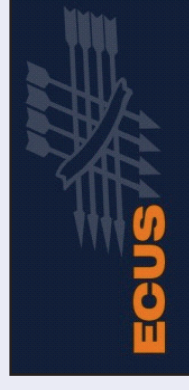


East Lindsey District Landscape Character Assessment

July 2009

Prepared on behalf of
East Lindsey District Council
by ECUS Ltd

Final Report



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Introduction

ECUS was appointed by East Lindsey District Council in November 2007 to undertake a character assessment of the District's landscapes to provide a robust evidence base for the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).

The study was guided by the brief issued by East Lindsey District Council and subsequent communications with the appointed project officer. The overall aims of the study were to provide a reliable assessment of the District's landscapes to:

- Inform the development of strategic policies within the East Lindsey Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD);
- Inform both development control policies and Settlement Proposals DPDs; and
- Provide a reliable resource for use in planning applications prior to adoption of the LDF.

The landscape character assessment was carried out during 2008 in line with good practice guidance including the Landscape Character Guidance for England and Scotland published by SNH and the former Countryside Agency in 2002. The methodology for the study is described in detail in Appendix 2.

Consultation with stakeholders and the public was an important part of the assessment and included six workshops and distribution of a questionnaire. The information gathered from the consultation informed the subsequent assessments of the District's landscape character. A final consultation with Council Members was made before the report was finalised.

This document provides background information on the broad planning context, the landscape context and the physical and cultural influences that have shaped today's landscape. The assessment has subdivided the landscape of East Lindsey into thirteen discrete areas of similar character. For each of these areas, the report describes key characteristics, landscape character, landscape forces for change and the potential sensitivity to change of each area's landscape.

IT IS NOT an adopted policy document but it will provide evidence when developing the Local Development Frameworks' Core Strategy & Development Control Policies and Settlement Proposals, Development Plan Documents. It will also provide a consistent and reliable resources to assist in the determination of planning applications prior to the adoption of the Core Strategy.

Planning Context

There is a raft of legislation and guidance which recognises the importance of landscape and seeks to protect and enhance all landscapes. Those which are particularly pertinent to the purpose of this study are highlighted below.

International Planning Context

The European Landscape Convention (CETS No. 176)

This has now been now ratified and is in force in the UK. It sets out the basic premise that landscape should be considered as the central framework and basis for all strategic planning:

'As a reflection of European identity and diversity, the landscape is our living natural and cultural heritage, be it ordinary or outstanding, urban or rural, on land or in water.'

It highlights that all landscapes are equally important for the all-encompassing influence they have in our everyday existence.

National Planning Policy Context

Planning Policy Statements (PPS)

These set out the Government's national policies on different aspects of land use planning in England, and are gradually replacing Planning Policy Guidance (PPG).

PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development)

This statement sets out the overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning, at the heart of which is the fundamental idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. A key objective of Government for the planning system is:

'protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities.'

PPS12 (Local Spatial Planning) June 2008

This document replaces PPS12 (Local Development Framework). It still directs Local Planning Authorities in producing their suite of Local Development Documents (LDD) which will constitute their Local Development Frameworks and will eventually replace existing Local Development Plans and Unitary Development Plans.

Particular direction is given to Core Strategies and Sustainability Appraisals, both of which create a framework for the remainder of the suite of Local Development Documents. Together these will provide a Local Spatial Plan and Strategy along with locally referenced guidance on all aspects of the local planning system.

Paragraph 4.6 states that the Core Strategies must be justifiable and that they:

'must be founded on a robust and credible evidence base.....'

'The evidence base should contain two elements:

- Participation: evidence of the views of the local community and others who have a stake in the future of the area.*
- Research / fact finding: evidence that the choices made by the plan are backed up by the background facts.'*

PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas)

This seeks to protect rural areas from inappropriate development and highlights landscape character as an important consideration. It also talks about the importance of robust and comprehensive landscape assessments, which must firstly define the landscape resource, and secondly how it should be conserved and/or enhanced.

Planning Context

Regional Planning Context

The East Midlands Integrated Regional Strategy

The vision for the East Midlands Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) includes the following:

'A rich, diverse and attractive natural and built environment, and cultural heritage.'

'Sustainable development of new and existing infrastructure that makes efficient use of land and resources, reduces the need for travel, incorporates sustainable design and construction, and enhances local distinctiveness.'

'Regional and local policies that result from a thorough understanding of the evidence and, where appropriate, effective participative forms of governance.'

One of the agreed priorities for the region is:

'To protect, enhance and manage the rich diversity of the natural, cultural and built environmental and archaeological assets of the region.'

Regional Environment Strategy, Part One - Objectives and Policies for the East Midlands Environment

The Regional Environmental Strategy, Part One includes a policy which is particularly relevant to landscape.

'Policy ENV2: To ensure that all important elements that underpin the concept of local distinctiveness are conserved and managed.'

This policy recognises the different elements which combine to make up a landscape and 'create a sense of place'. This reflects an important acknowledgement of how people relate to landscapes in general and in particular to their habitual and familiar landscapes, which are imbued with cultural and personal meaning.

East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (2003- 2021)

The East Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy has two policies which have particular relevance to landscape character assessment.

Policy 27 seeks to protect and enhance the region's natural and cultural assets. It states that the highest level of protection should be afforded to the region's nationally and internationally designated sites by regional and local authorities and other bodies. This highlights the importance of the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at the regional level. However it also states that:

'...Understanding the importance of all landscapes and reducing the emphasis on local landscape designations will ensure that the character of one area is not protected at the expense of another.'

It highlights other regions within East Lindsey District which it seeks to conserve and enhance including: 'grazing marshes in Lincolnshire' and also 'pre-enclosure landscapes and historic parklands'.

Policy 30. 'Priorities for the Management and Enhancement of the Region's Landscape Development Plans' states that: Local Development Frameworks in the future should promote the highest level of protection of landscape character for the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It also seeks to 'promote initiatives to protect and enhance the natural and heritage landscape assets.' Also to use landscape character assessments as a basis for criteria based policies concerning development proposals in both rural and urban fringe areas. It also states that where they are not already prepared for this, they should be and should assess whether there are exceptional local circumstances requiring the retention of any local landscape designations and associated policies in local development frameworks.

Planning Context

East Midlands Regional Plan Proposed Changes (July 2008)

This document is a draft document which was put forward for a period of consultation which is now completed. The most pertinent new emerging policies are Policies 27 and 31 within 3.3 Regional Priorities for Natural and Cultural Strategies.

Policy 27 Regional Priorities for Environmental and Green Infrastructure

'Local Authorities and those responsible for the planning and delivery of growth and environmental management across the Region should work together to: within Local Development Frameworks develop green infrastructure plans based on character assessments of the existing natural, cultural and landscape assets required to meet the needs of existing and expanding communities.'

Policy 31 Priorities for the Management and Enhancement of the Region's Landscape

'The Region's natural and heritage landscapes should be protected and enhanced by:

- The promotion of the highest level of protection for the nationally designated landscapes of the Peak District National Park and the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;*
- The establishment of criteria-based policies in Local Development Frameworks to ensure that development proposals respect intrinsic landscape character in rural and urban fringe areas including recognition of the value of tranquillity and dark skies;*
- The identification in Local Development Frameworks of landscape and biodiversity protection and enhancement objectives through the integration of Landscape Character Assessments with historic and ecological assessments.'*

If they do not already have a Landscape Character Assessment then Local Authorities should prepare one to inform the preparation of Local Development Frameworks. This document can also be used to develop Supplementary Planning Documents.

Lincolnshire Structure Plan (Adopted September 2006.)

This plan has many broad policies in place which recognise different aspects of landscape character, as well as historical and cultural heritage which contribute so much to landscape character. It seeks to protect and enhance such landscapes and their contributory elements.

Planning Context

Local Planning Context

East Lindsey Local Plan, Saved Policies (September 2007)

The local planning policy documents have more specific and locally focused policies and guidance which also recognise different aspects of landscape character, along with historical and cultural heritage. They seek to protect and enhance landscape character as part of an integral whole through a raft of policies which include local landscape designations such as Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLVs).

East Lindsey Emerging Local Development Framework

The developing Local Development Framework (LDF) has to integrate and support both national and regional policies and strategies at a level of detail which is specific to the locality and local communities. As part of the consultation process in the development of the LDF, East Lindsey District Council has considered many issues and options for inclusion in its Core Strategy and Sustainability Appraisal which together will form the strategic framework of the LDF. These are published in Local Development Framework, Core Strategy - Issues and Options November 2007.

East Lindsey Local Development Framework. Core Strategy - Issues and Options (November 2007)

Part of the proposed vision aims for:

‘a high quality environment that makes the most of its special qualities, particularly the coast, the Wolds and the market towns...’

It specifically highlights and values the distinctive geographical, rural and settlement characteristics within the District, and the importance of the built environment, including the traditional appearance of the many villages, market towns, traditional seaside resorts and miles of unspoilt coastline. One Option (Question 19. Options L1. and L3.) suggests the development of a landscape strategy for the District as a whole which will build upon this Landscape Character Assessment.

Statement of East Lindsey Council Statement of Community Involvement.

This document sets out the local Council's obligation to consult and consider the local communities thoughts and wishes when compiling the LDF, and any supporting documents such as this landscape character assessment.

Consultation

Community and Stakeholder Consultations

The Purpose of Consultation

A crucial part of the landscape character assessment was the consultation with those who live, work in, or visit East Lindsey District, as well as with decision makers and other interested groups. Its purpose was to gain the perceptions, opinions and local knowledge from these individuals and groups, to assist in providing a robust document, which is relevant to all those who will use it.

The information gained through this process provided an invaluable source of local knowledge which helped to build on the desktop study and understand further how the landscape has evolved, and how it is presently perceived and valued. At the detailed level it indicated the importance of certain elements and features within a landscape, whilst at the broader scale it highlighted how the combination and relationship of those elements and features were perceived and appreciated. It also highlighted issues which may have already, or could potentially, affect future changes in the landscape character.

The Process of Consultation

Many people were invited to take part in the consultation. Twenty eight responded by filling in questionnaires. Twenty five of these respondents were residents of East Lindsey and included Council Members, business owners and farmers. The other three represented the following stakeholder groups; Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, the Ramblers Association and the Woodland Trust. Most of these respondents and other consultees attended one of the six workshops held as part of the consultation process and spoke to planners and consultants where further comments were recorded. The consultation methods are described in detail in Appendix 2.

Summary of Responses

The consultations made it clear that the landscapes of the District are very much recognised and appreciated by those who participated in the consultation. The overwhelming response from all who took part in the consultation was the great extent to which they value the natural, rural and scenic nature of their landscapes. Most respondents voiced concerns about valued aspects, and past, present and future changes to the landscape.

The rural character was valued by many respondents, who often made reference to the working and traditional management and farming of the landscapes. Also valued were traditional villages of medieval origins with their churches and vernacular buildings giving time depth to the landscape. The character of the coastal areas of coastal sand dunes, saltmarsh and long sandy beaches with their natural beauty and interest were also much appreciated and valued.

Views of the landscape across the District were mentioned frequently as a highly valued characteristic of the landscape. There were some suggestions that particular views should be recorded and protected. In particular, views to landmark church spires and towers, and heritage features were described with great regard. Trees on the skylines and also dramatic panoramic views across areas such as the Wolds, Marshes and Fens were highly valued. Open views with wide horizons and 'big skies', particularly at sunrise and sunset, were reported to be much appreciated as was the lack of light pollution allowing enjoyment of starry night skies. Frequent mention was made of the tranquility of the area, the quiet roads with wide verges and wildflowers, and the views enjoyed particularly whilst travelling along the rolling roads in the Wolds.

Consultation

Geology, wildlife habitats and biodiversity were of great interest and enjoyment to many. This included interest in the dunes, woodlands, hedgerows and verges. The replanting of lost hedgerows and trees was also generally much appreciated.

Some people enjoyed the visual experience of the contrasting patterns in the landscape, such as the natural meandering stream courses overlaid by the straight geometric drainage and road patterns, and the linear patterns of trees contrasting with small copses. Another example mentioned was the transition between contrasting landscapes such as the grazing marshes and the foothills of the Wolds. All of these observations highlight the importance of how features combine to create unique perceptual experiences within the landscape.

There were several common concerns about changes which have already or have the potential to affect the landscape. Many of these related to the valued aspects and features described above.

One common concern was about the visual effects of existing and planned onshore and offshore wind farms. This was evident from the number of comments received about them. The majority of these comments were negative with only one positive reference. Another issue highlighted was the pressure for new housing. The concerns were that new housing could alter the traditional appearance and character of villages, particularly on their outskirts. The loss of open views as a result of new tree and hedge planting particularly alongside roads was also mentioned as an issue.

Comments were made on the potential implications of rising sea levels and flooding episodes with the construction and appearance of more flood defences in the form of pumps and embankments potentially affecting future landscapes. Another observation was the migration of villages onto land which has been reclaimed from the sea. A suggested change was the

reintroduction of ancient wetlands and of traditional grazing in the Coastal Marshes. Another suggestion was the re-use of disused railway lines as public rights of way and 'nature walks.'

Formative Influences

“Landscape encompasses everything – natural and human – that makes an area distinctive: geology, climate, soils, plants, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it, past and present, and the perceptions of those who visit it. (Countryside Agency Publication CA23, p12)”.

The perception of landscape character is influenced by the physical elements of both landform and landcover, and the natural processes which affect these. It is also strongly influenced by the cultural perceptions of the past and the present, and in particular by the history of evolving human habitation and activity on and within the landscape. To appreciate the existing and continually evolving landscape it is important to understand how the existing physical form has come into being and how both human activities and natural processes have, and still do interact with it. Figures 1 to 7 broadly illustrate these influences across the District.

In East Lindsey there are four distinctive broad landscapes: the Fens around the Wash Basin, the Central Lincolnshire Clay Vale, the Chalk Wolds and the Coastal Marshes. They are each derived from their geology, geomorphological events and ongoing processes which include, sea level changes, and fluvial and coastal erosion and deposition. The resultant landform and landcover has influenced and been influenced by human activity since before Neolithic times. This is perceptible in layers of evidence including the pattern and layout of settlements and agriculture, and scattered artefacts overlaying the landscape. Since this early period, the influences of human invasions, activity and settlement have modified and overlain the natural landform and landcover, and further influenced the ongoing geomorphological fluvial and coastal processes. Further periodic changes have occurred with a series of sea level rises and falls causing the coastline to recede and extend. Settlers over the course of history have sporadically tried, with varying degrees of success, to control

both saltwater incursions onto the land and freshwater runoff to the sea, in the Fens and Coastal Marshes. They also reclaimed land from the coastal saltmarshes and the Fens. All of these activities have resulted in a complex system for controlling water levels, flooding and drainage, with the use of sea embankments, dykes and pump houses. Today these are managed and controlled by the Environment Agency and several drainage boards.

These events and the resultant changes in landuse and landscape character have led to the distinctiveness of the landscapes of East Lindsey District which we see today. Even more so when interpretation and understanding increase the awareness and perception of past events. The formative influences on East Lindsey’s landscape are summarised below.

Early Physical Influences.

The Chalk Wolds form the backbone of East Lindsey, and are a complex geological formation of layers of sedimentary rocks. They are mainly composed of Jurassic clays, Spilsby and Elsham sandstones, Tealby clay and ironstones. These were overlain by chalks laid down in warm seas during the Cretaceous Period, approximately 90 million years ago. The land was then tilted eastwards and sank below sea level several times. It subsequently underwent more dramatic changes during the glacial and interglacial periods between 200,000 and 10,000 years ago.

The glaciers covered much of the Wolds, smoothing them in the process. At this time the Central Lincolnshire Clay Vale and Wash Basin were developing. Seasonal melt waters cut the many steep sided valleys and open ended gorges, for examples, the Hubbard Hills near Louth. The courses of many rivers were also being altered, and during this period the sea came right up to the Wolds and cut some chalk cliffs which, although partially buried, can still be seen in the East Keal area. During this period and when the ice eventually melted, erratics and melt-water glacial tills and gravels were deposited across the whole District. At that time, dry land still joined Britain with Europe, but a gradual sea level rise flooded forests and created peatlands, the remains of

Formative Influences

which are now found in the Fens. Eventually the sea cut Britain off from the European mainland and those forests were buried under layers of marine deposits. Ancient tree stumps are now being revealed along the eroding coastline between Mablethorpe and Ingoldmells.

The shallow gradient of the coastal plain and the Wash Basin in combination with the changing sea levels have resulted in the freshwater Fens in and around the Wash Basin and the Coastal Marshes, which include both the Coastal Outmarsh along the immediate hinterland to the coast, and the Middle Marsh which separates the Coastal Outmarsh from the higher ground of the Wolds. In addition there are coastal saltmarshes which are located on the deposited tidal mud and silt flats in estuaries and along the coastline

Prehistoric Activities and Settlement ~ 8000 BC - 44 AD

The first inhabitants of this region are thought to be hunter gatherers who left no significant marks on the landscape. The only remaining evidence of them are the many finds of stone tools in the ground scattered across the District.

A more settled way of life began around 6000 BC, with the start of farming and more permanent settlements. Much of the evidence in the landscape from these times has been lost through centuries of more recent farming and settlement, and in particular through modern intensive farming activities. However, some visible evidence still remains in the form of Neolithic long barrows and Bronze Age round barrows, which are often found in groups and in prominent positions on hills or along skyline ridges. Prehistoric settlement in the Fens is also sometimes evident from crop marks which can be seen from the air.

Evidence suggests that certain existing travel routes were created or used during these times which include the Bluestone Heath Road and Caistor High Street. The patterns which these created responded to landform and

landcover, with roads along the ridgelines or skirting wet marsh-covered areas and high ground. They form the framework for today's road network and settlement patterns.

There is also evidence of small scale industrial activities in the marshes, which include saltern mounds. These are evidence of salt workings near coastal areas which may in part date back to the prehistoric period.

The Romans AD 44 - AD 500

There is evidence to suggest significant settlement and farming in fields bounded by drainage ditches within the Fens during this period. The sea was still retreating and the coastline was extending out into the sea which left good grazing on the coastal saltmarshes. Creek inlets were also silting up, isolating valuable village ports from the sea. The Romans also started and continued small scale industrial activities, such as the extraction of salt in many coastal sites which are still perceptible today in the form of saltern mounds in the Coastal Marshes. These extraction operations would have been fuelled by the peat extracted from the Fens.

The Romans were excellent engineers and created a network of arterial routes across the county, linking and reusing some earlier routes such as the Bluestone Heath Road and also roads leading to coastal ports such as Burgh le Marsh which is now inland. They built navigable dykes and waterways, such as Carr Dyke which ran from the River Welland to the River Witham, and dug the Foss Dyke a navigable link between the River Witham and the River Trent. Although these are outside the present East Lindsey District, they were arterial routes linking to the wider region. They were also thought to have been built to help drain some areas of marsh and Fen. Some of the first sea embankments reclaiming some coastal areas of marsh for agriculture are also thought to possibly be of Roman origin. They also built forts at Horncastle, Tattershall, Wainfleet, and Willoughby.

Formative Influences

In the second century the sea levels rose again, inundating the Fens and Coastal Outmarsh, which by the fifth and sixth centuries again became uninhabitable. In the fifth century the Romans left and much of their infrastructure fell into disuse and disrepair. However, their influence is evident in the patterns which they created and reinforced and which survive to the present day.

Anglo-Saxons and Danes 410 - 1066 AD

In the fifth and sixth centuries, the coastline was much further inland than it is today and the Fens were inundated by the sea and were uninhabitable.

The Anglos started raids on the east coast and eventually settled and created the Kingdom of Lindsey between the River Witham and the Humber Estuary. Many of today's existing villages are thought to have their origins in this period. Place names ending in:- ham, -ton, -ingham, -ington are found in the line of villages along the slightly raised ground to the east of the Wolds from Alvingham to Tetney. There is another line of settlements along on the edges of the Wolds on the spring lines where porous chalk meets impervious clay causing fresh water springs to rise from the ground, which are also thought to originate in this period.

Christianity came to the region in the late seventh century, with the establishment of several Christian churches. Although many of these original churches were constructed of wood, some have since been rebuilt in stone and brick and evidence survives in the form of reused stones of Saxon architecture integrated within later buildings. Speculation suggests that Cock Hill in Burgh le Marsh may have originated as a Saxon burial mound.

In AD 865 the Vikings invaded and settled spreading from the east coast inland, conquering all Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms. There are few references in the physical landscape, but a strong legacy exists in many place names, such as those ending in 'by', meaning small settlement or farm, as found

in names such as Maltby le Marsh, Spilsby, Cadeby and Mumby. 'Thorpes' are understood to indicate a secondary settlement which were thought to originate from later waves of Danish invaders settling in what were at that time the less desirable Fens and Coastal Marshes, for example Thorpe St. Peter.

During this time, the summer grazing pastures in the Coastal Marshes were manned by small seasonal hut settlements known as 'cots'. This is evident in the place name North Somercotes. They also extracted salt from the sea using salt pans and created saltern mounds which are still evident in areas of the Coastal Outmarsh. On-shore winds and storms began to form low sand dunes which were later reinforced to create sea defences. Other settlements such as Chapel St Leonards were, for a period, lost to the sea.

Norman Conquest 1066 - 1216 AD

The Normans removed the Anglo-Saxon nobility and divided the lands amongst the king's military supporters. The Domesday Book provided a snapshot of the settlements, farming and industrial activities taking place at that time.

Much of the western part of East Lindsey in the Central Lincolnshire Clay Vale and some of the eastern edge south of Louth were wooded. The southern part of the Wolds was densely populated, with markets at Bolingbroke and Partney. Settlements were still generally located away from the freshwater and saltwater marshes which were at risk from flooding. However, the Fens and Coastal Marshes were still important, for meadows, pasture, fish, fowl and peat pits.

Other features still visible in the landscape today include churches with remnants of classic Norman door archways, such as Rigsby Wold near Alford.

Formative Influences

Medieval 1216 - 1485 AD

During this period Lindsey was very prosperous with sheep grazing on the Fens and Coastal Marshes including grazing beasts in open fields after a harvest of crops such as wheat, barley and beans in the Middle Marsh. Water, wind and horse powered mills were used for grinding corn. There was also a continuation of salt extraction which was exported through many small ports which were on the coastal inlets existing at that time. Wainfleet St Mary was a prosperous port, but there was the continuous problem of it silting up. Other villages were created along the silt ridge separating the Fens from the coastal saltmarshes.

There were many storm episodes and abnormal high tides. Sand and shingle barriers were washed onto the shore, forming the present day dunes from North Somercotes to Mablethorpe. Both freshwater and seawater floods were a problem in both the Fens and Coastal Marshes. Flood control was achieved in part by a new method of cutting straighter channels for the river which were less liable to silting up. Sea banks were also being constructed in order to reclaim some coastal saltmarshes. Some schemes were sponsored by the government whereas others were privately funded.

The upkeep of sea defences and dykes was an important issue which was being addressed by changes in the organisation of who was responsible for it. Initially 'frontagers' or those tenants and owners actually situated on the embankments and dykes were themselves responsible for their upkeep. This piecemeal construction and maintenance regime was not effective and those living further away from the actual dykes and embankments also suffered the consequences of failed dykes and embankments. Consequently a collective tax and more organised approach both funded and directed the upkeep of a more consistent pattern and layout of defences in contrast to the earlier piecemeal approach.

Many fine churches were built in the Wolds and the Fens during this period, which to this day exist as landmarks rising from villages set within trees

settled within the wider rural landscape. At this time monastic communities were important landowners and traders and were an economic force of the time. On the eastern side of the Witham Valley in the Central Lincolnshire Clay Vale were a string of prosperous abbey estates. The ruins of Tūpholme are visible evidence of these, but in other places only earthworks survive, as the original buildings were later to be ruined and robbed of stone, after Henry VIII's 'Dissolution of the Monasteries'.

Other subtle references to these times remain in the landscape in the form of ridge and furrow field patterns resulting from old ploughing and cultivation practices. Bumpy and uneven fields disguise the remains of deserted medieval villages, Motte and Bailey remains of fortified towers and castle ruins, such as at Bolingbroke and Tattershall. Wide-verged drove roads were used to move cattle seasonally from upland to lowland fen pastures.

The prosperity did not last and many of the medieval villages in and around the Wolds and Middle Marsh have since been deserted. The reasons for this are unclear, and supposition suggests changing climate, changing farming practices with a switch from arable to sheep farming and also very probably the spread of 'The Black Death'.

Tudors 1485 - 1715 AD

During this time, Henry VIII's 'Dissolution of the Monasteries' led to the famous 'Lincolnshire Uprising'. The later civil war and famous battle at Winceby eventually led to the final downfall of the nearby Bolingbroke Castle. An interpretation plaque marks the site of the battle and explains the significance of the events on that day.

More visible references are a few remaining buildings of the period, including rare mud and stud built cottages in Thimbleby, and some sturdier buildings such as the red brick Magdalen College at Wainfleet St Mary.

Formative Influences

Georgian Period 1714 - 1837 AD

This is the period when the industrial revolution gathered speed, common lands were enclosed and the Fens were further drained using the power of windmills.

Louth Canal was built in 1763 for the transport of goods to and from the coast. Turnpike roads were built with some surviving reminders including the occasional milestone and classic multifaceted turnpike cottages such as that found at Hallington, which was originally built on the Louth to Horncastle turnpike.

Many new villages were growing up at this time, as many people were moving into the Fens which were being further drained. More enclosures took place between 1750-80 under the The Enclosure Acts. Fields which were previously common land were being enclosed by hedges and used for sheep and cattle pasture, including some cattle from Scotland on their way to the markets in London. Winter feed was also being grown. It is this construction of drains and dykes and subsequent enclosures which are responsible for the apportioning of the land in the Fens, creating the scale and regularity of the geometric pattern which we see today.

Many of the existing town centre buildings and frontages in Wainfleet All Saints and Louth date from this period.

Victorian Era 1837 - 1901 AD

The high level of political and social concern in this age precipitated the building of Victorian schools in most villages and towns. Also a social and religious fervour led to the building of several Victorian high churches and many non-conformist chapels. Many of the latter have since been abandoned or are being converted to dwellings which adds to the rich mix of building styles and character found in many villages today. Revesby Abbey country house and the Victorian Woodhall Spa were also designed and built during this period.

Early intensification of farming required more farm workers, and villages grew with imported Irish labour. Later the mechanisation of farming led to a period of 'high' or industrialised farming with large farmyards laid out with a range of large red brick buildings to aid efficient farming. Fewer field labourers were required and this began the trend of the depopulation of villages and the countryside. It is also reported that much woodland was cut down during this period.

More Fens previously used for common land grazing, fishing and wildfowling were enclosed, drained and pumped out using windmills. Steam engines were later used for this purpose. Only a handful of wind and water mills survive today. Those which do are distinctive landmarks and heritage features in the landscape today. Examples include Burgh le Marsh Windmill, and Avingham Water Mill. Drainage boards were set up and managed the freshwater runoff from the Wolds and tidal surges coming in from the sea. This continued draining of the Fens and reclamation of coastal saltmarshes resulted in further changes in agricultural landuse from grazing pasture to more intensive arable crops. Also the exposed peats of the Fens dried, shrunk and eroded over time lowering their levels to below sea level.

Railway lines and steam trains also arrived and increased the popularity of visiting the spa at Woodhall Spa. The popularity of visiting the sandy seaside also increased and the seaside resorts of Mablethorpe and Skegness expanded seaward from their inland village origins.

Twentieth Century to the Present

This period has seen the most recent changes in the landscape which have overlaid or integrated with those which have preceded them. Some more recent changes represent events and periods which are still within the living collective memory and as such are powerful reminders which are likely contribute strongly to the perceived time depth within the character of the landscape.

Formative Influences

There has been a steady continuation of the industrial revolution with the use of diesel and electric engines to further drain the Fens and Coastal Marshes, and further development of more mechanised tools for farming. This has continued the change from predominantly pastoral to predominantly arable farming and resulted in the many intensively farmed landscapes which we see today.

The lines of telegraph poles, alongside raised marsh and fen roads have since partially subsided and this alludes to the marshy nature of the ground beneath. They contrast with the more modern pylon giants striding independently through the landscape.

East Lindsey, with its coast vulnerable to invasion and due to its strategic proximity to occupied Europe, played a key role in the two World Wars. Lincolnshire is known as 'The Home of the Royal Air Force', with many airfields and RAF training establishments based in East Lindsey. During WWII Lincolnshire was known as 'Bomber County' with large planes frequenting the skies. Today many of those airfields and bases are either closed down or converted to private enterprises. However, Coningsby RAF air base is still a proud reminder of this recent historic period within East Lindsey and Lincolnshire. Also, still active are the Ministry of Defence target and bombing ranges on the east coast.

Other visible legacies of WWII include numerous pill boxes and gun emplacements particularly along the coastal dunes, sea embankments and sea inlets. There are also WWII communications masts and the Belmont telecommunications mast which was erected in 1959 and is the tallest structure in the UK at 385 metres. WWI and WWII War memorials also act as focal points in towns and villages. A holiday camp at Rimac near Saltfleetby was a forerunner to the Butlin's style holiday resorts which are so much a part of Mablethorpe and Skegness today, with their ubiquitous large caravan and chalet parks. A large scale and devastating flood event in 1953 led to the construction of more solid sea defences which are now a feature along these more developed areas of the coast.

Building styles and settlement patterns and layout during this period have varied greatly from small lines of traditional workers cottages, to estates of modern bungalows and houses of a variety of styles and ages on the outskirts of towns and villages. Lindsey County Council's Sandhills Act in 1932 was responsible for restricting development along the dunes and littoral coastline and thus prevented continuous development along the Lincolnshire Coast.

Continuing changes in agriculture are reflected in the landscape. These include alterations in drainage regimes in the Fens and Coastal Marshes, implemented by the drainage boards which have affected water levels and in turn riparian and dyke vegetation. In the 1960s and 1970s further intensification led to the removal of hedges in order to create larger arable fields. Hedge removal is now less frequent and some are being replaced. Countryside Stewardship Schemes in the 1990s advocated a range of changes in farming practices. The most recent of these agri-environment schemes are the Environmental Stewardship Schemes which support the conservation of landscape, heritage and wildlife. The recognition and protection of wildlife on farms and in nature sites has been and still is a force for change across the landscapes of the East Lindsey District. (See Figures 6 - Nature Designations and 7 - Ancient Woodland). The attractiveness of Lincolnshire's distinctive wide roadside verges has also been recognised and many of them, particularly in the Wolds, are protected under the Protected Roadside Verges Scheme.

Farm diversification is increasing with the creation of large scale poultry farm units, commercial fishing ponds, associated chalet style accommodation, golf courses, garden centres and tree nurseries. Also onshore and offshore wind farms and occasional single wind turbines have been erected and influence views across large areas of the District.

Formative Influences

A wealth of visible historic features remain and have protected status which includes; over 1400 Listed Buildings, 104 Scheduled Monuments and 17 Conservation Areas. These contribute strongly to the landscape character of the District as a whole and also to the character and nature of many of the urban townscapes and also rural villages. There have also been losses in the landscape which include; the closure of many railways, loss of traditional rural fairs in market towns and the loss of many landscape landmarks and features such as windmills and churches.

The continued management of waterways and drainage channels and fluvial and tidal sea defences contributes strongly to the man-made character of the lower areas of East Lindsey.

These more recent 'Forces for Change' are highlighted in the landscape character assessments. These are based on primarily on visual evidence of change in the landscape.

Climate change is a strong potential 'Force for Change.' The possible effects of this could manifest themselves directly, for example as changes in sea level and flora and fauna, and also indirectly by consequential changes in landuse, sea and flood defences and infrastructure and settlement patterns thereby affecting cultural heritage in the longer term. However all of these are just scenarios and it is not possible to predict the precise nature or potential for changes in landscapes in any detail at this stage. At present there is little visual evidence at the broad landscape character level but potentially such changes are an important consideration when planning future strategies and policies in relation to landscape character.

Landscape Context

To gain a better understanding of the landscape character context of East Lindsey District we can refer to the 'Character of England Map' and its accompanying National Character Area descriptions which describe landscape character at a National/ Regional level. More detail on the landscape of the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty can be found in the 'Landscape Assessment. The Lincolnshire Wolds Landscape.' (1993), published by the Countryside Commission. The 'Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan' describes key areas of local habitat which helps us to understand the natural components making up the fabric of the landscape.

National/Regional Landscape Context

The Countryside Agency has mapped the whole of the United Kingdom into 159 distinct National Character Areas (NCAs) which are areas of broadly similar landscape character. These provide a consistent national framework for more detailed local landscape assessments. East Lindsey District is covered by four of these National Character Areas which are: Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes, Lincolnshire Wolds, Central Lincolnshire Clay Vale, and the Fens. (These are shown in Figure 4.). These areas within the District relate closely to the topography and geology of the landscape and provide a context for more detailed landscape assessment. They can be described as follows:

Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes

Key characteristics

- *Flat coastal plain to east, rising gradually in west to more undulating land at foot of the Lincolnshire Wolds.*
- *Predominantly open, medium-scale agricultural landscape.*
- *Tendency to smaller farm units with pasture in east. Some remnant areas of ridge and furrow, and mixed arable to west.*

- *Woodland and hedge cover sparse yet increasing to west at foot of the Wolds.*
- *Dispersed settlement pattern through most of area.*
- *Concentration of larger settlements towards the coast.*
- *Land drained to coast by combination of irregular ditches, streams and dykes. Louth Canal is major man-made watercourse.*
- *Coastline experiencing both erosion and accretion.*
- *Major coastal dune systems and saltmarshes and artificial sea defences along the coastline.*
- *Extensive shallow beach.*
- *Brick and pantile vernacular architecture to the west.*
- *Coastal strip significantly altered by discordant 20th century development including seaside resorts, theme parks, bungalows, caravan parks and industry.*

Lincolnshire Wolds

Key characteristics

- *Rolling upland arable landscape of strongly cohesive identity.*
- *Pronounced scarp edge to north and west, comprising rough pasture and scrub, affording fine panoramic views to Central Lincolnshire Vale.*
- *Combination of elevated plateaux and deep steep sided dales to chalk areas.*
- *Large rectilinear fields with clipped and degraded hedgerows from late enclosure.*

Landscape Context

- Occasional shelter belts, concentrated on steeper sided valley and scarp slopes, emphasising landform.
- Sparse settlement pattern of small nucleated villages, often in sheltered valleys and associated with modest country houses and small parklands.
- Diverse geology gives rise to variety of building materials.
- Broad verges to some roads and tracks provide valuable herb-rich habitats.
- Archaeologically rich with ancient track ways, deserted villages and burial mounds.
- Broader south-west valleys of River Lymn and River Bain.
- Associated alder carr woodland, and tree-lined watercourses.

Central Lincolnshire Clay Vale

Key characteristics

- Broad low-lying arable vale. Balanced, yet simple, open landscape.
- A regular pattern of medium-sized fields with enclosure by hedgerows of limited species and few hedgerow trees. Variations include pre-enclosure hay meadows and pasture near Wragby and the drained landscape north of Brigg.
- Variable woodland cover; little in the central and northern clays. Exceptions include coniferous plantations on both the Coversands, the sands and gravels around Woodhall Spa and, most notably, the Central Lincolnshire Limewoods between Wragby and Bardney.

- Sparse nucleated settlements throughout the area.
- Traditional building materials, predominantly local brick and limestone, from adjoining Lincolnshire Edge.
- Rich in ridge and furrow and deserted medieval villages.
- Wolds scarp gives strong visual boundary to east; distant views to Lincoln Cathedral in west.

The Fens

Key characteristics

- Large-scale, flat, open landscape with extensive vistas to level horizons and huge skies.
- A hierarchy of rivers, drains and ditches provide a strong influence throughout the area. Embanked rivers and roddons create local enclosure and elevation.
- Banks provide good grazing and grassland habitats.
- Modestly elevated 'islands' within fens provide isolated higher ground for most settlement. A higher proportion of grassland, tree cover and hedgerows are associated with these areas.
- Settled Fens or 'Townlands', in arc set back from the Wash, exhibit an ancient medieval and irregular field pattern. Typically smaller-scale with scattered farmsteads and dispersed ribbon settlements along the main arterial routes.
- Peaty Fens drained in 17th century comprise large rectilinear fields of black soil. A geometric road and drainage pattern with major high-level drains, washes and associated pumping stations.

Landscape Context

- Roads and rail links often on elevated banks.
- Area south of Lincolnshire Wolds most recently drained with Wolds providing marked 'Upland' horizon to north.
- Woodland cover sparse. Occasional avenues to roads, elsewhere isolated field trees have marked significance...
- Built forms exhibit strong influence ranging from historic cathedrals and churches, like Ely and Boston to large agricultural and industrial structures.
- Domestic architecture displays combination of elegant Georgian brick houses and bland 20th century bungalows.

Tranquillity in the East Midlands. (Campaign to Protect Rural England)

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is an organisation which campaigns to protect and conserve the countryside and desirable elements of rural life including, dark night skies, tranquillity, natural and historic environments and also rural landscape character.

Tranquillity is an important and hard to quantify feature of the character of a landscape. CPRE have devised a method which indicates relative tranquillity in any given area and takes into account factors which were reported to detract from tranquillity and also those factors which were thought to promote it. CPRE's definition is as follows:

'Tranquillity: The quality of calm experienced in places with mainly natural features and activities, free from disturbance from manmade ones.'

In the East Midlands the least tranquil areas are consistently in the west of the region with some larger and more tranquil areas being found between Lincoln and Boston in the south east. Lincolnshire ranks sixth in the counties of England, with the most tranquil county being Northumberland. Within

East Lindsey there are many smaller rural areas which are more tranquil, and the localised less tranquil areas are found particularly around main roads, the towns of Louth and Horncastle, and the coastal resorts of Mablethorpe and Skegness.

Overall in comparison to the rest of Lincolnshire, the East Midlands and the country as a whole, it is a relatively tranquil District with many areas classified amongst the most tranquil in the country in particular some areas in the marshes and the undeveloped coastal areas .

Dark Skies in the East Midlands. (Campaign to Protect Rural England)

'The night sky has been enchanting and mystifying people since long before the dawn of civilisation. Nothing else in the natural world achieves quite such a combination of beauty and mystery. Nothing else has inspired so much art, science and religion.'

CPRE have published satellite data which indicates areas of relative darkness at night and is briefly summarised as follows:

Overall 31% of the U.K. falls in the 'darkest' band of the categorisation, whereas the East Midlands region only has 2% and Lincolnshire has 5% in this category.

The dark skies in the District of East Lindsey appear to be in the Wolds and in the coastal regions immediately around the Wash, with some dark areas in the Coastal Marshes and the Fens.

Landscape Characterisations in Adjacent Districts.

To gain a fuller understanding of the landscape character of East Lindsey it is important to consider the landscape character of the surrounding districts. (See Appendix 3. for a summary of adjacent landscape character types and areas).

Landscape Context

Local Landscape Context

The Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Lincolnshire Wolds was designated in 1973 as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) under Section 87 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. This recognised the area's unique landscape and distinctive 'sense of place'. The following qualities are outlined in The Landscape Character Assessment (CCP414, 1993):

- *Unique landform and geology due in some part to glaciation.*
- *Scenic working landscape.*
- *Major archaeological resource.*
- *Highly valued cultural landscape.*

The Lincolnshire Wolds Landscape Character Assessment and Lincolnshire Wolds Management Plan 2004 -2009

This plan identifies four local character areas within the Wolds, three of which are found in East Lindsey and summarises them as follows:.

Chalk Wolds

'The Chalk Wolds is a large open plateau of rolling hills and secluded valleys. The topography of this part of the Wolds is striking and is testimony to the last glaciation when ice sheets and meltwater dramatically altered the landscape. Large arable fields and characteristic changing crop patterns dominate the plateau top and contrast markedly with the numerous valleys with their lush pastures and wooded slopes. The area has the highest concentration of deserted and shrunken medieval villages within the AONB.'

Key local AONB features identified:

- *Open rolling arable farmland on gently dipping plateaux*
- *Wooded and lush inward-facing valleys and dry valleys*

Key local issues identified:

- *Impact of disused wartime airfields, transmission lines, radio masts and huge straw stacks.*
- *Loss and decline of chalk grassland.*
- *Loss and decline in quality of hedgerows.*
- *Decline in quality of beech clumps and other woodland.*
- *Impact of arable practices on archaeological features.*
- *Abandonment of some of the more remote farms and cottages.*
- *Lack of awareness of the unique geomorphology.*
- *Threats to views out to the Coastal Marshes (e.g. wind farms, tourism developments).*

Ridges and Valleys of the South-West

'The ridges and valleys landscape is enormously complex with prominent chalk ridges bisected by deep combes and wide river valleys. The area is one of the most attractive within the Wolds with a patchwork of pastoral and arable fields, woodland, hedgerows, country estates and parkland, and attractive rivers and streams.'

Landscape Context

Key local AONB features identified:

- *Dramatic views south from the Bluestone Heath Road and Nab Hill - Hoe Hill ridge.*
- *Mixed pattern of arable and pastoral farming.*
- *Herb-rich roadside verges.*
- *Rich marginal and aquatic habitats of the River Bain, Lymn and Calecby Beck.*
- *Old mixed hedgerows.*
- *Sole example of a semi-natural chalk woodland (e.g. Tetford Wood).*
- *Characteristic villages – often rectangular in form and houses widely built of brick (e.g. Tetford).*
- *Historic parkland and country houses (e.g. Stenigot, Harrington, Langton).*
- *Alfred, Lord Tennyson birth place and childhood home at Somersby.*
- *Archaeological interest on the ridges (e.g. barrows, tumuli, cultivation terraces).*
- *Early medieval churches and moated sites (e.g. Somersby, Bag Enderby, Brinkhill, Langton).*
- *Wet alder carr woodlands (e.g. Salmonby Carr, New England Valley).*

Key local issues identified

- *Lack of awareness about historic and cultural associations.*
- *Development issues including telecommunications masts and oil exploration.*

- *Threat to grassland habitats.*
- *Inappropriate management of roadside verges.*
- *Loss of local village services.*
- *Heavy coastal traffic and potential road modernisation schemes (e.g. A158, Gunby Corner).*

South-East Claylands

'The gentle ridge of the south-east claylands dips gently west before merging with the flat marshlands beyond the AONB. This is the most heavily wooded part of the Wolds where large blocks of woodland are interspersed with cultivated fields. The area has an isolated and remote feel. The ridge-top salters' roads, spring-line villages and archaeological features are evident here.'

Key local AONB features identified:

- *Views across the Middle Marsh to the coast.*
- *Extensive oak-ash woodland (e.g. Maltby, Haugham, Burwell, Willoughby, Welton Woods).*
- *Attractive spring-line villages (e.g. Little Cawthorpe, Muckton, South Thoresby, Welton le Marsh).*
- *Ancient sea cliff on eastern ridge, broken by glacial meltwater valleys (e.g. Skendelby Psalter, Well Vale).*
- *Ridge-top roads and their associated archaeology (e.g. long and round barrows.*
- *West-east salters' roads.*
- *Wetland flushes and springs.*

Landscape Context

Key local issues identified:

- Sand, gravel and chalk extraction.
- Threats to views out to the Coastal Marshes (e.g. wind farms, tourism developments, grain silos).
- Impact of conifer planting.
- Development issues on prominent ridgelines (e.g. telecommunication masts).

Landscape Biodiversity Context

The Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan. Action for Wildlife in Lincolnshire 2nd Edition (2006)

Lincolnshire has a wide range of diverse and rare habitats many of which are within the boundary of the District of East Lindsey. These habitats are reflected in local landscapes and contribute greatly to landscape character as they are a product of the interaction of wildlife, landform, geology, landuse and management. The changes in the prevalence, character and condition of these habitats are also a force for change in the evolution of the landscapes of East Lindsey District. The Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan describes specific habitats within the District. It also highlights threats and target and management objectives for both species and habitats. The specific habitats relevant to East Lindsey are grouped in types and are listed as follows:

Coastal and Marine Habitats

Coastal Sand Dunes (Priority Habitat)

These include the Saltfleetby, Theddlethorpe to Mablethorpe dune complexes and also some areas behind the coast at Gibraltar Point. Some saline lagoons habitat occurs within this habitat.

Saline Lagoons (Priority Habitat)

These include many agricultural ditches alongside sea defences and also the clay pits between Chapel St. Leonards and Sutton on Sea.

Saltmarsh (Priority Habitat)

These are a key distinctive element in the Naturalistic Coast character type

Farmland and Grassland Habitats

These are the most commonly found habitats across the region as a whole. Conservation and management policies for these habitats are particularly relevant as they have broad implications for the landscape character of the District. Decline in the biodiversity of these habitats was first addressed by the Countryside Stewardship Schemes and more recently by Environmental Stewardship Schemes. These schemes are designed to promote changes in farming management and practices which are sympathetic to conservation of natural and historic environments, and also the landscape. Higher levels of the scheme use National Character Area (NCA) targeting statements to focus the desired outcomes from agreed plans and practices with both landowners and farmers. Habitats covered by these schemes include:

Arable Field Margins

Uncropped land between the crop and the field boundary which can be left as a buffer and /or specifically managed to increase its biodiversity and wildlife value.

Calcareous Grassland (Priority Habitat)

These are particularly found in the Lincolnshire Wolds on roadsides and on steep valley sides which are not suitable for arable farming and are frequently used as grazing pasture or occasionally hay fields. Many of the calcareous grasslands here are protected under the Protected Road Verge (PRV) scheme.

Grazing Marsh (Priority Habitat)

Described as formerly abundant but now vastly reduced due to drainage and subsequent conversion to arable land.

Meadows and Pasture (Priority Habitat)

These occur more occasionally throughout the District.

Landscape Context

Hedgerow and Hedgerow Trees (Priority Habitat)

These are a widespread feature across the District as a whole but less so in the Coastal Outmarsh and Fens.

Road Verges

Many of the calcareous grasslands here are protected under Protected Road Verge (PRV) scheme.

Heathland and Peatland Habitats

These include the following:

Lowland Heathland (Priority Habitat)

Lowland heath vegetation occurs on the nutrient-poor acid soils on the Fen-edge sands and gravels in the Woodhall Spa area.

Rivers and Wetlands Habitats

Chalk Streams (Priority Habitat)

These originate in the Wolds and also from groundwater aquifers as they pass through Fens and marshes on route to the coast, for example Tetney Blow Holes a Site of Scientific Interest.

Fens, Swamps and Wet Reedbeds (Priority Habitat)

A relict feature particularly in the Fens and Coastal Marshes.

Ponds, Lakes and Reservoirs

These are frequently scattered throughout the area. Many of these are man-made and include several commercial fishing ponds, which are particularly a feature of the Coastal Marshes .

Rivers, Canals and Drains

Ubiquitous in *Stickney to Sibsey Reclaimed Fen*, *Wainfleet Reclaimed Saltmarsh*, *Holton le Clay to Great Steeping Middle Marsh* and *Tetney Lock to Skegness Coastal Outmarsh*.

Springs and Flushes

Mostly scattered along spring lines around the Wolds.

Trees and Woodland Habitats

Trees and woodland are a very visible and important element of landscape character particularly in a rural setting. The spread and composition of woodlands are one of the defining elements which differentiate between character types and areas. The changes in management and conservation of these woodlands is and will continue to be a force for change in the evolving character of the District as a whole.

Ancient Semi-natural Woodland

These include alder dominated woods along the southern edge of the Wolds, the scattered and fragmented Lime Woodlands in the Clay Vale and the Ash and Oak woodlands on the calcareous south western edges of the Wolds and adjacent Middle Marsh. It is reported that conifers are gradually being removed from broadleaved woodlands to return them to their former native species composition.

Wet Woodland

These are a result of the high water table in the Tattersall, Coningsby and Mareham le Fen areas. They contain alder, downy birch, ash, sallow and alder buckthorn. There is also a small area of willow woodland by the River Witham.

Urban Habitats

Churchyards and Cemeteries

These are common with churches being a feature of many character areas. The tree planting in many churchyards alongside the church towers or spire are landmarks and features in the landscape contributing greatly to landscape character.

Parks and Open Spaces

In some settlements these are a distinctive feature such as within Woodhall Spa. Village greens also add to the character of smaller settlements.