



Top Pond Holes

Brake's Farm

Brake's Farm

B1022 (MALDON ROAD)

LOWER ROAD

Birch

Heath

The Dower House  
Sch  
Linden House

Gate House Fa

CAPER LANE

Greenfield Houses

MILL LANE

Birch Green

Mallard House  
Orchard House

Stamps Farm

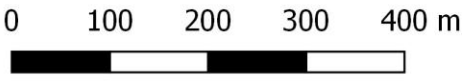
Palmer's Farm

Roundbush  
Corner

ROUND BUSH

Roundbush  
Bungalow


Roundbush Farm

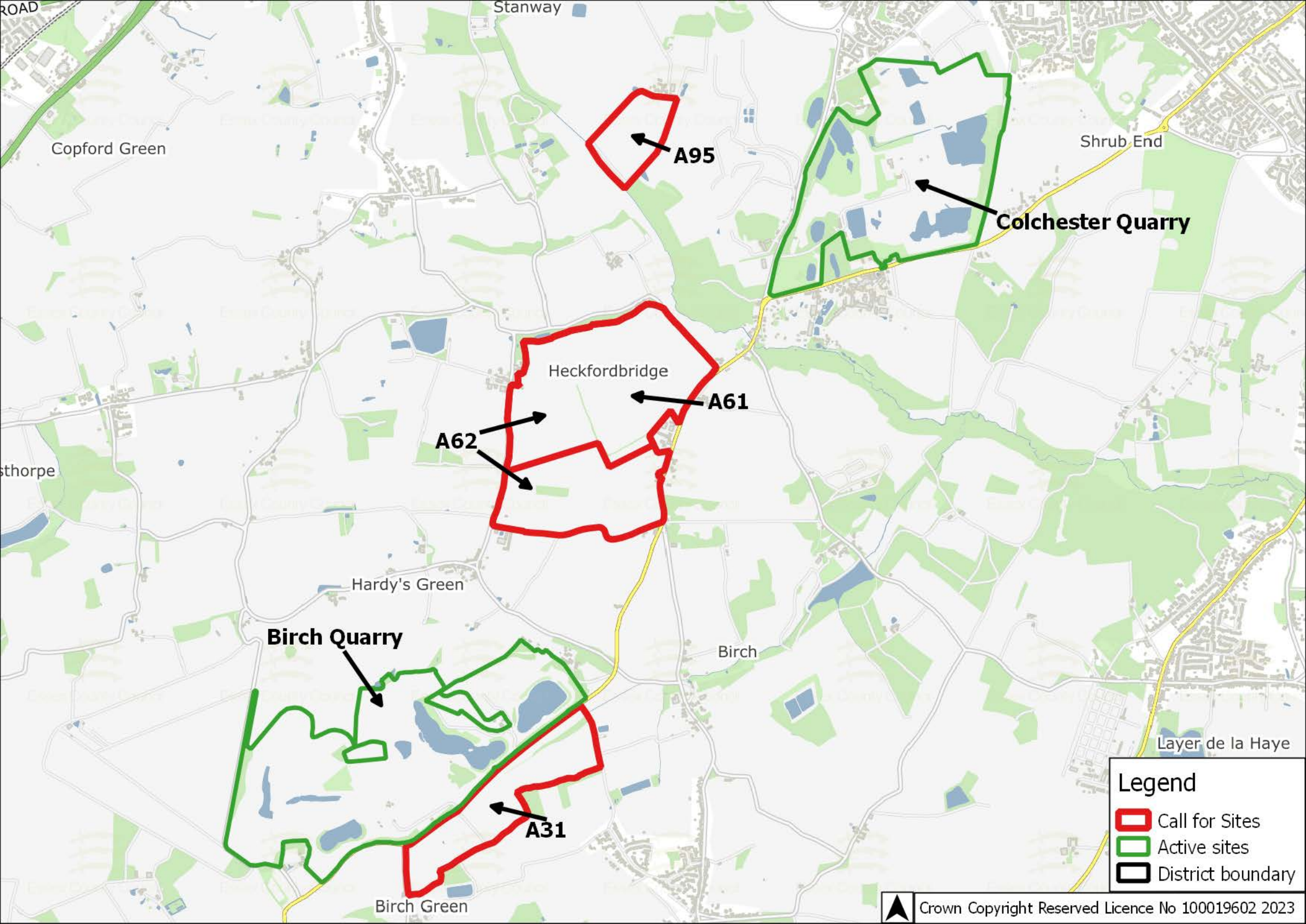


**Maldon Road, Birch  
A31**

**Legend**

 Site Boundary

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A62

A95

A61

Colchester Quarry

Birch Quarry

A31

**Legend**

-  Call for Sites
-  Active sites
-  District boundary

<i>Candidate Site Reference</i>	<i>Candidate Site Name</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Existing use</i>	<i>Site Area (ha)</i>	<i>Potential Yield (million tonnes)</i>
<b>A31</b>	<b>Maldon Road</b>	<b>Colchester</b>	<b>Agricultural</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>4</b>

The Site is proposed to be an extension to an existing mineral site (Birch Quarry) and is located to the south of Maldon Road, west of Birch. The Site area is approximately 25 ha and is proposed for 4 million tonnes of sand and gravel extraction. Minerals would be moved by conveyor under Maldon Road for processing and exported via the existing Site access. Extraction would not commence until after extraction at the existing quarry and all necessary restoration phases have been completed. The adjoining uses include the existing Birch Quarry, agricultural fields, access roads and residential buildings. The village of Birch is located to the east of the Site. This Site would be accessible via B1022. See Appendix J for a detailed map of the Site.

### Summary of RAG Assessment

The results of the technical and desktop RAG assessment are detailed below.

Landscape and Visual Sensitivity	Biodiversity	Historic Buildings	Archaeology	Flooding	Transport	Access	Public Rights of Way	Geo-Environmental	Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Drainage	Air Quality	Soil Quality	Services & Utilities	Health & Amenity	Green Belt	Airport Safeguarding Zones
Amber	Amber	Red/Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	Red/Amber	Green	Green	Amber	Green	Amber/Green	Amber	Red	Green	Green

Key findings of the assessment are as follows:

- The Site lies in historic landscape area 28, the Abberton Area with good field boundary survival. On the southern boundary two areas of ancient woodland are preserved.
- There are a number of woodland blocks adjacent to the southern boundary of the Site alongside gappy but established hedgerow and hedgerow trees. The Site itself is divided in several parcels by a mix of well-established hedgerow, hedgerow trees and tree belt. The Site has some attractive varying landform with a number of landscape features such as feature mature trees to the eastern boundary.
- Taking account of the vegetation and landform, much of the Site would be overlooked from the road by the long north-west boundary. A bund could prevent this, but would in itself, be intrusive. There would be some views of the Site from quite distant houses to the north and through the gaps in vegetation from footpath to the east.

- The need for screening views from the footpath to the south varies depending on landform and gaps through existing vegetation.
- The Site is within the Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zone for Abberton Reservoir Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. There are also potential pollution pathways – e.g. water quality - between the proposed mineral Site and international wildlife sites that would need to be considered further through the plan-level Habitats Regulations Assessment and any subsequent planning application.
- A number of Priority habitat hedgerows and three Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Priority habitat adjacent to the boundary could be affected directly and indirectly. Two of these woodlands may be partly ancient. The internal Hedgerow Priority habitat may be lost, as well as a watercourse and associated Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Priority habitat.
- The Site is graded Amber because ecological impacts are likely to be moderate and likely to require medium levels of mitigation to make the Site acceptable. The Site could have a moderate impact upon international and national designations and would be likely to require medium levels of mitigation. Moderate impacts are anticipated upon Priority habitats due to the loss of several Hedgerows, the internal water course and associated woodland and potential impacts to adjacent woodland Priority habitat. The Site could have major impacts upon irreplaceable habitats if the adjacent woodlands are found to be ancient; in which case the Site would be classified as Red/Amber.
- Key mitigation is likely to include prevention of hydrological changes to Woodlands; substantial buffers between the Quarry and the Woodlands and Hedgerows; and prevention of deterioration of water quality to the watercourse. Adequate and appropriate compensation may be required for the loss of Hedgerows, the watercourse, and losses of habitat for Priority farmland species.
- The allocation of the Site would likely result in ‘less than substantial’ harm at a mid-level to the significance of two Grade II listed buildings through a change within their settings: Roundbush Farmhouse (List UID: 1238544); and Barn to East of Roundbush Road (List UID: 1274130).
- The allocation of the Site is not considered to result in an impact to Palmer’s Farmhouse (List UID: 416803) or Brakes Farmhouse (List UID: 1238503)
- The undeveloped, agrarian landscape of the Site contributes to the setting and significance of these assets and the fundamental change in land use and land character would undermine the ability to understand and appreciate their significance.
- The Site lies within an extensive cropmark landscape. These include at least one enclosure, trackways, and ring ditches within the Site. A similar spread of

crop marks is visible around the Site indicating a dispersed settlement pattern within the immediate area.

- Excavation in the adjacent area has identified multi-period archaeological deposits with settlements of Bronze Age through to medieval date.
- There is also the potential for Palaeolithic or Pleistocene deposits within the gravels.
- A pre-determination desk based archaeological assessment, and a geo-archaeological assessment and aerial rectification will be required as part of the supporting data for the planning application.
- The Site is assessed as having a 'high' potential for surface water flood risk as identified within the SFRA.
- The Site has been identified as having a 'high' groundwater flood risk.
- The Site is predominantly within Flood Risk Zone 1, which is not at risk from fluvial flooding.
- Restoration of the Site following operational closure should consider the inclusion of flood reduction measures such as NFM and/or tree planting to reduce risks across the wider catchment.
- Access is proposed via an existing access serving Birch Quarry onto the B1022 Maldon Road which includes a ghost island right turn lane. This is acceptable in principle.
- To export minerals by HGV via the existing access it is proposed that minerals will be delivered by conveyor to the existing quarry. This will require a crossing of the B1022. No details provided.
- It is proposed that the existing agricultural access serving the Site will be used for limited access by low loader/plant but not for export of minerals by HGV. Further assessment of the suitability of this access will be required should the Site progress. It is noted that the applicant controls extensive frontage onto Birch Road to provide visibility splays and/or a new access location if required.
- The Site is within a Zone III - Total Catchment Groundwater SPZ and has low/medium to low groundwater vulnerability. A watercourse is present within the Site boundary and feeds into the Roman River. Appropriate consideration would be required to mitigate potential impacts on hydrology, hydrogeology, and drainage.
- The Site contains Grade 3 quality soil (good to moderate quality land), which has the potential for being BMV land but is likely to have a minor impact on soil quality and agricultural land. Appropriate consideration would be required

to assess whether any impacts on soil quality and agricultural land require mitigation.

- The Site contains 33kV overhead electricity lines within the Site boundary. Further investigation and consultation would be needed to determine appropriate mitigation measures to make the Site acceptable which may include diversion and/or protection of services and utilities.
- One farm building is present within the Site. One residential building is outside the Site boundary less than or equal to 20m from the Site. Four residential buildings, one farm building and one sports facility (fishing lake) are more than 50m but less than or equal to 250m from the Site. Given the proximity of sensitive receptors, mitigation would be required, however, the levels of mitigation required to ensure that there are no serious impacts on health and amenity would likely be difficult to achieve.

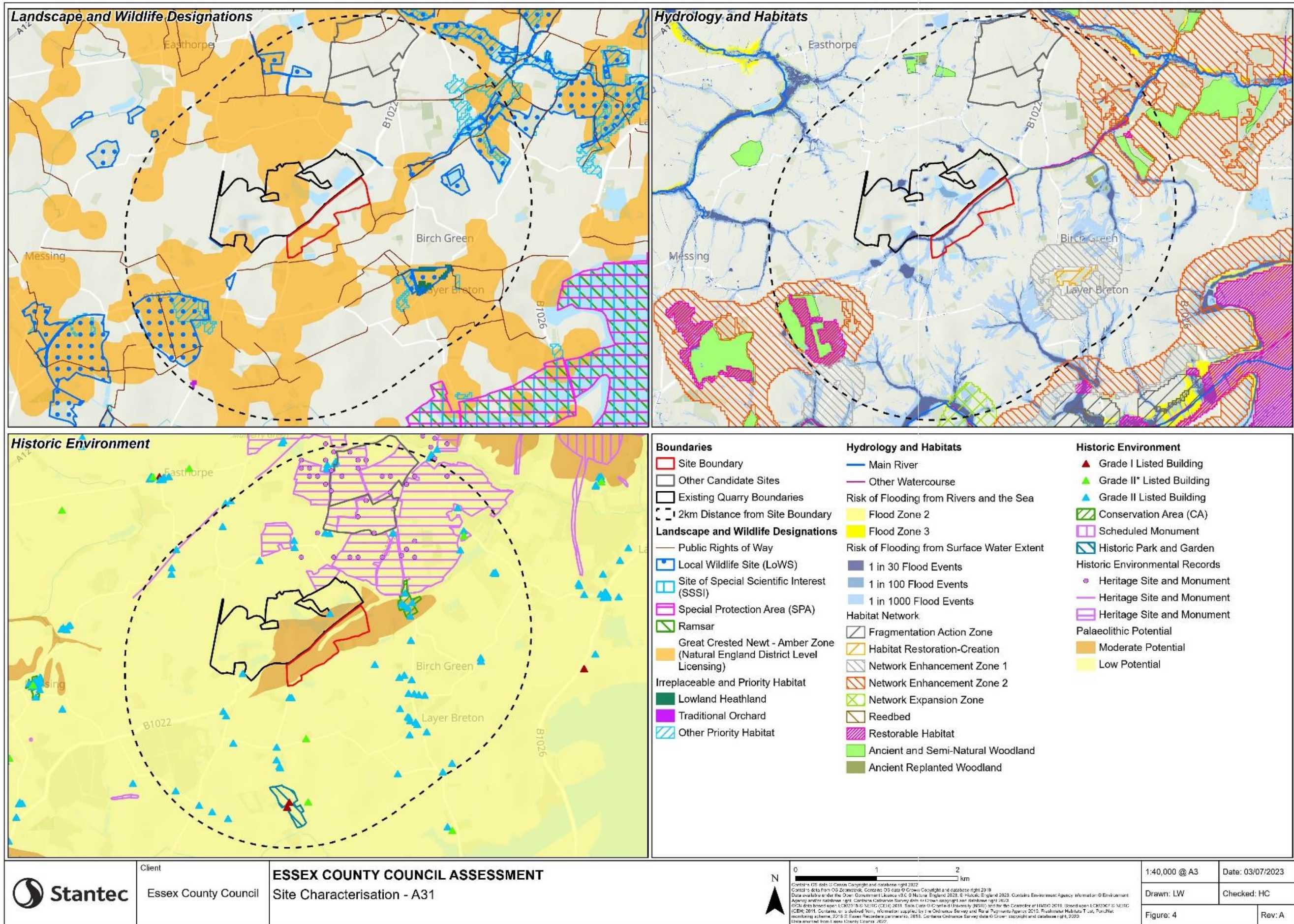


Figure 3.4: A31 - Maldon Road  
 Review of Essex MLP 2014 - Assessment of Candidate Sand and Gravel Sites, November 2023 39

The information and maps above represent a summary of the site assessment. You are encouraged to view the methodology and more detailed assessment for each site within appendices B-I. These can be found on the Candidate Sites Assessment webpage on our consultation pages:

[www.essex.gov.uk/minerals-review](http://www.essex.gov.uk/minerals-review)

Appendix B - Landscape and Visual Sensitivity

Appendix C - Biodiversity

Appendix D - Historic Buildings

Appendix E - Archaeology

Appendix F - Flooding

Appendix G - Transport

Appendix H – Access

Appendix I - Public Rights of Way, Geo-Environmental, Hydrology, Hydrogeology & Drainage, Air Quality, Soil Quality, Services & Utilities, Health & Amenity, Green Belt, and Airport Safeguarding Zones