

May 2007

# **Breckland District Landscape Character Assessment**

**Final Report for  
Breckland District Council  
by  
Land Use Consultants**





**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER  
ASSESSMENT OF BRECKLAND  
DISTRICT**

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Prepared for Breckland Council  
by  
Land Use Consultants**

**May 2007**

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### Acknowledgements

Land Use Consultants has prepared this report on behalf of Breckland Council. LUC's team consisted of Kate Ahern, Andrew Tempny, Holly Robinson (authors), Graham Savage (GIS and graphics) and Sarah Sing (Landscape Planning Policy).

We are grateful to Andrew MacNair for permission to use William Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk within the report, and to Paul Thorogood and David Gurney at Norfolk Archaeology for use of the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) data.

The project was directed by a steering group comprising David Spencer (Planning Policy, Breckland Council), Phil Mileham (Planning Policy, Breckland Council), Gilbert Addison (Tree and Conservation Officer, Breckland Council), Judith Cantell (Landscape Architect, Norfolk County Council) and David Yates (Landscape Architect, Norfolk County Council). Consultation was undertaken with a range of relevant bodies including the Brecks Partnership, the Wensum Valley Project, and the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership. However the views expressed within the report are those of Land Use Consultants.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report contains the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of Breckland District. The study was commissioned by Breckland Council and steered by an advisory group representing officers from the district and county council. The district assessment nests within the national and county landscape framework including the recent 'Landscape Evaluation in relation to Wind Turbine Development' (2003).

The study considers the rural landscapes within the district. A more detailed assessment of the fringe of the main settlements has been undertaken and prepared as a separate volume.

The document will be supported by a GIS data set.

## What Is LCA?

Landscape Character Assessment is an accepted and recognised method for understanding what the landscape is like today, how it came to be like that, and how it may change in the future. Landscape character assessment describes and classifies the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes one landscape different from another rather than better or worse. Character is what makes each part of the landscape distinct and gives each area its particular sense of place.

The landscape character approach considers that all landscapes are valuable and seeks to protect their essential character. The purpose of landscape character assessment is to help ensure that change and development does not undermine what ever is characteristic or valued about a particular place, and that ways of improving the character of a place can be considered.

The landscape character assessment of Breckland District will provide a comprehensive landscape evidence base to help underpin planning and management policy and decision-making in the district.

## What does the Breckland LCA contain?

The Breckland landscape character assessment has been prepared in accordance with best practice guidance<sup>1</sup>. The findings have been subject to consultation with stakeholders including a local consultation workshop.

This report presents a characterisation of the whole district at 1:25,000 scale. The Breckland study has identified **6 landscape types** – each with a relatively homogeneous character with similar physical and cultural attributes. The landscape types are subdivided into component landscape **character areas**. These are discrete geographic areas that possess the common characteristics described in the landscape type. There are **27 character areas** in Breckland District each with a distinct and recognisable local identity. The character areas form the fundamental unit for this assessment and the basis for a detailed description and evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage: Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland. 2002. CAX 84/F

## The Breckland District Landscape Classification

### Landscape Type A: River Valleys

#### Character Area

- A1 River Thet
- A2 Upper Yare
- A3 River Wissey
- A4 River Wensum and Blackwater
- A5 Upper Tud

### Landscape Type B: Settled Tributary Farmland

#### Character Area

- B1 Little Ouse Tributary Farmland
- B2 The Buckenhams Tributary Farmland
- B3 River Thet Tributary Farmland
- B4 River Blackwater Tributary Farmland
- B5 River Wissey Tributary Farmland
- B6 River Wensum and Tud Tributary Farmland
- B7 River Nar Tributary Farmland
- B8 Gooderstone to Oxborough Tributary Farmland

### Landscape Type C: The Brecks - Plantations

#### Character Area

- C1 The Brecks of Thetford Forest

### Landscape Type D: The Brecks – Heathland with Plantation

#### Character Area

- D1 Swaffham Heath
- D2 Stanta Heath
- D3 Harling Heathlands

### Landscape Type E: Plateau Farmland

#### Character Area

- E1 Lophams Plateau
- E2 Snetterton Heath Plateau
- E3 Old Buckenham Plateau
- E4 Wayland Plateau
- E5 Central Breckland Plateau
- E6 North Pickenham Plateau
- E7 Beeston Plateau
- E8 Dereham Plateau
- E9 Whissonsett Plateau

### Landscape Type F: Chalk Rivers

#### Character Area

- F1 River Nar Valley

Each character area sets out the following information:

- **Description** – outlines key characteristics and describes character under the headings of physical/natural character, historic character, settlement and built character and perceptual/visual character.
- **Evaluation** – summarises positive landscape features of significance and inherent landscape sensitivities/visual sensitivities, and assesses the current state (condition) of the landscape, plus a review of forces for change. The evaluation concludes with an

overall landscape strategy followed by detailed guidelines for both landscape management and in relation to new development.

### **Who is the LCA aimed at?**

The document is aimed at a wide audience. It provides a technical document and evidence to underpin landscape policies in the preparation of the new Local Development Framework. It will provide key information for use by both developers and development control officers in helping to make decisions on the appropriate location, scale and design of new development. It will also be available to the wider public with a general interest in their local landscape and provides a framework for more detailed studies of local landscape character for example through parish plans or village design statements. The assessment also has wider applications, for example, in influencing land management decisions.

### **How should the Breckland LCA be used?**

The LCA has been undertaken at 1:25,000 scale and therefore provides character-based information for use at this scale. There are a number of considerations governing its use:

- it is a strategic study rather than a detailed field by field survey and any detailed decisions will therefore also need to consider specific local circumstances;
- the assessment concentrates on the rural landscapes of Breckland and excludes detailed urban-rural fringe considerations within the main settlements (this is undertaken as part of a separate study);
- character area boundaries usually represent a 'zone of transition' and in considering any change within any one character area it is often useful to consider effects on adjacent areas.



## **PART I: OVERVIEW**





# I. INTRODUCTION

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## THE LANDSCAPE OF BRECKLAND

- 1.1. Breckland District is located in the east of England, forming part of the County of Norfolk, covering approximately 131,000 hectares. The location and context of the District are set out at **Figure 1.1**. Thetford, Dereham, Swaffham, Watton and Attleborough are the principal towns in the district, together with a wide range of other settlements including the large villages of Necton, Swanton Morley, East Harling and Shipdham.
- 1.2. Breckland is a lowland rural landscape comprising a simple, large scale mosaic of mixed and coniferous plantations, arable agriculture and lowland heathland, crossed by a series of broad, shallow river valleys with associated floodplains and grazing pastures. These peaceful river landscapes form part of a gently undulating ridge and valley landform, with tributaries associated with transitional landform and arable farming, and more elevated farmed plateaux to the ridges.

## PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.3. This report forms part of the Evidence Base for the Breckland District Local Development Framework, and will inform future landscape planning policy. It will also provide evidence for the consideration of individual planning applications. The study describes, assesses and evaluates the character of the landscape within Breckland. It identifies strategies both for landscape management and enhancement and considerations for future change and development within each character area. These recommendations have been developed in close consultation with the client group and key stakeholders.

## STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

- 1.4. The structure of this report is as follows:

**Chapter 1: Introduction:** Introduces the landscape of Breckland District and sets out the structure of the report.

**Chapter 2: Method Statement:** Outlines the method used to undertake the landscape character assessment.

**Chapter 3: Landscape Character Context:** Outlines the landscape character context of the district.

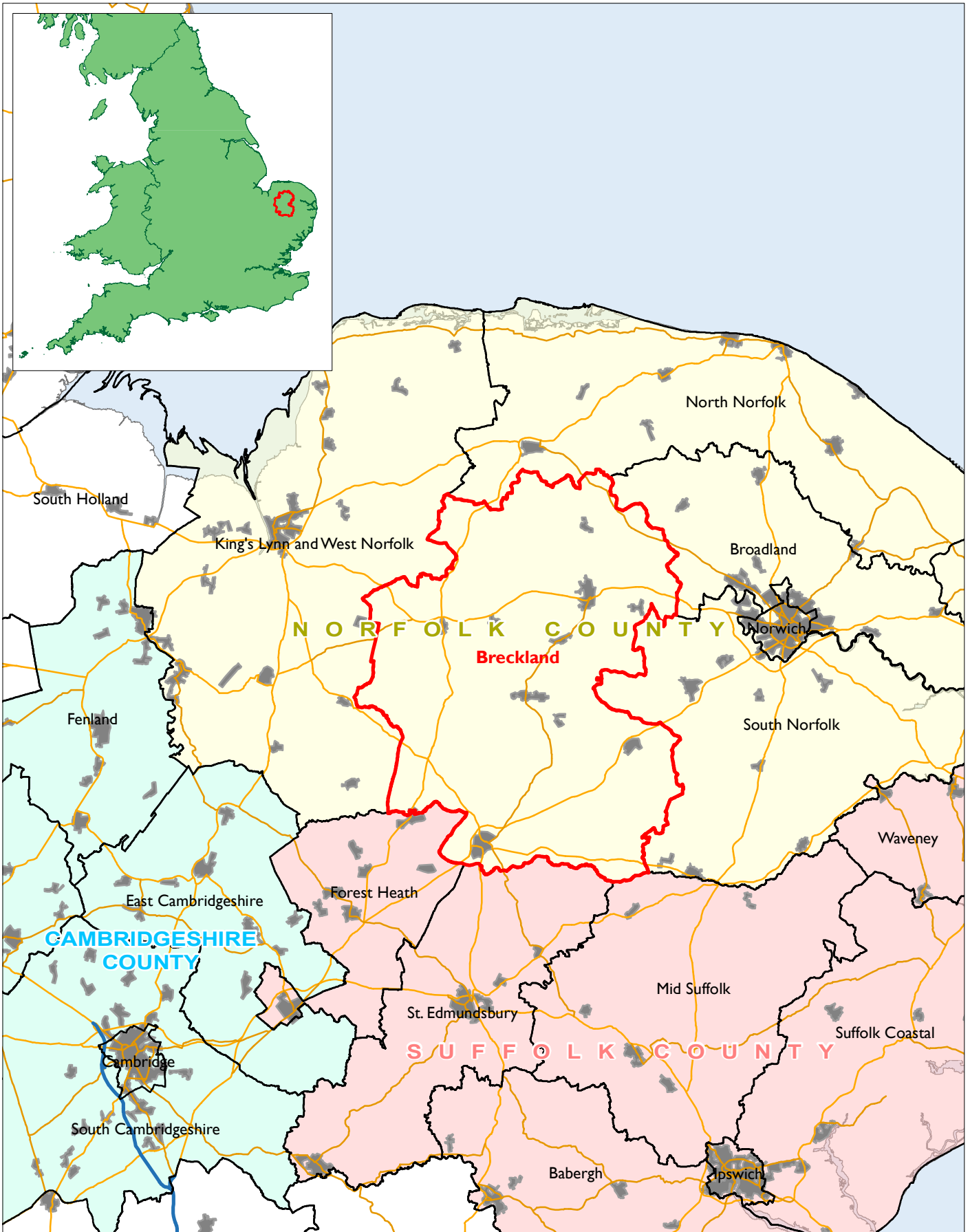
**Chapter 4: Physical influences and ecological context:** Establishes the physical factors that have influenced the character of the area, including geology, topography, hydrology and soils, in addition to providing an overview of ecological characteristics across the district.

**Chapter 5: Human influences and the historic environment:** Establishes the human and cultural influences that have shaped the character of Breckland.

**Chapter 6: Current Initiatives:** Outlines current initiatives influencing the landscape in the district.

**Chapter 7: The Landscape Character of Breckland District:** This is the main body of the report and contains descriptions of landscape types and character areas including a broad landscape strategy leading on to management guidelines.

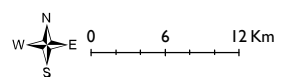
**Chapter 8: Conclusions:** Draws overarching conclusions in the form of overall management objectives for landscape types and character areas.



**Breckland LCA**  
**Figure I.1 Location and Context of the Study Area**

**Key**

- Breckland Boundary
- District Boundaries



Source: Ordnance Survey

Date: 06/06/2007  
 Revision: C





## 2. METHOD STATEMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The method for undertaking the landscape character assessment follows the current accepted method promoted by the former Countryside Agency (now Natural England) as set out in the document *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* (2002). The process for undertaking this assessment involves five main stages, described below, namely:
- Data Collation;
  - Characterisation;
  - Field survey;
  - Evaluation;
  - Consultation.
- 2.2. The assessment has been prepared within the framework of the former Countryside Agency and English Nature's Countryside Character Initiative and the previous LUC study which identified landscape types at 1:50,000 scale<sup>2</sup>. This study was undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000.
- 2.3. A Geographic Information System (GIS) was used throughout the study as the tool for collating, manipulating and presenting data. Land Use Consultants operates ESRI ArcView.

### DATA COLLATION

- 2.4. This involved the collation and mapping of a wide range of existing information on the characteristics of Breckland from a variety of sources including baseline maps of geology, topography, soils and hydrology; schedules of designated and protected areas and features; and Norfolk's Historic Landscape Characterisation (where available). The following baseline data was compiled and mapped:
- National countryside character areas;
  - National landscape typology;
  - Natural areas;
  - Norfolk County Level 2 LDU's;
  - Solid and drift geology (1:50,000);
  - Soils data (1:250,000);
  - Adopted Breckland Local Plan 1999 (including designated sites);

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<sup>2</sup> LUC *Wind Turbine Development: Landscape Assessment, Evaluation and Guidance*, 2003

- Norfolk Historic Landscape Characterisation;
  - The outputs of the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project.
- 2.5. A review was also undertaken of physical and human influences in the District, as well as current initiatives, including the Brecks Partnership, the EcoNet Project and the Wensum Valley Project.

## CHARACTERISATION

- 2.6. The draft assessment was arrived at by overlaying the individual datasets in GIS onto a 1:25,000 OS base map and identifying common patterns of characteristics. The approach follows best practice as promoted by the Countryside Agency in the Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002) in maintaining a distinction between landscape types and character areas, and developing a hierarchical approach as follows:
- **Landscape Types** - which are generic and share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation and human influences, e.g. *Brecks-Plantation*.
  - **Character Areas** - which are single and unique, discrete geographical areas of the landscape type, e.g. *Brecks of Thetford Forest*.
- 2.7. The study specifically excluded an analysis of the areas within the town and village development limits. Therefore, although the smaller villages were considered as a part of a wider landscape context and character, no specific townscape or urban character assessments were undertaken.

## SURVEY

- 2.8. A field survey was undertaken to appraise the draft characterisation. There were two stages of fieldwork – one in October 2006 to confirm boundaries and to undertake the fieldwork for a pilot area, and the second stage in December 2006-January 2007 to complete the gathering of data for all other landscape character areas.
- 2.9. Fieldwork was required to:
- confirm the draft boundaries;
  - gather data to feed into the descriptions;
  - gather evaluation data;
  - ensure photographic coverage of all the character areas within the district.
- 2.10. A systematic and rigorous approach was adopted for the survey, with information recorded on 1:25,000 scale maps and a field record sheet (shown at **Appendix I**). A comprehensive photo record was also made.

**A note on boundary lines:** The precision of boundaries drawn around landscape character areas and types varies with the scale and level of detail of the assessment. This assessment has been mapped at a scale of 1:25,000 which means that it is

suitable for use at this scale. In reality landscape character rarely changes abruptly and the boundaries indicated therefore sometimes represent zones of transition in character relating to changes in topography, geology, soils, cultural patterns, land use etc. rather than marked changes on the ground. In practice boundaries of this nature have frequently been drawn to follow physical or mappable features such as roads, lanes or field boundaries which provide 'best fit'. A section on boundaries has been provided at the beginning of each landscape character area description to highlight any boundary issues.

**A note on character areas:** Landscape character types and areas have been mapped at a scale of 1:25,000 and are suitable for use at this scale. Landscape types have generic characteristics which apply to all the areas falling within that type. Character areas share these characteristics with other areas of the same landscape type but have a particular 'sense of place'.

## EVALUATION

- 2.11. The Countryside Agency's Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland states '*The use of Landscape Character Assessment in making judgements is a fast-moving scene amongst practitioners*'. The evaluation undertaken as part of the Breckland LCA followed current best practice and was developed in consultation with the Steering Group.
- 2.12. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide the basis for strategic landscape planning and management and to assist in the development control process by providing a more informed response to development proposals affecting the landscape. In order to achieve these aims the evaluation developed judgements on:
  - (i) positive landscape features of significance and inherent landscape sensitivities;
  - (ii) visual sensitivity;
  - (iii) the current state of the landscape;
  - (iv) landscape change;
  - (v) an overall guiding landscape strategy;
  - (vi) guidelines to help achieve the overall strategy.

### Key Positive Features/ Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- 2.13. This identified a subset of key characteristics - the key positive attributes that, if lost or changed, would change the character of the landscape.

### Visual Sensitivity

- 2.14. This identified visual sensitivity based on observations about the visual prominence of the landscape (as a result of landform influences and vegetation cover), the presence of visual receptors and the potential for mitigating visual impact without the mitigation measures themselves having an adverse effect.

### **Current State of the Landscape (Condition)**

- 2.15. This part of the evaluation identified the current condition of the landscape as observed through field survey.

### **Forces for change**

- 2.16. This part of the evaluation identified forces for change partly drawn from the Countryside Agency's 'Countryside Quality Counts' (CQC) data, from consultation, and from field survey observations. It is recognised that the CQC data is based at the Countryside Character level and is therefore very broad brush in approach. Any statements were therefore backed up by consultation and/or field survey.

### **Landscape Strategy, Landscape Management and Development Guidelines**

- 2.17. The preceding information was analysed to produce an overall objective for the landscape, followed by more detailed 'guidelines' for landscape management and built development.

### **CONSULTATION**

- 2.18. In addition to close consultation with the Steering Group, initial consultation was undertaken with the following organisations by telephone:
- Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership;
  - Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project;
  - Brecks Regional Park Initiative/Suffolk County Council;
  - Wensum Valley Project.
- 2.19. The aim of the initial consultation was to gather information on initiatives and/or forces for change affecting the landscape of Breckland and to use this to inform the evaluation.
- 2.20. Stakeholder consultation workshops were held in January 2007 to validate the landscape characterisation. The stakeholder consultation report is provided at **Appendix 2**.



## 3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

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### THE NATIONAL/REGIONAL CHARACTER CONTEXT

- 3.1. The district wide assessment has been prepared within the framework of the Countryside Agency's Countryside Character Initiative as shown on the Character of England Map (see **Figure 3.1**).
- 3.2. The landscape of Breckland is represented at the national/regional level by three Countryside Character Areas. These are:
  - 83: South Norfolk and Mid Suffolk Claylands;
  - 84 Mid Norfolk;
  - 85: Breckland.
- 3.3. The study also considers the context provided by the Countryside Agency's National Landscape Typology (see **Figure 3.2**). This subdivides the regional character areas into more detailed landscape types.

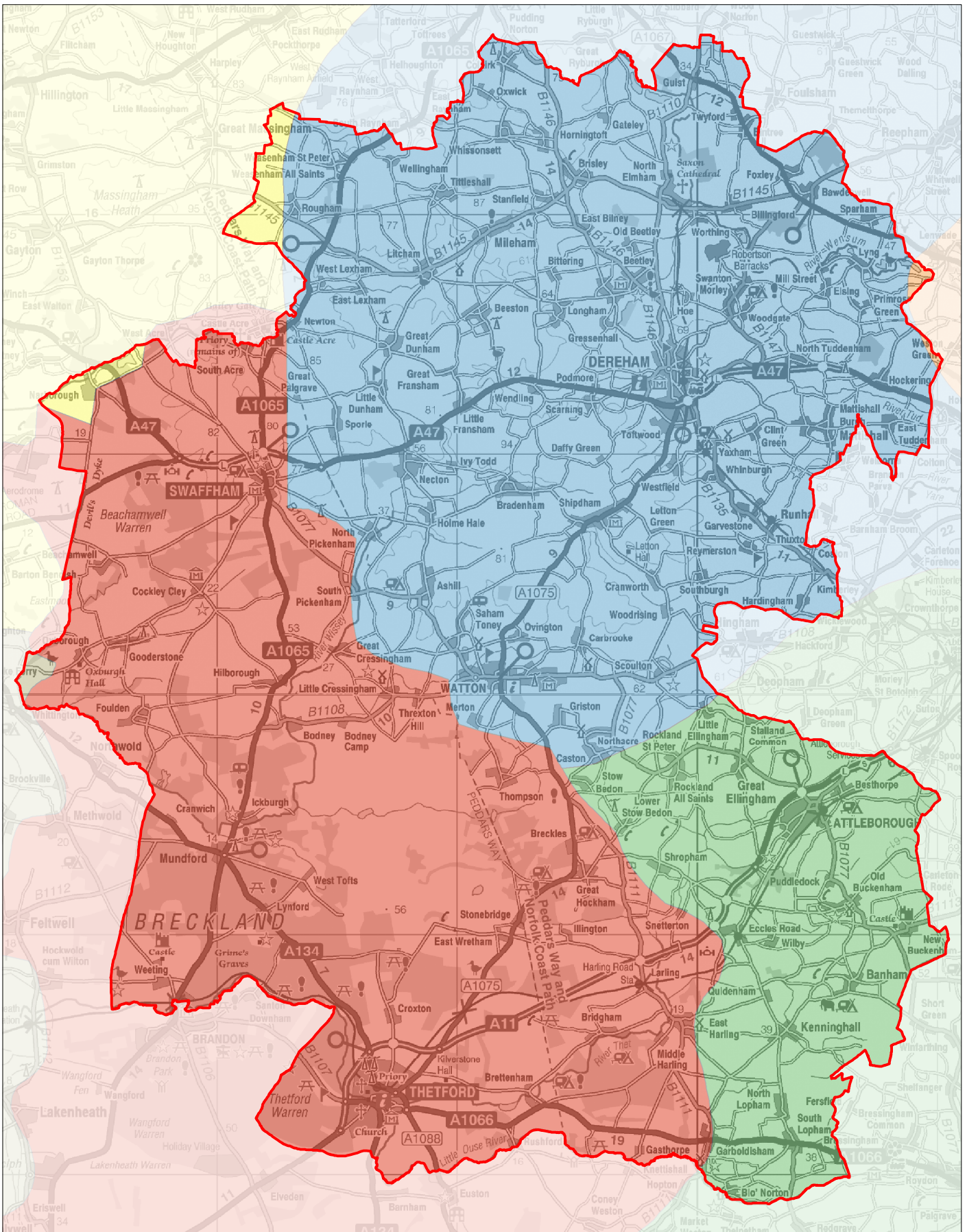
### COUNTY LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

- 3.4. The Norfolk County Landscape Assessment defined broad landscape character types equivalent to Level 2 Landscape Description Units or LDU's, organised on thematic lines including land cover, cultural, ecological and natural factors, and areas of settlement. A similar LDU based approach to characterisation has been undertaken in Suffolk. The landscape typology broadly agrees with the classification developed by this study.

### THE DISTRICT WIDE ASSESSMENT (THIS STUDY)

- 3.5. The Breckland District LCA, undertaken at 1:25,000 scale nests within the national and regional landscape framework. It builds upon existing work by Land Use Consultants within the district, notably the '*Wind Turbine Sensitivity and Capacity Study*' which was produced for Breckland District Council and the Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk in 2003. That study defined landscape types at 1:50,000 scale. This study has refined the boundaries and names appropriate to a District scale Landscape Character Assessment. The relationship between the two studies and how they informed the classification, together with the boundary changes and their justification is shown at **Appendix 3**.
- 3.6. In preparing the landscape classification, the study has noted the relationship with the ongoing landscape character assessment work within neighbouring authorities, notably South Norfolk District and the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, North Norfolk, Broadland, Mid Suffolk, St. Edmundsbury and Forest Heath. The aim being to produce, as far as possible, a seamless classification across administrative borders.

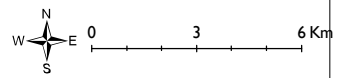




**Breckland LCA**  
**Figure 3.1 Joint Character Areas**

**Key**

- Breckland Boundary
- Mid Norfolk
- North West Norfolk
- Breckland
- South Norfolk And High Suffolk Claylands
- Central North Norfolk
- The Fens

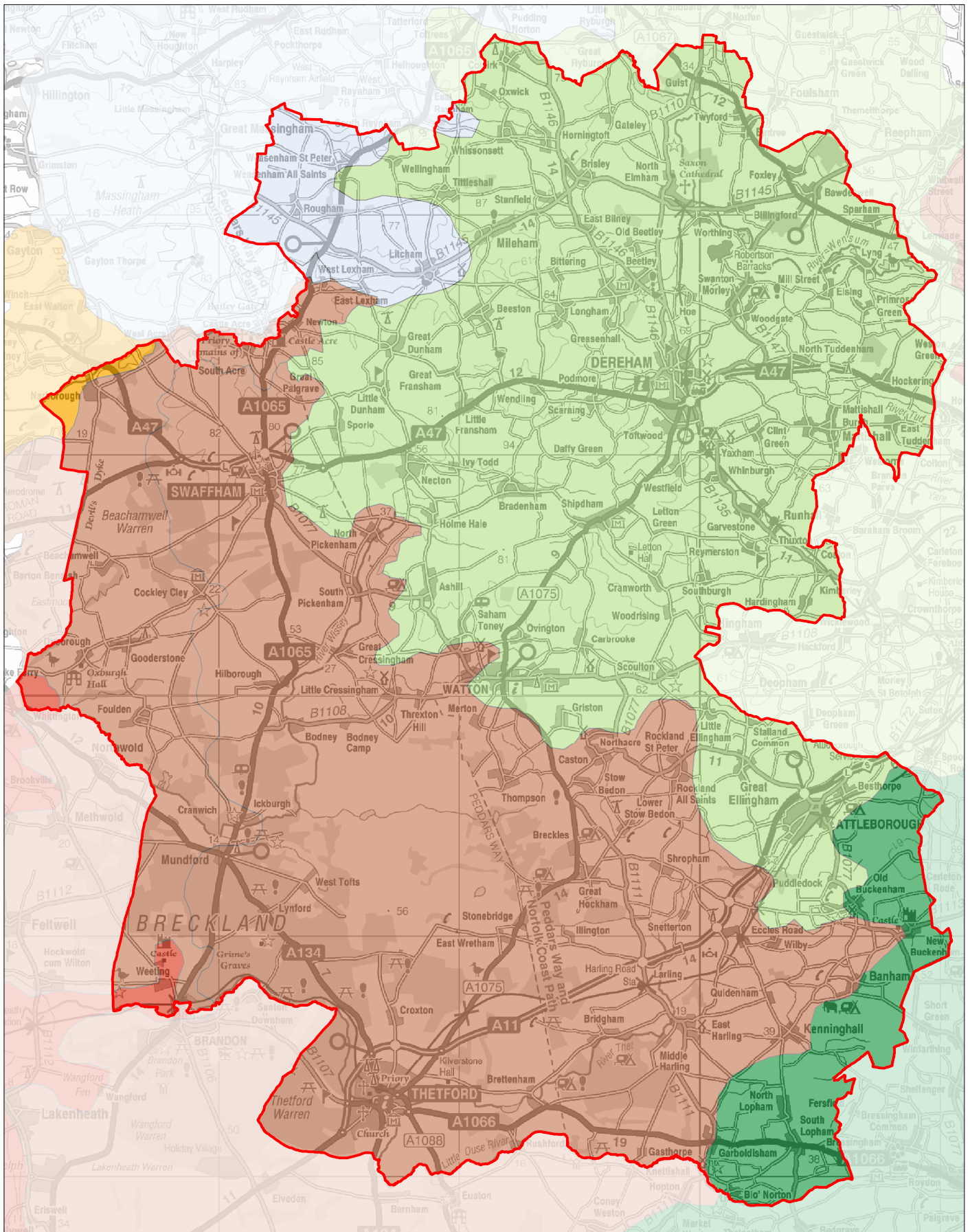


Source: Natural England

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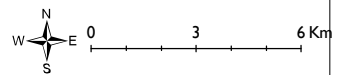






**Breckland LCA**  
**Figure 3.2 National Landscape Typology**  
**Key**

- Breckland Boundary
- National Landscape Typology (Level I)  
 Lowlands, Wetland, Wooded (secondary)
- Lowlands, Wetland, Wetland/waste unwooded
- Intermediate, Clayland, Wooded (ancient woods)
- Intermediate, Clayland, Wooded (esteland)
- Intermediate, Heath & Moorland, Wooded (esteland)
- Intermediate, Heath & Moorland, Wooded (secondary)



Source: Natural England

Date: 06/06/2007  
 Revision:





## 4. PHYSICAL INFLUENCES AND ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

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- 4.1. The landscape of Breckland has evolved in response to the basic underlying geological characteristics of the land upon which natural processes and human activities have operated in turn influencing patterns of land use as well as ecological and cultural character.
- 4.2. Breckland is underlain by Middle and Upper Chalk, largely covered with glacial drift deposits. The solid and drift geology of Breckland is illustrated in **Figure 4.1** and topography in **Figure 4.2**.

### GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 4.3. The landscape of Breckland District has evolved as a result of an interaction of the physical structure of the landscape and the vegetation and land uses that cover it. To understand what makes a place distinctive, it is useful to identify the key physical influences that have shaped the landscape over time.
- 4.4. The basic structure of the landscape is fundamentally influenced by its underlying rocks and relief. Geology and the processes of weathering, erosion and deposition influence the shape and form of the landscape and its drainage and soils. In turn, these influence patterns of vegetation and land use.
- 4.5. The underlying bedrock of the entire district is chalk, which was deposited during the Cretaceous period 144 and 65 million years ago. In Breckland, the overlying drift deposits of chalky boulder clay, sand, diamicton and alluvium create local variation within the landscape.
- 4.6. Many of the processes which shaped the Breckland landscape are linked to glaciations and occurred during the Pleistocene. There were 4 glacial periods that influenced the landscape of the East of England in general. During the Great Ice Age the area was covered more than once by ice sheets. As the ice moved over the area they displaced and transported materials. The second glacial period, the Great Eastern, had a significant impact upon the landscape. It was during this period that Chalky Boulder Clay (also known as Lowestoft Till) was deposited overlying the chalk. As a geological deposit, chalky boulder clay presents a flat surface, varying considerably in depth. The thickest deposits create the elevated plateaux, which form elevated flat, chalk landforms carved through by streams. When the Great Eastern Ice Sheet melted, great torrents of water flowed from beneath the ice sheet and scoured deep channels in the drift clay and underlying chalk. Immediately following the retreat of the ice sheet, the drainage of the region is thought to have developed along hollows formed on the surface of the newly deposited boulder clay. These channels subsequently filled with glacial drift, and in some instances became filled with water, forming the river channels extant today.
- 4.7. In the south west of the district, drift deposits are either completely absent or very thinly scattered. In this part of the district, there is only a thin capping of sand and gravel covering the chalk which gives rise to barren, sandy soils creating the Breckland heaths and forests. Here, periglacial action has created distinctive striped

or polygon- shaped soil pattern of alternating acidic and alkaline soils. This has resulted in interesting variations in vegetation and land cover, with acid heathland often alternating in 'stripes' with chalk grassland.

- 4.8. Glacial thaw during the last Ice Age resulted in the contraction of subterranean pockets of frozen groundwater, creating the characteristic 'pingo' pools apparent in the southern part of Breckland District, notably at Foulden Common. These support a rich range of aquatic and marginal habitats.
- 4.9. Among the heathy landscapes to the north of Thetford, several small, open groundwater-fed meres are found e.g. Ringmere. These meres with certain associated ponds probably originated through the partial blocking of the floors of swallow holes by clay transported from glacial beds through erosion. Marl pits are a common feature around the areas of sand and gravel deposits as excavated chalky clay was used to add body and lime to the sandy soils.

## ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

- 4.10. The Natural Areas associated with Breckland are shown at **Figure 4.3**.
- 4.11. Natural Areas are subdivisions of England identified by Natural England as being unique on the basis of their wildlife, landform, geology, land use and human impact. They provide a way of interpreting the ecological variation of the country in terms of natural features, illustrating the distinction between one area and another.
- 4.12. This approach provides a wider context for conservation action. Two principal Natural Areas are located within Breckland District, notably Breckland and the East Anglian Plain, whilst a small part of the North Norfolk Natural Area lies within the north western part of the district.
- 4.13. The profile for the Breckland Natural Area describes the area as being part of a low chalk spine extending from north west Norfolk as far as the Chilterns. The chalk solid geology of this low plateau is overlain with drift deposits of varying depth and composition, including windblown sand, sand and boulder clay. Soils are complex, encompassing free draining mixes of chalk, silt, sand, clay and flints, which have profoundly influenced the pattern of heathland and woodland vegetation and agricultural practice.
- 4.14. The profile description notes the considerable biodiversity value of the natural area (e.g. chalk rivers and SSSI designation such as at Stanta Heath), in spite of the significant changes in land cover resulting from afforestation and agricultural intensification during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- 4.15. The East Anglian Plain Natural Area is identified as a broadly flat plateau dissected by streams and river valleys, with local topographic variation provided by river valleys such as the Wensum. A strong contrast is created by the open plains and intimate small scale valleys. An underlying chalk solid geology is heavily overlain with boulder clay through which the river valleys were carved by glacial meltwater.
- 4.16. Arable agriculture is the dominant land use within the natural area, although hedges, isolated trees and woods create a wooded character in the southern part of the



character area. An irregular field pattern is still apparent in areas, in spite of 20<sup>th</sup> Century agricultural intensification and associated boundary loss.

- 4.17. The North Norfolk Natural Area lies in the northern part of East Anglia, being distinguished from adjoining Natural Areas by a combination of light soils, climate, relief and land use. Drift deposits of gravels, sands and boulder clays determine the vegetation cover, e.g. heathland to the south of Blakeney, in addition to areas of mire and ancient woodland.

## **KEY COUNTYWIDE ECOLOGICAL HABITATS**

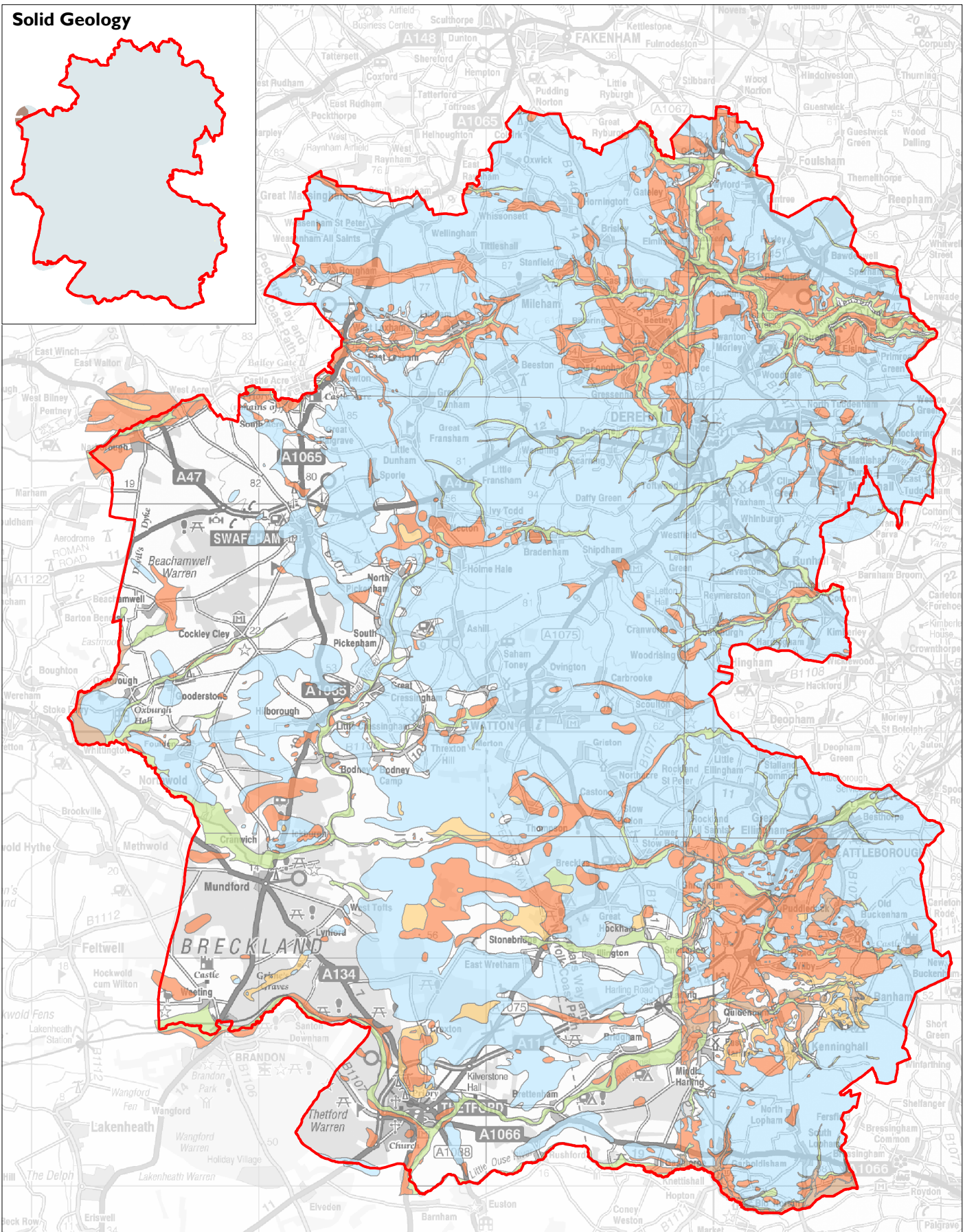
- 4.18. A number of priority habitats and species are identified within the individual component action plans of the Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). These include reedbed, wet woodland, chalk rivers, floodplain grazing marsh, heathland (both acidic and calcareous) lowland wood-pasture and parkland, mesotrophic lakes/meres, orchards, ancient hedgerows and cereal field margins. In particular alder carr is identified as a priority habitat and an important element of historic landscape and ecological character.
- 4.19. The Breckland Forest SSSI, SPA and SAC supports an important assemblage of scarce vascular plant species, invertebrates and birds protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, including Woodlark and Nightjar, in addition to being one of the last extant populations of Red Squirrel. The adjacent Breckland Farmlands are also designated SSSI, providing breeding grounds for Stone Curlew.

## **ECOLOGICAL NETWORK (ECONET) MAPPING PROJECT**

- 4.20. The Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership has prepared an indicative Ecological Network Map of Norfolk, with the aim being to protect and enhance the wildlife resource through appropriate and sensitive management and habitat creation to restore connectivity /create a linked series of sites. This project identified a series of Core Area, which represent dense concentrations of high quality extant habitat. In addition the Project has identified enhancement areas for heathland, grassland and woodland creation, to add to priorities and objectives for habitat creation and restoration. These broad areas are shown at **Figure 4.4**, with the Nature Conservation Designations at **Figure 4.5**.
- 4.21. Landscape management guidelines and principles identified for the respective character areas within the LCA have been informed by the objectives set out in the Ecological Network Mapping Project. The primary objective has been to ensure an integrated and holistic approach to landscape planning which takes account not only of designated sites but also habitats in decline and opportunities for future habitat creation in planning for future land management and enabling the delivery of the objectives/targets of both the Biodiversity Action Plan and the Ecological Network Mapping Project.




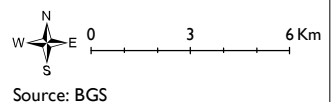
# Solid Geology



**Breckland LCA**  
**Figure 4.1 Drift and Solid Geology**

**Key**

- |   |                    |   |                 |   |
|---|--------------------|---|-----------------|---|
|  | Breckland Boundary |  | Sand and Gravel | <b>Solid Geology (Inset Map)</b>  |
|  | Diamicton          |  | Silt and Clay   |  |
|  | Peat               |  | Silty Clay      |  |
|   |                    |  | Sand            |   |

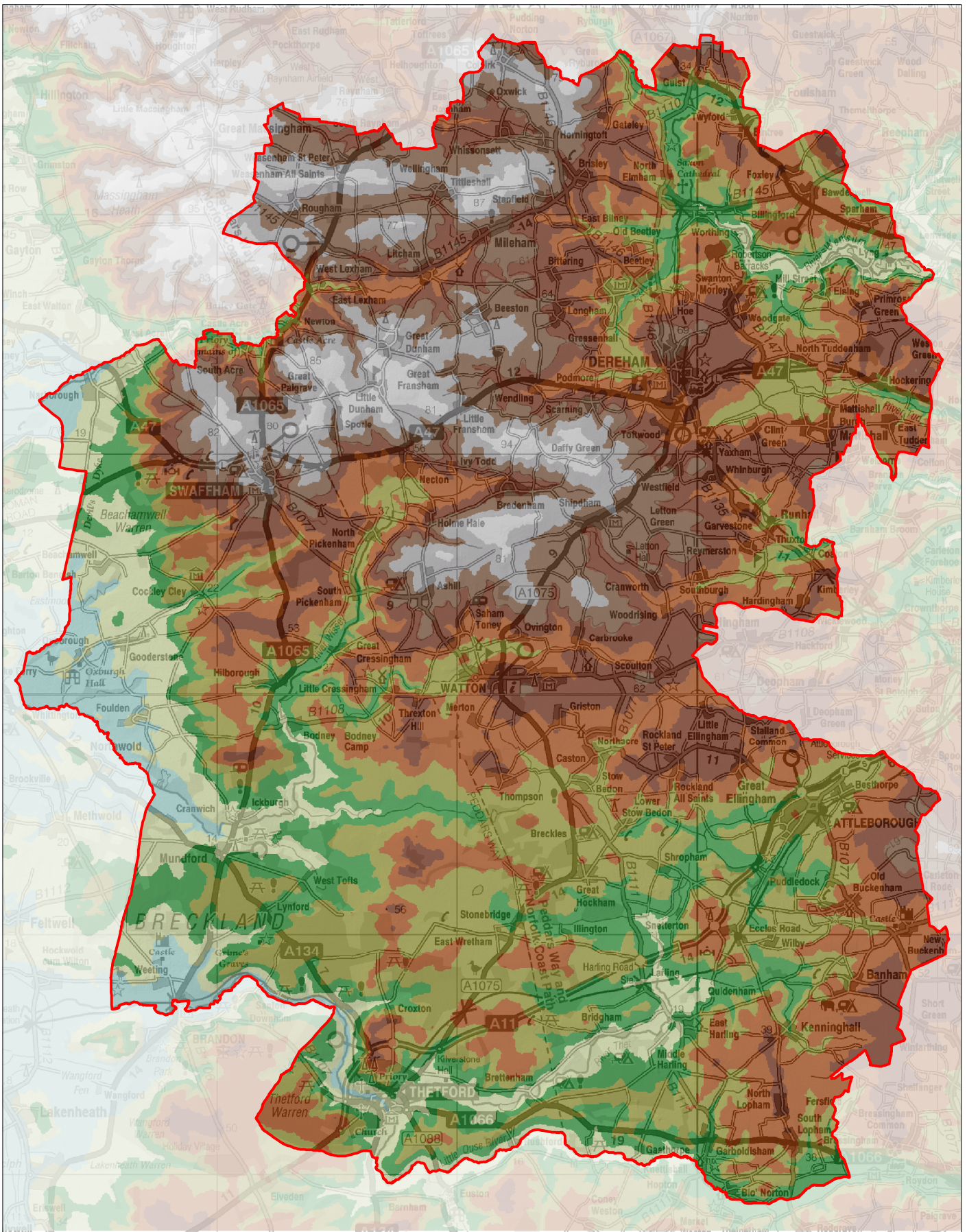


Source: BGS

Date: 06/06/2007  
 Revision:













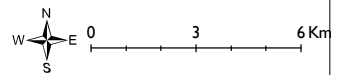




**Breckland LCA**  
**Figure 4.2 Topography**

**Key**

	Breckland Boundary		20 - 30		60 - 70
	0 - 10		30 - 40		70 - 80
	10 - 20		40 - 50		80 - 100
			50 - 60		

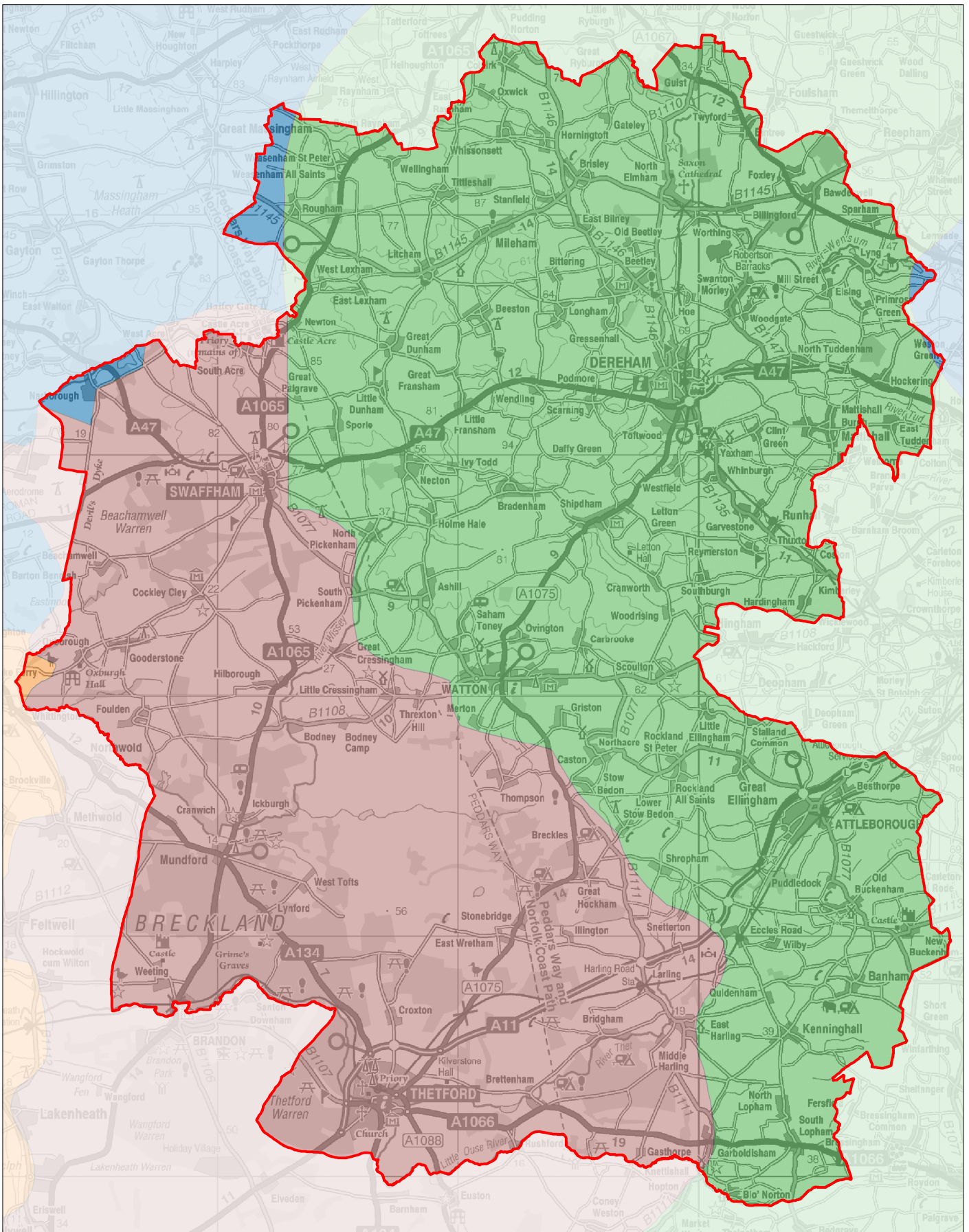


Source: Ordnance Survey

Date: 17/01/2007  
Revision: A



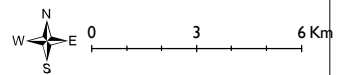




**Breckland LCA**  
**Figure 4.3 Natural Areas**

**Key**

- Breckland Boundary
- East Anglian Plain
- Natural Areas**
- North Norfolk
- Breckland
- The Fens



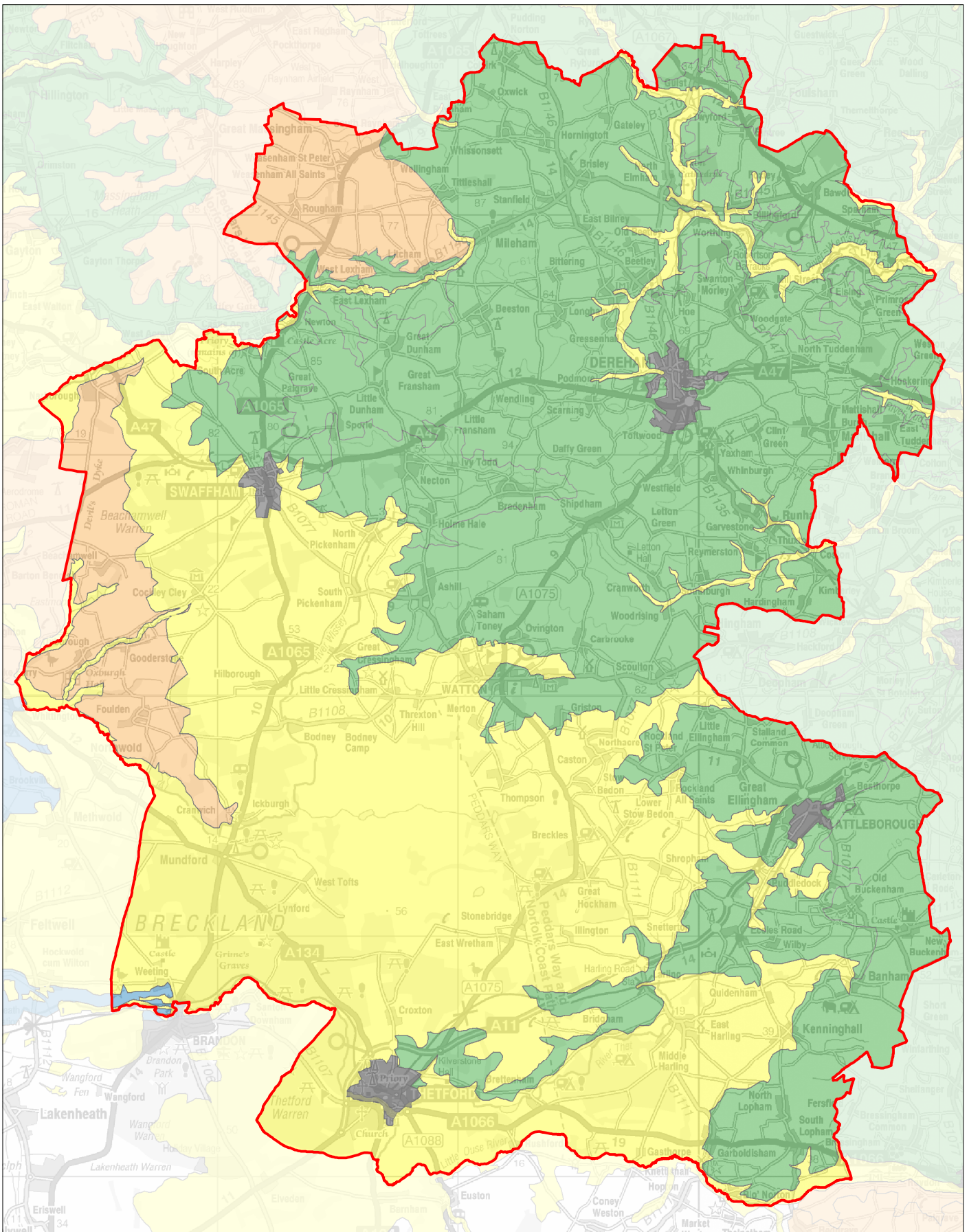
Source: Natural England

Date: 06/06/2007  
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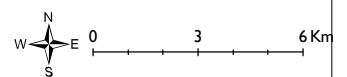


## Breckland LCA

Figure 4.4 Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project Enhancement Areas

### Key

- |   |                            |   |
|---|----------------------------|---|
|  | Breckland Boundary         | <b>Enhancement areas</b>  |
|  | Urban                      |  Enhancement - heath, grassland and wood |
|  | Core areas                 |  Enhancement - wetland creation          |
|  | Enhancement area - general |   |

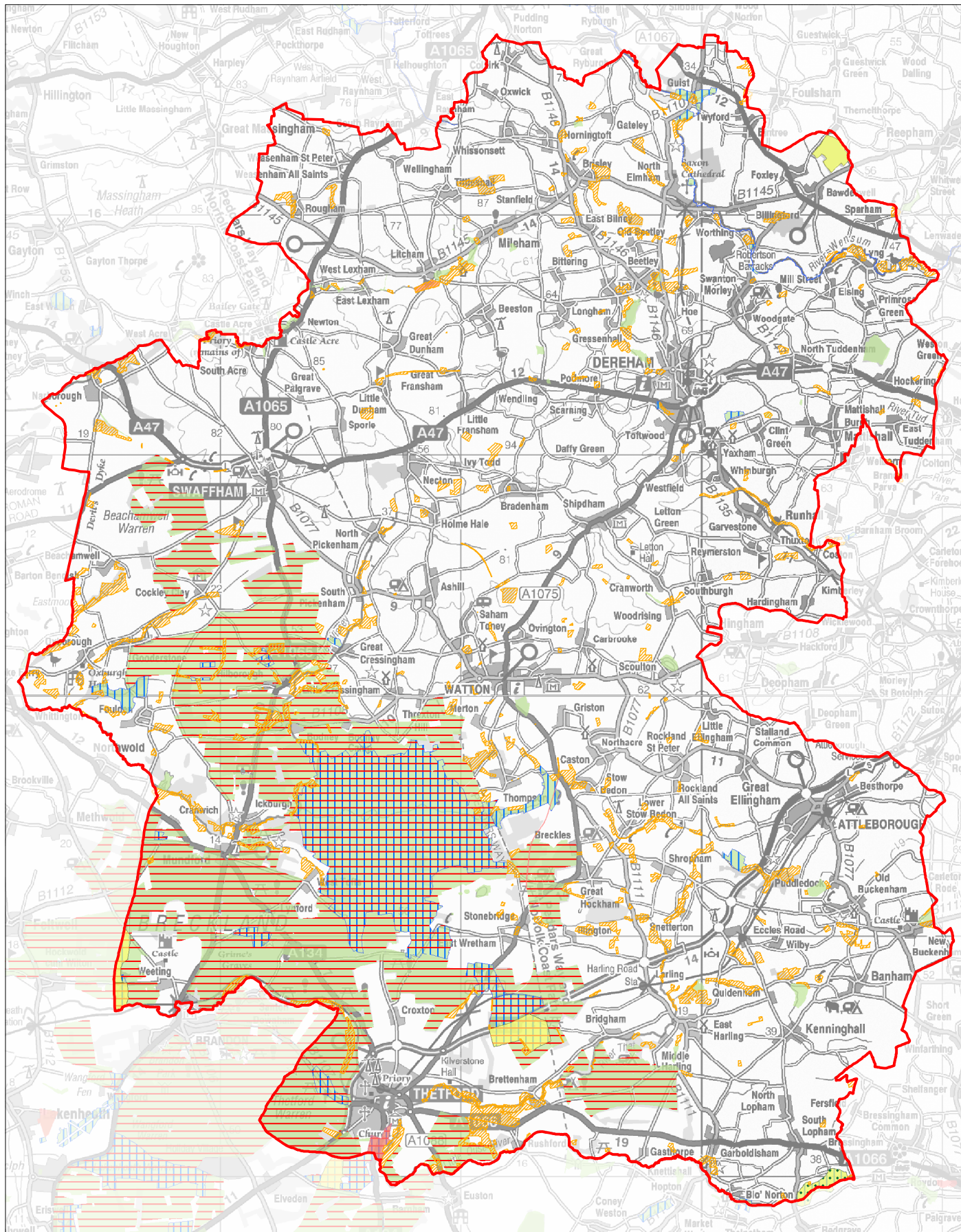


Source: Norfolk County Council

Date: 06/06/2007  
Revision: A



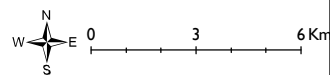




**Breckland LCA**  
**Figure 4.5 Nature Conservation Designations**

**Key**

- Breckland Boundary
- SAC
- SPA
- SSSI
- Ramsar
- NNR
- LNR
- County Wildlife sites



Source: Natural England  
 Breckland District Council

Date: 06/06/2007  
 Revision: A





## 5. HUMAN INFLUENCES

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### Introduction

- 5.1. The landscape of Breckland is the product of the interaction of natural and human or anthropogenic processes. Like most areas of Britain, the landscape of the district bears the imprint of successive periods of human habitation and land use. The following chapter provides a brief summary of the past influences on the landscape of Breckland. It builds on the human/anthropogenic processes affecting Breckland as identified in the draft Historic Landscape Characterisation at **Figure 5.1**. The historic designations are illustrated at Figure 5.2.

### The Neolithic Period and the Bronze and Iron Ages c4500 BC to AD43

- 5.2. Historically much of Breckland was lime dominated wildwood<sup>3</sup>, in addition to a mix of acid and calcareous heathland, often in alternating bands or stripes due to the underlying geology. Pollen samples found under Neolithic barrows have also indicated oak forest based soil<sup>4</sup>. The arrival of the first Neolithic peoples (c4500-2000 BC) resulted in the first wood clearances for both agriculture and woodmanship. A number of round burial mounds, barrows and mortuary enclosures are located within the District, often associated with the more elevated heathlands and plateaux, and indicate Bronze Age Activity.
- 5.3. Evidence of the Neolithic flint mining industry, both for arrow heads, weapons and later building materials is visible in the pits at Grimes Graves, within Thetford Forest. The Neolithic flint mines at Grimes Graves are recognised as being of national cultural, historical and archaeological importance.

### The Romano-British and the Anglo-Saxon Periods AD43-1066

- 5.4. Much of Breckland was occupied by Boudicea's tribe, the Iceni, around 60 AD, with Thetford, at the confluence of the Rivers Thet and Little Ouse being chosen as the site for the Iceni Royal City, and there is a reconstructed Iceni village at Cockley Cley. There is considerable evidence of Roman occupation within the District, both with the pattern of long straight roads and right angled junctions which form a rectilinear pattern across many of the elevated areas of heathland and parts of Breckland Forest, and also in the number of Romano British sites that have been excavated and recorded within the District, particularly within Thetford Forest.
- 5.5. Of the subsequent Saxon occupation, there remains some evidence. From c800AD North Elmham was the seat of the Bishopric (although this may have been South Elmham, in Suffolk), until the collapse of the See with the Danish invasions. The See lapsed in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century before being revived c.955. A cathedral stood on the site of the supposed North Elmham Cathedral, the foundations of which stand in the Wensum Valley, from the revival of the See until it was transferred to Thetford in

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<sup>3</sup> Rackham, O *The History of the Countryside*, JM Dent 1986

<sup>4</sup> Fairbrother, N *New Lives, New Landscapes* The Architectural Press, 1970

1071. The present ruins are however more probably a Bishop's Chapel of the early Norman era.<sup>5</sup>

- 5.6. A number of villages within Breckland possess parish churches which are substantially Saxon or incorporating Saxon work. Flint continued to be the predominant building material, into the medieval and post medieval eras with knapping and mining being prominent local trades. Breckland flint was later also used to supply the munitions and arms trade as far away as Siam<sup>6</sup>.

### **Medieval Period 1066-1499**

- 5.7. Following the Norman Conquest, landed estates either manorial or monastic began to influence the landscape and land use. Manorial lands were initially associated with Motte and Bailey Castles and later fortified or moated Manor Houses, towards the end of the period (e.g. Oxborough). A number of monastic sites were established within Breckland, either on the site of earlier Saxon foundations or otherwise endowments from new religious orders from continental Europe. A Benedictine Priory was established at Thetford, together with a nunnery, and a Cluniac monastery at Castle Acre (outside the present District Boundary, although its estates and lands/monastic farms historically influenced the character of the landscape in this area, and formed part of the wider Breckland landscape).
- 5.8. Manor houses and their associated parks often formed the core of the settlements within Breckland, augmented by knapped flint and dressed stone churches, many of which were substantially rebuilt in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries. These were generally relatively small in scale, with a number of exceptions, e.g. Oxborough. Round towers or short, squat square west towers are a characteristic feature within the Breckland Landscape. The general lack of prosperity apparent in the Breckland Churches is apparent in the ruinous state and isolated situation of many, which are the last surviving relics of numerous deserted medieval villages within the district.
- 5.9. In spite of the widespread woodland clearance in the pre medieval period, Rackham (1986) refers to areas of woodland across the central spine of Norfolk and encompassing Breckland, although this relates to settlements with woodland rather than the physical area of coverage. In addition, Manorial common and grazing lands associated both with pre Enclosure agricultural systems and the heaths were a common feature associated with the settlements. Rabbit farming or 'warrening' was a common practice in the later Medieval period, evident from the occurrence of the word 'Warren' in local place names.

### **Post Medieval Period (1499-1800)**

- 5.10. This period was characterised by the Dissolution of the monastic settlements in the Reformation of 1536-1540, and the associated fragmentation of estates and lands, and the ongoing development of manorial halls and parks, such as Narford.
- 5.11. The most significant change to the landscape occurred towards the end of the period with the Parliamentary Enclosures, which transformed the land cover pattern of Breckland, introducing treed field boundary hedgerows and woodland coverts.

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<sup>5</sup> Pevsner, N and Wilson, B *The Buildings of England: Norfolk 2: North West and South* Penguin, 1999

<sup>6</sup> Cook, O Breckland, Robert Hale Ltd, 1980

William Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk illustrates something of the landscape character and land cover pattern prior to the main period of parliamentary Enclosure, and an extract is shown at **Figure 5.3**.

### **Early Modern-Modern Period (1800-2000)**

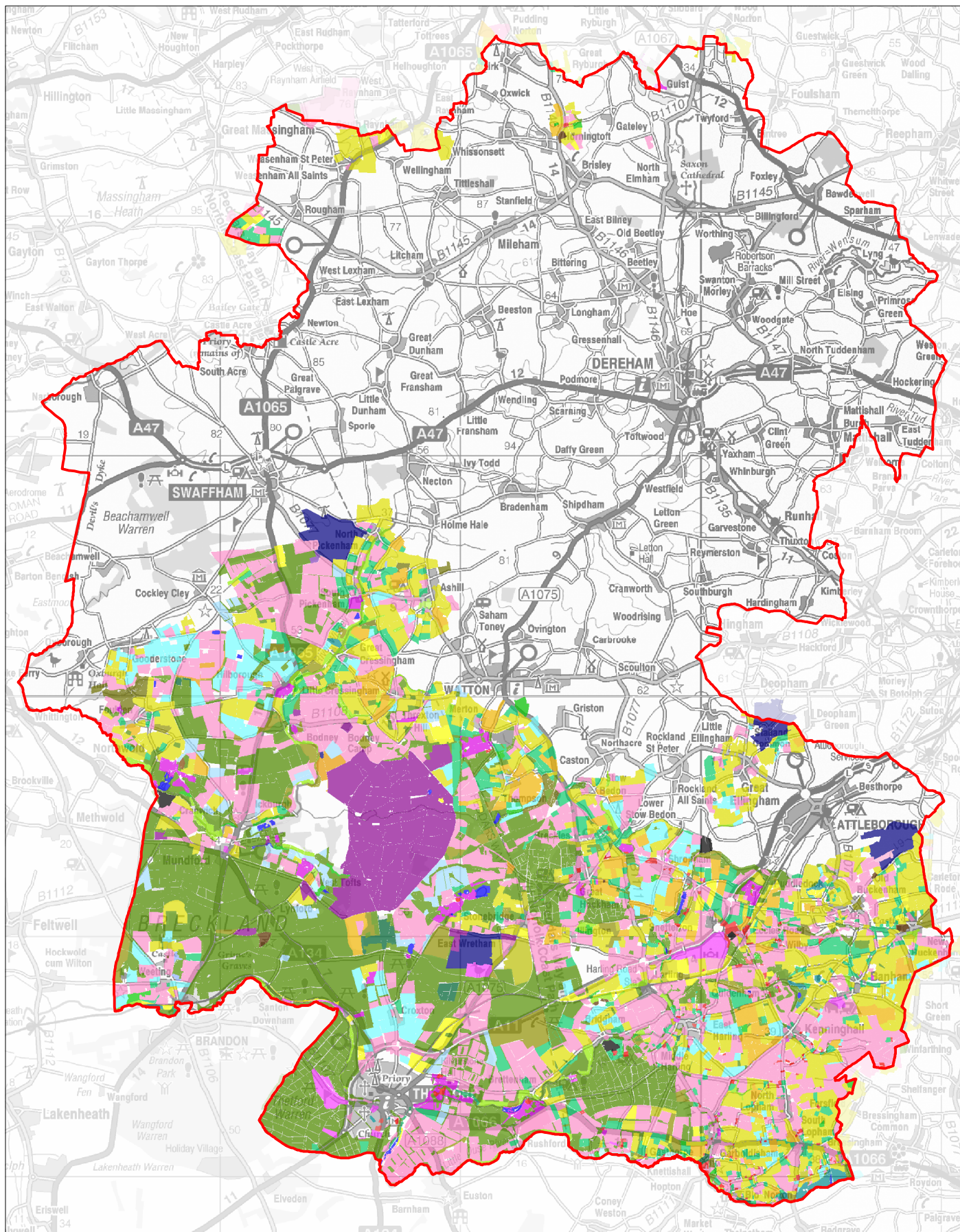
- 5.12. The early modern period was initially characterised by ongoing Enclosure of agricultural land and areas of common and heath on a piecemeal basis. Characteristic Scots Pine shelterbelts or wind breaks were planted to form field boundaries from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century. These now form the characteristic heavily contorted 'Deal Rows' within the Breckland landscape<sup>7</sup>.
- 5.13. Agricultural intensification was partly associated with the ongoing improvement and enlargement of the landed estates in the Victorian era, with some notable designed landscapes and estate features created at Sennowe, Dillington, and Garboldisham.
- 5.14. The most significant changes with a landscape expression occurred in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century. From 1922, large tracts of Breckland heathland and a number of redundant estates were purchased by the newly formed Forestry Commission for the purposes of establishing predominantly coniferous plantations as part of the national afforestation programme.
- 5.15. The Ministry of Defence became an influential landowner from 1943-44, with the requisition of a number of parkland estates in the centre of the District for the subsequent creation of the Stanta Training Ground, in addition to the construction of a number of airfields on the elevated plateaux. Whilst the requisition of the estates resulted in the loss of a number of the halls, it resulted in the preservation by default of a number of areas of parkland landscape and extensive areas of Breckland heathland.
- 5.16. Other land uses which influenced the character of the Breckland landscape in the latter part of this period were the intensive arable agricultural cultivation, which resulted in extensive field boundary hedgerow loss, as well as other land cover elements. The sand and gravel rich drift geology of many of the Breckland Rivers also made them natural sites for mineral extraction throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century e.g. the Wensum.

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<sup>7</sup> Fairbrother, N, Op Cit and Cook, O, Op Cit



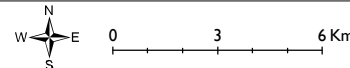




**Breckland LCA**  
**Figure 5.1 Historic Landscape Characterisation**

**Key**

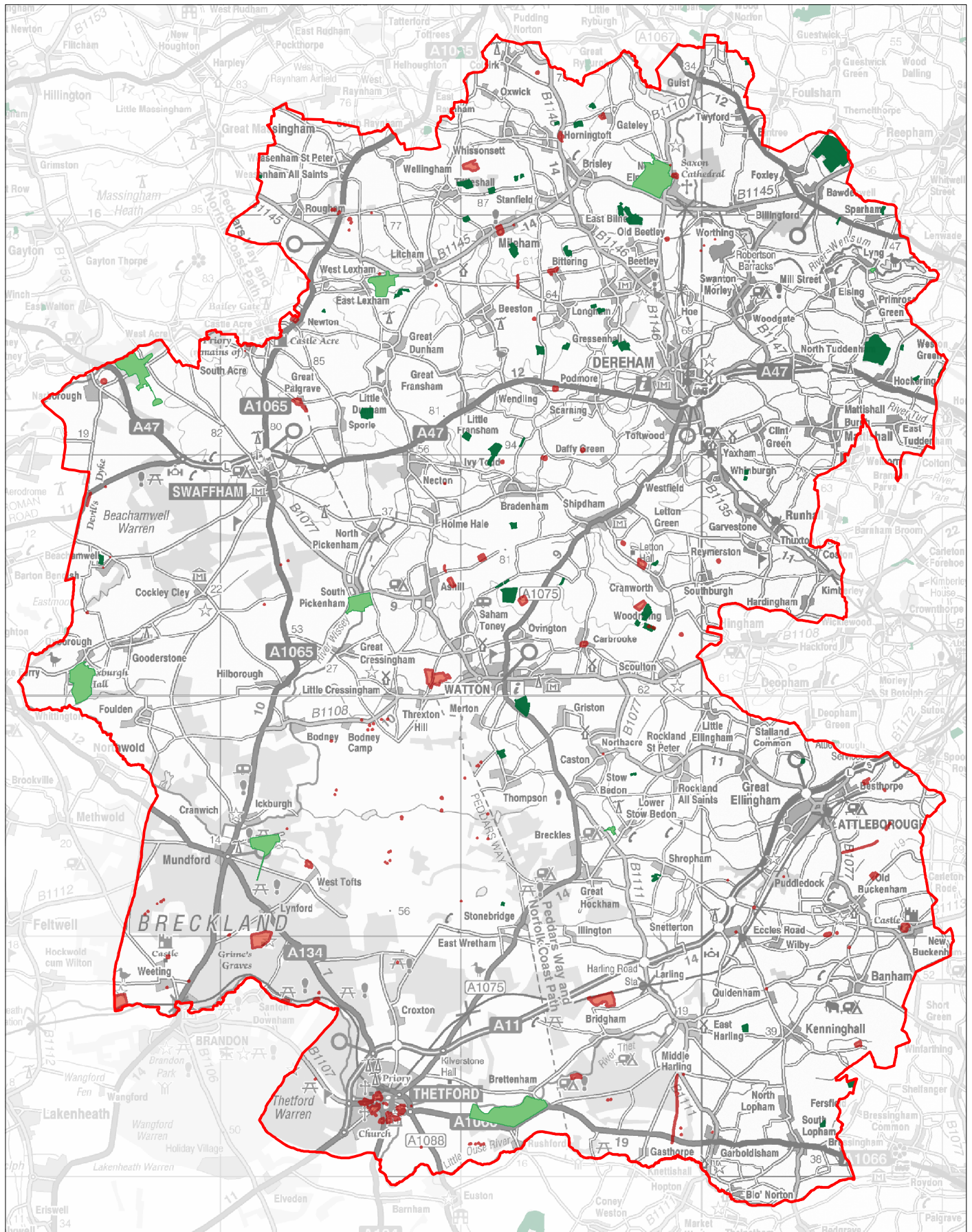
Breckland Boundary	Ancient woodland	Disused mineral extraction	Hall/harge house	Leisure/recreation	Nucleated clusters - more than 5	Pre-18th century fen enclosure	Unimproved freshwater fen
18th-20th century woodland plantation	Animal farm	Disused post-medieval military	Heath	Managed wetland	Nursery with glass house	Rabbit warren	Unimproved rough pasture
20th century enclosure	Boundary loss	Duck decoy pond	Historic earthwork	Mineral extraction	Orchard	Regenerated alder carr woodland	Water meadow
Airfield - military	Boundary loss - with relic element	Enclosed meadow	Hospital, school, university	Mixed origin	Parliamentary fen enclosure	Religious institution	Water reservoir
Airport - civilian	Built up areas - urban development	Estate fields	Industrial	Moor	Piecemeal enclosure by agreement	Small farm clusters - less than 5	Woodland clearance
Allotment	Carr woodland	Gardenesque style parkland	Informal parkland	New enclosure	Piecemeal style Parliamentary enclosure	Streets and rows - linear settlements	
	Common with an open margin	Irregular enclosure		New fen enclosure	Post-medieval military	Stud farm	



Source: Norfolk County Council / Norfolk Archaeology  
 Note: HLC complete as at November 2006





Date: 06/06/2007

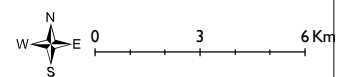




**Breckland LCA**  
**Figure 5.2 Historic Designations**

**Key**

-  Breckland Boundary
-  Scheduled Ancient Monuments
-  Historic Parks & Gardens
-  Ancient Woodland

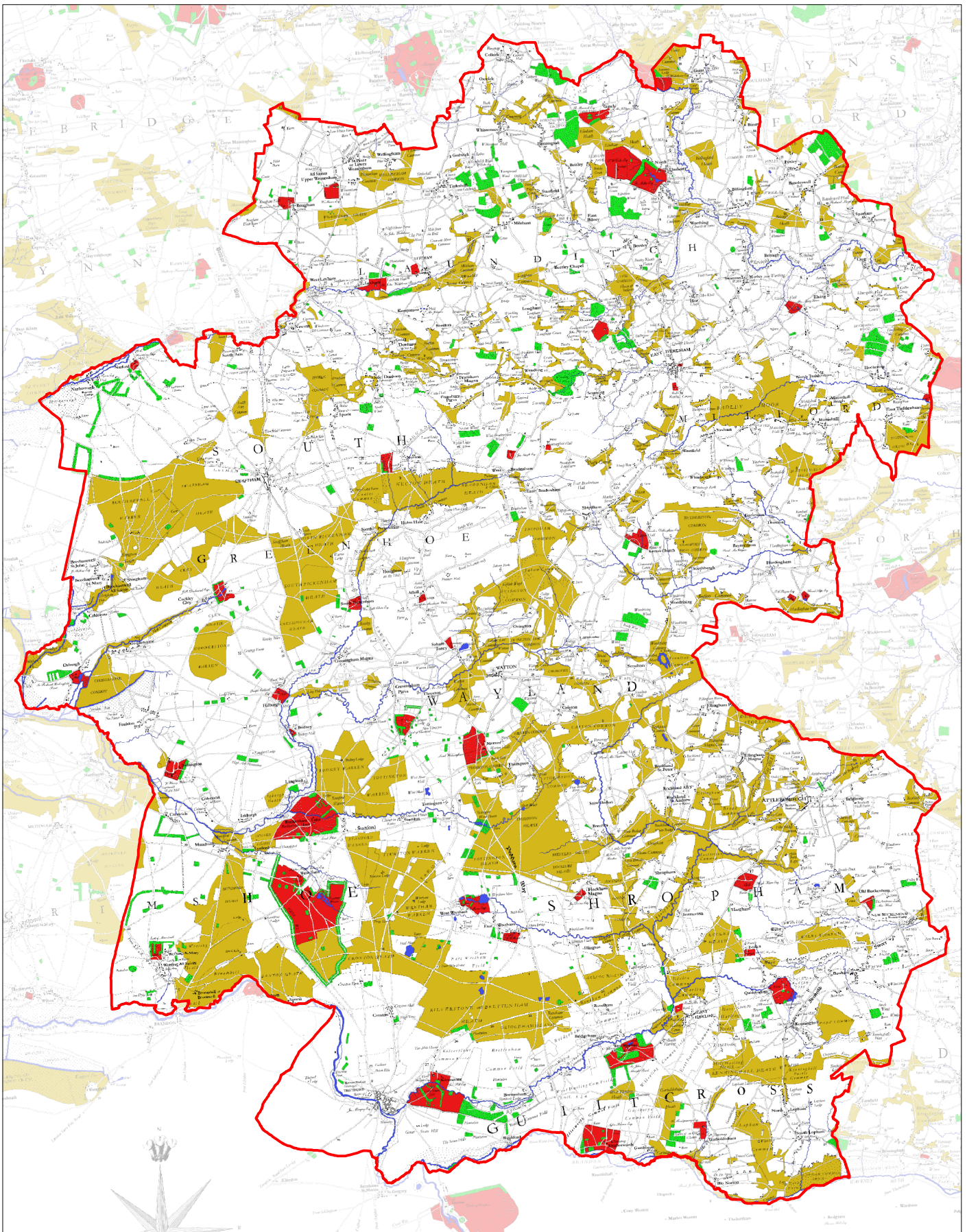


Source: Breckland District Council  
 English Heritage

Date: 06/06/2007  
 Revision: A



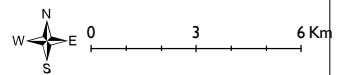




**Breckland LCA**  
**Figure 5.3 Extract from William Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk**

**Key**

-  Breckland Boundary
-  Parks of the Nobility & Gentry
-  Woods
-  Commons & Heaths
-  Parks of the Nobility & Gentry
-  Rivers
-  Great Roads



Source: Andrew Macnair (Fadens Map)

Date: 06/06/2007  
 Revision:





## 6. CURRENT INITIATIVES

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- 6.1. The Ecological Network Mapping Project has been described in section 4 above. Other key initiatives influencing the Breckland include the proposed Brecks Partnership, Forestry Enterprise Initiatives and local projects such as the Wensum Valley Project, in addition to the Ministry of Defence's Land Management objectives within their extensive land holdings at Stanta Heath.

### **Brecks Partnership**

- 6.2. The cultural and historical value of the Brecks is recognised through the Brecks Partnership initiative, which aims to secure recognition for the Brecks in view of the cultural significance of the landscape and the potential for Green Infrastructure in light of Thetford's Growth Point status. The initiative considers the wider Brecks landscape across four adjoining authorities and has identified a range of objectives including recreation, leisure and tourism, in addition to Green Infrastructure opportunities, embedded within the unique landscape of the Brecks.

### **Forestry Enterprise**

- 6.3. Forestry has been a dominant land use within the Breckland landscape due to the presence of Thetford Forest and with the acquisition of large areas of heathland and former landed estates by the Forestry Commission for the intensive afforestation programme from 1922. This was focused on commercial forestry for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A multi objective approach has been adopted in the last decade, in view of both recreational potential and the considerable biodiversity value of the Breckland Forest. As such the current Forestry Enterprise Strategy identifies not only a more diverse species palette for the rotational plantations but also a number of pilot projects for heathland restoration and also for re-creating wet meadows and grassland habitats in valleys where this habitat was previously lost to afforestation, e.g. the Thet Valley, as well as recreation opportunities.

### **Wensum Valley Project**

- 6.4. The Wensum Valley, part of which is in the eastern part of Breckland District, has been acknowledged as one of the finest river valleys in Norfolk, due to the variety of landscape elements and its considerable ecological potential. As such the Wensum Valley Project was set up in 1994, and is advised by a Joint Advisory Panel, with the project's work being guided by a number of objectives which include maintaining and enhancing the character of the valley's landscape and ecological integrity.

### **Ministry of Defence – Stanta Heath**

- 6.5. Large tracts of Breckland heathland and areas of historic parkland were preserved by the acquisition of Stanta Heath by the MOD in 1944. Land management objectives for this area have been developed with the primary aim of preserving areas of high and low cover for military training purposes, in addition to taking account of the requirements of the statutory nature conservation designations (SSSI) which cover the area. Much of the existing vegetation reflects the training objectives of the MOD and as such Stanta represents a very large area of historically and ecologically

important and intact heathland features, together with surviving parkland elements from former estates such as West Tofts.



## **PART 2: THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF BRECKLAND DISTRICT**



## 7. THE BRECKLAND DISTRICT LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION

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### INTRODUCTION

- 7.1. The physical and human influences described in the previous chapters have combined to create the unique and distinctive character of Breckland District. The district is characterised by a variety of landscapes represented by six **landscape types**.

#### Landscape Types within Breckland District

A: River Valleys

B: Settled Tributary Farmland

C: Brecks Plantation

D: The Brecks Heathland with Plantation

E: Plateau Farmland

F: Chalk River Valley

- 7.2. Each of the generic landscape types has a distinct and relatively homogenous character with similar physical and cultural attributes, including geology, landform, land cover, and historical evolution. For this district level study the landscape types are further sub-divided into component **landscape character areas**. These are discrete geographic areas that possess the common characteristics described for the landscape type. There are 27 individual character areas within Breckland District, each with a distinct and recognisable local identity.
- 7.3. The landscape classification for the district is set out in **Table 7.1** and illustrated on **Figure 7.1**. The figure has been prepared on a Geographic Information System (GIS), with mapping undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000.
- 7.4. The tables at **Appendix 3** show the derivation from and relationship of the landscape classification to the previous LUC Wind Turbine Study, together with an explanation of the boundary changes which were identified and required by this more detailed 1:25,000 scale study.

**Table 7.1: Breckland District Landscape Classification**

#### **Landscape Type A: River Valleys**

Character Area

A1 River Thet

A2 Upper Yare

A3 River Wissey

A4 River Wensum and Blackwater

A5 Upper Tud

#### **Landscape Type B: Settled Tributary Farmland**

Character Area

B1 Little Ouse Tributary Farmland

B2 The Buckenhams Tributary Farmland

- B3 River Thet Tributary Farmland
- B4 River Blackwater Tributary Farmland
- B5 River Wissey Tributary Farmland
- B6 River Wensum and Tud Tributary Farmland
- B7 River Nar Tributary Farmland
- B8 Gooderstone to Oxborough Tributary Farmland

### **Landscape Type C: The Brecks - Plantations**

#### Character Area

- C1 The Brecks of Thetford Forest

### **Landscape Type D: The Brecks – Heathland with Plantation**

#### Character Area

- D1 Swaffham Heath
- D2 Stanta Heath
- D3 Harling Heathlands

### **Landscape Type E: Plateau Farmland**

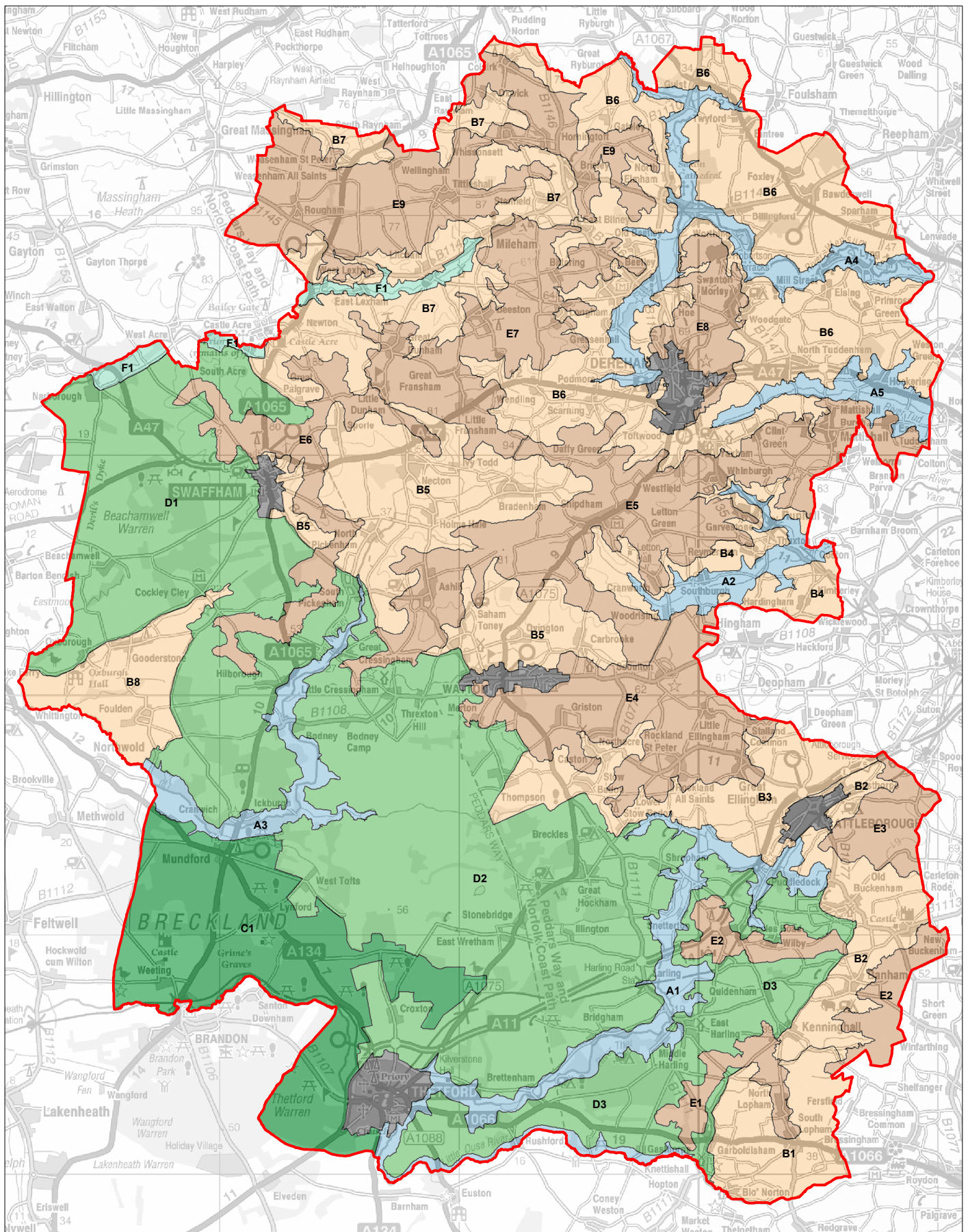
#### Character Area

- E1 Lophams Plateau
- E2 Snetterton Heath Plateau
- E3 Old Buckenham Plateau
- E4 Wayland Plateau
- E5 Central Breckland Plateau
- E6 North Pickenham Plateau
- E7 Beeston Plateau
- E8 Dereham Plateau
- E9 Whissonsett Plateau

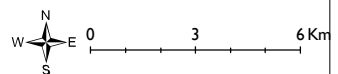
### **Landscape Type F: Chalk Rivers**

#### Character Area

- F1 River Nar Valley



**Breckland LCA**  
**Figure 7.1 Landscape Classification of Breckland**



- ▭ Breckland Boundary
- Landscape Character Areas**
- ▭ **A - River Valleys**
- A1: River Thet
- A2: Upper Yare
- A3: River Wissey
- A4: River Wensum and Blackwater
- A5: Upper Tud
- ▭ **B - Settled Tributary Farmland**
- B1: Little Ouse Tributary Farmland
- B2: The Buckenham Tributary Farmland
- B3: River Thet Tributary Farmland
- B4: River Blackwater Tributary Farmland
- B5: River Wissey Tributary Farmland
- B6: River Wensum and Tud Tributary Farmland
- B7: River Nar Tributary Farmland
- B8: Gooderstone to Oxborough Tributary Farmland
- ▭ **C - The Brecks - Plantations**
- C1: The Brecks of Thetford Forest
- ▭ **D - The Brecks - Heathland with Plantation**
- D1: Swoffham Heath
- D2: Stanta Heath
- D3: Harling Heathlands
- ▭ **E - Plateau Farmland**
- E1: Lophams Plateau
- E2: Snetterton Heath Plateau
- E3: Old Buckenham Plateau
- E4: Wayland Plateau
- E5: Central Breckland Plateau
- E6: North Pickenham Plateau
- E7: Beeston Plateau
- E8: Dereham Plateau
- E9: Whissonsett Plateau
- ▭ **F - Chalk Rivers**
- F1: River Nar Valley
- ▭ **Urban**

Source: Land Use Consultants

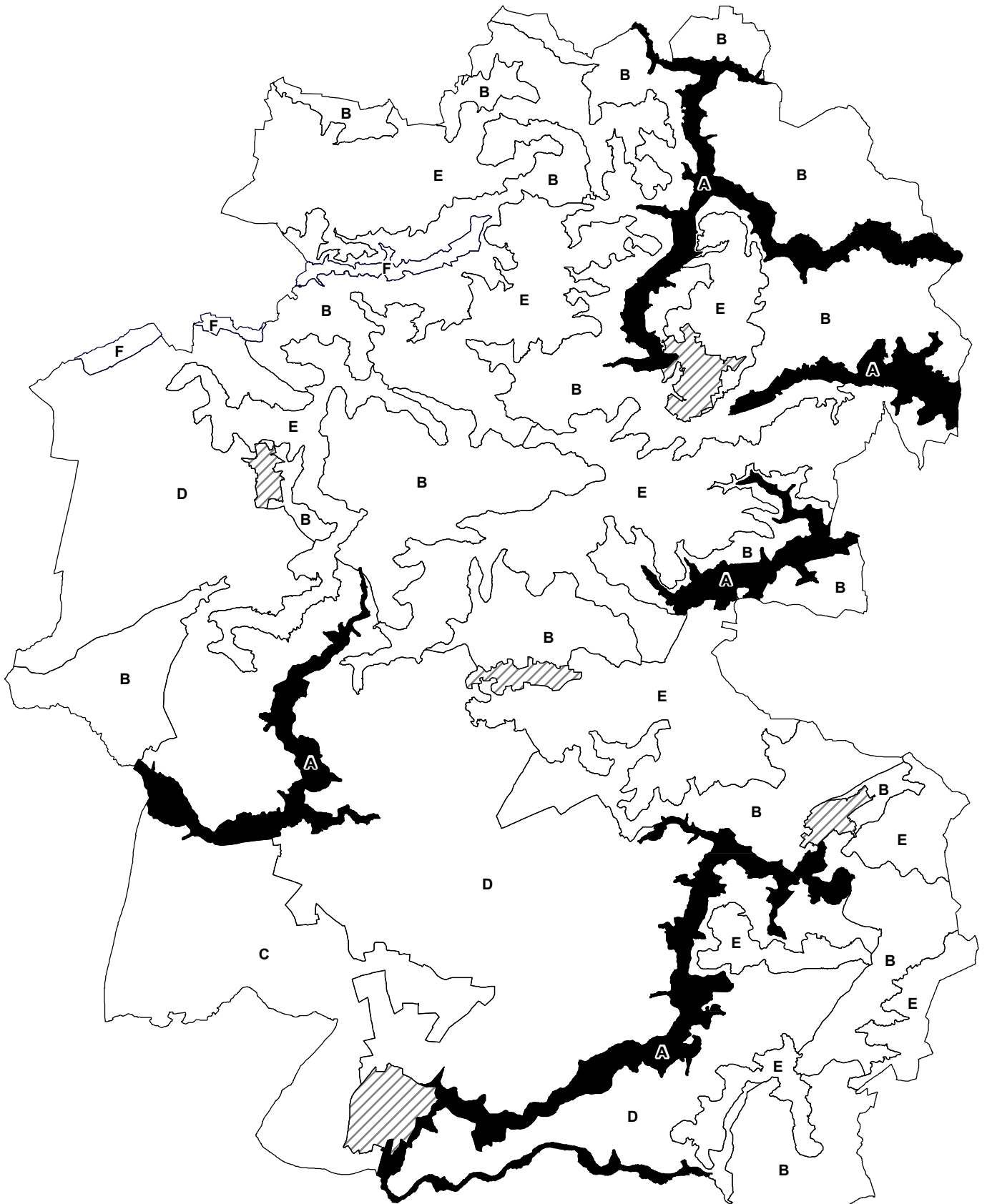
Date: 06/06/2007  
 Revision: B





# A. RIVER VALLEYS

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# LANDSCAPE TYPE A: RIVER VALLEYS

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A1 This landscape type constitutes a series of distinct, broad and gently undulating chalk valley landforms carved by two periods of glacial activity, and which are defined both by historic land use, land cover and later sand and gravel extraction. They form a very distinct landscape type. It should be noted that there are a number of other minor river valleys (such as the Gadder) that have not been included within this landscape type. These river valleys relate more strongly to, and appear as features of, the surrounding landscape context as opposed to being landscape types in their own right. In addition the River Nar, being of a different (chalk) geological formation is defined as a separate landscape type and character area.

## Key Characteristics

- A small scale landscape defined by shallow river valleys that offer a subtle sense of enclosure. Although sometimes across wider areas of floodplain, views are often channelled along narrow rural roads or restricted by waterside vegetation and woodland.
- Elevation predominantly ranges from 10m AOD (valley floor) to 40m AOD (valley crests). The transition from the surrounding areas is subtle.
- The *River Valleys* are dominated by pastoral farming. Fields are typically small to medium in size and bounded by hedges containing hedgerow trees. The fields are of varied shape and form, making an irregular land cover pattern.
- Settlement is infrequent and small scale, comprising individual properties and hamlets.
- The skyline is predominantly tree-lined. In some areas, the skyline is open, marking the ridge to the adjacent landscape types.
- There are few landmark features and visible structures, however churches (connected to the hamlets) and mills (on the banks of the rivers) provide surprise views and are key points of focus. Poplars are prominent vertical features aligning the course of the rivers.
- Views into adjacent landscapes are for the most part restricted by the ridges marking the limits of the valleys and the transition to the arable landscapes beyond.
- Although not remote, the pastoral character, low density of settlement and low levels of vehicle movement combine to form an intimate, tranquil landscape.

## Landscape Type A: River Valleys

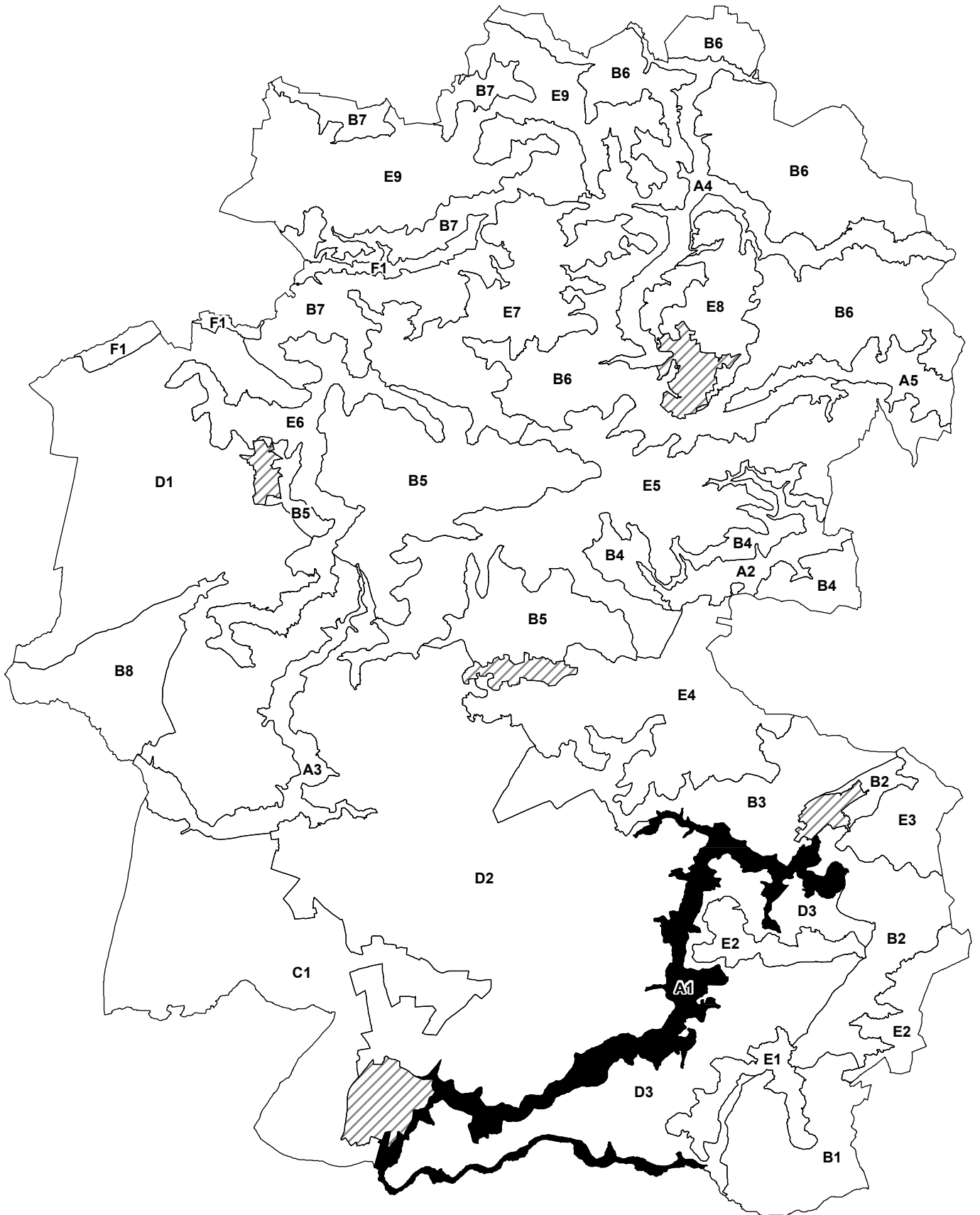
### Character Area

- A1 River Thet
- A2 Upper Yare
- A3 River Wissey
- A4 River Wensum and Blackwater
- A5 Upper Tud



# AI: RIVER THET

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# AI: RIVER THET

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## Location and Boundaries

A1.1 The *River Thet* valley is a broad, shallow valley carved through the chalk solid geology by glacial meltwaters. Glacial drift deposits of sand, gravel, clay and silt define the extent of the character area, which forms a south – westerly draining catchment within the south western and central part of Breckland District, meeting the River Ouse at Thetford. It is adjoined to the west by the *Stanta Heath* character area and to the east by the *Harling Heathlands*.

## Key Characteristics

- A south westerly draining catchment carved into the chalk solid geology by glacial meltwaters, with glacial drift deposits of sand and gravel.
- These deposits have historically been exploited for mineral extraction. A number of these are still active although redundant workings have resulted in a distinctive chain of lakes in the northern part of the character area.
- In places, peaty soils overlay the drift geology and these are often associated with areas of fen and alder carr.
- Topography is that of a broad shallow valley, ranging from 15 – 30m AOD.
- Visual character is essentially enclosed with views across the character area framed by small blocks of wet woodland and localised blocks of mixed plantation woodland. There are occasional views to the urban edge of Thetford in the southern part of the character area and to landmarks such as churches.
- Landcover is variable throughout the character area, with small grazed fields divided by ditches and belts of willow and alder in the north, with denser areas of wet woodland in the south of the character area, in addition to areas of pasture and rough grazing, defined by post and wire fencing or remnant hedgerows.
- The ecological diversity of the character area is recognised in a number of sites which are designated as SSSI, including carr woodland, part of Breckland Forest and the fenland marshes and mere of Old Buckenham Fen.
- Historic sites within the character area illustrate the long history of human intervention, e.g. the ruined church at Thorpe Farm and associated moat/earthworks to the east.
- Areas of remnant common land are locally distinctive features, notably West Harling, although many have been absorbed within afforestation to the valley sides.
- Settlement is relatively sparse in distribution, being represented by a number of small hamlets at bridging points, either linear (Bridgham) or nucleated (Brettenham), in addition to occasional scattered farmsteads.

- This is a small scale, textured and varied landscape, often enclosed in character due to the density of field boundary vegetation and woodland cover. The landscape has a tranquil, rural quality, although the A I I in the north eastern part of the character area is visually discordant.
- Opportunities for recreation are provided by the wooded commons and associated open access land, in addition to a number of rights of way. Pedestrian access to the river is restricted.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- A I.2 The River Thet has a south westerly draining catchment carved by two main periods of geomorphological activity, which has shaped the broad, shallow and clearly defined valley through which the river flows. The valley crests are typically defined by the 30m AOD contour, with the change in character defined also by vegetation cover.
- A I.3 Drift deposits of sand and gravel were deposited by glacial meltwater and are a characteristic feature of the valley sides. A long history of mineral extraction has resulted from the exploitation of these deposits. The drift deposits have a strong influence on the soils in the valley and have significantly influenced both the early colonisation and the development of agriculture and mineral workings. In places the glacial drift material is overlain with peat dominated soils and associated areas of heathland and common.
- A I.4 Traditionally managed pasture and rough grazing is the predominant landcover, although there are areas of fen, carr and wet woodland resulting in a varied mosaic of habitats including flood meadow, neutral grassland, marsh, fen and swamp. Areas of wet woodland to the southern part of the character area are often associated with a decline in pastoral grazing.
- A I.5 In terms of biodiversity, the character area supports a number of priority habitats within the Norfolk BAP, notably floodplain grazing marsh, some localised areas of reed bed vegetation and the alder and willow carrs/wet woodland. The carrs in particular are a long established component of the landscape, with alder woodland having been recorded in Norfolk since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. This habitat is also apparent in the colonisation of the former mineral workings sites within the character area.
- A I.6 The ecological value of the character area is recognised through SSSI designations at Old Buckenham Fen and part of Breckland Forest which supports a wide assemblage of scarce flora and fauna including red squirrel. The Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project has identified the Thet Valley as falling within one of the core ecological areas due to the presence of locally scarce fen systems and associated vegetation. In addition areas of remnant heath within the character area fall within the EcoNet Enhancement Area for Heathland creation.

### Historic Character

- A I.7 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), identifies historic processes including the creation of woodlands from the 18-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, areas of mineral extraction and relatively late (20<sup>th</sup> Century) Enclosure. A number of areas of field

boundary loss and relict field boundaries are identified, particularly in the northern end of the valley. This and the relatively late Enclosure are reflected in the present field boundary pattern which is often defined by post and wire fencing and patchy hedgerows with variable management regimes.

- A1.8 Faden's 1797 Map identifies parklands and planned estate landscapes associated with halls as falling within the character area, including at Shadwell and West Harling, occupying the transition between the crest of the valley slopes and the adjacent *Harling Heathlands* Character Area. These have largely disappeared, with the hall at West Harling demolished in 1931 and its parkland absorbed within subsequent Forestry Commission afforestation, although small areas of halls and parklands remain, as at Kilverstone.
- A1.9 Commons are also illustrated on the 1797 map, notably at Bridgham, Eccles and Harling and Shropham. These have largely been lost to subsequent mineral workings apparent as ponds and lagoons, particularly in the northern part of the character area.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- A1.10 Settlement is generally confined to farmsteads and small, linear hamlets associated with the rural road network and river crossing points (e.g. Brettenham and Bridgham). These are predominantly long established and characterised by a distinct and strong vernacular tradition in terms of building materials and visual appearance, with brick, flint and red tile all evident. Flint and dressed stone churches are locally distinctive, as at Brettenham. Thetford is the key settlement of the valley developing at a river crossing point. The town is not considered in detail by this rural landscape assessment.
- A1.11 A number of other human influences are apparent within the character area, such as land drainage works in the northern part of the character area, and the historic mineral/aggregate extraction which is apparent in the lagoons and pools in the north. The A11 widening scheme in the north eastern part of the character area is a locally divisive and visually discordant element within the landscape.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- A1.12 The character area retains a strong sense of enclosure due to the woodland blocks, hedgerows and areas of scrub vegetation on the valley floor and the rural lanes bounded by mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees. As such views are framed, although there are occasional views to landmark buildings within the valley sides, notably the church at Brettenham, in addition to views to and from the encroaching settlement edge at Thetford.
- A1.13 Together, the meandering river course, associated wetland habitats, small scale grazed pastures and network of ditches create a strong character. It is an intimate, varied and distinctly textured landscape.
- A1.14 Although the river and immediately surrounding grazed pasture creates a tranquil landscape, occasional views of waterbodies associated with the former mineral extraction reduce the intactness of parts of the valley, as does the localised

afforestation within the valley sides. The AII is visually discordant in the north eastern part of the character area.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- Natural meandering course of the River Thet and associated floodplain habitats and landscapes which are especially sensitive to river engineering and changes in water quality and water flows;
- Riparian vegetation on the valley floor including willow and alder carr, grazed pastures and meadows which represent the traditional, historic land use, contribute to the small scale character of the valley and provide a notable biodiversity resource;
- A tranquil rural character which is sensitive to incremental small scale change;
- The areas of open water within the valley and the need to ensure sensitive restoration and after use of sand and gravel workings;
- Low density of settlement comprising occasional scattered farm buildings and small, essentially linear hamlets clustered at bridging points;
- The varied field pattern, including the small scale fields associated with the settlements and the pastures enclosed by ditches on the valley floor;
- Network of narrow rural lanes and small scale river crossing points.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

A1.15 Key visual sensitivities of this landscape character area include the framed views, the river crossing points, and views to the valley crests. The urban edge growth at Thetford to the south west of the character area, is both visible from within the character area and has partially extended into the valley.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

A1.16 The landscape of the character is broadly representative of the landscape type, and has localised area of intact lowland river landscape characterised by a natural river course and historic landscape elements including alder carrs and fen. However, the character area also has an interrupted quality, due in part to past sand and gravel exploitation, the local presence of the AII and afforestation in the valley sides.



## Landscape Change

### Past Change

- Extraction of sand and gravel, plus restoration of schemes, and associated loss of common land and heath;
- Loss of parklands and former commons to afforestation/Forestry Commission plantings;
- Colonisation of wet woodland both on former minerals sites, and in areas where traditional pastoral management is in decline;
- Recent road widening works to the A11 transport corridor in the north eastern part of the character area, which are both divisive and visually discordant;
- Forestry Enterprise initiatives have recently involved pilot schemes for heathland restoration and restoration of grazing pasture on areas where the plantations have reached the end of their productive cycle.

### Future Change

A1.17 Potential future changes could occur as a result of the current forestry strategy, which incorporates proposals for heathland and riverine habitat restoration. Thetford's Growth Point Status and future urban expansion could have implications for the landscape to the south western edge of the character area, adjacent to Thetford.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall management objective should be to conserve the tranquil, pastoral, undeveloped character of the *Thet Valley* and to manage and where appropriate increase natural floodplain habitats such as grassland, reedbeds, fens and grazing marsh, in addition to maintaining and enhancing the areas of alder carr, other wet woodland and heathland. The ditch systems and associated hedgerows should be conserved, ensuring that the intimate scale, sense of historic character and enclosure are maintained.

### Guidelines

#### Landscape Management

- Maintain hedgerow and hedgerow tree boundaries of the rural roads and fields on the valley sides to maintain habitat connectivity and ensure succession of hedgerow tree cover;
- Use appropriate and sensitive management regimes to maintain the alder carrs in the valley floor;
- Maintain the predominantly grazed pastoral valley floor and area of flood meadow, wet pasture and rough grazing;

- Encourage opportunities for the creation of further areas of reedbed associated with existing wetland habitat, in area of low biodiversity interest, to assist in meeting the objectives of the Norfolk BAP;
- Seek to conserve the water levels and water quality within the river and associated ditches and the fen systems;
- Maintain the small scale field pattern, particularly the historic small scale fields surrounding settlements;
- Encourage the reversion of plantations in the valley sides to grazing land and heathland as appropriate, when such plantings reach the end of their productive cycle, and in accordance with Forestry Enterprise objectives.
- Explore opportunities to create visual and physical connections with the adjacent settled tributary farmlands.

### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve the historic character of nucleated settlements on the valley floor associated with the churches and rural road network;
- Conserve views of the wooded character of the valley crest;
- Monitor the expansion of the small settlements within the valley, and suburbanising built elements which could affect their small scale, vernacular and rural character;
- Seek to create a well integrated edge of Thetford with the valley landscape;
- Explore opportunities for the sensitive after use of gravel pits;
- Maintain the rural road network, resisting upgrading works which could have an urbanising influence and paying particular attention to the historic river crossing points;
- Improve connectivity between the character area and the river to make use of its potential as a recreational resource. Ensure that any recreational development takes into consideration the number of ecologically important habitats in the character area and is appropriate to its landscape setting in terms of scale and building materials.





# A2: UPPER YARE

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## A2: UPPER YARE VALLEY

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### Location and Boundaries

A2.1 The *Upper Yare Valley* is located in the north eastern part of Breckland District, at the confluence of the River Yare and the Blackwater Tributary. The River Yare flows in an easterly draining catchment into the neighbouring Broadland District. The valley crests are defined primarily by topography, in addition to the change in vegetation from floodplain and riparian to arable agriculture.

### Key Characteristics

- An easterly draining catchment carved into a chalk solid geology, overlain with boulder clay, silt, sand and gravel glacial drift deposits and chalky till/glaciofluvial drift soils.
- Topography ranges from 30-50m AOD, with the Blackwater Tributary forming a narrow, relatively steep sided valley, and the Yare, in contrast having a broad valley floor.
- Views are intermittent due to the density of native hedgerow vegetation along the rural lanes traversing the character area, and the presence of former hedgebanks, although localised views are available to the valley sides and to areas of open water.
- Land cover is predominantly pastoral and rough grazing, but with some paddocks and areas of arable agriculture partially encroaching into the valley sides at points.
- Small to medium scale, irregular field pattern, with enclosure provided by mixed native Enclosure hedges, which are of varying density and condition, and sometimes with hedgerow trees.
- Historic features include Calverley Hall and Parkland, the remains of a moated site near Cranworth, the church at Southburgh and the churchyard of the isolated church at St George's Mount.
- A mosaic of different woodland types including both wet woodland and coniferous species is a distinctive feature of the valley floor. Wetland habitats close to the river represented in a number of CWS, plus small SSSI at Potters Carr.
- The Mid Norfolk Railway crosses the eastern half of the character area at Thuxton. Water bodies associated with former mineral extraction are apparent in the eastern half of the character area.
- Settlement pattern is of low density comprising either linear villages (e.g. Garvestone, partly outside the character area) or small hamlets and groups of houses centred on key road junctions (e.g. Thuxton).

- A small scale, enclosed landscape, of a varied and textured character due to the range of land cover elements. Peaceful and rural in character and little disturbed by settlement or road pattern.
- Opportunities for recreation are afforded by a number of rights of way and the fisheries in the western part of the character. Access to the river is generally limited to the historic crossing points.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- A2.2 The *Upper Yare* is an easterly draining catchment carved by two main periods of geomorphological activity and lying in a broad, shallow but well defined valley. The boundaries of the *Upper Yare* character area are topographically defined by an elevation ranging from 40-50m A.O.D, with the lowest point of the valley floor located at 30m AOD.
- A2.3 Drift deposits of sand and gravel were deposited by glacial meltwater and are a characteristic feature of the valley floor. The drift deposits have a strong influence on the soils in the valley (defined by chalky till and glaciofluvial till) and have significantly influenced both the early colonisation and the development of the valley.
- A2.4 Land cover within the valley is defined predominantly by pasture and rough grazing, in addition to areas of mixed woodland, which includes both the typical carrs/wet woodland as well as areas of coniferous planting. The pastoral fields on the valley floor are small to medium sized and irregular, defined primarily by mixed hedgerows, some with hedgerow trees, in addition to ditches. The higher ground of the valley sides is characterised by medium sized, geometric fields, some of which are now under arable cultivation. Paddocks also occur across the character area.
- A2.6 Much of the course of the Upper Yare as it flows through Breckland District, and that of the associated Blackwater Tributary, has experienced relatively little disturbance other than the creation of the historic crossing points and a weir at Thuxton, although the eastern part of the character has in the past been used for sand and gravel extraction. A number of open waterbodies with wooded edges are apparent in the valley floor in this area.
- A2.7 Wetland woodland is a particular feature along the river and includes Potter's Carr SSSI at Cranworth and numerous County Wildlife Sites (CWS). In addition the calcareous grassland apparent within the character area is identified as a priority habitat within the Norfolk BAP. The Upper Yare Valley is also identified as having one of the largest distributions by area of reedbed, which is another priority habitat. In view of this habitat potential, the watercourse has been identified as one of the Core Areas within the Ecological Network Mapping Project, with the remainder of the character area falling within an Enhancement Area for heathland, grassland and woodland creation.

### Historic Character

- A2.8 Reference to Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk identifies a number of historic elements within the character area, including areas of common at Butlers Common and



Hardingham Low Common, in addition to a windmill at Hardingham and Hardingham Old Hall, on the periphery of the character area. Faden shows a small scale settlement pattern of linear village and hamlets which persists today.

- A2.9 Subsequent agricultural enclosure has largely resulted in the loss of the commons. The minor parkland of Hardingham Old Hall is extant on the boundary of the character area, as is the 17<sup>th</sup> Century timber framed Calverley Hall occupying the south facing valley slopes overlooking the Blackwater.
- A2.10 The Mid Norfolk Railway line which runs through parts of the *Upper Yare Valley* was an historically important feature, linking the area to the rest of Norfolk. The line no longer forms part of the mainline rail network, having been developed for recreational purposes by the Mid Norfolk Railway Group.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- A2.11 Settlement is essentially of low density and linear in formation, often comprising of small groups of houses aligned with rural roads, small hamlets focussed on key road junctions or river crossings (e.g. Southburgh, Thuxton) and a small number of compact linear villages to the valley sides, such as Garvestone. Areas of settlements display a varied vernacular in terms of materials and building styles, with colour render and whitewash apparent. Settlement edges are generally well wooded and effectively contained by the valley landform.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- A2.12 This is an enclosed landscape of small scale, and of a relatively unified character in terms of land cover elements, with the exception of the large areas of open water in the eastern part of the character area, which are a legacy of past mineral extraction. In view of the varied range of land cover types it has a textured quality, albeit with a muted palette of colours, partly influenced by the coniferous planting within the valley floor.
- A2.13 Views are intermittent in nature, due to landform and the sense of enclosure provided by field boundary hedgerows, in addition to the mixed and coniferous woodland planting within the valley floor, which forms a distinctive element of the landscape.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- Wooded valley floor which provides a sense of enclosure;
- Areas of wet meadow and grazing pasture indicate traditional landscape management practices;
- Vernacular buildings provide a sense of historical continuity and character;

- The small scale, linear settlement pattern;
- Quiet rural character.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

A2.14 The key visual sensitivities within this character area are the views to the valley sides and crest. The tower of the church in the adjoining settlement of Reymerstone, forms a prominent skyline element. Coniferous planting within the valley floor is a visually distinctive and detracting element.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

A2.15 With the exceptions of coniferous planting to the valley floor and the water bodies created by mineral extraction, the landscape has a clearly defined and generally undisturbed landscape character. In terms of ecological integrity, this is variable, with the watercourses and floodplain grassland which form part of the EcoNet Core Area being relatively strong, although biodiversity has been weakened by the coniferous woodland and by the encroachment of arable agriculture.

### **Landscape Change**

#### **Past Change**

- The construction of the Mid Norfolk Railway in the 1860s;
- Re-alignment of the tributaries and associated loss of floodplain grassland;
- Sand and gravel extraction within the floor of the Yare Valley;
- Arable cultivation and attendant changes to field boundaries within the upper valley sides;
- Coniferous planting in the valley floor and associated loss of floodplain landcover and habitats.

#### **Future Change**

A2.16 Future change may result from the ongoing after use design of former mineral extraction sites. There is also likely to be pressure for small scale residential expansion of the settlements.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall management objective for the *Upper Yare Valley* is to conserve its quiet rural character, in addition to maintaining traditional management practices such as grazing pasture. Lowland wetland habitats such as the carrs, wet woodland and floodplain meadow/grassland should be conserved to maintain historic character and ecological integrity.

## **Guidelines**

### ***Landscape Management***

- Encourage opportunities to replace coniferous tree planting within the valley floor with appropriate and native wet woodland species;
- Conserve existing alder carr woodland through active and appropriate management;
- Explore opportunities to re create floodplain grassland/meadow where this has been lost.
- Seek opportunities to create a more natural edge/buffer to tributary watercourses and to incorporate marginal vegetation/habitats, in accordance with EcoNet objectives.
- Conserve traditional landscape management practices e.g. grazing pasture/rough grazing;
- Where arable agriculture has encroached upon the valley sides, encourage reversion to pastoral agriculture;
- The restoration of mineral workings should be subject to an appropriate and sympathetic after use design and ongoing landscape management.

### ***Development Considerations***

- Monitor new development within the character area, ensuring that it does not encroach further upon the valley floor and associated riparian/floodplain elements;
- Ensure that any new development reflects the existing in terms of scale, style and materials palette;
- Ensure that new domestic boundary planting to the edge of areas of settlement does not have a sub-urbanising influence in terms of species;
- Conserve the exiting network of narrow rural roads and river crossing points, resisting traffic upgrade or calming measures which could have an urbanising influence;
- Conserve views to valley crests;
- Explore opportunities for recreational access to the watercourses, ensuring that they enhance the character of the river corridor and associated vegetation.

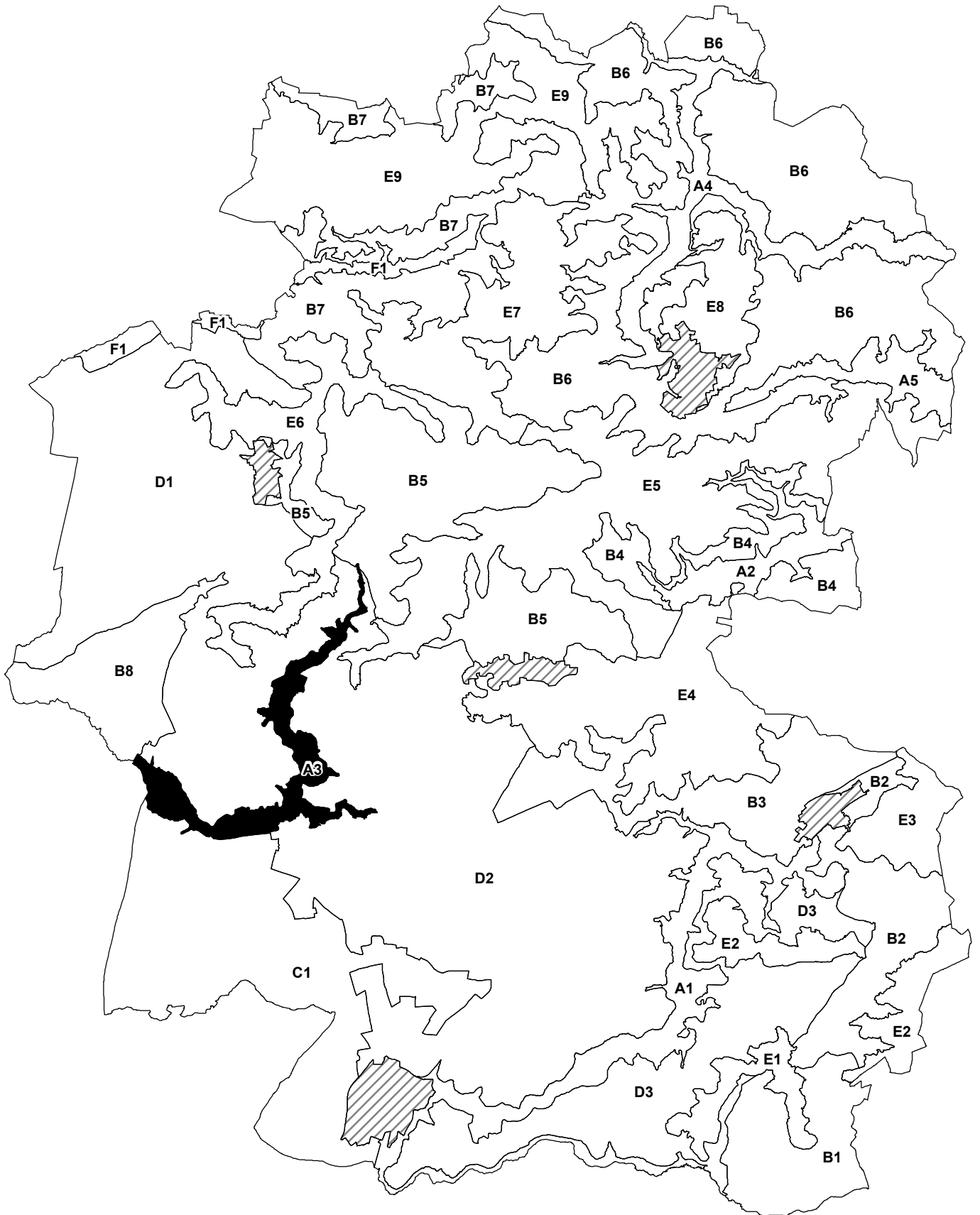






# A3: RIVER WISSEY

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## A3: RIVER WISSEY

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### Location and Boundaries

- A3.1 The River Wissey flows in a south-westerly draining catchment in the west of Breckland District rising at Bradenham flowing south through Breckland and then west into Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough. The character area is composed of the floodplain and valley sides of the River Wissey, being defined by the extent of drift deposits and by topography - the 30m -40m contour broadly marking the valley crest. The upper valley beyond South Pickenham is not clearly defined within the landscape and is included in the adjacent character area - B5: *River Wissey Settled tributary farmland*.

### Key Characteristics

- A south westerly draining catchment underlain by the Upper Chalk and overlying chalky boulder clay, with glacial drift deposits of sand, gravel, clay and silt plus later alluvial sediments.
- Landform is that of a broad shallow valley. With a flat valley floor and gentle valley sides rising to 30 – 40m AOD.
- The river follows a natural meandering course. Open water bodies, notably near Ickburgh are the legacy of past mineral extraction and exploitation of drift deposits within the valley floor. A chain of lakes also forms part of the designed landscape at Didlington Hall.
- On the valley floor, land use is characterised by a mosaic of permanent pasture fields and a variety of woodland types planting including semi-natural wet woodland, carr and dense plantation.
- Presence of woodland creates an enclosed character with framed views, particularly across the flat valley floor, and along the rural road network, although there are occasional views to the valley sides and crests.
- Pig farming is a small scale but visually prominent land use on the valley sides within the predominantly pasture and wooded landscape.
- Pasture fields on the valley floor are divided by water-filled ditches or post and wire fencing. Willows, alder and poplar frequently fringe the watercourse and boundaries.
- A mosaic of wetland habitats – carr woodland, reedbed, meadow, neutral grassland and fen defined as SSSI and County Wildlife Sites contribute to a strong valley character. The valley also contains part of the Breckland Forest SSSI west of Ickburgh and a section of Breckland Farmland within the Stanford Training Ground.
- Evidence of historical occupation and land use is scarce, although several parklands (e.g. Langford and Ickburgh) are marked on Faden's Map and a number remain today as at Didlington.

- Settlement within the valley character area is scant, the largest settlement being the linear village of Ickburgh. Other built form incorporates scattered Halls and farm buildings and former mills.
- Settlements are generally located on the valley crest as at Great Cressingham, Hilborough and Mundford and included within the adjacent character areas.
- A generally tranquil character area with occasional roads crossing the valley rather than running along the valley floor. The A1065 is locally dominant close to Ickburgh.
- Recreational access is facilitated by a number of rights of way, although there is little direct access to the river, other than at the historic crossing points with small scale bridges and fords.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- A3.2 The River Wissey has a narrow westerly draining catchment underlain by Upper Chalk and later glacial drift deposits of chalky boulder clay and sands and gravels. The drifts deposits together with later alluvial sediments have a strong influence on the soils of the valley and land use. As the river flows and gains momentum, the meanders become more defined and the valley becomes broader. The valley crests are delineated by the 30m contour.
- A3.3 Drift deposits of sand and gravel have provided a resource for excavation as at Ickburgh. The typical humic sandy gley soils are prone to waterlogging and erosion. Landcover within the valley floodplain is defined primarily by plantation woodland, alder and willow carrs and permanent grass pasture under traditional grazing management, plus localised areas of fen associated with field boundaries and drains/ditches. In addition to the pastoral land use, small areas of the valley sides are used for pig raising. Although hedgerows form part of the network of field boundaries, post and wire fences and ditches are also a common feature.
- A3.4 The mosaic of natural habitats, including flood meadow, neutral grassland, marsh, fen and swamp are important both in terms of ecological value and in defining landscape character. They include stands of wet woodland and carr woodlands e.g. Bodney Carr and Blacksmith Carr, reedbeds (Didlington Lakes SSSI), meadows (Hooks Wells Meadows SSSI) and fenland (Great Cressingham SSSI) all form part of the mosaic of ecologically important wetland habitats. All of these habitats are priority areas of the Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plan. The section of Breckland Forest SSSI within the character area is largely coniferous with small blocks of broadleaf woodland. The Wissey supports a range of species including crayfish. The EcoNet project has identified the Wissey Valley as a Chalk Valley Core Area.

### Historic Character

- A3.5 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk shows Halls to be a characteristic feature of the upper valley sides of the Wissey e.g. Hilborough Hall, Didlington Hall and Bodney Hall. Elements of the parkland character survive today particularly associated with Didlington Hall. The Faden map also shows substantial areas of former common

and heath associated with settlements for example Mundford Common, Lynford Heath, and Ickburgh Heath. Only Bodney Warren, with its history of use for rabbit cultivation during the medieval period, is still extant. Elsewhere plantation woodland has resulted in the loss of commons and heath.

- A3.6 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) identifies the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century as being a period of extensive change with a significant impact upon the landscape. Plantation woodland was planted, creating the dominant land use. In addition meadows were enclosed during this period, creating small and medium pastoral fields. On the whole this field pattern has been retained, although the HLC data shows some 20<sup>th</sup> century boundary loss, particularly on the upper valley sides.
- A3.7 The most significant recent human interventions to the character area are the route of the A1065 and the past excavation of sand and gravel deposits south of Didlington.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- A3.8 Settlement within the valley character area is scarce, the largest settlement being the linear village of Ickburgh. Other built form incorporates scattered Halls and farm buildings and former mills.
- A3.9 Although Ickburgh is the only settlement located on the valley floor, other settlements such as Mundford have spread over the crest of the valley from the adjacent *Great Cressingham* character area, with predominantly modern 20<sup>th</sup> century edge development.
- A3.10 Traditional building materials are red brick and flint, with some thatch. St Peter's Church at Ickburgh is an example of this local vernacular, being flint with brick detailing.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- A3.11 The meandering river course and mosaic of wetland habitats and pasture create a strong valley character. The river course is generally crossed by only minor roads and lanes with small scale bridges or fords and settlement is limited. The valley has a peaceful, natural character breached only by views to coniferous plantation woodland and occasional interruptions such as the A1065.
- A3.12 Views within the character area are framed, partly by the valley sides, but more significantly by the woodland blocks, both the large-scale plantation blocks and smaller scale stands of wetland woodland and carrs.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- Natural meandering course of the River Wissey which is especially sensitive to river engineering and changes in water quality and water flows;
- The mosaic of wetland habitats associated with the river course and floodplain, which are sensitive to change in water quality and water flows;

- Traditionally managed pasture and meadow on the valley floor, which are vulnerable to changes in farming practices and loss of grazing;
- Consistent use of vernacular red brick and flint building materials;
- Minor roads and river crossing points (bridges and fords);
- The parkland setting of Didlington Hall;
- The areas of open water associated with historic parklands and gravel extraction sites;
- Tranquil, rural undisturbed character of much of the valley.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

A3.13 The sloping valley sides and large blocks of plantation woodland restrict views both within the character area and to adjacent character areas. Views to the more open valley crests are sensitive due to the largely undeveloped skyline interrupted by occasional woodland blocks. There are also some key channelled views along the valley floor.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

A3.14 This is a functional landscape that is traditionally managed by grazing. However, some elements are not representative of the valley landscape including areas of pig raising on the valley sides and plantation woodland.

A3.15 Although non-native coniferous woodland is dominant, blocks of wet woodland and carrs are present on the valley floor. The mosaic of wetland habitats represented by the SSSIs and Country Wildlife Sites demonstrate the ecological diversity and integrity of much of the valley.

### **Landscape Change**

#### **Past Change**

- The introduction of coniferous plantations on former estate parklands e.g. Tofts Park and heathland and commons;
- Loss of common land as a result of agricultural enclosure;
- Twentieth century boundary loss, notably on the valley sides;
- Introduction of post and wire fencing to the pastoral fields of the floodplain;
- The exploitation of drift deposits for mineral extraction.

#### **Future Change**

A3.16 Potential future landscape change may result from emerging Forestry Enterprise strategy, such as the reversion of woodland on the valley side to grazing pasture, in addition to the ongoing restoration of mineral extraction sites. Reed and grazing

marsh habitats are proposed along the course of the Wissey as part of the Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plan, to link the Broadland and Fenland sites.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall landscape strategy should be to conserve the tranquil, pastoral, undeveloped character of the *River Wissey* and to manage and where appropriate enhance and create natural floodplain habitats such as grassland, reedbeds, watermeadows, and grazing marsh, in line with the Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plan objectives.

### Guidelines

#### **Landscape Management**

- Replace coniferous species in the valley floor with native wet woodland species, or where appropriate consider reversion to grazing pasture (or heathland);
- Replace post and wire fencing with native, species rich hedgerows or ditches to improve habitat connectivity;
- Maintain the traditional grazed pastoral valley floor and area of flood meadow, wet pasture and rough grazing;
- Maintain the small scale parliamentary enclosure field pattern where it exists and seek to enhance/replace hedgerow boundaries to conserve the pattern and improve habitat connectivity;
- Encourage opportunities for the creation of reedbed associated with existing wetland habitat, to assist in meeting the objectives of the Norfolk BAP;
- Seek to conserve the water levels and water quality within the river and associated ditches and the fen systems;
- Ensure that infrastructure (e.g. signage) associated with recreational use of the river banks is sensitively designed;
- Encourage the reversion of plantations in the valley sides to grazing land and heathland as appropriate, when such plantings reach the end of their productive cycle, and in accordance with Forestry Enterprise objectives.

#### **Development Considerations**

- Conserve the unsettled rural character and views of the undeveloped, wooded valley crests and skyline;
- Monitor the expansion of the small settlements within the valley, and suburbanising built elements which could affect their small scale, vernacular and rural character;
- Monitor changes/expansion of villages within adjacent areas – ensuring the development extensions do not extend into this otherwise largely undeveloped rural valley.

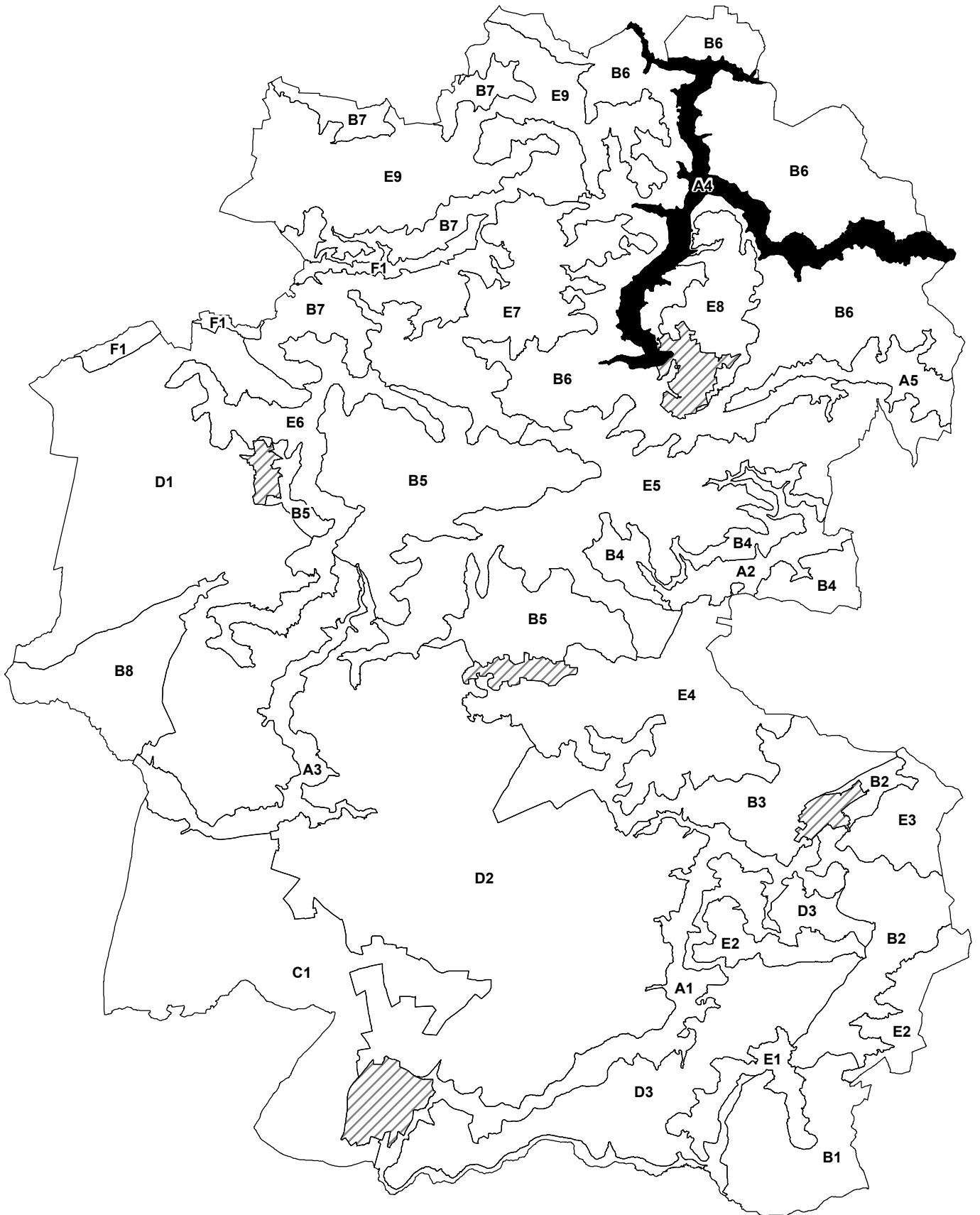
- Ensure recreation facilities and associated buildings/infrastructure respects the landscape and visual character and existing landscape elements. Explore opportunities for the sensitive after use of gravel pits;
- Conserve small scale river crossing points (bridges and fords)
- Improve connectivity between the character area and the river to make use of its potential as a recreational resource, ensuring that any recreational development takes into consideration the number of ecologically important habitats in the character area.







# A4: RIVER WENSUM AND BLACKWATER





## A4: RIVER WENSUM AND BLACKWATER

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### Location and Boundaries

- A4.1 The *Wensum and Blackwater* is an easterly draining catchment in the north eastern part of Breckland District, flowing from North Norfolk in the north and continuing into Broadland District to the east. The valley character is distinct from the surrounding *Wensum and Tud Settled tributary farmland*.

### Key Characteristics

- An easterly draining catchment carved into Upper Chalk and overlying chalky boulder clay. Glacial sands and gravel form deposits within the river channel, as well as alluvial sediments which are overlain by the silty/sandy soils of the valley.
- Glacial sands and gravels have been exploited through mineral workings, with a large number of active and disused pits. Redundant workings have created a chain of lakes with large parts of the valley floor being open water.
- Topography ranges from 20-40m AOD, and forms a broad, shallow valley.
- The presence of hedgerow trees and small blocks of woodland creates an enclosed character with framed views of the flat valley floor, and along the rural road network.
- There are occasional views up the valley sides to the crests with landmark buildings such as Swanton Morley church and Bylaugh Hall being visually prominent.
- Parts of the valley floor comprise small grazed fields, divided by ditches and dykes creating a distinctive landscape pattern and habitat. Willows, alder and poplar punctuate the flat open landscape. Black poplars are a distinctive feature.
- Remnant pockets of heath survive within the valley on areas of sand and gravel drift.
- The higher ground of the valley sides is characterised by arable cultivation, with some areas of pasture. Fields are bounded by mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- The valley is ecologically rich, representing a variety of habitats. The entire river channel is designated as a SSSI and a SPA, with adjacent areas of wet unimproved meadow, fen scrub and alder carr (also a SAC). The valley also contains Bentley and Hoe Meadows SSSI, Dillington Carr SSSI and Mill Common SSSI.
- Within the valley floor there is one Scheduled Monument, a moated site south east of Spong Bridge. The mill at North Elmham indicates the history of human interventions on the Wensum and is indicative of a former network of mills along the river.

- Brick hump back bridges form characteristic bridging points, whilst weirs and brick and weatherboard mills are distinctive features. Verges and hedgerows lining the narrow rural roads are an important landscape and wildlife feature.
- Settlement is characteristically scattered farmsteads, hamlets and mills, plus occasional edges of villages (such as North Elmham and Beetley) which have spread into the valley from the adjacent *Wensum and Tud Settled tributary farmland*.
- Recreational opportunities are provided by rights of way although there is limited pedestrian access to the river. The commons (open access land) however provide a notable recreational opportunity.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- A4.2 The River Wensum is an easterly draining catchment cutting through the underlying Upper Chalk formation by two main periods of geomorphological activity. The river follows a meandering course through a broad, shallow and well defined valley and meets the course of the Blackwater Tributary near Billingford Hall. The boundaries of the *River Wensum and Blackwater* character area are topographically, with the 40m contour marking the valley crests. The change in landform is subtle with the valley sides dropping gently away to mark the transition from the more elevated areas of the adjacent *Wensum and Tud Settled tributary farmland* character area.
- A4.3 Drift deposits of sand and gravel were deposited by glacial meltwater and are a characteristic feature of the valley sides. The drift deposits have a strong influence on the soils in the valley and have significantly influenced both the early colonisation and the development of agriculture and industrial activity.
- A4.4 The sand and gravel drift geology has resulted in areas of heathy common land interspersed with woodland. The sands and gravels have also been excavated and there are numerous relict and operational sand and gravel extraction pits along the valley. Operational pits include the pit adjacent to Billingford Common, but there are a greater number of pits which have been abandoned. Vast expanses of open water, surrounded by regenerated tree cover are now a feature of the valley floor landscape.
- A4.5 Land within the floodplain is still traditionally managed for hay crops and by grazing, creating a range of important grassland habitats some of which are seasonally inundated. The mosaic of meadow and marsh habitats, including one of the most extensive reedbeds in the country outside the Broads, provides a niche for a wide variety of specialised flora and fauna. The pastoral fields on the valley floor are medium sized and irregular, defined by rural style fencing, ditches and occasional hedgerows. The higher ground of the valley sides is characterised by medium sized, geometric fields bounded by hedgerows and under arable cultivation.
- A4.6 The ecological importance of the character area is represented by the number of ecological designations, and the designation of the entire River Wensum as an SSSI and SPA (SAC). In addition, Bentley and Hoe Meadows, Mill Common and Dillington Carr are all designated as SSSI's. There are four areas of Registered Common Land,

the largest being Beetley Common. Important habitats include osier and alder plantations and carrs, pollarded willows which occur along the river bank and calcareous grassland on the valley floor. Alder carrs have been evident in Norfolk since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. A small number of ancient woodlands occur within the character area, e.g. at Sennowe Park and near Worthing Mill. Woodland species also include ash, oak, hazel and birch.

A4.7 The entire character area falls into the core areas category of the Ecological Network Mapping Project for Norfolk due to its variety of riparian habitats and biodiversity value. It is also highlighted as an area for reedbed creation and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. Reedbeds are identified as priority habitats within the Norfolk BAP.

A4.8 The course of the River Wensum as it flows through Breckland District has experienced relatively little human intervention in contrast to stretches of the river outside of the district which have been dredged and straightened. Certain sections of the river are being rehabilitated as at Bintree Mill.

### **Historic Character**

A4.9 There is a long history of settlement and human activity in the Wensum Valley, with evidence of the valley being farmed during the late Iron Age. During the Roman Period, large areas of forest were cleared and this pattern of clearance continued through later centuries with substantial Saxon settlements found along the edge of the valley such as at North Elmham (Saxon Cathedral site).

A4.10 During the Medieval period, cultivation would have continued in places on the valley sides with grazed pasture land on the valley floor. Medieval enclosure is still evident in the landscape, in the form of very small fields surrounding settlements (e.g. south of Gressenhall) on the valley sides. Drainage of land within the valley during the last two to three hundred years using an extensive network of drainage ditches has lowered the water table, and made the pasture land more productive.

A4.11 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk has identified a number of commons at Hoe and Billingford, which are still extant, although reduced in area due to subsequent mineral extraction.

A4.12 Numerous weirs were constructed along the River Wensum in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to control the water level, providing an adequate head of water for the mills. Mills were used for a variety of uses, but particularly for the production of paper.

A4.13 Substantial areas of parkland were laid out in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the houses themselves often being constructed outside of the *River Wensum* character area, but their grounds having a strong influence on character within the valley, for example Sennowe Park in the north (with Sennowe Hall itself located outside Breckland District). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the river was dammed to create large lakes which are a feature of the floodplain today.

A4.14 During the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, there is evidence of considerable industrial activity within the Wensum Valley, making use of the abundant water supply. The railway line which runs through parts of the *River Wensum and Blackwater* character area, was an important feature at this time linking the area to the rest of Norfolk.

The line no longer forms part of the mainline railway network, having been developed for recreational purposes by the Mid Norfolk Railway Group.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- A4.15 The River Wensum valley itself has a low settlement density, although the adjacent *Wensum and Tud Settled tributary farmland* character area has a higher settlement density which in places overlooks the river valley, and is visible from within it, with housing sometimes encroaching over the valley sides e.g. South Beetley.
- A4.16 Settlement within the valley comprises isolated farm buildings or small hamlets along rural roads and lanes. These are often associated with weirs and mills such as at Worthing Mill and Elsing Mill.
- A4.17 The local vernacular is red brick with flint and clay ridge tiles, examples of which can be seen in Lyng. Mills are characteristically red brick, often with white painted weather boarding e.g. Elsing Mill.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- A4.81 The character area retains a strong sense of enclosure due to the woodland blocks on the valley floor and the rural lanes bounded by mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees. Views out of the character area to the crest of the valley are limited by the woodland blocks and wooded lanes, but there are occasional framed views up to landmark buildings on the crest of the valley as at Swanton Morley Church and Bylaugh Hall.
- A4.19 A strong character is created by the meandering river course, associated wetland habitats, small scale grazed pastures and network of ditches and the traditional built structures such as the brick bridges and weatherboard mills. All of these features combine to create an intimate but varied landscape.
- A4.20 Although the river and immediately surrounding grazed pasture creates a tranquil quality, the visual intactness of the character area is reduced by occasional visual instances of unsympathetic after use design of the sand and gravel pits, and by encroachment of settlement in localised areas.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- Natural meandering course of the River Wensum (SSSI/SAC) and associated floodplain habitats and landscapes which are especially sensitive to river engineering and changes in water quality and water flows;
- The riparian vegetation on the valley floor including willow/osier beds, carrs, grazed pastures and hay meadows (SSSI) which represent the traditional, historic land use, contribute to the small scale character of the valley and provide a valuable biodiversity resource;

- The tranquil rural character of the Wensum Valley and the sensitivities to incremental small scale change;
- The balance of open water within the valley and the need to ensure sensitive restoration and afteruse of sand and gravel workings;
- Areas of common land and associated heathy vegetation which are important as a historic feature, for recreation and biodiversity and require active management to sustain their character;
- Parklands such as Sennowe Park impart a historic and designed character to parts of the landscape;
- Low density of settlement comprising occasional scattered farm buildings and small hamlets clustered at bridging points and close to mills, which is sensitive to new development, particularly extension of settlement in the adjacent character area;
- The varied field pattern, including the small scale pattern of medieval ‘closes’ on the valley side associated with settlement, the pastures enclosed by ditches on the valley floor and medium scale hedged enclosures of the valley side which indicate historic processes and are especially sensitive to boundary change/loss;
- Network of narrow rural lanes bounded by mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees which contribute to the enclosed, small scale character of the valley, which are especially sensitive to upgrading/urbanising influences;
- Brick humpback bridges create a strong sense of tradition and historic character as well as serving as an important crossing point. They would be sensitive to road widening or an increase in traffic pressure;
- The site and landscape setting of historic features including the mills and occasional halls and churches on the valley crest which provide an important focus in views from the valley.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

A4.21 The open views across the flat valley floor are sensitive to further built development or the creation of large areas of uncharacteristic woodland planting, which would jar with the existing small blocks of wet woodland and alder and willow carr. The framed views to an open/undeveloped valley crest are sensitive to encroachment by any form of development, particularly extension of residential development and tall structures which would be very dominant within the small scale context of the valley.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

A4.22 Whilst areas of the landscape are interrupted due to the former mineral extraction, the remaining areas of valley floodplain are currently in good condition and there is little evidence of the condition declining. There is evidence that traditional management techniques are being used; the floodplain is characterised by active grazing and the traditional osier and alder carrs have been retained.

A4.23 There are various initiatives to maintain the character of the valley, including the Wensum Valley Project which is a partnership of Local Authorities aiming to conserve wildlife, landscape and heritage, improve countryside access and promote community action and involvement in the Wensum Valley.

## **Landscape Change**

### **Past Change**

- Loss of wetland habitats as a result of land drainage and agricultural intensification;
- More recently, positive agricultural management through the Broads ESA, including conversion of arable to grassland;
- Drainage and some dredging/straightening of sections of the river;
- Woodland planting including some conifer belts and planting/woodland regeneration on areas of common land;
- Extraction of sand and gravel, plus restoration/after use of schemes;
- Closure/loss of mills, the buildings often being converted for residential use;
- Spread of residential development from villages in the adjacent Settled tributary farmland landscape character area, down the valley sides;
- Positive Initiatives associated with the Wensum Valley Project e.g. rehabilitation of the river at Bintree;
- Closure of the Dereham branch of the Mid Norfolk Railway line and development for recreational purposes.

### **Future Change**

A4.24 Potential future change may arise through the implementation of agri environment schemes. The cessation of mineral extraction and the ongoing after use design of extraction sites may affect the landscape and visual character of the valley. The Wensum Valley Project will continue to initiate positive landscape change in the valley. Potential open space sites are also identified in the valley, adjacent to the north western edge of Dereham, in the Breckland District Local Plan.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall management objective should be to conserve the tranquil, pastoral, undeveloped character of the *River Wensum and Blackwater* and to manage and where appropriate increase natural floodplain habitats such as grassland, reedbeds, watermeadows, and grazing marsh, as well as areas of heathland associated with the commons. The wooded lanes of the valley sides should be conserved, ensuring that the hedgerows and hedgerow trees which create a sense of enclosure and historic character are maintained.



## **Guidelines**

### ***Landscape Management***

- Maintain hedgerow and hedgerow tree boundaries of the rural roads and fields on the valley sides, ensuring succession of hedgerow trees and gapping up hedgerows with native species where appropriate;
- Maintain the predominantly grazed pastoral valley floor; and seek to avoid further extension of arable cultivation down the valley sides;
- Maintain existing extent and quality of wet meadow and grazing marsh habitat;
- Seek to conserve the water levels and water quality within the river and associated ditches;
- Seek to create area of reedbed vegetation in areas of low nature conservation interest, to fulfil BAP/EcoNet objectives, subject to the provisions of agri environment schemes;
- Maintain areas of alder/osier carr at their current extent and seek to plant wet woodland species as part of the after use design of mineral extraction sites;
- Maintain the small scale field pattern, particularly the historic small scale 16<sup>th</sup> century enclosure found surrounding settlements.

### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve the historic character of nucleated settlements on the valley floor associated with mills;
- Conserve views of the wooded character of the valley crest with occasional landmark buildings, ensuring that new development does not detract from this view;
- Monitor the expansion of Lyng and North Elmham to ensure that development does not extend across the floodplain along the rural roads;
- Ensure that any development of leisure and recreation facilities responds to and enhances its landscape setting, and explore opportunities for the sensitive after use design of gravel pits;
- Monitor the expansion/widening of the 'A' and 'B' roads crossing the landscape, and introduction of new roads, with particular attention being paid to the crossing points and the protection of the historic brick humpback bridges;
- Conserve the strong wooded context to settlements and use this as a template for integration of new development;
- Improve connectivity between the character area and the river to make use of its potential as a recreational resource. Ensure that any recreational development takes into consideration the number of ecologically important habitats in the character area.

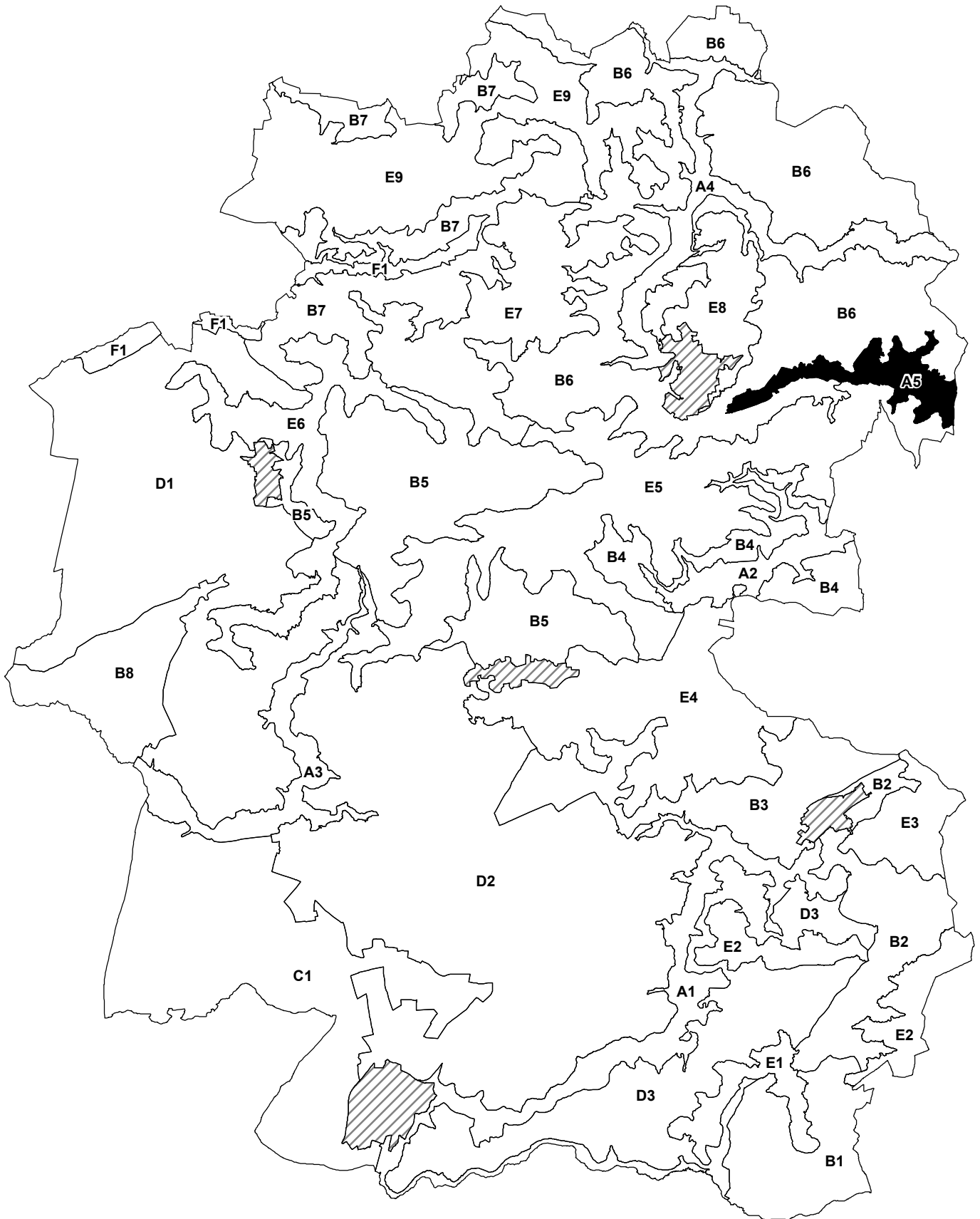






# A5: UPPER TUD

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## A5: UPPER TUD VALLEY

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### Location and Boundaries

A5.1 The *Upper Tud* Valley is an easterly draining catchment carved through the underlying chalk solid geology, overlain by drift deposits of silt, sand, gravel and clay. The watercourse forms a small component of the broad, contained but clearly defined valley which is bounded to the north and west by the *Wensum and Tud Settled tributary farmland* and to the south by the *Shipdham Plateau*. To the east the river crosses the District boundary and extends into the adjoining Broadland District and South Norfolk District.

### Key Characteristics

- An easterly draining catchment carved through chalk solid geology which is overlain by glacial drift deposits of sand, silt, gravel and clay, with the valley floor lying at 30m AOD and the crests at 50m AOD.
- Due to the containment provided by landform and by vegetation within the valley floor, views are intermittent, although church towers (e.g. East Tuddenham/Hockering) are prominent, and the skylines of the valley crests are uninterrupted.
- Pastoral farmland is the predominant land cover, with areas of rough grazing and wet meadow, in addition to alder dominated strips to the river, which provide intermittent views of the watercourse.
- The network of pastoral fields is primarily of geometric pattern and is generally small to medium in scale, with boundaries defined by both mixed native hedgerows and by field drains and tributaries.
- A number of historic land cover elements survive such as the alder dominated carr woodlands and Warren Plantation. The ancient woodland at Hockering Wood SSSI extends into a small part of the character area.
- The meandering course of the Tud and its associated tributaries and wet woodland strips form distinctive elements within the valley floor, as do the narrow, historic river crossing points.
- Historic features include the moated site in the north western part of the character area and the remote church of East Tuddenham.
- Settlement pattern is associated with the junctions of narrow rural roads and has a nucleated form. A number of isolated farmsteads occur across the landscape.
- A textured wetland landscape, with the only views of the River Tud available from the crossing points. The Tud Valley has a peaceful, pastoral character with only localised intrusion from the A47 in the northern part of the character area.
- An extensive network of rights of way intersects the character area, both along the course of the river and across the valley sides.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- A5.2 The Tud Valley is an easterly draining catchment carved through the underlying chalk solid geology and overlain with glacial drift deposits of sand, gravel and clay. Topography is that of a broad shallow and well defined valley, lying between 30-50m AOD.
- A5.3 Landcover is predominantly pastoral farmland, with some areas of rough grazing and wet meadow/fen, in addition to alder dominated woodland strips and areas of carr woodland along the course of the river and minor tributaries draining into it.
- A5.4 Field pattern is predominantly geometric (occasionally irregular) and comprises small to medium scale fields. Small fields in particular are associated with settlement edges and may be of ancient or pre Enclosure 'close' formation. Mixed boundary hedgerows characterise a number of field boundaries, in addition to field drains and tributaries.
- A5.5 A number of areas of fen and wet meadow within the valley floor are designated as County Wildlife Sites, illustrating the ecological potential of parts of the character area. The course of the Tud lies within the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project's Core Area, with the more intensively managed valley sides lying within the Enhancement Area for heathland, grassland and woodland re-creation. Carr and wet woodland which occurs within the valley is a priority habitat within the Norfolk BAP, as is broadleaf ancient woodland (e.g. Hockering Wood).

### Historic Character

- A5.6 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk illustrates a number of historic land cover elements such as the commons of East Tuddenham and Badley Moor, in addition to a minor parkland associated with the parsonage at Honingham, to the eastern edge of the character area. A low density settlement pattern of nucleated villages and hamlets is also shown on the 1797 map, together with small areas of woodland to the north of Hockering (Hockering Wood).
- A5.7 This low density settlement pattern is extant although the landcover pattern has significantly changed due to subsequent Enclosure, with associated loss of heath/common land at Badley Moor and East Tuddenham. Hockering Wood is designated ancient woodland and remains today. Warren Plantation refers to the historic Breckland practice of 'warrening' or rabbit farming.
- A5.8 Areas of dead and regenerating elms and associated suckering indicate the historic distribution of species in the valley floor before the onset of Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970's.
- A5.9 A moated site in the north western part of the character area provides evidence of the historical continuity of settlement and human intervention within the valley landscape.



## **Settlement and Built Character**

- A5.10 Settlement is small in scale and of a low density, generally nucleated pattern as at Hockering. Hockering has a characteristic isolated and visually prominent church and the village displays a small vernacular core, with a significant amount of mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion to the edges of the settlement. In terms of its relationship to the landscape this was historically based on a junction of rural roads although the village is now somewhat divorced from the valley floor due to the re routed A47 which creates an abrupt, artificial settlement edge.
- A5.11 East Tuddenham Church is also a prominent feature, being isolated from its settlement which largely lies within the adjacent character area. Settlement within the Tud Valley is otherwise represented by small, isolated farmsteads and the linear hamlet of Rotten Row.

## **Perceptual and Visual**

- A5.12 The *Tud Valley* is a peaceful, rural landscape clearly defined by a broad shallow valley landform. Evidence of the wetland character associated with the Tud is apparent in the areas of wet meadow, grazed pasture and alder carr, although the course of the Tud is often largely concealed by wet woodland, with views of the river generally confined to crossing points.
- A5.13 A range of pastoral and wetland elements provides a strongly textured quality to the landscape. Small to medium scale geometric pastoral fields contribute to the relatively intimate quality, as does the containment provided by landform and boundary/wet woodland vegetation within the valley floor. In experiential terms, the well defined valley crests create a clear, distinct sense of valley character. As such intervisibility with other landscapes is confined to intermittent views to the *Wensum and Tud Settled tributary farmland*. Church towers on the upper valley sides or the valley crests form prominent components of views such as at East Tuddenham.
- A5.14 Overall the *River Tud Valley* is tranquil in character due to the sparsely settled character and the network of narrow rural roads, with only localised intrusion from the A47 which intersects the northern part of the character area.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- A5.15 The following are judged to be the key landscape sensitivities and positive landscape features which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.
- Wet woodland and carrs along the river define the character of the lowland river landscape, creating a densely wooded river corridor.
  - Isolated churches to the valley crests and upper valley slopes create prominent and historic built features.
  - Narrow rural roads and river crossings, which represent historic bridging points and are illustrated on Faden's Map.

- Gently sloping pastoral fields to the valley sides represent historic post Enclosure landuse and landcover pattern.
- The valley crests, which clearly define the character area.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

A5.16 Key visual sensitivities are considered to be the views to the churches at Hockering and East Tuddenham, in addition to the potential for intervisibility with other landscapes due to the largely open and unwooded skylines to the valley crests. Localised glimpsed views of the course of the Tud are also valued elements.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

A5.17 This is a managed pastoral landscape with some localised areas of intact historic character, notably the areas of fen and carr woodlands in the valley floor and the ancient woodland at Hockering Wood on the upper valley slopes. Ecological integrity and habitat variety have otherwise been diminished by intensive land management.

A5.18 With the exception of some localised visual intrusion from the A47, this is a landscape of unified peaceful character.

### **Landscape Change**

#### ***Past Change***

- Agricultural Enclosure and associated loss of heath and common land;
- Dutch Elm Disease and its attendant implications for the former elm woodland cover in the valley floor;
- Arterial transport corridors and routes e.g. of the A47, which have created localised interruptions within the character area.

#### ***Future Change***

A5.19 Potential future change may arise from the implementation of agri environment schemes and through the implementation of the Ecological Network Mapping Project's recommendations in respect of grassland restoration and woodland enhancement and re-creation.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall landscape management objective should be to conserve the pastoral grazing lands and areas of fen, wet meadow and the carrs/ancient woodland. Opportunities should be explored to ensure sustained woodland cover in the valley floor through active management and new planting, as should the possibility for enhancing the settlement edge/landscape setting of Hockering.

## **Guidelines**

### ***Landscape Management***

- Conserve existing ancient woodland and carrs through active and appropriate arboricultural management, reinforcing where appropriate with appropriate native species to ensure sustained woodland cover;
- Aim to reinforce and extend wet woodland along watercourses;
- Continue to maintain grazing pasture through traditional management techniques;
- Increase the biodiversity of more intensively managed grassland, creating and linking buffer strips along linear features such as hedgerows to provide a continuous network of wildlife corridors. Seek opportunities to re-create unimproved or semi improved species rich grassland and meadow.
- Conserve areas of fen and wet meadow through appropriate and traditional management practices;
- Conserve the small to medium scale pattern of fields, particularly early field systems which provide historic continuity in the landscape;
- Conserve the remaining field boundary hedgerows and reinforce/gap up where appropriate to ensure that they continue to provide a unity across the landscape as well as providing wildlife habitats;
- Conserve and manage the remaining field boundary ditches that are of importance for biodiversity as well as increasing the visual diversity of the landscape. Seek opportunities to extend/re-create areas of wetland habitat.

### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve sparsely settled character of farmsteads and low density villages/hamlets;
- Conserve the network of minor rural roads, avoiding signage/highway works e.g. kerbs/traffic calming measures which could impair this character;
- Monitor settlement edges e.g. Hockering and ensure that where any new development takes place that it is of a high quality design and reflects the historic vernacular in terms of building materials and styles;
- Explore opportunities for enhancing the relationship of the A47 to the landscape through noise attenuation measures including native planting;
- Where views exist from the upper valley slopes account should be taken of these when planning any future change within the valley. The valley crests are also sensitive in terms of views from the valley floor.

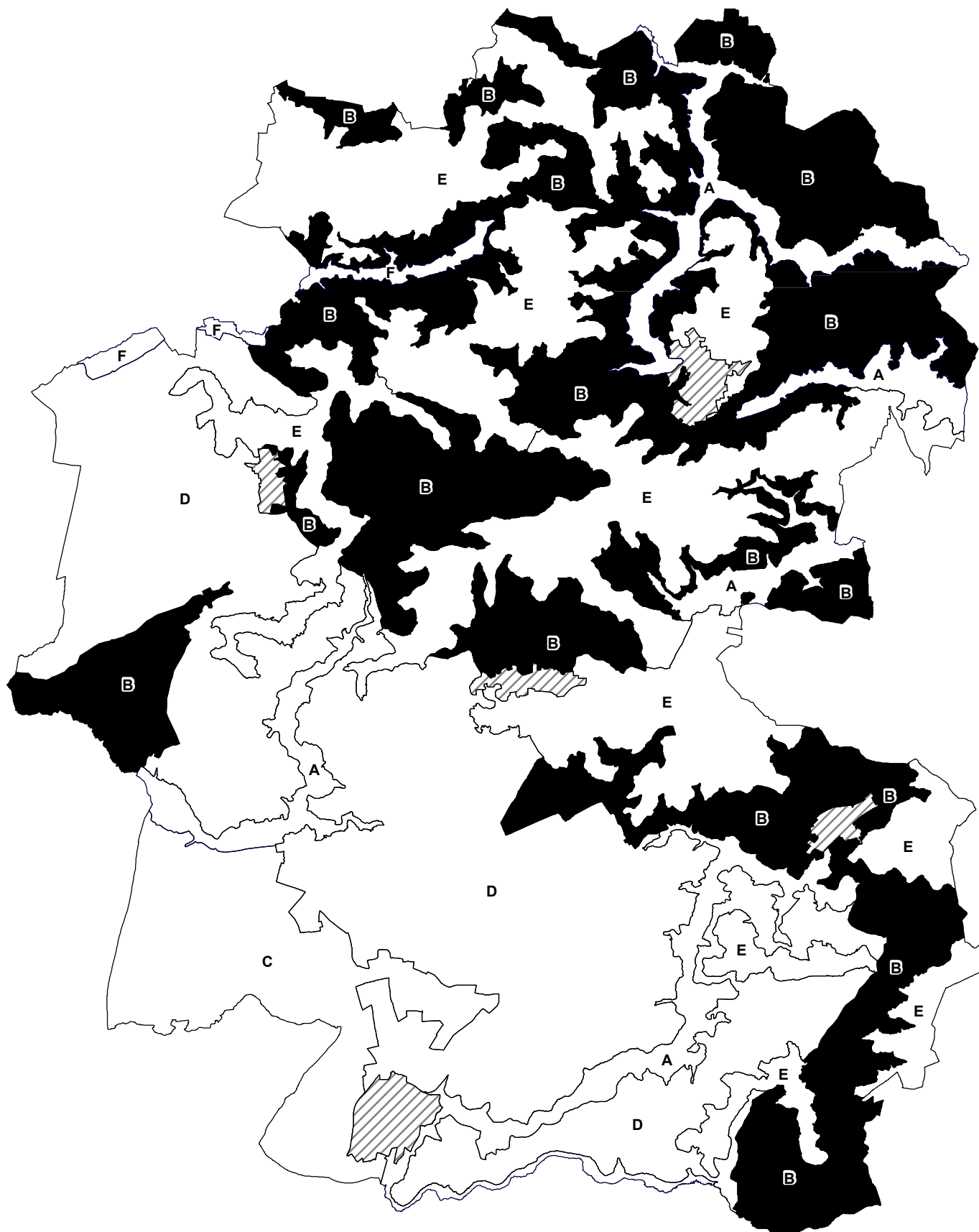






## B. SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND

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## LANDSCAPE TYPE B: SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND

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**B1** This landscape type is associated with the transition between both the river valley and plateau farmland landscape types, often encompassing a range of wetland features associated with tributary drains and fens in addition to larger scale landscape elements as a result of arable cultivation. Landform is distinctly undulating and this, along with field boundary vegetation, provides containment and limited intervisibility with other landscapes.

### Key Characteristics

- Medium scale landscape, with variable enclosure/field boundary pattern.
- Topographic elevation ranges from 20-50 metres AOD, and landform is variable and undulating.
- Landcover is predominantly defined by arable agriculture with localised areas of pasture associated with tributary drains and more occasionally freshwater fen.
- Medium-large scale network of geometric fields.
- Remnant hedgerows and associated hedgerow oaks are often apparent.
- Settled character, with dispersed farmsteads and nucleated villages.
- Varied skyline, with church towers often forming prominent features of views.

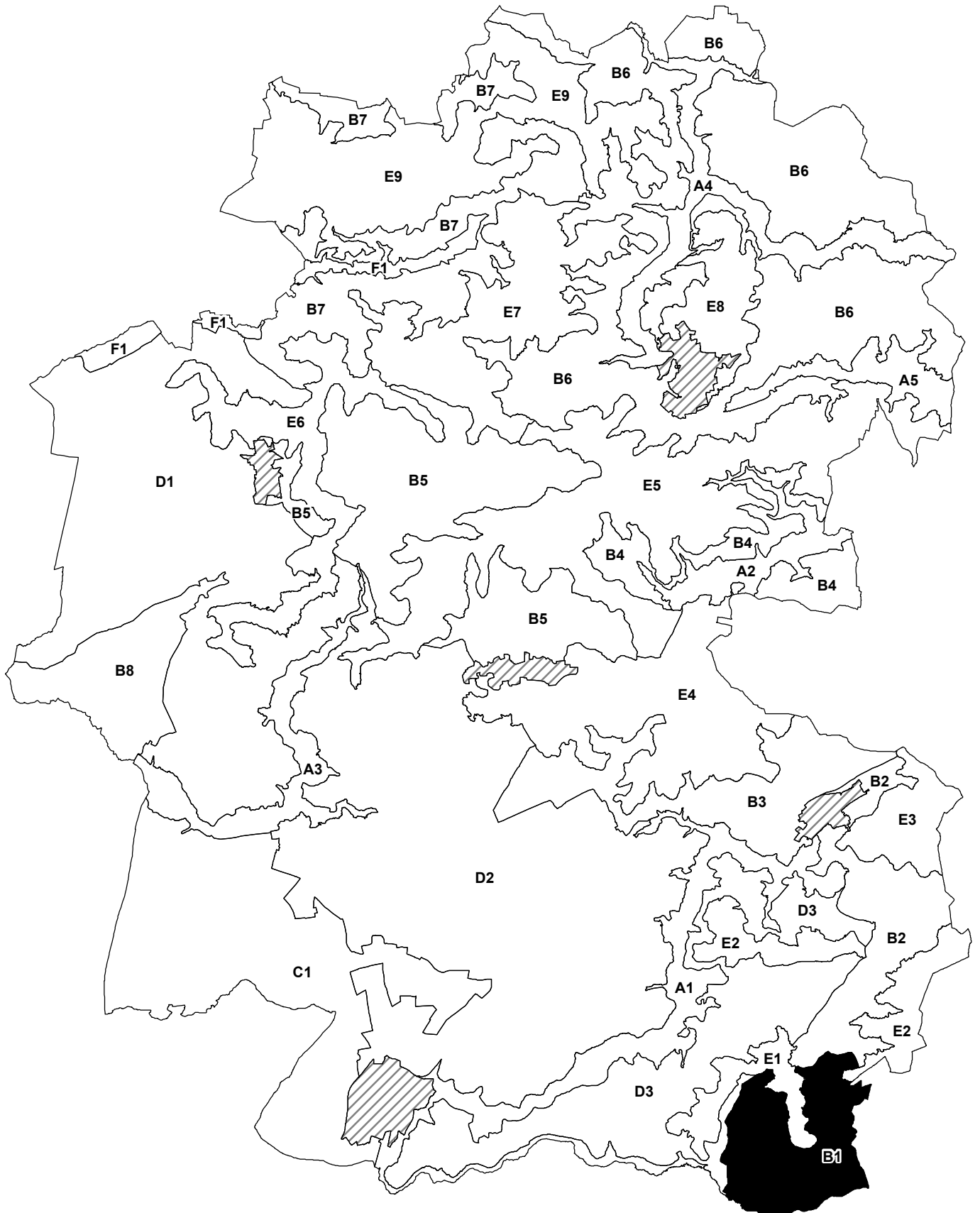
### Landscape Type B: Settled Tributary Farmland

#### Character Area

- B1 Little Ouse Tributary Farmland
- B2 The Buckenhams Tributary Farmland
- B3 River Thet Tributary Farmland
- B4 River Blackwater Tributary Farmland
- B5 River Wissey Tributary Farmland
- B6 River Wensum and Tud Tributary Farmland
- B7 River Nar Tributary Farmland
- B8 Gooderstone to Oxborough Tributary Farmland



# BI: LITTLE OUSE SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND





# BI: LITTLE OUSE SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND

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## Location and Boundaries

BI.1 The character area lies in the south eastern part of Breckland District, and the landscape type extends beyond the Breckland District Boundary into South Norfolk District to the east. The extent of the character area is defined by the valley of the Rivers Little Ouse and Waveney and adjoining Mid Suffolk District Boundary to the south, by the District boundary to the east, and by the more elevated landform of *Lophams Plateau* to the north west and *Snetterton Plateau* to the north east.

## Key Characteristics

- Predominantly diamicton drift with sand and gravels, and peat/silty clay along minor tributaries of the River Little Ouse.
- This underlying geology is reflected in the soils, which comprise chalky till and glaciofluvial drift material, although there are localised areas of peat around Redgrave and Lopham Fen in the southern part of the character area.
- Topography is gently undulating, and ranges from 20-50 metres AOD, with locally enclosed areas associated with the tributary valleys contrasting with the more exposed plateau edges.
- Views are generally contained by landform variation and by field boundary vegetation. Intervisibility with other landscape character areas is relatively low, although the adjoining plateau farmlands, as at the Lophams, are locally visible.
- Landcover is predominantly arable, with distinctive areas of pasture and wetland vegetation, wet meadows and fens associated with the source of the Little Ouse and of the eastward flowing Waveney in the south.
- The importance and distinctiveness of the fenland habitats associated with the source of the Waveney at Redgrave and Lopham Fen are recognised in a number of nature conservation designations, including SSSI, SAC and RAMSAR site designations.
- Field patterns across the character area are highly variable, being small in scale adjoining the drains and tributaries, but otherwise medium to large in scale and geometric in pattern when associated with arable agriculture.
- The remains of the estate landscape associated with the Garboldisham Manor are distinctive elements.
- Mature oaks associated with the patchy/remnant field boundary hedgerows are locally distinctive features.
- Heathland was historically a feature of the character area, with Kenninghall Heath and Lopham Common, although this largely been lost to arable cultivation.

- Settlement pattern is defined by frequent, dispersed farmsteads and hamlets, and more occasionally linear or nucleated villages associated with the rural road network, notably South Lopham.
- Local vernacular includes red pantiles and timber framed buildings with render and brick skins.
- A tamed rural landscape, with a generally tranquil quality and more akin to Suffolk landscapes in character.
- Opportunities for recreation are provided by a relatively extensive network of rights of way, in addition to the Nature Reserve at Redgrave and Lopham Fen.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- BI.2 The physical geology of the character area is defined by glacial drift deposits, with the sands and gravels associated with the tributaries of the Little Ouse and the Waveney. The source of the Little Ouse rises in the southern part of the character area, as does that of the eastward flowing Waveney.
- BI.3 The landform is gently undulating, with topography ranging from 20-50 metres AOD across the character area and the tributary valley contrasting with the more elevated plateau edges.
- BI.4 In the southern part of the character area rows of distinctive hedgerow oaks associated with former hedgerows and the field boundary ditch system are present. Elsewhere, on higher areas many hedgerows have been removed.
- BI.5 The biodiversity interest of the wetland vegetation associated with the areas of unimproved fenland to the southern boundary of the character area has been recognised in the designation of the Redgrave and Lopham Fens as a SSSI and also as a SAC and a RAMSAR site.
- BI.6 In addition, a number of sites have been designated at County Level for their nature conservation interest (County Wildlife Sites or CWS), and these include a number of small pastoral fields adjacent to the Little Fen and The Banks, in addition to Hollands Wood.
- BI.7 The Norfolk BAP has identified a number of habitats as a priority for action within this character area, notably reedbed and floodplain grazing associated with the fen in the southern part of the character area. The fens of Redgrave and Lopham Fen are identified as part of a core area within the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project, mainly in view of their international protection through designation as a RAMSAR site, and due to the relative scarcity of this habitat within Norfolk. Much of the remainder of the character area, encompassing the arable farmland and sites of former commons, falls within the Heath, Grassland and Wood Enhancement Area in view of the nature and extent of the arable cultivation.

## **Historic Character**

- BI.8 The Historic Landscape Characterisation has identified a number of distinctive historic features within the character area, including unimproved freshwater fen and remnant unenclosed common land. These are set within a landscape of largely 20<sup>th</sup> Century field patterns as a result of arable intensification. Other historic landscape processes include piecemeal enclosure, reflected in areas of variable field pattern and scale, including small scale fields defined by drainage ditches in the south, and field boundary loss arising from agricultural intensification in the north of the character area.
- BI.9 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk identifies a number of commons and heaths within the character area, notably at Lopham Common and Lopham Fen. Lopham Fen is still extant and has been incorporated within the Redgrave and Lopham Fen Nature Reserve. The commons have otherwise largely been lost to agricultural intensification, although the rural lane network associated with these survives. The windmill at Lopham Common, identified on Faden's 1797 Map and formerly associated with the historic linen weaving trade, has been replaced with Mill Pond Farm.
- BI.10 A number of features associated with the historic settlement pattern are apparent, notably the moated sites at The Ling at South Lopham and the remains of the estate associated with Garboldisham Manor ('wilderness' woodland).

## **Settlement and Built Character**

- BI.11 Settlement across the character area is defined primarily by small, scattered farmsteads and hamlets, in addition to the linear village of South Lopham which partly lies within the adjacent character area. South Lopham displays a range of timber framed buildings, in addition to later infill which has resulted in a 'ribbon' of development connecting it to North Lopham. The Norman tower of South Lopham Church is a prominent feature.
- BI.12 The settlements are related primarily to the rural road network and nodes/junctions. In terms of relationship to the landscape urbanising influences are occasionally apparent with gardenesque shrub and hedge species apparent to the edge of villages.

## **Perceptual/Visual**

- BI.13 This landscape is characterised by intermittent and framed views, due to landform variation and more occasionally field boundary hedgerows. The scale of the landscape within the character area is variable and influenced both by land use and field boundary pattern, ranging from small scale in the areas associated with pasture and the fens along the minor tributaries, to relatively large scale and open landscape associated with arable cultivation.
- BI.14 Overall the character area has a fairly interrupted visual quality due to agricultural intensification and associated loss of historic field boundary hedgerows, although there are localised areas of intact and historic landscape, as at Redgrave and Lopham Fen.

BI.15 Areas of settlement are small in scale and essentially rural in character. As such the character area generally has a tranquil quality, being dissected only by a network of rural lanes.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- Wetland features associated with Redgrave and Lopham Fen, such as fens, ditches, reedbed, tributaries and pollarded willows associated with watercourses, which are important for biodiversity;
- Grazing land and pastoral fields are apparent in the southern part of the character area, indicating historic land use;
- Remaining field boundaries, in particular the hedgerow oaks which form dense and distinctive lines in the southern part of the character area;
- The low density settlement pattern associated with the narrow rural road network;
- Tranquil, essentially rural character.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

BI.16 The key visual sensitivities associated with this character area include the generally framed views, which are contained both by landform and to an extent field boundary vegetation, particularly in the more intact southern part. There are few instances of intervisibility with other character areas, although the adjoining plateaux are locally visible. There are some key views to local features such as the church tower at South Lopham.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

BI.17 This is a landscape of variable condition. Much of the character area is relatively weak in terms of visual and aesthetic character in view of arable cultivation and agricultural intensification. The tributary valley associated with the source of the Waveney is considerably richer and more varied in terms of visual character and ecological integrity.

### **Landscape Change**

#### **Past Change**

- Enclosure and attendant loss of commons and heathland;
- 20<sup>th</sup> Century agricultural intensification and associated boundary loss;
- Settlement expansion within South Lopham, creating a 'ribbon' of development.



### **Future Change**

- BI.18 Potential future landscape change may arise through the implementation of BAP/EcoNet objectives for wetland and reed bed creation adjacent to existing fen systems. Potential enhancement of the arable landscape through agri environment schemes is a key opportunity.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall landscape strategy for the *Little Ouse Settled Tributary Farmland* should be to conserve and enhance the intimate, small scale and pastoral landscape and associated wetland vegetation in the south of the character area around Redgrave and Lopham Fen, and to enhance the more extensive areas under arable cultivation in the remainder of the character area. The aim should be to link and extend the distinctive wetland landscapes and to enhance the tributary valleys where they run through the arable farmland landscapes.

### **Guidelines**

#### **Landscape Management**

- Conserve areas of common land as at Redgrave and Lopham Fen;
- Encourage ongoing restoration and sensitive/appropriate management of freshwater fen habitat;
- Explore opportunities for creation of new areas of reedbed linked to existing habitat, and in areas of relatively low nature conservation interest;
- Encourage reversion to pastoral agriculture within the lower lying tributary valleys, creating buffers along the tributaries linking to the fens associated with the Upper Waveney;
- Conserve and enhance hedgerow trees through appropriate arboricultural management and reinforce through new mixed native hedgerow planting;

#### **Development Considerations**

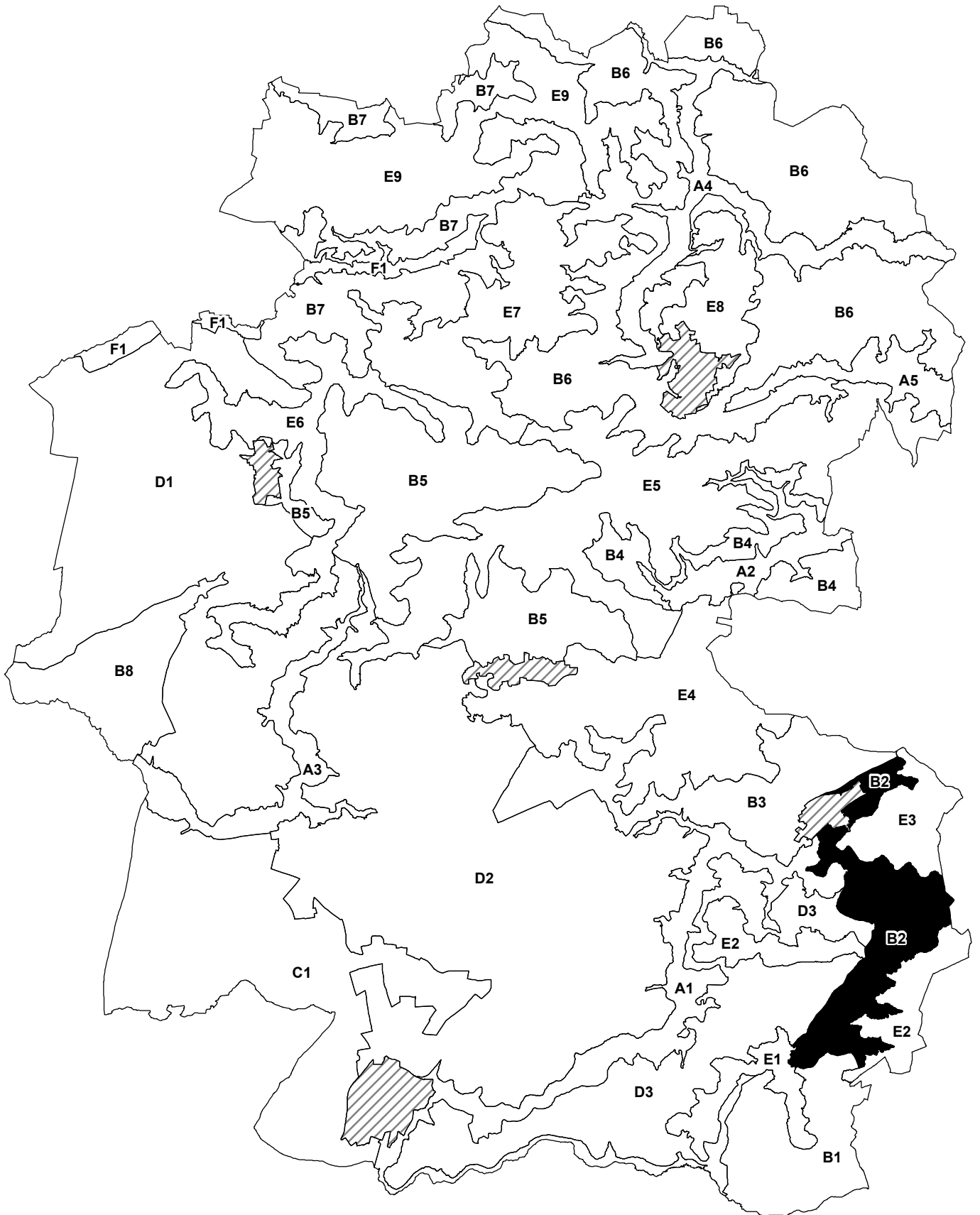
- Conserve existing small scale rural pattern of settlement, monitoring edge expansion and potential suburbanising influences in terms of built elements and garden boundary vegetation;
- Maintain the rural road network in its current state and monitor/discourage traffic / road widening pressures which could have an urbanising influence, e.g. traffic calming, road signage.







## B2: THE BUCKENHAMS SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND





## **B2: THE BUCKENHAMS SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND**

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### **Location and Boundaries**

B2.1 *The Buckenham Settled Tributary Farmland* is located on the eastern edge of Breckland District to the south east of Attleborough. It is a gently undulating landform cut by numerous ditches and tributaries. This area of settled tributary farmland is distinct for the extent of small scale settlement. The boundaries define the area from the Breckland Heath landscapes to the west and the more elevated open plateau landscapes to the east.

### **Key Characteristics**

- Lowestoft till glacial deposits creates a gently undulating landform interrupted by occasional shallow dry valleys and tributaries.
- Alluvium and river terrace deposits are a feature of the tributary valleys that cut the farmland as at Banham creating local landscape diversity.
- Distinctly undulating topography throughout character area, with topography ranging from 20-50m AOD reflecting the pattern of minor tributaries.
- Views are generally intermittent and frequently contained by landform and field boundary vegetation.
- Land cover is predominantly arable, with isolated blocks of mixed woodland and wooded strips to field boundaries, as well as shelterbelts.
- Surviving common land at New Buckenham and Old Buckenham are an important and distinctive feature of the villages. The common at Old Buckenham is considered to be the largest village green in England
- The common/green at New Buckenham is a large area of unimproved grassland, grazed by cattle and is designated an SSSI.
- Variable field pattern, ranging from small to medium-large scale. Drainage channels frequently supplement hedgerow boundaries.
- Historic sites (Scheduled Monuments) include the site of Buckenham Priory, the old castle, the later castle at New Buckenham and 'The Candle Yards' double moat at Kenninghall Place.
- Settlements with a strong historic character with a nucleated pattern at Old Buckenham, New Buckenham centred on historic village greens. Banham and Kenninghall, are by contrast linear in character.
- The town of Attleborough is a dominant influence in the northern part of the character area.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- B2.2 The underlying chalk geology of the character area is overlain by glacial drift deposits of sand, silt, clay and gravel. This gives rise to a gently undulating landform ranging from 20-50m AOD. In addition to the glacial deposits are alluvial deposits associated with the occasional tributaries which carve through glacial drift deposits to drain into the River Thet. Loamy and clayey Argillic brown earths provide good soils for cultivation. A clayey drift deposit associated with the southern part of the character area creates heavier clay soils.
- B2.3 Arable cultivation is the primary land cover, although there are small, isolated areas of mixed woodland, in addition to wooded field boundary strips and areas of shelter belt vegetation. Field boundaries are often defined by mixed hedgerows, with hedgerow trees, although there are extensive open areas where field boundaries have been lost.
- B2.4 Common land forms a localised, but distinctive land use, there being two examples within the character area at Old Buckenham and New Buckenham. New Buckenham Common is a large area of unimproved grassland grazed by cattle, designated as a SSSI. The character area is within the Ecological Network Mapping Project's Enhancement Area for woodland, heathland and grassland re-creation. There are a number of Norfolk BAP priority habitats within the area, including broadleaf woodland and cereal field margins. In addition at the local level, a number of areas of woodland are designated as CWS, in view of their local biodiversity interest.

### Historic Character

- B2.5 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has been completed for the majority of the character area and illustrates a range of historic processes which have informed the present character of the landscape. These include piecemeal and parliamentary Enclosure. During the twentieth century there have been extensive areas of boundary loss resulting from agricultural intensification, although small areas of relict field boundaries have survived within these areas, notably to the south east of Kenninghall.
- B2.6 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk identifies large tracts of common land around the 'Buckenams' and the minor parkland of St Andrew's Hall at New Buckenham. HLC data shows this to have been enclosed and converted to arable use during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- B2.7 A number of Scheduled Monuments within the character area denote the long history of settlement and the historic pattern of landed estates, notably the castle and Priory site at Old Buckenham and the earthworks of the castle at New Buckenham.

### Settlement and Built Character

- B2.8 Settlement is generally low density and of nucleated formation, and centred on large historic village greens or commons as at Old Buckenham and New Buckenham. New Buckenham is an example of a planned medieval settlement, of nucleated



formation and grid pattern. Settlements comprise compact villages and hamlets or small groups of houses and display a range of vernacular materials, including dressed stone churches, red brick, clay tile and colour washed render. Settlement usually relates to the junctions of the narrow rural roads which traverse the character area. In addition a number of small buildings, associated with farms are scattered across the character area. The windmill at Old Buckenham is a distinctive feature.

- B2.9 Kenninghall is a linear village with a strong historic character. Local red brick, clay lump, wattle and daub, timber framing and colour render are all apparent.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- B2.10 This is a medium scale and semi enclosed landscape, with views essentially contained by landform and field boundary vegetation. Although primarily a productive arable, locally distinctive features include the commons, hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees, small blocks of woodland, in addition to minor tributaries crossing the farmland.
- B2.11 The area has a very rural character, within which are a number of settlements with a strong historic quality and vernacular character (Buckenham, Banham and Kenninghall). The stakeholder consultation held on 18/1/2007 noted that the colloquial name for the area between these settlements was 'The Golden Triangle'. The landscape has an essentially peaceful quality, albeit with localised interruption along the northern boundary as a result of noise and lighting associated with the A11 and the edge of Attleborough.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities that are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- Nucleated settlements around village greens, which refer to the historic pattern of development.
- Historic vernacular and use of local materials, e.g. clay lump as at Kenninghall, which make a significant contribution to the sense of place of settlements.
- Surviving field boundary hedgerows and trees, which indicate the post Enclosure character of the landscape prior to agricultural intensification.
- The surviving areas of common land and the ecologically important grasslands.
- The Priory and Castle at Old Buckenham, together with the castle at New Buckenham, as a symbol of historic continuity.
- The narrow tributaries and associated wetland vegetation which transect the arable fields.
- Glimpsed views to focal points within the character area such as the church tower at New Buckenham.

- Essentially peaceful, rural character and dark skies.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

B2.12 The containment provided by the undulating landform and field boundary vegetation, results in only intermittent views and limited intervisibility with other landscapes. Important views within the character area include glimpsed views of prominent features such as the church tower at New Buckenham and open views across the two expansive areas of commons. The stakeholder consultation (18/1/07) indicated a valued long distance view from Buckenham across to Winfarthing. Other long distance views include the wooded skyline of the *Harling Heath character area (D3)* to the west, and local views across Old Buckenham Fen in the *Thet Valley (A1)*.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

B2.13 The landscape is essentially a managed, functional and productive arable agricultural landscape, although it retains localised areas of its historic character, notably with surviving Enclosure field boundaries and the commons associated with the historic settlements. Ecological integrity is relatively weak and there are opportunities for enhancement of woodland, heathland and grassland habitats.

### **Landscape Change**

#### ***Past Change***

- Parliamentary and piecemeal enclosure, and associated loss of common land.
- Agricultural intensification and attendant field boundary loss during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- The construction of the A11 and associated lighting and signage.
- Expansion of Attleborough;
- 20<sup>th</sup> century development and infilling within the villages.

#### ***Future Change***

B2.14 This remains a predominantly rural area, although pressure for development is ongoing. In the north of the area the A11 corridor already has a considerable influence on the rural character in terms of noise/lighting and is considered to be a potential catalyst for further change/development. Restoration and enhancement of ecological habitats is a potentially positive future opportunity.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall management objective for *The Buckenhams Settled Tributary Farmland* is to enhance the landscape of the tributary valleys that thread through the agricultural land, with the aim being to create stronger links with the adjacent river valley landscapes. The rural character of the landscape with its small scale compact villages set around commons should be conserved to provide a contrast to the more open and exposed plateau landscapes. Opportunities for reinforcement of field boundary

hedgerows should be explored, as should restoration/enhancement of grassland and woodland habitats to strengthen visual and biodiversity interest.

## **Guidelines**

### ***Landscape Management***

- Conserve and enhance existing field boundary hedgerows, trees and wooded strips through appropriate management;
- Seek opportunities to create/replace field boundary hedgerows where they have been lost, particularly to the east of Old Buckenham;
- Explore opportunities to improve biodiversity through creation of field set aside margins and buffers to the tributary watercourses;
- Explore opportunities to re create areas of heathland where appropriate relating to areas of former common land and linking into existing commons, e.g. at the Buckenhams;
- Conserve and enhance existing areas of common land and their relationship to settlements ensuring that any new development or changes to land use does not detract from their historic character.

### ***Development Considerations***

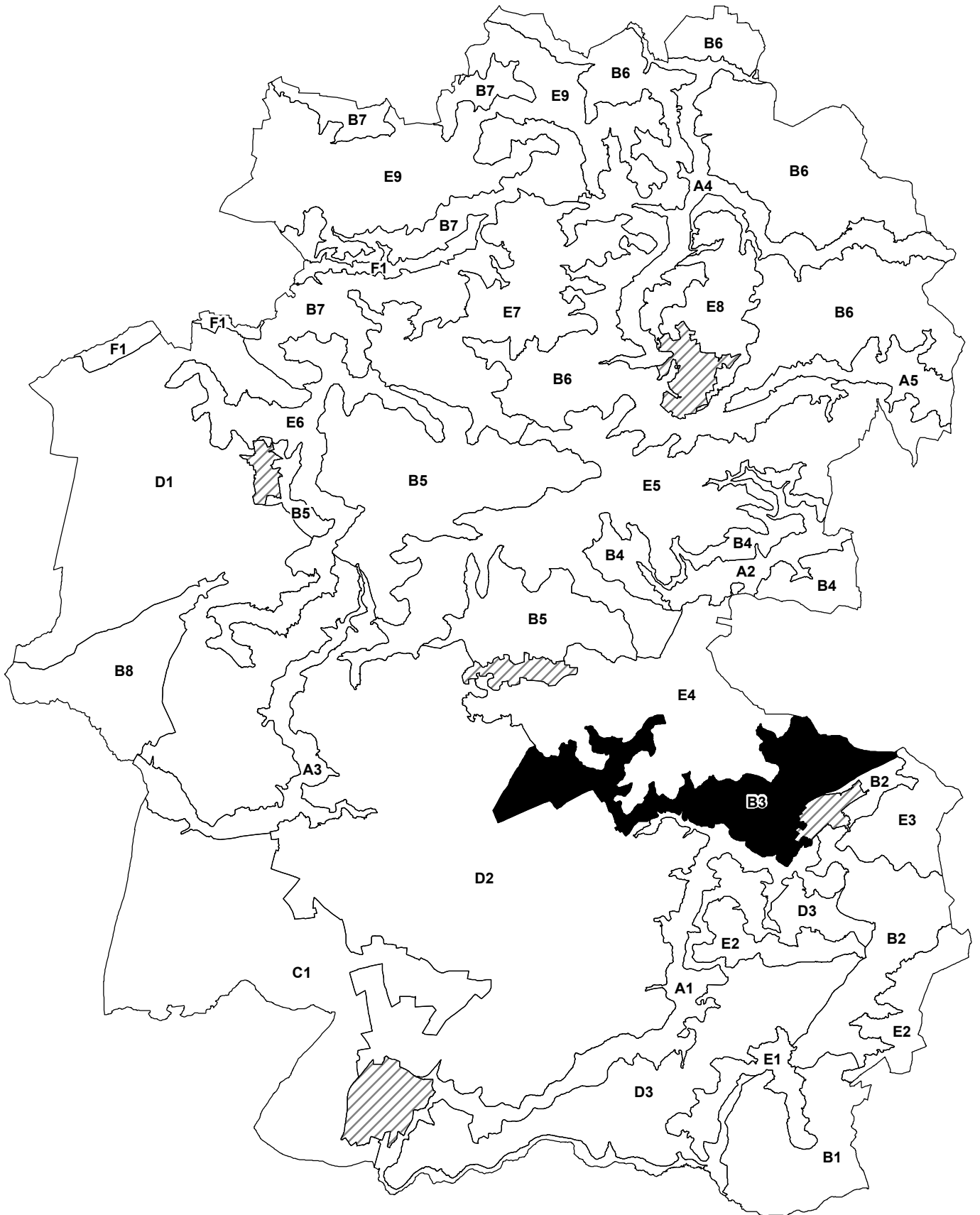
- Conserve existing small scale rural road pattern, resisting traffic upgrade/calming measures which could have an urbanising influence (signs, kerbing, lighting etc.);
- Ensure that new development within the settlements reflects the use of local materials, and that settlements individual and separate identities are preserved through avoiding coalescence;
- Conserve historic village signs;
- Conserve views to land mark features within the villages. Notably, views to the distinctive church towers;
- Monitor development and boundary treatments to the settlement edges and seek to reflect the surrounding rural character in selection of boundaries and planting palette.
- Seek to minimise lighting on the edges and within villages and adjacent towns/roads to conserve wider dark skies in this part of Breckland.







# **B3: RIVER THET SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND**







## B3: THET SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND

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### Location and Boundaries

- B3.1 Located in the south east of Breckland, *Thet Settled Tributary Farmland* forms a narrow band of gently undulating farmland intersected by tributaries draining southwards into the River Thet. The character area extends from Thompson in the west to Attleborough in the east, with the boundaries defined by topography. The landscape type extends northwards into South Norfolk District.

### Key Characteristics

- Lowestoft till glacial deposits creates a gently undulating landform interrupted by occasional shallow dry valleys and tributaries carved by glacial meltwaters.
- Alluvium and River Terrace deposits are a feature of the tributary valleys contributing to the loamy and clayey Argillic brown earths.
- A gently undulating topography throughout the character area, ranging from 30 metres AOD in the tributary valleys to 50 metres AOD in the elevated areas.
- Views are generally intermittent and frequently contained by landform, field boundary vegetation and areas of wet woodland, although views to church towers in adjacent character areas are a feature, e.g. Great Ellingham.
- Land cover is predominantly arable, interspersed with numerous smaller scale elements e.g. wet woodland (at Thompson Carr), blocks of mixed woodland and meadows e.g. Swangey Shetland Meadows.
- Common land was once an extensive land use. Whilst diminished in area, some common land remains e.g. Thompson and Stow Bedon Commons (SSSIs).
- Variable field pattern, ranging from small to medium-large scale arable fields of both irregular and geometric pattern.
- Distinctive features include the minor tributary watercourses and drainage channels to field boundaries, in addition to historic green lanes.
- Pingo pools, created by contraction of frozen pockets of ground water during the thaw following the last Ice Age, are a characteristic feature.
- A generally linear settlement pattern e.g. Caston and Stow Bedon focused around the narrow rural roads, in addition to scattered farmsteads.
- A medium scale, semi enclosed landscape, defined by the arable agricultural land use and settled, though peaceful character, albeit with localised interruption by the A11 along the eastern boundary of the area.
- Opportunities for recreation are afforded by Stow Bedon Common (County Wildlife Site) and Thompson Common (NNR), whilst the Great Eastern Pingo Trail passes through Thompson Common to the west of the character area.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- B3.2 The underlying chalk geology of the character area is overlain by glacial drift deposits of sand, silt, clay and gravel. This gives rise to a gently undulating landform ranging from 30-50m A.O.D. In addition to the glacial deposits are alluvial deposits associated with the tributaries. The combination of glacial and alluvial drift deposits gives rise to the loamy and clayey Argillic brown earths which supports the essentially arable land use.
- B3.3 Arable fields are separated by hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and on wetter ground also by drainage channels. Numerous small scale features are found interspersed with the arable fields, including the wetland environment created by the tributaries, which are particularly important in providing a variety of land uses and habitats. Wet woodland associated with the tributaries is a feature of the character area, the woodland at Thompson Carr being of particular ecological importance (SSSI and SAC). Common land was once an extensive land use within the character area and remains in places e.g. Thompson Common and Stow Bedon Common. Periglacial features such as pingos are a distinctive feature at Thompson Common.
- B3.4 The majority of the character area is defined by the Norfolk Biodiversity Mapping Project as being a core area due to the distribution and variety of high quality extant habitats and wetland environments including rivers and streams and reedbeds.

### Historic Character

- B3.5 Although not yet complete for this character area, the HLC information reveals a number of historic processes which have influenced the present landscape character, including 20<sup>th</sup> century agriculture, with attendant field boundary loss. Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk illustrates large areas of common land within the character area e.g. Stow Bedon Common, Caston Common and Ellingham Common. Small areas of common land remain, but much has been lost, the HLC data demonstrating that common land has either been enclosed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century or planted with small blocks of woodland between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- B3.6 Breckles Hall is both a Grade II listed building and a Registered Historic Park and Garden.
- B3.7 Although isolated churches within adjacent character areas are a feature, the only example within the character area, St Andrews, to the south of Rockland All Saints, is now in ruins.

### Settlement and Built Character

- B3.8 Settlement density is low, with settlement limited to small, generally linear villages and isolated hamlets scattered along the rural road network. Buildings display a range of vernacular materials, including dressed stone, red brick, clay tile and colour washed render.

## **Perceptual/Visual**

- B3.9 This is generally a medium scale and semi enclosed landscape, with views essentially contained by landform and field boundary vegetation. The areas of wet woodland and carr woodland associated with narrow tributaries crossing the landscape create a smaller scale, more intimate and enclosed character, with interest and colour provided by the variety of vegetation cover. Historic green lanes provide recreational access into the landscape
- B3.10 Further visual variety is produced through the fairly settled character. The low density of settlement and the pattern of narrow rural roads create an essentially peaceful, contained and intimate character. As such it is generally unified in appearance, albeit with localised interruption due to the A11.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- The large areas of arable fields bound by hedgerows which provide a rural setting to the character area, binding smaller elements together;
- The narrow tributaries and associated wetland vegetation;
- Views to church towers in adjacent character areas;
- Remaining common land, which indicates historic land cover;
- Historic village cores which are built from distinctive and characteristic building materials of red brick, render and dressed stone;
- The essentially peaceful, rural character.
- Breckles Hall and its setting, a Registered Historic Park and Garden.
- Green lanes, which are of historic interest as well as providing recreational access.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- B3.11 The key visual sensitivities within this character area are the variety of views, ranging from relatively long range views across arable fields where hedgerows have been degraded or lost, to small scale views within the enclosed areas of wet woodland. Although the undulating landform allows only occasional views out of the character area, glimpses of church towers in adjacent character areas provide a visual focus.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

- B3.12 The landscape is essentially a managed, functional and productive arable agricultural landscape, although it retains localised areas of its historic character, notably with surviving Enclosure field boundaries and the commons associated with the historic settlements.

## Landscape Change

### Past Change

- Parliamentary and piecemeal enclosure and associated loss of common land.
- Agricultural intensification and attendant field boundary loss during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- The construction of the A11 and the associated lighting and signage.
- 20<sup>th</sup> century development and infilling within the villages;
- The construction and later dismantling of the railway line in the west of the character area which has become part of the route of the Great Eastern Pingo Trail.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall management objective for the *Thet Settled Tributary Farmland* is to enhance the landscape of the tributary valleys that thread through the agricultural land, both to conserve the more intimate small scale wetland character associated with the minor watercourses and create stronger links with the adjacent river valley landscapes. Opportunities to improve biodiversity through enhancement of field boundary hedgerows and set aside field margins should also be explored, in addition to seeking opportunities to improve the ecological integrity of wetland environments through conserving and enhancing areas of carr woodland and meadow, in line with the objectives of the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project.

### Guidelines

#### Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance existing field boundary hedgerows, trees and wooded strips through appropriate landscape management;
- Create new, species rich field boundary hedgerows to link existing hedgerows and areas of woodland and to provide habitat connectivity;
- Explore opportunities to improve biodiversity through creation of field set aside margins and pastoral buffers to the tributary watercourses;
- Explore opportunities to re create areas of heathland where appropriate and possible.
- Protect common land and associated historic character;
- Conserve woodland and meadows associated with the tributaries as an important ecological feature;
- Conserve historic green lanes that cross the area.

### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve existing small scale rural road pattern, resisting traffic upgrade/calming measures which could have an urbanising influence;
- Seek options for better integration of the A I I through noise attenuation measures and less intrusive lighting;
- Ensure that new development reflects the existing material and stylistic vernacular within the settlements and that their individual and separate identities are preserved;
- Monitor development and boundary treatments to the settlement edges, resisting any materials and/or species which could have an urbanising influence on the rural landscape.

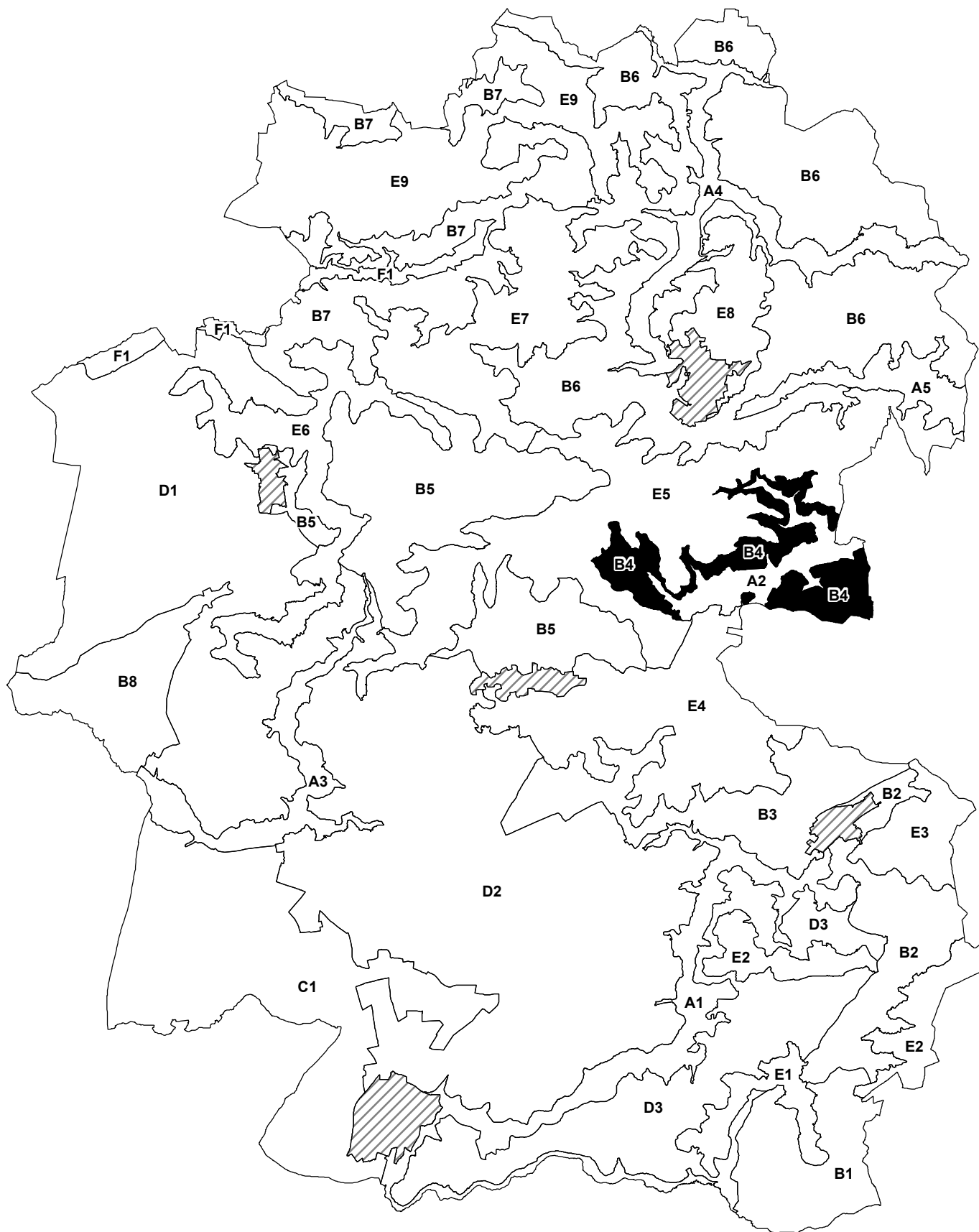








# B4: RIVER BLACKWATER SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND





## **B4: RIVER BLACKWATER SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND**

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### **Location and Boundaries**

B4.1 The character area is located on the eastern edge of Breckland, forming a narrow section of gently undulating land surrounding the upper course of the upper River Yare extending from Shipdham in the west to Hardingham in the east. To the north, south and west the character area is bounded by the more elevated arable plateau landscape type, defined approximately by the 50m contour and the transition to a flatter more open and exposed character. To the east, the boundary is formed by the administrative boundary - an area of similar character continuing into South Norfolk District.

### **Key Characteristics**

- Deposits of chalky boulder clay glacial overlying the chalk creates a gently undulating landform topography ranging from 40-60m AOD.
- Tributary valleys form small scale local undulations in the landscape, characterised by alluvial deposits along the bed of the tributary.
- An enclosed landscape with views frequently contained by landform and field boundary vegetation.
- Land cover is predominantly arable interspersed with isolated blocks of mixed woodland and wooded strips to field boundaries.
- Woodland blocks are characteristically small. They include small areas of mixed plantation plus Ancient Woodland at Woodrising.
- Variable field pattern, ranging from small geometric fields e.g. adjacent to Reymerston to very large irregular fields.
- Hedgerows are in variable condition. Veteran trees are a particular feature of the area, as are historic green lanes.
- A number of historic sites including a Roman villa and deserted medieval village represent the long history of human habitation, plus areas of parkland.
- A low density of settlement in both a linear (Reymerston) and nucleated (Hardingham) pattern.
- A network of narrow rural lanes connects settlements and links to the adjacent River Yare/Blackwater valley.
- A generally, peaceful rural peaceful character.
- The network of rights of way is limited, but provides opportunities for connection with the River Yare in the adjacent character area.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- B4.2 The character area is defined by an undulating landform ranging from 40-60m AOD created by deposits of Lowestoft Till drift geology overlying chalk. The thick covering of clayey Lowestoft Till drift material informs the (clay enriched) stagnogley soils which are characteristic. Soils support the growth of arable crops, although the soils are prone to water-logging and in localised areas field drains have been introduced.
- B4.3 Arable cultivation is the primary land cover, although there are small, isolated areas of mixed woodland, particularly to the south of the character area surrounding the settlement of Hardingham and an area of ancient woodland at Woodrising. Information from the veteran tree survey shows there to be veteran trees of various species throughout the character area. Mixed hedgerows, with mature hedgerow trees define field boundaries, although in places drains and ditches are also a boundary feature.
- B4.4 The majority of the character area lies within the Ecological Network Mapping Project's Enhancement Area for woodland, heathland and grassland re-creation. An isolated area of settled tributary farmland in the western part of the character area, associated with the chalk watercourse of the River Yare, falls within the Core Area. Norfolk BAP priority habitats including broadleaf woodland and cereal field margins.

### Historic Character

- B4.5 There are four Scheduled Monuments within the character area, representing human habitation at various points throughout history, including the remains of a Roman villa west of Woodrising and a deserted Medieval Village South East of Letton Hall.
- B4.6 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk identifies extensive areas of common land, the largest being at Hardingham. However, these have since been enclosed and converted to arable land.
- B4.7 Faden's Map shows two areas of parklands at Hardingham. The parkland setting of Hardingham Hall remains as a landscape feature today. The parklands of Letton Hall, a late 18<sup>th</sup> Century house by Sir John Soane, are an important landscape feature.

### Settlement and Built Character

- B4.8 Settlement is scattered along the rural road network in both a nucleated and linear pattern. Settlement density is low, being composed of generally compact villages and hamlets, with a number of small Halls. There is some evidence of infilling and spread along the rural roads e.g. at Garveston. Settlement displays a range of vernacular materials, including dressed stone churches, red brick, clay tiled and colour washed render.

### Perceptual/Visual

- B4.9 This is a medium scale and semi enclosed landscape, with views essentially contained by landform undulation and field boundary vegetation. It is essentially a productive

farmed arable landscape. The small scale settlement pattern, low density of roads and arable land use together result in a peaceful, rural character.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- Nucleated settlements built around village greens, which refer to the historic pattern of development.
- Green lanes, which are an historic landscape feature.
- Surviving field boundary hedgerows, trees and wooded strips which indicate the post Enclosure character of the landscape prior to agricultural intensification.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- B4.10 Views within this character are generally contained by landform and field boundary vegetation. There are some more open views to village edges from surrounding arable fields. Views to parkland features at Hardingham create visual interest and diversity. There is generally a low level of visibility with surrounding character areas, although occasional views into the valley of the *Upper Yare* are possible.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

- B4.11 The landscape is essentially a managed, functional and productive arable agricultural landscape, although it retains localised areas of its historic character, notably with surviving Enclosure field boundaries and the commons associated with the historic settlements. Apart from occasional areas of semi-natural woodland, there are few habitats of nature conservation value and ecological integrity is relatively weak.

### **Landscape Change**

#### ***Past Change***

- Parliamentary and piecemeal enclosure.
- Enclosure of common land and conversion to arable land.
- Growth and spread of villages.
- Agricultural intensification in the twentieth century and attendant field boundary loss.

#### ***Future Change***

- B4.12 The Local Plan has not identified any specific future development requirements within the character area. Change will primarily relate to future agricultural management.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall management objective for the *River Blackwater Settled Tributary Farmland* should be to conserve and enhance the peaceful rural character with small villages set within a managed agricultural landscape. Key opportunities are to enhance links to the Upper Yare Valley through conservation and enhancement of the intimate, small scale wetland character associated with the minor tributary watercourses, and to conserve and enhance the landscape pattern created by the field boundary hedgerow network. In line with the Norfolk EcoNet Project, opportunities should be sought to enhance woodland and grassland where possible to improve biodiversity value.

### Guidelines

#### ***Landscape Management***

- Conserve and enhance existing field boundary hedgerows, trees and wooded strips through appropriate landscape management;
- Conserve network of historic green lanes;
- Seek to enhance the tributary corridors by creation of pasture buffer land along water courses;
- Create new, species rich field boundary hedgerows where hedgerows have been lost to enhance connectivity with existing hedgerows and woodland site;
- Explore opportunities to improve biodiversity through creation of set aside margins to arable fields.

#### ***Development Considerations***

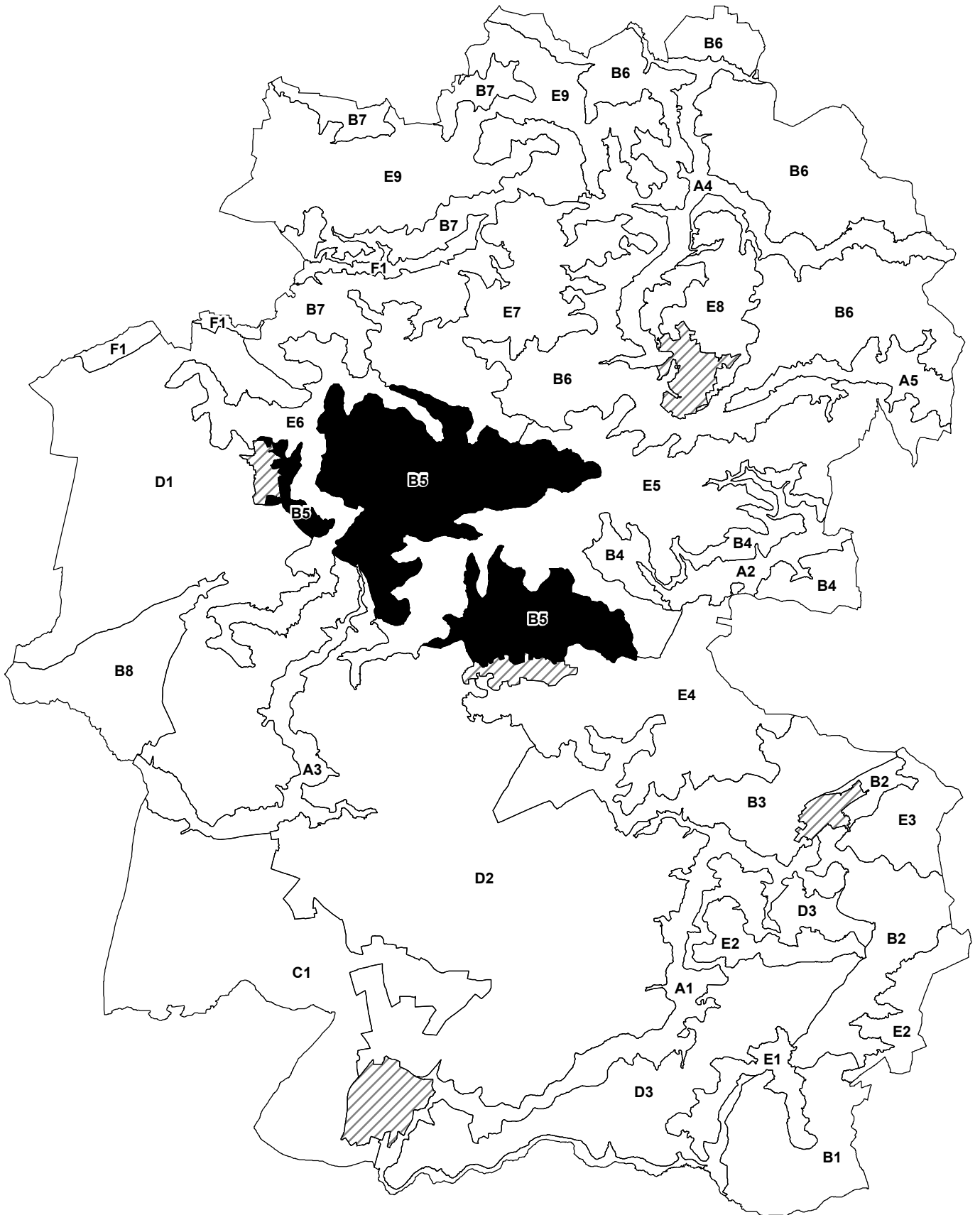
- Conserve existing small scale rural road pattern of green lanes, resisting traffic upgrade/calming measures which could have an urbanising influence;
- Ensure that new development reflects the existing material and stylistic vernacular within the settlements and that their individual and separate identities are preserved;
- Monitor development and boundary treatments to the settlement edges, resisting any materials and/or species which could have an urbanising influence on the landscape.







# **B5: RIVER WISSEY SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND**





## **B5: RIVER WISSEY SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND**

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### **Location and Boundaries**

B5.1 The *Wissey Settled Tributary Farmland* is located centrally within Breckland District to the north and north west of Watton. It is a gently undulating landscape draining into the River Wissey and rising up to the elevated *Arable Plateau* character areas which form the boundary to the character area.

### **Key Characteristics**

- Lowestoft till glacial deposits give rise to a gently undulating landform interrupted by occasional shallow dry valleys and tributaries. Alluvial deposits are also a feature of the tributaries, overlain with clayey Argillic brown earth soils.
- Topography varies between 35 m A.O.D at the base of the tributary valleys to 80m A.O.D to the adjacent plateau character areas.
- Views within and across the character area are largely contained by mixed enclosure hedges with hedgerow oaks. Hedged and treed skylines are a feature of the landscape.
- Arable agriculture is the predominant land cover. Fields are often medium to large in size and bounded by hedgerow and hedgerow trees, of variable condition. Localised areas of smaller fields are found on settlement edges and land adjacent to tributaries.
- Fenland is a small-scale feature which provides localised texture and ecological value e.g. at Carbrooke.
- The once extensive areas of heathland and common land have been replaced by farmland or woodland e.g. Common Plantation on Necton Common.
- Saham Mere and Wide Mere form part of a wider network of groundwater-fed meres forming a hydrological feature specific to Breckland on heathy land to the north of Thetford.
- Whilst population density remains low, the area is characterised by a number of villages (both nucleated e.g. Necton and linear e.g. Ovington) which show evidence of infilling and extension. Villages are connected by an extensive rural road network, and sunken lanes are often characteristic.
- The Peddars Way is an historically important National Trail which crosses the western extent of the character area before heading southwards towards Great Cressingham.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- B5.2 The character area is defined by an undulating landform ranging from 35-80m A.O.D created by deposits of Lowestoft Till drift overlying chalk. Clay enriched soils support the growth of arable crops, although these are prone to water-logging and in localised areas field drains have been introduced e.g. south of North Pickenham.
- B5.3 Arable cultivation is the primary land cover, with fields being of variable size, ranging from large open fields e.g. around Holme Hale to smaller fields characteristically associated with settlement edges or tributaries. Fields are bounded by hedgerows, although there is evidence of some boundary loss due to agricultural intensification.
- B5.4 An extensive network of rural roads crosses the character area, and lined with species rich hedgerows and ditches, both of which are important ecological habitats.
- B5.5 Woodland within the character area is generally sparse, characteristically including small scale plantation blocks, farm woodlands and wet woodland. Saham Wood is a larger block of Ancient Woodland.
- B5.6 Numerous additional small-scale features punctuate the predominantly arable landscape including tributaries, fenland (at Carbrooke) and Meres e.g. Saham Mere and Wide Mere. The meres are part of a wider network forming a geological feature specific to Breckland found on heathy land to the north of Thetford.
- B5.7 The majority of the character area lies within the Ecological Network Mapping Project's Enhancement Area for woodland, heathland and grassland re-creation. The remainder, land to the south west of the character area falls within the Core Area due to the tributaries which flow into the Wissey through this part of the character area.

### Historic Character

- B5.8 There are four Scheduled Monuments within the character area, representing human habitation at various points throughout history, including 2 moated sites north of Bradenham and a military site at Carbrooke representing the commandry site of St John of Jerusalem. The Peddars Way is an important historic landscape feature within the character area.
- B5.9 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk identifies extensive areas of common land, the largest being Necton Common. Common land is no longer a feature of the character area, having been enclosed and converted to arable land.
- B5.10 A number of parklands are identified by Faden's Map. Necton Hall, the largest, has been demolished and the parkland given over to agriculture.

### Settlement and Built Character

- B5.11 Settlement comprises small-scale linear (e.g. Ovington) and nucleated settlements. Necton is a larger village, historically of linear formation but increasingly nucleated due to 20<sup>th</sup> Century expansion. Local vernacular is characteristically red brick,

render and stone. To the south the character area adjoins the settlement edge of Watton.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- B5.12 *Wissey Settled tributary farmland* is an essentially tamed landscape composed of a number of elements and unified by the undulating landform. Although predominantly a large-scale landscape, variation and texture are provided by smaller fields with drainage channels, and by the tributaries and wetland vegetation. It has a tranquil quality due to its rural character and the network of narrow rural roads which link the compact areas of settlement and small distribution of scattered farmsteads.
- B5.13 Views are to hedged and wooded skylines, adjacent character areas being generally concealed except for occasional views in to the *Wissey Valley* and to the surrounding *Wayland Plateau* and *Central Breckland Plateau*. The church tower at Necton is a distinctive element of views, as are the wind turbines at Swaffham.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- The historic cores of villages and the consistent vernacular;
- Surviving field boundary hedgerows and trees, which indicate the post Enclosure character of the landscape prior to agricultural intensification;
- Wetland vegetation and meres, e.g. Saham Mere, which are of significant biodiversity/hydrogeological interest;
- Isolated area of fenland at Carbrooke;
- The network of hedged and ditched rural roads which connect the settlements;

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- B5.14 Key visual sensitivities within this character area are the containment provided by the field boundaries, and views to village edges from surrounding arable fields. Views to the church tower at Necton create visual interest and diversity. The character area is surrounded by plateau landscapes which are occasionally visible from the *River Wissey Settled tributary farmland* character area, with the wind turbines at Swaffham being a prominent element of views.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

- B5.15 The landscape is essentially a managed, functional and productive arable agricultural landscape. Although isolated areas of smaller scale, historic field boundaries exist, 20th century agricultural intensification has resulted in areas of boundary loss, weakening the historic integrity of the character area. Smaller scale features such as tributaries, ditches and Saham Mere create localised pockets of ecological diversity.

## Landscape Change

### Past Change

- Enclosure of Common land and conversion to arable land.
- Agricultural intensification and attendant field boundary loss.
- Settlement expansion during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, e.g. Necton;
- The construction of turbines at Swaffham and North Pickenham and the resultant change in views from within part of the *River Wissey Settled tributary farmland* character area.

### Future Change

- B5.16 A number of sites with planning permission for residential development within and to the edges of the settlements of Necton and Saham Toney are identified within the Local Plan. There are also views to the settlement edge of Watton.
- B5.17 Potential positive change may arise through the implementation of the objectives of the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall management objective for *Wissey Settled Tributary Farmland* should be to enhance the landscape of the minor tributary watercourses that thread through the agricultural land, with the aim being both to conserve the more intimate, small scale wetland character associated with these watercourses and to create stronger links with the adjacent river valley landscapes. Opportunities should also be sought to enhance biodiversity value through new native field boundary hedgerow planting and through woodland and grassland creation.

### Guidelines

#### Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance existing field boundary hedgerows, and trees through appropriate landscape management;
- Create new, species rich field boundary hedgerows;
- Explore opportunities to improve biodiversity through creation of field set aside margins;
- Explore opportunities to enhance the ecological value of tributaries and ditches, and the potential for connectivity to other wetland features, e.g. fen and meres;
- Ensure the protection and enhancement of small scale wetland features such as Fenland at Carbrooke and Saham Mere;

#### Development Considerations

- Conserve existing small scale rural road pattern, resisting upgrade/calming measures which could have an urbanising influence on the rural lanes;

- Ensure that new development within settlements reflects the existing use of local materials and that the individual and separate identities of settlements are preserved;
- Monitor development and boundary treatments to the settlement edges, and discourage any materials and/or species which could have a suburbanising influence on the landscape;
- Ensure that important views, e.g. to Necton Church and other landmark features are conserved;
- Seek to enhance settlement edges and integration within the landscape setting. Strengthening field boundary vegetation is a key opportunity.



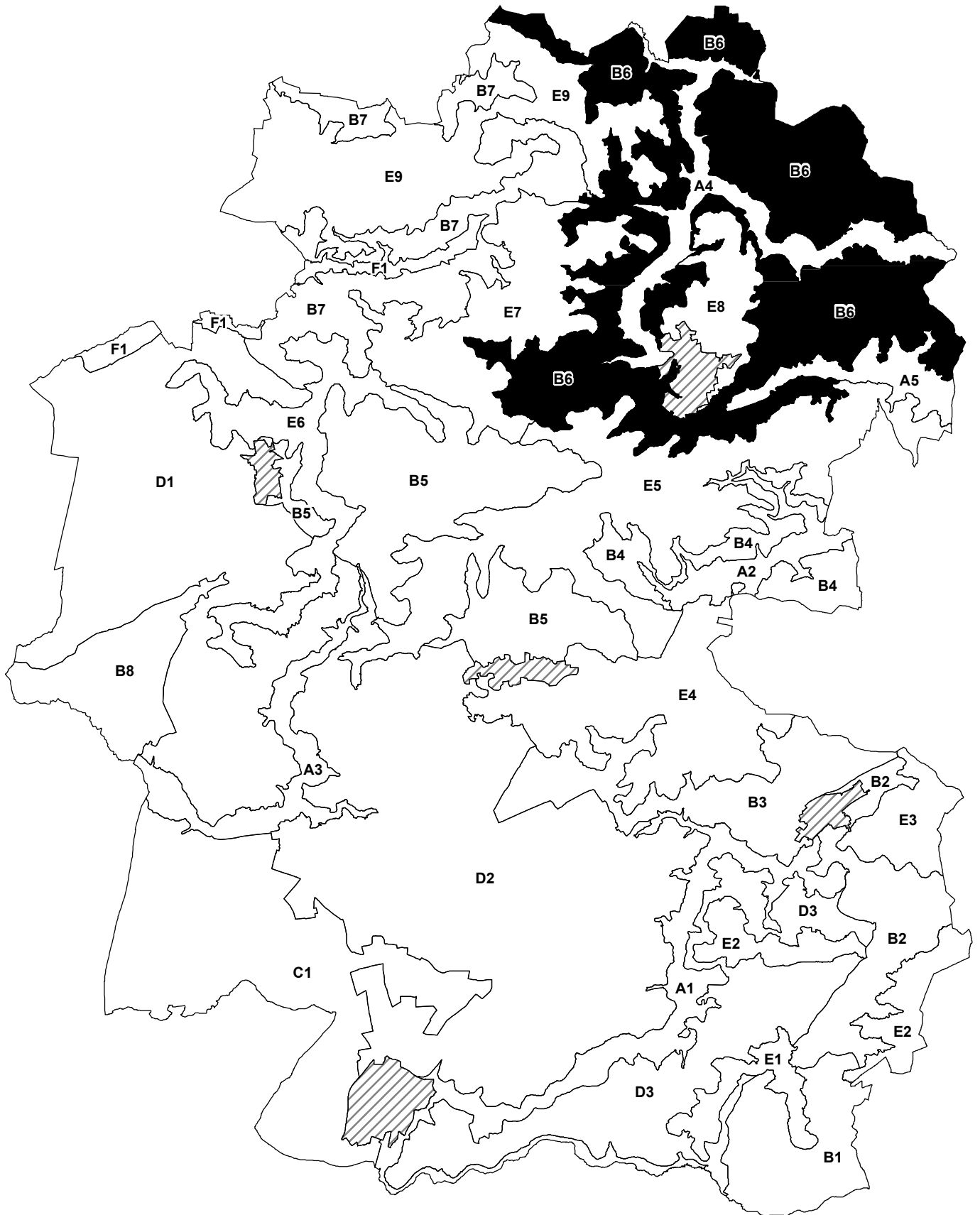






# B6: RIVER WENSUM AND TUD SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND

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## **B6: WENSUM AND TUD SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND**

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### **Location and Boundaries**

- B6.1 The *Wensum and Tud Settled Tributary Farmland* is located in the north eastern part of Breckland District and represents a large area of boulder clay drift deposits which have resulted in a gently undulating arable farmland landscape interspersed with tributaries. The boundaries of the character area are determined by river valleys (River Tud and River Wensum) and surrounding arable plateau character areas, with the landscape type extending beyond the District boundary into North Norfolk District to the north and Broadland District to the east.

### **Key Characteristics**

- Lowestoft till glacial deposits give rise to a gently undulating landform interrupted by occasional shallow dry valleys and tributaries. Topography ranges from 20-50 metres AOD.
- Alluvial deposits are a feature of the tributaries and dry valleys. Argillic brown earths dominate the character area
- Views within the area are often to tree lined or wooded skylines, with the wooded skyline of Bylaugh Park being particularly distinctive.
- Arable agriculture represents the dominant land use, although pasture is also evident, particularly associated with the minor tributaries.
- Tributaries of the River Tud and Wensum cross the arable landscape creating small scale, ecologically diverse features e.g. wet meadow, wet woodland, and marshland a number of which are designated as County Wildlife Sites.
- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees bound fields of variable size. Occasional drainage systems on wetter land adjacent to tributaries create a smaller scale landscape pattern.
- Fields are characteristically medium to large in size, although small-scale fields adjoin the drains and tributaries e.g. surrounding Yaxham at the head of the River Tud.
- Occasional woodland takes the form of small blocks (including wet woodland alongside tributaries), or larger woodland blocks associated with historic features e.g. Hockering Wood SSSI (Ancient Woodland) and woodland associated with parkland e.g. Bylaugh.
- Gressenhall Park, Sennowe Park (partly within the character area) and the wooded, parkland setting of Bylaugh Park are the few remaining reminders of the past wealth and former estate influence within of the character area.

- Settlement pattern is characterised by frequent dispersed farmsteads and hamlets and larger villages clustered around the rural road network in both a linear (Clint Green) and nucleated (Gressenhall) settlement pattern.
- Distinctive vernacular building materials include Norfolk red brick and clay lump at Yaxham. Churches at East Bilney and North Elmham are distinctive elements.
- A network of hedgerow lined rural roads characteristically connect the settlements. The A47 crosses east to west across the character area and is a major route into Dereham.
- This is a tamed arable landscape that generally retains a tranquil rural character.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- B6.2 Glacial drift deposits of sand, silt, clay and gravel overlay the chalk solid geology and have given rise to a gently undulating landform, with topography ranging from 20-50m A.O.D. In addition to the glacial deposits are narrow bands of alluvial deposits associated with the tributaries that carve through glacial drift deposits to drain into the *River Wensum* and *River Tud*. Tributaries are numerous, creating shallow valleys on the edges of the character area, flowing into the adjacent *River Valley* character areas. The combination of glacial and alluvial drift deposits gives rise to the loamy and clayey Argillic brown earths.
- B6.3 Arable cultivation is the primary land cover, although woodland and small areas of pasture are interspersed with the arable fields. Woodland ranges from small scale farm woodlands to larger strips of wet woodland associated with tributaries. In addition there are two large areas of ancient woodland designated as SSSIs (Hockering Wood and Foxley Wood).
- B6.4 Although fields are characteristically medium to large in scale, localised areas of small-scale fields adjoin the tributaries, these fields being separated by drainage channels to drain the wetter soils e.g. surrounding Yaxham. Wet woodland, carr woodland, wet meadows and marshland are a feature of the land adjacent to the tributaries e.g. Wending Carr woodland adjacent to a tributary feeding into the *River Wensum*. A patchwork effects is created by the tributaries and associated small fields draining into the Upper Tud, to the east of Dereham.
- B6.5 Elsing Heath is one of the few remaining areas of heathland in what was once a landscape with extensive heathland and common land. The former importance of heathland within the character area is reinforced by the inclusion of the character area within the Ecological Network Mapping Project's Enhancement Area for woodland, heathland and grassland re-creation. There are a number of Norfolk BAP priority habitats within the character area, including broadleaf woodland and cereal field margins.

### Historic Character

- B6.6 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk identifies large tracts of common land across the character area. Although small areas of heathland remain intact, woodland planting

has reduced their size e.g. Bylaugh Heath which is now largely wooded. Faden's Map demonstrates the former estate influence, with a number of parklands including Elmham. Bylaugh Park was laid out in the 1850s.

- B6.7 Three Scheduled Monuments exist within the character area, all located to the west of the River Wensum. The remains of an Anglo-Saxon church at North Elmham, and the remains of a Premonstratensian Abbey at Wendling dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century demonstrate a long history of human activity. Fieldwork revealed a small-scale field pattern surrounding settlements bounded by hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees, with larger fields elsewhere. HLC data is not available for this character area. The veteran trees survey demonstrates that there is a concentration of veteran trees in the south east of the character area. In addition, woodland at Great Wood, Foxley Wood and Hockering Wood are areas of extant ancient woodland within the character area.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- B6.8 Settlement density is highest in the west of the character area. To the east of the River Wensum settlement is notably sparser, and limited to small nucleated villages. West of the River Wensum, villages are larger and occur more frequently, e.g. North Elmham, Beetley and Gressenhall. Isolated farmhouses along the rural road network are also a feature.
- B6.9 Red brick, clay lump and occasional colour rendered houses are a feature of the settlement cores although the historic character is eroded by 20<sup>th</sup> century infill development within the villages. Churches are a distinctive feature, such as at East Bilney and the perpendicular church of St Mary at North Elmham.
- B6.10 Settlement edge character is varied, although in a number of cases e.g. Elsing, the settlement edge is screened by woodland. The former Dereham-Fakenham railway line dissects the north western part of the character area.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- B6.11 Views are generally contained by the landform and field boundaries, but occasional glimpsed views into the river valleys are possible. Parkland at Bylaugh provides an attractive wooded skyline. The landscape is relatively colourful and textured due to the wet woodland, marshland and wetland associated with the tributaries.
- B6.12 The scale of the landscape is variable, and largely defined by the arable field pattern. In the south eastern part where land is wetter and drained by a network of drainage channels, fields are smaller, creating a more intimate and enclosed landscape than to the north and west where fields are larger.
- B6.13 The landscape has a distinct, small scale pattern around its settlements. The A47 creates a localised interruption within the landscape, although it does not detract from the overall sense of tranquillity.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- Remaining historic parklands/estates e.g. at Bylaugh and Sennowe Park;
- The occasional large woodland blocks, a number of which include ancient woodland;
- The wet woodland and wet meadow habitats associated with the tributaries;
- Areas of grazing pasture.
- Small scale vernacular settlements.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

B6.14 The key visual sensitivities are the wooded skylines. The most significant woodland is associated with Bylaugh Park and the large blocks of ancient woodland, but the smaller scale woodland associated with tributaries also contributes to the generally wooded character.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

- B6.15 This is a productive, managed agricultural landscape, although the number of National and County level nature designations demonstrate the character area's ecological potential, and this is reinforced by the range of habitats present.
- B6.16 Interruptions due to the A47 and occasional harsh settlement edges locally disrupt the visual intactness.

### **Landscape Change**

#### ***Past Change***

- Construction of the A47 as a major route through Dereham;
- Parliamentary and piecemeal enclosure, and associated loss of common land;
- Agricultural intensification and attendant field boundary loss during the 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- 20<sup>th</sup> century infilling and expansion of settlements;
- Woodland planting on areas of former heathland and common land;

#### ***Future Change***

B6.17 The Local Plan shows that sites with planning permission for residential development exist within a number of villages, although no further development pressures are



noted. There may be the potential for heathland and woodland creation through the implementation of EcoNet Objectives.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall management objective for the *Wensum and Tud Settled Tributary Farmland* is to conserve and enhance the landscape of the tributary valleys that thread through the agricultural land, with the aim being to conserve and reinforce the small scale wetland character associated with the minor watercourses to create stronger connections with the adjacent river valley landscapes. The rural, settled character should be conserved to provide a contrast with the more open, exposed plateau landscapes. Opportunities to improve biodiversity through field boundary hedgerow planting and set aside field margins should also be explored, in addition to seeking opportunities for grassland, heathland and woodland opportunities where appropriate.

### **Guidelines**

#### ***Landscape Management***

- Conserve and enhance existing field boundary hedgerows, trees and wooded strips through appropriate landscape management;
- Create new, species rich field boundary hedgerows to enhance and reinforce the existing network and to provide opportunities for habitat connectivity;
- Explore opportunities to improve biodiversity through creation of field set aside margins;
- Explore opportunities to re create areas of heathland where appropriate and possible.
- Protect common land, ensuring that any new development or changes to land use does not detract from the historic character;
- Conserve woodland and meadows associated with the tributaries as an important ecological feature and enhance connectivity through buffer strips to the tributary water courses.

#### ***Development Considerations***

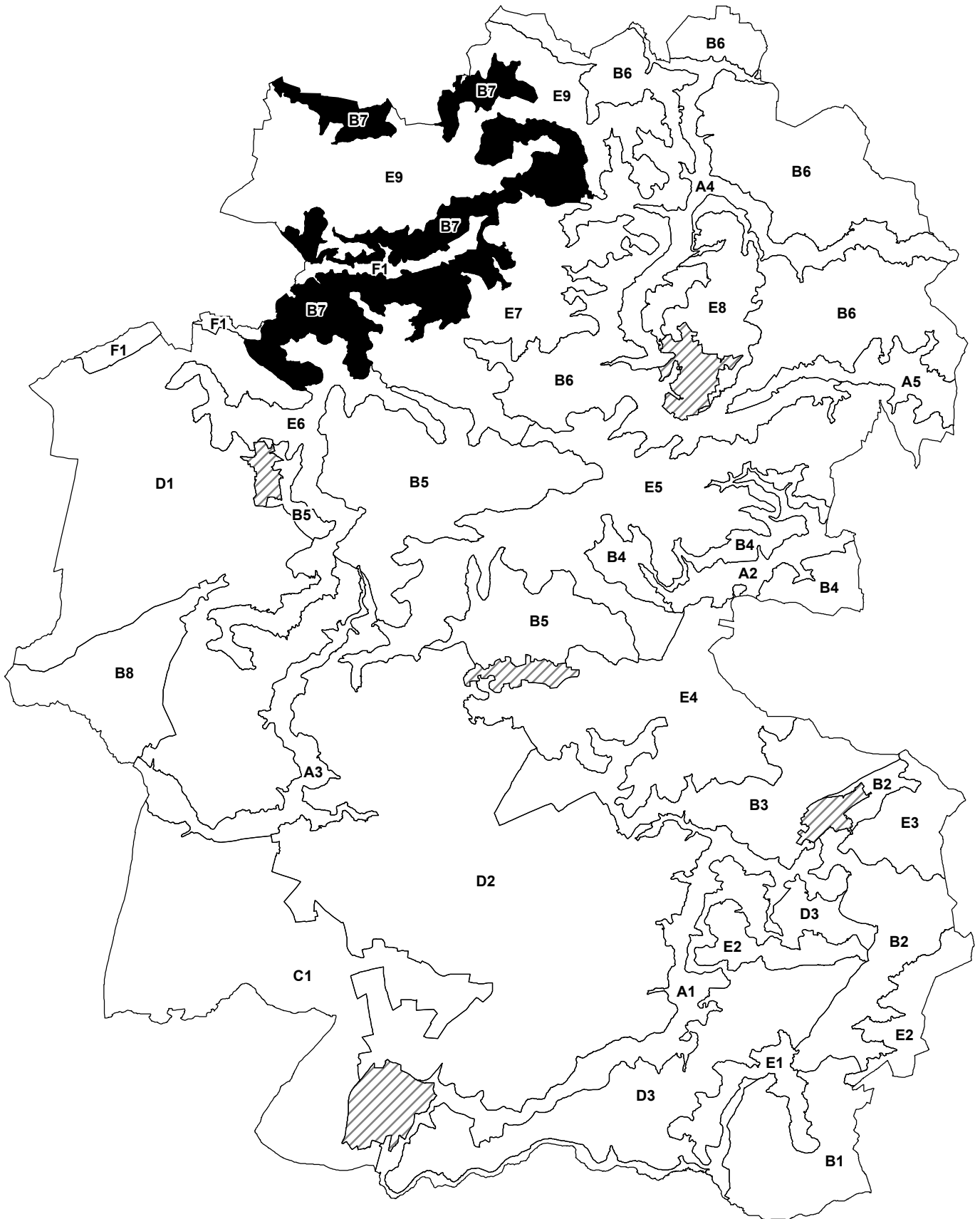
- Conserve existing small scale rural road pattern, resisting upgrade/calming measures which could have an urbanising influence;
- Ensure that any new development reflects the existing material and stylistic vernacular within the settlements (e.g. Norfolk red brick and clay lump) and that settlements individual and separate identities are preserved;
- Monitor development and boundary treatments to the settlement edges, resisting any materials and/or species which could have an urbanising influence on the landscape.







# **B7: RIVER NAR SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND**





## **B7: RIVER NAR SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND**

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### **Location and Boundaries**

B7.1 The *River Nar Settled Tributary Farmland* is located in the north western part of Breckland District, adjacent to character area FI: *River Nar*. It is characterised by a gently sloping landform, formed by glacial drift deposits of sand, gravel, clay and silt. The character area is bounded to the north by *Whissonsett Plateau* and to the south by *North Pickenham Plateau*, with the landscape type extending into the neighbouring authority of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk to the west and into North Norfolk District to the north.

### **Key Characteristics**

- Lowestoft till glacial deposits give rise to a subtly undulating landform interrupted by occasional shallow dry valleys and tributaries.
- Alluvial deposits are a feature of the tributaries and dry valleys. Clayey Argillic brown earths dominate the character area and support a range of arable crops.
- The topography is gently undulating and sloping in places, particularly where associated with the course of the Nar, and ranges from 45-75m AOD.
- Due to landform and the varied range of landcover elements, views are essentially framed and intermittent, with wooded skylines often evident.
- A diverse range of landcover elements includes historic parkland (Lexham Hall, a large part of which lies in the adjoining *River Nar* character area), mixed plantation and grazing pasture, together with arable agriculture in the eastern part of the character area.
- Enclosure hedges with hedgerow trees define the medium-large scale arable field network, with some post and rail fenced boundaries associated with the Lexham Hall Estate.
- A number of sites within the character area are designated as County Wildlife Sites in view of their local biodiversity interest. These include the wooded common at Bilney Common and woodland at Fox Covert.
- The continuity of settlement and human intervention is illustrated by a range of historic features, including tumuli at Great Wood, Litcham Priory, the ruined church at Kempstone and a number of moated sites, in addition to Saxon round towered churches, e.g. West Lexham.
- Distinctive elements include the parkland of Lexham Hall and associated stands of parkland tree planting, together with a number of field boundary tributaries and wooded skylines created by pine belts.
- Settlement pattern is often nucleated and centred on an historic village core, as at Litcham and Tittleshall, and more occasionally linear, as at Stanfield. In

addition there is a scattered distribution of small farmsteads associated with the narrow rural road network.

- The range of landcover elements creates a distinctly textured, varied landscape, which is of a broadly unified and tamed, estate and agricultural character.
- Opportunities for recreation and access are provided by open access land at Litcham Common (Nature Reserve), in addition to a network of rights of way.

## **LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION**

### **Physical/Natural**

- B7.2 A gently undulating landform results from glacial till drift deposits which overlay the chalk solid geology, and which are carved by the tributaries draining into the River Nar. Topography ranges from 45-75 metres AOD.
- B7.3 The drift geology is overlain by clayey argillic brown earth soils, which influences the dominant landcover elements, both parkland grassland and arable cropping. Landcover includes parkland trees and mixed estate woodlands associated with Lexham Hall, in addition to parkland grassland. Arable agriculture predominates in the eastern part of the character area.
- B7.4 A medium scale arable field network is defined by mixed Enclosure hedges with hedgerow trees, in addition to localised areas of post and rail fencing associated with Lexham Hall. Scots pine belts define field boundaries at points, creating wooded skylines.
- B7.5 The character area is identified within the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project as falling within an Enhancement Area for Heathland, Grassland and Woodland Creation. Ecological potential is illustrated by a number of sites which are designated as County Wildlife Sites in view of their local biodiversity interest. These include the wooded common at Bilney Common and the woodland at Fox Covert.

### **Historic Character**

- B7.6 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has not yet been completed for this character area. Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk illustrates a number of historic features, including common and heath, woodland and parkland. In particular, Faden's survey identifies Lexham Hall as belonging to Sir John Wodehouse and a minor estate to the north of Litcham. Common land is also identified at Stanfield, Bilney, and Litcham/Mileham Common, in addition to blocks of woodland associated with Lexham Hall and parkland.
- B7.7 Of these Lexham Hall, parkland and woodlands are extant, as is Bilney Common, albeit reduced in area. Much of the other common land has however been lost to subsequent agricultural Enclosure and localised afforestation. The small scale, nucleated settlement pattern associated with the rural road network and identified by Faden is extant today.



## **Settlement and Built Character**

- B7.8 Settlement is generally nucleated in formation, e.g. Litcham and Tittleshall, although linear development is also apparent e.g. Stanfield. Built form displays a range of vernacular styles and materials, including traditional red brick, flint, render and clay tile at Litcham. Pevsner identifies the most significant buildings as the late gothic parish churches of Tittleshall and Litcham.
- B7.9 Outside of these compact, low density villages, which are associated primarily with junctions and crossing points in the rural road network, settlement is confined to scattered and isolated farmsteads.

## **Perceptual and Visual**

- B7.10 This is a varied landscape which is essentially unified by the undulating landform and the managed estate and farmland character. The well managed, designed landscape of Lexham Hall is an important and distinctive element of the local landscape, and its influence is extended through blocks of mixed estate plantation woodland.
- B7.11 Views are contained by landform and by woodland vegetation, either as plantation woodland or wooded field boundary strips and field boundary hedgerows. A wooded skyline is evident at points, with scots pine belts limiting instances of intervisibility with adjacent landscapes.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- B7.12 The following are judged to be the key landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.
- Pine belts which are historic boundary features;
  - Intact field boundary hedgerows which indicate the Enclosure field pattern.
  - Small scale contained settlements of vernacular style and materials.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- B7.13 Key visual sensitivities include the prominent wooded skylines and the views across to Lexham Hall parkland and the course of the Nar within the adjacent character area.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

- B7.14 This is essentially a well managed and productive landscape, although historical and ecological integrity vary across the character area. The landscape associated with Lexham Hall is more historically intact and ecologically diverse than the areas under arable cultivation in the eastern part of the character area.

## **Landscape Change**

### ***Past Change***

- Enclosure of common and heathland;
- Agricultural intensification in the eastern part of the character area.

### ***Future Change***

- B7.15 Potential future landscape change may arise from the implementation of agri environment schemes, e.g. for the enhancement of hedgerows and field boundary margins. There may also be the potential for change through the implementation of EcoNet objectives for heathland, woodland and grassland re-creation and restoration.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall landscape management objective for the *River Nar Settled Tributary Farmland* should be to conserve remaining historic landscape features, such as common land and the trees and woodlands associated with the Lexham Hall Estate, and to enhance areas under arable cultivation. The landscape of the tributaries that thread through the agricultural land should be conserved and enhanced, to reinforce connections with the River Nar. The settled, rural character should be conserved. Opportunities to enhance and extend recreational provision should also be explored.

### **Guidelines**

#### ***Landscape Management***

- Conserve remaining areas of heathland and common through appropriate management, investigating the viability of traditional management techniques such as grazing;
- Conserve and enhance the tributary systems and associated vegetation;
- Enhance and reinforce existing field boundaries with an appropriate species rich native hedgerow mix, gapping up with native species where appropriate to promote habitat connectivity;
- Explore opportunities for woodland and heathland creation, both to connect to existing and to satisfy the objectives of Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project.

#### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve small scale rural road network, resisting upgrading pressures which could have an urbanising influence, such as edges and signage;
- Ensure that wooded skylines are conserved when planning for change;

- Any new development should respond to local vernacular in terms of materials and scale, and should seek to maintain the existing tightly nucleated settlement pattern.







# B8: GOODERSTONE TO OXBOROUGH SETTLED TRIBUTARY FARMLAND







## **B8: GOODERSTONE-OXBOROUGH TRIBUTARY FARMLAND**

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### **Location and Boundaries**

**B8.1** *Gooderstone-Oxborough Tributary Farmland* covers the undulating farmland surrounding the Gadder tributary. It is located in the western part of Breckland District, the landscape type continuing over the district boundary into the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. The extent of the character area is defined by the district boundary to the south and south west, and by the *Swaffham Heath* character area, to the north and east.

### **Key Characteristics**

- A low lying, undulating area of agricultural land interspersed with shallow tributary valleys associated with the River Gadder.
- Deposits of glacial till are sparse in comparison to other landscapes from this type, with diverse geological mosaic including Chalky soils supporting chalk grassland and acidic/sandy soils supporting areas of heathland.
- Views across the character area are essentially framed or channelled due to the variation in topography and pattern of vegetation.
- Landcover is mixed and includes grazed permanent pasture associated with the tributaries including areas of wet meadow at Cockley Cley, small scale woodland blocks and areas of common, chalk grassland and wooded heathland. Arable agriculture is dominant in some areas.
- The woodlands include linear areas of alder carr and mixed wet woodland associated with the Gadder tributary, plus areas of birch dominated woodland associated with localised areas of sandy/acid heathland.
- Field pattern is generally geometric and relatively small in scale, with some medium sized fields. Post and wire fences often form boundaries.
- Historic sites illustrate the influence of landed estates and the continuity of settlement, and include the moated manor house of Oxborough Hall and associated parkland, a number of moated sites associated with the Gadder Valley, in addition to Foulde Hall and moat and a ruined church at Cockley Cley.
- The water filled pingos of Foulde Common are a locally distinctive feature.
- Nucleated (e.g. Oxborough), compact and occasionally linear (e.g. Gooderstone) settlement pattern, with settlements often characterised by historic/vernacular cores and centred on imposing churches or halls.
- A landscape of a peaceful, very rural character, seemingly remote in places.
- A number of rights of way provide recreational access. Additional recreational opportunities are provided by common land, access land and by the water gardens

at Gooderstone. Drove roads are a feature of the area running perpendicular to the Gadder valley.

## **LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION**

### **Physical/Natural**

- B8.2 The underlying chalk solid geology is relatively sparsely overlain with glacial till drift deposits, meaning that the bedrock geology has significantly influenced the chalky brown rendzina soils although acid soils are also apparent creating distinctive contrasts in vegetation and land use. Topography ranges from 5-40 metres AOD across the character area, with the lowest areas associated with the River Gadder.
- B8.3 Landcover is variable across the character area, partly due to the distinctive alternating bands of acid and alkaline soils with grazed pasture, areas of small scale woodland, wooded heathland and colonising birch, commonland, chalk grassland and arable agriculture all represented within the character area. Wetland habitats associated with the course of the River Gadder are evident, including reeds, springs areas of wet woodland and alder carr and wet meadows.
- B8.4 A geometric field pattern of varying scale, predominantly small scale but also some medium scale fields is apparent.
- B8.5 The ecological diversity and potential of parts of the character area is recognised in the large number of wildlife designations. Foulde Common is designated as a SSSI on account of its diversity of habitats which encompasses open water (pingos), fen, chalk grassland, birch woodland and alder carr. Areas of remnant heathland also provides foraging and breeding opportunities for Stone Curlew, whose primary habitat is the adjoining Breckland Farmland SSSI/SPA, which is also partly within the character area.
- B8.6 Foulde Common also forms part of the Norfolk Valley Fen SAC, primarily due to the habitat opportunities it provides for whorl snails, but also due to its calcareous and acid heathland and the carrs.
- B8.7 The course of the Gadder and associated tributaries form part of the Core Area within the Ecological Network Mapping Project, as do the SSSIs. In addition, a number of the habitats which occur within this character area are also identified as priority habitats within the Norfolk BAP, e.g. alder carr calcareous grassland, lowland grassland and acid heathland.

### **Historic Character**

- B8.8 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is not yet complete, and only covers the central, southern and eastern parts of the character area. Historic processes identified include parliamentary fen enclosure, piecemeal parliamentary enclosure and 20<sup>th</sup> century Enclosure.
- B8.9 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk has identified a number of small parklands partly within the character area, notably Oxborough and Cockley Cley, in addition to common land at Gooderstone, and fen at Foulde. Areas of heathland are also apparent, as

are a number of warrens, which indicate the historic land use of rabbit farming which was once widespread in Breckland.

- B8.10 A number of these features are still apparent, notably the moated 15<sup>th</sup> century red brick manor house and crenellated gatehouse at Oxborough Hall and features of the designed landscape at Cockley Cley Hall, such as the lake. Areas of common land and heath survive, most notably at Foulден Common, although much was absorbed in subsequent Enclosure or has been lost through lack of grazing and colonisation by scrub and woodland.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- B8.11 Settlements are generally compact and of low density forming hamlets rather than villages. They are either nucleated, as at Oxborough and Cockley Cley, which are both centred on historic village greens, or linear as at Foulден and Gooderstone. Gooderstone is distinctive for its very long street with the River Gadder flowing parallel. The settlements generally display strongly historic cores with much traditional vernacular including flint, stone and red brick, with red clay tiled roofing. A number of settlements also display 1960s/1970s urban edge expansion. Large and often partially ruined churches are a characteristic feature, as Cockley Cley (ruined round tower) and Oxborough (Perpendicular, dressed stone, with ruined nave), and form a focus and landmark for settlement, as does the hall and parkland at Oxborough.

### **Perceptual and Visual**

- B8.12 Opportunities for views are often limited by localised enclosure provided by wooded rural lanes at points. Views are often framed or channelled although there is some intervisibility with the adjoining *Swaffham Heath* character area. Overall, the character area has a very peaceful, tranquil, rural quality.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- B8.13 The following are judged to be the key landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.
- Historic parklands associated with halls such as Oxborough, which provide historical continuity and have influenced the historic settlement pattern;
  - Small scale intact settlements and vernacular cores to the villages - prominent medieval churches provide a sense of historical integrity;
  - Pingos within Foulден Common are a locally characteristic resulting from glacial thaw at the last Ice Age;
  - The combination of calcareous grassland and acid heathland at Foulден Common refers to Breckland's distinctive geology and to the historic land cover;
  - Very rural peaceful character associated with this part of Breckland.

- The Gadder valley and its important wetland habitats – woodland and meadow and grazed pasture.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- B8.14 Key visual sensitivities include the settings of historic sites such as Oxborough Hall and the large, often partially ruined churches. Other visual sensitivities include the narrow and historic crossing points across the tributaries. The level of woodland cover limits views and intervisibility with other landscapes.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

- B8.15 The character area generally has a strong character and sense of historic integrity, particularly along the Gadder Valley. SSSI designations at Foulden Common and part of Breckland Farmland recognise the ecological richness of parts of the character area. A number of field boundaries are eroded however, with hedgerows having often been replaced by post and wire fencing, and parts of the landscape are intensively managed arable farmland particularly in the north eastern part of the character area.

### **Landscape Change**

#### **Past Change**

- Enclosure and associated loss of commons/heathland/fens;
- Lack of grazing and scrub/woodland development on areas of heath and chalk grassland
- Agricultural intensification and loss of field boundary hedgerows;
- Expansion to settlement edges, e.g. Oxborough.

#### **Future Change**

- B8.16 Potential future change may arise through the implementation of agri-environment schemes. The Local Plan has not identified any specific future forces for change within the character area.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall landscape strategy should be to conserve the intimate, small scale and pastoral landscape and associated with the course of the Gadder, and to enhance the surrounding agricultural landscape. Areas of BAP priority habitat, such as calcareous grassland, acid heath and the alder carrs should be conserved and managed to maintain their current extent and quality, with opportunities for restoration/recreation where appropriate.

### **Guidelines**

#### **Landscape Management**

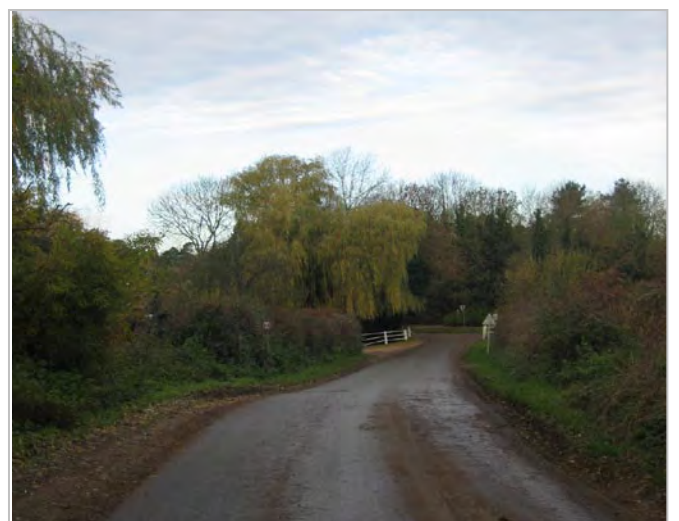
- Seek to conserve and enhance the wetland landscape of meadows, grazed pasture and wet woodland along the River Gadder;

- Create new, species rich field boundary hedgerows where hedgerows have been lost to enhance connectivity with existing hedgerows and woodland site;
- Explore opportunities to improve biodiversity through creation of set aside margins to arable fields.
- Conserve and enhance areas of chalk grassland and acid grassland heathland and consider opportunities for reintroduction of grazing to these areas - seek opportunities for restoration of areas of habitats that have been lost;

### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve the small scale low density settlement pattern which is integral to the peaceful, rural character of the area;
- Conserve the historic vernacular settlement cores centred on village greens, in addition to the settings of the historic/ruined churches, safeguarding these from any unsympathetic new development;
- Avoid further linear development of Gooderstone along the road network, or peripheral expansion which would result in loss of the distinctive linear character of the street;
- Monitor development to the settlement edges in terms of materials, character and garden boundary treatments;
- Conserve the existing network of narrow rural road, paying particular attention to the tributary crossing points, and avoiding traffic pressures/traffic calming schemes.



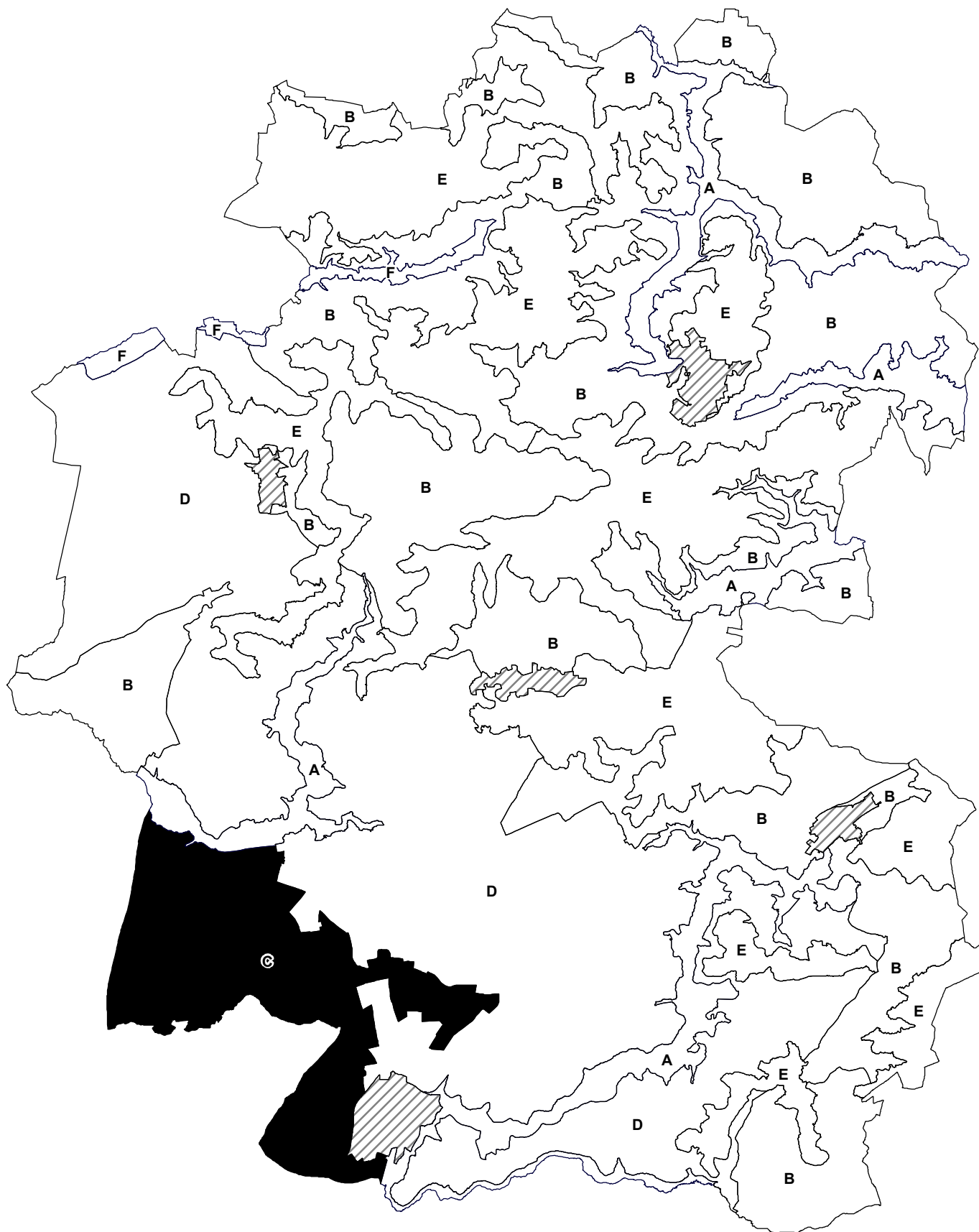






# C. THE BRECKS - PLANTATIONS

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# LANDSCAPE TYPE C: THE BRECKS - PLANTATIONS

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CI This landscape type is defined by large scale plantation forestry and a simple composition. Views are channelled and often contained by plantation blocks, creating an intimate spatial scale and quality. A strong geometric pattern is apparent due to the rectilinear road network and the bold, uniform plantation blocks.

## Key Characteristics

- A simple, large scale landscape on both the horizontal and vertical plane defined by extensive tracts of coniferous plantations that offer a strong sense of enclosure.
- An uncomplicated landscape of repeated elements notably the dense plantations with high canopies, which draw the eye to provide glimpsed views to the sky.
- With an elevation range of 10m – 50m AOD, the landform gently slopes towards the adjacent river valleys but the subtle elevation change is not immediately obvious due to the almost blanket coverage of the plantations.
- The dominant and repeated geometric plantation blocks create a simple and monotonous land cover pattern that accommodates a range of land uses – predominantly commercial timber production but also areas for recreation and military training.
- Linear, right-angular tracks and access routes divide the plantation blocks but these are only perceptible at close range, with the woodland blocks appearing as one continuous tract.
- Views are channelled down the long straight roads – both primary and secondary - which form strong linear corridors through the forest.
- Weeting would be an exception to this, as the single large settlement in the character type.
- An unsettled landscape with the exception of small settlements and the occasional individual property.
- Looking towards this landscape from adjacent areas, the skyline is defined by straight, continuous edges of the plantations, which silhouette against the sky and provide dramatic landmarks. The canopy forms a simple contrast with the sky.
- Tree cover greatly restricts views and as such built structures and landmarks are for the most part not evident.
- Although the distinctive plantation edges are visible from adjacent landscapes, tree cover largely prevents views into adjacent landscapes.

- The main roads cutting through the plantations brings a distinct sense of movement, although away from these roads the landscape can appear isolated and peaceful.

## **Landscape Type C: The Brecks - Plantations**

### Character Area

CI The Brecks of Thetford Forest

# CI: THE BRECKS OF THETFFORD FOREST





# CI: THE BRECKS OF THETFORD FOREST

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## Location and Boundaries

- CI.1 *The Brecks of Thetford Forest* lies in the south-western part of Breckland District and the landscape type extends into the neighbouring authorities of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough and Forest Heath District (Suffolk). The character area is defined primarily by the distinctive and extensive mixed plantation woodland cover, with the northern boundary marked by the *Wissey Valley*, and the eastern boundary defined by the more open and sparsely wooded character of the adjacent *Stanta Heath* character area.

## Key Characteristics

- A gently undulating landscape with sparsely deposited glacial drift material including sand, clay and gravel overlying the chalk solid geology. Distinctive stripes of brown and chalk based soils are apparent in the heaths at Grimes Graves.
- Topography ranges from 20-30m AOD throughout the character area.
- Views are intermittent and generally contained by the dense mixed mature plantation woodland cover, although woodland rides create localised views. There is relatively low intervisibility with adjacent character areas.
- Mixed plantation woodland dominates the landscape, with coniferous species such as Scots Pine, Corsican Pine and Larch predominating, in addition to broadleaves such as oak, beech and birch.
- With the exception of small scale isolated areas of heathy grassland, there are relatively few areas of open land, due to the extensive plantings undertaken by the Forestry Commission throughout the 20th Century.
- Strips of mature broadleaf trees and woodland define both former field and parkland estate boundaries (West Tofts), indicating the historic landcover and landuse. Contorted historic Scots Pine windbreak hedgerows are apparent throughout the character area, and are a distinctive feature.
- Historic sites include the nationally significant Neolithic flint mines at Grimes Graves, a number of barrows, a Romano-British site at Leylands Farm, and a former moated settlement and church site at Santon Downham.
- There are few extant areas of settlement within the character area, with the exceptions of Weeting, Mundford and Lynford. Weeting is the only large settlement in the character area. A network of straight rural roads traverses the character area, with distinctive right angled junctions.
- Intimate, small scale and contained landscape, with a wide variety of texture and colours due to the mixed woodland canopy cover, and characterised by a strongly unified, almost monotonous quality in places.

- Recreational opportunities are afforded by a network of way marked routes and rights of way across the character area, in addition to extensive areas of open access land and an aerial assault course within Thetford Forest.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- C1.2 The physical geology of the character area is defined by glacial drift deposits of sand and gravel overlying a chalk solid geology. The area is generally characterised by a thin light covering of drift deposits in comparison to surrounding character areas which have a deeper drift layer and more pronounced landform variation. The contrast of acidic drift and chalks soils is one of the most distinctive features of Breckland with contrasting vegetation and habitats in close proximity.
- C1.3 Where drift material has been deposited it give rise to the dominant brown sand soil – a droughty soil which without irrigation is prone to wind erosion. The acidic soils are reflected in the species composition of the woodland blocks, with pine being the main species. Within the pine plantations there are also areas of broadleaved planting. Within the East Anglia Forest District (which the character area falls within) there is approximately 12% broadleaf tree cover.
- C1.4 Coniferous and mixed/broadleaf plantation are the main land uses within the character area, in addition to isolated areas of farmland heathland and grassland which are traditionally managed by rotational sheep grazing. A number of the woodlands within Thetford Forest indicate the historic practice of rabbit farming, e.g. Thetford Warren.
- C1.5 Thetford Forest’s ecological potential is recognised in the large number of nature conservation designations across the character area. The greater part of the character area is designated as the Breckland Farmland SSSI and Breckland Forest SSSI, which also forms part of the Breckland SPA. Breckland Farmland SSSI is designated as a breeding ground for Stone Curlew, whilst the Breckland Forest SSSI supports an important assemblage of nationally rare plant species, a number of which are restricted to East Anglia and occupying habitats characteristic of Breckland. The Breckland Forest also contains the only extant population of red squirrel in East Anglia.
- C1.6 A number of areas within the Breckland Farmland SSSI within the character area are designated both as National Nature Reserves (NNR) and SACs. These include calcareous grassland and acid grassland at Weeting Heath SSSI/SPA and an area of MOD land adjacent to Grimes Graves flint mine, which support a wide range of flora and fauna. This diversity of habitats is reflected in the remnant heath at Barnhamcross Common SSSI/SAC, which encompasses alternating bands of acid heath and chalk grassland.
- C1.7 The importance of calcareous grassland as a habitat resource is recognised by Natural England, and the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project has identified much of the character area as falling within the core area in view of its SSSI designation. Acid grassland and lowland heathland are identified as priority habitats within the Norfolk BAP and the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project.



## Historic Character

- C1.8 A number of historic landscape processes are identified within the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), including 18-20<sup>th</sup> Century woodland plantations, piecemeal 18-19<sup>th</sup> Century Parliamentary Enclosure and 20<sup>th</sup> Century agriculture, plus boundary loss and areas of managed wetlands in the southernmost part of the character area adjacent to the watercourse of the Little Ouse.
- C1.9 Afforestation now represents the dominant land use, interspersed with small areas of farmland and pastoral grazing. A more open and pastoral character occurs near to the River Little Ouse, although this represents only a localised variation.
- C1.10 Faden's Map of 1797 identifies a large tract of heathland at Mundford Heath, falling broadly north-south across the character area, the large parkland of West Tofts (partly in the adjoining *Stanta Heath* character area), with its distinctive wooded boundary belt. In addition Faden's map also identifies the two churches at Weeting, the ruins of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century fortified manor at Weeting Castle, together with the nearby hall and parklands belonging to the Earl of Montrath. The early 18<sup>th</sup> Century house at Lynford which was rebuilt in the 1850's as the neo-Jacobean seat of the Lyne-Stephens family, is also identified.
- C1.11 Of these historic elements, isolated areas of heathy grassland and the distinctive mature oaks along the A134 (which form the belt of the former West Tofts parkland) are extant, in addition to the fragmented ruins of Weeting Castle and All Saints Church. Weeting Hall was demolished in 1952 and its parklands subsequently absorbed within the later urban edge growth of Weeting, which now forms the setting for the round towered church of All Saints with St Mary and of Weeting Castle. West Tofts was acquired by the Ministry of Defence and Forestry Commission in the 1940s and subsequently extensively planted with mixed woodland. Lynford Hall, parklands and associated arboretum survive as an hotel and country club.
- C1.12 The relatively settled historic character is indicated by a number of Scheduled Monuments within the character area, including the nationally significant neolithic flint mines at Grimes Graves, round barrows at Mount Ephraim Plantation, the round barrow and associated banking at Blood Hill and a Romano-British site at Leyland Farm, in addition to the moated site and former medieval settlement at Santon Downham, together with the site of St Helen's Church, oratory and holy well.
- C1.13 Reference to the medieval practice of 'warrening' or rabbit farming is made by Thetford Warren, within the character area.

## Settlement and Built Character

- C1.14 There is relatively little extant settlement within the character area, other than the nucleated, historic villages of Weeting and Mundford, and the hamlet of Lynford. Weeting is centred on the historic village green and displays a range of vernacular building styles and materials, including thatch and red brick, to the village core, although it is also includes modern urban edge development adjacent to the round towered church and Weeting Castle. Thatched cottages are also apparent at 'The Row'. Mundford contains a range of vernacular styles and materials to its core

including red brick and jettied half timber, together with later and modern infill and edge development.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- C1.15 The landscape is intimate in scale and of an enclosed character due to the prevalence of the plantation woodland. The plantations include a variety of broadleaf and coniferous species, creating a variety of textures and palette of colours.
- C1.16 The historic interventions within the landscape have created a number of visually distinctive features, notably the Neolithic flint mines at Grimes Graves and the double belt of mature oaks alongside the long straight roads which formerly marked the extents of West Tofts parkland.
- C1.17 The afforestation programme implemented from the 1940s to the present day has resulted in a visually unified and essentially contained landscape. Views are intermittent and framed, often limited to those from the long rides which are cut through the blocks of plantation woodland.
- C1.18 Due to the density of forestry woodland the character area has an empty, tranquil quality, although this is to an extent affected by the Stanstead Airport flightpath. The American Airforce bases at Mildenhall and Lakenheath are also significant disturbances in the locality.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- Ancient contorted Scots Pine windbreaks, which indicate historic field boundary pattern;
- Very mature oak 'avenue' planting to network of long straight roads with wide grassed verges, in particular along the A134, marking the historic West Tofts Parkland boundary;
- Extensive afforestation by mixed plantation woodlands is an essential component in defining sense of place and spatial enclosure;
- The round towered Church and castle at Weeting provides a sense of historic built character, as do the thatched cottages at 'The Row';
- The juxtaposition of the contrasting habitats of heath/acid grassland and chalk grassland, relating to the underlying soils and geology.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- C1.19 The key visual sensitivities associated with this character area include the relationship of the edge of areas of settlement to the wider landscape, as at Weeting, in addition to the occasional long views provided by the woodland rides.

## Current State of the Landscape

CI.20 The current state of the landscape is that of a managed and productive afforested landscape, with range of mature mixed and coniferous plantation woodlands. Harvesting and replacement/succession planting is evident within the character area. The landscape is representative of the type and generally intact and also retains a number of historic features including areas of remnant heath and broadleaf parkland and field boundaries. The ecological richness of the character area in terms of the habitats it affords for protected bird species is recognised through the SSSI, SPA and SAC designations.

## Landscape Change

### Past Change

- Loss of parklands and heathland to early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century afforestation by the Forestry Commission;
- Recent Forestry Enterprise Pilot Projects have included areas of heathland restoration;
- Conversion of Lynford Estate to a country club and adjoining caravan park;
- Absorption of historic landscape features and elements within later urban growth at Weeting;

### Future Change

CI.21 Potential future change may arise from the implementation of future Forest Design Plans, with an emphasis on increasing biodiversity through areas of heathland creation, and gradual, staggered changes in the species balance within the plantations as they are felled and replanted on rotation. The Growth Point Status of Thetford and potential future urban edge growth may have landscape implications to the south eastern edge of the character area.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall landscape strategy for the *Brecks of Thetford Forest* should be to conserve the existing balance of broadleaf and coniferous plantation woodland (in accordance with Forestry Enterprise objectives and Forest Design plans), and remnant historic elements such as the boundary oaks and deal rows. In addition, existing woodland cover should be enhanced through succession planting (again in accordance with Forestry Enterprise objectives) to ensure continuity of cover. The opportunity for the creation of areas of acid grassland and heathland is already being explored by Forestry Enterprise in two pilot areas and should be maximised where possible as some plantations reach the end of their productive cycle.

### Guidelines

#### Landscape Management

- Conserve long vistas created by woodland rides;

- Maintain existing balance of broadleaf and coniferous plantation woodland cover, and allow for sustainable canopy cover through succession planting as plantations are felled upon reaching the end of their productive cycle (subject to Forestry Enterprise objectives);
- Explore opportunities for further heathland restoration, in accordance with Forestry Enterprise Strategy and the objectives of the EcoNet Project;
- Maintain remnant historic features, including ancient pine hedgerows and distinctive oak avenues to roadsides, which mark the former extents of the West Tofts parklands;
- Conserve and enhance the setting of historic built elements within the landscape, such as the round towered church at Weeting.

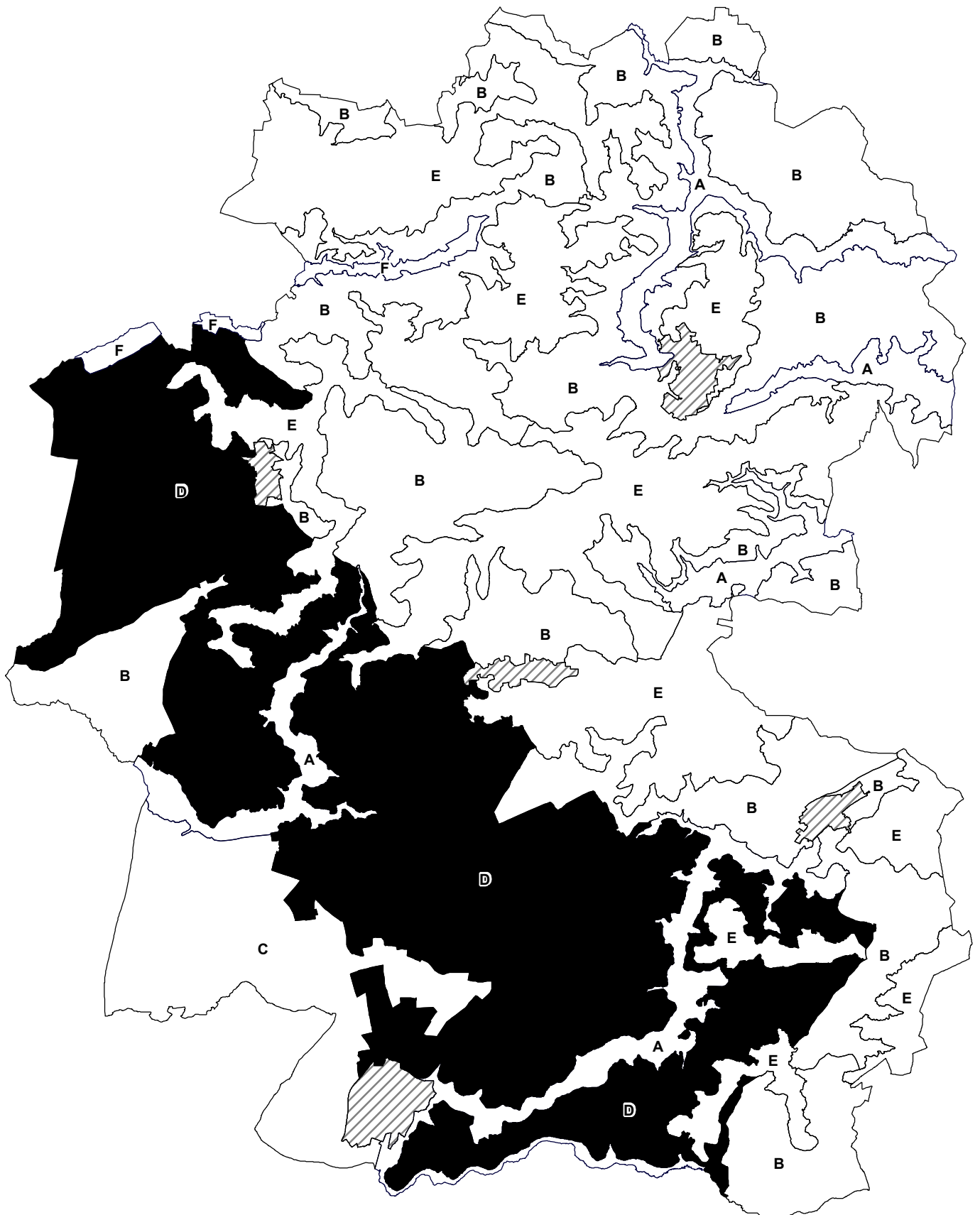
### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve wooded skylines to views and ensure that new development to the edges of defined settlements does not breach this;
- Conserve historic vernacular and ensure that any potential future development reflects these styles/use of materials;
- Conserve the predominantly 'remote' and unsettled/undeveloped character of Thetford Forest;
- Monitor existing pattern of urban edge to development and growth to settlements;
- Maintain existing rural character of the road network, resisting traffic pressures and traffic calming measures which could have an urbanising influence;
- Explore opportunities for enhancing recreational access, particularly to the historic drove road to the west of Weeting.





## D. THE BRECKS - HEATHLAND WITH PLANTATION







# LANDSCAPE TYPE D: THE BRECKS – HEATHLAND WITH PLANTATIONS

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D1 This landscape type is defined primarily by the historic heathland land cover (now frequently replaced with arable fields), interspersed with small-medium scale blocks of mixed plantation woodland. The landscape type accommodates a range of land uses and has a less unified character than the *Brecks: Plantations* landscape type in view of this and the more open character created by the sparse, more varied woodland cover.

## Key Characteristics

- A medium to large scale landscape characterised by areas of open farmland and heath and large coniferous plantations – changing perspectives from open to enclosed.
- River valleys cut through the Middle and Upper Chalk strata and plateaux rise to the north, creating a gently undulating landform with subtle slopes.
- Land cover is variable, ranging from intensively farmed arable fields, heathland and areas of coniferous plantation.
- Belts of twisted Scots pine, marking field boundaries and aligning roads, are sculptural features and points of focus.
- Settlement is dispersed and of low density but the urban edges of Swaffham and Thetford have an influence on the landscape.
- The skyline is prominent and for the most part wooded, defined by the solid lines of the coniferous blocks and shelter belt planting.
- Warrens, e.g. Beachamwell Warren and Gooderstone Warren are a distinctive feature.
- Views are often broken by tree cover allowing only glimpsed views into adjacent landscapes.
- Movement is variable –A roads and secondary routes bring a strong sense of movement to the landscape but away from these transport corridors, the area remains still and peaceful.
- Some large open, remote areas with few metalled roads or dwellings.

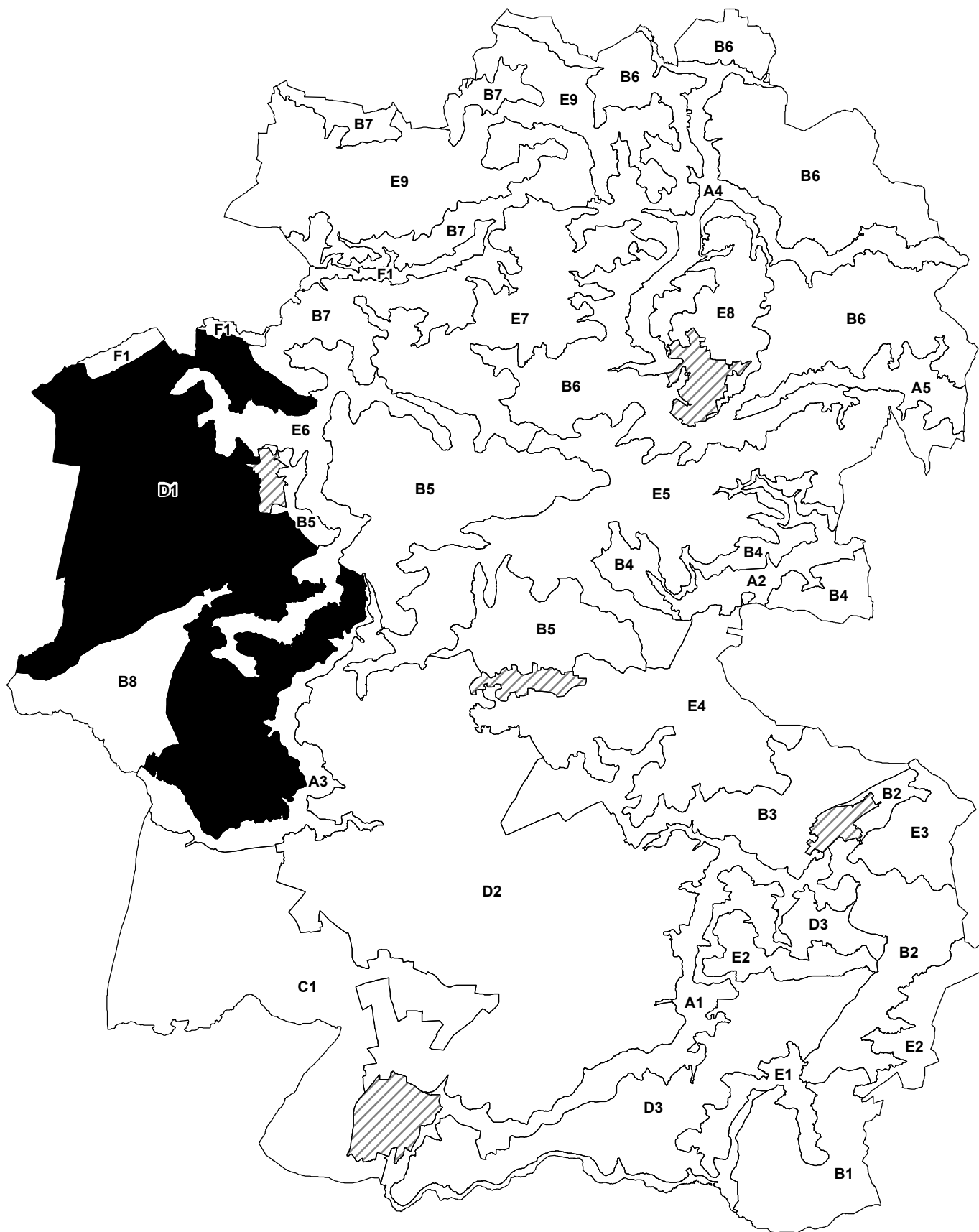
## Landscape Type D: The Brecks – Heathland with Plantations

### Character Area

- D1 Swaffham Heath
- D2 Stanta Heath
- D3 Harling Heathlands



# DI: SWAFFHAM HEATH





# DI: SWAFFHAM HEATH

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## Location and Boundaries

DI.1 A large area of the *Breckland Heathland with Plantation* landscape type located to the north-west, west and south west of Swaffham, with character defined primarily by the land use of arable farmland, historic parklands and plantation woodland and distinctive Scot's pine belts. To the north the character area boundary is marked by the adjacent *River Nar* character area and to the west by the district boundary and a change in character to a more settled area of farmland and plantations. To the south and east the landform falls towards the River Wissey.

## Key Characteristics

- Drift deposits of sand, clay and gravel create a gently undulating landscape, with topography ranging from 10-70m AOD across the character area.
- Free draining sandy soils support the functional land cover of arable cultivation, pig farming and plantation woodland.
- Ancient, contorted scots pine shelterbelts and screening belts of trees provide shelter to the easily eroded brown soils and are a prominent landscape feature.
- At Cockleycley Heath and Swaffham Heath, the woodland plantation blocks create a visually prominent feature in the landscape.
- The large scale arable fields are delineated by hedgerows in variable condition from occasional species rich intact hedgerows with hedgerow trees, thorn hedges and pine lines.
- Breckland Farmland SSSI covers a large part of the character area – the cultivated land proving a habitat for stone curlew. A smaller area of Breckland Forest SSSI also covers part of the area.
- A large scale landscape, with an open, windswept character, quiet and seemingly remote in places.
- Historic parklands and parkland features such as lodge houses, rides/long vistas and parkland species are evident in the landscape.
- Sparsely populated - the settlement pattern is characterised by scattered Halls, farm buildings and a small number of nucleated villages and hamlets. Churches are often isolated.
- Distinctive building materials of knapped flint, clunch and brick
- The areas of open access land associated with plantations at Swaffham Heath and Coldharbour Wood provide opportunities for recreation.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- D1.2 The character area has an underlying solid chalk geology and a gently undulating plateau landform covered by a thin layer of glacial drift deposits including boulder clay and sands and gravels. The covering of drift deposits is shallower than in adjacent landscape character areas resulting in complex soils typically sandy free draining mixes of chalk, sand, silt, clay and flints.
- D1.3 The light, droughty soils are prone to wind erosion. The geology and soils are reflected in the species composition of the woodland blocks, with pine being the main species. The blocks of plantation woodland and coniferous shelter belts have protected the soil from erosion and has allowed much of the landscape to be given over to arable production. In addition to arable cultivation, a number of areas are used for outdoor pig raising.
- D1.4 Significant areas of the character area are covered by nature conservation designations, representing its ecological value. Large blocks of the character area are designated as part of Breckland Farmland SSSI (SPA), with the arable farmland notable for supporting almost half the stone curlews in Britain, nesting in the cultivated land favouring the areas of bare ground and very short vegetation. The majority of the Breckland Forest SSSI (SPA) lies outside of the character area, but plantation woodland at Cockleycley Heath and Swaffham Heath are parts of the SSSI. Gooderstone Warren is designated as a SPA.
- D1.5 Field enclosure is provided by hedgerows of various condition and species composition. Historic, contorted scots pine wind breaks form a strong vertical feature in the flat landscape, as are localised areas of hedges of fast growing coniferous species. The grassy banks and field edges are very important to the conservation of the remnant Breckland grass-heath habitats.
- D1.6 The entire character area falls within the 'Core Area' as defined by the Ecological Mapping Project for Norfolk. Core areas represent significant concentrations of high quality extant habitat. The high quality habitat represented within character area D1 is Breckland Forest and area of remnant heath.

### Historic Character

- D1.7 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk identifies extensive areas of heathland and common within the character area, including Beachamwell Warren and Swaffham Heath. At this time it was an exposed open landscape. These areas have now largely been planted for commercial forestry and partly absorbed within arable cultivation. The HLC data (which is partially complete for the area) shows that the three most significant influences to be piecemeal parliamentary enclosure, 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century plantation woodland, and 20<sup>th</sup> century enclosure, some with resultant boundary loss. The landscape today, is one of medium to large sized fields often being bounded by 'gappy' and degraded hedgerows.
- D1.8 Plantations form significant blocks in two areas at Cockleycley Heath and Swaffham Heath. Conifer planting began in 1922 on areas of heath, and unstable sand dunes and marginal agriculture. The majority of the initial plantings reached the end of

their first rotation in the mid 1970s. Since then the harvesting of these and subsequent plantings has created a continuous supply of clear-felled areas and young plantations.

- DI.9 A number of parklands both extant and remnant signify the past wealth of this part of Breckland, notably the Historic Park and Garden at Pickenham Hall and the former estate of the now destroyed Didlington Hall. Various parkland elements are visible within the character area, such as the vista to Cockleycley Hall.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- DI.10 This is a sparsely settled landscape with a remote 'empty' quality in places. Settlement is characterised by a small number of nucleated villages generally located in proximity to and drawing on the resources of the intervening river valleys, as at Narborough (River Nar), Hilborough (River Wissey) and Cockley Cley (Gadder). In addition, there is a general pattern of dispersed farmsteads across the character area. The local vernacular is red/yellow brick and flint with occasional colour rendered buildings.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- DI.11 This is a large scale landscape with a strong geometry – with large regular fields defined by straight rows of Scot's pine or thorn hedges, interspersed with areas of conifer plantation. In places this creates a very open, exposed and windswept landscape. There is a relatively low density of woodland blocks, although where they do exist, they are large in scale and create a notable feature within the landscape.
- DI.12 Views both within the character area and to adjacent character areas are variable. In places views are distant, to the wooded skylines, to the elevated *North Pickenham Plateau* and to the *Wissey Valley*. However in other locations views are framed or contained by woodland blocks.
- DI.13 The low population density and the large swathes of farmland and woodland create a peaceful, even remote landscape. Views to the wind turbines north of Swaffham in the *North Pickenham Plateau* character area add a sense of movement and activity. Some noise disturbance from RAF Marham (within the adjoining Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk) is apparent.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- The historic boundary features - distinctive scots pine windbreaks and hedgerows;
- Remnant parkland features such as vistas to Cockleycley Hall, flint estate walls and lodge houses which provide a sense of historical integrity;
- The varied landcover mosaic created by the plantation woodland and farmland;
- Sparse settlement and rural character of the hamlets and villages;

- The narrow, often unmarked rural lanes and tracks;
- The ecological value of the arable farmland for birds, notably stone curlew;
- Areas of remnant heathland character.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

DI.14 A predominantly an open large scale landscape with long, open views. Within the more enclosed wooded areas vistas which were designed into the landscape as parkland features, have in places been retained. These views create surprise historical markers within the landscape and would be sensitive to unsympathetic woodland management.

DI.15 The woodland blocks create an important focus to the landscape, particularly where views are across arable fields to woodland blocks on the skyline.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

DI.16 This is a functional managed landscape with an eroding character in places due to loss of characteristic elements, notably heathland, degraded field boundaries, and changes in farming. The arable farmland provides a valuable habitat for farmland birds.

### **Landscape Change**

#### **Past Change**

- Agricultural enclosure and loss of heathland, plus further loss of heathland with decline in grazing;
- Conversion of parkland and heath/commons to plantation woodland;
- Declining condition of remaining areas of parkland;
- Agricultural changes including outdoor pig raising and development of water storage reservoirs on agricultural land.
- Decline of distinctive Scot's pine hedgerows;
- An increasing influence of traffic upon the landscape character with the inclusion and widening of the A47, A1122 and A1065.

#### **Future Change**

DI.17 Potential future landscape change may result from the implementation of agri-environment schemes and management to enhance ecological value. Changes in Forestry Enterprise Strategy, including heathland restoration and renewal may also have a positive effect on landscape character.



## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The landscape strategy should be to conserve the remote, open, sparsely settled character of the *Heathland with Plantation* landscape– restoring and enhancing the heathland character where appropriate and managing the arable farmland to enhance its ecological value, particularly for farmland birds.

### Guidelines

#### **Landscape Management**

- Encourage take up of agri-environment schemes to improve the ecological value of arable farmland and to create habitat connectivity;
- Conserve and enhance the historic contorted pine wind break hedgerows through appropriate a management;
- Consider opportunities for heathland creation on areas where it has been lost, for example areas of plantation woodland;
- Ensure that any further recreation provision does not conflict with the sensitive species and habitats within the Breckland Farmland and Breckland Forest SSSI;
- Conserve the rides within parklands and plantations which provide attractive vistas to historic features, including those designated as Historic Parks and Gardens.

#### **Development Guidelines**

- Conserve the sparse settlement pattern of small villages associated with the edges of river valley and scattered farms;
- Ensure that any new built development fits with the local built vernacular, including use of materials (brick and flint);
- Conserve the existing rural road network, resisting traffic pressures and traffic calming measures which could have an urbanising influence;
- Consider the effect of tall or vertical structures within this very open, exposed landscape.

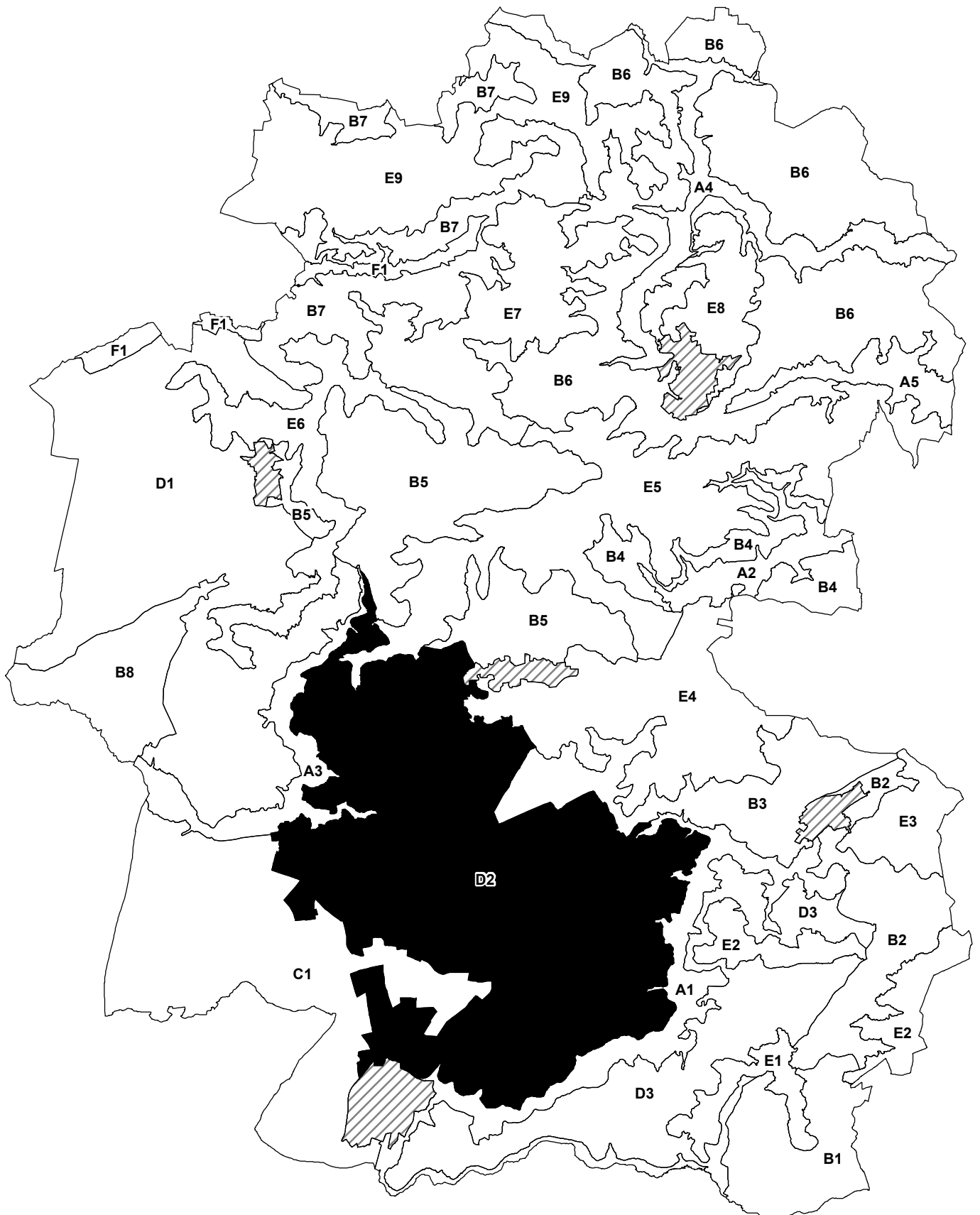






## D2: STANTA HEATH

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## D2: STANTA HEATH

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### Location and Boundaries

D2.1 This area of the *Breckland with Heathland and Plantations* landscape type covers a large area in the southern and central part of the district. The character area is defined primarily by the distinctive land cover of arable fields interspersed with blocks of mixed plantation woodland and areas of heathland and grassland. It is bounded by the more continuous forest cover of *Thetford Forest* to the south, by the *Wissey Valley* to the west and by the *Thet Valley* to the east, with the elevated plateau landscape marking the northern extent.

### Key Characteristics

- A gently undulating landscape with glacial drift deposits of sand, clay and gravel. Topography ranges from 20 – 55m AOD.
- Free draining sandy soils support a functional landscape of arable cultivation and plantation woodland.
- Large tracts of heathland and grassland survive within the extensive MOD land holdings at Stanford Training Ground (SSSI (SAC)), in the western half of the character area.
- Groundwater dependent meres at East Wretham Heath and the Stanta Training Area are internationally significant – unique hydrogeological features fed by base-rich groundwater with no inflowing or outflowing streams. Water filled pingos are a further distinctive feature.
- Contorted Scot's pine wind break hedgerows and screening belts of trees provide shelter to the easily eroded soils and are a prominent landscape feature, particularly on skylines. Plantation blocks are locally prominent features.
- The arable fields are delineated by hedgerows in variable condition from occasional species rich intact hedgerows with hedgerow trees, thorn hedges and distinctive pine lines.
- A large scale landscape, with an open windswept character, generally quiet apart from occasional aural interruptions arising from MOD training activities. Remote in some areas.
- Plantation woodland occurs on the site of historic parklands and landed estates, and parkland features such as rides and parkland species are evident in the landscape.
- The fenced and conifer hedged boundaries of Stanford Training Ground are prominent features in this open landscape.
- A number of Scheduled Monuments and features reflecting the settled historic character are evident, such as tumuli, a Roman Settlement and a number of

moated sites/ moated churches and deserted villages at West Tofts and Roudham.

- Sparsely settled with scattered Halls, farm buildings and a small number of isolated, nucleated villages and hamlets.
- The presence of 'A' roads and overhead aircraft noise interrupt the landscape.
- Open access land at Langmere and Brettenham and East Wretham Heaths provides opportunities for recreation.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- D2.2 The underlying solid chalk solid geology forms gently undulating plateau capped in places by a thin layer of glacial drift deposits including boulder clay and sand and gravels. The varied drift deposits create in complex soils typically sandy free draining mixes of chalk, sand, silt and flints. The soils are prone to wind erosion and are protected by blocks of plantation woodland and the historic planting of scots pine wind breaks allowing much of the landscape to be given over to arable production. In addition, there are large tracts of heathland with some pasture surviving within the MOD Stanford Training Ground and at Roudham Heath.
- D2.3 The area is of considerable biodiversity interest. Significant areas of the central heathland are designated as Breckland Farmland SSSI (SPA) Stanford Training Ground SSSI (SPA, and some parts SAC). This includes both historic and reverted heathland, associated primarily with acidic soils, in addition to localised areas of calcareous grassland and the fluctuating, groundwater dependant meres at Fowlmere and Devil's Punch Bowl, which are identified as 'internationally important' within the SSSI citation. Brettenham Heath is designated as a National Nature Reserve.
- D2.4 Much of Breckland Forest SSSI lies outside of the character area, but plantation woodland at Bridgham Heath within the character area forms part of the SSSI. The SSSI supports an important assemblage of nationally scarce plant species, of which a number are largely restricted to East Anglia and occupy habitats characteristic of Breckland.
- D2.5 Field boundaries are defined by hedgerows of various states and species compositions, and the historic, contorted scots pine wind breaks are also an important and distinctive feature. Grassy banks and field edges are very important to the conservation of the remnant Breckland grass-heath habitats.
- D2.6 The great majority of the character area falls within the 'Core Area' as defined by the Ecological Mapping Project for Norfolk. Core areas represent significant concentrations of high quality extant habitat. The high quality habitat represented within the D2 *Stanta Heath* character area is lowland heathland and grassland, with areas of calcareous grassland.



## **Historic Character**

- D2.7 A formerly exposed, open heathland dominated landscape, has been substantially enclosed and modified over the last 200 years. Faden's Map of 1797 identifies the key parklands of West Tofts, Buckenham Tofts, Merton and West Wretham, in addition to the meres and extensive tracts of heathland in the centre of the character area. The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) data illustrates a number of historic landscape processes. Most significantly these are piecemeal parliamentary enclosure, 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century plantation woodland, and post medieval military use, as well as areas of boundary loss associated with 20<sup>th</sup> century enclosure. The parklands of Buckenham Tofts and West Tofts (Caston Hall) were requisitioned by the MOD in 1944, and have subsequently been absorbed within Stanford Training Ground.
- D2.8 Planting with conifers began in 1922. The majority of the initial plantings reached the end of their first rotation in the mid 1970s. Since then the harvesting of these and subsequent plantings has created a continuous supply of clear-felled areas and young plantations. Plantations are found on sites of former parkland, these are in varying states of repair and intactness, with West Tofts (Caston Hall) and Sturston Hall having been requisitioned and subsequently demolished by the MOD, although parkland vegetation is evident, as are features such as rides and lodges. Wretham Hall was similarly demolished in the Second World War, and only parts of Buckenham Tofts and Merton Halls remain. A number of estate churches survive, notably at Tottington, associated with the former hall, and at West Tofts.

## **Settlement and Built Character**

- D2.9 The area is very sparsely settled, reflecting the land ownership pattern of estates and now MOD. Settlement density is characterised by a small number of nucleated and sometimes linear villages and a general pattern of dispersed farmsteads across the character area. The local vernacular is red brick and flint with occasional colour rendered buildings, with some white wash and thatch.
- D2.10 Great Hockham is the largest settlement, centred around the historic Village Green, the 14<sup>th</sup> Century church and the small parkland of the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century Hockham Hall. The settlement edge has expanded from the original nucleated form, containing later 20<sup>th</sup> century development.

## **Perceptual/Visual**

- D2.11 This is a large scale landscape with a strong geometry – with large regular fields defined by straight rows of Scot's pine or thorn hedges, interspersed with areas of conifer plantation. In places this creates a very open, exposed and windswept landscape. There is a relatively low density of woodland blocks, although where they do exist, they are large in scale and create a notable feature within the landscape. The heathland character of much of the central area survives within the MOD land a Stanford Training Area.
- D2.12 Views both within the character area and to adjacent character areas are variable. In places views are distant, to the wooded skylines and to the more elevated plateau land to the north, but in other locations views are framed or contained by woodland blocks.

D2.13 Population density is low and the character area has is sparsely settled with large swathes of farmland and woodland and heathland on non-accessible MOD land. However the presence of main A roads and overhead noise associated with military activity create localise interruptions within this otherwise quiet, even remote landscape.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- The historic boundary features e.g. contorted scots pine hedgerows;
- Remnant parkland features such as rides, lodges and remains of halls which provide a sense of historical integrity;
- The patchwork character created by the boundaries between plantation woodland and arable farmland and areas of heathland resulting in a visually varied landscape mosaic;
- Variations in light created by plantations, in addition to localised spatial variety and enclosure;
- The extensive areas of heathland and local areas of calcareous grassland, which are of considerable biodiversity interest;
- The meres are historically, hydrologically and ecologically significant;
- Sparse settlement and associated rural character;
- The ecological value of the arable farmland for birds, notably stone curlew
- Rural road network with bracken verges relates to the historic heathland character.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

D2.14 Open views, particularly across the military land, are a key visual sensitivity within this character area. The woodland blocks create an important focus to the landscape, particularly where views are across arable fields to woodland blocks on the skyline.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

D2.15 This is on the whole a functional and managed landscape. Within the MOD Estate extensive areas of heathland have survived and these, in addition to areas of calcareous grassland and the fluctuating meres, provide significant ecological interest. The arable land, under appropriate management is a valuable habitat for farmland birds, with the Scot's pine hedgerows surrounding fields forming a distinctive landmark feature.

## Landscape Change

### Past Change

- Agricultural enclosure and loss of heathland, plus further loss of heathland with decline in grazing;
- Conversion of parkland and heath/commons to plantation woodland and MOD training areas;
- Agricultural changes including outdoor pig raising and development of water storage reservoirs on agricultural land.
- Decline of distinctive Scot's pine hedgerows;
- An increasing influence of traffic upon the landscape character due to the presence of 'A' Roads and military activities.

### Future Change

D2.16 Potential future change may arise from the implementation of agri environment schemes and through heathland restoration within areas of commercial forestry plantation as part of the Forestry Enterprise's management strategy. The land management objectives of the MOD's will also influence the landscape in the future. Climate change, within this very dry area is a significant threat to the groundwater meres.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The landscape strategy should be to conserve the remote, open sparsely settled character of the *Stanta Heath* character area – restoring and enhancing the heathland character where appropriate and managing the arable farmland to enhance its ecological value particularly for farmland birds.

### Guidelines

#### Landscape Management

- Encourage take up of agri-environment schemes to improve the ecological value of arable farmland and to create habitat connectivity;
- Conserve and enhance the historic contorted pine wind break hedgerows through appropriate a management;
- Conserve an manage surviving areas of heathland and consider opportunities for heathland creation on areas where it has been lost, for example areas of plantation woodland;
- Ensure that any further recreation provision does not conflict with the sensitive species and habitats within the Stanford Training Ground SSSI, Breckland Farmland and Breckland Forest SSSI;

- Conserve the rides within parklands and plantations which provide attractive vistas to historic features, including those designated as Historic Parks and Gardens.
- Conserve areas of calcareous grassland through traditional management e.g. grazing.

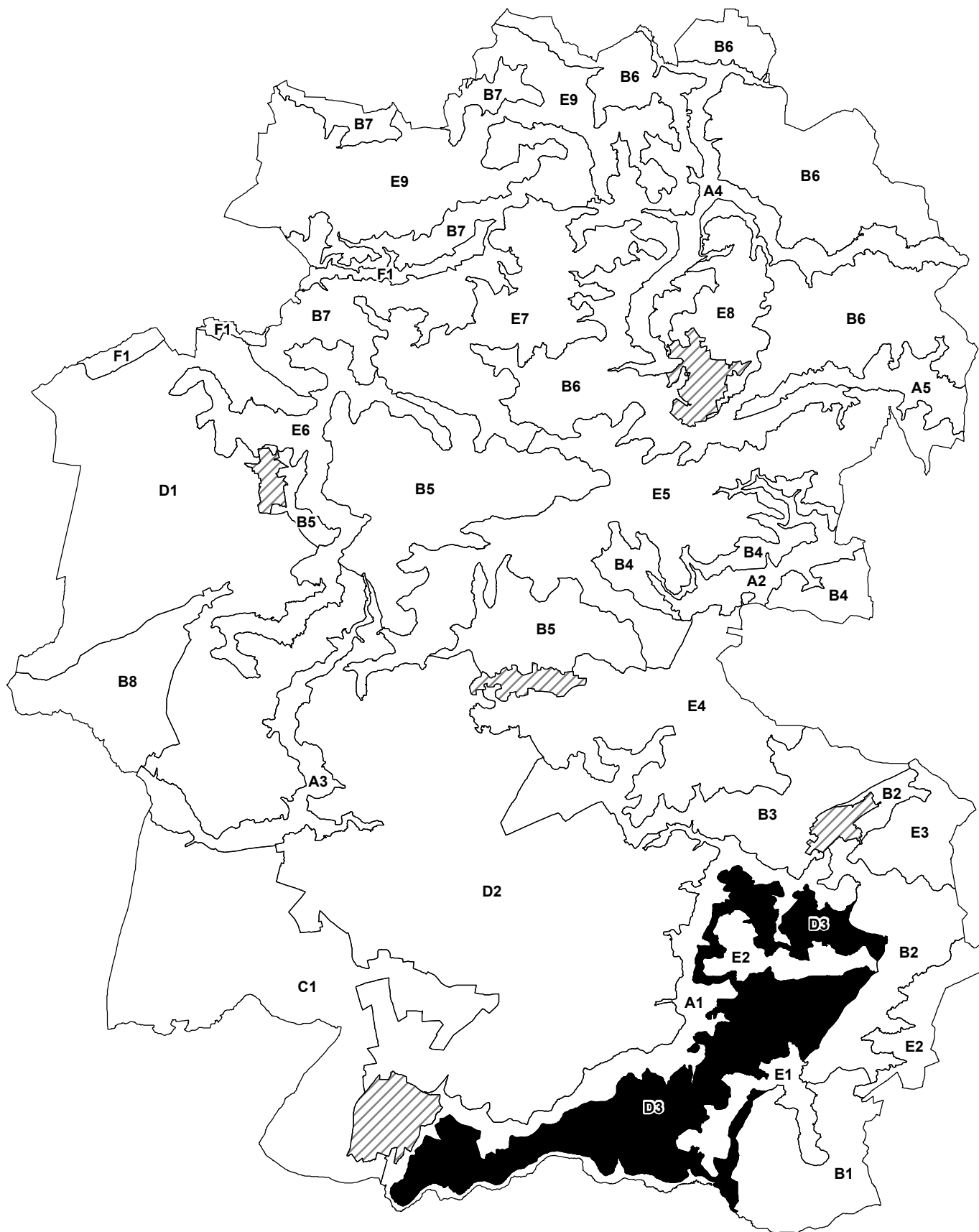
### ***Development Guidelines***

- Conserve the sparse settlement pattern and low population density;
- Ensure that any new built development fits with the local built vernacular, including use of materials (brick and flint);
- Consider the effect of tall or vertical structures within this very open, exposed landscape;
- Conserve the remaining historic parkland features, such as lodges and rides and ruined halls/churches;
- Conserve the existing rural road network, resisting traffic pressures and traffic calming measures which could have an urbanising influence.





# D3: HARLING HEATHLANDS







## D3: HARLING HEATHLANDS

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### Location and Boundaries

- D3.1 A relatively narrow section of the *Brecks Heathland with Plantation* landscape type in the east of the district defined by elevation and landform. The River Thet to the west, the River Ouse to the south and the more elevated land of the *Old Buckenham Plateau* character area to the east and north create the character area boundaries.

### Key Characteristics

- A gently undulating landscape with landform influenced by glacial drift deposits of sand, clay and gravel. Topography ranges from 20 – 40m AOD.
- Brown sand soils support the functional landscape which is used for arable cultivation, pig farming and plantation woodland.
- Contorted Scots Pine shelterbelts and screening belts of trees provide shelter to the easily eroded brown soils and are a prominent landscape feature.
- Large blocks of Breckland Forest SSSI are located within the character area on sites of former parkland creating a wooded, enclosed character in places.
- Forestry planting has occasionally eroded parkland character as at West Harling, although parkland is more intact in parts of the character area e.g. at Quidenham Hall.
- Large scale, geometric arable fields are delineated by hedgerows in variable condition, ranging from species rich intact hedgerows with hedgerow trees, to severely degraded hedgerows on some field boundaries.
- Small areas of calcareous and acid grassland/heathland, primarily associated with remnant common land, are locally distinctive vegetation elements.
- An open, windswept landscape in places due to areas of hedgerow loss.
- Chalk, aquifer fed meres, such as at Quidenham and East Harling, are a distinctive feature of the area.
- A number of Scheduled Monuments and other historic features illustrate the historic settlement of the character area, including tumuli, the presumed grave of Boudicea, the Devil's Ditch, the Peddars Way and the historic parklands and St Chad's Well at Shadwell Park.
- The settlement pattern is characterised by nucleated hamlets and larger villages focused around the rural road network, the largest being East Harling.
- A tranquil, rural landscape due to the low population density, the presence of only 2 'A' Roads (A11 and A1066) to the fringe of the character area and the localised impact of the Thetford - Attleborough railway line.

- Opportunities for recreational access are facilitated by the rights of way network and open access land at West Harling Heath.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- D3.2 An underlying chalk solid geology is overlain with extensive and varying drift deposits including sand and gravels associated with tributaries draining into the River Thet, which has created a gently undulating landscape. Other formations specific to this solid and drift geology are meres which are depressions carved into the chalk by water erosion, and which are fed by springs from the chalk. Quidenham Mere SSSI which is found to the east of Quidenham, and East Harling Mere are both examples of chalk, aquifer fed meres. To the west of Quidenham peat is found associated with the drains and waterlogged conditions associated with the River Wittle.
- D3.3 The drift deposits have given rise to the dominant brown sand soil – a droughty soil which without irrigation is prone to wind erosion. The geology and soils are reflected in the species composition of the woodland blocks, with pine being the main species. The blocks of plantation and the historic planting of scots pine shelter belts has protected the soil from erosion and has allowed much of the landscape to be given over to arable production. In addition to arable cultivation, a number of areas are used for outdoor pig farming.
- D3.4 Due to the contrasting bands of acidic and calcareous soils, a varied and contrasting range of vegetation types are located in close proximity within the character area.
- D3.5 A number of sites are protected by nature conservation designations, illustrating the ecological diversity of the character area. The majority of the Breckland Forest SSSI (SPA) lies outside of the character area, but plantation woodland south of West Harling on the former parkland of West Harling Hall is also designated as Breckland Forest SSSI. The SSSI supports an important assemblage of nationally scarce plant species, a number of which are largely restricted to East Anglia and occupying habitats characteristic of Breckland. The Breckland Forest also contains the only extant population of red squirrel in East Anglia.
- D3.6 Field enclosure is provided by hedgerows of varying condition and species composition, and are characterised by being of fairly large geometric 20<sup>th</sup> century formation and under arable cultivation. Historic scots pine wind breaks and screening poplars are also a boundary feature. The grassy banks and field edges are very important to the conservation of the remnant Breckland grass-heath habitats.
- D3.7 In addition to the important habitats defined as SSSIs, there are a number of County Wildlife sites within the character area representing the ecologically important Fen habitat (Kenninghall and Banham Fens, Middle Harling Fen SSSI) and common land (East Harling Common and Meres).
- D3.8 The entire character area falls within the ‘Core Area’ as defined by the Ecological Mapping Project for Norfolk. Core areas represent significant concentrations of high quality extant habitat. The habitats highlighted for particular study and recreation within the D3 *Quidenham* character area are calcareous grassland (specifically in the

south of the character area), aquifer fed naturally fluctuating water bodies or meres, wet woodland, heathland and Fens.

### **Historic Character**

- D3.9 A long history of settlement has left a variety of historical and archaeological features. These range from pre-historic earthwork sites to buildings and structures, such as medieval and post-medieval estate houses. Faden's 1797 Map shows five parklands and associated features either partly or wholly within the character area, representing the areas past wealth and the historic significance of the landed estates. These are Quidenham Hall (now a Carmelite Convent), Kilverstone Hall, Hargham Hall, Riddlesworth Park and West Harling Hall, in addition to Shadwell Park. Faden's Map also shows a number of areas of heath and common land e.g. East Harling Common. The majority of the parkland are extant, although many areas of heathland have subsequently been absorbed within both arable cultivation (e.g. East Harling Heath) and plantation forestry (West Harling Heath).
- D3.10 There are ten Scheduled Monuments and numerous ancient monuments within the character area. Devil's Ditch runs north south along the boundary of the block of plantation woodland at Harling. It is thought to have been a defensive structure built during the post Roman period. The presumed site of Boudicea's grave also lies within the character area near Kenninghall.
- D3.11 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has identified the presence of 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century plantation and 20<sup>th</sup> century agricultural cultivation. Smaller scale landuses are shown interspersed with these features e.g. parklands and small farm clusters. A number of these parklands are extant, e.g. Shadwell Park, designated as a park and garden of historic interest and Riddlesworth Park, now a school.
- D3.12 The acquisition of land by the Forestry Commission for the national afforestation programme in 1922 resulted in the absorption of areas of parkland, heathland, unstable sand dunes and marginal agriculture, within commercial forestry plantations. Corsican pine is the dominant species comprising over 70% of all plantings within the Breckland Forest SSSI as a whole. Scots pine, Douglas fir and larch also feature in the forest. The majority of the initial plantings reached the end of their first rotation in the mid 1970s. Since then the harvesting of these and subsequent plantings has created a continuous supply of clear-felled areas and young plantations. The main block of plantation within the character area is found at Harling, on the former site of West Harling Hall.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- D3.13 The settlement pattern is characterised by scattered hamlets largely encompassing clusters of farm buildings, and larger villages of both nuclear and linear formation along the rural road network. The largest village is East Harling which is described by Pevsner as being 'a substantial village with a square'. The market square is surrounded by 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century houses and shops and the village today still includes buildings from the 14<sup>th</sup> century including St Peter and Paul's Church. A variety of vernacular building materials is apparent, including pantiles, render, red brick and clay lump.

D3.14 The Halls and parklands are an additional layer of settlement pattern with associated lodges and farm buildings clustered around the parkland features.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

D3.15 This is a large scale landscape with large geometric fields which appear seemingly larger in places due to degraded hedgerows, creating localised areas of a very open, exposed character. Woodland cover is sporadic, but where woodlands do exist they are large in scale and create a notable feature within the landscape e.g. large plantation block at Harling. The landscape contains a variety of landscape elements, although the large scale of these elements provides a unifying influence.

D3.16 Views both within the character area and to adjacent character areas are variable. In places views are distant, to the wooded skylines, and up to the elevated *Old Buckenham Plateau Farmland*, while in other locations views are framed or contained by woodland blocks.

D3.17 The swathes of farmland and woodland create a landscape of peaceful, rural character. Localised interruption is created by the A1066 and the A11.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- The field boundary features e.g. ancient scots pine wind breaks and mixed native hedgerows which lend a sense of historical continuity and also enhance the ecological integrity of the character area;
- The numerous historical sites scattered throughout the character area;
- Remnant parkland features such as views along the driveway of Quidenham Hall;
- The landscape mosaic created by the boundaries between plantation woodland and arable farmland land uses;
- Remaining areas of heathland and calcareous grassland, which are significant biodiversity value, as are the chalk, aquifer fed meres;
- The clearings within the woodland which break up the generally large scale landscape;
- Sparse settlement and rural character of the hamlets and villages;
- The historic core of the village of East Harling;
- The narrow, often unmarked rural lanes and tracks;
- Devil's Ditch (Scheduled Monument).

## Visual Sensitivities

- D3.18 A number of vistas designed into the landscape as parkland features have been retained. These views create surprise historical markers within the landscape. They would be sensitive to variations in woodland management.
- D3.19 The woodland blocks create an important focus to the landscape, particularly where views are across arable fields to a wooded skyline. Churches, such as at East Harling, are also an important focal point within the landscape.
- D3.20 There is occasional intervisibility with adjacent character areas, most significantly with the *River Thet Valley*.

## Current State of the Landscape

- D3.21 This is a functional managed landscape with an eroded character in places due to degraded field boundaries and areas of open air pig farming.
- D3.22 Areas of intensive arable cultivation and use of the landscape for plantation woodland has resulted in the loss of habitats such as heathland and common land, although the presence of the meres and areas of calcareous grassland provide a measure of ecological integrity and diversity.

## Landscape Change

### Past Change

- Agricultural intensification and loss of heathland/commons;
- Conversion of parkland to plantation woodland;
- The introduction of the railway line.

### Future Change

- D3.23 Potential future landscape change may arise from implementation of agri-environment schemes and revisions to Forestry Enterprise strategy through new Forest Design Plans.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall landscape strategy for the *Harling Heathlands* character area should be to conserve the remaining historic parkland and estate elements and other features which contribute to the historical integrity of the character area, such as nucleated settlements centred on village greens and the rural road network. Existing woodland structure and field boundaries should be enhanced and reinforced through new hedgerow planting and appropriate ongoing management. The opportunity for further heathland restoration and enhancement of cereal field margins should also be explored.

## **Guidelines**

### ***Landscape Management***

- Ensure that historical features are not lost or degraded through agricultural cultivation, and conserve the sites and setting of Scheduled Monuments within the character area;
- Maintain hedgerow trees through appropriate arboricultural management, and reinforce field boundary hedgerows, gapping up where appropriate with a native hedgerow mix;
- Monitor the processes of arable cultivation and field drainage to ensure that they do not have a detrimental effect on the hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Encourage take up of agri-environment schemes to improve the ecological value of Fenland and chalk grasslands (identified as a priority habitat within the BAP and EcoNet Project);
- Conserve remaining areas of heathland and calcareous grassland;
- Conserve the meres and associated riparian habitat, monitoring causes of significant fluctuations in water level which could adversely affect these features;
- Reduce soil erosion by minimising exposure of bare soil associated with crop growth. Ensure that soils are protected from erosion by the retention of historic Scots Pine wind breaks and shelter belts of native trees;
- Maintain the historic scots pine shelterbelts and prolong/sustain their life through appropriate arboricultural management;
- Ensure that any further provision of footpaths or recreation areas does not conflict with the sensitive species and habitats within the Breckland Farmland and Breckland Forest SSSI;
- Ensure that the species mix of the plantations, incorporating broadleaf woodland and coniferous species is maintained;
- Promote traditional silvicultural management for the areas of deciduous woodland to ensure a diverse (indigenous) species and age structure;
- Consider the use of noise attenuation measures such as native planting to the A11 corridor.

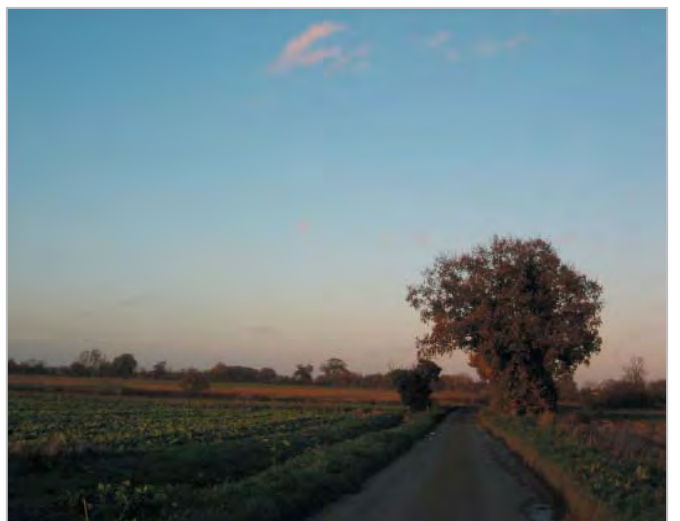
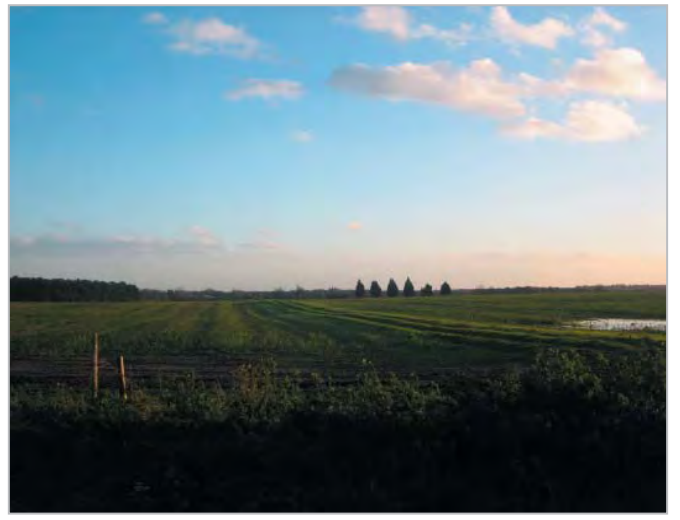
### ***Development Guidelines***

- Conserve the rides within parklands and plantations which provide attractive vistas to historic buildings, including those designated as Historic Parks and Gardens;
- Conserve views to landmark features within the villages, such as church towers;
- Maintain the nucleated character of the few villages, discouraging linear spread along the rural road network;

- Ensure that any new built development reflects the local built vernacular, including use of materials (red brick);
- Maintain the external fabric, appearance and setting of farm buildings and promote the use of local materials.
- Explore opportunities to enhance access for recreation, ensuring that this does not conflict with nature conservation objectives.



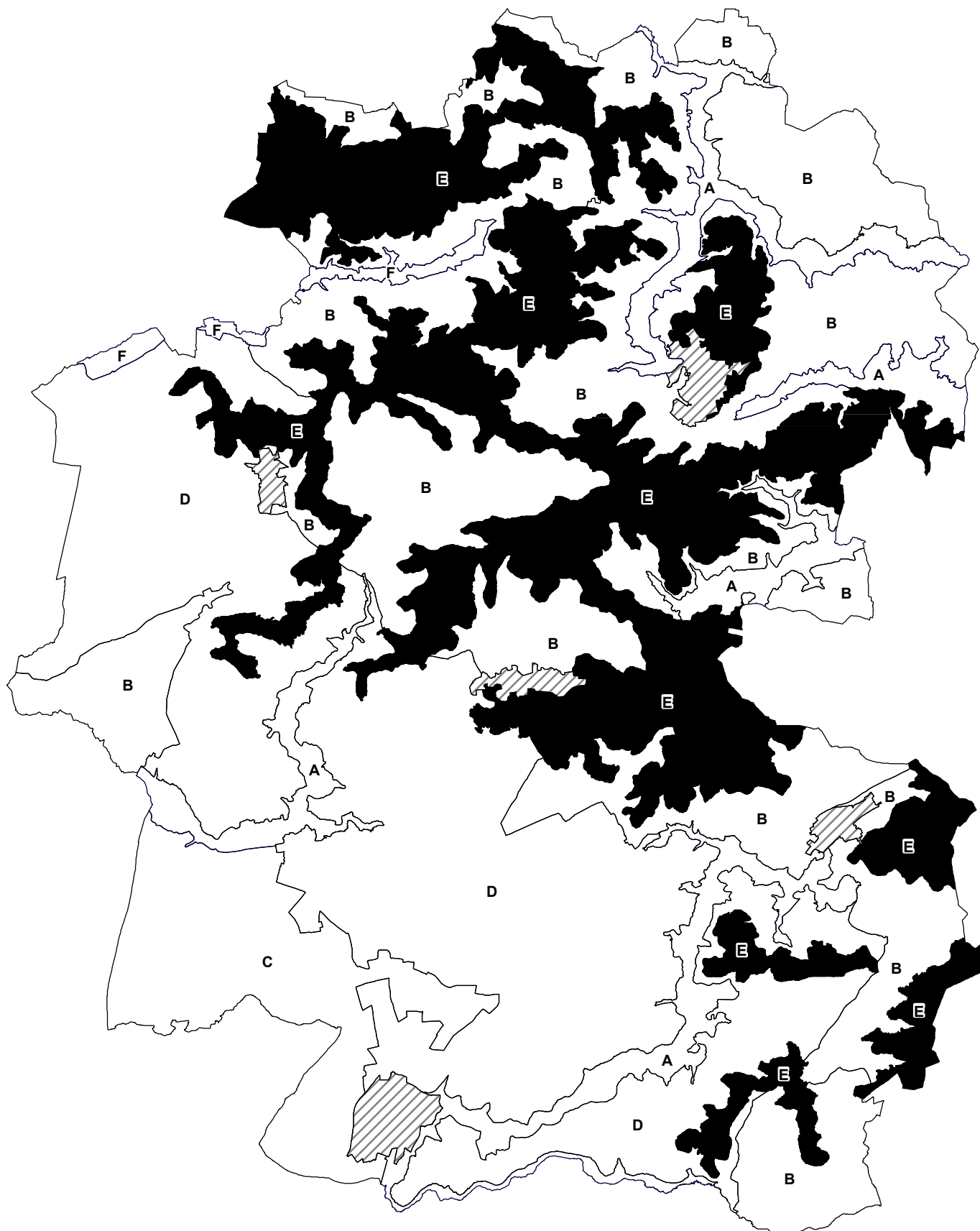






# E. PLATEAU FARMLAND

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## LANDSCAPE TYPE E: PLATEAU FARMLAND

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E1 The Plateau Farmland Landscape Type constitutes a predominantly arable, agricultural landscape of elevated landform (40-90m AOD). Whilst relatively open and large in scale, the landscape is interspersed with well treed field boundary hedgerows and small woodland blocks. The extent of the landscape type is based both on geology and topography.

### Key Characteristics

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

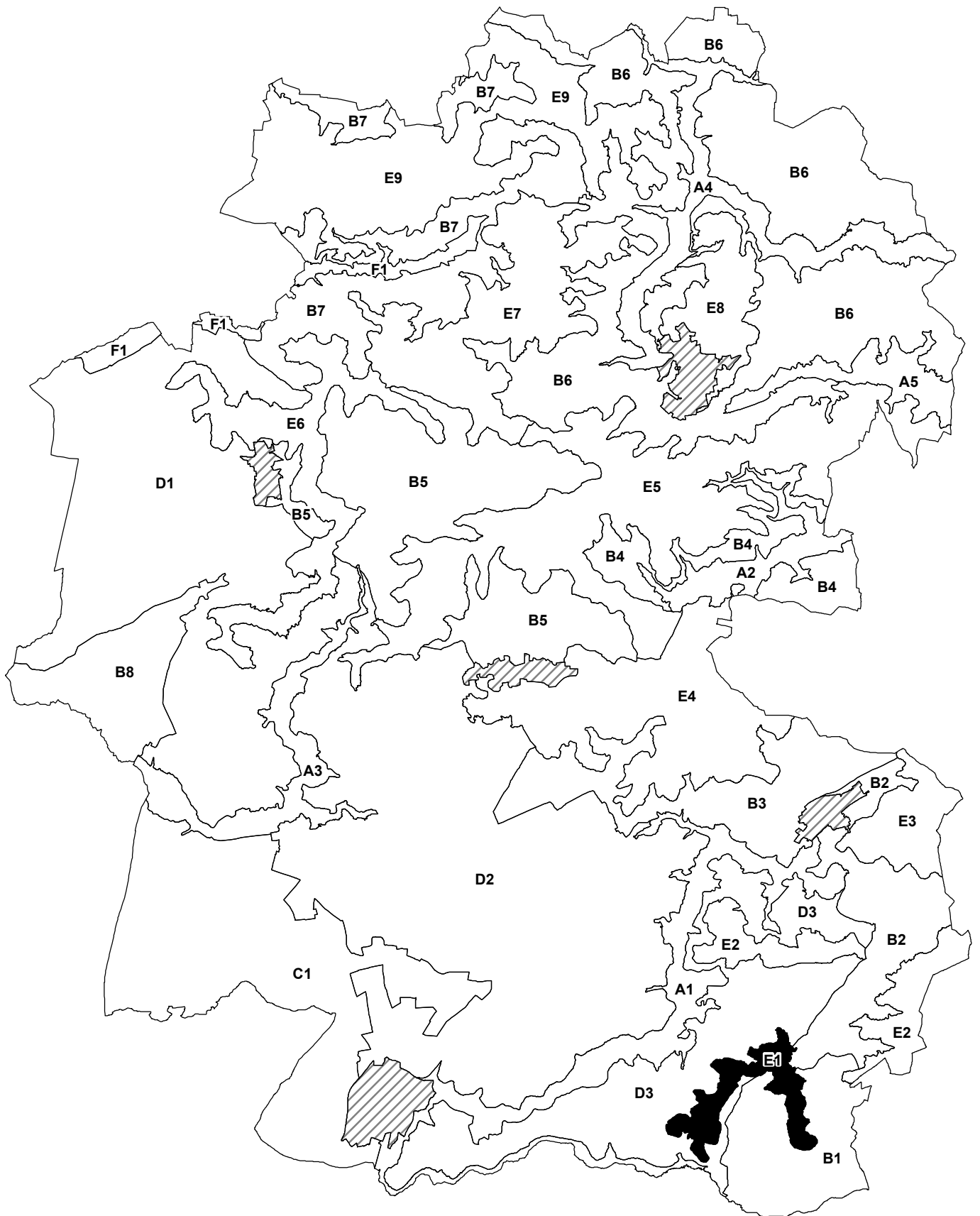
### Landscape Type E: Plateau Farmland

#### Character Area

- E1 Lophams Plateau
- E2 Snetterton Heath Plateau
- E3 Old Buckenham Plateau
- E4 Wayland Plateau
- E5 Central Breckland Plateau
- E6 North Pickenham Plateau
- E7 Beeston Plateau
- E8 Dereham Plateau
- E9 Whissonsett Plateau



# EI: LOPHAMS PLATEAU







# EI: LOPHAMS PLATEAU

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## Location and Boundaries

- EI.1 The character area is located in the south eastern part of the District and is defined primarily by the 50m AOD contour. Although displaying some localised undulation, landform is more consistent than that in the adjoining *Little Ouse Settled tributary farmland* character area. To the north and west the character area is adjoined by the more wooded *Harling Heath* character area.

## Key Characteristics

- The thick, underlying deposits of glacial Lowestoft Till create a narrow, elevated plateau landscape.
- Gently undulating landform defined by the 50m AOD contour.
- Distant though intermittent views are available from within the character area.
- Landcover is predominantly arable with a scattering of small mixed plantation woodlands particularly to the south of the character area to the north of Garboldisham.
- Field pattern is irregular and large in scale, separated by hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees.
- There are a number of round barrows (Scheduled Monuments) on Garboldisham Heath, near to the Devil's Ditch which traverses the western part of the character area.
- Pill boxes within the character area indicate the military history of Breckland.
- Settlement pattern is generally low density, with settlements of essentially linear formation e.g. North Lopham/South Lopham. Settlements are centred around vernacular 17<sup>th</sup> Century and later buildings with a wide variation in built character and style.
- There are some instances of intervisibility with other character areas to the fringes, and the landscape is generally unified in character, being an essentially tamed arable landscape.
- Opportunities for recreation are provided by a number of rights of way, in addition to the access land within the woodlands in the western part of the character area.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- EI.2 Glacial drift deposits of sand and gravel overlay the solid geology, creating a gently undulating landform defined primarily by the 50m AOD contour. The drift deposits

have also influenced the chalky till and glaciofluvial drift soils, in addition to the landuse of arable cultivation.

- EI.3 Arable farmland is the predominant landcover, and many field boundary hedgerows have been eroded or neglected due to agricultural intensification, giving an open, exposed character. There are a number of blocks of mixed plantation woodland in the western half of the character area.
- EI.4 A small area of Breckland Forest SSSI (SPA), which is valued both for the habitat it provides for scarce plant species and for species such as nightjar and woodlark, lies within the north western edge of the character area, at Garboldisham Belt. At the local level, a block of mixed woodland to the west of GUILT Cross is identified as a County Wildlife Site (CWS).
- EI.5 The northern and western parts of the character area fall within the Ecological Network Mapping Project's Core Area, in view of the range of BAP habitats including lowland deciduous woodland and cereal field margins, and due to the Breckland Forest SSSI (SPA), a small part of which lies within the character area.

### **Historic Character**

- EI.6 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has identified a number of historic processes which have influenced the present character of the landscape. These include 20<sup>th</sup> Century Enclosure and associated field boundary loss, and areas of common and heathland.
- EI.7 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk shows the parklands of Garboldisham Hall (partly outside the character area) and areas of woodland (on the site of present day coverts and woodland within access land), in addition to extensive areas of heath at Garboldisham and Kenninghall Heath.
- EI.8 Of these features only the remnant parklands of the former Garboldisham Hall are extant, with the heaths having been enclosed and subsequently absorbed within the agricultural intensification of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- EI.9 Settlement is of a low density and linear pattern as at North Lopham and South Lopham, which is partly outside of the character area. There is some evidence of vernacular building at North Lopham with 17th century thatched buildings, local red brick, render and clay lump, and the dressed stone and flint church of St Nicholas.
- EI.10 The relatively low settlement density, concentrated on the linear villages of North Lopham and South Lopham, is similar to that shown by Faden. Pevsner refers to the Decorated Church of St Nicholas at North Lopham in addition to the range of 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century buildings on 'The Street'. St Andrew's Church at South Lopham is a fine example of a Norman Parish Church.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- EI.11 This is an open arable landscape, which is of a large scale due to its comparatively sparse land cover and field pattern. There is the potential for distant though intermittent views which are partially contained by landform variation. It is essentially

a simple, tamed agricultural landscape of muted colour and smooth texture due to the extensive arable land use.

- EI.12 The low population density and the rural road network which is largely made up of narrow, minor roads, contribute to the tranquil character of the landscape.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- Elevated position and open aspect, which define the sense of place.
- Farm ponds and marl pits refer to historic land uses (stock watering and clay excavation).
- Remnant hedgerow trees indicate post Enclosure land cover pattern prior to agricultural intensification;
- Remnant parkland recalls the former influence of landed estates;
- Sparsely settled character, with settlements of linear formation.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- EI.13 The key visual sensitivities within this character area are primarily the elevated and open aspect, which leads to instances of high intervisibility with adjoining character areas.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

- EI.14 *Lophams Plateau* is essentially an intensively managed and productive arable landscape. As such historic and ecological integrity are both relatively weak, due to the limited land cover and structure, e.g. field boundary hedgerows. The landscape is visually lacking in variety due to the agricultural land use, but is broadly representative of the farmed plateaux within the District.

### **Landscape Change**

#### **Past Change**

- Enclosure of heathland;
- Agricultural intensification and attendant field boundary loss.

#### **Future Change**

- EI.15 Potential future change may arise from the implementation of agri environment schemes and through the enhancement of field boundaries and cereal field margins to meet the biodiversity of objectives of the EcoNet Project and the Norfolk BAP.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall management objective for *Lophams Plateau* should be to enhance the arable landscape in terms of field boundaries and opportunities for biodiversity, in addition to maintaining the rural, tranquil character. Opportunities should be explored to replant field boundary hedgerows and to create new hedgerows to the network of rural lanes, in addition areas of set asides to cereal field margins.

### Guidelines

#### *Landscape Management*

- Explore opportunities for the reinforcement of existing field boundary hedgerows and for the planting of new hedgerows of an appropriate and species rich native mix. With native hedgerow tree planting and appropriate ongoing management this could provide habitat connectivity through a series of wildlife corridors, and enhance the biodiversity value of the character area;
- Opportunities should be explored for the creation of set aside/grassland margins to crop fields, to enhance biodiversity.
- Investigate opportunities for heathland re-creation to reintroduce this historic land cover element and provide habitat creation opportunities.
- Maintain areas of woodland at their current extent to conserve the historically open character of the plateau.
- Conserve the sites of Scheduled Monuments and their settings

#### *Development Considerations*

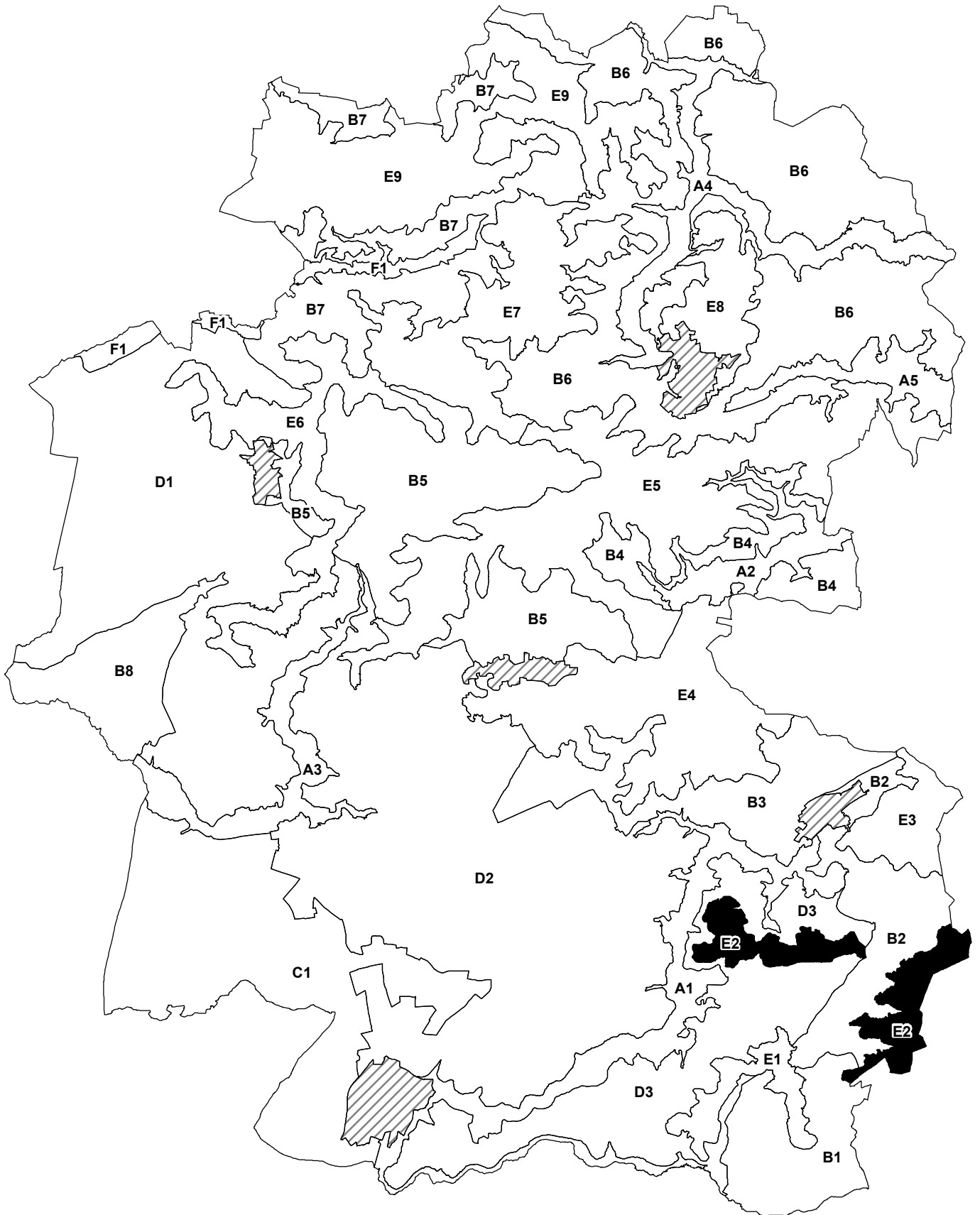
- Conserve linear settlement character and sense of separation between settlements when planning for change, ensuring that open skylines are respected;
- Any new development should respect the established vernacular and local building materials, and be of an appropriate and high quality design;
- Maintain the small scale, rural character of the road network, resisting change due to signage or traffic calming /edge treatments which could have an urbanising influence.
- In planning for future change, consider the scale of potential development and its effects on long views, skylines and intervisibility with surrounding character areas.

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# E2: SNETTERTON HEATH PLATEAU







## E2: SNETTERTON HEATH PLATEAU

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### Location and Boundaries

- E2.1 *Snetterton Heath Plateau* is an elevated landform in the south east of Breckland, forming two separate areas separated by the more low lying topography around Banham. Although the eastern boundary of the character area is formed by the Breckland district boundary, the *Plateau Farmland* landscape type extends eastwards into South Norfolk District.

### Key Characteristics

- A large scale, elevated landscape overlying a thick layer of glacial drift deposits of Lowestoft Till, sand and gravel - sandy drift deposits being dominant to the west.
- Topography ranges from 35-60m AOD making it one of the most consistent plateau landscapes.
- The elevated aspect of the landform provides opportunities for distant views across the character area and into the adjacent *Little Ouse Settled tributary farmland* character area.
- Arable agriculture is the dominant land cover interspersed with woodland blocks of various sizes and composition including carr woodland, small blocks of coniferous planting and larger broadleaf woodland e.g. Warren Plantation and Jubilee Plantation.
- Arable fields are large in scale and bounded by hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Localised areas of wetland and fen exist e.g. east of Banham. These are drained by a geometric pattern of field drains creating a more intricate landscape pattern.
- Numerous County Wildlife Sites (largely woodland) in the west of the character area illustrate its ecological potential.
- The plateau has a long history of human intervention and settlement and this is evident in the tumuli at Leader's Spinney and Round Barrow on Wilby Warren.
- Settlement is very low density and dispersed, taking the form of either scattered hamlets along the rural road network e.g. at the junction of Wilby Road and Quidenham Road, or isolated farms and lodges.
- Snetterton Circuit is a prominent recreational land use in the west of the character area.
- The A11 and the Thetford-Attleborough railway line in the western part of the character area are locally distinctive and divisive features.
- Recreational access is facilitated by a network of rights of way.
- This is a tamed landscape with an essentially peaceful, rural quality.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- E2.2 The elevated landform is composed of thick glacial deposits of Lowestoft Till. These drift deposits create an elevated landform which gently undulates between 35m and 60m A.O.D. The clayey Lowestoft Till informs the Stagnogley soils which predominate within the character area supporting the dominant arable land use.
- E2.3 Localised variation in the underlying geology is found to the west of the area. A thin layer of sand drift deposits overlies the Lowestoft Till which at one point supported extensive areas of heathland, which have now been lost.
- E2.4 The arable fields are characteristically split into large scale arable fields, lined by hedgerow and hedgerow trees. Many hedgerow field boundaries have been eroded or neglected due to agricultural intensification, giving an open, exposed character. The clayey Typical Stagnogley Soils are prone to waterlogging and in places overlain by a drainage system e.g. to the east of Heath Road.
- E2.5 Arable farmland is interspersed with woodland blocks of various sizes and composition including carr woodland, small blocks of coniferous planting and larger broadleaf woodland e.g. Warren Plantation and Jubilee Plantation. Despite the small scale of woodland cover, a number of the woodlands have been designated as County Wildlife Sites due to their ecological importance e.g. Eccles Wood, Warren and Nuttery Plantation. The Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project defines the *Snetterton Heath* landscape as an Enhancement Area for heathland, grassland and woodland creation.

### Historic Character

- E2.6 There are two Scheduled Monuments within the character area, a Round Barrow at Wilby Warren and a tumuli at Leader's Warren, demonstrating that whilst population density is now very low, the character area has a long history of human habitation.
- E2.7 HLC data shows that 20<sup>th</sup> Century enclosure and boundary loss associated with modern farming methods has had a profound impact upon the landscape. The majority of fields are large in scale, with a number of hedgerows having been absorbed due to agricultural intensification. Localised areas of parliamentary enclosure remain, and are characterised by a smaller scale field pattern, fields being notably smaller surrounding settlement e.g. along Heath Road and Long Lane.
- E2.8 With reference to the HLC data, it is apparent that areas of heathland were enclosed during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century and converted to arable farmland. Heathland has also been lost due to woodland planting. Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk also shows that Eccles Wood was formerly Eccles Heath, but was planted with woodland between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- E2.9 Snetterton Race Circuit is a large scale recreational feature in the west of the character area. The racetrack was constructed in 1951, having previously been the site of a US military Air base during World War II.

## Settlement and Built Character

- E2.10 Settlement density is very low, being characterised by scattered hamlets along the rural road network and isolated churches. There are no villages, and housing either takes the form of isolated farm buildings or linear hamlets formed along the rural road network.
- E2.11 A more settled character is apparent in the west, due to the influence of the A11, the railway line and employment development adjacent to the A11. The employment area at Snetterton utilises the former airfield site, and is a prominent landscape feature due to the scale of the buildings.

## Perceptual/Visual

- E2.12 The *Snetterton Heath Plateau* is a large scale arable landscape with varying levels of enclosure due to the variable intactness of the field boundary hedgerows and the presence of localised blocks of woodland cover. The elevated aspect creates opportunities for distant views, and intervisibility with other landscapes, particularly the adjacent *Little Ouse Settled tributary farmland*.
- E2.13 A combination of simple landscape elements, consistent land use and smooth texture creates a landscape of unified character. Due to the low density, nucleated settlement pattern and the narrow rural road network the landscape of the *Snetterton Heath Plateau* is characterised by an essentially peaceful, rural quality, interrupted only occasionally by examples of overt human influence in the case of Snetterton Circuit, Snetterton employment development and the A11.

## EVALUATION

### Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- The remaining network of hedgerow and hedgerow trees;
- The rural road network of unmarked lanes;
- Occasional small blocks of woodland particularly those designated as County Wildlife Sites;
- Pockets of fenland drainage systems;
- Remaining intact parliamentary enclosure fields which provide contrast with the larger 20th century enclosure fields;
- The tumuli at Leader's Spinney and Round Barrow on Wilby Warren as evidence of a long history of human intervention;
- The very low population density which contributes to the tranquil, rural character;
- The largely open skyline allowing clear views across the character area;

- Occasional views across the adjacent Settled tributary farmland character areas.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

E2.14 The key visual sensitivities within this character area are primarily the elevated and open aspect, which leads to instances of intervisibility with adjoining lower lying character areas of the *Little Ouse Settled tributary farmland* and *Thet Settled tributary farmland*.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

E2.15 The landscape is essentially an intensively managed and productive arable landscape and as such biodiversity interest is relatively low, confirmed by the designation as an EcoNet Enhancement Area for heathland, grassland and woodland creation. The consistent land use creates a landscape which is visually simple, but is broadly representative of the farmed plateaux within the District.

### **Landscape Change**

#### ***Past Change***

- Enclosure of heathland;
- Woodland planting on heathland;
- Agricultural intensification and attendant field boundary loss;
- The construction of major transport routes including the A11 and the railway line connecting Attleborough and Thetford;
- Use of the Snetterton Heath as a military air base and subsequently as a race track;
- Introduction of drainage channels to drain areas of fenland.

#### ***Future Change***

E2.16 There is potential for increased woodland planting and reversion of small areas of farmland to heathland through implementation of the EcoNet project's objectives. The Local Plan reveals an allocation for employment development, in addition to enhancement proposals along the A11 corridor.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall management objective for *Snetterton Heath Plateau* should be to conserve the rural, tranquil character. Opportunities should be explored to replant field boundary hedgerows and to create new hedgerows to the network of rural lanes, in addition areas of set asides to cereal field margins. Opportunities should also be sought to create and enhance heathland, woodland and grassland, and to enhance the setting of the A11 corridor.

## **Guidelines**

### ***Landscape Management***

- Explore opportunities for the reinforcement of existing field boundary hedgerows and for the planting of new hedgerows of an appropriate and species rich native mix;
- Seek opportunities for enhancement of woodland, and creation of heathland and grassland to fulfil EcoNet objectives;
- Explore opportunities for the creation of set aside/grassland margins to crop fields, to enhance biodiversity.
- Ensure that any new woodland planting does not detract from the overall open character of the plateau.
- Retain the remaining areas of historic field pattern associated with parliamentary enclosure which create a sense of historical and visual variety;
- Protect archaeological features/ historic sites and their setting, such as the tumuli at Leader's Spinney;
- Maintain the drainage network associated with areas of fenland encouraging improved ecological diversity.

### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve the sense of peace and quiet away from the main roads, and maintain the sparse settlement and road network;
- Consider noise attenuation measures and native planting in enhancing the relationship of the A11 corridor to the landscape;
- Monitor new development ensuring that it fits with the established vernacular and uses local building materials;
- Ensure that new development retains the low density, dispersed character to support the tranquil, rural character;
- Careful attention should be paid to maintain the predominantly open skylines in planning for change, particularly with regard to potential employment development;
- Maintain rural road network and avoid signage or traffic calming measures/edge treatments which could have an urbanising influence.

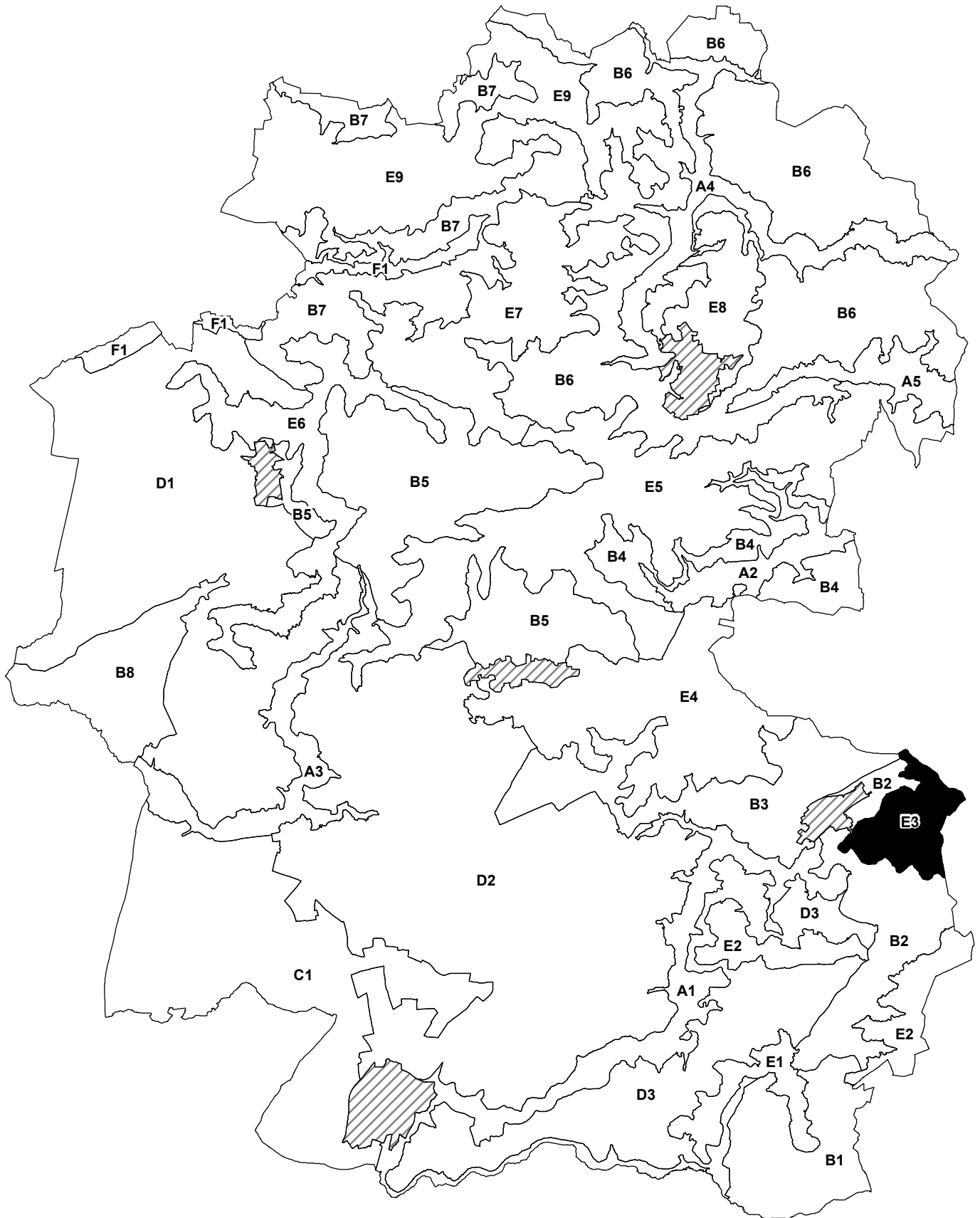








# E3: OLD BUCKENHAM PLATEAU





## E3: OLD BUCKENHAM PLATEAU

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### Location and Boundaries

- E3.1 *Old Buckenham Plateau* is located in the eastern part of Breckland District, east of Attleborough. The character area boundary is drawn along the District boundary, although the landscape type extends eastward into South Norfolk District. The character area boundaries are defined primarily by topography.

### Key Characteristics

- An elevated, gently undulating plateau landscape informed by underlying thick deposits of glacial Lowestoft Till.
- Topography ranges from approximately 45-66m AOD.
- Distant though intermittent views are available to the surrounding Thet Settled tributary farmland and River Thet character areas.
- Landcover is predominantly arable with some blocks and clumps of woodland/coverts, sometimes associated with former marl pits, in addition to a number of plantation blocks.
- Field pattern is irregular and large in scale, fields being bounded by hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees.
- Although commons are referred to in place names e.g. Burgh's Common, common land is generally no longer present in the character area, with the exception of isolated remnants.
- Old Buckenham Airfield, a relic of World War II is located in the south of the character area.
- Settlement pattern is of linear formation and low density, being limited to two main hamlets at Black Carr and Burgh Common and scattered farmsteads related to the narrow rural road network.
- This is a large-scale landscape in terms of its landscape elements and is relatively open in aspect. An essentially tamed arable landscape of unified character.
- An empty, almost vacant landscape is created by the low settlement density and absence of main roads.
- Opportunities for recreation are provided by a network of rights of way, and the open access land within the woodlands in the western part of the character area.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- E3.2 Chalk forms the solid geology of *Old Buckenham Plateau* although the landform is created by the deposition of Lowestoft Formation drift material deposited. The

glacial drift creates a slightly elevated landscape, levelling off to a plateau with the highest point of 66m A.O.D.

- E3.3 The soils are a Typical Stagnogley, which is a clay based soil, and used for arable cultivation, the majority of the character area being separated into large scale arable fields by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Many field boundary hedgerows have been eroded or neglected due to agricultural intensification, giving an open, exposed character. The clayey Typical Stagnogley Soils are prone to waterlogging and are in places overlain by a drainage system e.g. south of Black Carr.
- E3.4 There is very little vegetation within the character area, woodland being limited to very small farmland blocks or coverts, often associated with marl pits and ponds and occasionally with historic carr woodland.
- E3.5 Due to the intensive agricultural land use, there is relatively little habitat and ecological variation. One County Wildlife Site is represented within the landscape character area at West Moor. In view of the intensive arable cultivation and comparatively sparse landcover, the character area is identified as falling within the heath, grassland and wood enhancement area by the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project.
- E3.6 A number of Norfolk BAP priority habitats lie within the character area including cereal field margins.

### **Historic Character**

- E3.7 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is currently at an unpublished stage, although sections of it have been completed for this character area. Within the HLC data available for the character area, 20<sup>th</sup> Century military activity is a key land use, with Old Buckenham Airfield developed in 1942, utilising the open, elevated position. The HLC identifies the surrounding land as predominantly 20<sup>th</sup> century agriculture, which is evident in the large scale arable fields currently visible in the landscape.
- E3.8 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk has identified heathland and common at Burgh Common and a smaller area of heathland to the east, these features now having been largely eroded due Enclosure and later intensive arable cultivation.
- E3.9 A number of halls and estates are located within the character area e.g. Old Hall (identified as a farm adjacent to the now destroyed St Andrew's Hall in Faden's survey) and Besthorpe Hall. The earthworks of Bunn's Bank (Scheduled Monument) are a notable historic feature within the character area.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- E3.10 Settlement is of a low density and linear formation as at Foundry Corner along Buckenham Road. Employment development is apparent at Bunn's Bank. Other settlement displays a range of vernacular building materials including pantile, clay lump and red brick, and includes small hamlets such as Burgh Common and Black Carr, in addition to scattered farmsteads and buildings associated with Halls e.g. the cluster of buildings around Old Hall. However the character area otherwise has a remote and unsettled character.

## **Perceptual/Visual**

E3.11 This is an open landscape, which is of a large scale due to its comparatively sparse land cover and field pattern. The elevated landform allows for occasional distant views into surrounding character areas. It is essentially a simple, tamed agricultural landscape of muted colour and smooth texture due to the arable land use.

The landscape has a peaceful rural character due to the active arable land use, absence of main roads and low settlement density.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

E3.12 The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- The remaining network of hedgerow and hedgerow trees;
- The rural road network of unmarked lanes;
- Occasional small blocks of farm woodland, often associated with coverts or marl pits;
- Areas of historic wetland features such as carr woodland.
- Peaceful rural character.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

E3.13 The key visual sensitivities within this character area are primarily the elevated and open aspect, resulting in intervisibility with adjoining character areas.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

E3.14 The landscape is essentially an intensively managed and productive arable landscape. As such historic and ecological integrity are both relatively low, due to the limited land cover and structure, e.g. field boundary hedgerows. Due to the intensive arable land use the landscape is visually simple but broadly representative of the farmed plateaux within the District.

## **Landscape Change**

### **Past Change**

- Enclosure of heathland and common land;
- Agricultural intensification and attendant field boundary loss.

### **Future Change**

E3.15 Potential future landscape change may arise through implementation of agri-environment schemes and initiatives resulting from the objectives of the Norfolk

BAP, such as enhancement of field boundary hedgerows and cereal field margins. Industrial/employment landuses at Foundry Corner and Bunn's Bank may be subject to future expansion. Future expansion of Attleborough to the south may impact upon the character of the landscape.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall management objective for *Old Buckenham Plateau* should be to conserve the rural, tranquil character. Opportunities should be explored to replant field boundary hedgerows, in addition areas of set asides to cereal field margins to enhance biodiversity and to fulfil the objectives of the Norfolk BAP/EcoNet Project. Opportunities should also be sought to re create heathland and woodland, in accordance with the EcoNet Project's objectives, in addition to enhancing recreational access. Landscape enhancement of the edges of future settlement expansion and employment development should also be undertaken.

### Guidelines

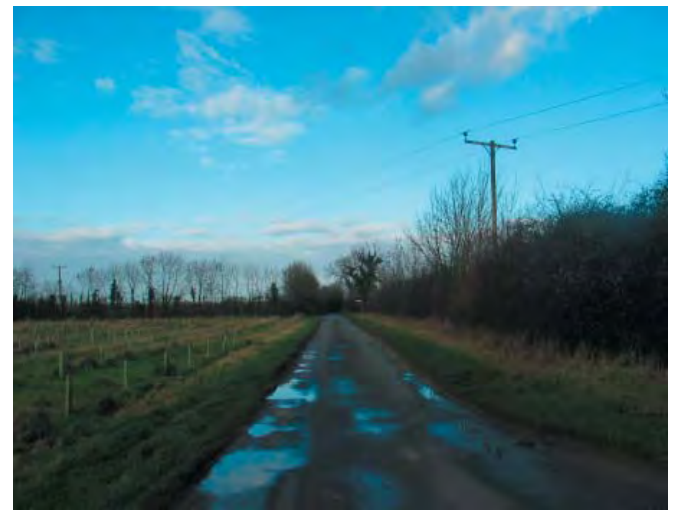
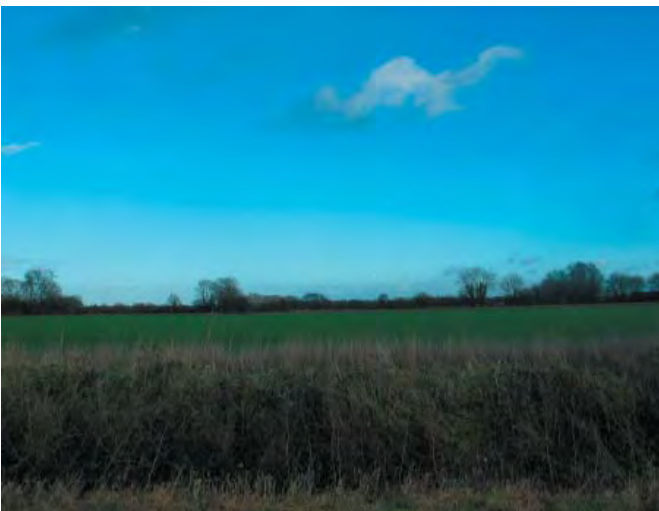
#### *Landscape Management*

- Explore opportunities for the reinforcement of existing field boundary hedgerows and for the planting of new hedgerows of an appropriate and species rich native mix;
- Seek opportunities for enhancing existing woodland, and creation of new areas of heathland and grassland as suggested by the EcoNet Enhancement Area proposals;
- Explore opportunities for the creation of set aside/grassland margins to crop fields, to enhance biodiversity and fulfil the objectives of the EcoNet project and the BAP;
- Ensure that where woodland planting takes place the overall open character of the plateau is maintained.

#### *Development Considerations*

- Monitor new development within the urban fringes of Foundry Corner, Burgh Common and Black Carr ensuring that it fits with the established vernacular and uses an appropriate materials vocabulary;
- Conserve the linear character of settlements and pay careful attention to maintaining the predominantly open skylines when planning for change;
- Maintain small scale rural road network, discouraging signage or traffic calming measures/edge treatments which could have an urbanising influence.
- In planning for future change, consider the scale of potential development and its effects on long views, skylines and intervisibility with surrounding character areas.

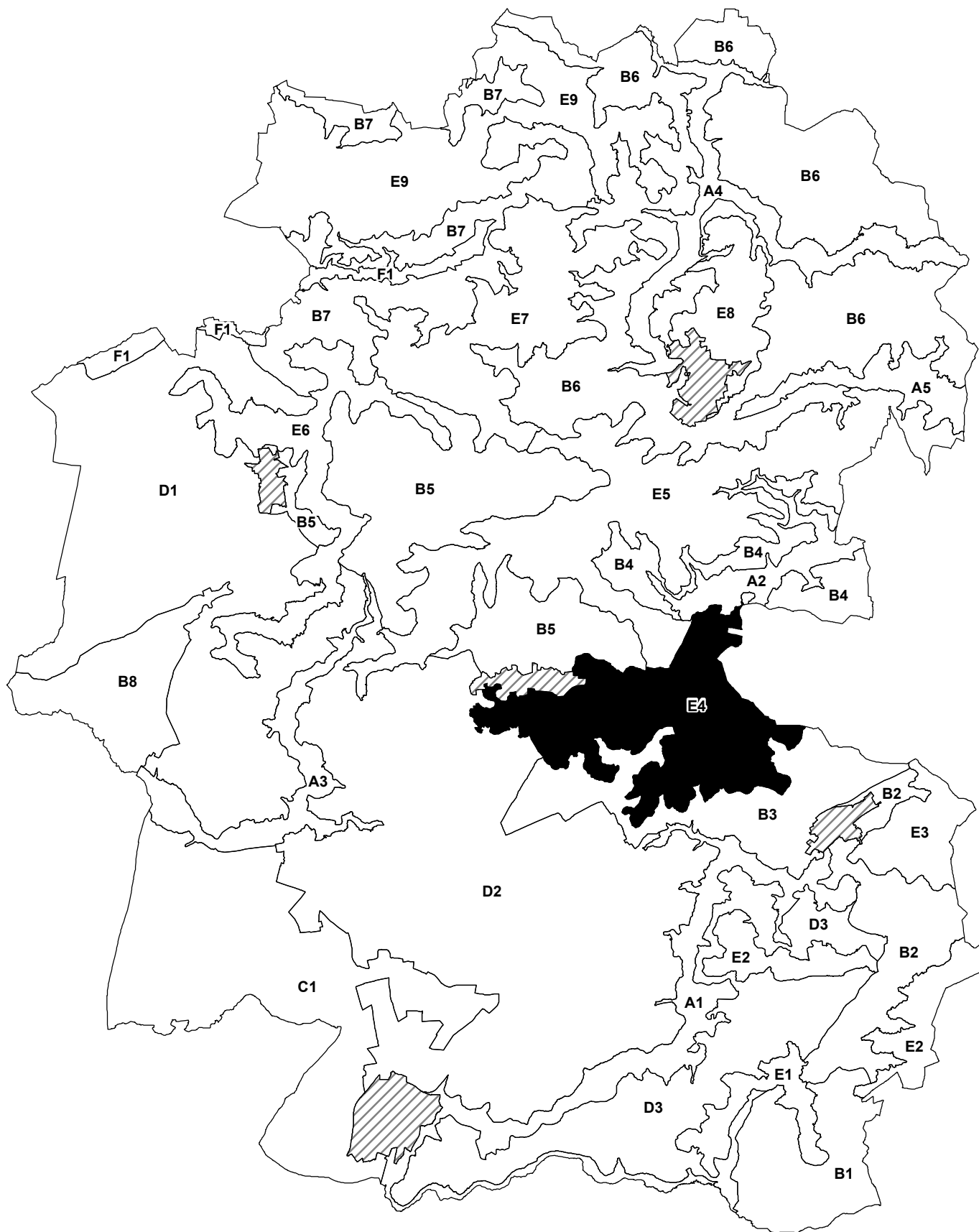
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# E4: WAYLAND PLATEAU





## E4: WAYLAND PLATEAU

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### Location and Boundaries

- E4.1 *Wayland Plateau* is located in the eastern part of the District, to the south and east of Watton, with the landscape type extending beyond the District boundary into the adjoining South Norfolk District. Whilst the character area has a relatively settled character it is distinguished from the adjoining *Blackwater* and *The Settled tributary farmlands* by the more elevated landform which ranges from approximately 40-60m AOD. *Stanta Heath* adjoins the character area to the west.

### Key Characteristics

- A chalk solid geology, overlain with localised glacial drift deposits of sand and gravel and chalky till and glaciofluvial drift soils.
- An elevated plateau landform with contour intervals ranging from 40-60m AOD.
- Opportunities for distant views are provided by the elevated aspect.
- Land cover is predominantly arable farmland, sometimes interspersed with small blocks of woodland or farm coverts, in addition to occasional paddocks.
- Fields are geometric in pattern, varying in scale from small to large and bounded with mixed Enclosure hedgerows, some of which have hedgerow oaks.
- Historic sites include a moated site at Woodrising Hall and the mound and associated moats at Hazel Hurn ancient woodland.
- Blocks of ancient woodland are a distinctive feature, e.g. Wayland Wood to the south of Watton.
- Distinctive features include the former Watton Airfield, Wayland Prison and the dismantled railway line near Watton.
- Low to medium settlement density, with a compact settlement pattern, which includes both linear settlements (e.g. Rocklands) and nucleated settlements (e.g. Great Ellingham/Little Ellingham), associated with the narrow rural road network.
- A landscape of simple elements, but with a textured quality, and of unified character.
- Opportunities for recreation are provided by the fisheries at Lays Farm and Scoulton Mere and Melsop Farm Park, in addition to the network of rights of way.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- E4.2 The character area is created by, thick layers of boulder clay which create an elevated landscape which undulates between 40 and 60m A.O.D. A distinctive

feature of the character area is the consistent, thick layer of clay glacial deposits, there being only very small areas of sandy drift, overlain with heavy clay, argyllic brown earth soils.

- E4.3 The land is intensively farmed and characterised by arable fields of variable sizes delineated by low, mixed hedgerows with hedgerow trees. Arable farming forms a consistent land use which is only occasionally interrupted by smaller scale features such as woodland, common land and paddocks. Goose Common is a small block of common land that is a relic of the formerly extensive network of commons which once covered the elevated *Wayland Plateau*. The arable field network is occasionally interspersed with small woodland blocks on field edges, in addition to the larger block at Wayland Wood SSSI (ancient woodland). The traditionally managed coppice woodland is composed entirely of semi natural stands forming an important habitat for a range of species.
- E4.4 Small scale water features are a characteristic feature of this landscape. Scoulton Mere SSSI is a notable example, including swamp, fen and bog communities that occur on islands in the mere and around the shore. These support a diverse flora including several rare plant species. In addition there are numerous marl pits, drains and tributaries which contribute to the ecological diversity of the character area.
- E4.5 Much of the northern and eastern parts of the character area fall within the Ecological Network Mapping Project's Enhancement Area for woodland, grassland and heathland re-creation, whilst the southern part of the character area is identified as a Core Area. The arable land use and small areas of Ancient Woodland are both identified as priority habitats within the Norfolk BAP.

### **Historic Character**

- E4.6 Whilst the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is currently at an unpublished stage and has only been completed for the south western part of the character area at the time of writing, this has identified a number of historic processes and pressures which have influenced the present character of the landscape. The arable landscape is composed of a mosaic of small and medium sized 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Enclosure and larger 20<sup>th</sup> century Enclosure fields.
- E4.7 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk identifies the presence of extensive areas of common and heathland at Griston and Caston Commons, in addition Scoulton Common and the mere, in addition to a number of areas of woodland at Wayland Wood and Woodrising Wood, together with a number of minor halls/estates on the edges of settlements, such as Woodrising Hall.
- E4.8 Of these elements only the ancient woodlands at Wayland Wood and Woodrising Wood are extant together with the mere and fragments of the heath at Scoulton, with the majority of the rest subsequently lost to Enclosure and later agricultural intensification. A number of Scheduled Monuments do however still indicate the long continuity of settlement on the plateau, such as the moat at Woodrising Hall and the moated site and mound within Hazel Hurn Wood.

## **Settlement and Built Character**

- E4.9 This is a sparsely populated landscape, with a dispersed settlement pattern. Settlement across the character area is generally low to medium density, consisting primarily of compact linear villages associated with the narrow rural road network as at Griston, Northacre and Rockland St Peter. A number of settlements are also of nucleated formation, such as Great and Little Ellingham. Use of traditional building materials of red brick, flint and thatched roofs are a feature of the historic cores of villages, although twentieth century infill and edge development is also apparent. The relatively low level of woodland cover and twentieth century development on village edges creates a visible edge to settlements which can be harsh.

## **Perceptual/Visual**

- E4.10 This is an elevated arable landscape with opportunities for distant, open views although the relatively intact field boundary hedgerows and occasional blocks of farm woodland provide an element of shelter and containment.
- E4.11 In terms of the variety of landscape elements the character area is relatively simple but has a textured quality due to the hedgerows, trees and farm woodlands and localised features of interest such as Scoulton Mere and Heath.
- E4.12 The overriding characteristic is that of a productive and managed tamed agricultural landscape of unified character.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- Localised areas of ancient woodland which indicate historic land cover pattern and are of significance for their biodiversity value;
- The mere at Scoulton, which is a significant seasonal, ground water based wetland habitat;
- Areas of remnant heathland such as at Scoulton refer to the historic land cover pattern prior to Enclosure.
- The intimate character of the historic village cores;
- The large skies and open views across the arable fields;
- The rural character of the network of narrow roads.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- E4.13 The key visual sensitivities within this character area are the views across the arable fields to large, open skylines. The expansive views, relatively low density of woodland cover and consistent landform with only gentle undulation, creates occasional visibility to settlement edges.

## Current State of the Landscape

- E4.14 The landscape is generally in good condition with the majority of individual elements being in good condition. Although the intensive use of the land for arable cultivation has resulted in some boundary loss and deprivation, the character area largely retains an intact visual and functional character and a range of small scale ecologically important features such as tributaries, Scoulton Mere and small blocks of woodland.

## Landscape Change

### Past Change

- Enclosure and later agricultural intensification, with attendant field boundary loss;
- Enclosure of common land;
- Planting of small woodland blocks between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- 20<sup>th</sup> century infill development and extension to village edges;
- The construction of Watton Airfield, and its subsequent closure in 1995;
- The introduction of small pockets of paddocks within the network of arable fields.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall management objective for *Wayland Plateau* should be to conserve existing small scale features such as woodland and common land, whilst maintaining the open, expansive views. The small scale intimate character of the villages should be retained and enhanced. Opportunities should be sought to strengthen the biodiversity of the character area in line with the Norfolk BAP objectives (field margins and ancient woodland) and the principles and guidelines of the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project.

## Guidelines

### Landscape Management

- Explore opportunities for the reinforcement of existing field boundary hedgerows and for the planting of new hedgerows of an appropriate and species rich native mix;
- Seek opportunities for enhancing existing woodland through appropriate arboricultural management and new native woodland planting to sustain the existing level of cover;
- Seek opportunities for the enhancement of the former airfield site, through creation of heathland and species rich grassland, to fulfil BAP/EcoNet targets;
- Explore opportunities for the creation of set aside/grassland margins to crop fields, to enhance biodiversity;

- Ensure that any new woodland planting does not detract from the overall open character of the plateau;
- Conserve the site and setting of historic sites.

### ***Development Considerations***

- Monitor new development within the key settlements of Griston, Rockland Saint Peter and Great and Little Ellingham, ensuring that it fits with the established vernacular and uses local building materials;
- Particular attention should be paid to conserving the historic cores of villages;
- Ensure that the predominantly open visual character is retained in planning for change;
- Development should reflect the linear character of the settlements, and maintain their sense of separation. Careful attention should be paid to maintain the predominantly open skylines;
- Maintain the rural road network and avoid signage or traffic calming measures/edge treatments which could have an urbanising influence;
- In planning for future change, consider the scale of potential development and its effects on long views, skylines and intervisibility with surrounding character areas

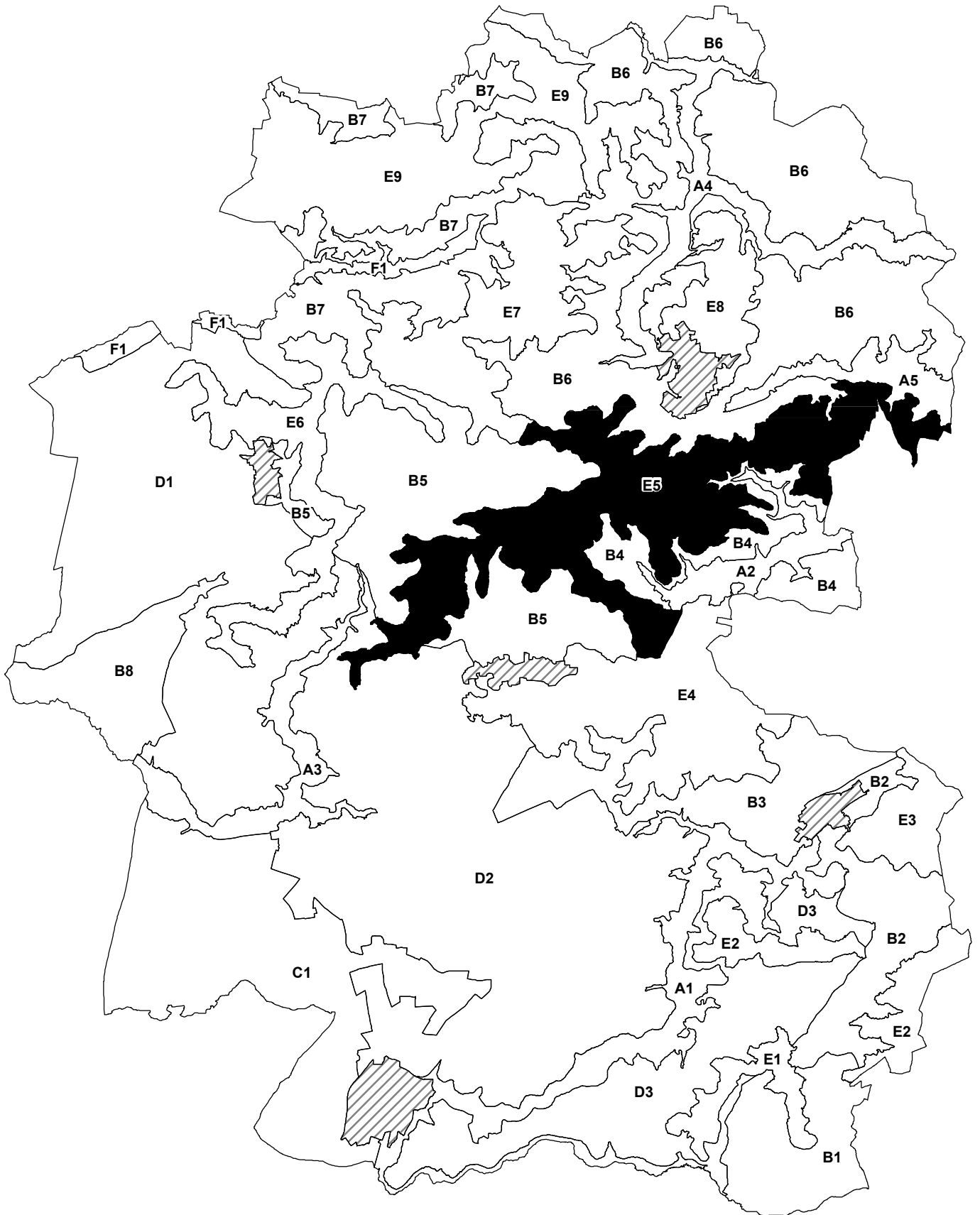








# E5: CENTRAL BRECKLAND PLATEAU





## E5: CENTRAL BRECKLAND PLATEAU

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### Location and Boundaries

- E5.1 This character area lies in the eastern part of Breckland District, occupying the ridge of elevated land between the *Blackwater/Yare* and *Tud Valleys*. Breckland's District Boundary defines the eastern boundary, although the landscape type extends into the neighbouring South Norfolk District. The character area is defined primarily by the 60-70m AOD contour, in addition to a more gently undulating landform than is apparent in the adjacent settled tributary farmland character areas.

### Key Characteristics

- A gently undulating landscape overlying glacial Lowestoft Till drift deposits.
- Topography ranges from 60-70m AOD, and the plateau landform displays localised/gentle undulation.
- Opportunities are provided for distant views, in addition to intervisibility with other character areas, due to the elevated aspect and the exposed, open character, with relatively little boundary vegetation evident. Skylines are often open.
- There is little vegetation of significance other than variable field boundary hedgerows (mixed and thorn dominated) occasional hedgerow / field oaks and small blocks of remnant ancient woodland.
- Land cover is dominated by arable farming, with a generally large scale, geometric field pattern.
- Historic sites across the plateau include the site of old Panworth Hall and the associated lost medieval village, a moated site and fishponds at Shipdham, a Roman enclosure to the north east of Panworth Hall and part of the Devil's Dyke earthworks.
- Settlement is predominantly linear and associated with the network of rural roads traversing the plateau, although some of the larger villages such as Ashill, Mattishall and Shipdham are continuing to grow and become more nucleated.
- A distinctive feature of the plateau is the former RAF Shipdham Airfield, occupying the elevated land to the south east of Shipdham.
- This is an open, sparse arable agricultural landscape, with a muted palette of colours and few structural landscape features.
- Recreational opportunities are afforded by the network of public footpaths in addition to the partially restored Mid Norfolk Railway, a section of which lies within the western part of the character area.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- E5.2 The physical character and gently undulating topography of this landscape are defined primarily by glacial drift deposits of Lowestoft formation, overlain by chalky till and glaciofluvial drift soils, which has in turn influenced the historic calcareous heathland cover and subsequent arable cultivation.
- E5.3 Due to both its elevated aspect and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century agricultural intensification, the landscape has an open, exposed quality. Field pattern is geometric and large in scale, with field boundaries often being defined by gappy, low mixed hedgerows although denser hedgerows and relict historic hedgerow oaks survive in places.
- E5.4 In view of its intensively managed agricultural landuse, the character area is of limited biodiversity value, with the majority of the historic heath and common having been enclosed and subsumed within later agricultural intensification. The great majority of the character area lies within the Ecological Network Mapping Project's Enhancement Area for heathland, grassland and woodland creation in light of the intensive arable cultivation.
- E5.5 A number of small blocks of ancient woodland survive within the character area e.g. at Yaxham Wood, Woodrising Wood and Hazel Hurn, and some of these are designated as County Wildlife Sites (CWS) on account of their habitat value. Ancient woodland, with lowland mixed deciduous woodland, is also identified as a priority habitat within the Norfolk BAP, as are ancient and/or species rich hedgerows.

### Historic Character

- E5.6 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is currently at an unpublished stage, and has not been completed for this character area. However, Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk has identified a number of historic land cover features and land uses. These include area of heath and common land at Shipdham, Mattishall and Tuddenham, in addition to the parklands of Letton Hall (largely outside the character area) and the ruins of Letton Church, in addition to a number of blocks of woodland at Necton Wood, West Bradenham and Whinburgh.
- E5.7 Of these, the heathlands have subsequently been enclosed and absorbed within later arable agricultural intensification. The areas of ancient woodland and the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century Letton Hall (by Sir John Soane) and parklands are extant, although only the foundations of Letton Church remain.
- E5.8 The presence of a number of Scheduled Monuments (SM's) within the character area indicates the long history of settlement, and includes part of the Devil's Ditch, a Roman Enclosure, a number of medieval village sites, notably at Letton and Panworth.

### Settlement and Built Character

- E5.9 There a number of large villages within the character area, often centred around historic brick and flint cores, with much 17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> Century and later work, in addition to a significant amount of later and modern infill and urban edge development.

Settlement pattern was historically linear and based primarily on the rural road network, although it has become increasingly nucleated as at Ashill and Mattishall (partly outside the character area).

- E5.10 The other areas of settlement within the character area are defined primarily by small hamlets and scattered farmsteads associated with the narrow rural road network.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- E5.11 The landscape of the character area is relatively large in scale and open in nature, due to the intensive managed arable land use. As such distant views are afforded across much of the character area, and intervisibility with adjacent landscape character areas is high. The arable land use has also resulted in an essentially tamed agricultural landscape of muted colour. Due to the relatively low density of settlement the landscape is also peaceful in character.
- E5.12 Opportunities for recreation are provided by the network of public footpaths which traverses the character area, in addition to the section of the Mid Norfolk Railway in the western part of the character area.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- Localised historic/veteran oak hedgerow trees provide a link to the early post Enclosure landscape prior to 20<sup>th</sup> Century agricultural intensification;
- Relict blocks of ancient woodland strengthen the ecological diversity of the character area and provide a visual link to the historic landcover pattern;
- Historic/vernacular settlement cores and use of local flint and brick for buildings reinforces the sense of place and historical integrity;
- Peaceful rural character.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- E5.13 Key visual sensitivities include the predominantly open skylines and horizons and the high potential intervisibility with other character areas due to its openness and elevated aspect. Long views are available from the elevated road network, with the potential for light pollution of the night sky from settlements.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

- E5.14 This landscape is essentially a productive, intensively used but poorly managed agricultural landscape, and field boundaries are often in variable condition. In terms of its ecological and historical integrity this is generally weak, although locally strengthened by the presence of early Enclosure hedgerow oaks and discrete areas of ancient woodland.

## Landscape Change

### Past Change

- Agricultural intensification and attendant field boundary loss;
- Loss of field boundaries due to agricultural intensification;
- Enclosure of heaths and commons and subsequent absorption within arable field systems;
- The construction and later closure of RAF Shipdham Airfield.

### Future Change

- E5.15 Potential future landscape change may arise from the implementation of agri environment schemes and the implementation of habitat enhancement proposals as set out in the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project. The airfield may be a potential site for future employment development, as has occurred elsewhere within Breckland. A number of the larger villages within the character area are identified as Local Service Centres (Mattishall, Shipdham and Necton) and may expand, with potential for landscape change to their edges.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall landscape strategy for the *Central Breckland Plateau* should be to conserve the remaining blocks of ancient woodland and veteran hedgerow/field trees. Opportunities should be explored for enhancing the arable landscape.

### Guidelines

#### Landscape Management

- Explore opportunities for new species rich native field boundary hedgerow and farmland tree planting, which, with appropriate management could substantially enhance the landscape and ecological integrity of the character area
- Opportunities for the creation of set aside field margins should be explored to enhance the biodiversity of field boundaries and to provide potential habitat connectivity;
- Conserve the sites and settings of historic sites.

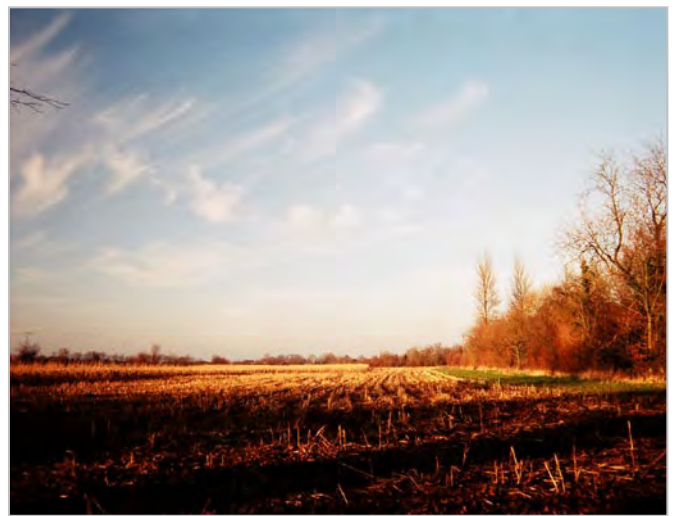
#### Development Considerations

- Monitor urban edge expansion of key settlements, ensuring that any development is appropriate to local historic vernacular and materials;
- This is an open, elevated and exposed landscape, with open fields often forming the horizon, and therefore attention should be paid to this, to long views/intervisibility with surrounding character areas, and to night skies when planning for change;



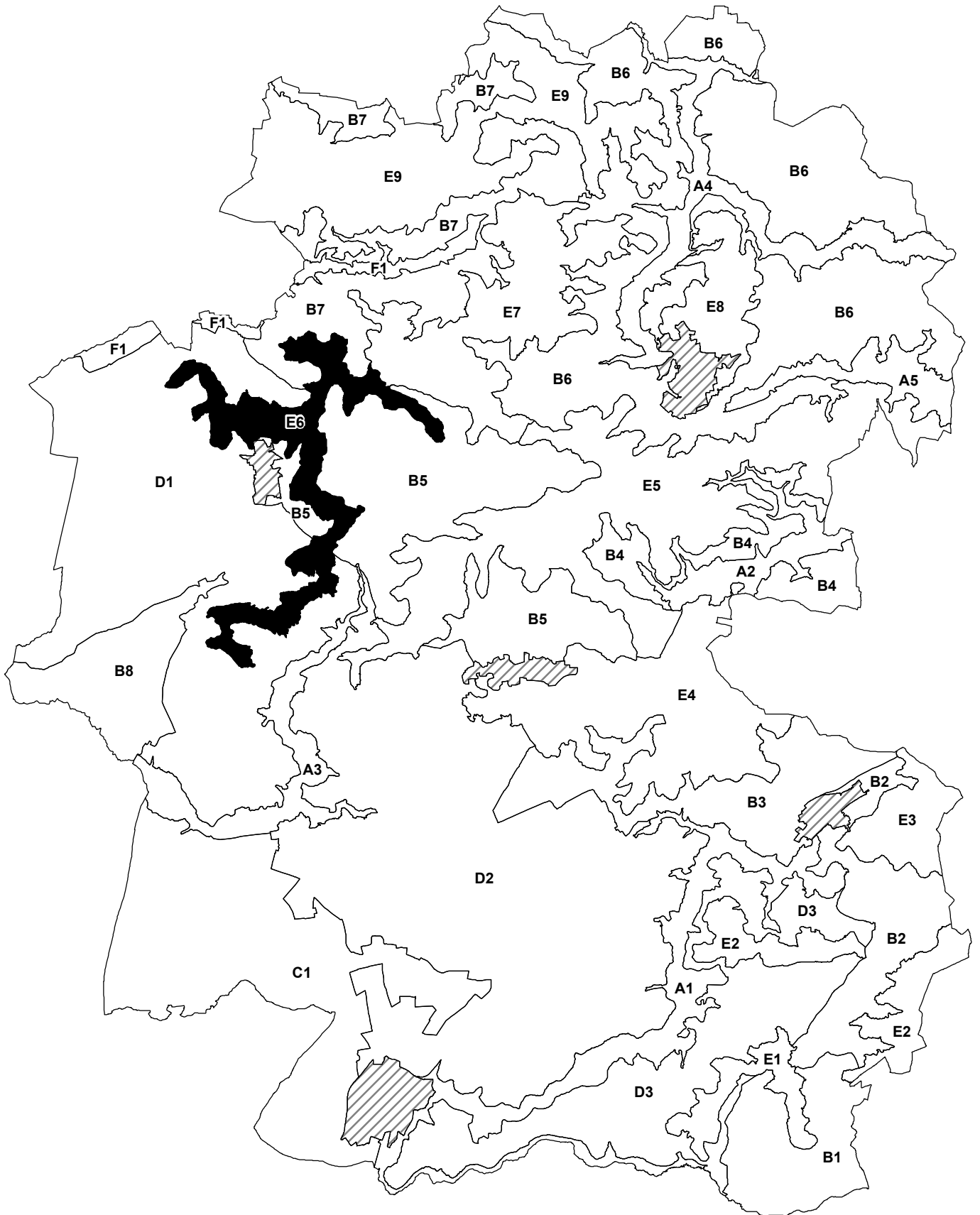
- Maintain existing small scale network of narrow rural roads, discouraging traffic calming measures/signage/lighting that would have an urbanising influence;







# E6: NORTH PICKENHAM PLATEAU





## E6: NORTH PICKENHAM PLATEAU

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### Location and Boundaries

- E6.1 *North Pickenham Plateau* encircles Swaffham from the northwest to the south, creating an elevated, arable plateau backdrop to the settlement. This largely flat, open landscape contrasts with the more undulating *Wissey Settled tributary farmland* and more wooded *Swaffham Heath* character areas that bound it.

### Key Characteristics

- Thick Lowestoft Till glacial deposits underlie the character area creating its elevated position.
- A largely flat landscape defined by 70-75m contours.
- Due to the elevated position affords views across the adjacent Settled tributary farmland and Heathland with Plantation landscape types are possible. Church towers within adjacent character areas are distinctive and prominent in views across the character area.
- The turbines on the ridge directly north of Swaffham are visually prominent vertical structures.
- Predominantly arable agricultural land cover, with some areas of mature mixed plantation woodland in the southern part of the character area.
- Geometric/rectilinear field pattern, of large scale, defined by low, flailed hedges, with more extensively treed hedges to the network of lanes traversing the character area.
- Former marl pits are a feature of the plateau.
- Occasional osier beds are interspersed with the field network.
- Remote character with little evidence of settlement, other than isolated farms and network of semi enclosed and enclosed rural roads and lanes.
- The character area is defined by muted colour and is strongly rural. The landscape of the character area is relatively remote and peaceful, with little movement.
- Runways, disturbed ground and industrial premises associated with the former North Pickenham Airfield are apparent in the southern part of the character area.
- The historic way marked route of the Peddars Way bisects the character area in the east, together with other waymarked routes such as Procession Lane. There is a network of footpaths and bridleways across the character area.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

- E6.2 The Character Area displays broadly consistent, gently undulating topography, and a large scale, rural landscape and land cover pattern.

### Physical/Natural

- E6.3 The physical geology of the character area is defined by glacial drift deposits of clay, silt, gravel and diamicton, which is reflected in the gently undulating, domed landform. Topography is defined by the 70-75 metre AOD contour.
- E6.4 Landform is gently undulating or domed, and defined primarily by the 70-75 metre contour, and land use is predominantly arable agriculture, defined by a large scaled field pattern with low, managed hedgerows often with drainage ditches.
- E6.5 Whilst localised enclosure is provided by the hedged lanes and small scale blocks of oak-ash dominated woodland, in addition to historic scots pine dominated windbreaks the landscape is relatively open and exposed in view of the relatively sparse, large scale field pattern.
- E6.6 The northern part of the character area lies within the one of the Ecological Network Mapping Project's Enhancement Area for heathland, grassland and woodland restoration, whilst the southern part of the character area, including and to the south of North Pickenham Airfield, falls within a Core Area. This is in view of the land designated as Breckland Farmland SSSI, in addition to an area of predominantly coniferous plantation woodland designated as part of Breckland Forest SSSI. Breckland Farmland SSSI, which is also a SPA, is designated as such in view of the fact that it provides a breeding ground for Stone Curlew. Breckland Forest SSSI (SPA) is designated due to the fact that it provides a breeding ground for woodlark and nightjar and supports an important assemblage of nationally rare vascular plant species and a rich invertebrate fauna.

### Historic Character

- E6.7 Whilst the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has only been completed for the southern part of the character area, this has identified a number of historic landscape processes and pressures which have informed the present character of the landscape. These include heathland, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Enclosure and military land uses around North Pickenham Airfield.
- E6.8 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk illustrates that the southern part of the character area was defined by common land and heathland at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, although this has subsequently been absorbed into both the arable field network and the plantations to the south of Swaffham which lie partly within this character area. The area was generally sparsely wooded in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. A more complex network of minor lanes, associated with isolated dwellings, is illustrated on the map, although these have largely been lost or otherwise absorbed into the agricultural landscape, sometimes surviving as tracks along field boundaries.
- E6.9 The landscape of the character area is a post enclosure agricultural landscape, with a predominantly geometric field pattern defined by low, managed mixed hedgerows. This has evolved into a large scale field pattern, due to agricultural intensification.



- E6.10 Localised areas of historic character and landcover survive, as at Grange Farm, with blocks of farm woodland containing veteran trees, together with densely wooded enclosed lanes. There are however few areas of designated Ancient Woodland, with the exception of a small parcel in the north eastern part of the character area.
- E6.11 The line of the former Dereham branch of the Mid Norfolk Railway, built in 1882, lies in cutting, following a north-east to south-west arc across the central part of the character area, and is perceived generally by the presence of scrub vegetation and the remaining road bridges across it.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- E6.12 There is little visual or physical evidence of historic settlement within this plateau landscape and it remains predominantly unsettled today, with occasional isolated farms and associated, relatively large modern farm buildings, notably Grange Farm, and a small, nucleated area of settlement at the cross roads at Edwin Farm, to the northern end of Sporle, which is largely outside the character area. The site of the former medieval village and associated moats of Great Palgrave adjoins the western edge of the character area.
- E6.13 Sporle, whilst lying largely outside the character area, displays some use of local vernacular, with red brick and clay tiles.
- E6.14 The other principal area of development within this character area are the runways and the brick built industrial premises associated with the former RAF North Pickenham Airfield.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- E6.15 Opportunities are created for extensive and panoramic views across the plateau due to the openness of the landscape, and intervisibility with other landscape character areas is high.
- E6.16 The character area as a whole is a generally simple landscape with a muted palette of colours, due to the predominantly arable agricultural land use, although with considerable seasonal variation depending on the crops planted. It is an essentially tamed rural landscape and is generally tranquil. It is remote in character due to its isolated settlement pattern.
- E6.17 In terms of visual unity and perceptual/visual character, this is interrupted, with overhead power lines and pylons apparent, in addition to road noise and light glare from the A47. The wind turbines adjacent to Swaffham are prominent vertical structures in views across the south of this character area.
- E6.18 In terms of use, much of the character area is a productive, working agricultural landscape. Opportunities for recreational access are however provided by a network of rights of way.

## EVALUATION

### Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- E6.19 The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.
- Dense, well treed hedgerows concentrated on the network of rural roads and lanes, in addition to localised enclosed lanes and hedgebanks with veteran trees, which impart an historic character to these parts of the landscape and provide evidence of the former landcover pattern;
  - Mature trees (predominantly oak/ash) within isolated woodland blocks on the plateau are of significant landscape, biodiversity and amenity value;
  - The sparse isolated settlement pattern and associated remote character, which would be compromised by further new development;
  - The gently undulating landform and marl pits/clay ponds which dot the plateau;
  - Localised areas of historic character associated with historic way marked routes such as Peddars Way and Procession Lane, in addition to more intact areas of Enclosure landscape;
  - Presence of occasional osier beds interspersed within the field network providing local variation;
  - Pine wind breaks – outgrown former hedgerows composed of Scots Pine are a locally occurring feature across the plateau and impart a sense of place and historic landcover pattern.

### Visual Sensitivities

- E6.20 The key visual sensitivities of this landscape relate to its elevated position and gently domed plateau landform. The landscape is exposed, due to its scale and comparatively sparse land cover. There is high intervisibility between settlements and between this and other character areas, with church towers forming a prominent element in views. Overhead power lines also form a prominent element in views, as do the wind turbines adjacent to Swaffham and the turbines and mast tower at North Pickenham.

### Current State of the Landscape

- E6.21 The landscape of the character area is that of a working arable agricultural landscape, and as such its visual intactness has been affected by agricultural intensification in the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the associated removal of field boundary hedgerows. In terms of ecology the character area is, as a whole, relatively weak, with the exception of localised woodland blocks and the ancient hedgerows to the lane network. The character area is in a generally good, managed condition.

## Landscape Change

### **Past Change**

E6.22 The primary historic force for change within this character area are as follows:

- Early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century agricultural intensification, with the resultant loss of field boundaries and hedgerows;
- Loss of areas of common/heathland to plantations to the south of Swaffham.
- The creation of the RAF Airfield at North Pickenham in 1943-1944 further disturbed the historic field pattern.
- The turbines on North Pickenham Airfield have had a significant visual impact on the plateau landscape.

### **Future Change**

E6.23 Potential future change may arise from further development of tall structures which could interrupt the open character of the landscape. In addition there may be the potential for expansion of residential /industrial development, e.g. associated with Swaffham or along the A47.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall management objective should be to conserve the peaceful and rural character of the plateau and to support opportunities to recover semi natural habitats such as heathland. Key features that should be conserved include the veteran trees and the historic scots pine shelterbelts. Enhancement opportunities predominantly relate to succession planting of new hedgerow trees and reinforcement of field boundary hedgerows, which, with appropriate landscape management, would improve the integrity of the landscape and strengthen its character. There are also opportunities to restore elements that have been lost such as areas of heathland.

### **Guidelines**

#### **Landscape Management**

- Conserve and enhance existing network of hedgerows and mature/over mature hedgerow trees, with appropriate additional and new native planting to ensure continuity of existing tree cover where it exists;
- Create new areas of set asides to field boundaries, to enhance biodiversity of cereal field margins, subject to the provisions of agri-environment schemes;
- Consider the creation of new areas of broadleaf woodland to reinforce existing farm woodlands, providing continuity of tree cover and habitat connectivity;
- Where possible, create new areas of heathland to satisfy the requirements of the EcoNet Project, by restoring some areas of farmland or plantation to this landscape type, when plantations have reached the end of their productive life;

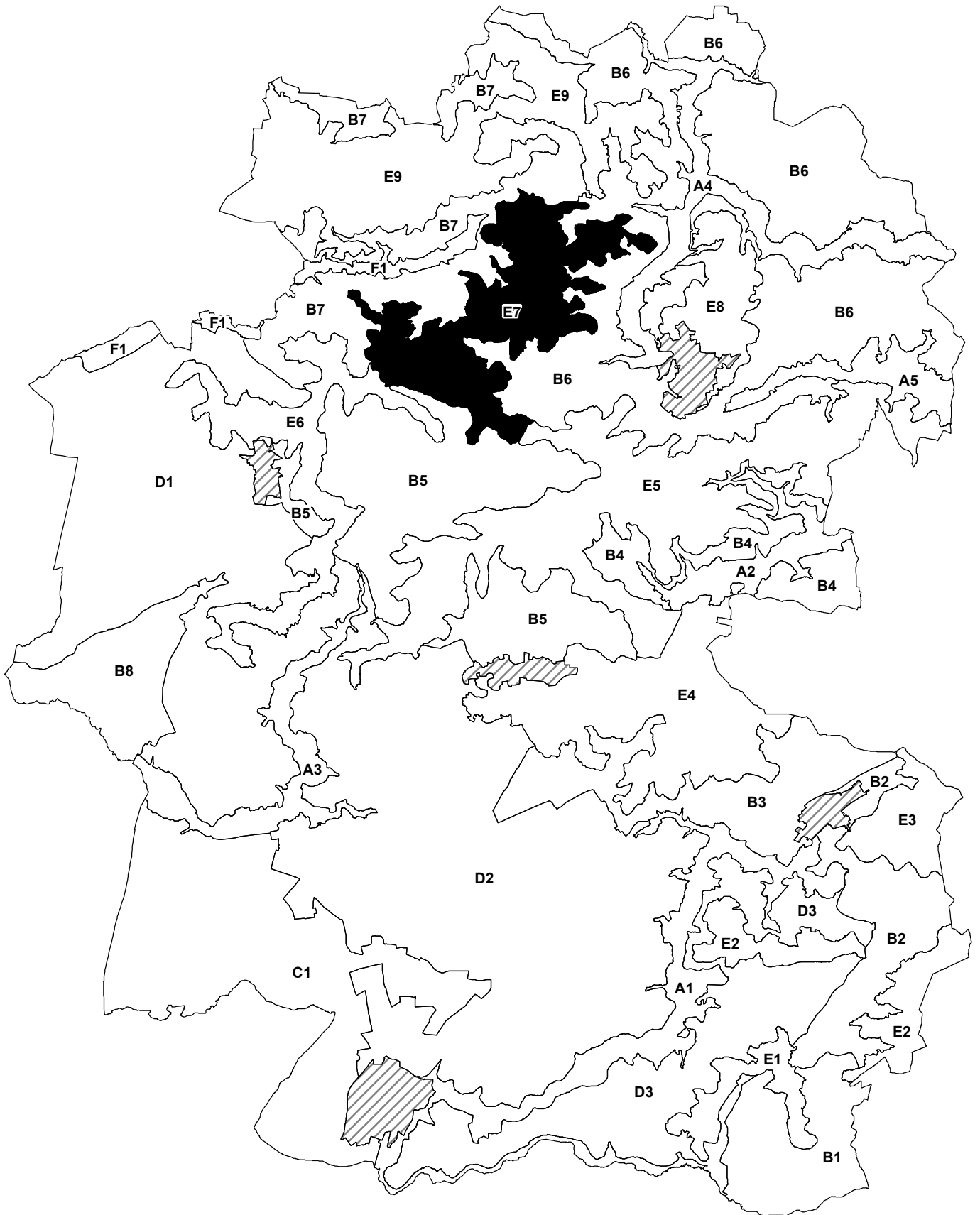
### ***Development Considerations***

- Maintain the historically sparse development pattern and unsettled character of the plateau;
- Monitor the expansion of the few areas of settlement, to conserve individual identity and prevent gradual urban sprawl;
- Avoid the use of bunding and dense woodland screen planting, which would be uncharacteristic elements within this landscape, in proposals for screening development;
- Maintain characteristic dark night skies and consider appropriate lighting requirements for industrial premises within the area;
- Consider the effects of further tall structures on the remote character and simple uninterrupted views;
- In planning for future change, consider the scale of potential development and its effects on long views, skylines and intervisibility with surrounding character areas;
- Retain the rural character of narrow lanes and resist traffic pressures for road widening schemes/traffic calming measures, in addition to maintaining current level of low key road signage.





# E7: BEESTON PLATEAU







## E7: BEESTON PLATEAU

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### Location and Boundaries

- E7.1 The character area is located in the north western part of the District, forming part of the elevated plateau that is distinguished from other arable plateau character areas by a network of small villages. Other less settled sections of plateau farmland which form part of the same ridge of glacial till informed plateau, and the lower lying and more undulating *Wissey Settled tributary farmland* character area form the character area boundaries, with the *Nar Valley* close to the western boundary.

### Key Characteristics

- Thick deposits of glacial till underlie the character area, informing its elevated position overlooking the adjacent *Wissey Settled tributary farmland* character areas.
- A gently undulating topography ranges from 60-95m AOD making this one of the most elevated character areas within Breckland.
- There is the potential for distant views due to the elevated aspect although these are often framed due to relict historic vegetation, field boundary hedgerows, and hedgerow enclosed lanes.
- Landcover pattern is predominantly arable, although there are frequent blocks of mixed oak and ash dominated woodland.
- Mature woodland blocks, including areas of Ancient Woodland at Horse Wood (Mileham) and Honeypot Wood (Wendling) lend a sense of historical integrity to the character area.
- Field pattern is regular and medium-large in scale, often defined by mixed hedgerows with hedgerow trees. Field boundary ditches are also apparent.
- A number of historic sites, associated with the long history of settlement on the plateau, include the earthworks of Mileham Castle, the deserted medieval village at Little Bittering and the moated site of Longham Old Hall.
- Ponds are a feature e.g. at Bittering, representing past sand and gravel extraction.
- Areas of settlement are centred on cross roads (Beeston) or key road junctions, and are often linear but becoming increasingly nucleated as at Beeston.
- The airfield to the south west of Longham Hall is a locally distinctive feature.
- A network of rural roads lined by mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees connects the villages, creating an enclosed and rural character.
- Opportunities for recreation are afforded by the fisheries at the deserted railway line near to Little Fransham, in addition to a number of way marked routes across the character area, including the *Nar Valley Way*.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- E7.2 Glacial till deposits of Lowestoft formation overlay the chalk solid geology. The distinctive east-west watershed is reflected in the soils, which comprise chalky till and glacio fluvial drift to the western/central part of the character and chalky till and glacio fluvial drift to the east.
- E7.3 Landform is gently undulating and increasingly domed in the eastern part of the character area. Topography is defined by the 60-70m AOD contour.
- E7.4 The underlying geology has informed not only the undulating/domed landform but also the current intensive arable agricultural land use. The presence of clay deposits is reflected in the historic woodland and hedgerow vegetation which remains, with species including oak, field maple and ash.
- E7.5 Whilst none of the character area is subject to statutory designations for nature conservation or scientific interest, the local value of a number of the remaining areas of broadleaf ancient woodland is recognised through their designation as County Wildlife Site (CWS), as at Bakers Wood. Ancient Woodland is recognised, with Lowland Broadleaf Woodland, as a priority habitat within the Norfolk BAP. A number of the older Enclosure field boundary hedgerows and those associated with the network of rural lanes display a range of native species and are likely to be relatively species rich in terms of flora and fauna, in addition to imparting an element of historic character.
- E7.6 In view of the intensive arable cultivation, the entire character area falls within one of the Ecological Network Mapping Project's Enhancement Areas for woodland, grassland and heathland re-creation.

### Historic Character

- E7.7 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is currently at an unpublished stage and has not been carried out for this character area. However, reference to Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk indicates a number of historic landcover elements, in particular a number of areas of common and heath, notably at Beeston Common and Longham Common, in addition to village greens with ponds as at Bradmore, and a windmill at Beeston Common. A number of minor landed estates are also shown, notably at Curd's Hall (Cad's Hall) and Dunham Hall.
- E7.8 Of these, the heaths and commons have large been lost to Enclosure and the subsequent 20<sup>th</sup> Century agricultural intensification. A number of elements of historic built character survive, notably the tight, nucleated historic settlement pattern which is related to the network of narrow rural roads and lanes. Settlements are generally centred on manor houses and prominent medieval parish churches which range from late Anglo Saxon to Decorated 14<sup>th</sup> Century. A number of manor houses and halls and associated parklands still impart fragments of a designed/planned character on localised parts of the landscape, and former parklands are apparent, particularly with the obelisk and woodland belts associated with the now demolished Curds Hall at Little Fransham.

- E7.9 The continuity of settlement is reflected in a number of Scheduled Monuments within the character area, including the moated site of Longham Old Hall, Mileham Castle and the deserted medieval village and manorial site at Little Bittering. More recently the elevated aspect of the plateau has lent itself to the siting of an airfield (Wendling Airfield) to the south west of Longham Hall.
- E7.10 Due to the drift geology the character area has in the past been exploited for mineral extraction, notably at Bittering, where a series of pools are the legacy of this activity.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- E7.11 The settlement pattern is low-medium density and comprises a number of linear and nucleated villages such as Beeston, Mileham, the Dunhams and the Franshams. Historically, settlements within the character area display a range of vernacular building materials including local red brick, clay ridged roof tiles and whole and knapped flint, particularly to gable ends. Churches are frequently constructed of flint and dressed stone or otherwise display lime plaster to their elevations. Broad, squat church towers are frequently apparent.
- E7.12 Later and modern infill, particularly single storey dwellings, is evident to the periphery of the settlements, in addition to wooded settlement edges. The character area is dissected by the A47 and the former railway line.

### **Perceptual/Visual**

- E7.13 This is a landscape of relatively enclosed character, in spite of the arable land use. Lanes are often enclosed by dense mixed hedgerows and areas of ancient woodland and blocks of farm woodland impart a sense of the historic landscape character.
- E7.14 The landscape has a relatively muted colour palette in view of the arable land use, and has a peaceful rural quality, in spite of the settled character. This is due primarily to the fact that the settlement pattern is small in scale and of low-medium density, and the road network essentially defined by narrow rural lanes.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- Dense, mixed and well treed hedgerows in places, which refer to the historic landcover pattern and the early post Enclosure landscape.
- Areas of ancient woodland and veteran trees in field covers indicate historic landcover, as do localised areas of enclosed lanes, in addition to enhancing biodiversity interest.

## Visual Sensitivities

- E7.15 The key visual sensitivities within this character area are the elevated, domed plateau landform, and the availability of distant, framed views out of the character area from localised points.

## Current State of the Landscape

- E7.16 The landscape is essentially a well managed, functional arable agricultural landscape, with a reasonably intact Enclosure field boundary hedgerow system in addition to localised farm coverts and areas of ancient woodland. The landscape and historic integrity has been partially eroded by 20<sup>th</sup> Century agricultural intensification. Ecological integrity is generally relatively weak in view of the arable land use and the limited variety of habitats, although there are localised exceptions due to species rich hedgerows, blocks of ancient woodland and enclosed/green lanes.

## Landscape Change

### Past Change

- Loss of field boundaries due to agricultural intensification
- Enclosure of heaths and commons and subsequent absorption within arable field systems
- Land drainage schemes and associated ditched field boundaries.
- Localised areas of mineral extraction.

### Future Change

- E7.17 Potential future landscape change may arise through the implementation of agri-environment schemes and ongoing after use design of mineral extraction sites. The former airfield near Longham Hall may create the potential for future development, with attendant pressure on the rural road network.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The overall management objective should be to conserve and enhance the existing Enclosure field boundary pattern, and area of broadleaf ancient woodland, farm coverts and other over mature tree cover. Consideration should also be given to new native tree planting and woodland creation, in addition to set asides to cereal field margins (a BAP priority habitat). Opportunities should be also explored for the sensitive restoration/after use design of mineral extraction sites.

## Guidelines

### Landscape Management

- Conserve and enhance existing field boundary hedgerow network through appropriate management and where appropriate succession planting to reinforce and enhance and to ensure continuity of vegetation cover;

- Seek to enhance existing and ancient woodlands where appropriate through active management, including pollarding and coppicing regimes to prolong their life;
- Explore opportunities for new hedgerows and farm woodland creation to fulfil the objectives of the EcoNet Project;
- Explore opportunities for set asides and long grassland/wildflower margins to cereal field boundaries (BAP Priority Habitat);
- Conserve sites and settings of historic sites;
- Ensure appropriate and sensitive after use design and landscape management of mineral extraction sites.

### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve the elements of historic vernacular in terms of building materials and styles within the settlements, ensuring that any new development reflects these;
- Ensure that views to locally prominent built elements, such as church towers, are conserved when planning for change;
- In planning for future change, consider the scale of potential development and its effects on long views, skylines and intervisibility with surrounding character areas;
- Monitor expansion of existing settlements, ensuring that wooded settlement edges are conserved, avoiding the introduction of species/features which could have an urbanising influence;
- Maintain small scale, narrow rural road network and low key signage, resist traffic calming/signage pressures, which could alter this character.

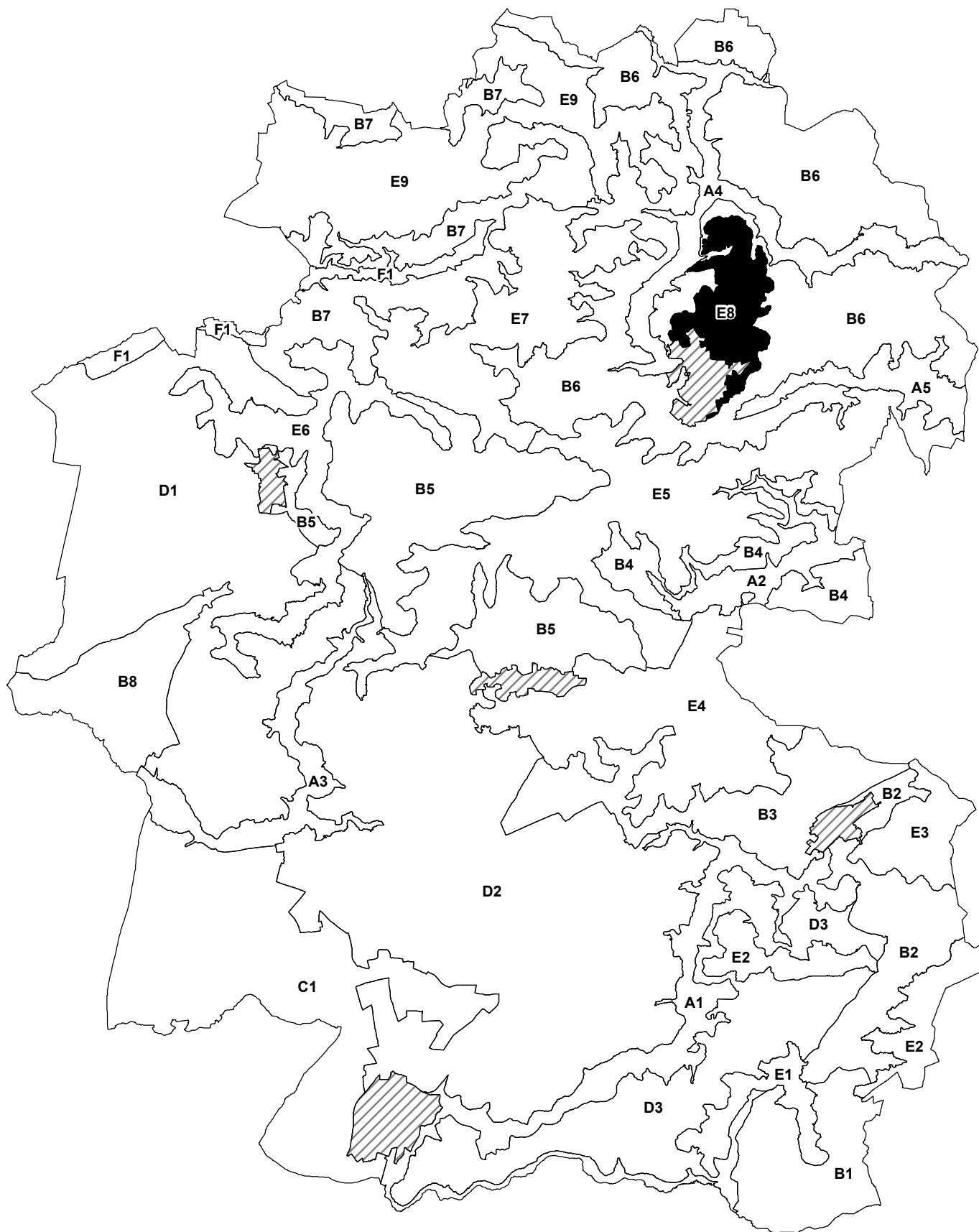








# E8: DEREHAM PLATEAU





## E8: DEREHAM PLATEAU

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### Location and Boundaries

- E8.1 *Dereham Plateau* occupies the elevated land surrounding Dereham in the northern part of Breckland District, being bounded by the adjacent *Wissey Settled tributary farmland* and *River Wissey* character areas.

### Key Characteristics

- An elevated landscape of predominantly flat arable farmland with localised gentle undulations overlying glacial drift deposits of sand and gravel.
- Topography ranges from 45-60m A.O.D.
- Due to the elevated aspect and the landform, there are opportunities for distant views to the Wensum Valley.
- Arable agriculture is the dominant land cover. This is interspersed by only occasional small scale farm coverts and blocks of mixed plantations to the edges of the character area e.g. Quebec Wood.
- The plateau is characterised by medium-large scale, irregular arable fields, with boundaries defined both by mixed Enclosure hedgerows and hedgerow trees, some being veteran trees.
- The elevated landform has historically been exploited for military uses (three pickett-Hamilton Forts at Swanton Morley), and Swanton Morley Airfield remains in use as a military base today.
- Commons were once widespread across the Dereham plateau but due to later Enclosure are now limited to a small area at Neatherd Common on the edge of Dereham.
- Population density is low, settlement being limited to the linear village of Swanton Morley and very occasional farmsteads scattered along the rural roads which are occasionally sunken and bounded by hedgerow lined banks.
- A simple, untextured character with little variation to the flat, arable landscape.
- Access to the character area is via the rural road network, with the railway line now only used for recreational purposes.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- E8.2 A gently undulating and elevated landform results from drift deposits of boulder clay, sand and gravel which overlay the chalk solid geology, with topography ranging from 40-50 metres AOD.

- E8.3 Although soils are heavy and clayey, the dominant land use is arable agriculture. Fields are small to medium sized and separated by hedgerows, hedgerow trees and ditches to aid drainage of the heavy soils. Very occasional mixed species woodland blocks and farm coverts are interspersed with the arable fields e.g. Hoe Wood associated with Hoe Hall. The margins of the arable fields are an important habitat and are recognised as a Norfolk BAP Priority Habitat.
- E8.4 The drift deposits of sand and gravel have resulted in localised exploitation for mineral extraction, notably in the north western part of the character area.
- E8.5 In view of the area's intensive arable cultivation and the absence of sites designated for nature conservation interest, the character area falls within the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project's Enhancement Area for heathland, woodland and grassland restoration.

### **Historic Character**

- E8.6 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is currently at an unpublished stage and has not been completed for this character area at the time of writing. However other sources suggest a long and varied history of human intervention.
- E8.7 The Veteran Trees survey demonstrates a high concentration of veteran trees, often associated with hedgerow boundaries, particularly within the south of the character area immediately adjacent to Dereham. Mature and veteran trees are often associated with hedgerow boundaries.
- E8.8 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk illustrates a number of historic elements, notably Quebec Hall and Hoe Hall. Other estate features are also apparent e.g. the obelisk associated with Quebec House. From Faden's Map it is apparent that common land was formerly extensive (e.g. Northill Common and Lettice Moor Common). Common land has largely been lost to subsequent Enclosure, although a large area of Open Access land remains at Neatherd Moor.
- E8.9 The elevated landform has historically been exploited for military uses (three pickett-Hamilton Forts at Swanton Morley), and Swanton Morley Airfield remains a military base today.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- E8.10 Settlement density is low, with a single village at Swanton Morley and scattered farms along the rural road network of occasionally sunken lanes. Swanton Morley was originally a linear settlement, but infill and sprawl has created a nucleated urban form. Buildings are a mixture of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century red brick and flint with later 20<sup>th</sup> century additions being constructed from brick with suburbanising features such as paved driveways and non-native planting. Bungalows are a feature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century infill development.
- E8.11 The settlement edge of Swanton Morley is abrupt due to the modern settlement expansion and the comparatively low level of woodland cover.

## **Perceptual/Visual**

- E8.12 The *Dereham Plateau* is a largely flat, medium to large scale arable landscape, occasionally interspersed with farmsteads or small woodland blocks. This facilitates long views of open skies. However, the occasionally sunken lanes lined by hedgerow provides a localised sense of enclosure and containment. The mature hedgerow trees contribute to a sense of historical continuity and character, which is reinforced by views across the parkland of Hoe Hall.
- E8.13 The gently undulating landscape affords long-range views across both the character area and into the adjacent *River Wensum* and *Wensum Settled tributary farmland*. Views show very little human activity, strengthening the sense of a tranquil, near vacant landscape.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

The following are judged to be the key inherent landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.

- Mature (occasionally veteran) hedgerow trees;
- Intact and continuous hedgerow boundaries to the small and medium sized arable fields;
- Ditches which form occasional field boundaries and an opportunity for enhancing ecological diversity;
- The parkland setting to Hoe Hall;
- The network of rural roads crossing the plateau including occasionally sunken lanes;

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- E8.14 The key visual sensitivities within this character area are the large, open skies which are only occasionally interrupted by isolated farmsteads, small woodland blocks or a view of an abrupt urban edge of Swanton Morley and Dereham.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

- E8.15 This is a managed arable landscape, with the principal elements such as hedgerow lined arable fields, drainage ditches and sunken rural roads generally in good condition. Mature and veteran hedgerow trees have been retained and create a mature character. Expansion of Swanton Morley during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has created an occasionally abrupt and un-sympathetic urban edge which detracts from the essentially arable landscape.

## **Landscape Change**

### **Past Change**

- Enclosure of common land;

- Agricultural intensification and attendant field boundary loss;
- Introduction of drainage channels to drain the arable fields;
- The construction of Swanton Morley Airfield;
- Infilling and expansion of Swanton Morley;

### ***Future Change***

- E8.16 The Local Plan shows sites with planning permission for residential development within Swanton Morley, demonstrating potential further expansion and infill. Potential future development may occur on Swanton Morley Airfield.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall management objective should be to conserve and maintain the rural, tranquil character. Opportunities should be explored to replant field boundary hedgerows and to create new hedgerows to the network of rural lanes, in addition areas of set asides to cereal field margins. Enhancement of woodland, and heathland re-creation, fulfilling the objectives of the Ecological Network Mapping Project, should also be explored.

### **Guidelines**

#### ***Landscape Management***

- Maintain, improve and restore the biodiversity of the field boundaries through appropriate management/ set asides;
- Ensure that an appropriate programme of arboricultural management is implemented to conserve the remaining veteran hedgerow trees and to prolong their life, whilst exploring opportunities for new native hedgerow tree planting.
- Seek opportunities for enhancing woodland, heathland and grassland to meet the objectives of the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project. Consider such opportunities as part of the sensitive after use design of mineral extraction sites;
- Ensure that any new woodland planting does not detract from the overall open character of the plateau.

#### ***Development Considerations***

- Monitor new development on the edges of Swanton Morley and Dereham ensuring that it fits with the established vernacular and uses local building materials;
- Seek opportunities to create an integrated and permeable urban edge to the settlement of Swanton Morley;
- Ensure that the rural character of the sunken lanes is maintained and does not become cluttered by lighting, signage or road markings;

- Careful attention should be paid to maintain the predominantly open skylines when planning for change;
- In planning for future change, consider the scale of potential development and its effects on long views, skylines and intervisibility with surrounding character areas.

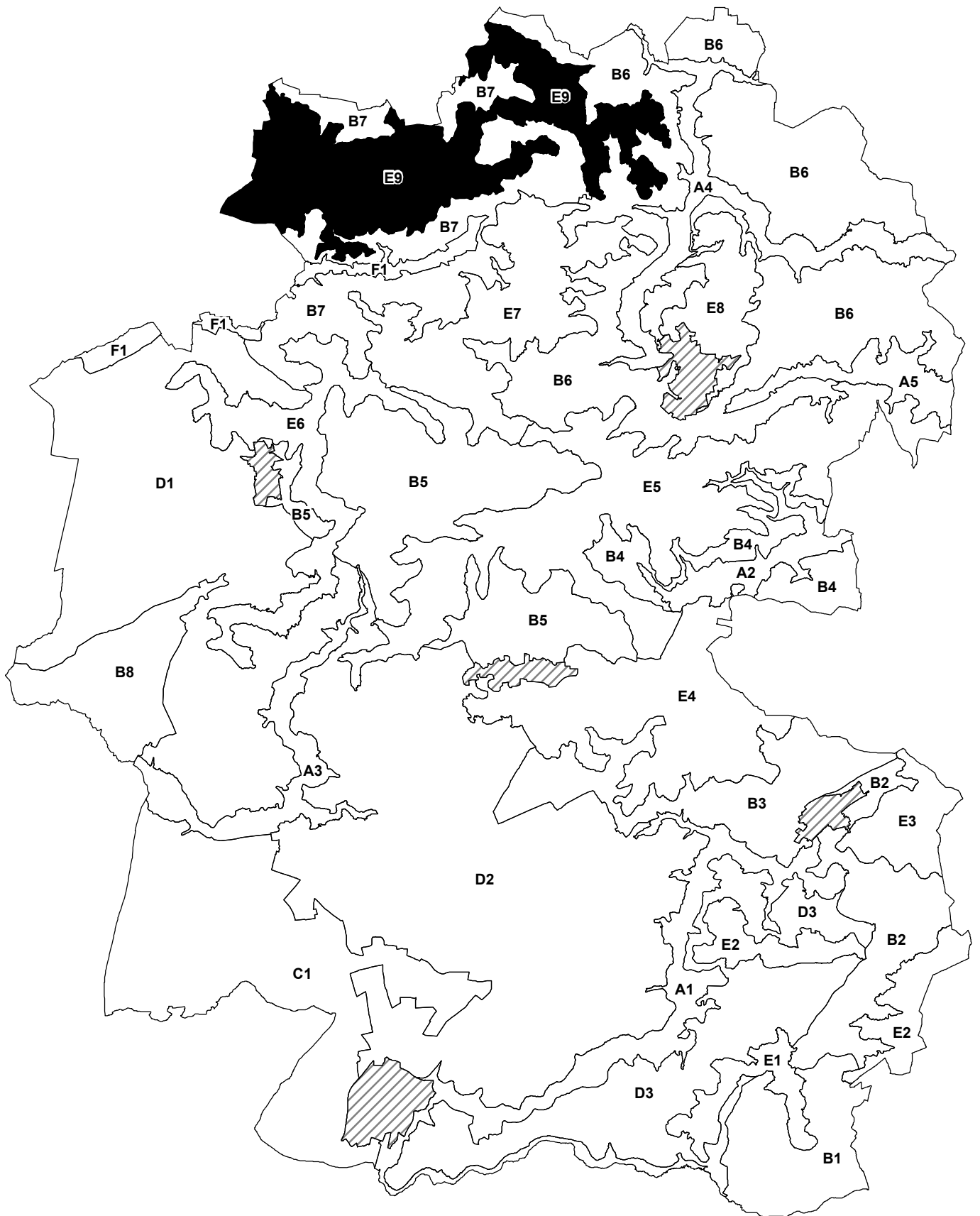








# E9: WHISSONSETT PLATEAU





## E9: WHISSONSETT PLATEAU

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### Location and Boundaries

- E9.1 *Whissonsett Plateau* occupies the elevated land (above 50m AOD) in the north western part of Breckland District, with the landscape type extending into the adjoining authorities of North Norfolk District to the north and the Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk to the west. This is a gently undulating plateau bounded to the south and to the east by the network of ridges and minor tributary valleys formed by the *Nar Settled tributary farmland*.

### Key Characteristics

- A medium to large-scale landscape overlying glacial drift deposits of sand and gravel.
- Landform is that of a gently undulating plateau, with topography ranging from 50-80m AOD.
- The elevated landform provides opportunities for distant views, including to elevated ridges within the adjoining Borough of Kings Lynn.
- Arable agriculture is the dominant land cover, although this is interspersed with small farm coverts and some ancient woodland (e.g. Horningtoft Wood SSSI) and blocks of mixed plantations, in addition to some paddocks.
- Veteran trees and areas of ancient woodland and common land which are also designated as County Wildlife Sites illustrate the ecological potential of the character area.
- The plateau is characterised by a medium-large scale network of predominantly arable fields, with boundaries defined both by Enclosure hedgerows with hedgerow trees and by former hedgebanks, notably to the rural lanes.
- Historic settlement is evident in the tumuli at Weasenham Lyngs, the deserted village of Godwick, manorial earthworks at Horningtoft and parklands at Rougham and Weasenham, in addition to a small part of Elmham Park.
- The large common at Brisley is a locally and historically distinctive feature.
- Settlement pattern is defined primarily by small villages of very low population density created following enclosure, such as Whissonsett, Weasenham All Saints and Brisley, in addition to scattered farmsteads. Settlement is often of nucleated formation based either on village greens or junctions of rural roads.
- Varying enclosure is provided by the field boundaries. The landscape is simple in terms of its elements, smooth in texture and essentially unified in character.
- A number of rights of way cross the character area, which afford opportunities for recreation, as do the areas of open access land within the character area, notably at Brisley Green, Harpers Green and Weasenham Lyngs.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

### Physical/Natural

- E9.2 Glacial till deposits and drift materials i.e. sand and gravel overlay the chalk solid geology and have created a gently undulating, elevated landform. Topography ranges from 50-80m AOD across the character area.
- E9.3 Arable agriculture is the predominant landcover, occasionally interspersed with small blocks of mixed farm woodland/coverts, in addition to larger blocks of plantation woodland as at Weasenham Lyngs. In addition there are scattered areas of grazing pasture, primarily associated with paddocks.
- E9.4 Field pattern is geometric and composed of medium-large scale fields bounded by mixed Enclosure hedgerows or by lines of oaks marking former hedgerows.
- E9.5 A number of sites are protected by statutory and local nature conservation designations, illustrating the ecological potential of parts of the character area. The ancient woodland at Horningtoft Wood is designated as a SSSI, in view of its importance as a relatively rare and species rich coppice with standard maple-ash-limewood dominated woodland, which supports varied groundflora including locally scarce species such as broad leaved helleborine and greater butterfly orchid. At the local level, a number of small areas of ancient woodland including farm woodland, coverts and groves are designated as County Wildlife Sites in view of their botanical and biological interest.
- E9.6 The character area lies within the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project's Enhancement Area for heathland, grassland and woodland re-creation. A number of Norfolk BAP Priority Habitats are represented within the character area, e.g. ancient woodland and cereal field margins.

### Historic Character

- E9.7 The Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has only been completed for small parts of the character area. This however indicates a number of historic processes which have influenced the present landscape character, including piecemeal Enclosure by agreement. This has informed the subsequent landcover pattern of Enclosure field boundary hedgerows. The field survey revealed some instances of boundary loss to agricultural intensification, evident in the rows of oaks marking former hedgerows in places.
- E9.8 Faden's 1797 Map of Norfolk identifies a number of halls and associated minor parklands within the character area, such as Rougham and Weasenham, together with the historic village of Godwick which is described as 'in ruins' by 1797. The map illustrates a small scale pattern of predominantly linear rural settlements. Also identified are areas of heathland and common at Weasenham, Brisley and Wellingham Heath, together with relatively extensive areas of woodland around Tittleshall.
- E9.9 Many of the commons and heaths have been lost to later agricultural Enclosure, but the large common at Brisley Green is extant, and is a locally significant element of

historic landcover. In addition a number of the ancient woodlands around Tittleshall remain, notably Church Wood and Sandholes Wood.

- E9.10 The settlement pattern identified by Faden, of nucleated and occasionally linear villages associated with village greens, manorial groupings or the rural road network largely remains today. Population density has significantly reduced following Enclosure and partly due to earlier settlement abandonment e.g. at Godwick.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- E9.11 Settlement is predominantly of nucleated formation, represented in the compact villages of Whissonsett, Weasenham All Saints and smaller hamlets such as Brisley. Areas of settlement are either associated with village greens as at Brisley, key junctions of rural roads or clustered around manorial halls and parklands as at Weasenham and Rougham.
- E9.12 A wide variety of vernacular character in terms of style and building materials is displayed by the settlements within this character area. Building materials include red brick, colour washed render and dressed stone, particularly to settlement cores, although a more modern palette and stylistic range is sometimes apparent to the edges of settlements.

### **Perceptual and Visual**

- E9.13 The *Whissonsett Plateau* is a gently undulating medium to large scale arable landscape with some enclosure created by field boundary hedgerows and localised woodland blocks, in the form of farm coverts and mixed plantations. The gently undulating land and elevated aspect creates opportunities for distant views and intervisibility with other landscapes, particularly to the west.
- E9.14 A combination of simple landscape elements, generally consistent land use and smooth texture creates a landscape of unified character.
- E9.15 Due to the low density, nucleated settlement pattern and the narrow rural road network the landscape of the *Whissonsett Plateau* is characterised by a peaceful, rural quality.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- E9.16 The following are judged to be the key landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.
- The unenclosed village green at Brisley which indicates the historic evolution of the settlement and is a rare survival of a large area of common land.
  - Earthworks represented by a number of Scheduled Monuments e.g. the tumuli at Weasenham Lyngs and the former medieval village of Godwick, which illustrate the continuity of human intervention and settlement.

- Hedgerow oaks and field oaks defining former hedgerows, which represent the Enclosure landscape pattern.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- E9.17 Key visual sensitivities are the elevated landform and the large scale, relatively open arable field pattern. Long views are available and there is some intervisibility with elevated ridges within the adjoining Borough of Kings Lynn.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

- E9.18 This is a visually unified and coherent landscape defined by its elevated plateau landform and the predominantly arable landcover and Enclosure field pattern. In spite of some areas of boundary loss, the landcover pattern is relatively intact and includes farm coverts and a number of small blocks of ancient woodland.
- E9.19 Generally the character area is relatively weak in terms of biodiversity and ecological integrity, in view of the intensive arable cultivation. However localised areas of species diverse habitat exist such as Horningtoft Wood, the importance of which is recognised through the SSSI designation.

### **Landscape Change**

#### **Past Change**

- Loss of commons and heathland through Enclosure and later agricultural intensification;
- Afforestation on areas of former common and heath (e.g. Weasenham Lyngs);
- Loss of woodland cover to agricultural intensification;
- Changes to population density due to 17<sup>th</sup> Century village abandonment/retreat (e.g. Godwick) and Enclosure;
- Localised areas of hedgerow boundary loss due to agricultural intensification.

#### **Future Change**

- E9.20 Potential future change may arise through implementation of agri-environment schemes. Damage to/loss of field boundary hedgerow trees through ploughing too close to field margins may also be an issue. There may be potential pressure for farm diversification and associated development, e.g. barn conversions.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall management objective should be to conserve the arable landuse and the remaining areas of ancient woodland, historic green and common. Existing recreational provision, in the form of rights of way and open access land should be conserved and where possible enhanced. Opportunities should be explored to enhance field boundary margins.



## **Guidelines**

### ***Landscape Management***

- Conserve existing arable landcover, whilst seeking opportunities to enhance field boundary hedgerows through agri-environment schemes;
- Subject to the provisions of agri-environment schemes seek opportunities to enhance field boundary margins and biodiversity value through long grassland set asides;
- Maintain the existing thorn dominated Enclosure hedgerow network, gapping up incomplete hedgerows where appropriate with a native species mix to ensure the network continues to provide a unity across the landscape as well as providing wildlife habitats;
- Conserve existing hedgerow oaks and field oaks through appropriate arboricultural management;
- Conserve the existing areas of coppices with standard ancient woodland through active and appropriate management;
- Conserve the rural character of the small scale road/lane network;
- Conserve the sites and settings of historic sites.

### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve the local vernacular e.g. red brick and colour washed render and ensure that any new development is of a high quality design which responds to local materials and styles;
- Conserve scattered distribution of small scale farmsteads, ensuring that new development is contained within defined settlement boundaries;
- In planning for future change, consider the scale of potential development and its effects on long views, skylines and intervisibility with adjoining landscapes.

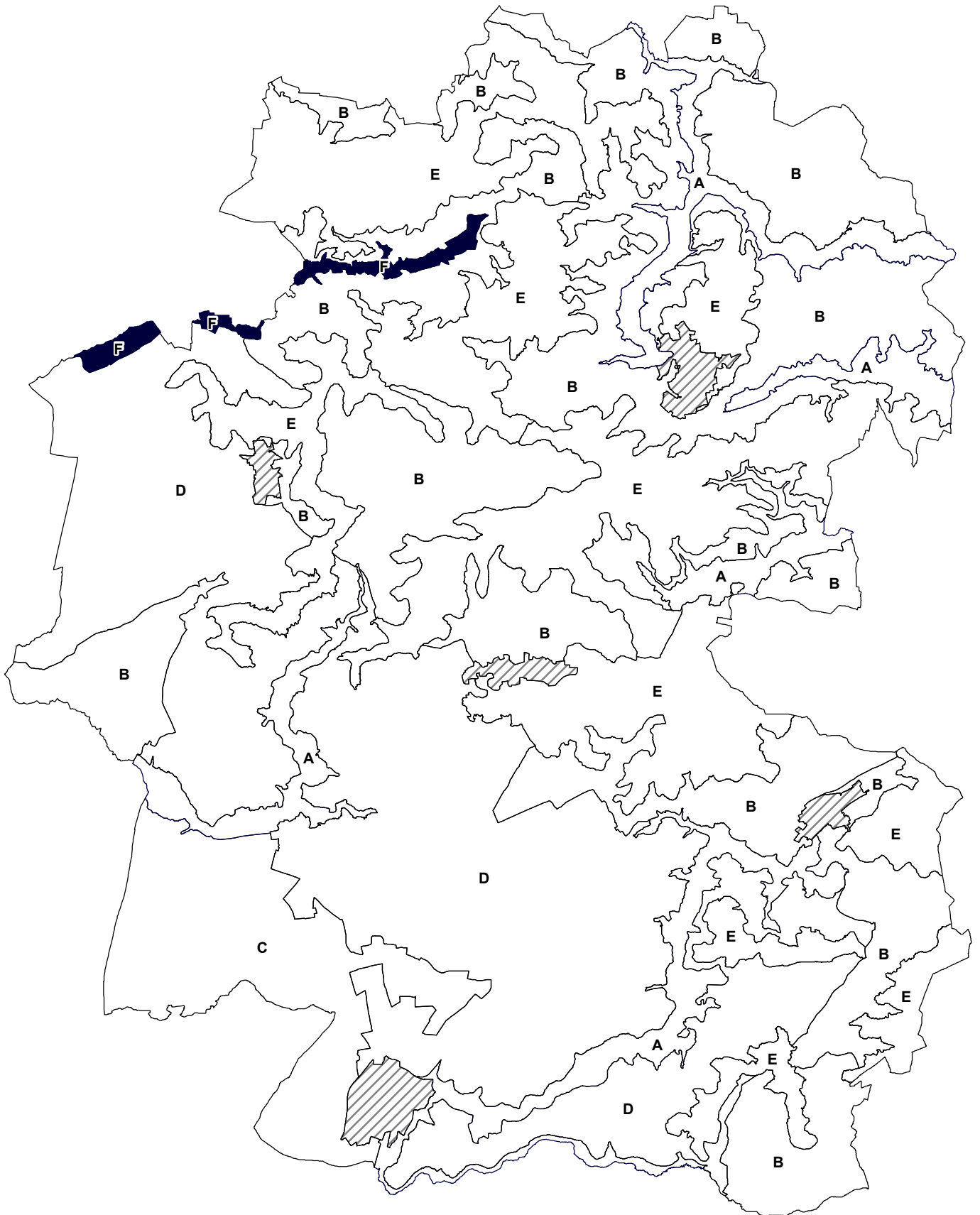






# F. CHALK RIVER VALLEYS

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## LANDSCAPE TYPE F: CHALK RIVER VALLEY

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FI The Chalk River Valley landscape type constitutes a pastoral landscape associated with the meandering course of fast flowing, shallow chalk rivers which rise from springs, as distinct from the tributary fed rivers which occur elsewhere within Breckland. The landscape type displays a rich range of wetland vegetation, in addition to woodlands, which are often associated with parkland in the valley floor. Within Breckland District. There is one river of this type in Breckland District – the River Nar.

### Key Characteristics

- Rivers fed by springs carve a meandering course through the underlying chalk bedrock overlain by alluvial deposits and sand and gravel drift material and typical brown soils.
- Valleys are typically of narrow formation and profile, with the valley crests generally not exceeding 50 metres AOD.
- Containment is often provided both by landform and by vegetation including hedgerows and woodlands, which are often associated with parkland.
- Grazing pasture is interspersed with areas of parkland, wet meadow and wet woodland.
- The sandy soils found on the valley sides are evident in remnant blocks of heathland.
- Wooded skylines often form a distinctive element.
- A rich range of riparian habitats is supported by the chalk river landscape type, and this is recognised both in the nature conservation designations and by the definition of chalk rivers as a Core Area within the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project.
- Evidence of human intervention is frequently apparent in the river valleys, e.g. weirs and mills.
- Recreational access and way marked routes are far more evident than in landscape type A: River Valleys.
- Common land was historically an extensive land cover, although this has been significantly diminished due to Enclosure.
- Settlement density is generally low, with settlement confined to compact nucleated villages to the valley sides and isolated halls and farmsteads.

### Landscape Type F: Chalk River Valley

Character Area

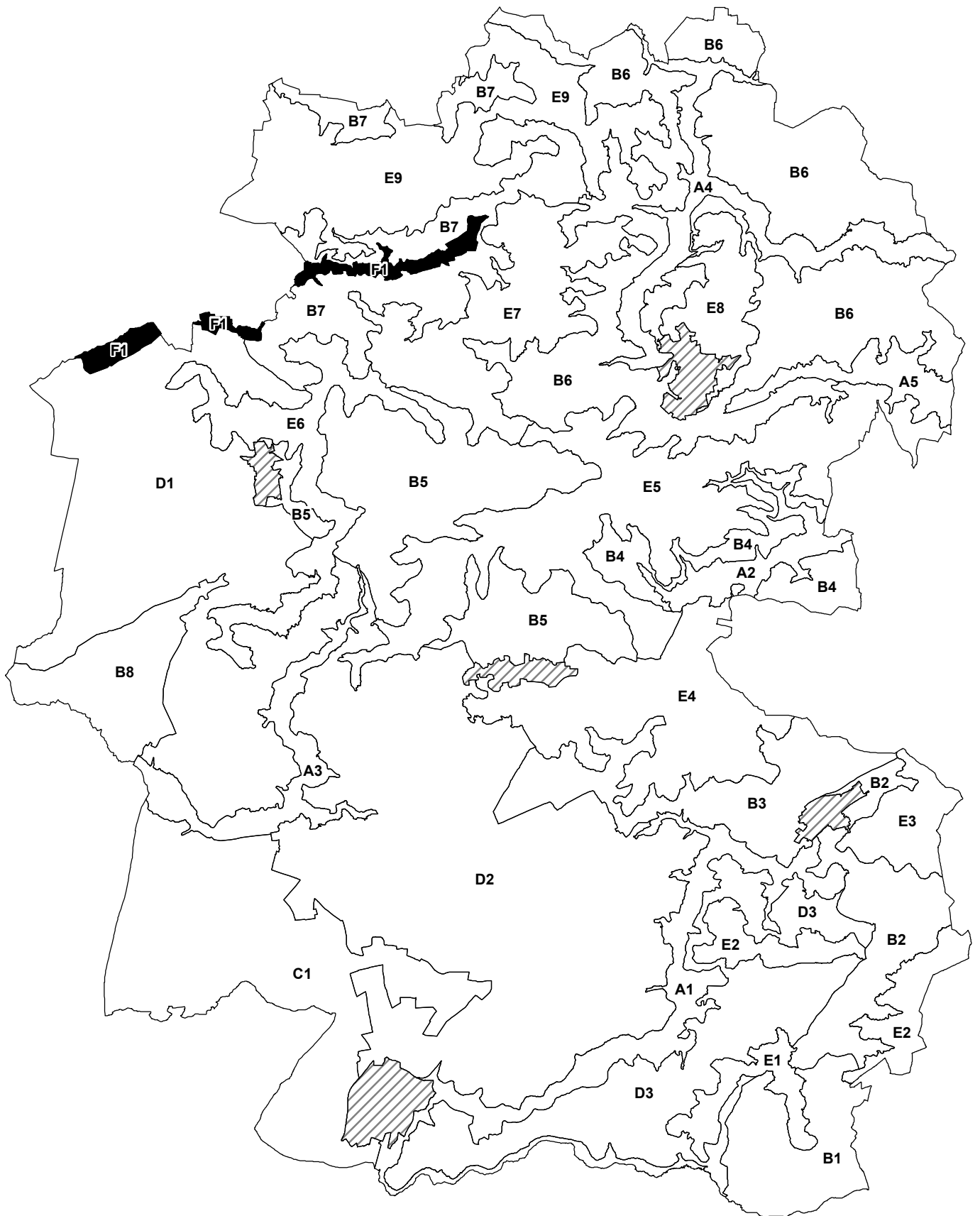
FI River Nar Valley





# FI: RIVER NAR

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# FI: RIVER NAR

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## Location and Boundaries

FI.1 The *River Nar* is located in the western part of Breckland District and is comprised of the floodplain and valley sides of the River Nar. The Nar is fed by springs rising from the chalk rather than the tributaries which feed the other Breckland rivers, and is therefore classified as a separate landscape type. The south westerly draining Nar rises from springs to the south west of Mileham and flows westwards into the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk.

## Key Characteristics

- The River Nar arises from chalk springs follows a meandering course through the underlying chalk bedrock and later glacial drift, with alluvial deposits along the floodplain.
- A narrow floodplain with valley sides rising to approximately 50m, with this contour approximately defining the crests of the valley sides.
- Visual containment is provided by the valley landform and landcover such as hedgerows and woodland associated with parkland.
- Grazing pasture line the valley floor interspersed with areas of parkland, wet meadow and wet woodland.
- Small remnant blocks of heathland e.g. Newton Heath occupy areas of sandy soils on the valley sides.
- Woodland associated with Lexham Hall, West Lexham Hall and Narborough Hall create a wooded character, views to the wooded skyline being distinctive.
- The course of the River Nar and sections of the floodplain are designated as SSSI due to its value as a chalk river habitat.
- Evidence of human interaction with the river is evident along the river course in the form of weirs e.g. Lexham Hall and mills e.g. at Narborough.
- The Nar Valley Way is an important recreational feature providing access to the river and connectivity, via the rights of way network with surrounding landscapes.
- Historically common land was extensive, but due to enclosure and afforestation, Litcham Common is the only surviving example.
- Settlement density is low being characterised by isolated Halls and farm houses, with small villages generally set above flood level at the valley crest as at East Lexham, West Lexham, South Acre and Castle Acre (the latter in King's Lynn and West Norfolk). At Litcham settlement spreads onto the valley floor.

- Opportunities for recreation and access are facilitated by the Nar Valley Way which intersects the centre of the character area, in addition to a network of rights of way.

## **LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION**

### **Physical/Natural**

- FI.2 The River Nar rises as a spring in the Upper Chalk resulting in distinctive chalk river characteristics. The river course is narrow and displays a wide range of natural physical features including riffles, pools, gravel beds and meanders as it flows westwards across the landscape. The entire course of the River Nar is designated as a SSSI, in view of its quality as a chalk river habitat encompassing areas of wet woodland, pasture and meadows on the valley floor.
- FI.3 Land adjacent to the river course is seasonally flooded, pastoral land. This is the dominant land use of the character area, although extensive wet woodland and carr woodland along the river course and further woodland associated with Lexham Hall and Narborough Hall is also characteristic. Although much of the woodland is native broadleaf, small plantation blocks and areas of coniferous planting are present. The fields are variable in size and shape. Fields on the valley floor are characterised by a geometric pattern of field drains and bounded by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Areas of unmanaged scrub remain within and on the edges of some fields.
- FI.4 The sandy soils have in the past supported extensive heathland, although this is now limited to small, isolated blocks as at Newton Heath and Litcham Common. The importance of heathland is recognised by the Norfolk EcoNet Mapping Project which classifies the valley sides as being a 'heathland, grassland and woodland' enhancement area. The valley floor is a chalk stream 'core area'.

### **Historic Character**

- FI.5 Two Scheduled Monuments are located within the character area; Camphill, a military site at Narborough and a disc barrow at Litcham. The weirs, bridging points and settlement along the course of the River Nar further signify the history of human activity within the character area.
- FI.6 Faden's Map demonstrates that in 1797 the valley was already settled and contained two Halls with extensive associated parkland. The estate character is still evident, parkland woodland, avenues of trees and driveways remain as features of the landscape. Both Halls appear in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.
- FI.7 Common land and heathland was once extensive throughout the character area, although this has now been significantly reduced by both enclosure of and conversion to woodland e.g. a large area of Beeston common has become 'The Warren Woodland'.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- FI.8 Settlement density is low being characterised by isolated Halls and farm houses scattered along rural roads on the valley sides. For the most part settlement is at the edge of the valley on the boundary with the adjacent character area. At Litcham

and West Lexham settlement spreads onto the valley floor. Litcham displays examples of brick, timber framed and flint buildings, with 20<sup>th</sup> century development. On the opposite bank of the river is Castle Acre, a small town, within the Borough of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. The town is a prominent feature of the valley established at the crossing point of the Nar and Peddar's Way. Landmark buildings include the Priory and Motte and Bailey Castle.

### **Perceptual and Visual**

- FI.9 This is a varied landscape which is essentially unified by the valley landform and consistent land use of pasture and woodland. The well managed and designed parkland landscapes of Lexham Hall and Narford Hall are an important and distinctive element of the valley; their influence is extended through blocks of mixed estate plantation woodland. The valley has a strong, rural character.
- FI.10 Views are generally contained by landform and by woodland vegetation, either as plantation woodland or field boundary hedgerows. The skyline is characteristically wooded, although views to landmark features such as Litcham church tower are also a feature.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Positive Landscape Features of Significance and Inherent Landscape Sensitivities**

- FI.11 The following are judged to be the key landscape sensitivities which are fundamental to the character of the landscape.
- The grazed pastures and meadow on the valley floor;
  - The chalk river and associated biodiversity interest
  - Riffles, pools and meanders associated with the natural river course;
  - Wet woodland and carrs on the banks of the river;
  - The remnant areas of heathland at Litcham Common and Newton Heath;
  - The designed, historic settings of Lexham Hall and Narford Hall;
  - Views to a generally wooded skyline punctuated by views of Litcham and West Lexham church towers.
  - The Nar Valley Way which has a high recreational value;
  - The low settlement density and tranquil character.

### **Visual Sensitivities**

- FI.12 The containment provided by the landform and land covers allow for only occasional longer views. The glimpsed views and setting of landmark features such as the church towers at Litcham and West Lexham are sensitive as are the views to an

undeveloped wooded skyline. Views of the designed, historic landscapes of Lexham and Narford Hall are a further important feature.

### **Current State of the Landscape**

- FI.13 This is traditional chalk valley landscape that is still managed by active grazing. It is visually unified and coherent landscape defined by the consistent land use and valley landform. The main landscape elements of pastoral fields and woodland are in good condition, although some areas of colonising scrub creates localised areas of more marginal character.
- FI.14 The wet woodland, grazing pasture and wet meadows, heathland, and chalk river course form a range of diverse habitats. The SSSI designation demonstrates the ecological richness of the landscape.

### **Landscape Change**

#### **Past Change**

- Loss of commons and heathland through Enclosure and woodland planting;
- Introduction of plantation and coniferous species;
- Expansion of settlement at Litcham.

#### **Future Change**

- FI.15 The Local Plan does not highlight any future change within the character area, although development pressure is evidenced by recent expansion at Litcham. Potential future change may arise through implementation of chalk stream conservation and heathland enhancement and expansion strategies through the Norfolk Ecological Mapping Project.

## **LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The overall management objective should be to conserve the rural character of the *Nar Chalk Valley*, with its areas of parkland and commons, and support opportunities to enhance natural floodplain habitats and maintain water flows and high water quality of the chalk rivers.

### **Guidelines**

#### **Landscape Management**

- Conserve existing wet woodland adjacent to the River Nar;
- Conserve and manage areas of pasture and meadow along the valley floor;
- Conserve and enhance remnant areas of heathland and commons and seek opportunities to expand this habitat;
- Conserve and enhance the parkland landscapes associated with the Halls;

- Safeguard water flows and water quality in the chalk river to conserve the habitats value of the river and maintain the pastoral character of the valley floor and floodplain habitats.

### ***Development Considerations***

- Conserve the distinctive built features of the valley such as the mills, bridges and weirs;
- Conserve the sparsely settled character of small villages and hamlets. Maintain the small scale villages and seek to avoid further expansion onto the valley floor;
- Conserve the setting of landmark features such as church towers;
- Ensure that any development reflects the local vernacular;
- Conserve the rural lanes and road network;
- Conserve the undeveloped valley crests.









## 8. CONCLUSIONS

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8.1. The assessment indicates that different landscapes have different opportunities for conservation, enhancement and restoration. The overall management objectives for each type are expressed as follows:

- **Conserve** i.e. the main objective is to conserve the existing character of the landscape;
- **Enhance** i.e. there are opportunities to enhance existing character through introduction of new elements and features or different management of existing ones;
- **Restore/re-create** i.e. there are opportunities to restore/re-create some key aspects of the landscape, or create new landscapes through landscape restoration.

8.2. The following gives a brief summary of the management objectives for each landscape type:

### **A: River Valleys**

8.3. The primary objective should be to conserve the range of pastoral and riparian habitats, in addition to exploring opportunities for landscape enhancement, particularly as part of the after use design of mineral extraction sites within the valleys.

### **B: Settled tributary farmland**

8.4. The primary objective should be to enhance the tributaries which thread through the arable farmland, both to enhance biodiversity and to restore the sense of connection to the adjacent river valleys. The settled rural character, which contrasts with the adjacent arable plateaux, should be conserved.

### **C: Brecks - Plantation**

8.5. The primary objective should be to conserve the existing balance of structural woodland cover and the sense of physical/visual containment, in addition to exploring opportunities for further habitat creation, such as heathland restoration.

### **D: Brecks - Heathland with Plantation**

8.6. The primary objective should be to conserve and enhance existing areas of heathland and calcareous grassland, and wetland habitats such as the meres, in addition to remaining historic parkland/estate landscape features. Opportunities should also be sought to enhance the agricultural landscapes through habitat re-creation, e.g. heathland.

### **E: Plateau Farmlands**

8.7. The primary objective should be to enhance the arable landscape through restoration and reinforcement of hedgerow boundaries and exploration of

opportunities to re introduce habitats such as heathland and grassland, to meet the objectives of the Norfolk Ecological Network Mapping Project.

***F: Chalk River Valley***

- 8.8. The primary objective should be to conserve the chalk watercourses and associated wetland vegetation, in addition to exploring opportunities to enhance natural floodplain habitats.

**APPENDIX I**  
**Field Survey Form**



**BRECKLAND DISTRICT LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT: LANDSCAPE TYPE  
FIELD SURVEY SHEET**

Photograph Nos: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Direction of view: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
 OS Grid Reference: \_\_\_\_\_ Weather: \_\_\_\_\_

**DRAFT LANDSCAPE TYPE** \_\_\_\_\_

**DRAFT LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Keywords describing the landscape:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Location and  
Boundaries**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Features**

LAND

<input type="checkbox"/> Flat	<input type="checkbox"/> Cliff/precipice	<input type="checkbox"/> Escarpment	<input type="checkbox"/> Broad valley
<input type="checkbox"/> Rolling	<input type="checkbox"/> Rock outcrops	<input type="checkbox"/> Ridge	<input type="checkbox"/> Narrow valley
<input type="checkbox"/> Undulating	<input type="checkbox"/> Plain	<input type="checkbox"/> Knoll	<input type="checkbox"/> Deep gorge
<input type="checkbox"/> Steep slopes	<input type="checkbox"/> Plateau	<input type="checkbox"/> Basin	<input type="checkbox"/> Gully
<input type="checkbox"/> Gentle slopes			

WATER

<input type="checkbox"/> River (size.....)	<input type="checkbox"/> Streams	<input type="checkbox"/> Drainage channels	<input type="checkbox"/> Lake
<input type="checkbox"/> River Meanders	<input type="checkbox"/> Broads	<input type="checkbox"/> Flooded gravel pits	<input type="checkbox"/> Pond

**LAND USE CONSULTANTS**

## Land Cover

Land Use							
<input type="checkbox"/>	Farmland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Residential	<input type="checkbox"/>	Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/>	Forestry
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parkland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	Natural
<input type="checkbox"/>	Historic Parkland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Leisure/Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mineral Working	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

Vegetation Cover							
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amenity grassland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed woodland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hedgerow trees
<input type="checkbox"/>	Perm. pasture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Common	<input type="checkbox"/>	Small farm woods	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hedgerows
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pasture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parkland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shelterbelts	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scrub/bracken
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ley/improved	<input type="checkbox"/>	Avenues	<input type="checkbox"/>	Copses	<input type="checkbox"/>	Heath/ Moor
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rough grazing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conif woodland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scattered Trees	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wetland/Aquatics
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wet Meadow	<input type="checkbox"/>	Decid. woodland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Orchards	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

Landscape Elements/Features    
  Subtle    
  Evident    
  Conspicuous

<input type="checkbox"/>	Motorway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Farm buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fortifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nucleated settlement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dual Carriageway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manor/Parkland	<input type="checkbox"/>	Isolated Church	<input type="checkbox"/>	Linear settlement
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Road	<input type="checkbox"/>	Landmark Building	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dispersed settlement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rural Lanes Track	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hill forts	<input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial workings
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sunken Lane	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lighthouse/beacon	<input type="checkbox"/>	Earthworks	<input type="checkbox"/>	Round towered churches
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bridleway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wind turbines	<input type="checkbox"/>	Moats	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	Footpath	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mast/poles	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tumuli	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	Railway	<input type="checkbox"/>	Church	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ridge and furrow	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

## Field Patterns

<input type="checkbox"/>	Banks	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fence - rural	<input type="checkbox"/>	Geometric	<input type="checkbox"/>	Small
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ditches	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fence – ‘urban’	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sinuous	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medium
<input type="checkbox"/>	Walls - rural	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hedge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irregular	<input type="checkbox"/>	Large



Wall – ‘urban’

Hedgerow trees

Regular

Other

## Perception

VIEWS	distant	framed	intermittent	panoramic	corridor
SCALE	intimate	small	medium	large	
ENCLOSURE	confined	enclosed	semi-enclosed	open	exposed
VARIETY	complex	varied	simple	uniform	
TEXTURE	smooth	textured	rough	very rough	
COLOUR	monochrome	muted	colourful	garish	
MOVEMENT	remote	vacant	peaceful	active	
UNITY	unified	interrupted	fragmented	chaotic	
NATURALNES	undisturbed	restrained	tamed	disturbed	

S

## Settlement within the landscape

Size \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Pattern \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Density \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Age, style and materials \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to the landscape \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Settlement edge character \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# EVALUATION

## POSITIVE LANDSCAPE FEATURES OF SIGNIFICANCE

Feature	Why it is significant

**INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY** (Consider: Positive features of key significance and sensitivity of the area as a whole, i.e. function & relationship to other areas and sense of place/identity)

Key Landscape Character Sensitivities

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Key Visual Sensitivities

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**STRENGTH OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER** (Consider: Representativeness in relation to landscape type & other key characteristics (positive/negative) that influence sense of place/identity).

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**CONDITION OF THE LANDSCAPE/CURRENT STATE OF THE LANDSCAPE**  
(Consider the functional, visual and ecological perspectives)

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**KEY ISSUES/VISIBLE FORCES FOR CHANGE**

Past

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Present and

future\_\_\_\_\_

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### DETRACTING FEATURES

<input type="checkbox"/>	Pylons	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fence – ‘urban’	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	Road signs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paddocks	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Degraded hedgerow	<input type="checkbox"/>	Uncharacteristic building materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wall – ‘urban’	<input type="checkbox"/>	Large scale industry	<input type="checkbox"/>	

### LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

Conserve\_\_\_\_\_

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Enhance\_\_\_\_\_

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Create\_\_\_\_\_

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### LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES

Riverine Habitats  
Renew/create\_\_\_\_\_

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Enhance\_\_\_\_\_

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**LAND USE CONSULTANTS**

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Conserve \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Agriculture  
Renew/create \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Enhance \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Conserve \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Field patterns/boundaries  
Renew/create \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Enhance \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Conserve \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Trees and woodland  
Renew/create \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Enhance \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Conserve \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Buildings/settlement/development  
Renew/create \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Enhance \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Conserve \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Mineral workings/reclamation

Renew/create \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Enhance \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Conserve \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Transport corridors/linear features

Renew/create \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Enhance \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Conserve \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX 2**  
**Stakeholder Consultation Report**





**BRECKLAND LANDSCAPE  
CHARACTER ASSESSMENT  
REPORT OF  
STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS  
JAN 18<sup>th</sup> 2007**

**Prepared for  
Breckland District Council  
by  
Land Use Consultants**

**January 2007**

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# I. INTRODUCTION

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- I.1. Breckland District Council commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC), in 2006, to undertake a landscape character assessment (LCA) for the whole District. The study builds upon the 'Wind Turbine Development, Landscape Assessment, Evaluation and Guidance' undertaken for Breckland Council and King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council which defined landscape types for the two unitary authorities.
- I.2. Effective stakeholder consultation is key to the process and success of landscape character assessment, ensuring a wide range of views and values are represented. For the Breckland LCA, two participatory workshops were held on January 18th 2007 in Breckland District Council Chambers, with the attendance of 29 participants attending the first workshop and 7 participants attending the second. (see Appendix I for full list).
- I.3. The consultation technique aimed to achieve active participation and to generate information appropriate to inform the district-wide landscape character assessment. The overall aim being to allow people who live and work in the district to understand and contribute to the process of LCA, rather than simply being consulted on the final report.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

- I.4. The objectives of the stakeholder consultation were to:
  - explain the process of LCA and relevance to Breckland – why it is being undertaken;
  - validate the characterisation map – boundaries, names, key characteristics, experience;
  - understand perceptions of what people value as important/special about Breckland District and why;
  - gather information on landscape change and input/validation of the landscape strategies.

## WORKSHOP EXERCISES

- I.5. In addition to a presentation from consultants, two workshop exercises were held. Information on each is set out below:

### **Exercise 1: Carousel: What Is Special About The Breckland Landscape and Why?**

- I.6. The purpose of this exercise was to determine “what is special” about various aspects of the landscape; what needs to be conserved and why. The information will be used to add local perspectives on the landscape to the report.

## **Exercise 2: Testing The Character Maps And Descriptions**

- 1.7. The purpose of this exercise was to seek participants' opinions on the landscape character areas identified by the assessment; the boundaries, the area names/titles and the key characteristics, the perceptual experience of the landscape and management strategies.

Note that the format of the two sessions was slightly different, the second session having a lower number of participants concentrated on Exercise 2 considering those areas with which participants were most familiar.

## 2. EXERCISE 1 WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT THE BRECKLAND LANDSCAPE AND WHY?

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2.1. The following tables show the features of the Breckland landscape which participants consider to be important and why. These comments were prompted by the following headings:

- Views and Landmarks
- Heritage/Historic Places
- Access/ Recreation Spaces/Areas
- Natural Landscape/Biodiversity
- Market Towns, Villages and Built Character

### VIEWS AND LANDMARKS

What is important	Why is it important
Churches e.g. Views to Hockering Church	One thing to see in flat landscape-unique in skyline
Towns/Village greens	Large number and in good condition
Village signs	Prevalent in the area but all different
Trees/Hedgerows	Need to replace trees. New developments to include more trees and hedgerows.
Wind turbines	Now a feature in Breckland but is this a good thing?
Wind mills	
Views from relief over lower ground	To get a distant view and a sense of space
Small scale views e.g. Hockering Wood	
Views of wilderness e.g. wetland and heathland	Provides contrast
Pine lines-twisted	Distinctive
Absence of pylons	They are not prominent

<b>What is important</b>	<b>Why is it important</b>
Traditional field patterns	
Views through 20 <sup>th</sup> century plantations	Drives through forest
Rivers and large lakes	
Corn exchanges	Distinctive to Breckland
Country estates	
Big skies-impressive sunsets	Strong sense of place
Unlit villages	Dark skies
Cart shed-open	Historic value
Gressenhall work house	Distinctive land mark of historical importance
Views to Dereham church from the High Street	Distinctive view
View from the top of Buckenham across to Wendling	Long distance views
Harling Drove	Good walking route-needs re-opening
Views down the Ouse and Thet river valleys	

## **HERITAGE/HISTORIC PLACES**

<b>What is important</b>	<b>Why is it important</b>
Churches	Varied styles
Use of local materials	
Country estates	Evidence of historic/economic growth. Feudalism and industrialism
Gressenhall Work House	Historic record
Dispersed rural	



<b>What is important</b>	<b>Why is it important</b>
settlement	
Bylaugh Hall	
Thetford Priory Nunnery	Religious history
Castle Hill	Iron age/Norman 2 <sup>nd</sup> largest man made mound
Rabbit warrens-warren lodge	Historic evidence of agriculture
Historic routes e.g. Peddars Way, Ickniel Way	
Boadicea camps	Historic settlements
Castle mound, Thetford	Historic
Battle grounds	Historic use continuing
Historic orchards	Traditional land use
Grimes Grave	Flint
Relict features such as pill boxes	Clues to the past

## **ACCESS/ RECREATION SPACES/AREAS**

<b>What is important</b>	<b>Why is it important</b>
Thetford Forest	Lots of things to do, wilderness, walking, aerial assault course
Peddars Way	Long history
Formal sports grounds	Need to be more-Dereham area deficient
Access to water	Limited-more needed
Landed estates	Sense of history
Battle Grounds	Sense of history
Golf courses	Fitness/exercise/openness
River valleys and associated long distance	Walking opportunities

<b>What is important</b>	<b>Why is it important</b>
paths	
Former railway line (MNR)	
Sandy soil activities e.g. horse riding	
Lynford Lakes	
Quiet Roads	
Need for 'breathing space' around Dereham	
Do certain areas need to have restricted access- to protect wildlife etc?	
Interaction between town and countryside- not currently good enough	'breathing spaces'

## **NATURAL LANDSCAPE**

<b>What is important</b>	<b>Why is it important</b>
Open space	Breathe/fresh air
'Island quality' of whole district	Isolated, a place apart/ recharges batteries
Heathland/Ridge landform as a result of wind blow	Unique feature with mix of heath and chalk grassland. See Brecks File – part of Brecks Partnership for more info (detailed study undertaken)
Woodlands and forests	Very serene- no noise. Opportunities for walking/access
Pingo trail	
Biggest area of windblown sand and pingos in the country	Threatened by Thetford growth point. Change not in sympathy
Breckland Heaths	Unique feature. Note that large heathland areas are important e.g. STANTA but also very important in

<b>What is important</b>	<b>Why is it important</b>
	landscape terms are the small islands of heath that remain across the district and their potential to extend/create links
Soil and rocks	Sand, chalk and flint create a distinctive built character  See Breckland Society for info on built character of district  Building materials e.g. clay lump buildings
Climate	Dry/Semi desert: Creates a distinctive landscape
Big skies	Across whole district, but especially notable feature of the plateaus (disused airfields)
Dark skies	Absence of light pollution across whole of district including villages. Limited to market towns
Rabbits/warrens	Have helped to shape the landscape
Waterways	Opportunities for recreation/sailing
Trees and hedges	
Wetlands-marsh, fen, riparian vegetation	Valued for habitat/ beautiful/unspoilt and an important part of the water management system
Historic parklands	Distinctive landscape in the district
Ancient woodland-extensive areas	e.g. Foxley Wood - Unique experience
Verges	Contain remnant flora
Pockets of pre enclosure fields across the district	Historic patterns, outgrown oak hedges
Neolithic landscape of Grimes Graves	Unique mining landscape
Distinctive habitats and species e.g. stone curlew  Important BAP Habitats and Species	Rare species
Common at Old Buckenham	Largest area of common in England

<b>What is important</b>	<b>Why is it important</b>
Thetford Forest	Diversification opportunities/regeneration of heathland

## **TOWNS AND VILLAGES**

<b>What is important</b>	<b>Why is it important</b>
Natural building materials (flint-red brick-render-clay lump)	Vernacular pre-industrial
Town and village greens	
Scale and proportion of buildings	
Traditional farm buildings	
Consistency of design- although this has been threatened by modern generic development	Creates a sense of place
Traditional village signs- these need to be conserved and recreated.	Creates a sense of place

## EXERCISE 2: TESTING THE CHARACTER MAPS AND DESCRIPTIONS

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### CHARACTER AREA NAMES

- 2.2. The following table summarises participants' comments on the character area names from both the afternoon and evening session. LUC have discussed all comments and the table below shows the LUC response.

Existing Name	Suggested Name	LUC response
A2: River Blackwater	Upper Yare	✓
A4: River Wensum	River Wensum and Blackwater	✓
A5: River Tud	Upper Tud	✓
B2: River Thet Tributary Farmland	B2a. River Thet Tributary Farmland	✓
	B2b. No suggestion-although proposing that the character area centres around the A11	
	B2c. The proposed name for this area was 'The Golden Triangle' – a colloquial name for the Buckenhams/Banham/Kenninghall. Alternative suggestion was 'Guiltcross' – a reference to the old Hundred name	
B3: Blackwater Tributary Farmland	No suggestion but feel it needs to be more geographically specific	✓
B7: Oxborough Tributary Farmland	Gooderstone to Oxborough Tributary Farmland Gadder Tributary Farmland	✓
C1: Thetford Warren	The Brecks of Thetford Forest	✓
D2: Breckles Heath	Stanta Heath	✓
D3: Quidenham	Harling or Harling Heathlands	✓
E1: North Lopham Plateau	Lophams Plateau	✓
E2: Snetterton Heath Plateau	Concern that Snetterton is in the far west of the character area, but no consensus as to what the name should be.	✓
E4: Watton Ridge Plateau	Wayland Plateau	✓
E5: Shipdham Plateau	Central Breckland Plateau	✓

<b>Existing Name</b>	<b>Suggested Name</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
E7: Beeston Settled Plateau	Beeston Plateau	✓

- 2.3. Proposed name changes are shown in brackets for each character area in the following sections.

## **BOUNDARIES, KEY CHARACTERISTICS, PERCEPTUAL/ EXPERIENTIAL LANDSCAPE AND ISSUES/ VALUES**

- 2.4. The following tables takes each Breckland District character areas in turn and details participants' comments on boundaries, the key characteristics and the perceptual/experience of the landscape and the management strategy. The tables incorporate comments from both the afternoon and evening sessions. The tables show LUC's response in the following way:

✓= comments included in the report

x=comments not thought to add sufficiently to the LCA report

### **Character Area A1: River Thet**

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	Extend into south of CI	Agree that the river continues west of Thetford, but the river forms a subtle landscape feature as it flows through Breckland Forest and it is considered that it should remain as a feature of CI rather than a character area in its own right.
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
	No comments	-
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	No comments	-
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	Conserved/managed for tourism and recreation	✓

### **Character Area A2 River Blackwater (Upper Yare)**

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	Possibly extend to north west to include Yare under the B1135	Agree- boundary changed
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
4	Mention loss of existing wetland landscape	✓
7	Not dense 'mixed' woodland- there is a 'mosaic' of woodland types	✓
	Add areas of open water-views across	✓
	Mid Norfolk Railway	✓
	Floodplain/grassland lost to changed uses and re-alignment of Yare tributaries	✓

	Horsiculture	✓
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	No comments	-
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	Conserve	✓
	Floodplain	✓
	Rural character	✓

### Character Area A3: River Wissey

	<b>Boundaries</b>	
	OK	-
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
7	Question the historic information	LUC to check
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	No comments	-
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	Conserve	✓

### Character Area A4: River Wensum (*River Wensum and Blackwater*)

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	OK	Note the Blackwater is a significant tributary and perhaps should be included in name and identified under location and boundaries
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
	Add comment on remnant pockets of heath	✓
	Some ancient woodland	✓
6	Not just willow, alder and poplar – much ash, oak, hazel and birch. Also Black poplar is distinctive	-
9	Add comment on network of mills. Note saxon cathedral at North Elmham and Viking burial mounds	✓ (Cathedral is in the adjacent <i>Wensum and Tud Tributary Farmland</i> character area)
8	Change cSAC to SAC. Note that the whole river is designated as a SPA. Note Dillington Carr SSSI and Mill Common SSSI	✓



	Add Foxley Wood – largest area of semi natural woodland in Norfolk Billingford Wood?	x - Foxley Wood is in the adjacent <i>Wensum and Tud Tributary Farmland</i> character area
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	No comment	✓
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	Conserve and enhance-water meadows	✓
	Use econet biodiversity information to add to guidelines	✓
	Conserve watermills	✓
	Conserve and enhance-re-instate hedges	✓
	Anything to add to restoration of mineral sites?	✓
	Re-instate ditches	✓ (Conserve and enhance ditched field boundaries)

### Character Area A5: River Tud (*Upper Tud*)

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	Possibly extend to BI 135	Agree-boundary changed
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
	Get rid of reference to Shaws	✓
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	OK	-
	Sense of clearly crossing a valley	✓
	Well defined	✓
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	Conserve	✓

**General Comment A & B:** For all river valley (A) and tributary farmland (B) landscapes - Management should seek to make links between the valleys and the tributaries extend up into tributary farmland landscapes. The landscape type B is important as the transition between the high and low land.

### Character Area B1: Little Ouse Tributary Farmland

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	OK	-
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
	Feels like Suffolk (different character)	✓
6	Ripped out hedgerows	✓
5	Lopham – important areas of heath RAMSAR site	✓
	Ribbon development at North Lopham	✓
	Banham Zoo	✓
	Historic character at Banham and Kenninghall	✓
	Wattle and daub houses-not flint	✓
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	Historic	✓
	Open	✓
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	Note ribbon development – should not perpetuate this characteristic	✓

## Character Area B2: River Thet Tributary Farmland

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	<p>Split into three-</p> <p>B2(a) River Thet Tributary Farmland – this is the western end of B2, including Stow Bedon, Mount Pleasant and majority of farmland between Attleborough and Ellingham.</p> <p>B2(b) AII Corridor: The Group felt strongly that the LCA should recognise the landscape impact of the AII corridor –Area B2(b) would start from Wroo Farm, and continue up to and including Besthorpe.</p> <p>B2(c) The Group felt that the character of Old and New Buckenham was different to the western end of draft area B2. The Group suggested that this area could be extended to include Banham and Kenninghall (currently in B1).</p>	<p>B2 has been split into two. B2 covers land to the east of the AII and the Buckenham extending south to Kenninghall.</p> <p>The new B3 (<i>The Buckenham Tributary Farmland</i>) includes land to the north and west of the AII.</p> <p>Note: no new character area has been created for the AII. This will be brought out as a feature of both B2 and B3 write-ups.</p>
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
	B2a. Agree with key characteristics	✓
	B2b. AII- the influence this has on the landscape, not only as a feature in its own right (lights, noise etc) but its influence on the future of the landscape and the likelihood of change.	✓
	B2c. The Group felt that the character of Old and New Buckenham was different to the western end of draft area B2. This is down to heavier soils (clay), less forest/Brecks influences and larger settlements.	✓
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	B2a. Agreed with B2 write up	✓

	B2b. The Group felt strongly that the LCA should recognise the landscape impact of the A11 corridor – and the influence this has on the landscape – not only as a feature in its own right (lights, noise etc) but its influence on the future of the landscape and the likelihood of change	x
	B2c. more open aspect	✓
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	B2a. Conserve	✓
	B2c. Conserve	✓

### Character Area B3 (B4): River Blackwater Tributary Farmland

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	Re-draw northern boundary and relate to E5-more open character	Agree-changed
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
8	Refer to historic green lanes	✓
6	Localised variation in enclosure hedges	✓
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	Contained and intimate	✓
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	Enhance/Restore	✓
	Conserve historic green lanes	✓
	Hedgerows	✓
	Develop more permitted paths	✓

### Character Area B4 (B5): River Wissey Tributary Farmland

	Name	LUC response
	OK	-
	<b>Boundaries</b>	
	OK	-
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
9	Necton Hall long gone, parkland turned over to agriculture	✓
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	Delete 'tamed'	✓
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	Conserve/Enhance	✓

### Character Area B5 (B6): River Wensum and Tud Tributary Farmland

	Boundaries	LUC response
	OK	-
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
	Sink holes in chalk	✓
	Very flat land at Yaxham-small scale drainage pattern	✓
	Vernacular building materials- Norfolk red brick, clay lump-both found at Yaxham	✓
	Noise from A47	✓
	Mention areas of woodland	✓
	Note the very human scale of the landscape around Dereham – settlement pattern and agriculture very different to plateau landscapes north of Swaffham “patchwork knitted effect”	✓
10	Note old park at Gressenhall. Bylaugh Park is a major feature of the landscape	✓
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	Noise from A47	✓
	Important 'breathing space'	-
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	No comment	

### Character Area B6 (B7): River Nar Tributary Farmland

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	Need to separate the River Nar out as a separate character area/landscape type. The upper extent of the tributary farmland could be encompassed in E9.	Agree- a new landscape type has been defined-type <b>F- chalk streams</b> , and character area <b>F1 The Nar Valley</b>
<b>Key Characteristics</b>		
	Need to refer to rural road network	✓
	Churches at Brisley/North Elmham	x - These are not within this character area.
<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>		
	Ok-need to be updated once River Nar is separated out	✓
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>		
	Needs to be updated once River Nar is separated out	✓

### Character Area B7 (B8): Oxborough Tributary Farmland (Gooderstone to Oxborough Tributary Farmland)

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	OK	-
<b>Key Characteristics</b>		
1	Don't think that undulations are a particularly characteristic feature	✓
3	Topographical range not experienced	✓
7	Geometry varies-not all small and man made enclosures	✓
	Bring out the Gadder as a feature	✓
<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>		
	Big skies	✓
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>		
	Conserve and Enhance	✓
	Wetlands and Fens	✓
	Conserve big skies	✓

**General Comment B:** For all tributary farmland (B) landscapes - Management should seek to conserve small scale 'human' scale character – pattern of roads and

tracks which is very different to the more open landscapes of the plateau and the more intricate river valleys.

### Character Area C1: Thetford Warren (*The Brecks of Thetford Forest*)

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	The most southerly section could become AI?	x- see Character area A1
	Needs to exclude Ragmere	x
<b>Key Characteristics</b>		
	Straight roads, distinctive pattern	✓
	Should reflect the forest more- emphasise 'the forest'	✓
	Need to pull out info on heathland- heathland reversion-forestry strategy	✓
	Rabbit warrens	✓
	Forest rides	✓
	Sandy soils	✓
	Question the term 'deal rows'	✓
	Round towered church at Weeting	✓
	The Row- longest terrace of thatched cottages	✓
	The flying clock of sheep- sheep that are moved around to manage grasslands traditionally	✓
<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>		
	A tranquil landscape	✓
	Recreational opportunities need to be improved	✓
	Aeroplanes detract from sense of tranquillity	✓
	An empty landscape	✓
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>		
	Enhance/Restore	✓
	Historic features	✓
	Opportunity to create the Brecks/Grass Heaths – balance with Forestry Plantations	✓
	Conserve- thatched buildings	✓
	Create improved recreational opportunities on drove roads west of Weeting	✓



### Character Area D1: Swaffham Heath

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	Possibly extend B6 into D1 (Narford Hall)	The area surrounding Narford Hall has been incorporated in the new F1 character area linking it with the river Nar.
<b>Key Characteristics</b>		
1	Add reference to underlying chalk	✓
8	Historic parklands and Plantation are separate features	✓
10	Question whether views of wind turbines detract from sense of tranquillity. Be less subjective	✓
11	There are limited recreation possibilities	-
	Lakes	-
<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>		
	Question whether turbines detract from landscape experience	✓
	A1065-locally prominent	✓
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>		
	Conserve	✓

### Character Area D2: Breckles Heath (*Stanta Heath*)

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	Consider taking forestry plantation out of D2 and put them in C1- because of historic significance	x-No change
<b>Key Characteristics</b>		
	Marl pits	✓
	Roudham Heath should be included as an area of 'true heathland'	✓
	Stanta needs to be reflected more- determines this type	✓
	National Nature Reserves and Meres- Longmere and Ragmere	-
<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>		
	No Comment	
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>		
	No Comment	

### Character Area D3: Quidenham (*Harling Heathlands*)

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	Takes in a lot of heathland-should the boundary be drawn tighter to the forestry	x-heathland is an important element of this landscape type.
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
	Needs to mention Boadicea's Grave between Quidenham and Kenninghall	✓
	River crossings at Shadwell and Harling	-
	Include historic value of the estates	✓
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	Needs to include the A1066	✓
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	No comment	-

### Character Area E1: North Lopham Plateau (*Lophams Plateau*)

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	Is the western boundary correct?	x-western boundary defined by contours
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
	Historic wealth in this area e.g. Lopham Weavers	x – Lopham Smock Mill and former linen weaving were within character area BI <i>Little Ouse Tributary Farmland</i>
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	Large scale	✓
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	Enhance and restore- Large scale restoration e.g. gorse and sands	✓
	Create/Renew-Pines, heathland	✓
	Enhance- banksides- erosion problems	-

### Character Area E2: Snetterton Heath Plateau

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	OK	-
<b>Key Characteristics</b>		
	Note differences between west – All more industrial and settlement and east – few villages and sparse settlement	✓
<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>		
	No comment	-
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>		
	Conserve – east Create/improve - west	✓

### Character Area E3: Old Buckenham Plateau

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	OK	-
<b>Key Characteristics</b>		
	Barren	✓(Simple, empty)
<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>		
	No comment	-
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>		
	Conserve	✓
	Monitor urban fringe development around Attleborough i.e. Foundry Corner/ Burgh Common.	✓
	Improve access to the countryside	✓

#### Character Area E4: Watton Ridge Plateau (*Wayland Plateau*)

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	OK	-
<b>Key Characteristics</b>		
	OK	-
	sparsely populated	✓
	dispersed settlement	✓
	heavy soils	-
	no distinguishing features	✓
<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>		
	'barren'	✓
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>		
	conserve the landscape.	✓
	Regenerate RAF Watton airfield- return it to grassland/woodland/farmland	✓

#### Character Area E5: Shipdham Plateau (*Central Breckland Plateau*)

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	OK	-
<b>Key Characteristics</b>		
5	Question whether the field pattern is irregular	✓
7	Bring out more information about the settlements- scattered farmsteads	✓
7	Introduce information about the evolution of villages	✓
6	More information about the historic processes and evolution of heritage assets	Depends on HLC data when available for this character area
<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>		
	Long views valued during the day time	✓
	Elevated roads	✓
	Light pollution	✓
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>		
	Enhance/Restore	✓

### Character Area E6: North Pickenham Plateau

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	OK	-
<b>Key Characteristics</b>		
7	Question distinctiveness of marl pits	✓
11	Question degrading impact of airfield	✓
<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>		
	No comment	-
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>		
	Conserve	✓

### Character Area E7: Beeston Settled Plateau (Beeston Plateau)

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	OK- subject to HLC data	Check HLC if available
<b>Key Characteristics</b>		
	Need to mention mineral workings	✓
	Quality 'climate' relatively	✓
	Highest point in Norfolk (E7 or E8)	LUC to check – this is one of the highest points in Breckland District
	Airfields on plateau	✓
<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>		
	Not felt to be intimate	✓
<b>Landscape Strategy</b>		
	Development pressures – extraction/waste/industrial development of former airfields (Beeston). Opportunities for restoration of mineral sites – potential to restore to heathland. Industrial development on airfield sites on the plateau has knock on effect on the tributary farmland – e.g. traffic on rural lanes	✓
	Enhance/Restore	✓
	Scope for mineral restoration	✓
	Relatively intact	✓

### Character Area E8: Dereham Plateau

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	Scarning Fen-move into B5 (check spelling)	Agree-this has been incorporated in B5
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
	Highest point in Norfolk (E7 or E8)	LUC to check
	711B soil type-heavy clay-poor draining	✓
	Largely unchanged history	✓
	Landscape centred around Dereham Park	✓
	Lanes are line ditched and double banked e.g. Shilling Lane, Old Drove Lane	✓
	Veteran trees	✓
	Airfields on plateau	✓
II	Note potential commercial use of rail in long term	✓
	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	No comment	-
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	Development pressures – extraction/waste/industrial development of former airfields (in E7 at Beeston). Opportunities for restoration of mineral sites – potential to restore to heathland. Industrial development on airfield sites on the plateau has knock on effect on the tributary farmland – e.g. traffic on rural lanes	✓(Also at Swanton Morley within this character area)
	Conserve historic landscape	✓
	Conserve veteran trees	✓
	Conserve pattern of rural roads	✓

### Character Area E9: Whissonsett Plateau

	<b>Boundaries</b>	<b>LUC response</b>
	Take boundaries further south along a lower contour line	Agree-small boundary change made.
	<b>Key Characteristics</b>	
	Post enclosure	✓
	Brisley Common an important feature	✓
	Population density was greater before enclosure	✓
	Veteran trees	✓

	<b>Perceptual/ Experiential Landscape</b>	
	V. low population density	✓
	<b>Landscape Strategy</b>	
	No comment	-

### **General Comments**

**Biodiversity:** (Scott Perkins): the report needs to draw out biodiversity more – in terms of habitats and key species. Must refer to Econet and Reg Lands work, plus also see KLWN methodology for incorporating ecological info. In particular, use EcoNet biodiversity information to add to all guidelines. (Norfolkbiodiversity.org)

**Building Character:** See information by Breckland Society

**Brecks:** Check Brecks Partnership website- e.g. for detailed heath surveys





### **3. EVALUATION AND NEXT STEPS**

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#### **EVALUATION FORMS**

- 3.1. At the end of the workshop evaluation forms were provided to each participant. 20% of participants (6 of the 29 present) completed and returned the forms. All reported that they found the evening interesting and useful, although more time would have been useful. All said they would like to be involved in any follow up event.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

- 3.2. LUC is in the process of completing the final draft landscape character assessment, incorporating comments made by workshop participants. The final draft report will be submitted to Breckland District Council in March 2007. There will be further opportunity to comment on the Landscape Character Assessment in Summer 2007 as part of the Local Development Framework consultation.
- 3.3. Land Use Consultants would like to take this opportunity to thank all participants for their attendance and the provision of extremely useful information.



## **APPENDIX I**



## WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

### Breckland Consultation Workshop Attendees

Name	Organisation
<b>Afternoon Session</b>	
Peter Francis	Breckland DC
Adrian Stasiak	Breckland DC
Tom Nash	New Buckenham PC
Brian Frith	North Lopham PC
Paul Thorogood	Norfolk County Council
Ray Reynolds	Attleborough TC
George Hayes	Dereham Area Partnership
Mike Garrod	Upper Yare Partnership
George Crummett	Upper Yare Partnership
Peter Lowings	Yaxham PC
Gilbert Addison	Breckland DC
John Hiskett	Norfolk Wildlife Trust
David Ovenden	Dereham Area Partnership
Michael Ward	Breckland DC
Robin Goolden	Wensum Valley Project
Gordon Bambridge	Breckland DC
David Gurney	Norfolk County Council
Colin Baron	Colkirk PC
David Yates	Norfolk County Council
Jill Glenn	Saham Toney PC
B Harold	Saham Toney PC
Andrew Gayton	Breckland DC

Eileen Powell	Beachamwell PC
Jill Ball	Breckland DC
Frank Woodward	Necton PC
Judith Cantell	Norfolk County Council
David Franklin	St. Edmundsbury DC
Ben Campbell	Great Hockham PC
Lynne Finnigan	Suffolk CC
Susan Glossop	Thetford TC
Ray Key	Breckland DC
Elizabeth Thomas	Forest Heath DC
Robert Kybird	Breckland DC
<b>Evening session</b>	
Scott Perkin	Norfolk County Council
David Burchell	Narborough PC
Brian Rayner	Narborough PC
Jane Scarrott	Weeting Clerk
Ann Morgan	Weeting Councillor
Lucy Evers	Gressenhall PC
Colin Clegg	Swanton Morley PC

## **WORKSHOP FACILITATORS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Kate Ahern	LUC
Andrew Tempany	LUC
Holly Robinson	LUC
David Spencer	BDC

Andrea Long	BDC
James Campbell	BDC





## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Tables Showing Landscape Classification and Boundary Justification**



**EXPLANATION OF LANDSCAPE TYPES/CHARACTER AREAS AND SUMMARY OF BOUNDARY CHANGES**

<b>Breckland and Kings Lynn Wind Turbine Sensitivity Study</b>	<b>Breckland Landscape Type</b>	<b>Breckland Landscape Character Area</b>	<b>Boundary changes and justification</b>
Types 1-6 wholly outside of Breckland within Kings Lynn and therefore omitted from the classification			
Type 7: Farmland with Woodland and Wetland	The small area within Breckland has been encompassed within Types D and F.	F1 and D1	The course of the River Nar and floodplain has become character area F1. The surrounding higher ground has been encompassed within character area D1
Type 8: Settled Farmland with Plantations	The small area within Breckland has been encompassed within landscape type D.	D1 and C1	The area of Settled Farmland with Plantations is judged to share similar topography and land use to character area D1, and where there is plantation woodland to the south with C1.
Type 9: Rolling Open Farmland	The small area within Breckland has been encompassed within landscape types E and B	E9 and B6	The small area of Rolling Open Farmland was not judged to be significantly different in character to warrant a separate character area. The farmland shared similar characteristics with both landscape types E and B, the boundary line between the landscape character areas was drawn based on topographical differences.
Type 10: Plateau Farmland	The plateau landscape type has become Landscape Type E: Plateau Farmland. It has been split into 9 character areas	E1: Boundary remains unchanged	
		E2: Split in two at Buckenhams	Split made due to a lower lying topography
		E3: large area to the south has been encompassed within B2	Split made due to lower lying topography and settlement pattern
		E4: Small part of former plateau to the north of Watton encompassed within B4	Split made due to lower lying topography
		E5: Extended south into B4	Split made due to lower lying topography Subdivided with E7-Cornation Plantation marks natural break.
		E6: Subdivided from E7	E6 has a markedly lower settlement density
		E7: Subdivided from E6 and E5	Split made due to lower settlement density and localised areas of woodland

**EXPLANATION OF LANDSCAPE TYPES/CHARACTER AREAS AND SUMMARY OF BOUNDARY CHANGES**

<b>Breckland and Kings Lynn Wind Turbine Sensitivity Study</b>	<b>Breckland Landscape Type</b>	<b>Breckland Landscape Character Area</b>	<b>Boundary changes and justification</b>
		E8: Small section to SW of Dereham incorporated within B6	Land use and topography shared more characteristics with the Settled Tributary Farmland landscape type.
		E9	Extended southwards to encompass elevated land.
Type 11	Type B: Settled Tributary Farmland. It has been separated into 8 character areas	B1: Little Ouse Settled Tributary Farmland	Has been separated due to a greater density of tributaries and a lower population density.
		B2: The Buckenham Settled Tributary Farmland	Separated due to its higher settlement density.
		B3: The Settled Tributary Farmland	Taken out an isolated area of Brecks Plantation to the south. Extended westwards to encompass tributary.
		B4: River Blackwater Settled Tributary Farmland	Some absorbed within River Blackwater Valley due to topography. Heads of the valley have been refined to correspond with contours. Extended into Central Breckland Plateau on northern side due to topography.
		B5: River Wissey Settled Tributary Farmland	No change
		B6: River Wensum and Tud Settled Tributary Farmland	Absorption of some of Landscape Type E (E9) due to topography. Includes part of former Upper Tud Valley Encompasses part of former Landscape Type 8: Rolling Farmland.
		B7: River Nar Settled Tributary Farmland	A large section of land within this character area formerly defined as Settled Tributary Farmland has become Type E Plateau Farmland.
		B8: Gooderstone to Oxborough Settled Tributary Farmland	This character area was formerly Type D. This has been re-classified as Type B due to the influence of the River Gadder.
Type 12: The Brecks Plantation	Type C: The Brecks Plantation	CI	This area remains largely unchanged although it does extend to include a section of the former Type 8 'Settled Farmland with Plantations'.
Type 13: The Brecks Heathland with Plantation	Type D: The Brecks Heathland with	D1: Swaffham Heath	A large section of D1 has become character area B8

**EXPLANATION OF LANDSCAPE TYPES/CHARACTER AREAS AND SUMMARY OF BOUNDARY CHANGES**

<b>Breckland and Kings Lynn Wind Turbine Sensitivity Study</b>	<b>Breckland Landscape Type</b>	<b>Breckland Landscape Character Area</b>	<b>Boundary changes and justification</b>
	Plantation	D2: Stanta Heath	Localised areas have become Type B due to tributaries and localised areas of wetland
		D3: Harling Heath	There has been a boundary change to the east to encompass part of Landscape Type E (E1) with a plantation land use.
Type 14: River Valleys	Type A: River Valleys	A1: River Thet – No change	
		A2: Upper Yare	Extended north-west at Garvestone .Boundary has been extended southwards to follow the 55m contour line at Woodrising.
		A3: River Wissey – No change	
		A4: River Wensum and Blackwater – No change	
		A5: Upper Tud – Alteration to western end of the valley relating to watercourse and vegetation.	



**APPENDIX 4**  
**Glossary of Terms**





## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum (sea level).
Ancient woodland	Woods that are believed to have been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD.
Built Form	The characteristic nature of built development.
Characteristic	A distinctive element of the landscape that contributes to landscape character for instance a particular hedgerow pattern or sense of tranquillity.
Conserve	Strategy where the emphasis is conservation of existing character and of particular features that contribute to this character.
Coppice	A traditional form of woodland management where trees are cut regularly on a cycle to promote growth from their bases.
Deal Rows	A local term for the Scots Pine windbreak hedgerows or tree lines within the Breckland landscape.
Enclosure	The placing in private hands of land to which there was previously common rights.
Enhance	Strategy where the emphasis is on restoring elements that have been lost or declined and on enhancing character. This may include improvements to landscape management practices and the introduction of positive new elements or features.
Fen	Fens are peatlands. Two main types of fen occur: Topogenous fens where water movement in the peat or soil is generally vertical (e.g. basin fens and floodplain fens) and Soligenous fens where water movements are lateral (e.g. mires associated with springs, rills and flushes and valley mires). They are dynamic semi-natural systems requiring appropriate management in order to maintain the open fen communities and associated species richness.
Guidelines	Guidelines outline the actions required to ensure that distinctive character is maintained.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Landscape character	The distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape and how these are perceived. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.
Landscape character areas	Single unique areas that are the discrete geographical area of a particular landscape type.
Landscape character types	Distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historic land use and settlement pattern.
Meres	Lakes formed when ice sheets retreated, carving out hollows in the underlying bedrock, and filling with meltwater from the glaciers.
Pingos	Water bodies created by the contraction of frozen pockets of ground water during the thaw following the last Ice Age.
Re-create	A strategy that provides the opportunity to create or accelerate change towards a new positive landscape character.
Restore	A strategy which focuses upon restoration or renewal of landscape features or characteristics that have been or are currently being lost or degraded, alongside active management of the remaining resource.
Sensitivity	A judgement of how sensitive or vulnerable a landscape component is to change.
Skyline	The outline of a range of hills, ridge or group of buildings seen against the sky.
Vernacular architecture	Architecture which is indigenous to a specific place and adapted to both the environment and to the user's need. (The term 'vernacular' is derived from the Latin vernaculus, meaning 'native').