

Stonebridge: An Initial Assessment of its Historic Landscape Character

By Stephen Rippon

Foreword

This report was prepared in the Spring of 2011 by Professor Stephen Rippon of the Archaeology Department, University of Exeter, with the assistance of Essex County Council for Southend Borough Council. It focuses on the origins and development of the ‘historic landscape’ (i.e. the present-day pattern of fields, roads and settlements), and follows Catherine Bickmore Associates’s (2009) *Southend-on-Sea: Proposed Countryside Access Scoping Study* which provides the planning background to the project.

In recent years the term ‘historic landscape’ has been developed within both academic research and heritage management to emphasise the remarkable time-depth that is present within the modern pattern of settlements, roads, fields, and land-uses which, in different parts of the country, can have relatively recent, medieval, Roman, or even prehistoric origins. The Stonebridge area is an excellent example of this with important features surviving from all these periods, in what is both a typical piece of Essex coastal landscape and a place with particular qualities of its own.

This report is divided into three parts. Part 1 defines the study area, and outlines the sources and methods used. The specialist terminology is also introduced. In Part 2 there is a summary discussion aimed at the non-specialist in which the story of this landscape – as far as we can write it at present – is told. It must be stressed that this discussion is based upon existing data and that further archaeological fieldwork and documentary research is required to fill in many of the gaps. Part 3 presents the detailed analysis that lies behind the conclusions presented in Part 2.

Exeter, 22nd February 2011

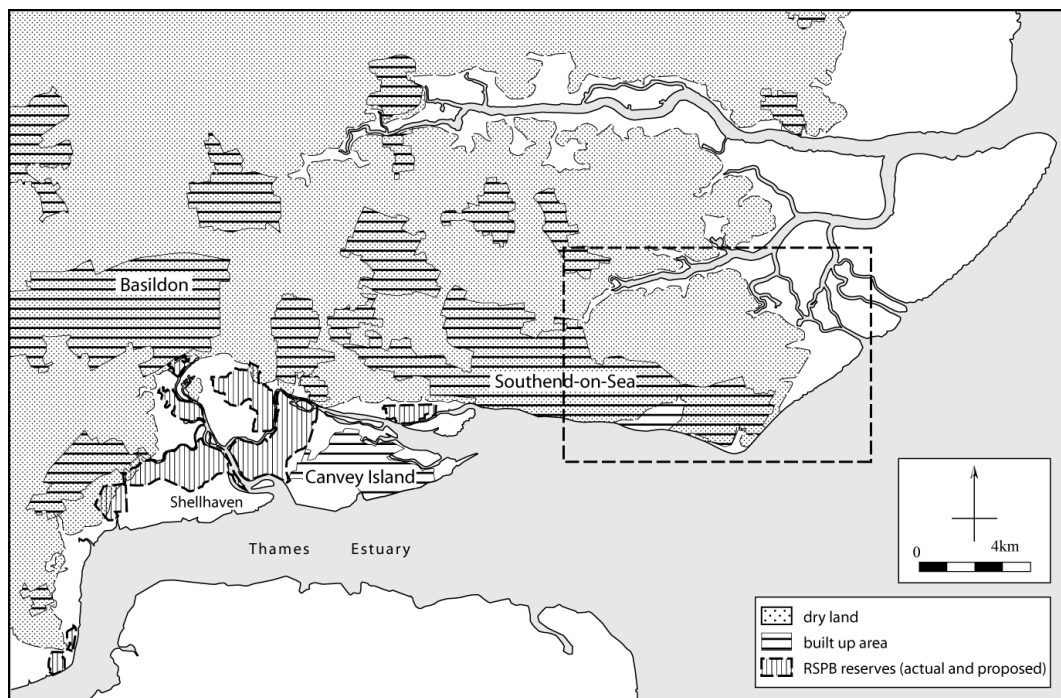


Figure 1: location map

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Definition of the study area

The core study area focuses on the area between the Roach Estuary to the north, Potton and Havengore Creeks to the east, the A1159/A13 to the south, and Sutton Road to the west, although this is placed in context by looking at all of the historic parishes that extended into this study area: Sutton, Shopland, Barling, Little Wakering, Great Wakering, North Shoebury, and Southchurch, along with the eastern part of Prittlewell. South Shoebury is included in this wider contextual study area as the landscape of North Shoebury cannot be understood without looking at South Shoebury as they were once a single entity (see **Figures 1 and 2**; and Section 3.2.2 below).

The study area comprises two very distinct types of physical landscape: dryland and wetland. The dryland area consists of a large tract of low-lying, almost flat land with fertile soils derived from the underlying geology that consists of river terrace deposits (sands and gravels) mostly capped by brickearth (Lake *et al.* 1986). Both the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's (1979) map of 'Agricultural Land Classification', and the Soil Survey of England and Wales' Map of 'Land Use Capability' (Mackney 1979), show this area to have Grade 1 land 'with very minor or no physical limitations' to agriculture. The wetland area lies between the dryland and a series of creeks and estuaries notably alongside the Roach Estuary and Barlinghall, Potton, and Havengore Creeks. These wetlands comprise silty clays laid down as intertidal mudflats and saltmarshes most of which have now been reclaimed and are protected from further tidal inundation by substantial sea walls. Between these sea walls and open water there remains an intertidal zone.

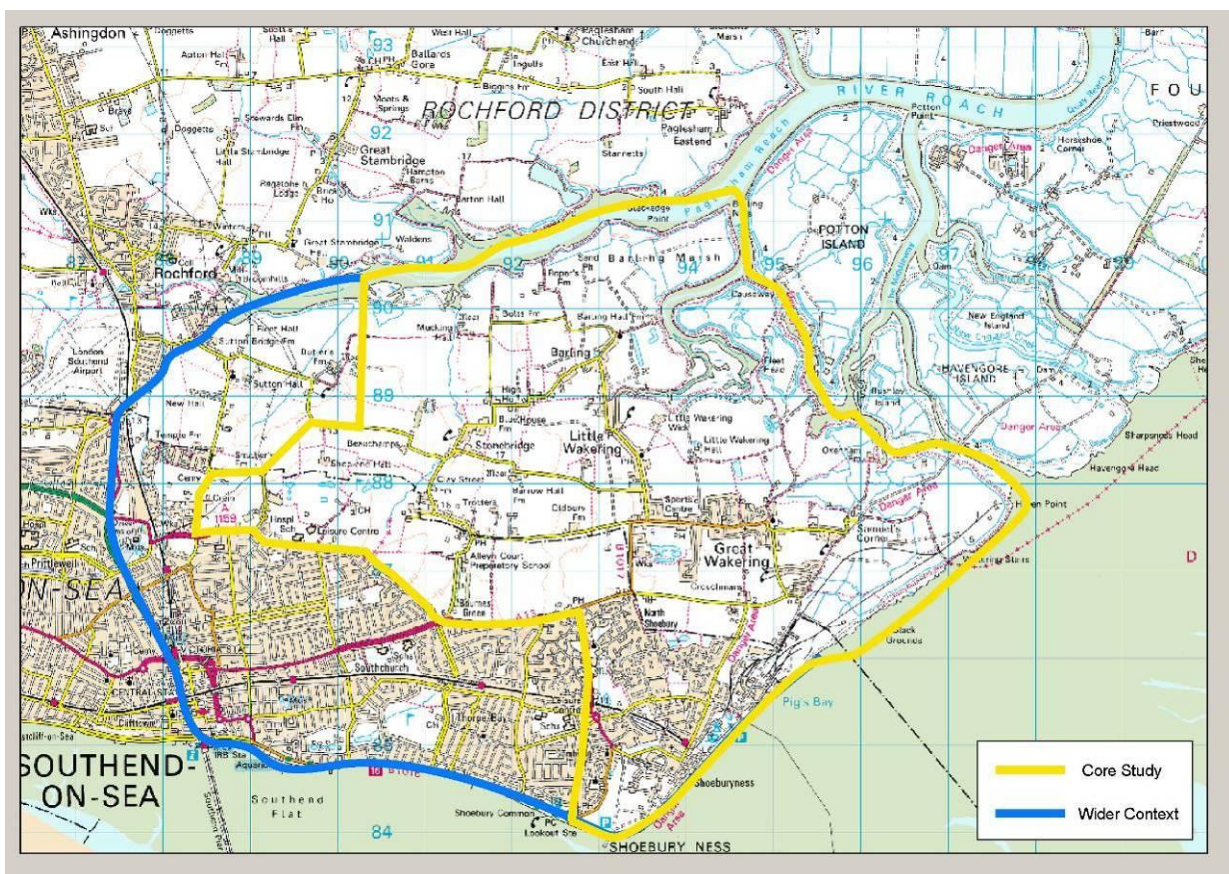


Figure 2: the study areas; ©Crown Copyright/database right 2011. An Ordnance Survey/EDINA supplied service.

1.2. Mapping the fen-edge

At this stage, mapping the boundary between the dryland and the wetland areas can only be approximate, as the existing data is contradictory in places. Three sources were consulted:

1. The published Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale mapping shows field boundaries in wetland areas as blue. These are invariably below the 5m contour
2. The published 1:50,000 mapping of the drift geology by the British Geological Survey (BGS) is clearly somewhat sketchy in places, for example north west of Mucking Hall where their mapping of the fen-edge places it above the 5m contour. The digital data available through Digimap is also incorrect in showing the area around Fleethead in Little Wakering as First River Terrace deposits when it is in fact alluvium (as shown on the published hard-copy mapping from the British Geology Survey: e.g. Lake *et al.* 1986, fig. 2).
3. In many places where the fen-edge can be clearly identified it is marked on early maps by a field boundary or road (e.g. alongside Shoebury Common and up towards Great Wakering Wick).

In the illustrations accompanying this report (e.g. **Figure 3**), the wetland-edge is therefore based on digital BGS data but is adjusted to follow any fen-edge road and field-boundary in the vicinity.

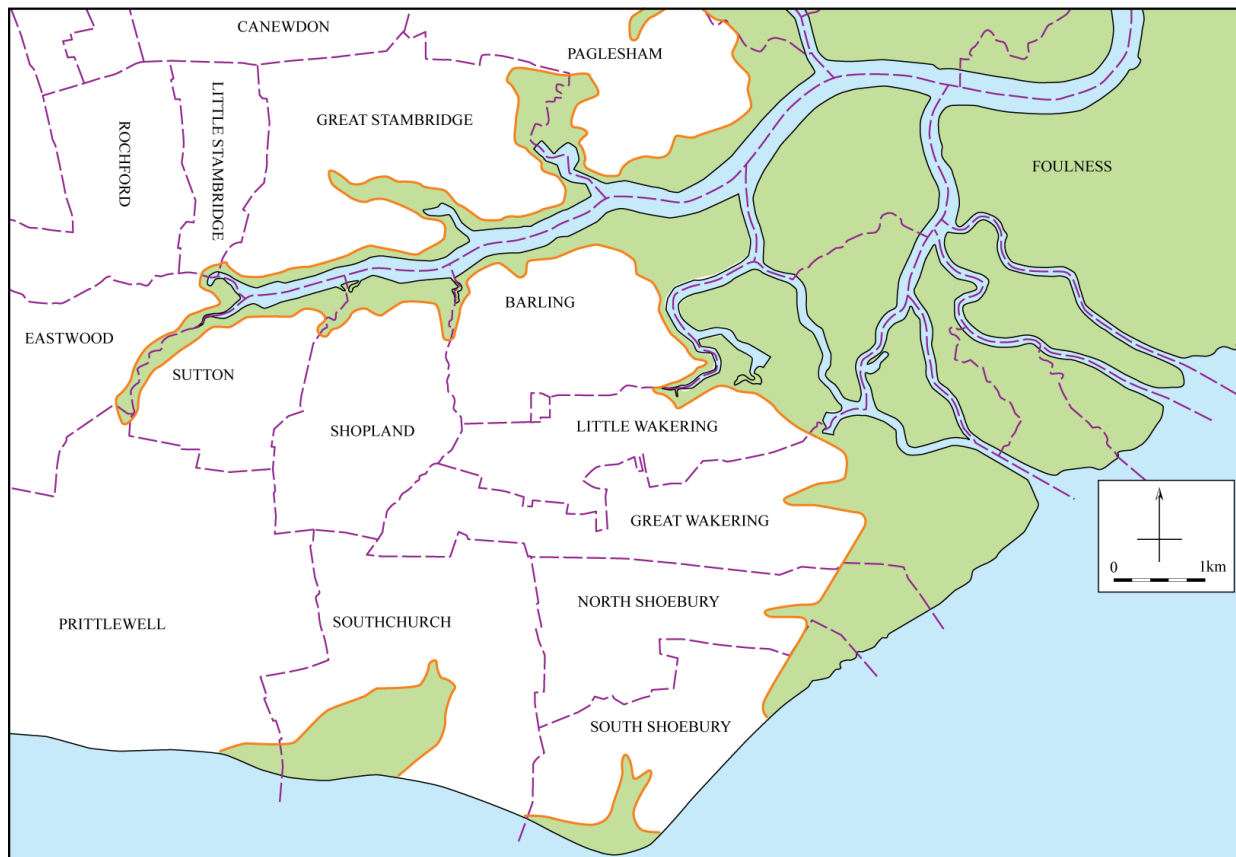


Figure 3: wetland edge and ancient ecclesiastical parishes

1.3. Fieldwork

This study was a rapid assessment of the historic landscape character, and although some fieldwork was undertaken, time constraints within what was a relatively short project meant this was restricted to key locations where there is public access. Since this report has been prepared to inform the Stonebridge strategy for public access to green infrastructure it is likely that these locations will be particularly significant.

1.4. Documentary research

A limited amount of documentary research has been possible, focussing on easily accessible (i.e. published) sources, including the Anglo-Saxon charters, Domesday, and the Feet of Fines for Essex. A visit to the Essex Records Office focussed on the early map evidence.

1.5. Terminology and abbreviations

- BGS: British Geological Survey
- carucate: a unit of tax assessment used in the east of England (the former Danelaw) that was equivalent to ‘ploughland’ or ‘hide’ used elsewhere in southern England. Usually regarded as 120 acres, but in Great Wakering the description of the same tenement as both ‘140 acres’ and ‘one carucate’ suggests it was a little larger (Feet of Fines volume XI, pp 12, 15, 24).
- co-axial: an area of roads and fields that have a broadly similar orientation based around a series of long, roughly parallel boundaries.
- dispersed settlement pattern: areas within which people lived in isolated farmsteads and small hamlets scattered across the landscape (cf. ‘nucleated settlement pattern’ below)
- ERO: Essex Records Office
- farmstead: the house and associated agricultural buildings of a single land-holding
- Feet of Fine: Final Concords which were records of land transactions that went through the Court of Common Pleas.
- hamlet: a small cluster of farmsteads and cottages
- HER: Historic Environment Record
- hide: a unit of land assessment used in Domesday, and which in Essex is traditionally thought to have equated to 120 acres (Darby 1952, 219-20), but which in this area may have become 140 acres (see ‘carucate’ above).
- historic landscape: the modern pattern of settlements, roads, fields, and land-uses which, in different parts of the country, can have relatively recent, medieval, Roman or even prehistoric origins
- hundred: (as in Rochford Hundred): a 10th century and later administrative unit
- Late Iron Age: c.50 BC–AD 43
- medieval period: AD 1066 – 1540
- Middle Iron Age: c.350 BC–c.50 BC
- nucleated settlement pattern: areas within which people lived together in villages
- parish: the term is used here for ancient ecclesiastical parishes, not modern civil parishes (see **Figure 3**)
- post-medieval period: AD 1540–present day
- Roman period: AD 43–410
- Saxon period: AD 410–1066, traditionally divided into the ‘Early Saxon’ period (5th to mid 7th centuries), ‘Middle Saxon’ period (mid 7th to mid 9th centuries), and ‘Late Saxon’ period (mid 9th to mid 11th centuries).

1.6. A comment on the name ‘Stonebridge’

On the map of 1777 (Figure 4) ‘Stonebridge’ is not named as such, and consisted for five occupied farmsteads scattered along nearby roads (including the listed 18th century or earlier Vine Cottages), and what appears to be an orchard (possibly a deserted moated site?). On the Ordnance Survey First Edition Six Inch map of 1873 three of these farmsteads are named (Blue House, Walker’s, and Shoulderswick Hall) with the ‘Stonebridge’ literally being the bridge that took the road between Barrow Hall and Beauchamps across the stream which marked the parish boundary between Barling and Shopland. The Stone Bridge itself was a landmark of some local significance, marking the starting point of the perambulation of the Shopland parish bounds in 1817 (Jerram-Burrows 1979, 989). Reaney (1935, 205) suggests that Giles de Staunbrigge lived here in 1279. Overall, the name ‘Stonebridge’ has little historical significance and was only one of numerous small medieval settlements in the area. Were a name to be needed for the whole area between the Roach and the Thames estuaries, ‘Wakering magna’ could be used, as Great Wakering appears to have been the most important Anglo-Saxon and medieval settlement in the area east of Prittlewell.

1.7. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Nigel Brown of Essex County Council Historic Environment Service and Ken Crowe of Southend Museum for their help in preparing this report, and Adam Wainwright for his work as my research assistant.



Figure 4: extract from Chapman and Andre's map of Essex, 1777

PART 2: SUMMARY

The landscape south of the Roach Estuary is characterised by its almost flat topography which along with its large arable fields gives it a very open feel. Although 20th century agricultural intensification and extensive mineral extraction in some areas have led to the removal of many field boundaries, and modern housing lines a number of the main roads, this is a landscape that retains much of its historic character and contains a remarkable time-depth that still shapes the countryside of today. Several important Iron Age, Roman, and Saxon monuments survive, while the magnificent medieval churches are dominant landmarks. The traditional local construction technique – weatherboarding on a timber frame – can still be found on domestic houses and agricultural buildings alike. Many a driver will have cursed sharp right-angled bends in many of the roads, but how many have wondered why these routes take such a curious line?

The study area focuses on the area between the Roach Estuary to the north, Potton and Havengore Creeks to the east, the A1159/A13 to the south, and Sutton Road to the west, although this is placed in context by looking at all of the historic parishes of Sutton, Shopland, Barling, Little Wakering, Great Wakering, North Shoebury, South Shoebury, Southchurch, and the eastern part of Prittlewell. The area comprises two very distinct types of physical landscape: dryland and wetland. The dryland area consists of a large tract of low-lying, almost flat land with fertile soils derived from the underlying river terrace deposits (sands and gravels) mostly capped by brickearth. Both the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's map of 'Agricultural Land Classification', and the Soil Survey of England and Wales' Map of 'Land Use Capability', show this area to have Grade 1 land 'with very minor or no physical limitations' to agriculture. On two sides this landscape is bounded by one of Essex's most characteristic features: the marshes and sea walls that line its many creeks and estuaries. The wetland area comprises silty clays laid down as intertidal mudflats and saltmarshes most of which have now been reclaimed and are protected from further tidal inundation by substantial sea walls. Between these sea walls and open water there remains an intertidal zone.

In order to understand the history of this landscape the earliest maps must be used, as they pre-date the extensive loss of the field-boundaries due to agricultural intensification and quarrying, and the urban expansion of Southend, during the late 19th and 20th centuries. These mid 19th century maps reveal that the dryland area included three planned landscapes: firstly, a radially-arranged system of fields and roads that extended from Shoebury Ness north as far as Great Wakering; secondly, a co-axial landscape of broadly east – west oriented boundaries in Barling, Little Wakering, and Shopland; and thirdly, a landscape laid out between two remarkably long, parallel boundaries in Southchurch and eastern Prittlewell (**Figure 5**). The landscape in Barling, Little Wakering, and Shopland can be divided in two along the line of the Stonebridge Brook with smaller fields and a greater number of settlements to the east (Barling and Little Wakering), and larger fields and far fewer settlements to the west (Shopland): this probably reflects the greater agricultural intensification seen in Shopland during the late- and post-medieval periods which resulted from the amalgamation of land-holdings and greater mechanisation of agriculture that was possible on larger, more wealthy, estates. Sutton also had a small number of very large farms, and its pattern of very large rectangular fields would also appear to have resulted from relatively recent agricultural intensification.

The wetland area had been largely reclaimed by the mid 19th century. The field boundary pattern was characterised by large fields defined by curvilinear boundaries that reflect the naturally meandering lines of former saltmarsh creeks. These large fields were used for grazing livestock, mostly sheep, and the absence of defined

roads in most areas suggest there was little or no arable (i.e. there was no need for a means of separating livestock from arable as they were moved around the landscape). At a later date, some of these large fields defined by former saltmarsh creeks were sub-divided using long, dead-straight boundaries. A string of settlements located on the wetland edge reflects how the wetlands and drylands were integrated into a single agrarian economy, with land-holdings embracing both environments. This principle is also reflected in the way that many of the land-holdings in the Stonebridge area held areas of woodland up on the Rayleigh Hills, and how many dryland communities held detached parcels of marshland. The unreclaimed marshes would still have been a valued resource for local communities, for example in providing rich grazing for sheep, and providing the opportunity for making salt (by heating sea water) and collecting fish/shellfish.

The study area is rich in below-ground archaeological remains from the prehistoric (pre AD43) and Roman (AD 43-410) periods, and there are several sites that are visible above ground. Iron Age fortifications can be seen at Fossetts Camp in Prittlewell and Shoebury Ness in South Shoebury, the latter possibly having been re-used by a Viking army in the 9th century. The southern boundary of Great Wakering may follow the line of a Roman road, while several mounds out on the marshes are 'red hills' (Roman salt production sites). Mounds such as these were commonly re-used in the medieval period as they afforded valuable areas of raised ground for dairies and shepherds huts.

In the Early Saxon period (5th to 7th centuries), the whole of South East Essex, south of the Crouch Estuary, appears to have formed a single district – probably known at the time as a 'regio' (district) – that became the Hundred of Rochford extending from South Shoebury, up to Canewdon, and across to Rawreth, Rayleigh and Hadleigh. The place-names Canewdon and Canvey may both contain the personal name 'Cana', making this the region of Cana's people. The most important place within this district appears to have been Prittlewell which was the site of a royal burial and early stone church. Around the 8th century this district was sub-divided into a number of smaller territories, each of which appears to have been furnished with a church which, in addition to Prittlewell included Great Wakering and probably Southchurch. In turn, these territories were sub-divided into smaller estates (some of which are recorded in 10th century charters) that became the manors and parishes recorded in the Domesday Book. Archaeological excavations suggest that settlement pattern in the Early Saxon period (5th to 7th centuries) was highly dispersed, with small farmsteads scattered across the landscape and which appear to have been unrelated to the later, medieval (11th to 15th century), landscape. Where prehistoric, Roman, and early Saxon field systems have been excavated they are also on a different orientation to the planned landscapes of today, whereas most of the known medieval settlements and churches (that existed by the 11th/12th centuries) appear to post-date the roads that form major components of these co-axial systems. The one exception is possibly the late 7th century church at Great Wakering which may have already existed when these roads were laid out, suggesting that the creation of the Shoebury planned landscape dates to between the 8th and 11th centuries.

Domesday gives us our first detailed insight into the landscape of this area, with many of the major places recorded. With the exception of Prittlewell, which contains some Anglo-Saxon work, there is no evidence that any of the present parish churches within the study area was standing at the time of Domesday, although all but North Shoebury were built (or rebuilt as they may have had timber predecessors) in the following half century. With the exception of Shopland, which has been demolished, these magnificent medieval buildings are dominant local landmarks. Great Wakering and North Shoebury are particularly good examples of the complex history of parish churches with various phases of architecture visible in one building.

A range of documentary and archaeological evidence, along with a number of standing buildings that have survived, suggest that the medieval settlement pattern in all parishes except Great Wakering was dispersed, with isolated farmsteads and small hamlets scattered across the landscape. Higher status farmsteads were often surrounded by a water-filled moat, of which Southchurch Hall is a fine example (and is open to the public). From the late 17th century some higher status houses were built of brick, but otherwise the local tradition of timber-framed houses clad in weatherboards continued, forming one of the character defining features of this landscape. Great Wakering's importance, reflected in the Anglo-Saxon period by its important church, continued into the medieval period when there was a market two days a week. In the 18th century it was the only nucleated settlement in the area. In the late medieval period, population decline following the Black Death led to the amalgamation of some land-holdings leading to greater prosperity for some of those who survived. A number of minor settlements were also abandoned, although there is no evidence for large-scale depopulation of the landscape. This trend towards larger farms continued in the 16th century with the redistribution of former monastic land, and led to the emergence of a new social class – the yeoman farmer/minor gentry – many of whose fine farmhouses still grace the landscape today. A comparison of 17th, 18th, and early 19th century maps that survive for the study area suggest a period of relative stability, although in the mid to late 19th century there was further agricultural intensification that started the process of field boundary loss that continued into the 20th century and was exacerbated by brickearth extraction. The areas that escaped the worst of this are some of the reclaimed marshes that still retain their traditional character, while the carefully targeted restoration of field boundaries in dryland areas could easily restore their traditional character. Were such a programme to be embarked upon it would be vital to retain the co-axial layout of the landscape, and not plant extensive areas of woodland that would be out of keeping with the historic character of the landscape.

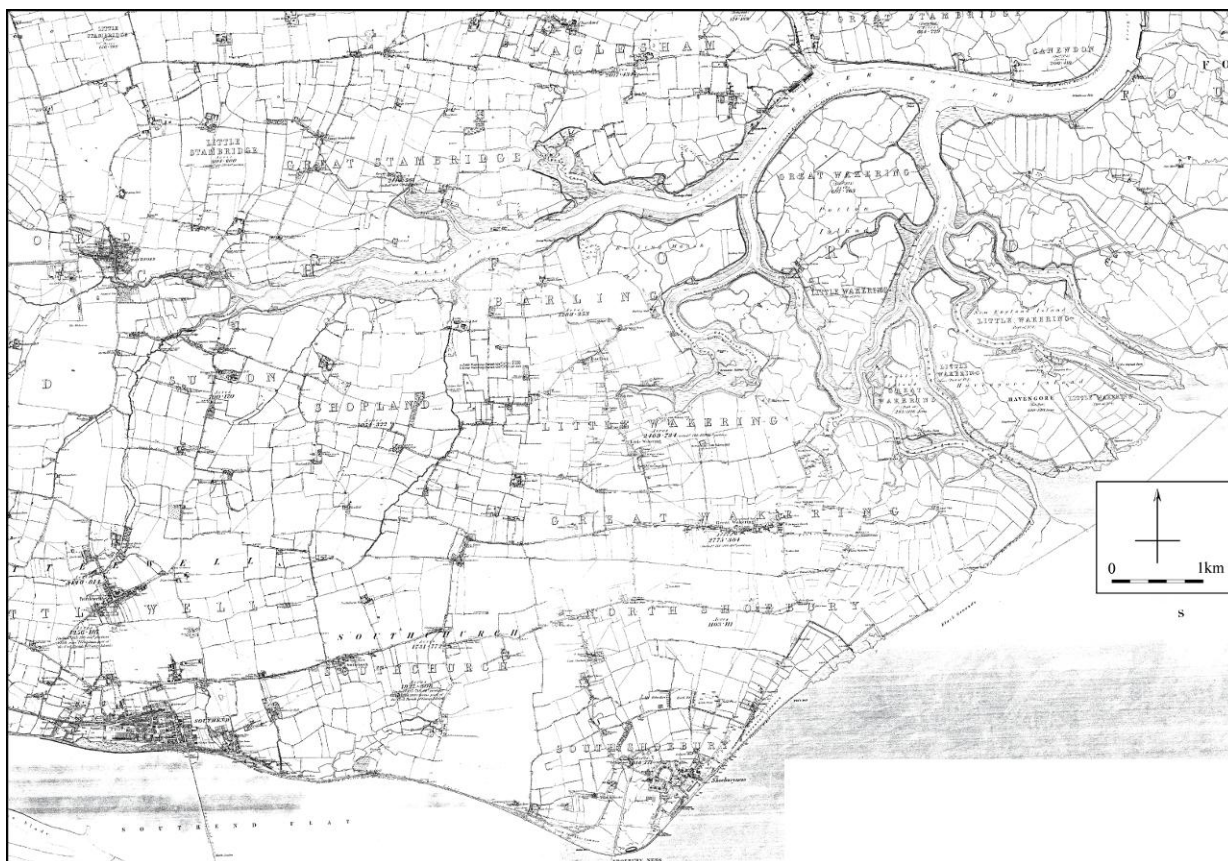


Figure 5: extract from the Ordnance Survey First Edition Six Inch maps of 1873; © Crown Copyright and Landmark Information Group Limited (2011). All rights reserved. (1873)

PART 3: THE DETAILED EVIDENCE

3.1. A Characterisation of the historic landscape

The Stonebridge area is included in the Rochford District Historic Environment Characterisation Project (Brown *et al.* 2006), and this study provides a more in-depth analysis of the area between the Roach and the Thames estuaries. In order to understand the history of this landscape an analysis has been carried out of the Ordnance Survey First Edition Six Inch maps surveyed in 1873 (**Figure 5**) as these are the earliest maps to uniformly cover the entire area at the same scale, and show a landscape largely unaffected by the urban expansion of Southend-on-Sea. The slightly earlier Tithe maps, that depict individual parishes in *c.*1840, were also consulted as they show a large number of field boundaries that had been lost between *c.*1840 and 1873.

3.1.1. ‘Enclosed’ and ‘Unenclosed’ land

In any historic landscape the most fundamental distinction to be made is between ‘Enclosed’ and ‘Unenclosed’ land, where ‘Enclosed’ is the area which has been divided up into fields and agriculturally improved. In the Stonebridge area all of the dryland area was enclosed by 1873 and there is no evidence that the medieval landscape included any unenclosed or common land apart from very occasional small parcels of former roadside waste. Most of the wetland areas had also been enclosed and reclaimed by 1873 although unenclosed marshes survived to the sea-ward of the sea walls around the many creeks and estuaries, and at Shoebury and South Shoebury Commons on the North Sea coast. Within the reclaimed marshes there was one area of unenclosed common in 1873 – Great Wakering Common – which the pattern of adjacent field boundaries (an area of long, straight boundaries, compared to their more curvilinear form found elsewhere) suggests was once far larger, extending *c.*300 m further east towards Oxenham. Of the enclosed landscape, we can distinguish two fundamental types: dryland and wetland (reclaimed marshland):

3.1.2. The dryland landscape: rectilinear and radial layouts

In 1873, the vast majority of the study area was enclosed dryland, and the historic landscape here has a very distinctive character with a co-axial layout (i.e. based around a series of roughly parallel alignments), and a settlement pattern characterised by scattered, isolated farmsteads and small hamlets. The Tithe maps of *c.*1840 show this even more clearly as many boundaries were destroyed between then and 1873 (**Figures 6 and 7**). The physical framework of the landscape is based upon a series of roughly east – west oriented alignments followed by roads, field boundaries, and footpaths that has the appearance of having been planned. It is noticeable that the individual roads had very straight, parallel sides with very little roadside waste which supports the interpretation of this landscape as being planned, as opposed to one that was gradually created through the piecemeal enclosure of common land (in which case more of the common land tends to survive). The eight medieval parish churches, often with a manor house nearby, provided focal points within the landscape and were sometimes associated with small hamlets, but most members of the community lived in farmsteads and cottages that were scattered across the countryside. Some major farmsteads were surrounded by water-filled moats that would have been a sign of their social status (one example, Southchurch Hall, is now a museum and so is open to the public). The only nucleated village in 1873 was Great Wakering that was also the most important Anglo-Saxon and medieval settlement in the area. A closer examination of the patterns of roads and fields reveals five character areas that relate to three planned systems (**Figure 8**):

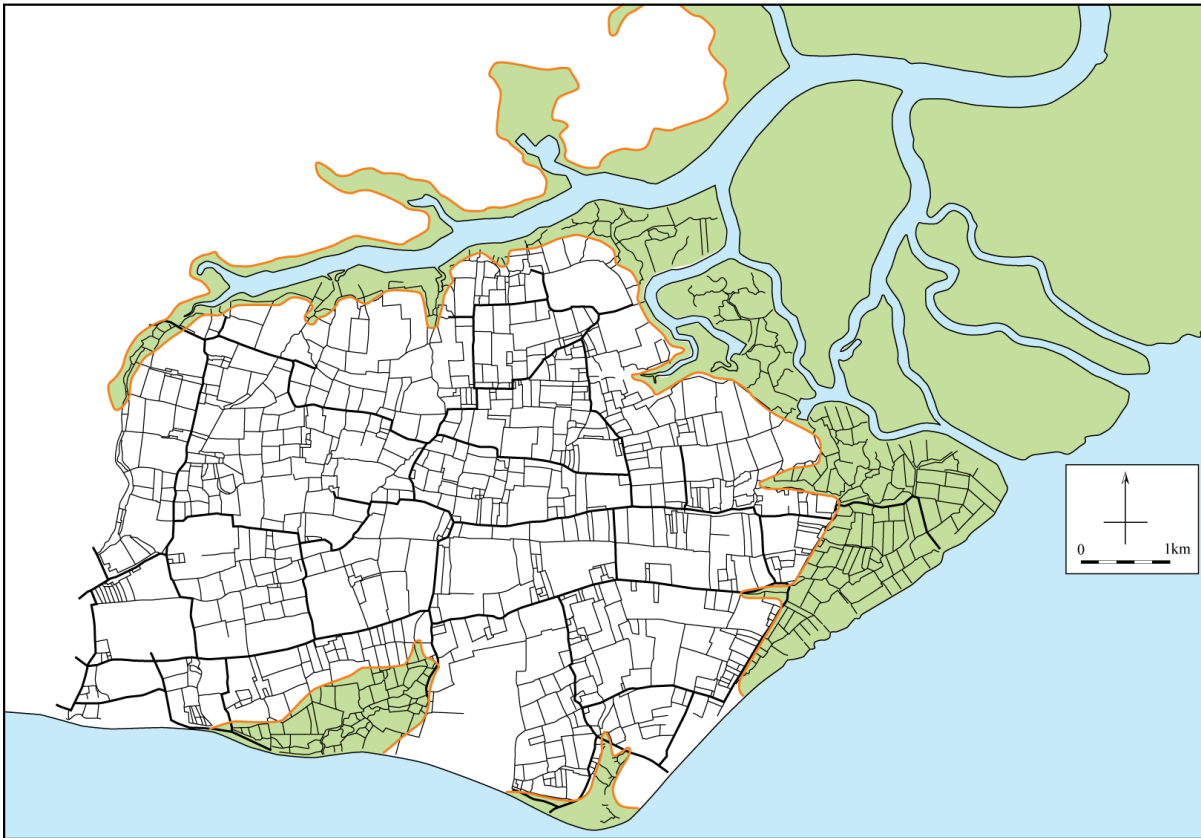


Figure 6: transcription of the fields and roads shown on the Ordnance Survey First Edition Six Inch maps of 1873



Figure 7: transcription of the fields and roads shown on the Tithe maps of c.1840, with those features destroyed between then and 1873 in blue.

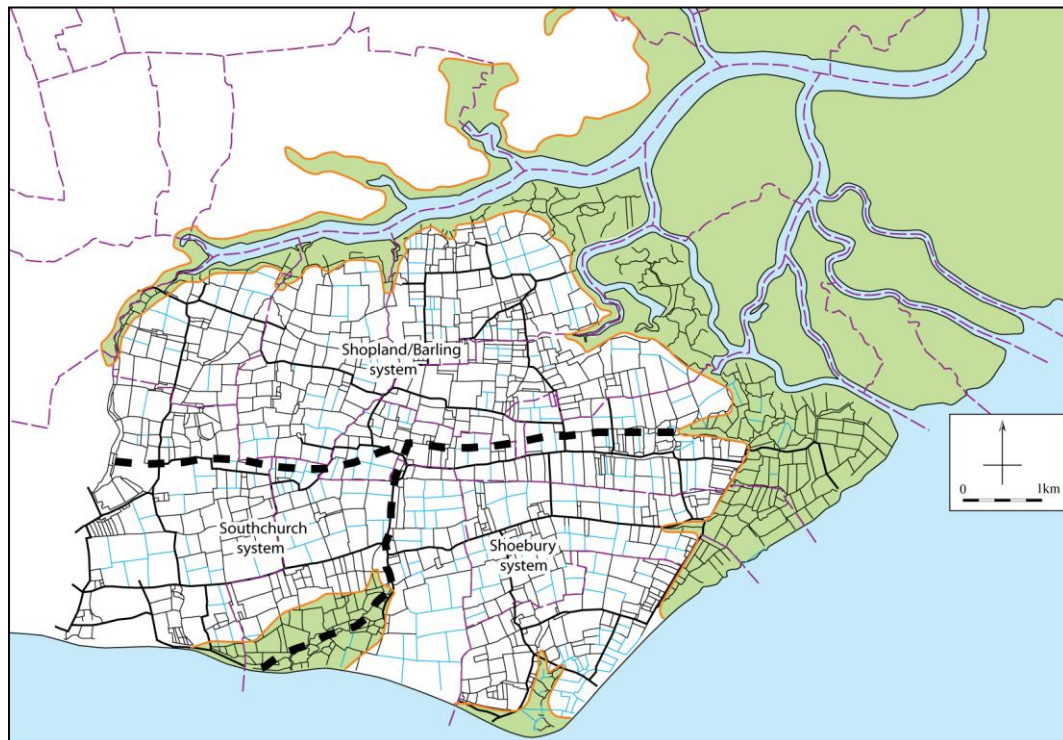


Figure 8: the planned landscapes

- **1. The Shoebury system:** A series of broadly E–W oriented but curving boundaries that radiate out from Shoebury Ness north into Great Wakering, and which appears to extend into the east of Southchurch parish (as far west as Thorpehall Farm). The fields between these major boundaries were, in the 19th century at least, large and rectangular, although in a very small number of places long, narrow, fields, and boundaries with a reversed-S plan suggest that there may have been some open field (e.g. south of Crouchmans in North Shoebury: see Section 3.11 below).
- **2. The Shopland/Barling system**
 - **2.A. Barling/Little Wakering:** A more rectilinear layout, on an E–W, N–S orientation, in which the fields are significantly smaller than in Shoebury to the south, or Shopland to the west (this contrast is especially clear on the Tithe maps of c.1840 which pre-date a period of agricultural intensification in the mid 19th century when many field boundaries were removed).
 - **2.B. Shopland:** The landscape in Shopland and north east Prittlewell also had a broadly E–W, N–S orientation, but with appreciably larger fields than in Barling/Little Wakering. The very small number of 19th century farms in this area, each with a very large land-holding, suggests considerable agricultural improvement which may well have been associated with the removal of field boundaries, before which this landscape may have looked much like that of Barling. Not only is this landscape on the same E–W orientation as that across the Stonebridge Brook in Barling/Little Wakering, but a number of individual field boundaries extend from one landscape into the other. Several footpaths also run across the Stonebridge Brook that continue the line of roads and field-boundaries that form major elements in what appears to have been a single co-axial landscape that covered the whole area between Barlinghall Creek and Shopland.

- **3. Sutton:** it is unclear whether the Shopland/Barling co-axial landscape originally extended into Sutton, which by 1873 had a landscape characterised by very large rectilinear fields. The dead-straight field boundaries in the landscape suggest they are relatively recent and result from agricultural improvement.
- **4. The Southchurch system:** Another co-axial layout covered western Southchurch and south-eastern Prittlewell which has an ENE–WSW orientation that appears to have been laid out separately from the Shoebury system to the east, and the Shopland/Barling system to the north. This landscape is based upon two long, parallel boundaries, the southern of which is now followed by the A13 from Porters Town in Southend to Bournes Green in Southchurch. The northern boundary runs just to the south of Prittlewell village past Hamstel to Southchurch Wick.

The date when these systems were created is considered in detail below (see Section 3.12 below).

3.1.3. *The reclaimed marshland*

The reclaimed marshlands have a distinctive character with two types of field boundary: firstly, those that are strongly curvilinear and clearly follow the line of former saltmarsh creeks, and secondly, those that are dead straight and are clearly more recent. In places, the curvilinear boundaries were associated with areas of particularly marshy ground or even water-filled channels that were known as ‘fleets’, particularly clear examples of which still survive on the Fleet Head Marshes in Little Wakering (the earthworks of the old saltmarsh surface, complete with even the minor creeks, are particularly well preserved here and are rare survivals of great importance).

If we carry out a ‘retrogressive analysis’ of this field-boundary pattern – whereby provably recent features are removed, leaving what survives from earlier periods – then a uniform landscape emerges across the enclosed marshland of large parcels of land defined by former creeks. The sub-division of these large fields using long, straight boundaries is later, and probably dates to the 18th and 19th centuries. The large size of the original fields suggests that they were used for livestock. The unreclaimed Essex marshes were particularly associated with the grazing of sheep (although the place-name ‘Oxenham’ appears to relate to a medieval reclamation which would have provided grazing more suited to cattle). Once reclaimed, the absence of defined roads in some of the marshes (e.g. Fleethead in Little Wakering) suggests there was little or no arable cultivation (one of the major functions of roads enclosed by banks, ditches, or hedges being to allow the passage of livestock through a landscape with mixed land-use, so keeping the animals from straying in arable crops or meadow that was to be cut for hay). The existence of defined roads in the Great Wakering marshes is, therefore, noteworthy and might suggest there was mixed land-use in this area.

Across the Stonebridge study area some of the reclaimed marshlands, particularly alongside the Roach, are of limited extent and would have formed part of the land associated with farmsteads based on the dryland. To the east, the marshes were more extensive and here some farmsteads were located on the fen-edge so that they were ideally positioned at the centre of an estate that had arable on the dryland and grazing land on the adjacent reclaimed marshes (e.g. Great Wakering south of Samuels Corner). The more extensive marshes were exploited from farmsteads located within them, such as Land Wick in Great Wakering (the place-name ‘wick’ reflecting how this was probably once a small dairy).

3.2. The prehistoric and Roman landscape

Although this study is explicitly focussed on the historic landscape – the patterns of settlement, roads, fields, flood defences, and land-uses that make up the countryside of today – there are a number of key sites of prehistoric and

possibly Roman date that, although no longer performing their original function, do contribute to the character of today's countryside. This region is in fact exceptionally rich in archaeological remains from the prehistoric and Roman periods but these have mostly been ploughed flat and only become visible as cropmarks in arable fields or through excavation (e.g. Wymer and Brown 1995). There are, however, two Iron Age defended enclosures, that archaeologists tend to call 'hillforts', with visible remains: Fossett's Camp in Prittlewell and Shoebury Camp in South Shoebury (Wymer and Brown 1995, 157). The latter has traditionally been called the 'Danish Camp', as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that the raiding Danish army 'made a fortification' at Shoebury in 894 (Swanton 1996, 87), but recent excavations have established that it is a Middle Iron Age (c.350-50 BC) hillfort (Eddisford 2005; Mattinson 2005). Although no evidence of a Viking presence was found in these excavations, the work was relatively small scale and does not preclude a Danish reoccupation of the earthwork.

Excavations have also shown that the study area was densely occupied during the Roman period (AD43-410), although very little evidence for this survives above ground: the exceptions are a number of salt production sites and a possible Roman road. There are large numbers of Romano-British salterns on the Essex marshes, known locally as 'red hills', with five examples from the study area: one on Barling Marsh, three north of Fleet Head in Little Wakering, and fifth near Oxenham Farm on the Great Wakering Marshes (Fawn *et al.* 1990, Nos. 261-3, 299, and 301; Bennett 1998, 213); a possible example has been destroyed by modern housing on the Thorpe Hall Marshes (Fawn *et al.* 1990, 67). The mound at 'Brimstone Hill' on the Brimstone Saltings in Little Wakering is a possible saltern (Fawn *et al.* 1990, site 262); 13th to 14th century medieval material from this mound probably represents its use as a dairy, or 'wick' (cf. the traditional suggestion that this is a castle mound – reported in the Essex HER 11098 – is not credible).

The possible Roman road was first identified by Rippon (1991, fig. 6), and whilst accepted by Going (1996, fig. 1) in his review of the archaeology of Roman Essex, it should be stressed that the date of this feature has not yet been tested through excavation (**Figure 9**). The evidence for this possible Roman road is the extraordinarily long and straight field boundary that marks the parish boundary between Great Wakering and North Shoebury. The alignment continues west in a fragmentary way as far as Leigh-on-Sea. Long stretches of this boundary still survive, and two sections – to the west of Eton House School in Stonebridge and south of the Great Wakering Brickworks – are currently public footpaths. If the date of this feature could be confirmed as Roman then it would be both of great historical importance and interest to the general public.

If this feature is a Roman road, then it must have been heading to a substantial site at its eastern end somewhere in the vicinity of Crouchmans, the modern 'Cupids Corner' (historically known as Friends Farm) or further to the east in which case it has been lost to later erosion. One possibility is that it was heading towards one of the series of Roman forts of the 'Saxon Shore', and if so this would fill in a gap in their distribution between those at Bradwell, in Essex, and Reculver, in Kent. The identification of a Middle Saxon (late 7th to 9th century) *monasterium* (minster church) at Great Wakering does raise a potential parallel to the early church at Bradwell which was closely associated with the Roman fort there (Medlycott 1994).

There is one further line of evidence, although this must be treated with extreme caution. A map of copyhold tenements within the manor of North Shoebury Hall dated 1723 gives the name of the field directly east of Crouchmans as 'North Croft als [alias] Caster' (ERO D/DU 628/1; on the later Tithe map of 1849 these fields

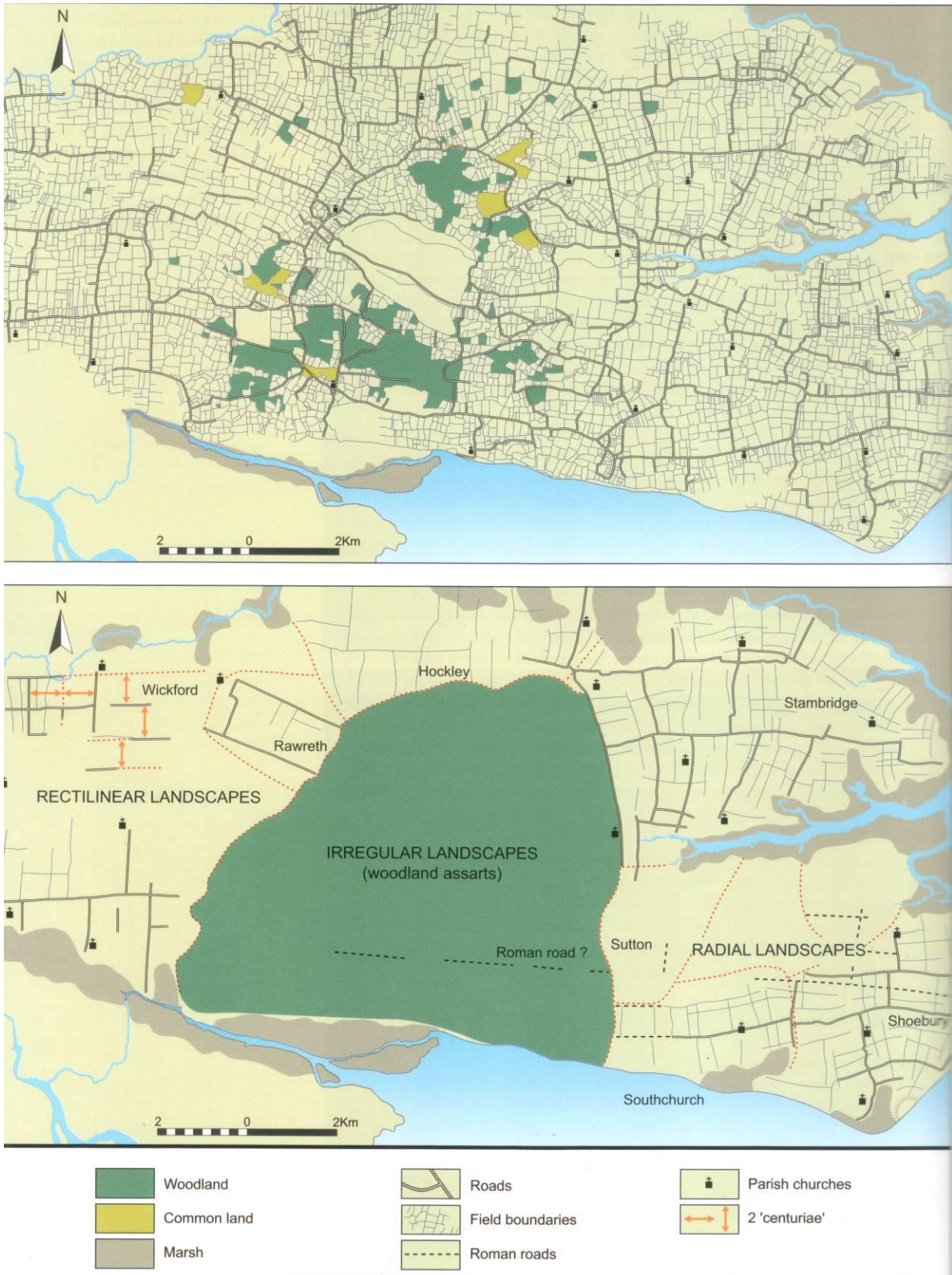


Figure 9: the possible Roman road in the context of planned landscapes across the whole of South East Essex

had changed their name to Upper and Lower North Skirts (ERO D/CT 317A and B). Caster could be derived from the Old English (i.e. pre-Norman Conquest) *cæster* that was in turn derived from the Latin *castrum* meaning ‘camp, fort, town’, although it could have been applied to other substantial Roman sites such as villas (e.g.

Woodchester in Gloucestershire). In the 8th century, for example, the Roman fort at Bradwell was known as *Ythancæster* (Parsons and Styles 2000, 158-9). ‘Caster’ could also be derived from the Old English *ceastel*, meaning ‘heap of stones, or ruin’ (Parsons 2004, 7-9) or Middle English (i.e. post Norman Conquest) *castel* (‘castle’; Parsons and Styles 2000, 145-8), but in either case it would suggest that people living locally were aware of something unusual beneath the soil, or perhaps even surviving as a ruin or earthwork above ground. There are no archaeological discoveries recorded from this area on the Essex HER or Portable Antiquities Scheme database, although it has not been quarried for brickearth (Nigel Brown pers. comm.). A Roman copper bracelet has, however, been found ‘in the old brickworks SW of the large nursery buildings’ to the west of Crouchmans (Essex HER 11093). A Romano-British settlement of some substance lies to the north of Great Wakering village where finds including a fragment of flue tile (suggesting a building with underfloor heating) was recovered during 19th century brickearth extraction (Essex HER 11122). It must be stressed that the interpretations of field-names is very difficult, especially when they are only available in recent forms (as is the case here) as place- and field-names can all change over time: the Roman fort at *Othona*, for example, was called *Ythancæster* in the Anglo-Saxon period, and since the 13th century has been known as Bradwell-juxta-Mare (Reaney 1935, 209). Caster, may therefore, be of recent origin but its location, towards the end of the putative Roman road is certainly intriguing.

3.3. The ‘Anglo-Saxon’ period

The period after Britain ceased to be part of the Roman Empire in AD410 and before the Norman Conquest in 1066 is traditionally known as the ‘Anglo-Saxon period’. It can be divided into three parts based on a number of distinctive artefact types: the 5th to mid 7th centuries (the ‘Early Saxon’ period), the mid 7th to mid 9th centuries (the ‘Middle Saxon’ period), and the mid 9th to mid 11th centuries (the ‘Late Saxon’ period).



Figure 10: fragment of Anglo-Saxon masonry in the north wall of Prittlewell church

3.3.1. *Prittlewell: a royal centre?*

The most important site in South East Essex is the Early Saxon cemetery beside Priory Park in Prittlewell, on the eastern side of the Prittle Brook. The richness of the grave goods deposited with one of the individuals suggests they were of very high status (the ‘Prittlewell Prince’), which in turn suggests that Prittlewell as a place was of considerable importance. This continued into the Middle Saxon period when the present parish church was constructed: the western part of the north wall of the chancel contains some Anglo-Saxon fabric, including a blocked round-headed door arch, and although this is not easily datable on stylistic grounds it may be Middle Saxon (**Figure 10**; Taylor and Taylor 1965, 499-500; Rodwell and Rodwell 1977, 22; Pewsey and Books 1993, 63). Stone buildings in this period were extremely rare suggesting that Prittlewell was a ‘minster’ church of some importance. Minster churches were founded in the late 7th to 8th centuries to serve large territories, that from around the 10th century were sub-divided into the ecclesiastical parishes with which we are familiar today. Excavations at Great Wakering suggest that it may have been the location of another minster church, while the place-name Southchurch suggests that it may have been a further example (see Section 3.3.2 below).

3.3.2. *Territorial arrangements in the Anglo-Saxon period*

The study area comprises eight complete parishes (Sutton, Shopland, Barling, Little Wakering, Great Wakering, North Shoebury, South Shoebury, and Southchurch) and the eastern half of Prittlewell. It is generally thought that parish boundaries in southern England were established between the 10th and 12th centuries AD (Blair 2005, 368-425), and there is no reason to assume that this corner of Essex was any different. Parishes were units of ecclesiastical jurisdiction that determined the area across which a church drew its congregation and claimed its ‘tithes’ (i.e. a tax paid in kind, amounting to a tenth of agricultural produce). They would usually have followed the boundaries of one or more secular units of land division known as ‘vills’ and the parishes of Barling, Shopland, and Sutton, for example, were probably coterminous with the 11th century vills of the same name. In contrast, the parishes of Little Wakering and Southchurch each embraced two vills (Little Wakering and Barrow Hall, and Southchurch and Thorpe respectively). The relationship between parish boundaries and other features of the landscapes can tell us something of their history, and it appears that the study area was once divided between three large estates (Figure 11):

1. *Wakering and Barling.* The boundaries between Barling and Little Wakering, and Little Wakering and Great Wakering zig-zag through the landscape in a way that clearly post-dates the field boundary pattern. There are also cases where the parish boundaries cut diagonally across fields suggesting they are relatively recent (‘relatively’ in the history of the territorial boundaries in this area, but still probably 10th to 12th century in origin). That the Wakerings both had detached parcels in Barling also suggests that the three parishes were once a single territory. Great Wakering also had a detached parcel north of Little Wakering on Potton Island. The southern boundary of Great Wakering, in contrast, mostly follows the very long, straight field boundary that could be a Roman road (except where it deviates to the north of ‘Southchurch Lawn’, now Eton House School), while the western boundary of all three parishes is marked by a natural stream known as the Shopland Brook/Shopland Ditch.¹ Overall, it would appear that Barling, Little Wakering, and Great

¹ The description of the bounds of Shopland parish in 1817 simply refer to it as the ‘Shopland Brook’ (Jerram-Burrow 1979, 989-90), while locally it is known as the ‘Shopland Ditch’ (Nigel Brown pers. comm.).

Waking were once a single block of land that was later divided into Barling (assessed as 3.5 ‘hides’² in Domesday) in the north, Barrow in the south west (1.5 hides), and Waking (7.5 hides) to the south east (giving 12.5 hides in total).

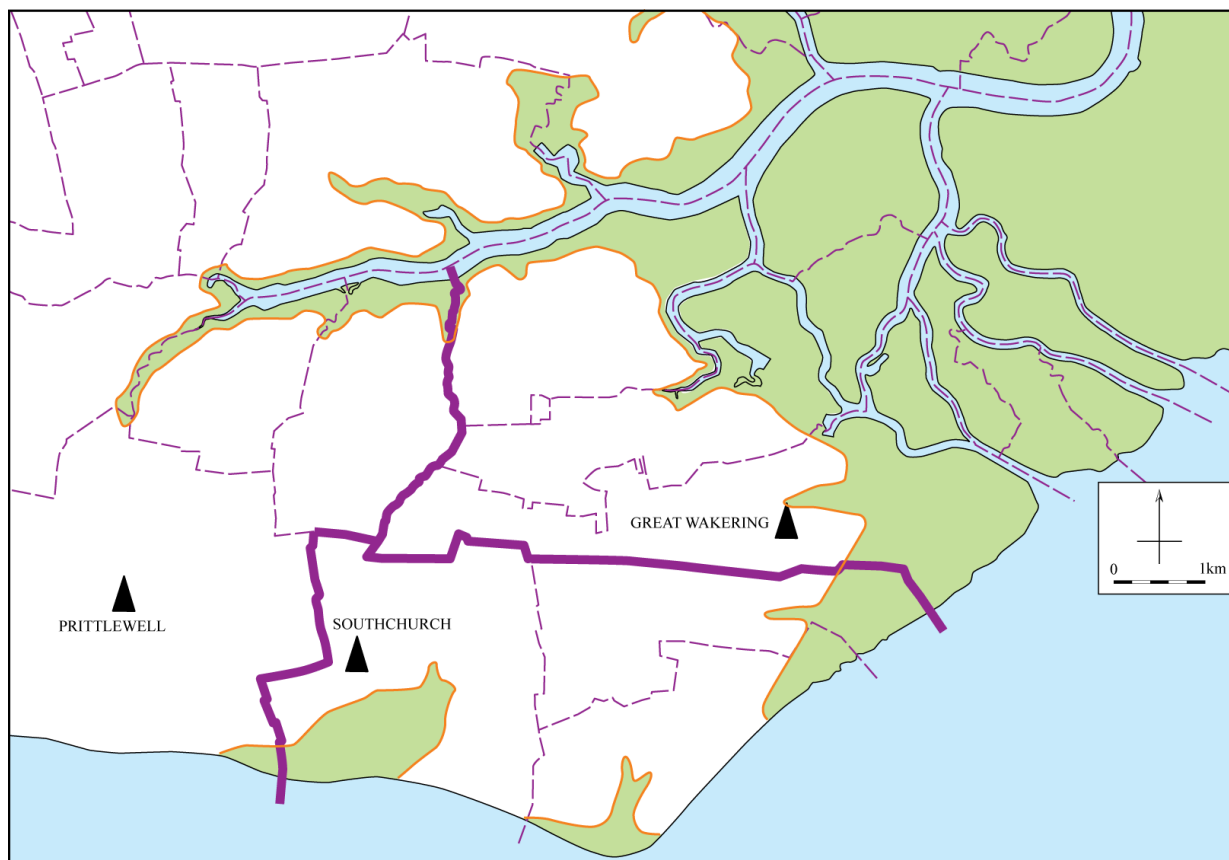


Figure 11: the possible early estates, and minster churches at Prittlewell, Southchurch and Great Waking.

The centre of this putative estate would have been Great Waking that was clearly the most significant settlement in the area. Waking is an Old English name, likely to date from the Early Saxon period, meaning ‘settlement of the people of Wacor or Waecer’ (Reaney 1935, 203). A large amount of ‘Early Anglo-Saxon’ material has been recovered from brickfields to the north and south of the village suggesting there may have been several settlements and associated cemeteries in the area (Essex HER 11003, 11206, 13822). There have also been a series of Middle Saxon finds from around the village including three bone combs (one a continental import of the 8th to 10th century), a spindle whorl, a number 7th century coins, and a 9th century bronze strap-end, although exactly where they were discovered is unfortunately not known (Essex HER 11004-5, 11069, 11126; Tyler 1986). The Life of St Mildrith refers to a church (*monasterium Wacrinense*) at Great Waking, said to be the burial place of two Kentish princes (Aethelberht and Aethelred) in the late 7th century, that was described as ‘very famous’ (Medlycott 2003, 6). Excavations immediately to

² According to Bede, a ‘hide’ was the ‘land of one *familia*’: the amount of land required to support a family, probably the extended family of a free man with their slaves and retainers (Faith 1997, 12, 132; Hooke 1998, 50). By the late 7th century, the laws of the West Saxon King Ine reveal that the hide (and in particular ten hide units) was used as the measure of apportioning liability to *feorm* (food render), *gafol* (tax), and various services owed to the king (Attenborough 1922, 59; Whitelock 1955, 364–72; Faith 1997, 38, 105, 107, 128; Dyer 2003, 31). A hide at this time was not a fixed unit of area, the figure of around 120 acres per hide being a post-Conquest notion; instead, a hide was ‘the essential unit in assessing, administering and financing service to the king’ (Faith 1997, 90, 28).

the west of the parish church, whose existing structure appears to be 12th century and later, revealed Middle Saxon occupation and a carved stone block with coiled serpent decoration, of a type and date (late 8th to 10th century) that could only have come from an important church, almost certainly a minster (Dale *et al.* forthcoming). This early church may pre-date the co-axial landscape in this area as it lies at the end of, as opposed to beside, one of its major axial elements.

2. *Southchurch and Shoebury*. The Domesday place-name Southchurch suggests it may have been the location of another minster church, although it appears to post-date the co-axial landscape in this area and so may be later than the church in Great Wakering. The parish of Southchurch was either formed from the combination of two Domesday vills – Southchurch and Thorpe – or was sub-divided into these vills. Its western parish boundary (with Prittlewell) looks relatively early (except where it deviates around Southchurch Hall which is presumably a later change) in contrast to the boundary with North and South Shoebury, both of which zig-zag through the landscape in a way that clearly post-dates the field boundary pattern. This suggests North and South Shoebury were once a single estate called ‘Shoebury’ (which in Domesday is recorded as 10 hides and 30 acres), and this estate had been carved out of Southchurch. In the medieval period South Shoebury was known as Great Shoebury, and North Shoebury as Little Shoebury (Reaney 1935, 198), suggesting that South Shoebury was the most important of the two places.

3. *Prittlewell, Sutton and Shopland*. The boundaries between Prittlewell, Shopland, and Sutton all clearly zig-zag through the field boundary pattern and even cut diagonally across some fields, which suggests they are relatively recent. Like Great Wakering and probably Southchurch, Prittlewell was a Middle Saxon minster church.

These three early estates probably existed by the 8th century but were probably created through the sub-division of what was once a single territory/estate that embraced all of the land between the Thames and the Crouch estuaries and extending as far west as the Rayleigh Hills, that broadly corresponds to the later Rochford Hundred (a ‘hundred’ was a 10th century and later administrative unit). The evidence for this is particularly clear on Wallsea Island and the adjacent marshes, different parts of which belonged to Little Wakering, Canewdon, Eastwood, Great Stambridge, and Hockley, suggesting that it was once a common pasture open to all these communities and that when parochial rights had to be defined, each community received a defined block of land (**Figure 12**; Darby 1952, 241-4). Until the 16th century, when it became a parish in its own right, Foulness was similarly shared between the mainland parishes of Rochford, Little Stambridge, Little Wakering, Shopland, and Sutton (Smith 1970, 9, map 1). Similarly, a number of communities in the east of Rochford Hundred, including South Shoebury, Sutton, and Great Wakering, held areas of woodland on the Rayleigh Hills that would have provided them with upland wood pasture (Rackham 1986, fig. 14). The reference to woodland in a survey of Temple Sutton dated 1309 (Lord 2002, 71-2), for example, is noteworthy as the area east of the Prittle Brook was almost devoid of woodland from at least the 18th century (Chapman and Andre’s map of 1777), and the Templar’s woods was Temple Wood in Hadleigh (Rackham 1986, 16).³ The place-names Canewdon and Canvey may both contain the personal name ‘Cana’, making this the region of Cana’s people (Reaney 1935, 148).

³ There are many other cases of estates on the lowlands of south east Essex holding woodland that was on the Rayleigh Hills. In 1315 a tenement whose property comprised 115 acres of land, 50 acres of marsh, and 2 acres of wood were spread across

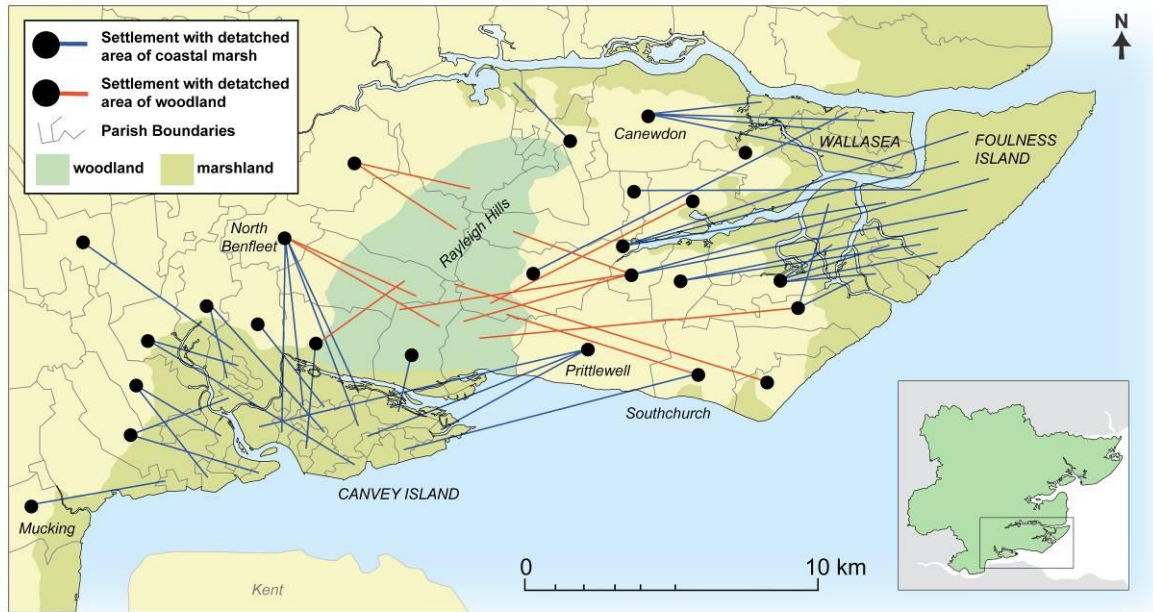


Figure 12: territorial links across South East Essex (drawing: Essex County Council).

This pattern of lowland communities having woodland up on the Rayleigh Hills may explain the limited amount of woodland that Domesday records in that area (Darby 1952, fig. 61). The 11th century place-names on the Rayleigh Hills certainly imply the presence of extensive woodland, notably the dominance of *-leah* names (meaning woodland clearing or wood pasture), that have become *-leigh* and *-ley* (Hadleigh, Hockley, Leigh, Rayleigh, Thundersley), and *-wuda* (as in Eastwood). When the landscape is first mapped, by Chapman and Andre in 1777, there were indeed large areas of woodland on the Rayleigh Hills but almost none in the lowlands to the east, yet in Domesday there is less than expected woodland listed in those manors located on the hills. The two manors that made up the large parish of Rayleigh, for example, had enough woodland for 40 pigs, while the three manors in Hockley had woodland for just 30 pigs between them. In contrast, in the fertile agricultural lowlands to the east, where there was almost no woodland in 1777, the manors in Sutton had woodland for 50 pigs, Great Wakering, Shopland, and Southchurch had woodland for 40 pigs each, and the Shoebury manors had woodland for 32 pigs. The likely explanation for less woodland being recorded in Domesday on the Rayleigh Hills than is to be expected, and more than expected in the lowlands to the east, is that just as inland communities had areas of coastal marshland for their sheep, so lowland communities had areas of woodland on the uplands to graze their pigs. Whilst of great historical interest in terms of how the landscape has developed, this could also be used in promoting public access, in showing how all local communities used to share resources in the area.

The Anglo-Saxon name of this district between the Crouch and the Thames is not known, but would probably have been called a ‘regio’, equivalent to the ‘regio’ of Dengie that is referred to in an Anglo-Saxon charter (land grant) of 706-9 (Hart 1971, No. 7). Over time, the 7th to 8th century ‘regios’ were divided up into large

Shopland, Little Wakering, and Hadleigh (Feet of Fines part XVII, p239); in 1329, a messuage [house] with 236 acres of land, 3 acres of pasture, 156 acres of wood, and 140 acres of marsh were spread across Barrow, Little Wakering, and Thundersley (Feet of Fines part XIX, p8); in 1330 a tenement whose property comprised 1 messuage, 43 acres of land, 1 acre of meadow, and 1 acre of wood were spread across Little [North] Shoebury, Rawreth, and Hadleigh (Feet of Fines part XIX, p14); in 1333 a tenement consisted of two messuages, 120 acres of land, 2 acres of meadow, 300 acres of marsh, and 4 acres of wood in Shopland and Hadleigh (Feet of Fines part XIX, p29); and in 1388 a tenement comprised 1 messuage, 18 acres of land and 1 acre of wood in Shoebury and Rayleigh.

estates, of which those based at Great Wakering, Prittlewell, and Southchurch are probably examples. In turn, these large estates were progressively broken up into smaller units that correspond to the manors recorded in Domesday. One way in which the large estates were fragmented was through the king granting part of an estate to the church or one of his followers, and the earliest record of this within this study area is possibly in 823 when Leofstan is said to have granted Southchurch to the monks of Christ Church in Canterbury (although this charter could be a forgery).⁴ The earliest genuine charter relating to our study area is in 946 when King Eadred granted 12 ‘mansae’⁵ at *Scopinglande* (Shopland) to a nun called Eawynn (probably of Barking Abbey: Hart 1971, No. 12). By the 990s, Shopland had become the property of St Paul’s Cathedral (Hart 1971, No. 28), but by 1066 it was held by a freeman as 5 ‘hides’. As ‘mansae’ and ‘hides’ were probably the same measure of land, the 12 ‘mansae’ in 946 must have covered more than just Shopland which was assessed as 5 hides in Domesday. It is likely that the 12 ‘mansae’ included Sutton to the west (where there were 5.5 hides plus 15 acres in Domesday) and perhaps the northern part of Prittlewell, as Barling to the east was held by Leofwine, son of Wulfstan, until his death in 998 when he granted it to St Paul’s cathedral (Hart 1971, No. 32).

3.3.3. The Anglo-Saxon settlement pattern and landscape

A number of Early Saxon settlements have been discovered in the study area. An Early Anglo-Saxon ‘sunken featured building’ (SFB) has been excavated *c.*500 m west of Temple Farm (unpublished, referred to in Brown 1988, and Wymer and Brown 1995, 163). Another 6th century SFB has been excavated *c.*500 m north east of Fox Hall (half way between Fox Hall and Beauchamps: Ecclestone 1995), while fieldwalking has revealed another probable settlement *c.*700 m to the south (*c.*500 m north of Southchurch Wick Farm: Bennett 1998, 202). Another SFB was excavated in the Baldwin’s Farm gravel pit halfway between Barling Church and Barling Hall; it produced 5th to 8th century pottery (Essex HER 9878). Two findspots of 6th to 7th century pottery *c.*300 m apart, and halfway between Barling church and Roper’s Farm, may be from a single settlement or two separate occupation sites (Essex HER 14828 and 14831). Fragments of four 6th to 7th century brooches from a site between Little Wakering church and Abbotts Hall Farm are likely to relate to a cemetery (Essex HER 13816). The brickearth quarries north of Great Wakering have produced a number of Saxon artefacts, and references to a skeleton buried with iron implements are likely to be from an early Anglo-Saxon cemetery (Essex HER11126). An 8th to 10th century bone comb may suggest later occupation (Tyler 1986), though the provenancing of these antiquarian finds is very imprecise. An Early Saxon button brooch, likely to have come from a burial, was recovered *c.*800 m to the south west, to the west of Great Wakering village (Essex HER 11206), while *c.*1 km to the south excavations have revealed an Early Anglo-Saxon SFB and other features (Essex HER13822). Finally, 5th to 7th century occupation has also been found in excavations adjacent to the parish church in Great Wakering, *c.*700 m south of the brickfields to the north of the village (Essex HER 18259). A small Early Saxon cemetery has also been excavated at North Shoebury (Wymer and Brown 1995, 46-52).

Three important conclusions can be drawn from these finds. Firstly, it is noticeable that each discovery of a ‘sunken featured building’ has been an isolated find, and the completely excavated cemetery at North Shoebury was very small, suggesting a highly dispersed settlement pattern of physically isolated farmsteads and small hamlets as opposed to larger villages. Secondly, all these Early Saxon sites are located some distance from known

⁴ Canterbury did hold Southchurch in 1066, but the only evidence for this gift is W. Somner’s (1640) *The Antiquities of Canterbury* and his source – a list of grants to Canterbury – has now been lost (Hart 1971, No. 8). As medieval churches were notorious for forging documents in order to establish their claim to land, we cannot be sure that this charter is genuine.

⁵ ‘Mansae’ were a measure of land probably equivalent of a hide (see above).

medieval settlements. Thirdly, none of these Early Saxon settlements saw any later occupation: there seems to be something of a dislocation between the Early Saxon settlement pattern and the historic landscape of today. When this dislocation occurred is not, however, clear as Middle to Late Saxon Essex is aceramic (i.e. people did not use pottery) and so the absence of datable material from these sites does not mean they were not occupied; all that we can say is that they were abandoned before the medieval period.

Table 1. Domesday Manors (fields that are tinted are not recorded in Domesday but are interpolations)

vill	parish	Phillimore Edition reference	status	owner	owner	hides	acres (if 1 hide = 120a)	Tithe acreage
		No.		1066	1086			
Barling	Barling	5,12	1 manor	St Pauls	St Pauls	2.5 hides less 15 acres	285	1,259
			In the same 1 freeman held 0.5 hides and 10 acres				70	
		18,16	in lordship	1 freeman	Bishop of Bayeux	0.5 hides	60	
						3.5 h less 5 a	415	1,259
Shoebury	North or South Shoebury	18,17	in lordship	1 freeman	Bishop of Bayeux	1 hides and 30 acres		
	North or South Shoebury	24,23	1 manor	Robert son of Wymarc	Swein of Essex	5 hides		
	North or South Shoebury	24,28	1 manor	1 freeman	Swein of Essex	4 hides		
			A freeman holds the fourth of these hides					
						10h 30a	1,230	2,097
Shopland	Shopland	20,80	in lordship	1 freeman	Count Eustace	5 hides		
			In Shopland 1 freeman held 0.5 hides and 30 acres which Engelric appropriated					
						5.5h and 30a	690	1,040
Southchurch	Southchurch	2,8	1 manor	Holy Trinity, Canterbury	Holy Trinity, Canterbury	4 hides		
[Little]thorpe*	Southchurch	24,25	1 manor	Godric, a thane	Swein of Essex	1 hide 30 acres		
Thorpehall	Southchurch	37,10	1 manor	Ingvar	Ranulf brother of Ilger	2.5 hides		
						7.5h and 30a	930	1,880
Sutton	Sutton	24,30	1 manor	2 freemen	Swein of Essex	1.5 hides and 30 acres		
		24,35	1 manor		Swein of Essex	1 hide and 15 acres		
		24,39	'in Sutton'	Robert	Swein of Essex	0.5 hides		
		71,4	1 manor	1 freeman	Theodoric Pointel	2 hides and 30 acres		
						5h and 75a	690	721
Wakering [Gt]	Great Wakering	24,21	1 manor		Swein of Essex	5.5 hides	660	2,784
			Of this manor Warner and W. hold 1 hides					
Wakering [Lt]	Little Wakering	24,29	1 manor	1 freeman	Swein of Essex	2 hides		
			Of this manor Robert holds 1 hide and Godric 0.5 hides					
Barrow [Hall]	Little Wakering	23,43	in lordship	Finn the Dane	Richard, son of Count Gilbert	1.5 hides		
						3.5h	420	2,736

* China Hall on Chapman and Andre 1777; Southchurch Lawn on OS 1st Ed. 6th 1873; now Eton House School

3.4. Domesday

The first detailed insight we get into the history of this landscape is the Domesday Book (**Table 1**). It is a popular misconception that Domesday records settlements: it does not. What Domesday records is units of land ownership – mostly manors – and the district, or ‘vill’, in which they were located. In some cases the geography was quite simple: in the vill of Shopland, for example, there was a single manor, while in the vill of Barling there were two separate manors, and in Sutton four. Some villas were probably coterminous with ecclesiastical parishes, and this was probably the case in Barling, Shopland, and Sutton. Elsewhere the administrative geography was more complex. The parish of Prittlewell, for example, comprised two villas – Milton and Prittlewell – each with a single manor. The parish of Southchurch comprised the villas of Southchurch (a single manor) and Thorpe (in which there

were two manors: Littlethorpe and Thorpehall). The separate parishes of North and South Shoebury, and Great and Little Wakering, may not yet have existed as Domesday simply records the villas of ‘Shoebury’ (in which there were three manors) and ‘Wakering’ (in which there were two manors); Barrowhall was a separate vill and manor to the west of (Little) Wakering.

Each of these places must have had a manor house that was the centre of the estate, though it is not clear where the remaining population lived. On St Pauls Cathedral’s manor of Barling, for example, there were nine men who would have held a small amount of land each (and also a slave, who would not have had land). What is not clear is where these ten men, and their families, lived: all together in a small village, or scattered across the landscape in isolated farmsteads. Some tenants may have lived close to the manor house but it is highly unlikely that all of the houses were concentrated together in one location (i.e. a village), as all the other evidence points to this area having a dispersed settlement pattern (see Section 3.6 below). Domesday also records ‘free men’ who would not have owed services to the lord, and their farmsteads are likely to have been located away from the centre of the main estate (the freeman in Barling may well have lived at Mucking Hall, that later in the medieval period became a manor in its own right (Feet of Fines V, 46).

3.5 The parish churches

With the exception of Prittlewell, which contains some Anglo-Saxon work, there is no evidence that any of the present parish churches within the study area was standing at the time of Domesday, although all but North Shoebury were built in the following half century. They may have had timber predecessors. The place-name ‘Southchurch’ shows that there must have been a church there in 1066 that was either located nearby, or was rebuilt in the Norman period. With the exception of Shopland, which has been demolished, these magnificent medieval buildings are dominant local landmarks. Great Wakering and North Shoebury are particularly good examples of the complex history of parish churches with various phases of architecture visible in one building.



Figure 12: the church at Barling is a prominent local landmark, as seen here looking down Mucking Hall drive

Barling (All Saints) Walls of ragstone rubble with some flint in the nave (not rendered). South wall of nave possibly 12th century, but rest 15th century, including tower, that Pevsner rightly describes as ‘stately’, with tall, slender spire (RCHME 1923, 10-11; Pevsner 1954, 65).

Great Wakering (St Nicholas) Site of a Middle Saxon minster church although nothing of this survives above ground today. The present church has walls of ragstone rubble with some flint and septaria (not rendered). Norman chancel and nave; ground stage of tower late Norman (c.1130) and completed in late 12th century. The tower is topped by a spire of medium height. Unusual west porch added in 15th century: Pevsner (1954, 193) notes: ‘The most singular feature of this church is the two-storeyed C15 W porch added to the Norman W tower. This is an early Saxon motif, and one wonders what can be the reason for introducing it here? Older foundations, or simply some obstacle in the way of a two-storey S porch?’ Documentary research reveals that there was indeed a church here from the late 7th century (Dale *et al.* forthcoming). Was there still memory of this Anglo-Saxon church in the 15th century, or is there more to this architectural anomaly. Would certainly warrant a detailed architectural survey.



Figure 13: the curious west porch of Great Wakering church that is dated to the 15th century but built in an Anglo-Saxon (c.8th -10th centuries) style

Little Wakering (St. Mary) Walls of mixed rubble except tower which is coursed ragstone rubble (not rendered). Norman chancel and nave; chancel extended to south in the 15th century, when the tower was added (with its tall, slender spire comparable in elegance to Barling).

North Shoebury (St Mary) Walls of ragstone rubble with some flint (not rendered). Mostly 13th century (i.e. later than the majority of the churches in this area that are Norman), with the north wall of the nave and top stage of the tower rebuilt in the 14th century. Simple low pyramidal spire on tower (comparable to bell turret at Sutton). The 13th century south aisle has been demolished (probably in the 15th century when the roof was renewed) and the archways blocked but the arcade piers are still exposed (RCHME 1923, 101-2). The demolition of the aisle may have been a result of population decline after the Black Death and subsequent outbreaks of plague.



Figure 14: the south side of North Shoebury church. The former 13th century south aisle was demolished (probably in the 15th century) and the new south wall of the nave was built by blocking the former arches of the arcade.

South Shoebury (St Andrew) Walls of ragstone rubble except tower which is of flint rubble (not rendered). Late Norman chancel and nave (built in mid 12th century), with tower added in 14th century. Unlike Barling, Great and Little Wakering, and North Shoebury, lacks a spire (RCHME 1923, 143-4).

Southchurch (Holy Trinity) Walls of ragstone and flint rubble (not rendered). Late Norman (mid 12th century) nave; chancel rebuilt in mid 13th century; 15th century belfry with tall, elegant spire, now dwarfed by a modern extension in which the medieval church is simply the south aisle (RCHME 1923, 145).

Sutton (All Saints) Walls of ragstone rubble (not rendered). Chancel and nave late Norman (first half of 12th century); no tower but 15th century weather-boarded pyramid-shaped bell-turret (RCHME 1923, 157).

Shopland Was of Norman date (RCHME 1923, 135-6; Pevsner 1954, 318), demolished in 1957 after being slightly damaged during the War (Rodwell and Rodwell 1977, 16).

3.6. The medieval and later settlement pattern

The first occasion for which we can describe the complete settlement pattern of South East Essex is based on the Tithe maps of c.1840 and Ordnance Survey First Edition One Inch maps of the 1873 (Chapman and Andre's map of 1777 appears to show most settlements but cannot be regarded as totally reliable). Six types of settlement can be identified:

- Large villages associated with the parish church (of which there were just two – Great Wakering and Prittlewell – in the study area)
- Small hamlets consisting of several houses and cottages in a cluster, associated with the parish church (of which there were just two clear examples – Little Wakering and Southchurch – in the study area, and a possible third at Barling)
- Church/manor complexes not associated with other settlement (of which there were four in the study area: North Shoebury, South Shoebury, Shopland, Sutton)
- Substantial isolated farmsteads (with a large curtilage and numerous ancillary agricultural buildings) that were usually set back from the main through roads, of which there were several in each parish. Some were enclosed by water-filled moats, and most are documented in the medieval period.
- Scattered smaller farmsteads (with a small curtilage and no more than two ancillary agricultural buildings). Farms with small land-holdings such as these may once have been more common, but many will have fallen on hard times and lost their land to larger, more successful farms.
- Roadside cottages, that would have been the residences of agricultural and other workers, and were not associated with an agricultural landholding.

All of the settlements depicted on the Ordnance Survey First Edition Six Inch map of 1873 for the parishes of Sutton, Shopland, Barling, Little Wakering and Great Wakering (i.e. the core area of the proposed enhancement of public access) are listed in **Table 2**, with earliest evidence for their existence based on Reaney's (1935) study of *The Place-Names of Essex*, the RCHME's (1923) survey of the major standing buildings, and modern Listed Building records (<http://lbonline.english-heritage.org.uk/Login.aspx> and www.imagesofengland.org). The settlement patterns of these parishes are discussed below, along with a short comparative note about the other parishes in the broader study area. In compiling **Table 2** the following terminology/conventions were used.

- 'first documented in': first reference to settlement discovered by Reaney (1935), although it must be stressed that a settlement may have existed for many centuries without having been documented (e.g. in a parish for which few records have survived). Bolt's farmhouse in Barling, for example, is a 16th/17th century or earlier structure that does not appear in Reaney's study of the place-names. Archives may also exist that Reaney did not have access to that could reveal an earlier date for a settlement.
- 'possibly occupied by': refers to where Reaney (1935) has found a surname in the parish that corresponds to the place-name. Some of these places may indeed have been occupied by these individuals, but there is no other evidence for this.
- Standing building: the primary source is the listed building record which are based on more recent surveys (1950s and later) than were carried out for the RCHME (1923) volume; the latter is used where a building is

not listed, for example where its condition may not now warrant listing, or it may have been demolished, such as Jail Farm and Trumpions in Barling, both of which were 15th century (RCHME 1923, 11-12).

- Moats: these are sometimes noted in the RCHME volume, although several others can be identified on the Ordnance Survey First Edition Six Inch map.

Table 2. The settlement pattern

parish	village or hamlet	church/manor complex	substantial farm	smaller farms
Sutton		Sutton Hall. ‘Sutton’ first documented in 1086. Listed as C14 and later.	Coopers Farm [Smithers in 1777], first documented in 1553 and possibly occupied by John le Smith in 1341.	Tanyard , shown but not named on 1777 map.
			Fleet Hall , first documented in 1547. Listed as ‘C17 or earlier’. Possible moat on OS 1 st Ed. 6”.	
			New Hall . Not on 1777 map. Listed as ‘C18’	
			Rectory . Early C17 th structure (RCHME 1923, 158)	
			Temple Farm [Temple Sutton in 1777], first documented in 1234 as ‘Little Sutton’. Early C17 structure (RCHME 1923, 158)	
Shopland		Shopland Hall. ‘Shopland’ first documented in 946. Listed early C18 barn.	Beauchamps , possibly occupied by Alice Beauchamp in 1442. Listed as late C17 or earlier. Probably C18 century brew/bakehouse. C18/19 granary. Possible moat on OS 1 st Ed. 6”.	[what is remarkable about Shopland is that by 1873 the whole parish had just four farms, that presumably represent the amalgamation of many smaller medieval farms]
			Butlers Farm , possibly occupied by William le Botiller in 1258. Listed as C18 or possibly earlier. C17 barn. Moat (RCHME 1923, 136).	
			Fox Hall , possibly occupied by Thomas le Vaut in 1327.	
Barling	scattered hamlet SW of church	(Barling Hall is c.300m to the east of the church)	Baldwin’s , first documented in 1360.	Barling House . Listed as C18 or earlier.
			Barling Hall . ‘Barling’ first documented in 998; Barling Hall first documented as such in 1419. Possible moat on OS 1 st Ed. 6”.	Blue House , first documented in 1719. Listed as C17/18
			Burtons , possibly occupied by Robert Burton in 1729.	Bolts , listed as C16/17 or earlier (Figure 15).
			Glebe Farm , listed as C17 or earlier.	Harveys . On OS 1 st Ed 6”, but not map of 1777
			Jail Farm . C15 house (RCHME 1923, 12).	Roach Farm [not named on OS 1 st Ed. 6”, but immediately north of Bolts], listed as mid C16
			Mucking Hall , possibly occupied by Thomas de Muckinges in 1248. Listed as C16 or earlier. Substantial C17 threshing barn, and C18 raised granary. Moat (RCHME 1923, 11).	Peacocks , possibly occupied by John Peacock in 1419.
			Roper’s Farm , first documented in 1768. C17 farmhouse (RCHME 1923, 11). Listed early C16 barn (now converted into a house). Late C18 cartlodge.	Ruckins [not named on OS 1 st Ed. 6”, but on Little Waking Road]. Listed as C16/17 or earlier.
			Sutton’s Farm [not named on OS 1 st Ed. 6”, but south west of Parsonage], possibly occupied by John Sutton in 1419.	Trumpions , first documented in 1777. C15 house (RCHME 1923, 11).
			Vicarage . ‘Saxon-Norman’ (c.C11-12) pottery (Essex HER 9879)	Walkers , listed as late C17
			Deserted moated site, ‘Weir Pond’ (on OS 1 st Ed. 6”); an enamel cross attachment has been found nearby (Essex HER 11192).	

Little Wakering	scattered hamlet around church	(Little Wakering Hall is c.600 m to the east of the church)	Barrow Hall. First documented in 1086. Listed as C18 or possibly earlier. Moated (RCHME 1923, 89).	Brays [not named on OS 1 st Ed. 6 th , but adjacent to church], listed as C17 or earlier
			Habits Hall [now Abbots Hall], listed as C18 or earlier. Moated (RCHME 1923, 89).	Bridgmans
			Little Wakering Hall, substantial manor house listed as C15 or earlier. C16 outbuilding. Possible moat on OS 1 st Ed. 6 th .	Cramps Farm
			Little Wakering Wick	Dam Farm
			Deserted site on OS 1 st Ed. 6 th north of Habits Hall, shown as occupied by un-named on 1777 map. Possible moat on OS 1 st Ed. 6 th .	Halfway House
				Parsonage Farm
				Slutsgreen
Great Wakering	Large village to west of church	Since the time of Domesday, Gt and Lt Wakering manors were in the same hands (Medlycott 2003). The location of Gt Wakering manor house is not known. Morant (1763-8, 305) states that it 'stood by Pales Pitt at the coming of the street' (the location of this is not known, but it may be Paton's Pit at the junction of the road leading west from Gt Wakering and the road north to Lt Wakering). After it had been demolished, its functions passed to Lt Wakering Hall.	Great Wakering Wick. Possible moat on OS 1 st Ed. 6 th .	Claystreet. Listed as C17 or earlier.
			Oldbury Farm	Millbarn
			Trotters. First documented in 1777. Listed as C16 or earlier hall house.	Millers Farm. Listed as late C18.
			Winters	Polsteads
				Rebels. First documented as Ravels in 1777.
				Samuels Corner. Possibly C16 house (RCHME 1923, 61).
				Un-named farm south of Great Wakering Common

Barling. By the 18th century there were a large number of settlements scattered across the parish with some substantial farmsteads but also a large number of smaller farms and cottages. A number of these buildings survive (and are listed buildings that retain their traditional weatherboarding), making this the largest concentration of traditional buildings in the Stonebridge area. The manor house – Barling Hall – is located c.350m to the east of the church, and probably shifted to this location so that it could exploit both the fertile dryland soils and rich grazing land on the adjacent marshes. Several pairs of farms may represent the division of what had been a single landholding (e.g. Bolts and Roach, Blue House and Walkers). A series of cottages along the road between the church and the Parsonage and down the lane to Little Wakering,⁶ and a deserted moated site opposite the parsonage, formed a loosely-arranged hamlet though it is unclear whether this is the shrunken remains of what had been a larger medieval settlement, or a relatively recent piecemeal creation. Overall, Barling had a very dispersed settlement pattern, with a diversity of large farmsteads, small farmsteads, and workers cottages, that may have been typical of the late medieval/early post medieval landscape before the emergence of the large farms that came to dominate areas such as Shopland and Southchurch.

Great Wakering. A substantial village to the west of the church, which had a market on two days a week, suggesting this was a place of some importance (<http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/essex.html#Greatw>). The earliest map of the area (the Tithe map of 1841) shows a series of long, narrow fields extending at right angles both to the north and the south of the High Street which might represent blocks of tenements in a planned village (Essex County Council 2006,), although they may reflect the re-use of strips in a former open field. This second

⁶ including 4 Church Road (listed as 18th century), 26 and 28 Church Road (listed as mid 16th century), Myrtle Cottage listed as 15th century, and Ruckins listed as 16th/17th century or earlier.

hypothesis is strengthened by the way that the long narrow strips are also found to the west of the lane north to Little Wakering Hall that in 1777 had not yet been occupied by the village, and by a series of medieval ditches c.6m apart that were excavated in advance of the development of Milton Close, south of the village (Reidy 1997). The village still contains a large number of 17th to 18th century cottages (many of which are listed and retain their traditional weatherboarding). The White Hart pub is a 15th/16th century hall house that must have been at the centre of a substantial farm, while Rectory Farm lay to the north of the church. The core of Great Wakering is a Conservation Area, reflecting the large number of traditional buildings (of which 14 are listed) and has been subject to a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Essex County Council 2006).

In the west of the parish small farmsteads were dotted across the landscape, while at the eastern end there was a series of farmsteads scattered along the fen-edge (including Great Wakering Wick), continuing the line of fen-edge settlements to the south in Shoebury. The lack of farms in the central part of the parish implies that this land was managed from farmsteads in the village such as the modern White Hart pub.

Little Wakering. The 18th and 19th century maps depict a settlement pattern very much like that in Barling with a loose hamlet around the church, a small number of substantial farmsteads dotted across the parish, and a larger number of smaller farmsteads and cottages scattered along the roads. We can, however, say relatively little else about this settlement pattern as few pre-19th century buildings survive and are listed, and Reaney (1935) has very few entries. The present village is of recent origin.

North Shoebury. A settlement pattern that, like Shopland, was dominated by a series of large farmsteads many of which are documented from the 13th to 15th centuries. The manor house (North Shoebury Hall) lay next to the church, and part of a moat is depicted on the OS 1st Ed. 6” map. Excavation has also revealed a large ditched enclosure to the east. Moat House to the south was also moated, and until the early 20th century had a gatehouse (RCHME 1923, 102) making it comparable to Southchurch Hall. Barnfleet, Mustard Hall (Barn Cottages on the OS 1st Ed. 6”): Reaney 1935, 198), and Friends Farm (a 15th century farmhouse: RCHME 1923, 61) lay on the fen-edge to the east, while Crouchmans was at the head of a small stream that flowed into these marshes.

Prittlewell: The settlement pattern in the eastern half of Prittlewell contained a large nucleated village around the church but was otherwise like that of Shopland with just a series of substantial farmsteads and no other smaller farmsteads or cottages (Crabbs [Tranham in 1777], Hamstel, Fossets, Jordans, Milton Hall (a Domesday manor), Porters, Priory Farm, and Thames Farm).

Shopland. By the 18th century there were just four substantial farms scattered across the parish: Shopland Hall (that lay next to the church) and Beauchamps, Butlers, and Fox Hall. These represent the homes of yeoman farmers whose descendents had built up large estates by amalgamating the land-holdings of adjacent tenements. In 1257–58 Shopland had a market, held by Robert Tybbetoth; it was alleged that Robert had erected the market to the detriment of that at Great Wakering, and Robert and his heirs were permitted to have their market in return for 9s. per annum. (Feet of Fines I, part viii, p227; <http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/essex.html#Sho>). This market therefore appears to have been a speculative development by the lord of the manor and there is no evidence that it was long-lived.

South Shoebury: A settlement pattern that, like Shopland, was dominated by a series of large farmsteads. The manor house (South Shoebury Hall) lay next to the church. Suttons, Chapman’s, and Cherrytree lay on the fen-edge to the east.

Southchurch. A small hamlet around the church included the school, rectory, Tile House, and some cottages. Elsewhere, there was a settlement pattern typical of the area with a series of very substantial farmsteads: the

moated manor house at Southchurch Hall, along with Littlethorpe and Thorpehall Farm (both Domesday manors), Buttery, Samuels Farm (moated: RCHME 1923, 146), Southchurch Lawn [China Hall in 1777], and Southchurch Wick. There were a few smaller farms (Bournesgreen Farm, Pigsgate, Potash Farm, and Wyatts). **Sutton.** By the 18th century there were six farms: Sutton Hall, which lay next to the church, and Coopers, Fleet Hall, New Hall, Tanyard, and Temple Farm. Other elements of the highly dispersed settlement pattern were the Rectory and three groups of cottages (Cockerton Cottages west of Tanyard, Red Cottages east of Temple Farm, and Slate Row south of Butlers Gate).



Figure 15: the 16th or 17th century Bolts Farm in Barling: an example of a traditional weather-boarded timber framed house.

3.7. Domestic architecture

The Stonebridge area – and in particular Barling parish and Great Wakering village – includes some fine examples of the local building tradition of timber-framed houses that were either plastered or weather-boarded (of the surviving 18th century and earlier houses that are listed the proportions are roughly 50:50). There were two examples of decorated plasterwork (pargeting), though both have now been lost⁷. The most characteristic aspect of the local architecture is its use of weather-boarding (Figure 15) which is found on all forms of buildings including agricultural barns, bakehouses, granaries, and cart lodges (e.g. fine examples at Beauchamps, Butler’s Farm and Shopland Hall all in Shopland, and Mucking Hall and Roper’s in Barling), small cottages, large farmhouses (e.g. Butler’s Farm), and manor houses (e.g. Sutton Hall). It was even used in the gatehouse to Moat House in North Shoebury (now demolished: RCHME 1923, 102).

⁷ at Beauchamps in Shopland (for photos see RCHME 1923, plates facing p136 and 152), and 26/28 Church Road in Barling (RCHME 1923, 11; Listed Building Record)

Before the 19th century brick was used to a very limited extent (two examples in South Shoebury being Red House and Suttons dated 1673 and 1681: RCHME 1923, 145), and was restricted to high status houses such as New Hall in Sutton, Barrow Hall in Great Wakering, and White House and North Shoebury House in North Shoebury (all 18th century). Some apparent examples of early brick houses are in fact timber-framed buildings that have been faced in brick at a later date (e.g. Sutton Hall, South Shoebury Hall, and Clay Street Farm and 11/15/17 High Street in Great Wakering).

3.8. Medieval and later land-holding

By the 19th century, this was a landscape characterised by a small number of large land-holdings: the 2,097 acres in Shopland for example were divided between just four farms (Butlers, Beauchamps, Fox Hall, and Shopland Hall). We do not have a complete map of settlement or land-holding in the medieval period, but an impression of the amount of land associated with farmsteads can be gauged using documents known as Final Concords (commonly known as ‘Feet of Fines’) which were records of land transactions that went through the Court of Common Pleas. An analysis of the entries for Sutton, Shopland, Barling, Great and Little Wakering, and North and South Shoebury between 1199 (the earliest date for which they survive) and 1348 (the Black Death) reveals the details of 57 transactions that involved 60 tenements (as several entries refer to more than one tenement)⁸ that between them had 1,903 acres of ‘land’ (presumably arable), 53.5 acres of pasture, 7.5 acres of meadow (totalling 1,964 acres), and 811 acres of marsh. Several entries just relate to marshland or rents, and of the 53 remaining entries (which represent 57 tenements), the average amount of land, pasture and meadow per tenement was 34.51 acres.⁹ What this figure hides, however, is a huge variation in the size of land holdings although a very high proportion were clearly extremely small (see **Table 3**). Over time, however, the size of land-holdings increased. For 1199 - 1348 (the Black Death) 49% of the 57 tenements that included ‘land’ were 10 acres or less compared to 35% of the 23 tenements recorded between 1349 and 1500, and 19% between 1501 and 1603. In part this reflects the amalgamation of land-holdings after the Black Death and the subsequent outbreaks of plague, and then the dispersement of former monastic lands following the Dissolution. Through these processes the size of landholdings increased which led to the emergence of the landed gentry and the yeoman farmers, many of whose houses still grace the landscape.

Table 3: the size medieval landholdings excluding marshland, pasture and meadow based in Feet of Fines

area of land	10a or less	11-20a	21-30	31-40a	41-50a	51-60a	61-70a	71-80a	81-90a	91-100a	101-120	121-140a	141-160a	161a+	Total
No. of tenements 1199 - 1348	28	8	4	4	2	2	0	1	0	1	0	4	1	2	57
No. of tenements 1349 - 1500	8	8	3	1	1			1			0	1			23
No. of tenements 1501 - 1603	11	5	6	3	2	1	0	10	0	2	6	4	1	6	57

⁸ Where there is more than one transaction recorded for the same tenement only the first is included in this analysis.

⁹ Several entries refer not to acres but to a ‘carucate’, which was a unit of tax assessment used in the east of England (the former Danelaw) that was equivalent to the ‘ploughland’ or ‘hide’ used elsewhere in southern England. In Great Wakering the description of the same tenement as ‘140 acres’ and ‘one carucate’ gives us the acreage for a carucate in this area (Feet of Fines volume XI, pp 12, 15, 24).

3.9. Place-names

Place-names can form an important part of the character of a landscape, illustrated for example by the large number of place-names ending in ‘-leigh’ and ‘-ley’ on the Rayleigh Hills (see Section 3.3.2 above). These place-name elements are both derived from the Old English *leah* meaning ‘woodland clearing’, and this area is still well wooded. In the Stonebridge area no one place-name element is characteristic of the area although a number of the names are of particular interest. Great and Little Wakering are clearly sub-divisions of what was once a single territory, as were South and North Shoebury (Reaney 1935, 201). The name of Temple Farm in Sutton reflects its former ownership by the Knights Templar, as does ‘Temple-Marsh’ on Havengore (Lord 2002, 71). Note that although in northern England place-names that include ‘thorpe’ are Scandinavian, the two Thorpe names in Southchurch (Thorpehall Farm and Littlethorpe to the north) are based on the Old English *thorp*, meaning settlement and cannot be taken as evidence for Viking settlement (Reaney 1935, 201).

Former manor houses are typically called ‘X Hall’ (e.g. Shopland Hall, Barrow Hall, and Thorpehall). Minor farms typically have personal names such as Baldwins, Burtons, and Peacocks in Barling that may have been occupied by John Bauldewyne in 1311, Robert Burton in 1729 and John Pecok in 1419 respectively; Mucking Hall was the home of Thomas de Muckinges in 1248 (Reaney 1935, 178).

There were four ‘wick’ place-names: Land Wick out on the Great Wakering Marshes (first documented in 1348: Reaney 1935, 204), Great Wakering Wick and Little Wakering Wick on the fen-edge of those parishes, and Southchurch Wick. ‘Wick’ names in England have two derivations: the first is derived from the Latin *vicus*,¹⁰ although the vast majority are derived from the Old English *wīc*, meaning trading centre, salt-production site, or dairy farm (Cameron 1996, 27, 42; Gelling 1988, 67-74). They are very common on the Essex marshes where it is the third of these meanings that usually applied (see Section 3.14 below).

3.10. The settlement pattern: a discussion

The characterisation above shows that apart from the substantial villages at Prittlewell and Great Wakering, and smaller hamlets at Southchurch, Little Wakering, and possibly Barling, the 18th and 19th century settlement pattern across the study area was dispersed, with a mixture of substantial farmsteads that were typically set back from the main roads and were sometimes moated, lesser farmsteads that were typically beside the main roads, and roadside workers cottages. It must be remembered, however, that our 18th and 19th century maps only provide a snap shot of what the landscape looked at that particular time, and that all landscapes change over time as some settlements expanded in size, and others contracted and even disappeared. **Table 4** provides one measure of the degree to which this particular settlement pattern has changed, by comparing the number of households recorded in Domesday with the number of houses in c.1870 (based on John Marius Wilson’s *Imperial Gazetteer*: <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/>). In Domesday there were a total of 162 households recorded in our eight parishes, with 640 houses in c.1870, giving an average of 3.9 houses in c.1870 for each household in 1086. Great Wakering and Barling saw the greatest increases, although it is interesting to note that the way in which this population growth was accommodated within the landscape was different: in Barling, houses were scattered across the parish, while in Great Wakering most of the growth was within the village. Shoebury, Southchurch, and Little Wakering are around the average, but in Sutton and Shopland there were actually fewer households in c.1870 than in 1086 (which is also reflected in the large size of the fields in these parishes which suggest agricultural investment and intensification).

¹⁰ Where English place-names containing ‘wick’ may reflect the presence of a Romano-British settlement, they take the form Wickham, not Wick, being combined with the Old English *hām* (‘village’) (Cameron 1996, 42).

Table 4. Measures of change in the landscape: a comparison of households in 1086 and c.1870

parish	Acreage (from Tithe survey, c.1840) ¹¹	Domesday (households)	c.1870 (houses)	Ratio c.1870 houses to DB households
Barling	1,259	11	77	7.0
North and South Shoebury	2,010	32	180	5.6
Shopland	1,040	16	10	0.6
Southchurch	1,880	41	91	2.2
Sutton	721	26	32	1.2
Great Wakering	2,784	20	199	9.9
Little Wakering	2,736	16	51	3.2
Totals/averages	12,430	162	640	3.9

When interpreting 18th and 19th century maps we must therefore be aware that they represent the culmination of many centuries of landscape change. The question is, while individual settlements may have disappeared or have been created over time, has the basic character of the settlement pattern fundamentally changed: in the medieval period, was this also a landscape of predominantly dispersed settlement, or was it once far more nucleated? The archaeological, architectural, and documentary evidence brought together in **Table 2** is very clear: many components of the dispersed settlement pattern can be traced back to the 13th and 14th centuries and this clearly was not a landscape once characterised by wholly nucleated settlement patterns. It must also be remembered that if a settlement is first documented at a particular date it does not mean that this is when it was created: it simply means that this is the earliest date for which documentary evidence has been found, and the settlement could well be much older (i.e. many of the settlements not documented until the post medieval period may in fact have existed in the medieval period). Similarly, if the present standing building on a particular site is 17th century it does not mean that this location was first occupied at that date: there may well have been an earlier house on an adjacent plot that was demolished after the present structure was built. Unfortunately, there has been very little archaeological work carried out within or in the immediate vicinity of settlements that existed in the 18th and 19th centuries in order to establish when they were first occupied. Excavation within the core of Prittlewell village, on the opposite side of the main street to the church, has established occupation from at least the 12th century on a plot next to a standing 15th century house, although a series of earlier features that lacked datable pottery but are aligned with the historic landscape show that the site was occupied before that date (Pocock 2006). Observations during building works carried out at Glebe Farm in Barling (the former vicarage, a 17th century farmhouse, within the sprawling hamlet south west of Barling church) revealed ‘Saxo-Norman’ pottery (c.11th to 12th century) (Essex HER 11178). In Great Wakering, excavations immediately adjacent to the churchyard have produced important evidence for Middle Saxon occupation (Dale *et al.* forthcoming).¹²

Across most if not all parishes, it is likely that some medieval settlements have been abandoned and now lie under ploughed fields, especially in Shopland. Before the agricultural revolution farming was a far more labour-intensive process and parishes such as Shopland – that by the 19th century had just four farmsteads – would have required a far larger workforce. This larger population may have been accommodated in settlements scattered across the landscape as was the case during the 18th and 19th centuries, or may have been housed in small hamlets associated with each of the estates centres, but which were demolished once mechanisation made them redundant

¹¹ Kain and Oliver 1995

¹² The Essex HER gives the grid reference for an Anglo-Saxon spearhead, some 7th century coins, a 7th to 9th century vessel, and a 9th century strap end as corresponding to Great Wakering Village, though this may be because the exact location of the find was not known (Essex HER 11002-5).

(i.e. what had been small hamlets have now shrunk to single farmsteads). There are several examples of now abandoned medieval settlements across the study area, such as a scatter of late medieval pottery from south of Suttonford Bridge in Sutton (Essex HER 9710), and various 11th to 13th century features excavated c.500 m to the east of Sutton Hall (Ennis 2008). A 14th to 16th century settlement excavated between Smither's Farm and Temple Farm could be a direct predecessor to 'Red Cottages' shown on the OS 1st ED. 6" map (Ennis 2008). Excavations on the fen-edge of Barling Marsh revealed two sites with evidence for 10th to 13th century occupation c.350m apart, the first of which was c.300m north west of Barling Hall (Essex HER 16904-5). A third site, with 12th to 13th century pottery, has been recorded on the fen-edge c.300 m south of Barling Hall in the Baldwins Farm Gravel pit (Essex HER 9880). All this evidence once again demonstrates that in the medieval period there was a dispersed settlement pattern like that mapped for the first time in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Such a dispersed settlement pattern could have been created in three ways. Firstly, each parish may once have had a nucleated village surrounded by open fields, and when these open fields were enclosed farmsteads gradually migrated from the villages out into the surrounding landscape (so that the farmstead could be located in the compact block of fields that replaced the scattered strips it once held in the open fields). This is what we see across a large part of central England, but not in South East Essex as archaeological and documentary evidence shows that medieval settlement patterns were dispersed. Secondly, it may be that there never were the villages and open fields that typified Midland England, and this area had dispersed settlements associated with enclosed field throughout the medieval period. In some areas this may have been the case. Thirdly, it is possible that within a landscape of predominantly enclosed field systems there were some small open fields each associated with a small hamlet, with the land belonging to each farmstead within the hamlet scattered across the open field; during the late- and post-medieval periods population declined and tenements were gradually amalgamated, eventually leaving a single isolated farmstead associated with a compact block of land. There is some evidence for these possible small open fields which is discussed below in Section 3.11.

3.11. Medieval field systems and the evidence for open field

Most of the fields across the study area are broadly rectangular with straight sides of a type found across much of Essex, and which Martin and Satchell (2008, 225-6) have called 'block holdings': fields that have always been enclosed by a hedge, owned by one individual, and in close association with their controlling farmstead. There are, however, a number of strands of evidence for former open field in the study area (open fields being very large fields that were sub-divided into blocks known as furlongs, which were in turn divided into un-hedged strips):

- The historic landscape as mapped in the 18th and 19th centuries in Barling, Little Wakering, Great Wakering, North Shoebury, and South Shoebury includes some long narrow fields that could represent the enclosure by agreement of strips in an open field. Some of these have a 'reversed-S' shape that is particularly diagnostic of former open field strips and were caused by ploughing over many years with teams of oxen (e.g. east of Beauchamps in Shopland on the estate map of 1755: ERO D/DU 628/1, and on the OS 1873 map south of Winter's in Great Wakering, and south of Crouchmans in North Shoebury).
- Although most farms covered by 18th century estate maps were associated with compact blocks of fields, the copyhold lands in North Shoebury Hall (ERO D/DU 663/3) were scattered across the northern part of the parish and included a number of long narrow fields that could have been former open field strips. Fragmented patterns of land-holding such as these may reflect the way that a tenant's strips were scattered across the various furlongs within an open field.

- The survey of the Manor of Wakering Hill in 1598 (ERO T/Z 38/67) includes a field-name ‘Furlongs als forlands’.
- A published account of grant of land in Sutton to the Knights Templar in 1245 apparently refers to strips in the open fields of Little Sutton (modern Temple Farm: Lord 2002, 71) although the original text of the Latin document is not given in the published account and so this translation cannot be checked.
- a series of closely spaced ditches, c.6m apart, and containing a few sherds of ‘Saxon’ and ‘Early Medieval’ (12th/13th century) pottery, have been excavated south of Great Wakering village (Reidy 1997). Reidy interprets these ditches as marshland drainage but this cannot be the case as the site is on brickearth. Similar closely spaced medieval features c.6-8m apart and oriented with the historic landscape were recorded to the west of Little Wakering village and east of Roper’s Farm in Barling (Wade 1994; Bennett 1995, 222), near Fossetts Camp (Wessex Archaeology 2007), and at North Shoebury (Wymer and Brown 1995, 54). These ditches may all represent the enclosure of strips within a former open field.

It has always been thought that there was very little open field in the south of Essex (e.g. Martin and Satchell 2008, 225), and so the possibility that it existed in this area would warrant further documentary research.

3.12. Patterns of land-use

3.12.1. Agriculture

From the 13th century onwards there are increasing numbers of medieval documents that describe some aspects of the landscape in considerable detail with a clear pattern emerging of arable-dominated agriculture on the dryland areas and pasture on the marshes. In 1245, for example, Constance Partridge granted land in Sutton to the Knights Templars that consisted of strips in the open fields of Little Sutton (modern Temple Farm), 88 acres in Great Sutton (Sutton Hall), and pasture on the marshes (Reaney 1935, 203; Lord 2002, 71). A survey in 1309 describes how the estate consisted of a messuage (house), fruit and herbage from the garden, a dovecot, 360 acres of arable land ‘in demesne’ (i.e. managed by the Templars, as opposed to being leased to tenants), 130 acres in three marshes, pasture for 440 sheep, 15 acres of meadow, a windmill, and four woods (Lord 2002, 71-2); note that the woodland probably lay in Hadleigh (see Section 3.3.2). Records from Canterbury Cathedral Priory’s manor at Southchurch show that cattle and sheep were present in roughly equal numbers with a few pigs, while the arable crops were dominated by wheat alongside barley, oats and some legumes (Campbell 2000, 107-19, 277-83).

A broader view of land-use can be gained through analysing the Feet of Fines for Sutton, Shopland, Barling, Wakering, and Shoebury. Between 1199 and 1348, 69% of the property was described as ‘land’ (i.e. arable), 2% pasture, 0.3% meadow and 29% marsh. By the 16th century patterns of land-use appear to have changed dramatically as now only 30% of property was described as land or arable, 27% as pasture, 7% meadow, 3% wood, 0.2% furze or heath, and 33% marsh (of which 8% is specified as ‘freshmarsh’ (i.e. reclaimed) and 7% as saltmarsh).

The mid nineteenth century Tithe Files show that in most parishes in South East Essex over 80% of the land was arable, which was typical of most of Essex. Wheat dominated, alongside barley, oats, pulses and turnips, and the yields of over 40 bushels of wheat and barley per acre were relatively high compared to the rest of the county (Kain 1986, 31).

3.12.2. Industry

South East Essex has always been a primarily rural area, although there have been two important industries: salt production and brick making. The evidence for Roman salt production as found on the 'red hills' is discussed above (Section 3.2). There is some evidence for brick making by the 17th century – there are two fields in South Shoebury called 'Clamp Field' on a map of 1687 (clamp may refer to a kiln) – but the main period of production there was from the 1850s when the brickworks in the northern part of the parish were opened (Ryan 1999, 160). The brickfields south of Thorpehall Farm were being worked by 1806 (Ryan 1999, 158). A field-name 'Clamp Field' is shown on the estate map of Little Wakering Hall dated 1765 (ERO TS/M 24/1) and may be a kiln site that Ryan (1999) has not picked up. A field-name 'Brick Field' on the Great Wakering Tithe map of 1841 might suggest memory of brick making there, but it was not until the mid 19th century that the present industry began (Ryan 1999, 112-14).

3.13. Dating the planned landscape

Having reviewed various strands of evidence for the history of this landscape, there remains the crucial issue of the date of the planned landscapes that are so characteristic of the area. Rackham (1986, 14) quite rightly notes that that planned landscape of South East Essex 'cannot conceivably have been the work of a multitude of independent farmers', but goes on to suggest that the lack of grid-like structure suggests that it cannot have been Roman in date and so suggests a prehistoric origin. In 1991, Rippon noted that the radial landscape in Shoebury and Great Wakering appeared to post-date a long, straight field boundary that forms the North Shoebury/Great Wakering parish boundary and which then stretches intermittently up onto the Rayleigh Hills, and which could possibly be a Roman road. He also observed that the Romano-British field system excavated at North Shoebury was on a different orientation to the present-day landscape, and that these Romano-British ditches must have been still open in the Early Saxon period as they contained pottery of that date, suggesting a later date for the laying out of the radial landscape. As the area was owned by a multiplicity of different landowners by 1066, which would make the laying out of such an extensive landscape extremely difficult, Middle to Late Saxon date (late 7th to 10th century) seemed most likely.

Since these two studies were published, a number of important excavations have shed further light on the date of these planned landscapes. One group of excavations has occurred in the area of broadly east – west oriented historic landscape in Sutton, Shopland, and north east Prittlewell. **North west of Fox Hall** short stretches of a Late Bronze Age ditch (F.1170) and an Early Iron Age ditch (F.1180) are both on different orientations to the historic landscape, although an Early Iron Age gully (F1137) does share the generally WNW – ESE orientation of medieval field boundaries in this area (Ecclestone 1995). **East of Sutton Hall**, however, a Middle Iron Age ditch is on a different alignment to the historic landscape (Ennis 2008). **West of Fossetts Camp**, on the B&Q/Comet Site, more extensive excavations show conclusively that the historic landscape post-dates an extensive planned field system of late Bronze Age date. No Iron Age or Romano-British features were recorded on this excavation, suggesting that the area was open, unenclosed, pasture, and that the historic landscape was created at a later date. A series of features dated to the 'Early Saxon' period (5th to 7th century) are on a variety of orientations and neither their general irregularity, nor their variety of orientations, bear any relationship to the regularly laid out historic landscape in this area. This is important evidence in firmly dating the laying out of the historic landscape to after this date. A series of closely spaced gullies that do conform to the orientation of the historic landscape are unfortunately undated (Wessex Archaeology 2007).

Another group of excavations has occurred in the radial landscape in Shoebury and Great Wakering. As mentioned above, at **North Shoebury**, an extensive programme of excavation has shown that Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British field systems were all on a different orientation to the historic landscape, and that the late Romano-British field ditches were still open in the 'Early Saxon' period as they contain sherds of pottery of that date (Wymer and Brown 1995). Unfortunately, no 'Middle Saxon' or 'Late Saxon' features were recorded although a large rectangular enclosure to the east of North Shoebury Hall, whose ditch contained 11th/12th century pottery in its lower fills, is oriented with the radial landscape. Excavations before the development of **Milton Close**, at the southern end of Alexandra Road, south of Great Wakering village, revealed a series of parallel ditches containing a little late prehistoric pottery: the only diagnostic material was Middle Bronze Age. Although broadly on the same orientation as the main road through Great Wakering and the parish boundary (and possible Roman road) to the south, a series of closely spaced ditches, c.6m apart, containing a few sherds of 'Saxon' and 'Early Medieval' (12th/13th century) pottery were on a slightly different orientation (Reidy 1997). Reidy interprets these ditches as marshland drainage but this cannot be the case as the site is on brickearth. Similar closely spaced medieval features c.6-8m apart and oriented with the historic landscape were recorded to the west of Little Wakering village and east of Roper's Farm in Barling (Wade 1994; Bennett 1995, 222), near Fossetts Camp (Wessex Archaeology 2007), and at North Shoebury (Wymer and Brown 1995, 54, and may represent the enclosure of strips within a former open field. Unpublished excavations in the **Great Wakering brickfields** just to the south of the village during 1984-6 revealed a Late Bronze Age to Iron Age field system on a different orientation to the historic landscape, but several ditches that contained some Roman and 'Early Saxon' pottery were on a different orientation: although broadly aligned with the historic landscape, the difficult conditions during this excavation means that the precise orientation of these features cannot be determined (unpublished archives in Southend Museum).

The majority of excavated prehistoric and Romano-British and Early Saxon field systems therefore appear to be on a different orientation to the historic landscape of today (with the key sites being the B&Q/Comet Site near Fossetts Camp and at North Shoebury). The 11th/12th century enclosure at North Shoebury, in contrast, is aligned with the radial landscape, lying close to one of its major north – south oriented elements. The Norman churches at Sutton, Shopland, Barling, Little Wakering, and Southchurch also all lie next to major axial elements of the planned landscape (although the earliest visible fabric of these churches can be dated to the 12th century, the possibility of there being earlier churches on the same site, perhaps built of timber, cannot be ruled out). The one church that has a different relationship to the planned landscape is Great Wakering as it lies at the head of one of the major axial east – west oriented elements. This relationship suggests that the church – or something that preceded it – existed before the planned landscape was laid out, and recent excavations have suggested that this was the site of a Middle Saxon minster church in existence by the late 7th century.

Overall, therefore, it appears likely that the radial planned landscape in Shoebury and Wakering dates to the Middle or Late Saxon periods, after the foundation of a minster church at Great Wakering and before the 12th century by which time church/manor complexes were established. It should be stressed, however, that this dating remains provisional as none of the major axial elements themselves has been excavated.

3.14. The coastal and estuarine marshes

Some of the most distinctive features of the Essex landscape are its tidal creeks and estuaries, fringed by saltmarshes, and bounded by sea walls, of which the Stonebridge area has some fine examples. To the north it is

bounded by the Roach Estuary, and to the east by Barlinghall, Potton, and Havengore Creeks. The coastal saltmarshes in Great Wakering extend almost as far south as Shoebury Ness, whilst further west there were extensive areas of marsh south of South Shoebury church and west of Thorpehall Farm. Before reclamation these marshes were rich in natural resources

3.14.1. Salt production

In the Roman period we know that these wetlands were used for producing salt at sites known as ‘red hills’, and it is likely that the marshes were also grazed by livestock. Large numbers of these Romano-British salterns were dotted across the Essex marshes in what appears to have been a small-scale, possibly seasonal/part-time industry. In contrast, fewer but larger salt making sites are known from the medieval period, including examples beside the Crouch (Christy and Dalton 1925; Barford 1988; Pattison and Barker 2000, 14; Barker 2003). Unfortunately, the Domesday book appears to have omitted salterns from the southern half of Essex (Darby 1952, 246-8), but documentary and archaeological evidence suggests that the industry was in fact widespread (Christy 1906; 1907) and field-names suggestive of medieval saltworks have been noted in Barling and Great Wakering (Christy 1906, 193-4; Barford 1988, 7).

3.14.2. Grazing marshes

Even before their reclamation, the vast tracts of saltmarsh that fringed the coasts and estuaries of South East Essex provided rich grazing for sheep, and so were highly valued by local communities. This is recorded in Domesday using a term ‘pasture for sheep’. Barling, for example, had pasture for 40 sheep, two of the manors in Shoebury had pasture for 140 sheep between them, while Southchurch had pasture for 200 sheep. Great Wakering and Little Wakering both had pasture for 300 sheep. All of these essentially dryland parishes extended onto adjacent areas of marshland (e.g. Barling Marsh in Barling, Fleet Head in Little Wakering, Landwick and Oxenham in Great Wakering, and the Thorpehall Marshes in Southchurch), while most of these parishes when mapped for the first time in the 19th century also had detached parcels in the archipelago of islands towards Foulness and Wallasea (Rushley was part of Great Wakering, Havengore and New England were part of Little Wakering, while Potton was shared between Great and Little Wakering; Southchurch included part of Canvey Island). The intermingling of these detached parcels – that is particularly marked on Canvey Island – suggests that these marshes were once common land and it was only as the desire to define property rights increased that particular communities were allocated specific marshes.

There remains one curiosity. In Domesday, Shopland is recorded as having pasture for 400 sheep which by analogy with Barling Marsh (*c.* 1.5 km²), which appears to have supported 40 sheep, and the marshes in Great Wakering, which included Rushley and the northern two thirds of Potton (*c.* 7 km²) and which supported 300 sheep, should have covered 8 – 9 km². There is, however, nowhere near this amount of marshland within Shopland as it is mapped in the 19th century. Similarly, three of the four manors in Sutton had between them pasture for 440 sheep that cannot possibly have been accommodated within the parish as mapped in the 19th century. There is also later evidence for these two parishes having vast tracts of marshland. In 1436 a tenement in Shopland and Sutton consisted of 600 acres of marsh (Feet of Fines IV, p23), while in 1530 a property on Shopland and Sutton consisted of a house, 100 acres of land, 40 acres of meadow, 200 acres of pasture and 600 acres of marsh (Feet of Fines IV, p120). This marshland, and such vast areas of ‘pasture for sheep’ in Domesday, suggests that Shopland

and Sutton may also once have held grazing rights in the coastal marshes, which documentary research locates on Foulness (Smith 1970, 9, map 1).

Within these unreclaimed marshes, any raised areas of ground would have been used for shepherds huts and dairies, and in the medieval period several of the old Roman salterns appear to have been re-used for this purpose: medieval pottery has been found on a red hill on the Fleet Head Marshes in Little Wakering (Essex HER18826), and 13th to 14th century pottery has also been recovered from Brimstone Hill, also in Little Wakering (Essex HER 11098). William Camden described such raised areas on Canvey Island in 1586: ‘[Canvey is] ... so low that often times it is quite overflowne, save for the hillocks cast up, upon which the sheepe have a place of refuge ... For it keepeth about foure thousand sheepe, whose flesh is of a most sweet and delicate taste, which I have seene young lads taking women’s function, with stooles fastened to their buttocks to milk, yea and to make cheeses of ewe’s milk in those dairy sheedes [sheds] of theirs that they call there “wickes”’ (quoted in Cracknell 1959, 13).

These grazing marshes were highly valued land, and supported vast flocks of sheep. In 1181, for example, a survey of the manor of Barling records 480 acres of arable worth 6 pence per acre a year, and 100 acres of marsh worth 3 shillings every two years per acre [18 pence a year]; the marsh supported 300 sheep (Morant 1763-8, 308).



Figure 16: the sea wall north of Bolts Farm in Barling

3.14.3. Reclamation

The date when the marshes of South East Essex started to be reclaimed is unknown, although in 1271 there is reference to land in Foulness being within and without the walls (Smith 1970, 9). Reclamation in Sutton is implied by the reference in 1313 to ‘4 acres of outer marsh’ at Fleet Hall (Morant 1763-8, 292), the implied ‘inner marsh’ presumably having been embanked? The place-name ‘Bradewerde’ (‘werde’ or ‘worth’ meaning enclosure), also

in Sutton and recorded in 12 Hen VI [1436] (Morant 1763-8, 292), also implies reclamation, as does ‘Shelword’ in North Shoebury recorded in 1362, ‘Littlebingworth’ in Great Wakering recorded in 1348, ‘Bradeworth in Little Wakering recorded in 1546, and ‘Heghwerd’ recorded in Shopland in the early 14th century (Morant 1763-8, 302, 306, 307, 309). In all these cases, all we can say is that these marshes appear to have been embanked by these dates, although in Barling in 1322 we have a very rare example of the actual act of reclamation being documented when the Church of St Pauls [cathedral, who owned the manor] came to an agreement with Adam, son of Simon de Barling, whereby the said Adam and his tenants obliged themselves to raise a wall to keep out the inundation of the sea (Morant 1763-8, 309).

Oxenham on the Great Wakering Marshes is documented in 1358 and means ‘Oxen enclosure’ (Reaney 1935, 204) which might refer to a stock enclosure on an area of saltmarsh, or an area that had been embanked and reclaimed; a farm called Land Wick is shown on the Ordnance Survey First Edition Six Inch map just inside the line of the possible seawall that enclosed this area. The field boundaries within this probably embanked area are characterised by their sinuous nature, suggesting that they are based on former saltmarsh creeks, in sharp contrast to those to the north, west and south that are long, straight, and clearly more recent, which does suggest this could have been a medieval reclamation. The land east of Land Wick was embanked by c.1574 (Gramoult 1960, fig. 15), while to the south, in North Shoebury, reference to 36 acres of ‘land’ (not ‘marsh’) called ‘Inmersshe’ in 1510 suggests reclamation had taken place (Feet of Fines IV, 120).

Even reclaimed land was liable to flooding, and in 1334 a major storm surge flooded part of the manor of Great Wakering and a jury found that the inundated land ‘scarcely in seven years will return to its former state’ (Galloway 2009, 183). Even after reclamation these marshes appear to have been used mostly for grazing as there are few of the distinctive traits of prolonged arable cultivation seen on other British reclaimed wetlands. Indeed, the marshes in the Fleethead area of Little Wakering are extremely important as remarkably well-preserved traditional grazing marshes (compare to Wallasea, for example, where the historic landscape was destroyed in the 20th century as the area was levelled and drained: Heppell 2004).

3.14.4. Fishing and shellfisheries

In addition to producing salt, there were other natural resources that the estuaries had to offer. The document recording the construction of a sea wall in Barling in 1322, and the survey of Great and Little Wakering in 1570, for example, both record that the manors included a fishery (Morant 1763-8, 307, 309). During the medieval period the Crouch was one of the major oyster fisheries in Essex, but there was also a fishery in the Roach (Shenstone 1907, 435; Benham 1993, 33). The excavations at North Shoebury included settlements of prehistoric, Roman and medieval date which show how shellfishing changed over time (Wymer and Brown 1995, 142-5). During the prehistoric period relatively small quantities of shellfish were recovered, and the species present – mussels, with some cockles and oysters – suggest small-scale collection, mainly in the intertidal zone. During the Roman period oyster dominate a far larger assemblage, while cockles, mussels, winkles and whelks were also recovered. The presence of whelks is particularly interesting as they are an offshore shellfish that nowadays is collected using baited wicker pots laid from boats. The Roman period may also have seen the first management of oyster beds. The same range of species was also found in the medieval period. At nearby Great Wakering, oysters were present in large numbers along with mussels, cockles, whelks and winkles. At Fossett’s Farm, near Prittlewell, oyster again dominated the assemblage but cockle, mussel, venus clams, and whelk were present (Ennis 2008, 13-14). Fish were also consumed on local medieval settlements (e.g. Great Wakering: Dale *et al.* forthcoming; 255 Victoria

Avenue in Prittlewell: Pocock 2006; North Shoebury: Wymer and Brown 1995, 141-2), with assemblages tending to be dominated by small flatfish that can be caught by laying many-hooked lines along a beach or estuary mouth at low tide, and are likely to represent a local rather than a commercial catch (Nicholson forthcoming). Herring, sea bass, thornback ray, and members of the cod family, that have also been recovered, tend to live in deeper waters and must have been caught from boats in the Thames Estuary or the North Sea.

3.15. Discussion

3.15.1. Key character defining features

There are three major historic landscape types within the study area

- Enclosed agricultural land in the dryland areas, characterised by planned landscapes with various rectilinear and radial layouts. This rectilinearity is particularly prominent as one drives around the many sharp right angled bends in the road.
- Enclosed agricultural land in the reclaimed marshland, used primarily as grazing for livestock, whose characteristic features include ‘wick’ place-names, and a field boundary pattern that preserves the meandering courses of former saltmarsh creeks
- Unenclosed land: intertidal saltmarsh, that was used for grazing livestock and producing salt from the tidal waters

The lack of woodland, combined with the removal of many hedgerows, gives rise to another key character defining feature: the landscape’s open feel, and the prominence on many skylines of the magnificent medieval churches.

The extensive marshland was part of a local economic system that also embraced areas of woodland and heath on the Rayleigh Hills. In the Anglo-Saxon period the whole of Rochford hundred may have been a single socio-economic territory, with livestock moved between the extensively settled lowlands, and areas of grazing on the uplands of the Rayleigh Hills and the coastal marshes. The ‘wick’ place-names are a reminder of the distinctive marshland economy, having been the location of dairies. By the 8th century, this early territory appears to have been broken up into a number of smaller estates, which south of the Roach may have been based at Prittlewell, Great Wakering and Southchurch where there were also early minster churches.

In the past, the settlement pattern was highly dispersed, with the only villages being Great Wakering and Prittlewell. Stone built churches, often with moated manor houses beside them, were focal points within the landscape. Lower-status domestic settlements were timber framed and weather-boarded, while from the 17th century a small number of higher status farmhouses were built in brick. In the medieval period land was held both by large institutional landowners, such as the Knights Templar and St Paul’s Cathedral, and a multiplicity of local farmers who mostly held just a few acres. As population declines in the late medieval period, many of these smaller holdings appear to have been combined as some of the surviving population became richer, a process which continued as former monastic land was redistributed following the Dissolution. Through these processes the size of landholdings increased which led to the emergence of the landed gentry and the yeoman farmers, many of whose houses still grace the landscape.

Another character-defining feature of this landscape is the way that its economy was integrated with the wider area: many communities held grazing rights in the coastal marshes, while the lowland communities held areas of woodland in the uplands of the Rayleigh Hills.

3.15.2. Assessment of significance/value, condition, and ability to sustain change

Assessing the relative importance of any landscape is a subjective matter, and an assessment can have two stages: a consideration of a landscape's inherent importance, and secondly, determination of its current condition.

In terms of **importance**, the study area is noteworthy for a number of features:

- firstly, it is in many ways typical of the Essex landscape with extremely fertile agricultural land fringed by reclaimed marshland and open saltmarshes beside tidal creeks
- the co-axial landscapes in Sutton, Shopland, and Barling are also typical of parts of Essex and East Anglia, although that in Shoebury/Great Wakering has an unusual morphology and so is of particular interest
- the well-preserved areas of traditional grazing marsh include some extremely well-preserved earthworks of the pre-reclamation saltmarsh surface, and post-reclamation landscape

When assessing **condition and ability to sustain change**, it must be remembered that all landscapes are constantly changing, but that some landscapes change more than others. A comparison of the Tithe maps of c.1840 and Ordnance Survey Six Inch map of 1873, for example, shows fairly extensive field boundary loss as the intensification and mechanisation of agriculture led to the removal of hedgerows, while comparison with a range of 17th and 18th century estate maps shows relatively little change between then and c.1840. Even in 1873, however, almost the whole study area remained in agricultural use and if we take this map as a benchmark we can see that the amount of subsequent change across the area has been variable.

- Change has been slowest in parts of the reclaimed wetland where the traditional network of drainage ditches, based on former saltmarsh creeks, survives very well. In places, the surface of the former saltmarshes is preserved remarkably well, for example in small areas of reclaimed marsh on the southern side of the Roach, and more extensively on the Fleethead Marshes. Overall, some of these are particularly well preserved traditional Essex grazing marshes.
- The landscape around Great Wakering is particularly degraded due to brickearth extraction, agricultural intensification (the removal of field boundaries), and urban expansion. Field boundary loss has also been considerable in Sutton and North Shoebury.
- The landscape of Barling Marsh has been destroyed through quarrying. Were a country park to include extensive habitat creation, then this would be a possible location.
- In Shopland, Barling (excluding Barling Marsh), and Little Wakering the historic landscape is better preserved and there are a number of traditional (listed) buildings still in a rural setting. The complex at Mucking Hall is particularly impressive. These landscapes also include small areas of reclaimed marshes, sea walls, and intertidal areas beside the creeks and estuaries that are so characteristic of coastal Essex. Developments such as earthmoving/habitat creation in these areas would be regrettable, although the scope for improving public access and restoring field boundaries is considerable. Were such a programme of recreating field boundaries to be embarked upon it would be vital to retain the co-axial layout of the landscape, and not plant extensive areas of woodland that would out of keeping with the historic character of the landscape.

3.16 Sites that could be promoted to visitors

Within the core study area

Iron Age hillfort: Fossetts Camp – currently no public access, but earthworks survive above ground.

Roman road?: long stretches of field boundary survive, some of which are already public footpaths, though the date of this feature requires testing through excavation.

Medieval churches: all of great historic importance. North Shoebury is of particular educational value as the lack of external render means that alterations to the church (the demolition of the south aisle and blocking of the south arcade) can be clearly seen and understood (**Figure 14**). Great Wakering has an architecturally interesting porch at the west end that although thought to date from the 15th century is built in an Anglo-Saxon (c.8th-10th century) style (**Figure 13**). Barling Church is a particularly impressive local landmark with its tall spire (**Figure 12**).

Sea walls/creeks: there is easy access to the sea wall and creeks/estuaries north of Roach Farm (access via a public footpath beside Bolts Farm: **Figure 16**) and Roper's Farm in Barling, and east of Little Wakering (access via a footpath from opposite Cramps Farm to Little Wakering Creek)

Nearby

Prittlewell Church: contains some Anglo-Saxon period fabric suggesting it was a minster church of the late 7th to 10th century.

Prittlewell Priory: fine example of a medieval monastery converted into a country house after the Dissolution, currently open as a museum.

Shoebury Camp: although largely destroyed during the construction of the Shoebury Garrison from the 1850s, the line of defences is partly marked by 'Rampart Street' and short stretches of earthwork survive to south (east of Warrior Square Road).

Southchurch Hall: fine example of a medieval moated manor house, currently open as a museum.

3.17. Some suggestions for future research

- The date of the field boundary that forms the North Shoebury – Great Wakering parish boundary remains unclear. It is likely to be a Roman road, which could be an important feature in the development of the enhancing public access to this area, though this hypothesis needs to be tested through excavation.
- The 'caster' field-name east of Crouchmans in North Shoebury is intriguing and this and adjacent field should be subject to archaeological survey.
- Further research could shed more light on the structure and character of the early medieval *regio*.
- The western porch of Great Wakering church is apparently 15th century, but looks Anglo-Saxon. A detailed architectural survey may shed some light on this anomaly.
- In order to date the various planned landscapes there needs to be a programme of excavation with a series of trenches placed across key axial elements. A reasonably large number of trenches may be required as in places the continuous use, and therefore re-cutting, of these boundaries may have removed all evidence of their initial construction (e.g. when Temple Lane in Sutton was sectioned in 1987: Brown 1988).
- In order to understand the development of the medieval settlement pattern there needs to be a programme of archaeological survey consisting of, firstly, fieldwalking in order to identify deserted sites, and secondly, test-

pitting around settlements shown on the 18th and 19th century maps in order to establish how long they have been occupied. This could be done in the context of a community project.

- Dendrochronological dating of roof timbers could date the standing medieval and early post-medieval buildings more accurately, while further documentary research may reveal evidence for a greater number of places than are listed in Reaney (1935).

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