	7
COLLANE10	Green Acres	Foxes Lane	Daisy Green	4	2	2	2	3	2	2	17	6
COLLANE11	Copford Hall	Aldercar Road		4	6	2	2	4	1	1	20	10
COLLANE12	Easthorpe	Porters Green Road		2	4	1	1	1	1	1	11	6
COLLANE13	Birch Green	Garlands Road		3	2	2	3	2	2	1	15	5
COLLANE14	Great Tey	East Gores Road		3	4	2	2	2	3	1	17	7
COLLANE15	Chappel	Oak Road		4	4	2	3	2	1	1	17	8
COLLANE16	Layer-de-la-Haye	Birch Park		3	2	1	1	1	1	1	10	5
COLLANE17	Langham	Coles Oak Lane		2	2	1	1	4	1	0	0	4
COLLANE18	Langham	Water Lane		3	4	1	2	2	1	4	17	7
COLLANE19	Langham	Low Lift Cottage Road		3	6	1	2	1	1	4	18	9
COLLANE20	Boxted	Cage Lane		3	2	2	2	4	2	2	17	5

	Location	Nsg_name1	Nsg name 2	Diversity	Integrity	Potential	Aesthetic	Biodiversity	Group value	Archaeol association	Total	Stage 2 total
COLLANE21	Fingrinhoe	Upper Hay Lane		4	6	2	2	2	2	0	18	10
COLLANE22	Mount Bures	Peartree Hill	Bells Hill, Dowling Road	4	2	2	3	2	3	1	17	6
COLLANE23	Fordham	Creeping Hall Road		2	4	2	2	2	1	1	14	6
COLLANE24	Little Horkesley	Holts Road	Crabtree Lane	4	6	2	2	2	2	2	20	10
COLLANE25	Copford	Hall Road		2	2	1	1	4	1	0	0	4
COLLANE26	Heckfordbridge	Birch Park		4	4	3	3	4	4	2	24	8
COLLANE27	Wakes Colne	Brookfield Road		2	4	2	1	2	2	0	13	6
COLLANE28	Fingrinhoe	South Green Road		4	4	2	3	4	2	2	21	8
COLLANE29	Great Tey	Burnthouse Road		2	4	3	2	2	2	1	16	6
COLLANE30	Janke's Green	Boarded Barn Road		4	4	3	2	2	2	0	17	8
COLLANE31	Mount Bures	Jankes Green Road	Fordham Road	3	4	2	2	2	2	1	16	7

Appendix 1 Scores for all Assessed Lanes December 2015 (Those in red rows failed the criteria)

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