

NORTH KESTEVEN LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT



David Tyldesley and Associates

for

North Kesteven District Council

September 2007

Cover photograph

Vista from Harmston village on the Lincoln Cliff, north-west over the Witham and Brant Vales character sub-area.

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FINAL DRAFT

prepared by

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for

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Contents

	Page
PART 1 – PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND LANDSCAPE CONTENT	
1. Purpose of the Report	1
2. Methodology	3
3. Introduction to Landscape Character Assessment	7
4. Introduction to the Landscape Characteristics of North Kesteven	11
5. Evolution of the Landscape	13
PART 2 – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA DESCRIPTIONS	
6. Trent and Witham Vales Regional Landscape Character Type	23
Landscape Character Sub-areas:	
6.1 Heath Sandlands	23
6.2 Terrace Sandlands	28
6.3 Till Vale	36
6.4 Lincoln Fringe	41
6.5 Witham and Brant Vales	43
7. Lincoln Cliff Regional Landscape Character Type	53
7.1 Lincoln Cliff Landscape Character Sub-Area	53
8. Central Plateau Regional Landscape Character Type	61
Landscape Character Sub-areas:	
8.1 Limestone Heath	61
8.2 Raucedale Hills	67
8.3 Wilsford Heath	73
8.4 Sleasdale Valley	77
8.5 Central Clays and Gravels	82
8.6 Upland Plateau Fringe	88
9. The Fens Regional Landscape Character Type	95
9.1 Fenland Landscape Character Sub-Area	95
10. North Kesteven Green Wedges	101
PART 3 – DESIGN STATEMENT	
11. Design Statement – Landscape and Countryside Design in North Kesteven	113
12. Settlement and Landscape Design Guidelines	121
References and Sources of Information	143
Figures and Maps	
Figure 1 Landscape Character Types and Sub Areas	at end
Maps 1-8 Detailed 1:50,000 scale maps showing boundaries of Landscape Character Types and Sub-Areas	at end
Appendices	
Appendix 1 Example of Field Sheet	at end

PART 1 – PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) has commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) of the district which will be used to inform the Local Development Framework (LDF). NKDC is in the early stages of preparation of its LDF which will cover the plan period 2001-2021.
- 1.2 A detailed assessment of the character, distinctiveness and qualities of the landscape of North Kesteven is required in order to inform policies to be contained in the forthcoming LDF, in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1) and The Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8).
- 1.3 PPS1 sets out the Government's commitment to the protection of the environment. PPS1 states that planning policies should seek to protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas as a whole. In order to achieve this, planning policies should be based on up-to-date information on the environmental characteristics of the area.
- 1.4 RSS8 states that when preparing LDFs, LCAs are needed in order to underpin, and act as key components of, criteria-based policies to be used when assessing the suitability of land for development in rural or urban fringe areas. Policy 30 of RSS8 states that these should be prepared to coincide with the adoption of the LDF.
- 1.5 Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) sets out the Government's objectives for sustainable development in rural areas. With regard to local landscape designations, the Government recognises and accepts that there are areas of landscape outside nationally designated areas that are particularly highly valued locally. The Government believes that carefully drafted, criteria-based policies in Local Development Documents (LDDs), utilising tools such as landscape character assessment, should provide sufficient protection for these areas, without the need for rigid local designations that may unduly restrict acceptable, sustainable development and the economic activity that underpins the vitality of rural areas.
- 1.6 There are no nationally designated landscape areas within North Kesteven. The early drafts of the current Local Plan included a local landscape designation, the 'Lincoln Cliff Area of Great Landscape Value'. This was subsequently abandoned in favour of the current 'Lincoln Cliff Landscape Character Area' policy. In accordance with PPS7, local landscape designations should only be maintained or, exceptionally, extended where it can be clearly shown that criteria-based planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. This LCA considers how best the importance of this striking landscape feature can be conserved and managed in the context of the criteria given in paragraphs 24 and 25 of PPS7.
- 1.7 The Lincolnshire Structure Plan Policy LPA8 designates a series of 'Green Wedges'. These are defined further in the North Kesteven Local Plan 2007. This LCA assesses the appropriateness of the Local Plan policy and designation from a landscape perspective and makes appropriate recommendations.
- 1.8 The LCA includes, as a separate section which may form the basis of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), a Design Statement indicating how necessary development can be accommodated whilst ensuring that local character and distinctiveness are protected.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The LCA was commissioned in January 2007. It follows the guidance given in “Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland” prepared by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage in 2002. Essentially, 5 steps have been followed:

Step 1 Defining the Scope

- 2.2 The scope of the study was established with NKDC in the first week of January 2007 before any work was undertaken. The scope was predominantly defined by the agreed purpose of the LCA, as described in Chapter 1, and the scale and level of detail considered appropriate for this purpose (see steps 3 and 4).
- 2.3 Whilst no stakeholders (other than NKDC) have been involved in the LCA process, information was obtained on other assessments from neighbouring authorities (see step 2).
- 2.4 It was agreed with NKDC that the starting point for the LCA would be the joint Countryside Commission and English Nature report on “the Character of England: landscape, wildlife and natural features”, 1996 (the Countryside Character Approach), which identifies four character areas within North Kesteven (see Chapter 4). This was compared with the District Council’s own interpretation of the 4 national character areas in the Local Plan, which identifies a separate character area for the Lincoln Cliff scarp and dip slopes (see Chapter 4).
- 2.5 Using these existing landscape character areas as a starting point, this LCA then defines their boundaries, validates and refines them. It also sub-divides them into smaller sub-areas which, whilst sharing common characteristics with the main regional landscape character types, merit identification because of their distinctiveness and variations in character. The LCA identifies, for each of the landscape sub-areas, the key characteristics, a description of the landscape character (see step 4), analysis of its sensitivity to pressures for change, and provides guidelines for enhancement/restoration and accommodating new development.
- 2.6 It was agreed that mapping outputs in the LCA would be scanned drawings in pdf format for uploading onto GIS by NKDC.

Step 2 Desk Study

- 2.7 Preparatory work was undertaken by reviewing numerous sources of information as listed in Appendix 1 and in the References. A series of map overlays were prepared at 1:50,000 encompassing:
- geology and soils
 - topography
 - roads and settlements
 - rivers and drainage
 - vegetation
 - land use

- 2.8 This information was overlain on the Local Plan Proposals Map, at the same 1:50,000 scale, which illustrates other relevant information with land use policy implications, namely:
- washland
 - Landscape Designations
 - Green Wedges
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest
 - County Wildlife Sites
 - Local Nature Reserves
 - Scheduled Monuments
 - Conservation Areas
 - Parks and Gardens of Special/Local Historic Interest
- 2.9 Once finalised, the multiple map overlays were combined to begin the process of identifying areas of common character. Aerial photographs were used (from the Live Search website) to help identify initial landscape character area boundaries, for testing in the field.
- 2.10 No Historic Landscape Characterisation has been completed for Lincolnshire.

Step 3 Field Survey

- 2.11 Field survey was planned to ensure all the draft landscape character types and sub-areas were visited. A purpose-designed field recording sheet was prepared and used to record as much information as necessary in order to describe the character, identify aesthetic and perceptual qualities, and to inform subsequent judgements and decisions.
- 2.12 Ordnance Survey base maps at 1:25,000 scale (OS Explorer Maps) covering the whole of the district and beyond were used in the field. The fieldwork was undertaken between mid January and the end of March 2007. Surveyors travelled mostly in pairs, but occasionally in threes or singularly, to record their findings on the fieldsheets and by annotating the 1:25,000 scale base maps. Photographs were also taken at each survey point, and elsewhere throughout the district.

Step 4 Classification and Descriptions

- 2.13 This step in the classification process is classifying and describing landscape character. A top-down approach was adopted as being appropriate at the local authority scale, by refining and subdividing existing character types previously identified by the national 'Countryside Character' approach and by NKDC as described in the Local Plan. This resulted in draft regional landscape character types which are broken down further into local landscape character sub-areas.
- 2.14 Table 1 in Chapter 4 indicates how the landscape character types and sub-areas relate to the areas identified in the wider 'Countryside Character' approach and in the NKDC Local Plan.
- 2.15 Chapters 6 to 9 provide the written descriptions for each of the landscape character types and sub-areas identified in this LCA. These are the result of several refinements following consultation with NKDC on initial findings, further field surveys and on-going discussions between the assessment team.

Step 5 Making Judgements based on Landscape Character

- 2.16 This step is not always taken in LCAs. However, as described in Chapter 1, one of the main purposes of this LCA is to form the basis of a SPD to indicate how necessary development can be accommodated whilst ensuring that local character and distinctiveness are protected, and where necessary enhanced. Judgements are made on the particular sensitivities of each landscape character sub-area to change.

3. Introduction to Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.1 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a process used to help plan and manage landscape change. It has evolved over the last 30 years or so. At the outset it may be useful to explain some of the terms used in landscape character assessment. The definitions are consistent with terminology in good practice publications by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002) and Landscape Institute (Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 2002). It helps to explain that landscape character assessment is not entirely subjective but based on a blend of objective assessment and subjective judgement of professional landscape planners. All of these various expressions are used in this report.
- 3.2 **Landscape Elements** – these are the individual components which make up the landscape including, for example in North Kesteven, hills, valleys, rivers, woods, trees, hedges, ponds, stone walls, buildings and roads. They are visible, physical components which generally are capable of being measured and quantified and they can easily be described in an objective way.
- 3.3 **Landscape Features** – these are particularly prominent or eye-catching elements such as a tree clump on a hill top, a church spire, conspicuous buildings such as Leadenham House on the Lincoln Cliff, telecommunication masts, and ridges that form the skyline.
- 3.4 **Landscape Characteristics** – these are components of the landscape, or combinations of them, that make a particular contribution to the character of an area. They will therefore include combinations of the physical elements and features but will also include aspects of landscape experience which are not of a physical nature. Thus, landscape characteristics may be **visible and physical** elements as already described above, or they may be **visible and spatial but not physical** characteristics such as scale, pattern, colour and texture. There may also be **non-visible characteristics** of the landscape which, although they cannot be seen, can influence our experience of a landscape and include sound, smell, temperature and our prior knowledge of the history or artistic or cultural associations with the landscape. The non-physical characteristics of the landscape are more difficult to describe objectively. They can rarely be measured or quantified but their contribution to landscape character is just as important as the physical elements.
- 3.5 **Landscape Character** – this is the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, features and characteristics that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape. It reflects particular combinations of, for example, geology, landform (the shape of the land), soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It creates the distinctiveness, identity and the sense of place which makes one landscape different from another. The recognition and understanding of landscape character is fundamental to contemporary landscape planning and landscape management which seek to manage change in the landscape in ways that will generally conserve, enhance and, where necessary, restore its character as an important contribution to sustainable development and quality of life.
- 3.6 **Landscape classification** – this is the process of identifying the character of different landscapes in any particular area and sorting them into distinctive **landscape character types**. The landscape character types can be mapped and described in a systematic way at various scales, ranging from national to local, a process referred to as landscape characterisation. In this LCA the broad landscape character types

have been further divided into smaller **landscape character sub-areas** (see paragraph 2.5).

- 3.7 **Landscape Characterisation** – this is the process of identifying areas of similar character, classifying, mapping and describing them. It is a fundamental part of landscape character assessment. England's national landscape characterisation is expressed in the Countryside Agency's Character of England Map (1996).
- 3.8 **Landscape Character Assessment** – this is the whole process of landscape classification, characterisation, understanding the history and evolution of the landscape, identifying pressures and trends for change in the landscape and often producing guidelines to advise on the management of landscape change. This process is widely endorsed and encouraged by the Government in national planning statements (PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development 2005, PPS 7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas 2004) and by the Countryside Agency and its successor Natural England for several years.
- 3.9 **Landscape Evaluation** – this is a different and separate process from landscape character assessment. It is the evaluation of different areas or landscapes, normally against a set of pre-defined criteria. The evaluation process may, or may not, classify or characterise the landscape in the way described above, but it always relies on judgements being made as to the relative worth or value of landscapes for different interests or groups or to underpin designations. Landscape evaluation in the past may lead to designations such as, in the case of North Kesteven, the Lincoln Cliff Area of Great Landscape Value (now abandoned), and elsewhere, National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 3.10 **Landscape Capacity** – this is the capability of a landscape to accommodate a particular kind of change, for example, increased woodland cover or new built development. It is usually expressed in relative, rather than absolute, terms. For some changes there may be identifiable thresholds or limits of acceptable change beyond which the character of a landscape would be changed in negative or positive ways. For most changes, however, capacity is a relative measure expressing how increasing levels of change increasingly affect landscape character. This LCA provides advice on how development can be accommodated, but is not a detailed landscape capacity study.
- 3.11 **Landscape Impact Assessment** – the process of assessing the effects of one or more proposed changes to the landscape, as a resource in its own right, how its character may be changed, beneficially or adversely, by changes to its elements, features or characteristics. Usually the effects (impacts) are judged as a relative degree of change and expressed in terms such as substantial, moderate or slight adverse or beneficial impacts etc. In this context, beneficial impacts would strengthen, enhance, restore or otherwise improve the distinctiveness of landscape character. Adverse impacts would diminish or eliminate distinctiveness, remove characteristic elements and/or add uncharacteristic elements and thereby damage landscape character. Landscape impact assessment has not been considered within this LCA (see also paragraph 3.13).
- 3.12 **Visual amenity** – the benefit or advantages gained from a view in terms of what is seen and may be enjoyed by an observer.
- 3.13 **Visual Impact Assessment** – the process of assessing the effect of one or more proposed changes to views that are experienced by people and how the changes

may affect the (visual) amenity of the view, beneficially or adversely. For example, a view may be impeded, narrowed or shut off (visual obstruction), views of unsightly features may be hidden (screened) or partly hidden (filtered), new features may be introduced (visual enhancement or intrusion), or features may be removed (visual reduction). Usually the relative degree of change is judged and expressed in terms such as substantial, moderate or slight beneficial or adverse effects on visual amenity. Visual Impact Assessment is usually undertaken alongside landscape impact assessment, and thus is not a consideration within this LCA.

- 3.14 The **sensitivity of the landscape** depends on a range of factors including its character, its capacity to accommodate a proposed change, its condition and integrity, trends or pressures for change in landscape character and whether it has been identified as a landscape of particular importance in policy terms (e.g. Areas of Great Landscape Value). The most sensitive landscapes are those with limited capacity to accommodate the proposed change, landscapes with a particularly typical or distinctive character which has historical continuity and integrity, rare landscape types, designated landscapes and landscapes that have been specifically designed or planned for visual amenity e.g. designed landscapes or parklands forming the setting of a country house.

4. Introduction to the Landscape Characteristics of North Kesteven

- 4.1 Essentially there are three broad landscape character types within North Kesteven, each elongated from north to south:
- To the west are the Trent and Witham Vales, as described in Chapter 6
 - To the east is The Fens, which are described in Chapter 9
 - In between is the Central Plateau, as described in Chapter 8.
- 4.2 On the western edge of the Central Plateau, overlooking the Trent and Witham Vales, is the steep scarp slope of the Lincolnshire Edge, known locally as the Lincoln Cliff. It is described in Chapter 7 as the fourth landscape character type in the district, principally due to the distinctive landform and geology which is in sharp contrast to the relatively flat landscapes elsewhere throughout the district.
- 4.3 Within these broad divisions are many local variations in geology, soil, slope, natural drainage and settlement. In all, 13 landscape character sub-areas have been identified. Table 1 categorises the four landscape character types and the 13 landscape character sub-areas therein.
- 4.4 The boundaries of the four landscape character types approximately follow the boundaries of the four national character areas that lie across North Kesteven as identified by the Countryside Agency (now incorporated within Natural England) within the Character of England (1996), as explained below:
- 'The Fens' character area is almost identical to the national delineation.
 - The Southern Lincolnshire Edge is very similar to the area identified in this LCA as the 'Central Plateau', with the exception that the steep scarp slope of the Lincoln Cliff is excluded (and becomes a separate landscape character type). Furthermore the national area Kesteven Uplands is included as a landscape sub-area within the Central Plateau and is re-named the 'Upland Plateau Fringe'.
 - The Trent and Belvoir Vales area is almost identical but is re-named the Trent and Witham Vales to reflect its location within North Kesteven district.
- 4.5 Table 1 below indicates the landscape classification within this LCA, and illustrates how this compares to the Character of England and the District Council's Local Plan:

Table 1

Landscape Classification			
Landscape Character Areas – Countryside Character Approach	Landscape Character Areas – Local Plan	Landscape Character Types – this LCA	Landscape Character Sub-Areas – this LCA
Trent and Belvoir Vales	Trent and Witham Vales	Trent and Witham Vales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heath Sandlands - Terrace Sandlands - Till Vale - Lincoln Fringe - Witham and Brant Vales
Kesteven Uplands	Kesteven Uplands	Central Plateau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upland Plateau Fringe - Limestone Heath - Rauceby Hills - Wilsford Heath - Slea Valley - Central Clays and Gravels
Southern Lincolnshire Edge	Lincoln Cliff Dip Slope		
	Lincoln Cliff	Lincoln Cliff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lincoln Cliff
The Fens	The Fens	The Fens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fenland

5. Evolution of the Landscape

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The overriding character of the North Kesteven landscape today is that it is flat or gently undulating, predominantly in agricultural use and generally open with few or discontinuous boundaries and small areas of woodland. Within this broad character there are many local variations, and the prominent Lincoln Cliff forms a distinctive backbone to the district.
- 5.1.2 The character of North Kesteven's landscape is derived from the underlying base rock, which over millions of years has been subjected to the twin processes of erosion and deposition resulting in a unique topographic form which has, in turn, influenced the pattern and distribution of soils, drainage, land cover and human activity. Successive generations of people have altered the natural landscape, and this continues today.

5.2 Physical Influence

Geological History

- 5.2.1 In geological terms Lincolnshire is made up of more or less parallel bands of sedimentary deposits running in a north-south direction. These deposits were laid down during the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous and recent periods.
- 5.2.2 The oldest deposits are found in the western side of the County in the Trent Valley. The Keuper Series were laid down about 225 million years ago during the Triassic Period when an inland sea covered much of the north of England. The series consists of marls and sandstones. Much of these Triassic formations are overlain by Pleistocene and Recent deposits.
- 5.2.3 The Jurassic Period followed, 195 million years ago, lasting some 55 million years when shale, clays, sandstones and limestones were deposited. The Lincolnshire Edge, or Lincoln Cliff as it is known locally, is made up from deposits of this period. It is a continuous feature for approximately 50 miles from Grantham in the south to the Humber Estuary in the north, formed by the Middle Jurassic limestone. The River Witham breaches the ridge at Lincoln. The Kesteven Uplands were also formed by Middle Jurassic limestone.
- 5.2.4 Towards the end of the Jurassic Period the sea began to recede and as a result there was a break in deposition of material and erosion of the already existing deposits. The basic, underlying shape of Lincolnshire as we know it today was established by the end of the Cretaceous Period and subsequently altered only by erosion and development of river systems during the Tertiary Period, and the influence of the ice age in the Quaternary Period.

5.3 The Influence of the Ice Age

- 5.3.1 The present day form of the land, its cover of soils and the pattern of drainage is the result of the formation and movement of the ice sheets which developed over 150 million years ago, and moved across Lincolnshire in a southerly direction. The erosive action of the ice sheets was particularly effective in the softer clays of the Trent valley and the Lincoln Clay Vale, which were deepened by the ice. The ice also moulded and smoothed the shape of the Lincoln Cliff. The ice age included

several episodes of glaciation, interspersed with warmer inter-glacial periods in which meltwater streams incised new drainage patterns and the seawater rose.

- 5.3.2 In the final period of glaciation, in the Quaternary Period, over a million years ago, the Wash was plugged with a combination of ice and boulder till. This in turn caused the formation of a massive glacial lake in the Fens and the lower Trent valley. When this lake eventually drained it left behind a rich alluvium which makes today's fertile farmland. Glacial sands were also blown eastwards across the unvegetated frozen landscape, probably originating from sandstones to the west of the Trent. These coversands added to the complex pattern of meltwater deposition in the Lincoln Clay Vale, where boulder till, clay, gravels and alluvium formed an uneven covering.

5.4 Today's Geological Landscape

- 5.4.1 As a result of its geological history the landform of North Kesteven consists of three main areas, the central limestone cliff and dip slope (including the Kesteven Uplands), the Witham/Brant clay vale and the fenlands.
- 5.4.2 Throughout most of North Kesteven the Lincoln Cliff is relatively narrow, but broadens out at Leadenham where there is a double terrace, towards the Kesteven Uplands to the south. It has a regular height of about 60 metres above sea level, with a line of springs where the Oolitic limestone rests on the underlying clay. The gentle rolling dip slope comprises a sequence of Jurassic clays which became overlain by the drift deposits of alluvium, boulder clays, coversands and gravels. The limestone of the Kesteven Uplands supports well drained calcareous loams similar to the Lincolnshire edge but also has areas of slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged clayey soils, developed on the glacial till and boulder clay.
- 5.4.3 The River Witham is the major watercourse in the District which rises in the Kesteven Uplands near Grantham and flows northwards up to Lincoln City where it cuts through the Lincoln Cliff. The Witham and Brant Vale to the west of the District has predominately heavy clay soils, but local variations in the solid and drift geology have a marked influence on landscape character, with low hillocks of boulder till forming shallow "islands" on the flat alluvial land. Further to the west there are fluvio-glacial deposits of sands and gravels creating sandy loams. To the west of Lincoln close to the Trent is a strip of wind-blown sand.
- 5.4.4 The Fens on the eastern edge of the District follows the line of the River Witham as it flows towards the Wash. As the sea level has changed since the last Ice Age, the balance of saltmarsh, bog and woodland has altered. The underlying geology is a complex combination of post-glacial alluvium and freshwater clays. Within North Kesteven the soils are dark friable fen peat. The original course of the River Witham once meandered through a flood plain of marshy pools and reed beds, but since the 17th century the area has been progressively drained. The River Witham now has an artificial canalised course which runs straight for miles and is bounded by high banks to contain the watercourse from the lower adjacent fields.

5.5 Human Influences

- 5.5.1 There is archaeological evidence that this part of Lincolnshire has been settled by humans for many thousands of years. The Mesolithic people were the first settlers in the area and are thought to have preferred the drier, relatively open sites of the Lincoln Cliff rather than the densely wooded valleys. The process of woodland

clearance was begun by the Neolithic farmers and continued by Bronze Age settlers, who probably occupied all but the heavy clay lands.

- 5.5.2 The Roman occupation made a very visible impact on the landscape of North Kesteven. Lincoln was a fortified city linked by Ermine Street and the Fosse Way to other major settlements across Britain. Ermine Street roughly follows the crest of the Lincoln Cliff and Ancaster became an important Roman town in the gap created by the River Slea. The Foss Dyke is the oldest canal in England constructed by the Romans around 120AD and still in use today. It connects the River Trent at Torksey with the River Witham at Lincoln and was originally used for the transport of wool and other agricultural products.
- 5.5.3 The Romans were the first to attempt to control the water levels in the fenland areas. The Car Dyke, which runs close to the western limit of the Fens and joins the Witham a few miles south of Lincoln, was constructed by the Romans from Lincoln to Peterborough. It has been thought that the purpose of the Car Dyke was probably to transport livestock, although it could also have been a catchwater drain which cleverly allowed water to flow in both directions depending on the state of the tide. It was also thought that the Romans used the fens for agriculture but more recent research suggests that they also engaged in industrial activity, particularly the production of salt, deposited by the high tides flowing through the lowlands at that time. These artificial waterways fell into disuse after the Romans left.
- 5.5.4 The Anglo-Saxon invasions of the 5th and 6th Centuries heralded a new era in land management, introducing more systematic methods of cultivation. They favoured the Lincoln Cliff with its loamy soils and springs. Patterns of woodland clearance occurred during this period which had a lasting influence and is often reflected in the present day parish boundaries.
- 5.5.5 Lincolnshire was then invaded by the Danish Vikings in the 8th Century. The area occupied by the Danes became known as Danelaw and was dominated by the five boroughs of Nottingham, Lincoln, Stamford, Derby and Leicester. The influence of the Viking occupation is evident in many of today's place names with the suffixes "by" "thorpe" and "kirk". A long distance footpath, The Viking Way, has also been established, running from Barton-upon-Humber to Oakham, to remember this time.
- 5.5.6 During the medieval period farming developed on the perimeter of the "Cliff" along the western spring line and to the clay vale to the east. The Domesday Book shows the cliff edge as an agricultural community and there are still signs of the medieval five-field system evident in furlong ridges in some areas. The farmer's homesteads were established in the well-drained, cliff edge villages, leaving the legacy of numerous fine houses and barns in today's cliff top villages. Manorial power was a great influence at this time with the church and manor being the most important buildings and often with a close physical relationship.
- 5.5.7 The upper reaches of the limestone plateau remained an expanse of uncultivated heathland and gorse. Indeed many parts of this area still bear the name of "Heath", and have few settlements within it. Parts of the heath are deeply steeped in history and legend owing to strong connections with the Knights Templar of the 12th Century. Temple Bruer, in the middle of the Heath between the A15 and A607, north of Cranwell, is one of the few Knights Templar sites left in England where any ruins remain standing. The Temple Bruer estate was ideal as a base for the practicing of military manoeuvres and sheep farming, to finance the Crusades. Lincolnshire became a rich County at the time, breeding Lincolnshire Longwool sheep. The great

change in emphasis from arable to sheep farming led to the setting up of villages which became what we now call deserted medieval villages.

- 5.5.8 The 16th and 17th Centuries were a time of population decline in rural areas. There was a general migration to towns, conversion back from pasture to arable and a rationalisation of agricultural holdings. During the 18th Century the enclosure movement had a great influence on land patterns. On the limestone plateau it resulted in the improvement and cultivation of the heathlands creating the elevated farmlands seen today. In 1846 Disraeli made a speech on the repeal of the Cornlaws in which he said:

“Why, the market is supplied with the wheat of Lincoln Heath, the intrinsic poverty of who’s soil is only sustained by the annual application of artificial manures, but which produced the finest corn in the Kingdom. What has protection done for them? Why, if protection has never existed, Lincolnshire might still have been a wild wold, a barren heath, a plashy marsh.”

- 5.5.9 During the 19th Century the erection of windmills on the Central Plateau, taking advantage of the flat upland location, was a major influence on the landscape of the district. Further windmills were erected on the fens. Today there are 14 mills remaining in various conditions, with the taller restored mills such as at Heckington and Scopwick being conspicuous features within the landscape.
- 5.5.10 The human history of the Fens has been a battle of man against the forces of nature to bring out the full agricultural potential of the land. Although the Romans were the first to attempt to control water levels by building flood defences and drainage channels, much of their work fell into disuse. In the Middle Ages monks played an important role in tending the land on the edges of the fen and a number of monasteries developed in Lincolnshire including ones at Bardney and South Kyme.
- 5.5.11 In the middle ages sheep were reared in the fens, primarily for wool which was England’s most important source of wealth at that time. The fens were also used for growing hay and reeds, for fishing, and occasionally as ploughed land. In the late middle ages there was a decline in the wool trade and the fenlands became neglected. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution there was a need for increased agricultural production and in 1762 an Act of Parliament was obtained to authorise major drainage works in the area of the River Witham, which was the last area of fenland to be improved. This Act also included the setting up of six Internal Drainage Districts which, were to be controlled as independent areas separated from one another by a system of flood banks and sluice gates. Huge capital investment was made in the fens with the objective being to convert seasonally inundated grassland, only useful for six months, into land which could support farming all year round. Flooding was still a danger and because the fens are so low lying, pumps have always been necessary to raise unwanted water up to the River Witham. In the 18th Century windmills powered such pumps but after the 1820s steam power was often installed. This was more powerful and reliable, and made a great difference to the fens. Nowadays electric motors are generally used.
- 5.5.12 The primary use of the drains has always been water removal and storage but they were also an obvious means of transport. Farming families used boats to go into Boston or Sleaford for the markets to sell their produce. From that time the right of navigation has been maintained on the larger drains although drainage and irrigation are always the priority functions.

- 5.5.13 A major 20th Century influence on the landscape of North Kesteven has been the growth of airfields along the top of the limestone edge. This part of Lincolnshire was ideal for military airfields because the expanse of flat and well drained ground provided the ideal conditions for runway construction. Airfields were first brought into operation at various times in the First World War, including Bracebridge Heath, Anwick, Digby, Wellingore and Cranwell. New airfields were opened up all over the County during the Second World War and by 1945 there were 49, including within North Kesteven, RAF Waddington, Metherringham, Coleby Grange, Anwick, Cranwell, Swinderby and Wellingore.
- 5.5.14 Many airfields have since become disused, although the remains of runways and control towers can still be identified. However four of the airfields are still in active service: RAF Waddington dominates the surrounding countryside with its new hangar complex and is home to the “AWACS” E3 aircraft with its distinct rotating radar dish; the RAF College and Training school situated at Cranwell with its imposing central building; RAF Digby which is a listening station; and RAF Swinderby which is a flying school.

5.6 Ecology

- 5.6.1 Being within one of the most important counties for agriculture in the country, much of the North Kesteven area of Lincolnshire is dominated by farmland. In many areas the agriculture is large scale and intensive, with arable crops being the primary land use. The intensification of production since the Second World War stemmed from a need to meet demand as a self sustaining country in the post war years, and more recently by the need to farm land more intensively to enable agriculture to continue to be profitable in the modern economy with retailer control over much of the market.
- 5.6.2 Whilst such areas have a relatively low level of ecological interest when compared with landscapes of more semi natural and varied habitat types, there remains some very important habitats of biodiversity value within this agricultural landscape. These are either remnants of former habitat types, or are habitats that arise specifically as a result of the use of the land for agriculture, such as hedgerows, ditches and field margins. Typical habitats of biodiversity importance in the North Kesteven District include semi-improved grasslands, hedges, woodland copses, wetlands and streams. Of critical importance across the district is the connectivity of these valuable habitats, which is needed to enable species to move across otherwise unsuitable or unusable land.
- 5.6.3 Taking a landscape scale view of an area’s requirements for nature conservation brings landscape and wildlife conservation more closely aligned and enables a more co-ordinated approach to the conservation, enhancement and restoration of the natural environment. When considering the character of the landscape, and what may be possible to retain, restore or enhance the important character of a particular landscape type, it is important to consider how such restoration or enhancement can also be undertaken to improve the connectivity of valuable habitats within the landscape. Similarly, biodiversity initiatives, including habitat creation and restoration projects, must consider the wider landscape setting, to ensure that they are in keeping with the wider character of the area and do not erode its distinctiveness or introduce uncharacteristic features.
- 5.6.4 Whilst taking a larger scale and co-ordinated approach will be most beneficial, it still remains necessary to bear in mind the specific and more local wildlife issues within the North Kesteven District. Taking account of the needs of individual species or

species groups that are locally notable in the District should feature in the progression of the larger scale landscape character enhancement work, working in partnership with the development of a sustainable agricultural economy in the area. In a district where the land use is predominantly agriculture, the decline of species such as brown hare *Lepus europaeus* and a number of farmland birds due to modern farming methods is of great concern, for example.

- 5.6.5 There is clear evidence that the agricultural landscape is slowly but increasingly evolving with the more recent emphasis on government payments for environmental enhancements on agricultural land. Environmental Stewardship, following from its predecessor Countryside Stewardship, is a system of paying farmers for managing, restoring and enhancing their agricultural land to the benefit of local biodiversity and the wider landscape.
- 5.6.6 Around the North Kesteven District a considerable amount of native mixed species hedgerow planting can be seen. Large field margins provide a refuge for ground nesting farmland birds such as grey partridge *Perdix perdix*, and also ensure an unsprayed zone where some of the rare arable weeds such as Cornflower *Centaurea cyanus* and corn marigold *Chrysanthemum segetum* can survive.
- 5.6.7 Other margins include a seed bearing crop planted purely as a feeding area for farmland passerines of local biodiversity importance, such as linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, corn bunting *Miliaria calandra* and yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*. These are a welcome addition to the large expanses of arable fields. A number of field margins hosting sunflowers are noted within the district, for example.
- 5.6.8 'Beetle banks' are also to be seen as distinctive banks of wilderness running up the middle of otherwise extensive and continual blankets of arable land, providing an oasis of invertebrate life that offers a natural control mechanism for crop pests. Consequently, the North Kesteven landscape is gradually losing some of its uniformity. It is regaining some of its former detail and also benefiting from new biodiversity enhancements that are adding diversity to the landscape.

Ecology of the Trent and Witham Vales

- 5.6.9 Prior to settlement in this area it is thought that the majority of the Vales were covered by oak woodland, with alder and lime. Woodland clearance is likely to have taken place since Mesolithic times (10,000 to 4,500 BC), with various periods in history seeing more prolific woodland clearance. A number of plantations exist amongst the broadleaved woodland blocks, and these are likely to be on land that was formerly broadleaved woodland, specifically cleared to make way for the commercial timber planting of spruce and pine. It is evident that a number of these plantations are reverting back to oak woodland, and this should be facilitated wherever possible to the benefit of both habitat and landscape restoration. Despite this significant historic loss, the Trent and Witham Vales remains the most wooded area of the North Kesteven district, and the residual woodland blocks are important and defining habitats for the area. Unfortunately, a number of woodlands suffer from harsh boundaries with agricultural land running tightly up to the outer tree line. In such situations the biodiversity value of the woodland is reduced by its lack of woodland edge habitat, where a significant amount of botanical and invertebrate diversity is usually found.

- 5.6.10 Hedgerows are a distinctive feature of the Trent and Witham Vale, and offer one of the most important opportunities for wildlife corridor restoration. The relative abundance of hedgerows in comparison with other parts of the district is notable in the landscape, and consequently in the numbers of farmland birds seen in the area. The native hedgerows are dominated by hawthorn, but occasionally a more diverse hedgerow occurs. The Midland hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata* is characteristic of the region, occasionally found at woodland edges or more rarely within a hedgerow that crosses a former woodland site. This species is distinguished from the more ubiquitous common hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* by its flowers having two or three styles, which results in fruits of two or three seeds as opposed to the single style seen in common hawthorn flowers, producing single seeded fruits.
- 5.6.11 Large mature trees are often clustered around the halls and manor houses in the Vale, but also occasionally seen along the roadsides, offering vital habitat to mammal, bird and invertebrate life. Large old pollarded willows can also be seen along some of the river stretches, such as those along the River Witham to the south of Stapleford.
- 5.6.12 Grassland that is unimproved, or only partially improved is now quite rare in the agricultural landscape, but occasional pockets can be found in the District, particularly around the edges of parkland or where grassland has been traditionally managed with grazing or cutting without being relied upon for economic return by an agricultural business. In these remnant small fields, original boundary features such as stone walls or enclosure hedgerows may also remain. Rarely, the old ridge and furrow lines can still be detected, such as those on the outskirts of Whisby, and it is in such locations that more diverse neutral grasslands are likely to be found.
- 5.6.13 These rare fragments of grassland support a diversity of plant and invertebrate life, which varies with soil type. The Trent and Witham Vales host a variety of soil types reflecting the range of underlying geology. Seasonal inundation of water on lower land close to the Witham and Brant creates wet grassland habitat suitable for feeding and breeding waders such as lapwing and snipe. This has been reduced however by the constructed embankments running along much of the stretches of river through the Vales, preventing flood water spilling over into the adjacent grassland.
- 5.6.14 The Witham and its tributaries support a number of important biodiversity action plan species including the native crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* and the water rail *Rallus aquaticus*. Indeed there is a new long distance path and cycleway running along the disused railway adjacent to the River Witham called the Water Rail Trail. Natural large water bodies are not a characteristic of the area, but restored sand and gravel pits have introduced new wetland habitat to the Vale which attracts a quite a range of bird life. Whisby Nature Reserve is a former gravel pit that has been reclaimed and has now developed into an oasis for bird life and provides a valuable opportunity for people to see and learn about wetland wildlife.
- 5.6.15 Landscape scale biodiversity enhancement opportunities within the Trent and Witham Vales is likely to arise when extraction is completed at any of the sand and gravel quarries, and reclamation proposals are presented to the local authority. Consideration should be given to sensitive reclamation proposals that aim to restore to heathland and acid grassland mosaics in the area. The restoration of extraction sites to native woodland will also be very beneficial to the landscape in certain locations, particularly where isolated remnants of woodland can be reconnected. Whilst restoration of former extraction sites to wetland is frequently undertaken, this

may not represent the most suitable option when considering the wider landscape and local biodiversity habitat linkage needs.

- 5.6.16 The retention and replacement of traditional field boundaries, especially ancient and species rich hedgerows and parish boundaries will be important for landscape character, particularly around the heath sandlands in the north west of the District. The sensitive management of these field boundaries and creation of buffer strips alongside hedgerows will also be of benefit to a range of farmland birds, providing sites for feeding, nesting and cover, including species such as skylark *Alauda arvensis*, linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and yellow hammer *Emberiza citrinella*.

Ecology of the Lincoln Cliff and Central Plateau

- 5.6.17 The limestone geology is the defining factor for the presence of the characteristic species and habitats on the Lincoln Cliff and Central Plateau. Of key importance for this area is the grassland of calcareous substrates, which support a distinctive flora and fauna. There are small pockets and fragments of the once extensive calcareous grasslands on the upland plateau, hosting a high diversity of wildlife. These open areas are also important for bird species such as the hunting barn owl *Tyto alba* and also the ground nesting sky lark *Alauda arvensis*, which needs a good supply of invertebrates to feed its young. Because of agricultural intensification and a reduction in sheep grazing, the grasslands of greatest diversity are often found on road verges, where the land has suffered much less intensification. However, it is these grasslands that are also often subjected to insensitive cutting regimes, which can reduce floral diversity and disrupt invertebrate lifecycles. Open tracts of grassland can occasionally include a mosaic of grasses and heather shrubs, and there are numerous place names that include the word 'heath,' indicating that this habitat type was once much more prevalent, although the name 'heath' was often used in the area as a general description for open and rolling rough grazing land.
- 5.6.18 Woodland is not particularly characteristic of the northern part of this area, and is much more significant in the southern end of the Plateau, where boulder clay exists over the underlying limestone. These woodlands are of particular wildlife importance for their diversity of understorey flora, edge habitats and ground flora. The presence of ancient semi-natural woodland in this southern part of the Plateau is relatively significant. Small leaved lime *Tilia cordata* is occasionally found in the boulder clay woodlands.
- 5.6.19 Wood pasture is a distinctive and biologically diverse habitat that is found on the plateau around the important historic halls such as those at Rauceby and Aswarby. Wood pasture is typically a very stable habitat, with little change over many years, and is consequently very diverse, particularly in terms of specialist invertebrates, lower plants and species of bat utilising the veteran trees, standing and fallen deadwood, and grasslands.
- 5.6.20 Farmland habitats, including unimproved or semi improved grassland, hedges, ponds and small copses are important across the Plateau, although the large scale and more intense farming techniques of recent decades have eroded and lost some of the more traditional features of the farmland landscape on the Plateau. There is a mixture of field patterns and sizes on this higher area, as well as a mix of arable and grazing uses. Many fields have been combined and enlarged with boundaries lost to accommodate large arable production. However, a number of smaller and less improved fields remain with a mixture of boundary types.

- 5.6.21 Where fields have been enlarged, the presence of boundary features is less common in the landscape, and where they do exist the hedges tend to be harshly clipped, which can reduce their value as feeding habitat. The presence of limestone walling is more frequent on the Central Plateau than in other areas of the District, which provides a different habitat for lower plants, and shelter and nesting sites for small mammals and birds.
- 5.6.22 Farm ponds are a traditional part of the Plateau farmland on boulder clay, and the maintenance of clusters of ponds that are no more than a few hundred metres apart is particularly important for the success of amphibians and aquatic invertebrates using the pond networks. The restoration of shaded and shrinking ponds should form part of any landscape and biodiversity enhancement initiatives and Environmental Stewardship schemes in the area.
- 5.6.23 Landscape scale biodiversity enhancement opportunities along the cliff and out on the central plateau may exist amongst the larger expanses of grassland such as within the RAF camps where restoration to a more species diverse limestone grassland could be considered. Environmental Stewardship opportunities include sensitive field margin/field corner management for farmland birds, and the introduction of a range of habitat buffer strips, of scrub, woodland or grassland to protect the biodiversity value of important habitats that exist within an active agricultural landscape.

Ecology of the Fens

- 5.6.24 The North Kesteven fenland is a significant agricultural asset, with rich dark soils that were once part of the fenland peat. The fens have historically been subjected to extensive cultivation, and bare little resemblance to the former ancient peatland expanse. The fens rarely reach any higher than 10 metres above sea level, and historically peat formation occurred as the area became increasingly waterlogged. The landscape would have been a mix of open water, sedge and rush fen and boggy peat. The fen would have supported an abundance of wildlife, much of which would have been quite specialist to the fen habitat.
- 5.6.25 Using the land for agriculture required extensive drainage and straight drain lines are a feature of the landscape today. Following the initial drainage schemes several hundred years ago, the fen would have remained quite wet, with the land being used as grazing marsh and the harvesting of sedge for thatching and peat for burning would have been undertaken. Subsequent and more intensive drainage eventually lead to the land being suitable for growing crops, enabling farmers to take advantage of the rich soil with a high peat content.
- 5.6.26 The loss of the former wetlands has undoubtedly had a dramatic effect on the fen wildlife. The fenland within North Kesteven has few natural areas remaining due to the intensive nature of the agricultural improvement and it is now dominated by arable farmland. The once extensive fenland is now only found in remote fragments, and many of these are now designated as locally important wildlife sites. These fen sites host a number of rare and quite specialist species of plants, and, particularly in the wettest areas, along with invertebrates such as specialist snails and beetles.
- 5.6.27 Consequently, the fens are now essentially a farmed landscape and as such, farmland biodiversity is now an important asset to the landscape character of the modern North Kesteven Fen. The ecology of the Fens as farmland has also experienced considerable land use changes in more recent times, and some of its

characteristic farmland wildlife has reduced as a result. A number of the features within this landscape, particularly the hedgerows, ditches, drains and small watercourses, support a wide range of species including some that have undergone dramatic recent declines such as song thrush *Turdus philomelos*, dunnoek *Prunella modularis* and grey partridge *Perdix perdix*.

- 5.6.28 In contrast to other landscape units within the North Kesteven District, the Fens have little woodland coverage. The rising water rendered the land unsuitable for trees to survive, and any tree cover will therefore be a relatively recent feature in the landscape, since the occurrence of land drainage.
- 5.6.29 The straight lined drains are themselves important biodiversity habitats, with aquatic and emergent plant species that are now considered ditch line specialists. Such plants have become increasingly rare with the modern maintenance techniques for drainage ditches. Mechanical advances have resulted in increasingly more severe maintenance operations in terms of how much vegetation is removed from the ditch, and also the distance that can be covered at any one time. It is imperative that the fen drains are sensitively managed for biodiversity, as these are a network of linear habitats which require planned and sensitive maintenance in order for species to survive. Management in disjointed or alternate sections, and rotating which side of the drain is cut, will undoubtedly add to the resources needed for drain maintenance, but such planning and control is vital if species are to survive. Cyclic maintenance creates a much more diverse range of habitats, so that different species can exploit the different stages of succession in the drain.
- 5.6.30 Landscape scale biodiversity enhancement opportunities will be particularly focused upon areas where isolated, remnant and re-colonising fen type habitats can be linked together to increase the viability and potential expansion of these important biodiversity habitats. Wet habitats such as wet grassland should be encouraged as complementary habitat on more productive ground. Other Environmental Stewardship opportunities should be taken on agricultural land, including beneficial field margin management. River and drain management should also be a particular biodiversity enhancement priority within the Fens.
- 5.6.31 Gravel pit restoration on the fen edge can also contribute to landscape scale nature conservation, by considering reclamation to wetland habitat to complement and increase the wetland network across the fen. Whilst such reclaimed sites will never fully represent the former fenland habitat, much of the structural diversity and mosaic of wet grassland to open water can be included, to re-establish a network of habitat types that can be utilised by fenland flora and fauna and contribute to biodiversity expansion and re-colonisation across the Fens.

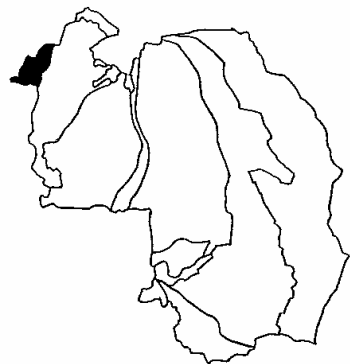
PART 2 – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA DESCRIPTIONS

6. Trent and Witham Vales Regional Landscape Character Type

6.1 Heath Sandlands Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- *Bounded by District boundary on all sides apart from the east where the boundary is marked by the land rising into the Terrace Sandlands landscape character sub-area.*
- *Flat, open, rural lowland.*
- *Mainly arable agriculture, though some rough pasture.*
- *Generally medium sized rectilinear fields with absent field boundaries.*
- *Small, isolated stands of Scots Pine, and incongruous conifer 'walls' around farmsteads.*
- *Birch, oak, bracken and gorse in wide roadside verges.*
- *Steep sided straight dykes along field boundaries.*
- *Small brick bridges for tracks over dykes.*
- *Radial road pattern converging on North Scarle.*
- *Very straight roads.*
- *North Scarle is a nucleated settlement with older red brick built buildings in the centre of the village and newer mixed development on the outskirts.*
- *Variable pattern of land uses around village and along roads including "horsiculture", poultry sub-areas and some light industrial sub-areas at Lodge Farm.*
- *A number of small lakes used for angling.*
- *Open views across to the Cottam power station on the River Trent.*



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Character Sub-Area

- 6.1.1 This is a small landscape sub-area centred on the village of North Scarle. It is bounded by the District and County boundary on three sides which is an established line following field boundaries, except for the western boundary which is delineated by the A1133. To the east the sub-area boundary is less well defined, but can be identified by the rise in relief to the neighbouring sub-area, the Terraced Sandlands.
- 6.1.2 A similar landscape character continues westwards over the county boundary into Nottinghamshire in the Spalford and South Clifton area to the north and towards the River Trent to the west.

Topography and Landform

- 6.1.3 The change in elevation from the adjacent Terraced Sandlands is subtle, yet this area is distinct, having more in common with the East Nottinghamshire Sandlands across the county boundary. The landform comprises a low flat area of land of no more than 10 metres in height, evolved from wind blown deposits of sand edging the Trent floodplain.
- 6.1.4 The underlying clays have impervious qualities and ponds and small lakes are a characteristic feature, unlike most other areas of the district apart from the Fenland sub-area. At Whitfield Farm is a steep embanked reservoir, and a canalised drain, the Mill Dam Dyke, cuts diagonally across the sub-area, changing direction in the centre of North Scarle. Along some parts of its length it has very tall steep earth embankments with mature trees growing lining the opposite bank. There are a distinctive number of small brick bridges across the dyke leading farm tracks into the adjacent fields.
- 6.1.5 As the area is flat and low with frequent blocks of woodland in the middle distance there are few extensive views to be seen of the surrounding landscapes. The level terrain affords frequent open vistas towards the River Trent and views of the Cottam power station chimneys.



Mill Dam Dyke

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 6.1.6 There is a varied and relative intensive pattern of land use and development along many of the roadsides to the west of North Scarle, which helps give the landscape a distinctive character. A number of light industrial sub-areas are found at Lodge Farm on the Wigsley Road and also a number of poultry farming units. There are further poultry farming complexes along the Spalford Road. Other uses include paddocks and stables and associated 'horsiculture' development and there are a number of caravans and mobile homes which appear to be associated with the fishing lakes of the sub-area.

- 6.1.7 Apart from this variable pattern of land holding and diverse range of land uses, the predominant use of the land is mixed agriculture, both arable and grazing. The arable crops mainly consist of cereal and sugar beet, grown in medium sized, rectilinear fields. Field boundaries are largely absent or marked by rough grassy margins and drainage channels. Along some of the boundaries where hedgerows do still remain, these are often gappy and in poor condition.
- 6.1.8 There are smaller fields surrounding North Scarle, particularly to the south, which are generally put to grazing pasture. The grass is often rough and tussocky and the fields are separated by low, neatly trimmed hedgerows. There are stronger lines of hedgerows along the roadsides and footpaths with occasional belts of trees. Along the Besthorpe and Wigsely roads there are wide verges with birch, oak, bracken and gorse revealing the underlying heathland characteristics of the sub-area. Similarly there are isolated stands of Scots Pine and 'leylandii', the latter usually surrounding farmsteads and frequently presenting a functional but visually prominent and incongruous feature within the landscape.
- 6.1.9 On the northern boundary of the sub-area is a disused airfield, crossing over into Nottinghamshire. Here there is a larger pattern of fields and open grassland with little tree cover. A large part of this particular area is used for large scale pig farming, and the land as a consequence is often muddy and featureless in appearance, and there is evidence that the pig grazing is managed on a rotational basis with some fields clearly in a fallow to recover from previous seasons' grazing and foraging. There is a further area of pig farming to the south of the sub-area alongside the county boundary.

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

- 6.1.10 There is a radial pattern of roads within this landscape sub-area, with six minor roads converging on the central village of North Scarle. In addition there is the Wigsley-Besthorpe Road to the west of North Scarle and the Spalford Road to the north, both of which are extremely straight in character.
- 6.1.11 The main settlement is North Scarle which has a nucleated development pattern in the centre of the village where the roads converge, residential development then spreading out along the roads. The village is located upon slightly raised land and is subsequently visually prominent in this largely flat landscape.
- 6.1.12 There are no other settlements within the sub-area but there are a number of scattered farmsteads with many associated agricultural buildings. Piecemeal ribbon development, particularly along the Wigsley-Besthorpe Road is also a contributory element of the 'busy' character of this rural fringe of the district.



Views to North Scarle

Settlement Character

- 6.1.13 The centre of North Scarle has many of the original buildings in vernacular style constructed in red brick with pantiled roofs, contributing greatly to the local sense of place. The village church is constructed of lighter coloured stone and has a tower which is a prominent landmark in the area. There are also a number of other attractive buildings such as Glebe Farm and the old pub which add particular interest and charm to the village centre. Trees are very important feature in the village adding an attractive focus to views along the High Street and Church Lane. The Mill Dam Dyke is an interesting feature which cuts right through the village.
- 6.1.14 Interspersed with the traditional buildings and on the outskirts of the village there is newer development of mixed design in a variety of different building materials. Many of these are of a suburban style including a number of bungalows which do not reflect the established vernacular. There is also an area of former Local Authority housing constructed in dark red brick on the northern edge of the village which is visually distinct from other parts of the village.
- 6.1.15 In addition, the periphery of the village is fringed equine related development with several prominent stables and riding paddocks. The paddocks are generally well kept and bounded by wooden post and rail fences, but this is inconsistent with established local character.
- 6.1.16 Those buildings outside the village fringes are of mixed styles and ages including traditional farmhouses with associated buildings, newer individual houses and some visually detracting mobile homes and caravans associated with the fishing lakes.

Heath Sandlands	
Pressures for change & landscape detractors	Opportunities for enhancement
<p>Agriculture: Arable intensification leading to decline in the overall structure and condition of the landscape with many hedgerows either gappy or entirely absent.</p> <p>Large utilitarian agricultural buildings (e.g. poultry units), and multiple smaller units (i.e. pig sties) are prominent features in the landscape.</p>	<p>Maintain and strengthen the characteristic pattern of hedged fields by enhancing the overall structure and unity of the landscape through additional planting. Investigate establishment of a local grant scheme for field boundary reinstatement, and embed within Agri-environment scheme objectives.</p> <p>Pursue more sensitively designed large agricultural buildings, and screen in more effective manner through use of indigenous species, on and off site where appropriate.</p>
<p>Woodland: Lack of larger areas of woodland compared to neighbouring areas.</p> <p>Inappropriate tree species (e.g. Leylandii), alien to the rural landscape, have been used to screen farmsteads and other agricultural buildings.</p>	<p>Conserve and expand existing small copses and existing groups of trees along roadsides and dykes to safeguard this asset of landscape character, particularly reflecting heathland characteristics, by using Scots Pine.</p> <p>Suitable native tree species should be used and where possible replace 'Leylandii walls'.</p>
<p>Housing development: Further development of North Scarle with inappropriate, "suburban" style development, eroding established character.</p>	<p>Any further development should reflect the character and integrity of this rural settlement. Suitable materials should be used (e.g. local bricks) and the edges of new development should be softened with appropriate landscaping.</p>
<p>Ribbon and sporadic development: Piecemeal commercial and residential development has spread along some of the roadsides, including industrial units (e.g. Lodge Farm), a haulage company, static caravans associated with fishing lakes and 'horsiculture', resulting in an appearance characteristic of the urban fringe rather than a semi-remote rural area.</p>	<p>There should be more focused control over future development outside of settlement boundaries, to avoid this creeping urbanisation and to safeguard the local rural character. Land use planning may consider the need to consolidate space intensive uses in specific allocated areas rather than allow iterative continuation of ad-hoc development across the sub-area.</p>

6.2 Terrace Sandlands Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- Gentle, subtle undulations in topography, dominance of woodland blocks and hedgerow trees, large and less managed hedgerows.
- A noticeable ridge of sand and gravel deposits circles the farmland south of Norton Disney Hall, which highlights the geological contrast with the River Witham vale to the east and the Trent vale to the west, and partially defines the character area boundary.
- Woodland, both broadleaved and conifer plantation is a dominant feature of the landscape and plays a key role in defining landscape character. Its presence greatly influences the length of views and sense of openness or enclosure. Vistas open out and close up dependent on the position of the woodland blocks in the landscape.
- Sandy deposit geology gives rise to pine and gorse dominated roadsides, and sand and gravel extraction has some impact upon the landscape. Land reclamation post extraction has created a large expanse of open water with significant wildlife benefits, and a prominent but possibly incongruous landscape feature locally.
- Avenues of trees occasionally line minor roads, increasing the intimacy and detail of the area.
- Settlement is scattered and road patterns are similarly winding and irregular, in contrast to the more regular and spinal network seen in the Witham and Brant Vales.
- The estate village of Doddington dominates the northern section of this area, with its stunning Elizabethan Hall and parkland central to this estate village.
- The presence of the MOD firing range at Beckingham has mixed influence on the landscape.
- A lack of arable farming in this pocket of the character area creates subtle and soft layering of grassy pasture, straggly and irregular boundary hedges and post and wire fencing.



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Character Sub-Area

- 6.2.1 The extent of the woodland blocks across parts defines the extent of the sub-area, as the landscape gives way to flatter, lower and more open landscapes. The landform around the Norton woodlands is a considerable influence on its boundary line, with the higher ridge at this location being a prominent feature from which the sub-area is divided from the lower Witham and Brant Vale to the South and East.
- 6.2.2 The northern limit of this sub-area extends up to and skirts around the northern edge of Old Wood, to the north of Doddington. The boundary then follows a drain that cuts easterly across from Old Wood towards Saxilby Road, and continues to encircle the north eastern edges of Skellingthorpe. The boundary then follows the outer limits of

the parkland associated with the Skellinthorpe Hall to the north east of the village to meet the North Kesteven administrative boundary where it then follows the A46 down to include Wisby Nature Reserve. The sub-area here is separated from the fringes of Lincoln, where the spreading urban influence forms the Lincoln Fringe landscape character sub-area.

- 6.2.3 The A46 dissects the sub-area into a northern and southern half, but a southern fringe of this sub-area runs along the Roman road from the farms at Thorpe Grange to those at the Norton woodlands. This strip of farmland south of the A46 sits on a pronounced ridge feature around the Norton woodlands, which gently falls northwards to the west of Haddington. The ridge at Norton Big Wood and Norton Low Wood offers a distinct boundary between this wooded farmland and the low Witham and Brant Vales below.
- 6.2.4 Below the ridge, the Stapleford woodlands take the sub-area down to the A17, where the westerly floodplain and pasture land around Stapleford Moors completes the southern extent, where there is a clear difference between this more complex and layered landscape, to the larger scale of the Witham and Brant Vales to the east.
- 6.2.5 The western boundary is artificially defined by the Western administrative boundary of North Kesteven, and in extent reaches a little further west towards the Trent Valley. Within the northern section of this sub-area, the Western fringe of Eagle Hall wood takes the boundary line up to Swinethorpe, following the lower contours of the slope up to Eagle, and thereby dividing the lower lying North Scarle area into a separate landscape character sub-area. The western boundary line then runs along the western side of the remaining wooded blocks of Old Wood, to meet the northern boundary of this sub-area.

Topography and Landform

- 6.2.6 This is a sub-area of gentle undulations and terraces, and is slightly elevated from the surrounding sub-areas. Occasionally the elevation is more pronounced, such as that seen around the Norton Woodland ridge where heights of 34m are reached. A clear distinction is seen between this elevated terrace and the lower vale.
- 6.2.7 Drains are occasionally found, but these are much less a feature of the landscape than in other sub-areas across the district. The geology and rise and fall of the land within this sub-area contribute to more natural drainage, rendering artificial drainage less necessary.
- 6.2.8 Within the Terrace Sandlands is Wisby Nature Park, a complex of flooded gravel pits which has created a significant and extensive waterscape. However, this is only fully appreciated when close to the Nature Park, because the mature tree screens and location at the base of the Terrace Sandlands. The contribution to the landscape character is therefore minimal until seen from close proximity. In contrast, the reclaimed extraction site situated on the Norton Woodland ridge, between Norton Big Wood to the south and RAF Swinderby airfield, presents much more prominent waterscape. Whilst a naturally profiled and vegetated feature, attracting considerable birdlife interest, it stands out as an incongruous component in the generally 'heathy' landscape sub-area. It is however close to the A46 corridor, where the landscape is influenced by more significant development, and hence contributes to the disjointed and uncharacteristic feel of this corridor.

- 6.2.9 The Terrace Sandlands sub-area continually changes in openness and enclosure, heightened by the distinctive changes in direction when travelling along the roads within this sub-area. The woodland blocks throughout the sub-area often prevent any wide open views, but then breaks within woodland blocks regularly increase the depth of view. The Stapleford Woodlands in the southern part of this sub-area are particularly enclosing and make a clear boundary line to the sub-area at this point.
- 6.2.10 The landscape within the Terraced Sandlands has a more layered quality than adjacent sub-areas, and this stems from the gentle undulations, taller hedges and woodland blocks. Colour variation is also varied because of the range of hedge, roadside tree and woodland features. Smaller field patterns than the larger expanses of the Witham and Brant Vales create greater variation in colour and texture within a small area. The occasional leylandii hedging and screening is sometimes a pronounced and incongruous feature in the landscape, by way of its size, uniformity and dense uniform dark green colours. There are though colour variations in the plantations and broadleaved woodlands, fields and hedges. Individual houses dotted throughout the area are red brick, or often painted render on newer dwellings and farmsteads.
- 6.2.11 Key vistas within this sub-area are often those looking out onto other sub-areas, with the most impressive vistas being those from the Norton Woodland ridge over the lower vale. At the northern end of the Terrace Sandlands there are glimpses of Lincoln Cathedral. At the southern extent the view over the more pastoral landscape encircling the Ministry of Defence firing range offers a refreshing contrast from the more arable nature of the district in general.

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 6.2.12 This sub-area is the most wooded character area within the North Kesteven administrative boundary, and those woodland sub-areas play a major role in defining its landscape character. Much of the woodland within the Terraced Sandlands is plantation woodland, and it is apparent that this exists in areas of former native woodland. The woodland blocks frequently consist of blocks of planted pines, with either fringes of broadleaved woodland, or, where the plantation is no longer managed as a commercial entity, broadleaved woodland is now reclaiming its former predominance. In a number of small blocks where broadleaved woodland has now substantively returned, their place names indicate a former more commercial use, such as Old Orchard and Markham's Plantation. Wide verges and individual roadside trees and lines of roadside trees are an important feature.



Tree-lined lane on Norton Woodland ridge

- 6.2.13 Arable fields dominate the area, but the smaller field pattern in comparison to the adjacent landscape character areas adds relative interest and creates less stark vistas from those in the lower floodplains of the River Whitham and River Brant. Livestock grazing is more frequent in this sub-area, but this still remains an occasional feature, except at the southern extent of the Terrace Sandlands sub-area where the Ministry of Defence land is predominantly rough grazing. Arable crops are mixed, but the production of root crops prevails in this sub-area.
- 6.2.14 The more complex landscape of the sub-area, with smaller fields, larger hedges and frequent woodland blocks provides good opportunities for biodiversity within the sub-area. Foraging owls are seen at dusk, taking advantage of the wildlife corridors harbouring small mammal prey, and the smaller field size gives greater cover for hares venturing into arable fields to feed, and the larger and less frequently trimmed hedges provide a larder of food for small farmland song birds.
- 6.2.15 The RAF airfield at Swinderby dominates local vistas around the A46, and this expanse of grassland is frequently used for public events such as the Antiques and Collectors Fairs, when tall white marquees are often a striking feature from the A46.
- 6.2.16 Sand and gravel extraction is occasionally intrusive, but more often it is the bund walls and screening that indicates the presence of extraction work. Extraction infrastructure is much more noticeable on the Norton woodlands ridge, and this detracts from an otherwise quite intimate and varied part of the landscape character sub-area.

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

- 6.2.17 The road network of this sub-area is of rather straight sections of road, frequently interrupted with sharp changes in direction, with few direct routes from one settlement location to another. The recently dualled A46 follows the route of the Fosseway Roman road between Newark and Lincoln.
- 6.2.18 Settlement is less nucleated within the Terrace Sandlands sub-area. It is relatively scattered, with greater aggregations at small villages which extend into the open

countryside with dotted farmsteads and larger dwelling houses close to these loose concentrations but still within open countryside. The smaller villages and hamlets, and frequent individual dwellings or group of two or three dwellings in otherwise open countryside is typical of this sub-area and in contrast to the adjacent Witham and Brant Vale sub-area where the settlement pattern is more clearly defined into larger villages.

Settlement Character

- 6.2.19 The most distinctive village within the Terrace Sandlands sub-area is the village of Doddington, which is centred around the historically important and architecturally impressive Elizabethan Doddington Hall, set in extensive parkland. Doddington Hall was built in 1600 by the Elizabethan architect Robert Smithson and is one of the historic jewels of Lincolnshire. The hall and its grounds have extensive influence on the entire village, with much of it being constituted by parts of the hall's estate buildings. Specimen trees fringe the village, which also has a noticeable abundance of mature holly trees. Houses and cottages are red brick, and are in generally good condition.



Doddington Hall, Doddington

- 6.2.20 Older villages consist often of neat red brick houses and cottages, and the larger individual houses in the wider countryside are very often red brick with ornate tall roof lines, reflecting the local vernacular of the small villages and hamlets. Other areas of dispersed and ribbon development are less uniform in nature and are often of painted render on the newer dwellings which are often quite prominent in the landscape when away from village settlements.
- 6.2.21 Individual houses and farms in the wider countryside very often also display stark boundaries, with tall leylandii hedging standing out amongst the surrounding fields of native and often overgrown or gappy hedges. These are negative components of the traditional countryside of this area.
- 6.2.22 Newer housing along the A46 corridor, particularly at Witham St Hughs, Swinderby, whilst not necessarily incongruous, lacks the established attractive characteristics seen in many of the older villages and hamlets.

Terrace Sandlands	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for enhancement
<p>Minerals working: Sand and gravel extraction taking place within Terrace Sandlands is a detractor from the character of the sub-area, and has resulted in the creation of the large wetland area at the restored site between Norton woodlands and Swinderby airfield. While this undoubtedly is of biodiversity value, it is incongruous in the landscape with underlying heath characteristics.</p> <p>Active mineral sites are generally screened by bund walling, which are functional but not harmonious with the natural landform. Bund walling is and will be necessary to prevent much of the active workings detracting visually and aurally across the area.</p>	<p>Consideration should be given to the sensitive reclamation of former sand and gravel extraction sites, in accordance with wider landscape features. This should focus on heathland and acid grassland mosaics, hedgerow patterns and some restoration of former native woodland expanses where locally appropriate. Large water bodies should play a less major role in future reclamation schemes.</p> <p>Native and locally appropriate planting of bund walling will help it to blend into the surrounding landform and character, which is undulating and with varied hedge and tree cover. A more natural approach could be to plant some parts of a bund with trees or scrub, whilst leaving other parts as grassland.</p>
<p>A46 Corridor: The A46 corridor cuts through the character sub-area, and the land immediately to the north and south of this main route represents a corridor of increased activity, vulnerable to development pressure within the landscape. This corridor represents an area of more intensive disruption to the rest of the sub-area, with the former airfield at Swinderby, recent housing at Witham St Hughs and typical transport corridor related development that is not evident elsewhere in the sub-area. The corridor does include some significant detractors, with large modern commercial and storage buildings. These currently remain scattered in nature, interrupting longer views out to the wider countryside. This could be lost however, if large buildings continue to be developed along the A46 route.</p> <p>The A46 dual carriageway is a significant piece of transport infrastructure. The road itself is a considerable detractor in the landscape and severs the landscape to the north and south.</p>	<p>Further development along the A46 corridor should have regard to the more sensitive landscapes within the areas to the north and south of this major transport route, looking to blend design with the built and landscape character of the Terrace Sandlands.</p> <p>There is the opportunity for new housing and also smaller scale non-residential development to pay much greater regard to the need to reflect the character of the older villages to the north and south of the A46 within the Terrace Sandlands.</p> <p>Care needs to be taken to ensure that the landscape character remains linked to the north and south, with common themes retained on each side of the road. There is also opportunity for more woodland planting in the vicinity of this corridor, to reduce the impact of the road and replicate the more enclosed and wooded nature of the landscape to the north and south. This would be beneficial in reducing the severing nature of the road, whilst ensuring that its obvious straight form as a historic Roman road is retained.</p>

Terrace Sandlands	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for enhancement
<p>MoD estate: As with many parts of the North Kesteven District, the Ministry of Defence heritage has left its impression on the Terrace Sandlands sub-area. The former Swinderby airfield is a focus for large local events such as outdoor shows and specialist markets, and consequently it frequently accommodates large white marquees, which can be very prominent in the landscape from some distance.</p>	<p>Whether the use of the former airfield is a detractor in the landscape, or a recognisable and locally distinctive part of this sub-area is likely to be a matter of opinion for both local residents and visitors. As an important venue for local and regional events, the use of the airfield is likely to continue. At each event consideration needs to be given to how landscape intrusion can be minimised. This could be stipulated as a requirement for any event held.</p>
<p>Treescape: Trees are a critical in defining the character of the sub-area, and mature avenues of roadside trees are particularly distinctive in the Terrace Sandlands. It is noticeable that many trees along roadsides are aging and beginning to go into senescence.</p> <p>Trees are important to the setting of a number of villages in the sub-area, particularly those influenced by parkland, such as at Doddington. Again it must be recognised that the parkland landscapes and specimen trees are mature, and further aging, if unmanaged, will result in a gradual change in the setting of villages and character of the landscape.</p>	<p>There is evidence across the sub area of an on-going tree management strategy which should continue to benefit from support.</p> <p>This sub-area has benefited from a noticeable amount of roadside planting, and some of these individual trees are starting to contribute to its character, replicating the mature avenues seen alongside the minor roads. This enhancement is very much in keeping with the sub-area, and should continue to ensure that the roadside trees as valued features within the sub-area present a good range of age and size, as to ensure the continuation of this important element of the sub-area.</p> <p>In such locations there is a need to give long term consideration to the future treescape, ensuring that new trees are planted that are in keeping with the village character, which will retain and continue the individual treescape of the villages into the future. Such considerations should be important elements when determining development proposals on the edge of settlements.</p>

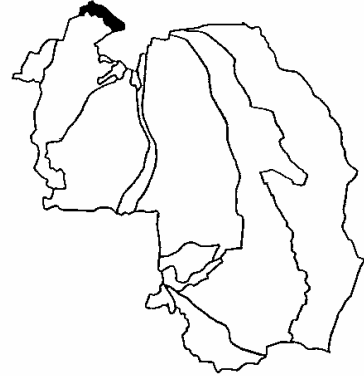
Terrace Sandlands	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for enhancement
<p>Non-indigenous tree cover: Throughout the sub-area there are occasional tall leylandii hedges, which are usually found defining residential boundaries. These are visual detractors where they occur in the open countryside standing as dense uniform blocks, and do not enable the dwelling or other development to blend into or fit with its surroundings.</p>	<p>Whilst it will be difficult to secure the removal of existing leylandii hedges, it should be ensured that new residential developments do not incorporate such inappropriate landscaping and suitable native boundary planting can be stipulated as part of any planning permissions.</p> <p>Planning design policy should also be developed and implemented so that any development application for improvements to existing dwellings or developments might lever general enhancement of the site which could include leylandii hedge replacement with more suitable native boundary treatment.</p>

6.3 Till Vale

Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- The Till Vale is flat and low lying with open expanses and panoramic views.
- Large arable fields with few hedge boundaries dominate the landscape.
- The large, channelled drains at the northern edge of this sub-area, and the northern limit of the North Kesteven district, are significant linear landscape features. It is here that boating activity is seen and adds a different land use to the otherwise arable farmed landscape.
- Important and clear views of the higher parts of Lincoln city are taken from the Till Vale landscape character sub-area, and Lincoln Cathedral is a prominent feature of the easterly skyline.
- Woodland is virtually absent, as are significant hedgerows, but lines of Lombardy poplars stand out in the landscape, creating elongated shadows across the arable fields.
- A few farmsteads include modern buildings that lack any distinctive character and the one main road through the sub-area is relatively straight and without boundary features, which increases the speed at which traffic travels though the sub-area.
- The sub-area could be enhanced by adding intermittent planting to the main road, and consideration could also be given to softening the edge of Old Wood, to create a more natural edge.



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Character Sub-area

- 6.3.1 This landscape sub-area lies at the most north-westerly part of the North Kesteven district. The Terrace Sandlands sub-area extends northwards up to Old Wood and the village of Skellingthorpe, but beyond this, the landscape character changes markedly and it is here that the Till Vale character sub-area begins, continuing out of the district and into West Lindsey.
- 6.3.2 The southern boundary of this sub-area from the A46 at Decoy Farm is the northern limit of the parkland to the east of Skellingthorpe, and then the outer limits of Skellingthorpe village, following a drain line that circles the village to the east and north. The boundary then continues to take the drain line westwards to meet Old Wood. From here the obvious boundary is the edge of Old Wood, up to Lound Farm and then across the northern limit of Old Wood.
- 6.3.3 Other than the southern boundary line, the Till Vale character area is artificially bounded by the North Kesteven administrative boundary in all other directions, but the characteristics of this sub-area are seen extending northwards, and indeed the open views to the north are in clear contrast to views back towards the relatively more enclosed and wooded Terrace Sandlands.

- 6.3.4 The Skellingthorpe Green Wedge (GW4) clearly omits a significant green area which reaches from the village itself, beyond the A46 trunk road and into the Swanpool area, deep within the city's urban extent. This area, despite its current importance as a functional green wedge is allocated for development as part of the Western Growth Corridor strategic urban extension of the North Kesteven and Lincoln City Local Plans. The North Kesteven District element of the growth area is undeveloped apart from the A46 itself, and is part of the Till Vale landscape character area.

Topography and Landform

- 6.3.5 In contrast to the more elevated and varied contours of the Terrace Sandlands, the Till Vale is flat and low lying. Large channelled drains are a significant feature close to the administrative boundary of the North Kesteven district. The degree of openness in the Till Vale is an important characteristic of this sub-area, with panoramic vistas of considerable distance. With little foreground detail or interest, the colours are muted greens and browns. The colour of the landscape is substantially influenced by the time of year, because the large expansive fields provide significant blocks of colour, which change the overall scene with passing seasons.



Lines of Lombardy Poplars, seen from Saxilby Road

- 6.3.6 It is from the Till Vale sub-area that important views easterly towards Lincoln are taken, and Lincoln Cathedral is prominent in the skyline. The open nature of the landscape allows such long distance vistas, and an absence of woodland prevents shortened views.

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 6.3.7 Large flat, arable fields dominate the landscape and the reduction in hedge boundaries is noticeable. The Till Vale sub-area has a number of lines of Lombardy poplars, which are a distinctive characteristic in the otherwise flat expanse. A small sewage treatment works is the only built development other than agricultural buildings.



Saxilby Road, looking north towards North Kesteven administrative boundary

- 6.3.8 Wildlife interest is reduced in this sub-area, owing to the arable monoculture and lack of natural boundaries that would normally form wildlife corridors across arable land. There is a noticeable reduction in song birds within this sub-area.
- 6.3.9 At the northern limit of the North Kesteven administrative boundary, the channelled Fossdyke is navigable and connects with a new marina in West Lindsey.

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

- 6.3.10 Settlement is limited to a few scattered farms, and the farmhouses and farm buildings are generally modern and indistinctive. The main road through the sub-area is Saxilby Road, which is relatively straight and without any boundary features, exacerbating a sense of openness and exposure. As a generally featureless road, the traffic movement on Saxilby Road can be fast and attracts attention through movement in the landscape.

Settlement Character

- 6.3.11 The few farms within this sub-area do not provide any significant sense of place and are typically modern and utilitarian, lacking in character or interest.

Till Vale	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for enhancement
<p>Agriculture: The sub-area is likely to suffer little pressure for change from its current arable use. The landscape is uniformly large scale agriculture, with little small field pattern remaining.</p> <p>Pressure for the addition of further modern agricultural buildings is possible within this sub-area, as the primary land use continues to be large scale, intensive arable farming. The existing buildings within this sub-area are utilitarian, intrusive and lacking in distinctive character. In such an open landscape any attempt to screen buildings can be more detrimental to the landscape than the building alone.</p> <p>The lines of Lombardy poplars are very prominent in the open expanse of the Till Vale. The extent to which they contribute to landscape character will be a matter of opinion, and it may be argued that the lines of Lombardy poplars are now a characteristic feature of the Till Vale sub-area. They do add some focus and interest in an otherwise virtually featureless landscape.</p>	<p>The open nature of this sub-area is part of its defining character and what sets it apart from adjacent areas.</p> <p>Restoration to smaller field sizes is not realistic in this important area for arable production.</p> <p>Landscape enhancements therefore will be low key and should be carefully planned so as not to dilute the quite dramatic open nature of the landscape of the whole sub-area.</p> <p>Existing buildings do not need to set the standard of design in this sub-area, and much could be done to reduce the prominence of new buildings through appropriate siting, use of material and colouring, whilst still retaining their modern functionality. Siting and orientation of new agricultural buildings should seek to reflect the grain of the field pattern.</p> <p>Simple, low density planting to break up the profile of the development should be preferable to any dense screening, particularly where that would be dominated by non-native species.</p> <p>The removal of the poplars is not therefore considered to be a priority for landscape enhancement. With a relatively short lifespan, the poplars will not necessarily be a long-term feature, and there will be the opportunity for replacement with less visually uniform, more diverse planting features in the future. This could be considered as part of long-term woodland management for the North Kesteven District.</p>

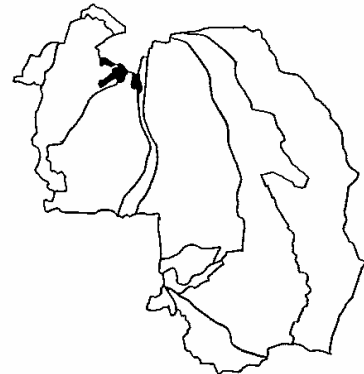
Till Vale	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for enhancement
<p>Field Boundaries: Large tall hedges are no longer a feature of the Till Vale sub-area, and many of the large fields do not offer any indication of former boundaries at all.</p> <p>A lack of roadside hedging within the Till Vale is a characteristic contrast to other sub-areas.</p>	<p>Whilst the fields are very large within this sub-area, there is still scope for the reintroduction of limited boundary planting to create low and continual hedges that do not detract from the open character of the Till Vale, but make a positive contribution, adding visual diversity and corridor habitat value.</p> <p>Any additional roadside hedging could be concentrated towards the southern end of the sub-area, to soften the contrast between the Terraced Sandlands sub-area and the Till Vale sub-area, but not intrude or alter the open character of the Till Vale.</p> <p>Saxilby Road might benefit from further, carefully planned roadside planting. This should be intermittent and varied to add interest without detracting from the open nature of the vale. Occasional and small stands of tree planting would break up the uniformity of the highway, without losing the open character of the sub-area. Roadside trees would enhance the landscape if irregularly planted at a low density.</p>

6.4 Lincoln Fringe

Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- *Developed urban areas on Lincoln City's periphery, but which fall with North Kesteven District Council.*
- *Comprise of small areas heavily developed with little 'landscape' distinctiveness.*
- *Present context for urban-rural fringe uses and issues.*



Detailed Description

6.4.1 Three areas within North Kesteven district which lie adjacent to the southern and western boundaries of the administrative area of Lincoln City have been identified as a separate landscape character sub-area. These are the predominantly developed areas which lie in between the four key Green Wedges, and which together define the interface between urban and rural areas. The Green Wedges are described in Chapter 10 and illustrated on Maps 1 and 2. The Lincoln Fringe landscape character sub-area demand only a brief character description given their developed nature. They comprise of the following three areas:

- Brant Road East, in between GW1 (Waddington to Washingborough) and GW2 (Witham Valley);
- Newark and Lincoln Road Estates, in between GW2 and GW3 (Hykeham and Whisby Pits);
- The Whisby Road area, inbetween GW3 and GW4 (Skellingthorpe).

6.4.2 **Brant Road East** is a small rectilinear parcel of low and flat land lying between the south western extremity of the Waddington to Washingborough Green Wedge and the Witham Valley Green Wedge areas. The northern extent is defined by the City boundary and the southern edge by the end of Station Road. It consists predominantly of post war low-density housing estates with primary school and a very small pocket of arable farmland. It has very limited landscape character value.

6.4.3 **Newark and Lincoln Road Estates** is a large area of low density post war suburban housing, interspersed with large schools / college and local services in North Hykeham. A single large supermarket occupies a significant site off Newark Road. This is a low and flat area which displays no strong sense of place or local distinctiveness. Its southern boundary meets with the northern extent of the Witham and Brant Vale, but apart from the visual interface of suburban and agricultural areas, the transition in uses is relatively sudden and reflects the value of the soils on the vale.

6.4.4 The **Whisby Road area** is an irregular shaped urban wedge which lies between the northern edge of the Hykeham and Whisby Pits Green Wedge and the Hartsholme area of the city. Its outer extreme to the west is delineated by the A46 trunk road. It is an area of mixed, large and small business, light industrial, commercial and leisure

uses. Often this is at a relatively low density with large parking or service yards. Car sales showrooms and large public houses and restaurants line the main routes, particularly on the A46. The A46 presents a clear and definite delineation between this urbanised area of the district and the openness of the Terrace Sandlands to its west.

Lincoln Fringe	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for enhancement
These small areas are not particularly important in the context of the district's landscape character. Their urban uses define their character and change within those uses is to be expected. The interfaces between the urban uses and landscape character types as defined within this study are however significant and important. Those interfaces are well defined at the time of study with little harmful urban fringe extension or influence into adjacent agricultural landscapes or the green wedges.	Opportunities to strengthen the visual boundaries between the character areas and the Lincoln Fringe urban areas should be taken through enhanced, indigenous planting schemes where opportunity presents itself, such as through development within the fringe units. Use of coniferous hedging should normally be avoided.

6.5 Witham and Brant Vales Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- *Defined in the east by the base of the Lincoln Cliff scarp slope, to the south by the district boundary, the Terrace Sandlands to the west, and the southern outskirts of Lincoln City to the north.*
- *Extensive low lying, generally flat valley of twin rivers Witham and Brant running from the south to north east of the sub-area.*
- *Pronounced landform or topographical variation absent from the sub-area.*
- *Twin, small rivers generally present a very subtle influence on their presence often only notable through riparian vegetation and flooded fields.*
- *Across the sub-area tree cover is limited, but has a disproportionately high influence on the landscape as the level terrain allows hedgerow and copse trees to foreshorten views across the vale, often allowing a strong band of tree and hedge between land and the large skies.*
- *Settlement pattern is defined by attractive, small nucleated and sometimes linear villages of red brick and pantile construction to the central and western extent of the sub-area.*
- *The impact of roads on the landscape is generally low once away from the A17 and A46. As across the study area elsewhere, overhead high and low voltage transmission lines can be prominent.*
- *Pressures for change in the Vale predominately relate to minerals operations, intensive agricultural practice and associated development, and to flood alleviation works*
- *There is widespread evidence of historic field boundary loss, particularly in the east.*
- *Landscape strengthening and enhancement is evident through boundary reinstatement and tree planting across the vale. Increased amounts of set-aside land are also visible within the central and western bands which help soften the landscape and have visibly enhanced biodiversity interest.*
- *Development within and to the edge of the Vale's settlements has generally been delivered having sound regard to local vernacular design and has integrated well with the historic environment.*
- *New development to the south of North Hykeham is prominent within the flat landscape as the vale meets the city.*



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Character Sub-Area

- 6.5.1 The Brant and Witham Vales is a large landscape character sub-area defined primarily by its low, flat landscape of intensively farmed character in the north west of the district. It is delineated in the north by the southern urban extent of Lincoln City around North Hykeham. Its eastern boundary is clearly defined by the dramatic change in topography at the foot of the South Lincolnshire Cliff. It runs the length of the Cliff to the south where the district boundary runs east west, south of, but parallel

to the A17. It then extends to the west as far as Beckingham where it moves northwards skirting the more pastoral landscape around the MoD ranges, and then follows the eastern fringe of the sand and gravel low hills between Norton Disney and Swinderby Airfield in a more convoluted fashion than elsewhere. It then runs parallel with the A46 returning again to North Hykeham.

Topography and Landform

- 6.5.2 This landscape character sub-area displays a general uniformity in topographical and land use respects, but there is notable transition across its extent in three subtle bands running north to south, generally dividing the area into thirds. These can be seen to be the areas east of the River Brant, between the River Brant and River Witham and then west of the River Witham to the fringe with the Terrace Sandlands landscape character sub-area.



Extensive vistas are enjoyed over the Brant and Witham Vale from the upper cliff

- 6.5.3 The sub-area is largely defined by its distinct and extensive low lying and generally flat topography, enclosed by the Lincoln Cliff and the low ridge and sand and gravel ridged undulations aligned generally with the A46. It is a broad valley floor of two small rivers, the Witham and Brant, which both run from the southern edge of the sub-area (and district boundary) north-easterly to their confluence close to South Hykeham. From there the River Witham flows onwards beyond the sub-area boundary, arcing through the Lincoln Cliff gap and the heart of the city and then south easterly through the fens. There is a subtle banded variation in the elevation and undulation of the land, gradually increasing at the extreme east and west fringes of the sub-area. However, elevation is predominantly between 6m to 12m across the central belt, with a gradual terracing up to 15m-25m to the eastern fringe, and again a gentle rise in the west up to 20 metres in places, but here the landform is less regular than to the east.
- 6.5.4 The modest scale of the rivers, low elevation and relief and the extensive flood management infrastructure such as the river embankments along much of the River Witham, result in the river's visual influence on the landscape being less pronounced than might be expected. Views of the water itself are mostly confined to river crossings across the road network. More often the influence of the twin rivers is through continuous ribbons of denser riverside vegetation, particularly willow and other broadleaved trees which belie their course. This is particularly the case for the Brant in the northern part of the sub-area. Elsewhere, more significant structures

such as the sluice control at Blackmoor Bridge or by flooded meadows adjacent to the embankments help reveal the presence of important water courses in the landscape.

- 6.5.5 Elsewhere, surface water drainage is important in the east of sub-area, which displays a more fen-like character. Indeed south-east of Aubourn are two areas known as Aubourn and Marlborough Fens. Here there is a prominent network of straight, engineered drains and dykes creating a rectilinear network across the low-lying vale. Often these act as sole field boundary delineations and contribute to the openness of the landscape. This network is reinforced by a generally larger scale of fields than towards the west.
- 6.5.6 The scale of the landscape across the vale is varied. Often broad vistas, particularly in the east, are afforded by the flat relief, large field size and absence of field boundary hedges. This is also the case in swathes of the sub-area in the central and western bands, but here the picture is more complex. There is a gradual transition in scale of the landscape sub-area from large open and rectilinear in the east to a less regular and slightly more intimate scale to the west. This transition is however subtle and irregular, with small tracts of either larger or smaller scale areas being interspersed within the gradual change. There is an increase in the network of field boundary hedges from east to west of the sub-area, but again this is inconsistent, particularly around the water meadows and mineral workings around Norton Disney, Aubourn and South Hykeham. However, right across the sub-area the influence of hedge and tree cover is important, despite its low density. Lack of elevation or relief means that even relatively distant hedges, hedgerow trees, coppice and plantations define the extent of views, backed only by the Lincoln Cliff in the east and north.
- 6.5.7 Hence there is often a sense of openness to the landscape but rarely any feeling of exposure. It does offer a general level of tranquillity, afforded by the low settlement density, quiet network of rural lanes and protection from the influence of the busy A46 by plantation and the sand and gravel undulations defining the sub-area's western extent.



The northern Witham, backed by woodlands and the distant Lincolnshire Cliff. The influence of the rivers of the Vale is often masked by flood management embankments until vistas are afforded from bridges

- 6.5.8 Key vistas from within and out of the character sub-area are limited by the foreshortening effects of field boundaries, small woodland coverts and watercourse levees on an otherwise low and level area. However, views up to the Lincoln Cliff, defining the eastern boundary, are extensive from much of the area, although the impression of elevation is not as pronounced from below as it is from on the Cliff itself. Elsewhere the impact of the water vapour plumes from Trent and Humber power stations to the north is often marked, particularly in clear sky conditions. Within the vale, vistas tend to open and close dependent on the relative density of tree cover and embankment. Views of the settlements are normally restricted to the outer limits of built development and to the rich variety of parish church spires and towers, as the lack of relief prohibits views over or across the villages.

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 6.5.9 Outside the settlements of the central band, the character area is dominated by agricultural land use. This is predominantly arable in nature, but there are significant areas of rough pasture and grazing, particularly towards the western band of the area. The grazing areas tend to be associated with riverside meadows where fluvial flooding occurs or is managed, or at the fringe of the character area adjacent to the MoD firing ranges in the south-west segment of the area close to its boundary with the Terrace Sandlands. Within the grazing pastures, field boundaries are of a mixture of low hedges and post and wire or post and rail fencing. Elsewhere across the area mixed hawthorn and blackthorn hedges with frequent mature hedgerow trees of ash and oak dominate once away from the ditched field delineations of the eastern band at the foot of the Cliff. Field pattern is regular and large in scale to the eastern 'fen' band and to the south of the central band around Brant Broughton. Here, field boundary is predominantly ditch with some hedgerow, often low and heavily clipped. As distance is increased away from the foot of the Cliff, the field pattern very gradually alters to a denser cover of hedgerow boundary and hedgerow trees around a network of smaller fields. Further west, towards the Terrace Sandlands and A46 corridor, the rectilinear subdivision of fields gives way to a more random pattern, reflected also by the lane network. Here, the field size is also more confused, with some larger areas devoid of strong field boundary, possibly belying past minerals working around Norton Disney in particular. However in that particular case the scale of the workings is well screened by the absence of elevated vantage points.



Wide vistas to the east across the Vale near to Norton Disney where the landscape texture is a notably rougher mix of arable and pastoral uses than within its eastern band

- 6.5.10 The predominance of arable farming is notable across the vale, and the relatively low concentration of significant agricultural complexes suggests large sub-areas with intensive modes of operation. Soils are notably dark in the eastern band and hedgerow depletion is evident suggesting further high intensity vegetable crop production.
- 6.5.11 Trees in the landscape are not restricted to hedgerow trees, although those are important contributors to local character. There is a wide scattering of generally quite small copse and woodland within the vale, mainly of mixed deciduous nature. In particular there is a notable concentration of smaller coverts in the central band in the vicinity of Aubourn and Bassingham, and along parts of the Brant riverside. In the northern parts of the area there are occasional poplar osiers and coppice, which are infrequent but are notable in their regularity of planting and tree profile. As with the hedgerow trees, these coverts and copses play an important role in breaking up the otherwise relatively featureless vale. Even from some distance the woodlands can punctuate the landscape and foreshorten views.
- 6.5.12 The intensity of the agricultural activity and its wider importance to the local economy is apparent through the presence and significant visual intrusion of intensive poultry barns and the industrial scale feed producer sub-areas adjacent to Hopyard Lane, north of Brant Broughton. Despite some attempt at bund walling and planting, these developments are prominent in the flat and open landscape in which they lie. These are significant visual interruptions and are also highly visible from upon the Cliff to the east.
- 6.5.13 To the western fringes of the area sand and gravel workings also present an interruption to the predominance of agricultural land use. These are located to the north and west of Norton Disney but from within the area the low lying land and use of bund walling helps screen the workings themselves. Views in to the works are sometimes possible however from the sand and gravel ridge which delineates the adjacent landscape area of the Trent Sandlands. Here the plant buildings are more prominent but tend to be viewed against the large mixed woodland plantations of Stapleford Wood and Norton Big Wood, lessening their harmful visual impact.
- 6.5.14 The influence of infrastructure within the area is restricted mainly to flood management works and to the crossing of the vale by the prominent high voltage power lines and their pylons. The impact of the water management works is limited because of their vegetated banks, although their engineered profile and foreshortening of longer vistas does have a de-naturalising effect on the character of the vale. The pylons and cable are, however, highly intrusive and the effect is emphasised by the march of the pylons and towers from the crest of the cliff at Boothby Graffoe north-west across the vale. The impact of this infrastructure on the landscape is significant at the area scale, but the pylons can be particularly dominating when viewed from closer range. The flat landscape means that the lines and pylons are rarely 'softened' against any significant backdrop, apart from the Cliff, which offers only a slight lessening effect.

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

- 6.5.15 Settlement on the vale is characterised by small and medium scale villages concentrated in the area between the twin river courses. Only Stapleford Norton Disney and South Hykeham lie to the west of the Witham, whilst there is significantly no notable settlement to the east of the Brant on the low lying remnant fenland.

Stragglethorpe, Brant Broughton, Carlton-le-Moorland, Bassingham and Aubourn all lie between the two rivers and are dependant on flood management embankments.

- 6.5.16 The influence of Lincoln City to the northern tip of the landscape sub-area is marked. Here the settlement of North Hykeham, contiguous with the City itself, defines the northern extent of the character sub-area in a relatively abrupt transition from open arable vale landscape to suburban and urban housing estates, commercial development and urban roads network. Elsewhere the influence of settlement is important within the central band of the sub-area, where five villages or hamlets lie between the two rivers. They are Stragglethorpe, Brant Broughton, Carlton-le-Moorland, Bassingham and Aubourn. These are villages of notable character but generally are unremarkable in a wider landscape sense because of the very low variation in elevation and relief.



The abrupt rural-urban interface at North Hykeham is typical of the city and countryside's meeting across much of the northern parts of the district

- 6.5.17 The orientation of road network reflects closely the rectilinear field pattern and generally aligns parallel with, or at right angles to, the flow of the twin rivers in a loose grid network. This grid becomes less pronounced to the north and west of the area. To the east of the Brant and Broughton Lane/Low Road which runs close to it, there are no north-south road links across the 'fen', only east-west links which ascend the cliff to its distinctive ridgeline settlements.

Settlement Character

- 6.5.18 The vale's villages are an important part of the landscape character but are never dominant in the landscape. Low relief prevents extensive vistas across the settlements, as does tree cover, which although not heavy, often serves to screen the interface between developed and agricultural land.



Low relief and tree cover often result in a 'soft' visual edge to vale villages. Stapleford

6.5.19 The settlement form of villages on the vale is either nucleated grids for the larger settlements, such as Carlton-le-Moorland, Brant Broughton and Bassingham, or linear in emphasis for the smaller settlements, such as Aubourn and South Hykeham. Red brick dwellings with pantiled roofs are predominant building materials, although most settlements also contain a significant proportion of dwellings of white painted render, as well as blue slate roofs. The villages do possess a strong sense of place, with post-war development generally being well integrated with the historic fabric and layout. This is particularly notable in respect to new development in Aubourn. A consistent feature within the vale is the variation and visual quality of the parish churches. With a mix of spires and towers the churches often present the first indication of settlement on the vale from approaching roads and lanes.

Witham and Brant Vale	
Pressures for Change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
<p>Agriculture: Intensive arable farming in eastern areas resulted in loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees, weakening definition between fields and roadsides.</p> <p>There is a great deal of <i>positive</i> change visible across the vale in terms of landscape enhancements. There is widespread evidence of field boundary strengthening through hedgerow and tree planting.</p>	<p>Integrate relevant landscape character restoration objectives, such as field boundary strengthening into agri-environment schemes such as Farm Stewardship Schemes. Seek planning gain opportunities through development proposals.</p>

Witham and Brant Vale	
Pressures for Change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
<p>Landscape and ecological enhancements are also evident (with farmland species such as hares, partridge, fieldfare, larks, buntings and short-eared owls present) through a widespread adoption of agricultural set-aside practice within and around field margins, particularly between the Brant and Witham.</p> <p>Agricultural development in the form of large barns, silos and farmsteads and straw / hay bale storage can be significant in the landscape. Insensitive landscaping of such development through use of leylandii hedges and other non-indigenous species can present harmful and significant interruptions to the landscape.</p>	<p>Biodiversity enhancements across these areas are evident and should be further developed in line with LBAP priorities.</p> <p>These enhancements serve to provide needed variety in the texture and colour of the vale in contrast to the monotone, intensively cropped and improved land.</p> <p>Seek to integrate new agricultural development in line with sound countryside design principles, and screen with sympathetic landscaping schemes on and off site, utilising indigenous species. Seek to resist development of uses not requiring an open landscape location.</p>
<p>Housing Development: To northern fringe of the area where pressures for more sustainably located housing is resulting in new interface between Vale and North Hykeham.</p> <p>On-going need to address locally arising housing demand in smaller Vale settlements.</p> <p>Potential for growth in urban fringe uses or pressures</p>	<p>Continue to demand high standards of design in housing, reflecting sense of place and respecting field pattern and existing boundaries where possible. Variety in materials and building design will serve to reduce the impact of the new urban-rural interface and add character to the development.</p> <p>Carefully control 'traditional' urban-rural fringe uses with the new boundary areas where pressure will be acute for access and recreation and other 'space' demanding activity and landuse.</p>
<p>Infrastructure: Maintenance and upgrading of flood defence infrastructure and improvements particularly in the northern Vale.</p> <p>High voltage power lines cross the northern Vale.</p>	<p>Seek where possible to reduce visual intrusion of flood defence infrastructure through less 'engineered' embankments and allow more naturalised riverside vegetation to flourish</p> <p>Engage with National Grid company to investigate potential for 'undergrounding' strategy</p>

Witham and Brant Vale	
Pressures for Change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
Minerals operations: Sand and gravel in west of Vale, on-going operations and plant noise, associated bund walling and transportation, all serve to have some negative impacts upon the Vale landscape.	Seek aspirational 'net gain' restoration schemes, secured under planning consents which serve to restore landscape character features and strengthen character and biodiversity value consistent with established character.

7. Lincoln Cliff Regional Landscape Character Type

7.1 Lincoln Cliff Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- *The Lincoln Cliff Scarp landscape sub-area follows the limestone escarpment running north-south. The escarpment continues beyond the North Kesteven district both to the north and south.*
- *A dramatic topographical feature in the context of the wider district.*
- *After the physical slope itself, it is the villages, the countryside between the villages, and the considerable and varied treescape that form the key characteristics of the Lincoln Cliff Scarp.*
- *Villages along the scarp are generally located on its crest. Much of the building material is limestone, with some red brick. Large limestone walls curve around the network of winding village lanes and red pantiled roofs stand out against the yellow limestone.*
- *Church towers and spires from the scarp villages are a prominent feature on the skyline along the slope.*
- *Large mansion houses and halls are a striking and consistent feature along the ridge villages, taking advantage of extensive panoramic views over the Witham and Brant Vale.*
- *The scarp itself is often intimate and enclosed in character, mainly influenced by the villages, tighter field pattern extending in linear bands up the slope, boundary integrity and significant tree cover.*
- *The landscape has variety in texture and colour, with the patches of broadleaved woodland playing a major role in the colour variations, alongside glimpses of the yellow limestone of the scarp villages.*
- *Variations in scarp slope direction affords greater visual interest in the form and lines of the landscape, particularly at Wellingore's 'buttress'.*
- *The 'double cliff' at Leadenham is an important characteristic at the southern end of the landscape, where the escarpment splits and presents a flat intermediate area of land between a lower and upper slope. Whereas many of the ridge line villages sit high on the slope, Leadenham village nestles on the flat terrace between the lower and upper slopes at this point. The upper slope is not clearly apparent from the lower vale, and similarly the lower slope is hidden when this double feature is viewed from the plateau above.*
- *The northern end of the Lincoln Cliff Scarp varies in character, and represents a contrast to many of the features of the slope generally. Here the slope is a mixture of arable and pasture fields, more open in nature with a considerable reduction in tree cover.*



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Character Sub-Area

- 7.1.1 The boundary of the Lincoln Cliff landscape sub-area is generally defined by the ridge and foot of the scarp slope itself. At the southern end of the sub-area a wider line is taken to encompass the important setting of the Leadenham 'curve' and a double slope feature in the escarpment.
- 7.1.2 The northern end of the sub-area is artificially defined by the North Kesteven administrative boundary. In fact the green finger of the scarp continues further north into Lincoln city, but its character is altered somewhat by the use of the land as a golf course.
- 7.1.3 The eastern boundary of the sub-area, where the top of the scarp meets the plateau and adjoins the Limestone Heath landscape sub-area, is generally concurrent with the A607 as far as Navenby. Local deviations from this road are seen on the sub-area map where the landscape character does not conform to the line of the road.
- 7.1.4 At Navenby the Pottergate Road takes the eastern boundary of the landscape sub-area down to the eastern side of Leadenham. The escarpment continues out of the North Kesteven district to the south and the sub-area is therefore bounded at its southern end by the administrative boundary.
- 7.1.5 The returning boundary line at the base of the slope from south to north is not so obviously defined, without the benefit of a road close to the change in topography and character as is to be found on the higher eastern boundary line. The western delineation starts at the administrative boundary below Leadenham, and here the sub-area sees its broadest point, to take in the double terrace of the escarpment at Leadenham, and also to enclose the important setting of the historic Leadenham village.
- 7.1.6 The boundary then follows the bottom of the slope to Wellbourn, where the line skirts along the western fringe of this village and its historic features, situated on the lower part of the slope. Following the base of the slope to Wellingore, the sub-area and boundary then expands to include the buttress curve in the limestone escarpment on which Wellingore village is located. The boundary then follows the base of the slope again as it curves back towards Navenby. The narrower and steeper slope of the cliff seen in the northern half of the sub-area is then reflected in the boundary line proceeding north, following the bottom of the slope but capturing the settings of the ridge line villages of Boothby Graffoe, Coleby and Harmston.
- 7.1.7 The lower part of the slope then broadens out at the northern end of the sub-area, and the sub-area therefore opens out to take in the lower and gentler part of the slope. It is here that a clear boundary is defined at the divide between Lincoln's suburban fringe and the agricultural landscape of the cliff, and the North Kesteven administrative boundary is rejoined at this point.

Topography and Landform

- 7.1.8 The sub-area is one of the most obviously distinctive within North Kesteven, consisting of the more-or-less unbroken slope or 'cliff' between the lower vale and higher plateau. It is defined by its topographical characteristics and its transitional

qualities. The change in elevation from the low lying Witham and Brant Vale in the east, to the plateau of the Limestone Heath to the west, occurs entirely within the narrow sub-area. At a height of between 80 and 100m, the cliff is a considerable feature when compared to the low lying Witham and Brant Vale at around 10m elevation. This rise in level occurs over a small distance, mainly over less than 1.5 km, with the slope taking a flat 's' form, gently concave at its foot, with steep middle sections and a gently convex upper reach to its ridge. Running in a north south direction, this limestone escarpment is a renowned and locally valued landscape feature. From the westerly facing slope views of considerable distance are possible over the low expanse of the Witham and Brant Vale and beyond into North Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire.

- 7.1.9 Views both towards the cliff and in particular, views out over the vale from the cliff, are of considerable scale. The views from the cliff present possibly the most important vistas within the district. When travelling from the plateau in the west, the treescape and gently convex ridge obscures the view of the lower vale until emerging from the trees and beyond the crest itself. The view then opens up dramatically to reveal the expanse of the low vale.



View west from the Cliff above Wellbourn

- 7.1.10 Curves in the line of the scarp, most noticeably at Wellingore and Leadenham, present buttress features to the limestone escarpment strongly rising above the vale below before curving back to the general north south direction. At these points the hedgerows running down the slope appear to fan out to the base, and the villages of Wellingore in particular can be more clearly seen, although still somewhat veiled by swathes of trees. The buttress at Wellingore retains a single slope, whereas further south at Leadenham the cliff presents a very distinctive upper and lower slope, with an intermediate flat terrace, appearing as a narrow and hidden shelf in the escarpment.

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 7.1.11 Land use along the slope is predominantly pasture land, usually with good condition and generally continuous hedgerows. Occasional arable fields are seen on the lower

slopes where the scarp raises, gently at first, from the mainly arable and larger fields of the vale below. Field boundaries are bolstered by additional post and wire fencing to create safe enclosures for livestock. Most of the actual farmsteads are located either at the top or the bottom of the slope, although a small number are present on the slope itself. The use of the pasture land for horses appears to be slowly increasing, and this brings additional landscape detractors.

- 7.1.12 Trees are a major landscape feature within the Lincoln Cliff Scarp sub-area. The majority of the scarp woodland is broadleaved, which provides attractive variations throughout the year. This is in contrast to much of the woodland within the Terraced Sandlands landscape sub-area, which is one of the other more wooded areas within the North Kesteven district, but where the large plantation woodlands influence the character of the sub-area and its colour. In some places the treescape is continual across the top of the slope, and in others there are regular woodland clumps, creating a very varied skyline. Hedgerows are thicker and slightly taller than those seen on the lower Witham and Brant Vale, and most fields are elongated down the slope, with the effect of a continual ladder of hedgerows running from the higher slope down into the vale. Where the scarp takes a curve and splays out into the vale, small woodlands occur in the hollows as the scarp returns to its north-south line.
- 7.1.13 Consequently the Cliff itself is much more varied than its eastern or western surrounds, particularly to its southern reaches, often offering enclosure and intimacy. This is primarily because of the varied and significant treescape, which in turn presents a varied skyline, but also as a result of the quite intimate and nucleic nature of the scarp villages. After the topography itself, the treescape and villages are very important defining characteristics for this landscape sub-area.
- 7.1.14 The trees and villages are important in terms of the colour and texture of the landscape sub-area. Mature trees are frequently clustered around into the villages, and tree cover spills down the slope amongst a network of significant hedgerows. 'Layers' or bands of trees can be viewed from the top to the bottom of the slope, with significant tree cover at the top of the scarp, and scattered clumps, or hedgerow trees frequently occurring as the slope flows downwards. Amongst the trees glimpses of the villages are often seen, and the yellow limestone walls, red pantile roofs and tall chimneys stand out from within this softening cover. The extent and detail of each village is often not seen until entering the villages themselves. Much is hidden from more distant vistas, although when viewed from the vale, the various spires and towers from village churches emerge from the trees and pierce the skyline to indicate where the villages lie. Again the great variation in churches and their towers and spires, as seen across the North Kesteven district generally, adds to the interest and sense of place.
- 7.1.15 Whilst the Waddington airbase is located on the higher plateau and outside the Lincoln Cliff Scarp landscape sub-area, it does influence the landscape character and feel when in its vicinity along the cliff ridge in the north. At the very northern end of this landscape sub-area, as the slope runs towards the city of Lincoln, the scarp is allocated as green wedge within the North Kesteven Local Plan 2007. Here the slope itself is devoid of settlement and runs northwards as a narrow finger of green bounded by suburban settlement both at the foot of the slope and on the plateau. Along this green finger the field pattern becomes more varied, and more arable agriculture is introduced alongside the pastures, and acts as an important landscape backdrop and informal recreation asset to the Lincoln city fringes.

- 7.1.16 Similarly at the southern end of the sub-area the agricultural use of the land becomes more mixed on the flat terrace between the upper and lower slopes of the cliff at Leadenham, taking advantage of the richer soils that occur above the limestone on this intermediate plateau. The treescape around Leadenham is quite distinctive, and contributes to the double slope feature in that it hides either the lower or upper slope from view when a view is taken from the other. Specimen trees around the major houses and halls of the cliff, such as fir and cedar are occasionally dramatic and highly attractive landscape features of the cliff.

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

- 7.1.17 The settlement pattern across the Lincoln Cliff Scarp sub-area is distinctive, comprising clustered villages along the ridge. The villages are in fact quite regularly spaced along the slope, although the elevation of each village does vary, with some concentrated almost on the plateau and others, particularly Welbourn and Leadenham located further down the slope. Navenby extends into the higher plateau at the top of the slope slightly beyond the ridgeline, and Waddington is almost entirely situated on the plateau with only its most westerly fringe dipping onto the slope itself and hence being included in this landscape sub-area. Leadenham is uniquely located on the flat terrace between the upper and lower slopes of the cliff. The village of Leadenham is larger than most of the other villages along the slope, and Leadenham Hall benefits from a well located position at the top of the lower slope.
- 7.1.18 Road patterns within the scarp villages are a tight network of small lanes, reflecting the nucleic nature of the villages. Across the scarp as a whole, the roads are a regular and repeated pattern of routes running straight up and down the cliff in an east-west direction from Broughton Lane in the vale to the main A607 road to Grantham, which runs along the top of the slope at the plateau's edge. These roads run at regular intervals wherever a village occurs on the slope, to connect each village with the two main roads to the west and east of the Lincoln Cliff Scarp. Connections between the villages other than the main A607 road are virtually absent. At Wellingore the A607 dips down from the plateau to the lower part of the slope, where it is known as Cliff Road.
- 7.1.19 The road pattern prevents any significant vehicular travel across the scarp itself, with the roads running parallel to it at, or close to, its foot and across the crest, linking its settlements.

Settlement Character

- 7.1.20 The ridgeline villages are often of relatively high density, with clusters of houses knitted together around a network of small lanes. Mature and aging trees are a significant feature of the scarp villages, adding to their sense of history and character. The density of trees renders many of the villages very inward focused, and this is amplified by central features such as small village greens.



Typical high estate walling in Leadenham village

- 7.1.21 Much of the older sections of the scarp villages are predominantly built from limestone, although some red brick is evident. Red pantile roofs or blue slate roofs are usually topped with tall chimney stacks. Limestone walls curve alongside the village lanes, often obscuring the full extent of housing clusters.
- 7.1.22 Areas of post war housing within the ridgeline villages are occasionally slightly unsympathetic to the older village core character. It is evident however from some of the very new development, where greater attention is now being paid to dwelling design that a strengthening of character is being achieved.
- 7.1.23 A number of the scarp villages also hold fine large historic houses, such as Wellingore Hall which usually stand with more prominent views over the vale, and consequently can be seen emerging from the trees when the slope is viewed from the lower vale. It will be important that future development respects the importance of such buildings and their settings and significant landscape features.

The Lincoln Cliff	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for enhancement
<p>Increased Sensitivity to Change In comparison with other character units within the North Kesteven District, the Lincoln Cliff is particularly sensitive to the visual impact of new development, and is unlikely to accommodate any significant non-residential development without causing harm to landscape character, unless the design of the development was exceptional and an exposed location justified. The striking topography, pattern and character of the villages, within their wider countryside setting would be significantly harmed through poorly located new development.</p>	<p>Careful consideration of new development within the ridgeline villages will be necessary, to ensure that new buildings serve to enhance the distinctiveness and sometimes significant charm of the villages. Retaining their close and nucleic character will also be important, whilst protecting important open spaces therein. Significant extensions to the villages, which would spread out into the undeveloped countryside in between should be avoided, to maintain separation and identity. Extension, if necessary, should be towards the east and the Limestone Heaths character area.</p>

The Lincoln Cliff	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for enhancement
<p>Settings of Ridgeline Settlements The ridgeline villages are very distinctive in terms of setting and built environment, and some of their character has been eroded by newer development that does not sit well with the historic traditional dwellings.</p>	<p>Residential development where opportunities arise within the tight village envelopes can be accommodated with considerable attention to design detail and reflection of local character.</p>
<p>The settings of Leadenham and Wellingore in particular are very important to the character area. Any significant expansion of Leadenham which would be likely to harm its setting and relationship with the cliff's 'middle shelf' should be resisted, and any expansion of Wellingore on to the scarp slope would dilute its prominent and distinctive character and form.</p>	<p>All cliff villages, but particularly Leadenham and Wellingore, require specific consideration in future spatial planning policy to ensure that it does not expand in such a way as to harm or dilute their setting and interrelationship with the topography of the cliff and associated tree cover.</p>
<p>Treescape Treescapes across the cliff are critical landscape features. Wellingore, Navenby and Leadenham villages are particularly reliant upon their surrounding treescape in terms of setting and views in and out of the villages. Their on-going management to ensure longevity and retention of their visual importance is critical to landscape character and value. Unsympathetic and 'urbanising' use of leylandii type hedges, particularly to the northern ridge villages.</p>	<p>Long term planning for the continuation of the trees framing the area's villages is necessary. Ensuring that a continued and mixed age structure prevails in the woodlands by favourable management, and similarly ensuring a continued line of planted village trees, or specimen trees such as cedar, to replace the older ones as they are lost, is an important management and enhancement objective for this sub-area.</p> <p>Leylandii type hedging should be avoided and where possible removed. But other non-native species such as cedar, encouraged where appropriate and closely related to the villages themselves.</p>
<p>Green Wedge Function The section of Green Wedge at the northern end of the Lincoln Cliff Scarp landscape sub-area is a distinctive wedge that has the topographical and vegetation cover characteristics and interest of the scarp generally, but without settlement. The openness here is very important to the character of this area of the cliff. However, its location immediately south of the city of Lincoln and immediate proximity to North Hykeham and Bracebridge Heath is likely to place it under considerable pressure for future residential development.</p>	<p>The retention of this area of considerable landscape importance as a Green Wedge, allowing protection against the pressure from suburban expansion to meet housing demand, should remain a core element of future spatial planning policy.</p>

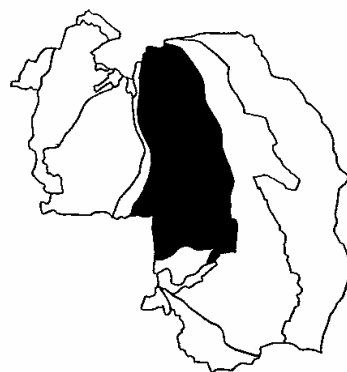
The Lincoln Cliff	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for enhancement
<p>Infrastructure The ridgeline of the character area is likely to prove an attractive location for telecommunications equipment, such as mobile phone masts. The sensitivity of the ridge means such development could be particularly harmful to the landscape character and integrity.</p>	<p>The addition of prominent telecommunication infrastructure across the Lincoln Cliff is a further pressure that is likely to erode the special character of this sub-area and therefore requires specific and firm policy protection in spatial plans to ensure insensitive development can be resisted in order to protect landscape quality. Careful consideration should be afforded to measures such as 'sky-lining', mast sharing and positioning of infrastructure on existing buildings rather than new masts.</p>
<p>Field Pattern and Boundaries The field boundary hedgerows running up and down the slope are a striking feature of the character area when viewed from the lower vale. In some locations however, these hedges are 'gappy' and poorly managed.</p>	<p>Distinctive hedgerow patterns should be restored and gaps filled in wherever possible. The Local Authority might consider the possibility of introducing a hedgerow management and restoration grant scheme for landowners to undertake the necessary restoration planting within the character area.</p>

8. Central Plateau Regional Landscape Character Type

8.1 Limestone Heath Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- *This is a large landscape character sub-area situated in the centre of the District between the ridge of the Lincoln Cliff and the Central Clays and Gravels to the east..*
- *Its position on the upper reaches of the cliff's dip slope gives it a feeling of relative elevation and exposure.*
- *It is predominantly an empty, open landscape with wide views to the skyline in all directions.*
- *The landform is a gently undulating plateau which dips gently towards the east.*
- *Generally the whole area is dry, with no obvious surface drainage as a consequence of the underlying limestone geology.*
- *Scattered woodland copses pepper the whole of the sub-area, which although relatively small are prominent features because of the openness of the landscape.*
- *Roadside hedgerows are often found with mature trees within.*
- *Limestone dry stone walls are apparent along roadside and some field boundaries, but are generally in poor condition.*
- *Fields are very large and rectilinear. Field boundaries are often absent, broken or delineated by a strip of rough grass or remnant hedgerow or wall.*
- *The soil colour is a striking reddish brown colour with visually prominent stone content giving it a rough texture.*
- *Intensive arable agriculture dominates land use with wheat and root crop common.*
- *The central plateau area is generally unsettled except for isolated farmsteads and occasional ribbon development along the A15. Larger settlements are situated on the edge of the sub-area characterised by having historic cores with limestone buildings but often surrounded by significant levels of 20th Century development.*
- *Utility Infrastructure, which although sparse, makes an impact on the landscape including prominent pylons and the main A15 running north to south.*
- *RAF installations have made a significant impact on the landscape sub-area with several large bases and training centres.*
- *Mineral working is a feature of the sub-area with several large limestone quarries.*
- *Pressures for change on the Plateau predominately relate to minerals operations, decline of field boundaries, particularly walls, and intensive agricultural practices.*
- *Opportunities for landscape strengthening and enhancement mainly lie in field boundary reinstatement, particularly of dry stone walls and for more appropriately designed development on the outskirts of settlements.*



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Character Sub-Area

- 8.1.1 The Limestone Heath is a large landscape character sub-area situated in the centre of the District, characterised by its elevation and openness and large intensively farmed fields. The sub-area is delineated in the north by the top edge of the scarp slope (i.e. Lincoln cliff) before it drops down into Lincoln City. To the west the top of the scarp slope again makes an obvious topographical boundary, running from Bracebridge Heath south to Leadenham. The eastern boundary with the Central Clays and Gravels landscape character sub-area roughly follows the line of the railway and the B1188. The south-western boundary follows the A17 west of Sleaford before turning southwards just north of North Rauceby to join the B6403 Ermine Street just north of Ancaster.
- 8.1.2 There is a continuation of this landscape sub-area to the north of Lincoln (i.e. to the north of the Lincoln gap in to West Lindsey District). The character sub-area displays a great deal of uniformity in topographical and land use respects.

Topography and Landform

- 8.1.3 The landform consists of an open, gently undulating plateau with the gradient sloping down from west to east (approx 80m down to 25m). The ridges and dips run in an east-west direction following shallow 'dry' valleys, and this is particularly apparent when travelling along the A15 which falls and rises with the topography. Towards the west, the ridge of the Lincoln Cliff makes a prominent skyline with woodland copses outlined against the sky. There are extensive 360° views throughout the sub-area afforded by the generally low relief, large field size and absence of field boundaries. The sense of relative elevation is obvious and the general lack of tree cover or other features accentuates the feeling of exposure and emptiness.
- 8.1.4 Generally the whole area is dry with no natural waterbodies and no obvious, surface drainage due to the underlying pervious limestone, though some streams rise on the eastern fringe of the sub-area.
- 8.1.5 A key vista is the view from the northern end of the landscape sub-area on the edge of the scarp, in the Canwick area, where there is an excellent view of Lincoln City and the Cathedral.
- 8.1.6 The soil within the landscape character sub-area is notable for its reddish-brown colour with and obvious limestone fragments content giving a rough texture. The intensive arable use of the fields and absence of boundaries results in this becoming seasonally significant within the landscape.

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 8.1.7 The landscape sub-area is dominated by agricultural land use. The farming practice here is almost entirely arable farming, consisting of cereal and root crops grown in large rectangular shaped fields. Some fields appeared to be in 'set-aside', characterised by a rougher and unkempt appearance.

- 8.1.8 Notably, there are many mature trees within the roadside hedgerows often with ivy clad trunks indicating that they maybe becoming over-mature. The roadside hedgerows are often tall (approx. 1.5 -2m in height) with broad grass verges in front. The hedgerows along the field boundaries tended to be lower, sparser and less well kept. Dry stone walls are a feature of this area, making use of the local limestone resource, both along the roadsides and occasionally along field boundaries though many are in poor repair.



Copse near Ashby de la Launde

- 8.1.9 There are a number of small copses, mostly broadleaved, throughout the sub-area which because of the general openness of the landscape are prominent and make important features. The copses often abut the many scattered farmsteads and agricultural buildings.
- 8.1.10 There is little evidence of industry or commercial activity except on the outskirts of the larger settlements such as Waddington and Bracebridge Heath. There are several active stone quarries at a number of sites including Scopwick, Dunston and Harmston Heath, which is operated as a waste disposal site. These are generally well screened by earth bund walls and landscaping and therefore not immediately obvious in the landscape. There is also evidence of a number of small scale abandoned quarries and minerals workings which have become naturalised and overgrown.
- 8.1.11 Obtrusive infrastructure elements are present in the two lines of large pylons and high voltage electricity cables running across the landscape to the eastern fringe of the area and also across its south-west quadrant. Radio masts at RAF Digby are also prominent but relatively concentrated in area. The flat and open landscape does not afford any softening landscape backdrop and so their prominence is emphasised and visually significant from relatively long distances.



Open landscape and dry stone wall boundaries near Scopwick Heath

- 8.1.12 RAF establishments are a current and important historic feature of the area within the open, exposed and largely flat landscape being highly suitable for airfields. They include the large air base at RAF Waddington which has a number of very large aircraft hangars; the RAF camp and radio installations at RAF Digby; and the training centre with its imposing central building and gates at Cranwell. There is also evidence of abandoned airfields and associated buildings.

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

- 8.1.13 There are very few settlements in the central parts of this landscape character sub-area and the lasting impression is of an empty landscape. There are a few isolated farmsteads and agricultural buildings and occasional sporadic ribbon development along the A15. The settlements that are present are on the fringes of landscape sub-area including Waddington, Bracebridge Heath and Branston. These are large villages close to the edge of Lincoln City and as a result have absorbed significant housing development over recent years.
- 8.1.14 The road pattern is distinctive with the straight main road (A15) running from north to south (Lincoln to Sleaford) dividing the character sub-area in two and acting as a central communications spine, with straight and parallel minor roads dissecting the area into a grid pattern, running generally north-east to south-west. This distribution becomes slightly more diluted towards the southern parts of the area where the minor road network loses some of its straight line emphasis, but generally retains the grid character. Minor roads are characterised by wide grass verges, normally to one side of the metalled highway.

Settlement Character

- 8.1.15 The few settlements in the area have historic cores characterised by dwellings built of limestone with pantiled roofs. However, newer development is very mixed both in design and the materials used. Branston has a large attractive historic village centre set in a dip of the landscape but is now surrounded by newer development. The only other settlements of any size in the sub-area are Ashby de Launde and Bloxham which are attractive estate villages with old manor houses and distinctive cottages. Both are framed by attractive treescapes to give an enclosed, intimate setting in

contrast to surrounding open landscape. Ashby de Launde has a prominent church steeple and water tower.

Limestone Heath	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities of Enhancement
<p>Agriculture: Intensive agricultural activity has led to the removal or neglect of field boundaries of hedgerows or limestone walls.</p> <p>Walls are a particular feature of the sub-area but many are now in a poor state of repair or have been lost altogether.</p>	<p>Replacement hedgerow planting where these have been lost or degraded.</p> <p>Reinstatement and repair of the dry stone walls. Consider introduction of a district-wide walling repair grant scheme or introduce as a core element of farm agreements within DEFRA agri-environment schemes.</p>
<p>Housing development: Housing development on the edge of settlements has sometimes resulted in intrusive features because of the open and exposed nature of the surrounding landscape.</p> <p>Inappropriate, non-vernacular materials have been used in recent housing developments (e.g. red bricks and tiles)</p>	<p>Better design solutions should be encouraged through the planning process which seeks to deliver more sensitive interface between the settlement and open character of the landscape sub-area. Rigid building lines, uniform building design should be avoided, and better landscaping of indigenous tree belts and appropriate boundary treatment, such as dry stone walling, should be encouraged.</p> <p>Appropriate local material mixes should be used such as limestone for walling and clay pantiles for roofing, particularly at settlement edges.</p>
<p>Infrastructure: A number of power lines and pylons traverse the unit and are particularly dominant because of the openness of the landscape.</p> <p>There are several large limestone quarries e.g. Blankney, Brauncewell and Metherringham and an inert waste landfill site at Harmston which are potential detractors from the landscape.</p>	<p>The visual impact of pylons is difficult to counteract at the present time but long-term under-grounding solutions should be investigated in partnership with the electricity distribution companies and National Grid Company.</p> <p>Whilst the mineral extraction sites are generally well screened, additional tree planting would improve their setting and reduce harmful visual impact.</p>

Limestone Heath	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities of Enhancement
<p>MoD: The large RAF establishments in the unit make a major visual and aural impact on the landscape, with massive aircraft hangars, large concrete runways, tall radio masts and large perimeter fences.</p>	<p>There are steps that could be taken to improve the dominant appearance of the RAF establishments, such as additional tree and hedge planting around some buildings and around and away from the perimeter fences. Habitat friendly limestone grass management regimes should be investigated within base boundaries.</p>

8.2 Rauceby Hills Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- *A small landscape sub-area situated to the south-west of the District. It is delineated to the north by the wide gentle valley that the A17 follows. To the south the area is marked by a drop in gradient to the Slea Valley. To the west is the District boundary while to the east there is lower land surrounding Sleaford.*
- *The whole sub-area is higher than the surrounding areas with the highest part to the north (70-65m) and falling gently to the south to around 35m.*
- *The general impression is of a well managed agricultural countryside with open views to the north and south.*
- *The area is free draining with no obvious surface water due to the underlying limestone.*
- *There are a number of small copses of mixed woodland throughout the area and a single large area of woodland, High Wood, in the centre of the area.*
- *Avenues of mature trees and substantial hedgerows running along the lanes leading to North and South Rauceby, give an enclosed feeling to the area.*
- *Fields are large and rectangular in shape and away from the lanes field boundaries are often absent or marked by small hedgerows.*
- *Adjacent to the villages of North and South Rauceby smaller field and paddocks remain.*
- *Land use is predominately intensive arable agriculture.*
- *Between the two villages lies Rauceby Park, a large country estate, with sheep grazing within parkland and mature woodland.*
- *Apart from the two villages the area is largely unsettled except for occasional farmsteads.*
- *General absence of utility infrastructure.*
- *Pressures for change relate generally to intensive agricultural practices.*
- *Opportunities for landscape strengthening and enhancement lie in greater hedgerow planting along some of the field boundaries.*



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Character Sub-Area

- 8.2.1 This is a small landscape sub-area situated to the south-west of the District characterised by wooded copses and avenues of trees within an agricultural landscape. It lies in between the Limestone Heath to the north and east, and the Slea Valley to the south. The A17, set in a wide, open valley, forms much of the northern boundary. The A15 Sleaford Bypass forms the eastern boundary between the A17/A15 Holdingham Roundabout and the southern boundary is delineated by the fall in gradient to the Slea Valley.

- 8.2.2 The B6403 Ermine Street/High Dyke forms the western boundary of the sub-area, which is also the North Kesteven district boundary. A similar landscape continues beyond this into South Kesteven.

Topography and Landform

- 8.2.3 This sub-area is a transitional zone between the limestone heathland to the north and the rolling claylands to the south. Landform is more undulating than the flatter plateau to the north, comprising a series of flat ridges and valleys formed around two small streams which flow west-east down to the River Slea beyond Sleaford to the east.



Views north towards Cranwell

- 8.2.4 From a high point of 82m at Sudbrook House on Ermine Street in the west, the land falls gradually southwards to around 35m at the northern edge of the Slea Valley, just east of the Ancaster Gap. A similar level is achieved along the A15 Sleaford Bypass.
- 8.2.5 From the high ground in the west there are extensive views across the limestone heathland to Cranwell Airfield in the north and down to the Slea Valley to the south. Similarly there are long distance views across the sub-area from the A15 Sleaford Bypass. Within the heart of the sub-area, however, there are numerous small, medium-sized and large copses/woodlands which occasionally enclose the landscape and foreshorten views.
- 8.2.6 This is generally a mid-scale landscape, with predominantly regular medium-sized fields although these become smaller to the east. The general impression is of a well-managed and settled agricultural landscape.

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 8.2.7 Land use is almost entirely agricultural, with a mix of arable and some pasture. Notably there are a number of fields set to root crops. Generally the fields are large and rectangular in shape often with no field boundaries. Rauceby Hall lies within parkland to the east of the village, with much of the surrounding farmland being

managed by the estate. The parkland is grazed by and is characterised by many mature broadleaved trees within it.

- 8.2.8 The transitional nature of the landscape is illustrated by the merging characteristics of sandy thin limestone soils and limestone walls in the west, typical of the heathland, and the wide verges, thick mature hedgerows with trees and numerous woodland copses more typical of the central claylands.
- 8.2.9 One of the most distinctive features of the area are the avenues of trees lining the lanes in the immediate vicinity of North and South Rauceby (Church Lane, Waterwell Lane and Thorpe Drive). There is a mix of mature and some younger trees within the avenues, suggesting succession management, and are mostly sycamore and horse chestnut and grow on both sides of the lanes alongside well managed hedgerows and distinctively broad grass verges. Avenue trees are closely spaced, occasionally screening the surrounding open fields and affording an impression of enclosure which is absent from the other sub-areas in the central plateau. Further away from the villages the landscape becomes more open as the trees are less densely planted.



Avenues of trees and hedgerows approaching North Rauceby

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

- 8.2.10 The minor road Tom Street / Raucby Drove runs through the centre of this sub-area, from the A17 southwards through North Rauceby and South Rauceby, and suggests origins as a droving route more apparent in the Upland Plateau Fringe sub-area to the south.
- 8.2.11 Two further minor roads connect this main north-south route to Ermine Street to the west, one running from North Rauceby and the other from South Rauceby. There are no roads connecting these villages to the east, and much of the area is undeveloped only being accessed by small farm tracks or footpaths.
- 8.2.12 A number of farms are dotted throughout the sub-area, mostly located along long access drives leading from the minor roads through the central and western half of the area, as well as from trunk roads in the north, east and south. Generally this space road network runs on a north-south and east-west emphasis.

Settlement Character

- 8.2.13 North Rauceby and South Rauceby are distinctive estate villages of considerable charm. They are linear in form and have grown alongside the Tom Street and Rauceby Drove through this sub-area.
- 8.2.14 South Rauceby is the larger of the two villages, extending along three minor roads. The parkland and Hall lie to the east of the village, the parkland extending northwards almost to North Rauceby and presenting a very considerable contribution to local character.
- 8.2.15 Both North and South Rauceby are small settlements with many attractive historic buildings. North Rauceby is a linear 'street' village with most development having a direct frontage to the main street. As well as a number of historic cottages built of limestone with pantile roofs, there is also newer development including small bungalows and former Local Authority housing with locally untypical mansard roofs. There is a fine spired church in the centre of the village which appears disproportionately large for the small scale of the village. The spire is however an important landmark in the surrounding landscape. There is also a stone cross in the centre of the village.



The church at North Rauceby

- 8.2.16 South Rauceby has a main street similar to that of North Rauceby in that development generally has a direct frontage on the street. The setting on this part of the village is distinctive with land rising to the north and falling away to the south of the main street. In the centre stands a historic brick mill tower which has been converted to residential use. In addition there is some housing to the south of the main street along Cliff View which to a significant extent is enclosed by woodland. Further to the south-west is the small, modern housing estate of Southgate Spinneys, consisting of large detached dwellings. This estate is surrounded by woodland and largely hidden from the road.
- 8.2.17 Rauceby Hall is a country house set in parkland and surrounded by an imposing limestone boundary wall. There are mature, broadleaved trees scattered throughout

the parkland. The hall and much of the estate building stock dates from the mid 1800s.



Main Street, South Rauceby

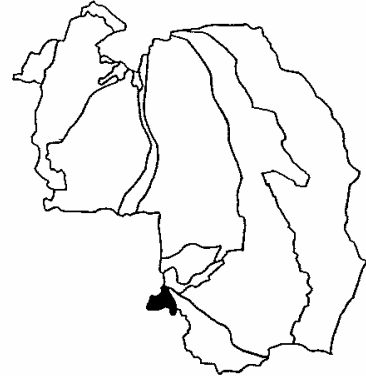
Rauceby Hills	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities of Enhancement
<p>Agriculture: Intensive agricultural activity has led to the removal or neglect of hedgerows between fields.</p> <p>Limestone walls are a particular feature in the west of the area but many are now in a poor state of repair or have been lost altogether.</p>	<p>Replacement hedgerow planting where these have been lost or degraded.</p> <p>Reinstatement and repair of the dry stone walls. Consider introduction of a district-wide walling repair grant scheme or introduce as a core element of farm agreements within DEFRA agri-environment schemes.</p>
<p>Housing development: The modern housing estate of Southgate Spinneys does not follow the traditional linear street pattern within South Rauceby. However it is well screened and its modern layout is not apparent.</p>	<p>There is unlikely to be any major development pressure in this area. However, any infill housing should respect the distinctive pattern of the “street villages” and utilise local materials such as limestone and clay pantiles in a sensitive way. ‘Backland’ type development should be resisted on character grounds.</p>

Rauceby Hills	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities of Enhancement
<p>Infrastructure: The A15 Sleaford bypass is visible from within the sub-area although makes no obvious adverse impact on its character. However some of the structure planting alongside the road has not assimilated well into the landscape and remains somewhat unnatural in appearance.</p>	<p>Along the A15 any future landscape planting should ideally follow a natural pattern of occasional small copses and groups of trees rather than a linear planting scheme.</p>

8.3 Wilsford Heath Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- *Small sub area on the south western edge of the District.*
- *Bounded by the District boundary on three sides, with the western boundary being the B6403 (Ermine Street).*
- *Relatively flat, high in elevation (between 90-92m) and falls away to the north towards the Ancaster gap and to the east where the land becomes more undulating. To the south and west the land rises gently.*
- *A generally level, agricultural landscape.*
- *The whole area is dry with no obvious surface drainage due to the underlying limestone.*
- *There is a single large coppice of broadleaved woodland to the centre of the area with a other smaller copes closer to the areas boundaries.*
- *Fields are large and generally used for intensive arable agriculture.*
- *The area is mostly unsettled except for a few farms and associated buildings..*



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Sub-Area

- 8.3.1 This is a very small sub-area situated on the south west edge of the District. It lies to the south of the extensive limestone heath, of which it bears many similar characteristics, being separated from it by the Rauceby Hills and Slea Valley.
- 8.3.2 It is bounded on three sides by the North Kesteven District boundary. The northern edge of the sub-area abuts the valley through which the River Slea and the A153 pass through the Ancaster Gap. The western boundary is formed by the A6403 which follows the route of Ermine Street a Roman road (also know as High Dyke). Beyond the boundary the heathland characteristics continue westwards through Willoughby Heath and Barkston Heath. Immediately outside the district boundary is RAF Barkston Heath airfield, a typical land-use within the Limestone Heath as described in Section 8.1.
- 8.3.3 To the south, the boundary of the sub-area again follows the District boundary. Just beyond the boundary the landscape has typical heathland characteristics before merging into the more undulating clay uplands beyond. The eastern boundary with the Upland Plateau Fringe marks the gradual change from the open, exposed, expansive heathland to the smaller scale, more intimate and varied landscape of the claylands to the east.

Topography and Landform

- 8.3.4 The landform consists of an open, flat plateau, being generally between 90–92m in height. From the eastern edge of the area the land falls into a valley and views can be seen across the adjoining rolling farmland.



Heath Lane, Wilsford Heath

- 8.3.5 Generally the whole character area is dry with no waterscape or surface drainage due the underlying pervious limestone.
- 8.3.6 This is a large to medium scale, largely open landscape with generally extensive views, occasionally foreshortened by woodland copses both within the landscape sub-area and beyond. Large, regular fields in the west gradually become smaller and more enclosed, though still regular and rectilinear to the east.

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 8.3.7 The sub-area is dominated by agricultural land use. The farming practice is almost entirely arable farming, grown in large, rectangular fields, though there is some pasture in the east. Three farms, Valley Farm, Wilsford Heath Farm and Glebe Farm, are spread evenly across the sub-area.
- 8.3.8 This area has been previously quarried for limestone. A large quarry in the centre of the sub-area is well screened by a large broadleaved woodland which is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Just beyond the southern boundary lies Quarry farm, a further indicator of the former land-use.
- 8.3.9 There are many mature trees (mainly Ash) lining the few straight roads with wide grass verges and mature hedgerows. There is also a smaller, triangular shaped area of woodland on the northern boundary called Duke's Covert.
- 8.3.10 The northern half of the sub-area is more obviously influenced by man. There is a covered reservoir and mast to the east of the area. Adjacent to Ermine Street, at Cooper Hill, there are large hanger-type buildings associated with the airfield immediately to the west, together with another aerial mast.



Reservoir, Wilsford Heath

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

8.3.11 As a small landscape area there is a very limited road network. The only lanes therein form a cross, with King Street running from north to south which follows the course of a Roman road, and Heath Lane which runs from east to west. There are no significant settlements in the area and only few isolated farmsteads.



Looking west to hangar type buildings on the B6403

Wilsford Heath	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
<p>Agriculture: Intensive agricultural activity has led to the removal of some hedgerows and walls between fields.</p>	<p>Replacement hedgerow planting where these have been lost or degraded.</p> <p>Reinstatement and repair of the dry stone walls. Consider introduction of a district-wide walling repair grant scheme or introduce as a core element of farm agreements within DEFRA agri-environment schemes.</p> <p>An increase in grassland and pasture would help to restore a more mixed pattern of land use, returning to a more visually varied and traditional landscape.</p>
<p>Employment development: The location of the sub-area close to the B6403 and the airfield has encouraged development pressures along the western boundary. A precedent has been set by the Cooper Hill development which arguably could expand in the future.</p>	<p>Pressure for ribbon development along the B6403 should be resisted to avoid landscape harm caused by interruption to the open and largely unspoilt landscape of the sub-area.</p>
<p>Infrastructure: The area appears to present a good technical setting for telecommunications masts on the open heathland, and this sub-area may come under further pressure for this type of development.</p>	<p>Any future telecommunications development should be very carefully sited so as not to impact on the openness of the landscape.</p>
<p>Minerals Operations: Active quarrying appears to have ceased in this area at present. However the limestone resource on which the landscape is based presents the potential for future minerals extraction pressures.</p>	<p>Any future mineral working would need to be carefully sited and screened to prevent further erosion of the predominately agricultural character of the landscape. In doing so full regard to the national importance of the SSSI should be afforded.</p>

8.4 Slea Valley Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- *Small, linear shaped landscape character sub-area situated in the south west of the District. It is delineated by rising land to the north and south on either side of the shallow valley. To the east it meets the lower more open land surrounding Sleaford. To the west the area meets the District boundary.*
- *The area is low at the valley bottom (approx 20m) and rises gently on both sides to 25 m before rising to the adjoining landscape character sub-areas.*
- *The area is dominated by the main road, the A153, and the railway line which follow the line of the valley along its whole length.*
- *A watercourse known as the Beck, which later becomes the River Slea, also follows along the length of the valley but is not an obvious feature in the landscape.*
- *In the centre of the valley are several small lakes reflecting past gravel working.*
- *The land use is generally arable agriculture, though there is evidence of set-aside and grazing.*
- *Few hedgerows but some dry stone walls.*
- *The valley sides are generally open with little woodland cover. There are some distinctive willow trees lining the Beck at Wilsford and some stands of poplar.*
- *On the valley floor to the centre of the area, around Sleaford golf course, unimproved heathland with pine trees and gorse bushes is present.*
- *The village of Wilsford stands partly in the valley but also rises up into the Upland Plateau fringe. It has attractive limestone buildings with a distinctive church.*
- *The other main settlement is around Rauceby Station where there is new development within the former Rauceby Hospital, characterised by woodland including distinctive fir trees.*



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Character Sub-Area

- 8.4.1 This is a narrow sub-area running east-west between Sleaford and Ancaster. It is defined by the narrow valley of the River Slea as it flows eastwards through the gap in the limestone escarpment at Ancaster and through the centre of Sleaford.
- 8.4.2 The narrow valley is defined by a combination of landform, land-use, vegetation pattern and soil type. The sands and river gravels form a distinct corridor through the Central Plateau Landscape Character Type to the west of Sleaford.
- 8.4.3 The Northern boundary with the Rauceby Hills sub-area in parts follows the line of the railway and the A153 (where the River Slea runs south of these) but mainly follows a line slightly north of the river as an approximate boundary of the south-facing valley.

- 8.4.4 The southern boundary with the Central Clays and Valleys sub-area in parts follows the railway line or is drawn tightly around distinctive land-uses within the valley, namely the golf course and the former Rauceby Hospital site, or extends slightly to the south of Wilsford and the A153 as an approximate boundary of the north-facing valley (between Wilsford and Ancaster).
- 8.4.5 The western extent of the sub-area follows the North Kesteven district boundary to the east of Ancaster, whilst the eastern end is defined by the railway as it arcs around the western built-up edge of Sleaford.



Sleaford Golf Course, Slea Valley

Topography and Landform

- 8.4.6 The highest part of the sub-area is at the extreme south-western tip, at approximately 80m. Here the valley is at its steepest, falling steeply to the low point of the valley at 27m at Wilsford. In general the River Slea (known as the Beck in the western part of the sub-area) follows a gently meandering course at around 25-30m.
- 8.4.7 In contrast to the western end of the valley, the central and eastern sections are much flatter and possibly providing a functional floodplain value. In the middle section of the valley, between the road and the railway, are several small lakes created as a result of former gravel working.
- 8.4.8 Due to the surrounding landform, views out from within the valley are limited at the western end. Neither the railway nor the River Slea are significant visual features within the valley at its western end. These become more obvious however, as does the A153, where the valley widens out through its central and eastern sections. The A15 Sleaford Bypass cuts across the valley on an embankment over the railway and river, making it a significant feature within the floodplain but providing extensive views along the valley.
- 8.4.9 Views south of the river within the centre of the sub-area are enclosed by the dense vegetation within the golf course and by development around the former Rauceby Hospital.

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 8.4.10 The dominant land use is arable agriculture, mainly consisting of cereal and root crops. There are however large open fields to the north-east of the area which are used for grazing. There are also a number of fields put over to set-aside which has resulted in an coarser appearance and texture to the landscape and less uniform in appearance.



Shallow but distinctive slopes of the Slea Valley

- 8.4.11 The golf course in the centre of the area has an intensively managed appearance of fairways and greens, although there is clearly remnant heathland characteristics of coniferous trees, birch and gorse bushes associated with dry sandy soils. Those remnants enjoy designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- 8.4.12 The main areas of woodland are associated with the two settlements. There are a couple of small copses close to Wilsford, together with large riparian willow trees alongside the Beck. Around the new development at the Rauceby Hospital site there are mature woodlands comprising both broadleaved and conifer species.
- 8.4.13 In general the fields are large and open often with no discernable field boundaries. However, to the western end of the area some of the field boundaries consist of mature hedgerows. There are occasional but visually prominent shelter belts of poplars. Dense roadside planting alongside the A15 Sleaford Bypass is now well established, although its landscape impact is slightly incongruous with established landscape character despite its functional performance.
- 8.4.14 The most obvious infrastructure features are the main road and railway which dominate the area. There are three level crossings along the A153 where the railway crosses the road.



The Slea valley with fields in set-aside and arable use

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

- 8.4.15 The linear road pattern dominates the area with main A153 running from Sleaford in the east to Grantham in the west. There are a number of minor roads adjoining the main road cutting across the landscape from north to south.
- 8.4.16 The main two settlements are Wilsford, which is an attractive village with many old limestone buildings, and the new development at the Rauceby Hospital site which was still under construction at the time of survey. There is a small railway station at Rauceby hospital.

Settlement Character

- 8.4.17 The linear village of Wilsford is partly within the Slea valley but also rises up into Upland Plateau fringe. Completely by-passed by the A153, Wilsford has an attractive high street containing many limestone buildings with red pantiled roofs. It has a distinctive spired church at the northern end of the village which is a prominent feature within the rural hinterland. There is some newer development spreading up the hill to the south of the settlement. On the eastern edge of the village are the impressive stone buildings of Hall Farm which have now been converted to multiple residential dwellings.
- 8.4.18 Significant new development now surrounds the former Rauceby Hospital and consists of a complex of distinctive red brick buildings. The new development is a mixture of three-storey town houses and two storey properties with shallow front yards and gardens. The landscaping of the area which has yet to be completed will link the new development to the old hospital buildings by establishment of an avenue of deciduous trees.



New development at the Rauceby Hospital site

Slea Valley	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
Agriculture: Intensive agricultural activity has led to the removal of hedgerows between fields.	Replacement hedgerow planting where these have been lost or degraded.
Employment development: The location of A153 running along the centre of the sub-area may possibly put development pressure along its length.	Pressure for ribbon development along A153 should be resisted
Housing development: The large new housing development under construction at Rauceby Hospital may put pressure for further development in this area.	

8.5 Central Clays and Gravels Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- *Landscape sub-area runs the entire length of the District.*
- *The narrowest part is in the north, widening southwards beyond Sleaford to meet the Upland Plateau Fringe. The western edge is defined by the Limestone Heath and Slea Valley, whilst the Fens lie to the east along its full extent.*
- *A gently undulating lowland, edged by areas of woodland in the north.*
- *Fields are generally smaller and more varied in shape than on the adjacent limestone plateau with some grazing land as well as arable.*
- *Surface water drains into small streams running from west to east and drainage ditches run by the sides of the fields.*
- *Well kept hedgerows along roadsides and sometimes between fields.*
- *Dark brown coloured soil.*
- *Small copses of broadleaved woodland throughout the sub-area and larger areas of woodland on the eastern edge.*
- *Three distinctive lines of settlements – the limestone villages following the spring lines coming off the limestone plateau; the line of villages on the clay strip; and the villages edging the fens to the south.*
- *Road network orientated with the main roads running from north to south (Lincoln to Sleaford) with smaller roads running west to east.*
- *Pressures for change in the sub-area relate to inappropriate development on the edge of villages and the loss of hedgerows and tree cover.*
- *Opportunities for landscape enhancement mainly rest with increased hedgerow and tree planting and maintaining the character of the villages.*



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Character Sub-Area

- 8.5.1 This landscape character sub-area is characterised by gently undulating lowland, edged with areas of woodland in the north, and elsewhere scattered throughout. It runs the length of the District with the narrowest part in the north, widening southwards beyond Sleaford to meet the Upland Plateau Fringe. The western edge is defined by the limestone heath and Slea valley, west of Sleaford, whilst the Fens lie to the east. The western boundary is roughly indicated by the line of the railway north of Dunston, and southwards along the B1188 to Sleaford, and the A153 west of Sleaford. In the northern section the eastern boundary with the Fens is very distinctly marked by the line of the Car Dyke and areas of mixed woodland. In the southern section the eastern boundary is less distinct and merges more gradually with the fens.
- 8.5.2 The same landscape character can also be distinguished on a low clay strip of land which is separated from the main area by a finger of fenland set to its west. Here the settlements of Martin, Timberland, Walcott and Billingham are found. This strip of

land is further defined by the Car Dyke to the east. The southern boundary is delineated by the Billingham Skirth, a dyke edged with a substantial earth bank.



Fields in the clay vale edged by Potterhamworth Woods

Topography and Landform

- 8.5.3 The landform consists of a gently undulating lowland clay vale, underlain with boulder clay and gravel deposits. The gradient slopes gently down from west to east (approx 20m down to 5m). The northern section of the sub-area although generally a very open landscape is sheltered by the height of the limestone plateau edge adjoining it. Towards the centre of the sub-area, the landform is more open and merges with the adjacent fenland, such as in the Ruskington area. South of Sleaford, the land falls gradually down from the Upland Plateau Fringe at approximately 40m in the west before merging with the adjacent fenland in the east.
- 8.5.4 Surface water emerging from springs at the limestone plateau edge drains into small streams which run from west to east. Often these streams run through villages as a central feature. Drainage ditches by the side of the fields are indicative of the change in porosity from the dry landscapes of the Plateau. The soil is heavy clay and generally dark brown in colour.
- 8.5.5 This is generally a mid-scaled landscape. There are some very large fields but also fields of mixed shape and size. Although generally flat and of low relief, this sub-area differs from its immediate neighbours, it does not have the same emptiness and exposure of the limestone heath nor the uniform flatness of the Fens. The general impression of this sub-area is of a gentle, agricultural landscape which is well managed and settled.

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 8.5.6 Land cover is generally arable with many fields of cereals and root crops. However there are some scattered fields of rougher grassland, sometimes seen to be put to sheep grazing.
- 8.5.7 There are hedgerows along most roadsides which are generally thick and neatly trimmed, often with mature trees within. There are also some hedgerows along field

margins though this varies throughout the sub-area and often field boundaries are absent.

- 8.5.8 Some small woodland copses are scattered throughout the sub-area, mostly broadleaved. On the edge of the sub-area in the north are some large areas of mixed woodland which clearly differentiate the change from the clay fringe to fenland. These areas of woodland are associated with the adjacent villages such as the Potterhanworth Wood and the Nocton Wood. These are prominent and interesting features in the landscape.
- 8.5.9 There are a few scattered agricultural buildings mostly associated with farmsteads and occasional poultry units. The only industrial and commercial uses are located on the edges of the larger settlements such as Metherringham and Ruskington, which has a large food processing factory on its southern edge and is conspicuous in the landscape.
- 8.5.10 The main infrastructure feature in the sub-area is the main line Lincoln-Sleaford railway line, which skirts the western boundary along, with its associated features of bridges, level crossings and signal boxes. High voltage power lines and pylons cross the area but whilst massive, are generally less prominent in the landscape than in the more open landscapes of the Fens or the Limestone Heath.

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

- 8.5.11 A line of villages comprising Potterhanworth, Nocton, Dunston, Digby and Scopwick, follow the spring lines rising from the limestone heath plateau and, as a result, present a linear distribution of settlement. Metherringham and Ruskington are the largest villages in the sub-area, which both have a significant level of modern development around their historic cores.



Scopwick Green, an example of a spring line village

- 8.5.12 This distinctive settlement pattern is reflected once more on the separate strip of very slightly raised land consisting of the villages of Martin, Timberland, Walcott and Billingham and the Fen fringes.

- 8.5.13 A further line of villages can be identified to the south of the sub-area, on the B1394 along the western boundary, namely Heckington, Great Hale, Little Hale, Helpringham and Swaton. Heckington is the largest of these, which originated at the intersection of minor roads but which has grown northwards towards the A17 bypass.
- 8.5.14 There are other scattered villages which do not fit into an obvious pattern, particularly the estate village of Blankney and the hall and parkland at Aswarby.
- 8.5.15 The road network is orientated with the main roads running from north to south (Lincoln to Sleaford) with minor connector routes roads running west to east. The B1188 north of Sleaford was once a major trading route known as the 'Low Road', following a sinuous route along the edge of the heath. This contrasts sharply with much straighter routes, in particular the Mareham Lane Roman road, running northwards from Bourne to Sleaford. This was also a major trading route during medieval times. Clearly the road pattern in this character area is of historic significance.

Settlement Character

- 8.5.16 The spring-line settlements all have similar characteristics, with the original buildings constructed of honey coloured limestone walls with pantiled roofs. The streams often running beside the central village streets with adjacent greenspaces are an attractive feature of these villages. Newer mixed development has been built on the outskirts of the villages, although much of this has been in-keeping with the local vernacular.
- 8.5.17 Blankney has a distinctly different and strong identity as an estate village with dwellings built in dressed and coursed limestone in an pseudo-Elizabethan or Tudor-style with mullioned windows and elaborate chimneys. Aswarby is different again, being dominated by the hall and parkland.
- 8.5.18 The settlements along the clay to the east of the sub-area and south of Sleaford are different in character from those following the spring lines, though display similarities within themselves. The original buildings are generally built of brick with plain tiled roofs. Red brick Methodist chapels are a particular feature of some of these villages. Newer development is more mixed in material and design.



The main village street in Blankney

8.5.19 There are a number of prominent landmarks throughout the landscape sub-area including the Heckington 8-sailed windmill, the church tower at Dorrington and the water tower at Billingham, each of which presents strong historical reference points within the landscape which should be protected from visual interruption.

Central Clays and Gravels	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
Agriculture: Intensive agricultural activity has led to the removal of hedgerows between fields.	Replacement hedgerow planting where these have been lost or degraded. An increase in grassland and pasture would help to restore a more mixed pattern of land use, returning to a more visually varied and traditional landscape. Agri-environment scheme objectives should be tailored in part to reflect landscape character aspirations.
Housing Development: Some newer development within the villages has been unsympathetic to existing building vernacular and has used inappropriate materials which dilute sense of place.	Maintaining the distinctive character of the villages in this unit is very important and new development should use materials, and design principles that respect and reflect the existing traditional limestone building stock so that they are sympathetic to place and established vernacular.

Central Clays and Gravels	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
MoD Uncertain future of the disused RAF Hospital at Nocton Hall. Development pressure may arise as a brown field site.	This site is not allocated for development in the local plan. Careful consideration should be afforded to the impacts of proposed development on the landscape at such sites, and where permitted work with and to enhance established landscape character.

8.6 Upland Plateau Fringe Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- *South westerly fringe of the district.*
- *Topography is more varied than most other elements of the district.*
- *A series of interlocking, rolling low hills and gently rounded ridges with small river valleys with steep lower reaches.*
- *Series of small water courses in convex valley sides run from higher ground at the district boundary with South Kesteven in an eastward direction towards the fenlands.*
- *Watercourses are often difficult to see in the landscape, but provide the only significant organic, sinuous lines in the landscape.*
- *Significant series of small wooded areas, some semi—natural, some more recent, within a landscape dominated by intensive arable agriculture.*
- *More intimate network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees than elsewhere across the district, particularly to the western fringe.*
- *A sparse grid like road and lane network with wide verges and varying levels of field-side enclosure of hedges or small open ditches.*
- *Significant network of green lanes and footpaths generally reflecting the road network pattern.*
- *Series of very small traditional agricultural settlements with fine parish churches and minimal unsympathetic development.*
- *Manor halls and estate villages are influential elements of the settlement pattern.*



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Character Sub-Area

- 8.6.1 The extent of the area is partially defined by the south western district boundary from the southern edge of the Ancaster Gap, south and east to the A52, 1 km east of Threkingham. From the two boundary points the internal delineation of the character area runs in a relatively direct south-east to north-west diagonal line.
- 8.6.2 As with many transitions across the district between landscape character areas, the change from the Central Clays and Gravels to the Upland Plateau Fringe is gradual and difficult to define using specific landscape features. Key elements in that transition are the gradual increases in elevation and general increase in the density and enclosure of intimacy of field pattern and size. The characteristics of the area extend beyond the district boundary which has little relation to any marked landscape changes. Views to the south of the area across *South* Kesteven reveal definite and strong consistency as far as vistas allow.
- 8.6.3 As with the gradual change in character from the Slea Valley to the north and the Central Clays and Gravels character sub-area to the east, the variation within the area is subtle and displays very gradual change. The increase in elevation from the

low margins in the east, typically around 20m, to higher ground of up to 80m at the district boundary is a defining characteristic.

Topography and Landform

- 8.6.4 Landform is subtly varied with a complex series of relatively pronounced valleys and low hill ridges running from higher ground to the west and south in an easterly direction, where the hills gradually merge into the landscape of the Central Clays and Gravels. When crossing the area from north to south the traveller will rise and fall over a series of the flat hill tops and steeper lower valley sides, but such variation is far less pronounced in an east-west direction when rises are less dramatic. This pattern is not always obvious on the ground, but contour study reveals a distinctive pattern to the changes in elevation.



The gently rolling arable hills and valleys of the Upland Plateau Fringe

- 8.6.5 Small streams, increasingly fed by small drainage ditches in the east, drain the landscape towards the fens in the east. Other significant surface water is largely absent apart from the artificial dammed lake which forms part of the designed parkland of Culverthorpe Hall in the northern part of the area. A significant number of small field ponds are found elsewhere across the character area, but are not significant landscape features.
- 8.6.6 This is a landscape of medium scale, where occasional views from elevated points are possible, for example looking northwards from the crest on the A15 at Newton Grange Farm, but elsewhere topography and hedge and tree cover limit any openness. Enclosure from small woodlands and thick, treed hedges and the relief of the valley sides is notable, particularly in the far south and west, contrast to the character areas to the east and north. The eastern fringe of the area does however offer some more open countryside where there is evidence of hedgerow removal and the relief is generally less undulating.
- 8.6.7 Colour and texture within the landscape depends heavily upon the season. Nevertheless, this is a textured landscape with strong visual contrast between the hedges, streams, linear tree lines and patchwork of small woodlands. The winter period emphasises this mixture and 'roughness', particularly in respect to the mix of fields which may be ploughed or under winter cereals or legumes.

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 8.6.8 Farming is the predominant land use and this is primarily arable in nature reflecting the good quality of soils. There is a strong patchwork of fields, normally defined by well maintained, often thick hawthorn hedges. Hedgerow trees, particularly ash and oak are common across the southern and western area but the condition and extent of these lessens to the north and east where field size gets larger and ditches become as common a field boundary as hedgerow. This field network is predominantly rectilinear in form and shape across the whole character area. The land use therefore presents a regular and managed appearance with sinuous or organic lines limited to the small water courses. The field size tends to be much reduced adjacent to the characteristic agricultural and estate hamlets, and presents the only significant divergence from the predominance of intensive arable practice. Here smaller fields are more pastoral and reflect a historic subdivision of the Enclosures Act and are often given over to low intensity livestock farming, such as winter grazing for sheep. As a consequence, the landscape setting of the hamlets is often better preserved than where arable uses prevail.
- 8.6.9 The treescape is not dominant in the landscape but is nevertheless a very important contributor to overall character. Particularly in the south-west segment there is a series of small copses and woods which are important in creating its more intimate patchwork than elsewhere in the district. These dense stands of mainly deciduous species are typically of beech, birch, poplar and oak, but mixed plantation is also found to the far south west adjacent to the district boundary. They are not regularly positioned, but tend to be located away from the stream valleys, on the flat tops, or upper slopes of the uplands. The woods are, or have been managed and are enclosed on the whole by hedge and fence and take rectilinear rather than organic form. The woodlands appear to owe their existence primarily to encourage game, and such uses are still apparent in and around the estate villages, particularly around Aunsby and Culverthorpe.
- 8.6.10 Agricultural infrastructure is ever present in the landscape but rarely dominating, although the agricultural character of some of the smaller settlements is obvious, with traditional farm buildings juxtaposed with modern and much larger scaled sectional barns and sheds. This is most apparent within the hamlet of Culverthorpe where old and new dominate the settlement. Conversely small agricultural hamlets such as Haceby and Walcott have maintained a scale of small traditional farming practice very untypical of the district as a whole.
- 8.6.11 Industry, commercial activity and minerals workings are almost entirely absent in the character area. This is a quiet and tranquil landscape with only the A52 and A15 being significant transport infrastructure therein. Apart from the powerlines and pylons which dissect the area between Aunsby and Aisby, overhead wires are generally not as intrusive as elsewhere in the district and other communications infrastructure is generally unobtrusive.

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

- 8.6.12 With Osbournby lying just outside the character area, settlements within it are without exception of a small village or hamlet scale, some with strong associations with manor houses or farms. The settlements do not display any regular distribution, but tend to be located away from the higher plateaux-like tops, and are generally located on the mid slopes of the shallow valleys. Walcot, Newton, Haceby, Dembleby and

Kelby follow this general pattern. Threkingham, the furthest east of the area's settlements is also its largest village, taking a strategic position at the intersection of crossroads of five lanes and roads, including the A52 and the ancient roman road of Mareham Lane. Historic evidence and records of a medieval market and fair is important to its local heritage. The relative importance of the village as a consequence of its size relative to others within the area should not be overplayed however as a significant degree of its built form is of late 20th century or more recent vintage and is predominantly residential in nature. There is no service centre of significance within this character area.

- 8.6.13 The network of hard surfaced roads and lanes in the character area is relatively sparse, but does display an informal grid like pattern. Its orientation is distinctly north south and east west, with the later network of minor lanes, and the A52 following either valley bottoms, but particularly from the A52 northwards, taking a line along the flat ridges of the hill tops, such as between Aunsby and Ainsby, and Swarby and Culverthorpe. North-south routes tend not to follow any obvious topographical features, but maintain a generally straight orientation. The character area does accommodate a significant network of green lanes and tracks which tend to reinforce the grid pattern of routes and afford significant opportunities to access this tranquil countryside area. The only notable deviation from the grid form of communication routes is around the designed landscape of Culverthorpe Hall, and within and immediately around the villages and hamlets themselves.
- 8.6.14 The network of broad roadside verges and delineation between road and field is also important to the area's character. Often wide grassy verges to one side of a lane are of a significant proportion, at least reflecting the width of the road itself. Normally these are bounded by hedgerows of varying condition and free from trees. However often they are regularly interspersed with mature deciduous trees of lime, ash, oak and there is significant evidence of new planting of verge trees in the Dembleby and Haceby areas. Towards the north and east of the character area roadside hedges are occasionally absent with only shallow drainage ditches separating the roads from the increasingly large arable fields. Normally this would be along one side of the road only.



Characteristic wide verges with recently planted trees in a gently rolling landscape

Settlement Character

- 8.6.15 Settlements within this landscape character sub-area display a strong agricultural or estate character. Villages and hamlets almost without exception are of an attractive and unspoilt character with historic layouts intact, usually loosely clustered around the series of very fine parish churches and enclosed by a tighter network of small pastures. Farmhouses and agricultural buildings are often the most significant buildings in the settlements apart from the churches. Mature deciduous trees are strong components of the 'villagescapes', often around the church or rectory. The historic hamlet of Haceby, for example, is little more than a loose cluster of traditional Ancaster limestone and pantiled roofed farm buildings, farm workers' dwellings and a small but fine church. Its landscape setting is typical of the area with a fringe of pasture contrasting to the wider arable landscape, and a strong framing by mature and some younger plantation and hedgerow trees. This combination is reflected on slightly larger scales throughout the area, notably at Walcot and Newton, south of the A52. North of the A52 settlements within the area are again very small and strongly agricultural in nature. 20th century development is more prevalent on the peripheries of the hamlets of Dembleby and Kelby, but at a very minor scale. Culverthorpe Hall and its parkland setting is a significant feature in the landscape, with designed water bodies, and formal grounds separate from its extensive estate buildings infrastructure.



Haceby Church

- 8.6.16 Outside the hamlets and villages settlement is largely absent apart from occasional scattered farms, often set away from the road network and slightly more prevalent in the southern parts of the character area.
- 8.6.17 This is a landscape which is highly influenced by agricultural and small scale forestry management. The built environment is not dominant in the landscape as a consequence of the rolling topography and tree cover, particularly around the settlements and their very small scale. As elsewhere across the wider district, ecclesiastical architecture, and particularly the church steeples and spires are the only strong indication of built development in the landscape, but this influence is important and characteristic. There is a strong sense of place within the character area, tranquil and deeply rural but one which relates more closely in landscape terms to the regional character areas of the Kesteven Uplands to the south and west beyond the district boundary than within the rest of North Kesteven itself.

Upland Plateau Fringe	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
<p>Agriculture: The agricultural landscape is well maintained and local character not obviously pressured from agricultural practice.</p> <p>Occasional poplar coppice is incongruous to the landscape.</p>	<p>Replacement hedgerow planting where these have been lost or degraded.</p> <p>Careful control should be maintained where possible over agricultural buildings to ensure they relate well to existing farmsteads and scale is appropriate to the setting and prominence of the site.</p> <p>Coppicing of species such as Lombardy poplar should not be encouraged through grant regimes and addressed within any wider woodland management strategy.</p> <p>Agri-environment scheme objectives should be tailored in part to reflect landscape character aspirations.</p>
<p>Housing Development: The area is likely to witness little housing development under the current Development Plan. However, the high quality of the agricultural hamlets will be particularly sensitive to poorly designed development.</p>	<p>Maintaining the distinctive character of the agricultural hamlets in this unit is very important and new development should use materials, and design principles that respect and reflect the existing traditional limestone building stock so that they are sympathetic to place and established vernacular.</p>
<p>Verge treatment: The distinctive wide verges of the area are important to character, as are the 'avenue' trees therein.</p>	<p>Roadside verge management should be afforded careful consideration by the Local Highways Authority. Mowing and management regimes should be established to maintain their visual importance and to allow their habitat function and connectivity to develop. Tree management and supplementary planting to maintain the distinctive avenues should also be taken appropriate account of.</p>
<p>Green Lanes: The network of green lanes across the area is significant. These should be maintained suitable for public use as a historical and recreational asset as well as for their contribution to visual interest within the landscape.</p>	

9. The Fens Regional Landscape Character Type

9.1 Fenland Landscape Character Sub-Area

Key Characteristics

- *The Fenland landscape sub-area occupies the whole of the eastern part of the District from the Lincoln gap to the boundary with south Kesteven near Swanton.*
- *Low lying with very flat relief.*
- *Occasional small islands of slightly higher land.*
- *Very large, rich arable fields divided up by drainage channels*
- *A hierarchy of rivers drains and ditches creating linear patterns across the landscape.*
- *The geometric road pattern follows the drainage pattern with small roads raised above the level of the fields, running from west to east.*
- *Generally extensive vistas to level horizons and huge skies, apart from in the north easterly direction where the Lincolnshire Wolds provide a marked "Upland" horizon.*
- *Sparse woodland cover though some occasional trees surrounding farmsteads and some shelter, belts particularly of poplars.*
- *Intensively farmed and managed it is almost entirely a man-made landscape.*
- *Except for scattered farmsteads and farm buildings the sub-area is unsettled.*
- *Prominent power lines and large-scale agricultural buildings.*



Detailed Description

Boundaries and Extent of the Landscape Character Sub-area

- 9.1.1 The Fenland landscape character sub-area runs along the whole of the eastern part of the District. It is characterised by its low lying and very flat landscape with very large fields divided from one another by drainage channels. A hierarchy of rivers, drains and ditches provide a strong linear pattern on the area which is also followed by the road pattern.
- 9.1.2 To north and east the area is bounded by the River Witham. At the northern end the fenland area narrows as it meets the Lincoln gap creating a funnel shaped area of fenland. To the west the Car Dyke and woodland fringes make a distinctive boundary north of Billingham. There is also a finger of fenland extending up towards Digby, after which the southern boundary follows the edge of the Central Clays and Gravels sub-area which is marked by a line of numerous villages from Anwick to Swanton on the southern district boundary.



Fenland and dyke adjacent to the Bardney Road

Topography and Landform

- 9.1.3 The fens have a very strong and distinctive character and despite its absence of variation might be considered to present a sense of drama and melancholy.
- 9.1.4 The landform consists of very flat alluvial land with the gradient below 10m down to sea level itself. The land has been reclaimed and drained from the natural marshes and wet woodlands from which the 'reclaimed' fens of today actually take their name. The Fenlands have been drained and farmed over a period of hundreds of years and therefore present an almost totally man-made landscape. It is crossed by an extensive and intricate series of arrow straight drainage channels (dykes), emptying eventually to the River Witham, which itself has been engineered and straightened over most of its course as it frames the eastern edge of the character area.
- 9.1.5 Although the sub-area itself is very open, the northern element is edged by the Lincolnshire Wolds to the north-east and the limestone edge to the west creating a funnel shaped enclosure in this section. There are key vistas of Lincoln Cathedral as the Witham valley narrows through the Lincoln Gap. This section also has distant views of the power stations on the River Trent and their sometimes dramatic vapour columns. However, further south the views eastwards become extensive to a level horizon and to the west the adjacent landscape sub-area is similarly low-lying clay vales, and so the resultant impression of a vast flat landscape is even greater. The large scale of the landscape with open panoramas and enormous skies can create a strong sense of isolation which is compounded by the lack of settlements in the area.
- 9.1.6 There are two 'islands' of slightly higher land within this landscape which are edged by large drainage channels, including the major Billingham Skirth and the Kyme Eau. North Kyme and South Kyme, the only settlements of any size in the sub-area, are located on these islands.
- 9.1.7 The finger of fenland which runs to the west of the clay strip of the central clays and gravels area has very similar characteristics to the main area of fenland in that it is very flat land with large, rectilinear fields and very little tree cover. There is however

a more sheltered impression afforded by its marginally higher land to the east and west.

- 9.1.8** The soil throughout the whole of the landscape sub-area is of the highest grade, peaty and very dark brown in colour and presents a nationally significant agricultural resource.

Land Use, Land Cover and Vegetation

- 9.1.9** The land is almost exclusively set to arable farming, managed within the very large, distinctively flat fields. The relatively low concentration of significant agricultural complexes suggests large farm holdings with intensive modes of operation.



Dorrington Fen showing the typical dark soil of the Fenland

- 9.1.10** Tree and woodland cover is scarce with minimal significant woodland cover. There are occasional individual trees and some trees belts around the isolated farmsteads. These are often distinctive and often consisting of poplar trees visible for significant distance over the flat and otherwise interruption free landscape. Hedgerows are almost entirely absent as the fields are separated by functional drainage dykes. Most of the dykes are well managed and cleared, however some have become colonised with sedge and reed, presenting a valuable habitat resource and biodiversity interest.
- 9.1.11** Industry and commercial use is largely absent in the sub-area itself though the sugar beet factory at Bardney (outside of the District boundary) is very prominent in the wider landscape. Like other areas of the district the impact of electricity infrastructure is also significant with rows of pylons very dominant in the open landscape and presenting a powerful man-made statement across the horizon in the south of the sub-area.

Settlement Distribution and Road Pattern

- 9.1.12** The road pattern consists largely of narrow, straight roads, running in an east-west direction, and is heavily influenced by the drainage patterns of the area. They are raised above the level of the land on earth embankments and edged with

characteristic drainage channels. The largest road in the sub-area is the A17 which cuts across its southern half and takes an uncharacteristic sweeping line. The only significant road running from north to south is the A153 which joins the B1395 south of North Kyme. Apart from the dramatic skyline, movement of vehicles along these roads will often be the only dynamic element in the landscape.

- 9.1.13 The only two settlements of any significance in this part of the Fenland are North and South Kyme which are located on slightly higher islands of land raised above the surrounding fens and edged by drainage channels. There are a small number of scattered small, hamlets based either on farmsteads or along the edge of the River Witham such as Tattershall Bridge and Walcott Dales.

Settlement Character

- 9.1.14 The character of the built environment within the Fenland area is varied in style and age. Combined with the paucity of settlement within the character area it is suggested that there is no strong settlement character which relates clearly to the exceptionally distinctive landscape.



Kyme Tower to the west of South Kyme village

- 9.1.15 The two Kyme villages were able to be established because of their slightly raised position above the fenland levels. North Kyme is a linear village which has the A153 running through it. It has a small market place with an important medieval stone cross. South Kyme is an attractive village with many original brick buildings. The Kyme Eau, a canalised section of the River Sleas flows through the settlement presenting a striking and distinctive Fenland element to the village itself. To the west of the village is the Kyme Tower, a remnant of a medieval castle which is a distinctive local landmark. Close by are the remains of a priory which dates from the 12th century and the attractive Victorian parish church which add reference points, historical interest and visual prominence to the settlement and landscape.

Fenland	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
<p>Agriculture: The large scale and intensive nature of the agriculture practised on the fens has resulted in a strongly distinctive but uniform landscape with few focal points or strong variations in character.</p> <p>Large scale agricultural buildings and storage of agricultural machinery and produce can be very prominent in the open landscape. In some cases species such as leylandii have been used to screen agricultural development or to provide shelterbelts and these have become functional but clearly incongruous features in the landscape.</p>	<p>Some enhancement measures could be introduced which would not detract from the distinctive and open nature of the fen landscape and its large-scale vistas, for example small stands of tree planting along roads or ditch-lines where trees are already a local feature, but may have been under managed.</p> <p>Additional tree planting, using native species, could soften the impact of agricultural buildings in the landscape. Only native tree and shrub species should be used in shelterbelts. In particular species such as alder and willow, mainstays of the original landscape and habitats of the fens should be re-introduced.</p>
<p>Drainage and Flood Infrastructure: The dykes and embankments have frequently been 'improved' to aid flood protection and in some cases close management and maintenance has resulted in the further reduction of aquatic and marginal vegetation.</p>	<p>Natural vegetative cover could be allowed to grow up in certain areas, e.g. along embankments, dykes or field margins where it would not interfere with flood management or drainage priorities. This would result in additional visual interest in the landscape, and could also increase the biodiversity value of the area, particularly in respect to linking woodlands and the larger watercourses.</p>

10. North Kesteven Green Wedges

Key Characteristics

- Define the interface between the rural character of the north and north-west of the district with the urban and sub-urban fringes of Lincoln city and north Hykeham.
- Fragmented tracts of land across certain areas of the City and District Boundary.
- Control over development is restrictive.
- Definition of green wedges is not made on landscape value alone. Policy areas created in response to opportunities for enhancement, recreation, to resist urban coalescence and maintain urban character, as well as for their landscape character.
- Green wedges create a substantive buffer between the city and the district, but do not cover the whole interface between the city and district.
- The northern reaches of the Lincoln Cliff in north Kesteven, between North Hykeham and Washingborough is overlain by a continuous series of connected green wedge sections, 'Witham Valley Green Wedge', 'Waddington-Bracebridge Heath Green Wedge', 'Canwick-Bracebridge Heath Green Wedge', and 'Canwick-Washingborough Green Wedge'.
- Other green wedge tracts are located around North and South Hykeham overlying the Witham valley, at Hykeham Pits (with RSS proposals to extend into Whisby Pits area), and between Skellingthorpe and the city,
- The site for the strategic urban extension – the Western Growth Corridor is omitted from the Green Wedge network.
- Landscape character is markedly different across the Green Wedges.

Policy Concept

- 10.1 The North Kesteven Green Wedges are a well established Local Plan policy response to the need to resist the spread and coalescence of urban areas of the north of the district and City of Lincoln neighbourhoods into important undeveloped areas on the city's fringe. In addition they are utilised to safeguard valued landscape, nature conservation and recreational assets in the close vicinity to the city. Green Wedges are a joint policy approach and as such extend across administrative boundaries outside the district.
- 10.2 The four Green Wedges wholly or partly within North Kesteven are identified on Map 1 and are described in detail below. From a landscape perspective these areas have, and do, offer a strong and effective policy tool in protecting the setting of the historic city. They afford protection from development and coalescence of important breaks in development across suburban tracts of the greater city area and present in the case of GW1 and GW3, very important recreation and habitat assets. In particular, the protection of the northern parts of the Lincoln Cliff within the district is particularly important to local amenity and to the setting of the city of Lincoln itself. Given the likely removal of undeveloped tracts of land close to the city under the proposals for the Western Growth Corridor, (abutting GW4 – Skellingthorpe), the value of the remaining Green Wedge areas within the district may be seen to take even greater value and local importance. *Very careful consideration should be given before any reduction in Green Wedge policy areas are sanctioned within spatial plan reviews.*

GW1 - Waddington to Washingborough Green Wedge

- 10.3 A single and continuous tract of land which generally follows the scarp slope of the Lincolnshire Cliff northwards and then eastwards through the Witham valley 'gap' from the northern edge of Waddington to the western fringe of Washingborough. The western extent of the wedge is clearly defined by the built area of the Bracebridge estates, and in the north by the district boundary which generally cuts across the lower sections of the Cliff slope as it becomes the Witham Gap. Its eastern extent is less well defined by topography, with less discernable justification of extent to the north of Bracebridge Heath and around Canwick. The landscape of the wedge is dominated by the steep scarp of the cliff, although more level ground is incorporated along its base on the upper reaches of the Witham Vale, and then again at its crest as it merges with the Heath Plateaux. High points of the wedge reach to around 75 metres close to Waddington on the Grantham Road, and around 65 metres around Canwick. Hence with lower elevations of only 5 metres in the Witham Vale, the wedge therefore consists primarily of a significant and relatively dramatic topographical feature which is of high landscape significance. Views from it, and vistas towards it, particularly from the city itself are significant and important. In particular, vistas towards Lincoln Cathedral and across the Vale could be considered as being of more than district significance.
- 10.4 Land use within the wedge is mixed. The southern sections reflect the typical characteristics of the Lincoln Cliff Landscape Character Sub-area (see Chapter 7) and the Witham and Brant Vales Landscape Character Sub-area (see section 6.5), and display a mix of predominantly large field monoculture but with rough grazing pasture on steeper fields, particularly on the approaches to Lincoln. Field boundaries are generally defined by gappy hedgerows with few trees, particularly on the scarp although the ridgeline to the immediate west of Bracebridge Heath has a strong mature hedge definition. The boundaries along the lower reaches of the southern wedge are often defined only by ditches.



The Cliff top merges with the Heath in areas with little topographical definition and wide open arable fields.

- 10.5 As the wedge arcs north easterly into the Witham Gap, the uses become more closely associated with recreation and urban fringe development. Pockets of low woodland, school playing fields and equestrian uses are present, whilst a golf course covers the majority of the lower slopes north of Canwick. The area west of Washingborough then reverts to arable agriculture as the topography becomes less

pronounced. The central section of the wedge lies on elevated but generally level arable land between Bracebridge Heath and Canwick and is of very limited topographical or other character interests but does present significant views towards the Minster as it abuts the cliff ridge along the upper part of Lincoln city's South Common area.

- 10.6 The Viking Way long distance footpath is an important recreational asset to the wedge, particularly given its accessibility from the wider urban area. Networks of footpaths dissect the cliff in straight west to east lines offering several 'circular' routes and affording significant views west and north.



Important vistas to Lincoln Cathedral are prevalent from the northern area of the green wedge

- 10.7 By definition, settlement or significant buildings are absent from the wedge.

Green Wedge 1	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
<p>Agricultural Development The openness of much of this green wedge is valuable in presenting a key setting for Lincoln and affording expansive views in an otherwise low lying district. Development of major buildings is unlikely to pass policy test but pressure for agricultural development, less well controlled within the planning system may arise with highly intrusive outcomes.</p> <p>Large fields in monoculture practice are dominant in the northern parts of the wedge, and further loss of field boundary should be discouraged.</p>	<p>In determining prior notification proposals for agricultural development, the planning authority should seek to use its full influence in discouraging large or poorly designed agricultural 'sheds' within the wedge, instead seeking to relocate to less intrusive areas of a farm unit, and ensure building design and appropriate landscaping is delivered to a high standard.</p> <p>Farm Stewardship scheme objectives should seek to resist further loss of field boundary, and seek to encourage reinforcement of field pattern where opportunity arises.</p>

Infrastructure The area would be vulnerable in landscape terms to new infrastructure proposals, particularly telecommunications and electricity distribution networks. There is a risk of 'skylining' in many parts of the wedge from several vantage points which would detract from its valued landscape characteristics.	The Planning Authority should seek to maintain a positive dialogue with the utility companies and statutory undertakers to ensure prominent infrastructure is not located in the upper areas of the wedge, and wherever possible, to seek for a reduction or removal of existing infrastructure.
Public Rights of Way The network is reasonably extensive in the green wedge, but opportunity for expansion, and particularly improved linkages around the urban fringe is a valid objective for the County Council and Local Authority. The prominence of paths across the cliff side can be prominent from the lower parts of the area.	Seek to focus the expansion of the PRow network across the green wedge, utilising appropriately designed entrance points, surfacing, gateways, styles and signage.

GW2 - Witham Valley Green Wedge

- 10.8 The roughly triangular area lies within the well defined wedge of green space between North Hykeham, and the lower reaches of Bracebridge estates along Brant Road, and extends southwards away from the city limits down the Witham Valley and westwards to the north eastern point of South Hykeham. The southern and south eastern boundary of the wedge does not follow a strong topographical or land use delineation.
- 10.9 The river, (and its tributary drains) present the only topographical features of interest, but as within the wider vale, is generally screened from view by flood defence embankments. Sparse bank-side vegetation of scrub, hawthorn and willow occasionally break up the artificial profile of the river's embankment. Otherwise the land is low lying and flat.
- 10.10 Intensive arable farming prevails across the wedge, typical of its Brant and Witham Vale character, and this use often reaches to the very edge of the urban and suburban extent of North Hykeham and southern parts of Bracebridge estates. Field boundaries again reflect those of the wider Vale, often being defined by drainage ditches in the south east area, with increasing hedgerow cover further west. The few areas which are not under crops are associated with some rough grazing and playing fields to the eastern edge of North Hykeham, and sewage treatment works adjacent to the river in its northern part, and again on a smaller scale close to South Hykeham.



Urban fringe uses and green wedge to North Hykeham's new southern boundary

- 10.11 Settlement within the wedge is essentially absent, but large areas of intensive housing development in the North Hykeham area has resulted in a new rural-urban interface. This is sometimes stark, but more recent development does display some strong and locally sympathetic design characteristics which do not soften this marked change, but does afford some strengthening of local distinctiveness particularly when viewed from Mill Lane and from South Hykeham.

Green Wedge 2	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
<p>Agricultural Development The openness of much of this green wedge is valuable in presenting a key limit to greater Lincoln. Development of major buildings is unlikely to pass policy test but pressure for agricultural development, less well controlled within the planning system may arise with intrusive outcomes.</p> <p>Large fields in monoculture practice are dominant in the northern parts of the wedge, and further loss of field boundaries should be discouraged.</p>	<p>In determining prior notification proposals for agricultural development, the planning authority should seek to use its full influence in discouraging large or poorly designed agricultural 'sheds' within the wedge, instead seeking to relocate to less intrusive areas of a farm unit, and ensure building design and appropriate landscaping is delivered to a high standard.</p> <p>Farm Stewardship scheme objectives should seek to resist further loss of field boundaries, and seek to encourage reinforcement of field pattern where opportunity arises.</p>
<p>Infrastructure The area is within part of the Witham Valley where flood risk is significant. Flood infrastructure influences the landscape mainly through shielding the river from view. This is unlikely to</p>	<p>Flood defence infrastructure management should seek to afford a more naturalised appearance to river embankments, where acceptable from a safety and functionality perspective. Less 'engineered' profiles</p>

change in the future, but further engineering works will remain a possibility.	and allowance of natural riparian vegetation would enhance landscape credentials and habitat value.
Public Rights of Way The network is less extensive in the green wedge, and opportunity for expansion, and particularly improved linkages around the urban fringe is a valid objective for the County Council and Local Authority.	Seek to focus the expansion of the PRow network across the green wedge, utilising appropriately designed entrance points, surfacing, gateways, styles and signage.

GW3 - Hykeham and Whisby Pits Green Wedge

- 10.12 The Green Wedge stretches in a westerly direction from the city boundary roughly between Whisby Road and the Newark Road. Its Local Plan delineation ends where it abuts the A46 trunk road running in a north-easterly direction, but proposed alterations within the RSS Lincoln Sub-Area review suggest it will in future extend beyond this line to cover the area known as Whisby Pits. It is evident that the original element of this wedge does perform a function of partition between the areas of North Hykeham and the Hartsholme districts of the city. However the key characteristics of the area are considered to be more significant than its role as an important interface between city and countryside. This is emphasised by the proposed expansion which relates more to the consistency and nature of its landscape characteristics, recreation and biodiversity value than to any obvious separation or wedge function.
- 10.13 The area is strongly characterised by an extensive water and woodland environment which very obviously owes its existence to past (and some current) minerals workings (sand and gravel). It would not be unreasonable to refer to the area as a 'blue wedge' such is the dominance of water and the clear delineation of the area around the lakes. The area is by definition very low lying and flat topography, with only the embankments of the A46 trunk road and railway rising significantly above the wider area. Whilst an extensive waterscape it is also a complex one, defined by a series of over twenty individual lakes and lagoons of varying size and perimeter form. The larger lakes are located east of the A46 and south of the Lincoln-Nottingham railway line, whilst those within the northern and western areas tend to be smaller, tightly interlinked with complex series of promontories and narrow banks separating individual waters. Generally the further east within the wedge, the larger and more rectilinear the water bodies become. A feature of the central and western lakes and ponds is their irregular shape and proliferation of islands. A landscape consequence of this is that from eye level the extent and form of the lakes is confused, and identification of true bankside from island is difficult.



Dominance of water and wire in the Hykeham and Whisby Pits Green Wedge

- 10.14 Within this confused interplay of land and water is an extensively treed landscape. This is predominantly of self generating alder and birch, and is characterised by differing ages of succession, probably reflecting the length of time since the cessation of minerals workings. As a consequence of the trees within the wedge and the level nature of the area the outlook from spaces within the wedge is of a horizontal banding of water, woodland and large skies. Interruptions to this characteristic vista are however significant, particularly as a consequence of the significant high voltage transmission lines and pylons which cross the west of the area, and from the larger industrial and distribution buildings which bound the site at several points. In addition there are some areas still under minerals activity and the industry's infrastructure is prominent in certain areas. Despite the significant naturalisation of large parts of the wedge, this is a busy landscape, with human intervention obvious most of the time.
- 10.15 The wide mix of uses across the wedge is of note and may be seen as occasionally incompatible. Areas around some of the lakes and the water itself present a clear and varied recreation resource of boating, sailing, angling, informal recreation and habitat interest. This is notable at the Whisby Nature Park Centre. Sometimes this is a managed landscape, particularly to the east close to housing estates, whilst elsewhere it is far more naturalised. Accessibility across the site is however restricted. Caravan homes and mobile caravan storage is also concentrated to the fringes of the wedge. Elsewhere minerals and industrial uses persist, reminding the visitor of the origins of the landscape as it is today.



Industrial and mineral workings continue in the green wedge

Green Wedge 3	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
<p>Mixed uses</p> <p>Diverse pressures for use of land and water are apparent in the wedge. In particular the spread of housing, continued minerals activity and broad range of recreational uses are significant influences on the landscape character. Some uses are particularly negative features, including existing electricity infrastructure and holiday home parks of regimented lines of caravans and holiday homes. The wedge nevertheless has very strong landscape, recreation and biodiversity importance all of which are interdependent and vulnerable to pressure for increased use or development.</p>	<p>It is suggested that a Green Wedge Management Plan type approach be adopted to set out clear vision, objectives actions and deliver solutions for the continued sustainable evolution of the resource. This should have regard to stakeholder aspirations and seek to achieve win-win type outcomes to identified issues and problems.</p>

GW4 - Skellingthorpe Green Wedge

- 10.16 The wedge presents a buffer between the western Lincoln suburbs of Birchwood and the village of Skellingthorpe which lies only 1.5km to the west but still retains its integrity as free standing large rural village. The Local Plan designation is proposed to be expanded in accordance with the proposed RSS revisions within the Lincoln Sub-Area strategy. It takes a convoluted form, generally consisting of an irregular south-east to north west wedge between the village and city, with a narrowing to the north before taking a hammer-head form along the north western district boundary running in a north-west to south-east orientation along the Fosdyke main drain. The heavily wooded western suburbs, and the A46 trunk road delineate the eastern

extent of the wedge, with a convoluted line defining the remaining sides utilising field boundaries, lanes, surface water drains and the limits of the built area of the village itself. The omission from the green wedge area of the area proposed for the Western Growth Corridor east of the A46 is notable. In terms of its primary function, this area would have been expected to be overlain by a green wedge designation as an important green incursion into the core of the urban area.

- 10.17 Apart from the elevation of the embanked A46 towards the northern section of the wedge, the area is of negligible topographical variation. It is low lying and level. Drainage ditches characterise the northern sections.



Intensive arable farmland to the north of the Skellingthorpe Green Wedge with vistas to the Cathedral

- 10.18 Land use within the wedge is predominantly of intensive arable agriculture, typical of the wider landscape character of the upper Trent and Belvoir Vales. Mostly fields are of a medium to large size with boundaries of gappy hedges with a few hedgerow trees. Towards the edges of Skellingthorpe field size reduces slightly and some evidence of mixed arable and dairy farming. A small area of parkland, surrounding a modest country house is found to the east of the village. However, the heavily wooded landscape to its eastern fringe is locally distinctive and serves to provide a very substantial visual and perceptual barrier between the city suburbs and the open countryside of the village's setting. Away from this physical barrier, the views out of the village and wedge toward the city are important, particularly in respect to vistas of the Cathedral.

Green Wedge 4	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
Agricultural Development The openness of much of this green wedge is valuable in presenting a key limit to greater Lincoln. Development of major buildings is unlikely to pass general spatial policy tests but pressure for agricultural development, less well controlled within the planning system may arise with intrusive outcomes.	In determining prior notification proposals for agricultural development, the planning authority should seek to use its full influence in discouraging large or poorly designed agricultural 'sheds' within the wedge, instead seeking to relocate to less intrusive areas of a farm unit, and ensure building design and appropriate landscaping is delivered to a high standard.

Green Wedge 4	
Pressures for change and landscape detractors	Opportunities for Enhancement
Large fields in monoculture practice are dominant in the northern parts of the wedge, and further loss of field boundaries should be discouraged.	<p>Farm Stewardship scheme objectives should seek to resist further loss of field boundaries, and seek to encourage reinforcement of field pattern where opportunity arises.</p> <p>Objectives for the Till Vale character sub area are pertinent to this wedge.</p>
Infrastructure The area is adjacent to major drains infrastructure (Fossedyke) where water management is important. Flood infrastructure influences the landscape can be prominent because of the wedge's open nature. This is unlikely to lessen in the future, and further engineering works will remain a possibility.	<p>Flood defence and navigation infrastructure management should seek to afford a more naturalised appearance to waterway corridors, where acceptable from a safety and functionality perspective. Less 'engineered' profiles and allowance of natural riparian vegetation would enhance landscape credentials and habitat value.</p>
Public Rights of Way The network is less extensive in the green wedge, and opportunity for expansion, and particularly improved linkages around the urban fringe is a valid objective for the County Council and Local Authority.	<p>Seek to focus the expansion of the PRoW network across the green wedge, utilising appropriately designed entrance points, surfacing, gateways, styles and signage.</p>
Treescape The dense birch woodland which bounds the south-eastern fringe of the green wedge around the A46 corridor is an important landscape element, particularly in forming a visual and perceptual barrier between Lincoln city and its rural hinterland.	<p>The birch woodlands of the wedge should be positively managed to allow appropriate succession and maintain and strengthen its visual, habitat and recreational roles.</p>

Continued relevance and value of the Green Wedge policy approach

- 10.19 The Green Wedge policy of the 2007 North Kesteven Local Plan seeks to maintain a robust level of control over development within the green wedges, permitting only development which is not harmful to its multiple functions of landscape value and protection of the city's setting, urban containment, habitat importance and recreational value. Exceptions to this presumption against harmful development must to be justified as being in the public interest and be accompanied by a series of appropriate mitigation and compensatory measures. The policy appears to be as 'firm' as is reasonably possible given the mainly local importance of these functions. The regional, if not national imperative to protect the setting of the historic city of Lincoln should not be underplayed however.

- 10.20 As adopted, the policy may actually be considered to be less aspirational than could be the case. It focuses on the necessary control over development role of the Green Wedges, but ignores the opportunity to incorporate any element of positive enhancement which this study would support. A broadening of the policy approach, perhaps within emerging LDF policy, could set a more positive and permissive regime for small scale development which could help enhance its informal recreational, educational, habitat and landscape functions, and the linkages therein.
- 10.21 As set out within the main descriptions for each of the Green Wedges which fall within North Kesteven, the character of those individual wedges is extremely diverse. All have intrinsic landscape interest and importance, even where not necessarily of exceptional value in a traditional 'scenic' sense. Their importance is emphasised by a series of inter-twined factors and pressures which varies across the series. In particular the wedges which overlap the Lincoln Cliff are particularly valuable in respect to a combination of their exceptional topographical interest, habitat and recreational value, and in maintaining vistas towards the city, and especially the Minster. The lower lying 'dry' wedges of the Witham Vale and Skellingthorpe perhaps afford less of a resource from a habitat perspective, but do present very important buffers of open countryside close to existing or proposed areas of significant expansion, such as the Western Growth Corridor proposals. These represent very important constraints on urban expansion where the character of the underlying character sub-areas would be highly vulnerable to the scale of potential growth which simple adherence to good countryside design principles (as set out in Part 3) could not protect adequately. The 'wet' wedge of Hykeham and Whisby Pits Green Wedge affords an exceptionally diverse landscape asset, which although recently 'man-made' in the main, presents a very important asset to the district and city in respect to its habitat, recreation and landscape qualities, as well as urban constraint. Pressure for waterside development, over intensive recreational uses and residual pressure for minerals working present a series of challenges to the landscape which demands a special integrated approach in policy.
- 10.22 Another important consideration in determining the future relevance of the green wedges as a policy tool is their trans-authority function. The wedges within North Kesteven are but part of a wider series of wedges which protect the city's landscape setting and other important social and well-being functions within the City itself and West Lindsey District. Their key functions should be applied consistently and robustly if they are to be effective (as they have been) regardless of which administrative area they fall within, and maintenance of a clear and specific policy for the defined spatial units is helpful in this regard.
- 10.23 A considerable advantage of the retention of the Green Wedges as a policy approach is the potential for long-term and co-ordinated enhancement and management schemes to be prepared and implemented, with the assurance of those spaces enjoying equivalent long-term protection from harmful development. Hykeham and Whisby Pits Green Wedge in particular presents a valuable, diverse and extensive resource of landscape features, recreational opportunity and habitat function which is likely to benefit from long-term vision and management initiatives to secure enhancement and protection of their multi-functional benefits.
- 10.24 This study recommends that general landscape considerations across the wider district would benefit in the long term from application of a *landscape character* orientated policy approach. However, the specific pressures and functions associated with the Green Wedge network framing Lincoln city suggests that the retention of the network in policy, to *at least* its current spatial extent, remains valid,

and is likely to be increasingly important as pressure grows over the medium term in respect to Lincoln as one of the region's principle growth areas, making a step change in housing provision. The policy approach should however be seen as not just a restrictive or protective tool, important as the function is, but also as positive element in pro-active enhancement and improved management of the sites within the wedge network. Interesting work carried out by the Countryside Agency and English Nature (Delivering a New Urban Fringe - 2006) illustrates the positive and multi-beneficial uses which can be achieved through a positive management approach.

PART 3 – DESIGN STATEMENT

11. Design Statement – Landscape and Countryside Design in North Kesteven

General Principles

- 11.1 This section addresses landscape considerations which should be met in respect to development which is appropriate, or likely to be permitted, within the open countryside.
- 11.2 This report records the diverse landscape character of the district. It is clear that the whole of the North Kesteven landscape is sensitive to change. The wrong type of development in the wrong location, or a badly designed development, or even a badly designed landscaping scheme for an otherwise well sited and designed development, can damage the integrity of its landscape character, often disproportionately to the scale of the development that caused the change. The need for good design is certainly not confined to only the 'best' landscapes, such as the Lincoln Cliff formally designated as an Area of Great landscape Value. All landscapes, throughout North Kesteven, are important to those people who live or work in them or visit them. It is a fundamental aspect of sustainable development to hand on a healthy, well cared for and locally distinctive landscape to future generations, whilst meeting the needs of our rural communities and businesses today.
- 11.3 Where it is appropriate to carry out development in the countryside particular care is required to ensure that built development and associated landscaping and land use changes fit well with the character of the different parts of North Kesteven. Such considerations should be taken by any individual, commercial interest, statutory undertakers, government or other public body, including the Ministry of Defence, where proposing, designing, commenting on or controlling development, land use change and rural activities. In most cases, development in the open countryside will benefit from being carefully designed and utilising the skills of architects, landscape architects, engineers and planners as necessary.
- 11.4 Whilst respecting established character and vernacular tradition should be encouraged, innovative design that fits well in the North Kesteven landscape can be also be viewed positively. The Council should not wish to inhibit modern and innovative designs where they are appropriate, particularly in respect to sustainable design and construction. However, for most development it will be helpful to check that it is compatible and complementary to the key characteristics of the North Kesteven landscape character sub-areas. Wherever possible, new development should help to strengthen, reinforce or where necessary, restore distinctive landscape character.
- 11.5 For most proposed development or changes in the countryside, specific and careful consideration of the aspects set out in the checklist below will help to facilitate improved design. The table offers a systematic and broad structure to the assessment of how development might fit into the landscape, bearing in mind the local landscape character and its sensitivity to change.
- 11.6 Developments that are subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will require an Environmental Statement to be submitted in accordance with the *Town*

and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999. These statements should include a thorough assessment of landscape and visual impacts in accordance with the recommended procedures set out in national guidance such as 'Environmental Impact Assessment: A Guide to Procedures'(January 2000) wherever the effects are likely to be significant. Given the sensitivity of some parts of the North Kesteven landscape, it is likely that all EIA developments will need to include landscape and visual impact assessments in the relevant environmental statements, for which the Landscape Character Assessment can set a clear baseline.

- 11.7 Where non-EIA development is proposed, projects that are likely to have significant landscape and / or visual impacts should be subject to similar assessments in accordance with the EIA guidance even where a statutory environmental statement is not required. The District Council should be able to advise on the need for, and scope of, such assessments in advance of the preparation and submission of a planning application.
- 11.8 Key points for consideration in assessing how a good landscape character fit can be achieved for new development are set out as follows:

Landscape Design Considerations

Location and siting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposal be sited in a way that provides the best fit in the landscape so that it would look as if it belonged there, for example is it well related to other buildings or features in the landscape? • Would it present an isolated and incongruous interruption where there is open character to the landscape? • Is it well related to landform in a way that buildings have traditionally related to the topography?
Aspect and orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposed buildings be consistent with the way other buildings are orientated, for example inward looking to a crew yard or village green, outward looking to a view from a ridge, or fronting or at right angles to a road or lane?
Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposal be appropriate in scale to its setting, for example would it dominate other buildings or landscape features around it, detract from views of a church spire, or look incongruously too big or too small?
Layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the layout of the proposal be compatible with the surrounding development, traditional layouts and / or landscape character, for example would any existing buildings and the proposed buildings be well related to each other? • Would there be a rational explanation as to why they are laid out in the way they are, would the layout reflect that typically found in the area or vicinity, would it relate well to the layout, inter-relationships and juxtaposition of buildings and / or other features in the setting?
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposed design be compatible with the landscape and/or settlement character, for example would it be in harmony with other features or strikingly discordant? • Would it reflect the traditional approach to design, for example in mass, shape, height, width, depth, openings, fenestration, roof pitch, doorways, porches etc?

Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposal be built in external materials that reflect those traditionally used and which make up an important characteristic, avoiding stridently contrasting or other inappropriate materials, colours and finishes, would the colour, texture and reflection of the materials of buildings or infrastructure make the development more conspicuous or out of place? • Does it avoid using reflective materials for large agricultural building's external walls and roofs?
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposed means of access fit well with the landscape setting and the new and existing development? for example would it be a dominant feature, would it require excessive 'cut and fill' because it was not well related to landform, would it be built of appropriate surfacing materials that blended with the surroundings and other land surfaces? • Would it avoid using features which serve to 'urbanise' the setting, such as using concrete kerbs and utilitarian lighting? • Would highway design requirements, including signage be disproportionately intrusive in relation to the scale of development?
Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposal require new boundaries to be erected and, if so, what would be the most appropriate type? • Would a hawthorn hedge, plateau limestone walling, estate fencing or brick wall be most appropriate, would any fencing be compatible with the traditional style of agricultural enclosure in the landscape around it? • Which type of gate would best fit in with other landscape elements? • Would it avoid utilising flimsy fences, 'ranch-style' fences, close-boarded fences and crude post and plank fences and, unless the scale and design of the development particularly justify it, very large, over-ornate metal fences and gates? • Is field hedging locally characteristic in species or pattern, and can it be strengthened? • Should hedgerow trees be encouraged and dying or diseased trees replaced, or retained for habitat value? • Can field boundary margins be managed better for landscape value and habitat enhancement?
Landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of landscape treatment would best fit the location and achieve the <i>purpose</i> of the landscaping scheme? - is the objective to help to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Screen the development from particular views, or ➤ Reinforce existing landscape features to improve the fit of the development in the landscape, or ➤ Provide a largely cosmetic landscaping scheme?
Plant species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the mainstay of the landscaping scheme or any boundary or other treatment comprise species of trees and shrubs that are locally indigenous, native species already dominant in the area? Not only will this afford best landscape fit, it will be preferable from an ecological point of view and those species will grow well in the location. • Several farm complexes around the district utilise effective, but visually incongruous and prominent Leylandii type screening. These present an alien feature in the landscape and present non-seasonal sometimes massive intrusions in the landscape. Does the proposal avoid use of Leylandii and similar species? • Non-native coniferous species should not be encouraged through the planning or land management controls and interventions. • Can a new landscape scheme serve to replace incongruous features, such as Leylandii hedging?

Landscape links and 'stepping stones'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would it be possible to use new planting to help to link the proposal to existing landscape features such as woodlands, copses or hedgerows? • Could lost landscape features be replaced, can the development contribute to the provision or restoration of landscape features which are important to wildlife as corridors or stepping stones, such as ponds, hedges, trees, woodlands, wetlands or semi-natural grasslands? • Can local Biodiversity Action Plan objectives be facilitated through landscaping schemes?
Vistas and Outlooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would development or landscaping serve to interrupt or otherwise obscure important vistas or inter-visibility between landmarks? • In particular, would views from and up to the Lincoln Cliff to and from the west, and vistas of the characteristic church spires across North Kesteven be afforded proper protection? • Can landscaping in particular serve to reinforce important vistas, such as tree avenues, or focusing the eye towards important buildings or views?
Drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would it be possible to create new sustainable drainage systems that will improve water quality and help create new wetland habitats? • Does ditch maintenance or creation complement landscape character and pattern, and afford biodiversity opportunity, particularly on the Fens and across the Witham and Brant Vale? • Can dew ponds be (re)introduced to the Limestone Heath?
Ancillary Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposal include, or lead to pressure for, ancillary buildings or structures, and if so will they clutter the site or spoil the overall design and layout, would they fit well in the landscape, has sufficient consideration been given to their design and integration? • Has the need for likely future requirements such as storage and expansion been taken account of?
Outside Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposal require goods, materials, vehicles, trailers etc to be stored outside, would the development be likely to generate clutter, if so would these things be controlled, well screened and discretely located?
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider fully, and control as necessary level and direction of external lighting to new development. • Does the scheme minimise 'light pollution' and safeguard the characteristic dark skies of the district away from the Lincoln area? • Avoid the use of internally illuminated signs within rural settings and important built environments.
Visual Amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would the proposal adversely affect the visual amenity of people who live, work, visit or pass through the area, would important viewpoints be affected, how conspicuous would the development be and what could be done to reduce this?

11.9 Beyond agriculture and certain minerals and highway developments, some of the most significant forces for landscape change beyond the confines of established settlements in the district are associated with the Ministry of Defence's presence in the district and with new environmental infrastructure, particularly flood defence works. These may present a need for more specific and innovative approaches in respect of landscape conservation. Likewise, the particular importance of the Lincoln Cliff demands specific consideration in terms of landscape conservation.

Ministry of Defence Sites

- 11.10 The presence of the Royal Air Force installations, operational and disused, across the district is significant in landscape terms, but are often an important part of the local community, have strong historic value, and also be of significant economic importance. By their nature, the airfields at Waddington and Cranwell, and the communications/radar community at RAF Digby will remain significant interruptions in the otherwise agricultural landscape, and their buildings are some of the largest in the district. Perimeter treatment will be determined by security requirements rather than aesthetic considerations whilst they remain operational. Infrastructure within the sites can be massive, extensive or just prominent by way of their design and function, absence of sub-division, floodlighting and large expanses of hard surfacing are prominent characteristics. Furthermore, as Crown land, new, additional development within the airfields themselves may not be subject to any effective planning control.
- 11.11 Such matters suggest that there is a need for a long term and collaborative relationship to be established between the MoD estates operations and the Local Planning Authority in respect to further development, or on occasion decommissioning of facilities. In all such cases, seeking solutions which have a good landscape fit, or minimise incongruous intrusion into the landscape should be core objectives. Opportunities for landscape enhancement, or minimising of impact could be addressed in respect to:
- Securing significant *off-site* landscaping, in line with the appropriate character area profile could be long-term mutually beneficial solutions to the impact of the airbases across the district. Whilst security considerations will prevail, off site block planting may help reduce the visual interruption to established character
 - Enhancement of the installations as habitats which are not otherwise fostered in the intensively farmed landscape should be examined where they do not hinder functionality. In particular, management of sites for natural grassland and wild flower habitats, rich in invertebrate interest may be worthy of investigation, and evidence suggests that this has been successfully carried out elsewhere through use of appropriate seeding and mowing regimes.

Utility Infrastructure

- 11.12 Flood defence infrastructure is sometimes a prominent feature in the west and north of the district. In the Fens of the eastern part of the district they are fundamental elements of the landscape and its valued character, with ditches, embankments and their linear patterns central to its uniqueness. Elsewhere, pressure for new flood defences is likely to increase with proposed major mixed use expansion in the Lincoln City area as a key example.
- 11.13 Flood defence is clearly an important and topical issue, and protection of life and property essential. However it has also resulted in some landscape harm, particularly in respect to flood embankments across the Witham and Brant Vale character area. Here the importance of the twin rivers within the landscape is often reduced considerably by embankments, and also by the maintenance of those embankments as a result of systematic clearance of riverside vegetation from them. Such measures have been evident in the landscape for many years, but consideration should be given to reducing its impact upon the landscape and to the natural systems and habitats which would otherwise colonise the riparian

environment. Whilst flood defence in the form of embankments will remain in populated areas, the risk and intensity of flooding can be off-set through restoration of functional flood plains. Such measures, for example across the Witham and Brant Vale could present very considerable opportunities for landscape enhancement and habitat enrichment, and examination of planned management of water meadows and flood plains should be considered between the Environment Agency, the Local Authority and land owners.

- 11.14 Across considerable tracts of the district high voltage transmission infrastructure presents a major interruption to the landscape. No practical landscaping measures could serve to meaningfully reduce their impacts, apart from under-grounding. The national importance of these lines is fully acknowledged, as is the economic burden associated with under-grounding of cables. However their impact upon the Lincoln Cliff and its environs is significant. The Local Planning Authority should seek to maintain pressure on the National Grid Company to consider the potential for under-grounding the cables between the Witham and Brant Vale to a point east of the Cliff ridge, so as to avoid the very significant sky lining of the infrastructure in this area. Elsewhere similar consideration should be given to the removal of overhead wires from the Bracebridge Heath and Washingborough areas which otherwise offer superb views of Lincoln Cathedral.

The Lincoln Cliff

- 11.15 The Lincoln Cliff, along with the fens, presents perhaps the most important individual landscape asset within the district. The prominence of its scarp slope, the setting it affords for its fine limestone villages and the views afforded from it are important both locally and at a sub-regional level. This importance has been recognised by local landscape designation - Area of Great Landscape Value within previous iterations of the development plan, but this approach is no longer supported by Government or the council. Instead PPS7 supports a Landscape Character based policy approach when considering development proposals or land management matters which have landscape implications, and subsequently the council has adopted the 'Lincoln Cliff Landscape Character Area' policy within the North Kesteven Local Plan 2007 in place of the previous local designation.
- 11.16 The detailed description of the cliff and its characteristics is set out within Chapter 7. Landscape threats and opportunities are addressed within the chapter, but it is important to reiterate the importance not only of its inherent characteristics which combine to present such an important and valued landscape asset, but to protect its setting from harmful visual intrusion beyond its actual character area delineation. In particular, development at the foot of the Cliff within the Witham and Brant Vale should be carefully controlled to avoid harmful interruption of the important break in topography and land use change as the scarp rises abruptly from the vale landscape. Similarly development proposals within the ridgeline settlements of Waddington, Coleby, Bracebridge Heath, Harmston, Navenby, Wellingore and Leadenham should be afforded utmost scrutiny to ensure that the character of those settlements and their crucial landscape setting is neither obscured nor diluted through unduly prominent or poorly designed development.
- 11.17 Spatial policy within the emerging LDF should therefore consider making explicit the need for protection of the *setting* of the Cliff, as well as its component features, particularly in respect to development on the edge of the ridgeline settlements and agricultural or communications infrastructure development, on the scarp or within its setting. In this respect the setting of the Cliff might reasonably be expected to

encompass *significant* areas of the Witham and Brant Vales to its immediate west, which are so critical in presenting a clear vista towards the break in topography and its rich and much valued appearance, from Green Wedge 1, and also the western fringe of the Limestone Heath from where large structures may, in theory, 'skyline'. The geographical extent of where the impact of development proposals on the setting of the Cliff could be harmful will be influenced by the scale and nature of the proposals themselves. Subsequently, it is not proposed that a 'Cliff setting' delineation be made on the Proposals Map of the LDF as this would be difficult to prepare and potentially sensitive to communities and interests beyond the existing character area policy extent. Nevertheless, the on-going conservation of the Cliff within its wider setting might be artificially limited by reliance on the current tightly defined character area policy delineation which may not deliver the broader criteria tests that a Landscape Character Assessment based policy could for development *beyond* the its current spatial delineation.

- 11.18 Spatial policy must therefore present a clear set of criteria for conservation and enhancement of all landscape character types in the district, but which also presents a separate element specific to the Lincoln Cliff. In doing so elevated levels of protection can be properly afforded, reflecting the findings of this report, and making clear that development away from the character area itself, but affecting its setting, will be subject to close scrutiny. This need not result in any dilution of the levels of development control possible under the present policy approach, and should, in practice be more effective and responsive to the distinct landscape characteristics of the Cliff itself.
- 11.19 In addition, land management regimes, through direct council action, partnership working, informal agreements and voluntary action, should ensure the special landscape features of the Cliff, such as field orientation, boundary maintenance, woodland management and succession and utility infrastructure provision seeks to strengthen its very special character and enhance its amenity value.

Preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents.

- 11.20 To help to deliver the landscape planning objectives of this report, more detailed guidance should be prepared in the form of Supplementary Planning Document(s). The guidance should be developed from a solid landscape conservation orientated policy, or suite of policies within the emerging Local Development Framework, ***which refer to and are anchored within the findings of this or future Landscape Character Assessment(s)***. Key elements of supplementary guidance might usefully be based upon the Character Area specific 'threats and opportunities' tables contained within each of the preceding Character Area profiles. Of course, such SPD is dependent on Landscape Character orientated policies being adopted within subsequent spatial plans for the district.

12. Settlement and Landscape Design Guidelines

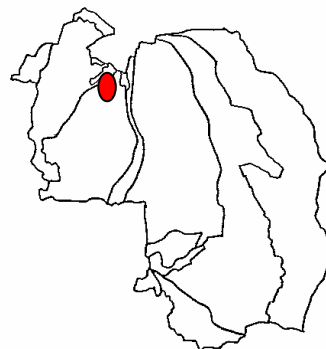
Housing Development in Settlements

- 12.1 The following section of this report sets out guidance in respect of how general development, and especially housing development, may achieve 'best landscape fit' within or adjacent to settlements where growth may be accommodated as set out within the North Kesteven Local Plan 2007.
- 12.2 The 2007 Local Plan sets out a strategy for the location of new development based upon a settlement hierarchy. This identified a twin track approach, with a 'Lincoln Policy Area' and a 'Rest of District' area. Each is divided into four separate tiers of settlement therein, each of which can be seen to perform a different role and present different suitability and sustainability credentials in respect to accommodating necessary growth. First Tier and Second Tier settlements are the largest and identified as most appropriate for accommodating growth.
- 12.3 The first of the twin areas is the 'Lincoln Policy Area'. This includes the settlements of the district closely related to Lincoln's built-up area. Primarily this consists of North Hykeham and South Hykeham Fosseway, which are the priority location for development in the Lincoln Policy Area. Its Second Tier Service Villages are; Bassingham, Bracebridge Heath, Branston, Heighington, Metheringham, Skellingthorpe, Waddington, Washingborough and Witham St Hughes.
- 12.4 The second area is the 'Rest of the District' where the influence of Lincoln City is less significant. Sleaford (including Rauceby Hospital) is identified as the first choice location for development in the area. Its Second Tier Service Villages are; Billingham, Heckington, Navenby and Ruskington.
- 12.5 In both areas the Third Tier consists of Villages. These represent the third choice location for development and the Council will consider small-scale residential infill development of up to 3 houses in these areas. The Fourth Tier consists of Hamlets and these Hamlets are not generally considered as suitable locations for development.
- 12.6 The following section examines those settlements where development is most likely to take place (i.e. First and Second Tier settlements) and examines the implications that new developments may have on the existing character and landscape setting of them and sets out strategic level design guidelines.

Lincoln City Policy Area

North Hykeham and South Hykeham Fosseway

- 12.7 The existing extent of built development at North Hykeham and South Hykeham Fosseway is, in a physical sense, an extension of the Greater Lincoln urban area. It falls within North Kesteven but is an integral element of the city. There are few if any clearly distinguishing physical features or breaks in development which afford a separate identity to be established by the area within North Kesteven.
- 12.8 In sustainability terms the designation of the area for significant allocation of housing is appropriate and in-line with government guidance and established sustainability thinking. Furthermore, much of the area designated within the Local Plan now has the benefit of planning permission and development over larger areas between the Newark Road and Mill Lane is partially completed or underway at the time of preparing this report. Within this allocation there is a significant element of greenfield development proposed or underway falling *within* the Witham and Brant Vale landscape character area.
- 12.9 Landscape Character implications of this significant growth point are relatively clear. An area of currently intensive arable farmland with occasional pockets of pasture between Mill Lane and Newark Road will be lost to development of housing and employment development. The relatively level relief of the area means that, in landscape terms its impact from on the Vale itself will be concentrated at the interface between the new development and the open countryside, rather than the detail of layout, design and density therein. Such issues may be more important visually from areas elevated on the Lincoln Cliff, but the relative distance between vantage points and the area of growth is unlikely to present significant issues for layout and design.
- 12.10 Therefore, in landscape terms it will be most important that the interface between the Vale and the new development is afforded careful attention. Whilst a significant loss of open countryside close to the city has been accepted, and its intrinsic countryside character lost, there are positive opportunities for the creation of a well designed rural-urban fringe in this area. The main interface between the new development and the open Vale runs along the track which links Mill Lane and Newark Road. The eastern section appears to be bounded by a bund wall which may have flood defence function, but will also afford a significant visual screen between the new development and the Vale. Such bunding appears not to be provided to the western parts of the development boundary. Here it will be important to reinforce existing landscape character. As established, the boundary treatment in this part of the Vale is predominantly mixed hawthorn and blackthorn hedging with occasional hedgerow trees, sometimes combined with deep ditches. Hedge height varies and is dependent on maintenance regimes. This important characteristic should be strengthened across the extent of the development's edge, and careful attention paid to ensuring hedgerow trees are appropriate species such as Ash and Oak.
- 12.11 In this area of development it is likely that individual housing units will be visible from some points across the northern Vale. Building design, scale, orientation and massing will therefore be important in a landscape context as well as from an urban



design perspective. To better integrate what is likely to be an abrupt delineation between town and countryside, it may be preferable to ensure that house design is varied along the development perimeter, particularly in terms of building line, ridge height, roofing materials and main walling materials. However, such variation need not be dramatic, and local building vernacular should still be reflected. Small differences between elements of perimeter development could significantly enhance the new urban-rural fringe. Recent development at Hambleton Avenue, east of Mill Lane can be seen to have implemented successfully such an approach. Attention to detail in matters such as eaves, gable verges and fascia treatments, window proportion, window fenestration and materials will also help soften the new urban fringe.

- 12.12 In addition to building design, the characteristic Vale hedges and hedgerow trees should be reinforced at garden boundaries, and consideration given to ensuring that curtilage enclosure to the southern, or open countryside boundaries, is carefully controlled by the LPA. This may require the removal of Permitted Development Rights for the erection of boundary enclosures. Irregular boundary treatment of various designs of timber or concrete fences, Leylandii type hedging or absence of enclosure altogether could have a very detrimental visual impact at the fringe of the landscape character area.
- 12.13 The development offers potential for improved access to the open countryside from the urban area. However a number of public rights of way are to be lost, or their character severely compromised through implementation of the allocations. It should be an objective of the development, and future LDF policy to enhance the Public Rights of Way from the urban area into the surrounding countryside.

Bassingham

- 12.14 Bassingham is a medium sized village on the Witham and Brant Vale where the Local Plan suggests some housing development may be appropriate, subject to it having acceptable impact on character and falling within the village curtilage (as defined on the local plan Proposals Map).



- 12.15 The agricultural heritage of the village is obvious within its built composition, with a number of farm buildings, modern and historic, scattered across the settlement. There would appear to have been a gradual erosion of the dominance of farming within the settlement however with farm buildings and farmyards lost to 'infill' residential development over recent years. Most, but not all post-war development is located towards the north of the village in small estate developments. The elements of the village which have most character fall within a Conservation Area covering a large part of the southern parts of the settlement.
- 12.16 Bassingham is located entirely on the eastern side of the river Witham, close to its banks, but never extending to its west. This strong locational characteristic should be recognised and maintained in considering the location of new development in Bassingham, and in any case may be necessitated by flood defence considerations.
- 12.17 The village has a form often distinctive of other 'Vale' settlements, being of an irregular north-south, east-west grid street pattern, with a complex series of lanes

running parallel and at right angles to one another. It is of generally low to mid density with most property being of a detached or semi-detached two storey scale, set in gardens to front and rear. There is not a clearly defined central element to the village, and its physical centre has shifted generally north and east with the intensification of post war residential development in these areas.

- 12.18 The village has seen significant levels of growth in comparison to its relative size in the past fifty years, doubling in population to around 1,300. Its form, whilst still clearly discernable has been eroded to some extent by extensive infill and 'backland' development in areas which would most likely have been farmsteads and paddocks within the village itself. This has had the twin effect of increasing the built density of the village, and also eroding the street pattern through development of closes and cul-de-sacs with which dilute the grid street pattern curved layouts, such as at Holmes Field.
- 12.19 Building materials, particularly of the most important and characteristic buildings are red brick and clay pantile, although some welsh slate is also used. Artificial tiles and more uniform brick types are more prominent in post war developments. In the older parts of the village, such as High Street and Newark Road buildings tend to be built tight to the pavements, but generally the housing stock across the settlement is provided with gardens to front and rear. Consequently there remains a 'green' ambience to much of the village, and mature trees play an important part in creating this character.
- 12.20 In landscape character terms, it is considered that opportunity for further development of residential property within the village curtilage is now severely limited. With the exception of perhaps very small developments of single dwellings, its capacity for growth within the envelope has been exceeded in character terms. Infill and 'backland' development can be seen to have had a considerable, and possibly negative effect on the character of the village over the past 50 years, particularly in respect of its agricultural heritage and open character. Where less densely developed areas remain today, their character is considered to be of heightened importance, such as within the Conservation Area, or flanking the west of the village by the Witham, and further housing development therein needs to be controlled very carefully in order to retain the essential character of the village.
- 12.21 It is therefore proposed that in terms of character the most appropriate way to accommodate necessary new housing within Bassingham would be to allow a single, or a number of smaller extensions to its current built form. Such extension should reflect the grid road layout and be developed at low to medium density. The open spaces within the extension would be important and should be carefully integrated with the subsequent rural-urban boundary. Tree planting and landscaping, and hedged boundary treatment should be important elements of comprehensive design schemes. Such an approach is likely to be in partial conflict with national guidance, and lower density development contrary to established sustainability thinking. However, in *landscape character* terms this may afford the best approach to meeting local housing need. Whilst the landscape of the vale is locally distinctive, the setting of the village would be unlikely to be harmed through such an approach if holistic design approaches are taken, and it is unlikely that sites on its northern, north-west or north-east edges would detract from important landscape elements. The field between Thurlby Road and Croft Lane may offer a suitable site in this respect. Development to the south of the village or between the Witham and existing built extent should continue to be resisted. Where windfall sites become available, the form and density of development should be carefully considered and the orientation

of dwellings afforded careful consideration, with sinuous or curved developments being resisted.

Skellingthorpe

- 12.22 Skellingthorpe is a large village, located towards the northern limit of North Kesteven in the Terrace Sandlands. It also serves as an outlying village on the fringes of Lincoln city, and is hence a focus for new housing within the Local Plan. Skellingthorpe has a population of approximately 2750 people, which includes an increase of approximately 120 people in the last two decades.
- 12.23 The village is clustered around a trefoil of main roads, Saxilby Road, Jerusalem Road and Lincoln Road, all of which join at the centre of Skellingthorpe. The minor road network of Skellingthorpe is very much set around a web of cul-de-sacs and closes, most notably to its western and southern sides where the most modern housing is located. Linear development is found along the three main roads spurring out of the village, representing some older and pre-war dwellings, but these are still modern in comparison with the more historic core of Skellingthorpe. The older village nucleus is nestled around St Lawences Church at the northern end of the village, although even this more historic cluster is now very mixed, with modern development and a range of building styles and materials seen amongst the more distinctive historic cottages and long standing community buildings.
- 12.24 Considerable expansion has taken place to create the more modern southern half of Skellingthorpe, which lies between Jerusalem Road and Lincoln Road. The variety of house styles and materials used is seen throughout the village, representing several decades of expansion in its southern half. This area also includes a considerable number of modern bungalows. A smaller and notably new extension lies to the west, centred on Old Chapel Road.
- 12.25 Around the older northern end of Skellingthorpe village, and also scattered amongst the array of more modern housing, are a number of historic, characteristic or important buildings. These include traditional farmsteads with attractive brick buildings with pantiled roofs, and also the steep slate roofs of the taller and more distinctive farmhouses.
- 12.26 With such a range of dwelling types, any distinctive built characteristics running through the village as a whole are limited. However, it is the treescape of the village that is one of its most notable characteristics, and this is particularly significant at the village fringes. Tree lines also skirt around the various playing fields and open spaces, and mature trees enhance many of the avenues and cul-de-sacs. A number of Tree Preservation Orders exist within and around the village, and the treescape of Skellingthorpe should therefore be regularly checked to ensure suitable maintenance and regular replacement or additional planting to maintain the feature.
- 12.27 A disused railway line runs in an east-west direction through the middle of the settlement, providing an important green corridor and recreational route. This is a significant feature within the village landscape and creates an important tree line. This line also has the effect of severing the residential areas to the north and south of



it. However it is clear that the addition of any further roads across the disused railway line would be detrimental to its function and landscape value. Movement across this line in terms of walking, cycling and riding, should however be encouraged, with opportunities sought for footpath and cycleway linkages into the settlements to the north and south.

- 12.28 Skellingthorpe has a number of important greenspaces within the residential areas, which include playing fields, sports fields and smaller informal open areas. These are particularly important in a village such as Skellingthorpe where traditional village layout has been diluted, and relatively rapid growth has taken place in the post-war period. Protection and enhancement of these internal greenspaces is therefore very important when new development is considered.
- 12.29 It is likely that there will be some opportunities for infill development and the reuse of brownfield land within Skellingthorpe, and this should be encouraged, particularly where redundant buildings can be reused, or replaced where such buildings are unsightly modern structures. It is however very important that, because of their relative scarcity, this should not impose on any older or characteristic buildings that define the original village, or similarly should not impose on any of the few traditional dwellings or farmsteads scattered amongst the wider settlement. Other important buildings are particularly distinctive and include St. Lawrence's Church, the Methodist church, St Lawrence's School and a number of public houses such as The Plough Inn. The old Manor House, and the secluded Skellingthorpe Hall and its grounds buildings are also very important and treasured assets of the village.
- 12.30 New development should seek to blend with the more traditional older buildings in Skellingthorpe, in order to highlight and replicate the most attractive aspects of the village. By adding carefully designed dwellings that reflect the older parts of the village, a greater sense of character and identity can gradually be developed. Modern, bland and repetitive styles should be avoided. Larger housing developments will need to introduce individual house designs and concentrate on an attractive and varied street scene, reintroducing neat hedgerows and swathes of roadside verges and small greens.
- 12.31 With considerable distance between the old northern centre of the village and the southern expansion, it is clear that any further sprawl of the village out to the south should now be discouraged. The southern boundary is partially defined by a significant woodland belt running across the south-east edge of Skellingthorpe. This forms a distinctive boundary and is particularly important as it contributes to a green divide with attractive landscape character between Skellingthorpe village and the Lincoln city fringe settlements. Village character and identity would be considerably eroded if new development was allowed to breach this green divide and creep towards the A46. This would result in a loss of all distinction between Skellingthorpe village and Birchwood on the Lincoln City fringe.
- 12.32 If deemed necessary, village expansion on greenfield land could most appropriately fit to the west of the Old Chapel Road and Canberra Way development, where three large arable fields are currently present. However, this would greatly depend upon the agricultural value of the soil in this area as development should not result in the loss of high quality farmland and other options may therefore need to be considered.
- 12.33 If development was pursued in this location, it would keep new development close to the heart of the village, and would also bring development up to a notable belt of trees and woodland pockets, which would form a distinctive and well established soft

edge to the village, echoing the characteristic woodland edge of the southern arc of the village. A suitably large landscape and habitat buffer will need to be retained between any new development and the old railway line to the south if any new development in this potential expansion area is pursued.

Witham St Hughes

- 12.34 The 'new' settlement of Witham St Hughes, located within the Terraced Sandlands, is one of the most recent areas of significant development within the North Kesteven District. The village is adjacent to Swinderby Airfield and just south of the A46, and has been developed partially on brownfield land associated with the airfield, along with extensions out into surrounding agricultural land. This has brought considerable new housing close to the small clusters of older dwellings around the western edge of the airfield north of Green Land and also to the north of Moor Lane, which in effect has created an extended village around the new housing of Witham St Hughes.



- 12.35 Street pattern is contemporary, with sweeping cul-de-sacs and small communal greens to the road side. Roads are wide and usually with pavements, conforming to modern access and safety requirements. In many places the extremities of the new settlement have retained and adhered to original field boundaries, with hedgerows and a number of hedgerow trees located around the often outward looking edge of the village.
- 12.36 Houses are predominantly brick, but colour varies between distinctive reds and yellows. Design is varied, with each phase of development representing a particular style, with slight variations amongst the phased groups. Overall themes throughout the village include the predominance of replicated town houses, with a considerable number of three storey dwellings, most commonly in short terraced lines serving to increase net dwelling densities. Roofs are generally gable ended, but a small number of units have hipped roofs. Roof materials are either grey or red tiles, and this in combination with the bright red or yellow brick work creates a vivid colouration to Witham St Hughes generally, which can be seen at some distance across the flatter land to the south of the village.
- 12.37 Some of the new development within Witham St Hughes has paid notable attention to design detail, with interest added from occasional ornate brickwork, feature rendered sections or feature gables and entrance porches. Other development is more uniform and lacks more intricate detail, but whilst it does not make such a positive contribution, development generally blends with the overall style of the new settlement.
- 12.38 The new elements to Witham St Hughes are of a relatively high building density. Further opportunity for expansion to the settlement within the current village envelope is therefore limited. Whilst the current plan period does not propose any expansion to Witham St Hughes, should the village be considered for expansion in the future, thought will need to be given as to whether it is appropriate to make further expansion into the surrounding 'greenfield' land, much of which is on high grade

arable soils. There are a number of options for expansion, and preference may be dependant upon an appraisal of the most sustainable opportunity available.

- 12.39 It will be important to consider the impact upon the village edge in any further development decisions. The retention of mature trees or existing hedgerows will make a positive contribution to the landscape setting of the village, and it is therefore considered that the tree and hedgerow resource in and around the new settlement is of primary importance. The current village boundary should not retain established hedges or trees if expansion occurs. Furthermore it will continue to be important to retain and add to the tree resource throughout the village generally, to soften and reduce its impact in the wider Terraced Sandlands landscape, particularly when viewed from the south along Moor Lane. Preventing harsh and abrupt lines of houses on the edge of the village will also be important.
- 12.40 The edge of the village benefits from a mixture of house styles and roof heights for most views into the village, and this approach should continue into any new development. Any further expansion should also pay careful regard to the setting of the existing dwelling clusters to the north of both Green Lane and Moor Lane. Whilst linkages should be encouraged, particularly in the form of green corridors, integration should not be to the detriment of the existing dwellings.
- 12.41 Future development design should continue to reiterate the general themes running through the village as recently developed, but ensure that some locally characteristic building detail is added to prevent uniformity and blandness and to create a more distinctive character for the new settlement. Given its backdrop of Swinderby airfield and both reclaimed and active sand and gravel workings, it is particularly important to retain a high quality of design, and develop a character or identity for the village of Witham St Hughes. This could also be achieved with any additional community or amenity development, which should seek to serve as focal points for the village and encourage high quality design by demonstrating best practice. Furthermore, expansion, particularly into previously developed sites should also take account of the opportunity to help restore landscape setting, in line with the landscape character of the Terraced Sandlands.

Bracebridge Heath

- 12.42 Bracebridge Heath is a large village about two and a half miles south of Lincoln and has been designated as a Second Tier Service Village falling within the Lincoln Policy area. It is positioned on top of the Lincoln Cliff scarp slope, within the Limestone Heath Landscape sub-area. It overlooks the City and the Witham Valley to the north, separated from the urban boundary by an area of relatively open land designated as Green Wedge policy area, though there is some ribbon development along the London Road. To the west of the village are open views across the Brant and Witham Vale. Flat agricultural land surrounds the village to the south and east.

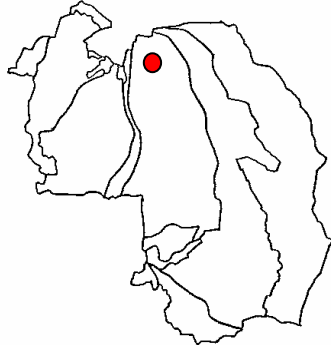


- 12.43 Although physically separate from the City it is very much a settlement of urban character which has experienced a great deal of growth. The most notably housing development in recent years has been at the old St Johns Mental Hospital building

which closed in 1990. The hospital buildings themselves have been converted into flats and offices with about 1,000 new dwellings built in the surrounding grounds to the east of the village. There is a great mix of housing types throughout the village including a large post war estate to the west of Grantham Road which consists of regimented detached plots with many bungalows. There is newer development to the south and east (including development within the hospital grounds) which has more organic layouts. The houses are built from a variety of materials including brick and limestone block with grey and red/orange tiles. There is not an obvious use of local building materials or any evidence of following the vernacular building styles.

- 12.44 The actual location of new development around the existing urban area would need to be very carefully considered as the existing gaps of undeveloped land are of great landscape importance. The undeveloped gap to the north of Bracebridge Heath separates it from the City giving its individual identity and there also open views northwards towards the Cathedral. New development in this area would therefore be avoided. An expansion to the south would erode the effective physical separation between Waddington and Bracebridge Heath which is important to their individual identity. The Lincoln Cliff runs along the western boundary of the village and any expansion in this direction would impact on the landscape value of this feature. This leaves the eastern side of the village which is surrounded by flat, largely featureless agricultural land.
- 12.45 The main landscape character implication for the further growth of this settlement is its very exposed and open position on the limestone plateau. Generally new housing developments have been built close to the edge of the surrounding fields with the boundaries consisting of low hedges with some trees creating a very stark interface between the countryside and the settlement. Any future additional development on the village edges would benefit from softer edges and greater tree and hedge planting around the settlement fringes. It is also important to reinforce the existing landscape character in the surrounding countryside. The boundary treatment in this part of the limestone heath area generally consists of hedgerows with some roadside trees and dry-stone walls. These characteristics should be strengthened across the extent of the settlement's edge and careful attention paid to ensuring that new hedgerow and tree planting use appropriate native species. Dry-stone walls could be used as a particular feature of boundaries to enhance the local distinctiveness of this area.
- 12.46 In this area individual houses will be visible from some distance across the limestone heath and therefore building design, scale and materials are important in a landscape context as well as an urban design perspective. Although there is not a strong local vernacular style in this settlement certain elements present within the existing village could be followed. The general pattern in the centre of the village is two storey dwellings with ridge lines parallel to the road, built of red brick and red tiles. The detailing on these dwellings such as traditional windows with vertical proportions and traditional lintel design could be used in new development to reflect this character. It may be preferable to ensure that house design is varied along the exposed edges, particularly in terms of building line, ridge height and roofing materials to break up the impact of new development.

Branston

- 12.47 Branston is a large village located about 3 miles south east of Lincoln. It falls within the Limestone Heath Landscape Character Area. The original village centre is located in a low valley and largely consists of buildings built of local limestone. All Saints Church built of local limestone has a tall spire and is a prominent landmark within the village. Topography is particularly important here with the sweeping valley down into the centre of the village. A wooded valley running through village centre, with many mature trees and open space makes an important feature in the village and is designated and protected as Visual Amenity Area in the Local Plan. Branston Hall Hotel set in a large parkland area also represents an important feature of the village.
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- 12.48 Newer development has grown up surrounding the centre on higher land making it quite exposed in the surrounding agricultural landscape. A great deal of new development over recent years has occurred largely to the east of the Lincoln Road (B1188) and to the east and west of Station Road which leads towards Heighington. The newer development is very mixed in style and building materials.
- 12.49 The location of new development should avoid the north of the village as it would take up land that separates Branston from Heighington which has similar peripheral estates. Maintaining the separation between the two settlements is important to their individual identities. The existing development along the Lincoln Road to the east of the village could be termed as ribbon development being largely a line of detached houses as it follows the ridge line along the western side of the road. To the east of the Lincoln Road the landscape is open and undeveloped with fine views to the Cathedral. It would be important to maintain this openness and it would not be appropriate to build on this ridge line. To the south of the Lincoln Road, behind the existing ribbon development, lies Branston Park, which would be generally protected from development. Therefore the most suitable area for development beyond existing boundaries would be along the western edge of the village, north of Moor Lane where the existing boundary of the modern housing estates is very abrupt, straight and exposed. New development if carefully designed could fringe this harsh boundary and make a more attractive gateway into the village from the east. Development should not however be considered south of Moor Lane as it makes an effective boundary to the settlement.
- 12.50 The main landscape character implications for the further growth of Branston are its very exposed and open position on the limestone plateau and its undulating topography. Generally new housing developments have been built close to the edge of the surrounding fields with the boundaries consisting of low hedges with some trees creating a very stark interface between the countryside and the settlement. Any future additional development on the village edges would benefit from softer edges and greater tree and hedge planting around the settlement fringes. It is also important to reinforce the existing landscape character in the surrounding countryside. The boundary treatment in this part of the limestone heath area generally consists of hedgerows with some roadside trees and dry-stone walls. These characteristics should be strengthened across the extent of the development's edge and careful attention paid to ensuring that new hedgerow and tree planting use appropriate native species.

- 12.51 This village has a strong local character in the village centre which could be reflected in new development. Very little of the recent development in the village has followed the local vernacular and it is important that future development redresses this and strengthens local characteristics and features. The shapes of windows and other architectural details on the traditional buildings, as well as the use of local limestone and clay pantiles, could be reflected to a greater extent in new development.

Heighington

- 12.52 Heighington lies five miles to the south east of Lincoln within the Lincoln Policy Area. It is positioned on the lower slopes of the landscape escarpment and falls within the Central Clays & Gravels Landscape Character Unit. To the north and east of the village the land gradually merges towards the fenland landscape surrounding the River Witham.



- 12.53 The village centre of Heighington largely consists of historic limestone buildings, clustered around the junction of the two roads. It is now however surrounded by much more recent development mostly dating from the last 20 years. It is closely situated, on the north western side, to Washingborough with no visually perceptible gap in between.
- 12.54 The location of new development should generally avoid the south-west of the village as it would occupy land that separates Heighington from Branston which has similar peripheral estates. However there may be limited potential for development in the triangle of land between the railway and the Potterhanworth Road to the south of the village. Development however should not be considered to the west of the railway as it creates a strong boundary to the settlement. Other suitable areas for new development in landscape terms are considered to be very limited given the proximity to natural spring lines to the north of the village which would need to be taken into consideration in respect of their visual and hydrological importance and to the south of the village where the landscape is gently undulating and forms an attractive visual setting for the village. This leaves the eastern side of Heighington where there very minor expansion may be accommodated in landscape terms. Boundary treatment would be particularly important on this eastern edge of the settlement as the surrounding landscape is very flat and open as it falls towards the fenland. Whilst there should be some native hedge planting to soften the development boundary, additional tree planting may look incongruous.
- 12.55 This village has a strong local character in the village centre which could be reflected in new development. However, very little of the recent development in the village has actually reflected the established local vernacular and it is important that future development redresses this and strengthens local characteristics and features where possible. Traditional window design and proportioning, as well as other architectural detailing on the buildings, along with the use of local building materials such as limestone and clay pantiles should be incorporated to reflect the character of the historic core of the village.

Metheringham

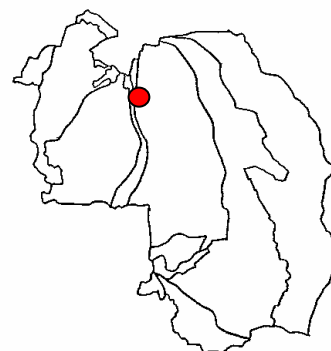
- 12.56 Metheringham is a medium sized village situated 10 miles south-east of Lincoln and is designated as a Second Tier Service Village within the Lincoln Policy Area. It is positioned on the lower slopes of the limestone escarpment on the boundary of the Limestone Heath and the Central Clays & Gravels landscape sub-areas. The landscape immediately to the south and east of the village is very flat being a transitional fringe of the fenland. The village rises gently towards the west at the foot of the plateau.



- 12.57 It has a central village core of older buildings designated as a Conservation Area with many buildings constructed in limestone with clay pantile roofs. Its heritage is as a farming community but now is predominantly a commuter village for Lincoln. A great deal of housing has been built in the post-war years, a high proportion of which has been provided to house RAF personnel serving at the nearby bases. The newer development is very mixed in style and materials. There is an old flour mill, known as Old Meg, which is now disused which is a distinctive local landmark. To the east the land becomes significantly lower with a finger of low fenland reaching up to Moor Lane, which is actually above the level of the surrounding land. Further eastwards along this road towards the village of Martin lies the Metheringham Airfield which although disused since 1946 it still has the remains of runways and buildings.
- 12.58 The areas suitable for future development are limited in landscape terms. The village is bounded to the west by the B1188 which forms a strong boundary to development. To the south Metheringham is very closely juxtaposed to the neighbouring village of Blankney and its associated historic parkland. To the east is the railway which also forms another strong boundary. The northern area therefore offers itself as being most suitable area for further development in respect to potential landscape impacts. Currently, the northern edge of the village is very straight and uniform and new development may offer an opportunity to soften this harsh boundary and offer additional visual interest. For instance new dwellings could be clustered in small groups interspersed with planting, which would effectively merge the settlement boundary more subtly into the surrounding countryside. Native tree and hedge species should be used and dry-stone walls could also be used as part of the boundary treatment, as these are a particular feature of the area. As Metheringham has been so greatly expanded over the years the original character of the built environment has been watered down. New development should therefore incorporate some of the design features and building materials found in the historic core of the village to strengthen the overall visual appearance of the village and reinforce its local distinctiveness.

Waddington

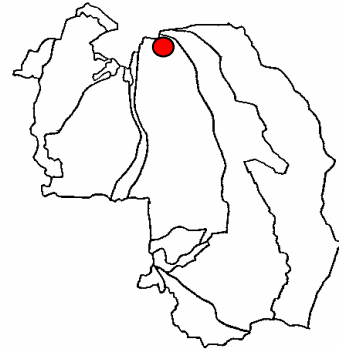
- 12.59 Waddington is located along the A607 to the south of Lincoln and in the Lincoln Policy Area. It is positioned close to the Lincoln Cliff falling mainly within the Limestone Heath landscape sub-area with the western edge falling within the Lincoln Cliff landscape sub-area.
- 12.60 This village is dominated by the RAF base which is located between the A15 and A607. To the west of the A607 is the main centre of the village with older buildings situated towards the edge of the Lincoln Cliff. In the older part of the village the lanes run from east to west between the High Street and Hill Top Road. There are a number of notable historic buildings, some of which are listed. The historic core of the village is designated as a Conservation Area. Part of the special character of the village is the way in which walls and buildings define the curving form of the lanes (e.g. Far Lane and Manor Lane). Stone and pantile is generally characteristic of the area, as is the use of windows with a strong vertical emphasis. Hilltop Lane, on the western boundary of the village, is an integral part of the Conservation Area defining the edge of the old village and emphasises its setting held on the ridge top. This lane offers a contrast between the eastern edge which is tightly defined by stone walls and high banks, and the open western edge which provides dramatic views from the Cliff top to the Witham and Brant Vales area to the west.
- 12.61 The High Street forms the spine of the village. The southern section of the village has a curving form defined by walls and buildings with trees making a significant contribution. The northern section opens up from the junction with Bar Lane. The intricate pattern of roof lines adds to the distinctive character of the village. For the most part development is set up to the pavement and where it is set further back it is often enclosed by stone walls.
- 12.62 There is a great variety of building types and materials within the village. The older buildings are built of local limestone with red pantile roofs but newer development is much more varied. On the RAF base as well as the large runways and aircraft hangars there is also a large residential barracks area. The houses are generally brick built with grey slate roofs. There are also larger buildings, residential and offices, which have a sandy coloured exterior (possibly limestone) with brown tiled roofs.
- 12.63 Potential sites for new development are very limited. The western side of the village along the Cliff edge would be ruled out for development because of its visual intrusion in the landscape and its impact on the Conservation Area. Further development along the northern edge would also be restricted as it is important to maintain the separation between Waddington and Bracebridge Heath. To the east is the RAF base, which presents an effective barrier to any further development on this side. This leaves the southern boundary where possibly minor expansion to the settlement could occur. However this boundary is very exposed to the surrounding open, agricultural landscape and new development would be very conspicuous. Therefore any housing development there might be grouped in irregular clusters and interspersed with appropriate planting to break-up any straight, harsh edges. Dry-stone walls are a particular feature of this Limestone Heath character area and these could also be used in the boundary treatment of new development to reflect local distinctiveness. Whilst Waddington has a variety of building styles within its



settlement boundary, it would be preferable if new development incorporated some of the design features and used the same building materials as found in its historic core. For example development could be built close up to the pavement edge, or if dwellings are set back from the road their curtilages could be enclosed by stone walls. The varied roofscape found in the centre of the village could also be reproduced in new development, which would help to break up its visual impact from the surrounding open landscape.

Washingborough

- 12.64 Washingborough lies 3 miles south-east of Lincoln within the Lincoln Policy Area. It is positioned on the lower slopes of the Lincoln Cliff as it slopes down towards the River Witham. It falls within two of the landscape character units the Central Clays & Gravels and the Fenland.
- 12.65 There is an attractive historic core to the village with an old church and many limestone buildings, mainly situated on sloping ground before it levels off to the floodplain. The starting point of Car Dyke lies to the north of the village adjacent to the Washingborough Road. The gradient of the land is very flat to the north of the village leading up to the Witham and to the east towards the Fens.
- 12.66 The railway was built through the village in the 1840s and significant housing growth followed at this time, mainly brick built with slate roofs in contrast to the older limestone dwellings.
- 12.67 To the east and west of the village centre there is considerable newer development mainly consisting of post-war housing estates. The newest housing is along the outer eastern edge of the village. These serve to significantly dilute the historic character of the village.
- 12.68 In the village core the predominant materials are natural stone walls and pantile roofs. There are also some red brick buildings with slate roofs. There are a number of listed buildings within the village and most of the older part of the village is designated as a Conservation Area. A number of the older buildings are linked by walls and hedges which define the curve of the road and emphasise the falling road level. The local topography affords a prominent roofscape, within which incongruous materials can be prominent in the landscape from some distance, particularly from the north. Buildings fronting directly to the pavement edge serve to give tight definition and sense of enclosure throughout the settlement.
- 12.69 Washingborough is sited very closely to the neighbouring village of Heighington to the south with no clear gap in-between, there would therefore be no scope to site development in this area. To the north the low lying land adjacent to the Witham would not be suitable for development for hydrological and landscape reasons. To the west the village is contained by the railway line which makes an obvious boundary to the settlement. Therefore the most suitable situation for new development would be to the east of the village. There could be opportunities to regain some of the character and distinctiveness of Washingborough, that has been lost to a great extent by the dominance of the rather indistinctive modern housing, if



suitably designed dwellings were developed on this eastern edge. However this land slopes downwards from 25 metres to less than 5 metres in elevation and so any development would be very prominent in the surrounding landscape and could be viewed across the Witham vale from the City of Lincoln. The existing development boundaries along this eastern edge of the village are very straight and make a strong visual barrier. It would be preferable if new development could utilise the sloping characteristics and create a more organic boundary, edged with appropriate tree and hedge planting to soften the visual impact and to provide habitat and amenity value. Design features and local materials found in the historic core of the village could be incorporated into new development, and split level dwellings on the steeper parts of the slope could be considered which would add further to the visual interest.

‘Rest of the District’ Policy Area

Sleaford

- 12.70 Sleaford is the only free-standing town in the District and is the first choice location for development in the part of the district that does not fall within the Lincoln policy area. Situated centrally within the surrounding farmland it has always been very important as a central market town and a number of agriculturally based industries have developed over the years. The River Slea, which is navigable through the centre of the town, was important in developing this trade, though the railways eventually overtook the river's importance. The town centre of Sleaford has many attractive and historic buildings including St Denys' church, with its prominent stone built spire, and Cogglesford water mill. More recently the town has greatly expanded with many new private housing estates on its periphery in a great variety of building styles and materials. Since 2000 the town centre has seen significant developments and improvements including "The Hub", a centre for craft and design, housed in a redeveloped seed warehouse incorporating contemporary design features. In addition restoration of the Bass Maltings on the southern side of the town is underway, considered to be one of the finest examples in England of an industrial-scale flour maltings, and are grade II* listed buildings.



- 12.71 Sleaford is set at the convergence of three landscape character types. The Central Clay Vale wraps around the north, east and south of the town, while to the west the Slea Valley and the edge of the Limestone Heath, fringe the built up area. Generally the landscape is low and flat surrounding the town and the settlement edge is quite exposed from the surrounding countryside. The railway to the eastern edge of the town forms a strong settlement boundary beyond which the open agricultural land of the clay vales slopes gently down towards the fenland. This side of Sleaford is particularly open and featureless with little tree cover. Likewise towards the south of the town the landscape comprises flat, open agricultural fields with little tree cover. To the north, beyond the A15, the land rises significantly towards the limestone heath, towards the village of Leasingham. On the western side of Sleaford the land is undulating, incorporating the rise and fall of the Slea Valley and the edge of the Rauceby Hills in the near distance. There are a few scattered copses in this area giving greater interest and variety to the landscape.

- 12.72 The Local Plan allows for windfall housing and employment developments in Sleaford, provided they meet the requirements of the search sequences set out in national and strategic planning guidance. Priority will be given to previously developed land and buildings within the settlement curtilage. Generally speaking, the development of land within the built up area of Sleaford would not impact greatly on the wider landscape character of the surrounding countryside, though it would obviously be important to retain the open amenity areas within the built up area particularly the areas alongside the River Slea and the Sleaford Wood.
- 12.73 Where previously developed land is not available within the urban area, consideration will therefore be given to proposals for development which represent extensions to the settlement. Should development on the periphery be considered necessary there are a number of areas where, from a landscape perspective, that should be avoided. The Slea Valley would most likely be ruled out because of possible flooding implications and also because of its landscape value, offering distinct topographical interest and belying the town's navigational heritage. Indeed the whole of the western edge of Sleaford beyond the line of the railway has greater landscape interest than the other peripheral areas and therefore should not be prioritised for development. There are, however small pockets of land beside the junction of the two railways where the Local Plan makes recommendations for the integration of two sites into the settlement boundary. As the railways provide a strong boundary to the built up area, new development could be accommodated on these sites without impacting on the landscape of the Slea Valley.
- 12.74 The eastern side of Sleaford is also considered unsuitable for development because its flat, exposed nature would mean that any new building would be conspicuous from a considerable distance. In addition the railway makes a strong and defensible settlement boundary and any development that is enclosed or separated by railways or major highways should be resisted, on infrastructure connectivity grounds as well as landscape.
- 12.75 Along the northern edge of Sleaford there is a gap between the settlement edge and the A15 which although partly developed around the A153 roundabout is still generally open and agricultural. However because of its location between two large road interchanges, with their associated service station development, this area has urban-rural fringe characteristics. It is therefore not unreasonable to consider that this land could be developed in the future with little impact on landscape character. Development should not however cross the A15 as it presents a natural settlement boundary between the built-up area and the open countryside of the Limestone Heath.
- 12.76 To the south of Sleaford, although the land is generally flat and open, the settlement boundary is much less strongly defined. It would therefore be possible to make small extensions into this area without serious impact on the surrounding landscape character. There would of course be many other considerations to bear in mind to facilitate the sustainable development of new areas. For instance preference should be given to sites with good access to town centre services, which would rule out remoter areas away from the main public transport routes.
- 12.77 If new development is allocated on the outer fringes of Sleaford account would need to be taken of the landscape characteristics of the surrounding countryside. Hard, straight settlement edges, the result of regimented rows of similar style housing should be avoided. Buildings should be set out in a more varied way, interspersed

with appropriate planting. Different roof levels and orientation of buildings can help to create this variety. Landscaping should use indigenous species and include larger off site group planting to break up the building line.

- 12.78 The centre of the town has a very strong, character with many buildings dating back to medieval times. Many are constructed of local limestone notably St Denys church and the Sessions House, though there are also many attractive red brick buildings with clay pantiled roofs. However the surrounding housing estates have not generally reflected this character or followed the vernacular building design found in the surrounding villages. As a result the general impression of the outskirts of Sleaford is one of suburban areas built in a variety of styles, layouts and materials and consequently any strong local character is not apparent. New development could reflect the character and building style of the town centre by incorporating some of the design features and using local materials. Pastiche of traditional buildings, however, should be avoided and buildings of a contemporary design reflecting some of the recent development in the town centre may be appropriate within the built-up area of Sleaford.

Navenby

- 12.79 The village of Navenby is located on the important landscape feature of the Lincoln Cliff Escarpment. Navenby is settled around the A607, which runs through its centre and forms an attractive and varied High Street through the village. The western side of the village has extensive views across the Witham and Brant Vale, which extend across a significant tree and hedge covered slope to the bottom of the cliff. The minor village roads are aligned in an east-west direction, running from the central north-south spine of the A607.



- 12.80 Apart from some new development in the 1960s, Navenby village encountered little change throughout the 1970s, with a static population of approximately 900. Navenby now has a population of approximately 1800, having doubled its number of residents in the last 25 years. Extensions to the village in the south east include modern bungalows and terraced townhouses, with the latter having been added along Green Man Road on the northern boundary, which has resulted in a very sharp linear edge to the village at its northern extent.
- 12.81 The main historic part of the village lies to its western edge, and 'rolls over' the cliff and partially down the scarp slope. This is the typical setting for many of the villages that lie along the Lincoln Cliff, and as a typical cliff village, Navenby makes a vital contribution to defining the landscape character of the Lincoln Cliff Escarpment.
- 12.82 The village of Navenby has distinctive characteristics that should be enhanced by, and taken forward into any new development. Attractive street frontages of red brick or limestone cottages, with each aligned parallel to the road are typical of the village, with the addition of the red pantiled or grey slate roofs that are found throughout the North Kesteven District. In a number of places the building line is directly onto the pavement edge. It is important for this characteristic feature to be reflected in any new residential development elsewhere in Navenby. Replication of the distinctive building line should be carefully adhered to when infill development is considered.

- 12.83 Tall brick chimney stacks are a consistent and distinctive characteristic on most of the older dwellings within Navenby. Lines of attached dwellings often have varying roof heights, and this is an attractive feature that can be carefully replicated in new development. A number of sympathetically renovated and converted barns can be seen in the village, and the reuse and careful restoration of redundant buildings is to be encouraged, to retain historic buildings that contribute to defining the character of Navenby. New houses should be of individual design, and should reflect, respect and enhance the surrounding traditional building character, whilst where appropriate taking new design features forward in a sympathetic manner.
- 12.84 Navenby High Street creates an inwardly focused settlement that is oriented towards this distinctive central spine. The High Street is a key element of the village character and gives Navenby individual identity with its varying street width and consequential varying building line. The prominence and then retreat of the characteristic buildings, along with their varying roof heights adds great variety and interest, and draws attention to the detail of each individual building. The facades of the High Street buildings are therefore particularly important to retain, and should be carefully considered where any new development is required. New development should generally be resisted on the High Street, and should only include sensitive restoration or repair of existing buildings.
- 12.85 One of the most important characteristics of the villages located on the Lincoln Cliff escarpment is the countryside and treescape that lies in between the dotted line of villages as they follow this prominent linear feature in the landscape. From the lower vale, the villages are glimpsed through the trees on the lower and middle slope, with key prominent buildings and church spires cutting through the woodland on the higher skyline. Navenby epitomises this with views of St Peter's Church and the Old Rectory on its western fringe.
- 12.86 Villages are scattered relatively uniformly along the cliff with woodland, hedgerows and rolling fields aligned up the slope in between. For the landscape character of the village of Navenby and the wider Lincoln cliff, it will be of paramount importance to ensure that the village does not further merge with the closely neighbouring village of Wellingore. The two villages are virtually adjoined, mainly as a result of recent development at the northern tip of Wellingore where mainly modern bungalows have been added. The dwellings located within the triangle of the A607 and Pottergate Road are within the boundary of Navenby Village, but appear to be part of the northern tip of Wellingore. In order to prevent further integration, which would be damaging to the landscape character of the Lincoln Cliff, the southern arc of Navenby and indeed the northern arc of Wellingore should not be further extended, and the village boundaries should be tightly defined by the existing houses, preventing any further encroachment. With the two villages virtually connected, any further expansion is likely to be highly detrimental to village and wider landscape character. It is essential that any additional dwellings are resisted as further infringement by even an individual house is likely to be significant.
- 12.87 The western edge of the Navenby is of importance to village character in that it contains much of the historic elements of the village, and also in that its' wooded edge, which spills over the slope of the cliff, is a defining characteristic of the wider Lincoln Cliff landscape. The older buildings in this part of Navenby are however inter-dispersed with some more modern houses and bungalows, and it is therefore imperative that this part of the village is particularly protected from inappropriate

development. Any future infill or restorative development in this part of the village should be carefully designed to blend with and enhance the existing built heritage.

- 12.88 The village edge is clearly defined and delineated by a strong treescape, and this should not be altered by any further development on this western boundary. There is obvious opportunity for landscape enhancement towards the southern end of this western boundary, where the trees and mature hedges currently disappear. At this south westerly end of the village newer housing has been developed in the post war period along 'The Rise,' but this lacks the significant tree cover that sweeps around the western fringe of the older parts of the village. Navenby village and the wider landscape character would therefore significantly benefit from the continuation of tree and hedge cover around the village fringe at this point.
- 12.89 If it is considered that if expansion onto greenfield land is necessary to accommodate required new housing, a limited amount of further development may be acceptable in landscape terms around Heath Road to the south east of the village where the most recent new houses have already been located. This should not however extend any further south than the existing limit, but rather should extend towards the east. It will be important to contain any such expansion to a limited extent, in order to develop a suitable village edge in this location, which would benefit from replication of the softer boundary line of the western side of Navenby, rather than the geometric form seen to the north east.

Billinghay

- 12.90 This village is sited on the edge of the Fens, about 10 miles east of Sleaford and 17 miles south of Lincoln. It falls within the Central Clays & Gravels landscape unit. It is a linear village sited at the junction of the A153 and the B1189.



- 12.91 The village lies at the southern end of the low and narrow ridge of land extending from the Lincoln Heath at Metheringham which supports a line of settlements including Billinghay. The early development was around the Old Bridge over the Billinghay Skirth and the older part of the village is located near this watercourse and now designated as a conservation area. The buildings are densely grouped, generally two stories in height and are located on the pavement edge. Buildings are often linked together with walls and fences. Red/brown brick is the predominant building material and roofs are slate or pantile. There are also some buildings of a more yellow brick type. Roofs are often gable ended with at least one and often two gable chimneys. Windows generally have a vertical emphasis. The Market Place is a triangular space created by the junction of Bridge Street, Church Street and Victoria Street. The focal point of the centre of the space is the War Memorial. The Billinghay Project has created a number of street scene improvements to the village including re-paving around the war memorial, and replacement fences and seating. The historic village core has an urban nature with few trees or open spaces and the buildings on or close to the pavement edge. Small variations in building line give prominence to gable walls. On Walcott Road verges, trees and hedges contrast with the density of the village core with hedges linking the buildings. Mature trees along the Billinghay Skirth are important as they give a backdrop to the village streets.

- 12.92 The Market Place, at the centre of the Conservation Area is about seven metres above sea level with the land falling to the surrounding fenland to the south, east and west which is around one to two metres above sea level. The village is, therefore, a prominent feature in the wider landscape, particularly in views from the east, west and south. The church has a tall steeple which is a prominent feature in the landscape.
- 12.93 Newer development has taken place mainly to the south and west of its core. Development to the east would be restricted because of the low level of the land and the Billingham Skirth and its accompanying flood embankment forms a natural boundary to the village. There may be some potential for development north of the Walcott Road or possibly south along Mill Lane as both of these areas are of a sufficient height above the fenland. However, further ribbon development along the Walcott Road should be avoided and any additional housing areas and associated road patterns should relate to the village centre.
- 12.94 As the village is effectively an island of higher land it is very prominent making building design, scale and materials particularly important in a landscape context as well as from an urban design perspective. The strong local vernacular style present in the old part of the village should be reflected in any new development particularly the use of the red/ brown brick and clay pantiles or slate roofs. As there is a general lack of tree cover in this area planting trees of suitable native species would help to soften the edge of new developments and strengthen the landscape character of the Central Clays and Gravels landscape unit.

Heckington

- 12.95 Heckington is a large village on the edge of the Fens located just off the A15 about 5 miles east of Sleaford. It falls within the Central Clays & Gravels landscape unit but is sited close to the boundary with the Fenland sub area.
- 12.96 It was originally an agricultural settlement and is surrounded by flat, fertile farmland. The village itself is slightly higher than the surrounding land and so is very prominent in the landscape. It has an attractive historic core with mainly brick built buildings with some rendered and whitewashed. There is also the distinctive 8-sailed windmill on the eastern edge of Heckington and a spired church which are important local landmarks. There are newer housing estates on the edge of the village which are very mixed in character and in the building materials used.
- 12.97 The core of the village is designated as a Conservation Area. The High Street forms the central spine of the village. The enclosure of the street is important with buildings built up to the pavement. In this area the building materials are predominately red brick and slate with some whitewash/render and stone. In some areas red clay pantiles are used for roofing.
- 12.98 The location of new development within this village must be very carefully considered because of the flat and exposed nature the surrounding farmland. In particular the eastern boundary is exposed as the land gently falls towards the fenland.



Development would be inappropriate here as it could be particularly conspicuous from the surrounding countryside. To the south of the village is the railway line which offers an effective boundary to the settlement and although there is some development beyond this line, it should not be further consolidated. In addition it is important to limit development to the south in order to maintain the visual gap between Heckington and Great Hale, although there is already some ribbon development along the Hale Road. The Sleaford Road runs roughly parallel to the north of the railway and there may be some limited possibilities to site development between this road and the railway. The only other possibility for new development would be along the northern edge of the village where there has already been recent housing development. There may be some limited scope for additional development in this area but should not extend any further towards the A17, as this would set an inappropriate settlement boundary in terms of scale and proportion in relation to services and village function.

- 12.99 As the surrounding landscape is so flat the design of new developments and its boundary treatment is very important. It may be preferable to ensure that dwelling design is varied along the exposed edges, particularly in terms of building line, ridge height and roofing materials to break up the impact of new development. Boundary treatments are particularly important and hard straight edges of housing development should be avoided. Ideally the boundaries should be softened with suitable hedge or tree planting. An uneven boundary may make less impact in the landscape than a straight, regimented boundary line.

Ruskington

- 12.100 Ruskington is a large village situated 4 miles north of Sleaford and largely contained between the B1188 to the west and the railway line to the east. It falls within the Central Clays & Gravels landscape character unit.



- 12.101 The attractive village centre has a strong landscape presence with a stream running through the centre, the Ruskington Beck, parallel with High Street. The building materials used mainly consist of limestone or red brick. The gabled roofs are a particular feature and generally russet coloured pantiles have been used. The buildings in the older streets are sited close to the pavement edge giving an enclosed feeling to the village centre.
- 12.102 There are newer estates to the north and south of the village centre. The surrounding large housing estates are of mixed styles which do not reflect the characteristics of the local villages. There is a large food production factory south of the village.
- 12.103 The surrounding landscape is low lying farmland with very little tree or hedge cover. To the east of the village the gradient of the land slopes gently down to the fenland. Ruskington is very exposed and prominent in the landscape, and therefore any future development should be designed to minimise its visual impact or improve the existing landscape setting of the settlement. Although there are small housing areas beyond the railway line to the east of the village, it generally offers an effective boundary to the settlement which should not be further breached. To the north-west the Beck

enters the village and there is open land either side of this watercourse which should be maintained for both visual and hydrological reasons.

- 12.104 As the form and orientation of the village is generally linear running from east to west, the northern and southern boundaries are the widest and offer the most scope for development, whilst the eastern and western boundaries are smaller. Currently the southern boundary of the village, immediately to the east of the B1188, presents a very straight and exposed boundary to surrounding farmland with little vegetation apparent to screen it. If additional housing were to be sited here it would be an opportunity to break-up this rather harsh edge by housing development that may be grouped in small clusters and interspersed with tree planting using native species. It is considered that this southern edge would be more suitable for development than the northern edge as this has a softer and attractive appearance and is already screened by some mature trees. All settlement boundaries should be softened with suitable hedge or tree planting so that they merge more subtly into the surrounding agricultural landscape and add to the landscape character of the Central Clays and Gravels landscape unit. An uneven boundary may make less impact in the landscape than a straight, regimented boundary line. Also it may be preferable to ensure that house design is varied along the exposed edges, particularly in terms of building line, ridge height and roofing materials to break up the impact of new development.
- 12.105 The new development surrounding the village centre of Ruskington is currently very mixed in character but would be beneficial if future development reflected some of the characteristics seen in the older dwellings to strengthen the local distinctiveness. For example, dwellings could be built closer to the pavements within parallel street patterns, rather than in a late 20th century organic and curved street layout. Building materials are also very important to character and where possible limestone and clay pantiles should be used.

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Figures and Maps

See separate attachments

Appendix 1

Example of Field Sheet used in study

See Separate attachment

Field Recording Sheet

Date	Location	Joint Character Area	Grid ref	Recorder(s)
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Provisional landscape character type	
Provisional Landscape character Unit / Name	

Landform:	
<p>I.e. predominant features, inter-linkages or contrasts, height, aspect, gradient, slope profiles.</p> <p>Prominent Vistas or vantage points</p> <p>Skyscape?</p>	<p>For example; plateau, low hills, undulating lowlands, fen, scarp/dip slope, ridge, terrace, basin, plain.....</p>

Land cover / Land use:	
Predominant vegetation, Vegetation mix	e.g. Grazing / grassland / moor / heath / woodland / arable /wetland
Agriculture	e.g. Arable / Livestock (type)/Mixed/ Equine / energy crops/ cereals/ brasica / root veg / other... aquaculture , Scale, agribusiness, medium , small, smallholdings
Settlement	e.g. Absent / Town / Village / Hamlet / Isolated dwellings / farmsteads....

Settlement Pattern	e.g. Nucleated, scattered, linear, sprawl, traditional / historic / recent (time period) / prominent in L/S,/ enclosed by L/S, hilltop, valley sides, valley floor....
Built environment	Prominent buildings / building materials / architectural composition / roofscapes/ spires / towers / scale, distinguishing features open spaces, green wedges/ interrelationship with C/S
Woodland/tree cover	e.g. Conif. Plant'n / mixed plantation / Broadleaf woodland / Semi natural wood'd, tree clumps, Copse, Shelterbelt, hedgerow trees/ Specimen trees, avenues....
Waterscape	Coastal, estuarine, river valley, (scale – flow), canal, fen, ditches, dykes, reservoir, marsh, wet woodland, watermeadows, Scale.... Drainage pattern, berthing / marina
Enclosure / Field Boundaries	Size, shape, regular, irregular, lost boundaries/hedges (type, condition, age), scale, fencing, ditches, post and wire, drystone walls
Infrastructure	Pylons / o/h lines / water infrastructure/ flood defence / dykes/ energy generation Bridges /transport infrastructure /roads /rail / Airfields / Ports/

Recreation / Other uses	Playing fields / Golf courses / industry / storage
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Shape / Orientation / Colour / Texture / Dynamics	
Scale	
Emphasis (vertical, horizontal, sloping, rolling)	
Openness	
Texture	
Colours Monochrome, muted, colourful, garish	
Human Intevention Natural / seemi natural / low key/extensive / intensive	
Movement	
Uniform/Diverse/simple/complex	
Condition managed, degraded, tended, planned, formal	
Linear features, lines (straight, angular, curved, sinuous)	
Noise / sound	
Smell	

Other comment