Elmstead Parish
Landscape Setting Report

Supporting Document to Elmstead Neighbourhood Plan

2022

Elmstead Parish Council

Contents

Section	Contents	Page
1	Introduction	
2	Assessment of the Landscape Setting	
3	Borders	
4	Relief	
5	Elmstead Market	
6	Small Village Fields	
7	Larger Rural Fields	
8	Reservoirs	
9	Streams and Brooks	
10	Ditches	
11	Hedgerows	
12	Spinney	
13	Managed Woodland	
14	Ancient Woodland	
16	Interconnectivity	

1. Introduction

1.1 In establishing Elmstead's Neighbourhood Plan a widespread consensus was displayed through community conversations stressing the importance of maintaining the villages setting in the wider rural landscape. It is clear to maintain the villages character this setting must be maintained and protected.

1.2 Over the course of the neighbourhood plan procedure, a number of outreach activities have emphasised concern about development both removing this landscape area, and altering the wider setting – and the villages interaction with it.

1.3 Therefore the purposes of this report are:

- To identify the key features of the neighbourhood plans landscape.
- To record and explain the varying aspects of areas of the setting on a local scale.
- To consider the ramifications of potential development on these landscape areas.

1.4 Further concerns have been raised over the looming development of the Tendring Colchester Border Garden Community, which heavily encroaches on the existing landscape surroundings. In order for the setting to be maintained, and protection provided against coalescence it is felt the setting must be documented and evaluated in its current preferable state.

2. Assessment of the Landscape Setting of Elmstead Parish

2.1 Elmstead Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) defines its plan area as that of Elmsteads Parish Boundary – a perimeter encompassing approximately 1450 hectares.

2.2 The Parish is composed of the village of Elmstead Market near its approximate geographical center and surrounding rural landscape.

2.3 The Parish is located in north-east Essex, some 3 miles east of Colchester.

2.3 The area is part of the northern Thames basin as defined by the national character area scheme. Albeit adjacent to the areas northern boundary.

2.4 While the area is underlaid by London clay, it has unusually high quality soil due to alluvial deposits from the nearby river Colne and its tributaries.

2.5 Historically this has lead to substantial farming for much of recorded history, continuing to this day as over 60% of the parishes area is grade 3a or better ‘best and most versatile’ farmland.

2.6 Such conditions also provide trees with favourable conditions, with the area containing substantial swathes of woodland, both ancient, and managed.

2.7 While significantly drier than English average rainfall values, the area is well irrigated by a number of brooks, streams, springs and reservoirs. The majority of these water sources have been augmented at some time in the past century or more to best provide for the areas needs, but most retain a predominately natural state.

2.8 The long agricultural history of the area has lead to a number of heritage buildings as part of the landscape setting. Oldest is the parish church of st anne and st Michael, believed to have been built in 1310. A number of farm cottages also date back multiple centuries, and many display an aesthetic style recognisable for its local origin.

3. Borders

3.1 Elmstead's North and East borders predominantly follow the centre line of Bromley brook, forming a natural boundary between the parish and Bromley to the north and Frating to the east.

3.2 Elmstead's Southern border is more irregular, following hedgerows and field boundaries of historic property lines, the far side of which is the parish of alresford.

3.3 A quirk of historic byelaws requiring cattle watering rights has led to the village retaining a narrow spur of land extending to the south west in a dog legged shape, meeting the river Colne and extending to the water ways centre, where Elmstead shares a short border with the village of Rowhedge.

3.4 The Western parish border is also the district boundary of Tendring, the far side being the borough of Colchester. To the south west is wivenhoe, a town within Colchester borough, while immediately west, just beyond the university of Essex is Colchester itself, formerly a town, but which recently became a city in May 2022. The north western border runs along a natural line forming the ridge of salary brooks valley, beyond the brook is the Colchester ward of green stead.

3.5 The north, east and southern borders share a rural character, whereby leaving the village of Elmstead Market transitions from a rural village, into a countryside landscape of farmland, broken into small to medium fields by established hedgerows and pockets/corridors of woodland and other natural environments. It is some distance beyond the boundary through a similar landscape before one reaches small settlements that share similar local characteristics to Elmstead, with some distinguishing features of their own.

3.6 The western boundary remains rural, but has the potential to change in the near future dependant on the emerging plans for the Tendring Colchester borders garden community. Currently upon crossing the western boundary, one passes by the university of Essex, which while heavily developed is set beyond the historic estate of wivenhoe house, which maintains gardens and woodland providing an additional landscape barrier between Elmstead and the more urban setting.

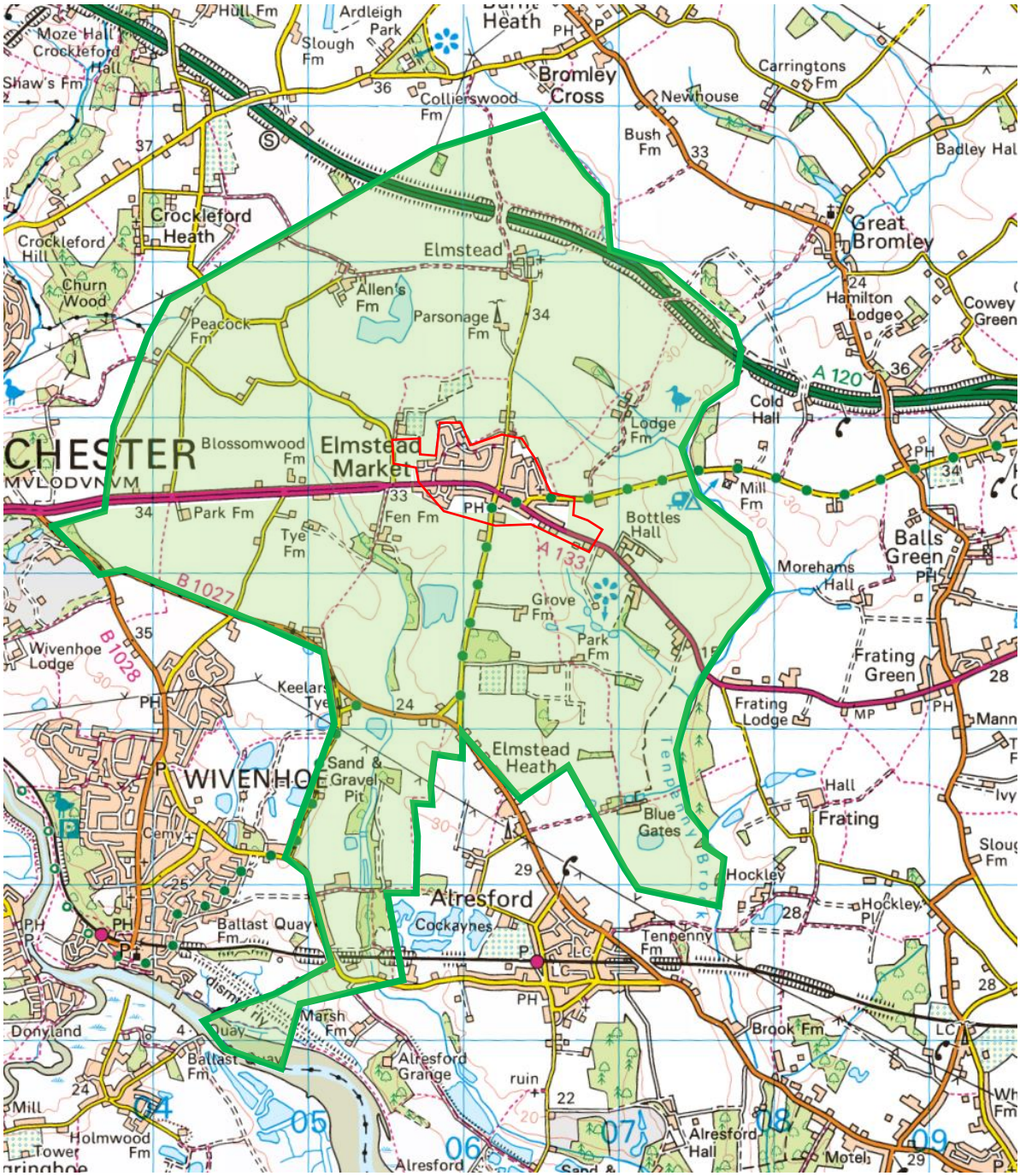

Fig. 3.1 *Elmstead Parish Boundary, and Elmstead Market Village Settlement Development Boundary*

4. Relief

4.1 The vast majority of the area is practically flat, with over 95% of the parishes land being between 31 and 35 metres above sea level. The highest point being a mere 36m above sea level.

4.2 The northern boundary shares the flat nature of most of the parish, but from the Northwest border begins to descend progressing southward, following the flow of Bromley brook. The brook has formed a gentle sloping valley, descending to a mere 14 metre elevation at the parishes south east corner.

4.3 To the south west there are a number of landscape views found to be much valued by the local community in the neighbourhood plan process – in part due to the landscape vista provided by the slopes of the Colne river valley, in which the parish gradually descends over the course of approximately a mile, to its lowest point at sea level.

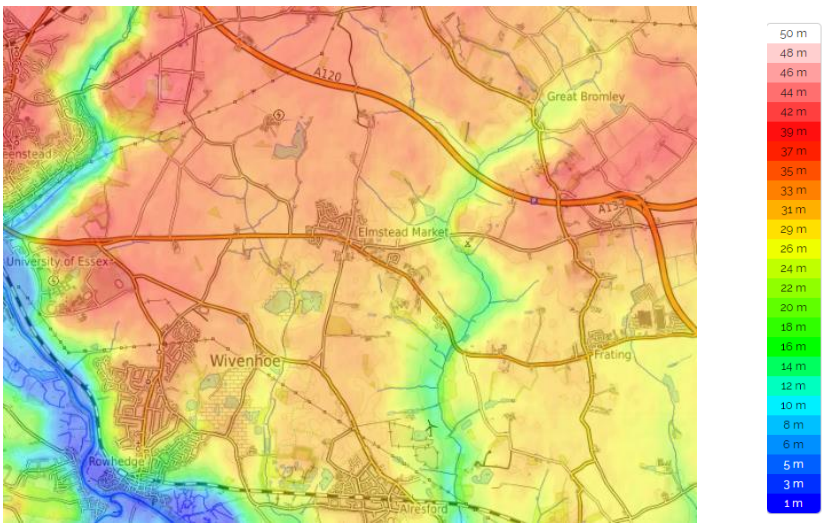

Fig. 4.1 *Relief map showing ground level height above sea level.* ***Fig 4.2*** *A view south displaying Elmstead's descent into the Colne river valley*

5. Elmstead Market

5.1 The village of Elmstead market is designated as a rural services centre, and valued by the local community for being both a focal point of the local community, while maintain a rural aesthetic that integrates the village into its surroundings.

5.2 There are 4 primary roads by which one may enter the village, that share similar features to provide a managed transition from open countryside to settlement. All such roads are lined by trees and hedgerows, with grass verges to increase the space surrounding the roads and provide safer, long fields of view for junctions. Naturally occurring sparse lengths or gaps in the hedgerow, alongside gateways for farm vehicle access provide line of sight beyond to the open countryside, while in places an elevation difference between the road and surrounding hedgerows give a clear view of the landscape setting, and frame the village within it.

5.3 At the villages approximate border on these roads are placed road signs mounted on ‘gateway’ structures, reminiscent of historic farm gates prevalent throughout the local area. These reinforce the aesthetic boundary between open countryside and rural settlement and hold significance to the local community.

5.4 Passing through Elmstead, the main thoroughfare is the A133 (aka Clacton Road) which has various parallel pavements, wide verges and secondary roads that allow pedestrian access offline of this busy road, albeit just a single lane carriageway throughout the village. There is a notable amount of vegetation while passing through the village, that partially or wholly obscure many of the houses, most of which are setback from the road with front gardens. Mature trees are commonplace, both in these gardens and on wide verges, with a number of blossoming trees giving a unique natural aesthetic to passage through parts of the village when in bloom.

5.5 There are two ‘village greens’ along this main central road, the ‘south green’ runs as a long strip alongside the A133 in the western half of the village, compromised of wide grass verges, mature trees and at various times flowerbeds and plant pot displays. There are also a number of benches available for public use. The ‘North Green’ is smaller, but holds significance to the local community as the village centre, functioning as a meeting place and venue for events such as remembrance services held at the war memorial, set amongst trees and flowerbeds on the green.

5.6 Adjacent to the north green is a crossroads, where School Road and Church Road intersect with Clacton road. It is this intersection around which the village formed historically, although centuries of activity may have caused the precise location to have migrated somewhat from successive changes.

5.7 In the immediate area of the crossroads and green are a number of important buildings, including some of the villages older listed heritage buildings that contribute to the character of the village centre, and even at the heart of the settlement maintain a rural aesthetic. Two of these buildings were once pubs, both having closed around the turn of the millennium, with one, immediately adjacent to the crossroads and opposite the green becoming a local supermarket. Neighbouring this is the villages community centre.

5.8 The crossroads and additional nearby junctions provide access to the majority of the villages residential areas, primarily focussed to the north of the A133.

5.9 There is a tendency for these surrounding residential properties to have front and back gardens, with vegetation prevalent throughout. There is a strong trend for properties on the outskirts of the village to have proportionately larger gardens, often bordered by hedges instead of or as well as fences, and more trees. Combined this gives an effect of a nurtured boundary of vegetation surrounding the village, which obfuscates much of the development from sight from many locations in the surrounding landscape.

Fig. 5.1 *Alongside the A133 passing through the centre of Elmstead Market, overlooking the villages south green*

Fig 5.2 *The Western approach entering Elmstead Market*

6. Small ‘Village’ Fields

6.1 Elmstead Market is surrounded on all sides by a number of fields, considered small by modern agricultural standards at around 3-5 hectares.

6.2 Historically most of these were orchards, or used for livestock, to bring labour intensive farming as close to the village as possible.

6.3 More of these fields were used to keep horses, historically the high yield surrounding farmland needed an intense concentration of working draught horses, which persisted past the industrial revolution, with many local farms continuing to rely on heavy horse teams throughout the second world war era.

6.4 A handful of these fields are retained as paddocks for recreational stables to this day.

6.5 While some orchards remained productive until the turn of the millennium, most were native fruit trees such as apples that have a limited lifespan of fruit production. None have been replaced, while some have been left to transition to more natural spaces, often with significant ground vegetation that makes a wonderful habitat, sadly more have been cleared and repurposed.

6.5 A number more have been developed in post war decades, most for individual ‘self build’ houses with substantial gardens.

6.6 Trends of development both in the 1960’s-70s and last decade have led to some of these fields bordering the village to be developed intensively into housing.

Fig 6.1 *A historic orchard in which most trees had died naturally, recently cleared and facing an uncertain future*

Fig. 6.2 *One of the paddocks remaining in use for horses today*

7. Larger Rural Fields

7.1 Further away from the village there is a trend for fields to become larger, at around 10 to 15 acres. Historically such a size was dictated by the area a horse team could work in a day.

7.2 Fields of this size are also protected from weather events by the shelter given from healthy hedgerows against wind and driving rain.

7.3 There are a number of fields substantially larger, that have emerged from a number of smaller fields being merged when hedgerows and ditches were removed. This was commonplace in the 1950's to make for more efficient use of tractors utilising larger equipment.

7.4 Some of these larger fields are noticeable for having hedgerows with larger maturing trees – evidently planted when the fields were expanded to counteract the potential for wind damage to crops.

7.5 Being of such high grade farmland, there is great versatility in what such fields can be efficiently planted with. While grains are a staple, peas, onions, sugar beat and oilseed rape are all common. Most fields are cycled through various crops over a number of years to promote soil health and nutrient fixation, leading to a changing visual landscape annually, indicative of productive working farmland.

7.6 Increasingly over past decades there has been a tendency to segment larger fields to use areas in varying ways. Sections of fields being used to grow game cover for pheasant and partridge rearing, set aside to lie fallow in accordance with wildlife schemes, or growing multiple crops in the same field, to protect against unpredictable seasonal weather associated with climate change by diversifying into crops that thrive in different conditions.

Fig. 7.1 *One of many sweeping landscape vistas provided by expansive fields, the wide open space is emphasised when contrasted to nearby woodland.*

8. Reservoirs

8.1 There are a number of man made reservoirs within the parish, all of which have been established in the last 50 years.

8.2 These water features main use is to provide irrigation to surrounding fields, the local sub-climate being notoriously dry compared to national averages, so storing autumn and winter precipitation is vital for maximising the next years crop yield.

8.3 The location of these reservoirs is mostly dictated by local geology, with linear gravel deposits being distributed throughout the parish. These deposits are beneficial to reservoir construction in a number of ways, enabling water to drain into the surrounding soil more easily, while gravel extraction during excavation can offset the reservoirs cost.

8.4 Once established, these bodies of water can find additional uses, with a number being supplied with fish, and at times functioning as water sports and scuba diving venues, with the largest reservoir housing a double decker bus for diver training.

8.5 Such large bodies of water naturally attract varied wildlife. Waterfowl such as ducks, geese, swans, moorhens and coots are all common, while herons, kingfishers and can all be encountered on occasion. There are also a number of migratory birds that make use of reservoirs as over night refuges, and it is not uncommon for sea birds to visit from the nearby coast.

Fig. 8.1 *A grey heron overlooking moorhen and ducks on the parishes largest reservoir*

9. Streams and Brooks

9.1 There is a minimum of 7 miles of natural flowing waterways within the parish boundary. Depending on season and recent rainfall this can increase substantially.

9.2 These permanent waterways tend to be fed by natural springs, removing their dependence on rainfall to maintain a sustainable flow of water.

9.3 While undoubtedly influenced by nearby human activity, especially irrigation needs, the tendency for such waterways to have relatively steep valleys compared to the wider flat landscape, means they were avoided for most farming activity and have retained many areas of mostly natural immediate surroundings.

9.4 While catchment areas have been reduced during the construction of reservoirs, and at times springs utilised to fill these reservoirs, significant effort has been made by landowners to maintain these springs in a fashion that is sustainable in the long term.

9.5 Despite sharing many characteristics and wildlife habitats with reservoirs and ditches, the constant flowing water of streams and brooks make for unique blue infrastructure supporting a number of native species, particularly amphibians.

9.6 In the otherwise flat landscape, the extended valleys these waterways have established over millennia have formed interesting landscape features, that provide many of the 3 dimensional landscape vistas, extending line of sight to open up the wider setting.

9.7 When approaching Elmstead by road, all major routes feature a descent into one of these valleys, crossing a waterway that is often the designated border, before climbing into the parishes setting. This creates a distinct border to emphasise the transition from the various settlements surrounding the neighbourhood plans area to those within.

Fig. 9.1 *Showing the permanent natural waterways*

10. Ditches

10.1 There is an estimated 41 miles of man made ditches in the parish, utilised primarily for drainage and irrigation needs, although some augment drainage solutions for highways, PROWs and residential property in a sustainable manner.

10.2 Most ditches were historically dug to a yard wide standard, and this has continued as an approximate standard, although varies dependant on method of construction. There is a tendency given local soil composition for surface erosion to widen the ditch at the top, and resulting sediment to narrow the base of the channel, resulting in a naturally occurring bank on either side of around 60°. The notable exception to this trend is when adjacent to a hedge line, the root systems of the hedgerows vegetation can reinforce the bank, maintaining a near vertical side.

10.3 ditches vary in depth significantly, some begin with natural gulley's that blend into the landscape making the transition to where the ditch begins objective. Most are 1-2 metres deep, with the maximum effective depth being around 3 metres, due to issues with soil stability collapsing banks, underlying geology and safety concerns.

10.4 Most ditches are maintained every 3 to 5 years to prevent fouling from sediment, vegetation and sadly litter in roadside scenarios.

10.5 In certain locations that encounter higher rates of water flow such maintenance becomes less necessary, and left to a semi-natural state water plants begin to flourish in these conditions. As these ditches tend to be larger and function in many ways as man made streams, this has led to emerging habitats with reedbeds, gravel and sand beds and potential for aquatic and amphibious native wildlife to thrive.

10.6 Ditches vary in function, either acting as soakaways for small areas of land they surround or water courses to drain land into the streams, brooks and reservoirs of the

10.7 In much the same ways that hedges act as green corridors for wildlife, the parishes ditches function in many ways as a blue coridoor connecting water features across the landscape. Most important in wet spring and autumn months this allows wildlife to move between bodies of water that would otherwise be isolated, making the ditch network vital for the long term health and viability of more publicly ecosystems such as ponds and reservoirs.

Fig. 10.1 *Reedbeds established naturally in the base of a larger ditch – the water teeming with pondlife.*

11. Hedgerows

11.1 There is an estimated 58 miles of hedgerows in the parish, not including domestic hedgerows within the villages settlement development boundary.

11.2 Most hedgerows are trimmed every 2 years, usually in late summer to prevent disturbing nesting birds, to a height of 3-4 metres. Roadside hedges are often trimmed annually to prevent encroaching onto the highway. While most hedges are a single line of primary plants, some are made thicker, either by offsetting alternating plants, or having two lines of plants to reinforce the hedge line. These reinforced hedgerows are notable for being significantly more supportive of native wildlife and more sustainable in the long term.

11.3 While hedges around the village of Elmstead market vary greatly in composition, tending to be monocultures of hybrid or non-native plant species, the historic and agricultural beneficial hedgerows tend to have a diverse range of native species. Beech, Hazel, Hawthorn and Blackthorn being most prevalent.

11.4 Many hedgerows are dotted with mature trees, predominantly oak, ash and beech, with occasional chestnut, hazel and walnut.

11.5 While interspersed undergrowth and a minority of evergreen plants mean most hedgerows maintain a level of vegetation year round, annual deciduous cycles lead to a changing, visibly distinct landscape depending on season. During the winter many hedges are sparse enough to allow through vision, making lines of sight far greater than in spring and summer when dense vegetation makes the hedge opaque. Many hedgerows that are low enough to be overlooked throughout most of the year have superficial growth during the summer months that make them tall enough to block lines of sight – this phenomenon transforms a number of country lanes and footpaths in the parish to ‘green tunnels’ that are valued by the local community for their tranquil aesthetic.

11.6 The vast network of hedgerows that criss-crosses the parish function as one immense wildlife corridor, connecting the many pockets of woodland and functioning as habitat in their own right. Residents greatly value hedges for their importance in maintaining a healthy wild eco-system, but also for how it displays this wildlife for the community to interact with. Its not uncommon for a short walk around the parish to display a number of birds, small mammals and plants within the hedgerow, which integrates the community into the landscape.

Fig. 11.1 *The monoculture garden hedgerow on the left is distinctly different from the variety of native plants and trees of the older hedgerow on the right.*

Fig 10.2 *What was once a simple reinforced hedgerow has now provided a route for a well travelled pedestrian path to avoid encroaching on a narrow country lane*

12. Spinney

12.1 Historically the small copse's of woodland known as spinneys were established by landowners to provide shelter for various game animals. While many would have been cut down for firewood as trees matured, others have been left to develop into small areas of established woodland around the parish.

12.2 In the post-war era more areas have been planted, most being multi purpose, functioning as game cover, tree nursery's, green corridors for native wildlife and simply a productive use for awkward shapes and locations of land that are not efficient for arable use.

12.3 While lacking the community recognition of ancient woodland within the parish, many areas of spinney are more accessible, being placed around footpaths and bridleways.

12.4 While comparable in many ways to older woodland, spinneys distinctly differ in character at ground level. Lacking years of loam accumulation and fallen trees the ground is more open, aided by a dense canopy, lower than that of a mature forest, preventing significant undergrowth. While less natural than ancient woodlands ground cover, this effect leads to a preferable environment for some native species that would otherwise struggle to compete in local woodland environments – foe example certain wildflower species thrive in this more open floor. This open ground has the additional bonus of being more easily traversable, making it conducive to public access – footpaths need less maintenance etc.

12.5 Due to being planted as saplings, trees within a spinney tend to be in closer proximity than in mature woodland. From a distance this gives the visual effect of a denser canopy, and so tends to be perceived as greater tree cover than older established woodland areas. This effect is particularly noticeable approaching Elmstead Market from either direction on the A133, where areas of spinney supplement older woodland to emphasise the wooded nature of the surrounding landscape.

Fig. 12.1 *A lone mature tree emphasises the contrasting characteristics of its surrounding spinney vegetation*

Fig 12.2 *The close planted pattern has caused these trees to grow tall and slender – a number of birds nest and squirrel drays are visible, the animals feeling safer when inaccessible by larger predators in the swaying boughs.*

13.Managed Woodland

13.1 Some areas of mature woodland in the parish have been managed over long periods of time to the degree they have gained a unique character, compared to more modern woodland or true ancient woodland.

13.2 Most notable are the areas containing exclusively coppiced or pollarded trees, which cause the canopy and therefore ground level to differ significantly from natural woodland.

13.3 Managed woodland often has rows or patterns of trees, which makes other man made features more practical within the woodland. Lanes and footpaths can pass freely between these rows, while farmers utilise gulley's to handle excess surface water run off in a controlled fashion and to safely route irrigation pipes where they are accessible with farm vehicles.

13.4 While at a close distance this pattern of trees is evidently man-made, most managed woodlands are surrounded by hedgerows that obfuscate the rows, and the dense canopy of the woodland above is practically indistinguishable from natural forest, providing additional tree cover to fields of view around the parish.

13.5 The distinct features of this woodland contributes to areas having a working rural setting, where the woodland is or has been productive, as opposed to the natural aesthetic of the parishes ancient woodland.

13.6 There is one substantial area of newly established woodland in the parish, approximately 17 hectares in area, managed by the woodland trust, with the intention of nurturing additional native woodland to be carefully curated to as near to a natural state as possible. Given the lifespan of many of the saplings utilised, it is expected to be a long term project which aims to include to generations of local communities in its stewardship.

13.6 Most of the parishes managed woodland is adjacent or near to other green spaces, which together with adjoining hedgerows form larger, diverse ecosystems. The consistent nature of the managed areas can make for a preferable habitat for many species, for example small birds which prefer the safety of pollarded trees canopies.

13.7 While some may argue managed woodlands are undesirable compared to an entirely natural habitat, most agree them to be a preferable compromise, whereby significant areas of land are maintained as woodland, providing many of the same benefits as ancient woodland, and benefitting the wider landscape, while allowing landowners to maintain sustainable use of productive land.

Fig. 13.1 *The peculiar and decidedly man made features of an expanse of coppiced trees – note the distinct lack of undergrowth. In spring and summer the reason is clear as deciduous vegetation forms an incredibly dense canopy.*

Fig. 14.1 *An area of ancient woodland surrounding a natural gulley. Trees of many ages and types are visible from saplings, to mature and ancient trees that are centuries old, while stumps and fallen logs emphasise the ever changing nature of such an area. A line of coppiced trees suggest the gulley was used to promote natural irrigation of saplings, amongst the otherwise natural woodland – a clear display of productive human activity and nature co-existing to form the recognisable setting.*

14. Ancient Woodland

14.1 Ancient Woodland is nationally defined as areas of woodland that have persisted since 1600 or earlier.

14.2 There are a number of areas within the parish believed to meet this criteria – showing no signs of ever having been used as anything but natural woodland.

14.3 There are similar areas at point around the parish boundary which are visible for some distance across the countryside, adding to the local landscape setting and forming part of a wider eco-system of natural forests joined by green corridors.

14.4 Ancient Woodland is noticeably distinct from the more recently planted woodland by its variety of mature trees – many of which can be a century or more old. There's also a clear lifecycle where naturally propagated saplings will be growing amidst established trees, fallen logs and long rotted tree stumps.

14.5 This diverse area allows for significant undergrowth where sunlight reaches the ground – a thriving habitat for many smaller animals that's mostly missing from man made woodland.

14.6 From a distance ancient woodland may appear less dense than human influenced woodland – its canopy dotted with gaps where trees have fell, sparse sections where deciduous species are at full leaf at different times of year, and often many colours and textures of leaf from a mixture of species. While not always obvious, this effect contributes to the wilder vistas of the surrounding landscape, as opposed to the noticeably more patterned homogenous canopies of managed woodland.

15. Interconnectivity

15.1 In the wide area designated by the neighbourhood plan it is interesting to note no landscape feature functions in isolation. Every area of woodland is connected by wooded hedges to other nearby woodland. Every body of water intersected by tributaries and ditches to connect to reservoirs and streams or rivers.

15.2 While it is easy to discern these features as independent, in actuality the green and blue corridors connecting them allow many areas to function as one larger feature.

15.3 Most obvious in the proliferation of native wildlife, there is no one habitat large enough to support the areas healthy populations of many valued creatures – bats, hedgehogs, badgers, dormice, newts etc, but the wider connected network allows for a robust population to exist and thrive. The working rural locality also serves to bring the local community into healthy coexistence with this wildlife on a regular basis.

15.4 The connected patchwork of the landscape also serves to improve the visual setting of the wider area – where landscape views may overlook multiple hedges, fields and woodland, depending on vantage point it is easy for the separated treetops to blend together giving the impression of far more vegetation, or gaps and gateways to emphasise the swathes of working farmland – especially noticeable during times in the farming calendar when farm machinery is a common sight at work.

16. Potential impacts of Tendring Colchester borders garden community on Elmstead's landscape setting

16.1 North Essex Authorities Shared Strategic Plan allocated an area of search for TCBGC in January 2021

16.2 The area was further defined in march 2022 by the TCBGC draft plan

16.3 This area contains a development boundary, major link road connecting the A120 and A133 and strategic green gaps within the borders of Elmstead parish boundary.

16.4 Concerns have been raised amongst the local community that while this green gap theoretically prevents coalescence, it substantially impacts the area's landscape setting.

16.5 While it is recognised the designated strategic green gap will be managed, it was emphasised remaining landscape between Elmstead and the garden community should be recognised for its importance.

16.6 To maintain a functional and representative landscape between Elmstead Market and the TCBGC it is important to maintain a transition from settlement, to open countryside to settlement, with distinct identifying features discernible to preserve Elmstead's character.

16.7 This open countryside should maintain both working farmland, and natural spaces to preserve the historically integration of such features into a recognisable vista.

16.8 It is essential for landscape views to be preserved in this area, to prevent urban encroachment into the rural landscape.

16.9 It is vital to maintain multiple fields width to provide the recognisable transition from larger open fields (7) to smaller 'village fields' (6)

16.10 Trees and hedgerows have a specific roll to play in preventing visual, noise and light pollution into and through the landscape, providing layers of barriers against such impacts, but it must be recognised those closest to the TCBGC will suffer from these effects.

16.11 Allen's Reservoir (8) and Sixpenny Brook (9) form a substantial length of the boundary between TCBGC Green Gap and Elmstead's Landscape buffer. Both are interconnected with a number of ditches and streams forming wider blue infrastructure, it is vital to protect this network as detrimental impacts in one location could easily spread throughout to harm a wide landscape area reliant on a stable water course.

Fig. 17.1
TCBGC approximate area of search (blue)
Landscape character setting initial proposed area (orange)

17. Landscape Setting Area

17.1 A recurring theme arising during conversations with the community during many neighbourhood plan outreach activities was the concern of TCBGC proximity and encroachment by various means into Elmstead's identity.

17.2 The ENP Steering Committee therefore deemed it necessary to evaluate and maintain the remaining intermediate space between the village settlement and TCBGC boundary.

17.3 Most common amongst community feedback was the importance of separation, and the principle of a transition from one settlement, to open countryside, to the other settlement

17.4 For this space to be representative of all the key landscape characters identified (6-14) is impractical, but it is vital that existing features within this space are maintained and preserved, and where possible improved or created to guarantee the conservation of Elmstead's landscape setting as a whole.

17.5 The space designated is the necessary minimum in providing an area representing the features identified, to form a buffer that establishes the transition from the rural settlement of Elmstead, to an open countryside character, to the future garden community urban aesthetic.

17.6 It is only by protecting a combination of features identified in this report that the natural setting can be preserved to form a functional buffer and protect against coalescence.

17.7 It has been established that the land to the south of the A133 is of less concern, being further removed from Elmstead, and current suggestions of development are for predominantly open green spaces, with building only towards the western edge.

17.8 The garden community proposal also uses the A120 as a northern perimeter, allowing the most important landscape setting to be confined between these roads.

17.9 The eastern and western borders of the area by necessity follow the boundaries of Elmstead and the proposed garden community respectively, allowing for the definitive area proposed by the neighbourhood plan.

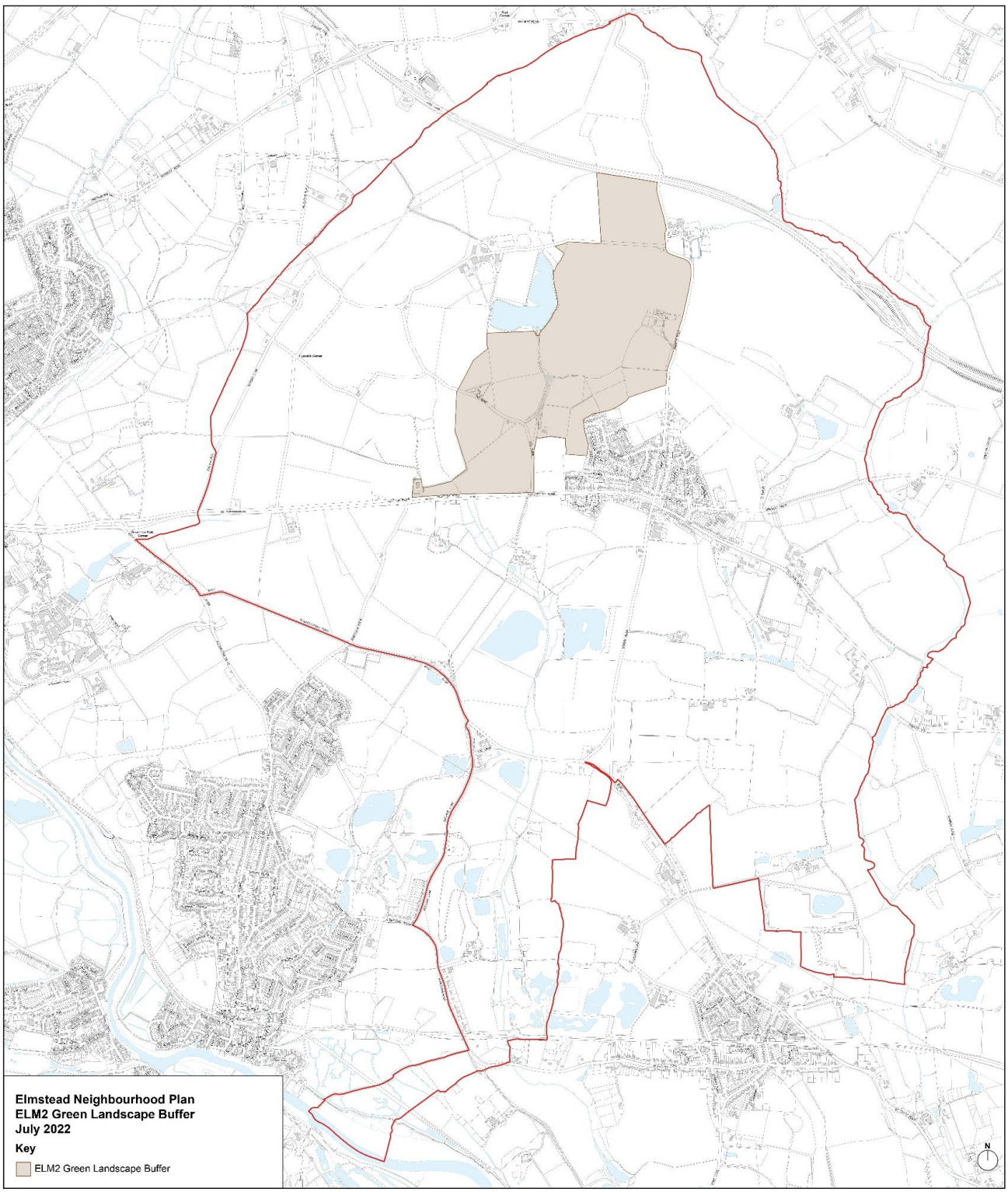

Fig. 17.2
Proposed Landscape Buffer (orange)