

<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>
A55	Sheepcotes – Southern	Chelmsford	Agricultural	25.19	1.97

The Site is promoted as an extension to an existing mineral Site (Sheepcotes Quarry) and is located the south of Sheepcotes Quarry. This Site area is approximately 25.19 ha and is proposed for 1.97 million tonnes of sand and gravel extraction with processing and distribution at the adjacent Sheepcotes processing plant. Operations at the Site will commence following the completion of the currently consented agricultural reservoir. The adjoining uses include woodland, agricultural fields, residential and farm buildings. The village of Little Waltham is located to the west of the Site. This Site would be accessible from the A131 via the existing processing area and access road. The practicality of the internal haul route from the public highway would need to be explored further especially with regard to the existing reservoir. 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	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	Green	Red/Amber	Green	Amber /Green	Green	Amber	Amber /Green	Red	Green	Green

Key findings of the assessment are as follows:

- The Landscape Character Area (LCA) is Central Essex Farmlands (B1). The Site possesses limited characteristic features of the LCA including the irregular field pattern of arable farmland reducing the sensitivity of the landscape. The Site largely comprises three arable fields with hedgerow boundaries and a small portion of grazing to the north. Appropriate consideration is required to protect the characteristic features of the LCA and mitigate the impacts on the landscape.
- Site A55 is within the Impact Risk Zone for the River Ter Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is located approximately 2.2 km north-east of the Site. This is a geological SSSI and therefore potential ecological impacts are not considered further.

- The Site itself comprises three relatively large arable fields with boundary and internal hedgerows and some mature standard trees. Sheepcotes Wood is situated c.350 m north of the Site. This woodland is designated as a Local Wildlife Site; it is an ancient woodland which is therefore irreplaceable habitat.
- The Site is graded Amber because it could have major impacts upon the adjacent Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland and Orchard Priority habitats; involves the loss of Priority habitat Hedgerows and habitat for Priority farmland species. It could also have moderate impacts upon at least one significant Oak tree and several adjacent ponds. Impacts may include changes to the hydrology of the woodlands and Traditional orchard, smothering of leaves by dust, disturbance e.g. by noise and lighting and loss of habitat for Priority farmland species. Loss of Hedgerow Priority habitats and habitats for farmland Priority bird species should be compensated. The internal Hedgerows should be retained if at all possible.
- The allocation of the Site would likely result in 'less than substantial' harm at a moderate level to the significance of one Grade II listed building through change within its settings: Spartigans Hall (List UID: 1263954).
- Further to the southeast is the Grade II listed Alsteads Farmhouse (List UID 1172595) and Wilderness (List UID: 1122050). However, the Site is well separated from these assets by Leighs Road and Spartigans Hall. Therefore, the allocation of the Site would likely result in 'less than substantial' harm at a low level to the significance of these two assets.
- The undeveloped, agrarian landscape of the Site contributes to the setting and significance of the above three heritage assets. The fundamental change in land use and land character would dilute the ability to understand and appreciate their significance.
- The Site lies within an area known to contain areas of multi-period archaeology from the Late Bronze Age to the medieval period.
- Archaeological evaluation and excavation on the adjacent quarry to the north of the Site identified a late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age cremation as well as other features and Late Iron Age/Roman features indicative of settlement activity in the area.
- Aerial photographic evidence shows the presence of two large irregular enclosures in the eastern part of the Site. These have been tentatively interpreted as being of late prehistoric date, based on their shape and comparison to other settlement sites of a similar shape and size which have been excavated.
- Any complex deposits identified may need to be preserved in situ.
- The Site is assessed as having a 'medium' potential for surface water flood risk as identified within the SFRA.

- The Site has been identified as having a ‘low’ groundwater flood risk.
- The Site is entirely within Flood Risk Zone 1 and therefore is not at risk from fluvial flooding.
- 4 Public Rights of Way cross the Site. 1 Public Right of Way is within 100m of the Site. Appropriate consideration would be needed to mitigate potential impacts on these Public Rights of Way and high levels of mitigation may be required which is likely to include diversion especially with regard to those Public Rights of Way crossing the Site.
- The Site has low groundwater vulnerability. The Site is within a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone (Surface Water). The Site is likely to have a minor impact on hydrology, hydrogeology, and drainage. Appropriate consideration would be required to mitigate potential impacts on hydrology, hydrogeology, and drainage.
- The Site contains Grade 2 quality soil (very good quality agricultural land) which is BMV land. Appropriate consideration would be required to mitigate the impacts on soil quality and agricultural land – this is likely to include removal of soils for stockpiling prior to reuse, potentially in site restoration.
- The Site contains 11kV overhead electricity lines and low voltage underground cables within the Site boundary. Further investigation and consultation would be needed to determine whether mitigation measures are needed to avoid any impact on the electricity lines and underground cables. Such mitigation may include diversion and/or protection.
- 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. Two farm buildings and four residential buildings are more than 20m but less than or equal to 50m from the Site. Nine residential buildings and one farm building 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.

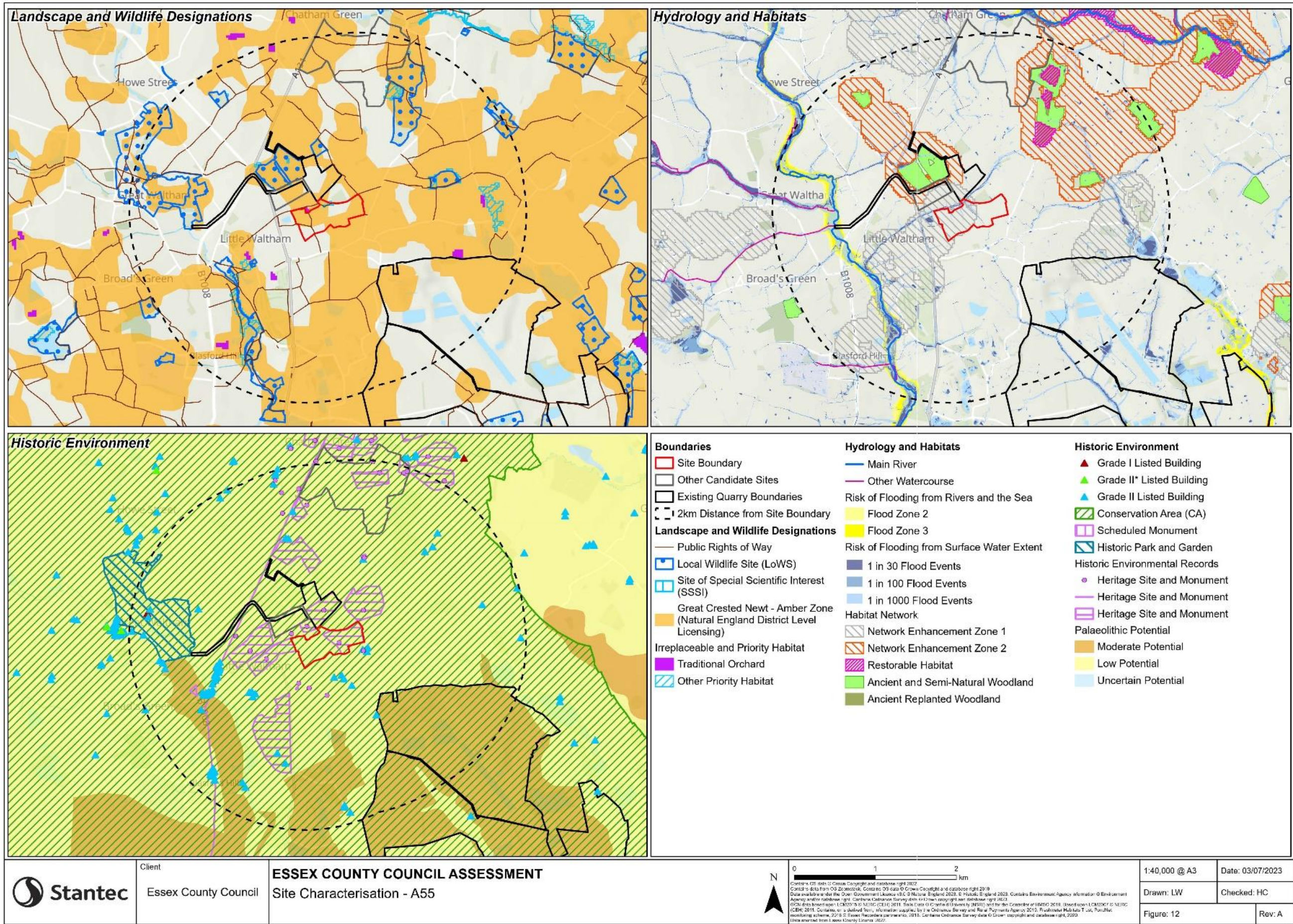


Figure 3.12: A55 - Sheepcotes - Southern
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The information and maps above represent a summary of the site assessment. You are encouraged to view the methodology and more detailed assessment for each site within appendices B-I. These can be found on the Candidate Sites Assessment webpage on our consultation pages:

www.essex.gov.uk/minerals-review

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