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BRENTWOOD BOROUGH PROTECTED LANES ASSESSMENTS

March 2016 (Draft)

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Essex County Council

Brentwood Borough

Protected Lanes Assessment

March 2016

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1 Introduction

Essex County Council's Place Services Historic Environment Specialists were commissioned by Essex Highways in 2015 to undertake an assessment of Brentwood Districts existing Protected Lanes using the new Protected Lanes criteria developed by Essex County Council for Chelmsford Borough Council (ECC 2009). A total of 13 lanes were assessed.

The work was undertaken in two stages, comprising an initial stage of desk-based assessment followed by field survey. Following the assessment, the scores for each Protected Lane were checked against the threshold for determining Protected Lane status. This report summarises the methodology and results of the project.

2 Background

2.1 Historic Lanes in Essex

The greater part of the road network in the Essex countryside derives from at least as far back as the medieval period. Much of it undoubtedly existed in Saxon times and it is likely that many roads and lanes were formed long before that. These lanes are part of what was once an immense mileage of minor roads and track-ways connecting villages, hamlets and scattered farms and cottages. Many were used for agricultural purposes, linking settlements to arable fields, grazing on pasture, heaths and greens; and other resources such as woodland and coastal marsh. Generally these roads were not deliberately designed and constructed; written records of the establishment of roads during the medieval period are rare (Rackham, 1986, 264). Instead they would have started life as track-ways without a bearing surface, although often with defined boundaries including hedgerows, ditches and banks.

The width of ancient roads depended then, as now, on the traffic using them but historic lanes tend to be very variable in width, often within a short distance. Before metalling the roads became rutted in wet weather and the traffic would move over less rutted areas to the sides. Principal roads between towns tended to be wide for this reason. Wide verges and linear roadside greens were also grazed by cattle, sheep and geese being driven through the countryside to market. Roadsides often had ponds associated with them for watering livestock, although it is clear from The

Court Rolls that these frequently began life as extraction pits for clay and gravel (Emmison, 1991, 287). Many lanes had ditches along one or both sides of the lane to demarcate the highway and to assist drainage. These boundaries are frequently even more sinuous than the road itself. On the clay lands, the roads inevitably became water courses during heavy rain; the water would pour off the fields and wash away the muddy surface. They were also eroded through continuous use; over the centuries lanes on hillsides tended to become sunken. Lanes with marked differences in the level between two sides of a lane are also apparent on sloping ground, caused by lynchet formation – the gradual shift of soil down-slope caused by ploughing over hundreds of years. When roads became properly metalled in the 19th century and 20th centuries they became in a sense fossilized; the carriageways were fixed as metalled strips and the verges were formed from the marginal land between the carriageway and the highway boundary (Hunter, 1999).

Today, historic lanes are an important feature in our landscape: they continue to have an articulating role, providing insights into past communities and their activities through direct experience of a lanes historic fabric; contain the archaeological potential to yield evidence about these past human activities and to provide insights into the development of a landscape and the relationship of features within it over time; have considerable ecological value as habitats for plants and animals, serving as corridors for movement and dispersal for some species and acting as vital connections between other habitats; and allow people to enrich their daily lives by accessing cherished historic landmarks and landscapes, encouraging recreation within the countryside, thereby promoting well-being.

2.2 Protected Lanes Policy in Essex

The policy to preserve Essex historic lanes has been in operation for over a quarter of a century and is summarized in a document prepared by Essex County Council (ECC, 1998). However when Local Authorities decided to re-assess their existing Protected Lanes as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Frameworks, precise information on the criteria used to assess historic lanes for Protected Lane status and the original survey guidelines for making this assessment were found to be no longer available. Essex County Council's Historic Environment Specialists were commissioned by Chelmsford Borough Council to develop robust and defensible criteria for its Local Development Framework, Core Strategy and Development Control Policies (Policy DC 15) on Protected Lanes (CBC, 2008, 75)

and then to apply these criteria to Protected Lanes in the Borough (ECC, 2009). The criteria used for Chelmsford have since been used to undertake re-assessments of Protected Lanes in Uttlesford and Braintree. In 2015, the Historic Environment specalists of the Place Services team at Essex County Council were commissioned by Essex Highways to extend this re-survey to the remainder of the Protected Lanes in the County.

2.3 Protected Lanes Policy in Brentwood Borough

Brentwood Borough Council's present Local Plan identifies a total of 13 lanes with Protected Lane status. However, there is a lack of supporting information for this policy and prior to the current study, the existing Protected Lanes had not been assessed for a period of at least 25 years.

3 Reason for the project

Paragraph 165 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires that planning policies and descisions 'should be based on up-to-date information about the natural environment' and paragraph 169 requires that local planning authorities 'should have up-to-date information about the historic environment of their area and should use it to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make to the environment'. Paragraph 1 of the Planning Practice Guidance states that 'local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged'.

Development Policies can have significant effects and so it is important that the criteria for decision making and the evidence base on which decisions are made is comprehensive, robust and defensible. Consistency and transparency of judgment is crucial to public acceptability, and to the fairness of the process. Detailed criteria for Protected Lane status and a methodical articulation of how a lane does or does not meet such criteria, which clearly illustrates the rationale behind a lanes selection, will make a major contribution to achieving that acceptability.

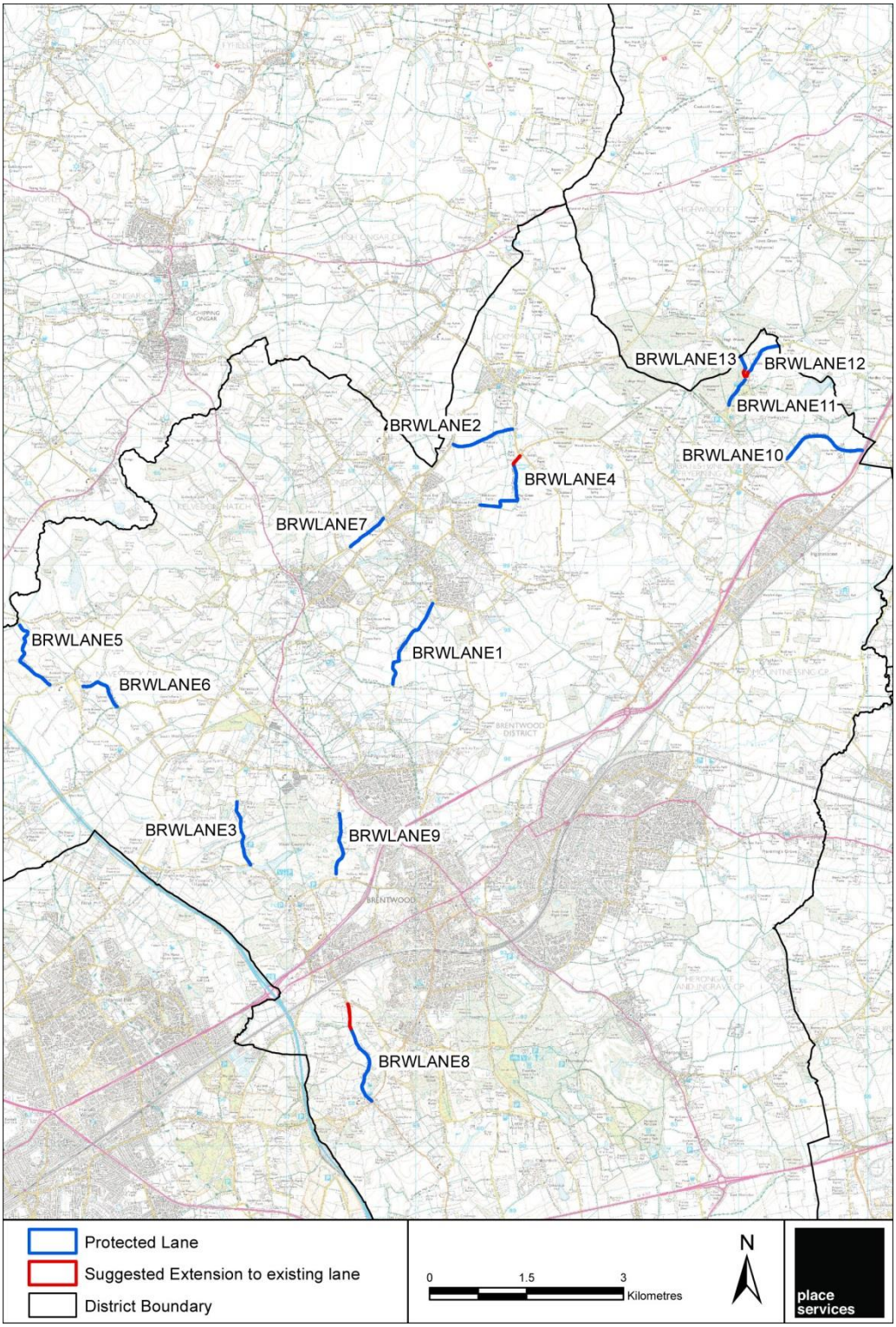

Figure 1 - Location of the existing protected lanes

4 Protected Lanes Assessment Procedure Criteria and Scoring System

The following section describes the processes undertaken in the assessment of each protected lane. This comprised both office based and on site assessment with all of the lanes visited. Figure 1 shows the location of all of the protected lanes.

4.1 Units of Assessment

As part of the project each lane was assigned a unique number (using BRWLANE 1 etc), along with the street name give in the National Street Gazetteer. A desk based assessment using Google Earth and Google Earth Streetview, Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER), and GIS data relevant to the criteria was undertaken. Examples of the GIS data used includes ancient Woodland, Special Verges, County Wildlife Sites, heritage assets including designated sites, and SSSI's. The use of Google Earth Streetview allowed a detailed assessment to be made along the length of the lane as part of the desk based assessment.

As part of this initial assessment the lane names were identified by the National Street Gazetteer. Where more than one lane of the original protected lanes was identified with the same National Street Gazetteer name these were merged to form a single unit unless the separate lengths were of significant difference. In some cases the lane had two street names but was a single lane, in which case both names were added to the recording sheet.

For the purposes of the field assessment, further details were added to the sheets undertaken for the desk based phase of assessment. These forms were completed in digital format being based on individual **units of assessment**. For a lane which was largely intact along the whole of its historic length (as identified on the first edition OS map), a single **unit of assessment** was identified and only one form completed. However, there were cases where extensive alterations had occurred along a historic lane, or where a lane had been broken by a new road which meant that these lengths of lane automatically fell out of the criteria and as such either the lane was broken into separate units or were reduced in length. So for each named lane, one or more assessment forms had to be completed.

4.2 Field Assessment

Each historic lane was assessed in good weather conditions by a team of two historic environment specialists. Digital assessment sheets were updated as each lane was inspected.

4.2.1 Photographic Record

Most units of assessment had colour digital images taken with photos stored in the lane assessment folder within the computer project. Photographs were taken which illustrated the range of forms that a lane took and its historic features e.g. banks, ditches, veteran pollards, hedges etc.

4.2.2 Data Fields

For each lane, the following data fields were completed:

- *Name* – name of historic lane
- *Unit* – the number of the unit of assessment
- *Highway / Byway Classification* – Class III, Unclassified or Byway Open to all Traffic (BOAT)
- *NGRs* **–** X and Y numbers for each end of the units of assessment. These were generated from the GIS after completion of the assessment. To allow this, the assessment maps (one for each historic lane) were marked at the beginning and end points of each unit of assessment during the field visit and the map annotated with the number of the unit.

4.2.3 Diversity

Description of form and features – this was a description of the historic lane for the length of the unit of assessment. The description included information on the following where possible:

- Form(s) that the lane took e.g. sunken, flat, raised, or lynchet (positive lynchet on uphill side and/or negative lynchet on down hill side).

Figure 2 - Change in form of lane moving from an area level with adjacent fields into a sunken lane travelling down slope into a wooded area (BRWLane5).

- Carriageway surface(s) e.g. tarmac, stone, dirt, road planings etc.
- Verges – width, flat, sloping etc.

Figure 3 - Verges on lane dropping into the valley at Little Hyde Lane (BRWLane10)

- Banks and ditches including approximate dimensions and profiles

- If sunken – depth of sunken lane and amount of variation etc

Figure 4 - Sunken lane at Darks Lane (BRWLane 8)

- Associated vegetation e.g. hedgerows (with an indication of species mix i.e. largely single species, large variety of woody species etc, veteran trees (including pollards, coppice stools), mature trees, grass / flowering plants on verges and banks.

Figure 5 - Veteran pollards situated on the road side bank overhanging the road (BRWlane 8)

4.2.4 Historic Integrity

Description of erosion damage – this was a description of erosion damage to the structure of the lane from vehicular traffic along the length of the unit of assessment. The description included information on damage to banks, verges and surfaces.

Figure 6 - Shows area of disturbance from car parking on the edge of Sandpit lane (BRWLane 9)

Description of improvements – this was a description of any significant improvements that had been made to a lane along the length of the unit of assessment. The description included information on the type and extent of traffic calming measures and other 'improvements' such as widening, kerbing etc.

4.2.5 Archaeological Potential

Archaeological potential of the lane and its associated features such as the ditches, banks and greens etc. These features can all contain important archaeological remains that relate to the development and human interaction with the landscape.

Figure 7 – Historic Green at Sabines Road maintained as mowed area by local residents (BRWLane 6)

4.2.6 Aesthetic Value

Views **–** notable views, which are particularly scenic, unusual or which include contemporary historic features of note e.g. a parish church, listed building, farm complex or landscape that are framed by the lane and/or its associated vegetation were identified.

4.3 Protected Lane Scoring System

The criteria and associated scoring system that were used to evaluate existing Protected Lanes in Brentwood Borough through a combination of desk based and field assessment are set out below:

PROTECTED LANES SCORING SYSTEM			
Criterion	**Type of assessment**	**Description**	**Score**
Historic Integrity	Field assessment	Significant improvements or damage evident; erosion of historic fabric affecting significant length of the lane (excluding significant hedgerow loss)	1
		Moderate improvements or loss to historic fabric of the lane (excluding significant hedgerow loss)	2
		Limited or discrete erosion/damage to the historic fabric of the lane and/or significant hedgerow loss	4
		No improvements to the lane and well preserved historic fabric	6
Diversity	Field assessment	The lane has limited diversity of features, form, alignment, depth and width	1
		The lane has a moderate range of features but limited form, alignment, depth and width or vice versa	2
		The lane has a moderate range of features and form, alignment, depth and width	3
		The lane has a wide range of features, form, alignment, depth and width	4

Group Value (Association)	Desk-based assessment	The lane has limited association with historic landscape features and other heritage assets of broadly the same date	1
		The lane has direct association with one or more historic settlements or other significant heritage assets of broadly the same date	2
		The lane has association with a moderate range of contemporary historic landscape features and other heritage assets	3
		The lane has a strong association with numerous and/or designated historic landscape features/other heritage assets of broadly the same date	4
Archaeological Association	Desk-based assessment	The lane has no known association with a non-contemporary archaeological feature	0
		The lane has a single association with a non-contemporary archaeological feature	1
		The lane has limited association with non-contemporary archaeological features	2
		The lane has a strong association with non-contemporary archaeological features	3
Archaeological Potential	Field assessment	The lane has limited potential for archaeological evidence	1
		The lane includes components which have the potential to contain archaeological evidence	2
		The lane contains a wide range of components with potential to contain archaeological evidence	3
Biodiversity	Field and desk based	The lane has limited biodiversity assets e.g. grass verge or bank, single species	1

	assessment	hedge e.g. garden hedge or has suffered significant hedgerow loss	
		The lane has significant lengths of intermittent hedge (with or without occasional mature trees) and verge surviving and single non-designated assets e.g. pond, or lane or is adjacent/connected to designated asset e.g. Ancient Wood, SSSI	2
		Non-designated assets including continuous mixed species hedgerows, mature trees (including TPOs), grass verge with flowering plants, ponds etc.	3
		Designated assets e.g. LOWS, Special Verge, veteran pollards, Ancient Species Rich hedgerow(s) associated with the lane or its component parts	4
Aesthetic Value	Field assessment	The lane has limited variety of aesthetic features, or forms/alignment and no significant views	1
		The lane has a variety of aesthetic features or forms/alignment and / or a significant view	2
		The lane has a wide variety of aesthetic features or forms/alignment and / or more than one significant views	3

5 Application of the threshold for Protected Lane Status

After completion of the assessment and scoring of the Protected Lanes in the District (Appendix 1), the final step in determining whether assessed lanes should be designated as Protected Lanes was to apply a threshold score to each of the historic lanes to identify lanes that were deemed worthy of Protected Lane status. The threshold score used (14) was originally established in the Protected Lanes project developed for Chelmsford Borough Council.

The threshold score of 14 was determined by the following method:

- *Stage 1 – The lane must score a minimum of 2 for integrity.*

If a lane fails to score 2 for integrity it is not taken forward to the next stage.

- *Stage 2 – The combined score for integrity and diversity must be 5 or more.*

If a lane fails to score 5 for its combined integrity and diversity scores it is not taken forward to the next stage.

- *Stage 3 – The sub total for integrity and diversity (5 or more) from Stage 2, when combined with the scores for group value, archaeological association, archaeological potential, aesthetic value and biodiversity value must be 14 or more.*

The threshold score of 14 was arrived at by adding the minimum score of 5 points from Stage 2 to a score of 9 which is equal to the combined total of the second highest scores attainable for each of the remaining criteria i.e. Group Value score of 2, Archaeological Association score of 1, Archaeological Potential score of 2, Aesthetic Value score of 2 and Biodiversity score of 2. A lane which scores the maximum score of 10 during Stage 2, from a combination of the maximum integrity and diversity scores, must score the second highest score on at least one of the remaining criteria to qualify.

Applying the threshold score to the assessed lanes resulted in a final tally of 11 Protected Lanes in Brentwood Borough that were deemed worthy of Protected Lanes under the Policy in the Borough's future Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (Table 1 and Figure 8).

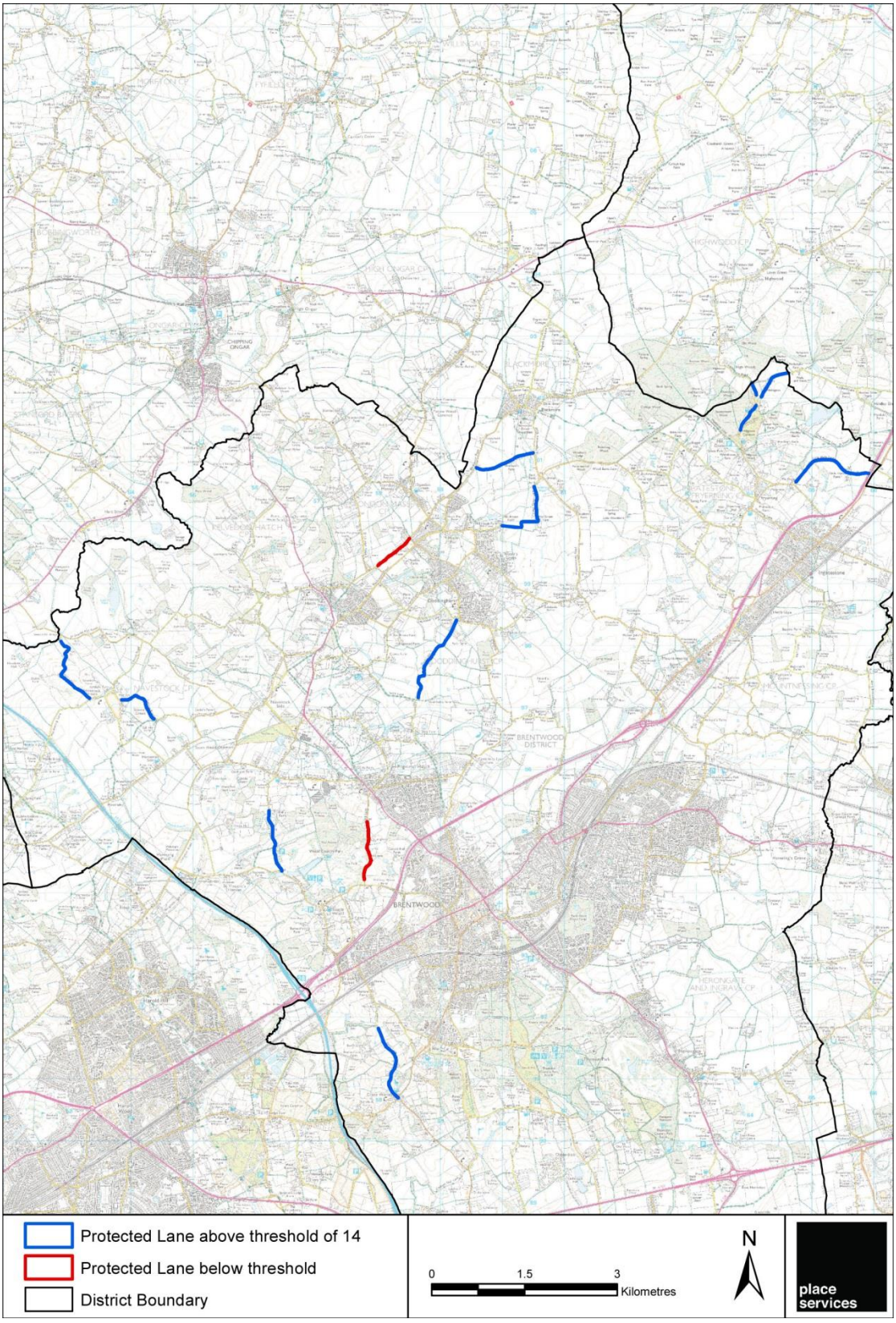

Figure 8 – Lanes which meet the criteria and score above 14 (blue) and those which failed (red)

Table 1 Scores for the Protected Lanes that exceed the threshold

Lane_id	Location	**National Street Gazetteer Name (NSG)**	Diversity	Integrity	Potential	Aesthetic	Biodiversity	Group value	Arch association	Total
BRWLANE1	Doddinghurst	Days Lane	3	4	2	2	4	1	1	17
BRWLANE2	Blackmore	Wenlocks Lane	3	4	2	2	2	2	1	16
BRWLANE3	Coxtie Green	Lincolns Lane	3	4	2	2	4	2	0	17
BRWLANE4	Wyatt's Green	Hay Green Lane	3	4	2	2	2	3	0	16
BRWLANE5	Navestock Heath	Mill Lane	4	6	1	3	3	2	1	20
BRWLANE6	Sabines Green	Sabines Road	3	4	2	2	4	2	1	18
BRWLANE8	Great Warley	Dark Lane	4	4	2	2	4	4	0	20
BRWLANE10	Fryerning	Little Hyde Lane	4	4	2	3	4	1	1	19
BRWLANE11	Mill Green Common	Mill Green Road	2	4	1	2	4	2	1	16
BRWLANE13	Mill Green Common	Ingatestone Road	3	4	2	2	4	3	0	18
BRWLANE12	Mill Green Common	Ivy Barns Lane	3	4	2	2	4	2	1	18

6 Conclusions

The project has applied robust and defensible criteria consistently and methodically to existing Protected Lanes in Brentwood Borough in order to determine lanes that are worthy of Protected Lanes status under the new Brentwood Borough Council's Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. Only 2 of the original 13 lanes failed to meet the cut off score under the new scoring methodology.

The most significant change to an existing Protected Lane was Sandpit Lane at South Weald (BRWLane 9). This lane has become a major cut through for both cars and vans. The lane has extensive damage to the verges caused by parked cars, and the resulting measures to try and reduce the traffic have resulted in significant changes to the lane such as traffic calming measures at each end, and road signage.

This indicates that, with the ever increasing rise in the number, size and diversity of motorised vehicles using minor rural roads (CPRE, 1996), Protected Lane status may not in itself be enough to secure the long term future of these important historic landscape features. Consideration should therefore be given to exploring options and partnerships for influencing user behaviour and applying intelligent and positive measures of highway management that will serve to encourage local journeys to be made on bicycle or foot, and for recreation, and reduce the impact of vehicles on the historic fabric of lanes, whilst maintaining their local character (e.g. CPRE, 2003).

Backlane at Doddinghurst failed to meet the criteria due to it no longer being used as a road with access blocked for motor transport with bollards blocking access at both ends (BRWLane 6).

7 References

Chelmsford Borough Council	2008	'Our Planning Strategy for the Future: Core Strategy and Development Control Policies'
CPRE	1996	'Lost Lanes: An investigation into the impact of rising traffic levels on England's country lanes'
CPRE	2003	CPRE's guide to Quiet Lanes
Department of Transport	2006	'The Quiet Lanes and Home zones (England) Regulations'
Essex County Council	1998	'Protected Lanes'
Essex County Council	2009	'Protected Lanes Study for Chelmsford Borough Council: Summary Report'
Emmison, F G	1991	'Elizabethan Life: Home, Work and Land'
Hunter, J	1999	'The Essex Landscape'
Rackham, O	1986	'The History of the Countryside'

Appendix 1 Scores for all Assessed Lanes (Those in red rows failed the criteria)

Lane_id	Location	**National Street Gazetteer Name (NSG)**	Diversity	Integrity	Potential	Aesthetic	Biodiversity	Group value	Arch assoc	Total	Stage 2 total
BRWLANE1	Doddinghurst	Days Lane	3	4	2	2	4	1	1	17	7
BRWLANE2	Blackmore	Wenlocks Lane	3	4	2	2	2	2	1	16	7
BRWLANE3	Coxtie Green	Lincolns Lane	3	4	2	2	4	2	0	17	7
BRWLANE4	Wyatt's Green	Hay Green Lane	3	4	2	2	2	3	0	16	7
BRWLANE5	Navestock Heath	Mill Lane	4	6	1	3	3	2	1	20	10
BRWLANE6	Sabines Green	Sabines Road	3	4	2	2	4	2	1	18	7
BRWLANE7	Doddinghurst	Back lane	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BRWLANE8	Great Warley	Dark Lane	4	4	2	2	4	4	0	20	8
BRWLANE9	South Weald	Sandpit Lane	2	2	1	2	4	3	4	0	4
BRWLANE10	Fryerning	Little Hyde Lane	4	4	2	3	4	1	1	19	8
BRWLANE11	Mill Green Common	Mill Green Road	2	4	1	2	4	2	1	16	6
BRWLANE13	Mill Green Common	Ingatestone Road	3	4	2	2	4	3	0	18	7
BRWLANE12	Mill Green Common	Ivy Barns Lane	3	4	2	2	4	2	1	18	7

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March 2016

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