

Norfolk Vanguard Offshore Wind Farm Landscape Character Assessment Documents

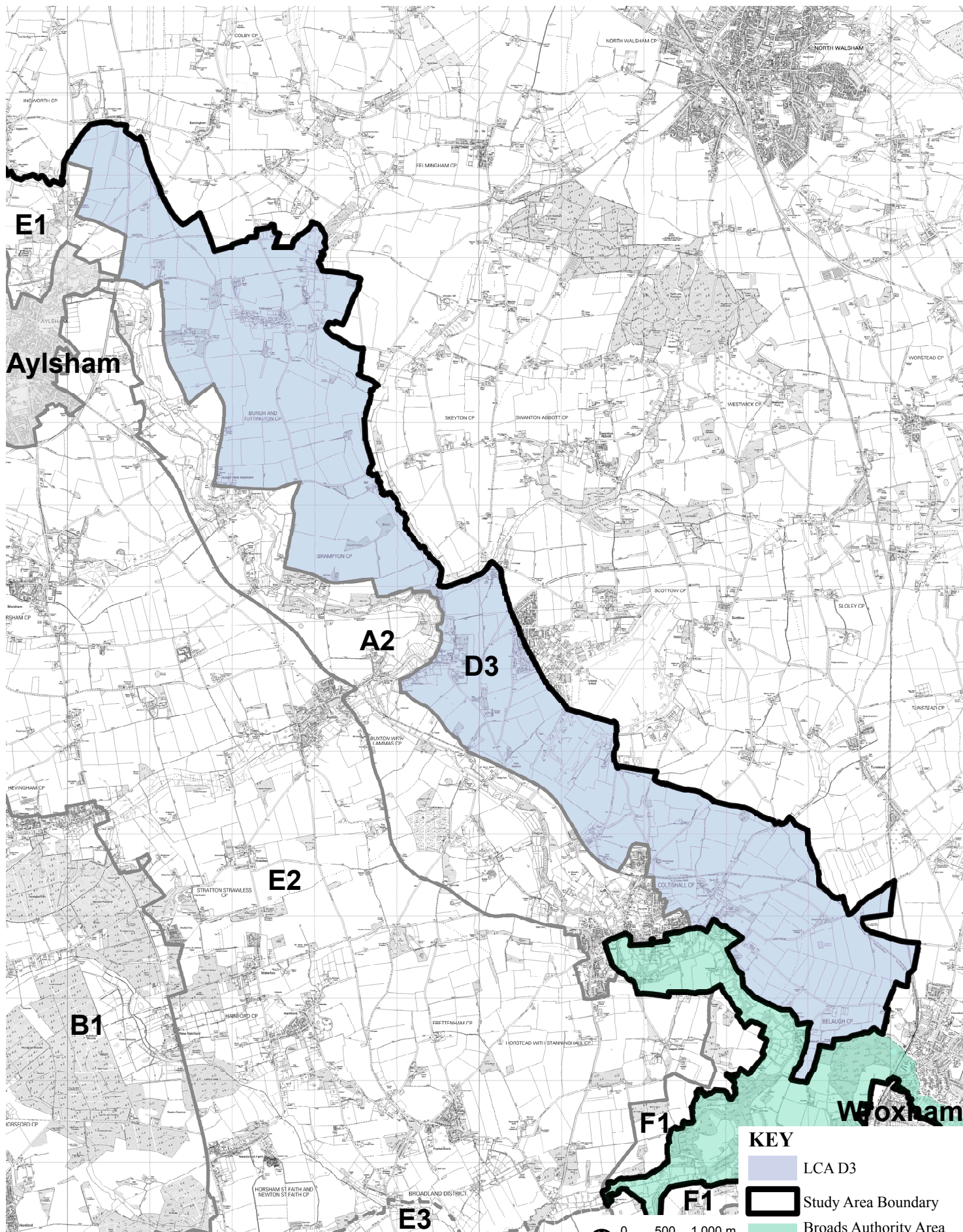
1. Broadland District Council Part 4 of 5

Applicant: Norfolk Vanguard Limited
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Photo: Kentish Flats Offshore Wind Farm





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Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

3.7.35 The following inherent landscape sensitivities have been identified:

- Recognisable landscape structure, including hedgerows and numerous characteristic isolated hedgerow trees.
- Uniform landscape pattern with little diversity and an open, rural character.
- Long uninterrupted views across a generally flat rural landscape.
- Sparse settlement pattern;
- Subtle features of the historic landscape, such as hedgerows and tracks, which are not protected, and are vulnerable to change and loss.
- Landscape setting of churches and halls.
- Landscape setting of hamlets and villages.
- Wide expansive views, which are contained by distant wooded horizons.
- Generally uninterrupted skyline;
- Small pits, ponds and extraction sites.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

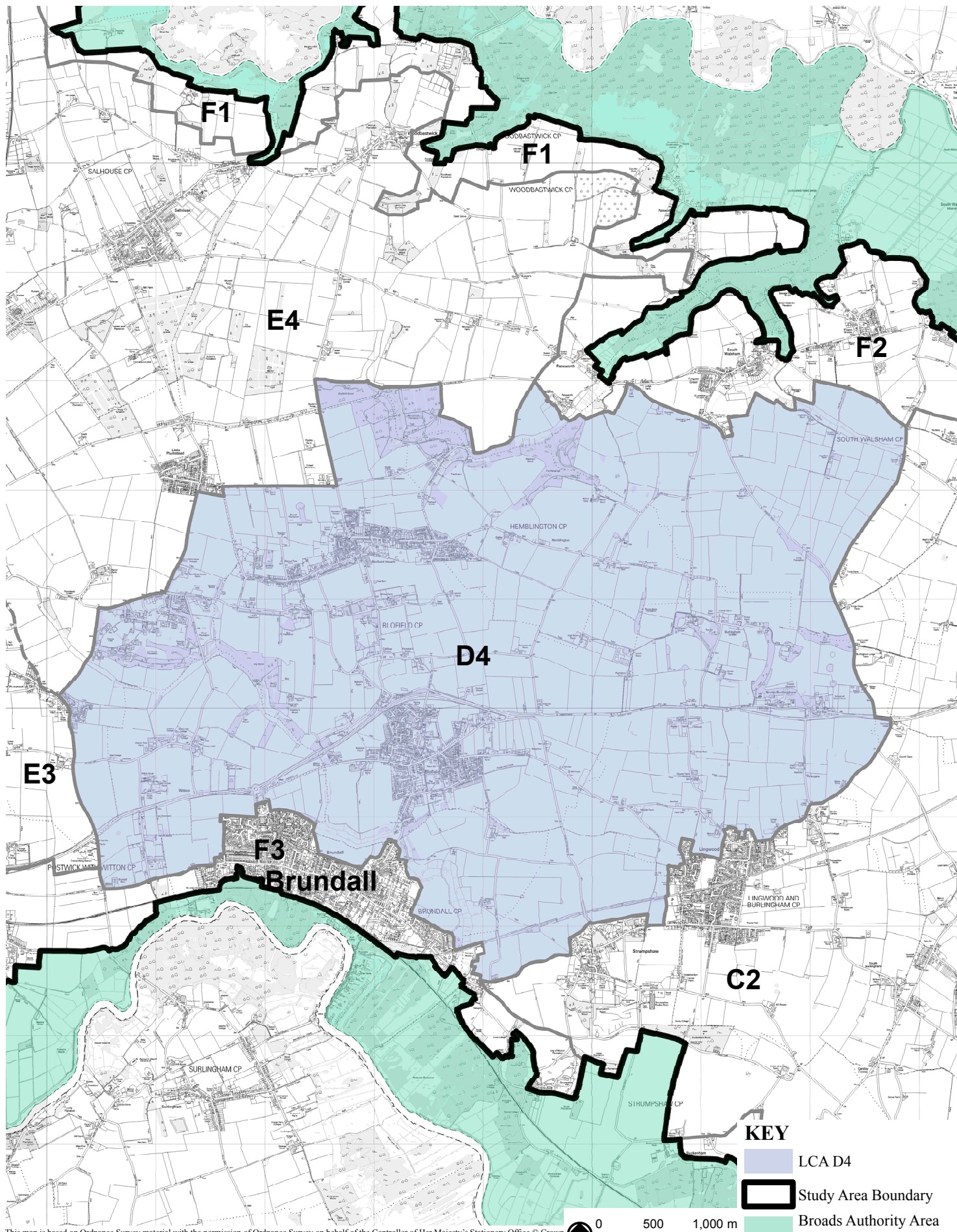
3.7.36 The following Landscape Planning Guidelines apply to Coltishall Tributary Farmland Landscape Character Type:

- Seek to conserve the open, rural character of the area.
- Resist new development that would result in any diminution of the sparsely settled nature of the area or in any reduction in the sense of isolation and tranquillity within the area, which is devoid of large settlements and busy roads.
- Seek to conserve remaining subtle features of the historic landscape, including hedgerows, characteristic hedgerow trees and tracks.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of churches and halls.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of hamlets and villages.
- Seek to ensure that any new small-scale development in or on the edges of Tuttington, Lamas and Little Hautbois, responds to existing settlement pattern and built form character.
- Seek to ensure that any new development in or on the edges of Coltishall RAF base responds to existing settlement pattern and respects the landscape setting of Lamas and Little Hautbois.
- Seek to ensure new development does not reduce the smooth, predominantly uninterrupted skyline within the area.
- Seek to conserve wide expansive views contained by distant wooded horizons;
- Seek to conserve small pits, ponds and extraction sites.

D4: BLOFIELD

Summary of visual character

- 3.7.37 Situated directly east of Norwich, this large area of gently undulating Tributary Farmland extends between the Yare and Bure River Valleys. Tributaries of the Yare form these gentle undulations. These cut into the soft loam that blankets the area creating deeply rolling slopes. In some areas, the crag geology that underlies the loam is exposed. Around Plumstead, sporadic deposits of Till provide highly fertile Grade 1 agricultural soil. Land use within the area is dominated by arable farmland. Field sizes vary from medium to large and there has been limited removal of hedgerows from field boundaries. Woodland cover is limited where land is in agricultural use, but where land use varies tree cover increases. Woodland can be found in the grounds of old houses in the north, along the tributaries of the Yare and Bure, and around settlements.
- 3.7.38 Isolated churches, historic halls and farmsteads located along rural lanes, often amid woodland, are a distinct and repeated feature within the area, especially around Burlingham. Apart from these, there are few notable features to provide interest or strengthen its visual fabric. Essentially, it is a simple, working landscape that works well functionally, and this is the essence of its character. Most of the settlements located in western parts of the area have been engulfed by the rapid expansion in modern suburban housing. These developments have for the most part remained contained as individual linear or nucleated developments, such as Blofield. There is often an abrupt transition between the housing developments and the surrounding agricultural land. The area's proximity to Norwich has stimulated growth within the area and encouraged other uses. The A47 is a major transport route, which effectively sub-divides the area. The Great Yarmouth rail link traverses southern parts of the area.
- 3.7.39 Although field sizes are generally medium to large, the topography of the area helps to create a small-scale enclosed character. Views are contained by rolling slopes, providing a variety of close horizons. Church towers and woodland create memorable features in these views.



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Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

3.7.40 The following inherent landscape sensitivities have been identified:

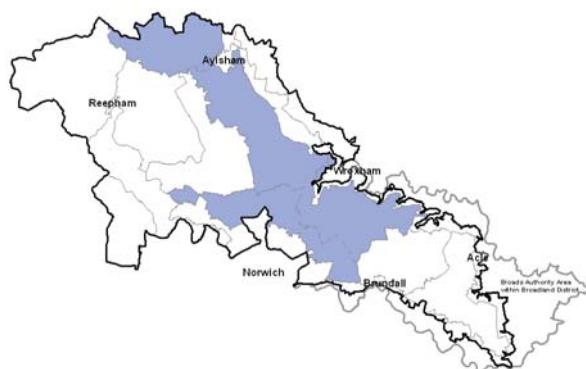
- Distinctive topography with a strong mosaic of rolling arable fields, intact hedgerow and mature woodland within the grounds of old houses and lining tributaries.
- Strong rural character with a recognisable sense of place.
- Concentration of isolated churches, halls and farmsteads amid woodland around Burlingham; often using distinctive combinations of traditional buildings materials within buildings.
- Landscape setting of historic halls and churches.
- Landscape setting of hamlets and villages.
- Characteristic views to features, such as church towers surrounded by woodland.
- Relatively strong sense of tranquillity away from major transport routes.
- [The Witton Run is a tributary of the River Yare SSSI near Blofield. Within a 2km section of the tributary south of Little Plumstead there are four CWS \(No. 1421, 1422, 2071, and 2058\)](#)

Landscape Planning Guidelines

3.7.41 The following Landscape Planning Guidelines apply to Blofield Tributary Farmland Landscape Character Area:

- Seek to conserve the simple, predominantly rural character.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of historic halls and churches;
- Seek to conserve the pattern of isolated churches, historic halls and farmsteads;
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting hamlets and villages;
- Seek to promote use of local materials within villages;
- Seek to conserve the recognisable sense of place;
- Seek to conserve the relatively strong sense of tranquillity within central and northern parts of the area;
- Resist new development that would mask the area's distinctive topography;
- Seek to ensure that new development does not reduce the vertical significance of important historical architectural features within the landscape, such as church towers.
- [Seek to conserve and protect the tributary valleys for their biodiversity particular the Witton Run, a tributary of the River Yare SSSI near Blofield.](#)

3.8 E: WOODED ESTATELANDS



Location and Boundaries

3.8.1 This Landscape Character Type is located in the central and northern³⁰ part of the Study Area – bound to the east by River Valley (Landscape Character Type A), and to the west by Woodland Heath Mosaic (Type B) and Tributary Farmlands (Landscape Character Type D). To the south, it is met by the fringes of the city of Norwich. To the north it adjoins Random Enclosed Rolling Open Farmland, Small Valleys and Wooded with Parkland Landscape Character Types, within the North Norfolk District Landscape.

Key Characteristics

3.8.2 The following Key Characteristics are typical of the Wooded Estatelands Landscape Character Type:

- A pattern of small manor houses, isolated halls and larger estates, with associated parkland extending across much of the area;
- These buildings impart a strongly ordered and human influence over the surrounding landscape;
- Numerous copses, woodlands and small plantations associated with these estates, punctuating a landscape of underlying predominantly arable farmland;
- Settlements have many historic buildings associated with them and a strong local vernacular;
- Strong historic dimension throughout the landscape;
- Woodland provides a sense of enclosure;
- Underlain by a mixed geology of Till, with loams and pebbly soils.

Summary of Visual Character

3.8.3 This gently rolling landscape of predominantly arable farmland is underlain by a mixed geology. In certain locations, Till predominates. This results in a

³⁰ This landscape continues outside the District boundary to the north, within North Norfolk District. For further information see *Landscape Character Assessment for North Norfolk District Council Local Development Framework: Draft Version*.

land cover of loams and pebbly soils. Topography within this Landscape Character Type is more strongly rolling than with adjacent flatter landscapes, with field boundary trees, copses and woodlands nestled within the folds of the landscape.

- 3.8.4 The numerous copses, woodlands and small plantations provide a sense of enclosure, as well as being points of visual focus within views across the farmland. There is a striking settlement pattern of small manor houses, isolated halls and larger estates. Large historic halls are dominant landscape features, often with associated parkland and designed landscapes, which contrast with the adjacent farmed landscapes.
- 3.8.5 A network of minor and major roads cut across and link small villages within this Landscape Character Type. The influence of the urban edge of Norwich is also quite strong towards the south of this Landscape Character Type. Despite this, there is generally a predominantly rural character and associated strong sense of tranquillity throughout most of this landscape. Views across this landscape are restricted in places by the pockets of woodland. In other places, however, long views across gently rolling farmland can be gained.

Historic Environment Character

- 3.8.6 Evidence of prehistoric presence within this Character Type has been recorded, mainly as findspots, including Palaeolithic hand axe finds, Mesolithic flintwork and tranchet axes and Iron Age horse equipment. The only evidence of this period still upstanding are the Bronze Age barrows, although these tend to be greatly reduced in size.
- 3.8.7 Echoes of Horstead's ancient past have been found as early Celtic and Roman cremation urns and the outline of a Roman marching camp believed to have been constructed during the Boadicean Rebellion. Elsewhere, Roman objects and coin findspots have been recorded as well as a Roman site at Bolwick Hall Farm.
- 3.8.8 Town names in the form of 'ham', such as Marsham, Horsham and Frettenham, reflect the Early Medieval period along with metalwork, pottery, coins and the remains of St Faith Priory, a Scheduled Ancient Monument near Horsford, dated 1105.
- 3.8.9 A number of perceptible moats notably Horsford Castle's Norman motte and bailey (with remains of a keep, traces of stone buildings and a barbican) bear witness to the Medieval period. Other buildings relating to this period include Blickling Hall, which began life as a manor house in the 11th century and was owned by Harold Godwinson (later to become the King of England). By 1091 it had become the country palace of the bishops and towards the end of the 14th century, Sir Nicholas Dagworth had a moated house built on the Site.
- 3.8.10 In between these large estates, in the early 14th century, arable cultivation dominated. However, by 1750 this had gradually become more mixed with pastoralism becoming more apparent. Unlike other areas of Broadland the area around Horstead and Frettenham were untouched by parliamentary

enclosure. Today, the field pattern is predominantly 20th century agriculture with some 18th - 19th century enclosures, patches of woodland and some inland managed wetland following river corridors. Ancient and semi-natural woodland as well as ancient replanted woods are present in this Type.

- 3.8.11 Dispersed small-medium linear and medium-large nucleated villages, small manor houses (such as Horsford Manor), isolated halls (such as Rippon Hall) and larger estates with associated parkland (such as Blickling Hall and Heydon Hall, Grade II* and II on the register of Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest respectively), extend across much of the area. Generally, settlements have many historic buildings associated with them and a strong local vernacular. Red and colourwashed brick are commonly used materials along with pantiled or thatched roofs.

Ecological Character

- 3.8.12 The ecological character of this landscape character type is dominated by the following habitats:
- Extensive areas of woodland and shelterbelts associated with large estates
 - Small copses of woodland near river valleys
 - Unimproved valley meadow
 - Fen
 - Damp neutral grassland
 - Hedgerow network
 - Treebelts and clumps of mature trees
- 3.8.13 The Nature conservation value of these habitats is recognised by the following designations:
- Crostwick Marsh Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI)
 - County Wildlife Sites

Key Forces for Change

- 3.8.14 The following Key Forces for Change have been identified for the Wooded Estatelands Landscape Character Type:
- Loss of field boundaries as a result of agricultural intensification;
 - Small-scale incremental development within villages, which may be inconsistent with local built character and materials;
 - Changes in woodland cover as a result of changes in management;
 - Changes in management of historic halls and their associated parkland settings;
 - Increased use of rural roads associated with tourism and visitors to historic attractions;
 - Loss of field trees and mature landscape structure as a result of agricultural intensification.

Evaluation

Landscape Condition and Strength of Character

3.8.15 This Landscape Character Type has a generally strong and distinctly recognisable sense of place throughout, with historic halls, woodland copses and small settlements providing visual landmarks and focal points. As a result, this landscape is considered to have a generally strong character. There is evidence of decline in hedgerow field boundaries and loss of hedgerow trees, however, overall, this Landscape Character Type exhibits a mature landscape structure.

Management Strategies and Objectives

3.8.16 The overall strategy for the Wooded Estatelands should be to conserve the relatively intricate pattern of woodland clumps and copses and historic halls, alongside the generally strong character and recognisable sense of place.

Plantings to enhance hedges should be appropriate to the specific local character of the Landscape Character Areas. For more information refer to 'Planting hedges in Norfolk – maintaining regional character; A guide to restoring and planting hedges' www.norfolkbiodiversity.org/reports/.

Specific management objectives are to:

- Seek opportunities for the creation of woodland and wood pasture;
- Seek opportunities to promote catchment sensitive farming;
- Seek to conserve and restore declining hedgerows and field trees;
- Seek opportunities for the management and creation of urban and urban fringe greenspace, as well as the maintenance and enhancement of green corridors through the built areas;
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape structure within the area, including blocks and belts of woodland, copses of mature trees, mature parkland trees and intact hedgerows;
- Conserve and enhance existing woodland belts to buffer potential new housing development;
- Seek to retain and conserve parkland landscapes and character to provide greenspace between potential new housing development.

3.8.17 Within this Landscape Character Type, the following Landscape Character Areas have been defined:

- E1: Blickling and Oulton**
- E2: Marsham and Hainford**
- E3: Spixworth**
- E4: Rackheath and Salhouse**

3.8.18 A Summary of each area's visual character, inherent landscape sensitivities and landscape planning guidelines are set out below.

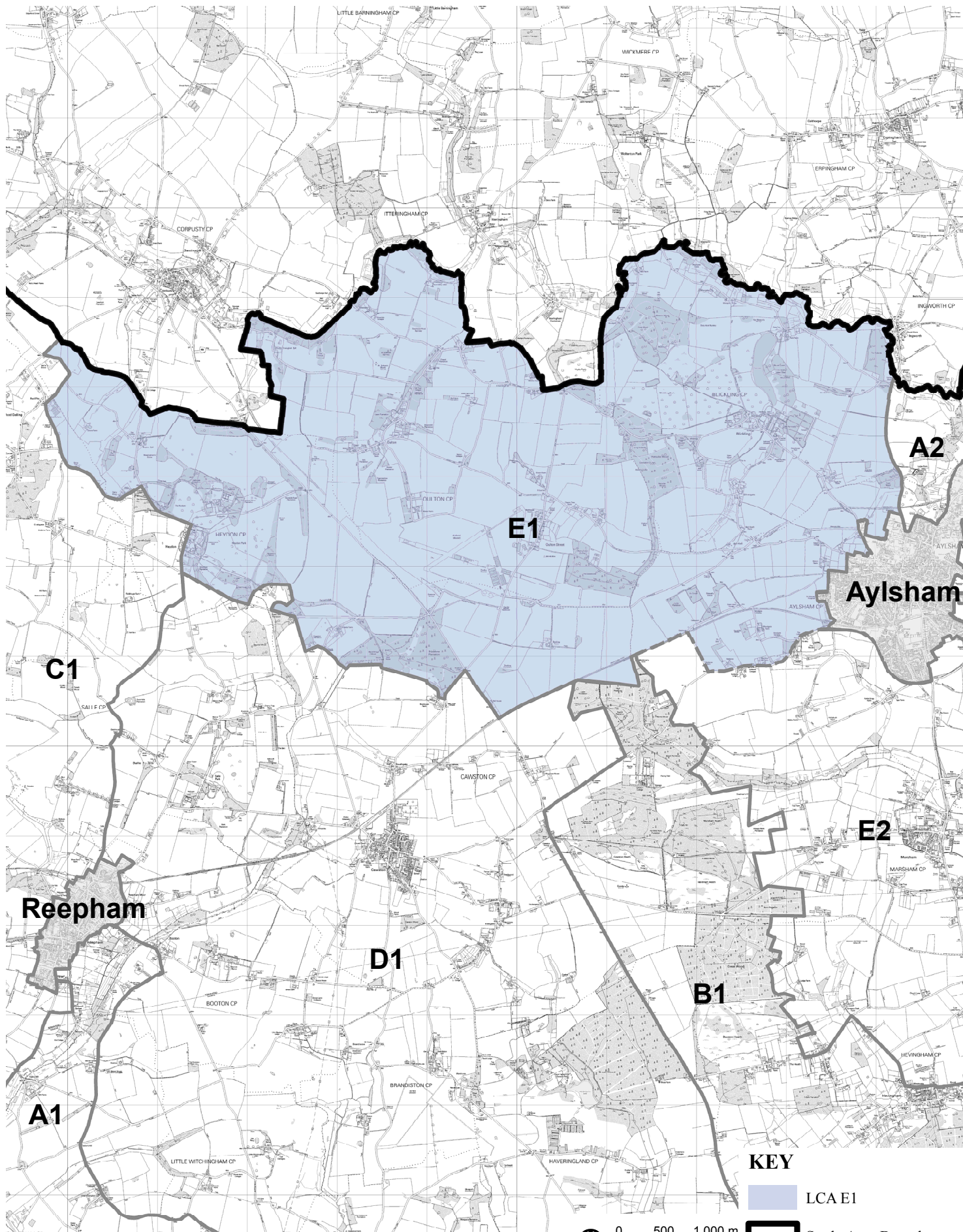
E1: BLICKLING AND OULTON

Summary of visual character

3.8.19 This Character Area comprises a gently rolling landscape, stretching southwards from the upper reaches of the River Bure. The land becomes

increasingly undulating where tributaries of the Upper Bure incise it. Overlain with loams, this belt of land contrasts with the Till to the west and the low quality sands to the east. The loam geology produces fertile soils and the area has a long established agricultural history. Today, land is predominately in agricultural cultivation, except in the far north where the soils become lighter and sandier. To the east and west, large parkland estates have developed on poorer soils. Historically, reduced agricultural demand allowed the gentry to build up their country seat through continued enclosure of the land. By the late 17th century these estates were extensive, centred on grand houses, including landscaped gardens, parkland and plantations e.g. Heydon Park and Blickling Park. Surrounding medium scale rectangular arable fields represent an extension of the park landscape. These were owned by the gentry and worked by tenant farmers. Today, parkland still extends across a large part of this character area. However, in more recent years an airfield comprising a typical World War II A-layout, has been built on a flat elevated plateau in the centre of the area, at Oulton.

- 3.8.20 The area comprises large blocks and belts of woodland, which provide a strong mature landscape structure. Extensive plantations and coverts define estate boundaries. Historic maps show a number of mediaeval market towns located within this area. Some have expanded around a strong nucleated core and are busy towns today, such as Aylsham. Others, such as Heydon, declined as the rural population fell or were incorporated into the large estates as 'closed villages'. Today the settlement pattern reflects a long history of development, scattered with historic halls, villages and isolated farmsteads. The settlements have many historic buildings and features and a strong local vernacular. The architecture and landscape of the large estates are important historic features within the area, and strongly contribute to the area's rich and distinctive character. In particular, the large manmade park landscapes to the east and west, specifically designed to create an 'idyllic natural landscape', are very scenic. Large estates such as Blickling Hall are of recognised national importance. Development of an airfield has resulted in hedgerow and woodland losses in central parts of the area, diluting the rural landscape character in this part.



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Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

- 3.8.21 The following inherent landscape sensitivities have been identified:
- Mosaic of parkland, arable fields and woodland, providing a diverse and interesting landscape character.
 - Mature landscape structure including substantial blocks and belts of woodland, copses of mature trees and intact hedgerows, providing a robust visual mosaic.
 - Landscape setting of historic houses, associated estates settlements and churches.
 - Architectural and landscape features of historic estates, including scenic parkland landscapes rich in idyllic components such as rides, parkland trees and lakes.
 - Nucleated medieval market towns with a strong historic core.
 - Landscape setting of villages.
 - Distinctive and largely unspoilt landscape character.
 - Rich historic character and a strong sense of place.
 - Characteristic views across the farmland to landmark churches, often isolated and amid woodland.

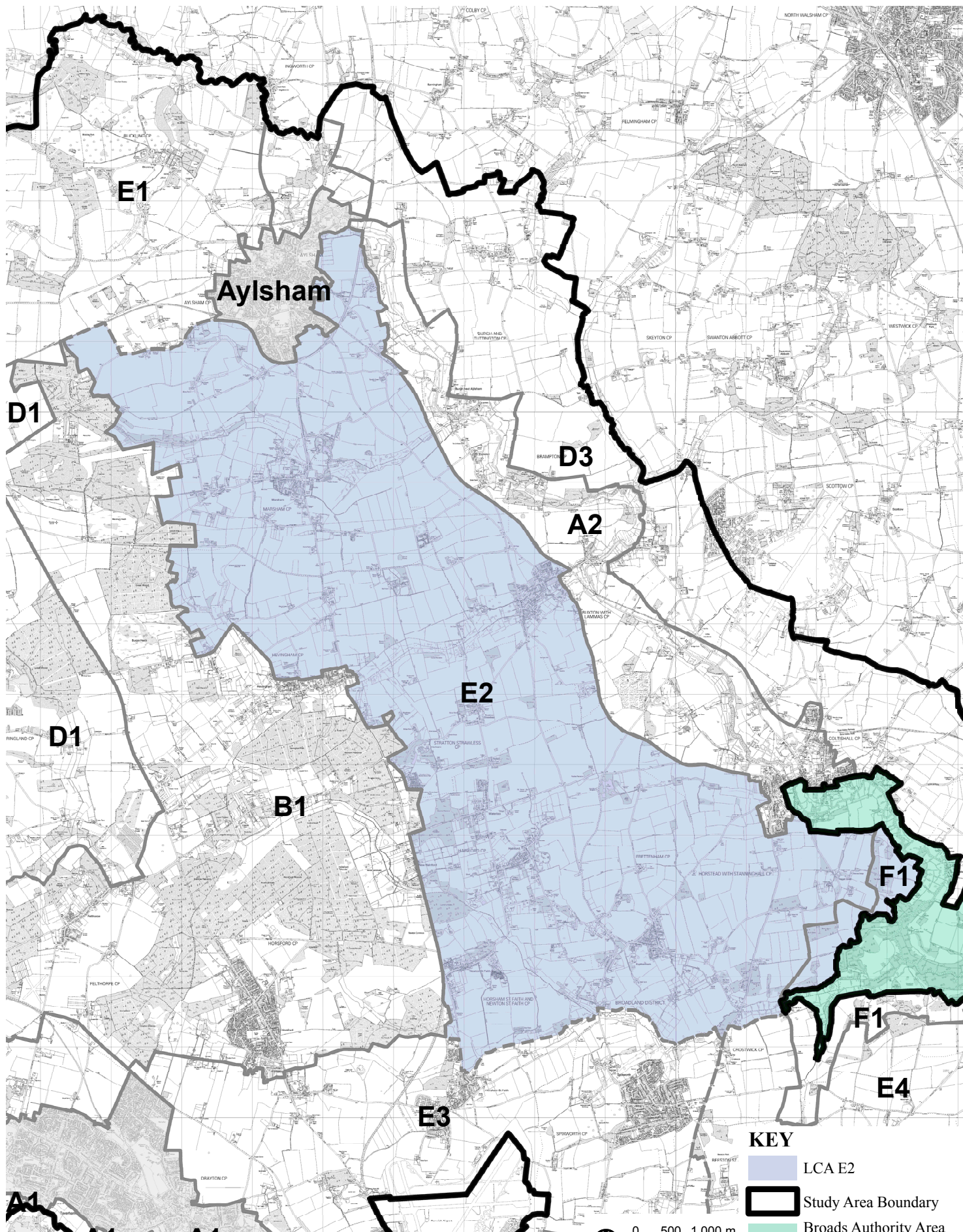
Landscape Planning Guidelines

- 3.8.22 The following Landscape Planning Guidelines apply to Blickling and Oulton Wooded Estate Lands Landscape Character Area:
- Seek to conserve the diverse and interesting landscape pattern and character;
 - Seek to conserve distinctive, historic architectural and landscape features including historic parkland landscapes and their setting, which contribute to the area's rich historic character and strong sense of place;
 - Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving further tall structure (such as steel pylons and telecommunication masts) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas;
 - Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within villages is consistent with the existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form;
 - Seek to conserve the landscape setting of market towns and villages, and seek to screen (where possible) harsh settlement edges and existing visual detractors;
 - Seek to promote use of local vernacular buildings materials, including red brick and pantiles.
 - Seek to ensure new development does not reduce the vertical significance of important historical and architectural features within the landscape, such as church towers;
 - Seek to conserve the landscape setting of historic houses, manors, estate settlements, churches, and halls;
 - Conserve and enhance existing woodland belts to buffer potential new housing development;
 - Seek to retain and conserve parkland landscapes and character to provide greenspace between potential new housing development.

E2: MARSHAM AND HAINFORD

Summary of visual character

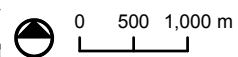
- 3.8.23 This character area comprises the gently rising slopes that extend from the Bure valley to the belt of woodland that sharply defines the area to the west. At the edge of the Bure floodplain convex slopes sharply define the valley floor. From this point the land rises gently, becoming increasingly undulating where incised by tributaries of the River Bure. The area is made up of a varied drift geology of sands and gravels. This is overlain with loam in some areas, especially in the north where it forms pockets of higher quality agricultural land.
- 3.8.24 The majority of this landscape is in arable cultivation. Fields sizes vary from medium to large scale. Most are rectilinear with remnant intermittent hedgerows and numerous hedgerow trees. Hedgerow removal is more evident on higher quality land in the north. Woodland cover is generally limited to small copses associated with small halls and manors sited adjacent to tributaries of the Bure. The valleys of these tribunes provide variations in topography, with narrow water channels and associated drains adding interest. An exception is the extreme south east of the area. Here increased tree cover in the form of small-scale woodlands and copses reflects its proximity to the Broads.
- 3.8.25 A number of small halls, manors and isolated churches located along rural lanes, often amid woodland, are a distinct and repeated feature within the area. Apart from these, there are few notable features to provide interest or strengthen its visual fabric. The few dispersed settlements in this area have expanded slightly during the twentieth century. This is more noticeable in the south. Most settlements form a dispersed collection of residential buildings with minor central core. During recent years, housing has also developed in small clusters along the busy roads that pass through the area, linking Alysham with Norwich. These developments have for the most part remained contained as individual linear or nucleated developments, such as Marsham. There is often an abrupt transition between the housing developments and the surrounding agricultural land. The area's proximity to Norwich has stimulated growth within southern parts of the area and encouraged other uses.
- 3.8.26 Away from the tributaries, slopes are generally open in character affording wide views. Numerous hedgerow trees and intermittent hedgerows provide structure gently filtering these views and reducing the feeling of exposure. Distant views are strongly contained to the west by the distinct wooded horizon of the adjacent character area (B1). To the east, woodland defines the edge of the Bure valley. Variations in landscape character are provided by the streams and river channels that form gentle wooded incisions in the landscape, including The mermaid, Camping Beck and Stone Beck. Closer to the broads in the south west of the area, increased woodland cover provides additional structure.



KEY

- LCA E2
- Study Area Boundary
- Broads Authority Area within Broadland District

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Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

3.8.27 The following inherent landscape sensitivities have been identified:

- Pockets of pasture, open grassland, patterns of semi-natural vegetation lining tributaries, create interest and diversity in an otherwise arable landscape.
- Generally unified, rural character and recognisable landscape structure with fields defined by hedgerows in many areas.
- Landscape setting of historic halls, manors and churches.
- Landscape setting of villages.
- Characteristic westerly views across the farmland to distinct wooded horizons.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

3.8.28 The following Landscape Planning Guidelines apply to Marsham and Hainford Wooded Estate Lands Landscape Character Area:

- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape structure within the area, including woodland, copses of woodland, mature trees associated with small halls and manors and intact hedgerows;
- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving further tall structures (such as steel pylons and telecommunication masts) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas;
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within villages is consistent with the existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form;
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of historic halls, manors and churches;
- Seek to promote use of local vernacular buildings materials;
- Seek to ensure new development does not reduce the vertical significance of important historical and architectural features within the landscape, such as church towers.

E3: SPIXWORTH

Summary of visual character

- 3.8.29 This character area forms a narrow belt of land abutting the northern settlement edge of Norwich. The land within this area forms part of an extensive area of sands and gravels that rises gently northwards towards the centre of the district. Its simple geology is broken up by areas of loam, which coincides with higher quality agricultural land. Although land use within the area is influenced by its close proximity to Norwich, a large proportion of the area is still in arable cultivation, especially in western parts. Other more urban fringe uses have developed on converted farmland in central and western parts, such as golf courses and sporting fields. The other major land use in this area is Norwich Airport. Although the majority of airport infrastructure is located south of the District boundary, the northern section of the airport's runways encroach central parts of this character area.
- 3.8.30 Three settlements are located within this area, including Spixworth, Horsham St Faith and Thorpe End. These settlements have expanded in recent years, with newer residential developments engulfing the historic core and forming large extensions. A number of roads radiate from the city of Norwich across the landscape, at times, coinciding with ribbon development. The A140 is a particularly busy road that dissects the centre of the area, introducing considerable amounts of movement and noise to the landscape. The airport is a major influence of the character within central parts, creating an open exposed landscape. Due to the location of the airport in this area, various restrictions have reduced the number of new developments within the area, curtailing the expansion of Norwich here. The airport and its associated buildings and machinery are visually intrusive, and the robust tree belts located around its boundary form striking lines across the landscape. In southern parts of the area, a large business park and adjacent hospital have developed on the settlement edge of Norwich, at the junction of the A47 and A1042. The settlement edge of Norwich is often abrupt and encloses southerly views, forming a harsh boundary to the area. However in eastern parts of the area, the settlement edge is often well enclosed by woodland, tree belts, copses of mature trees and robust hedgerows in adjacent fields. Woodland in these areas, both coniferous and lowland mixed deciduous, is generally associated with high landscape and recreational value for adjacent urban populations.
- 3.8.31 Although the area abuts the urban edge of Norwich, the landscape generally comprises a semi-rural character. Its strength of character has been diluted by substantial fragmentation to the hedgerow structure in western parts. Here, the landscape is large-scale and open in character, with remnant patches of hedge boundaries and mature hedgerow trees adding interest, allowing only filtered views to settlement edges. Further east the influence of the Airport is substantial and greatly dilutes the area's rural character. In eastern parts of the area, parcels of land form a patchwork of rectangular fields and woodland. Robust blocks of woodland generally contain views across this flat landscape, at times, forming distinct coniferous skylines. Part enclosure of the land has allowed medium sized estates to develop around large houses and halls. These are smaller and less dramatic than those in the north of the district, but comprise a similar parkland character. One of

these has been converted into a hotel and surrounding parkland has been converted into a golf course. The road network has a strong influence; well used by commuters, it is noisy and busy. The mixture of land uses within the area generally coincides with a fairly weak sense of identity.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

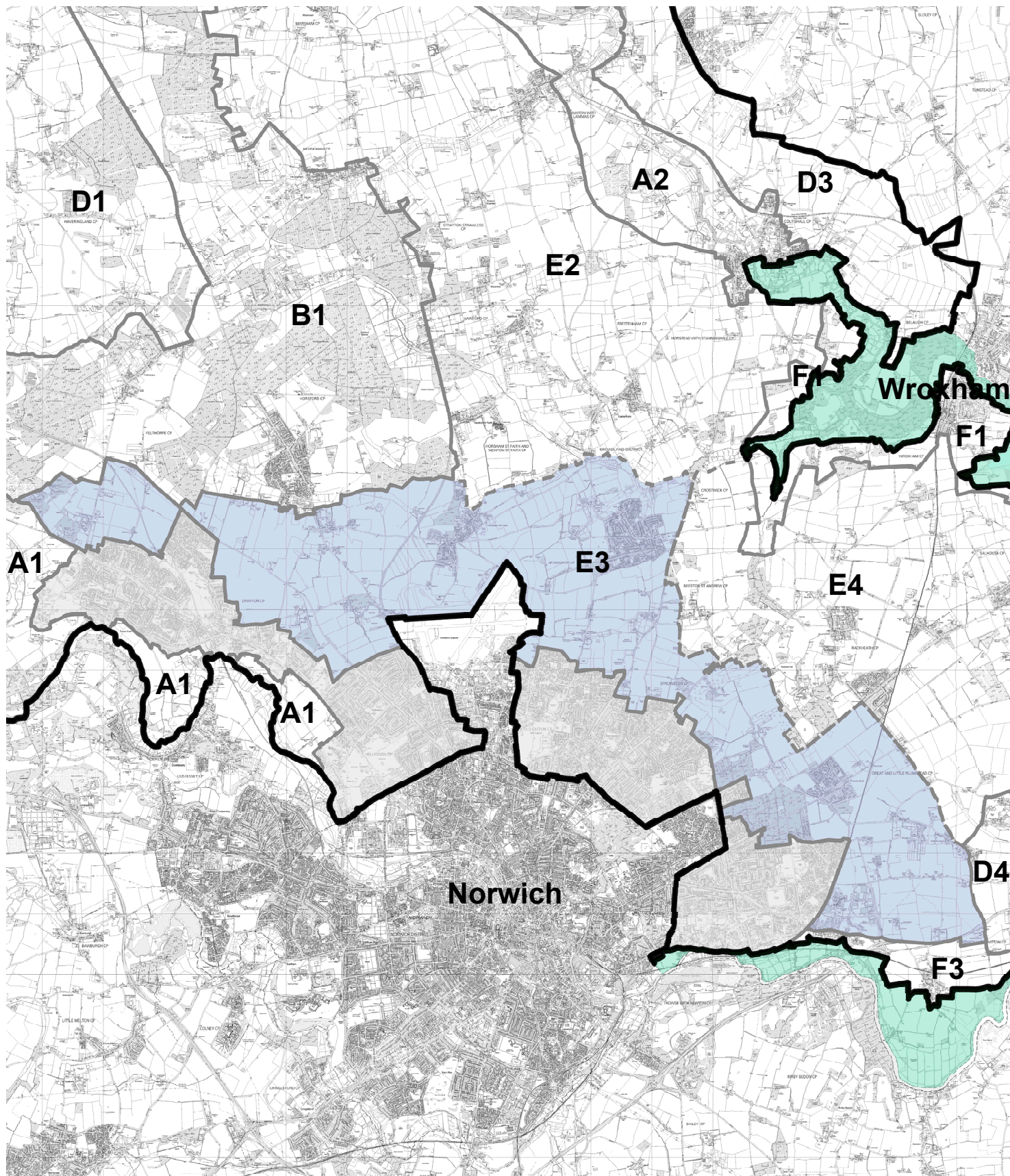
3.8.32 The following inherent landscape sensitivities have been identified:

- Mature landscape structure in eastern parts, including large blocks of woodland (including coniferous plantations), tree belts, copses of mature trees, remnant hedge boundaries and hedgerow trees, and parkland trees associated with large houses and halls.
- High landscape and recreational value associated with mature woodland; in particular the woodland located in eastern parts on the settlement edge of Norwich.
- Forms an important landscape setting to the city of Norwich.
- Landscape setting of villages.
- Landscape setting of historic houses and halls.
- Open skyline in western parts.

Landscape Planning Guidelines

3.8.33 The following Landscape Planning Guidelines apply to Spixworth Wooded Estate Lands Landscape Character Area:

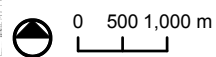
- Seek to conserve the predominantly rural character of the area;
- Seek to conserve and enhance the diversity of landscape structure within the area, including the patchwork of woodland and farmland with a recognisable hedgerow structure;
- Seek opportunities for the restoration of fragmented hedgerows;
- Seek to conserve the setting of historic houses, halls and parkland;
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern and is well integrated into the surrounding landscape;
- Conserve the landscape setting of villages, such as Horsham Saint Faith and Spixworth
- Seek to maintain greenspace between the edges of Norwich urban area and adjacent villages;
- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape setting of Norwich and seek to screen (where possible) existing and potential harsh settlement edges;
- Seek to maintain and enhance copses of mature trees and existing robust hedgerows.



KEY

- LCA E3
- Study Area Boundary
- Broads Authority Area within Broadland District

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E4: RACKHEATH AND SALHOUSE

Summary of visual character

- 3.8.34 This landscape character area forms a large tract of land extending southwards from the edge of the Bure valley within Broads Authority Area. The topography of this area is generally flat, particularly in western parts, and falls gradually towards the Broads. The land becomes increasingly undulating in northern and eastern parts, and where tributaries of the Yare and Bure rivers incise it. Geology is an important influence on the character of the area. Located on a band of sands and gravels, the soils produced are light, sandy, and less fertile than the high quality land further west, within E2 Character Area.
- 3.8.35 Historically, much of this character area formed part of a large area of heathland. The heathland extended from the northern settlement edge of Norwich almost to Salhouse. Today, only areas of heath retained within the urban area of Norwich remain (Mousehold Heath), which contain high ecological value and provide an important landscape resource. However, subtle clues of the area's past land cover is reflected in local names of villages, roads and farms, such as Rackheath, Heath End, Heath Farm and Mousehold Heath Farm. The area has only a recent history of agricultural development. The Enclosure Acts that eventually led to the parcelling of this land have created a strong geometric layout, with medium-sized regular fields and a strong grid road pattern. These mostly arable fields are interspersed with plantations, copses of mature trees and woodland belts, along with remnant patches of heath. Woodland in the area is a mixture of deciduous and coniferous plantations, often with patches of scrub and heath within the interior. Radial routes extending from Norwich, including the Bittern railway, dissect the mosaic of fields, woodland and roads.
- 3.8.36 Retained for a long period as an area of common land, few settlements developed within this landscape. Many of the settlements located in this area have only developed in recent years, providing housing on the outskirts of Norwich along main transport routes, often nucleated around road junctions. The settlements form blocks within the surrounding rural landscape, and often comprise abrupt boundaries. This is particularly evident in western parts of the area. Here, the housing style is typical of modern suburban developments – detached and semi-detached dwellings, often located around cul-de-sacs. A large industrial estate has recently developed immediately west of the Bittern railway, which is fairly enclosed from the wider landscape by linear belts of mature woodland. In northern and western parts of the area, part enclosure of the land has allowed medium sized estates to develop around large houses and halls, such as Beeston Park, Salhouse Hall, Rackheath Hall and Woodbastwick Hall, in several places with their associated Historic parkland. These are smaller and less dramatic than those in the north of the district, but comprise a similar parkland character.
- 3.8.37 Northern and western parts of the area comprise a different settlement pattern and built character, which reflects a long history of development.

Here, strings of historic settlements, scattered with historic halls, villages and isolated farmsteads are nestled against the wooded slopes that fall away to the Broads. These settlements, such as Woodbastwick, have hardly expanded in recent years. They comprise a strong local vernacular, including traditional buildings clustered around a historic core. Shaped gables, steep pitched pantile roofs, brick barns and flint walls are key characteristics. The architecture and landscape of the historic halls and houses are important features within northern and western parts of the area, and strongly contribute to a rich and distinctive character in these parts. Linear coniferous tree belts and the development of an industrial estate, has resulted in hedgerow loss in central parts of the area, diluting the rural landscape character in this part.

Evaluation

Inherent Landscape Sensitivities

3.8.38 The following inherent landscape sensitivities have been identified:

- Mosaic of parkland, arable fields and woodland, providing a diverse and interesting landscape character, particularly in northern and western parts;
- Mature landscape structure including blocks and belts of woodland, copses of mature trees and intact hedgerows, providing a robust visual mosaic, particularly in eastern parts;
- Landscape setting of historic houses, halls and churches;
- Architectural and landscape features of houses and halls, including scenic parkland landscapes rich in idyllic components such as rides, parkland trees and lakes;
- Linear hamlets with a strong historic core;
- Landscape setting of hamlets and villages;
- Rich historic character and a strong sense of place, particularly in northern and western parts;
- Characteristic northerly views over descending wooded slopes to the Broads, and associated close wooded horizon;
- Historic buildings and settlement character within Salhouse and Woodbastwick (recognised by designation as a Conservation Area).

Landscape Planning Guidelines

3.8.39 The following Landscape Planning Guidelines apply to Rackheath and Salhouse Wooded Estate Lands Landscape Character Area:

- Seek to conserve and enhance the landscape structure within the area, including blocks and belts of woodland, copses of mature trees, mature parkland trees and intact hedgerows.
- Seek to conserve the diverse and interesting landscape character, particularly in northern and western parts.
- Seek to conserve distinctive, historic architectural and landscape features including historic parkland landscapes and their setting, which contribute to the area's rich historic character and strong sense of place, particularly in northern and western parts.

- Seek to ensure the sensitive location of development involving further tall structures (such as steel pylons and telecommunication masts) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Seek to ensure that potential new small-scale development within villages is consistent with the existing settlement pattern, density and traditional built form.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of villages, such as Woodbastwick, Rackheath and Salhouse and seek to screen (where possible) harsh settlement edges and existing visual detractors.
- Seek to promote use of local vernacular buildings materials, including red brick, flint and pantiles.
- Seek to conserve the landscape setting of historic houses, halls (including Beeston, Salhouse and Rackheath) and churches;
- Seek to conserve the interesting landscape pattern of parkland, arable fields and woodland.