

NORTH NORFOLK Local Development Framework



Landscape Character Assessment

Supplementary
Planning
Document

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Landscape Character Assessment 1

1 Landscape Character Assessment

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1** Landscape as an entity is not static but is constantly changing and developing. Decisions relating to development often impinge considerably upon landscape, changing and altering it. It is therefore important that proposals are informed by an understanding of the landscape and what factors may be more, or less, appropriate.
- 1.1.2** North Norfolk District Council Core Strategy Policy EN2 requires that proposals for development should be informed by, and be sympathetic to, the distinctive character of an area. This Landscape Character Assessment provides the tools to help implement this policy and should be used alongside more detailed site specific appraisals of an area at the time of application.

Structure of the Landscape Character Assessment

- 1.1.3** The document is arranged into different chapters with the main analysis of Landscape Character contained within the Character Types and Character Area chapters. The map in chapter 3 illustrates where the different Types and Areas are found.
- 1.1.4** For those users unfamiliar with Landscape Character Assessments, it may help to understand the reasoning behind how, and why, certain judgements are made within the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment by reading the Introduction section. This details the development of Landscape Character Assessment, an overview of the process involved, and how it can be utilised when making decisions about development within the context of landscape and the Core Strategy policies. A User Guide is included in section 3 of the document to enable those less familiar with Landscape Character Assessment to help interpret the Core Strategy policy and this document.
- 1.1.5** Chapter 2 describes the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment in detail, explaining the rationale, principles and processes behind the assessment. This should be referred to during use to gain the context of the study.

Policy Context

- 1.1.6** The North Norfolk Core Strategy incorporating development control policies was adopted by the Council on 24 September 2008. This contains a series of policies which will be used to determine planning applications in the District. It covers the period to 2021 but can be reviewed within that period.
- 1.1.7** Core Strategy Policy EN2, Protection of Landscape and Settlement Character, requires that proposals should be informed by, and be sympathetic to, the distinctive character areas identified in the Landscape Character Assessment. This document is therefore an important piece of evidence that should be used to inform development proposals and consideration of planning applications.
- 1.1.8** Government policy (PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development) requires that development plans and decisions on planning applications contribute to the delivery of sustainable development, by:
- Seeking to achieve environmental, economic and social objectives together over time,
 - addressing the causes and potential impacts of climate change,
 - taking a spatial approach to planning,
 - promoting high quality inclusive design,
 - improving access for all, and
 - ensuring that communities can contribute to the planning process.

1 Landscape Character Assessment

- 1.1.9** This document has had regard to, and seeks to achieve, these principles. It was subject to sustainability appraisal which requires consideration of the range of effects (both positive and negative) on the environment, as well as the possible effects of development in terms of economic benefits and social well being.

Decision Making and Conflicts

- 1.1.10** When considering development proposals or planning applications, judgements made through the LCA process will be important in informing the final decision. As stated in section 2 landscape character assessment is not a tool designed to resist changes that may influence the landscape. Rather it is an aid to decision making, a tool to help understand what the landscape is like today, how it came to be like that and how it may change in the future. Government policy in PPS1 requires that development plans and decisions on planning applications contribute to the delivery of sustainable development. In some circumstances a Planning Authority may decide in reaching a decision to give different weight to social, environmental, resource or economic considerations. Where this is the case, the reasons for doing so should be explicit and the consequences considered. Adverse environmental, social and economic impacts should be avoided, mitigated or compensated for.
- 1.1.11** Situations may arise where there is conflict between LCA conclusions and the social and economic objectives of the Core Strategy. In these instances the benefits and consequences should be carefully considered and, if development is to proceed, the information contained in the LCA should be used to minimise the impact of the development on the character of the landscape or steer it to a more appropriate location (in terms of landscape character) if possible.
- 1.1.12** Site specific appraisals, such as through individual landscape character and visual assessments, will be important in translating the principles contained in the LCA to individual proposals.

Renewable Energy

- 1.1.13** Government policy on Renewable Energy (PPS22) requires that local development documents should contain policies which promote and encourage, rather than restrict, the development of renewable energy resources. The wider environmental and economic benefits of all proposals for renewable energy projects, whatever their scale, are material considerations that should be given significant weight in determining whether proposals should be granted planning permission.
- 1.1.14** The landscape and visual effects of particular renewable energy development will vary on a case by case basis according to the type of development, its location and the landscape setting of the proposed development. Some of these effects may be minimised through appropriate siting, design and landscaping schemes, depending on the size and type of development proposed.
- 1.1.15** PPS22 states that of all renewable technologies, wind turbines are likely to have the greatest visual and landscape effects. However it requires that, in assessing planning applications, local authorities should recognise that the impact of turbines on the landscape will vary according to the size and number of turbines and the type of landscape involved, and that these impacts may be temporary if conditions are attached to planning permission which require the future decommissioning of the turbines.
- 1.1.16** Planning authorities are also required to take into account the cumulative impact of wind generation projects in particular areas. Such impacts should be assessed at the planning application stage and authorities should not set arbitrary limits in local development documents on the numbers of turbines that will be acceptable in particular locations.

Landscape Character Assessment 1

1.2 What is Landscape Character Assessment?

Background

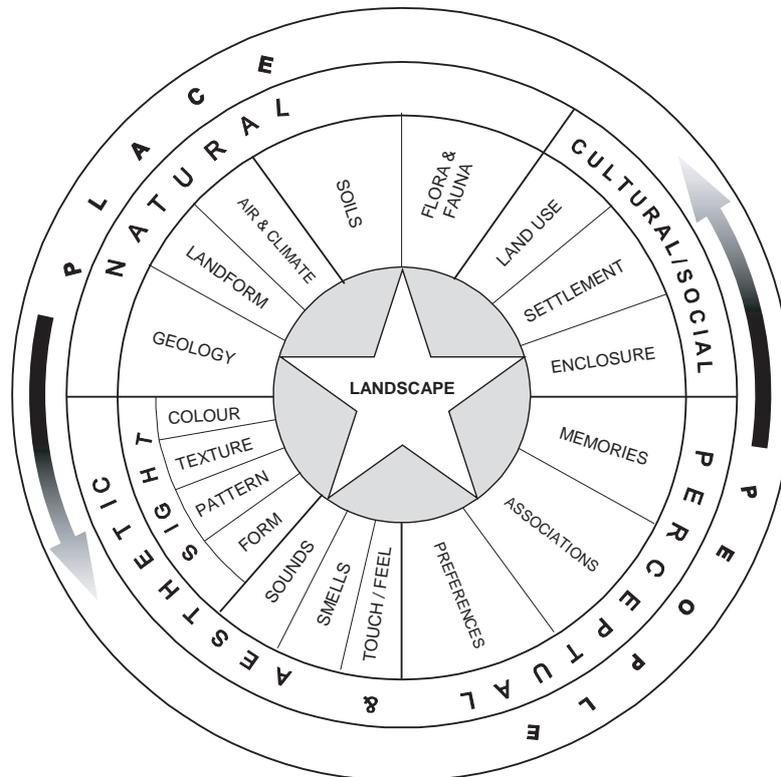
- 1.2.1** There is an increasing recognition for a need to incorporate landscape considerations into decision making, particularly due to the ever more influential sustainable development agenda. Landscape Character Assessment is seen as a tool which can aid the decision making process and at the same time make a significant contribution to the objectives of sustainable development that relate to environmental protection and the prudent use of natural resources. This was recognised by the Government, in England, in their 2000 Rural White Paper: *Our Countryside: The Future - A Fair Deal for Rural England* (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions), which endorses the use of Landscape Character Assessment as a way of informing decisions.
- 1.2.2** Over the last decade Landscape Character Assessment has been promoted as a tool to be used in land use planning, with the former Countryside Agency spearheading the development process. National Planning Policy Guidance, PPG7, gave the option for Local Planning Authorities to incorporate a Landscape Character Assessment within their planning documents to inform policy and decisions. This was strengthened in the updated version of the guidance, PPS7, to the effect that such a study is expected.
- 1.2.3** In considering *landscape* in land use planning and management, there has been a change in emphasis from landscape evaluation or designation, i.e. what makes one area 'better' than another, through to describing the 'character' of a landscape, i.e. what makes one area 'different' or 'distinct' from another. Finally the shift to Landscape Character Assessment which is a process of addressing both the characterisation process (the identification, mapping, classification and description of landscape character) but also the process of making judgements based on landscape character (in order to inform a range of decisions). The development of Landscape Character Assessment over the years has been a gradual process to help address the differing opinions associated with 'landscape quality' based surveys.
- 1.2.4** Landscape Character Assessment is just one of a number of tools for environmental and character assessment, and it is important to distinguish and recognise the role that each tool can play. Landscape Character Assessment can be applied to a number of different uses, such as planning and landscape conservation, management and enhancement. It should not be used as a tool to resist changes in the landscape, but is there to aid decision making by understanding the landscape, it's history and potential; and to ensure that change and development does not undermine what is characteristic or valued about the landscape.

Defining Landscape Character and Landscape Character Assessment

- 1.2.5** Landscape is about the relationship between people and place, and does not just apply to special or designated landscapes and is not restricted to the countryside. Landscape is a result of how the different components of our environment - both the natural, such as the influence of geology, soils, climate, flora and fauna; and the cultural, such as the historical and current impact of land use, settlement, enclosure and other human interventions - interact together and how they are perceived by people (see Figure 1.1). This is not just a visual perception, but also involves the other senses and the feelings, memories and other associations that the landscape evokes. Landscape character is the pattern that arises from particular combinations of the different components, and can provide a sense of place to the surroundings. Landscape Character Assessment has emerged as an appropriate way to look at landscape because it provides a structured approach to identifying character and distinctiveness as well as value.

1 Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 1.1 Landscape Relationships



1.2.6 Landscape Character Assessment in its most basic form is a process of assessing the particular features (individual items such as churches) and elements (general items such as hills) within landscapes which make one landscape different from another. The process of undertaking a Landscape Character Assessment is to try to break down the overall landscape into its constituent parts, understanding the contribution of each of them to the whole effect and then be able to describe and analyse the landscape in a manner which is useful to the particular purpose set.

Key Principles

1.2.7 The process of undertaking a Landscape Character Assessment is underpinned by a set of key principles, however there is a degree of flexibility and evolution in this process that allows response to local circumstances. In order to understand Landscape Character Assessment and make appropriate use of the tool it is useful to understand what the key principles are and the history and philosophy behind them. The following is a summary of the key principles:

1. The emphasis placed on landscape character.
 - Landscape Character Assessment is primarily concerned with *landscape character* rather than landscape quality or value.
 - Landscape Character is defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape.
2. The division between the process of characterisation and the making of judgements to inform decisions.
 - Landscape Character Assessment has two distinct stages:

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- The characterisation process - which is a relatively value-free process.
 - The subsequent making of judgements based on landscape character.
 - The judgements made contribute to informing the decision making process.
3. The roles for both objectivity and subjectivity in the process.
 - There has been long standing debate about the role of objectivity and subjectivity in the process.
 - The process of characterisation is (in the main) an objective process.
 - The process of making judgements to inform decisions involves an element of subjectivity.
 4. The potential for the application at different scales.
 - Landscape Character Assessment can be applied at a number of different scales.
 - Assessments should fit together within a hierarchy of types and areas, one level adds more detail to the one above.

Process

- 1.2.8** With the key principles in mind, there are a number of steps to undertaking a Landscape Character Assessment, each of which will have certain parameters to adhere to (as detailed in the Landscape Character Assessment Guidelines for England and Scotland, prepared by the Countryside Agency *et al*, 2002). The steps are divided into the **characterisation stage** and the **making judgements stage**.
- 1.2.9** **Characterisation Stage** - this stage embraces the practical steps involved in identifying areas of distinctive character, classifying and mapping them, and describing their character. This stage clarifies what makes one area different or distinct from another, and results in the identification of Landscape Character Types (distinct types of landscape that are homogeneous in character yet generic in nature in that they may occur in different parts of the country) and/or Landscape Character Areas (single unique areas being the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type). Within the Characterisation stage the following processes are undertaken:
- **Step 1: Defining the Scope.** All Landscape Character Assessments must have a clearly defined purpose. This will influence the scale and level of detail required and the types of judgements required to inform decisions.
 - **Step 2: Desk Study.** This stage involves a review of relevant background information and data to identify areas of common character.
 - **Step 3: Field Survey.** Data from the field should be collected in order to refine the draft landscape character types and areas identified at the Desk Study stage. This information is also used to inform the written descriptions of the characters and to identify the current condition of the landscape elements.
 - **Step 4: Classification and description.** This step finalises the characterisation process by classifying the landscape into landscape character types and areas and mapping their extent.
- 1.2.10** At the end of the characterisation phase, the Landscape Character Assessment should contain a map of the Character Types and Areas, a description of the Character Types and Areas, and the identification of the Key Characteristics. A Landscape Character Assessment can conclude following the Characterisation Stage and will result in an objective, neutral view of the current character of the landscape.
- 1.2.11** **Making Judgements Stage** - Where the assessment has been undertaken to inform a particular decision or policy, the assessment will move on to make judgements about landscape character. This stage is based on the results of the characterisation process and involves making judgements about landscape character to inform particular decisions related to the type of application.

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- **Step 5: Deciding the approach to judgements.** This stage requires thought to be given to the overall approach, the criteria to be used and the information needed to support the judgements to be made. Additional field work may be necessary or information from the original field survey may need to be reviewed, such as the condition of the landscape elements and features and the sensitivity of the landscape to change.
- **Step 6: Making Judgements.** The nature of the judgements and the outputs that may result from the process will vary according to the purpose of the assessment. The main approaches to making judgements within the landscape assessment process are usually landscape strategies, landscape guidelines, attaching status to landscapes, and landscape capacity (further information on this can be found in the Landscape Character Assessment Guidelines; Countryside Agency *et al* 2002).

1.2.12 Depending on the aims and objectives of the Landscape Character Assessment, the final stages of the assessment could contain the following outputs: Landscape Enhancement Proposals, Information for Planning Policies, Special Recognition, Landscape Strategies and Guidelines, or Proposals for Location and Design of Development.

1.2.13 The next part of this document describes in detail how the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment has been prepared using the above guidelines and best practice. This will take the form of *Outputs* expected for each stage of the process. It will allow the user to understand the scope of the document and how to interpret the information contained in the Character Assessments.

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2 North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment

2.1 Methodology

Brief and Scope of Study

- 2.1.1** The primary aim of the North Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment is to provide an assessment of landscape character in the District to inform the development of the Core Strategy policies on landscape protection, and for use as a tool to implement and interpret these policies when assessing development within the District. The key Core Strategy policy related to the assessment is policy EN2: Protection and Enhancement of Landscape and Settlement Character.
- 2.1.2** Landscape Character Assessment is not a tool designed to resist changes that may influence the landscape. Rather it is an aid to decision making, a tool to help understand what the landscape is like today, how it came to be like that and how it may change in the future. Its role is to help ensure that change and development does not undermine whatever is characteristic or valued about any particular landscape, and that ways of improving the character of a place can be considered.
- 2.1.3** Broad changes to landscapes can occur over decades through social and economic factors. How land is used and managed may be affected by food production practices, transport, leisure activities, and as a source for materials and energy. Changes also occur through regular planning applications for new build and modifications to existing buildings for housing, retail, business, farming and farm diversification, and leisure and tourism. The individual and cumulative effects of such development can have major impacts for good or ill on landscape character. It is this second category of change where the policies of the Core Strategy have the most direct influence on whether a development may or may not be permitted. Policy EN2 sets the standards to be met as regards to the landscape factor in the determination of a planning application. The policy requires that proposals for development should be informed by, and be sympathetic to, the distinctive character of an area.
- 2.1.4** It is anticipated that this study will be referred to by Development Control officers, developers, Parish Councils, members of the public and all others responsible for, or interested in development within North Norfolk to ensure that development is appropriate to the landscape it is within.
- 2.1.5** The study may also assist in the implementation of other Core Strategy Policies such as EN4 Design, EN9 Biodiversity & Geology and EN10 Development and Flood Risk, and also provides a common framework from which all may assess the impact of a development on the landscape.

Scale and Level of Detail

- 2.1.6** The appropriate level of detail for this study was determined to be at the Local Authority Scale ('County/District level' as defined by the Countryside Agency Guidance), this results in the definition of landscape types which have unity of character due to particular combinations of land form and land cover, and a distinct pattern of elements. Character Areas at this scale are discrete geographical areas where each type occurs, conveying a sense of place. This is not a site specific appraisal and individual appraisals will need to be carried out to inform decisions on planning applications.
- 2.1.7** North Norfolk District Council, along with many of the other Districts and the County Council within Norfolk, subscribed to the *Living Landscapes Project* for the purpose of providing the base data and map sets for desk top survey. This partnership has meant that any surveys produced should be consistent between Districts and between the Districts and County. This has considerable

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advantages for the Landscape Character Assessment in terms of robustness, support, peer review and sense of purpose.

- 2.1.8** The desk top survey of mapped data from the Living Landscapes Project, was at the Level 2, 1:50,000 scale. These maps identified *Landscape Description Units* at a relatively broad brush scale. The North Norfolk assessment utilised this data and augmented it with additional field survey and descriptive analysis to give a more refined survey at the Level 3, 1:25,000 scale. The survey is intended to give a strategic view of the relative variety of landscapes to be found in the District.

Relationship to Other Assessments

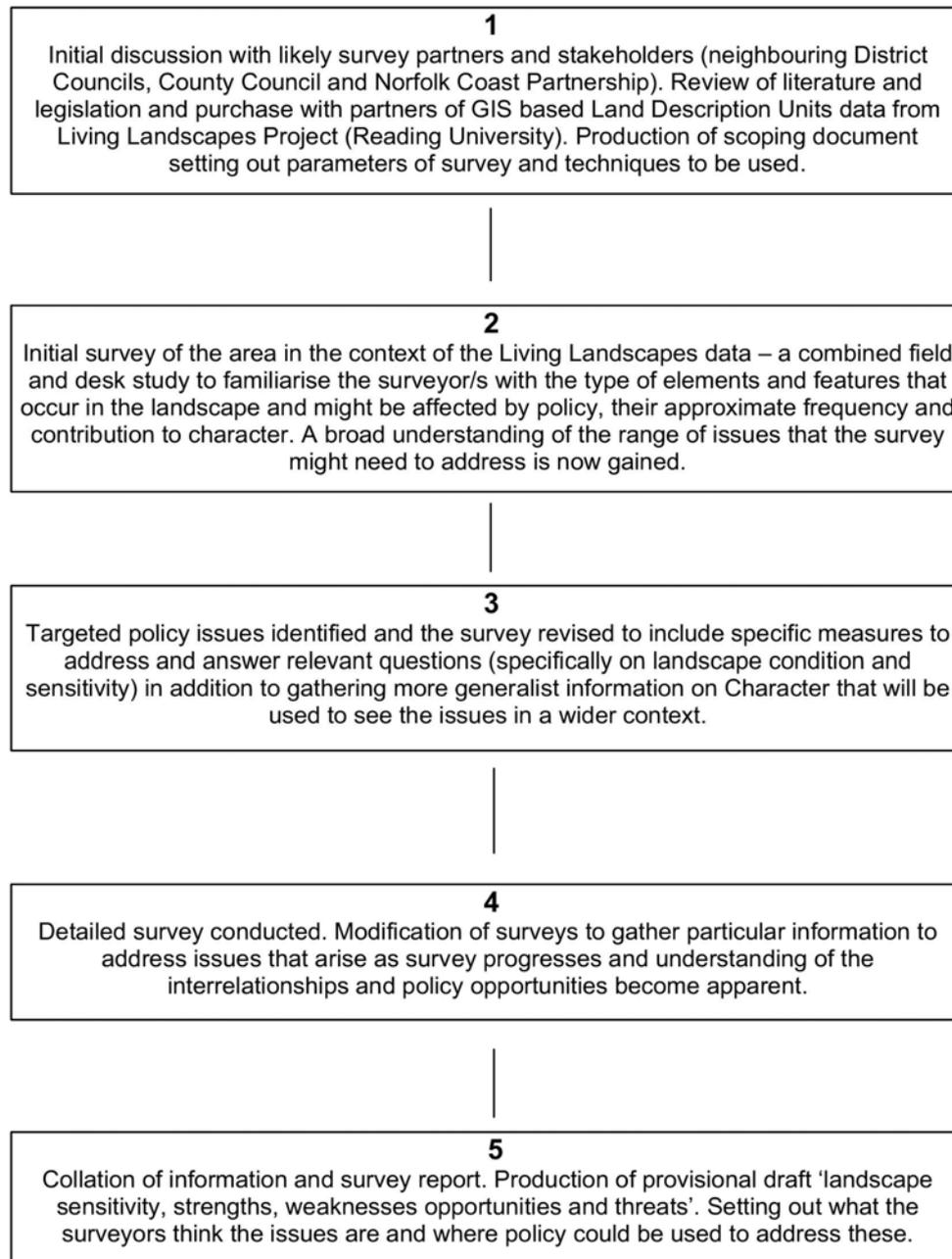
- 2.1.9** During the preparation of the assessment there was a need to ensure continuity between the North Norfolk study and similar studies which exist for Breckland District Council, Broadland District Council, The Broads Authority and Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council which were undertaken both internally by their staff or by consultants. Regular meetings were held with neighbouring authorities to compare progress, methodology and findings. This continuity was aided through the process of using the Landscape Description Units utilised by the other Councils. This study should also conform to the earlier county wide landscape character survey which was produced for Norfolk County Council. There was also a need to ensure that this assessment would adhere to guidelines and ensure conformity with potential future assessments, i.e. a hierarchical approach.
- 2.1.10** An Integrated Landscape Character Guidance has also been prepared for the The Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) by consultants appointed by the Norfolk Coast Partnership. This describes the distinctive character of the Norfolk Coast AONB, highlights those aspects that are particularly valued or vulnerable to change and provides guidance on appropriate measures and considerations that will help conserve and enhance those aspects. There was significant collaboration during the preparation of both assessments. The AONB Landscape Character Guidance can be viewed on the Partnership's website (www.norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk).
- 2.1.11** Norfolk Wildlife Trust and the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership have in addition prepared an Ecological Network map for Norfolk identifying core areas for biodiversity where protection, enhancement and expansion of the existing resource will be a priority. This county level report has been taken forward at the District level and the North Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping report seeks to,
- identify key statements contained in the county ecological report relevant to North Norfolk
 - make recommendations on how these ecological network priorities can be further developed and implemented in North Norfolk.
- 2.1.12** This has informed the assessment of ecological character included within the LCA. Further information can be found in Appendix B of the North Norfolk Core Strategy.
- 2.1.13** Norfolk Landscape Archaeology are undertaking an Historic Landscape Characterisation of Norfolk which seeks to assess the rural landscape of Norfolk with regard to its historic origins. This process has not yet been completed and therefore has not been included in this LCA.
- 2.1.14** There are other documents and studies which also describe settlement character. These include the North Norfolk Design Guide which seeks to raise the quality of design of new development in the District by offering advice on appropriate design solutions. The Design Guide was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in December 2008 and should also inform new development proposals. In addition a series of Conservation Area Appraisals are being carried out across North Norfolk during 2009-2010 to define what makes up the special character and sense of place in these areas. The appraisals look at topography and landscape setting, history, buildings, settlement

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form, important views and activities and uses. Negative features that detract from the special qualities of the area are identified and management recommendations for protection and enhancement of the area proposed. These are subject to public consultation and are available on the Councils website as they are prepared.

Approach and Methodology

Figure 2.1 Survey Methodology



2.1.15 The assessment was conducted using the standard Landscape Character Assessment methodology, previously described in Section 1.2, developed by the Countryside Agency and others on behalf of the Government. Figure 2.1 outlines the chronology and methodology carried out by North Norfolk District Council during the study. As highlighted earlier, a series of data sets were purchased from the Living Landscapes Project who specialise in the development of GIS based landscape

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assessment. These data sets included a wide range of factors, many of which were aggregated into *Landscape Description Units* (LDUs), such as 'Rolling Farmland with Dispersed Settlement' or 'Alluvial Drift Overlain by Sands and Gravels'. These were used to provide the basis of the assessment of the landscape character of the area.

- 2.1.16** An interrogation and understanding of this desk-based data was undertaken, followed by a process of field study to augment and test the data.

Biodiversity and Ecological Character

- 2.1.17** Apart from simply describing landscape, other factors can be included or have influence within a Landscape Character Assessment, such as the biodiversity of the area. Biodiversity has a similar place within the planning regime to landscape and the two are linked in terms of what they contribute to the sense of place of any area. Biodiversity in this survey is recognised through the use of land cover and soil type / geological data, and each landscape description includes a section on ecological character and which Biodiversity Action Plan habitats are present.

Geological Context

- 2.1.18** Along with ecological information, the Landscape Character Assessment has also been informed by the geology of the area, which has played a large part in shaping the District. The recent geological past is summarised here, but a further insight into the geology of the area is given in Appendix A.
- 2.1.19** North Norfolk is considered to be outstanding in a national context for both its geology and its landforms. It has one of the most complete sequences of late Jurassic to late Cretaceous marine strata in Britain. These are capped by an extremely important series of Pleistocene pre-glacial inter-glacial and glacial deposits. The low-lying coast the coastal cliff sections and the inland landforms are some of the finest of their kind in the British Isles.
- 2.1.20** The legacy of the glaciers which covered the area in the Anglian glaciation 350,000 years ago and again reached the north coast some 30,000 to 10,000 years ago still dominates the landscape throughout the District. The gravels, sands, chalk erratics and boulder clays left behind by the retreating ice still determine the natural vegetation patterns. This is evident in the distribution of heathlands which developed on a sweep of gravels which extend from the Blakeney area down to the Ringland Hills and Norwich. The land has a greater relief than adjacent areas but with no where more than 100 metres altitude.

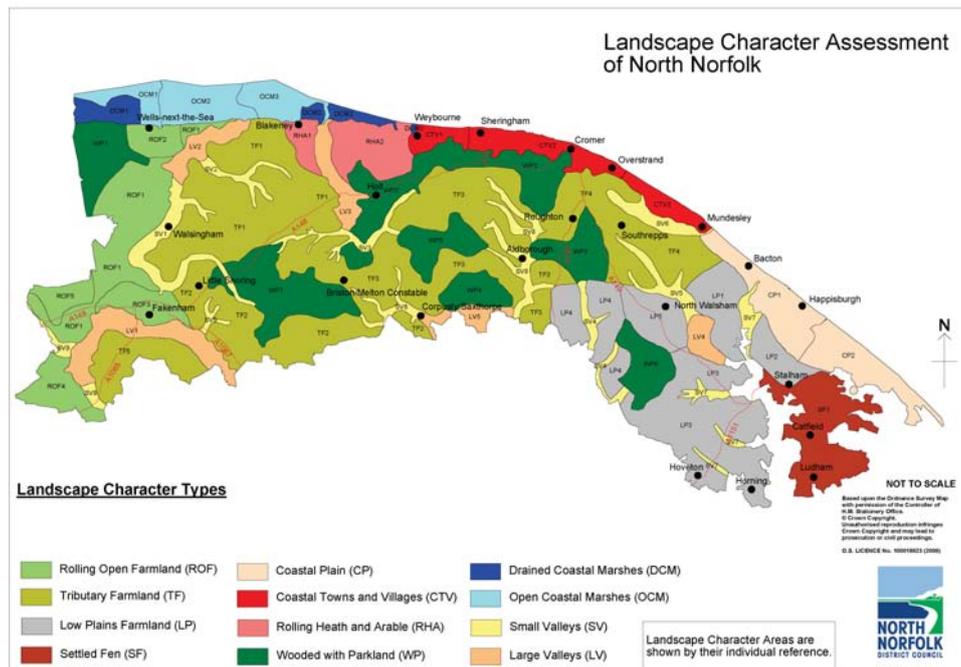
2.2 Outputs from the Characterisation Stage

Landscape Character Map - Types and Areas

- 2.2.1** The implementation and completion of the Desk Survey and the Field Study has resulted in the apportionment the landscape of the District into two levels of character assessment: Landscape **Types**, and Landscape **Areas**. These are distinct areas, plotted on a map of the District (Map 2.1 - for illustrative purposes only - a larger version of the map is available for analysis on page 21), which demonstrate a similar character of appearance, history and ecology at two different scales of resolution; one fairly broad (Type), and one more detailed (Area). The degree of variation of character between one Type or Area and another is fairly similar at that particular scale of resolution. Each Character Type, with the inclusion of the Areas, are given their own chapter in the document.

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Map 2.1 Landscape Character Assessment of North Norfolk



- 2.2.2** The Landscape **Types** are the larger *contextual* scale of assessment. They are usually 'generic' and the character that they describe can be found repeated in many different places both within the District and in other similar scaled Character Assessments. This is the case for most of the Types in this document. A considerable degree of co-operation has been undertaken to try to ensure that the generic 'equivalence' of Types in North Norfolk (description, extent and boundaries where these cross District boundaries and analysis) have been made to conform across the whole of the County. Therefore one Type mentioned in one District should demonstrate the same character features / elements and assessment as the same Type in another District. Individual authorities should be contacted for details of their particular Landscape Character Assessment.
- 2.2.3** The Landscape **Areas** are by contrast, specific to the particular place they describe. All Areas nest within Types. They are effectively 'sub-Types', a more detailed and refined analysis of the character which is specific in that location. In this study the Areas are prefaced by the name of the Parish or Parishes in which they occur in order to help ground the geography and emphasise their distinctiveness. These are shown on more detailed maps within each chapter.
- 2.2.4** The boundaries between different Types should be treated as potentially transitional areas where the character of one Type blends with the neighbouring Type. As such both Types near boundaries should be consulted and the most appropriate description / recommendations that apply to the specific site being considered should be used, this may be a combination of the two Types.
- 2.2.5** Within the Landscape Type Chapters, there is a written description of its **Location and boundaries** followed by some **photographic representations** of the key elements of the character type. There then follows a list of the **Key Characteristics** of the Character Type, these are the combination of elements which help give the landscape its distinct sense of place. They tend to be 'positive' characteristics but they may also be 'negative' features which nevertheless are important to the current character of the landscape.
- 2.2.6** A written description of the **Landscape Character** is then given which describes the overall character of the landscape with reference to topography, land cover, geology, land use, settlement and enclosure where relevant. Although the characterisation stage of the Landscape Character Assessment process is primarily objective, there is a need to assess the way in which the features

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and elements work together to form the character which may involve some subjectivity. The approach in this study has been to give a balanced view during the description stage, combining both objective and subjective elements to comply with the aims of the study.

- 2.2.7** Following a description of the Landscape Character, a description of the **Ecological character** of the landscape type is given, followed by the **Biodiversity Action Plan habitats present within the type**. This completes the outputs for the Characterisation Stage.
- 2.2.8** To ensure continuity throughout the document, decisions had to be taken as to what the definitions of particular features and elements were and how they are described throughout the document, for example defining field size into small, medium and large. A guide to each of these definitions is available in the Glossary of terms and phrases used in this document.

2.3 Outputs from the Making Judgements Stage

Defining the Making Judgements Process

- 2.3.1** Because the study is to be used in decision making and to help in the process of managing change in the landscape, there was a need to make judgements on the Landscape Character of the District. The main aim of the study is to ensure that development proposals are planned and designed to achieve an appropriate relationship with their surroundings, and wherever possible contribute to the enhancement of the landscape. The Landscape Character Assessment, however, is not intended to focus entirely on maintaining the existing character of the landscape.
- 2.3.2** Approaches to making judgements are generally based on the following considerations: the character, quality (condition of features), value of the landscape, and its sensitivity to change. These terms have distinct definitions when used in landscape character assessment to ensure consistency between assessments. This study has sought to be faithful to those definitions as specified in the Countryside Agency Guidelines. The complete definitions of the terms are given in the Glossary at the end of the document.
- 2.3.3** The approach to making judgements in this study has been to assume that within the landscape the positive characteristics should be protected from adverse change, and that the negative characteristics may be improved by some form of enhancement. This has involved:
- evaluating the landscape condition and strength of character,
 - calculating the effects of predicted change on key characteristics (both negative and positive),
 - defining potential threats to key characteristics as a result of adverse consequences to change,
 - identifying potential enhancement opportunities where there is scope for beneficial change.
- 2.3.4** This has been done at either the Character Type level or the Character Area level, or both.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 2.3.5** During the field survey and desk-based data analysis procedure, the aspect of 'Landscape Sensitivity' was considered. Landscape sensitivity is the degree to which a particular landscape type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character. For the purpose of development control this aspect of landscape is fundamentally important. Landscapes vary in their ability to accommodate different forms of development. Sensitivity will therefore vary according to landscape type, its condition, the nature of the proposed development and the type of change being considered. The sensitivity assessment of the Landscape Character in this document is presented in the '**Feature Analysis Tables**', and essentially describes how sensitive a particular landscape is to change – positive or negative. The condition and the degree of

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contribution to the character of the landscape provided by the elements and features were considered. Aesthetic aspects or visual sensitivity were not assessed.

- 2.3.6** In this survey, the issue of sensitivity to change is a key feature, and one which is analysed both at the individual feature/element level and at the corporate whole landscape level. The reason that it has been done in this way is to provide a detailed understanding of the way in which the dynamic of the landscape behaves when subjected to stress or pressures (principally, though not entirely) from development of one sort or another. For the purposes of this assessment, development planning and changes to the agricultural scene have been considered as central and have therefore biased the concentration of interpretation but not of the underpinning assessment; because these are the factors which are likely to be the source of enquiry, and be informed by this survey.

Notes on Landscape *Value* and *Sensitivity*

- 2.3.7** Landscape value was and still is a very important means of apportioning landscape policy. National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and at District level, Areas of High Quality Landscape all rely on this form of assessment. However, it has been criticised on the basis that it is very subjective - 'what is beauty?' and on the basis that it does not value the wider landscape which is not beautiful. By changing the criteria to 'character' rather than 'beauty' the two problems were largely addressed. Everywhere has a character and the character assessment process works to try to remove a good deal of subjectivity. Nevertheless, relative value is still an important; some would argue the most important factor, in defining policy. Therefore, whilst it will be expected that any review of District or County level planning policy documents will be underpinned by an Landscape Character Assessment rather than simply areas which have been designated as of higher value and those that have not, there remains a clause which allows Councils to retain (but informed by a Landscape Character Assessment) some form of qualitative assessment. It will be seen that the issues which surround the assessment of, and policy apportionment resulting from, considerations of landscape sensitivity, are likely to be very similar to issues relating to relative landscape value.
- 2.3.8** However, it should be noted that the similar factors affecting *sensitivity* are entirely distinct perspectives compared with the notion of 'value', which have been arrived at by different survey methodologies. In the first instance, landscape value is effectively a personal response to what the surveyor or convention, considers to be attractive or beautiful. In the second instance, the sensitivity of landscape, is arrived at after analysis of the features and elements which have gone to make the landscape look and behave as it does (both those that are obvious and visual and those that are less obvious but may have guided or underpinned development), the sensitivity referred to therefore can be either a sensitivity of the individual feature or element (how robust it is and how easily lost or eroded by environmental changes) or the sensitivity of the whole landscape character of a location to change or erosion (i.e. the corporate effect of environmental changes which could erode or damage the integrity of the 'whole'). Sensitivity in an integrated landscape character assessment (which includes historical and ecological factors) also has to take into account the presence and sensitivity of these interrelated factors, teasing out their elements and features, all of which will contribute to overall landscape character.

Landscape Condition

- 2.3.9** During the survey process (desk and field study) the condition of elements and features was assessed as being within one of three categories 'Good, Fair or Poor'. This was assessed in relation to the degree of intactness and state of repair (in visual, functional and ecological perspectives) of the element/feature in relation to the mean for that element/feature within the Area AND if known (from historical survey) its original degree of presence (quantity)/intactness/assumed or assessed likely state of repair.

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- 2.3.10** This was then used in conjunction with an assessment of the vulnerability of the element/feature to changes in its condition, quantitative presence, or to effects which might impinge upon the element/feature as a result of potential development of the landscape (additions of new features/elements and/or changes in other existing features/elements) to provide a score for the degree of sensitivity shown by an element/feature, or group of elements within the Analysis for each Landscape Area. The scores used were High, Moderate and Low and relate to a judgement made about each element/feature group in relation to a relative mean (for that feature or element group) within the same Landscape Type(s) in North Norfolk. Due to the degree of variation within an Area, it is possible that the same element/feature could be more or less sensitive in different locations (usually depending upon the relationships with other elements/features), which is why in some instances the table refers to 'Moderate to High' or 'Moderate to Low' sensitivity, to accommodate the variability within the Area.
- 2.3.11** Therefore for the purposes of this survey, sensitivity can be assumed to be a function of the relative vulnerability of an element or feature to changes in its condition and or to external effects on other elements/features or the introduction of new elements and features which erode its setting/relationships and thereby its contribution to the character of the landscape within the Type.

Feature Analysis Tables

- 2.3.12** The making judgements stage has resulted in **Tables** analysing the main constituent elements and features mentioned in the Key Characteristics section. The issue of relative sensitivity of the different Landscape Types to change is dealt with in the tables, as is an evaluation of their **condition** (good, fair or poor). Some degree of weighting has been given for those elements that have obviously declined but may yet still demonstrate a strong presence compared to those that have never been particularly strong elements but have not suffered decline.
- 2.3.13** The condition is then used to consider the individual elements' sensitivity to change within that specific landscape Type. Factors that might affect the element/feature are considered and a description of how these might positively or negatively affect them is suggested ('forces for change'). The element or feature is then scored for its overall **sensitivity**; high, moderate or low.
- 2.3.14** The intention is that this information can be used to better understand the way in which different issues, pressures or opportunities could affect the individual elements and features which go to make up the character of the landscape and hence be useful in determining policy production or individual responses to specific proposals.
- 2.3.15** By dividing up each landscape Type into elements and features for the purpose of sensitivity, a clearer understanding of the mechanisms and likely outcomes of any set of development proposals/other factors for change in the landscape, can be more clearly analysed and their effects more clearly understood and quantified.

Evaluation - Landscape Condition

- 2.3.16** The final part of the Character Type section evaluates the Feature Analysis tables and descriptive and other data and presents some conclusions on the main strengths and weaknesses of the Type and the overall sensitivity of the landscape to change.
- 2.3.17** The principal **recent changes** to the landscape which have impacted most on the character of the Type are also assessed.
- 2.3.18** This is followed by a series of recommendations which detail what **factors** (particularly within the Development Control realm) would either protect and enhance or detract from the landscape and ecological character of the Type.

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Landscape Character Areas

- 2.3.19** Following assessment of the Character Type is a list of the Areas which may be found within the Type, including a map or maps of their location. These are described in order, with each Area having its own individual assessment detailing the individual features and elements which set it apart from the Type norm, an **evaluation** of the condition of the landscape character in that Area as a whole, and a consideration of the strength of the landscape character in that Area, also as a whole. Finally, there is a section entitled **Issues** which details and discusses the sensitivity of that particular Areas' landscape to change, and considers what that change might consist of. Particular problems or eroding factors are also considered and discussed.
- 2.3.20** The purpose of the Area analyses is not to replace or supplant the dissection/analysis and recommendations concerned with landscape character in the Type sections, rather the intention is to provide an additional level of detail and understanding which should be read with the analysis of the overall Type assessment. From this reading, a detailed and specific understanding of the landscape character, the elements and features which make it what it is, and the threats and pressures which will tend to erode it, should become apparent. Therefore in using this document, the main Positive and Negative Factors contained in the Type assessment should be used as the principle basis of the LCA during decision making, the detailed and specifically located information contained in the Area 'Issues' section should then be referred to in order to additionally inform, weight and adjust the Positive and Negative Factor's recommendations appropriately.
- 2.3.21** Naturally, the level of detail in this assessment cannot cater for every location within a Type or Area and discretion has to be used and the particular circumstances of the proposal in a particular location analysed in order to arrive at an answer. Hopefully this document will start to give some ideas about what to consider and how to analyse the problem and whether further detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIA) or Landscape Character Assessments are required.

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3 How to use the Landscape Character Assessment

3.1 User Guide

Overview

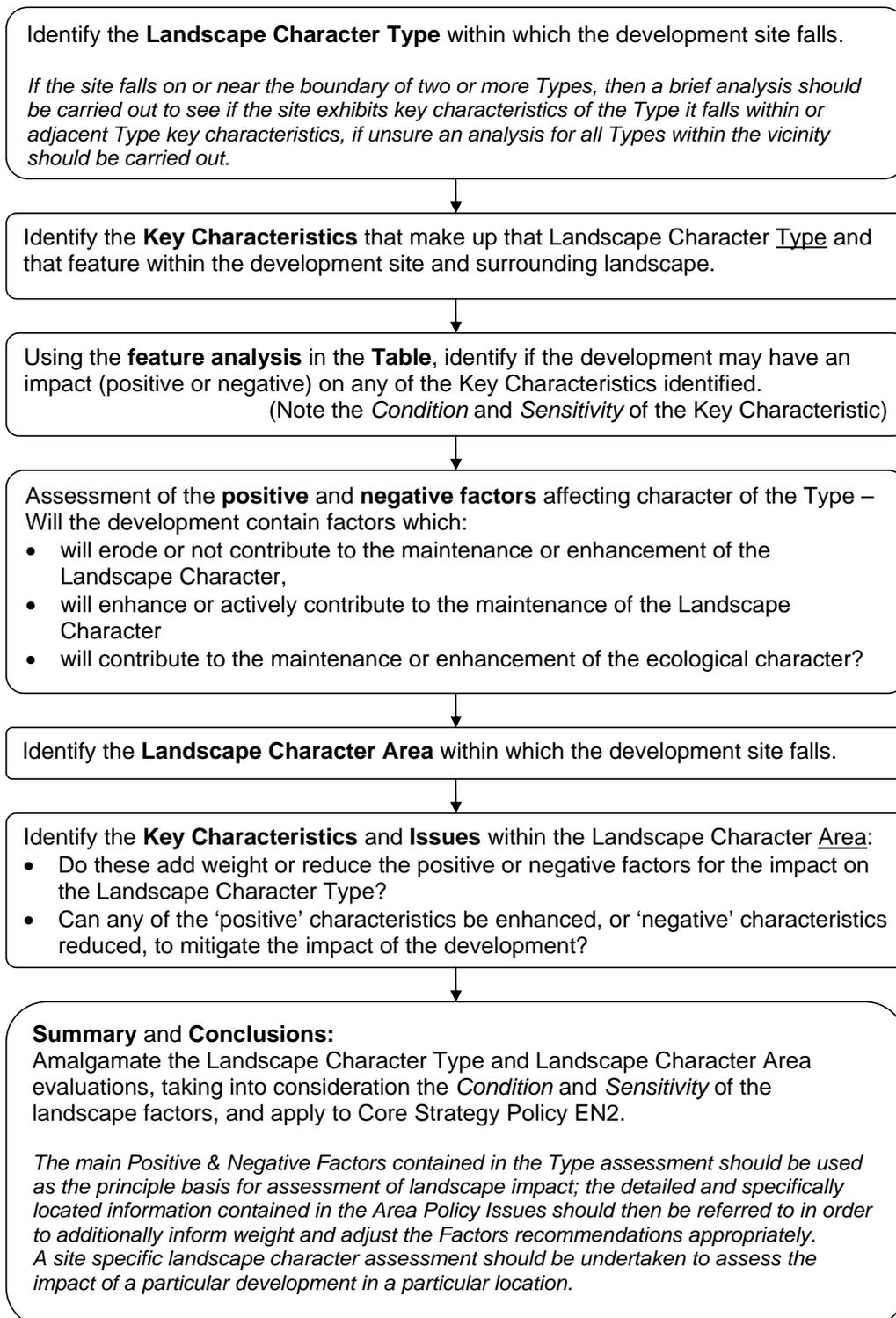
- 3.1.1** The document is not intended to be read from start to finish. When considering development, the user should first look at the Landscape Character Map to ascertain which Landscape Character Type the application falls within, and then refer to the relevant chapter.
- 3.1.2** The chapters are colour-coded to match the map as best as possible. The more detailed Areas that occur within each Type are mapped and discussed within each specific chapter. Each chapter describes the landscape and ecological character of a piece of land and assesses which factors could erode or contribute to that character.
- 3.1.3** Having found the Type which the development is in, particular attention should be paid to the 'Key Characteristics' section of that Type, and the table showing the 'analysis of specific elements and features'. For the latter, the sensitivity of the key characteristics is an important consideration.
- 3.1.4** More local and refined detail is given by looking at the relevant Character Area that is set within the Character Type. Again the 'Key Characteristics' section should be examined, and the the section on 'Issues'. It is important to go through both steps.

User Guide

- 3.1.5** A simple flow-chart has been devised as a User Guide for the Landscape Character Assessment and is shown over the page. This has been developed to provide those less familiar with Landscape Character Assessment with a simple step-by-step process to follow to quickly access the information contained in the document.
- 3.1.6** It does not negate the need to understand the principles and processes behind the Landscape Character Assessment, which are detailed in Chapter Two of this document, which can be referred to if required. However it should enable the user to start to analyse the development in the context of impact on landscape and to start to look at the landscape in terms of its constituent parts, what makes it characteristic and forces for change in the landscape.
- 3.1.7** The User Guide should be followed from top to the bottom, in order. Always refer back to the full text of the Character Type and Area analysis and descriptions for further detail and clarity. For clarification of the process refer to Chapter Two and the outputs of the North Norfolk Character Assessment.

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Figure 3.1 LCA User Guide Flow Chart

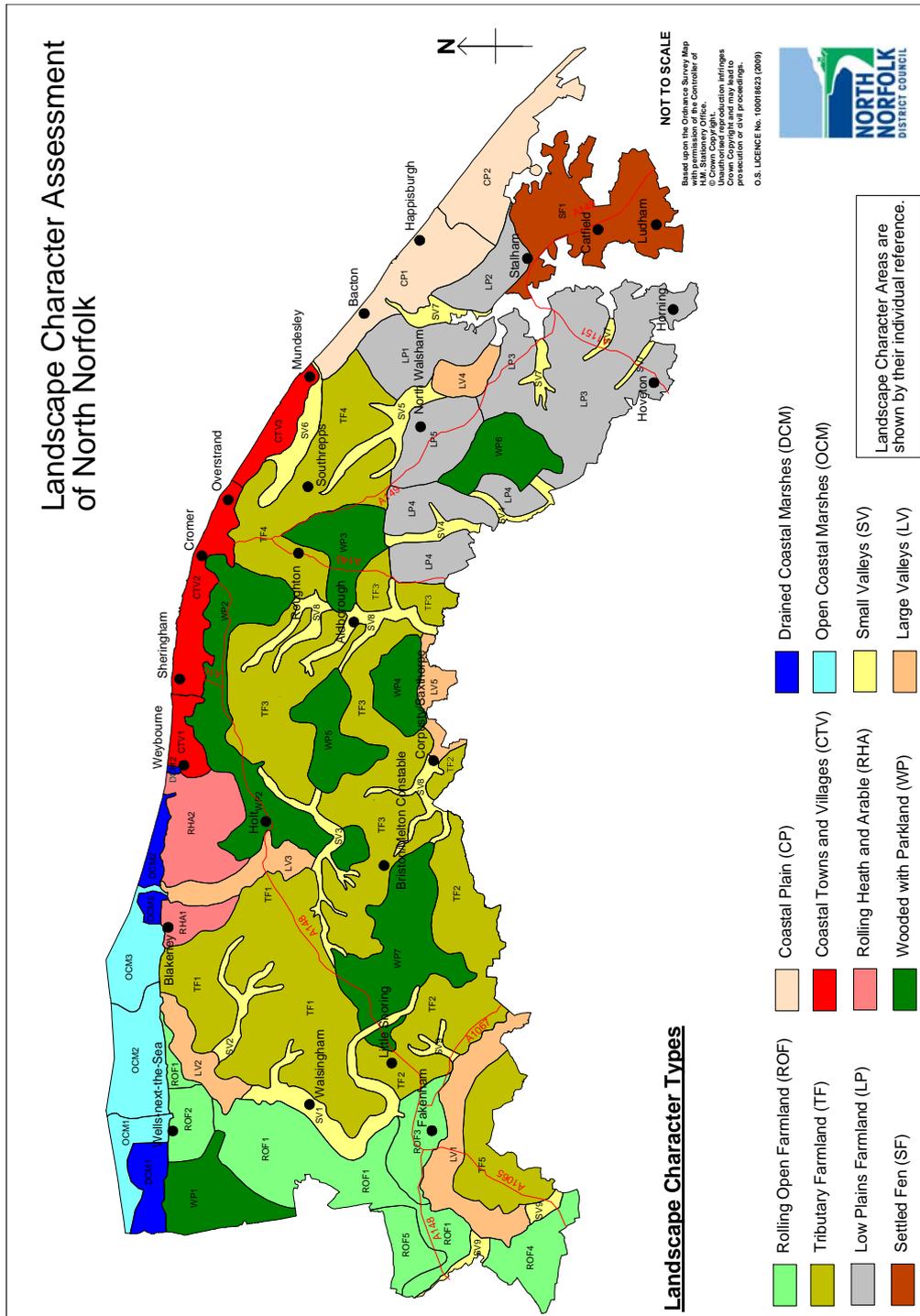


How to use the Landscape Character Assessment 3

3.2 Landscape Character Assessment Map

3.2.1 The landscape character assessment process (as described in Chapter 2) resulted in the production of the Landscape Character Assessment map shown below. This shows where different overall Character Areas can be found across North Norfolk. This is shown at a general scale in this document and is mapped at a more detailed level on the Council's GIS mapping system, detailed maps available on request. The specific chapters also contain more detailed maps of the different areas.

Map 3.1 Landscape Character Assessment Map of North Norfolk



3 How to use the Landscape Character Assessment

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4 Rolling Open Farmland

Location and Boundaries

4.0.1 This is a large area, only part of which extends into the most western part of the District. The majority of this area is often known as 'High Norfolk' and is associated with the chalk upland in the west of the County, extending over light sandy soils to a line approximately bounded in the east by the Stiffkey Valley and the Wensum Valley.

Table 4.1 Rolling Open Farmland

Picture 4.1



Large sweeping main roads with open views and towards settlement

Picture 4.2



Low density road network, generally straighter than in neighbouring Types with single species hedges

Picture 4.3



Hard edge to former RAF station settlement. The style and form of the development is non-vernacular

Picture 4.4



Large or very large geometric fields, long views over gently rolling country to vernacular towns softened by established trees

Key Characteristics

- A landscape with an open character with long uninterrupted views.
- The topography is generally gently rolling with large domed plateau giving a feeling of height.
- The land use is predominantly arable in nature but there are large areas of pasture or rough grass associated with former airfields - mostly situated on the domed plateau. There are also some areas of heath and former heath (Syderstone) which are of considerable ecological as well as landscape importance.

4 Rolling Open Farmland

- Field boundaries are geometric and regular. Hedges tend to be single species and maintained in a 'square' format. Field size tends to be medium to large but there is greater consistency in field size than in the Tributary Farmland to the east.
- The skyline is very prominent due to the uninterrupted expanses of open landscape.
- Where present, trees tend to be in relatively small individual woodlands associated with sporting uses. The species in the woods tend to be either mixed deciduous or coniferous. There are very few woodlands with trees predominantly older than 100 years. Hedgerow trees are present in some areas, and tend to be the oldest trees in the landscape.
- Prominent features in this landscape are; large hangars and former hangars (Egmere, Sculthorpe and Raynham), larger isolated farmsteads and minor gentry houses.
- Views are generally uninterrupted and aside from the areas around settlement and with the exception of the features above, there are large areas of quiet rural agricultural land which are occasionally broken by small dry or semi-dry valleys.
- The main A148, A1065 and various B roads run through this character area. There are relatively few minor roads or footpaths in this character area compared with character areas in the east of the County. This is a historical legacy of the type of land ownership of the area. The A and B roads are busy but some of the minor roads which do not form links between settlements are very quiet.
- On the western boundary of this type, there is a small intrusion of the Plateau Farmland type detailed in the neighbouring West Norfolk Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment March 2007. This has very similar overall structure and features to this type but is also characterised by its plateau landform. In North Norfolk this is also associated with Sculthorpe Airfield.
- Settlement is distinctively different from that in neighbouring areas being strongly nucleated within villages which tend to be non-linear. Outside villages, there are occasional large houses and farmsteads with collections of farm workers cottages. The settlement gives the impression of being highly controlled and regulated.
- Overall the impression of a high degree of control and regulation in settlement is transferred to the overall impression of the management and organisation of the landscape as a whole. Beyond the villages (and very often within them too) this is a landscape where the ad-hoc rarely happens.

Landscape Character

- 4.0.2** This is an area defined by two main factors, its topography - large expansive open gently rolling or undulating land - and its historical landownership - large holdings since the mid eighteenth century. These two factors more than any others have determined the way in which the landscape has developed, and which have organised and developed the whole structure of its character. Control and regulation are two words that sum up the feel of much of the area.
- 4.0.3** The land use of the area is predominately arable. Crops such as wheat, barley and sugar beet, interposed with rape, beans and set-aside comprise the vast majority of produce. There are areas of grassland but these tend to be small, often associated with villages or large farmsteads as pony paddocks or similar. The field size tends to be more regular than in the eastern areas of the County. This again is the result of historical processes. The majority of the landscape was farmed as open fields until the eighteenth century when, through a process of piecemeal and Parliamentary enclosure the land was re-organised. The size of landholdings being generally large, became larger with the enclosure movement, removing smaller landholders. These larger field sizes have tended to be sufficiently large to translate adequately into modern agriculture with relatively few hedgerow removals compared to other landscape types. The majority of hedges date from this period excepting those associated with older boundaries such as along roads / tracks. Woodland tends to be parceled into regular 'blocks' associated with the geometric field pattern. Where a

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more fluid appearance occurs this is often associated with a former parkland type planting or with an older remnant parcel of woodland often within a dry valley and conforming to the topography of this. Woodland cover generally is lower than other types of landscape and the biodiversity throughout the Type as a whole tends to be less than the average within the District. Many woodlands are of relatively recent planting or have been re-planted relatively recently (within the last 100 years). A considerable portion are conifer plantations dating from the 1950's on. More recent new woodlands tend to be mixed deciduous corresponding with changes in woodland grants.

- 4.0.4** Settlement tends to be nucleated and more non-linear than other character types. Settlements are fairly spread out and there are large areas of open country between them. This again corresponds to the historical landownership of the area which tended to concentrate land workers within settlements where property was often owned by the large landowners for whom the land workers worked. The subsequent development of these villages has seen land in-filled between properties. This has occurred most noticeably in the post 1960 era, with flushes of development coinciding with property booms. In many villages, there are now few properties with large gardens and especially in the post War era there has tended to be an 'ad-hoc' approach to the design (in contrast with earlier periods) of many properties in relation to the existing settlement structure and property design. This has tended to erode both the character and amenity of the settlements creating a 'mixed bag' range of property with no distinctive or cohesive lineage. Allotments appear to have survived in most of the villages, and with exceptions, appear to be actively used. In the absence of a village 'centre' in several cases, the playing field, oldest or most 'street' form development and or Church tend to be sub-centre foci.
- 4.0.5** Outside villages, there are few individual properties. Most are either large or very large houses associated with large farm holdings with collections of old and modern farm buildings (often with the older farm buildings converted to holiday use and modern farm buildings beyond), or farm workers' cottages. There are occasional rows of post war local authority housing in isolated places, or just beyond settlement boundaries, which again jar with the settlement character of the Type. There are also occasional isolated farm buildings both older and modern. Some of these can be quite extensive with large barns and subsidiary single story courtyard developments.
- 4.0.6** The only town in the Character Area is Fakenham, part of which is effectively in this Type and part of which spills down into the Wensum Valley (Character Type; Large Valleys). The town does not dominate the character type to a great degree, although the church is prominent in the skyline when viewed from the south, and is near to the transition to the more informal landscape types adjoining (Central Rolling Farmland and Large Valley). There is some degree of urban spill from the nucleus of the urban area into the wider countryside (peripheral garages / out of town shops and golf range, together with the inevitable dominant road network and street lighting which is typical of most edge of town locations).
- 4.0.7** Airfields are prominent features of this landscape and have settlement associated with them which is particular to their character. This tends to be in the form of large hangars with the main former airbase concentrated nearby and adjoining this is the former airbase settlement. The character of the settlement is generic, post war, utility architecture with no attempt at vernacular reference. There is usually no attempt to integrate the settlement or site into the landscape.

Geological Character

- 4.0.8** The glacial tills, sands and gravels tend to be thin and patchy in this western portion of North Norfolk. The underlying chalk is close to the surface and landscape features include dry valleys and areas of patterned ground. Chalk has been quarried near -next-the-Sea and sands and gravels extracted elsewhere (Tattersett). The farmed soils are predominantly sandy loams, but heaths and commons mark areas of poorer sandy soils.

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Ecological Character

- 4.0.9** The existing ecological character of the area is predominantly arable land divided by hedged and frequently hedged and banked field boundaries. Banks alone forming boundaries are rare. Pasture, if present, tends to be temporary or recent arable reversion, except where it may be related to larger 'gentry' or similar 'parked' dwellings. Almost all pasture is improved and of relatively limited ecological value. Set aside and grassed margins (part of agri-environment schemes / other payment systems) comprise the major non-woody ecological content of the Type.
- 4.0.10** Woodlands are less apparent in this Type than in its corresponding Tributary Farmland Type in the east of the District. Similarly, the woodland structure tends to be less varied and formal suggesting that the majority of woodlands may have a younger basis (generally supported by the County Wildlife Site classification / distribution of woodlands) than those in the east. The inference is that woodlands in the western sector of the District are frequently post 1700s plantations reflecting the landownership / settlement development characteristics of the area, whereas those in the east may have a more ancient basis, also reflecting landownership and settlement development.
- 4.0.11** Older tree assemblages, older field boundaries with multi-species hedges / ground flora, coppiced woodland areas, veteran trees and ponds are all less common in this Type than Tributary Farmland. These factors tend to indicate that the landscape and its features are generally younger than that in the east.

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Grassland of all types according to soil types with a preference for those on calcareous land to the north of the Wensum. Creating this landcover form should also be considered a high priority within river and stream catchments to buffer these against pollution runoff and soil erosion / siltation.
- Heathland - A feature more associated with Rolling Coastal Heath and Arable and Wooded with Parkland but present in limited amounts throughout the Type, usually associated with areas of former common or similar waste ground on lighter gravelly soils. Often indicated only as limited indicator species in road verges etc.

Table 4.2 Rolling Open Farmland: Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Open Character with uninterrupted views	Good	<p>The more remote areas would be radically changed by development of any sort.</p> <p>The less remote areas nearer larger settlements have had their character interrupted by disturbance and could accommodate moderate and appropriate developments which respect the low population / settlement characteristic of the Area.</p> <p>The siting of wind turbines within the more rural locations would be inappropriate.</p> <p>The siting of wind turbines within the more disturbed and degraded landscapes would be less harmful.</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		The siting of telecom masts should be undertaken to minimise visual intrusion and may be inappropriate in some landscapes.	
Arable land use with large geometric fields bounded by hedges	Good to Poor - the majority being Fair	<p>The imposition of new cropping types or changes to woodland cover could change the landscape. However the underlying geometry could be retained if suitably designed changes occur.</p> <p>The imposition of stock sheds, new isolated barn or other complexes with dwellings need to be carefully considered as modern designs tend to be strongly contrary to the existing character of the isolated large farm buildings / cottages / dwellings dating from the C19th. Appropriate large scale landscaping (not screening) can assist in integrating new development.</p> <p>Density of such developments should reflect the mean level that currently exists within the locality - increasing density will have strongly adverse effects on remoteness of some areas.</p>	Moderate
Skyline	Good	<p>Avoid developments which affect or impinge on open skyline views or which would adversely affect the night time experience of dark landscapes.</p> <p>Wind turbines and telecom masts can have very severe impacts in certain areas.</p>	High
Airfields (hangars, settlement and open landscapes associated)	Fair - Poor	<p>These are essentially alien landscape features which jar with the rest of the landscape type. As such they offer opportunities to develop positive enhancement proposals in terms of their built development and considerable threats in terms of extending or adversely adding to the existing jarring features (settlement and hangars etc).</p> <p>The location of the sites atop domed plateau dominate large areas of landscape and increase the potential for harm / positive remediation.</p>	High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>Woodland planting / heathland reversion / grazing / fencing and ancillary redundant building removal could be considered.</p> <p>The grassland swards are a wildlife and landscape feature of considerable rarity due to the scale of 'un-enclosure' and lack of disturbance.</p> <p>Detailed assessment and briefs would be beneficial to plan for the changes and pressures that these sites will experience.</p>	
Settlement (villages, edge of town and isolated farms etc)	Fair	<p>Villages</p> <p>Areas where large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller fields still contribute significantly to the character of the village could be protected from development. There is a strong tendency for the character of villages to be altered by modern high density development within existing boundaries. Additional development should utilise the best adjacent characteristics of the built landscape to enhance and reinforce those areas of villages which have degraded or unfocused styles / character.</p> <p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p>	Moderate to High
		<p>Edge of Town</p> <p>Considerable erosion of character to the edge of town is occasioned by the generic development of the road network / out of town shops / petrol stations and other 'urban' type developments.</p>	Moderate
		<p>Isolated Farmsteads / Large Houses / Cottages</p> <p>These have traditionally been associated with working the land, providing accommodation for farmers and farm workers and as such the style and nature of the developments tend to intimately reflect the purpose (in this case very controlled and organised) of agriculture. Future developments could attempt to take this as the test for suitability and attempt to integrate with existing densities and</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>character styles. Modern generic agricultural buildings result in difficulties enabling such developments to respect the character of previous building styles (free range or intensive hen units). Suitable locations and landscaping can assist but there is a distinct contradiction between enabling some developments and retaining those areas where character is strongest and avoiding smell/ nuisance problems in relation to residential housing.</p> <p>The redevelopment of redundant barn complexes both within, on the edge and especially outside settlement boundaries alters the character of the built and surrounding environment from a rural working context to a leisure / residential use. The impact of this can vary considerably depending upon the execution. Redundant agricultural buildings in decay can add to the sense of character and history of the landscape as they have done for millennia, changing their use transforms both.</p>	

Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

4.0.12 The overall condition of this Type is fair to good depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. Generally, the non-built features are in a more stable (un-changing) condition than the built features and the areas around them. The strength of character is generally moderate with subtle interactions between features and elements in the landscape providing the defining 'sense of place'. Variation within the Type is not great but is apparent with landform, settlement type and vegetation cover all providing significant subtle indications of different Areas within the Type.

Recent landscape impacts

4.0.13 Changes to agricultural economy (introduction of agri-environment grants) and the rise in interest in environmental management have seen positive changes to reinstate or improve existing non-built features such as woodlands and hedgerows. Less intensive use of land is also reflected in wider field margins and set-aside which are becoming noticeable.

4.0.14 Conversely, increasing wealth in the area is demonstrated by numbers of properties being enlarged / improved and sub-divided all of which may affect the appearance and character of settlements - often in individually modest but cumulatively significant ways (fencing replacing hedged boundaries / the loss of large gardens with mature trees and the resultant massing of buildings). New agricultural buildings are increasingly being erected to replace older barns etc which are in turn being converted

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to residential use, often with a significant change to the character of the landscape to which they contribute.

4.0.15 The edge of Fakenham has seen considerable 'estate' type developments of a generic nature which have tended to undermine the traditional form of road and settlement patterns together with their characteristic vernacular building appearance. Similarly, large stores and industrial estates on the edge of the town have similarly eroded the distinctive rural character of the landscape and required substantial alterations to road networks.

4.0.16 The two airfields in the Type create their own landscapes and introduce specific development issues (large areas of estate type housing, existing hangars and new industrial storage buildings etc). Sculthorpe is a major settlement and industrial area with one of the largest areas of grassland in the District still associated with military use to an extent. Egmere / North Creake is primarily a feedstuffs processing and storage area with small scale industrial use.

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

- Significant numbers of new properties either sited within or outside existing smaller settlements. This area has a strongly nucleated settlement pattern with several very isolated unsettled areas.
- Subdivision of existing larger gardens within settlements.
- New agricultural buildings sited in locations away from or prominently within existing farm complexes.
- Wind turbines in most locations excepting around the existing large settlement (Fakenham).
- Telecom masts in prominent locations.
- New road layouts which introduce standard 'suburban' highway features (kerbing / signage / widening).
- Extensions to properties which overly enlarge or gentrify rural settlements / locations.
- Barn conversions and other property construction within the open countryside which introduce 'suburban' features such as surfaced drives / domestic style gates and fences / garden style planting and parking areas / overly large windows and external lighting etc. Frequently a barn conversion in an isolated location away from other settlement can introduce a strongly suburban character.
- Offshore windfarms which would be sufficiently close or large enough to 'enclose' or create a 'limit' to the skyline and horizon could have detrimental effect on the perception of remoteness and wilderness in this Type

b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of or creation of new pasture, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- Properties which are of a scale and location which respect the individual form of the settlement in which they are located (i.e. development should not 'stand out' but rather should be almost un-noticeable and un-remarkable as an additional element within the existing development structure, taking particular account of building / development size, location, surrounding landscaping and existing land uses).
- Landscaping around new properties which actively blends with existing features rather than tries simply to screen new development.
- Landscaping which uses native as opposed to non-native species.

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- Landscaping which builds upon and enhances existing trees, hedges and other features on and adjacent to the proposed development site.
- Biofuel crops have potential to be integrated within this landscape Type fairly easily depending upon the type of crop and its location. Important considerations would be to avoid excessively large 'blocks' of biofuels such as short rotation coppice (of Miscanthus or Willow etc) where these impinge upon the views and landform of the location. By using rotations / species which do not appear excessively higher than existing hedgerows (which could be allowed to grow in height anyway) impact would be minimised. Valley sides are likely to be more sensitive to their distinctive landform presenting more prominent 'viewing' of the crop.

c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character

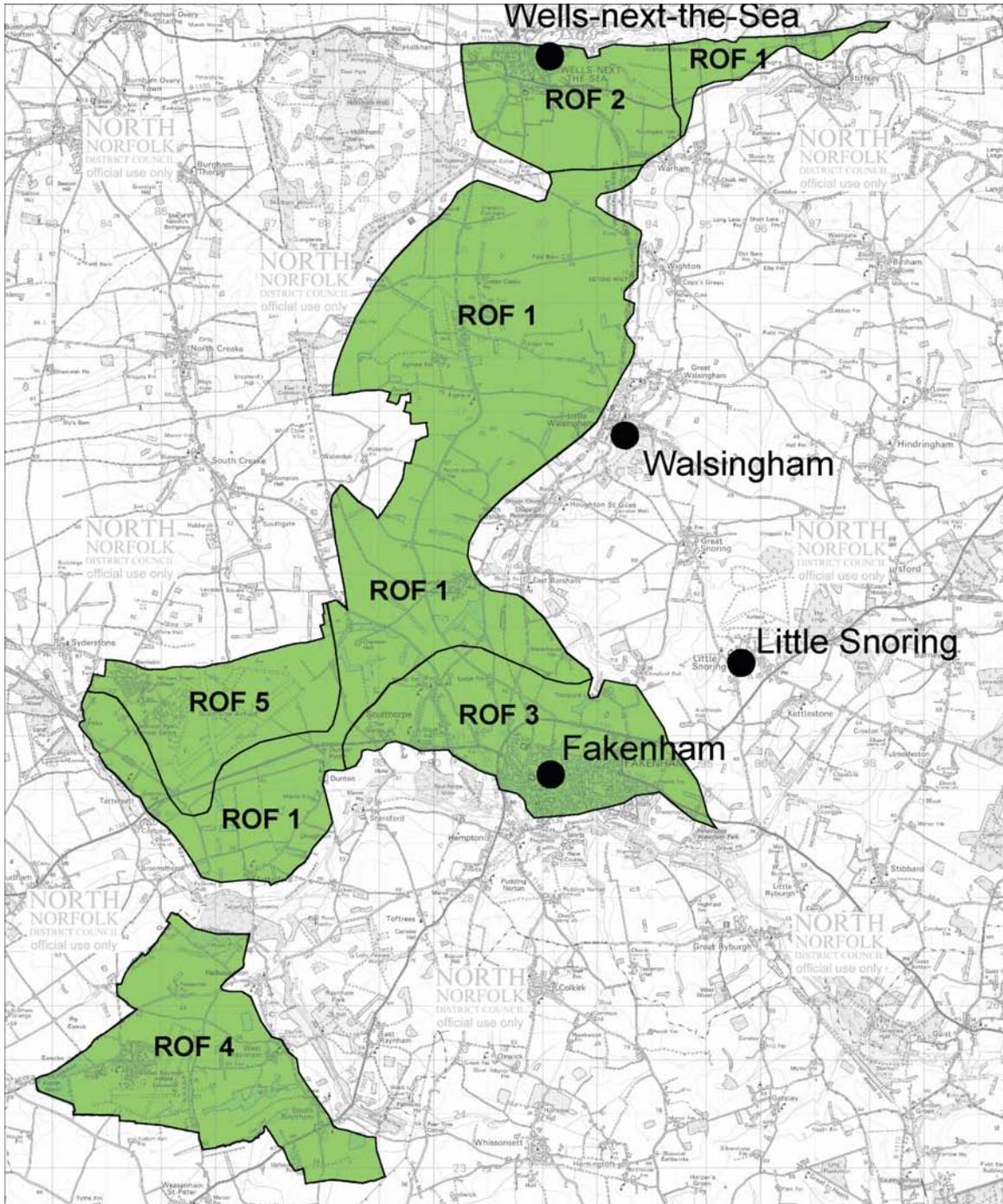
- Creation of new grassland areas.
- Buffering programmes along existing river and stream courses to prevent runoff and soil erosion - strongly favouring grassland creation.
- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses
- Reinstatement of former pasture, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.

Areas within the type

- ROF1 – Egmere, Barsham and Tatterford Area
 - ROF2 – -next-the-Sea Area
 - ROF3 – Fakenham Area
 - ROF4 – Raynham Area
 - ROF5 – Sculthorpe Airfield Area
-

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Map 4.1 Rolling Open Farmland



Landscape Character Type

 Rolling Open Farmland

Areas within the Type

- ROF 1 - Egmere, Barsham & Tatterford Area
- ROF 2 - Wells-next-the-Sea Area
- ROF 3 - Fakenham Area
- ROF 4 - Raynham Area
- ROF 5 - Sculthorpe Airfield Area



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4.1 Egmere, Barsham, Tatterford Area (ROF1)

Key Characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Low settlement density – no villages within this Area; there are several hamlets which may vary from a collection of farm workers houses (e.g. Egmere) to a large farmstead and collection of farm workers cottages (West Barsham and Crabbe Castle Farm).
- The road network is almost rectilinear working off the B1105
- The topography is more undulating than is commonly found in the Type when considered across neighbouring West Norfolk and is more undulating than the areas near Fakenham and to a lesser extent near Wells-next-the-Sea.
- Field boundary hedges tend to be more consistent and apparent in condition (fair to good) and presence (creating more similarly sized fields) than is the mean within the Type. The species are almost always heavily Hawthorn dominated.
- Small fragmented and isolated heathland outcrops on terminal moraine hills near coast
- Other features are as per the mean for the Type.

Evaluation

- 4.1.1** The condition of the landscape Area is generally Good.
- 4.1.2** The strength of character is moderate and typical of the mean within the Type with subtle interactions between the landform, field boundaries and settlement structure and density providing the key indicators of specific location.

Issues

- 4.1.3** This landscape Area is more open and has less built development (settlement or otherwise) than its neighbouring Areas and most other Types. It is consequently particularly sensitive to increases in built development (wind turbines, telecom masts, housing or industrial activity). The comparison with the neighbouring Area to the south (Fakenham and Sculthorpe) indicates how different the landscape is when it becomes subject to gradual increases in development, particularly from development of a sub-urban type (e.g. the nursery and golf driving range).
- 4.1.4** The area around the former Egmere Airfield demonstrates the potential disruption that industrial development can introduce into this Area. Screening or integration of large buildings on higher ground becomes difficult with small planting belts ineffective. Additional development of this site could further erode the character significantly in this otherwise relatively isolated part of the Area.
- 4.1.5** Night time lighting similarly has a seriously detrimental effect even in small amounts as the point lights quickly make the Area seem small and ‘semi – urban’
- 4.1.6** However, it has a robust ability to accept other forms of development such as variations in cropping and possibly increases in woodland. The ecological value of the Area is fairly low but has the capacity to be greatly enhanced by improvements which would have a connective effect with neighbouring areas of higher ecological value (Wooded with Parkland or Small Valley Types). Isolated planting of copses or reinstatement of individual closely managed hedgerows has relatively less benefit.

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4.2 Wells-next-the-Sea Area (ROF2)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Proximity to the settlement of Wells-next-the-Sea and views of the Town from approach roads.
- The town of Wells-next-the-Sea has a distinctive 'older non-industrial' feel to its layout with layers of settlement development radiating in a compact manner from the central hub of the town.
- Large garden styles and some open grassland are typical of the internal character of the Town, allowing large mature trees to be a major feature of some areas (Polka Road, Buttlands, Burnt Street, Northfield Avenue).
- Very dominant three-storey residential apartments with four-storey tower on western approach to town.
- Very dominant former warehouse in central location of quay.
- *Ad hoc* development at East Quay – fishermen's huts, open stores and boats.
- Proximity to Wooded with Parkland Holkham Area.
- All other features are as per the mean for the Type.

Evaluation

- The condition of the landscape Area is generally Good.
- The strength of character is moderate and typical of the mean within the Type with subtle interactions between the landform, field boundaries and settlement structure and density providing the key indicators of specific location.

Issues

- 4.2.1** The development of the settlement of Wells-next-the-Sea is naturally the key policy issue for this Area. Currently, Wells-next-the-Sea presents a fairly unusual townscape, that of a compact, tightly knit and cohesive (in form, colour and character) settlement as viewed from any of the normally available approaches to the Town by land or sea. Wells-next-the-Sea does not have the usual generic industrial fringe which is associated with most larger settlements. It has a firm edged development based on a strongly rectilinear (Early Modern C1500s) plan with different ages of housing construction effectively growing out of previous structures in a satisfyingly organic, but very orderly way. This is apparent from most vantage points within this Area. There are significant areas of open space within the town (large gardens, greens and wet meadows) which allow mature trees to be a major feature of areas of the Town. The trees particularly have a significant effect in breaking up the density of other intervening areas of the town which demonstrate considerable housing density. The Quay area is a critical defining characteristic of the Town and surroundings. The central portion is older, with a built feel surrounding an open quayside (often covered with cars and used as a car park, considerably diminishing its amenity use and visual character). The eastern end of the town is characterised by *ad hoc* fishermen's huts, stores and boats giving a more liberal and working feel to this part. The countryside surrounding the Town is typical of the rest of the ROF Type, largely undeveloped and with a strongly rural feel. The Town is not a dominant but a 'present' feature in this landscape – a landscape which has not altered much in the last 100 years. Development will have to take careful account of the limiting factors presented by the rising topography of land to the south of the Town if it is not to lose this unique characteristic. Some degree of integration may be possible by careful and well planned landscaping within and beyond any development, and the provision of internal open spaces to ameliorate or even break up certain views of new development. This would mirror the numerous areas of mature large trees which intersperse the Town and reduce the feeling of density and weight.
- 4.2.2** The landscape setting of Wells-next-the-Sea is highly distinctive and is sensitive to changes which

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affect the character and feeling of this old town set dramatically and compactly within a very un-developed and rural coastal location.

4.3 Fakenham Area (ROF3)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Considerably less remote feeling – almost busy landscape.
- Numerous ad hoc developments surrounding the main settlement distributed over much of the Area (Nurseries, storage buildings, Golf Driving Range, Cemetery).
- Disseminated village settlement of Sculthorpe – a non-typical village with a central core on the old Lynn Road but with ribbon development of no cohesive style along 1/2 mile roads to the north, west and south east.
- Views of Fakenham Town.
- Busy roads with much new road construction and layout within the last 25 years.
- Typical edge of town developments – industrial areas, out of town shops, garage and playing fields. Atypical for the Type.
- Settlement on the edge of town is typically generic and has no locally based design or layout.

Evaluation

4.3.1 The landscape character has been considerably degraded over the whole Area. In some locations it is degraded only by the association of the land to adjacent degraded areas (by visual envelope) whereas in others, the underlying structure of the landscape (field pattern, road network and settlement structure) has been so overlaid by other recent (last 30 years) developments as to be unrecognisable as part of any particular local landscape – rather it is a generic ‘suburban fringe’ landscape. This dichotomy extends right into the town itself, with pockets of pre-modern town existing within generic suburbia (e.g. Nelson and parts of Lynn Roads).

Issues

4.3.2 Where the character of the landscape has not been irrevocably disordered, there is sufficient rural structure to warrant protection for its own sake (e.g. to the north and west of the northern bypass). Remediation should be proposed where existing developments (nurseries driving range, storage buildings or other prominent jarring features have eroded the landscape character) require change. This may require developing a new landscape character for this area which relies on woodland as a feature to screen and integrate features into the landscape, providing a buffer and separation between this ‘hinterland’ and the more intact landscapes further from the town.

4.3.3 Similarly, new development on the inner section of the road network needs to take account of its visual effect on the wider countryside beyond. This may mean that promotion of woodland to the north of the bypass would be more effective than if sited to the south of the bypass. Any new green infrastructure should be carefully considered to provide the maximum benefits, such as provide a meaningful size and degree of ecologically worthwhile landscaping and allow space for non-housing developments within the ‘development area’. Of particular need is additional space for allotments (which are already oversubscribed in the town and demand for which will inevitably be great due to the compact nature of new housing) within walking distance of the new developments proposed. Placing these on the outer edge of the development would be structurally appropriate in settlement character terms, and give an additional space between the bypass and settlement.

4.3.4 Opportunities to reduce the light pollution from the driving range and the supermarket would make a significant difference to the overall visual nighttime impact of Fakenham on the wider countryside.

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4.4 Raynham Area (ROF4)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- The topography and general landscape is typical of the central 'less developed' area of ROF with strong field boundary presence, low underlying settlement density (large farmsteads and small nucleated 'closed' villages).
- Woodland density both within the Area and visible adjacent, is higher than the norm for the Type.
- The element which determines particular difference on this landscape is the presence of former RAF Raynham with existing housing, hangars and other ancillary buildings.
- It should be noted that Breckland District Council's LCA has a different character Type bordering this Area, however within the Types there are similarities of the features and elements.

Evaluation

- The condition and intactness of the landscape character for the Area is good beyond the confines of and visual envelope of the RAF station.
- The RAF station is considerably more compact than RAF Sculthorpe and much less visually intrusive. The area of runways etc is strongly rural in character but clearly formerly RAF (grassland with some block houses used for storage of straw etc.).

Issues

- 4.4.1** The character of the landscape beyond the RAF station is very rural and has a remote and unspoilt feel to it. Policy should reflect this by preserving this character which effectively extends well beyond the District boundaries in one of the more remote central areas of Norfolk.
- 4.4.2** The RAF station has housing which is now being released for sale. Any new developments should seek to consolidate rather than extend this relatively compact area of development (which has cohesiveness akin to a village unlike Sculthorpe which is effectively two areas – residential and industrial with an amount of 'no-mans land' between). Extension beyond the natural cohesive area of settlement (i.e. to the area of block houses east of the old small runway) should be resisted as this would jar with the adjoining landscape. The blockhouses themselves detract from the visual amenity of the area and opportunities to remove and not replace them should be taken when they reach the end of their lives.
- 4.4.3** Additional woodland planting around the potential industrial area of the hangars would be beneficial.

4.5 Sculthorpe Airfield Area (ROF5)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A domed plateau topography which equates to the adjoining Areas and Type in West Norfolk and Kings Lynn Borough Council Landscape Character Assessment.
- A large former airfield settlement development pattern which dominates virtually all the Area.
- Large Hangars and very long runway in addition to extensive residential areas.
- Large expanses of open grassland of considerable ecological value for ground nesting birds.
- Few trees, hedges or other natural features.

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Evaluation

- 4.5.1** The condition of the landscape is Poor to Moderate. The area around the Wicken Green Village which is the former RAF base residential area is generally in poor condition whilst the grassland area of the former RAF base is one of the largest single expanses of open grassland in the District and as such, has significance for ecology (ground nesting birds) of at least County importance. The open landscape is effectively an extreme manifestation of the very open nature of this landscape Type.
- 4.5.2** The strength of character is Poor to Moderate.

Issues

- 4.5.3** The existing housing and industrial (former hangars, etc.) of the airfield are in generally poor condition, highly exposed, without any basis within the landscape which justifies or ameliorates their stark appearance. Areas within and around the Village and Industrial areas are becoming derelict. The effect is utterly utilitarian and completely at odds with the surrounding rural character of the landscape. A programme of strategic landscaping to integrate, screen and provide amenity (public open spaces of worth and usability) could be effective as the original character of the landscape has been completely erased.
- 4.5.4** Set against this 'problem' area is the exceptional resource of the wide and open grassland which provides a largely unique scale of habitat for some of the most threatened species of birds (those that nest on the ground). The proximity to the Wensum Valley (one of the main migratory highways and feeding areas in the District) adds to the ecological value of the grassland. Developments which diminish or remove (by agriculture or other) areas of this grassland should be resisted where possible or compensatory habitat adjacent to or strongly linked to the main grassland sward should be required. Wind turbines may have unacceptable detrimental effects on the ecology of this landscape but otherwise might be acceptable in small numbers close to existing residential and industrial areas depending upon the scale of the units.
- 4.5.5** This is by turns a robust 'damaged' landscape in need of recreation or restoration and a highly sensitive ecological landscape in need of conservation. Opportunities to enhance and link its ecological features would be of considerable Regional benefit.

4 Rolling Open Farmland

Tributary Farmland 5

5 Tributary Farmland

Location and boundaries

5.0.1 This landscape Type extends across the middle section of the District, extending over light sandy soils with areas of heavier land to the south around Wood Norton across towards Aylsham. On the west, the area is bounded by Rolling Open Farmland Type demarcated by the Stiffkey Valley and the Wensum Valley, to the east, the distinction is less clear where this Type dissolves into the Low Plain type around North Walsham.

Table 5.1 Tributary Farmland

Picture 5.1



Open landscape with large fields enclosed with some hedges and hedgerow trees

Picture 5.2



Very large open fields with few features or sense of enclosure

Picture 5.3



Settlement nestling in background

Picture 5.4



Long views over rolling landscapes with distant wood copses and hedgerow trees

Key characteristics

- A landscape with an open character with long uninterrupted views.
- The topography is generally gently rolling with large domed plateau giving a feeling of height.
- The land use is predominantly arable in nature but there are small areas of pasture often associated with areas which have retained small fields.
- Field boundaries can be geometric and regular but there are strong elements of less regular boundaries. Hedges tend to be single species and maintained in a 'square' format but there are areas with multi-species hedges and high hedges. Field size tends to be medium to large but there is less consistency in field size than in the Rolling Open Farmland to the

5 Tributary Farmland

west. There are notable areas of remnant ancient pre-enclosure field boundaries (e.g. Wood Norton, Bale and Briston).

- The skyline is very prominent due to the uninterrupted expanses of open landscape.
- Where present, trees tend to be in relatively small individual woodlands often associated with sporting uses. There are more older remnant semi-ancient woodlands than in the neighbouring Rolling Open Farmland and there are strong influences from the several 'incursions' of Wooded with Parkland Types where the woods tend to be distinctly older and less 'planned'. The species in the woods tend to be either mixed deciduous or coniferous. There are numbers of woodlands with trees predominantly older than 100 years. Hedgerow trees are present in some areas.
- Prominent features in this landscape are; telecom towers, larger isolated farmsteads and minor gentry houses and Churches.
- Views are generally uninterrupted and aside from the areas around settlement and with the exception of the features above, there are large areas of quiet rural agricultural land which are occasionally broken by small dry or semi-dry valleys.
- The main A148 and various B roads run through this character area. There are significantly more minor roads and footpaths in this character area compared with character areas in the west of the County. This is a historical legacy of the type of land ownership of the area. The A and B roads are busy but some of the minor roads which do not form links between settlements are very quiet.
- Settlement is distinctively different from that in western areas being much less strongly nucleated. Villages tend to be linear and to have a more random feel with larger gardens, possibly associated with former small farms and smallholdings. There are substantially more small fields around settlements, (which is also where old hedges and hedgerow trees tend to be located). Outside villages, there are occasional large houses and small and larger farmsteads with odd independent cottages. The settlement gives the impression of being lightly controlled and regulated.

Landscape character

5.0.2 This is an area defined by two main factors, its topography - large expansive open gently rolling or undulating land - and its historical landownership - smaller tenanted and owner occupier landholdings based loosely around villages but extending beyond these. This area contrasts considerably in its historical development with the neighbouring Parliamentary Enclosed Type to the west. Where Parliamentary Enclosed Type still demonstrates a high degree of control and regulation in terms of its landscape, this landscape is clearly less regimented. However, it is noticeable that the same economic factors which have driven agriculture and property development during the last 40 years have tended to reduce and minimise the differences - equalising the size of fields (reducing the non-geometrical appearance of this landscape) and have in-filled the once very sparsely developed villages into more nucleated forms.

5.0.3 Similarly, the land use of the area is predominately arable, as it is across the main Types. Crops such as wheat, barley and sugar beet, interposed with rape, beans and set-aside comprise the vast majority of produce. There are areas of grassland but these tend to be small, often associated with the edge of villages and individual properties. These are significantly more numerous and prominent in this Type than they are in the neighbouring Parliamentary Type, often forming very significant character rural character settings to the buildings and to the settlement. These fields, often the few remnants of agricultural land which have not been consolidated into larger holdings, retain the degree of enclosure and number of boundaries which would have been common throughout the landscape, giving an impression of just what the landscape might have looked like in the C19th with taller less managed hedges and numerous trees. The field size tends to be much less regular than in the western area of the County. This again is the result of historical processes.

Tributary Farmland 5

The majority of the landscape was not farmed as open fields but was piecemeal enclosed over centuries.

- 5.0.4** The majority of hedges have relatively few species but are often on the line of boundaries which have been in existence for centuries.
- 5.0.5** Woodlands tend to be older than those in the neighbouring lands to the west, often they have some portions that are semi-ancient or have a greater variety of species (ground flora and woody species). The forms of woodland vary between the geometric shelterbelts and shooting copses through to more fluid forms which conform to older field boundary patterns, landform or other topographical features. It is notable that there are larger numbers of the Woodland and Parkland landscape Type within this landscape Type - again a historical legacy of the landownership. The Woodland and Parkland Types within embedded within this Type tend to be more heavily weighted towards the semi-natural ancient woodland category rather than the formal planned parkland category.
- 5.0.6** Settlement tends to be non-nucleated and more linear than the Rolling Open Farmland Type but similar to those in other neighbouring Types which again reflect the historical development of the Type. Settlements are closer together and there are more isolated cottages and small farmsteads. This again corresponds to the historical landownership of the area which tended to allow small landowners to operate. However, the subsequent development of these villages has seen land in-filled between properties and this has tended to greatly increase the sense of nucleation. This has occurred most noticeably in the post 1960 era, with flushes of development coinciding with property booms. In many villages, there are now few properties with large gardens and especially in the post War era there has tended to be an 'ad-hoc' approach to the design (in contrast with earlier periods) of many properties in relation to the existing settlement structure and property design. This has tended to erode both the character and amenity of the settlements creating a 'mixed bag' range of property with no distinctive or cohesive lineage. In the absence of a village 'centre' in several cases, the playing field, oldest or most 'street' form development and or Church tend to be sub-centre foci.
- 5.0.7** The parish of Northrepps forms quite a distinct boundary between the coastal strip and TF4. The north of the village is situated on the Cromer Ridge and enjoys spectacular views across the valley towards North Walsham. This part of the ridge is well wooded being part of the Northrepps Hall Estate. The character of the older buildings in the village of Northrepps is high pitched, thatched roofed, step gabled brick and flint estate workers cottages. Northrepps was a "plague village" and relocated to the Crossdale Street community along the A149. Few buildings of significant age, with exception of the parish church are located in the village centre and there has been piecemeal development during the 20th century.
- 5.0.8** Outside villages, there are small numbers of individual properties. Most are small cottages and a few large farmsteads. There are occasional rows of post war local authority housing in isolated places, or just beyond settlement boundaries. There are also occasional isolated farm buildings both older and modern. Some of these can be quite extensive with large barns and subsidiary single story courtyard developments.

Geological character

- 5.0.9** Typically these are areas of gently undulating catchment slopes which feed into the main river valleys. They consist of thick glacial sands, gravels and tills. Glacial depositional landforms and melt waters produced the present day topography and drainage pattern. Where sands and gravels are more dominant, extraction has taken place (Edgefield). The extensive areas of clay tills gave rise to heavy moisture retentive soils with thicker, taller hedges, smaller field and a greater settlement dispersal. Many pits and ponds remain in the landscape.

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Ecological character

- 5.0.10** The existing ecological character of the area is predominantly arable land divided by hedged and frequently banked field boundaries. In some areas hedges are not present or may never have formed all field boundaries. In these areas, grassed banks provide the boundary feature. Pasture, if present, tends to be temporary or recent arable reversion, except where it may be related to larger 'gentry' or similar 'parked' dwellings. Almost all pasture is improved and of relatively limited ecological value. Set aside and grassed margins (part of agri-environment schemes / other payment systems) comprise the major non-woody ecological content of the Type.
- 5.0.11** Woodlands are more apparent in this Type than in its corresponding Rolling Open Farmland Type in the west of the District. Similarly, the woodland structure tends to be more varied and informal suggesting that the majority of woodlands may have an older basis (generally supported by the County Wildlife Site classification / distribution of woodlands) than those in the west. The inference is that woodlands in the western sector of the District are frequently post 1700s plantations reflecting the landownership / settlement development characteristics of the area, whereas those in the east may have a more ancient basis, also reflecting landownership and settlement development.
- 5.0.12** Older tree assemblages, older field boundaries with multi-species hedges / ground flora, coppiced woodland areas, veteran trees and ponds are all more common in this Type than Rolling Open Farmland Type. These factors tend to indicate that the landscape and its features are generally older than that in the west.

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Wood pasture - a feature more especially concentrated in the Wooded with Parkland Type but present in limited amounts and appropriate / capable of being present throughout the Type.
- Heathland - A feature more associated with Rolling Coastal Heath and Arable and Wooded with Parkland but present in limited amounts throughout the Type, usually associated with areas of former common or similar waste ground on lighter gravely soils. Often indicated only as limited indicator species in road verges etc.
- Parkland - a feature more associated with Wooded and Parkland Type but also present in smaller areas associated with smaller 'Gentry' houses.

Table 5.2 Tributary Farmland: Analysis of Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Open Character with uninterrupted views	Good	<p>The more remote areas would be radically changed by development of any sort -</p> <p>The less remote areas nearer larger settlements have had their character interrupted by disturbance and could accommodate moderate and appropriate developments which respect the low population / settlement characteristic of the Area</p> <p>The siting of wind turbines within the more rural locations would be inappropriate.</p> <p>The siting of wind turbines within the more disturbed and degraded landscapes would be less harmful.</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		The siting of telecom masts should be undertaken to minimise visual intrusion and may be inappropriate in some landscapes	
Arable land use with large geometric fields bounded by hedges	Good to Poor - the majority being Fair	<p>The imposition of new cropping types or changes to woodland cover could change the landscape. However the underlying geometry could be retained if suitably designed changes occur.</p> <p>The imposition of stock sheds, new isolated barn or other complexes with dwellings need to be carefully considered as modern designs tend to be strongly contrary to the existing character of the isolated smaller farm buildings / cottages / dwellings which characterise much of the settlement outside villages. Appropriate large scale landscaping (not screening) can assist in integrating new development</p> <p>Density of such developments should reflect the mean level that currently exists within the locality - increasing density will have strongly adverse effects on remoteness of some areas</p>	Moderate
Skyline	Good	<p>Avoid developments which affect or impinge on open skyline views or which would adversely affect the night time experience of dark landscapes.</p> <p>Wind turbines and telecom masts could have severe impacts in certain areas</p>	High
Settlement (villages, edge of town and isolated farms etc)	Fair	<p>Villages Areas where large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller fields still contribute significantly to the character of the village could be protected from development. There is a strong tendency for the character of villages to be altered by modern high density development within existing boundaries. Additional development should utilise the best adjacent characteristics of the built landscape to enhance and reinforce those areas of villages which have degraded or unfocused styles / character.</p> <p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p> <p>Isolated farmsteads /small houses / cottages These have traditionally been associated with working the land, providing accommodation for farmers and farm workers and as such the style and nature of the developments tend to intimately reflect the purpose (in this case very controlled and organised) of agriculture. Future developments could attempt to take this raison d'être as the test for suitability and attempt to integrate with existing densities and character styles. Modern</p>	Moderate to High

5 Tributary Farmland

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>generic agricultural buildings result in difficulties enabling such developments to respect the character of previous building styles (free range or intensive hen units). Suitable locations and landscaping can assist but there is a distinct contradiction between enabling some developments and retaining those areas where character is strongest and avoiding smell/ nuisance problems in relation to residential housing.</p> <p>The redevelopment of redundant barn complexes both within, on the edge and especially outside settlement boundaries alters the character of the built and surrounding environment from a rural working context to a leisure / residential use. The impact of this can vary considerably depending upon the execution. Redundant agricultural buildings in decay can add to the sense of character and history of the landscape as they have done for millennia, changing their use transforms both.</p>	

Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

5.0.13 The overall condition of this Type is fair to good depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. Generally, the non-built features are in a more stable (un-changing) condition than the built features and the areas around them. The strength of character is generally moderate with subtle interactions between features and elements in the landscape providing the defining 'sense of place'. Variation within the Type is not great but is apparent with landform, settlement type and vegetation cover all providing significant subtle indications of different Areas within the Type.

Recent landscape impacts

5.0.14 Changes to agricultural economy (introduction of agri-environment grants) and the rise in interest in environmental management have seen positive changes to reinstate or improve existing non-built features such as woodlands and hedgerows. Less intensive use of land is also reflected in wider field margins and set-aside which are becoming noticeable.

5.0.15 Conversely, increasing wealth in the area is demonstrated by numbers of properties being enlarged / improved and sub-divided all of which may affect the appearance and character of settlements - often in individually modest but cumulatively significant ways (fencing replacing hedged boundaries / the loss of large gardens with mature trees and the resultant massing of buildings). New agricultural buildings are increasingly being erected to replace older barns etc which are in turn being converted to residential use, often with a significant change to the character of the landscape to which they contribute.

5.0.16 The edges of larger settlements have seen considerable 'estate' type developments (Fakenham, Briston and Little Snoring) of a generic nature which have tended to undermine the traditional form of road and settlement patterns together with their characteristic vernacular building appearance. Similarly, large stores and industrial estates on the edge of Fakenham have eroded the distinctive urban-rural fringe character and required substantial alterations to road networks.

5.0.17 The two airfields in the Type create their own landscapes and introduce specific development

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issues (chicken sheds and re-use of existing hangars etc). Cockthorpe is the most altered, having lost runways, hangars and other ancillary buildings to be replaced by new woodland and turkey sheds. Little Snoring has altered relatively little with re-use of existing buildings and runway etc.

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

- Significant numbers of new properties either sited within or outside existing settlements.
- Subdivision of existing larger gardens within settlements.
- New agricultural buildings sited in locations away from or prominently within existing farm complexes.
- Wind turbines within the more rural locations.
- Outside lighting - both street type and decorative / domestic.
- Use of un-sympathetic boundary treatments, particularly bordering public highways and on edges of settlements where close boarded fencing / other semi/sub urban styles can appear incongruous.
- 'Improvement' of access tracks and entrance ways with urban style features (brick entrance pillars, gates, removal of 'rough track with grassed central margin, use of kerbing, close mown verges).
- Telecom masts in prominent locations.
- New road layouts which introduce standard 'suburban' highway features (kerbing / signage / widening)
- Extensions to properties which overly enlarge or gentrify rural settlements / locations.
- Barn conversions and other property construction within the open countryside which introduce 'suburban' features such as surfaced drives / domestic style gates and fences / garden style planting and parking areas / overly large windows and external lighting etc. Frequently a barn conversion in an isolated location away from other settlement can introduce a strongly suburban character.
- Extraction and landfill.

b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- Retention of rural features - tracks with grassed central margins, old fencing / gateposts / walls.
- Properties which are of a scale and location which respect the individual form of the settlement in which they are located (i.e. Development should not 'stand out' but rather should be almost un-noticeable and unremarkable as an additional element within the existing development structure, taking particular account of building / development size, location, surrounding landscaping and existing land uses).
- Landscaping around new properties which actively blends with existing features rather than tries simply to screen new development.
- Landscaping which uses native as opposed to non-native species.
- Landscaping which builds upon and enhances existing trees, hedges and other features on and adjacent to the proposed development site.
- Biofuel crops have potential to be integrated within this landscape Type fairly easily depending upon the type of crop and its location. Important considerations would be to avoid excessively large 'blocks' of biofuels such as short rotation coppice (of Miscanthus or Willow etc) where

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these impinge upon the views and landform of the location. By using rotations / species which do not appear excessively higher than existing hedgerows (which could be allowed to grow in height anyway) impact would be minimised. Valley sides are likely to be more sensitive to their distinctive landform presenting more prominent 'viewing' of the crop.

c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character

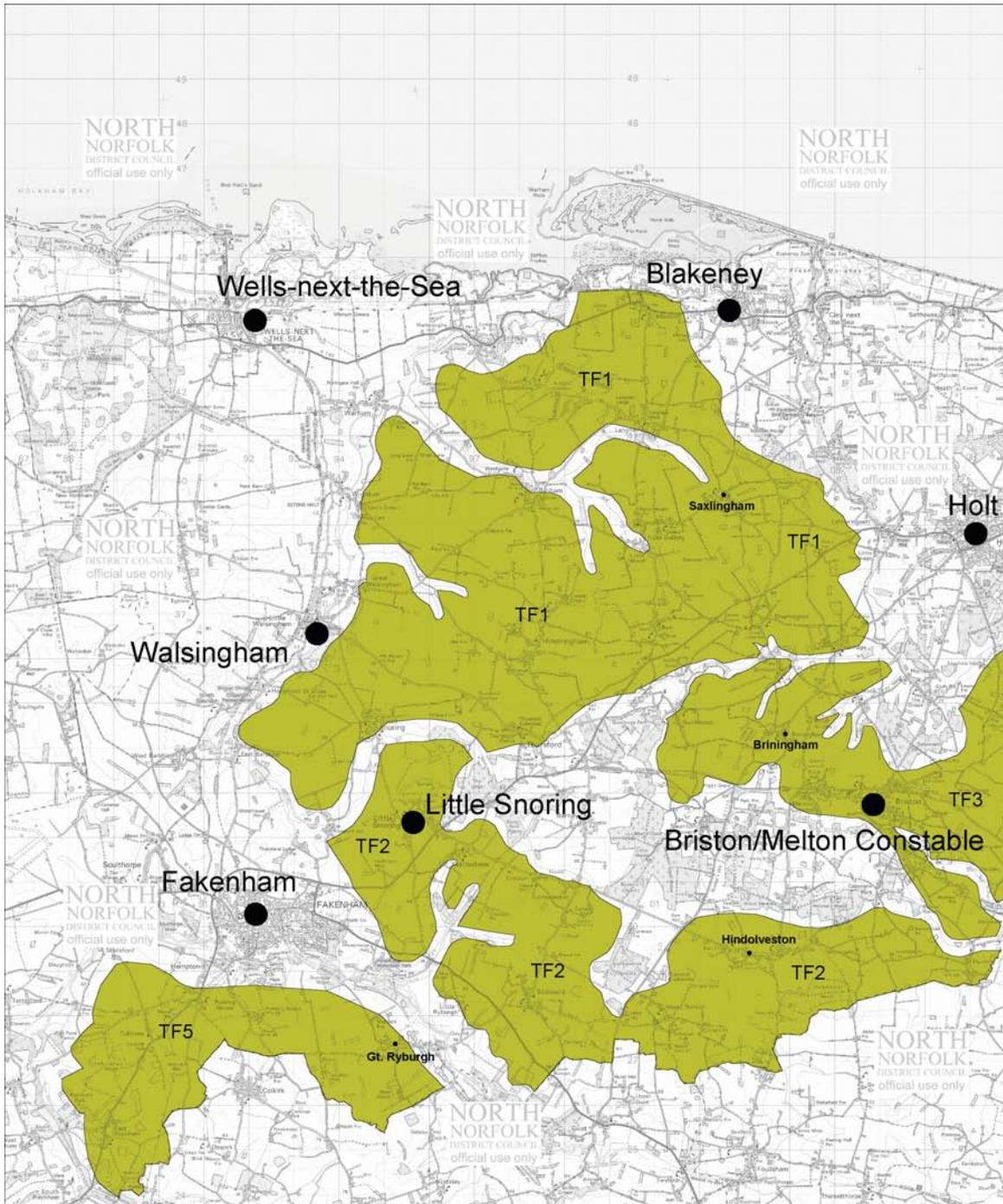
- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.

Areas within the type

- TF1 – Morston and Hindringham
- TF2 – Snoring, Stibbard and Hindolveston
- TF3 – Hempstead, Bodham, Aylmerton and Wickmere
- TF4 – Roughton, Southrepps, Trunch and Knapton
- TF5 – Raynham, Pudding Norton and Great Ryburgh

Tributary Farmland 5

Map 5.1 Tributary Farmland (Western Area)



Landscape Character Type

 Tributary Farmland

Areas within the Type

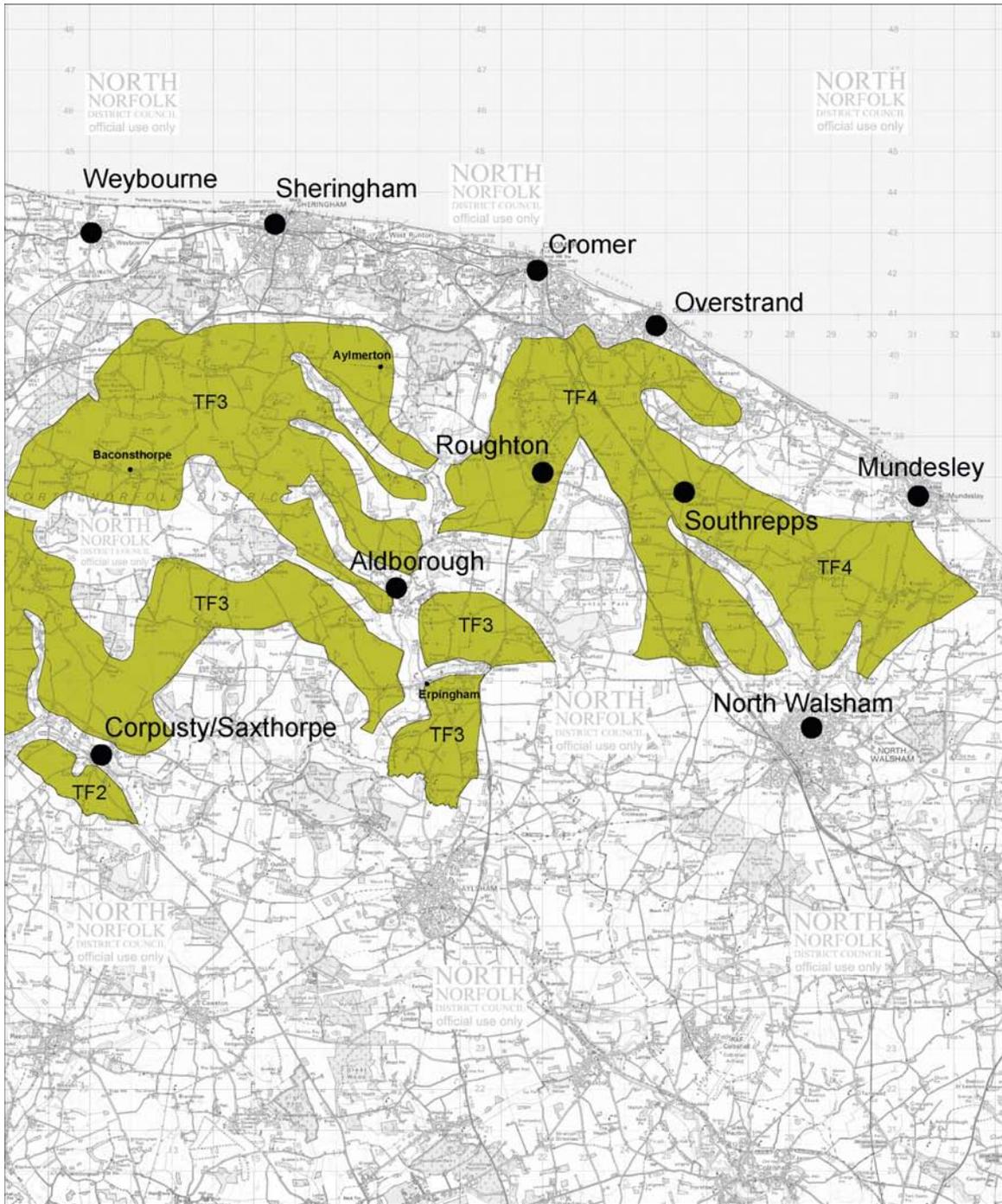
- TF 1 - Morston & Hindringham
- TF 2 - Snoring, Stibbard & Hindolveston
- TF 3 - Hempstead, Bodham, Aylmerton & Wickmere
- TF 4 - Roughton, Southrepps, Trunch & Knapton
- TF 5 - Raynham, Pudding Norton & Gt. Ryburgh



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Map 5.2 Tributary Farmland (Eastern Area)



Landscape Character Type

 Tributary Farmland

Areas within the Type

- TF 1 - Morston & Hindringham
- TF 2 - Snoring, Stibbard & Hindolveston
- TF 3 - Hempstead, Bodham, Aylmerton & Wickmere
- TF 4 - Roughton, Southrepps, Trunch & Knapton
- TF 5 - Raynham, Pudding Norton & Gt. Ryburgh



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Tributary Farmland 5

5.1 Morston and Hindringham (TF1)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Gradually sloping topography which rises from north to south over the Area giving rise to large views and an almost plateau like landscape intersected with small tributary valleys.
- A road network which tends to be predominantly north south and east west orientated (probably resulting from an earlier planned landscape (possibly pre-dating the open field agricultural system which operated prior to enclosure from C18th).
- Interrelated with the north south orientation of the road network, there is a north south special distribution of settlement along the road network.
- Settlement tends to be nucleated around a church but with a strong 'extension' element along roadways (Field Dalling, Hindringham and Sharrington particularly).
- A lower density of woodland on and adjacent to the Area than is normal for the Type. Woodland tends to be in very small fragmented parcels often no more than fairly modern shooting copses.
- Lower than average for the Type presence of small fields around settlement giving a 'stark edge' to settlement as viewed from adjoining countryside.
- Lower than average for the Type concentrations of roadside or hedgerow trees.
- Cockthorpe Airfield – site of a large poultry farm and telecom mast, the latter visible for many miles
- Small fragmented and isolated heathland outcrops on terminal moraine hills near coast
- Predominantly clay tills.
- Pits and ponds in many fields.

Evaluation

- The condition of the landscape character in this Area is Fair to Good. Areas where field boundaries have been lost and large fields have been created, areas with modern conifer / poplar copses, areas with new housing estates on the edge of existing settlements (Langham) or where existing settlements have larger estates of local authority housing (Binham, Field Dalling, Langham and Hindringham) have all seen character eroded.
- The strength of character in this area is moderate to strong depending very much on the location and the elements mentioned above.

Issues

- 5.1.1** Settlement structure is often fragmented and leaves considerable 'gaps' between properties or behind them. The temptation to 'consolidate' these gaps should be considered very carefully as they often provide a very strong defining characteristic to the settlement and mean that the landscape is not dominated by large long tracts of what could amount to ribbon development.
- 5.1.2** Enhancement of the underlying structure of the landscape would be highly beneficial to supporting and maintaining the landscape character – particularly replacement of hedges and hedgerow trees. It is noticeable that areas where hedges are more substantial have a much more definite 'intactness' feel. Attempts to link existing isolated copses or lengths of hedgerow, particularly with those of sites within valleys, would have the most effect ecologically as this is a very fragmented landscape from a habitats perspective. Similarly areas of grassland should be used where these can actually link with other larger bodies rather than just placed ad hoc around field boundaries in otherwise isolated locations.
- 5.1.3** The coastal area has a considerable influence over adjoining highly sensitive marshland landscapes as well as being relatively remote and undeveloped in its own right. Prominent developments

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(houses, barns, wind turbines, telecom masts etc) within this coastal band could have significant detrimental effects on a wide area of the AONB. It is particularly noticeable how far and to what extent the telecom transmitter at Cockthorpe dominates the coast from Blakeney to Stiffkey when viewed from the marshland.

- 5.1.4** The installation of wind turbines would probably be inappropriate in this landscape due to the enormity of the views and consequently the visual impact of the development over a very large area.
- 5.1.5** Street and outside lighting has a disproportionate adverse effect on this landscape also due to the long views and open character.
- 5.1.6** Development of the poultry units at Cockthorpe Airfield have been well screened with woodland planting creating what amounts to a different but valid landscape.
- 5.1.7** Excessive filling in of the ponds and pits should be avoided.
- 5.1.8** The landscape is moderately sensitive to development changes – more particularly in the coastal part and immediate settings of the upper tributaries where these have not been degraded or changed by modern agricultural / forestry practice. Beyond these parts, wider programmes of restoration as part of suitable developments may be a way of improving the overall strength and condition character of the landscape.

5.2 Snoring, Stibbard and Hindolveston (TF2)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- More enclosed than the norm for the Type – especially around some of the settlements where high hedges are often seen.
- An almost plateau like topography but without long views.
- Proximity to large areas of woodland further enhances the enclosed and more wooded feel of this landscape.
- Snoring Airfield retains a strong 'original' layout with more or less original hangars and control tower buildings, perimeter road etc remaining.
- Proximity to Fakenham produces a busy feel with A148 and A1067 running through the Area. Street and other lighting is highly visible from most of the Area.
- The part of the Area near Wood Norton to Hindolveston has a strong 'remnant ancient countryside' character – different hedgerow structure and presence of botanically rich verges also linked to the proximity to large blocks of ancient woodland.
- Pits and ponds in many fields.
- Modern estates around Little Snoring are a jarring feature in the landscape.

Evaluation

- The condition of the landscape character in this Area is Fair to Good. Areas where field boundaries have been lost and large fields have been created, areas with modern conifer / poplar copses, areas with new housing estates on the edge of existing settlements (Little Snoring) or where the proximity to the busy road network and Fakenham is apparent, have all seen character eroded.
- The strength of character in this area is moderate to strong depending very much on the location and the elements mentioned above.

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Issues

- 5.2.1** Road improvements on the major routes and in settlements are having a significant eroding effect on landscape character (Stibbard junction) and road lighting at roundabouts.
- 5.2.2** Development of inappropriately designed and located estates similarly can jar with the surrounding settlement type (as at Hindringham social housing) where the overly compact and generic nature of the development contrasts with the mature garden settings of most village properties in North Norfolk.
- 5.2.3** Parts of this landscape (possibly between Kettlestone and Fakenham which is disturbed by the proximity to Fakenham and two major roads) might be able to absorb some wind turbine development without excessive disturbance to a wider landscape. This would however need a further environmental and landscape impact assessment.
- 5.2.4** Considerable care and attention should be paid to retaining roadside and other verges, older hedgerows etc especially where these are clearly part of a much older landscape than is normal for the Area or Type (around Wood Norton and Hindolveston and elsewhere where apparent). Opportunities to link or reinforce links between existing older features (grasslands, hedgerows, watercourses and woodlands) would have a marked positive effect on ecology.
- 5.2.5** Excessive filling in of the ponds and pits should be avoided.
- 5.2.6** The landscape is moderately sensitive to development changes – more particularly in the immediate settings of the upper tributaries where these have not been degraded or changed by modern agricultural / forestry practice. Beyond these parts, wider programmes of restoration as part of suitable developments may be a way of improving the overall strength and condition character of the landscape.

5.3 Hempstead, Bodham, Aylmerton and Wickmere Area (TF3)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A large central area of the Type comprising a relatively high level topography which slopes southwards and in which the watercourses tend to drain to the south (to the Broads).
- The river network is less defined than in other Areas but more frequent small valleys of running ditches (Small River Valley Areas) are present through most of the Area.
- Settlement is in fairly dispersed villages and a range of farm sizes from small to large, sited both within settlements and in isolated positions.
- Some parts of the landscape are heavily influenced by large estates (Felbrigg, Mannington, Wolterton, Barningham) and whilst the house and parklands of these properties may be separate Area/s, they are intimately linked to the form and structure of this landscape (isolated larger farmsteads, woodland planting for sporting purposes, estate type cottages in settlements and isolated locations).
- Settlement tends to be elongated and semi-dispersed, with cottages having above average sized gardens and much greater presence of small fields and enclosed high hedged closes within and surrounding villages which give a spacious feel to these settlements.

Evaluation

- The condition of the landscape character is Fair to Moderate with a few Good areas. The majority of the landscape has been affected by commercial agricultural activity over the past 50 years and this has removed much of the underlying structure of what is in many places a fairly old landscape (pre-dating the Enclosure movement of the C18th and C19th). The removal

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of field boundaries and the reduction in size and condition of those which remain is apparent in much of the Area. Where boundaries have been replaced the character is reinforced. Similarly, the reduction in small fields, closes and large gardens around and within settlement has eroded the character of these villages considerably in some cases. Where this has not occurred (Hempstead, parts of Baconsthorpe, parts of Gresham and Wickmere as well as outlying hamlets and farmsteads (around Bodham for instance) the character is much stronger and the impression of an older landscape is prevalent.

- The strength of character is Moderate (due to the above comments)

Issues

- 5.3.1** The erosion of character in this Area is principally due to two factors – infill development of unsuitable degree and type within existing settlements and outside, and loss of rural features due to decay and modern agriculture.
- 5.3.2** The settlement structure requires a certain amount of space between dwellings; and to have dwellings of the characteristic size and design (with suitably sized gardens and landscaping) in order to retain their distinctive character). Introduction of suburban features in the form of kerbing, roadside paths, street lighting, walls and fences further diminishes the character of these, until recently, very isolated communities.
- 5.3.3** The opportunity to enhance the structure of the existing landscape by replanting lost hedgerows, hedgerow trees, arable reversion to pasture and the creation of copses and woods, would all have a positive effect on re-establishing the underlying structure of the landscape. In areas where this has been done it has had a marked positive effect. In other areas where it has not been done and where the features have been removed, the landscape is simply open and barren.
- 5.3.4** Gravel extraction can have an impact.
- 5.3.5** The landscape is moderately sensitive depending upon the location within the Area and the type of development proposed. Some parts may be suitable for small scale wind turbine siting taking care not to place them so prominently that they are apparent for miles (i.e. near the Cromer ridge).

5.4 Roughton, Southrepps, Trunch and Knapton Area (TF4)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A topography of raised watersheds between shallow valleys, with prominent views to north east and south west.
- The road network is generally small scale except at the Roughton end where the Area is crossed by the A140 and bounded along part of the western side by the A149
- Settlement structure is strongly nucleated with few outlying farmsteads or cottages except in the Roughton area which is dispersed along the road network. Roughton is also unique in having a high proportion of late C19th and early C20th houses and villas situated in large semi-rural locations – probably associated with the holiday development of ‘Poppyland’ about this period.
- Farm size is large.
- There are fewer than average woodlands and this together with the landform and low presence of hedges makes the landscape very open.
- There are remnant areas of heathland around Roughton (on Roughton Heath and elsewhere) and occasionally these can be picked up in hedgerows where there will be a presence of Gorse or Bracken.

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Evaluation

- 5.4.1** The condition of the landscape varies from Poor to Moderate. There are almost no areas where it can be said to be Good. The landscape character has been eroded by a combination of field boundary removals, pasture removal and development of small and medium generic housing estates around most of the settlements during the past 30 years.
- 5.4.2** The strength of character is Fair to Moderate.

Issues

- 5.4.3** There is considerable scope for landscape enhancement in this Area.
- 5.4.4** The settlement of Roughton still has considerable numbers of remnant features (wood, heath, wetland, large hedges and dispersed residences with larger gardens) however these are gradually being removed by infill development and gentrification of existing landholdings. The creation of 'horsiculture' areas (trotting rings, outside lighting, fencing and stabling together with attendant detritus) has had a negative effect on maintaining separation between residences, the impression of a rural setting and retention of heathland and field boundaries.
- 5.4.5** The settlements of Southrepps, Trunch and Knapton have relatively similar format which is quite distinct from that of Roughton. They are nucleated, once having been ringed (until mid C20th) with small fields and closes they now have (in the first two) extensive modern housing estates of a generic layout and design which have overly emphasized the nucleation of the settlements but eroded their distinctive architecture and layout in the process.
- 5.4.6** The proximity to Cromer has a strong influence on the northern boundary part of the Area. Views over the Town are apparent from the A149 which are very distinctive with sea views beyond. The entrance via Roughton Road is equally distinctive – no views of the Town or sea until one is upon them. There is a small amount of gradual post C19th ribbon development along the roadway.
- 5.4.7** The wider landscape is very open and accommodates new agricultural buildings badly.
- 5.4.8** Gravel extraction can have an impact.
- 5.4.9** The Area is sensitive and but requires restoration programmes if not to see further disproportionate erosion of existing character with new development.

5.5 Raynham, Pudding Norton and Great Ryburgh Area (TF5)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Parkland with strong arable agricultural use and recent copses in the Raynham part associated with Raynham Hall (late C17th early C18th).
- Two fairly busy roads cutting across the Area – A1065 and B1146.
- Apart from the parkland areas, the woodland presence is lower than average with few copses, hedgerow trees or other woodland.
- Lower than average field boundary presence and larger than average field size. Hedges are often not present on field or roadside boundaries giving a particularly open character to the landscape.
- Settlement is semi-nucleated with small villages the size of hamlets being the norm. Occasional outlying larger farmsteads and barn conversions complete the sparse settlement structure.

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- Views of Fakenham dominate the northern part of the Area as seen from across the Wensum Valley.
- Gravel deposits have been worked at Hempton. The disused extraction pit is used for poultry and other visually prominent industrial buildings. A section has been designated as a RIGS local site.

Evaluation

- 5.5.1** The condition of the landscape character in this Area is Poor to Moderate. The removal of field boundaries and hedges, together with eroding features such as the industrial / poultry units at Hempton have significantly reduced the cohesiveness of this landscape. The expansive views of Fakenham – particularly the dominance of the large industrial sheds in the central part of the townscape similarly undermine the character as does the views over the maltings at Gt Ryburgh. The part around Raynham has remained relatively untouched by these changes.
- 5.5.2** The strength of character is Low to Moderate.

Issues

- 5.5.3** The underlying landscape character has to an extent been considerably eroded over the past 50 years, with more industrial changes in the past 25 years. This is a landscape which would benefit from restoration and enhancement, replacing hedges, field boundary trees, introducing new woodland (to complement the Raynham style) to screen and integrate existing and future landscape features.
- 5.5.4** This is a landscape which is sensitive to large scale development due to its very open and largely featureless character (in places). Large new agricultural buildings will tend to be excessively prominent but could, if suitably sited and with suitable landscaping, be integrated into the landscape. Smaller agricultural buildings sited within existing complexes and suitably coloured can be successfully integrated (e.g. Testerton Hall). Simple 'screening belts and raised banks' tend to look artificial and as though they are an afterthought to the development – largely out of accord with the wider landscape pattern and rarely contributing positively to it. More strategic approaches are needed in this type of open landscape.

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Location and boundaries

6.0.1 The North Walsham Plain is located in the eastern half of the North Norfolk District and stretches from the coastal area south of Paston, Bacton and Happisburgh to the edge of the Broads at Hoveton and Horning. It stretches from the edge of the Broads in the east to the A140 from Aylsham to Hanworth in the west. North Walsham itself is located at the heart of the plain and is the only substantially urban area apart from Stalham on the edge of the character area. It is bounded by the landscape character types of coastal villages, Broads, randomly enclosed rolling open farmland, and contains small river valleys and wooded parkland.

Table 6.1 Low Plains Farmland

Picture 6.1



Characteristic unconverted barn complex retaining strong rural agricultural feel

Picture 6.2



Fairly enclosed landscape bounded by mature and over mature hedgerow trees, often without accompanying hedges

Picture 6.3



Vernacular cottages near the road in an ad-hoc linear settlement structure

Picture 6.4



Ad-hoc infill development of differing styles within the existing settlement structure

Key characteristics

- A landscape with an open character with long, uninterrupted views.
- The topography is on the whole either flat or very gently undulating, which falls away towards the river valleys and areas of marshland.

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- The land use is predominantly arable, with areas of localised rough grazing close to the river valleys and Broads, with medium to large sized fields.
- Field boundaries on the whole consist of low grass banks due to widespread hedge removal, however there are areas with high hedges, which results in localised enclosed areas.
- The skyline is very prominent for the most part in this character area, due to the large expanses of open, uninterrupted landscape.
- This skyline is punctuated by many belts of trees, areas of woodland, and isolated trees. Some of these isolated trees are all that remain of the removed hedgerows.
- Prominent features in the landscape, which can often be seen on the horizon, include church towers and more unusual structures such as the Trimmingham dome (in neighbouring Type), along with modern agricultural buildings.
- Views are generally uninterrupted, and aside from the structures detailed above, large expanses of this character area are relatively vacant / empty.
- The A149, the A1151 and the Bittern railway line from Sheringham to Norwich run through the character area, however the remaining roads are either 'B' or unclassified roads, and as such the area is on the whole relatively quiet in terms of vehicular traffic away from the main 'A' roads.
- North Walsham is the largest settlement in the character area, with remaining settlement consisting of rural villages and dispersed farmsteads.
- The overall character of the landscape is predominantly rural, and on the whole peaceful, apart from areas adjacent to the A149, and in and around the urban areas.

Landscape character

- 6.0.2** The Norfolk Coast AONB covers a small portion of the north of the Low Plains Farmland character area, and as such extends to the area around Trunch and Knapton. The remainder of this character area is not designated.
- 6.0.3** The overall character of this area is one of either flat or very gently undulating land, apart from the areas adjacent to either the Broads or the river valleys. These areas in turn are more undulating, and have a much more enclosed feel in contrast to the very open nature of this character area. This openness is due to the flat landform, widespread hedge removal, and large expanses of land without many dominant features, apart from those on the skyline. The contours in this character area range from 10 to 40m.
- 6.0.4** Due to the openness of the landscape, the views are extensive, and structures such as church towers can be seen on the horizon some distance away. The horizon line is often lined with trees, either areas of older deciduous woodland, or more recent belts of conifers. These views are only restricted in the areas adjacent to the river valleys, Broads, or areas of marshland, where hedges are higher, the landform is more undulating, or roads are more winding. This affords a greater sense of enclosure in these localised areas.
- 6.0.5** The land use is predominantly arable, with some areas of localised rough grazing that tend to be close to areas of water / marsh / broad. There has been much widespread hedge-removal in the area, although hedges still remain in the latter areas, and there is also some planting of new hedgerows in some places. This combination of arable farming and low grassy banks in place of hedges contributes greatly to the overall character of this area. Field sizes are medium to large on the whole and fairly regular in shape. Again, it is only towards the 'watery' areas where this overall trend is different, with smaller, more irregular-sized fields. There is a moderate correlation between small field size and areas around settlement. This becomes more marked in the southern parts of the Type and where settlement is less nucleated. This is a function of the land ownership history over the past 200/300 years and especially during the last 50 years where small fields which are associated with dispersed cottages within a loose settlement have tended to mitigated

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against aggregation into larger fields. Similarly, hedge height and size tends to be greater the closer to settlement one gets - largely as a result of individual landholders not having access to machinery to maintain them regularly.

- 6.0.6** Settlement type is a mix of nucleated - of the type more akin to that seen in the west of the County, and non-nucleated. The tendency is for settlement to become less nucleated the further south and east one goes. Larger farmsteads in isolated positions are similarly more characteristic of the western portion of the area whilst smaller farmsteads, often part of the straggling village structure are more common in the east. However all examples can be found throughout the Type. Modern estates have often obscured or linked previously semi-dispersed settlements and made them more nucleated than they would have been 50 years ago. The estates usually have no significant references to vernacular architecture and jar somewhat with the existing road and built structure of the settlements. The larger hedge size / trees on boundaries adjacent to and within the settlements make a very major contribution to screening, separating and integrating development into the existing landscape. Where these have been removed / were not present on boundaries of settlements, the result is very stark and out of character.
- 6.0.7** Churches are a dominant feature within the landscape, along with the Trimmingham radome, and a few windmills, water towers, and wind turbines. These features can be quite prominent due to the flatness of the land, but their prominence is also dependent on conditions. For example, the radome can be very visible in certain weather conditions, but not in others.
- 6.0.8** The main area of settlement is North Walsham. Stalham is the second largest settlement, but apart from these urban areas, the majority of the settlements are villages of varying sizes, or dispersed farmsteads. There are two single carriageway 'A' roads in the character area, along with a railway line, but these only affect the character and break the tranquillity of the immediate surrounding areas. The remainder of the roads are 'B' or unclassified roads, and as such contribute to the quiet, rural character of the area. The former RAF Coltishall base makes a significant contribution to the built area. Most of the site is well tree'd and integrated into the existing landscape of small woodlands / rolling countryside. Changes / redevelopment of the base could have significant negative consequences if it altered the existing built environment (particularly on the former airfield itself, or by way of road improvements).

Geological character

- 6.0.9** Unconsolidated crag sands underlie the glacial tills in this part of Norfolk, producing a low lying and muted topography. The sandy glacial tills give rise to deep loam soils, whilst alluvial deposits and fen peats have accumulated in adjacent valleys.

Ecological character

- 6.0.10** The existing ecological character of the area is predominantly arable land divided by hedged and frequently banked field boundaries with areas which have ditches as well. In some areas hedges are not present or may never have formed all field boundaries. In these areas, grassed banks / ditches provide the boundary feature. Pasture, if present, tends to be temporary or recent arable reversion, except where it may be related to larger 'gentry' or similar 'parked' dwellings or especially wetter, lower lying areas and areas around settlement. Almost all pasture is improved and of relatively limited ecological value. Set aside and grassed margins are not as prevalent in this Type, probably due to the high agricultural land grade over much of the area (Grade 1 and 2).
- 6.0.11** Woodlands are dispersed unevenly across this Type, with some areas demonstrating quite large blocks of woodland (some of which are commercial and or amenity related (Bacton Woods) with other areas fairly deprived of woodland (Trunch and Tunstead and north of Stalham). Further areas have a more dispersed and fragmented content of woodland which provides a sort of 'copse

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and small wood landscape'. As a result, the woodland structure tends to be varied with some areas demonstrating small areas of former ancient woodland (too small to be registered) often as hazel coppice (south and east) mixed with woodland planted for sporting purposes and forestry. These variations reflect the landownership issues that have variously affected land use. A direct correlation between settlement and woodland type is not obvious.

- 6.0.12** The type contains a distinctive area of former heathland around North Walsham. This is now largely covered in conifer woodland but remnants occur in these woodlands and on a number of small commons.
- 6.0.13** Older tree assemblages, older field boundaries with multi-species hedges / ground flora, coppiced woodland areas, veteran trees and ponds are all less common in this Type than Tributary Farmland. However this may be a result of the intensity of land use due to land quality rather than a commentary on the age of the landscape features (settlement, woodland, roads etc.).

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Woodland where present - specially remnant areas of former and current ancient woodland.
- Heathland - a feature associated with the upper valleys of the Broads and the sands and gravels around North Walsham. It is usually associated with common land and is a component of a number of conifer woodland.
- Parkland - a feature more associated with Wooded and Parkland Type but also present in smaller areas associated with smaller 'Gentry' houses.
- In addition to BAP habitats, special consideration should be given to a 6km radius of Paston Barn SAC to maintain grassland, scrub, hedge and other associated habitats for bats.

Table 6.2 Low Plains Farmland: Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Open character with long, uninterrupted views and flat or very gently undulating topography	Good	<p>The more remote areas would be radically altered by development of any sort, and those areas that retain their very open character are most sensitive to change. However, there are places where prominent features within the flat landscape such as modern agricultural buildings, edges of settlements and water towers break the uninterrupted views.</p> <p>The siting of wind turbines within the more rural locations would be inappropriate.</p> <p>The siting of wind turbines within the more disturbed and degraded landscapes would be less harmful.</p> <p>The siting of telecom masts should be undertaken to minimise visual intrusion and may be inappropriate in some landscapes.</p>	Moderate to High
Arable land use, medium-large sized fields with predominantly low grass banks as field boundaries. Small fields around settlements -	Fair to Good	<p>As arable crops are a prominent feature in this landscape type, any major alterations to this could change the landscape.</p> <p>Hedge removal has been a prominent trend in this landscape in the twentieth century, but attempts are being made in some areas to re-plant hedges.</p>	Moderate

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
often associated with high hedges / trees		<p>There are modern agricultural buildings within this landscape, and in the areas where they exist, they tend to be prominent due to the flatness of the landscape, and their difference to the existing vernacular architecture. Therefore the imposition of stock sheds, new isolated barn or other complexes with dwellings need to be carefully considered as modern designs tend to be strongly contrary to the existing character of the isolated smaller farm buildings / cottages / dwellings which characterise much of the settlement outside villages. Appropriate large scale landscaping (not screening) can assist in integrating new development.</p> <p>Density of such developments should reflect the mean level that currently exists within the locality - increasing density will have strongly adverse effects on remoteness of some areas.</p> <p>Small fields in proximity to existing settlement are often used for additional development - this can have an eroding effect upon the character, either removing the setting of existing buildings or changing rural to built areas.</p>	
Skyline	Good	<p>Avoid developments that affect or impinge on open skyline views or which would adversely affect the night time experience of dark landscapes.</p> <p>Wind turbines and telecom masts can have very severe impacts in certain areas due to the openness of the character Type.</p>	High
Settlement	Fair	<p>Villages Areas where large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller fields still contribute significantly to the character of the village could be protected from development. There is a strong tendency for the character of villages to be altered by modern high density development within existing boundaries. Additional development should utilise the best adjacent characteristics of the built landscape to enhance and reinforce those areas of villages which have degraded or unfocused styles / character, such as those with post-war council housing on the outskirts, which is often at odds with the character of the centre of the settlement. Consideration should be given to the 'stock' of small fields / buffering features between new and existing development on edges / outside settlements and the degree of 'ruralness' that they offer - frequently intact small fields around settlement are the only remaining old landscape feature which retain the rural character of the area.</p> <p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>Edge of town There is considerable industrial and urban development on the edge of the town areas, which contrasts vastly with the majority of the rural character area.</p> <p>The associated road network is also busy around the more urban areas and as such cuts through the landscape.</p> <p>Isolated Farmsteads etc These have traditionally been associated with working the land, providing accommodation for farmers and farm workers and as such the style and nature of the developments tend to intimately reflect the purpose of agriculture. Future developments could attempt to take this <i>raison d'être</i> as the test for suitability and attempt to integrate with existing densities and character styles. Modern generic agricultural buildings result in difficulties enabling such developments to respect the character of previous building styles. Suitable locations and landscaping can assist but there is a distinct contradiction between enabling some developments and retaining those areas where character is strongest.</p> <p>The redevelopment of redundant barn complexes both within, on the edge and especially outside settlement boundaries alters the character of the built and surrounding environment from a rural working context to a leisure / residential use. The impact of this can vary considerably depending upon the execution. Redundant agricultural buildings in decay can add to the sense of character and history of the landscape as they have done for millennia, changing their use transforms both.</p> <p>RAF Coltishall May face pressures to be extensively developed and enlarged - especially for additional housing beyond the current site boundaries (which are fairly well screened and integrated) and base buildings. Will require sensitivity and a comprehensive approach.</p>	

Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

- 6.0.14** The overall condition of this Type is fair to good depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. There has been considerable erosion and degradation of rural features in many areas - particularly loss of hedgerows and pasture. Generally, the built features are in a moderately stable (un-changing) condition, comparable with all the other rural areas of the District. The major exceptions being Stalham (particularly along the A149 corridor) and RAF Coltishall which has an uncertain development future.
- 6.0.15** The strength of character is generally moderate with subtle interactions between features and

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elements in the landscape providing the defining 'sense of place'. The character of the landscape is generally less 'intact' than in neighbouring areas to the west. Variation within the Type is more apparent than in other neighbouring areas but is still moderate but is apparent with landform, settlement type and vegetation cover all providing significant subtle indications of different parts of the Type.

Recent landscape impacts

- 6.0.16** Changes to the agricultural economy have tended to see fewer impacts in introducing ecological improvements resulting from agri-environment grants.
- 6.0.17** Telecom masts are fairly prominent in some parts of the Type due to long views.
- 6.0.18** The increasing wealth in the area is demonstrated by numbers of properties being enlarged / improved and sub-divided all of which have affected the appearance and character of settlements (especially Stalham) - often in individually modest but cumulatively significant ways (fencing replacing hedged boundaries / the loss of large gardens with mature trees and the resultant massing of buildings). New agricultural buildings are increasingly being erected to replace older barns etc which are in turn being converted to residential use, often with a significant change to the character of the landscape to which they contribute. The Type has tended to lag behind other rural areas of the District but is catching up.

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

- Significant numbers of new properties either sited within or outside existing smaller settlements.
- Subdivision of existing larger gardens within settlements.
- New agricultural buildings sited in locations away from or prominently within existing farm complexes.
- Wind turbines within the more rural locations.
- Outside lighting - both street type and decorative / domestic.
- Use of un-sympathetic boundary treatments, particularly bordering public highways and on edges of settlements where close boarded fencing / other semi/sub urban styles can appear incongruous.
- 'Improvement' of access tracks and entrance ways with urban style features (brick entrance pillars, gates, removal of 'rough track with grassed central margin, use of kerbing, close mown verges).
- Telecom masts in prominent locations.
- New road layouts which introduce standard 'suburban' highway features (kerbing / signage / widening)
- Extensions to properties which overly enlarge or gentrify rural settlements / locations.
- Barn conversions and other property construction within the open countryside which introduce 'suburban' features such as surfaced drives / domestic style gates and fences / garden style planting and parking areas / overly large windows and external lighting etc. Frequently a barn conversion in an isolated location away from other settlement can introduce a strongly suburban character.
- Landfill and mineral extraction.

b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.

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- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- Retention of rural features - tracks with grassed central margins, old fencing / gateposts / walls.
- Properties which are of a scale and location which respect the individual form of the settlement in which they are located (i.e. Development should not 'stand out' but rather should be almost un-noticeable and unremarkable as an additional element within the existing development structure, taking particular account of building / development size, location, surrounding landscaping and existing land uses).
- Landscaping around new properties which actively blends with existing features rather than tries simply to screen new development.
- Landscaping which uses native as opposed to non-native species.
- Landscaping which builds upon and enhances existing trees, hedges and other features on and adjacent to the proposed development site.
- Biofuel crops have potential to be integrated within this landscape Type fairly easily depending upon the type of crop and its location. Important considerations would be to avoid excessively large 'blocks' of biofuels such as short rotation coppice (of Miscanthus or Willow etc) where these impinge upon the views and landform of the location. By using rotations / species which do not appear excessively higher than existing hedgerows (which could be allowed to grow in height anyway) impact would be minimised. Valley sides are likely to be more sensitive to their distinctive landform presenting more prominent 'viewing' of the crop.

c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character; Ecological Network Priorities for this Landscape Type

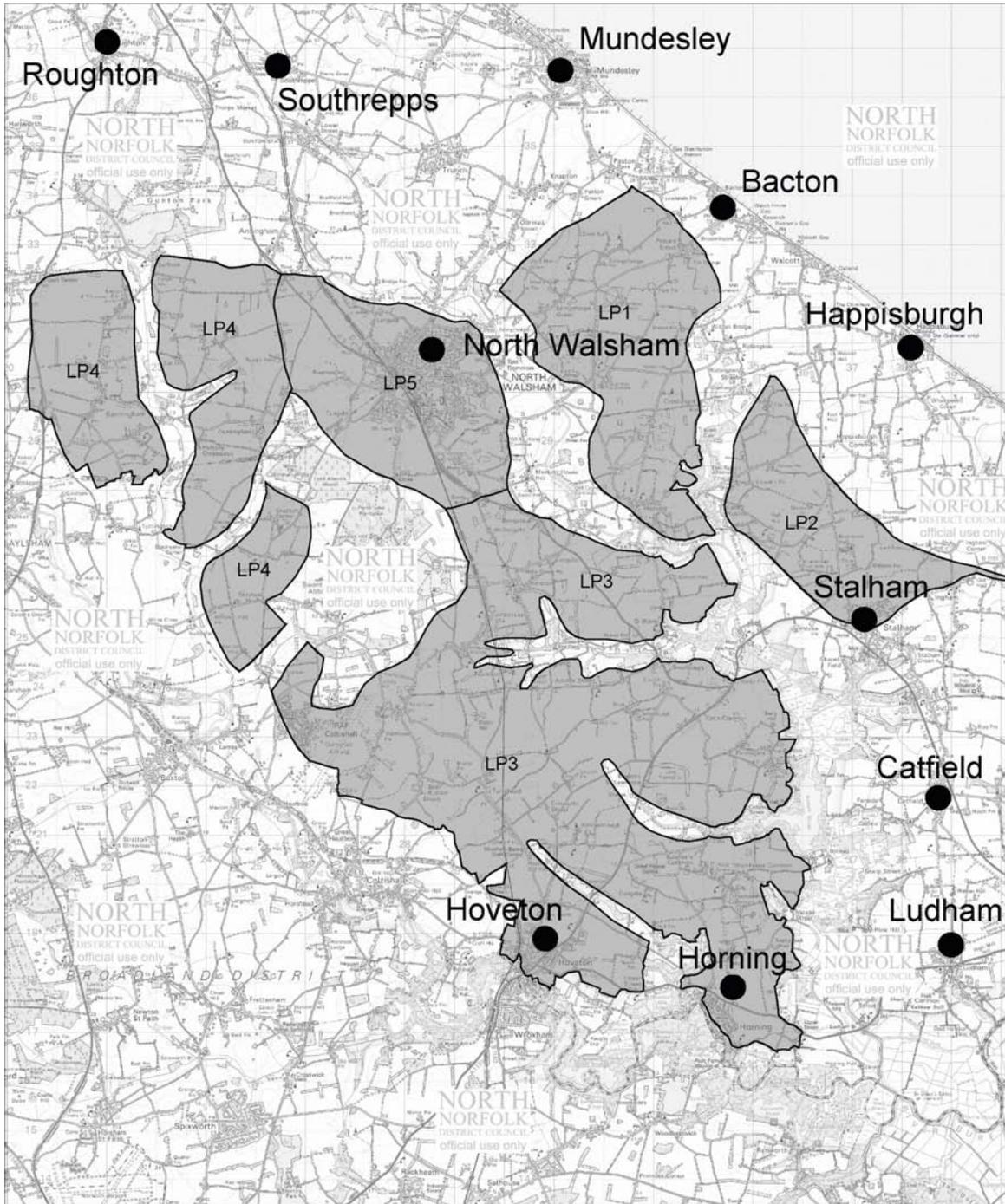
- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Opportunities to buffer existing watercourses by the introduction of heath, scrub and grassland along margins should be a priority.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.

Areas within the type

- LP1 – Edingthorpe to Honing Area
 - LP2 – Stalham
 - LP3 – Worstead, Coltishall, Hoveton and Smallburgh
 - LP4 – Colby, Banningham, Felmingham and Skeyton
 - LP5 – North Walsham
-

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Map 6.1 Low Plains Farmland



Landscape Character Type

Low Plains Farmland

Areas within the Type

- LP 1 - Edingthorpe to Honing
- LP 2 - Stalham
- LP 3 - Worstead, Coltishall, Hovington & Smallburgh
- LP 4 - Colby, Banningham, Felmingham & Skeyton
- LP 5 - North Walsham



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6.1 Edingthorpe to Honing Area (LP1)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A generally open landscape which does have enclosed parts within it of a distinctive nature. (Bacton Woods, Honing and Honing Hall Park)
- A more than average woodland presence (Bacton Wood and Honing / Honing Hall parts).
- Coastal views and proximity (light skies due to reflection of light from water).
- Wooded common at Honing.
- More than average undulation in the topography.

Evaluation

- 6.1.1** The condition of the character of the landscape is Moderate. Field boundary removals and gradual loss of hedgerow trees has diminished the fairly subtle sense of character in this landscape. However, there has been a certain amount of hedgerow and woodland restoration / replacement schemes undertaken in recent years. Areas such as Bacton Wood (which is a predominantly commercial forestry wood of recent age) has a distinctive sub-character, as does Honing and Honing Common (which is fairly wooded).
- 6.1.2** The strength of character is Fair to Moderate.

Issues

- 6.1.3** This landscape is strongly rural in character. There are no major roads running through the Area and the most busy road is the one from North Walsham to Bacton.
- 6.1.4** Parts of the Area are more robust than others and could accommodate some disturbance in the form of wind turbines where these would add to, but probably be seen in the context of, the Gas Terminal.
- 6.1.5** The siting of new farm buildings or other agricultural structures should be undertaken in reference to existing woodland and farm complexes. The siting of individual new farm buildings in isolated locations tend to be over prominent and out of character. Additional new woodland would be appropriate in this Area – building on the existing Bacton Woods location.
- 6.1.6** The section of the Area nearest the coast has a considerable influence over adjoining sensitive coastal Areas (CP1 Happisburgh part) as well as being relatively remote and undeveloped in its own right. This landscape is effectively the coastal landscape that Bacton and Walcott's recent developments have lost and consequently separated this Area from. Prominent developments (houses, barns, etc) within the coastal band would have significant detrimental effects on a wide area. It is particularly noticeable how far and to what extent the telecom transmitter at nearby Bacton dominates the coast.
- 6.1.7** This landscape is moderately sensitive.

6.2 Stalham Area (LP2)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- The landscape is gently undulating.
- The field size is generally large but boundaries are more often than average banked giving the impression of an even larger more open landscape.
- The Area is dissected by the busy and straight B1159.

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- The part of the Area around East Ruston is more wooded (mostly situated within the adjoining Ruston / Ridlington Small Valley) in character and has a more intimate and small scale feel.
- The southern part of the Area is dominated by the hard edge of the town of Stalham. This is very prominent and rarely softened by any mature trees or woodland. The character of the entrances to the Town from the north (B1159) and east (B1151) are distinctive as they are without the frequently encountered industrial areas or modern estates. The entrance from the B1151 starkly encounters a large post war Council estate whilst the B1159 similarly encounters the ribbon extension of pre and post war generic suburban development.

Evaluation

- 6.2.1** The condition of the landscape character varies between Fair (around Stalham) to Moderate (around Ruston) due to the condition and presence of rural features (hedgerows, field size and woodland / tree presence) and condition and style of settlement development (generic suburban or more vernacular rural).
- 6.2.2** The strength of character varies between Low and Moderate.

Issues

- 6.2.3** This landscape could have extensive restoration. Parts of it are a fairly blank canvas but this would be to deny its underlying structure and that (equally importantly) of the structure of adjoining Areas. Reinforcing and restoring some of the rural features beyond Stalham whilst at the same time buffering and integrating existing and future development in the Stalham area would have considerable positive benefits. Creating areas of woodland or linking field boundaries around Stalham with other existing boundaries or features would have positive ecological and landscape impacts. The provision of usable open spaces near to existing and future housing (especially the provision of allotments) could be used to positively enhance the setting and impact of the settlement which currently appears over dense and featureless.
- 6.2.4** The sensitivity of this landscape Area is moderate but its capacity to accept new development is greatly reduced by its open nature and the starkness of existing development as a result.

6.3 Worstead, Coltishall, Hoveton and Smallburgh Area (LP3)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A central Area within the Type closely adjoining and infiltrated by the Broads giving considerable proximity character to the Area.
- Fairly open landscape in some parts (Tunstead and west of Barton Turf) whilst in others it has a more intimate and small scale character due to the presence of smaller field size, fruit farming, woodland or settlement pattern and proximity of other more small scale Areas (e.g. in the Broads).
- RAF Coltishall creates a distinctive sub-Area with a strong 'aerodrome' character with large expanses of hard and soft spaces.
- Hoveton is the largest settlement and is moderately dominant in the southern section of the Area but does not have extensive visual impact.
- Woodland presence is generally average with most woodland presence felt from adjoining Areas rather than within this Area.
- Settlement is dispersed but with some notable nucleated centres (Worstead, Hoveton and Horning. The remainder tend to be extended linear (Tunstead) or multi centred (Sloley and Barton Turf).

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- Farm size is generally moderate to large with quite a number of small holdings and smaller farms interspersed within the dispersed and somewhat fragmented settlement structure – a remnant of historical land ownership and development.
- Main roads are the A149, B1150, A1151 and A1062 which are busy and extensively improved / modern and re-aligned (with the exception of the A1062 which has not seen as many improvements). Street lighting is extensive in Hoveton only creating a sky loom of some prominence.

Evaluation

6.3.1 The condition of the landscape character varies considerably over the Area from Fair to Moderate. Disturbed areas include the Hoveton approaches which are flanked by modern generic housing estates (Tunstead and Horning Roads) and local authority estates (Stalham Road), RAF Coltishall with its distinctive character but which is surprisingly well integrated by existing large trees and woodlands around and within the site and the numerous road re-alignments and improvements which have tended to create a more busy and road noise dominated landscape within their corridors of influence (highly dependent upon visibility and wind direction).

6.3.2 The strength of character varies between Poor and Moderate.

Issues

6.3.3 This landscape is fairly robust and can accommodate modest and appropriate types of development if suitably and sensitively located to mirror and re-inforce the existing character type. Infill development in some settlements may be acceptable if of an appropriate scale and type. Design and size of properties is essential in this process. The gradual erosion of the character of most of the settlements has occurred during the past 40 years due to the imposition of generic suburban housing designs and attendant garden styles and boundaries without consideration to the strong vernacular which is often part of the original settlement but is lost because it was never present in a cohesive nucleated mass but as dispersed individual units whereby it tended to be overlooked.

6.3.4 Different farming styles have had considerable character input with new wind brake planting (mostly types of non-native alder) planted around fields to shelter soft fruit. The effect is quite significant but may be acceptable in some locations. The introduction of extensive areas of polytunnels would have more extensive impact but again, with appropriate screening within the context of a fairly enclosed and intimate landscape with few views (as around parts of Tunstead etc.) could be acceptable if appropriately sited.

6.3.5 Wind turbine development may be acceptable in some locations on a small scale within this Area, however this would require a further environmental and landscape assessment. Visual impacts and extents would be reduced by the relatively low, level landform but the size of turbines would be critical.

6.3.6 Opportunities to enhance and reinforce the landscape with suitable ecological features (hedges, replacement hedgerow trees particularly, and woodlands / grassland) would have considerable benefits to landscape as well. Opportunities should be taken to link existing features. There are pockets of ancient woodland around this Area (which are too small to be registered as such) and these should be targeted for suitable management, extension and linking projects.

6.3.7 The overall sensitivity of this landscape is Moderate, but there are some areas which are Robust and others which are more sensitive (especially close to the Broads).

6.4 Colby, Banningham, Felmingham and Skeyton Area (LP4)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Very open and very simple landscape with relatively few features or distinctive parts.
- A fairly dispersed settlement structure with only Felmingham and Banningham demonstrating any degree of nucleation (mostly by infill in the last 100 years).
- Rows of isolated hedgerow boundary trees dominate many parts where there are any hedgerow boundaries remaining. These are all of an age (mature or over mature) and may or may not have hedges associated with them.
- The interpolation of small valleys and the proximity of woodland in Westwick / Gunton Areas provide a sense of limit to the landscape and boundaries to it.

Evaluation

- 6.4.1** The condition of the landscape character is Fair to Moderate. The gradual removal of field boundaries, hedgerow trees and the extensive areas of arable, together with some often insensitive development (infill, barn conversions and redevelopments of existing formerly small properties) has caused significant erosion of the character of the landscape over much of the Area.
- 6.4.2** The strength of character is Fair to Moderate.

Issues

- 6.4.3** This landscape is in need of restoration and reinforcement of the underlying character. Gradual erosion has taken place over probably the last 50 – 100 years and this has left a generally low character, somewhat degraded feeling landscape.
- 6.4.4** Replacement of field boundaries, creation of new woodlands (linked to other features rather than just 'planted' in isolated locations) and refusal to accept developments which have the potential to further erode character (especially those which seek to replace, infill or provide new or existing housing units with over large, generic and suburban designs) should be resisted where possible. Other factors which erode character include the development of horsiculture.
- 6.4.5** This landscape is moderately sensitive to development notwithstanding its fairly bleak and eroded appearance, due to its long views and open nature which means that any adverse development located within has extensive impacts beyond the immediate area.
- 6.4.6** The development of RAF Coltishall (which has a unique but surprisingly wooded character) could well be an opportunity to integrate and extend this landscape character Area to include the former Base, reinforcing and adding to the existing woodland structures in both parts whilst recognising and respecting the different historical traditions and developments of both. A strategic approach to any development of the existing housing and base (hangars etc) would benefit from a comprehensive approach to considering the impact on the existing built and natural environment as a whole. RAF Coltishall is a relatively isolated, compact and rural 'base' (very unlike the larger bases of Lakenheath or even Sculthorpe) which is well integrated and 'hidden' within its own and the surrounding landscaping. The importance of the historical nature of the site, the intactness of its built history and the uniquely complete and extensive tree'd landscaping are important features to take into account. Developing this will require sensitivity.

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6.5 North Walsham Area (LP5)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Views of North Walsham and its church, particularly from the south and west.
- The entrances to North Walsham from the south, west and north are over fairly level ground and the buildings rise up out of this relatively open expanse. The majority of the industrial parts of the town are also located on these sides and form highly prominent typical 'town' entrance features. This is the commercial generic side of the Town
- The entrances to North Walsham from the east are in contrast, discrete, often sudden or of views which indicate an old town clustered around its church as seen from across a valley. There is little indication of industry or large busy roads. This is the rural, historic side of the Town.
- Considerable (for the Type) undulation in the part to the south of the Town (Scarborough Hill)
- Large roadways traversing the Area, particularly the A149 sited on a former railway line south of the Town, B1150 and B1145.
- Large housing estates have tended to be drawn out from the centre of the Town to the south and east and now straggle down the sides of the valley and connect with adjoining more rural Areas within the valley.
- Large dominant industrial estates now extend well beyond the northern limit of the Mundesley Road.

Evaluation

- 6.5.1** The condition of the landscape character of the Area varies between Poor and Moderate. The most intact parts are to the south of the Town whereas the more eroded parts are to the north, east and west. The landscape beyond the Town is typical of the less well featured parts of adjacent Areas of the Type (Low Plains) with removal of field boundaries and large open expanses of arable land being typical.
- 6.5.2** The strength of character varies between Low and Moderate as determined by the factors discussed above.

Issues

- 6.5.3** The landscape to the south of the Town has a strong transition to a more rural character and the impact of the adjacent recent development impinges strongly fairly close to the Town due to the rolling form of landscape and existing woodlands providing screening.
- 6.5.4** Additional development around North Walsham (on all sides) would benefit the wider landscape if it were able to work more strategically with the location of existing screening features (woodland and landform) and build upon these rather than rely on insubstantial and artificial looking 'screening belts' of trees closely situated around new development – or worse still, no such softening/integrating landscaping. This would also give opportunity to develop public open spaces which link to and open access to larger more mature landscapes/countryside beyond.
- 6.5.5** Particularly noticeable as a 'stark edge' to the Town are the entrances from Felmingham (with new 3 story development very prominent and largely unscreened or integrated (little or no space for large trees internally either) – particularly with the bland close boarded fence boundary to the countryside beyond), the Old Yarmouth Road, Tungate (housing estates) and Cromer Road areas (DIY store and former Crane Frauhauf site). The latter however has the benefit of some interposed mature trees which make a considerable difference to help to integrate and soften the appearance of the site (as do the down-lit, full cut off, low car park lights).

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- 6.5.6** Similarly, opportunities to develop open space should incorporate opportunities to provide allotments for residents who will may have small gardens as there is currently high demand for allotments in the town.

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7 Large Valleys

Location and boundaries

7.0.1 The Large Valleys comprise portions of the upper Broads (Bure and Ant in the east near Aylsham and North Walsham respectively) and the Wensum and lower reaches of the Glaven and Stiffkey rivers in the western half of the District. The tendency is for rivers to start as a Small River Valley character type or even to begin within another type, and if large enough, develop to Large Valley status at some point. The southward flowing rivers then develop into the Broads Type when they reach the alluvial plains of the Broads.

Table 7.1 Large Valleys

Picture 7.1



Open valley floor with pasture, small blocks of Poplar woods, meandering watercourse and farm buildings situated on higher land

Picture 7.2



Slow flowing river with individual willows and small copses of native trees surrounded by pasture

Picture 7.3



Road network tends to avoid valley bottom. Long views across valley bottom to opposite valley sides

Picture 7.4



Few individual properties situated on roads parallel to valley floor

Key characteristics

- A landscape with a moderately confined character which can nevertheless provide long views out across valleys or further from valley side across lower landscape types beyond.
- The topography tends to be in the form of shallow valleys with indistinct valley crests, often with minor dry or tributary valleys feeding into the main valley. The main valley will have a distinct valley floor or flood plain.

7 Large Valleys

- Field boundaries tend to be hedged, often with banks and trees. The format of boundaries tend to be similar between the valley sides and the neighbouring landscape type but to be distinctly different in the valley floor - becoming higher, thicker and more likely to contain informal hedgerow trees. Many valleys contain 'ring boundaries' dividing the valley floor from the sides.
- Field size is moderate to large on the valley sides tending to be smaller in the valley floor and where associated with settlement.
- The skyline is prominent but not dominant unless views exist across the valley.
- Woodlands within the valley can be in the form of blocks or more sinuous shapes which conform to and accentuate the topography of the valley. Deciduous woods predominate with some coniferous plantations.
- Landcover tends to be arable on the valley sides with a mix of arable, pasture, woodland and occasional fen or rough carr on the valley floor. Pasture can predominate in some areas and this landscape type has the largest concentration of pasture of any landscape type.
- Roads often conform to the topography of the landform and will run parallel to the valley floor or are sited along the valley crest.
- Settlement is often of distinctive form, again like the roads, conforming to the topography of the land and following the valley sides / roads, and often situated just above the valley floor. This forms linear settlement patterns which are continued in the Small River Valley Type.
- The overall character of the landscape is predominately rural with small linear villages often formed and constrained by the landform and flood plain, a strong distinction between valley floor and sides and moderate to long views sometimes very constrained due to hedges etc.

Landscape character

- 7.0.2** This landscape type contains a variety of habitats and is probably the most ecologically important landscape type beyond the coastal fringe. The Wensum is categorised as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and has attendant areas of SSSI and County Wildlife Sites on adjoining land. The Stiffkey, Glaven Bure and Ant all have areas of land, which are classified as SSSIs or County Wildlife Sites.
- 7.0.3** There is considerable variety and variation within the Large Valley Type just as there is within the Small Valley Type. Arguably there is more variation between small discrete areas within both these types than there is between some of the 'wider' general landscape types for the country beyond. Some of these discrete areas are no more than a few hundred metres in either direction, yet they create a totally different landscape type due to the land cover within them. Usually the variation is caused by remnant older land uses (old pastures bounded by large mature hedges and trees with fen or alder carr) and is particularly concentrated in the valley floors. This is often as a result of land tenure issues which have mitigated against the land being changed for modern or larger scale agriculture. Gravel extraction is evident in some areas.
- 7.0.4** Views within the landscape type tend to be very varied as a result of the variety of land cover parcels mentioned above. Some views are as long as in neighbouring landscape types such as Western / Tributary Farmland, whilst others are very intimate, especially within the valley floor areas. The majority fall somewhere between the two and one is conscious both of internal views of the valley itself and of the land beyond.
- 7.0.5** Woodland tends to be present in a higher perceived concentration than in other landscape types, often partly due to the presence of 'treed hedges' and small copses and the restricted nature of views within the valley itself. However there is a distinct difference in the structure of woods within the valley, especially close to the valley floor. Here most trees are deciduous, there are higher concentrations of older trees and some woodland types are only found in this location (or Small Valleys / Broads for the same reason) including wooded carr (mainly alder and willow with some

Large Valleys 7

hazel oak and birch) and stands of poplars. These latter are quite prominent features in several areas as the trees are reaching maturity. Shooting woods of conifers are largely confined to valley sides if present at all.

- 7.0.6** Settlement tends to be in the form of small linear villages which in many cases appear to have developed as a result of gradual coalescence of cottages / small holdings / farmsteads. Larger settlements (Fakenham Walsingham and Aylsham (which is outside the District)) have acknowledged the presence of the river valley but have not been 'developed by it' to the same degree. The Wensum at Fakenham has been radically re-aligned over the centuries and parts of the town which did develop as a result of the presence of the river (for transport) are now some distance from the water. Elsewhere, there are clear signs that the presence of the river and or flood plain has had a marked influence on the development of the settlement pattern. Isolated and individual cottages / farms and small holdings predominantly cluster along the roads parallel to the flood plain, indicating the historical nature of the farming practice and the type of land tenure which was to be found in valleys. Such tenures tended to include areas of wet pasture and areas for arable / dry pasture / woodland within one holding. Similarly, there was a higher tendency for land in these areas to be owner occupied or smaller tenanted farms - creating smaller ad-hoc enclosed fields, smaller houses and a more intimate landscape.
- 7.0.7** Roads vary between major A roads such as the A1067 from Fakenham to Norwich and A1065 Fakenham to Swaffham and the more minor roads which predominate throughout the rest of the valleys. It is noticeable that there are few major roads using the valleys as a 'thoroughfare' the only exception being the former A140 through Ingworth which is now by-passed. Most minor roads conform to the topography of the valleys, either crossing at right angles or running more or less parallel to the valley floor. The landscape type tends to be moderately quiet as a result, except where the minor roads form a vital link to other settlements (i.e. the Letheringsett to Blakeney road).

Geological character

- 7.0.8** The accumulated soils within the large valleys are mainly alluviums which consist of silts, clays, sands and some peats. In a few places post glacial gravels have been deposited as river terraces.

Ecological character

- 7.0.9** The existing ecological character of the area is predominantly arable land divided by hedged and frequently banked field boundaries with areas which have wet ditches as well. There is often a marked difference between the land uses on the valley sides (arable) and valley floor where pasture may be present in largish blocks. There is often a correlation between pasture, flat valley floors, alluvial or peat deposits, small areas of wet woodland and high hedges / wet ditches. This results in one of the most diverse and ecologically valuable sets of habitats in the District. Pasture and woodland may be unimproved. The rivers are often designated sites (SSSI / SAC) and surrounding land is often similarly designated or County Wildlife Site. The field size tends to be smaller than average and can be very small. Valley sides tend to have 'standard' hedges, hedgerow tree presence and field size to match the adjoining landscape Type.
- 7.0.10** Agri-environment schemes have often been used to reinstate drainage patterns and there are areas of arable reversion. On valley sides, grass margins and new hedge / copse planting has occurred in some areas.
- 7.0.11** Woodlands tend to be in two forms - those on valley sides which are often relatively modern (150 years old or younger) and may have been planted for shooting or commercial (conifer) purposes. These woodlands have a limited ecological value. There are a few locations where older woodland assemblages occur (Glaven) on valley sides. The second woodland form are woodlands situated

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on valley floors. These tend to be older, more 'natural' in content and less regular in form - often forming a boundary to the watercourses or field patterns. Wet woodlands may be found on valley floors. The ecological value of these woodlands is significantly greater than that on valley sides by and large. Wet woodland is a BAP habitat priority type.

7.0.12 Heathland is a feature of certain valleys (Glaven, Ant Valley). It is situated on valley sides and associated with outcrops of sandy and gravelly land. Where it is present, it is a significant ecological feature and a BAP habitat priority type.

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Woodland where present - especially wet woodland.
- Heathland - A feature more associated with Rolling Coastal Heath and Arable and Wooded with Parkland but present in limited amounts in the Ant and Glaven Valleys.
- Grassland and Meadows - especially wet grassland.
- Reedbeds and fens.
- Chalk streams.

Table 7.2 Large Valleys: Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Moderately confined but with notable longer views	Good	<p>The more remote areas would be radically changed by development of any sort.</p> <p>Certain specific views and viewpoints are particularly sensitive due to the nature of the view (long views over valleys to valley sides beyond).</p> <p>Other areas which are more enclosed and have already accepted a certain degree of development may be less sensitive to additional development which respects and reinforces the character of the area.</p> <p>Some confined areas have additional constraints in terms of being more remote, with more intact countryside features (high hedges, old trees, pasture, river views) whether or not new development is visible is largely immaterial to the change in the character of these landscapes such is their sensitivity.</p>	High
Landform of shallow valleys with indistinct valley crests and minor tributary valleys. Valleys have flood plains	Good	<p>The landform lends itself to careful use to integrate development sensitively but other factors strongly limit type and degree of development that the landscape can accommodate.</p> <p>Changes to cropping regimes or to woodland cover can both enhance and diminish the sense of difference between valley floor, sides</p>	Moderate

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		and crests and accentuate or diminish the distinctive topography.	
Landcover	Varies from Good to Poor	<p>Within most valleys are areas where a diversity of ecologically valuable habitats exist (Grassland, heath, woodland, fen, reedbed) however many of these have seen significant declines over the past 50 years and many existing habitats are not maintained in favourable condition.</p> <p>Development pressure can easily erode small sensitive 'remnant' intimate landscapes which are associated with existing settlements because they are 'screened'. The features which provide the screening are of themselves more valuable than the open landscapes in many instances.</p> <p>Farming economics can require changes from pasture to arable.</p> <p>There are many opportunities to increase the ecological and landscape potential of areas through restoration / recreation of habitat types.</p>	High
Skyline	Good	<p>Avoid developments which affect or impinge on open skyline views or which would adversely affect the night time experience of dark landscapes.</p> <p>This could impact upon the siting of wind turbines within this landscape Type and those of adjacent Types</p>	Moderate to High
Field Boundaries	Varies greatly between Good and Poor	<p>Modern agriculture tends to require larger cropping units - needing larger fields.</p> <p>Smaller fields on valley floors tend to be insulated from some modern agricultural pressures by the nature of the land (wetter) and by agri-environment schemes.</p> <p>Existing high and thick hedges give a strong sense of enclosure and can assist in integrating suitable development which is in character with surrounding development into the landscape. However these are often areas of remnant older landscapes, highly valued for</p>	High to Moderate

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>their rare character and appearance, wildlife habitat etc where development is fundamentally inappropriate.</p>	
Settlement (villages, edge of town and isolated farms etc)	Good to Fair	<p>Villages Areas where large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller fields still contribute significantly to the character of the village could be protected from development. There is a strong tendency for the character of villages to be altered by modern high density development within existing boundaries. Additional development should reflect the morphology (often linear) of the existing settlement, especially with regard to its development within the confines of the topography of the valley.</p> <p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p> <p>Towns Considerable erosion of character of the valleys can be occasioned by inappropriate development which does not reflect or respect the topography or local amenities of the valley / river area. Developments of large inappropriately sited or coloured buildings can impact on the orientation of the settlement away from its traditional relationship with the valley.</p> <p>There are opportunities to utilise development to engage a settlement with a valley if it is currently peripheral - this can enhance the valley and local utilisation of it.</p> <p>Isolated farmsteads / large houses / cottages These have traditionally been associated with working the land, providing accommodation for farmers and farm workers and as such the style and nature of the developments tend to intimately reflect the purpose (in this case very controlled and organised) of agriculture. Future developments could attempt to take this <i>raison d'être</i> as the test for suitability and attempt to integrate with existing densities and character styles. Modern generic agricultural buildings result in difficulties enabling such</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>developments to respect the character of previous building styles, i.e. excessively large units situated on valley crests. Suitable locations and landscaping can assist but there is a distinct contradiction between enabling some developments and retaining those areas where character is strongest.</p> <p>The redevelopment of redundant barn complexes both within, on the edge and especially outside settlement boundaries alters the character of the built and surrounding environment from a rural working context to a leisure / residential use. The impact of this can vary considerably depending upon the execution. Redundant agricultural buildings in decay can add to the sense of character and history of the landscape as they have done for millennia, changing their use transforms both.</p>	
Woodlands - blocks and more sinuous forms	Good to Fair	<p>Opportunities to increase or alter (e.g. by substituting willow / alder for Poplar plantations) woodland in certain areas could enhance the character of valleys in certain areas.</p> <p>The removal of woodlands would be usually contrary to enhancing the character of the Type. Wet woods often have.</p>	High

Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

- 7.0.13** The overall condition of this Type is fair to good depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. There has been considerable erosion and degradation of rural features in many areas - particularly loss of hedgerows and pasture during the past 50 years. Generally, the built features are in a moderately stable (un-changing) condition, comparable with all the other rural areas of the District. The major exceptions being Fakenham and to a lesser extent North Walsham where new development (residential and employment) have extended into valleys over the last 20 years considerably eroding the character of these areas.
- 7.0.14** The strength of character is generally moderate to high with interactions between features and elements, particularly landform, landcover and enclosure / settlement providing the defining 'sense of place'. The degree of intactness of the character of the landscape varies considerably between 'intact' remnant and historically interesting areas to significantly degraded urban and rural areas (development of unsuitable types and loss of features respectively).

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Recent landscape impacts

- 7.0.15** Changes to the agricultural economy have tended to see impacts in introducing ecological improvements resulting from agri-environment grants, particularly arable reversion, wetland management and hedgerow planting / grassed margins.
- 7.0.16** Development pressures around major towns have had detrimental effects and reduced the opportunities for subsequent pro-active restoration, amenity provision (access to countryside) or creation of new habitats.
- 7.0.17** The increasing wealth in the area is demonstrated by numbers of properties being enlarged / improved and sub-divided all of which have affected the appearance and character of settlements - often in individually modest but cumulatively significant ways (fencing replacing hedged boundaries / the loss of large gardens with mature trees and the resultant massing of buildings). New agricultural buildings are increasingly being erected to replace older barns etc which are in turn being converted to residential use, often with a significant change to the character of the landscape to which they contribute. The Type has tended to lag behind other rural areas of the District but is catching up.

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

- Significant numbers of new properties either sited within or outside existing settlements. The siting of new developments needs to take particular account of the existing structure of settlements - prominently located 'upper valley side' developments are often inappropriate.
- Subdivision of existing larger gardens within settlements.
- New agricultural buildings sited in locations away from or prominently within existing farm complexes
- Wind turbines where these would impinge upon open skyline views.
- Outside lighting - both street type and decorative / domestic.
- Use of un-sympathetic boundary treatments, particularly bordering public highways and on edges of settlements where close boarded fencing / other semi/sub urban styles can appear incongruous.
- 'Improvement' of access tracks and entrance ways with urban style features (brick entrance pillars, gates, removal of 'rough track with grassed central margin, use of kerbing, close mown verges).
- Telecom masts in prominent locations.
- New road layouts which introduce standard 'suburban' highway features (kerbing / signage / widening)
- Extensions to properties which are too large or gentrify rural settlements / locations.
- Barn conversions and other property construction within the open countryside which introduce 'suburban' features such as surfaced drives / domestic style gates and fences / garden style planting and parking areas / overly large windows and external lighting etc. Frequently a barn conversion in an isolated location away from other settlement can introduce a strongly suburban character.
- Biofuel crops have potential to be integrated within this landscape Type with some difficulty depending upon the type of crop and its location. Important considerations would be to avoid excessively large 'blocks' of biofuels such as short rotation coppice (of Miscanthus or Willow etc) where these impinge upon the views and landform of the location. By using rotations / species which do not appear excessively higher than existing hedgerows (which could be allowed to grow in height anyway) impact would be minimised. Valley sides and valley bottoms are likely to be more sensitive to their distinctive landform presenting more prominent 'viewing'

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of the crop / and higher potential habitat loss (grassland / potential grassland / wetlands / wooded carr) / damage to the (often) oldest intact bits of countryside.

- Gravel extraction and straightening of natural water courses.

b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- Retention of rural features - tracks with grassed central margins, old fencing / gateposts / walls.
- Properties which are of a scale and location which respect the individual form of the settlement in which they are located Landscaping around new properties which actively blends with existing features rather than tries simply to screen new development.
- Landscaping which uses native as opposed to non-native species.
- Landscaping which builds upon and enhances existing trees, hedges and other features on and adjacent to the proposed development site.

c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character; Ecological Network Priorities for this Landscape Type

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Opportunities to buffer existing watercourses by the introduction of heath, scrub and grassland along margins should be a priority.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- Where possible, landcover changes should seek to reflect and enhance existing landforms of watercourses / the break between valley floor and sides etc.

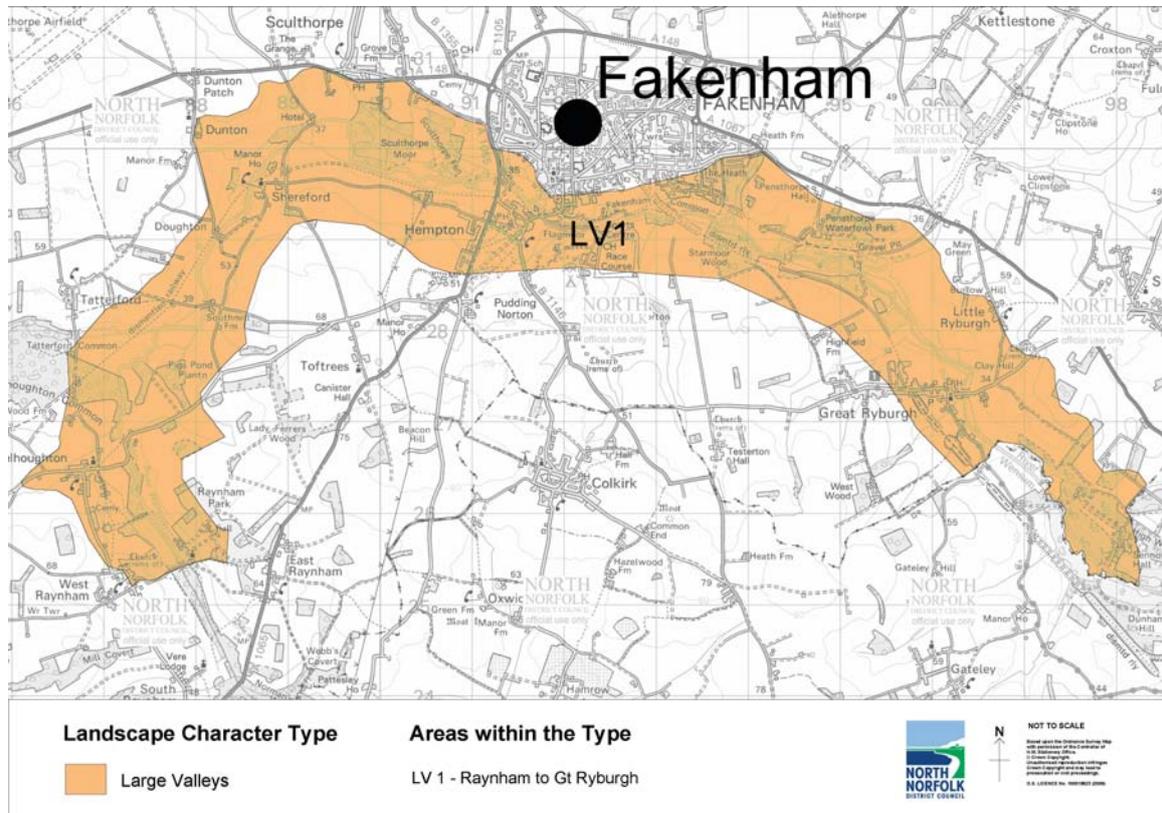
Areas within the type

- LV1 – Raynham to Great Ryburgh
 - LV2 – Stiffkey to Warham
 - LV3 – Wiveton and Letheringsett
 - LV4 - White Horse Common to Briggate
 - LV5 – Saxthorpe to Itteringham
-

7 Large Valleys

7.1 Raynham to Great Ryburgh (LV1)

Map 7.1 LV1



Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- The largest river in the District, the Wensum also has the highest level of ecological designations (SAC – the main River and parts of the valley floor, SSSI – significant bodies of land within the valley floor area and ‘County Wildlife Site’ status for other areas (woodlands and some grasslands) adjoining the valley floor and sides.
- A definite simple valley topography with a relatively wide valley floor.
- Complex drainage system relating to former mills and IDB drains (for agricultural purposes).
- Substantial areas of former gravel workings near Pensthorpe which are now a bird reserve and visitor attraction.
- Large parkland with substantial lake formed from dammed area just off the line of the River at Raynham (C18th)
- The Town of Fakenham and the extended village of Hempton effectively meet at the valley floor and there is a complex interplay of settlement, riverine, industrial and surprisingly high quality ecological land types within a very small and discrete area.
- Views of the settlement of both Town and Village are very significant from both within and outside the valley (especially from the south)
- Nationally important wildlife reserves at Hempton and Sculthorpe provide a strong visitor attraction based on wildlife in addition to Pensthorpe.

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- Former railway lines converge at Fakenham within the valley providing potential and actual access and dividing physically (by the presence of raised mostly wooded embankments) some parts of the valley.
- Beyond the immediate area of the Town, the field size is generally large within the valley sides and relatively small on the valley floor. There are considerable amounts of pasture on the valley floor but relatively little on the valley sides.
- There are areas of fen and reeds either side of Fakenham (Pensthorpe and Sculthorpe Fen parts).
- Good views of Fakenham town centre and its prominent church.

Evaluation

- 7.1.1** The condition of the landscape character is Poor to Good. There are relatively few poor areas (associated with industrial development within and adjacent to the valley floor) and much larger Good areas (Sculthorpe Fen and some of the less eroded landscape within the valley).
- 7.1.2** The strength of character varies between Moderate and Good. The degraded areas are relatively small and discrete which limits the adverse effect on the wider landscape of the Area.

Issues

- 7.1.3** This is a landscape of considerable contrasts (as are most of the Large Valley Areas) with more than average diversity of character within it. There are locations which have strong natural intactness and are being well managed (Sculthorpe Fen and other parts of the valley floor). These parts may be fairly open or enclosed and will probably demonstrate considerable ecological value (SSSI status and close proximity to the River). These are locations which need conservation and are highly sensitive but at the same time have considerable statutory protection. Nevertheless, the land adjacent to them or within the same visual envelope can be highly industrial or not protected and potentially subject to future pressure for development. These are locations which strongly need restoration or at least screening and buffering in order to retain the setting of the rural and frequently almost remote feeling places. There are many of these in close proximity to the Town of Fakenham (between the Mill and 3 Brick Arches, and around Goggs Mill Bridge and Hempton), sometimes no more than a few acres of wet woodland and enclosed fen or grazing marsh. Considerable erosion of the character of these landscapes can and has taken place during the past 30 years due to the expansion of industrial land / buildings, (particularly to the north of the River near the centre of the Town, the construction of Tescos almost within the valley floor, the area around Hempton close to the south side of the River and at Gt Ryburgh maltings) the conversion of properties and the excessive gentrification of land for gardens and the large estate developments to the south of the Town on the former Heath area. Both have had a very adverse effect on one of the most important non-coastal ecological and landscape features in Norfolk – urbanising them.
- 7.1.4** The opportunity to create a linked set of landscapes within this valley would be highly recommended in order to restore and reinforce the existing character. If this could be combined with some degree of additional public access to enhance public amenity, the benefit would be significantly greater.
- 7.1.5** Further beyond the Town, the landscape becomes very open and almost bare in places, here, field boundaries, hedgerow trees and woodland are rare. This landscape similarly appears to be eroded from the character of adjoining locations which have a strong woodland, fen, hedge and tree'd character. Restoration would be appropriate to enhance the ecological and landscape character of this location. Developments such as the large poultry units at Hempton tend to be very visible and attempts to 'hide' them by the use of artificial banks can be only partly effective. More extensive integration with existing features would be helpful.

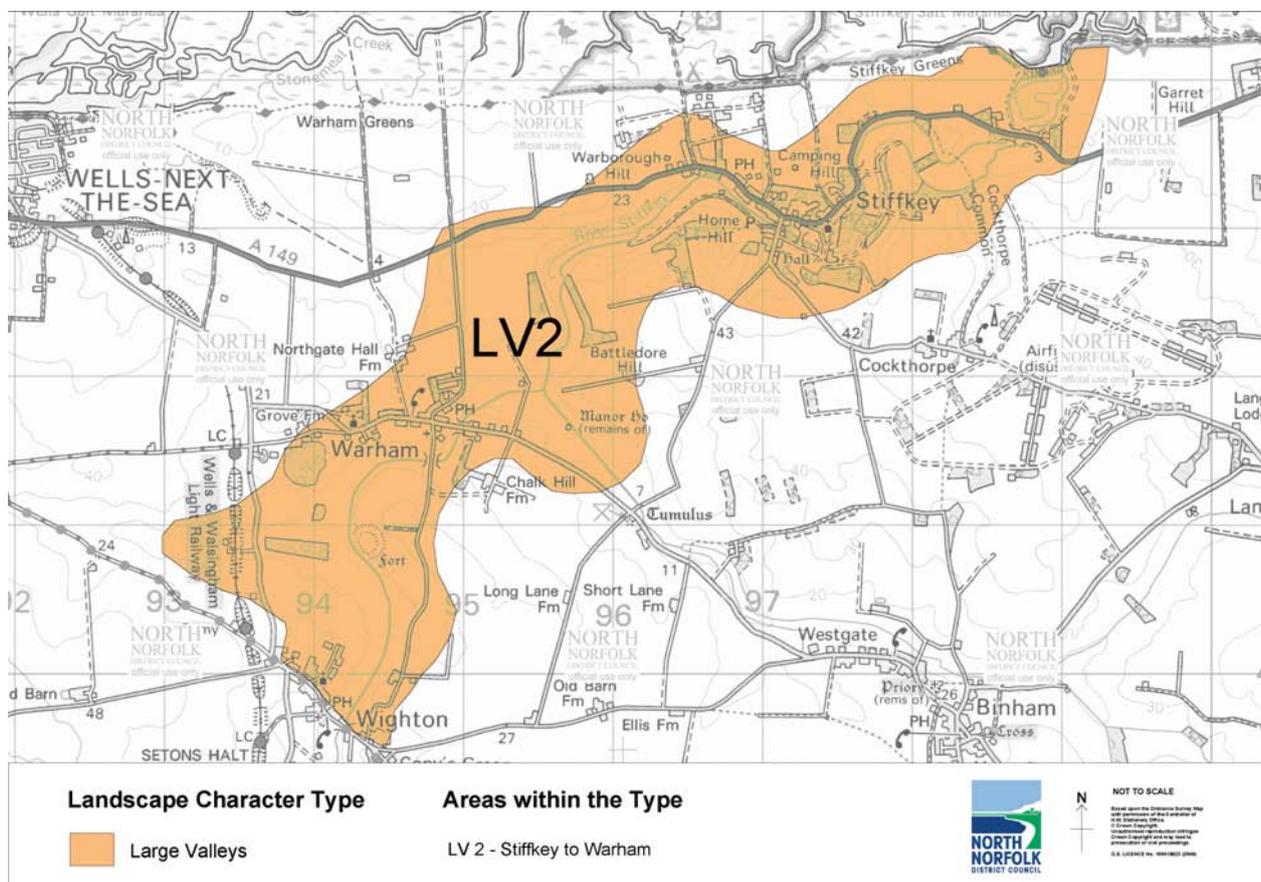
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7.1.6 The upper reaches are partly dominated by parkland (Raynham Hall early C18th parkland) which reaches down into the valley floor and has a large off River lake associated with the park. The park itself is much reduced in area due to arable use but older and more recent shelter belts of trees are apparent. This is a fairly sensitive landscape due to its open nature. Features such as agricultural buildings etc easily stand out within it if not carefully sited and landscaped. The villages of Raynham and Helhoughton are visually set within a more wooded and mature landscape, with numbers of large mature trees within the settlements themselves providing a significant setting to existing properties and a screen / integration within the wider landscape so that one comes upon the villages almost 'suddenly' from some directions.

7.1.7 Also within the valley floor / sides parts are significant areas of woodland carr – enclosing the landscape and providing a very strong distinctive and isolated, almost semi-wilderness feel to these parts. This landscape is very sensitive to change.

7.2 Stiffkey to Warham (LV2)

Map 7.2 LV2



Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Wide valley floor which is frequently flooded.
- Deep canalised river with low raised banks due to dredging.
- Villages which tend to develop on the valley sides rather than floor and which may have a bridge crossing linking sections of the village (Stiffkey and Warham).
- Compact and mainly older building style village settlement structure.
- Topography of steep sided valleys with prominent undulations.
- Wooded valley sides.
- Northern end of valley has been excavated beyond 'White Bridges' for waterfowl refuge.

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- Significant Iron Age Fort at Warham.
- Proximity to coastline – feeling of light and coastal ecology (birdlife).

Evaluation

- 7.2.1** The condition of the landscape Character is generally Good but with areas which are degraded or changed considerably (excavated area to the north of White Bridges has an artificial appearance more akin to former gravel extraction areas due to the presence of banks etc.).
- 7.2.2** The strength of character is Strong due to the topography and relatively intact settlement structure / land cover. The river was probably tidal for the full length of this Area and became non-tidal at the southern boundary (Wighton) prior to embankment in the C16th.

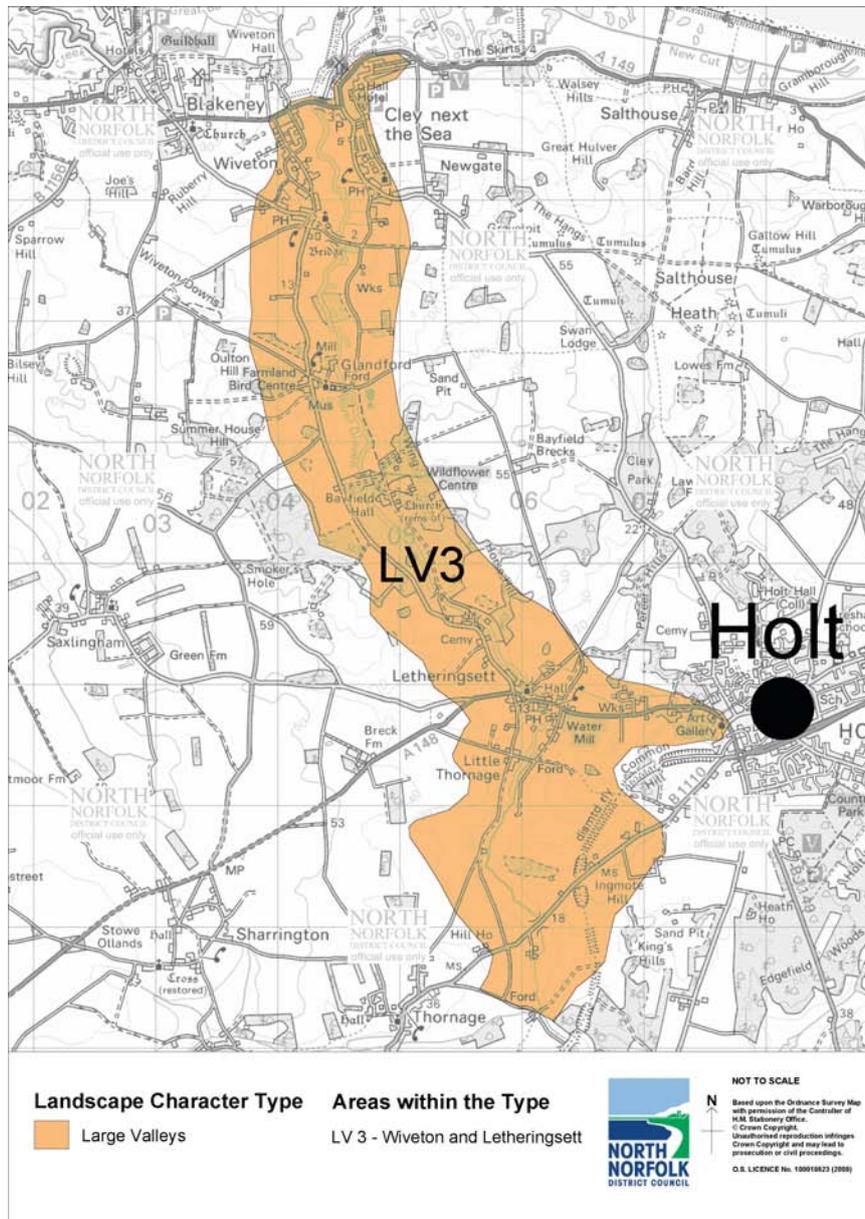
Issues

- 7.2.3** Recent housing developments in both settlements have retained the character of the Area. Arable reversion and particularly partial flooding of some areas of valley floor have had a positive effect on ecology (bird life mainly).
- 7.2.4** Additional development should seek to conform and mirror the sensitive type of development already integrated within the settlements.
- 7.2.5** This area is sensitive to changes and developments which would have a negative effect upon the Area include; large farm buildings in isolated locations – especially on valley floor or skyline away from other farm buildings and woodlands; Barn conversions where these may introduce ‘gardens’ on former agricultural land which tend to emphasise the change in use to highly residential rather than rural purposes; telecom masts where these intrude on skylines.
- 7.2.6** This is an important landscape for its ecological and visual amenity qualities. The river part extending right up to the headwaters is an important ecological feature of this part of the District, providing an important diversity of riverine and adjacent (woodland, wooded carr, wet ditches, grassland and hedges with hedgerow trees) habitats. Effectively it is large enough to support significant populations of even Otters and Water Vole as well as transporting species throughout this part of the District. It should be seen as a core area from which to develop connections reaching out into the relatively barren adjoining landscape Areas.
- 7.2.7** Opportunities to reduce O/H power cables and increase arable reversion would be beneficial as would removing the low raised banks alongside the River Stiffkey in suitable locations to allow controlled flooding of the food plain to protect other sensitive residential areas and provide additional habitat / remove the artificial appearance of the watercourse.
- 7.2.8** A sensitive landscape which has absorbed some physical changes to alter the ecological carrying capacity of the landscape – not always without cost to the character of the landscape from a visual perspective.

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7.3 Wiveton to Letheringsett (LV3)

Map 7.3 LV3



Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Wide former estuary landscapes in lower reaches with large skies and light reflected from the sea just over the Coast Road.
- Settlement concentrated on valley sides (Cley and Wiveton) at the northern estuary end but allowed to drift to the valley centre and floor by Letheringsett.
- The prominent parkland of Bayfield Hall which encompasses and divides the valley mid way.
- Long estate boundary walls.
- The fairly strong topography of the valley sides which are both relatively steep for the Type and contain the unusual feature of heathland – a factor repeated in the upper reaches of the River.
- The model village of Glandford (C19th) formed as part of the Bayfield Estate.
- The road network which follows both valley floor sides only until Glandford.

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Evaluation

- 7.3.1** The condition of the landscape character is generally Good. Few elements have eroded or degraded the character and what developments have occurred have generally integrated well within the existing structure of the landscape.
- 7.3.2** The strength of character is Strong with a definite feeling of a presence to the sea followed by a strong Parkland element and latterly at the southern end by a development into a rural quiet pastoral valley.

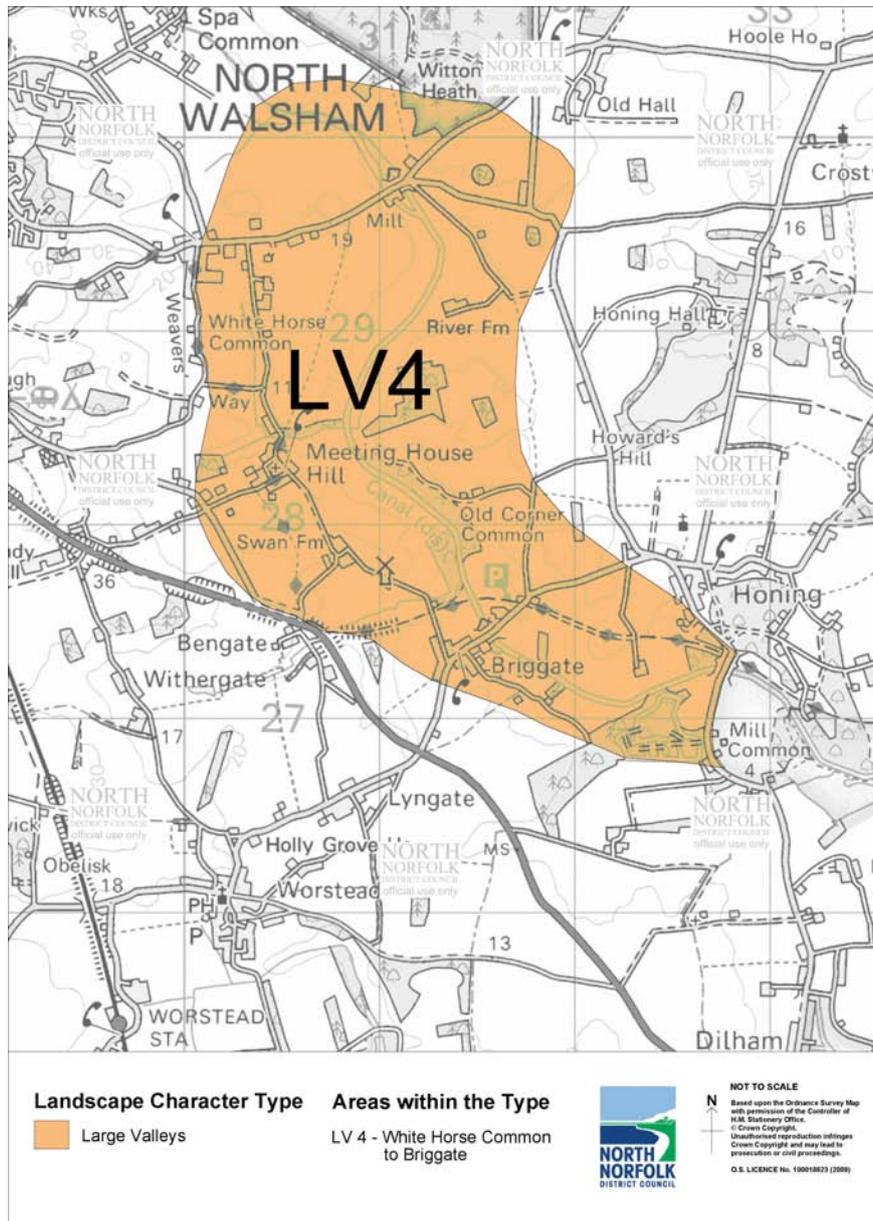
Issues

- 7.3.3** The existing management of this landscape (all of which is notably a Conservation Area) appears to have retained its character remarkably intact. The diversity of character within such a small area is similar to but very different from that in the Walsingham / Stiffkey area although many of the elements are the same but their translation is very different. The landscape is very sensitive to minor changes in architectural or land use styles and particular issues will undoubtedly be the theme of creeping suburbanisation and gentrification which ultimately create a generic appearance. Outdoor lighting, extensions to garden areas (especially on the floor of the valley where these have an adverse effect on ecology) and means of enclosure (fences, inappropriately fancy walls and gates etc) would all have a detrimental effect on character.
- 7.3.4** This is an important landscape for its ecological and visual amenity qualities. The river part extending right up to the headwaters is an important ecological feature of this part of the District, providing an important diversity of riverine and adjacent (woodland, wooded carr, wet ditches, grassland and hedges with hedgerow trees) habitats. Effectively it is large enough to support significant populations of even Otters and Water Vole as well as transporting species throughout this part of the District. It should be seen as a core area from which to develop connections reaching out into the relatively barren adjoining landscape Areas.
- 7.3.5** Opportunities to link existing habitats with adjoining grassland, hedgerows, watercourses (ditches and flooded areas) woodland and heathland within and outside the site would all have a positive effect on enhancing both the ecology and landscape character of the area. Research has been carried out by the University of East Anglia (Adrian Southern and Tim O’Riordan), the Norfolk Coast Partnership and the River Glaven Conservation Group on implementing such opportunities.
- 7.3.6** A sensitive landscape with a strong historical basis and ecological elements. The adjoining settlements of Cley and Wiveton give a strong character to the lower regions (of a historical coastal appearance – with views of the churches and small older cottages particularly important) but this is never dominant. The prominent characteristic is of an old rural coastal landscape.

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7.4 White Horse Common to Briggate (LV4)

Map 7.4 LV4



Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Valley sides are not well defined. The valley has a curious amalgam of terracing and small hills within the context of a larger valley. Only the valley floor is well defined and wide.
- Canalised water course (North Walsham to Dilham Canal) once used for commercial traffic (with several disused locks and wharfs) which is fairly small, feeds into the Broads and becomes the River Ant.
- Moderately enclosed and well wooded with reed fringed water course.
- Valley floor is often bounded by 'ring garth' older field boundary.
- Valley floor contains mixture of pasture, woodland and rough herbage fen.
- Settlement tends to be dispersed and set well up the valley sides, often running parallel to the watercourse except at Briggate where there is a bridge crossing within the settlement.

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- The proximity to North Walsham is not particularly apparent due to the landform, higher woodland areas and the low dominance of the settlement type as seen from this location. Night time light issues are however very apparent.
- Two mills exist at Briggate (extensively decayed) and at White Horse Common (still functional but asbestos buildings).

Evaluation

- 7.4.1** The condition of the landscape character is generally Moderate to Good. The valley floor features are of high ecological value and the Area is surprisingly rural and intact. The valley sides have experienced field boundary loss which has eroded the character somewhat.
- 7.4.2** The strength of character is Moderate to Strong with a similar distribution on the valley sides and valley floor parts respectively.

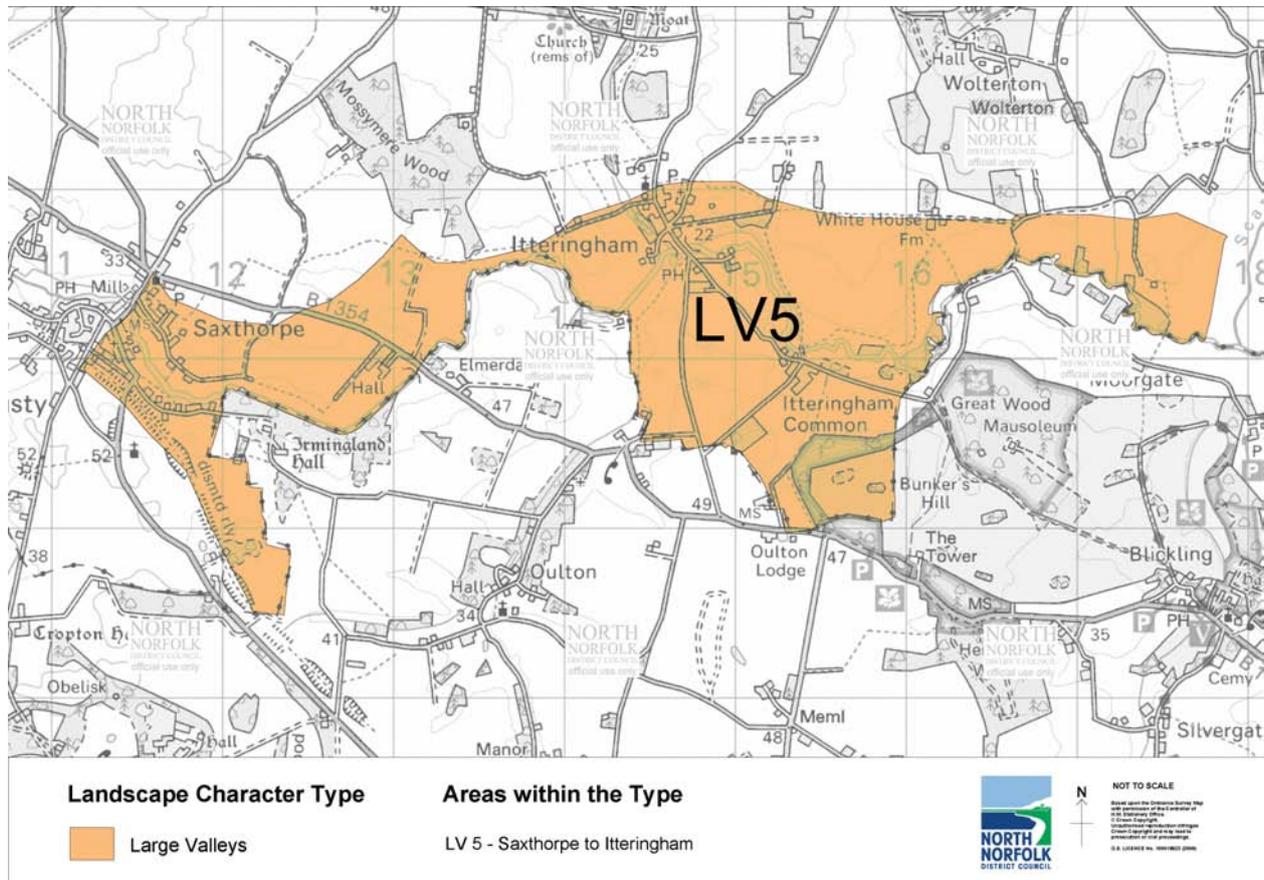
Issues

- 7.4.3** This is an important ecological and landscape extension to the Broads. The canal/river part extending right up to the headwaters at Southrepps is one of the most important ecological features of this part of the District, providing an important diversity of riverine and adjacent (fen, woodland, wooded carr, wet ditches, grassland and hedges with hedgerow trees) habitats. Effectively it is large enough to support significant populations of even Otters and Water Vole as well as transporting species throughout this part of the District. It should be seen as a core area from which to develop connections reaching out into the relatively barren adjoining landscape Areas.
- 7.4.4** The settlement development in this Area has been extensively added to over the years with considerable 'ad hoc' infill of very variable types and designs creating an inconsistent style and form of settlement. This is probably a result of its historical development from common land which was simply settled and carved out of 'waste land' areas, without any sense of an overall guide or control to its development. This has tended to allow in recent years some unhelpful designs and layouts which if continued would considerably undermine the existing character of the landscape. This is a landscape which would benefit from restoration and reinforcement, especially on the valley sides to extend the features into parts which have become divorced from the character Type to an extent.
- 7.4.5** The landscape is moderately sensitive to change. Buffering and separation from development occurring around North Walsham should be considered important to retaining the sense of individuality of the whole Valley complex not just this Area of it.

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7.5 Saxthorpe to Itteringham (LV5)

Map 7.5 LV5



Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Isolated and rural feel, even more than some of the other parts of the large valley Type, possibly resulting from the distance from any large town or busy village / holiday area.
- Nucleated settlement pattern (to a large extent) with Itteringham clearly a controlled development estate type village (proximity of Blickling, Mannington and Wolterton) whilst Saxthorpe and Corpusty have a more 'ad hoc' development which has nevertheless in this case lead to a fairly nucleated form (by gradual infill over decades) from what was a fairly dispersed form 200 years ago.
- Settlement is concentrated in the valley floor areas with extensions running up the sides.
- The road network only partly conforms to the valley sides or watercourse and more often appears to be independent of it. Roads tend to coincide on crossings. There are some valley side (ring garth) delineating roads at Saxthorpe only.
- Elsewhere ring garth delineation between valley floor and sides is present in the field boundaries and ditches.
- Isolated small / medium farms near the valley sides are present in preference to other locations in the Area or adjacent Areas.
- Large new roadway at Saxthorpe is prominent in the landscape.
- Adjacent network of woodlands offering opportunities for ecological and wildlife corridors.

Evaluation

7.5.1 The condition of the landscape character is generally Moderate to Good. Parts of the Area which

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demonstrate the most intact character are the valley floor and some parts of the sides. The village of Itteringham is notable for its intact historic qualities (Conservation Area – small cottages of brick and flint set in large gardens) which is in considerable contrast to the more eclectic and organic Saxthorpe (which is not a Conservation Area and has a mix of older and modern generic and vernacular buildings). The valley sides may have seen considerable field boundary removal. This Area and adjoining Areas are notable for hedgerow trees – many of which have gone in the last 100 years or are nearing the end of their lives.

- 7.5.2** The strength of character is Moderate to Strong. With weaker areas on the valley sides where field boundaries / hedgerow trees and other features have been eroded. Also where the main B1149 now cuts a swathe through the eastern part of Saxthorpe.

Issues

- 7.5.3** As with the North Walsham / Dilham Canal Area, this is an important ecological and landscape extension to the Broads. The river part extending right up to the headwaters at Briston is an important ecological feature of this part of the District, providing an important diversity of riverine and adjacent (fen, woodland, wooded carr, wet ditches, grassland and hedges with hedgerow trees) habitats. Effectively it is large enough to support significant populations of even Otters and Water Vole as well as transporting species throughout this part of the District. It should be seen as a core area from which to develop connections reaching out into the relatively barren adjoining landscape Areas.
- 7.5.4** The existing settlement structure and diversity does much to give character to this very limited part of the much wider and larger extent of this Area (in neighbouring District). The protection of the special qualities of Itteringham and to a lesser extent those of the enclosed and yet diverse Saxthorpe (with its small and distinctive areas of paddocks and small fields surrounding and within the settlement, separating and ‘ruralising’ this settlement) is very important in maintaining the character of the landscape as rural and remote from suburban influences.

7 Large Valleys

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Location and boundaries

8.0.1 The small river valleys are located throughout the North Norfolk district and within other character types. The rivers vary in size from small tributaries found at the head of larger rivers to complete rivers in their own right.

Table 8.1 Small Valleys

Picture 8.1



Narrow lanes and extensive wooded areas on the valley floor provide a sense of enclosure

Picture 8.2



The land cover is predominantly rough grazing and meadow towards the valley floor

Picture 8.3



The small river valleys are characterised by valley sides with relatively shallow gradients and expansive wooded areas

Picture 8.4



The rivers themselves are often little more than small streams

Key characteristics

- Undulating landscapes, with valley sides varying in gradient.
- Landscape becomes more enclosed towards the valley floors.
- The land use on the valley sides is predominantly arable, with areas of pasture, rough grazing and meadow towards and on the valley floor.
- Field sizes tend to be medium to large.
- Field boundaries consist of relatively high hedgerows that are species rich and often contain mature trees towards the valley floor, with shrub hedgerows on the valley sides.
- Views in these areas are very restricted and enclosed on the valley floors, and open out the higher one travels up the valley sides. The top plateaus of some valleys are very open with

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extensive views, similar to the surrounding character areas such as the North Walsham Plain, in which around half of the small river valleys are contained.

- Woodland cover is extensive in the small river valleys, with hedgerows with trees in, belts of trees, and areas of more dense woodland and plantations.
- The roads around the river valleys are predominantly 'C' or unclassified, and in the valley floor areas, can be very narrow and winding. The A140 and A149 run between three of the main small river valleys in the east of the district, and the A148 and a few 'B' roads run closer to the rivers in the western half.
- Settlement in the river valleys is concentrated along the road sides, with many of the roads running alongside the rivers.
- The overall character of the small river valleys is that of a rural, wooded, enclosed, pastoral landscape.

Landscape character

- 8.0.2** The small river valleys are located within different landscape character types and are dispersed throughout the district, but are all identifiable as having a distinct character. This character is of a landscape that is undulating, enclosed, pastoral and wooded. The majority of the small river valleys descend gradually to the valley floor, in comparison to the larger river valleys, which have much steeper sides. At the top of the valleys sides, the landscape varies depending on which character type the valley is located in, but tends to be arable, and relatively flat.
- 8.0.3** Woodland cover and tree presence vary considerably across the Type but where trees and woods are present they make the most dominant contribution to character. In sections of valleys where trees, taller hedges and or woodlands are present, views are generally restricted in these areas, a feature which can extend onto the valley sides. Where trees / hedging are less prominent, the slopes themselves may also constrain any extensive long views that can be gained from the surrounding open landscapes on higher ground. Any built structures that exist within this character landscape tend not be visible from any distance, and can be well-hidden from view. This contrasts with much of the character of the district where large, flat, open landscapes make built structures prominent landmarks and highly visible from miles around.
- 8.0.4** The land use is predominantly pastoral on the valley sides and floor, with many areas of rough grazing. Arable cultivation is still present within the small river valleys however, especially towards the top of the valley sides, but due to the extent of wooded areas, both individual trees and woodland, a green lushness dominates many sections of valleys, which diminishes the presence of the arable areas. The loss of pasture in valleys has been particularly high during the post War era - upper reaches may only be ditched indentations in the landform with severely canalised (deepened and straightened) watercourses of little ecological or landscape value.
- 8.0.5** Hedges tend to be high alongside the roads, and consist of shrubs and trees. In the surrounding fields, shrub hedges are common, as are lines / belts of trees. Fields tend to be medium to large in size.
- 8.0.6** Settlement in the small river valleys either spreads in a linear fashion along the edge of the road, or is concentrated along one or two roads at the centre of the settlement, often close to the valley floor in a more nucleated pattern. In some areas, the road follows the course of the river, and buildings are very often close to the carriageway. Aside from those buildings on the edge of the road, built structures are not always visible from any distance in the small river valleys, as they can be in the surrounding flatter character areas, due to the valley sides and much more enclosed nature of the landscape restricting the views. For example, whereas churches are often visible for miles around and act as landmarks in the flatter, more open landscapes, they only become apparent when one is almost upon them in the small river valleys.

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- 8.0.7** The roads themselves are predominantly C or unclassified, and tend to be narrow and winding, with localised areas of straight stretches. The A140, A148 and A149 run through some of the areas containing the small river valleys, but their proximity to the valleys and the rivers themselves is limited. This pattern results in remote areas characterised by little vehicular traffic.
- 8.0.8** Trees and woodland are common features in the small river valleys. The valley sides contain trees within the hedgerows, lines / belts of trees, clumps of trees and denser areas of woodland or conifer plantation. The valley floors are characterised by mature trees that often meet when located either side of the road to create a 'tunnel-like' effect. Looking along the stretches of river, trees are again a common feature. Whereas in the more open landscapes trees are often seen only as a line on the horizon, in the small river valleys trees can be seen in the foreground, middle ground and distance in varying forms, and hence fragment the view at various stages. This proliferation of trees is a main factor in the character of these areas being so green, lush and full, compared to the more open landscapes found in the North Norfolk district.

Geological character

- 8.0.9** The accumulated soils within the small valleys are mainly alluvium which consists of silts, clays and sands. Peats have also developed in many of these small valleys.

Ecological character

- 8.0.10** The existing ecological character of the area is predominantly arable land divided by hedged and frequently banked field boundaries with areas which have wet ditches as well. There is often a marked difference between the land uses on the valley sides (arable) and valley floor where pasture may be present in largish blocks. In smaller valleys though there may be no valley floor as such and no pasture. There is often a correlation between pasture, flat valley floors, alluvial or peat deposits, small areas of wet woodland and high hedges / wet ditches. This results in one of the most diverse and ecologically valuable sets of habitats in the District. Pasture and woodland may be unimproved. The rivers are sometimes designated sites (SSSI) and surrounding land is occasionally similarly designated or County Wildlife Site. The field size tends to be smaller than average and can be very small. Valley sides tend to have 'standard' hedges, hedgerow tree presence and field size to match the adjoining landscape Type.
- 8.0.11** Agri-environment schemes have often been used to reinstate drainage patterns and there are areas of arable reversion. On valley sides, grass margins and new hedge / copse planting has occurred in some areas.
- 8.0.12** Woodlands tend to be in two forms - those on valley sides which are often relatively modern (150 years old or younger) and may have been planted for shooting or commercial (conifer) purposes. These woodlands have a limited ecological value. There are a few locations where older woodland assemblages occur (Glaven) on valley sides. The second woodland form, are woodlands situated on valley floors. These tend to be older, more 'natural' in content and less regular in form - often forming a boundary to the watercourses or field patterns. Wet woodlands may be found on valley floors. The ecological value of these woodlands is significantly greater than that on valley sides by and large. Wet woodland is a BAP habitat priority type.
- 8.0.13** Heathland is a feature of certain valleys (Glaven, Ant Valley). It is situated on valley sides and associated with outcrops of sands and gravel. Where it is present, it is a significant ecological feature and a BAP habitat priority type.

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Woodland where present - especially wet woodland.

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- Heathland - A feature more associated with Rolling Coastal Heath and Arable and Wooded with Parkland but present in limited amounts in the Upper Ant and Glaven Valleys.
- Grassland and Meadows - especially wet grassland.
- Reedbeds and fens in very limited amounts.
- Chalk streams.

Table 8.2 Small Valleys: Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Undulating landscape, enclosed towards the valley floor	Good	The intimate scale of this landscape could be radically altered by new development. Development on the valley floors is limited to an extent by the geography of the area. However, any proposed development in these already settled areas should respect the existing character of the area. Views from the valley sides are particularly sensitive due to the remote nature of the character Type.	High
Pasture, rough grazing and meadow on the valley floor with arable on the valley sides. Hedgerows that increase in height towards the valley floor	Good to Fair	<p>The amount of pasture and existence of substantial hedgerows is especially marked where the valleys are located in areas that are predominantly arable. There is a distinction between the valley crests, sides and floor in terms of land cover which should be maintained in order to define these areas.</p> <p>Existing high and thick hedges give a strong sense of enclosure and can assist in integrating suitable development which is in character with surrounding development into the landscape. However these are often areas of remnant older landscapes, highly valued for their rare character and appearance, wildlife habitat etc where development is fundamentally inappropriate.</p>	High
Extensive woodland cover	Good to Fair	<p>The removal of areas of woodland would alter the character of the Type, especially on the valley sides and valley floor, and would result in the opening up of this very enclosed landscape.</p> <p>Opportunities to increase or alter (e.g. by substituting willow/alder for poplar plantations) woodland in certain areas could enhance the character of valleys.</p>	High
Skyline	Good	Avoid developments which affect or impinge on open skyline views or which would adversely affect the night time experience of dark landscapes.	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Settlement	Good to Fair	<p>Villages Areas where large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller fields still contribute significantly to the character of the village could be protected from development. There is a strong tendency for the character of villages to be altered by modern high density development within existing boundaries. Additional development should reflect the morphology (often linear) of the existing settlement, especially with regard to its development within the confines of the topography of the valley.</p> <p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p>	Moderate to High

Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

- 8.0.14** The overall condition of this Type is fair to good depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. There has been considerable erosion and degradation of rural features in many areas - particularly loss of hedgerows and pasture during the past 50 years. Generally, the built features are in a moderately stable (un-changing) condition, comparable with all the other rural areas of the District. The major exceptions being Fakenham and to a lesser extent North Walsham where new development (residential and employment) have extended into valleys over the last 20 years considerably eroding the character of these areas.
- 8.0.15** The strength of character is generally moderate to high with interactions between features and elements, particularly landform, landcover and enclosure / settlement providing the defining 'sense of place'. The degree of intactness of the character of the landscape varies considerably between 'intact' remnant and historically interesting areas to significantly degraded urban and rural areas (development of unsuitable types and loss of features respectively).

Recent landscape impacts

- 8.0.16** Changes to the agricultural economy have tended to see impacts in introducing ecological improvements resulting from agri-environment grants, particularly arable reversion, wetland management and hedgerow planting / grassed margins.
- 8.0.17** Development pressures around major towns have had detrimental effects and reduced the opportunities for subsequent pro-active restoration, amenity provision (access to countryside) or creation of new habitats.
- 8.0.18** The increasing wealth in the area is demonstrated by numbers of properties being enlarged / improved and sub-divided all of which have affected the appearance and character of settlements - often in individually modest but cumulatively significant ways (fencing replacing hedged boundaries / the loss of large gardens with mature trees and the resultant massing of buildings). New agricultural buildings are increasingly being erected to replace older barns etc which are in turn being converted

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to residential use, often with a significant change to the character of the landscape to which they contribute. The Type has tended to lag behind other rural areas of the District but is catching up.

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

- Significant numbers of new properties either sited within or outside existing settlements. The siting of new developments needs to take particular account of the existing structure of settlements - prominently located 'upper valley side' developments are often inappropriate.
- Subdivision of existing larger gardens within settlements.
- New agricultural buildings sited in locations away from or prominently within existing farm complexes
- Wind turbines where these would impinge upon open skyline views.
- Outside lighting - both street type and decorative / domestic.
- Use of un-sympathetic boundary treatments, particularly bordering public highways and on edges of settlements where close boarded fencing / other semi/sub urban styles can appear incongruous.
- 'Improvement' of access tracks and entrance ways with urban style features (brick entrance pillars, gates, removal of 'rough track with grassed central margin, use of kerbing, close mown verges).
- Telecom masts in prominent locations.
- New road layouts which introduce standard 'suburban' highway features (kerbing / signage / widening).
- Extensions to properties which overly enlarge or gentrify rural settlements / locations.
- Barn conversions and other property construction within the open countryside which introduce 'suburban' features such as surfaced drives / domestic style gates and fences / garden style planting and parking areas / overly large windows and external lighting etc. Frequently a barn conversion in an isolated location away from other settlement can introduce a strongly suburban character.
- Biofuel crops have potential to be integrated within this landscape Type with some difficulty depending upon the type of crop and its location. Important considerations would be to avoid excessively large 'blocks' of biofuels such as short rotation coppice (of Miscanthus or Willow etc) where these impinge upon the views and landform of the location. By using rotations / species which do not appear excessively higher than existing hedgerows (which could be allowed to grow in height anyway) impact would be minimised. Valley sides and valley bottoms are likely to be more sensitive to their distinctive landform presenting more prominent 'viewing' of the crop / and higher potential habitat loss (grassland / potential grassland / wetlands / wooded carr) / damage to the (often) oldest intact bits of countryside.

b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- Retention of rural features - tracks with grassed central margins, old fencing / gateposts / walls.
- Properties which are of a scale and location which respect the individual form of the settlement in which they are located (i.e. Development should not 'stand out' but rather should be almost un-noticeable and unremarkable as an additional element within the existing development

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structure, taking particular account of building / development size, location, surrounding landscaping and existing land uses).

- Landscaping around new properties which actively blends with existing features rather than tries simply to screen new development.
- Landscaping which uses native as opposed to non-native species.
- Landscaping which builds upon and enhances existing trees, hedges and other features on and adjacent to the proposed development site.

c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character; Ecological Network Priorities for this Landscape Type

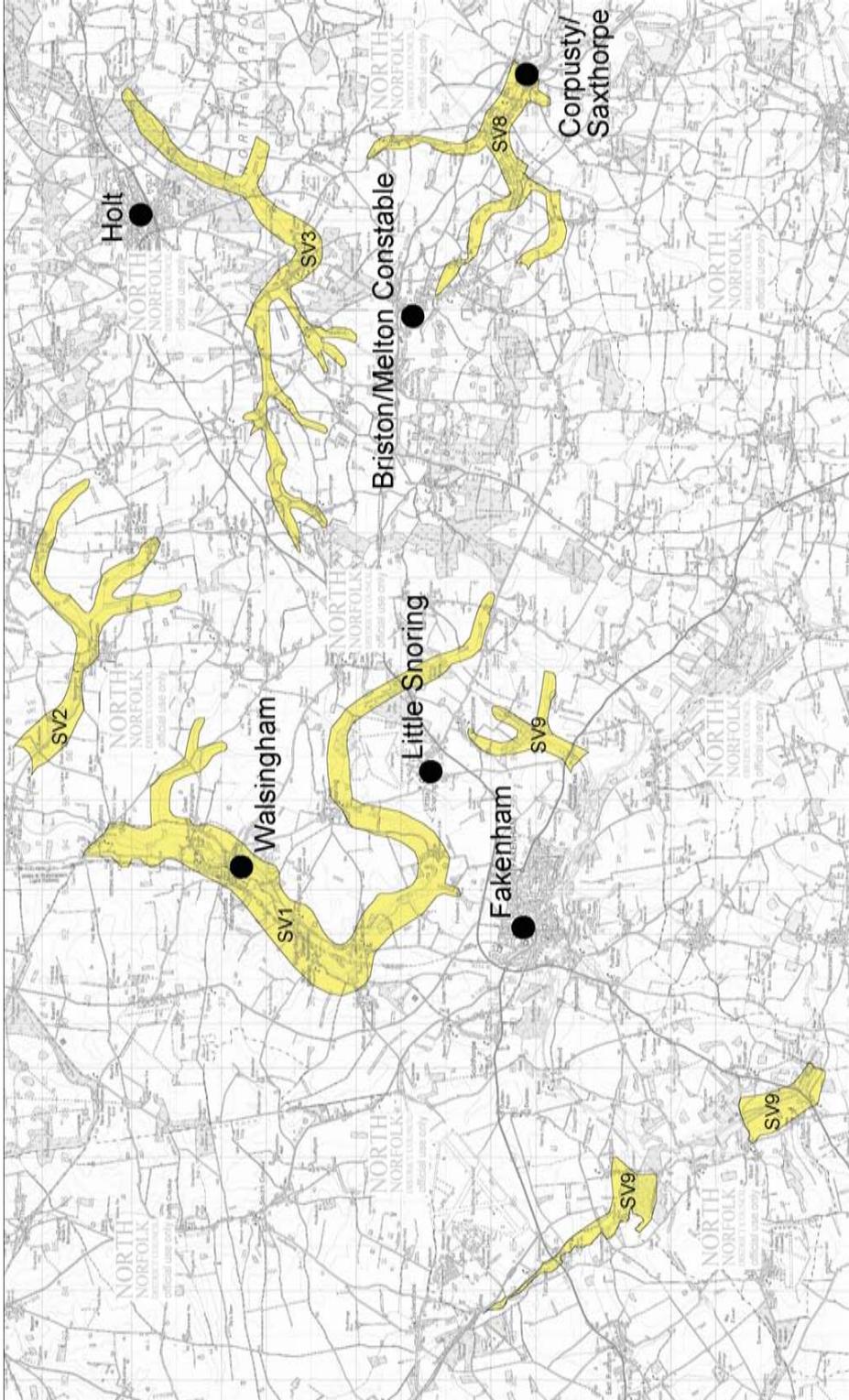
- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Opportunities to buffer existing watercourses by the introduction of heath, scrub and grassland along margins should be a priority.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- Where possible, landcover changes should seek to reflect and enhance existing landforms of watercourses / the break between valley floor and sides etc.

Areas within the type

- SV1 – Wighton to Fulmodeston
- SV2 – Binham to Langham
- SV3 – Thornage to Brinton
- SV4 – Barningham to Suffield
- SV5 – Southrepps, Antingham and Spa Common
- SV6 – Mun Valley
- SV7 – Worstead, Beeston and Ashmanhaugh
- SV8 – Gresham, Aldborough and Erpingham
- SV9 – Raynham, Tatterford and Kettlestone

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Map 8.1 Small Valleys (Western Area)



Landscape Character Type

- Small Valleys

Areas within the Type

- SV 1 - Wighton to Fulmodeston
- SV 2 - Bingham to Lingham
- SV 3 - Thormage to Brinton
- SV 8 - Gresham, Aldborough & Erpingham
- SV 9 - Raynham, Tatterford & Kettlestone

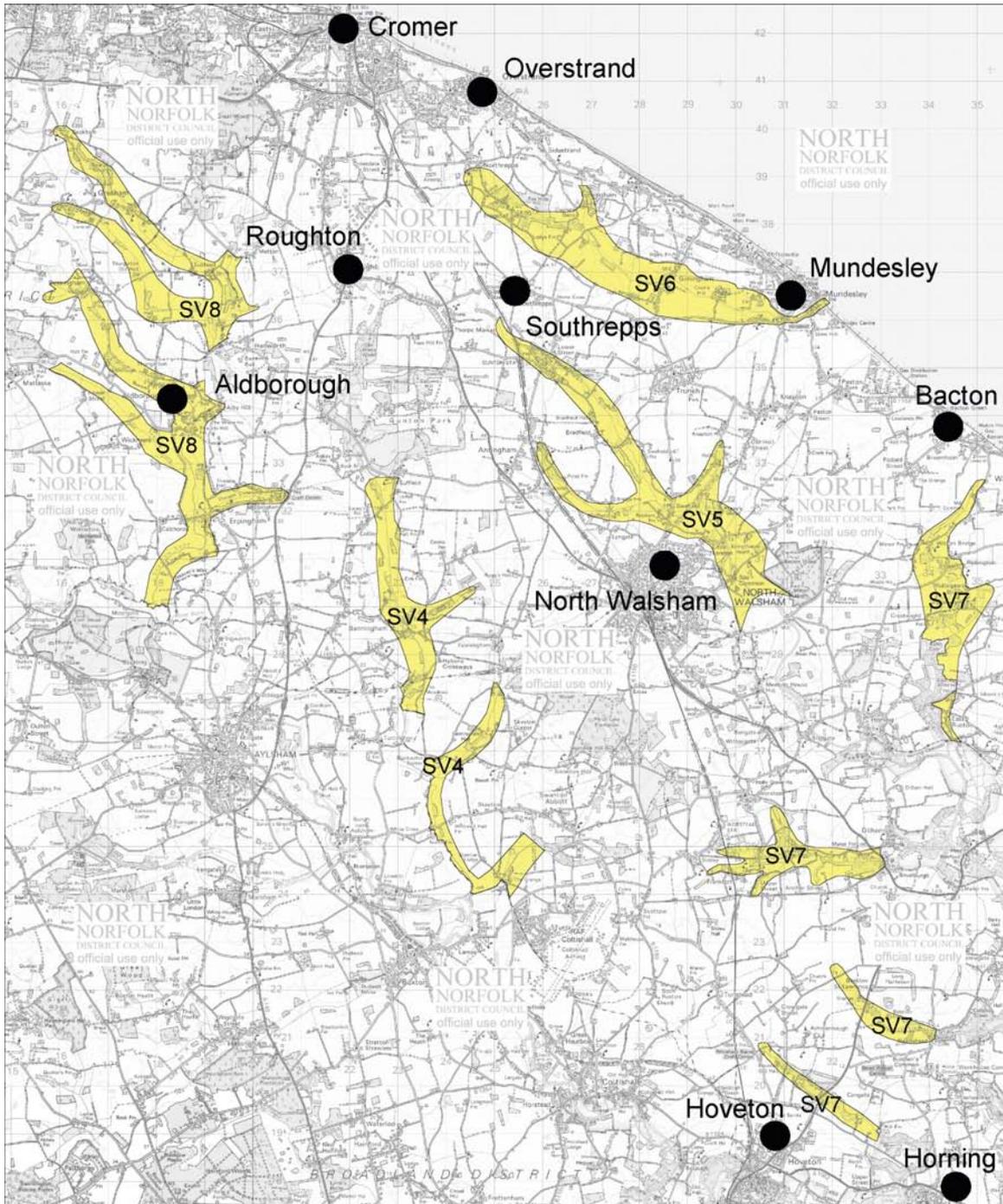
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Map 8.2 Small Valleys (Eastern Area)



Landscape Character Type

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Areas within the Type

- SV 4 - Barningham to Suffield
- SV 5 - Southrepps, Antingham & Spa Common
- SV 6 - Munn Valley
- SV 7 - Worstead, Beeston & Ashmanhaugh
- SV 8 - Gresham, Aldborough & Erpingham



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8.1 Wighton to Fulmodeston (SV1)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- An Area with considerable variety within it. Small sections of the valley have considerable differences within them which are at least as great as some differences between Areas within Types but due to the very compact nature of the changes cannot be considered as separate Areas.
- The sense of enclosure and compartmentalisation of the valley is strong.
- Topography is very important to understanding the variety in this Area.
- Road and settlement structure is strongly influenced by the valley form and follows the valley until near Snoring where this feature disappears as the valley becomes too small and the topography / landform less dominant.
- Historic features (Friaries, Priory, C16th great house at Barsham and churches – ancient and modern) dominate part of this valley around the Walsinghams to the Barshams.

Evaluation

- 8.1.1** The condition of this landscape character Area is fair to good. The most intact areas are in the central portion of the Area around the Walsinghams, but there are other areas which have also retained a relatively intact character due to the presence of grazing on the valley floor, an uncanalised watercourse, large hedges and hedgerow trees and relatively little settlement or recent development.
- 8.1.2** The strength of character is moderate to strong dependent upon the location within the valley and the comments above.

Issues

- 8.1.3** The relatively wide diversity of landscapes within this Area gives rise to a necessary flexibility in interpreting what is and what is not acceptable within the scope of development. The areas of strong historical building presence are very sensitive to changes in the character of the landscape. The intimate nature of these (and other) parts of the valley should not be seen as suitable screening for development as the character is determined by the traveller through the landscape picking up what amounts to a narrative of interpretation.
- 8.1.4** Jarring features include the car park at the Slipper Chapel (Houghton St Giles), Barn conversions at Barsham (which have very 'modern' garden features and planting wholly out of context with an isolated rural former stockyard), extensive garden extensions with elaborate suburban gated entrances (Gt Snoring) and the lines of Council houses at Gt Walsingham and Houghton St Giles. These latter are now a part of the 'accepted landscape' due to their age, but they are contrary to the settlement form and additional properties added to these lines – either within or beyond, changes to garden boundaries etc have a marked effect on the visual intrusiveness of the properties and may erode character.
- 8.1.5** The meandering course of the River at Walsingham, the old high hedges and hedgerow trees, small field size and pasture areas give a strong sense of an 'old landscape' and contribute significantly to the character of the Area.
- 8.1.6** This landscape is sensitive to relatively minor changes in its lower reaches due to the particular nature of the landform (enclosed valley), the importance of landscape features such as wet meadows, large hedges, historical sites and glimpses and views within the confines and outside

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the valley. The upper reaches are less sensitive to change but have highly sensitive small areas within them.

8.2 Binham to Langham (SV2)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Clearly defined valley which is frequently very open.
- Settlement which conforms to the valley sides and tops.
- A moderate conformity between the road / PROW network and the course of the stream.
- A strong historical element at Binham Priory situated in a very prominent location on the valley side.
- Lower than average woodland content – especially in the valley floor area.

Evaluation

8.2.1 The condition of the landscape character is generally Fair. The character of the Area has been reduced by the gradual erosion of features such as the valley floor pasture areas and the removal of hedgerow boundaries. It is clear from historic maps that there was a more clearly defined 'ring garth' separating the valley floor from the valley sides probably well into the middle C20th. Many hedges are maintained overly thin and low and provide a very poor ecological / visual element compared with other similar small valley areas in the District. Developments such as the poultry sheds at Binham Westgate, the overly gentrified landscaping around the isolated barn on the valley floor between Warham and Binham further erode the character.

8.2.2 The strength of character is moderate.

Issues

8.2.3 Developments such as barn conversions beyond and within settlements need careful consideration to avoid 'gentrification' – especially in the provision of gardens, outdoor lighting and entrance drives / gates.

8.2.4 The Westgate area of Binham is very stark and prominent and whilst many of the properties are older cottages, they have become somewhat stark, possibly again by the use of inappropriate landscaping and over gentrification of / enlargement to dwellings and outbuildings.

8.2.5 The setting and views from Binham Priory are very important. Again, until recently, this was a relatively 'undiscovered' remote site where the historic character of the Priory and its surrounding landscape could be felt. Over interpretation or development – especially of surrounding buildings or sites could completely remove this strong character element. It is noticeable that the design, location and surrounding development of the Village Hall has not done any harm to this setting with the exception of its outside lighting – which is unfortunate and unsympathetic.

8.2.6 This Area is sensitive to change but does require restoration of features such as hedged boundaries, hedgerow trees and possibly copses of trees off the valley floor.

8.3 Thornage to Brinton (SV3)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A discreet three pronged small valley complex.
- Fairly steep valley sides with distinct valley bottoms – some with a defined valley floor of grazing meadows.

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- Larger than average hedgerow size.
- Settlement mostly just off the valley bottoms but discreetly held within the confines of the valley sides and often strongly limited by it.
- Settlement which is linear to the valley floor (Hunworth and Stody especially).
- Large areas of woodland dominating valley tops (just outside Area).
- Semi-parkland planning to some village areas (Thornage, Brinton and Stody) with large houses sited within the valley area – perhaps mimicking Bayfield.
- There are small areas of heathy habitat especially on the eastern side of the valley associated with the area around Hunworth and Holt.

Evaluation

- 8.3.1** The condition of the landscape character is Fair to Good depending upon the location within the system. Some areas have been degraded by quarrying (Edgefield) or by arable incursions into the valley floor area. Similarly some areas have poor condition field boundary hedgerows or the presence of new conifer woodland which over-dominates the landscape.
- 8.3.2** The strength of character is generally Moderate, with a few areas of remnant older closes and high hedges / wet woodland, demonstrating Strong character.

Issues

- 8.3.3** All the villages in this Area are in Conservation Areas. Nevertheless, the pressures for and presence of infill development appears to be lower in this Area than in other villages.
- 8.3.4** Development of agricultural buildings and isolated farmsteads outside the settlements have in one or two places, significantly adversely affected the visual cohesiveness of the character of this landscape. The valley sides and tops (beyond settlement) particularly do not exhibit any prominent form of development pre-1960.
- 8.3.5** Opportunities to link existing habitats with adjoining grassland, hedgerows, watercourses (ditches and flooded areas) woodland and heathland within and outside the site would all have a positive effect on enhancing both the ecology and landscape character of the area. Much detailed work has been done on this matter by the University of East Anglia, Norfolk Coast Partnership and Glaven Valley Conservation Group.
- 8.3.6** This landscape is sensitive to change but could also positively accept restoration of habitats and features.

8.4 Banningham to Suffield (SV4)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A small discrete valley offshoot of the River Bure.
- Very low settlement density and presence situated well apart from larger villages and towns.
- Strongly canalised watercourse.
- Woodland presence associated with the watercourse.
- The presence of horsiculture in some locations on the valley floor.

Evaluation

- 8.4.1** The condition of the landscape character is generally Moderate. There are few strong features in this landscape and it only modestly interrupts the Low Plains Felmingham and Banningham Area on either side.

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8.4.2 The strength of character is Fair.

Issues

8.4.3 This landscape provides the an important corridor of movement for species from Gunton / Hanworth Wooded with Parkland Area to the Bure and the Broads. As such its ecological value is much greater than its apparent visual landscape character. The landscape also has the potential to be much better in habitat terms than its current condition. Extension and reinforcement of the existing features and elements would have considerable much greater benefits than were these works carried out in isolation.

8.4.4 Development pressures are unlikely to be significant but adequate screening and integration of the existing camp sites / horsiculture could be integrated with and developed with consideration to the wider landscape and habitat connectivity mentioned above. Also in this fairly featureless landscape, any additional development of features will be welcome.

8.4.5 This landscape is only moderately sensitive but has considerable potential as an ecological linking factor and to reinforce and restore some additional character to this Area and adjoining Areas.

8.5 Southrepps, Antingham and Spa Common (SV5)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Lower parts around Spa Common have ill defined valley sides (similar to adjoining Large Valley Area) with small hills and terraces extending the valley sides well beyond the valley floor part (right up to North Walsham). This is mostly on the western side of the valley.
- Settlement is dispersed with former common land areas at Southrepps (Lower Street) and Spa Common as well as Bradfield all demonstrating a degree of 'ad hoc-ness' to the layout and development of the settlement.
- Woodland presence is moderately high and tends to be in marked contrast to the very open and exposed Tributary Farmland Type adjoining, except where the presence of Bacton Wood dominates the landscape.
- River crossings are notable and often occur by small older bridges. The road network radiating from North Walsham is largely responsible.
- Roads are generally small but often disproportionately busy.
- The proximity to North Walsham is an important determinant to character at the southern end of the Area.

Evaluation

8.5.1 The condition of the landscape character varies considerably from Fair to Good. Parts demonstrating eroded character tend to be on the valley sides where features and elements have been removed (field boundaries, grassland, hedges, trees etc) and where relatively recent development has taken place. The parts around Spa Common, Swafield and Little London have seen considerable ad hoc industrial, holiday chalet and infill residential development erode character. Elsewhere there are surprising retentions of strong charactered intimate landscapes.

8.5.2 The strength of character is moderate to strong in similar relationship to the above.

Issues

8.5.3 This is an important ecological and landscape extension to the Broads. The canal/river part extending right up to the headwaters at Southrepps is one of the most important ecological features of this part of the District, providing an important diversity of riverine and adjacent (fen, woodland,

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wooded carr, wet ditches, grassland and hedges with hedgerow trees) habitats. Effectively it is large enough to support significant populations of even Otters and Water Vole as well as transporting species throughout this part of the District. It should be seen as a core area from which to develop connections reaching out into the relatively barren adjoining landscape Areas.

- 8.5.4** The settlement development in this Area has been extensively added to (in its lower regions around North Walsham where new estates now join Spa Common to Brick Kiln Road and through to Marshgate) over the years with considerable 'ad hoc' infill of very variable types and designs creating an inconsistent style and form of settlement. This is probably a result of its historical development from common land which was simply settled and carved out of 'waste land' areas, without any sense of an overall guide or control to its development. This has tended to allow in recent years some unhelpful designs and layouts which if continued would considerably undermine the existing character of the landscape. The upper reaches beyond Swafield have not experienced the same pressures and have largely retained their distinctive form and individuality.
- 8.5.5** This is a landscape which would benefit from restoration and reinforcement, especially on the valley sides to extend the features into parts which have become divorced from the character Type to an extent.
- 8.5.6** The landscape is moderately sensitive to change. Buffering and separation from development occurring around North Walsham should be considered important to retaining the sense of individuality of the whole Valley complex not just this Area of it.

8.6 Mun Valley (SV6)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A small river valley unlike most others in North Norfolk which while accessing the coast does not enlarge to Large River Valley status (with a well defined valley floor or extensive fairly long catchment).
- Similarly, the valley tends to 'pinch' at its mouth, ending as a narrow gully hidden within the town of Mundesley.
- The upper reaches are well wooded but the rest of the valley has very little woodland or trees.
- There is some valley floor pasture but much of this has been lost in the last 50 years.
- The River is heavily canalised.
- Settlement is sparse and tends to be transverse across the valley rather than typically longitudinal as in other Areas of the Type.
- Similarly, the road network tends to traverse the Area rather than follow the course of the River – often demarcating the valley floor and sides in other Areas.
- There are however remnants of the 'ring garth' boundary between the valley floor and sides shown in field boundaries.
- Fishing lakes at Gimingham are prominent as is the Golf course and Driving Range at Mundesley and the former TB hospital building on the valley side near Mundesley.
- Proximity to coast and cliff areas gives views and reflected light issues from valley tops.

Evaluation

- 8.6.1** The condition of the landscape character is Fair to Moderate with only one or two areas near the headwaters which might be considered Good. The landscape has seen considerable gradual removal of field boundaries, pasture and some woodland/heathy areas during the past 100 years which have tended to remove the major elements which define the Area's character. Settlement has not altered radically except near Mundesley.

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8.6.2 The strength of character is Moderate.

Issues

8.6.3 This landscape has experienced typical gradual erosion of rural features which determined its character (loss of hedges, permanent grassland, valley floor features (drainage and canalisation of the River), hedgerow trees, small areas of wood and scrub, heathy bits and rural isolation). There have been some increases in housing (Gimmingham has a local authority mini-estate and some sub-division of garden plots) more especially at the Mundesley end, where new estates, school and infill properties have tended to 'hide' the valley and River.

8.6.4 The construction of the Driving Range has introduced a fairly suburban feature into the landscape between the edge of Mundesley and the Hospital. This is accentuated by the very intrusive lighting.

8.6.5 The proximity to the coast is a significant and unusual factor in this small valley landscape. Enhancing the connections between the valley sides and clifftop areas would have significant benefits (by creating heathland, grassland, restoring hedged boundaries and providing foot access). The night time landscape is severely affected by light pollution although much of the landscape has a fairly remote feel. Reducing light pollution (especially around the Radome and driving range with more sensitive 'down lighting') would have considerable benefits.

8.6.6 This landscape is sensitive to change being at the same time somewhat open and degraded yet with small intimate areas which are yet very isolated and rural in feel (around Clapham Dams and Frogshall). Inappropriate siting of large farm buildings, extensions to adjoining areas of caravan or chalet parks, or driving ranges etc can have an extensive effect out of proportion to their scale if not correctly located within the landscape and adequately integrated by existing or proposed landscaping.

8.6.7 Opportunities to develop ecological connectivity between existing or possible future habitats should be taken to replace lost landscape features as mentioned above. Proposed developments could consider what positive contribution could be made to such connections.

8.6.8 This landscape is moderately sensitive to change but would benefit strongly from proposals to restore landscape features such as mentioned above.

8.7 Worstead, Beeston and Ashmanhaugh (SV7)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Small discrete valley extensions from the Broads – all feeding into the Ant and in the case of Ashmanhaugh, Bure catchments.
- Very low settlement presence.
- In each case there is a current or remnant large house and parkland with modified water course (often dammed small lake).
- The historic water gardens and parkland associated with Worstead are a particular feature deserving special consideration, restoration and conservation.
- Woodland presence is higher than average and often associated with the parkland although there is also often a good proportion of wooded carr which may be semi-naturalised.
- All very similar in character.

Evaluation

8.7.1 The condition of the landscape character varies between Moderate to Good depending upon the amount of the relatively few features and elements which make up these little landscapes.

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8.7.2 The strength of character is Moderate due to the relatively small and localised nature of the Areas.

Issues

8.7.3 These landscapes are relatively sensitive as they are easily eroded by the removal of one of the relatively few features and elements which make up their Area (drainage of wetland, removal of areas of natural wooded carr and replacement with other forms of forestry or removal of grassland areas). Similarly they can be easily reinforced and restored by relatively little actions to replace or introduce these elements.

8.7.4 The location of these Areas as extensions to the larger and internationally important Broads network (particularly those parts to which they connect directly) means that their ecological importance is far greater than the sum of their parts. Works to improve and enhance the Areas ecologically should be strongly favoured.

8.7.5 These are not landscapes in which significant development pressures are likely to be experienced but they would have little or no capacity to absorb them.

8.8 Gresham, Aldborough and Erpingham (SV8)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A larger than average network of watercourses providing significant headwaters to join the Bure.
- Settlement pattern is fairly dense and extensive with larger villages at Erpingham and Aldborough; minor villages at Bessingham and Hanworth.
- Dispersed settlement tends to be the norm with fragmented or multi-centred villages outlying cottages and small and medium farmsteads.
- The road network is similarly fragmented and rarely conforms to the valley topography.
- Field boundaries between the valley floor and sides are fairly common, often delineating permanent pasture from arable land beyond.
- Provide a welcome disruption and variety within the larger Tributary Farmland Type surrounding the Area.
- Some parts are relatively open whilst in others, the presence of high hedges, holloways and woodland give a strong sense of enclosure.

Evaluation

8.8.1 The condition of the landscape character is Moderate to Good. The presence of and condition of elements such as hedges, unimproved grassland (especially in the valley floor), relatively un-canalised water course, woodland, small and unimproved vernacular settlement all contribute to supporting character. The converse is true.

8.8.2 The strength of character is Moderate to Good with the majority being Moderate often as much due to the influence of the condition of the adjoining wider landscape Areas beyond.

Issues

8.8.3 This is an important ecological and landscape extension to the Bure and Broads. The stream extending right up to the headwaters at Gresham is an one of the important ecological features of this part of the District, providing an important diversity of riverine and adjacent (fen, woodland, wooded carr, wet ditches, grassland and hedges with hedgerow trees) habitats. Effectively it is large enough to support significant populations of even Otters and Water Vole as well as transporting species throughout this part of the District. It should be seen as a core area from which to develop

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connections reaching out into the relatively barren adjoining landscape Areas. Sites such as Thwaite Common (SSSI) are linked to and an essential part of this Area. Similarly, this Area links to and provides links between wooded with parkland Areas (Matlask to Hanworth). As such, policies which reinforce and add to the existing stock of ecological elements and features should be strongly encouraged especially grassland, wet ditches, substantial hedgerows, wet and dry woodlands and hedgerow trees. Some areas within the valley have strong heathland attributes and these should be noted (Thwaite Common, Alby Hill and Gresham) – in these locations Gorse and heathy species are appropriate.

- 8.8.4** The character of settlement is vitally important to the character of the wider landscape for much of the Area due to its all pervading presence. Gradual infill and gentrification has tended to erode and undermine the character of some parts of the landscape (especially around and within Aldborough, Gresham and Erpingham). The trend towards larger properties with extensive extensions, very manicured gardens and boundaries is not compensated for by the use of supposedly 'vernacular' design and materials. The scale and appearance of the structure can be too large and too consciously 'smart' to fit in with what was until relatively recently a very quiet and undeveloped backwater of Norfolk.

8.9 Raynham, Tatterford and Kettlestone (SV9)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Low valley sides – often indistinct.
- Very low density settlement pattern – isolated very small villages (South Raynham and Tatterford) with few isolated houses and farms (e.g. Pinkney Hall).
- Significantly higher than average wooded content. Mostly wet woodland (Poplar plantations and wet woodland carr).
- Very small roads serving the valley and frequently no obvious ring garth division between the valley floor and sides.

Evaluation

- 8.9.1** The condition of the landscape character in these two headwater valleys (from the Wensum) is Good.
- 8.9.2** The strength of character is Strong.

Issues

- 8.9.3** These headwaters are relatively isolated (more so in the case of the Tatterford section which is further from a main road) and have a distinctive very enclosed character. They are important for protected species (Otter and Water Vole) and have significance as part of the Wensum SAC. They are also important as part of the migratory route for birds (within the Wensum Valley context). Drainage and pollution issues (getting into the Wensum) are especial concerns. Gravel extraction in the upper reaches of the Tat valley have considerably changed the character and ecology of the local area – restoration is important in this location.
- 8.9.4** The sensitivity of the landscape is high and would not easily accept much development.

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9 Settled Fen

Location and boundaries

9.0.1 This landscape type is situated on the slopes and low plains adjacent to and surrounding the Broads between Stalham and Potter Heigham and the coast around Sea Palling. As such it conforms closely to the form of the topography of the main rivers and alluvial plains. On the western side of the River Ant the land type is slightly higher and forms the Tributary Farmland Type, whilst on the whilst on the northern boundary is the Coastal Plain Type.

Table 9.1 Settled Fen

Picture 9.1



Flat landform with large open fields, few hedges or trees and prominent large modern farm buildings

Picture 9.2



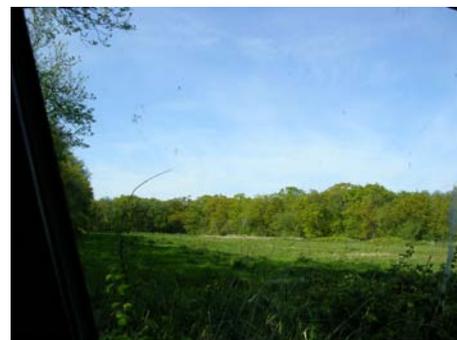
Former Ludham Airfield showing location of gas depot with attendant lighting columns

Picture 9.3



Some minor roads have mature trees and hedges, often associated with smaller field size

Picture 9.4



Fields adjacent to settlement or the Broads may be smaller and enclosed with woodland / hedges

Key characteristics

- A landscape with a moderately open to very open character with a few discrete enclosed areas.
- The topography is flat with little change in levels. Most of the area is between 1m and 7m above sea level.
- Landcover is predominantly arable (mainly wheat, barley, potatoes and sugar beet) with small pockets of pasture near settlement and some farmsteads.
- Woodland tends to be in small belts or as copses; relatively few in number but the sense of enclosure is increased by the woodland fringe of adjoining Broads.

9 Settled Fen

- Field boundaries tend to be either hedged, banked or ditched with ditches predominating. Field size is large to medium with a few character important smaller fields nearer settlement. Hedges tend to be less common than in neighbouring landscape types, increasing the sense of openness. Larger 'treed hedges' are rare, but minor roads tend to have older hedgerow trees remaining within the verge / bank.
- Settlement is semi-dispersed but with several large villages. Stalham, Catfield, part of Potter Heigham, Hickling, Sea Palling and Ludham are within the Type. The settlement structure is semi-nucleated but with considerable additional sprawl and little consistent vernacular character within or between settlements.
- Industrial units are prominent at Catfield.
- Large farmsteads with modern (often potato stores) and vernacular farm buildings are prominent.
- Features such as former windmills, large church towers and telecom masts punctuate the skyline.
- The former Ludham airfield forms a central feature not in terms of its former use but as a minor depot, concrete access roads are common in the surrounding area hinting at a former use.
- The main road (A149) dissects the area running on the trackbed of the former railway for most of its length and bypassing the minor villages it once ran through. A network of minor roads service connections between the settlements. The presence of the busy A149 is felt over most of this landscape type in noise and visibility terms.

Landscape character

- 9.0.2** The Settled Fen landscape Type is characterised by moderately long views over flat or very flat arable landscapes. Settlement is a strong feature of the landscape, partly as a result of the flat topography of the Type and partly due to the size and nature of the settlement format.
- 9.0.3** Woodland cover is generally considerably lower than that within other landscape Types and it is noticeable that copses for shooting have not been planted in such numbers as on neighbouring Types - probably as a response to the higher potential agricultural production of the land compared to lighter soils. There is still an amount of woodland and trees within the Type. The settlements all contain some minor areas of woodland and mature trees (mostly within gardens or in roadside verges) but there are closes and paddocks on the fringes which often have mature boundary trees (Sutton). Where boundary trees and hedges are not present in numbers there are usually hard edges to settlement and the transition from arable to built land gives a stark and un-integrated appearance (often local authority housing i.e. at Stalham and Catfield). The woodland in neighbouring landscape Types, especially the Broads, gives a greater sense of enclosure to this landscape type and often provides a feature on the skyline.
- 9.0.4** Field size tends to be large or very large but there are areas of more moderately sized fields and a few areas of small closes - often the areas which retain high hedges with a selection of trees within them (treed hedges). Field boundaries may be no more than a ditch or bank in many cases which tends to increase the apparent size of the landscape. Hedges tend to be low, except when adjacent to some roads and in association with some smaller fields.
- 9.0.5** Settlement tends to be complex in structure but evenly distributed through the Type without reference to any topographical features (unlike Broads Type). Most of the settlements were (until the early C20th) small semi-nucleated settlements surrounded by generally small to medium isolated farmsteads. The popularity of the area as a holiday destination at the beginning of the century through to the present, has caused sporadic and ad-hoc development response. Much housing falls into the category of cheaper inter-war bungalow or prefab styles, augmented with significant amounts of local authority housing on the edge of Stalham and Catfield and in a number

Settled Fen 9

of more isolated locations (often forming de facto hamlets - just off the A149 south of Hickling). In addition, changes to site use (obsolescent industrial sites) and opportunities for larger housing estate construction have significantly changed and altered the settlement gravity and structure. Small settlements clustering around a road junction or spread out along roads have become both subject to infill and have seen contrasting estates move the centres of villages physically outwards. Industrial areas within and on the periphery of villages, usually originally associated with either the agricultural or especially the boating industries have enlarged to form what is for the District, a very unusual settlement structure mix of housing and considerable industrial development going back over half a century.

- 9.0.6** Outside the main settlements, small, medium and some large farmsteads exist together with farm workers' cottages. These tend to have older ranges of farm buildings, often still in use rather than converted to non-agricultural uses as elsewhere in the district, and ranges of more modern generic agricultural buildings. There are several large complexes of these buildings which act as warehousing for potatoes harvested from very large landholdings (Catfield area).
- 9.0.7** The former Ludham airfield which is central to the area of this Type has been largely removed, however its presence remains in the gas distribution site (heavily lit at night) and numbers of concrete service roads / few remnant buildings.
- 9.0.8** Telecom masts, church towers and distant views of wind turbines together with a single large former windmill, form the main feature points on the skyline apart from woodland. Telegraph and electricity poles are prominent in this landscape, accentuated by the flat topography and low woodland cover.
- 9.0.9** The road network falls into two categories, the older inter-settlement structured road network of minor roads together with the old A149, and the new A149 which bisects the Type, following the track of the old railway. The minor roads follow no topographical features and run indirectly between settlements. The new A149 is very busy and its noise can affect all of this landscape Type. Visually it is prominent and vehicles can be seen over a substantial portion of this landscape Type. In addition, the other major road present in the Type is the A1062 which travels the southern boundary and bisects the village of Ludham, this is a particularly prominent Tourist Route during the summer and has associated noise issues. The roads are omnipresent in the landscape whether seen or not and create a less tranquil atmosphere.

Geological character

- 9.0.10** This is an area of low lying sandy clay till and glacial silt lying over unconsolidated sandy crag. It borders the peat and alluvium lands of the broads. The derived soils are suitable for intensive arable cropping and pasture is largely absent except in close association with settlements or farmsteads.

Ecological character

- 9.0.11** The existing ecological character of the area is predominantly arable land divided by mainly ditched field boundaries with some areas which have hedges as well. Watercourses are only present as running ditches and most have limited ecological value (some have reeds and sedges but most are grass or scrub sided) but with considerable potential for enhancement.
- 9.0.12** Grassland is present in small areas only and almost exclusively associated with settlement (Sutton, Hickling and Catfield). Most of the grassland has been improved but there are small wet meadows in limited areas.
- 9.0.13** Agri-environment schemes have had relatively little effect on the area due to the high agricultural

9 Settled Fen

land grade and the correspondingly intensive agricultural land use. Woodlands are not characteristic of the Type but there are small copses, again often associated with settlement but not exclusively. Some of these are wet woodland carr containing alder and birch and consequently a BAP habitat priority type.

- 9.0.14** Heathland is present in very small parts of existing small fields (small areas of gorse) or indicated on roadside verges in very limited areas (Hickling Heath).

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Woodland where present - especially wet woodland.
- Heathland - a very minor feature of remnant presence only on verges / very small marginal areas.
- Grassland and Meadows - especially wet grassland.
- Reedbeds and fens.

Table 9.2 Settled Fen: Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Moderately to very open character with uninterrupted views	Good	<p>The more remote areas (adjacent to the Broads Type) would be often be adversely changed by development.</p> <p>The less remote areas nearer larger settlements have had their character interrupted by disturbance and could accommodate moderate and appropriate developments which respect the population / settlement characteristic of the Area.</p> <p>The siting of wind turbines within the Type should have strong regard to their effects on neighbouring landscape Types - this Type is surrounded by landscape Types which need more careful consideration of impact effects.</p> <p>The siting of telecom masts should be undertaken to minimise visual intrusion and may be inappropriate in some landscapes.</p>	Moderate to High
Arable land use with small to large fields bounded by ditches banks and some hedges with notable hedgerow trees	Fair to Poor	<p>The imposition of new cropping types or changes to woodland cover could change the landscape. However the underlying geometry of field boundaries could be retained if suitably designed changes occur.</p> <p>The imposition of stock sheds, new isolated barn or other complexes with dwellings need to be carefully considered as modern designs tend to be strongly contrary to the existing character of the isolated relatively small farm buildings / cottages / dwellings dating from the C19th. Appropriate large scale landscaping (not</p>	Moderate

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>screening) can assist in integrating new development.</p> <p>There are noticeably large warehousing / agricultural storage units within this landscape, it is questionable if more could be accommodated without compromising the character of the landscape or without substantial woodland planting schemes.</p> <p>Density of such developments should reflect the mean level that currently exists within the locality - increasing density will have strongly adverse effects on remoteness of some areas.</p> <p>The remaining small closes and fields surrounding settlement which contain the only areas of ecological value in the Type are under considerable pressure for housing development and other forms of infill.</p>	
Skyline	Good	<p>Avoid developments which affect or impinge on open skyline views or which would adversely affect the night time experience of dark landscapes.</p> <p>Wind turbines and telecom masts can have very severe impacts in certain areas.</p>	High
Airfields (hangars, settlement and open landscapes associated)	Fair	<p>The Ludham Airfield has been largely removed and the small remaining area redeveloped. The landscape is now largely returned to that of the Type as a whole - agricultural and should not be treated as 'brownfield' in character terms. Existing re-use is generally low key in built terms but lighting is intrusive at depot.</p>	Moderate
Settlement (villages, edge of town and isolated farms etc)	Fair	<p>Villages Areas where large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller fields still contribute significantly to the character of the village could be protected from development. There is a strong tendency for the character of villages to be altered by modern high density development within existing boundaries. Additional development should utilise the best adjacent characteristics of the built landscape to enhance and reinforce those areas of villages which have degraded or unfocused styles / character.</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p> <p>Edge of Town Considerable erosion of character to the edge of town is occasioned by the generic development of the road network / out of town shops /petrol stations and other 'urban' type developments. Stronger development of a distinctive 'in scale and style' character to these developments may assist future integration.</p> <p>Isolated farmsteads / large houses / cottages These have traditionally been associated with working the land, providing accommodation for farmers and farm workers and as such the style and nature of the developments tend to intimately reflect the purpose (in this case very controlled and organised) of agriculture. Future developments could attempt to take this raison d'être as the test for suitability and attempt to integrate with existing densities and character styles. Modern generic agricultural buildings result in difficulties enabling such developments to respect the character of previous building styles. Suitable locations and landscaping can assist but there is a distinct contradiction between enabling some developments and retaining those areas where character is strongest.</p> <p>The redevelopment of redundant barn complexes within, on the edge and especially outside settlement boundaries alters the character of the built and surrounding environment from a rural working context to a leisure / residential use. The impact of this can vary considerably depending upon the execution. Redundant agricultural buildings in decay can add to the sense of character and history of the landscape as they have done for millennia, changing their use transforms both.</p>	
The road network	Good to Poor	<p>Larger roads have generic character and tend to produce considerable visual and noise disturbance.</p> <p>Minor roads in some areas have considerable rural character and are associated with thick tall hedges / trees and biodiverse verges. Others</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		have suffered loss of hedges / verges and have little character.	

Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

9.0.15 The overall condition of this Type is poor to good depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. There has been considerable erosion and degradation of rural features in some areas (around Catfield and Sutton and along the A149 with industrial and housing development of various sorts). The presence of the A149 is also a significant negative feature which dissects the western part of the Type and has a large visual and noise presence. Areas within settlements have been subject to considerable development pressures, frequently of somewhat ad hoc type styles and designs ranging from fairly substantial urban estates (Sutton and Catfield) to smaller estates and infill properties. The coastal area has a fairly substantial amount of ad hoc holiday and leisure development (caravan sites, shopping parades, bungalows and outdoor storage issues. Set against these negative factors are the positive retention of small paddocks and fields around settlement which contain the main ecological and 'old rural' character, together with small remnant sections of the Type (east of Hickling) which demonstrate considerable solitude and isolation. Overall, the degree of intactness of the character of the landscape varies considerably between 'intact' remnant and historically interesting areas to significantly degraded sub-urban and rural areas (development of unsuitable types and loss of features respectively).

Recent landscape impacts

- The high quality of agricultural land has tended to mitigate against the take up of agri-environment schemes in this Type.
- The development of large agricultural storage facilities (Catfield / Ludham) area have tended to create large intrusive features in the otherwise fairly open landscape. Landscaping surrounding these units has and probably will be fairly ineffectual in mitigating this effect.
- Similarly, new free range chicken units near Sea Palling have had a similar effect in eroding the visual character of the landscape.
- Developments of suburban style estates have tended to significantly alter the immediate area of Sutton and Catfield whilst the sites themselves are fairly well screened from wider landscape views.
- Re-development of existing properties, enlargement and infill between properties has had localised impact but is generally less than some other parts of the District.

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

- Significant numbers of new properties either sited within or outside existing settlements. The siting of new developments needs to take particular account of the existing structure of settlements.
- Subdivision of existing larger gardens within settlements tends to have a negative effect on the settlement character.
- Small fields surrounding settlement contribute the major ecological value and much rural character to the Type and their erosion, changes to usage and development has a markedly negative effect on character.

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- New agricultural buildings sited in locations away from or prominently within existing farm complexes.
- Wind turbines in certain areas.
- Outside lighting - both street type and decorative / domestic.
- Use of un-sympathetic boundary treatments, particularly bordering public highways and on edges of settlements where close boarded fencing / other semi/sub urban styles can appear incongruous.
- 'Improvement' of access tracks and entrance ways with urban style features (brick entrance pillars, gates, removal of 'rough track with grassed central margin, use of kerbing, close mown verges).
- Telecom masts in prominent locations.
- New road layouts which introduce standard 'suburban' highway features (kerbing / signage / widening)
- Extensions to properties which overly enlarge or gentrify rural settlements / locations.
- Barn conversions and other property construction within the open countryside which introduce 'suburban' features such as surfaced drives / domestic style gates and fences / garden style planting and parking areas / overly large windows and external lighting etc. Frequently a barn conversion in an isolated location away from other settlement can introduce a strongly suburban character.

b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries but only where these are traditionally present.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- Retention of rural features - tracks with grassed central margins, old fencing / gateposts / walls.
- Properties which are of a scale and location which respect the individual form of the settlement in which they are located (i.e. Development should not 'stand out' but rather should be almost un-noticeable and unremarkable as an additional element within the existing development structure, taking particular account of building / development size, location, surrounding landscaping and existing land uses).
- Landscaping around new properties which actively blends with existing features rather than tries simply to screen new development.
- Landscaping which uses native as opposed to non-native species.
- Landscaping which builds upon and enhances existing trees, hedges and other features on and adjacent to the proposed development site.
- Biofuel crops have potential to be integrated within this landscape Type fairly easily depending upon the type of crop and its location. Important considerations would be to avoid excessively large 'blocks' of biofuels such as short rotation coppice (of Miscanthus or Willow etc) where these impinge upon the views and landform of the location. By using rotations / species which do not appear excessively higher than existing hedgerows (which could be allowed to grow in height anyway) impact would be minimised.

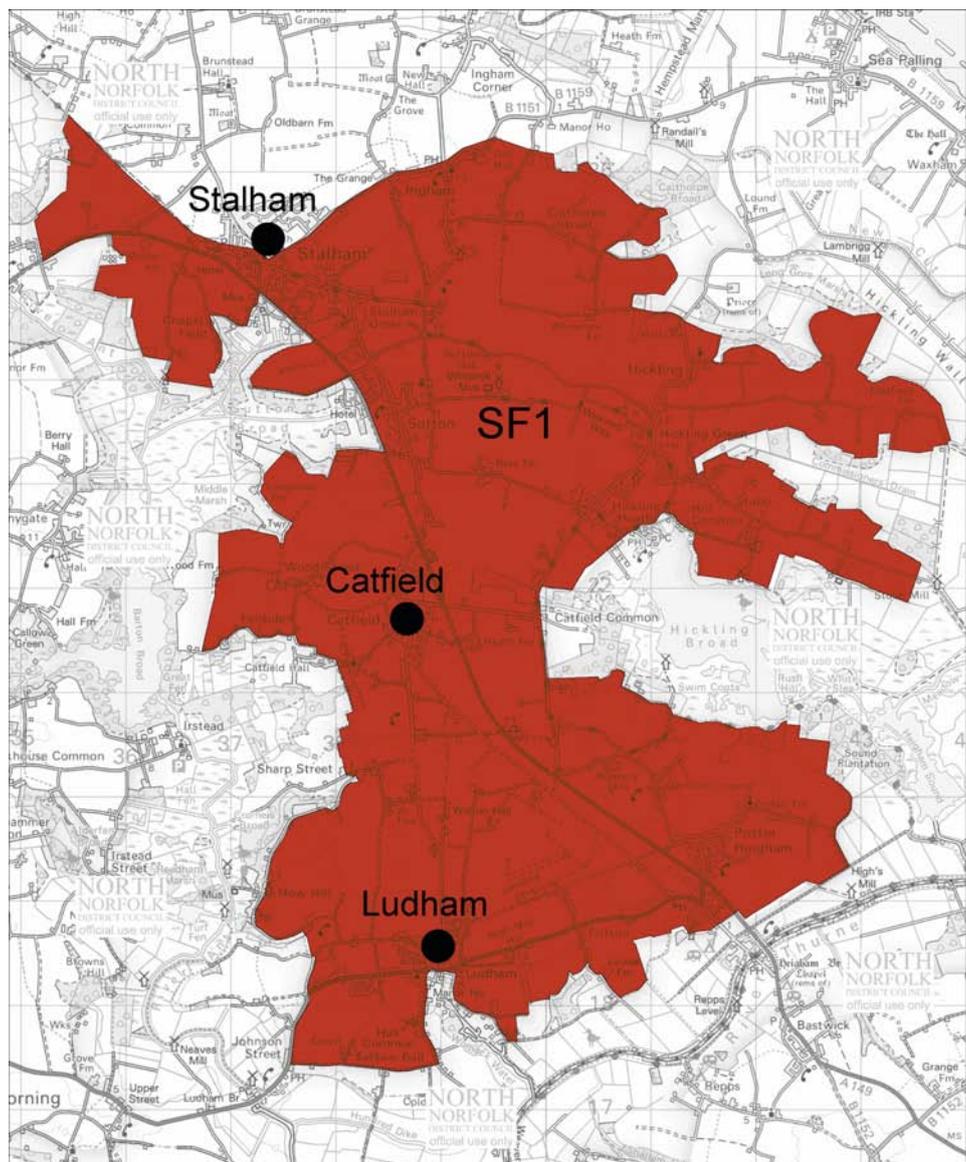
c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character; Ecological Network Priorities for this Landscape Type

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries where these were traditionally present only.
- Opportunities to buffer existing watercourses by the introduction of scrub and grassland along margins should be a priority especially where this would prevent pollution / connect with the Broads and associated wetlands.

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- Management of water levels should be considered where it is possible to retain water in ditches or create / maintain existing wet grassland / woodland areas. Where changes to drainage would adversely affect neighbouring sites which have ecological value, these should be resisted.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- The restoration and creation of wetlands comprising grassland, reedbed and wet woodland on the flood plain.

Map 9.1 Settled Fen



Landscape Character Type
 Settled Fen

Areas within the Type
 SF 1 - Stalham, Ludham & Potter Heigham



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9 Settled Fen

9.1 Stalham, Ludham and Potter Heigham (SF1)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- 9.1.1** The description of this Area has been covered in depth (to Area level) in the analysis of the Type as this is the only Area of the Type in the District.

10 Coastal Plain

Location and boundaries

10.0.1 The Coastal Plain Type is located to the north and east of Stalham, fringed on the south by the Broads and Coastal Fen Types and to the north and west by the Randomly Enclosed Open farmland Type (North Walsham plain). It is a relatively small distinct area which can be seen as part of a three part coastal landscape character typeset based loosely around the degree of elevation, coastal views and subsequent human response from south to north - fen to high rolling cliff.

Table 10.1 Coastal Plain (Countryside)

Picture 10.1



Picture 10.2



Long open views which have a few prominent and distinctive features situated on minor rises

Open countryside plains with few hedges, large fields and distant copses of trees

Picture 10.3



Picture 10.4



Former and current holiday houses of distinctive inter-war timber and asbestos designs

Settlement which is more or less level with the beach huts, caravans and ad-hoc development

10 Coastal Plain

Table 10.2 Coastal Plain (Settlement)

Picture 10.5



Coast road with open fields bounding hard-edged settlement and sea views beyond (Bacton)

Picture 10.6



Bacton Gas Terminal - One of the major features of the coastal landscape

Picture 10.7



Beach and coastal development with rising sandy cliffs indicating the changing landform of adjacent landscape type (Walcott)

Picture 10.8



Typical coastal village with widely varying styles and ages of development, street lighting etc

Key characteristics

- A very open landscape with long uninterrupted views and dominant, often highly coloured skies due to the proximity / orientation and reflection from the sea.
- A flat or nearly flat landscape with a few very minor but highly significant rises within it, upon which isolated farmsteads and churches may be sited.
- A skyline which is very prominent and upon which individual features are very significant (water towers, churches, telecom and major communication towers and lighthouse).
- Land cover is largely arable (Potatoes, wheat, barley, beans, rape and sugar beet) with small pockets of pasture near settlement and especially isolated farmsteads.
- Some of the largest areas of Grade 1 agricultural land in the County.
- Settlement is highly dispersed except along the coastal fringe which is where the only substantial villages are sited.
- Settlement is concentrated in the coastal area to reflect the development of both the tourist / holiday structure of the area and the gas industry. Both have produced highly distinctive settlement types.

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- Woodland cover is very low and tends to comprise small copses of deciduous and coniferous trees, often associated with isolated farmsteads. Trees within coastal settlements are virtually absent or small / windblown.
- The road network is dominated by the B1159, a single straight (possibly Roman) road, which serves as the main feeder road to service the coastal settlements. It cuts through the landscape irrespective of settlement or other topographical features. The other roads in the Type are minor with the exception of the Coast Road (also the B1159).

Landscape character

- 10.0.2** This is a very open landscape with long views and a definite presence of the sea throughout its area - even when views of the sea are not present. The settlement structure and land use fall into two very distinct categories - coastal holiday and industrial category and dispersed settlement arable category. The two are strongly linked by the terrain and the views within the Type, and mesh one into the other with very hard, stark edges to the settlement.
- 10.0.3** Topography is very important to this landscape type and is one of its main defining elements. The landscape is flat to very gently undulating, but the undulations are of considerable importance in defining human use of the landscape - the ridges (rising 10m at most) have been the sites of choice for farmsteads and particularly for churches (Walcott and East Ruston). Happisburgh, sited on the only small cliff edge within the type (about 20m) is similarly sited on a former ridge. These give rise to prominent and distinctive features on the skyline, which are a very definitive characteristic of this landscape Type.
- 10.0.4** Land cover is predominately arable and there are strong similarities with neighbouring and adjoining Broads Fringe landscape Type in this respect. There is even less woodland in this area than Broads Fringe. What woodland exists tends to be in small copses of variable age (from mature to newly planted - not ancient) associated with settlement in the main but occasionally as isolated units. Hedgerow trees are notable by their absence over most of the Type, again accentuating the open feel. Similarly hedgerows are not common or tall.
- 10.0.5** Field boundaries tend to be banked often without a hedge. Where a hedge is present it is often very low and scrubby but may be multi-species. There are numbers of pre-C18th enclosures within this area. Given the dispersed settlement pattern, road network and field boundary information, it is highly probable that the basic structure of boundaries in the landscape is of some antiquity. Field size varies from large to medium with some small closes near cottages and near the older settlements.
- 10.0.6** Settlement structure is complex and falls into two distinct categories as mentioned above. The dominant concentration of settlement is within the coastal fringe, formed by the gradual ad-hoc spread of holiday plots for structures ranging from beach-hut type shed 'parks' (Bacton) through more sophisticated crescents / un-made roadways of prefabricated inter-war and post war bungalow type holiday homes (now predominantly permanent homes) to estates of, again, holiday flats and bungalows (mostly 1960s/70s) which have become permanent homes more recently, through to C19th semi-detached holiday houses, farm workers cottages, high status farmhouses and even listed C17th farmhouses with major ancillary barns, with of course extensive areas of static caravans. Bacton Gasworks dominates the whole of the coast with its scale and communications towers.
- 10.0.7** The road network is very similar to that found in the other neighbouring types (minor roads serving to link settlements and the dispersed farmsteads / cottages) with the notable exception of the main B1159 which appears to be Roman in origin and bisects the area forming a notable feature in its own right.

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Geological character

10.0.8 This is a glacially deposited landscape that is undergoing continued marine erosion from the east. Tills, sands and gravels form unconsolidated low cliffs along the higher northern stretch of this coast and coastal dune formations provide a protective coastal fringe along the lower lying southern portion. The truncated drainage pattern left from glacial times mainly flows south away from the sea, leaving the area vulnerable to marine flooding. Settlements have also been lost over historic times, leaving a truncated and angular road pattern. Bungalows and other houses about the coast for much of its length. The sandy clay tills and glacial silts produce good agricultural soils.

Ecological character

10.0.9 The existing ecological character of the area is predominantly arable land divided by hedged and frequently just banked field boundaries with areas which have ditches as well. In some areas hedges are not present or may never have formed all field boundaries. In these areas, grassed banks / ditches provide the boundary feature. Pasture, if present, tends to be temporary or recent arable reversion, often for horses or especially wetter, lower lying areas and areas around settlement. Almost all pasture is improved and of relatively limited ecological value. Set aside and grassed margins are not as prevalent in this Type, probably due to the high agricultural land grade over much of the area (Grade 1 and 2).

10.0.10 Woodlands are infrequent in this landscape type. What woodlands there are form either mature wooded belts around larger 'Rectory' properties or small scrubby woodland in lower lying areas. Ancient woodland is not present. These variations reflect the landownership issues that have variously affected land use. A direct correlation between settlement and woodland type is not obvious. There are also relatively few hedgerow trees.

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Maritime Cliff and Slopes - Soft Cliff.
- Coastal Sand Dunes.
- Woodland.
- In addition to BAP habitats, special consideration should be given to a 6km radius of Paston Barn SAC to maintain grassland, scrub, hedge and other associated habitats for bats.

Analysis of specific elements and features within this type

Table 10.3 Coastal Plain: Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Open character with uninterrupted views	Good	<p>The more remote areas (adjacent to the Broads Type) would often be adversely changed by development.</p> <p>The less remote areas nearer larger settlements have had their character interrupted by disturbance and could accommodate moderate and appropriate developments which respect the population / settlement characteristic of the Area.</p> <p>The siting of wind turbines within the Type should have strong regard to their effects on neighbouring landscape Types - this Type is surrounded by landscape Types which need more careful consideration of impact effects.</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		The siting of telecom masts should be undertaken to minimise visual intrusion and may be inappropriate in some landscapes.	
Arable land use with medium to large fields bounded by banks and some hedges with notable hedgerow trees	Fair to Poor	<p>The imposition of new cropping types or changes to woodland cover could change the landscape. However the underlying geometry of field boundaries could be retained if suitably designed changes occur.</p> <p>The imposition of stock sheds, new isolated barn or other complexes with dwellings need to be carefully considered as modern designs tend to be strongly contrary to the existing character of the isolated relatively small farm buildings / cottages / dwellings dating from the C19th. Appropriate large scale landscaping (not screening) can assist in integrating new development.</p> <p>There are noticeably large warehousing / agricultural storage units within this landscape, it is questionable if more could be accommodated without compromising the character of the landscape or without substantial woodland planting schemes.</p> <p>Density of such developments should reflect the mean level that currently exists within the locality - increasing density will have strongly adverse effects on remoteness of some areas.</p>	Moderate
Skyline	Good	<p>Avoid developments which affect or impinge on open skyline views or which would adversely affect the night time experience of dark landscapes.</p> <p>Wind turbines and telecom masts can have very severe impacts in certain areas.</p> <p>Certain distinctive features within the landscape (Lighthouse, Churches, Watertower) would be greatly diminished if competing with other skyline features of wind turbines.</p>	High
Coastal landscape	Fair to Poor	<p>The coastal landscape is heavily developed by ad-hoc settlement. This restricts and impinges upon views.</p> <p>Much of the settlement is unattractive and without a cohesive style or sense of being integrated within its landscape - it appears to jar with surrounding agricultural and coastal features.</p> <p>Physical access to the sea is often similarly limited.</p> <p>Erosion constantly changes the beach and there are varieties of coastal defences which add to the character or subtract from it.</p>	Low

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>The Bacton Gasworks dominates the coast and imposes a strong industrial note / jarring with the quiet agricultural landscapes adjacent.</p>	
<p>Settlement (villages, edge of town and isolated farms etc)</p>	<p>Fair</p>	<p>Inland Villages Areas where large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller fields still contribute significantly to the character of the village could be protected from development. There is a strong tendency for the character of villages to be altered by modern high density development within existing boundaries. Additional development should utilise the best adjacent characteristics of the built landscape to enhance and reinforce those areas of villages which have degraded or unfocused styles / character.</p> <p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p> <p>Coastal Villages The ad-hoc nature of development, its increasing density and very 'hard edge' impose considerable challenges in terms of improving what are often settlements with degraded or low quality character. However, there are notable areas with ad-hoc timber framed bungalows / holiday huts / old farmhouses etc (Ostend Crescent, Walcott) which have considerable character and historical value.</p> <p>Further development should seek to retain and enhance the setting of the older buildings, whether residential or holiday, and seek to address the 'hard edge' lack of integration of the settlements into the surrounding landscape.</p> <p>Isolated farmsteads / large houses / cottages These have traditionally been associated with working the land, providing accommodation for farmers and farm workers and as such the style and nature of the developments tend to intimately reflect the purpose (in this case very controlled and organised) of agriculture. Future developments could attempt to take this raison d'être as the test for suitability and attempt to integrate with existing densities and character styles. Modern generic agricultural buildings result in difficulties enabling such developments to respect the character of previous building styles. Suitable locations and landscaping can assist but there is a distinct contradiction between enabling some developments and retaining those areas where character is strongest.</p> <p>The redevelopment of redundant barn complexes both within, on the edge and especially outside settlement boundaries alters the character of the built and surrounding environment</p>	<p>Moderate to High</p>

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>from a rural working context to a leisure / residential use. The impact of this can vary considerably depending upon the execution. Redundant agricultural buildings in decay can add to the sense of character and history of the landscape as they have done for millennia, changing their use transforms both.</p> <p>The maintenance of individual buildings in isolation to provide distinctive landscape features should be an important consideration.</p>	
The road network	Good to Poor	<p>B classification roads, whilst modernised to an extent, retain a strong sense of character - rural and distinctive. Care should be exercised over excessive signage in this relatively uncluttered road network.</p> <p>Minor roads in some areas have considerable rural character and are associated with thick tall hedges / trees and biodiverse verges. Others have suffered loss of hedges / verges and have little character.</p>	Moderate to High

Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

10.0.11 The overall condition of this Type is poor to good depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. There has been considerable erosion and degradation of rural features in many areas – particularly loss of hedgerows and pasture. Generally, the built features are in a moderately stable (un-changing) condition, comparable with all the other rural areas of the District. The major exceptions being within the coastal villages of Bacton and Walcott where the development of the Gas Terminal continues to erode the surrounding character of the landscape. There are opportunities to enhance its setting or ameliorate its impact with more strategic woodland planting well beyond the boundaries of the site (so avoiding security issues) also of contributing to ecological issues by providing grassland for foraging Bats from Paston Barn (SAC).

10.0.12 The strength of character is generally moderate, with subtle interactions between features and elements in the landscape providing the defining ‘sense of place’. The character of the landscape is generally less ‘intact’ than in neighbouring areas to the west. Variation within the Type is more apparent than in other neighbouring Types, but is still moderate but is apparent with landform, settlement type and vegetation cover all providing significant subtle indications of different parts of the Type.

Recent landscape impacts

10.0.13 Changes to the agricultural economy have tended to see fewer impacts in introducing ecological improvements resulting from agri-environment grants.

10.0.14 Telecom masts are fairly prominent in some parts of the Type due to long views.

10.0.15 The increasing wealth in the area is demonstrated by numbers of properties being enlarged /

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improved and sub-divided all of which have affected the appearance and character of settlements (especially Stalham) - often in individually modest but cumulatively significant ways (fencing replacing hedged boundaries / the loss of large gardens with mature trees and the resultant massing of buildings). New agricultural buildings are increasingly being erected to replace older barns etc which are in turn being converted to residential use, often with a significant change to the character of the landscape to which they contribute. The Type has tended to lag behind other rural areas of the District but is catching up.

10.0.16 The coastal fringe has seen considerable developments within the last 50 years which have had, in the main, a negative effect on the character of the landscape. Developments such as the Coastline Village at Walcott, caravan parks and other similar (frequently excessively lit) developments usually taking no account of the existing vernacular or attempting to screen or integrate the developments by suitable or sufficient landscaping have greatly eroded the original character. Opportunities which may be offered by new development to address older eyesores would be of benefit. Some parts demonstrate a highly degraded landscape in need of restoration or even creation of new landscapes (as woodland, the only tool left to ameliorate the damage, is not a characteristic of this Type). Addressing adverse light pollution issues by means of downlighting (even in the area of the Terminal) would be greatly beneficial to the wider undeveloped coastline area including the AONB nearby.

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

- Further development of the coastal area which extends beyond current limits.
- Significant numbers of new properties either sited within or outside existing settlements.
- Subdivision of existing larger gardens within settlements.
- New agricultural buildings sited in locations away from or prominently within existing farm complexes.
- Wind turbines in certain areas.
- Outside lighting - both street type and decorative / domestic.
- Use of un-sympathetic boundary treatments, particularly bordering public highways and on edges of settlements where close boarded fencing / other semi/sub urban styles can appear incongruous.
- 'Improvement' of access tracks and entrance ways with urban style features (brick entrance pillars, gates, removal of 'rough track with grassed central margin, use of kerbing, close mown verges).
- Telecom masts in prominent locations.
- New road layouts which introduce standard 'suburban' highway features (kerbing / signage / widening).
- Extensions to properties which overly enlarge or gentrify rural settlements / locations.
- Barn conversions and other property construction within the open countryside which introduce 'suburban' features such as surfaced drives / domestic style gates and fences / garden style planting and parking areas / overly large windows and external lighting etc. Frequently a barn conversion in an isolated location away from other settlement can introduce a strongly suburban character.

b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.

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- Retention of rural features - tracks with grassed central margins, old fencing / gateposts / walls.
- Properties which are of a scale and location which respect the individual form of the settlement in which they are located (i.e. Development should not 'stand out' but rather should be almost un-noticeable and unremarkable as an additional element within the existing development structure, taking particular account of building / development size, location, surrounding landscaping and existing land uses).
- Landscaping around new properties which actively blends with existing features rather than tries simply to screen new development.
- Landscaping which uses native as opposed to non-native species.
- Landscaping which builds upon and enhances existing trees, hedges and other features on and adjacent to the proposed development site.
- Biofuel crops have potential to be integrated within this landscape Type fairly easily depending upon the type of crop and its location. Important considerations would be to avoid excessively large 'blocks' of biofuels such as short rotation coppice (of Miscanthus or Willow etc) where these impinge upon the views and landform of the location. By using rotations / species which do not appear excessively higher than existing hedgerows (which could be allowed to grow in height anyway) impact would be minimised. Valley sides are likely to be more sensitive to their distinctive landform presenting more prominent 'viewing' of the crop.

c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character; Ecological Network Priorities for this Landscape Type

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Opportunities to buffer existing watercourses by the introduction of scrub and grassland along margins should be a priority.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland and scrub - or where existing pasture or woodland could be suitably enlarged.
- Maintenance and restoration of sand dune and cliff habitats as well as the creation of grassland and other habitats on land behind.

Areas within the type

- CP1 – Bacton to Sea Palling
 - CP2 – Sea Palling to Waxham
-

10.1 Bacton to Sea Palling (CP1)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Generally level or very gently rolling landscape which is relatively low compared with neighbouring coastal areas to the North. The landform gradually declines from Cromer to Sea Palling and then becomes sea level fen around Horsey.
- Settlement pattern is linear along the coast with large areas of ad hoc development straggling along roadways between settlements. The pattern is distorted and disturbed but an underlying nucleated 'older' (pre late C19th) settlement pattern is still discernible in the older properties, road network and location of churches.
- Away from the coast and mirroring the underlying pattern along the coastal part, the settlement structure is semi-nucleated with small villages (with a dispersed settlement pattern around a road network indicating small farmsteads and cottages with larger than average gardens) – an open, less controlled or estate type landscape based on individual small landholdings (other areas within the eastern part of the District demonstrate similar patterns).
- No major roads. The coast road and main, unusually straight B1159 are the only major roads servicing this Area. Road disturbance tends to be less than average.
- Bacton Gas Terminal dominates the landscape. Both in terms of daytime and nighttime impact. It can be seen from miles away (communication towers and lights). It has a strong influence over the perception of the landscape for a wide area around Bacton but not so much from the northern (Paston) side from which it is partly hidden by rising ground.
- Large caravan and chalet parks. Most are sited along the coastal fringe and dominate the settlement structure – emphasising and encouraging (by additional development) the straggling structure. One centrally placed chalet park in Bacton is comprised of wooden huts of some antiquity; similarly the Ostend Crescent in Walcott; which gives a very definite historical 'pre-War' feel to this area. Others such as the Coastline flats and bungalows (Walcott) simply suburbanise, starkly rising out of the landscape.
- Similarly remnant older bungalows of a wood and asbestos nature put up between the Wars or post 1945 give a definite character to parts of the coastal area.
- The surprisingly large Bush Estate at Eccles is the epitome of ad hoc 'plotlands' holiday development being quite isolated down unadopted rough tracks.
- Older settlements such as Happisburgh, Lessingham and Ingham Corner have an almost 'Broads' feel in terms of vernacular architecture with thatched roofs, coursed high quality flintwork and small cottages with large gardens.
- Field pattern is pre-Enclosure (mainly). But many field boundaries have been lost. Others are not hedged but banked only (and may always have been so). The presence of hedgerow trees is higher than the norm for the Type, but low compared to neighbouring Types (due to non-replacement of old trees – it appears that the landscape has become significantly less 'treed' during the past 50 years).
- Views of the Happisburgh Lighthouse, Watertower and Churches (especially Walcott, Happisburgh (and Ruston), Lessingham) are very visually dominant in this open landscape.

Evaluation

- 10.1.1** The condition of the landscape character varies from Poor to Moderate. Areas close to the coast (Bacton Walcott) show the most degraded and eroded character due to recent overlying developments. Areas away from the coast yet not overly degraded by field boundary removals show Moderate character.
- 10.1.2** The strength of character is Moderate – even the degraded or eroded parts demonstrate a highly distinctive if often unlovely, character which is often full of interest if somewhat generic nationally.

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Issues

- 10.1.3** This is a landscape which, like the Coastal Towns Type around Mundesley, has been adversely affected by decades of ad hoc and other development pressures. It is consequently in need of restoration on the coastal fringe area but where it is more intact inland, conservation may be more appropriate. There are elements within the degraded coastal fringe area which are worth retention give significant character and interpretation to the history of the area. Notable among these are the wooden chalets in a park at Bacton. The distribution of ad hoc wooden and board bungalows elsewhere along the coast, the former wartime defensive structures (pill boxes and spigot mortar posts – see Defence of Britain Project by Imperial War Museum for details and locations) some of which (such as the pillbox and anti-aircraft mount to the north of Walcott prom) are fairly rare examples. The trend over the past 30 years is for these items of character to be replaced by modern brick built generic designed larger properties of a very suburban style (including changes to their gardens and boundary features especially). This replaces an interesting and characterful settlement with a dull, cluttered and generic one. Better design could be the way forward for replacement dwellings to reflect the special history of the area.
- 10.1.4** The issues surrounding the development and expansion of the Gas Terminal are complex (security and function as well as access, and economy) and have made previous attempts to introduce landscaping around the site often later redundant. A more sustainable approach may be to look further afield and attempt to put in place strategic landscaping belts / copses / replacement clifftop or coastal habitat further away from the site which will be effective in screening and integrating the site for longer and with greater flexibility to the operations.
- 10.1.5** Elsewhere, landscape enhancements (new hedges, grassland, scrub copses and woodland etc) should seek to integrate and link to existing structured features (especially the Broads via watercourses around Lessingham and Walcott / Bacton).

10.2 Sea Palling to Waxham (CP2)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A relatively simple area of landscape with many fewer jarring elements.
- Lower landform which becomes almost sub-sea level in places.
- Mainly arable land use.
- Large poultry units.
- Extensive touring caravan sites.
- Historic Waxham Barn, Hall and Church complex.
- Isolated and remote character.
- Close proximity to the wilder part of the Broads (scrub belts and extensive reed fens / wet grazing meadows).
- Few hedged boundaries – mostly ditched and reed fringed.
- Very few field boundary trees – mostly willows.
- Coastal area is 'duned' and there are brackish 'slacks' which are scrub enclosed water bodies just to the rear of the dune system. Drainage is however into the Broads via pumps due to the low level of the land.

Evaluation

- 10.2.1** The condition of the landscape character is generally Fair to Good. This is a simple, remote landscape with few jarring features (exceptions being the poultry units and caravan parks).
- 10.2.2** The strength of character is Moderate to Strong.

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Issues

- 10.2.3** This is a very sensitive landscape on the edge of the Broads and part of the AONB. It has a highly distinctive and unusual character which is largely intact. This is an area where conservation of existing features is probably most appropriate.
- 10.2.4** The construction of new poultry units has had a visual impact but with appropriate (scrub type) screening, colouring of buildings (dark or wooden boarded) this can be reduced. Similarly the caravan parks can be intrusive but with sensitive landscaping and minimal outside lighting they can have a low impact. Entrance gate areas with overly elaborate signs / fencing, gates and kerbing etc can undermine the remote nature of the Area.
- 10.2.5** This would be an inappropriate area to site wind turbines.
- 10.2.6** Retention of and restoration of small landscape features such as reed fringed ditches and small scrub areas can have a significant positive effect on enhancing and reinforcing character in this landscape.

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11 Coastal Towns & Villages

Location and boundaries

11.0.1 The Coastal Towns and Villages landscape Type extends from Weybourne, without a break, to the eastern side of Mundesley. Usually the depth of the area is no more than 1 mile and can be less as the Type concentrates upon the distinctive settlement development and land form which has created this Type.

Table 11.1 Coastal Towns & Villages

Picture 11.1



Coast road with small areas of open fields dividing settlements

Picture 11.2



Caravan parks without landscaping on cliff tops

Picture 11.3



Area of more open arable and former heathland with prominent Radome above sandy cliffs

Picture 11.4



Older pre-war settlement extending along minor roads with established low trees/hedges

Key characteristics

- A fairly enclosed landscape type excepting views out of the area towards the sea.
- Rolling topography which often has relatively steep rises (for this coast) between the shore and the settlement and land beyond.
- A landscape which can be felt to be enclosed on a ledge of land or restricted on a ridge; both overlooking the sea.
- Arable land often provides the separation between villages or towns and makes each settlement a distinctive unit even if the separation comprises only a few fields. This separation is of considerable visual importance.

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- Pasture is occasionally present around and within settlement, but has been eroded by infill development and extension in recent years (Mundesley, Sheringham).
- Trees are an important feature of most of the settlements and provide a sense of softening both within the settlements and to blend the edges of settlement with small areas of countryside - increasing the appearance of separation between settlements.
- Woodlands are fairly scarce due to the predominance of settlement but there are large areas of woodland on the rising land of the Sheringham Cromer Ridge (Wooded with Parkland landscape Type) which gives a strong limitation to the views inland and encloses the settlement.
- Settlements vary from large seaside towns (Sheringham and Cromer) to large villages (Runtons, Overstrand and Mundesley) to small villages (Sidestrand). Each has a distinctive character and there are marked differences in the developmental history of each settlement.
- Settlements tend to be nucleated with older centres and wide ranges of development types surrounding them worked out along roads but often respecting, incorporating, or avoiding topographical features such as hills and woodlands in a way which adds to their distinctiveness.
- Large areas of caravan parks dominate many cliff top sites between and adjoining settlement.
- The road network tends to run both along the coast and between the coastal villages and inland settlements. Roads are busy and it is unusual to be far from road noise. This is not a landscape that is particularly tranquil and has areas of considerable disturbance.

Landscape character

- 11.0.2** The Coastal Towns and Villages landscape Type includes a wide diversity of landscapes which range from busy towns to more open and quiet arable rolling cliff tops. However, the proximity of the different landscape types and the way in which they have become integrated over very short distances, means that for practical purposes - and particularly in a 'usage' term - the area is one Type. The use of the area is its critical defining element; it is a leisure / holiday landscape and most of its development, either directly or indirectly and much of its use, is directed to this end. Similarly, its pressures often come from this very element also.
- 11.0.3** Parts of this landscape are within the Norfolk Coast AONB but the more densely settled parts were specifically excluded from the designation due to development. There are a number of sites of considerable nature conservation interest and one of geological interest (the cliffs to the east of Cromer are SSSIs, the rockpools of the Runtons foreshore are a geological SSSI and there are SSSIs and County Wildlife Sites at Beeston Common and Incleborough Hill).
- 11.0.4** The area is highly defined by its topography. To the west of Cromer, between the Runtons and Sheringham, the area is effectively a ledge on the seaward side of the Cromer Ridge. The soil is derived from the glacial sands, gravels and clays which are highly contorted and are exposed in the eroding coastal cliffs which are a major feature of this coast. To the East of Cromer the Type extends upwards onto the tail end of the Cromer Ridge as it meets the coast and then continues along the gradually declining land towards Mundesley. From Overstrand south, the rear of the Type is bounded by the Mun Valley which has psychologically restricted the use of the area to those parts in sight of the coast.
- 11.0.5** Land use to the west of Overstrand is predominantly developed settlement with smaller areas of arable fields between settlements. To the east of Overstrand there are areas of open fields up to and along the cliff edge giving some impression of what the area might have looked like when Gilbert Scott wrote Poppyland in the late 1800s.
- 11.0.6** Field size is medium with quite a number of smaller fields especially around and between settlements. Many of these have been turned into camping fields or pony paddocks which give a distinct leisure character to this land. Hedge size varies but can be tall and thick. There are

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considerable networks of tracks and paths in the Sheringham Cromer area which are extensively used by walkers and these are often bounded by banks and hedges.

- 11.0.7** Woodland cover in this type is lower than average but much of the Type adjoins the Wooded with Parks Type and so is effectively close to, and influenced by, this strong wooded element. Much of the leisure use of the area devolves into the wooded Ridge (Roman Camp, Felbrigg, Northrepps and Sheringham Park) and for practical purposes people use this as one landscape unit albeit with two very distinctive characters.
- 11.0.8** The cliff edge is highly distinctive and varied. This is one landscape over which man has virtually no control except to reduce its gradual erosion. The steepness of the cliff together with its constant erosion means that the ecology is almost completely natural and without any man-made intervention. It is classified as SSSI for that reason. The cliffs between Weybourne and Mundesley are of international importance for their geology. Views from the cliffs are a highly distinctive feature, heavily coloured by the use of extensive areas for golf courses (old and well established) and caravan parks.
- 11.0.9** Settlement is highly varied with the two towns being very different in character. Cromer is the major settlement, which developed during the C19th as a resort compared with Sheringham, which is not much smaller, but which developed from its fishing village origin to become a distinctly different type of resort with a distinctly different architecture (in the main) presumably resulting from attracting a different type of holiday maker. Cromer appears to have been more distinctly 'planned' (especially the western grid streets), whereas Sheringham has a consciously 'more vernacular' appearance - reflecting the frequent combination of fishing and guesthouse proprietor businesses under one roof in the late C19th to mid C20th. The developments of large properties to the south of the Coast Road in Sheringham give the appearance of a very wealthy elite purchasing individual plots - similar to that seen in Overstrand and in Cliff Avenue in Cromer.
- 11.0.10** To a greater or lesser extent one can see the same dynamics of early (C19th to mid C20th) development occurring in all the settlements in this Type. This is what has effectively defined the Type - its shared heritage of development. Most of the villages were involved in the fishing industry and had/have a core of older small cottages and often an 'off centre' church - the cottages would have been dispersed and included smallholdings. These have been augmented, either en block by a consciously grand plan (in the case of Mundesley, Cromer and Sheringham to a lesser extent) where large landowners saw a development opportunity. Or there have been piecemeal developments as a result of smaller landowners gradually disposing of land - over a longer period causing different styles and ages of properties to predominate.
- 11.0.11** To the south east of Trimmingham is a particular land use / development type - military. The area has been a site of radar transmitters since the War and quite extensive areas of hilltop contain abandoned block houses and high security fencing. The Trimmingham Radome is visible for many miles to the south and west.
- 11.0.12** The road network works in two main directions, along the coast and at right angles to it - effectively providing a major link between the major settlements which are along the coast but also providing links into the land behind the settlements - both to connect with villages to the rear of the coast and as a result of the historical land use and parish distribution (tending to incorporate land over and onto the ridge to the south). The roads are busy and there are few places where road noise and visual disturbance are not omnipresent.
- 11.0.13** Views within the Type tend to be short or enclosed, except to the east of Overstrand and on the cliff edge and the notable hills which exist in the area. The sea is the major constant defining visual element throughout the Type.

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Geological character

11.0.14 This section of coast is actively eroding as a result of sea encroachment. Much of the resulting cliff edge is composed of the unconsolidated and contorted glacial clays, sands and gravels exposed at the seaward end of the Cromer Ridge. The underlying chalk is visible in the cliffs at Weybourne and on the foreshore at West Runton. The cliffs between Weybourne and Mundesley are of international importance for their geology.

Ecological character

11.0.15 The existing ecological character of the area is predominantly arable land divided by hedged and frequently banked field boundaries. In some areas hedges are not present or may never have formed all field boundaries. In these areas, grassed banks provide the boundary feature. Pasture, if present, tends to be temporary or recent arable reversion with some notable areas around the main towns - often on land where development is anticipated. Pasture may therefore be 'natural regeneration' or improved.

11.0.16 Woodlands are very apparent on the fringes of parts of this Type (Sheringham to Cromer) but there are limited amount within the Type itself. Most is fairly low diversity often 'Sycamore' or 'Pine' woods. Woodland of a sort is present in larger gardens situated with or surrounded by housing (Sheringham).

11.0.17 Older tree assemblages, older field boundaries with multi-species hedges / ground flora, coppiced woodland areas, veteran trees and ponds are all infrequent, although there are 'pockets' of this sort of landscape (Runtons and Trimingham).

11.0.18 Heathland is present in limited quantities, often situated in similar locations to the woodlands (on top of rises - e.g. Beeston Bump and around the Runtons) where it is essentially a continuation of the adjacent Wooded with Parkland Type.

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Heathland - A feature more associated with Rolling Coastal Heath and Arable and Wooded with Parkland but present in limited amounts in particular parts of the Type, usually associated with areas of former common or similar waste ground on lighter gravely soils. Often indicated only as limited indicator species in road verges etc.
- Woodland - of limited diversity normally and present in limited quantities.
- Grassland. Generally in small pockets and 'improved'.

Analysis of specific elements and features within this type

Table 11.2 Coastal Towns & Villages: Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Fairly enclosed with views out towards the sea and occasionally along the coastal fringe	Fair	<p>The enclosure is mostly occasioned by a combination of built development and landform.</p> <p>There are considerable threats through development which will further reduce and enclose the landscape - especially between settlements on the small areas of remaining open agricultural land and cliff top.</p> <p>There are views over the Type from a number of</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>notable vantage points (Beeston Bump, Inceborough Hill and areas along the Cromer Ridge through to Trimingham). All of these are potentially susceptible to considerable change both from surrounding development and the types of development within the settlements which one looks across / down into.</p> <p>Views over this Type are also significant features of neighbouring landscape Types.</p>	
Arable land use separating settlements bounded by banks and some hedges with notable hedgerow trees	Fair	<p>There are considerable pressures to develop the land adjoining and between settlements within this Type.</p> <p>The remaining agricultural land plays a vital part in retaining a sense of less intensive less urban use of the Type. Removal of even small parcels of land in certain locations can have considerable effects in eroding the character of this Type.</p> <p>Maintenance of buffers of agricultural land in and around settlement is of high importance -(ie accentuating the character and ecological value of the Runton and Beeston Commons).</p> <p>Hedges, hedged trackways and hedgerow trees are very important features again accentuating the rural nature of parts of this Type. There are issues of retaining views however which certain replanting schemes have not considered.</p> <p>Small barns and sheds tend to be the norm for agricultural buildings within this type. There is a tendency for these to be used for other purposes which often attract non-agricultural detritus outside (vehicles, caravans, machinery storage of materials) these are not appropriate uses for these types of building without close control.</p>	High
Coastal landscape	Good to Poor	<p>The coastal landscape is heavily developed by settlement. This restricts and impinges upon views.</p> <p>Large areas of caravan developments on clifftops intrudes into the character of the landscape and is a jarring feature which makes little attempt to be integrated.</p> <p>The cliffs vary between strongly eroding and non- or low eroding. Their ecology and appearance are</p>	High to Moderate

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>striking and highly sensitive. There is a strong argument for retaining the diversity of cliff types.</p> <p>Beach types vary from sandy to cobbled and vary according to the time of year and the type of defences.</p>	
Settlement (villages, edge of town and isolated farms etc)	Fair	<p>Generally The diversity between the two towns is a strong characteristic, as is the diversity between the different settlements and settlement structures along the whole of the Type. Maintaining the distinctive nature of each settlement should be paramount, through design, layout and mix of buildings etc.</p> <p>Street lighting can dominate the landscape beyond the settlements - especially affecting views along the coast and from the settlements out seawards. A sensitive approach could improve the character of both settlements and land beyond.</p> <p>Towns Due to topographical constraints, new development - particularly industrial and commercial is taking place on the main entrance routes into the town - on rising and higher land. This is contrary to the developmental character of the towns until the last 20/30 years and has tended to make the settlements appear less cohesive and more unstructured - many developments are unattractive, badly sited within the landform and have inadequate integration or relationship to the landscape in which they are imposed.</p> <p>Additional landscaping, better design and siting, consideration of lighting issues and the ancillary requirements that will be imposed such as road improvements and signage should be carefully considered.</p> <p>Use of woodland belts to compartmentalise and limit views over large expanses of development should be considered as these would reflect and enhance existing wooded fringes extending down from the Cromer Ridge.</p> <p>Villages Areas where large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller fields still contribute significantly to the character of the village could be protected from</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>development. There is a strong tendency for the character of villages to be altered by modern high density development within existing boundaries. Additional development should utilise the best adjacent characteristics of the built landscape to enhance and reinforce those areas of villages which have degraded or unfocused styles / character.</p> <p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p> <p>Ad Hoc coastal fringe development Often in the form of timber framed bungalows and similar structures, these are frequently sited in sensitive and fairly visible locations relying on small size and substantial mature gardens to minimise current visual impact. Changes to redevelop, enlarge or infill these sites should be very carefully considered in relation to whether or not this would alter the visual impact and character of the location.</p> <p>Isolated farmsteads / cottages / barns There are relatively few of these within this Type due to the nature of the agricultural land and the degree of development within the Type. Additional individual dwellings will tend to have a detrimental effect on character as the overall density of the settlement is pretty much at capacity.</p>	
The road network	Fair to Poor	<p>Main roads are busy and generic in form. They impose considerable visual and noise disturbance. Signage is heavy and cluttered in many places as typified by the degree of tourist areas.</p> <p>Minor roads in some areas have considerable rural character and are associated with thick tall hedges / trees and biodiverse verges. Others have suffered loss of hedges / verges and have little character.</p>	Moderate to Low

Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

11.0.19 The overall condition of this Type is poor to good depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. Generally, the non-built features are in a more stable (un-changing) condition than the built features and the areas around them. The strength of character is generally low to moderate

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but definite assemblages of single features (types of buildings/views of sea scapes or woodlands, hillocks etc) and interactions between features and elements in the landscape provide a distinctive 'sense of place'. Variation within the Type is moderately significant depending upon the features and elements, with differences between the 'Towns' and 'Villages' and the settings between them.

11.0.20 There are still important parts of the Type which have not been adversely affected by recent development and provide a surprisingly rural, coastal experience with discrete views of the sea or wider coast, set with villages. These undeveloped areas which separate and provided the setting for individual settlements still create a strong defining characteristic of the Type.

Recent landscape impacts

- Extension of the built area of towns and villages which have eroded and removed other prominent features.
- Development of the road network.
- Increasing street and outdoor lighting.
- Removal of hedged boundaries (eastern area beyond Overstrand) during past 50 years.
- Increasing infill development removing open space opportunities.
- Increasing infill development removing open space opportunities and decreasing views both externally looking into settlements and internally looking out (especially villages).
- Installation of clifftop caravan parks in the post War era are now very dominant landscape features.
- Increasing sub-urbanisation of settlement fringe areas (especially the large and extensive industrial and retail developments on the edge of Cromer and the gradual changes of use of land between the settlements – to garden centres, car boot sale fields, playing fields etc).

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

- Significant numbers of new properties either sited within or outside existing settlements.
- Subdivision of existing larger gardens within settlements.
- New agricultural buildings sited in locations away from or prominently within existing farm complexes.
- Wind turbines in certain areas.
- Outside lighting - both street type and decorative / domestic where small areas of darker landscapes within the Type remain.
- Use of un-sympathetic boundary treatments, particularly bordering public highways and on edges of settlements where close boarded fencing / other semi/sub urban styles can appear incongruous.
- 'Improvement' of access tracks and entrance ways with urban style features (brick entrance pillars, gates, removal of 'rough track with grassed central margin, use of kerbing, close mown verges).
- Telecom masts in prominent locations.
- New road layouts which introduce standard 'suburban' highway features (kerbing / signage / widening) on the remaining rural road network outside towns.
- Extensions to properties which overly enlarge or gentrify rural settlements / locations.
- Barn conversions and other property construction within the open countryside which introduce 'suburban' features such as surfaced drives / domestic style gates and fences / garden style planting and parking areas / overly large windows and external lighting etc. Frequently a barn conversion in an isolated location away from other settlement can introduce a strongly suburban character.

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b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Retention of the widely varying built character of the landscape - the diversity of densities, ages and sizes of properties. The retention of mature gardens and trees where present.
- Retention of and development of open spaces.
- Moving caravan sites off prominent coastal locations or providing additional landscaping / reductions in density / subdued colour use/reductions in un-sympathetic lighting.
- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- Retention of rural features - tracks with grassed central margins, old fencing / gateposts / walls.
- Properties which are of a scale and location which respect the individual form of the settlement in which they are located.
- Landscaping around new properties which actively blends with existing features rather than tries simply to screen new development.
- Landscaping which uses native as opposed to non-native species.
- Landscaping which builds upon and enhances existing trees, hedges and other features on and adjacent to the proposed development site.
- Biofuel crops have potential to be integrated within this landscape Type with some difficulty depending upon the type of crop and its location. Important considerations would be to avoid excessively large 'blocks' of biofuels such as short rotation coppice (of Miscanthus or Willow etc) where these impinge upon the views and landform of the location. By using rotations / species which do not appear excessively higher than existing hedgerows (which could be allowed to grow in height anyway) impact would be minimised. Valley sides are likely to be more sensitive to their distinctive landform presenting more prominent 'viewing' of the crop.

c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character

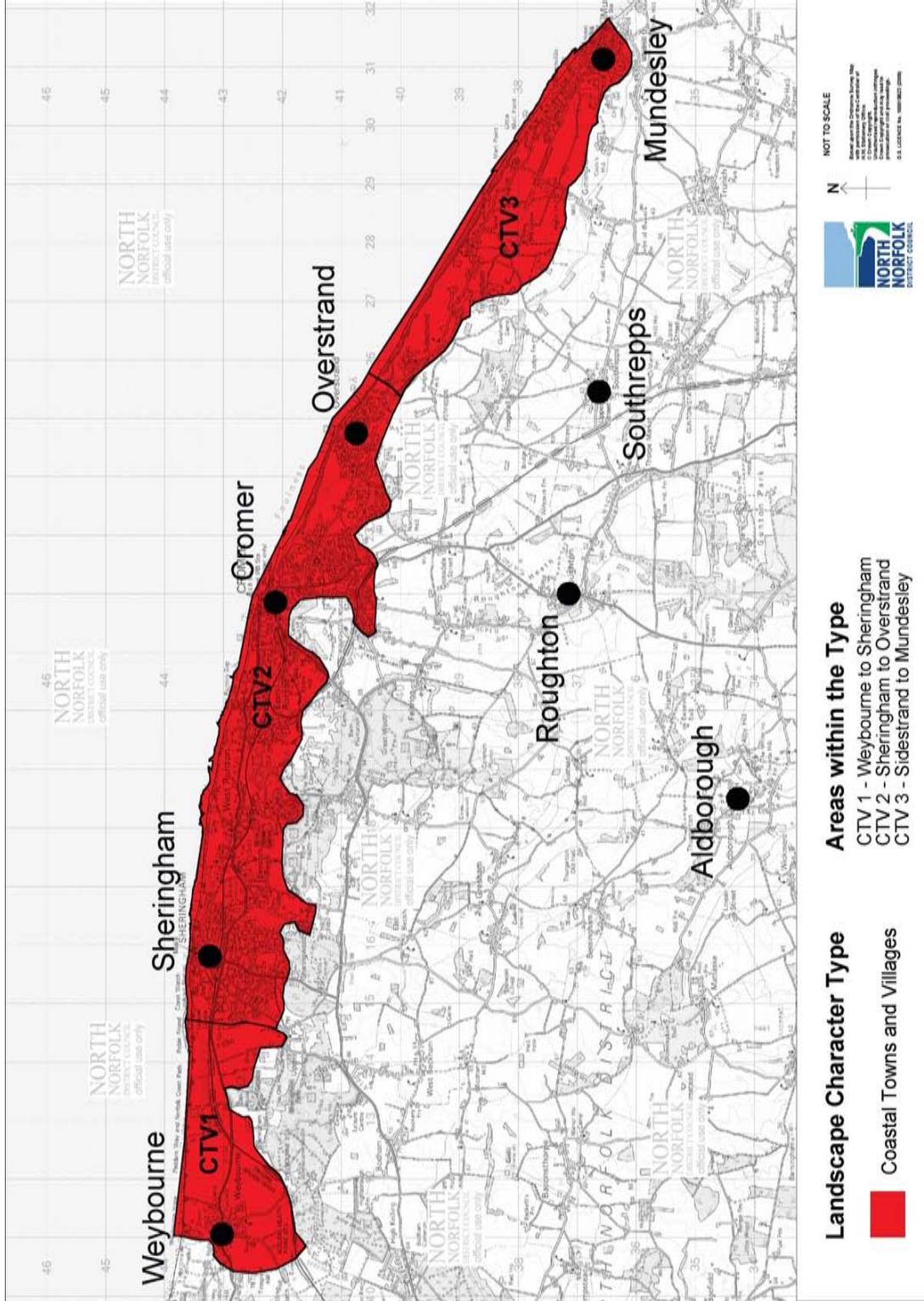
- Maintaining and enhancing existing 'green corridors' within and outside developed areas - particularly enhancing connectivity with neighbouring habitats in other Types (woodland and heathland).
- Reinstatement of hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.

Areas within the type

- CTV1 – Weybourne to Sheringham
 - CTV2 – Sheringham to Overstrand
 - CTV3 – Sidestrand to Mundesley
-

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Map 11.1 Coastal Towns & Villages



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11.1 Weybourne to Sheringham (CTV1)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A small discrete Area sandwiched between the scarp slope of Kelling Heath and the town of Sheringham.
- A relatively undeveloped landscape which is strongly influenced by and has influences on the setting of Sheringham Park.
- A landscape which is dominated by views of the sea.
- A quintessentially English coastal landscape with factors such as small fields, wooded copses, heathy boundaries, a steam railway, nestling village with church and windmill all set within a gently rolling landscape.

Evaluation

- 11.1.1** The condition of the landscape character is Good. The landscape is more or less intact with few degraded or jarring elements.
- 11.1.2** The strength of character is Strong.

Issues

- 11.1.3** The landscape is very distinctive with views of Sheringham Park (both into and out of the Park), the sea, Weybourne Village and the surrounding countryside (including Weybourne station and the railway) being important defining elements within this landscape. These elements are reliant on the purity of their setting to achieve the cumulative impact that they do. Developments such as the new railway sheds at Weybourne, the new farm buildings near Weybourne Station and the modern housing developments on the outskirts of Weybourne have and will erode the character of the landscape. The degree of erosion is cumulative (as in most such instances) but particularly so given the very considerable sensitivity of this landscape to changes. Introducing large scale landscape screening should not occur unless the development is unavoidable and this is a least worst option – it is not however a panacea which can be used to make development acceptable.
- 11.1.4** Small developments such as the creation of kerbed entrances (to the new barns) and external lighting can have a disproportionately adverse suburbanising effect (beyond that in other rural Types) within this Area.

11.2 Sheringham to Overstrand (CTV2)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- This Area has the largest physical amount of settlement in the District, yet it still manages to retain parts which are very rural and relatively untouched.
- The landform of the Area is very significant in the development, layout and distribution of settlement – both its density and types. Essentially development has occurred along a cliff shelf between the higher dryer Cromer Ridge and the sea. Original development concentrated around the few places where easy access between the cliffs could be gained to the sea. This has extended outwards with concentric rings (often beginning as fingers along roadways) of newer development forming during each new generation. With time this has meant that all the settlements have nearly joined and have pressed up against the backdrop of woodland and higher ground along the Ridge.
- The presence of the cliff area is very significant.

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- The presence of large caravan parks has had a strong effect on the appearance of the cliff areas between and around settlements.
- Small but prominent hills form a strong visual and separating element within the Area (Beeston Bump, Inceborough Hill) and other smaller ones.
- Small but discreet areas of farmland, woodland, heath and other open spaces (small commons, golf courses) all contribute successfully to separating and setting the villages and towns apart. This is one of the most vital elements in the character of the Area.
- The settlement structure is frequently orientated around commons which run north south along very small water courses. This provides a welcome and distinctive open space in the centre of settlements and often has significant ecological value (Beeston Common SSSI, East and West Runton Commons).
- The building types are strongly redolent of character being formed largely for leisure purposes. All the settlements have as the basis of their growth, the common factor of holidays since the mid C19th.
- The presence of larger houses situated away from the centre of the towns, often with large mature gardens, areas of trees (often conifers) and built between 1890 and 1940 are a strong reminder of the upper middle class holiday preferences of the Area.
- Generic estates have been developed around all of the settlements – often eroding the character.
- The presence of the wooded Cromer Ridge makes a strong backdrop and leisure area in its own right, interrelated with the very different character of the towns and villages.

Evaluation

- 11.2.1** The condition of the landscape character varies between Poor and Good. Areas of cliff top caravan parks, generic estates, road improvements, excessive street lighting, industrial estate development and parts where infill development has removed the structure of the larger gardens and setting of houses have all eroded the character of the Area. Other areas such as around the two Runtons and around Overstrand have retained or at least developed (as the character has undoubtedly changed considerably) more of their underlying character whilst at the same time changing quite radically during the last 100 years.
- 11.2.2** The strength of character varies between Moderate to Strong.

Issues

- 11.2.3** The retention of the small areas of open space (farmland, woodland, heath, golf courses etc) are the essential element which underlies the character of this Area. Reductions in this element during the past 70 years have significantly changed the character of the Area and effectively eroded it. The level of presence of this element is now critical. There are still some parts of the Area where one is not aware of the size and extent of settlement or even that there is settlement at all! But there are others where it's all too apparent. Maintaining areas where it is possible (West Runton Common) to look out of the centre of the settlement and see countryside are defining.
- 11.2.4** Maintaining the physical separation between the settlements, even if this is only on small strips of farmland or open land (as at Cromer / East Runton) have importance in defining individual settlement character. This could be enhanced by suitable natural landscaping on these small areas (i.e. ribbons of woodland or heath).
- 11.2.5** Screening and integrating the existing caravan parks would (by changing to less dense chalets as at Beeston) with the addition of sensitive and appropriate landscaping do much to alleviate what are major erosive elements in the character and amenity of the Area. Similarly external lighting

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has a disproportionately negative effect on character when seen from the adjoining semi-rural parts of the Area.

- 11.2.6** Inland caravan areas could similarly achieve much better integration if current 'suburban park style' landscaping lighting and roadway construction were substituted for a more sensitive approach which values the local rural landscape character between settlements.
- 11.2.7** The retention of larger gardens and mature garden trees is very important in maintaining the sense of lower density of settlement than is actually the case. This is especially apparent in Overstrand, parts of Cromer, Sheringham and the Runtons.
- 11.2.8** Development of positive landscaping around existing and extended industrial areas could be particularly beneficial (north side of Holt Road Cromer).

11.3 Sidestrand to Mundesley (CTV3)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A landform which is effectively a cliff ridge sloping north to south and backed by a valley (River Mun).
- Settlement pattern is semi-nucleated with Sidestrand, Trimingham and Mundesley as the three centres. Intervening land has numbers of ad hoc post C19th individual houses mostly associated with the holiday element of the Area.
- Similarly, towards Mundesley there are numbers of small static caravan sites which are prominent in the landscape, mostly on the cliff top.
- Trimingham has a large holiday complex situated within (and largely screened by) a woodland area to the south of the coast road.
- Trimingham also has the RAF radome installation and there are telecom / radar installations near Overstrand. The radome is visible (due to the landform) from up to 6miles distant.
- The field pattern and hedgerow presence has been significantly eroded due to hedgerow removals and is generally less present than in other Areas of the Type.

Evaluation

- 11.3.1** The condition of the landscape character is Poor to Moderate. The landscape has been considerably changed during the past 100 years and the development of generic estates around Trimingham and Mundesley, together with the caravan parks, and increasing re-development of small outlying ad hoc holiday units to larger or multiple dwellings has greatly eroded the character of the landscape – especially in the last 40 years. (see also Mun Valley Landscape Character Assessment NNCP 2001).
- 11.3.2** The strength of character of the landscape is Fair to Moderate.

Issues

- 11.3.3** Extensions to and integration of the various jarring developments (estates and caravan parks) around Mundesley would present opportunities to undertake extensive buffering (internal and external) landscaping to improve both the internal amenity of these parts and their external visual impact. Utilising the existing disused railway line which currently provides a boundary to the coastal development could enhance ecological, access and landscape elements but would require greater land area to provide sufficient meaningful screening planting.
- 11.3.4** The gradual re-development of existing areas of housing (usually former holiday houses often of a prefabricated or timber / brick skin construction) for larger properties (sometimes with sub-divided

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gardens etc) has a detrimental effect on character due to the considerable change in the scale and nature / design of the buildings. A more sensitive approach to re-development would retain character and amenity. Suitable landscaping (particularly insisting on hedged and treed boundaries in preference to walls and fences) would have similar benefits.

- 11.3.5** Enhancement of the area of cliff top to the east of the Trimmingham Radome would give a significant benefit visually and ecologically.
- 11.3.6** Proposals for replacement hedges, hedgerow trees, new small woodland copse planting or grassland and especially heathland restoration would have significant benefits ecologically and visually. Preference should be given to opportunities to link existing features with others nearby (i.e. cliff edge habitat to cliff top grassland; field boundaries should try to link to existing boundaries in the Mun Valley; the existing railway line could be linked to other field boundary and woodland / grassland features.
- 11.3.7** This is not an area which has numbers of isolated farm buildings or complexes and as such these could be jarring features.
- 11.3.8** The landscape sensitivity varies across the Area. The northern part being more sensitive and less developed than the southern part which would actively benefit from restoration rather than simple preservation. This is not a landscape which could easily accommodate structures such as wind turbines as evidenced by the prominence of the radome – a relatively small structure.
- 11.3.9** Detailed reference on landscape development, history and character can be found in the Mun Valley Landscape Character Assessment produced by the North Norfolk Coast AONB Partnership in 2001.

Wooded with Parkland 12

12 Wooded with Parkland

Location and boundaries

12.0.1 This Type is spread in various distinct areas throughout most of the District. It avoids the lowest areas however and tends to be situated on higher land above 20m. The largest areas of this Type are along the Cromer Ridge, and at Swanton Novers. There are other smaller areas all of which are associated with the parks of great houses. It will be noted that this Type does not include all the areas of woodland in the District - a 'cut off point' has been considered which accords with the scale of resolution of the overall survey at Level 2 and this has excluded some areas such as Bacton Woods which, whilst locally significant in the landscape, do not accord a distinction within this level of assessment.

Table 12.1 Wooded with Parkland

Picture 12.1



Grazing set in historical parkland with large mature native trees scattered within

Picture 12.2



Arable land with field boundaries bordered by hedgerows

Picture 12.3



Arable land with mature copses and woodland

Picture 12.4



Typical country road in wooded parkland

Key characteristics

- Enclosed or moderately enclosed views within the Type as a result of predominance of woodland.
- Woodland and trees, mostly in blocks ranging from copses to large woods and interspersed with areas of arable, settlement and some pasture form the main defining character element of this Type.

12 Wooded with Parkland

- The underlying topography of the Type tends to be the same as that in the surrounding landscape Types. I.e. this Type is defined by landcover.
- Woodland types range from areas of coniferous planting to areas of deciduous planting, and include belts, blocks and large stands of woodland of all ages.
- Parkland is a major feature which has encouraged the planting of and retention of woodland. It is rare to find large areas of woodland which have not got an associated park (the Forestry Commission woods of the Cromer Ridge are an obvious exception).
- Settlement tends to be in the form of dispersed larger farmsteads (often associated with the main great house and landowner); a great house/s and small villages / planned villages. However there are notable exceptions around Holt / High Kelling, Sheringwood and Aylmerton (all on the Cromer Ridge) where settlement is in the form of roadways of plotlands within the woods themselves.
- Road networks vary with the overall landscape and neither distinctive nor take account of the particularities of this Types' topography / development.

Landscape character

- 12.0.2** This is an enclosed landscape Type which gives a distinct contrast with most of the other landscape Types in the District. It is also very distinctly different from the Types into which it is effectively an insertion or sub-type due to its particular landcover (and settlement) elements.
- 12.0.3** The wooded element comes in a variety of different forms throughout the Type and these can be expressed as the following:
- 12.0.4** Parkland belts around and within formal great house parks. The planning of these parklands tends to be associated with the early to late C18th (in the general style of either Capability Brown - Felbrigg, Suffield and Holkham which are highly formalised enclosed parks using relatively few features or elements - or Repton whose work is a development from this style but with a more naturalistic and less formal, occasionally somewhat wooded garden style). The current management of these parks varies and some are highly managed, whilst others have matured to a more naturalistic form. Some have added areas of commercial woodland planting to the basic parkland (Felbrigg) and it is not always clear where one intention begins and another ends.
- 12.0.5** Commercial woodlands planted by landowners and the Forestry Commission. These are usually obvious in their design - dominantly coniferous or of one or two species planted in rows for ease of maintenance and to enable suitable growth. The age ranges vary, but most are less than seventy years old. The form of these woodlands tends to be in blocks.
- 12.0.6** Ancient woodlands. These are rarer but may occur anywhere. Swanton Novers and Fulmodeston Severals are the two largest areas (both SSSI and the former a National Nature Reserve managed by English Nature). There are numerous other areas (some very small) of ancient woodland (i.e. that which has not been cultivated for at least 400 years and has a structure and ground flora/fauna which is indicative of English Natures' classification of Ancient Woodland). Many of these smaller areas are not indicated on any register as they are considered too small (i.e. below 2 ha) but are of considerable local importance. It is common to find that portions of parkland belts, reforested commercial woodlands etc may also be ancient woodlands.
- 12.0.7** Shooting woodlands and breaks. These are effectively farmland woods which are planted for a variety of reasons including shooting cover for game birds, minor forestry production and to prevent wind blow, or simply to use up an area which is too wet or dry or topographically unsuitable for any other purpose. The woodlands created tend to be in small blocks but may in the latter cases be sinuous and follow other features (streams or slopes). They tend to produce a fragmented wooded appearance to the landscape.

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- 12.0.8** Land use between the woodlands tends to be arable, large areas of pasture associated with parklands and some smaller areas of pasture and settlement. The arable use is very similar in character to that in the neighbouring / surrounding landscape Type.
- 12.0.9** Field size tends to be the same as that in the surrounding landscape Type and in most cases, this is medium to large. Field boundaries tend to be similar in character i.e. hedged with banks. There is a tendency for hedges to be 'older' in areas of ancient woodland such as that around Fulmodeston and extending into the area around Wood Norton / Swanton Novers. Here a 'wood pasture' agricultural history has 'eaten into' bits of older wood and has created a much older continuous field boundary pattern than in some other parts of the District. Hedgerows have greater species diversity than almost anywhere else in the District.
- 12.0.10** Settlement is very varied within the Type. Holt is the only major town within the Type but other large towns are close to the Cromer Ridge area. The development of Holt has not been changed by the woodland element (the name Holt suggests the area has long been wooded) but it provides a setting for some of its outer parts.
- 12.0.11** Parks and large houses are a dominant feature as already mentioned. The majority are what might be termed either first rank great houses (Holkham and Blickling) or second rank (Suffield, Felbrigg, Sheringham, Mannington and Wolterton). Most have had a considerable influence over the development of settlement within and outside the parks - destroying and relocating settlements, creating new settlements of workers cottages, model farms, small hamlets etc. The overall density of settlement in these areas tends to be lower than that outside the influence of the large landowner. The character, period and style of each great house and its attendant settlement tends to be unique.
- 12.0.12** Some settlements are much older (Wood Norton Thursford, Barney and Swanton Novers); here the style of settlement is typically dispersed small farmsteads and cottages associated with a wood pasture type agricultural history.
- 12.0.13** Other equally characteristic settlements have been created during the C20th with the selling off of considerable areas of 'plotlands' within woods for those seeking a woodland lifestyle (particularly the period 1914 to 1960). This has formed the distinctive settlements of High Kelling, Sheringwood and Aylmerton with numbers of Arts and Crafts, Modern and ad-hoc prefab or timber framed hut / bungalows. During the period from the 1960s on the original plots have become more and more heavily subdivided and infilled, creating areas which are only semi-wooded, increasingly suburban and eroding the original intention of the amenity and design.

Geological character

- 12.0.14** This Type sits on a variety of geological beds but woodland tends to occupy less productive or hard to work soils which reflect the underlying geology. To the east of Wells (WP1) thin dry soils reflect the shallow glacial cover and closeness of the Chalk to the surface. On the Cromer Ridge (WP2) the soils are derived from glacial sands and gravels with patches of clay till. Elsewhere woodland may also remain on the heavy clay tills.

Ecological character

- 12.0.15** The existing ecological character of the area is predominantly arable land divided by hedged and frequently banked field boundaries. In some areas hedges are not present or may never have formed all field boundaries. In these areas, grassed banks provide the boundary feature. Pasture, if present, tends to be temporary or recent arable reversion with permanent pasture occurring mainly around settlements.

12 Wooded with Parkland

12.0.16 Woodlands are very apparent throughout the Type and vary from ancient woodlands (Swanton Novers) to modern coniferous plantations. Wood pasture types are present with some notable assemblages of veteran trees (Thursford and Sheringham Park). Woodlands associated with parkland are very common, often incorporating and extending existing ancient woodland areas (Melton Park). Smaller copses and wooded blocks are equally common with larger areas and may have formed on former railway lines or be associated with shooting interests. Coniferous plantations on the Cromer Ridge are often sited on former areas of heath, deciduous woodlands in this area may be natural succession from heath.

12.0.17 Older tree assemblages, older field boundaries with multi-species hedges / ground flora, coppiced woodland areas, veteran trees and ponds are all fairly frequent.

12.0.18 Heathland is present in limited quantities, often situated in similar locations to the woodlands.

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Heathland - A feature more associated with Rolling Coastal Heath and Arable and Wooded with Parkland but present in limited amounts in particular parts of the Type, usually associated with areas of former common or similar waste ground on lighter gravely soils. Often indicated only as limited indicator species in road verges etc.
- Woodland - of significant diversity.
- Grassland. Generally in small pockets near settlement and 'improved'.

Analysis of specific elements and features within this type

Table 12.2 Wooded with Parkland: Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Enclosed or moderately enclosed views	Good	<p>The enclosure is entirely due to the wooded aspect of the Type and therefore relies on the retention of the woods. Dependent upon the type of woodland, some woods may be clear felled and restocked at times which will open new vistas - expose developments for a period. Most woodlands will be likely to remain as woodland regardless of felling regimens.</p> <p>The enclosure of the landscape can make certain types of development less visibly intrusive. However, many wooded areas have a lower than average development density. Similarly, development within woodland often puts additional pressure upon the retention of trees adjacent (due to 'perceived' safety or 'subsidence' / amenity issues) which are difficult and costly to control.</p> <p>The siting of wind turbines within or adjacent to the Type can ameliorate some of the visual intrusion aspects but there should have strong regard to their effects on neighbouring landscape Types -</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>this Type is surrounded by landscape Types which need more careful consideration of impact effects.</p> <p>The siting of telecom masts should be undertaken to minimise visual intrusion and may be inappropriate in some landscapes.</p>	
Arable land use - moderate to large fields bounded by banks and some hedges with notable hedgerow trees	Good to Poor - the majority being Fair	<p>The imposition of new cropping types or changes to woodland cover could change the landscape. However the underlying geometry of field boundaries could be retained if suitably designed changes occur.</p> <p>The imposition of stock sheds, new isolated barn or other complexes with dwellings need to be carefully considered as modern designs tend to be strongly contrary to the existing character of the isolated relatively small farm buildings / cottages / dwellings dating from the C19th. Appropriate siting within the landform and wooded context of the landscape together with appropriate and character enhancing landscaping can assist in integrating new development.</p> <p>Density of such developments should reflect the mean level that currently exists within the locality - increasing density will have strongly adverse effects on remoteness of some areas.</p>	Moderate
Skyline	Good	<p>Avoid developments which affect or impinge on skyline views whether wooded or open, or which would adversely affect the night time experience of dark landscapes.</p> <p>Wind turbines and telecom masts can have very severe impacts in certain areas but can utilise the landform and woodland cover to advantage if carefully sited, coloured and in harmony with the line and form of the skylines surrounding the site(s).</p>	Moderate
Parkland	Good to Fair	<p>Parkland varies in its degree and scale considerably throughout this Type. Some parklands were highly planned (often walled) and have been subsequently highly managed and have associated settlements etc. Others were never dominant re-definitions of the landscape but more modifications of it. The appropriate and sensitive understanding of individual parkland landscapes and their context is important to maintain and</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		enhance the overall landscape Type. Most are fairly low key wooded, arable and pasture combinations with very low density development (isolated farms, great house and few cottages) Some have great historical value and are Scheduled with consequent restrictions.	
Settlement (villages, edge of town and isolated farms etc)	Fair	<p>Villages Villages in wooded / parkland areas tend to be more spaciouly laid out than villages in adjacent countryside. Large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller fields still contribute significantly to the character of the village could be protected from development. There is a strong tendency for the character of woodland villages to be eroded by high density infill development. This adds considerably to pressure to fell and remove trees.</p> <p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p> <p>C20th plot land villages These have experienced considerable expansion and infill pressure during the last 30 years and particularly the last 10 years. Enlargement appears attractive and possible due to the ability to 'hide' houses within the wooded areas but the pressure on remaining trees, amenity of neighbours and on the wooded character of the sites makes this unsustainable and impractical. Similarly, housing densities appropriate within non-wooded areas are not appropriate within wooded areas as this tends to make the retention of garden trees impossible.</p> <p>Isolated farmsteads / large houses / cottages These have traditionally been associated with working the land, providing accommodation for farmers and farm workers and as such the style and nature of the developments tend to intimately reflect the purpose (in this case very controlled and organised) of agriculture. Future developments could attempt to take this raison d'être as the test for suitability and attempt to integrate with existing densities and character styles. Modern generic agricultural buildings result in difficulties enabling such developments to respect the character of previous building styles. Suitable locations and landscaping can assist but there is a distinct contradiction between enabling some developments</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>and retaining those areas where character is strongest.</p> <p>The redevelopment of redundant barn complexes both within, on the edge and especially outside settlement boundaries alters the character of the built and surrounding environment from a rural working context to a leisure / residential use. The impact of this can vary considerably depending upon the execution. Redundant agricultural buildings in decay can add to the sense of character and history of the landscape as they have done for millennia, changing their use transforms both.</p> <p>The maintenance of individual buildings in isolation to provide distinctive landscape features should be an important consideration.</p>	
The road network	Good to Poor	<p>'A' roads are often busy and generic in character. The noise and disturbance from them can intrude greatly into the adjacent otherwise 'remote' and 'natural' feeling woodland greatly diminishing character.</p> <p>'B' classification roads, whilst modernised to an extent, retain a strong sense of character - rural and distinctive. Care should be exercised over excessive signage in this relatively uncluttered road network.</p> <p>Minor roads in some areas have considerable rural character and are associated with thick tall hedges / trees and biodiverse verges. Others have suffered loss of hedges / verges and have little character.</p>	Moderate to High

Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

12.0.19 The overall condition of this Type is fair to good depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. Generally, the non-built features are in a more stable (un-changing) condition than the built features and the areas around them. The strength of character is generally moderate to strong with interactions between features and elements in the landscape providing the defining 'sense of place'. Variation within the Type is not great but is apparent with landform, settlement type and vegetation cover all providing significant subtle indications of different Areas within the Type.

12 Wooded with Parkland

Recent landscape impacts

- 12.0.20** Changes to agricultural economy (introduction of agri-environment grants) and the rise in interest in environmental management have seen positive changes to reinstate or improve existing non-built features such as woodlands and hedgerows. Less intensive use of land is also reflected in wider field margins and set-aside which are becoming noticeable.
- 12.0.21** Some moderate heathland recreation has removed areas of relatively (70 years) recent woodland and created open views.
- 12.0.22** Conversely, increasing wealth in the area is demonstrated by numbers of properties being enlarged / improved and sub-divided all of which may affect the appearance and character of settlements - often in individually modest but cumulatively significant ways (fencing replacing hedged boundaries / the loss of large gardens with mature trees and the resultant massing of buildings). New agricultural buildings are increasingly being erected to replace older barns etc which are in turn being converted to residential use, often with a significant change to the character of the landscape to which they contribute.
- 12.0.23** The edges of larger settlements have seen considerable 'estate' type developments (Holt and to an extent High Kelling) of a generic nature which have tended to undermine the traditional form of road and settlement patterns together with their characteristic vernacular building appearance.

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

- Significant numbers of new properties either sited within or outside existing settlements.
- Subdivision of existing larger gardens within settlements.
- New agricultural buildings sited in locations away from or prominently within existing farm complexes.
- Wind turbines in certain locations.
- Outside lighting - both street type and decorative / domestic.
- Use of unsympathetic boundary treatments, particularly bordering public highways and on edges of settlements where close boarded fencing / other semi/sub urban styles can appear incongruous.
- 'Improvement' of access tracks and entrance ways with urban style features (brick entrance pillars, gates, removal of 'rough track with grassed central margin, use of kerbing, close mown verges).
- Telecom masts in prominent locations.
- New road layouts which introduce standard 'suburban' highway features (kerbing / signage / widening).
- Extensions to properties which overly enlarge or gentrify rural settlements / locations.
- Barn conversions and other property construction within the open countryside which introduce 'suburban' features such as surfaced drives / domestic style gates and fences / garden style planting and parking areas / overly large windows and external lighting etc. Frequently a barn conversion in an isolated location away from other settlement can introduce a strongly suburban character.
- Biofuel crops have potential to be integrated within this landscape Type fairly easily depending upon the type of crop and its location. Important considerations would be to avoid excessively large 'blocks' of biofuels such as short rotation coppice (of Miscanthus or Willow etc) where these impinge upon the views and landform of the location. By using rotations / species which do not appear excessively higher than existing hedgerows (which could be allowed to grow

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in height anyway) impact would be minimised. Valley sides are likely to be more sensitive to their distinctive landform presenting more prominent 'viewing' of the crop.

b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- Retention of rural features - tracks with grassed central margins, old fencing / gateposts / walls.
- Properties which are of a scale and location which respect the individual form of the settlement in which they are located (i.e. Development should not 'stand out' but rather should be almost unnoticeable and unremarkable as an additional element within the existing development structure, taking particular account of building / development size, location, surrounding landscaping and existing land uses).
- Landscaping around new properties which actively blends with existing features rather than tries simply to screen new development.
- Landscaping which uses native as opposed to non-native species.
- Landscaping which builds upon and enhances existing trees, hedges and other features on and adjacent to the proposed development site.

c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character

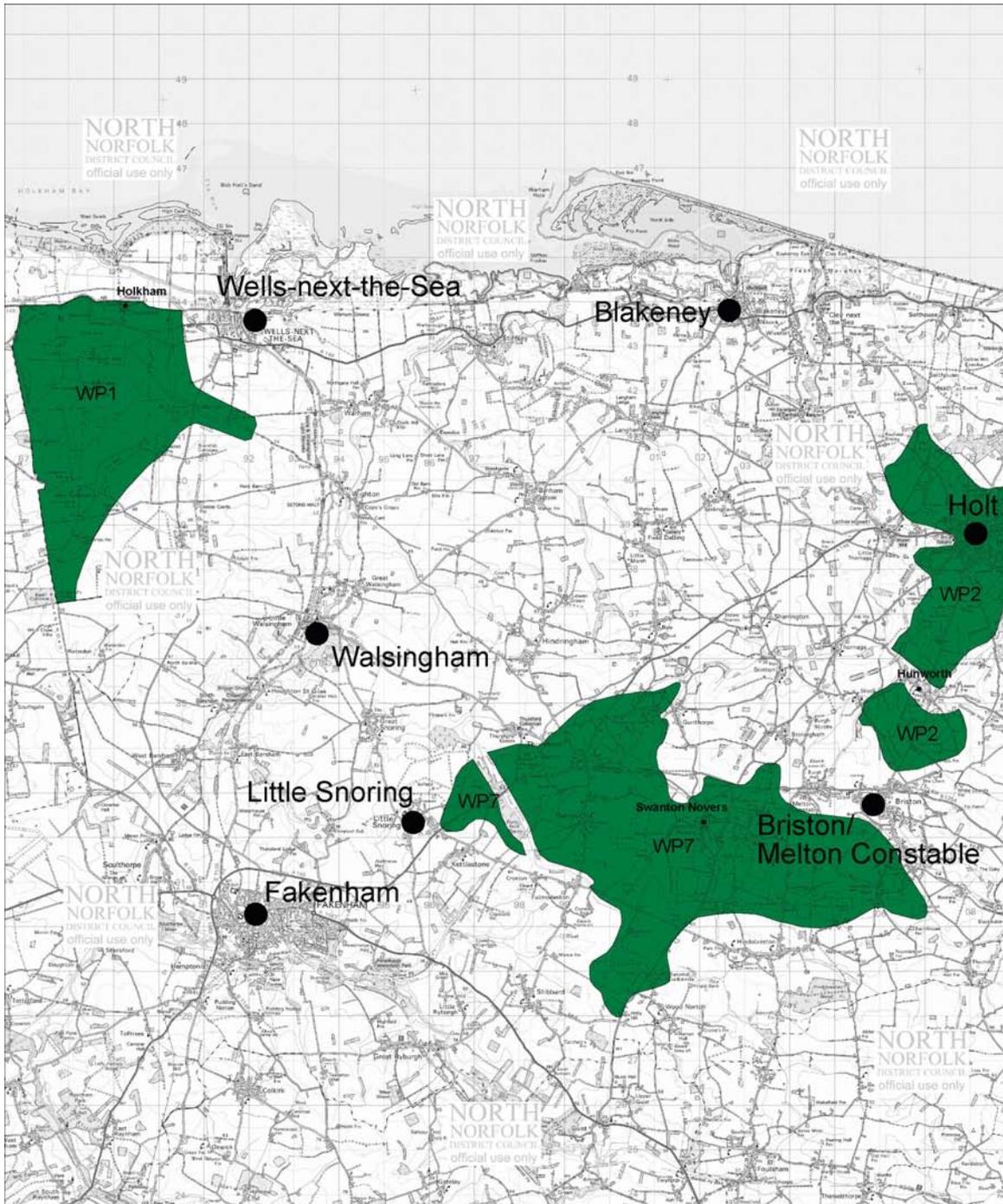
- Creation of new linkages between wooded and heath areas to provide corridors of habitat.
- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.

Areas within the type

- WP1 – Holkham Park
 - WP2 – Holt to Cromer
 - WP3 – Gunthorpe and Hanworth
 - WP4 – Wolterton and Mannington Halls
 - WP5 – Plumstead and Barningham
 - WP6 – Wickmere and Swanton Abbott
 - WP7 – Thursford, Swanton Novers and Melton Constable Hall
-

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Map 12.1 Wooded with Parkland (Westen Area)



Landscape Character Type

 Wooded with Parkland

Areas within the Type

- WP 1 - Holkham Park
- WP 2 - Holt to Cromer
- WP 3 - Gunthorpe & Hanworth
- WP 4 - Wolterton & Mannington Halls
- WP 5 - Plumstead & Barningham
- WP 6 - Wickmenre & Swanton Abbott
- WP 7 - Thursford, Swanton Novers & Melton Constable Hall



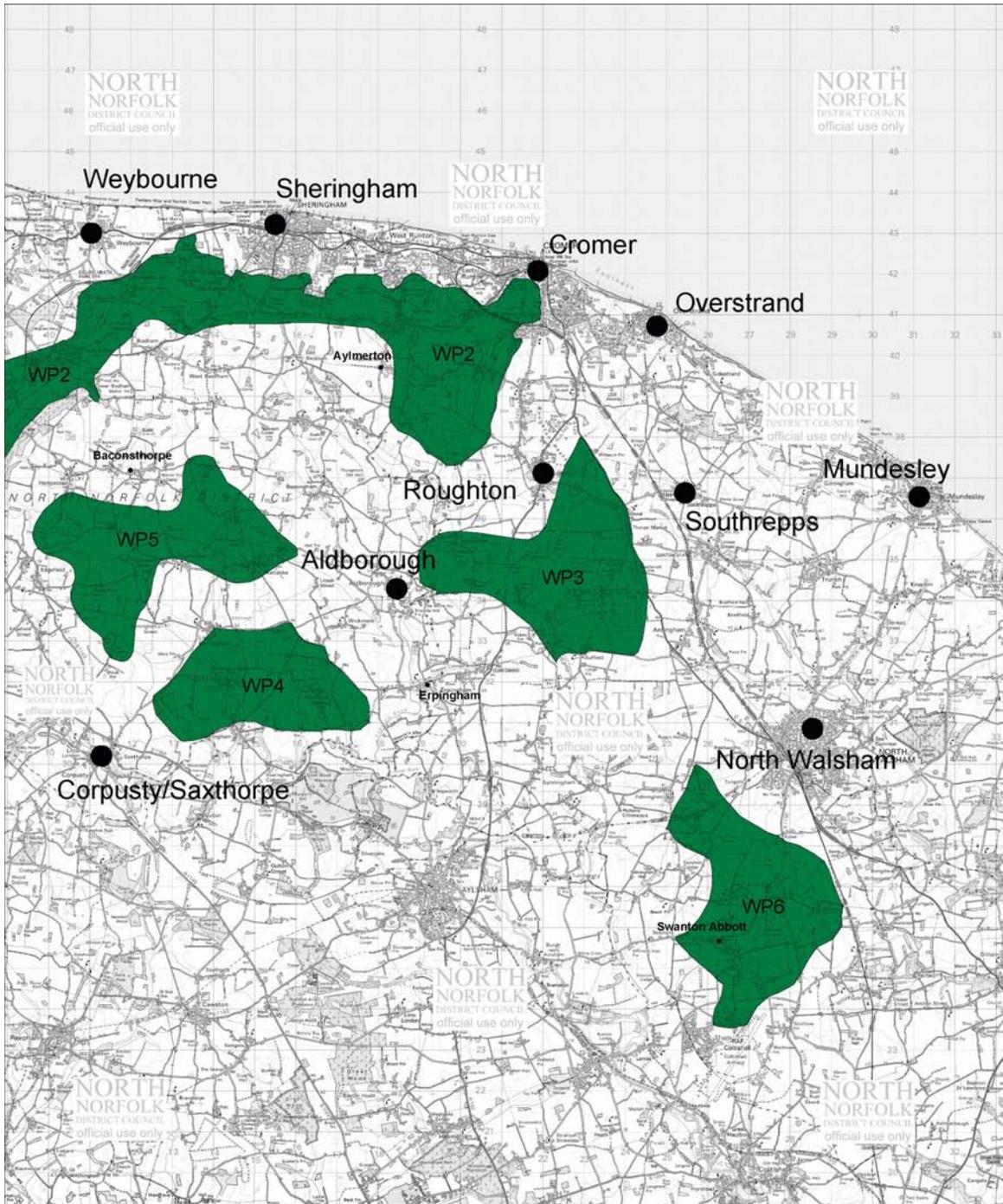
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Map 12.2 Wooded with Parkland (Eastern Area)



Landscape Character Type

 Wooded with Parkland

Areas within the Type

- WP 1 - Holkham Park
- WP 2 - Holt to Cromer
- WP 3 - Gunthorpe & Hanworth
- WP 4 - Wolterton & Mannington Halls
- WP 5 - Plumstead & Barningham
- WP 6 - Wickmenre & Swanton Abbott
- WP 7 - Thursford, Swanton Novers & Melton Constable Hall



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12.1 Holkham (WP1)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Strong designed element to the landscaping.
- Walled area of Holkham Park enclosing large area of planned woodland, arable, grassland and formal park and garden.
- Listed buildings in profusion – many C18th neo-classical buildings including Hall, Model Farms and Farm buildings, Gatehouses and features such as Obelisk and Column.
- Isolated large Church.
- Relocated model village and hamlets with other estate houses (mostly dating from mid C19th to early C20th).
- Mature woodlands beyond walled area forming triumphal entrance avenue several miles long.

Evaluation

12.1.1 The condition of the landscape character in this Area is generally Good. The landscape, whilst of considerable historical interest and value, is surprisingly robust as a result of its variety of periods of development (post about 1700 up to the present) and the large amount of woodland / general topography which enables developments to be ‘absorbed’ without unduly affecting the strong contextual structure of the landscape.

12.1.2 The strength of character is Strong.

Issues

12.1.3 A surprisingly robust landscape which is largely protected by its historical status within the main areas of the estate. The areas to the south of the Park are more vulnerable to change due to their low settlement density and remote nature.

12.1.4 The developments within the village of Holkham (particularly the re-development of the Victoria Hotel and Ancient House) have, together with the sheer numbers of people and cars which have been attracted to these items and the adjacent Holkham Beach area, completely transformed the character of this area from one of quiet historical backwater to a busy, bustling and modern visitor attraction.

12.1.5 The sensitivity of this landscape should be seen against the proximity of the Area to other adjoining Areas (Coastal Drained Marsh). Whilst the Park is probably able to absorb successfully changes to farming practice (new buildings which will naturally be carefully designed and located within this Grade I park), the capacity of outlying areas is probably less and in the case of Holkham Village, the overall effects on cumulative visitor impact on neighbouring more sensitive Areas have, in addition to any physical development issues (lighting or building design) should be carefully weighed. It might be argued that the capacity of the adjoining Areas has been reached and possibly exceeded.

12.2 Holt Cromer Area (WP2)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Wide mix of woodland types jumbled together to form a fairly cohesive Area stretching along the Cromer Ridge (terminal moraine – glacial gravels).
- Woodland types include, parkland (Holt Hall C19th naturalistic planting, Voewood (early C20th screening planting), Sheringham Park 1770s Repton landscape, Cromer Hall C19th parkland

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and Felbrigg C18th walled park with later plantings through to C20th (Victory V in post war era); older mixed woodland (around Holt and on some of the areas around Felbrigg); C20th conifer plantations – often Forestry Commission lead and natural woodland colonisation of former heath and scrub lands.

- Areas of arable land interspersed with woodland areas.
- Large busy road (A148) runs through the centre of the Area meaning that most of the Area is within earshot and sight of the road.
- Large settlement of Holt within the Area (Holt meaning ‘woodland’) gives a distinctive setting and boundaries to the Town.
- Settlements such as High Kelling and Sheringwood have been ‘planted’ within the woodland and former common land during the early C20th and have subsequently grown.
- Landform is an important determinant of the Area, with height being important – long views from parts of the landscape out to the north and south (seawards and landwards at least 20 miles in places).
- Caravan and Chalet parks area feature of the western central part of the Area (Kelling Heath and Bodham).
- There is generally good access to much of this landscape (PRoWs, National Trust lands and other public access land inc Woodland Trust and Local Authority).

Evaluation

- 12.2.1** The condition of the landscape character varies between Fair and Good. The majority is Moderate. This is due to the character eroding elements of infill development (in all settlements), estate developments (on the edge of Holt and Sheringham), the presence of the busy road network which is constantly ‘present’ wherever one is in the Area and removes the sense of remoteness completely and the strong leisure use in many parts of the Area (formal and informal).
- 12.2.2** The strength of character is Moderate. The woodland presence gives a strong sense of ‘woodedness’ which is relatively rare in Norfolk. However the busy nature of the area and the generic features of the most of the settlements means that the strength of character is significantly reduced.

Issues

- 12.2.3** The expansion of Holt to the south and east is likely to result in less impact on the character of the landscape due to the landform (relatively level) and land cover (mostly enclosed with few viewpoints) than development on the north or west of the Town. The current access to the Town from Hempstead Road is very typically ‘suburban fringe’ in a generic format, with nondescript housing estates and industrial areas mixed in a typical format which can be seen in many towns. The presence of woodland surrounding these areas greatly reduces their adverse impact on the wider landscape. In contrast the woodland quality and landform to the north of the Town is very different. Whilst estate developments along the Kelling Road have significantly eroded character with generic bungalow and similar estates, the boundary between them and the wider countryside is still to an extent intact. The playing fields of Gresham’s School present a very controlled and manicured appearance and the high level lighting is a very unwelcome intrusion but these areas do give views of trees and wider landscapes which are helpful.
- 12.2.4** Infill development within High Kelling Aylmerton and Sheringwood have significantly reduced the setting and peacefulness of these areas of ad hoc post 1920s development. Effectively they are becoming large housing estates by degrees and will eventually lose most or all of the mature trees within them (except where TPOd). It is noticeable that no new tree planting is taking place in most gardens and what trees are planted are non-native and small garden varieties. During the

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next 50 years this will transform the character of these areas and they will probably cease to have a woodland cover of recognisable density approaching their pre 1990s form.

12.2.5 In contrast, the area of Kelling Heath Park has integrated well due to careful management of the tree stock – maintaining rather than eroding current densities. Other sites, both residential and holiday occupancy, could have similar management with advantage – especially removing the ‘suburbanising effects’ of little fences, huts, decking, outside lighting, kerbed and surfaced roadways, leylandii hedges, CCTV, signs, garden trees and planting’ which creeps un-noticed until it takes over a whole site or settlement. The settlements of High Kelling, Aylmerton and Sheringwood are fairly unique in the District and worthy of retention for the particular character qualities and quality of life which they present – suburban areas are plentiful by contrast.

12.2.6 The management of the woodland stock within the Area is varied. Some is commercial, others recreational, some is left alone and some is mixed. The parkland areas have notably good management. Some attempts at heathland recreation on currently wooded areas have been attempted. The results are mixed with some areas (Roman Camp) actively benefiting from the changes which give views, interesting compartments and a ‘bigger feel’ to the landscape. Others have been less successful (Woodland Trust area near Hill Top) which has simply given views of part of former gravel extraction now used as a children’s activity centre. Woodland is a very critical element in protecting this busy landscape from exposing its less attractive elements. It would therefore be preferable to either create heathland on currently arable land or create a comparable amount of woodland on adjoining land when heathland recreation on woodland takes place. To do otherwise risks reducing both character and public amenity.

12.2.7 The landscape is sensitive to further change and must be considered to be nearing capacity in its current character form.

12.3 Gunton and Hanworth (WP3)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Almost entirely parkland derived landscape although some of the woodland is effectively commercial forestry.
- Considerable restoration efforts to return the landscape to an original landscape design have been carried out during the past few years – noticeably the felling of some of the commercial forestry areas and replacement landscape planting within the main parkland of Gunton Park.
- The smaller parkland associated with Hanworth is critically affected by the proximity to Hanworth Common and its particular settlement pattern.
- Small areas of copses and woods which are not part of either park but are closely associated with both, extend the wooded area.
- Settlement pattern is mostly nucleated (Suffield and to a lesser extent Hanworth) with few outlying farmsteads and moderate farm size (not necessarily associated now with either estate but formerly part of an extensive estate area).
- Caravan park at Woodlands site off White Post Road.
- Valley context (upper headwaters) for both parklands seen utilised by works to develop large and small water bodies. Former moated area on Hanworth Common.

Evaluation

12.3.1 The condition of the landscape character varies between Moderate and Good. The intervening land between the two parks tends to be of Moderate character only with field boundaries removed and the presence of the A140 dissecting the Area causing considerable noise and visual disturbance. The parklands themselves are of Good and improving condition.

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12.3.2 The strength of character similarly varies between Fair and Strong.

Issues

12.3.3 The majority of this Area is a Conservation Area as such it has and continues to have a degree of protection over certain changes. The controls over woodland development, settlement development and other developments within the parklands and the Common have been relatively unstretched and there are few jarring elements. The intervening land has been able to absorb the caravan park relatively successfully though the ability of the landscape to absorb more or bigger developments without extensive careful landscaping design should be questioned. The setting of the parks makes the surrounding areas of greater sensitivity than would otherwise be the case.

12.3.4 Small developments which introduce suburban elements of non-native planting or kerbing / roadway developments need similarly careful consideration as they will have a disproportionately detrimental effect on character.

12.3.5 The landscape is moderately sensitive to development changes – more particularly in the parks and immediate settings where these have not been degraded or changed by modern agricultural / forestry practice. Outside the parks, wider programmes of restoration as part of suitable developments may be a way of improving the overall strength and condition character of the landscape.

12.4 Wolterton and Mannington (WP4)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Less wooded than all the other Areas in the Type. Small areas of woodland associated with C18th parkland within an arable field context which is essentially Tributary Farmland Type.
- Low settlement density with a strong 'estate' feel (one or two outlying farms/cottages and a strongly estate 'closed village' character to Itteringham and Little Barningham on the boundaries of the Area.
- Average sized houses and parklands but both have considerably older origins than some of the larger estates in the District.

Evaluation

12.4.1 The condition of the landscape character is Moderate to Good. The areas within the Parklands are managed for conservation and historical purposes and are in very good condition. The wider landscape is much as surrounding Type. Settlement is generally not greatly eroded or changed.

12.4.2 The strength of character is Moderate with some Strong elements close to the two great houses. The landscape is generally subtle and hence does not have great strength of character naturally regardless of condition or intactness.

Issues

12.4.3 Build upon the existing management structure where possible with particular regard to conserving the settlement character (design) and enhancing the ecological and landscape features and elements where possible (especially around the ancient woodland of Mossymere Wood which contains large numbers of veteran trees of great importance).

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12.5 Plumstead and Barningham (WP5)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A more open woodland structure than the norm within the Type.
- A less strongly 'parkland' dominated landscape with only Barningham Hall providing this element.
- A more naturalistic and less commercial quality to the fairly extensive blocks of woodland, yet while containing a good amount of coniferous plantations.
- A low settlement density with Plumstead and Matlask providing a nucleated settlement pattern.
- Quite a number of outlying isolated larger farms more akin to the western part of the District and beginning (together with neighbouring Areas) to provide the transition to this type of farm size (where small and medium farms become increasingly less prevalent).
- No roads of any size or degree of busyness cross or are close to this Area.
- This Area is well removed from any larger settlements.

Evaluation

12.5.1 The condition of the landscape character is Moderate to Good. Some parts of Plumstead have seen erosion due to generic modern infill development. Some parts of the Area have seen erosion of the character due to removal of field boundaries.

12.5.2 The strength of character is Moderate.

Issues

12.5.3 The location of the Area is fairly remotely situated well away from larger towns and villages and without any larger or busy roads either within or near the Area. It is consequently a quiet location. The settlement pattern has been added to (in some cases unsympathetically with non-vernacular houses) by modest amounts of infill, but generally it is a low population Area.

12.5.4 Woodland density is moderate within the Type or somewhat lower than average. Opportunities to link woodlands through additional woodland planting or allowing key hedgerows to enlarge / have more hedgerow trees planted within them, would all assist the transition of woodland populations (flora and fauna) between sites.

12.5.5 The very rural, sensitive and relatively intact nature of the landscape in this Area would be considerably disturbed by the introduction of large scale features such as wind turbines or significant amounts of additional development. The siting of larger agricultural buildings should preferably be located within existing farmsteads.

12.6 Westwick and Swanton Abbott (WP6)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Areas of dense woodland frequently associated with commercial forestry but also as extended parkland setting.
- Moderate settlement density, partly dispersed.
- One large parkland at Westwick with other smaller 'gentry houses' often within and associated with small parkland areas or avenues of trees.
- Three large water bodies formed from impounded watercourses and forming wood surrounded lakes.
- A Low Plains Type landform and settlement structure.

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- One major roadway through the Area (B1150) main road to Norwich.
- Close to and adjoining former RAF Coltishall and influenced slightly by this relationship.
- Enclosed landscape beyond woodland parts where high hedges and watercourses / small fields remain, often in conjunction with dispersed older settlement types.

Evaluation

- 12.6.1** The condition of the landscape character in this Area is Moderate to Good. The Good parts are located within the parkland of Westwick Hall and adjoining woodland. The remaining parts are of Moderate condition, eroded by extensions to the settlement pattern, removal of field boundaries and intensive commercial (mainly coniferous) forestry. The parts of the Area intersected by watercourses are often of good condition and demonstrate an older pre-modern agricultural landscape which is similar to other Small Valley Areas.
- 12.6.2** The strength of character is Moderate.

Issues

- 12.6.3** Gradual infill development will tend to erode the character of this relatively rural landscape. This could have particular consequences for the most intact parts which are often associated with the small closes and fields adjacent to the water course which runs through Swanton Abbott. Opportunities to link and extend woodland with new hedges on open land would have ecological and landscape advantages. The landscape beyond the valley and woodland / parkland parts is frequently very open and denuded of features. New development in these parts would need careful siting in order to integrate with the surrounding landscape.
- 12.6.4** This landscape is moderately sensitive to change but can in some parts, accept agricultural development if carefully sited and well landscaped to integrate with the existing landform and features/elements.
- 12.6.5** The development of RAF Coltishall (which has a unique but surprisingly wooded character) could well be an opportunity to integrate and extend this landscape character Area to include the former Base, reinforcing and adding to the existing woodland structures in both parts whilst recognising and respecting the different historical traditions and developments of both. A strategic approach to any development of the existing housing and base (hangars etc) would benefit from a comprehensive approach to considering the impact of the existing built and non-built environment as a whole. Coltishall as presented today is a relatively isolated, compact and rural feeling 'base' (very unlike the larger bases of Lakenheath or even Sculthorpe) which is well integrated and 'hidden' within its own and the surrounding landscaping. The importance of the historical nature of the site, the intactness of its built history and the uniquely complete and extensive tree'd landscaping are important features to take into account. Developing this will require sensitivity.

12.7 Thursford, Swanton Novers and Melton Constable (WP7)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A large and extensive area of woodland interspersed with arable land.
- The largest collection of Ancient Woodlands in Norfolk.
- Low settlement density concentrated in small nucleated villages (Barney and Swanton), extended hamlets (Craymere Beck and Briston Common) and a few outlying large (often estate based) farmsteads and isolated cottages.

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- Complex drainage pattern.
- Two major parklands at Melton Constable Hall and Gunthorpe Hall. The main bulk of the woodland is however not associated with parks but is associated with Ancient woodland and post C19th Forestry Commission land.

Evaluation

12.7.1 The condition of the landscape character in this Area is Moderate to Good. The removal of field boundaries (hedges and hedgerow trees) together with the introduction of the major A148 and B1354 roads have tended to erode the character of the landscape. Similarly, minor developments such as at Thursford Heath and at Briston Common (infill residential development of generic form and unscreened industrial development) have had an eroding effect.

12.7.2 The strength of character is Moderate to Good.

Issues

12.7.3 The main woodland areas are frequently protected as Ancient Woodlands (Swanton Novers wood is a National Nature Reserve). Other areas of woodland are not as they are principally commercial woodlands or have no overriding ecological status. Corporately however they form one of the most important woodland areas in Norfolk and whilst individual portions of woodland may not have 'importance individually', they effectively have a much greater importance as part of a whole large scale ecosystem. Policies to conserve and enhance (by extension and linking planting) would significantly add to the value of the individual elements.

12.7.4 Care should be taken to ensure that any features (woodland or hedgerow / grassland) introduced to the Area 'fit' with adjoining elements and features both in landscape and ecological terms. Woodland is not just coniferous and broadleaved; the choice of species, sourcing of stock and density and location of planting should all be considered important within in this most special landscape Area.

12.7.5 Opportunities to provide screening to existing built development (such as caravan parks and industrial units) would be greatly beneficial and would add to this composite beneficial effect (landscape and ecology).

12.7.6 There are few opportunities for public access to any of the Area. Consideration might be given to opportunities to enhance this aspect.

12.7.7 This landscape Area is very sensitive to changes which affect ecology but due to the land form (relatively level) and presence of woodland, there are opportunities to carefully site agricultural buildings in 'hidden' locations – especially if accompanied by additional landscaping. Additional housing would tend to be highly noticeable within the low density settlement structure (e.g. the re-development of former forestry cottages to extensive generic bungalows and other similar buildings with very 'suburban' features around Craymere Beck / Briston Common)

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Location and boundaries

13.0.1 This type covers the raised hinterland stretching from Blakeney to Weybourne. It largely consists of glacial sands and gravels and includes sections of the Cromer Ridge and the Blakeney Esker. The principal characteristic of this land is a very light sandy soil which on any small humps or higher land is typically pure sandy gravels and consequently very marginal land in agricultural terms. It is therefore a heavily heathened landscape.

Table 13.1 Rolling Heath & Arable

Picture 13.1



Typical road passing through high level heathland

Picture 13.2



Heather, bracken, gorse, grass, scrub and small trees

Picture 13.3



Moderately open view bounded by wooded scrub

Picture 13.4



Heathland bordered by mixed woodland

Key characteristics

- An open or very open landscape which nevertheless has areas which are more enclosed either by heath scrub or wooded land.
- A land which has considerable (for Norfolk) slopes and hills which give long sea and landward views.
- Many small historic sand and gravel pits. Some larger extraction pits still active.
- Land cover varies considerably but is heavily constrained by the lightness of the soil which dries out rapidly. Heath, scrub, light woodland which has often reverted from heath, acid grassland, and arable land (mostly wheat, barley, rape and some carrots and Beet) predominate.

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- Woodland tends to be in slight hollows and on the crests of hills. Heath tends to be on the hills and steeper slopes. Heath indicator plants are widespread throughout the hedgerows of the area (Gorse, Bracken, light grasses).
- Arable is concentrated on the more level areas in moderately sized fields bounded by low thin hedges of few species. Some of the hedges are sculpted by the wind and are significant features.
- Telecom masts, church towers, the North Norfolk Railway line (Weybourne Station and ancillary sheds), Muckleburgh Collection (Military vehicles on a former army camp) and associated radar post at Weybourne, are the major features of this landscape, punctuating the views.
- Settlement is scarce and nucleated. Settlement types are largely vernacular villages with fairly prominent churches clustered around or along roads. Density within settlements tends to be moderately high (Weybourne, Blakeney and Cley) with some settlements showing lower densities and larger gardens (Salthouse and Kelling). There are few farmsteads or other buildings beyond the settlements (barns and odd cottages only).
- Sea views are an important part of the character of the area giving a sense of space and importance of sky.

Landscape character

- 13.0.2** The Rolling Heaths and Arable Landscape Type is one of the 'feature' landscapes which people think of when considering the North Norfolk Coast AONB, along with marshes and sand dunes. The whole area is within the AONB and much of the heathland is classified as SSSI or County Wildlife Sites. The area gives a considerable sense of height and perspective which is unusual for Norfolk which has landscapes which are fairly flat. The intimacy of the rolling small hillocks and slopes of Muckleburgh Hill and the Kelling and Salthouse Heaths is strangely contrasted with the long views out from within these areas over the sea and along the coast in either direction.
- 13.0.3** There is a very definite distinction between the area of this landscape Type which abuts the coast and ends in the soft chalk and glacial sediment cliffs near Weybourne and the area westwards where the rolling hills become subjected into the adjoining marshland and hence separated from the sea by some distance.
- 13.0.4** There is a sense that this is a 'typical' English landscape - especially around the Weybourne area which has the added feature of the steam railway and Station to give an 'old fashioned' tinge to the views. Field size is not large by the standards elsewhere in the County which again accentuates the older feel of the area.
- 13.0.5** The heaths are of considerable importance visually and ecologically and are more extensive than any other heaths beyond the Breckland area. These vary between stretches of open heather or acid grassland / set aside to more enclosed areas of scrub and gorse. On the slopes and small wetter vales inland, there are areas of naturalised woodland (mostly Oak, Birch, Sycamore, Willow, Hawthorn etc). These break up the heathland into smaller discrete blocks and make the area feel much larger than it actually is.
- 13.0.6** Arable areas can only grow crops tolerant of dry sandy soils so wheat, barley, carrots, beet and rape predominate although some new reservoirs may make potatoes and other crops possible. Fields are bounded by banks and hedges - the latter tend to be sparse, gappy and thin. Pasture is rare and tends to be used for horse grazing in intensive blocks (Kelling) with ancillary sheds, caravans and other paraphernalia.
- 13.0.7** Settlement is strongly nucleated and fairly concentrated and dense reflecting the type of land holdings and the nature of the land use. Most settlements have a strong core of vernacular cottages,

Rolling Heath & Arable 13

a church and farmsteads. Beyond this, other developments, mostly post War are present in Weybourne, Blakeney and to a lesser extent in Cley. These bear no resemblance to the character and type of vernacular layout or style in the original village (bungalow estates, holiday chalets and local authority housing estates typify the non-vernacular types). Infill has occurred in many places also, which has reduced garden size to typically small and often introduced further non-vernacular styles and layouts. However, the compact nature of the villages still retains a semblance of distinctive character when viewed from afar.

13.0.8 Principle features within the Type and which punctuate the landscape and provide key visual indicators of sense of place include the following;

- Telecom towers.
- Churches with towers.
- The Muckleburgh Collection of military vehicles which is on a former army camp site at Weybourne together with the attendant RAF listening post and prominent grass airstrip / vehicle test tracks.
- Views over the coast and the shingle bank (on the neighbouring Drained Marsh Type).

Geological character

13.0.9 The areas included in this Type occupy the high ground of the Blakeney Esker and some of the Cromer Ridge. These are glacial and glacial outwash features and mainly consist of sands and gravels. The Cromer Ridge has a steep north slope overlooking the sea and a gentler slope to the south. The ridge ends to the east in the impressive eroding cliffs at Weybourne. There are many disused sand and gravel pits; several designated as geological SSSIs.

Ecological character

13.0.10 The existing ecological character of the area is predominantly arable land divided by hedged and frequently banked field boundaries. Pasture, if present, tends to be temporary or recent arable reversion with permanent pasture rare. Acid / neutral unimproved grassland is present in limited quantities associated with the heathy outcrops within the Type. Where it occurs, it is usually part of a designated site (County Wildlife Site or SSSI).

13.0.11 Woodlands are apparent throughout the Type and vary from copses for shooting purposes to natural regeneration of former heath / woodland to modern coniferous plantations. Wood pasture types are not present. Woodlands are not associated with parkland.

13.0.12 Older tree assemblages, older field boundaries with multi-species hedges / ground flora, coppiced woodland areas, veteran trees and ponds are all infrequent but there are some exceptions mostly distributed along the road network.

13.0.13 Heathland is present in significant quantities, distributed along the sandy gravel Cromer Ridge and the Blakeney Esker. Most of the heathland sites are designated (County Wildlife Site or SSSI) but smaller remnant areas are not (field margins mostly).

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Heathland - present throughout the Type in significant quantities and quality.
- Woodland - of significant diversity.
- Grassland - both improved and unimproved but with some notable acid and neutral grassland swards associated with heathland.

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Analysis of specific elements and features within this type

Table 13.2 Rolling Heath & Arable: Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Mostly Open character with uninterrupted views and some areas of greater enclosure	Good	<p>The more remoter areas (especially heathland and rolling open arable lands) would be often be adversely changed by development.</p> <p>The siting of wind turbines within the Type could be detrimental to the character of the landscape Type and those adjacent.</p> <p>The siting of telecom masts should be undertaken to minimise visual intrusion and may be inappropriate in some landscapes.</p> <p>Changes to the use of prominent landscape features or settlements can impinge on views over large areas (Radar station / airstrips / former gravel pits).</p>	High
Arable land use with medium to large fields bounded by banks and some hedges with notable hedgerow trees	Good to Fair	<p>The imposition of new cropping types or changes to woodland cover could change the landscape. However the underlying geometry of field boundaries could be retained if suitably designed changes occur.</p> <p>The imposition of stock sheds, new isolated barn or other complexes with dwellings are not common in this landscape and are generally likely to be contrary to the existing character of the isolated relatively small farm buildings / cottages / dwellings dating from the C19th.</p> <p>Change of use from arable to the intensive keeping of horses, stud farms or other semi-agricultural practices would be contrary to the character of this landscape, difficult to integrate and likely to be a jarring feature.</p> <p>The replacement of field boundaries which have lost hedges would be highly beneficial.</p>	High
Skyline	Good	<p>Avoid developments which affect or impinge on open skyline views or which would adversely affect the night time experience of dark landscapes. This is essentially a dark landscape.</p> <p>The skyline is determined by landform and woodland with some features, mostly churches. Telecom towers where present introduce an alien feature which is detrimental to the character of the landscape especially when viewed in the context of the coastal areas of this Type and neighbouring types.</p>	High
Settlement (villages, edge)	Fair	<p>Villages Areas where large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
of town and isolated farms etc)		<p>fields still contribute significantly to the character of the village could be protected from development. There is a strong tendency for the character of villages to be eroded by high density infill development. Further expansion could be considered on suitable sites which may be outside the village boundary. Such development could utilise the best adjacent characteristics of the built landscape to enhance and reinforce those areas of villages which have degraded or unfocused styles / character.</p> <p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p> <p>Isolated farmsteads / large houses / cottages These have traditionally been associated with working the land, providing accommodation for farmers and farm workers and as such the style and nature of the developments tend to intimately reflect the purpose (in this case very controlled and organised) of agriculture. Future developments could attempt to take this raison d'être as the test for suitability and attempt to integrate with existing densities and character styles. Modern generic agricultural buildings result in difficulties enabling such developments to respect the character of previous building styles. Suitable locations and landscaping can assist but there is a distinct contradiction between enabling some developments and retaining those areas where character is strongest.</p> <p>The redevelopment of redundant barn complexes both within, on the edge and especially outside settlement boundaries alters the character of the built and surrounding environment from a rural working context to a leisure / residential use. The impact of this can vary considerably depending upon the execution. Redundant agricultural buildings in decay can add to the sense of character and history of the landscape as they have done for millennia, changing their use transforms both.</p> <p>Development of buildings beyond settlements and the imposition of new uses on land (airstrips etc) could be contrary to the maintenance of the distinctive character of the Type and adversely affect other neighbouring Types or features (European Marine Site / Special Area of Conservation).</p>	
The road and rail network	Good to Poor	<p>'A' and 'B' classification roads, whilst modernised to an extent, retain a strong sense of character - rural and distinctive. Care should be exercised over excessive signage in this relatively uncluttered road network.</p> <p>Minor roads in some areas have considerable rural character and are associated with thick tall hedges / trees and biodiverse</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>verges. Others have suffered loss of hedges / verges and have little character.</p> <p>The railway is a positive enhancement to the character of the landscape in the eastern sector of the Type. Development of ancillary buildings near or associated with the railway should respect and blend with the character of the existing line (i.e. pre 1950) and should respect the density of development and type of uses that would be appropriate to a branch line of this type.</p>	

Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

- 13.0.14** The overall condition of this Type is poor to good (but mostly good) depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. Generally, the non-built features are in a more stable (un-changing) condition than the built features and the areas around them. The strength of character is generally moderate to strong with interactions between features and elements in the landscape providing the defining 'sense of place'. Variation within the Type is fairly wide with landform, settlement type and vegetation cover all providing significant subtle indications of different Areas within the Type.
- 13.0.15** Particularly important defining features are the sense of space and the lack of development / feeling of remoteness.

Recent landscape impacts

- 13.0.16** Changes to agricultural economy (introduction of agri-environment grants) and the rise in interest in environmental management have seen positive changes to reinstate or improve existing non-built features, mainly hedgerows and some woodland with arable reversion to heath / grassland also apparent, together with heathland restoration, and wide grassed field margins being common. The soil type is poor and this has contributed to this change process.
- 13.0.17** Conversely, increasing wealth in the area is demonstrated by numbers of properties being enlarged / improved and sub-divided all of which may affect the appearance and character of settlements - often in individually modest but cumulatively significant ways (fencing replacing hedged boundaries / the loss of large gardens with mature trees and the resultant massing of buildings). New agricultural buildings are increasingly being erected to replace older barns etc which are in turn being converted to residential use, often with a significant change to the character of the landscape to which they contribute.
- 13.0.18** The edge of Blakeney and Weybourne have seen several smaller 'estate' type developments of a generic nature which have tended to undermine the traditional form of road and settlement patterns together with their characteristic vernacular building appearance.

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

- a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

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- Significant numbers of new properties either sited within or outside existing settlements.
- Subdivision of existing larger gardens within settlements.
- New agricultural buildings sited in locations away from or prominently within existing farm complexes.
- Wind turbines.
- Outside lighting - both street type and decorative / domestic.
- Use of un-sympathetic boundary treatments, particularly bordering public highways and on edges of settlements where close boarded fencing / other semi/sub urban styles can appear incongruous.
- 'Improvement' of access tracks and entrance ways with urban style features (brick entrance pillars, gates, removal of 'rough track with grassed central margin, use of kerbing, close mown verges).
- Telecom masts in prominent locations.
- New road layouts which introduce standard 'suburban' highway features (kerbing / signage / widening)
- Extensions to properties which overly enlarge or gentrify rural settlements / locations.
- Barn conversions and other property construction within the open countryside which introduce 'suburban' features such as surfaced drives / domestic style gates and fences / garden style planting and parking areas / overly large windows and external lighting etc. Frequently a barn conversion in an isolated location away from other settlement can introduce a strongly suburban character.
- Changes in landcover from current lower intensity farming (grass margins / set aside) to higher intensity farming - particularly stock (pigs) with attendant shelters.
- Offshore windfarms which would be sufficiently close or large enough to 'enclose' or create a 'limit' to the skyline and horizon could have significant detrimental effects on the perception of remoteness and wilderness in this Type.
- Biofuel crops have potential to be integrated within this landscape Type with considerable care depending upon the type of crop and its location. Important considerations would be to avoid excessively large 'blocks' of biofuels such as short rotation coppice (of Miscanthus or Willow etc) where these impinge upon the views and landform of the location. By using rotations / species which do not appear excessively higher than existing hedgerows (which could be allowed to grow in height anyway) impact would be minimised. Valley sides are likely to be more sensitive to their distinctive landform presenting more prominent 'viewing' of the crop.

b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.
- Retention of rural features - tracks with grassed central margins, old fencing / gateposts / walls.
- Properties which are of a scale and location which respect the individual form of the settlement in which they are located Landscaping around new properties which actively blends with existing features rather than tries simply to screen new development.
- Landscaping which uses native as opposed to non-native species.
- Landscaping which builds upon and enhances existing trees, hedges and other features on and adjacent to the proposed development site.
- Retention of small sand and gravel pits which add to the historic character and conserve geodiversity.

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c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character

- Creation of new linkages between existing wooded and heath areas to provide corridors of habitat.
- Reinstatement of existing hedged boundaries.
- Reinstatement of existing ponds and watercourses.
- Reinstatement of former pasture, woodland, scrub and heathland - or where existing pasture, woodland and heathland could be suitably enlarged.

Areas within the types

- RHA1 – Blakeney
 - RHA2 – Salthouse and Kelling
-

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13.1 Blakeney Area (RHA1)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A small somewhat isolated extension to the larger Area on the eastern side of the Glaven Valley.
- Tends to have a lower presence of heathland and former heathland / woodland structure than neighbouring Areas within the Type.
- Larger area of woodland associated with Bayfield Hall is at the southern end but is distinct from some of the more 'heathy' woods over the majority of the Type being older and more mature.
- Gradually sloping landform rather than the scarp slope of terminal moraine seen on other parts of the Type.
- Blakeney Esker, (part of Wiveton Downs) a ribbon of gravely soil ridge forming an interrupted heathy line diagonally across the Area (categorised as SSSI for geology). A former under glacial river course.
- Blakeney village with its strong, relatively large nucleated settlement structure. The presence of modern estate type developments is atypical of the structure of most villages in close proximity.
- The proximity to the sea, and numerous sea view opportunities are a prominent feature of this Area.

Evaluation

- 13.1.1** The condition of the character of the landscape is Fair to Good. Significant erosion has taken place where quarrying of the Esker has been undertaken in the past. Similarly other small corners of the landscape have suffered from 'tidying up' and removal of heathy habitat. The presence of Blakeney gives a slightly more suburban feel to the landscape, especially on the Langham Road.
- 13.1.2** The strength of character is moderate to strong with the area around Wiveton Downs demonstrating the strong element of character which much of this Area must have had until the 1960s.

Issues

- 13.1.3** Remediation of the former quarry area has enhanced the landscape character considerably – extending the amount of heathland would considerably enhance both the ecology and landscape of the Area. Overly neatening the remaining areas of woodland and heath by over management should be resisted – if some areas revert to scrub woodland then this tends to create a more 'extensive' and wild feel to the landscape.
- 13.1.4** Development around Blakeney has often left a hard edge of generic bungalows or modern houses which, by its starkness is out of character with the more mature tree'd nature of the central part of the older edge of the village (around the Rectory). Subsequent development should seek to try to re-establish this character relationship if possible – perhaps using heathland where appropriate.
- 13.1.5** This landscape is very sensitive due to its reliance on long coastal views and sense of semi-remoteness due to the presence of heathland cues and low settlement density. Additional development beyond the current boundaries of settlements could begin to erode the character of the landscape (where it has occurred on the western and southern part of Blakeney during the last 30 years, the negative effects are apparent, especially due to lack of consideration for design and landscaping to integrate the developments). Over development and gentrification of the few isolated dwellings in the Area should be resisted as this has a severely detrimental effect on character

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13.2 Salthouse and Kelling Area (RHA2)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- The largest cohesive Area of this Type in the District.
- Parts of the Area are very remote and have a wild character (Salthouse and Kelling Heaths).
- Relatively recent forestry on former heaths is apparent in the southern part of the Area.
- The landform has a prominent scarp slope intersected with dry valleys on its northern side providing dramatic sea, coastal and village (Salthouse and Kelling).
- Outlying hills (once more numerous but since reduced by coastal erosion over centuries) are a feature of the eastern end of this Area (Muckleburgh Hill).
- The former Muckleburgh camp is now a military museum but there is still an RAF radar post adjoining.
- Settlement is sparse but concentrated along the coastal area (A149) and extends up the dry and wet valleys not quite as far as the higher heath parts.
- The proximity to the sea, and numerous sea view opportunities are a prominent feature of this Area.

Evaluation

13.2.1 The condition of the landscape character is Fair to Good. The area has had relatively little disturbance or adverse development. Notable exceptions are the area around Kelling Heath (ad hoc sheds and horsiculture, together with a very prominent garden centre and car park), overly gentrified barn conversions near Lowes Farm, very prominent landing strip and caravan at Muckleburgh and the construction of new railway sheds and associated fencing at Bridge Road. All of these developments together with telecom masts at the Hangs near Cley and at Muckleburgh have contributed to erode the otherwise wild and unique landscape of this part of the AONB.

13.2.2 The strength of character of this landscape is Strong.

Issues

13.2.3 Relatively small or seemingly insignificant developments have a disproportionate adverse effect on this landscape due to its high sensitivity. It is inherently an undeveloped wild landscape with a high ecological value (as lowland heath). Damaging developments have been listed in the Evaluation above.

13.2.4 The opportunities for positive enhancements to contribute to the character of this landscape are significant. The most obvious is the extension of the existing heathland areas. Traditionally, these would have been transitory with the main core (which still remains) probably untouched except for light grazing. Other areas of light soils would have come into and out of cultivation periodically.

13.2.5 Restoration of commercial extraction pits provides the opportunity to increase geodiversity by retention of small geological faces exposed during extraction activities.

13.2.6 Woodland is a defining feature within the landscape and is valuable particularly for its diversity in habitat terms and by making the relatively small Area seem bigger by compartmentalising it. Reducing the amount of woodland by returning it to heath may only have a limited positive effect, such as through the enhancement of ecological value.

13.2.7 This landscape is very sensitive due to its reliance on long coastal views and sense of semi-remoteness due to the presence of heathland cues and low settlement density. The capacity of this landscape to accept and accommodate development is very low. Over development and

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gentrification of the few isolated dwellings in the Area should be resisted as this has a severely detrimental effect on character.

Drained Coastal Marshes 14

14 Drained Coastal Marshes

Location and boundaries

14.0.1 This landscape Type is located on the boundary between the sea and rising land, at points between Weybourne in the east and Holkham in the west. It is no more than a half mile deep in all places but may extend several miles in length. All the areas where this type occurs are bounded from the sea either by dunes or by a sea wall (shingle or grassed clay).

Table 14.1 Drained Coastal Marshes

Picture 14.1



Open landscape bounded by shingle bank and drainage dyke

Picture 14.2



Used for grazing

Picture 14.3



Grazing marsh, large skies

Picture 14.4



Settlement on rising ground adjoining flat marshland

Key characteristics

- A very open flat landscape which has views constrained north and south by rising land / banks or sea walls but which has long views to the east and west.
- Some of the smaller pockets of this type (at the eastern end of Wells-next-the-Sea and near Weybourne Hard) give a smaller more intimate set of views.
- The sky is significant wherever one is within this landscape type, accentuated by the colour and reflection from the sea.
- The land use varies with the location. The eastern block of this land type around Cley is a nature reserve with brackish lagoons, pasture, reedbeds and dykes, the western type around the Wells-next-the-Sea / Holkham area is partly pasture and partly arable (wheat, barley,

14 Drained Coastal Marshes

beans and rape). Water control in this western portion is more orientated towards drainage rather than the creation of wetland habitats.

- The pattern of field boundaries and ditched enclosures is very strong in some parts of the Type.
- Settlement is virtually absent from this Type although it is in close proximity on the higher ground adjacent. The main exception is the large caravan site, beach huts and RNLI station at Wells-next-the-Sea.
- Woodland is a feature of the western area of the Type. It comprises pinewoods on the dunes and is a major landscape feature.
- A former railway line is a feature of the western area of this Type.
- The proximity to the sea, and numerous sea view opportunities are a prominent feature of this Type.

Landscape character

14.0.2 The Drained Marsh landscape Type is a significant feature of the North Norfolk Coast AONB. It contains a number of designated sites for wildlife including National Nature Reserves (Holkham) together with SSSIs (Holkham, Wells-next-the-Sea, Cley and Weybourne). The sites are internationally important for a variety of bird species and have distinct and rare wetland ecologies.

14.0.3 The topography of the Type is predominantly flat, with much land at or slightly below sea level (due to shrinkage). The land is protected from flooding by major features of a shingle bank (about 8m high) at Cley to Weybourne, by internal and external clay banks protecting the sites from inundation along or adjacent to former estuaries and by a large dune bank at the western portion of the Type (Holkham).

14.0.4 There are distinctive differences in the land cover of the various locations as a result of the landownership and intention. The Cley / Salthouse area is largely run as a nature reserve with a few small grazing meadows owned by individuals. The water levels are closely controlled to retain water in brackish lagoons and dykes and to retain a generally wet freshwater marsh ecology. At Wells-next-the-Sea to Holkham, whilst part of the area is similarly managed, other areas to the eastern part of this site are used for arable farming (wheat, barley, rape and beans or set-aside). Here the water is managed to drain the land.

14.0.5 Similarly, there are distinctive differences in the nature and appearance of the sea bank at the two main locations. Holkham has a large natural dune system and wide beach protecting its marshes. The dunes have been further stabilised and altered by the planting of Corsican and Black pines creating an unusual ecological system (part of the NNR). At Cley to Salthouse, the bank comprises shingle with a steeply sloping, constantly eroding beach on the other side. The shingle has a unique ecology but is highly unstable and vulnerable. Occasional flooding of the marsh occurs.

14.0.6 Settlement is very low on the marsh Type itself but there are substantial amounts of vernacular and semi-vernacular development which occur immediately adjacent to the Type on higher land (1m to 5m) much of which is to the south of the A149 Coast Road which is a constant feature of this Type, providing a strong delineation between the rising land to the south and the start of the Marshes. The only exception to this is the large caravan park, car park, beach huts, ancillary buildings and playing field and RNLI station at Wells-next-the-Sea and the Beach Café at Cley. These are significant features - causing in the former case considerable light disturbance, traffic and physical changes to the character of the landscape.

14.0.7 Features of this landscape include the following:

- Woodlands at Holkham

Drained Coastal Marshes 14

- Shingle Bank at Cley / Salthouse
- Caravan Park and lights at Wells-next-the-Sea
- RNL station at Wells-next-the-Sea
- Floodlights at Wells-next-the-Sea playing field
- Beach Café at Cley
- Windmill at Cley

14.0.8 Other features in neighbouring landscape Types are highly prominent and contribute to the distinctive setting of this landscape and include the numerous church towers, the prominent vernacular buildings of Cley and Salthouse, the town of Wells-next-the-Sea, Holkham Park and telecom masts at various sites along the coast ridge.

Geological character

14.0.9 This is an accreting section of the coast with salt marsh development and important coastal features including barrier islands and spits. The low lying coast is one of the few examples of a barrier system in Europe. The whole is a complex of saltmarshes generally developing behind sand dunes and shingle structures together with extensive areas of intertidal sand and mudflats. Scolt Head Island and Blakeney Point have recurving shingle and dune ridges which have been extensively studied by geomorphologists.

Ecological character

14.0.10 The ecological character of the area is a mix of arable and pasture lands. The proportion of the mix varies considerably depending upon the specific geographical location of the site. The westernmost section of DCM 1 is predominantly pasture with only a small area of arable land on the rising slope up to the A149 Coast Road, whereas the land nearer Wells-next-the-Sea is predominantly arable. The land in DCM2 is entirely pastoral.

14.0.11 The land parcels/fields within the area are separated by ditched enclosures almost exclusively but there may be small areas of scrub and rough hedges associated with some of the boundaries on the western rising lands in DCM 1, and are also associated with the areas of the former railway line through the central portion of this Type. The principle variability within the boundary forms in this area are between those which are deep and where the ground water level is maintained at a low level (i.e. relatively dry ditches with steep trapezoidal sides, often with a fringe of *Phragmites* sp. which is flailed yearly) and those which are relatively wet, often shallower and of variable width. The latter tend to be associated with pasture areas exclusively and are where the water table is specifically maintained at a high level to achieve compliance with agri-environment grant schemes.

14.0.12 The field size varies considerably and is generally much smaller in the DCM2 area. Similarly in DCM1 the field form is more rectilinear in the arable section than elsewhere.

14.0.13 There are substantial areas of DCM1 and 2 which are purposely flooded scrapes for bird life. Similarly in DCM1 and DCM2 there are areas of reedbed which are maintained either by chance or by design. The outlying Weybourne section of DCM 2 is mainly reedbed and dense bramble / willowherb fed by a small stream which filters out to sea beneath the shingle bank. There are two saline lagoons (brackish lakes/ ponds) to the immediate rear of the dunes in DCM1 which are in part affected by water movements in the sand/gravel strata and are affected to a degree by tidal flows (Spring tides only), and others at Salthouse and Cley.

14.0.14 Some areas are specifically allowed to flood by managing the water levels – these are found in both DCM1 (western section) and DCM2 whole area.

14.0.15 A significant but somewhat 'odd' ecological characteristic of DCM 1 is the large area of principally

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non-native woodland on the dunes. This is formed with Corsican and Black pines purposely planted in the early C20th to stabilise the dunes. Subsequent natural succession has taken place and at the western end of the Type, a much younger woodland has gradually extended west colonising the dunes, whereas to the central and particularly eastern (Wells-next-the-Sea) end, deciduous woodland to the inland side of the woodland has colonised (Birch, Oak, Holm Oak, Hawthorn, Gorse and Sycamore). There are also coniferous woodland belts around the caravan park at Wells-next-the-Sea and a small woodland (for sporting purposes) sited centrally within the arable area of DCM1.

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Coastal Sand Dunes – DCM 1 contains some significant large and stable dune systems associated with the older line of the coast. Younger more active dune systems outside this Area are to the seaward side of the beach area
- Coastal Fens – This Area contains significant amounts of this relatively rare and important habitat type
- Reedbeds - This Area contains significant amounts of this relatively rare and important habitat type
- Saline Lagoons - This Area contains significant amounts of this relatively rare and important habitat type

Analysis of specific elements and features within this type

Table 14.2 Drained Coastal Marshes: Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Very flat open landscape with long views along coast, more intimate drained areas and contrast between nature reserve areas and arable lands	Good	<p>Changes to the sea walls and sea banks occasioned by flood protection needs or natural forces will alter the length and nature of the views.</p> <p>Changes to settlement on the neighbouring rising land could strongly affect views and the character of this landscape.</p> <p>The imposition of different cropping / water management or woodland cover would be likely to have significant effects on the views if the vegetation height / colour / texture were to alter. This could positively or negatively alter the perception of the landscape depending upon the type, area covered and location of the change(s).</p> <p>Changes are likely to be forced by natural rising sea levels. This in turn may lead to a 'managed retreat' approach by the statutory bodies, forcing changes. This process is beyond the scope of this study to consider as it will inevitably require both Environmental Impact Assessments and considerable public consultation and</p>	High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>will be likely to lead to compensatory habitat being required elsewhere.</p> <p>Small features such as hides, lighting, small car parks or other indications of human structures or activities can have disproportionate effects on the 'wildness' of the landscape.</p>	
Skyline	Good	<p>Avoid developments which affect or impinge on open skyline views (especially on neighbouring landscape Types on rising ground) or which would adversely affect the night time experience of dark landscapes. This is essentially a dark landscape.</p> <p>The skyline is determined by landform and woodland with some features, mostly churches. Telecom towers where present introduce an alien feature which is detrimental to the character of the landscape especially when viewed in the context of the coastal areas of this Type and neighbouring Types.</p>	High
Field boundary pattern / landcover	Good to Fair	<p>The most notable patterns and features are caused by relatively small fields bounded by water filled ditches with biodiverse sides and a high water table. Changes to the cropping pattern - from pasture to arable or vice versa will greatly change the character of the Type. Similarly, changes in water table can have profound effects on the appearance of the ditches and on the landcover of the site. There are strong moves to increase (through agri-environment grants and special area payments / agreements) a reversion from arable to pasture and fen land cover with consequent raising of the water levels and seasonal management. Similarly, there are threats in the form of potential saline inundation, which would see a reversion to salt marsh. Whether or not this is positive or negative depends upon perception - in landscape terms it is probably neutral.</p>	High
Settlement (villages, edge of town and isolated farms etc)	Good to Fair	<p>General Settlement on this landscape Type is essentially inappropriate and the majority of settlement related influences on this landscape occur from settlement located immediately adjacent to this Type on rising ground.</p> <p>Villages Areas in adjacent landscape Types where large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller fields still contribute</p>	Moderate to High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>significantly to the character of the village could be protected from development.</p> <p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p> <p>Edge of Towns Where the existing edge of towns (Wells-next-the-Sea) abut this Type, consideration should be given to enhancing the appearance of the town from the marshlands adjacent by appropriate design, colour of materials and the need for retention of existing trees and hedges and landscaping to prevent new 'hard edges' or to address existing and inappropriate 'hard edges' to settlement.</p> <p>Lighting within and adjacent to towns can have a severely negative effect on the appreciation and character of this landscape Type due to its long views. It is possible to see light pollution (point lights and some glow) from many miles along the coast.</p> <p>Caravan Park and associated development This has its own landscaping which is an extension of the essentially 'artificial' but highly regarded and characteristic woodland associated with the Holkham Meads. This largely screens the car park, caravans etc. Changes to this woodland as it matures mean that this screening will be likely to lessen over time as growth leads to views under the canopy of trees. Consideration of this may be appropriate.</p> <p>Certain lighting on the site is highly visible and contrary to the character of the area.</p>	
The road network	Good to Fair	<p>"A" classification Coast Road, whilst modernised to an extent, retains a strong sense of character - rural and distinctive. Care should be exercised over excessive signage in this relatively uncluttered road network.</p> <p>The few minor roads / trackways have considerable rural character (exception Beach Road, Wells-next-the-Sea) and are often ditched with reed fringes.</p>	Moderate to High

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Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

14.0.16 The overall condition of this Type is fair to good (but mostly good) depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. There are few built features in this landscape, excepting the large caravan park at Wells-next-the-Sea Beach, and apart from this they do not detract greatly from its character. The strength of character for this Type is strong, with grazing marsh, wet ditches, long views and flat terrain being the defining elements.

Recent landscape impacts

14.0.17 Changes to agricultural economy (introduction of agri-environment grants) and the rise in interest in environmental management have seen positive changes to reinstate or improve existing non-built features, mainly grazing marsh and water level management. The areas of nature reserve near Cley have remained fairly constant. Major changes have occurred with the occasional breaking down of the shingle bank at Cley - Salthouse and the subsequent inundation of the freshwater grazing marsh and reedbeds.

14.0.18 The development of the caravan park / car park / attendant shops etc has significantly changed the character of the Wells-next-the-Sea Beach area and whilst the site is screened by tree planting, lighting, traffic and built presence is considerable

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

- With the exception of the Wells-next-the-Sea Beach area, this is not a landscape which is likely to experience built development pressure but due to its proximity to other Types with settlement, the effect of developments in these Types should be considered for their effects upon the Drained Marsh's particular qualities (feeling of remoteness and lack of development / low impact human intervention).
- Extensions to the caravan park / car park or other facilities associated with them could be detrimental to the character of the landscape.
- Offshore windfarms which would be sufficiently close or large enough to 'enclose' or create a 'limit' to the skyline and horizon could have detrimental effects on the perception of remoteness and wilderness in this Type.
- Biofuel crops have very little potential to be integrated within this landscape Type due to the potential loss of habitat and visual impact. Where existing use is arable, the potential loss of higher grade freshwater grazing or reedbed to compensate for losses in areas of coastal erosion would be a significant cost to any benefit from the crop.

b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Retention of existing pasture and reedbeds.
- Creation of new grassland and reedbeds where appropriate.
- Maintenance / creation of freshwater habitats.
- Enabling the natural coastal processes to continually develop coastal habitats (shingle bank roll back) as long as this does not conflict with shoreline management plans.
- Retention of rural features - tracks with grassed central margins, old fencing / gateposts / walls.

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c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character

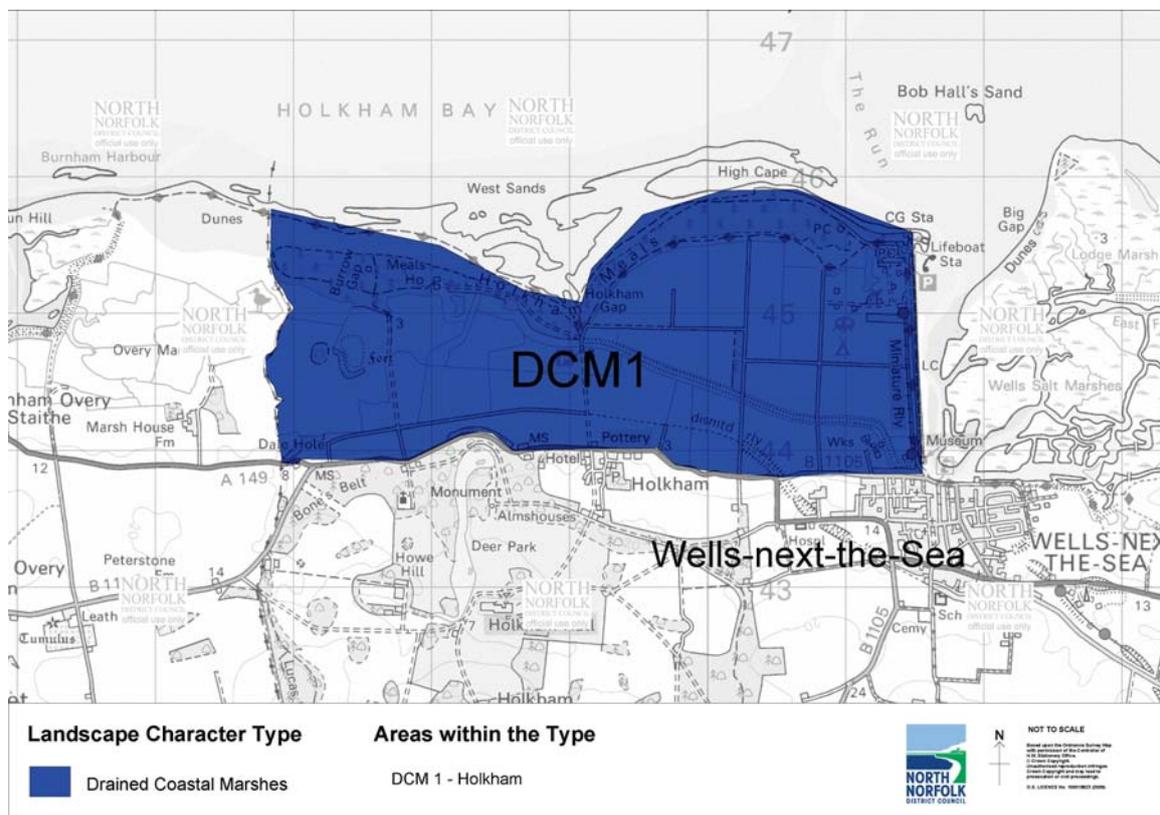
- Retention of existing pasture and reedbeds.
- Creation of new grassland and reedbeds where appropriate.
- Maintenance / creation of freshwater habitats.
- Enabling the natural coastal processes to continually develop coastal habitats (shingle bank roll back) as long as this does not conflict with shoreline management plans.

Areas within the type

- DCM1 – Holkham
- DCM2 – Blakeney, Wiveton, Cley and Salthouse

14.1 Holkham (DCM1)

Map 14.1 DCM1



Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Dynamic coastline area with large dune system which backs a wide beach gradually transforming to marshland.
- Formal beach area at Wells-next-the-Sea end with prominent beach huts and Lifeboat House which are highly distinctive.
- Large belt of Pine (Black and Maritime Pines) on and adjacent to the 'inner' main dune system.
- Partly arable and partly flooded grazing marsh areas to rear of dunes.
- Rising slopes of grassland / arable to north of A149 are key feature providing views over marshland.

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- Caravan park, Wells-next-the-Sea Beach car park are major features.
- Avenue of poplars and car parking at Lady Annes Drive is a major feature.
- Railway embankment at Wells-next-the-Sea end.
- Sea walls within and at eastern end of Area.
- Proximity to Wooded with Parkland (Holkham Area).

Evaluation

- 14.1.1** The condition of the landscape character varies from poor to good due to the high sensitivity of the landscape and the extreme pressures in terms of visitor numbers placed upon it.
- 14.1.2** The marshland landscape around Holkham and Wells-next-the-Sea is particularly distinctive (strength of character high) for the large number of unique features it exhibits.

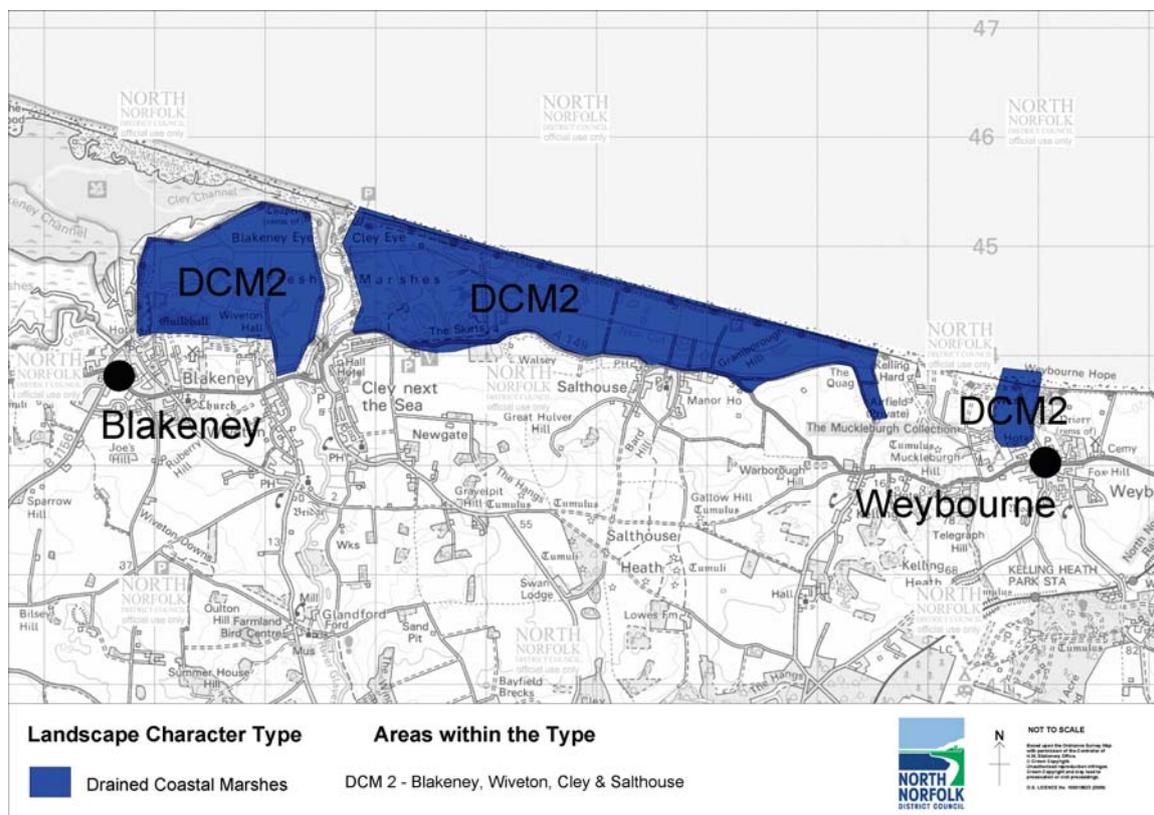
Issues

- 14.1.3** The landscape of the drained marshland and accompanying beach area (which should be seen as one integrated unit although they are very different habitats) is very sensitive to change. Long views mean that intrusive elements are apparent over a wide area. The landscape has been subject to considerable change over the last 15 – 20 years due to the vastly increased numbers of visitors attracted to the Area not just in the middle summer months (as previously) but all year. This has had considerable visual effects (sheer numbers of persons seen in what was a very remote area 25 years ago) together with car parking, lighting (caravan park, Victoria Hotel, Wells-next-the-Sea and Football Ground) and associated structures. It is difficult to think of this as other than a recreational area but it has a considerable ecological value as determined by its National Nature Reserve status.
- 14.1.4** Improvements could be made to reduce visual impacts by improving lighting use at the caravan park, Wells-next-the-Sea Beach car park, Football Field, Victoria Hotel, Freeman Street road lighting and at the Natural England barn store.
- 14.1.5** Extensions to the car parking areas or caravan / lodge site or developments at the southern end of the Beach Road (around the Football Field or Pitch and Putt areas) could have considerable detrimental effect on the remaining character of the site.
- 14.1.6** Further arable reversion on the eastern side of Lady Anne's Drive would have a very positive effect on extending the more remote character features and improving the ecological carrying capacity of this rare (freshwater flooded grazing marsh) habitat type which is likely to become more scarce if further inundations elsewhere along the coast cause reversion to salt marsh.
- 14.1.7** Changes to the car parking areas (Lady Anne's Drive or Wells-next-the-Sea Beach) through surfacing etc could have a suburbanising effect. Opportunities to soften and integrate these features should be taken where present.
- 14.1.8** Conflicts between National Nature Reserve (ecological) status and people are now arising, and the carrying capacity of this landscape vis a vis its ecological and visual importance needs to be carefully considered. The landscape is highly sensitive and has reached a critical point in its development.

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14.2 Blakeney, Wiveton, Cley and Salthouse (DCM2)

Map 14.2 DCM2



Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A relatively simple area which has few features.
- Strongly influenced by adjacent Character Types and Areas.
- Mostly freshwater grazing in small field parcels with reed fringed ditches and larger open water scrape.
- The area around Blakeney / Wiveton is bounded by sea banks and has no direct contact with the coast.
- The area along Cley / Salthouse has a sea bank formed by the prominent shingle bank feature.

Evaluation

- 14.2.1** The condition of this landscapes' character is Fair to Good. The landscape is cohesive and intact with good management.
- 14.2.2** The character of this landscape is Strong. The landscape character is however also greatly influenced by adjacent Areas and Types.

Issues

- 14.2.3** The relatively low public access (except around the sea walls, shingle bank and within the NWT Reserve which is limited) provides a sense of security to the ecology and character of the Area. It can be viewed but not easily 'used'. It is unlikely (due to flood issues etc) that buildings or other developments will be sought on this Area. Its character would however be greatly eroded by increases in arable use. Similarly, managed retreat would have considerable implications ecologically and visually for this area – effectively completely changing its character.

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- 14.2.4** Recent positive elements have been the removal of the caravans on Friary Farm Hills to the south of the site Blakeney end of the site.
- 14.2.5** Negative effects of lighting from Blakeney, the Dun Cow at Salthouse and to a lesser extent from Cley, detract from the sense of remoteness, as does the prominent car park which is situated adjacent to the NWT visitor centre.
- 14.2.6** Some negative change has occurred by the re-alignment of the Glaven to the north of the Area, reducing its area – however this has integrated well but the change reduces the ecological carrying capacity of the Area.
- 14.2.7** The planned ‘managed retreat’ of the shingle bank management has altered the appearance and character of the Area to a degree and will, if managed retreat continues, lead to dynamic changes in the ecology and visual character of the Area – possibly negative.
- 14.2.8** This is a highly sensitive landscape – considerably affected by any potential developments or changes in adjoining higher Areas.

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15 Open Coastal Marshes

Location and boundaries

15.0.1 This landscape Type is concentrated along the central portion of the North Norfolk Coast between Wells-next-the-Sea and Blakeney. This strip of land between the rising land and the sea contains one of the largest single areas of undrained salt marsh in Europe.

Table 15.1 Open Coastal Marshes

Picture 15.1



Lagoon

Picture 15.2



Natural creeks

Picture 15.3



Flat topography

Picture 15.4



Creeks with moored boats

Key characteristics

- A landscape of long open views and uninterrupted visual character.
- The topography is generally very flat except for small rises where dunes have formed on the seaward side of the marsh. These rise no more than 7m.
- The landuse is predominantly unmanaged natural marshland with some dune and a small amount of conifer woodland. The marsh comprises a typical variety of saltmarsh ecologies and the dune ecology is typically marram grass and other similar dune plants.
- The Type is bounded by gently rising land to the south which is mostly arable, and by the sea on the northern side – to either end the type concludes within an estuary system with drained marsh continuing the open character beyond. The underlying landform effectively becomes subducted into, and under the marsh.
- Settlement is confined to a few buildings close to or on the marsh at Morston. There are other buildings adjacent to the marsh at Blakeney and Morston.

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- Boats moored within the creeks at Wells-next-the-Sea, Stiffkey, Morston and Blakeney are a significant feature.
- The creeks within the marsh are a significant element throughout the Type.
- The large sandy lagoon at Blakeney (3miles long) is a major feature of the Type.

Landscape character

- 15.0.2** The Open Coastal Marsh landscape Type comprises land which has formed due to a combination of natural processes of deposition and ecological succession. Only minor human intervention has occurred to shape or farm this landscape and the result is therefore a rare combination of natural ecology and topography forming a generally stable but gradually changing equilibrium.
- 15.0.3** The overall character of the area is one of a very flat landscape with rising dune lands on the seaward side of the Type and interspersed with creeks and larger lagoon type harbour areas. Long views over the low marshland plants to the horizon are a major feature.
- 15.0.4** The creeks vary in size from small tributaries of no more than .3m wide to well over 60m wide. The creeks are often sandy with steep mud cliff sides of up to 2m. A large sandy lagoon enclosed by the large sand spit of Blakeney Point is a major feature. The whole dynamic of the marsh, creeks and dunes is constantly changing and growing / shrinking. Plant communities change as land accretes and becomes drier or erodes to become wetter. Small amounts of human intervention have altered the line of creeks (Blakeney Cut, Wells-next-the-Sea Harbour, Stiffkey Harbour and several other similar re-directions), but natural forces have created the majority.
- 15.0.5** The major human 'mark' upon the landscape is in the form of moored boats, both within the creeks and within the large lagoon at Blakeney. Different sizes of boat tend to inhabit comparably sized creeks. Most of the boating activity now comprises leisure use with dinghies and small craft, although at Wells-next-the-Sea and Blakeney, larger yachts provide a dense almost settlement type cover to the landscape and intrude significantly upon what was a very undeveloped landscape. There are boat parks at Blakeney and Morston and smaller more ad hoc boat parks at Stiffkey Freshes and at Stiffkey marsh.
- 15.0.6** Buildings are rare due to the vulnerable coastal nature of the site; exceptions are the look out at Morston and the former RNLI building at Blakeney Point. There are other buildings close to the Type (mostly former vernacular cottages / houses which due to their proximity to the sea are now converted to luxury holiday homes) but situated on the slightly higher ground to the south of the Type. There are some areas where small and larger clay sea walls provide delineation between this Type and the neighbouring landscape types to the south and east/west. These form significant features ending the Type and breaking views of the horizon.
- 15.0.7** Landcover is almost entirely natural and unmanaged. There has been grazing of the marsh by sheep and cattle in the past but this has not occurred for some decades and the resultant variety of grasses, quantities of Sea Purslane and other plants have distributed themselves according to their required degree of immersion. Similarly, the plant communities on the dunes have formed and reformed as a result of forces of wind and water with the exception of the small pine wood on the western edge of the Type adjacent to Wells-next-the-Sea Harbour mouth.
- 15.0.8** There are no roads over the Type but there are footpaths and trackways which serve to provide access to the harbours / creeks and connect along the southern edge of the Type to form a continuous long distance path (Peddars Way and North Norfolk Coast National Trail).
- 15.0.9** There are two large car parks associated with the villages of Morston and Blakeney, which are very prominent, when many cars are present due to window glare.

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Geological character

15.0.10 This is an accreting section of the coast with salt marsh development and important coastal features including barrier islands and spits. The low lying coast is one of the few examples of a barrier system in Europe. The whole is a complex of saltmarshes generally developing behind sand dunes and shingle structures together with extensive areas of intertidal sand and mudflats. Scolt Head Island and Blakeney Point have recurving shingle and dune ridges which have been extensively studied by geomorphologists.

Ecological character

15.0.11 The ecological character of this area is a complex of intertidal mud flats and sandbanks together with salt marshes and some sandbars which have established or forming sand dune complexes (in one instance with Corsican Pines) with a variety of creek sizes. The salt marshes are relatively stable with gradually changing communities of plants in some places. The mud flats and sandbanks are liable to change location, species content and extent.

15.0.12 The whole of the Type is designated with one or more of the following;

- Wash and North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site
- SAC
- SPA
- SSSI
- Ramsar site

Biodiversity action plan habitats present in this type

- Intertidal sandbanks and mud flats
- Saltmarsh
- Sand dune complexes

Analysis of specific elements and features within this type

Table 15.2 Open Coastal Marshes: Analysis of Key Characteristics

Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
Very flat open landscape with long views along coast, more intimate drained areas and contrast between nature reserve areas and arable lands	Good	<p>Changes to the sea walls and sea banks occasioned by flood protection needs or natural forces will alter the length and nature of the views.</p> <p>Changes to settlement on the neighbouring rising land could strongly affect views and the character of this landscape.</p> <p>The imposition of different water management processes (natural or man made) would be likely to have some effects on the views if the vegetation height / colour / texture were to alter. This could positively or negatively alter the perception of the landscape depending upon the type, area covered and location of the change/s. The changes are unlikely to be as dramatic as those on the Drained Marsh Type.</p> <p>Changes are likely to be forced by natural rising sea levels.</p>	High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		Small features such as hides, lighting, small car parks or other indications of human structures or activities can have disproportionate effects on the 'wildness' of the landscape.	
Skyline	Good	<p>Avoid developments which affect or impinge on open skyline views (especially on neighbouring landscape Types on rising ground) or which would adversely affect the night time experience of dark landscapes. This is essentially a dark landscape.</p> <p>The skyline is determined by landform and woodland with some features, mostly churches. Telecom towers where present introduce an alien feature which is detrimental to the character of the landscape especially when viewed in the context of the coastal areas of this Type and neighbouring Types.</p>	High
Settlement (villages, edge of town and isolated farms etc)	Good to Fair	<p>General Settlement on this landscape Type is essentially inappropriate and the majority of settlement related influences on this landscape occur from settlement located immediately adjacent to this Type on rising ground.</p> <p>Villages Areas in adjacent landscape Types where large mature gardens / paddocks and smaller fields still contribute significantly to the character of the village could be protected from development.</p> <p>Importance should be given to retaining mature trees which contribute to the setting of the village / buildings.</p> <p>Edge of Towns where the existing edge of towns (Wells-next-the-Sea) abut this Type, consideration should be given to enhancing the appearance of the town from the marshlands adjacent by appropriate design, colour of materials and the need for retention of existing trees and hedges and landscaping to prevent new 'hard edges' or to address existing and inappropriate 'hard edges' to settlement.</p> <p>Lighting within and adjacent to towns can have a severely negative effect on the appreciation and character of this landscape Type due to its long views. It is possible to see light pollution (point lights and some glow) from many miles along the coast.</p> <p>Car Parks The extension of and use of areas of marsh for car parking</p>	High

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Key Characteristic	Condition	Analysis of Key Characteristics	Sensitivity
		<p>can significantly impinge upon and be contrary to the character of this Type.</p> <p>Moored Boats In moderation these do not impinge greatly upon, or conflict with, this landscape Type. In higher concentrations the 'forest of metal masts' strong colours and density of craft become effectively a waterborne car park. The noticeable increase in the density of moorings at Blakeney and Wells-next-the-Sea and the attendant appearance of craft seen from a distance - especially at high water - can be very dominant and have detracted from the wilderness character of the Type considerably.</p>	
The road network	Good	<p>'A' classification Coast Road, whilst modernised to an extent, retains a strong sense of character - rural and distinctive. Care should be exercised over excessive signage in this relatively uncluttered road network.</p> <p>The few minor roads / trackways have considerable rural character (exception Beach Road Wells-next-the-Sea) and are often ditched with reed fringes.</p>	Moderate to High

Evaluation

Landscape condition and strength of character

15.0.13 The overall condition of this Type is fair to good (but mostly good) depending upon the particular feature/s being considered. There are few built features in this landscape and they do not detract greatly from its character. The strength of character for this Type is strong, with salt marsh, creeks, sandbanks, sand dunes and mudflats, long views and flat terrain being the defining elements.

Recent landscape impacts

- Increasing boating activity has created significant numbers of new moorings for yachts and other craft at Blakeney ('The Cut' near the Village and 'The Pit' near Blakeney Point) and at Wells-next-the-Sea. This has occurred during the last 20 years with significant increases in the last 10 years.
- The development of boat trips (to Blakeney Point and the seal grounds) has encouraged large numbers of cars to Morston. The parking of cars on the hard is highly visible.
- The area is subject to constant natural change.

Assessment of positive / negative factors affecting character in this type

a) Factors which may erode / may not contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of landscape character

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- This is not a landscape which is likely to experience built development pressure but due to its proximity to other Types with settlement, the effect of developments in these Types should be considered for their effects upon the Open Coastal Marsh's particular qualities (feeling of remoteness and lack of development / low impact human intervention).
- Increasing boat moorings would continue to create a 'large car park' appearance in these highly visible locations. This could have a significant detrimental effect on the character of much of the Type being visible for long distances on high tides.
- Increasing formalisation of and provision of facilities for car parking / visitors at Morston could further erode the limited degree of 'remoteness' which remains in this location.
- Offshore windfarms which would be sufficiently close or large enough to 'enclose' or create a 'limit' to the skyline and horizon could have significant detrimental effects on the perception of remoteness and wilderness in this Type
- Biofuel crops have virtually no potential to be integrated within this landscape Type due to the salt inundation, visual and ecological impact.

b) Factors which may enhance / actively contribute to the maintenance of landscape character

- Reductions in moored craft in highly visible locations.
- Careful screening or restricting / relocating car parking from the foreshore / hard areas.

c) Factors which contribute to the maintenance / enhancement of ecological character

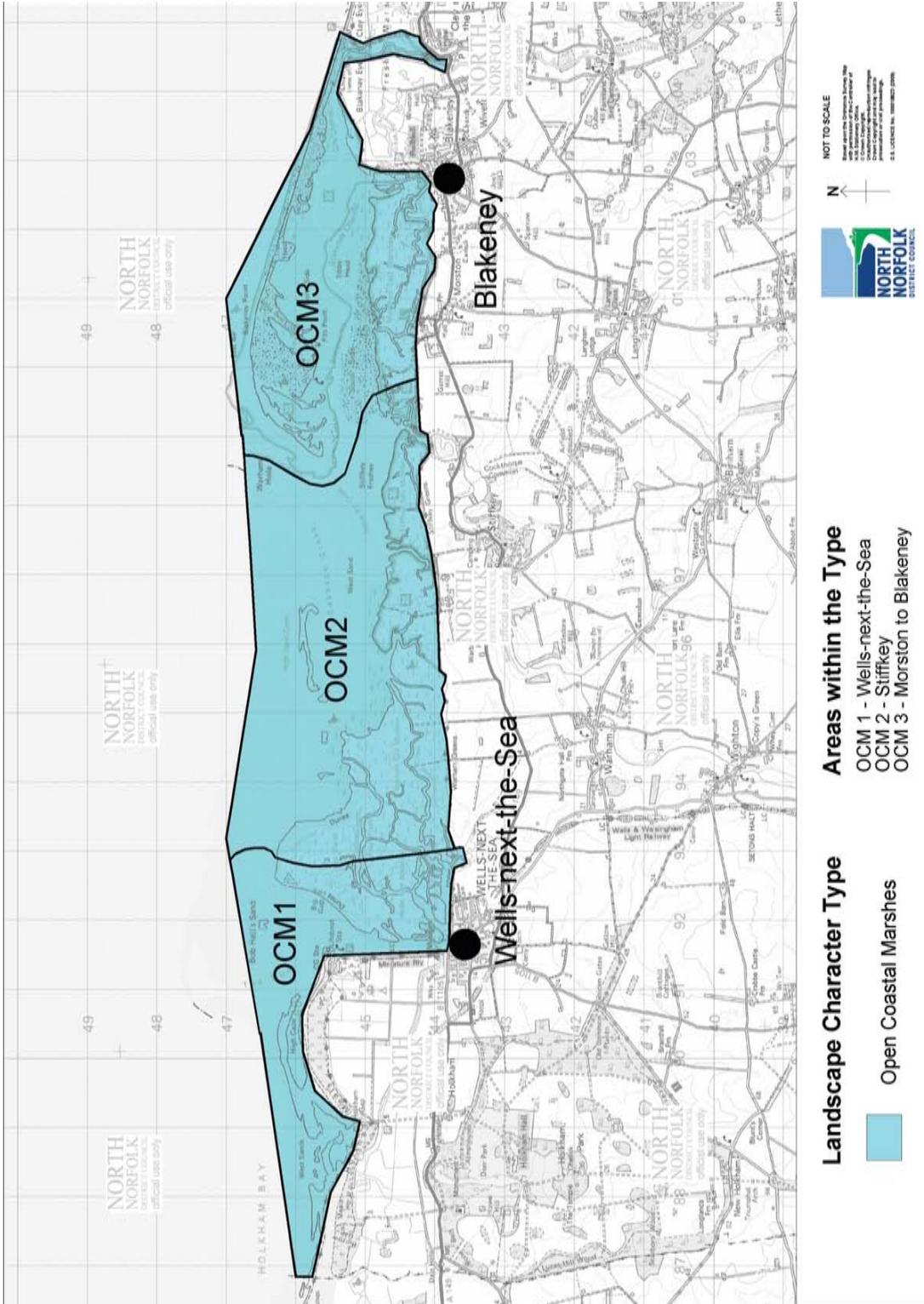
- Retention of existing diversity of marshland and associated habitat types.
- Enabling the natural coastal processes to continually develop coastal habitats as long as this does not conflict with shoreline management plans.
- Retention of small transitional areas of heathland and grassland where these emerge from the marsh and buffer agricultural land.

Areas within the type

- OCM1 – Wells-next-the-Sea
 - OCM2 – Stiffkey
 - OCM3 – Morston to Blakeney
-

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Map 15.1 Open Coastal Marshes



15 Open Coastal Marshes

15.1 Wells-next-the-Sea (OCM1)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- An area of marsh and harbour which is well used for recreational and work craft with moorings very prominent.
- Views of the Town of Wells-next-the-Sea dominate the marshland.
- Proximity to the Wells-next-the-Sea Beach area gives a strong recreational feel to the Area.
- The prominent dunes have some maritime and black pines on them which are visible from as far away as Sheringham.

Evaluation

15.1.1 The condition of the landscape character is Moderate to Good. The harbour area of Wells-next-the-Sea has developed a strong character but one which has changed considerably during the past 10 years with the loss of commercial cargo vessels and handling facilities and the rise of leisure craft. It does still, however, play an important role as a working port for fishing boats and other industrial uses such as survey boats. The harbour and main creeks take on a 'marina' appearance in summer due to the numbers of small craft moored in them.

15.1.2 The wider area of the marsh quickly becomes more remote and has a strong ecological and visual character combined.

15.1.3 The strength of character is Strong.

Issues

15.1.4 The harbour may have reached saturation point in terms of the provision of moorings along the main channel and Sluice Creek. Any attempts to increase moorings further eastwards or northwards (especially if accompanied by dredging or other operations / floating structures) may intrude into and erode the character of this landscape Area.

15.1.5 As with the adjoining Holkham Drained Coastal Marsh Area, this landscape is highly sensitive to change and has also probably reached the limit of its capacity to absorb change without correspondingly significant alterations to its character.

15.2 Stiffkey (OCM2)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- Very remote feel – large open expanses of saltmarsh with few if any interrupting features visible upon the skyline.
- Low settlement density adjacent to the character Area on rising ground.
- Stiffkey and Morston 'Greens' – thin strips of rising land between the marsh and the hedged enclosed agricultural fields beyond.
- Trackways across the marsh for foot access to former grazing, shooting, cockling and staithe areas.

Evaluation

15.2.1 The condition of this landscape Character Area is very good. Very little erosion of the character has been able to take place due to the remoteness of the site. However there is considerable pressure on the area from leisure walking etc and from the need to provide ancillary services to

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persons trying to access this area as seen by the car parks at Morston and the increasing traffic to Stiffkey and foot access from Wells-next-the-Sea.

15.2.2 The character of this Area is very sensitive to change but is particularly Strong.

Issues

15.2.3 Development of car parking areas at Stiffkey, vehicular access from existing rights of way between Wells-next-the-Sea and Morston all pose significant threats to the maintenance of the highly sensitive character of this landscape. Control of this threat is likely to be difficult. Even the increased use of the site by foot access is having a jarring effect upon the remote character of the site (virtually the last bit of the NN Coast to be able to be called 'remote' i.e. away from road noise, people, buildings, night time lights etc, and within a landscape which has remained more or less unchanged for the last 150 years).

15.2.4 Development of the campsite and old military camp buildings at Stiffkey could pose a threat to the character of the landscape by close association.

15.2.5 Development of large farm buildings on the skyline of the rising land to the south of the Area would be likely to intrude within the special qualities of the character of this landscape.

15.2.6 The Greens areas along the edge of the marsh are important for ecology – especially the heathland (gorse) areas and hedgerows adjoining the Greens (many of which are in poor condition).

15.2.7 Given the very particular qualities of remoteness and size which this landscape Area demonstrates it is probably the most sensitive part of the North Norfolk Coast to factors which would alter its character (development)

15.3 Morston and Blakeney (OCM3)

Key characteristics of this character area which make it distinctive within its type

- A popular and well used area for leisure purposes – often very busy with lots of visitors.
- Large car parks at Morston and Blakeney.
- Staithe and dinghy / boat parks at Morston and Blakeney.
- Large area of harbour enclosed by the spit of Blakeney Point.
- Large number of moored boats in the Harbour and creeks.
- Substantial areas of dune and shingle beach on Blakeney Point which are in a highly dynamic (moving) state.
- Large areas of salt marsh around the harbour and adjoining the Stiffkey area.
- Sea banks or walls from Morston to Blakeney.
- The Village of Blakeney and to a lesser extent Morston, is highly visible from within this Area due to their locations on rising land adjacent to the boundaries of the Area.
- The former Life Boat House and Watch House on Blakeney Point provide point features.

Evaluation

15.3.1 The condition of the landscape character varies from Moderate to Good. Moderate areas have seen considerable erosion in character during the last 20 years or so due to the pressures of visitor numbers and the need for infrastructure to service them (mainly car parks and moorings). Good areas have avoided these pressures.

15.3.2 The strength of character is Strong.

15 Open Coastal Marshes

Issues

- 15.3.3** The popularity of the Area for recreational purposes (from boating, seal visits, bird watching and walking) has put considerable pressure on this landscape both in terms of the sheer numbers of people who walk / use the area, and the infrastructure which has been necessary to cater for them. The two car / boat parks at Blakeney and Morston can be highly intrusive during the season (which has greatly extended and has relatively few 'off season periods'), both physically from a distance and locally when one walks through or near them and this colours the perception of the Area as full of people and cars.
- 15.3.4** Similarly the quantity of moored boats has the same effect but to a greater extent than at Wells-next-the-Sea, by making the creeks and harbour appear to be a waterborne 'boat park' – often not aided by the strong colours and shining windows reflecting the sun. This is most apparent on high Spring Tides when the boats can easily be seen from Muckleborough Hill some 8 miles east.
- 15.3.5** The restrictions on built development have largely removed the pressures which might exist for inappropriate development on this highly sought after location. The only structures being those (of some antiquity dating from the 1920s/30s) on the Point and the watch tower at Morston (National Trust) – none of which are particularly intrusive or out of character being isolated and low key. Additional units would however quickly begin to 'clutter' this landscape.
- 15.3.6** The level of visitor numbers has had a detrimental effect on character and is having a detrimental effect on ecology (disturbance to nesting birds, visitors, light aircraft and noise from power boats etc). Also marsh ecology (especially around the Greens) is being physically eroded by walkers.
- 15.3.7** This landscape is very sensitive and has experienced considerable changes to its non-permanent landscape character through loss of 'remoteness' due to large visitor numbers. Consideration of the carrying capacity of the landscape to accept more visitor numbers without disproportionate declines in character and ecology.

Appendices

A Geology & Landscape in North Norfolk

Appendix A: Geology & Landscape in North Norfolk

- A.1** Much of the present day landscape of North Norfolk is the direct result of glacial deposition. The huge ice sheets that invaded the region during the last half million years brought with them great thicknesses of sediment that remained after the ice melted. The more obvious depositional features left by the retreating ice include: terminal moraines, push moraines, gravel outwash fans, eskers etc. These features form the hills of Northeast Norfolk, and their structure is seen in section at the eroding cliffs of the present day shoreline. They are composed of sands, gravels, tills, and sometimes 'rafts' of Chalk plucked from the bedrock and carried by the ice.
- A.2** Further south the landscape continues to be a result of alternate deposition and erosion by the great ice sheets. Basal tills (formed at or near the base of the moving ice) consist of fine sediments that were ground up by the weight and movement of the overlying ice. Where the ice sheets passed over sandy beds, these tills are sandy; where the ice sheet passed over Chalk, they left behind chalky tills. (In some parts of Britain tills contain boulders caught up the clay matrix and so historically were known as boulder clay. Till is now a more appropriate term.) Where these clay tills remain they form heavy soils and a landscape of field ponds, streams, and moated houses. The chalky tills were exploited to 'marl' the fields and the sandy tills were often dug for brick making. Many small disused pits remain in the landscape.
- A.3** Where rivers ran under, or emerged from the ice sheets, gravel was deposited. These gravels are exploited by the aggregates industry. At times of ice melt, water flows were much greater than today, resulting in valleys that now are dry or have only small streams.
- A.4** Between glacial periods the climate warmed and erosion tended to occur rather than deposition. But some highly significant beds were laid down. These include the Cromer Forest bed types, some of which contain early hominid artifacts and diagnostic fossil assemblages, including the spectacular West Runton elephant.
- A.5** Over the glacial deposits, in the low lying Southeast of the district, peat beds formed at intervals. They were dug for fuel during the middle ages, and some of these workings subsequently flooded to become broads.
- A.6** Coastal processes continue to erode the east coast and accumulate landforms such as spits and sand dunes and salt marshes along the north coast.
- A.7** Under the glacial deposits in the eastern part of the district are unconsolidated shelly sands known as Crag. These beds are largely unseen.
- A.8** Chalk underlies all these other deposits and was laid down between 150 and 65 million years ago. It is highest in the west where it is visible in section at Hunstanton cliffs, and dips eastwards to exposures on the foreshore at West Runton. The extreme cold of the ice ages reduced the upper surfaces of the Chalk to a consistency of putty, and in the west of the district, where the glacial deposits and soils are thin, periglacial soil patterns such as stripes and polygons are visible. Surface water dissolved and widened these frost cracks, eventually flowing underground, leaving dry surface valleys and forming vital water aquifers. Chalk has long been quarried for use as lime, and all Norfolk's flints were dug or weathered from the Chalk. Flint has been used from Palaeolithic times for tool making and is the main local building stone.

Appendix B: Glossary

Analysis - the process of breaking the landscape down, usually in descriptive terms, into its component parts in order to understand how it is made up.

Ancient woodland - woodland which has had a continuous woodland cover since at least 1600AD and has only been cleared for underwood or timber production. It is an extremely valuable ecological resource, with an exceptionally high diversity of flora and fauna.

Approach - the step-wise process by which a landscape assessment is undertaken.

Assessment - an umbrella term used to encompass all the many different ways of looking at, describing, analysing and evaluating landscape.

Brownfield site - a development site which is re-using land previously developed.

Carr woodland - marsh or fen woodland in waterlogged terrain. Characteristic trees include alders and willows.

Character Area - a unique geographic area with a consistent character and identity, which forms part of a landscape character type.

Character Type - a generic term for landscape with a consistent, homogeneous character. Landscape character types may occur in different parts of the county, but wherever they occur, they will share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation or human influences.

Characteristic - an element that contributes to local distinctiveness (e.g. narrow winding lanes, vernacular building style).

Classification - a process of sorting the landscape into different types, each with a distinct, consistent and recognisable character.

Coppicing - the traditional method of woodland management in which trees are cut down to near the ground to encourage the production of long, straight shoots, which can subsequently be harvested.

Description - verbal description of what a landscape looks like. This is usually carried out in a systematic manner, but it may also include personal reactions to the landscape.

Element - a component part of the landscape (e.g. hedges, roads, woods).

Eutrophic - the state of a water body when it has an excess of nutrients usually derived from agricultural fertilisers. The process by which a water body becomes overloaded with nutrients is known as **eutrophication** and leads to a dense plant population, the decomposition of which kills animal life by depriving it of oxygen.

Feature - a prominent, eye-catching element (e.g. wooded hilltop, church spire).

Greenfield site - development site, usually on the fringes of a settlement, which has not previously been used for built development.

Horsiculture - term used to describe areas on the fringes of settlements which are dominated by horse paddocks, stable buildings and associated paraphernalia.

Land cover - combinations of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.

B Glossary

Landscape Capacity - refers to the degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or over change of landscape character type. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.

Landscape - the term refers primarily to the visual appearance of the land, including its shape, form and colours. However, the landscape is not a purely visual phenomenon; its character relies on a whole range of other dimensions, including geology, topography, soils, ecology, archaeology, landscape history, land use, architecture and cultural associations.

Landscape Character - a distinct pattern or combination of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape.

Landscape Condition - based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional and ecological perspectives. It reflects the state of repair or intactness of individual features or elements (relating to that features primary condition or ultimate *desire*).

Landscape Value - is concerned with the relative value that is attached to different landscapes. In a policy context the usual basis for recognising certain highly valued landscapes is through the application of a local or national landscape designation. Yet a landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without any formal designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests; or the existence of a consensus about importance, either nationally or locally.

Marl pit - small pit resulting from the extraction of marl (a calcareous clay or mudstone) which has often subsequently been filled with water to form a small field pond.

Open-field system - an area of arable land with common rights after harvest or while fallow. The fields date from the medieval period and are usually without internal divisions (hedges, walls or fences).

Outcrop - the emergence of a stratum, vein or rock at the surface.

Pollarding - a traditional woodland management practice in which the branches of a tree are cut back every few years to encourage new long, straight shoots for harvesting. Differs from *coppicing* because the cuts are made at sufficient distance from the ground to prevent them from being eaten by animals.

Remediation - process by which a contaminated or damaged site is repaired and brought back into more general use.

Riparian habitat - riverbank habitat

Semi-natural vegetation - any type of natural vegetation which has been influenced by human activities, either directly or indirectly.

Topography - combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface.

Vernacular - buildings constructed in the local style, from local materials. Concerned with ordinary rather than monumental buildings.

Veteran tree - a tree which is of great age for its species and is of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically.

Abbreviations

AONB - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

BAP - Biodiversity Action Plan

CCA - Countryside Character Area (refers to the broad landscape character areas described on the Countryside Agency's Character Map of England)

EIA - Environmental Impact Assessment

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisations

NNR - National Nature Reserve

PPG - Planning Policy Guidance (national)

PPS - Planning Policy Statement (national)

Ramsar Site - Wetland site as designated by criteria agreed at the Ramsar convention

RPG - Regional Planning Guidance

SMR - Sites and Monuments Record

SAC - Special Area of Conservation

SPA - Special Protection Area (Birds)

SSSI - Site of Special Scientific Interest

Notes on Landscape Character Assessment descriptions

- Field size is categorised as being either small, medium or large:
 - small fields = < 1ha to < 4ha
 - medium sized fields = > 4ha to < 8ha
 - large fields = > 8ha
- Rolling or undulating land is considered as a relative term within the context of the North Norfolk landscape and tends to include land form changes of between 10m up to 60m. There are very few places within the District where land rises above 70m.
- Level landscapes tend to be those where land does not rise more than 10m.
- Fen landscapes and Marsh landscapes tend to be at or below sea level.

B Glossary

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