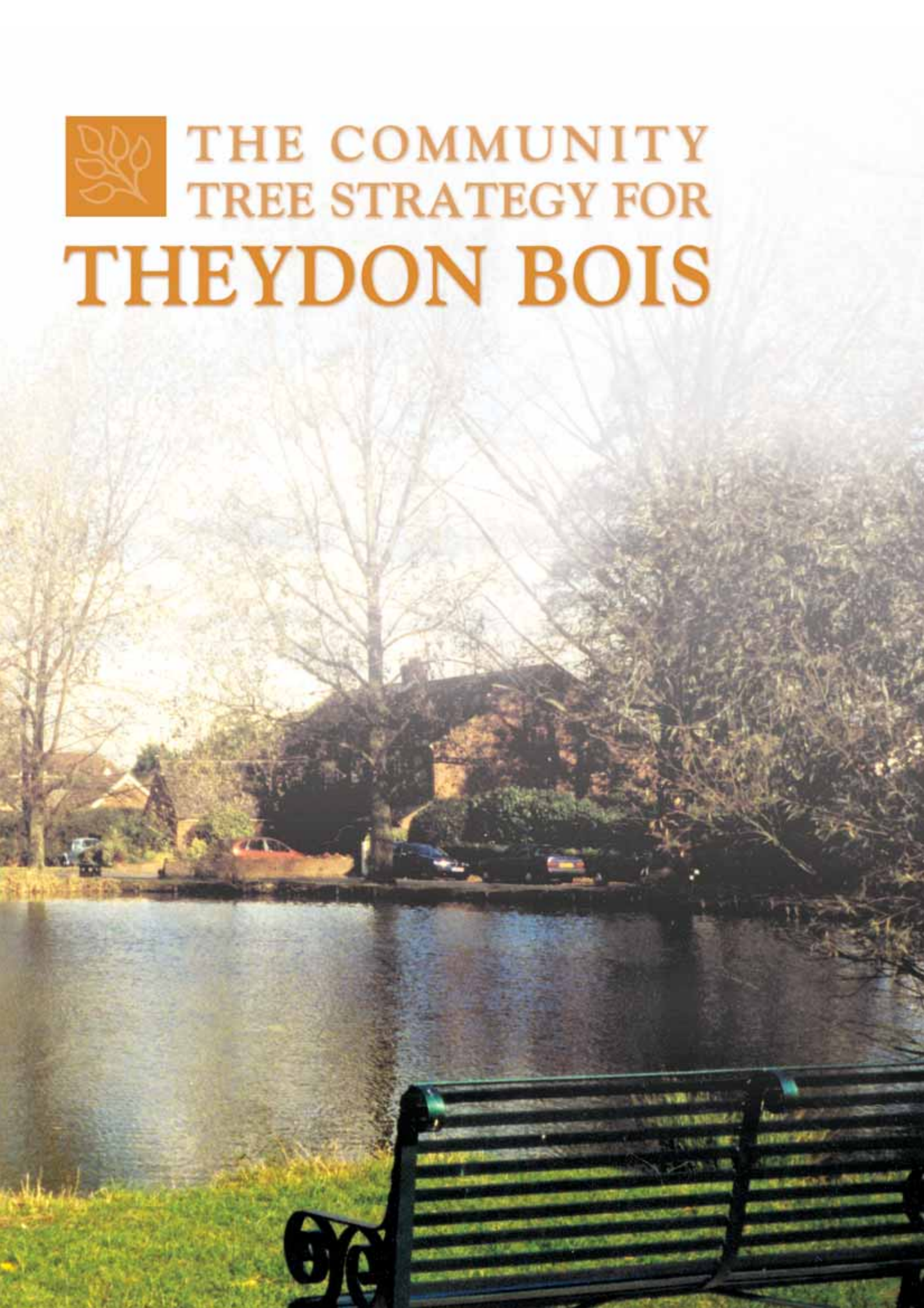
THE COMMUNITY TREE STRATEGY FOR THEYDON BOIS



THE COMMUNITY TREE STRATEGY FOR THEYDON BOIS

An assessment of the trees, hedgerows and woods of the parish in their historic, physical, social and cultural context, with guidelines for their future management.

Prepared by Epping Forest District Council, with Theydon Bois Parish Council, Theydon Bois Rural Preservation Society, the Theydon Bois tree wardens, and The Corporation of London: Conservators of Epping Forest.

Epping Forest District Council

CORPORATION OF LONDON

Theydon Bois and District Rural Preservation Society

Theydon Bois Parish Council

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This Community Tree Strategy for Theydon Bois is respectfully dedicated to the past and present tree wardens of the parish: John Conroy, Bob Day, Robin Llewellyn Jones and Jane Turner, and to John Plume, all of whom have given generously and selflessly of their time and energy for the good of their community, but in particular to the late Ernest Crouch, whose enthusiasm, wisdom and guidance were invaluable to the early stages of the project and who will remain an inspiration to those who knew him.

FOREWORD

On behalf of the Tree Council, I am pleased to be able to endorse the Community Tree Strategy for Theydon Bois. It is an excellent piece of work that puts the trees in their full context as both historical and landscape features, whilst also revealing what they mean to the community.

Across the United Kingdom there is an increasing understanding of the importance of trees, both in the town and the countryside, not least to our health and well-being. However, achieving a well tree'd environment and conserving its key features is far from easy. It needs a thorough assessment of the current treescape and an understanding of its 'meaning'. It needs the right kind of action, at the right time. Achieving that requires the involvement of, and cooperation between, all the relevant parties: the community, the landowners and the various authorities.

The involvement of all of these in the development of the strategy, to be continued in its implementation, has produced a model of great potential, that we hope will be followed in other parts of the district, but which could also be used by other local authorities across Britain.

All those involved in the creation of the strategy are to be commended on this innovative and farsighted piece of work, which can only be to the long term good of trees both within Epping and elsewhere.

Pauline Buchanan-Black
Director
The Tree Council

THE TREE COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

This is the second of the proposed district-wide series of Community Tree Strategies, the first being that for Stapleford Abbotts, published in June 2000. It has been developed by Epping Forest District Council with the active cooperation and support of the local community and partner organisations. It follows the principles of "Trees Please", the tree strategy for the district. It incorporates the results of two public meetings and extensive consultation. We intend that the information and guidance that it contains will promote the protection and active conservation of trees and encourage public participation in projects to enhance the local environment and so influence long-term change for the better.

The scope of the project is to:

- **Assess the current treescape of the parish;**
- **View it in its physical, historic, social and cultural context; and**
- **Give guidance for all concerned on its conservation, management and enhancement for the future.**

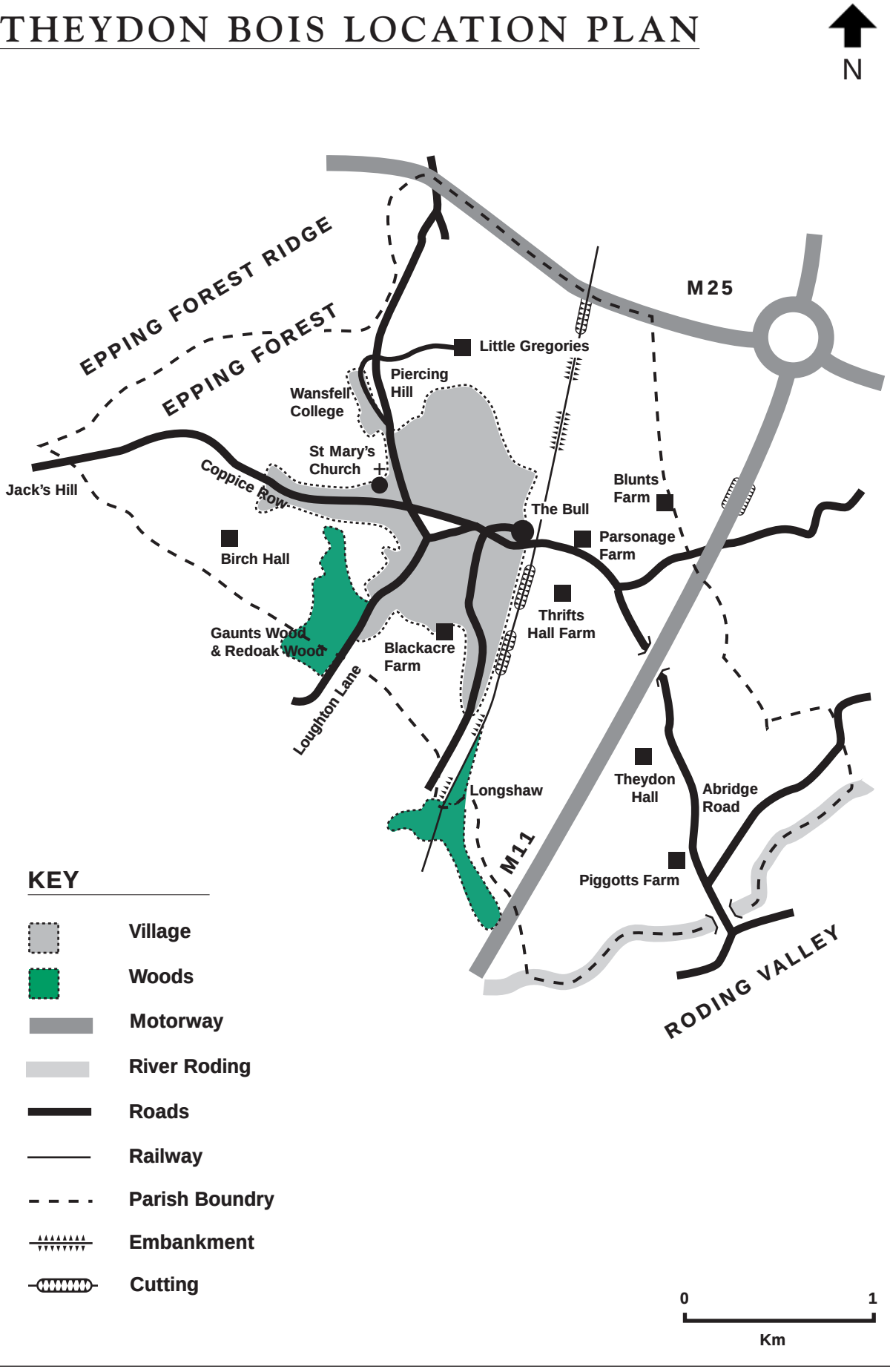
Publication of the strategy will meet a key aim in our Community Plan for 2000-2005 and also assist with the implementation of the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan. The linked action plan sets out the key initiatives that follow from the strategy, to be undertaken in partnership with the local community.

The decision to choose Theydon Bois as one of the two pilot projects for local tree strategies was very much influenced by the knowledge there would be strong local support. As well as its Parish Council, Theydon Bois has a number of active local voluntary groups, notably the Rural Preservation Society, formed in 1943 "to preserve the rural character of the countryside in and around Theydon Bois as an appropriate and natural setting to Epping Forest" and the Village Association, formed in 1948 to co-ordinate local organisations.

When we introduced our Tree Warden Scheme in 1994, the Rural Preservation Society and the Parish Council nominated a total of four tree wardens. The wardens quickly showed an ability to undertake local projects, including a photographic survey of notable trees in the parish, and then a further photographic survey to record the condition of all the street trees in the village in advance of cable TV installation in 1997.

The tree wardens took an active role, with officers of the district council, in the discussions with the cable TV company, then Bell Cable-Media, to ensure that no harm would come to the trees through trenching operations. The positive impression they made was such that Bell Cable-Media subsequently contributed financially to another project, with the agreement and support of the Conservators of Epping Forest and the help of children from the primary school, to remove much unsightly, diseased elm scrub from the Green, along Coppice Row. New trees were then planted: one by the Piercing Hill crossroads, another near the junction with Loughton Lane, and a third opposite the village hall, surrounded by five groups of oak, hornbeam and crab apple.

THEYDON BOIS LOCATION PLAN



THE TREES OF THEYDON BOIS

Location

Theydon Bois village is located approximately 2 miles south west of the town of Epping.

The M11 passes through the east of the parish, and the M25 just to the north. It has a station, on the Central Line of the London Underground. The 1991 census found a total population for the parish of 3946, in 1530 households, of whom 414 lived outside the village.

The landform is gently undulating, rising from the river Roding, which forms the eastern boundary of the parish at 25m above sea level, to a ridge of just over 70 m at Thrifts Hall Farm, beyond which the land falls again to a sheltered valley, in which the village is situated. To the north west the land then rises to the Epping Forest Ridge, the parish boundary being at around 115 m. and within the Forest just east of the B1393 Epping Road.

In terms of landscape character it is within the North Thames Basin, an area centred upon North London, but extending from Watford in the west to Harwich and Southend in the east.

Landscape Character

The overall landscape of the parish fits within the character zone of the North Thames Basin, as defined by the Countryside Agency in their Countryside Character Assessment for England. It contains elements – as a result of the underlying clay – that are characteristic of the clay lowlands to the south, and also elements that associate with the sandy wooded ridges to the north and east.

Key guidance from the Countryside Agency on the priorities for action includes the need for:

- Sensitive management of veteran trees;
- Conservation of hedgerows, preferably through traditional techniques, but where appropriate replanting – in particular with elm; and
- Conservation of margins within arable fields.

Within that framework Essex County Council have recently published their Landscape Character Assessment for the county, according to which the parish mostly falls within the Roding Valley landscape character area, other than the slopes west of the village, that fall within the Epping Forest and Ridges area.

The key characteristics of the Roding Valley are said to be:

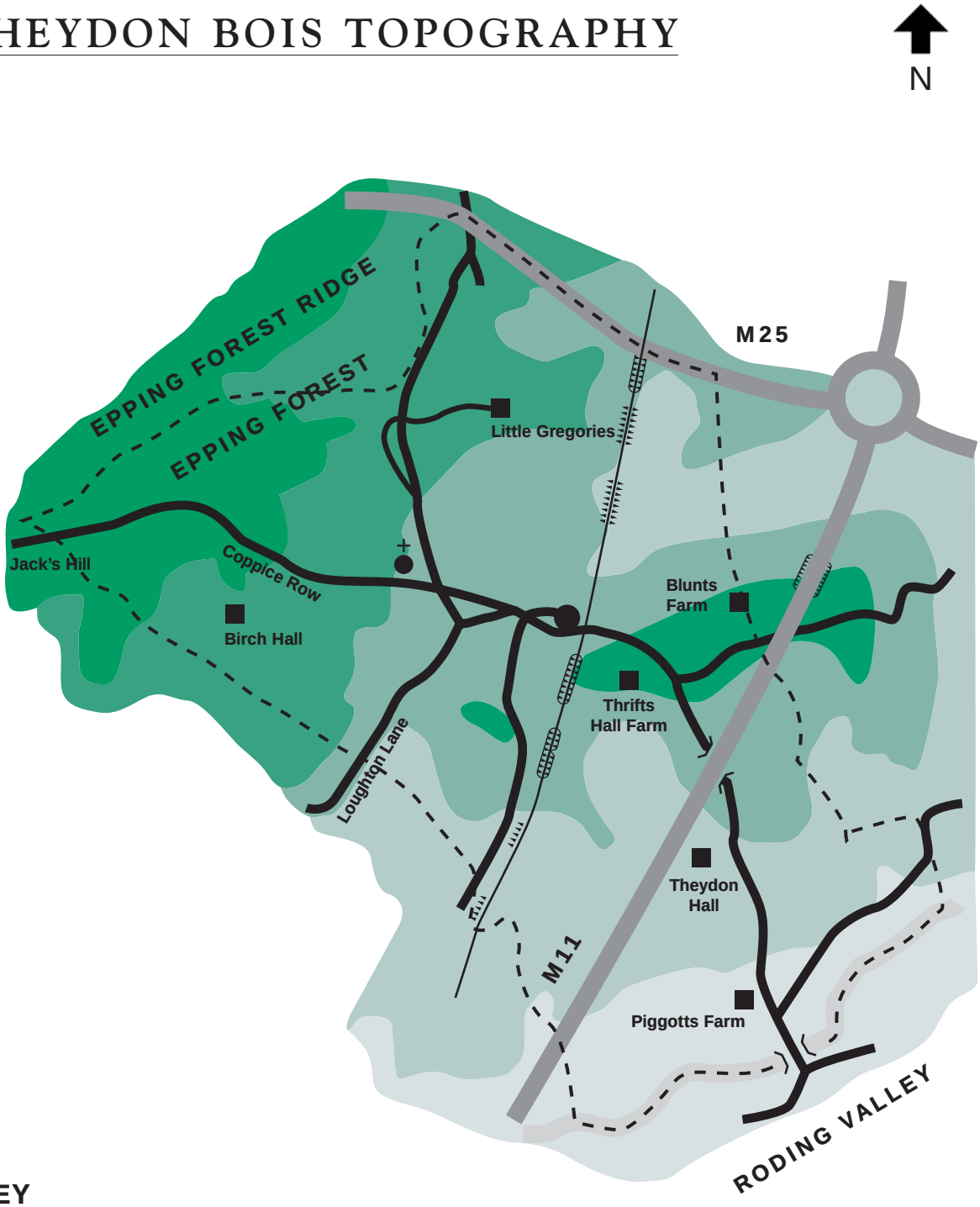
- Wide valley, deepening to the south.
- Gently to moderately undulating valleysides, occasionally intersected by small tributary valleys.
- Strong pattern of valleyside vegetation with thick hedgerow field boundaries, many hedgerow trees and scattered small woodlands.
- Meadows on flat valley floor, with occasional riverside trees.
- Tranquil character except in the south.

Those of the Epping Forest and Ridges are:

- Elevated moderate to steep sided ridges, crowned by woodland.
- Very large crescent shaped block of ancient deciduous woodland to the west.
- Wooded skylines.
- Distinctive grassy plains and large ponds within Epping Forest, greens and commons associated with settlements.
- Small to medium scale pattern of hedged pasture and arable fields with frequent hedgerow trees.

A key component of landscape character is the range of tree and shrub species that are indigenous to the area. Across the farmland of Theydon Bois elm, hawthorn and blackthorn dominate the hedgerows, with trees of oak and ash. Hazel and field maple are common, with occasional dogwood, elder, sallow, spindle and holly. Sycamore has colonised many hedgerows. In the Forest hornbeam and oak dominate the lower parts, with beech on the higher ground. Holly and birch are common where the canopy has been broken.

THEYDON BOIS TOPOGRAPHY



Prehistory

The existing treescape of Theydon Bois has been shaped by physical factors – particularly climate and soil - but mostly by the activities of people. Perhaps the most interesting – and surprising – result of recent research is that, while the appearance of the landscape continually changes there are elements within it, including trees, woods and hedges, which show continuity not only over hundreds but even thousands of years.

When the glaciers last retreated from the valleys of the Roding and the Lea some 12,000 years ago the massive flows of melt-water left the form of the land largely as we find it today. From the open valley of the Roding in the south, the land rises gently towards a low ridge above Theydon Hall, now cut by the M11, then falls gently to the site of the present village, before rising again to the Epping Forest ridge, beyond which is the Lea Valley.

The melting glaciers left behind them both London and Boulder clays – mixed clays with chalk, pebbles, sands and other materials gathered from many locations. These have mostly eroded away, except for the ridge between Blunts Farm, Theydon Hall Farm, and Thrifts Hall Farm above the village to the east. To the west, the Epping Forest ridge east of Jack's Hill is topped by pebble gravel. The Roding Valley floor is alluvium, with gravel at Piggotts Farm.

The soil of the parish is otherwise formed from the underlying London Clay, which was laid down under warm seas millions of years ago. By nature it is heavy and difficult to work, wet in the winter and dry in the summer and therefore good land for grass, but not for ploughing. It restricts the height of trees in comparison to those on more open sorts of soils nearby, for example the gravels of the Lea Valley. Pebble gravel gives rise to poor soils, unsuited to agriculture.

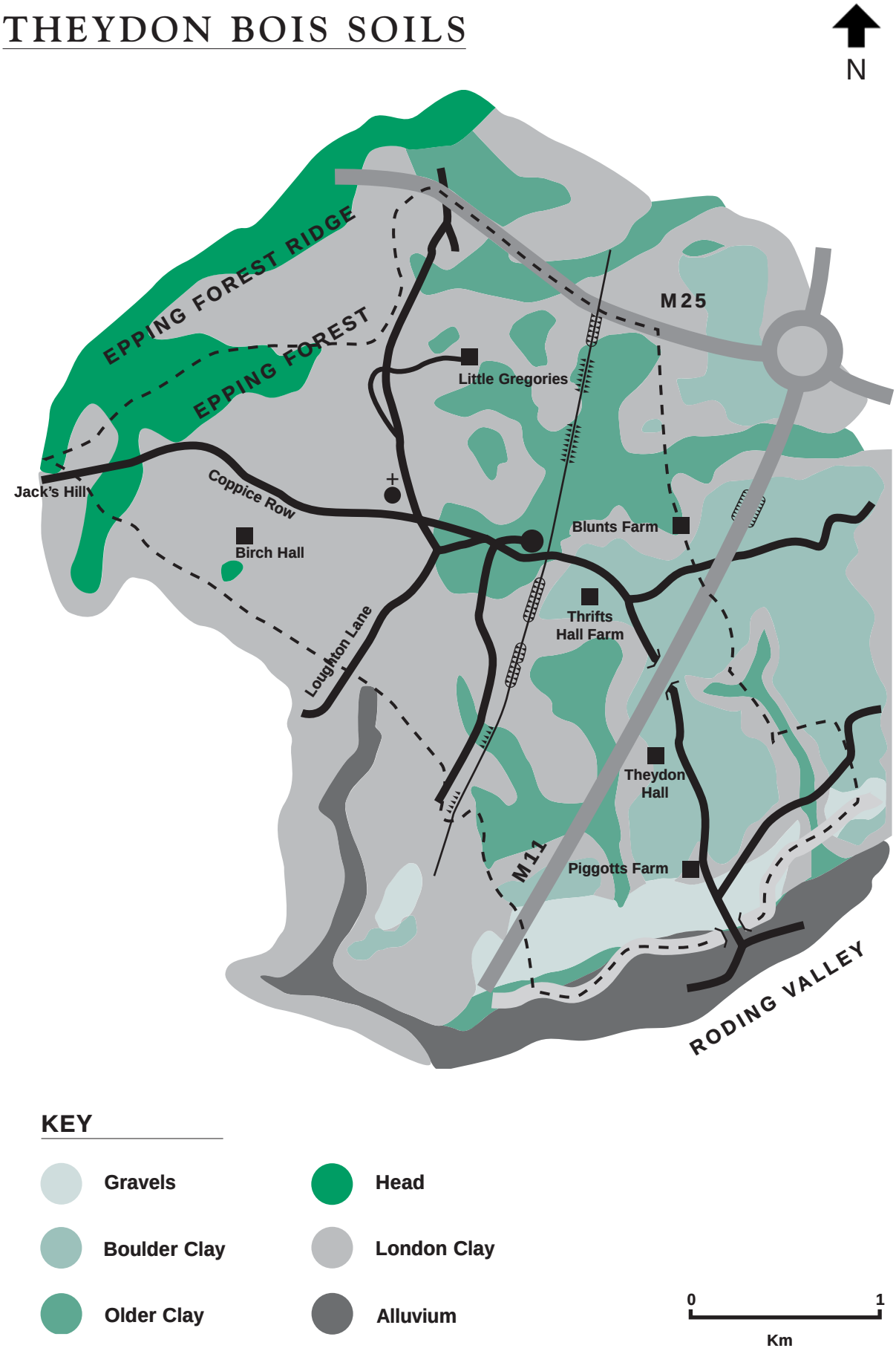
As the climate warmed, the wildwood of Europe spread northwards by natural seeding, the forerunners of which were the willows, birches and hazels. Probably the first impact of people was the creation of pathways and of clearings next to running water for homesteads. The lower and more fertile land would then have been cleared for crops and pasture. In Theydon Bois there is evidence that the meadows by the Roding were indeed cleared at an early stage. It is known from archaeological evidence elsewhere in Essex and the east of England that the people of the Neolithic and Bronze Age enjoyed a complex relationship with trees and woodland. Farming was first introduced into Britain during the Neolithic period but there was no sudden change from a hunter-gatherer to a farming economy. Evidence from east Essex indicates only small-scale woodland clearance with wild food sources at least as important as cultivated ones.

It seems certain that from earliest times selected species of trees would have been harvested deliberately for their qualities and products. The main uses would have been for shelter, fuel, domestic implements and fodder. The wildwood would also have been a hunting ground with every path and every tree known intimately. In autumn the woodland would have provided nuts and berries for food. Nests of wild bees in hollow trunks would have been greatly prized for their honey. The medicinal properties of some trees, such as the anaesthetic effect of willow bark, may also have been appreciated. It also seems likely that trees were celebrated and worshipped in recognition of their importance to people's lives. Circumstantial evidence for this has been revealed by excavations at a major Neolithic ritual monument at Springfield near Chelmsford, and more directly by the remarkable inverted tree trunk at the centre of the 'seahenge' timber circle on the Norfolk coast.

Wildwood

Wildwood is the term denoting the wholly natural woodland, which developed after the last Ice Age unaffected by human activities. Recent research shows that it always contained a substantial component of open land, as a result of grazing by wild animals. There is no pure wildwood left in this country. In Epping Forest the land has been managed but never cleared, so it is a particularly special form of what it is termed semi-natural woodland. Unlike recent plantations, it is particularly important as a habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals, and contains significant elements of the wildwood.

THEYDON BOIS SOILS



How quickly clearance of the woodland occurred locally. However, there is good evidence from eastern England for widespread and extensive woodland clearance during the Early/Middle Bronze Age (c. 1800-1500 BC). By the later Bronze Age (c.1500-800BC) Essex was relatively densely populated, with a well-developed society trading widely, and with a complex fully agricultural economy. There were arable fields and many of the crops familiar to today such as wheat, barley, oats, peas and beans were grown. Sheep, pigs, goats, deer and cattle grazed the woodlands, beneath the shade of pollarded trees. There were also extensive areas of enclosed pasture, ditched and probably hedged to control livestock and many drove ways, used to herd the cattle. Some woodland may also have been protected by hedges and ditches, so that it could be managed more productively as coppice. Woodlands were the major source of raw materials for the technology of the day, used for everything from buckets to boats and buildings.

Situated within the protection of the woods on the Forest ridge just outside the Parish boundary and now beside the B1393, the iron-age camp, Ambresbury Banks, is thought to date from the fifth century B.C. Even today its scale is impressive. Its total area is approximately 5 hectares (12 acres), originally cleared of trees and enclosed by 3 metre earth walls, within a ditch 3 metres deep. Its use, which continued for up to 500 years, was probably as a holding area for livestock, possibly in times of conflict or in connection with trading.

Roman and Saxon Periods

There is archaeological evidence of Roman activity in or near the parish, particularly along the Roding Valley. There was a villa near Hill Farm, and possibly a settlement just west of Abridge. The Roman Road from London to Dunmow crossed the parish in the south. From Piggotts Farm it ran north to Garnish Hall and Hobbs Cross, from where its route is well preserved running north east to Theydon Mount and on through Bobbingworth and Moreton. It may be observed in straight sections of hedges, field boundaries and present day roads. London grew from nothing to succeed Colchester as the Roman capital in the first century A.D. because of its importance as a trading port. Its rapidly growing population would have required food from the countryside and wood for fuel, construction and domestic uses. Because of their proximity it is probable that the woods and hedgerows of the parish would have been more intensively managed to help produce the increased quantities that would have been demanded.

Pollarding

Pollarding involves cutting the branches of trees back to the main stem or trunk on a regular cycle. While broadly similar to coppicing, pollarding was practised historically where the land beneath the trees was regularly grazed, often as part of the system of wood pasture. Wood pasture dates from Anglo Saxon times and possibly earlier. Animals were pastured, normally on common land, amongst trees that would be widely spaced allowing light onto the ground vegetation. The system encouraged the formation of an older tree population, because saplings tended to be browsed, preventing establishment of younger trees.

New shoots could only flourish above the reach of the animals so pollard trees were lopped at 2 or 3m above the ground. This produced a supply of wood for many household uses and for charcoal. Twigs and leaves were used as animal fodder.

Pollards are the characteristic form of tree in Epping Forest. Continued pollarding induces a characteristic shape, with a bulbous head from which the new shoots grow. This shape can still be recognised in old pollards, even those that have not been cut for tens or even hundreds of years. Regular pollarding keeps trees young but if the practice stops they mature and die in the normal way. An unpollarded tree is known as a “maiden”.

The Saxon and Norman Periods

With the decline of Roman Britain and the arrival of the Saxons, some elements of the landscape reverted to woodland but many continued in working order and were maintained under the manorial system until the Norman Conquest. Something can be inferred about the general state of the countryside of that period from William the Conqueror's Domesday survey. The entries relevant to Theydon Bois are in the Little Domesday Book, which dealt with Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk. It tells us that southwest Essex generally was a relatively well-wooded area as was Theydon Bois itself. As well as woodland, there was ploughland, pasture and meadow. Of these the meadow, then as now by the Roding, would have been the most valuable.

According to the Little Domesday Book the manor of Taindena (probably Thain = Lord, and Dun = Hill), which also then comprised Theydon Garnon and Theydon Mount, had mostly been the property of a Saxon named Hacum. Hacum's lands and those of another Saxon, Alwyn, were passed to the Norman, Peter De Valognes, Sheriff of Essex and Hertfordshire. From him, the manor of Theydon was held by the family of de Bosco (from which probably derives "Bois"). The north east of the current parish was a separate manor – Gregories, from a certain Gregory who held the manor in the 13th Century.

In or before 1289 the main manor was passed from John de Tany to the Abbot of Waltham who retained it until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1540 when it passed briefly to the Crown and then into private ownership.

The Royal Forest of Essex was designated by Henry I in 1130 and originally included most of the county. This did not mean that trees covered the forested land. It included much open countryside, and even major towns such as Colchester. Its main function was to raise revenue for the Crown. Edward I eventually agreed to reduce greatly the forested area and the Forest of Essex was broken up into several small royal forests in 1301. Waltham, the southernmost of these, was considerably the largest. It included much of the south and west of what is now Epping Forest District and also the adjoining London boroughs. Epping Forest and Wintry Wood are the remaining parts of Waltham Forest. In Theydon Bois the land subject to forest law broadly comprised the area south and west of Abridge Road and west of Piercing Hill. It is likely that actual woodland was, even in early medieval times, a far smaller area generally corresponding to the area of the existing Epping Forest.

Existing common rights were not extinguished even after the imposition of the forest laws. They included rights for cattle to graze and for the lopping of the pollard trees, although the timber

and any maiden (unpollarded) trees would have remained the property of the lords of the manors. Collection of fruit such as crab apples, which were food for deer, was also forbidden. On the other hand hazelnuts could still be gathered.

Surviving medieval documents give some insight into the care of woods. For example, in 1526 the Priory of St Bartholomew Smithfield, which owned lands around the original church as a gift from William de Bosco, leased the rectory to Juliana Fenrother at £4 per annum. In 1527 she was granted leave, for £2, to cut down and retain all the wood on the property, except the "great trees", and provided she did not damage the young "springs". For security, she also had to deposit £4. "Springs" refers to the underwood or coppice, so the record tells us both that the woodland was coppiced as might be done today and that the process of sustainable management was understood and capable of enforcement in 16th century Theydon Bois.

In 1772-4, Chapman and André surveyed Essex. By the standards of the time the resulting map was a particularly good example of their craft. They paparated but now joined together within the deer sanctuary. Just to the west is Birch Hall Wood, now included in the Forest. Below Thrifts Hall Farm is shown Thrifts Hall Wood, which was largely grubbed out in the mid 20th Century. The Green is shown with trees bordering Coppice Row, along the southern edge, east of Loughton Lane, and west of the pond. There are scattered cottages and farm buildings around the Green, including Pakes Farm, and a cluster of dwellings around the tollgate and The Bull. Otherwise few houses are shown. Apparently little had changed since the Middle Ages when, in 1428, the parish was exempted from tax because there were less than 10 households.

In times of hardship, for example following the Black Death in the Middle Ages, it is likely that land reverted to woodland and then later, in times of prosperity, was brought back to pasture. During all these centuries the produce of the woodlands and hedgerows would have been a major part of the local economy. Charcoal (known as coal) came to be the main fuel for the bread ovens of London. Its production was a major industry before it was eventually superseded by mineral coal. The charcoal burners, or colliers, and their conical ovens would have been a common sight in the woods and the Forest. They are commemorated in local names such as Collier Row (Havering) or Colliers Hatch (Stapleford Tawney). With limited woodland available, hedgerow timber would also have been valued. Ancient pollards in hedgerows show evidence of continued cutting over many centuries.

Forest Laws

Rights to hunt were crucial to the new norman feudal lords after the conquest. Protection of these rights was a primary aim of normal justice, and of a series of forest laws. There is a common misconception that the penalties for breaking forest laws were loss of limbs or even death. Actually penalties were financial. A system of forest courts with officials known as Verderers, grew up to enforce them. Forest laws became a substantial source of revenue for the Crown.

Coppice

Coppice trees were cut to near ground level on a cycle of 15-25 years over time producing a complex "stool". Vigorous regrowth from the stool after coppicing produces a continual supply of wood for many household and industrial uses and, occasionally, shoots for fodder. Providing this is done in the winter, the trees sprout again next spring. Coppice woods are noted for the variety of flowers and herbs they shelter, adapted to grow in the partial shade. Exclusion of grazing animals is vital to successful coppice management as the young shoots are particularly appetizing to deer and cattle. As a result even long derelict coppice woodland can often be recognized by the presence of ditches and banks, originally topped by fences, to protect the stools.

19th and 20th Centuries

Within the parish there has never been wide scale conversion to parkland around a great house, as at Hill Hall in Theydon Mount or Gaynes Park near Epping. At Birch Hall the modern garden may have 19th century antecedents. At Thrifts Hall Farm the formal avenue, which leads to the house from Abridge Road, dates from around this time, as does the planting of lime trees in the fields. This suggests an ambition to create a landscaped setting, also perhaps revealed by the Ordnance Survey first edition, which recorded the parish in 1870, where the property is shown as "Mount Pleasant".

This map is particularly helpful because the mapmakers took great pains, (not since repeated) to record not only the woods, but also hedgerows and even individual trees. It illustrates a landscape connected directly to medieval times, and which would have seemed familiar (apart from the railway) to an Anglo-Saxon, or even a Roman. North of the river are open meadows, indicated as liable to flood. South of the railway is an intricate pattern of small fields, some with individual trees, most with hedgerows. To the west, just outside the parish boundary, is a wood called Long Shaw, mentioned by John Hunter in "The Essex Landscape", as containing apple and crab apple trees, and also some ancient oak and hornbeam pollards, indicating that it was once wood pasture. It may have been converted into woodland in the 17th or 18th century. Woodland is shown south of Blunts Farm, as well as the two woods to the north.

Immediately to the west of the railway the pattern around Blackacre Farm (now within the village) is similarly of small, hedged fields, although these are more open to the south. A small, linear wood is shown south of Blackacre Farm, just outside the boundary. This is also still present. North of Debden Lane, Redoaks Wood and Gaunts Wood are shown, now joined together. The area between Birch Wood, on the parish boundary, and Birch Hall and Farm is again of small fields with hedges.

The village consists of a dozen houses around The Green, principally on Poplar Row, and the same along Coppice Row, towards the 6 String Jack and the new enclosures off Piercing Hill, called Manor Villas. The map shows that several of these, notably the Vicarage, opposite

St. Mary's on Piercing Hill and Redoak, west of The Green, had substantial gardens with trees, and it is clear from the contemporary situation that the new owners of Manor Villas quickly set about emulating the established properties.

Generally the Forest boundaries remain as before. The Plain is shown clear of trees. The fields south of Little Gregories (now the golf course) are large and open, although to the north and east they are still small and hedged.

It had been intended that an extensive area would be developed northwards towards Epping, so land was cleared of trees. However only a limited amount of building had taken place by 1850. As a result the properties that had been constructed acquired very generous gardens, suitable for tree planting, and under the retrospective arbitration award of 1882 by Sir Arthur Hobhouse the northern compartment, known as Blackheath was restored to the Forest. The first superintendent, Alec McKenzie, then replanted using larch, sweet chestnut and other exotic conifers and broad leaves. The presence of so many conifers there and in the gardens at Wansfell was responsible for the survival of the red squirrel until the late 1950s, although the species died out earlier elsewhere in the Forest.

The first edition map also records one other notable feature of the village, the avenue of 62 oaks across The Green, planted in 1832 by Lieutenant Hall-Dare RN, son of the lord of the manor. In "Theydon Bois and All That", Jack Farmer records the story that this was the result of him being left a legacy, and wishing to do something to benefit the parish. With the help of friends (and in all likelihood workman from the estate), and with refreshment from the Bull Inn, the trees were planted in a day.

The main growth of the modern village started from 1870 with the arrival of the railway and has been well recorded in the Parish Council's village appraisal of 1981. The fields into which the village expanded were usually quite small and again defined by hedgerows of trees. It seems that in the early stages, when plot sizes and houses were generally larger, mature trees from the hedgerows were often retained within gardens and new trees planted. In the later stages of its expansion, when the plot sizes became smaller, the old hedgerows and the trees were swept away and planting of large trees became unrealistic.

The overall pattern of the countryside of the parish revealed by the map, of generally modest, irregular fields with plentiful hedgerows, is characteristic of land used predominantly for dairy farming, as indeed was the case for many of the farms on the southern Essex clay. It was only in the latter part of the 20th century that farmers were persuaded, by the loss of Milk Marketing Board subsidies and the incentives of government grants, to remove hedgerows and trees and put more land under the plough. Aerial photographs document the loss of hedgerows from 1950 to 1980, most noticeably close to the village on Blackacre Farm, opening up the landscape, and impoverishing its wildlife value.

After this the pace of destruction slowed. Recently extensive new woodland planting at Great Gregories, south of the M25, by the Corporation of London, and of a significant wood near the site of the original Thrifts Hall Wood has reversed the trend of tree loss.

The Forest

As we know from Chapman and Andre's map the boundaries of the Forest within the parish have been largely unchanged since at least the early 18th century, and probably from much earlier. Indeed, many of the features mentioned in the Perambulation of 1641, which recorded the historic boundary in the parish may still be readily identified;

"To Aybridge and passing over the bridge aforesaid, by the King's Highway leading to the parish church of Theydon Boys, and so forward to the dwelling house of the Rector of Theydon Boys, into a gate called Theydon Green Gate, and thence by the hedge called Purlieu Hedge, until the end of a certain lane called Hawcock Lane, and so to the bank near the end of the town of Epping called Purlieu Bank…"

Chapman and Andre

Chapman and Andre produced their map of Essex in 1777, which was exceptionally detailed and accurate, showing buildings, roads and countryside features. Parks, heaths and woods – mostly named – are shown, with sufficient detail to allow the woodland management to be interpreted.

However, there have been changes to its management that have altered its appearance dramatically. For example, on the slopes above The Plain, an area of Forest appears to have been converted to coppice several centuries ago and then allowed to revert to trees. The many rings of trees would originally have been single coppice stools, the centres having rotted away over time. There are also many enormous multi-stemmed beeches produced by coppicing.

Until a century and a half ago the Forest would have been light and airy, even in summer, as indeed it is described in John Clare's poem "A Walk in the Forest." John Clare lived at High Beach under the care of Dr. Allen, a pioneer in the care of the mentally ill, between1837-1841. He often wandered in the Forest for solace. It then had, as he describes, substantial open areas of grass and heath. Tall, spreading trees and a closed canopy would have been the exception, not the rule.

The most important factor leading to this change was probably the loss of many of the markets for the loppings, following the development of new industrial techniques and new materials. The practice of pollarding, which had created and maintained the open character was therefore in decline. There was also a change in attitudes: pollarding came to be regarded as an unnatural practice. However the change was speeded as a consequence of the protection of the Forest under the Epping Forest Act 1878.

The story of how the northern part of the Forest was, at the eleventh hour, rescued from wholesale clearance may be found in excellent accounts by Sir William Addison in "Epping Forest – Figures in a Landscape" and in "Portrait of Epping Forest". In the former he records the view which arose in the polite society of the nineteenth century that commoners' rights to pasture cattle and to lop trees encouraged habits of idleness and a dislike of regular work. So much so that, in 1875, the Loughton parish vestry, concerned for the morals of the parish poor, passed a resolution "that the existence of the alleged forestall rights causes great waste and demoralisation and that it is expedient that they should be abolished with due compensation". The Lord of the Manor of Loughton, William Whitaker Maitland devised schemes to enclose and develop for housing substantial areas west of Loughton.

Resistance initially came in the form of the struggle of some of the commoners, notably Thomas Willingale of Loughton, who wished to continue to exercise their ancient rights of lopping and grazing. He brought a legal case that found support, remarkable in that social climate, of a member of the local gentry, the Quaker Edward North Buxton, Verderer and last Lord of the Manor of Theydon Bois. While the case proceeded, public support for the cause grew. In the end it was the wealth of the Corporation of London that allowed the Lords of the Manor to be bought out and Epping Forest to be safeguarded for future generations.

The legislation that transferred the land-owning rights to the Corporation of London was specific. It required the Conservators of the Forest to "protect the timber and other trees, pollards, shrubs, underwood, heather, gorse, turf and herbage growing on the forest". It was unfortunate, although understandable that the Conservators interpreted this as requiring them to cease pollarding, in order to protect, the trees and enable them to grow to maturity. Since the legislation had also extinguished the commoners' lopping rights, pollarding could no longer take place at all. As a result the pollard trees have grown to their full potential height and their crowns have joined overhead, creating generally shady and enclosed woodland.

In more recent decades there has been a growing appreciation of the importance of pollards to the character, wildlife and history of the Forest coupled with the desire that they should continue to be a major feature of the Forest for future generations to enjoy. As a result the Conservators have begun an ambitious programme of restoration of existing pollarded trees together with creating new, "maiden" pollards.

Another change has been in the number of people who use or enjoy the Forest. While many people now pass through in cars, few trouble the deeper parts of the Forest. For much of history the thud of the axe or the rasp of the saw would have been common sounds. The energetic but comparatively few workers of the Corporation of London cannot rival the legions that kept the Forest pollarded or coppiced over the centuries. After Queen Victoria came to the Forest on 6 May 1882 to dedicate it to "the use and enjoyment of my people for all time", the idea took hold that it should be a playground for the poor of East London. In the village three 'retreats' were built to cater for the needs of the visitors, particularly for refreshment and entertainment. Jack Farmer gives many interesting details in "Theydon Bois as I Knew it". Visitors came in great numbers and were a characteristic sight on The Green in summer in the years between the wars, to the financial benefit of many villagers. By great bad fortune and with considerable loss of life, the two larger retreats were bombed during World War 2 and not rebuilt. With changing social conditions the need for them had disappeared. Apart from the noise of the motorcar and aeroplane the Forest today may be as secluded and quiet as it has ever been in history.

A Walk in the Forest, by John Clare

I love the Forest and its airy bounds,

Where friendly Campbell takes his daily rounds;

I love the breakneck hills, that headlong go,

And leave me high, and half the world below;

I love to see the Beech Hill mounting high,

The brook without a bridge, and nearly dry.

There's Buckhurst Hill, a place of furze and clouds,

Which evening in a golden haze enshrouds;

I hear the cows go home with tinkling bell,

And see the woodman in the forest dwell,

Whose dog runs eager where the rabbit's gone;

He eats the grass, then kicks and hurries on;

Then scrapes for hoarded bone, and tries to play

And barks at larger dogs and runs away.

THE MODERN TREESCAPE

The Village

From the village green Theydon Bois is still dominated by trees. To the west the Forest itself clothes the rising land of the Epping Forest ridge. To the east, the mature parkland trees around Thrifts Hall Farm crown the high ground. On The Green the avenue of oak trees planted by Lieutenant Hall-Dare is a major landmark, although its overall condition is variable, and many of its components are in decline. In surrounding gardens there are fine mature trees.

The most impressive and important trees in the village are generally either ones incorporated from the countryside, for example the magnificent oaks in the churchyard or nearby in the grounds of Theydon Lodge, or are in older properties such as the Vicarage, or date from the early period of expansion, along Piercing Hill and Coppice Row. Characteristically these are exotic species, including horse chestnut, robinia, pine and cedar.

Not all features of historic importance are so imposing. For example, there is an apparently ordinary, clipped elm hedgerow fronting Baldocks and the adjacent properties west of Orchard Drive, and across the frontage of the village hall. It may in fact be a surviving part of the hedge referred to in the perambulation of the forest of 1641.

The village green is part of Epping Forest, managed by the Parish Council on behalf of the Conservators of the Forest. Other than the oak avenue, trees on the green are largely confined to the edges, and are found singly, or in small relatively informal clumps. The two groups of oaks and hornbeams opposite the Baptist Church and the Church Hall are notable examples of mid-20th century planting. Frequent cutting of the sward has produced a cropped appearance over recent years, but the wet summers of 2001 and 2002, when mowing had to be less frequent, have revealed a previously hidden diversity of flowering grasses and herbs.

In its streets, the village has some 300 trees, the majority planted over the last 50 years. Notable exceptions are the Landmark pine set in the footpath of Coppice Row and the Veteran oak in Woburn Avenue. The majority of the street trees are relatively short-lived and decorative species such as plum, rowan, crab apple, whitebeam and hawthorn. There are a few larger growing kinds, including lime, robinia and hornbeam. These have a longer life expectancy – but some are planted with limited space to expand, so will need a high level of maintenance to be retained.

In general the street trees contribute strongly to an attractive public environment and their importance is increased because of the restricted size of many front gardens. However, the quality and extent of tree cover varies considerably from street to street, although it is noticeably better in streets north of the Green than in those to the south.

Until recently the shopping area at the lower end of Forest Drive suffered from an absence of trees of any kind. In 1994 the Parish Council sponsored the planting of four London plane trees with the intention that they should, in due course, be managed as pollards. These are now flourishing, and already show how much trees can add to the character of a street.

The most verdant parts of the village are those adjoining the Forest, including Piercing Hill, Coppice Row and Loughton Lane, where most of the important trees are in private gardens or the grounds of institutions. Piercing Hill still has a rural character. To the west of the lower stretch are the Forest and the mature trees of St Mary's Churchyard. To the east are tall limes, robinias, and hollies originally planted in the garden of The Vicarage. Many properties lie behind tall hedges, with substantial mature native and exotic trees.

Coppice Row is characterised by horse chestnuts, some in front gardens, some set back behind properties. Along Loughton Lane there are several mature oaks, some in the highway, but others in gardens. Other survivors from the old countryside include the veteran oaks on the northern boundary of Woodland Way with the golf course, and a short stretch of hedgerow trees behind Orchard Drive, on the boundary with the newer development in Barnmead. Where space permits there has been plentiful new tree planting in private gardens. The more notable are already Landmark trees, such as the dawn redwoods in Red Oaks, west of the village green.

St Mary's Church is not only surrounded by trees, but has an interesting collection of trees in the churchyard itself, including two fine Landmark oaks, a small wooded area and an avenue of yews. For many years now the management of the churchyard has benefited from the dedicated commitment of Mr John Plume, with a small band of volunteers. Theydon Bois County Primary School has a mature oak to the front, and an ancient hedgerow which divides the playing field to the rear. Wansfell College, off Piercing Hill, is an adult education college teaching a wide variety of courses, many on environmental themes. It has inherited an extensive and well laid out Victorian garden with a mixture of a few of the old Forest trees, augmented by mature planting of horse chestnut, lime, beech, pine, etc.

Outside the College, following the line of the old road is a substantial length of hedge, known as the Purlieu Hedge because it grows on the Purlieu Bank, which continues up to and along the south side of Little Gregories Lane. It marks the Forest boundary, as described by the 1641 perambulation. The hedge is mostly of hornbeam, but it has standard trees, including several superb oaks bordering the golf course, and hazel bushes, which produce hazelnuts.

Regular trimming ceased in the late 1960s, when the new road was built. By the early 1990s it had become overgrown, forming a continuous tree line that was attractive but structurally unstable, and which had lost its original character. After consultation a decision was made to restore the lower section it to a traditional form. This was carried out in two stages, although not without some opposition. However the hedge responded well, and is now regularly, if a little severely managed, together with the grassed area beyond.

Landmark Trees

The District Council's Landmark tree initiative is designed to allow the community, via their tree wardens and with the owner's agreement, to designate trees that have a particular local prominence. This may be because of their visual prominence, outstanding form, great age, or association with an important person or event. With the agreement of their owners these then become the Landmark trees of the parish. The district council undertakes to give priority to owners of Landmark trees who are in need of advice on their care. A tree preservation order may cover some Landmark trees, however the Landmark tree scheme is intended to work through cooperation and recognition of the value of trees to the community, rather than compulsion.

Epping Forest

Epping Forest is now recognised as one of the most important areas of open, semi-natural land in Europe, if not the world, particularly for its many Veteran pollards. The current composition of the Forest is described in the Epping Forest Management Plan. In summary, this reveals a varied and valuable series of habitats, though subject to major change through natural processes. The Plain is maintained as grassed open-space, and some small open spaces are maintained within the Forest where this is particularly important for animals or other plants. However the wooded parts, now subject to far less grazing, have become far shadier as the tall canopy has closed overhead, and as dense under-storey, particularly of holly has spread.

The most important species on the tops of the hills, where the soil is better-drained gravel, is beech. It is present as ancient pollards, ancient coppice, and also as younger, maiden trees, which are able to shade out other species, even including oak. Hornbeam is an important species on the lower Forest slopes and also oak, particularly on the southern fringes of the Forest. Birch has invaded many of the internal open spaces and holly is also proliferating very densely.

There is a particular and widespread problem of the over maturity of the pollards, on which lopping ceased in the nineteenth century. In addition to the restriction of habitats the fate of the many tens of thousands of veteran trees is a major concern Because of their relatively short life expectancy many beech pollards are now dying, and in the process weakened trees shed their limbs or topple. New opportunities are created, but at the expense of the Forest's traditional character.

At the top of Piercing Hill the results of the nineteenth century replanting may still be seen, although the larches, sweet chestnuts and other exotic trees are becoming fewer as they age and wind-blow. Natural regeneration, mostly of natives, is replacing them.

The Corporation of London has recently acquired an extensive area of farmland, previously part of Great Gregories Farm. This "buffer land" is an important protective zone for the Forest itself, but also contains hedgerows and veteran trees of historic interest. 10.1 hectares (24 acres) of native woodland planting, chiefly oak, ash, hornbeam and beech, with field maple and crab apple has recently taken place south of the M25 motorway which, when it matures, will give screening and some degree of noise reduction. On the crest of the hill, east of Little Gregories, there used to stand a prominent group of elms known as The Seven Sisters. Because of their importance, they were injected with fungicide to protect them from Dutch elm disease, an attempt that was ultimately unsuccessful. Recently a group of beech has been planted nearby. This has been difficult to establish but promises, in time, to recreate the feature, albeit with different species. Several elms still remain in a hedgerow across the remaining pasture to the south.

The south facing slopes above the village remain sparsely treed and with few hedgerows.

The golf course is visually important from the village itself, but also in longer views from the south. All of the "old nine" is within the historic Forest boundary, several holes in the wooded Forest west of Theydon Road and the remainder in the open land north of Little Gregories Lane. A continuation of the Purlieu Bank and the old Epping road, now a sunken green lane partly blocked by thick scrub and lined by tall trees, mark the northeastern boundary. The "new nine", immediately north of the village was constructed in the mid 20th century on farmland acquired by the Forest, and was initially planted using inappropriate exotics. However, recent planting has been better advised and, with more planned, this should considerably enhance the setting of the village as it matures.

An ancient hedgerow, containing several large and important veteran oaks, marks the southern boundary of the course. Unfortunately one was felled a few years ago, having been implicated in subsidence to a house in Woodland Way.

Veteran Trees

Veterans, or ancient trees, are those that have survived into old age. Depending on species, this generally means 250 + years. They can normally be recognised by their size, with a girth likely to exceed 3m, and, in the case of pollards, their characteristic shape. Allowance is made for the slower growing nature of species such as yew or mulberry, or the short life expectancy of, for example, willow. Trees that become veterans are invaluable as a habitat, particularly for insects but also for their landscape and historic interest. The Veteran Tree Initiative is a national scheme to find and record details of all of the U.K.'s ancient trees. They may be present in gardens, as well as countryside and Forest.

The Thrifts Hall Farm Ridge

Beyond the railway the land rises to the ridge on which stand Thrifts Hall Farm, Parsonage Farm and Blunt's Farm. The planting around Thrifts Hall Farm is of particular importance, seen from the village. The recent removal, for safety reasons, of the hybrid poplars that lined the railway has opened up the views to the old parkland beyond. Although many of the farm buildings have recently been converted to housing, the nearby trees have been retained. The planting around the farm is principally of lime and horse chestnut, but ancient native hedgerows of hawthorn, hazel, field maple, oak and ash also remain in the surrounding landscape.

Beyond the ridge was Thrifts Wood, removed in stages during the twentieth century. Its outline is still partly drawn on the landscape by hedgerows. Since 1990 a new wood has been planted on part of its original area, following the construction of fishing lakes in the valley. Although site conditions are difficult, the owner, one of the parish tree wardens, has taken considerable trouble to look after the trees, which are thriving. Additionally he has permitted natural regeneration from the native hedgerow oaks so that they are already re-establishing themselves by seed amongst the forestry mix.

The highway from Abridge is an ancient one. Although improved and straightened it still retains in places its ancient hedgerows and veteran trees. To the east of the Abridge Road, and north of Coopersale Lane, the well-treed pattern persists with a mixture of native trees, particularly oaks, with newer plantings. The north facing slopes beyond Blunt's Farm have largely been cleared of hedgerows, but in the valley floor, close to the motorway junction, a small, but ancient and floristically valuable bluebell wood remains. South of Thrifts Hall Farm, beyond the new fishing lakes, is an open pattern of fields, with the skeleton of the ancient field system remaining as hedgerows, with mature ash and oak trees. Until Dutch elm disease, many of these hedgerows would have been principally of elm.

Roding Valley Slopes

The M11 now provides a rough dividing line between the Thrifts Hall Farm ridge and the Roding Valley slopes. Along the Roding these retain their historic character as open waterside meadows. Higher, the fields are now mostly ploughed. There are fewer trees or hedgerows but some veteran pollards of oak. Clumps of trees, including horse chestnut and willows, mark most buildings, including the ancient complex of Theydon Hall and Theydon Hall Farm, and the original church site and burial ground of Theydon Bois. A small area of broad leaved woodland remains just north of Theydon Hall cottages. The Abridge Road, although straightened and modernized, still has many fine trees including old pollards and sections of ancient hedgerow along its verges.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The following sections look at the way ahead. They consider the main issues that need to be resolved, if change is to be managed successfully, and set out the key aims. Because of the role of the Corporation of London as Conservators of Epping Forest, key objectives 1 and 4 (i) - 4(iv) relate to them, and conform to the Management Plan for the Forest and the Buffer Lands.

The overall key aims are:

- **to record key elements of the landscape, in accordance with the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan;**
- **to preserve what is most important in the landscape, or meaningful for local heritage;**
- **to manage the trees, woodlands and hedgerows for the benefit of the landscape, amenity and wildlife;**
- **to add to the existing tree and hedgerow cover by new planting, particularly where this is in keeping with the historic landscape character;**
- **to encourage new planting in the village, particularly in the streets and in front gardens; and**
- **to increase understanding of, and involvement with, tree conservation and management.**

The specific actions to achieve these aims will be set out by the District Council in a separate action plan. In general they require cooperation between the various authorities, the community and landowners. The key issues and related objectives are set out below.

1 The Green

The main tree issue is the future of the oak avenue, given its variable condition and appearance. The intention of the Conservators is to maintain the single avenue with necessary surgery and inter-planting for the time being, but to consult widely with residents of Theydon Bois on a longer-term strategy for trees on The Green.

The principles of management of the Green are set out in the Management Plan for the Forest. It must respect The Green's historic character and maintain and enhance its wildlife value as well as allowing for informal recreation and the holding of events. To maintain The Green's historic openness only limited additional tree planting is likely to be appropriate.

Key Objective 1

To maintain with sensitivity the historic character of Theydon Green and to enhance its appearance and wildlife value, subject to consultation with the local community.

2 Street Scene

The consultative meetings showed that there is a general appreciation of the street trees as an important asset of the village together with a desire for additional tree planting. There is also a desire for advance consultation with residents and local organisations on new planting, and in particular on the choice of species and their location, for more frequent pruning of trees, and for better care of young trees in particular.

At the same time, there is a significant level of general concern about the potential problems that trees can cause, notably building subsidence as a result of root activity, damage to pavements and large trees out-growing their situation and causing excessive shading, etc.

Restricted financial resources are likely to remain, for the foreseeable future, a major factor limiting the District Council's ability to meet expectations of either increased planting or more active tree care. The challenge is therefore to find new forms of working, including partnerships with local people, businesses and other organisations, and new sources of funding.

Planting

Planting over recent years has continued to add to the number of trees in the verges. 27 new trees were planted in the 2001/2002 season. However a much more extensive programme would be necessary to make a major improvement, particularly bearing in mind the number of decorative trees, mostly red-leaved plums, which are nearing the end of their useful lives. There are opportunities throughout the village for planting:

- **to maintain tree cover;**
- **to replace over-mature or unsuitable trees; and**
- **to increase the tree cover where space exists.**

Subject to the formal agreement of all parties, residents and local organisations will be offered the opportunity to increase the numbers of trees planted in the village through sponsorship. There will be consultation, via the Parish Council on the proposed planting programme.

Maintenance

The restricted budget for highway trees also affects the kind of pruning that can be done. There is no capacity for "non essential" work, for example crown reduction to lessen shading. Operations are now carried out only when necessary for safety. The removal of basal shoots and low branches to clear footpaths and roads is undertaken, but is restricted to a four-yearly cycle. Because many of the current trees produce vigorous sucker growth the inevitable result is that they become unsightly, and the appearance of the street suffers.

One of the benefits of the tree warden scheme to the village has been that pruning by volunteers, arranged under the auspices of the tree warden scheme, has helped to relieve this problem, and to clear associated litter.

In the longer term, there is a need to work towards a sustainable situation, where the planting of new trees does not outstrip the resources available for later management. Identification of the best sites and careful matching of all of the characteristics of the intended tree to the location should minimise future problems, while creating a more diverse and attractive streetscape.

Key Objective 2

(i) To identify partnership arrangements or additional sources of funding to increase the District Council's ability to meet public expectations, in terms of both planting and care of trees;

(ii) To propose a programme of street tree planting for the village that will be more sustainable, and to ensure that newly planted trees receive a good standard of aftercare; and

(iii) To continue to maintain the safety of the street tree population.

3 Trees in gardens and semi-public locations

The existing stock of garden trees in general is important in enhancing the village's environment and its potential for wildlife. In parts of the village the trees have become an essential and special element of its character. These are mostly older trees, including Veteran trees deriving from the countryside, which predate the expansion of the village. They include the significant legacy of Victorian and Edwardian planting, including horse chestnuts, pines and other introduced species that are now at their prime. The presence of notable trees also characterizes several of the village's significant public places, and particularly St. Mary's Church. There are also a number of individually outstanding trees in prominent locations. Many of these trees are protected by tree preservation orders, or have been recognized as "Landmark trees."

Tree Wardens

Tree wardens are volunteers, who are prepared to give time to promote the care and planting of trees in their neighbourhoods and support initiatives such as National Tree Week.

The Tree Warden Scheme is co-ordinated nationally by The Tree Council, and with Epping Forest District Council. Theydon Bois has had an active group of tree wardens since the start of the scheme in 1994. Tree wardens can be contacted via the parish or district councils.

Threats to trees can arise from proposed development, or from inappropriate planting choices, which lead to trees outgrowing their situations, but increasingly from concerns about subsidence on shrinkable clay, caused by tree root activity. In many circumstances loss of trees can be accepted subject to replacement planting, but not of trees that are essential to the character of the village, unless it can be shown that no alternative solution exists

Key Objective 3

By advice, publicising other sources of reliable guidance, and through the use of planning control:

- to support the appropriate management of existing trees, and appropriate new planting, particularly on sites to which the public have access;
- to encourage the completion of the Landmark and Veteran Tree surveys and to publicise their findings; and
- to protect those trees that give character to the village, and ensure that trees that have a special or outstanding value are not felled, except where there is no alternative.

4 Epping Forest

Given the scale of the task, and the resources available, the Epping Forest Management Plan concentrates on specific initiatives for defined purposes and does not seek to reproduce the original management of the Forest as a whole. Although its character will inevitably change, there is an ambitious programme to ensure that visitors will continue to find pollarded woodland, the key characteristic of the Forest. The programme involves active restoration of over-grown pollards, concentrating on hornbeam rather than beech because the success rate is better. The ultimate aim is that one third of all hornbeam pollards should be returned to regular cutting. In addition new pollards are being created.

From the community perspective, the Forest is valued but is not always well known or understood. Many people have concerns, particularly about safety, which currently restrict the use that they are able to make of it, either for recreation or quiet enjoyment. The intention of the Conservators is to prove better information, in the form of leaflets and signboards at Forest entrances, to allow more people enjoyment of at least the outer fringes of the Forest. The community's wider concerns will also be reviewed as part of a review of the Public Affairs Strategy in 2003.

The open grasslands of the golf course are increasingly being managed in a way that benefits biodiversity. Key features including trees and hedgerows of historic value are being identified and some of the more out-of-place conifers and poplars are being replaced. Much new planting has taken place, particularly in the newer southern part of the golf course, which will eventually create an attractive and appropriate landscape above the village. Retention of the Veteran trees, including those along the northern boundary of the village, and bringing the Purlieu hedge along Little Gregories Lane back into active management are of particular importance.

In the buffer lands on Great Gregories Farm it appears that, at least since the 19th century there have been relatively fewer hedgerows than elsewhere in the parish. This was exacerbated by clearances over the second half of the 20th century. Now that the land is under the stewardship of the Corporation of London, it will be possible to undertake significant re-planting, particularly along the field boundaries, which will enhance the view from the village. There is a willingness to involve the community in related projects, and particularly to include the school in hedgerow planting at Great Gregories.

Key Objective 4

(i) To continue management of the Forest to protect and enhance, so far as practicable, its bio-diversity and to conserve its special character;

(ii) to enhance public enjoyment of the Forest and to increase understanding of its management;

(iii) to promote management of the golf course, in partnership with Theydon Bois Golf Club, to retain its key historic features, enhance its value for wild life, and to improve its overall landscape character; and

(iv) to improve the landscape character of the "buffer" lands by involving the local community in selective tree and hedgerow planting.

5 Countryside

The farmed countryside retains its historic character, but only in part. Some parts of the parish, particularly east of the railway, remain well hedged, with many hedgerow trees, including Veteran trees and pollards. Outside the Forest there has been little woodland since pre-historic times, but most of what there has been is still present. Considerable hedgerow loss occurred during the 20th century, but the pressure for removal of hedgerows appears to have receded and important hedgerows now have protection under the law. Trees and hedgerows remain under threat, but generally from decline as a result of neglect or inappropriate management rather than wholesale and intentional removal.

The original purposes of woodland, to provide timber and wood, and of hedgerows, to demarcate boundaries, to enclose and shelter stock, and provide wood for fuel have largely disappeared. Remaining hedgerows often are therefore unmanaged. This leads to a poorer habitat for nesting birds and a loss of species diversity, as weaker species are shaded out. If hedgerows are cut, it is now usually in summer, when it is most damaging to wildlife. Over-heavy cutting is common, damaging to the hedgerow structure and health, and causes sapling trees to be lost. Field margins are eroded to increase productivity and tree roots damaged. The results, particularly noticeable on the Roding Valley slopes, are hedgerows that can only make a limited contribution to the landscape and to wildlife diversity, and a vulnerable population of trees that is ageing and in poor health.

Policy at national level is moving towards recognition of the appearance and wildlife value of the countryside as an actual product of the farming system, to be rewarded by subsidy or grant. The prospects for effective wildlife enhancement in the countryside may therefore be transformed. At present taking land out of agricultural management for large scale planting schemes, or leaving wide field margins may not be seen to be realistic, but small-scale initiatives, such as allowing saplings to develop in managed hedgerows, planting up field corners or recommencing management of neglected pollards or small areas of woodland, would still be of benefit. The Essex Biodiversity Action Plan contains a number of objectives related to trees and, within the plan, the District Council has adopted Veteran trees as one of its local Flagship Species.

Key Objective 5

(i) To record key countryside features, particularly Veteran trees, pollards, and ancient hedgerows and woods;

(ii) to encourage their conservation and appropriate management in accordance with the Essex Biodiversity Action Plan;

(iii) to promote establishment of new trees, where appropriate; and

(iv) to increase public awareness and understanding of trees in the countryside.

6 Trees and Planning

There is a range of TPOs in the parish. The oldest are strategic orders made by Essex County Council in the 1950s, covering Redoak Wood, Gaunts Wood, The Vicarage and Thrifts Hall; others cover the whole of substantial properties such as Birch Hall. More recent ones however have been made to protect selected garden trees in advance of development.

There are strong policies in the Epping Forest District Local Plan, that are rigorously enforced to ensure that important trees are not lost or damaged as a result of development, and that new building has appropriate and effective landscaping. Threats to trees range from domestic extensions that would come to close to individual trees, with the risk of damage to their roots, to major applications in the countryside, with the potential to cause major loss of trees and woodland. An example would be the proposal for a golf course at Blunts Farm, where, however, the most valuable trees and the ancient wood are now all protected, and shown to be retained in line with the planning conditions for the development. The local plan also contains the council's policies to guide its consideration of requests to prune or fell preserved trees, which are all looked at individually. These encourage reasonable management, but guard against unnecessary or unjustified loss of important trees.

In dealing with planning applications TPO trees are "material considerations". However the majority of trees (outside the Forest) are not legally protected. It is clear that, within the planning process, recognition needs to be extended to the value of the special trees and landscape features, identified in this strategy, that contribute to the character of the village and the surrounding countryside. It is intended, therefore, that this strategy will be adopted as supplementary planning guidance to allow it to be used when taking decisions on planning applications and in planning appeals or enquiries, to give greater force to the local plan policies.

Key Objective 6

- To use planning powers where appropriate, and specifically the policies in the local plan,
- To protect features identified as being of special importance to the amenity, character and setting of the village, particularly Landmark Trees, Veteran Trees, ancient hedgerows and woods,(LL1,2,7,8,9,10); the parkland at Thrifts Hall Farm,(LL1,2,10); and, in gardens within the village, the characteristic Victorian planting and trees incorporated from the countryside,(LL7,8,9,10).

*Note - The local plan policy references are given following the relevant issue. The text of the policies is included as Appendix 1.]

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The following sources have been used in the preparation of this strategy, in addition to plans and estate maps held at the Essex Records Office:

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The Epping Forest District Council team preparing and implementing this strategy is:

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APPENDIX A

These are the relevant policies from the local plan:

Policy LL1

The council will continue to act to:

(i) conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the countryside;…

Policy LL2

The council will not grant planning permission for development in the countryside unless it is satisfied that the proposal will:-

(a) respect the character of the landscape; and/or

(b) enhance the appearance of the landscape; and

(c) where appropriate involve the management of part or all of the remainder of the site to enhance its contribution to the landscape.

Policy LL7

The council will:

(i) promote tree and woodland planting where it is considered that this will lead to significant amenity benefit;

(ii) seek to protect trees and woodland of amenity value; and

(iii) promote good standards of tree care and woodland management.

Policy LL8

The council will give consent for works to a tree or woodland protected by a tree preservation order provided it is satisfied that:-

(i) the health and appearance of the tree will not be impaired; and

(ii) the works will not justifiably inhibit or prevent the full and natural development of the tree; or

(iii) the works are necessary to its continued retention and consistent with good arboricultural practice; or

(iv) in the case of a woodland, the proposed works are consistent with the principles of sound woodland management.

Policy LL9

The council will not give consent to fell a tree or woodland protected by a tree preservation order unless it is satisfied that this is necessary and justified. Other than for woodland any such consent will be conditional upon appropriate replacement of the tree.

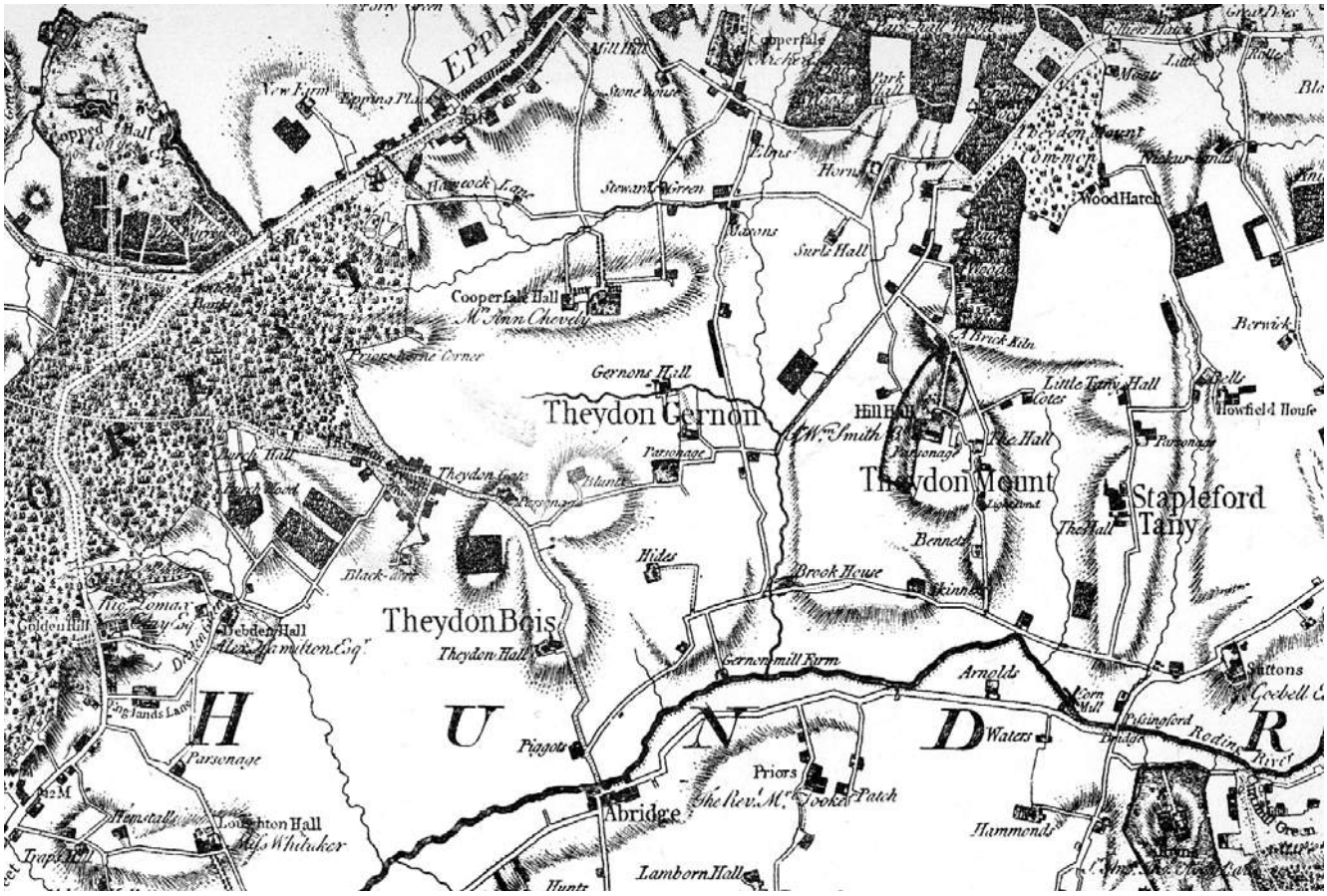
Policy LL10

The council will refuse to grant planning permission for any development which it considers makes inadequate provision for the retention of:-

(i) trees; or

(ii) natural features, particularly wildlife habitats such as woodlands, hedgerows, ponds and watercourses; or

(iii) man-made features of historical, archaeological or landscape significance.



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