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The Historic Landscape Characterisation Report for Essex, Volume 1

HLC project background and overview

February 2011

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Essex County Council

The Historic Landscape Characterisation Report for Essex

February 2011

Compiled by Alison Bennett

Cover illustration: View of the Stour Valley

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES

FIGURES

Acknowledgements

The Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation Project was carried out by the Essex County Council Historic Environment Branch (ECCHEB), under the management of Lynn Dyson-Bruce between 2000 and 2005, funded and supported by English Heritage. The digitisation was carried out by Lynn Dyson-Bruce, David Locke, David Green, Adrian Turner, Mohammed Osman and Debbie Knopp. Two students who can not now be identified also did some work.

This document has been prepared by Alison Bennett, Team Leader of the Essex Historic Environment Record, with contributions from Maria Medlycott, Paul Gilman, Lynn Dyson-Bruce and Adrian Gascoyne, and funded by English Heritage and Essex County Council. The layout has drawn on a wide range of previous Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) reports, particularly the Buckinghamshire, Lancashire, Hertfordshire and Cheshire HLC reports.

Special thanks are given to David Green, Buckinghamshire County Council, for advice on the methodology employed in Essex, Maria Medlycott (ECCHEB) for her contributions, advice and encouragement, and Paul Gilman (ECCHEB) for his management, contribution and editing of the report. Thanks also go to Graham Fairclough, Dave Went and Peter Herring of English Heritage, for their support in the production of this report, and to Judith Meyer (ECCHEB) for assistance with the analysis.

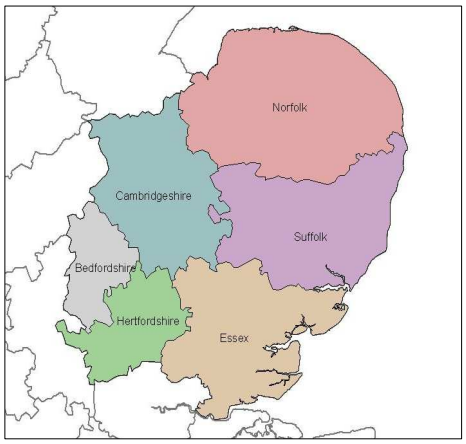
Executive Summary

The county of Essex is today subjected to enormous pressures from housing and transport infrastructure developments, but many historic elements can be seen to survive in the landscape. A Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project has therefore been carried out as part of the English heritage national programme to assess the rural landscape in terms of its historic origins.

View of the Stour valley

The aim of the project in Essex was to *characterise the distinctive historic dimension* of the current rural landscape. This has been carried out as part of, and using the methodology developed for, the East of England Regional HLC project. The regional project is sponsored by English Heritage and covers the six counties of Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire, plus the unitary authorities within the region.

In Essex desk-based research using modern and historic mapping sources was carried out to identify and map the historic character of the landscape through the application of defined Historic Landscape Character types. The result of the project is a comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS) which provides a complete coverage of the county with information on current and past landscape origins.



The resulting information has, in turn, formed an important element in Essex County Council's Historic Environment Characterisation projects. This complements the archaeological and historic building information to form a product designed to serve as a tool in the creation of Local Development Frameworks by Local Government Planners.

This volume of the report presents the background to the HLC project with an overview of the Essex Landscape and its development. Volumes 2 and 3 summarise the results from the project. A description of the methodology, database and the terminology developed can be found in the appendices in volume 4. It is also intended to place this report and appendices onto our web pages at www.essexcc.gov.uk.

1. INTRODUCTION

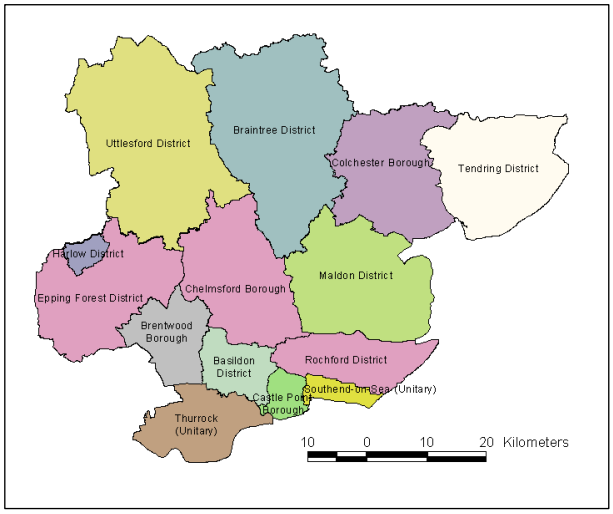
1.1 BACKGROUND

The Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project is part of a regional project covering the six counties (Hertfordshire, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire) of the East of England Region, This was the only, regionally based HLC project, and forms part of the national HLC programme sponsored by English Heritage.

The origins of HLC as an evolving methodology for assessing historic landscapes lie in the UK Government White Paper '*This Common Inheritance*' (1991). English Heritage was invited to prepare a list of landscapes of historic importance, similar to its *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest* (English Heritage 1991). Appropriate methodologies were assessed (Fairclough *et al* 1999) and it was concluded that a more holistic approach was needed rather than a "selective register" (Fairclough 1994). Cornwall was the first county to undertake a Historic Landscape Characterisation in 1994, and from there it has become a national programme.

Within this national HLC framework Lynn Dyson-Bruce, as regional co-ordinator from 1999 to 2005, developed a single but evolving methodology for the East of England Region. As with other HLC projects, this records and illustrates changes within the historic landscape, especially over the past 150 years. HLC represents a shift from monument and building designations to a view of the whole landscape. The HLC approach makes it possible to understand the development of the entire landscape in historic terms, and from this assessment to identify the diverse patterns which make its historic landscape distinctive. By adopting a regional approach, it will be possible to address academic and management questions and issues across the region.

HLC in Essex covers c. 4,250 sq km (367,725.84 ha) and includes the modern administrative area of Essex comprising 12 districts plus Southend and Thurrock Unitary Authorities. The population totalled c.1.61 million people in 2001. The southern part of this area is highly urbanised in character with a concentration of industrial, commercial and housing development. In contrast, the northern part is more rural and agricultural in character, with a limited number of large settlements.



Plan showing District and Unitary authorities in Essex

The digital mapping and data entry aspects of the project were carried out within ECCHEB under the management of Lynn Dyson-Bruce between 2000 and 2005, with modification of the GIS structure, analysis and report writing being carried out subsequently by Alison Bennett, with contributions by Maria Medlycott, Adrian Gascoyne and Paul Gilman. The data is held as part of the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER).

Report Grouping	*HLC Broad Group*	*HLC Type*
Enclosed land	Pre-18th Century Enclosure	• unenclosed common arable • coaxial enclosure • dual-axis - rectilinear 'co-axial' fields • dual-axis - sinuous 'co-axial' fields • irregular enclosure • rectilinear enclosure • irregular sinuous enclosure
	18th -19th Century Enclosure	• piecemeal enclosure by agreement • formal style parliamentary enclosure • piecemeal style parliamentary enclosure
	20th Century Agriculture	• boundary loss • boundary loss - with relict elements • 20th century enclosure
	Inland - Managed Wetlands	• enclosed meadow • managed wetland • water meadow
	Miscellaneous	• mixed origin
	Marginal	• unimproved rough pasture
Open land	Commons, Wastes, Heaths	• commons with a built margin • commons with an open margin • heath
Woodland	Woodlands	• ancient woodland • 18th-20th century woodland plantation
Parks & Gardens	Parks, Gardens, Recreation	• informal parkland • leisure / recreation
Coastal	Coastal - Drained Enclosure	• drained reclamation - curvilinear - pre-18th century • drained reclamation - rectilinear - 19th -20th century
	Coastal - Managed Wetlands	• unimproved marine marsh or brackish fen • saltings • unimproved intertidal
	Water features	• sea defences
Settlement	Built-up Areas- Historic Built-up Areas- Modern	• religious institutions • built-up areas - urban development • hospital, school, university • plotlands
Industrial	Mineral	• disused mineral extraction • mineral extraction • restored land
	Industry	• disused industrial • industrial
Horticulture	Horticulture	• allotments • orchard • nursery with glass house
Miltary	Military	• disused post-medieval military • post-medieval military
Landuse	Historic Earthworks	• historic earthwork
	Water features	• water reservoir
	Communications	• airfield – civilian • motorway, railway
	Miscellaneous	• duck decoy pond • rabbit warren • stud farm
	Inland - Managed Wetlands	• watercress beds
	Coastal - Managed Wetlands	• oyster beds

Table 1: HLC Types in the Essex HLC

1.2 OUTLINE METHODOLOGY

Historic Landscape Characterisation in Essex started with an assessment of historic and current mapping, mainly the Ordnance Survey (OS) First Edition, 1950 series, and modern digital mapping (OS Landline). In certain parishes earlier maps were also consulted where this would aid the interpretation of the landscape. It attributed various HLC Types to blocks of landscape and the data was entered into a Geographic Information System (GIS). Where changes in landuse were observed from the source maps, the previous HLC type data was also entered into the GIS database. These 'relict' HLC types give a time depth to the data, and allow the degree of change in the landscape to be calculated.

HLC Types were defined, based on either morphology, or on landuse. Morphology in this context is the shape and pattern of features in the landscape. The majority of Essex consists of enclosed land and the study of the shape and pattern of field boundaries helps determine the date and origin of these fields. For example, the regular shaped planned fields from parliamentary enclosure in the 18th to 19th centuries can be distinguished from smaller, irregular fields which are considered to represent earlier landscapes. HLC Types reflect these differences. Landuse also defines some types of landscape and can reflect historical elements, such as duck decoy ponds or oyster beds.

54 HLC Types are used in the Essex HLC (see table above). These can be loosely grouped together into 24 Broad Groups which aids analysis of patterns and themes in the landscape. For the purpose of this report, these have been grouped into 10 wider categories. Each of these wider categories is discussed later in this report and includes an indication of importance and more details on the principal HLC Types.

The full methodology can be found in Appendix A, and a list of all the HLC Types with a definition in Appendix B.

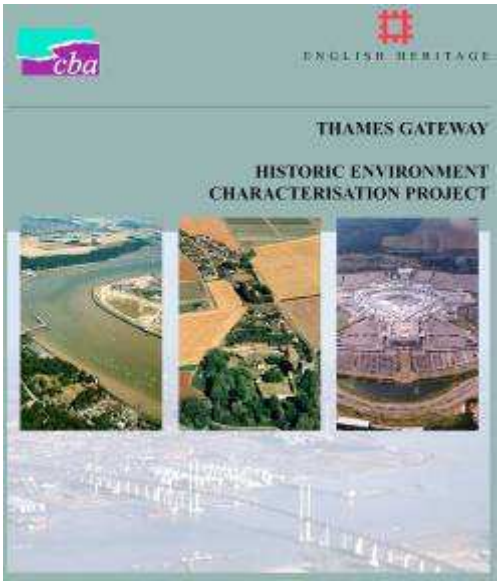
2. USES AND APPLICATIONS OF HLC IN ESSEX

2.1 OVERVIEW

HLC is the first historic environment dataset in the county to provide complete and seamless coverage of one critical component of the historic landscape, namely field systems and their boundaries, and also takes into consideration other significant component features (for example woodland and parkland) of the natural and built environment. HLC provides a tool that shows how these aspects of the landscape have changed over time and what elements from the past survive into the present. In addition it can be used as a background against which other individual assets can be shown to inter-relate and fit into their surroundings and the wider landscape. Due to its geographically comprehensive coverage, HLC lends itself to a wide range of applications.

HLC has been, and continues to be, used in Essex for a number of different purposes relating to the characterisation, management and enhancement of the county's rich historic environment. Future applications are likely to be equally varied, with the data most effectively used in combination with other historic environment, landscape and wider environmental datasets to serve the needs of the County Council and its clients. Whilst HLC can be used as a stand-alone tool its value in that regard is limited, and it's full potential will only be realised as one component in the systems of environmental and landscape characterisation, which are currently being developed for the county.

2.2 STRATEGIC PLANNING: GROWTH AREAS AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS

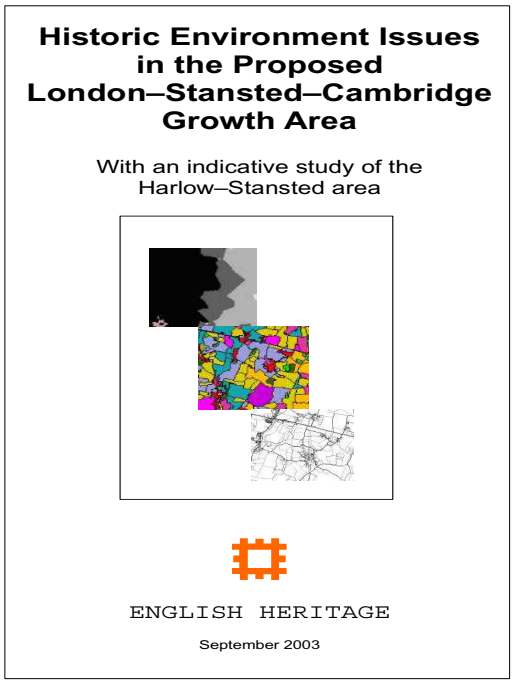


A pioneering attempt at developing a characterisation approach to the historic environment and strategic planning, utilising Historic Environment Record data, was undertaken to inform the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Structure Plan Review (Chris Blandford Associates, 2002). At that time HLC data for Essex was beginning to become available and an appendix incorporated HLC data with SMR derived data in an attempt to develop a holistic approach to sensitivity mapping of the historic environment for part of south-west Essex. The study was one of the initiatives which paved the way for the rapidly developing methodologies for historic environment characterisation in the county, spurred on by the government agenda for sustainable communities, and by changes to the planning system in 2004.

The Sustainable Communities Plan issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime minister (ODPM, 2003) provides the national strategic development framework for England. The Plan sets out a long-term programme for delivering sustainable communities in both urban and rural areas. The plan identifies four growth areas, two of which: Harlow/Stanstead/M11/Cambridge Corridor and

Thames Gateway are partly in Essex. The growth areas are large zones in which major new housing, industry and transport infrastructure will be concentrated. This poses a major challenge to the management and conservation of the historic environment. HLC has been used in a number of characterisation projects within the Growth areas, as a means by which this challenge will be met.

In 2003, English Heritage used the Essex HLC, in parallel with the Hertfordshire HLC, and a range of other archaeological and historic data, to develop an indicative strategic model for part of the London-Stansted-Cambridge corridor, in the area around Harlow, Bishop's Stortford and Stansted. The purpose of this indicative study was to investigate methodologies which the authors hoped would: 'provide the basis for a modern set of assessment and evaluation methods capable of responding to development and planning proposals affecting the historic environment within the context of evolving notions of …sustainability, characterisation, social inclusion and participation' (Went, Dyson-Bruce, Vindedal, 2003).


Historic Environment Issues in the Proposed London–Stansted–Cambridge Growth Area

With an indicative study of the Harlow–Stansted area

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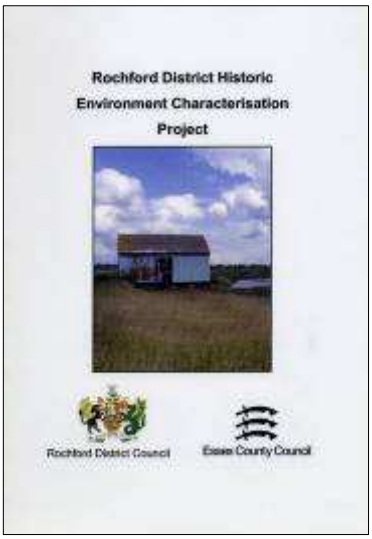
September 2003

HLC data has also been used in conjunction with archaeological character and historic urban character, in the development of Historic Environment Characterisation (HEC) in the county. The methodology for HEC was first developed and applied during the Thames Gateway Characterisation project, carried out by Chris Blandford Associates on behalf of English Heritage and Essex and Kent County Council. This provided a HEC of the whole Thames Gateway for use as a tool for strategic decision-making (Chris Blandford Associates, 2004) and the foundation for more detailed future work such as Master Planning.

In addition to the major growth areas, the requirement for evidence-based regional spatial strategies and local development frameworks resulting from the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, offers both challenges and opportunities for the County Council's Historic Environment Branch (HEB). Planning Policy Statement 1 states that: 'Policies must be based on a proper assessment of the character of the surrounding natural and built environment' (ODPM 2005). In Essex, HEB has refined characterisation methods used in the Thames Gateway study and undertaken further, in-depth studies in order to gain more detailed knowledge to inform local planning documents.) A number of Essex Borough and District Councils (see section 1.3) such as Rochford District (ECC, 2005a) and Chelmsford Borough (ECC, 2005b) have commissioned Essex County Council to prepare detailed HEC studies, specifically to inform the creation of Local Development Frameworks. The methodology employed for these studies involves the definition of Archaeological Character Areas, Historic Built Urban Character Areas and Historic Landscape Character Areas to define Historic Environment Character Areas which are then divided into detailed HEC



zones. Each zone is scored on a range of criteria, such as potential and sensitivity to change, based on a system developed for the English Heritage Monuments Protection Programme. These characterisation projects are intended as stand alone studies forming part of the evidence base for developing Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), but they could also usefully serve as the basis for other components of an LDF such as Village Design Statements and Conservation Area Appraisals or for other activities such as Master Planning. One of the great advantages of HEC is that it provides a nested approach. Similar work is underway to upgrade the original Thames Gateway study in south Essex

2.3 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Green Infrastructure has been defined as "…a planned network of multifunctional greenspaces and interconnecting links which is designed, developed and managed to meet the environmental, social and economic needs of communities across the Sub-Region. It is set within, and contributes to, a high quality natural and built environment and is required to enhance the quality of life for present and future residents and visitors and to deliver "liveability" for sustainable communities". (Environment Agency 2005). HLC is being used alongside other historic environment data in the planning of Green Infrastructure projects in Essex, for example in the Haven Gateway. The Haven Gateway is one of four planning sub-regions identified in the emerging East of England Plan (EEP). It has also been designated a "New Growth Point" by the Government, reflecting the substantial scale of planned housing and employment growth.

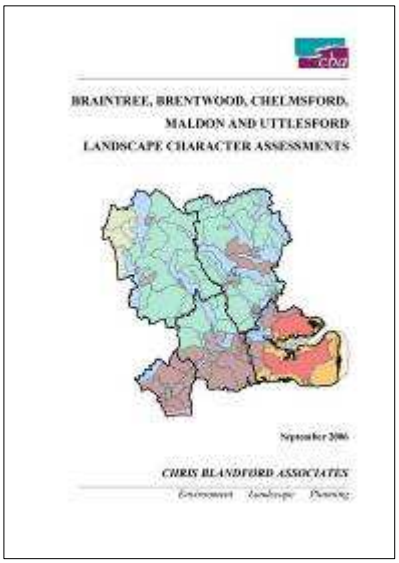
2.4 RURAL LAND MANAGEMENT

HLC is regularly used by HEB, in combination with historic mapping and other historic environment data, to inform the provision of advice to rural land managers on the restoration and conservation management of historic field systems and their boundaries. Farmers and other rural land owners applying to Defra's Higher Level Stewardship Scheme are required to formally consult their local historic environment service as part of the process of completing a Farm Environment Plan, and the response to this consultation is meant to incorporate information from the local HLC when it is available. HLC can provide a broad perspective of the landscape of any given agricultural holding, which is complementary to the whole farm approach of Environmental Stewardship.

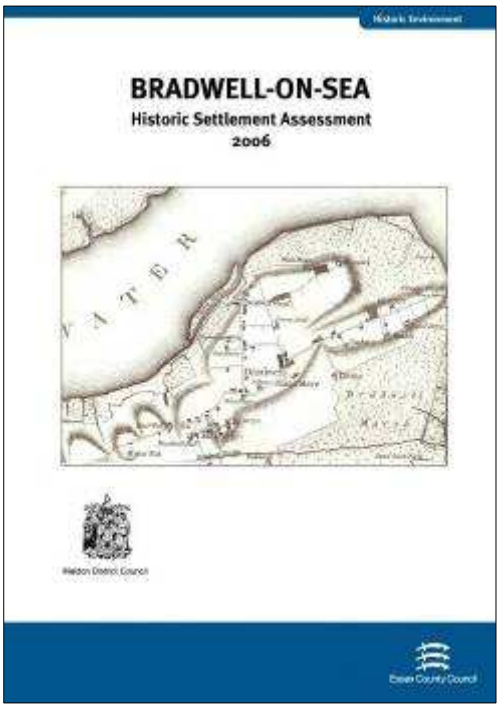
HLC is also used to inform the response to consultations by the Forestry Commission on applications to its English Woodland Grant Scheme. Where woodland planting is proposed, HLC is used in conjunction with historic mapping and other sources to inform the location, extent, size and shape of planting, to help ensure that new woodland is sympathetic to the character of the local historic landscape.

2.5 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Essex County Council produced a county-wide Landscape Character Assessment as part of the Essex & Southend-on-Sea Replacement Structure Pan Review (CBA, 2002). HLC was not used in the production of the assessment but can contribute an additional cultural dimension to further, more detailed local authority Landscape Character Assessments such as the one produced for Mid Essex. This study, undertaken by Chris Blandford Associates on behalf of Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Councils, defined the different components and features of the landscape that contribute to character and sense of place; described and mapped landscape character types and areas; and defined planning and land management guidelines (CBA 2006). For the purposes of the study, Essex HLC data was combined with supplementary datasets, such as Ancient Woodland data, to derive Historic Landscape Character Areas. These were used to contribute to the description of Landscape Character Areas and to inform their definition and extent. It is hoped that, as a result of HLC being used as a formative building block within the LCA process, the wider historic landscape will be more adequately addressed than in previous LCAs which used minimal historic landscape elements.



Although the HLC was incomplete, it made an important contribution to the LCA of the Essex Coast (Essex County Council 2006). The Essex Coast LCA collated and co-ordinated access to previous landscape and historic landscape assessments of the coast. The published report included an introduction to HLC which was used to provide a context for the Landscape Character Areas in specific parts of the Essex coast. In south Essex use of the Adobe Acrobat software allowed links to be made to the maps produced by the Thames Gateway Characterisation project (Chris Blandford Associates 2004).



2.6 HISTORIC SETTLEMENT ASSESSMENTS

Essex has over the past seven years developed a Historic Settlement Assessment methodology. This assesses the origins and development of historic settlement, both nucleated villages and the dispersed settlements more common in Essex, within

their immediate landscape setting, usually at parish level. This makes extensive use of the HLC, in conjunction with historic cartographic and documentary sources, as a tool in understanding the development of the historic environment and establishing which elements survive into the present.

2.7 RESEARCH

HLC has a great potential to inspire and provide a resource for research, especially when used in combination with other historic environment information. As yet this potential remains largely untapped but is ripe for exploitation, especially as the HLC character areas have been added to the EHER which in turn is linked to ArcGIS. .

2.8 OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

This is another potential growth area for the use of HLC, both for formal education in schools and colleges, and for broader outreach aimed at community groups and the general public. Consideration is being given to how the HLC can best be presented on the County Council's own web site (www.essexcc.gov.uk) and the on-line version of the EHER at http://unlockingessex.essexcc.gov.uk. This would need to be at an appropriate scale and used in conjunction with other data sets such as Historic Environment Characterisation and the EHER itself.

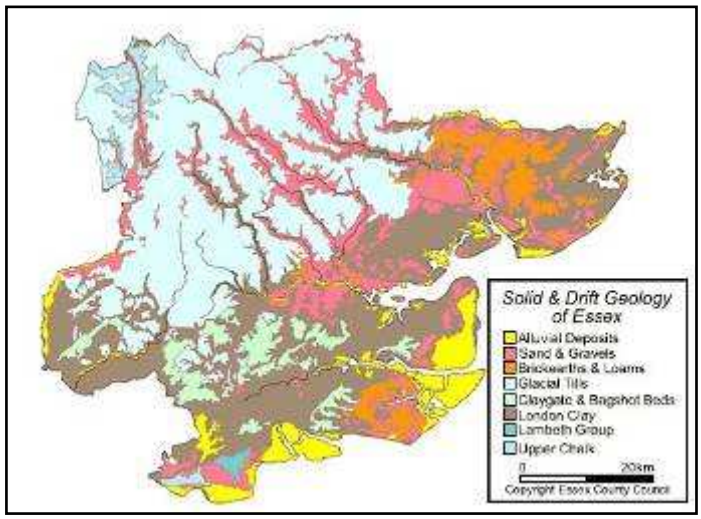
3. OVERVIEW OF THE ESSEX LANDSCAPE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The landscape of Essex is very varied, based on the underlying geology, which determines its soils, and on the topography, shaped by natural processes. These factors have influenced the character of the county's natural and semi-natural vegetation, and the human activities that can be supported.

3.2 GEOLOGY

The present-day visible geology of Essex is a 'snap-shot' of the geological processes of the past. It consists of pre-Ice Age 'solid' geology and Ice Age and later 'drift' deposits. The pattern of deposits is complex (see fig. right).



igure 1: Solid and drift geology of Essex

The solid geology is part of the structure known as the London Basin. The rock has been folded, creating a basin under London and Essex. The edges of the basin outcrop in the north and the south of the county. The oldest deposits at these edges are the Upper Chalk, of the Cretaceous era.

Between the edges of chalk are successive beds of the sands and clays of the Lambeth Group (Thanet, Woolwich, Reading, Blackheath and Oldhaven Beds), also outcropping towards the edge of the Basin. These were overlaid by the London Clay, which extends over the whole of the area between the edges of the Basin, but is only visible in the southern half of the county. Here, in places, the clay is topped by the sands and clay of the Claygate and Bagshot Beds. All these deposits are of the Tertiary era.

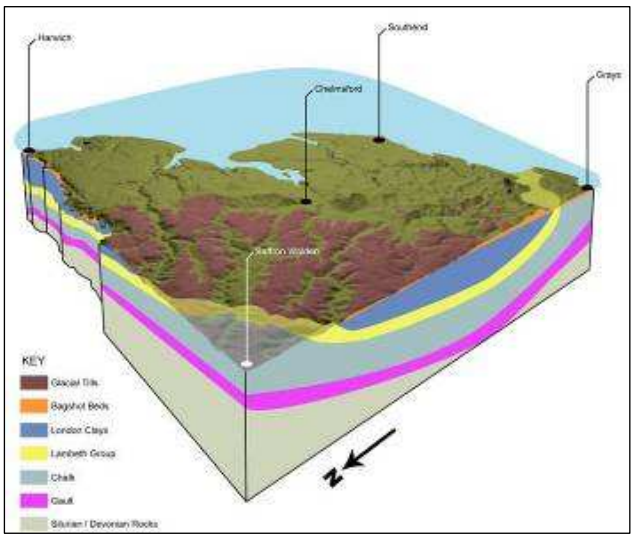


Figure 2: Cross-section of the geology of Essex

The Quaternary era encompasses all the drift geology, deposited as a result of the processes during the glacial and inter-glacial periods. The most significant formation of this era is the boulder clay, which was deposited over the north of Essex as the Anglian ice sheet retreated. There are significant areas of glacial gravels, and

successive terraces of sands and gravels, deposited as the early courses of the Rivers Thames and Medway were gradually shifted southwards across the county towards their modern positions. Later permafrost conditions led to wind blown silts being deposited to form brickearth, and the formation of ice wedges in the ground.

Following the Ice Age, rivers have cut through the boulder clay in places, allowing earlier deposits to be seen, but also depositing alluvium.

The table below shows a breakdown of each geological period and the deposits associated with each.

Epoch	Period	Years BP	Climate	Geological formation	Geological Deposit
Quaternary	Holocene	10,000	Temperate	Recent	peat and alluvium
	Pleistocene		Cold/glacial	(Devensian) Wind Blown Silts	loess and brickearth, including fossils, and ice wedges
		120,000	Warm	(Ipswichian)	fossiliferous sediments
			Cold/glacial	(Wolstonian)	
			Temperate	(Hoxnian) River Terrace deposits	gravel, including fossils and Lower Palaeolithic worked flints
		450,000	Periglacial and glacial	(Anglian) Boulder Clay and Glacial Gravel	clay, silt, sand, chalk, glacial eratics, gravel
			Temperate	Kesgrave Sands and Gravels	sand and gravel
			Periglacial and glacial	Chillesford Sand (Norwich Crag)	sand
	Pliocene	2 million	Temperate	Red Crag	
	Miocene			not found in Essex	
	Oligocene				
Tertiary	Eocene	50 million	Warm	Claygate and Bagshot Beds	sands and clay
				London Clay	clay, including fossils
				Blackheath and Oldhaven Beds	sands, silts, clays and pebble
	Palaeocene	65 million	Temperate	Woolwich and Reading Beds	
				Thanet Beds	
Cretaceous		80 million	Tropical	Chalk (Lower, Middle and Upper)	chalk and flint nodules
		100 million		Gault and Upper Greensand (under Essex)	marly clay
				not found under Essex	
Jurassic					
Triassic					
Permian					
Carboniferous					
Devonian				Shales and mudstone (at depth under Essex)	hard silty shales, mudstone and sandstone
Silurian		440 million			

Table 2: Geological periods and associated deposits

3.3 SOILS

The table below describes the soils that characterise the landscape regions and sub-regions of Essex in relation to the underlying geology. These soil types have helped shape the landscape, wildlife and economy of Essex.

In general these soils can be summarised as follows.

The soils of the London Clay are less fertile than the boulder clay soils. They are heavy and this led to a predominant use as pasture linked to small dispersed settlements. The South Essex Hills of the Coastal Zone and Wooded

Hills of the Mid-Essex Zone have very complex soils, supporting beech woodland or mixed hornbeam and oak, such as seen in Epping Forest. The Thames Terraces and Tendring Plain lie on glacial and fluvial deposits. These give rise to soils of low fertility. The Former Heathlands north and east of

Landscape regions	*Sub-regions*	*Geology*	*Soils*
Coastal Zone	Coastal Marshes	London Clay and coastal clays	Loamy and clayey soils with naturally high groundwater of moderate fertility
	Thames Terraces	Alluvial, Sands and Gravels, Brickearths	Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils with low fertility and freely draining slightly acid but base rich soils with high fertility
	London Clays	London Clay	Slowly permeable seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils of low fertility and slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage with moderate to high fertility
	South Essex Hills	Bagshot and Claygate beds over London Clay	Freely draining slightly acid but base rich soils with high fertility
	Tendring Plain	Fluvial deposits and Loams	Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage with moderate to high fertility
Mid-Essex Zone	Wooded Hills	Bagshot and Claygate beds over London Clay, Glacial Sands and Gravels	Slowly permeable seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils of low fertility
	Former Heathlands	Kesgrave sands and gravels	Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage with moderate to high fertility
Essex Till		Boulder Clay and glacial gravels	Lime-rich loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage of high fertility
	Copped Hall Hills	London Clay	Slowly permeable seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils of low fertility
	Chalk Uplands	Chalk	Freely draining lime-rich loamy soils

Table 3: Soils and geology of the Essex landscape regions

Colchester lie on brickearth, which forms a rich, fertile soil supporting market gardening. The soils of the boulder clay areas are rich and cereal and fruit crop-producing, where road patterns and field boundaries are related to both the soil and topography. These soils support a wide range of natural vegetation. The chalk escarpment in the extreme northwest of the county has soils which are naturally acidic in places and calcareous in other places. The field pattern is open or with ancient enclosed fields with species-rich hedges.

3.4 TOPOGRAPHY

The Essex landscape is one of considerable variety which can be described as gently rolling countryside bisected by many river valleys. The county is predominantly low-lying, with a coastline which extends for almost 400 miles and is indented with numerous estuaries. At its highest, in the extreme north-west, chalk hills rise to over 120 meters. Other areas of high ground exist, such as the South Essex Hills. The landscape of Essex can be divided into four broad regions, the Coastal Zone, the Mid-Essex Zone, the Essex Till and the Chalk Uplands.

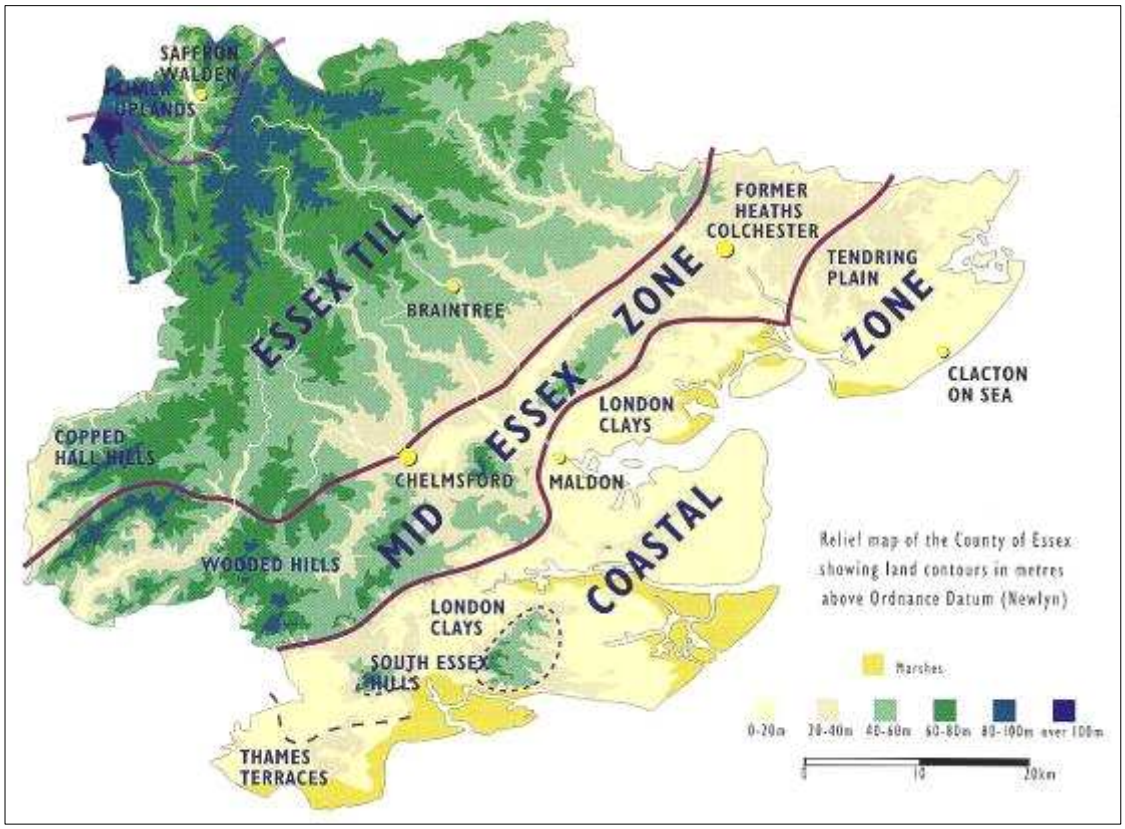


Figure 3: Landscape Zones of Essex

3.4.1 The Coastal Zone

This is predominantly flat and low-lying, broken by the estuaries of the Colne, Blackwater and Crouch, and bounded by the Thames and Stour estuaries. These are fringed by productive marshlands formed of marine or fluvial silts, with a hinterland composed of Low London Clay hills. The Zone is divided into several distinct areas, comprising Coastal Marshes, Tendring Plain, Thames Terraces, South Essex Hills, and London Clays.

<u>The Coastal Marshes</u> were the traditional grazing marshes, now reclaimed for arable, together with the saltmarsh, mudflats and shingle banks beyond the sea walls. The reclaimed soils are easy to cultivate for a range of arable crops. In addition, over 80% of the coastline has been designated as a series of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, for reasons of nature conservation. Current issues concern loss of the saltmarsh and rising sea levels. To tackle this, a programme of coastal and estuarine managed realignment is being carried out in several areas. This involves breaching the sea wall to allow high tidal water to

penetrate. The land behind the sea wall absorbs the water, creating new saltmarsh and reducing the amount of water travelling inland.

The Tendring Plain is a generally flat area over fertile loams. This is fringed by a coastline with many creeks.

The Thames Terraces comprise gravels and sands deposited by the former course of the River Thames following the last Ice Age. The land is free-draining and supports arable farming. There has been much mineral extraction, exposing the underlying chalk in places, and there are increasing pressures of development.

The South Essex Hills are formed of Bagshot and Claygate Beds and carry extensive tree cover. The individual woods are ancient and place names ending in *-leah* reflect their origins as woodland clearings. The hills had many commons which were used traditionally as wood-pasture. Some of these survive in Thorndon Country Park, Danbury, Galleywood, Great Warley. This area also includes Epping Forest.

The London Clay region comprises the South Essex Plain, the Dengie Peninsula, and the area north of Maldon, forming a broad zone extending across the south and east of the county. The heavy clay soils are difficult to cultivate without modern machinery and historically these areas would have been pasture and sparsely populated. The South Essex Plain and Dengie Peninsula show an early, possibly Saxon, planned landscape with a regular long, parallel field axis. However, the area north-east of Maldon is different as it shows no evidence of early planned landscape and merges with the adjacent heathland of Tiptree Heath.

3.4.2 The mid-Essex zone

This zone separates the boulder clay plateau to the north west from the lower levels of the London Clay to the south east. This has two important sub-divisions, the wooded hills in the south, around Brentwood and the former heathlands to the north of Colchester.

The Wooded Hills stretches through several ridges – Epping Forest, Hainault, Thorndon, Galleywood and Danbury to Tiptree, rising above the general level of the London Clay lowlands to about 100 meters. The soils were acidic and traditionally supported woodland and pasture farming. This formed part of a system of land allotment where a series of narrow, parallel parishes shared woodland, pasture and arable resources. Northwards, the Wooded Hills merge into the area of former heathlands.

The Former Heathlands extended around Colchester and up to the Stour Valley. They are on light, often sandy soils. The remains of several heaths remain, though they have mostly been enclosed for arable farming. The largest was Tiptree Heath, which was inter-commoned between 14 parishes.

3.4.3 The Essex Till

This comprises a thick layer of chalky Boulder Clay deposited in the Anglian cold stage, which also has a key sub-region of the Copped Hall Hills in the south-west. This plateau of boulder clay blankets at least one third of the surface of Essex. It is heavily dissected by rivers such as the Ter, Pant, Brain, Blackwater, Colne and Stour, and their tributary streams. A variety of deposits of glacial and Holocene origin are represented within the valleys and soil patterns are variable as a result but naturally fertile. In the north the plateau rises to a height of around 120 meters then descends slightly to terminate along the crest of the chalk escarpment. The plateau declines south and south eastwards towards the central Essex depression before rising again towards the ridges of the Bagshot Hills. This area has supported arable farming from the Iron Age right through to the modern day.

The Copped Hall Hills form a rolling landscape, and are characterised by an estate landscape of late enclosure with spinneys and large fields. An area of small farms and irregular hedges survives north of Upshire.

3.4.4 The Chalk uplands

The chalk outcrops in the northwest of the county to form an escarpment close to the Cambridgeshire border, and forms a rolling landscape. This area, unlike the rest of Essex, was characterised by open fields with strip farming of mixed arable and pasture, which was only enclosed in the early 19th century.

4. HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE LANDSCAPE OF ESSEX

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As seen in the previous section, the Essex landscape is one of considerable variety. The geology and topography have had a direct influence on settlement, communications and farming practices. These elements are all closely reflected in the distribution of field-types.

With over 1.7 million people, Essex is one of the most densely populated counties in England, yet over 75% of its area is used for agricultural purposes. Proximity to London has been, and remains, a major factor in the social and economic life of the county. Essex is also an integral part of the region based around the southern North Sea, and the numerous creeks and inlets facilitate waterborne contacts with the continent.

4.2 THE PALAEOLITHIC AND MESOLITHIC PERIODS

About 472,000 years ago, an ice sheet covered most of Britain. When this ice sheet reached Essex, the Thames was flowing through the Vale of St Albans towards Colchester. A lobe of ice blocked the river and it was diverted towards its present course.

As the ice eventually receded at the beginning of the next interglacial stage (the Hoxnian Stage), the landscape of Essex bore some resemblance to that of the present day. The Stour, Colne, Chelmer, Blackwater and Crouch rivers followed roughly their present courses, but

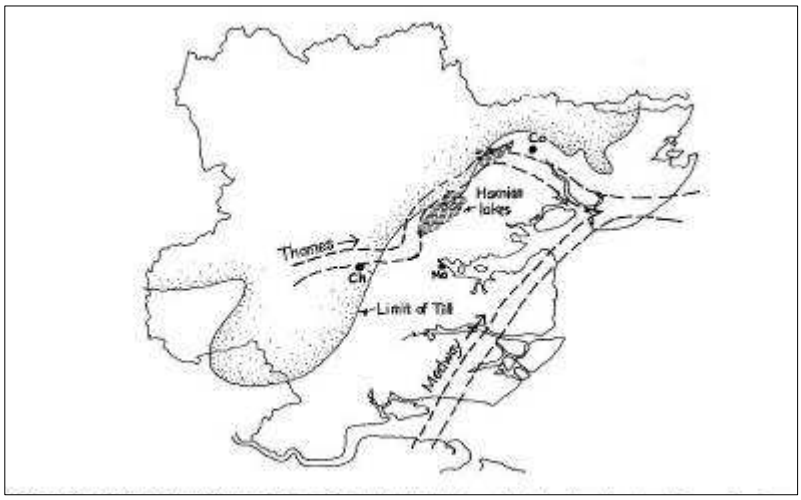


Figure 4: The pre-Anglian ice sheet course of the River Thames

the Medway joined the Thames at Southend and the combined river continued north-east across what is now the coast of east Essex to join the Rhine.

There is nothing to indicate that glaciers ever covered Essex again, but there were several very cold periods. Oscillations of sea level and climate affected the rivers and costal flood plains, leading to the creation of gravel terraces, and it is these that contain a wide variety of human artefacts and environmental data dating to the Palaeolithic period. However it is the geological rather than the human elements of the Palaeolithic landscape that impact on the modern Historic Landscape Character.

With the warming up of Britain during the Mesolithic period, from about 10,000 years ago, most of lowland Britain was covered by a succession of forest types with breaks in the canopy around rivers and lakes. A number of important

Mesolithic sites survive as submerged land-surfaces in the Crouch and Blackwater estuaries and at Stone Point, Walton-on-the-Naze.

4.3 LATER PREHISTORY

By the early Neolithic (from around 4,000 BC) the sea level had risen, so that the Essex coastline had reached something like its present appearance. High tide mark was approximately in the region of the present low-tide mark and consequently large areas of former land surface now lie within the present intertidal zone.

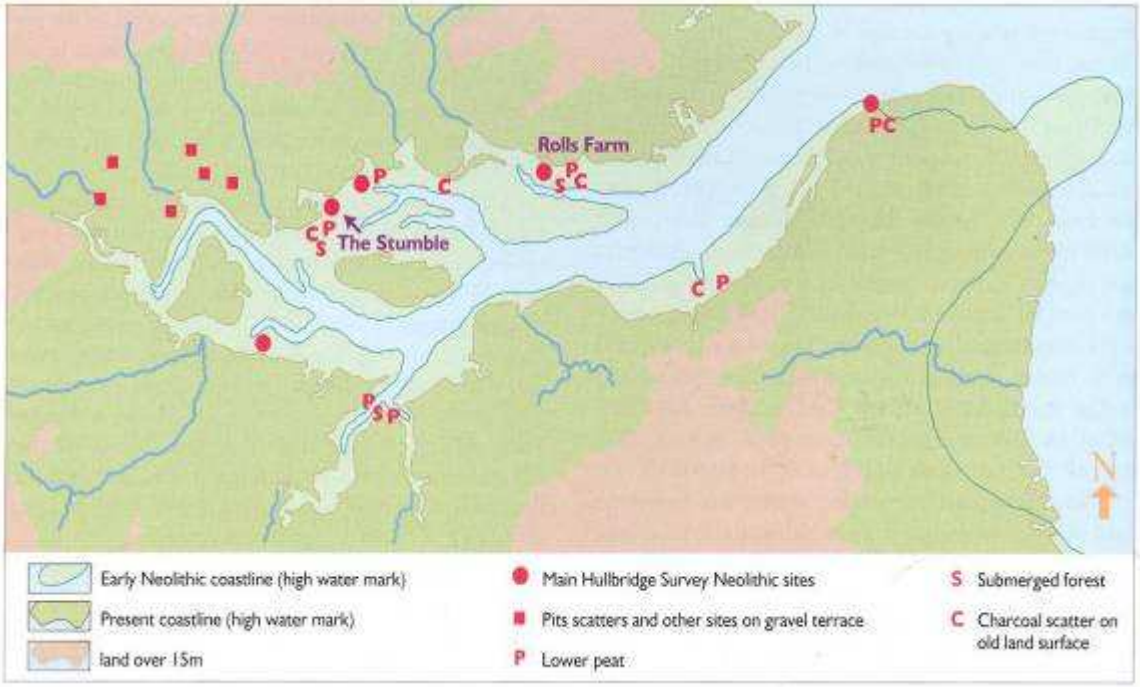


***Figure 5**: Interpretation of the early Neolithic landscape of the Blackwater Estuary, based on the Hullbridge survey of intertidal sites (Wilkinson & Murphy 1995)*

Well-preserved settlement sites on these land surfaces have yielded detailed economic and environmental data, indicating that wild food resources were at least as important as cultivated ones. There seems to have been no sudden shift from a hunter-gatherer to an agricultural-based economy, for settlements lay within a still largely wooded landscape. Long burial mounds and other monuments of earth and wood were built at this time, several of which are at times visible as cropmarks. A causewayed enclosure, long barrow and 'cursus' monument were constructed at Springfield near the edge of the Boulder Clay plateau and close to the confluence of the Chelmer and Can rivers, where the rivers made natural routeways onto the plateau. Other causewayed enclosures are found at Orsett, which occupied a similar focal point, with the wooded London Clays and Orsett Fen to the north and west and the gravel terraces of the Thames to the south and east, and at St Osyth.

Evidence for settlement in the Bronze Age is extensive, particularly on the light well-drained soils in the south and east of Essex. By the later Bronze Age (1500-700 BC) a fully agricultural economy had been developed. The extensive coastal marshes were used for pasture and salt manufacture. There was also widespread expansion on to the Boulder Clay plateau. Systems of ditched rectangular fields have been identified at North Shoebury and at Mucking, and

many more are known as cropmarks. The light soils of north-east Essex contain numerous barrow cemeteries and urnfields dating to the middle Bronze Age (1,500-1,000 BC), now showing as cropmark ring ditches. Examples of these have been excavated at Ardleigh and Brightlingsea. The late Bronze Age saw the construction of ditched circular enclosures, known as Springfield-type monuments after the type-site at Springfield Lyons near Chelmsford.

Figure 6:Reconstruction of the Late Bronze Age landscape around Ardleigh (Roger Massey-Ryan, ECC)

This long period of human settlement is partially still visible in the modern landscape, but not within the HLC. However each period shaped and influenced what came after so the modern landscape, as recorded by the HLC, is a reflection of Essex's past.

The pattern of an expanding population and the clearance of woodland for agriculture continued into the Iron Age, creating a landscape dominated by farming, with a widespread scatter of individual farms, hamlets and villages. Strongholds or hill-forts were built on ridges or locally high ground. There is a string of these structures along the Lee, Stort and Cam valleys, of which one, Wallbury, is visible as an 'earthwork' on the HLC. The late Iron Age is marked by the rule of Cunobelin over the tribes of south-east Britain from his base at *Camulodunum* (Colchester). The possible site of his homestead lay at Gosbecks at the head of a vast Inland promontory fort bounded by the Colne and Roman rivers. Across the neck of this promontory lay a series of dykes, totalling 19-24 km in length.

Wallbury Hillfort from the air (ECC)

4.4 THE ROMAN PERIOD

Although Julius Caesar attacked Britain twice, in 55 and 54 BC, he failed to establish Roman control. In AD 43, the emperor Claudius launched his invasion of Britain. His general, Aulus Plautius, won a battle near *Camulodunum* (Colchester). A legionary fortress was built on the hill-top to the north-east, the

site of the future Roman town of Colchester. By AD 49 the fortress had become redundant and it was converted into a *colonia* for retired legionaries and their

Figure 7: Reconstruction of Roman Colchester as it would have looked c.250 AD(©P.Froste)

families. The new town was dominated by a huge temple to the deified Claudius. In AD 60 the Boudiccan revolt resulted in the destruction of Colchester, followed by London and St Albans. Following the suppression of the revolt Colchester was rebuilt as a showpiece town, this time protected by substantial walls. The site of *Camulodunum* was also enhanced by magnificent municipal buildings.

By AD 69 the layout of Roman Essex bore a considerable resemblance to the modern map, and many of these elements are visible on the HLC. The three main corridors of communication had been built; the London-Colchester road (the A12), the Colchester-Braughing road (A120) and a route northwards from London up the Lee, Stort and Cam valleys. In addition there were many smaller roads, trackways and droveways. Towns developed, often at communication nodal points, ranging in size from 8 to 20 ha in size, with internal roads, market-places and rectangular timber-framed buildings. Examples include Chelmsford, Braintree and Geat Dunmow.

There are at least 69 known villa sites in Essex, the majority of which are on the Boulder Clay, but with a group around the Colne estuary and a scatter of sites in south Essex. Further down the social scale were the smaller hamlets, farms and cottages. A major salt industry based on Red Hills flourished in the Late Iron Age and during the early Roman period.

Figure 8: Reconstruction of a Roman farmstead at Great Holts, Boreham (©P.Froste), where elements of the field system appear to have continued into the medieval and post medieval periods

The later Roman period in Essex appears to have been one of decline. At Chelmsford the town contracted in size, and crops were being grown within the walls of Colchester. 'Saxon Shore' forts were erected at Bradwell and at Walton, Suffolk, to guard the coast from invasion and/or to secure the movement of supplies. The provision of a wall for the small town of Great Chesterford could be a related development.

4.5 THE SAXON PERIOD

Following the end of Roman control in the early years of the fifth century Essex was embroiled in the first phase of Saxon conquest. The newcomers rapidly acquired estates, which became parts of small territories. Some of these, such as the Rodings in central Essex and the Dengie peninsula in the east may be tentatively identified. From these the East Saxon kingdom (from which Essex takes its name) emerged. At its greatest extent in the 7th century it extended to include Middlesex, Surrey and Hertfordshire and retained some kind of independence until the mid-9th century. Conversion to Christianity was a protracted process. Mellitus, sent by Augustine from Kent, founded St Paul's Cathedral in London, described by Bede as 'the principal city of the East Saxons and a trading centre for many nations who visit it by land and sea'. The East Saxons later reverted to paganism, but re-conversion was undertaken by St Cedd, who founded minsters at Bradwell, Tilbury and elsewhere.

The Saxon chapel at Bradwell-on-Sea, sited just outside the Roman fort of Othona

There is relatively little archaeological evidence for early Saxon settlement in Essex, although there are some extensive cemeteries, as at Great Chesterford, Mucking, and Prittlewell, together with a number of settlement sites particularly in the south and east of the county. The settlement at Mucking was one of the most extensive Anglo-Saxon sites excavated in England with 53 posthole buildings and 203 sunken-featured huts. Fieldwork suggests a complex pattern of change, with woodland regeneration on the Boulder Clay plateau, whilst evidence from the river valleys indicates continuous arable cultivation. One major focus of middle Saxon settlement lay around the Blackwater estuary; important estates existed at Mersea

Remains of a Saxon fish-trap of Pewitt Island in the Blackwater estuary

and a royal vill, associated with political events and government functions, at Brightlingsea. In the estuary itself extensive fish-trapswere constructed and the Strood

Causeway which links Mersea to the mainland. The late Saxon period was marked by Saxon raids and invasions. In 894 Alfred's army destroyed the Viking fleet at Benfleet, later Edward the Elder reclaimed Essex from the Danelaw, at the same time founding burhs at Colchester, Maldon and Witham. In 991 the battle of Maldon took place between the Saxons of Essex and an invading Viking force. It was during this period that the great estates were sub-divided into manorial holdings. Excavations at Springfield Lyons found a 10th century settlement which is likely to be the forerunner of the Domesday manor of Cuton Hall (Tyler and Major 2005). Sub-division also took place in ecclesiastical organisation with the building of proprietary chapels close to the manorial holding. Thus the manors of the Domesday Book, many with their own parish churches and the first generation of greens situated at the gates of the manor, have their origins in this period. The landscape of Essex and distribution of roads and settlement by the 10th century was substantially similar to that of the 18th century (Hart 1993). The Domesday Book also suggests that about 30% of the land was rough pasture or 'waste' and a further 20% was woodland (Hunter 2003). The 'Dengie-form' co-axial fields which covered much of the south-east Essex are not a single entity, some may be Roman in origin and some even older, however it has been argued that the particular concentrations in the Southend and Dengie peninsulas, may have their origin in the middle to late Saxon period (Rippon 1991).

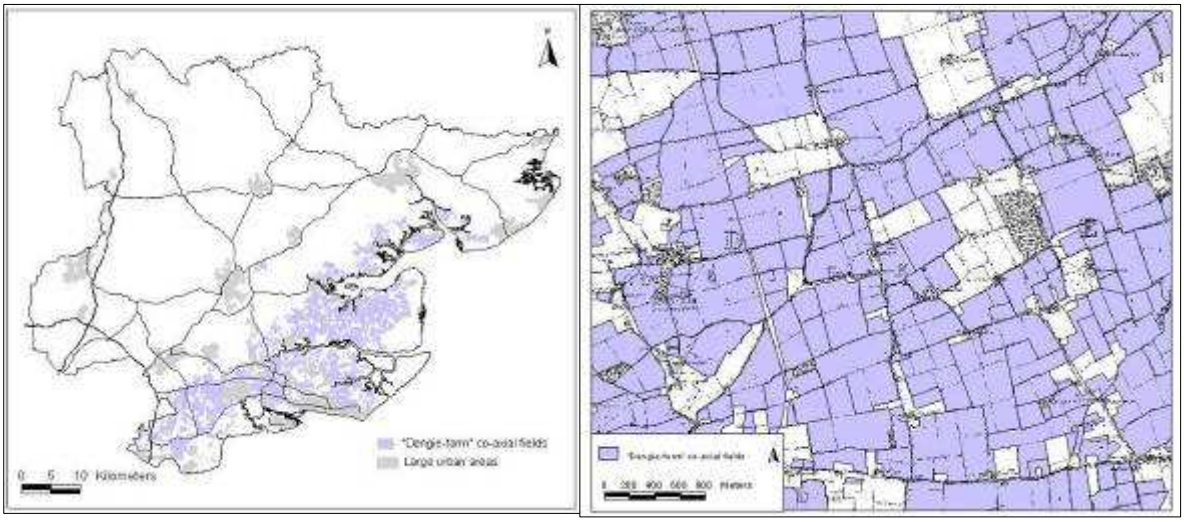


Figure 9:Distribution of 'Dengie-form' co-axial fields and close-up of 'Dengie-form' co-axial fields in the Purleigh area on the Dengie peninsula (overlain with the 1st edn. OS map)

4.6 THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The Domesday Book describes Essex at the time of the Norman Conquest, recording population, livestock and land-holding statistics for the years 1066 and 1086. At this time the economy and population were growing swiftly, a process which reached its limits in the late 13th century, catastrophically crashing in the 14th century.

As discussed above, the principal elements of the Essex landscape were already in place, including most of the towns, the principal routes, and many of the manors and minor routes. In Essex the normal rural settlement pattern was largely a dispersed one of scattered hamlets and individual farmsteads.

The HLC illustrates the general trends of the fieldscape for this period. In the north-west corner on the chalk ridge bordering Cambridgeshire and northern Hertfordshire are Essex's only examples of the classic midland three-field system. To the south of this is a swathe of irregular fields, which approximates to the extent of the Boulder Clays. The southern side of this also has extensive areas of former common fields, many of which were enclosed piecemeal by agreement in the later medieval period (Hunter 1999). On the Tendring plateau the proportion of these common fields in relation to the irregular fields rises to about 50:50.

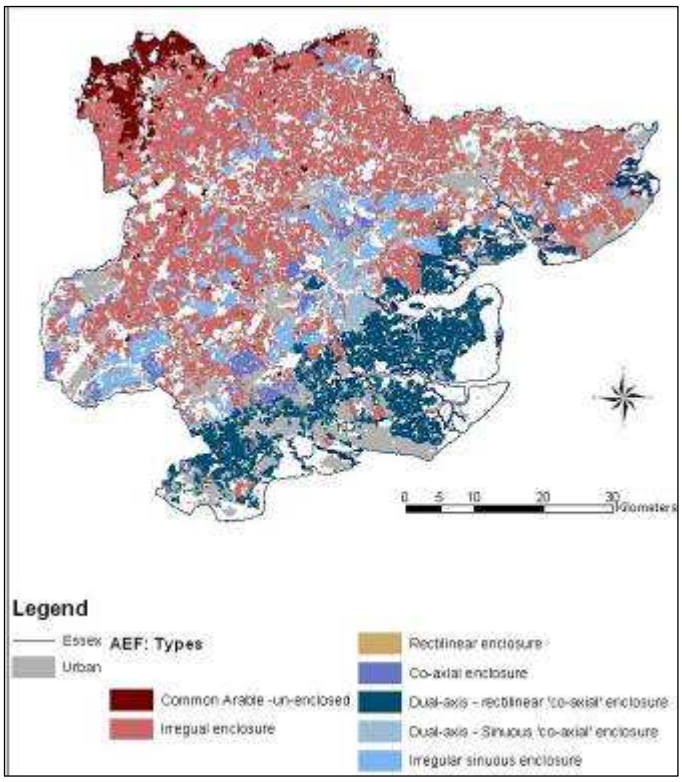


Figure 10: Trends in the Essex landscape as illustrated by the HLC

The area around Colchester was encircled by vast heaths or commons, these are visible on the HLC to the north of the town, but those to the south are not so easily distinguishable, possibly in part because they have been swallowed up by the modern urban area of Colchester and partly because their enclosure had largely been completed before the 1st edition OS map. Diagonally from south-west to north-east across the centre of the county runs a band of mixed irregular fields, co-axial fields and former common fields (the latter were mostly enclosed in the later medieval period). This band approximates to the interface between the Boulder Clay plateau to the north-west and the sands and gravel layers that overlay the London Clay to the south-east. To the south-east there are extensive areas of co-axial fields, that vary between 'sinuous rectilinear', 'sinuous irregular' and 'rectilinear' in type, but these differences appear to be largely the result of local responses to the immediate topography. These co-axial field merge with the already old system of 'Dengie-form' co-axial fields

which were still in use in most of the south-east of Essex. The eastern coastal areas were largely marshland.

Google Earth image of Danbury Common

The increasing population of the 11th to 13th centuries led to the ploughing up of 'waste', with the colonisation of areas of rough pasture and woodland which had formerly been extensive but were now becoming increasingly scarce. Eventually the essential minimum of land required for pasture came to be defined and preserved as a second generation of greens bordered around by the tofts of peasant families, who would also cultivate strips in the adjoining arable fields. Many of these scattered green-side settlements developed into hamlets. The greens could be either 'focal', that is a compact area of grassland, as at Matching Green, or 'linear', that is wide verges along a roadside. The HLC has identified many greens or commons of the 'compact' variety, although by no means all; the many small examples that characterised the medieval landscape of Uttlesford District in particular are unrepresented. Likewise the 'linear' greens are barely represented on the HLC, possibly because many were enclosed in the 17th century as licensed 'purprestures' (private enclosures along the verge of a public highway). As discussed above, the large 'wastes' or heaths that were held in commonage around Colchester, including Tiptree Heath are also under-represented, particularly to the south and west of the town.

The better and lighter soils were thus being largely used for crop cultivation, with the greens and commons serving as pasturage. The valley bottoms of rivers and streams were often managed as meadow pasture, that is for hay cultivation, with stock being placed on them once the hay crop had been cut. They were often drained by a system of closely-spaced parallel ditches set at right-angles to the river. The HLC shows that the meadows are largely a feature of northern and western Essex, with the notable exception of those along the Mar Dyke in Thurrock. The coastal marshes supported extensive flocks of sheep as well as shell-fisheries. There is evidence for some sea-walls being constructed during this period. Particularly significant extents can be seen along the Chelmer, Blackwater, Colne and Stour rivers.

Woodland bank in Little Bishops Wood, Stock

Essex had extensive areas of woodland, much of which was managed wood-pasture. Large and remarkable examples of medieval woodland survive

at Epping, Writtle and particularly Hatfield Forest. Woodlands were protected with banks and hedges. Wood-pasture and some woodland might be retained as parkland, enclosed by a tall fence erected on a bank with a ditch on the park side. Some woods, as at Epping Forest were held as commonage, with the commoners having rights to grazing, pannage and timber. The HLC shows that both the ancient woodland and the medieval parkland are largely absent in the south-east corner of the county, with the exception of the wooded Rayleigh Hills.

By the end of the Saxon period the manorial hall and accompanying church were already features of the Essex landscape and this pattern continued into the medieval period. The Norman Conquest saw the imposition of castles as the focus of the large territorial estates of the new overlords, as at Pleshey and Castle Hedingham. The 11th and 12th centuries also saw the foundation of new towns, both as adjuncts to castles as at Pleshey, or as deliberate commercial ventures. Both Braintree and Chelmsford were founded in 1199 by the Bishop of London to capitalise on his manors' positions at communication nodal points. A characteristic Essex medieval site is the 'homestead' moat, and these are particularly common on the Boulder Clay.

Excavations have been undertaken on a number of medieval farmstead sites. These usually originated in the 12th century, a period of population growth and expansion and were abandoned in the 14th century. This may reflect a series of economic and social disasters, including the Black Death, poor weather with resulting widespread crop failure and famine, and the Peasant's Revolt of 1381 in which Essex played a prominent part. The excavated farms are those that failed, the ones that survived this period are largely still occupied and still form the landscape of fields and farms recorded by the HLC. Detailed analysis of a number of parishes by the Historic Settlement Assessment Project has established that much of the present field pattern has its origins in at least the 12th century, if not before. Individual fields can be traced back through cartographic, documentary and place-name evidence to that period. In a number of exceptional cases, most notably at Paslow Hall in High Ongar it is possible to trace within the modern field pattern the boundaries of a late Saxon farm recorded in 1062.

Figure 11: Reconstruction of a medieval farmstead at Stebbingford, Felsted

The late 15th and early 16th centuries were a period of economic prosperity in Essex, partly due to the expansion of London as a market for Essex's agricultural produce and partly due to the rise of the cloth trade with Europe. The magnificent 'wool cathedrals', as at Saffron Walden and Dedham, were largely financed by the profits of the cloth trade.

4.7 THE POST-MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The Reformation of the 16th century saw major changes, including the demolition of old monastic buildings and the erection of mansion houses on their sites for their new, usually newly-rich, owners. This phase is reflected in the number of parks recorded on the HLC.

The 17th and early 18th century saw extensive drainage and embankment of the marshes, notably at Canvey Island where the island was created by Dutch engineering expertise. This phase of drainage and reclamation is clearly demonstrated by the HLC as 'sinuous reclamation'. A second phase of reclamation took place in the 19th century, this time characterised by greater use of straight reclamation ditches, again this phase is clearly identifiable on the HLC.

By the 1740s the cloth industry was in decline, but Essex agriculture entered a new and increasingly prosperous phase, which peaked during the Napoleonic wars. Arable agriculture in particular expanded, because of London's increasing demand for wheat for bread and barley for brewing. It was a period of considerable experimentation in farming practice, including the innovation of hollow drainage and the mole-plough on the heavy clays as well as new animal management, as evidenced by the construction of 'model farms', many of which still survive. The management of animals for sport is also evident in this period with the planting of shaws and copses as pheasant and fox-cover. This is particularly noticeable in the area closest to London where the gentry purchased sporting estates.

Hatch Farm, a model farm at Thorndon Park

The Enclosure Acts of the first half of the 19th century saw the remodelling of the remaining open fields, most noticeably in the north-west of Essex in the area to the north of Saffron Walden, although isolated examples also occurred elsewhere.

This period also saw the development of navigable waterways, including the Lea, Stort, Stour and Chelmer Navigation Canals. The availability of water transport acted as a magnet for industries related to agricultural expansion and the demands of the London market. The building of the railway lines in the mid-19th century saw an influx of tourism from London and the development of the coastal resorts of Southend, Clacton, Walton and Frinton, and the development of an increasingly urban and industrial landscape including commercial quarrying, along the Thames estuary east of London.

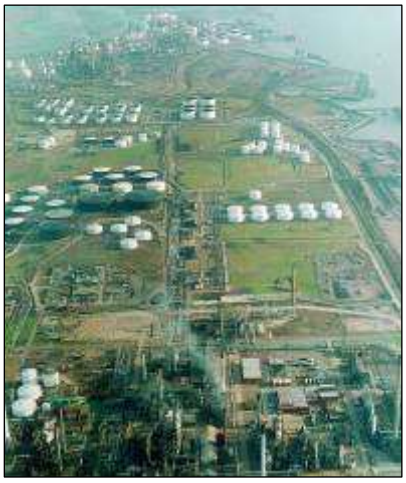
Coalhouse Fort

Throughout the post-medieval period fortifications were concentrated along the Essex coastline, ranging from a small 16th-century gun emplacement at East Mersea to elaborate 17th- and 19th-century forts at Harwich, and at Tilbury and Coalhouse guarding the Thames.

4.8 THE MODERN PERIOD

The modern period adds a further layer of development and change across an already complex landscape. Most noticeable is the massive expansion of the urban areas, this took place in two principal phases, firstly in the south of the county as part of the 'plotland phenomena' where agricultural land was sub-divided and sold-off as do-it-yourself housing parcels during the late 19th and early 20th century agricultural depression. The HLC has identified some areas of surviving plotlands, as well as the new towns of South Woodham Ferrers and Basildon which were built to regularise the plotlands. The second wave of urban development began in the 1960s as London overspill, with extensive estates added to the outskirts of existing market towns.

The expansion of industrialisation is also a major feature of the modern landscape. This is evident on the fringes of most of the major towns, but most noticeably with the expansion of the petrochemical industry along the Thames estuary.



Shellhaven oil refinery, Thurrock

Changes in agricultural practice are also apparent on the HLC. Most noticeable is the post-1950s removal of field boundaries in order both to form larger fields and rationalise their shape for the ease of modern agricultural machinery. There are few areas in Essex that remain untouched, however the degree of boundary removal varies from the comparatively minor to farms where up to 19 or 20 fields have been coalesced to form a single unit. No overall pattern can be readily distinguished and it appears that the degree of boundary removal depended only partially on how inconvenient the original fields were from the point of view of modern machines and more strongly on the actions of the individual land-owner. Other changes to agricultural practice are also demonstrated by the HLC. The glasshouse vegetable-growing industry is evident in the southern Lea valley on the Hertfordshire border. On the eastern coasts the straightening of drainage channels forms a noticeable component, reaching its apogee on Wallasea Island where the entire previous landscape has been removed.

In addition to boundary loss, the HLC identifies a group of fields entitled '20th century enclosure'. These are usually ancient fields that have been cut through by a new road, which thus forms a new boundary on one side. They are also a noticeable element on the outskirts of towns, often taking the form of small paddocks for horse-rearing and such like.

The World Wars, particularly the Second, have left a lasting effect on the Essex landscape in the form of airfields and landing-strips. The HLC illustrates that these had a widespread distribution across the northern half of the county.

The role of mineral extraction in the Essex landscape, fuelled by the post World War II re-building programme and by road-building is evident. The medieval and post-medieval extraction sites were small sites, serving local needs. By contrast the gravel extraction sites along the Lea Valley, the chalk-pits along the Thames estuary and the brickearth pits to the north-east of Rochford are on a massive scale. Brickearth quarries are broad and very shallow, these occur mostly to the north and east of Southend.

Mineral extraction near Chelmsford

Linked to the mineral extraction theme is the role of leisure activities as a landscape element, as many of the excavated gravel pits, particularly along the Lea Valley, have been flooded and converted to water-sport activities, most notably fishing, and to nature reserves.

Golf course under construction near Stock

However it is the massive expansion in the number of golf courses in Essex in the late 1980s and early 1990s that forms the dominant expression of leisure activities on the HLC. It is of interest that many of these re-used medieval or post-medieval parkland, so that although the internal features have changed, ancient ornamental trees and the park boundary itself are often retained, as indeed is the original concept of the land being put aside for leisure pursuits.

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