



King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

**KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK BOROUGH
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT**



Final Report

March 2007

CHRIS BLANDFORD ASSOCIATES

Environment Landscape Planning

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

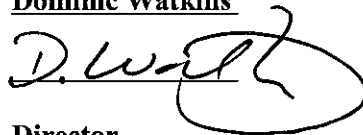
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Position: Director

Date: 20th March 2007

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11102104R Final LCA_03-07

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PREFACE

This Technical Study was commissioned by King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council. The Study provides a baseline inventory of variations in landscape character across the Borough, and outlines guidance for conserving, enhancing and/or restoring locally distinctive landscape characteristics. The need to protect and enhance landscape character is recognised by Government planning policy on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. To ensure that full account is given to landscape character in planning decisions, this Study is commended to the Council for use as an evidence base for informing the preparation of the Local Development Framework and in development control.

We are grateful for the advice and guidance provided by the Steering Group, namely:

- Peter Jermany – Planning Policy Manager, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
- Gemma Cousins – Planning Officer, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
- James Alflatt – Planning Officer, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

In addition, we appreciate the help of individuals from other organisations who willingly assisted in the provision of data and information for the Study. We would also like to acknowledge the representatives of organisations who attended the stakeholder consultation workshops held during the course of the Study (see Appendix A for details). The information gained from these stakeholders provided an important input to the Study.

The Consultant Team comprised:

- Dominic Watkins
- Emma Clarke
- Sarah De Vos
- Alison MacDonald
- Marian Cameron
- Jonathan Webb

Chris Blandford Associates
March 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In May 2006 King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment of the Borough.

The aim of the Study is to provide an integrated assessment of the landscape character of the Borough at 1:25,000 scale, to serve as a baseline inventory to enable a better understanding of King's Lynn's and West Norfolk's landscapes and for monitoring change. The Landscape Character Assessment will be used as a technical evidence base to inform the Local Development Framework currently being prepared by the Council, and guide development control decisions.

Methodology

The overall approach to the Study is based on *Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland* (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002), the latest published guidance, and takes into account current best practice. Landscape Character Assessment addresses both the relatively objective process of landscape characterisation, which involves identifying, mapping, classifying and describing 'landscape character', and the more subjective process of evaluating landscape character to inform planning and land management decisions.

In parallel to this Landscape Character Assessment, the Norfolk Coast Partnership commissioned CBA to undertake a study to advise on the development of a co-ordinated approach integrated to landscape planning across the four district planning authorities within the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This Study included a proposed methodology for integrating the forthcoming Historic Landscape Characterisation Data and existing draft Ecological Network Mapping information into key stages of the landscape characterisation and evaluation process. This integrated approach has informed the production of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment.

In summary, the main stages involved in the Study process were:

- Information Scoping
- Desk Study Research
- Field Survey
- Characterisation
- Evaluation
- Preparation of the Study Report

Consultation with key stakeholder organisations via two workshops was an important and integral element of the Study. The purpose of the stakeholder consultation was to strengthen the evidence base by gathering opinions about landscape character from the key stakeholders, and to promote the value of the Study as a tool for informing planning and land management decisions in rural areas.

Structure of the Report

Section 1.0 sets out the context for the Study. It explains the background to the Study, its aims and objectives, and highlights the importance of landscape character. It also describes the planning policy framework for the Study, and outlines the approach and process behind the assessment methodology.

Section 2.0 provides an overview of the Borough. It describes the physical and historical influences on the landscape, considers past and current perceptions of the landscape and identifies the key forces for change affecting landscape character today.

Section 3.0 provides an overview of landscape character across the Borough as a whole within its national and county context, and provides detailed ‘profiles’ of the 11 Landscape Character Types and 61 Landscape Character Areas identified by the assessment.. The profiles describe the character of each Landscape Character Unit, and set out management strategies, objectives and guidelines for informing environmental land management initiatives and land use planning decisions.

Section 4.0 sets out the main conclusions of the Study, and provides recommendations to the Council for its consideration and action as appropriate.

Informing Judgements

Judgements about the acceptability, or otherwise, of development and/or land management proposals should take account of:

- (i) the description and evaluation of the relevant Landscape Character Type(s) related to the proposal; and
- (ii) the description and evaluation of the relevant Landscape Character Area(s) related to the proposal.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In May 2006 King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to undertake a Landscape Character Assessment of the Borough.
- 1.1.2 The Borough is the tenth largest in England and Wales with an administrative area of approximately 550 square miles (142,880 hectares). In addition to the Borough's three main towns of King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton, there are more than one hundred villages of varying sizes within the Study Area (see **Figure 1.1**).
- 1.1.3 The Borough is predominantly rural in character and has a very diverse and varied landscape. The north of the area encompasses gently rolling farmland and high plateau, which is fringed by the dramatic coastal landscapes of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Contrast is provided by the undulating parkland and woodlands in the Sandringham area dissected as a series of relatively narrow rivers. To the west of King's Lynn is the coastal landscape of mudflats and saltmarsh that fringe The Wash. Further to the south, the open skies and long ranging horizons of the fenlands dominate the landscape.
- 1.1.4 Maintaining, protecting and enhancing the special qualities of the landscape that contribute towards West Norfolk's local identity and distinctiveness, is at the heart of the Council's vision for the new Local Development Framework (LDF).

1.2 Study Aims and Objectives

- 1.2.1 The aim of the Study is to provide an integrated assessment of the landscape character of the Borough at 1:25,000 scale, to serve as a baseline inventory to enable a better understanding of King's Lynn and West Norfolk's landscapes and for monitoring change. The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) will be used as a technical evidence base to inform the LDF currently being prepared by the Council.
- 1.2.2 The key objectives of the Study are to:
- Undertake a systematic survey of the Borough's existing Landscape Character Types¹ to identify areas of distinctive local character.
 - Provide a comprehensive description and evaluation of the landscape character units identified within the Borough, integrating field survey information on visual character with historic landscape character and biodiversity (including ecological network mapping information).
 - Engage key stakeholders in the assessment process to gather views on landscape character issues and raise awareness of the project.
- 1.2.3 The area of Study characterised by this assessment includes all of the rural area up to and including the urban edge of the main settlements.

¹ As identified in the King's Lynn & West Norfolk and Breckland Wind Turbine Development Landscape Assessment, Evaluation and Guidance Study (LUC, 2003)

1.3 The Importance of Landscape Character

1.3.1 The UK Government signed the European Landscape Convention² on the 24 February 2006. The Convention aims to encourage public authorities within member states to adopt exemplary and long lasting policies and measures for the protection, management and planning of all landscapes, both outstanding and ordinary, that determine the quality of people's living environment.

1.3.2 The European Landscape Convention defines landscape as:

'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.'

1.3.3 The term landscape is typically synonymous with the countryside; however, landscape is everywhere and may comprise rural landscapes, urban landscapes or townscape, urban fringe landscapes, coastal landscapes or seascapes, etc.

1.3.4 The European Landscape Convention defines 'landscape character' as:

'a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape.'

1.3.5 In England and Scotland, Landscape Character Assessment³ is a tool that allows landscape character to be understood, explained and described in a transparent and robust way. It does this by mapping and describing the variations in physical, natural and cultural attributes and experiential characteristics that make one area distinctive from another at a range of spatial scales. Landscape Character Assessment also recognises how landscapes have changed over time, and acknowledges the changing influences of human activities and the impacts of economic development.

1.3.6 The overall aim of landscape planning, design and management should be to achieve *sustainable landscapes* that are as visually, biodiverse and culturally rich as possible to meet society's social, economic and environmental needs. A better understanding of landscapes provided by Landscape Character Assessments – their diversity, character and distinctiveness, evolution, sensitivity to change and their management needs – is essential in helping to work towards this goal.

1.4 Planning Policy Framework

1.4.1 National Planning Policy relating to landscape character is contained in PPS1⁴ and PPS7⁵.

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

1.4.2 PPS1 sets out the Government's overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. It states that one of the Government's objectives for the planning system is that planning should facilitate and promote sustainable urban and rural development by protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment and the quality and character of the countryside (para 5). In its key principles, PPS1 states that '*a spatial planning approach should be at the heart of planning for sustainable development*'

² The European Landscape Convention opened for signature in Florence on 20 October 2000. Jim Knight, Minister for Rural Affairs, Landscape and Biodiversity announced the UK signing of the European Landscape Convention on 24 February 2006.

³ Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

⁴ Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM, 2005).

⁵ Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (ODPM, 2004).

(para 13.iii) and ‘*design which fails to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted*’ (para 13.iv). When preparing development plans ‘*planning authorities should seek to enhance as well as protect biodiversity, natural habitats, the historic environment and landscape and townscape character*’ (para 27). PPS1 also requires new design to be integrated into the existing urban form and natural and built environments (para 35).

Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

- 1.4.3 Landscape Character Assessment, along with Village or Town Design Statements and Village or Parish Plans, is recommended by PPS7 as a tool to assist Local Authorities in the preparation of policies and guidance that encourages good quality design throughout rural areas (para 13). Landscape Character Assessment is also recommended by PPS7 as a tool for creating carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in Local Development Documents to protect valued landscapes outside nationally designated areas without the need for rigid local designations, which may restrict sustainable development and the economic vitality of rural areas. PPS7 advises that local landscape designations should only be maintained or, exceptionally, extended where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based policies cannot provide the necessary protection (paras 24 and 25).

The East of England Plan

- 1.4.4 The Draft Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the East of England was published by the Regional Assembly for consultation in December 2004⁶. An Examination in Public (EIP) into the draft RSS was held between November 2005 and March 2006. The EIP Panel Report was published in June 2006, which included recommended changes to the draft RSS. The Draft RSS contains a range of policies requiring action by local planning authorities.
- 1.4.5 The Draft RSS is based on the principles of sustainable development. It specifically identifies protection of protected landscapes/designated areas and application of landscape character as a key consideration in the spatial development of the region. Taking into account the recommended changes of the EIP Panel, draft Policy ENV2 Landscape Conservation states:

‘Planning authorities and other agencies in their plans, policies and programmes and decision-making will, in accordance with statutory requirements, afford the highest status of protection to the East of England’s nationally designated landscapes – the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads (having status equal to a National Park) and the Chilterns, Norfolk Coast, Dedham Vale and Suffolk Coast and Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)s. Within the Broads priority will be given to the statutory purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, promoting public enjoyment and protecting the interests of navigation. Within the AONBs priority over other considerations will be given to conservation of the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.

Throughout the East of England planning authorities and other agencies in their plans, policies, programmes and decision-making will aim to recognise, protect and enhance the diversity and local distinctiveness of the countryside character areas indicated on Map 9.1 by:

- * developing area-wide strategies, based on landscape character assessments, setting long-term goals for landscape change, targeting planning and land management tools and*

⁶ The East of England Plan: Draft Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (December 2004)

resources to influence that change, and giving priority to those areas subject to most growth and change;

- * developing criteria-based policies, informed by the area-wide strategies and landscape character assessments, to ensure that all development, wherever possible respects and enhances local landscape character; and*
- * providing/requiring appropriate mitigation measures where avoidance of damage to local landscape character is unavoidable.'*

Norfolk Structure Plan

- 1.4.6 The approved Norfolk Structure Plan⁷ was adopted in 1999. Under the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, the Structure Plan and its policies are saved until 2007 – or until superseded by the published RSS (whichever is sooner).
- 1.4.7 The Structure Plan contains three policies related to landscape protection: Policy ENV2 on the character of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Heritage Coast and the Broads; Policy ENV3 on Areas of Important Landscape Quality and Policy ENV4 on the distinctive character of the Norfolk countryside and coast.

Local Planning Context

- 1.4.8 King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council has prepared and adopted a Local Plan for the whole of the Borough to guide development and to protect and enhance the environment, which contains a number of policies concerned with the protection of different aspects of landscape, including in particular:
- Policy SS3 – Conservation of the Borough's Countryside
 - Policy 4/3 – River Corridors
 - Policy 4/5 – Protection of AONBs
 - Policy 4/6 – Areas of Important Landscape Quality
 - Policy 4/7 – Features of value within the landscape
 - Policy 4/8 – Protection of Historic Parks and Gardens
 - Policy 8/7 – New Development in the Countryside
 - Policy 9/29 – Design.
- 1.4.9 The Local Plan will eventually be replaced by a Local Development Framework (LDF) under the arrangements set out in the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*. The LDF comprises a series of Local Development Documents (LDDs) that will set out proposals for the future development, use and conservation of land and buildings.
- 1.4.10 The main LDDs are the Core Strategy, Development Control Policies, Site Specific Allocations, Proposals Map and Area Action Plans. Together with the RSS, these LDDs comprise the statutory Development Plan Documents against which all planning decisions will normally need to be made. It is intended that this Landscape Character Assessment will be used as part of the evidence base of technical studies to inform the LDDs.

⁷ Norfolk Structure Plan, Adopted 1999, Norfolk County Council.

1.5 Approach and Methodology

- 1.5.1 The overall approach for undertaking the Landscape Character Assessment was based on the latest guidance published by the Countryside Agency⁸, taking into account current best practice. Landscape Character Assessment addresses both the relatively objective process of landscape characterisation, which involves identifying, mapping, classifying and describing 'landscape character', and the more subjective process of evaluating landscape character to inform planning and land management decisions.
- 1.5.2 In parallel to this Landscape Character Assessment, the Norfolk Coast Partnership commissioned CBA to undertake a study to advise on the development of a co-ordinated approach to integrated landscape planning across the four district planning authorities within the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This Study⁹ included a proposed methodology for integrating the forthcoming Historic Landscape Characterisation Data and existing draft Ecological Network Mapping information into key stages of the landscape characterisation and evaluation process. This integrated approach has informed the production of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment.

Integration of Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) component

- 1.5.3 A Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project currently being undertaken for the whole of Norfolk County is ongoing, and is due to be completed in August 2007. Currently available information from the HLC includes mapping of current land use for the Norfolk Coast AONB area. HLC datasets showing relic land use will not be available until July 2007, and written descriptions of Historic Landscape Types and Historic Landscape Zones (providing a simplified historic description and judgements about significance and sensitivity) will not be available until August 2007.
- 1.5.4 As complete HLC data is not currently available for the Study Area, it has not been possible to incorporate it at this stage and expert advice has been relied on to provide an understanding of historic landscape character in lieu of this data.

Integration of Ecological Network Mapping

- 1.5.5 A draft Ecological Network Mapping Project for Norfolk has been completed for the whole of Norfolk County¹⁰. Information from the Ecological Network Mapping Project was used to inform the preparation of management objectives for each Landscape Character Type identified within the Study Area.

Study Process

- 1.5.6 The following stages of work were undertaken as part of the Study process:

⁸ Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland (Countryside Agency/Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002).

⁹ Towards a Co-ordinated Approach to Integrated Landscape Planning in Norfolk (CBA/AFA for Norfolk Coast Partnership, 2006),

¹⁰ Report of Ecological Network Mapping Project for Norfolk: Presentation of Methodology and Draft Maps for Consultation (July 2006), Reg Land, Norfolk Wildlife Trust for Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership: (www.norfolkbiodiversity.org).

Information Scoping

1.5.7 The preliminary stage involved the following main tasks:

- Identifying and reviewing existing LCA information covering King's Lynn and West Norfolk, including the Landscape Character Types defined by the '*Wind Turbine Development, Landscape Assessment, Evaluation and Guidance*¹¹' study.
- Obtain information and data for incorporation into the landscape character assessment.

Desk Study Research

1.5.8 This stage involved desk-based research to identify the physical and historical factors that have influenced the shape and use of the landscape. This work drew on a variety of documents and maps (see **Appendix C** for details) that describe the physical geography and cultural history of the Borough (including geology, soils, hydrology, vegetation and topography). The desk research also considered past and current perceptions of the landscape, and identified the forces for change affecting the character of the Borough's landscape.

1.5.9 In summary, the desk work involved:

- Mapping of existing character assessments covering the Study Area, to identify draft Landscape Character Types and Landscape Character Areas including:
 - National Joint Character Areas: 1:250,000 scale;
 - National Typology (known as Landscape Description Units Level 1): 1:250,000 scale;
 - County Typology (known as Landscape Description Units Level 2): 1:50,000 scale;
 - Local Typology (Wind Turbine Development – Landscape Assessment, Evaluation and Guidance): 1:25,000 scale.
- Analysis of existing 1:25,000 scale landscape character assessments for neighbouring local authority areas.
- Analysis of the Strategic Habitat map (plus descriptions) set out within the Ecological Network Mapping Project to inform draft Landscape Character Types and Areas.

Field Survey

1.5.10 Field surveys were undertaken during Summer and early Autumn 2006. The aim of the surveys was to undertake a visual analysis of how different features and elements combine to create distinctive patterns in the landscape. The surveys were undertaken from key viewpoints within each draft Landscape Character Type by a team of field assessors using a structured checklist. The checklist included:

- Landform
- Rivers/drainage
- Land cover
- Field pattern and field boundaries
- Communication routes
- Settlement form/pattern
- Building styles
- Scale
- Texture
- Enclosure

¹¹ King's Lynn & West Norfolk and Breckland Wind Turbine Development – Landscape Assessment, Evaluation and Guidance (2003), Land Use Consultants.

- Stimuli
- Sense of tranquillity
- Movement
- View types and composition
- Landmarks.

- 1.5.11 The survey information (including photographs) was used to (i) inform the descriptions of landscape character and (ii) to test and refine the boundaries of the draft Landscape Character Types and Areas.

Characterisation

- 1.5.12 The characterisation stage involved the combination of the desk study research and field survey analysis to identify and map generic Landscape Character Types and geographically unique Landscape Character Areas at 1:25,000 scale.

- 1.5.13 For each generic Landscape Character Type, its boundaries were mapped and the following information was recorded:

- Location and Boundaries
- Key Characteristics
- Summary of Visual Character
- Historic Environment Character
- Ecological Character
- Key Forces for Change.

- 1.5.14 For each unique Landscape Character Area, its boundaries were mapped and a summary of its visual character described.

Evaluation

- 1.5.15 This stage involved making the following judgements about each Landscape Character Type and Area. For each Landscape Character Type, the following information was included:

- Landscape Condition and Strength of Character.
- Management Strategy and Objectives (incorporating identified priorities for habitat conservation and enhancement identified by the Ecological Network Mapping Project).

- 1.5.16 For each Landscape Character Area, their inherent landscape sensitivities were evaluated and landscape planning guidelines identified. The sensitivity analysis for each Landscape Character Area, together with the proposed management strategies and objectives for each Landscape Character Type, can be used to inform:

- the identification of spatial development options within the Local Development Framework.
- Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment of Local Development Framework site allocations.
- the highlighting of landscape issues that may need to be considered in greater detail in relation to development control decisions.
- the application of criteria-based landscape protection and enhancement policies within the Local Development Framework.

Key Stakeholder Consultation

- 1.5.17 Consultation with key stakeholder organisations was an important and integral element of the Study. The purpose of the stakeholder consultation was to strengthen the evidence base by gathering opinions about landscape character from the key stakeholders, and to promote the value of the Study as a tool for informing planning and land management decisions in rural areas.
- 1.5.18 The consultation involved four workshops to explore stakeholder's views on (i) what gives different places their local identity and distinctive character and (ii) key issues for the protection and landscape enhancement of character in the Borough (see **Appendix A** for further details). This information was fed into the desk study research, field survey and characterisation stages of the Study to refine and validate the preliminary draft mapping of Landscape Character Types and Areas by the Consultant Team. It was also used to identify issues that needed to be addressed by the management strategies, objectives and guidelines within the evaluation stage.

1.6 Structure of the Report

- 1.6.1 The Study report is structured as follows.

Section 1.0 sets out the context for the Study. It explains the background to the Study, its aims and objectives, and highlights the importance of landscape character. It also describes the planning policy framework for the Study, and outlines the approach and process behind the assessment methodology.

Section 2.0 provides an overview of the Borough. It describes the physical and historical influences on the landscape, considers past and current perceptions of the landscape and identifies the key forces for change affecting landscape character today.

Section 3.0 provides an overview of landscape character across the Borough as a whole within its national and county context, and provides detailed 'profiles' of the 11 Landscape Character Types and 61 Landscape Character Areas identified by the assessment. The profiles describe the character of each Landscape Character Unit, and set out management strategy and objectives and guidelines for informing environmental land management initiatives and land use planning decisions.

Section 4.0 sets out the main conclusions of the Study, and provides recommendations to the Council for its consideration and action as appropriate.

2.0 THE SHAPING OF THE LANDSCAPE

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2.1 General

- 2.1.1 This section provides an overview of the Borough. It describes the physical and historical influences on the landscape, considers past and current perceptions of the landscape and identifies the key forces for change affecting landscape character today.

2.2 Physical Influences

- 2.2.1 The landscape within the borough has evolved as a result of an interaction of the physical structure of the landscape and the vegetation and land uses that cover it. To understand what makes a place distinctive, it is useful to identify the key physical influences that have shaped the landscape over time.
- 2.2.2 The basic structure of the landscape is fundamentally influenced by its underlying rocks and relief. Geology and the processes of weathering, erosion and deposition influence the shape and form of the landscape and its drainage and soils. In turn, these influence patterns of vegetation and land use.

Geology, Landform and Drainage

- 2.2.3 The Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk is underlain by a concealed platform of ancient rocks, which were laid down between 545 and 543 million years ago. Overlying this base are a number of different geological layers including chalky boulder clay, sand, sandstone and chalk that have formed and undergone erosion through marine, fluvial and glacial processes between 60 million years ago to the present to form the rock structure of the Study Area today.

- 2.2.4 The surface geology of the Study Area (see **Figure 2.1**) is dominated by the deposition of glacial till over chalk or clay and gravel by glaciers when the area was subjected to periodic ice advances and retreats as the climate cooled and warmed. This leads to a complex mix of glacial, proglacial and periglacial deposits overlying each other, forming coastal plain, marshland, south and east of King's Lynn, fens in the west and rolling hills with plateaux in the east. Since deposits left by the Anglian Glaciation make up most of the surface of the Study Area, they exert a strong

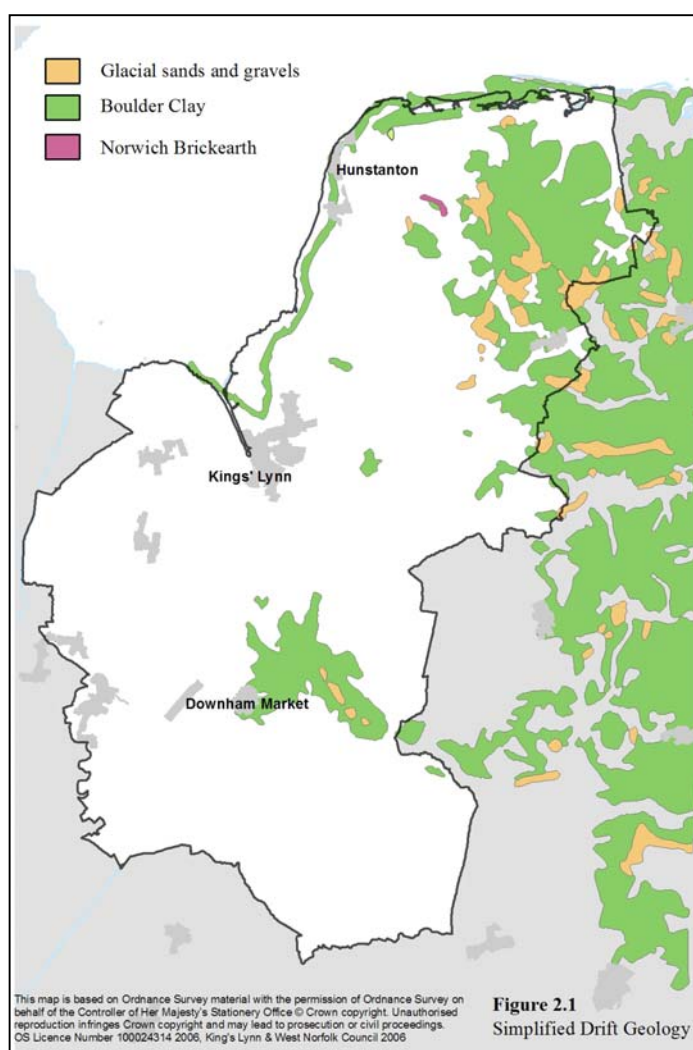


Figure 2.1
Simplified Drift Geology

influence on the soils and have affected both the early colonisation of the Study Area and subsequent agricultural development and vegetation cover.

- 2.2.5 The narrow strip of apparently flat, open, coastal plain lies in the north of the Study Area. Erosion and deposition are extensive features of this coast as the strata that once formed its cliffs, now confined to the outer limits of this area, are nearly all of soft or loosely-aggregated glacial sands, gravel and clays. There are tracts of saltmarsh and mud flats defined by an intricate network of creeks, drains and lagoons behind the shingle bars that characterise the coast. The local landscape is both very varied and constantly changing with tides. Where the salt-water estuary has been reclaimed drained marshes have formed on calcareous sits and clay soils used traditionally for pasture.
- 2.2.6 In the west of the Study Area low-lying fens form part of a large area, which slowly drains towards the Wash. Ground level in this area rarely exceeds 10m AOD, with much of the land below sea level, relying on pumped drainage and the control of sluices at high and low tides to maintain its agricultural viability. The underlying geology is a combination of post-glacial alluvium, freshwater clays and post-Roman marine clays influenced by changing sea level. The soils overlying the geology in the central and coastal fens comprise rich, fertile, stoneless, calcareous, silty soils while inland are swathes of dark, friable, fen peat.
- 2.2.7 The original river courses including the Great Ouse and River Nene originally meandered slowly across the fens causing widespread seasonal water logging by river water and high tides. However, all rivers are now in artificial straight canalized courses bounded by high banks to contain the watercourse from the lower adjacent fields. In some locations, up to 2 to 3m above the dark peat soils, 'roddons' inland silt banks, mark the former course of old riverbeds. These have subsequently shrunk due to continuous cultivation, drainage and wind erosion of the peat creating an ever-greater demand for artificial drainage of the land.
- 2.2.8 The eastern edge of the fens within the Study Area is bound by rolling hills which rise to approximately 70m AOD. The unified and distinctive rolling hills consist mainly of the shallow dip slope of a low Chalk escarpment sloping west to east. This forms a plateau of brown rendzina soils with a few shallow river valleys running into the Wash. The area is separated from the coastal strip along the eastern edge of the Wash by an outcrop of the Lower Greensand, which includes a ridge of orange-brown 'carstone', a type of ferruginous sandstone. The scarp soils are variable in quality, with outcrops of poor quality brown sands and sandy gley soils contrasting with the rich alluvial soils of the river valleys. This variation in soil quality creates conditions for different types of vegetation cover from plantation and more natural woodland to intensive arable land.
- 2.2.9 In the southwestern extent of the Study Area from Hockwold cum Wilton in the south to Marham in the north a combination of climate and geology has produced a low, gently undulating plateau with long slopes leading to alluvial flats with meandering rivers. This area, between 1 and 40m AOD, forms part of the most extensive areas of sandy heath in lowland England, with poor, free-draining sands and gravels with scattered flints over chalk. The unique physical features are a result of the combination of periglacial action on its soils during the Ice Age, low rainfall and a semi-continental climate. The area is crossed by a number of rivers, notably the Little Ouse and the River Wissey, of which some are unusually fast-flowing chalk streams. The lushness of their shallow valleys contrasts strongly with the dry uplands and the availability of water had a significant influence on the pattern of settlement and fertility of the soils.

2.3 Historical Influences

- 2.3.1 People have transformed the landscape of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk District into the present day rich tapestry since their emergence in the Palaeolithic.

Palaeolithic to Mesolithic (c.500,000 to c.4,500 BC)

- 2.3.2 Some of the earliest recorded history of human activity in Britain has been found in Norfolk¹. Evidence for settlement in this area mainly comes from re-deposited flakes and tools recovered from areas such as gravel riverbeds with few large-scale excavations recording evidence from the Palaeolithic to the Mesolithic. During the time of the Palaeolithic to Mesolithic, the sea levels began to rise and the coast would have been 60-70 km further north than its present position.
- 2.3.3 During the Anglian Glaciation (around 46,000 BC), the variations in climate affected the distribution of flora and fauna as well as the locations people settled. In East Anglia, the majority of archaeological evidence from the Palaeolithic comes from the preservation of flint and tools recovered from river gravel deposits. These were recovered during the 19th and 20th centuries when the gravel in the riverbeds was extracted for the construction industry.
- 2.3.4 At the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic (30,000 – 10,000 BC), Britain was still connected to the European landmass. A large number of late Palaeolithic flints found at low tide at the town of Titchwell near Brancaster, show that this land was utilised during the Palaeolithic.
- 2.3.5 The Mesolithic period experienced an increase in temperature and this would have caused sea levels to rise to levels near that of today. By about 6,500 BC Britain was an island and the coastline of Norfolk was little different from that of today. Forests expanded and would not have been suitable habitat for the herds of horse or reindeer that would have previously inhabited the area. The main source of food for any settlers would have been deer and elk.
- 2.3.6 King's Lynn and West Norfolk would have been a rich environment for settlers. Links to The Wash and the rest of the coastline would have provided settlers with fish and other resources, with the mixture of forest and open land providing areas for hunting and cultivation. Evidence of settlement or activity in the area has been found in the form of archaeological remains such as small tools, for example, artefacts such as a flint axe at Castle Acre and a worked Mesolithic elk antler and a broken flint blade at Hunstanton.
- 2.3.7 It was around this time that the Icknield Way², the oldest road in Britain, was constructed. The road was built along the open chalk from Ivinghoe Beacon, Buckinghamshire to Knettishall, Norfolk.

Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age (c.4,500 BC to c.43 AD)

- 2.3.8 There have been extensive remains from the Neolithic found in the Study Area due to the extent of Neolithic settlement and the use of the surrounding landscape. Excavations and surveys in Norfolk show that it is possible that Neolithic communities preferred the light soils and the river valleys of Norfolk compared to the heavy wooded central claylands. Nevertheless, these areas of woodland would have been utilised for the hunting and gathering of food. Excavations show that during this time, the forested areas would have been populated with Oak (*Quercus sp.*) and Pine (*Pinus sp.*)³
- 2.3.9 The majority of evidence for this period comes from burial sites found in the Study Area. Examples include two long barrows, which were found in West Rudham dating from the early to mid Neolithic (3,400 – 2,400 BC). Remains including a Neolithic curved flint sickle,

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Norfolk & www.broadshawfoundation.com/anglia-man/

² <http://www.icknieldwaypath.co.uk/>

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Norfolk#Upper_Palaeolithic

a Bronze Age copper alloy cauldron and an Iron Age jar were found at Feltwell, providing evidence for the progression of settlement in the area. Such examples of progressive human settlement can be found in many areas in West Norfolk, such as the excavation of a number of human remains found from the Bronze Age⁴ in Sedgeford.

- 2.3.10 The amount of metalwork found particularly from the end of the Bronze Age reveals that Norfolk was an important area for settlement and wealth. It was during the Bronze Age, that the Icknield Way would have been used as a trading route. Tracks, such as the Icknield Way, and rivers would have connected settlements in the area as well as provided links to the rest of Britain.
- 2.3.11 At the beginning of the Iron Age, bronze was still in use, but it was iron that was to allow farming on harder soil. There is evidence across the whole of King's Lynn and West Norfolk that people settled in the area during the Iron Age, for example Bloodgate Hill Iron Age Fort, situated in South Creake. Bloodgate Hill is the largest Iron Age Fort to be found in Norfolk, however much of the visible remains disappeared in the 19th century with the levelling of the fields for agricultural use. There is also evidence of an Iron Age to Romano-British settlement in Heacham, comprising of a rectangular ditched enclosure, a small farmstead and three possible remains of circular houses⁵. Another example of settlement in West Norfolk has been found in Sedgeford, where archaeological evidence suggests that people lived in unenclosed settlements and farmed wheat⁶. Farming was important in this period, but it was not an industry as it later became, its purpose was to sustain the immediate community.
- 2.3.12 A foci for settlement in the area came from salt marshes that developed along the coast, which were harvested for salt by settlers in the King's Lynn area. These salt marshes not only had a major impact on the communities that evolved around them, but also on the land formation. The salt was separated from the sand, which resulted in discarded sand piles. Salt production was to continue for many centuries thus creating higher mounds of sand, and thus continually changing the topography of the landscape. Some of these piles became so stable, above the level of the marshland that building was possible.
- 2.3.13 Pastoral farming also developed during this period, concentrating to the east of The Wash and in The Fens. The light soils to the east of The Wash were suitable for sheep farming, which helped, produce fertiliser for the growing crop. In contrast, the Fenland of heavy soil supported cattle farming and the production of dairy produce.

Romano-British (c.43 AD to 4th century AD)

- 2.3.14 The Romans had a major role to play in the changing and continued cultivation of the landscape of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. The Romans continued to farm the area producing cereals and establishing vineyards⁷. In addition to agriculture, salt production was one of the main activities in the area during the Roman period due to the difficulties of getting salt in Rome, which was a highly sort after commodity. This continued use of the salt marshes created an ongoing change in the topography of the Borough.
- 2.3.15 The Romans were the first to attempt to control the water levels of the Fens by building a sea wall along the inner Fen margin⁸. After Roman rule collapsed in Britain the waterways created by the Romans in the Fens were to fall into disuse.

⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk/senseofplace/sharp.shtml>

⁵ <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/conMediaFile.3949>

⁶ <http://www.sharp.org.uk/aboutsharp/research/Inprogress/ironage/ironage.htm>

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Norfolk#Roman

⁸ Countryside Character, (1999) Volume 6: East of England. Countryside Agency, Gloucestershire.

- 2.3.16 Evidence of settlement in this area not only came from the progressive work in the area of draining the Fens, but also from the extensive remains that were left behind after Roman occupation. Several Roman villas have been found in the areas of Flitcham with Appleton and Snettisham. In Hilgay, a Roman farmstead was found and in Burnham Thorpe there is a Roman barrow, which still stands to a height of 3.5 metres. A Roman Fort *Branoduni Castra* and settlement, *Branodunum*⁹ are at Brancaster. The landscape around the fort and settlement has been significantly altered since its construction. There has been speculation as to why there was a fort in Brancaster and the plausible thoughts include using the connections to the sea and trade, as during the Roman period the shoreline would have been closer to the fort. There is also evidence of Roman settlement in other parts of West Norfolk including Sedgeford where archaeological evidence has shown that they attempted to drain the land.
- 2.3.17 Before new settlements were to be created, roads had to be built forming one of the lasting Roman legacies in Britain. One such road in West Norfolk was the 'Peddars Way'¹⁰. This was thought to have originally been a prehistoric route before the Romans developed it. The road runs 75.6 km through Norfolk and was an important route to access the coast. It ran from Knettishall Heath Country Park, Suffolk to Holme-next-the-sea on the north Norfolk coast. The name 'Peddar' however was not to be used until the medieval period when 'Peddar' meant footpath¹¹.
- 2.3.18 Archaeological finds suggest that the Romans travelled around much of West Norfolk. Pottery and coins have been found throughout the whole of West Norfolk. This distribution of Roman coins would suggest that the prosperity of Norfolk was increasing during this period. The added wealth circulating in the area had profound effects on the landscape, with advances in agriculture, building and new innovation, such as the attempt to drain the Fens.

Early Medieval (4th century to 1066 AD)

- 2.3.19 There was little change in the landscape immediately after Roman rule collapsed in Britain. However, later changes include the construction of defensive structures. One such example is Wormegay, where the motte and bailey still survives today. There is also evidence that there was continuation of settlement at Sedgeford during this period.
- 2.3.20 The Early Medieval period also saw the construction of many churches. They would have formed the tallest buildings in the area and distinct features within the villages close to them.¹² An example of these churches is the Church of St Mary, which can be found in South Creake, where there has been a church on this site for over one thousand years.

Medieval (1066 to 16th century AD)

- 2.3.21 In 1066 when William Duke of Normandy invaded England, he brought with him technology and designs from the continent including fortified castles. At first, these castles were to appear mainly from Hastings to London as a defence route back to the coast from London, but after William became King of England, 1066, land was to be distributed out to the men that came with him from Normandy. On all areas of land provided by the King, a castle was built. Nothing like this had ever been seen on the landscape before the Norman Conquest and it completely changed the landscape especially when the wood from these defences was replaced with stone creating lasting structures.

⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brancaster>

¹⁰ http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/B/bigromandig/comesaw/3_49.jsp

¹¹ <http://www.britainexpress.com/countryside/national-trails/peddars-way.htm>

¹² <http://www.roundtowers.org.uk/toptwenty.html>

- 2.3.22 The Domesday Book of 1086 gives no indication of a substantial settlement in King's Lynn at this time. When the town was first established in the 11th century it had direct access to The Wash. The connections by land and sea made King's Lynn an important place for trade. The Domesday Book also mentions that this trade was possibly even greater before the 11th century when King's Lynn was to have important connections to the Netherlands and other important ports in Europe for trade. The 13th century saw the port become one of the most significant and prosperous ports in Britain. During this period West Norfolk was predominately agricultural based, with its main income coming from farming, with the production of wool, salt and grain. By the end of the 13th century, due to the growing importance of the port, King's Lynn had defensive walls built around the port and town.
- 2.3.23 King's Lynn was not the only town or place to gain fortifications. Generally there was an increase in the number of settlements, but to look across the flat fields of Norfolk it would have been the castles that would have dominated the skyline. Some examples of castles within the Study Area are listed below:
- Wormegay Castle, which began as a late Saxon Manorial complex and fortified in the 12th century.
 - Middleton Castle, an 11th century motte and bailey castle, founded by William of Ecouis.
 - Castle Acre and its priory built shortly after the Norman invasion.
 - Castle Rising, which was built in 1138 on heathland with its earthworks covering an area of 4.8 hectares.
 - Middleton Towers, which was originally a 14th century fortified manor house developed in the 15th century.
- 2.3.24 The 13th century saw Norfolk's main emphasis change from military dominance to economic development. It also saw a further attempt to drain the Fens. The Fens were drained through 'assarting', which was the process by which common land was enclosed piecemeal by private landowners. Grazing and salt making were also to continue on the Fens throughout this period.
- 2.3.25 Religious houses also changed the make-up of the landscape and had a role in economic development. It was during the medieval period that monasticism began to take a stronghold in Britain, with several religious orders setting up religious houses throughout Britain, King's Lynn and West Norfolk. Monasteries and priories obtained a huge amount of land, mainly from wealthy benefactors, mainly used for farming. An example of intensively farmed monastic land in West Norfolk can be seen at Castle Acre Priory. This was to become a very wealthy priory and gain extensive lands.
- 2.3.26 The Black Death hit in 1349 and a large percentage of the population died. A number of medieval settlements had a significant loss of population and many villages were abandoned. More than one hundred Norfolk villages mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 had disappeared by 1500¹³. Even though there was a substantial reduction in the population, farming was still important with huge flocks of sheep contributed to the areas economy. However, by the late medieval period Norfolk fell into economic declining.

Post Medieval (16th century to 1900)

- 2.3.27 In the 17th century, a Royal Charter was gained by the Earl of Bedford to turn the Fens into a place for summer grazing. The Dutch engineer Vermuyden¹⁴ created new linear links against the tidal flow. Parallel watercourses were created to control flooding at high tides and during high river levels. The aim was to drain the fens and make use of the good rich soil that lay

¹³ <http://www.norfolkbroads.com/guide/histnorf.htm>

¹⁴ Countryside Character, (1999) Volume 6: East of England. Countryside Agency, Gloucestershire.

under water most of the time. However, since then the rivers have needed to be constantly cleared and scoured with water pumped, diverted and stored. Windmills were first used for pumping water and were then later replaced by steam, diesel and electric pumps. The draining of this land was so advantageous to the productivity and economy of the area that the land was given the status of Grade I soil suitable for intensive arable, horticultural and vegetable production.

- 2.3.28 From the 17th century the 'Peaty Fens' or 'Black Fens' were drained. In the 17th century, this area was made up of rectilinear fields and straight roads, with straight drainage ditches and the raised banks of the artificial drainage channels punctuating them¹⁵. By the late 17th/ early 18th century, wealthy landowners wanted to acquire more land, which led to the draining of some of the salt marshes and sea defence banks being built with the remaining tidal mudflats and salt marshes stretching out to The Wash behind the sea walls.
- 2.3.29 Over 160,000 ha (31%) of Norfolk were enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries¹⁶ by Parliamentary Enclosure Acts. Over large areas, the Acts tidied up the abandonment of open-field agriculture, which had been ongoing for some centuries, or finally brought small commons and wastes into cultivation, sometimes for the first time, or led to the improvement of heaths and fens,
- 2.3.30 It was not just farming and cultivation of the fens that were to have an important role in the change of the visual landscape. Minor settlements began to grow and start to dominate the landscape. By the 17th and 18th centuries, stately homes were coming into fashion. Land that was owned by the house was to be fashioned around the building. Huge parks were enclosed and cultivated for pleasure, for example Houghton Hall, built in c.1722.
- 2.3.31 In the 18th century Norfolk was one of the wealthiest and most densely populated counties in Britain and contained over 700 rural parishes and more than 1,500 manors. West Norfolk is also home to one of the most famous houses in Britain, Sandringham House, which was built in 1870 by Edward VII with its 24 hectares of gardens, 243 hectares of wood and parkland.
- 2.3.32 By 1880 over half of Norfolk was owned by landowners with more than one thousand acres, and their houses, parks, farms and villages dominated much of the landscape of the county. Estates varied enormously in size and therefore wealth, from those who were owned by little more than gentlemen farmers to those controlling estate offices and huge workshops with 40 or 50 farms on their rent roll. The largest estates within the District were: the Houghton Estate (6 – 7,000 ha), owned by the Walpole family, later Lord Cholmondeley; the Stow Bardolph Estate (6,400 – 4,850 ha), owned by the Hare family; and the West Acre Estate (4,000 – 4,450 ha), owned by the Hammond family.
- 2.3.33 The 19th century was to bring competition to Norfolk from the textile industries of Lancashire and Yorkshire, which brought economic collapse in a county unable to compete with the cheap local energy sources of coal and fast streams. This period was to coincide with the economic decline, which was affected the whole country, leading to a major depopulation of the countryside as people started to move to other towns and cities such as Norwich.
- 2.3.34 The industrial revolution was slow in Norfolk, but in 1861, the landscape was to change with the building of the Lynn to Hunstanton railway line. This railway line was to play a huge part in the growth of Hunstanton, which was previously a small coastal village. In 1947, the railway line from London to King's Lynn via Ely was built. There was a growth in population due to the railways and industries were able to grow and expand. The railways

¹⁵ Countryside Character, (1999) Volume 6: East of England. Countryside Agency, Gloucestershire.

¹⁶ An Historical Atlas of Norfolk (Trevor Ashwin & Alan Davison Eds, 2005, Phillimore & Co. Ltd: Chichester)

meant that more people could take day trips and holidays to the coast. A direct result of the railways was that trade was taken away from the rivers, as it was faster and cheaper by rail.

- 2.3.35 During this period, farming fell into decline due to the policy of landlords. Enclosure of land meant that people could no longer graze their stock on free land. This led to small uprisings, one such uprising in King's Lynn and West Norfolk was the Ketts rebellion¹⁷.
- 2.3.36 Until the end of the 19th century, the area of King's Lynn and West Norfolk was mainly open fields and arable land. In 1850, 39% of West Norfolk's workforce worked in agriculture compared to 20% nationally. The 19th century brought about the four-course crop rotation that dramatically altered the landscape with its large geometric enclosed fields.

Modern Period (1901 – present day)

- 2.3.37 The 20th century saw a mass decline in population and economy in Norfolk. Despite the general decline in farming, the World Wars increased farming in the area. During World War II, farming was to become important industry with moving people to the countryside out of the cities. In 1950, the agricultural work force in West Norfolk was 31% compared to 5% in 2000.
- 2.3.38 From the 20th century onwards, there has been a large increase in tourism in the area concentrating in areas such as King's Lynn and the coast around Hunstanton due to the vast picturesque countryside and the visual remains of its heritage, as described in the Forces for Change (Section 2.5) below.
- 2.3.39 Since the start of the 20th century, development has occurred unevenly across the Borough, with most occurring in strategic towns such as King's Lynn and the smaller market towns. Large areas of arable land and fens still remain sparsely populated and isolated. 'Redevelopment of Lynn in the 1960's destroyed much of its intimate and historic street pattern, yet an important slice of Lynn's rich urban fabric remains and sympathetic housing developments and conversions are repopulating the town centre'¹⁸. Even now King's Lynn is still undergoing change with a 250-berth marina planned, which will be surrounded by apartments, hotels, shops etc¹⁹. Development is not the only key function at work. In some areas the Fens are being allowed to revert back into a slatmarsh and wildlife habitat, which in turn will act as a natural sea defence.

Historic Environment Designations

- 2.3.40 The Borough's landscape is the product of human activity over thousands of years. A variety of historic environment features within the Study Area are protected by both formal and informal designations and legislation in recognition of their historical and archaeological value, both locally and nationally. These include:
- **Scheduled Monuments:** There are 129²⁰ nationally important archaeological sites within King's Lynn & West Norfolk (compared to 432 in Norfolk as a whole), which are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979).
 - **Conservation Areas:** There are 46²¹ historical areas of towns and villages in West Norfolk of special architectural or historical interest protected under the listed Building and Conservation Areas Act (1990) (compared to 275²² in Norfolk as a whole).

¹⁷ http://www.bbc.co.uk/legacies/myths_legends/england/norfolk/article_1.shtml

¹⁸ Richards, P (1997) King's Lynn. Phillimore, Butler and Tanner LTD.

¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King's_Lynn#Today

²⁰ http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/heritagecounts/2005_pdfs/eoe.doc

²¹ Heritage Counts The State of the East of England's Historic Environment Statistical Appendix (English Heritage, 2005)

- Listed buildings: There are 111 Grade 1, 153 Grade II* and 1614 Grade II listed buildings of architectural merit, protected under the Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act (1990) (compared to 532 Grade I, 817 Grade II*, and 9098 Grade II in Norfolk as a whole).²³
- Registered Historic Parks and Gardens: There are five²⁴ historically designed landscapes within King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough included on the English Heritage non-statutory national Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest (compared to 51²⁵ in Norfolk as a whole). These are:
 - Houghton Hall;
 - Hunstanton Hall;
 - Sandringham House;
 - Stradset Hall; and
 - The Walks.

2.4 Past and Current Perceptions

- 2.4.1 West Norfolk has captured the imagination of many artists and writers and has been described through writing and poetry. A series of selected quotes are set out below:

Artistic Associations

- 2.4.2 There are a limited number of artists associated with this area. Artists that have spent time within the area include John Constable and Prince Charles. John Constable, the son of a farmer, spent much of his life devoted to drawing and painting the local landscape. In 1794 Constable made a sketching tour of Norfolk before he went on to join the Royal Academy School.
- 2.4.3 Sandringham has also drawn the attention of artists. Prince Charles is an avid painter of his home of Sandringham, while the modern painter Sean Wright²⁶ has produced a number of watercolours of West Norfolk, including watercolour painting of the mists around Sandringham.
- 2.4.4 Henry Bell was an accomplished architect, artist and author of the area. He is best known for his local works, including the design of the Custom House, which was built in 1683, and North Runcton Church. As an artist, he produced a unique set of prints featuring King's Lynn, and as an author he wrote an early description of King's Lynn. He also had a part to play in the architectural design of Houghton Hall in the 1920s and 1930s.

Descriptive Writings and Literary Associations

- 2.4.5 The fens cover land from the Wash across Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, and West Norfolk. They were once a swampy wilderness, but are now intricate waterways crossing agricultural land. In the 19th century Charles Kingsley²⁷ wrote about the loss of the marshes:

'Gone are the ruffs and reeves, spoonbills, bitterns and avocets ... Ah well at least we shall have meat and mutton instead, and no more typhus and ague'.

²² Heritage Counts The State of the East of England's Historic Environment Statistical Appendix (English Heritage, 2005)

²³ www.imagesofengland.org.uk

²⁴ Heritage Counts The State of the East of England's Historic Environment Statistical Appendix (English Heritage, 2005)

²⁵ Heritage Counts The State of the East of England's Historic Environment Statistical Appendix (English Heritage, 2005)

²⁶ www.seanwright.co.uk

²⁷ Kingsley, C. cited in (1999) Countryside Character, Volume 6: East of England. Countryside Agency, Gloucestershire.

- 2.4.6 In 1906, in his book of essays, *Hills and the Sea*, Hilaire Belloc²⁸, an author less associated with the Fens, was struck by the unique qualities of the land:

'Upon the very limit of the Fens, not a hundred feet in height, but very sharp against the level, there is a lonely little Hill. From the edge of that hill the land seems very vague; the flat line of the horizon is the only boundary, and the horizon mixes into water clouds. ... Great catastrophes have certainly overcome this countryside ... it is probable that, coincidentally with every grave lesion in the continuity of our civilisation, the Fens suffered, for they always needed the perpetual attention of man to keep them fully inhabited and cultured. Nowhere that I have been in the world does the land fade into the sea so inconspicuously.'

- 2.4.7 On his journey through the Fens Daniel Defoe (1660 – 1731) described this area as being 'the soak of no less than thirteen countries'²⁹

- 2.4.8 John Clare wrote about 19th century rural life, mainly the area of West Norfolk, he described the undrained fen³⁰ as:

*'Here tempests howl
Around each flaggy plot
Where they who dread man's sight the water fowl
Hide and are frightened not'*

- 2.4.9 Almost all the main drains we have today were invented during the 18th and 19th centuries; and the challenge for mankind to drain the Fens brought together foreigners, religious refugees, the English aristocracy and prisoners of war. A *Poet's Vision of Drained Fens and Marshes*, which has been popularly attributed to Samuel Fortrey, Director of Bedford Land Corporation, in the mid-17th century reads:

*'I sing Floods muzzled and oceans tam'
Luxurious rivers govern'd and Reclaimed,
Water with Banks confin'd as in a Gaol
Till kinder Sluces let them go to Bail
Streams curb'd with Dams like Bridles, taught t'obey
And run as strait, as if they saw their way.*

*There shall a change of Men and manners be;
Hearts, thick and tough as Hydes, shall feel Remorse,
And souls of Sedge shall understand Discourse,
New hands shall learn to Work, forget to Steal,
New legs shall go to church, new knees shall kneel.'*

- 2.4.10 Fanny Burney (1752-1840) was a 19th century English novelist and diarist from West Norfolk and greatly admired by Jane Austin. Her first novel was published anonymously in 1778.

Historical Associations

- 2.4.11 King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough was home to a number of historical figures. These included:

²⁸ Hills and the Sea, H Belloc, 1906, Methuen & Co Ltd: London

²⁹ From Punt to Plough – A History of the Fens, Rex Sly, 2003 Sutton Publishing Ltd: England

³⁰ Clare, J. cited in (1999) Countryside Character, Volume 6: East of England. Countryside Agency, Gloucestershire.

- Captain Vancouver, originally from West Norfolk, sailed his ship to the northwest coast of America and declared it British Columbia. Vancouver, Canada's largest port was named after him.
- Reverend Audrey took his inspiration for Thomas the Tank Engine from the tramway that went from Wisbech to Upwell.
- Burnham Thorpe had a notable association with Lord Nelson who was born there. It was his intention that he should be buried in his hometown, but he was instead buried at St Paul's Cathedral.
- Frederick Savage invented the steam-powered merry-go-round with the first moveable horses³¹.
- Composer Vaughn Williams wrote his famous 'Norfolk Rhapsody' after visiting King's Lynn and meeting and listening to local people perform their folk music.

2.5 Forces for Change in the Landscape

- 2.5.1 Use of land for housing, minerals, recreation, energy generation and other activities have resulted in a general erosion of the character, quality and diversity of the landscapes within the Study Area since the mid-twentieth century. The cumulative effects of small-scale and incremental changes have had a particularly marked effect on the character of the landscape.
- 2.5.2 The pace, mixture and scale of landscape will continue to change in the future, which may impact, positively or negatively, upon those qualities that make the landscape special. A key challenge is to understand, manage and direct future positive change in the landscape in ways that conserve and enhance its essential characteristics and valued attributes, whilst enabling sensitively designed development to be accommodated to meet social and economic need.
- 2.5.3 The key global, national and local forces for change that affect the character of the Study Area's landscapes are considered under the following main headings:
- Agriculture, Land Management and Diversification;
 - Socio-Economic Characteristics;
 - Infrastructure, Transport and Traffic;
 - Built Development;
 - Tourism and Water-based Recreation;
 - Climate Change; and
 - Renewable Energy.

Agriculture, Land Management and Diversification

- 2.5.4 Agricultural activity is a vital aspect of the rural environment within the Study Area and is a primary factor in shaping the character of the landscape. The Study encompasses a highly productive arable farming area. Pasture is not extensive, except where drainage is a constraint on cultivation.
- 2.5.5 Agriculture has the ability to substantially enhance and detract from the character of the landscape in a relatively short period of time, primarily due to an increase in mechanisation and intensive practices. These have since the 17th Century and in particular over the last fifty years, contributed to the changes in the rural environment through intensive cropping, loss of

³¹ <http://www.thegalloper.com/backstories/backfreddie1.htm>

field boundaries, introduction of a larger-scale field pattern, drainage of marshes/wetlands, and the introduction of a larger-scale field pattern, drainage of marshes/wetlands and fens, and the introduction of new farm buildings. Pastures and coastal grazing marshes are dependent on appropriate livestock grazing practices. On some coastal grazing marshes scrub encroachment is becoming a problem due to lack of grazing/management.

- 2.5.6 Changes in farming practice and fluctuations in the agricultural economy have an important impact and these changes will only increase, as global markets become a major influencing factor. For example, the production of Sugar Beet (and associated agricultural practices) and the development of reservoirs have had a significant impact on the agricultural landscape. Whilst the effects of post-1945 agricultural change on landscape character are well understood, future changes may result from increasing competition in a global market place, ongoing from the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the proposals of the Government Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food, including proposed Entry-Level Agri-Environment Scheme (ELS) and Higher Tier Scheme, are yet to become clear. There may be ongoing adverse effect on character, as well as important opportunities to enhance and restore character as a result of changes in policy.
- 2.5.7 Historically the fens south and west of King's Lynn were waterlogged and unsuitable for growing crops (Gerrard, 2003). In the 17th Century a massive project was undertaken to drain the fens and make use of the good, rich soil and peat that lay under water most of the time. Since then through constant maintenance of the rivers and drainage channels, arable fields have been created. In many areas the rivers and their banks are substantially higher than the surrounding fields they drain through the shrinkage of the soils as the land dries out. However even now the fens are still at constant risk from flooding.
- 2.5.8 The drained fens now form some of the best quality agricultural land in Britain creating the basis for growing a wide range of crops in characteristically large open fields. The basis of agriculture in the Study Area is a rotation of potatoes, wheat and sugar beet but, in addition, other cereal crops, vegetables (such as peas, beans, brassicas, carrots and celery) and fruit (such as strawberries) are grown. The Fens are also used for horticulture and production of bulbs. The intensive agricultural regimes in the area have led to the loss of peat leaving relatively unfertile soils composed of a mixture of sand or clay and silt.
- 2.5.9 The future pressure on the land in the area comes from further intensification of the fens, however, there is also possible future potential for conservation and enhancement of the remaining semi-natural fenland habitat. There is also potential through agri-environmental schemes such as Environmental Stewardship to encourage farmers to make changes to their farming practices that would help restore the loss of important habitats and features within the landscape.
- 2.5.10 The key issues affecting landscape character include:
- Decrease in woodland and tree cover.
 - Renewable energy;
 - Continuing decline/loss of landscape features such as hedgerows, field margins and farm ponds as a result of maximising field size, lack of appropriate management and spray drift.
 - Soil erosion as a result of autumn cultivation of arable crops.
 - Soil shrinkage and drop of levels due to the desiccation of the former fens.
 - Increased pressure for new uses of 'marginal' land, including smallholdings, leisure uses and pony paddocks.
 - Loss of grazing marsh in past through arable conversion.
 - Potential loss of limited grazing marsh back to salt marsh through managed retreat.

- Loss of salt marsh through coastal squeeze.
- Flooding of the fenland through failure of the riverbanks and pumps that maintain the water levels.
- Increase in large arable farm units, which may lead to further homogenisation of the landscape, reduction in biodiversity and potential demand for more centralised and large-scale buildings such as grain storage facilities.
- Farm diversification such as the adoption or reuse of farm buildings for commercial, industrial and storage uses, which may conflict with historical/architectural character and the introduction of new industrial crops;
- Mineral extraction;
- Caravans and storage (large sheds and polytunnels);
- Growth of biomass crops.

Socio-Economic Characteristics

- 2.5.11 The social and economic characteristics of the towns in the Study Area, including King's Lynn play an important role in the process of future change and regeneration within the region. In recent years there has been a change in the structure and type of employment away from traditional manufacturing and agriculture to the service industries including retail, tourism, education, office employment and the high-tech sector. Tourism is also a source of rural employment in the fens, around the Wash and in towns such as King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton. Commuting out of the Study Area to Norwich, Peterborough, Cambridge and London for employment is also significant.
- 2.5.12 The town centres, local centres within urban neighbourhoods and village shops provide the social economic focus of communities within the Study Area. The last 10 to 15 years have seen many changes in retailing, including the growth of regional shopping centres, the growth of out-of-town retail parks, extended opening hours and Sunday trading, and more recently internet shopping. All of these changes have had an effect on existing town and local centres. In particular employment opportunities have increased significantly in King's Lynn with the expansion of the Central Area and the Urban Renewal Area.
- 2.5.13 Key socio-economic characteristics of King's Lynn and West Norfolk include:
- In April 2001 there was an estimated 135345 residents with a population structure of 49% male and 51% female, which was about average for the East of England region.
 - The population density in 2001 averaged 0.95 people per square kilometre, which is below average for the region.
 - In 2001 there was an unemployment rate of 2.57% of all economically active people aged 16-74.

Infrastructure, Transport and Traffic

- 2.5.14 Reflecting the national trend, the Study Area has seen increasing levels of car usage. This is leading to major congestion, pollution problems and pressures for new road schemes in the countryside between the towns, and road improvements that significantly affect landscape character. Upgrading of the rail network may create new types of pressure and the building of new multi-modal transport interchanges.
- 2.5.15 Throughout the Study Area there is a comprehensive network of major roads, which provide connections between the towns in the area to King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton and also outside the area including London, Peterborough, Norwich and Cambridge. King's Lynn forms an important nodal point where major transport routes converge. These routes include four trunk roads (A10, A47, A17 and A134), a direct, electrified, rail service to

London and Cambridge, an extensive system of inland navigable waterways, and sea links to northern and eastern Europe.

2.5.16 The European context is emphasised by the inclusion of the A47 trunk road, the London-King's Lynn railway and the port of King's Lynn in the Trans European Network.

2.5.17 The key issues affecting landscape character include:

- Construction of new roads, bypasses and service stations, including the introduction of new structures, lighting and earthworks into the landscape.
- Road improvements that can have an urbanising effect, especially on rural lanes, by road widening, straightening and introduction of features such as kerbs, paving, highway lighting, visibility splays and signage.
- Increased requirement for parking provision in villages and towns popular with tourists, such as Hunstanton.

Built Development

2.5.18 The pressures of development are a result of locally generated needs for requirements such as a strong housing market, jobs and transport. Urban development has placed an increasing pressure on all aspects of the landscape, over the last fifty years in particular. This has resulted in urban expansion into undeveloped rural areas, redevelopment and intensification of urban areas, increasing urbanisation and development of rural villages. The urban fringe is often used to locate access roads, sewage works, waste disposal facilities and intensive recreation uses. However, the urban fringe also provides a setting for urban areas, and often contains important landscape features and/or habitats.

2.5.19 Relatively high levels of development have been absorbed by King's Lynn, Downham Market and the other smaller market towns in the Study Area, but there is a constant need for the provision of new houses and services. However, Green Belt policy has helped to constrain development and control the expansion of settlements.

2.5.20 There is however, a significant and quantifiable lack of affordable housing within West Norfolk. New development may well help reduce the need but the scale of the problem is significant as demand outstrips supply. The position of affordable housing in the Borough needs to be addressed. Due to the good transport links to London and Cambridge, people from those areas are choosing to live in West Norfolk, where the house prices are significantly lower. This has led to local people being unable to afford to buy houses in the Study Area. There are also concentrations of second and holiday homes in parts of the Study Area, which limits the scope for some groups such as first time buyers, young families and single professionals to purchase houses in the area. Migration of people into the area on retirement also has an impact on local house prices.

2.5.21 The key issues affecting landscape character include:

- Quality of built environment.
- Loss/erosion of urban open spaces and of tree cover.
- Loss of night-time remoteness by lighting at urban fringes and street lights;
- Planting of non-native species.
- Decline in the condition of landscapes in the urban fringe, with problems such as lack of management of hedgerows/trees, poorly managed horse paddocks and fly-tipping.

- Loss of domestic gardens and hedges.
- Housing growth at the periphery of towns can extend the urban character of these areas into the landscape, as increased noise and light pollution and development leads to an urbanising effect on the rural landscape and loss of tranquillity.
- New strategic initiatives to maintain and enhance existing green spaces and corridors while creating a new provision of green infrastructure, as an integral part of new development.

Tourism and Water-based Recreation

2.5.22 Tourism is an important part of the local economy, particularly in the coastal areas and King's Lynn. In recent years there has been a substantial increase in the number and proportion of people playing sport and taking part in recreational activities. In addition the many 'traditional' villages and the countryside in the Study Area are an attraction in their own right with many people attracted to buy second homes. The rivers and drainage channels flowing through the area and in particular the Fens are important for informal and formal recreation such as angling, canoeing, sailing, boating, cycling and walking along set routes.

2.5.23 The key issues affecting landscape character include:

- Disturbance of habitat by inappropriate recreation.
- Increased desire for public access to the coast, which would potentially lead to, increased disturbance and truncation of habitats such as marsh and salt marsh.
- Increased desire for water-based activities, including boat trips.
- Pressure from tourism to increase the capacity and size of caravan and camping areas and their associated facilities.
- Continued demand for golf courses, driving ranges and associated facilities.
- Localised fence clutter through management for recreation.
- With a high proportion of houses owned by weekend and holiday visitors, the villages would experience extremes of occupation. In the summer and at weekends they are busy and there can be problems with parking. At other times, they can be very quiet.

Climate Change

2.5.24 It is widely acknowledged that global climate change is inevitable, and that it is likely to have significant physical impacts on the landscape. The East of England is particularly sensitive to the effects of climate change. Changes in the form of increased temperatures, wetter winters and more extreme weather events have been identified in the last 10 years. The scenarios produced by the UK Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP02) suggests by 2080 the UK is likely to experience:

- Annual temperature rises by between 2 and 3.5°C.
- More frequent high summer temperatures and very cold winters becoming increasingly rare.
- Winters becoming wetter and summers becoming drier.
- More frequent summer droughts, winter flooding and storms.
- Sea-levels rising between 26 and 86 cm above the current level.

2.5.25 Whilst there are still uncertainties regarding exact changes at regional and local levels, it is clear there could be both direct and indirect impacts on landscape character. The coastal and fenland areas are critical and irreplaceable natural assets supporting diverse internationally important species composition, habitat fragmentation, water resources, soils, agricultural land use, recreation and tourism and cultural heritage.

2.5.26 There is future pressure for further intensification of the coastal grazing marsh and fenland habitats, however there is also possible future potential for saltmarsh habitat creation and restoration through managed realignment along certain stretches of the coastline.

2.5.27 The key issues affecting landscape character include:

- Increases in sea levels, especially if coupled with increases in storm activity, may cause greater erosion of habitats such as intertidal mudflats and salt marsh and also soil erosion.
- Rising sea levels may also affect agricultural land, which is currently located on reclaimed marshland.
- Rich agricultural land below 5m AOD is at risk of saline intrusion from rising sea levels. There may be an increased requirement for irrigation reservoirs to store winter rainfall and for use of irrigation equipment etc. in summer. Traditional arable crops may also be replaced by more summer drought tolerant species such as sunflowers and maize.
- Damage to historic landscapes and archaeological sites may occur through erosion from sea level rise and flooding, as well as through changes in farming practice and soil desiccation.
- Transference of water via the river system around the Great Ouse due to reduced rainfall.
- Creation of reservoirs, which may involve loss of agricultural land.
- Increasing amount of exotic (non-native) tree planting;
- Loss of existing vegetation as a result of inability to adapt to saltwater conditions.

Renewable Energy

2.5.28 The UK faces difficult challenges in meeting its energy policy goals. Renewable energy as a source of low-carbon, indigenous electricity generation is central to reducing emissions and maintaining the reliability of our energy supplies at a time when our indigenous fossil fuels are declining more rapidly than expected (DTI, 2006). The Government estimates that renewable sources of energy and in particular offshore and onshore wind power could contribute between 10% by 2010 and 15% of current UK electricity by 2015.

2.5.29 As part of meeting the national target, the East of England's electricity generation target from renewable sources by 2010 is 14% (EEEEGR, 2006). King's Lynn and West Norfolk, as a local authority, is required to consider the contribution that the Borough can make to meeting energy needs, as well as the contribution that investment in renewable energy can make in lessening the potential impact of global warming.

2.5.30 The key issues affecting landscape character include:

- The visual impact of on-shore and off-shore (near-shore) wind turbine developments individually and cumulatively on the landscape character.
- The potential changes to established agricultural landscape character arising from large-scale energy-crop production.
- Domestic solar panels and turbines.

3.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION AND EVALUATION

3.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION AND EVALUATION

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 This section provides an overview of landscape character across the Borough as a whole within its national and county context, and provides detailed ‘profiles’ of the 11 Landscape Character Types and 61 Landscape Character Areas identified by the assessment. The profiles describe the character of each Landscape Character Unit, and set out management strategy and objectives and guidelines for informing environmental land management initiatives and land use planning decisions.
- 3.1.2 Judgements about the acceptability, or otherwise, of development and/or land management proposals should take account of:
- (i) the description and evaluation of the relevant Landscape Character Type(s) related to the proposal; and
 - (ii) the description and evaluation of the relevant Landscape Character Area(s) related to the proposal.

3.2 Landscape Character Context

- 3.2.1 The descriptions of Landscape Character Types and Areas within Section 3.3, should be read in conjunction with the information set out below to ensure that the contextual relationship within the wider landscape is understood.

National Character Context

- 3.2.2 The national context for defining the boundaries of the different Landscape Character Units within the Borough is provided by the Countryside Character Areas from the Character of England Map¹.
- 3.2.3 As illustrated on **Figure 3.1**, the Borough contains part of the following five Countryside Character Areas defined at 1:25,000 scale:
- Mid Norfolk (34)
 - The Fens (46)
 - North West Norfolk (76)
 - North Norfolk (77)
 - Breckland (85)
- 3.2.4 The character of these Countryside Character Areas is described in Countryside Character Volumes 4 and 6, published by the Countryside Agency².
- 3.2.5 The Countryside Character Areas provide the contextual framework within which more detailed classifications of Landscape Character Units at 1:50,000 (County) and 1:25,000 (District) can be defined.
- 3.2.6 The Borough is also covered by the Countryside Agency’s National Landscape Typology (Level 1), defined at 1:250,000 scale using GIS (as shown on **Figure 3.2**). This defines a

¹Character of England Map (Countryside Agency, English Nature Rural Development Service, English Heritage, updated 2006).

²Countryside Character Volume 6 – East of England and Volume 4 – East Midlands (Countryside Agency, 1999, CA 10/CA 14).

series of homogenous units of land with a uniform character that are distinct from each other on the basis of definitive natural and cultural attributes.

County Character Context

- 3.2.7 The current landscape character framework for Norfolk County is provided by the Landscape Description Units (Level 2) prepared by the Living Landscapes Project for the County Council. This defines a series of homogenous units of land with a uniform character at a scale of 1:50,000 (as shown on **Figure 3.3**). This information has been incorporated into the definition of Landscape Character Types for the Borough.
- 3.2.8 The Ecological Network within the Borough is shown on **Figure 3.4**.

The Borough Assessment

- 3.2.9 The King's Lynn & West Norfolk and Breckland Wind Turbine Development – *Landscape Assessment, Evaluation and Guidance* Study defined Landscape Character Types for the Study Area at a scale of 1:25,000. The distribution of the 1:25,000 Landscape Character Types are shown on **Figure 3.5** (and also within **Appendix D**).
- 3.2.10 Eleven Landscape Character Types are defined within the Borough. These are:
- Open Coastal Marshes (Type A)
 - Drained Coastal Marshes (Type B)
 - Coastal Slopes (Type C)
 - The Fens: Settled Inland Marshes (Type D)
 - The Fens: Open Inland Marshes (Type E)
 - Wooded Slopes with Estate Land (Type F)
 - Farmland with Woodland and Wetland (Type G)
 - Settled Farmland with Plantations (Type H)
 - Rolling Open Farmland (Type I)
 - Plateau Farmland (Type J)
 - The Brecks – Plantations (Type K).
- 3.2.11 Each of the above generic Landscape Character Types has a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover, biodiversity and historical evolution.
- 3.2.12 Within the 11 generic Landscape Character Types, 61 Landscape Character Areas have been identified within the Borough. The Landscape Character Areas reflect distinctive variations in local character within each Landscape Character Type based on visual analysis in the field to assess of how different combinations of physical features and perceptual qualities such as scale, pattern, tranquillity, cultural associations etc. create areas of distinctive landscape character.
- 3.2.13 The Landscape Character Areas are:

A OPEN COASTAL MARSHES

- A1: Terrington
- A2: North Wootton
- A3: Shepherd's Port
- A4: Heacham
- A5: Old Hunstanton
- A6: Holme

- A7: Thornham and Titchwell
- A8: Brancaster
- A9: Overy Creek

B DRAINED COASTAL MARSHES

- B1: Terrington
- B2: North Wootton
- B3: North Heacham

C COASTAL SLOPES

- C1: Heacham
- C2: Holme to Brancaster
- C3: Burnham Overy

D THE FENS- SETTLED INLAND MARSHES

- D1: Clenchwarton Marsh
- D2: Walpole, Terrington and Clenchwarton
- D3: Terrington St John
- D4: Emneth, West Walton and Walsoken
- D5: Outwell

E THE FENS – OPEN INLAND MARSHES

- E1: Tilney All Saints
- E2: Saddlebow and Wormegay
- E3: Wiggshall St. Mary
- E4: Marshland St. James
- E5: Downham West
- E6: Hilgay Fen
- E7: Welney River
- E8: Denver Sluice
- E9: Methwold
- E10: Feltwell

F WOODED SLOPES WITH ESTATE LAND

- F1: Snettisham and Dersingham
- F2: Sandringham
- F3: Babingley River
- F4: Hillington and Congham
- F5: Pott Row and Roydon Common
- F6: Grimston
- F7: North and South Wootton and Castle Rising

G FARMLAND WITH WOODLAND AND WETLAND

- G1: Bawsey and Leziate
- G2: Middleton
- G3: Gayton and East Winch
- G4: West Winch

H SETTLED FARMLAND WITH PLANTATIONS

- H1: Stow Bardolph
- H2: Fincham
- H3: Denver
- H4: Wereham
- H5: Northwold
- H6: Hilgay and Southery.

I ROLLING OPEN FARMLAND

- I1: Burnham Market
- I2: Ringstead Downs
- I3: Ringstead
- I4: Burnham Thorpe and the Creakes
- I5: Sedgeford
- I6: Bagthorpe
- I7: Shernborne and Flitcham
- I8: Harpley and the Rudhams
- I9: Little Massingham and Castle Acre

J PLATEAU FARMLAND

- J1: Docking
- J2: Bircham
- J3: Great Massingham
- J4: Bircham Newton

K THE BRECKS – PLANTATIONS

- K1: Cranwich

3.3 Landscape Character Types and Areas

- 3.3.1 This section of the report describes the variations in the character of the King's Lynn and West Norfolk Landscape. For the purposes of the Borough-wide assessment, emphasis is placed upon the definition, characterisation and evaluation of Landscape Character Areas at a scale of 1:25,000 within the Landscape Character Types, defined previously in the landscape character assessment undertaken by Land Use Consultants in 2003 for the *Wind Turbine Development – Landscape Assessment, Evaluation and Guidance* for the Study. Detailed 'profiles' for each of the Landscape Character Types shown on **Figure 3.5** are provided and structured as follows:

- Location and Boundaries
- Key Characteristics
- Summary of Visual Character
- Historic Environment Character
- Ecological Character
- Key Forces for Change
- Landscape Condition and Strength of Character
- Management Strategy and Objectives

- 3.3.2 For each Landscape Character Area identified within a Landscape Character Type, a short profile is provided, structured as follows:

- Summary of Visual Character
- Inherent Landscape Sensitivities
- Landscape Planning Guidelines

- 3.3.3 King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough possesses many of the physical and geographical requisites to make a significant contribution towards meeting the UK's international commitments to reducing CO2 emissions. Given the pressures for turbine development within this area, specific guidance was prepared for the Borough in August 2003 (*Wind Turbine Development: Landscape Assessment, Evaluation and Guidance - for Breckland Council and King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council*, by Land Use Consultants).

This document sets out evaluation and guidance relating to wind turbine development for each of the Landscape Character Types and should be referred to for landscape planning guidance in relation to this issue.

- 3.3.4 As acknowledged by the Countryside Agency's guidelines, landscape is a continuum and character does not in general change abruptly on the ground. More commonly, the character of the landscape will change gradually rather than suddenly, and therefore boundaries drawn between Landscape Character Types and Areas shown on **Figure 3.5** should be considered to reflect zones of transition in many cases. In addition, the boundaries drawn around Landscape Character Types and Areas has been defined and mapped at a scale of 1:25,000, and the assessment is therefore only suitable for use at this scale. This should be taken into consideration when the assessment is being used to inform decision-making in relation to development and land management proposals.

A: OPEN COASTAL MARSHES



Location and Boundaries

There are two separate locations of this Landscape Character Type within the Borough. The first is located to the north of the Borough, its northern boundary being entirely defined by intertidal mudflats that extend out to the open waters of The North Sea (referred to here as the North Sea marshes). Its southern boundary is bordered by Coastal Slopes (Landscape Character Type C) that forms a subtle ascending backdrop. The second location forms the most seaward point of the arc of land to the north and north west of King's Lynn – its northern edge abutting the open waters of The Wash and the southern boundary being entirely defined by the sea defence bank that separates it from Drained Coastal Marshes Landscape Character Type (referred to here as The Wash marshes).

Key Characteristics

- A medium scale landscape defined by extensive areas of salt marsh, shingle banks, sand dunes, brackish lagoons and reed beds marking the transition between land and sea. Although expansive and open, small details such as the winding creeks and small fishing boats reduce the sense of scale overall.
- Low lying with elevation predominantly ranging between 0 and 5m AOD.
- A flat landform providing distant and open views across the marsh towards both the sea and inland.
- The saltmarshes are interspersed by tidal creeks and inlets that have a natural, organic form making for an irregular land cover pattern.
- Settlement is notably absent although views can be gained of the villages aligning the A149 in the adjacent Coastal Slopes landscape type.
- The coastal skyline is largely uninterrupted and smooth – giving way to wide open skies. The skyline inland from the North Sea marshes is greatly influenced by built form and the presence of woodland on the adjacent Coastal Slopes. The skyline inland from The Wash marshes is defined by the strong line of the sea defence bank.
- Visible built structures are limited – only evident at Brancaster Beach where there are a number of public facilities including Brancaster Golf clubhouse and toilets.

- Views inland from The Wash marshes are restricted by the prominent sea defence bank (particularly in proximity to Brancaster clubhouse) separating the marshes from the adjacent Drained Coastal Marshes landscape type.
- Views inland from the North Sea marshes are defined by the adjacent Coastal Slopes landscape type.
- Boat masts and posts carrying overhead wires form the main vertical elements. There are no obvious landmark features or strong points of focus.
- In some parts, the presence of people is evident on the North Sea Marshes (this is a popular area for ornithologists and dog walkers and there are two golf courses). The Wash marshes are inaccessible. Birds in flight bring a subtle source of movement but generally both areas feel calm and still.
- These are areas of immense ecological value and scenic beauty – reflected in the landscape (AONB) and biodiversity (SSSI) designations.
- Strong sense of remoteness, tranquillity and wildness – a fluid, dynamic spectacle of sea, saltmarsh, sand and sky.
- Subtly different character, experience and sense of place within the North Sea Marshes to the southwest, in comparison to the Wash Marshes further to the north.

Summary of Visual Character

The elevation of this landscape predominantly ranges from 0-5m AOD – the highest points attributed to the human manipulated sand banks of the golf courses within the North Sea marshes area. Here, the 5m contour line marks the southern extent of the landscape as the land ascends inland to form the Coastal Slopes Landscape Character Type (C). The transition to this adjacent landscape is marked not only by the change in landform and elevation but also by the clear changes in land use and land cover becoming much more influenced by humans, with areas of settlement and managed agricultural land. The southern boundary is entirely defined by the sea defence bank that separates it from the Drained Coastal Marshes Landscape Character Type (B).

The elevation of The Wash marshes is less variable and the transition to the Settled Inland Marshes Landscape Character Type is clearly defined by the sea defence bank. Upper Chalk is overlain by drift deposits of Silty Clay, Sandy Mud and Shell Marl, this Landscape Character Type is characterised by extensive stretches of salt marsh interspersed by a series of intricately winding tidal creeks. Much of the landscape has remained in its natural state and there is an overriding sense of this being a wild landscape with an untamed character. The salt marsh adjoining the waters of The Wash is more uniform in character than that on the North Norfolk Coast which also comprises shingle banks, sand dunes, brackish lagoons, reed beds and some areas that have been drained for agricultural use but which are too small to separate out as another landscape type. These drained areas occur adjacent to the settlement of Holme-next-the-Sea and to the east and west of the River Burn.

Aside from the sand banks, the landform is simple – flat and, combined with the presence of the sea, evokes a very open and exposed character. Apart from boat masts and posts carrying overhead wires, the landscape is largely absent of vertical elements with visual interest very much concentrated on the horizontal plane. This is a medium scale landscape - although expansive and open, small details such as the winding creeks and small fishing boats reduce the sense of scale overall. There are no obvious points of focus or landmark features to draw the eye and settlement is notably absent. The coastal skyline is undeveloped and there is a strong simple break between land and sky. Looking inland from the North Sea marshes, views are defined by the agricultural land, settlement and areas of wooded characterising the adjacent Coastal Slopes.

The marshes adjoining The Wash are inaccessible both to pedestrians and vehicles, aside from the Peter Scott Walk following the line of the sea defence bank. By comparison, access to the marshes adjoining the North Sea is possible and as such human influence, although limited, is more apparent. There are a number of minor roads providing direct access from the A149 with some bordered by

distinctive reed-filled drainage ditches. Public rights of way cross the marshes including the Peddar's Way and Norfolk Coast National Trail. This is a popular area for tourism and informal recreation with dog walkers, horse riders, bird watchers and golfers. Small-scale visitor facilities occur on the North Sea marshes; these are however limited to certain points (Brancaster Sands) and their presence is not apparent across the whole area. Overall, the area presents a dynamic spectacle of sea, saltmarsh, sand and sky, with a strong sense of remoteness and wildness. These qualities are highly valued by residents and visitors and are reflected in the AONB and Heritage Coast designations.

Historic Environment Character

Evidence of past land use along the coastal marshes is widespread, but generally not visible in the landscape today. Since the 1970s, numerous late Palaeolithic and Mesolithic flint artefacts have been collected from the inter-tidal zone at Titchwell and in 1986, 13 worked flints were found *in-situ* on a land surface dating to c.10,000 to 8,000 BP. At this time, the coastline would have been 60-70km further seaward than today, with much of the North Sea a wide, open plain. By the time Seahenge, a Bronze Age timber circle excavated at Holme next the Sea, thought to be a ritual, symbolic or funerary monument, was built in 2049 BC, the coastline lay only several hundred metres to the north of its present position.

Evidence for the use of this area, for activities such as fishing, can still be seen as wooden structures along the foreshore. Two (as yet undated) alignments of timber posts found near Brancaster could be Saxon fish-traps and two groups of timber-lined pits (recorded close to Brancaster harbour), have been reported as being used for storing shellfish after they had been collected from nearby saltmarsh creeks and before they were taken to markets. These pit groups are marked on an Ordnance Survey map from 1906 as 'mussel pits'.

During the post-medieval period ports (for example those at Brancaster and Burnham Overy) thrived, with successful fishing industries, commercial shellfishing and coastal and international trade providing economic prosperity. Harbour facilities, such as timber quays, jetties and revetments were recorded at the ports, and some of these can still be seen today.

Overall there is limited visible built heritage due to the area being marginal throughout the majority of history and prehistory, and the sea reclaiming any structures, which have been built in this area.

Ecological Character

The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:

- Coastal vegetated shingle.
- Saline lagoons.
- Coastal dunes.
- Reedbeds.
- Purple moor and rush pastures.
- Mudflats.
- Lowland meadows.

The nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:

- North Norfolk Coast Ramsar site.
- The Wash Ramsar site.
- The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).
- The Wash Special Protection Area (SPA).
- North Norfolk Coast Special Protection Area (SPA).
- The Wash Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

- Holme Dunes National Nature Reserve (NNR).
- The Wash National Nature Reserve (NNR).
- County Wildlife Sites (CWS).

Key Forces for Change

- Disturbance and erosion of delicate coastline and habitats as a result of water-based recreation activities.
- Potential future sea-level rises, leading to changes in coastal habitats (loss of saltmarsh and mudflats) and land use.
- Potential new small-scale built developments or tall vertical elements within adjacent (Coastal Slopes and Drained Coastal Marshes) Landscape Character Types, which may block or dominate panoramic, open views northwards to the sea.
- Disturbance of sense of remoteness and tranquillity as a result of increased tourist and visitor pressure and increased traffic on rural lanes leading to the seashore.
- Flood protection or managed realignment.
- Potential visual impacts associated with offshore wind turbines.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

The patchwork of reed beds, mudflats, brackish lagoons and reedbeds provide a cohesive visual unit and contribute to a generally undisturbed and natural character. There are very few detracting elements within the type, and general lack of built elements or settlement pattern enhances sense of tranquillity and remoteness. Recognisable sense of place and character is strong, on account of open, expansive views northwards across a dynamic seascape. The overall condition of this landscape is considered to be good.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for this landscape character type should be to conserve the intricate mosaic of inter-tidal mudflats, saltmarshes, lagoons and creeks, which contribute to the strong sense of openness, isolation and tranquility throughout the Open Coastal Marshes. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek to restore degraded areas of coastal vegetated shingle beaches along the North Norfolk Coast and lining The Wash (both core habitat areas³).
- Seek to protect, enhance and where possible expand, habitats of purple moor grass and rush pastures.
- Consider opportunities for managed realignment, where appropriate to local landscape character.
- Seek to protect, enhance and where possible expand, lowland meadow habitats.
- Seek to conserve the intricate network of intertidal mudflats and saltmarshes as important winter-feeding areas for waders and wildfowl.
- Seek to protect and conserve dune systems along the coast as habitats for a rich diversity of flora and salt-tolerant species.
- Seek to manage recreational use of The Wash and North Sea by motorized craft to prevent erosion of saltmarsh.
- Seek to protect and conserve areas of natural brackish lagoons (for example at Holme), and artificial lagoons (for example, at Titchwell), as valuable habitats for invertebrate fauna and feeding sites for wintering and passage waders and waterfowl.

³ See **Figure 3.4:** Ecological Network

- The Management of this Landscape Character Type should also take into account Coastal Management Plans, where available.

Within this Landscape Character Type, the following areas of distinctive character have been defined:

- A1: Terrington**
- A2: North Wootton**
- A3: Shepherd's Port**
- A4: Heacham**
- A5: Old Hunstanton**
- A6: Holme – Next-The -Sea**
- A7: Thornham and Titchwell**
- A8: Brancaster**
- A9: Overy Creek**

A summary of each area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

A1: TERRINGTON

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the northwest of King's Lynn and north of Terrington St Clement, this character area fringes The Wash and encompasses a strikingly flat and low-lying landscape. Consisting of a patchwork of intertidal mudflats and reed beds, the marshes are interspersed with a series of sinuous tidal creeks (resulting in an irregular, organic landscape pattern). Small brackish pools and lagoons, punctuate reed beds and saltmarshes, within a large-scale landscape, which changes dramatically with the ebb and flow of the tides. This intricate combination of mudflats, saltmarshes, reedbeds, dykes, drains, inter-tidal sands and reefs provides a key ecological habitat for a range of invertebrates, wading birds and wildfowl. Prominent sea defence banks (which provide separation from adjacent drained coastal marshes) form strong features along the skyline, within views southwards. A strong sense of openness and exposure predominates throughout the area, with few vertical elements present along the generally undeveloped coastline horizon. Distant views to the waterfront along the River Ouse at King's Lynn, provide focal points to the east, however, the constantly changing colour of the dynamic seascape and wide-open skies, dominates views northwards from the area. There is no apparent settlement pattern within the area, resulting in a general sense of isolation and wildness. Sense of tranquillity is generally strong throughout the area, with occasional disturbance associated with boats using The Wash and visitors walking along the Peter Scott Walk footpath (running along the coastline, upon the most northerly sea bank). At times, the loud overhead noise of planes practising on the bombing ranges associated with RAF Holbeach sporadically disturbs sense of tranquillity.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Very strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout the character area.
- Strong sense of openness, with open views towards a generally undeveloped coastal skyline.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.
- Open, panoramic views across the ever-changing nature of the seascape (The Wash).
- Intricate network of inter-tidal habitats.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the open nature of the mosaic of saltmarsh, mudflats and other inter-tidal habitats.

- Seek to conserve the generally undisturbed, undeveloped character and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve open views across dynamic seascape to the north.
- Seek to conserve the generally rural nature of minor roads and lanes within the area and minimise clutter of signage.

A2: NORTH WOOTTON

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the northeast of King's Lynn and fringing The Wash (and the northeastern side of the channel of the River Great Ouse), this character area encompasses a dynamic combination of intertidal mudflats, saltmarshes, brackish pools, lagoons and reed beds. The area is also situated within Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The landscape is low-lying and strikingly flat. The patchwork of marshes and other habitats are interspersed with a series of sinuous tidal creeks result in an irregular, organic landscape pattern. Small brackish pools and lagoons, punctuate reed beds and saltmarshes, within a large-scale landscape, which changes dramatically with the ebb and flow of the tides. This intricate combination of mudflats, saltmarshes, reedbeds, dykes, drains, intertidal sands and reefs provides a key ecological habitat for a range of invertebrates, wading birds and wildfowl. Prominent sea defence banks (which provide separation from adjacent drained coastal marshes) form strong features along the skyline, within views southwards. A strong sense of openness and exposure predominates throughout the area, with few vertical elements present along the generally undeveloped coastline horizon. The constantly changing colour of the dynamic seascape and wide-open skies, dominates views northwards from the area. There is no apparent settlement pattern within the area, resulting in a general sense of isolation and wildness. Sense of tranquillity is very strong throughout, with only occasional disturbance associated with boats using The Wash.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Very strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout the character area.
- Open, views across the ever-changing nature of the seascape (The Wash).
- Intricate network of inter-tidal habitats.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the open nature of the mosaic of saltmarsh, mudflats and other inter-tidal habitats.
- Seek to conserve the generally undisturbed, undeveloped character and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve open views across dynamic seascape to the north.

A3: SHEPHERD'S PORT

Summary of Visual Character

This predominantly flat, low-lying area fringes the eastern edge of The Wash and is situated to the west of Dersingham village. The southern tip of the area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. Once underlain by shingle (which was extracted for concrete), a series of five saline lagoons dominate the character of this area. The lagoons are separated from the vast expanse of The Wash to the west by a relatively narrow strip of shingle beach. Most of the area is situated within Snettisham Nature Reserve, which recognises the area (and the adjacent Wash) as an important habitat for grey plover, knot, bar-tailed godwit, sanderling, pink-footed goose and shellduck. Several hides are scattered around the lagoons, introducing the only visible built elements within the area, which is generally

devoid of settlement pattern. The shingle beach to the west also provides a habitat for several rare plants and invertebrates and is often used for nesting by ringed plovers and oystercatchers⁴. The often-glistening lagoons dominate landscape character within the area, and are fringed with patches of scrub and several deciduous trees. Overall, there is a relatively strong sense of openness throughout the area, with open views across adjacent drained coastal marshes. A series of informal footpaths provide access to the Nature Reserve, which has a relatively strong sense of tranquillity, particularly along the beach to the south and west, at a distance from the lagoons (some of which also function as angling ponds). At times, the sense of tranquillity is disturbed by the noise and visual intrusion of cars/car parking associated with the lagoons (within the northern part of the area). The character area is only accessible from the north (via Snettisham Beach Road), facilitating a relatively strong sense of isolation within the southern half of the area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity within the southern half of the area.
- Patchwork of key ecological habitats for migratory birds and invertebrates.
- Generally strong sense of openness within views across the area and also across adjacent areas of drained coastal marshes.
- General lack of built elements, with a sense of isolation within the southern part of the area.
- Predominantly undeveloped coastal skyline to the west.
- Seek to conserve the generally undisturbed, undeveloped character and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the predominantly undeveloped coastal skyline.
- Seek to conserve open views across the area, and also open views across adjacent Drained Coastal Marshes.
- Seek to conserve the relatively strong sense of tranquillity within the southern area, and associated undisturbed and undeveloped character.

A4: HEACHAM

Summary of Visual Character

This predominantly flat, low-lying open coastal marsh fringes the eastern edge of The Wash and is situated to the west of Heacham. The stretch of coast lies between the caravan parks at Hunstanton and those at Shepherd's Port to the south. The area is predominantly characterised by flat coastal grassland and rough scrub (used for grazing cattle) which meets the low rising banks that separate the strip of grassland and scrub from the wide expanses of flat sand beaches to the east. Visual interest is added to the grassland by the presence of ditches, long linear lagoons and creeks that run parallel to the shoreline. Caravan parks introduce colour and visual confusion. The coastal margin where the grassland meets the sand beach is characterised by a shingle bank littered with seaweed and other debris deposited by waves. The shingle bank slopes relatively steeply down to the sandy beach below. Expansive, long distance and panoramic views across The Wash and adjacent seascape can be gained from the shingle banks. Particularly towards the more northern, urbanised end. Views include artificial groynes located periodically along the coast below the shingle bank reaching out towards the sea with their timber frames becoming fragmented and broken in places. Behind the groynes, sand is collected forming a flat plateau at the base of the shingle bank slope. The groynes provide some sense of protection to the extensive caravan park and buildings along this part of the coast from the sea. A

⁴ Snettisham Nature Reserve: The wild heart of The Wash (Trail Guide), RSPB/ The Countryside Agency.

network of tracks and footpaths provide access to this landscape. The caravan parks are highly visible from the coastline and also from adjacent landscape character areas. There is a strong sense of tranquillity in places within this area (away from the caravan parks).

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide panoramic views across the beach and the ever-changing nature of the seascape over The Wash.
- Intricate network of inter-tidal habitats.
- Strong sense of tranquillity and isolation within parts of the area.
- Patchwork of scrub and grassland along the landward side of the beach provide key ecological habitats for a wide range of species.
- Relatively strong recognisable sense of place (as a result of panoramic views across adjacent seascape).

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve the open nature of the mosaic of grassland, shingle banks, sand and other inter-tidal habitats.
- Seek to ensure that development avoids prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to conserve and enhance relatively strongly recognisable sense of place within the area.
- Seek to screen, where possible, visually intrusive caravan parks (ensuring that planting is of an appropriate scale and height, which does not interfere with open views across the area).

A5: OLD HUNSTANTON

Summary of Visual Character

This relatively short stretch of open coastal marshes runs from Old Hunstanton to Holme-Next-the-Sea, and encompasses a predominantly flat landscape, which is mostly situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. The northern edge of the area is lined by a series of gently undulating fixed sand dunes. In close proximity to the sand dunes, land-use is dominated by a patchwork of rough grassland and other sand dune related vegetation. To the north, a golf course (with associated mown grassland) exerts a visible human influence and dominates character within this section. The saltmarsh and grassland to the north of the area and along the coastal fringe (and on the seaward side of the River Hun) has a generally untamed and exposed character, in contrast to the golf course. Very few vertical elements are visible, however, views northwards towards the sea are generally limited by the sand dunes. Overall sense of place and tranquillity throughout the area is quite strong (especially at distance from the golf course and caravan park). Settlement pattern within the area is generally sparse, with few buildings, other than a short line to the east of the car park (associated with the golf course). Sense of openness is generally strong, particularly east-west across the area. To the south, views to rising coastal slopes and woodland belts at the foot of these slopes dominate views.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide panoramic views across the beach and ever-changing nature of the seascape over The Wash.
- Intricate network of inter-tidal habitats north of Old Hunstanton.

- Patchwork of salt marsh, scrub and grassland along the landward side of the beach providing key ecological habitats for a wide range of species.
- Generally strong recognisable sense of place.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the strong sense of openness within the character area.
- Seek to conserve and maintain open, panoramic views across the area and also southwards towards the coastal slopes.
- Consider the visual impact of new development (particularly tall vertical developments, both within the character area and adjacent coastal slopes) on the open character area.
- Seek to soften the visual impact of the golf course and further screen car parking from views across the area.

A6: HOLME NEXT-THE-SEA

Summary of Visual Character

This character area encompasses a diverse area of Open Coastal Marshes (characterised by an intricate network of saltmarshes and mudflats). The entirety of the area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. A series of fields have been reclaimed inland to form drained fields. These are too small, however, to warrant definition as a different Landscape Character Type. A network of straight ditches and creeks drain the fields creating a mosaic of small to large sized pastoral and arable fields. The only building in the area is The Firs located amongst a cluster of coniferous trees to the north of Broad Water. This building is accessed by a track, which begins at Old Hunstanton. The Peddar's Way and Norfolk Coastal Path runs around the seaward side of the dry land in the area. Apart from the cluster of deciduous trees west of Staithe Lane, the area is open and has long distance views across the fields, creeks and drains and over the saltmarsh and mudflats to the north. The sand dunes, salt marsh and mudflats delineate the extent of the reclaimed land. From here views are panoramic encompassing the ever-changing seascape of Brancaster Bay with the sands and saltmarshes of the coast. The area has a strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness. Particularly within the northern part of this area, landscape pattern is intricate and is periodically inundated by the sea at high tide. Small boats punctuate the horizon and contribute to a strong recognisable sense of place.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intricate landscape structure including salt marshes and reclaimed agricultural land.
- Wide panoramic views across fields and encompassing an ever-changing seascape and coast line.
- Intricate network of intertidal habitats.
- Strong sense of openness, with open views towards a generally undeveloped coastal skyline.
- Strong recognisable sense of place, as a result of extensive views and recognisable elements such as small boats.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area and generally strong sense of tranquillity throughout.
- Seek to conserve the open nature of the mosaic of saltmarsh, mudflats and other intertidal habitats.
- Seek, where possible, to conserve open views across the sea and towards the open salt marshes north of Old Hunstanton.

- Seek to ensure that development avoids prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.

A7: THORNHAM AND TITCHWELL

Summary of Visual Character

This character area is situated to the north of Thornham and Titchwell and encompasses a large intricate expanse of intertidal Open Coastal Marshes, within the Norfolk Coast AONB. The area includes a dynamic patchwork of saltmarsh and mudflats, dissected by a complex network of ditches, creeks and lagoons along the coastal fringe. The proximity to the sea creates an ever-changing environment highly dependent on tides. North of Titchwell Nature Reserve a series of vegetated sand dunes provide protection for the diverse grass and marshland landscape behind them. Footpaths run along these dunes providing access to the beach. In addition a few tracks and paths pass through this delicate environment emanating from the A149. Panoramic, open views are a characteristic of this landscape, with an ever-changing seascape in the foreground view. There is a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity along this section of coastline. Water within the tidal creeks often glints and shimmers (especially within views from Coastal Slopes to the south). Recognisable sense of place is strong throughout the area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide open panoramic views across the salt marshes and the ever-changing seascape.
- Intricate network of inter-tidal habitats.
- Strong sense of openness, with views northwards towards the coast.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the intricate network of inter-tidal habitats lining this coastal strip.
- Seek to conserve the isolated and rural nature of the landscape.
- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve the open nature of the mosaic of saltmarsh, mudflats and other inter-tidal habitats.

A8: BRANCASTER

Summary of Visual Character

Located to the north of Brancaster and Burnham Deepdale, this Landscape Character Area encompasses an intricate network of intertidal habitats. The entirety of the area is within Norfolk Coast AONB. A comprehensive network of creeks and ditches, winding through large expanses of salt marsh and mudflats create an ever-changing, delicate environment. The area is very flat with few trees or vertical features to break up the horizontal coastline. The Royal West Norfolk Golf Club is located to the north of Brancaster on an area of slightly raised ground surrounded by sand dunes and salt marsh accessed by a track running parallel to the sand dunes. This building is protected by a series of relatively harsh (rock armour) sea defences. Occasional isolated cottages and marshside buildings contribute to a generally scattered settlement pattern. The area has a strong sense of isolation and remoteness throughout, with a footpath crossing the salt marsh and mudflats, which winds along a sleepered boardwalk to access the sand dunes at Scolt Head. Throughout the entirety of this area, open and expansive views of sea and sky dominate the visual horizon. Sense of tranquillity

is strong, with the call of sea birds contributing to the overall strong recognisable sense of place. The area is overlooked by the linear settlements of Brancaster and Brancaster Staithe, which nestle along the A149 road corridor to the south.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide open panoramic views across the salt marshes and the ever-changing seascape.
- Intricate network of inter-tidal habitats.
- Strong sense of openness, with open views towards a generally undeveloped coastal skyline.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the intricate network of inter-tidal habitats, and strong landscape pattern.
- Seek to conserve the isolated and rural nature of the landscape.
- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve the open nature of the mosaic of saltmarsh, mudflats and other inter-tidal habitats.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale or incremental development within Brancaster and Brancaster Staithe, corresponds with existing settlement pattern and is well screened.

A9: OVERY CREEK

Summary of Visual Character

Overy Creek Open Coastal Marshes are located to the north of Burnham Norton and Burnham Overy, within Norfolk Coast AONB. The area is characterised by an intricate network of intertidal habitats including creeks and ditches winding through areas of drained and natural saltmarsh and coastal grassland. Tracts of Overy and Norton Marshes have been reclaimed to form drained land used for grazing cattle. Overy Marshes are protected from the sea by the vegetated sand dunes at Gun Hill. The coastal marshes are sparsely populated with occasional farms inhabiting the drained marshes. Channels separate the drained marshes from the salt marsh. Other than Peddars Way and Norfolk Coastal Path, which follows the landward side of this channel to the dunes on Gun Hill, access across the area is not marked. There is a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout the area. The masts of boats (moored within the creek) provide striking vertical elements within views to the dynamic coastal skyline backdrop. Long distance, panoramic, expansive views over the salt-marshes towards the dynamic, often glittering sea, contribute to a strong recognisable sense of place overall. To the south, a sense of enclosure is provided by the rising Coastal Slopes backdrop.

Evaluation

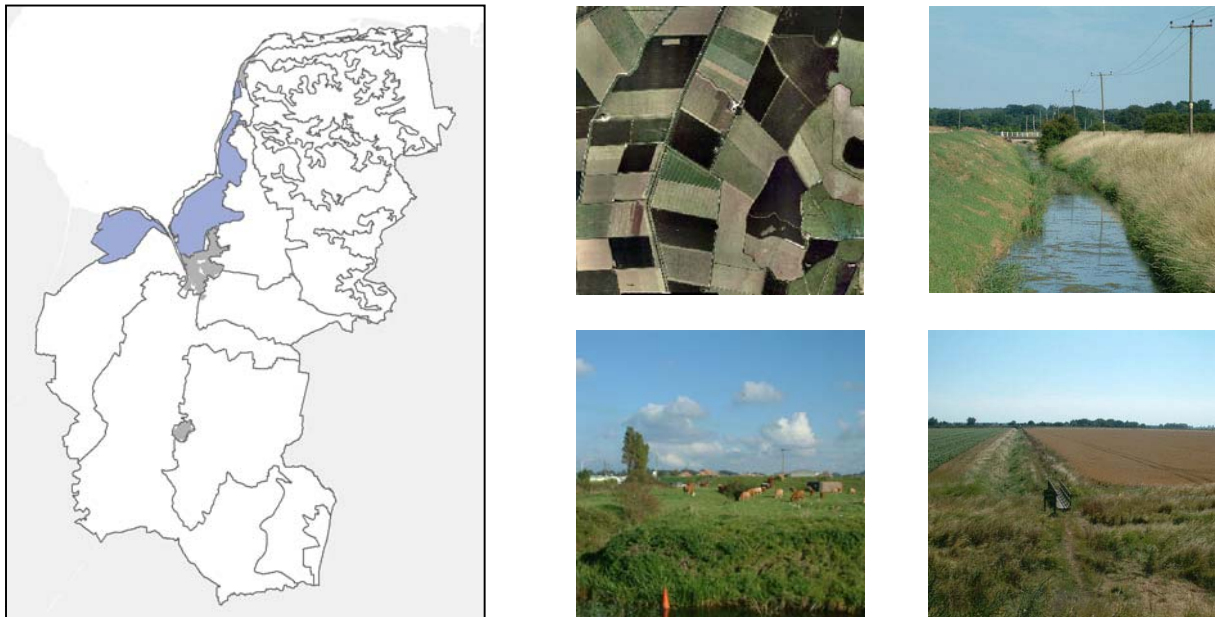
Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide open panoramic views across the salt marshes and the ever-changing seascape.
- Intricate network of inter-tidal habitats.
- Strong sense of openness, with open views towards a generally undeveloped coastal skyline.
- Strong recognisable sense of place, overall.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the intricate network of inter-tidal habitats and recognisable landscape pattern.
- Seek to conserve the isolated and rural nature of the landscape.
- Seek to conserve the open nature of the mosaic of saltmarsh, mudflats and other inter-tidal habitats.
- Seek to conserve the overall strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness throughout the character area.

B: DRAINED COASTAL MARSHES



This Landscape Character Type occurs within the north west of the Study Area. The entire northern and western edge is defined by a series of sea wall defences separating this landscape from the adjacent Open Coastal Marshes (Type A). To the south, the drained marshes are bound by The Fens – Settled Inland Marshes Landscape Character Type. The Wooded Slopes with Estate land and the Coastal Slopes (Type C) define the boundary to the east.

Key Characteristics

- A large scale landscape with an overwhelming sense of openness and exposure due to the simplicity of the land cover and landform.
- This area was reclaimed from the waters of The Wash and is delineated on its seaward extent by extensive sea defence walls.
- The land use is simple and repetitive dominated by large, geometric arable fields that are intensively farmed and bordered by drainage ditches and dykes.
- Towards the east, the landscape appears less intensively farmed and there is an increase in tree cover, low, gappy hedges are a feature.
- The landform is uncomplicated and flat with an elevation range between –2m AOD and 5m AOD.
- The River Great Ouse and the Babingley River cut through the landscape with significant sections canalised and embanked. A number of smaller, minor watercourses also meander through the marshes before entering The Wash.
- Views are both distant and panoramic, defined by wide open skies and a simple uninterrupted horizon often defined by the sea wall.
- There is a notable absence of vertical elements across most of the area and there are no obvious landmarks or points of focus aside from the strong visual line of the sea walls and embanked rivers.
- Settlement and built structures are largely absent aside from the occasional isolated farmstead and the stationary caravans (and associated facilities) at Shepherd's Port and west of Heacham.
- Although greatly influenced by humans, the majority of the landscape feels both physically and perceptually remote.
- There are some localised pockets of human activity (such as at the caravan sites) but for the most part the landscape is remote, peaceful and still.

- Pedestrian access is limited – minor roads becoming unmade tracks lead to individual farms with Admiralty Point, Snettisham Scalp and Heacham Harbour marking the most seaward points accessible by car. The Peter Scott Walk follows the line of the sea defence bank lining the Wash, to the west of King's Lynn.
- Mixed shelterbelts, both aligning fields and field junctions, occur in some areas but are dispersed and infrequent and do not provide any degree of enclosure.
- Views into the adjacent Settled Inland Fens are for the most part uninterrupted. The rising slopes of the Wooded Slopes with Estateland to the east are apparent due to the changes in landform and land cover. From these elevated areas, to the east, there are extensive views over the Drained Coastal Marshes.

Summary of Visual Character

The Drained Coastal Marshes is an engineered landscape - tamed and restrained through human intervention. These marshes are delineated to the north and west by a series of sea wall defences – the construction of which largely occurred in the 17th Century, allowing the land to be reclaimed from The Wash. Beyond these sea walls are the salt marshes, characterised as the Open Coastal Marshes, that give way to tidal mudflats stretching out into the sea. The sea defences form a prominent line on the horizon and although for the most part prevent views to the coast, the influence of the sea is strongly felt. The landform is uncomplicated – flat with an elevation range of between –2m and 5m AOD. To the south there is little landform variation making for a subtle transition to The Fens – Settled Inland Marshes. To the east however, the change in character is more distinct – defined by the sloping landform, heightened elevation and the heavily wooded cover that defines the Wooded Slopes with Estate land Landscape Character Type. Although for the most part filtered by woodland, there are some long ranging views from this more elevated landscape over the Drained Coastal Marshes.

The solid geology of this landscape is defined by Mudstone and Sandstone of the Upper Jurassic era, overlain by drift deposits of silty marine or estuarine clay. These give rise to soils with a large water storage capacity allowing intensive farming. The land use is dominated by large arable fields delineated by a regular network of drainage ditches. The fields are particularly large to the south and west of the area – on either side of the River Great Ouse/Lynn Channel, which follows a straight north west course through the landscape towards the sea. Moving eastwards, closer to the boundary of the wooded slopes, the fields reduce in size and have a more organic, irregular form. This change in pattern and scale is mirrored by the course of the River Babingley – intricately meandering between the more irregular fields but becoming canalised - following an angular, linear course across the large geometric fields towards its confluence with the Great Ouse.

The drainage ditches are often imperceptible unless at close range or where lined with rushes. The subtlety of these field margins and the general absence of vertical components give the impression of a landscape without divisions and exaggerate the overriding sense of openness and exposure that pervades. There is a distinct lack of buildings within the marshes and aside from caravan parks at Shepherd's Port and on the west of Heacham, minor roads becoming unmade tracks, provide access to isolated farmsteads. The general absence of settlement and access routes through the landscape evokes a 'vacant' character and there is a strong overriding sense of remoteness, both physical and perceptual.

The stationary caravan parks, beach huts, car parks and visitor facilities such as snack bars and cafes at Shepherd's Port and Heacham Beach bring localised variation in character and increase activity within the landscape particularly during the summer months. Farmland surrounding these caravan parks appears less intensively managed than the more isolated areas.

Posts carrying overhead wires are a common feature. The most marked vertical elements in the landscape are mixed woodland shelterbelts. These do not occur across the whole area but are focused around inland areas such as Wootton Marsh, South Outmarsh and New Inclosed Marsh. These belts are located on the edges of field, but have an inconsistent form – some forming a narrow belt that runs

the full length of field margins and others taking a wedge-like form and occurring at field corners. Although bringing a distinct vertical component to an otherwise 'horizontal' landscape, these belts are dispersed and too infrequent to enclose the landscape to any significant degree. Posts carrying overhead wires form the only other vertical elements and there are no obvious landmark features or points of focus. Views are distant and panoramic. The skyline is generally undeveloped allowing a strong line to divide the sky and from the land.

To the north of King's Lynn, inland from Wootton Marsh, the landscape is distinctly more textured with fields appearing less intensively managed and having a rougher character. Scattered trees and low gappy hedges are a feature here. This eastern section of the Drained Inland Marshes falls within the boundary of the Norfolk Coast AONB and although hedges and an increase in tree cover is evident; there is an overriding open character. The predominant impression throughout is one of an open, exposed and remote landscape with long views and strong connections to the sea.

Historic Land Use Character

Palaeolithic find spots and prehistoric round barrows bear witness to the use of the Drained Coastal Marshes before they resembled the landscape, which we see today. However, due to sea inundation, evidence is limited and this period of its history is almost absent within the landscape today.

The chronicle of attempts to turn bog and marsh to pasture and arable land spans nearly two millennia, from the small-scale operations of Roman settlers colonising the silts edging the coast to the major engineering projects completed during the 20th century. Drainage, however, was not an invariable objective of those who cut new lodes and diverted existing waterways. Other functions, including: flood prevention; transport facilitation; and most recently, water transfer to reservoirs, have frequently been of equal or greater importance.

Although Roman colonisation of this area was short-lived, the siltlands were re-settled in the Saxon period and witnessed sustained development after the Norman Conquest. Salterns, metal work sites and probable roads remain in the archaeological record as testament to this area being utilised during the Roman occupation, however visual evidence is limited. Marshland was drained by a multitude of dykes that separated the small individual holdings. These dykes discharged into larger drains, which delivered the waters either into the rivers that edged the silts or seawards through culverts beneath the great sea bank that protected the marshland. Enclosure as we see it today, largely began in the medieval period when this area was utilised as an intensively arable landscape, however it was largely under pasture by the 16th century and used for grazing sheep and cattle. Indeed Bryant's 1826, shows the majority of the Character Type as marshland. The obvious landscape features of enclosure come with the building of flood defence barriers during the 20th centuries, the most recent being constructed as late as the 1970s. Linear 'ladder-type' field patterns reflect the stages of enclosure, often having their shorter side parallel to the defence bank.

Due to the often-unstable nature of the earliest reclamation, settlement and built structures are largely absent, with the exception of the defensive walls and occasional isolated farmsteads. These farmsteads are often located at the intersection of reclamation periods and are on higher more stable land.

Ecological Character

The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:

- Scattered mixed shelterbelts.
- Poplar rows.
- Fragmented hedgerows.
- Network of drainage ditches (with grassy banks and lined with reeds and rushes).

The nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:

- The Wash Ramsar site.
- The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).
- The Wash Special Protection Area (SPA).
- The Wash National Nature Reserve (NNR).
- The Wash Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- County Wildlife Sites (CWS).

Key Forces For Change

- Potential new small-scale development, which may impact upon the strong sense of openness and exposure throughout this Landscape Character Type.
- Potential flood risk from the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the adjacent coastline.
- Potential eutrophication of rivers and dykes as a result of run-off from adjacent agricultural farmland.
- Visual intrusion associated with caravan parks and golf courses lining the adjacent Open Coastal Marshes to the south of Hunstanton.
- Potential loss of grazing marsh as a result of managed realignment schemes.
- Extension of urban/ urban fringe character around the northern edges of King's Lynn and associated visual impact on landscape character.
- Loss of hedgerow field boundaries as a result of agricultural intensification.
- Potential expansion of North Lynn industrial estate, with associated noise and visual intrusion;
- Extension of 'urban fringe' character (such as pony paddocks and domestic garden fences and hedges) into adjacent landscape at settlement edges.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

Recognisable sense of place varies throughout this Landscape Character Type, as a result of no obvious landmarks or points of focus. Strength of character however is generally moderate, as a result of recognisable landscape pattern, which is emphasised by the strong visual line of the sea walls and embanked rivers. The condition of field boundaries varies, with occasional shelterbelts and trees in good condition, but an overall gappy nature to several of the hedgerows. As a result of this, strength of character is considered to be declining within parts of this Landscape Character Type.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for this landscape character type should be to conserve the courses of drainage ditches, and minor watercourses running across the Drained Coastal Marshes and enhance gappy hedgerows where apparent at field boundaries. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek to conserve and enhance scattered, mixed shelterbelts, which delineate fields, as corridors of ecological value;
- Seek to enhance fragmented sections of the hedgerow network as landscape features which contribute to field pattern and also, to increase their potential as wildlife corridors;
- Seek to conserve existing drainage ditches (which are lined in places with grassy banks, reeds and gold rushes) as key landscape features and wildlife corridors.
- Seek strategies to minimise the risk of eutrophication of rivers and dykes as a result of run-off from adjacent agricultural farmland

Within this Landscape Character Type, the following areas of distinctive character have been defined:

- B1: Terrington**
- B2: North Wootton**
- B3: North Heacham**

A summary of each area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

B1: TERRINGTON

Summary of Visual Character

This Landscape Character Area lies to the west of the Borough and in the northeast is constrained by sea defence banks, which separate the area from Type A: Open Coastal Marshes. Type D: The Fens – Settled Inland Marshes bound the area in the south. Intensively managed farmland dominates this largely undeveloped strikingly flat reclaimed land. A regular network of drainage ditches, in places lined with reeds and rushes delineate the medium sized predominantly arable fields. Views across the area and beyond to adjacent character areas are far-reaching, open and panoramic, occasionally framed by the odd shelterbelt. In views seaward, sea defence banks define the horizon and the transition between Type B: Drained Coastal Marshes and Type A: Open Coastal Marshes. There are few points of focus in this low-lying, uncomplicated landscape with rows of communication masts, dispersed isolated farmsteads, shelterbelts, a few poplar rows and orchards, and fragmented gappy low hedges (species-rich) providing the only vertical elements against the horizontal plane of the surrounding uncomplicated landscape. There is a lack of settlement with the only settlements in the area being dispersed, isolated farmsteads and houses, dotted along the roads running through the area. Communication pattern is equally sparse and consists of a handful of peaceful rural roads (frequently lined with drainage ditches) accessing the area and connecting the few farms and houses. Little bridges crossing the drainage ditches to access the buildings are typical for the area. Occasional old sea banks are also a visible feature within the landscape. Despite the very obvious manmade character of the landscape, a very strong sense of openness, remoteness and exposure is apparent throughout the entire area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Very strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout the character area.
- Strong sense of openness, with open, panoramic views towards the undeveloped Open Inland Marshes.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the overall strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity within the area;
- Seek to conserve panoramic and open views the area and beyond to adjacent landscape areas, especially toward the open inland marshes.

B2: NORTH WOOTTON

Summary of Visual Character

This landscape character area encompasses a long stretch of Drained Coastal Marshes situated between Hunstanton and King's Lynn. Much of the area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. Type F: Wooded Slopes with Estate Land, flanking the area in the east, provides a wooded skyline in

views towards the east. The sea banks running along the entire western border of the area are a key element on the skyline in views to the west, evoking a strong sense of place. An incredibly strong sense of openness, with vast skies, is apparent throughout the area, brought about by the flat, low-lying landform with its lack of built structures and vertical elements. The main land use in this uncomplicated landscape is farming (apparent in a combination of arable fields and sheep grazing/rough grassland) with the regular network of medium sized fields delineated by a variety of field boundaries, including visible drainage ditches (often lined by reeds and rushes), occasional shelterbelts and low to medium hedges. Open views north-south are punctuated in places by the lines of vegetation at some field boundaries, other tall vegetation associated with caravan parks in the north of the area, and simple post and wire fencing cutting through the fields. There is a general lack of communications, other than the beach road, connecting Snettisham to Shepherd's Port, and a number of minor roads and footpaths crossing the area east to west. A handful of isolated farmsteads are dotted along these roads, doing little to break up the continuity of the landscape. The overall lack of settlement and communication brings with it a relatively strong sense of tranquillity. Towards the south of the area, character is more strongly influenced by the urban fringe to North Wootton and North Lynn. Here, the developed residential skyline is visible within views southwards and overall sense of tranquillity is disturbed by activity within the urban area. Several urban fringe characteristics (such as pony paddocks and domestic garden boundary fences) are also apparent.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Very strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout the character area.
- Strong sense of openness, with open, panoramic views towards the undeveloped open inland marshes.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve relatively strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity within parts of the character area.
- Seek to conserve panoramic and open views the area and beyond to adjacent Landscape Character Areas, especially toward the Open Inland Marshes.
- Seek to screen, through use of appropriate planting, edges of King's Lynn and Hunstanton.
- Seek to conserve the generally scattered and isolated settlement pattern throughout the area.

B3: NORTH HEACHAM

Summary of Visual Character

Situated between the coastal towns of Hunstanton and Heacham the Drained Coastal Marshes of Heacham are characterised by flat well drained land dominated by Searles Golf Course and Driving Range and the caravan park on the southern edge of Hunstanton. Inland from the golf course are two large arable fields separated by fragmented hedgerows contribute to landscape character. The boundary between the fields and the golf course is marked with a long linear ditch. West of the golf course, a ribbon development of houses lines the seafront road, which facilitates extensive ever-changing views across the sea. The row of houses and the caravan park is protected from the sea by the presence of a sea wall and groynes that extend out to the sea. Heacham River forms the southern boundary of this drained landscape, flowing into the Open Coastal Marshes that lie seaward of this area. Tree cover is generally limited within this landscape, other than those around the edges of the caravan park break up the views of the sea. Throughout the majority of the area, long-distance, panoramic views across the ever-changing seascape can be gained. The close proximity of the A149 disturbs an otherwise tranquil coastal landscape.

Evaluation

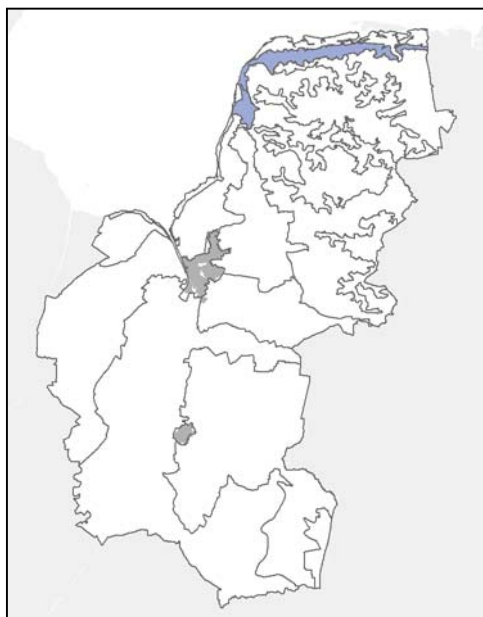
Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Very strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout the character area.
- Strong sense of openness, with open, panoramic views towards the undeveloped open inland marshes.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undisturbed, undeveloped character and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve panoramic and open views the area and beyond to adjacent landscape areas, especially toward the open inland marshes.
- Seek to screen the edges of the caravan park and buildings associated with the golf course;
- Seek to maintain a break between the settlements of Heacham and Hunstanton.

C: COASTAL SLOPES



Location and Boundaries

There are two separate locations of Coastal Slopes, within the Study Area, located to the south and northeast of the town of Hunstanton. The area to the northeast of the town is bound entirely by the North Sea marshes of Type A (Open Coastal Marshes). Its southern boundary is defined by the Rolling Open Farmland and Farmed Plateau Landscape Character Types respectively. The area of Coastal Slopes to the south of Hunstanton is bordered to the west by Drained Coastal Marshes, to the east by Rolling Open Farmland and to the south by Wooded Slopes with Estate land.

Key Characteristics

- A medium scale landscape with an open character – providing extensive uninterrupted views across the coastal marshes and beyond to the open waters of The Wash and North Sea.
- Regularly spaced contours make for a gently sloping landform with the even slope falling away from the plateau (to the south) towards the coastal marshes (to the north).
- A land use dominated by arable farming and organised within a regular geometric field pattern.
- Flailed hawthorn hedges define the field boundaries (generally established around the time of the Enclosure Act). These appear largely continuous however there are some areas where the hedges are gappy and visually less intact.
- Settlement is generally linear in form and concentrated along the A149 towards the base of the slope. The largest settlement, Heacham, lies on the western facing slope and extends down towards the coast, with the smaller settlements evenly dispersed and aligning the A149 on the north-facing slope.
- The skyline is strong – predominantly defined by the edge of the plateau and is for the most part smooth although there are some areas where trees and hedgerows silhouette against the sky - bringing varied heights and texture to the horizon.
- Occasional agricultural buildings, village churches, telecommunication masts and posts carrying overhead wires are the only other visible built structures.
- Views towards the coastal marshes and beyond to the sea are extensive and open, unhindered by vertical elements. Views to the plateau landscape are restricted by the edge of the plateau forming

a strong visual boundary – blocking views beyond. The slopes form an important backdrop and skyline to the coastal edge.

- Church towers and spires associated with the settlements form subtle landmark features.
- The A149 is a busy coastal road but away from this main thoroughfare, movement within the landscape is minimal.
- A series of rural roads running up the slopes, at right angles to the A149, are flanked by hawthorn hedges and these channel views – restricting visibility across the slopes.
- This is not a remote landscape – although rural and for the most part quiet, there are a number of visible settlements and human influence is apparent although on higher ground, away from the A149, there is a strong sense of tranquillity.

Summary of Visual Character

The coastal slopes to the east of Hunstanton are included within Norfolk Coast AONB forming a gentle backdrop to the coastal edge (Open Coastal Marsh). The slopes to the south of Hunstanton are not designated and, by comparison are fronted by an area of Drained Coastal Marsh. This is an area of gently sloping land, providing a subtle transition between the adjacent elevated inland landscapes to the south, and east and the low lying salt marshes and seascape to the north and west. The slopes are north and west facing and such have a strong visual connection with the Open Coastal Marshes (A) and Drained Coastal Marshes (B) and beyond – forming the backdrop to the coast. In terms of land use and land cover pattern however, the slopes are similar to the adjacent agricultural landscapes.

The solid geology of Middle and Upper Chalk and Lower Greensand is overlain by drifts of Sand and Gravels – both Glaciofluvial and River Terrace Deposits. The River Terrace Deposits are associated with the River Burn occurring to the east of the north facing slopes and cutting a valley through the coastal slopes towards the Open Coastal Marshes at Overy Marsh. Contours are regularly spaced and form an even, uniform slope. Elevation generally ranges from 5m to 50m AOD with the 50m contour largely on the change to the plateau landscape to the south of the north facing slopes. The plateau edge is defined by a strong ridgeline that restricts views. The horizon line is often smooth but in places is characterised by silhouettes of deciduous and coniferous trees and hedgerows marking the edge of the plateau. Long distance views can be obtained across the lower lying, flat marshland to the open waters of The Wash and North Sea. The elevated slopes combined with the distant glimpsed views to sea evoke an open and exposed character.

The land use is simplistic and uniform – almost entirely characterised by arable farming contained within a network of regular, geometric fields. There are some small areas of permanent pasture but these are limited and do not have a strong influence on overall character. The field units are medium sized with boundaries picked out by flailed hawthorn hedges. In the area to the south of Heacham, fields reduce in size where the agricultural land use is more mixed. These appear largely continuous but with some sections that are gappy and visually less intact. Field boundaries often follow the lines of contours – forming a parallel relationship with the A149 that runs east-west along the northern boundary of the type. The consistent hedgerow lines, parallel to the road, exaggerate the linear, narrow extent of this landscape type. Vertical elements on the slopes are not prominent. There are however a number of posts carrying overhead wires which cut diagonally across fields. A communication mast located at Beacon Hill on the adjacent plateau is visible. Village churches act as subtle landmark features.

Settlement occurs on both the north and west facing slopes. Lying south of Hunstanton, the large settlement of Heacham, characterised by traditional buildings of brick and carstone, caravan parks and modern housing estates. Elsewhere, settlement is characterised by linear villages that spread out along the route of the A149. These villages include both traditional and modern built development. In addition to the settlements, there are dispersed individual farms and outbuildings. Towards the edges of settlements, horse paddocks and associated fences and boundary tapes are visually apparent within views from the surrounding landscape.

Historic Land Use Character

Mesolithic and Neolithic sites, represented by findspots, within the Coastal Slopes are limited, however far more evidence is available for the Bronze Age and Iron Age periods. Round barrows and ring-ditches are numerous along the Coastal Slopes and form a distinctive line around the 30m contour. However, their visibility within the landscape has diminished throughout the intervening three millennia and consequently sites that would have dominated the landscape of the Iron Age now are only visible to the trained eye.

Settlement of the area would have increased with the building of Branodunum Roman Fort, Brancaster, in c. 230 AD. It would have attracted a considerable population who would have provided services to the garrison. When the Romans left, settlement within the area continued and a number of coastal villages have their origins within the Saxon period. As the Norman feudal system developed, many homestead in the villages in the Coastal Slopes would have had land in open fields on the slopes and common rights on the marshes.

Evidence of the feudal system can be seen in the landscape today with villages and settlement following the routes of long established roads and lanes, along the coastal slopes. Villages are characterised not only by buildings but also by a variety of spaces. Each one being part of the village's traditional structure, being previously used as villages greens or for agriculture. Common land is an important feature of the coastal slopes, not only were the marshes used for grazing but areas such as Barrow Common were formerly grazing commons. This is now an area of rough scrub and bracken. During the Georgian period, the practice of removing hedgerows was commonplace, and has resulted in the opening up of fields.

Much of the built character comes from buildings constructed to traditional patterns, using local material. Some, which were originally built to meet the needs of agriculture or the fishing industry, have housed generations of local people. Clusters of farm buildings are a major aspect of the local built environment. They include many substantial buildings, most noticeably barns, some of which date from the 18th century. Characteristic features include long pantiled roofs and windowless walls that mix brick, flint pebble and chalk.

Traditional domestic buildings in villages are generally small, often arranged in rows and terraces, perhaps with an assembly of little yards and outbuildings. They are compact, usually of two storeys with a double-pitch roof. Traditionally, windows and door openings took up a relatively small proportion of the outside walls, making these elevations appear 'solid'. A limited range of construction material has been used, most of which would have been derived locally.

In several locations, remnant World War II structures (such as pillboxes) provide visual historic features within the landscape.

Ecological Character

The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:

- Small pockets of woodland.
- Intact hedgerow network.
- A number of river corridors (including the River Burn and the Heacham River).

The nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:

- North Norfolk Coast Ramsar site.
- The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).
- North Norfolk Coast Special Protection Area (SPA).
- North Norfolk Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

- Hunstanton Cliffs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Heacham Brick Pit Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- County Wildlife Sites (CWS).

Key Forces For Change

- Potential new large or small scale or tall vertical developments, which may block characteristically recognisable views to and from the coast.
- Pressure on minor rural roads from increasing recreation and tourism associated with the North Norfolk Coast.
- Increased need for parking facilities associated with the coast and coastal villages (with associated visual intrusion).
- Conversion of agricultural buildings to houses and recreational facilities.
- Intensification of arable farming practices, resulting in decline and potential loss of hedgerows at field boundaries.
- Small-scale or incremental development within villages (such as Holme, Brancaster and Thornham), which may be inconsistent with local built character and materials (such as flint).
- Potential new visually intrusive golf courses along the coast, which may detract from existing landscape character and pattern.
- Pressure for development/ ownership of second or holiday homes;
- Redevelopment of existing small-scale development with larger-scale buildings;
- Managed realignment and associated formation of saltmarsh.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

This Landscape Character Type is considered to have a strong character overall, as a result of strong recognisable sense of place (provided by extensive uninterrupted views towards The Wash and The North Sea) and views to several landmark churches and spires. Landscape pattern is also strong, on account of the combination of small villages lining the A149 coastal road corridor, and the several minor roads running at right angles to the slopes. Condition of several of the flailed hedgerows within the type is generally good, with a continuous pattern visible. Overall condition, however, is considered to be slightly declining, with gappy hedgerows visible in places.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for this landscape character type should be to conserve the existing landscape pattern of predominantly arable fields, delineated by hedgerows, and restore these hedgerows where gappy and depleted. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek to restore hedgerows (generally hawthorn species) where gappy, to enhance existing landscape pattern (demarcating field boundaries and lining minor roads leading southwards from the A149) and improve their function as wildlife corridors throughout the Coastal Slopes.
- Seek to establish arable field margins as potential nest sites for ground nesting birds and habitats for small mammals⁵.
- Seek opportunities for creation and of chalk flora to form part of calcareous grassland habitats.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the structure and condition of small woodland patches and copses throughout the type.
- Seek to conserve the small river corridors (such as the River Burn and River Heacham) as important landscape features and wildlife habitat corridors (in particular, patches of lowland meadows along the river courses).

⁵ See: [Hhttp://www.rspb.org.uk/countryside/farming/advice/farmhabitats/margins/index.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/countryside/farming/advice/farmhabitats/margins/index.asp)

- Seek opportunities for creation of coastal grazing marsh along the coast.

Within this Landscape Character Type, the following areas of distinctive character have been defined:

- C1: Heacham**
- C2: Holme to Brancaster**
- C3: Burnham Overy**

A summary of each area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

C1: HEACHAM

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the north of Snettisham and south of Hunstanton, this area encompasses a landscape, which slopes gradually downwards from east to west, towards The Wash to the west. The eastern edge of the area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. The large, nucleated village of Heacham dominates landscape pattern within the southern half of the area. Heacham is situated upon an outcrop of rolling lowland chalk and limestone (known locally as the Heacham Lowlands), which is surrounded by pockets of soft sandstone, with peat/gleyed soils further to the west (adjacent to The Wash). The relatively narrow course of Heacham River flows through the area, and drainage ditches delineate several field boundaries. Immediately to the north of Heacham, arable farmland dominates land cover, with a large-scale field pattern visible. Field boundaries are gappy in places, although the hedgerow network is generally intact. The golf course and driving range associated with Searles Caravan Park (to the south of Hunstanton) introduces a visually intrusive human element to an otherwise predominantly farmland landscape. Tree cover is generally thinly scattered, other than within the mature parkland landscape associated with Heacham Hall (Heacham Park). Settlement pattern is concentrated within Heacham village, which contains a variety of houses and shops, set around a triangular village green. Built character within the village is dominated by carstone (from the nearby Snettisham quarries), interspersed with chalk clunch⁶ and orange bricks. Pantiles and slate dominate the roofscape. The striking contrast between the orange carstone and white/ grey patches of clunch contributes to a distinctive and recognisable sense of place. Some sense of enclosure is provided by small pockets of woodland surrounding Heacham Park and also by the settlement edges of Hunstanton to the north and Heacham to the south. Sense of tranquillity varies throughout the area. To the west (in close proximity to North Beach, sense of tranquillity is stronger than to the east (where the A149 introduces noise and visual intrusion) or in close proximity to the settlement edges of Hunstanton, Heacham and the Caravan Parks to the west of Heacham.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Relatively open and panoramic views eastwards to adjacent open coastal marshes/ North Beach.
- Mature parkland landscape associated with Heacham Hall.
- Striking built character (combination of traditional carstone and chalk clunch).
- Patches of intact hedgerow network.
- Existing vegetation fringing the settlement edges of Heacham and Hunstanton.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of and gap between Hunstanton and Heacham.

⁶ Clunch: Often-irregular lumps of rock, either picked up from the ground or quarried and hewn, in regular-shaped building blocks, which are predominantly chalk/ clay based.

- Seek to conserve open views westwards, along North Beach and across adjacent Open Coastal marshes.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to ensure that any new small-scale development in or on the edges of Hunstanton or Heacham, responds to existing settlement pattern.

C2: HOLME TO BRANCASTER

Summary of Visual Character

Set slightly back from the patchwork of open coastal saltmarshes which line the North Norfolk Coast, this character area runs east-west across the Borough and encompasses gently sloping landform (from higher plateau to the south towards the coast). Most of the area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. Landscape is underlain by a combination of soft sandstone and sandy drift (with deep loam soils) to the north and a band of chalk and limestone (with shallow soils) to the south. Arable farmland (predominantly cereal crops) dominates land cover within the area, with geometric fields delineated by a generally intact network of hawthorn hedges (which also line minor road corridors within the area). Settlement pattern is dominated by several linear villages (Holme-next-the-Sea, Thornham, Titchwell, Brancaster and Brancaster Staithe) lining the A149 (main east-west coastal road). The area is served by the busy A149 (introducing noise and visual intrusion) and a series of rural roads, which lead southwards (at right angles to the main road). One of these minor roads follows the line of the Peddars Way, which connects to a wider network of public footpaths, both within and outside the character area. A mixture of traditional buildings, which are occasionally interspersed with more modern development, dominates built character within the villages. Within all of the villages in this character area, the use of local/ traditional building materials is striking and provides strong recognisable sense of place. Buildings within Brancaster, Brancaster Staithe and Burnham Deepdale, are faced with a mixture of chalk clunch, and flint, whilst within Holme-next-the-Sea, a mixture of carstone, chalk clunch, flint and mixed rubble is visible. In most settlements, distinctive red pantiles dominate roofscape character and provide contrast with the generally white or grey clunch. Examples of more modern architecture are also visible and are sometimes out of scale with existing traditional buildings. Churches (predominantly named St. Mary) provide landmarks within most of the villages, which are visible within views from surrounding coastal slopes (particularly from the higher edge of the plateau to the south). This higher landscape to the south facilitates extensive, uninterrupted and often panoramic views towards the coast (with an intricate network of saltmarshes and creeks visible in the distant foreground). Views northwards towards the coast are also often channelled along rural lanes. Sense of tranquillity varies within the area and is stronger within higher landscape to the south, than in close proximity to the villages (to the south). The villages characteristically appear as rows of red roofs, set amongst trees.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Generally intact, coherent landscape (and hedgerow network).
- Strong sense of openness within views northwards towards the coast from the higher slopes.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within small village settlements.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Open views (particularly from the higher slopes) towards church towers within the villages.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the villages is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles; and architecture, which respects traditional built form, layout and character.
- Seek to screen existing settlement edges and potential new small-scale developments within the villages (Holme next the Sea, Thornham, Titchwell, Brancaster and Brancaster Staithe) with planting, using species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Seek to conserve characteristic panoramic, open views northwards across the slopes towards the coast.
- Seek to conserve and enhance strongly recognisable sense of place within the area.
- Seek to ensure that any new development avoids prominent skyline locations upon the slopes.

C3: BURNHAM OVERY

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the northeast of Burnham Market, and set back from the intricate network of saltmarshes fringing the Norfolk Coast, this character area encompasses topography, which slopes gently from south (rolling farmland) to north. The area is also situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. Landscape is underlain by soft sandstone, which spreads northwards and also underlies rolling farmland to the south. The character area is generally contained to the east by the mature parkland landscape associated with Holkham Hall (within North Norfolk District⁷) and to the west by the relatively narrow course of the River Burn (which meets the coast to the west of Burnham Overy Staithe). Land cover is dominated by a relatively medium to large-scale field pattern of arable fields, delineated by a relatively intact network of hedges at field boundaries. The small-nucleated village of Burnham Overy Staithe contributes the main settlement element, which nestles at the edge of and overlooks Overy Creek and Marshes. The diverse mixture of orange brick and pantile traditional buildings, with contrasting chalk clunch, flint and pebble facings, provides strong recognisable sense of place. The main A149 east-west coast road (which introduces noise and visual intrusion) and several minor roads leading southwards at right angles to the main road, serve the area. Woodland associated with Holkham Park (Lucas Hill Wood) provides a relatively strong sense of enclosure within views eastwards (with mature trees strikingly visible along the skyline). Panoramic views northwards towards the coast, particularly from higher slopes to the south, contribute to visual character. Dramatic views north and westwards from Burnham Overy Staithe, across a vast expanse of intricate saltmarshes against a backdrop of huge skies contribute to an overall strong recognisable sense of place. Sense of tranquillity is relatively strong throughout the character area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Generally intact hedgerow network.
- Strong sense of openness within views northwards towards the coast from the higher slopes.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within Burnham Overy Staithe.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement pattern.
- Overall strong recognisable sense of place, particularly within views north and west from Burnham Overy Staithe.

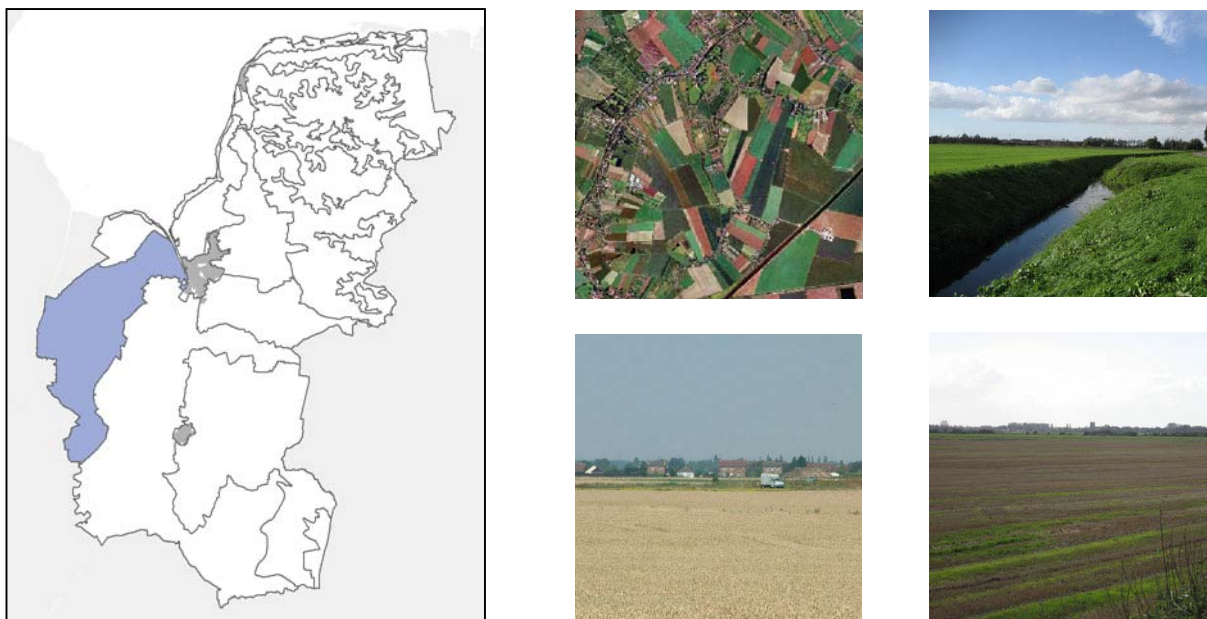
⁷ Landscape Character Assessment for North Norfolk District Council Local Development Framework: Draft Version: http://www.northnorfolk.org/planning/documents_forward_planning/LCANorthNorfolkLDFDraft.doc

- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Generally undeveloped coastal skyline, with few dominant vertical elements.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the Burnham Overy Staithe is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including brick, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.
- Seek to screen existing settlement edges and potential new small-scale developments within Burnham Overy Staithe with planting, using species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Seek to conserve characteristic panoramic, open views northwards across the slopes towards the coast and open views north and westwards from Burnham Overy Staithe, across intricate Open Coastal Marshes.
- Seek to conserve and enhance strongly recognisable sense of place within the area.
- Seek to ensure that any new development avoids prominent skyline locations upon the slopes, which may block views across and to/ from the character area.

D: THE FENS – SETTLED INLAND MARSHES



Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Type is located to the west of the Study Area. The northern boundary is defined by the Drained Coastal Marshes Landscape Character Type, whilst The Fens – Open Inland Marshes define the eastern and southern edge. The western boundary of the landscape is demarcated by the administrative Borough boundary.

Key Characteristics

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Summary of Visual Character

The Fens – Settled Inland Marshes (also known as The Settled Fens) is a large-scale landscape that shares many attributes in common with the adjacent Fens - Open Inland Marshes. There are however a number of key differences that distinguish this as a separate Landscape Character Type - the amount of settlement and the number of built structures for example that create a busier and more active environment. With an elevation generally ranging from 0-5m AOD, this is a low lying, flat landscape – the simple level terrain allowing far reaching views across the landscape and beyond to the adjacent Open Inland Marshes and Drained Coastal Marshes. This landscape is entirely underlain by Mudstone of the Upper Jurassic era with calcareous estuarine Silty Clay deposits, giving rise to fertile soils with a massive water storage capacity – allowing the intensive farming practices that so clearly define the landscape. As with the Open Inland Marshes, this landscape is dominated by arable farming with vast tracts of intensive crop production divided by ditches and dykes that are often lined with rushes. Marshland droves (routes used historically for cattle and sheep transfer between winter and summer pastures) are also distinctive landscape features within the Type. Field size is however more variable. Close to the edge of settlements for example there are many more dykes dividing fields, making for smaller field units. Although field size is generally smaller across the whole landscape, this is not immediately apparent as dykes are often only perceptible at close range such that the fields can appear as one continuous tract. The hierarchy of engineered watercourses that drain this landscape indicate the artificial creation of the landscape. In places, the courses of old river channels are also visible features.

Orchards were a common feature with many rectangular, geometric plots given over to short standard fruit trees arranged into well ordered rows. Remaining orchards and alder hedges (sometimes used as wind breaks for the orchards) bring variety to the landscape - channeling views through the regimented rows and bringing distinct textural and vertical interest. Where still present, the orchards also bring some degree of enclosure – this is particularly evident where trees align roads and impede views out. Poly-tunnels are also evident but, although conspicuous, do not dominate views. The open vistas and wide horizons afforded by the level flat landform, evoke a strong sense of exposure. This sense of exposure is however not as great as the Open Inland Marshes due to the presence of elements such as the orchards and more obviously the settlements. Settlement is low density and largely takes a linear form – aligning the roads that cross through the landscape. Due to the linear arrangement of buildings along roads and the extent of visibility across the level ground, hamlets, villages, and individual farms are frequently in view giving the impression that the landscape is more settled than is actually the case. Grand churches within villages appear dramatically out of scale with surrounding buildings and are key landmark features – visible from long distances. Although falling beyond the Study Area, the edge of the market town of Wisbech is visible.

Building style and age ranges from traditional farmhouses to modern suburban-style housing and bungalow development – buff and red coloured brick and render are common external finishes. Harsh settlement edges are typical of the more modern developments. Properties are frequently bounded by solid leylandii hedges. Poplars and willows frequently occur along watercourses and within the village of Outwell, the willow-lined Well Creek forms an attractive feature – linking the open land with the settlement. Pylon lines are dominant features. In addition, masts carrying overhead wires are also common as are other vertical elements and built structures of varied form and function. These elements make for an inconsistent, seemingly cluttered skyline particularly where they appear together

in the same view. There are two major roads running across the settled marshes –the A17(T) running west out of King’s Lynn and the A47 (T) connecting King’s Lynn with Wisbech. These are fast moving, relatively busy transport corridors that bring a constant source of movement to the landscape. The landscape is accessible by secondary roads. Unlike the Open Inland Fens, these roads, although having a number of straight sections, follow a much more irregular path – becoming denser and more winding in and around settlements such as Walpole St Peter and Terrington St Clement. In addition to the roads, agricultural machinery in operation brings a constant source of background movement.

Historic Land Use Character

Pre-Iron Age utilisation of the Settled Inland Marshes is very limited. During the Iron Age, exploitation is recorded by limited artefact finds, however post-Roman invasion of the area is marked by concentrations of salterns and numerous finds. This was mainly because during the Romano-British period the fenland became dry enough for it to be settled and farmed, with roads and canals also being established. Numerous low-status settlements engaged in salt-making, peat-cutting and livestock farming, all as part of a vast Imperial Estate administered from *Sonea* (Cambridgeshire) and from prosperous fen-edge villas (Feltwell and Methwold – Character Type H). Apart from these physical differences, the landscape was probably viewed by its inhabitants in ways very different to and far more complex than our modern perceptions. Area of water, rivers, streams, islands, woodland, trees, hilltops and other natural features may have embodied meanings and values only occasionally hinted at in the archaeological record. Very few Roman sites survive visibly in the modern landscape, however the pockets of co-axial field systems seen today may have their origins in the Roman reclamation of this land.

Although Roman colonisation of this area was short-lived, the siltlands were re-settled in the Saxon period, with a Saxon coin production site at West Walton, and those settlement names ending in –Tun, also represent a Saxon influence on the modern landscape. By the end of the Saxon period West Walton was one of the most densely populated areas of Norfolk.

Sustained development was witnessed after the Norman Conquest. The remaining bogs and marshes were drained by a multitude of dykes that separated the small individual holdings. These dykes discharged into larger drains that delivered the waters either into the rivers that edged the silts, the Nene in the west and the Great Ouse to the east, or seawards through culverts beneath the sea bank that protected marshland. The drainage systems expanded in tandem with the reclamation of the silts, reflecting a pragmatic approach to a perennial problem and in marked contrast to the grand designs imposed on the neighbouring peat fens in later centuries.

By the medieval period, the open settled marshes were mainly utilised as pasture for cattle. Although population increased the limited number of churches within this area demonstrate the relatively low levels of habitation compared with the rest of the Borough. Four markets are recorded within the settled inland marshes in the medieval period: West Dereham (1199); Upwell (1202); West Walton (1271); and Walpole (1272).

In this area of marshland the layout of parishes is determined by common land. Settlement was in the siltlands, salt marsh grazing on the tidal marshes and fen and smeeth rights in the south and umbilical droveways of street greens linked these settlements, hence settlements grew from the 14th century southwards along these common droveways (routes used historically for cattle and sheep transfer between winter and summer pastures). By the time William Faden produced the first large scale map of Norfolk, 1797, many areas of settled inland marshes were still recorded as Greens or Fen. The settlement pattern remains but it was not until the late 19th century that the field pattern which is prominent over most of the area today was established.

Ecological Character

The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:

- Scattered mixed shelterbelts and clumps of mature trees.
- Poplar and willow rows.
- River corridors, including the River Great Ouse and The Well Creek.
- Network of drainage ditches (with grassy banks and lined with reeds and rushes).

The nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:

- The Wash Ramsar site.
- The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).
- The Wash Special Protection Area (SPA).
- The Wash Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- The Wash National Nature Reserve (NNR).
- County Wildlife Sites (CWS).
- Few hedges, some orchards left, which are a Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat.

Key Forces for Change

- Loss of field margins and farm ponds through agricultural intensification.
- Intensification of arable farming practices, resulting in potential loss of curvilinear drainage patterns/ co-axial field systems.
- Potential decline in maintenance of river and drainage channels and pumps and associated potential flood risk.
- Soil erosion and shrinkage, resulting in changing agricultural landscape.
- Potential major road improvements associated with the A17.
- Risk of saline intrusion of agricultural farmland from rising sea levels.
- Potential small-scale pockets of new development within and around the edges of Terrington, which may be inconsistent with local built character and settlement pattern.
- Potential farm diversification, with associated recreational pressures, such as parking and noise/ visual intrusion.
- Potential construction of new sluices.
- Loss of orchards.
- Introduction of new large sheds, haulage or agricultural buildings.
- Potential expansion at the settlement fringes of Wisbech and associated port development.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

Recognisable sense of place is variable throughout this Landscape Character Type. The long distance views to never-ending distant horizons, evoke a strong sense of openness and hint at the relatively recognisable sense of place. The continuous, intensively farmed geometric fields (divided by straight drainage ditches, channels and dykes), however, appear somewhat monotonous in places, although are also locally recognisable. Overall strength of character is considered to be moderate. The intensive nature of farming has led to the breakdown of traditional field boundaries in places, and several fruit orchards are declining landscape features. Built character is also deteriorating, with several derelict buildings along the A47 (T) bridges (crossing drains) in a poor state of repair. Overall condition is therefore considered to be declining.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the Fens – Settled Inland Marshes should be to 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. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek to conserve scattered, mixed shelterbelts (including rows of poplars and willows such as the line following Well Creek, which provide recognisable sense of place), and enhance their function as ecological/ wildlife corridors.
- Seek to conserve, enhance and manage the regular, interconnected network of reed-lined drainage ditches and dykes throughout the Landscape Character Type.
- Seek to conserve and restore areas of orchards (a key characteristic of this landscape character type) as key landscape features⁸.
- Seek opportunities for the creation of floodplain grazing marsh alongside the rivers and Fenland drains, to contribute to the function of these rivers as important wildlife corridors.
- Seek opportunities for the creation and enhancement of reedbeds.
- Seek to retain arable field margins and farm ponds as key landscape features.

Within this Landscape Character Type, the following areas of distinctive character have been defined:

- D1: Clenchwarton Marsh**
D2: Walpole, Terrington and Clenchwarton
D3: Terrington St John
D4: Emneth, West Walton and Walsoken
D5: Outwell

A summary of each area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

D1: CLENCHWARTON MARSH

Summary of Visual Character

This strikingly flat, low-lying landscape in the northern extent of the Borough is constrained to the east by the River Great Ouse. It overlooks the Drained Coastal Marshes in the north and is bordered in the south by the more settled Character Area D2 Clenchwarton Marsh. The organic irregular field pattern, with its sinuous field boundaries, is in stark contrast with the straight, regular field system of surrounding Character Areas. Drainage ditches (often lined with reeds and rushes) generally demarcate the medium sized (predominantly arable) fields. The topography allows panoramic views with huge skies Northeast and westwards from most locations across the area, contributing to a strong recognisable sense of place. A range of vertical elements including rows of communications masts and several orchards distributed throughout the area limit views in places. The banks of the River Great Ouse draw the eye in views eastwards. The skyline in views southwards is slightly cluttered with the roofs of buildings. Settlement pattern is scarce and consists of few isolated large farmsteads with associated farm buildings, frequently surrounded by wind break trees. Communication pattern is equally scarce, with a number of minor roads connecting the farmsteads. A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity is apparent throughout the area, only broken by the occasional tractor slowly moving along the rural roads.

⁸ See: <http://www.applesandorchards.org.uk/index.php>

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Panoramic views with huge skies across the area and beyond over adjacent fen landscape and seaward.
- Strong historic integrity including orchards and historic drainage network.
- Scarce settlement and communication pattern.
- Strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the predominantly rural character of the area with its wide open views in most directions.
- Seek to conserve the scarce settlement and communication pattern.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to existing settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve the largely tranquil nature of the area.

D2: WALPOLE, TERRINGTON AND CLENCHWARTON

Summary of Visual Character

This Landscape Character Area is situated at the northern extent of the Settled Inland Fens, in between Type B Drained Coastal Marshes to the north and Type E Open Inland Fens to the southeast. The Borough boundary confines the area in the west while West Lynn demarcates its eastern border. This large-scale, low-lying landscape offers extensive panoramic views in all directions, occasionally framed by fruit orchards (which contribute to sense of place) scattered throughout the area. The underlying geology of predominantly mudstone gives rise to rich soils, which are primarily used for arable farming practices. Dykes and ditches, often aligned with reeds and rushes, demarcate the small to medium sized mainly irregular fields, and often also follow the course of rural roads. Near villages wooden fencing is occasionally used to keep livestock. Dykes are low and often only visible from a short distance, greatly adding to the continuous expansive character of the area. The horizon appears cluttered in places due to the variety of vertical elements of differing sizes, including buildings – farmsteads, glasshouses and residential –, communication masts, and tall vegetation. Pylons and village churches are conspicuous landmarks in all directions. Rows of poplars lining drainage channels in the adjacent Character Area D3 (Terrington St. John) are also frequently visible in views to the south whilst the edge of West Lynn is visible from locations in the east of the area. Settlement pattern consists of large-scale farmsteads and nucleated hamlets and villages, including Walpole St. Andrew and St. Peter, Terrington St. Clement and Clenchwarton. Building character varies from old style farmhouses to relatively new suburban red or buff coloured brick housing. A network of narrow rural roads, frequently lined with tall vegetation, connects the villages. Tranquillity in the area largely depends on proximity to the fast moving traffic corridors of the A17 and A47, which dissect this character area and provide a constant source of noise and movement.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Panoramic views across the area and beyond over adjacent fen landscape.
- Strong historic integrity including historic drainage network.
- Traditional built character of several farmhouses.
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of the existing villages such as Walpole, Terrington and Clenchwarton.
- Ensure that any new small-scale development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of King's Lynn (more precisely West Lynn) and seek to screen (where possible) harsh urban edges.
- Seek to conserve the largely tranquil nature of the area.

D3: TERRINGTON ST. JOHN

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the north east of Wisbech and bordered by the A47 to the east and south, this very flat and low-lying area has an underlying geology of predominantly mudstone, which is reflected in the extremely fertile soils. The land use is mainly arable with the small generally regular fields often demarcated by dykes and ditches (usually lined with reeds and rushes). Several small bridges crossing the wider drains are distinctive features throughout the area, contributing to sense of place. A strong sense of tranquillity is apparent throughout the entire area, emphasised by the general lack of development in the area. Settlement pattern consists of the village of Terrington St. John (built character of which consists of a combination of brickwork – red and colourwash, pantiles and slate), scattered (mainly brickwork) houses and large farmsteads with slow-moving tractors a constant feature on the horizon. Set back from the roads and concentrated around settlement edges, the distinct vertical shapes of fruit orchard trees, arranged in neat rows, guide views and provide a strong sense of place. Views in every direction across the area are dominated by rows of poplars and rows of communication masts slicing through the fields, which (together with the church in West Walton in Area D4) provide the main focal points in this expansive, large-scale area. The combination of differing vertical elements including rows of trees, pylons, orchards, buildings and tall vegetation (occasionally lining the roads), makes for a cluttered skyline in places. A number of straight, fairly busy roads (with settlement concentrated largely linearly along the roads), cut through the area from north to south, connected by several more rural and peaceful roads.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide panoramic views across the fen landscape and beyond over adjacent areas (including views on West Walton church).
- Strong historic integrity including historic drainage network.
- Strong sense of tranquillity and isolation throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the predominantly rural character of the area.
- Seek to conserve the panoramic views across the area and adjacent areas.
- Seek to conserve the characteristically sparse settlement pattern throughout the area.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing small villages such as Terrington St John and West Walton.
- Seek to conserve the largely undisturbed and tranquil nature of the area.

D4: EMNETH, WEST WALTON AND WALSOKEN

Summary of Visual Character

This character area, situated to the east of Wisbech is bordered by the Open Inland Fens to the east and encompasses a rich mix of arable fields, fruit orchards, plantations and pasture. Intensively managed agricultural fields dominate this remarkably flat, low-lying landscape with agricultural vehicles a recurring feature. Dykes and ditches, frequently lined with reeds, rushes and occasionally shrubs (including ash, willow and hawthorn) divide the generally large fields and bring topographical change. The patchwork of arable fields, orchards, plantation woodlands, together with a variety of vertical elements including large-scale farms, glasshouses, pylons, frequent rows of poplars and other tall vegetation, give the landscape a cluttered appearance with few points of focus. Orchards are particularly abundant directly east of Wisbech and give a sense of enclosure (with the neat rows of low trees channelling views) contrasting greatly with the expansiveness in the rest of the area. Settlement pattern consists of farms, which are generally dotted along the rural roads, and several mainly linear villages including Tilney St. Lawrence, Emneth and Marshland St. James, which has a distinctive character. Walsoken once had a tramway and canal. Small bridges crossing the drains lining the roads and giving access to houses and farms, are typical throughout the area. Built character varies between old farmhouses and more modern suburban red or buff brick buildings. Sense of tranquillity varies in the area depending on proximity to the busy transport corridor of the A47 (with its visual, noise and movement intrusion) and the urban fringe around Wisbech. A pattern of several, more or less parallel, fairly busy, urban roads (frequently lined with tall species-rich vegetation, including mature trees such as oak and ash) covers the area and connects the villages.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intact mature landscape structure including the rows of poplars and large concentration of fruit orchards.
- Panoramic views across the area, frequently framed by orchards.
- Historic drainage network.
- Strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any new small-scale or incremental development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of the existing villages such as Emneth and West Walton.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Wisbech and seek to screen (where possible) harsh urban edges.
- Seek to conserve pockets of tranquillity where apparent.
- Seek to ensure that new drainage or culverting responds to existing landscape pattern.

D5 OUTWELL

Summary of Visual Character

This Landscape Character Area situated to the southeast of Wisbech in the southern extent of the Settled Inland Fens. The Borough boundary lines the western edge while the Middle Lever Main Drain forms the southeastern border. The sinuous, practically merged, villages of Outwell and

Upwell, within a backdrop of arable farmland and plantations, dominate this very flat, low-lying landscape with its vast open skies. The small to medium, mainly regular fields are demarcated by dykes and ditches, which are often lined with reeds and rushes and other low vegetation. Adjacent to settlement, wooden fencing is used on occasion to restrain livestock. Both Outwell and Upwell encompasses two roads on either side of a watercourse (the old course of the River Nene) with the buildings lining the roads. The presence of several small bridges giving access to the houses contributes to the unique, distinctive nature of the area. Settlement pattern further consists of several isolated farmsteads with associated farm buildings, dotted linearly along the rural roads. The built character of the area varies between traditional (red or colourwash brickwork and slate) houses and farmsteads and more modern red or colourwash brick buildings. A strong sense of tranquillity is notable throughout the entire area, despite the presence of busy transport corridors such as the A1101 and the A1122. Views are generally open but the horizon is cluttered in places with a wide array of vertical elements such as buildings, mature trees, communication masts and overhead wires, rows of poplars and orchards. Structures and fences associated with horse and pony paddocks are also apparent landscape features. Fruit orchards are generally set back from the roads, channelling views and creating a sense of enclosure in places. Boats moored along the banks of watercourses also contribute to recognisable sense of place and character. The transport corridors follow the natural course of the rivers and creeks in the area, giving the landscape a more organic feel than is the case in the rest of the Settled Inland Fens.

Evaluation

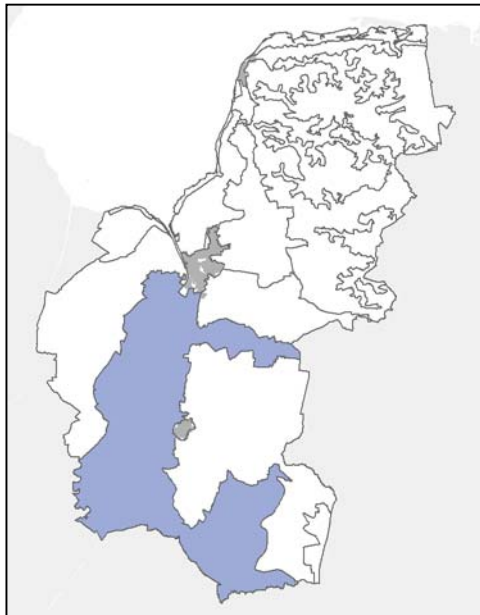
Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Open views to adjacent fen landscape.
- Strong historic integrity with the traditional built character of the villages of Outwell and Upwell and the historic drainage network.
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting and historic character of Outwell and Upwell.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve the largely undisturbed and tranquil nature of the area.

E: THE FENS – OPEN INLAND MARSHES



Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Type covers a large area within the southwest of the Study Area. To the north the landscape is bordered by The Fens – Settled Inland Marshes and the settlement of King's Lynn. Two distinct landscape types adjoin the eastern boundary: Farmland with Woodland and Wetland and Settled Farmland with Plantations.

Key Characteristics

- A large scale landscape with extensive vistas and wide open skies evoking a strong sense of openness, exposure and isolation.
- The elevation of the landscape ranges between 1m AOD to -2m AOD resulting in a strikingly flat, low lying terrain.
- Strong geometric and linear landscape patterning defined by large scale intensive arable farming with extensive field units divided by a regular network of drainage ditches and dykes, long straight roads, large straight rivers and cut off channels.
- A largely unsettled landscape with villages and dispersed farmsteads with adjoining outbuildings.
- Isolated farmsteads are often surrounded by wind break trees that provide points of focus in a landscape largely devoid of landmarks or strong focal points.
- A simple but strong skyline – uninterrupted and smooth with expansive horizons giving way to huge skies.
- Posts carrying overhead wires are frequently in view.
- Pylons cross the landscape. These are conspicuous due to the lack of other vertical elements (other than large sheds) and form a strong contrast with the flat open horizontal plane.
- Drainage channels and dykes flanked with golden rushes and bright green grass banks draw the eye and contrast with the dark predominantly peaty soils.
- Views into the adjoining Fens landscape – Settled Inland Marshes – are clear however the distinction between the landscape types is not obvious – appearing as one continuous landscape type where settlements are not in view.

- Long straight roads cut through the landscape and are important transport routes. These and the operation of large agricultural machinery bring a constant source of movement to the landscape. However, these do not dominate and the landscape, for the most part, feels empty and peaceful.
- The landscape does not feel remote because although largely unsettled, is dominated by human influences including the consistent presence of artificial drainage channels, ditches and dykes.
- Visible landmarks include Denver sluice and the large silos of the Wissington sugar beet factory.

Summary of Visual Character

The Fens – Open Inland Marshes (also known as The Peaty Fens or Black Fens) is a landscape of simple yet dramatic character. Located within the southwest of the Study Area this Landscape Character Type forms part of the wider Fens landscape, which also crosses into the counties of Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. The area to the south and east – is characterised by Peat drift deposits. To the north and west, the Peat gives way to sandy mud. Some areas of deep peat do remain but are confined to Feltwell and the Methwold Fens. The loss of much peaty soil due to shrinkage, oxidation and wind erosion has resulted in soils characterised by a complex mix of residual peats as well as sandy, clayey or marly substrata. The landscape is characterised by intensive arable production on a massive scale with varied crop production bringing seasonal colour change. Fields are extensive with boundaries often imperceptible but defined by the straight edges of crops and the regular network of drainage ditches and dykes – evoking a distinctly geometric, ordered and tamed landscape. The dykes are often lined with golden rushes and have lush grassy banks making them more conspicuous and drawing the eye.

Posts carrying overhead wires are the only obvious, repeated vertical element although pylon lines do cross the landscape in two places – north of Wiggenhall St Mary the Virgin and to the far west of the landscape near to the village of Outwell. Outside the character area (March) a prominent wind turbine is visible. There are also views to other pylon lines within the adjacent Landscape Character Type The Fens – Settled Inland Marshes. The elevation of the landscape ranges between 1m AOD to -2mAOD. The dramatic flat landform provides extensive, panoramic vistas of open, seemingly ‘empty’ country and huge skies, evoking a sense of exposure and isolation. Raised banks and berms do, however, interrupt the continuity of the landform in places -marking the location of artificial drainage channels. These large scale, linear landscape features greatly influence character -interrupting the flat landform and forming a barrier to views. Similarly roads are often raised above the level of fields. Aside from pylons, landmarks include Denver sluice gates and Wissington sugar beet factory. Settlement pattern consists of linear villages, such as Wiggenhall St Mary the Virgin, Wiggenhall St Mary Magdalen and dispersed farmsteads both aligning and located away from the roads that cross through the landscape. Isolated farmsteads and adjoining agricultural buildings, often surrounded by wind break trees do provide some points of focus.

Towards the north of this Landscape Character Type, the urban edge of King’s Lynn influences views with industrial buildings. The large silos of the Wissington Sugar Factory on the bank of the River Wissey, towards the south of the area, form prominent skyline features. The raised banks of the Old Bedford and New Bedford Rivers form dramatic parallel lines across The Fens. These are the cuts first made in the 1600s to help drain The Fens by joining the River Great Ouse with the sea at King’s Lynn. The land between these Rivers stands above sea level and, during the summer months, provides grazing and hay. During January to March the area is flooded to provide a wide area of ‘washes’. Much of the ‘Ouse Washes’ including the rivers either side are afforded with SSSI designation and are a RAMSAR site. The site is one of the country’s few remaining areas of extensive washland habitat and is noted for the large number of wildfowl and waders, the large areas of unimproved neutral grassland and the rich aquatic flora and fauna.

Roads do not dominate the landscape only through are relatively few but there are short stretches of four major routes – the A10 road linking King’s Lynn with Cambridge, the A1122 connecting Downham Market and Wisbech, and the A47(T) and A17 connecting to King’s Lynn in the north. In addition, there are some secondary, rural roads, often only providing a route to and coming to an end

at individual farms. The roads are very straight - further exaggerating the almost 'regimented' pattern of the landscape. The railway corridor is also a feature within the landscape.

Historic Land Use Character

Like the other fenland areas prehistoric utilisation of the Open Inland Marshes is limited and it was not until the Romano-British period and the introduction of salt production that the Open Inland Marshes were more fully exploited. Salterns were concentrated around the major rivers and routeways and once again evidence of this activity is not visible in the current landscape.

Even up until the Middle Ages the peat fens were utilised but not tamed. They offered a range of natural resources, but there were few attempts to transform the landscape. They largely comprised extensive tracts of wetland common, cut for fodder and thatching materials and grazed in the summer. Slow-moving rivers meandering across the peat levels were however straightened, as much to ease transport problems as to improve drainage. The Little Ouse, the Great Ouse and the Nar all took up new courses and it is tempting to see in these changes the hand of the major monasteries that thrived on their higher reaches.

At the beginning of the 17th century a new wave of entrepreneurial enthusiasm threatened the Fens. The potential profits of draining and farming blocks of fenland appealed to wealthy individuals. Various schemes were proposed. All ultimately failed, but relics of these enterprises remain: London Lode running into the Well Creek at Nordelph was probably constructed by London merchants at the beginning of the century and only a few years later the cutting of Popham's Eau from the Old River Nene to the Well Creek was financed by the Lord Chief Justice and others. The land they drained was, however, still common land.

But it was the ambitious project devised by the Earl of Bedford and the engineer Cornelius Vermuyden that marked the first unitary attempt to drain the southern peat fens. Between 1630 and 1653 existing rivers were straightened and new cuts made to carry water more rapidly to the outfalls. The outstanding achievements of this phase were the Old and New Bedford Rivers, parallel channels that confined a gigantic 'reservoir' for winter floodwater known as The Washes. Denver sluice was built to accommodate the flows of six rivers (the Old and New Bedford, the Great and Little Ouse, the Lark and the Wissey). Other new watercourses have lasted less well. Sam's Cut, which took the waters of a Feltwell stream directly to the Great Ouse, is now largely obsolete although its course is still maintained by a secondary road.

Drainage of the peat fens initiated a cycle of events that could not have been foreseen by the early drainers. The removal of water led to the drying out of the peat and a consequent fall in the level of the land. Within a century windmills were universally adopted to pump water from the lower field dykes into the main drains, which remained at a higher level. In the 19th century the windmills gave way to steam engines houses in pumping stations. Electrically driven pumps too have now superseded these. Relics of these earlier methods of drainage are rare, but Nordelph can still boast the shell of a windmill beside the Well Creek, and near Hilgay on the south bank of the Wissey is a derelict pumping station. Further information on the history of drainage within the Fens is housed within the Drainage museum – Marshland St. James.

The 18th and 19th centuries brought improvements to the outfalls of the Nene and the Great Ouse. In the estuaries the channels of these rivers were straightened and below King's Lynn a loop of the Ouse was removed with the opening of the Eau Brink Cut in 1821. A few years later in 1848, waters from the Isle of Ely were channelled across Marshland along the Middle Level Drain to the Great Ouse. Another feature of the 18th and 19th centuries, which can still be seen in the King's Lynn and West Norfolk landscape today, is that of Decoy Ponds. Often built near the new drains the artificially created or modified pools of water, usually square or rectangular in outline, with one or more curving ditches called pipes leading off them to encourage wildfowl to be netted, are still a feature of the landscape.

Historically settlement within the Open Inland Marshes is very limited and generally is represented by isolated farmstead on outer edges of the marshes, where traditionally the land is more stable. Along the River Nar, however, Monastic influence over the landscape is still apparent (in the form of the remains of Pentney Abbey).

Ecological Character

The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:

- Scattered mixed shelterbelts and clumps of mature trees.
- Poplar rows.
- Fragmented hedgerows.
- Network of drainage ditches (with grassy banks and lined with reeds and rushes).

The nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:

- The Ouse Washes Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- The Ouse Washes Special Protection Area (SPA).
- Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA).
- Breckland Farmland Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- River Nar Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Wiggshall and St. Germans Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Islington Heronry Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Setchey Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- County Wildlife Sites (CWS).

Key Forces for Change

- Potential farm diversification, resulting in conversion of agricultural buildings to houses and recreational facilities.
- Decline in hedgerow field boundaries as a result of intensification of arable farming practices.
- Potential flood risk along the western edge of the area, as a result of climate change and sea level rise.
- Potential decline in maintenance of river and drainage channels and pumps and associated potential flood risk.
- Soil erosion and shrinkage, resulting in changing agricultural landscape.
- Potential risk of saline intrusion from rising sea levels.
- Potential urban expansion/ introduction of an urban fringe character to the west of Downham Market and associated visual impact on landscape character.
- Expansion of Wissington for biofuel development.
- Expansion of horse stables, pony paddocks and associated 'horsiculture'.
- Potential development of new sluices or rebuilding of older structures.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

This character type has a generally strong sense of place, as a result of the strong geometric and linear landscape patterning defined by large-scale intensive arable farming. Recognisable sense of place, however, varies, with few landmarks or strong focal points visible. Where present, field boundaries are generally intact (with occasional gappy patches) and ditches appear well managed. Overall, landscape condition is good, but slightly declining in places.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the Fens – Open Inland Marshes, should be to conserve the large-scale, predominantly open strong geometric landscape pattern of arable fields, divided by the regular network of drainage ditches and strengthen the hedgerow network, where gappy and fragmented. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek to enhance and expand lowland meadow habitats associated with the Ouse Washes and along the River Nar corridor, or within any areas of suitable soil conditions.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the corridor of the River Nar, as an important wildlife corridor and landscape feature.
- Seek to restore marginal areas of semi-natural habitats or low input grassland within the floodplain of river corridors and at spring lines throughout the type.
- Seek to conserve scattered, mixed shelterbelts (including rows of poplars and willows such as which provide recognisable sense of place), and enhance their function as ecological/ wildlife corridors.
- Seek to conserve and manage clumps of mature trees where present throughout this type.
- Seek opportunities for creation of floodplain grazing marshes along river courses and Fenland drains and consider potential wildlife corridor connections with the Ouse Washes (the largest area of grazing marshes within the Fens).
- Seek opportunities for the creation and enhancement of reedbeds.

Within this Landscape Character Type, the following areas of distinctive character have been defined:

- E1: Tilney All Saints**
- E2: Saddlebow and Wormegay**
- E3: Wiggshall St. Mary**
- E4: Marshland St. James**
- E5: Downham West**
- E6: Hilgay Fen**
- E7: Welney River**
- E8: Denver Sluice**
- E9: Methwold**
- E10: Feltwell**

A summary of each area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

E1: TILNEY ALL SAINTS

Summary of Visual Character

This fen landscape to the south west of King's Lynn is defined in the east and south respectively by the meandering courses of the River Great Ouse and the Smeeth Lode. The village of Clenchwarton in the adjacent character area (D2 Walpole and Terrington) borders the area to the north whilst the Settled Inland Fens of Landscape Character Type D flank the area in the west. Intensive arable farming dominates this largely undeveloped, low-lying, strikingly flat character area with its large open skies, evoking a strong sense of isolation and exposure. A system of dykes and ditches (often lined with reeds and rushes) with grassy verges demarcate the fields, providing a stark contrast with the black peat. No distinct pattern is apparent in the fairly large fields to the north of the area with fields becoming smaller and more regular and geometric towards the south. The banks of the River Great Ouse, which are raised several feet above the surrounding landscape, provide a focal point in views eastwards within the character area. Prominent vertical elements such as communication masts,

orchards (both within the character area and looking across adjacent areas) and rows of poplar trees draw the eye in this large-scale continuous landscape. Views across adjacent Open Inland Marshes towards the south are panoramic and open whereas the skyline within views in other directions, especially looking towards the more developed surrounding landscape character areas (in Type D – Settled Inland Fens), has a somewhat cluttered appearance. The only forms of settlement in this fen landscape are the isolated scattered farmsteads, frequently surrounded by wind break trees, and the (mainly red brickwork) houses linearly along the few roads running through the character area. Slow-moving tractors are a constant feature on the horizon. A strong sense of tranquillity is apparent throughout the area, despite the fast moving transport corridors of the A17 and the A47 (with the associated noise intrusion) cutting across the area in the north.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Relatively open and panoramic views across the character area.
- Rows of poplars and willows situated in the north of the area wedged in between the A47 and the A17.
- General lack of built elements and largely rural character.
- Moderate sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Remaining orchards.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undisturbed, undeveloped character and related moderate to strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve open views southwards, along the Smeeth Lode (which contributes to recognisable character within the area) and across adjacent open inland marshes.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the poplar rows, characteristic of the area and protect and enhance the orchards in this area.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to screen existing settlement edges and potential new small-scale developments within villages in adjacent character areas (eg Clenchwarton in landscape character area D2 Walpole, Terrington and Clenchwarton) with planting, using species appropriate to local landscape character.
- Where appropriate, consider sensitive farm diversification, in keeping with local settlement pattern and character.

E2: SADDLEBOW AND WORMEGAY

Summary of Visual Character

Situated between the towns of King's Lynn and Downham Market, this character area follows the course of the River Nar to the east and is restricted by the banks of the River Great Ouse to the west. The banks limit views westwards and give the landscape a more enclosed feel, in strong contrast with the more open character within the rest of the Open Inland Marshes. The underlying geology of mudstone gives rise to extremely fertile soils in this landscape, which is characterised by intensively, managed arable fields, occasionally interspersed with pasture. Dykes (in places lined with tall vegetation) and ditches (often lined with reeds and rushes) frequently demarcate the medium to large, mostly regular fields. The banks of both the Relief channel and the River Nar, and the railway corridor cutting north south through the area, further offer topographical change and in places limit views across the area. Both the main river and relief channels are key landscape features within the area. Periodic flooding of the area changes the overall character of the area. In the eastern extent of

the area views are generally broken by tall vegetation (orchards, rows of poplars and clumps of trees including ash, beech, horse-chestnut, hawthorn and poplars), both in the area and associated with adjacent Character Types G (Farmland with Woodland and Wetland) and H (Settled Farmland with Plantations). The settlement pattern consists of several hamlets (including Saddlebow, Wormegay and Stowbridge, often linearly along the rural roads) and dispersed farmsteads, connected by a system of narrow rural roads with grassy verges. The mainly traditional building materials (including red brick, flint, chalk clunch and carstone) greatly add to distinctive recognisable sense of place throughout the area. Monastic influence is apparent along the River Nar, in the form of places of worship. A strong sense of tranquillity exists throughout the area, especially where the riverbanks create a more enclosed landscape.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- River Nar corridor.
- Strong sense of openness within views towards (adjacent) Open Inland Marshes.
- Patchwork of woodland patches and wet grassland, especially in the east along the River Nar, key ecological habitats for a wide range of species.
- Striking built character (combination of traditional flint, red brick, carstone and chalk clunch).
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within small village settlements.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve open views across the area and towards open inland marshes.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the villages is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the northern landscape setting of Downham Market, and seek to screen (where possible) harsh urban edges and existing visual detractors (such as the sewage works).
- Seek to conserve and enhance strongly recognisable sense of place within the area.
- Seek to conserve the patchwork of woodland patches and wet grassland.
- Seek to ensure that potential development of new pipelines respects landscape pattern and character.
- Seek to ensure that any potential new development respects the distinctive character of the River Nar and other river valley corridors.

E3: WIGGENHALL ST. MARY

Summary of Visual Character

Situated between the towns of King's Lynn and Downham Market, with the meandering course of the River Great Ouse forming its eastern boundary, this fen landscape encompasses large tracts of predominantly arable farmland. Strikingly flat and low-lying, the area offers panoramic views in most directions with wide, open skies. Communication masts cutting through the fields and rows of poplars

delineating roads and drains provide strong contrast with the flat character of the landscape. The skyline appears cluttered in places due to various buildings lining roads both within the area and adjacent character areas. Compared with the adjacent Open Inland Marshes, noticeably less dykes and ditches cut through the area, creating larger fields and a more continuous fen landscape, mostly uninterrupted by the low vegetation, which generally delineate the drainage channels. The Middle Level Main Drain dissects the area from north to south, its straight line emphasising the manmade nature of the landscape. Along the road following the River Great Ouse, views eastwards are limited by the river's raised banks whilst in the south views across the area are occasionally framed by woodland belts. Settlement, with its associated noise and intrusion, in the form of the hamlets Wiggshall St. Mary The Virgin, Wiggshall St. Germans and Wiggshall St. Mary Magdalen is concentrated at the northern extent of the area, and also lines the western bank of the River Great Ouse. Most buildings are traditional red brick with some variation being offered by the use of carstone, limestone and flint. The village churches form prominent landmarks in an otherwise very flat and horizontal landscape. Settlement pattern is generally isolated consisting of isolated, dispersed farmsteads and associated buildings occur in the rest of the area, which in combination with the general lack of a distinct road network, allows for the strong sense of tranquillity apparent throughout the area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide open skies and strong sense of openness and continuity throughout the area.
- Rows of poplars as focus points and ecologically important features.
- Distinctive built character (combinations of traditional building materials) within small village settlements.
- Village churches as landmarks within views across the area and adjacent areas.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve open views across the area and towards the village churches.
- Seek to conserve and enhance ecologically important features such as poplar rows.
- Seek to limit development in prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the villages is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.
- Seek to conserve and enhance strongly recognisable sense of place within the area.
- Where appropriate, consider sensitive farm diversification, in keeping with local settlement pattern and character.

E4: MARSHLAND ST. JAMES

Summary of Visual Character

This Character Area is situated to the northeast of Downham Market with the Middle Level Main Drain diagonally cutting the area in half. The more Settled Inland Marshes flank the area in the west. Land use in this large-scale, low-lying landscape is predominantly intensively managed arable farmland. A dense regular network of dykes and ditches (often lined with reeds and rushes) delineates

the small (mainly east of the Middle Level Main Drain) to medium (mainly west of the Drain) sized generally regular fields. Dykes are fairly low throughout the landscape (with the exception of the banks of the Middle Level Main Drain), adding to the continuum of the flat, unremitting fen landscape. Views throughout the area are overall panoramic, occasionally broken by rows of poplars, communication masts (a constant in the fen landscape), large farmsteads with associated wind break trees, and other tall vegetation. Clutter on the horizon is mainly associated with adjacent more settled landscape character areas, both within Type D (Settled Inland Marshes) to the west, and within Type H (Settled Farmland with Plantations), to the east. Settlement pattern in the area mainly consists of fairly large farmsteads linearly along the minor roads running through the area. The roads (often slightly higher than the surrounding landscape) are rural, narrow and often very straight, creating, together with the dense geometric network of drainage channels, a very regular manmade landscape. Sense of tranquillity is generally very strong throughout the area with the only sounds and movement coming from tractors (a constant feature on the horizon) and overhead planes, evoking a strong sense of place.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide open skies and strong sense of openness and remoteness within views across the area.
- Rows of poplars, clumps of trees and other tall vegetation as important ecological features.
- Characteristic and recognisable sparse settlement pattern.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Very strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve wide open views across the area.
- Seek to conserve and enhance ecologically important features.
- Seek to limit development in prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the area is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to conserve and enhance a recognisable sense of place within the area.
- Where appropriate, consider sensitive farm diversification, in keeping with local settlement pattern and character.

E5: DOWNHAM WEST

Summary of Visual Character

Situated directly to the west of Downham Market, with the River Great Ouse forming its eastern boundary, this character area encompasses predominantly intensively managed agricultural farmland. A dense regular network of dykes and ditches – often lined with reeds and rushes – delineates the generally geometric, small to medium sized, mainly arable fields, slightly detracting from the continuous character of this flat and low-lying fen landscape. Settlement pattern is sparse and linear, concentrated at the edges of the area, in the form of farmsteads and houses dotted along the A1122 (which runs across northwest corner of the area) and a more rural road running along the northwest extent of the area. Both roads are linked by another, relatively busy, rural road running eastwest from the direction of Downham Market. Settlement is also apparent at Barroway Drove. At Salter's Lode and Nordelph, recognisable distinctive character is apparent, with a Dutch style influence. The roads are, in most places slightly higher than the surrounding landscape. The area is further served by

several, equally straight, bridle paths. Views are mostly panoramic throughout the area with little or no vegetation causing visual obstruction, but the horizon often appears cluttered, especially within views towards Downham Market and more settled types and areas in the east. Rows of communication masts cutting across the fields provide prominent landscape elements, contrasting strongly with the strikingly horizontal plane of this geometric manmade landscape. Sense of tranquillity varies throughout the area, largely depending on proximity to busy transport corridors.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide open skies and strong sense of openness and remoteness within views across the area.
- Characteristic and recognisable sparse settlement pattern.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Very strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Network of dykes, ditches and watercourses.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve wide open views across the area.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the area is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Downham Market, and seek to screen (where possible) harsh urban edges and existing visual detractors (such as the sewage works).
- Seek to conserve and enhance strongly recognisable sense of place within the area.
- Seek to ensure that new drainage responds to existing landscape pattern.

E6: HILGAY FEN

Summary of Visual Character

This large-scale fen landscape encompasses very large tracts of mainly arable farmland (occasionally interspersed with patches of pasture). The Old and New Bedford River (holding between them the largest wet grassland habitat in the UK, including the Ouse Washes Nature Reserve – a nationally important wetland reserve for breeding and migrating birds) diagonally cuts through the area. The River Great Ouse encloses the area to the east whilst its southern edge is defined by the Borough boundary. A dense network of dykes and ditches (often lined with reeds and rushes) covers the low-lying flat landscape, bringing topographic change and demarcating the field boundaries. Views, which are generally panoramic throughout the area, are occasionally framed by rows of tall vegetation and mature trees lining the roads (including willows and rows of poplars), and dominated by vast open skies. Rows of pylons occur within views in some directions, detracting slightly from the horizontal character of the area. Communication corridors are scarce within this largely unsettled area, consisting of a few urban roads (often accompanied by a drainage channel either side). A railway corridor cuts north/south through the fields in the east of the area. Scattered farms are dotted linearly along the handful of roads in the area, concentrated mainly along the road following the course of the River Great Ouse. The banks of the Old and the New Bedford River are significant raised elements against the flat plane of the surrounding landscape. The very strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area brought about by the lack of both communication and settlement pattern, adds to the strong sense of place.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide open skies and strong sense of openness and remoteness within views across the area.
- Nationally important wetland habitat and other ecologically important features (including rows of poplars and other tall vegetation).
- Coherent and recognisable scarce settlement and communication pattern.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Very strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undisturbed, undeveloped character and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve open views across the area.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the wetland habitat and other ecological features.
- Seek to ensure that potential new development within the area is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to conserve and enhance strongly recognisable sense of place within the area.
- Where appropriate, consider sensitive farm diversification, in keeping with local settlement pattern and character.
- Seek to conserve the distinctive pattern and nature of the Old and New Bedford River channels.

E7: WELNEY RIVER

Summary of Visual Character

This flat and low-lying fen landscape is defined to the east by the busy road corridor of the A1101 and encompasses mainly intensively managed farmland, with both the Old and the New Bedford River (holding between them a large area of biodiversity rich wetland habitat, providing overwintering and feeding opportunities for a great number of bird species) running through the area in its southeastern corner. To the northwest of Welney, the relatively narrow course of the meandering Old Croft river joins the straight course of the Old Bedford River, providing contrast in drainage and landscape pattern. A mosaic of dykes and ditches (often lined with reeds and rushes) usually delineates the generally small, irregular mainly arable fields (with occasional patches of pasture). Settlement pattern consists of large farmsteads with associated farm buildings, often surrounded by wind break trees, scattered throughout the area, mainly linearly along the rural road corridors (B1094, B1100 and a handful of minor roads and bridleways). The linear arrangement of settlement within the area and surrounding landscape give the horizon a cluttered appearance within most views throughout the area and from adjacent areas. Other vertical elements including pylons and wind break trees also break the continuous character of the horizontal plane. Sense of tranquillity is generally strong throughout the area but varies depending on proximity to fast moving traffic corridors, especially the A1101 (which is a constant source of movement).

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide open skies and strong sense of openness throughout the area.

- Wetland habitat and other ecologically important features (including wind break trees and other tall vegetation).
- Scarce settlement pattern.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Moderately strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undisturbed, undeveloped character and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve open views across the area.
- Seek to conserve and enhance ecologically important wetland and other features.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the area is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.
- Seek to conserve and enhance strongly recognisable sense of place within the area.

E8: DENVER SLUICE

Summary of Visual Character

The line of the Cut-Off Channel (flowing into the Relief Channel at Denver Sluice) both appearing raised in comparison to the surrounding landscape, dominates this flat, low-lying, predominantly open fen landscape to the south of Downham Market. The River Great Ouse defines its western edge. Landscape is covered by a regular, geometric field pattern, consisting of a mixture of intensively managed arable farmland and pasture/rough grassland adjacent to the river and relief channels. Drainage ditches (often lined with low vegetation) and occasional low hedges (gappy in places and often not linear anymore), with single, mature deciduous trees, demarcate the field boundaries. Mud lines the banks of the river channel, with reeds and grassland set further back from the water. Views across this large-scale, expansive landscape are open and panoramic, dominated by sky, creating a strong, recognisable sense of place. Occasional clumps of trees and telegraph poles form the main vertical elements within a landscape which otherwise has an open and expansive feel. In some cases the roofs of houses are dominant on the skyline. Denver Windmill and the sluice gates of Denver Sluice form prominent landmarks, both within views to the adjacent character area to the east and within views from adjacent character areas. Overall, this is a very 'manicured' landscape. The settlement pattern is generally scarce, consisting of relatively isolated (generally modern) farmsteads, linked by minor rural roads/or droves, often running at right angles to the river channels. A relatively strong sense of tranquillity and exposure is apparent within this part of the Fen landscape.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide open skies and strong sense of openness within views across the area.
- Views to sluice gate landmarks (Denver Sluice) and along river and relief channel provide recognisable sense of place.
- Strong landscape pattern and historic integrity, in terms of recognisable fen field pattern and network of drainage ditches.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve sense of remoteness and tranquillity where apparent.
- Seek to conserve open, panoramic views across the area, towards Denver windmill and sluice gates, and to adjacent character areas.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the western landscape setting of Downham Market and seek to screen (where possible) harsh urban edges.
- Consider the visual impact of new development (particularly tall vertical developments) on the open character of the area.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the area is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.

E9: METHWOLD

Summary of Visual Character

The character area is situated in the south of the Borough, flanked by Settled Farmland with Plantations to the north, east and west and more Open Inland Marshes towards the south. The Cut-Off Channel defines the eastern boundary of this strikingly flat, low-lying fen landscape, which dominated by intensively managed farmland (mainly arable interspersed with patches of pasture). A dense regular and geometric network of drainage ditches (often lined with reeds and rushes) delineates field boundaries. The open character of the fen landscape is not always apparent due to views across the area being blocked in places by tall vegetation (including rows of poplars and medium to high species-rich hedgerows with mature trees such as willows) often lining the footpaths and ditches. Still unquestionably fen landscape, the higher density of tall vegetation sets this area apart from the other open inland marshes character areas. The Wissington sugar beet factory, with its associated silos, bordering the River Wissey is a prominent landmark within views from most directions, both within the area and in adjacent character areas, and evokes a strong sense of place. Both settlement and communication pattern are very sparse with a scattering of large farmsteads (with associated farm buildings) being linked by a handful of rural roads (mainly consisting of one road cutting more or less diagonally across the area with another one going off into the direction of the sugar factory). Towards the east of the area the roads acquire a more sinuous form and, together with the course of the River Wissey, contrast starkly with the geometric pattern of the surrounding landscape. Settlement pattern along the road is also slightly denser in the east but overall a strong sense of tranquillity is apparent throughout the entire area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide open skies and strong sense of openness within views across the area.
- Views to Wissington sugar beet factory provide recognisable sense of place.
- Strong landscape pattern and historic integrity, in terms of recognisable fen field pattern and network of drainage ditches.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undisturbed, undeveloped character and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve open, panoramic views across the area, across the area and to Wissington sugar beet factory.

- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the area is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to conserve the gently meandering course of the River Wissey and associated riverbank habitats.
- Seek to ensure that potential expansion of Wissington includes a strong landscape framework.

E10: FELTWELL

Summary of Visual Character

This low-lying dramatically flat character area is situated in the southern extent of the Borough, with the boundary following the course of the Little Ouse River. The Cut-Off Channel defines the eastern edge of the area. Large-scale agricultural farming is the predominant land use in this extensive fen landscape with its vast, open skies. The landscape appears fairly textured with lots of rough grassland and shrub peppered across the farmland. The medium sized regular fields are usually delineated by a network of drainage ditches (often lined with reeds and rushes), the banks of which are fairly low and offering little topographical variation. Views within the area are generally open and panoramic but are in places limited by tall vegetation (including shelterbelts and woodland copses, rows of poplar – a recurring feature in the fen landscape, and lone standing mature trees). Within views towards more settled area Type H: (farmland with Plantations) and Type D (The Fens – Settled Inland Marshes), the skyline appears cluttered with rooftops and other vertical elements (including rows of communication masts and tall vegetation). The tall silos of the sugar factory in adjacent Character Area E9 (Methwold) form a focus point on the skyline in views towards the north. Several large farms with associated farm buildings, occasionally surrounded by wind break trees are dotted along the few rural roads (with grassy verges) running through the landscape. A number of footpaths and bridleways further serve the area. Throughout the entire area a strong sense of isolation and remoteness is apparent, brought about by the general lack of built structures and communication corridors.

Evaluation

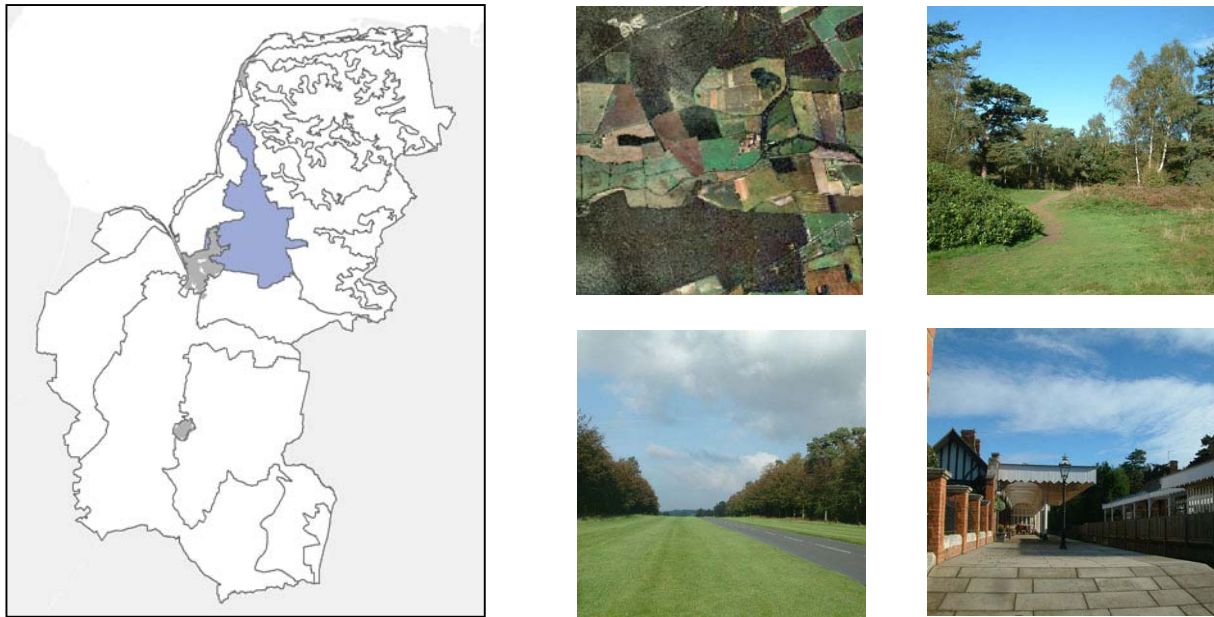
Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide open skies and strong sense of openness within views across the area.
- Views to Wissington sugar beet factory provide recognisable sense of place.
- View of the satellites.
- Strong landscape pattern and historic integrity, in terms of recognisable fen field pattern and network of drainage ditches.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undisturbed, undeveloped character and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve open, panoramic views across the area, across the area and to Wissington sugar beet factory.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the area is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.

F: WOODED SLOPES WITH ESTATE LAND



Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Type is located towards the north west of the Study Area - bound to the south by Farmland with Woodland and Wetland (Type G), and to the west by Drained Coastal Marshes and the town of King's Lynn. To the north it is met by Coastal Slopes and to the east by Rolling Open Farmland. The sloping landform forms the transition between the low lying Coastal Marshes to the west and the elevated Rolling Open Farmland to the east.

Key Characteristics

- Dominated by the presence of coniferous and mixed plantation woodlands and mixed estate woods but with substantial areas of land given over to arable farming, this is a medium scale landscape with contrasting degrees of enclosure. The small villages bring an intimate quality to the landscape.
- This landscape is cut by tributaries of the Babingley River, Gaywood River and The Ingol, making for a gently undulating, sloping landform.
- The extent of tree cover imparts a dark, enclosed character to the landscape.
- Where the landscape is under arable cultivation, there are few vertical or divisionary elements such as hedgerows. Ditches, dykes and post and wire fencing define the field margins – offering wide-open views towards the wooded areas where trees define the horizon.
- A well-managed landscape which includes Sandringham and its associated estate grounds and well tended villages.
- Views are restricted across much of the area due to the density of the plantations but with open views across arable land and channeled along the main roads.
- Aside from the larger settlements of Dersingham and Snettisham, settlement comprises small-scale villages of traditional style that are often focused around greens. Carstone is consistently used as a building material.
- The edge of King's Lynn brings an urban influence to the landscape - with views from the main A149 to modern developments and built structures.
- Within the landscape, visible built structures are generally discrete and there are few points of focus or landmark features.

- The landscape is cut by long straight roads including the main A149 (Hunstanton to King's Lynn road) that runs north – south through the entire area. These roads form the main source of movement. Away from this major road the landscape is for the most part quiet.
- Human influence is apparent and the landscape is neither physically or perceptually remote.

Summary of Visual Character

The Wooded Slopes with Estate Land Landscape Character Type is a transitional landscape occurring between the low lying Drained Coastal Marshes to the west and the elevated inland landscape of the Rolling Open Farmland to the east. These slopes are predominantly defined by a solid geology of Sandstone and Mudstone. The sands series occurring within this landscape is complex - many, including Sandringham Sands, have been worked for glass manufacturing. Elevation ranges from 0m to 50m AOD – ascending gently from west to east to form subtle slopes. These slopes are cut by the tributaries of the Gaywood River, Babingley River and The Ingol – making for a gently undulating landform although this is disguised by the amount of woodland cover. This landscape has been drained and planted over the last 100 years - transforming it from open heathland and grassland to the landscape of today; dominated by conspicuous coniferous and mixed plantation woodland. There are still a number remaining heathland pockets but these are restricted (potentially due to the amount of management needed).

The landscape is centred on Sandringham House – a Grade II* listed property and country retreat of the Queen. The house and grounds of the Sandringham Estate have an influence on the landscape - imparting a well-managed character over the wider area. The Sandringham Estate is surrounded by a large area of plantation woodland that falls within the designated Norfolk Coast AONB. This woodland contains Sandringham Country Park – an area covering 57.5 hectares accommodating recreational activities including occasional picnic areas, camping and caravanning sites as well as signposted walks and trails. Towards the south, the woodlands surrounding Sandringham Estate give way to substantial tracts of arable farmland contained within large, geometric fields. Interspersed with the arable fields are further woodland blocks - the abrupt change in land cover from dense woodland to open farmland making for strong contrasts of enclosure and viewing experience. Orchards are also associated with the Sandringham Estate. Within the arable areas, hedgerows are limited and field margins are for the most part characterised by ditches and dykes and post and wire fencing - exaggerating the scale of the open and flat farmland plain. The landscape is cut by long straight roads including the main A149 (Hunstanton to King's Lynn road) that runs north – south through the entire area. This main route brings with it a constant source of movement and forms a clear interruption to the largely unspoilt character of the landscape. Within and around the Sandringham Estate, and surrounding woodland, roads are neatly edged on either side by wide close-cut grass verges.

The most significant settlements in terms of size are Snettisham and Dersingham occurring within the north of the landscape. Smaller scale, low-density settlements are dispersed and discrete - on the edge of the wooded areas and focused in the south and east – leaving a significant area in the west largely unsettled. Villages generally have a traditional character and are often focused around a central green. The consistent use of building materials - clay tiles, red brick and carstone (an orangey-red sandstone from the Lower Greensand outcrop) evoke a unified and very 'manicured' character. West Newton, part of the Sandringham Estate, has an organised, picturesque arrangement of buildings. Although the landscape has a large scale overall, the smaller villages bring an intimate quality. The larger urban areas of King's Lynn and Dersingham also have an influence on character - their modern, suburban edges visible from the A149 although often obstructed or filtered by trees.

Historic Land Use Character

Due to its former close proximity of the sea, its fertile soils, and spring lines this Landscape Character Type has attracted many past settlers to Norfolk. The great Iron Age hoards discovered at Snettisham in Norfolk form the richest Iron Age treasure ever discovered in this country. However, it is not until the early medieval period that features that survive in the landscape today started to be constructed.

An example of one of the earliest of these is Castle Rising. A Norman fortress built around 1140, covering an area of 4.9 hectares (12 acres), of which parts of the great tower, gatehouse, fine Norman arches and vaulting still remain. The general layout of the port of Castle Rising, refounded after the construction of the castle by William d'Aubigny forced relocation of the existing church and settlement in the 1130s, implies that it may be a rectilinear plantation but other evidence is lacking.

The density of settlement within the area during the early medieval period was one of the highest in Norfolk. This is shown at Snettisham there were seven mills in the Domesday survey - more than in any other Norfolk village. Today, however, only Snettisham watermill, which was built in 1800 survives. It is probable that it was built on an existing mill site although virtually no records have so far been found.

In contrast to the open fields, fold course systems: of sheep and cereals, especially barley, the 16th century saw the commencement of two centuries of estate enlargement and concentration, founded on post-Restoration political stability, economic growth and agricultural improvement, reflecting the high political value and social status of landownership, which can still be seen in the King's Lynn and West Norfolk landscape today. Manorial holdings were relatively large in this part of Norfolk compared to the east side of Norwich due to the land being less fertile and the cheaper soils. Although none of the great Estates of this period, within the Wooded Slopes, are owned by the named families much land was within Estates of between 2,000 and 4,000 ha (5,000 and 10,000 acres).

Continued building in the second half of the 19th century reflected not only the optimism of the golden age of 'High Farming' but also the march of non-landed money into the countryside. Of 21 new houses built in Norfolk, six were built by men new to the County including the Prince of Wales who settled at Sandringham. With Sandringham, came not only its associated estate grounds but also the well tended villages.

Continuing political, economic and social change in the 20th century undermined the landed estate and deprived the country house of its traditional roles. The largest Estates proved most resilient but many country houses were demolished. Of the houses mapped by the end of the 19th century more than one quarter have gone. Population change in the 19th century was characterised by rapid growth. With an overall increase of between 33 and 100% across the Character Type. This was perhaps due to the building of the Great Eastern Railway (between 1862 and 1922) which would have allowed greater movement throughout the Character Area.

Generally settlement comprises small scale villages of traditional style that are often focused around greens. Vernacular dwellings within the villages are mostly constructed of carstone and flint, a few with bathstone dressings. An example of which is The Tithe Barn, adjacent to the Church in Dersingham, which was built in 1671 in clunch and carstone and features brick dressings and a pantiled roof. These buildings and villages are not typical of West Norfolk. They are of a different character to the rest of the Borough.

Ecological Character

The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:

- Lowland heathland.
- Calcareous grassland.
- Lowland dry acid grassland.
- Purple moor and rush pastures
- Coniferous, deciduous and mixed (plantation) woodland including several patches of wet woodland.
- Scattered mixed shelterbelts and clumps of mature trees.
- Hedgerow network.
- River corridors, including the River Ingol.

- Small ponds and pools.
- Network of drainage ditches (with grassy banks and lined with reeds and rushes).

The nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:

- Roydon Common Ramsar site.
- Dersingham Bog Ramsar site.
- Roydon Common and Dersingham Bog Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).
- Roydon Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Leziate, Sugar & Derby Fens SSSI.
- Grimston Warren Pit SSSI.
- Dersingham Bog SSSI.
- Roydon Common National Nature Reserve (NNR).
- Dersingham Bog National Nature Reserve (NNR).
- County Wildlife Sites (CWS).

Key Forces for Change

- Loss of hedgerow field boundaries as a result of agricultural intensification.
- Small-scale or incremental development within villages (such as Snettisham and Dersingham), which may be inconsistent with local built character and materials (such as carstone, clunch and flint).
- Changes in woodland cover as a result of changes in management.
- Increased parking associated with the potential expansion of villages and tourist attractions.
- Potential urban expansion/ introduction of an urban fringe character to the east of King's Lynn and associated visual impact on landscape character.
- Potential small-scale pockets of new development within and around the edges of Snettisham and Dersingham, which may be inconsistent with local built character and settlement pattern.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

This Landscape Character Type has a generally strong and distinctly recognisable sense of place throughout, even though visible built structures are discrete, with generally few points of focus or landmark features visible. Overall, this type is considered to have a generally strong character, as a result of the generally well-managed landscape associated with Sandringham House and Estate. Overall condition of elements within the type is also considered to be good.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the Wooded Slopes with Estate Land should be to conserve the relatively intricate pattern of large plantation woodlands and estate villages alongside the varying range of diverse ecological habitats and mature landscape structure. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek opportunities to expand and create calcareous grassland habitats within and associated with core areas (such as SSSI's and CWS).
- Seek to expand and create areas of lowland dry acid (calcareous) grassland as part of any minerals restoration strategies with the type.
- Seek to expand and create areas of lowland heathland, associated with existing core areas (generally underlain by greensand geology).
- Seek to expand and create areas of purple moor grass and rush pastures within existing core areas.

- Seek to enhance the management, presentation, interpretation and accessibility of the area for its historic value.
- Seek opportunities for restoration of degraded areas and creation of new areas of wood pasture, associated with other heathland and grassland sites.
- Seek to conserve and manage the age-structure and species composition of large areas of plantation and estate woodlands as striking landscape features and wildlife areas.

Within this Landscape Character Type, the following areas of distinctive character have been defined:

- F1: Snettisham and Dersingham**
- F2: Sandringham**
- F3: Babingley River**
- F4: Hillington and Congham**
- F5: Pott Row and Roydon Common**
- F6: Grimston**
- F7: North and South Wootton and Castle Rising**

A summary of each area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

F1: SNETTISHAM AND DERSINGHAM

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the south of Hunstanton and north of Sandringham Estate, this character area encompasses two relatively large nucleated villages (Snettisham and Dersingham), which nestle within a predominantly wooded backdrop. The northern part of the area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. The lower course of the River Ingol flows east west across the area (to the south of Snettisham), becoming a more recognisable landscape feature further to the east, where the valley sides become steeper. Topography throughout the area is generally flat to gently sloping (from east to west). Landscape within the area is underlain by soft sandstone and Greensand. The relatively steep western sloping edge of rolling open farmland provides a sense of enclosure to the east, whilst topography is much flatter to the west (on the vast expanse of Drained Coastal Marshes). A strong sense of enclosure is also provided by the wooded slopes of Sandringham Estate to the south, which provide a backdrop and setting to Dersingham village. Dersingham and Snettisham extend east and westwards from Lynn Road corridor, which once provided the main north-south route from King's Lynn to Hunstanton (now replaced by the A149 bypass). Pockets of development (shops and houses) and the lower part of Ingoldisthorpe village line this road corridor. Set back from this, land use characteristically consists of small patches of enclosed horse pasture, medium-sized arable fields sprinkled with regular copses and blocks of predominantly deciduous woodland (such as Life Wood). Several traditional orange carstone buildings dominate built character within both villages. Within Snettisham, the station building is a prominent feature and buildings are set along a High Street. Old station buildings contribute to recognisable sense of place to the west of Dersingham village (adjacent to several small business units and plots of enclosed rough grassland). Sense of tranquillity within this part of the character area is disturbed by proximity to the A149 bypass road to the west. Snettisham is based around a similar layout, with several distinctive buildings, such as the Rose and Crown public house (white-washed carstone) contributing to recognisable sense of place. In both cases, the churches are situated at a slight distance to the east of the main settlement (and in the case of Snettisham, upon higher ground within adjacent Rolling Open Farmland). Overall sense of tranquillity varies, depending on proximity to the Lynn Road corridors and settlement edges.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure, with fields and paddocks delineated by generally mature hedgerows.
- Traditional buildings materials (such as carstone) within several traditional/ older buildings.
- Mature woodland copses (e.g. Life Wood) and larger areas of woodlands and plantations (Ken Hill Wood and Lodge Hill Plantation).
- Open views to landmark churches to the east of the villages.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to maintain and enhance the generally wooded setting of parts of Snettisham and Dersingham villages.
- Seek to conserve open views across Drained Coastal Marshes to the west of the area.
- Seek to conserve open views to Snettisham, Ingoldisthorpe and Dersingham churches (which provide recognisable landscape features).
- Seek to ensure that any new small-scale development in or on the edges of Snettisham and Dersingham, responds to existing settlement pattern.
- Seek to ensure that any new development is small-scale and responds to historic settlement pattern, setting and traditional building materials.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the settlement edges of Snettisham and Heacham.

F2: SANDRINGHAM

Summary of Visual Character

This character is situated to the south of Dersingham and northeast of King's Lynn and encompasses Sandringham royal estate and the large expanse of surrounding woodland, which is predominantly coniferous. The majority of the area is within Norfolk Coast AONB. Gently rolling topography is underlain by soft sandstone and the landscape is speckled with several small ponds and pools. Land use is dominated by the vast expanse of predominantly coniferous woodland that surrounds Sandringham House and Country Park. Mature trees create canopies over the minor road corridors that are sprinkled throughout this area, creating a strong sense of enclosure in places. Recognisable character and sense of place is visible as a result of the pattern of low brick walls and characteristic black metal railings, marking the boundaries of the Royal Estate. The main house is surrounded by a large expanse of mature parkland which is speckled by majestic deciduous parkland trees. Colour variation is noticeable in the form of purple flowers (of rhododendrons), which contrast against a dark green coniferous backdrop. Long parkland drives punctuate the landscape (often delineated by black estate railings). The Norwich Gates (designed by Thomas Jekyll) and described by Pevsner⁹ as 'very sumptuous cast and wrought ironwork' provide a striking and instantly recognisable local landmark feature. Settlement pattern is dominated by the small villages of Wolferton and West Newton. West Newton encompasses a series of estate cottages (within a woodland setting), located next to the church (another local landmark). At Wolferton, the disused, yet maintained, railway station (which is situated along the old railway corridor that connected King's Lynn to Hunstanton) provides a recognisable feature of the built character. Within both villages, traditional wooden signs denote sense of place. Roads are generally lined with wide grass verges and tall, mature Scotch pines, mature hedgerows or other coniferous trees. Views are characteristically either channelled down road corridors, or looking towards a woodland backdrop. Overall sense of tranquillity throughout the area is strong.

⁹ Pevsner/ Wilson (1999), *The buildings of England, Norfolk 2: North-West and South*, Yale University press, New Haven and London.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Very mature landscape character, including vast expanses of mature coniferous woodland.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within West Newton and Wolferton.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the character area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the predominantly rural character of the area.
- Seek to ensure that any potential new small scale or incremental development within West Newton or Wolferton respects the character and setting of Sandringham House and estate.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials within villages, including flint, chalk clunch and pantiles.

F3: BABINGLEY RIVER

Summary of Visual Character

Situated between the Vincent Hills to the north and the Old Sovereigns to the south, Bablingley River Wooded Slopes with Estate Land follows Bablingley River from the B1440 in the east to the A149 in the west. The western half of the area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. The area encompasses a relatively flat valley floor surrounded by wooded hills, which are separated into large irregular fields bound by post and wire fences and crossed by ditches. The Bablingley River is lined by trees to the west of the area and around Mill House within Keepers Wood. Whalley Farm and the caravan park to the east of the area form the only settlement in the area. Due to the open nature of the valley the caravan park and large modern farm building associated with the farm are visually intrusive introducing urban features into a predominantly rural landscape. Views are channelled east-west along the valley bottom between areas of large dense woodlands on the valley slopes. Sense of tranquillity in the area is disturbed by the close proximity of the main roads with associated noise and visual intrusion.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.
- Views to plantation woodland surrounding the valley.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Predominantly rural character throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the patchwork of woodland copses and wet grassland.
- Conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.
- Seek to screen existing visual detractors such as the caravan park.

F4: HILLINGTON AND CONGHAM

Summary of Visual Character

Situated between Roydon and Grimston to the south and Hillington to the north, this Landscape Character Area encompasses a sparsely populated area of mature landscape comprising gently undulating woodland, plantation and arable farmland. The western part of the area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. The north and east of the area in particular is peppered with large expanses of mixed woodland and plantation creating a strong sense of enclosure. Outside the woodland blocks, mature deciduous single trees are scattered throughout hedgerows and also within fields. The south and western extents of the area are more open with only odd pockets of coniferous plantations and tree belts amongst the open large arable fields. To the west of the area near to the A148, within the open fields are some rectangular artificial ponds and lakes punctuate the landscape, contributing to strong landscape pattern. Congham Hall is set within parkland with mature trees scattered throughout areas of grassland. The only settlements within the area are the small villages of Congham and Hillington. Congham is a ribbon development with two centres along a small minor road with the western end centred on a church with tower. The church provides a distinctive feature within surrounding open landscape. A cluster of farms and Little Congham House forms the eastern end of the village grouped around a pond and green. Hillington lies in the northeast corner of the area. The Hillington towers are distinctive features within the landscape. The houses in the area are often traditional small terraced cottages often with white windows and flint faced walls nestled amongst group of trees. The houses in the area are also often associated with small paddocks, which are lineated with wooden fences and occasionally horse tape. Outside of the villages settlement pattern consists of a series of isolated dwellings and farmsteads accessed by the network of roads. Roads radiate from the A148 and are generally aligned north-south or east-west. Most of the roads are minor and single-track. Between Hillington and Grimston lies the wider and busier B1153. Noise from the roads in the area disturbs the otherwise strong sense of tranquillity. This area is also crossed by a series of Public Rights of Way, which generally follow farm tracks and narrow country lanes. The dense blocks of woodland and plantation restrict views, however, long distance views can be obtained across fields in places.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Open, panoramic views across fields within the area.
- Landscape setting of the villages.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within the settlements.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing villages.
- Seek to conserve the open views across the area and adjacent areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the villages is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.

F5: POTT ROW AND ROYDON COMMON

Summary of Visual Character

Situated between South Wootton to the west and Roydon and Pott Row to the east, this area is dominated by the generally flat Roydon Common (National Nature Reserve) and its surrounding woodland. Roydon Common forms a large patchwork of open dry and wet heath, valley mire and rough pasture. To the east and south of the open mosaic of habitats lie Hudson's Fen and Grimston Warren, which form large blocks of gently undulating mixed but mainly coniferous woodland. Southeast of the large blocks of woodland are flat small narrow linear paddocks and the complex network of small fields and the coniferous Pott Row Woods. In the western extent of the area on the edge of South Wootton is Reffley Wood, which screens South Wootton from the surrounding countryside. Surrounding these main blocks of woodland small fields consisting of a mixture of pasture and arable farmland dominate character. Low hedgerows with large mature hedgerow trees often delineate the field boundaries. Settlement is concentrated in the east of the area upon the villages of Pott Row and Roydon. These villages form ribbon development along the eastern side of Leziate Drove. Outside these villages a few isolated farms are located on the edge of woodland and accessed by the tracks and single-track lanes that dissect the landscape. These minor roads provide access to the main roads such as the A149 and Leziate Drove that cross the area. In addition to the network of roads there is a network of Public Rights of Way and tracks winding through the woodland and heath. Outside of the woodland many of the footpaths follow tracks. The dismantled railway that crosses the area northeast-southwest forms a strong linear feature in the landscape and in parts a boundary to the woodland. The blocks of woodland (only allowing short distance channelled views between the woodlands) restrict views across the area. Away from the main roads the area has a strong sense of tranquillity, which is disturbed by traffic noise in close proximity to the roads.

F5a: Gaywood River Valley

Situated towards the south of Pott Row and Roydon Common character area, this valley encompasses the very gently meandering channel of the Gaywood River. Changes in topography between the valley and adjacent agricultural fields are almost imperceptible. The valley is, however, recognisable as a landscape feature on account of the associated vegetation lining the river course and a series of drainage ditches at field boundaries in close proximity to the river.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.
- Landscape setting of the villages.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within the settlements.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Recognisable sense of place.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.
- Small-scale industries

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing villages.
- Seek to conserve the open views across the area and adjacent areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the villages is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Pott Row.

F6: GRIMSTON

Summary of Visual Character

This character area lies between Grimston and Pott Row to the north, and Leziate in the south. Character within the area is dominated by open estate land with only small blocks of woodland (often linear in shape). The flat to gently rolling arable and pasture fields are regularly shaped and vary in size. The fields boundaries are marked by a mixture of low, well trimmed hedgerows, which are gappy in places and also contain mature deciduous hedgerow trees. In addition there is a comprehensive network of straight ditches and streams running across the fields, and demarcating field boundaries. The streams rise through springs and wells in the eastern side of the area. Grimston church forms a key landmark in the area. To the south, the village of Gayton also encroaches into the area situated between the junction between the B1145 and the B1153. Other settlement in the area is characterised by farmsteads and small hamlets centred on Halls scattered along the single-track roads that cross the area. The houses are often faced with more traditional stone and flint with striking and red carstone. Settlements are linked through an interconnected network of roads and small country lanes as well as footpaths and tracks especially in the north. In places, mature tall hedgerows provide a sense of enclosure channelling views along the road corridors. Sense of tranquillity varies throughout the area. Views within the area are generally open and long distance over the fields where there are no hedgerow trees dominating the skyline.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.
- Open, panoramic views across the fields within the area.
- Landscape setting of the villages.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within the settlements.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing villages, such as Gayton and Grimston.
- Seek to conserve the open views across the area and adjacent areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the villages is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.

- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.

F7: NORTH AND SOUTH WOOTTON AND CASTLE RISING

Summary of Visual Character

Surrounding the villages of North and South Wootton, this area is split into two parts, which is separated by the villages. The area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. Overall the area is covered to a large extent by mixed woodland on common land with a patchwork of arable and pastoral fields around Castle Rising, North Wootton and South Wootton. Castle Rising forms the main settlement in the area (lying to the northeast of North Wootton). The village lies below the castle, which stands prominently on the side of a hill. Also in the village the church (with tower) provides a distinctive landmark. To the east of North Wootton the landscape encompasses an extensive area of woodland with recreational access including King's Lynn Golf Course within Stony Hangings clearings. To the north the woodland merges at points with Wootton Carr, a smaller wood with less public access. An interconnected network of minor roads link North Wootton and Castle Rising and surround Castle Rising itself. To the west of North Wootton, a more open mosaic of small regular pasture and arable fields delineated by an intricate ditch network dominate the landscape. The landscape to the west of North Wootton is generally flat and low lying in comparison to the eastern side. Overall the area has a strong sense of tranquillity and views are generally enclosed by trees to the east, whilst to the west, they are generally more open and extensive.

Evaluation

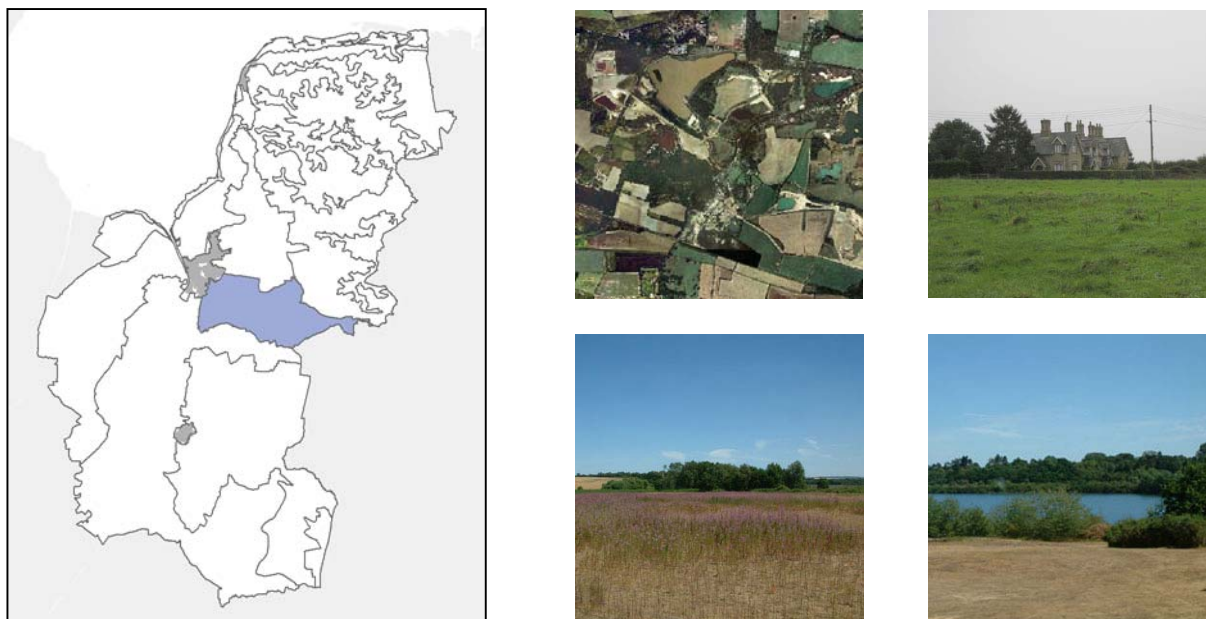
Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.
- Open, panoramic views across the fields within the area.
- Landscape setting of North Wootton, South Wootton and Castle Rising.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within the settlements.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Strong recognisable sense of place throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of North Wootton, South Wootton and Castle Rising.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to conserve the open views across the area and adjacent areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within the villages is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.

G: FARMLAND WITH WOODLAND AND WETLAND



Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Type occupies a central to northwest location within the Study Area and is bound to the north by Wooded Slopes with Estate Land (Type F), the east, to the south by Settled Farmland with Plantations and to the south and west by The Fens – Open Inland Marshes and the urban edge of King's Lynn.

Key Characteristics

- Mixed agricultural fields, interspersed with woodland and areas of open water create a medium scale landscape with a varied sense of enclosure.
- This landscape is flat to gently undulating - falling away towards the River Nar (on the southern boundary) and the Gaywood River (occurring to the north of the landscape).
- Much of the surface geology is defined by Sand and Gravel and previous and present day mineral extraction sites characterise much of the landscape.
- Restored workings are important for both recreation and biodiversity.
- Fields are irregular both in terms of size and shape and are bound by hedgerows that vary in terms of height, thickness and overall condition – evoking an inconsistent character.
- Settlement is concentrated on areas of higher ground and characterised by small-scale villages and hamlets of a linear arrangement. To the north west, views can be gained of the urban edge of King's Lynn.
- Wooded horizons frequently characterise the skyline views. Pylons are also prominent features on the – occurring within the north and south of the landscape. Masts and posts carrying overhead wires are also frequently in view.
- The landscape has very few points of focus - churches associated with settlement are the most prominent landmark features.
- Although some views into the landscape can be gained from adjacent character types, these are largely broken or filtered by the tree cover and landform.
- Away from main transport corridors the landscape has a peaceful character.

Summary of Visual Character

Farmland with Woodland and Wetland Landscape Character Type is a medium scale, transitional landscape – separating the low lying areas of Fens to the west, from the more elevated area of the Rolling Open Farmland to the east. The sense of transition is marked by a varied and less consistent land cover pattern than is evident in other landscapes within the Study Area – its mixed character influenced by the different landscape types that demarcate its boundaries. The elevation of the land ranges from 10m to 40m AOD with a flat to gently undulating terrain. The areas of lowest elevation are generally consistent with the western edge. Here, the landscape type borders The Fens – Open Inland Marshes. The land also drops gently towards the River Nar (defining the southern boundary of the landscape) and towards the Gaywood River (occurring to the north within adjacent Wooded Slopes with Estate land Landscape Character Type). These south and north facing slopes leave an area of slightly higher ground that forms a very subtle ridge, east-west through the centre of the landscape. It is within this area of higher ground, away from the floodplain of the rivers, that settlement is concentrated.

The surface geology is defined by drift deposits comprising Sand and Gravel, Clay and Peat and by solid strata of Sandstone and Mudstone. The presence of sand and gravel throughout the landscape has meant a history of mineral excavation with pits and active workings a key feature. Silica sand is a precious resource, and the railway corridor was developed for the transportation of this sand. In addition to the active extraction sites, are substantial areas of land, previously worked for sands and gravels, that have been now been restored to form areas of open water and woodland of significant recreation and biodiversity value - Pentney Lakes Leisure Park and the Country Park at Leziate for example. Pentney Lakes or Pentney Gravel Pits (County Wildlife Site) is a large area of vegetated gravel and sand workings and an extensive system of lakes that are spring fed from the northeast.

The lakes have important fringing vegetation, as well as areas of grassland and scrub. Woodland and areas of commercial forestry and are a key component of the landscape. West Bilney Wood, occurring to the west of Pentney Lakes is a large geometric coniferous plantation – managed by the Forestry Commission. Mintlyn Wood is an area of mixed woodland with an irregular, sinuous form and is connected to a series of woodland pockets and swathes that surround the Leziate Country Park. In addition, there are a number of small areas of wet woodland – bordering roads for example - characterised by birch and other moisture loving species. The areas of woodland as well the restored and active mineral workings intersperse the main land use which is defined by mixed agricultural fields – comprising cereal crops, paddocks, improved pasture and areas of rough grazing. The fields are not uniform - varying in terms of shape and size but generally bound by hedgerows, containing hedgerow trees. The hedgerows have an inconsistent character - differing in terms of height, thickness and overall condition. Active hedgerow restoration is evident in a number of areas. Post and wire fencing is also a common boundary feature. The sense of enclosure varies across the landscape. It feels distinctly more enclosed where the hedgerow network is strong and where trees and areas of woodland obstruct and restrict views. The landscape feels much more open towards the west and south of the area where it becomes much more indicative of the adjacent Fens – Open Inland Marshes and Settled Farmland with Plantations Landscape Character Types. Away from this main transport corridor, the landscape is very peaceful. Masts and poles and two extensive pylon lines (in the south and north of the area) interrupt the skyline. Settlement comprises villages and hamlets of a linear form – often merging and appearing as one such as at Middleton and Blackborough End. The largest settlement, West Winch occurs in the far west of the landscape. Villages contain significant areas of modern development and often have a suburban edge character. Village churches are landmark features but otherwise there are few points of focus.

Historic Land Use Character

Like the majority of the rest of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough prehistoric evidence within this Character Type is restricted to findspots and is therefore not visible within the landscape today. However, the modern landscape does play testimony to the trends and fashions of many periods

throughout its history, starting with the early medieval. One example is Middleton Castle, an 11th century earthwork motte and bailey fortress, founded by William of Ecouis. The large motte, is encased by a wide ditch and to the east is a sub-rectangular bailey, with the remains of its encasing rampart and ditch.

Development continued in some cases throughout the medieval period, Middleton Towers was originally a 14th century fortified manor house, founded by the Scales family. In the 15th century, Thomas, Lord Scales erected a brick courtyard fortress, on the large moated platform. However, all that remains, is a fragment of the west range and the large three storey gatehouse, which is flanked on the angles by four storey octagonal turrets. However, three major deserted medieval villages and two minor or shrunken medieval villages are recorded, with two villages recorded as having fewer than ten households in 1428.

The countryside between 1500 and 1740 was dominated by open fields and fold course systems: sheep and cereals, especially barley. The Gayton Inclosure Act, 1810, and Wormegay and other parishes Drainage Act (an act for draining and improving certain fen lands, low grounds and marshes, and other lands and grounds), 28th June 1815, further changed the field layout into the small fields that can be seen in the landscape today.

This Character Type was quite late in attracting parks and gardens, as a small number of parks are recorded during the early 20th century, many with less than 74.9 ha (185 acres). Many attracted large houses, such as Gayton Hall, a fine Georgian house, which was bought by the 4th Earl of Romney in 1880 as part of a sporting estate. Vernacular architecture, within the small-scale villages and hamlets of linear arrangement, is dominated by local carstone.

Ecological Character

The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:

- Lowland calcareous grassland.
- Several patches of wet woodland.
- Scattered mixed shelterbelts and clumps of mature trees.
- Hedgerow network.
- River corridors, including the Rivers Nar and Gaywood.
- Parkland

The nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:

- Norfolk Valley Fens Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- East Walton & Adcock's Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Bawsey SSSI.
- Blackborough End Pit SSSI.
- East Winch Common SSSI.
- River Nar SSSI.
- Castle Acre Common SSSI.
- CWS

Key Forces for Change

- Loss of hedgerow field boundaries as a result of agricultural intensification.
- Potential urban expansion/ introduction of an urban fringe character at the edges of King's Lynn and associated visual impact on landscape character.
- Potential small-scale pockets of new development within and around the edges of villages such as Gayton, which may be inconsistent with local built character and settlement pattern.

- Potential noise and visual intrusion associated with mineral extraction sites at Bawsey/ Leziate, and associated visual intrusion.
- Noise and visual intrusion associated with Hardwick Industrial Estate.
- Potential pollution of river corridors as a result of run-off from adjacent agricultural farmland.
- Expansion of extraction for sand.
- A47 Middleton East Winch bypass.
- West Winch bypass.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

Overall condition within this Landscape Character Type varies. In places, hedgerows are well managed and continuous, whilst in other places, a gappy and less well-managed character is apparent. As a result of this, overall condition of landscape with this type is considered to be declining. Throughout the type, although landscape pattern is relatively recognisable and sense of place quite strong in certain places (as a result of views to church towers), the landscape is fragmented, due to varying land uses and land cover pattern. Overall strength of character is considered to be moderate, although several of the small village retain their traditional form and exhibit a range of varied local materials.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for this landscape character type should be to conserve the strong pattern of wetland, farmland and mature woodland and enhance the hedgerow network where gappy and depleted. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek opportunities to expand and create calcareous grassland habitats within and associated with core areas (such as SSSI's and CWS) and as part of minerals restoration strategies.
- Seek to conserve and enhance chalk river corridors (such as the Nar and Gaywood) as wildlife corridors and landscape features.
- Seek to restore and buffer Gayton Common (County Wildlife Site) pingoes¹⁰ as a wildlife feature within the type.
- Seek opportunities for restoration of mineral extraction sites and quarries as landscape and nature conservation features.
- Seek to conserve and manage large areas of woodland as striking landscape features and wildlife areas.
- Seek to restore hedgerows, where gappy, to enhance existing landscape pattern and improve their function as wildlife corridors throughout the type.
- Seek to establish arable field margins as potential nest sites for ground nesting birds and habitats for small mammals¹¹.
- Seek opportunities for the creation of floodplain grazing marsh along river corridors throughout the type.

Within this Landscape Character Type, the following areas of distinctive character have been defined:

- G1: Bawsey and Leziate**
- G2: Middleton**
- G3: Gayton and East Winch**
- G4: West Winch**

¹⁰ Pingoes: periglacial features which occur as a high density of relatively small ponds in discrete areas.

¹¹ See: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/countryside/farming/advice/farmhabitats/margins/index.asp>

A summary of each area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

G1: BAWSEY AND LEZIATE

Summary of Visual Character

Situated directly to the east of King's Lynn, this character area (Bawsey and Leziate) is defined to the north by the B1145 and to the south by a dismantled railway corridor. A rich mosaic of wet – plantation – woodland (deciduous, coniferous and mixed), wetland, lakes (some of them marking previous mineral extraction sites) and farmland (a mixture of arable and pasture) dominates the flat to gently undulating landform with its underlying geology of predominantly sandy and mudstone. A variety of boundaries, ranging from species-rich hedges (mostly intact although gappy in places) with mature trees, wooden fences (grazed areas) and drainage ditches (frequently lined with reeds and rushes) delineate the medium sized mainly irregular fields. Settlement pattern is relatively scarce and mainly consists of ribbons of houses along minor rural roads running northeast across the area. Dispersed farmsteads with associated buildings occur throughout the area. The relatively wooded character of the landscape provides a strong sense of enclosure in places and limits views within the area and from adjacent character areas. Rows of communication masts slicing through the fields are a recurring feature. The lack of built structures and transport corridors in the centre of the area makes for a moderate to strong sense of tranquillity, becoming less apparent near the edges of the area, where King's Lynn urban fringe and the busy corridors of the A149 and the B1145 create a busier environment with more movement and noise. Surrounding the sand plant, the landscape has a relatively industrial character.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Sense of tranquillity throughout the character area.
- Mature landscape structure with high density of water bodies and plantation woodland, providing a strong sense of enclosure in places.
- SSSI protected habitats.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the, rural character and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of King's Lynn and seek to screen (where possible) harsh urban edges.
- Seek to conserve enclosed character brought about by mature vegetation.

G2: MIDDLETON

Summary of Visual Character

Situated directly to the southeast of King's Lynn this character area encompasses the village of Middleton within a patchwork of predominantly farmland (mainly arable) interspersed with patches of wetland and plantation woodland. Field boundaries vary with mainly regular medium sized fields generally demarcated by a system of drainage ditches (frequently lined with reeds and rushes) to the west. Towards the east, hedgerows (usually intact but gappy in places) are more common. The more wooded character of the adjacent area (G1 Bawsey and Leziate) provides a backdrop to views north. Within the character area, views are generally intermittent due to several copses and belts of plantation woodland scattered throughout the farmland, which follows field boundaries in places. Towards the west the more open landscape allows views to the western edge of King's Lynn, creating a more

cluttered and busy skyline. The linear village of Middleton (merging along the road into Blackborough End (in area G4 West Winch) with its high density of traditional red brickwork buildings dominates settlement pattern. Isolated farms are further dispersed throughout the area. The A47 running east to west through the area towards King's Lynn provides a source of movement and noise, disturbing the otherwise strong sense of tranquillity generally present throughout the area. Communication pattern is further scarce with one main rural road (connecting Middleton with the surrounding character areas) and several footpaths and bridleways scattered across the landscape.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intact mature landscape structure including mature deciduous parkland trees, patchwork of grazed parkland, intact hedgerows and woodland plantations.
- Views to historic halls within the area and views on plantations from adjacent landscape character areas.
- Strong historic integrity.
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Seek to conserve the setting of historic halls and parkland.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Conserve the landscape setting of existing small villages (such as Middleton).
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of King's Lynn and seek to screen (where possible) harsh urban edges.
- Seek to conserve the largely undisturbed and tranquil nature of the area.

G3: GAYTON AND EAST WINCH

Summary of Visual Character

This character area encompasses a fairly inconsistent gently undulating landscape of farmland, (plantation) woodland and wetland. Situated at the eastern extent of Type G (Farmland with Woodland) and Wetland, the area looks out over the rolling landform of Type I (Rolling Open Farmland) to the north and the flat plain of Type E (The Fens – Open Inland Marshes) to the south marking this as a somewhat transitional landscape.

This area encompasses a small-scale landscape exhibiting a variety of different habitats, mainly agricultural fields (combination of arable and pasture) in a colourful mosaic of generally medium sized fields, delineated by a variety of field boundaries, including hedgerows and post and wire fencing. Farmland is interspersed with fairly large (plantation) woodland (deciduous, coniferous and mixed) copses, which are concentrated mainly to the eastern and southern edges of the area. Areas of open water are also an important feature, associated with the valley of the River Nar to the south e.g. (Pentney Lakes Leisure Park to the south). Settlement is relatively scarce and consists of a number of small villages and hamlets, including East Winch, Gayton and Pentney, with village Halls often prominent features within the villages. Village churches form landmarks within views throughout the area. The character of the views across the area varies greatly, from enclosed and channelled by paths in the woodland to open (although frequently limited by blocks) across farmland. Built character in the villages is a mixture of flint, mainly red brickwork, carstone, slate and pantiles. Several farmsteads are dotted along the mainly rural roads. The busy traffic corridor of the A47, cutting diagonally through the area, disturbs the generally tranquil character of the area in places.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout the character area.
- Diversity of character with patchwork of (wet) (plantation) woodland, farmland and wetland.
- Contrast between open panoramic views across farmland and beyond to adjacent character areas and more enclosed within woodland.
- The landscape setting of Middleton.
- Mineral Deposits.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undisturbed, undeveloped character and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve panoramic and open views the area and beyond to adjacent landscape areas, especially toward the open inland marshes.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of Middleton.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within Middleton is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, appropriate to existing settlement character.
- Seek to conserve pingoes and their landscape setting.
- Seek, where possible to enhance and restore mineral extraction sites.

G4: WEST WINCH

Summary of Visual Character

This character area lies between the sprawling settlement of West Winch to the west and Blackborough End in the east. The area is characterised by a gently undulating mixture of urban sprawl, fields and woodland with scattered lakes and ponds. The west of the area lies within West Winch which forms a linear development along the A10 with groups of buildings and houses clustered together in groups separated by small fields and farms. The church with a tower (situated to the east of West Winch and north of Manor Farm forms a distinctive feature). North Runcton forms a more compact settlement centred on Rectory Lane, and Chequers Lane. The key buildings within the village of North Runcton are the church (with a tower visible over the surrounding fields) and The Grange a large mansion to the east of the village centre off Rectory Lane. Blackborough End in the southeast corner of the area forms a small compact settlement centred around the junction between Setch Road and East Winch Road. The remaining landscape between these settlements encompasses a series of fields of varying sizes. The fields are predominantly arable with some paddocks around the village edges and between the clusters of houses in West Winch. Hedgerows and ditches demarcate field boundaries, with lakes and ponds scattered throughout the fields. Amongst the fields blocks of mixed woodland also contribute to landscape pattern. Setchey Common forms a linear grassland feature running south of North Runcton to Setch Road. West Winch Common is also a distinctive local landmark. The villages and towns are accessed via a network of roads that lie around the perimeter of the area with roads radiating out from the centre of the villages. One of the busiest roads in the area is the A10 which links King's Lynn to Downham Market. Noise from this road disturbs the sense of tranquillity. In addition to the roads, tracks and footpaths wind through the fields linking settlements. In places, woodland blocks restrict (otherwise open) views across fields.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Very strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout the character area.
- Strong sense of openness, with open, panoramic views towards the undeveloped open inland marshes.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve panoramic and open views the area and beyond to adjacent landscape areas, especially toward the open inland marshes.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of West Sussex.
- Seek to conserve existing settlement pattern and provide a green setting to settlement edges.

H: SETTLED FARMLAND WITH PLANTATIONS



Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Type occupies a south to southwest location within the Study Area. This landscape forms the transition between the low lying flat landscape of The Fens – Open Inland Marshes and the more elevated, variable landform of: The Brecks – Heathland with Plantations.

Key Characteristics

- Medium to large field units interspersed by area of woodland and belts that offer some degree of enclosure and impart a medium scale to the landscape.
- Topography gradually ascends inland and appears for the most part very flat but with localised areas of gently sloping land dropping away towards the Rivers Great Ouse and Nar.
- Arable crop production is the predominant land use and is defined by a variety of field margins. There are some small areas of pasture but these are limited.
- Areas of mixed woodland bring textural qualities and offer semi-enclosure in the landscape. Away from the wooded areas however, the landscape is open with distant views.
- Field margins range from ditches and dykes, hawthorn hedges, scrubby margins, and lines of poplar to areas where there are no visible boundary divisions.
- Although fields are geometric in form, due to the inconsistent nature of the field margins and the irregular location and shape of the wooded areas, the regularity of the land cover pattern is diffused.
- Scattered farm dwellings and small-scale settlements of low density are dispersed throughout this landscape, connected by rural roads.
- Characteristic building materials are buff coloured brick and clay roof tiles.
- Suburban development on the edge of Downham Market (abutting the landscape's western edge) influences the character of this landscape type.
- The skyline is variable – appearing inconsistent in areas of mixed woodland and scrub, regular where views can be gained of the block plantations within the adjacent landscape, and feeling uncomplicated and open across the Fens.
- With the exception of views across and into the Fens, wooded horizons define much of the skyline.

- Communication masts at Feltwell, Marham and Bexwell are eye catching and influence the character of the skyline’.
- Marham has a very distinctive character, with communication masts at RAF Marham airfield bringing a military influence to the landscape.
- Landmark features include churches, located on higher ground, windmills, such as and Stoke Ferry and the British Sugar factory occurring within the adjacent Fens landscape type. There are however significant areas where there are no obvious landmarks or points of focus.
- Slaughter houses and charcoal industry buildings also contribute to recognisable character.
- Due to the predominantly flat landform, vertical elements from a strong contrast to the horizontal plane. In particular, lines of poplar, Scots pine and beech – marking field boundaries – are eye-catching elements.
- A number of main routes cross through the landscape, bringing a constant source of movement but away from these main routes the landscape is, for the most part, still and peaceful.

Summary of Visual Character

The Settled Farmland with Plantations Landscape Character Type is a medium scale landscape marking the transition between the low lying Fens to the west and the higher ground of The Brecks – Heathland with Plantations that defines much of the eastern boundary. The transitional nature of the landscape is marked by its underlying physical composition with drift deposits of peat in the west (pertaining to the character of the Fens). Much of this landscape is however unaffected by drift deposits with the solid strata of Silty Mudstones in the far west and the expanse of Lower and Middle Chalk in the centre and east, defining the upper surface geology. The elevation of the landscape ranges between 0m and 30m AOD and the landform is gently sloping – dropping away towards The Fens – Open Inland Marshes and landscape Farmland with Woodland and Wetland Landscape Character Types. The slope of the land is however gradual and it appears almost flat.

Arable farming dominates and is contained within a regular network of geometric fields. The regularity of the land cover pattern is diluted by the presence of woodland (varying in shape and size), areas of scrubby ground and the inconsistent nature of the field boundaries. The areas of scrub have a strong influence – imparting an almost unmanaged character to parts of the landscape. The geometric, consistent field pattern does reduce towards the west of the area where fields generally become smaller and of a more irregular form. Towards the west, drainage ditches and dykes that form a strong visual connection, and mark the transition, to the adjacent Fenland landscape, commonly delineate field boundaries. In addition to the dykes, hawthorn hedges, lines of poplars, shelterbelts of Scots pine and scrubby verges define field margins. It is the combination of the varied field margins, scrubby land and areas of woodland that create a mix of textures and heights; affording the landscape with a more variable land cover pattern than neighbouring landscapes. Sizeable plantations as well as small coniferous, deciduous and mixed woodland blocks and belts frequently occur - making for predominantly wooded horizons that vary in terms of height, form and density. The most significant areas of woodland occur to the north at Shouldham Warren – a large plantation with recreational value containing a number of public footpaths and picnic areas.

Although areas of tree cover greatly influence views - both within and out of the landscape – there are extensive open views across the adjacent Fens landscape. In this predominantly flat landscape, vertical elements form a strong contrast to the horizontal plane. In particular, lines of poplar, Scots pine and beech – marking field boundaries – are eye-catching elements. Churches associated with the settlements, located on slightly elevated ground, also form points of focus with their towers and spires punctuating the wooded context. Communication masts at RAF Marham airfield (bringing a military influence to the landscape) as well as at Feltwell and Bexwell draw the eye. The windmill at Stoke Ferry is a local landmark. The British Sugar factory occurring within the adjacent Fens landscape type is also a strong landmark feature – it’s large silos appearing to loom over the open landscape. There are however significant areas where there are no obvious points of focus.

A number of main routes cut through the landscape bringing a constant source of movement. Away from these main routes however, the landscape is, for the most part, still and perceptually peaceful. In addition to the main roads, a network of rural lanes connects the scattered farms, small hamlets and villages that make up the majority of settlement. These villages exhibit a mix of traditional and modern styles with buff coloured brick, red brick and clay tiles, the consistent building materials. The presence of the urban area of Downham Market is also locally apparent – low-rise suburban development on the edge of the town having an influence on the character of the adjacent rural landscape.

Historic Land Use Character

Evidence of past land use within the Settled Farmland is widespread, but generally not visible in the landscape today; from Palaeolithic occupation sites through to vast quantities of Iron Age artefacts, much has been recorded within the area but none of it immediately visible. The Roman occupation brought with it more visible archaeological remains, including buildings, salt production sites, and the road from the coast to the Roman town of Narford, however, two millennia of agricultural activity within the region have obliterated all but the fragments of this former use. Some settlements however, do have Roman or pre-Roman routes. Hockwold-cum-Wilton would have been a hamlet based around one or two farmsteads with workers' hovels clustered nearby. A source of water reasonably close by would have been an important settlement generating factor, together with fertile land for cultivation and woodland for hunting and grazing.

Town names in the form of '-Tun' are all that remain of the Early Medieval period, although these are quite a widespread resource and include: Ryston; Hockwold cum Wilton; Whittington; Barton Bendish; and Watlington. Other early town foundations include Feltwell, which is recorded as having a market in 1283, although it was out of use by the 17th century.

The agricultural pattern between 1500 and 1740 was that of open fields and the fold course systems of sheep and cereals, especially barley. Parliamentary enclosure was predominately a 1793 – 1815 activity within this area, however the general field pattern of today does not reflect that.

By 1880 over half of Norfolk was owned by landowners with more than one thousand acres, and much of the landscape of the county was dominated by their houses, parks, farms and villages. The fortunes for purchases were often made through political activities or the legal profession. Sir Nicholas Hare was a Privy Councillor and Keeper of the Great Seal for Mary I before he bought Stow Bardolph in 1553. Another example within the Character Type is Stradset Hall, a Grade II Listed Park and pleasure grounds, of 108 ha (267 acres) laid out by JC Loudon between 1810 – 1813.

The most modern period of history, which has a great impact on the landscape of this Character Type, is that of 20th century military action. Feltwell, Boughton, Narborough and Marham airfields are all situated within its confines: Feltwell's connection with aviation began during World War 1, when No. 7 Training Depot Station was housed there; Narborough aerodrome was opened in August 1915, as a night flying landing ground satellite for RNAS Great Yarmouth; and Marham aerodrome was constructed in 1935 as part of the RAF's pre-war expansion program. Bexwell and Downham airfields are also visible within the landscape.

Settlement is generally still on a small scale pattern, with villages dominated by landmark features including churches and windmills. Local traditional materials play a large part in the construction of historic buildings. These materials include: Chalk, rough blockwork (coursed and random); Flint, field nodules (coursed and random) and also knapped flint; bull Gault clay bricks; Red brick; Colourwashes; and Red and black glazed pantiles.

Ecological Character

The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:

- Several patches of wet woodland.
- Scattered mixed shelterbelts and clumps of mature trees.
- Hedgerow network.
- Rows of poplars.
- Network of drainage ditches (with grassy banks and lined with reeds and rushes).

The nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:

- Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA).
- Boughton Fen Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Breckland Farmland SSSI.
- County Wildlife Sites.

Key Forces for Change

- Loss of mature hedgerow field boundaries as a result of agricultural intensification.
- Potential urban expansion to the east of Downham Market, which may be out of character with the surrounding landscape and settlement character.
- Small-scale development within villages such as Hockwold, which may be out of character with existing settlement pattern.
- Pressure for the expansion of villages such as Watlington (associated with the mainline railway corridor).
- Loss or decay of mature parkland landscapes and landscape features.
- Visual intrusion associated with RAF Marham.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

Field boundaries within this Landscape Character Type are inconsistent and gappy in places, denoting a somewhat declining landscape structure. Strength of character varies, depending on proximity to plantations. The simple, mainly arable land cover is relieved by the variety of plantation woodlands. Landscape pattern is quite striking as a result of the patchwork of regular plantations interspersed with predominantly arable farmland. Overall condition is considered to be declining and strength of character, moderate.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the Settled Farmland Plantations, should be to conserve the relatively regular landscape pattern of arable farmland, interspersed with plantations, scattered farm dwellings and small-scale settlements, and enhance field margins and field boundaries. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek to conserve and manage large areas of plantations as striking landscape features and wildlife areas.
- Seek to enhance the management, presentation, interpretation and accessibility of the area for its historic value.
- Seek to restore hedgerows, where gappy, to enhance existing landscape pattern and improve their function as wildlife corridors throughout the type.
- Seek to establish arable field margins as potential nest sites for ground nesting birds and habitats for small mammals¹².
- Seek to conserve and enhance chalk river corridors as wildlife corridors and landscape features.

¹² See: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/countryside/farming/advice/farmhabitats/margins/index.asp>

- Seek opportunities for the creation of floodplain grazing marsh along river corridors throughout the type.
- Seek to conserve the setting of historic houses (mature parkland) where they occur throughout the Landscape Character Type.
- Seek to conserve, enhance and link patches of wet woodland throughout the type.
- Seek to conserve and enhance rows of poplars (at field boundaries) as striking landscape features, which contribute to over landscape pattern and function as wildlife corridors.

Within this Landscape Character Type, the following areas of distinctive character have been defined:

- H1: Stow Bardolph**
- H2: Fincham**
- H3: Denver**
- H4: Wereham**
- H5: Northwold**
- H6: Hilgay and Southery**

A summary of each area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

H1: STOW BARDOLPH

Summary of Visual Character

This character area is situated northeast of Downham Market with the Fens (Type E – Open Inland Marshes) flanking the northern and western boundaries. The flat to gently rolling landform of this character area is covered with a rich, colourful (with seasonal differences) patchwork of arable farmland, historic parkland (often grazed) and rough grassland, interspersed with (both regular and irregular shaped) copses and belts of plantation woodland (deciduous, coniferous and mixed) and a scattering of hamlets and small villages. Occasional ponds and pools are peppered throughout the area. A variety of field boundaries, including wooden fencing around pasture, medium to tall hedgerows (species rich – but mainly hawthorn – generally well managed although gappy in places) with young and mature trees (including ash, poplar, oak) and drainage ditches (often lined with reeds) demarcates the generally regular network of medium to large fields. Ditches, trees and hedges also often align the rural roads. Views across the area are in most directions framed by woodland plantations. The trees and hedges aligning roads in places further add to a sense of enclosure. Historic halls are landmark features within several views (set against surrounding parkland backdrop). From the A10, approaching the junction with A1122 and also from adjacent footpaths the eastern settlement edge of Downham Market is visible. Communication masts cut across the fields but due to the presence of other vertical elements are a lot less conspicuous than is the case in the adjacent more open, flat inland marshes. The settlement pattern is scattered, consisting of isolated farmsteads dotted along the rural roads, historic halls (including Ryston Hall with its associated golf course and Bexwell Hall) and (linear) small villages. A network of relatively narrow, rural roads crosses the area and connects the settlements. The Main A10, A134 and A1122 roads cut through the area (forming a triangle), with associated noise and visual intrusion. A relatively strong sense of tranquillity away from the main road corridors is apparent throughout the area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intact mature landscape structure including mature deciduous parkland trees, patchwork of grazed parkland, intact hedgerows and woodland plantations.

- Views to historic halls within the area and views on plantations from adjacent landscape character areas.
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Seek to conserve the setting of historic halls and parkland.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing small villages (such as Shouldham Thorpe).
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Downham Market and Bexwell and seek to screen (where possible) harsh urban edges.
- Seek to conserve the largely undisturbed and tranquil nature of the area.

H2: FINCHAM

Summary of Visual Character

This landscape character area is bordered to the north by Fen Landscape, whilst more settled farmland with plantations flank the area to the south and west. The flat to gently rolling landform of Area H2 (Fincham) is dominated by the RAF settlement (conveying a strong sense of place) amidst a colourful patchwork of intensively managed farmland interspersed with several belts and copses of deciduous, coniferous and mixed woodland plantations. The medium to large mainly regular fields (predominantly arable with occasional patches of pasture and rough grassland) are lined with a variety of field boundaries, from hedges (medium height, mainly hawthorn and generally well managed) to ditches (often lined with reeds and rushes) and in the case of pasture wooden fences. Views across the area are generally open and dominated by wide, open skies. The plantation woodlands and tall vegetation lining the roads in places provide a sense of enclosure. From several locations in the north of the area the extensive Shouldham Warren coniferous woodland plantation in the adjacent Area H1 (Shouldham Thorpe) character area is visible on the skyline. Landscape and settlement pattern is greatly influenced by the presence of the RAF village of Marham (with generally modern red-brick buildings) and associated structures, including the Marham Airfield in the northeast corner of the area. The settlement pattern further includes the (respectively linear and nucleated) villages of Fincham and Barton Bendish. Large, isolated farmsteads and occasional houses occur dotted along the generally peaceful rural roads. Communication pattern is fairly scarce and consists of a network of urban roads connecting the settlements. The straight (Roman Road) fast moving transport corridor of the A1122 cuts through the area, splitting it into two, whilst a system of droves, bridleways and footpaths further serves the area. A strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity persists throughout the area, depending on the proximity to the A1122 with its association noise and visual intrusion.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intact mature landscape structure including intact hedgerows and woodland plantations.
- Contrast between open and enclosed views across the area, including views on plantations in adjacent landscape character areas (e.g. Shouldham Warren coniferous plantation).
- The landscape setting of the villages.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.

- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing villages.
- Seek to conserve the largely undisturbed and tranquil nature of the area.

H3: DENVER

Summary of Visual Character

The flat to gently sloping landscape (sloping from west to east across the character area) of this character area, situated directly north of Downham Market, is dominated by the linear village of Denver. This village is set within predominantly arable farmland comprising occasional patches of rough grassland and pasture. The relatively regular, fairly geometric field pattern consists of medium-sized fields generally delineated by a mixture of hedged field boundaries and visible drainage ditches (often lined with reeds and scrub). Where pasture occurs wooden fences often demarcate the boundaries. The species-rich hedges are low to medium, generally intact but gappy in places, with mature trees also visible within field boundaries. Occasional small patches of mixed and deciduous plantation woodland are scattered throughout the area and several ponds are visible within the landscape. The plantation woodlands, mature field boundaries, hedges (lining field boundaries and roads), mature trees (including rows of poplars) provide some sense of enclosure, with views across the farmland often framed by plantation woodlands. From locations within the character area, the southern edge of Downham Market is visible. Denver windmill is a landmark within views across the western half of the character area, evoking a strong sense of place. The more open character of the Inland Marshes to the west of the character area offers panoramic views with wide, open skies over the fen landscape. Settlement pattern is dominated by Denver with its landmark church, hall and two moated sites. Agricultural buildings are also scattered across the landscape. Several camping and fishing sites are associated with the village and commons are a notable landscape feature within the area (including Whin Common, to the east and Sluice Common to the west). The communication pattern consists of two major roads at the northern and eastern boundary to the area (A1122 and A10), with a minor road (Sluice Road) connecting the area to fen landscapes further to the west. Tranquillity is disturbed in places by proximity to main road corridors and activity associated with Denver settlement and the southern edge of Downham Market to the north.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Strong landscape structure apparent in places including intact, mature field boundaries.
- Strong historic integrity with historic features including the landmark church, windmill, hall, two moated sites and two commons.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve the setting of historic features within the character area.
- Conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Downham Market and seek to screen (where possible) harsh urban edges.
- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.

H4: WEREHAM

Summary of Visual Character

This character area is situated southeast of Downham Market, its southern edge defined by the Cut-Off Channel, with the A134 Lynn Road running through the area in the east. The flat to gently rolling landscape encompasses several small linear villages (including Crimplesham, West Dereham, Wereham and Boughton) nestling within a predominantly agricultural backdrop (mainly arable with occasional patches of pasture around the villages). The field pattern consists of a network of generally regular small to medium fields delineated by a variety of field boundaries including species-rich (usually intact but gappy in places) hedgerows, drainage ditches (often lined with reeds and/or shrubs), mature trees and (in the case of pastoral fields) wooden fencing. Several plantations woodlands (deciduous, coniferous and mixed), hedges, rows of poplars and other mature trees (including birches), scattered throughout the area and lining the roads, frame views and give a sense of enclosure. From locations in the south the sugar factory in Area E9, Methwold is a landmark on the skyline. The site of St. Mary's Abbey (founded 1188) provides a notable historic landmark feature within the area. Apart from the above-mentioned villages the settlement pattern consists of several large farms dotted along the rural roads. The southeast corner of the area is slightly more settled with Wereham and the fused villages of Wretton and Stoke Ferry. A network of mainly rural, peaceful roads (often aligned by drainage ditches) connects the farms and villages. A moderate to strong sense of tranquillity is apparent throughout the area, depending on proximity to busy transport corridors.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intact mature landscape structure including intact hedgerows and woodland plantations.
- Views on plantations both within the area and in adjacent character areas.
- The landscape setting of the small villages.
- St. Mary's Abbey and its setting.
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Seek to conserve the setting of St. Mary's Abbey.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing small villages and seek to screen harsh edges.
- Seek to conserve the largely undisturbed and tranquil nature of the area.

H5: NORTHWOLD

Summary of Visual Character

This flat to very gently undulating landscape, situated in the east of the district, overlooks the Fen landscape to the west. The landform with an underlying geology of chalk and limestone encompasses a number of villages, large farms and estates, set within a backdrop of farmland and plantation woodland. The fields are mainly regular in shape, medium sized and generally lined with hedges (species-rich, overall intact but gappy in places). Views across the area are strongly influenced by the plantations in adjacent character area (K1 Cranwich). The belts and copses of (coniferous, deciduous and mixed) plantation woodland between Feltwell and K1 further frame views across the area and contribute to a sense of enclosure. Several locations in the west of the area offer wide, open views with huge skies looking across adjoining fen character areas E9 (Methwold) and E10 (Feltwell).

Settlement pattern in the area consists of a number of villages, including the large village of Feltwell with its RAF station (currently used by the United States Air Forces Europe) and military disused airfield directly south of Methwold, contributing to a strong sense of place and history. The built character in the villages, with its rich and colourful mix of brickwork (red, orange and buff), chalk clunch, flint and pantiles, further adds to sense of place. Hockwold church is also a landmark feature within several views across the area. Several farms and estates are dispersed over the area, dotted along the rural roads connecting the settlements. Roads crossing the land are mostly rural, tranquil and occasionally lined with species-rich hedges, channelling views and creating a sense of enclosure in places. The fast moving corridor of the A134 cuts through the fields, disturbing tranquillity in the northeast corner of the area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses of plantation woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerows.
- Views on plantation woodlands (both within the area and in adjacent character area K1) to the east and across the adjacent fen landscape to the west.
- Landscape setting of the villages.
- Striking built character (combination of brickwork, chalk clunch, flint and pantiles).
- Strong historic integrity.
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve and enhance the existing belts and copses of plantation woodland and other tall vegetation within the area.
- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing villages.
- Seek to conserve the largely undisturbed and tranquil nature of the area.

H6: HILGAY AND SOUTHERY

Summary of Visual Character

This character area is located to the south of the Borough with the Cutt-Off Channel forming its northern boundary and the meandering course of the River Great Ouse delineating the area from the west. The landform is flat to gently undulating in the south and forms a slight hill in the north of the area, which slopes down to the sinuous form of the River Wissey further north. The combination of plantation woodlands (coniferous, deciduous and mixed), watercourses, farmland, drainage ditches, rows of poplar trees, small and large ponds and mix of building materials, creates an interesting and busy landscape. The small to medium sized (generally arable, with pockets of pasture concentrated around settlement) fields exist in a regular pattern, the boundaries delineated by drainage ditches (frequently lined with reeds and rushes). The belts and copses of plantation woodland that occur throughout the entire area only allow intermittent views across the area and from adjacent character areas. Wisseton Sugar Factory in character area E9 (Methwold) is a prominent vertical element on the skyline in views from locations in the eastern extent of the area. The adjacent fen landscape further permits wide, open views in places but are westwards limited by the raised banks of the River Great Ouse. The villages of Hilgay (overlooking the River Wissey) and Southery dominate the settlement pattern. Built character in the villages is chiefly composed of brickwork (mainly buff interspersed with red) with occasionally pantiles and slate. Settlement pattern further consists of a

number of houses and farms scattered across the area. Agricultural sheds and the water tower contribute additional built elements. Communication pattern is fairly scarce with the busy, fast-moving transport corridor of the A10 cuts through the fields, dissecting the area and disturbing tranquillity in places. Few rural roads cross the area; it is however covered by a strong network of footpaths and bridleways.

Evaluation

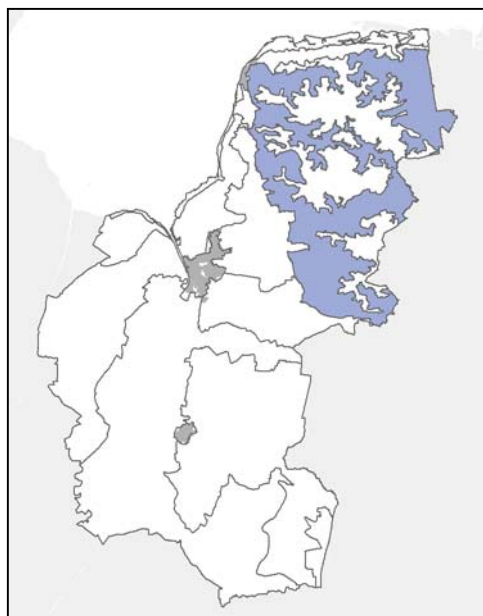
Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses of plantation woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerows.
- Views on fen landscape from locations in the east and south of the area..
- Landscape setting of the villages Hilgay and Southery.
- Traditional built character (combination of red and buff brickwork, pantiles and slate).
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of existing villages.
- Seek to conserve the largely undisturbed and tranquil nature of the area.

I: ROLLING OPEN FARMLAND



Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Type occurs within the north of the Study Area and gives way to landscape Plateau Farmland (Type J), predominantly occurring above the 60m contour which marks the transition to this flatter and more elevated landscape. The Rolling Open Farmland is bound along its northern edge by Coastal Slopes, to the west by Wooded Slopes with Estate Land and to the southwest by Farmland with Woodland and Wetland.

Key Characteristics

- A medium to large scale landscape with an overriding sense of openness, wide open skies, medium to large field units, and the presence of large features such as linear Scots pine shelterbelts.
- Shallow river valleys and dry tributary valleys cut through the Middle and Upper Chalk geology to give rise to a gently rolling landform.
- Dominated by intensive arable crop production contained within a network of regular shaped fields that form a strong geometric landscape pattern.
- Dramatic linear shelterbelts of Scots pine are visible from long range - looming over the horizontal plane and forming distinct focal points.
- Hawthorn hedgerows demarcate field boundaries and align rural roads. These exaggerate the strong landscape lines and provide focused channelled views. Hedgerow trees, predominantly oak and beech are often clothed in ivy.
- Dispersed low-density settlement comprising isolated farmsteads, rural hamlets and villages. The latter generally occur at road crossings and take a linear or bilinear form. They generally appear contained rather than sprawling due to their small size and scale. Churches are a key symbolic feature of settlements although sometimes detached from the main settlement hub.
- A prominent skyline, often uninterrupted and smooth - the strong horizon line giving way to wide open skies. The skyline is also characterised in places by the silhouettes of Scots pine shelterbelts, hedgerow trees and the presence of pylons, posts and communication masts.
- Churches associated with settlements are often located on discrete knolls, their towers and spires acting as distinct focal points. Windmills similarly act as points of focus, and are interesting

landmark features, as well as the water tower on the edge of Hunstanton at Redgate Hill. Settlements are generally discrete.

- Although there is an overriding sense of openness, views into other landscape types are restricted due to the rolling landform and the elevated plateaux, which often limit views.
- The network of rural roads and lanes is the most obvious source of movement (these are often very straight and flanked by wide grass verges) but overall movement is minimal and the landscape feels very still.
- Due to its largely unsettled character and extensive areas of undeveloped land, the landscape often feels remote and peaceful.
- Drove-wide road corridors.

Summary of Visual Character

The Rolling Open Farmland Landscape Character Type is a transitional landscape occurring between the more elevated Plateau Farmland and the slopes, both north and east, leading to the coast. Past and present hydrological processes have cut river valleys (both wet and dry) through the underlying solid geology of Middle and Upper chalk. The solid chalk defines the surface geology of much of the western half of the landscape but further east, drift deposits dominate. This is apparent where fields have been cultivated and the soil is peppered with gravels. Drift deposits are also associated with the River Valleys – the Rivers Burn and Heacham for example are defined by linear strips of sand and gravel, silty clays and shell marl. The elevation of this landscape roughly ranges between 20m AOD and 60m AOD although there are areas that exceed this range. The 60m contour line often marks the transition to the adjacent Landscape Character Type defined as Plateau Farmland. The change to this type is subtle but there is a heightened sense of elevation, and the landform becomes flatter. Views into the plateaux landscape are in general restricted to the plateaux edge. Intensive arable production is the dominant land use and the landscape is characterised by continuous tracts of medium to large geometric field units. The open, arable fields are interrupted by the repetition of a number of key landscape features. Hawthorn hedgerows, for example, of varying heights, condition and density, define the majority of field margins. Often cut into tall and narrow blocks, these hedgerows exaggerate the strong geometric field pattern. The hedges also impart a distinct sense of enclosure particularly along the often straight rural roads where views become channeled. This is particularly evident where lanes become partially sunken, moving into the shallow river valleys. Where hedges are broken or gappy views become both intermittent and distant. The hedges are often flanked or interspersed by hedgerow trees – typically oak or beech clothed in ivy. These are strong vertical features. Large linear shelterbelts of Scots Pine (sometimes mixed with beech) are the most dramatic landscape features – bringing strong vertical contrast. Their looming presence also appears to increase the scale of the landscape. Windmills, church towers and spires are also important focal points. Other vertical elements are pylons, communication masts and posts carrying overhead wires and two water towers on the edge of Hunstanton at Redgate Hill. These somewhat disrupt the distinct land cover patterning by slicing diagonally across field units. Where hedgerows are gappy, views of the adjacent ‘downs’ can be gained.

Some areas of pasture also occur, generally grazed by sheep. Pasture is increasingly common close to the river valleys and on the edges of settlements but is not an overt characteristic of the landscape. Pig farming is more common with sizeable fields units given over to free range rearing. This is conspicuous within the landscape as a result of the kennels. Enclosure of the landscape varies from semi-enclosed to open changing with localised variations in landform and with the presence/absence of vertical elements. The pace of the landscape is generally slow and combined with the simple land cover evokes a tranquil character. There is an overriding sense of unity due to the simplicity of the land use and the regular and consistent occurrence of key elements such as the hawthorn hedgerows, Scots pine shelterbelts and remnant Scots pine hedges.

Historic Land Use Character

This Character Area has yielded large numbers of artefacts that illustrated the whole sequence of human occupation from prehistoric flint potboilers and Neolithic flint implements to Bronze Age tools, Iron Age pottery and Roman fittings right through to post-medieval artefacts. However, none of these are visible in the landscape. The earliest tangible evidence of early occupation of this area is the round barrows and associated monuments of the Bronze Age, such as the scheduled round barrow and associated ring ditches beside Whiteway Road in Burnham Westgate Park.

Occupation continued into the Iron Age, with the building of South Creak hillfort, and also the Romano-British period when various roads are recorded, for example the one that runs from Holkham to Toftrees.

Castle Acre Norman Castle earthworks and the ruins of the Cluniac Priory, are evidence of the great wealth within the region during the early medieval period. Both were founded soon after the Norman Conquest in 1066 by William de Warenne, first earl of Surrey and many members of this great family went on to play an important role in the affairs of the State with Kings and Queens all visiting Castle Acre as their guests.

The planned medieval town of Castle Acre is a feature of the medieval landscape, which to some extent is present within today's landscape. Here, the earthwork fortress of the Warennes lied to the east of a small, rectilinear planned town, which is itself defended by a ditch and bank. The town, almost certainly a 12th century addition, had gates to the north and south (the north gate survives) with the parish church standing just outside the defensive line. The castle dominated the Peddars Way which, at Acre, is thus forced to divert through the village. Even so, the town was not successful; to the present day development within the bank has been limited, while the centre of the village has grown up on the green to the north.

The agriculture of the period between 1500 and 1740 saw the landscape under open fields and fold course systems: sheep and cereals, especially barley. This area was scarcely affected by parliamentary enclosure, and the field pattern today is of open fields.

The settlements within the Character Type owe a great deal to the use of local traditional materials in the construction of its historic buildings. The ingenuity of local builders has resulted in some interesting combinations of wall materials, not just on the main façade but between the front and side elevations. The effects are however, sometimes the result of refronting or partial rebuilding at a later date. The full range of materials includes: Clunch (squared blocks and random); Flint nodules; Cobbles (coursed and random); Pebbles; Red brick; Yellow or gault brick; Colourwashes; Orange clay pantiles; Black glazed pantiles; Smut pantiles; and Slate. Church towers and spires and windmills often act as a centre of the settlement but also as distant focal points.

Ecological Character

The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:

- Lowland heathland.
- Lowland meadows.
- Calcareous grassland.
- Scattered mixed shelterbelts and clumps of mature trees.
- Hedgerow network.
- Network of drainage ditches (with grassy banks and lined with reeds and rushes).

The nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:

- Ringstead Downs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

- Hunstanton Park Esker SSSI.
- Syderstone Common SSSI.
- Snettisham Carrstone Quarry SSSI.
- River Nar SSSI.
- Holkham Brick Pits SSSI;
- River Wensum SSSI;
- County Wildlife Sites (CWS).

Key Forces for Change

- Potential farm diversification, resulting in conversion of agricultural buildings to houses and recreational facilities.
- Potential loss of mature hedgerow field boundaries as a result of agricultural intensification.
- Pressure for development/ ownership of second or holiday homes.
- Small-scale development within villages such as North and South Creak, which may be out of character with existing settlement pattern.
- Increased pressure on rural roads as a result of increased second home ownership, and increased tourist activity along the North Norfolk Coast.
- Car parking in Burnham Market and associated pressures.
- Exception sites for low cost housing.
- Rudhams bypass.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

Strength of character across this Landscape Character type is considered to be relatively strong on account of the coherent traditional form and character of several of the villages, and also the overriding sense of openness within views to adjacent Landscape Character Types (restricted in places by adjacent plateau farmland). Overall condition is considered to be generally good, on account of the coherent network of hedgerows and generally mature hedgerow trees (which are, however, over-mature in places).

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the Rolling Open Farmland should be to conserve the strong geometric landscape pattern of regular-shaped arable fields, linear Scots Pine shelterbelts, shallow river valleys that contribute to a gently rolling landform, and overriding sense of openness throughout the type. Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek to expand and create areas of lowland heathland in core areas, such as Syderstone Common.
- Seek to conserve and enhance hawthorn hedgerows (demarcating fields) and hedgerow trees as landscape features and wildlife corridors.
- Seek to expand and enhance existing areas of lowland meadows, in any areas with suitable soil.
- Seek opportunities for creation of all types of grassland, according to soils.
- Seek opportunities for the creation of chalk flora, in and around Ringstead Downs SSSI (core area).
- Seek to conserve chalk river corridors as important landscape features and wildlife habitat corridors (in particular, patches of lowland meadows along the river courses).
- Seek to establish arable field margins as potential nest sites for ground nesting birds and habitats for small mammals¹³.
- Seek to manage arable farmland as a habitat for game birds.

¹³ See: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/countryside/farming/advice/farmhabitats/margins/index.asp>

- I1: Burnham Market**
- I2: Ringstead Downs**
- I3: Ringstead**
- I4: Burnham Thorpe and the Creakes**
- I5: Sedgford**
- I6: Bagthorpe**
- I7: Shernborne and Flitcham**
- I8: Harpley and the Rudhams**
- I9: Little Massingham and Castle Acre**

A summary of each area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

I1: BURNHAM MARKET

Summary of Visual Character

Situated inland from the North Norfolk coast this area is characterised by rolling open farmland between Barrow Common (south of Brancaster in the west), to Burnham Market in the east and Stanhope in the south. The northern half of this character area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. The key area of settlement is around the small but neatly organised Burnham Market (which contains a variety of houses and shops). The settlement has spread along a valley, and also follows the course of the Goose Beck, a short tributary of the River Burn that rises just west of St. Mary's Church by a colourful mix of buildings. Built character within the village comprises a dynamic mixture of colour-washed buildings, interspersed with bricks. Remaining settlement pattern is characterised by isolated dwellings and farmsteads scattered throughout the open arable farmland with a visible medium-scale field pattern. Straight ditches or hedgerows predominantly demarcate field boundaries. Deciduous and mixed woodland areas occasionally mark field boundaries forming blocks of trees that break up the openness of the landscape. The B1155 runs north-south through the middle of the area from Burnham Market to Stanhoe south of the area. In addition narrow relatively straight country lanes criss-cross the landscape providing access to the isolated farmsteads and villages. The sense of tranquillity is strong in the area away from the B1155 and Burnham Market.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.
- Landscape setting of the villages.
- Striking built character.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within small village settlements.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of tranquillity.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.

- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas..
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of Burnham Market.
- Seek to conserve the panoramic views across the area and adjacent areas.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials appropriate to existing landscape and built character.

I2: RINGSTEAD DOWNS

Summary of Visual Character

Ringstead Downs Rolling Open Farmland is situated at the eastern edge of Hunstanton. The northern boundary of the area encloses the woodland plantations around Hunstanton Hall, the eastern boundary lies to west of Ringstead while the southern boundary encompasses Ringstead Downs Nature Reserve. The eastern half of the area is also within Norfolk Coast AONB. The western and eastern extents of the area are characterised by an open gently rolling medium scale landscape sloping gradually upwards from west to east with a regular geometric field pattern. Mature hedgerows with several hedgerow trees delineate the field boundaries. The centre of the area around Hunstanton Hall and park is characterised by designed parkland crossed by strips of linear mixed woodlands and plantations with irregular edges. A small stream lies to the south of the area rising at Downs Farm and flowing southwest to the southern edge of Hunstanton. There are few dwellings or farmsteads outside Ringstead, Hunstanton or associated with Hunstanton Hall. The large area of unimproved chalk grassland at Ringstead Downs Nature Reserve in the south, situated between South Hill Wood and Larch Plantation, provides diversity within the landscape. Other than the main A149 coastal road which runs along the eastern edge of the area, roads and communications are infrequent, with a few minor roads and tracks providing access to the area and in particular to Hunstanton Hall and Park. The medium scale landscape has some sense of enclosure and intimacy provided in places, such as Hunstanton Hall and Ringstead Down, by linear woodland/plantations and hedgerows, which limit long distance views. Throughout the area there is a strong sense of tranquillity away from the urban edges and the A149 road corridor.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.
- Landscape setting of Ringstead.
- Striking built character as a result of distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within small village settlements.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Moderate to strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Predominantly isolated and rural character.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of Ringstead.

- Seek to conserve the panoramic views across the area and adjacent areas.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials.

I3: RINGSTEAD

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the east of Ringstead, this landscape character area is characterised by open rolling arable farmland that slopes gently down to the north. The northern half of the area is within Norfolk Coast AONB. There are few strips or areas of woodland to break up the long expansive views across the patchwork of irregular (predominantly arable) fields. Straight, well-maintained hedgerows delineate the field boundaries. Outside Ringstead scattered isolated dwellings and farmsteads dominate settlement character. These are accessed by the straight narrow country lanes that criss-cross the fields. A few footpaths and tracks including the Peddar's Way and Norfolk Coastal Path also dissect the fields in straight lines and often following field boundaries. There is a strong sense of isolation and tranquillity throughout the character area

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Landscape setting of Ringstead.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within small village settlements.
- Strong sense of tranquillity and isolation throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve and enhance the existing belts and copses of plantation woodland and other tall vegetation within the area.
- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing village's.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials appropriate to local landscape and settlement character.

I4: BURNHAM THORPE AND THE CREAKES

Summary of Visual Character

Situated towards the eastern edge of the Borough, this landscape character area lies between Burnham Market and Holkham Park. The area is centred on the shallow clear chalk stream of the River Burn and its associated valley, which runs south to north between the surrounding low lying hills covered by light chalky soil. Within the main valley, there are a series of linear ribbon settlements including Burnham Thorpe, North Creake and South Creake with vernacular buildings faced with flint and chalk centred on the roads running through the villages and the River Burn. Outside the settlements, farmsteads with walls faced with flint and chalk are also found near to the river. The B1355 and other smaller country lanes access these settlements and dwellings. Along the valley floor a ribbon of water meadows separates the River Burn from the irregularly shaped arable fields that dominate the rest of the area. Hedges with hedgerow trees delineate these fields. In places the hedges are occasionally gappy and to the west of North Creake form lower, trimmed hedges with fewer hedgerow trees. To

the north of the area around Burnham Thorpe deciduous plantations including Hillock Wood, Open Meadow Plantations, Sandpit Plantation and East Common occasionally break up the patchwork of arable fields. In contrast, around North Creak and South Creak mixed and coniferous plantations surround the villages and separate the fields on the valley sides. Views in the area are often open from the sloping valley sides overlooking the River Burn winding its way down the valley and the church towers in North Creak and Burnham Thorpe. The area away from the valley floor around the villages and the B1355 has a strong sense of tranquillity. Church towers (within villages) provide landmark features nested against a wooded backdrop, within views from adjacent character areas.

I4a Burn River Valley

Running through the centre of Burnham Thorpe and the Creaks character area the very gently meandering valley of the River Burn provides a key landscape feature, along which, settlement has developed. The relatively gently sloping sides of this narrow valley are punctuated with patches of plantation woodland and a mosaic of regular small-scale fields.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.
- Landscape setting of Burnham Thorpe, North Creak and South Creak.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within small village settlements.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.
- Strong sense of openness, with open views over the valley.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Valley of the River Burn.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the patchwork of wet woodland copses and wet grassland.
- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of Burnham Thorpe, North Creak and South Creak.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.
- Seek to ensure that any development on the valley sides is small-scale and respects associated landscape pattern.

I5: SEDGEFORD

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the west of the Borough between Heacham to the west and Fring to the east, the area is characterised by steep valley sides surrounding the valley of Heacham River leading up to flat plateaux with large arable fields. The eastern half of the area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. Sedgeford lies at the centre of the area forming a linear ribbon development centred along the B1454 and along the small narrow country lanes that radiate out of the settlement. The village has a church with a tower in the oldest part of the village surrounded by vernacular style buildings. Outside the

village, scattered farmsteads and cottages in the vernacular style line the roads between Sedgeford and Fring and Sedgeford and Docking. The majority of the landscape outside the villages is characterised by large arable fields with low flailed or trimmed gappy hedgerows. The field boundaries are also lost or gappy in places. A ribbon of mixed woodland lines the Heacham River as it passes south of Sedgeford from Glovers Farm where the river rises to Eaton. The rest of the woodland is concentrated around the edge of Fring with small areas scattered through the fields. A few public rights of way cross through the landscape around Sedgeford including Peddlar's Way and Norfolk Coast Path. Due to the low and fragmented hedgerows and openness of the landscape the views within the area are open and panoramic framed by the topography of the land. A key view point in the area is the Water Tower east of Sedgeford. Away from the B1454 the area has a relatively strong sense of isolation and tranquillity.

I5a Heacham River Valley

The course of the Heacham River Valley meanders through Sedgeford Rolling Open Farmland, providing recognisable variation in topography, as the valley sides slope relatively steeply downwards towards the valley floor. The course of the valley appears wooded in places, both to the east and west of Sedgeford, as a result of patches of woodland, which follow the course of the river. Several small-scale, regular fields, which line the course of the river, also contribute to recognisable landscape pattern within the river valley.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.
- Landscape setting of Sedgeford.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within small village settlements.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve the scarce settlement pattern characteristic of the area.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of Sedgeford.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials appropriate to local landscape and built character.

I6: BAGTHORPE

Summary of Visual Character

Situated between Fring (to the west) and Syderstone 9to the east), this area of rolling farmland is located in a deep valley in the folds of rolling countryside of the chalk upland, which separates areas of plateau farmland on the tops of the hills. There are several small villages including the eastern edge of Fring, Bircham Newton, Bagthorpe, Barmer and the western extent of Sydertstone, within the valleys. Woodlands and plantations often surround these. The villages are characterised by their linear nature (following roads) and the vernacular style buildings with chalk and flint boundary walls. Outside the villages the scattered farmsteads and dwellings are visible within the open arable

landscape. The fields are generally large, delineated by low to medium flailed hedgerows with occasional mature hedgerow trees. Towards the east of the area the landscape becomes more wooded with Coxford Wood and the surrounding plantations located on the steep valley sides and higher ground providing a sense of enclosure. The western end centre of the area is more open with fewer plantations and areas of woodland. Roads often line the valley floor or rise up the more gently sloping valley sides to provide access out of the valley to surrounding villages. The area is generally tranquil with more enclosed views due to the valley shape and woodland areas. The church tower at Fring and Fring Hall (with associated mature parkland landscape), provide key landmarks within the area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within small village settlements.
- Relatively strong sense of place.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of Bircham Newton and Bagthorpe.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.

I7: SHERNBORNE AND FLITCHAM

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the west of Snettisham and Ingoldisthorpe and east of the high plateau, this area of rolling arable farmland is located along the Babingley Valley. The northern tip of the area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. Landscape is characterised by isolated villages and farmsteads and wide open fields bounded by thorn hedges of varying heights (broken by coniferous and mixed shelter belts and plantations that punctuate the skyline). Settlement is concentrated in the north of the area on the edge of Snettisham and Ingoldisthorpe and the small village of Sherborne. To the southwest, settlement character is dominated by the linear settlement of Flitcham. The buildings within the settlements are of local vernacular style with flint and chalk faced walls. The villages and farmsteads are accessed through a network of narrow single-track country lanes cross the patchwork of arable fields. In places, tall hedgebanks create a strong sense of enclosure along road corridors. A striking landscape feature is the King's Avenue (connecting Anmer to Sandringham at the Jubilee Gates) where an avenue of mature poplars lines the road. Views to the west south of Dersingham feature the wooded horizon of Sandringham as a backdrop. General sense of tranquillity in the area is disturbed by noise and visual intrusion associated with the B1153.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within small village settlements.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve the characteristically sparse settlement pattern of the area.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of Shernborne and Fritcham.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, including flint, chalk clunch, pebbles and pantiles.

I8: HARPLEY AND THE RUDHAMS

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the east of the Borough (west of Tattersett), this area of gently rolling arable farmland, which rises gently to the north, surrounds the villages of Harpley, West Rudham and East Rudham. The buildings in East Rudham are predominantly of the 18th or 19th Century with cottages built in the local vernacular manner and medium sized and larger houses in the classical style of their respective periods. East Rudham has village green, which forms a long, relatively narrow open space, triangular in shape adjacent to the Crown public house and the adjoining shop. Harpley is a smaller village with a relatively harsh urban edge, which is very visible from the surrounding landscape. West Rudham Common also contributes to distinctive landscape character. The landscape consists of predominantly rolling large arable fields edged by generally mature medium to low hedgerows with hedgerow trees including oaks. The gently meandering course of the River Wensum (lined in places by mature vegetation) flows thorough the eastern edge of the character area, with its course continuing eastwards outside the Borough boundary. Hedges become gappier to the east of East Rudham. The small, narrow River Tat lies to the east of the area south and east of West Rudham and East Rudham. In this area there are also a series of ditches separating the fields. The area is split by the A148 which runs east-west through the area and through the centre of East Rudham. Noise from the bypass disturbs the otherwise strong sense of tranquillity as it crosses the area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within small village settlements.
- Strong sense of tranquillity and isolation within pockets of the area.
- Strong sense of openness, with open views over the farmland.
- The distinctive meandering course of the River Wensum.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve the scarce settlement pattern characteristic of the area.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing villages.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials within villages.
- Seek to ensure that any development on the valley sides is small-scale and respects associated landscape pattern.

I9: LITTLE MASSINGHAM AND CASTLE ACRE

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the east of the Borough, this area of open farmland is characterised by strongly rolling topography. The landscape consists of predominantly arable farmland with a large regular field pattern broken up by belts and copses of mixed and coniferous woodland and plantations. Generally mature intact hedgerows with oak hedgerow trees demarcate field boundaries. Narrow country lanes cross the rural landscape providing access to the villages and isolated dwellings. The roads are often lined with mature trees that form canopies across the roads creating a sense of enclosure. Amongst the patchwork of fields lie scattered farmsteads and cottages. Settlement is concentrated in the southeastern corner of the area in Castle Acre with other villages in the area including the edge of Little Massington in the northeast and Gayton Thorpe in the southwest. The buildings in the villages are often in local vernacular style with chalk and flint facing to the walls. Key landscape features within the landscape include the mature parkland south of Home Farm with mature decaying pastureland and scattered trees and the circular marl pits with beech trees. Just to the south of the character area, the valley of the River Nar meanders across the landscape. Water meadows associated with the river corridors also contribute to distinctive character. The area has a very strong sense of tranquillity and sense of isolation.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

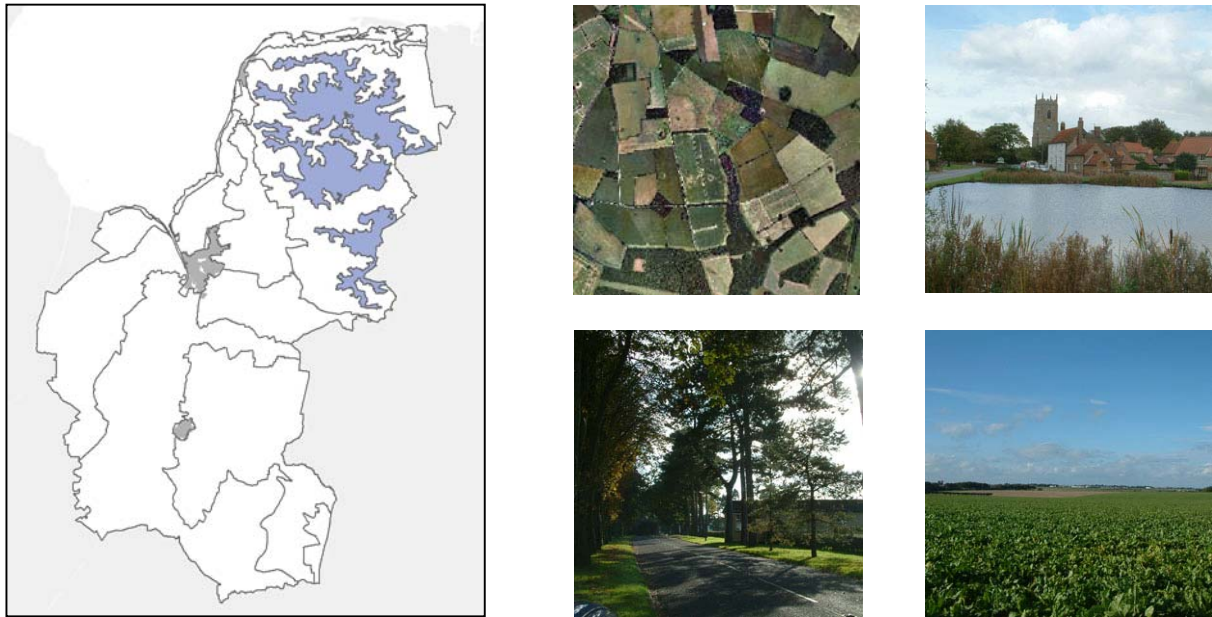
- Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerow.
- Landscape setting of the villages.
- Distinctive combinations of traditional building materials within small village settlements.
- Strong sense of tranquillity and isolation throughout the area.
- Strong sense of openness, with open views over the farmland.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.
- Mature corridor of the River Nar (to the south of the character area) and associated habitats.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve and enhance the existing belts and copses of plantation woodland and other tall vegetation within the area and conserve the landscape setting of Massingham and West Acre.
- Seek to conserve the generally undeveloped, rural character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

- Seek to conserve the scarce settlement pattern, which is characteristic of the area.
- Ensure that any new appropriate development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape.
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials within villages.

J: PLATEAU FARMLAND



Location and Boundaries

There are a number of geographically separate locations belonging to this Landscape Character Type. This type extends from the north of the Study Area, where it is bordered by the Coastal Slopes landscape type and intersperses Rolling Open Farmland before meeting with the administrative boundary to the south east. The boundaries of the plateau are topographically defined – occurring above the 40-metre contour line.

Key Characteristics

- A large-scale landscape predominantly defined by extensive geometric fields under arable crop production.
- The most elevated landscape type within the Study Area – occurring between 40m and 90m AOD.
- The landform is characterised by a strikingly flat terrain providing long distance, panoramic views and a strong sense of exposure.
- The land cover pattern is simple and regular – defined by geometric fields typically bound by straight drainage ditches, short flailed hedges and Scots pine shelterbelts.
- Settlement occurs throughout the plateau – comprising individual farmsteads, hamlets and small-scale villages – the latter often centred on a green or pond.
- The skyline is prominent, often uninterrupted and smooth giving way to wide-open skies.
- Visible built structures and landmarks include village churches, windmills and a series of cranes at the construction-training centre at Bircham Newton.
- Where communication masts and pylons occur, these are prominent features.
- Views from adjacent landscapes are predominantly restricted to the plateau edges forming a barrier to views beyond.
- Halls, surrounded by landscaped parks and woodland impart a designed character on parts of the landscape.
- A number of roads cross through the landscape and these bring an intermittent source of movement. However the landscape feels for the most part still –having a remote, almost vacant character in places.

Summary of Visual Character

This Landscape Character type has the greatest geographical range in the Study Area. The areas of plateau farmland predominantly occur adjacent to the Coastal Slopes landscape type that gives way to these areas of more elevated ground. However, Plateau Farmland also occurs further west, abutting The Brecks – Heathland with Plantations Landscape Character Type (situated within the adjacent District). Where the areas of plateau occur adjacent to the Rolling Open Farmland, elevation predominantly ranges from 60m to 90m AOD. Further south however, where elevation of the land is generally lower, the plateau areas are largely defined by the 40m and 50m contour lines. This is an upland landscape within this area of Norfolk and the transition from the surrounding landscapes is clearly defined by the combination of a change in elevation and a switch to strikingly flat terrain.

Views towards this landscape from adjacent areas are therefore generally limited to plateau edges that form a prominent skyline. Views out from the areas of plateau are also often restricted by the plateau edge – preventing views to lower ground. However, views gained from the plateau edges themselves are extensive across the adjacent lower lying landscapes and beyond. The elevation and level landform creates a landscape that is inherently open and exposed. Geologically, the Farmed Plateau is defined by drift deposits of Boulder Clay with localised occurrences of Sand and Gravel – the latter corresponding where the areas of plateau occur.

This is a large scale, tamed agricultural landscape – predominantly defined by intensive arable production contained within a network of very large, geometric fields. Field boundaries vary across the plateau. There are often no visible divisions between fields and as such numerous field units can appear as one continuous tract. Hedgerows are however common in several locations. Hedgerows aligning transport routes, interspersed with hedgerow trees, are often taller and more dense and these can channel views along the roads and restrict wider views across the plateau. Drainage ditches are also a key characteristic and frequently form the only boundary between rural roads and open fields. Within the north, Scott's pine shelterbelts frequently characterise field boundaries and are prominent linear features. Points of focus across the plateau are limited but landmarks including village churches and windmills are eye catching elements. These are often surprise, as opposed to frequent, views. A series of cranes at the construction training centre at Bircham Newton are prominent features on the skyline. Pylons and masts also occur but do not dominate the entire skyline which is predominantly undeveloped and open - the flat, simple horizon giving way to wide open skies. Settlements occur throughout the areas of plateau – both nucleated and linear and, for the most part, comprising small scale villages and hamlets of a traditional character and often centred around village greens or ponds such as at Great Massingham.

There are also a number of individual farmsteads and agricultural buildings. Associated with the villages are a number of halls and surrounding areas of parkland. Houghton Hall for example is a Palladian house overlooking open parkland that extends for approximately 1km to the west with woodland beyond. The halls with their surrounding landscaped grounds impart a designed character upon the area of plateau. There are a number of roads that cut across the landscape, the majority of routes characterised by secondary roads and rural lanes. Movement on the plateau is therefore limited to traffic and agricultural machinery working the fields. As such the landscape often feels peaceful.

Historic Land Use Character

Settlement on the chalk sands is represented throughout prehistory by numerous findspots from Palaeolithic occupation sites to Iron Age gold coin hoards. However, as with many other areas this evidence is not apparent in the landscape of today. The Roman occupation brought roads to the area and the Roman road now referred to as Peddar's Way runs across the plateau farmlands of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. The road would have attracted additional occupation within the area.

Early Medieval population densities within the plateau farmland were quite varied and again not much evidence survives. However, evidence in the form of salt pans (which indicates the presence of human activity and settlement) is common within this area and many are recorded in the Domesday survey.

The open fields and fold course systems including sheep and cereals, especially barley common in the 1500 to 1740, and possible before, were superseded during the 18th and 19th century by enclosure.

A feature of the 19th century, still evident to some extent in the landscape today is the Halls, surrounded by landscaped parks and woodland, which impart a designed character on parts of the landscape. These include Houghton Hall, Houghton a Grade II Listed Park & Garden. The Houghton Estate was one of the Great Estates in the 19th century, owned by the Walpole family, and later Lord Cholmondeley, which owned in total over 6,000 ha (15,000 acres) of West Norfolk.

Settlement today is generally small scale in form, comprising individual farmsteads, hamlets and small-scale villages, the latter often centred around a green or pond and often lies at the centre of a radiating system of roads and tracks. The character of the plateau farmland owes a great deal to the use of local traditional materials in the construction of its historical buildings, these include: Carstone, laid in all its various ways from coursed ashlar work to random rubble, sometimes with other materials, sometimes galletted; Yellow, buff and red local Norfolk brickwork, Clunch (chalk); flint, again used in various guises, from random rubble to knapped, sometimes galletted; Norfolk orange / red pantiles and blue / black glazed pantiles, and clay peg tiles.

Ecological Character

The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:

- Scattered mixed shelterbelts and clumps of mature trees.
- Hedgerow network.
- Network of drainage ditches (with grassy banks and lined with reeds and rushes).

The nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:

- County Wildlife Sites.

Key Forces for Change

- Potential farm diversification, resulting in conversion of agricultural buildings to houses and recreational facilities.
- Potential loss of mature hedgerow field boundaries as a result of agricultural intensification.
- Increased pressure for second home ownership within villages throughout the type.
- Small-scale or incremental development within villages, which may be inconsistent with local built character and materials (such as flint).
- Potential wind turbine developments.
- Potential expansion of Bircham Newton or associated CITB development.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

This Landscape Character Type is considered to have a relatively strong character, as a result of the strong geometric landscape pattern (denoted by a network of regular shaped arable fields) and relatively strong sense of place (resulting from views to several landmark church towers and windmills). Overall condition is considered to be good. Although the condition of hedgerows varies

slightly throughout the type, in several places, hedgerows create strong linear features and channel views along minor rural roads.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the Plateau Farmland should be to conserve the predominantly geometric, large-scale recognisable landscape pattern, which is interspersed with halls and small-scale villages. Specific Management Objectives are to:

- Seek to conserve and manage the mature hedgerow network, as a recognisable landscape feature and wildlife habitat corridor.
- Seek to conserve drainage ditches (which are often reed-lined with grassy banks), as landscape features and wildlife corridors.
- Seek to enhance the management, presentation, interpretation and accessibility of the area for its historic value.
- Seek opportunities for creation of all types of grassland, according to soils.
- Seek to conserve chalk river corridors as important landscape features and wildlife habitat corridors (in particular, patches of lowland meadows along the river courses).
- Seek to establish arable field margins as potential nest sites for ground nesting birds and habitats for small mammals¹⁴.
- Seek to manage arable farmland as a habitat for game birds.

Within this Landscape Character Type, the following areas of distinctive character have been defined:

- J1: Docking**
J2: Bircham
J3: Great Massingham
J4: Bircham Newton

A summary of each area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

J1: DOCKING

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the north of the Borough, this large area of gently undulating plateau farmland radiates from the large village of Docking at its centre. The western edges of the area are situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. Outside Docking, settlement pattern is sparse, consisting of isolated farmsteads and small hamlets forming ribbon development along the roads that cross the area. The village of Docking centres on the church with a landmark tower and village pond, Docking Hall and its associated mature parkland landscape. Typical of the area are a series of roads (some of them fairly busy e.g. the B1454) radiating out from the villages. Farmland comprises generally large, regular shaped fields (separated by low to medium mature hedgerows), which are interspersed by small patches of woodland, plantations and tree belts, which punctuate the skyline. The patches of woodland provide some localised sense of enclosure. Few tracks and footpaths cross the area other than the Peddar's Way and Norfolk Coastal Path. A strong sense of tranquillity, isolation and exposure is apparent throughout the open sparsely populated area. Long distance, panoramic and open views across farmland are characteristic of the area, contributing to the generally large-scale nature of this landscape character area.

¹⁴ See: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/countryside/farming/advice/farmhabitats/margins/index.asp>

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Intact mature landscape structure including belts and copses of (plantation) woodland, mature (parkland) trees and patches of intact hedgerow network.
- Landscape setting of Docking.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve and enhance the existing belts and copses of (plantation woodland), other tall vegetation and parkland within the area.
- Seek to conserve the scarce settlement pattern characteristic of the area.
- Seek to conserve the largely undisturbed and tranquil nature of the area.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of Docking.
- Seek to conserve the panoramic views across the area and adjacent areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential small-scale or incremental development within Docking, is in keeping with existing landscape and settlement character.
- Where appropriate, consider sensitive farm diversification, in keeping with local settlement pattern and character.

J2: BIRCHAM

Summary of Visual Character

Bircham Plateau Farmland is situated to the east of the Borough between Coxford Heath to the east, Snettisham to the west, Bircham to the north and New Houghton to the south. The northern tip of the area is situated within Norfolk Coast AONB. Landscape character is dominated by a mixture of gently undulating arable farmland and parkland, interspersed with the small settlements of Amner and Bircham. A key local landmark feature west of Great Bircham is the Windmill set in open farmland, which contributes to strong local recognisable sense of place. Landscape pattern is dominated by a series of relatively large (predominantly arable) fields, with field boundaries demarcated by hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees. The hedgerows are gappy and denuded in places or have been replaced by post and wire fences. Houghton and Anmer

Parks dominate the southern part of the area. Both parks have mature parkland landscape with mature oaks set within grassland. Houghton Park is centred on Houghton Hall (described by Pevsner¹⁵ as 'outwardly of Yorkshire stone, of beautiful golden ashlar masonry'). The pale sandstone hall was built in the 18th Century and is rectangular in plan with single storey pavilions to the north and south linked to the main block by colonnades set in an expanse of flat grassland and deer park. Roads crossing the parkland and farmland are generally narrow single-tracked rural roads lined in places by tall red brick or flint walls. The Peddar's Way and Norfolk Coast Path, running to the west of Houghton Park and Great Bircham, provide access to the area. Towards the centre of this character area, coniferous, deciduous and mixed woodland blocks often punctuate the skyline. There is a relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area, and generally open views across the arable farmland, contribute to a sense of openness.

¹⁵ Pevsner/ Wilson (1999), *The buildings of England, Norfolk 2: North-West and South*, Yale University press, New Haven and London.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Generally mature landscape structure including belts and copses of (plantation) woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerows.
- Wide panoramic views across the farmland and towards landmark churches.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Strong historic integrity of historic parkland associated with Anmer and Houghton Hall.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity and isolation throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Seek to conserve and enhance the existing belts and copses of (plantation woodland), other tall vegetation and parkland within the area.
- Seek to conserve open views across the farmland.
- Seek to conserve the scarce settlement pattern characteristic of the area.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of existing villages.
- Seek to conserve the largely undisturbed and tranquil nature of the area.

J3: GREAT MASSINGHAM

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the east of the Borough, this area of farmland plateau is centred on the village of Great Massingham. The area is characterised by flat medium to large, mainly regular arable fields generally separated by mature, generally intact hedgerows with mature oak hedgerow trees. Woodland copses, and tree belts intersperse the arable farmland and in places limit views across the area. Hedgerows with mature oak hedgerow trees also line the narrow single-lane roads. Settlement pattern predominantly consists of the village of Great Massingham, which has narrow country lanes radiating out from the village centre. The village is centred on a large pond and village green, which contributes to the character of the area. The older buildings in the village are faced with chalk and flint dressings. The southern half of the village forms ribbon development along the roads entering the village. To the east of Great Massingham, a private airfield (with associated small industrial units), dominates the character of the area. To the southwest of the area, a small area of parkland associated with High House (with associated mixed deciduous and coniferous trees set in an area of grassland) contributes to localised sense of place. There is a relatively strong sense of tranquillity apparent throughout the area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Wide, panoramic views across farmland.
- Landscape setting of the village of Great Massingham.
- Striking built character (combination of brickwork, chalk clunch and flint).
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity and isolation throughout the area.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve and enhance the existing belts and copses of (plantation) woodland, other tall vegetation and parkland within the area.

- Seek to conserve the mostly rural character of the area.
- Seek to conserve panoramic views across the area and adjacent areas.
- Seek to conserve the sparse and relatively isolated settlement pattern, which is characteristic of the area.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of Great Massingham.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within Great Massingham is consistent with existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to promote the use of local materials, appropriate to existing built character and form.
- Seek to conserve the largely undisturbed and tranquil nature of the area.

J4: BIRCHAM NEWTON

Summary of Visual Character

Situated to the east of Bircham Newton, this area is centred on the Bircham Newton Training Centre. A former RAF World War II airfield that has been converted into the Construction Industry Training Board's training centre. Strong recognisable sense of place is apparent, as a result of the instantly recognisable blocky and relatively stark architecture of the accommodation blocks. A series of large cranes tower over the area, and their presence is strongly visible as local landmarks within views to the area from surrounding Landscape Character Areas. The old military buildings appear somewhat dwarfed by the tower cranes on the site. The training centre is surrounded by a series of relatively small arable fields, with field boundaries demarcated by low, predominantly intact hedgerows. Sense of tranquillity is somewhat disturbed by activities associated with the training centre.

Evaluation

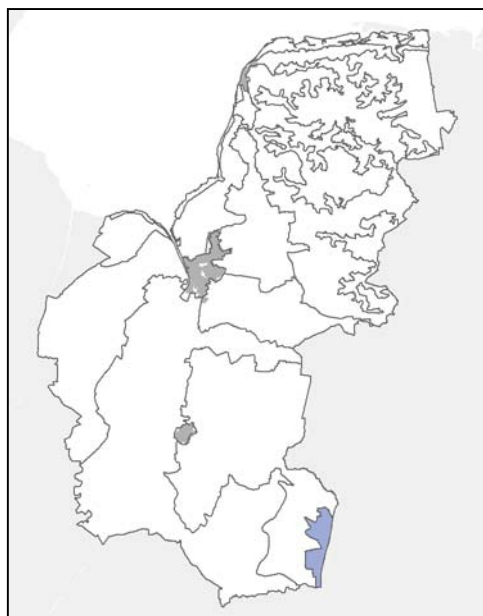
Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Striking built character (blocky, relatively stark architecture) and strong historic integrity (including historic drainage network).
- Strong recognisable sense of place.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve the existing settlement pattern and form, wherever possible.
- Seek to screen the harsh edges of several of the areas of accommodation blocks and other buildings within the area.
- Seek to conserve open views from the edges of the area, across adjacent (predominantly open) farmland.
- Seek to conserve the strongly recognisable sense of place within the area.
- Where appropriate, consider sensitive farm diversification, in keeping with local settlement pattern and character.

K: The Brecks – Plantations



Location and Boundaries

This Landscape Character Type, lies at the southeastern edge of the Study Area. Only small part of this type lies within the Borough (extending predominantly to the west across the adjacent Breckland District. Landscape is bounded to the northwest by Settled Farmland with Plantations and to the west by The Fens – Open Inland Marshes.

Key Characteristics

- A simple, large scale landscape on both the horizontal and vertical plane defined by extensive tracts of coniferous plantations that offer a strong sense of enclosure.
- This is an uncomplicated landscape of repeated elements notably the dense plantations with high canopies, which draw the eye to provide glimpsed views to the sky.
- The landform gently slopes towards the adjacent river valleys but the subtle elevation change is not immediately obvious due to the almost blanket coverage of the plantations.
- Dominated by commercial coniferous plantation planted into geometric blocks, with pine hedges delineating the field boundaries of farmland in places.
- The repeated geometric plantation blocks create a simple and monotonous land cover pattern that accommodates a range of land uses – predominantly commercial timber production but also areas for recreation and military training.
- Linear, right-angular tracks and access routes divide the plantation blocks but these are only perceptible at close range, with the woodland blocks appearing as one continuous tract.
- Views are channelled down the long straight roads – both primary (A134 and A1065) and secondary - which form strong linear corridors through the forest.
- This is a generally unsettled landscape.
- Looking towards this landscape from adjacent areas, the skyline is defined by straight, continuous edges of the plantations. The canopy forming a simple contrast with the sky.
- Scots pine silhouette against the sky and provide dramatic landmarks.
- Tree cover greatly restricts views and as such built structures and landmarks are for the most part not evident.

- Although the distinctive plantation edges are visible from adjacent landscapes, tree cover largely prevents views into adjacent landscapes.
- The main roads cutting through the plantations bring distinct sense of movement but away from these roads the landscape can appear isolated and peaceful.

Summary of Visual Character

The Brecks--Plantations Landscape Character Type is characterised by vast commercial coniferous forests, and forms part of the southern, core block of Thetford Forest - the largest area of lowland forest in England. The plantations form a striking contrast to the arable land use that dominates Norfolk. Upper and Middle Chalk defines the surface geological layer giving rise to poor, free draining soils that are droughty, infertile, and are liable to wind erosion. As such the soils are more suited to forestry than agricultural production. The area has been used for timber production since the 1920s when the Forestry Commission bought and started planting the area. Flint is also present in the soils and Grimes Graves an important archaeological site, (the site of Neolithic flint mines) occurs to the south east of Lynford.

Landform variation is subtle and topographical variation is largely imperceptible due to almost blanket coverage of the plantations. This is simple, uniform, large scale structured by the repetition of vertical lines. Rows of Corsican pine, Scots pine, Douglas fir and larch form geometric blocks that are delineated by almost grid-like access tracks. Unless at close range, these tracks are largely imperceptible - the plantations appearing as one continuous tract. Away from the main transport corridors, the landscape is very still and, due to the notable absence of settlement and built structures feels isolated in parts. In other areas, signposted paths and picnic sites indicate recreational use. The roads create strong lines that provide channeled views. The sense of enclosure, provided by the tree cover, draws the eye up the straight towering trunks towards the sky. Where areas of woodland have been clear felled, the sense of enclosure changes with the landscape becoming more open - allowing longer views. Scrub encroachment is evident in areas of cleared land and gorse is a roadside feature. These areas of scrub bring textural and colour variation. Although forestry dominates, the landscape does support other land uses, such as farmland.

Historic Land Use Character

Enormous quantities of flint finds within The Brecks may indicate the first significant use and opening-up of this previously marginal wooded area in the late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (c.3000 – 1700 BC), although the area's notorious dryness probably restricted the number of locations suitable for settlement.

The edge between the Fenland and Breckland was obviously an important location as many later prehistoric finds are recorded along this break, especially during the Iron Age. The building of the Devil's Dyke (also known as the Fossedyke or Fendyke), which forms the eastern boundary of this Character Type and the Borough in the Saxon period may have reinforced the distinction between Fenland and Breckland.

From the medieval period reasonable crops, of barley, especially, were produced in the open fields, which occupied the better land, in the principal valleys, but only through the intensive night-folding of sheep which had been grazed by day on extensive upland heaths. In most parishes the complex institution of the fold course allowed manorial lords to monopolise much of this manure, and also to exclude tenants' sheep from the flocks. Some areas were under cultivation as outfield 'brecks' – ploughed and cropped for a few years before returning to rough grazing – while extensive rabbit warrens occupied the poorest ground.

Many parishes had their settlement on the boundary between the valley sides and the marshy valley floor. The bulk of the parish, away from the river, was heathland (once primary woodland) over

which lords of manors had their foldcourses for sheep and sometimes also their warrens. That said it was not a densely populated area and indeed was predominantly an unsettled landscape.

Maps of 1826 show small areas of woodland to the south of the area predominately along hedge boundaries but it is not until the late 19th / early 20th century that large scale plantations were established. Some of these were based on the early Estates as the edge of the plantations generally follow the former boundary of Methwold Lodge Estate.

Ecological Character

The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:

- Extensive areas of coniferous, deciduous and mixed (plantation) woodland;
- Farmland mosaic.

The nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:

- Breckland Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA).
- Breckland Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- Breckland Farmland SSSI.
- County Wildlife Sites (CWS).

Key Forces for Change

- Increased traffic pressure on minor rural roads as a result of tourist visits and activities to the forest.
- Potential decay in mature woodland due to change in forestry management,
- Potential small-scale developments at the edges of villages within the type, which may be inconsistent with existing landscape and settlement character.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

Overall, this type is considered to have a relatively strong character overall, as a result of the recognisable geometric pattern of regular blocks of woodland and recognisable sense of place and enclosure coupled with this. Overall, the woodland is considered to be in a relatively good and well-managed condition.

Management Strategy and Objectives

The overall strategy for the Brecks - Plantations is to conserve the large-scale landscape pattern of extensive tracts of coniferous plantations and overall mature landscape structure, which contributes to a strong sense of enclosure through this Landscape Character Type. Specific Management Objectives are to:

- Seek to conserve and manage the condition, structure and edges of large areas of Breckland Forest plantations (SSSI) and adjacent woodland, as striking landscape features and important wildlife habitats for species such as breeding woodlark and nightjar.
- Seek to conserve arable farmland (particularly within Breckland Farmland SSSI) as a key habitat for stone curlews and game birds.

- Seek to establish arable field margins as potential nest sites for ground nesting birds and habitats for small mammals¹⁶.
- Seek to conserve and manage the mature hedgerow network, as a recognisable landscape feature and wildlife habitat corridor.

Within this Landscape Character Type, the following area of distinctive character has been defined:

K1: Cranwich

A summary of this area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

K1: CRANWICH

Summary of Visual Character

Situated at the southeastern corner of the Borough, this Landscape Character area (with its underlying geology of sand, chalk and flint) is covered with plantation woodland, limiting views across the area and contributing to a great sense of enclosure and remoteness. Scotts pine dominates most of the woodland with a smaller copse of deciduous (Glebe plantation, including oak, birch, horse chestnut, linden and hawthorn) woodland to the north. A number of arable fields are interspersed with the woodland, creating several open areas within an otherwise generally enclosed landscape. This Landscape Character Area forms part of a larger area of plantation woodland, which spills over, into Breckland District to the east. The woodland forms a prominent feature on the skyline in views from adjacent areas whilst, other views are generally channelled along the few rural roads that cross the area. A series of interconnecting footpaths also cross the area, and a network of firebreaks divides the woodland into regular blocks. Settlement pattern is sparse, with a handful of isolated dispersed farmsteads present along the rural roads. The lack of settlement and transport corridors throughout the area contributes to a relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- Mature landscape structure including deciduous and coniferous plantation woodland.
- Strong historic integrity with plantations dating from the Napoleonic war.
- Views of plantation woodlands from adjacent areas.
- Open areas of arable fields within the woodland, bringing diversity and contrast.
- Coherent and recognisable small-scale settlement density and pattern.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity and isolation throughout the area.
- Strong recognisable sense of place.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

- Seek to conserve and enhance the plantation woodland.
- Seek to conserve the largely undeveloped character of the area and related strong sense of remoteness, enclosure and tranquillity.
- Seek to conserve the open areas of farmland within the woodland.
- Seek to conserve open views across the area and towards open inland marshes.
- Seek to conserve and enhance strongly recognisable sense of place throughout the area.

¹⁶ See: [Hhttp://www.rspb.org.uk/countryside/farming/advice/farmhabitats/margins/index.asp](http://www.rspb.org.uk/countryside/farming/advice/farmhabitats/margins/index.asp)

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 General

- 5.1.1 This section sets out the main conclusions of the Study, and provides recommendations to the Council for its consideration and action as appropriate.

4.2 Conclusions

Diversity of the Borough's Landscapes

- 4.2.1 This assessment has confirmed the diversity of West Norfolk's landscapes, identifying 11 different types of landscape within 550 square miles. This diversity is represented by the variety of coastal, fenland, estate and farmland landscapes. This assessment also confirms that the historical settlement, development and use of the West Norfolk landscape, and its ecological character, reflect this diversity. Within the context of this diversity of landscape types, the assessment has identified 61 areas of distinctive landscape character. These areas reflect distinct and recognisable patterns of different natural and cultural elements that combine to create a particular experience or 'sense of place' – quite unlike anywhere else.
- 4.2.2 Overall, the diversity and local distinctiveness of the Borough's landscapes are considered to be a major environmental asset, making a significant contribution to the quality of life for West Norfolk's communities. Protecting landscape features and patterns that contribute to landscape diversity, including enhancing their quality, character and function where necessary, should be a key aim for planning and land management policy in West Norfolk.

Condition and Sensitivities of the Borough's Landscapes

- 4.2.3 The profiles set out in Section 3.3 identify, in broad terms, the current condition and sensitivities of the Borough's landscapes and the forces for change that they are experiencing. This information highlights the main issues affecting landscape character that need to be considered in decisions involving the development and use of land within a particular character type or area. In summary, the key issues in relation to development planning can be summarised as follows:
- *Built development* – expansion of suburban character and pattern; use of standardised housing designs/inappropriate building methods/materials/details that ignore local vernacular; expansion of industrial, leisure and retail developments on settlement edges; pressure on open character of countryside gaps.
 - *Infrastructure* - loss of tranquillity from road and development growth/widespread lighting; increase in power lines, telecommunication masts, wind turbines and associated buildings.
 - *Small-scale and incremental change* - gentrification, suburbanisation and extension of rural settlements, dwellings and gardens; loss of agricultural land for gardens, planting of exotic species, urban style fencing and lighting; loss of locally distinctive features such as walls, fences, signs and adverts, etc; horse culture, increased car use/erosion of narrow lanes/adverse impact on landscape and settlement character/obtrusive road signage and traffic calming measures.
 - *Settlements in their landscape settings* - relationship between settlement core and landscape severed by settlement expansion; new development unsympathetic to original settlement pattern and relationship with landscape; poor relationships between settlement and landscape/key views/landmarks/other landscape features.

- *Recreation and tourism* – access infrastructure; horse-related developments, golf courses.
- *Climate change* – reducing the causes of climate change through energy conservation/efficiency and increased use of renewable energy sources; adapting to the consequences of climate change in relation to flood risk and sea level rise.

Landscape Management Needs

- 4.2.4 Taking into account the current condition, sensitivities and forces for change affecting the character of each identified landscape character unit, the profiles in Section 3.3 also identify guidance in the form of an overall strategy and set of objectives for managing landscape change. These reflect the specific needs of different landscape types and character areas - ranging from protecting the highest quality and most sensitive landscapes from adverse changes, to promoting positive management actions to strengthen specific characteristics and features within landscapes of poor condition through environmental enhancement, design and restoration projects. Importantly, the management strategy objectives reflect priorities for the creation and enhancement of habitats identified in the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project.

The Landscape Planning Policy Framework

- 4.2.5 The focus of the current national and emerging regional planning policy framework in relation to the protection and enhancement of landscape can be summarised as:
- Sustainable development is the overarching objective and priority.
 - Landscape character, settlement character and local distinctiveness should be taken into consideration in development.
 - The countryside is to be protected for its own sake but development that supports the rural economy should be considered on its own merits.
 - Core policies need to be clear, concise and criteria-based.
 - A strong evidence base is required to support policies and any Supplementary Planning Documents.
 - Local landscape designations and green wedges/strategic gaps, where these are to be retained, need justification based on a formal and robust assessment.
 - Design policy is an important means for achieving landscape character objectives.
- 4.2.6 This assessment provides the evidence base required to support the Council's Local Development Framework in general, and to underpin the development of criteria-based policies in particular.

Synergy with Landscape Character Assessment Hierarchy

- 4.2.7 As demonstrated in Section 3.3, this 1:25,000 Level 3 'district-scale' assessment of landscape character units has been undertaken to 'nest' within the framework provided by the 1:250,000 Level 1 'national-scale' Character of England Map and the 1:50,000 Level 2 'county-scale' assessment of Landscape Description Units.

4.3 Recommended Applications of the Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.3.1 It is recommended that this Landscape Character Assessment be made accessible for use by all those with an interest in landscape planning, design and management within the Borough.

4.3.2 In line with the aims and objectives set out in Section 1.2, the principal application of this Landscape Character Assessment is in relation to the Council's development planning functions. Practical uses of the Landscape Character Assessments in this regard include:

- Raising the general awareness in the planning process of the importance of landscape character in contributing to quality of life within the Borough by recognising:
 - * both the differences and similarities between places
 - * what gives different places their special local identity and distinctiveness
 - * the need to protect and enhance special and valued characteristics
 - * that development needs to be sympathetic to these special qualities
 - * the need to actively improve the quality of places through good design.
- Informing the formulation of criteria-based landscape character policies in the Local Development Framework.
- Providing the spatial framework for considering the landscape character implications of options for different scales and patterns of strategic development in the Local Development Framework.
- Informing development control decisions about proposals for built development and other forms of land use change.
- Informing the Strategic Environmental Assessment and evidence base of the Local Development Framework of the impact of new development on landscape character.
- Providing a framework for more detailed studies to enhance the evidence base, and for the targeting of landscape enhancements in concert with development schemes.
- Informing design guidance to promote higher quality landscape design.
- Providing a baseline for monitoring the impact of new development on landscape character and quality.

4.3.3 Planners, developers, architects, urban designers, landscape architects and other professionals may also find the characterisation information and guidelines useful as a reference source for informing the site masterplanning and building design process for specific development schemes. Other applications of the Landscape Character Assessments include its use by those involved in the targeting and delivery of environmental land management schemes - e.g. Environmental Stewardship advisers, landowners and managers. Local communities and other stakeholders may also find the Study useful as a basis for guiding their responses to consultations by the planning authorities on plans, strategies and planning applications that may have significant implications for their local landscapes.

4.4 Landscape Policy Recommendations

4.4.1 This assessment identifies the specific characteristics and features within a landscape character type or area that require protection, and also highlights objectives that promote the enhancement of local character and distinctiveness within these areas. Taking this into account, it is recommended that the Council considers adopting a strong landscape character approach within its LDF. This is consistent with approaches by a growing number of other local authorities in England where criteria-based landscape character policies, with supporting guidance, are replacing the traditional reliance on local landscape designations

where these are considered to be too blunt an instrument for delivering sustainable development in landscape terms¹.

- 4.4.2 A proposed criteria-based Landscape Character Policy is set out in the Norfolk Coast Partnership Study ‘Towards a Co-ordinated Approach to Integrated Landscape Planning in Norfolk’. It is recommended that the Council incorporates this policy into the relevant LDD.

4.5 Recommendations for Further Work

Enhancing the Character Evidence Base

- 4.5.1 This Landscape Character Assessment provides information to help understand the distinctive character of landscapes within the Borough, and it is expected that the evidence base will be treated as a material consideration in planning decisions. A variety of other character-based studies may be needed to more fully inform the LDF policies and any SPD. It is therefore recommended that, over time, the Council give consideration to working with Norfolk County Council and other key partners through the Norfolk Coast Partnership to enhance the current character evidence base within the framework provided by this and other Landscape Character Assessments.
- 4.5.2 Options for enhancing the evidence base in relation to the character of the landscape within the Borough include:
- *Settlement Character Studies* – including for example Townscape/Urban Character Assessments (particularly for the main settlement, urban archaeological surveys, settlement-edge landscape setting studies, Conservation Area appraisals, Town and Village Design Statements, and Parish Plans.
 - *Landscape Design Guidance* – to promote sensitive and high quality landscape design, by providing guidance on how the settings of new development can be carried out in accordance with the design policies of the Local Development Framework in order to help retain local distinctiveness.
 - *Green Infrastructure Network Planning* – long-term plans to establish networks of multi-functional accessible green infrastructure sites, corridors and areas within the countryside in and around the Borough’s main settlements.
 - *Urban Green Space Strategies* – detailed strategies for delivering high quality parks and other public open spaces, based on PPG17² open space audits and need assessments, prepared in line with CABE Space guidance³.

Monitoring Landscape Policies

- 4.5.3 In line with the requirements of PPS12⁴, there is a need to monitor the impacts of LDF policies over time. In order to measure the effectiveness of planning policies in protecting, conserving and enhancing landscape character, quality and local distinctiveness, it is recommended that the Council give consideration to working with Norfolk County Council and other key partners to develop a framework for monitoring landscape change within the Landscape Character Types and Areas identified by this assessment.

¹ See for example – Countryside Agency Demonstration Project – Criteria-based Landscape Policies and Guidance in Local Development Documents : an Approach in West Sussex, Report No. 1 Policies (White Consultants, February 2006).

² PPG17 - Open Space, Sport and Recreation (HMSO, 2002).

³ Green Space Strategies - a Good Practice Guide (CABE Space, Undated).

⁴ PPS12 Local Development Frameworks (ODPM, 2004).

Community Initiatives

- 4.5.4 It is recommended that the Council gives consideration to continuing to encourage and support community involvement in the future applications of the LCA through development of 'bottom up' character based initiatives at the local level. These include initiatives such as Town/Village Design Statements, Parish Plans etc.

Retro-fitting of the Historic Landscape Characterisation Data

- 4.5.5 It is recommended that the Council gives consideration to retro-fitting the relevant HLC data into the LCA once it is available after August 2007. A proposed methodology for undertaking this work is set out in the Norfolk Coast Partnership Study 'Towards a Co-ordinated Approach to Integrated Landscape Planning in Norfolk'.

APPENDIX A

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION



KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

First Community Stakeholder Workshop

6-8pm, Thursday 13th July 2006, Assembly Rooms, King's Lynn Town Hall, Queen Street, King's Lynn

Participants

Chris Blandford Associates (CBA)

Dominic Watkins

Emma Clarke

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

Gemma Cousins

James Alflatt

Norfolk Rural Communities Council

Janice Howell

Wash Estuary Project

Tammey Smalley (Project Officer)

Adam Partington (Wash historic environment officer)

King's Lynn Civic Society

Sally Smith

Keep Burnham a Village

John Lain

Lorraine Lain

Castle Acre Parish Plan

John Rolfe

South Wooton Parish Council

North Wooton Parish Council

Van Newkirk

CPRE

Vickey Newton

Walpole Parish Council

James Whitaker

Welney Parish Council

Tim Vernes

Keeping Wretton Rural

Gerry Mansell

Apples and Orchards Project

Bob Lever

Gayton Parish Plan

Edward Hawkins

1. Aim of the workshop

To provide an overview of the landscape character assessment process, discuss and review preliminary Landscape Character types and areas maps.

2. Welcome and Introduction

CBA gave a short presentation on aims of the overall project and the principles of landscape character assessment as a tool for establishing local distinctiveness and sense of place within the Borough, to inform land use planning, and land management policy and decisions.

It was also noted that initial work and preliminary characterisation had been based on Desk-study and that fieldwork is due to start during July.

3. Review of Draft Character Types and Areas Map

CBA presented AO plans to show preliminary Landscape Character Types and Areas for the study area, based on desk study and invited participative discussion of initial classification and naming.

The following key points arose from discussions with stakeholders:

- There is a need to highlight the importance of the maritime coastal/ Wash SSSI and the influence that this has on adjacent inland landscapes;
- The Wash has a constantly changing rather than static character;
- A couple of areas close to the Wash which are currently identified as type 'D' (The Fens – Settled Inland Marshes) ought to be within type 'B' (Drained Coastal Marshes);
- 50% of the Borough's traditional orchards are located within areas D3 and D4 (East of England apples and orchards project – survey of traditional orchards). These are an important landscape feature;
- Villages are currently experiencing infill and change to second home ownership (in some cases this is as high as 40% of residential properties within the village);
- Coastal parishes are generally becoming denser;
- Houses are becoming taller as people build higher to see the Marshes;
- There is general pressure on the coast from tourism and visitor numbers, which can cause disturbance to the seashore (in particular nesting birds);
- Wooden 'B&Q-style' bird hides along the coast are visually intrusive;

- The coast is dynamic and evolving, and it is therefore necessary to get a historic view of the area;
- The study should highlight sustainability for the future;
- Identifying local identity within the Walpoles is key;
- The main arterial roads within the Borough are like a spider's web, with minor routes following the topography;
- Norfolk has a unique identity – trees have filled spaces in an ever-changing landscape;
- In some areas, non-intervention may be the best policy;
- In places, Countryside Stewardship is promoting pastoral management (with possibilities of parts of the landscape being returned to pastoral over the next ten years);
- Pressure from agri-environment schemes, road and housing development.

Date of Next Workshop: Thursday 21st September 2006, 6-8pm, Assembly Rooms, King's Lynn Town Hall, Queen Street, King's Lynn



KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

First Statutory Stakeholder Workshop

3-5pm, Thursday 13th July 2006, Assembly Rooms, King's Lynn Town Hall, Queen Street, King's Lynn

Participants

Chris Blandford Associates (CBA)

Dominic Watkins

Emma Clarke

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

Gemma Cousins

James Alflatt

Peter Jermany

Dave Allan

Claire Churchill

Norfolk County Council

Judith Cantell (Landscape)

Scott Perkin (BAP Co-ordinator)

Norfolk Wildlife Trust

John Hiskett

Boston Borough Council

Gemma South

Norfolk Coast AONB Unit

Neil Featherstone

1. Aim of the workshop

To provide an overview of the landscape character assessment process, discuss and review preliminary Landscape Character types and areas maps.

2. Welcome and Introduction

CBA gave a short presentation on aims of the overall project and the principles of landscape character assessment as a tool for establishing local distinctiveness and sense of place within the Borough, to inform land use planning, and land management policy and decisions.

CBA noted that the process will include two stages, primarily the identification of different landscape character types and areas within the Borough and secondly evaluation of each landscape character area, based upon identification of landscape condition, qualities and sensitivities, culminating in the development Management Strategies and Landscape Planning Guidelines.

It was also noted that initial work and preliminary characterisation had been based on Desk-study and that fieldwork is due to start during July.

3. Review of Draft Character Types and Areas Map

CBA presented AO plans to show preliminary Landscape Character Types and Areas for the study area, based on desk study and invited participative discussion of initial classification and naming.

The following key points arose from discussions with stakeholders:

- It may become clear from fieldwork that a number of distinctive valleys can be identified (either running through current character areas, or as character areas within their own right), particularly within the Greensand Ridge. The corridor aspect of these river valleys means that they can be important in terms of biodiversity.
- CBA should refer to published landscape character assessment for North Norfolk to ensure as much consistency as possible at the boundaries of the Borough. This is particularly relevant at Fring, where the valley crosses the A148 and should be consistent with North Norfolk.
- The Fens have a series of dykes, which originate from different ages, depending upon the time at which they were reclaimed. This may be helpful when determining character area boundaries.
- Type 'E' fits well with the underlying peat, which can be important for wetland restoration.

- Towards Wisbech, there may be an urban fringe landscape between the A47 and the settlement.
- Within the Fen area to the north of Downham Market, housing tends to be prominent within the floodplain /Fenland Landscape (E3).
- Within the Southern Fens, building types and localised building styles should play an important role in determining landscape character areas.
- CITB construction site (Bircham Newton) has an urban character and feel which is different to adjacent areas of landscape character.
- There may also be other examples of airbases within the Borough that impact upon local landscape character.
- Landscape character type 'J' appears to have been determined using contour lines/elevation. There is a need to look at current 'islands' of type J and consider joining these to adjacent areas of Landscape Character Type J.
- Several river valleys appear to float within areas of Marshland.
- To the south of Downham Market, landscape character is influenced by the Industrial Estate.
- Within the AONB, there is a need to look at whether or not hedges need to be put back, depending upon whether or not the landscape has a sense of openness or enclosure. This may also relate to agri-environment schemes.

Date of Next Workshop: Thursday 21st September 2006, 3-5pm, Assembly Rooms, King's Lynn Town Hall, Queen Street, King's Lynn



KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Second Statutory Stakeholder Workshop

3-5pm, Tuesday 24th October 2006, Assembly Rooms, King's Lynn Town Hall, Queen Street, King's Lynn

Participants

Chris Blandford Associates (CBA)	Emma Clarke
	Sarah De Vos
King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council	Gemma Cousins
	Tony Brindley
Norfolk County Council	Judith Cantell (Landscape)
	Scott Perkin (BAP Co-ordinator)
Natural England	Chris Smith
Boston Borough Council	Gemma South
Norfolk Coast Partnership	Neil Featherstone
Great Yarmouth Borough Council	Sarah Slade

1. Aim of the workshop

To review threats to valued characteristics and opportunities to enhance landscape character/sense of place for each identified landscape character type (to feed into the identification of land management and landscape planning principle for guiding positive change in the landscape).

2. Welcome and Introduction

CBA gave a short presentation on aims of the overall project and the principles of landscape character assessment as a tool for establishing local distinctiveness and sense of place within the Borough, to inform land use planning, and land management policy and decisions.

CBA gave an update on progress within the characterisation process, and noted that 11 different Landscape Character Types and 61 unique Landscape Character Areas had been identified (which were presented on an AO plan).

3. Applications of the Landscape Character Assessment – Overview by CBA

CBA gave a short overview of potential applications of the Landscape Character Assessment (which were issued as a hand-out) including:

- Raising the general awareness in the planning process of the importance of landscape character in contributing to quality of life within the Borough by recognising:
 - * both the differences and similarities between places
 - * what gives different places their special local identity and distinctiveness
 - * the need to protect and enhance special and valued characteristics
 - * that development needs to be sympathetic to these special qualities
 - * the need to actively improve the quality of places through good design.
- Informing the formulation of criteria-based landscape character policies in the Local Development Framework
- Providing the spatial framework for considering the landscape character implications of options for different scales and patterns of strategic development in the Local Development Framework.
- Informing development control decisions about proposals for built development and other forms of land use change.
- Informing the Strategic Environmental Assessment and evidence base of the Local Development Framework of the impact of new development on landscape character.
- Providing a framework for more detailed studies to enhance the evidence base, and for the targeting of landscape enhancements in concert with development schemes.
- Informing design guidance to promote higher quality landscape design.
- Providing a baseline for monitoring the impact of new development on landscape character and quality.
- As a reference source for informing the site masterplanning and building design process for specific development schemes (for planners, developers, architects, urban designers, landscape architects and other professionals).
- As a useful basis for guiding responses to consultations by the planning authority on plans, strategies and planning applications that may have significant implications for the local landscape (for local communities and other stakeholders).

Review of Issues and Opportunities - Discussion Group

CBA facilitated a discussion of the key issues/ pressures and opportunities that could be identified for each Landscape Character Type (aided by handout detailing potential examples). The following points were recorded from discussions:

A OPEN COASTAL MARSHES

Issues

- Need to maintain sense of openness and tranquillity.
- Flood risk.

Opportunities

- Potential for managed realignment.

B DRAINED COASTAL MARSHES

General character

- Lots of archaeology within this type.
- Views to wooded backdrop of Sandringham to the east.

Issues

- Flood risk.

Opportunities

- Scope for enhancement of several features (including field boundaries) within this type.
- Regeneration and enhancement of existing farmland.

C COASTAL SLOPES

Issues

- Second-home ownership pressure is high within villages (for example, up to 40% within Brancaster).

Opportunities

- Enhancement of golf courses, with management for ecological potential.
- Regeneration and enhancement of existing farmland.

D THE FENS- SETTLED INLAND MARSHES

General character

- Big, open plains and skies.
- Historic evidence for this being a more wooded landscape?

Issues

- County-level importance for orchards (within this type, approximately 90% of County total).
- Linear/ fragmented landscape pattern around Emneth and Outwell.
- Intensification of arable farming.
- Splitting of larger plots (pressure for gardens which are considered as brownfield);
- Visual intrusion of horticultural or food processing developments.
- Piecemeal development along the old A17 road corridor.

Opportunities

- Improvement of orchards, associated with food processing corridors.

- Enhancement of road corridors, with additional landscaping.
- Potential for creation of a new landscape here?
- Strong historic patterns may create guidelines for newer planting.

E THE FENS – OPEN INLAND MARSHES

General character

- Intensively drained and less settled.
- Military influence around Feltwell.

Issues

- Development pressure around Downham Market (and also regeneration of brownfield sites within Downham).
- Flood risk along western edge of type.

Opportunities

- Potential for waterway recreation.
- Potential recreational links (e.g. Midland's canals).
- Potential for large-scale reedbed creation.
- Ouse Washes (RSPB) as mitigation for summer flooding and also potential for large-scale habitat creation.
- Waterways running across the Fens could easily (?) be flooded to form wetland habitat creation.
- Potential for floodplain and grazing marsh creation.

F WOODED SLOPES WITH ESTATE LAND

Issues

- Potential expansion of villages, which may be out of character with existing pattern, scale and materials.
- Management of woodland areas.

Opportunities

- Recreation potential.
- Enhancement of river corridors as wildlife corridors.

G FARMLAND WITH WOODLAND AND WETLAND

General character

- Knight's Hill provides a landscaped northern entrance into King's Lynn.

Issues

- Visual intrusion of industrial and residential development on the fringes of King's Lynn.
- Harsh urban edge to the east of King's Lynn.
- Visually intrusive bypass.
- Fit of new development within Nar Ouse Regeneration Area.

Opportunities

- Enhancement of river corridors flowing into the settlement.
- Potential for increase in footpath and cycle links from King's Lynn to surrounding landscape (i.e. across the bypass).

H SETTLED FARMLAND WITH PLANTATIONS

General character

- Many traditional buildings of flint and clunch
- Nucleated villages, with spurs of settlement along roads.

Issues

- Need to retain nucleated settlement pattern.
- Pressure from linear infill, where sense of openness can be lost.
- Need to retain landscape pattern, where farmland comes right into the heart of villages.
- Pressure from expansion of settlements.

Opportunities

- Screening around RAF Marham.
- Management and enhancement of higher-tier agricultural land.

I ROLLING OPEN FARMLAND

General character

- Wide verges along narrow lanes (verges were once used for movement of sheep and other animals along the roads).
- Views to the coastline from certain locations.

Issues

- Sense of openness on slopes (particularly at Massingham and Harpley) would be affected by potential wind turbine developments.
- Fashionable villages have immense pressure for second-home ownership.
- Potential farm diversification (with associated visual intrusion?).

Opportunities

- Enhancement and potential connection of river valley systems (such as the Ingol) as wildlife corridors.
- Creation and linkage of wet woodland.
- Enhancement of old field systems at Stanhoe.

J PLATEAU FARMLAND

General character

- Open views across Type F (Wooded Slopes with Estate Land) from higher parts of J (leading to a general sense of elevation).
- Patches of woodland create a sense of enclosure.
- Dominance of hawthorn in hedgerows.
- Pressure for new housing at Bircham Newton training area.

Issues

- Pressure from tourism along the coast to the North and also within the villages.
- Pressure for wind turbine development.
- Pressure from expansion/ gentrification of Burnham Market.
- Potential for second-home ownership within villages such as Fring.

Opportunities

- Opportunities for calcareous grassland creation (informed by Ecological Networks mapping project).

K THE BRECKS – PLANTATIONS

Issues

- Management of woodland areas for recreation and wildlife.

Opportunities

- Creation of Breckland as a National Park

Next Steps and Close

CBA noted that the discussion points raised would feed into the development of Land Management guidelines and Landscape Planning Guidelines for each Landscape Character Unit, which will be included within the Final Report.



KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Second Community Stakeholder Workshop

6-8pm, Tuesday 24th October 2006, Assembly Rooms, King's Lynn Town Hall, Queen Street, King's Lynn

Participants

Chris Blandford Associates (CBA)	Emma Clarke
	Sarah DeVos
King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council	Gemma Cousins
Wash Estuary Strategy Group	Adam Partington
East of England Apples and Orchards Project	Bob Lever
Hunstanton Environment and Landscape Programme	John Maiden
Hunstanton Civic Society	Canny Jones
Castle Acre Parish Plan	John Roff
Walpoles Parish Plan Group	James Whittaker
RSPB	Ciaran Nelson

1. Aim of the workshop

To review threats to valued characteristics and opportunities to enhance landscape character/sense of place for each identified landscape character type (to feed into the identification of land management and landscape planning principle for guiding positive change in the landscape).

2. Welcome and Introduction

CBA gave a short presentation on aims of the overall project and the principles of landscape character assessment as a tool for establishing local distinctiveness and sense of place within the Borough, to inform land use planning, and land management policy and decisions.

CBA gave an update on progress within the characterisation process, and noted that 11 different Landscape Character Types and 61 unique Landscape Character Areas had been identified (which were presented on an AO plan).

3. Applications of the Landscape Character Assessment – Overview by CBA

CBA gave a short overview of potential applications of the Landscape Character Assessment (which were issued as a hand-out) including:

- Raising the general awareness in the planning process of the importance of landscape character in contributing to quality of life within the Borough by recognising:
 - * both the differences and similarities between places
 - * what gives different places their special local identity and distinctiveness
 - * the need to protect and enhance special and valued characteristics
 - * that development needs to be sympathetic to these special qualities
 - * the need to actively improve the quality of places through good design.
- Informing the formulation of criteria-based landscape character policies in the Local Development Framework
- Providing the spatial framework for considering the landscape character implications of options for different scales and patterns of strategic development in the Local Development Framework.
- Informing development control decisions about proposals for built development and other forms of land use change.
- Informing the Strategic Environmental Assessment and evidence base of the Local Development Framework of the impact of new development on landscape character.
- Providing a framework for more detailed studies to enhance the evidence base, and for the targeting of landscape enhancements in concert with development schemes.
- Informing design guidance to promote higher quality landscape design.
- Providing a baseline for monitoring the impact of new development on landscape character and quality.
- As a reference source for informing the site masterplanning and building design process for specific development schemes (for planners, developers, architects, urban designers, landscape architects and other professionals).
- As a useful basis for guiding responses to consultations by the planning authority on plans, strategies and planning applications that may have significant implications for the local landscape (for local communities and other stakeholders).

Review of Issues and Opportunities - Discussion Group

CBA facilitated a discussion of the key issues and opportunities that could be identified for each Landscape Character Type (aided by handout detailing potential examples). The following points were recorded from discussions:

A OPEN COASTAL MARSHES

Issues

- Height of properties along the sea wall (currently generally one storey). Taller developments may block views across Open Coastal marshes and the sea.
- Risk of flooding.
- Loss of saltmarshes.
- Need for protection of special cliffs at Hunstanton (with their striking carrstone rock bed).
- Visual intrusion of caravan sites and sedentary chalets.
- Visual intrusion associated with golf courses.

Opportunities

- Potential for managed realignment (depending on levels of erosion, flooding deposition).
- Potential for linkages with adjacent landscapes, to contribute to a landscape of greater ecological function.

B DRAINED COASTAL MARSHES

Issues

- Visual intrusion of large corrugated iron barns within adjacent landscape character types.
- Loss of sense of openness.

Opportunities

- Enhancement of small river corridors crossing the type.
- Enhancement of the harsh urban edges of King's Lynn.

C COASTAL SLOPES

Issues

- New golf courses – out of character with existing buildings and local landscape character.
- Infilling of back gardens within Hunstanton (seen as brownfield sites).

Opportunities

- Protect and enhance the character of local buildings (such as Heacham Priory).
- Conserve existing local architectural character.

D THE FENS- SETTLED INLAND MARSHES

Issues

- Back garden/ drive infill and development.
- Loss of historic field pattern through intensified farming practices.

Opportunities

- Reinstatement of curvilinear drainage and field patterns.

E THE FENS – OPEN INLAND MARSHES

Issues

- Existing visual intrusion associated with the railway corridor.

Opportunities

- Potential for grazing marsh enhancements (between the cuts).

F WOODED SLOPES WITH ESTATE LAND

Issues

- Expansion of urban fringe of King's Lynn, which is visually intrusive and harsh in places.
- Potential expansion of small settlements (such as to the south of Dersingham).
- Lack of appropriate infrastructure.

Opportunities

- Potential for enhancement of old railway corridor (King's Lynn to Hunstanton) as a green cycle and transport route.

G FARMLAND WITH WOODLAND AND WETLAND

Issues

- Visual intrusion from the edge of King's Lynn.
- Pressure associated with recreation opportunities.

Opportunities

- Reedbed recreation (related to Internal Drainage Board sites?).
- Recreation and linkage of Heathland (such as Roydon Common).
- Enhancement of river corridors (such as the Gaywood and Nar rivers).
- Potential for recreational opportunities (Bawsey and Leziate) outside urban areas.
- Potential for recreation of extraction sites.

- Potential for informal recreation corridors.

H SETTLED FARMLAND WITH PLANTATIONS

Issues

- Pressure for expansion of village along train route to London.
- Over-intensification of farming practices.

Opportunities

- Need to protect the distinctive character of local buildings.
- Potential to screen edges screen/ landscape edges of new development.

I ROLLING OPEN FARMLAND

Issues

- Tourist pressure on villages throughout the type, and also associated with the coast to the north.
- Pressure for second-home ownership within several of the villages (such as Castle Acre/ West Acre and Burnham Market).
- Potential new development, which may block views.

Opportunities

- Potential to further enhance the Peddar's Way as a recreation and wildlife corridor.

J PLATEAU FARMLAND

Issues

- Potential new development, which may block views.
- Loss of marginal farmland.
- Deterioration in management of old Sheep Walk verges.

Opportunities

- Enhancement and greening of village edges.

K THE BRECKS – PLANTATIONS

Opportunities

- Recreation potential of Forest area.

Next Steps and Close

CBA noted that the discussion points raised would feed into the development of Land Management guidelines and Landscape Planning Guidelines for each Landscape Character Unit, which will be included within the Final Report.

APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY

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GLOSSARY

Community Strategy

All local planning authorities have a duty to prepare community strategies under the Local Government Act 2000 in conjunction with other public, private and community sector organisations. Community Strategies should promote the economic, social and environmental well being of their areas and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Local Development Frameworks provide the spatial expression to those elements of the Community Strategy that relate to the use and development of land.

Conservation Area

Areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which is desirable to preserve or enhance, through strict control of new development, and protection of trees, and the need for demolition of buildings or walls to be subject to Conservation Area Consent.

Core Strategy

The Core Strategy sets out the long term vision and the strategic policies required to deliver that vision. Its main aim is to promote sustainable development. It will also seek to protect and enhance the environment, as well as defining the general locations for delivering strategic development including housing, employment, retail, leisure, community and transport. This Development Plan Document includes the existing national, regional and local strategies that have implications for the development and use of land. The Core Strategy includes a key diagram showing in broad terms the main policies and proposals, and also includes a number of strategic development policies that set out the broad criteria against which planning applications for the development and use of land and buildings will be considered. Such policies will ensure that any development in the area is in harmony with the spatial vision and objectives set out in the core strategy. They will also highlight the needs and characteristics of the local area.

Design Guides

A document providing guidance on how development can be carried out in accordance with the design policies of a local authority or other organisation often with a view to retaining local distinctiveness.

Development Briefs

Inform developers and other interested parties of the constraints and opportunities presented by a site, and the type of development expected or encouraged by local planning policies.

Development Plan Document (DPD)

Development Plan Documents that a Council are required to prepare include the core strategy, site-specific allocations of land and area action plans. There will also be a proposals map, which will illustrate the spatial extent of policies that must be prepared and maintained to accompany all development plan documents. All Development Plan Documents must be subject to rigorous procedures of community involvement, consultation and independent examination, and adopted after receipt of the inspector's binding report.

Evidence Base

An up-to-date information base on key aspects of the social, economic and environmental characteristics of the area, to enable the preparation of a sound spatial plan that meets the objectives of sustainable development.

Landscape Character Area

A discrete geographical area of a particular Landscape Character Type with a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently throughout the area.

Landscape Character Type

A generic unit of landscape with a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently throughout the type.

Local Development Document (LDD)

Local Development Documents are those documents that together make up the Local Development Framework. They comprise of Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents and the Statement of Community Involvement.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

This is the term given to the portfolio of Local Development Documents which will provide the framework for delivering the spatial planning strategy for the area.

Scheduled Monument

An ancient monument or deposits designated by DCMS under the Ancient Monuments Act 1979.

Site Specific Allocations

Land allocated for specific uses identified in specific Development Plan Documents. Specific policies that relate to these designations are set out in a Development Plan Document and cover principles such as design or specific requirements for implementation. Policies relating to the delivery of the Site Specific Allocations, such as any critical access requirements, any broad design principles or any planning obligations which may be sought, are set out in a development plan document.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

This sets out the standards that a Council intends to achieve in relation to involving the community and all stakeholders in the preparation, alteration and continuing review of all Local Development Plan Documents and in significant planning applications, and also how the local planning authority intends to achieve those standards. A consultation statement showing how a council has complied with its Statement of Community Involvement should accompany all Local Development Documents.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

These documents contain policy guidance to supplement the policies and proposals in Development Plan Documents. They do not form part of the development plan, nor are they subject to independent examination.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

An appraisal of the economic, social and environmental effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process, so that decisions can be made that accord with sustainable development.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL TERMS**Palaeolithic**

The general term 'Palaeolithic' covers the whole of the period before and during the last ice age that is prior to about 10,000 years ago.

Mesolithic

The general term 'Mesolithic' covers the whole period beginning around 10,000 years ago, situated between the Palaeolithic and the Neolithic, and is associated with the rise to dominance for microliths (small stone tools).

Neolithic

The general term 'Neolithic' covers the whole period beginning around 4,000BC, generally characterised by the development of agriculture.

Bronze Age

The general term 'Bronze Age' covers the whole period beginning around 2,200 BC.

Iron Age

The general term 'Iron Age' covers the whole period beginning around 800BC.

Roman

The general term 'Roman' covers the whole period from AD 43 to 410.

Early Medieval

The general term 'Early Medieval' covers the whole period from AD 410 to 1066.

Medieval

The general term 'Medieval' covers the whole period from AD 1066 to 1540.

Round barrows

Hemispherical mound surrounded by a ditch (or occasionally two or more concentric ditches), often accompanied by an external (or occasionally internal) bank.

Salterns

A building, in which salt is obtained by boiling and evaporating salt brine or seawater in large pans.

Pillboxes

An often-squat building with thick, loopholed walls and a flat roof, designed to accommodate a variety of weapons, usually strategically positioned to cover a vulnerable point in a defensive system. Many were built to standardized designs.

Funerary

Site types normally or frequently associated with burials, which in some instances may have had solely religious or ritual functions.

Common Land

An area of private land over which the community has certain specified rights, for example grazing.

English Heritage

The government's statutory adviser on conservation legislation concerning the historic environment. English Heritage maintains a Register of Historic Parks and gardens.

For further definition of terms, see <http://thesaurus.english-heritage.org.uk/>

APPENDIX C

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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APPENDIX D
BOROUGH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES
AND ARES (OS BASE)



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