



# The setting and surroundings of Dunmow – Detailed assessment and key issues

**The TDS has drawn attention to many aspects of the setting of the town – that is the edge of the built up area and the wider landscape. These contribute to the character of Dunmow in a very significant way. Whilst there are a few ‘protected’ areas such as site of Nature Conservation Importance on the whole this setting would be considered as simply countryside or agricultural land. It is therefore important to identify those aspects of it which should be retained, protected or enhanced in some way if development were to take place.**

## **North east**

The approach to Dunmow from the north rises distinctly from the Chelmer where it is crossed by the Thaxted Road over agricultural land to the edge of development around parsonage farm – a collection of low buildings interspersed with a number of trees and buffered by hedges. This slope is contained by the sweep of the Chelmer as it swings to pass St Mary’s Church. The church and its dense screen of trees is a very prominent feature over most of this sector from many points of view. The fields here are large and the hedge pattern is weak and sporadic. The Chelmer is hemmed in by agricultural land and is inaccessible. Nevertheless the foot path and bridleway offers a broad

panorama and leads to the town through the Church and cemetery and by Bigods Farm to the Stebbing Road. This road is private but can be busy and does not provide safe pedestrian route. North eastwards the land rise again to the open countryside that leads to Stebbing. South of the Stebbing Road the edge of the town is marked by St Edmunds Lane with its ribbon of development on the east side. Immediately to the east of St Edmunds Lane the fringe of agricultural land is bordered by tall trees with denser woodland beyond. Footpaths lead out into this rolling countryside which is a distinct contrast with the view to the west over the Chelmer again to buildings and woodland in the town, the views from the east side of St Edmunds Lane are extensive.

## **Key issues**

- The openness of the approach from the Chelmer Valley
- The small scale of the buildings on the northern edge of the town
- The views of the tower of St Mary’s church
- The stands of trees on the high ground and around the church
- The footpath route around the north east sector
- The wide open landscape from the east
- The distinct edge of the town at Church End
- The views over the town and the features of the church tower and clock house.

## South east

At the south end of St Edmunds Lane the new bowling club is a sudden intrusion into this rural fringe and introduces a hard urban feature with access road and curbs. The development has not been well integrated into the landscape. The Chelmer again provides an attractive green view with the fields rising distinctly to Dunmow Park. The edge of the town is very distinct at this point. The Chelmer turns south as it passes under the Braintree Road and gives distant views over agricultural land to the south east.

Soon the intrusion of the A120 and the old by-pass are felt and south east edge of the town is marked by the old A120 and the two industrial estates along the Chelmsford Road. The A120 and the roundabout beyond provide a major barrier, visual and in other ways to the countryside leading to Barnston.

### Key Issues

- The setting of the Chelmer and the views of the church tower northwards
- The distinct rural edge on the east side of St Edmunds Lane
- The important tree belts east of St Edmunds Lane and the woodland around Merks Hall
- The views out to open country south east over the Chelmer
- The open landscape of the Chelmer and the slope rising to Dunmow Park
- The visual confusion that affects the southern entrance to the town – Chelmsford Road and the Braintree Road

## South West

The effect of the A120 continues westwards – it cuts off the town from the countryside around the Canfields and lays a blanket of noise over a very substantial distance. Crossing it is restricted to the Roding's Bridge or the rather unappealing tunnel to the west. Between the A120 and the former railway line and the B 1256 Stortford Road and to the west of the Lukins Estate lies a shallow valley. Two extensive areas of woodland Olives Wood and Ash Grove occupy the slopes and both are identified as of nature conservation importance and may be ancient woodland. They provide an important visual feature, a very attractive amenity and most important an area of significant biodiversity in close proximity to the town. The edge of the town seen from here is screened to a significant degree by the dense fringe of trees along the by pass which leads out westwards along the Flich Way and the old railway line again vital amenity and recreational route.

### Key Issues

- The intrusion of the A120 by-pass
- The importance of the landscape fringe to the northern edge of the A120
- The value of Olives Wood and Ash Grove for biodiversity landscape and amenity
- The hedge screening of the B 1256
- The role of the Flich Way in biodiversity and recreation
- The footpath link over the B 1256 into the heart of the town

## North West

The land becomes flatter to the North West and the edge of the town is marked by Folly Farm and the Stortford Road. Beyond lies the massive extent of the Woodlands Park estate and the Tesco store. Westwards the land is a plateau of varying relief but with extensive woodland. This woodland provides a strong visual feature in views from the western edge of the town.

The new western bypass has effectively cut through this mature landscape and has destroyed the fringe of the woodland that is 'protected' as a nature conservation area. It has also severed the footpath leading to Little Easton manor and church. The by pass once open will be a major source of visual intrusion and noise.

### Key Issues

- The importance of Hoglands Wood and Broomhills and Fredericks Spring in biodiversity and landscape terms
- The views to the undulating landscapes north east
- The importance of trees in the landscape
- The footpath network linking the town to the Eastons

