



**ES LANDSCAPE
PLANNING**

Part of the ES Group

LAND NORTH OF WITHINGTON
STREET,
SUTTON BRIDGE

Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

1.1.1. ES Landscape Planning Ltd was instructed by ABDS Ltd to assess the landscape and visual implications arising from the proposed development of 129 dwellings at land to the north of Withington Street, Sutton Bridge. The Site location is illustrated on Plan SLP.001.

1.1.2. It must be noted that parts of the site have reserved matters approval for development, however, this assessment adopts a holistic approach assessing the landscape and visual implications of developing the whole site as illustrated on Plan SCP.002.

1.2. Approach

1.2.1. The purpose of this assessment is to objectively assess the proposed development in the context of the existing landscape character, visual environment and landscape related policy environment.

1.2.2. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will take the following format:

- Review of the site's context in terms of landscape related policy, existing landscape character and the receiving visual environment;
- Introduction of the proposed development, including the proposed landscape strategy;
- Assessment of landscape and visual effects upon the existing receptors / resource and in relation to landscape related planning policy; and
- The conclusions of the assessment will be set out.

1.2.3. The assessment has been prepared in accordance with the methodology that is included in Appendix 1. The methodology has been developed in line with guidance within Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3), prepared by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and the Landscape Institute (LI) in 2013.

- 1.2.4. A suite of plans and photographs have been prepared to assist the assessment within this LVIA and these are referred to within the text. The photographs are included within Appendix 5.
- 1.2.5. This assessment forms part of the suite of documents submitted as part of the full planning application, and should be reviewed alongside the other submissions that accompany the application.

2. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

2.1. The Site

- 2.1.1. The site lies on the northern edge of Sutton Bridge, an established settlement near to the border between Lincolnshire and Norfolk, approximately 10km to the north of Wisbech and 13km west of Kings Lynn.
- 2.1.2. The town lies to the west of the navigable River Nene, which extends north to The Wash and incorporates a port. The town has grown to the west of the port, primarily following Bridge Road. A number of residential roads run at right angles to Bridge Road and comprise a wide variety of housing, ranging from Victorian terraces to more recent semi-detached and detached residential estates. While the town has grown along the road corridor, the settlement does not have a linear character. The residential streets extending to the north and south introduce development at depth and dilute the perception of a linear settlement. The site's location is illustrated on Plan SLP.001.
- 2.1.3. The site currently comprises two fields which are currently appear to be lying fallow, although it is understood that the western parcel is under licence to be cropped by the previous landowner. The site lies immediately adjacent to the existing settlement edge. The site is illustrated within its immediate context on Plan SCP.002.
- 2.1.4. As noted above, part of the site is subject to reserved matters approvals. These are illustrated on Plan SCP.002 and show that over half of the site has been approved for residential development. The two smaller parcels represent infill development at the end of Withington Street and between Chestnut Terrace and the primary school, while the larger western parcel extends the settlement north. The eastern parcel does not extend as far north as the approved parcel and does not extend beyond the northern boundary of the allotments which lie immediately to the east.

2.2. The Site's Setting

- 2.2.1. The site lies on the northern edge of the settlement, with the residential areas associated with Nightingale Way, Crosby Row, Glanville Terrace, Withington Street, Chestnut Terrace and Ann Road defining most of the

southern boundary of the site. The playing fields to the north of the primary school also abut part of the southern edge of the site, with the boundary being defined by a chain link fence and overgrown hedge. Most of the southern boundary of the site is defined by timber closed board fences or brick walls associated with the properties that back or side onto the site. The existing settlement edge is prominent in views from the north, being characterised by a mix of largely post-war residential development. The properties on Nightingale Way appear to be the most recent, extending the settlement west along Bridge Road.

- 2.2.2. Red brick appears to be the most common building material although there is some evidence of white render. Roofs of the more recent properties tend to be grey / brown clay tiles, with the more established properties incorporating slate.
- 2.2.3. Bridge Road can be accessed from the site via Nightingale Way and Withington Street, with pedestrian links to the facilities of Sutton Bridge also possible along Granville Terrace, Chestnut Terrace and Allenby's Chase.
- 2.2.4. Within the wider context, the chimneys associated with the gas power station, just to the south east of Sutton Bridge, and wind turbines near Tydd St Mary form prominent features on the skyline in views from the north. The tower of St Matthew's Church is visible but not prominent on the skyline, set within a mature landscaped context.
- 2.2.5. An area of allotment gardens lies to the east of the site, which are accessed from Allenby's Chase, immediately adjacent to the site. The allotments are typical and comprise an area of individual plots with scattered sheds and paraphernalia. A line of bungalows forms the hard settlement edge, extending east along St Matthew's Drive. Further east, late 20th century residential development on Wright's Lane and New Road extends the perceived settlement north. A golf course separates the residential areas from the port which lies further to the east, with the River Nene running south – north towards The Wash.
- 2.2.6. The larger approved parcel forms the western part of the site. A farm track defines the western boundary of the site, along which footpath SuBr/1/1 runs, heading north from Bridge Road towards Westmere Farm. Several outbuildings lie immediately to the west of the track, with the residential

development associated with Kestrel Close lying immediately to the south of these feature and to the west of the track. This development forms the western edge of the settlement at depth. Several scattered properties lie along Bridge Road to the west, with various speed calming measures announcing the approaching settlement for travellers heading east along the highway.

- 2.2.7. To the north of the site lies agricultural land which is under arable use. Fields are defined by tracks or drainage dykes with few vegetated field boundaries. The flat, open nature of the landscape gives it a large-scale character. Scattered farmsteads break up the arable field pattern, often including wind breaks around plots which create a degree of visual interest and vertical scale.
- 2.2.8. **Vegetation Cover** – The site is currently fallow but has previously been used to grow crops. Areas of scrub line the southern boundary where the site abuts the settlement edge, however, there are no landscape features of note associated with the site and it is of limited ecological interest. The wider landscape setting does not vary greatly. Arable land uses prevail with some shelter belts present around the scattered farmsteads to the north. A line of poplars are present within the primary school grounds to the south of the site. These vertical features are evident within the context of views from the north.
- 2.2.9. **Topography** – The site reflects the general flat topography of the area. There is some minimal variation within the localised setting, but Sutton Bridge and its immediate setting is typically 3.5 – 5m AOD. The limited topographic variation is illustrated on Plan SLP.001.
- 2.2.10. **Public Rights of Way** – The site is not publicly accessible. Footpath SuBr/1/1 runs adjacent to the eastern and western boundaries of the site. It extends north from Allenby's Chase, following the field boundary tracks, up to Westmere Farm. It then loops to the west before heading south and connecting to Bridge Road, between Kestrel Close and Nightingale Way. There is limited public access within the wider landscape setting as illustrated on Plan SLP.001.

2.3. Landscape Related Policy Background

- 2.3.1. The site is covered by the saved policies of the Adopted South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (March 2019).
- 2.3.2. The site is not covered by any qualitative landscape designations.
- 2.3.3. The site lies adjacent to the settlement edge of Sutton Bridge, but is identified as being located within Countryside. This is not a qualitative designation but covers those parts of the District that lie outside of the identified settlement boundaries. It is noted that the three parcels on the southern and western sides of the site, which have reserved matters approval, lie outside of the settlement boundary, within Countryside.
- 2.3.4. Sutton Bridge does not have a Conservation Area. There are several listed buildings located to the south east of the site, focussed around the church and the port.
- 2.3.5. Paragraphs 11 and 170b of the NPPF are considered relevant to the site, as are Policies 2 and 3 of the Adopted Local Plan.
- 2.3.6. A detailed appraisal of planning policy is included within the planning statement prepared by ABDS Ltd.

2.4. Landscape Character

- 2.4.1. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) defines landscape as “...**an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factors**”.
- 2.4.2. As set out within “An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment” (Christine Tudor, Natural England; October 2014) “**landscape character may be defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive.**”

- 2.4.3. As part of the baseline assessment, published landscape character assessments have been identified and reviewed and these form the basis of the assessment of the landscape character of the site.

Regional Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.4.4. Natural England have prepared the Character Map of England which provides a broad assessment of landscape character at a regional level. The site lies within “The Fens” national character area (NCA 46). An extract of the assessment is included within Appendix 2.

- 2.4.5. It is noted that the assessment identifies a number of key characteristics, including:

- **“Expansive, flat, open, low-lying wetland landscape influenced by the Wash estuary, and offering extensive vistas to level horizons and huge skies throughout, provides a sense of rural remoteness and tranquillity.**
- **Overall, woodland cover is sparse, notably a few small woodland blocks, occasional avenues alongside roads, isolated field trees and shelterbelts of poplar, willow and occasionally leylandii hedges around farmsteads, and numerous orchards around Wisbech. Various alders, notably grey alder, are also used in shelterbelts and roadside avenues.**
- **The predominant land use is arable – wheat, root crops, bulbs, vegetables and market gardening made possible by actively draining reclaimed land areas. Associated horticultural glasshouses are a significant feature. Beef cattle graze narrow enclosures along the banks of rivers and dykes and on parts of the salt marsh and sea banks.**
- **Open fields, bounded by a network of drains and the distinctive hierarchy of rivers (some embanked), have a strong influence on the geometric/rectilinear landscape pattern. The structures create local enclosure and a slightly raised landform, which is mirrored in the road network that largely follows the edges of the**

system of large fields. The drains and ditches are also an important ecological network important for invertebrates, fish including spined loach, and macrophytes.

- **Large, built structures exhibit a strong vertical visual influence, such as the 83 m-high octagonal tower of ‘Boston Stump’ (St Botolph’s Church), Ely Cathedral on the highest part of the Isle of Ely dominating its surrounding fen, wind farms and other modern large-scale industrial and agricultural buildings, while drainage and flood storage structures and embanked rail and road routes interrupt the horizontal fen plain.**
- **Settlements and isolated farmsteads are mostly located on the modestly elevated ‘geological islands’ and the low, sinuous roddon banks (infilled ancient watercourses within fens). Elsewhere, villages tend to be dispersed ribbon settlements along the main arterial routes through the settled fens, and scattered farms remain as relics of earlier agricultural settlements. Domestic architecture mostly dates from after 1750 and comprises a mix of late Georgian-style brick houses and 20th century bungalows.”**

2.4.6. The regional assessment is useful in introducing the wider landscape character context in which the site is set. However, the assessment does not provide an assessment of sensitivity or value.

Local Landscape Character Assessments

2.4.7. At a more local level, South Holland District Council have undertaken the Strategic Landscape Capacity Study. An extract from the Strategic Landscape Capacity Study is included within Appendix 3. This is primarily an assessment of the ability of the landscape within the District to accommodate wind turbine development, however, it does include a high-level assessment of landscape character.

2.4.8. The site is located within the “Settled Fens” landscape character type (LCT). The study describes this area as:

“Predominantly flat topography, dissected by main roads, rivers, drainage channels and drainage ditches on raised banks (1-2m). primarily nucleated settlements with associated mature trees...Medium to large fields with intensive market garden crops. Locally strong hedgerow elements. Views are foreshortened by shelterbelts and woodland or mature hedgerows. This contributes to a sense of enclosure with a more open feel between settlements. The main visual detractors are the 440kv and 132kv overhead lines on towers, electricity sub stations and power stations and urban fringe visual clutter (dominated by light industry and glasshouse horticulture). Note that within the larger settlements there are no views of adjacent fenland and this introspective quality reduces the awareness of place within the wider fenland landscape.

Condition: average, but ranges from good (farmland) to poor (urban fringe clutter)

Architecture: New-build around traditional (medieval-Victorian) core, with the church as the primary node. Building materials are predominantly brick and a combination of brick and stone. The settlement form is primarily nucleated with some linear settlement.”

2.4.9. In addition to the South Holland Strategic Landscape Capacity Study, English Heritage have prepared The Historic Character of the County of Lincolnshire (2011). While this is primarily an assessment of historic character, it provides some further high-level assessment of the landscape setting of the site. An extract is included within Appendix 4.

2.4.10. The site lies within the “Reclaimed Wash Farmlands” character zone which forms part of “The Wash” character area.

“Land use throughout the entire zone is primarily agricultural, and there are a number of large scale farmsteads of industrial size in the zone...

The agricultural landscape of the zone comprises a semi-regular pattern of field enclosures, with occasional areas of coherent rectilinear field divisions in the east of the zone and around Moulton Common. Field boundaries predominantly comprise narrow and

shallow wet dykes, although embanked natural watercourses form continuous linear boundaries across the zone...

Settlement in the area is mainly dispersed and, where grouped, is linear. It mostly adheres to the road infrastructure, with the exception of some large, often industrial sized and isolated, farm complexes which are located along dedicated trackways. The southern limits of the zone have a higher population density, with settlement following the course of the 'Roman Bank' (a sea-bank dating to about 1300) and forming more nucleated settlements, such as Holbeach Hurn or Moulton Seas End, that are satellite villages to inland market towns. The northern limits of the zone similarly feature a string of smaller post medieval satellite hamlets such as Gedney Drove End and Holbeach St Marks. The far east of the zone is dominated by the port of Sutton Bridge...

Canalisation of the River Nene and subsequent land reclamation in the Cross Keys Wash Zone (WSH4) led to the development of the port of Sutton Bridge in the late nineteenth century. Although the original Victorian port was short lived, the modern day port was opened in 1987 and continues to operate today..."

- 2.4.11. It is noted that none of the published assessments provide an assessment of value or sensitivity.

ESLP Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.4.12. ESLP has also undertaken an assessment of the localised landscape character, and this has been informed by the published assessments prepared by Natural England, South Holland and English Heritage.
- 2.4.13. The site comprises two fields which are currently fallow that lie immediately adjacent to the settlement edge of Sutton Bridge. The settlement edge is characterised by a mix of domestic garden boundaries and scrub which creates a hard edge to the landscape to the north and ensures that the built environment is prominent. The way in which the townscape has evolved over the past 100 years gives rise to a varied, uncoordinated edge. This varies from timber closed board fences, stained in a variety of colours,

hedges and brick walls around the more established properties. The presence of the school breaks up the built edge but contributes to the varied nature of the settlement boundary.

- 2.4.14. Farm tracks define the eastern and western edges of the site, with a cluster of farm buildings lying immediately to the west and the allotments lying to the east. These features form defensible boundaries, with the allotments extending the suburban presence of the settlement north. The development associated with Wright's Lane and New Road also extend this perceived presence, with development extending north away from Bridge Road.
- 2.4.15. The landscape to the north of the site comprises extensive arable land uses, with a mix of vegetables and cereals being grown. The lack of boundary hedgerows results in an open landscape, with fields defined by a geometric network of drainage ditches. Scattered farmsteads provide some visual relief within this flat, open landscape.
- 2.4.16. The site reflects the local topography with minimal variation across the area and is largely the same elevation as the adjoining settlement. There are no distinctive landscape features associated with the site of note.
- 2.4.17. As part of the landscape character assessment, there is a need to assess the susceptibility, value and overall sensitivity of the landscape resource. These assessments will inform the objective assessment of effects within Section 4.2 and ensure that a transparent and objective approach to the assessment is achieved. GLVIA3 defines landscape susceptibility, landscape value and landscape sensitivity, as follows:

“Susceptibility: the ability of a defined landscape to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences;

Landscape Value: the relative value that is attached to different landscape by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons;

Sensitivity: a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type

of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.”

Landscape Susceptibility

- 2.4.18. In terms of the susceptibility of the localised landscape receptor, Annex 1 within “An Approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management” (Christine Tudor, Natural England; June 2019) identifies a series of criteria which can be applied to assess the susceptibility of a landscape to change. Table 1, below, assesses the susceptibility of the various criteria when applied to the landscape resource in which the Site is set.

Table 1: Baseline Landscape Susceptibility Analysis

Susceptibility Criteria	Assessment of Susceptibility of the Landscape Resource
<i>Scale</i>	Low – The area in which the site, and Sutton Bridge, are set comprises a flat, open, large-scale landscape.
<i>Landform</i>	Low – There is little topographic variation within the immediate or wider context of the site, with much of the surrounding landscape located between 3 – 5m AOD.
<i>Landcover</i>	Low – The site is set within a simple landscape, comprising large-scale arable fields with scattered settlements. There is little woodland cover and the landscape adopts a simple, geometric pattern.
<i>Man-made Influences</i>	Medium – This is a landscape that has been shaped by man over centuries of farming and reclaiming the farmland from the coast. A network of dykes and ditches create a geometric pattern which has informed the road network and settlement pattern. The adjoining settlement edge influences the character of the site, with the character becoming more rural away from the developed areas.
<i>Scenic Quality & Sense of Place</i>	Medium / Low – There are few scenic features associated with the site or its setting, indeed the settlement edge forms a detracting element within the immediate context of the site. The openness of the landscape to the north contributes to a sense of place.
<i>Remoteness / Tranquility</i>	Medium / Low – Away from the settlement, the open landscape gives rise to a sense of remoteness, however, this is an

	intensively farmed landscape which reduces the feeling of tranquility. Within the context of the site, the adjoining settlement edge and presence of other features such as the allotments, power station and wind turbines reduce the perceived remoteness and tranquility.
<i>Skylines</i>	Low – while the site is set within an open landscape and would be susceptible to taller features such as turbines or pylons, the site is set against the backdrop of largely two storey residential development. Given the type of development being proposed it is considered that the character of the local skylines is less susceptible to change.
<i>Movement</i>	Low – The settled nature of the sites immediate context results in a degree of movement as a result of domestic activities and access to the residential areas. The presence of Bridge Road and the A17 also contributes to a perception of movement in the landscape.
<i>Intervisibility</i>	Medium – The open landscape to the north affords a degree of intervisibility between the site and the wider countryside setting to the north of Sutton Bridge. However, the existing townscape to the east and south, vegetation associated with Bridge Road and limited public access affords a high degree of visual containment to the east, south and west.

2.4.19. As an overview, it is considered that the sites location immediately adjacent to the settlement edge influences the susceptibility of the site's landscape character. Sutton Bridge is set within a large scale, intensively farmed landscape. Sutton Bridge has grown out from the historic core with residential areas of various ages forming the immediate context of the site. It is concluded that the susceptibility of the landscape, in which the site is set, to change of the type proposed is Medium / Low.

Landscape Value

2.4.20. In terms of value, Box 5.1 within GLVIA3 identifies a series of eight criteria which are generally accepted as being appropriate indicators of landscape value.

2.4.21. Table 2, below, assesses the value of the landscape in which the site is set against each of the eight criteria set out in Box 5.1.

Table 2: Baseline Analysis of Landscape Value

Value Criteria	Assessment
<i>Landscape Quality (Condition)</i>	Low – This is an intensively farmed landscape which has undergone significant changes as a result of the industrialization of farming and the canalization of the River Nene. Sutton Bridge has evolved to the north and west from the historic core, with newer housing characterising the outer edges of the settlement.
<i>Scenic Quality</i>	Low – There are very few positive scenic features within the context of the site which is characterised by the varied built edge of the settlement to the south. The open nature of the landscape to the north affords a degree of scenic quality, but there are few features of interest and the settlement is prominent in views from the north.
<i>Rarity</i>	Low – There are no rare elements or features associated with the site or its landscape setting that do not exist elsewhere within the wider landscape context.
<i>Representativeness</i>	Low – There are no characteristics or features associated with the site or its setting that are considered particularly important examples.
<i>Conservation Interests</i>	Low – While the site is currently fallow it has, historically, been used for arable agriculture and so has limited ecological interest. There is no known heritage value associated with the site or its setting, which is characterised primarily by mid – late 20 th century housing.
<i>Recreation Value</i>	Low – The site is not publicly accessible. It is acknowledged that the site forms the setting of footpath SuBr/1/1 for a short length, immediately adjacent to the existing settlement edge.
<i>Perceptual Aspects</i>	Medium / Low – The presence of the existing settlement edge reduces the perceived tranquility of the localised landscape setting of the site.
<i>Associations</i>	None – There are no known associations with the site or its immediate landscape setting.

2.4.22. As an overview, it is considered that the overall value of the site, and the landscape in which it is set, is Low. It is considered that the landscape in which the site is set does not represent a “valued landscape” in the context of para 170a of the NPPF.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 2.4.23. Para 5.34 of GLVIA3 states that once an assessment of the baseline situation has been undertaken, the key components (also referred to as landscape receptors) that might be affected by the development should be identified, such as: “...**overall character and key characteristics, individual elements or features, and specific aesthetic or perceptual aspects**”.
- 2.4.24. A series of landscape receptors associated with the site and its landscape setting have been identified as part of the baseline assessment of susceptibility and value. These include:
- **Scale** – This is a large-scale landscape as a result of the agricultural practices and topography. The scale reduces within and immediately adjacent to the settlement where the built environment and vegetation creating a more intimate setting.
 - **Openness** – As above, the arable farming practices, lack of vegetated field boundaries and flat topography creates a perception of openness. This reduces around the settlement as a result of the built form and domestic enclosures.
 - **Topography** – The site reflects the topography of the wider landscape setting which is distinctly flat.
 - **Land use** – The site is currently undeveloped and although it is fallow it reflects the agricultural landscape to the north. However, the presence of the settlement edge, which defines the southern and eastern boundaries, influences the character, with areas of scrub extending out from the domestic boundaries where there has been no management of the vegetation; and
 - **Setting of Sutton Bridge** – As above, the site is influenced by the settlement edge to the south and east and its current unmanaged nature. The settlement edge is currently varied and uncoordinated giving it an ad hoc, hard appearance. The land to the north comprises open countryside under intensive agricultural use.
- 2.4.25. Overall, in terms of sensitivity, when the judgements of susceptibility and value are considered, it is concluded that the sensitivity of the landscape in which the site is set is Medium / Low.

2.5. The Visual Environment

- 2.5.1. As part of the initial desk study and the subsequent site visit, a number of key views have been identified which are taken from publicly accessible locations showing the site in its localised and wider landscape context. The viewpoints seek to reflect the views of the site by more sensitive receptors, such as walkers on the local public right of way network, however, the viewpoints are considered representative and not exhaustive.
- 2.5.2. The viewpoints are illustrated on the Viewpoint Location Plan (9198L.VLP.003) within Appendix 5. The photographs were taken in August 2020. The day was clear and bright with good visibility at longer distances.
- 2.5.3. The photographs were taken with a Canon 35mm equivalent digital SLR. The camera is a cropped sensor model so, in line with Landscape Institute TGN 06/19 – Visual Representation of Development Proposals, the photographs were taken at 35mm. The photographs are presented in Appendix 5 at a scale whereby they can be viewed at a distance of 260mm to represent the view from the particular location. The extent of the site / proposed development is indicated on the photographs to assist the viewer's understanding of where the site / proposals sit within the context of the view. It must be noted that the photographs are illustrative and do not replace visiting the viewpoints in person.
- 2.5.4. As part of the baseline visual assessment, key receptors have been identified and this has informed the overall assessment of sensitivity of the view.
- 2.5.5. Table 3, below, identifies the locations, receptors and sensitivities of the key viewpoints. It must be noted that the views illustrate the site as it currently is (August 2020) and the initial assessment considers the development of the site as a whole and does not take account of the extant reserved matters permissions that cover the western and southern parts of the site. This matter is dealt with later on in the assessment of effects (Section 4) of this LVIA.

Table 3: Baseline Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Location	Receptor	Sensitivity
1	Allenby's Chase, 110m to the south east of the site	Local residents on the residential road	Medium
<i>Overview:</i> The view looks north along the residential streetscene. The eastern part of the site lies beyond the intervening residential built form associated with Anne Road and Allenby's Chase.			
2	Allenby's Chase, 20m to the south east of the site	Local Residents on the residential road / Walkers accessing footpath SuBr/1/1	Medium / High
<i>Overview:</i> The view looks north west from the junction of Allenby's Chase and St Matthew's Drive into the eastern part of the site. The trees associated with the primary school, which lie just to the south of the site can be seen to the left of the view, while the allotments which lie to the north of St Matthew's Drive, lie to the right.			
3	Footpath SuBr/1/1, 90m to the north east of the site	Walkers	High
<i>Overview:</i> The northern edge of Sutton Bridge is evident within this view, forming a backdrop to the site. The eastern parcel is currently characterised by the taller green scrub beyond the arable crop. The trees associated with the primary school form prominent landscape features and a degree of create vertical scale.			
4	Footpath SuBr/1/1, 320m to the north of the site	Walkers	High
<i>Overview:</i> The northern edge of Sutton Bridge is evident within this view, forming a backdrop to the site. The trees associated with the primary school form prominent landscape features and a degree of create vertical scale.			
5	Footpath SuBr/1/1, 830m to the north of the site	Walkers	High
<i>Overview:</i> The northern edge of Sutton Bridge is evident within this view, forming a backdrop to the site. The trees associated with the primary school, the chimneys associated with the power station and the wind turbines at Tydd St Mary form prominent landscape features and a degree of create vertical scale.			
6	Footpath SuBr/1/1, 220m to the north of the site	Walkers	High
<i>Overview:</i> The northern edge of Sutton Bridge is evident within this view, forming a backdrop to the site. The western parcel with the reserved matters approval lies to the right of the view and extends towards the properties on Granville Terrace.			

7	Footpath SuBr/1/1, 100m to the north west of the site	Walkers	High
<i>Overview:</i> The northern edge of Sutton Bridge is prominent within this view, forming a backdrop to the site. The western parcel with the reserved matters approval lies to the right of the view and extends towards the properties on Granville Terrace.			
8	Footpath SuBr/1/1, <10 to the west of the site	Walkers	High
<i>Overview:</i> This view looks east across the site, with the western parcel in the foreground. Development associated with Wright's Lane and New Road can be seen to the east, extending the presence of the settlement to the north. The principle of development on this part of the site has been accepted by South Holland District Council as the parcel in the foreground has reserved matters approval for up to 60 dwellings.			
9	Nightingale Way, 35m to the south of the site	Residents	Medium - High
<i>Overview:</i> This view is taken from the public open space on Nightingale Way looking north into the western parcel of the site, which lies immediately beyond the timber fence. This part of the site benefits from an extant reserved matters approval for 60 dwellings.			
10	Granville Terrace, 40m to the south of the site	Residents	Medium
<i>Overview:</i> This view looks north along the northern end of Granville Terrace along a private farm track. The properties associated with Granville Terrace and Young's Row characterise the foreground, with the site lying immediately to the north.			
11	Withington Street, 30m to the south of the site	Residents	Medium
<i>Overview:</i> The view looks north from the end of Withington Street. The site lies beyond the area of scrub which characterises the end of the street. It is noted that the parcel immediately to the north of the streetscene has reserved matters approval for 10 dwellings.			
12	Chestnut Terrace, 45m to the south of the site	Residents	Medium
<i>Overview:</i> The view looks north along the Chestnut Terrace streetscene which is characterised by late 20th century terraced housing and bungalows. The site lies beyond the tree at the end of the road corridor.			
13	Wright's Lane, 370m to the east of the site	Residents	Medium - High
<i>Overview:</i> From this location, the site is not immediately apparent with few breaks between the properties on Wright's Lane. The site lies beyond the allotments in the middle distance and to the right of the poplar trees associated with the primary school.			

14	New Road, 695m, to the north east of the site	Motorists	Medium
<i>Overview:</i> The northern edge of Sutton Bridge is evident within this view, forming a backdrop to the site. The trees associated with the primary school form prominent landscape features. The clutter associated with the allotments is also evident to the left of the view.			
15	New Road, 1,140m to the north east of the site	Motorists	Medium
<i>Overview:</i> The northern edge of Sutton Bridge is evident within this view, forming a backdrop to the site, with the wind farm at Tydd St Mary dominating the skyline.			
16	Bridge Road, 625m to the west of the site	Motorists	Medium
<i>Overview:</i> The site is afforded a degree of visual containment from this location by the intervening outbuildings and vegetation that lie to the west of the site. The existing residential development associated with Wright's Lane and New Road extend the perception of the settlement to the north.			

- 2.5.6. As illustrated by the Photographic Record and Table 3, views of the site are localised as a result of the built environment and limited public access that characterises the immediate setting of the site. Section 4.3 of this LVIA assesses the potential effects of the proposals upon these views.

3. THE PROPOSALS

- 3.1. The proposals comprise the development of 129 dwellings with associated access, open space and landscaping. This is an outline application with all matters reserved except access and layout. The proposals are illustrated on the ABDS Ltd layout within Appendix 6.
- 3.2. As illustrated on Plan SCP.002 and mentioned in Section 1, over half of the site has reserved matters approval for 76 dwellings. This is broken down into three parcels: the western half of the site (60 dwellings); a small parcel at the northern end of Withington Street (6 dwellings); and a parcel to the east of Chestnut Terrace (10 dwellings). An outline application was submitted to South Holland District Council on the remainder of the site for 70 dwellings but this was refused in July 2019. Given that the principle for residential development has been accepted on over half of the site, the proposals, that are the subject of this application, seek to coordinate the four parcels to ensure a high quality holistic development can, and will, be achieved.
- 3.3. The layout of the proposals on the approved parcels broadly reflects the reserved matters layouts. The key differences are how the parcels now connect to one another. Rather than being three stand-alone parcels, the proposed layout presents the opportunity to achieve a more coordinated development that sits comfortably alongside the existing townscape.
- 3.4. The proposals comprise a mix of detached and semi-detached properties set along an estate road that links from Nightingale Way and Withington Street. Pedestrian access will also be possible via Chestnut Terrace and Allenby's Chase.
- 3.5. The proposals will incorporate a sensitive palette of materials which reflect the local vernacular.
- 3.6. The proposals include areas of public open space centrally and towards the eastern end of the site, providing opportunities for informal recreation and green and blue infrastructure.
- 3.7. SUDS and flood management have informed the design of the proposals with an attenuation basin and below ground cellular storage linked by filter drains set within grass verges which run along the estate road. The inclusion of the roadside solution represents a positive feature within the context of the estate

road, with a broad green verge running the length of the streetscene, setting built form on the northern side of the road back, creating a feeling of space. To ensure that the proposed properties are not at risk of flooding the finished floor levels (FFLs) have been raised up to a maximum of 1m above existing levels, with steps up to the front doors. This ensures that no significant changes to the topography of the site are required and the limited increase in height of FFL will ensure that overlooking of existing neighbouring properties is not an issue.

- 3.8. The proposals also present the opportunity to create a coordinated, softened edge to the settlement, replacing the current mix of fences, hedges and walls with a more sensitive response. The proposals will incorporate timber post and rail rear garden boundaries, rather than the more common 1.8m high timber closed board fence, with a native hedgerow running along the outer edge of the demise. The reduced height of the fence will ensure that it is visually less evident, with the proposed hedgerow creating a softened green boundary. Scattered trees within the hedge will further break up the perceived built edge.
- 3.9. Planting within front gardens and the estate road streetscene will further break up the perceived built environment, creating a high-quality environment in which to live.
- 3.10. Details of the proposed planting are envisaged to form part of a future reserved matters application.

4. ASSESSMENT OF LANDSCAPE & VISUAL EFFECTS

4.1. Background

- 4.1.1. In line with the guidance in GLVIA3, it is appropriate to assess the effect of the proposed development upon the baseline landscape character and visual environment as identified in Section 3 of the LVIA. The magnitude of change arising from the proposed development is assessed against the identified sensitivity of the landscape or visual receptor and a reasoned judgement is made as to the significance of the effect.

4.2. Effect upon Landscape Character

Regional Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2.1. With regard to the effect of the proposals upon the “The Fens” national character area (NCA 46), it is noted that this published assessment does not provide an assessment of sensitivity. The proposals are located immediately adjacent to an established Fens settlement and will not introduce any new or alien features into this landscape setting, nor will they compromise any of the existing positive characteristics or features. It is considered that the proposals will not affect the character of “The Fens” and, as such, the significance of the effect will be **None**.

Local Landscape Character Assessments

- 4.2.2. As noted within Section 2, English Heritage and South Holland District Council have undertaken high level character assessments of the landscape in which the site, and Sutton Bridge, are set. Neither assessment identify any specific key characteristics and it is noted that the main rationale for the South Holland Strategic Landscape Capacity Study is to assess the ability of the landscape within the District to accommodate on-shore wind developments.
- 4.2.3. Neither study assesses the sensitivity or value of the landscape, although it is noted that the South Holland District assessment identifies that the condition of the “Settled Fens” landscape character type is “**average, but ranges from good (farmland) to poor (urban fringe clutter)**”.

- 4.2.4. The proposals will not adversely affect the open, intensively farmed countryside which characterises the setting of Sutton Bridge, nor will they affect the geometric field pattern or sparsely vegetated character of the area.
- 4.2.5. The proposals are located immediately adjacent to an existing, established settlement, which has grown out from its historic core, with the most recent developments located on the outer edges of the town. Nightingale Way and Kestrel Way are two such developments, being some of the most recent residential development in Sutton Bridge, and lie adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. The proposals will not harm the settlement pattern of Sutton Bridge and it must be noted that the principle of development on the western part of the site has been accepted by South Holland District Council at outline and reserved matters stage. This part of the development extends further north into the countryside than the parcel to the east and lies adjacent to footpath SuBr/1/1. The eastern part of the proposals does not extend any further north than the allotments which are clearly part of the settlement envelope.
- 4.2.6. The South Holland Landscape Study identifies that clutter around the urban fringes of settlements reduces the condition of the “Settled Fens” landscape character type. The proposals present an opportunity to create a more coordinated and defensible edge to the settlement. The use of simple post and rail fencing with native hedging will create a sympathetic, consistent green edge to the development and this part of Sutton Bridge, replacing the varied and unmanaged edge that currently exists.
- 4.2.7. It is considered that the proposals will not affect the character of “The Wash” or “Reclaimed Wash Farmlands” as identified within the Historic Landscape Assessment, nor will they affect the character of the “Settled Fens” as identified by the South Holland Landscape Character Capacity Study. While there will be a negligible magnitude of change within the localised setting of the site, it is considered that the proposals can be integrated without harm to the landscape character of the areas as identified within the published assessments and, as such, it is concluded that the significance of the effect will be **None**.

ESLP Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2.8. As set out within Section 2 of this LVIA, ESLP has also undertaken an assessment of the localised landscape character, and this has been informed by the published assessments prepared by Natural England, English Heritage and South Holland District Council. The assessment within Section 2 concludes that the overall sensitivity of the landscape receptor in which the site is set is Medium / Low.
- 4.2.9. The localised setting of the site is characterised by a series of landscape receptors which were identified within the susceptibility and value judgements. It is considered appropriate to assess the change upon these features as a result of the proposals which will inform the overall assessment of effects upon the landscape character (refer Table 4 below).

Table 4: Assessment of Change upon Key Landscape Receptors

Landscape Receptor	Magnitude of Change
Scale	None – The proposals will not affect the perception of a large scale, open landscape. The proposed development lies immediately adjacent to the existing settlement edge and reflects the same scale of built form as exists immediately to the south. The proposals will not introduce prominent new structures into this landscape setting that will affect an appreciation of the scale of the wider countryside setting.
Openness	Low Adverse – It is acknowledged that the proposals will affect the perceived openness of the site itself, changing it from open fields to a housing development. However, the settlement edge that defines the southern boundary creates a degree of enclosure which influences the perceived openness of the site. The proposed built form will be set back from the northern boundary with a landscaped edge creating a sympathetic transition between the proposals and the open landscape to the north. The effect of proposed residential on the perceived openness of the western parcel has been considered acceptable by South Holland District Council through their approval of the three

	reserved matters applications in the western and southern parts of the site. The eastern parcel does not extend as far north into the countryside as the approved western parcel and it is considered that the proposals can be integrated without notable adverse effects upon this receptor.
Topography	None – The proposals have been carefully developed to ensure that no extensive re-grading or engineering works are required to integrate the proposed built form and ensure that the scheme works from a drainage perspective. The FFLs of the proposed properties will be elevated above existing levels and sympathetic drainage solution incorporated to ensure that the flat topography of the area is not compromised.
Land Use	Low Adverse – It is acknowledged that the proposals will result in the loss of an area of agricultural land. At present the site is fallow with areas of scrub developing along the southern boundary. The scrub gives settlement edge an unmanaged appearance which does little to create a positive interface with the landscape to the north. The proposals comprise residential development which will be located immediately adjacent to Sutton Bridge which is characterised by residential areas which have extended west along Bridge Road as the settlement has grown. The site is considered to be an appropriate location for new development which closely relates to the settlement and does not extend the perception of the settlement any further west. The location of the proposals will ensure that the development does not appear separated or divorced from the existing settlement. The approval of development on the western parcel of the site demonstrates that the loss of an area of agricultural land, immediately adjacent to the settlement edge is considered acceptable. The proposed layout incorporates the approved parcels and proposes an additional 53 dwellings on land that is currently fallow or being colonized by scrub, immediately adjacent to the settlement edge. It is considered that the perceived change to this receptor can be integrated without notable adverse effects.

Setting of Sutton Bridge	Negligible Beneficial – As noted above it is acknowledged that the proposals will change the character of the site in terms of openness and land use, however, the location of the site and the type of development being proposed is considered appropriate in this location. The eastern parcel is narrower and essentially forms an infill between the reserved matters approved parcel and the allotments. The proposed development will not give rise to the perception of the settlement extending outwards along Bridge Road or New Road. The proposals represent an opportunity to create an enhanced edge to the settlement, which incorporates sympathetic and defensible boundary treatment to the wider landscape setting, creating an appropriate transition between the townscape of Sutton Bridge and the wider countryside to the north.
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4.2.10. As noted above, it is considered that the proposals can be integrated in this location without adversely affecting the character of Sutton Bridge or it's countryside setting. It is acknowledged that the proposals will affect the character of the site in terms of openness and land use, changing it from fallow land on the settlement edge to a new housing development. However, as noted, over half of the site has extant permission for up to 76 dwellings. Not only has the principle of development been accepted on the western and southern parts of the site, but details of the layout and appearance of these parcels have also been approved as part of the reserved matters applications.

4.2.11. As set out in Table 4 above, it is acknowledged that the proposals will result in some adverse effects upon the perceived openness and land use of the site, however, given its settlement edge location, these effects are considered minimal (low adverse). The weight to be applied to these perceived effects should be reduced given the extant permissions associated with the site, particularly the western parcel. Officers considered that the loss of openness and agricultural land was acceptable on the north western edge of Sutton Bridge. The proposed layout does not materially extend the perception of these effects, effectively forming infill between the permitted western parcel and the allotments to the east. The proposed layout also presents the opportunity to create a more sympathetic edge to

the settlement, introducing a landscaped boundary between Nightingale Way and Allenby's Chase.

- 4.2.12. Taking into account the extant permissions associated with the site and the opportunities the proposals present for creating an enhanced edge to the settlement, it is considered that the magnitude of change arising from the proposed development will be low / negligible adverse. The site is not considered to be located within a "valued" landscape, with reference to para 170a of the NPPF, and it is concluded that the proposals will give rise to an effect of **Minor / Negligible Adverse** significance upon the receiving landscape character of the site and its immediate setting. The proposals will not affect the wider character of Sutton Bridge or its countryside setting.

4.3. Effect upon the Visual Environment

- 4.3.1. Table 5, below, assesses the effect of the proposed development upon the identified key views which are included within Appendix 5. The assessment in Table 5 assesses the introduction of the proposed layout in the context of the individual baseline views. The weight that should be afforded the assessment of visual effects, given the presence of the extant permissions on the southern and western parcels, is dealt with in paragraphs 4.3.3 – 4.3.9.

Table 5: Assessment of Visual Effects

Viewpoint	Location	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance
1	Allenby’s Chase, 110m to the south east of the site	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Adverse at Year 1
				Negligible Adverse / None at Year 15
<i>Assessment:</i> From this approach, the proposals will be largely screened by the built form on Anne Road and Allenby’s Chase. Some glimpsed views of the easternmost properties will be possible but will be seen in the context of existing residential built form and will not affect the amenities of this view. The introduction of landscaping along the eastern edge of the site will further integrate the proposed built form and enhance the vegetated setting of Sutton Bridge.				

2	Allenby's Chase, 20m to the south east of the site	Medium / High	Medium / High	Major / Moderate Adverse at Year 1
				Moderate Adverse at Year 15
<i>Assessment:</i> The proposals will be evident in the centre of this view, extending west. The proposed layout sets the built form back from the eastern boundary providing opportunities for landscaping along this edge. The layout will also ensure that a hard built edge is avoided with the view looking along the estate road and built form either side. The eastern area of public open space will also break up the perceived built environment. The context of this view is characterised by the garages and allotments off St Matthew's Drive and the residential development on Allenby's Chase. While the proposals will change this view, they will be perceived within a townscape context. As the proposed landscaping matures it will create vertical scale and soften the perceived built edge. Intervisibility will increase during the winter, however, the proposed tree canopies will continue to filter views of the built form beyond.				
3	Footpath SuBr/1/1, 90m to the north east of the site	High	Medium	Moderate Adverse at Year 1
				Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 15
<i>Assessment:</i> The proposals will be visible within the context of this view, extending to the west of the footpath and it is acknowledged that they will represent a perceptible change at Year 1. However, the proposals will be perceived within the context of the wider settlement edge and will not introduce any new or alien components into the context of this view. The proposals also incorporate a landscaped edge to the development along the northern boundary. As this matures it will soften the perceived built edge and create a more sympathetic transition between the settlement and the landscape to the north.				
4	Footpath SuBr/1/1, 320m to the north of the site	High	Medium / Low	Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 1
				Minor Adverse at Year 15

<i>Assessment:</i> As with Viewpoint 3 the proposals will be visible extending to the right of the footpath, although the intervening distance affords a greater appreciation of the wider existing settlement edge to the south, reducing the perceived change arising from the introduction of new residential built form. The proposals will not introduce any new or alien components into the context of this view. As the proposed landscaping along the northern boundary, matures, the proposals will be further integrated into the context of this view.				
5	Footpath SuBr/1/1, 830m to the north of the site	High	Low	Minor Adverse at Year 1
				Negligible Adverse at Year 15
<i>Assessment:</i> The proposals will be visible within the context of this view, although will not appear prominent in the context of the wider settlement edge. The proposed built form will not be materially higher than the existing properties to the south and so will not break the skyline, nor will the proposals extend any further east or west than the existing settlement edge. As the proposed landscaping on the northern boundary matures it will create a softened green edge to the site and this part of Sutton Bridge.				
6	Footpath SuBr/1/1, 220m to the north of the site	High	Low	Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 1
				Minor Adverse at Year 15
<i>Assessment:</i> As with Viewpoint 4, the proposals will be visible extending to the left of the footpath, although the intervening distance affords a greater appreciation of the wider existing settlement edge to the south, reducing the perceived change arising from the introduction of new residential built form. The proposals will not introduce any new or alien components into the context of this view. As the proposed landscaping along the northern boundary, matures, the proposals will be further integrated into the context of this view.				
7	Footpath SuBr/1/1, 100m to the north west of the site	High	Medium / Low	Moderate Adverse at Year 1
				Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 15

Assessment: The proposals will be visible within the context of this view, extending to the west of the footpath and it is acknowledged that they will represent a perceptible change at Year 1. However, the proposals will be perceived within the context of the wider settlement edge and will not introduce any new or alien components into the context of this view. The proposals also incorporate a landscaped edge to the development along the northern boundary. As this matures it will soften the perceived built edge and create a more sympathetic transition between the settlement and the landscape to the north.

8	Footpath SuBr/1/1, <10 to the west of the site	High	Medium / High	Major / Moderate Adverse at Year 1
				Moderate Adverse at Year 15

Assessment: The proposals will be evident in the centre of this view, extending north from the existing settlement edge. The proposed layout sets the built form back from the western boundary ensuring that it does not appear overbearing. The context of this view is characterised by the residential development on Kestrel Close and Nightingale Way either side of the footpath. While the proposals will change this view, they will be perceived within a townscape context. As the proposed landscaping matures it will create vertical scale and soften the perceived built edge.

9	Nightingale Way, 35m to the south of the site	Medium - High	Medium	Moderate Adverse at Year 1
				Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 15

Assessment: The proposals will extend across this view, set back beyond the timber fence that marks the edge of the public open space (POS). The proposed layout includes an area of POS to the north of the existing greenspace that will set the proposed built form back from the southern boundary and present opportunities for landscaping to be introduced along this edge to soften the interface. The set back of the buildings will ensure that they do not appear overbearing. The context of this view is modern housing associated with Nightingale Way and Grebe Close. The proposals will not introduce any new or alien components into the context of this view. The proposals will adopt a similar, simple palette of materials ensuring

that they are integrated within this context. As the proposed landscaping matures it will soften the perception of the proposals.				
10	Granville Terrace, 40m to the south of the site	Medium	Medium	Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 1
				Minor Adverse at Year 15
<i>Assessment:</i> The proposals will extend across this view, with the farm track delineating the approved parcel to the left and the additional parcel to the right. The proposed layout has properties backing on to the track, which will form a pedestrian link into the site, setting the proposed built form back from the lane and presenting opportunities for landscaping to be introduced along this edge to soften the interface. To the right of the track, the proposals will reflect the building line of the existing properties to the south. The set back of the buildings will ensure that they do not appear overbearing. The context of this view is residential built form associated with Youngs Row and Granville Terrace. The proposals will not introduce any new or alien components into the context of this view. The proposals will adopt a similar, simple palette of materials ensuring that they are integrated within this context. As the proposed landscaping matures it will soften the perception of the proposals.				
11	Withington Street, 30m to the south of the site	Medium	Medium	Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 1
<i>Assessment:</i> The existing built form either side of the streetscene will contain views of the wider development. The proposals will extend the built environment to the north, with a new link road passing through the area of scrub. The proposals will reflect the existing building line, with potential opportunities to introduce landscaping into the front gardens of the proposed properties. As this landscaping matures it will positively contribute to the localised streetscene. The proposals will not introduce any new or alien components into the context of this view.				
12	Chestnut Terrace, 45m to the south of the site	Medium	Medium	Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 1
				Minor Adverse at Year 15
<i>Assessment:</i> The built form either side of Chestnut Terrace will contain views of the wider development. Views through to some of the properties on the northern edge of the eastern				

parcel will be glimpsed from this location but will be seen in the context of the existing residential built form in the foreground. The proposals will not introduce any new or alien components into the context of this view.

13	Wright's Lane, 370m to the east of the site	Medium - High	Negligible	Minor / Negligible Adverse at Year 1
				Negligible Adverse at Year 15
<i>Assessment:</i> From this location the intervening garden boundaries, vegetation and allotments will reduce the visibility of the proposals. Some glimpsed views will be possible through the gap to the left of the timber closed board fence, but the proposals will be seen in the context of the existing residential development in the foreground and will not introduce any new or alien components to this view. As the proposed landscaping in the eastern part of the site matures it will further integrate the proposals into this view.				
14	New Road, 695m, to the north east of the site	Medium	Low / Negligible	Minor Adverse at Year 1
				Negligible Adverse at Year 15
<i>Assessment:</i> The proposals will be visible within the context of this view, although will not appear prominent in the context of the wider settlement edge. The proposed built form will not be materially higher than the existing properties to the south and so will not break the skyline, nor will the proposals extend any further east or west than the existing settlement edge. As the proposed landscaping on the northern boundary matures it will create a softened green edge to the site and this part of Sutton Bridge.				
15	New Road, 1,140m to the north east of the site	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Adverse
<i>Assessment:</i> The proposals will be visible within the context of this view, although will not appear prominent in the context of the wider settlement edge. The proposed built form will not be materially higher than the existing properties to the south and so will not break the skyline, nor will the proposals extend any further east or west than the existing settlement				

edge. As the proposed landscaping on the northern boundary matures it will create a softened green edge to the site and this part of Sutton Bridge.				
16	Bridge Road, 625m to the west of the site	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Adverse
<i>Assessment:</i> The intervening built form and vegetation cover to the west of the site will reduce the visibility of the proposals. Where visible they will be seen in the context of the wider settlement to the south and east. proposed landscape treatment on the eastern boundary will assist in integrating the proposals.				

- 4.3.2. The assessment within Table 5 identifies that there will be some initial major / moderate adverse visual effects upon viewpoints immediately adjacent to the site (Viewpoints 2 and 8), where the introduction of residential built form into an existing open field will be prominent. However, the proposed built form will be set back from the eastern and western boundaries ensuring that the proposals do not appear overbearing and providing opportunities for landscaping that will soften the perceived built edge. The proposals will also be perceived within the context of the existing settlement edge to the south and east of the site.
- 4.3.3. Furthermore, it must be remembered that residential development on the western parcel has been approved. The change to the setting of footpath SuBr/1/1, where it passes next to the site, must therefore be considered acceptable by South Holland District Council. Given the acceptance of the change to the footpath setting to the west, it follows that the effect upon the footpath to the east, should also be considered acceptable. Indeed, the presence of utilities along the eastern boundary will ensure that the proposals are set further back from the footpath than those associated with the reserved matters approval to the west. While the proposals will be visible from footpath SuBr/1/1, they will not affect the public's ability to access the countryside and this route is already characterised by the existing settlement edge. The proposed layout incorporates opportunities for landscaping along both the eastern and western boundaries. As this matures it will soften the perception of the proposals and the wider settlement edge, reducing the significance of the effect. By Year 15, it is considered that the effect of the proposals will reduce to moderate, which is not considered significant.

- 4.3.4. In terms of views from the residential streets to the south (Viewpoints 9, 10 & 11), it is acknowledged that the proposals will represent a degree of change over the baseline conditions, however, the proposals will be seen within the context of existing residential built form and will not introduce any new or alien components into the context of these views. Furthermore, opportunities within the proposed layout will assist the integration of the proposals, softening the perceived built elevations. It must also be recalled that the development within the western parcel and at the end of Withington Street has been approved. The change to views from these residential areas has therefore been accepted. The proposed layout largely reflects the approved layouts with regard to the appearance of the proposals from these viewpoints. It is acknowledged that the proposals will also be visible from the end of Chestnut Terrace, however, the existing tree will be retained, providing a mature landscaped setting and the degree of change experienced at this viewpoint will be the same as experienced from the viewpoints to the west with reference to the approved schemes. It is concluded that the proposals can be integrated without giving rise to significant adverse effects upon views from the residential areas to the south.
- 4.3.5. In terms of potential issues of overlooking, it must be remembered that in planning there is no right to a view. The proposals have adopted appropriate development set-backs that reflect current best practice. The drainage strategy for the site seeks to avoid significant re-grading or engineering works that would affect the sites topography. Instead the finished floor levels (FFLs) of the proposed properties will be elevated between 0.4m – 1.0m above the existing site levels, with steps up to front doors. While this will elevate the proposed buildings, the increase is not considered significant and will not give rise to overlooking issues with the existing neighbours to the south. It is noted that this approach was proposed, and subsequently approved by South Holland District Council, within the western and southern parcels and this layout reflects the approved schemes. The FFLs have only been raised to meet the requirements of previously approved Flood Risk strategies that have been deemed acceptable by both South Holland District Council and the Environment Agency.
- 4.3.6. With regard to longer distance views from the north east and west, it is considered that the proposals will not be immediately apparent and where

visible will be seen within the context of the existing townscape of Sutton Bridge. The proposals can be integrated without significant adverse effects upon the wider visual environment. The existing built environment to the south and west contains longer distance views of the proposals from the wider countryside setting to the south and west of Sutton Bridge.

- 4.3.7. As an overview, it is acknowledged that the proposals will give rise to some short term, significant adverse effects upon views from the footpath where it abuts the eastern and western boundaries, however, these perceived effects will reduce as the proposed landscaping matures, ensuring that there will be no long term significant adverse effects. It is also acknowledged that the proposals will affect views from the neighbouring residential areas to the south, however, these are not considered significant effects and opportunities exist to soften the proposed development through new landscaping. Fundamentally, it must be remembered that development within the western and southern parcels of the site has already been approved. This includes development immediately adjacent to the footpath (SuBr/1/1) and the residential areas associated with Nightingale Way, Youngs Row, Granville Terrace and Withington Street. The effect of residential development upon these receptors has been considered acceptable. The proposals reflect the approved layouts in terms of extent of development relationships with existing neighbours. The key difference is the extension to the east, towards the allotments. Development within the eastern parcel does not extend any further north than the approved parcel to the west or the allotments to the east. It is considered that the effect upon the footpath to the east will be no greater than that to the west.
- 4.3.8. As noted within the assessment, the proposed layout presents the opportunity to provide a more coordinated edge to the settlement. As the landscaping along the northern boundary matures it will soften both the perception of the proposals and Sutton Bridge beyond.
- 4.3.9. It is concluded that the proposals can be integrated into the receiving visual environment without significant adverse effects.

4.4. Effect upon Landscape Related Policy

- 4.4.1. In terms of the effect upon national and local landscape related policy, the site and its setting are not covered by any qualitative landscape designations.
- 4.4.2. As set out in Section 2, it is considered that the site and its setting do not represent a “valued landscape” in the context of Para 170a of the NPPF.
- 4.4.3. Para 170b of the NPPF requires development to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. As set out within this assessment, it is considered that the proposals can be integrated without significant long term adverse effects upon those landscape receptors which characterise the site and its wider landscape setting. It is concluded that the proposals will not harm the intrinsic character or beauty of the countryside in which the site is set.
- 4.4.4. Within the context of the Adopted South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, the site lies outside of the settlement boundary within Countryside. This is not a qualitative designation and does not preclude development. Indeed, the approved parcels lie outside of the settlement boundary and are considered acceptable by South Holland District Council. It is considered that the proposals represent an appropriate form of development adjacent to the existing settlement edge. The eastern parcel forms infill development between the approved western parcel and the allotments to the east and does not extend any further north than either of these elements. the inclusion of this parcel will not give rise to any significant adverse effects beyond those considered acceptable in relation to the southern and western parcels.
- 4.4.5. Policies 2 and 3 of the Local Plan are considered relevant to the proposals from a character and appearance perspective. Policy 2 relates to development management and states that:

“Proposals requiring planning permission for development will be permitted provided that sustainable development considerations are met, specifically in relation to:

- 1. size, scale, layout, density and impact on the amenity, trees, character and appearance of the area and the relationship to existing development and land uses;**
- 2. quality of design and orientation;**
- 3. maximising the use of sustainable materials and resources;**
- 4. access and vehicle generation levels;**
- 5. the capacity of existing community services and infrastructure;**
- 6. impact upon neighbouring land uses by reason of noise, odour, disturbance or visual intrusion;**
- 7. sustainable drainage and flood risk;**
- 8. impact or enhancement for areas of natural habitats and historical buildings and heritage assets; and**
- 9. impact on the potential loss of sand and gravel mineral resources.”**

4.4.6. As set out earlier in this section, it is considered that the proposals can be integrated without significant adverse landscape or visual effects. The proposals respond positively to the existing settlement pattern and present the opportunity to create an appropriate transition between the western extent of Sutton Bridge and the wider landscape setting to the north. The proposed layout has been informed by the approved schemes to ensure that size, scale, layout, density and impact on the amenity reflect what has been considered acceptable on over half of the site previously. The quality of design and orientation of the proposals have also been informed by the approved schemes to ensure an appropriate approach.

4.4.7. As noted above, the proposals incorporate appropriate set back distances from the existing neighbouring properties, reflecting current best practices. The proposed FFLs will be elevated above existing levels within the site, but not significantly and will not give rise to issues of overlooking. It is considered that the proposals can be integrated without adversely affecting residential amenity. There is no Conservation Area associated with Sutton Bridge and the proposals are located away from the listed buildings associated with the historic core of the settlement. The proposals will not affect views towards the church tower within the south eastern part of Sutton Bridge. It is considered that the proposals comply with Policy 2 from a character and appearance perspective.

4.4.8. Policy 3 relates to the design of new development and states that:

“All development will create distinctive places through the use of high quality and inclusive design and layout and, where appropriate, make innovative use of local traditional styles and materials. Design which is inappropriate to the local area, or which fails to maximise opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area, will not be acceptable.

Development proposals will demonstrate how the following issues, where they are relevant to the proposal, will be secured:

- 1. creating a sense of place by complementing and enhancing designated and non designated heritage assets; historic street patterns; respecting the density, scale, visual closure, landmarks, views, massing of neighbouring buildings and the surrounding area;**
- 2. distinguishing between private and public space;**
- 3. the landscape character of the location;**
- 4. accessibility by a choice of travel modes including the provision of public transport, public rights of way and cycle ways;**
- 5. the provision of facilities for the storage of refuse/recycling bins, storage and/or parking of bicycles and layout of car parking;**
- 6. the lighting of public places;**
- 7. ensuring public spaces are accessible to all;**
- 8. crime prevention and community safety;**
- 9. the orientation of buildings on the site to enable the best use of decentralised and renewable low-carbon energy technologies for the lifetime of the development;**
- 10. the appropriate treatment of facades to public places, including shop frontages to avoid visual intrusion by advertising, other signage, security shutters, meter boxes and other service and communication infrastructure;**
- 11. residential amenity;**
- 12. the mitigation of flood risk through flood-resistant and flood-resilient design and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);**
- 13. the use of locally sourced building materials, minimising the use of water and minimising land take, to protect best and most versatile soils;**

- 14. the incorporation of existing hedgerows and trees and the provision of appropriate new landscaping to enhance biodiversity, green infrastructure, flood risk mitigation and urban cooling;**
15. the appropriate use or reuse of historic buildings.”

- 4.4.9. The proposals have been informed by the localised townscape of Sutton Bridge and, as set out in this assessment, seek to enhance the setting of the settlement within the localised landscape context. The proposals have sought to tie into the existing network of residential streets that exist to the south, with building set back lines reflecting the neighbouring development to ensure an appropriate transition between new and old.
- 4.4.10. As set out in section 4.2, it is considered that the proposals can be integrated without harm to the receiving landscape character of the published assessments, and while there will be some change within the site itself, such change has been considered acceptable within the western parcel and it is considered that the proposals can be integrated without significant adverse effects upon the receiving landscape character. The incorporation of the approved schemes into the proposed layout ensures an appropriate and coordinated response to the design of the layout, ensuring permeability and an appropriate interface with the adjoining existing settlement. The proposals have been carefully designed to mitigate flood risk while also ensure that the residential amenity of neighbouring properties is not compromised. The proposals have adopted an appropriate offset from the existing treescape around the school and sought to incorporate a sympathetic scheme of landscaping that will not only assist the integration of the proposals but also enhance the interface between the settlement and the wider landscape setting to the north. It is considered that the proposals comply with the objectives of Policy 3 from a character and appearance perspective.
- 4.4.11. National and local policy seek to achieve high quality and sustainable development. It is considered that the proposals comply with the aims and objectives set out within the national and local planning policy framework from a landscape and visual perspective.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. ES Landscape Planning Ltd was instructed by ABDS Ltd to assess the landscape and visual implications arising from the proposed development of 129 dwellings at land to the north of Withington Street, Sutton Bridge.
- 5.2. The site lies on the northern edge of Sutton Bridge and currently comprises two fields which are currently lying fallow, lying immediately adjacent to the existing settlement edge.
- 5.3. It should be noted that over half of the site is subject to reserved matters approvals. This comprises the western extent of the site, to the north of Nightingale Way and Youngs Row and two smaller parcels to the north of Withington Street and east of Chestnut Terrace. The eastern part of the site is not subject to the same approvals but does not extend as far north as the approved parcel and does not extend beyond the northern boundary of the allotments which lie immediately to the east.
- 5.4. The site is not subject to any qualitative landscape designations.

Effect upon Landscape Character

- 5.5. It is considered that the proposals can be integrated in this location without adversely affecting the character of Sutton Bridge or its countryside setting as identified by the published character assessments. It is acknowledged that the proposals will affect the character of the site in terms of openness and land use, changing it from fallow land on the settlement edge to a new housing development. However, as noted, over half of the site has extant permission for up to 76 dwellings. Not only has the principle of development been accepted on the western and southern parts of the site, but details of the layout and appearance of these parcels have also been approved as part of the reserved matters applications.
- 5.6. Officers considered that the loss of openness and agricultural land was acceptable on the north western edge of Sutton Bridge. The proposed layout does not materially extend the perception of these effects, effectively forming infill between the permitted western parcel and the allotments to the east. The proposed layout also presents the opportunity to create a more sympathetic edge

to the settlement, introducing a landscaped boundary between Nightingale Way and Allenby's Chase.

- 5.7. The site is not considered to be located within a "valued" landscape, with reference to para 170a of the NPPF. Taking into account the extant permissions associated with the site and the opportunities the proposals present for creating an enhanced edge to the settlement, it is considered that the proposals can be integrated without significant adverse effects upon the receiving landscape character of the site and its immediate setting. The proposals will not affect the wider character of Sutton Bridge or its countryside setting.

Effect upon the Visual Environment

- 5.8. It is acknowledged that the proposals will give rise to some short term, significant adverse effects upon views from the footpath where it abuts the eastern and western boundaries, however, these perceived effects will reduce as the proposed landscaping matures, ensuring that there will be no long term significant adverse effects. It is also acknowledged that the proposals will affect views from the neighbouring residential areas to the south, however, these are not considered significant effects and opportunities exist to soften the proposed development through new landscaping. The proposals adopt appropriate set-backs from the existing properties and have been carefully designed so as to avoid issues of overlooking.
- 5.9. Fundamentally, it must be remembered that development within the western and southern parcels of the site has already been approved. This includes development immediately adjacent to the footpath (SuBr/1/1) and the residential areas associated with Nightingale Way, Youngs Row, Granville Terrace and Withington Street. The effect of residential development upon these receptors has been considered acceptable by South Holland District Council in their approval of the reserved matters schemes within the southern and western parts of the site. The proposals reflect the approved layouts in terms of extent of development relationships with existing neighbours. The key difference is the extension to the east, towards the allotments. Development within the eastern parcel does not extend any further north than the approved parcel to the west or the allotments to the east. It is considered that the effect upon the footpath to the east will be no greater than that to the west.

- 5.10. As noted within the assessment, the proposed layout presents the opportunity to provide a more coordinated edge to the settlement. As the landscaping along the northern boundary matures it will soften both the perception of the proposals and Sutton Bridge beyond.
- 5.11. It is concluded that the proposals can be integrated into the receiving visual environment without significant adverse effects.

Effect upon Landscape Related Policy

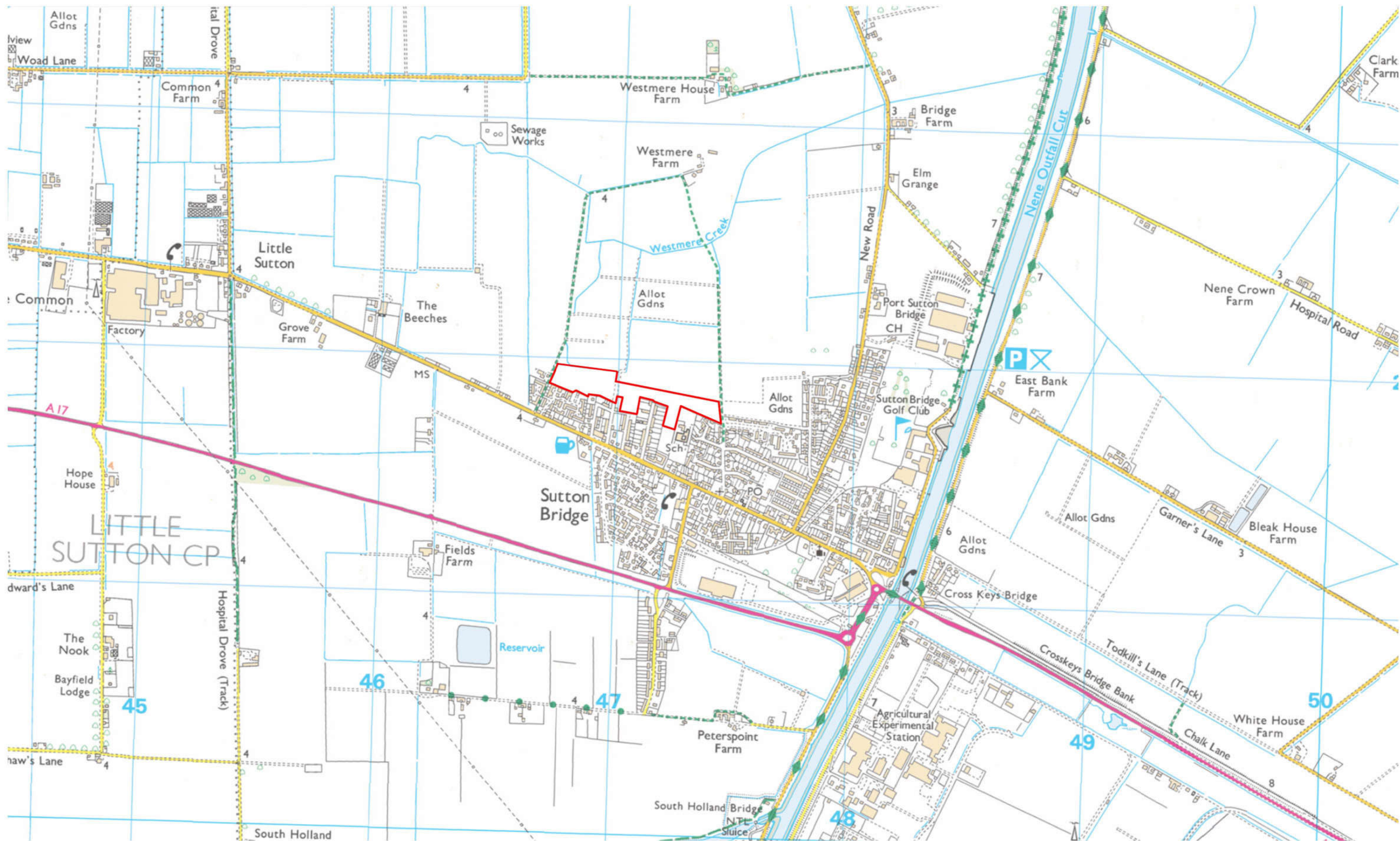
- 5.12. In terms of the effect upon national and local landscape related policy, the site and its setting are not covered by any qualitative landscape designations.
- 5.13. The assessment concludes that the site and its landscape setting do not represent a “valued landscape” in the context of para 170a of the NPPF.
- 5.14. National and local policy seek to achieve high quality and sustainable development. It is considered that the proposals comply with the aims and objectives set out within the national and local planning policy framework from a landscape and visual perspective.

Conclusion

- 5.15. In conclusion, it is considered that the proposed layout has been informed by the approved schemes within the southern and western parts of the site as well as the adjoining townscape to the south. It is considered that the proposals will not give rise to any significant adverse effects upon the receiving landscape character of the site or its wider setting, as identified by the published assessments and this LVIA.
- 5.16. It is acknowledged that there will be some localised significant adverse effects upon views from the footpath which abuts the eastern and western site boundaries, however, there are opportunities to introduce landscaping along these boundaries that will mature to integrate the proposals. Furthermore, the effect of the proposals upon the footpath on the western boundary was considered acceptable by the Council in relation to the approved scheme. It is considered that the proposals can be integrated without giving rise to long term significant adverse effects.

- 5.17. In conclusion, the proposals can be integrated in this location without long term adverse effects upon the receiving landscape character and visual environment. It is concluded that the proposals are supportable from a landscape and visual perspective.

PLANS



Key

— Site Boundary



Not to Scale

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ES LANDSCAPE
PLANNING
Part of the ES Group

Land North of Sutton Bridge Site Location Plan

Client: ABDS Ltd

Drawing Ref: 9198L.SLP.001

Date: August 2020 Drawn: AM Checked: AM



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Key

- Site Boundary
- Public Right of Way
- Parts of site with Reserved Matters Approval



ES LANDSCAPE PLANNING
Part of the ES Group

Land North of Sutton Bridge Site Context Plan

Client: ABDS Ltd

Drawing Ref: 9198L.SCP.002

Date: August 2020 Drawn: AM Checked: AM

APPENDIX 1

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Methodology



LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. This methodology, and the assessment to which it applies, has been prepared in accordance with the following guidance:
 - Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition – GLVIA3 (2013) - Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment;
 - Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Technical Guidance Note 06/19), published by the Landscape Institute (2019).
- 1.2. The purpose of this methodology is to set out a clear and transparent approach to the assessment of landscape character and visual effects, in line with guidance set out by GLVIA3.
- 1.3. When assessing character within an urban context, this methodology can be applied to Townscape Assessments and assessing how a proposed development could affect the elements that make up the townscape and its distinctive character.

2. THE LVIA PROCESS

2.1. The main stages of the LVIA process are outlined below. The process comprises:

- the baseline study;
- the description of the proposed development; and
- the assessment of effects.

2.2. This process seeks to provide a clear and transparent method that will assist in identifying the potential effects of a development on the receiving landscape and the visual environment.

Stage 1 - Baseline Study

2.3. The baseline assessment sets out the existing landscape character and visual environment conditions against which any future changes resulting from new development can be measured or predicted and assessed.

Landscape

1. The scope of the assessment is defined.
2. Landscape related planning policy, including any landscape designations, is identified and outlined.
3. The landscape baseline is established through an initial desk study, which includes an assessment of published regional and local Landscape Character Assessments, where available, and subsequently a site visit to identify the value and susceptibility of the landscape resource (receptor) to a change of the type proposed, at community, local, national or international levels, as appropriate.

Visual

1. The scope of the assessment is defined.
2. The visual baseline is identified as the extent of visual receptors within the study area, and establishes the number and sensitivity of the representative viewpoint and/or groups of people (receptors) within the study area whose views may be altered as a result of the proposals. The

use of Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) models can be a useful tool, assisting in identifying the theoretical visual extent of a proposal, where appropriate. However, it must be noted that these are not definitive, and do not replace viewing the site “in the field” as set out in GLVIA3, but can assist in scoping out those areas where topography will contain views of a development. Photographs from the key viewpoints are taken and presented in accordance with best practice guidance, illustrating the baseline situation.

Stage 2 - Description of the Development / Design Proposals

- 2.4. The baseline study will highlight opportunities and constraints for the integration of the proposals into the receiving environment. The various components of the proposals at each phase of the development process, which will potentially give rise to effects on the landscape character and the visual environment, need to be identified. At this time, the proposals can be modified to ensure that further mitigation measures are incorporated into the design in response to the local landscape and visual environment.

Mitigation of landscape and visual effects

- 2.5. Paragraph 4.21 of GLVIA3 states that “*measures proposed to prevent / avoid, reduce and, where possible, offset or remedy (or compensate for) any significant adverse landscape and visual effects, should be described*”. In practice, such mitigation measures are generally considered to fall into three categories:
- Primary measures, developed through the iterative design process, which have become integrated or embedded into the project design;
 - Standard construction and operational management practices for avoiding and reducing environmental effects;
 - Secondary measures, designed to address any residual adverse effects remaining after primary measures and standard construction practices have been incorporated into the scheme.

Stage 3 - Description of Effects

- 2.6. The assessment should then identify the level of effect as a result of the different components of the proposals upon both landscape and visual receptors.

- 2.7. In order to assess the significance of the effect on the receiving environment, it is necessary to consider the **magnitude**, i.e. the degree of change, together with the **sensitivity** of the receptor.
- 2.8. The assessment will identify the type of effect experienced by the receptor, as set out in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Interpretation of Effects

Type of Effect	Interpretation
Direct	A direct effect will be one where a development will affect the character of a landscape or a view, either beneficially or adversely.
Indirect	An indirect effect will occur as a result of elements associated with a development, i.e. a development may result in an increase of traffic on a particular route.
Short, medium or long term	This relates to the anticipated duration and magnitude of effects associated with a development. Within this assessment, the potential effects are typically assessed during the Construction Phase, then at Years 1 and 15, following completion of the development.
Temporary or Permanent	This relates to whether the resulting effect of a development can be mitigated or not, and whether the result of the mitigation is beneficial or adverse.
Beneficial or Adverse	<u>Beneficial effects</u> would typically occur where a development would positively contribute to the landscape character or view. <u>Adverse effects</u> would typically occur where there key landscape elements are lost, or the proposal detracts from the quality and / or character of a landscape or view. <u>Neutral effects</u> can occur where changes neither add nor detract from the quality and character of a landscape or view.

Assessing cumulative effects

- 2.9. Cumulative effects are additional effects caused by a proposed development in combination with other similar developments. This can be cumulative landscape effects on the physical fabric or character of the landscape, or cumulative visual

effects caused by two or more developments being visible from one viewpoint (in combination) and / or from a route where the viewer has to move to another viewpoint to see the same or a different development (sequentially). The scope of cumulative effects should be agreed at the outset to establish what schemes are relevant to the assessment, and at which planning stage this is appropriate. It is generally considered that existing and consented developments, and those for which planning applications have been submitted but not yet determined, should be included. The assessment of cumulative effects must be considered as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) but does not have to be assessed as part of a non-EIA project.

Stage 4 - Significance of Effects (EIA only)

- 2.10. A final judgement on whether the effect is likely to be significant will be made, as required by the EIA Regulations. These conclusions should draw out the key issues and outline the scope for reducing any negative / adverse effects.

3. ASSESSING THE EFFECT OF DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1. The purpose of the LVIA is to provide an objective assessment of the potential effects of the proposals upon the identified landscape and / or visual receptor. GLVIA3 states that *“Assessing the significance of landscape and visual effects is a matter of judgement. It is vital that the basis of such judgements are transparent and understandable, so that the underlying assumptions and reasoning can be examined by others”*.
- 3.2. This section sets out the basis for assessing landscape and visual sensitivity, the magnitude of proposed effects, and the overall assessment of significance.

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

- 3.3. The sensitivity of a particular landscape in relation to new development is categorised as very high, high, medium, low or negligible. This takes into account the **susceptibility** of the receptor to the type of development proposed and the **value** attached to different landscapes by society.

Susceptibility of the Landscape Receptor

- 3.4. GLVIA3 defines the **SUSCEPTIBILITY** of a receptor to change as being the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue negative consequences upon the baseline situation.
- 3.5. “An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment” (Natural England and Christine Tudor, June 2019) identifies a number of criteria which can be used to assess the susceptibility of a landscape receptor. These can include:
- Scale
 - Landform
 - Landcover
 - Man-made Influences
 - Settlement Pattern
 - Movement
 - Remoteness & Tranquillity
 - Skylines
 - Intervisibility

- 3.6. A judgement as to the level of susceptibility (High, Medium, Low or Negligible) is made in relation to each criterion, and these judgements contribute to an overall judgement of susceptibility for the landscape receptor.
- 3.7. A landscape deemed to be highly susceptible is likely to be small-scale, with a mosaic of natural habitats and limited human influences, while a less susceptible landscape receptor is likely to be simpler, with noticeable human influences and fewer natural / semi-natural habitats present.

Value of the Landscape Receptor

- 3.8. Following the publication of GLVIA3, it is now generally agreed that the **VALUE** of a landscape receptor can be determined by a range of factors set out within Box 5.1 of GLVIA3. These include:
- Landscape quality (condition);
 - Scenic quality;
 - Rarity and representativeness;
 - Conservation interests;
 - Recreation value;
 - Perceptual aspects; and
 - Associations.
- 3.9. The Box 5.1 criteria are used to determine the value of landscape receptors. The resulting value levels under each factor are recorded, and an overall judgement of the level of value is reached.
- 3.10. A judgement as to the value of the landscape receptor is made in relation to each factor (High, Medium, Low or Negligible) and these factors contribute to an overall judgement of value.

Overall Judgement of Landscape Sensitivity

- 3.11. Once judgements of the susceptibility and the value of the landscape receptor have been made, an overall judgement of landscape sensitivity is made. The following table explains each threshold, and the factors that contribute to the degree of sensitivity.

Table 2: Definition of Landscape Sensitivity Thresholds

Sensitivity	Definition
Very High	Landscapes which would have a high susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of high value. Such landscapes would have a high degree of intimacy, strong landscape structure, and a high sense of intactness, and contain features worthy of protection. Townscapes may include a high proportion of historic assets and be designated as a World Heritage Site. Typical examples may be nationally or internationally designated, e.g., World Heritage Sites, National Parks, Heritage Coasts or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
High	Landscapes where there is a medium - high susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of high value. Such landscapes may be small scale, have a strong landscape structure, be relatively intact and contain features and / or elements worthy of protection. Townscapes may include a number of historic assets. Typical examples may be of local importance or within the immediate setting of National Parks, AONBs, Conservation Areas, etc.
Medium	Landscapes where there is a medium susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of medium value. Such landscapes will have good landscape structure, with some detracting features or evidence of recent change. Townscapes may include a proportion of historic assets or assets of cultural value locally.
Low	Landscapes where there is a low susceptibility to change, and which are considered to be of low value. Typical landscapes will have some characteristics of interest, but human influences and some detractors will be present.
Negligible	Landscapes where there is little or no susceptibility to change, and which are of low value. Typical landscapes are likely to be characterised by extensive human influences, be of weak landscape structure, with intensive land uses present, and require landscape restoration.

VISUAL SENSITIVITY

- 3.12. As part of the assessment of visual effects, the sensitivity of the visual receptor will be assessed against the magnitude of visual change. Each receptor should be assessed in terms of both their susceptibility to change in views and visual amenity, and also the value attached to particular views. The sensitivity of receptors is categorised as very high, high, medium, low and negligible.

Table 3: Visual Sensitivity Thresholds

Sensitivity	Definition
Very High	Viewers on public rights of way, within nationally designated landscapes such as National Parks or AONBs, whose prime focus is on the high quality of the landscape around, and who are very aware of its value.
High	Viewers on public rights of way, whose prime focus is on the landscape around, or residential properties which lie immediately adjacent to, and look directly onto the development site. Examples may include users of the public right of way network (e.g., promoted routes, national trails, footpaths or bridleways), or the setting of a listed building.
Medium	Viewers engaged in outdoor recreation with some appreciation of the landscape, occupiers of residential properties with oblique views from which the proposals may be visible, and users of rural lanes and roads, including pedestrians, cyclists or horse riders. Examples may include viewers within moderate quality landscapes and / or local parks or recreation grounds.
Low	Viewers engaged in outdoor sports or recreation, whose prime focus is on their activity rather than their setting, or those passing through the area on main transport routes (A-roads, dual carriageways, motorways or the rail network), whose attention is focused away from an appreciation of the landscape through which they are passing.
Negligible	Viewers whose attention is focused on their work or activity, and who are not susceptible to changes in the surrounding visual environment.

MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT

- 3.13. The magnitude of change relates to the extent to which a proposed development will affect the characteristics and / or elements that define the landscape character or view. This change is categorised as high, medium, low, or negligible.

Table 4: Magnitude of Change

Magnitude	Effect Definition
High	Change resulting in a high degree of harm or improvement, such as the introduction of prominent new elements that are considered to make a major alteration to a landscape or view.
Medium	Change resulting in a moderate degree of harm or improvement, or when constitutes a perceptible change within a landscape or view.
Low	Change resulting in a low degree of harm or improvement to a landscape or view, or which constitutes only a minor component within a landscape or view.
Negligible	Change resulting in a barely perceptible degree of harm or improvement to a landscape or view.
No Change	It is also possible for a landscape or view to experience no change, due to the proposed development being totally compatible with the receiving environment or not visible due to intervening structures or vegetation.

Significance Threshold

- 3.14. To assess the overall significance of the effect, the magnitude of change is considered against the sensitivity of the landscape or visual receptor.
- 3.15. In formulating the significance of the potential landscape or visual effect, reasoned professional judgement, based on clear and transparent methods, suitable training and experience, and a detached and dispassionate view of the development, is required. The matrix at Table 6 should be used as a guide for consistency rather than a prescriptive tool. Where the final judgement differs from the matrix, this will be supported by a clear explanation.

- 3.16. The significance thresholds are predicted as Substantial, Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible and None, and can be either beneficial or adverse. Where there is no perceptible change in terms of the effect magnitude regardless of the sensitivity of the receptor, the significance of the effect on a landscape or view will be none.
- 3.17. Unless otherwise stated, all effects are predicted in the winter months. The extent of mitigation measures should be clearly stated, and in the case of planting proposals, the contribution to reducing adverse effects over time should be demonstrated at different stages (typically construction stage and operational stages year 1 and year 15).

Table 5: Significance of Effect

Significance	Threshold Definition
Substantial	A very high magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view of national / international importance which has no ability to accommodate change.
Major	A high magnitude of change that materially affects a high sensitivity landscape or view which has some ability to accommodate change. Positive effects will typically occur in a damaged landscape or view.
Moderate	A medium magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view which may have the ability to accommodate the type of development proposed. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
Minor	A low magnitude of change that materially affects a landscape or view which can integrate the type of development proposed. Positive effects will typically occur in a lower quality landscape or view.
Negligible	A negligible magnitude of change that has little effect on a landscape or view which has the ability to accommodate change.
None	A magnitude of change of none occurs where there is no perceptible change, and the proposals are considered compatible with local character, or change is not visible.

- 3.18. The significance of the effect is measured on the ability of a landscape or view to accommodate the change. In assessing the significance of effects, the following matrix provides a guide through determining the significance of the effect based on the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of change, but it is not a prescriptive tool.

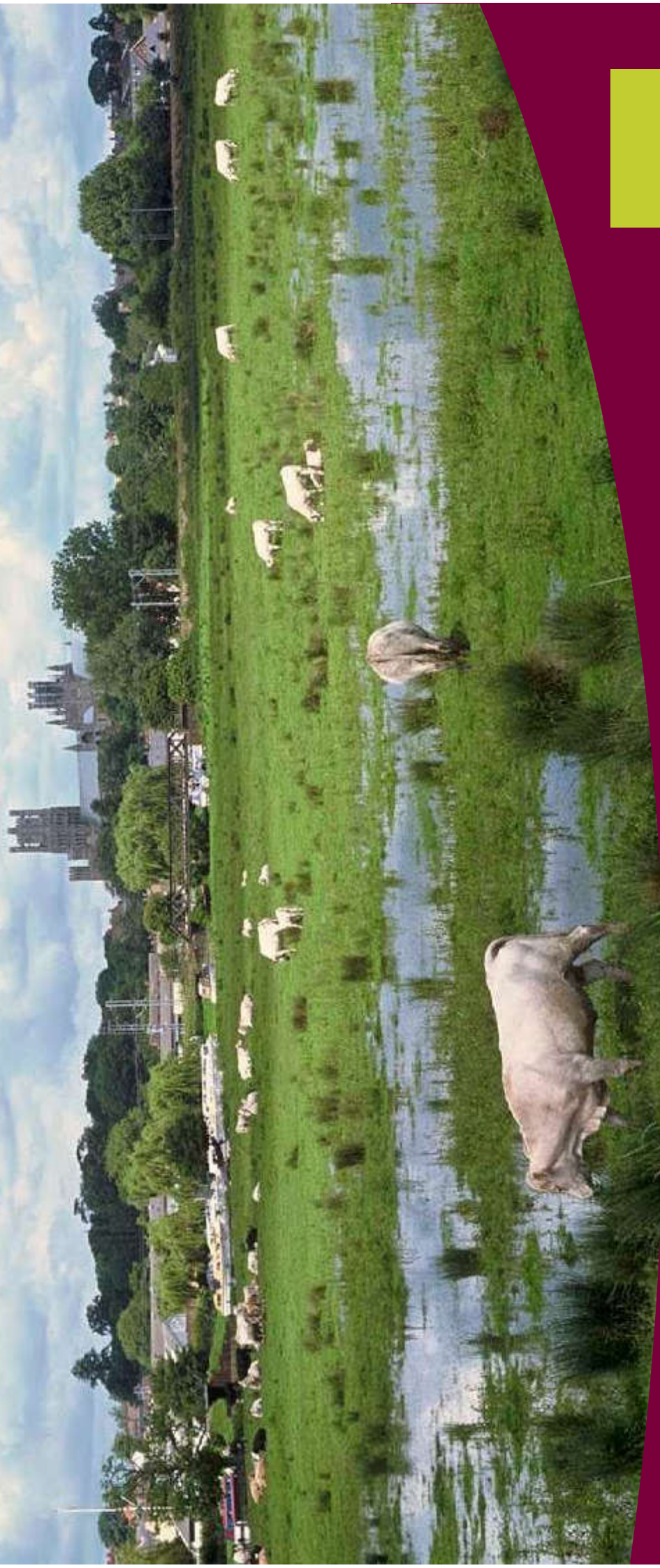
Table 6: Measuring Significance of Effect

		Sensitivity of Receptors				
		Very High	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Magnitude of Change	High	Substantial	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor
	Medium	Major	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor
	Low	Major/ Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Moderate	Moderate/ Minor	Minor	Negligible	Negligible/ None

- 3.19. In terms of assessing whether the effects are significant or otherwise, it is noted that para 5.56 of GLVIA3 states that there are no “hard and fast rules” about what makes a significant effect. For the purposes of this methodology, and with regard to the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (updated 2017), “significant” landscape or visual effects are those effects considered to be of Substantial, Major or Major / Moderate significance, as set out within Table 6.
- 3.20. It is reasonable to say that, where development will result in substantial loss of or irreversible adverse effects over an extensive spatial area on features and / or aspects that are key to the aesthetic and perceptual character of nationally valued landscapes, these will be of the greatest significance. By contrast, effects which may be reversible or can be mitigated over a shorter duration, within a more restricted spatial extent, on features that contribute to but may not be key characteristics of a landscape which has some (or even limited) local value, are likely to be of lesser significance, depending on the circumstances. Landscape and visual assessments must make a professional and objective judgement on the significance of the effect, and whether or not these are considered significant, providing reasoned justification as to how the conclusions have been reached.

APPENDIX 2

Extract from Natural England's Character Map of England –
"The Fens" NCA46



www.gov.uk/natural-england

NATURAL
ENGLAND

Summary

The Fens National Character Area (NCA) is a distinctive, historic and human-influenced wetland landscape lying to the west of the Wash estuary, which formerly constituted the largest wetland area in England. The area is notable for its large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons. The level, open topography shapes the impression of huge skies which convey a strong sense of place, tranquillity and inspiration. One per cent of the NCA falls within the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It is a large, low-lying, flat landscape with many drainage ditches, dykes and rivers that slowly drain towards the Wash, England's largest tidal estuary. The single obvious factor uniting the Fens is the low-lying, level terrain reflecting its geological past. With the exception of the Isle of Ely, which reaches above 20 m, elevations rarely pass the 10 m contour, and typically vary by little more than one or two metres over long distances. Much of the land is below sea level, relying on pumped drainage and the control of sluices at high and low tides to maintain its agricultural viability. The level horizons and the huge scale of the landscape create a strong sense of isolation and tranquillity, and a distinctive sense of place. There are, typically, large open panoramas and enormous skies, whose changing weather patterns have a strong influence on the observer. Four major rivers drain into the Wash: the Witham, Welland, Nene and Great Ouse. All rivers now have artificial canalised courses that run straight for long distances and are bounded by high banks to contain the watercourse from the lower adjacent fields.

The Fens are the bread basket of Britain. The drainage of this area from the 17th century onwards presented valuable soils which provide excellent

conditions for large-scale cultivation of arable and horticultural crops; holdings of more than 100 ha make up 77 per cent of farmed land. As cultivation techniques have become more intensive, however, the soil resource is increasingly diminished through desiccation and erosion. Clays and silts laid down by marine incursions dominate the area abutting the Wash and extend inland along the rivers, forming the fertile horticultural soils of the silt fens. This area is now marginally higher in altitude than the inland peatlands which have 'wasted'. The fertile peat soils have been historically drained and managed to support national food production at the expense of other ecosystem services. Drained peat is more vulnerable to loss, particularly where the deposits are deep and the water table is kept artificially low. Peat wastage through shrinkage, oxidation and wind erosion is a long-term issue affecting the ecosystem services of the Fens.

The Wash includes salt marsh and mudflats that support large, internationally important populations of seals, waders and wildfowl, including pink-footed and Brent geese, shelduck, knots, oystercatchers, common terns and various plover species. It is accordingly designated a Ramsar site, a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a Special Protection Area (SPA), a European Marine Site (EMS), a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). Other important wetland habitats include areas of relic old fen, washland, rivers, drains and a network of lesser drainage channels known locally as ditches, dykes or sewers.

Several SSSI in the Fens are designated for their buried interest – a geological record contained in the sediments of the Wash basin and fenland – making

an important contribution towards our understanding of the effects of climate and environmental change over millions of years. Also, the Oxford Clay and Kings Dyke brick pit have been very important for palaeontology, with major Jurassic reptiles including the pliosaur *Pachycostasaurus dawsoni* unearthed here. *Leedsichthys*, the world's largest fish, was discovered in these sediments and is still being unearthed from them.

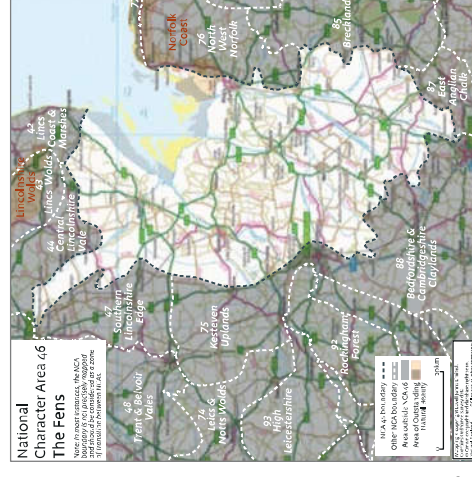
There is a long history of human occupation here, accounts of which can be found in the Historic Environment Records for Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Lincolnshire. Early prehistoric sites are mostly deeply buried beneath the fen sediments or occur on the low slopes of the higher fen 'islands'. Scheduled Ancient Monuments of prehistoric to post-medieval date are located across the fens and many undesignated sites and monuments are known, again mainly from the fen edges and islands. However, Flag Fen is a site of international importance – a preserved, wooden, bronze-age platform and causeway crossing the marsh to the east of the Peterborough fen edge, off which votive deposits (symbolising a wish, desire or prayer) of bronze and iron tools, weapons and decorative items were thrown into the marsh.

Ancient remains of settlements or task sites are increasingly being discovered as the peat dries out across the fenland area, or through development – for example eight log boats were found in an ancient river channel along with associated riverside settlements at Whittlesey, and numerous artefact scatters of prehistoric to Roman sites are annually ploughed up where the peat is thinnest on the gravel island edges and emerging crests. The impressive Ely Cathedral is a major landmark dominating the Cambridgeshire peat fen from its location atop the Isle of Ely, as is ‘Boston Stump’ (St Botolph’s Church, Boston) in the Lincolnshire silt fen, while similar island-top locations

were also used for monastic and secular establishments across the fenland region (such as Ramsey, Thorney, Crowland and Chatteris). Lodes, slades and canals historically formed the early transport opportunities across the fens, commencing after the Roman conquest of Britain but increasingly in the late Saxon and medieval periods.

Authors Sir Harry Godwin and H.C. Darby have written major works on the Fens, and Rex Sly has chronicled the history of the Fens from Roman times until the present and written about fenland families and life in a series of three books published in the 2000s. Chris Gerrard has authored a book of work by fenland artists showcasing the landscapes and biodiversity of the Fens.

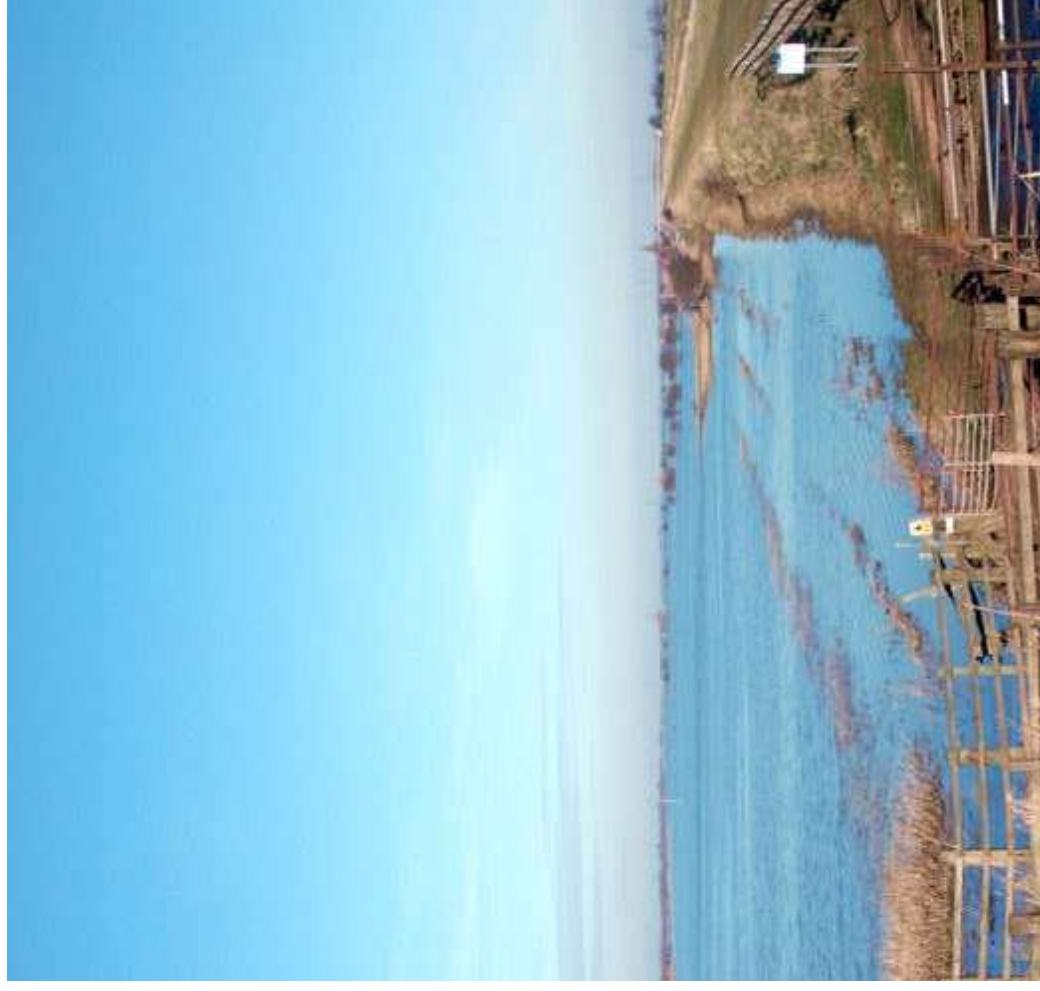
Although many of the Fens waterways are heavily embanked, limiting views across the landscape, water-based recreation is a popular pastime with a focus at Ely marina. Angling is popular here.



Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce

Statements of Environmental Opportunities:

- **SEO 1:** Manage the agricultural landscape and soils which allow the Fens to be a major provider of food and horticultural produce, while seeking to enhance opportunities for biodiversity.
- **SEO 2:** Manage the core wetland complexes and increase their connectivity by enhancing the main rivers, waterways and their associated riparian habitats and improve recreational access opportunities to the Fens.
- **SEO 3:** Plan for the creation of new coastal landscapes in the Wash area that are adapted and resilient to the impact of climate change, for the benefit of people and wildlife.
- **SEO 4:** Conserve, manage and enhance the Fens landscape and increase educational opportunities to access its geodiversity, archaeology and cultural heritage to enhance enjoyment and understanding for those who live and work in and visit the Fens.



The Fens today.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

The area abuts a number of other National Character Areas (NCAs). To the east lie North West Norfolk and The Brecks NCAs. To the south-east rises the gently rolling East Anglian Chalk NCA and to the south-west is the undulating Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands NCA. To the west rise the gently shelving slopes of the Kesteven Uplands and the South Lincolnshire Edge NCAs. To the north-west the woods and gravel workings of the Central Lincolnshire Vale NCA gradually slope down to the Lincolnshire fens, while due north the Lincolnshire Wolds NCA rises to create a dominant 'upland' horizon. The Steeping River marks the quieter north-east boundary to the Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes NCA. The land boundary of the Fens is typically drawn along a series of catchwater drains, dykes, canalised rivers and lodes. To the north-east the Fens are bounded by the North Sea.

Four main rivers, the Witham, Welland, Nene and Great Ouse, drain much of the surface water from the East Midlands across the Fens. The rivers often flow in canalised channels before discharging into the large Wash estuary. The rivers and their associated networks of ditches and dykes provide ecological networks and functional links to other NCAs.

Marine processes strongly influence the physical and biological character of the Wash. Marine sediments originating from the eroding nearshore seabed off central Lincolnshire and the Holderness coast of East Yorkshire predominate,

although some accreted sediments originate from further north. While much of this sediment settles within the Wash, some moves seaward again to help supply the coastal structures along the North Norfolk coast.

Due to its low-lying landform, views to and from the neighbouring NCAs strongly reflect their geology, particularly the higher ground of the gently rolling East Anglian Chalk NCA to the south-east, the undulating Bedfordshire Claylands to the south-west, and to the west the gradually shelving slopes of the Kesteven Uplands and the South Lincolnshire Edge NCAs, while due north the Lincolnshire Wolds NCA rises to create a dominant elevated horizon. There are vast, open views of the sky throughout and wide, flat panoramic views, particularly over the mudflats of the Wash in the east.

Fenland farming is nationally important with, for example, a quarter of England's potatoes grown here and over one-third of English vegetables. Agriculture is the major source of employment, with approximately 27,000 people employed either permanently or seasonally/temporarily throughout the year. Nearly 90 per cent of the Fens were classified as either Grade 1 or Grade 2 agricultural land under the Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) survey of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Peat wastage will have reduced this since then.

The Fens play host to several major transport links. The East Coast railway mainline cuts across the south-western corner and there are east-west rail passenger and freight lines running through the area. Major roads include the A47, the A16 and A17, among numerous other A roads which form transport corridors across the landscape. Other major infrastructure, such as power stations, major gas and electrical distribution networks, either supply surrounding NCAs or the Fens are supplied by them.

Distinct areas

■ Open coastal marshes

■ Drained coastal marshes

■ Settled inland fens

■ Open inland fens

Key characteristics

■ Expansive, flat, open, low-lying wetland landscape influenced by the Wash estuary, and offering extensive vistas to level horizons and huge skies throughout, provides a sense of rural remoteness and tranquility.

■ Jurassic clays are overlain by rich, fertile calcareous and silty soils over the coastal and central fens and by dark, friable fen peat further inland. The soils are important for agriculture, which is hugely significant for the rural economy in the Fens. There are over 4,000 farms in the Fens; enough wheat is grown here annually to produce a quarter of a million loaves of bread and one million tons of potatoes are grown here. In addition to traditional vegetables, exotics such as pak choi are now cultivated. Some 40 per cent of England's bulbs and flowers are also produced in the Fens.

■ The Wash is the largest estuarine system in Britain, supporting internationally important intertidal and coastal habitats influenced by constant processes of accretion and deposition, forming salt marsh and mudflats and providing habitats for wildfowl, wading birds and other wildlife, including grey seals and approximately 90 per cent of the UK's common seals. It also provides important natural sea defences and plays a key role in climate change regulation. Flood storage areas on the

Nene, Cam, Lark and Ouse washes also provide significant biodiversity interest. True fen mainly occurs at remnant conservation sites, such as Baston or Wicken Fen.

■ Overall, woodland cover is sparse, notably a few small woodland blocks, occasional avenues alongside roads, isolated field trees and shelterbelts of poplar, willow and occasionally leylandii hedges around farmsteads, and numerous orchards around Wisbech. Various alders, notably grey alder, are also used in shelterbelts and roadside avenues.

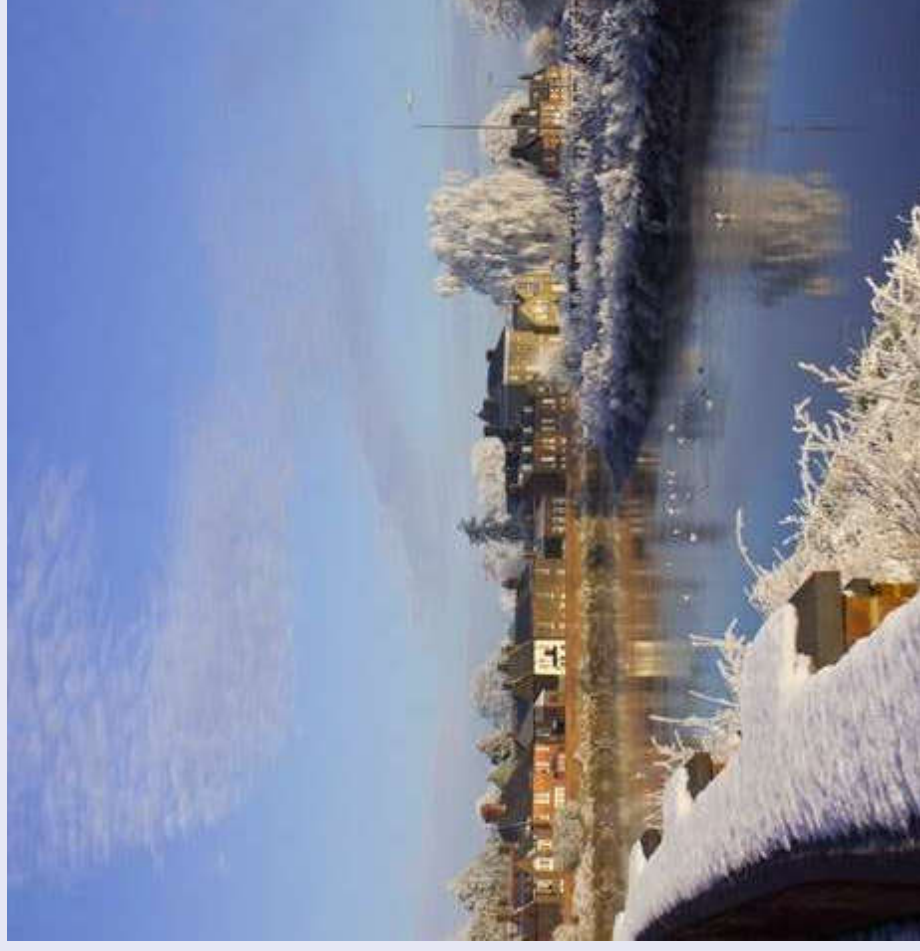
■ The predominant land use is arable – wheat, root crops, bulbs, vegetables and market gardening made possible by actively draining reclaimed land areas. Associated horticultural glasshouses are a significant feature. Beef cattle graze narrow enclosures along the banks of rivers and dykes and on parts of the salt marsh and sea banks.

■ Open fields, bounded by a network of drains and the distinctive hierarchy of rivers (some embanked), have a strong influence on the geometric/rectilinear landscape pattern. The structures create local enclosure and a slightly raised landform, which is mirrored in the road

Key characteristics (continued)

network that largely follows the edges of the system of large fens. The drains and ditches are also an important ecological network important for invertebrates, fish including spined loach, and macrophytes.

- The area is very rich in geodiversity and archaeology, with sediments containing evidence for past environmental and climate changes and with high potential for well-preserved waterlogged site remains at the fen edge, within some of the infilled palaeo-rivers and beneath the peat.
- Large, built structures exhibit a strong vertical visual influence, such as the 83 m-high octagonal tower of 'Boston Stump' (St Botolph's Church), Ely Cathedral on the highest part of the Isle of Ely dominating its surrounding fen, wind farms and other modern large-scale industrial and agricultural buildings, while drainage and flood storage structures and embanked rail and road routes interrupt the horizontal fen plain.
- Settlements and isolated farmsteads are mostly located on the modestly elevated 'geological islands' and the low, sinuous roddon banks (infilled ancient watercourses within fens). Elsewhere, villages tend to be dispersed ribbon settlements along the main arterial routes through the settled fens, and scattered farms remain as relics of earlier agricultural settlements. Domestic architecture mostly dates from after 1750 and comprises a mix of late Georgian-style brick houses and 20th-century bungalows.



Wisbech North Brink - the tidal River Nene and inland port.

APPENDIX 3

Extract from South Holland Strategic Landscape Capacity Study –
“Settled Fens”

STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE CAPACITY STUDY

For

S O U T H



H O L L A N D
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Prepared by

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above broad distinctions within South Holland District. These are classified as *Landscape Character Types*, as follows:

- The Settled Fens Landscape Character Type
- The Peaty Fens Landscape Character Type
- The Wash Marshes Landscape Character Type

The essential characteristics of these Landscape Character Types are summarised below. This model of field assessment follows that used in the Salisbury Plain Army Training Estate Landscape Character Assessment carried out for Defence Estates by ERM.⁸

4.4 The Settled Fens Landscape Character Type

Topography: flat

Dominant Land Cover and Landscape Elements:

Buildings: farms, masts, poles, pylons, industrial, commercial, settlements, urban

Heritage/vernacular: buildings, country houses, field systems, ecclesiastical

Farming: hedges, fields, fences, arable, market gardening, orchards

Woodland and trees: deciduous, mixed, shelterbelts, hedgerows, orchards, clumps and alien coniferous screens

Hydrology: rivers, drainage channels, ditches

Communication: roads, railways, airfields, pylons, masts.

Description:

Predominantly flat topography, dissected by main roads, rivers, drainage channels and drainage ditches often on raised banks (1-3m). Primarily nucleated settlements with associated mature trees. Church spires and towers often rise above the mature vegetation to provide prominent landmark features. Medium to large fields with intensive market garden crops. Locally strong hedgerow elements. Views are restricted or foreshortened by shelterbelts and woodland or mature hedgerows.

This contributes to a sense of enclosure with a more open feel between settlements. The main visual detractors are the 440kV and 132 kV overhead lines on towers, electricity sub stations and power stations and urban fringe visual clutter (dominated by light industry and glasshouse horticulture).

Note that within the larger settlements, there are no views of adjacent fenland and this introspective quality reduces the awareness of place within the wider fenland landscape.

Key characteristics: flat landform, nucleated settlements with mature vegetation and church spires; organic lines dominate, e.g. winding roads

Condition: average, but ranges from good (farmland) to poor (urban fringe clutter)

Visual Assessment criteria:

Pattern: strong

Scale: medium-large

Texture: textured⁹

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.31

⁹ Texture is determined by land cover, e.g. trees, hedges and crop types and their scale or size within the landscape

Colour: muted-colourful¹⁰

Complexity: diverse

Remoteness: active

Unity: fragmented

Form: curved

Enclosure: open-enclosed

Perception:

Security: comfortable

Stimulus: bland

Tranquillity: vacant

Pleasure: pleasant

Architecture:

New-build around traditional (medieval-Victorian) core, with the church as the primary node. Building materials are predominantly brick and a combination of brick and stone. The settlement form is primarily nucleated, interspersed with some linear settlement.

Three representative photographs of the Settled Fens Landscape Character Type are shown below.

The Settled Fens Landscape Character Type



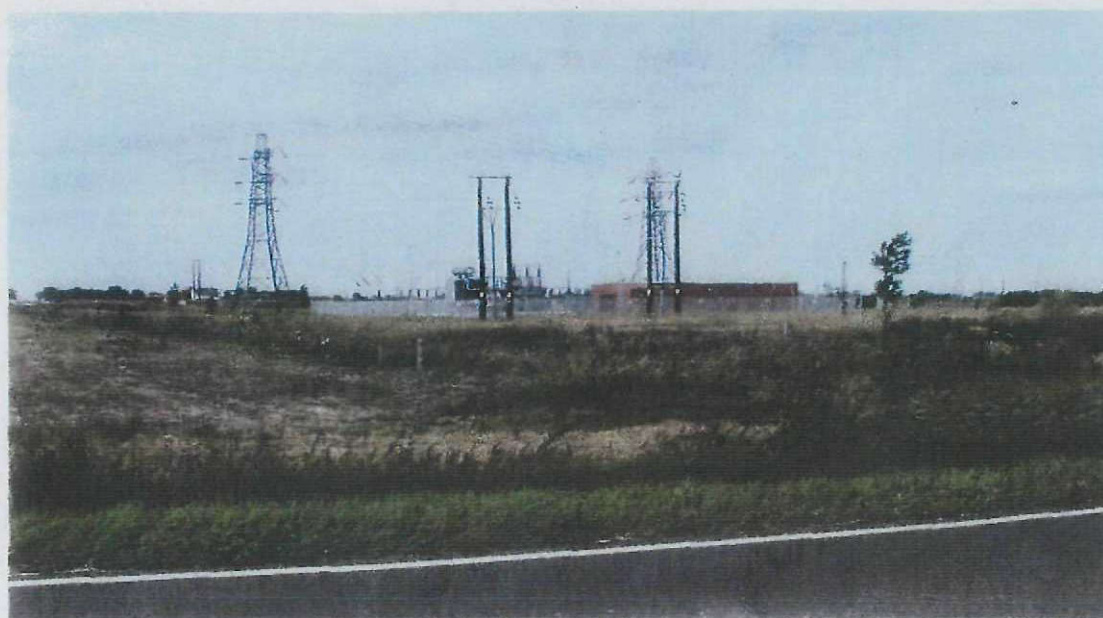
Gosberton church viewed over open fields

¹⁰ Colour is the dominant colour of the constituent elements, e.g. fields, built form

STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE CAPACITY STUDY
SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT, LINCOLNSHIRE

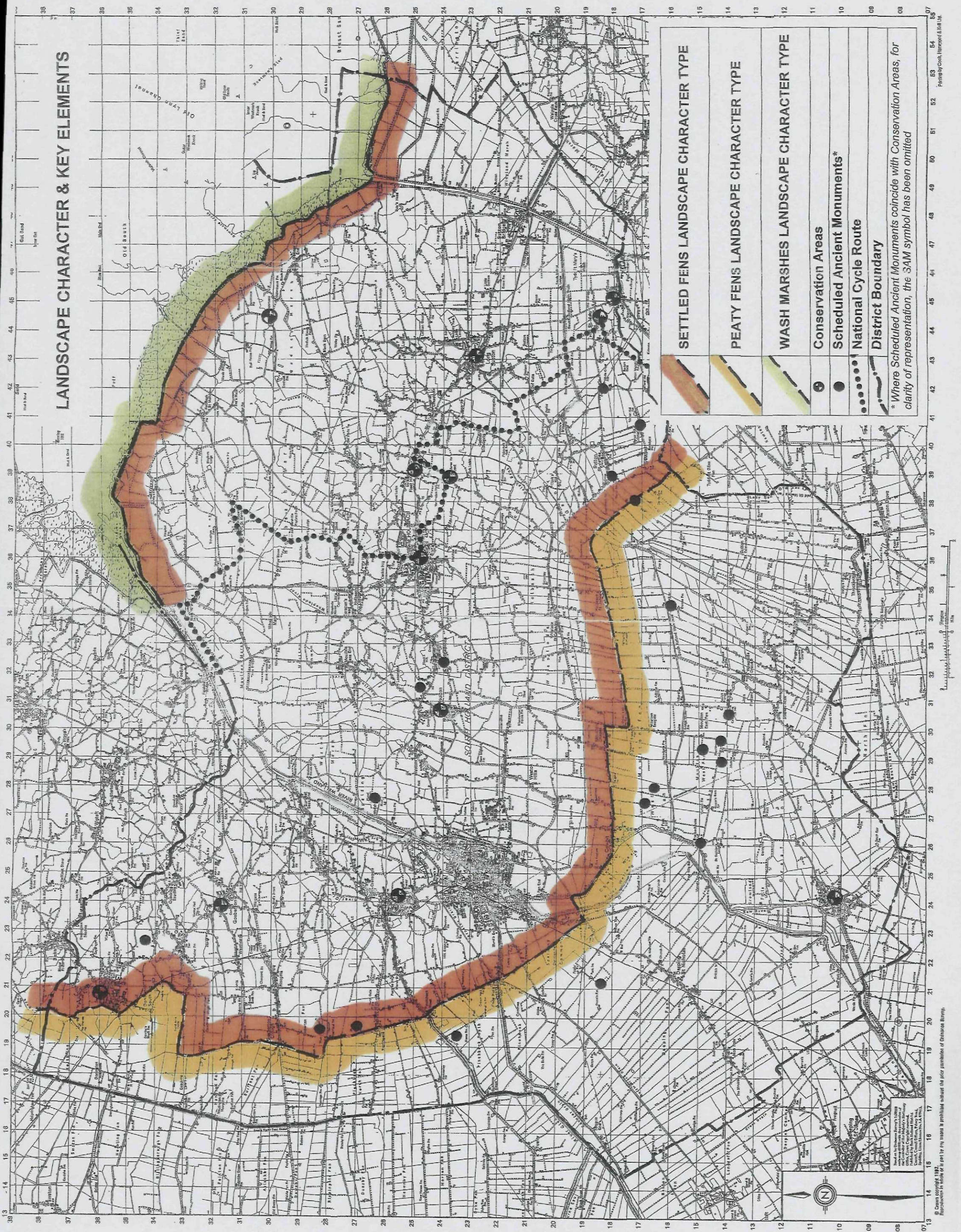


Sutton Bridge power station viewed from the A17



Power distribution infrastructure south of Holbeach

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER & KEY ELEMENTS



APPENDIX 4

Extract from Historic Landscape Character Assessment –
“The Wash” and “WSH4”

The Historic Landscape Characterisation Project for Lincolnshire



The Historic Character of The County of Lincolnshire

English Heritage Project No. 4661 Main

Report

John Lord and Alastair MacIntosh
Lincolnshire County Council

With contributions from

Adam Partington

September 2011

3.10 Regional Character Area 10

The Wash

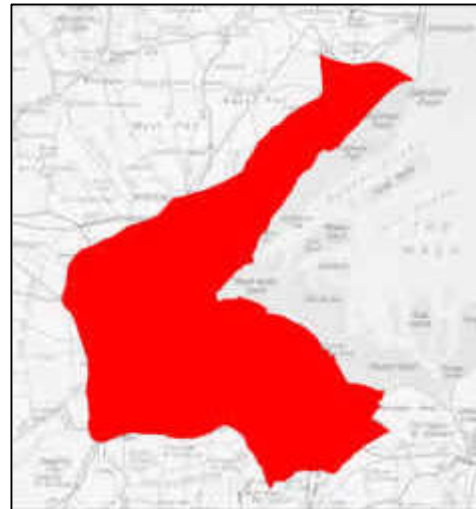
ARS sub-province: EWASH

Countryside Agency Countryside Character Areas:

46 – The Fens

Total area: 660.3 km²

Percentage of Overall Project Area: 15.1%



Description of Present Landscape

The Wash is a large estuarine complex on the east coast of Lincolnshire. It is fed by the Rivers Witham, Welland, Steeping, Great Ouse and Nene, which are themselves fed by numerous drains and streams across the East Midlands. The western edge of the character area is dominated by a silt ridge which stands about 4m above sea level. The land between this ridge and the Wash Estuary itself is typically at or below sea level, with earthen banks at regular intervals parallel to the coast marking the extent of former coastlines.

The shoreline of the Wash has changed dramatically over the last thousand years, not least because of human influence. Although the shape of the coast has changed naturally as a result of changes in sea level, rainfall and climate, much of the dry land of the character area owes its existence to successive periods of artificial drainage for agricultural purposes. The rural landscape is one of broad, open views with occasional vertical intrusions from buildings or features, such as the tower of St Botolph's Church in Boston, wind power facilities or relict sea banks. Roads are typically elevated from their surroundings by up to a metre, and even this modest height allows views over great distances, especially on the drained marshland.



Large Modern Field at Croft Marsh

© Richard Croft

The area is predominantly agricultural, with the highest proportion of modern fields by area in the county, which is indicative of the high rate of field boundary loss. There is also a surprisingly high proportion of surviving ancient enclosure. Perhaps the most striking element of the modern landscape is the occurrence of very large modern fields, sometimes referred to as 'prairies'. These large flat arable fields are almost industrial in character, with parallel lines of uniform crops, such as lettuces or brassicas stretching away into the

distance. The enormous quantities of produce grown require a large infrastructure for processing, and the rural landscape is punctuated by industrial complexes such as canneries and freezing plants. The main roads of the area are often busy with large articulated lorries carrying the produce to distant markets, and these can be seen for miles around.

The flat open expanses of the coastal farmland have proved suitable for the construction of wind farms. This is not a new development, as wind power has been used in the area for centuries, both for milling grain and pumping water, and remains of these windmills can be seen in villages across the character area. However, modern wind power generators are generally much larger than historic windmills and tend to be built in groups, as at Gedney Marsh. The wind farms are visible over great distances, and, as elsewhere in the county, have proved controversial.

Settlements are typically found on high ground, particularly on the silt ridge known locally as the Townlands, extending from Wainfleet in the north, around the coast to Boston, Spalding, Holbeach and Long Sutton. The formation continues across the county boundary to Kings Lynn and around the eastern edge of the Wash, and is roughly parallel to the current coast of the Wash. The Townland settlements are typically nucleated in character, although there has been some development along the main roads that threatens to merge some of the smaller settlements with their larger neighbours, and some ribbon development along the historic drove roads leading north from the Townlands to the drained marsh. The major settlements tend to have a broad mix of housing types from a variety of periods. The historic cores are generally surrounded by increasingly more recent housing, with modern residential estates on the periphery.

Away from the main settlements there is a relatively high proportion of dispersed rural settlement. This was historically made up of isolated farmsteads and associated cottages but new dwellings have been added at a steady rate over the last century. Although parts of the drained marsh can feel isolated due to the large fields and vast skies, it is generally possible to see at least two farmsteads from any position in the landscape, and often five or six, making the landscape a little more intimate than it might at first appear.

Landscape History

The modern landscape of the area has been created by the interplay of two factors. The first is the struggle to drain and retain land from the encroachment of the sea. The second is the exploitation of the rich, fertile land gained by doing so.

It is likely that the entire character area has only existed as dry land since the end of the Roman period. At some point in the centuries following the departure of Roman authority, the land on the seaward side of the Townlands was drained either by human activity or by receding sea levels. The Townlands themselves may have existed as islands before this point, but there is little evidence for extensive occupation until the



Inland View from Friskney Sea-Bank
© Ian Paterson

Anglo-Saxon settlement of the area. By the time of the Domesday survey, the main settlements of the Townlands were in existence in some form. The survey also recorded the presence of salterns along the length of the coast, whose mounds may have been partly responsible for the next phase of reclamation recorded by the fourteenth century. This strip of former marsh, running parallel to the silt bank on the seaward side, is likely to have formed by accretion after numerous high spring tides, which would eventually have left the land dry enough to enclose and surround with a sea-bank. At this point the reclaimed land was most likely to have been used for year-round pasture, with the salt marsh on the far side of the bank providing further grazing when not inundated by the sea.

The process of gradual accretion followed by defence and enclosure continued gradually for several centuries. This resulted in a series of sea banks, which can still be seen in the landscape today. The subsequent phases of enclosure are also indicated by the pattern of field boundaries, which become increasingly more planned and straight the closer they are to the coast. In many places, the former courses of creeks are preserved within the field pattern, presumably still forming an important part of the drainage system. An interesting variation on this theme can be seen at Friskney and Wrangle Tofts, where the field boundaries continue their long straight course across several sea-banks. Taken together with the line of settlement from which these fields emanate, this pattern indicates a continuity of ownership over a considerable period of time, with initial plots, laid out at the back of small farmsteads along what is now the A52, being extended each time a new phase of enclosure was completed.

Over the last century, much of the farmland of the area has been turned to arable cultivation. The fertility of the land has been augmented by the adoption of modern farming techniques, but the same techniques require increasing use of machinery, such as tractors and combine harvesters. In order to accommodate the machinery, farmers here, as elsewhere in the county, have consolidated their fields by removing some of the historic boundaries. This has resulted in the creation of large 'prairie' style fields across the character area.

The battle against the sea has been an important part of the historic development of the area. This battle continues, but has recently become more urgent with the impending challenges presented by climate change. It is predicted that sea levels will rise sufficiently to threaten much of the low-lying farmland of the character area in the next fifty years. In order to combat this threat new techniques have been employed, such as the managed retreat at Freiston Shore. As the current policy is that no more land should be surrendered, other methods will need to be employed, such as enhancing existing sea-defences, building new sea walls and adding to the existing array of pumping stations. The threat of climate change has also led to the construction of wind farms across the area, with notable examples at Gedney Marsh and Bicker Fen. These can have a significant visual impact within the landscape, but do not typically damage historic landscape elements, such as field boundaries or standing archaeology. Sub-surface archaeology is, of



Wind Farm at Gedney Marsh
© Glyn Drury

course, as vulnerable to the erection of wind turbines as it is to any other ground disturbance.

Although less than optimal as a site for airfields, the landscape of the Wash nevertheless experienced the effects of the twentieth century conflicts. The remains of pill boxes and other defensive installations can still be seen throughout the character area, having been constructed in order to slow the advance of a potential German invasion force.

Legibility

Despite the many changes to the landscape, much of its historic character remains evident to this day. The marshland that once covered the entire area is still visible from the outermost sea wall, and indeed is a major tourist attraction, as it provides a habitat for large numbers of migratory birds. There are several specific nature reserves, and the whole estuary has been designated as a National Nature Reserve.

Away from the semi-natural landscapes of salt marsh, the rest of the area is entirely man-made. The various phases of drainage can be identified in the field patterns and relict sea-banks and former creeks are seen throughout the area. Despite the removal of many field boundary ditches, the underlying patterns remain well preserved. This is largely due to the inadvisability of removing too many drains in a landscape that is largely below sea level.

Drivers of Change

Agriculture

- Introduction of tall-growing bio-mass crops
- Consolidation of fields leading to further loss of historic patterns around settlements
- Creation of large 'prairie' fields on drained marsh

Climate Change

- Flood alleviation schemes – storage pools, pumping facilities, dykes
- Enhancement of existing sea banks
- Introduction of new crops capable of dealing with drought

Industry

- Construction of new energy production facilities – especially wind power
- Creation of associated energy infrastructure, such as pylons and substations

Settlement

- Regeneration of historic settlements - Boston, Spalding
- Expansion of residential areas around larger settlements
- Ribbon development along main connecting roads
- Infill developments in straggling linear villages

Tourism & Recreation

- Wider appreciation of biodiversity leading to increase in Nature Tourism
- Local economic regeneration through promotion of tourist destinations

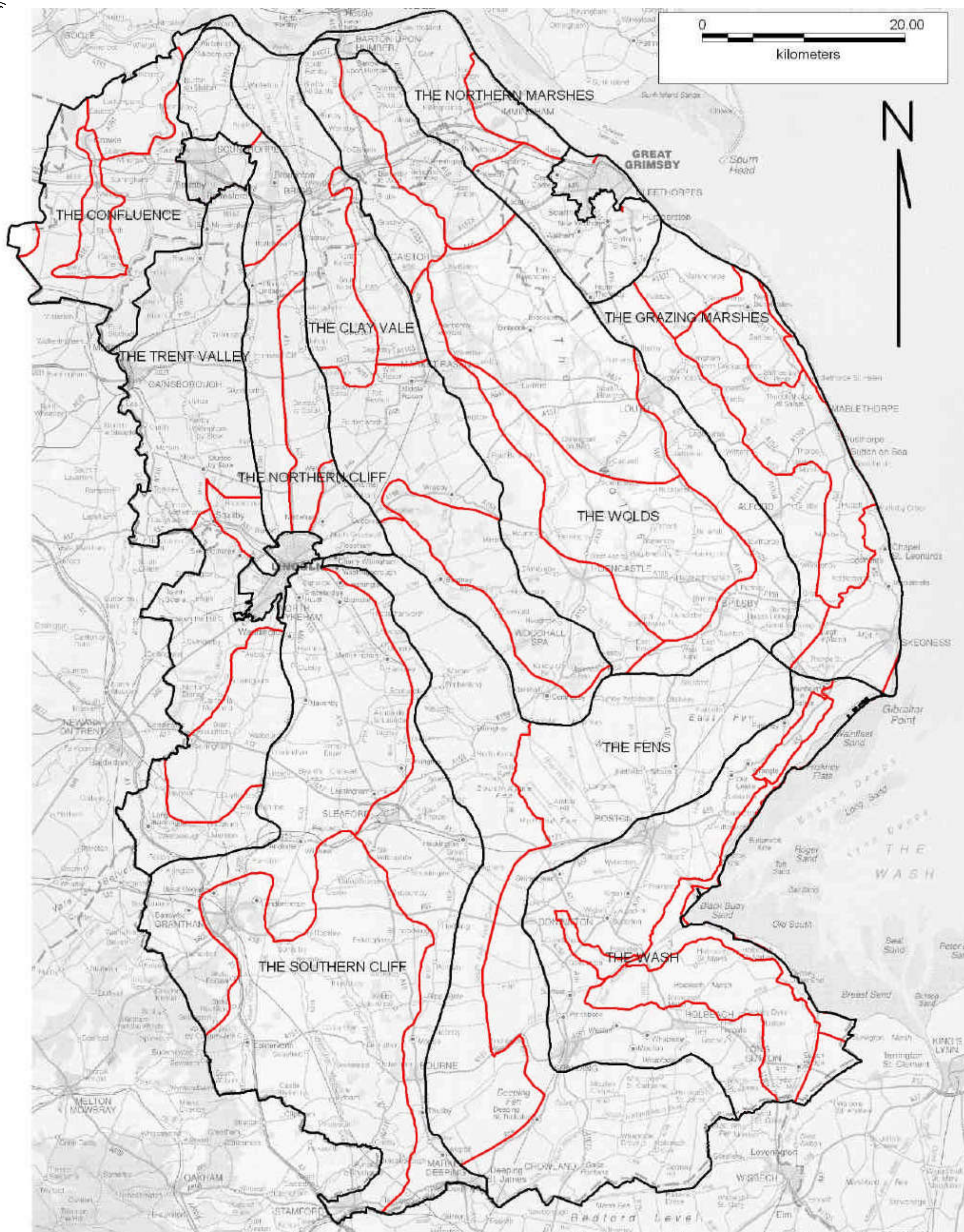


Figure 7. Historic Landscape Character Zones with indicative raster map data
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 Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to civil proceedings.

Character Zone WSH4

Reclaimed Wash Farmlands within The Wash Character Area

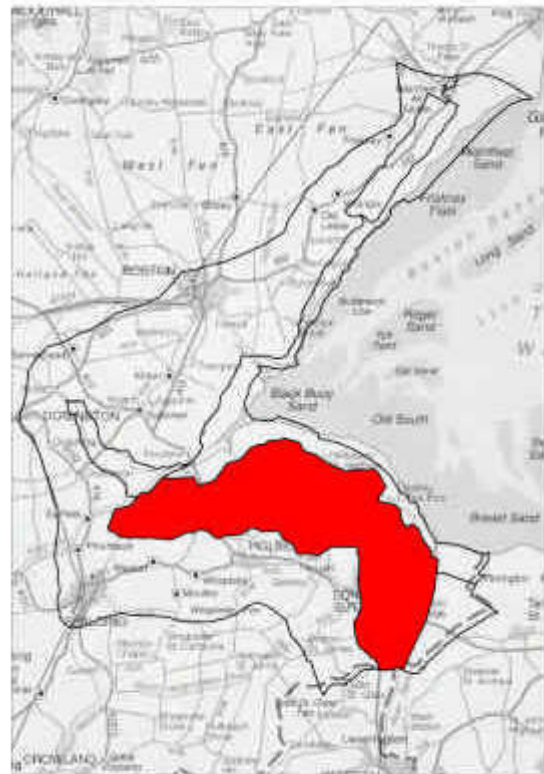
ARS sub-province: EWASHW

Natural England National Character Area:
46 The Fens

Total area: 138 km²

**Percentage of Regional Character
Area:** 20.9%

**Percentage of Overall Project
Area:** 1.98%



Description

Land use throughout the entire zone is primarily agricultural, and there are a number of large scale farmsteads of industrial size in the zone. A small number of orchards exist in the south-west of the zone.

Industrial sites are few, comprising light industry along the A17 corridor as well as storage, processing and distribution sites associated with expanded farmsteads.

The agricultural landscape of the zone comprises a semi-regular pattern of field enclosures, with occasional areas of coherent rectilinear field divisions in the east of the zone and around Moulton Common. Field boundaries predominantly comprise narrow and shallow wet dykes, although embanked natural watercourses form continuous linear boundaries across the zone. A small number of fields around Holbeach St Matthew and Dawesmere are bounded by hedgerows.

Relict sea-banks around the periphery of the zone are associated with successive stages of coastal land reclamation. Sea-banks run roughly parallel to the coastline, with few perpendicular banks dividing inland areas.

The west edge of the zone is formed by the canalised river channel of the Welland, while the east edge of the zone is the large straight drainage channel of the North Level Main Drain and the canalised River Nene.

Settlement in the area is mainly dispersed and, where grouped, is linear. It mostly adheres to the road infrastructure, with the exception of some large, often industrial sized and isolated, farm complexes which are located along dedicated trackways. The southern limits of the zone have a higher population density, with settlement following the course of the 'Roman Bank' (a sea-bank dating to about 1300) and forming more nucleated settlements, such as Holbeach Hurn or Moulton Seas End, that are satellite villages to inland market towns. The northern limits of the zone similarly feature a string of smaller post medieval satellite hamlets such as Gedney Drove End and Holbeach St Marks. The far east of the zone is dominated by the port of Sutton Bridge.

Western parts of the zones are characterised by a network of curvilinear minor roads and tracks running perpendicular to the coast, connecting satellite settlements with their larger parent market towns in the Townlands Zone (WSH6) to the south. Towards the coast, the road system is aligned more east to west and connects the outlying settlements. Road infrastructure in the east of the zone is more organised in nature, with a rectilinear layout of minor roads and trackways.

Woodland in the zone is sparsely distributed throughout, and mainly consists of thin rectilinear plantations and holts located along field boundaries or adjacent to buildings. The south-west of the zone has a limited number of orchards. Numerous small agricultural reservoirs are scattered within the zone.

Historic Landscape Evolution

The entire zone was reclaimed from semi-natural and natural saltmarsh between 1660 and 1811. Prior to embankment and drainage, the saltmarsh was an extensive common grazing area serving livestock from the market towns inland.

Interest from the Crown under James I led to the reclamation of coastal land from the mid seventeenth century. Inhabitants of local villages had the opportunity to purchase their common marsh providing they embanked and drained the land. Tenancies on the remaining land was offered to private individuals who had to embank and drain the shares of Common, Crown and private land as part of their tenure agreement.

Land reclamation occurred from the mid seventeenth century with 17,374 acres of saltmarsh embanked between Moulton and Gedney. The size of the intake suggests that the extent of saltmarsh during this period was substantial. Semi-regular field patterns in the zone, and retained small scale natural watercourses indicate that drainage and enclosure utilised the existing natural drainage infrastructure (Lutton Leam, Fleet, Moulton and Whaplode River systems and the saltmarsh creeks). Areas of more organised enclosure patterns around Moulton and Long Sutton correlate with common land purchased by the villages prior to reclamation, and represents possibly later parliamentary style enclosure of common lands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Reclamation and drainage of land provoked the development of post medieval satellite villages and hamlets on the seaward side of the 'Roman Bank', and inland of the new sea-bank. A new network of roads, accessing and interlinking the satellite villages, formed subsequent to the reclamations. Isolated farmsteads, associated with Crown and private estates, will have been constructed soon after enclosure. Further coastal reclamation between 1793 and 1811 was carried out under the South Holland Embankment Act, increasing the total area reclaimed by 4,695 acres.

Large drainage infrastructure in the south-east of the zone includes the canalised River Nene (1770-72 Wisbech to Gunthorpe Sluice and 1827-30 Gunthorpe Sluice to current outfall), the North Level Main Drain (about 1828), and the South Holland Main Drain (about 1793). The channels cut across former seventeenth- and eighteenth-century coastal reclamation landscapes in the zone, and derive from the drainage of vast tracts of former freshwater fenland in southern Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire.

Canalisation of the River Nene and subsequent land reclamation in the Cross Keys Wash Zone (WSH4) led to the development of the port of Sutton Bridge in the late nineteenth century. Although the original Victorian port was short lived, the modern day port was opened in 1987 and continues to operate today.

Elsewhere in the zone, the pattern of settlement indicates twentieth-century expansion of the more southerly satellite villages, with infill and suburban development along linear features such as sea-banks and minor roads. The northerly satellite villages underwent comparatively less expansion, and in some cases their populations have diminished as industrialised farming techniques reduced the demand for labour.

The modern landscape is a result of widespread amalgamation of enclosures into larger field units mainly from the 1950s, and the growth of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century farmsteads into agricultural complexes of industrial size.

Legibility

The zone clearly demonstrates the successive reclamation of coastal marsh from the thirteenth century onwards, and shows in particular the different approaches to land drainage and enclosure. Subsequent colonisation of the area is visible in the pattern of settlement and infrastructure, and in the place-name evidence of satellite hamlets and villages.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century freshwater drainage channels in the zone provide clear evidence for the episodic evolution of the landscape in this zone and the drained fen landscapes lying inland.