

The Walpole Cross Keys Views Assessment 2024

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Introduction

Walpole Cross Keys parish falls within the National Character Area "The Fens (NCA 46)" which is marked with an X (Figure 1). National Character Areas (NCAs) are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries, making them a good decision-making framework for the natural environment. NCA profiles are guidance documents which can help communities to inform their decision-making about the places that they live in and care for. The information they contain will support the planning of conservation initiatives at a landscape scale and also help to inform choices about how land is managed and can change¹.

For the Fens, as stated in the NCA summary, this character area is a distinctive, historic, and human-influenced wetland landscape lying to the west of the Wash estuary, which formerly constituted the largest wetland area in England. The area is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. The level, open topography shapes the impression of huge skies which convey a strong sense of place, tranquillity, and inspiration. It is a large, low-lying, flat landscape with many drainage ditches, dykes and rivers that slowly drain towards the Wash, England's largest tidal estuary. The single obvious factor uniting the Fens is the low-lying, level terrain reflecting its geological past.

Much of the land is below sea level, relying on pumped drainage and the control of sluices at high and low tides to maintain its agricultural viability. The level horizons and the huge scale of the landscape create a strong sense of isolation and tranquillity, and a distinctive sense of place. There are, typically, large open panoramas and enormous skies, whose changing weather patterns have a strong influence on the observer. As well as this The Fens plays an important contribution to Britain since the drainage of this area from the 17th century onwards presented valuable soils which provide excellent conditions for arable and horticultural crops. This is true for the Walpole Cross Keys parish since all the land is made up of Grade 1 Agricultural Land Classification.

Recent changes within the NCA states that settlement and development can erode the historic character of some Fenland villages and development on settlement margins can create visual intrusion, reduce the sense of remoteness, and enclose views. One the landscape opportunities Natural England suggests is to protect the long views and open

¹ [NCA Profile: 46. The Fens - NE424 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk/nca-profiles/46-the-fens-ne424)

expansive unwooded character of the landscape and work to visually mitigate the impact of large structures including unsympathetic buildings and energy infrastructure that are highly visible in this flat landscape. These are opportunities the NP Review wish to seek to contribute too.



Figure 1- National Character Area The Fens (Source Natural England)

The West Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment² identifies that the neighbourhood area falls under 'The Fens, Settled Inland Marshes' character area which is characterised:

- A large-scale, low-lying landscape offering distant, panoramic views that evoke a sense of openness. This open character is less evident where settlements, shelterbelts and orchards occur.
- Simplistic terrain characterised by a distinctly flat landform providing wide horizons. Earthworks in the form of rivers and creek embankments bring topographic change and strong, straight lines of contrast.
- An intensively farmed arable landscape comprising predominantly geometric fields divided by straight drainage channels and dykes and underlain predominantly by silts. Field size is variable in places with small units defining settlement edges.

² KLWN Landscape Character Assessment, Final Report March 2007, Chris Blandford Associates

- Fruit orchards are a relatively common (yet declining) feature with rectangular plots ordered into rows. These rows often channel views and where orchards occur alongside roads, views across the landscape are more restricted. Conifer planting is also a relatively common feature. One traditional orchard is being taken forward as a local green space.
- Buildings and storage associated with horticulture and food production industries, as well as power stations, pumping stations and sluices, provide visible human-built elements.
- Well served by a network of rural roads that follow an irregular path.
- The landscape appears well settled – with villages, town edges, large houses, individual farms and properties generally in view. Settlement is predominantly found aligning secondary roads and has a linear arrangement with villages often merging through ribbon development.
- The skyline appears cluttered in places due to the varied heights, forms and textures of vertical elements including trees, pylons and buildings.
- Lines of pylons are dominant features slicing diagonally across the field system. The pylons and posts carrying overhead wires are frequently in view.
- Views can be gained to the edge of King's Lynn and Wisbech.
- The change to the adjacent Coastal Marshes and Open Inland Marsh landscapes is transitional and not always obvious.
- Large churches (which are often situated in an elevated position) within villages are key landmark features - visible from long distances.
- The main roads – the A17(T) and A47(T) are busy through routes and the operation of farm machinery brings constant movement to the landscape.
- The sense of remoteness and tranquillity varies and is largely dependent on proximity to roads and settlement edges.

The planning guidelines for management in the West Norfolk assessment which are relevant to local views include *"conserve the strong large-scale landscape pattern of large geometric arable fields that contribute to an overall sense of openness and enhance the reed-filled ditches and dykes that delineate field boundaries"*.

In relation to the landscape and protecting important local views the community in the initial consultation survey held in March 2023 shared key public views they thought were important for the parish. Specific areas to identify are listed below:

- Views from houses that overlook fields and views from roads and footpaths across the fenland.
- Walpole Cross keys school and the village hall
- Where the village remembrance sign is.

- The openness of Little Holme Field and view to the south along Little Holme Road
- Looking over farmland along Station Road, the Ristoft Fields, Fence Bank
- The fields around Middle Bank
- North of Sutton Road opposite Walker's Garage and behind the Jephson Hall.
- View to the north and south along Sutton Road
- Barn conversions on Station Road
- Garden with village sign.
- The open views in Low Road and countryside further round Low Road.
- The Church and grounds

Some ideas shared have not been taken forward in this assessment either because they fell outside of the boundary or people said every view or building should be preserved which is not practical or recommended to do in a neighbourhood plan since this could be considered as trying to restrict sustainable development in coming years. The descriptions listed noted how the community wished to still be able to view into the outer environments of the parish particularly observing the arable fields and long-distance views which contribute to the dark skies. As well as this some views were mentioned in the village itself looking at key community infrastructure and historic structures. The initial consultation survey asked people to what extent do they agree if green spaces are important and should be protected; 83.3% of the respondents agreed to protect green spaces and listed specific spaces including:

- The field behind Walkers Garage or grass area alongside the lay by
- The fields on station road north and one side of low road
- Fields at either side of the village and between the village and the A17.
- The field behind the new builds along Sutton Road
- War memorial area
- The field opposite Station Road North, Little Holme Road and Sutton Road
- The village gardens
- Farmland at the A17 end of Station Road
- Greens space along Sutton Road such as the north side of Sutton Road , area containing the bus stop pull in
- Field at back of the new houses
- Fields on Station Road North and corner of the A17 Station Road South
- The three garden areas in the village plus the many views across the field which we need to keep our village rural.
- The fishing area near the farm block

Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan steering group have decided to not pursue designating local green spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan Review the list of areas suggested by the community have been reviewed to consider as important local views. A set of criteria was used to identify such views:

- a) Accessible from a public space;
- b) A good reason for its inclusion within the Neighbourhood Plan which may relate to its recreational value, conservation interest, scenic quality, rarity or planning history; and
- c) Have a specific reason for being important to the community.
- d) Does the land have a current planning permission? (Can we influence this land through policy)

The neighbourhood plan has put together a policy to take advantage of landscape opportunities within new development by ensuring that these are well integrated into the surrounding landscape, sensitive to the prominent skyline within the character area and conserves the landscape quality of the existing landscape setting and its remoteness and tranquillity. By doing so 8 views have been proposed as locally important views so they are afforded protection within the Neighbourhood Plan. During 2023 the community identified the most important local views and the reasons why these are special. This document provides the evidence to support these views being included within the neighbourhood plan.

A map of the 8 views is shown in Figure 2, followed by details in relation to each of them. The views are shown as cones coming from set viewpoints for users to understand where the views are located and to what extent. Whilst the length of the cones should be taken as indicative it gives the understanding of the extent the view can be seen from and how vast the expansion of that view is. Development wishing to be located within the view must consider the scale and layout, so it does not cause adverse harm to the view the community wishes to protect. For example, by creating harsh boundary treatments that will limit visual intrusion.

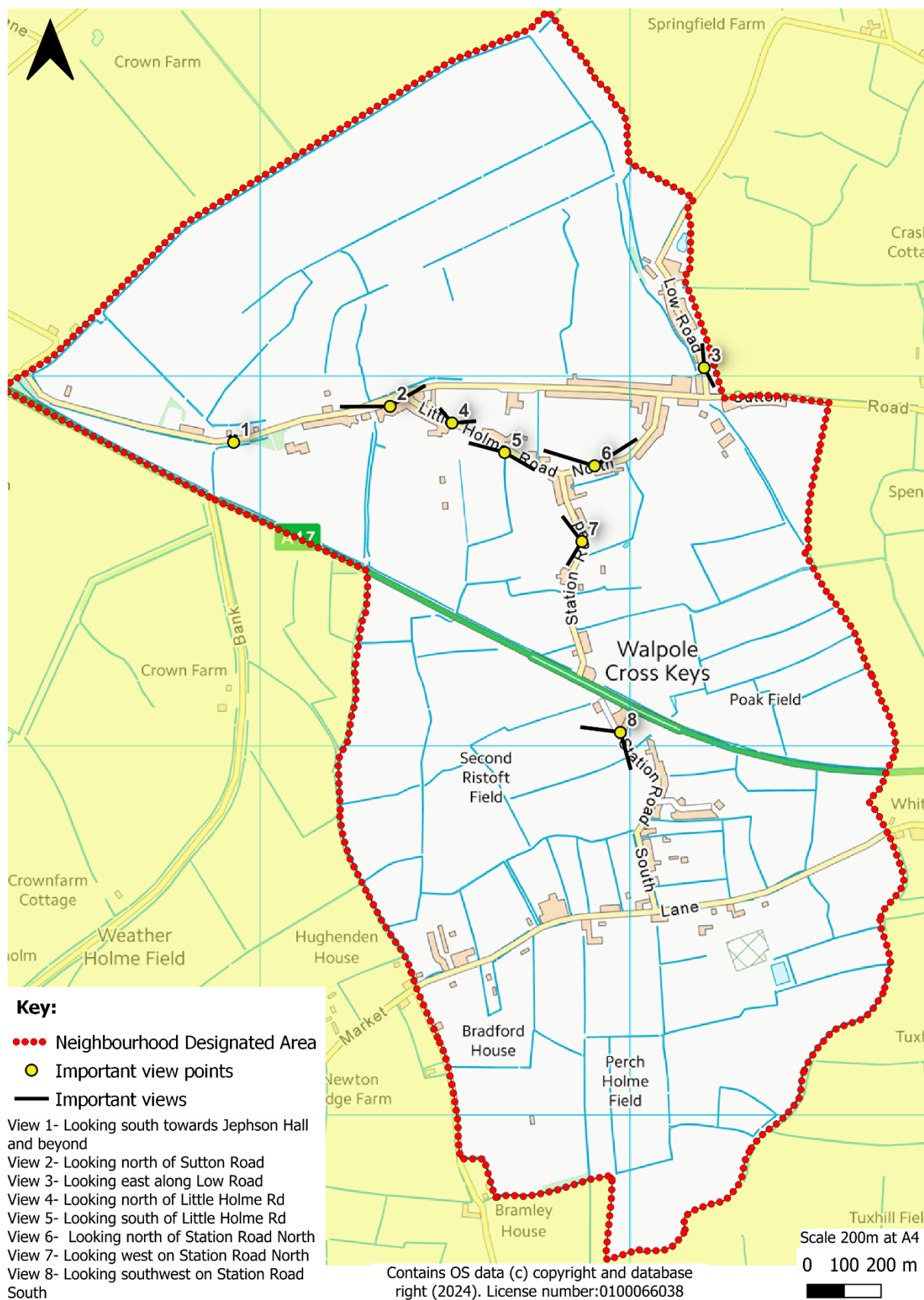
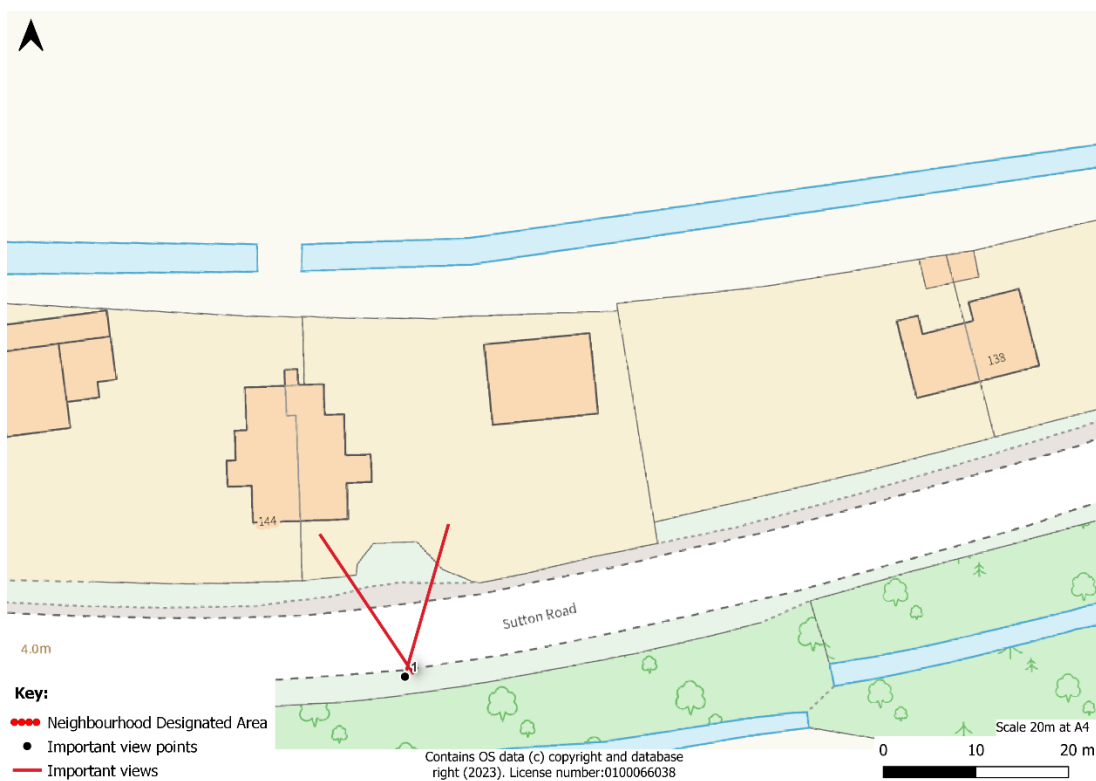


Figure 2- Important Key Views in Walpole Cross Keys

Views assessment

View 1- Looking North towards Jephson Hall and beyond.



Criteria	Comments
Specific location of the viewpoint	View is looking north of Sutton Road towards Jephson Hall and the landscape beyond.
Description and purpose	View includes the village hall and open land which can be seen past the hall.

Criteria	Comments
Direction of the view	North
Is the view publicly accessible?	Yes- can be viewed from a public footpath and the road.
Quality of the view – condition	Nice view of the community hall and the distant expansive views in the background.
Planning history	No applications present which affect the view- checked the BCKWLN planning applications map on 05/09/2023
Scenic quality of the view	
Does this view fall within any landscape designations e.g., AONB?	None.
What national and local character area type does this view fall within?	<p>This view falls within the National Character Area: 46 The Fens, which is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. It is very important for agriculture with large scale arable and grassland landscape.</p> <p>This view falls within the local character area (The Fens, Settled Inland Marshes), where it is known for its large-scale, low-lying landscape offering distant, panoramic views that evoke a sense of openness and tranquillity.</p>
Conservation interest	N/A
Recreational value	The view can be seen by the community who will visit the community hall or walk past and admire the landscape.
Rarity	None
What is the view representative of?	Represented of the low lying fenland landscape which makes up the local character of the area.
Perception of the view?	
Are there any associations with the view e.g. historic?	On Norfolk Heritage Explorer The Sea Bank (monument) follows Sutton Road where this view looks out upon. NHE2187- Map Search - Norfolk Heritage Explorer
Map reference point	View 1

View 2- Looking north on Sutton Road

View looking north



View looking north-east



View looking north west

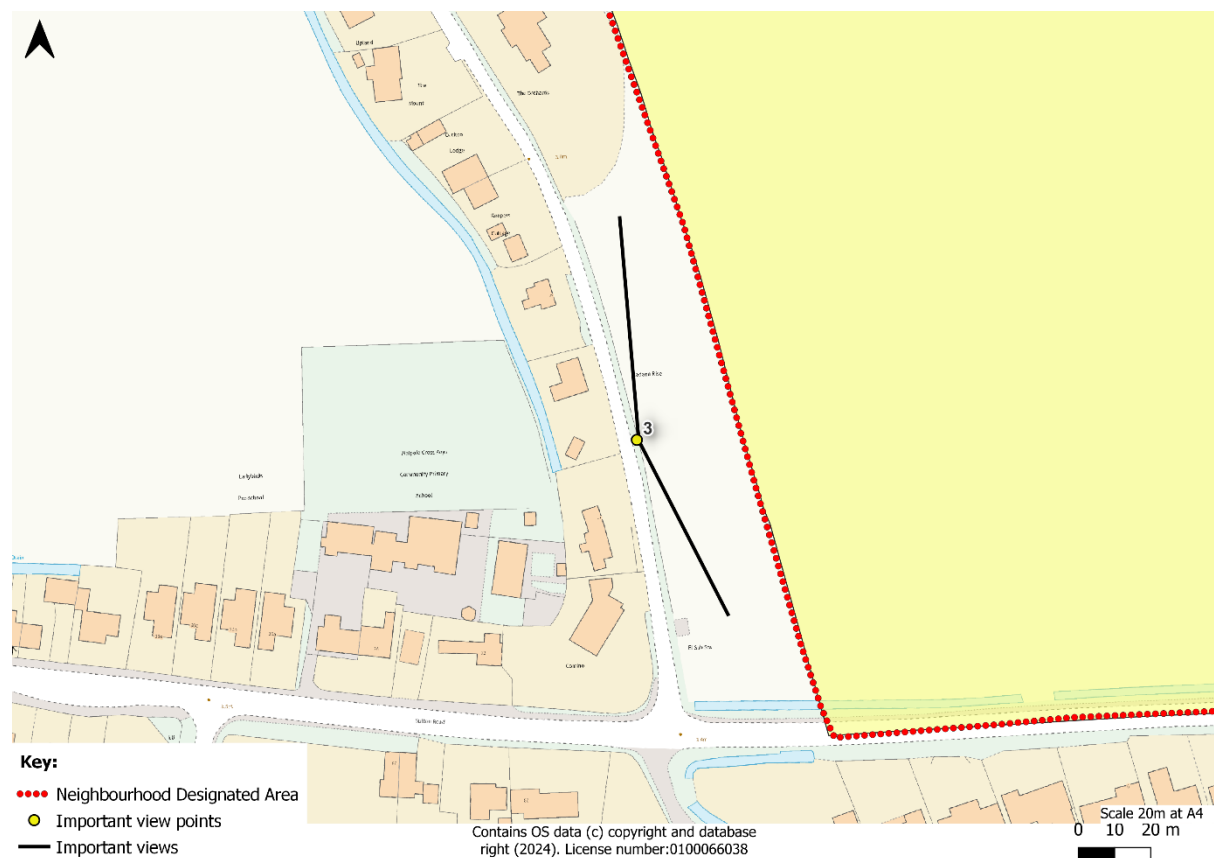




Criteria	Comments
Specific location of the viewpoint	Looking north on Sutton Road where the bus stops and one can sit on the benches on the open green space.
Description and purpose	The view is an important one from a community spot in the village where people wait for the bus or rest on the benches looking north into the open fields.
Direction of the view	North
Is the view publicly accessible?	Yes
Quality of the view – condition	Excellent view of the distant panoramic views.
Planning history	No applications present which affect the view- checked the BCKWLN planning applications map on 05/09/2023
Scenic quality of the view	Very scenic with a good viewpoint for all the community.
Does this view fall within any landscape designations e.g., AONB?	None.

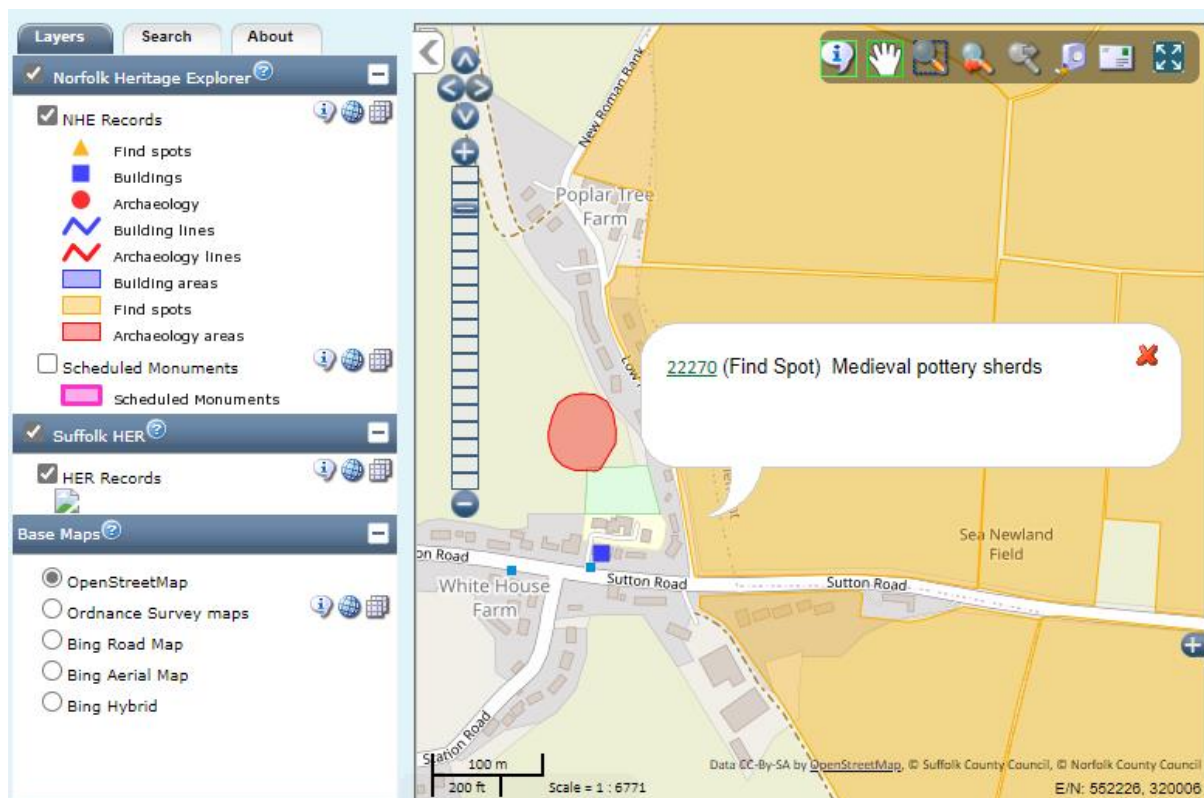
Criteria	Comments
What national and local character area type does this view fall within?	<p>This view falls within the National Character Area: 46 The Fens, which is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. It is very important for agriculture with large scale arable and grassland landscape.</p> <p>This view falls within the local character area (The Fens, Settled Inland Marshes), where it is known for its large-scale, low-lying landscape offering distant, panoramic views that evoke a sense of openness and tranquillity.</p>
Conservation interest	N/A
Recreational value	The view can be seen by the community who may sit on the benches looking out north on the little green space there is available in the parish or waiting for a bus.
Rarity	None
What is the view representative of?	Representative of the large low lying expansive fenland which makes up the local character of the area.
Perception of the view?	
Are there any associations with the view e.g. historic?	<p>On Norfolk Heritage Explorer The Sea Bank (monument) follows Sutton Road where this view looks out upon.</p> <p>NHE2187- Map Search - Norfolk Heritage Explorer</p>
Map reference point	View 2

View 3- Looking east along Low Road



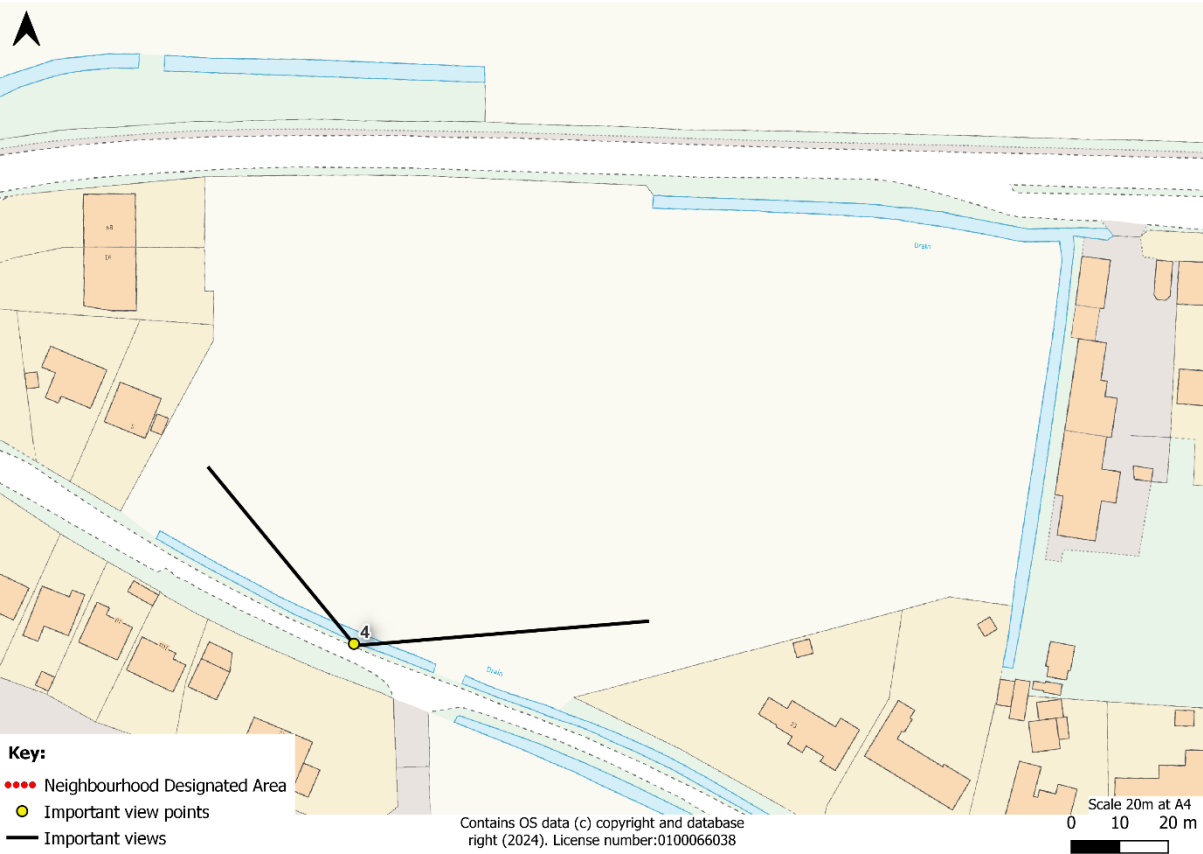
Criteria	Comments
Specific location of the viewpoint	Looking east along Low Road
Description and purpose	This view looks east along Low Road if one is following the narrow roadway. The view is of arable land and trees in the distance portraying a view of the expansive low-lying landscape of the fens.
Direction of the view	East

Criteria	Comments
Is the view publicly accessible?	Yes, on the roadway
Quality of the view – condition	Good
Planning history	No applications present which affect the view- checked the BCKWLN planning applications map on 05/09/2023
Scenic quality of the view	Good
Does this view fall within any landscape designations e.g., AONB?	None.
What national and local character area type does this view fall within?	<p>This view falls within the National Character Area: 46 The Fens, which is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. It is very important for agriculture with large scale arable and grassland landscape.</p> <p>This view falls within the local character area (The Fens, Settled Inland Marshes), where it is known for its large-scale, low-lying landscape offering distant, panoramic views that evoke a sense of openness and tranquillity.</p>
Conservation interest	N/A
Recreational value	N/A
Rarity	N/A
What is the view representative of?	Represented of the large low lying expansive fenland which makes up the local character of the area.
Perception of the view?	
Are there any associations with the view e.g. historic?	On the Norfolk Heritage Explorer there is a record of a historic find of medieval pottery sherds in the fields. NHE22270
Map reference point	View 3



Source: Norfolk County Council, 2023- [Map Search - Norfolk Heritage Explorer](#)

View 4- Looking north of Little Holme Rd



Criteria	Comments
Specific location of the viewpoint	Looking north of Little Holme Rd
Description and purpose	View looks over open farmland which one can walk on the narrow roadway. It is an expansive view with trees in the distance showing the openness and low-lying character of the area.

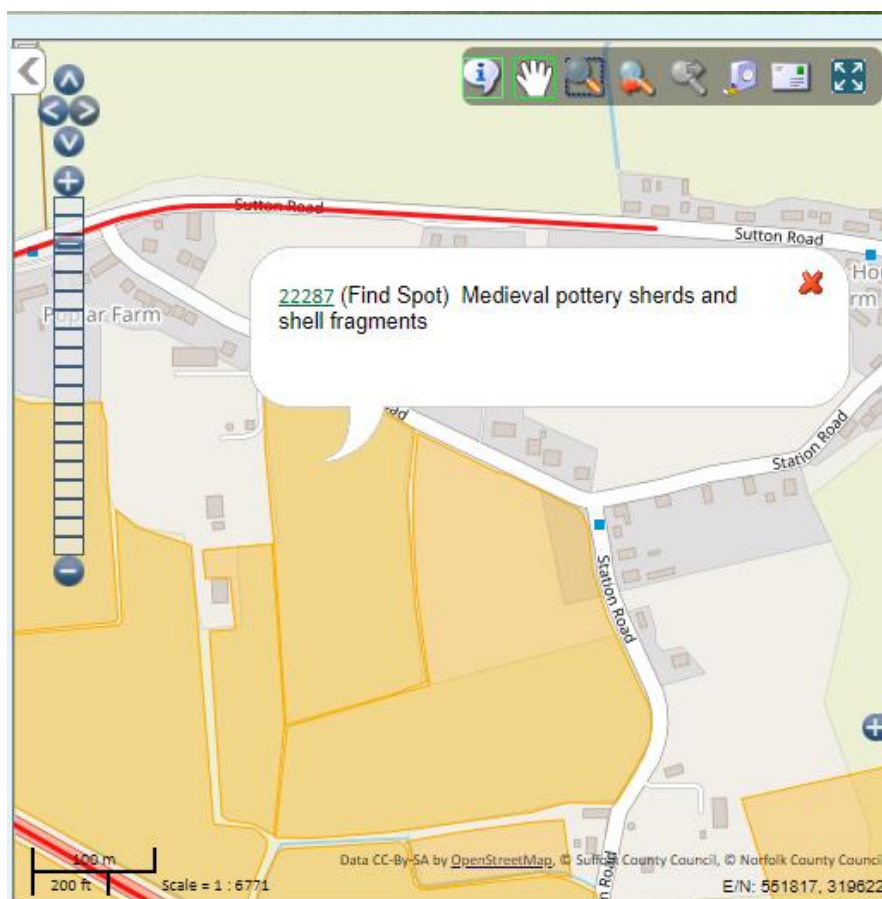
Criteria	Comments
Direction of the view	North
Is the view publicly accessible?	Yes, on the roadway
Quality of the view – condition	Good view of the open arable land.
Planning history	No applications present which affect the view- checked the BCKWLN planning applications map on 05/09/2023
Scenic quality of the view	Good/Excellent
Does this view fall within any landscape designations e.g., AONB?	None.
What national and local character area type does this view fall within?	<p>This view falls within the National Character Area: 46 The Fens, which is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. It is very important for agriculture with large scale arable and grassland landscape.</p> <p>This view falls within the local character area (The Fens, Settled Inland Marshes), where it is known for its large-scale, low-lying landscape offering distant, panoramic views that evoke a sense of openness and tranquillity.</p>
Conservation interest	N/A
Recreational value	N/A
Rarity	N/A
What is the view representative of?	Representative of the large low lying expansive fenland which makes up the local character of the area.
Perception of the view?	
Are there any associations with the view e.g. historic?	None
Map reference point	View 4

View 5- Looking south of Little Holme Rd



Criteria	Comments
Specific location of the viewpoint	Looking south of Little Holme Rd
Description and purpose	View looks over open farmland which one can walk on the narrow roadway. It is an expansive view with trees in the distance showing the openness and low-lying character of the area.
Direction of the view	South

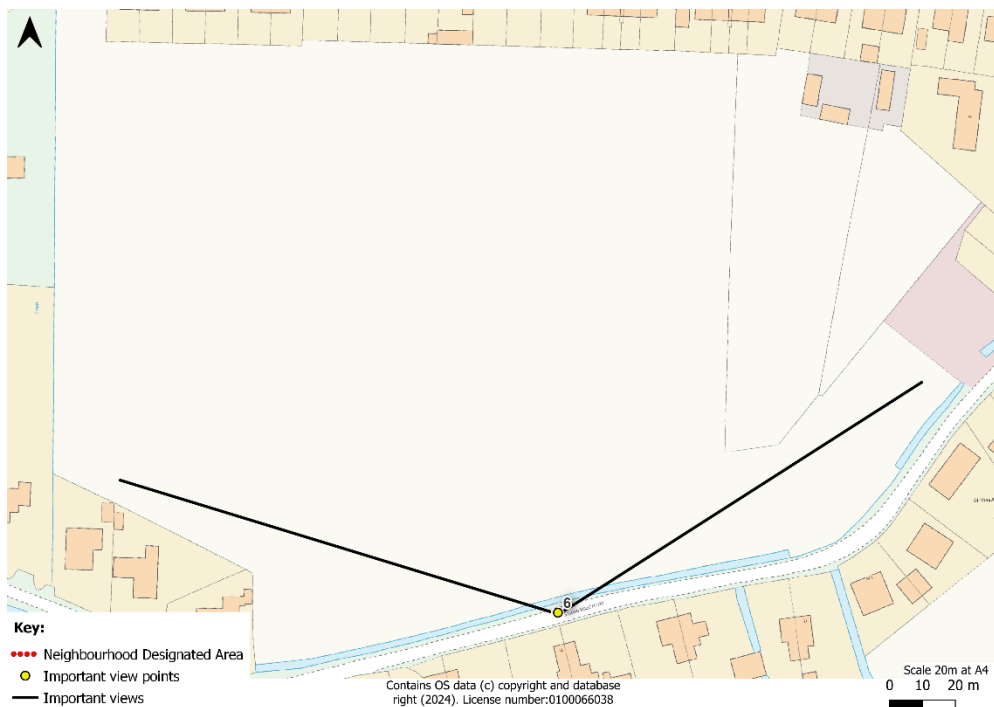
Criteria	Comments
Is the view publicly accessible?	Yes, on the roadway
Quality of the view – condition	Good view of the open arable land.
Planning history	No applications present which affect the view- checked the BCKWLN planning applications map on 05/09/2023
Scenic quality of the view	Good/Excellent
Does this view fall within any landscape designations e.g., AONB?	None.
What national and local character area type does this view fall within?	<p>This view falls within the National Character Area: 46 The Fens, which is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. It is very important for agriculture with large scale arable and grassland landscape.</p> <p>This view falls within the local character area (The Fens, Settled Inland Marshes), where it is known for its large-scale, low-lying landscape offering distant, panoramic views that evoke a sense of openness and tranquillity.</p>
Conservation interest	N/A
Recreational value	N/A
Rarity	N/A
What is the view representative of?	Representative of the large low lying expansive fenland which makes up the local character of the area.
Perception of the view?	
Are there any associations with the view e.g. historic?	On the Norfolk Heritage Explorer there is a record of a historic find of medieval pottery sherds and shell fragments in the fields. NHE
Map reference point	View 5



Source: Norfolk County Council, 2023- [Map Search - Norfolk Heritage Explorer](#)

View 6- Looking north on Station Road North

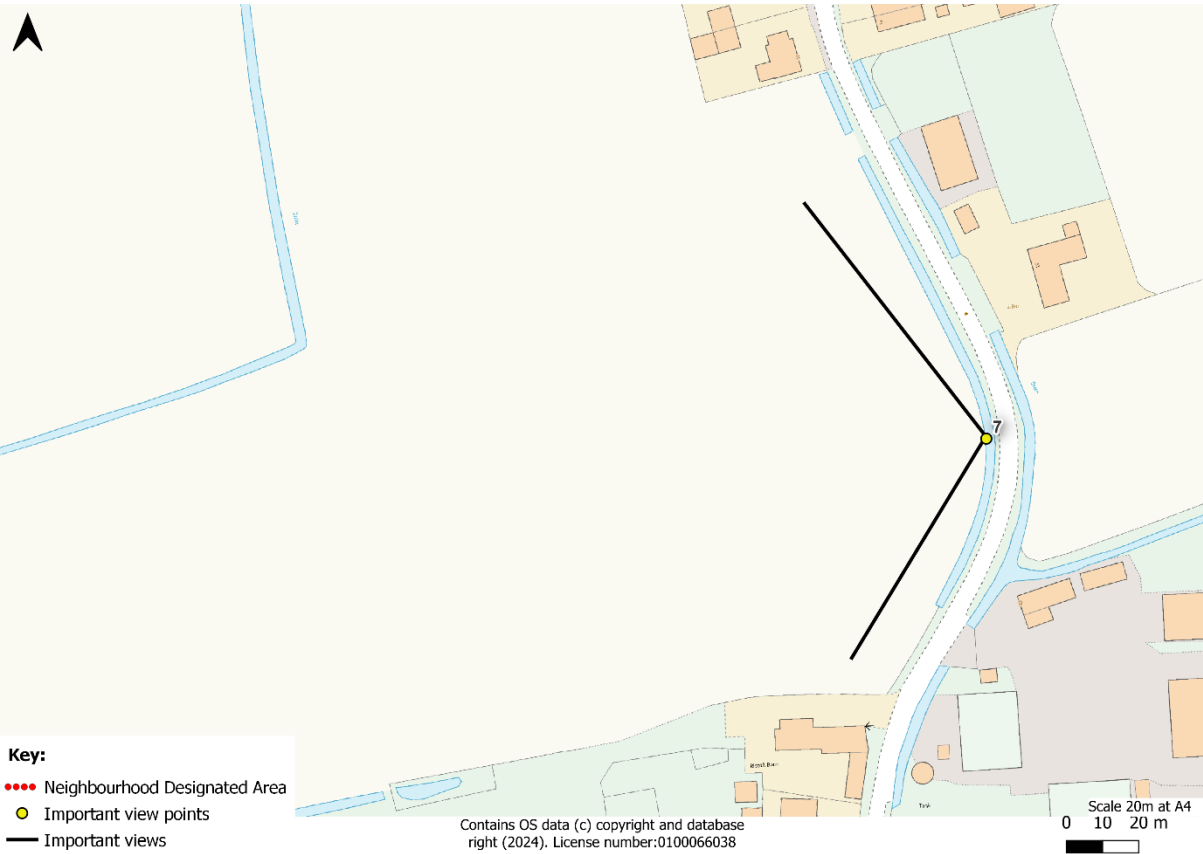
Pictures at different angles covering the same area



Criteria	Comments
Specific location of the viewpoint	Looking north on Station Road North
Description and purpose	View looks over the open fields which sit in between Station Road North and Sutton Road. This open field is made up of different plants, colourful flowers and weeds and sits behind the recent development on Sutton Road. This is an important viewpoint expressed in the consultation survey.
Direction of the view	North
Is the view publicly accessible?	Yes, on the roadway
Quality of the view – condition	Good view of the open land behind recent development.
Planning history	No applications present which affect the view- checked the BCKWLN planning applications map on 05/09/2023
Scenic quality of the view	Good/Excellent
Does this view fall within any landscape designations e.g., AONB?	None.
What national and local character area type does this view fall within?	<p>This view falls within the National Character Area: 46 The Fens, which is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. It is very important for agriculture with large scale arable and grassland landscape.</p> <p>This view falls within the local character area (The Fens, Settled Inland Marshes), where it is known for its large-scale, low-lying landscape offering distant, panoramic views that evoke a sense of openness and tranquillity.</p>
Conservation interest	N/A
Recreational value	N/A
Rarity	N/A
What is the view representative of?	Representative of the large low lying expansive fenland which makes up the local character of the area.
Perception of the view?	

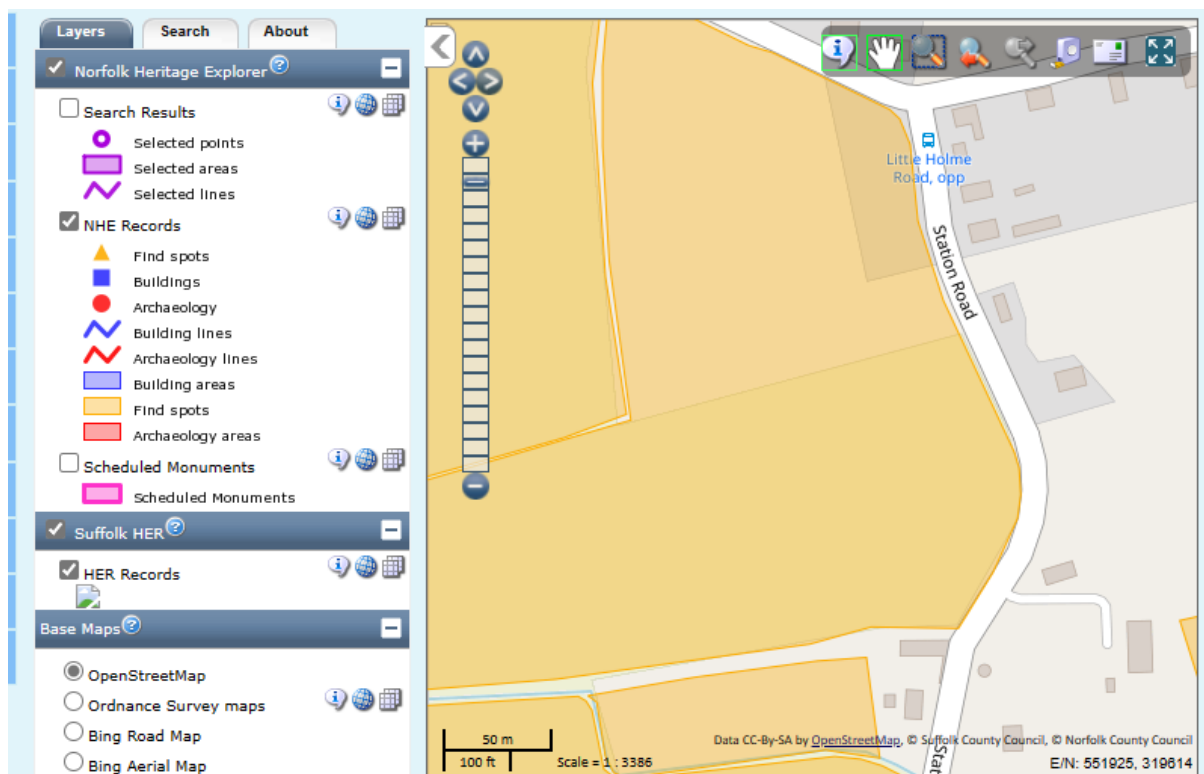
Criteria	Comments
Are there any associations with the view e.g. historic?	None
Map reference point	View 6

View 7- Looking west on Station Road North



Criteria	Comments
Specific location of the viewpoint	Looking west on Station Road North
Description and purpose	This view is north of the A17 and is looking west over expansive arable land in the parish.
Direction of the view	West

Criteria	Comments
Is the view publicly accessible?	Yes
Quality of the view – condition	Excellent
Planning history	N/A
Scenic quality of the view	Excellent
Does this view fall within any landscape designations e.g., AONB?	None.
What national and local character area type does this view fall within?	<p>This view falls within the National Character Area: 46 The Fens, which is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. It is very important for agriculture with large scale arable and grassland landscape.</p> <p>This view falls within the local character area (The Fens, Settled Inland Marshes), where it is known for its large-scale, low-lying landscape offering distant, panoramic views that evoke a sense of openness and tranquillity.</p>
Conservation interest	N/A
Recreational value	Yes, for those interested in coming to admire the old disused railway and look out over the fenland landscape where the train once went through.
Rarity	N/A
What is the view representative of?	Representative of the large low lying expansive fenland which makes up the local character of the area.
Perception of the view?	Rural
Are there any associations with the view e.g. historic?	On the Norfolk Heritage Explorer there is a record of a historic find of medieval pottery sherds in the fields. NHE22291.
Map reference point	View 7



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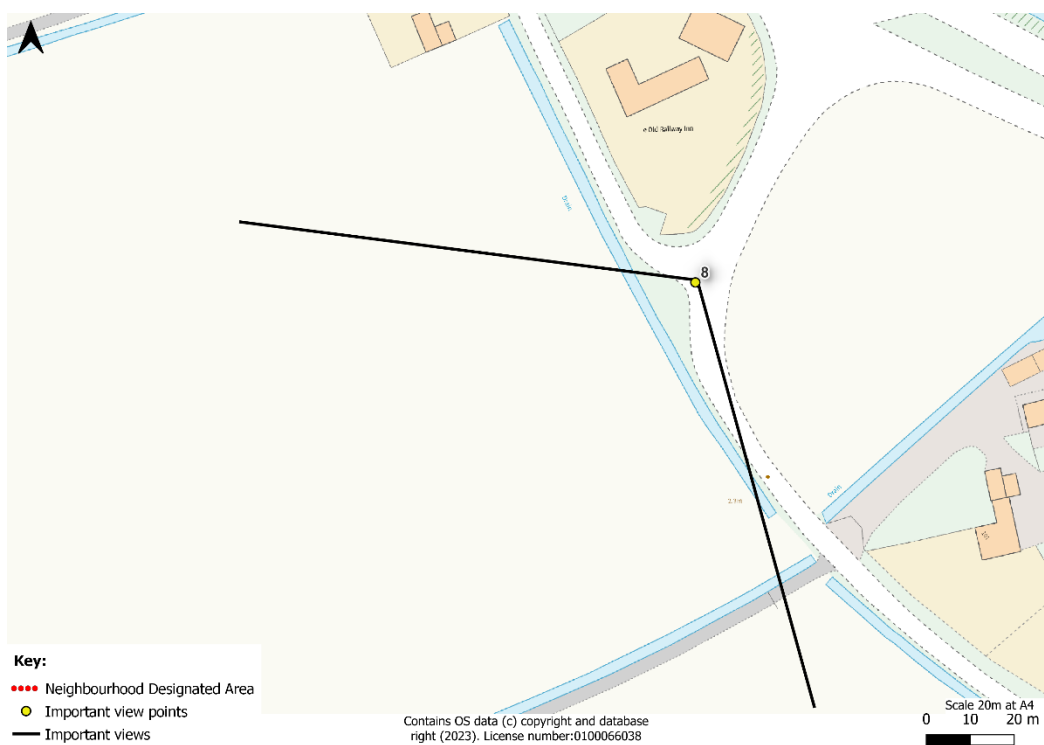
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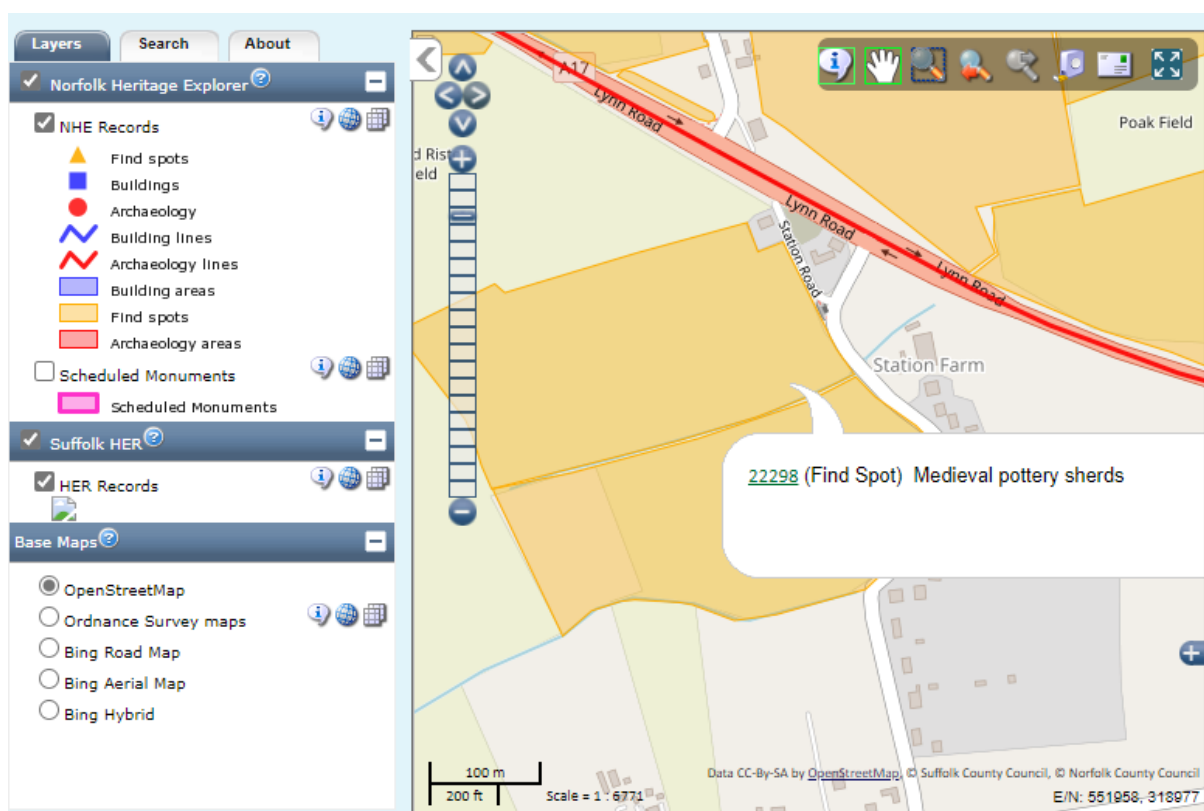
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View 8- Looking southwest on Station Road South



Criteria	Comments
Specific location of the viewpoint	Looking southwest on Station Road South
Description and purpose	This view is south of the A17 and is looking southwest over expansive arable land in the parish. The view also includes the Walpole village sign, flower beds and historic artefact of part of the disused railway track and wheels which once went through the parish. Giving the area a historical connection to its past.
Direction of the view	South-west
Is the view publicly accessible?	Yes
Quality of the view – condition	Excellent
Planning history	No - checked the BCKWLN planning applications map on 05/09/2023
Scenic quality of the view	Excellent
Does this view fall within any landscape designations e.g., AONB?	None.
What national and local character area type does this view fall within?	<p>This view falls within the National Character Area: 46 The Fens, which is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. It is very important for agriculture with large scale arable and grassland landscape.</p> <p>This view falls within the local character area (The Fens, Settled Inland Marshes), where it is known for its large-scale, low-lying landscape offering distant, panoramic views that evoke a sense of openness and tranquillity.</p>
Conservation interest	Historic connection
Recreational value	Yes, for those interested in coming to admire the old disused railway and look out over the fenland landscape where the train once went through.
Rarity	N/A
What is the view representative of?	Representative of the large low lying expansive fenland which makes up the local character of the area.

Criteria	Comments
Perception of the view?	
Are there any associations with the view e.g. historic?	On the Norfolk Heritage Explorer there is a record of a historic find of medieval pottery sherds in the fields. NHE22298 and NHE13581 (Monument) route of Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway from Great Yarmouth to Sutton Bridge which part of the trackway is shown in the view.
Map reference point	View 8



Source: Norfolk County Council, 2023- [Map Search - Norfolk Heritage Explorer](#)