



Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan
SD19 Landscape and Visual Assessment
of Mendlesham



The Parish Of Mendlesham
Neighbourhood Plan

Supporting Document SD19
Landscape and Visual Assessment
of Mendlesham

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1.0 Introduction

This report highlights the main landscape and visual assessment of key views around Mendlesham village. Landscape is defined in the European Landscape Convention as ‘...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors’ (Council of Europe, 2000). Visual or visual amenity considerations relate specifically to the views of a landscape afforded to people. These separate but related issues form the basis for landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA).

The remainder of this report sets out the methodology used to undertake the assessment, the baseline conditions, mitigation measures, and an assessment of impacts which takes into account mitigation measures that are integral to the proposed development. A conclusions section completes the report.

2.0 Methodology

The assessment process has been carried out based on ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition’ (Landscape Institute, LI, and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, IEMA, 2013). The overarching study area includes the main roads surrounding Mendlesham village. (Approximately 1km from the boundary edge of the village.)

3.0 Baseline Evaluation

Baseline conditions are defined by landscape character and respective sensitivity, together with visual amenity (as represented by views) and the sensitivity of visual receptors (or potential viewers), in accordance with the criteria set out below.

Table 1 Definitions of Landscape Sensitivity

Level of Sensitivity	Definition of Sensitivity Examples
High	Typically of high importance and rarity, national scale, and limited potential for substitution (e.g. National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Landscape unlikely to tolerate change of the type proposed.
Medium	Typically of moderate importance and rarity, regional scale, and limited potential for substitution (e.g. Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas). Landscape likely to tolerate some change of the type proposed.
Low	Typically of low importance and rarity, local scale, such as undesignated or degraded landscapes. Landscape has potential to tolerate change of the type proposed.

Table 2 Definitions of Visual Sensitivity

Level of Sensitivity	Definition of Sensitivity Examples
High	Views from important landscapes where appreciation of affected views may be the principal activity. Residential properties.
Medium	Views from local public rights of way, cycle trails, public open space or regionally/locally important landscapes, where attention may be focused on an affected view.
Low	Views from roads and railways which are transient due to travelling through the landscape. Places of work or commercial properties, where attention is unlikely to be focussed on affected views.

Relevant desk-based information has been obtained from Natural England and Ordnance Survey. Field survey work was undertaken during winter 2015. At this time of year, deciduous trees and shrubs are without leaves and as such there is greater visibility within the landscape than in summer months (when there is deciduous leaf cover). Viewpoints have been selected to represent the range of visual receptors, predominately those towards Mendlesham village which may be affected by future proposed development, and views affected, against which visual sensitivity was assessed. Viewpoint photographs were taken in accordance with LI guidance (LI, 2011) using a digital single lens reflex (SLR) camera, with lens selected to provide the digital equivalent of 50 mm focal length for a 35 mm film format SLR camera. Photographs were then stitched together to generate a panorama spanning a minimum of approximately ninety degrees in the direction of the proposed development (the full extent of view that would be experienced by the viewer at the selected viewpoint, when facing in that direction).

4.0 Assessment

The criteria and threshold matrices used to assess the magnitude of impact and significance of landscape and visual effects are set out below. (Impacts would be assessed at any potential development construction phases).

Table 3 Assigning Magnitude of Landscape Impact

Level of Magnitude	Definition of Magnitude
High	Total loss of or major alteration to key landscape characteristics such that landscape character will be fundamentally changed.
Medium	Partial loss of or alteration to key landscape characteristics such that landscape character will be partially changed.
Low	Minor loss of or alteration to key landscape characteristics such that landscape character will be similar to the baseline conditions.
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to key landscape characteristics such that change in landscape character will be barely distinguishable from the baseline conditions, approximating to the “no change” situation.

Table 4 Assigning Magnitude of Visual Impact

Level of Magnitude	Definition of Magnitude
High	Major change in existing view.
Medium	Partial change in existing view.
Low	Minor change in existing view such that view largely unchanged.
Negligible	Very inconspicuous change in existing view, approximating to the ‘no change’ situation.

A combined assessment of sensitivity and magnitude is undertaken to determine how significant an effect is, as set out in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Significance Matrix

MAGNITUDE	High	Moderate	Moderate / Major	Major
	Medium	Minor / Moderate	Moderate	Moderate / Major
	Low	Minor	Minor / Negligible	Moderate
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
	Low	Medium	High	
	SENSITIVITY			

Effects may be positive or negative. Applying the precautionary principle, this assessment identifies potential effects as negative although it should be noted that any development may not be regarded by all as having an adverse effect. Only those effects that are recorded as major negative are considered to be significant in respect of the decision making process (as shaded on Table 5).

For this exercise it is assumed that a typical 2 storey residential development is proposed, abutting Mendlesham village.

5.0 Base line

Landscape Designations

Defining the landscape character of an area will shape future development, and affect the setting in which people live and work in Mid Suffolk.

The majority of the landscape of the Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan area is classified as Arable land. This is the same for the surrounding Parishes. There are areas classified as Grassland, most of which are connected to the suburban areas. There are two areas of land classified as Woodland in the Parish area; one centrally and one in the south-west of the Parish.

The Mendlesham Neighbourhood Plan area features Grade 2 and 3 agricultural land. This means that the land is very good and good to moderate for agricultural use.

Government policy for England is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012 (paragraph 112). Decisions rest with the relevant planning authorities who should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.

The Agricultural Land Classification system classifies land into five grades, with Grade 3 subdivided into Sub-grades 3a and 3b. The best and most versatile land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a by policy guidance (see Annex 2 of NPPF). This is the land which is most flexible, productive and efficient in response to inputs and which can best deliver future crops for food and non-food uses such as biomass, fibres and pharmaceuticals.

Landscape Character

According to the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment, Mendlesham is located within the Plateau claylands landscape typology.

Key Characteristics: Gently rolling heavy clay plateaux

- Plateaux of heavy clay soil very gently undulating or flat dissected by small streams
- Ancient organic pattern of fields, some co-axial in the north-east
- Substantial hedges of hawthorn, blackthorn and elm with oak and ash predominant hedgerow trees
- Extensive areas of hedgerow loss creating “arable prairies”
- Dispersed settlement, villages with multiple nuclei, landscape scattered with farmsteads and hamlets
- Large greens – many now enclosed but with ‘ghost’ outlines – on the flatter parts; houses around their margins, but medieval churches are only very rarely present
- Rich stock of medieval and later vernacular buildings, but generally less glamorous than those in south Suffolk
- Large modern agricultural buildings a recurrent feature
- Redundant WWII airfields
- Almost no woodland
- Small copses in villages and around farmsteads
- A working landscape on which suburbanisation is only beginning to make an impact compared with other parts of the county

6.0 Landscape Sensitivity

Whilst some areas of the Mendlesham landscape is identified as being sensitive to development (due largely to rural characteristics, visual sensitivities and a general appreciation of wide views across the open arable landscape) with the careful consideration for retention and enhancement of local features, development in certain locations could be suitably integrated within the local landscape without resulting in significant disruption to local landscape character. Overall, taking into account that the local landscape is not designated, together with scope to accommodate a limited amount of development, this landscape is considered to have a medium sensitivity.

Visual Amenity

The selected viewpoints have been chosen to represent the key views towards Mendlesham village from the surrounding lanes, including the main entrance points into the village. Each of the view points selected have been taken as general view points to assess the quality of view from particular points towards the village, not to assess any specific development location, type, or other potential change to landuse.

Viewpoint 1: View from Oak Farm Lane looking North West

This view takes into account views towards Mendlesham village from the highest point of Oak Farm Lane. The view includes the gable end of the listed Elms Farm to the west. The absence of a landscape screening boundary on the southern boundary of Glebe Way creates an exposed view of houses and rear property boundaries. Oak Farm Lane is a very lightly trafficked road, but is popular with walkers. Taking this receptor into account, visual sensitivity is considered to be **low**. The view towards the valley over an expanse of arable fields needs to be balanced against the very light use of Oak Farm Lane and the hard edge of Glebe Way.

Viewpoint 2: View from Wash Lane looking North

Views across the arable fields show the topography of the flat landscape. St.Mary's church provides a key focal point. As with Oak Farm Lane, Wash Lane is a very lightly trafficked road, but is popular with walkers. Taking these receptors into account, visual sensitivity is **low**. The view towards Mendlesham village over an expanse of arable fields needs to be balanced against the very light use of Wash Lane and the hard edge of Glebe Way.

Viewpoint 3: View from Old Station Road looking South West towards the Millennium Woods

This view represents all users and modes of travel from/to a key entrance gateway into and out of Mendlesham village. Taking these receptors into account, visual sensitivity is considered to be **high**, The view is defined by the open space gap between the village and the woodland.

Viewpoint 4: View from Mill Road looking South East towards the school, playing fields and GR Warehouse site

This view represents all users and modes of travel to an entrance gateway into Mendlesham village. Although not a main entrance gateway, Mill Road is a well used secondary route. Taking these receptors into account, visual sensitivity is considered to be **medium**, The view is flat and open and is defined by the agricultural buildings/sheds on the GR site, although these have become largely screened by a belt of tree and hedge planting to mitigate their impact.

Viewpoint 5: View from Hobbies Lane looking East in line with overhead wires

This view represents all users and modes of travel, Hobbies Lane is a very lightly trafficked road. Views from Hobbies Lane are typically countryside views across arable fields and towards Mendlesham village, and St. Mary's church. Taking these receptors into account, visual sensitivity is considered to be **medium**. The view is open yet unspoilt, with the village edge obscured by hedgerows.

Viewpoint 6: View from Hobbies Lane looking East in from stream bridge

This view represents all users and modes of travel, Hobbies Lane is a very lightly trafficked road. Views from Hobbies Lane are typically countryside views across arable fields and towards Mendlesham village, and St. Mary's church. Taking these receptors into account, visual sensitivity is considered to be **medium**. The view is open yet unspoilt, with the village edge obscured by hedgerows.

Viewpoint 7: View from Mendlesham Road Lane looking South East

This view represents all users and modes of travel from/to a key entrance gateway into and out of Mendlesham village. Taking these receptors into account, visual sensitivity is considered to be **high**. The view is defined by long views towards the village which is screened with mature trees and hedge planting.

Viewpoint 8: View from Mendlesham Road Lane looking East

This view represents all users and modes of travel from/to a key entrance gateway into and out of Mendlesham village. Taking these receptors into account, visual sensitivity is considered to be **high**. The view is defined by the soft edge of the village with low rise properties visible through mature tree and hedge planting. Views to St.Mary's church provide both legibility and a destination indicator and should be protected.

Viewpoint 9: View from Chapel Road looking East in from stream bridge

This view represents all users and modes of travel from/to a key entrance gateway into and out of Mendlesham village. Taking these receptors into account, visual sensitivity is considered to be **high**. The view is defined by the gaps within hedgerows and the screened backs of properties on Mayfield Way.

Viewpoint 10: View from the corner of Church Road and Brockford Road looking East

This view represents all users and modes of travel from/to a key entrance gateway into and out of Mendlesham village and the conservation area. Taking these receptors into account, visual sensitivity is considered to be **high**. The view is defined by the gaps within hedgerows and tree planting and the openness of the historic churchyard, cemetery and the landmark lime trees that line Church Road.

Viewpoint a: View from Front Street looking East towards St. Mary's Church

This key view is key recommendation from the Conservation Area Appraisal, MSDC, 2008

Viewpoint b: View from Chapel Road looking South towards St. Mary's Church

This key view is key recommendation from the Conservation Area Appraisal, MSDC, 2008

Viewpoint c: View from Church Road looking North towards St. Mary's Church

This key view is key recommendation from the Conservation Area Appraisal, MSDC, 2008

7.0 Mitigation requirements

Areas of landscape that are temporarily disturbed during construction of any development throughout the parish would need to be restored on completion. During the design and planning stages of any proposed development due consideration for local landscape and visual considerations needs to be recognised and observed. In order to integrate any proposed development within the local landscape, appropriate levels of visual screening hedgerows, incorporating locally occurring species, should be proposed.

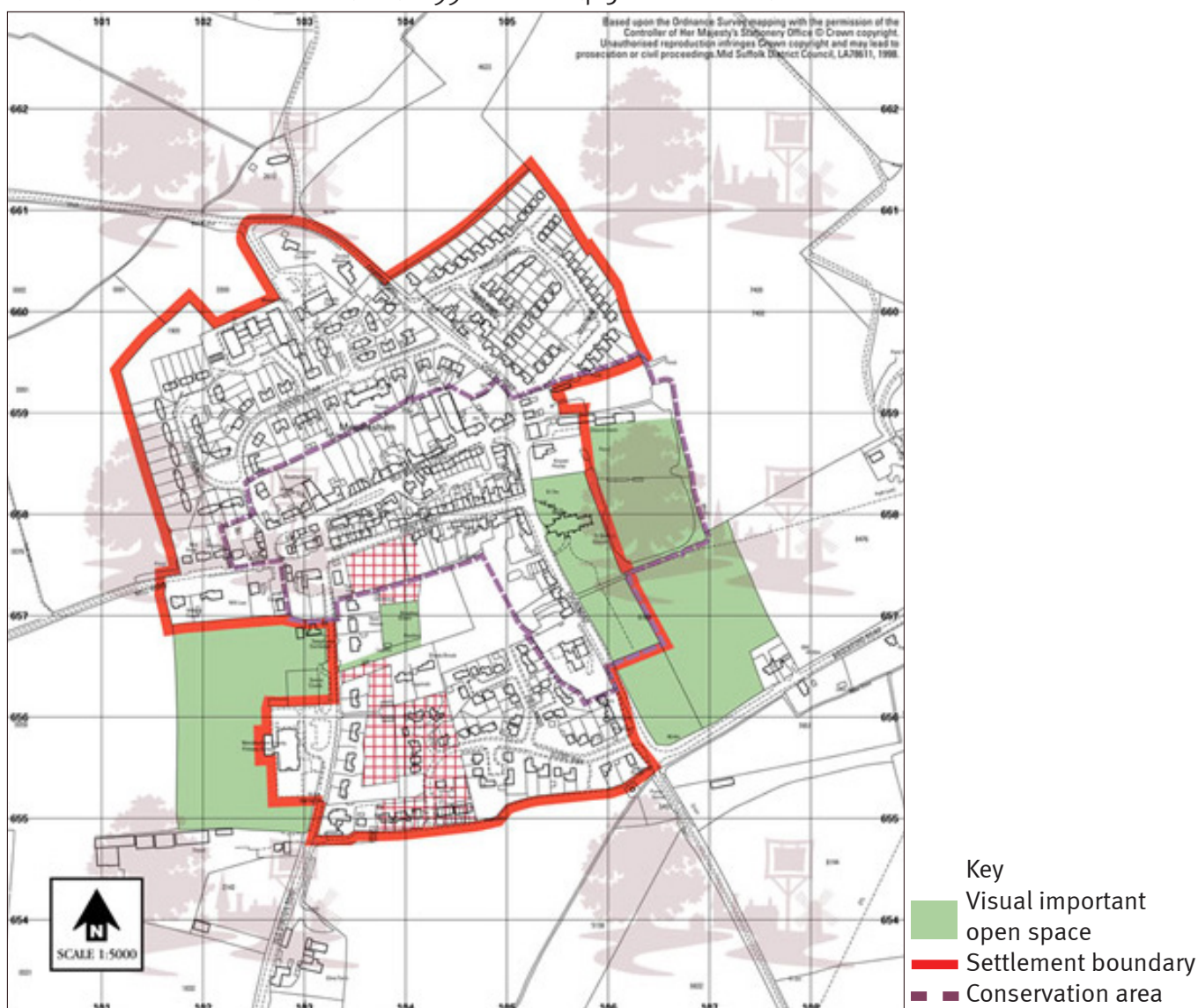
8.0 Conclusions

The potential landscape and visual implications that any new development may have on Mendlesham village must have been considered through comprehensive landscape and visual assessment in accordance with best practice guidance. Mendlesham falls within a landscape that is not designated however the sensitivities of certain areas (and views to and from the village) would still impact on the surrounding landscape characteristics (arable farmland). In particular less sensitive areas, the impact on visibility could be contained by woodland and hedgerows in the landscape, limiting views of the proposed development. Overall, any proposed development would need to demonstrate that the visual sensitivities of the proposals have been carefully integrated into the local landscape.

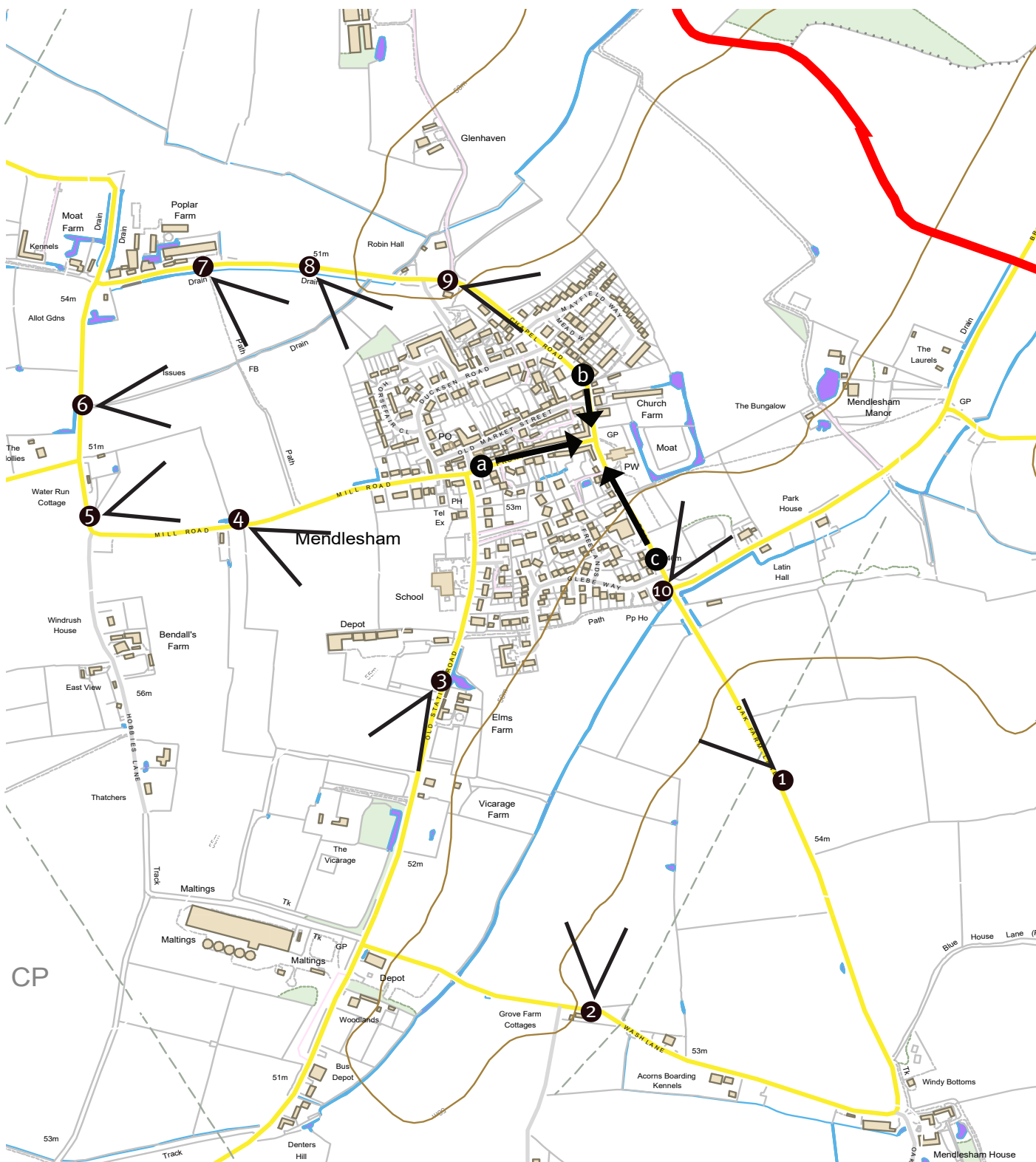
References

- Mendlesham Conservation Area Appraisal, MSDC 2008
Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. LI, 2011
Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment: Third Edition, LI & IEMA, 2013
Countryside Character, Countryside Agency, 1999

Mid Suffolk District Council Local Plan 1998 Insert map 52A Mendlesham



9.0 View location map (fig. 6.7)



Scale



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10.0 Key views and analysis

Viewpoint 1: View from Oak Farm Lane looking North West



View 2: View from Wash Lane looking North



Viewpoint 3: View from Old Station Road looking South West towards the Millennium Woods



Viewpoint 4: View from Mill Road looking South East towards the school, playing fields and GR Warehouse site



Viewpoint 5: View from Hobbies Lane looking East in line with overhead wires



Viewpoint 6: View from Hobbies Lane looking East in from stream bridge



Viewpoint 7: View from Mendlesham Road Lane looking South East



Viewpoint 8: View from Mendlesham Road Lane looking East



Viewpoint 9: View from Chapel Road looking East in from stream bridge



Viewpoint 10: View from the corner of Church Road and Brockford Road looking East

