

## Landscape

To the north of the Isle of Sheppey, the London Clay ridges and outcrops have formed a landscape which is elevated above the low lying marshland to the south. The drier soils have resulted in arable farming being a dominant land use, whilst the London Clay outcrops bordering the marshland tend to be overlain with tertiary deposits and are therefore characteristic of fruit belt landscape types. The orchards enclosed by hedgerows, tree lines and windbreaks provide a contrast to the surrounding open marshland landscape. Farms and larger settlements are located on the higher, drier pockets of land above the neighbouring marshes, usually surrounded by stunted and windswept trees and hedges which are particularly prominent vertical features in the generally flat, open landscape.

## Biodiversity

The predominant land use in this area is intensive arable farming with occasional small orchards, so existing BAP habitats are limited.

The strategic Biodiversity Network Opportunity is very mixed, with such opportunity being rather localised and reflecting the interest in adjacent character areas. Many of these landscapes are bounded by marshland, but some, to the east are also situated on the edge of the Blean woodland complex. Outside of the main areas of network opportunity there are more localised opportunities to improve the biodiversity resource in a similar way to Fruit Belt landscape types. A number of BAP habitats associated with lowland farming are prevalent here, such as traditional orchards, hedgerows and arable field margins. The latter two habitat types provide not only valuable refuges for wildlife, but also important linear linkage ('corridors') between larger patches of habitat such as woodland and grassland/grazing marsh.

Appropriately managed arable habitats are becoming increasingly important for certain open farmland species, including brown hare and farmland birds such as skylark, tree sparrow and turtle dove. Where arable land incorporates patches of set-aside, spring-sown crops, species-rich hedgerows, grass leys and/or wide field margins, such species can flourish. However, some of these management practices have waned over recent decades leading to declines in these key species.

The conservation of traditional orchards is a priority at both national and county level as reflected in the UK BAP and the Kent BAP. In their mixture of rough grassland and old trees, they offer a similar habitat to parkland and are important for birds and invertebrates.

The Environmental Stewardship scheme administered by Natural England can help arable and orchard farmland to incorporate valuable habitat features and management practices through targeted funding and advice.

## Climate Change

With a current lack of detailed studies, it is difficult to predict how this area's characteristic habitats will respond to climate change, but species composition within habitats is highly likely to alter. For example, in woods shallow-rooted beech trees may suffer from drier soils but small leaved lime reproduction may increase in response to warmer temperatures. Ponds in these landscapes may also be threatened by hotter, drier summers. Veteran trees within boundaries and along ancient hedgerows are a key concern as the increase in storm-force winds may fell these important habitat features. This could lead to a significant loss of biodiversity, in particular bats, lichens and notable invertebrates of standing dead wood. Therefore, the conservation of veteran trees and the planting of native replacements for the future are important.

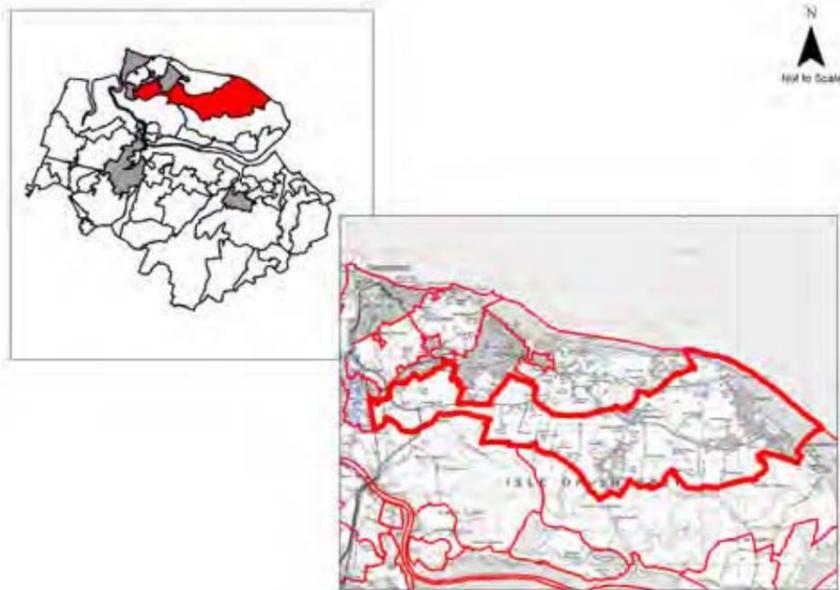
In these farmland landscape types, the economic response to climate change of the agricultural sector may have a greater effect on habitat quality and distribution than the direct climatic effects themselves. Warmer temperatures and drier summers, plus changing world markets may lead to a shift to land uses which can take advantage of such conditions. The challenge will be to ensure that such changes are aligned with mechanisms to preserve and connect important farmland habitats.

## Clay Farmland Guidelines

- Where the urban fringe and prison complexes, holiday parks, industrial buildings, docks, road and rail corridors have significantly reduced the quality and rural character of these areas, the landscape would benefit from screening using native species.
- Conserve veteran trees along boundaries and within ancient hedgerows where these occur along roads and drovers tracks, and plant new standard native species to ensure the continuation of this key characteristic.
- Encourage the reinstatement of hedgerows along former boundaries.



# 13. Central Sheppey Farmlands



## Landscape Description



The Central Sheppey Farmlands are part of the London clay ridge that runs across the northern half of the Isle of Sheppey. It provides the area with a distinctive elevated relief. The ground rises northwards from the flat alluvial plains of the marshland, to form an area of complex topography before dropping away to the sea on the northern side. These slumped, clay cliffs are of significant geological and landscape interest. To the east the steep cliffs of Warden Point are a Site of Special Scientific Interest and are of particular interest for their fossil remains and botanical interest. At its western end the character area is punctuated by the prominent Furze and Barrow Hills.

Traditionally land use was predominantly pasture with occasional orchards but it is now mainly put down to arable cultivation. The combined effects of Dutch Elm Disease, removal of hedgerows and coastal exposure have all contributed to the development of an open and exposed character. The remnant field pattern indicates small-scale fields to the north and east with larger fields to the south and west associated with former drove roads from the higher, drier land out onto the summer grazing of the marshland. Pockets of scrub woodland, some roadside hedges, occasional poplar shelterbelts around existing or former

orchards and overgrown hedgerows provide some localised enclosure and shelter. Community woodlands have been planted in the area in association with new housing.

The steep rolling topography, large open fields and lack of mature woodland all helps in providing long views to the mainland and across the vast marshlands adjacent to the Swale Estuary. These views are particularly notable from Eastchurch, where there are also extensive views towards Leysdown and Whitstable to the east.

Villages, hamlets and farms are scattered across the area and are mostly in keeping with its rural character. However, some oversized farm buildings sited in the lower lying, open areas are incongruous features and inappropriately sited. Elsewhere insensitive modern residential and holiday developments are poorly integrated and intrusive and generally have an urbanising effect. Urban fringe characteristics are particularly apparent at Neatscourt and Rushenden, with the construction of the Rushenden Relief Road between Rushenden and the A249 and residential and employment development in association with the Queensborough and Rushenden Regeneration. The Bunnybank at Eastchurch is one of the few remaining large areas of undeveloped land within the village. The trees here are a distinctive feature in the landscape.



## Key Characteristics

- Ridge of London clay rising steeply to north
- Eroded clay cliffs of geological significance
- Coastal views of estuary and windfarm
- Large-scale open predominantly arable landscape, with infrequent isolated orchards
- Remnant shelterbelts and fragments of over-mature hedgerows
- Poor quality urban fringe developments including holiday parks
- Distinctive outcrop at Bunnybank, Eastchurch
- Prison complex raised on Stanford Hill provides a dominant feature

## Condition: Poor

The condition of the landscape is generally poor. Strong mature hedgerow corridors do exist along the main roads but elsewhere the landscape has an exposed and denuded character, with fragmented shelterbelts and hedgerows scattered across the open arable fields. Woodland planting in association with recent housing development on the periphery of Minster helps to soften the urban edge.

Urban fringe landscapes contain elements that intrude upon and significantly detract from the rural character. Such problems are typically seen along the east coast, where residential development, non-agricultural land uses such as horse grazing and playing fields and poorly integrated caravan and chalet developments spill over into their rural surrounds.

The prison complex at Stanford Hill is a dominant feature in the open rural landscape. It has a wide impact on the adjoining marshland, particularly when floodlit at night.



## Guidelines: Restore and Create

Guidelines for the Central Farmlands are aimed at encouraging restoration and the creation of new landscape features.

- Consider the generic guidelines for clay farmland landscapes.
- Maintain remaining landscape features and look for opportunities to restore or create a stronger landscape structure (trees, shelterbelts, hedgerows, drains, ponds, traditional orchards and woodlands) within denuded areas.
- Look for opportunities to integrate development, including harsh edges and road corridors, through planting.
- Avoid proposals that would be unduly prominent in highly visible locations, such as undeveloped south, east and west facing slopes and limit ribbon development.
- Avoid proposals that would be unduly prominent on the undeveloped coast and those that would obstruct or erode views of the Swale or Thames Estuary.
- Minimise the impacts of external lighting at the prisons on wider landscape.

## Sensitivity: Moderate

This is a moderately sensitive landscape. The prominent hills across the area are important features, although the rural character of some is affected by insensitive and very prominent development, for example the prison at Stanford Hill. However as a whole, they retain a predominantly rural character and their visual prominence means that they are highly sensitive and cannot easily absorb development.

The undulating landform of some areas provides a more intimate and enclosed character. Further limited development could be absorbed but should be well integrated and make a positive contribution to the coherence of the landscape. However, at the undeveloped coast, the open character of the coastline and its sea views could easily be compromised.

The urbanising influence of roads, lighting, signage, power lines and ribbon development further detract from the rural character. A combination of these elements and the need to access the industrial areas to the west has created an urban fringe landscape along the B2231. Associated with this corridor is degraded farmland. A further extension of this ribbon development would be detrimental to the quality of the landscape.

- Use local and vernacular materials appropriate to the location: for boundaries – mostly hedgerows in rural locations, for roofs - Kent-peg tiles and for building walls – yellow or occasional red stock brick, black or white painted weatherboarding. For new hedges and hedgerow trees - hawthorn, pedunculate oak, ash and field maple and for planting in mixed woodland or for within developments - pedunculate oak, ash, wild cherry, field maple, hazel, hawthorn. Shelterbelts – poplar (on higher ground).

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

# 13. Central Sheppey Farmlands

## Biodiversity Network Opportunity

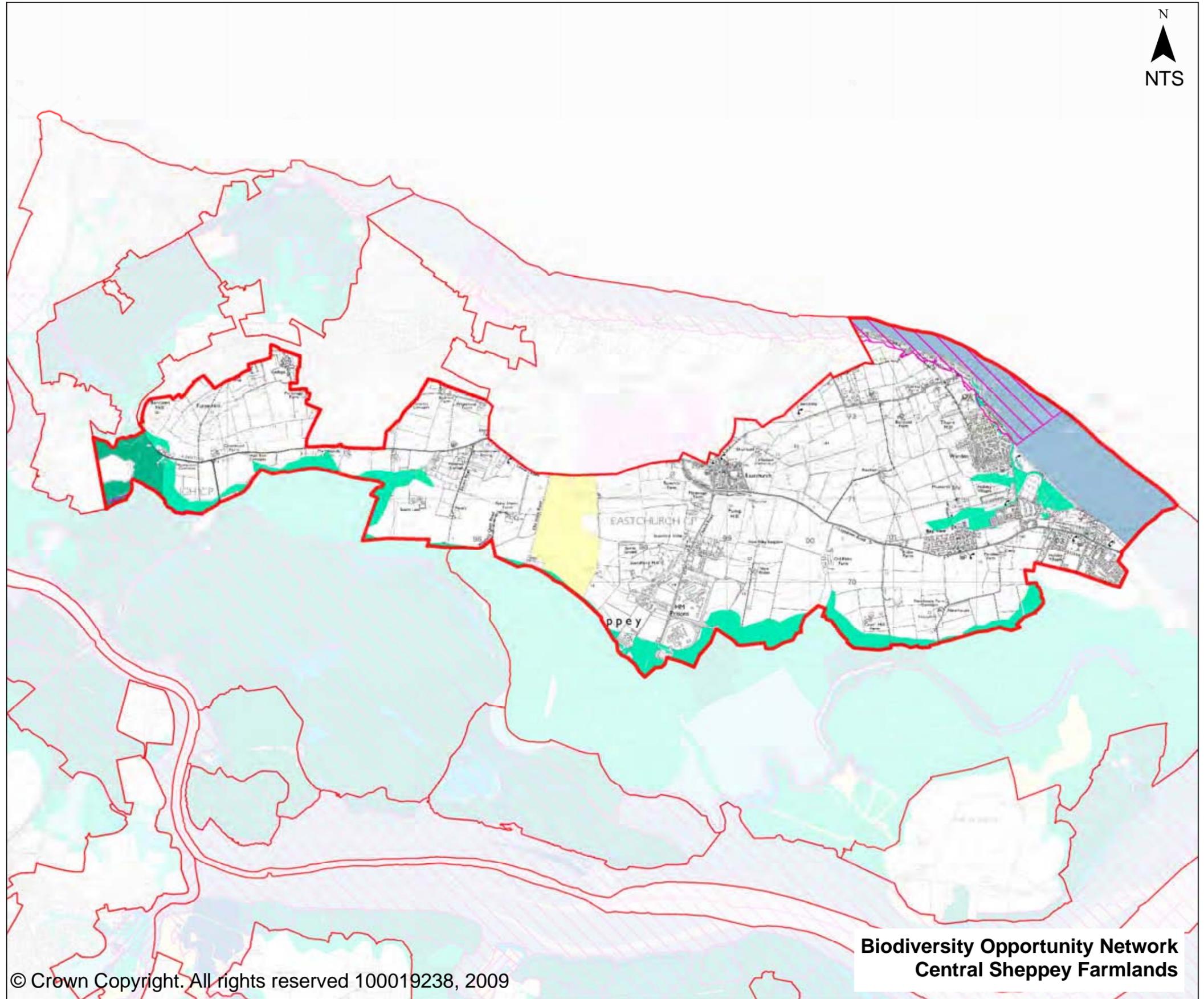
Central Sheppey Farmlands has limited habitat network potential despite the size of the area. Along the southern and eastern boundaries there is some potential for creation or restoration of grazing marsh and/or intertidal habitat in lower-lying coastal areas. In the centre of the area a swathe of species-rich grassland network opportunity also exists. Elsewhere, generic guidelines for arable and orchard land should be followed here. The restoration and extension of the hedgerow network and arable field margins would provide improved habitat connectivity at the local scale, and the sensitive management of older, traditional orchards for biodiversity should be encouraged. Much of this can be supported through the Environmental Stewardship scheme administered by Natural England.



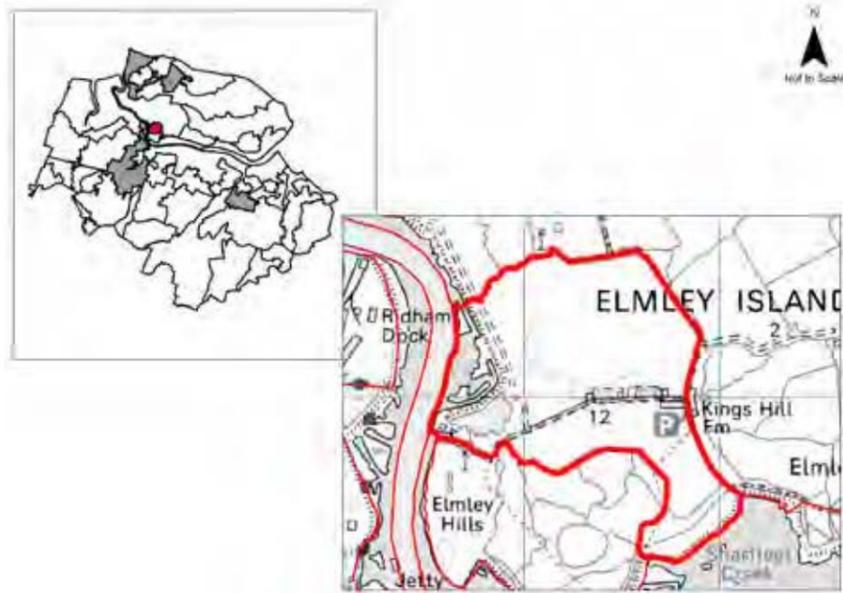
**Legend: Biodiversity Opportunity Network**

*Note: Habitats (existing and potential) are only shown where they occur within the strategic network identified by the Kent Wildlife Trust's BOA mapping (see Figure 10 and Appendix C)*

- Open water (inland) - existing
- Wetland - existing
- Wetland - potential
- Intertidal habitat - existing
- Grazing marsh - existing
- Grazing marsh & intertidal habitat - potential
- Species-rich neutral grassland - existing
- Species-rich neutral grassland - potential
- Acid grassland & heathland - existing
- Acid grassland & heathland - potential
- Chalk grassland - existing
- Chalk grassland - potential
- Ancient Woodland - existing
- Woodland - potential
- Character Areas
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Wildlife Sites



# 14. Elmley Island



## Key Characteristics

- *Outcrops of high ground formed of London clay contrasting with the surrounding flat open alluvial marshland*
- *Long views across open marsh intermittently interrupted by trees and scrub growing on the ridge*
- *Elmley Estate managed for the promotion of biodiversity*
- *Historic buildings in various states of repair*
- *Numerous man made features found in the landscape, provide strong evidence of the history of the area*

## Condition: Good

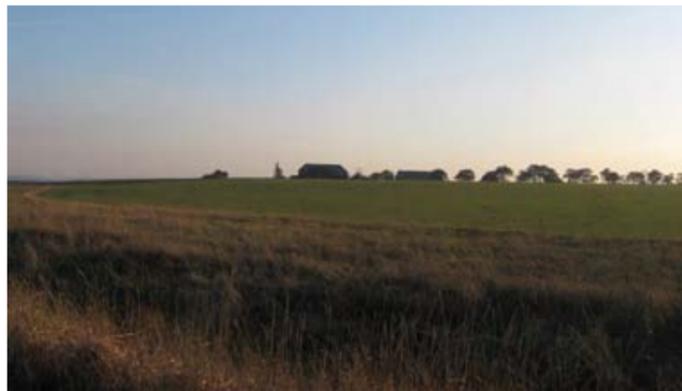
Generally there is a sense of visual unity. Buildings and landscape are generally unspoilt and in good condition. Some historic features are in decline but are not unattractive; rather they remain as decaying reminders of past activities. The cultural integrity of the area is variable. Post and wire fencing is used around the plantation and there are a number of historic buildings in decline. Elsewhere the buildings are maintained to a high standard.

The ecological integrity of the area is very strong. The plantation of mature oaks and recently planted mixed native trees that supplement the existing planting, are a prominent feature in the landscape, as they are sited along the ridge of the island. This and other scrub and former orchard planting around the farmstead, provide interrupted views and make the ridge quite intimate in places, despite its isolated location in the centre of a huge expanse of marsh.

## Sensitivity: High

This is an area of high sensitivity with a very distinct character. Views are in places contained by the scrub and tree planting along the ridgeline, but the open nature of the surrounding landscape provides long views of the island ridge from all sides and across the areas of open marsh.

## Landscape Description



The bridle path descends from the clay ridge onto the lower alluvial marshland, to the site of a former extinct cement works, which closed in 1881. On the banks of the Swale the remains of a wharf and jetty may be seen, together with an adjacent scattering of building foundations, walls and masonry. Nearby a former wind pump may have provided water for the cement workers living and working on Elmley Island. Further south a shingle causeway extending out into the Swale, toward the mainland, indicates where the Elmley Ferry once operated.

The whole area was inundated during the 1953 floods and many of the buildings were damaged or destroyed ending the settlement of the island, save for one farmstead that is still inhabited, close to the original farmhouse.

The ridge affords long open views across the surrounding marshland. As elsewhere the marshland areas are made up of sinuous drainage channels, rough grassland and saltmarsh vegetation, reed-filled ditches, grazing animals and wetland birds. It is extremely remote and unspoilt with a strong sense of place.

The rough track that crosses Elmley Marshes runs southwards to the remote and peaceful 'island' of Elmley. Here, a low ridge of London clay rises to 10m contrasting to the surrounding alluvial landscape. This island has an interesting history, which is now evident in the features found on site. Today the RSPB have offices in the former 16th century farmhouse. Adjacent to this building are a traditional Victorian stockyard and barn all restored and in fine condition. In 1688 James II is believed to have been captured, whilst escaping to exile in France, and incarcerated in this house overnight.

Stretching to the west of the farm buildings, beside a bridle path on the crest of the hill, a scattered line of trees forming a windbreak enclosing two ponds is managed for nature conservation. This path extends to a ruined school and the site of the demolished church of St. James, originally built in 1853. During the Victorian era industry supported a small village community in this area and this explains the presence of the former school and remains of the graveyard.

## Guidelines: Conserve

Guidelines for the Elmley Island Character Area focus on the long-term conservation of areas of international nature conservation importance, whilst safeguarding it as a prominent landscape feature within the wider landscape.

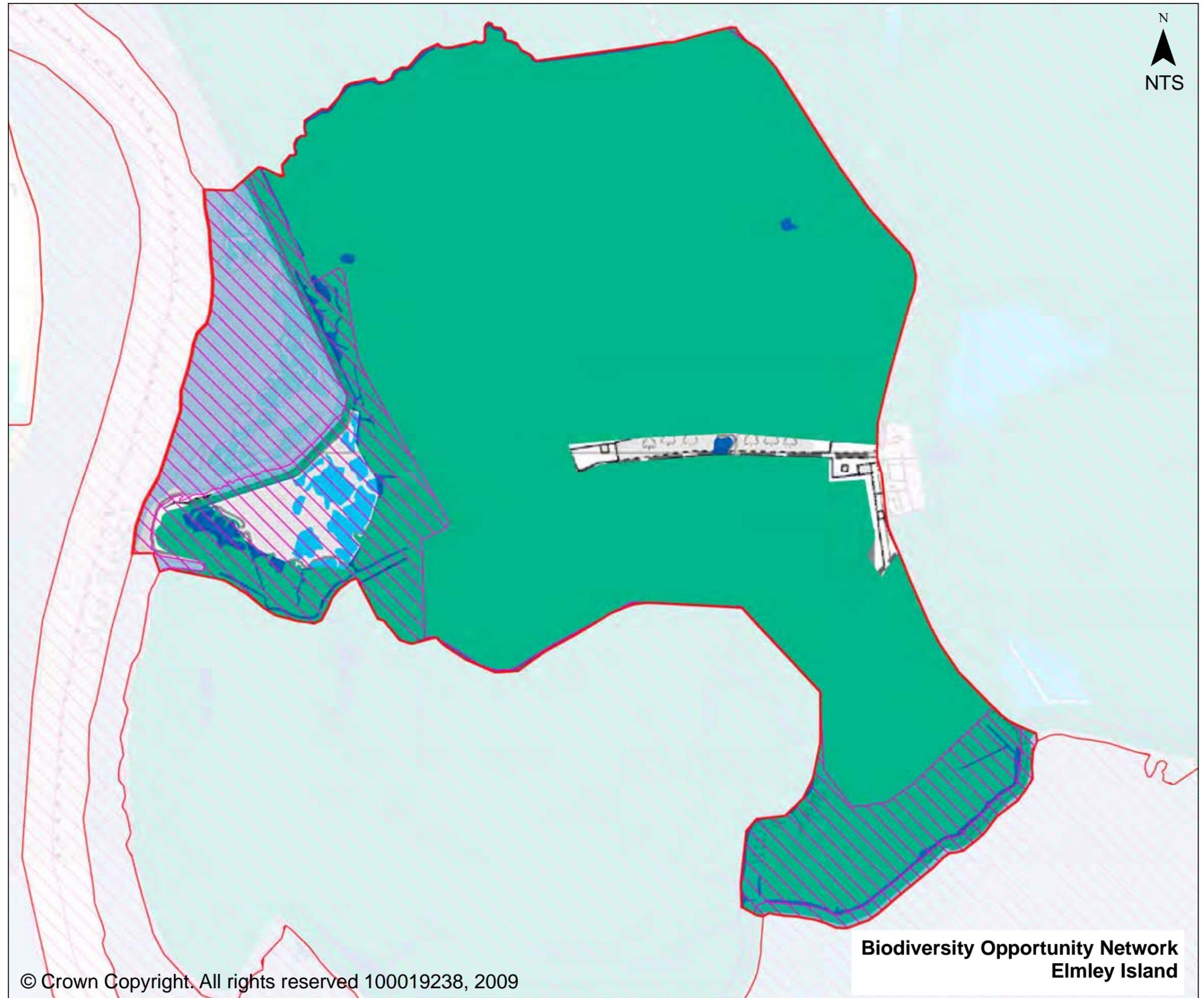
- Consider the generic guidelines for clay farmland landscapes.
- Avoid proposals that would be prominent on the slopes to or tops of higher ground.
- Conserve the undeveloped and distinctive character of the marshland, to maintain the integrity of the wider North Kent Marshes.
- Improve landscape character and ecological diversity on the higher ground, by replacing post and wire fencing with hedgerow planting.

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
Sensitivity				

# 14. Elmley Island

## Biodiversity Network Opportunity

Elmley Island's strategic habitat network consists of almost entirely existing grazing marsh. The rest of the character area is existing fen and reedswamp in the west.

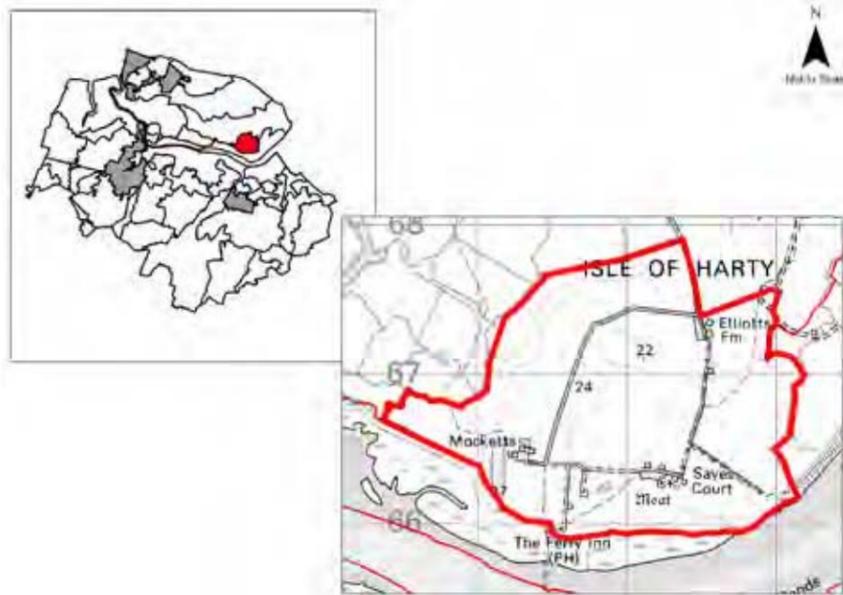


**Legend: Biodiversity Opportunity Network**

*Note: Habitats (existing and potential) are only shown where they occur within the strategic network identified by the Kent Wildlife Trust's BOA mapping (see Figure 10 and Appendix C)*

- Open water (inland) - existing
- Wetland - existing
- Wetland - potential
- Intertidal habitat - existing
- Grazing marsh - existing
- Grazing marsh & intertidal habitat- potential
- Species-rich neutral grassland - existing
- Species-rich neutral grassland - potential
- Acid grassland & heathland - existing
- Acid grassland & heathland - potential
- Chalk grassland - existing
- Chalk grassland - potential
- Ancient Woodland - existing
- Woodland - potential
- Character Areas
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Wildlife Sites

# 15. Isle of Harty



## Key Characteristics

- Former Island and high point formed of London clay contrasting with surrounding low lying marshland
- Strong history of settlement dating from 4th Century AD
- Medium to large-scale irregular fields
- Limited scattered mature vegetation
- Panoramic views
- Isolated settlement, a number of buildings and features of historic interest, including St Thomas's Church

## Landscape Description

The Isle of Harty is no longer an island since areas of the Capel Fleet, that once separated it from the mainland, have been reclaimed. Nevertheless it remains a remote and prominent feature in the landscape. It is an outcrop of London clay that rises to 26m above the surrounding low lying marsh and access remains limited to one narrow winding lane, the Harty Ferry Road.

In spite of its remoteness, archaeological evidence indicates that Harty was probably the site of the earliest human settlement on Sheppey. Evidence suggests that a small Romano-British settlement on the Isle of Harty possibly dated from 4th Century AD. The position of Harty on the main waterway used by shipping between southern England and the continent at that time and the nearness of the Watling Street would have been contributory factors. The ferry at Harty was in use from the time of these early settlers and remained so until the construction of the Kingsferry Bridge. The jetty remains as an interesting local landscape feature. From the inn, panoramic views across the Swale of the mainland and of the boats in the channel are present.

The island is an agricultural landscape, with medium to large-scale irregular fields. Vegetation is limited to fragmented clumps of mature hawthorn, willow and elder, with an avenue of oaks leading to Sayes Court. Most of the mature trees and scrub are found growing around buildings and scattered along the lanes. Agricultural intensification has led to the development of larger scale fields devoid of internal hedgerows.

A small portion of grazing marsh to the south east of the area is designated as part of the Swale SSSI/SPA which is important for its assemblages of wintering and passage birds.

There are a number of interesting and historic buildings on the island including Sayes Court restored following damage during the Second World War, St. Thomas's Church dating from 12th century and the 18th century Harty Ferry Inn. The small hamlet that grew up around the church included a school, now derelict.

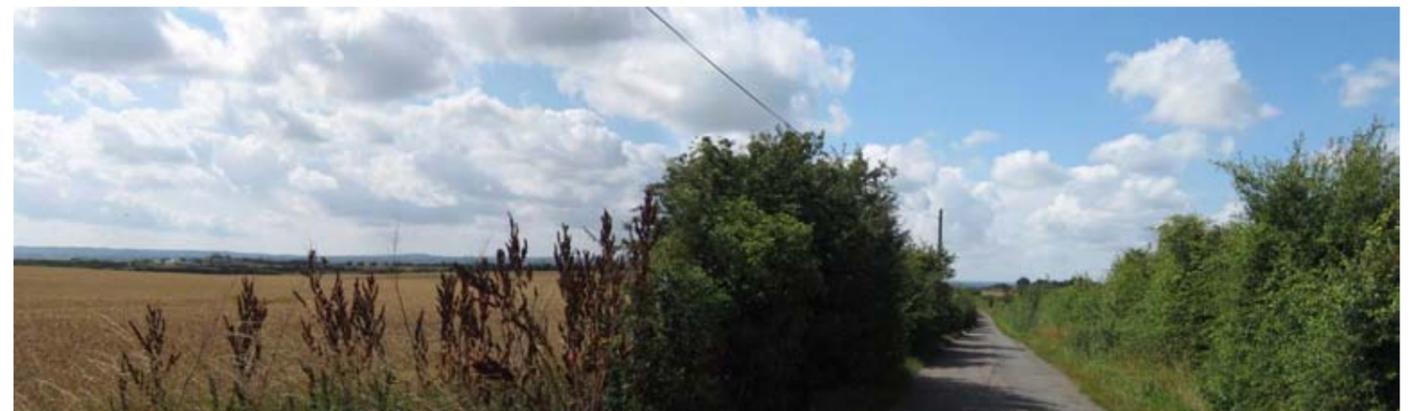


Of St. Thomas's, the Poet Laureate, Sir John Betjeman, remarked "the church in its splendid isolation, with seabirds wheeling by the Thames so wide as to be open sea, and the air so fresh as to be healthier than yoghurt."

## Condition: Moderate

The condition of this landscape is moderate, which has improved since 2005 because of recent gapping up of hedgerows. There are a number of contributing factors, including derelict buildings and fragmented mature vegetation. The buildings are in various states of repair, but the most prominent are in good condition and in traditional vernacular styles. Generally visual unity is strong, with vegetation helping to screen any potentially degrading features. The ecological integrity of the area has been hampered by agricultural intensification and the loss of ecological networks. However, some recent gapping up of hedgerows will reinstate the landscape and ecological framework. The designated marshland to the south east is in favourable condition.

Buildings vary from very good condition in traditional vernacular styles to derelict. There are strong links to the past, most notably the church and ferry.



## Sensitivity: High

This is a unique and highly sensitive environment with very distinct and historic origins with a strong sense of place. This sensitivity is further enforced by the lack of mature vegetation found on the island and the high point on which it stands. Long views to and from the island of the mainland, the Swale and beyond are therefore largely open and unrestricted.

## Guidelines: Conserve and Restore

Guidelines for the Isle of Harty are to restore those distinctive features and patterns of the landscape, whilst safeguarding it as a prominent landscape feature within the wider landscape.

- Consider the generic guidelines for clay farmland landscapes and for landmark buildings.
- Conserve the area's rural character, including its historic buildings and features, rural lanes and tracks, together with its remnant hedgerows, vegetation, mature trees leading to and around buildings and ponds. Look for opportunities to further restore (including the creation of) smaller scale field patterns, by establishing orchards and a stronger network of hedgerows, trees and ponds.
- Conserve the undeveloped character of the landscape, which is surrounded by the distinctive marshland of the North Kent Marshes.
- Avoid proposals that would be prominent in locations such as the slopes or top of higher ground, or the shoreline, together with those that would interrupt views of large open skies or horizons (including those of other character areas).
- Encourage suitable planting around visually prominent farm buildings (particularly large, modern sheds) to soften the visual impact.

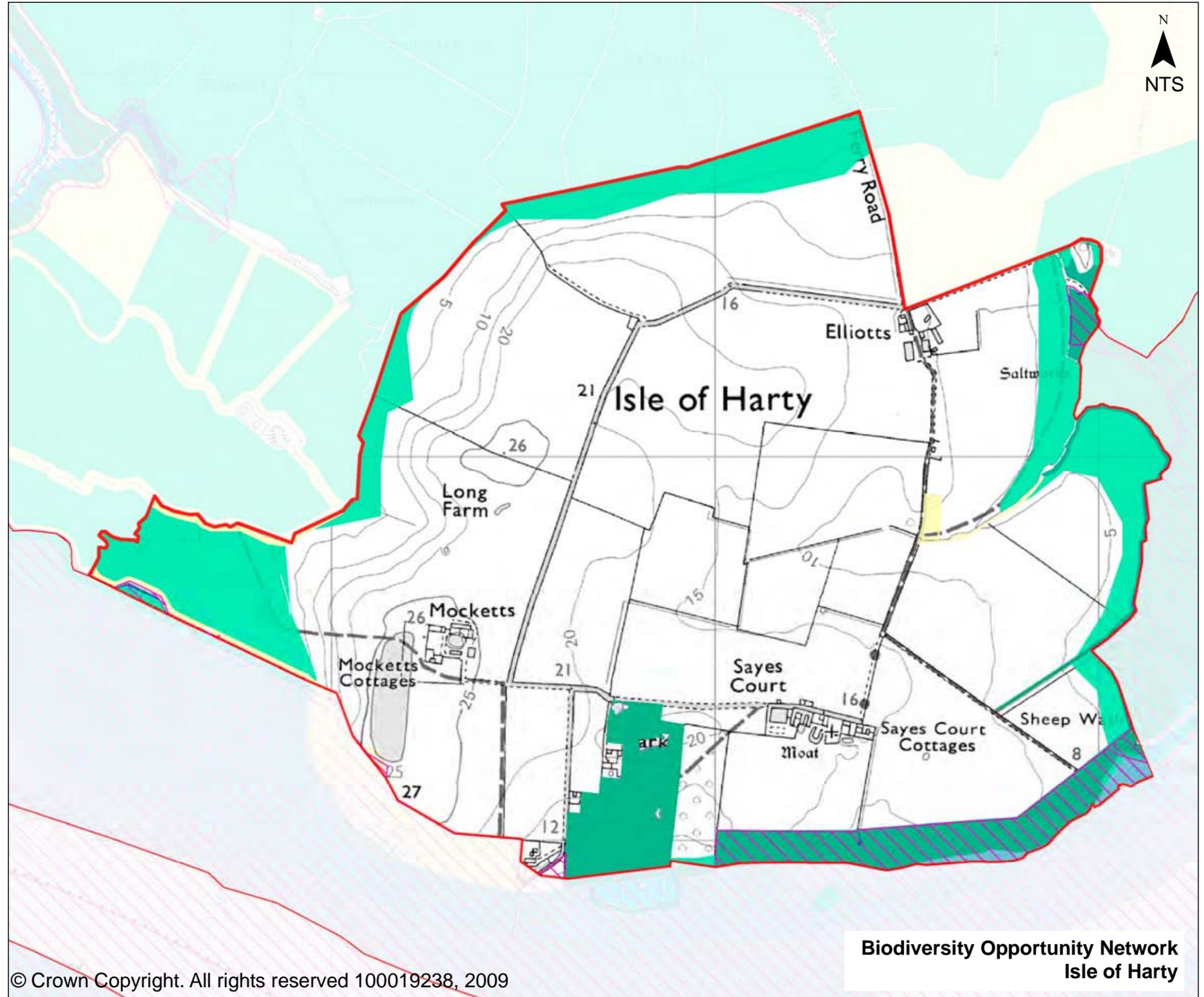
- Use local and vernacular materials appropriate to the location: for boundaries - hedgerows, for roofs - Kent-peg tiles and for building walls – ragstone, red brick, painted brickwork. For new hedges and hedgerow trees - hawthorn, blackthorn and, for planting generally (usually scrub) - pedunculate oak (also in avenue planting), ash, wild cherry, field maple, willow, hawthorn.

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
Sensitivity				

# 15. Isle of Harty

## Biodiversity Network Opportunity

The Isle of Harty has some opportunity for extending the grazing marsh and intertidal network on the low ground at its periphery. Elsewhere, generic guidelines for arable and orchard land should be followed here. The restoration and extension of the hedgerow network and arable field margins would provide improved habitat connectivity at the local scale. Much of this can be supported through the Environmental Stewardship scheme administered by Natural England.



**Legend: Biodiversity Opportunity Network**

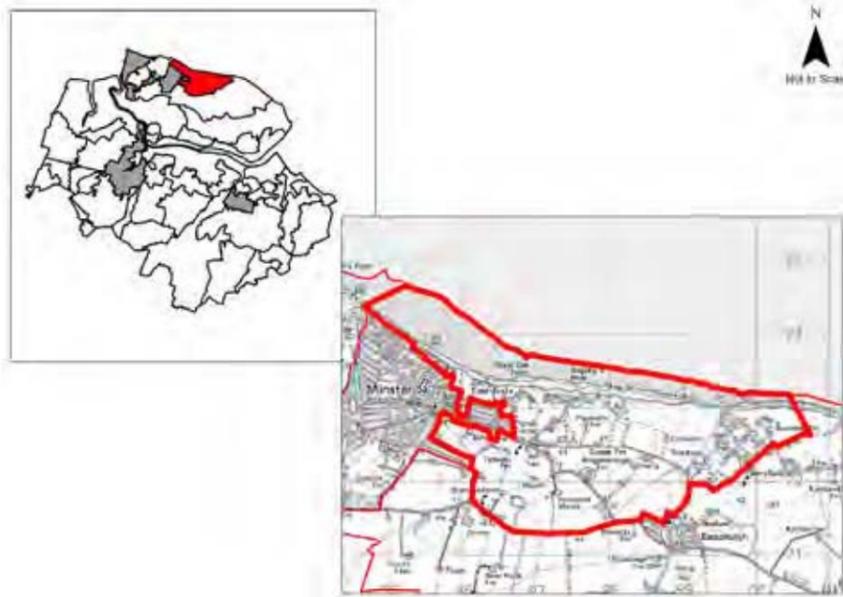
Note: Habitats (existing and potential) are only shown where they occur within the strategic network identified by the Kent Wildlife Trust's BOA mapping (see Figure 10 and Appendix C)

- Open water (inland) - existing
- Wetland - existing
- Wetland - potential
- Intertidal habitat - existing
- Grazing marsh - existing
- Grazing marsh & intertidal habitat - potential
- Species-rich neutral grassland - existing
- Species-rich neutral grassland - potential
- Acid grassland & heathland - existing
- Acid grassland & heathland - potential
- Chalk grassland - existing
- Chalk grassland - potential
- Ancient Woodland - existing
- Woodland - potential
- Character Areas
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Wildlife Sites

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**Biodiversity Opportunity Network  
Isle of Harty**

# 16. Minster and Warden Farmlands



## Landscape Description

This area is located to the far north of the island is the highest part of Sheppey. The geology is mixed, with the lower areas and cliffs formed from the soft London clay. Higher up are the Claygate beds, Bagshot beds and head gravel. Here the land is a complex undulating topography that drops steeply to the sea on the north coast. From this, the 'roof top' of Sheppey, there are magnificent long views of the Kentish mainland to the south and some fine views of the Thames Estuary to the north. Where the Claygate and Bagshot beds meet the London clay a number of springs arise. From these, streams flow northwards to the cliffs. The steeply wooded cliffs are important for their botanical interest and in geological terms for their fossil remains. Below the cliffs are sandy beaches, separated by timber groynes, and extensive mudflats.



## Key Characteristics

- Highest part of Sheppey rising to 76m at The Mount
- Rolling topography with mixed geology of London clay, Claygate beds, Bagshot beds and head gravel
- Eroded clay cliffs of geological significance
- Small to medium-scale irregular field pattern
- Remnant poplar windbreaks and fragmented hedgerows
- Narrow enclosed lanes
- Mixed land use comprising of arable production and urban fringe activities such as horse pasture, playing fields and holiday parks
- Long views south to mainland and glimpses of the Thames Estuary to the north. Views of hill-top Minster Abbey

The field pattern is small to medium-scale, with sections of mature poplar windbreak indicative of the areas traditional use in fruit production. These shelterbelts and remnant, fragmented sections of mature hedgerow are seen along the narrow lanes and scattered around some fields. Land use today is mixed, with farmland generally used for the production of arable crops. However, urban/ rural fringe activities have put great pressure on the agricultural landscape in this area.

The rolling topography and areas of well-established mature vegetation helps to screen many of these elements and provides a more intimate and enclosed character than elsewhere. However, the overall effect is of a fragmented and discordant landscape with little coherence or identity.

## Condition: Poor

The Minster and Warden Farmlands is a landscape in poor condition. The screening provided by topography and vegetation helps to provide the impression of a coherent landscape. However, urban fringe activities have degraded its traditional rural qualities. Where hedgerows have been lost uncharacteristic post and wire or post and rail fencing has been the replacement.

Caravan parks, intrusive residential development (in a huge variety of non-vernacular styles) together and non-agricultural land uses such as horse grazing and playing fields, are all elements which intrude upon and detract from the rural, agricultural character of the landscape to a significant degree.

There are a number of well-maintained scattered historic farms, which provide a strong indication of the past character of the area. New housing development has been accompanied by the creation of new woodland, which will help to increase the ecological and aesthetic value of the area in the longer term.



## Guidelines: Restore and Create

The Minster and Eastchurch Farmlands are an area that should be restored and new landscape features created to provide a unifying influence on the existing fragmented pattern of development and land use and to reduce the influence of urbanising elements.

- Consider the generic guidelines for clay farmland landscapes.
- Maintain the existing pattern of small to medium-scale fields and ponds and the character of narrow enclosed lanes and look to restore and create a stronger more cohesive landscape framework (including at the urban edge and holiday parks), in the form of hedgerow, shelterbelt, avenue, tree planting and ponds.
- Avoid proposals that would be unduly prominent on undeveloped south facing slopes or on the undeveloped coast and those that would obstruct or erode views of the Swale or Thames Estuary.
- Maintain views to and the landscape setting of Minster Abbey.

## Sensitivity: Moderate

This is a moderately sensitive area. The folding topography and mature vegetation helps to disguise some of the less attractive features and protect some of the more traditional features, but some prominent slopes e.g. at Gilbert Hall Farm, The Mount and Shrubsoles and Round Hills are more sensitive to new development and/or compromise views of the coast or visually notable buildings like Minster Abbey. New woodland planting will also help to create a more distinct local feature and help to integrate new housing development into the landscape.

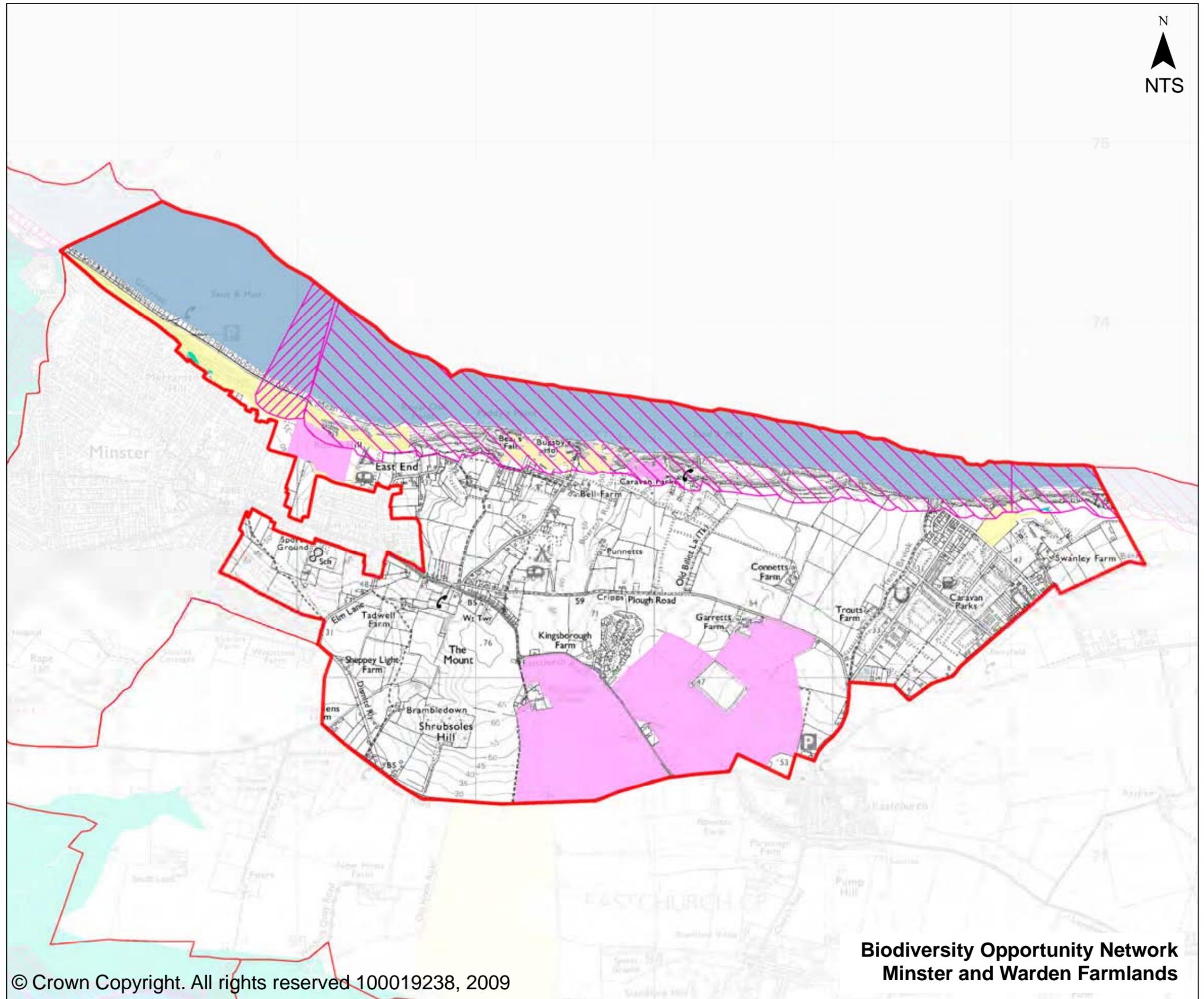
- Use local and vernacular materials appropriate to the location: for boundaries - mostly hedgerows, for roofs - Kent-peg tiles and for building walls – yellow or occasional red stock brick, black or white painted weatherboarding. For new hedges and hedgerow trees - hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, dog rose, for mixed woodland or for within developments - pedunculate oak, ash, wild cherry, field maple, hawthorn and elder, additionally lime or horse chestnut (as specimen trees within villages). Shelterbelts – poplar and pedunculate oak.

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
Sensitivity				

# 16. Minster and Warden Farmlands

## Biodiversity Network Opportunity

The potential habitat network here is characterised by species-rich neutral grassland opportunity along the coastal fringe, and a larger area of acid grass and heath opportunity to the south, with smaller patches of such opportunity near the coast. Elsewhere, the restoration and extension of the hedgerow network and arable field buffers/margins would provide improved habitat connectivity at the local scale, and should be encouraged. Much of this can be supported through the Environmental Stewardship scheme administered by Natural England.

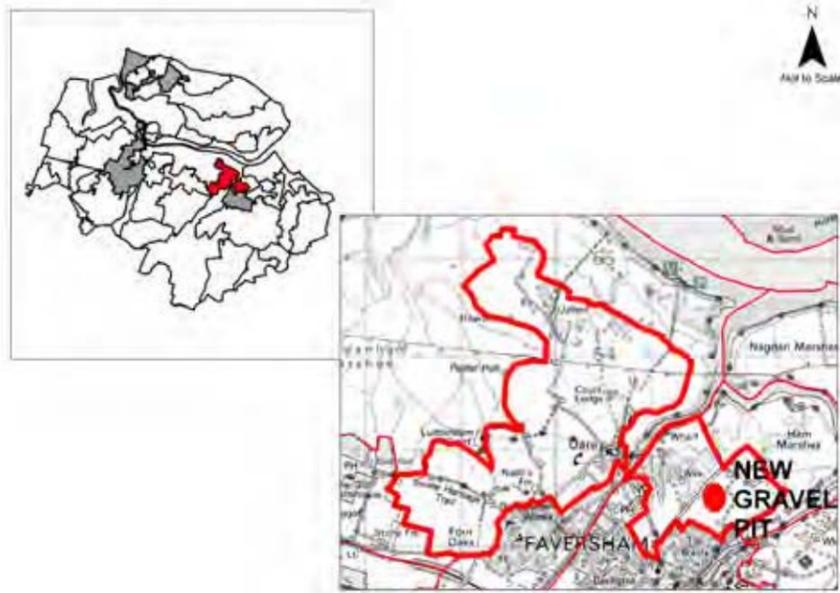


**Legend: Biodiversity Opportunity Network**

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- Wetland - existing
- Wetland - potential
- Intertidal habitat - existing
- Grazing marsh - existing
- Grazing marsh & intertidal habitat - potential
- Species-rich neutral grassland - existing
- Species-rich neutral grassland - potential
- Acid grassland & heathland - existing
- Acid grassland & heathland - potential
- Chalk grassland - existing
- Chalk grassland - potential
- Ancient Woodland - existing
- Woodland - potential
- Character Areas
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Wildlife Sites

# 17. Stone Arable Farmlands



## Key Characteristics

- Rolling landscape, gently rising south away from the marshland edge
- Large number of boats at Oare Creek
- Complex geology of London clay, head brickearth, head gravel and the more fertile Woolwich, Oldhaven and Thanet beds
- A landscape generally enlarged as a result of agricultural intensification. Also isolated, smaller scale, more traditionally managed landscapes
- Flooded pools and gravel workings at Oare and Ham Farm
- Fragmented mature hedgerows along narrow enclosed winding lanes
- Many traditional buildings dating from 17th and 18th century. Victorian cottages and 20th century housing

## Landscape Description



Narrow, often sunken lanes wind through the landscape. In places strong hedgerows enclose the lanes; elsewhere they are open to the adjacent fields. Oare village is the largest settlement, situated on the north east fringe of Faversham most of the buildings here date from the 1800s with modern infill. The village perches on the old coastline overlooking the sights and sounds of the many boats moored in the creek, together with the flooded pools and trees formed by the gravel working beyond.

Elsewhere, small groups of cottages and isolated farmsteads are scattered across the landscape, with the little hamlet of Uplees nestled into a piece of high ground just above Uplees Marsh. Building stock is typically of traditional local vernacular style. Many of the properties date from the 17th, 18th and 19th century and are built in brick extracted locally with half tile hung cladding, occasional timber framed dwellings and barns still exist.

North and west of Faversham are the Stone Arable Farmlands. Here the land rises steeply by 35m from the marshland edge. The complex geology includes large blocks of London clay on the high ground adjacent to the marsh. To the south are the mixed head brickearth, head gravel, Woolwich and Oldhaven beds, with a more significant area of Thanet beds located further south still.

This is a rolling arable landscape with enlarged fields that are irregular in shape and medium to large-scale. Traditional farming practices are evident in the few orchards that now remain at Little Uplees. Mature fragmented hedgerows are found along the external field boundaries, but many of the internal hedgerows have been lost. High points in open farmland provide excellent views to Sheppey and east across the marshes. The slope up to Bysing Wood in an adjacent character area provides a strong background and contrast to this area.



## Condition: Poor

This landscape is in poor condition, although there are pockets of more traditional landscape which is in better condition. There are significant urban fringe influences north of Faversham, comprising extensive works off Ham Road. Whilst much of this land has been restored to large lakes and wetlands which support the wider marshland landscape, there are remnant detracting features. The wider landscape is an area now largely used for intensive arable farming, where fields have been enlarged and as a result hedgerows lost. Remnant mature sections do still exist in some fields, indicating the line of former boundaries. At the lane side hedgerows are more complete but still fragmented. Post and wire fencing has been used to supplement these boundaries. Large pylons cross the area, causing a significant visual detracting feature. Occasionally mature shelterbelts are also found at field margins of neighbouring fruit orchards. Fruit trees are scattered around the tiny isolated hamlet of Little Uplees, remnant of former orchards.

Ecological integrity varies greatly. At Little Uplees and on the surrounding grazing fields it may be described as strong. The Oare gravel workings have forged a landscape that is diverse in its visual, ecological and historic interest. Elsewhere agricultural intensification has reduced the areas usefulness in terms of wildlife to the fragmented hedges and shelterbelts.

Building stock is mainly of traditional character and in good condition. Some recent development has taken place but cannot be considered to have made a significant impact on the landscape. Most of the older properties are in good condition.

## Guidelines: Restore and Create

Guidelines for Stone Arable Farmlands include the restoration of historic landscapes whilst creating an improved landscape structure where feasible.

- Consider the generic guidelines for clay farmland landscapes, commercial and equestrian, and on landmark buildings, particularly relating to St Mary's Church, Faversham.
- Avoid proposals that would be unduly prominent on high or open ground, and have particular regard to sensitive views from the marshes to the north.
- Conserve the undeveloped and distinctive character of the marshland to the north, to maintain the integrity of the wider North Kent Marshes.
- Restore and create/strengthen landscape patterns through infilling existing hedgerows and planting new hedges and integrate existing and new development using hedges and shelterbelts.
- Conserve the distinctive landscape character of historic structures, pools and land formed at the Oare gravel workings, together with the woodland backdrop formed by Bysing Wood and the characteristic ridge comprising the former coastline at Oare.
- Use local and vernacular materials appropriate to the location: for boundaries, hedgerow, yellow and (some red) stock brick walls, for roofs – Kent-

## Sensitivity: Moderate

It is a moderately sensitive area. In places it is very distinct and historic in origin with a strong sense of place and historic buildings. Whilst visibility can be described as enclosed in places, elsewhere topographical high points and a landscape opened up for modern farming practices means that the landscape is generally vulnerable to change.



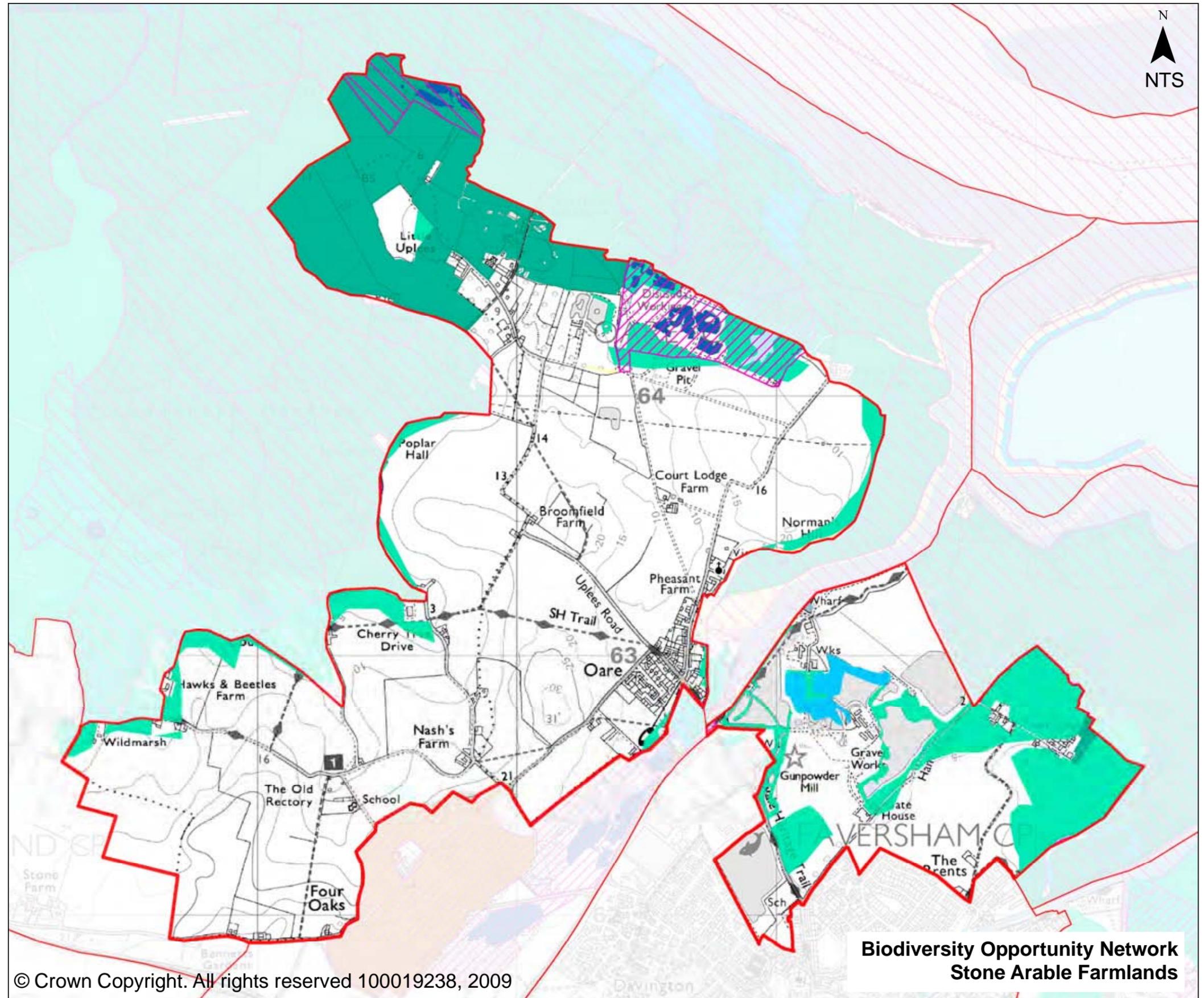
peg tiles and occasional slate and corrugated iron sheets on rural outbuildings, for building walls – tile hanging, yellow and red stock brick, some render and weatherboarding. For new hedges and hedgerow trees - hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, field maple, for other planting - pedunculate oak, hornbeam, ash, hazel and field maple, additionally at lower levels, birch, alder and reeds. Additionally, within developed areas - older fruit tree varieties for trees. Shelterbelts – alder. Other - occasional fruit orchard.

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
		Sensitivity		

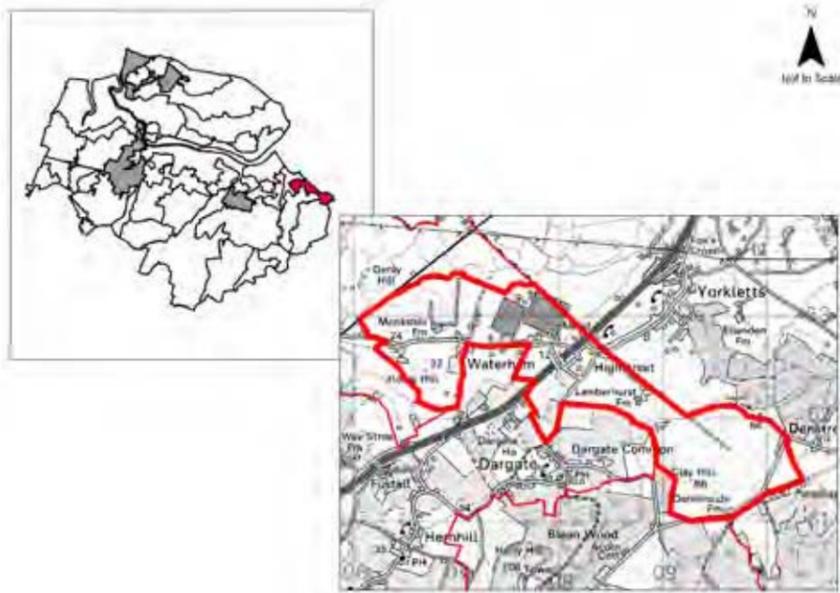
# 17. Stone Arable Farmlands

## Biodiversity Network Opportunity

Stone Arable Farmlands habitat network interest falls mainly to the north and east where areas of existing grazing marsh and wetland habitats are situated near to areas of grazing marsh and/or intertidal opportunity. Elsewhere, on the higher ground generic guidelines for arable land should be followed. The restoration and extension of the hedgerow network and arable field margins would provide improved habitat connectivity at the local scale, and should be encouraged. Much of this can be supported through the Environmental Stewardship scheme administered by Natural England.



# 18. Waterham Clay Farmlands



## Landscape Description



The topography of this area distinguishes it from adjacent landscapes. Centrally it is low lying and is divided by the A299 road corridor. On either side the landscape gently rises away from this busy thoroughfare and then steeply forms a number of domed hills used for grazing and arable farming. The London clay that outcrops here defines this unique landform.

The field pattern is small to large-scale and irregular in form. The landscape has an open and exposed character particularly to the north of the A299 where the land drops down directly onto the open plain of Graveney Marsh. However this area may be described as intimate due to the small-scale hills and fields. Here the steeply sloping landscape is mainly used for sheep grazing. At Monkshill and Horse Hill and in locations where farmland adjoins the Graveney Dykes, a distinctive landscape is formed. Part of this area is locally designated for biodiversity as part of the Graveney Dykes and Pasture LWS.

To the south of the A299 the landscape is more open and rises to form the domed Clay Hill. This area contains large fields, intensively farmed for cereal production. Evidence from maps of the mid 19th and 20th centuries indicate that this area was not cleared of woodland until the latter half of the 20th century. Formerly it would have been part of the Blean woodland complex. Clay Hill now acts as foreground to the Blean Woods, although it has been acquired by the Woodland Trust who have replanted it with trees to restore its

cultural identity with the Blean Woods complex and improve its ecological value.

Adjacent woodland and orchards partially enclose the area, but overall the large fields, elevated topography and internal field boundaries of post and wire fencing, create an open character. The ephemeral streams known as Hawkins Hill Drain catchment and North Drain catchment also define and subdivide the large fields.

Long panoramic views are present across the Seasalter Levels and Graveney Marsh to the northwest as far as Essex on a clear day. To the south views of the Blean Woods and the adjacent fruit belt dominate, but at intervals small areas of remnant woodland and over-mature hedgerows interrupt these.

Settlement is limited to scattered cottages and isolated farms. Two industrial units are located on the flatter land adjacent to the trunk road. These enormous glasshouses are extremely incongruous in an otherwise intimate and traditional landscape.



## Key Characteristics

- Distinctive domed hills set within an otherwise low lying landscape
- London clay geology with heavy soils
- Ephemeral streams feed into the marshes
- Clay Hill cleared of woodland in mid 20th century for cereal production
- Woodland planting across Clay Hill to reinstate the landscape as part of the Blean complex
- Small areas of remnant woodland at field boundaries
- Rising ground abuts marshland
- Monkshill and Horsehill used for sheep grazing
- Many hedgerows lost and fragmented. Field boundaries replaced with post and wire fencing
- Isolated farmsteads and groups of cottages. Large industrial units
- A and B roads
- Extensive views over Seasalter Levels and Graveney Marsh to coast and beyond

## Condition: Poor

Waterham Clay Farmlands are generally in poor condition. The landscape pattern is incoherent and there are a number of detracting features, including the large industrial sheds and general poor state of landscape elements such as hedgerows. Whilst replanting has begun to establish across Clay Hill which will eventually improve the condition of the landscape, it has not yet become visually established.

The functional integrity of the landscape is low, as its cultural and ecological interest has been eroded by woodland clearance and the breakdown of hedgerows and shelterbelts. Groups of semi mature dead elms have been left standing. These provide useful homes for a variety of flora and fauna, but visually detract from the scene.

The building stock is generally in good condition. Most dates from the mid 19th and 20th century and is built in brick with modern cottages built in brick and weatherboard. Unfortunately the large industrial units do not respect local building style and do not contribute to the character of the area.

## Guidelines: Restore and Create

Actions appropriate to Waterham Clay Farmlands are those that will restore its traditional character, including the creation of landscape elements lost over time.

- Consider the generic guidelines for clay farmland landscapes.
- On higher ground, look for opportunities to restore native broadleaf woodland to enlarge and link with existing areas, whilst safeguarding ephemeral streams and restoring or creating networks of hedgerows and woodlands where appropriate.
- Conserve the distinctive landscape character formed at the boundaries with other character areas, such as where orchard and pasture adjoin the Graveney Dykes at and around Monkshill and Horse Hill and restore the more intimate landscape structure of smaller scale fields, shelterbelts and hedgerows.
- Avoid inappropriate large-scale or obtrusive elements on the visually sensitive high ground and encourage the improved integration into the landscape of existing agricultural and commercial buildings and new development by use of shelterbelts and hedgerows.

## Sensitivity: Moderate

This is a moderately sensitive landscape. The changes that have taken place in the landscape have eroded many of the area's distinctive features and weakened its sense of place.

The dominant landform is the strongest landscape element. Combined with the lack of visually evident tree cover, this creates a highly visible landscape. On the north west side where the areas of high ground face onto the low lying Seasalter Levels and Graveney Marsh the visibility is very high and locally more sensitive.



- Use local and vernacular materials appropriate to the location: for boundaries - red (almost predominantly) stock brick walls or hedgerows, for roofs - Kent-peg tiles and occasional slate or corrugated sheeting on outbuildings and for building walls – weatherboarding, red stock brick and white/rendered painted brick. For new hedges and hedgerow trees - hawthorn, hazel, field maple, dog rose and dogwood. For mixed-woodland or other planting - pedunculate oak, hazel and field maple, scattered oak standards in open fields. Additionally, within developed areas – older fruit tree varieties and beech hedging. Shelterbelts – poplar or alder.

Condition	good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE
	moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE
	poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
		low	moderate	high
Sensitivity				

# 18. Waterham Clay Farmlands

## Biodiversity Network Opportunity

Waterham Clay Farmlands holds some potential to develop the woodland network in the land to the south-east where it abuts the Blean woodland complex at Clay Hill. Some tree planting has already been undertaken by the Woodland Trust here, but is not yet established woodland and there may be opportunity to extend this.

