

INTRODUCTION

The Valley character area follows the course of the Gipping from the point where it enters the borough near Sproughton to its exit in the south east as the Orwell, a tidal estuary and important shipping route. Three character sub areas have been identified:

- Gipping Valley
- Stoke
- Orwell Estuary

As the source of Ipswich's trading wealth, the river valley is the most dynamic part of the towns landscape. It is characterised both by ancient settlement patterns, in the vicinity of Stoke and the docks, and a constantly changing landscape of industry, transport routes and dockside developments.

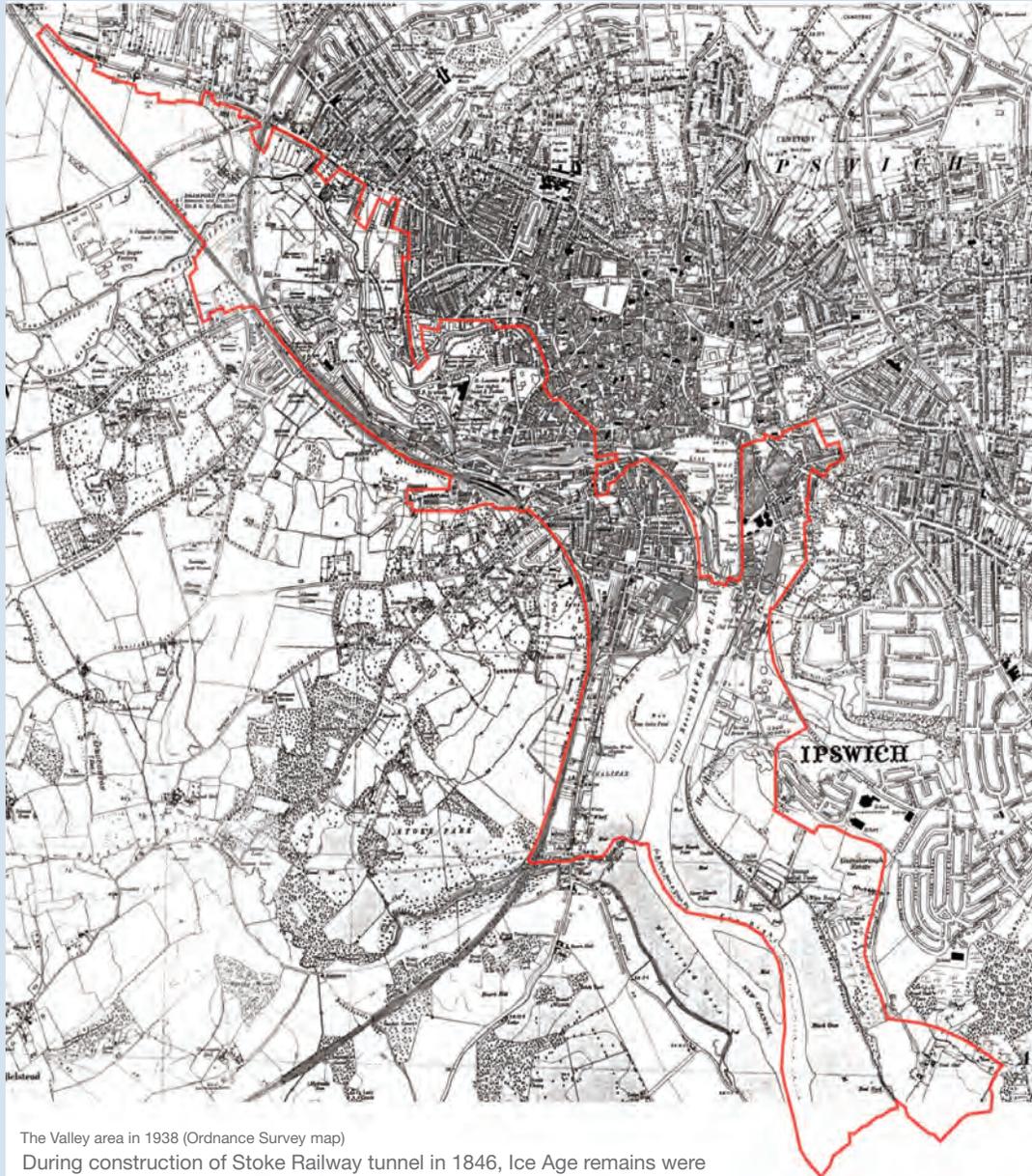
There are strong contrasts. Historic maltings stand alongside residential streets, and the streetscape of Stoke looks out across the broad expanse of the docks and estuary. It is also a landscape of transport; rail and road corridors help define distinct areas, but also create fragmentation and can make access for pedestrians difficult.

The development challenge in the Valley is to continue to provide a competitive location for business whilst taking every opportunity to create a more legible and attractive environment for residents and visitors.

Picture: The River Orwell. The riverside provides public realm and environmental enhancement opportunities



The Valley urban characterisation area and sub-areas. The Wet Dock is a Conservation Area and not included in this study.



The Valley area in 1938 (Ordnance Survey map)

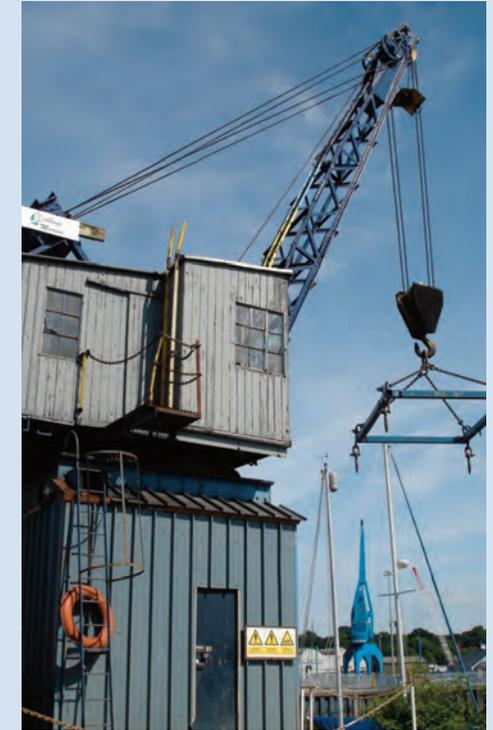
During construction of Stoke Railway tunnel in 1846, Ice Age remains were discovered of mammoth, rhinoceros, bears, wolves and tortoise.

History

The history of Ipswich begins in the 7th century AD in the river valley area. The estuary provided access to the north sea trading routes and it is likely that there were moorings, warehouses and a river crossing (probably a ford) from the earliest times.

By the time Stoke Bridge was constructed, in the 9th – 10th century, settlement was established either side of the river. The only visible evidence from this period is in the survival of street alignments, on the Stoke side including Great Whip Street (which leads to the original ford crossing), Austin Street (formerly Boars Head Lane) and Bell Lane.

Stoke itself is mentioned in early records, including the grant of the parish to Ely Abbey in 970. A church almost certainly existed on the site of St Mary Stoke at this time, though the building that stands there now mostly dates from the later medieval period.



Top: Debbage Marina crane. There has been a goods crane at Ipswich Docks since at least the 15th Century. Bottom: Orwell Estuary, West Bank (where West Bank Terminal is now located), early 20th Century. The boats belonged to the owners of houses fronting Wherstead Road, who enjoyed special mooring rights on the estuary

HISTORY

Sandy Hill Lane, near Greenwich Farm in the 1890s. The Orwell can be seen in the background.



Either side of the river the valley landscape would have been thinly populated, mostly marshes, reedbeds and mudflats crossed by unsurfaced roads. Although it retained this undeveloped appearance well into the 19th century, the river corridor was of vital importance for Ipswich. Upstream, records show that watermills existed in the middle ages at Handford and Horsewade whilst in the same period downriver, moorings were established to help deal with the overseas trade in commodities such as wool.



New Cut East. The completion of the New Cut and Wet Dock in 1842 and the opening of the railway in 1846 lead to a vast increase in trade and industry in Ipswich in the second half of the 19th century.



Stoke Bridge in 1912 and the same view in 2014. The early photograph shows the iron bridge constructed in 1812. The bowstring truss bridge that replaced it in 1925 is still in use.

The coastal trade enabled the export to London and elsewhere of locally ground flour from Ipswich's water, tide and windmills. Other activities that flourished in the pre-industrial landscape included maltings and fulling mills. As the port's capacity grew, related trades such as sail and ropemaking crowded in around the docks and in the 18th century shipbuilding started up in yards at Nova Scotia and Halifax. By the middle of the century, the Cobbolds had established their brewery at the Cliff Quay site.

Economic development in the 19th and 20th centuries transformed the appearance of the valley beginning with the construction of the Wet Dock and the railway. Ipswich's first railway station opened near Croft Street in Stoke in 1846. The Ransomes established their agricultural implements business during the same period, and by the second half of the 19th century had diversified into railway equipment and established large engineering premises on both sides of the Orwell.

The opening of the new station at Princes Street in 1860 crowned a period of dramatic economic growth. The trim terraced streets in Stoke were laid out during this period, providing housing for workers employed in the factories, the docks and the railways. Residential expansion south of the river was limited, however, by the need to provide land for industry.

Alongside the expansion of the railway, road routes were improved and new connections created throughout the Valley area. Ranelagh road was laid out during this period, linking the station to Hadleigh Road. The imposing tramshed complex was built at Constantine Road in 1901, alongside the new electricity generating station.



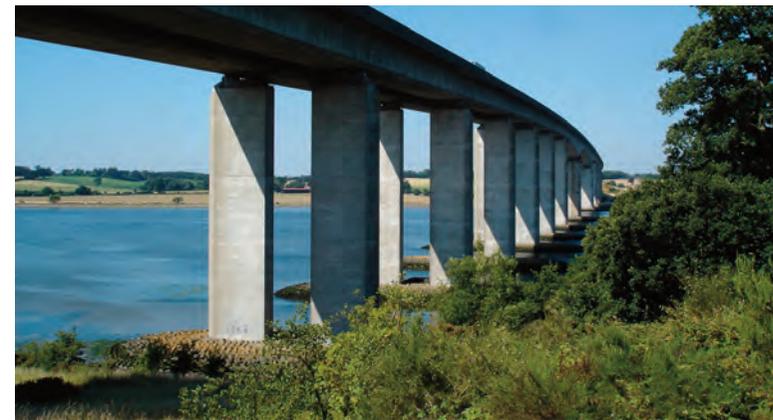
Regatta, 1896. The paddle steamer is packed with spectators. It is moored at the end of New Cut, with the Cobbold Brewery at Cliff Quay visible in the background. The Cobbolds were enthusiastic promoters of both the Wet Dock and the railway.

Railway lines and sidings, photographed from the London Road bridge looking towards Hadleigh Road. The railway arrived at Ipswich in 1846 with the first station at Croft Street in Stoke. The tunnel was built at the same time.

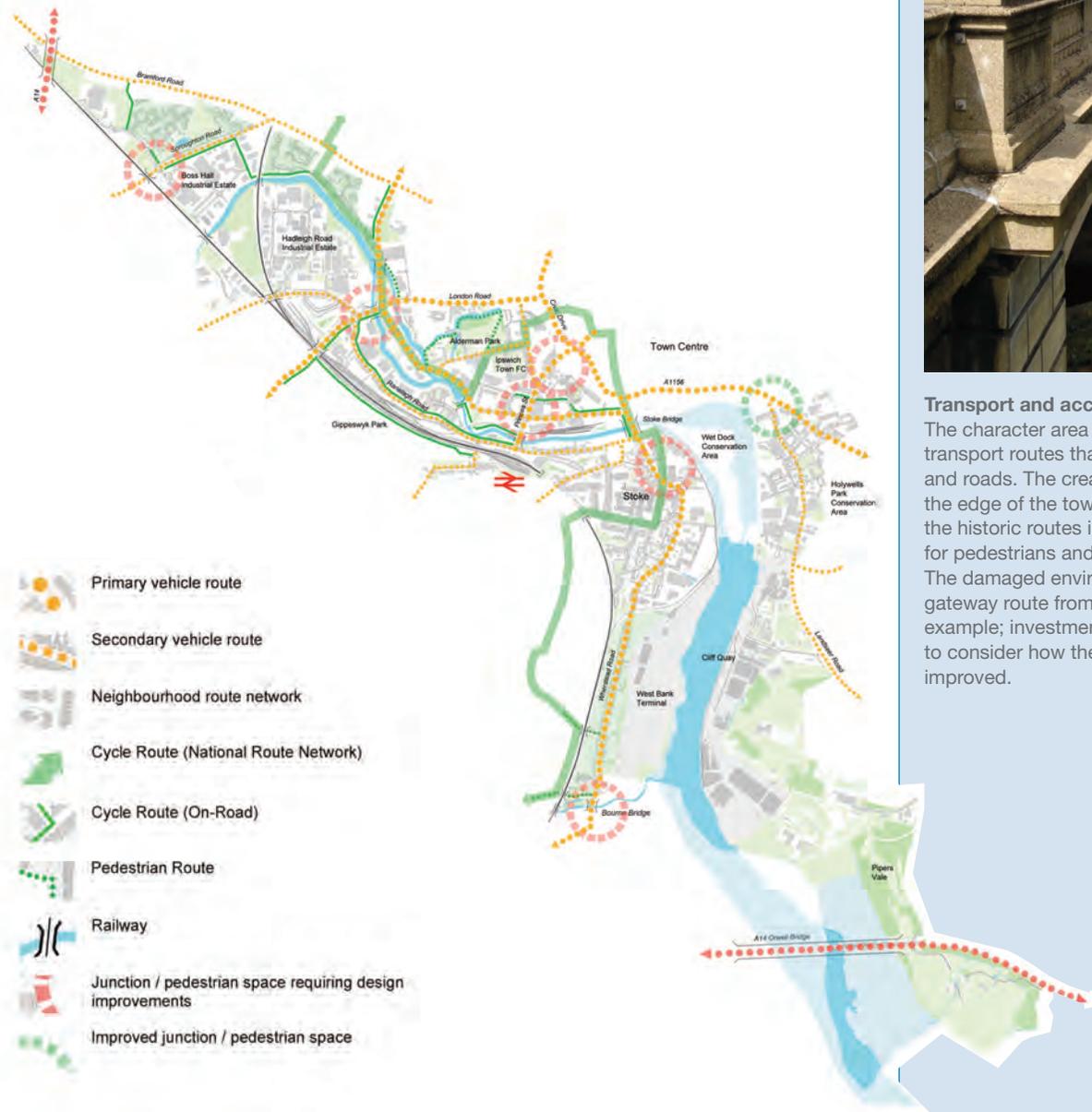


Stoke Bathing Place. This was one of a number of swimming areas enclosed within the Orwell; the water was tidal and not filtered!

In spite of the loss of heavy industry in the postwar era, the area has continued to adapt to changing economic circumstances. The importance of the valley as a transport corridor has been reinforced by the creation of an enlarged road network, and in 1973 the West Bank Terminal complex was constructed. Business parks have expanded over the low lying land next to the river, and historic industrial buildings such as the Maltings have been converted to residential and office use. The opening of the Orwell Bridge in 1982 created a dramatic landmark across the estuary.



Orwell Bridge, completed 1982. At the time, the 190m main span was the longest pre-stressed structure in the world.



Transport and access

The character area is defined by the historic transport routes that cross it – the river, railway and roads. The creation of a ring road around the edge of the town centre cuts across many of the historic routes into the town, making access for pedestrians and cyclists difficult in places. The damaged environment of Princes Street, a gateway route from the railway station, is a good example; investment and urban planning needs to consider how the environment can be improved.

1 Princes Street Bridge. An important gateway to the town centre that could benefit from pedestrian and cycle route improvements.

2 Old Bourne Bridge. A modern road bridge has replaced the 19th Century structure, which is now used by pedestrians and cyclists.

3 Some of the major road junctions such as London Road/Ranelagh Road lack attractive design characteristics and are an obstacle for pedestrians and cyclists





Much of the Valley's sense of space is provided by open expanses of water overlooked by a network of promenades and paths.

The design of new development has improved access to the waterside, for instance the university campus and residential sites in the docks area. Further downstream, the Orwell Country Park is an attractive area of farmland and semi natural landscape overlooking the estuary and Orwell Bridge.

Elsewhere, industrial development has encroached on areas of former meadow and foreshore. Where open space remains, it is often on private land and inaccessible.

It is important that future development improves access and provides both open space and linkages to existing spaces. Connections to the waterside and the recreation of natural habitat are particularly important in this area.

Farmland near the Orwell Bridge



BIODIVERSITY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Biodiversity

The Gipping

The river is the main biodiversity feature of this character area, but in parts it is quite hidden. For many years the town turned its back on the river and this has only recently been reversed through new housing development addressing the river and the provision of the riverside cycle path.

The aquatic habitat of the river and its banks has County Wildlife Site status for much of its length. Areas of associated habitat e.g. Riverside Road meadow and Alderman Canal, increase the Gipping's habitat value. For example, associated with the Alderman Canal there is wet grassland containing orchids. Any development that takes place on land forming part of the setting of the river should enhance the biodiversity of the corridor. Railway lines form the south-western edge to, and traverse, the Gipping section of the character area and these also provide important corridors for wildlife movement, linking to sites such as Gippeswyk Park which is a major landscape feature.

The Orwell

The Orwell Estuary has national and international designations for its wildlife value – Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area for Birds and Ramsar Site. The value is predominantly for overwintering wading birds.

Its banks are dominated by industrial and port uses but on the east side there are sites which contain important habitats, form part of a key wildlife corridor and provide an important landscape feature when viewed from the west bank. These areas, such as Hog Highland and Pipers Vale, link through to the ancient woodland at Braziers Wood and on into Orwell Country Park. This in turn links into the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Looking at species found in the entire Valley area, the north-west and south-east ends are noted for reptiles. Other species of note are: Dittander (a nationally scarce plant), Great Green Bush Cricket, birds ranging from summer migrants occupying scrubby areas in open spaces (e.g. Nightingale and Blackcap).

Kingfishers and Waders occupy the tidal section of river up to the weir (e.g. Cormorants, Egrets and Oystercatchers). Water mammals such as Water Voles and Otters have been sighted during the last ten years. The water itself is noted for Grey Mullet and, in the estuary, non-native marine life that travels in with ships. The canopy cover across the Valley area is relatively low at 7.3%.



1 Pipers Vale Country Park. The area contains a variety of habitats including heath, scrub, reedbeds and alder carr. More than 100 species of bird have been recorded here and rare plants such as Sulphur Cinquefoil, Hemlock, Water Dropwort and Meadow Rue.

2 Cliff Quay Brewery. Many former industrial sites have become overgrown and recolonised by wildlife. Protected species such as bats are conserved when areas are redeveloped.

3 Heathland and habitat near the Orwell Bridge.

4 Alderman Canal local Nature Reserve. An urban nature reserve that is carefully managed to protect habitat and allow public access.

5 Belstead Brook near Bourne Bridge. Grey seals are regular visitors to the marina.

6 River Gipping near the London Road bridge

Archaeology

The River and Valley sides were a focus of occupation and burial from Prehistoric times onwards.

On the north bank of the river, around the site of the former medieval moated Boss Hall (close to Boss Hall road), there is evidence for Anglo-Saxon occupation and a 6th-7th century Anglo-Saxon cemetery. Anglo-Saxon occupation, predating the earliest foundation of Ipswich itself or immediately contemporary to it continued westwards of Boss Hall, towards the site of St Albright's Chapel (at the junction of Bramford Road and the Railway), and further west still to a 7th century site recorded around Tower Mill Road. To the south, on the south bank, an Anglo Saxon cemetery was excavated around Hadleigh Road/Allenby Road, with another cemetery and Anglo-Saxon and Roman occupation across the bridge on Handford Road. At Philip Road, another Saxon cemetery is recorded.

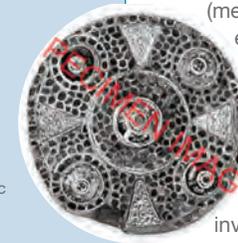
Earlier Bronze Age urned burials are recorded around Brunel Road.

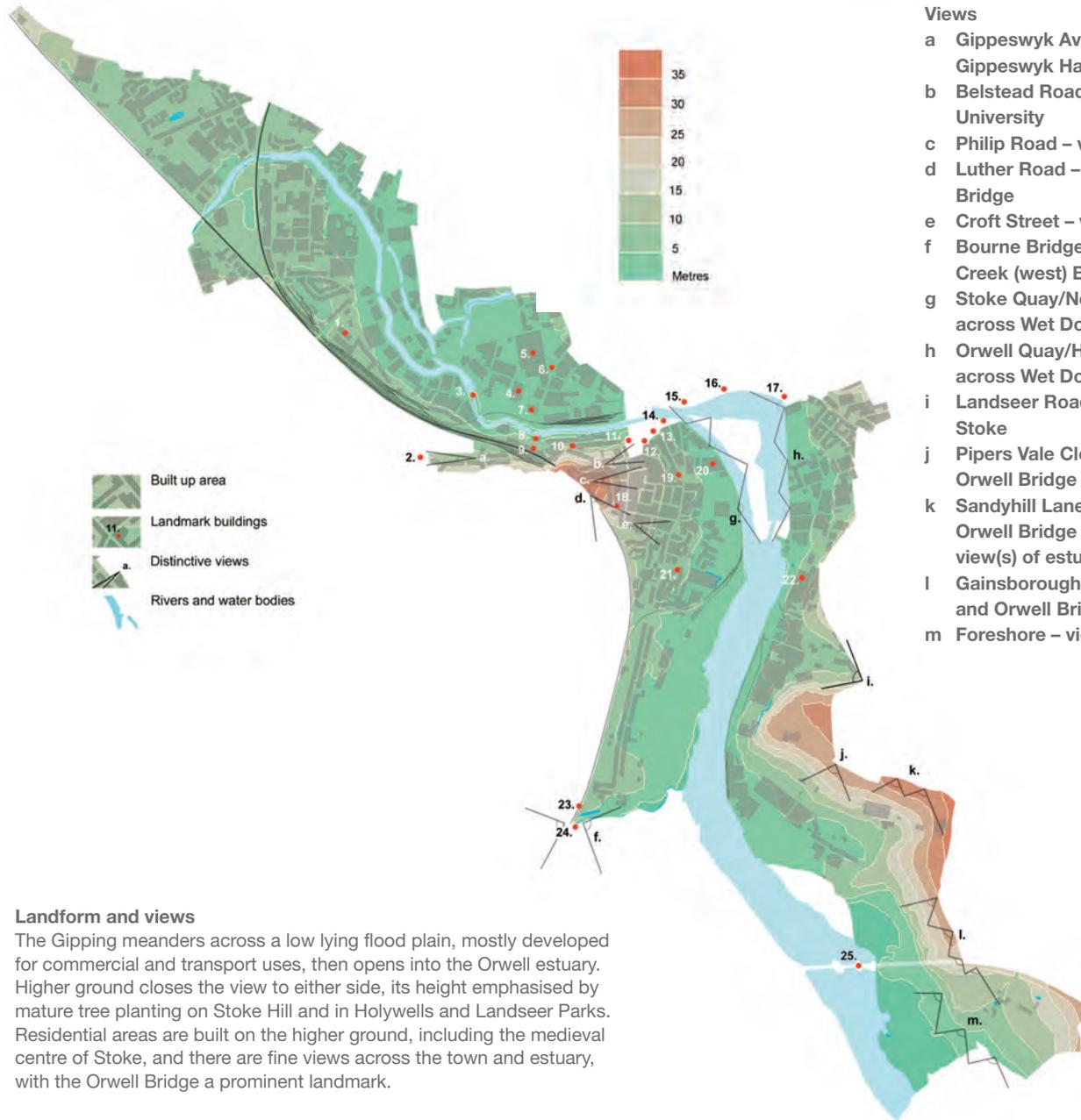
Prehistoric artefacts are frequently found on or close to the foreshore, particularly Neolithic stone items from Cliff Quay and Neolithic and Bronze Age flints from Piper's Vale.

There was previously a marshy area between the river and the Late Saxon town defences (where the Football Ground is now); historic sites (medieval and Roman) are found around its edges. The ponds and spring at Holywells were a focus for medieval and prehistoric activity.

Palaeolithic artefacts are frequently recorded along the Valley, and two major sites of that date were investigated at Bramford Pit (between Bramford Road and Sproughton Road) and the Stoke Tunnel.

Boss Hall brooch. A gold and garnet Anglo Saxon brooch found in a burial at Boss Hall near Sproughton





Landform and views

The Gipping meanders across a low lying flood plain, mostly developed for commercial and transport uses, then opens into the Orwell estuary. Higher ground closes the view to either side, its height emphasised by mature tree planting on Stoke Hill and in Holywells and Landseer Parks. Residential areas are built on the higher ground, including the medieval centre of Stoke, and there are fine views across the town and estuary, with the Orwell Bridge a prominent landmark.

Views

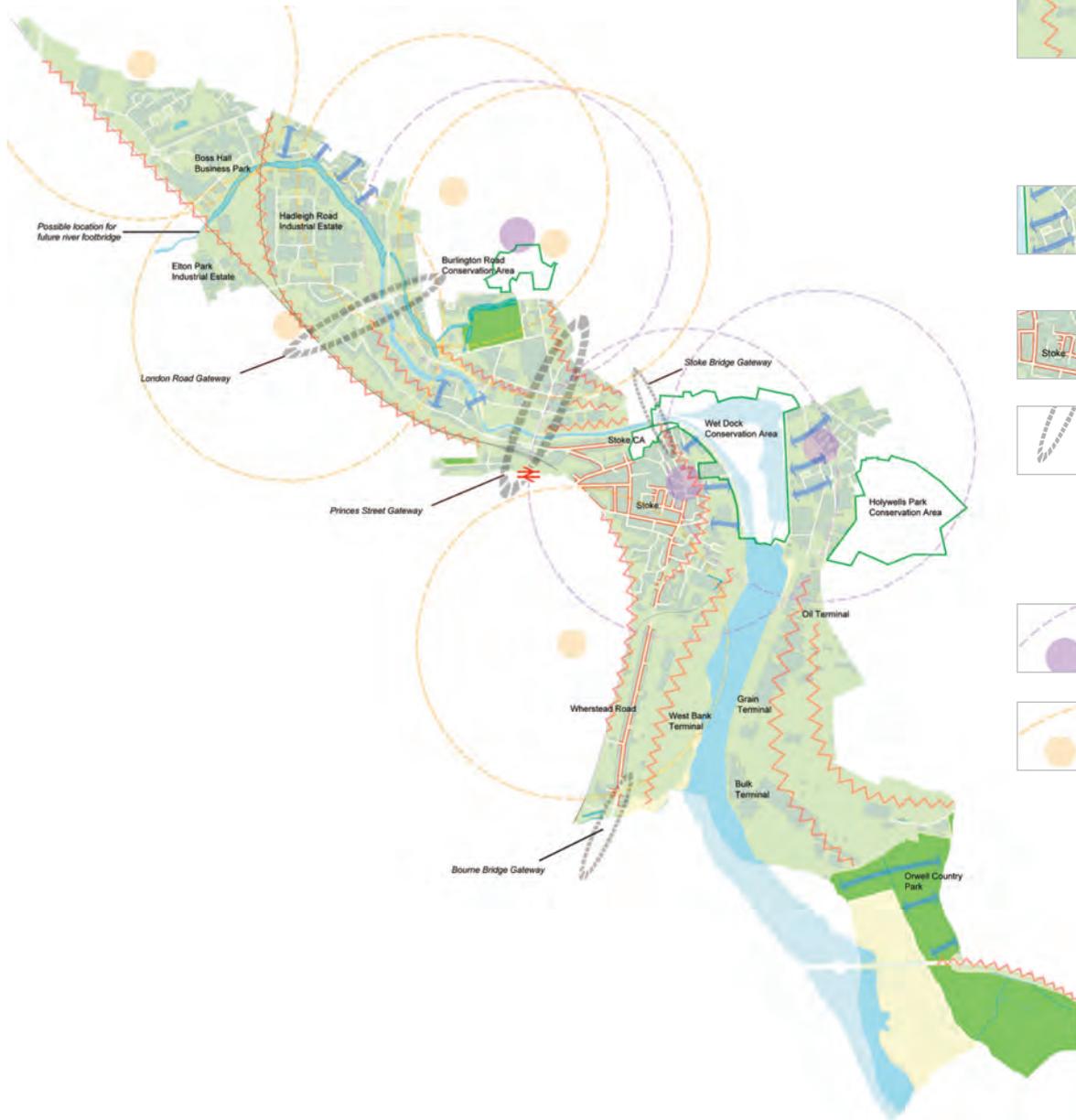
- a Gippeswyk Avenue – streetview of Gippeswyk Hall
- b Belstead Road – view of Wet Dock/ University
- c Philip Road – view of Holywells Park
- d Luther Road – view of estuary and Orwell Bridge
- e Croft Street – view of Holywells Park
- f Bourne Bridge – view (east) of Ostrich Creek (west) Belstead Brook
- g Stoke Quay/New Cut West – view(s) across Wet Dock
- h Orwell Quay/Helena Road – view(s) across Wet Dock
- i Landseer Road – view of the estuary and Stoke
- j Pipers Vale Close – view of estuary and Orwell Bridge
- k Sandyhill Lane – view(s) of estuary and Orwell Bridge Gainsborough Lane – view(s) of estuary and Orwell Bridge
- l Gainsborough Lane – view(s) of estuary and Orwell Bridge
- m Foreshore – view(s) of estuary

Landmark Buildings

- 1 Ranelagh County Primary School
- 2 Gippeswyk Hall
- 3 Sir Bobby Robson Footbridge
- 4 Ipswich Crown Court
- 5 Ipswich Town Football Club
- 6 Churchmans
- 7 The Maltings
- 8 Station Hotel
- 9 Ipswich Railway Station
- 10 19 Willoughby Road
- 11 St Mary at Stoke
- 12 Peoples Hall
- 13 Old Bell Inn
- 14 Stokebridge Maltings
- 15 Dance East
- 16 Old Custom House
- 17 UCS Waterfront Building
- 18 Luther Road almshouses
- 19 Uncle Toms Cabin
- 20 Felaw Maltings
- 21 Rapier Street Housing
- 22 Cliff Quay Brewery
- 23 Stoke Park Arch
- 24 Bourne Bridge
- 25 Orwell Bridge

The Wet Dock. The historic dock has been successfully redeveloped as a marina, university campus and residential/evening economy area





 Features causing visual and physical separation. Transport networks and industrial installations have contributed to the fragmentation of the valleys urban pattern - the railway for instance, road widening schemes and dockside developments. The river, of course, is a natural barrier. The commercial nature of activity in the valley makes this unavoidable in many cases, but every opportunity should be taken to create physical and visual connections, particularly with the riverside, adjacent urban areas and the town centre.

 Improved connectivity. Recent development has greatly improved accessibility within the Valley area, in particular to the river and docksides. The Ranelagh Road residential development, for instance, opens up public access to the river frontage and provides a landmark foot and cycle bridge (the Sir Bobby Robson Bridge).

 Active, well defined street frontages.

 Urban gateways requiring improvement. The Valley contains points of entry to both the urban edge and the town centre. Urban gateways requiring design improvements include:

- Railway Station/Princes St (town centre gateway)
- London Road (town centre gateway)
- A137 / Bridge Street (town centre gateway)
- A137 / Bourne Bridge (urban edge gateway)

 District Centres and 10 minute walking radius

 Local Centres and 10 minute walking radius

Industry, transport and houses are close together in this character area; the mix is distinctive but can also help fragment the urban fabric.

Recent improvements have created an attractive waterside environment. Improving pedestrian and cycle access within and across the Valley character area is an important objective



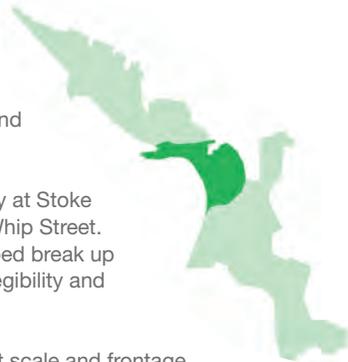
CHARACTER SUB AREA - OVER STOKE

Over Stoke is the historic heart of the Valley character area. Its medieval street pattern has been overlaid by dockside industry, the railway and modern roads but retains the character of a compact settlement. Development of all types – residential, industrial and office based - should seek to reinforce this pattern and recreate links with the docks and riverside.

The original street layout is preserved around the church of St Mary at Stoke and in the north-south alignments of Wherstead Road and Great Whip Street. However the creation of the A137 and site redevelopment has helped break up this pattern and separated Stoke from its dockside, reducing the legibility and permeability of the area.

Development should take into account Stoke's characteristic street scale and frontage pattern, for instance along Wherstead Road between the Station Street junction and Uncle Toms Cabin public house. It should also, where possible, recreate pedestrian and cycle links with the riverside including the historic river crossing point at the north end of Great Whip Street.

The name Over Stoke is a reference to locals crossing over Stoke Bridge to reach the small hamlet on the other side of the river.



- 1 Former Almshouses, Luther Road. 1895, by Brightwen Binyon the local architect who also designed the Ipswich Corn Exchange.
- 2 Great Whip Street. One of the oldest streets in Ipswich, Great Whip Street originally lead to the river crossing, now moved westwards to the position of Stoke Bridge. In spite of road and dockside redevelopment, the area retains its 19th century residential character.
- 3 Willoughby Road. Decorative details such as the contrasting brickwork, stone window dressings and window box ledges are typical of housing built for the Victorian middle classes.
- 4 Little's Crescent. Much of the red brick terraced housing in Stoke is intact. The sloping streets are a distinctive feature.
- 5 Developments which create barriers along road frontages should be avoided.
- 6 Stoke's historic streetscape is broken up in places by modern traffic interventions. Where possible, the negative visual impacts should be mitigated (or, preferably, reversed) by more sympathetic layouts which emphasise pedestrian priorities and reduce clutter.



Red brick is the characteristic building material, though often used in conjunction with other colours and materials. The industrial heritage of the area means that robust materials and honestly expressed construction works well; the examples shown include painted cast iron and glazed terracotta. The terracotta initials are of the Eastern Union Railway and belong to the former EUR hotel.

Stoke expanded westwards in the 19th century across the slopes of Stoke Hill. The suburb is the best preserved part of Stoke's historic townscape containing a variety of terraced housing types. Future development in the area should respect the distinctive streetscape, in particular the scale, density and active

frontages. Although street tree planting is largely absent, some streets have narrow front gardens with space for planting behind walls, and the larger rear gardens have tree planting. The fine detail on many street elevations, for instance on door and window lintels, should be conserved where possible.



1 Vaughan Street. Although red brick predominates, there is an eclectic mix of building materials. The residential areas of Stoke have a distinctive scale and density which new development should reflect.

2 Rapier Street Housing. Former dockside land that has been successfully redeveloped to create higher density housing. The scale, bold design and detailing are appropriate in this setting.

3 Brownrigg Walk. The scale and materials of 19th century Stoke terraces have been reinterpreted in this modern public housing scheme.

4 Modern materials can be used successfully in this character area provided they form part of an overall design approach which respects context.



The railway station is at the western extremity of this area, facing Ipswich across the river. New development in this important gateway location should provide a well designed arrival point for visitors and a setting for the 19th century station and the Station Hotel. Good public realm is a long term objective for the area, linked to the Princes Street gateway to the town centre.

The low lying area between the A137 and the docks has a contrasting sense of scale, reflecting industrial development over many years. Listed buildings such as Felaw Maltings help preserve the street pattern and sense of identity in spite of site clearance in recent years. There are opportunities for innovative, high quality modern development in this area, supporting the creation of public access to the dockside and new public realm.



CHARACTER SUB AREA - THE GIPPING VALLEY

The Gipping Valley includes the areas of low lying former meadowland either side of the Orwell/Gipping upstream of Stoke Bridge. It is mostly industrial and commercial in character and is dominated by road and rail corridors. In spite of good connectivity it is characterised by poor permeability and legibility, lacking landmarks or distinctive viewlines. Modern development should support placemaking, particularly in relation to the river and public access along the riverside.

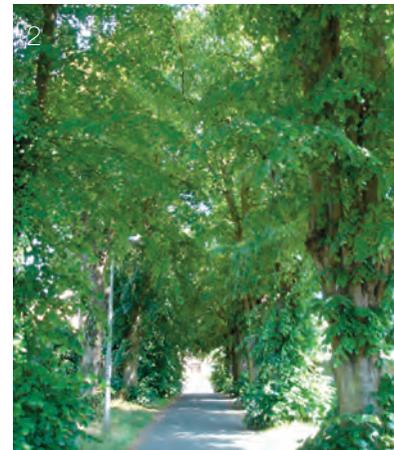


The Portman Road area is an exception, possessing a public park and a number of distinctive historic and modern buildings (including the stadium of Ipswich Town FC). The Alderman Canal is a historic feature which has been managed as natural riverside habitat accessed by wooden walkways. This is an approach which should be developed wherever possible in the Valley character area.

A wide range of building types and designs is possible in this setting. The area lacks good connectivity to the town centre, however (commercial buildings along Civic Drive have created a wall-like barrier). Masterplanning for vacant sites in the Portman Road area should take into account the need for a legible new street network which links where possible with the inner urban area.



Priority should also be given to the Princes Street corridor between the railway station and the town centre, and the creation of clearly defined frontages and tree planting along this route. Tree planting should also be encouraged along West End Road, linking with the London Planes on Yarmouth Road



1 Ipswich Town Football Club, Sir Alf Ramsey Stand. The club have been at Portman Road since 1884; before this they were based at Broomhill Park (see Norwich Road, page)

2 Alderman Park

3 Canham Street. Commercial buildings along Civic Drive create an abrupt change of scale, and block visual and physical links between the Portman Road area and the town centre



Above: Weir on the Gipping in the 1880s and the same view today. The historic image shows the point where the Gipping becomes the tidal Orwell. The tower mill that can be seen in the distance is on Tower Mill Road. The modern image shows the sluice gate that stands in the same position today, near Yarmouth Road.



Further upstream the Valley is defined by a loop of the Gipping which encloses the Hadleigh Road Industrial Estate. The lack of a design response in this area to the river valley setting is particularly noticeable, and new design should aim to address this where possible.



1 Endeavour House, Russell Road. Recent commercial buildings have contributed to placemaking in the Portman Road area, and set a high standard for commercial development.

2 River Gipping, near Beaconsfield Road. The creation of riverside footpath and cycle links has helped reconnect the natural environment of the Gipping with the adjacent residential areas, including areas of new housing

3 Bayswater Close. New housing has been designed with through routes for pedestrians and cyclists between riverside and Bramford Road. The housing layouts create active street frontages and enclose green spaces with protected trees.



This could be through the creation of habitat and access along the river corridor, and the use of distinctive modern design. The lack of a clearly defined historic context, apart from the natural landscape, allows much more flexibility for new build proposals.

Recent residential development between the north bank of the Gipping and Bramford Road has already helped address riverside access issues, and provided housing which is well connected with existing district and local centres. This process should continue to be the basis for future development; connectivity, responsiveness to setting and originality should be the design watchwords.



Above: Sir Bobby Robson footbridge. A 60m cable stay bridge, opened in 2009.

The Orwell Valley is the land to east and west of the Orwell between the Wet Dock and the Orwell Bridge. Historically, land uses have been connected almost exclusively with river and dockside industry, and much of the level ground is still occupied by port activities and storage. On the east side of the estuary, steep slopes have restricted development and allowed wooded ridges to remain with fine views across the Orwell.



West Bank

Wherstead Road forms a gateway to Ipswich, bounded by the railway line to the west and (until recently) the historic shoreline to the east. Although diminished in townscape significance the construction of the West Bank Terminal in the 1970s, the distinctive relationship between the road and the estuary can still be seen in the area of the marina, near Bourne Bridge.

Development along Wherstead Road should reflect the domestic character of the existing road frontages.

There are also opportunities for distinctive or landmark design, which could benefit from the long sightlines and gateway identity of the area.

The historic crossing point at Bourne Bridge is a meeting point for rural, estuary and townscape views, but the setting is poorly designed and dominated by road engineering. New development should consider how this important area, including its public realm, can be enhanced.



1 Cliff Quay brewery. Started on the site in 1746 the brewery was rebuilt in 1896, although the Brewery Tap in the foreground is part of the earlier establishment.

2 Fox's boatyard and marina, established 1927.

3 Wherstead Road, looking north.

4 Cliff Cottage, Cliff Quay

brewery. Ornamental carving around main entrance.

5 Belstead Brook Local Nature Reserve, from Bourne road bridge.

East Bank

The east bank of the Orwell extends from the university quarter on the edge of the town centre to the countryside south of the Orwell Bridge. The area has benefitted from re-development in recent years, most of it to a high standard. The scale of industrial buildings which used to occupy the area has been reinterpreted to form high density blocks of office, residential, education and leisure uses, using modern designs and cladding materials. High quality public realm has been provided at the same time, and clear visual and physical links between residential areas and the dock side.



A wide palette of materials is possible in this character area, drawing on the industrial heritage of wooden shipbuilding, metalwork and engineering as well as ornamental Victorian brickwork. Honestly expressed structure is a better reflection of the areas character.

Further south, the level ground alongside the estuary is hemmed in by steep slopes. Cliff Quay and other waterside areas are occupied by port, commercial and utilities uses and are not accessible to the public. The opportunities to open up views across the Orwell from the slopes of Hog Highland are currently limited, but the potential in this landscape for access, open space and future development design should increasingly be taken into account.

The southernmost section of the Orwell valley is made up of high quality natural landscape overlooking the Orwell Bridge. Public access is already in place and the area is protected by a number of nature conservation designations, for instance the Braziers Wood County Wildlife Site. The further enhancement of this area, for instance the provision of visitor facilities, should reflect the quality of the setting.

1 and 2 Orwells Furniture, Wherstead Road. The modern timber framed frontage is a successful addition to the streetscape, and the manufacturing plant on the riverside is carefully integrated into the residential setting.

3 Commemorative plaque on Bourne Bridge showing the Borough boundary marker which runs through the middle of the bridge.

4 and 5 University buildings near the Wet Dock.

6 Orwell Bridge, viewed from within Pipers Vale Local Nature Reserve.