# Claydon and Whitton Rural Neighbourhood Plan

# Landscape and Biodiversity Evaluation 2021

| Project No: | Report: | Date: |
|---|---|---|
| 069/20 | Final | 2nd July 2021 |
| **Prepared by:** | **Checked:** | **Date:** |
| Jill Wyllie BSc Hons, ACIEEM | Simone Bullion BSc Hons, PhD. MCIEEM | 5th July 2021 |


**Prepared by:**
SWT Trading Ltd
Brooke House
Ashbocking
Ipswich
Suffolk IP6 9JY

**Prepared for:**
Claydon and Whitton Rural Parish Council
Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

## DISCLAIMER

This report has been compiled in accordance with BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of practice for planning and development, as has the survey work to which it relates.

The information, data, advice and opinions which have been prepared are true, and have been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

This survey was carried out and an assessment made of the site at a particular time. Every effort has been made to date to provide an accurate assessment of the current situation, but no liability can be assumed for omissions or changes after the surveys have taken place.

It is our policy to submit any biological records to the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service, in accordance with BS42020 (6.4.7). We will do this 3 months after the submission of this report. If you wish to discuss this, please contact us within this time period.

## Executive Summary

SWT Trading Ltd: Ecological Consultants, the consultancy of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, was instructed by Claydon and Whitton Rural Parish Council to undertake a landscape and ecological evaluation of the parish as part of their review of the existing Neighbourhood Plan. This document seeks to provide the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group with an evaluation of landscape character and in particular, to highlight specific habitats and associated ecological networks as a rich source of biodiversity.

There are five different landscape character types within the parish. The largest area, covering the western area of the Claydon parish and most of Whitton Rural, is defined as 'Rolling Estate Farmlands'. The next largest area is defined as 'Ancient Rolling Farmlands' and is located to the east of Claydon parish and covers a very small portion of Whitton Rural in the south-eastern corner. There are three much smaller landscape character types present on the boundaries. Along the south-western boundary of Whitton Rural is a small stretch of 'Plateau Estate Farmlands'; a small tongue of 'Ancient Estate Claylands' projects south into the north-eastern corner of Claydon parish and a small linear stretch of 'Valley Meadowlands' runs along the River Gipping corridor on the western boundary. Overall, these landscape character types help define the different habitats across the parish and also the species within them.

There are no statutory designated sites within the parish, but there are three non-statutory designated sites: River Gipping (Sections) County Wildlife Site and two Roadside Nature Reserves.

Seven Priority Habitats have been identified within the Parish, including hedgerows, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, ponds, wood pasture and parkland, traditional orchards, wet woodland and rivers and streams. Across the Parish, 41 UK and Suffolk Priority Species have been recorded which complement and help define the biodiversity value of the locality.

The principal ecological network within the parish is associated with the River Gipping and associated habitats. Continuous riparian habitat is associated with the river corridor demarcating the western boundary of the parish.

On a smaller scale, the network of hedgerows and woodland within the remainder of the parish also provide local connectivity.

Development Management guidance for any new developments within the area covered by this Neighbourhood Plan should seek to protect existing landscape and ecological assets and restore, enhance and reconnect the ecological network.

## Contents

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Brief and Terms of Reference

SWT Trading Ltd: Ecological Consultants, the wholly-owned consultancy of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, was instructed by Claydon and Rural Whitton Parish Council on 23rd September 2020 to undertake a landscape and biodiversity evaluation of the parish as part of their Neighbourhood Plan that is currently being refreshed.

The Civil Parish of Claydon, within its formal parish boundary, is the 'Neighbourhood Area' for the purposes of the Plan along with the Whitton Rural area, to the north of Whitton Urban – a suburb of Ipswich Borough.

This document seeks to provide the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group with a consideration of landscape character and use this as a basis to highlight key habitats and associated ecological networks as a rich source of biodiversity.

## 1.2 Parish Location and Statistics

Claydon Parish is located north-west of the town of Ipswich, and Whitton Rural wraps around the north-western fringe of the Whitton area of Ipswich within the ward of Claydon and Barham and the Mid Suffolk District (combined Babergh Mid Suffolk District Council). Together they cover around 520 hectares, with the central point grid reference close to TM 1405 4931. The parish also shares boundaries with the Suffolk civil parishes of Akenham, Great Blakenham, Little Blakenham, Bramford and Ipswich.

Data from the UK Census 2011 [1] groups Claydon and Barham together, categorised as Suburbs and Small Towns: Suburbs and indicate a population of around 4686 residents within approximately 1908 households, with the population in Claydon alone being 3253 residents. Whitton Rural is one of the smallest parishes in Suffolk and has a population of only 168 [2]. Built up areas represent about 25% of the parish, largely concentrated in the north-west, with scattered dwellings in Whitton Rural.

Outside of the River Gipping, the road network, buildings and gardens arable farmland is the most frequent and extensive land use.

## 2. Planning and Development Context

An outline of elements of the current planning system and associated strategic documents will help to place this present evaluation in context:

### 2.1 Localism Act (2011)

The Department of Communities and Local Government promoted the Localism Act (2011) [3]. The subsequent Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012) provide the statutory framework for Neighbourhood Development Plans. These allow communities to establish the general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. 'Neighbourhood Plans allow local people to get the right type of development for their community, but the plans must still meet the needs of the wider area'.

### 2.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is statutory guidance published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (February 2019), which provides national planning policy [4].

Of particular relevance to this project is Paragraph 170, under Section 15 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment', which states

The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits of ecosystem services; including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate

The NPPF also sets out the plan-making framework in Paragraph 17, in that development plans must include strategic policies to address each local planning authority's priorities for the development and use of land in its area. These can be contained in a local plan and/or a spatial development strategy. Policies to address non-strategic matters are also included in local plans and in neighbourhood plans. These set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic polies in the development plan that covers the area.

## 2.3 Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Local Plan

The emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan is in its development stages, with the Pre-Submission (Reg 19) Document submitted in November 2020 [5]. This will replace the existing Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998) and Mid Suffolk District Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008)[6].

Relevant policies within these documents included:

- Core Strategy Policy CS5 – Mid Suffolk's Environment
- Core Strategy Objective SO 1 – To protect, manage, enhance and restore the landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity of the District
- Local Plan Policy CL5 – Protecting Existing Woodland
- Local Plan Policy CL8 – Protecting Wildlife Habitats
- Local Plan Policy CL9 – Recognising Wildlife Areas
- Local Plan Policy CL10 – Wildlife value of Rivers and other water areas.

The documents are to be superseded by the following policies proposed in the Pre-Submission Document (November 2020):

- Strategic policy SP09 – Enhancement and Management of the Environment
- Local Policy LP18 – Biodiversity & Geodiversity

**Local Policy LP19 – Landscape** is also applicable with regards to protecting and enhancing landscape character, which supersedes Proposal 6: Existing Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in the Mid Suffolk District Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008).

## 2.4 Biodiversity Net Gain

Following the consultation on mandating biodiversity net gain in development, it was confirmed in March 2019 that the government will use the forthcoming Environment Act to mandate 'biodiversity net gain' – meaning that new developments must deliver an overall increase in biodiversity.

Net gain in planning terms describes an approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. The approach to delivering net gain still requires the application of the mitigation hierarchy, in that impacts on biodiversity should be first avoided, then minimised and only as a last resort be compensated. Where losses cannot be compensated within the development footprint then biodiversity losses may be offset by delivery of gains elsewhere. As a very minimum a target of 10% net gain should be sought as currently specified in the recent Environment Bill. However, it should be noted that impacts on irreplaceable habitat cannot be offset to achieve no net loss or net gain.

A key part of the process is demonstrating measurability to account for the ecological value of a site and how changes arising from development or management will impact on this value over time. The Biodiversity Metric 2.0 Beta Edition designed by Natural England (often termed the 'Defra Metric') is a means to undertake this. Biodiversity Metric 3.0 is soon to become the latest version.

Achieving the best outcomes for biodiversity requires credible evidence derived from ground-truthing and justifiable choices based on ecological knowledge. In addition, the delivery of net gain is dependent upon the financial means to undertake the necessary habitat management, in order to secure a long-term biodiversity benefit.

# 3. Methods

## 3.1 Field Survey

A 'Phase 1 type' field survey and ecological audit of the parish was undertaken on 8th March 2021. The objective of the field survey was to investigate and record land use, habitat types and notable plant and animal species and take digital images to illustrate these features. Using public highways, bridleways and footpaths it was possible to view and comment upon all but a small percentage (around 10%) of the parish land area.

## 3.2 Desktop Survey

A variety of existing source material was consulted including:

- Suffolk County Council website and other documents
- Mid Suffolk District Council website and other documents
- Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service website and databases
- The MAGIC website (provides geographic information about the natural environment from across a range of government sources) including Sir Dudley Stamp 1933-1949 Land Use Inventory).
- Suffolk Wildlife Trust databases
- Suffolk Hedgerow Survey – County Report
- Suffolk Bird Atlas 2007-11

## 3.3 Evaluation of Landscape and Wildlife Assets

The descriptions and evaluation that follow in the report draw on information collected during the field and desktop surveys. For convenience and clarity, elements concerned with the wider landscape are considered first in Section 4. These are then followed in Section 5 by wildlife elements, from protected sites through to wider ecological networks habitats.

However, these two sections should be considered together as there is integration of significant landscape and wildlife elements, resulting in a network of landscape and wildlife features.

# 4. Evaluation of Landscape Assets

## 4.1 Protected Landscapes

Claydon and Whitton Rural do not lie within or close to any Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). However, the Gipping Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA) runs along the west of the built up area of Claydon and extends to the north and south along the River Gipping as shown in the Mid Suffolk Interactive Map [7].

## 4.2 Local Landscape Policy

Previously, many local authorities in England have used Local Landscape Designations (LLDs) to protect locally important landscapes. In different authorities LLDs are variously termed 'Areas of Great Landscape Value', 'Areas of Special Landscape Importance' or here, in the case of Suffolk, 'Special Landscape Areas' (SLA). Unlike National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Special Landscape Area is a non-statutory designation. However, it was created to categorise sensitive landscapes to assist their protection from development or other man-made influences. In 1987 Suffolk County Council identified a number of broad areas of land for designation as SLAs. They considered that these areas possessed a quality of landscape that was of countywide significance. District Councils were made responsible for the precise delineation of each SLA boundary, a process that entailed a careful assessment of each using aerial photographs and site surveys.

Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998) Proposal 6 describes SLAs as:

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

The Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance document, August 2015 [8] provides guidance on development in the countryside. Section 1 of the document provides background information for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts, outlines the reasons for the Landscape Guidance Document and highlights the Designated Landscapes. Section 2 is focused on guidance for development in the countryside, and Section 3 describes the Landscape Character Types found in Babergh and Mid Suffolk and their respective locations.

**Policy LP19 – Landscape** within the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Pre-Submission (Reg 19) Document (November 2020) sets out the landscape policy for Mid Suffolk District. When adopted, this will replace existing Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) as defined in earlier Mid Suffolk District plans and policies. The new policy seeks to protect and enhance the landscape, taking account of its natural beauty, characteristics and features of natural, archaeological or historic interest. All new development proposals need to ensure it responds to and reinforces the local distinctiveness of the area in scale, form, design, materials and location.

Although the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan will no longer use the designation of SLA, it can also be reasonably argued that paragraph 170 of the NPPF 2018 (Section 2.2 above) continues

to give some weight to areas which have or formerly had a Local Landscape Designation such as SLAs, in the context of a 'valued landscape':

"Planning Policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity and geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identifies quality in the development plan).

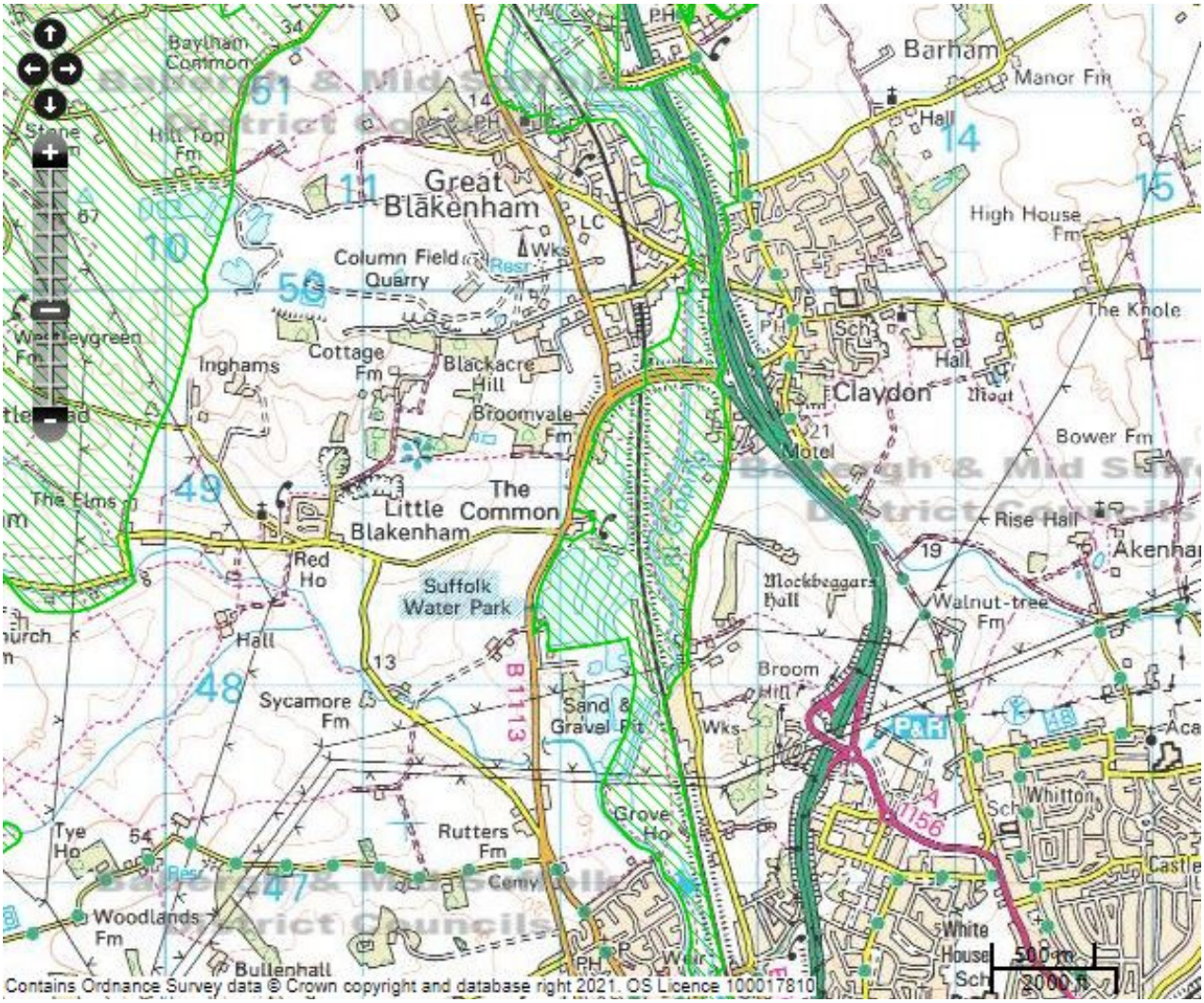



**Figure 1. Claydon Section of the Gipping Valley Special Landscape Area (Source: MSDC Interactive Map)**

### 4.3 Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment

In 2008, Suffolk County Council completed a project to describe landscapes throughout Suffolk in detail and assess what particular character and qualities make up the different landscape areas of the county. This is known as the Level 2 Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), [9]. The guidance required the preparation of landscape character assessments in order to review and/or replace local landscape designations. The results of these assessments could then be used as supplementary planning guidance and to help produce landscape management guidelines.

Suffolk County Council worked in partnership with the Living Landscapes Project based at Reading University, private consultants and all District and Borough Councils in Suffolk, using methodology

in which discrete units of broadly homogeneous land were identified according to a set of physical and cultural characteristics. These characteristics were defined by four principal attributes: physiography, ground type, landcover and cultural pattern, which in turn were derived from six mapable datasets: relief, geology, soils, tree cover, farm type and settlement. Application of this methodology maintained a consistent approach across Suffolk.

It is highly appropriate for the Claydon and Whitton Rural Neighbourhood Plan to acknowledge and make full use of both the descriptions and the land management guidelines related to the three Landscape Types that exist within the parish.

The main Landscape Character Types (LCT) which cover Claydon and Whitton Rural parish are:

- **Rolling Estate Farmlands** (coloured dashed olive on Figure 2)
- **Ancient Rolling Farmlands** (coloured striped olive stripes Figure 2)
- **Ancient Estate Claylands** (coloured striped lime on Figure 2)
- **Valley Meadowlands** (coloured blue on Figure 2)
- **Plateau Estate Farmlands** (coloured spotted olive on Figure 2)

For each of these Landscape Character Types, Suffolk County Council has produced written guidance involving detailed descriptions of:

- key characteristics
- sensitivity to change
- key forces for change
- development management guidelines
- land management guidelines

SCC notes highlight that the guidance documents have been written principally to address the needs of development management. That is, to provide a summary of the forces that have been and are at work in the landscape and the key forces for change operating in the landscape at the time of writing.

However, the caveat is added that guidance cannot be considered to be definitive for a particular site, nor is it exhaustive. Rather it is intended to give a clear indication of the issues raised and principles to be followed when dealing with a particular type of development.

This evaluation for the Neighbourhood Plan therefore distils the essence of the information provided - as it applies to Claydon and Whitton Rural - as a guide for any future development here. Much of the discussion on development guidance is taken verbatim from the documents, but linkages and comments are added that make it relevant to this parish.

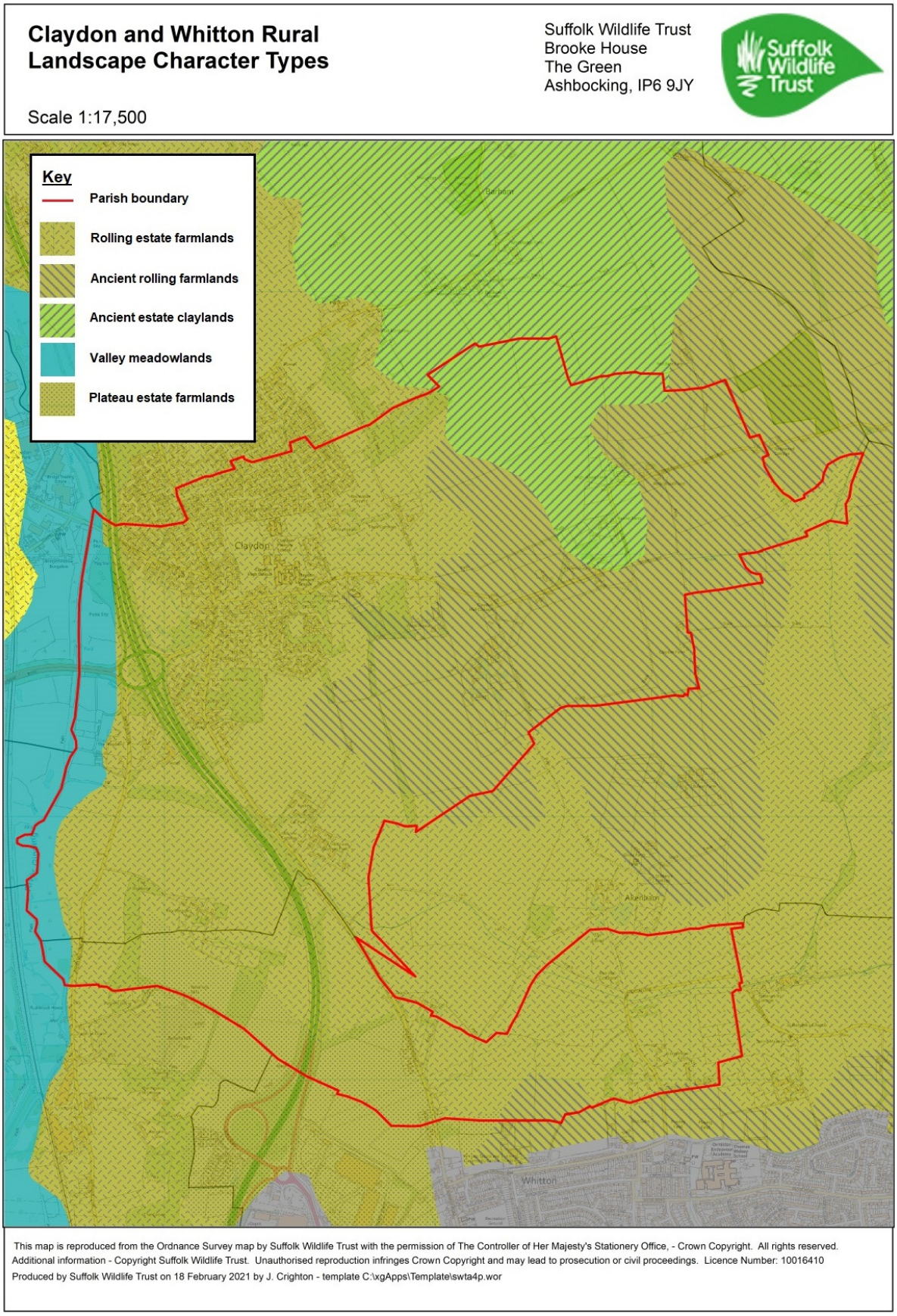



**Figure 2: Suffolk Landscape Character Types ascribed to Claydon and Whitton Rural (Source: Suffolk County Council)**

### 4.3.1 Rolling Estate Farmlands

These landscapes lie on the east side of the Gipping valley and its tributaries from Sproughton upstream to Coddenham and Hemingstone. They occur on gently sloping valley sides and plateau fringes. The soils are largely clayey loams derived from glacial outwash and till deposits, with a particularly chalky loam area around Coddenham which is prone to drought. Rolling Estate Farmlands offered attractive settlement areas with access to water and arable land, with evidence of settlements in all of the valleys by the Iron Age and in AD 43 a Roman fort was established in the Gipping Valley. Another feature of the Gipping valley is the extension sand and gravel exploitation which has resulted in a number of 'pits', now generally water filled and used for recreational purposes such as fisheries. It is the most extensive Landscape Type within Claydon and Whitton Rural.

Key characteristics of this landscape type as they refer to Claydon and Whitton Rural are:

- Gently sloping valley sides and plateau fringes
- Generally deep loamy soils
- An organic pattern of fields modified by later realignment
- Important foci for early settlement
- Coverts and plantations with some ancient woodlands
- Landscape parks with a core of wood pasture
- Location for mineral workings and related activity, especially in the Gipping valley

*Mockbeggars Hall Estate*

*View towards A14 from behind Lime Kiln House*

*Behind Lime Kiln House, old quarry site*

*Disused quarry with exposed chalk face*

Key potential changes and Development Management guidance related to this landscape type:

- Expansion of settlements
- Changes of land management
- Extension of garden curtilage
- Changes in the management and use of landscape parklands
- Mineral extraction especially, but not exclusively, in the Gipping Valley

Land Management guidelines for this Landscape Type relevant to Claydon and Whitton Rural include:

- Reinforce the historic pattern of sinuous field boundaries
- Recognise localised areas of late enclosure hedges when restoring and planting hedgerows.
- Maintain and increase the stock of hedgerow trees
- Maintain the area of woodland cover
- Maintain and restore historic parklands and their features

### 4.3.2 Ancient Rolling Farmlands

This landscape character type is typified by rolling clayland landscapes with the main soil type derived from chalky clays left behind by the Anglian Glaciation, with some sand and gravel deposits. The largest area of this type is in south-central Suffolk. However, a smaller, more fragmented area is present to the north of Ipswich and Woodbridge. The enclosure pattern is fairly organic, retaining ancient characteristics such as species-rich hedgerows and associated ditches. Settlement is limited to a few landholdings over quite an extensive area.

Key characteristics of this landscape type as they refer to Claydon and Whitton Rural are:

- Rolling arable landscape of chalky clays and loams
- Field pattern of ancient random enclosure
- Hedges of hawthorn and elm with oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees
- Scattered with ancient woodland parcels containing a mix of oak, lime, cherry, hazel, hornbeam, ash and holly
- Network of winding lanes and paths, often associated with hedges, create visual intimacy
- Farmstead buildings are predominantly timber-framed, the houses colour-washed and the barns blackened with tar. Roofs are frequently tiled, though thatched houses can be locally significant
- Villages often associated with village greens or the remains of greens

*Looking across the landscape to Claydon Hall*

This Landscape Type is present across the eastern section of Claydon Parish and a very small section on the southern boundary of Whitton Rural.

Key potential changes and Development Management guidance related to this landscape type:

- Expansion of garden curtilage
- Change of land use to horse paddocks and other recreational uses
- Impact of deer on the condition of woodland cover
- Settlement expansion eroding the characteristic form and vernacular styles
- Conversion and expansion of farmsteads for residential uses
- Large-scale agricultural buildings in open countryside
- Development of former airfield sites
- Development of large-scale wind turbines

Land Management guidelines for this Landscape Type relevant to Claydon and Whitton Rural include:

- Reinforce the historic pattern of sinuous field boundaries
- Recognise localised areas of late enclosure hedges when restoring and planting hedgerows
- Maintain and restore greens commons and tyes
- Maintain and increase the stock of hedgerow trees
- Maintain the extent, and improve the condition, of woodland cover with effective management
- Maintain and restore the stock of moats and ponds in this landscape

### 4.3.3 <u>Ancient Estate Claylands</u>

This landscape character type occurs in eastern Suffolk on the indented edge of the central clay plateau. The rivers draining east and south have divided the edge of the plateau into a series of 'fingers' and this landscape is found on those residual areas of plateau. The dissected plateau is composed of glacial till or boulder clay, left behind by the great Anglian Glaciation ice sheet.

Key characteristics of this landscape type as they refer to Claydon and Whitton Rural are:

- Dissected Boulder Clay plateau

- Organic pattern of field enclosures
- Timber framed buildings
- Distinctive estate cottages

*Looking north from Church Lane*

This Landscape Character Type is not well represented in Claydon, with only a small projection into the north of the parish.

Key potential changes and Development Management guidance related to this landscape type:

- Expansion of garden curtilage
- Change of land use to horse paddocks and other recreational uses
- Settlement expansion eroding the characteristic form and vernacular styles
- Conversion and expansion of farmsteads for residential uses
- Impact of deer on the condition of woodland cover
- Changes in the management and use of landscape parklands
- Large-scale agricultural buildings in open countryside
- Redevelopment of former airfield sites to new uses
- Development of wind turbines

Land Management guidelines for this Landscape Type relevant to Claydon and Whitton Rural include:

- Reinforce the historic pattern of sinuous field boundaries
- Recognise localised areas of late enclosure hedges when restoring and planting hedgerows
- Maintain and restore greens and commons
- Maintain and increase the stock of hedgerow trees
- Restore, maintain and enhance the historic parklands and the elements within them
- Maintain the extent, and improve the condition, of woodland cover with effective management
- Maintain and restore the stock of moats and ponds in this landscape

### 4.3.4 Valley Meadowlands

Found principally in the floors of the river valleys of south and south-east Suffolk, Valley Meadowlands are made up of seasonally wet clays overlying alluvial deposits and peat. The damp nature of the land and tree-lined wet dykes support good meadow habitat, although much of this is now used as animal pasture rather than for hay production. Settlement tends to be limited to occasional farmsteads and any woodland tends to be alder carr in the wetter areas. However, in the 20th century plantations of poplar and cricket-bat willows were introduced.

Key characteristics of this landscape type as they refer to Claydon and Whitton Rural are:

- Flat landscapes of alluvium or peat on valley floors
- Grassland divided by a network of wet ditches
- Occasional carr woodland and plantations of poplar
- Occasional small reedbeds
- Unsettled
- Cattle grazed fields

*Grazed wet meadow adjacent A14*

*River Gipping*

This Landscape Character Type is present along the River Gipping on the western boundary of the parish.

Key potential changes and Development Management guidance related to this landscape type:

- Development and land use change adjacent to this landscape type
- The loss of grazing by cattle
- The creation of new woodlands
- The introduction of horse grazing
- Neglect of the characteristic ditch and hedgerow networks
- The conversion of grassland to arable production

Land Management guidelines for this Landscape Type relevant to Claydon and Whitton Rural include:

- Support the continuation of traditional economic activities. i.e. cattle and sheep grazing
- Restore and retain the pattern of drainage via meadows divided by ditches and dykes
- Maintain levels of grassland via arable reversion or expansion of livestock enterprises
- Encourage and support appropriate planting and management of woodlands (both wet and plantation)

### 4.3.5 Plateau Estate Farmlands

Plateau Estate Farmlands have soils which represent chalky clay till and light loam, sandy drift deposits. The field patterns have a large rectilinear pattern which has been largely lost as a result of 20th Century agricultural improvement. Across this Landscape Character type there are large areas of former heathland, with a network of tree belts and coverts. Additionally, parkland is a characteristic feature. As with Ancient Plateau Claylands, the villages are clustered with farmsteads around them and the countryside has an open feel.

Key characteristics of this landscape type as they refer to Claydon and Whitton Rural are:

- Flat landscape of light loams and sandy soils
- Network of tree belts and coverts

*Looking east from Old Norwich Road towards A14*

*Looking west from Old Norwich Road towards Akenham*

This Landscape Character Type is found along the south-western boundary of Whitton Rural, adjacent the A14.

Key potential changes and Development Management guidance related to this landscape type:

- Expansion of existing settlements into this landscape and creation of new settlement patterns and clusters associated with infrastructure development
- Conversion and expansion of farmsteads for residential uses
- Large-scale agricultural buildings in open countryside
- Redevelopment of former airfield sites to new uses
- Changes in the management and use of landscape parklands
- The introduction of new agricultural techniques
- Leisure as a driving force for changes in economic activity

Land Management guidelines for this Landscape Type relevant to Claydon and Whitton Rural include:

- Reinforce the historic pattern of regular boundaries
- Restore the quality of elm hedges with coppice management
- Restore, maintain and enhance the network of tree belts and pattern of small plantations found across much of this landscape type
- Restore, maintain and enhance the historic parklands and the elements within them

### 4.4 Landscape Character Assessment of Babergh and Mid Suffolk

As part of the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance document, August 2015, a Landscape Character Assessment was prepared. Section 1 of the document provides background information for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts, outlines the reasons for the Landscape Guidance Document and highlights the Designated Landscapes. Section 2 is focused on guidance for development in the countryside, and Section 3 describes the Landscape Character Types found in Babergh (10 typologies) and Mid Suffolk (12 typologies) and their respective locations.

| **Babergh** | **Mid Suffolk** |
|---|---|
| Ancient Estate Claylands | Ancient Estate Claylands |
| Ancient Estate Farmlands | Ancient Plateau Claylands |
| Ancient Plateau Claylands | Ancient Rolling Farmlands |
| Ancient Rolling Farmlands | Plateau Claylands |
| Plateau Estate Farmlands | Rolling Estate Farmlands |
| Plateau Farmlands | Rolling Valley Claylands |
| Rolling Estate Farmlands | Rolling Valley Farmlands |
| Rolling Valley Farmlands | Rolling Valley Farmlands & Furze |
| Undulating Ancient Farmlands | Valley Meadowlands |
| Valley Meadowlands | Valley Meadowlands and Fens |
| | Wooded Valley Meadowlands |
| | Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fens |

*Table 1. Landscape Character Types in Babergh Mid Suffolk*

### 4.5 The Significance of the Landscape for the Neighbourhood Plan

The descriptions and discussions in Sections 4.1 - 4.3 indicate how Landscape Character Assessment is increasingly underpinning development management guidance. In the case of Claydon and Rural Whitton Parish, the importance of sensitive development and the retention and enhancement of existing features typical of the five Landscape Character Types is highlighted.

As well as adherence to Local Plan Policy, development management guidance for any new developments within the area covered by this Neighbourhood Plan should consistently reflect the Development Management and Land Management Guidelines drawn up within the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment and the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance.

# 5. Evaluation of Wildlife Assets

## 5.1 Local Biodiversity Policy

Mid Suffolk District Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008) includes **Policy CS5**: Mid Suffolk's Environment. The policy seeks (amongst other things) that:

All development will maintain and enhance the environment, including the historic environment, and retain the local distinctiveness of the area.

To protect, manage and enhance Mid Suffolk's biodiversity and geodiversity based on a network of:

- Designated Sites (international, national, regional and local)
- Biodiversity Action Plan Species and
- Habitats, geodiversity interests within the wider environment Wildlife Corridors and Ecological Networks

The emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan is in its development stages, with the Pre-Submission (Reg 19) Document submitted in November 2020 [5]. The following policies apply:

**Strategic policy SP09 – Enhancement and Management of the Environment**
1) The Council will require development to support the enhancement and management of the natural and local environment and networks of green infrastructure, including: landscape; biodiversity, geodiversity and the historic environment and historic landscapes through detailed development management policies set out in the Plan, including environmental protection measures, such as biodiversity net gain and sustainable urban drainage systems. Cross-boundary mitigation of effects on Protected Habitats Sites.

2) Development that creates new dwelling(s) within the identified Protected Habitats Sites Mitigation Zone will be required to make appropriate contributions through legal agreements towards management projects and/or monitoring of visitor pressure and urban effects on Habitats Sites and be compliant with the HRA Recreational disturbance and Avoidance Mitigation Strategy. Development will otherwise need to submit separate evidence of compliance with the Habitats Regulations Assessment regarding predicted impacts upon relevant designated sites.

3) All development proposals will be required to support and contribute to the Councils' project to maintain, enhance and protect biodiversity net gain, the networks of habitats and green infrastructure.

**Local Policy LP18 – Biodiversity & Geodiversity**
1) All development should follow a hierarchy of seeking firstly to; enhance habitats, avoid impacts, mitigate against harmful impacts, or as a last resort compensate for losses that cannot be avoided or mitigated for. Adherence to the hierarchy should be demonstrated.

2) Development should:

a. Protect designated and, where known, potentially designated sites. Proposed development which is likely to have an adverse impact upon designated and potential designated sites, or that will result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable biodiversity

or geological features or habitats (such as ancient woodland and veteran/ancient trees) will not be supported.

b. Protect and improve sites of geological value and in particular geological sites of international, national and local significance.

c. Conserve, restore and contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity and geological conservation interests including priority habitats and species. Enhancement for biodiversity should be commensurate with the scale of development.

d. Plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of local networks of biodiversity with wildlife corridors that connect areas. Where possible, link to existing green infrastructure networks and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation so that these ecological networks will be more resilient to current and future pressures.

e. Identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains, equivalent of a minimum 10% increase, for biodiversity. Where biodiversity assets cannot be retained or enhanced on site, the Councils will support 'biodiversity offsetting' to deliver a net gain in biodiversity off-site in accordance with adopted protocols.

f. Apply additional measures to assist with the recovery of species listed on S41 of the NERC Act 2006.

3) Development which would have an adverse impact on species protected by legislation, or subsequent legislation, will not be permitted unless there is no alternative and the local planning authority is satisfied that suitable measures have been taken to:

a. Reduce disturbance to a minimum; and
b. Maintain the population identified on site;
c. Provide adequate alternative habitats to sustain at least the current levels of population.

4) Where appropriate, the local planning authority will use planning obligations and/or planning conditions to achieve appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures and to ensure that any potential harm is kept to a minimum.

## 5.2 Statutorily designated sites for biodiversity

The quality of the natural environment in Suffolk is reflected by the extent of its land area with statutory protection for its wildlife. 8% of the county has national designation as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), reflecting the importance of habitats and species found here. Many of these areas are also of European or international importance, with designations as Special Areas for Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Ramsar Site. Large areas of the nearby estuaries and coastline are protected in this way.

### 5.2.1 Sites of European and International Importance

There are no sites of European or International Importance within the parish itself, the closest is the Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA and Ramsar Site which lies 6.2km south of the parish boundary, with the Deben Estuary SPA and Ramsar Site being 10.8km to the east.

### 5.2.2 Site of Special Scientific Interest in Claydon and Whitton Rural

The above-mentioned designated areas also have the national designation of SSSI and are named as Orwell Estuary SSSI and Deben Estuary SSSI respectively. Although there are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest within Claydon and Whitton Rural parish, there are three within 2km of the boundaries, including Sandy Lane Pit SSSI, Barham which is 865m to the north and Great Blakenham

Pit SSSI, 900m west. Both of these sites are designated as geological Conservation Review sites, with importance for Pleistocene studies. In addition, Little Blakenham Pit SSSI, lies 1.7km west and is important for its chalk grassland flora. Part of this site contains two disused lime kilns and includes a tunnel which is one of the largest known hibernation roost site for bats in Great Britain [10].

## 5.3 County Wildlife Sites

### 5.3.1 Rationale behind this non-statutory designation

County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) are areas known to be of county or regional importance for wildlife. They have a key role in the conservation of Suffolk's biodiversity and are important links in Suffolk's 'Living Landscape', as described on the Suffolk Wildlife Trust website [11]. CWS designation is non-statutory but is recognition of a site's high value for biodiversity. Suffolk currently has over 900 County Wildlife Sites representing approximately 2.6% of the county's land area.

CWSs have been identified throughout Suffolk and range from small meadows, green lanes, dykes and hedges through to much larger areas of ancient woodlands, heathland, greens, commons and marsh. Outside of areas with statutory protection (such as SSSSIs, Local and National Nature Reserves), CWSs are therefore the most important areas for wildlife in Suffolk and can support both locally and nationally threatened wildlife species and habitats.

Many County Wildlife Sites support UK Priority Habitats and Species (see 5.3 and 5.4 below). They complement the statutory protected areas and nature reserves by helping to buffer and maintain habitat links between these sites.

It is important to note that the designation of a site as a CWS does not confer any new rights of access either to the general public or conservation organisations.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service and Natural England manage the Suffolk County Wildlife Site system in partnership. This CWS system involves:

- Maintaining an up to date database of CWSs in Suffolk. Partners and local authorities have copies of the database
- Designating new CWSs, extending existing CWSs and modifying information held on existing sites when changes occur. New sites and site extensions are notified in accordance with selection criteria.
- Supplying information on wildlife interest of CWSs to landowners and other organisations whose work may affect CWSs. The importance of CWSs is recognised by local authorities in Suffolk and they have all developed policies that give CWSs some protection in line with national planning policy. If a CWS is likely to be affected by development the views of the CWS partners is normally sought as part of the consultation process.

CWSs are implicitly recognised by the NPPF as having a fundamental role to play in meeting overall national biodiversity targets. In the NPPF 2019 they are described as 'Locally Designated Sites'. CWS are not protected by legislation, but their importance is recognised by local authorities when considering planning applications. Under current planning policy there is a presumption against granting permission for development that would have an adverse impact on a CWS. Suffolk Wildlife Trust assesses planning applications for potential impacts on County Wildlife Sites.

The high wildlife value of many CWSs has developed through land management practices that have allowed wildlife to thrive, for example traditional and historical management such as rotational coppicing of woodland, hay cutting or grazing of grasslands. Ensuring the continuation of such appropriate management is vital to maintain the wildlife value of a site. Establishing and maintaining good working relationships with landowners and managers is therefore essential.

The CWS partnership appreciates the difficulties that achieving the conservation management of CWSs can present and is therefore happy to offer advice on management and on potential sources of funding. Free advice is available from Suffolk Wildlife Trust to CWS owners and managers and includes:

- Information on the wildlife and nature conservation interest of the site;
- Advice and site visits can be made to establish the best management to maintain and enhance wildlife value.

### 5.3.2 County Wildlife Sites in Claydon and Whitton Rural

There is one County Wildlife Site associated with Claydon and Whitton Rural, and two Roadside Nature Reserves.

River Gipping (Sections) – Mid Suffolk 10: TM 125 486

3.9ha: River flora and fauna

There are several stretches of the River Gipping between Stowmarket and Ipswich which are of considerable conservation value. The emergent fringe vegetation offers habitat for water birds including breeding reed bunting, grey wagtail and tufted duck. Some uncommon plants such as arrowhead and spiked water-milfoil are also found. The river is used for recreational fishing and has populations of roach, dace, eel, tench, perch and pike.

*River Gipping looking south*

Roadside Nature Reserve 144 – Mid Suffolk 167: TM 128 496
0.52ha: Criteria 2b – Grassland Community, Score 11
The B1113/A14 junction road verges on the roundabout, designated for its chalk flora including pyramidal orchid. It has been recently subjected to disturbance due to improvements to drainage of the highway.

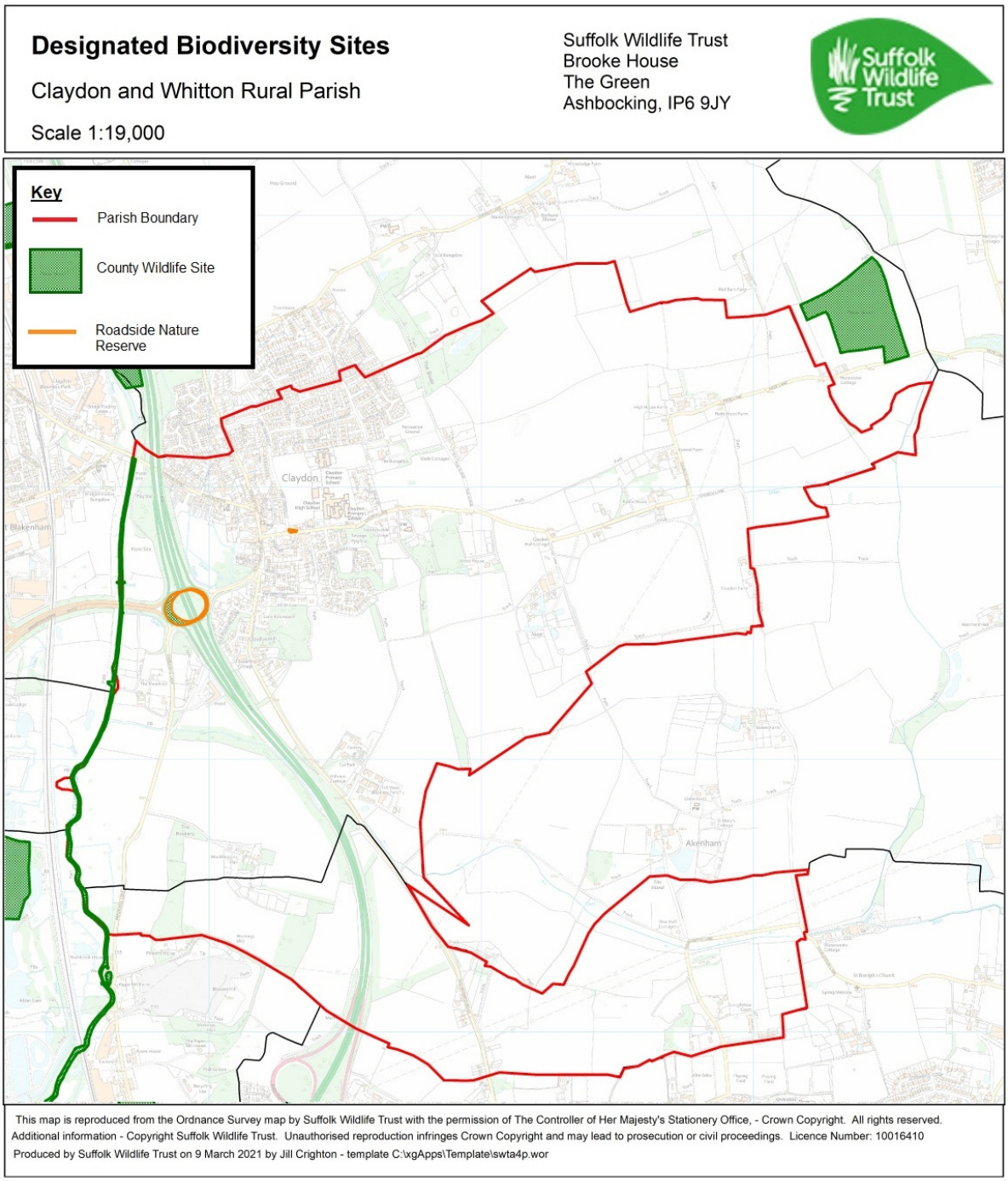
*RNR 144*

Roadside Nature Reserve 165 – Mid Suffolk 166: TM 133 498
0.018ha: Criteria 2a – Priority species
Along Church Lane, designated for the presence of tower mustard.

There are several CWS's in the surrounding parishes, including chalk grassland, species-rich grasslands, habitat mosaics, ancient woodlands and sites designated for their ornothological and invertebrate interest.

*RNR 165*

**Figure 2: Location of designated sites for biodiversity**




## 5.4 Biodiversity Action Plans and Priority Habitats

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP, 1994) was the UK Government response to the 1992 International Convention on Biological Diversity. The UK BAP listed a range of habitats, plus a number of birds and species from other taxa of conservation interest. National targets and priorities were set in order to address the particular needs of those species. The list was amended in August 2007 to include additional species and habitats to reflect concerns over continuing declines. Much of the work previously carried out under the UK BAP is now focused through from country level down to local level through the creation of local biodiversity strategies. However, the UK BAP lists of priority species and habitats remain important and valuable reference sources.

In addition, Section 40 of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act states that 'Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. UK Priority habitats and species, listed within Section 41 of the Act, are normally taken as a good benchmark for demonstrating biodiversity duty.

In January 2014, Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership (SBP) - a consortium of over 20 organisations working for wildlife within the county - published revised statutory lists of Priority Habitats and Species occurring in Suffolk, [12] and these have been subsequently updated and amended. In a small number of cases where previously no national BAP existed, certain species are described as Suffolk Character Species to reflect their particular importance within the county.

The following section deals with the Priority Habitats that are present in Claydon and Whitton Rural. In most cases the habitat descriptions include Priority Species and other notable species as supporting evidence. For the majority of species, they are only referenced if they were noted during the field survey or are recent records (post 2000) held by Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service.

### 5.5 Suffolk Priority Habitats in Claydon and Whitton Rural

Of the 24 Suffolk Priority habitats, seven are known to be present in Claydon and Whitton Rural parish:

- Hedgerows
- Mixed deciduous woodland
- Ponds
- Wood Pasture and Parkland
- Traditional Orchards
- Wet woodland*
- Rivers and Streams

*Although there are no areas of wet woodland shown on Defra's MAGIC maps [13], the Valley Meadowlands landscape character type includes this priority habitat, and it was recorded in locations along the River Gipping.

The Priority Habitats are described in more detail below to highlight the significance of these ecological assets within the parish. The format is in three parts:

1. General descriptions of the habitats as they relate to Suffolk

2. These are followed by descriptions of the Priority habitat as found in Claydon and Whitton Rural during the field survey, noting any associated UK and Suffolk Priority species

3. Finally, reference is made from the Suffolk BAPs (or other sources) to those development activities that are most likely to affect the Priority Habitat as it exists in Claydon and Whitton Rural.

### 5.5.1 Hedgerows

5.5.1.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

Hedgerows are boundary lines of trees and/or shrubs, sometimes associated with banks, ditches and grass verges. Those considered ancient or species-rich or both are an important reservoir of biodiversity in the farmed landscape as well as being of cultural, historical and landscape importance. Hedges act as wildlife corridors, linking habitats of high biodiversity value such as woodland and wetland, thus enabling bats, other small mammals and invertebrates to move around under cover from predators.

Ancient hedgerows, which support a greater diversity of plants and animals than subsequent hedges, may be defined as those that were in existence before the Enclosure Acts, passed between 1720 and 1840.

Species-rich hedgerows contain five or more native woody species on average in a 30 metre length. Those which contain fewer woody species, but a rich basal flora may also be considered as important. The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 define 'important' hedgerows as those with seven woody species, or six woody species in a 30m length, plus other defined features.

Key Priority species in Suffolk which use hedges and associated grassy verges include: brown hare, grey partridge, song thrush, linnet, turtle dove, corn bunting, tree sparrow, bullfinch and various species of bats. Hibernating reptiles and amphibians and invertebrates such as white-letter hairstreak butterfly on elm hedges also all make use of this Priority Habitat.

5.5.1.2 Hedgerow Priority Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural

Claydon was one of the many parishes covered by the Suffolk Hedgerow Survey, 1998-2012, surveyed in January 2011. Valley Meadowlands landscape character type was not assessed during the hedgerow survey. The results have been taken from the other four Landscape Types.

The 2012 report on this project [14] shows that, although access was not granted to some landholdings, out of the 68 hedges surveyed for woody species:

5 contained 4 species or fewer
21 contained 5, 6 or 7 species
42 contained 8 species or more

Therefore at least 92.6% of the sampled hedgerow resource within the parish can be deemed species-rich.

Whitton was also surveyed in January 2011. The 2012 report on this project shows that, although access was not granted to some landholdings, out of the 47 hedges surveyed for woody species:

13 contained 4 species or fewer
17 contained 5, 6 or 7 species
17 contained 8 species or more

Therefore at least 72.3% of the sampled hedgerow resource within the parish can be deemed species-rich.

It must be noted that this summary is based on data collected early 2011 and that changes will have occurred since that time, both positive and negative. However, it remains broadly true that the hedgerows in the parish are an important reservoir for wildlife.

During the walkover surveys, it was noted that the hedgerows within this landscape type are tall, thick and generally species-rich. Many are associated with roadsides, with the field margins being more open. Recorded species include hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, field maple, elm and holly with English oak, ash and sycamore as standard trees.

Hedgerows are important for a number of bird Priority Species and the Suffolk Bird Atlas 2007-11 recorded several species typical of this habitat: dunnock, yellowhammer, linnet, bullfinch and also redwing and fieldfare in winter

*Double width hedgerow with ash standards in Ancient Rolling Farmlands*

5.5.1.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect Hedgerow Priority Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural

- Removal to facilitate development, subsequent fragmentation of the hedgerow network arising from development;
- Under-management and neglect of hedges leads to a reduction of their biodiversity value and structural coherence (and occasionally leads to their complete disappearance);
- Too-frequent flailing can lead to structural incoherence and – if carried out in successive years - loss of hedgerow fruit in autumn, as flowering and fruiting normally takes place on second year growth;
- Mature hedges with a minimum grass strip separating them from arable land may suffer damage to tree and shrub roots through ploughing;
- Fertilizer and other agro-chemical drift may degrade plant and invertebrate populations, especially where a crop extends to the hedge base.

**5.5.2 Mixed Deciduous Woodland**

5.5.2.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

This Priority habitat includes all broadleaved stands and mixed broadleaved and coniferous stands which have more than 80% of their cover made up of broadleaved species. It also includes patches of scrub of above 0.25 hectares forming a continuous canopy, areas of recently felled woodland and other successional types, along with the other integral features of woodland such as glades and rides.

These woodlands may be ancient (where cover existed before c 1600) or recent (where cover has been created since c 1600). Both these age designations may have semi-natural cover or plantation cover, depending on past management. Management can vary from coppice or coppice with standards to wood-pasture, high forest or minimum intervention. The latter, when found in ancient semi-natural woodland, contains some of the most important wildlife assemblages of any habitat.

5.5.2.2 Mixed Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural

There are no known ancient woodland sites within Claydon and Whitton Rural parish, however there are a number of woodland blocks which are classed as Priority Habitat on the MAGIC website. The largest area of this woodland lies within Claydon, around the Listed property of Lime Kiln House. This secondary woodland sits within a disused quarry (*pers comm*. with local resident) and contains tall trees, dominated by sycamore, but also including ash and oak with blackthorn, hawthorn and elder scrub. The image below shows the treetops from the cliff edge above, with the woodland filling the quarry space. 'The Slade' is another area of private woodland to the north-east of the residential area of Claydon. It is predominantly Scot's pine, but also contains a large number of mature oak, ash, sycamore, beech, field maple and cherry, with a dense understorey of hawthorn, elder, holly and elm. Clematis and ivy are growing around the trees and scrub and some leylandii have been planted on the edge.

Further areas of Priority woodland which could not be surveyed include 'The Rookery', another privately owned woodland in the south-east of Claydon Parish, associated with Mockbeggars Hall. A number of smaller woodlands within this land ownership are also designated as Priority habitat. There is also an area of woodland associated with Honeysuckle Cottage, Church Lane, Claydon; and further woodland to the east of this site, between Honeysuckle Cottage and Wood House, which is not designated but contains broad-leaved species also present within other woodlands in the parish. There are some lines of trees with scrub alongside the A14, one of which has a mountain bike course dug in. At the boundary between Claydon and Whitton Rural, an area of this line of trees is also designated.

There are two areas of woodland close to the A14 and River Gipping which are also classified as this habitat type on the MAGIC website, however, they are more suited to 'Wet Woodland' Priority Habitat and will be discussed in Section 5.5.6.

*Woodland behind Lime Kiln House*

*The Slade woodland*

*Woodland associated with Mockbeggars Hall*

*Woodland strip adjacent A14 with bike jumps*

5.5.2.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect the Mixed Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural

- Further fragmentation of and within the existing woodland area;
- Intensification of management between woodland fragments reduces the ecological value; of edge habitats and the connectivity between woodland blocks in the landscape.

**5.5.3 Ponds**

5.5.3.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

For the purposes of classifying this Priority Habitat, ponds are defined as permanent or seasonal standing water bodies up to 2 hectares in extent which meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Habitats of international importance
- Species of high conservation importance, for example ponds supporting Priority Species
- Ponds of high ecological quality, as determined by standard survey techniques

5.5.3.2 Ponds Priority Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural

Information provided by Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service and from aerial photographs indicate that there are approximately 17 ponds within the Parish of Claydon and Whitton Rural. This may be an underestimate as this does not include all ponds within individual gardens. The largest cluster of these ponds is associated with Claydon Hall on the Ancient Rolling Farmlands

landscape character type, and the rest are scattered throughout the Rolling Estate Farmlands. There are 13 ponds in Claydon, and 4 in Whitton Rural.

A density of 3.3 ponds/km$^2$ shows that Claydon and Whitton Rural contains a third of the average of 9.6 ponds/km$^2$ throughout the rest of the Mid Suffolk District, and is less than the entire County average of 5.9 ponds/km$^2$ [15]. The ponds visited during the survey were associated with woodland or other specific landscapes, with the vast majority of the land used for arable production, reducing the need for field ponds, which would have offered a water source for grazing animals.

As access was limited it was only possible to visit very few of these ponds during the walkover survey, but reference to Google Earth imaging suggests that the majority still exist. There may also be an additional network of garden ponds, which it was not possible to identify during the field survey.

*Pond associated with woodland adjacent Wood House*

*Pond within the parkland of Claydon Hall*

5.5.3.3 Activities and developments that could affect the Ponds Priority Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural

Ponds are dynamic systems, being both lost and created over time. However, loss or degradation of ponds - even if they are at low densities within a landscape network - may lead to a reduced diversity of wildlife as ponds become more isolated from one another, compromising species that may rely on a network of ponds for their survival. Examples of how such changes may occur include:

- Complete infilling due to loss of economic value or new development;
- Loss of terrestrial buffer zones in areas of intensive land use;
- Diffuse or point source pollution from nutrients or other chemicals;
- Inadvertent or deliberate introduction of non-native species such as New Zealand pygmyweed (*aka* Australian swamp stonecrop), least duckweed or ornamental fish;
- Neglect and/or lack of management resulting in heavy shading and drying out.

It should be noted that some apparently neglected ponds and many ephemeral ponds are of great interest for biodiversity and that a pond survey based on a standard procedure can do much to inform management decisions.

**5.5.4 Wood Pasture and Parkland**

5.5.4.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

Lowland wood pastures and parkland are the products of historical land management systems and represent a vegetation structure rather than being a particular plant community. Typically, this structure is one of large open-grown or high forest trees (often pollarded) at various densities, in a matrix of grazed grassland, heathland and/or woodland floras. It can include non-native species introduced as part of a designed landscaping scheme.

Historic landscapes can provide a wealth of habitats and niches for wildlife, especially fungi, invertebrates, bats and woodland birds.

5.5.4.2 Wood Pasture and Parkland in Claydon and Whitton Rural

There are three areas of Wood Pasture and Parkland Priority Habitat listed on Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory on MAGIC: south of Claydon Hall in Claydon parish, and south of The Island, on the border of Akenham parish and another to the east of Honeysuckle Cottage, Claydon. The latter was not viewed due to lack of access but the other two areas are still present. The land at Claydon Hall has been partitioned into horse paddocks by post and rail fencing, so has lost much of the parkland feel, but there are a number of veteran oaks spread throughout the landscape, as well as several ponds. It is situated in the Ancient Rolling Farmlands landscape and is relatively flat and open.

The land near Akenham has an altogether more natural feel with an undulating landscape on Rolling Estate Farmlands with clusters of trees as well as solitary mature trees, there are no obvious field partitions within the landscape. The tussocky nature of the grassland suggests it is used seasonally for sheep grazing, and there is a large pond just outside the parish boundary.

*Land at Claydon Hall*

*Land south of The Island, Akenham*

5.5.4.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect Wood Pasture and Parkland Priority Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural

- Reduction in structural and age diversity of woody species, including lack of replanting to replace lost mature/veteran trees or damage to young trees by cattle and horses;
- Unsympathetic tree surgery including removal of fallen deadwood or standing deadwood (unless required for safety reasons);
- Loss of structure via field partitioning into paddocks;
- Cessation of grazing by cattle or sheep leading to changes to grassland habitat

**5.5.5 Traditional Orchards**

5.5.5.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

Traditional orchards are structurally and ecologically similar to wood pasture and parkland, with open-grown trees set in herbaceous vegetation. However, they are set apart by a number of factors as follows:

- Species composition - trees grown for fruit or nut production, such as apple, pear, plum, damson, walnut, cherry and cobnut;
- Management – low intensity grafting and pruning with little or no use of chemicals;
- Spacing – denser arrangement with good ground flora structure;
- Scale – small individual habitat patches;
- Dispersion and frequency – wider and greater occurrence in the countryside.

Traditional orchards are hotspots for biodiversity supporting a range of wildlife, particularly when associated with other features such as ponds, hedgerows, scrub, fallen deadwood and streams. The minimum size of a traditional orchard is defined as five trees with crown edges less than 20m apart.

Traditional orchards are not to be confused with commercial orchards which tend to be much larger in size, have more of a monoculture and are much more intensively managed.

5.5.5.2 Traditional Orchards in Claydon and Whitton Rural

There are three areas of traditional orchards listed on Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory on MAGIC: two of the areas are small garden orchards associated with Knole House, off Church Lane and the other is a much larger orchard between Paper Mill Lane and the River Gipping. One of the Knole House orchards was viewed through the boundary hedgerow and appears ancient and sympathetically managed, with a small number of mature fruit trees. An area described as orchard on MAGIC near the River Gipping appears to be planted with cricket bat willow, so likely to be inaccurate.

5.5.5.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect Traditional Orchards Priority Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural

- Inappropriate management;
- Use of pesticides;
- Pressure from land development;
- Neglect;
- Intensification of agriculture.

**5.5.6 Wet woodland**

5.5.6.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

Wet woodlands occur on land that has waterlogged or seasonally waterlogged soils, where the water table is correspondingly high and drainage poor. They are frequently associated with river valleys, floodplains, flushes and plateau woodlands.

Typical tree species include grey willow, alder and downy birch. The habitat supports a number of important Priority species in Suffolk. These include mammals such as otter and various bat species, birds such as marsh tit and various scarce species of beetles and weevils.

5.5.6.2 Wet woodland in Claydon and Whitton Rural

The wet woodland in the parish is associated with the River Gipping riparian corridor, within the Valley Meadowlands landscape character type. It is largely willow directly adjacent the river, as well as on the edge of a wet meadow to the north of the A14 corridor, parts of which are currently under water.

*Wet woodland directly adjacent River Gipping*

*Inundated woodland on floodplain*

5.5.6.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect Wet woodland Priority Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural

- Changes in the flow patterns in the land drainage systems causing changes to woodland hydrology;
- Inappropriate management causing changes in the structure and flora, leading to poor regeneration and changes in the floristic diversity;
- Poor water quality leading to changes in the flora and invertebrate communities;
- Colonisation of the woodland by non-native species, for example Himalayan balsam;
- Direct loss of the habitat through a change to other land uses;
- Climate change may have a significant impact on the hydrology and biology of these woods.

**5.5.7 Rivers and Streams**

5.5.7.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

During a 2007 national review of BAP Habitats and species by Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) it was considered appropriate to create a new BAP specifically for rivers. The criteria for a Rivers BAP were published by JNCC in July 2010 and include:

- Headwater reaches;
- Presence of specific vegetation communities;
- Chalk rivers;
- Active shingle rivers;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest designated for riverine features or species;
- Presence of priority BAP (Priority) Species or other indicator species.

Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership is currently in the process of drawing up a rationale, criteria and management prescriptions for rivers in Suffolk identified as Priority Habitat.

5.5.7.2 Rivers and Streams Priority Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural

*River Gipping looking south, with recent restoration works along the banks*

Although the first five criteria above do not apply to the River Gipping, comparison between the list of Suffolk Priority Species and records for Claydon and Whitton Rural held by Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service shows the presence of otter and water vole recorded along the river channels. Various bat species are also recorded in the parish and will most likely feed along the wooded margins of river channels, particularly the species which tend to be associated with river valleys such as Daubenton's bat and soprano pipistrelle. It is also designated as a County Wildlife Site and is probably the most prominent landscape feature of the parish.

5.5.7.3 Activities and developments that could affect the Rivers and Streams Priority Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural

Inappropriate management of and adverse events within the river channel would include:

- Extensive dredging or channel re-alignment;
- Passage of major infrastructure schemes without mitigation of effects;
- Extensive removal of bankside trees;
- Severe point source pollution events.

## 5.6 Suffolk Priority Species in Claydon and Whitton Rural

Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service has provided records of species within the Parish. Those that are listed as protected or Priority species are as follows:

Mammals: Bats including soprano pipistrelle, pipistrelle spp, Natterer's, Daubenton's, noctule and serotine. There are a number of hedgehog records for the urban areas and brown hare records for the arable farmland. Additionally, water vole and otter have been recorded along the River

Gipping. N.B. Badger is also recorded and whilst is not a Priority species, it is protected under its own specific legislation. Many of these records are associated with road deaths on the A14, but there is a fairly even spread across the parish also.

Claydon is known to host a bat hibernation roost, with records of Daubenton's, Natterer's and brown long-eared bats using it. In recent years it has partially collapsed, making survey difficult, but it is still accessible to bats for roosting purposes.

Birds: A number of Red List and Amber List Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) have been recorded, most of which are also Priority Species.

Key species likely to be associated with woodland, hedgerows, scrub and farmland include yellowhammer, skylark, linnet, dunnock, and bullfinch. There are also records of the exceedingly rare turtle dove. The species also associated with settlements include starling, song thrush and house sparrow. Spotted flycatcher and ring ouzel are also recorded.

Various birds are associated with riverine habitats including herring gull, hen harrier, curlew, lapwing, marsh tit, reed bunting and cuckoo.

Swift and barn owl are also recorded and are Suffolk Priority Species. Swift is classed as Endangered as a GB breeding bird according to International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria. Barn owl is listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Invertebrates including wall and small heath butterflies, the micro-moth horehound long-horn and stag beetle have been recorded.

Five amphibian and reptile species have been recorded in the parish: Common lizard, grass snake, slow worm, great crested newt and common toad.

European eels have also been recorded using the River Gipping.

In addition, two rare plant species have been recorded: tower mustard and wild clary.

## 5.7 Built Environment and Associated Habitats

### 5.7.1 General description of this habitat in the context of Suffolk

This habitat refers broadly to the wide range of structures, materials and microhabitats found in the built environment, including (though not exclusively) farm buildings, houses, gardens, allotments and waste land. These built-up areas, gardens and associated spaces can form a significant proportion of the land use within a settlement, but still provide a wide range of habitats with significant biodiversity value. All provide opportunities and in some case refuges for a wide range of species to complete their life cycles.

The conservation importance of the built environment and its associated habitats also lies as much in the opportunities they provide for people to have close contact with wildlife as in the protection of common and scarcer species. Becoming familiar with the wildlife in a garden often stimulates interest in species and habitats within the wider countryside.

**5.7.2 Built Environment Habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural**

The name Claydon comes from 'Clay-on-the-hill'. According to Heritage Suffolk [16], the earliest record for Claydon is the rectory from 1254, and in 1327 the first population was recorded when village gave its name to the hundred 'Bosmere-and-Claydon'. The main settlement of Claydon is around the north-western corner, where it joins directly to Barham parish, but there are scattered farm steadings throughout. There are two public houses, and a number of food take-away shops within the village as well as a number of small shops associated with the main street.

The Church of St Peter is a Grade I Listed building dating back to pre-Norman times with parts built in the 10th and 11th Centuries, and several further additions and restorations over the centuries. There are a further fifteen Grade II or Grade II* Listed structures in Claydon and Whitton Rural, thirteen of which are buildings including Mockbeggars Hall, Lime Kiln House and Claydon Hall; and two structures associated with Lime Kiln House (lime kiln and wall).

The eponymous papermill was functioning in the 19th century but was joined by the world's first purpose-built superphosphate fertiliser factory in 1851 and in 1858 by Joseph Fison's Eastern Union Works.

*Grade I Listed, Church of St Peter, Claydon with churchyard*

**5.7.3 Activities and developments that could affect this habitat in Claydon and Whitton Rural**

Rather than note adverse actions, there is a wide range of information and websites generally available on wildlife gardening. Some of the positive actions than individual gardeners can consider include:

- Creating ponds and mini wildflower meadows;
- Putting up swift boxes on buildings;
- Creating hedgehog highways between gardens;
- Composting and creating deadwood areas;
- Harvesting rainwater;
- Avoiding garden chemicals.

## 5.8 Ecological Networks and Connectivity

**5.8.1 The significance of ecological networks and connectivity**

Maintaining and improving connectivity between habitats is important in ensuring the longer-term survival of biodiversity in an increasingly fragmented landscape and with a changing climate.

An ecological network is the basic natural infrastructure that enables biodiversity assets (both habitats and species) to become re-established if damaged or in decline and become resilient to the impacts of climate change. Integrated with the natural cycling of water, soil and nutrients, biodiversity provides what are increasingly recognised as vital 'ecosystem services'. These services are not only of intrinsic of social and economic value but will create social and economic problems if they fall too far into deficit.

The major components of an ecological network can be identified as:

- Core Areas: existing areas/features/resources of importance for biodiversity
- Corridors: existing linear features providing structural connectivity between Core Areas and into the wider landscape
- Stepping Stones: existing habitat patches providing functional connectivity between Core Areas and into the wider landscape
- Restoration Areas: areas/features/resources with the potential to become future Core Areas, or to improve connectivity, if they are enhanced or restored
- Buffer zones: can be included around all these elements to lessen the likelihood of direct or indirect impacts upon them

As already noted, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 states that Plans should take a strategic approach to biodiversity. It includes a range of requirements to conserve and enhance the natural environment, among them requiring Local Plans (and by association Neighbourhood Plans) to: '…promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species.' Consequently, it is essential that decision makers have access to high quality ecological advice in order to meet these requirements.

In addition, Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystems services also features a number of Priority Actions, including to 'establish more coherent and resilient ecological networks on land that safeguards ecosystem services for the benefit of wildlife and people'.

### 5.8.2 Ecological networks in Claydon and Whitton Rural

The principal ecological network in the parish is along the River Gipping and its associated habitats. The river demarcates the western boundary of the parish wet woodland along much of the length. The river is lined with continuous riparian habitat to the north, and to the south-east until it reaches the centre of Ipswich town.

Although much of the land throughout the remainder of the parish is in intensive arable production, the network of hedgerows and woodland blocks also provide local habitat connectivity. The A14 also has some semi-natural habitat along its length.

## 5.9 The significance of wildlife and ecological assets for the Neighbourhood Plan

Claydon and Whitton Rural parish contains 1 County Wildlife Site and 2 Roadside Nature Reserves. In addition to the above, six Priority habitats have been identified within the parish.

These habitats support a range species including 41 protected and/or Priority species (2 amphibians, 1 fish, 3 reptiles, 20 birds, 11 mammals and 4 invertebrates). In addition, two Suffolk Rare Plants were recorded.

Development Management guidance for any new developments within the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan should seek to protect existing ecological assets and restore, enhance and reconnect the ecological network.

## 6. References


1. https://www.ukcensusdata.com/claydon-and-barham-e05007137#sthash.hK30btaa.dpbs [Accessed 4th March 2021]
2. https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/eastofengland/suffolk/E35000054__claydon/ [Accessed 3rd March 2021}]
3. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted [Accessed 4th June 2020]
4. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2 [Accessed 14th September 2020]
5. https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/adopted-documents/mid-suffolk-district-council/ [Accessed 23rd February 2021]
6. https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/new-joint-local-plan/joint-local-plan-r19-pre-submission/ [Accessed 23rd February 2021]
7. Cadcorp Web Map Layers (midsuffolk.gov.uk) [Accessed 28th June 2021]
8. https://www.babergh.gov.uk/assets/Strategic-Planning/Current-Evidence-Base/Joint-Landscape-Guidance-Aug-2015.pdf [Accessed 23rd February 2021]
9. http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/ [Accessed 18th February 2021]
10. https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=S1004523&SiteName=laken&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea= [Accessed 10th March 2021]
11. https://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/countywildlifesites [Accessed 3rd March 2021]
12. http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/biodiversity/speciesandhabitats [Accessed 3rd March 2021]
13. Magic Map Application (defra.gov.uk) [Accessed 18th February 2021]
14. Suffolk Hedgerow Survey 1998-2012, Guy Ackers, Suffolk Coastal District Council Greenprint Forum, 2012
15. Sibbett, N. (1999) The Distribution and Abundance of Ponds in Suffolk. No. 333 English Nature Reports. English Nature, Peterborough.
16. https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/media/pdfs/claydon.pdf [Accessed 1st July 2021]