

Landscape Character Guidelines for the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Guidance on the maintenance, protection and enhancement of this unique landscape



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The Landscape Character Guidelines are a valuable reference tool for anyone involved in the management of land within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. They describe the eight different landscape types which can be found and outline the typical characteristics and features which make them special.

The Guidelines are also packed with positive ideas and suggestions on ways in which you can safeguard and enhance the unique landscape of this protected area.



The Suffolk Coast and Heaths was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1969, and is now one of 41 such areas throughout England and Wales. The designation recognises the national importance of the Coast and Heaths' high quality, unspoilt landscape and gives it equal status to that of a National Park.

The Coast and Heaths is remarkably varied incorporating sweeping estuaries, windswept coastline and the heathy 'uplands' of the Sandlings. Each part of the landscape has its own distinctive character which makes it unique, however, the differences are subtle and not always obvious at first sight.

Protection is provided through national and local planning policy and the work of numerous conservation organisations and sympathetic landowners. However, the area is not immune to change - agricultural intensification, alterations in land management practice, development, creeping urbanisation, ecological changes and coastal erosion can all alter the landscape both for better or worse.

We believe that the special character of the Coast and Heaths deserves the highest level of protection. This does not of course mean that the landscape should be unchanging, but that, wherever possible, changes reflect and enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the area, rather than detract from it.

We appreciate that financial and other constraints may mean that these Guidelines may not always be immediately, or easily achievable. Also, we do not wish to dictate to land managers nor to prevent individuals doing something original. Instead we hope that the Guidelines will raise awareness of the special character of the Coast and Heaths and help anyone planning work in the area, either now or in the future, to make informed decisions.

The Landscape Character Guidelines provide useful advice for anyone involved in the management of land, whether tree planting or other conservation schemes, new developments, changes in land use or just day-to-day operations. They are relevant not just to large estates or farms, but also to any small landholdings.

Landscape Types of the Suffolk Coast and Heaths

- Coastline
- Coastal Valleys
- River and Stream Valleys
- Estuary Valley Sides
- Estuary Valley Floor
- Sandlings Plateau - With Heathland
 - With Farmland
 - With Forest and Woodland

How to use the Landscape Character Guidelines

The Guidelines are designed to be used by the following:

- Farmers
- Landowners
- Small holders and rural householders
- Local authority officers
- Consultants and contractors
- Grant giving bodies
- Developers
- Community groups
- Environmental organisations
- Parish councils

For each landscape type there is a **Guidance Card**, which shows a sketch of an ideal scenario, with priorities, ideas and advice for management.

There is also a **General Guidance Card** which can be applied throughout the whole of the Coast and Heaths.

The 1:50,000 scale **Character Map** shows where each of the landscape types can be found in the AONB.

There is a range of grants available which can help towards the costs of conservation work in the AONB, whether large or small scale. Further information and advice on topics mentioned in the guidelines, such as hedge planting, woodland management or habitat creation can also be obtained. Please contact the Suffolk Coast & Heaths Project for more details.

Suffolk Coast & Heaths Project

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These guidelines have been produced on behalf of the **Suffolk Coast & Heaths Partnership**.

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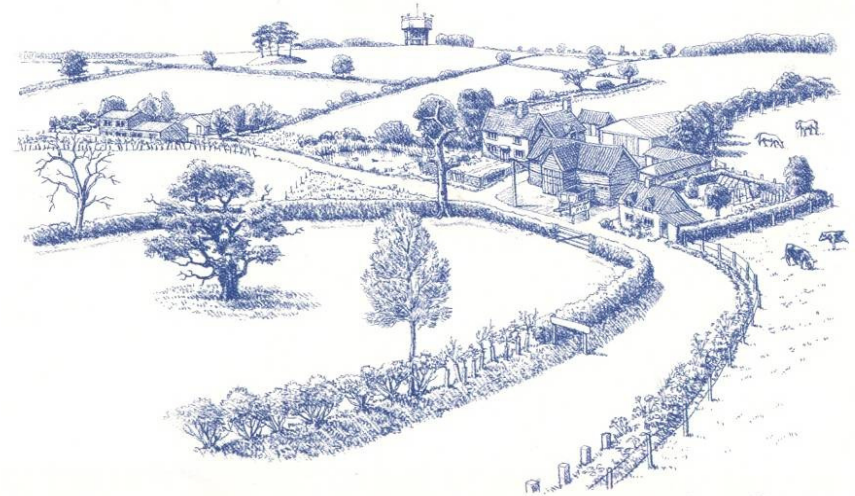


The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Project

The Project was set up in 1993. Our aim is to conserve the landscape and wildlife, provide for quiet enjoyment and promote co-ordinated management for an area based on the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We work closely with landowners, local communities, organisations and visitors to help protect the special character of the area.

The Suffolk Coast & Heaths Partnership

The Partnership is made up of 23 organisations with an interest in the area, including the Local Authorities, government agencies, farming representatives, and conservation organisations. They have all signed up to support the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Management Strategy which sets out a framework for the protection and care of the AONB.



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Text by Kath Hewitt, Drawings by Mark Beesley, Designed by Salmon Design Ltd, Ipswich

Landscape Character

The Coast and Heaths has a very varied character incorporating the coastline, estuaries, coastal and stream valleys and the 'Sandlings'. More details on each landscape type are found in the following individual guidelines. However, some features are common to all areas of the Coast and Heaths and these are outlined below.

The landscape is in general large-scale and wide-open in character, with a profusion of habitats including heath, reedbed, woodland and saltmarsh which help to create a very natural character. In places the Coast and Heaths seems wild and even unkempt, quite different from the pastoral, manicured countryside found elsewhere in Suffolk.

The environment is predominantly rural with relatively little large-scale industrial or residential development or its associated urban-style infrastructure, as compared to much of the coastline of south-east England. However, settlements in the form of isolated farmsteads, attractive villages and historic coastal towns do contribute to the unique quality of the area.

Farming and forestry are key industries and have a major influence on the landscape in the form of massive fields of wheat or vegetables or swathes of conifer plantation. Herds of cattle still graze the marshes, while extensive areas of outdoor pigs reflect more recent trends in livestock husbandry.

These guidelines apply generally throughout the Coast and Heaths area, but should be read in conjunction with the relevant Landscape Character Guidelines of each specific landscape type.

Key Habitats & Species

- The Coast and Heaths is noted for the extent and quality of its surviving wildlife habitats and species, many of which are of international importance. It is one of the most significant areas in England for wildlife, and the landscape is enhanced by evocative sights and sounds such as the call of thousands of waterfowl on the estuaries in winter or acres of purple heath in late summer.

Issues & Problems

- Inappropriate development and urbanisation.
- Effects of coastal erosion, ageing sea walls and sea level rise.
- Impact of intensive farming practice.
- Limited resources available to manage natural habitats.
- Decline in livestock husbandry and lack of grazing herds and flocks.

Objectives

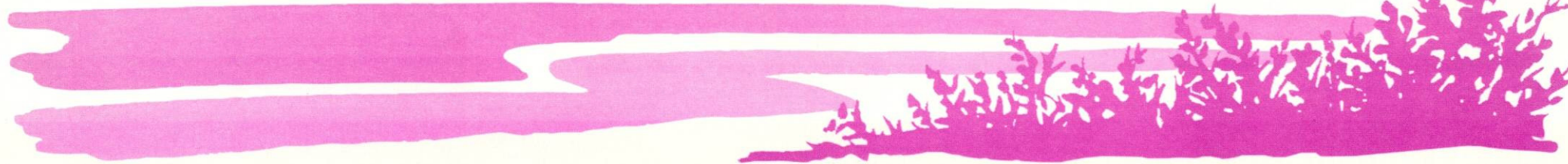
- Retain and enhance the distinctive character of the Coast and Heaths.
- Ensure that new development is in keeping with the landscape, and proliferation of urban clutter is prevented.
- Retain traditional landscape features.
- Maintain and support traditional farming practices, such as the grazing of marshes.

- Promote the implementation of conservation measures on intensively farmed land.
- Retain and manage semi-natural habitats, and increase their area where possible.
- Promote the use of agri-environment grant aid and other support to achieve conservation aims.

Tree & Shrub Planting

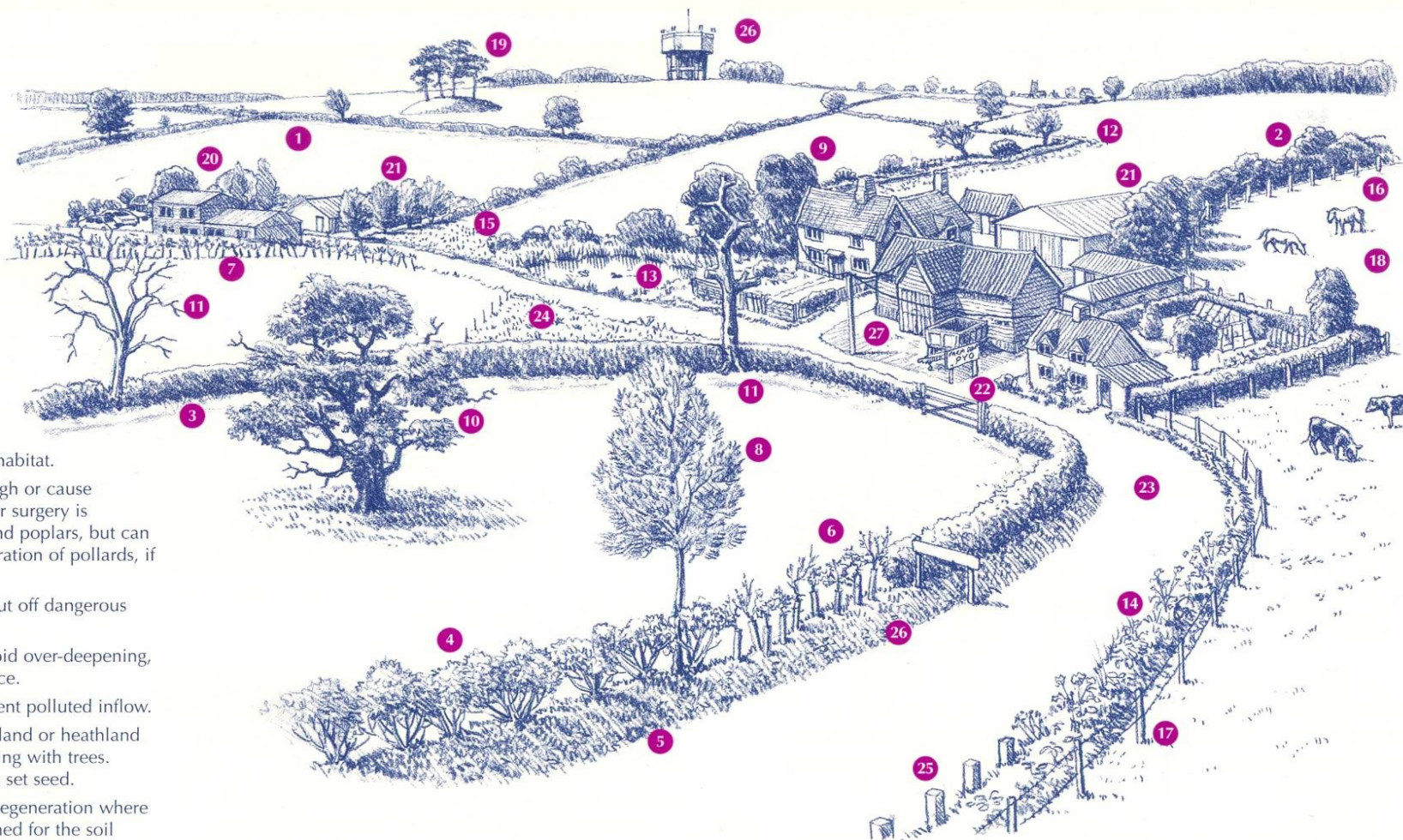
- In the open countryside, choose native species which occur locally in hedgerows, woods etc. Avoid ornamental trees such as Norway maple or red oak and conspicuous non-natives such as leylandii.
- Historic parklands are exceptions to this advice, since they generally have a wider variety of non-native specimen trees planted as part of the original design. Within villages and towns it is also acceptable to plant more ornamental trees such as holm oak, horse chestnut and rowan.
- Never plant on heathland, flower-rich grassland, wetland or other valuable habitat.
- Before planting always consider whether natural regeneration would be a possibility.
- Use stock grown from British seed or, even better, from Suffolk seed, if available.
- Keep your species mix simple to avoid a fussy, artificial effect.

Refer to the relevant Landscape Character Guideline for further details and the recommended species lists for individual landscape types.



Management Guidelines

- 1 Do not grub out hedges or level hedgebanks.
- 2 Create a variety of hedgerow shapes – some trimmed or coppiced and others allowed to grow freely to their full height.
- 3 Where possible, trimmed hedges should be cut only every other year in winter and allowed to develop a good height and width.
- 4 Elm hedges need to be periodically coppiced to ground level and allowed to regrow; or at least cut back occasionally to prevent Dutch Elm Disease killing the plant.
- 5 Do not spray established hedgebanks and hedge bottoms with herbicide.
- 6 Plant up gaps in hedgerow.
- 7 Reinststate lost hedgerows along field margins or roadsides where possible.
- 8 Encourage the growth of new hedgerow trees.
- 9 Wherever possible, retain ivy on mature trees as a habitat.
- 10 Protect veteran trees and avoid felling. Do not plough or cause compaction below the crown. Repollarding or other surgery is sometimes recommended, especially for willows and poplars, but can kill very old trees of all species. Create a new generation of pollards, if possible.
- 11 Retain dead trees as a habitat wherever possible. Cut off dangerous branches rather than felling.
- 12 Avoid filling in or culverting ditches and dykes. Avoid over-deepening, and manage according to good conservation practice.
- 13 Protect ponds. Clear scrub encroachment and prevent polluted inflow.
- 14 Protect verges and small blocks of flower-rich grassland or heathland by avoiding spraying, ploughing, fertilising or planting with trees. Ideally verges should be cut only after flowers have set seed.
- 15 Let disturbed and bare ground vegetate by natural regeneration where possible. If seeding is unavoidable use a mix designed for the soil type, rather than a standard commercial mix.
- 16 Where possible, erect fences along hedges or woods etc, rather than cutting across open views.
- 17 In open countryside unobtrusive post and wire fencing is usually preferable to standard wooden post and rail, or urban style fencing. If obtrusive fencing is unavoidable consider planting a hedge alongside to soften its effect.
- 18 Horse paddocks should not dominate the scene. Avoid overgrazing and excessive use of fencing, jumps etc. Where possible, avoid subdividing fields into small fenced paddocks.



- 19 Protect historic and archaeological features – avoid ploughing, excessive scrub encroachment, or other damage.
- 20 New developments should be well sited and sit well in the landscape.
- 21 Screen intrusive buildings with native trees and shrubs.
- 22 Traffic, business, tourist, recreational or information signs can create unattractive clutter in the landscape. Limit their number and choose their design and siting carefully.
- 23 Avoid unnecessary use of lighting and excessive traffic calming measures on rural roads.
- 24 Prevent the development of informal parking especially on verges.
- 25 Protect small and winding lanes, especially from the effects of hedge removal, widening or verge damage.
- 26 Wherever possible, site telecommunication aerials on existing structures or masts rather than erecting new masts.
- 27 Underground cables wherever possible.

Landscape Character

The Sandlings is the flat or gently undulating 'upland' plateau that runs the full length of the Coast and Heaths. The landscape is large scale and extensive and the soils are generally very sandy and light leading to distinctive vegetation and land use.

In pre-historic times the natural vegetation of the whole area would have been oak and birch woodland, and today a small number of fragments remain as ancient woodland, albeit influenced by the hand of man. These woodlands can be seen as distinct blocks scattered over the farmed landscape and are particularly notable in the Shotley Peninsula. Prime examples still exhibit coppiced or pollarded trees, as evidence of traditional management practice. In later centuries, broadleaved woodland was also planted, often associated with large houses or in the form of shelterbelts.

By contrast the forest plantations are a 20th century creation, when swathes of heathland and poor quality farmland were planted up with commercial conifers. Inside the forest, there is a much greater sense of enclosure than on the open Sandlings but the 1987 storm created more open space, much of which has since been retained. There is very little development or settlement within the forest, so creating a remote, wild character.

Key Habitats & Species

Woodland

- Pollarded oaks – Specialised lichen and fungi. Bats, owl and woodpecker.
- Ancient coppice woodland – Bluebell, red campion, wood sorrel, wood anemone, dog's mercury. Warblers, chiff-chaff, nightingale. Dormouse. Butterflies such as speckled wood and green hairstreak.

Forest

- Heather and acid grassland rides and blocks – Woodlark, nightjar and other heathland species.
- Conifer blocks - Crossbill, goshawk, hobby. Deer.

Issues & Problems

Woodland

- Difficulties in gaining economic return from continuing traditional forms of management.
- Neglect or inappropriate management, such as the extensive planting of conifers, in some woods.
- Deer browsing destroying regrowth and seedlings.

Forest

- Need to ensure economic return, whilst also supporting conservation measures in the forest.

Objectives

Woodland

- Ensure that there is no net loss of woodland area in the AONB.
- Establish new woodland where appropriate.

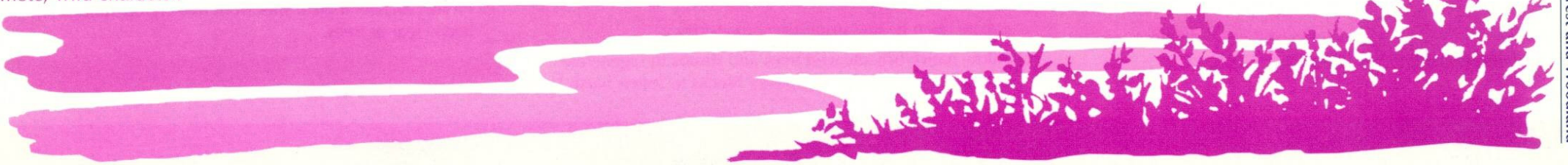
- Promote sound woodland management practice, and where viable continue traditional management.
- Restore woodlands damaged by inappropriate planting, neglect or management, and where possible revert back to a natural mix of broadleaved species.
- Promote restocking of ancient woods by natural regeneration or using saplings grown from site native seed, rather than re-planting with commercial stock.

Forest

- Optimise the amount of heathland and other open space in the forest area.
- Maximise diversity of plantation age and structure.

Tree & Shrub Planting

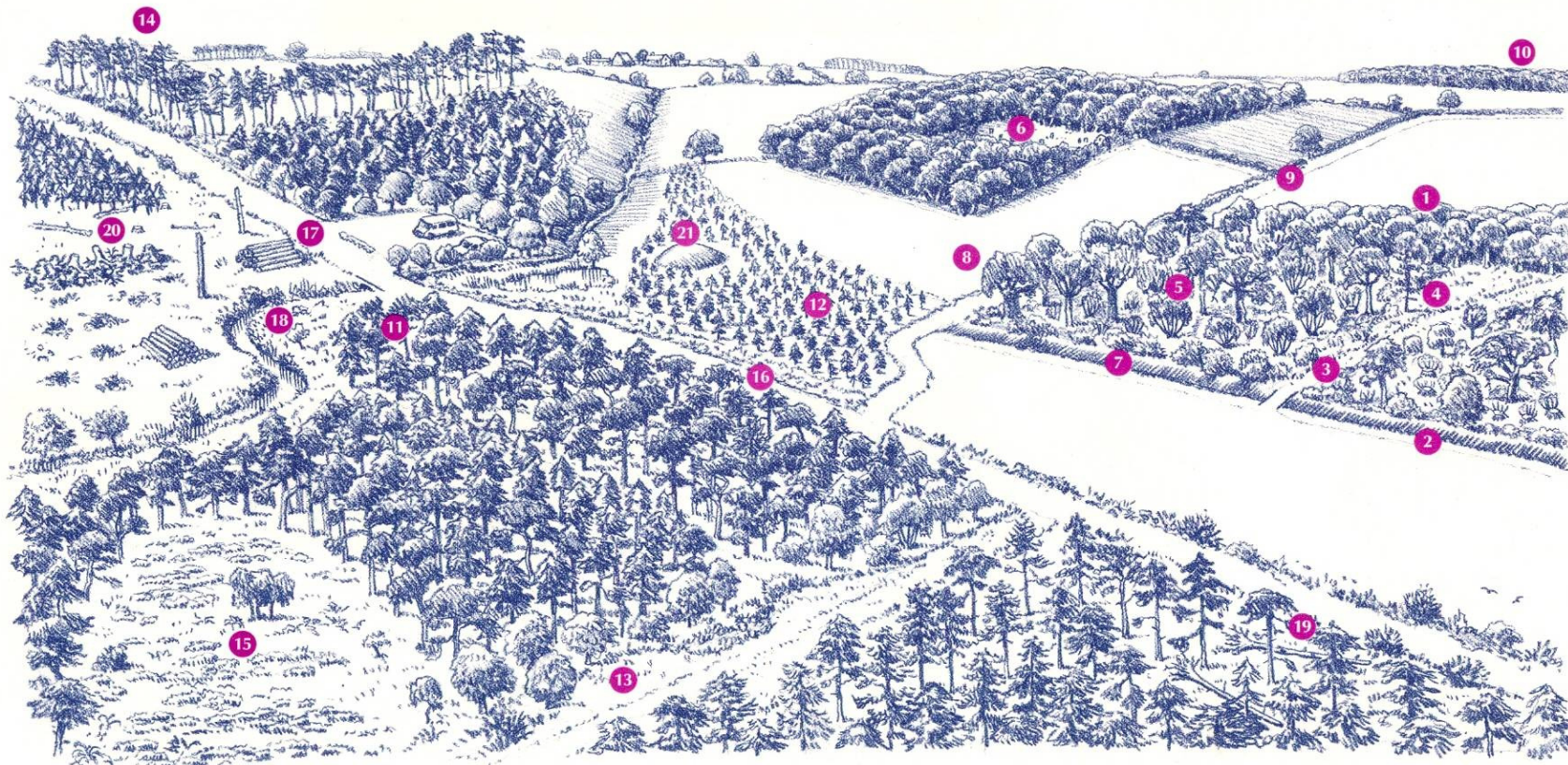
- **Ancient woodland** is best restocked through natural regeneration or the use of saplings derived from site-native seed rather than with commercial stock. Use only species which are originally found in the wood such as oak, ash, holly, hazel, hawthorn, field maple and rowan.
- **Other broadleaved or mixed woods** can be replanted or created using oak, ash, holly, hazel, hawthorn, sweet chestnut or other species found commonly in local woods, such as Scots pine. Commercially valuable species such as sycamore or Corsican pine are acceptable as part of an economically productive woodland, but should be avoided if the wood is simply for amenity or conservation purposes.
- **Coniferous forest plantations** are usually part of a large-scale commercial operation and are normally planted with fast growing Corsican pine. Amenity planting on fringes of conifer blocks is usually best avoided and left to natural regeneration (usually birch and oak) or allowed to develop as heath.



Management Guidelines

Sandlings Woodland

- 1 Manage ancient woodlands for conservation as well as timber production.
- 2 Restore coniferised ancient woodland to predominantly native broadleaved species.
- 3 Create wide rides with grassy and shrubby margins.
- 4 In larger woods, maintain clearings and other open space, and plan open space in new woods.
- 5 In woods traditionally managed by coppicing, continue or reinstate the practice, where possible.
- 6 Avoid 'clear felling', instead fell mature trees in groups to retain continuous cover.
- 7 Protect archaeological or historical features, particularly the ancient woodland bank and ditch.
- 8 Protect veteran trees and manage appropriately.
- 9 Retain and create hedgerows and uncropped banks and field margins, which create wildlife corridors between woods.
- 10 Ensure that new woods are well designed and positioned in the landscape.



Sandlings Forest

- 11 Forestry blocks and edges should be in keeping with natural contours or historical features such as old field patterns rather than laid out on artificially straight lines or rigid grid patterns.
- 12 Ensure that the forest has blocks of trees of different ages to increase diversity in the landscape.
- 13 Maintain a variety of open 'rides', especially wide rides with grassy or heathy margins. Avoid rigidly parallel sides by scalloping the edges and widening ride junctions.
- 14 Retain mature trees as a feature, especially on the skyline or on roadsides.
- 15 Create blocks of permanent heathland within the forest.
- 16 Create open heathy strips along roadsides.
- 17 Allow native broadleaved trees and shrubs to regenerate naturally on the edges of forestry blocks to soften harsh lines.

- 18 Keep stream valleys and wetland areas clear of conifer planting.
- 19 Retain dead wood, where possible.
- 20 Use rotational clear-fell techniques to ensure that there is a constant supply of open areas for heathland birds.
- 21 Protect archaeological sites from forestry operations and keep clear of trees.

Landscape Character

The Sandlings is the flat or gently undulating 'upland' plateau that runs the full length of the Coast and Heaths. Although the natural vegetation cover was originally woodland, the dry sandy soils led to the development of extensive heathland as farmers historically cleared the trees and ran flocks of sheep. Today, however, the predominant form of land use is that of economically productive modern agriculture. Isolated farmsteads are common although small villages are also to be found.

Whilst much of Suffolk is known for its patchwork of ancient (often Medieval) species-rich hedges, these were not a typical feature across most of the Sandlings. The predominance of grazed heathland meant that the land was not enclosed by hedges until relatively late (19th C) if at all. Elm hedges are often to be found along lanes and tracks; whilst linear shelter belts, and in some places, lines of pine trees also provide structure. However, the overriding character of the landscape tends to be large-scale, open and unenclosed.

However, there are considerable local variations. Hedges and hedgerow trees are more common in the northern part of the Sandlings and in the Shotley Peninsula (which is known for its holly hedges).

Agriculture is typically in the form of large fields of cereals, vegetables or turf often relying on intensive irrigation, the use of plastic mulches and other modern techniques. Grazing livestock have virtually disappeared but outdoor pigs are a new feature of recent decades.

Key Habitats & Species

- Farmland, acid grassland verges and field margins.
- Corn bunting, grey partridge, skylark. Brown hare. Lady's bedstraw, common mallow.

Issues & Problems

- Dominance of large, bleak homogenous arable fields in the landscape.
- Impacts of irrigation, including the demand on water resources and the increasing number of farm reservoirs.
- Lack of acid grassland and heath habitat.
- Isolation of existing habitat by large fields.
- Loss of elm trees and hedgerows to Dutch Elm Disease.

Objectives

- Retain and manage sympathetically all existing hedgerows, shelterbelts and pine lines.
- Protect and manage existing flower-rich verges and establish new verges and field margins.
- Revert marginal areas of arable land to heathland or acid grassland and create new areas of scrub or woodland.

Tree & Shrub Planting

Recommended species choice: -

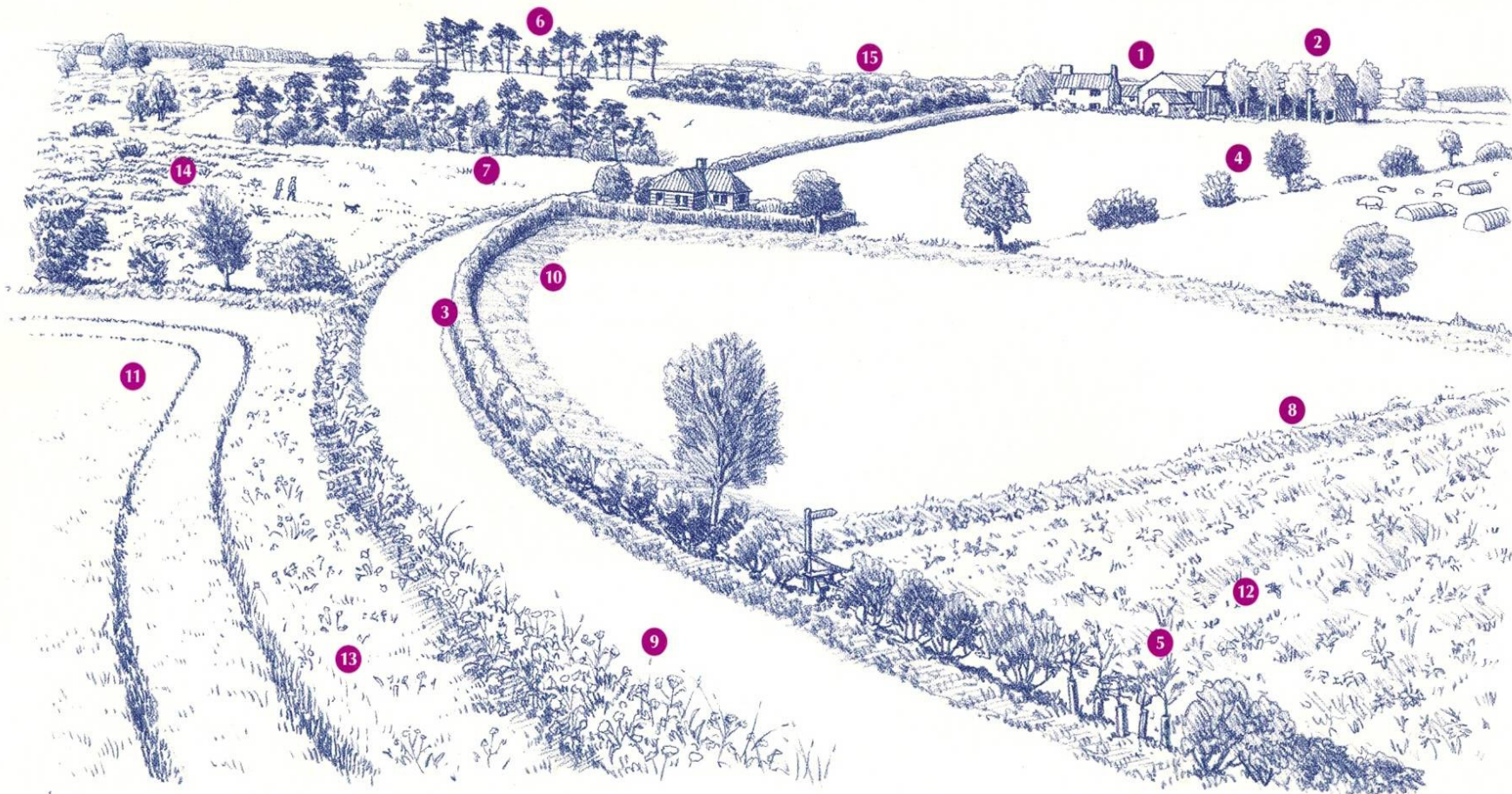
- Hedgerows and shrub lines: Hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple.
- Trees : Scots pine (but see note below), English oak, silver birch, ash.
- In the Shotley Peninsula also include holly, but limit the use of silver birch.

In some parts of the Sandlings, Scots pines are an important feature in the landscape and in these cases a planting mix with a large proportion of pine is recommended. However, in many areas mature pines are not common, and therefore should be avoided or only planted in small numbers.



Management Guidelines

- 1 Ensure new farm buildings are well sited and designed.
- 2 Screen less attractive farm buildings by planting native shrubs and trees.
- 3 Manage existing hedgerows for conservation (see general guidelines) and plant up gaps.
- 4 Very large fields can be divided by cross-field planting of trees and shrubs.
- 5 Hedgerows can be replanted on field margins where they have been removed in the past, but avoid planting long lengths of new hedgerows in areas where they were never typical features.
- 6 Protect mature pine lines and replant gaps with Scots pine.
- 7 Plant up gaps in shelterbelts and establish broadleaved shrub layer.
- 8 Establish grassy banks or uncropped strips across particularly large fields.
- 9 Protect flower-rich roadside and trackside verges - avoid planting up, ploughing, spraying or reseeding.
- 10 Establish new uncropped field margins, especially where they run alongside a hedge or other habitat. Use natural regeneration where possible or a specially designed grass mix.
- 11 Make use of spring-sown crops for the benefit of wildlife.
- 12 Make use of permanent or rotational set-aside to create habitat in strips or on whole fields.
- 13 Leave unsprayed headlands or rotovate uncropped field margins to create habitat for rarer arable annual flowers.



14 Convert marginal areas to heathland or acid grassland.

15 Convert marginal areas to scrub or woodland.

- Ensure farm reservoirs are carefully sited, designed and integrated into the landscape with appropriate planting if necessary.

Landscape Character

The Sandlings is the flat or gently undulating 'upland' plateau that runs the full length of the Coast and Heaths. Although its natural vegetation cover was originally woodland, the extremely sandy, free-draining soils led to the development of extensive heathland as farmers historically cleared the trees and ran flocks of sheep.

Although a great deal was lost in the 20th century, significant stretches of heathland still remain and its mosaic of naturally occurring heathers, heathy grasses, gorse and other specialised flora bring texture and colour to the landscape and creates a wild and evocative atmosphere.

Many of the Sandlings heaths are remote and undeveloped, although others are found near settlements and are heavily used for recreation, sometimes having been converted to golf courses.

Key Habitats & Species

- Heather heathland and acid grassland.
- Bell heather, common heather, heath bedstraw, heath speedwell, sheep's sorrel, harebell.
- Nightjar, woodlark, stonechat, tree pipit, stone-curlew, Dartford warbler.
- Silver-studded blue butterfly, grayling butterfly, ant-lion. Common lizard and adder.

Issues & Problems

- Lack of management by grazing or mowing, allowing bracken and scrub to invade.
- Disturbance caused by heavy recreational use, and other human impacts such as unauthorised camping or driving on the heaths.
- Loss of small areas to development, agriculture or amenity uses.

Objectives

- To protect all areas of heathland, however small, as a priority.
- To ensure long-term management, by light sheep grazing or (failing that) mowing, to retain heather and prevent invasion of bracken and scrub.
- To create new heathland especially in areas adjacent to existing heath or where it will connect two isolated areas of heathland.

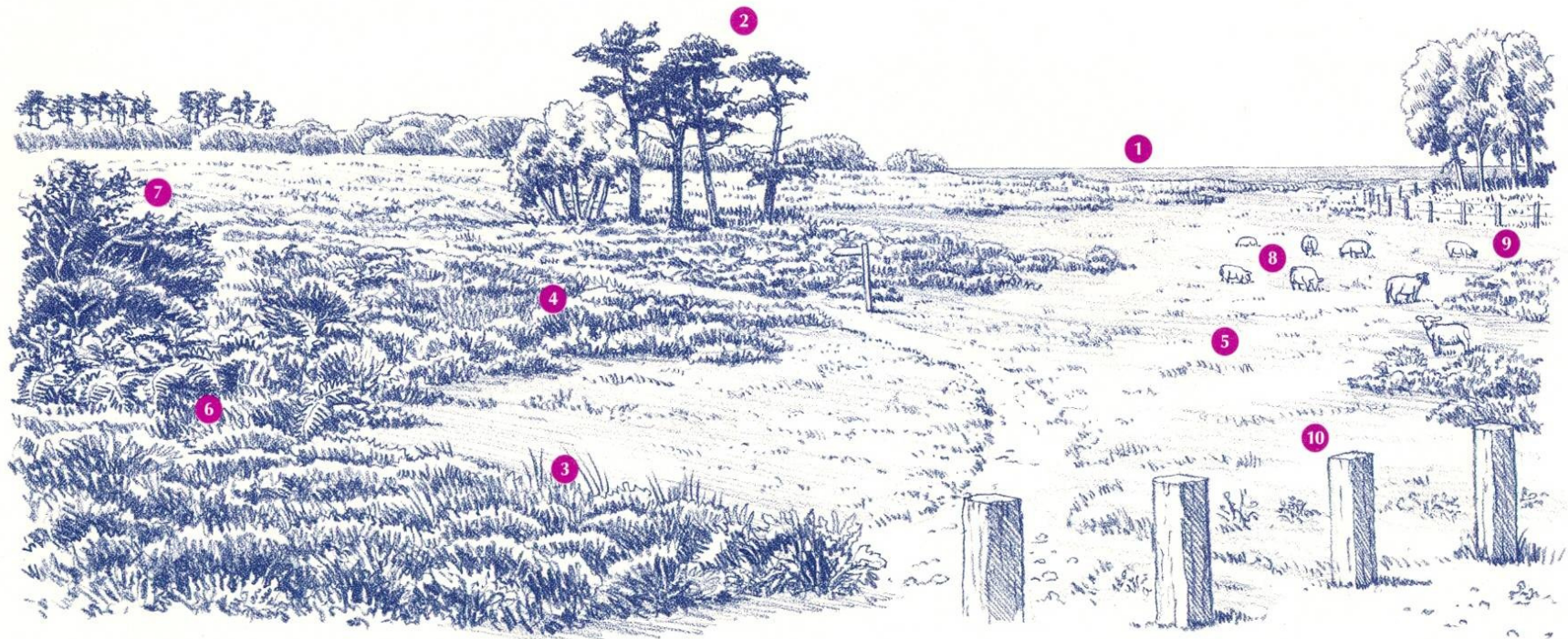
Tree & Shrub Planting

- Generally avoid all tree planting on heathland or acid grassland as trees shade out and destroy heather and other heathland plant species.



Management Guidelines

- 1 Retain the large-scale, wide-open character. Avoid planting on heathland and control excessive natural tree growth.
- 2 Some mature specimens of birch or pine may be retained as features of interest and visual contrast.
- 3 Vegetation should be dominated by heather and/or heathy (acid) grassland.
- 4 Encourage heather and manage it to ensure a variety of different growth phases.
- 5 Avoid use of fertiliser, herbicide, irrigation or reseeding with commercial grass mixes.
- 6 Control bracken by spraying or cutting to prevent it invading and dominating the heath.
- 7 Restrict scrub (especially gorse and birch) to discrete clumps, especially on the fringes of the heath, and prevent it from encroaching and dominating. Remaining areas of gorse can be managed by coppicing to provide structural diversity and to benefit certain bird species.
- 8 Introduce low-intensity sheep grazing where possible, and/or encourage rabbit grazing.
- 9 Position fencing along scrub blocks or at the edges of the heath to avoid breaking up open views.
- 10 Restrict damage and disturbance by unauthorised parking, driving or camping.



Landscape Character

The river and stream valleys are of a much smaller scale than the other landscape types in the Coast and Heaths, often with a quiet, intimate and enclosed atmosphere. The strong visual relationship between flat valley floor and the soft slopes of the valley sides is a key part of the character. An interesting mosaic of relatively small fields in traditional patterns, large hedges, veteran trees, woodland, copses and wetland features, often gives an impression of a 'forgotten' landscape.

The valley floor of larger stream and river valleys is often dominated by grassland giving pastoral scenes and lush verdant textures. The meandering watercourse may be fringed with lines of alders or occasional pollarded willows. There is usually a complex drainage system, often with marshy areas.

However, in small stream valleys, a more natural community of wet woodland with reed or sedge beds often develops.

On the valley slopes there is usually a mix of arable cropping (which in places, has come to dominate) and permanent grasslands, along with numerous woods and scrubland. A rich domesticated character is created by isolated farmsteads and hamlets on valley sides, but the floodplains remain largely unsettled.

An unusual case is found on the Shotley Peninsula, where the valley was flooded to create Alton Water reservoir.

Key Habitats & Species

Wet flower-rich grasslands

- Ragged robin, lady's smock, southern marsh orchid. Lapwing, redshank, water rail.

Rivers, streams and ditchlines

- Common reed, hornwort, milfoil, yellow water lily. Pike, roach and bream. Water vole and otter.

Hedgerows

- Song thrush, turtle dove. Small mammals. Veteran oaks and ashes.

Woodland, including ancient woodland

- Nightingale, nuthatch, woodpecker. Dog's mercury, bluebell, ransoms wild garlic. Badger.

Wet alder woodland and willow carr

- Marsh marigold, golden saxifrage, water mint. Marsh tit, redpoll, siskin in winter, lesser spotted woodpecker.

Dry grasslands on slopes

- Meadow pipit, skylark, grey partridge. Butterflies such as meadow brown, ringlet and wall brown.

Issues & Problems

- Minimal economic return from stock grazing or hay-making in valley floor meadows, with subsequent lack of management causing loss of flower species and invasion of scrub.

- Dominance of arable farming in some valleys, with its large scale, uniform fields and associated loss of features such as hedges and ponds.

Objectives

- For all arable land in the valley floor to be restored to permanent grassland or natural habitat.
- Create more wetland habitat in the valley floor by raising water levels.
- Protect and manage all old grasslands and wet flower-rich meadows.
- Retain a balanced mix of arable farming and grassland on the valley sides, especially encouraging grassland or permanent set-aside on the lower or steeper slopes.
- Retain the traditional field patterns and landscape features of hedges, trees and woodland.

Tree & Shrub Planting

- In general avoid planting blocks of trees or hedgelines across the valley floor, however, lines of scattered trees are characteristic along streams and rivers, and can be replanted. Choose crack or white willow or common alder.
- Species suitable for valley-side hedgerows or new woodlands include hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, hazel, holly, ash and oak.



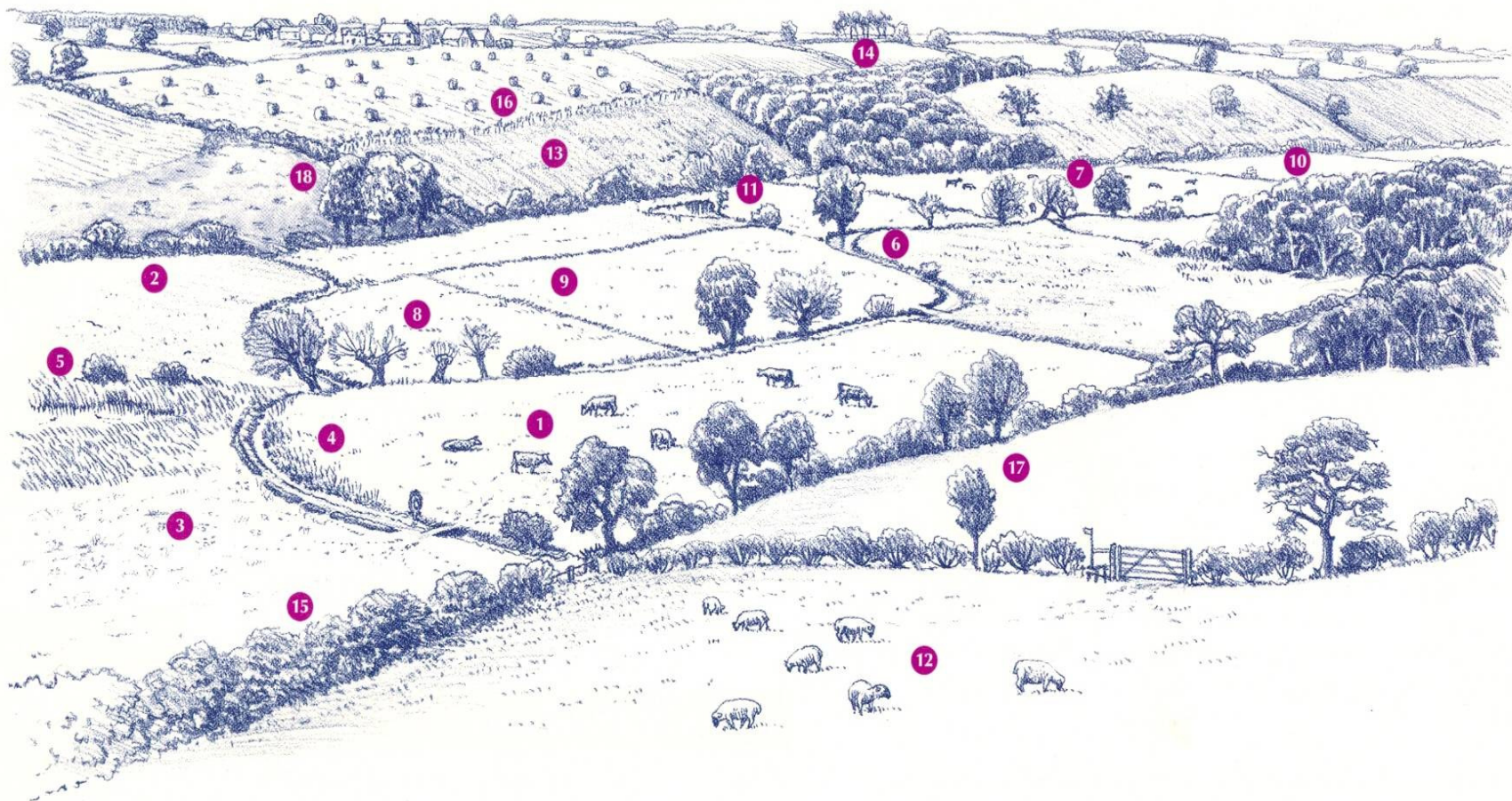
Management Guidelines

Valley Floor

- 1 Retain existing grassland and graze wherever possible.
- 2 Revert arable land to grassland.
- 3 Manage flower-rich meadows for conservation, by grazing or mowing and preventing scrub encroachment. Extend and re-create where possible.
- 4 Manage dykes sensitively according to conservation advice and retain high water levels.
- 5 In dry floodplain grasslands, raise water levels where possible to create wet grazing marshes or reedbeds.
- 6 Avoid creating large lakes or reservoirs in sensitive locations.
- 7 Retain lines or clumps of trees or shrubs along the river or stream.
- 8 Periodically re-pollard top-heavy willow pollard trees to prevent collapse.
- 9 In larger valleys the floodplain is characteristically open, so in general avoid tree planting.
- 10 In small valleys the valley floor may have wet woodland and scrub and carr, which can be retained.
- 11 Restore old ponds. New ponds may be appropriate but their size and location need to be carefully considered.

Valley Sides

- 12 Retain existing grasslands on the valley sides and maintain grazing.



- 13 If arable fields dominate the scene, where possible, revert arable land to grassland or permanent set-aside, especially on lower or steeper slopes.
- 14 Retain woodland, copses and areas of scrub on valley sides. New woods may be established on valley sides, especially on steeper slopes, if of an appropriate scale. Link them to existing woodlands if possible.

- 15 Protect hedgerows and manage them sympathetically (see general guidance), especially the hedgerow which marks the break of slope on the edge of the floodplain.
- 16 Replant lost hedgerows.
- 17 Allow new hedgerow trees to grow on.
- 18 Retain, re-create and manage scrub and heathy areas.

Landscape Character

Sheltered from the impact of the North Sea, the distinctive character common to all of the five major estuaries of the Coast and Heaths is large-scale, wide-open landscape but one which is peaceful and tranquil. The farmed and wooded slopes of the valley side provide a contrasting backdrop, whilst flocks and calls of birds add to the ambience.

The landscape is dominated by the estuary itself, which is constantly changing from mudflats crossed by meandering rivulets at ebb tide, to a brimming lake of water at high tide. Patterns of moored yachts cluster round attractive shoreline villages, often typified by weathered jetties and other trappings of boating life.

The estuary is fringed in many parts by undisturbed saltmarsh, rich in flora and fauna, whereas in the upper reaches beds of swaying reeds sometimes develop. Elsewhere reclaimed land takes the form of grazing marsh; an expanse of perfectly flat grassland, largely devoid of trees, extending to the horizon. However, texture and interest is created by subtle changes in the vegetation, herds of grazing cattle, reed-fringed dykes and occasional scrapes or pools.

In some areas the Valley Floor has been heavily drained for arable cropping creating a more featureless and bleak landscape.

Key Habitats & Species

Marine Environment

- Bass, eels, whiting and other fish.

Grazing marsh

- Lapwing, snipe, redshank, yellow wagtail, brent and white-fronted goose, short-eared owl, marsh harrier. Dyke plant communities. Small mammals.

Mudflats

- Dunlin, knot, shelduck, black-tailed godwit, oystercatcher, red shank. Cockles, ragworm and other mud invertebrates.

Saltmarsh

- Skylark, oystercatcher, curlew, redshank, wigeon, grey plover, brent goose. Sea lavender, glasswort (samphire) sea purslane, sea aster.

Reedbed

- Reed and sedge warbler, reed bunting, water rail. Water vole.

Issues & Problems

- Significant areas of grazing marsh have been converted to arable farming in previous decades.
- Many of the remaining grazing marshes are well drained, so reducing their wildlife value.
- Lack of grazing herds, especially those able to cope with wet, rough grazing marshes, which tend to have the highest conservation value.

- Erosion of mud flats and saltings, in part due to them being squeezed against sea walls as sea levels rise.
- Recreational pressure caused by the growth of marinas, moorings, baitdigging for fishing etc.

Objectives

- Retain the open character of the landscape.
- Protect existing grazing marshes and dyke systems, and manage sympathetically. Support grazing, to ensure a relatively short and well managed sward and raise water tables on the marshes, wherever possible.
- Return all arable areas to grazing marsh or saltmarsh/mudflat.
- Allow 'managed retreat' of estuarine habitats (saltmarsh and mudflat) onto suitable areas of reclaimed land behind the sea wall.

Tree & Shrub Planting

- Generally tree and hedge planting is not appropriate on the floodplain, sea wall or saltmarsh.
- If there are already lines of alder or small copses or clumps of scrub these can be enhanced but restrict additional planting to existing species or use common alder, goat willow and blackthorn.



Management Guidelines

- 1 Development should be very strongly controlled on valley floor. Any unavoidable structures, such as pumping stations should be located on edge of floodplain and well screened.
- 2 In general avoid tree planting as typically the landscape has wide-open aspect with few trees.
- 3 However, retain occasional scrub or lines/groups of alders or willows.
- 4 Retain grassland, and resist conversion to arable use.
- 5 Graze with cattle.
- 6 Maintain grassland as wet as possible, encouraging flooding and/or scrapes in winter.
- 7 Wherever possible, keep dykes with high water levels and manage sensitively.
- 8 Limit the amount of fencing used – instead use dykes as natural barriers to stock.
- 9 Manage reedbeds and prevent the encroachment of scrub.
- 10 Coastal habitats (saltmarsh and mudflat) can be established behind the sea wall (especially on ex-arable land).
- 11 Protect saltmarsh.
- 12 Protect mudflat.
- 13 Retain old structures and derelict wooden boats, where they create a feature.



14 Protect the trees or hedgeline which marks the break of slope at the edge of the floodplain, and manage if required.

Arable Dominated Valley Floor – not illustrated

- Revert arable land to grassland, wetland or estuarine habitat, where possible.
- Where reversion is not possible create an uncropped margin alongside ditches and other watercourses and create scrapes or ponds in marginal areas.

Landscape Character

This landscape is distinguished by its long sweeping slopes which create a backdrop to the estuaries themselves. The valley sides are a large-scale mosaic of different land uses including arable, grassland, parkland and woodland. There is quite a strong pattern of field boundaries with hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and the slopes are well wooded in many parts. Isolated farmsteads and small villages or hamlets can be found, as well as majestic historic houses set in extensive tracts of parkland.

Key Habitats & Species

Hedgerows

- Yellowhammer, tree sparrow, bullfinch, whitethroat, linnet, turtle dove. Small mammals.

Parkland

- Veteran trees with dead wood for invertebrates. Nuthatch, woodpecker, tawny owl. Bats.

Farmland

- Grey partridge, skylark, finch and bunting flocks. Brown hare.

Woodland

- Nightingale, nuthatch, woodpecker. Dog's mercury, bluebell, ransoms wild garlic. Badger.

Issues & Problems

- Domination of large arable fields at expense of other land use.
- Loss of hedges and other key features.
- Decline of some historic parkland, including the conversion of original pasture to arable use.
- Intrusive developments can be visible over considerable distances due to shape of the valley.

Objectives

- Retain as much diversity of land use as possible and prevent arable fields from dominating the landscape.
- Retain and manage key features such as hedgerows and woodlands.
- Ensure that development is not visually intrusive.
- Conserve and restore historic parkland.
- Encourage landowners to undertake conservation measures, for example, through agri-environment schemes.

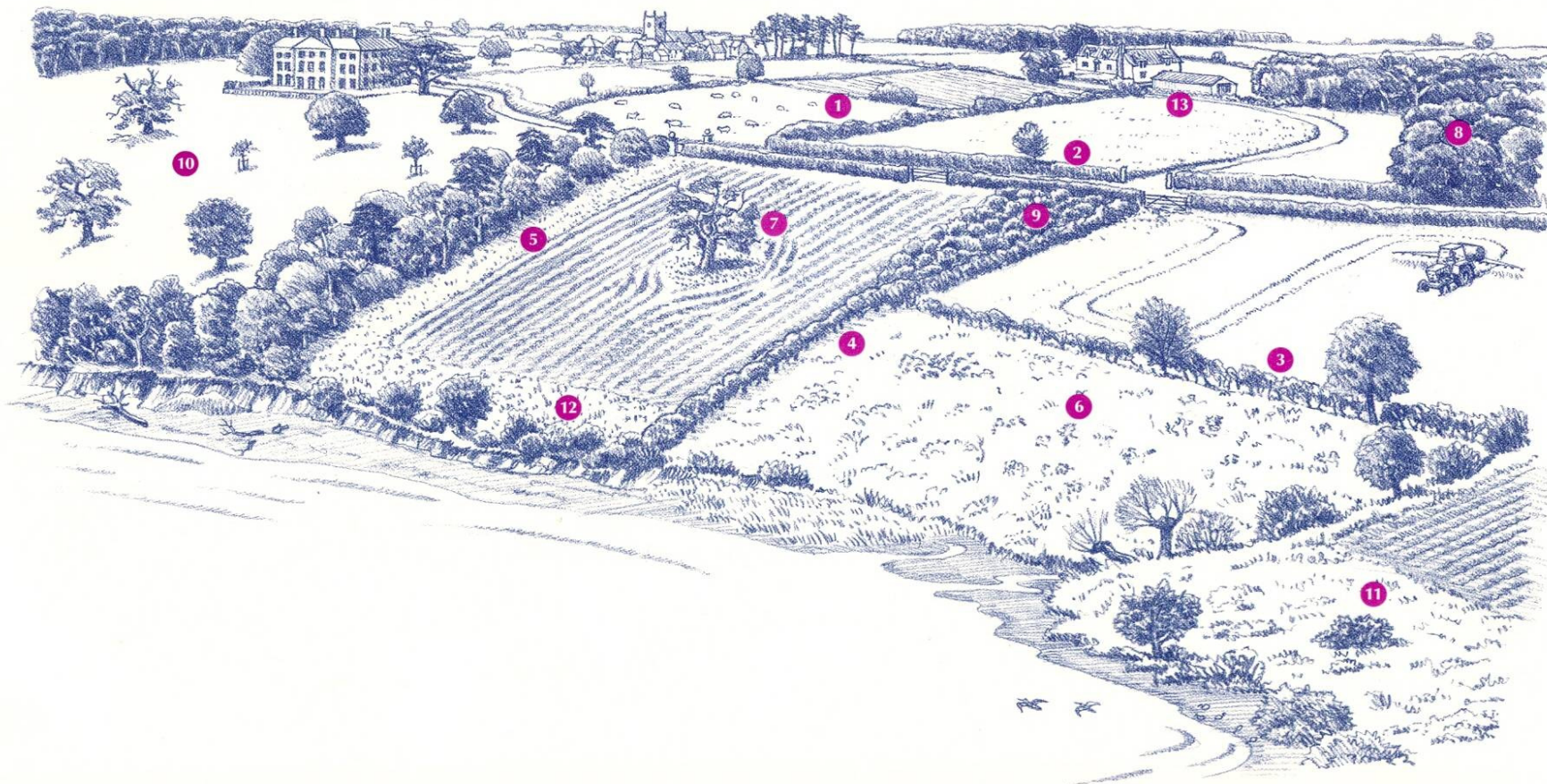
Tree & Shrub Planting

- Suitable species of hedgerows or woodland include hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, hazel, holly, oak and ash.
- In parkland there is often a much wider range of, often non-native, ornamental species, which may have been planted as part of the historic landscape design. Re-plant using the same species as already present.



Management Guidelines

- 1 Retain mosaic of grassland, arable and woodland land use.
- 2 Retain strong field boundaries marked by hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- 3 Restore hedgerows by filling in gaps and managing sympathetically.
- 4 Plant new hedgerows across large fields, ideally on old boundary lines.
- 5 Introduce field margins alongside hedgerows, ditches, woods etc.
- 6 Permanent set-aside land can be used to good effect on agriculturally poor land.
- 7 Protect veteran trees, particularly by avoiding ploughing under the crown.
- 8 Retain and manage woodlands and copses. Woodlands are typically mixed, but broadleaved species should predominate over conifers.
- 9 New woodland can be established through planting or natural regeneration, providing it is not sited on land with existing habitat value.
- 10 Retain parkland as grassland and restore historic features if required.
- 11 Create areas of grassland, heathland or scrub from marginal farmland, especially near the shore.
- 12 Where arable land reaches the shore, establish an uncropped 'buffer strip'.
- 13 Avoid intrusive developments due to high level of visibility from distance.



Landscape Character

These saucer-shaped shallow valleys which lead up to the coastline were once small open estuaries. Now they are sealed by a shingle bar across their mouth. The flat valley floor often has a very natural character created by reedbed, open water and grazing marsh. The gentle slopes of the valley sides are often well clothed with scrub and native woodland but heathland is also an important feature along with some mixed farmland.

Coastal Valleys are remote and largely uninhabited with very little development, although there may be an occasional isolated house or farmstead on the valley sides or an historic windpump which creates a point of interest.

Many of the Coastal Valleys are under some form of conservation management, however, in some places the valleys have been all or partly converted to intensive arable farmland, which creates a much bleaker, homogenous landscape.

Key Habitats & Species

Grazing marsh

- Teal, wigeon, gadwall, white-fronted goose, lapwing, snipe, redshank, yellow wagtail, short-eared and barn owl.

Scrapes and lagoons

- Redshank, avocet, common tern. Starlet sea-anemone.

Reedbed

- Bittern, bearded tit, marsh harrier, reed and sedge warbler. White-mantled wainscot moth. Otter and water vole.

Natural oak woodland

- Hobby, redstart, turtle dove.

Issues & Problems

- Lack of grazing herds, especially those capable of grazing wet, rough swards.
- Many areas are in conservation ownership and need support.
- Valley floor habitats are at risk of salt water flooding with sea level rise, with subsequent requirements for sea defences such as bunds to protect them.
- Negative effect of conversion to intensive arable production in some coastal valleys.

Objectives

- Retain diverse mix of semi-natural habitats and increase numbers of associated rare species.
- Support management of habitats such as reed cutting and the grazing of marshland.
- Protect freshwater habitats wherever possible, but allow conversion to saltwater habitat as sea levels rise.
- Find alternative sites for the re-creation of freshwater habitats further inland.

Arable Dominated Coastal Valleys

- In valley floor, revert arable land to grazing marsh or wetland such as reedbed or lagoons.
- Where reversion is not possible, restore features such as ditches, dykes, hedgerows and woodland on field boundaries, field corners and marginal land.

Tree & Shrub Planting

Valley Floor

- In general it is best to avoid entirely any tree or shrub planting on the flat valley floor.

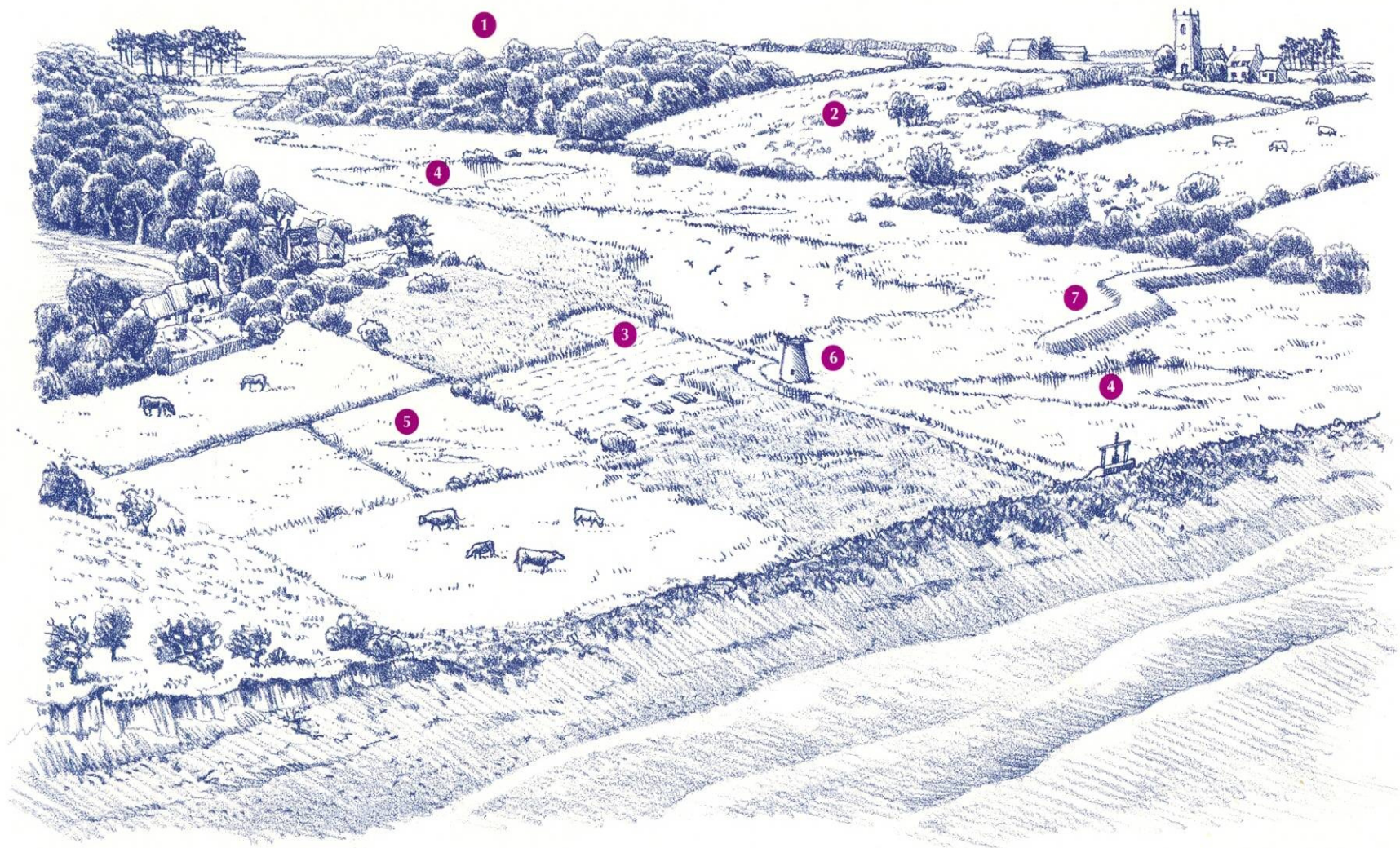
Valley Sides

- In native woodlands it is preferable to rely on natural regeneration of existing species.
- Planted woodland can be restocked, and new woods created using the following species: oak, ash, hawthorn, field maple, hazel, blackthorn or other species which occur naturally in the locality. Small proportions of pines are acceptable providing they do not create a hard 'edge' or a dominant block in the valley landscape.
- New hedgerows on the valley sides are not normally a top priority, however, gaps in existing hedgerows should be replanted using a mix including hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple (and hazel on heavier soils), with oak and ash as tree species.



Management Guidelines

- 1 Retain wooded lower slopes. Where viable, conifer plantations are best reverted to native broadleaved trees.
- 2 Retain and manage heathland – see 'Sandlings Plateau with Heathland' guideline for more details.
- 3 Retain areas of reedbed. Maintain cutting and conservation management regime.
- 4 Protect lagoons or scrapes near the coast where feasible, or re-create inland if they are threatened by coastal erosion or flooding. Create new scrapes or lagoons where appropriate.
- 5 Where possible, keep high water levels in grazing marshes and graze regularly.
- 6 Protect historic features from decline.
- 7 Ensure all new bunds or banks are absolutely essential and designed as sympathetically as possible, avoiding overly regular and angular forms. Ensure that they are not seeded with amenity or commercial grass mix but allowed to vegetate naturally.



Arable Dominated Coastal Valleys

(not illustrated)

- In valley floor revert arable land to grazing marsh or wetland such as reedbed.
- Where reversion is not possible ensure ditches and dykes have uncropped margins or buffer strips alongside.
- Create scrapes or ponds in marginal areas.
- On valley sides restore hedgerows and woodland features and allow field corners to develop grassland or scrub.

Landscape Character

The Coastline landscape type is restricted to a narrow strip directly adjacent to the North Sea and is therefore wild, windswept and remote. The sea itself is the primary influence, creating movement and change as erosion and deposition takes place along the coastline.

Low crumbling cliffs, comprised of sands and crags give way to sand dunes or long unremitting shingle beaches often steeply raked close to the shore. Slightly inland, these loose sediments have stabilised somewhat and a flower-rich maritime vegetation often develops. Shallow lagoons are also found here and much of the area is designated for its specialised wildlife value.

Landmarks break the horizon including church towers, lighthouses, Martello towers and perhaps at a less sympathetic scale, Sizewell Power Station. A jumble of concrete WW2 defences, and remnants of old sea defences sometimes give the area a rather unkempt but distinctive feel. In places rows of small houses or fishing huts seem to rise out of the beach, and along with fishermen's boats and pulleys this adds to the evocative and old-fashioned character of the coast.

A rarity in south-east England, this coastline is, for the most part, undeveloped and uncommercialised, with few roads and settlements apart from small historic towns such as Southwold and Aldeburgh and attractive villages like Walberswick and Dunwich.

Key Habitats & Species

Shingle

- Little tern, ringed plover. Sea pea, yellow horned poppy, sea kale.

Cliffs

- Sand martins.

Strand Line

- Specialist invertebrates.

Coastal heath

- Meadow pipit, stonechat. Sea campion, sea holly, lichen and moss species.

Sand dunes

- Meadow pipit, skylark.

Coastal lagoons

- Avocet, wintering wildfowl. Starlet sea anemone.

Issues & Problems

- Future loss of features caused by coastal erosion and flooding, coupled with the inability of habitats and landscape features to 'migrate' inland.
- Risk of new intrusive coastal defences as demand for coastal protection rise.
- Car parking on or near the beach and trampling and disturbance by visitors.
- Suburbanisation of properties and facilities on the coast.
- Beach litter.

Objectives

- Ensure that low-lying habitats are replaced further inland as the coastline alters and sea levels rise.
- Create and maintain a semi-natural fringe of woodland, scrub, grassland or heathland on cliff tops which can migrate inland as the cliffs erode.
- Minimise artificial coastal defences.
- Enable visitors to enjoy the coast without causing damage.
- Avoid suburbanisation, prettifying and overtidying.

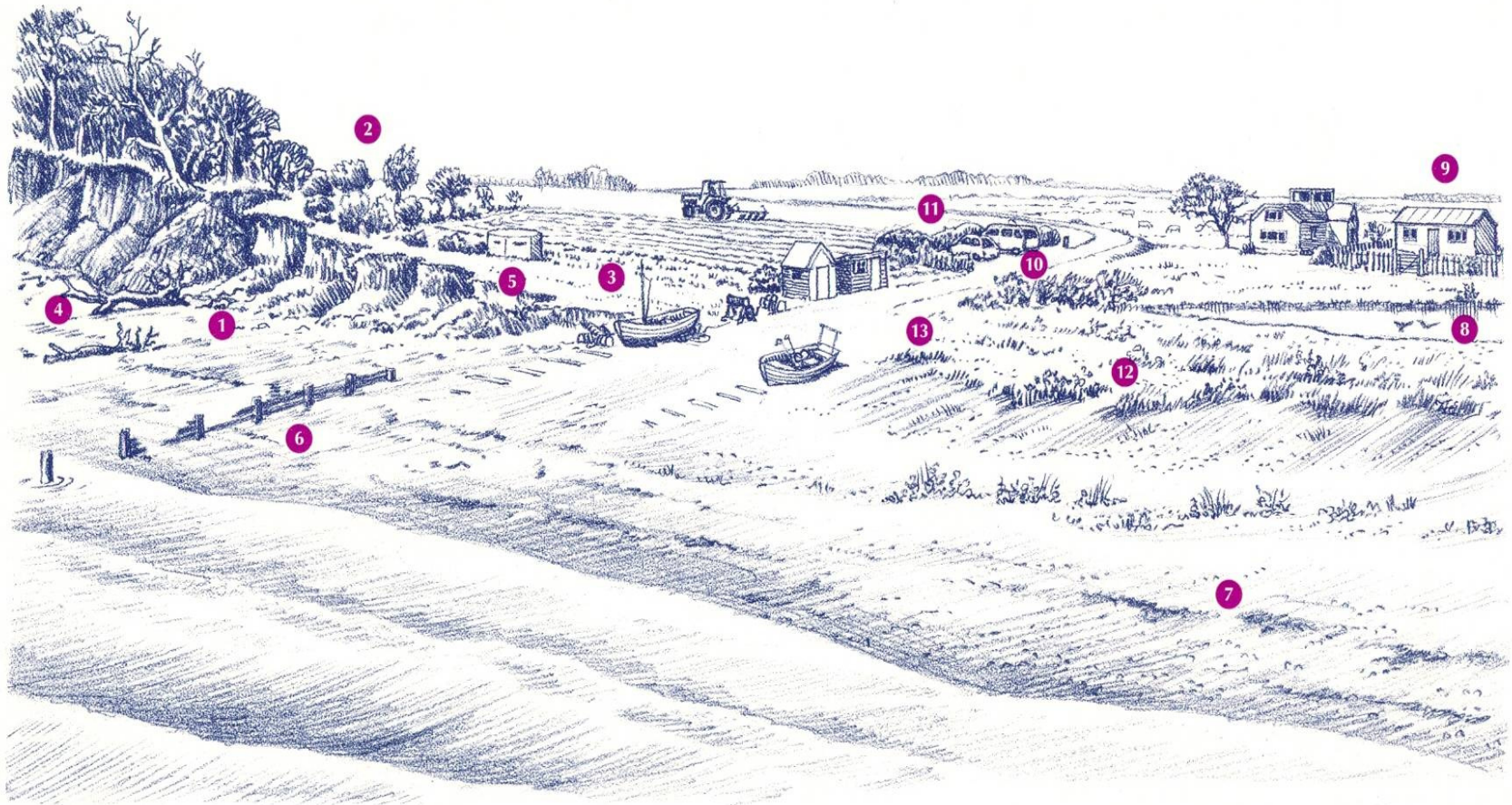
Tree & Shrub Planting

- On cliff tops planting and natural regeneration can be used to extend existing woods and shelterbelts, especially inland. In general, use species which are already present in the wood such as oak and Scots pine, with hawthorn and blackthorn as shrubs. Sycamore is less desirable but acceptable if other species do not survive.
- Planting elsewhere on the coast is usually best avoided as conditions are usually too harsh for trees and apart from low growing shrubs they are not a characteristic feature. If, however, planting for screening or shelter is essential choose native species if at all possible, such as blackthorn and hawthorn. If none will survive try tamarisk, maritime pine, white poplar, holm oak and sycamore. Avoid more ornamental salt-tolerant species wherever possible except in built-up areas.



Management Guidelines

- 1 Avoid erecting hard concrete, or block sea defences at the foot of cliffs wherever possible.
- 2 Where cliffs are eroding, establish new areas of scrub, trees or woodland inland from existing woods or shelterbelts.
- 3 Avoid ploughing close to the cliff edge. Establish a grassy or heathy 'buffer strip' of at least 6m between crops and the cliff edge and allow this to migrate inland as the cliff erodes.
- 4 Large trees, which have fallen to the beach, should be left in situ wherever possible.
- 5 Protect historic features such as pillboxes or Martello towers, wherever possible.
- 6 Retain old groynes or other wooden coastal structures, where feasible.
- 7 Remove litter, but organic debris and driftwood should be left on the beach strand line.
- 8 Protect lagoons where possible, or recreate inland if they are threatened by coastal erosion.
- 9 Gardens, fences and other domestic paraphernalia should not encroach onto the beach.
- 10 Restrict cars to roads and designated parking places to avoid erosion and eyesores on the beach.
- 11 Design car parks to be in keeping with the surroundings and screen where possible.



12 Protect coastal vegetation (especially that on shingle and dunes) and ground nesting birds. Minimise erosion, damage or disturbance by visitors, or works machinery etc. by careful management of access or the use of discrete or temporary fencing or signing.

13 Allow disturbed or bare ground to vegetate naturally with native coastal plants and grasses, or use a specially designed grass mix. Avoid standard amenity or commercial grass mixes.