

# **Marton Parish Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment**

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The contents of this document have been prepared by:

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with advice and support by:

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# MARTON PARISH LANDSCAPE & SETTLEMENT CHARACTER ASSESSMENT 2015 (UPDATED 2020)

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Typical view of farmland in Marton

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## INTRODUCTION

This review of the landscape and settlement form of Marton has been conducted as part of the development of the Marton Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) during the course of 2015.

The study covers the area of the Plan (the Area) as agreed with Cheshire East. This Area coincides with the parish boundaries of the village of Marton and is clearly demarcated on drawing 015-019-P001.

The intention and purpose of this document is to understand the landscape character of Marton, and to identify the combination of elements and features that contribute to the character of Marton.

A localised baseline appraisal has been undertaken in a number of stages:

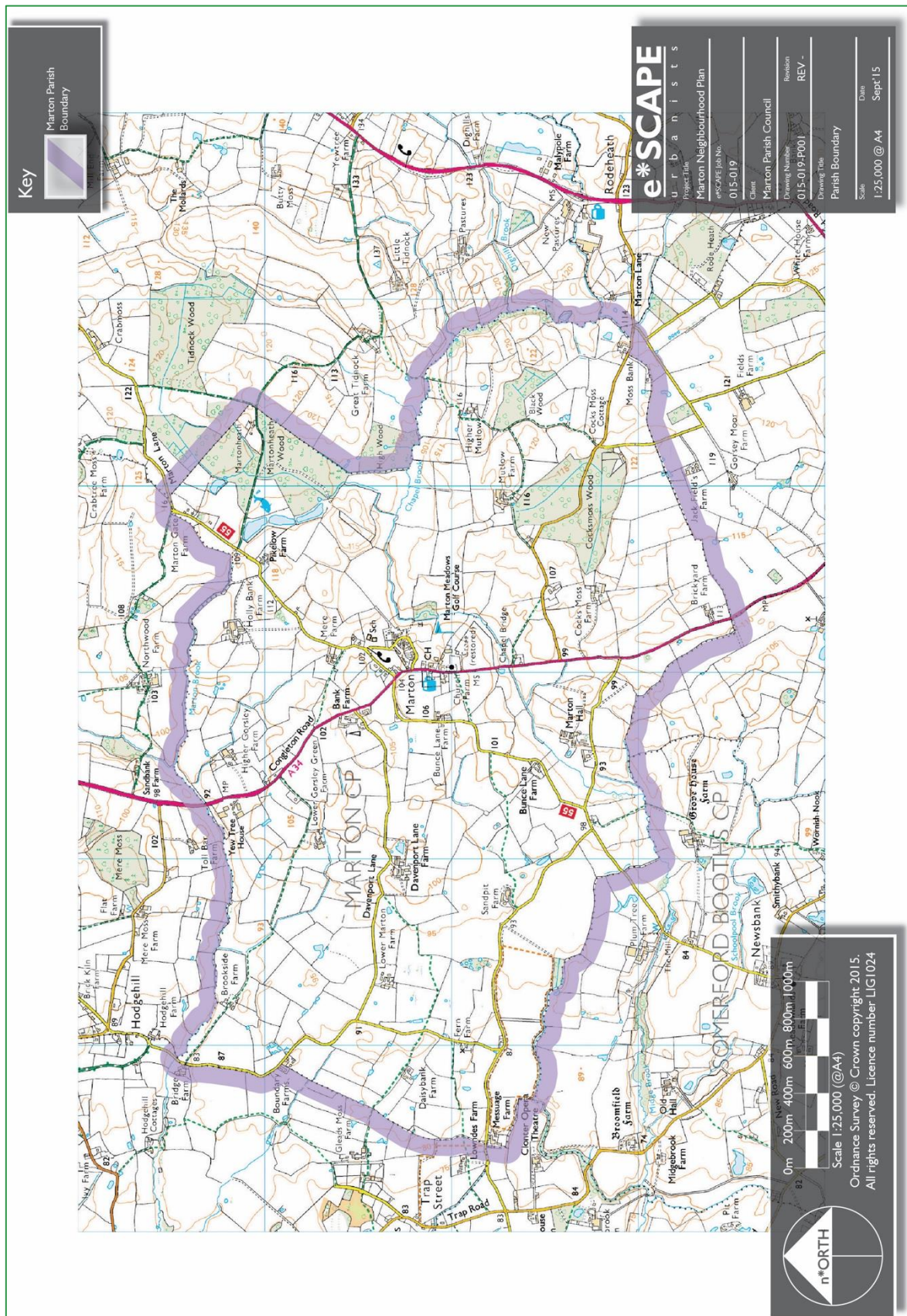
- A desk-based study, reviewing the material available on the internet from Cheshire East, from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and from Natural England
- A series of walks around the parish, recorded with photographs and written up by local residents
- Consideration of threats or implications of change on the landscape, and therefore the development of a series of recommendations that have been used to inform the Plan
- Classifying and mapping the landscape's character areas, including
  - Topographical features
  - A snapshot of the flora and fauna living in the area
  - An outline of the land use
  - An indication of the cultural associations with the landscape
- Consideration of threats or implications of change on the landscape, and therefore the development of a series of recommendations that have been used to inform the Plan
- Additional professional advice offered by e\*SCAPE urbanists & PGLA Landscape Architecture.

As the Parish is primarily a rural landscape with the village of Marton roughly at its centre, e\*SCAPE Urbanists and PGLA developed the additional baseline assessment work addressing both the rural landscape character and the villages specific 'Sense of Place' or 'Genius loci', hence this report's title 'Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment'. To that end, this report deals with the wider landscape character and the various levels of character assessment (national and local) that address that overarching subject and then focuses in on the village itself and assesses the physical elements of the village, their disposition and form, that all come together to create its character and sense of place.

In essence 'sense of place' is about an emotional response to a place, urban or rural and whilst it is hard to quantify in general, the physical features combine to evoke a response, positive or negative. The approach to writing the Settlement Assessment is in line with the approach taken in the development of the Settlement Character Assessments as used in 'Volume 1: Setting the Scene of Cheshire East' of the 'Cheshire East Borough Design Guide', adopted 2nd May 2017 and therefore is a robust approach to assessing character relating specifically to the village of Marton.

The village itself cannot be assessed using either the national or local landscape character assessment, as they are both too general to appreciate and understand the intrinsic and unique qualities of a village the size of Marton.

The intention of this document therefore is to describe the landscape and settlement of Marton, and to identify the combination of elements and features that are unique to the parish.





While we have included some photographs taken at an earlier date, to show different seasons, the bulk of this work was done in July and August 2015 in good weather conditions. Because Marton is a rural agricultural parish, the changing seasons will affect the appearance of the landscape.



Marton Oak Tree – Image credit John Beresford.

Ancient tree: one of 50 Great Trees in the country. Est. 1200 years old.

## POLICY CONTEXT

At a national level, the landscape is recognised to be an important asset, and this is promoted by public bodies such as Natural England and English Heritage as well as being set out in planning policy.

The government signed up to the European Landscape Convention in 2007. This convention defines landscape as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (Council of Europe, 2000).

The Localism Act says that local communities can develop Neighbourhood Plans with a view to determining locally based guidance on where development can go and what it should look like. This landscape character assessment will be used to inform the developing Marton Neighbourhood Plan, and will form part of the evidence base for the Plan.



The development of this assessment has been community led, which is in line with government policy and was supported by highly experienced consultants, who have assisted in developing a robust baseline that is supported by the wider community.

Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in line with both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Cheshire East Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans as a spatial planning tool have now been further embedded in the latest NPPF (February 2019) and is an intrinsic part of the plan making process at a non-strategic level.

The NPPF states that:

“28. Non-strategic policies should be used by local planning authorities and communities to set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development. This can include allocating sites, the provision of infrastructure and community facilities at a local level, establishing design principles, conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment and setting out other development management policies.

29. Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies<sup>16</sup>.

30. Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict; unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently.”

Cheshire East Council’s Adopted Local Plan Strategy (27<sup>th</sup> July 2017) reiterates the need for planning applications to accord with relevant policies in Neighbourhood Plans (Policy MP1) and as justified in Para 7.8:

“Should Neighbourhood Plans be produced in the borough (in conformity with the contents of the Local Plan Strategy) then their policies will also be relevant.”

Good Design is now at the forefront of government and local plan policy making with the current NPPF also strengthening policies relating to what constitutes good design as set out generally in Chapter 12 and as quoted below:

“124. The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.”

In addition to the NPPF Design Policies the government has recently published the National Design Guide (October 2019) and states that:

“The long-standing, fundamental principles for good design are that it is: fit for purpose; durable; and brings delight. It is relatively straightforward to define and assess these qualities for a building. We can identify its activities and users, the quality of detail, materials, construction and its potential flexibility. We can also make judgements about its beauty.

A place is more complex and multi-faceted than a building:

- it is a setting for a diverse range of uses and activities, and is experienced by many people in many different ways
- it is made up of buildings, and also landscape and infrastructure, which are likely to endure longer than the buildings themselves
- most places evolve over a long period of time once they have been established, with many incremental changes that can affect their quality
- the quality of ‘delight’ includes a richness of experience gained from all of our senses, not only the visual and
- beauty in a place may range from a long view down to the detail of a building or landscape.”

It also states:

“The underlying purpose for design quality and the quality of new development at all scales is to create well-designed and well-built places that benefit people and communities.”

“The National Design Guide addresses the question of how we recognise well-designed places, by outlining and illustrating the Government’s priorities for well-designed places in the form of ten characteristics.”

A diagram extracted from the NDG illustrating these 10 characteristics is illustrated below for reference.



Indeed Cheshire East Council has promoted good design for a number of years prior to the publication of the National Design Guide with their own adopted SPD; The Cheshire East Borough Design Guide (Adopted 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017). This document predates the National Design Guide and whilst it was prepared before the NDG was published fully accords with it and drills down to a more detailed and locally contextual response to what constitutes good design at the local level.

Marton is a rural, agricultural village, where the landscape has been influenced over many hundreds of years by the work of the agricultural community. It contains historic listed buildings, notably the ancient church, and a notable ancient tree.

The landscape character of Marton is clearly the result of the interaction of people with the natural landscape over centuries.

Locally contextual design is therefore key for any developments proposed in Marton and this baseline assessment constitutes the foundations on which the Neighbourhood Plan design and spatial plan policies has been based.



## EXISTING PUBLISHED CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

### NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Natural England is reviewing all national level character assessments, NCA's. The parish of Marton falls within national character area 61 Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain:

*"The Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain National Character Area (NCA) comprises most of the county of Cheshire, the northern half of Shropshire and a large part of north-west Staffordshire. This is an expanse of flat or gently undulating, lush, pastoral farmland, which is bounded by the Mersey Valley NCA in the north, with its urban and industrial development, and extending to the rural Shropshire Hills NCA in the south. To the west, it is bounded by the hills of the Welsh borders and to the east and south-east by the urban areas within the Potteries and Churnet Valley, Needwood and South Derbyshire Claylands, and Cannock Chase and Cank Wood NCAs.*

*A series of small sandstone ridges cut across the plain and are very prominent features within this open landscape. The Mid-Cheshire Ridge, the Maer and the Hanchurch Hills are the most significant. They are characterised by steep sides and woodland is often ancient semi-natural woodland which is notably absent from the plain, except around Northwich."*

*"The landscape character of the plain owes much to its glacial origins. A thick layer of glacial till covers the lower slopes of the ridge and the surrounding plain, and is punctuated by numerous ponds and meres."*

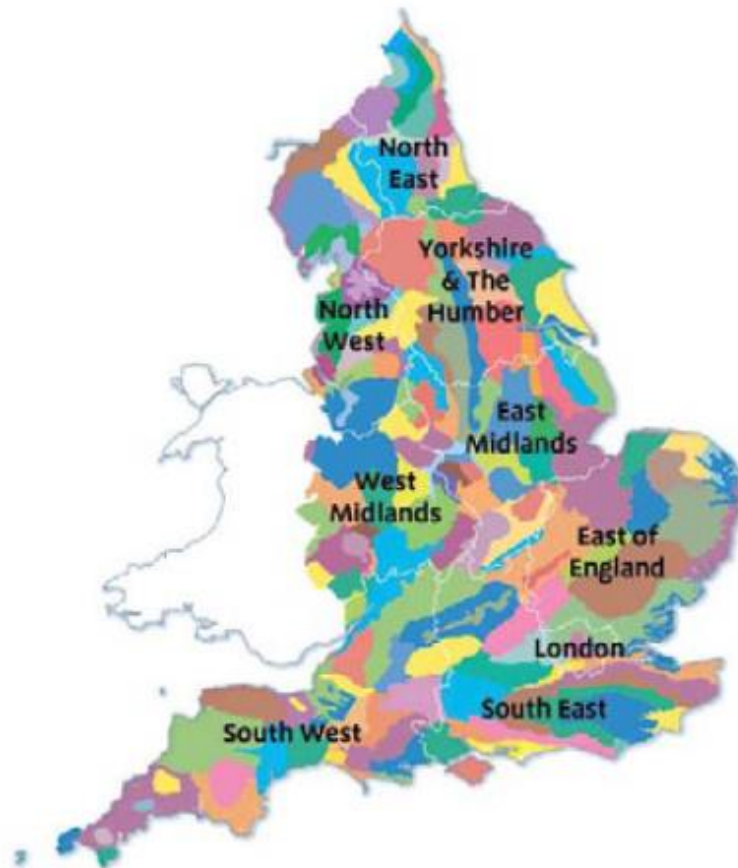
*"Throughout the plain, the water retention and fertility of the clay soils support lush pastures for grazing dairy cattle."*



Typical view of cattle grazing

*From: National Character Area 61: Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain*

## National Character Areas map



<sup>1</sup> The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature, Defra

(2011; URL: [www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf](http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf))

<sup>2</sup> Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, Defra (2011; URL:

[www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020-111111.pdf))

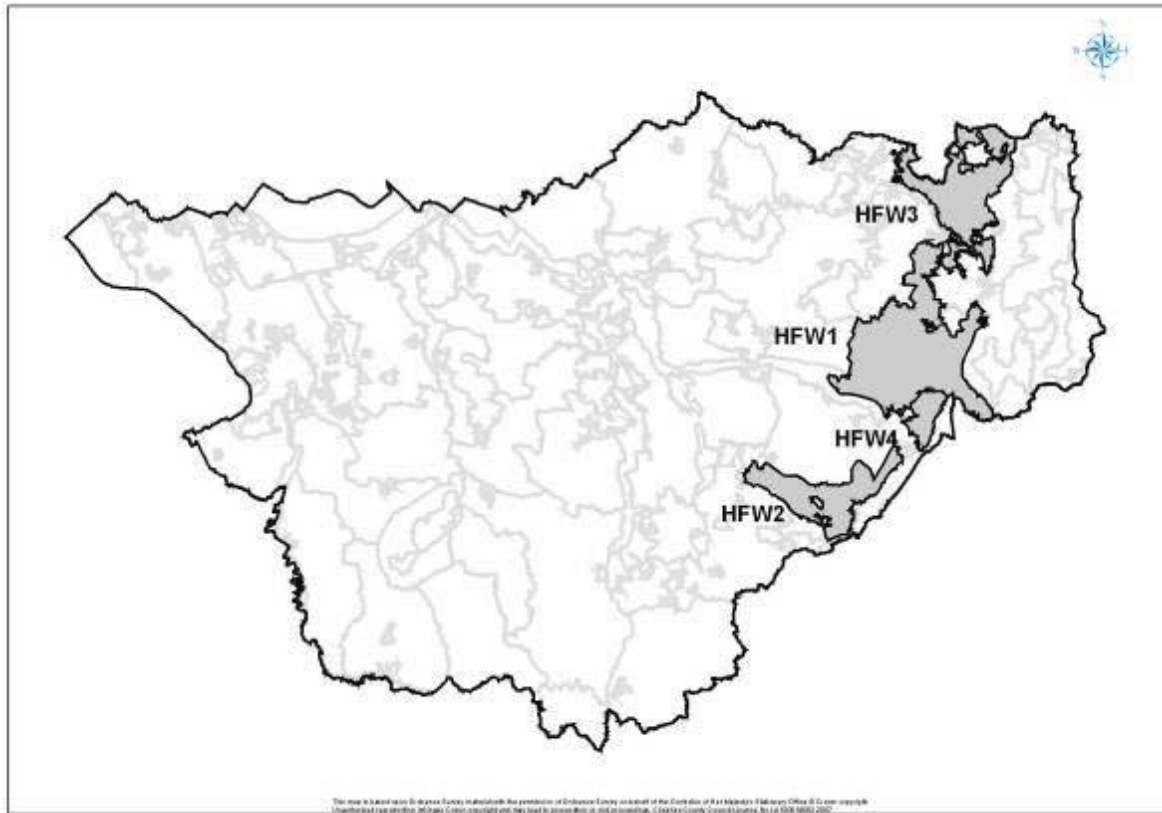
<sup>3</sup> European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe

(2000; URL: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm>)

## 11







*From: Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment (November 2008)*



Arable crop with copse of trees

## LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment (November 2008) classified the area in which Marton sits (HFW1) as 'Higher Undulating Farms and Woods'.

The characteristics of this landscape type have been identified as:

- Gentle rolling and moderate undulating topography
- A mix of medieval and post-medieval reorganised fields (irregular, semi-regular and regular up to 8ha)
- Hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees
- High density of woodland – blocks, coverts and riparian
- Predominantly low density dispersed settlement.
- Ponds
- Small mossland areas

*"This undulating character type has a rural nature, which is defined by a higher than average density of woodland compared with much of Cheshire...."*

*Land use is a mix of arable and pasture, while settlement largely retains its dispersed low density pattern. Intensive reorganisation during the post-medieval period saw the breakup of medieval field patterns. Small surviving mosses are typical in most areas, as are ponds.*

*Many areas have a very rural character with small, winding country lanes rising and falling over the undulating ground."*

Specifically, the Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment states of the area of Marton:

*"The landform in this character area gently undulates in the vicinity of Marton ... This is a medium-large scale landscape where the adjacent high ground is visually dominant, and the distinctive landmarks of the Croker Hill telecommunication mast and The Cloud feature in most eastern views.*

*Fields are mainly post-medieval in date and are typical of agricultural improvement. ...The fields are small (up to 8ha) with some medium and large (4-8, over 8ha). The larger and more regular fields are typical of modern changes to the field pattern."*

It further states that the major road in the area is the A34 *"but away from the major highways, and the urban influence of Macclesfield and Congleton, the character is very rural and even remote.*

*... settlement has a low density and mainly comprises dispersed farms connected by narrow country roads which rise and fall with the rolling landform.*

*Overall this area has one of the highest concentrations of woodland in the county, including some of the largest blocks – Tidnocks, Marton Heath and Cocks Moss are all SBIs and comprise mainly broadleaves with some conifers located on drained mossland. Typical species are birch with rowan and occasional aspen and alder buckthorn."*

Marton Heath and Cocks Moss woods both fall within the Area (Tidnocks adjoins the Area).

An SBI is a Site of Biological Importance: a site identified by the Cheshire Conservation Trust as being of wildlife interest. SBI sites are graded:

- A: very high wildlife importance
- B: high wildlife interest
- C: wildlife interest

In Marton:

- Tidnock Wood is graded A
- Cocks Moss Wood is graded B
- Marton Heath is graded C.

These woods are protected by Policy SE3 in Cheshire East Council's Adopted Local Plan Strategy:

SE3 - 4: Development proposals which are likely to have a significant adverse impact on a site with one or more of the following local or regional designations, habitats or species will not be permitted except where the reasons for or benefits of the proposed development outweigh the impact of the development:

ii. Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) or Local Wildlife Sites

The justification of the policy states:

"The designation of international, national and local sites is an on-going process, therefore the above policy will equally apply to any sites selected or designated subsequently to the adoption of the Local Plan. Conversely, the policy will not apply to any site de-selected after the adoption of the Local Plan. Sites of Biological Importance are being resurveyed; they will then be designated as Local Wildlife Sites. At the time of producing this document, there are therefore sites that are designated as Sites of Biological Importance (which have yet to be resurveyed) and sites that are designated as Local Wildlife Sites (which have been resurveyed.)"

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## OTHER DESIGNATIONS

The village of Marton does not attract any specific landscape designations such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Special Landscape Area or Green Gap (Strategic Open Gaps).

Although Marton contains a high number of listed buildings, an ancient tree, and several other trees with preservation orders, it does not contain or form part of any designated conservation area.



## MARTON PARISH RESIDENTS – LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL OF THE VILLAGE AND COUNTRYSIDE

The Area is small, and consists of three main character areas: fields, woods and the village itself.

### FIELDS

- Open fields with extensive hedgerows along the boundaries, some including native and protected species of flower. Trees are incorporated into the hedgerows, and there are also stands of trees.
- There are views across the Cheshire Plain to the hills, and from the edges of the Area back towards the Church, which is visible across the fields in many places.
- The fields are typically used for grazing cattle and sheep, with a few horse paddocks.
- Away from the A34, this is a predominantly tranquil area, with only a few very minor single track roads and scattered farmhouses and other farm buildings.

### WOODLANDS, TREES AND HEDGEROWS

Woodlands in Marton are typical deciduous Cheshire woodlands.

Many of the field boundaries comprise hedgerows and mature trees. There are long-distance views, often many miles beyond the parish boundaries.

Some of the hedgerows meet the criteria of ‘important’ hedgerow in that they:

- Contain a protected species of native bluebell
- Are over 20m in length
- Are on land used for agriculture
- Are over 30 years old
- Incorporate 4 woody species
- Have less than 10% of gaps
- Are adjacent to a road used as a public path.

There are many trees in Marton, and the Parish Council has an annual tree planting scheme to fill gaps in hedgerows.

Trees and wooded areas in Marton include:

- Individual trees and copses in fields
- Full-sized trees in hedgerows
- The Marton Oak (an ancient tree, and one of the 50 Great Trees in the UK)
- The newly planted village orchard
- Three woodland areas:
  - Marton Heath Wood
  - Cocks Moss Wood
  - Black Wood.

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## VILLAGE

- Most dwellings in the village are scattered across the landscape, but in the core of the village there are around 50 houses, the church, a primary school and a small courtyard containing a restaurant, a café and other small retail outlets. There is also a golf course in the centre of the village.
- The A34 runs through the village, and traffic is restricted to 30mph in the core of the village. For the most part this road has no pavement, and where there is pavement, it is narrow. However, in the middle of the village, the verge widens to a grassy area where the Parish Council has created a Millennium circle and a village orchard.
- There are a high proportion of listed buildings in the core of the village, including the Grade 1 listed church and several private houses, three of which are black-and-white timbered cottages.
- The traditional density of the village is low at between 5 and 15 homes per hectare with properties set into well wooded grounds and separated/interspersed with paddocks and small field enclosures.
- The size of houses in the village has grown slowly over time, though the population has declined:
  - In 1954, water was brought to the village, and 14 council houses were built, creating Oak Lane
  - In 1968, 6 old people's bungalows were built in Oak View
  - In the 1980s Oak View was extended by adding 9 social housing dwellings.
- Since then there has been some conversion of farmhouses and outbuildings for residential and business use
- Most houses in the village are built of brick
- School Lane, Oak Lane/Oak View and the A34 form a triangle, with a field in the middle used to graze cattle or sheep.



View from corner of A34 and School Lane of Greenacre (listed)



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## VISUAL AMENITY

Drawing 015-019-P008 (see overleaf) identifies the location of key views that can be found within the village and in the surrounding landscape. In addition to longer range views drawings 015-019-P007 and P009 illustrated later in this assessment indicate views specific to the village itself, both longer range views and local views within the settlement. The supporting photographs show that the village has a number of locations which capture long range views to important landscape features such as Gawsworth Common, Bosley Cloud and the folly of Mow Cop Castle. At close quarters the Church of St James and St Paul is visible from the lanes and public footpaths in the vicinity of the village core as illustrated in drawing 015-019-P007. The views illustrate how the rural countryside provide an appropriate and historic setting to the heritage asset that the church provides and ranges from views of the full façade or limited to just the spire.

Important views can be categorised into those within the village core and those that are experienced in the surrounding countryside. The following is a general overview of the visual amenity.

Viewpoints 1-3 illustrate the views out to the east and south from the vicinity of the Church of St James and St Paul. These views include a panorama that captures Gawsworth Common, the Bosley Cloud and even Mow Cop when viewed from the A34.

Viewpoints 4 and 5 are in the vicinity of Bunce Lane and illustrate that the steeple of the Church is experienced on the adjacent public footpath. This is important in terms of the setting of the Listed Building.

Viewpoints 6-9 illustrate the quality and character of the surrounding landscape to the north of the village and here views of Gawsworth Common to the east are experienced in localised places such as openings to the hedgerows for access into fields.

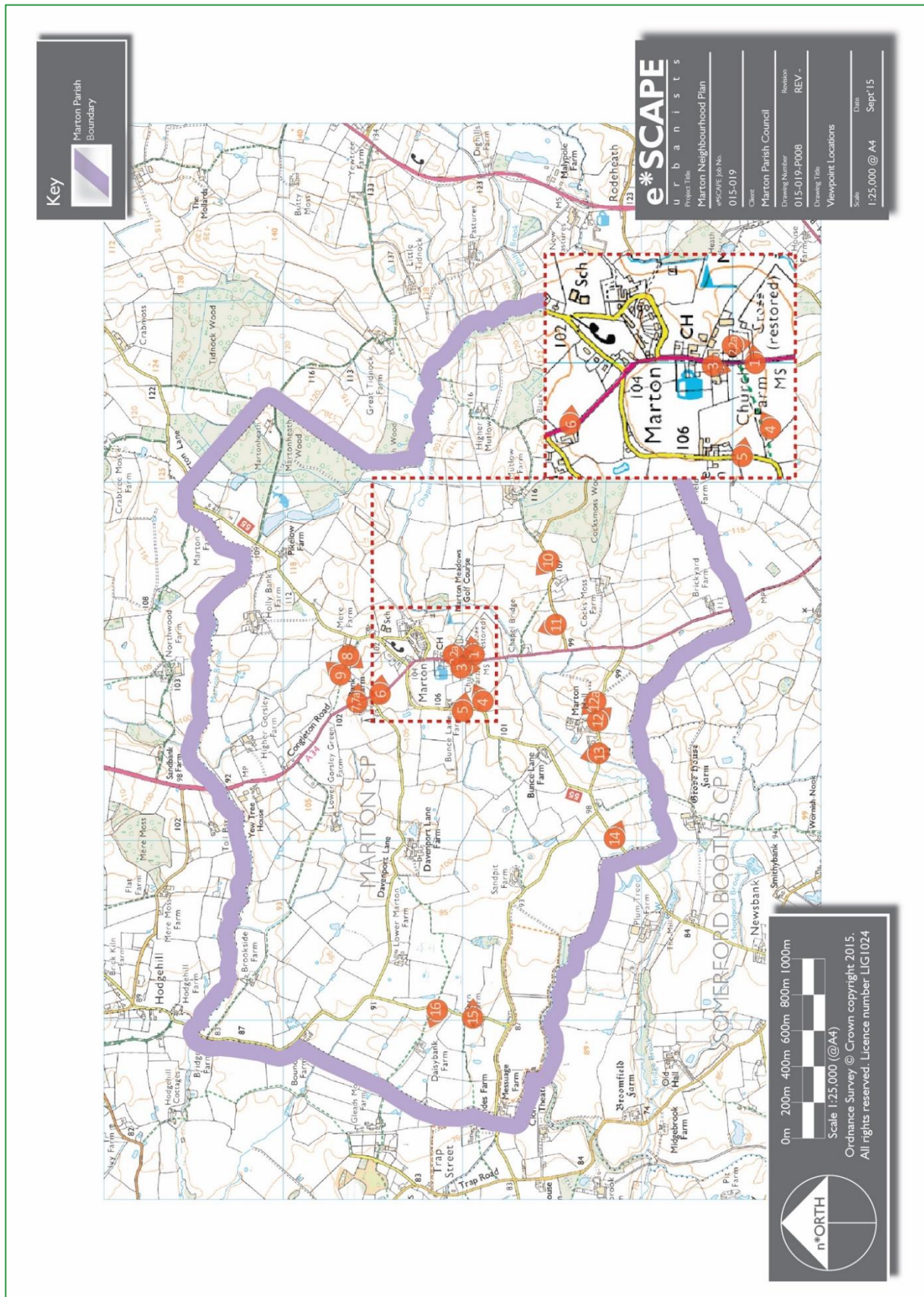
Viewpoints 10 and 11 are located on Cocks Moss Lane and are particularly significant in terms of the setting of the Church of St James and St Paul.

Viewpoints 12-14 are located south of the village on Marton Hall Lane and capture the character of the landscape in and around Marton Hall. Jodrell Bank can be seen when looking north as well as glimpses of Gawsworth Common to the east. Marton Hall is set within a parkland landscape as illustrated in Viewpoint 12a.

Viewpoints 15 and 16 are located to the west of the parish boundary on Hodgehill Lane and capture long range views to the east and south. The typical parkland tree lined avenue leading to Daisy Bank Farm is illustrated in Viewpoint 16 and captures the character of the surrounding parkland landscape.

As stated above the more localised views within the village, as illustrated in 015-019-P007 aid in creating the villages key ‘sense of place’ or ‘Genus Loci’ and include:

- Local views from School lane to Mere Farm.
- Local views from School Lane to the rear of Oak View across a paddock containing a mature Sycamore tree.
- Local views from Congleton Road across fields to School Lane and Bunce Lane.



Map 2: Viewpoint Locations





Viewpoint 1.



Viewpoint 2.



Viewpoint 2a.





Viewpoint 3.



Viewpoint 4.





Viewpoint 5.



Viewpoint 6.



Viewpoint 7.





Viewpoint 7a.



Viewpoint 8.



Viewpoint 9.





Viewpoint 10.



Viewpoint 11.





Viewpoint 12.



Viewpoint 12a



Viewpoint 13.





Viewpoint 14.



Viewpoint 15.



Viewpoint 16.



## MARTON PARISH ASSESSMENT

### PARISH OVERVIEW

Marton is a small rural village and lies within Cheshire East, south-west of Macclesfield and north of Congleton.

The parish of Marton consists of a predominantly agricultural landscape of between 4 and 5 square miles, with a number of scattered farms and a group of dwellings in the centre as illustrated in the map diagram overleaf.

The population of fewer than 250 people mostly reside within the village core with the remainder living in the outlying areas.

Historically, Marton was a rural community comprising of farmlands whose produce supplied the markets of Macclesfield and Congleton. In more recent times the population has decreased with many now commuting to work elsewhere or retired from work, though the proportion of people working in agriculture remains unusually higher (comparison with figures for rural areas UK-wide).

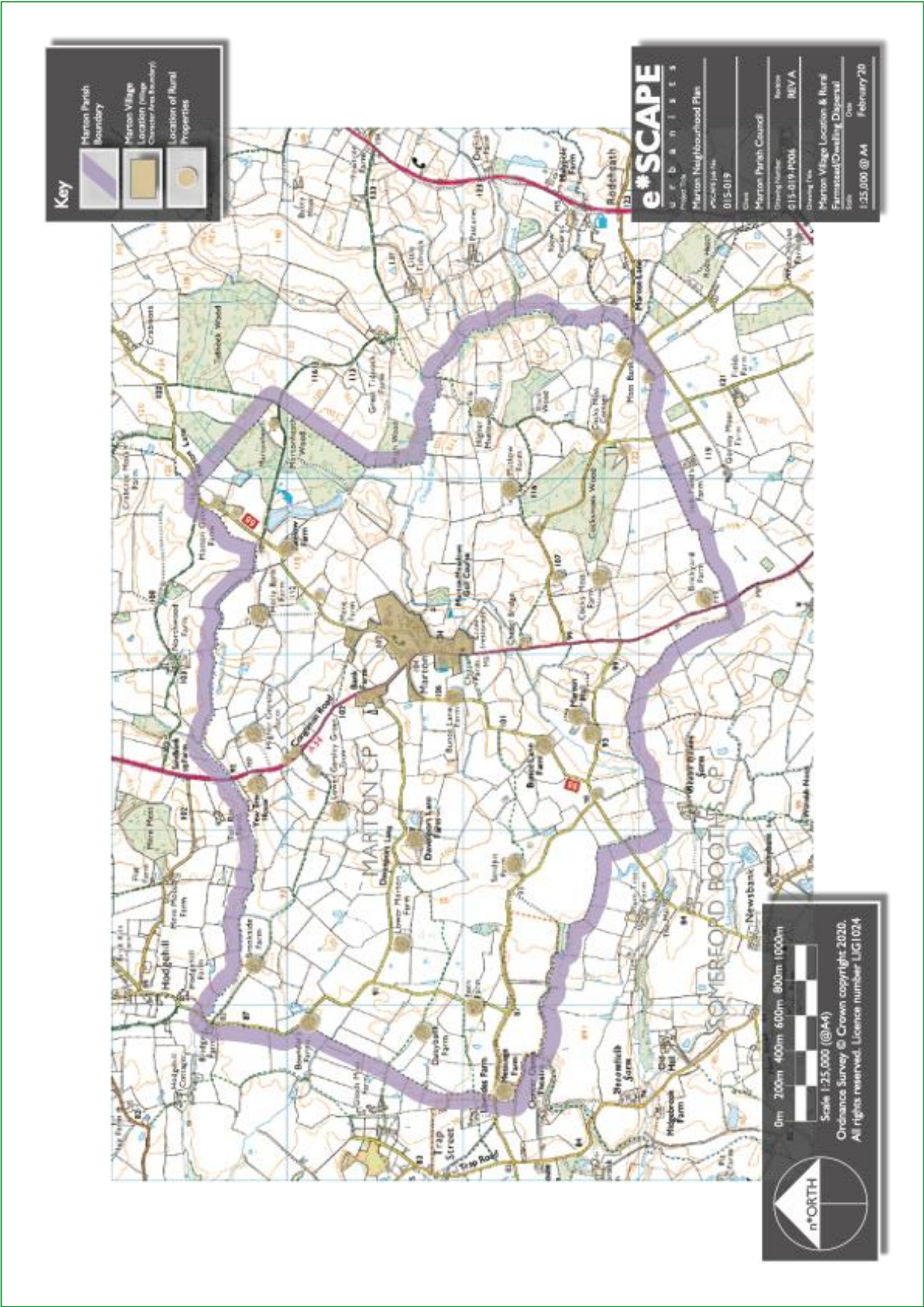
Marton contains a number of ancient listed buildings, the most important being the 14<sup>th</sup> century timber framed church of St James and St Paul, founded in 1343. It has a wood shingled bell-tower, and black and white half-timbering; it is one of the ancient timber-framed churches of Cheshire, and considered one of the oldest longitudinal timber churches of Europe.

The village also contains a single-entry Church of England aided primary school serving six surrounding villages and north Congleton. This school was established over 40 years ago, when the village schools in seven villages were closed and amalgamated on the site in Marton.

In the centre of the village are a restaurant, café, pub, other small retail outlets, plus a 9-hole par 3 golf course; and, nearby, a series of trout pools that serve the fishing community. The pub, the Davenport Arms, dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

There are no rail or bus services within the village or from the village travelling to local towns, and apart from the A34, which is a major A road connecting Manchester and Southampton, the road network comprises rural single-track lanes. There is also a network of footpaths and bridleways, and the area is popular with cyclists and horse-riders.

Another notable feature is the Marton Oak which is listed among the 50 most important trees in the country. It is estimated to be at least 1200 years old.



Map 3: Marton Village Location & Rural Farmstead/Dwelling Dispersal

## SETTLEMENT – VILLAGE EVOLUTION & FORM

The village of Marton lies in virtually the centre of the Parish of the same name. The settlement straddles the A34 Congleton Road and appears to have grown up around the crossroads of the Congleton Road with School and Bunce Lanes.

The village has a long history and is listed in the Domesday Book as 'Meretune', which by 1248 had become 'Merton'. The meaning is 'the tun (homestead) by a lake'. The settlement was named after Marton Mere, which has now been drained and used as a field, which is subject to seasonal waterlogging and attracts a wide range of birds.

The population has declined over the years (with a recent upsurge), though the number of dwellings has grown slowly over time, notably in about 1954, when 14 council houses were built on Oak Lane (and later mostly sold into private ownership) and then again in 1968 when 6 bungalows were built in Oak View and again in the 1980s when 9 social housing dwellings were added in Oak View.

Year	1801	1851	1871	1901	1951	2011
Population	310	313	296	289	227	245

Whilst the village is small in size it takes on the form of a dispersed radial settlement, focussed around the junction, with the majority of the built form to the east of the main road arranged mainly around two village lanes: School Lane and Oak Lane.

Marton contains a number of ancient listed buildings as listed below and located over page, the most important being the 14<sup>th</sup> century timber framed church of St James and St Paul. Founded in 1343 by local landowner Sir John de Davenport, it was originally a chapel, and was raised to the status of parish church in 1370. It has a wood shingled bell-tower, and black and white half-timbering; it is one of the ancient timber-framed churches of Cheshire, and considered one of the oldest longitudinal timber churches of Europe.

Listed buildings in Marton include:

Grade I:  - Buildings of exceptional interest, sometimes considered to be internationally important. Only 2.5% of listed buildings are Grade 1	1.Church of St James and St Paul
Grade II*	<none>
Grade II :  - Buildings that are nationally important, and of special interest.	2.Cross in churchyard of St James and St Paul
	3.Cherry Tree Cottage
	4.Lower Gorsley Green Farmhouse
	5.Greenacre
	6.Holly Bank Farm
	7.Lower Marton Farmhouse
	8.Oak Cottage
	9.Oak Farm
	10.Pump Cottage

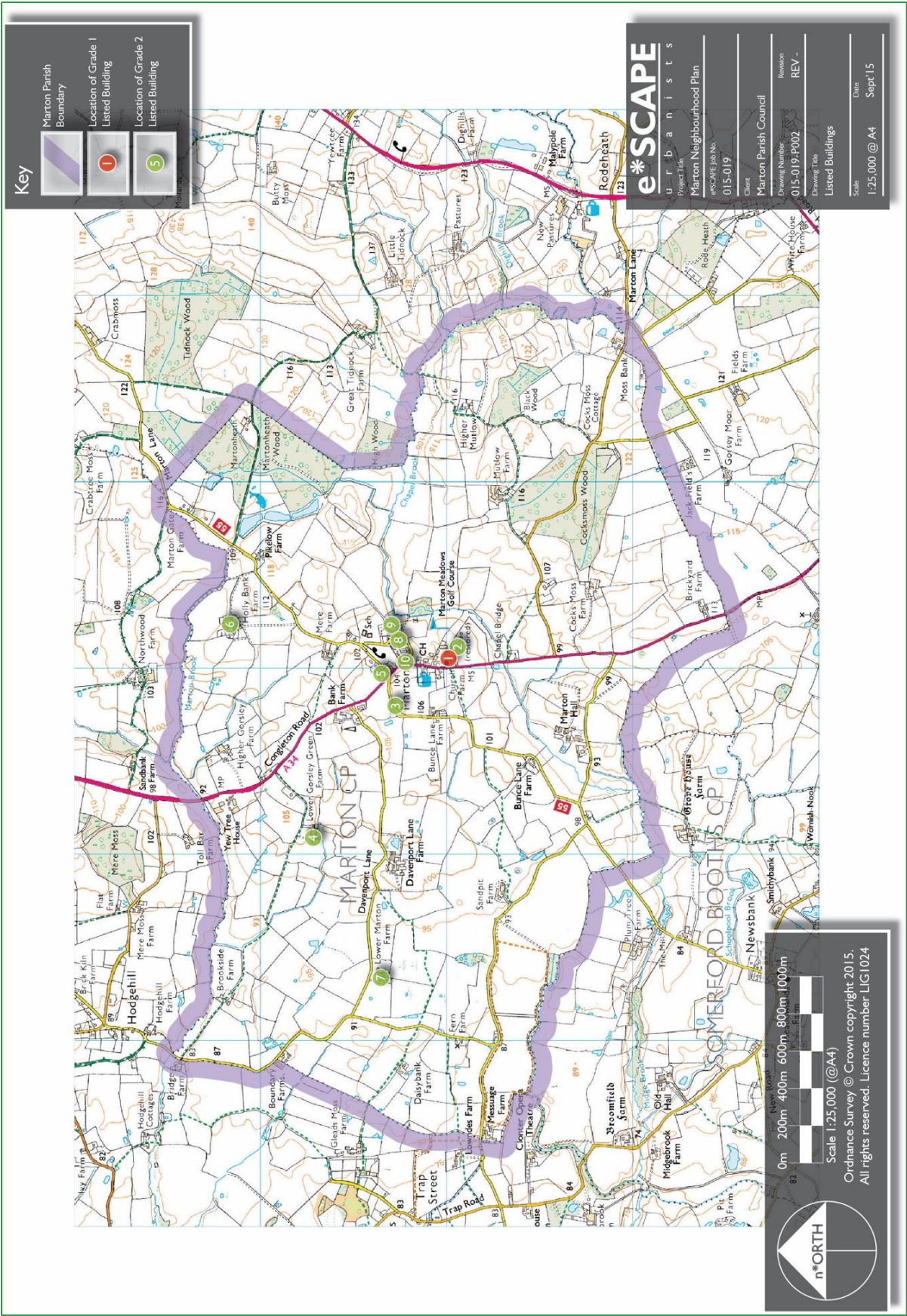
These listed buildings (not counting the church) are primarily houses built before 1840, with a few being built before 1700. Most of the listed buildings are in the core of the village.



View from the churchyard (listed monument in grounds of ancient listed church)

Pump Cottage: Oak Lane (listed)





Map 4: Listed Buildings

A key element in this type of village is the amount of mature tree cover and as a consequence the low density of dwellings. The village still feels enclosed and intimate, but whilst many villages rely on the enclosing nature of the built form, Marton relies on a mix of the cottages and houses interspersed by trees, native hedgerows and paddock boundaries to enclose the village lanes.



View south to the village from Marton Farm House illustrating the level of tree cover.

Additional built form lies to the south along the main road and terminating in the historic St James and St Paul Church which occupies high ground in the form of a bluff commanding panoramic views south to Croker Hill, Gawsorth Common, Bosley Cloud and the folly of Mow Cop Castle.

To the north the village terminates at Bank Farm which again occupies higher ground, where the main road rises up and curves around the farm before dropping down into the centre of the village.

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## VILLAGE LAYOUT & STRUCTURE

Drawing Number 015-019-P007 over page illustrates the analysis undertaken of the village in terms of its form, interaction and relationship with the rural hinterland which surrounds it.

From the south one approaches the village along a straight section of the A34 climbing up into the village from Chapel Bridge between well tree'd hedgerow boundaries. Glimpse views can be had of the village on this approach and especially of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century half-timbered black and white church of St James and St Paul. The church marks the point of arrival into the village from the south, as well as creating a strong skyline and landmark from the surrounding lanes and fields on the southern side of the village.

The church is part of a cluster of built form around the main road in the southern part of the village and includes the Davenport Arms, a Georgian Coaching Inn, and, the conversion of the Georgian farm buildings opposite the public house into a courtyard of restaurants, cafes and secondary retail



uses which lends a village square feel to this part of the settlement. The nine hole golf course is also located in this cluster.

To the north of this area lies the heart of the village with a number of additional listed buildings which relate strongly to and front the main road. A village green lies on the inside of a bend on the main road and consists of an area of grass, trees, and the village orchard. Opposite the green lies the access points to the core of the village with Oak Lane to the south and School Lane to the north. These two lanes encircle a mix of houses and cottages interspersed with trees and hedgerows all of which encloses a small central paddock which is an integral element of Marton's dispersed radial settlement character.

Oak Lane forms a strong and positive relationship between the villages' built form and the countryside with properties fronting the lane with large front gardens, boundary hedges and retained mature trees. Whilst on the opposite side of the lane the field hedgerows and hedgerow trees create a strong edge to the wider rural landscape beyond. Whilst the dwellings on the southern section of Oak Lane are not of any specific vernacular quality (social housing vernacular from circa 1950), the landscape setting of the lane creates a strong and positive character in this location.

On the middle portion of Oak Lane, Oak Cottage a thatched single storey listed building is part of a cluster of more historic buildings which straddle the lane in this location and also includes farm houses and related outbuildings. This organic settlement form adds interest in this particular location and whilst not visible and standing on private property the historic Marton Oak adds to the history of this part of the village.

The final section of Oak Lane prior to it joining School Lane returns to a rural lane feel with the central paddock bordering it to the west and the primary school playing fields to the east.



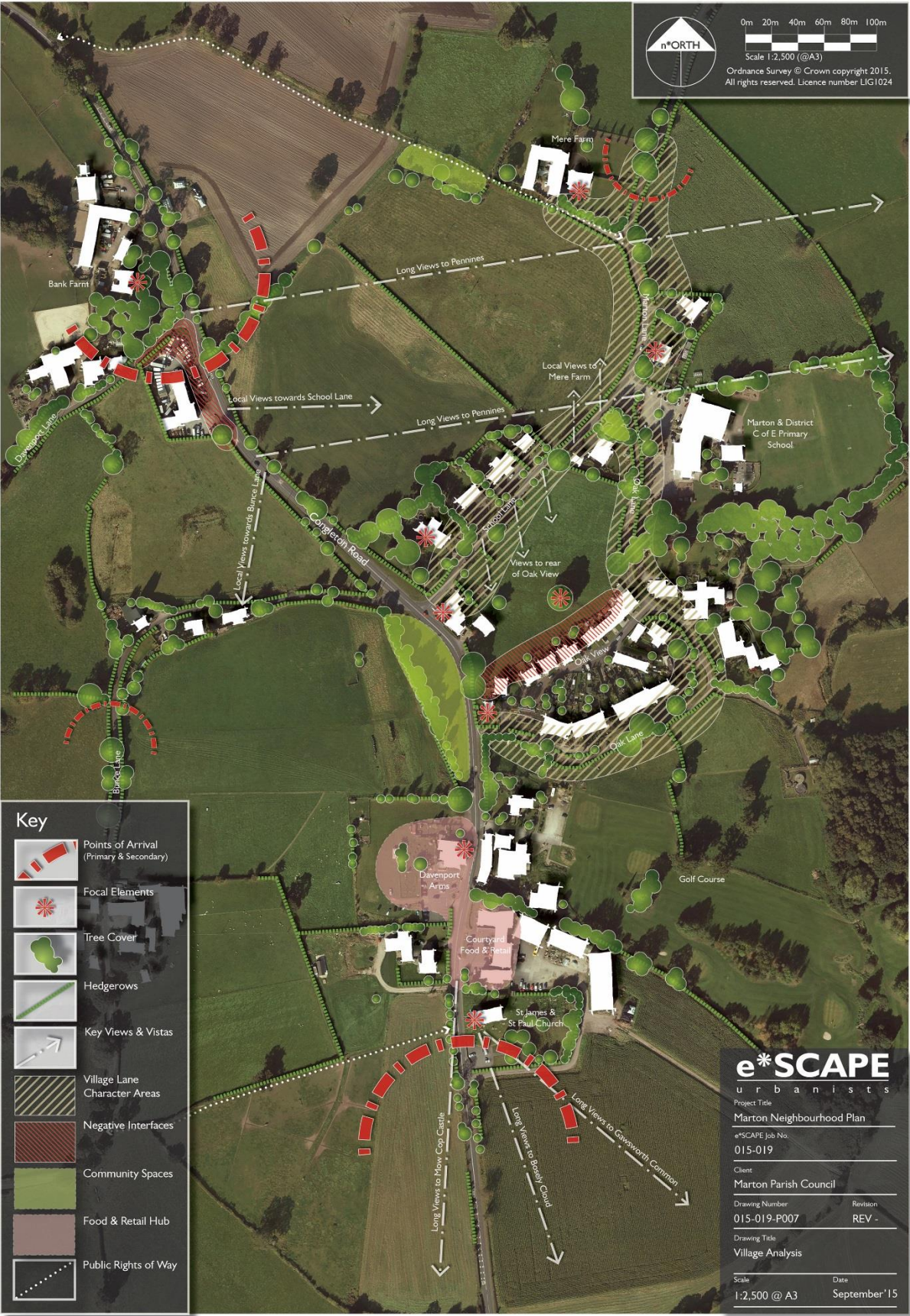
The interface between Oak Lane and the countryside is positive with built form fronting the lane and overlooking the countryside.





Oak Lane adjacent to the School has a very rural feel, enclosed by native hedgerows and with the school to the east and the central paddock to the west.





Map 5: Village Analysis



A small community copse and private cottage occupies the corner of the junction between Oak Lane and School Lane adjacent to the central paddock.

School Lane is an extension of Marton Lane which connects the village north west to Gawsworth and Macclesfield beyond. In the opposite direction School Lane returns to the A34.

The central paddock occupies the majority of the south eastern side of School Lane and lies in the heart of the village. The hedgerow on this part of the lane is not continuous and offers views across the paddock to a mature sycamore which stands in the southern half of the paddock. Whilst the species is of little significance the visual amenity value of this large tree in the heart of the village is of great importance, set as it is in the centre of the village in an open field, and was the subject of a Tree Preservation Order.

The one detractor from this view is the rear of properties on Oak View which are a mix of 20<sup>th</sup> century bungalows and more recent infill social housing. There is no consistent boundary treatment to the rear of the properties which are a mix of timber board/concrete post and hedgerows with greenhouses, sheds and conservatories highly visible. Improved boundary treatments in this location (i.e. native hedgerows) would enhance this important view and sense of openness in the heart of the village.



View from School Lane across the central paddock towards mature sycamore. The rear view of properties on Oak View detracts from this panorama.

To the west of School Lane a handful of detached properties of varying architypes are located and whilst the built form is of varying eras they are individually designed, architecturally interesting and set into mature landscaped gardens which contribute to the village lane feel of School Lane.



School Lane forms a secondary approach to the village from the north east as touched on above. Marton Farm House forms the northern extent of the village and acts as the point of arrival, with the village being glimpsed as one rounds the bend on which the farm is located, followed by the vicarage and two semi-detached Victorian properties. The semi's create a strong frontage to the lane and can clearly be seen across the fields from Congleton Road as one travels south through the village.



Marton Farm House forms the northern extent of the village on School Lane.

Marton C of E Primary School also occupies a central location on School Lane, adjacent to Oak Lane. The school itself is single storey and isn't particularly visible from the surrounding area.

Bunce Lane forms a low key access onto the main road just north of the village green and serves the local farms found to the south east of the village. Only a handful of properties are found on the lane close to the village, but one of them is a Grade 2 listed half-timbered cottage. These properties form the secondary point of arrival into the village from Bunce Lane.

Finally the form and layout of the village from the northern approach to Marton via Congleton Road is more of an unfolding series of views. Prior to Bank Farm the village is hidden by the rising ground on which Bank Farm sits. The farm and surrounding fields are well tree'd and until one is level with the farm itself Marton is hidden from view.

As one begins to descend into the village glimpsed views across School Lane and onwards to the Pennine foothills around Gawsworth Common begin to open up. When one is level with the commercial vehicle garage the village is visible as a mix of tight views along the curve of Congleton Road as it sweeps around the edge of the green and more panoramic views across Marton Lane, the backs of the properties on School Lane, and the cottages on Bunce Lane.

The commercial garage on the corner of Congleton Road and Davenport Lane is an important and established enterprise in the village, however some environmental enhancements in terms of soft landscape treatments on its boundaries would help in making it a more positive part of the village streetscene.

Then as one travels south around the bend one sees the Davenport Arms, Courtyard and church spire, before leaving the village and descending down the hill towards Congleton. It should be noted that the folly of Mow Cop Castle forms a focal point on the distant hills from Congleton Road as one leaves the village.

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### VERNACULAR DETAILING

As stated earlier in this chapter the village has been in existence for a very long time and that is borne out in the range of architectural forms found in the village from half-timbered Medieval churches, Tudor cottages, Georgian farmsteads to Victorian and 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> Century archetypes.

The half-timbered church and cottages have in the main been painted in typical black and white livery. Some parts of the cottages where the timber has been replaced with brickwork retain this livery with the timbers painted onto the facades e.g. Pump Cottage.



The half-timbered church of St James and St Paul.

The church is roofed in stone flags with the tower in timber shingles with a number of the cottages roofed in traditional thatch.



The half-timbered and thatched Pump Cottage on the corner of Oak Lane.

The Georgian farmsteads are typical of Cheshire with a brick built farm house and associated yard enclosed on two to three sides by two storey agricultural buildings containing shippons, loose boxes and hay barns. The brickwork is usually English bond with headers every 5<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> course. A 'cock and hen' brick banded course at eaves can be found on many buildings with circular door opening's to the upper hay loft with vents to the external faces in wheat sheaf or diamond patterns.

Traditionally the farm yards are paved in rounded 'river-washed' cobbles and boundary walls to these farmsteads are in matching brick to the buildings with stone copings.

The buildings of this period changed from using heavy stone flags on the roofs to lighter Welsh blue slate which continued on into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as they were then easier to transport from Wales with the growth of the railways.

The brick of the Georgian era is the typical and traditional warm brindle multi 'Cheshire brick' which is also found in domestic buildings in the village from all eras. The exceptions being the early (50's) social housing on Oak Lane, the bungalows on Oak View which are in a brown/buff multi brick and the more recently built affordable units at the head of Oak View which are constructed in a bright red facing brick, the latter being very much at odds with the vernacular and rural setting. This is especially apparent with respect to the two semis adjacent to Pump Cottage which not only jar in terms of materials, but also in terms of massing with the adjoining historic cottage.

The above existing non-vernacular approaches to housing in the village should be used to ensure that such an approach is not accepted in the future.





Georgian architecture in the form of the Davenport Arms frontage and farm buildings opposite.

Modern or rebuilt cottages in the village on individual plots provide new and creative architectural forms which still follow some of the traditional rules in terms of materials (timber and/or brick with blue slate roofs), massing and density within strongly landscaped plots, whilst adding a new dimension to the vibrancy of the built form in the village.

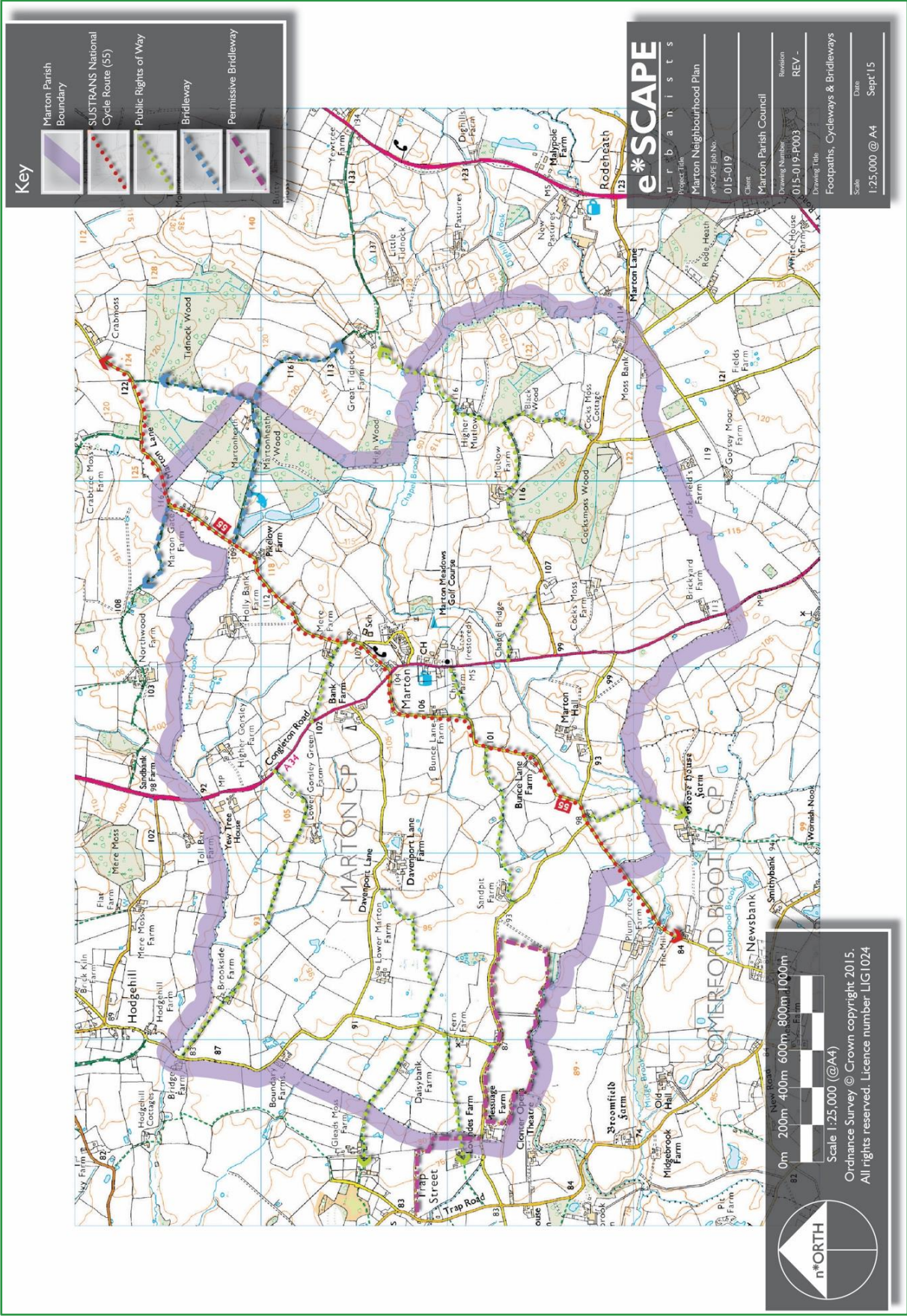
In summary the village has evolved and grown over many centuries with those layers of evolution evident in the archetypes today. The density of the existing homes in the village is low at between 5 to 15 dwellings per hectare with the sense of place formed as much around the spaces between the buildings as the buildings themselves. These spaces being made up of large gardens, trees, hedgerows and paddocks.

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#### FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS

There is a network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes throughout the Area which are enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. See Drawing 015-019-P003 (overleaf) for footpath network.





Map 6: Footpaths, Cycleways & Bridleways





*Image credit: Google Maps 2015*

In this aerial shot of Marton, the field pattern and woodlands can be clearly seen, as can the low density of scattered dwellings across the landscape along with the paddocks and small field enclosures within the village itself.



## FLORA AND FAUNA

There are a variety of birds and wildlife living in and around the village: from bats, buzzards and badgers, to hares and herons, foxes, red-legged partridge and woodpeckers. At Marton Heath trout pools, some 30 different species of farm and woodland birds use the feeders each day.



*Local fauna – All image credits: copyright David Taylor.*





*Local flora and fauna – All image credits: copyright  
David Taylor.*

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## WATER FEATURES

The village is bounded by Marton Brook to the north, and includes sections of Clonter Brook and Midge Brook. There is a natural village pond as well as many other ponds on farmland, including trout pools owned and managed by a local business.

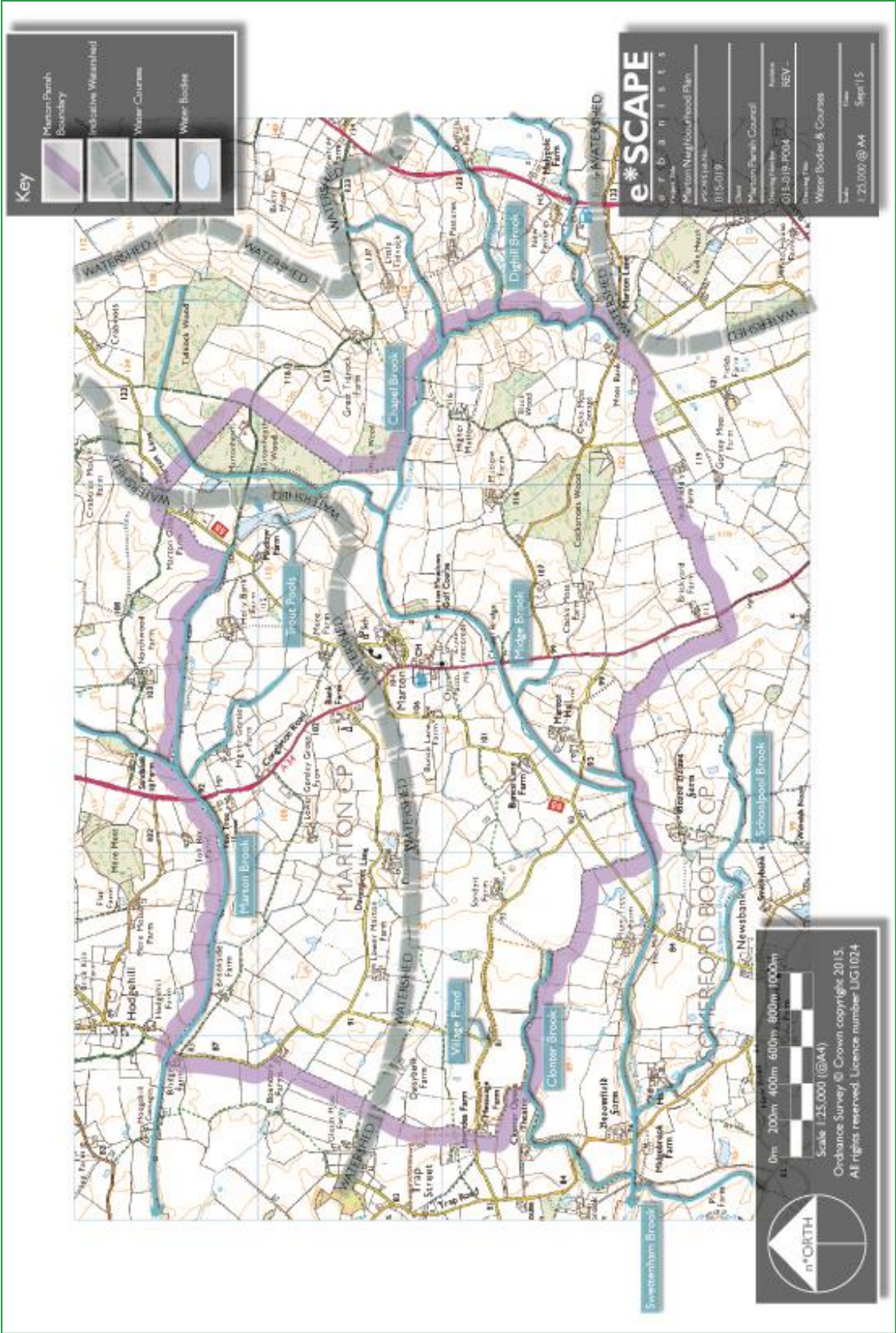


*Trout pools - Image credit: copyright David Taylor.*



*Trout pools - Image credit: copyright David Taylor.*









Aerial view of trout pools showing typical Marton view - *Image credit: copyright David Taylor.*

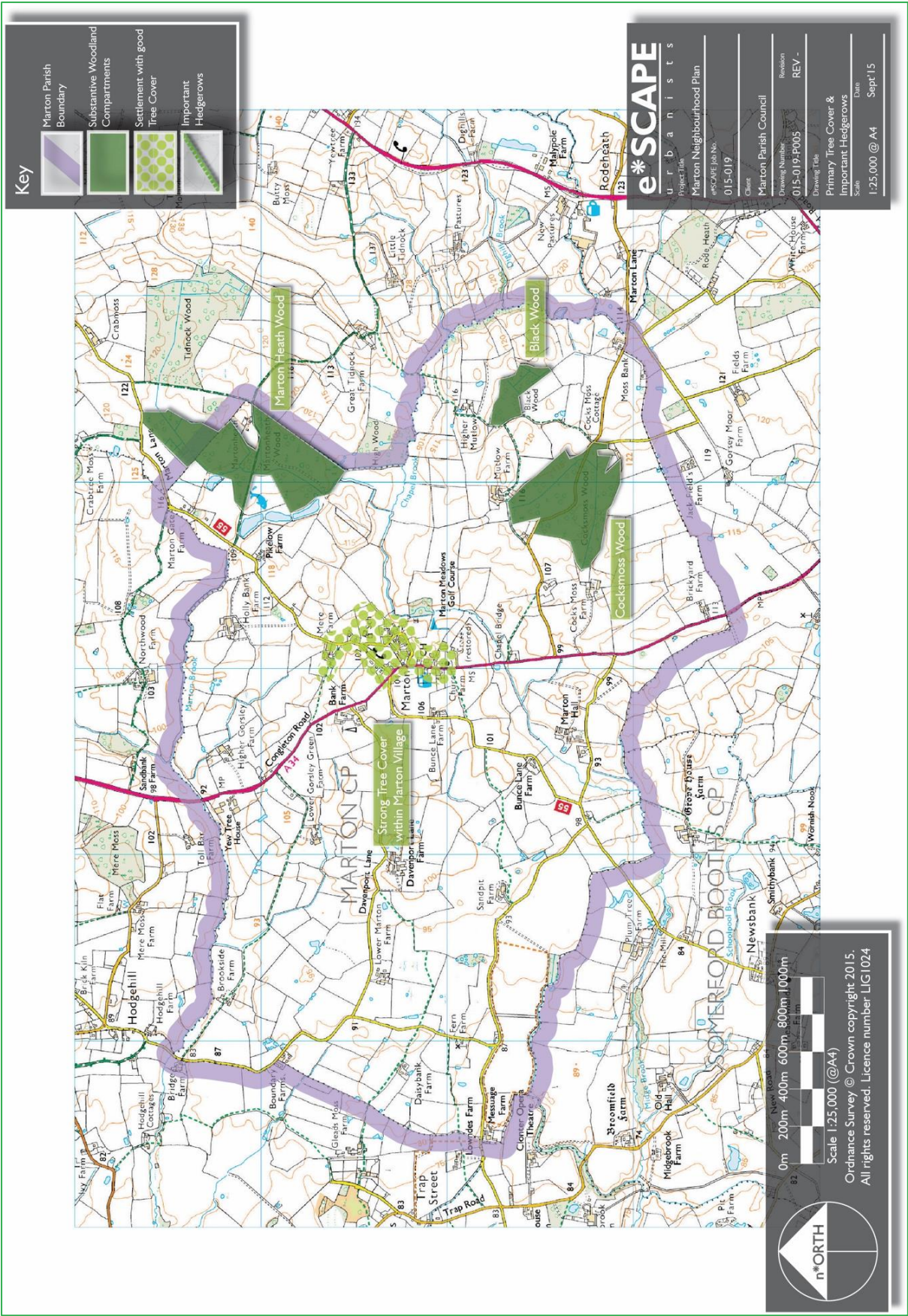
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#### WOODLANDS, TREES AND HEDGEROWS



Hodgehill Lane, including hedgerows and trees





Map 8: Primary Tree Cover & Important Hedgerows

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## PUBLIC CONSULTATION MARCH 2015

As part of the public consultation for the Plan as a whole, residents were invited to report on what they liked and did not like about the Area.

In general, people who live in Marton are happy to live here. In terms of the landscape and built character of the village, they like:

- the rural setting of the village (fields, wildlife, cattle, views...)
- the village pub, restaurant and café
- the ancient buildings
- the small size of the village
- that it is unspoilt, with open space
- the low density of housing
- our historic tree
- the lack of street lighting, so that the night skies are visible.

Landscape and character issues raised as part of the consultation include:

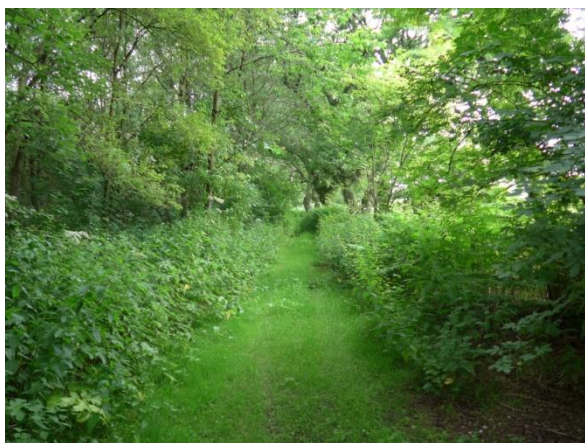
- school parking and traffic
- no village hall, community centre or sports facilities
- litter
- poor quality roads with potholes
- lack of pavements and cycle paths on the narrow lanes
- lack of footpaths across fields.



## IMAGES OF MARTON

Images throughout this document show the character of the Marton landscape, but we include some further representative images of the different character areas below.

### FIELDS AND WOODLAND



View of Marton Heath Wood



View of Cocksmoss Wood



View of rapeseed crop



View from Bunce Lane



View west from Bunce Lane



View to the south



View of open farmland with distance views



View of church across fields with The Cloud behind



View of typical Cheshire farmhouse on Bunce Lane





Junction of Hodgehill Lane/Davenport Lane junction

*Image credit: copyright Peter Turner and licensed for reuse under Creative Commons License. Source: [www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2825653](http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2825653)*



Looking east to the Cloud from A34



View from School Lane to Sutton Common

## CENTRAL VILLAGE: THE CHURCH



Views of Church of St James and St Paul (oldest half-timbered church in use in Europe)



## CENTRAL VILLAGE: THE A34



View north of dwellings along A34 and of village orchard and open grassed area known as the Folly



View of focal point on the Folly and view east from A34 of Oak View housing, from the Folly

## CENTRAL VILLAGE: SCHOOL LANE – MARTON SCHOOL



Views of housing along School Lane



View into paddock on corner of School Lane



View down School Lane





View from School Lane across the central paddock to Oak Lane (left of image) and Oak View (centre of image)



View of Old School House, School Lane (now a private dwelling)



View of current school from School Lane

## CENTRAL VILLAGE: OAK LANE – OAK VIEW



View along Oak Lane with central paddock glimpsed through gaps in the hedgerow



View of housing along Oak Lane



View of entrance to Oak Farm from Oak Lane



Oak Farm (listed)





View of Oak View (off Oak Lane)



Houses on Oak Lane

### CENTRAL VILLAGE: PUB, RESTAURANT AND COURTYARD NEXT TO CHURCH



Davenport Arms, on A34 and La Popote – restaurant opposite Davenport Arms, in courtyard



View of courtyard



View of restaurant

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The landscape, as it is, is a highly valued local resource, and the character of the parish and its character should be retained. Key aspects of the character across all areas relate to the open, unspoilt and rural nature of the parish. The views to and from the parish are of importance, with the most significant features being the church, the various listed buildings, the gaps and spaces between the buildings, the rural landscape, trees and hedgerows, and the absence of larger scale buildings.

There are a number of potential threats to retaining the landscape and settlement character:

- Large-scale greenfield housing development
- Ribbon development from the towns to the north-east and south, encroaching on the Area
- Loss of trees and hedgerows
- Infill and garden developments within the village itself

Recommendations are made below which could be considered for adoption by the Parish Council and/or included in the Plan. The aim is to promote the Area for the enjoyment of residents and visitors specifically through the retention and enhancement of the landscape and the characteristics of the parish.

### A: Access to the landscape

- Ensure footpaths are easily identified and accessible all year.
- Consider an increased number of bridleways to help in avoiding unsafe use of roads for riders and walkers. Where possible liaise with landowners to review the use of existing tracks and field margins to create new safe off-road bridleway routes

### B. Village Environment

- Any development should respect the density, massing, style and scale of the existing properties within the village. No development (conversion, extension or new build) should change the existing characteristics through inappropriate higher densities, scale of buildings, infilling of key open spaces/paddocks, boundary treatments or building materials. To that end a village design statement should be developed to ensure any future developments contribute to the village character.
- To avoid change in the character and scale of the village, any development should comply with CEC policy PG6 Open Countryside.
- Effort should be made to ensure that the undeveloped land within the village remain intact to retain the existing character and structure of the village.
- Spatial policies should be developed which preserves the setting and views to and from the Grade 1 listed church.

### C. Landscape, visual amenity and natural environment

- Maintain existing hedgerows, trees and woodland, and where possible encourage the planting of new trees and hedgerows, ideally using native / local plant types.



- Monitor trees for signs of disease. Since trees are so highly valued in the village, efforts should be taken by landowners and walkers to assist in the monitoring and identification of diseased trees. If mature trees are to be removed for safety reasons, they should be immediately replaced with new trees of a similar or more appropriate native species and size to reinstate that lost character trait. Such trees should be properly maintained during their establishment to ensure their long-term survival.
- Maintain the character, setting and views of the parish. The views to and from the rural undeveloped landscape have been identified as intrinsic and special aspects of the area. The character of the landscape and setting of the village are highly valued. The Parish Council should consider the appropriateness of any development with a view to avoiding change to the unspoilt and open nature of the area and views to and from it. Larger buildings and structures out of keeping with the openness and unencumbered views should be avoided. See Village Centre map overleaf.



### Map 9: Village Centre



## POLICY COMPLIANCE

The following section demonstrates how the above recommendations relate to existing national policy.

### A - Access to the Landscape

A1 - Maintain footpaths by ensuring they are easily identified and accessible year-round.

A2 - Consider the option for new rights of way

NPPF - paragraph 98 states that “Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.”

### B - Residential and Village Environment

B1 - Any new development should respect the style and scale of the existing properties.

B2 - Any development should comply with CEC policy PG6 Open Countryside.

B3 - Undeveloped land within the village should remain intact to retain the character and structure of the village

NPPF – The NPPF paragraph 125 states that Plans should, at the most appropriate level, set out a clear design vision and expectations, so that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable. Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development.’

### C – Landscape and Natural Environment

C1 – Maintain existing hedgerows, trees and woodlands and encourage the planting of new trees and hedgerows

C2 – Monitor trees for signs of disease

C3 – Maintain the character, setting and views of the parish.

NPPF – Paragraph 170 of the NPPF requires that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity where possible, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.