

**Archaeological Character:** The valley contains a varied and valuable archaeological resource within a significant cropmark landscape of trackways, field systems, enclosures and ring-ditches. Much of the nationally important Great Baddow Late Bronze Age enclosure survives. The major prehistoric monuments such as the Springfield Neolithic Cursus and the Springfield Lyons Late Bronze Age enclosure (excavated during the development of Chelmer village [see HECA 2]) were originally significant elements in this landscape. There is a concentration of finds of Bronze Age metalwork around Boreham which extends across the valley into HECA5. Recent work within the valley has shown the potential for the survival of multi-period remains (Neolithic-Medieval) is high. This work has also shown that particularly well preserved archaeological/environmental evidence can be expected within and/or beneath alluvial deposits within the floodplain, of the Chelmer and its tributaries.

Although the area is particularly noted for the quality of evidence relating to the prehistoric landscape, the valley also contains extensive World War II survivals and the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation whose construction began in 1793, and which now forms the core of a linear Conservation Area along the floor of the valley.

## **HECA 5: Danbury Ridge**

**Summary:** Danbury Ridge rises sharply from the Middle Chelmer Valley and land to the south east to form one of the highest points in Essex at around 107 metres OD. The surface geology is largely glaciofluvial sand and gravel over exposed London clay. Danbury village is the focus of settlement and developed around the 12<sup>th</sup> century church of St. John the Baptist which is situated on the highest point on the medieval route between Chelmsford and Maldon. The village has expanded significantly in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Woodland and common land is an important feature of the area with three named commons of medieval origin. Much of the woodland is ancient but some is of later date developed on former heath and common land.

**Historic Landscape Character:** Historically, settlement was dispersed around several commons and greens, with a small nucleated settlement around the church of St. John the Baptist in Danbury, and the church/hall complex at Little Baddow. The fields are small and irregular in shape and of ancient origin, and there has been very little boundary loss. There are also areas of ancient woodland, and secondary woodland developed on former commons. The woods and commons form a complex of designated nature reserves and the grounds of Danbury Palace are now a country park. Recent settlement expansion has occurred around Danbury and along the roads of Little Baddow and there has also been some gravel extraction. Despite this the essential historic character of the landscape survives.

**Archaeological Character:** Danbury Camp, a middle/late Iron Age hillfort is situated at the crest of the south facing slope and a major archaeological feature within the area. The woods and commons preserve many earthwork boundaries and other features of medieval origin together with further undated earthworks within woodland on the north facing slope overlooking the Middle Chelmer Valley. The presence of a number of small raised bogs indicates the potential for recovery of environmental data.

Finds of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Roman date within the area, together with medieval finds in the vicinity of the church and main road, point to considerable archaeological potential.

## **HECA 6: South East –East Hanningfield, Bicknacre, Woodham Ferrers**

**Summary:** The landscape is one of open and undulating arable cultivation with scattered copse and small woodlands, rising to around 72 metres OD. The land falls away sharply to the south at the Woodham Scarp. Geology is of exposed London Clay and Claygate Member over much of the area, overlain by Head clay/silt/sand/gravel. The area contains a small number of historic villages and a settlement pattern of further scattered farmsteads and medieval moated sites.