

Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan *Landscape Appraisal*

Final Report



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Alison Farmer Associates was appointed by Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan Group to undertake a landscape appraisal of the Parish, in order to provide a robust evidence base to support the development of policy within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. In particular the Neighbourhood Plan Group required land surrounding the village of Woolpit to be assessed in detail to establish the sensitivity and capacity of these areas to accommodate housing/employment development.
- 1.1.2 Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan area covers the same area as the Parish, and stretches from the A14 in the north and east to the edges of the Rattlesden River in the south. The Black Bourne valley and village of Drinkstone lie beyond the Parish to the west and north. The main settlement within the Parish is Woolpit which is positioned to the south of the A14 on elevated land above the Black Bourne valley. The other smaller hamlets are Woolpit Green, Woolpit Heath and Borley Green.

1.2 Objectives

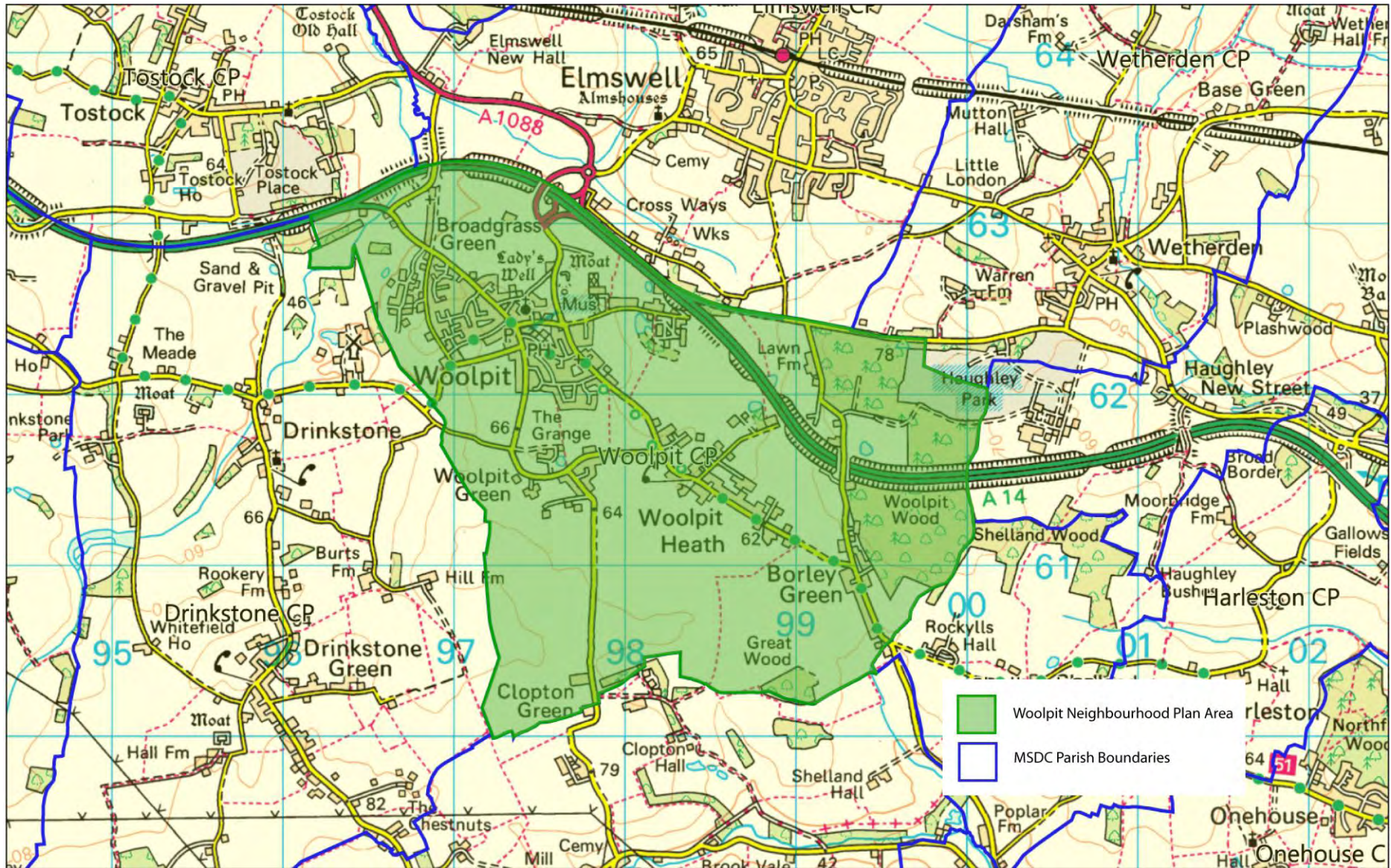
- 1.2.1 The key objective of this study is to provide a robust understanding of the character and qualities of the Neighbourhood Plan Area in order to make sound judgements as to the sensitivity and capacity of land to accommodate housing/employment development. This study also presents guidance on opportunities for landscape enhancement and green infrastructure which collectively help to shape a vision for the Parish.

1.3 Methodology and Approach

- 1.3.1 This assessment has been carried out in accordance with Guidelines on Landscape Character Assessment¹ and Guidelines in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment². Reference has also been made to other recent sensitivity and capacity assessments which reflect best practice. The approach has included a client meeting and familiarisation site visit, desk study and further detailed site assessment during January 2018. It has also included a presentation of interim findings to the local community at an open day on 3 February 2018.

¹ Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002) The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage and An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014) Natural England.

² Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013 (third edition).



Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan Area (Source: Mid Suffolk District Council Website with Woolpit NP Area emphasized)

- 1.3.2 This assessment is a landscape capacity-led approach which considers the Woolpit village and the hamlets of Woolpit Green, Woolpit Heath and Borley Green holistically and within their landscape settings. The approach also adopts emerging thinking on ecosystem services and the benefits which are afforded by the special qualities of the area and opportunities to enhance and develop these further. Analysis is used to provide robust evidence to support judgements on the sensitivity of land and its capacity to accommodate housing development from a landscape/townscape perspective.
- 1.3.3 The appraisal reviews existing documentary evidence on the settlement and its landscape and considers the historic evolution, describes landscape setting, key views, gateways and landmarks as well as valued characteristics and spaces. A landscape character assessment which divided the Parish into discrete and recognisable character areas was undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Group. This defined five character areas and has been used as a framework for understanding the relationship between built form and landscape setting. Consideration of the settlement holistically enables a thorough assessment of individual sites within a wider context rather than in isolation. Opportunities for environmental initiatives which seek to enhance local identity and settlement distinctiveness are highlighted where relevant.
- 1.3.4 The following definitions of terms are used in this study:
- Sensitivity** is defined as the ability of the landscape to accommodate a particular type of change (in this case housing or employment development) without adverse effect and is determined by consideration of local character and visual sensitivity.
- Value** is defined as the relative value that is attached to different landscape by society. In this study value has been assessed in the context of Woolpit settlement and with reference to factors such as designations, conservation interest, distinctive features, role and function (i.e. setting or gateway), condition and intactness, and rarity.
- Capacity** of an area considers the extent and nature of development which may be accommodated and is derived from an understanding of both landscape value and sensitivity of a landscape to change.
- 1.3.5 Where land/sites have been assessed in terms of sensitivity and capacity it is from a landscape perspective only and no consideration has been given to matters such as access or land ownership. It is possible therefore that, land identified as suitable for development without significant adverse landscape effects, may subsequently be discounted for reasons other than landscape.

1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.4.1 Under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, Mid Suffolk confirmed the Neighbourhood Plan Area for Woolpit on 4 May 2016.
- 1.4.2 The Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan Working Group was subsequently established and a questionnaire survey undertaken which sought the views of the local community on quality of life, housing and development, jobs and protection of the environment. The questionnaire revealed that the majority of respondents felt there was a need for housing for the elderly and medium sized family homes but that the protection of the setting of Woolpit, its heritage and village character were also very important to retain. Views were expressed regarding the need for growth which retains the village/community and prevents the establishment of separate neighbourhoods. Improved outdoor recreation opportunities for young people along with the safeguarding of green spaces, farmland, woodland and hedgerows was noted and a number of environmental assets were identified which have informed this sensitivity and capacity assessment.

1.5 Potential Development Sites

- 1.5.1 Woolpit has been identified as a Key Service Centre in the emerging local plan and is therefore considered a sustainable location for residential and employment development. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) carried out in May 2016 considered peripheral sites around the settlement and identified five sites which were regarded as potentially suitable for residential development.
- 1.5.2 In August 2017 Babergh and Mid Suffolk undertook a Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA). This study took all sites which had come forward as part of their call for sites in April 2017 and assessed them against set criteria to determine which were deliverable, those with potential and those which should be discounted.
- 1.5.3 This assessment considered each site against a number of topics, to determine in broad terms, likely effects and constraints. These included:
- landscape/townscape
 - biodiversity/geodiversity
 - historic environment
 - open space
 - transport and roads
 - compatibility with neighbouring use
- 1.5.4 The assessment identified thirteen sites within the parish as potentially suitable for development and of these five, were considered suitable for employment use.

1.5.5 Recent planning applications have included the following:

- Land south of Old Stowmarket Road - approved
- Land north of Old Stowmarket Road - deferred
- Land south of Rag's Lane - withdrawn
- Land east of Green Road - appealed

2: The Evolution of Woolpit

2.1 Early Origins and Evolution

- 2.1.1 Woolpit Parish has a strong time depth reflected in its various buildings, historic sites and evidence of past land management and industry/trade. The centre of Woolpit Village is a conservation area containing many listed buildings, important areas of open space and historic features while to the southeast of the Parish is the historic parkland of Haughley.
- 2.1.2 Whilst there is archaeological evidence of activity in the Woolpit area from prehistoric and the Roman period it is not until 1005 that it is documented as a manor associated with the Abbey of St Edmund in Bury St Edmunds. It is referenced again in Domesday in 1086 as a small village with church and is estimated to have population of around 250..
- 2.1.3 The village prospered in the Medieval Period as a result of the Suffolk wool trade. The current arrangement of the village centre reflects the original triangular market place defined by buildings, many of which date to the 14th and 15th centuries. It was also an important place for pilgrims who would visit a shrine or statue housed in the Chapel of St Mary which is thought to have been attached to the main church. The church was rebuilt in the 15th century.
- 2.1.4 To the east of the church is a moated site known as Our Lady's Well. This is first documented in 1574. It is thought that this was a place of healing the natural spring water which rises here, having a high sulphate content renowned for healing sore eyes.
- 2.1.5 Thus in the Medieval period Woolpit would have been an important place from an ecclesiastic, healing, pilgrimage and commercial perspective. The outward expression of this period in the main historic buildings and market place, the church and the moated site to the east remains tangible and strong and contributes to Woolpit's sense of place and identity.
- 2.1.6 Woolpit evolved further in the period from the 16th to the 19th centuries when brickmaking became a significant activity immediately to the east of the village. In the 18th century there are known to have been three working pits which were later owned by the London Brick Company and a small narrow gauge tramway was constructed between the pits and Elmswell station on the mainline railway to the north (the route of the tramway is still possible to trace in the landscape today). The pits were closed in the Second World War due to the visibility of the kiln fires from the sky at night and, although reopened post war, they became flooded by spring water and un-operational. Subsequently the brick pit area has been reclaimed by modern commercial development in the 20th century or restored to agriculture, although vestiges of the brick pits remain in the form of lakes and woodland.

2.1.7 Finally the present day appearance and layout of Woolpit has been influenced by two further factors. Firstly the construction of the A14 in the 1970's, which bypassed the village and a new link road was created between the A14 junction for Woolpit and Heath Road while Old Stowmarket Road was severed. This altered the approach to the village and increased congestion on Heath Road. Secondly, the development of new housing in the latter half of the 20th century such that Woolpit expanded significantly, its population increasing by 50% between the 1970's and 2000. Housing estates were constructed to the southeast and northwest of the market place leaving the historic core of the village close to open countryside in the northeast and southwest.

2.1.8 Other settlements within the Parish comprise the hamlets of Woolpit Green, Woolpit Heath and Borley Green. Each has very different origins which are expressed in their present day form and character.

- Woolpit Green is an elevated settlement which historically comprised The Grange, Green Farm and Abbey Farm. Some small scale infill development has occurred around the junction of Green Road and Rattlesden Road. Many of the farm buildings in the hamlet are listed and in the mid 20th century were associated with small orchards.
- Woolpit Heath is a settlement which originally developed as dispersed farms (e.g. Hague and Heath Farms) fringing the former Woolpit Heath, an area of common grazing. Late 20th century development has occurred along The Heath towards Borley Green and Warren Lane giving the settlement a more structured and linear form.
- Borley Green originated as a small group of dwellings at the junction of Wood Road and The Heath. In the latter half of the 20th century it has experienced considerable development along the main road to the south and north resulting in a predominately linear form and modern character.

2.2 Surrounding Historic Landscape Patterns

2.2.1 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is the process of characterising the historic landscape into a series of types. A HLC was undertaken for the whole of Suffolk in 1998-99. This identified the field enclosures surrounding the settlement and within the wider Parish. The Parish contains a mixture of enclosure patterns dating to different periods. To the north and southwest of Woolpit village the enclosure pattern is pre 18th century and random in character. These patterns are thought to date to the Medieval period or earlier and are often associated with ditches and banks and hedgerows are frequently species rich. In contrast the higher land south of Woolpit Green comprises pre 18th century enclosure with post 1950 boundary loss. The pattern here is therefore larger scale fields and fewer hedgerows. In the vicinity of Woolpit Heath the enclosure pattern reflects late enclosure of common land (Woolpit Heath) in the 18th century followed by field boundary loss in the 20th century resulting in an open landscape with few hedgerows and where they still exist they are often hawthorn hedges which are well trimmed. Other historic landscape types identified in the assessment include meadow and

managed wetlands in the valley bottom and ancient woodland associated with Haughley Park.

3: Landscape Character

3.1 National Character Areas 83 South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands

3.1.1 Woolpit Parish is covered by two National Character Areas - NCA 83 South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands and NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands. The boundaries between these two character areas are not abrupt but transitional and although both are relevant to the Parish NCA 83 is most strongly expressed. This National Character Area (NCA) extends northwards from Woolpit to occupy a large area of central East Anglia and comprises a high and predominately flat clay plateau which is incised by numerous small-scale wooded river valleys with complex slopes. The underlying geology is chalk, which forms the principal aquifer, and shallow marine deposits overlain with glacial till, buried river gravels, lake sediments and banks of glacial outwash deposits.

3.1.2 Rivers are mostly small and slow flowing and their valleys contain an important mosaic of small-scale pasture, wet heath, reedbeds and woodland. Large areas of woodland are scarce, with most confined to the edges of the plateau. Views are frequently open, only sometimes confined by hedges, hedgerow trees and scattered smaller woodlands that are still notable elements of the landscape. Occasionally there can be a feeling of exposure, although within the valleys it is possible to find quite confined landscape with intimate views.

3.1.3 This is a long-settled landscape with a strong utilitarian and rural character. Settlement patterns include nucleated villages, dispersed hamlets and moated farmsteads.

3.1.4 The statements of environmental opportunity set out in the NCA description include SEO2 which states:

'Encourage measures that conserve and enhance the characteristic historic settlement patterns including notable village commons and greens, and historic features such as moated farmsteads and windmills, ensuring that access and educational opportunities are maximised and ensure that the design and location of new development add to the sense of place and history across the NCA'.

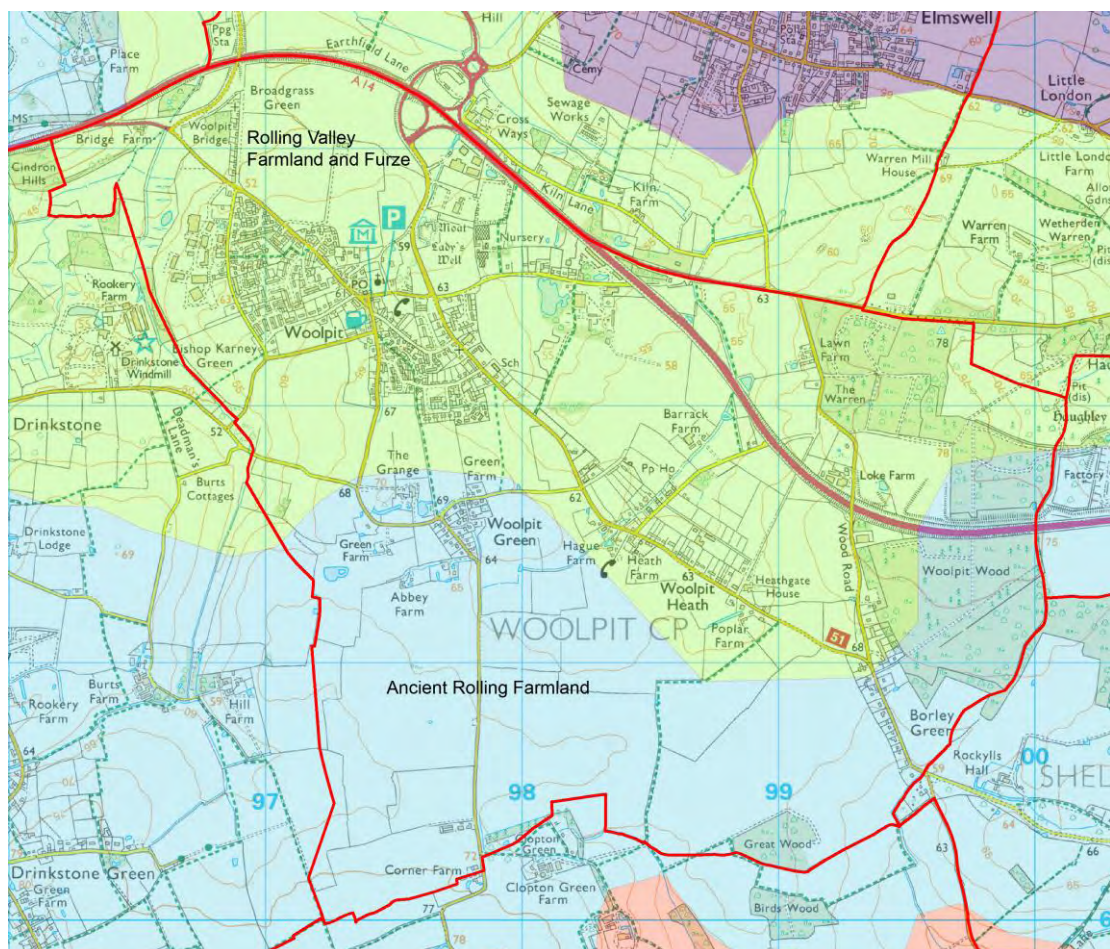
3.1.5 This is elaborated with specific guidance as follows:

- Plan for well-designed new development inspired by local character.
- Promote the use of traditional building materials as appropriate to enhance the significance and local distinctive character of the area's traditional architecture.
- Ensure local development frameworks recognise the importance of conserving and enhancing the landscape and the sense of history to help to reduce the likelihood of negative impacts from new development.

- Support the use of history and landscape characterisation to inform change, and encourage their use in community based planning to help to identify locally valued townscapes, rural landscape and historic features.
- Maintaining the distinctive character, settlement form and building materials of the villages and market towns; improve their setting and settlement fringes through the allocation of new greenspace and woodland planting.
- Conserve the distinctive medieval churches...ensuring that their setting and visual presence in the landscape are retained for their contribution to sense of place.
- Conserving and protecting historic parklands.
- Retaining and restoring historic green lanes and former droveways.

3.2 Suffolk County Landscape Character and Local Assessments

- 3.2.1 The landscape character assessment for Suffolk classifies the parish of Woolpit into two character areas as shown on the map below. Rolling Valley Farmland and Furze (green) in the north (including the village of Woolpit) and Ancient Rolling Farmlands (blue) to the south including Woolpit Green.



Source: Suffolk County Landscape Character Assessment

3.2.2 The local landscape character assessment undertaken by the Parish Neighbourhood plan group further subdivides the parish into five character areas which are illustrated on Figure 1. These character areas and the written description which accompanied them have been reviewed and used as the basis for this study. Where appropriate additional information on character has been added to the descriptions and some minor boundary adjustments made. The assessment has not been repeated here but the key characteristics have been set out below to provide the context for the sensitivity assessment.

Broadgrass Green

3.2.3 This character area lies to the north of the Parish and extends beyond the Parish boundary to the north and west. It comprises the gentle valley sides of the Black Bourne stream valley. Notable characteristics relevant to this landscape type include:

- Small shallow valley with prominent river terrace.
- Sandy geology and soils reflected in former sand and gravel extraction and areas of birch trees and bracken.
- Topography is gently sloping ranging from 60 to 45m AOD.
- Medium scale fields and small scale irregular patterns along the stream valley.
- Arable landuse on upper slopes with pasture along stream courses.
- Mixed hedgerows of hawthorn, dogwood and blackthorn with oak, ash and field maple.
- Plantation and carr woodland along watercourses.
- Sites of local nature conservation value include woodlands and meadows.
- Elevated views from upper slopes to areas beyond Parish.
- Views to church landmarks (Woolpit and Elmswell).
- Drinkstone mills are local landmark features within the valley.
- A14 lies to the north - although not visible there is some noise intrusion.
- Woolpit village sits on elevated shoulder of land above the valley.
- Historic linear development along White Elm Road.
- Some urban fringe land uses including cricket pitch and Wrights Way Estate in former sandpit.
- Scenic quality expressed in juxtaposition of valley side topography, patterns of woodland and pasture, church landmarks and rural character.

Woolpit Green

3.2.5 This character area lies to the west of the Parish and forms the immediate setting to the village of Woolpit to the southwest. It forms the gently sloping ground of a tributary valley to the Black Bourne and extends beyond the Parish boundary. Key characteristics relevant to this landscape type include:

- Underlying geology comprises chalky clays and loams.
- Topography is gently sloping ranging from 68-50m AOD.

- Landcover is predominately arable, with distinctive areas of pasture on lower slopes.
- Field patterns are medium in scale and random reflecting pre 18th century enclosure or earlier with some boundary loss.
- Mixed hedges some of great antiquity and fragments of woodland creating overlapping lines of vegetation.
- Church towers associated with settlement and extant windmills in valley create memorable landmarks.
- Views are contained by landform, field boundaries and woodland and focus on valley landscape with some views to wider landscape beyond.
- A tamed rural landscape, with notable tranquillity.
- Ancient lane networks offer recreation opportunities including walking and Cycle Route 51.
- Scenic quality expressed in juxtaposition of valley side topography, overlapping vegetation, ancient enclosures, arable and pasture land use, church landmarks and rural character.

Woolpit Heath and Borley Green

3.2.7 This character area lies in the east of the Parish and forms the eastern setting to Woolpit village and includes the settlement of Woolpit Heath. Key characteristics relevant to this area include:

- Mixture of outwash deposits from ice sheets including silts, sands, gravels and brickearths.
- Topography is flat to gently sloping in a northerly direction ranging from 65-55m AOD.
- Areas of former brickpits reflected in waterbodies and scrub.
- Former area of Woopit heath/common.
- Areas of horse paddocks and allotments at Woolpit Heath.
- Contrasting areas of open arable and enclosed areas of woodland.
- Predominately straight hedgerows dating to late enclosure.
- Field reorganisation resulting in medium to large scale enclosure patterns.
- Settlement includes hamlet of Woolpit Heath and Medieval farmsteads.
- Commercial development associated with former brick pit areas.
- A14 severs landscape which extends to the north - some noise intrusion.
- Scheduled monument at Our Lady's Well and old Glebe land at Palgrave's meadow both of which are within the Conservation Area.
- Views to churches of Woolpit and Elmswell and woodland along Wood Road which forms a wooded skyline.
- Landscape valued for its historic interest in terms of past land use and historic evolution of Woolpit.

Clopton Green

3.2.9 This character area lies to the south of the Parish on the highest land and forms an expansive area of relatively flat arable farmland including the settlement of Woolpit Green and Borley Green. Key characteristics relevant to this landscape type include:

- Slightly acidic, loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage.
- Relatively flat elevated land ranging from 75-65m AOD.
- Medium to large scale fields reflecting pre 18th century enclosure with significant 20th century field boundary loss.
- Arable fields defined by hedgerows with hedgerow trees of oak and ash.
- Ancient woodland concentrated in southern part of area associated with former Clopton Park (includes Great Wood).
- Areas of woodland have been lost to arable e.g. Blundell Wood.
- Settlement includes the hamlet of Woopit Green including historic grange and cottages.
- Field and farm ponds are common features.
- Relatively inaccessible with few public rights of way or lanes.
- Wide open views to wooded skylines of Woopit Wood in east and southwards across the Rattlesden Valley to the south.

Woolpit Wood and Haughley Park

3.2.10 This character area lies in the far eastern corner of the Parish and forms part of landscape estate historically associated with Haughley Park beyond the Parish boundary. Key characteristics relevant to this landscape type include:

- Chalky clay and loamy soils.
- Elevated ridge of land on eastern edge of Parish ranging from 80-65m AOD.
- Well wooded landscape comprising ancient woodland associated with Haughley Park to the east and areas of conifer replanting.
- Patches of arable land use between areas of woodland.
- Woodlands noted for their carpets of bluebells in Spring.
- Settlement includes northern part of Borley Green.
- Elevated views from edge of area towards Woolpit and church landmark.
- Area severed by A14 (in cutting) with some noise intrusion.
- Scenic quality expressed in pattern of ancient woodland and former Medieval deer park.
- Limited rights of way and access.

3.3 Special Landscape Area

3.3.1 Land to the northwest of Woolpit, associated with the river valley of the Black Brook is designated a Special Landscape Areas (SLA), as is the land to the southeast of the Parish associated with Haughley Park and woodlands (refer to Figure 2). An SLA is a local landscape designation reflecting attractive combinations of landscape elements. Although the original assessment which lead to these areas being designation is not available, the following types of landscape are known to be included:

- River valleys which still possess traditional grazing meadows with their hedgerows, dykes, and associated flora and fauna;
- Areas of breckland including remaining heathland, and the characteristic lines of belts of Scots Pine;
- Historic parklands and gardens;
- Other areas of countryside where undulating topography and natural vegetation, particularly broadleaved woodland, combine to produce an area of special landscape quality and character

3.3.2 In the context of Woolpit Parish the SLA comprises a river valley landscape with small scale pastures and an area of former parkland estate associated with Haughley Park. There is a strong correlation between more varied topography and the prevalence of County Wildlife Sites within the SLA area. Significantly, the character assessment detailed above has established that scenic qualities associated with the Black Bourne Valley also extend beyond the SLA boundary to include land forming the tributary stream valley to the southwest of Woolpit.

4: Settlement Character and Conservation Area

4.1 Woolpit Conservation Area

4.1.1 Woolpit is noted for its intactness and concentration of listed buildings and was designated a Conservation Area in 1972 and extended in 2000. The Conservation Area includes the central core of the settlement around the market place, church and Our Lady's Well scheduled monument and is illustrated on Figure 2.

4.1.2 A Conservation Area Appraisal for Woolpit village was published in June 2012. It highlights that Woolpit is a small nucleated settlement which contains a concentration of listed buildings around the market place and along The Street as well as the church (Grade I), The Rectory and Monks Close.

4.1.3 The Conservation Area Appraisal describes the interest found within the settlement. The following qualities of particular relevance to this study have been noted:

- *The village is located on a gentle spur of land projecting northwards;*
- *The main road through village used to be a turnpike road between Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich but was by passed by the A14 in the 1980's;*
- *Brickworks to the east utilised the 'Woolpit Beds' laminated silts for brickmaking producing the 'Suffolk Whites';*
- *The Street and it adjoining central historic areas remain essentially intact;*
- *Church noted in Domesday 1086;*
- *Our Lady's Well moated site sits on a natural spring and dates to the Medieval Period;*
- *St Mary's Church has a conspicuous spire;*
- *Wealth of fine buildings many listed are mostly timber framed with some refaced in brick;*
- *Flintwork occurs on important boundary walls;*
- *The triangular market place with village pump is the most important space in the village;*
- *In the village core there is a tight urban feel with dwellings hard on the pavement edge and small narrow side roads;*
- *Sequence of open spaces occur at church, playing field and then Palgrave's meadow;*
- *Historic core immediately gives way to open countryside to the northeast and southwest.*

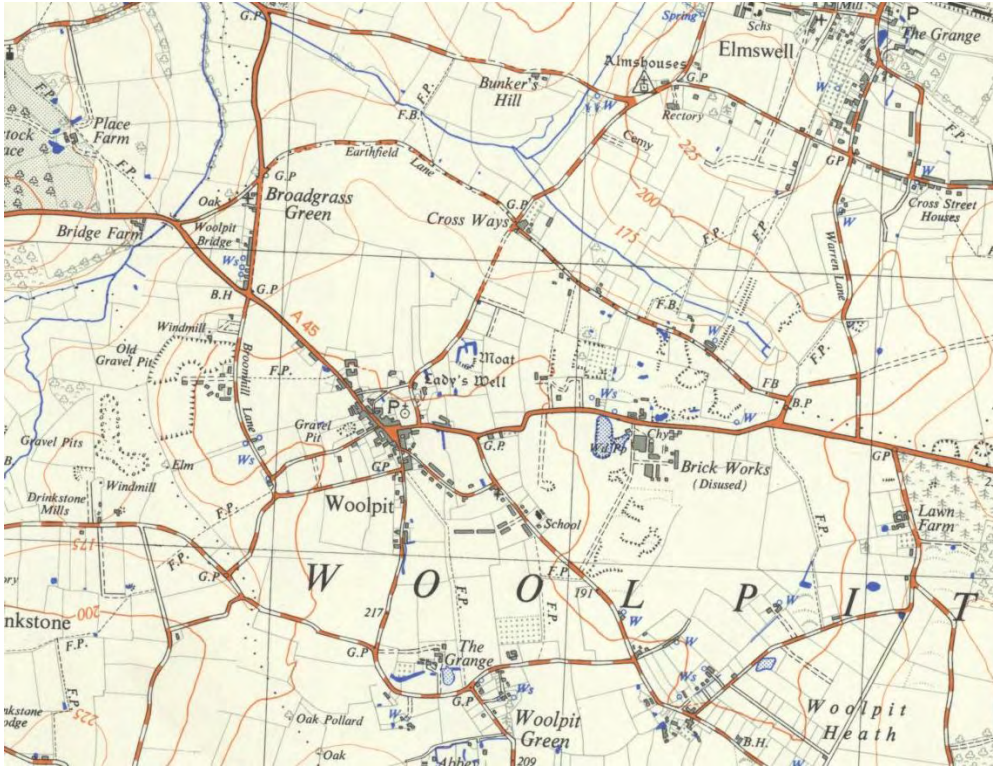
4.1.4 The Conservation Area Appraisal identified three important views looking towards the market place from the main approach roads. However it did not identify important views out of the settlement or towards the settlement from the surrounding landscape. These has been identified in this appraisal (refer to section 5.2 and Figure 3).

4.2 Current Settlement Form

- 4.2.1 Today the layout of Woolpit retains a nucleated settlement form, with the key focal points of the church and the market place, at the fulcrum of a network of historic routes.
- 4.2.2 Nevertheless the village has seen substantial change and growth since the post war period with the introduction of sizable housing developments between the 1970 and 2000. In the post war period housing focused to the south of the historic core with the creation of new roads such as Steeles Road and associated estate development. This was followed in the 1960s by cul-de-sac development at Mill Close to the southeast of the market place and northwest at Briar Hill and Mitre Close. These developments elongated the settlement in a northwest and southeast alignment but retained the close proximity of the historic core with the wider countryside to the north and east and southwest. Further cul-de-sac development occurred in the 1980s at Saffron Close and then in the 1990s to the northwest along Bury Road extending development which has starting to encroach on the historic core and wider countryside at Hay Barn Meadow.
- 4.2.3 Development of the brick works area to the east of the village has also occurred over the last 50 years with the establishment of commercial development. Nevertheless the sense of separation of this area from the main village has been retained.

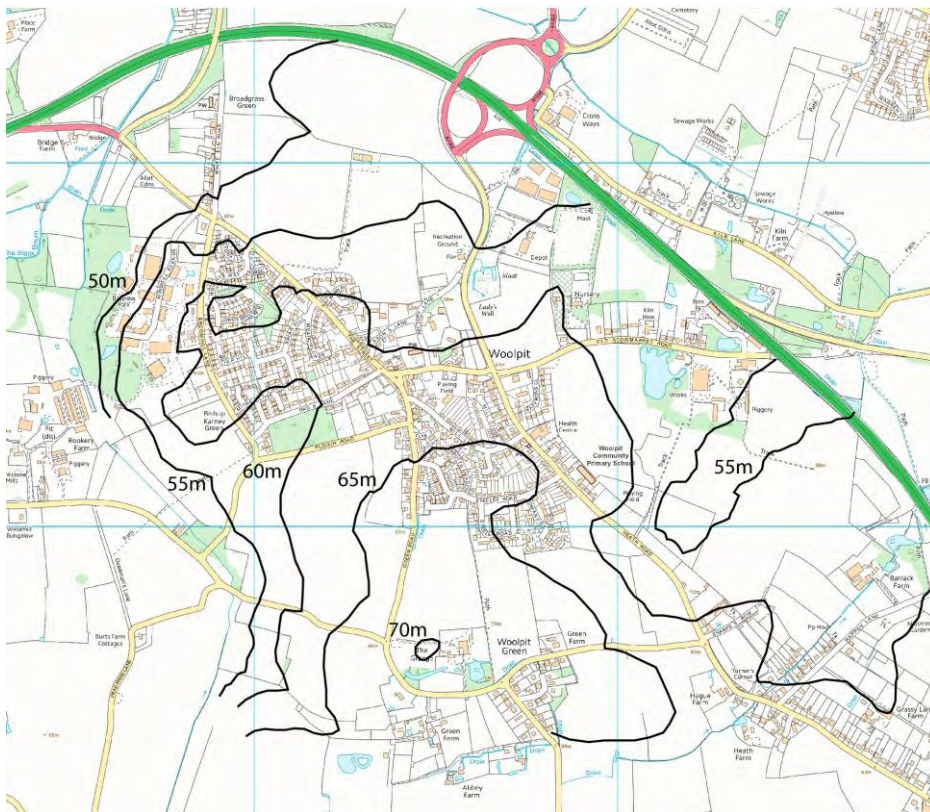


Historic map dating to 1890s (Source: Historic Maps Scotland)



Historic map dating to 1950s (Source: Historic Maps Scotland)

4.2.4 The relationship of the current village form to contours is illustrated in the plan below and helps to articulate current perceptions of the village and how it sits within the wider landscape setting.



Present day extent of settlement with contours (© Crown Copyright and database rights 2018. Ordnance Survey 100017810)

4.2.5 The following points can be drawn from overlaying this data:

- Traditionally the built form associated with the village located between the 60-65m contours and the majority of the built form still reflects this pattern.
- Where development has extended below the 60m contour on the valley slopes it is visible from the wider valley landscape e.g. Mitre Close and Hay Barn Close.
- Where development has extended above the 65m contour it tends to be more visible from the surrounding landscape and seen on the skyline e.g. Steeles Road and Green Croft.

5: Detailed Analysis

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This section builds on previous sections of this report and seeks to establish more detailed baseline data on village character. Consideration is given to identifying key landmarks and key views in and out of the village as well as gateways. These are illustrated on Figure 3.

5.2 Landmarks and Key Views

5.2.1 Key features which contribute to sense of place and orientation have been identified and the majority are illustrated on Figure 3. They include the following:

- Woolpit Primary School (bell tower)
- St Mary's Church
- Drinkstone windmills
- Elmswell Church
- Village triangular marketplace
- Our Lady's Well
- Norton Wood
- The Warren and Woolpit Wood

5.2.2 Views are critical in defining and reinforcing sense of place and local distinctiveness, connecting places where people live with the wider environment, providing opportunities to appreciate special qualities and connecting to local landmarks which can aid orientation.

5.2.3 Because Woolpit is located on a shoulder of elevated land above the Black Bourne stream there are elevated views to the wider landscape from the edges of the settlement and especially from the settlement gateways (refer to section 5.3). Similarly the undulating nature of the landscape surrounding the village results in views across the river valleys and lower lying areas back to the village and its associated church landmark.

5.2.4 The key views are illustrated on Figure 3 and described briefly below:

Views from the north looking towards Woolpit

5.2.5 In these views the church spire of Woolpit is seen on the skyline and is the dominant feature in views. The wider settlement edge is not significantly visible with development at Wades Wood and Horsefair, backclothed by vegetation on higher land behind. Development at Wrights Way is located in lower lying land of a former sand/gravel extraction site. It is therefore development at Hay Barn Meadows which is visually most prominent in views from the north because it sits on high land forward of The Street and is seen on the skyline and in front of the Church.



a) View looking southeast from White Elm Road

Views from the southwest towards Woolpit

- 5.2.6 In these views the spire of St Marys Church is the principle landmark breaking the skyline with the tower of Elmswell Church also visible in the same views. The urban edge in the foreground of the church is well screened and the rural arable fields are seen sweeping up to the vegetated settlement edge. As a result the church is perceived as close to the settlement edge and has a rural setting which reinforces Woolpit's rural origins and character. Nevertheless where development has extended onto the valley slopes as at Mitre Close it is highly visible. Similarly where development has extended onto higher land above the 65m metre contour it is also highly visible and seen breaking the skyline. The rising arable slopes on the valley sides form an important rural setting to the village.



b) View looking north towards development at Mitre Close on upper slopes



c) View looking east towards development at Green Croft on the skyline

Views from the south towards Woolpit

- 5.2.7 There are views of Woolpit from Green Road and Woolpit Green looking north. Here the more recently developed southern edge of Woolpit is clearly visible where it has risen onto slightly higher land towards Woolpit Green. From Green Road there are views towards the Church in the centre of the village with open arable fields to the west. However development to the east at Green Croft is clearly visible forming a harsh and regimented line of housing which does not reflect the local vernacular or form of the village. Development at Roman Fields is at a slightly lower elevation and

has a more established vegetated perimeter both of which soften the character of the settlement edge.



d) View looking north towards development at Steeles Road

Views from the east towards Woolpit

- 5.2.8 In these views the church remains the dominant focal point breaking the skyline where as other built development to the east of the village is largely concealed from view by mature woodland and scrub vegetation associated with the A14 and former brick pits. Recent development on the higher land to the south of the village at Green Croft is visible as are properties associated with Woolpit Heath. Although large scale commercial units are located between the village and A14 these are largely not visible and recede in views filtered by vegetation.



e) View looking west towards the southeast fringes of Woolpit with Woolpit Heath in bottom left hand corner

Views from within the settlement to the wider landscape

- 5.2.9 There a number of locations where there are important views from the settlement outwards towards the wider landscape. These include elevated views northwards across arable fields towards Norton Wood and Elmswell Church; and views south and southwest from the Drinkstone Road across the tributary valley to the windmills at Drinkstone; and south from Green Road and Heath Road at the edge of the built up area. It is notable that the key views out of the settlement from the urban area often occur at the gateway points (refer below). These are illustrated on Figure 3.

5.2.10 This analysis has confirmed that in many instances the village is not widely visible from the wider landscape despite its location on a shoulder of land above the Black Bourne Valley. The exception is the church spire which is seen from many directions as a key landmark but frequently in the context of only limited areas of peripheral development. It is therefore often not possible to perceive the full extent of the village, and the relatively small areas of housing that are visible, reinforce its small scale nucleated form. Furthermore views to the church spire often occur with a foreground of rural landscape again highlighting the rural context of the church particularly in views from the north and from the southwest. Development along the southern edge of the village is the most visible where 20th century housing has extended the village on to slightly more elevated land above the 65m contour. The linear layout of houses and colour of building materials further increases visibility as seen in the photographs above.

5.3 Gateways

5.3.1 Two types of gateway have been identified as part of this study. The first is the initial gateway into the settlement which marks the start of built form. Often this type of gateway occurs where there is more recent 20th century development on the outskirts of the settlement along main routes or where new road junctions have been created. These gateways may or may not have a strong character or sense of place.

5.3.2 The second gateway is that into the historic core of the settlement. This gateway marks the arrival at an area which has antiquity reflected in the built form, vernacular architecture or street pattern/spaces and often coincides with the edge of the Conservation Area.

5.3.3 The gateways defined in this study are illustrated on Figure 3. Key findings include the following:

- Gateways often occur at road junctions.
- The historic gateway from the north has been substantially altered due to the construction of the A14 junction and link road between Our Lady's Well and Old Stowmarket Road.
- Green Road and Heath Road are the only two gateways not at junction joints. These gateways have not altered substantially due to late 20th century housing estates being set back from the roads.
- Gateways from the east have been lost due to the severing of the road network by the A14.
- The distance between the initial settlement gateway and the historic core gateway is relatively short giving rise to the perception that the settlement is compact and has a strong sense of place with little indistinct peripheral suburban development. The exception is along The Street where late 20th century development coupled with housing along White Elm Road has extended the gateway to the northwest.

6: Detailed Assessment of Peripheral Areas

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 This section of the report considers in detail peripheral areas around Woolpit and other smaller hamlets within the Parish. Within each of the peripheral areas there may be sites which have already been approved for housing, are current applications, or have been considered in the Mid Suffolk and Babergh SHELAA. This assessment is from a landscape perspective and does not take account of other issues or constraints which will also affect an area's ability to accommodate housing.
- 6.1.2 Each Peripheral Area (PA) is illustrated on Figure 4 and described in terms of character and context followed by an evaluation of sensitivity and capacity to accommodate housing growth in the context of the character of the village and its setting. The assessment draws on all baseline data set out in this report.

6.2 Peripheral Areas Sensitivity Assessment

- 6.2.1 Eleven peripheral areas have been assessed and are illustrated on Figure 4. Of these areas 1, 4, 6 and 9 could accommodate some residential development and areas 7 and 10 could accommodate some commercial development. Areas 2, 3, 5, 8 and 11 are considered to be especially sensitive and should be retained as important open space and landscape which forms a setting to Woolpit and hamlets as well as bolstering sense of place and local identity of the Parish as a whole.
- 6.2.2 Where it is concluded that areas have some capacity for development it should not be assumed that these areas are free of sensitivity. The detailed assessment for each area, contained in the tables below, sets out the sensitivities relating to each area and highlights opportunities for mitigation and wider landscape enhancement. In this way information is provided on how development may deliver positive environmental gain in accordance with the Government's Environment Strategy, 25 Year Plan which states the clear objective to '*embed an environmental net gain principle for development, including housing and infrastructure*'. In particular this approach avoids the consideration of individual sites in isolation but looks at a broader context within which development can deliver positive change of benefit to the wider Parish and local community.

ANALYSIS TABLES

Peripheral Area 1: Land South of Woolpit/Heath Road

Relevant Planning Sites	Sites SS0673 and SS0783 in SHELAA.
Physical Character	Gently sloping site ranging from 62m to 60m AOD comprising two parcels of land either side of Heath Road. Arable land use to the west and rough ground to the east. The western site used to be the allotments for the village in the early 20th century.
Existing Settlement Edge	Located in the south eastern corner of the village, close to the existing urban edge. Land to west lies between Roman Fields and Heath Road. Here the existing urban edge comprises a hedgerow boundary with housing seen behind. The northern boundary is defined by a leylandii hedge. Mature hedgerow along the eastern side of Heath Road screening views eastwards. Track access and public right of way to the south leads to former area of brickpits. Within the existing urban area properties are set back from the road private driveways onto Heath Road and signage exert an urbanising influence. The existing gateway into the village is poorly defined.
Views and Visibility	Views into and across the western part of the site when approaching and leaving the village along Heath Road. The eastern site is not prominent in views due to hedgerow vegetation along Heath Road.
Designation/Condition	No nature conservation or heritage designations associated with this peripheral area. However the area is not without historic interest associated with the former brickpits. School house located to the north is a local landmark building.
Perceptual Qualities	This landscape is physically and visually connected to the wider landscape to the south of the village.
Function	This area is valued for its setting to the village and as part of the gateway to the settlement. This area forms an important role in connecting people with the wider landscape via existing public rights of way which run across and adjacent to the area.
Sensitivity/Capacity	The sensitivity of this site relates to its position at the gateway between the existing urban edge and the wider landscape. The eastern area is also visually sensitive in views from the south and east. While the eastern site is less visible it forms a rural setting to the village and the hedgerow along Heath Road reinforces rural character. Overall this area has some capacity for residential development which seeks to create a new and stronger gateway to the settlement and an improved softer urban edge which better integrates development at Roman Fields.
Mitigation	Mitigation associated with development should include a softening of the urban edge through appropriate native planting within and around any housing scheme. Development should not extend southwards beyond the existing urban edge and should be low density reflecting the urban edge location. The rural character of Heath Road between new development and Green Road should be strengthened through hedgerow/hedgerow tree planting and management of grass verges.
Guidance	Development should create a new gateway into the village ensuring properties faces onto Heath Road and define the streetscape in association with public open space. Development should reflect rural housing styles i.e. terraced cottages and the layout should include the creation of minor roads and lanes connecting into the existing urban edge e.g. Roman Fields. To the east any development should be considered in association with adjoining playing fields associated with the school and the potential for any school expansion, or development in peripheral area 9, ensuring the area is developed comprehensively, and enabling connectivity and permeability with the existing urban edge. Bolt-on housing estate development should be avoided.

Peripheral Areas 2: Land between Green Road and Heath Road

Relevant Planning Sites	Sites SS0093, SS0846 and SS0005 in SHELAA
Physical Character	Ridge of higher land between the settlements of Woolpit Green and Woolpit and sloping land towards Heath Road ranging from 70m AOD to 62m AOD at the junction between Heath Road and Green Road. The area forms arable land and there is evidence of field boundary loss resulting in medium scale fields which are open in character.
Existing Settlement Edge	The existing edge of Woolpit is abrupt comprising visually prominent housing associated with recent development at Green Croft. The colour of building materials, uniformity of style and layout and lack of boundary vegetation, as well as its elevated location, mean that it has a characterising influence on this area which is at odds with the strongly rural character of surrounding land.
Views and Visibility	This area comprises a ridge of higher land that slopes in an easterly direction towards Heath Road and in a westerly direction towards a tributary to the Black Brook. As a result it is highly visible from the surrounding countryside. In many views this landscape forms a notable rural gap between Woolpit and the hamlet of Woolpit Green and between Woolpit and Woolpit Heath. Views are particularly significant from elevated land south of Burts Cottages and from Wood Road as well as from Green Road and Heath Road.
Designation/Condition	There are three listed buildings in close proximity to this area including The Grange (Grade II), Green Farmhouse (Grade II) and Priory Cottage (Grade II). Former orchards were associated with Green Farmhouse in the early 20th Century. The landscape to the west of this area is high quality providing a valued rural setting to Woolpit which has visual interest associated with its varied topography, woodland copses and field patterns. There is evidence of field boundary loss in this area.
Perceptual Qualities	This is an open elevated/sloping landscape offering panoramic views across the Suffolk countryside.
Function	This area forms an important visual and physical gap between the settlements of Woolpit and Woolpit Green and Woolpit Heath. A public right of way cuts across the ridge of higher land connecting Woolpit with Woolpit Green.
Sensitivity/Capacity	This area is highly sensitive due to its visual prominence located on open elevated land which forms a distinct ridge. It is also sensitive because of its role in reinforcing the gap between Woolpit, Woolpit Green, and Woolpit Heath and in reinforcing the individual identity of these settlements. Development in this area would extend built form to the south elongating the village and blurring the distinction between the village and hamlet of Woolpit Green. As a result this landscape is not considered suitable for residential or commercial development. Whilst development close to the existing edge along Green Road could arguably be mitigated through boundary planting, it would nonetheless diminish the gap between the settlements and be highly visible in views from the west as well as affect the gateway into the settlement along Green Road.
Mitigation	Not applicable
Guidance	Consider the restoration of this landscape including the replanting of hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Consider the introduction of a community orchard and or planting of a new woodland south of the existing urban edge. Restore hedgerows along Green Road.

Peripheral Area 3: Land south west of Woolpit

Relevant Planning Sites	Site SS0458
Physical Character	Sloping land between the 67m and 50m contours. Relatively steep slopes facing away from the settlement and dipping into the tributary valley of the Black Brook.
Existing Settlement Edge	Reasonably well vegetated, glimpsed views to residential development. Housing at Mitre Close more visible as on sloping land. Church spire seen in the context of open farmland which sweeps up to the urban edge. Glimpsed views to commercial units at Woolpit Business Park where they has extended southwards.
Views and Visibility	There are distinctive and memorable views from Green Road to the church spire in Woolpit. There are also memorable and unique views from the west looking towards Woolpit where the spire of Woolpit Church and tower of Elmswell church are visible in the same view. Views from upper slopes westwards to the windmills at Drinkstone are also memorable.
Designation/Condition	Good condition with distinctive landscape features and patterns. Scenic quality reflected in more pronounced topography, overlapping lines of vegetation, small woods and a combination of arable on upper slopes and pasture on lower valley slopes.
Perceptual Qualities	Intimate and rural character with strong sense of place.
Function	Important high quality setting to Woolpit which extends into urban edge close to the historic core reinforcing rural character of village. Recreation opportunities are valued and views to the church close to the urban edge bolster sense of place.
Sensitivity/Capacity	The sensitivity of this area lies in its westerly facing slopes which extend into the upper reaches of the Black Brook valley providing a high quality rural setting to the village of Woolpit and Woopit Green as well as a valued landscape on the fringes of these settlements which is highly accessible. The open, elevated and sloping nature of this area means that it is visually sensitive when viewed from the west. In these views the urban edge is indented and vistas to the church are across this agricultural land such that the church appears close to the edge of the settlement and the settlement small in scale. Development in this area would undermine these qualities, extend the settlement into areas of open countryside which retain a deeply rural character. Development here would not be characteristic of Woolpit nor reflect its historic position in the landscape. Whilst there are views to the urban edge this is often well screened or views are filtered and where the Windmill Avenue Business Park is visible it appears unrelated to the settlement. Development along Drinkstone Road would alter the gateway into the settlement which is unique in the context of Woolpit connecting the historic core with the wider rural landscape setting. On balance this area is not considered suitable for residential or commercial development.
Mitigation	Not applicable
Guidance	Opportunities exist to reinstate hedgerows and grass verges along the rural lanes which traverse this area and lead into Woolpit. Seek opportunities to restore the rural lane character along Broomhill Lane where it has become eroded by close board fencing and the edge of estate housing development, through the planting of new hedgerows and hedgerow trees and management of grass verges. Undertake new field boundary planting and creation of small copses within the wider landscape to help mitigate views to the urban edge from the west and south. Avoid further extension of Woolpit Business Park to the south where it is starting to intrude on the small scale valley context.

Peripheral Area 4: Land South of Rag's Lane

Relevant Planning Sites	Planning application for residential development 2017 (withdrawn).
Physical Character	Flat site defined by mature hedgerows comprising former allotments, now overgrown with an unkempt appearance and two small fields at the eastern end.
Existing Settlement Edge	Enclosed site such that the existing urban edge is not visible from the wider landscape. Existing housing occurs on the northern side of Rags Lane while to the south is Area 3.
Views and Visibility	Views out from the site are restricted to the gateway access from Drinkstone Road. The mature hedgerow along Drinkstone Road which forms the boundary of the site is an important area of vegetation in the setting to the church spire when viewed from the southwest.
Designation/Condition	The eastern fields lie within the Conservation Area. Hedgerows are of nature conservation value and scrub vegetation within site may have some habitat value. Rags Lane has a semi-rural and intimate character. Listed buildings on Rag's Lane.
Perceptual Qualities	Enclosed, overgrown land which appears unkempt.
Function	Important vegetated edge to the village which contributes to the gateway into and out of the settlement along Drinkstone Road. Current gateway lies close to the historic core of the village.
Sensitivity/Capacity	The sensitivity of this site lies in its location on the edge of the settlement and its interrelationship with the wider landscape setting to the south. The site itself is however visually contained and screened from view by a mature and historic hedgerow along Drinkstone Road. This site has capacity to accommodate residential development. Given its location so close to the village centre and issues relating to traffic congestion this site may lend itself to retirement accommodation.
Mitigation	The height of buildings on this site should be carefully considered ensuring no visual intrusion into the wider landscape to the southwest. Vehicular access onto Drinkstone Road should be low key and rural in character or avoided altogether in order to retain the rural character of this lane or avoid alteration to the existing village gateway. The positioning of new dwellings, style and vernacular should positively enhance the small and intimate character of Rags Lane. Care should be taken to avoid high density small scale units which do not relate well to the existing housing density along Rag's Lane. A smaller number of larger buildings divided into separate units and set within grounds may provide a better fit.
Guidance	Retain significant trees on the site which provide the setting to views of the church from the southwest. Ensure that new development relates positively to Rag's Lane with some properties facing onto this route.

Peripheral Area 5: Land within Black Brook Valley

Relevant Planning Sites	Site SS0787 and SS1048 in SHELAA
Physical Character	Small scale stream valley with gently sloping valley sides ranging from 50m - 45m AOD. Stream course evident in valley bottom and crossed by Woolpit Bridge. Areas of broadleaved woodland (reflecting valley location i.e. willow and alder) and mature hedgerows/hedgerow trees surrounding small scale pasture fields.
Existing Settlement Edge	Settlement includes rural farmstead of Bridge Farm. Area is physically and visually separate from the existing urban edge of Woolpit but with good access to the A14.
Views and Visibility	Views are limited to close proximity from existing lanes. There are glimpsed views to dwellings on White Elm Road and to commercial units at Woolpit Business Park but otherwise the area has a rural valley character.
Designation/Condition	Important area for nature conservation and habitat networks. Landscape forms part of the Special Landscape Area and expresses scenic qualities associated with topography, vegetation and enclosure patterns/landuse.
Perceptual Qualities	Road noise from the A14 but traffic is not especially visible. Strongly rural riparian characteristics. Small scale and intimate.
Function	Associated with Bridge Farm is a large area used for Woolpit Sunday Market Car Boot Sale. Land immediately adjacent to Bridge Farm is used as a haulage yard. Otherwise this landscape is strongly rural comprising small scale pasture fields and woodland and forms a distinctive valley setting to Woolpit village, reinforcing its sense of place and historic location within the landscape. Land either side of Bury Road contributes to the rural gateway into Woolpit.
Sensitivity/Capacity	The sensitivity of this area lies in its high scenic quality (SLA) derived from its varied topography, woodland cover and associated valley vegetation associated with the Black Brook. This landscape has an intimate and small scale character and feels remote from the settlement of Woolpit which has historically been located on the spur of higher land overlooking the valley. Although this area has good connections to the A14, which may suggest a suitable location for commercial development, the area's small scale and intimate character make it sensitive to development of this kind. Residential or commercial development in this landscape would be uncharacteristic and would significantly alter the urban form of Woolpit village and its relationship with the river valley. Development in this landscape is not recommended.
Mitigation	Not applicable.
Guidance	Undertake field boundary planting to mitigate the visual intrusion of houses along White Elm Road and reinforcing the gateway into the village at the junction between The Street and Broomhill Lane. Avoid the extension of Woolpit Business Park where additional units would increase the visual and physical presence of large buildings within this intimate landscape. Seek opportunities to enhance habitat networks and nature conservation value of the area through woodland management and grazing.

Peripheral Site 6: North of Bury Road

Relevant Planning History	Site SS0670 in SHELAA. Site master plan at consultation stage comprising housing and primary school off Bury Road.
Physical Character	Area lies to the north of the village on land that slopes away from the settlement towards open countryside. Arable land use with a single hedgerow boundary and existing recreation ground to east. Medium scale fields due to some field boundary loss. Highest parts of area are c. 60m AOD at Bury Road dropping to 50m AOD in the northwest.
Existing Settlement Edge	Elevated views from settlement edge to the wider landscape. Housing development at Hay Barn Close sits on the highest land and is visually prominent. Other housing south of Bury Road recedes as it is back clothed by vegetation. The church lies close to the urban edge and retains a uninterrupted connection to the wider landscape.
Views and Visibility	Open and expansive character. There are views to Norton Wood on the skyline and also to the church tower of Elmswell. The A14 is not visible sitting on lower land and with associated vegetation. Views back from White Elm Road and north of the A14 towards Woolpit and especially church spire. Views across this area and playing fields from A14 junction to northeast.
Designation/Condition	Field boundary running east west is only remaining boundary on site and is gappy. Monks Close is a listed building on the existing urban edge. Conservation Area abuts this area and extends slightly to the north of the urban edge.
Perceptual Qualities	Open and expansive. A14 not visible in views despite proximity but some noise intrusion.
Function	There are no public rights of way across this land but it performs an important function in providing a setting to the village and church, reinforcing the historic location of the village overlooking lower land associated with the Black Bourne valley. Intervisibility of the two churches of Woolpit and Elmswell is a special feature in this area as are views to Norton Wood.
Sensitivity/Capacity	The sensitivity of this site relates to its edge of village location and outwards north facing gentle slopes which connect the village with its wider landscape setting. Elevated views out from the urban edge and views back towards Woolpit church are distinctive and valued. The proximity of the conservation and area listed buildings to the existing urban edge also increases the sensitivity of this area to development. Development in this area also has the potential to alter the settlement form and character, undermine the rural setting to the church and alter perceptions of arrival. Nevertheless, the southwestern part of this site has some capacity for new housing development which is closely associated with the existing urban edge. Development in this area offers opportunities to create new distinctive gateways into the village either along Bury Road or the A1088, whilst retaining the rural setting and relationship between the church and wider landscape setting. Care should be taken to keep new development close to the existing edge and to retain open fields between the urban edge and the A14. The openness of this area and connection to the wider landscape means it is not considered suitable for commercial or industrial development even on the lower slopes closest to the A14.
Mitigation	The east west hedgerow across the area should be strengthened to filter views through to new development and a fringe of farmland retained separating the edge of the village from the A14. Significant landscape planting within any new development should provide structure and break up development on the slopes as well as help divide the site into smaller neighbourhoods. Protect a wedge of open space extending up the slopes to the church retaining the church's connection to the wider landscape.
Guidance	Protect the sense of separation between the village and the A14 retaining perceptions of a small scale compact village. Plan for the provision of new open space in north west of village where there is currently poor provision Protect views from the urban edge to Norton Wood and wider landscape which reinforces identity and sense of place. Plan for the creation of new gateways as part of any development. Ensure they are close to existing gateways and have a strong

	<p>sense of place and open up vistas to existing landmarks to reinforce arrival and avoid roundabout junctions which are uncharacteristic. Avoid cul-de-sac developments and introduction of distributor roads - plan for a hierarchy of small scale streets reflecting form and pattern of village and which connect into the existing urban edge (such as Rectory Lane) ensuring a high degree of permeability and integration to village centre. Plan for the integration of housing along White Elm Road which currently feels remote and separate from the village. Protect and manage a rural fringe of fields to the village.</p>
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Peripheral Site 7: Former Brick Pits/Commercial Development

Relevant Planning History	Sites SS0326 and SS0328 in SHELAA
Physical Character	This area comprises land to the northeast of Woolpit village. It lies adjacent to Our Lady's Well scheduled monument. Relatively flat landscape around 60m to 55m AOD. Land use comprises a mosaic of industrial and commercial buildings with associated storage areas and car parking along with patches of rough ground or remnant agricultural landscape. Majority of area has a well wooded appearance, the landscape remaining stronger than the commercial buildings which are located within it. Access into this area is via the A1088 with two new access roads feeding Jewers Grain and Goldstar Transport respectively in the north, close to the junction with the A14, and also access to other smaller commercial units and plant nursery via the Old Stowmarket Road.
Existing Settlement Edge	Some linear housing development along Old Stowmarket Road (mixed ages) reflecting the former importance of this route prior to the construction of the A14. Physically and visually separate from existing settlement of Woolpit.
Views and Visibility	Warehouses and storage areas visible above vegetation from White Elm Road and A14 junction adjacent. Limited visibility from Old Stowmarket Road across Palgrave's Meadow due to boundary vegetation.
Designation/Condition	Area previously formed part of the brick industry, some remnants of past industrial history may be present. Biodiversity interest associated with patches of scrub and woodland, waterbodies and rough grassland. Setting to Our Lady's Well scheduled monument. Some listed buildings on Old Stowmarket Road.
Perceptual Qualities	Enclosed and inward looking area feeling separate from the wider landscape.
Function	Public right of way historically connected Old Stowmarket Road with Kiln Lane but now severed by A14. Wooded character of this site helps to screen the eastern edge of Woolpit and separates it from the A14. The area is also an important part of Woolpit's history comprising the former brickworks.
Sensitivity/Capacity	The sensitivity of this area lies in its potential nature conservation value and its proximity to Our Lady's Well Scheduled Monument and Woolpit Conservation Area. Nevertheless the area has some capacity for further commercial development due to its relatively well vegetated character and the low embankment of the A14 which helps screen views from the north. Residential development would not be in keeping with the historic village form of Woolpit and is unlikely to feel integrated due to its more peripheral location. It is therefore not recommended. The land at the access slip roads to the A14 may be a suitable location for a new service station especially if this enabled the release of the Murco garage site within Woolpit for residential development (refer to peripheral site 8).
Mitigation	Opportunities to mitigate development through sensitive design and location of new buildings and consideration of height limits for structures and materials in storage areas. Mitigation should seek to develop a nature conservation strategy for the whole area. Ensure that new access into this area for commercial development, if it requires HGV access, is located close to the A14 and does not encroach on the small scale and rural character of lanes closer to the village of Woolpit. Any development close to the A14 slip roads would need to be associated with substantial landscape screening.
Guidance	Seek opportunities to open up areas of woodland and waterbodies and grassland to public access and create nature and history walks close to areas of work. Ensure that new developments seek to use waterbodies as part of creating distinctive settings for employment sites. Seek opportunities to bolster existing planting surround Palgrave's Meadow to reduce visual intrusion of adjacent development through planting of hedgerow trees for example. Seek to reduce visual clutter of signage along roads particularly where this may affect the gateway into the village. Seek opportunities to reinstate public right of way from Old Stowmarket Road to Elmswell with safe crossing of A14 (footbridge/underpass) and provide an associated cycle route.

Peripheral Site 8: Our Lady's Well, Palgrave's Meadow

Relevant Planning History	Sites SS0070 and SS0958 in SHELAA. Current planning application for residential development on Palgrave's Meadow (awaiting decision)
Physical Character	This area lies to the northeast of Woolpit village. It comprises small scale pasture fields currently used for horse paddocks and an arable field, to the west and east of Heath Road respectively. The current site of the Murco Garage has also been included in this area. In the northeast is an area of woodland and scrub around the moated site Our Lady's Well scheduled monument. Heath Road was constructed as part of the A14 junction to the north and is bounded by maturing hedgerow trees and scrub. Topographically the area is flat at around 60m. The area is open to Old Stowmarket Road while to the north and east are low hedgerows with filtered views to glasshouses, commercial buildings and container storage, visible above the vegetation.
Existing Settlement Edge	This area is weakly associated with the existing urban edge of Woolpit. Existing dwellings to the west back onto the small scale paddocks and are defined by close board fencing. To the south dwellings at Saffron Close are largely screened from view. New residential development is planned for south of Old Stowmarket Road along with the construction of a new junction at Heath Road and Old Stowmarket Road. The Murco Garage is visually prominent especially when approaching from the east along Old Stowmarket Road but does not appear in an urban context. The realignment and creation of a new road link between the A14 to Heath Road and the severing of Rectory Lane (which would have originally been the approach route into the village), has altered perceptions of arrival and has physically severed Our Lady's Well/Palgrave's Meadow from the core of the village.
Views and Visibility	Significant views across this area from Old Stowmarket Road and glimpsed views at junction between it and Heath Road. Views to church spire of Woolpit and also to tower of Elmswell Church. Our Lady's Well is not readily discernible due to vegetation cover.
Designation/Condition	Area forms part of the Woolpit Conservation Area, the boundary of which reflects former field patterns prior to the construction of Heath Road link road. Open landscape setting to Our Lady's Well (Scheduled Monument) and Woolpit Church - two key landmarks and historic assets which reveal the evolution and significance of Woolpit.
Perceptual Qualities	This area has a strong rural character despite its proximity to the historic core of the village. Views of landmark and historic features give it a strong sense of place and important function in terms of reinforcing local identity.
Function	The land in the immediate vicinity of Our Lady's Well is valuable in providing a rural and open setting and affording views to Woolpit Church. Both these features are historic assets which reveal the evolution and significance of Woolpit. This area of land is therefore particularly important in reinforcing sense of place. Visual connections between this land and the core of the village remain tangible. The open character of Palgrave's Meadow reinforces the sense of separation between Woolpit village and industrial / employment activity to the east.
Sensitivity/Capacity	The sensitivity of this landscape lies in its role as a rural setting to local historic landmarks and in affording memorable views. It also brings a rural character into the village and reinforces the separation between the historic core and historic brick works and plays a role in defining the approach and sense of arrival at Woolpit. These factors limit the capacity of this area to accommodate development without significant loss to valued assets, character and sense of place and make it vulnerable to urbanising influences associated with a new roundabout junction. Nevertheless there is some scope for housing development on the Murco Garage site if it could be relocated (refer to peripheral area 7). This is a visually sensitive site and will need careful design so that built form helps define the street and enhances sense of arrival when approaching from the east.
Mitigation	Mitigation should include the careful design of any development on the Murco site in terms of built form, vernacular styles, traditional building material and relationship to the street. More broadly there is potential for this area to play a greater role in the

	sense of arrival at Woolpit village and should be considered in relation to any new gateway created to the north (refer to area 6) and the proposed new junction at Heath Road and Old Stowmarket Road - care should be taken to avoid urbanising influences - the use of non standard design and layout as well as minimising the effects of lighting and signage would be most appropriate.
Guidance	Seek opportunities to integrate Our Lady's Well, the church and surrounding open land, reinforcing the collective role these elements have in reinforcing local identity. Avoid introduction of new elements which visually fragment these areas or intrude on the character and unity of the space. Seek opportunities to open up areas of woodland and waterbodies and grassland to public access and create nature and history walks close to areas of work. Seek to reduce the effects of close board fencing along the existing urban edge and keep visual clutter associated with horse paddocks to a minimum. Seek opportunities to open up views from Heath Road across the paddocks and Palgrave's Meadow, integrating the open space into the urban fabric of the village. Seek opportunities to return Palgrave's Meadow to grassland and manage for nature conservation and as a community asset. Consider the designation of the area as a Locally Important Green Space based on its proximity to the local community, importance in reinforcing local identity/sense of place and as a setting to historic assets.

Peripheral Area 9: Old Brickworks

Relevant Planning Sites	Site SS0822, SS0331 and SS0823) in SHELAA.
Physical Character	Relatively open and flat landscape between 58m and 55m, the lower lying area occurring centrally. Former heath character of brick works although not evident in landscape other than the general lack of strong enclosure pattern. Land use is arable with no hedgerow enclosures except to the north where the area abuts a recently allocated housing site and there is mature historic hedgerow boundary.
Existing Settlement Edge	Warehouse/commercial buildings set down low and surrounded by woodland/scrub vegetation to the north. Glimpsed views of development at Roman Fields and houses at Croft Green on higher land to the west. Views also to dwellings set in woodland at Woolpit Heath to the south.
Views and Visibility	This land is highly visible from rising land towards Elmswell, from Wood Road to the east and from Green Road to the south. There are no cultural or natural heritage designation in this area although there are remnants of the former brickworks including access track.
Designation/Condition	Landscape reads as open swathe of arable between Woolpit village and hamlet of Woolpit Heath.
Perceptual Qualities	Open, expansive and denuded character.
Function	Physical and visual gap between settlements and a rural setting to both. Public right of way runs along old access track to the former brickworks between Heath Road and Old Stowmarket Road.
Sensitivity/Capacity	The sensitivity of this site relates to its open character and role in providing a setting to Woolpit village and maintaining a sense of separation between Woolpit and Woolpit Heath. Nevertheless, this area may have some capacity for development in the longer term if a strong landscape structure is created which includes the planting of native woodland which extends the current vegetated character of the landscape found to the northeast. Development opportunities could include a mixture of commercial/employment and residential but should seek to closely relate to the existing urban edge of Woolpit and be restricted to the lower lying parts of the site whilst retaining open arable land between Woolpit Village and Woolpit Heath and along Heath Road.
Mitigation	Creation of a strong native woodland structure into which new development can be placed in the longer term. Vegetation structure should reflect the wooded character of land to the north and ensure that development is well screened and where visible is backclothed by vegetation.
Guidance	Ensure development in this area is not visually intrusive i.e. carefully consider the height and colour of buildings and character of roofscape ensuring buildings sit low within the newly established wooded character. Woodland species should reflect local geology of the area and include acid loving species such as birch if appropriate. Woodland creation could also provide a resource for the local school e.g. forest school. Consider the effect of access into development on the gateway into Woolpit along Heath Road. Any development should be considered in association with adjoining playing fields associated with the school, the potential for any school expansion, or development in peripheral area 1, ensuring the area is developed comprehensively, and enabling connectivity and permeability with the existing urban edge. Bolt-on housing estate development should be avoided.

Peripheral Area 10: Land East of A14

Relevant Planning Sites	Site SS0566 and SS0773 in SHELAA. Screening opinion for industrial development of Lawn Farm.
Physical Character	This site is located north of the A14 and comprises sloping land ranging from 55m in the west to 70m AOD along Wood Road in the east. Predominately arable landuse in small scale fields defined by hedgerows in the west and larger open field to east. Western corner of area includes hardstanding and single story building housing The Stag Cafe truck stop.
Existing Settlement Edge	Physically separate from wider settlement of Woolpit village, Woolpit Heath and Elmswell and areas of commercial development south of the A14. Site forms part of wider landscape between the A14 and Elmswell village.
Views and Visibility	Area visible when travelling east on the A14 especially the sloping land which rises up to Wood Road and Lawn Farm. Land is also visible from elevated views along Wood Road , Warren Lane as well as Kiln Lane.
Designation/Condition	Lawn Cottage and Lawn Farmhouse are listed buildings (Grade II) and Special Landscape Area located to the east of the site.
Perceptual Qualities	Countryside location separate from existing villages and hamlets. There are no views to existing settlements from the lower lying land but elevated views across to Woolpit, Woolpit Heath and Elmswell from upper slopes in the east.
Function	Part of open countryside. Public Right of way connects Woolpit Heath with Old Stowmarket Road over the A14.
Sensitivity/Capacity	The sensitivities of this site lie in its location adjacent to a Special Landscape Area and elevated slopes which are highly visible from the A14 and edge of Woolpit, Green Road and Elmswell. Residential development on this site would appear remote and unconnected to existing settlements and would not be in keeping with existing settlement patterns. Similarly employment development in this area would appear physically and visually separate. The prominence of existing farm buildings associated with Lawn Farm illustrate the extent to which large scale buildings in this location would be visible over substantial distances. Nevertheless there is some capacity for development in the western corner of the site where the land lies below the 60m contour, especially if it was accompanied with significant woodland planting. Any development in this area and associated with woodland creation would fit well with the existing employment development on the site of the former brick pits to the northwest.
Mitigation	Development in this location should be kept below the 60m contour and building heights should be kept low to avoid increased visibility from the wider landscape. Undertake substantial woodland planting so that development sits within this landscape context and is in keeping with similar development to the northwest. Ensure that development in this area does not affect the setting of the listed buildings on Wood Road nor is accessed off this rural lane.
Guidance	Seek opportunities to improve the footpath access between Woolpit Heath and Elmswell Station via the existing public rights of way providing safer crossing of the A14 via footbridge/underpass and developing the route as a new cycleway. Seek opportunities to improve habitats associated with small stream/ditch and creation of new habitat network though any development site.

Peripheral Area 11: Land East of Wood Road

Relevant Planning Sites	None
Physical Character	Elevated land at 75m AOD. Relatively flat topography. Arable land use.
Existing Settlement Edge	Isolated site, physically separate from existing settlement. Surrounded on two sites by woodland and A14 in cutting to the south with Wood Lane forming western boundary. Area contains earthworks associated with the A14.
Views and Visibility	Not significantly visible from the surrounding landscape due to woodland screening although woodland may be felled in future especially conifers in Warren Wood.
Designation/Condition	Historically this site has remained open and immediately adjacent to the woodland associated with Haughley Park. When the A14 was built the site was altered in terms of earthwork development.
Perceptual Qualities	Clearing within woodland resulting in an enclosed remote character. Some noise intrusion from the A14.
Function	Forms part of the wider rural landscape and former extent of parkland associated with Haughley Park as well as part of the Special Landscape Area
Sensitivity/Capacity	Sensitivities of this site lie in its designation as a Special Landscape Area and its position immediately adjacent to Haughley Park. The accessibility of this site along Wood Road also increases its sensitivity as does its physical and perceptual separation from existing settlement. Whilst there has been some development of executive homes associated with Borley Green to the south this type of development on this site is not considered characteristic of the area and would have the effect of extending an urbanising influence along Wood Road. The characteristic settlement pattern in this area is small scale terraced/semi-detached cottages and or farm complexes. There is some limited capacity for development of this type on this site located either facing onto the lane or slightly set back.
Mitigation	Partial development of this site would presents opportunities for additional native woodland planting and creation of acid grassland habitat.
Guidance	Ensure any new development reflects the local vernacular of rural cottages and farm complexes and is modest in scale and character. Avoid the urbanisation of Wood Road as a result of new development.

6.3 Potential for Development within the Wider Parish

- 6.3.1 The smaller hamlets of Woolpit Green, Woolpit Heath and Borely Green each has its own individual identity and comprises small scale clusters of built development within the wider countryside.
- 6.3.2 Within Woolpit Green new development has occurred along the rural roads and but is modest in scale and has not overwhelmed the otherwise dispersed pattern of farms and dwellings which forms a loose cluster of properties. This settlement has limited capacity to accommodate further development without loss of its loose organic form.
- 6.3.3 Woolpit Heath has a linear quality extending along Heath Road and Warren Lane. There is some capacity of infill development in some of the small scale pastures to the south of Warren Lane. Development here would fit with the linear form of development and would not be widely visible from the wider landscape.
- 6.3.4 Borley Green comprises mainly late 20th century development along Wood Road. More recent development has occurred in the north at the junction with Heath Road. This area has accommodated new development relatively well due to the higher concentration of woodland and back drop of Woolpit Wood. Any further development in this area would need to conserve the sense of separation between Borley Green and Woolpit Heath and avoid extending the gateway to the west.

7: Summary of Findings

7.1 Special Qualities to Conserve and Enhance

7.1.1 The following conclusions can be reached as to the special qualities of Woolpit and its setting which, wherever possible, should be retained and enhanced. Special qualities include:

- The intact form and fabric of the historic core of Woolpit village which reflects its early layout centered on the triangular market place;
- The position of the village on higher land overlooking the valley and tributary of the Black Brook;
- The distinctive orientation and relationship of buildings around the market place;
- The small scale street pattern comprising the main routes and back streets which interconnect and provide permeability through the historic core;
- Village edges are predominately indented and organic in character;
- Sense of separation between Woolpit village and former brickworks and rural hamlets which retain their individual identity;
- Distinctive spire of Woolpit church and tower of Elmswell church located close to the edges of each settlement;
- Visual connectivity from existing edges of Woolpit across lower lying land and to skyline woodland and built landmarks, reinforce sense of place;
- Gateways into the village remain close to the historic core, reinforcing perceptions of its small scale rural village character;

7.2 Changes to Avoid

7.2.1 This detailed analysis has noted some changes which have resulted in loss of the distinctive qualities of the village. It is useful to highlight these as it may inform decisions regarding any future development or environmental initiatives/management of the village setting.

- Development on visually prominent land to the south of the village above the 65m contour;
- Development which extends below the 50m contour onto the lower valley sides;
- Use of inappropriate building materials and building forms;
- Urban and engineered road layouts which do not reflect the existing hierarchy of routes;
- Cul-de-sac road layouts;
- High density and abrupt urban edges;
- Positioning new development behind existing rural lanes such that there is a poor relationship between historic routes and new development;
- Potential loss of key views to surrounding landmarks affecting visual and physical connectivity between the village and wider landscape;
- Loss of hedgerows and woodland;
- Loss of meadows close to watercourses and conversion to arable use.

7.3 Management and Development Guidelines

7.3.1 The following management and development guidelines have been identified as a result of this detailed settlement and landscape analysis. These guidelines are provided to inform land management decisions, inspire local community initiatives and to inform the development of proposals by developers and to assist decision makers.

7.3.2 Management guidelines seek to reinforce local character and improve legibility. They include:

- Soften existing hard urban edges with planting where development is visually intrusive;
- Open up views to churches so they act as stronger landmarks and visually/physically connecting areas of open space;
- Create new woodland (possibly community woodland or woodland used as forest school) east of Heath Road, increasing capacity for development and reducing visual effects of existing urban edges;
- Improve pastures associated with watercourses;
- Reinstate hedgerows especially on the valley slopes conserving landscape character and scenic qualities;
- Ensure new gateways enhance sense of arrival through integration of open space, planting and creation of vistas to landmarks;
- Seek opportunities to restore areas of pasture from arable especially where they occur close to the urban edge;
- Conserve and enhance the setting of Our Lady's Well scheduled monument;
- Manage areas of ancient woodland using traditional woodland management techniques including the reintroduction of coppicing where appropriate;

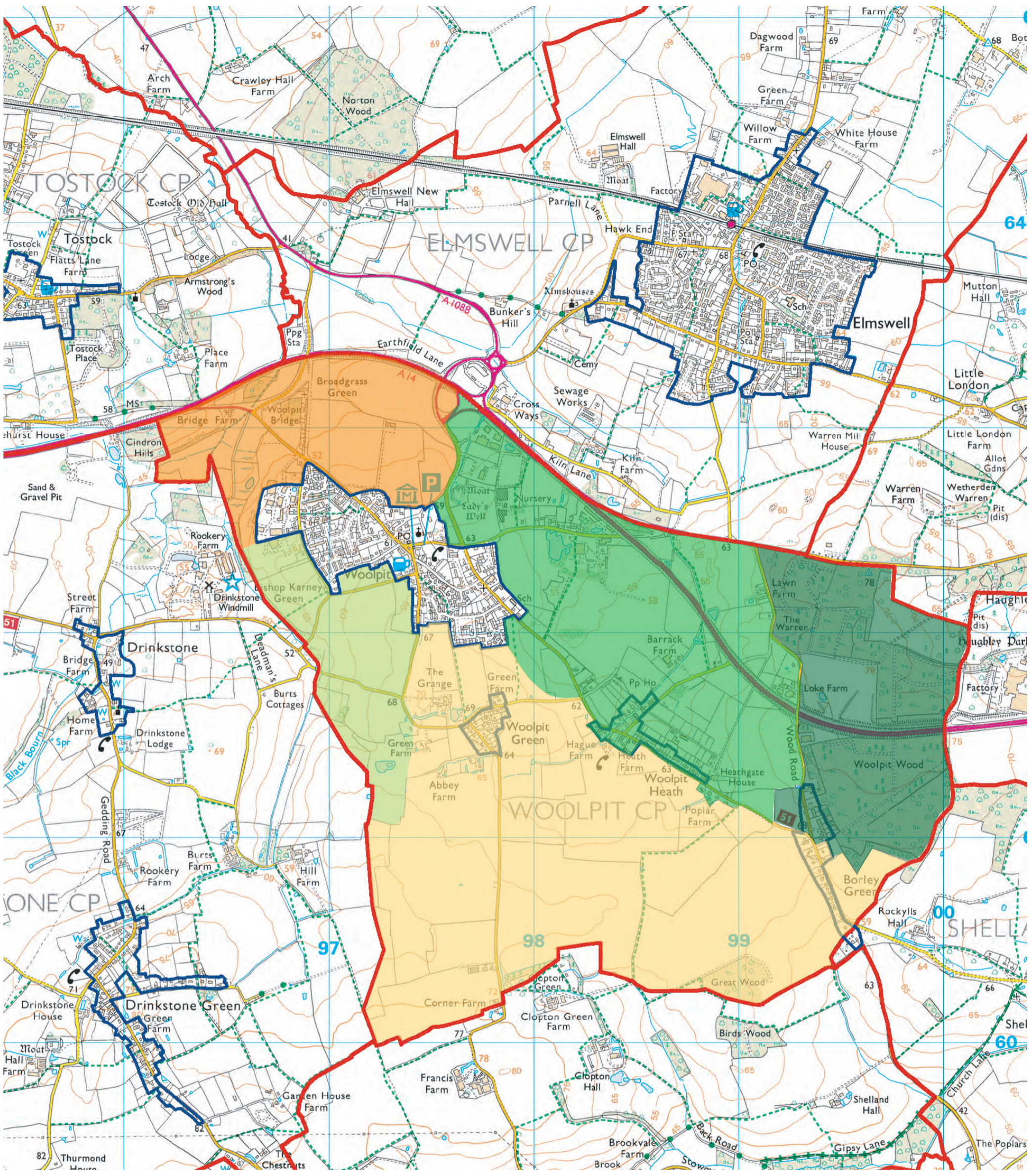
- Seek to minimise the impacts of close board fencing and other curtilage treatment on rural lanes e.g. Broomhill Lane;
- Seek opportunities for the creation of orchards associated with the fringes of settlement particularly on higher slopes between Woolpit and Woolpit Green;
- Reduce visual clutter which may arise from pony paddocks;
- Undertake a detailed hedgerow, tree and woodland survey to identify recent and ancient plantings and the coincidence between species mix and soil type in order to inform any hedge/tree restoration and management work;
- Seek opportunities to reduce noise and visual impact of traffic on the A14 through additional planting and reinstatement of landscape structure where field boundaries have been lost;
- Seek opportunities to fell and replant areas of conifer plantation with native woodland species such as oak;
- Seek opportunities to redesign and enhance the public realm through changes to road layouts and signage, enhancing the street scene, gateways and reducing traffic speeds and congestion.

7.3.3 Development guidelines seek to inform new development and include:

- Ensure Woolpit continues to be perceived as a ridge settlement overlooking the Black Bourne valley and avoid expansion onto lower slopes or higher land which can undermine these perceptions and sense of place;
- Avoid cumulative effects of small housing schemes which collectively, over time, extend the urban edge and relate poorly to one another – seek wider masterplans and visions for broader areas linking in aspirations for open space, reinforcement of rural landscape setting, views and vistas, public rights of way/circular countryside walks and recreation;
- Ensure permeability through new housing areas, connecting any new development into the heart of the existing settlement and avoid cul de sac development wherever possible;
- Ensure that new development is sensitively located and avoids adverse impacts on the setting of landmark buildings and historic landscape patterns;
- Retain a sense of separation between commercial activity and the historic settlement of Woolpit;
- Ensure new development faces onto existing lanes/roads retaining a rural character and creating cross streets or new back streets in keeping with the settlement's hierarchy of routes;
- Avoid new development within the valley floor and on the valley sides which visually intrudes/detracts from the tranquillity, and intimate character;
- Retain open valley slopes visible from the southwest and ensure agricultural land is retained between the urban edge and A14;
- Avoid the development of roundabouts at road junctions which are uncharacteristic and undermine the rural 'village' character of the settlement;
- Seek opportunities to improve access and interpretation of the brick pit industry and biodiversity legacy it has provided.
- Protect rural lanes from verge erosion caused by increased traffic.

7.4 Conclusions

- 7.4.1 In conclusion this assessment has revealed that Woolpit has capacity to accommodate appropriately designed residential and commercial development. To ensure a good fit between new and old it is important that any new development seeks to conserve and enhance the character of the existing settlement in terms of urban form as well as character. The settlement has a number of sensitivities related to its special qualities and as a result opportunities for development tend to be small scale. The future growth of Woolpit should therefore comprise a number of small to modest scale developments rather than a single or couple of large scale schemes.



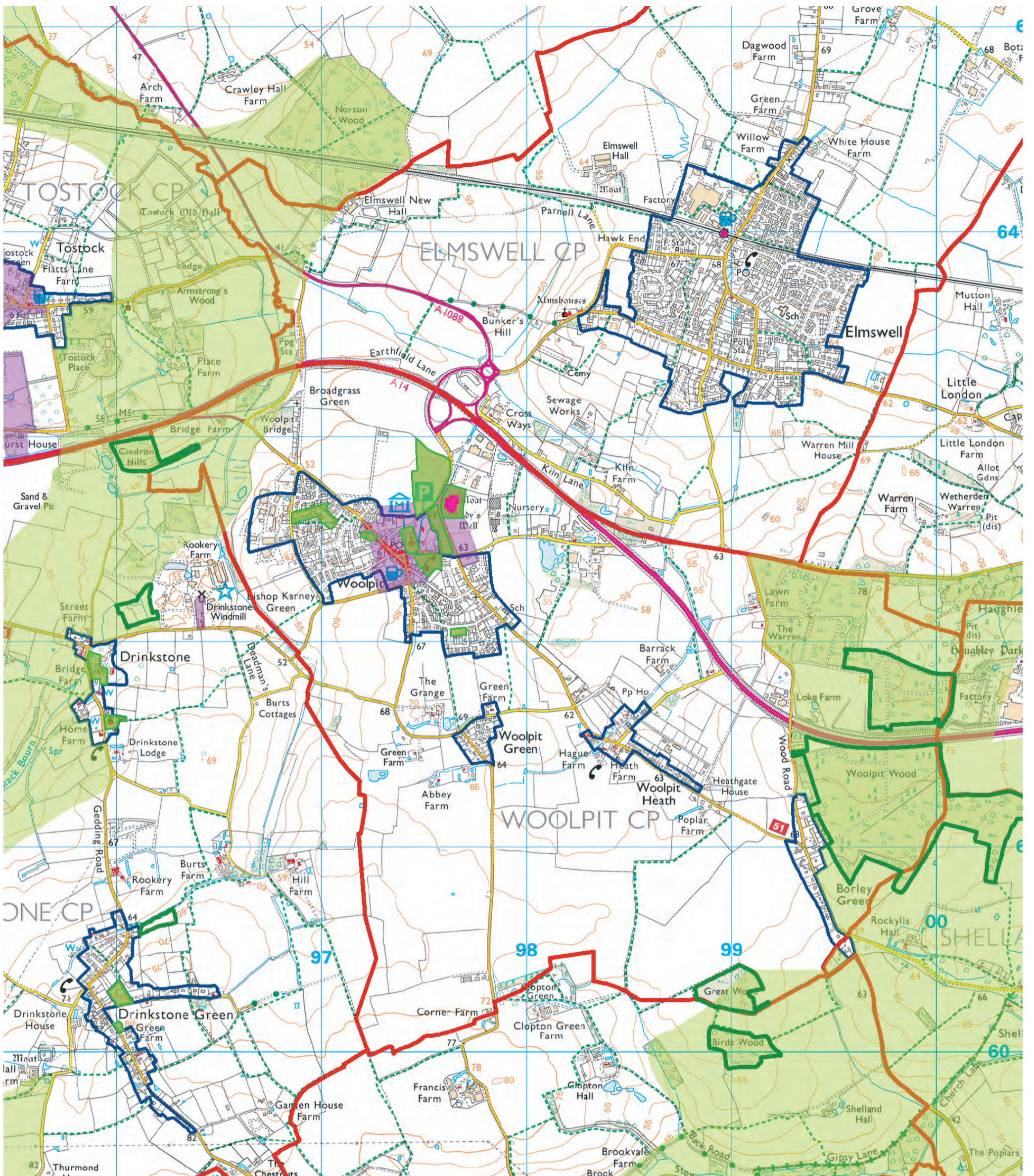
Key

- Neighbourhood Plan Area
- Settlement Boundary
- Broadgrass Green
- Woolpit Green
- Woolpit Heath and Borley Green
- Clopton Green
- Woolpit Wood and Haughley Park

**Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan
Landscape Appraisal**

**Figure 1:
Landscape Character**





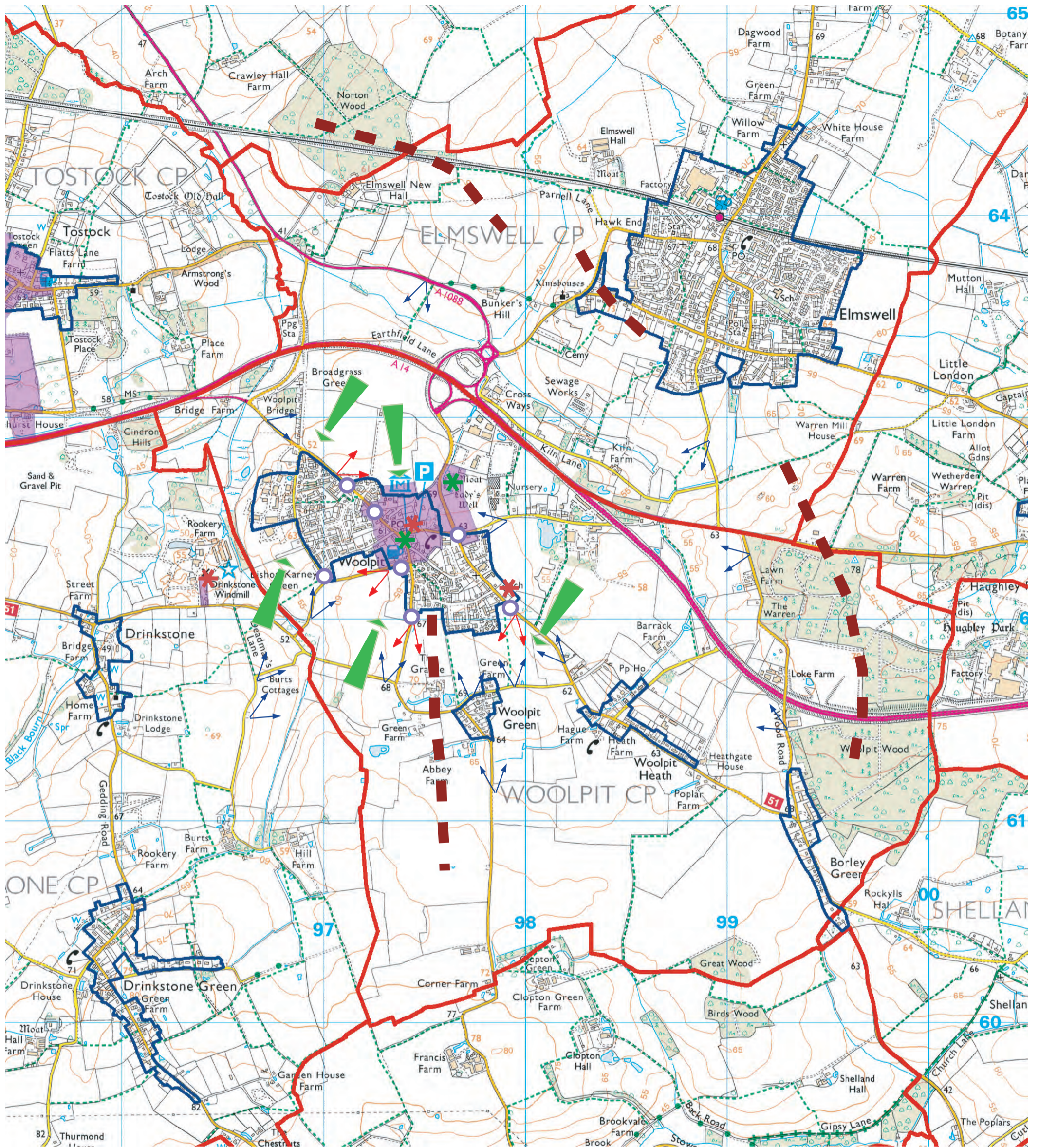
Key

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
|  | Neighbourhood Plan Area |  | Conservation Area |
|  | Settlement Boundary |  | Scheduled Monument |
|  | Special Landscape Area |  | Listed Buildings |
|  | County Wildlife Sites |  | Visually Important Open Spaces |






**Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan
Landscape Appraisal**





**Figure 2:
Landscape Designations**





Key

-  Neighbourhood Plan Area
-  Settlement Boundary
-  Visually important ridges
-  Views towards Settlement
-  Views out of Settlement

-  Land extending towards settlement
-  Gateways
-  Landscape Features
 1. Village marketplace
 2. Lady's Well
-  Landmarks
 1. Woolpit Primary School
 2. St Mary's Church
 3. Drinkstone Windmill

Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal

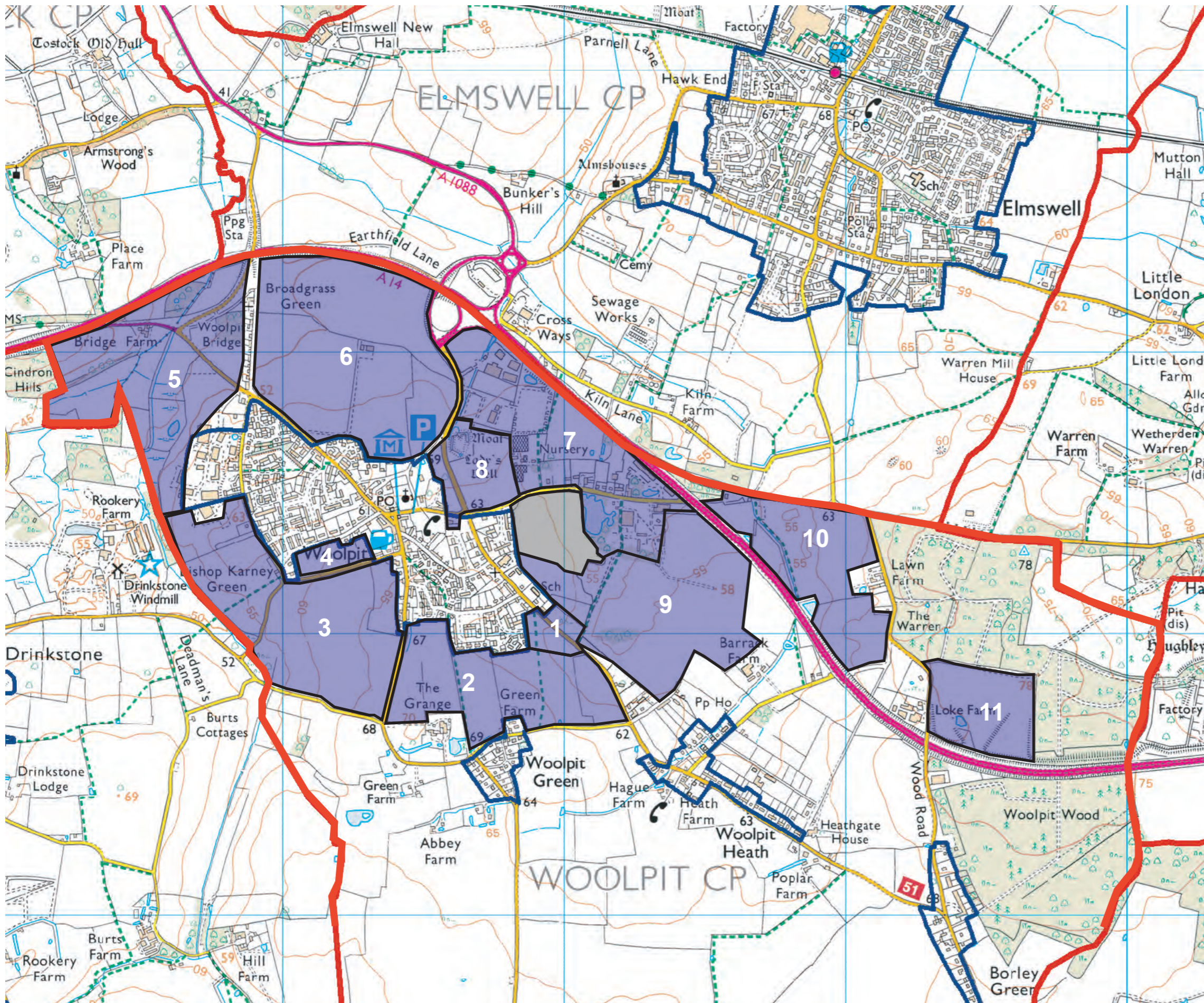
Figure 3: Analysis






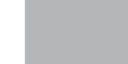
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Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan Landscape Appraisal

Figure 4: Sensitivity Assessment



Key

-  Neighbourhood Plan Area
-  Settlement Boundary
-  1 Peripheral Areas
-  Allocated Housing

