



**Green Belt Landscape Assessment
For Castle Point Borough Council**

September 2010

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Section 1.0

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Essex Landscape Design were commissioned by Castle Point Borough Council to undertake a study of the green belt in the Borough to provide information on the sensitivity of different landscape areas to development.

1.2 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this study is to provide a layer of information to inform the green belt policy of the district. It is not intended to provide an indication of likely planning consent for any given proposal.

1.3 Methodology

The approach used to assess the sensitivity of landscape areas has been informed by current guidance provided in the recently published Landscape Character Assessment guidance and associated topic papers.

1.4 Desk Study

This work brought together all the data and mapping about the greenbelt areas in the borough and included all the designated areas and landscape character assessment work. It also includes historic characterisation information for the district.

1.5 Field and Visual Survey

A survey of each area was carried out on the ground during August 2010. The purpose of the survey was to assess the landscape sensitivity and visual sensitivity of the various areas identified, to take a series of photos to illustrate the landscape character and to get an understanding of how the areas related to each other. A form was used to record information in a systematic way for all areas.

1.6 Assessment

Assessment was based on scales for landscape sensitivity and visual sensitivity as set out below.

Table A ~ Criteria for Determining Landscape Sensitivity	
Sensitivity	Typical Criteria
Very High	A landscape/townscape with a very low ability to accommodate change because such change would lead to a significant loss of valuable features or elements, resulting in a significant loss of character and quality. Development of the type proposed would be discordant and prominent. Will normally occur in a landscape/townscape of very high or high quality or value.
High	A landscape/townscape with limited ability to accommodate change because such change would lead to some loss of valuable features or elements, resulting in a significant loss of character and quality. Development of the type proposed would be discordant and visible. Will normally occur in a landscape/townscape of high quality or value.
Medium	A landscape/townscape with reasonable ability to accommodate change. Change would lead to a limited loss of some features or elements, resulting in some loss of character and quality. Development of the type proposed would be visible but would not be especially discordant. Will normally occur in a landscape/townscape of medium quality or value, a low quality/value landscape/townscape which is particularly sensitive to the type of change proposed, or a high quality/value landscape/townscape which is well suited to accommodate change of the type proposed.
Low	A landscape/townscape with good ability to accommodate change. Change would not lead to a significant loss of features or elements, and there would be no significant loss of character or quality. Development of the type proposed would not be readily be visible or would not be discordant. Will normally occur in a landscape/townscape of low quality or value, or a higher quality/value landscape/townscape which is well suited to accommodate change of the type proposed.

Table B ~ Criteria for Determining Visual Sensitivity	
Sensitivity	Typical Criteria
High	Residential properties with predominantly open views from windows, garden or curtilage. Views will normally be from ground and first floors and from two or more windows of rooms in use during the day. Users of Public Rights of Way with predominantly open views in sensitive or unspoilt areas. Non-motorised users of minor or unclassified roads in the countryside. Visitors to recognised viewpoints or beauty spots. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with predominantly open views where the purpose of that recreation is enjoyment of the countryside - e.g. Country Parks, National Trust or other access land etc.
Medium	Residential properties with views from windows, garden or curtilage. Views will normally be from first floor windows only, or an oblique view from one ground floor window, or may be partially obscured by garden or other intervening vegetation. Users of Public Rights of Way with restricted views, in less sensitive areas or where there are significant existing intrusive features. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views or where the purpose of that recreation is incidental to the view. Schools and other institutional buildings, and their outdoor areas. Users of minor or unclassified roads in the countryside, whether motorised or not.
Low	People in their place of work. Users of main roads or passengers in public transport on main routes. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views and where the purpose of that recreation is incidental to the view.

Section 2.0

Context

2.0 Context

2.1 Green Belt

The current area of green belt in Castle Point Borough is 2,750 hectares, comprising about 60% of the Borough Council.

2.2 Landscape Character

The coastal landscape character assessment of Castle Point has identified bands of landscape broadly parallel to the coast; salt marsh, coastal marshland and farmland on gravel terraces are all identified. The county assessment identifies a large rural area containing towns at Canvey Island and on the higher land. (Essex Landscape Character Assessment July 2002, and Landscape Character of the Essex Coast, 2006). The areas delineated by these studies are shown in the map below. This is an extraordinary landscape, since the area is heavily designated for its nature conservation value. The area contains many ancient woodlands which are generally well managed and accessible. It has very dramatic topography with the Rayleigh hills sloping steeply down towards Benfleet Creek and the estuary. Hadleigh Castle is prominent on a spur beneath the hillside.

2.3 Environmental Designations

The area has many national environmental designations, in particular sites of special scientific interest, ancient woodland and national nature reserves. Local designations include country parks, county woodland and county wildlife sites. The designated areas are shown on Figures 1.2 and 1.3.

Figure 2.1: Study Areas

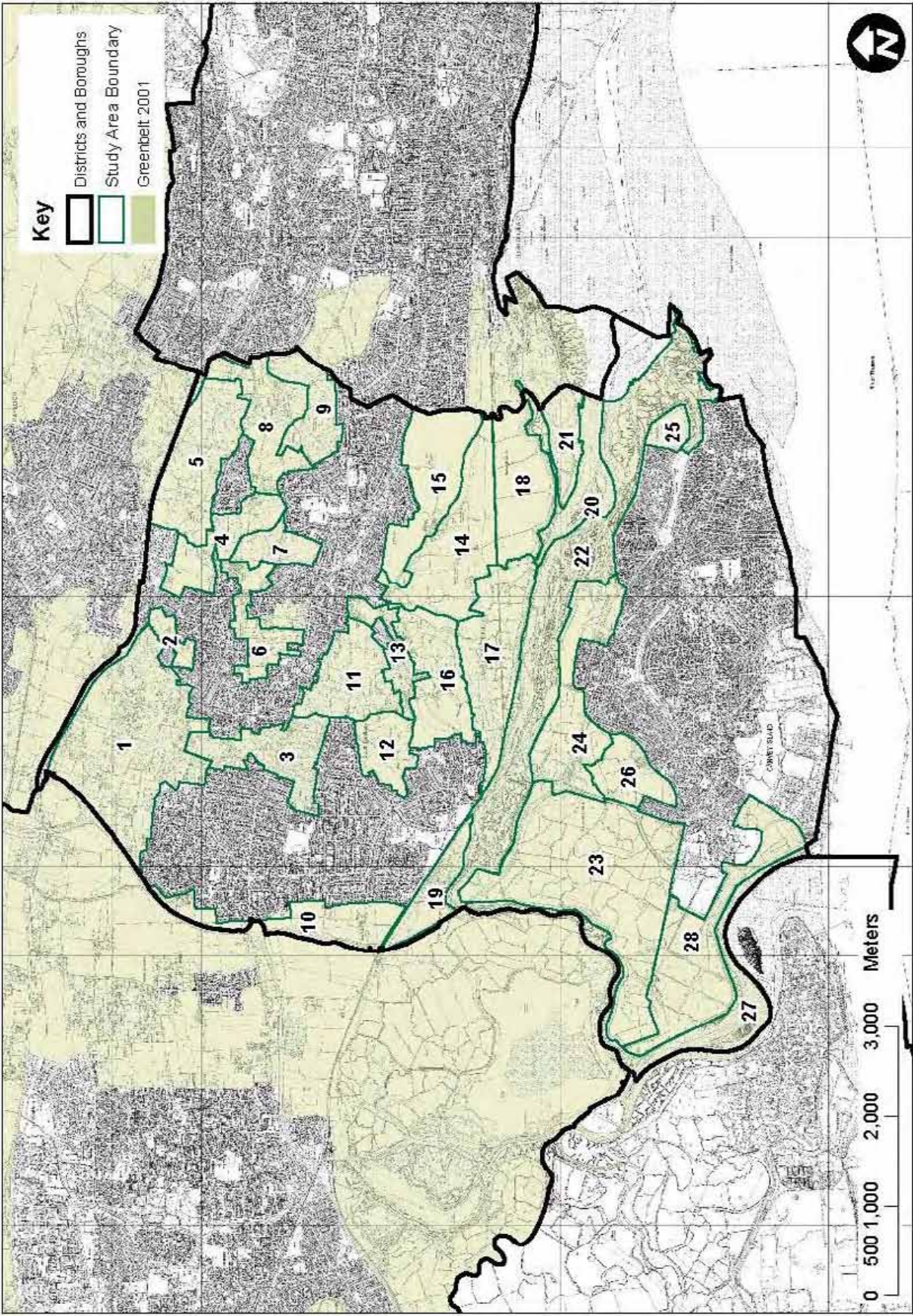


Figure 2.2: National Environmental Designations

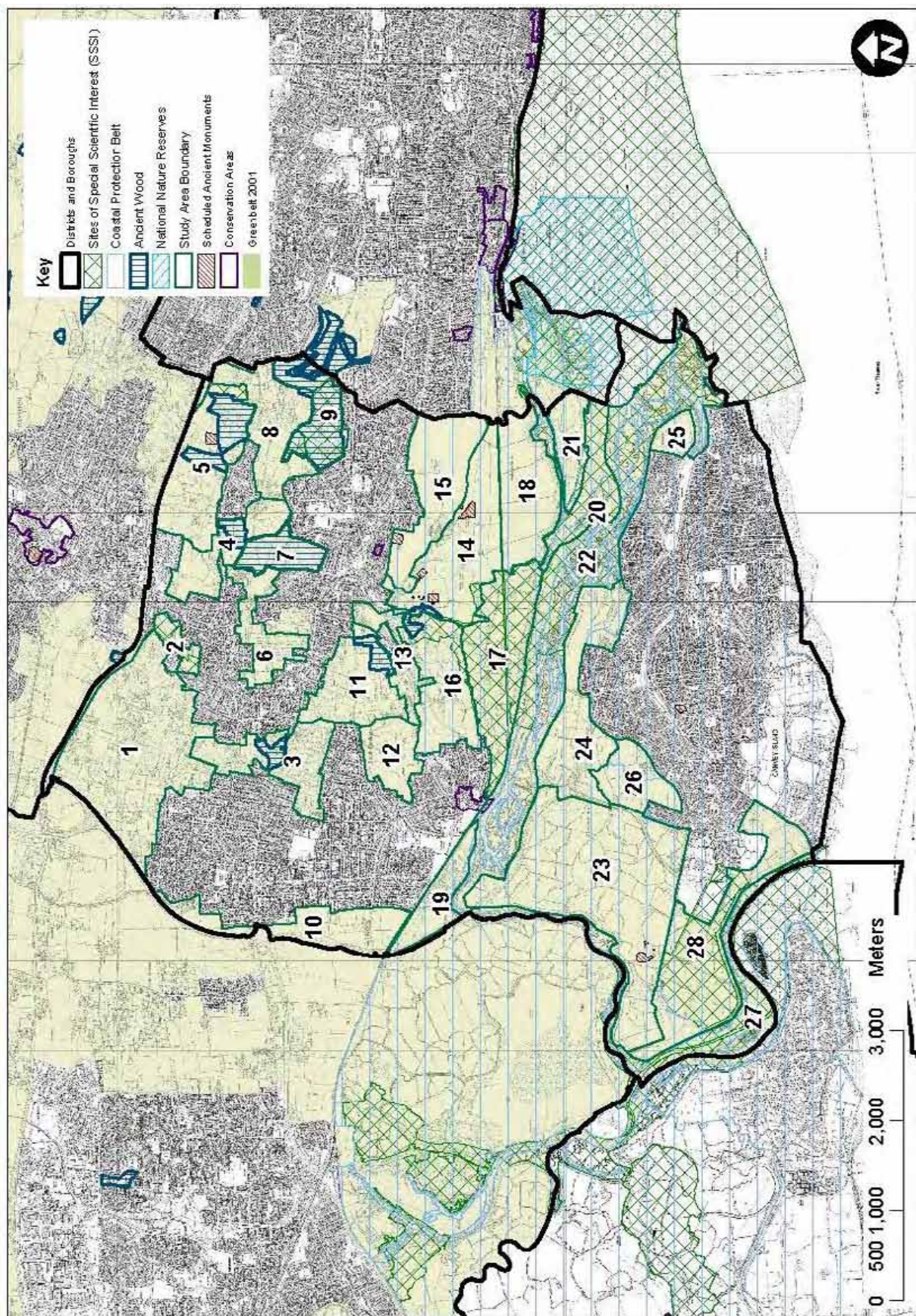


Figure 2.3: Local Environmental Designations

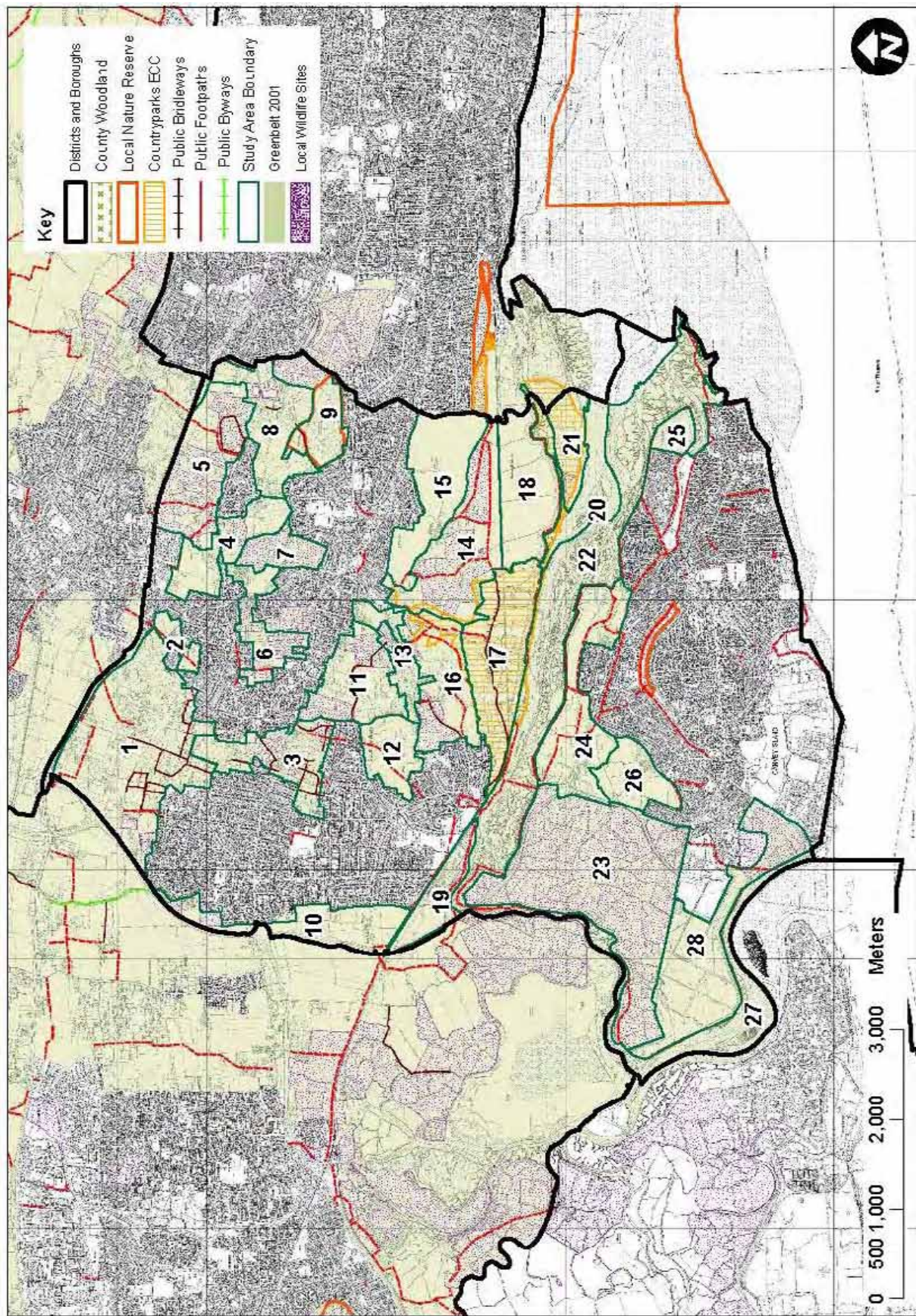


Figure 2.4: Topography

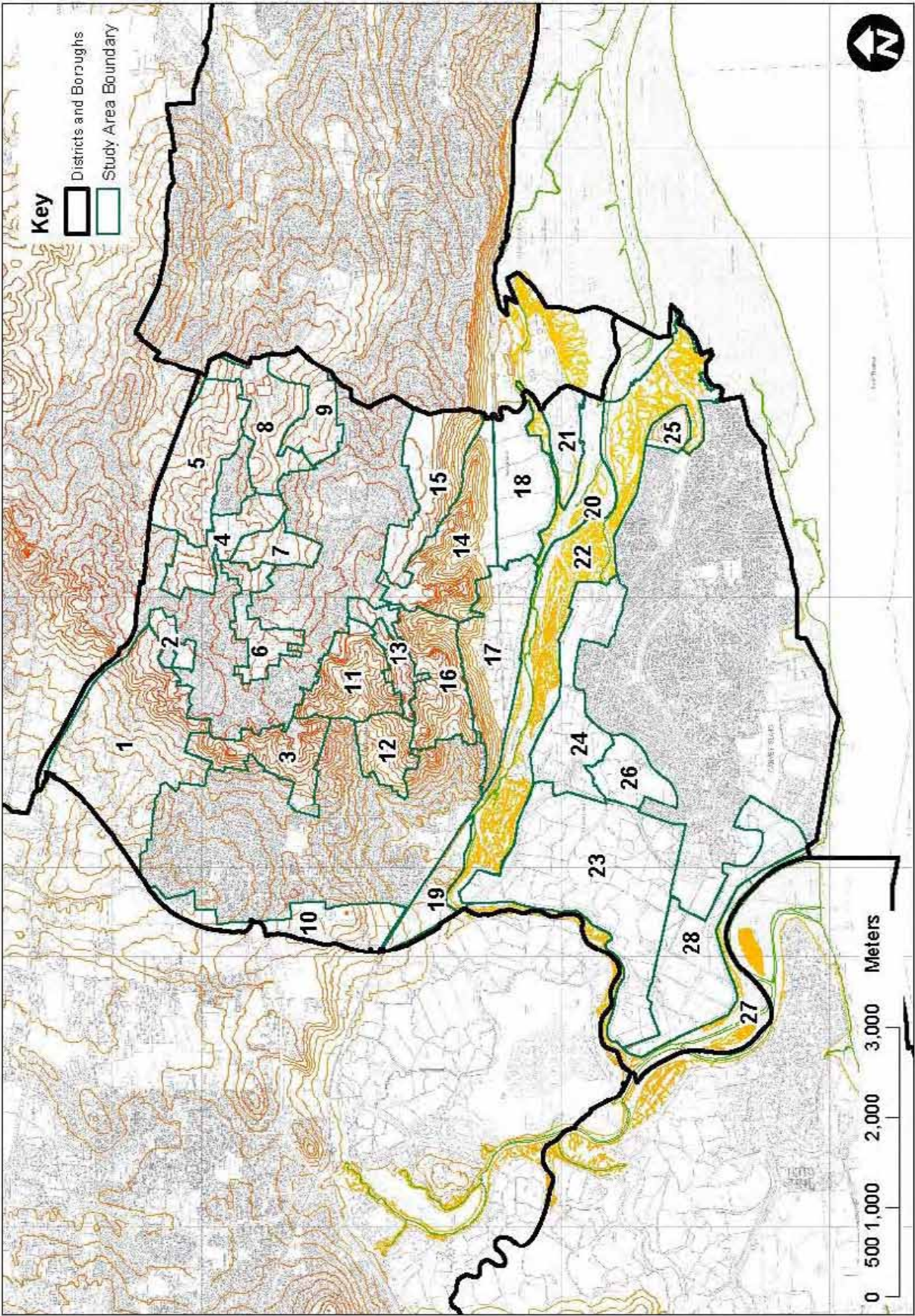
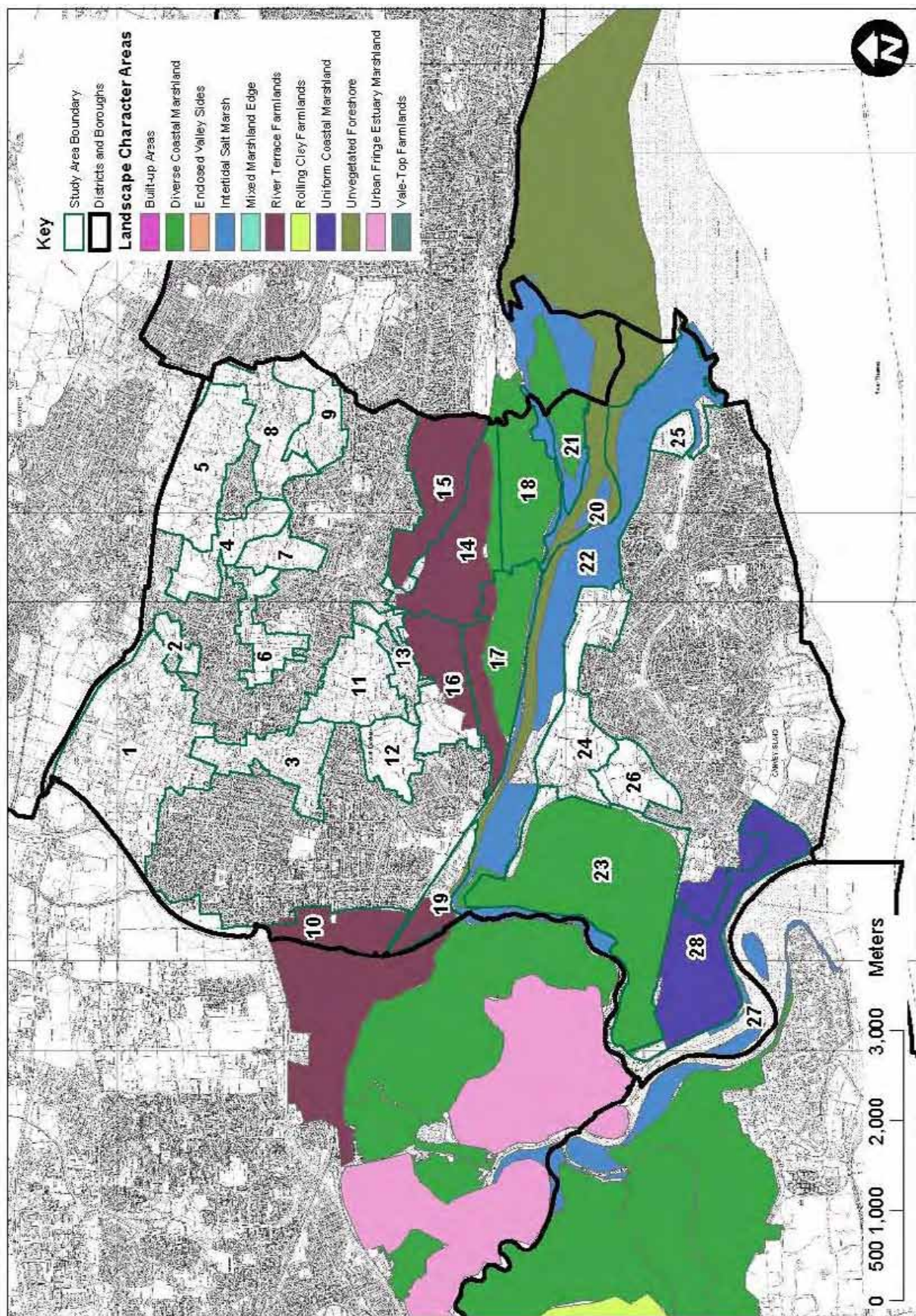


Figure 2.5: Landscape Character Areas



Section 3.0

Landscape Assessment

3.1 Area 1

Location

This is a large area which stretches from the north of Thundersley up to the A130 and A127, which form the northern edge of Castle Point Borough.

Area Description



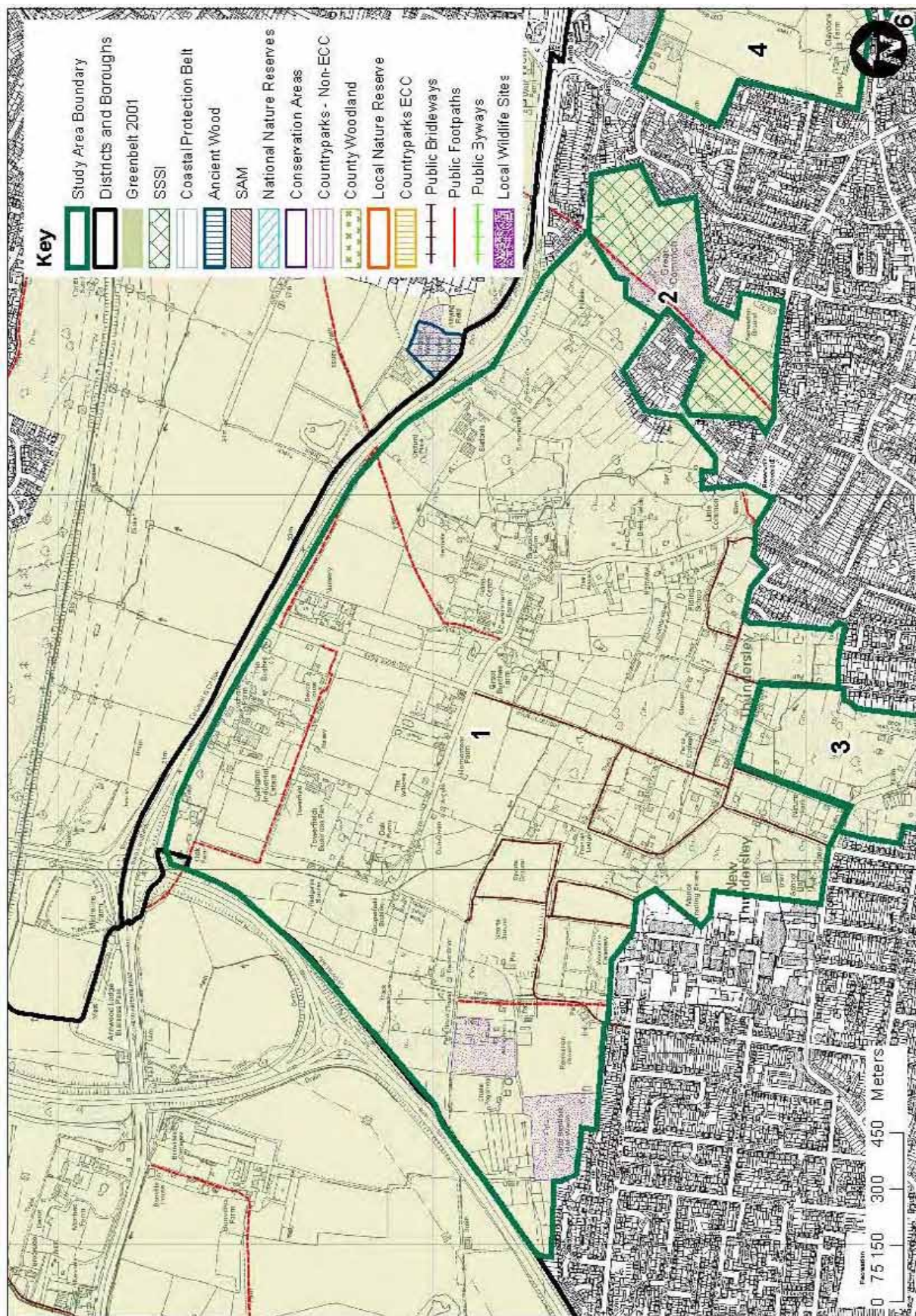
- The area comprises a mosaic of woodland, pasture and grassed areas for formal and informal recreation. Hedgerows and ditches are also prominent features. The landform is rolling with land falling from the south towards the north of the site, and from west towards the east. Species are mainly native, with hawthorn and blackthorn hedges, and oak and ash common in woodland and as boundary trees.
- The landscape is enclosed through a pattern of agricultural fields, pasture and small plots. Plotland dwellings, smallholdings, recreational buildings and stables are largely hidden by the vegetation. Throughout the area, lanes and tracks are largely narrow and unsurfaced, restricting vehicular access, but providing access to the countryside for walkers and cyclists.
- The landscape has retained its pattern of enclosure, although there are areas where dumping of soils, mounding and poor maintenance are eyesores in this attractive rural landscape.
- This is a relatively intimate/small scale landscape with a variety of views and enclosed spaces. Plotland boundaries and the enclosure pattern are particularly distinctive.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Thundersley Rural Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘This zone consists of an area of semi-rural land between South Benfleet, Thundersley and the A127 and A130 road corridors. The field pattern of small rectilinear enclosures of ancient origin, has survived relatively well preserved within plotland boundaries. Many of the individual plots do not seem to have been occupied and there is much secondary woodland. There is an area of historic common land in the eastern tip of the zone, now also mostly wooded.’ (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.1: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	High
Natural Factors	A valuable mosaic of mature woodland, pasture and meadows
Cultural Factors	Field and settlement pattern is well preserved within the old plotland boundaries and rural lanes and tracks
Aesthetic Factors	An intimate scale landscape with a variety of spaces, which is sensitive to change
Quality/Condition	Typically, the field pattern is still well-defined although some inappropriate planting with conifers affects the landscape character.

Visual Sensitivity: Medium

- **General Visibility:** Relatively small area views contained within the rolling landform and by trees along the A130 to the east and A127 to the north. Longer views across the area from higher points in the east and west.
- **Population:** Some residential development within the area will have views. There are also views from scattered farmsteads and the network of rural tracks, lanes, bridleways, footpaths and public rights of way.
- **Mitigation:** Emphasis of mitigation should be on conserving the character of the area including maintaining hedgerows, field boundary trees and belts of woodland.

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to reinforce and strengthen existing landscape features through landscape management.
- Constraints to development due to the high landscape sensitivity and integrity of the historic landscape character. Development is also constrained by visual sensitivity where the area acts as a green edge to adjacent residential areas.

3.2 Area 2

Location

This area is located between housing west of the Rayleigh Road and Area 1.

Area Description



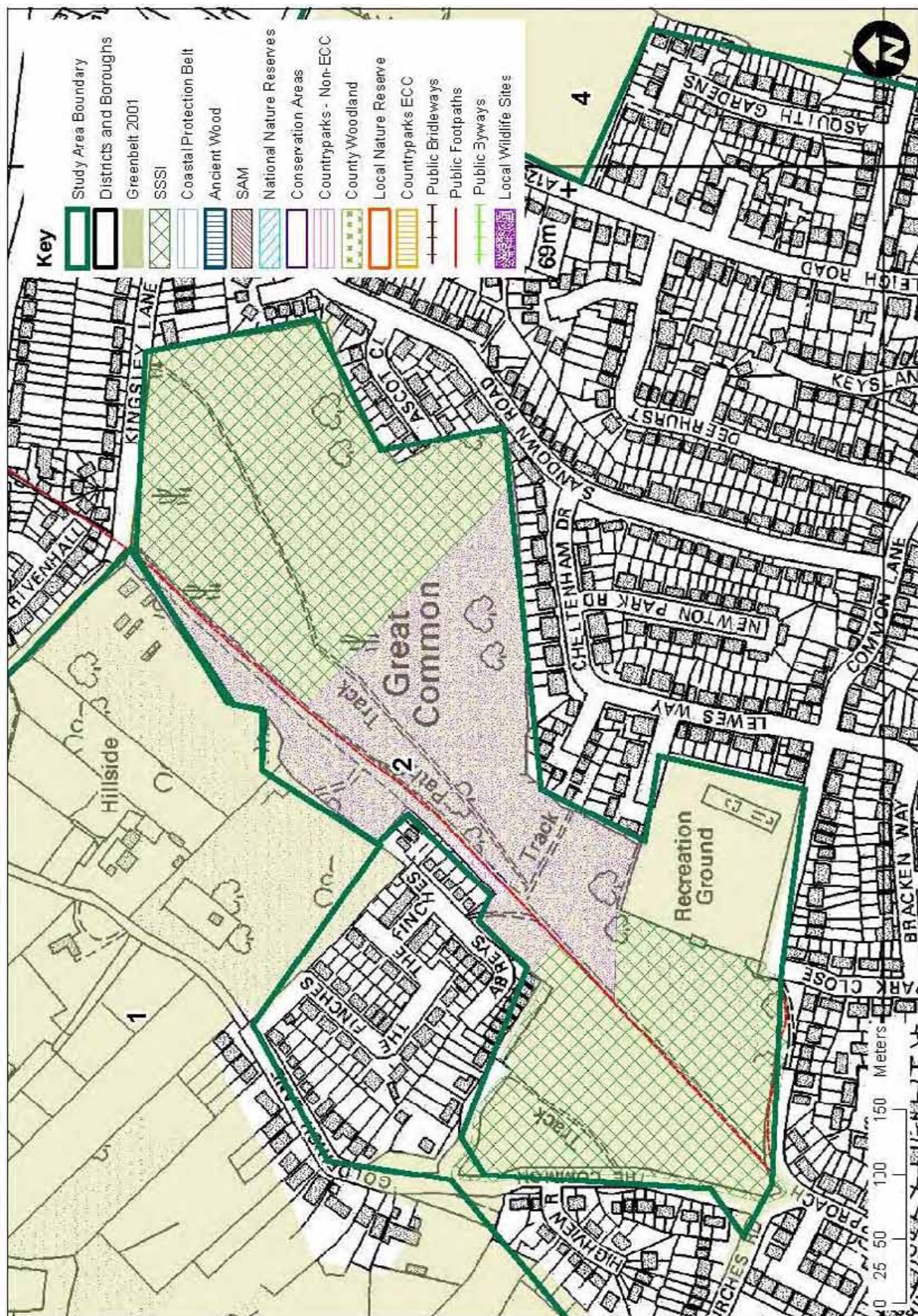
- The landform is gently rolling and the area comprises a large area of historic woodland with some grassland. Much of the woodland is designated ancient woodland and site of special scientific interest. The grassland is mainly acid grassland and heath. Woodland species are mainly oak with hornbeam and birch in some areas. The ground flora is typical of poor sandy soils. There is a grassed area managed for formal recreation at the south end of the area.
- The area includes woodland and parkland with different management systems and ages of trees. The landscape is very well-managed, with areas managed for nature conservation and for access.
- This is a very attractive area with a sense of tranquillity, important for nature conservation and its cultural context. The woodland has a high quality through the age of species, and contrasts between dense woodland and more open areas which have the character more of parkland.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Thundersley Rural Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'This zone consists of an area of semi-rural land between South Benfleet, Thundersley and the A127 and A130 road corridors. The field pattern of small rectilinear enclosures of ancient origin, has survived relatively well preserved within plotland boundaries. Many of the individual plots do not seem to have been occupied and there is much secondary woodland. There is an area of historic common land in the eastern tip of the zone, now also mostly wooded.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.2: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	Significant area of sensitive and highly valuable oak woodland and parkland and heathland
Cultural Factors	An area of historic common land identified as contributing to historic landscape character of the wider area
Aesthetic Factors	An intimate, tranquil and attractive area of woodland
Quality/Condition	Well managed area of attractive and well used woodland

Visual Sensitivity: High

- **General Visibility:** The rolling topography reduces the visibility of the area from the surrounding landscape. The site is intimate in scale and well enclosed by woodland, mature trees and scrub
- **Population** The site is well used and crossed by numerous tracks, footpaths and public rights of way. There are some small scale views into the south of the site from residential properties.
- **Mitigation** It would not be possible to replace the maturity and historical character of the tree planting.

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to enhance the landscape character through management
- Constraints to development are the high landscape sensitivity and historic landscape character

3.3 Area 3

Location

This area is located between residential areas of Thundersley and links to the Green Belt of Area 1.

Area Description



- The topography is very undulating and generally slopes down steeply towards the south. It is well-wooded, with hedges and small fields of pasture. Species are mainly native, with oak trees and hawthorn and blackthorn common in dense hedgerows and as boundary trees. The area includes Coombe Wood which has remnants of ancient woodland. Oak, sweet chestnut, hornbeam and ash are the main tree species with alder in wet areas. The woodland has a rich ground flora.
- The landscape is very enclosed in its pattern with houses and small plots set within the woodland matrix. The ancient woodland abuts secondary woodland and links to hedgerows and groups of trees.
- The narrow lanes complement the enclosed pattern and small scale which does not show much evidence of change. The scale is intimate, and the area largely has little public access with the exception of the track through Coombe Wood.
- The landform provides some good views down towards the estuary but, within the area, the compartmentalised landscape generally provides privacy in an intimate landscape. The landscape has a charm due to its scale and variety and has retained a distinctive character.

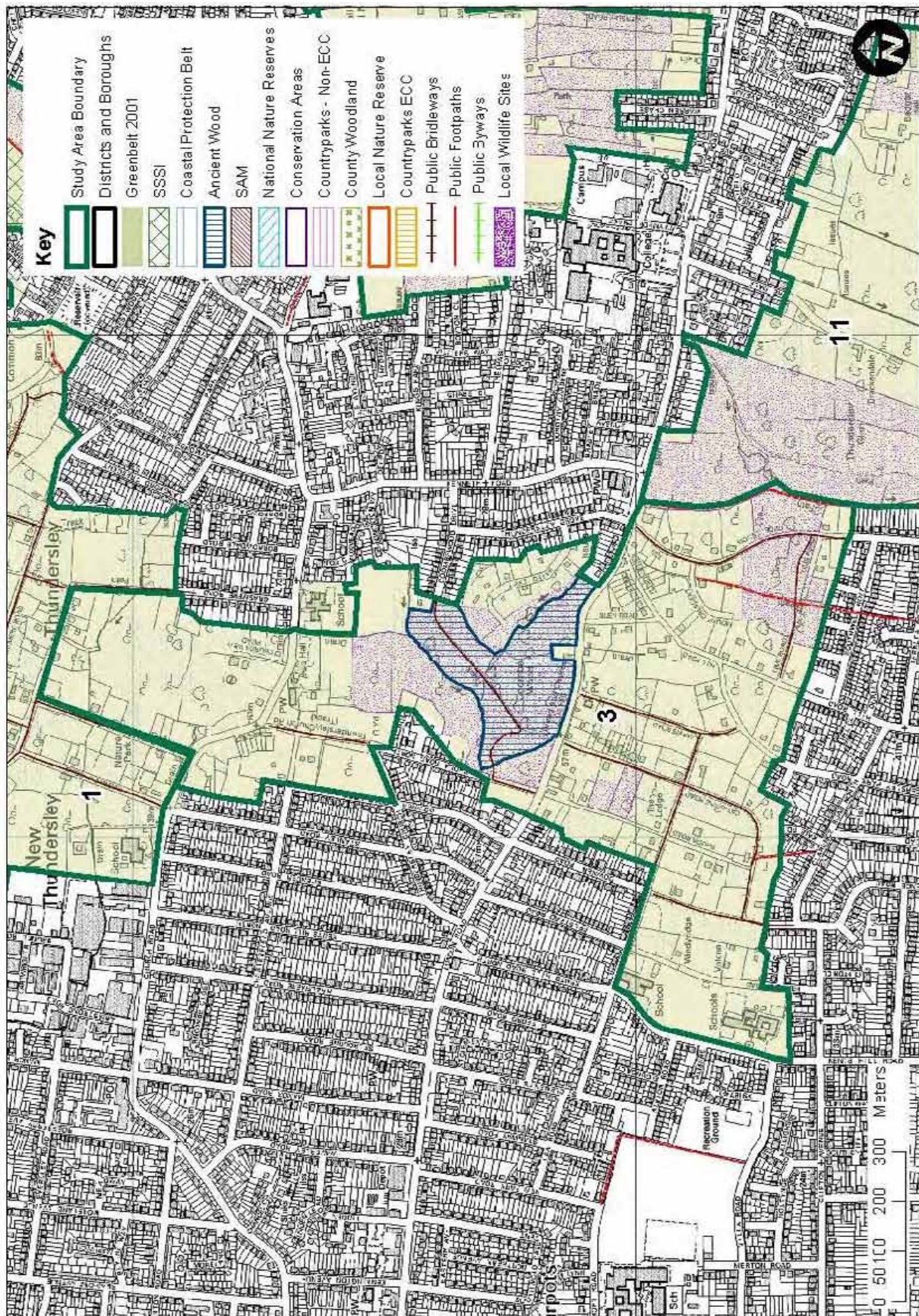
Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Thundersley Woods Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘St Peter’s Church, Thundersley, contains 12th century fabric. Jarvis Hall is another important element in the historic environment, representing the original dispersed settlement pattern in this zone. The historic field pattern of ancient origin was one of small irregular rectilinear fields. There are two areas of ancient woodland, Shipwrights Wood and Coombe Wood. Large parts of the zone were divided up as plotlands, although relatively few seem to have been occupied and considerable secondary woodland developed. The south-west corner of the zone is occupied by

Boyce Hill Golf Course.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.3: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	High
Natural Factors	Extensive woodland cover, which is a significant part of a significant belt of woodland running north to south across the district between settlements
Cultural Factors	Pattern of plotlands and intimate-scale agricultural fields is well preserved
Aesthetic Factors	A strong intimate and rural character, particularly along interior tracks, lanes and woodland paths, despite the proximity to urban settlement
Quality/Condition	Despite the pressures of urban settlement, the landscape is of high quality and appears well cared for. The historic landscape character is relatively intact.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- **General Visibility:** The area is screened by trees but is prominent within the landscape due to the landform. The hill is a key landmark and orientation feature in views from the roads and settlements of the local area. Significant and extensive views from the northern and southern edges of the site.
- **Population:** Some properties within the woodland areas. Small scale, intimate views from roads, tracks and public rights of way within the area.
- **Mitigation:** Opportunities to strengthen and conserve the historic landscape character of the area.

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to enhance the landscape character of woodland areas through management
- Significant constraints on development due to high visibility and topography of the landscape. The ancient woodland and intimate scale and cultural integrity of the landscape make it highly sensitive to development

3.4 Area 4

Location

This area borders other areas of greenbelt (Areas 5 and 7) and residential areas around the Rayleigh Road and Daws Heath.

Area Description



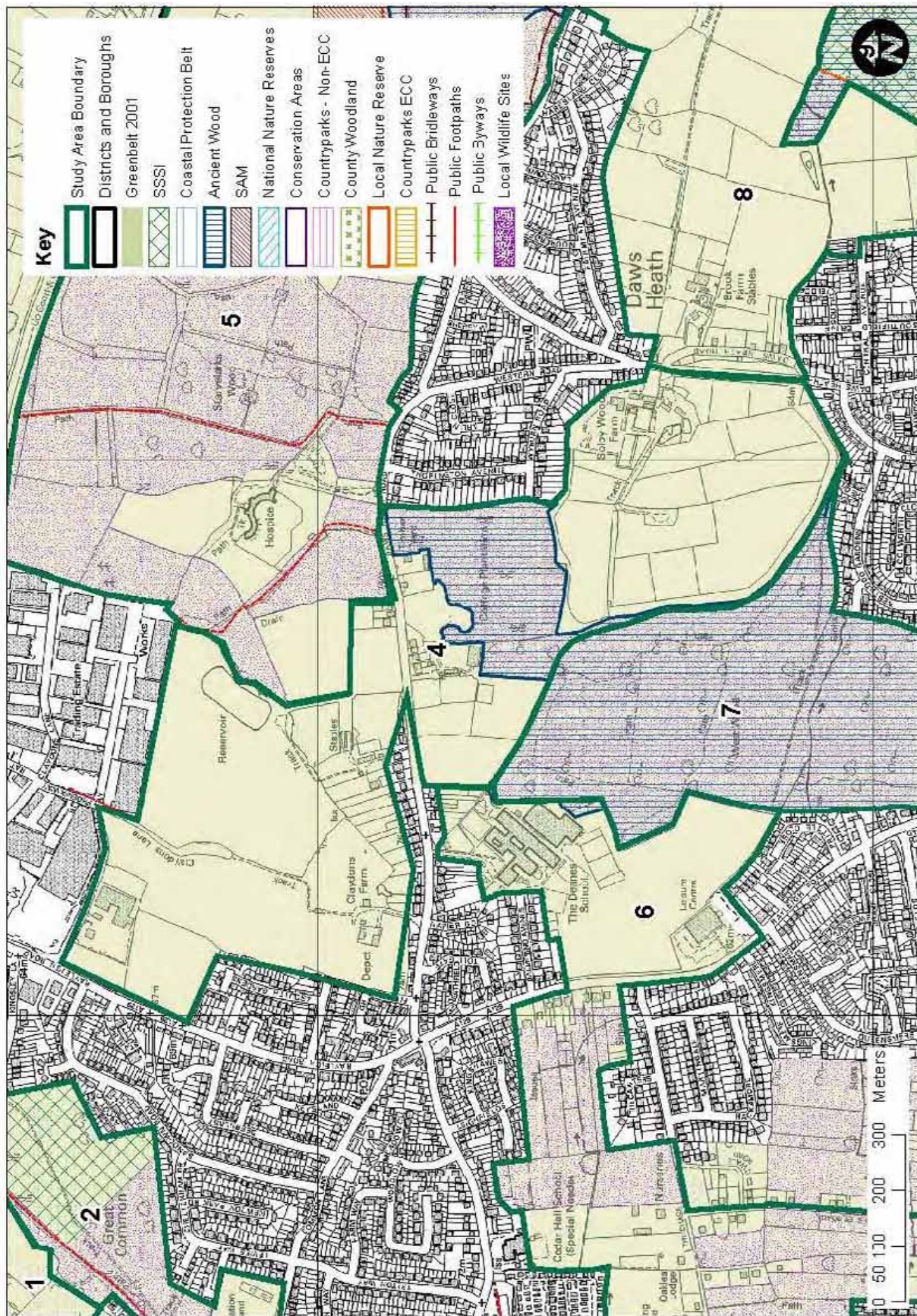
- The topography is rolling with small valleys. It contains areas of pasture, woodland and hedgerows with field boundary trees.
- The field pattern is generally fairly small scale, and the land is well managed for grazing.
- The landscape is very attractive due to the individual elements and the contrasts. The rolling landform and well vegetated field boundaries are key elements of its landscape character.
- There are attractive views within the area and looking into the area from surrounding roads and other viewpoints. The industrial estate on the northern edge is reasonably well screened and set below the high ground in views from the south. The area is very attractive in views from Daws Heath Road.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the West Wood Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘There are no settlements within the zone, which is bounded on all sides by the modern developments of Hadleigh and Thundersley. An area of ancient woodland, West Wood, stretches up the sloping ground at the south, and the rest of the zone comprises a field system of small irregular enclosures dating to the early post-medieval period. The woodland contains a number of earthworks including woodland boundary banks.’ (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.4: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	High
Natural Factors	Substantial area of ancient woodland and small-scale land for pasture is particularly valuable and sensitive
Cultural Factors	Woodland boundary banks and ancient pattern of field enclosure contribute to the strong landscape character of the area
Aesthetic Factors	The attractive rolling topography and small scale pasture of the north and south contrasts with the intimacy and enclosure of the ancient woodland. It also contributes to the setting of the adjacent nature reserve.
Quality/Condition	The landscape is well managed for grazing, informal recreation and nature conservation

Visual Sensitivity: High

- **General Visibility:** Northern part of the area is more steeply sloping with views east. Central part of the site is densely wooded and enclosed. Southern part is enclosed and well screened by woodland and mature hedgerows.
- **Population:** Visible to residential properties in the immediate vicinity of the area. Scatter of houses and farmsteads along Daws Heath Road within the site.
- **Mitigation:** Scope to mitigate the impacts of development in the southern part of the site through additional planting

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to enhance existing landscape character through management and additional planting to the north of the site to more clearly define the green belt boundary with the trading estate
- Constraints to development are primarily the designation of ancient woodland and rolling topography to the north

3.5 Area 5

Location

This area borders the boundary with Rochford to the north and other greenbelt areas 4 and 8 and the residential area of Daws Heath.

Area Description



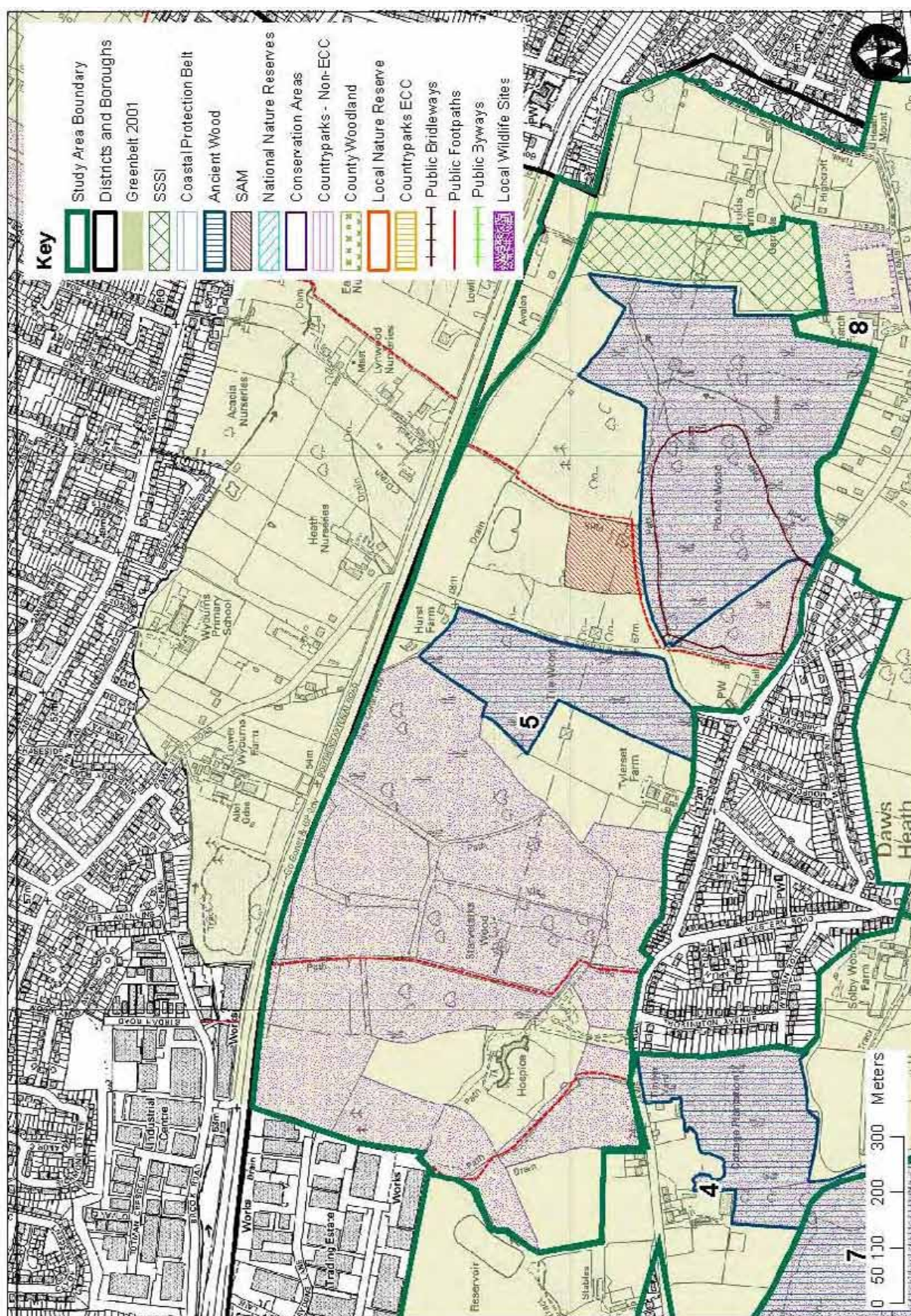
- The topography is gently rolling with a substantial area of woodland cover – much of it ancient woodland. The area is divided by areas of pasture and hedgerows which act as clearings within the wooded landscape. The area comprises a number of woodlands in the Tile Wood and Little Haven complex as well as a local nature reserve. Species vary between woods but include sessile oak, hawthorn, sweet chestnut, hornbeam, ash, alder and hazel. Ground flora are attractive and species are those which are typical of ancient woodlands.
- The landscape is well-managed with good access through the woodland. The woodland is very attractive due to its age and management, and richness of species. Views through the area are very attractive due to the landform and richness of the vegetation.
- The area has a tranquility and beauty due to the variety of features and land use, landform and vegetation.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Daws Heath and Pound Wood Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘This zone represents a remarkable survival of a historic pattern of irregular small fields and ancient woodland, Pound Wood, Tile Wood and Starvelarks Wood. Significant elements of the woods are managed as nature reserves. The zone is bounded to the north by the Southend Arterial Road (A127). North of the road are a number of modern nurseries, which have imposed a new pattern of enclosures over the early field system. There are a range of earthwork woodland boundaries and other earthworks within the woods.’ (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.5: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	A valuable mosaic of substantial areas of ancient woodland, grassland, pasture and scrub
Cultural Factors	Distinctive historic landscape pattern of woodland and small irregular fields
Aesthetic Factors	A very attractive area of countryside with a distinctly rural character. Contrasts between intimate scale of rural lanes and woodland and more open fields
Quality/Condition	The historic landscape pattern is very much intact and the landscape is well managed, with evidence of traditional management practices, for nature conservation and informal recreation.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: A mosaic of woodland and pasture with the longest views from the more open western end of the area.
- Population: Views into the area from adjacent residential properties and farmsteads. A network of minor roads, tracks, footpaths and public rights of way cross the site. Views into the area from the A127 in the north are screened by mature trees.
- Mitigation: There is little scope for mitigation due to the largely intimate scale of the landscape

Opportunities and constraints

- Constraints to development are due to the multiple landscape designations, the high landscape sensitivity and sensitivity of the historic landscape character

3.6 Area 6

Location

This area is nearly surrounded by residential areas in Thundersley and links to greenbelt area 7.

Area Description



- The topography is gently sloping and the landscape is enclosed and compartmentalised with a variety of land uses. The landscape includes woodland, pasture, with hedgerows and grassed areas for formal and informal recreation and many old hedgerow trees. The area to the west is mainly pasture used for grazing horses, and is crossed by a public right of way. Species are mainly native, with hawthorn and blackthorn in hedges, and oak, ash, hawthorn common tree species.
- There are small plots within the area with small houses, many of which are bungalows and date from early in the twentieth century. Garden plots are often large with small areas of pasture adjoining properties.
- The area varies in its management, but retains an attractive rural character due to the vegetation, small lanes and regular maintenance. The scale of the landscape is intimate and enclosed with limited views into the area due to the trees and hedgerows.
- The landscape has a distinctive quality through its historic pattern of development and quantity of vegetation.

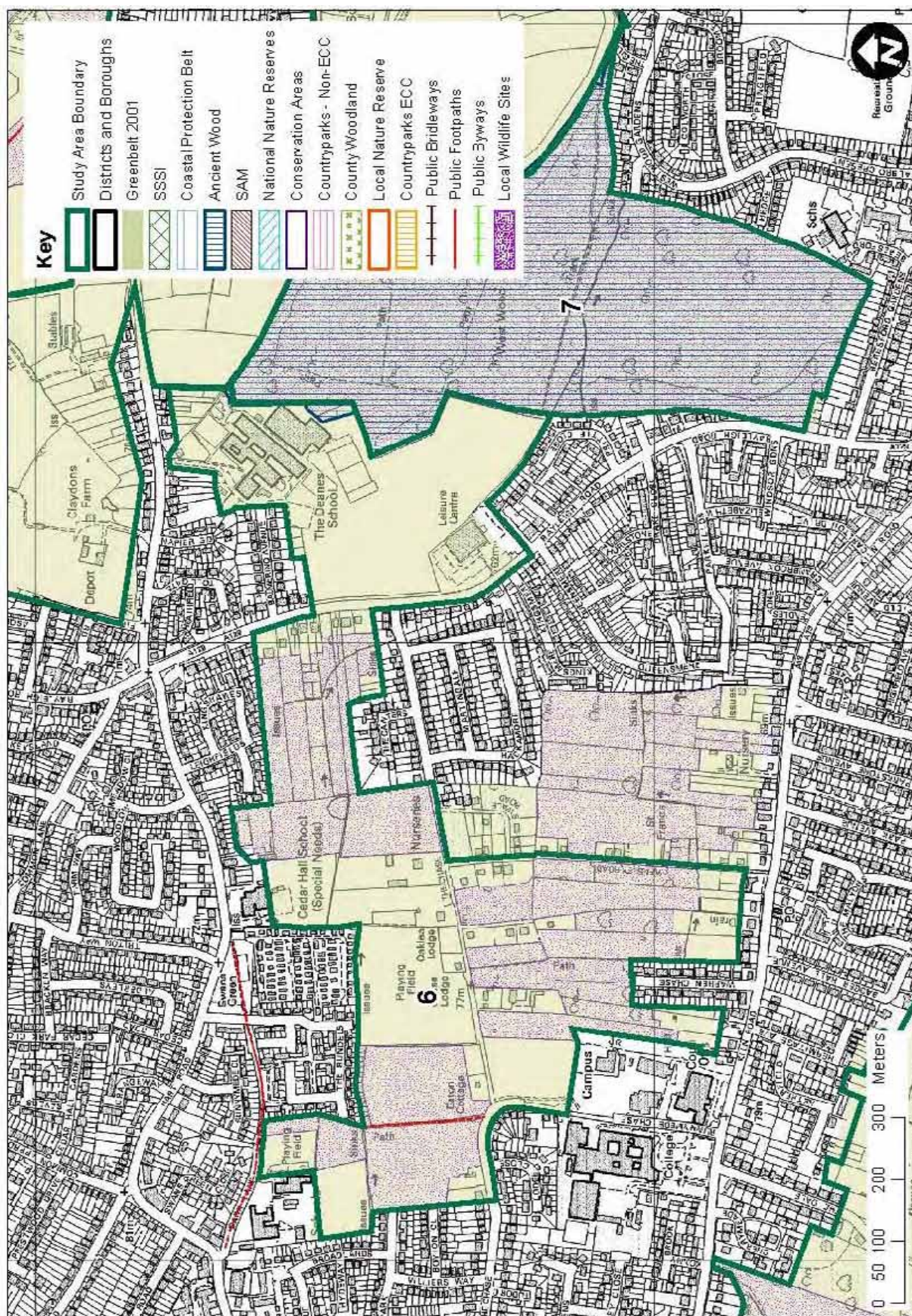
Historic Urban Character

The area lies within the Thundersley Historic Character Area, which has the following historic urban character:

‘Thundersley comprises a 20th century residential developments, although a few buildings survive from the original dispersed settlement pattern. The historic landscape was originally defined by irregular rectilinear fields. The first half of the 20th century saw extensive plotland development, the boundaries of which largely respected the earlier field layout. Most of the plotlands were absorbed into residential developments in the late 20th century although some survive in the centre of the zone, together with secondary woodland. The centre of the zone also contains

open school playing fields.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.6: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	High
Natural Factors	The area is largely covered by semi-natural mature deciduous woodland of significant nature conservation value
Cultural Factors	Historic plotland settlement pattern and rural lanes and tracks survive
Aesthetic Factors	A sense of remoteness and retreat from the surrounding urban settlement. The lanes and woodland footpaths are particularly intimate and rural in character
Quality/Condition	The landscape quality varies across the site

Visual Sensitivity: Medium to High

- General Visibility: The core of the area is well screened by trees and comparatively hidden in the wider landscape due to the flat landform.
- Population: The north of the area is locally visible from adjacent residential areas and a school. The area is crossed by a network of unadopted lanes, tracks and a public right of way. Clusters of plotland development within the area.
- Mitigation: There is scope for additional planting to the north of the site to mitigate the impacts of development

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to enhance the existing landscape through improvements in management
- Constraints to development include landscape designations, high landscape sensitivity of the woodland and the locally unique nature of the surviving historic plotland settlement patterns

3.7 Area 7

Location

This area adjoins greenbelt areas 6 and 4 in the north and residential areas to the south.

Area Description



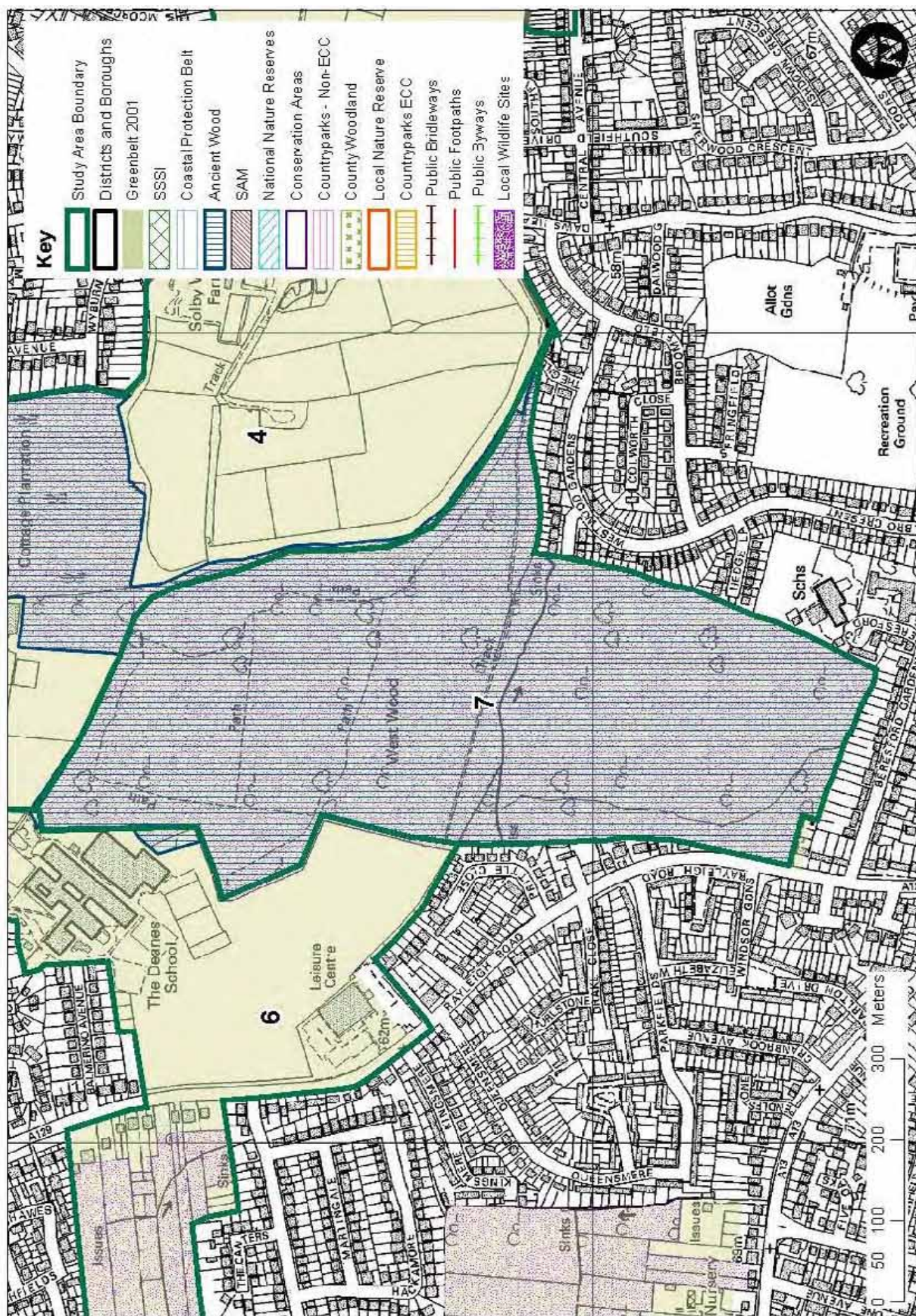
- The topography is undulating and the landscape is ancient woodland (West Wood). Woodland tree species include hornbeam, sweet chestnut, birch, and wild service tree. Nature conservation and informal recreation are land uses. There is a heathland area on the north-west side of the area. On the lowest lying section tree species include poplar and willow. Ground flora is characteristic of ancient woodland.
- The landscape is well managed as a nature reserve with public access through the woodland. Views are enclosed, but with the coppice allowing light to reach the ground through the trees enhancing the woodland experience.
- The landscape is intimate and very attractive with a variety of woodland species related to the site conditions and history. It has a sense of timelessness due to the age of the woodland and woodland pattern.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the West Wood Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘There are no settlements within the zone, which is bounded on all sides by the modern developments of Hadleigh and Thundersley. An area of ancient woodland, West Wood, stretches up the sloping ground at the south, and the rest of the zone comprises a field system of small irregular enclosures dating to the early post-medieval period. The woodland contains a number of earthworks including woodland boundary banks.’
(Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.7: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	Substantial area of ancient woodland
Cultural Factors	Historic landscape features include traditionally managed areas of ancient woodland and woodland boundary banks
Aesthetic Factors	An intimate and very attractive landscape which provides a strong contrast to the more open nature of surrounding land. An attractive backdrop to urban settlement
Quality/Condition	Well managed for nature conservation and informal recreation. Some evidence of pressures at urban fringe.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: The area is densely wooded and enclosed.
- Population: Significance as prominent skyline feature for views from farmsteads, residential areas and schools in the immediate vicinity. A network of paths and tracks cross the area.
- Mitigation: There is no scope for mitigation.

Opportunities and constraints

- Constraints to development are primarily the designated landscape and high landscape sensitivity

3.8 Area 8

Location

This area adjoins greenbelt areas 4,5 and 9 and residential areas of Daws Heath and Hadleigh.

Area Description



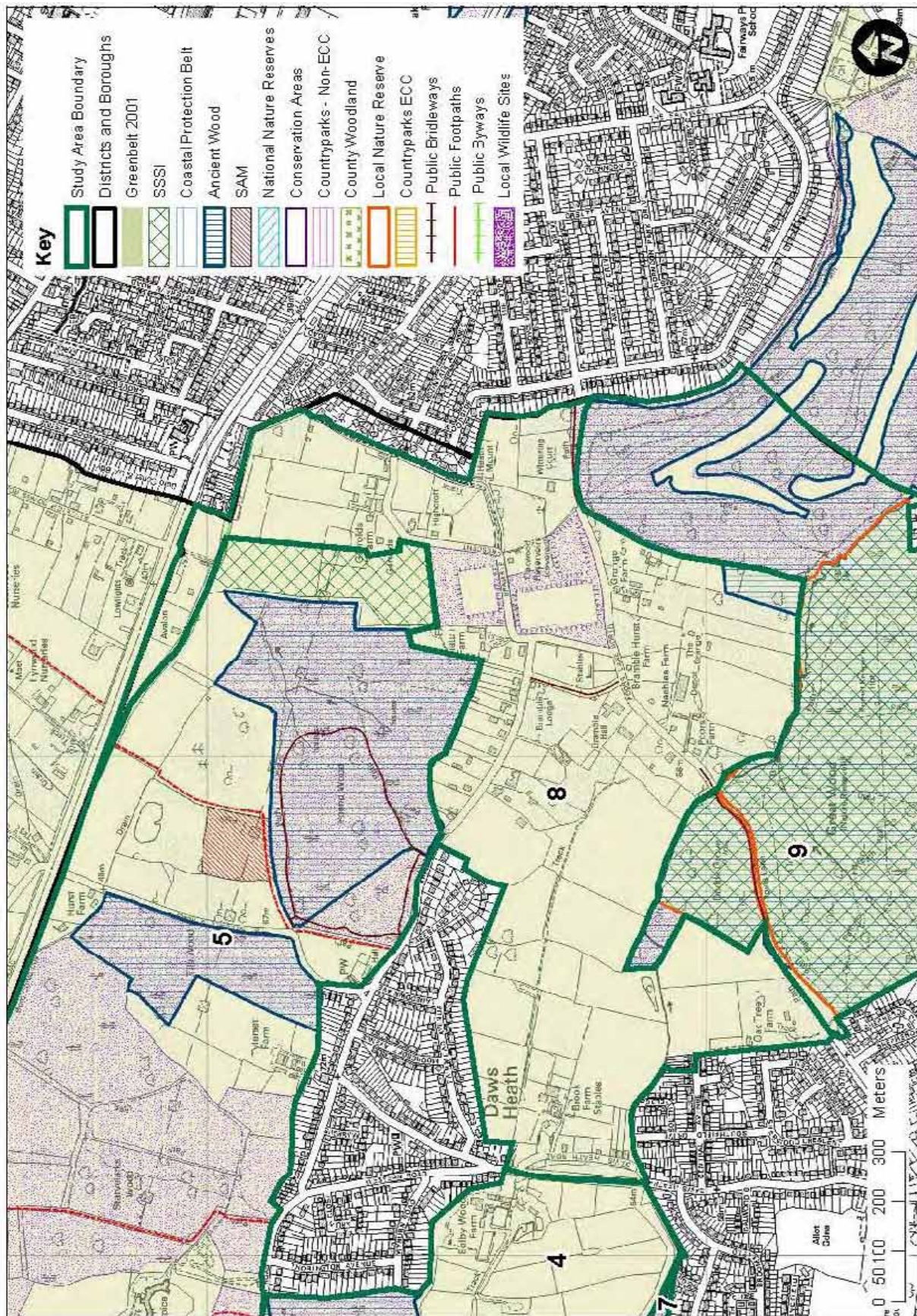
- The topography is gently sloping and the area comprises a mixture of woodland, pasture, housing and reservoirs. There are many dense hedges with hedgerow trees in the area, with hawthorn, blackthorn, oak and ash common.
- The landscape is compartmentalised with hedges and fences separating areas. Woodland is attractive and well managed with pedestrian access. The landscape generally is intimate, rural and attractive in its quality. Development is well screened by trees and hedges and roads are few, narrow and sinuous, relating well to the landform.
- The landscape management is reasonably good, and there are good views within the area. The landscape has a sense of history, or having retained its pattern for many years.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Hadleigh Great Wood Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'Much of the zone consists of an ancient field system of small enclosures, based around a dispersed settlement pattern of historic farmsteads. In the south is a tract of ancient woodland known as Great Wood, now a nature reserve. The woodlands preserve earthwork woodland banks and other earthwork features. There are three 19th century covered reservoirs in the east of the zone built to serve the expanding population of Southend, which borders the zone to the east. The modern conurbation of Hadleigh surrounds the zone to the south and west.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.8: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	High
Natural Factors	Attractive mixture of woodland and pasture with old hedgerows
Cultural Factors	Pattern of landscape and settlement is long established and compartmentalised
Aesthetic Factors	High visual quality of woodland and contrasts in land uses.
Quality/Condition	Good condition with cared for appearance.

Visual Sensitivity: Medium to High

- General Visibility: Area is at present generally enclosed by woodland, hedges and other vegetation.
- Population: There are views into the area from properties in Daws Heath, and turnings off Daws Heath Road.
- Mitigation: Mitigation should concentrate on protection of woodland and retention of rural character of the area

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to reinforce and strengthen existing landscape character.
- Constraints to development are substantial due to the designated landscape and high landscape sensitivity and integrity of the historic landscape. Development is also constrained by visual sensitivity.

3.9 Area 9

Location

The area adjoins green belt area 8 to the north and residential areas to the south and east. It is situated within a larger area of woodland.

Area Description



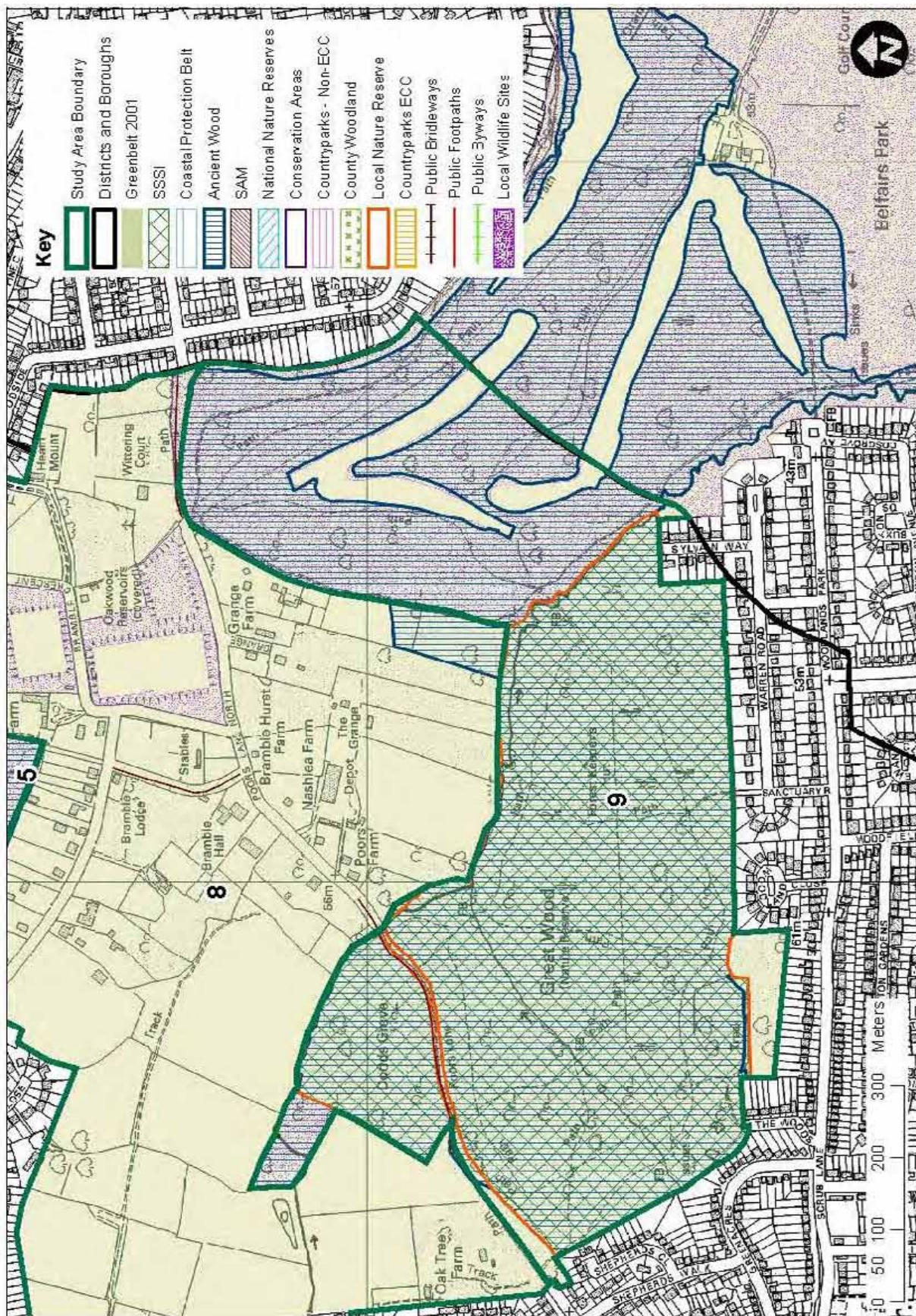
- The area comprises Great Wood, ancient woodland and site of special scientific interest and part of Belfairs woodland which is also ancient woodland. It also includes Dodds Grove ancient woodland which borders Great Wood to the north. The area adjoins green belt area 8 to the north and residential areas to the south and east. It is situated within a larger area of ancient woodland which extends further east into Belfairs Park. Species include oak and hornbeam with dense thickets of aspen, birch, hazel and sweet chestnut in some areas.
- The topography is gently sloping, and the woodland character is very attractive and is important for nature conservation. Nearly the entire area is designated a site of special scientific interest.
- The woodland is well managed and has good access for pedestrians. Views are enclosed, with views into the wood in areas that have been recently coppiced.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Hadleigh Great Wood Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘Much of the zone consists of an ancient field system of small enclosures, based around a dispersed settlement pattern of historic farmsteads. In the south is a tract of ancient woodland known as Great Wood, now a nature reserve. The woodlands preserve earthwork woodland banks and other earthwork features. There are three 19th century covered reservoirs in the east of the zone built to serve the expanding population of Southend, which borders the zone to the east. The modern conurbation of Hadleigh surrounds the zone to the south and west.’ (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.9: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	The area mostly comprises ancient woodland
Cultural Factors	There is good access into the woodland and a history of use
Aesthetic Factors	The woodland is very attractive with variations in topography, species and management.
Quality/Condition	The woodland is generally well-managed and well used by walkers and cyclists.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: The area is very enclosed by its woodland
- Population: The area is visible and properties on the south side of the woodland in Hadleigh. There are views of the area from the section of Poors Lane which is a right of way through the wood.
- Mitigation: It would not be possible to mitigate for the loss of woodland

Opportunities and constraints

- Constraints to development due to the landscape designation and high landscape sensitivity and integrity of the historic landscape. Development is also constrained by visual sensitivity from adjacent residential areas.

3.10 Area 10

Location

The area lies between the A130 and residential area on the west side of Benfleet.

Area Description



- The topography in the north section of the area is relatively flat, falling slightly towards the south. In the south section of the area, the topography is very undulating and with a long slope down toward the estuary.
- The vegetation in the north section is a mixture of trees, scrub, school and playing fields, recently cultivated nature conservation area and pasture.
- The boundaries are varied including hedges, timber and steel fences. The southern section is pasture, used as fields for horses.
- In the south section, the vegetation comprises gappy hawthorn hedges, a few trees with scrub and woodland around the recreation area at the top of the area. Field boundaries are typically timber post and rail fences.
- In the north section the landscape management varies from frequent (management of the school and its playing fields) to negligible (areas of scrub). There is no unity throughout this section due to the variety of land uses and the lack of connection between them.
- The area generally provides a rural edge to the housing areas and a rural landscape corridor beside the A130.

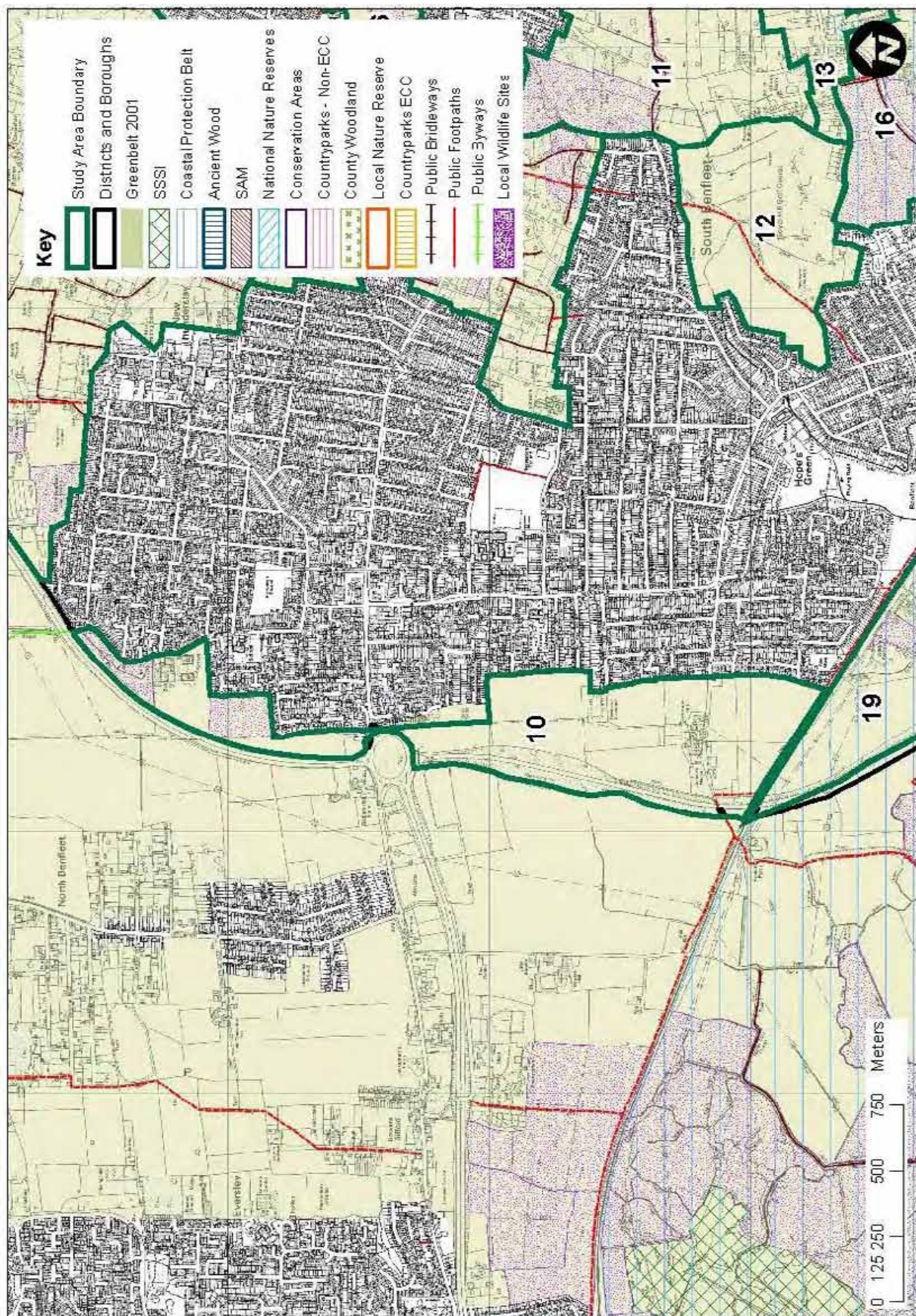
Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Bowers Hall Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'This zone is crossed by the A130 and A13 road corridors and a branch of the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway. The zone, which contains the 14th century church of St. Margaret, has a dispersed settlement pattern, including several medieval moated sites, and the field pattern has a strong rectilinear pattern of ancient origin. There has been some significant boundary loss however, the broad rectilinear structure of the landscape survives. The pattern of smaller fields survives reasonably well

in the west of the zone. 20th century features include a WWI night landing ground close to the A130/A13 junction, and WWII sites relating to the General Headquarters defence line.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.10: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Medium
Natural Factors	Topography of the southern section slopes down towards the estuary
Cultural Factors	The area has a range of uses related to the adjacent housing or agriculture
Aesthetic Factors	The area varies considerably between various sections
Quality/Condition	The condition of sections within the area varies from dense scrub to rolling hillside used as horse paddocks with little hedging or trees remaining.

Visual Sensitivity: Medium to High

- General Visibility: Part of southern section of site is very elevated and visible for a wide area to the south.
- Population: The area is visible from housing along its east side.
- Mitigation: Visual Impacts on the southern section would be hard to mitigate due to the landform. Development would require a substantial belt of vegetation to be created or retained along the A130 to retain a rural character of the road and approach to Canvey Island.

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to strengthen existing landscape character.
- Constraints to development due to the landscape sensitivity of much of the landscape.

3.11 Area 11

Location

This area lies between residential areas to the north and west and green belt area 13 to the south and area 3 to the north west.

Area Description



- The area is very undulating and comprises a large amount of woodland, with fields of pasture and new planting, and grassed area of formal recreation. The land is enclosed by hedges into fairly small units. The woodland areas include Thunderley Glen, Shipwrights Wood and Coopers Wood which are parts of a large ancient woodland. These sites, Shipwrights meadow and Mount Road Wood are all local nature reserves. Species include oak, ash, field maple, hornbeam and birch and hawthorn scrub in Thundersley Glen. In Shipwrights Wood, hazel and poplar are also present and both woods have a high ground flora. Many hedges are estimated to be ancient in origin.
- The landscape is attractive, with the woodland containing many mature specimens and a variety of species. Hedges, ditches, streams, copses and scrub are other landscape features in the area. There are a number of ponds in Thundersley Glen and damp areas of ground in Shipwrights Wood with changes in species. Shipwrights meadow is a species rich damp grassland area.
- Despite the area appearing well used, the landscape management varies, with some woodland and areas of scrub receiving little or no apparent management. The areas have a fine quality due to the diversity of land use and the mature nature of much of the woodland.

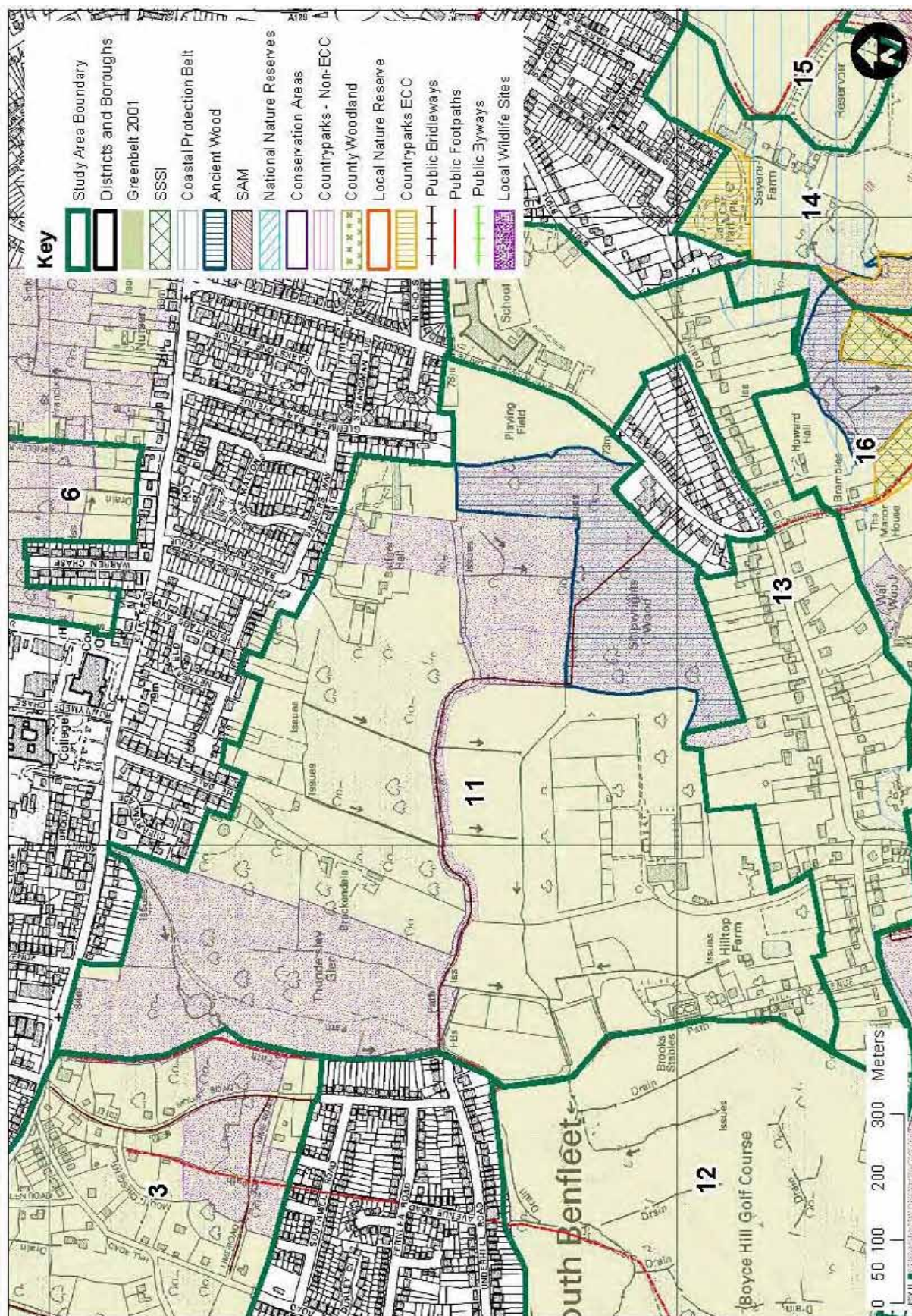
Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Thundersley Woods Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘St Peter’s Church, Thundersley, contains 12th century fabric. Jarvis Hall is another important element in the historic environment, representing the original dispersed settlement pattern in this zone. The historic field pattern of ancient origin was one of small irregular rectilinear fields. There are two areas of ancient woodland, Shipwrights Wood and Coombe Wood. Large parts of the zone were divided up as plotlands, although

relatively few seem to have been occupied and considerable secondary woodland developed. The south-west corner of the zone is occupied by Boyce Hill Golf Course.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.11: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	Undulating land with large amount of woodland, some ancient woodland
Cultural Factors	Divided landscape with small fields of pasture, and a historic landscape including ancient woodland
Aesthetic Factors	An enclosed landscape with very attractive woodland seen from the woodland edges and rights of way.
Quality/Condition	Good condition and high quality

Visual Sensitivity: Medium to High

- General Visibility: Topography and woodland contribute to make area relatively enclosed behind a fringe of residential development
- Population: Views into area from rights of way and views into woodland, pasture and recreation areas from adjacent residential areas.
- Mitigation: Loss of woodland could not be mitigated

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to strengthen existing landscape character through improved landscape management.
- Constraints to development due to the landscape sensitivity and designation of much of the landscape.

3.12 Area 12

Location

This area adjoins areas 13, 16 and a residential area of South Benfleet to its west.

Area Description



- The area is the Boyce Hill golf course and comprises woodland and grassland in a very undulating topography with steep slopes. There are many trees, areas of scrub and attractive views to the high ground surrounding. The club describes its course as a parkland course reflecting the number of trees within the site of this 18 hole golf course.
- The area is very well managed and provides a very attractive managed landscape. There is a considerable amount of new planting which has been carried out, occasionally with non-native species, but the parkland setting is its key character.
- There are good views out from the club house area towards London's docklands along the estuary landscape.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Thundersley Woods Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'St Peter's Church, Thundersley, contains 12th century fabric. Jarvis Hall is another important element in the historic environment, representing the original dispersed settlement pattern in this zone. The historic field pattern of ancient origin was one of small irregular rectilinear fields. There are two areas of ancient woodland, Shipwrights Wood and Coombe Wood. Large parts of the zone were divided up as plotlands, although relatively few seem to have been occupied and considerable secondary woodland developed. The south-west corner of the zone is occupied by Boyce Hill Golf Course.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	High
Natural Factors	Very undulating landform with woodland and groups of trees
Cultural Factors	Use for recreation as golf course
Aesthetic Factors	Very attractive combination of landform and vegetation
Quality/Condition	Very well managed landscape

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: Views into area from surrounding high ground.
- Population: Nearby properties have views down to area between trees and areas of woodland.
- Mitigation: Loss of woodland could not be mitigated

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to conserve and strengthen existing landscape character
- Constraints to development due to the steep slopes, landscape and visual sensitivity, and present landuse which is well suited to the land form.

3.13 Area 13

Location

This area lies between green belt area 11, 12 and 16.

Area Description



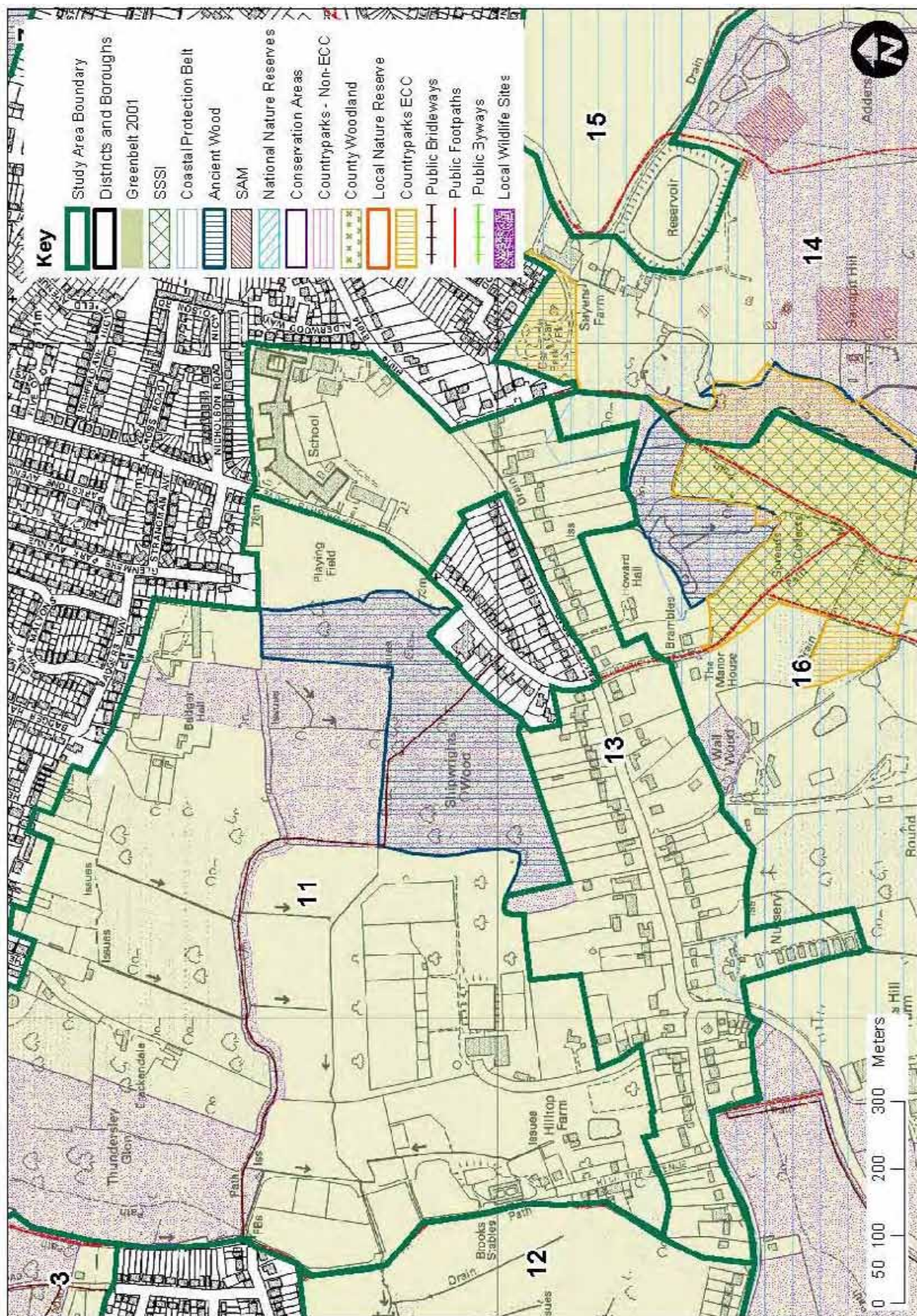
- The topography is very dramatic with land steeply sloping both down to the estuary to the south and down to the north. The area has fringes of woodland, trees in clumps and single specimens, with areas of scrub. Much of this is reasonably well managed within gardens or other private land.
- The area has rows of large residential properties along the ridge on each side of the Benfleet Road. There are very good distant views from this high ground looking down over the estuary. The landscape is varied with an intimate character along the Benfleet Road contrasting with the open views at the top of the hill.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Thundersley Historic Character Area, which has the following historic urban character:

‘Thundersley comprises a 20th century residential developments, although a few buildings survive from the original dispersed settlement pattern. The historic landscape was originally defined by irregular rectilinear fields. The first half of the 20th century saw extensive plotland development, the boundaries of which largely respected the earlier field layout. Most of the plotlands were absorbed into residential developments in the late 20th century although some survive in the centre of the zone, together with secondary woodland. The centre of the zone also contains open school playing fields.’ (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.13: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Medium to High
Natural Factors	Steeply sloping topography each side of ridge with woodland to the north around development
Cultural Factors	Linear pattern of development along ridge (Benfleet Road)
Aesthetic Factors	Very attractive area with woodland edge and open views to the estuary
Quality/Condition	Good condition with many trees maintained within gardens.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: Area very visible over a wide area to the south due to elevation.
- Population: Visible from properties over a wide area and from rights of way and roads.
- Mitigation: Not possible to mitigate due to elevated location on edge of high land above estuary and overlooked by high land to the north.

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to conserve and strengthen existing landscape character.
- Constraints to development due to the landscape and visual sensitivity of the area.

3.14 Area 14

Location

This area lies between greenbelt areas 15,16, 17 and 18.

Area Description



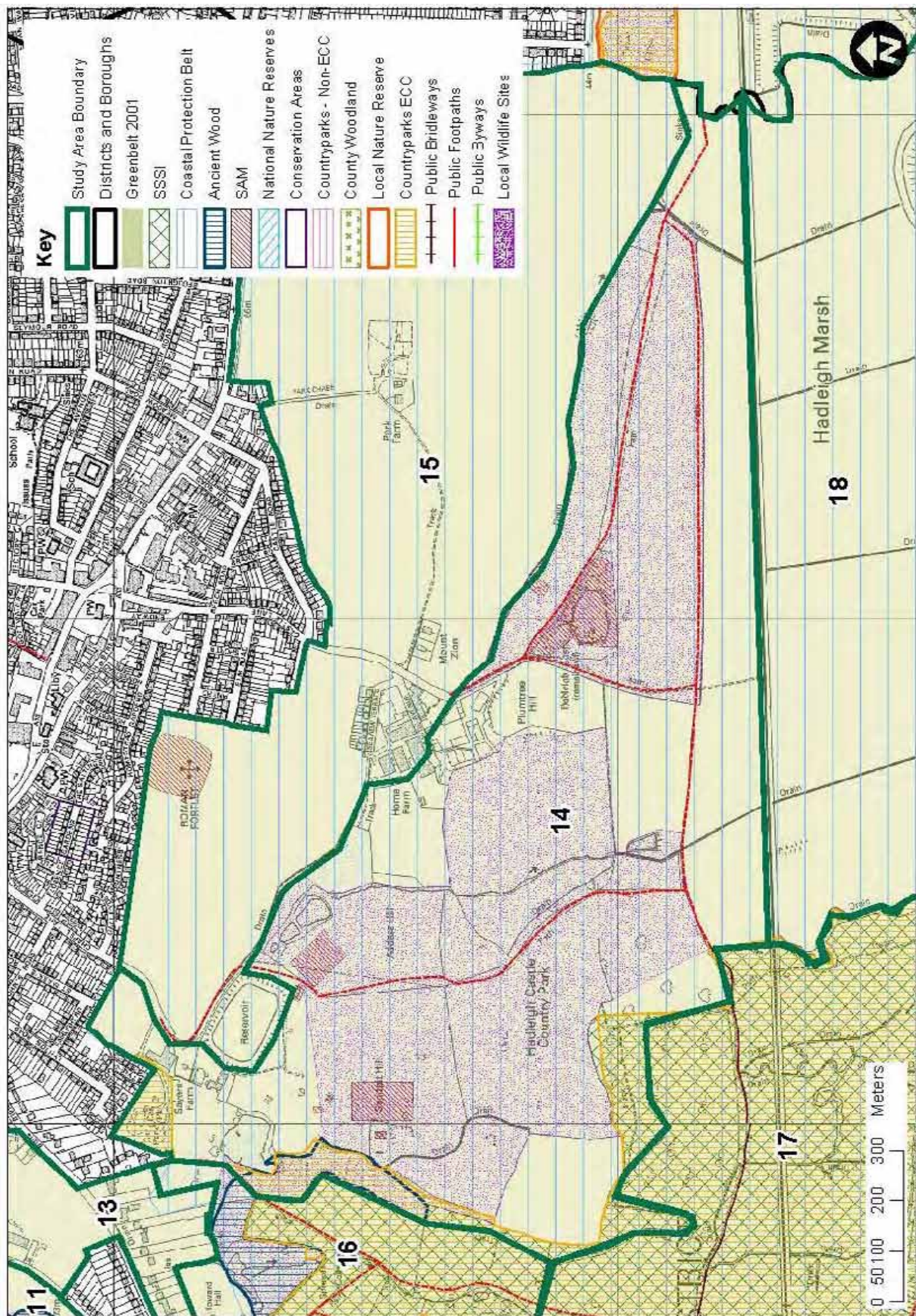
- The topography is dramatic, with undulating land steeply sloping down to the estuary. Hadleigh Castle is prominent and sits on a spur below the higher landform.
- The area comprises woodland, pasture, and a strip of arable farmland beside the railway. The area near the Castle has a pattern of small fields with hedgerows and groups of trees. Much of the area is a local nature reserve comprising Castle Farm/Hadleigh Castle grasslands which form an extension of the country park SSSI grasslands to the west.
- The landscape management is good, with much of the land under the control of the country park or local farmer. This forms one of the largest non-grazing marsh grassland sites in the south of the county, and includes substantial areas of acid grassland and species rich hedgerows.
- The contrasts in topography and land use make this a very attractive and unusual landscape in the county.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Hadleigh Castle Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘The zone is an area of steeply rising ground between Hadleigh Marsh and the urban area of Hadleigh. Hadleigh Castle, constructed in the 13th century and extensively remodelled in the 14th century as a royal palace in the reign of Edward III, is a dominant feature in the landscape and is Scheduled. The zone contains a dispersed settlement pattern. A medieval park associated with the castle lay in the north east of this zone. Elements of the landscape are protected within the Hadleigh Castle Country Park..’ (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.14: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	The topography is dramatic, with steep slopes down to the estuary. The area has woodland and pasture with old hedgerow trees.
Cultural Factors	Hadleigh Castle sits on a lower slope with a pattern of small fields (pasture) surrounding, and rights of way linking it to the country park and surrounding area
Aesthetic Factors	The area is part of a large landscape seen from the high ground in Hadleigh and from the low land around Benfleet Creek and Canvey Island. It is one of the most dramatic views in Essex, with panoramic views from the high ground at Hadleigh.
Quality/Condition	The quality is high with well managed landscape flowing down to the grazing meadows and natural estuarine landscape below.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: The landscape is very visible over a wide area
- Population: There are a large number of properties and rights of way particularly in Benfleet and Canvey Island with views of the area.
- Mitigation: It would not be possible to mitigate the impacts of development in the area.

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to conserve and strengthen existing landscape character, and to develop access for informal recreation.
- Constraints to development due to the designations and visual sensitivity of the landscape.

3.15 Area 15

Location

This area lies between the built up area of Hadleigh and greenbelt area 14.

Area Description



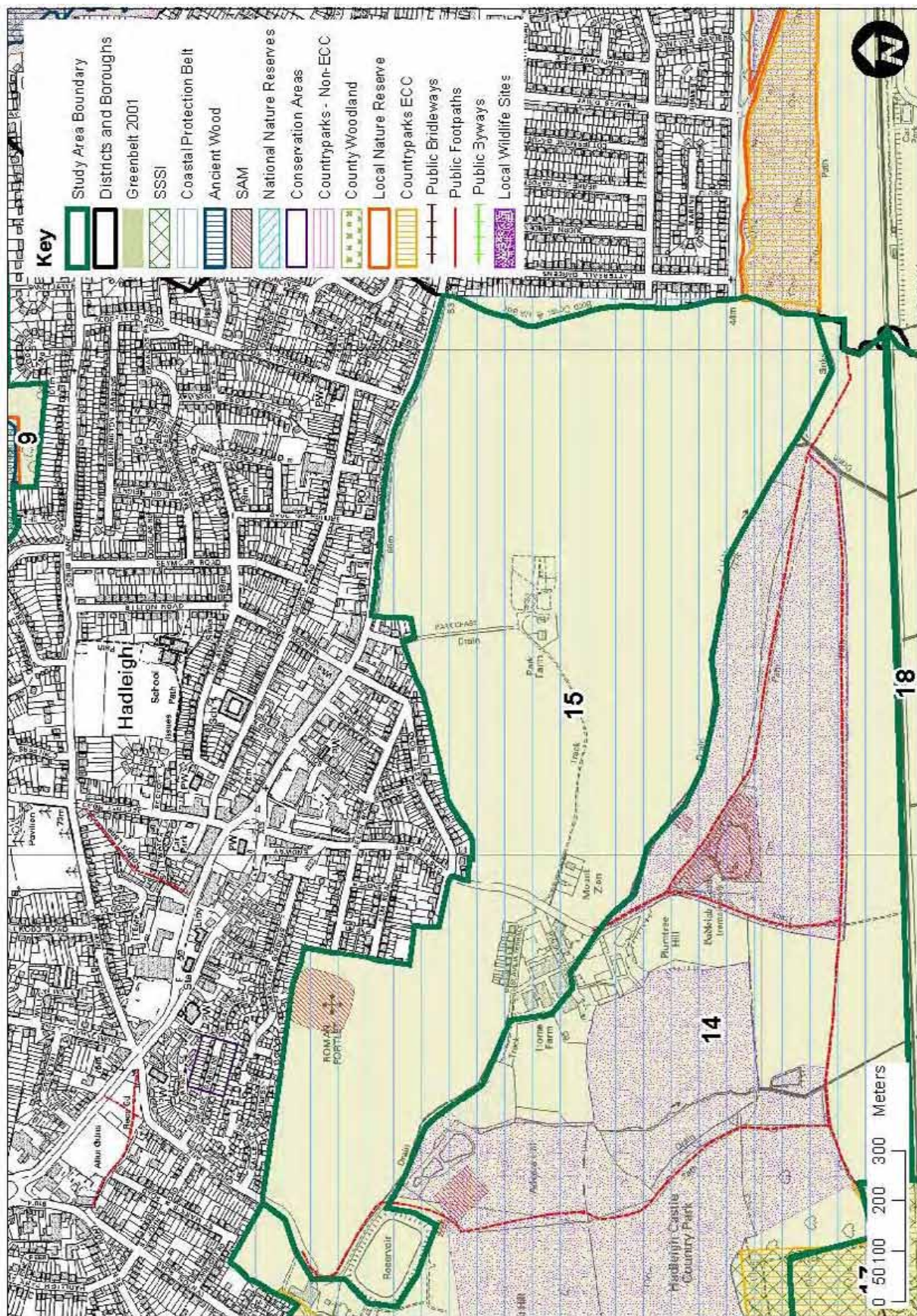
- The land slopes from north to south and comprises mainly arable farmland. Fields are large, with some hedgerows and a few hedgerow trees. The landscape is generally open with very good views down over Hadleigh Castle and the estuary.
- Landscape management is reasonably good with agricultural use, the concrete tracks and signs forming the only detracting elements.
- The area forms part of a large landscape which varies from flat estuary marshes, to steep hillsides with grazing and these higher more gentle slopes. The changes in topography and vegetation make this larger landscape one of the most dramatic in the county, with spectacular views of Hadleigh Castle on its spur below.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Hadleigh Castle Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘The zone is an area of steeply rising ground between Hadleigh Marsh and the urban area of Hadleigh. Hadleigh Castle, constructed in the 13th century and extensively remodelled in the 14th century as a royal palace in the reign of Edward III, is a dominant feature in the landscape and is Scheduled. The zone contains a dispersed settlement pattern. A medieval park associated with the castle lay in the north east of this zone. Elements of the landscape are protected within the Hadleigh Castle Country Park..’ (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.15: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	Open arable land with panoramic views down over Hadleigh Castle to the estuary
Cultural Factors	Hadleigh Castle and its surrounding farmland is prominent in views
Aesthetic Factors	Views are very dramatic with a range of landscape types, topography and open expanse of estuary.
Quality/Condition	Landscape condition is good.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: Part of the area is visible from a large area to the south in Benfleet and Canvey. It forms part of the landscape setting of Hadleigh Castle, seen from the south.
- Population: The area is visible from properties to the north in Hadleigh and from Canvey Island.
- Mitigation: It would not be possible to mitigate the loss of landscape setting of Hadleigh Castle.

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to strengthen existing landscape character with hedgerow and tree planting, improved management and pedestrian access.
- Constraints to development due to the landscape and visual sensitivity of much of the landscape.

3.16 Area 16

Location

This area is located between greenbelt areas to the north east and south and borders the built up area of Benfleet to the west.

Area Description



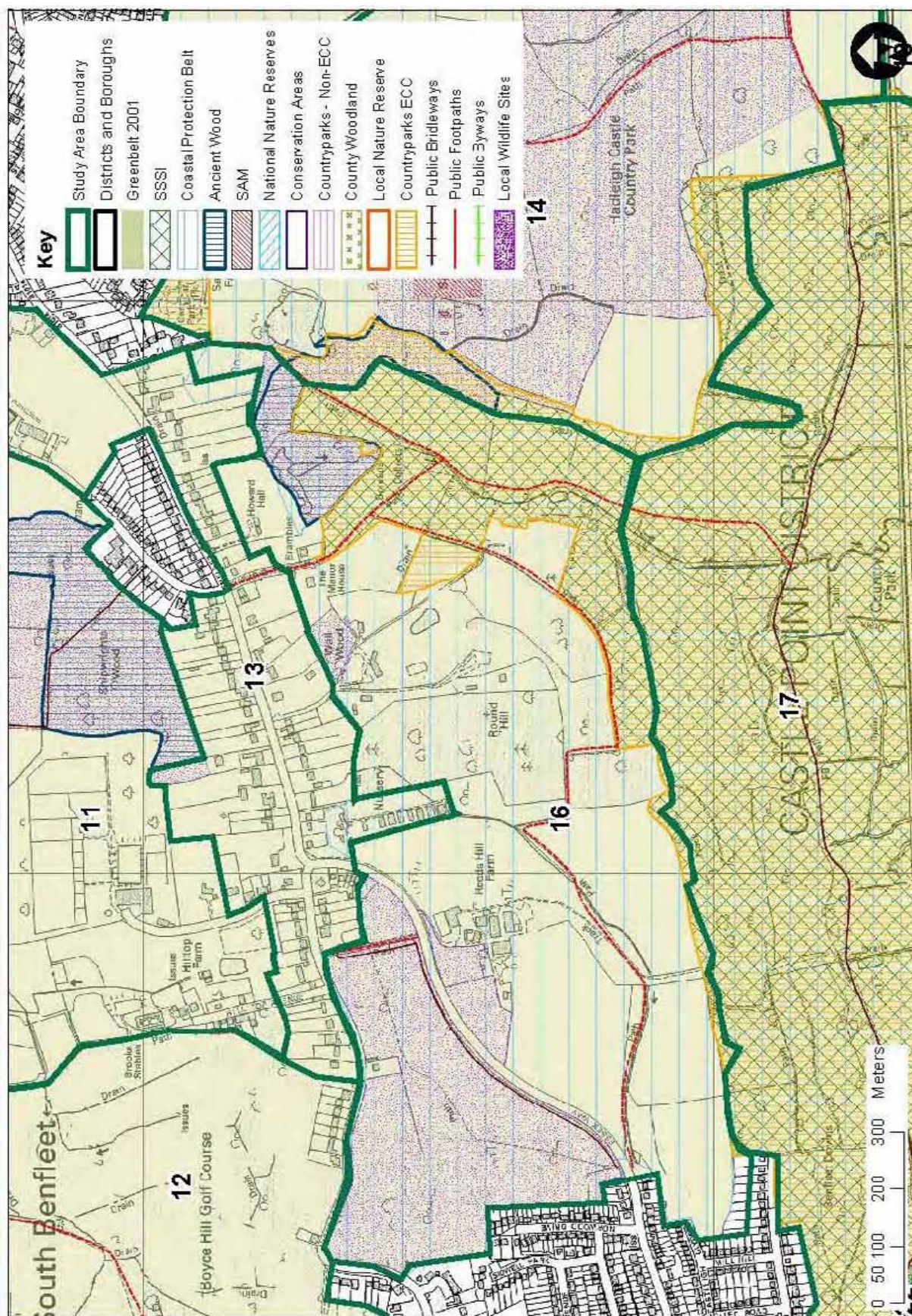
- The topography is undulating and sloping down towards the estuary. It comprises arable land, pasture, woodland and scrub. The landscape is relatively enclosed by woodland and hedges and hedgerow trees. Fields are irregularly shaped due to the varied landform. Both local nature reserves, Wall Wood and part of Nine Acre Wood lie within this area. The species include ash, hornbeam, oak and holly with a good ground flora. There are two areas of grassland, Reeds Hill and Vicarage pasture. These are local nature reserves.
- Landscape management is good, including part of Hadleigh country park and farmland, with large areas of pasture. Part of the site is an SSSI.
- The variety of land use, the interesting topography and the amount of woodland make this a very attractive landscape which contributes to the larger landscape along the estuary.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Round Hill Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘The zone is an area of steeply rising ground between Hadleigh Marsh and the urban area of South Benfleet. It contains a scatter of buildings, reflecting an historic pattern of sparse, dispersed settlement. The southern part of the zone is within Hadleigh Country Park. The historic field pattern comprises irregular and rectilinear fields, which survive well in the modern landscape.’ (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.16: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	Area has large areas of woodland, pasture and scrub which cover a steeply sloping landform.
Cultural Factors	Historic woodland and dramatic views are two of the main cultural factors
Aesthetic Factors	The views are very dramatic due to the landform which falls steeply towards the south and provides panoramas from the higher land. The variety of land use on this contoured landscape create a diverse and attractive area
Quality/Condition	The quality varies with good management of pasture and woodland.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: There are long views into the area from Canvey Island and other areas to the south.
- Population: There are views into the area from surrounding residential areas in Benfleet with distant views from many properties in Canvey Island.
- Mitigation: It would not be possible to mitigate the loss of views and impact on the hillside landscape which extends around Hadleigh Castle.

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to strengthen existing landscape character and improve pedestrian access.
- Constraints to development due to the landscape and visual sensitivity of the landscape.

3.17 Area 17

Location

This area is located beside Benfleet Creek, and surrounded by other greenbelt areas with the exception of the edge of Benfleet to the west.

Area Description



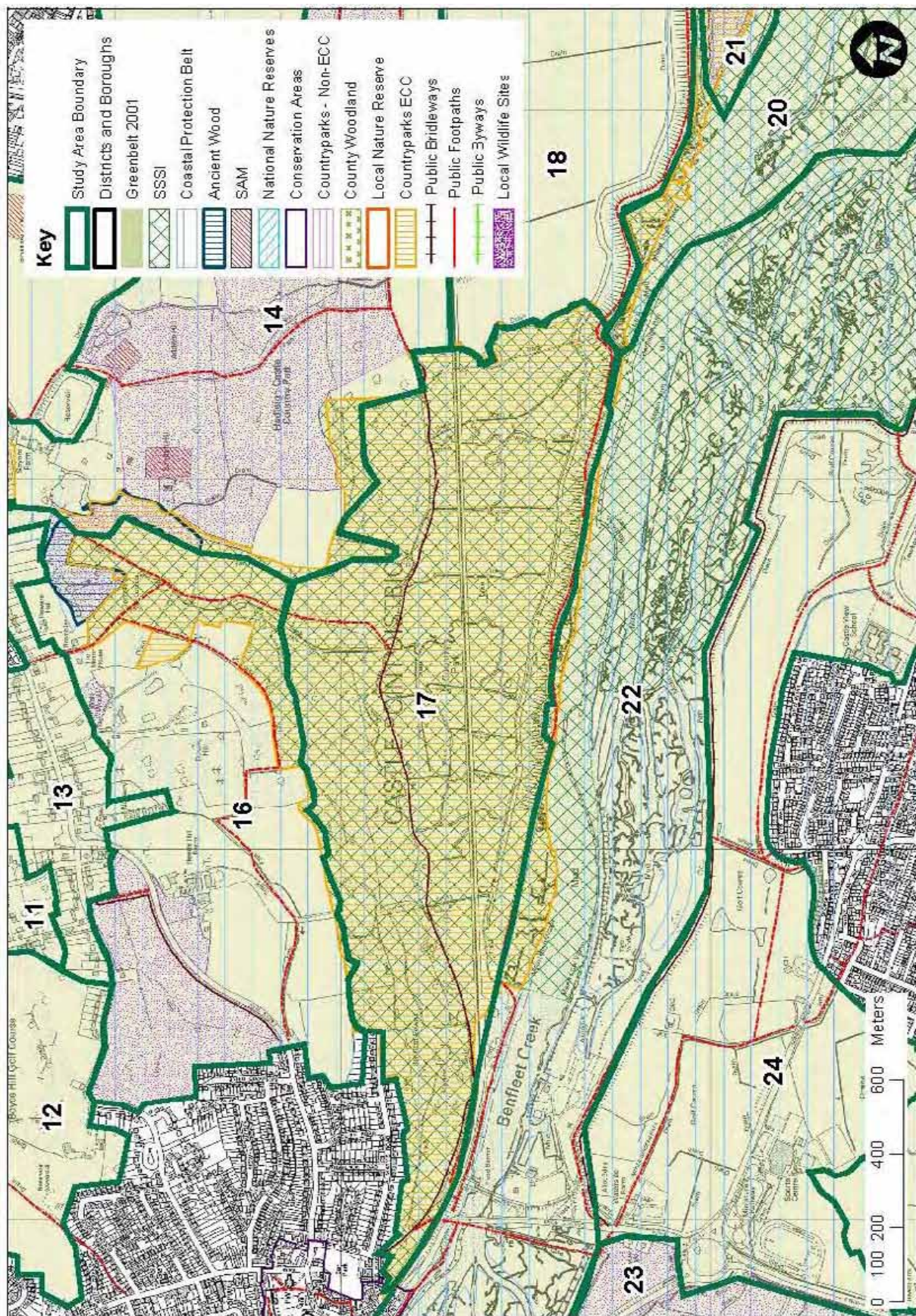
- The landscape is flat, and is mostly grazing marsh on the low land beside the estuary. There is some scrub, but pattern in the landscape is provided by a network of ditches which generally run from north to south across the area. There are areas of scrub and woodland along the northern edge of this area, including large areas of woodland and pasture within Hadleigh Country Park. The area is a site of special scientific interest.
- The landscape is well managed, mainly through grazing. The land below the woodland edge is open which provides good views along the estuary and up to Hadleigh castle and the hills beyond. A raised dyke follows the edge of the Creek which also provides access along the site.
- The landscape is very attractive due to the combination of topography and land use. There are distant views of the area from Canvey Island, with areas of pasture creating a broken pattern of scrub and woodland on the hillside.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Hadleigh Marsh Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'This zone consists of an estuarine landscape comprising areas of reclaimed present and former grazing marsh. It is open and exposed with broad views of the Thames estuary, Southend, Canvey Island and north Kent. Historically it was largely devoid of settlement, and remains so today. Some field boundaries incorporate former saltmarsh creeks in their boundaries, and in places earthworks survive. Most fields are bounded by drains and are regular in shape. Most of this zone lies within Hadleigh Castle Country Park.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.17: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	Grazing marsh on low land beside Benfleet Creek with woodland and scrub on the rising land.
Cultural Factors	Historic use of grazing marsh and woodland
Aesthetic Factors	Part of a beautiful panoramic landscape with the hills behind and Hadleigh Castle to the east. Area is tranquil and remote from development.
Quality/Condition	Area is well managed and high quality.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: Area is visible from houses on the high ground in Hadleigh, Benfleet and Southend. It is prominent in views from Canvey Island.
- Population: Area is visible from railway which passes through the site, from properties described above and from rights of way.
- Mitigation: It would not be possible to mitigate the impact of development on this site.

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to strengthen existing landscape character and improve pedestrian access.

Constraints to development due to the landscape and visual sensitivity of much of the landscape.

3.18 Area 18

Location

This area is located south of the railway line down to Benfleet Creek.

Area Description



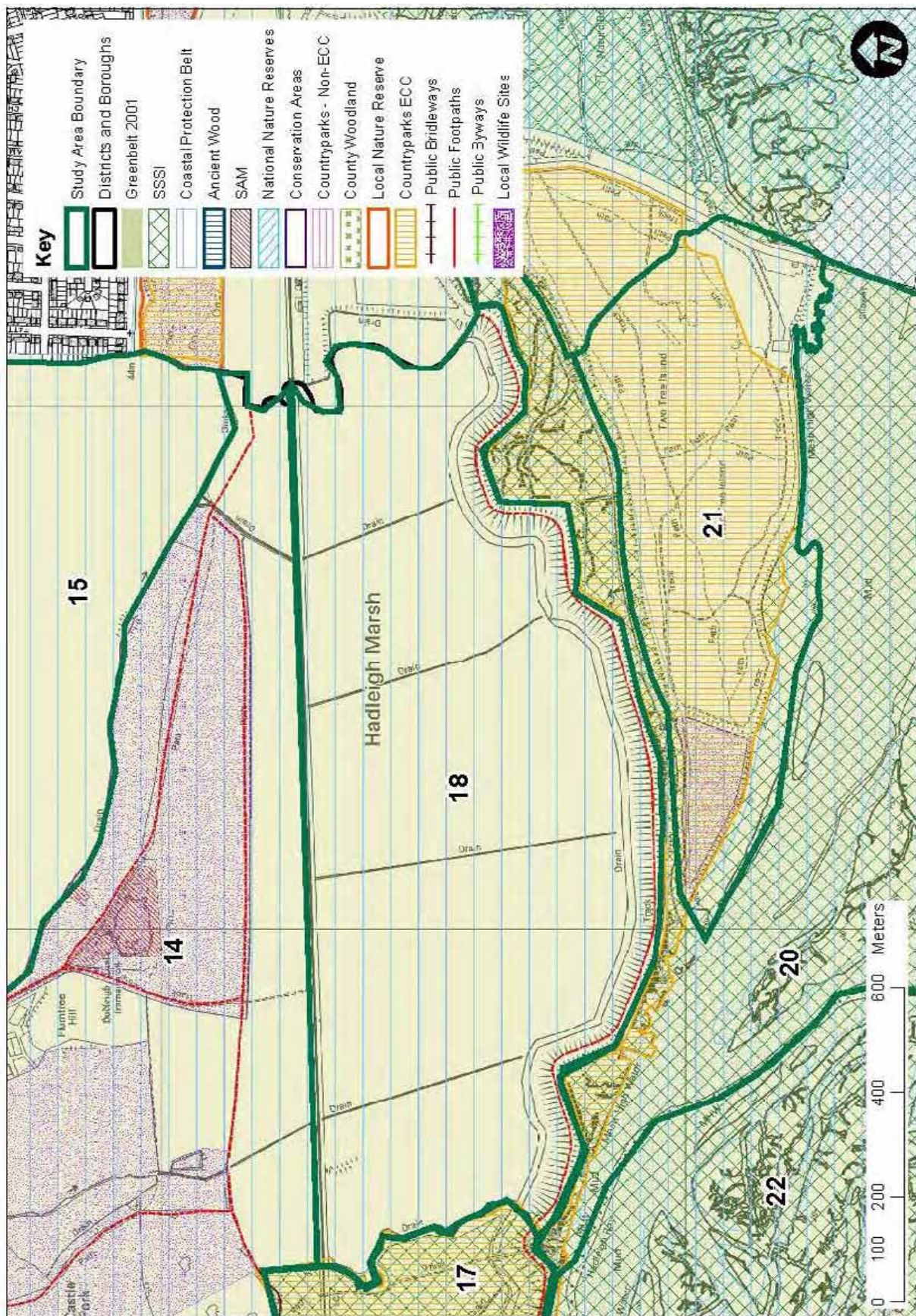
- The landscape is flat, and this area consists of arable land. Fields are divided by ditches which creates a geometric pattern between the railway line and Benfleet Creek. The landscape is open with no trees or hedges.
- The land was originally marsh prior to drainage. The land management is good, however with access from Leigh on Sea and Benfleet along the right of way beside Benfleet Creek.
- Views down onto the area from the hills to the north are very attractive with a range of land uses, dramatic topography and distant views across to the estuary. Such views are rare within the county.
- The area is tranquil and feels remote despite the proximity of Leigh-on-sea and Benfleet. It is part of a big landscape which falls dramatically from the hills down to the estuary.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Hadleigh Marsh Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘This zone consists of an estuarine landscape comprising areas of reclaimed present and former grazing marsh. It is open and exposed with broad views of the Thames estuary, Southend, Canvey Island and north Kent. Historically it was largely devoid of settlement, and remains so today. Some field boundaries incorporate former saltmarsh creeks in their boundaries, and in places earthworks survive. Most fields are bounded by drains and are regular in shape. Most of this zone lies within Hadleigh Castle Country Park.’ (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.18: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	Flat arable land beside Benfleet Creek, with agricultural land steeply rising on the hillside up to Hadleigh.
Cultural Factors	Part of the landscape setting to Hadleigh Castle which is prominent in views.
Aesthetic Factors	A part of a very impressive landscape with distinctive landform which contrasts with hillside and estuary beyond Benfleet Creek.
Quality/Condition	The area is very well managed and in good condition.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: The area is overlooked from the north where areas of housing are on higher ground. To the south there are views from across Benfleet Creek.
- Population: There are views of the area from properties in Southend and Hadleigh. From across Benfleet Creek there are views from rights of way, the golf course and properties in Canvey Island.
- Mitigation: It would not be possible to mitigate the impacts in this area.

Opportunities and constraints

- Opportunities to improve pedestrian access.
- Constraints to development due to the landscape and visual sensitivity of the landscape.

3.19 Area 19

Location

This is a wedge shaped area bounded, to the south-east, by Benfleet Creek, to the west, by Canvey Way and, to the north-east, by a railway.

Area Description



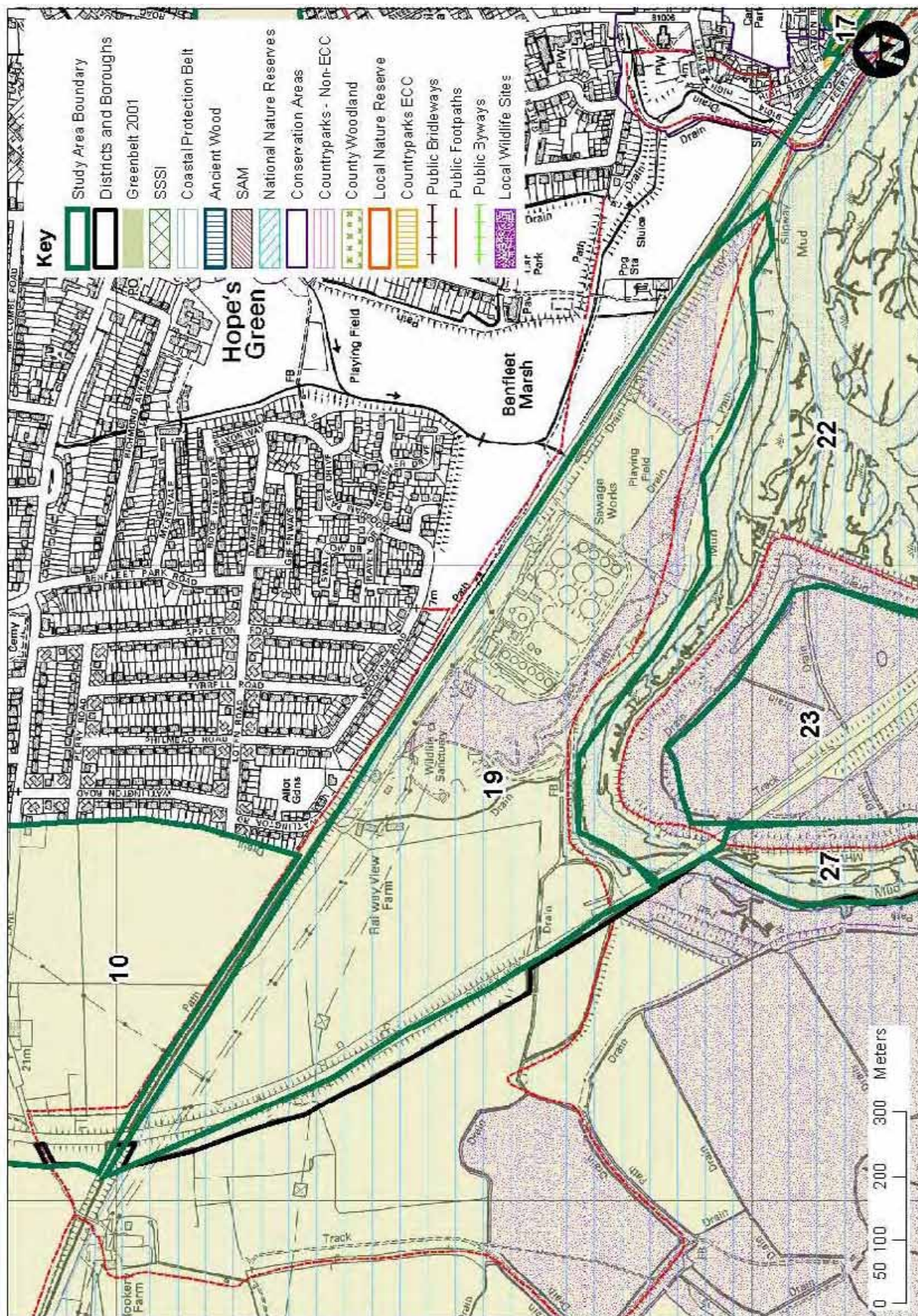
- At the east, the land is raised or mounded and supports both areas of scattered and dense scrub. It also contains a sewage works and a playing field (which are obscured from view from the road) and, hidden within the scrub, the Rescuers Wildlife Sanctuary.
- The western part consists of fields on land that generally slopes gently up towards the north-west end. The fields are separated by uncut grass edges and inconspicuous fences and have been used for hay. This area is not as high or sloping as area 10, to the north. In the past, it was used as landfill.
- At the bottom of the slope, near Benfleet Creek are smaller fields and a wide water-filled ditch.
- A line of pylons crosses the western part of the site and the area is visually degraded by Canvey Way and the railway, which have also cut it off from surrounding areas. Canvey Way is raised above the site on an embankment, which isolates the area from other land to the south and gives the road users views of the area over the embankment vegetation. Area 19 forms part of the setting for the main access to Canvey Island, and is overlooked from the farm and higher ground to the north. The road is particularly prominent where it is raised on structure near Benfleet Creek. The railway is partly visible from the area, past the vegetation on its boundary.
- Otherwise, with the fields and vegetated raised area, area 19 has landscape features with some value.
- Apart from the few structures and inconspicuous buildings described, there is no settlement on this area, south of the railway.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Benfleet Marsh Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'Historic Landscape Character: The zone is situated on the urban edge, with the centre cut by a railway line, bounded to the south by Benfleet Creek. There is a sewage works in the centre of the zone. It consists mostly marshland that was reclaimed at an early date, it comprised small and irregular grazing enclosures but significant boundary loss in the 20th century has largely removed this pattern.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.19: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Medium
Natural Factors	Extensive area of scrub on mounded land, fields used for hay, gentle landform, adjacent to East Haven Creek.
Cultural Factors	Past use as landfill. Fields currently used traditionally.
Aesthetic Factors	Severed by railway & elevated Canvey Way. Also degraded by pylons and, locally by sewage works and motorbike track. Fields and mounded vegetation make area more attractive, particularly near East Haven Creek.
Quality/Condition	Some aspects are managed well, but area degraded by a number of features.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: Overlooked by higher land to the north.
- Population: Overlooked from many users of Canvey Way, on main approach to Canvey Island and from railway.
- Mitigation: Potential to screen by road & railway, though not so easily from higher land.

Opportunities and constraints

- This area has rather less landscape and visual sensitivity than most, although it still has some sensitivity. However, it is within the Coastal Protection Belt and parts are a Local Nature Reserve.

3.20 Area 20

Location

This area is located where Benfleet Creek becomes a wider, more open, tidal channel than elsewhere.

Area Description



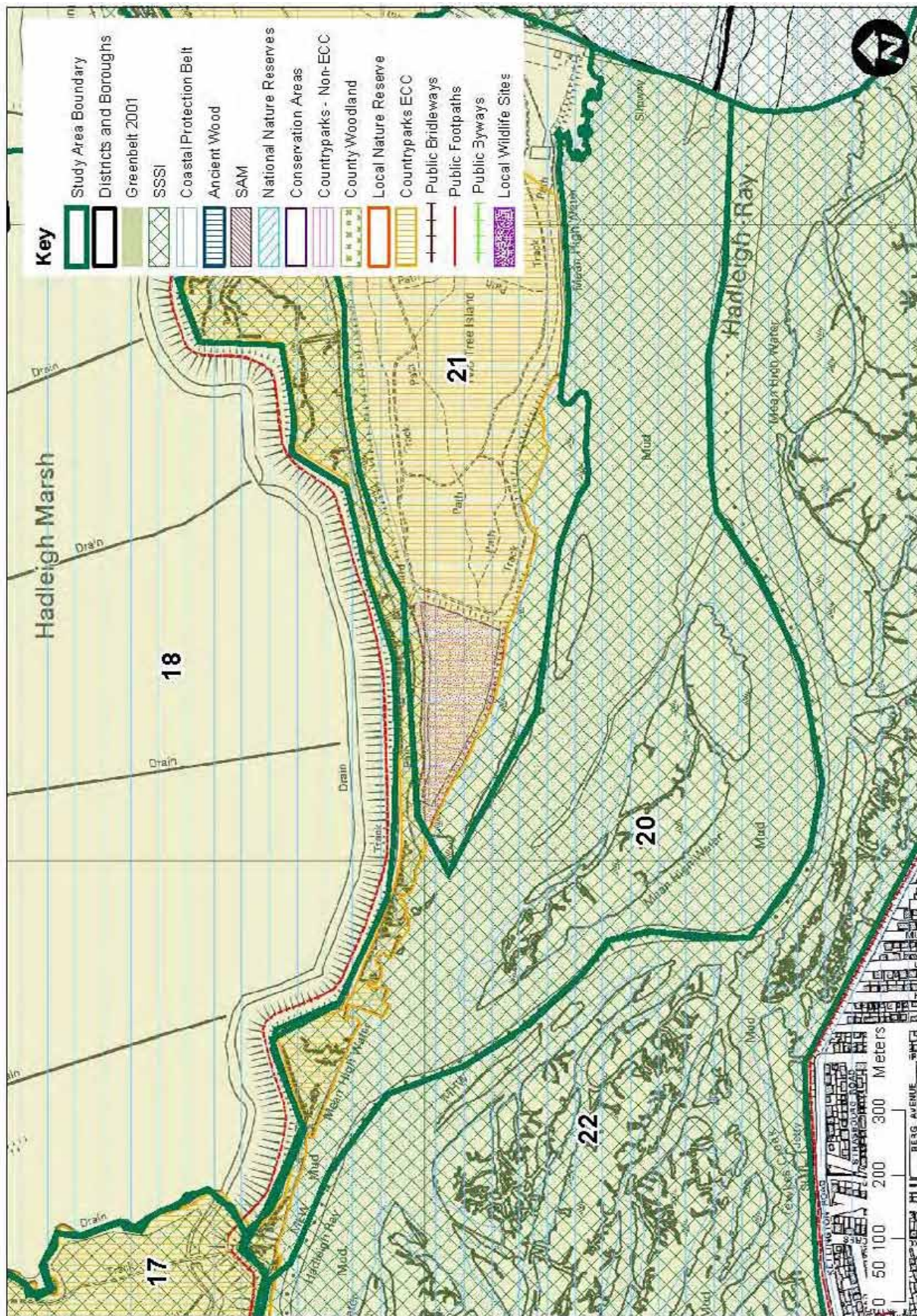
- It mainly consists of the area which is tidal mudflat, to the north of the permanent (i.e. low tide) channel of Hadleigh Ray. A number of boats are moored in, or near to, this area.
- The area includes a little saltmarsh along the north edge of the creek, and a low saltmarsh island in the middle of the creek. It also includes the channel between Two Tree Island and the mainland, which contains saltmarsh and varies in width. It is a site of special scientific interest.
- The area forms part of a larger landscape, and is influenced by the land which rises conspicuously to the north and which supports a combination of fields, woodland, some properties at the crest of the ridge and Hadleigh Castle. The area is clearly overlooked from the higher land.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Benfleet Creek Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'This zone consists of an estuarine landscape comprising grazing marsh and mudflats, with some limited areas of reclaimed land. It is open and exposed with broad views of the Thames estuary, Southend, Canvey Island and north Kent. Historically it was largely devoid of settlement, and remains so today. Newlands Caravan Park occupies an area of reclaimed land at the mouth of the inlet, and Castle Point Golf Course occupies landscaped ground to the west. The Canvey Heights Country Park is being developed on former landfill in the south-east of the zone.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.20: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	Mudflats and saltmarsh
Cultural Factors	Unchanged & used for boat moorings in the creek.
Aesthetic Factors	Part of extensive, attractive landscape.
Quality/Condition	Unchanged.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: Very open and overlooked from south and from high ground to north
- Population: Viewed from properties on ridge, railway, two tree island and sea walls.
- Mitigation: Not possible to mitigate.

Opportunities and constraints

- Substantial constraints, due to very high landscape and high visual sensitivity, the designations of SSSI and Coastal Protection Belt and the impracticality of developing on this site.

3.21 Area 21

Location

The area occupies the western half of Two Tree Island.

Area Description



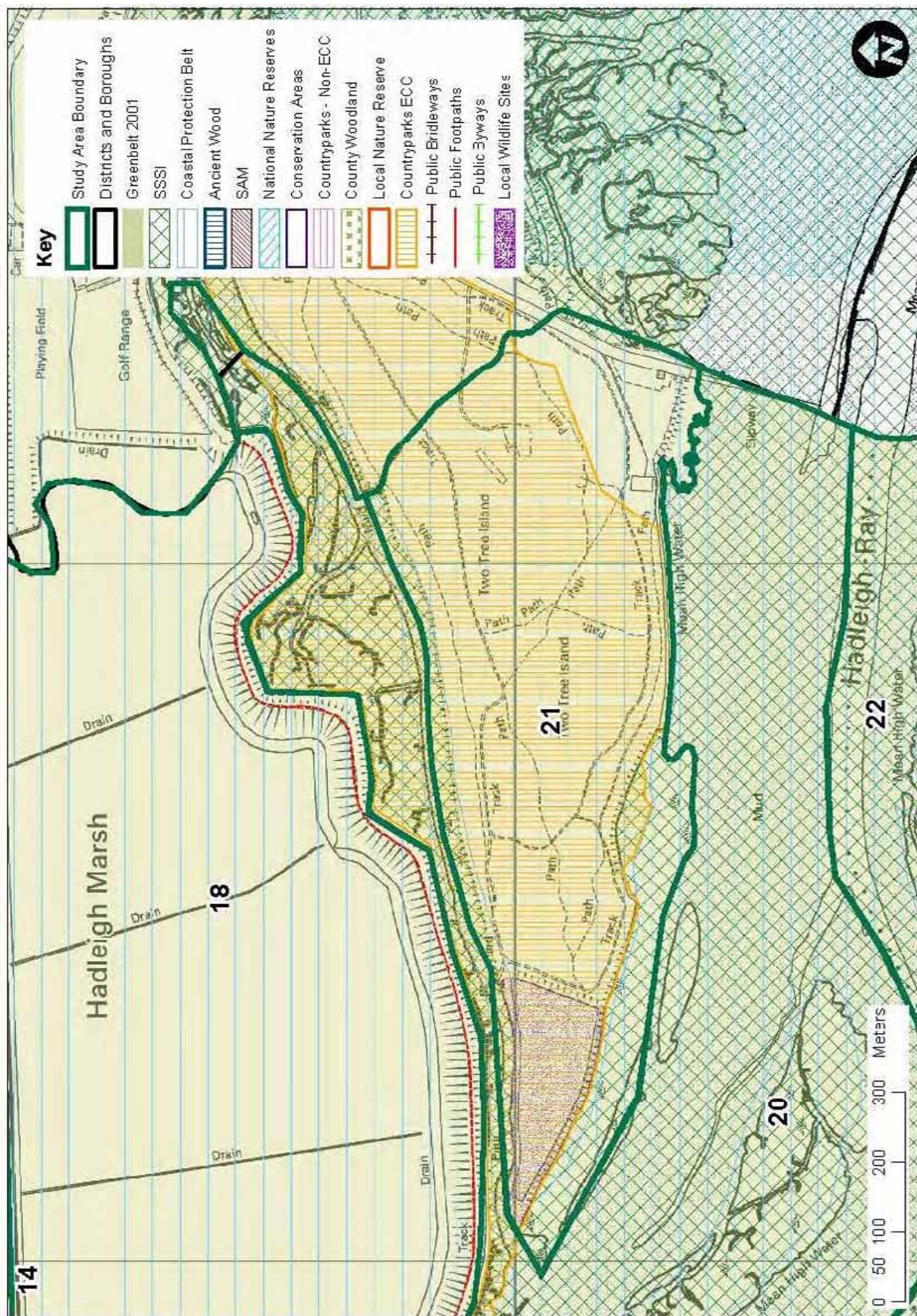
- The island is slightly higher than the nearby saltmarsh. The landform is fairly flat overall. In the past it was used as landfill and parts of it are artificially raised.
- The area generally consists of scattered shrubs in long grass, with very few trees.
- On the south edge is a car park at a point from which boats are launched. Some paths encircle the area, leading to bird hides. At the west end, a bird hide overlooks a lagoon, enclosed within banks.
- The area is a valuable bird habitat, and part of it is a local nature reserve.
- Apart from its wildlife value, much of the area's landscape value comes from its situation, with a wide channel opening into the estuary at the south and the ridge of land to the north, providing good views along the creek and up to the higher landscape. At the top of the slope to the north, the island is overlooked by properties.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Hadleigh Marsh Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'This zone consists of an estuarine landscape comprising areas of reclaimed present and former grazing marsh. It is open and exposed with broad views of the Thames estuary, Southend, Canvey Island and north Kent. Historically it was largely devoid of settlement, and remains so today. Some field boundaries incorporate former saltmarsh creeks in their boundaries, and in places earthworks survive. Most fields are bounded by drains and are regular in shape. Most of this zone lies within Hadleigh Castle Country Park.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.21: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	A valuable bird habitat, adjacent to saltmarsh and extensive mudflats.
Cultural Factors	Part of an area historically devoid of settlement. An old landfill. Developed as part of Country Park, with bird hides, and used for launching boats.
Aesthetic Factors	A conspicuous part of the larger valuable landscape, encompassing the rising land to the north, Benfleet Creek and its surroundings.
Quality/Condition	Landscape is in reasonable condition, managed for wildlife and access.

Visual sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: Very conspicuous location, due to generally open surroundings and higher ground to the north.
- Population: Overlooked by edge of development at crest of slope, and seen from across the Benfleet Creek to the south. Visual impact on users of the site and boats.
- Mitigation: Not possible to mitigate due to the landform and generally open character

Opportunities and constraints

- There are substantial constraints on development, due to very high landscape and high visual sensitivity, and designations as Coastal Protection Belt and Country Park and the SSSI designation of adjacent areas.

3.22 Area 22

Location

This area consists of the length of Benfleet Creek, and adjacent saltmarsh, stretching from the Canvey Way bridge eastwards until it widens to form area 20, and the belt of saltmarsh that continues further eastwards on the south of Hadleigh Ray as far as Canvey Point.

Area Description



- The dominant feature is the belt of saltmarsh to the south of the tidal channel and enclosed by a sea wall on the south. Numerous creeks wind through the saltmarsh.
- The saltmarsh and creek provide a bird habitat. Public footpaths overlook the area from the sea walls along its edges.
- The area is crossed by the B1014. Adjacent to this is a boat yard and many other boats are moored in the area nearby, and further along the creek, adding to the character. To the east of the boatyard is a local area of scattered scrub.
- The character of the area is influenced by the land which rises conspicuously to the north, supporting a combination of settlement, woodland and fields and the features of the water tower and Hadleigh Castle. Trains are visible to the north of the area. The area forms part of a larger landscape, including other areas.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Benfleet Creek Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘This zone consists of an estuarine landscape comprising grazing marsh and mudflats, with some limited areas of reclaimed land. It is open and exposed with broad views of the Thames estuary, Southend, Canvey Island and north Kent. Historically it was largely devoid of settlement, and remains so today. Newlands Caravan Park occupies an area of reclaimed land at the mouth of the inlet, and Castle Point Golf Course occupies landscaped ground to the west. The Canvey Heights Country Park is being developed on former landfill in the south-east of the zone.’ (Essex County Council, 2007)

Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	Saltmarsh and bird habitat.
Cultural Factors	Minor cultural influence.
Aesthetic Factors	Part of more extensive landscape, including ridge to the north.
Quality/Condition	Generally unchanged.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: Open and overlooked from high ground to north.
- Population: Overlooked from seawalls, boats and properties on high land to north.
- Mitigation: Not possible to mitigate.

Opportunities and constraints

- Substantial constraints due to very high landscape and high visual sensitivities, designations of SSSI and Coastal Protection Belt and the impracticality of developing on saltmarsh.

3.23 Area 23

Location

This area occupies the north-west part of Canvey Island. It is part of a wider stretch of the 'South Essex coast diverse coastal marsh' landscape type, which extends further to the west.

Area Description



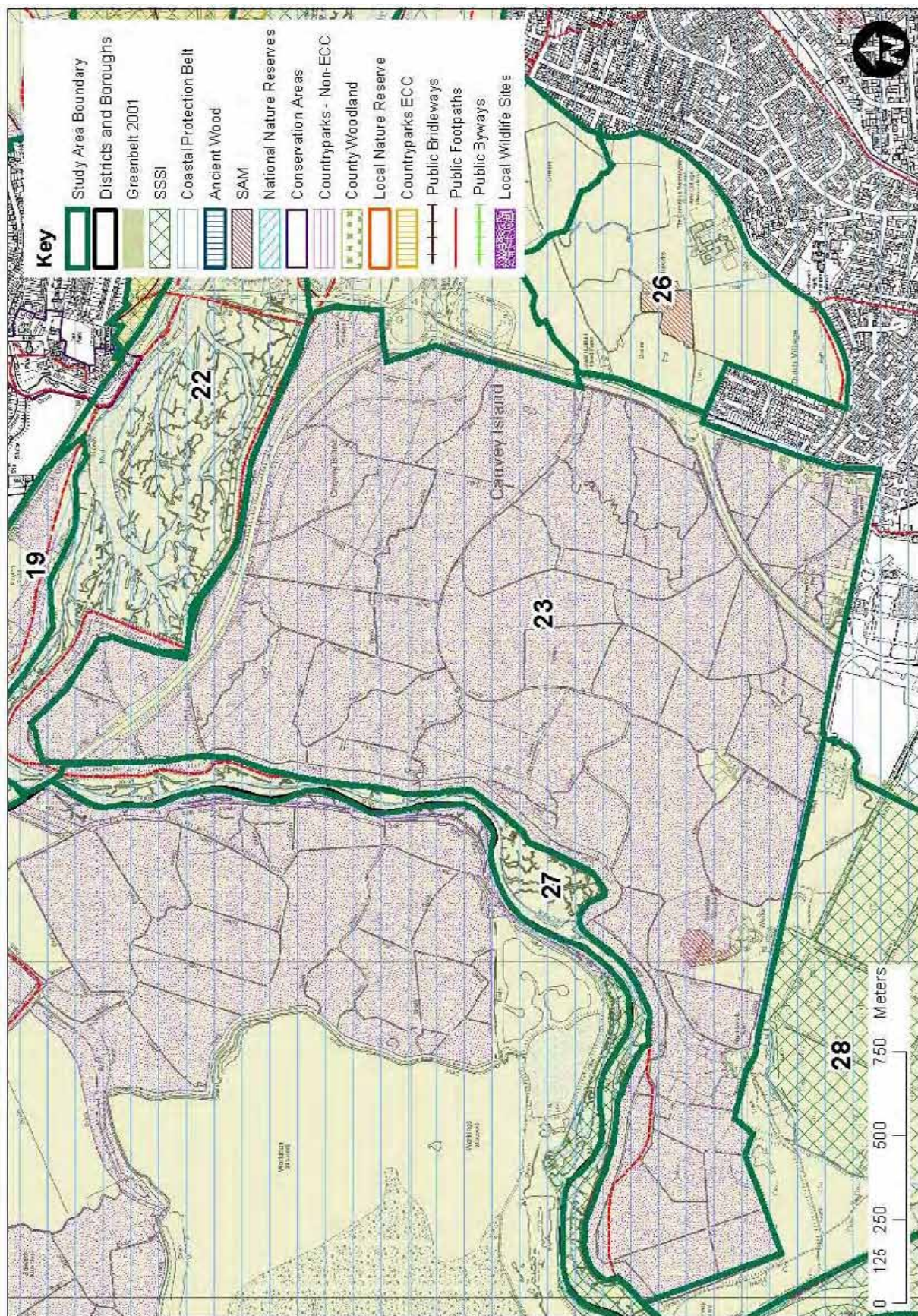
- The area has a quite distinctive character. It is generally very flat, open, rough grassland with cattle, although there are horses in a few places. It is generally without hedges and seems an expansive, slightly wild landscape. There are ditches on many field edges, generally with reeds, along with a few scrapes and wet areas and one wider creek. There is fencing in some areas, which is mostly unobtrusive, although other parts appear completely open. Some of the grassland is cut for hay. There is some scattered scrub (mainly blackthorn and some hawthorn), some on field edges, with more in one part where it forms belts.
- The area is generally all within a local wildlife site, most is managed as an RSPB reserve and there is a visitors' carpark, linked to footpaths across the site.
- The flat, open character means that higher features beyond the area are noticeable, although they are generally fairly distant, such as higher land to the north, traffic on Canvey Way, Pitsea landfill and the oil refinery.
- A small part of the area is north of Canvey Way, some of which has scattered shrubs. At the south-west end of area 23, nearby features beyond the reserve, that is, outside, or on the edge of, the site (such as industry, landfill and vegetation belts) impinge somewhat on the character.
- At the south-east, a triangular area, is separated from the rest of the site by Roscommon Way. Although it retains much of the character of the rest of the area, this part, which is grazed by horses, is degraded to some extent by cluttered, unsightly development on its margins, which gives this part of area 23 rather less landscape sensitivity. However, development here would be likely to have an impact on other parts of 23.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Canvey Marshes Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'This zone is bounded to the north by Benfleet Creek and to the west by East Haven Creek. Although the north of the zone, bordering Benfleet Creek, retains its saltmarsh, the zone consists mostly of reclaimed marshland, the central and western part of which has EU-designated Ancient Land status. This is an area of grazing marsh, comprising blocks of regular and irregular fields bounded by drainage ditches with often sinuous boundaries reflecting their origins in marshland creeks. The boundaries are mainly of medieval/post medieval origin resulting from the creation of grazing marsh, some elements of the earlier salt marsh can be discerned. There are a wide range of archaeological features including earthwork counter walls, and flood defences. Significant areas of this zone are being incorporated into the new RSPB reserve developed in south Essex as part of the Thames Gateway initiative.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.23: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	Unimproved grassland and reed-filled ditches, with other wetland habitats.
Cultural Factors	A well conserved historic landscape.
Aesthetic Factors	Distinctive landscape with expansive, slightly wild character of very flat, open, rough grassland with cattle.
Quality/Condition	Mostly maintained in good condition. Degraded to the south-east of Roscommon Way.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: Open land, allowing long views across it.
- Population: Looked onto by the many users of Canvey Way and users of the footpaths and reserve on the site.
- Mitigation: Not possible to mitigate, as a very open and sensitive site.

Opportunities and constraints

- For the great majority of the area, very substantial constraints on development, due to very high landscape and high visual sensitivity, the designations of Coastal Protection Belt and County Wildlife Site and being an RSPB reserve. The small part to the south-east of Roscommon Way is a bit less sensitive, but the designations still apply there.

3.24 Area 24

Location

This area occupies a belt along the middle part of the north edge of Canvey Island.

Area Description



- Ditches and creeks are significant features in this flat landscape, from where there are good views to the north over Benfleet Creek. Habitats consist of scrub, grassland or wetland.
- This area has generally been taken over by various sporting uses. The largest of these is a golf course, which runs along the whole length of the area at the north, from east to west. On the western half of the area, the golf course occupies the part to the north of the busy B1014, while the part to the south of this road is occupied by a sports centre. At the south-east of the area is a smaller area occupied by a rugby club, and a small area managed for nature conservation, containing a creek. The north-west corner of the area is occupied by a Civic Amenity Site and an associated depot and buildings together with some allotments.
- Most of the sports centre land consists of areas of mown grass (supporting some sports pitches) enclosed by traditional field hedges, which have been retained and grown large. The north-west part of the sports centre land has lost any traditional character and contains, a miniature railway, racing track and illuminated all-weather pitch.
- There are no hedges on the golf course, but there are some ditches, containing reeds, as there are on the sports centre land. The golf course also supports planted trees, tree-belts and areas of long grass containing scattered shrubs. There are also local areas of denser scrub, wet areas, and areas of planted trees within the overall area. Lines of trees run beside the B1014, which crosses the site, but is quite open to the sports centre land.
- There are a few buildings within the area, mainly associated with sporting use, close to the rugby club or beside the Civic Amenity Site, however, parts of the area are overlooked by housing on its boundaries.
- Various features outside the area, which are noticeable within it are a boat yard and a moderately sized phone mast to the north of the golf course, the concrete-

topped sea wall along the north boundary and the water tower and Hadleigh Castle on Benfleet Downs.

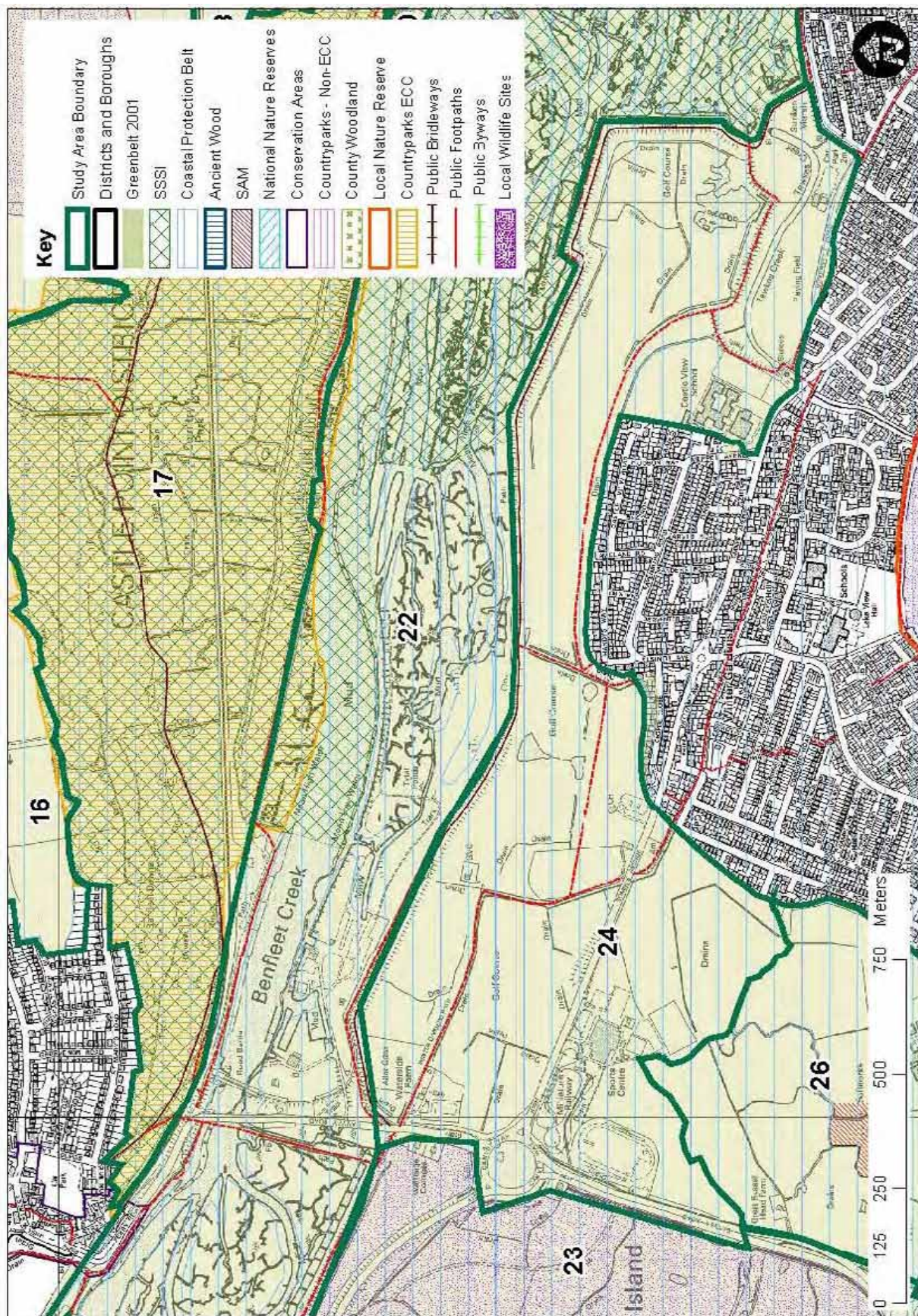
- On the sports centre land, are medium sized spaces, largely enclosed by the large hedges, while the golf course is part of a larger space enclosed by Benfleet Downs to the north and the built up area of Canvey to the south.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Canvey Marshes Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'This zone is bounded to the north by Benfleet Creek and to the west by East Haven Creek. Although the north of the zone, bordering Benfleet Creek, retains its saltmarsh, the zone consists mostly of reclaimed marshland, the central and western part of which has EU-designated Ancient Land status. This is an area of grazing marsh, comprising blocks of regular and irregular fields bounded by drainage ditches with often sinuous boundaries reflecting their origins in marshland creeks. The boundaries are mainly of medieval/post medieval origin resulting from the creation of grazing marsh, some elements of the earlier salt marsh can be discerned. There are a wide range of archaeological features including earthwork counter walls, and flood defences. Significant areas of this zone are being incorporated into the new RSPB reserve developed in south Essex as part of the Thames Gateway initiative.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.24: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Medium to low
Natural Factors	A few hedges and ditches, and some areas of long grass. A small part, with a creek managed for nature conservation.
Cultural Factors	A few traditional hedges and ditches retained.
Aesthetic Factors	Most has relatively little aesthetic value.
Quality/Condition	Most traditional character has been lost.

Visual Sensitivity: Medium to High

- General Visibility: There are views across it from the south, towards ridge at Hadleigh.
- Population: It is looked across from many properties to the south. The area is also visible from the B1014, and from high ground in Hadleigh
- Mitigation: Some mitigation possible, but existing views would be lost and the landscape setting of Canvey Island would be affected.

Opportunities and constraints

- There are substantial constraints due to amenity sporting use and integrity of the landscape setting of Canvey Island.

3.25 Area 25

Location

This area is at the north-east corner of Canvey Island.

Area Description



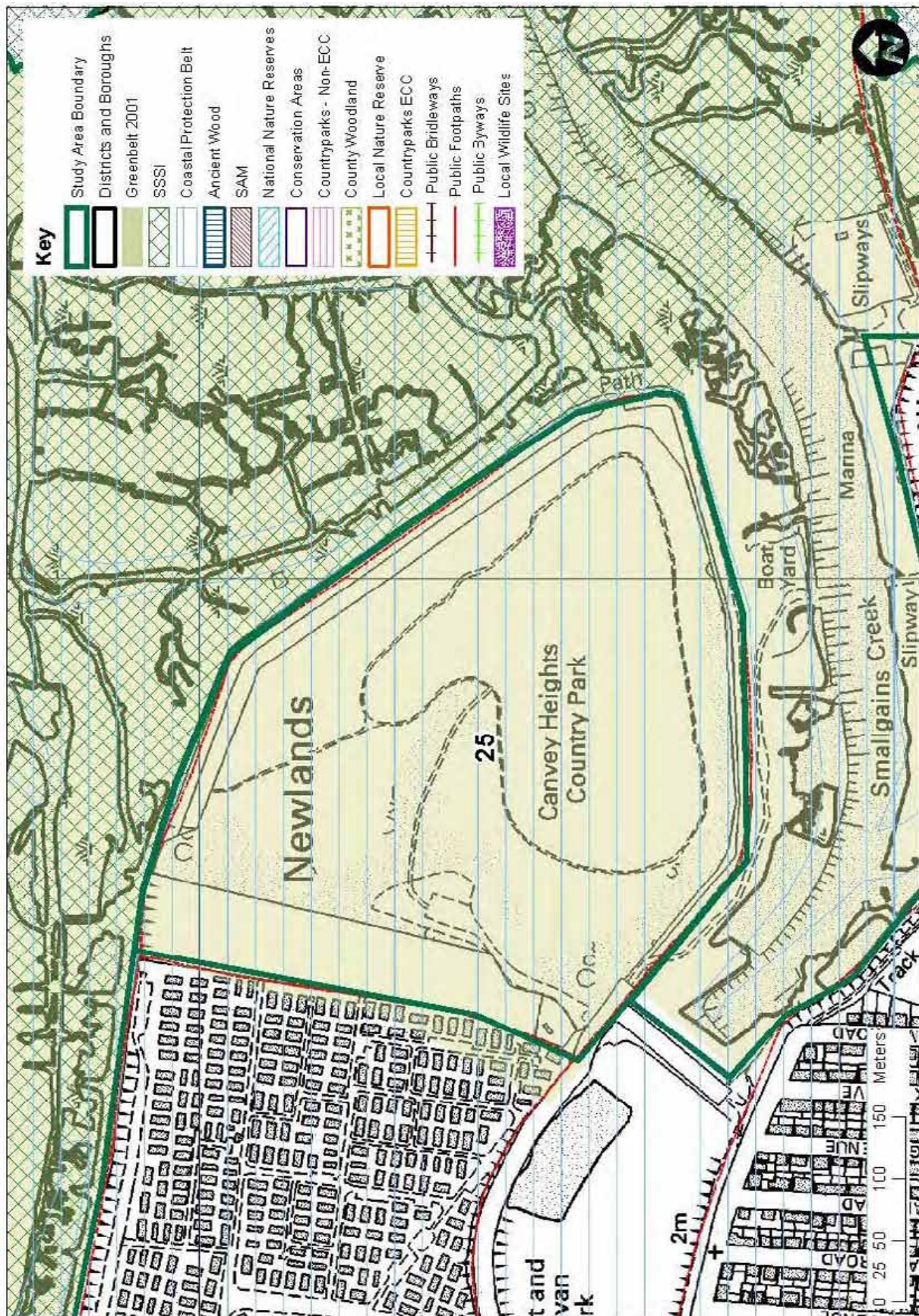
- The site is an ex-landfill that has been converted into a small country park.
- Its landform, which is raised with a gently domed top, is noticeable in the context of the lower, flat surroundings.
- The land cover consists of areas of short and long grass and belts of shrubs.
- There are paths around the site, which link to the public footpath along the sea wall. The site is well used.
- An important part of its character and value are the views, from this raised site, of the Thames estuary (there are long views along the estuary in both directions), and of Kent, Southend and across Hadleigh Ray with its boats (to the north) to the Benfleet Downs.
- The area forms part of a much bigger landscape.
- The shrubs and long grass are wildlife habitats, although the popularity of the site probably prevents high levels of wildlife.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Benfleet Creek Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘This zone consists of an estuarine landscape comprising grazing marsh and mudflats, with some limited areas of reclaimed land. It is open and exposed with broad views of the Thames estuary, Southend, Canvey Island and north Kent. Historically it was largely devoid of settlement, and remains so today. Newlands Caravan Park occupies an area of reclaimed land at the mouth of the inlet, and Castle Point Golf Course occupies landscaped ground to the west. The Canvey Heights Country Park is being developed on former landfill in the south-east of the zone.’ (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.25: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	High
Natural Factors	Long grass and shrubs. Overlooks saltmarsh.
Cultural Factors	Once landfill, this area has been restored as a popular country park.
Aesthetic Factors	Part of a bigger, interesting landscape, of which it provides long and wide views.
Quality/Condition	Well managed.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: Many views into and from the site.
- Population: Views from the many users of the site and from rights of way.
- Mitigation: Not possible to mitigate

Opportunities and constraints

- High landscape and visual sensitivity, along with the designation of Coastal Protection Belt and the problems of developing on an old landfill site, leading to constraints on development.

3.26 Area 26

Location

This is on the western edge of the urban part of Canvey Island. Area 24 is to the north and area 23 to the west.

Area Description



- The landform is generally flat. The landcover is grass, most of which is left long, with some areas cut relatively short. In some areas, there are scattered shrubs, and there are shrubs on the field edges, which form thick hedges or shrub belts in places.
- There are ditches with reeds on some field edges and a concrete-lined ditch along one of the area's edges.
- The traditional field pattern, vegetation and ditches have been retained.
- The area includes the grounds of a school (although much of it has a fairly similar character to the rest) and is bounded by metal pallisade fencing, which detracts from the landscape quality. Parts of the area are bordered by housing, which overlooks some of the site, although some of this housing is partially screened.
- The 'field' at the north-west is of a different quality to the rest, and is used for formal recreation including sports pitches.
- Overall, the area appears to be a valuable amenity and to have an attractive landscape quality. The character is of a quite extensive, fairly wild area, close to large areas of housing.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Canvey Marshes Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'This zone is bounded to the north by Benfleet Creek and to the west by East Haven Creek. Although the north of the zone, bordering Benfleet Creek, retains its saltmarsh, the zone consists mostly of reclaimed marshland, the central and western part of which has EU-designated

Ancient Land status. This is an area of grazing marsh, comprising blocks of regular and irregular fields bounded by drainage ditches with often sinuous boundaries reflecting their origins in marshland creeks. The boundaries are mainly of medieval/post medieval origin resulting from the creation of grazing marsh, some elements of the earlier salt marsh can be discerned. There are a wide range of archaeological features including earthwork counter walls, and flood defences. Significant areas of this zone are being incorporated into the new RSPB reserve developed in south Essex as part of the Thames Gateway initiative.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	High
Natural Factors	Long grass, scattered shrubs, shrub belts and ditches.
Cultural Factors	Retained historical field pattern and boundaries, currently well-used for formal and informal recreation.
Aesthetic Factors	The apparent character is extensive, open and distinctive.
Quality/Condition	Generally the site seems well managed.

Visual Sensitivity: High

- General Visibility: Each field is fairly open, but quite visually enclosed by boundary vegetation.
- Population: The south part of the area is overlooked by housing.
- Mitigation: Some mitigation might be possible, but the existing view would be lost.

Opportunities and constraints

- There are constraints on development due to the high landscape and visual sensitivities and the designation of the Coastal Protection Belt.

3.27 Area 27

Location

This area consists of the parts of East Haven Creek and Holehaven Creek that are in Castle Point District.

Area Description



- East Haven Creek creates the western edge of Canvey Island. It follows a winding line, between ribbons of saltmarsh, all enclosed by sea walls. The creek empties and fills with the tide. The area is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- There are zones of different vegetation, including the grassed higher levels and the saltmarsh. At one point, the saltmarsh widens to over 150m width within the area.
- Generally, the area has both a rather remote character and the influence of Pitsea landfill, the nearby oil refinery and, where it crosses the area, Canvey Way.
- At the south, area 27 occupies part of the wider Holehaven Creek. Here, it includes a strip of saltmarsh outside the concrete-topped sea wall, areas of tidal mudflat, a permanent channel and some saltmarsh islands. It is screened from the land by the sea wall. This part of area 27 is directly opposite the oil refinery and particularly combines the elements of industry and wildness.
- At least for much of this area, the saltmarsh appears to be at a higher level than the land behind the sea wall.

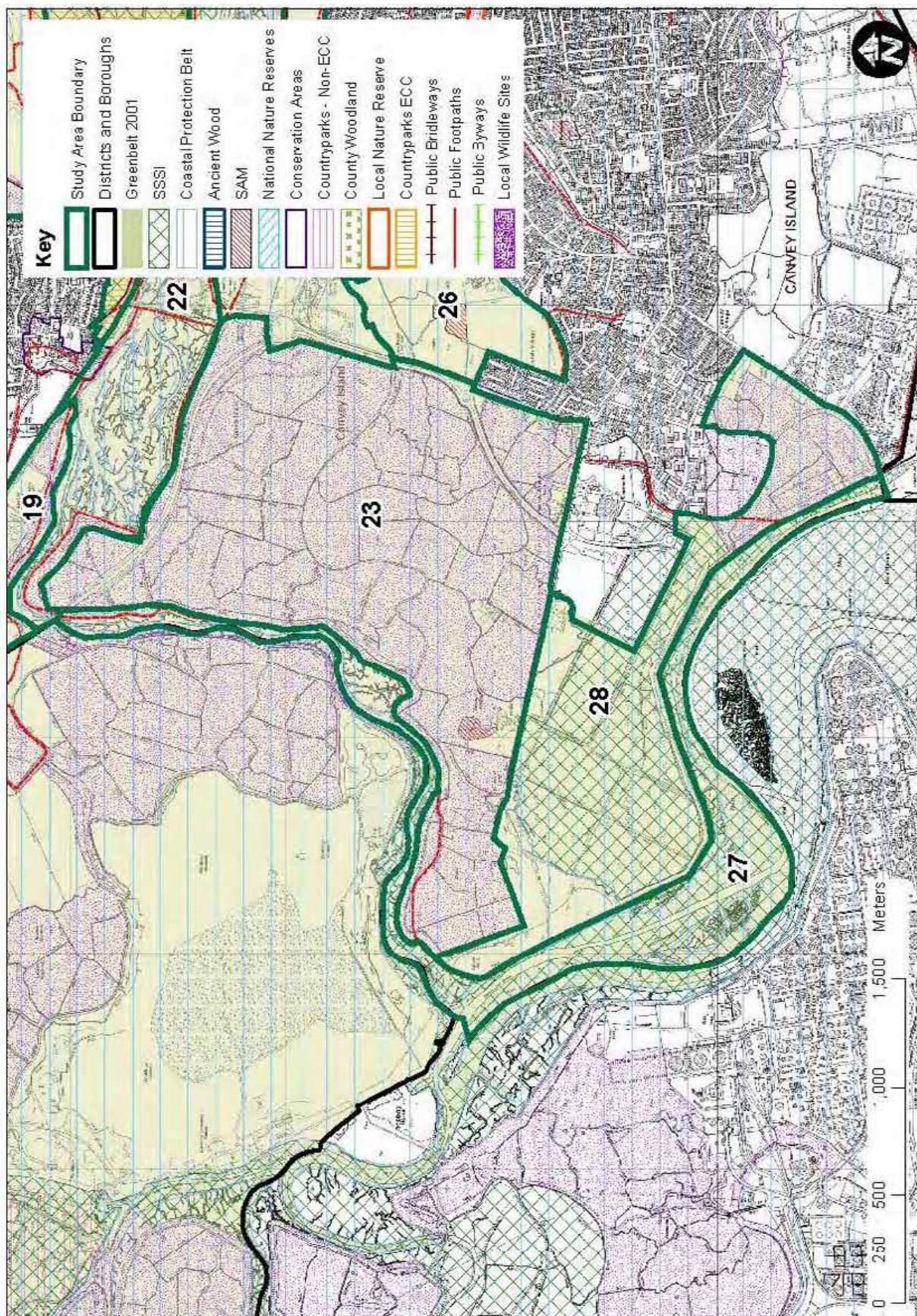
Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Hole Haven Creek East Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

‘This zone consists of land to the east of Hole Haven Creek. It is an area of reclaimed marshland that was enclosed as grazing marshes at an early date. A sea wall running along the eastern side of the creek was built in the 17th century, and has been repaired and rebuilt up to the present day. An oil refinery was constructed in the 1960s but never used, and was dismantled during the 1980s. Its site is now occupied by a retail

centre. The northern extent of the Zone consists of made ground.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.27: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Very High
Natural Factors	Saltmarsh including islands, and tidal creek and mudflat. Bird habitat.
Cultural Factors	Natural, rather than cultural, influences appear dominant within the area itself.
Aesthetic Factors	Unusual combination of wild and industrial (from adjacent sites) elements, with some parts seeming more remote.
Quality/Condition	Generally condition is good. Possibly some saltmarsh is experiencing some erosion in Holehaven Creek.

Visual Sensitivity: Medium

- General Visibility: Largely obscured behind sea walls.
- Population: Overlooked from sea wall path and at Canvey Way bridge.
- Mitigation: Not appropriate

Opportunities and constraints

- Substantial constraints due to high landscape sensitivity, designations of SSSI and Coastal Protection Belt and a site which is not physically suitable for development.

3.28 Area 28

Location

This is a generally flat stretch of land to the east side of the lower part of Holehaven Creek.

Area Description



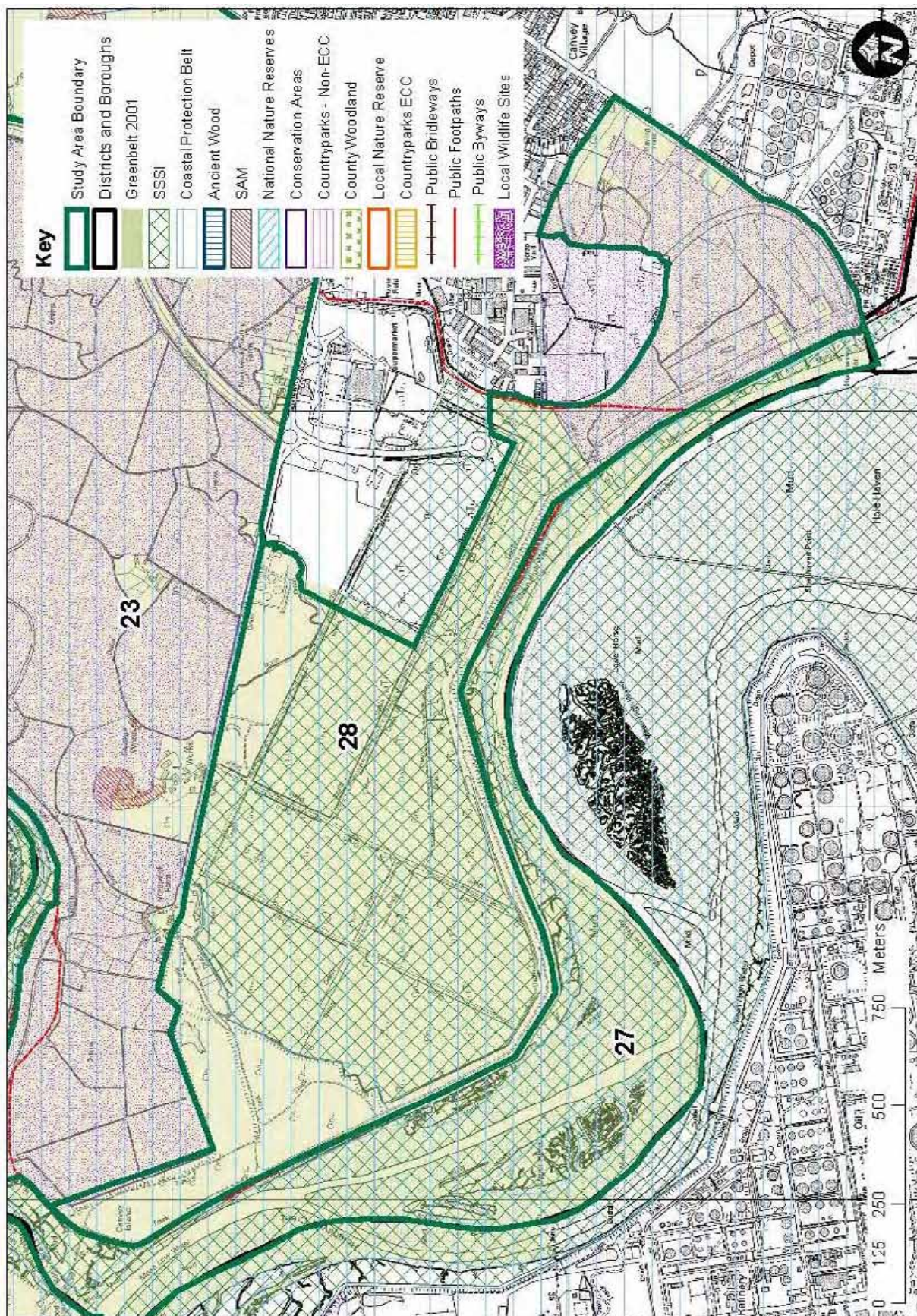
- On most of the area work was started to develop it as an industrial storage facility, but then abandoned. This part of the site now supports scrub, long grass and other self-seeded vegetation. The scrub varies in density, but is generally scattered. A few belts of trees have developed. In places, the grass is close-cropped by rabbits.
- There is a grid of stone tracks within this part of the site, and a few informal tracks. This part contains the remains of the development, debris and rubbish, which could affect potential amenity value.
- At the west end of area 28 is a different part which was previously used as landfill, containing visibly raised and uneven land which has been colonised by self-seeded vegetation, adding to its interest. Adjacent to this, straddling the edges of areas 28 & 23 is Northwick Farm, which contains extensive unsightly clutter. This end of area 28 is also influenced to some extent by the proximity of the oil refinery and Pitsea landfill.
- The smaller east part of the area consists of fields used for grazing cattle and horses, with some fencing, a creek and some ditches and some fences. The quality of this part is degraded by adjacent industrial features on two sides and by a few sheds and clutter. An extension to Roscommon Way is being built between this part of the area and the industrial estate, which is likely to have some effect on the character. An elevated industrial jetty crosses the area nearby.
- Area 28 also contains a cemetery.
- The area is overlooked from a public footpath along the sea wall.

Historic Landscape Character

The area lies within the Hole Haven Creek East Historic Character Area, which has the following historic landscape character:

'This zone consists of land to the east of Hole Haven Creek. It is an area of reclaimed marshland that was enclosed as grazing marshes at an early date. A sea wall running along the eastern side of the creek was built in the 17th century, and has been repaired and rebuilt up to the present day. An oil refinery was constructed in the 1960s but never used, and was dismantled during the 1980s. Its site is now occupied by a retail centre. The northern extent of the Zone consists of made ground.' (Essex County Council, 2007)

Figure 3.28: Environmental Designations



Landscape Assessment

Landscape Sensitivity	Medium
Natural Factors	Extensive habitat, consisting of scattered scrub and some ditches and wet hollows.
Cultural Factors	Some field boundaries retained at east. Remains of industrial development.
Aesthetic Factors	Most of site has some wilderness character, though without much variety. Various elements degrade the site's quality, both at the east and elsewhere.
Quality/Condition	Various elements degrade the site's quality.

Visual Sensitivity: Medium

- General Visibility: Visibility generally restricted over most of the area, but the part at the east end is quite open.
- Population: The eastern end is overlooked from the sea wall as is the south edge of most of the site. Paths pass through the scrub area.
- Mitigation: Development might improve the eastern part. Existing vegetation could help mitigation elsewhere.

Opportunities and constraints

- There are medium landscape and visual sensitivities for the area overall. However, most of the area (excluding the east end) is a SSSI. The whole site is within the Coastal Protection Belt. Therefore, there are likely to be constraints to development on most of the site.
- For the smaller, eastern part of the area, the landscape sensitivity is fairly low. However, along with the rest of area 28, this part of the area is within the Coastal Protection Belt and it is also a County Wildlife Site.

Section 4.0

Sensitivity Mapping

Figure 4.1: Landscape Sensitivity

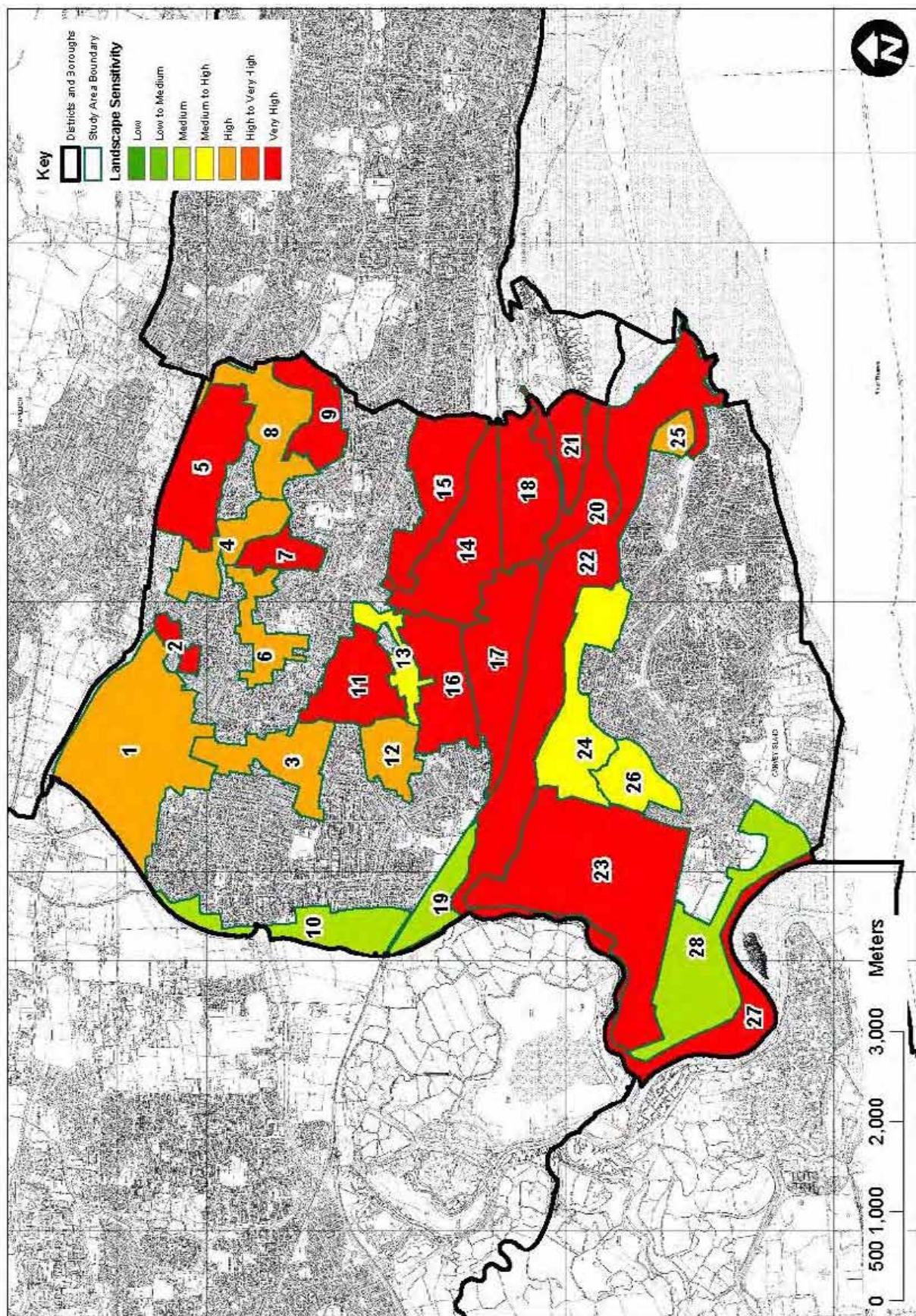


Figure 4.1: Visual Sensitivity

