

# North Weald Bassett Heritage and Character Assessment

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## 1. Introduction

This report presents a summary of the history and character of North Weald Bassett Parish, which lies within the Epping Forest District. The Parish boundary of North Weald Bassett encompasses the villages of North Weald, Hastingwood and Thornwood. The report has been prepared by consultants at AECOM on behalf of Locality, working closely with the North Weald Bassett Neighbourhood Steering Group and is based on a detailed appraisal of the area carried out through desk study and fieldwork.

Landscape is a broad, collective term that encompasses natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It is defined by the European Landscape Convention as “... an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.” Landscape character assessment is used to describe and articulate what is special and distinctive about a particular place. The principles of landscape character assessment apply to all types of landscape, including urban townscape. It is used to identify recognisable patterns of elements or characteristics that make one place different from another. This report is focussed on the character of the urban townscape and its rural landscape context.

*“[Townscape is] the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationship between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open spaces” (LI, 2017).*

The information generated through the process of characterisation can be used as evidence to support the planning and design process. This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies based on an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics (DCLG, 2012). In doing so, policies can ensure that development responds to local character and history, and reflects the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

## 2. Approach

The approach of this study follows well-established landscape character assessment techniques. The detailed desk study and fieldwork carried out to inform this assessment underpins the classification and description of character areas and broadly follows the process set out in the “*Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*” (Natural England, 2014). This approach has been tailored to meet the specific needs of the neighbourhood planning process and draws on further best practice guidance including:

- Townscape Character Assessment, TIN 05/17 (Landscape Institute, 2017);
- Historic Environment: Good Practice in Planning Note 3 (Historic England, 2017);
- Shaping Neighbourhoods: Character and Context (Great London Assembly 2014);
- Character and identity Townscape and heritage appraisals in housing market renewal areas (Historic England and CABE 2008); and Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice (Historic England 2010);
- Understanding Place Historic Area Assessments: Principles and Practice (Historic England 2010); and
- Using Historic Landscape Characterisation (Historic England 2004).

Historic England, previously English Heritage has issued a number of guidance and best practice notes covering a range of issues in relation to the conservation and management of historic places and heritage assets all of which are available on the Historic England website (<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/>).



*Are there any issues relating to the heritage or character of the area which you would like to see resolved?*

- The roads are prone to congestion, particularly around M11 junction 7, the B1393 through Thornwood Village, Epping Plain and in North Weald Bassett;
- Modern estate development, such as Blenheim Square, is not in keeping with the density and number of storeys of the historic development of North Weald Bassett;
- Shop frontages are dated and there is a lack of parking in proximity to them;
- Lack of variety of properties for residents wanting to downsize and stay in the community;
- Pavements are either poor quality or do not exist; for example in and around Hastingwood which discourages residents from walking compounding the issues of vehicular congestion on the roads;
- Inadequate parking facilities associated with new developments result in parked cars occupying the roads and pavements;
- The roads around Hastingwood which are used as a “rat run” for speeding vehicles; and
- The poor condition of the North Weald Redoubt.

*Are there any aspects of heritage or character which you feel are particularly sensitive to change?*

- The landscape visible from and overlooking the east of the village which includes Weald Common and the North Weald Redoubt;
- The peacefulness of the Parish Church of St Andrew, North Weald Bassett Parish Council’s cemetery and the surroundings;

*What do you consider the main pressures will be in the future which would threaten the distinctive characteristics of the area?*

- North Weald Bassett becoming a through road or turning into a town;
- Settlements losing their connections with the surrounding rural landscapes;
- Loss of village scale and character;
- Pressure to increase density of development;
- Lack of appropriate infrastructure;
  - Roads;
    - Traffic generated by new development travelling to Epping Station;
    - Increased use of M11 Junction 7;
  - The drainage and sewage network is not adequate to support large scale new development; and
- Change of use and character of North Weald Airfield.

## 4. Context

This section of the report describes the location and context of the North Weald Bassett area and summarises current planning policies which are relevant to the study.

### 4.1 Location

North Weald Bassett is a parish covering approximately 23km<sup>2</sup> and is home to a population of approximately 6,000. Roughly rectangular in shape, the parish is located to the north east of London within the district of Epping Forest, Essex, as shown on Figure 1. The northern boundary of the parish runs contiguous with the southern edge of Harlow. The eastern, southern and western boundaries are flanked by agricultural land and settlements, the largest of which is Epping, located to the south west.

Further afield, Bishop's Stortford is located approximately 18km to the north and Chelmsford is situated approximately 20km to the east.

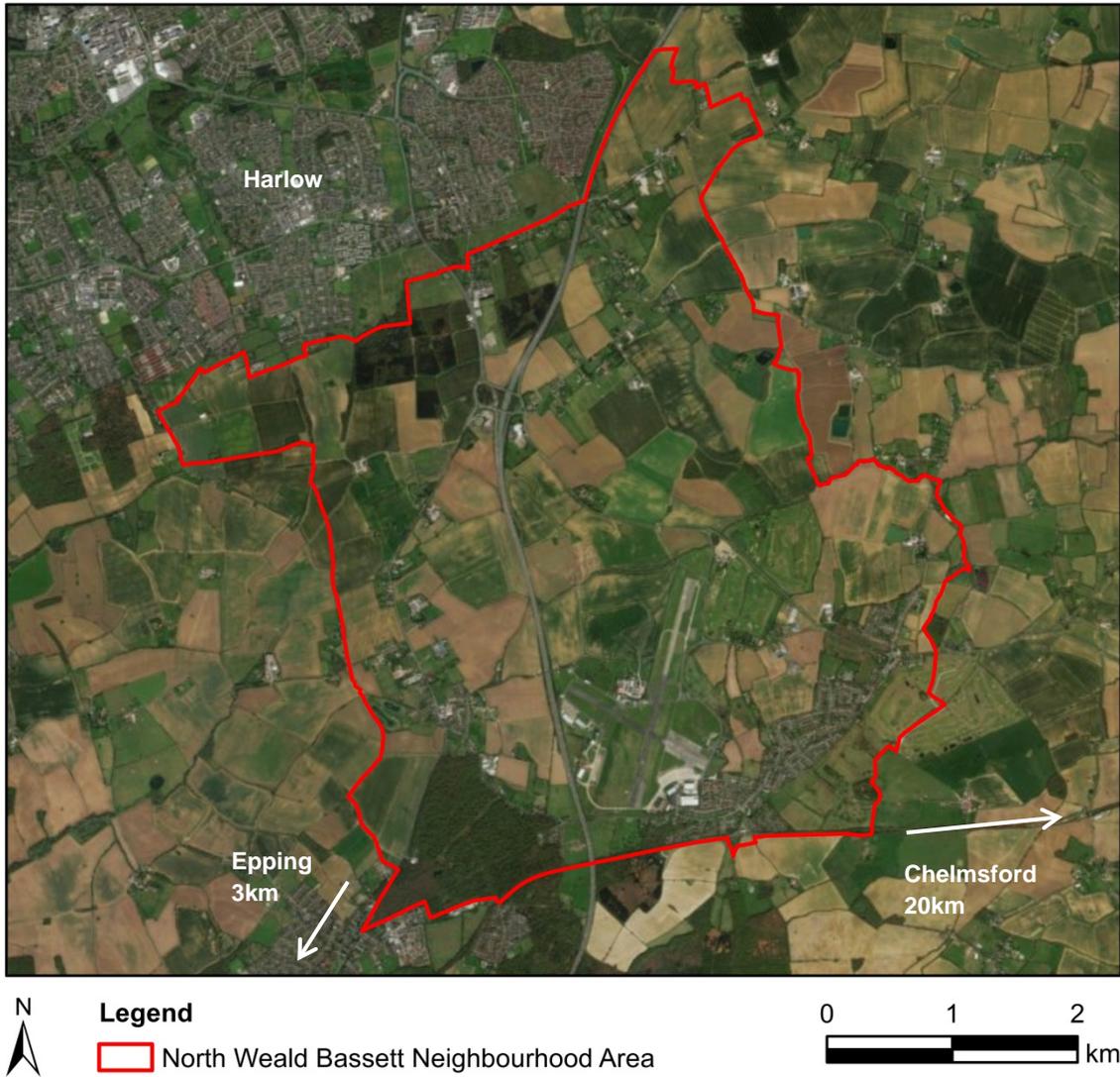
The M11 bisects the parish from north to south providing a direct connection to the M25, approximately 3km to the south, and Stansted Airport, approximately 18 km to the north. Hastingwood roundabout, located in the north of the area, is a junction of the primary roads in the parish, namely:

- the M11;
- the A414 which runs from Harlow in the north across to the south east of the area and onto Chelmsford; and
- the B1393 which runs south west from the roundabout to Epping.

The Epping Ongar Railway heritage railway, now a preserved heritage railway, traverses the southern boundary of the area. The North Weald Airfield occupies land to the south west of the area and is used for various private, light aviation.

Epping Station generates traffic on the B181 and B1393 drawing commuters to the northern terminus of the Central Line which has notably cheaper fares to central London than the surrounding over ground rail connections.

The Stort Valley Way is a circular recreational footpath around Harlow, measuring 45km. The route passes through the northern half of the parish.



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Figure 1 Location and Context

## 4.2 Natural Factors

### 4.2.1 Geology and soils

The underlying geology of the area is often largely hidden from view but has a strong influence on its character, having been shaped over by natural processes including erosion and sedimentation over millions of years. These processes help to define the landform, soils, vegetation, drainage and building materials which are common in an area.

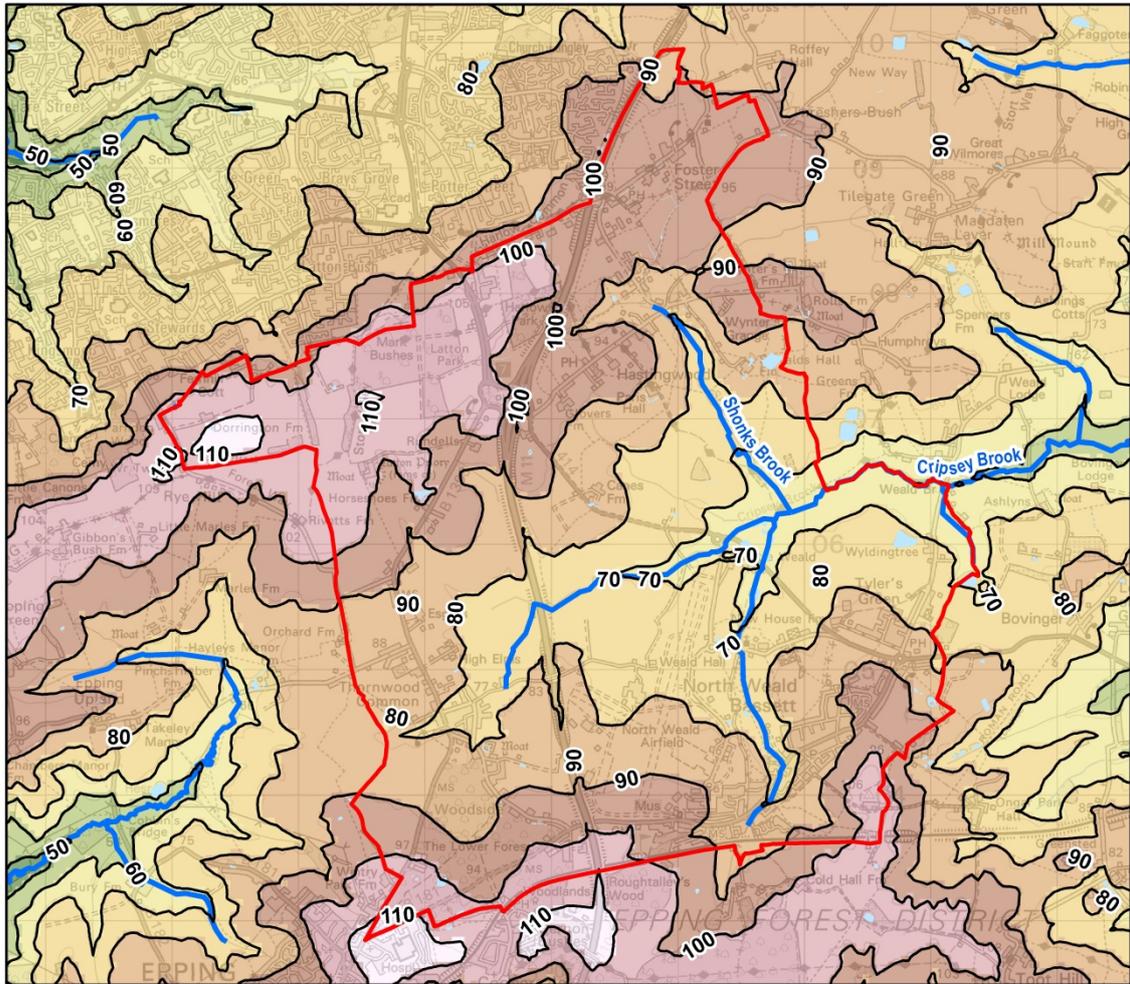
The bedrock in this area is London Clay Formation comprising clay, silt and sand. The superficial deposits in the area vary between Lowestoft Formation on the ridges and valley sides, and Head, typically found in the base of the minor valleys across the area. (Geology of Britain, 2017)

Soil across the area is generally of a loamy and clayey texture with moderate fertility to high fertility. (Soilscapes, 2017)

### Topography and hydrology

The topography undulates between 110m above ordnance datum (AOD) in the north west and south west of the study area, and 60m AOD at the lowest point forming a depression running east to west between the crest of the hills to the north and south of the area. Following the bottom of the depression, running west to east, is Cripsey Brook which is joined by Shonks Brook from the north and another tributary from the south, both of which have shaped undulations perpendicular to the rest of the linear depression.

The 40m height difference allows for long distance views across the rural landscape sloping between the ridge of the hill to the north and the hill to the south of the study area. The topography also helps to hide the urban expanse of Harlow and Epping from most of the area.



**Legend**

- North Weald Bassett Neighbourhood Plan Area
- Contour
- Watercourse
- Surface water

**Elevation (m above ordnance datum)**

- 40 - 50
- 50 - 60
- 60 - 70
- 70 - 80
- 80 - 90
- 90 - 100
- 100 - 110
- 110 - 120



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**Figure 2 Topography and Hydrology**

## 4.3 Planning Policy Context

### 4.3.1 National planning policy

#### 4.3.1.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012

The NPPF requires local authorities to set out in their Local Plan a positive vision for the enhancement and enjoyment of heritage assets (DCLG, 2012). Part 12 *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment* clearly states that local authorities should recognise “*the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*” and should seek “*opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place*”.

Paragraph 58 states that neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area, which are based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics.

Paragraph 60 is clear that promoting and reinforcing local distinctiveness is important, but that neighbourhood plans should not attempt to “*impose architectural styles or particular tastes*” or “*stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles*”. Paragraph 61 goes further, stating that “*although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations*”. It stresses that planning policies should “*address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.*”

The NPPF also includes guidance on developing policies to provide special protection for green areas through Local Green Space designations. Criteria for such designations are provided in paragraph 77.

#### 4.3.1.2 Planning Practice Guidance, 2014

Planning Practice Guidance was reviewed, catalogued and published on the internet by the government in 2014 (DCLG, 2014). The section on design includes guidance on promoting landscape character (Paragraph: 007Reference ID: 26-007-20140306). It states that “*development should seek to promote character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development*” and that the “*successful integration of new development with their surrounding context is an important design objective*”.

### 4.3.2 Local planning policy

This study is also informed by a number of policies relevant to the local area.

*Combined Policies of Epping Forest District Local Plan (1998) and Alterations (2006)*<sup>1</sup>

The Epping Forest District Local Plan was adopted in January 1998 and alterations were made in 2006. In 2008, Epping Forest District Council published the ‘Combined Policies of Epping Forest District Local Plan (1998) and Alterations (2006)’, thereby providing the most up to date source of adopted policy. That document has therefore been used to inform this policy baseline.

Policies relevant to the landscape and visual resource of the area are as follows:

Policy CP2: “*Protecting the Quality of the Rural and Built Environment*” requires that the quality of the rural and built environment be “*maintained, conserved and improved by*”, amongst other things, “*sustaining and enhancing the rural environment, including conserving countryside character, in particular its landscape wildlife and heritage qualities...*” as well as “*safeguarding and enhancing the setting, character and townscape of the urban environment*”.

Policy CP3: “*New Development*” states that “*the scale and nature of development is consistent with the principles of sustainability and respects the character and environment of the locality*”.

Policy CP6: “*Achieving Sustainable Urban Development Patterns*” states that emphasis should be given to making urban areas “*more attractive places in which to live... achieving a significant enhancement of the vitality and viability of the urban environment*”.

<sup>1</sup> Epping Forest District Council- Combined Local Plan (1998) & Local Plan Alterations (2006). Available at: <http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/index.php/home/file-store/category/168-current-policy>

Policy CP7: “*Urban Form and Quality*” states that “*the environmental quality of existing urban areas will be maintained and improved as attractive places in which to live, work and visit. Where the existing urban fabric provides for high quality in design and local environment by virtue of its existing character, open land uses and buildings and areas of architectural, historic and archaeological importance, this will be strongly protected and enhanced. New development in all urban areas which results in over development, unsympathetic change or loss of amenity will not be permitted*”.

The following policies are all concerned with development within the Green Belt and include provision for development to preserve the openness and character of the Green Belt:

- Policy GB4: “*Extensions of residential curtilages*”;
- Policy GB7A “*Conspicuous Development*”;
- Policy GB8A “*Change of Use or Adaptations of buildings*”; and
- Policy GB9A “*Residential Conversions*”;
- Policy GB14A “*Residential Extensions*”; and
- Policy GB15A “*Replacement Dwellings*”.

Policy GB18 “*The Former Radio Station Site at North Weald Bassett*” states that “*reuse and development... must maintain the openness, rurality and tranquillity of the area*”

Policy HC6: “*Character, Appearance, and Setting of Conservation Areas*” requires that within or adjacent to a conservation area, the Council will not grant permission for development, or works to trees, “*which could be detrimental to the character, appearance or setting of the conservation area*”.

Policy HC7: “*Development within Conservation Areas*” requires that development should be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the conservation area in terms of scale, massing, layout and landscape.

Policy DBE1: “*Design of New Buildings*” requires new buildings to “*respect their setting in terms of scale, proportion, siting, massing, height, orientation, roof-line and detailing; ... only employ external materials which are sympathetic in colour and texture to the vernacular range of materials*”.

Policy DBE4: “*Design in the Green Belt*” requires new buildings to ensure that their location “*respects the wider landscape setting of the site*”; and that “*they are of a design which respects local character in terms of traditional plan form and detailing*.”

Policy DBE9: states that “*change or intensification of use, extension or new development should not result in excessive loss of amenity including visual impact*.”

Policy LL1: “*Rural Landscape*” states that the Council will “*act to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the countryside*”.

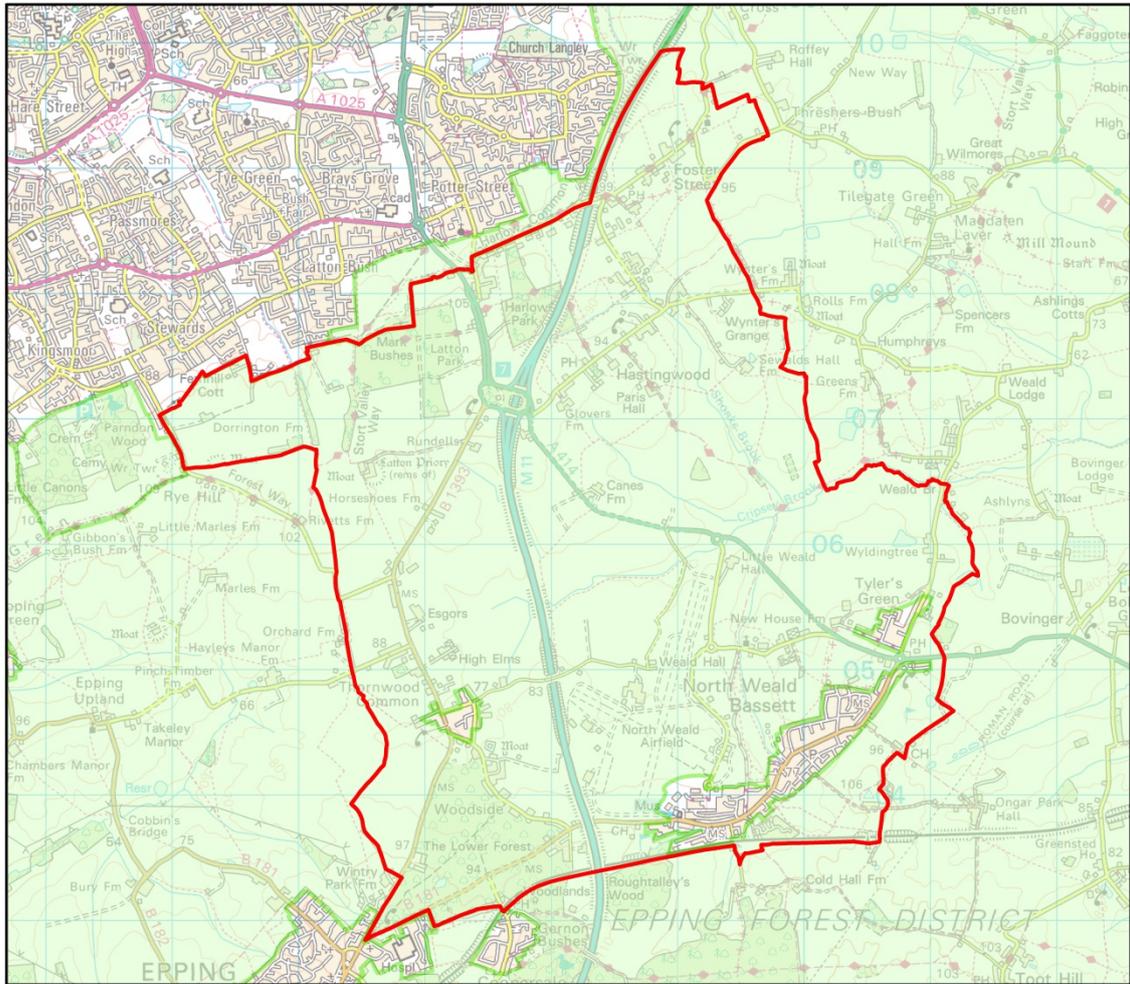
Policy LL2: “*Inappropriate Rural Development*” requires that development in the countryside must respect or enhance the character or appearance of the landscape.

Policy LL3: *Edge of Settlement* requires that developments on the edge of settlement must “*show a sensitive appreciation of their effect on the landscape*” by utilising techniques to soften or improve their impact.

This report is also informed by a number of other studies relevant to the local area as follows:

#### **Epping Forest Landscape Studies Landscape Character Assessment 2010**

An overarching landscape character study at the district scale covering the District of Epping Forest. The study sets out characteristics, description and locations of the landscape typologies of the district and elements of these typologies informed the character areas for this report. This is discussed further in section 4.3.6 below.



**Legend**

- North Weald Bassett Neighbourhood Area
- Green belt



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**Figure 3 Street Plan and Green Belt**

### 4.3.3 Historical development

From the beginning of the medieval period the Neighbourhood Area was mainly forested and the principal place names of the area, Thornwood, Hastingwood and North Weald, are a reminder of this historic character; Weald meaning a wood in Old English.

Throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods the area developed over time to support an agricultural way of life. Products were diverse, with a large variety of crops cultivated as well as pigs, sheep and cattle. From the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century some specialisation in production occurred, as the railway gave greater access to the markets of London.

Primary areas of settlement, including the villages of Thornwood Common and North Weald Bassett, remained dispersed in character until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the population of the area increased, in part influenced by the construction of North Weald Aerodrome early in the century, the villages became more consolidated as modern housing was developed. The present day character of the villages is largely a reflection of this modern development, and limited industrial development in Thornwood Common.

The following pages set out a timeline of the historical development of North Weald Bassett.

# Medieval-Post Medieval

1086

Two manors are recorded in the area: Walla and Walda. Walda will later become known as North Weald. The area is largely forested and uncultivated.

1200's

By the 13th century the area is divided into four manors, that of Walda, Paris Hall, Mashall's and Sewald's Hall. Although rebuilt in the post medieval period, the manor houses of Paris Hall and Sewald's Hall survive

1260

Philip de Basett is recorded as the principle land owner in Walda, subsequently lending his name to the manor.

1100's

An Augustinian Priory is founded, the remains of which are now known as Latton Priory.

1281

A windmill at the manor of North Weald is mentioned, telling of an emerging agricultural character of the area entailing wood clearing and crop planting.

1500's



A new tower is constructed at the Church of St Andrew

1330

The Parish Church of St Andrew is constructed.

1537

With the dissolution of the monasteries, Latton Priory is dissolved.

1678

A school is established at St Andrews Church, in what is now known as Church Cottage which stands today



# 19th Century

1801

North Weald Bassett's population is recorded as 620.

1818

The area is described as largely agricultural land, for the rearing of cattle, pigs, and sheep, as well as the production of wheat, barley, oats, turnips and much hay for the capital.

1831

North Weald's population is recorded as 886

**1842**

North Weald's School is expanded, surviving today to the east of Church Cottage.

**1861**

The population is recorded as 842 in North Weald Bassett.

**1868**

Roads in the area deteriorated after the Epping and Ongar Highway Trust closed.

**1865**

North Weald Bassett Railway Station opens on the Epping to Ongar Branch line completed by the Great Eastern Railway, largely serving goods traffic for the local agricultural industry. North Wealds' population grew steadily after the arrival of the railway, and a number of houses were constructed along the High Road during the later 19th century.

**1857**

Common Land at Hastingwood, Thornwood, Weald Gullet, and Tylers Green is enclosed by Act of Parliament, removing common rights to the land, and reflecting the increasingly commercialised nature of agricultural production in the area.

**1883**

A post service is established for the first time in North Weald.

**1895**

Encouraged by the Medical Officer of Health in the Epping Rural District, water mains reached North Weald by 1895.

**1870's**

Diversity of agricultural products, and particularly dairying for sale at London's markets, avert depression as felt elsewhere in the country as cheap American grain imports cause the price of corn to crash.

## 20th Century

**1900's**

Fruit growing becomes a staple of the local agricultural economy, made possible by the railway and ease of transport to London markets.

**1901**

North Weald's population has risen to 1,135, despite depopulation in other Essex villages as a result of agricultural depression.

**1911-12**

Mains drainage schemes began in Thornwood Common and North Weald, although every house would not be connected until after 1960.

**1918**

The Royal Air Force is established and uses North Weald Airfield as a base.

**1916**

The Royal Flying Corps establish the North Weald Bassett Aerodrome.

**1921**

North Weald's population is recorded as 1,239.

**1928**

North Weald Bassett's first Village Hall is opened, near Church Lane. This has since been replaced by a new hall south of High Road.

**1930's**

Purpose built shops were constructed on the south-east of High Road, south of Bassett Gardens, and a limited number of houses are constructed in the village on the High Road.



**1931-32**

Electricity and gas mains are laid out in the village, although not yet reaching every house.

**1932**

A branch of the county library is opened.

**1939-45**

North-Weald is bombed during the Second World War. The Woolpack Inn and the old Post Office are destroyed. An army camp is constructed at Thornwood Common. Norwegian squadrons are stationed at the Airfield.

**1940**

American Eagle Squadrons are stationed at RAF North Weald consisting of volunteer pilots before the US entered the War

**1945**

Improvements are begun in the village under the new Labour Government after the war, including street lighting and a speed limit on the High Road as well as gas, electricity and drainage for all homes.

**1945-60**

New housing is built to the north of Vicarage Lane, south of High Road at Bassett Gardens, and north of High Road in the Queens Road and School Green Lane area.

**1949**

Fighter Jet squadrons are based at RAF North Weald.

**1949-57**

The Epping to Ongar Branch Railway becomes part of London Underground's Central Line.

**1953**

The population is estimated as 3200, doubled since 1931.

**1945-60**

The army camp at Thornwood Common is used by the Field Ambulance Royal Army Medical Corps until its closure.

**1955**

A new St Andrew's School is completed at Beamish Close.

**1964**

The RAF leaves their station at North Weald Bassett, resulting in a loss of employment in the area.

**1979**

After use by both the Army and Navy, North Weald Airfield is sold to Epping Forest District Council and opened as a civilian airport as it operates today.

**1970**

New housing estates are recorded on mapping, south of High Road off of Emberson Way. North Weald Bassett and Thornwood Common appear approximately at their current size.

**1980**

The M11 opens, travelling north to south through the neighbourhood plan area to the west of North Weald Bassett improving road access to London.

**1994**

The Epping to Ongar Branch Railway closes.

**2000**

After demolition of the remaining nissan huts and shacks of the former army camp at Thornwood, fishing lakes are constructed.

## 21st Century

**2004**

A 6.5 mile stretch of the Epping to Ongar Branch Railway is opened as a heritage Railway, with North Weald Station at its centre.



#### 4.3.4 Cultural associations

An important cultural feature of North Weald Bassett is North Weald, which has been in active use for over a century. It continues to serve as an air traffic hub as well as an events location for a weekly market and boasts its own museum which gives an insight into the history of the airfield. The summer of 1952 North Weald Bassett was visited by Princess Astrid the Crown Princess of Norway who opened the obelisk to commemorate the Norwegian squadrons stationed at the airfield during WWII (North Weald Airfield Museum, 2000).

A unique feature of North Weald Bassett is North Weald Redoubt which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is listed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. It was built in the 1890's and is the northernmost of London's chain of 15 Mobilisation Centres built in a 27 mile long line to protect the capital in the event of an enemy invasion. North Weald Redoubt takes advantage of the elevated position on the hill east of North Weald Bassett village (Historic England, 2017).

The Epping Ongar Heritage Railway is a relic of the line that once connected the area to London between the 1850's and 1994. It now serves as a local tourist attraction running from Epping to Ongar with a single stop at North Weald Bassett with both steam locomotives and diesel trains.

A triangle of Epping Forest falls within the study area; part of one of the largest areas of ancient woodland in the country with numerous recreational trails and valuable habitats.

#### 4.3.5 Landscape designations

Statutory and non-statutory landscape designations have been reviewed to determine the levels of protection currently given to the landscape within the study area. These designations can also help in understanding the value of the landscape resource.

The majority of the study area is situated in London's metropolitan green belt as shown in Figure 3 on page 14, which offers a level of protection from development. Policy GB2A within the existing Local Plan states that planning permission for development or extensions would not be granted in the green belt unless it meets certain criteria.

There are several ecological designations and ancient woodland surrounding the settlements:

- The Lower Forest – Site of Special Scientific Interest, Epping Forest Ancient Woodland;
- Weald Common Flood Meadow – Local Nature Reserve;
- Church Lane Flood Meadow – Local Nature Reserve;
- Roughtalleys Wood – Ancient Replanted Woodland and Local Nature Reserve;
- Mark Bushes/ Latton Park – Ancient Replanted Woodland; and
- Thornwood Common Flood Meadow – Local Nature Reserve.

Several sites within the study area are listed as Scheduled Monuments:

- Moated site known as Marshalls, 290m south of Weald Place – Scheduled Monument;
- A London mobilisation centre known as the North Weald Redoubt – Scheduled Monument and on Historic England's Heritage At Risk Register;
- Latton Priory – Scheduled Monument; and
- Moated site 350m south of Dorrington Farm – Scheduled Monument.

Local lists form a vital element in the reinforcement of a sense of local character and distinctiveness in the historic environment. By identifying significant local heritage assets, they play an essential role in informing the development of local plans. A formal list of locally listed buildings has been adopted by Epping District Council and these are referred to where relevant within the landscape character area descriptions below.

#### 4.3.6 Existing Landscape Character Assessment

Existing character assessments have been reviewed to provide some context to this assessment. The majority of the study area falls within National Character Area (NCA) 86- South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland as defined by Natural England (Natural England, 2014). This national assessment is broad but provides some context to the character of the study area. The very south west corner of the study area is located within NCA 111- Northern

Thames Basin. On account of the broad scale of the NCAs, this study will take reference from NCA 86, in which most of the study area is located.

Natural England defines key characteristics as “those combinations of elements which help to give an area its distinctive sense of place” that would result in significant consequences for the current character if they were changed or lost. As a result, they form important evidence to support the development of planning and management policies and a reference point against which to monitor change. The key characteristics of this area which are of particular relevance to this assessment are:

- The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable with a wooded appearance. There is some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving;
- Roman sites, medieval monasteries and castles and ancient woodlands contribute to a rich archaeology. Impressive churches, large barns, substantial country house estates and Second World War airfields dot the landscape, forming historical resources;
- There is a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads, parishes and small settlements around ‘tyes’ (commons) or strip greens and isolated hamlets. The NCA features a concentration of isolated moated farmsteads and numerous well-preserved medieval towns and large villages;
- Traditional timber-frame, often elaborate buildings with exposed timbers, colour-washed render, pargeting and steeply pitched roofs with pegtiles or long straw thatch. Sometimes they have been re-fronted with Georgian red brick or Victorian cream-coloured bricks (‘Suffolk whites’). Clay lump is often used in cottages and farm buildings;
- Winding, narrow and sometimes sunken lanes are bounded by deep ditches, wide verges and strong hedgerows. Transport infrastructure includes the A14, A12, M11 and Stansted Airport; and
- A strong network of public rights of way provides access to the area’s archetypal lowland English countryside.

The Essex Landscape Character Assessment, 2003, by Chris Blandford Associates has informed this study at a local level the eastern side of the study area falls within Landscape Character Area (LCA) B1- Central Essex Farmlands, the central portion lies within LCA D1- Epping Forest and Ridges and the westerly portion of the study area falls within LCA C3- Lee Valley. The key characteristics identified within the Essex Landscape Character Assessment which are relevant to this study are summarised below.

#### Central Essex Farmland

- Irregular field pattern of mainly medium size arable fields, marked by sinuous hedgerows and ditches, with small fields around settlements;
- Many small woods and copses provide structure and edges in the landscape;
- Scattered settlement pattern, with frequent small hamlets, typically with greens and ponds;
- Network of narrow, winding lanes;
- Mostly tranquil character away from major roads;
- The Central Essex Farmlands is an extensive area of gently undulating arable farmland;
- Irregular fields are enclosed by thick but intermittent hedgerows, or just marked by grassy banks and ditches. In long views scattered small woods and copses, and hedgerow trees coalesce to sometimes create the illusion of a wooded horizon. The dispersed settlement pattern is characterised by small isolated hamlets and farmsteads, often straggling along lanes;
- Away from the M11 road corridor, large parts of the area have a tranquil character, embracing tracts of fairly secluded countryside;
- Locally rolling topography, where dissected by small shallow valleys of streams and brooks;
- Localised areas with large fields where hedgerows have been removed;
- Mainly arable, small areas of pasture, associated with settlements;
- Various disused and some small active airfields e.g. North Weald; and
- The condition of the hedgerows and woodlands overall is moderate. In some parts many hedges have been lost, or are fragmented.

#### Lee Valley

- Rolling farmland to the east, typically with bold blocks of woodland and linear tree belts on valley sides and ridges;
- Extensive views from higher ground within the area;

- Moderately sloping eastern valley sides, and a series of connected smaller tributary valleys and broad ridges, aligned approximately north east to south west;
- Open, rolling farmland to the east on the London clay soils of the ridges and valleys, has a strong pattern of hedgerowed fields, blocks of woodland and linear tree belts;
- Wide views across the area are obtained from high ground, and pylons and glasshouses interrupt these in parts;
- Some large fields with more fragmented hedgerow boundaries around Epping Upland;
- Mainly arable farmland;
- Around Epping Upland only a few isolated tree belts; and
- A significant area with a fragmented hedgerow pattern in poor condition occurs around Epping Upland.

#### Epping Forest & Ridges

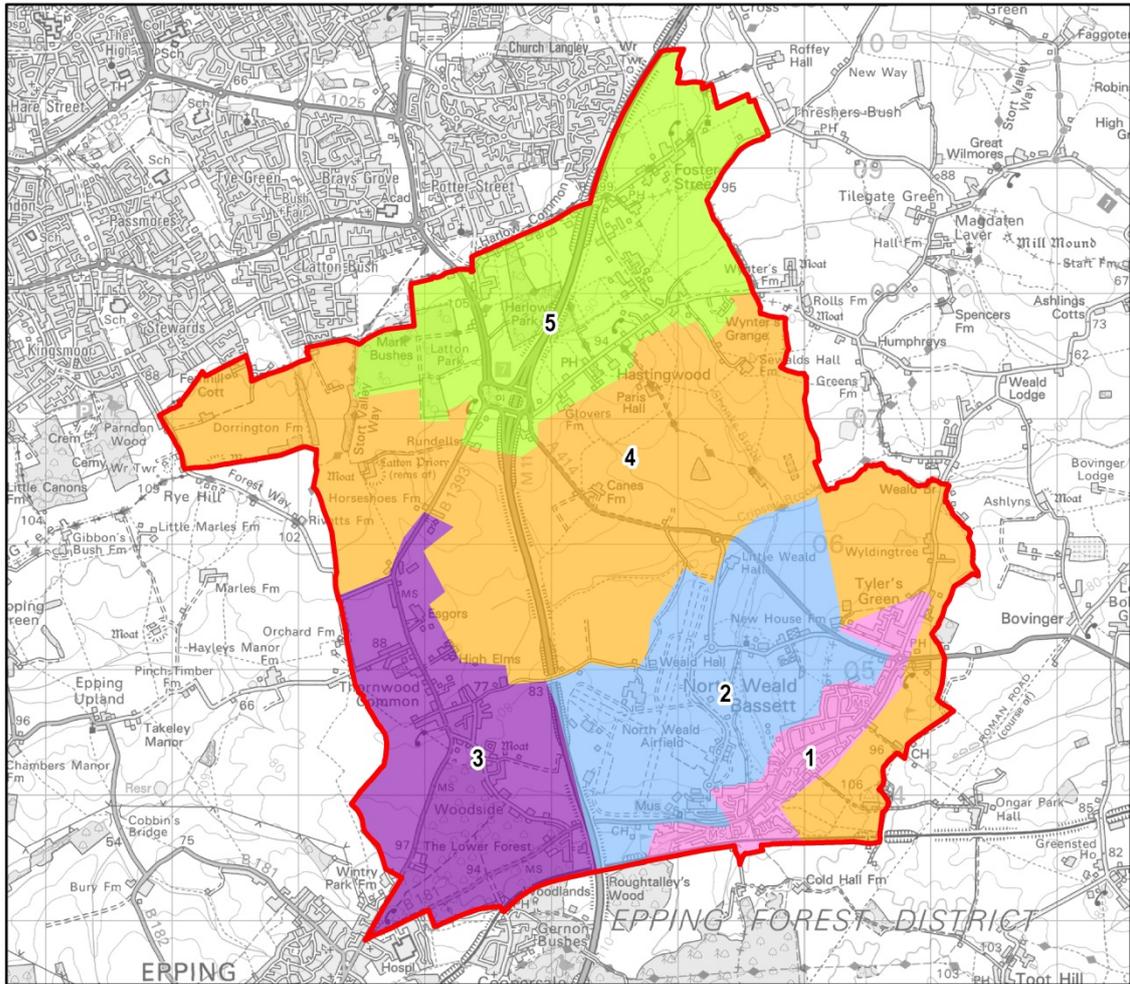
- Wooded skylines;
- Small to medium scale pattern of hedged pasture and arable fields with frequent hedgerow trees;
- To the north east urban influences on character are uncommon with a network of narrow lanes, small villages, hamlets and farmsteads;
- Undulating landform in the north east of the area;
- Mix of small and medium size hedged fields with both curved and straight boundaries;
- Farmland is characterised by both pasture and arable fields;
- Extensive coherent blocks of woodland that have a major influence on character;
- Small hamlets and farmsteads are dispersed around the fringes of the area;
- The M11 crosses the area; and
- There is likely to be continuing pressure for urban development especially housing development given the proximity of London, and recreational pressure both from visitors to Epping Forest, and use of urban fringe farmland for golf courses and equestrian uses.

## 5. Character Assessment

### Character Area Profiles

The results of the desk study and fieldwork have been analysed and five distinct character areas have been identified, as shown in Figure 4. These have been informed by the following:

- Historical development - including street pattern, land use, conservation areas and heritage assets;
- Movement - including physical boundaries such as railway lines, roads, rivers and gateways, nodes and linkages;
- Urban structure and built development - including density and building height, enclosure, architectural style and detailing;
- Land use and levels of activity;
- Green space and public realm - including those with planning policy and statutory protection, and how this relates to buildings and spaces; and
- Views and their contribution to an understanding of character, including the identification of landmarks.



**Legend**

North Weald Bassett Neighbourhood Area

**Character Area**

- 1 - North Weald Bassett Village
- 2 - North Weald Airfield and Nearby Land
- 3 - Thornwood Common and The Lower Forest
- 4 - Open Farmland
- 5 - Hastlingwood



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**Figure 4 Character Area Overview**

## 5.1 Character Area 01: North Weald Bassett Village

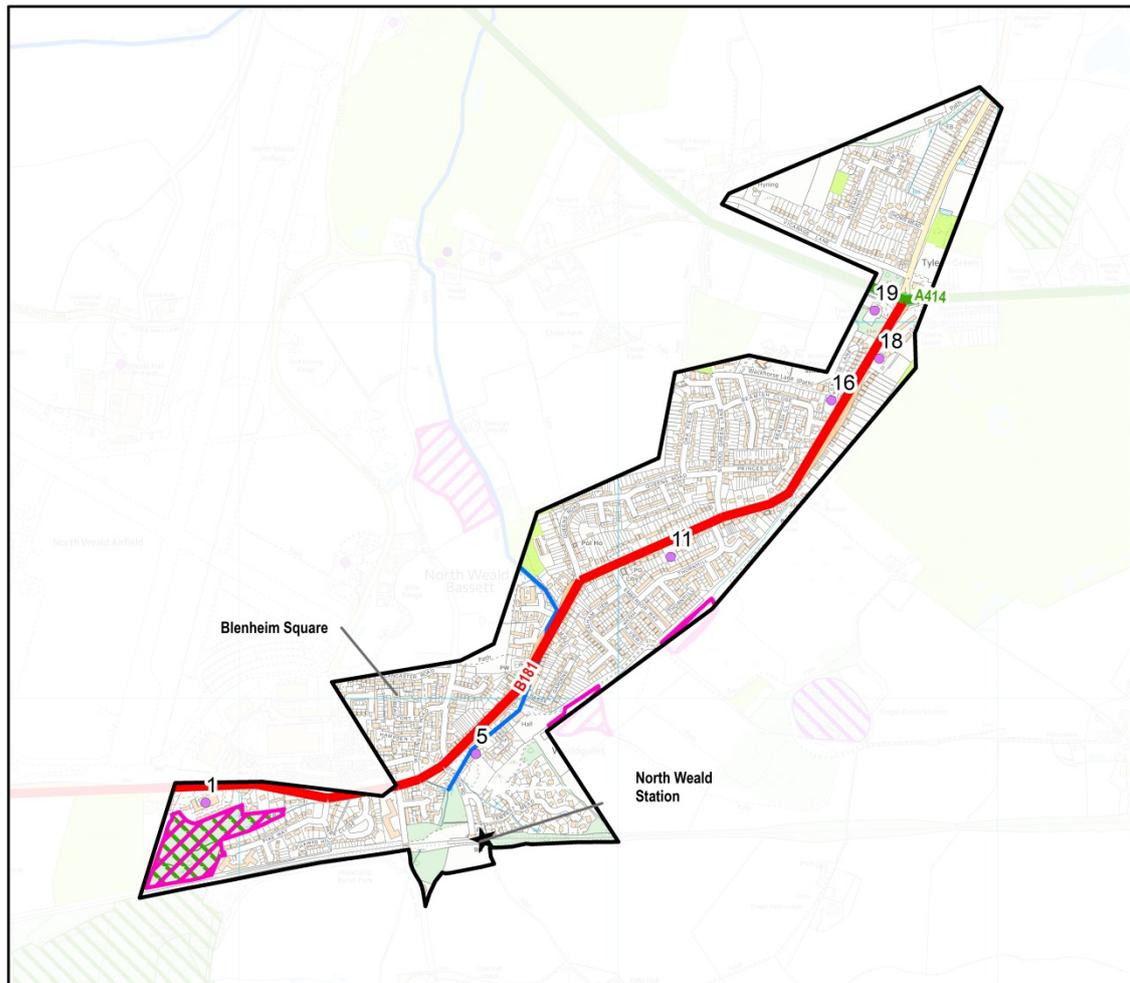
### 5.1.1 Key characteristics

The key characteristics of North Weald Bassett Village are as follows:

- Linear residential settlement concentrated along the B181 with some later development running perpendicular side streets;
- Small commercial developments scattered through the village including local convenience shops, a petrol station and public house to the south and car workshops to the north;
- Regular two storey brick buildings, typically with pitched roofs, but an array of architectural styles and ages and a relatively high density of development compared to the surrounding rural area;
- Gently undulating topography which provides occasional views over the surrounding countryside but otherwise does not provide sufficient elevation over built form or vegetation limits distant views;
- Occasional elements of green infrastructure (GI) in public space although most GI is in private front and back gardens; and
- The village is surrounded by and has strong connections with the surrounding agricultural landscape which provides tree or hedge lined backdrops to views out of the village and a sense of openness to the edges of the village.



View of two storey houses along the B181 in the rural setting



**Legend**

 North Weald Bassett Village

**Listed Building**

 Grade I

 Grade II\*

 Grade II

 Railway Station

 Secondary road

 Watercourse

 Local Nature Reserve

 Greenspace



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**Figure 5 Character Area 1: North Weald Bassett Village**

## Natural Factors

### 5.1.2 Topography and hydrology

The topography gently undulates between 90m AOD by the Airfield Museum to 80m by a tributary of Cripsey Brook where it is crossed by the B181 and then to 95m AOD to the north east of North Weald Bassett before gradually descending to Tyler's Green. The topography has only slight level changes; therefore the height and massing of built form combined with tall vegetation provide a sense of enclosure to the village.

Due to the character area being located on a gentle slope, surface water is directed into a few small streams which proceed north, eventually connecting to Cripsey Brook. Watercourses are typically concealed within deep drainage ditches and culverts and are not therefore readily perceived in the landscape.



**A section of culverted water course in North Weald Bassett by Wheelers Farm Gardens**

## Cultural and Social Factors

### 5.1.3 Movement and connectivity

The primary route through the settlement is the B181, which defines the central axis of North Weald Bassett, connecting it with Epping to the south and Moreton to the north. This road is busy due to the number of commuters driving to Epping Station; the northern terminus of the Central Line which provides cheaper access to central London than nearby over ground train lines. Cars often park straddling the kerb or on the pavement along the B181, which makes the road and pavement narrower, often restricting movement. A number of bus services run along the B181 allowing access to facilities and services outside North Weald Bassett to residents who cannot drive.

The A414 crosses the B181 just to the north of North Weald Bassett at Tylers Green and leads to Chipping Ongar and to the M11 and onto London or Cambridge. The A414 has a wide single lane in each direction with grassy verges and enclosed by hedgerows. The national speed limit applies so traffic moves quickly between roundabouts.

Closure and delays on the M25 and M11 can result in gridlock through the village, given their proximity to the character area.

A small row of shops, grocers, restaurant/ takeaways and services creates a focus of activity opposite the North Weald Methodist Church.



**North Weald Bassett's village centre with a row of small shops along the B181 with limited parking**

A series of short, narrow residential streets run adjacent or perpendicular to the B181. These streets have a residential character since they either loop around or terminate with dead ends and have numerous parked cars at either side often reducing the traffic flow to a single lane.

Several public rights of way (PRoW) cross through North Weald Bassett's centre or skirt the edge of the village providing access to the rural landscape for example the routes north of North Weald Bassett along Church Lane to the Parish Church of St Andrew. Other PRoW are located to the east of the village and lead toward North Weald Redoubt. These links are noted by the Neighbourhood Steering Group as being well used and valued due to their connectivity to North Weald Redoubt and Weald Common open space.

The Epping Ongar Railway, a heritage railway has one of its three functioning stations in North Weald Bassett which has been refurbished but does not normally function as a transport link. The railway creates a line of severance in the landscape limiting the number of roads and routes in a north-south direction to the south of North Weald Bassett.



Heritage railway locomotive at North Weald Bassett Station on the Epping Ongar Railway

#### 5.1.4 Land use

With the exception of a few commercial or community uses, such as the North Weald Library and the Kings Head public house on the B181, the North Weald Bassett Village character area is almost exclusively residential development. Included within the residential area are two retirement homes and a few small businesses. As a result, levels of activity are low and there is a sense of relative tranquillity away from the busy B181.



Whealers Farm Gardens with small green spaces and visual connections to the surrounding countryside

Between North Weald Bassett and Tyler's Green is a small scale industrial yard with a variety of light industrial businesses which is isolated from the rest of the village and has its own localised and contained industrial character.

### 5.1.5 Urban structure and built form

The majority of development within North Weald Bassett is located along the B181 or within 350m of it.

Buildings that front onto the B181 typically follow a consistent roof line and material pallet and date from the post-war period. The homes are mostly detached or semi-detached, regularly spaced and sized and set back from the street with a paved driveway or small front garden with a hedge or low wall.

The style of architecture across the wider character area is a mixture of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings including some with decorated plaster walls through to inter-war, post-war and recent development such as Blenheim Square which has a higher density that is not in keeping with the rest of the village.

There are slight variations from one street to another throughout the character area but typically the high density of built form combined with narrow residential streets creates a sense of enclosure and a small scale residential character.

Recent developments such as Tempest Mead and Blenheim Square are not in keeping with the older development within North Weald Bassett village. Tempest Mead has large detached properties along curved streets and an irregular development pattern opposed to the geometric, linear streets of other areas of North Weald Bassett. Buildings in Blenheim Square typically do not have front gardens and limited vegetation resulting in a hard street scene that does not contribute to green infrastructure of the area. Cars are generally parked over kerbs limiting pedestrian movement. The lack of definition between houses and pavements combined with little vegetation and parking on pavements creates a tight sense of enclosure and gives a hard urban character in contrast to the older parts of the village.



**Blenheim Square, a recent development with taller buildings, no front gardens, higher density and a more urban character than is typical for older development within North Weald Bassett Village**

Along the north side of the B181 in Tyler's Green, the buildings are one or two storeys in height, regular in size, form and spacing with relatively consistent rooflines. The buildings are set back further from the road allowing for larger well vegetated front gardens often defined by neat hedgerows. This creates a verdant character which contrasts with the typical smaller front gardens across the rest of the area.

### 5.1.6 Heritage assets

Eight heritage assets are located in the character area, and comprise six listed buildings and two locally listed buildings. There are no scheduled monuments or conservation areas in the character area.

## Listed Buildings

All six listed buildings are considered of special interest and are grade II listed. These largely reflect the historic character of North Weald Bassett as a small rural village and utilise the vernacular building traditions of the region. Examples include Tylers Lodge (NHLE 1111389), a large 19<sup>th</sup> century house with roughcast render; the associated Tylers Farmhouse, a 16<sup>th</sup> century timber framed hall house; and the King's Head Public House (NHLE 1146728), a 15<sup>th</sup> century timber framed hall house converted to a public house.



**King's Head Public House a 15<sup>th</sup> century timber framed hall house converted to a public house**

Distinct in style is the grade II listed Norway House (NHLE 1111388), a former officers' mess associated with the former RAF North Weald, in the west of the character area, and constructed in the 1920s.

## Locally Listed Buildings

Two buildings in the character area are identified on the local list. These comprise North Weald Station, constructed c.1868 by the Eastern Railways Company of red brick with yellow dressings, in an Italianate style; and 42 High Road, a rendered house dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and representing one of only a handful of surviving buildings in the vernacular style in North Weald Parish.

Further to this a number of buildings which contribute positively to the character and appearance of the character area have been identified in this report. These include:

- Nos. 229 & 231 High Road, dated to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, are a pair of semi-detached houses constructed of stock brick in a modest gothic style with twin gables. Depicted on the first edition OS map of 1874 as isolated dwellings, these houses reflect the historically dispersed character of the village of North Weald Bassett. As well as being of historic interest, the houses add to the architectural diversity of the village and are also of architectural interest (DSCN0063);
- The King's Head Garage, at the junction of Station Road and High Road, was built between 1960 and 1970 and comprises a rendered concrete single storey garage building. The building type represents once common structures which have often been replaced by more modern structures. This survival is of historic interest to the modern historical development of the village (DSCN0016); and
- The North Weald Methodist Church, located north of High Road, is a multiphase building located on the site of an earlier Methodist Chapel dated to 1888. The current structure, in rendered brick with a mock timber framed gable end, is dated to 1925 and 1969. The communal value, and the evidence of non-conformist religious practices in the village, which is derived from the building are a source of historic interest (DSCN0039).

### 5.1.7 Green space and public realm

There are no large public green spaces within this character area and the primary green infrastructure is therefore largely made up of private gardens and allotments.

Along the B181 there are grass verges and pockets of grass areas with occasional trees, for instance outside the library, on the corner of Harrison Drive and notably the strip of lawn with a hedgerow and scattered trees between the houses on York Road and the B181. Cumulatively these green spaces create a soft and verdant rural street scene. There is also triangle of ornamental planting outside the row of shops which adds to the quaint rural village character.

A small village green with an information plaque and the Village sign demonstrating the cultural link to the airfield is located on the corner of the B181 and Wheelers Farm Gardens. The village is surrounded by countryside, which contributes strongly to its rural setting. Well vegetated front gardens, including substantial hedges along residential streets such as Queens Road contribute notably to the verdant character of the streets, breaking up the density of post-war developments. In some cases front gardens have been paved over to accommodate private off-street parking, eroding this characteristic.



North Weald Bassett's village green

### 5.1.8 Views

The views are generally short to mid-range since the two storey built form is at a density which blocks most views beyond the street. Individual trees, proud of the rooflines, are a common feature, the cumulative effect in longer views along streets is that the trees soften the horizon and help blend the settlement into the verdant backdrop.

Long range views of the surrounding countryside are possible along the straight stretches of the B181. Glimpsed views across the undulating landscape from streets along the village edge such as Queens Road or Blackhorse Lane provide visual connectivity to the countryside.



An example of a view along the B181 enclosed by two storey houses with glimpses of the rural landscapes beyond

Views of the hill to the south east of North Weald Bassett are possible to glimpse from the B181, whereas direct views are possible from select locations such as by the North Weald Village Hall.



View towards the countryside south east of North Weald Village Hall

### 5.1.9 Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to North Weald Bassett's rural village characteristics, which are set out below.

- Countryside setting with views and connections out into rural surroundings particularly to the hill south east of the village toward North Weald Redoubt and along Church Lane;
- Regularity in form, scale, density and layout of development maintaining legibility and sense of place;
- Well-vegetated front gardens which soften the urban form of the development;
- Modern development on the side streets off the High Road has largely respected the scale of existing development along the High Road; and
- The cluster of shops, Village Hall and other community facilities are spread out along the B181 but are within a reasonable walking distance from the residential areas of North Weald Bassett including the modern developments.

### 5.1.10 Issues to be addressed

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed through new development or active management. These are principally related to a changing built structure and lack of community spaces.

- Limited parking facilities have resulted in streetscapes which are often cluttered with parked cars and reduced access to pavements;
- Modern development at Blenheim Square is very high density and forgoes front gardens and limits the size of back gardens creating a hard urban character that contrasts with the green rural village character of the rest of the village;
- Many front garden spaces along the B181 have been paved over to provide space for private off-street parking;



#### An example of the loss of front gardens to off-street parking on the B181

- The linear nature of North Weald Bassett means that the centre is not readily identifiable and public services, such as the shops and public library are spread out;
- The historic built form is juxtaposed with low quality modern developments;
- Blenheim Square is unresponsive to the historic character of the village, as a result of the increased density and size of the buildings which have a more urban character which erodes the rural village character of North Weald Bassett; and
- Residential buildings on Wellington Road are over two storeys in height and do not respond to the scale and massing of other buildings in the area.



**Larger scale buildings stand out amongst the generally low rise development which is characteristic of the area**

### 5.1.11 Sensitivity to change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to the well-established urban structure of the existing development.

- Views and recreational connections with the rural surroundings particularly to the south east of the village toward the North Weald Redoubt are infrequent;
- The consistency of built form in scale, density and layout;
- Well-vegetated front gardens are sensitive to being paved over to provide private off-street parking since public green space is limited;
- An increase in traffic volume on the B181 through the village would further reduce tranquillity in the village;
- Open green space, such as that in the west of the character area associated with mid-20th century residential development, is susceptible to changes of use including informal car parking; and
- Retail premises on the historic High Road are susceptible to incremental change through their frequent changes in commercial use, which can have an adverse impact upon the overall character and appearance of the area, for example through unsympathetic use of materials.

## 5.2 Character Area 02: North Weald Airfield and Nearby Land

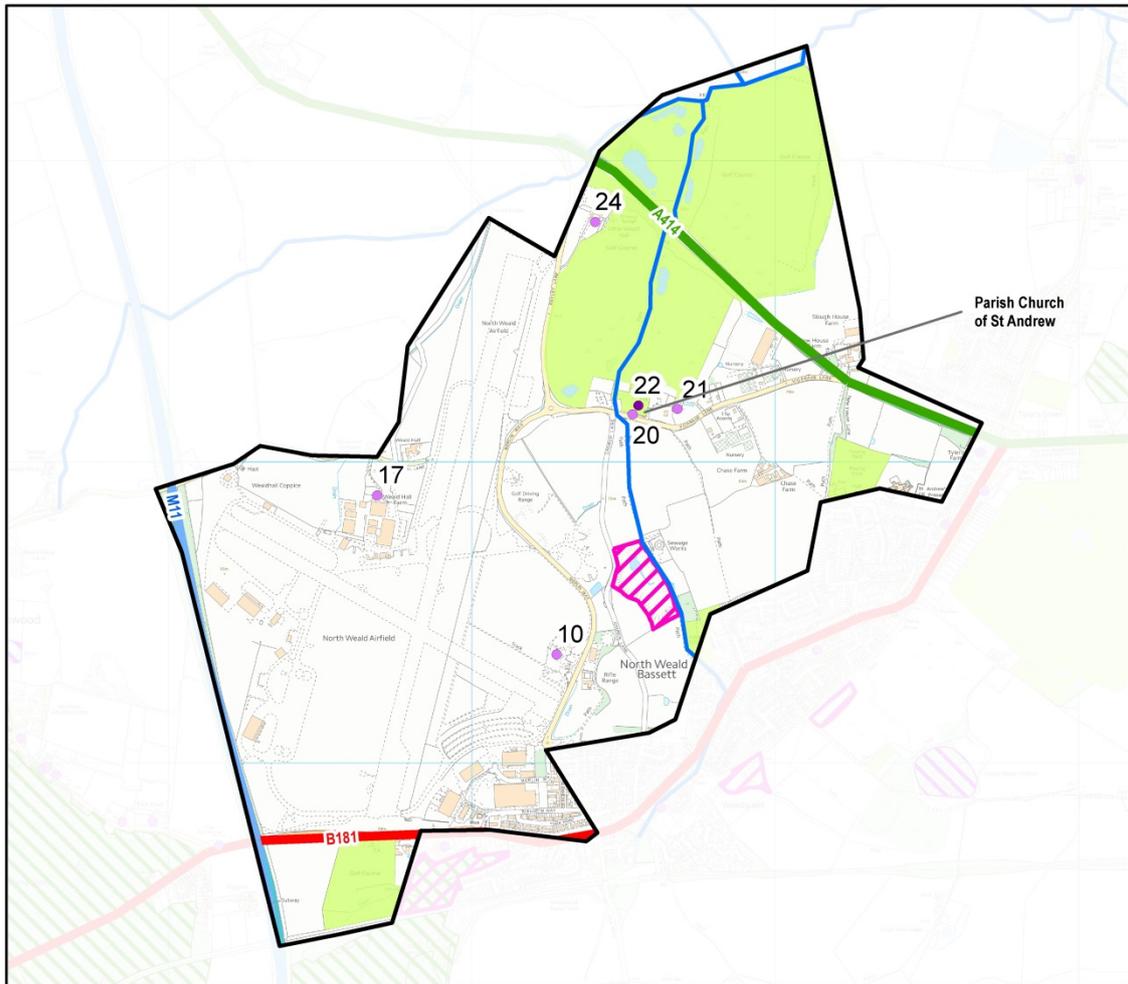
### 5.2.1 Key characteristics

The key characteristics of North Weald Airfield and Nearby Land are as follows:

- Large, flat, open airfield with an associated complex of hangars and ancillary buildings, including historic buildings of the former North Weald RAF base and Airfield Museum.
- Far reaching, expansive views across open exposed land to large skies.
- Medium, irregular shaped agricultural fields.
- Recreational activities including a golf driving range and disused golf course with artificial slopes, mounds and waterbodies and numerous public rights of way.
- Few built structures including The Parish Church of Saint Andrew and associated cemetery.
- Strong cultural links between North Weald Airfield and North Weald Bassett village and community including employment opportunities, social nodes and buildings previously used to accommodate approximately 50 squadrons situated in North Weald Bassett since 1916.



View of the large, flat, open airfield with big open sky



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**Figure 6 Character Area 2: North Weald Airfield and Nearby Land**



**A model Hawker Hurricane at North Weald Airfield – the village's emblem**

## Natural Factors

### 5.2.2 Topography and hydrology

The topography is very gently undulating with the highest points in the south and south east at 95m AOD. The lowest point in the area is approximately 60m AOD located the north eastern part of the character area, by Cripsey Brook.

The airfield is an even surface which uniformly falls from 95m AOD to 70m AOD on the northern edge. This gives the area associated with the airfield, with its swathes of mown grass and network of runways and taxiways, an open, exposed character.

Beyond the airfield, vegetation lining the boundaries of agricultural fields reduces the perception of the undulating topography. The topography has been manipulated in the existing and former golf courses and driving range at the local scale.



The artificial topography of the disused North Weald golf course

## Cultural and Social Factors

### 5.2.3 Movement and connectivity

The M11 forms the western boundary and creates a line of severance in the landscape with few opportunities to cross east to west, other than the B181 which passes under the M11 and Weald Hall Lane which has a narrow bridge over the top of it. Whilst it is not directly visible, the noise of constant traffic reduces tranquillity locally. The busy A414, which largely bypasses the area, provides access to and from Harlow and the M11. Weald Hall Lane once led to the Parish Church of St. Andrew but was cut off when the main runway of the airfield was lengthened to accommodate larger aircraft. Today, the lane provides emergency access to the airfield.

A network of small roads and lanes runs between the A414 and B181 in the centre of the area. Included are; Vicarage Lane West, Merlin Way (accessible from the B181 by foot), Church Lane and Rayley Lane, which provide access from North Weald Bassett to The Parish Church of Saint Andrew, the Pre-School and other developments along Vicarage Lane.

The B181 provides access to the museum and Bassett Business Units. Access to the Airfield is provided via the A414. The noise from aviation activities is far reaching and characteristic of North Weald Bassett.

A network of public rights of way running through the agricultural land and golf course connects the Stort Valley Way recreational trail and North Weald Bassett and form part of Bassett Millennium Walks; a series of three, looping, two hour trails around North Weald Bassett which have a sense of remoteness from any settlement. These footpaths are paths formed of unmade ground with basic signage, which follow the hedgerows lining field boundaries.



Public rights of way through flat agricultural land provide access to open countryside



A simple trodden path on the Bassett Millennium Walk 2000 by The Parish Church of St Andrew

#### 5.2.4 Land use

Aviation comprises a key land use of the area resulting in high noise levels which was noted by the Neighbourhood Steering Group as a key characteristic of the area. As well as aviation, the Airfield is home to the National Police Air Service, the Air Ambulance and a host of recreational activity, including model flying, cycling, archery, motorsports, HGV and PSV driver training and largescale public events. The north of the airfield character is inhospitable and expansive with high security requirements to the airfield whereas to the south the complex has strong cultural ties with the village of North Weald Bassett.

The airfield hosts one of the largest markets in the country. It is a weekly event which draws large crowds from around the country acting as an important social node but it also increases traffic on local roads.

Beyond the airfield, the land is mostly agricultural but includes two golf clubs; North Weald Par 3 Golf Course south of the B181 and North Weald Golf Course. The majority of North Weald Golf Course, excluding the driving range, is currently disused and overgrown.

There are several commercial centres; the largest comprises warehouses to the south of the airfield such as Booker Wholesale. A smaller centre lies to the north of the airfield and in and around Chase Farm from which a few small businesses operate including Art Nursery Garden Centre and greenhouses.

A small sewage works, which is enclosed by mature vegetation, is located east of Church Lane and is not readily discernible in the surrounding landscape.

### 5.2.5 Landscape structure and built form

Most of the buildings associated with the airfield are located close to the B181 on Hurricane Way or Merlin Way, focusing built form along the roads with the remaining area open. There is a World War Two memorial marking the entrance to Hurricane Way and North Weald Airfield Museum. North Weald Airfield Museum is a small building, formerly a house from the early 1900's; it is an isolated structure facing the World War Two memorial. The airfield has other built elements around its edge such as hangars, the control tower and associated infrastructure such as runways and manned security fences.

In addition, there are some much larger warehouses in the area. Booker Wholesale and Bell Technologies are screened from the south by a belt of trees whereas the warehouses north of Merlin Way are separated from the public realm by security fencing which skirts the perimeter of the airfield. They are typically large scale clad with corrugated sheet metal surrounded by large areas of hard surfacing for car parking and create an industrial character to the area.

Weald Hall Farm and Commercial Centre form inward facing blocks and are typically screened so are separating them from the agricultural landscape.

A small number of detached single or two storey houses are spread along Vicarage Lane West. The houses are well spaced out and set back from the rural lane behind large front gardens with private driveways and a large hedge or hedgerow with trees. Further west on Vicarage Lane West is a cluster of small buildings including a day nursery and a pet shop which front directly onto the pavement. The Parish Church of Saint Andrew is located behind this cluster of buildings and surrounded by a churchyard with a Lych Gate marking the entrance, which has recently been restored. A small car park for the church is located opposite the Lych gate. On street parking is common.

North Weald Bassett Cemetery is independent of the Parish Church of St. Andrew, located immediately east, and includes areas for burials and a garden of remembrance.



**The Lych Gate in front of the Parish Church of St Andrew**

The agricultural fields are irregular in shape and size following the old lanes and water courses and the golf courses are defined by the surrounding roads and rail lines. Often the fields are defined by logs or mounds of earth.

### 5.2.6 Heritage assets

Six designated heritage assets are located in the character area all of which are listed buildings. There are no scheduled monuments, conservation areas or locally listed buildings in the character area.

#### Listed Buildings

A total of six listed buildings are located in the character area, one of which is considered of more than special interest and is grade II\* listed. The Church of St Andrew, the parish church of North Weald Bassett (NHLE 1111353), was constructed in c.1330 of flint rubble and a brick tower was added c.1500. Associated with the church is the grade II listed Church Cottage (NHLE 1337224), a former school room dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and constructed of timber frame with mixed weatherboarding, plaster and brick cladding.

The remaining listed buildings largely reflect the historically rural character of the area and vernacular building traditions, with examples including the 19<sup>th</sup> century Weald Hall Farmhouse (NHLE 1111356) and the 17<sup>th</sup> century

lobby entranced Little Weald Hall Farmhouse (NHLE 1337223). A notable exception is the control tower of the former RAF North Weald (NHLE 1413519) constructed in 1952.

North Weald Airfield is home to a collection of heritage aircraft which speaks of the history of the area.

### 5.2.7 Green space and public realm

Although much of the area is open land, it is predominantly in private ownership and access and amenity is restricted to public rights of way. Mature hedgerows, small blocks of woodland and scrubland form a network of green infrastructure, but this is broken by North Weald Airfield which is largely devoid of vegetation except for large swathes of open grassland maintained between runways and taxiways. Nevertheless, this land makes an important contribution to the setting of the village of North Weald Bassett and creates a gap between it and the M11 to the west.



**Public footpath bounded by a tall hedgerow and woodland**

#### Views

There are expansive, panoramic views across the largely flat North Weald Airfield towards distant wooded skylines in the north, on the edge of Harlow, to the south, at Epping and west to the vegetated embankments screening the M11.



**North Weald Airfield's expansive panoramic views**

There are views across the golf courses which vary as a result of the artificial hillocks and mounds but are constrained by the hedgerows lining the roads. Vicarage Lane West has glimpsed views towards agricultural landscapes including a disused pillbox southwest of the cemetery and the taller trees within North Weald Bassett village through the hedgerows.

Views from lanes such as Church Lane and public rights of way are glimpsed towards the wider agricultural landscape through gaps in hedgerows.

The view of North Weald Airfield Museum and the World War Two monument from Hurricane Way is across the lawn. The view of the Airfield is limited by large warehouses and the belts of trees screening them.



Open views across the disused golf course, largely devoid of built development

### 5.2.8 Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the rural landscape which provides a variety of functions.

- Historically important airfield with a museum dedicated to the history of the airfield and those who served there and a well-established weekly market, which is valued by the local community;
- A diversity of habitats connected by mature hedgerows in the agricultural landscape outside of North Weald Airfield;
- A good network of public rights of way, which connect the built up extent of the village to the rural landscape;
- The Parish Church of St Andrew is a landmark in views due to its open setting; and
- There is a degree of relative tranquillity away from the busy M11 and A414.

### 5.2.9 Issues to be addressed

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed through new development or active management. These are principally related to the quality of the open space.

- Fly tipping, particularly in remote and secluded areas with low surveillance; and
- Lack of management of the disused golf course, which shows signs of neglect.

### 5.2.10 Sensitivity to change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to the historic buildings and cultural associations of the airfield and strong rural agricultural character.

- Heritage assets, particularly the Parish Church of St Andrew's and its rural setting;
- Mature hedgerows which demarcate field boundaries;
- The low density and rural setting of development;
- The dense vegetation which screens infrastructure, such as the sewage works;
- The contribution that active aviation makes to the character of the area;
- The largely undeveloped nature of the southern and eastern parts of the area, which prevent the spread of the village of North Weald Bassett; and
- The survival of a number of historic buildings which are associated with the airfield and historically rural character of the area. A high proportion of these are protected by statutory designation.

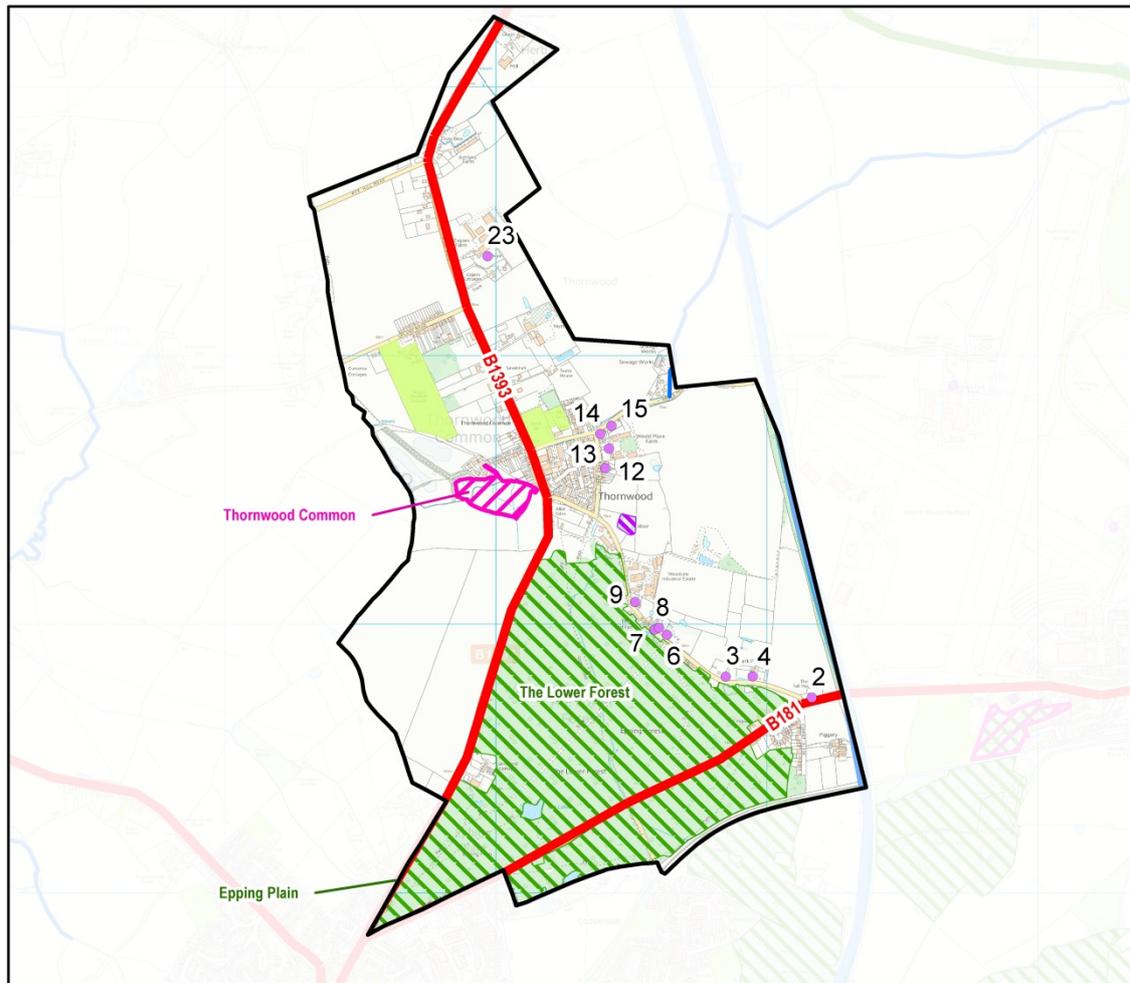
## 5.3 Character Area 03: Thornwood Common and The Lower Forest

### 5.3.1 Key characteristics

- A small village with small scale residential development interspersed with light industrial estates;
- Smaller isolated streets of residential or industrial development radiate from the centre;
- Large area of ancient woodland with high recreational value;
- In parts, built form and ancient woodland are adjacent to each other and well integrated; and
- Despite proximity of the M11 and Epping to the south, there is a strong rural character with views over open countryside.



View from within The Lower Forest of the mature woodland



**Legend**

Thornwood Common and The Lower Forest

**Listed Building**

Grade I

Grade II\*

Grade II

Watercourse

Secondary road

Record of Scheduled Monument

Local Nature Reserve

Woodland

Surface water

Greenspace



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**Figure 7 Character Area 3: Thornwood Common and The Lower Forest**



### Thornwood Common

## Natural Factors

### 5.3.2 Topography and hydrology

The highest point of this area (110m AOD) lies at the south western most point within The Lower Forest. From there it descends gradually to Thornwood Common at 80m AOD where the landscape becomes relatively flat. The gentle slopes and flat plains contribute to an open and rural character.

Concealed within The Lower Forest are a series of ponds, lakes and a tributary of Cripsey Brook. This watercourse flows through Thornwood Common but, as with the other small water courses in Thornwood Common, it is culverted so does not contribute to the character of the area.

There are also two artificial ponds within Thornwood Trout Fishery.

## Cultural and Social Factors

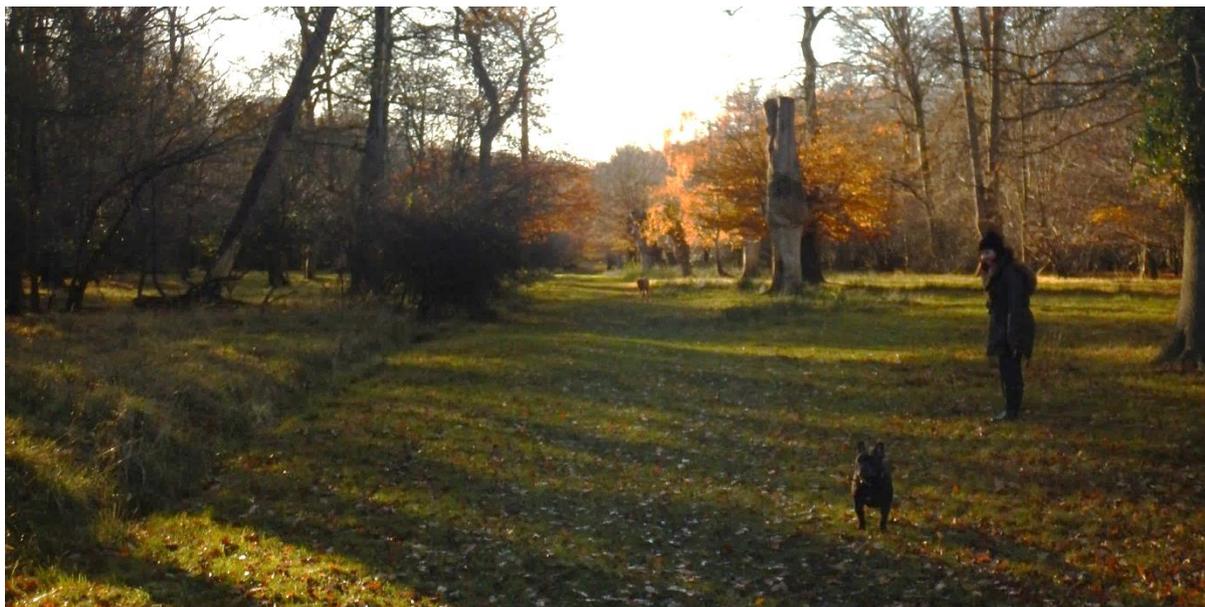
### 5.3.3 Movement and connectivity

The character area is served by two main roads. The B181 runs east west to North Weald Bassett and the B1393 runs north to Harlow. These roads meet at the Epping Plain, which creates a bottleneck, particularly during peak periods. The B1393 continues to Epping and to Epping Central Line Station. These roads are served by a number of bus routes. Weald Hall Lane, a quiet, hedge lined, farm track also runs east west crossing the M11 on a narrow bridge.

When air traffic uses the east to west runway of North Weald Airfield it is visible from Weald Hall lane and glimpsed over the surrounding trees in eastern parts of Thornwood Common.

The M11 forms the eastern edge but there are no junctions within the area, although noise from constant traffic reduces tranquillity in the rural landscape in proximity to the road. The M11 also limits connections to the east of the area to the two roads; B181 and Weald Hall Lane which terminates at the edge of the Airfield.

There is an extensive network of well used public rights of way throughout The Lower Forest which connect to trails in areas of Epping Forest to the south and the Essex Way recreational trail. The public rights of way link Epping, Thornwood Common and Harlow.



**A public right of way through The Lower Forest leading toward Epping**

The Epping-Ongar Heritage railway line borders the southern edge of the character area but is not used as a transport connection. The railway forms a line of severance in the landscape preventing movement south of the tracks, with the exception of Coopersale Common Road which is a narrow two way road, enclosed by woods which passes and under a railway bridge to Coopersale Common.

#### 5.3.4 Land use

The small village of Thornwood Common comprises residential areas as well as light industrial and commercial land uses, including a concrete works, scrap yard and a garden centre. These uses are distinctly separate.



**Industrial uses on the edge of Thornwood Common**

Other uses include public greenspace such as the Common, allotments, sport pitches and agricultural land, including paddocks for grazing horses on the edge of the settlement.

#### 5.3.5 Landscape structure and built form

The main settlement core of Thornwood Common is bounded by Woodside road and the B1393 between Woodside and Weald Hall Lane, west of Duck Lane. This core has a high density of development, generally comprising one to two storey detached, semi-detached and terraced houses typically built using yellow stock bricks or rendered with red brick detailing, or entirely using red brick. The Parish Hall is located within the character area, adjacent to the Common. In addition, there are a series of large industrial warehouses which contrast with the residential character due to the building size, materials and features such as security fencing to the perimeter. The warehouses are fronted by hard surfaced yards or car parks; they are close together, arranged perpendicular to the streets and include a single, private, internal road. The industrial warehouses are built using

red brick and clad with corrugated sheet metal. The warehouses have intermittent strips of evergreen trees to screen them.



**Modern terraced houses in Forest Grove on Woodside within the core of Thornwood Common settlement with relatively high development density**

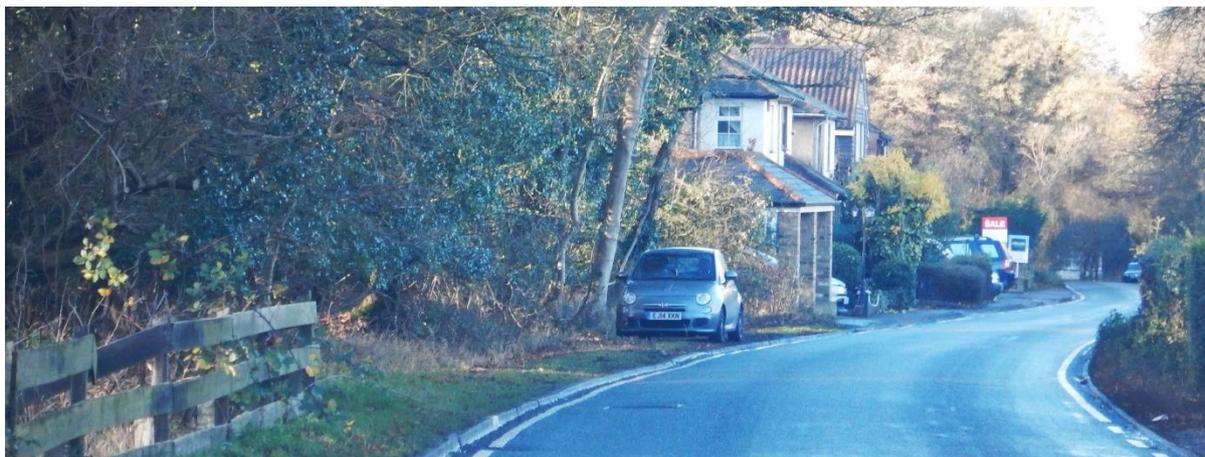


**Traditional terraced houses along the B1393 opposite the industrial warehouses**

Development can be found dispersed along the streets away from the village's nucleus with lower development density. The houses further from the centre of Thornwood Common typically have larger front gardens fronted by hedgerows and larger back gardens which border the hedgerows of the agricultural fields.

The development along Woodside is more spread out than the centre of Thornwood Common. The houses are typically of red brick, rendered and weather boarded timber frame, which contribute positively to local distinctiveness of the area and have well vegetated front gardens including trees and large shrubs which integrate the houses into The Lower Forest. The wooded edge character is intimate and enclosed.

The strip of built form along upland road has no relationship with the surrounding landscape and does not reflect its rural setting.



Low density development along Woodside well integrated into the wooded landscape

### 5.3.6 Heritage assets

Over 25 designated heritage assets are located within the character area, twelve of which are listed buildings, fourteen are locally listed buildings and one is a scheduled monument. There are no conservation areas in the character area.

#### Scheduled Monuments

A single scheduled monument is located in the character area. This is the moated site known as Marshalls (NHLE 1017249), comprising a small island of land with remains potentially surviving below ground associated with the former medieval manor house of Marshalls.

#### Listed Buildings

A total of 12 listed buildings are located in the character area, all of which are considered of special interest and are grade II listed. These reflect the historically rural character of the village of Thornwood Common and the wider area. Examples include Fox Cottage (NHLE 1146649), a 15<sup>th</sup> century cottage of timber framed construction; Marshalls Farmhouse (NHLE 1146913) dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and of timber framed construction; and a toll house (NHLE 1111382), on the Epping Road and former turnpike, built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century of rendered red brick.

#### Locally Listed Buildings

Buildings on the local list include:

- Brickfield Cottages, a row of eight cottages constructed of rendered brick in a vernacular style, dating to the early 19th century;
- The Cross Keys Public House, a former blacksmiths shop dated to c.1700 and currently vacant;
- the Arts and Crafts influenced The Shrubbery, built in 1889 of red brick; and
- No. 1 & 2 Stone Cottages, constructed of flint with brick dressings, dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### 5.3.7 Green space and public realm

Thornwood Common and recreation ground, with the character and function of a village green, provides amenity greenspace to the residents of Thornwood Common and connects to Thornwood Common Nature Area, an area of managed amenity land with grassland, scrub and broadleaved woodland with open glades providing a quiet recreational environment. The common is separated from the residential parts of the settlement by the industrial warehouses opposite the entrance. Houses within the core of Thornwood Common settlement have small back gardens as a result of the high density development but front gardens along Weald Hall Lane and Duck Lane are relatively large. On Upland Road, to the north west of the village centre is a series of sports pitches and facilities used by Epping Upper Clapton Rugby Football Club which provide recreational greenspace and a social node.

The character area consists largely of countryside that surrounds the hamlet of Thornwood Common providing a verdant backdrop. The Lower Forest is ancient woodland and an important green link forming part of Epping

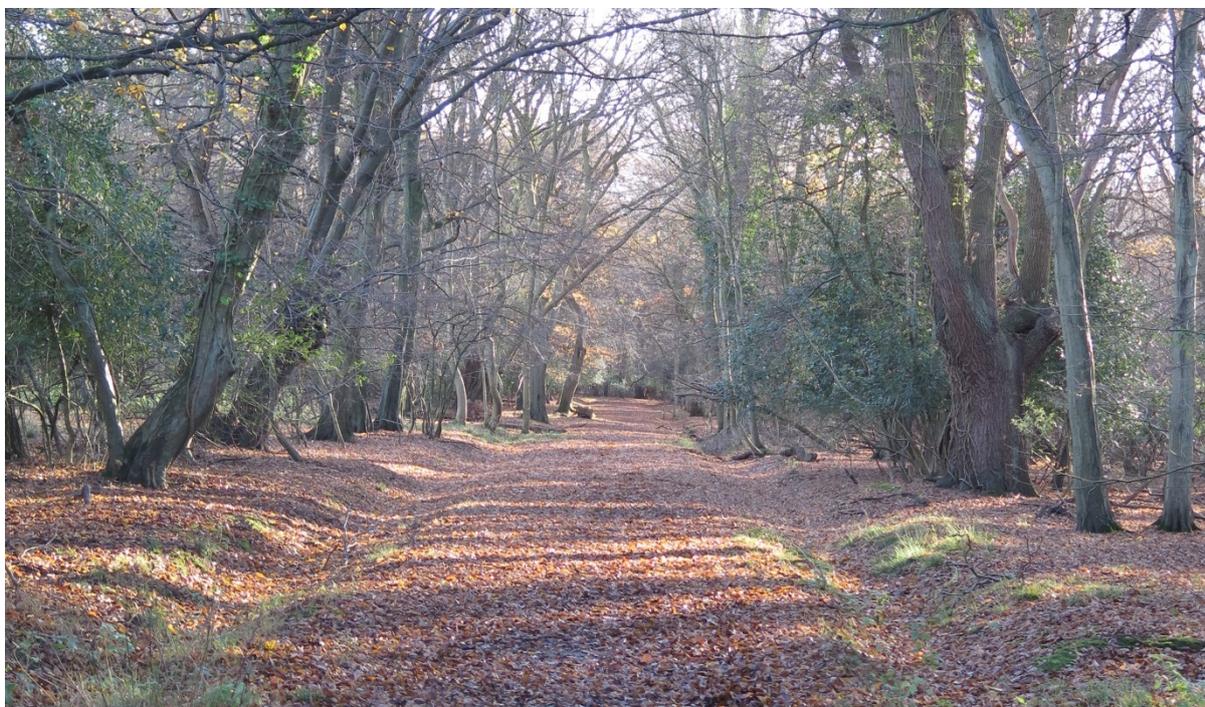
Forest (one of the largest areas of ancient woodland in the country) connecting to Garnon Bushes Nature Reserve to the south. The trees of The Lower Forest contribute to the skyline along Woodside and the southern part of the B1393 and provide a natural, wooded, semi enclosed character. The woodland contributes to the setting of the hamlet and provides physical separation between the settlement and Epping to the south.

### 5.3.8 Views

The gradual change in topography and the openness of the agricultural land surrounding the settlement allows for views over the sloping agricultural landscape from certain locations, such as the B1393. There are framed and glimpsed panoramic views of fields over or through hedgerows along B1393.

Within the developed areas views are curtailed by built form or hedgerows lining the roads and the industrial buildings.

Within the Lower Forest the understorey of the ancient woodland is relatively sparse. Views look through the trees and there are views down woodland tracks, such as Stump Road, which are far reaching and contribute to an appreciation of its heritage and landscape value. To the edges of The Lower Forest along Woodside and the B1393 views are enclosed on one side by the mature trees.



View along a historic track in The Lower Forest

### 5.3.9 Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the rural surroundings of Thornwood Common.

- The Lower Forest ancient woodland and its heritage and landscape value;
- The character of a remote, rural settlement separated from the comparatively urban area of Epping by the trees of The Lower Forest;
- Distinct rural edge to development north of Thornwood Common;
- Built form on the edges of the ancient woodland which are surrounded by trees and vegetation integrating it into the woodland;
- A number of vernacular buildings survive in the south of the character area, typically of red brick, rendered and weatherboarded timber frame, which contribute positively to local distinctiveness of the area;
- A high proportion of historic buildings have been given statutory designation as heritage assets;
- Sports facilities and greenspace within the settlement; and

- The glimpsed views across the rural landscape from the B1393.

#### 5.3.10 Issues to be addressed

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed through new development or active management. These are principally related to the urban characteristics of industrial features within the otherwise rural village of Thornwood Common

- The highly visible industrial warehouses and uses are out of context with the rural character of the village. For example lorries turning and parking in front of the primary entrance to the common;
- The lack of integration between the new development on Upland Road and its rural surroundings or with the centre of Thornwood Common;
- Noise from the M11, which reduces tranquillity in the rural landscape in proximity to the road;
- New development, such as that at Woodside, reference historic Georgian and Edwardian styles which are not characteristic of the area. The height, scale and massing and the use of uPVC and other low quality materials are incongruent with the historic fabric of the settlement;
- Industrial buildings, located between historic development in the south of Woodside and Thornwood Common, has caused the coalescence of historically distinct areas; and
- The proliferation of white uPVC windows, doors and rainwater goods on historic buildings, detracts from the distinctive character of the area and is not sympathetic to traditional vernacular materials and styles.

#### 5.3.11 Sensitivity to change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate primarily to the heritage and rural setting of the settlement, including The Lower Forest.

- The distinctive character and quality of the Lower Forest ancient woodland and the contribution this makes to the setting of Thornwood Common and its physical separation from Epping to the south; and
- Views and access to open countryside from Thornwood Common.

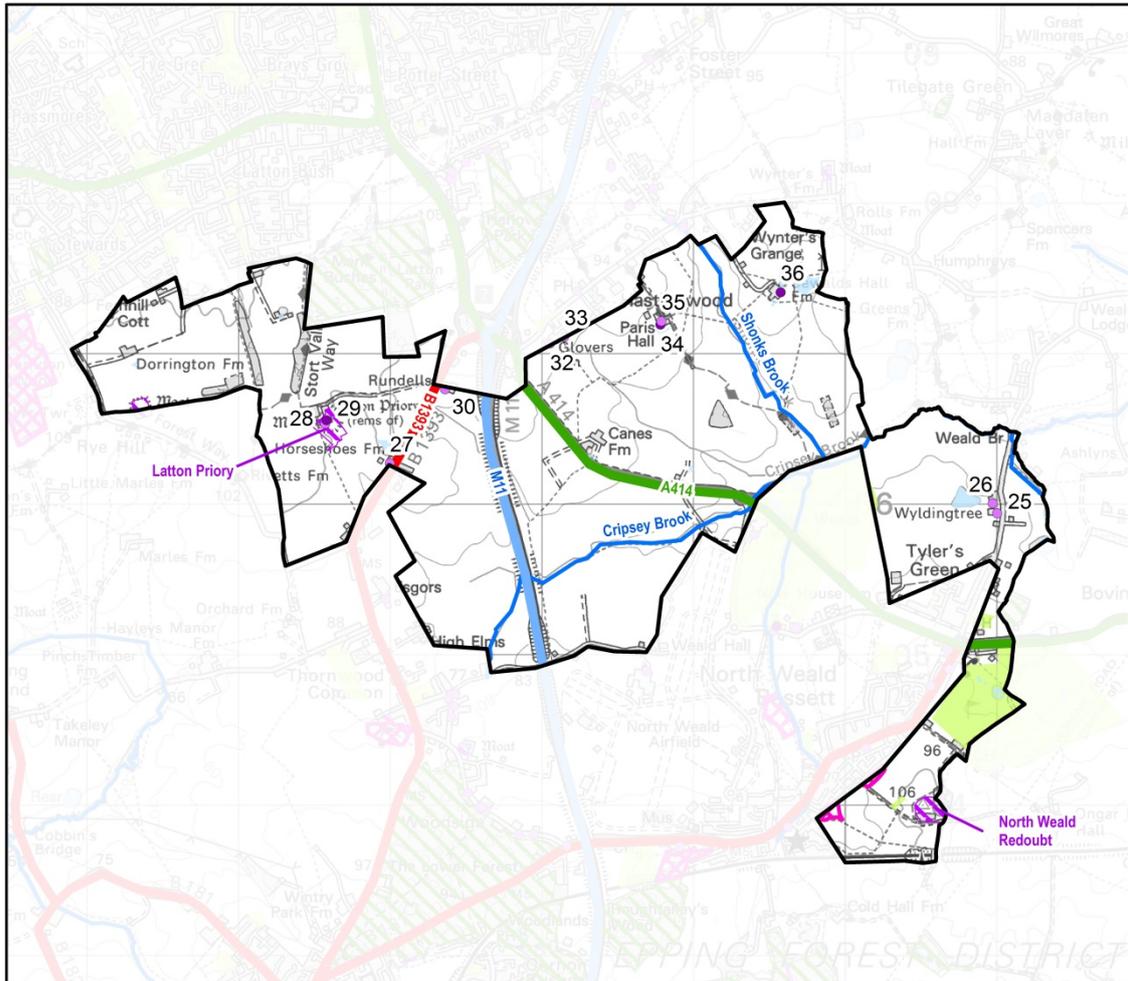
## 5.4 Character Area 04: Open Farmland

### 5.4.1 Key characteristics

- Open rolling, exposed landscape of large, irregular fields defined by occasional hedgerow or drainage ditch boundaries;
- Few hedgerows allowing frequent long distance views;
- Infrequent copses or thickets of dense woodland;
- Scattered built form – predominantly farm houses or farm buildings;
- Generally sparse network of rural lanes intersected by the M11 and A414; and
- Water towers; one to the north east of Harlow and one to the west of Rye Hill Road (outside the study area) are prominent landmarks visible from large parts of the area.



Typical view over open agricultural field



**Legend**

Open Farmland

**Listed Building**

- Grade I
- Grade II\*
- Grade II
- Motorway
- Primary road
- Secondary road
- Record of Scheduled Monument
- Watercourse
- Surface water
- Local Nature Reserve
- Greenspace



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**Figure 8 Character Area 4: Open Farmland**



**Expansive panoramic views over open farmland south of Hastingwood**

## Natural Factors

### 5.4.2 Topography and hydrology

The gently rolling topography ranges from the rounded hilltop at Rye Hill (110m AOD to a low point of 63m AOD) at the junction of Cripsey Brook and Shonks Brook. The smooth undulations in the landform are formed by Shonks Brook, and the various tributaries of Cripsey Brook which lead north west to south east, away from Hastingwood and into Cripsey Brook and onward to the east. The hill located to the south east of North Weald Bassett, has a relatively steep gradient.

The brooks have shaped the landform of the open valley and commonly define field boundaries. They are often concealed by hedgerows. Ponds are also a common feature in the land surrounding farmsteads.

## Cultural and Social Factors

### 5.4.3 Movement and connectivity

The primary routes, which cross roughly in a north south direction, are the M11 and the A414, which do not directly serve development in the area. The M11 is cut into the landscape and screened by vegetation limiting its visual impact but noise reduces tranquillity in the areas surrounding it.

The A414 links North Weald Bassett to Hastingwood, Harlow and the M11 and provides access to Canes Farm, Weald Hall Farm and Commercial Centre and Harlow Garden Centre. The A414 is busy and hedgerows line some of the road. Traffic noise and views of traffic reduce tranquillity locally. A short section of the B1393 connecting Hastingwood and Harlow to Thornwood cuts across the area and has a similar character to the A414 since it is only well screened on its eastern edge.



**A view of the A414 toward Hastingwood with hedgerows lining the road**

Public rights of way link Hastingwood and Magdalen Laver to the east, Epping Green to the west and North Weald Bassett. No routes directly cross the M11 in this character area, restricting permeability and connections to Thornwood. One of the primary routes is the Stort Valley Way, a long distance walking trail looping around Harlow through the villages of Sheering, Matching, Magdalen Laver and Epping Green outside the study area. A long section of one of the Bassett Millennium Walks circumnavigating Hastingwood also crosses the area.

#### 5.4.4 Land use

Excluding transport infrastructure, land use is almost exclusively agricultural. As a consequence, there is a contrast between the high levels of activity on these major transport routes and the surrounding rural countryside. There are a number of isolated farm complexes scattered throughout the area associated with the agriculture.

#### 5.4.5 Landscape structure and built form

The landscape structure is expansive and open. The fields are large and irregular in shape. Typical field boundaries comprise native species hedgerows, or grass banks and ditches.



**One of many large, open, irregular agricultural fields near Rye Hill Road**

The farm complexes within the character area are served by private tracks and have an array of architectural styles and ages from wooden weather boarding in the local vernacular style to large modern corrugated metal barns.

Within the agricultural landscape is the occasional copse such as Canes Wood, which contributes to the structure and skyline of the area,



**An example of a modern barn at Latton Priory Farm**

The hill located to the south east of North Weald Bassett has a relatively steep gradient reaching 110m AOD granting views over the built up area to the north. It has been used to situate both an early 20<sup>th</sup> century broadcasting centre named the Ongar Radio Transmitting station and a 19<sup>th</sup> century redoubt. Both of these structures are in a state of disrepair.

#### 5.4.6 Heritage assets

Seven designated heritage assets are located in the character area, and comprise a single scheduled monument and six listed buildings. There are no conservation areas or locally listed buildings within the character area.

##### **Scheduled Monuments**

Two scheduled monuments are located in the character area, namely Latton Priory and North Weald Redoubt. Latton Priory (NHLE 1017386) comprises the remains of an Augustinian Priory of St. John the Baptist dating to the medieval period at what is now Latton Priory Farm. It is surrounded by agricultural fields and belts of

woodland, located below the ridgeline which provides a rural, wooded setting to the farm and conceals the urban expanse of Harlow to the north. North Weald Redoubt (1018456) forms part of the London Defence Positions, a plan established in 1888 to protect the capital. After WWI the redoubt was used as a radio station and remained relatively unchanged. The designation includes the main compound, cottages and stores.

### Listed Buildings

A total of six listed buildings are located in the character area, two of which are considered to be more than special interest and are grade II\* listed. These reflect the historically rural character of the area.

- Paris Hall (NHLE 1146700), a 16<sup>th</sup> century manor house, now farmhouse, of timber frame construction with plastered infill. Associated with Paris Hall is a grade II listed granary (NHLE 1111387) located to the north, of weatherboarded timber frame construction and built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century; and
- The second grade II\* listed building is Sewalds Hall Farmhouse (NHLE 1146628), a plastered; timber framed manor house, now farmhouse, constructed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The remaining three grade II listed buildings comprise:

- Wyldingtree Farmhouse (NHLE 1337225), a timber framed lobby entranced house dating to the 17<sup>th</sup> century largely encased in 19<sup>th</sup> century brickwork;
- A pump associated with Wyldingtree Farmhouse located to the north (NHLE 1111355); and
- Horseshoes Farm (NHLE 1111393), a 17<sup>th</sup> century lobby entranced house of plaster rendered, timber frame construction.

### 5.4.7 Green space and public realm

There is no public green space in this area, but access to the countryside is good due to the network of public rights of way. These are typically signposted beaten tracks with a combination of styles and gates and are sometimes lined by hedgerows.

A broad network of green infrastructure crosses the area, supporting a variety of habitats. These typically comprise hedgerows, streams and small blocks of woodland which connect to the edges of settlements.

### 5.4.8 Views

The views are often panoramic, expansive and far reaching as a result of the elevated and rolling topography, large fields and limited hedgerows. An example of this are the views offered from the south of Hastingwood looking south where the topography gives a vantage point over the valley to the opposing valley side and hill to the south east of North Weald Bassett.

Views north from the B1393 and Rye Hill Road are of agricultural land reaching the ridgeline to the north of the area with Mark Bushes and Latton Park creating a skyline of trees maintaining separation from Harlow.



**View from the south of Hastingwood looking south over the valley**

Views from the roads and public rights of way are typically partially framed by the hedgerows but long range; panoramic views are glimpsed through gaps. Views from roads without hedgerows typically offer long range views over the undulating agricultural landscape.

The M11 is artificially cut through the hills and surrounded by strips of hedgerow planting which screens the road from most viewpoints but the adjacent fields. The general lack of development and activity in some views gives the impression of isolation.

One of the most popular vantage points is the top of the hill which overlooks North Weald Bassett, which provides a link to the redoubt. The view is far reaching over to the tree lined ridge south of Harlow but also overlooks the roofs of North Weald Bassett interspersed with trees. The houses larger than two floors and warehouses around the North Weald Airfield particularly stand out due to their size.



View over North Weald Bassett from near the redoubt atop the hill south east of the village

#### 5.4.9 Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the open, often remote agricultural character.

- Development is dispersed, and has conserved the historically open character of the area;
- Relatively tranquil areas away from busy road accessible by foot;
- A network of green infrastructure and habitats;
- Views of the urban expanse of Harlow are screened south of the ridgeline by the topography and skyline of trees;
- Primary land use is agricultural, preserving the setting of historic buildings located in the area particularly the listed buildings several of which have had agricultural functions; and
- A large proportion of buildings are protected by statutory heritage designations.

#### 5.4.10 Issues to be addressed

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed through new development or active management. These are principally related to the effect of major infrastructure cutting across the area.

- High speed roads which are difficult for pedestrians to cross safely create lines of severance in the landscape and have few places for vehicles to stop;
- The noise and adverse visual impact of traffic as a result of the lack of vegetation or other screening along these roads, which reduces relative tranquillity; and
- Occasional fly tipping and littering in areas with low surveillance.

#### 5.4.11 Sensitivity to change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to the vegetation and structure of the landscape.

- The limited trees and hedgerows lining roads, which are important for screening and minimising impacts of traffic;
- Gradual loss of the field patterns and hedgerow boundaries through field enlargement; and
- Historic farms are susceptible to incremental change through continued working use.

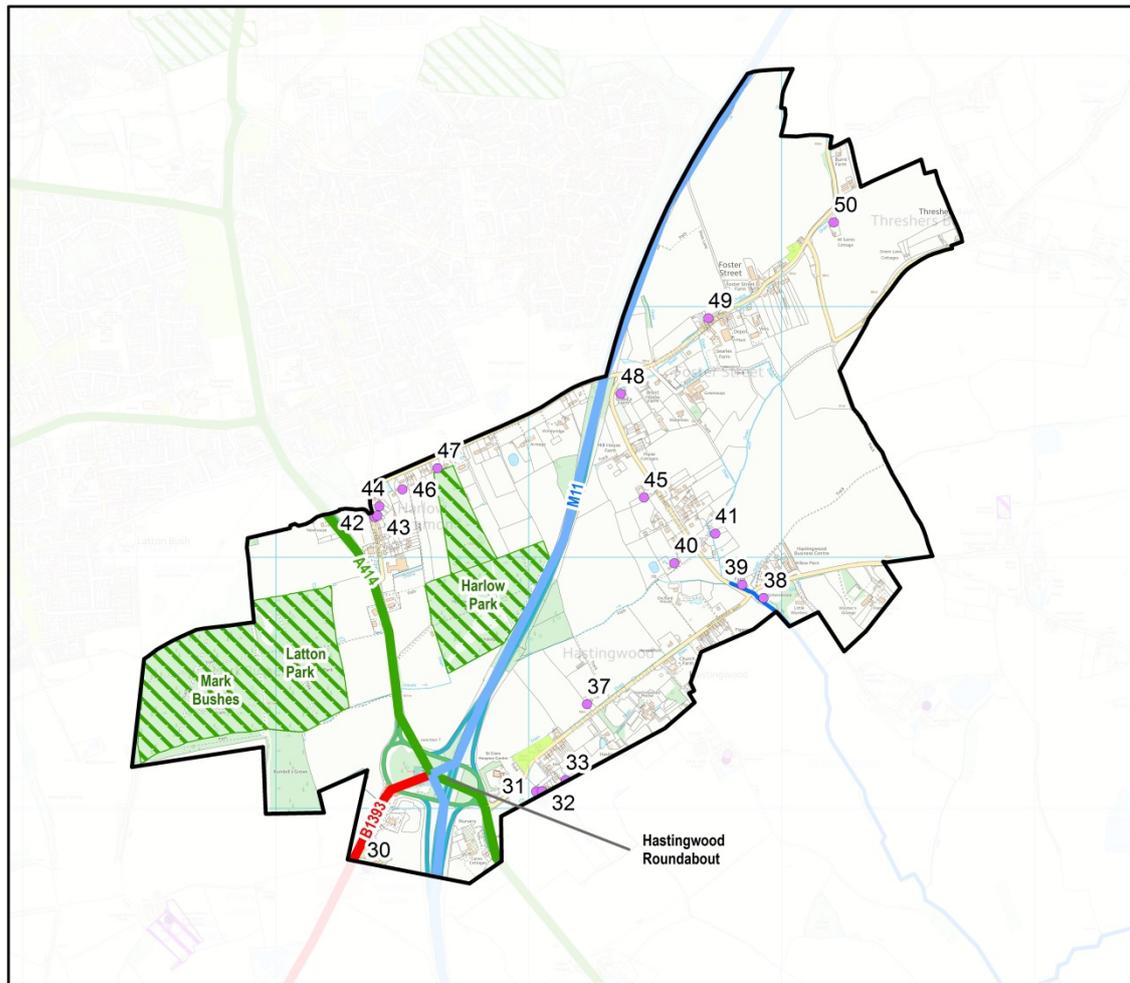
## 5.5 Character Area 05: Hastingwood

### 5.5.1 Key characteristics

- Hastingwood is a small settlement laid out along Hastingwood Road, Mill Street, Harlow Common Road, London Road and Foster Street;
- Settlement near to Harlow is focussed along Harlow Common and London Road. There is a mixture of settlement and light industry located on Foster Street;
- Settlements are located within a setting of small agricultural fields;
- The landscape is open allowing views over the surrounding countryside to and over the M11 which passes through the character area;
- Junction 7 of the M11 is a major node supporting services including two petrol stations and a fast food restaurant which are situated in a localised depression so are well screened from the surrounding areas; and
- Large blocks of woodland wooded areas are located at Latton Park, Mark Bushes and Harlow Park, which are linked by the Stort Valley Way.



View of Shonk's Farm



**Legend**

Hastingwood

**Listed Building**

Grade I

Grade II\*

Grade II

Motorway

Primary road

Secondary road

Watercourse

Woodland

Surface water

Greenspace



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**Figure 9 CHARACTER AREA 5: Hastingwood**

## Natural Factors

### 5.5.2 Topography and hydrology

The character area is largely flat, gently sloping toward the lowest point in the character area at 88m AOD between Hastingwood and Threshers Bush. There are also gentle slopes to the north towards Harlow and south towards a ridge on the southern edge of Harlow. The highest point of the area is located within woodland at Mark Bushes west of the M11, at 107m AOD.

There are no large watercourses or waterbodies, but a network of drainage ditches drain the area and there are occasional small ponds on private land.

## Cultural and Social Factors

### 5.5.3 Movement and connectivity

The key node in the area is the substantial, oval roundabout at Junction 7 of the M11. This connects the A414, the B1393 and Hastingwood Road, providing links London, Cambridge and Harlow and the surrounding villages of Hastingwood, North Weald Bassett and Thornwood. The Hastingwood Roundabout is often very busy and can become congested. The M11 is mostly cut into the landscape in the southern part of the character area whilst the northern stretch sits level with the surrounding landform.



#### Junction 7 links local settlements and the M11

A network of public rights of way connect the settlements of Hastingwood with Harlow and provide legible links to the surrounding rural landscape. The Stort Valley Way and Forest Way are long distance recreational trails. The Stort Valley Way crosses the M11 at the southern end of Harlow Park. Forest Way crosses the M11 along Harlow Common road and leads from Harlow Common, around Mark Bushes and south through Epping Forest. Both trails cross agricultural fields and wooded landscape on well-used trodden earth tracks or lanes with a sense of relative tranquillity away from the M11.

### 5.5.4 Land use

This character area is primarily agricultural with farm complexes with areas of large wooded parks namely Mark Bushes, Latton Park and Harlow Park; throughout these spaces is a series of recreational trails.

A series of transport infrastructure corridors including the M11, B1393 and A414 and the Hastingwood Roundabout cross the character area.

Surrounding the lanes are low density residential developments, occasional small industrial yards and social nodes in the form of: three pubs and restaurants, Hastingwood Village Hall and St Clare Hospice.

Surrounding the Hastingwood Roundabout and the A414 are commercial ventures including Harlow Garden Centre, a fast food restaurant, two petrol stations and a van sales store.



**Industrial yard on Foster Street**

Junction 7 of the M11 creates a concentration of traffic and high levels of activity at the associated fast food restaurant to the south.

### 5.5.5 Landscape structure and built form

The structure of the area is defined by the roads spreading radially from Junction 7 of the M11 which cause lines of severance within the landscape and limits points of crossing. Settlement is typically clustered along local roads or in private driveways; for example along Mill Street, and backing onto open countryside. Farm buildings, set back behind hedgerows and private driveways are also well integrated into their surroundings and add to the rural character.

Light industrial yards are typically inward facing and screened by vegetation from the surrounding landscape. The industrial yard on Foster Street includes a three storey warehouse, the upper portion of which can be seen from the two storey thatched house opposite creating conflicting characteristics.



**Cluster of houses distributed along Hastingwood Road**

Short rows of houses, such as along Hastingwood Road, are typically two storeys tall and semi-detached with narrow gaps between buildings, narrow back gardens and small front gardens most of which are paved to provide off-street-parking. The houses on Hastingwood Road were mostly built in the 1890's with rendered painted walls and a smaller number of larger new builds which are not reflective of the older houses. Some dwellings are isolated and set back much further from the road accessed by private driveways. These often large, detached properties have sizeable gardens bordered by thick hedgerows and some include tennis courts.

Properties along Harlow Common Road and London Road are large and detached or semi-detached houses with big back gardens lined with hedgerows, off street parking and deep front gardens behind hedges and trees. The houses are two to three storeys and exhibit a range of architectural styles and ages often featuring red tiled roofs. The pasture of Harlow Common gives an open, rural setting to the houses along Harlow Common Road.



#### Distinct boundaries between urban and rural at Harlow Common

Between Harlow Common and Hastingwood Road is a number of small fairly regular fields including a some paddocks to the backs of properties. These fields are much smaller than the character area to the south since they are dissected more by streets, paths and the M11 corridor. This gives them a similar rural character but a less exposed expansive feel.

#### 5.5.6 Heritage assets

Eighteen designated heritage assets are located in the Character Area, all of which are listed buildings. There are no scheduled monuments, conservation areas or locally listed buildings within the CHARACTER AREA.

##### Listed Buildings

A total of 18 listed buildings are located in the CHARACTER AREA, all of which are considered of special interest and are grade II listed. These reflect the historically open and rural character of the area, which largely prevails at present. Notable examples include: Shonks Farmhouse (NHLE 1111395), a 17<sup>th</sup> century lobby entranced house, of timber framed construction with weatherboarding; the Church of All Saints (NHLE 1146660) constructed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century of brick rendered to look like ashlar stone in a decorated gothic style with crenelated tower; and the Rainbow and Dove Public House (NHLE 1111385), built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as a house and constructed of timber framing.

#### 5.5.7 Green space and public realm

There is no formal public open space in this character area. Public rights of way cross the arable landscape along farm tracks or trodden earth paths with wooden fences and signage. A chain of substantial, dense blocks of woodland are located to the west of the M11, divided by the A414, which separate North Weald Bassett from Harlow to the north. Together they are an important part of the green infrastructure of the area and comprise, east to west, Harlow Park, Latton Park and Mark Bushes. They include coppiced, coniferous and non-coniferous woodland habitats.

Leading to Harlow Common is a strip of open access land along Mill Street made up of rough grassland with some scrub giving the street an open, rural character.

#### 5.5.8 Views

Views vary but, due to the relatively flat topography, tend to be mid-range, curtailed by vegetation along field boundaries and blocks of woodland. Hastingwood Road offers some fairly expansive views over the flat fields without hedgerow. These views are disrupted by traffic on the M11 to the north. The urban skyline of Harlow forms the background of views across Harlow Common, although the foreground and middle-ground of the view remain rural in character. Church Langley Water Tower to the north of the study area northeast of Harlow is a prominent landmark on the skyline in views from many points in the north of the character area, for example from Harlow Common road and Foster Street.

The M11 is artificially cut through the hills and surrounded by intermittent strips of hedgerow planting which help to screen the road; however, from the stretch of M11 north of the Hastingwood Roundabout, the road and its traffic are raised above the surrounding landform and are visible from Hastingwood Road and the A414 between the Hastingwood Roundabout and Harlow Park. Views from public rights of way vary from the dense enclosure of woodland to panoramic views towards the tree belts within the undulating agricultural landscape to the south west and east.



**Views from Harlow Common road across Harlow Common (not in study area) and of dense urban Harlow with a water tower in the background above the horizon**

#### 5.5.9 Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the small scale of the rural settlements in an agricultural setting including important green infrastructure, including woodland.

- Low density built development with well vegetated boundaries and gardens are well integrated into the surrounding rural landscape allowing the whole area to maintain a rural characteristic;
- Comprehensive network of public rights of way;
- Strong network of green infrastructure, particularly woodland;
- Agricultural land and woodland prevents the coalescence of Harlow, Hastingwood and North Weald Bassett;
- In most areas development is dispersed, preserving the historically open character of the area;
- Development is typically linear following historic routes, in keeping with traditional patterns of settlement in the area; and
- The primary land use is agricultural, preserving the historic setting of the designated assets located in the area.

### 5.5.10 Issues to be addressed

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed through new development or active management. These are principally related to the impact infrastructure and industrial land uses on the quality of the landscape.

- The M11 is visible from several parts of the character area and the noise of traffic on the road is detectable from most of the character area;



#### The M11 is dominant in views from the Rainbow and Dove pub on Hastingwood Road

- The Hastingwood Roundabout is often congested;
- Hastingwood Road, Mill Street and Harlow Common Road become rat runs when the M11 roundabout is blocked or congested;
- The high speed roads cause lines of severance within the landscape; and
- The proximity between industrial land uses and residential dwellings.

### 5.5.11 Sensitivity to change

There are also some elements which are particularly sensitive to change. These relate to maintaining the rural settlement character

- The area is sensitive to development which does not reflect the density and height of existing built form;
- A high proportion of historic buildings, which have been given statutory designation as heritage assets;
- The land between Harlow's urban suburbs and the development along Harlow Common and Foster Street is sensitive to development which would cause settlements to coalesce; and
- Loss of field pattern and boundary hedgerows.

## 6. Character Management Principles

In order to address the issues highlighted previously, principles for managing change in this area should focus on sustaining, reinforcing or enhancing those aspects which maintain or enhance the close relationship between the developments and their rural setting. The following principles should be considered when defining policies with respect to heritage and character.

### 6.1 General Principles

#### 6.1.1 General character management principles

- New development which takes a considered and appropriate approach to design, in a contemporary style, is often more sympathetic to the historic fabric and landscape of the village than poorly executed historically referenced designs. Therefore new builds which employ the imitation of historic architectural styles, using cheaper modern materials and a lack of consideration to proportion and massing of local historic buildings, should be considered less appropriate;
- Innovative design, which is in scale with existing development and which reinforces local distinctiveness, is encouraged;
- While areas with a higher density of historic buildings in the Neighbourhood Area may not meet the criteria for designation as a Conservation Area, the local authority can designate an area as an Area of Special Local Character. This is an appropriate measure to manage change in an area which has been recognised as a locally important landscape and includes locally listed buildings. Guidance can be found at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/local/>; and
- Historic England has published 'Local Heritage Listing' (HE, 2016); this should be used as a guide to discussions with the local planning authority. Any list of non-designated heritage assets should be created in conjunction with Epping District Council.

### 6.2 Specific Character Management Principles

#### 6.2.1 Character Area 01: North Weald Bassett Village

- Preserve the verdant backdrop and views to the surrounding countryside which highlight the settlement's rural setting;
- Preserve and enhance physical connectivity to the surrounding countryside in new development;
- Development affecting shop fronts should consider the size, shape, colour, style of lettering. Materials should be sympathetic to the building and the area, and should consider the relationship between neighbouring buildings;
- Development along residential streets should consider the use of vegetated boundary treatments and front gardens to provide definition and set back from the street, in keeping with the prevailing character of the area;
- Development within the village should include tree planting to contribute to the cumulative softening of views; and
- The King's Head Garage, 229 & 231 High Road and North Weald Methodist Church are non-designated heritage assets, and contribute positively to the character of the area and should be considered in the production of any formally adopted list of non-designated heritage assets. Refer to section 6.1.1 above for further information.

#### 6.2.2 Character Area 02: North Weald Airfield and Nearby Land

- Development should maintain the openness of the landscape and prevent coalescence of the village of North Weald Bassett and North Weald Airfield;
- Existing green infrastructure should be retained and enhanced;
- Any future development within the airfield should conserve and enhance its heritage and cultural value and should minimise impacts on views from the surrounding countryside and North Weald Bassett in particular;

- Preserve and enhance the trails which pass through the area which add recreational value and which link North Weald Bassett to the long distance trails such as the Stort Valley Way to the north;
- Areas of land within or on the existing edge of North Weald Bassett or the North Weald Airfield should be considered as more appropriate than that which surrounds the Grade II\* listed Church of St Andrew, which forms an integral part of the rural setting of the church; and
- Proposals for new infrastructure should avoid areas to the east of the airfield where there would be an adverse impact on the setting and significance of the Parish Church of St. Andrew.

### 6.2.3 Character Area 03: Thornwood Common and the Lower Forest

- Development should retain and where possible enhance the ancient woodland of The Lower Forest and its setting, including improving access;
- Preserve views out to the surrounding rural, agricultural landscape;
- Seek ways to screen and soften industrial development from residential areas through the use of vegetation;
- Modern development in close proximity to the historic core which is responsive to the historic character and appearance of the village should be encouraged. High quality contemporary designs are also often preferable to conservative efforts to emulate historic fabric, particularly that which is not traditional to the area, which more often appear contrived and as a poor quality pastiche; and
- Development on the rural edge of the settlement should include well-vegetated boundaries.

### 6.2.4 Character Area 04: Open Farmland

- Preserve and enhance the vegetation which lines major roads to screen views of traffic in the wider landscape;
- Development within or surrounding the character area should be carefully located or suitably screened. It should be responsive to the prevailing rural character and open nature of the area and maintain a buffer between the character area and the urban expanse of Harlow; and
- Maintain and enhance the ecological connectivity and quality and variety of habitats within the HCA by strengthening the network of green infrastructure.

### 6.2.5 Character Area 05: Hastingwood

- Integrate new development into the landscape with comprehensive planting to limit its visual effect within the area;
- Retain the expansive views over the rural landscape from Hastingwood, particularly facing south;
- Maintain and reinforce hedgerows to field boundaries for habitat value and to screen views of major infrastructure; and
- Modern development in close proximity to Harlow Common should be responsive to the historic rural setting.

## 7. Next steps and sources of further information

In addition to policy protection, this assessment has identified projects or initiatives which could be financed through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 (S106) contributions, or if the project is not eligible for these mechanisms, through other means of funding or delivery. CIL is a tool for local authorities to levy contributions from developers to help deliver infrastructure projects which benefit the local community – for more information, see <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy/>.

Section 106 agreements are site-specific and put in place to make it possible to approve a planning application that might not otherwise be acceptable in planning terms – for example, the provision of new green space. It is recommended to seek advice from the Local Planning Authority on what types of project can be funded through CIL and S106.

Projects and initiatives identified as having the potential to be brought forward by CIL, S106 or other means include:

- Design guidelines to inform future development in terms of, for example, size, scale, density, layout use of materials and boundary treatments in order to maintain the visual connection with the rural setting and preserve the verdant rural hamlet characteristics;
- Develop a strategy to preserve front gardens and enhance streetscape to retain the verdant and rural characteristics of the area;
- A Transport and Parking Study and Strategy to address transport and parking related issues in the area, particularly in narrow roads where parking restricts movement of pedestrians;
- Improvements to pavements to ease movement for the less able bodied and reduce traffic and parking pressures, particularly in areas noted above as having restricted pavements due to car parking;
- Preservation and enhancement of buildings and structures of cultural importance, particularly those which are deteriorating, for example those located in North Weald Airfield and Nearby Land, or Norway House;
- Develop a Countryside Management Strategy which would consolidate strategies about:
  - Landscape conservation to preserve and enhance the landscape;
  - Biodiversity and nature conservation to preserve and enhance biodiversity;
  - Countryside access and recreation to consider access issues;
  - Environmental education to raise awareness of those living or accessing the area of environmental issues; and
  - Sustainable development and rural economy to preserve characteristic productive rural landscapes.
- Public Right of Way improvements in the North Weald Bassett Neighbourhood Area for instance improving the paving and signage between North Weald Bassett and North Weald Redoubt and introducing pavements along rural lanes where none exist to enhance connectivity to the surrounding area and encourage walking;
- Develop a strategy to preserve and enhance the quality of existing Public Rights of Ways, particularly around Thornwood Common, for example improving surfacing, installing signs to improve wayfinding and interpretation panels to explain key features along the routes; and
- Develop a strategy to reduce the amount of litter and fly tipping as this is a notable issue in the areas of low surveillance such as the Open Farm Land and North Weald Airfield and Nearby Land character areas, which is detrimental to the overall character of the area.

This study is intended to provide evidence to support the development of policies with respect to heritage and character for the North Weald Bassett Neighbourhood Plan. As such, it does not provide a comprehensive overview of the contribution of individual buildings, streets or spaces to the character of the area. It should be considered alongside other evidence gathered through the plan making process, such as detailed policy reviews, consultation responses and site options assessments and the evidence base of the North Weald Bassett Parish Council Local Plan.

A wealth of further information and support is available to assist North Weald Bassett Neighbourhood Steering Group in applying the principles set out in this assessment. The Locality website is a useful starting point and is updated regularly. Current guidance which may be of interest includes:

- Community Rights and Heritage, July 2016: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/community-rights-and-heritage/>
- Heritage in Neighbourhood Plans, July 2016: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/news/heritage-in-neighbourhood-plans/>
- Design in Neighbourhood Planning, February 2016: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/design-in-neighbourhood-planning/>

Further technical support is also available to priority neighbourhood planning groups and forums through Locality, funded by MHCLG. The other packages of support currently available are:

- Housing Advice and Assessment
- Site Options and Assessment
- Urban Design and Masterplanning, including Design Codes
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
- Viability of proposals
- Evidence Base and Policy Reviews
- Facilitation Support
- Technical Facilitation
- Health check prior to examination

Further information is available in the Neighbourhood Planning Grant Guidance Notes produced by Locality: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/guidance-notes-neighbourhood-planning/>

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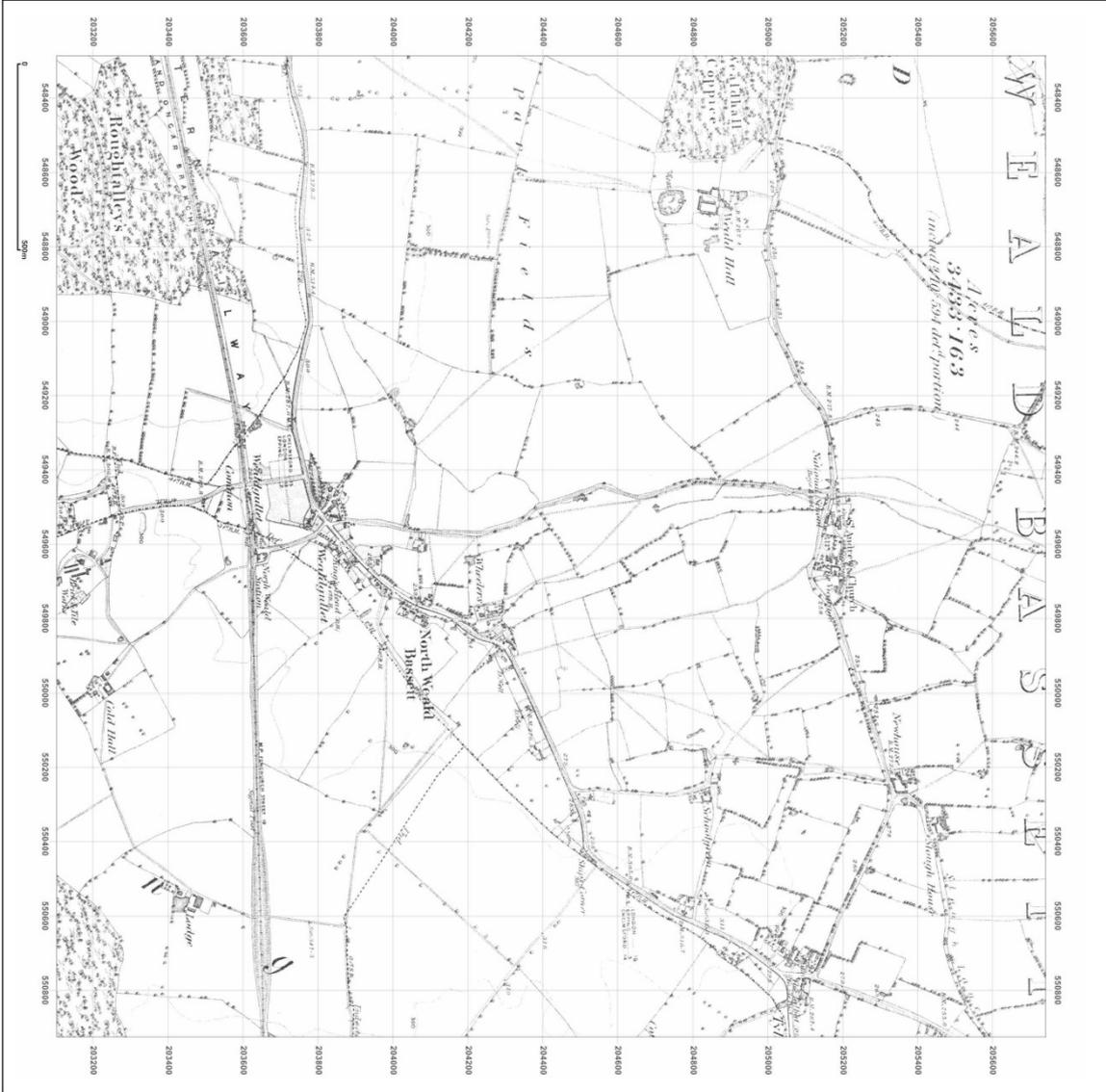
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# Appendix A - Historic maps



**CENTRE MAPS LIVE.**  
THE AUTHORITY FOR THE NORTH

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**Grid Ref:** 549605, 204421

**Map Name:** County Series  
**Map date:** 1874  
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**Printed at:** 1:10,560



Surveyed 1874  
 Revised 1874  
 Edition N/A  
 Copyright N/A  
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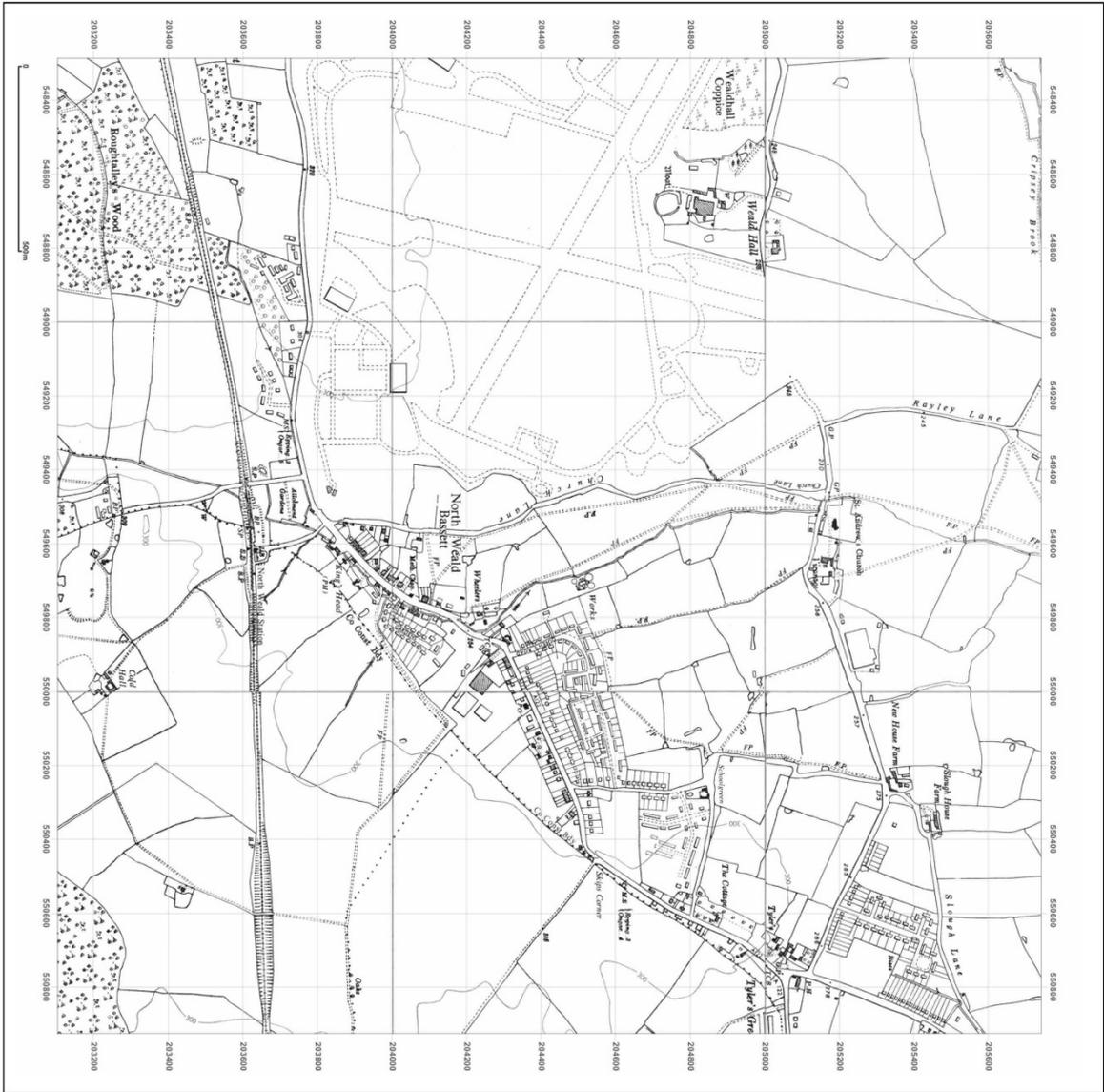
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**Scale:** 1:10,560  
**Printed at:** 1:10,560



Surveyed N/A Revised 1959 Edition N/A Copyright 1960 Levelled N/A	Surveyed 1956 Revised 1955 Edition N/A Copyright N/A Levelled N/A
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 Map legend available at:  
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## Appendix B - Schedule of heritage assets

ID	LIST ENTRY	NAME	GRADE	EASTING	NORTHING	LIST DATE
1	1392985	NORWAY HOUSE (FORMER OFFICERS' MESS)	II	548911.327	203722.8985	01/12/2005
2	1111382	THE TOLL HOUSE	II	548166	203727.3608	14/04/1982
3	1146923	FOREST COTTAGES	II	547848	203805.3608	21/11/1976
4	1337228	PARK PLACE	II	547948	203806.3608	26/04/1984
5	1146728	THE KINGS HEAD PUBLIC HOUSE	II	549624	203852.3608	20/02/1967
6	1146913	MARSHALLS FARMHOUSE	II	547631	203961.3608	31/12/1975
7	1111358	CEDAR COTTAGE CHERRY COTTAGE TUDOR COTTAGE	II	547586	203980.3608	26/04/1984
8	1337227	BARN APPROX 20 METRES NORTH WEST OF MARSHALLS FARMHOUSE	II	547602	203986.3608	31/12/1975
9	1111357	HONEYSUCKLE COTTAGES	II	547514	204082.3608	26/04/1984
10	1413519	Control Tower at North Weald Airfield	II	549279.3	204361.1937	19/04/2013
11	1146741	BRICKWALL HOUSE	II	550138	204376.3608	17/12/1975
12	1146656	29-35, DUCK LANE	II	547404	204581.3608	23/10/1969
13	1337199	WEALD PLACE	II	547417	204654.3608	
14	1146649	FOX COTTAGE	II	547385	204708.3608	26/04/1984
15	1337226	BROOK COTTAGE	II	547427	204738.3608	26/04/1984
16	1111381	WHITE COTTAGE	II	550562	204792.3608	26/04/1984
17	1111356	WEALD HALL FARMHOUSE	II	548688	204889.3608	26/04/1984
18	1111389	TYLERS LODGE	II	550688	204903.3608	26/04/1984
19	1111388	TYLERS FARMHOUSE	II	550676	205031.3608	26/04/1984
20	1337224	CHURCH COTTAGE	II	549530	205158.3608	20/02/1967

21	1111354	ST CLEMENTS	II	549678	205176.3608	26/04/1984
22	1111353	PARISH CHURCH OF ST ANDREW	II*	549549	205187.3608	20/02/1967
23	1308858	ESGORS	II	546969	205369.3608	26/04/1984
24	1337223	LITTLE WEALD HALL FARMHOUSE	II	549406	205797.3608	26/04/1984
25	1111355	PUMP APPROXIMATELY 5 METRES NORTH OF WYLDINGTREE FARMHOUSE	II	551002	205939.3608	26/04/1984
26	1337225	WYLDINGTREE FARMHOUSE	II	550973	206004.3608	26/04/1984
27	1111393	HORSESHOES FARM	II	546997.7811	206271.6006	26/04/1984
28	1146791	LATTON PRIORY FARMHOUSE	II	546571	206533.3608	26/04/1984
29	1111392	LATTON PRIORY	II*	546579	206558.3608	26/04/1984
30	1146797	RUNDELLS	II	547361	206763.3608	30/07/1975
31	1146664	BARN APPROXIMATELY 10 METRES WEST OF GLOVERS FARMHOUSE	II	548030	207066.3608	01/12/1983
32	1337200	GLOVERS FARMHOUSE	II	548053	207068.3608	01/12/1983
33	1111384	THE WOODINGS	II	548147	207112.3608	26/04/1984
34	1146700	PARIS HALL	II*	548782	207193.3608	22/02/1952
35	1111387	GRANARY APPROXIMATELY 11 METRES NORTH NORTH EAST OF PARIS HALL FARMHOUSE	II	548789	207215.3608	26/04/1984
36	1146628	SEWALDS HALL FARMHOUSE	II*	549575	207408.3608	26/04/1984
37	1111385	THE RAINBOW AND DOVE PUBLIC HOUSE	II	548232	207415.3608	26/04/1984
38	1111386	WYNTERSBROOK	II	548930	207838.3608	26/04/1984
39	1111395	SHONKS FARMHOUSE	II	548846	207891.3608	13/01/1975
40	1337202	THE THATCH	II	548577	207977.3608	26/04/1984
41	1308785	PAIR OF COTTAGES APPROXIMATELY 250 METRES NORTH WEST OF SHONKS FARMHOUSE	II	548739	208095.3608	26/04/1984
42	1308832	HILL HOUSE COTTAGE	II	547391	208161.3608	26/04/1984
43	1111391	HILL HOUSE	II	547401.5508	208166.9259	26/04/1984

44	1146822	BAYTREE COTTAGE HILL COTTAGE ROSE COTTAGE	II	547409.5039	208204.1721	15/11/1974
45	1308819	MAGPIE COTTAGE	II	548457	208239.3608	26/04/1984
46	1308875	PUMP APPROXIMATELY 4 METRES EAST OF MAGDALENE HOUSE	II	547501	208271.3608	26/04/1984
47	1337201	WOOD COTTAGES	II	547640	208356.3608	26/04/1984
48	1111394	CRABB'S FARMHOUSE	II	548366	208652.3608	26/04/1984
49	1111383	THATCHED COTTAGES	II	548712	208954.3608	12/01/1983
50	1146660	CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS	II	549208	209336.3608	26/04/1984

