



Key Characteristics

- Mix of arable and pasture; large scale field pattern with well maintained hedgerow boundaries and very few hedgerow trees.
- South of A631, the landscape is gently undulating and there are some small blocks of deciduous woodland.
- Land becomes flatter to the north, with open dykes and ditches draining into the River Ancholme.
- Remnants of carr vegetation towards the north.
- Straight roads with characteristic near right-angled corners - often ancient enclosure roads with wide verges and enclosing hedgerows.
- Dispersed, sparse settlements including small villages and individual farms.
- Long views towards the Wolds scarp to the east and occasional long views to Lincoln Cathedral.

Landscape Description

The *Lincolnshire Clay Vale* is an open agricultural landscape with big skies. The fields are of medium size and predominantly arable, with some pasture used for grazing cattle and sheep. In places the clay soils have been modified by thin drifts of coversands. The field pattern is regular with well maintained hawthorn hedge boundaries and very few hedgerow trees. Those hedgerow trees present are predominantly oak and ash, with some occasional lines of poplars and alders close to the New River Ancholme.

The land is low lying and gently undulating south of the A631 and there are some small blocks of deciduous woodland in this area. The landform becomes flatter towards the new River Ancholme, north of the A631, where a number of dykes and ditches drain into the river. Here there are occasional small groups or individual willows and alders along ditches, although most have open banks, devoid of any tall vegetation. These alders are remnants of carr vegetation and are known as North Kelsey, South Kelsey and Waddingham Carrs. The shallow watershed between the River Rase and the River Ancholme flowing towards the north and Barlings Eau and its tributaries flowing south, is not evident in the landscape.

There are long views towards the Wolds scarp to the east and occasional long views to Lincoln Cathedral in the south, on a clear day. The area has a dispersed pattern of small settlements, such as Faldingworth, Bustlingthorpe and Lissington, as well as individual farms. These villages are generally attractively set in trees and their limestone churches are significant local landmarks. There is a large disused RAF base and associated housing at Faldingworth.

Roads crossing the area tend to be straight with definite near right-angled bends. A number of the minor roads follow this same pattern and often have the wide verges and enclosing hedgerows typical of the ancient enclosure roads. The road bends provide a variety of views which are often framed by hedgerow trees.

Landscape Sensitivity

A low lying vale with long views and small, dispersed settlements. There is a branching network of rivers, dykes and ditches. Many of the settlements have related archaeological sites (often Scheduled Ancient Monuments) which provide evidence that the area was more extensively settled in medieval times.

This agricultural landscape is sensitive to changes in European Commission agricultural policy and subsequent trends in farming practice.

The most sensitive parts of the landscape are:

- *historic and archaeological sites* which are often the sites of medieval settlement;
- *hedgerows and remaining hedgerow trees* which provide a distinctive vertical element in the landscape;
- *remaining lines of riverside trees* eg North Kelsey Carr;
- *pasture and meadow* - now a rare element in the landscape pattern eg Kingery Beck Meadows and Pickerings Meadow;
- *rivers, ditches and streams*, particularly the original course of the Ancholme;
- *occasional ancient woodlands* eg Kingerby Wood;
- *enclosure roads* with wide verges and enclosing hedgerows.

Principles for Landscape Management

- Ongoing hedgerow management, including replanting gaps, will reinforce the characteristic landscape pattern.
- New tree planting would create a new generation of distinctive and characteristic hedgerow trees. Oak trees could be concentrated in areas where there are already hedgerow trees, as well as near settlements and farmsteads. Appropriate local tree species include field maple, ash and oak; hedgerow species include hawthorn, guelder rose, dog rose, blackthorn, and honeysuckle.

- Historically, the wider verges of some enclosure roads incorporated ponds to drain surplus surface water. There may be scope to re create some of these attractive valuable habitats.
- There may be scope to create new 'laybys' in the New Ancholme, by cutting false meanders in the riverbank. The meanders would increase the riparian habitat value of the river and would extend the positive influence of a similar scheme downstream.
- There is likely to be a need for increased flood capacity in the Ancholme valley and this may provide opportunities for the restoration of carr woodlands and for the re-creation of washlands and other wetland habitats.
- Consider planting new woodlands, particularly in the southern part of the character area, where there may be scope to extend the landscape character of the Lincolnshire Lime Woods.
- The meanders of the original River Ancholme and its associated ditches provide important riparian habitats; conservation works in the form of dredging, plug planting and creating ledges in some of the ditches will ensure that they are conserved. Tree planting (willows and alders) along water courses would give them a stronger visual presence in the wider landscape, provided flood defences are unaffected.
- The creation of buffer zones alongside watercourses will ensure that pesticides and fertilisers are filtered from the run-off from the adjacent arable land.
- The few remaining wet pastures should be a priority for careful conservation as they provide visual diversity and valuable wildlife habitats within a predominantly arable landscape.
- The area is likely to include some suitable sites for the rare black poplar, which is the subject of a national recolonisation programme.

Principles for Accommodating New Development

- Settlements in this area are characteristically small and dispersed; any new development should be designed to follow this pattern, with small clusters of buildings, closely associated with existing settlements (as part of the settlement, but not necessarily contiguous with the existing built fabric).
- Any redevelopment of the air base at Faldingworth will have a significant impact on this rural landscape. New buildings must be associated with carefully designed planting - some on a woodland scale. New planting can also be designed to reduce the apparent scale of the air base site, creating a

more coherent visual structure and scope for integration into the surrounding landscape.

- The fringes of some existing settlements have important archaeological sites and any new development should be sited and designed so that it does not damage or impose on sites which may be of archaeological value.
- There is a risk that large agricultural structures may be out of scale in this farmland landscape. Any new developments of this kind should be associated with native planting schemes of sufficient scale to integrate the structure with the surrounding landscape pattern.
- Wherever possible, existing mature trees within and on the fringes of settlements should be conserved. New developments should be designed to incorporate new tree planting, building on the characteristic pattern of trees in the area; they are concentrated close to settlements, framing rather than screening views to the buildings and integrating them in the landscape.
- New development in the southern part of the character area should be associated with extensive planting, perhaps in the form of woodlands, as this is on the fringes of the Lincolnshire Lime Woods.



Key Characteristics

- Relatively enclosed, undulating farmland with hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Clustered villages set in trees, linked by minor roads on slightly elevated, undulating land.
- Important sequential views to settlements and churches.
- Distinct lines of trees and individual mature trees on approaches to villages.
- Long views towards the Wolds' scarp.

Landscape Description

This is an area of relatively enclosed farmland on slightly elevated land to the north east of the *Lincolnshire Clay Vale*. A series of clustered villages are sited on minor hills and linked by minor roads. The land is more undulating than the surrounding clay vale and there are more hedgerows, hedgerow trees and small deciduous woodlands. The fields in this area are relatively small and those on the fringes of settlements are often used as pasture. These factors combine to give a landscape with a stronger sense of enclosure than on the adjacent *Lincolnshire Clay Vale*.

The string of small, nucleated settlements includes North Kelsey, South Kelsey and North Owersby. They are sited along a north-south minor spine road, which twists and turns over the undulating landform and round field boundaries to reveal a sequence of views of the settlements. The villages are sited on higher ground and are fringed with trees. Some are approached through distinctive lines of trees and individual mature trees, including oaks, ash and poplars.

There are long views across the wooded plantations around Market Rasen and Caistor towards the prominent scarp slope of the Wolds.

Landscape Sensitivity

Relatively enclosed farmland with clustered villages on slightly elevated land.

The most sensitive parts of the landscape are:

- *remaining pastures;*
- *the sequence of views to villages* along the north-south spine road;
- *hedgerows and trees, particularly* at the entrances to villages;
- *the winding character of the rural roads;*
- *lines and avenues of mature trees.*

Principles for Landscape Management

- A programme of hedgerow management and hedgerow tree planting would conserve this distinctive characteristic. Trees should be planted to create distinctive approaches to settlements and farms and to frame key views. Suitable tree species include oak, rowan and possibly sweet chestnut and beech; hedgerow species include hawthorn, gorse, holly and dog rose.
- There may be opportunities for the restoration or creation of grassland. This would enhance the habitat value and visual diversity of the local landscape. Priority should be given to the retention of existing meadow.

Principles for Accommodating New Development

- Within villages, development should contribute to the characteristic sense of enclosure, with brick or limestone walls and hedgerows fronting the streets and trees of stature (oaks, limes, horse chestnuts) within gardens or along boundaries.
- Buildings at sharp bends in the village street (a local characteristic) are always a focal point. New developments in such locations should be designed with particular care to ensure that they complement the existing traditional village buildings and create a strong sense of enclosure.
- There may be scope for new development to help create a stronger sense of identity in some of these settlements, particularly South Kelsey. This can be done by designing buildings in conjunction with open spaces to form a strong visual focus, and by planting distinctive patterns of trees and hedgerows. North Kelsey has a distinctive character and may provide a useful model for the design of new development in the other villages.



Key Characteristics

- Large conifer plantations on acidic soils formed on areas of coversand.
- Gorse, birch trees and acid grassland indicate heathland character within the agricultural landscape.
- Mix of arable fields and pastures with patchy clumps of hedgerows and few hedgerow trees.
- Distinctive lines of oaks, straight ancient hedgerows and small deciduous woodlands near Holton le Moor.
- The fringes of Market Rasen and Caistor have a relatively wide range of land uses.

Landscape Description

The *Heathland Belt* is situated on a low lying area of wind blown coversands overlying the Jurassic and glacial clays on the north western fringes of the Wolds escarpment. The heathlands are found on a tract of land between the two market towns of Market Rasen and Caistor.

The acid heathland has been extensively planted with large conifer plantations, dominated by Scots pine and Corsican pine. They are particularly evident to the north and east of Market Rasen and to the south west of Caistor. These plantations and the areas of acid grasslands within the agricultural landscape, create a distinctive character. Where the coniferous plantations have no deciduous edge planting, they form a dark vertical edge. This stark visual edge is particularly dominant in views from the Wolds between Walesby and Tealby. However, in some locations deciduous edge planting has helped to integrate the conifer plantations with the surrounding landscape.

The pattern of the agricultural landscape varies from large-scale arable fields and pastures, to the smaller scale pastures used for horses and free range chicken, which are found immediately to the north of Market Rasen. Fields are enclosed by low hedgerows and hedgerow trees, although there are also examples of 100 year old straight hedgerows, which date from the relatively late conversion of open common lands to enclosed fields. Gorse is often

present in hedgerows and road verges, indicating the acidic nature of the soils.

The landscape on the outskirts of Market Rasen has a particularly diverse pattern and a variety of uses including agriculture, light industry, kennels, nurseries, a race course, golf course and camping areas. The blocks of woodland, hedgerows and trees help to accommodate this varied range of land uses in a predominantly flat agricultural landscape.

Within the woodlands there is a strong sense of enclosure. There is an attractive deciduous edge alongside many of the roads within the plantations and parking, picnic areas and trails have been designed to encourage recreational use of the woodlands. Many of the woodlands include small streams, flowing from the chalk escarpment into the *Lincolnshire Clay Vale*. The Forestry Commission's *Design Plan* for woodlands such as Willingham Wood uses such riparian corridors as a framework for a sequence of linear open spaces within the forest.

North of the woodlands surrounding Market Rasen, the land is slightly more elevated and the heathland character is more evident; there are birch trees and clumps of gorse alongside fields adjacent to the A46. These areas retain names such as Claxby Moor, Owersby Moor and Nettleton Moor. The distinctive oak avenues and small deciduous woodlands along the A46 near Holton le Moor, may represent remnants of a parkland landscape. The flat farmland immediately to the west of Caistor has been developed for commercial and industrial uses, as well as residential estates. The built development is strung out along the straight roads which approach the town on this side.

North west of Caistor, along the A1084 below the indented slopes of the Wolds, the landscape is predominantly agricultural with a mix of arable fields and pastures. Fields are of medium size with patchy clumps of hedgerow, a few hedgerow trees and some small deciduous woodlands. A number of fields adjacent to the A1084 house pigs with their distinctive rounded sheds.

Landscape Sensitivity

This landscape of acid heathland and agricultural land, between Caistor and Market Rasen is dominated by large conifer plantations of mainly Scots pine and Corsican Pine. Views are relatively contained and there is some capacity to accommodate change.

The most sensitive parts of the landscape are:

- *existing open heathland and pastures*, such as Linwood Warren;
- *approaches to Caistor and Market Rasen* where there are pressures for a mixture of land uses, including golf courses, nurseries, light industrial areas and recreational uses;
- *woodland edges* - these structure views (particularly towards the Wolds) and form a dark backdrop to most views within this area;

- *species-rich ancient hedgerows.*

Principles for Landscape Management

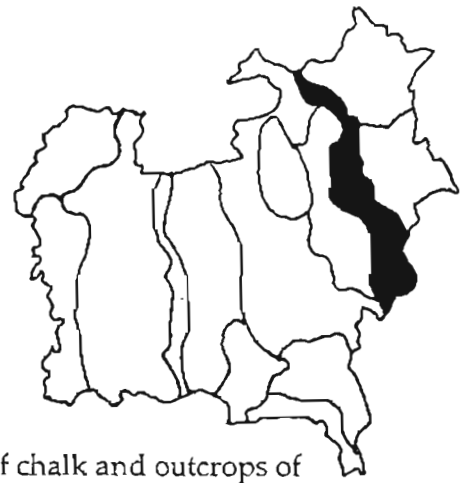
- As the even-aged plantations come to be felled and re-structured there are opportunities to design felling coupes and new planting to improve visual diversity and nature conservation value. The *Design Plan* prepared by Forest Enterprise provides strategic guidance.
- The introduction of a deciduous edge to conifer plantations, where there is none, would help to integrate the woodlands with the surrounding landscape and may be relevant in woodlands which have not yet reached their full economic rotation.
- Management of remnant heathland, with grazing to prevent birch regeneration should be considered wherever possible.
- The management of woodland walks, clearings and opportunities for recreation within the woodlands, should be considered in relation to an integrated woodland management plan, balancing nature conservation and recreational value.
- Any additional woodland planting should be concentrated on agricultural land, avoiding areas where there is potential for heathland restoration and re-creation.
- There is scope to develop a landscape strategy for the management and renewal of the distinctive hedgerow oaks.

Principles for Accommodating New Development

- Any new development on the fringes of Market Rasen or Caistor should be accompanied by mass planting which is designed to help integrate the development with the surrounding landscape pattern. It should include elements such as mixed woodland, hedgerows and hedgerow trees (predominantly oaks).
- Infill sites are particularly sensitive to change and require careful siting and design. The relationship between buildings and the street is important - new developments should retain the characteristic sense of enclosure by addressing the street directly by walls or the buildings themselves. Brick walls provide unity and enclosure along streets throughout the town, linking adjacent buildings and providing an attractive, varied built edge. They should be included as a fundamental part of any new development.
- Further development on the prominent higher ground to the east should be discouraged as it may affect the wider landscape setting of the Wolds'

escarpment; the flatter, relatively wooded areas are more suitable for accommodating change.

- Existing building materials are predominantly dark brick with pantile or slate roofs; many buildings are rendered white, particularly in the Market Rasen area.
- The linear development along the straight 'moorland' roads to the west of Caistor already lacks a visual relationship with the town. Further linear development should be discouraged and new buildings designed to create a stronger sense of place. Key views to the town centre should be identified and conserved and there is scope to give the existing buildings a stronger identity and unity by planting lines of trees (a characteristic feature of the area) along some routes.
- The dispersed pattern of development on the fringes of Market Rasen (individual industrial buildings, farms and cottages should be retained and linear development discouraged so that the striking, abrupt entrance to the historic town centre is conserved.
- Development should be avoided on heathland areas to preserve this limited habitat type.
- The choice of colours or materials for large scale agricultural or industrial buildings should take account of their backdrop and wider landscape setting so that they can be integrated successfully into the landscape.



Key Characteristics

- The Wolds' scarp slope with exposed scars of chalk and outcrops of ironstone is a prominent vertical feature in the landscape.
- Steep, hummocky scarp slopes, generally in rough pasture with occasional wedges of woodland and areas of scrub.
- Convoluted landform, with landslips, wet flushes and minor spoil heaps from iron workings.
- Villages sited along springline at foot of the scarp.
- Top of the scarp is high and exposed, with extensive views towards the north and west.
- High Street - a winding minor road with extensive westward views; minor hill crests along the road marked with distinctive clumps of beech trees and tumuli.
- Few settlements except scattered farmsteads, and occasional large farm buildings.
- Clusters of unsightly telecommunications masts and a large chalk quarry near Caistor.

Landscape Description

The *North-West Wolds Escarpment* is a pronounced escarpment, with exposed scars of chalk and outcrops of ironstone. The scarp face and its ridge line form a prominent vertical feature in the landscape which can be seen for miles from the west. Rough pasture predominates on the slopes of the scarp, with occasional wedges of woodland, areas of scrub, wet flushes and old ironstone workings. The slopes are steep, hummocky and indented by the action of minor streams and landslips.

At the bottom of the scarp there are a number of small attractive villages, including Bigby, Owmbly, Searby and Grasby to the north west of Caistor, and Claxby, Tealby and Walesby further south. The distinctive building materials in Tealby and Walesby are ironstone and Tealby Limestone is used for the

prominent hill top medieval church at Walesby. However, brick is the dominant building material in the villages to the north of Caistor.

There are extensive views from the top of the scarp to the north and west, particularly between Nettleton and Normanby le Wold. The latter seems high and exposed. To the east of the main scarp face, south of Caistor, the parallel river valleys of Nettleton Beck, Usselby Beck and the River Rase are backed by a higher ridgeline running along the line of High Street. Within these valleys, small deciduous woodlands often cover the steep slopes and narrow valley floors. High Street forms the eastern boundary of the character area. It is a quiet, winding minor road with extensive westward views. There are few settlements except for scattered farmsteads. The crests of small hills along the road are marked by distinctive clumps of beech and tumuli. However, clusters of unsightly telecommunications masts, a large chalk quarry near Caistor, and occasional large farm buildings, detract from the landscape in places.

The Roman town centre of Caistor has a defensive site on the Wolds' escarpment. The ironstone church tower at Nettleton with the backdrop of the Wolds scarp, is a distinctive landmark on the approach to Caistor from the south, although this view is somewhat degraded by roadside lighting, signage and some new development. The historic centre of Nettleton is just east of the A46, but newer development, including brick bungalows and a school, has spread along the main road. The Red Chalk SSSI, to the east of Nettleton Top, is of geological and ecological importance and the former ironstone mining areas have a distinctive, small-scale hummocky landscape character.

Caistor's buildings are predominantly brick or rendered and painted white or cream, with pantile, brown concrete tile, or slate roofs. The distinctive main street pattern focuses on a series of squares including Horsemarket, Buttermarket and Corn Hill. West of the centre of Caistor, along the straight Roman road to North Kelsey, there is a light industrial area (North Kelsey Industrial Estate) with warehouse style sheds. Further west, the extensive area of chicken or duck sheds at Highfield Farm is open to views from the road.

Landscape Sensitivity

The highly visible scarp face and ridgeline are prominent landscape features which can be seen for miles from the west. This part of the Wolds is therefore particularly sensitive to landscape change.

The most sensitive parts of this landscape are:

- the *highly visible ridgeline* - clusters of radio and telecommunications masts along "High Street" are already prominent and a proliferation of such structures would detract from the attractive, open skyline;
- the *scarp face* - sensitive to mineral or landfill activity, as well as to changes in proportion of arable: pasture;

- *Wolds villages* - pressures from built development, parking and tourism, particularly close to the Viking Way;
- *chalk grassland* - rare flora and fauna;
- *archaeological sites* - on ridgeline;
- *distinctive tree clumps* and other ridgeline features, including the small-scale rural lanes and steep hedgebanks;
- The *wet flushes* at the boundaries between different geological strata along the scarp.

Principles for Landscape Management

- The management of the remaining chalk grassland areas should be considered a priority; monitoring of stocking levels and ongoing scrub clearance may be required. Priority should be given to the restoration of chalk grassland on land adjacent to the existing managed sites, particularly where there is scope to create new links between the existing grassland habitats.
- Where possible, hedgerows should be trimmed to allow extensive views out from the ridgeline roads.
- The distinctive ridge-top clumps of beech require special management in the form of tree surgery, thinning and replanting if these valuable landscape features are to be retained.

Principles for Accommodating New Development

- Generally, new development should be severely restricted along the prominent ridgeline and scarp face; new buildings can only be accommodated at the foot of the scarp or on the lower slopes, following the existing settlement pattern.
- Careful consideration should be given to the siting of buildings, taking account of local topography, vegetation and views. Buildings which are sited at the foot of slopes or in the folds of undulating ground are characteristic; they should be associated with substantial tree planting designed to integrate them with the surrounding contours and landscape pattern.
- Any expansion of existing settlements or new developments should use appropriate materials. Ironstone is no longer available, but dark brick, white render and some limestones are also characteristic of the area.
- Linear development is already beginning to blur the identity of the larger villages; it should be restricted to ensure that new buildings contribute to the character and setting of the village.
- The existing irregular open spaces and small fields remaining within small villages such as Tealby should be conserved to protect the landscape

setting of the existing buildings - they should be set against a backdrop of farmland. Substantial blocks of development would be inappropriate in this natural landscape setting and there is a risk that they would detract from views to the Wolds from farmland to the west.



Key Characteristics

- Open, rolling arable farmland on Wolds' dip slope, with dramatic, inward-facing valleys and dry valley features.
- Most roads run east-west along low ridgelines, many with wide verges backed by hedgerows and hedgerow trees, characteristic of ancient enclosure roads.
- Valley bottoms are marked by woodlands and steep valley slopes near villages are often used for grazing.
- Intimate valley landscapes contain small settlements, mixed hedgerows and winding trackways.
- Attractive landscape setting to large houses and halls.
- Former RAF Binbrook airfield and its associated housing has a wide influence on the landscape.

Landscape Description

The broad chalk dip slope extends eastwards from the *North West Wolds Escarpment*. This is an elevated, rolling landscape with a broad, rounded landform, dominated by arable farmland. The dip slope is structured by a network of rolling, inward-facing valleys and dry valley features, representing the glacial lakes and spillways that covered wide areas of the Lincolnshire Wolds at the end of the last glaciation. The contrast between the arable tops and the lush wooded valleys is characteristic of this area.

The land dips gently to the east of High Street, with most roads running eastwards along low ridgelines. Many have the wide verges, backed by hedgerows and lines of ash and beech, which are characteristic of enclosure roads dating back to the parliamentary enclosures. Most of the land is in intensive arable use, but some steep valley slopes and valley bottoms are marked by woodlands, for example near Stainton le Vale. Clumps of mature beech, Scots pine and sycamore are characteristic and horse chestnuts are common features within valley settlements.

The northern part of the dip slope is dominated by two strong valley landscapes, centred on Laceby Beck, around Rothwell and Cuxwold and Waithe Beck, around Thoresway and Thorganby. These more intimate valley

landscapes contain some villages of Saxon and medieval origin, mixed hedgerows, winding trackways and other pre-enclosure landscape features. The steep valley slopes, near to the villages, tend to be used for sheep and cattle grazing. Around Rothwell, a local landowner has left an individual mark on the landscape; his extensive land-holding is marked by well maintained A-shaped hedges and daffodil-planted verges. The tall fountain of water glimpsed in the trees when approaching Rothwell from the south, is another distinctive landmark. Elsewhere, large houses such as Swinhope Hall have attractive parkland settings, with distinctive tree clumps and framed views.

The former RAF Binbrook airfield and associated housing, situated on high open ground to the south east, has a wide visual influence. There are important views to the Grimsby Dock Tower (near Thoresway) and the Stennigot and Benniworth masts.

Landscape Sensitivity

This landscape with its special character of open arable tops and dramatic, lush wooded valleys forms part of the Wolds AONB and is highly sensitive to change.

The most sensitive parts of the landscape are:

- *chalk grasslands* - continued grazing of these is necessary to retain their botanical interest and prevent eventual succession to woodland.
- *small woodlands and hedgerow trees* - many planted in the 18th and 19th centuries require management and renewal to retain their structure.
- *archaeological sites* - many tumuli are distinctive local landmarks;
- *ancient enclosure roads* - characteristic hedgerows and wide verges.

Principles for Landscape Management

- The reversion of arable land to pasture should be encouraged, particularly along valley floors, where the elongated meadows provide a contrast to the large-scale farmland of the uplands while also emphasising the alignment of the landform.
- Management of existing chalk grasslands is essential to retain their botanical interest; continued grazing at carefully defined stocking levels will prevent the development of scrubby vegetation. Priority should be given to the expansion of chalk grassland, particularly if there is scope to create new links between existing habitats.
- The development of farm-based landscape management plans covering grasslands, woodlands, copses and hedgerow trees could be designed to ensure the management, replacement and renewal of the characteristic Wolds landscape pattern. Special attention should be given to strategies for the renewal of the distinctive beech clumps, enclosure roads and

hedgerow trees to ensure the conservation of these ancient, distinctive landscape features.

- The distinctive structure of the historic enclosure roads should be conserved by management of the characteristic hedgerows and wide verges. Tree planting should be confined to hedgerows to conserve the sense of enclosure and allow management of the verges.
- Identification and restoration of important hedgerows, particularly the old mixed species, pre-enclosure hedgerows which often give visual emphasis to characteristic breaks of slope .
- New woodland planting and ongoing management should be designed to reinforce the existing pattern of woodland within the valleys, which typically emphasises the chalk landforms. Hawthorn, beech, field maple and ash are the most suitable local tree species.
- There is a risk that archaeological remains may be irreversibly damaged by agricultural practices such as deep ploughing and by the erection of agricultural structures.

Principles for Accommodating New Development

- New built development and farm building conversions require high standards of siting and design in this distinctive and sensitive landscape; buildings and walls should be constructed from local materials and should be of an appropriate scale; - some local farm walls are high enough to create striking built features within the valley landscape.
- Any new development within villages should be visually contained, following the existing settlement pattern; linear development along the valley approach roads is inappropriate and detracts from their distinctive landscape setting.
- Large scale housing, roads and minerals or industrial development cannot be successfully accommodated within this landscape; redevelopment of the Binbrook air base should incorporate strategic planting, designed to screen buildings, reduce the apparent scale of the land-holding and create a new landscape structure which relates to the surrounding landscape pattern.
- Building materials are predominantly brick, with some chalk and pantile roofs.



Key Characteristics

- Arable landscape with a regular pattern of medium sized fields.
- Extensive belt of mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland gives some sense of enclosure and a backdrop to views.
- Settlements have attractive wooded settings and the majority of buildings are constructed in a characteristic 'estate style'.
- Parkland landscape with distinctive individual mature trees and groups of trees near Brocklesby.
- Widespread influence of Brocklesby Estate, with large stone gate posts, post and rail fencing and a castellated gate house
- Larger and more open fields east of the B1211 and A18, allowing distant views across the flat landscape, towards Immingham Docks.

Landscape Description

The *Wolds' Estates* landscape is located to the north east of the district. It is a relatively open, agricultural landscape with a distinctive pattern of woodlands and shelterbelts. The regular field pattern is structured by well maintained hedgerows. These are particularly robust alongside local roads, but form more patchy boundaries elsewhere. An extensive belt of mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland on the fringes of the Brocklesby estate provides a broad sense of enclosure and a backdrop to views in this otherwise open landscape.

The settlements of Great Limber and Brocklesby, have attractive wooded settings. The majority of buildings within these villages are constructed in a characteristic "estate style" using yellow/brown brick with slate roofs and distinctive white painted wooden finials. Brocklesby Hall, its stables and landscaped lake are set in attractive parkland at Brocklesby, and there is a mausoleum in a woodland setting at Great Limber. These landmarks, together with individual mature parkland trees and groups of trees are landmarks within this designed landscape. A copse of copper beech trees is a particularly striking feature in a field to the south of Brocklesby. Other indications of the 'estate' are stone gate posts, post and rail fencing and an elaborate, castellated gate house to the north west of Brocklesby.

To the east of the B1211 and the A18 near Keelby, the fields are larger and the landscape more open and the village of Keelby has a relatively exposed setting. From here, there are distant views eastwards to the cranes and structures at Immingham Docks and to the oil refineries and transmission lines on Humberside.

Landscape Sensitivity

This well maintained estate landscape with its mix of woodland belts, agricultural fields, designed parkland landscapes and settlements, has a distinctive pattern and character. This landscape may be able to accommodate some change, if handled carefully.

The most sensitive parts of the landscape are:

- *open landscape* to the north east of the area, where there are relatively few hedgerows and trees;
- *woodland edges*, which form a backdrop to views and enclose areas of the landscape;
- *historic parkland landscapes* - designed features and framed views;
- *Individual specimen trees and distinctive groups of trees* - copper beech trees in Brocklesby Park; stand of poplars on the approach to Brocklesby village.
- *estate villages* - such as Brocklesby and Great Limber
- *views to historic built features* - including gate houses, decorative stone gate posts, a mausoleum, stone walls.

Principles for Landscape Management

- The existing mixed deciduous and coniferous woodlands should be managed by thinning, coppicing and/or replanting so that they provide a rich variety of species, structure and visual enclosure in the landscape.
- Investigate the history and design of the parkland landscape and develop appropriate management strategies to facilitate the renewal of distinctive features such as individual specimen trees, distinctive groups of trees and grazed parkland areas.
- The ongoing management and replanting of hedgerows and hedgerow trees will enhance the overall landscape structure, particularly in the northern part of the area, where it has become degraded. Ash and hawthorn are the most appropriate species, but they can be accompanied by field maple, hazel, beech, Scots pine, wild cherry, oak and lime.
- The introduction of belts of woodland to the north east of the A18 and B1211 may help to provide more structure and enclosure in this area, while also reducing the visual impact of structures at Immingham Docks and the oil refineries on the Humber estuary. Wherever possible, new woodlands should be designed to link existing woodland and shelterbelts.

Principles for Accommodating New Development

- The siting and design of new development should take account of the setting of historic parkland landscapes and the many individual landmarks which are characteristic of the area.
- Any expansion of existing 'estate villages' should reflect the distinctive character, style and building materials of the existing settlement; materials within estate villages are predominantly yellow/grey brick with slate roofs and distinctive white painted wooden finials. Elsewhere, red brick with pantiles or slate roofs, and some white painted, rendered brick buildings are typical.
- New development should be accompanied by planting which is designed to integrate it within the surrounding landscape pattern; there will often be opportunities for substantial planting in the form of woodland belts, trees and hedgerows.

The landscape of West Lindsey is in a constant state of flux. In the past, the pace of change was largely controlled by the activities of major landowners who amalgamated holdings and established patterns of local economic activity. The strong influence of the railways and industrial growth during the 19th century was more transient and is now waning. But increases in the scale and intensity of agricultural production have since transformed the rural landscape and the expansion of built development and infrastructure on the fringes of towns and villages has brought a further wave of change.

The pace of change is now more rapid than ever and its implications are always difficult to assess. Changes regarded as negative by some may be seen as improvements by others; perceptions change with time and new features will often become established as valued elements of the landscape. However it is crucial that change is managed to retain or enhance the qualities which make the landscape of West Lindsey special.

This section examines the driving forces behind change in West Lindsey, setting changes in a long term context and analysing trends for the future. It includes broad guidelines for each of the principal forces for change. These indicate how change can be managed to ensure that it has a positive influence on landscape character.

3.1

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The Lincolnshire Structure Plan sets the strategic framework for planning policy in West Lindsey. Key principles guiding the development of Structure Plan policies are:

- to develop more efficient land use patterns in the county;
- to maximise the re-use of derelict, degraded, and disused land;
- to achieve quality of design and layout for new development;
- to safeguard the county's natural resources
- to enable residents of the county to improve their quality of life.

These principles imply a broad land use strategy which is designed to achieve sustainable economic growth, while protecting the built and natural environment through the prevention of new development in inappropriate locations.

The West Lindsey District Local Plan is to be reviewed during 1999. Many policies have direct implications for landscape character and managing landscape change. For instance, Local Plan policies make specific reference to the conservation of undeveloped breaks between settlements (Policy G9), development on the edge of settlements (Policy ENV12), the conservation of

characteristic views (Policy C2) and the siting of large agricultural buildings (Policy C3).

3.2 *BUILT DEVELOPMENT*

In the past decade, built development has occurred on the fringes of towns and villages throughout the district. However, the greatest expansion has been concentrated in settlements within commuter distance of Lincoln. This trend is set to continue, but the Structure Plan's strategic policies aim to incorporate 60% of new development within existing urban areas. This suggests that there is likely to be considerable new development within the principal towns of Gainsborough, Caistor and Market Rasen. There is also some ongoing pressure for further development on the fringes of the district's villages, particularly in the Wolds, as this area is a popular destination at retirement.

3.2.1 *Expansion of Existing Settlements*

The Local Plan identifies capacity for additional built development within and on the fringes of most of the district's settlements. Much recent new development has been in the form of housing estates and sites for industrial, retail and commercial units. Where new development occurs on the edges of existing settlements, there is a risk that it may encroach on the setting of distinctive landscape features or views, threatening their special character and sense of place. For instance, churches are important local landmarks and a focus for views on the approaches to the majority of the district's settlements but these key views may be obscured by peripheral development, particularly where settlements have been bypassed and the original approach altered.

The district's many small rural villages are particularly vulnerable to the impact of homogeneous residential development which does not reflect the characteristic architectural style, scale and materials of the village core. Villages within a 5 mile radius of Lincoln, such as Welton, Saxilby and Nettleham have been subject to much recent expansion and pressures are likely to continue to be particularly acute in areas within easy commuting distance of the city.

Retail and commercial developments are concentrated on the fringes of Caistor and Gainsborough, although there are ongoing pressures for petrol filling stations, garden centres and hotels close to principal roads throughout the district. Most are on a relatively small scale, although low density commercial development to the west of Caistor forms a bland and predictable gateway to the town on this side.

The district's many redundant air bases have an uncertain future. The bases at Binbrook, Hemswell Cliff, Faldingworth, Sturgate and Blyton are partially used for commercial enterprises, but the majority of the land and buildings are derelict. There is some new residential development on part of the largest base at Scampton and some of the airfields are used for recreational flying.

The air bases are generally on relatively exposed and therefore prominent sites so their future development will have a wide visual impact on the surrounding landscape.

There are also opportunities for the conversion of derelict buildings. Market Rasen, Gainsborough and Caistor have a rich architectural and industrial heritage and the sensitive conversion and re-use of town centre buildings will ensure their distinctive townscape character is conserved. There are particular opportunities for large scale conversion and re-use in Gainsborough, where the river-front improvements may, in time, provide a catalyst for the redevelopment of a key part of the historic core.

3.2.2 *Buildings in the Countryside*

Many agricultural buildings can be erected without planning permission. They are often large and prominent in the open sweeping views which are characteristic of the clay vales. Intensive livestock units, such as duck and poultry sheds are a familiar sight in the farmland, but there are also large storage sheds for potatoes and other produce.

There are growing pressures for the conversion of agricultural buildings and other isolated buildings in the countryside. The Lincolnshire Grasslands Project may influence the prospects for the conversion of some agricultural buildings by providing grants for the restoration of buildings that can be used for livestock farming. This is a particularly important issue in West Lindsey, as farm buildings are often prominent and attractive features within the wider landscape.

3.2.3 *Broad Landscape Guidance for Built Development*

The principal document providing statutory advice on the siting and design of new built development is the West Lindsey District Local Plan. The *Lincolnshire Design Guide for Residential Areas* and the forthcoming *West Lindsey Countryside Design Summary* which is to be the basis of future work on Supplementary Planning Guidance, are also of relevance.

Character is always in flux and there is a need to allow the character of contemporary and innovative architecture to develop. Design guidance should not be seen as a recipe for stagnation. Principles for sustainability and energy efficiency will become increasingly important as criteria for assessing the quality of new built development. Key factors include layout, siting and design, the selection and use of materials and consultation with local communities.

Broad Landscape Guidance for Built Development

Siting

- Site new built development in sheltered positions on lower slopes, using landform and planting as protection from prevailing winds.

FORCES FOR CHANGE



Large Agricultural Structures



Oil Well - Nodding Donkeys



Redundant Traditional Farm Buildings



Above-Ground Farm Reservoirs



Re-Use of Buildings on Redundant Air Bases



Chalk Quarry



New Road-Side Planting



Poor Quality Re-Use of Historic Buildings

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- Avoid siting buildings close to the crest of ridges, particularly where they may appear on the local skyline.
 - Consider the potential impact of new buildings from a range of viewpoints, both in the immediate surroundings and the wider countryside, placing particular emphasis on views from public rights of way.
 - Examine the traditional relationship between buildings and local roads and use this to inform the siting of new built development; in general, avoid linear, suburban style development which faces directly onto principal roads.
 - Encourage the sensitive conversion of derelict traditional buildings, particularly in areas close to other settlements; those in remote, isolated situations may not be appropriate candidates for conversion.

Design

- Use the scale, spacing, orientation and siting of existing settlement as a model for considering how new development can be fitted into the landscape without disrupting its traditional pattern and grain.
- Respect existing field boundary patterns and ensure that fencing, hedgerows and lighting along property boundaries are subtly delineated, particularly in rural locations, where they should merge naturally with adjoining fields and woodland. Careful siting and design of boundary walls and fencing can help to integrate new development with the surrounding landscape.
- Minimise disturbance to the local landform and design earthworks associated with new development to integrate buildings with the local landform; avoid the use of substantial retaining walls or under-building on sloping sites.
- Consider the potential impact of surface water drainage and maximise the use of porous materials. Swales and attenuation areas can be designed to provide valuable informal open spaces within areas of built development.
- Consider the location and scale of outbuildings, driveways, access roads and areas of hard-standing as part of the overall design, ensuring that they are not dominant in views from the road.
- Minimise the scale of new development, particularly modern agricultural or commercial buildings, and design exterior finishes, colours and details to reduce the apparent size of the building.
- Retain as many existing trees as possible and plant native trees to help screen and accommodate built development, particularly where it forms a continuous line at the foot of steep slopes.
- Use buildings, styles, forms and architectural details which are characteristic of the local landscape; most contribute to a simple, sturdy and distinctive regional style.

Use of Materials

- Give careful consideration to the materials and colours of buildings in the countryside, taking inspiration from existing vernacular buildings and using local materials and building techniques wherever possible.
 - Limit the range of materials used on any one building and use natural materials, such as timber, stone and slate to link with existing buildings and trees.
 - Select cladding materials and colours for modern agricultural, forestry or industrial buildings to minimise their impact in the surrounding countryside; avoid the use of very light colours, which can reflect the light, and intense greens or blues, which often clash with the surrounding natural tones of fields and woodland.
 - Ensure that the materials and colours used are in harmony with one another and with existing buildings nearby.
 - Avoid strong contrasts between ornamental garden plants and styles and the surrounding natural landscape
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3.3 *INFRASTRUCTURE*

3.3.1 *Roads*

Recent changes in transport policy to reflect a more sustainable approach are likely to restrict the development of new roads. The Structure Plan lists a number of relatively minor improvements to the district's road network, including the Caistor Western bypass, Gainsborough to Scotter route improvement and the Middle Rasen bypass. Government policy on transportation planning suggests a stronger emphasis on minimising the impacts of transport on the environment, an improved public transport system and more integration between land use and transportation planning. National transport policy now recognises that the demands of future traffic growth should not be met simply by building new roads.

While major new road schemes are likely to be limited in future, minor road improvements and the development of privately financed roads within new housing, retail and commercial developments may nonetheless represent a significant force for change, particularly in rural areas. Here the cumulative impact of minor road improvements can have a homogenising influence on local landscape character. Pressures from increasing volumes of traffic, and in particular from heavy vehicles, have been the catalyst for straightening sections of roads, introducing kerbs, signage, white lines and lighting, and the removal of hedgerows and trees at junctions to provide visibility splays and sightlines. An increased emphasis on road safety and the upgrading of minor roads to meet the standards of current legislation has also played a part. Planning applications for new rural developments are generally required to minimise the impact on road frontages and to reinstate any hedgerows removed to improve visibility along new alignments. There is also a need to continue and extend this emphasis on high standards of design, and to pay particular attention to the conservation of local roadside features, such as hedgebanks, stone walls and bridges, which may be vulnerable to insensitive improvements.

Public transport is a key component of the transportation system yet many rural areas have an irregular bus service. The situation is hampered by the relatively low density of development and an overall increase in car ownership.

3.3.2 *Overhead Transmission Lines, Telecommunication Masts and Pylons*

Overhead transmission lines are prominent in the open arable landscapes of the broad vales and on the Wolds escarpment, where they cut across the grain of the land.

Single high communication masts or towers are associated with civil aviation, defence industries and the various telecommunication companies. Many such structures have permitted development rights and they may not be subject to planning constraints. They are particularly prominent on the open upland summits of the Wolds, where there are a number of masts. It is difficult to

predict whether the development of new masts will continue to be a significant force for change in the future as technology in this field is constantly being updated; by combining a number of transmitters onto single masts and removing any masts which have become redundant, it may be possible to minimise new developments.

3.3.3 *Renewable Energy*

There have been no applications for major wind farm developments on the Wolds, although some applications for single wind turbines have been refused. This seems unlikely to represent a significant force for change in the future, but the possibility cannot be ruled out. Wind farms must be sited in areas with a high wind speed and are prominent visually. They would have a significant impact on the distinctive and relatively small scale upland landscape of the Wolds.

3.3.4 *Flood Control Schemes and Reservoirs*

West Lindsey has three major river systems, the Trent on the western border and the Ancholme and Witham in the Lincolnshire Clay Vale to the east. All the principal river channels are enclosed by embankments which contain and control the flood waters. They also serve to prevent views to the river channels, rendering them relatively inconspicuous within the wider landscape.

Despite the embankments, the Ancholme and the Witham have inadequate flood defences. The extensive floods of April 1981 and, to a lesser extent, those in October 1993, have been the catalyst for action and there are proposals for two flood storage reservoirs at Market Rasen. The proposed reservoir near Willingham Woods would be a below-ground reservoir, which would be likely to have little visual impact, but the proposed reservoir near the golf course would be retained by a 3m embankment across the natural valley. Both reservoirs would normally be relatively dry, but are designed to prevent flood damage to the town during storm events.

Studies are underway to assess the need for flood alleviation works along the River Ancholme and the Witham. The proposals could range from improvements to the river embankments, to large flood storage reservoirs. The rivers already have a relatively engineered appearance and there may be scope for future flood alleviation schemes to incorporate meadows and washlands, re-creating some of the wetland habitats associated with the river corridor and introducing a wider diversity of landscape elements within a relatively homogeneous agricultural landscape.

There are no immediate proposals for flood alleviation schemes along the Trent in West Lindsey, where it is enclosed by steep embankments. There could only be opportunities to create new washlands if the existing embankments were moved and the Environment Agency does not anticipate this degree of change in the near future.

On a smaller scale, there has been a proliferation of small embanked farm reservoirs in the broad valleys of the Trent, the Till, the Ancholme and the Witham. These may be conspicuous when they are sited in open, flat arable landscapes. Careful siting and design is required to ensure they are integrated with surrounding landscape patterns.

3.3.5 *Broad Landscape Guidance for the Assessment and Design of Infrastructure Developments*

Volume 10 of the *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges* ⁽¹⁾ provides guidance on the environmental design of landform and alignment of new roads. The Countryside Commission has also produced some useful literature on roads in the countryside.

The Environment Agency has strict guidelines on the design and implementation of flood alleviation schemes and undertakes environmental assessments and extensive consultation for all significant schemes.

Broad Landscape Guidance for Infrastructure Developments

Siting and Design

- Avoid developing infrastructure in remote areas with a wild character
- Align routes of roads and pipelines to follow contours and minimise disruption to local landforms
- As far as possible, keep routes to lower elevations and follow natural breaks of slope; avoid straight alignments at angles to the natural grain of the land
- Avoid creating straight, geometric cuts for transmission lines through commercial forests; soften woodland edges along such corridors and design plantations to form a backdrop to power lines where they appear on the local skyline
- Consider under-grounding transmission lines for short distances to avoid breaking the skyline in sensitive locations
- Give special consideration to infrastructure developments on small islands or narrow peninsulas where they may be prominent on the skyline in local views.
- The use of existing structures to support mobile phone aerials and the practice of amalgamating several transmitters onto one mast minimises the need for visually intrusive structures.

Local Landscape Design

- Design new planting as an integral part of the infrastructure development, aiming to reinforce local landscape character and create a seamless 'fit' with the surrounding landscape
 - West Lindsey's many historic enclosure roads should be a priority for conservation - verges should be kept mown (those with calcareous grassland require specific mowing regimes) and free of planting; new tree planting of native species should be confined to the enclosing hedgerows, where it should be designed to integrate with the existing patterns of hedgerow and woodland trees. Inappropriate planting of all non-native species (particularly daffodils) should also be discouraged.
 - New (above ground) farm reservoirs require careful siting and design - earthworks should be indented and softened to reflect the grain of the local topography and new planting should be designed to integrate with surrounding landscape patterns.
 - New planting should emphasise areas of broadleaved woodland; avoid creating a linear
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(1) Department of Transport et al. 1993, *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges*, Volume 10, Environmental Design, HMSO

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- 'corridor' of planting which would draw attention to infrastructure developments.
 - Design embankments related to roads or flood defence schemes to 'flow' with the surrounding contours, minimising abrupt angles at breaks of slope and using new planting to help integrate the proposals with local landscape patterns.
 - Give special consideration to the design of local landscape associated with roads at the entrance to settlements, using traditional stone walls, hedgerows and tree planting to enhance the 'gateway' effect.
 - Use local materials characteristic of the area, is local stone for stone dykes and native species for new planting.
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3.4

MINERAL EXTRACTION

West Lindsey has valuable resources of aggregate minerals - sand and gravel, limestone and chalk. In the past, local ironstone deposits on the Wolds escarpment have also been worked, but this has long ceased to be commercially viable. There is also active oil exploration in the southern part of the district where 'nodding donkeys' are a regular local landscape feature.

There are no longer any active limestone quarries in the district, and two active chalk quarries, on the outskirts of Caistor and at Bigby. Other disused chalk pits and quarries are found on the Wolds near Caistor, at Grasby and near Swallow. They are prominent in some views of the chalk escarpment. Sand and gravel is found in the coversands areas to the north west of the district and in the Caistor area. There are workings in both. Many disused gravel pits provide excellent wildlife habitats and restoration has created some valuable wetland near Caistor and Nettleton.

Demand for sand and gravel is relatively stable, although less is likely to be required for the development of new roads in the near future. Production of chalk is also set to continue at current rates.

The *Lincolnshire Minerals Local Plan* ⁽¹⁾ sets out the County Council's policy framework for the development of mineral extraction within West Lindsey, including policies for mitigating the environmental impact of all operations.

(1) Lincolnshire Minerals Local Plan, Lincolnshire County Council, 1991

- There may be opportunities for screening quarries, particularly if they are a relatively small scale and in sheltered locations.
 - The value of disused quarries for nature conservation and as ecological education resources should be a consideration.
 - Large-scale quarries can have an immense landscape impact; locations which are relatively hidden from principal viewpoints (from public roads and from local communities) may help reduce this to some extent.
 - Phased restoration of active workings and, where possible, restoration of expired mineral workings, will lessen or obviate long term impacts and may result in some visual improvements.
 - Monitoring, frequent clearance and the wider provision of local landfill sites may help to reduce the problem of fly-tipping.
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3.5

AGRICULTURE

Future changes in agricultural subsidies and trends towards a stewardship-led approach to farming may bring benefits for biodiversity and landscape character alike. West Lindsey has a high proportion of arable land and in recent years, the agricultural subsidies of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have been the most significant controlling influence on agricultural change. Subsidies for arable production have encouraged the amalgamation of landholdings and the removal of hedgerows, trees and farm woodlands. There has also been an increase in the number and scale of modern farm buildings, most of which are prominent in the expansive, open arable farmland.

In the Wolds there is a more mixed pattern of farming, with a higher proportion of grassland than in the rest of the district. However, there has been a trend towards the amalgamation of landholdings here too, with the larger estates and farms buying up land from smaller tenant farmers. The statistics provide a striking example of agricultural change: between 1984 and 1992, the number of agricultural employees in the Wolds AONB has halved. The recent BSE crisis has further reduced the viability of cattle production, although the tradition of sheep farming on the Wolds continues, in a relatively extensive form.

Countryside Stewardship has had a positive impact on the restoration and conservation of grassland landscapes, particularly on the prominent escarpment slopes. This voluntary scheme provides farmers with a grant towards the management of key landscape elements, including hedgerows, stone walls, important grassland habitats, meadows and wetlands. However, there has recently been some dissatisfaction with the targeted nature of the scheme and with its associated bureaucracy. The grants programme as a whole is in a state of flux as the outcome of CAP reforms are, as yet, unclear.

However, future grant schemes are certain to build on the environmental awareness of Countryside Stewardship. For instance, there may be scope to develop an EC funded grassland restoration scheme in the Wolds and the new Lincolnshire Grasslands Project will also encourage the conservation and restoration of grasslands. The latter is designed to tackle the issue on a broad basis and includes funding for the restoration of farm buildings which can be used for stock, storage or fodder and for the conservation of ridge and furrow.

The availability of agri-environment grants is the principal influence on agricultural change in West Lindsey. The recent phase of hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting is the result of Countryside Stewardship funding (in the Wolds) and the availability of grants from both West Lindsey district and Lincolnshire County Council. Tree planting does not always have a positive impact - there are many examples of inappropriate planting of ornamental rather than native species, and of tree planting within the wide verges of the historic enclosure roads. Currently, the greatest threat to hedgerows is neglect or inappropriate management.

3.5.1

Broad Landscape Guidance for Agriculture

The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) provides leaflets and practical advice to farmers on sustainable agricultural practices and techniques for conservation. Further advice is available from the Countryside Agency, West Lindsey District Council, the County Council and the Wolds AONB Officer.

Broad Landscape Guidance for Agriculture

- Contrasting land management systems maintain a diverse landscape character, recognition and encouragement of traditional practices will help to maintain the distinction between upland and lowland areas.
- Retention of unimproved pastures, encouragement of conversion of semi-improved or improved land to wildlife-rich grasslands and management of herb-rich meadows and wetlands will add diversity to the lowland agricultural landscape.
- Farm and forestry tracks can be visually intrusive on a hillside; routing along screened alignments or along natural contours will help to ameliorate impact.
- Management to maintain or re-establish, where appropriate, a strong field pattern of stone walls or hedgerows will enhance the overall structure of the landscape and reduce its vulnerability to change.
- Modern agriculture can be particularly disruptive to the natural historical and archaeological heritage; education, information and incentives can help to reduce this impact.
- Overgrazing and/or the wrong type of grazing leads to loss of diversity and encroachment by bracken; appropriate sheep, deer and cattle numbers will encourage a more diverse landcover.
- Enclosure of pockets within farmland encourages woodland growth and adds diversity to the farmed landscape.

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- The clutter associated with small-holdings can detract from local landscape quality; 'good housekeeping' such as maintenance of out-buildings, removal of scrap and debris and repair of fences helps to maintain and enhance the landscape.
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3.6

WATER QUALITY

The quality of the aquatic environment, and its future management, is central to the long-term viability of West Lindsey's natural resources. Not only are the river systems of high amenity and recreational value, the purity of water supplies and the disposal of effluent are essential to public health and a high proportion of plant and animal life depends on the conservation of the aquatic environment.

Water courses are subject to a particularly wide range of uses and issues and policies relating to water quality management inevitably overlap with a number of different forces for change. For instance, water catchments are affected by trends in built development and infrastructure, agriculture, tourism and flood control. It is therefore essential that they are managed in an integrated way, through the preparation and subsequent implementation of Catchment Management Plans which balance the requirements of all the different land uses involved. This work is co-ordinated by the Environment Agency.

The recent *Grimsby Ancholme Draft Local Environment Agency Plan (LEAP)* and the *Local Environment Agency Plan for the River Witham* ⁽¹⁾ highlight the decline in the chemical quality of both rivers due to excessive nutrient enrichment. This eutrophication may cause severe diurnal swings in the dissolved oxygen content of the water and can be a significant source of stress for invertebrate and fish life. In addition to the detrimental effects of eutrophication, the quality of the aquatic environment is also affected by built development and infrastructure. Run-off from hard surfaces is often polluted and new standards apply to the construction of major infrastructure projects to ensure that they comply. Minor water courses are most at risk from poor design standards in developments and they are frequently ignored, culverted or polluted by run-off instead of being treated as a central focus for a scheme.

3.6.1

Broad Guidance for Water Quality Management

Water quality management demands an integrated approach, involving minimising the risk of pollution spills, reducing the influence and potential for diffuse pollution in the form of run-off from agricultural land or built development and the management of the river corridor landscape itself .

(1) *Local Environment Agency Plan, Upper Witham (Consultation Report)* Environment Agency, September 1996

The EC Nitrates Directive requires compulsory controls where levels exceed or are at risk of exceeding the 50mg/litre standard. The Upper Ancholme catchment has been designated a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone. Through this designation farmers are made aware of the need to limit nitrate applications. In 1997, the River Witham was designated a *Candidate Eutrophic Sensitive Area*, requiring ongoing monitoring and review of eutrophication levels.

Broad Landscape Guidance for Water Quality Management

- River corridors make a strong, positive contribution to landscape character and are extremely valuable in ecological terms. Every opportunity should be taken to enhance watercourses, including those associated with new development proposals.
 - There is a risk that new development will reduce the conservation value and scenic quality of watercourses, particularly minor streams; new developments should be designed to benefit from the visual focus and amenity value which water provides.
 - The widespread use of the *Code of Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Water* will help to reduce nutrient loads on water courses and the introduction of farm waste storage management plans will reduce the risk of pollution incidents from silage and slurry storage facilities.
 - The provision of buffer strips adjacent to water courses is considered to be good practice by the Environment Agency. It may help to intercept diffuse pollution and will enhance the ecological and landscape value of the river; however their effectiveness will depend on local soil types and rates of infiltration.
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3.7

FORESTRY AND WOODLANDS

West Lindsey is a predominantly farmed landscape, but there are extensive woodlands on the coversands in the north west of the district and in the Market Rasen area, and on the heavy clays in the southern part of the Lincolnshire Clay Vale. Elsewhere, there are scattered small farm woodlands and some significant wooded estates.

Recent trends towards new planting, woodland conservation and improved woodland management are gradually increasing the overall proportion of trees in the West Lindsey landscape. The changes are fuelled by grant schemes such as the Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) and the availability of EC funds. They also reflect a growing appreciation of the inherent value of trees and woodlands as a scenic, recreational and ecological resource.

3.7.1

Laughton Woods

The extensive conifer plantations near the villages of Blyton, Scotton and Laughton are on the acidic, sandy soils of the glacial coversands in the north western corner of the district. The landscape in this area has been undergoing a period of rapid change as the woodland has been substantially felled over the past 5 years. This is one of the most important heathland habitats in Lincolnshire and the woodlands are actively managed to conserve and enhance their ecological value, as well as for commercial forestry.

Approximately 10% of the plantation is now open heathland and new planting has been designed to include a mixture of conifers and native deciduous species. In time, the woodlands will take on a softer, more indented profile.

This area is valued for its wet heathland, a rare habitat in Lincolnshire. The nature reserve at Scotton Common is particularly important in this respect and Forest Enterprise has worked in conjunction with the Lincolnshire Trust to increase the area of heathland and reduce the impact of the forest on the local water table.

3.7.2 *Willingham Woods*

The other area of extensive forestry is on the coversands at the foot of the Wolds escarpment, near Market Rasen. Here the forest is even-aged and relatively immature and a major programme of felling and restructuring is now underway. Visitor access is a key issue here as the majority of the woodlands are in public ownership. There are also some important stream corridors within the woodlands. The Forestry Commission's *Design Plan* allows for both interests, with a combination of continuous cover (which does not imply large-scale felling) and riparian zone management, allowing open glades and 50% dappled shade near watercourses.

3.7.3 *The Lincolnshire Limewoods*

The heavy clay soils to the south east of the Lincolnshire Clay Vale have long proved to be difficult for agriculture and the area has the most important examples of small leaved lime woodland remaining in the country. The Lincolnshire Lime Woods are believed to have been under continuous woodland cover for thousands of years and the area was declared a National Nature Reserve in 1997.

The woodlands are concentrated on the summits of the low hills in this part of the Vale. Periods of poor management in the past have led to their fragmentation, partial felling and some replanting with conifers. Current *Management Plans* are designed to remove the conifers, create links between woodlands, encourage habitat restoration (for woodland, woodland edge and meadow species) and manage visitor access. A detailed review of the history of the woodlands and the potential ecological value of earlier woodland sites is being used to draw up a list of sites which would be a priority for acquisition. The Forest Enterprise has produced a detailed *Design Plan* for the woodlands which aims to co-ordinate the inputs of the many different groups with an interest in the woodlands, including English Nature, the Lincolnshire Trust and the British Butterfly Conservation Society. The National Nature Reserve status of these woodlands ensures that they will be conserved and enhanced for the foreseeable future, with carefully controlled public access (at present concentrated at Chambers Farm Wood) and the management of coppice, glades, rides and the pastures and hedgerows which surround and link the woodlands, as well as the woodlands themselves.

Small farm and estate woodlands are a crucially important part of the West Lindsey landscape. They provide shelter and enclosure and contribute to the distinctive landscape patterns which characterise different parts of the district. For instance, the mixed woodlands on the fringes of Gainsborough provide a robust landscape setting for the town, while the isolated geometric blocks of woodland in the Till Vale provide a focus and a frame for views in an expansive, open arable landscape. The woodlands at the foot of the Lincolnshire Cliff give visual definition to the slope and emphasise the strong contrast between the distinctive landscape of the escarpment and that of the surrounding open farmland. Further east, the combination of hedgerow trees and small farm woodlands in the Lincolnshire Clay Vale provides a subtle backdrop and contributes to the attractive 'layered' views which typify this rural farmland landscape. In the Wolds, woodlands again help to emphasise and define the rolling chalk topography, lending particular emphasis to the striking landforms of the dip-slope valley systems.

The importance of these woodlands is increasingly recognised, by the public, government organisations, interest groups and private landowners alike. The trend towards new planting and increased management has been encouraged by the availability of grants through the Woodland Grant Scheme and, most recently, through EC funding for 5b Areas (broadly relevant for the southern half of the district).

The Woodland Grant Scheme activity has been concentrated on shelterbelts and farm woodlands which are close to farm buildings. Some of these woodlands are valued as game coverts. The 5b Area funding is available to encourage the management of existing woodlands. It includes funding for training and has influenced some of the larger estates in their commitment to take on new woodsmen. The Brocklesby Estate, in the north east Wolds, has pioneered the development and management of mixed plantations for commercial, shelter, game and amenity use.

However, the smaller woodlands and coverts continue to suffer from neglect and lack of management and their survival is largely dependant on the attitude of the landowner. Much of West Lindsey falls within the catchment for the new biofuel power plant at Selby (which opens in November 1999) and there is likely to be an increase in the planting of short rotation coppice. Planting is already evident in areas close to Brattleby, Laughton and Market Rasen, where the coppice is developing in 5 ha blocks on flat areas of land. This will have a short-term impact on the landscape as the crop will be harvested every three years.

A community woodland is planned at the Lincolnshire showground next to the Scampton airbase and there may also be scope to develop some community woods (with improved public access) on the fringes of Gainsborough. In time, the development of some of the district's redundant air bases may well involve substantial woodland planting, which may be prominent on the exposed slopes of the limestone dip slope.

3.7.5

Broad Landscape Guidance for Forestry and Woodlands

Numerous texts, most notably the Forestry Commission's Guidelines, comprehensively cover the issue of good woodland design and management. They include *Lowland Landscape Design* ⁽¹⁾, *Forest Landscape Design* ⁽²⁾, *Forests and Water Guidelines* ⁽³⁾, *Creating New Native Woodlands* ⁽⁴⁾ and *Sustainable Forestry* ⁽⁵⁾

The following broad landscape guidelines identify ways in which forestry can make a positive contribution to landscape character while conserving important and distinctive visual relationships, landscape features, areas of semi-natural and ancient woodland and other sites of nature conservation or archaeological importance.

Broad Landscape Guidance for Forestry and Woodland

- A diverse mix of species (appropriate to the site), including broadleaf woodlands, adds visual interest and reflects more natural woodland patterns; however in a very simple landscape type a woodland with a more limited range of species may be accommodated more readily.
 - Irregularly shaped felling coupes appear more natural in the landscape, but woodland shapes should reflect those of the natural landform.
 - Recognising and responding to the relationship between woodlands and open space is fundamental to enhancing landscape character.
 - Woodland should be of a scale that reflects and integrates with both landform and land use.
 - Conservation, restoration and management of semi-natural woodlands will maintain the diversity of landscape features; estate woodlands, including ornamental species, make an important contribution to local landscape character.
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3.8

TOURISM AND RECREATION

Tourism in West Lindsey is promoted through the Tourism and Arts Division of the District Council and the county-wide organisation, Lincolnshire Tourism.

There is, as yet, no firm statistical data on visitor numbers, but the majority of people come to West Lindsey to visit friends and relatives and for short breaks. Many come for day-trips. The district has relatively few tourist 'attractions', but has a wealth of landscape, architectural and heritage interest, which is a catalyst for cyclists, walkers, boating enthusiasts and visitors who

(1) *Lowland Landscape Design Guidelines*, The Forestry Authority, 1992, HMSO

(2) *Forest Landscape Design Guidelines*, The Forestry Authority and the Forestry Commission, 1994, HMSO

(3) *Forests and Water Guidelines*, Forestry Commission, 1991, HMSO.

(4) *Creating New Native Woodlands*, Forestry Commission, Bulletin 112, 1994

(5) *Sustainable Forestry - The UK Programme*, Forestry Commission, 1994

simply enjoy scenic drives and exploring historic churches. West Lindsey is on the fringe of one of the country's most important historic cities; it has a range of scenic landscapes, including the dramatic chalk escarpment and uplands of the Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the gentle verdant farmland of the Lincolnshire Clay Vale and the northern spine of the Lincolnshire Cliff. It also has numerous attractive settlements, with historic buildings, parish churches and a wealth of archaeological interest, as well as a popular network of waterways. The district's many redundant air bases have a special draw for retired airmen and those with an interest in aviation history.

The district's principal tourist attractions are:

- *The Antiques Centre at Hemswell Cliff* - a major attraction and the largest centre in Europe. It is open 7 days a week and is the centre of operations for 280 dealers.
- *Rand Farm Park* - a popular animal farm park
- *Gainsborough Old Hall*
- *Stow Minster*
- *Bransby Home of Rest for Horses* - an equestrian rescue centre
- *The Market Rasen Races*
- *The Lincolnshire Show*

The District Council actively encourages the development of tourism and recreational activities which complement the inherent character and culture of the district, recognising that 'soft tourism', in the form of walking, cycling, boating and short-breaks is a key aspect of the strategy. The Viking Way, a popular long distance footpath crosses the district and is particularly well-used in the Wolds. Recent tourist projects have included the development of the Sustrans route from Hull to Harwich, which runs through the district and of several local feeder cycle routes. There are also new cycle routes in the district's three principal woodlands, Laughton Woods, Willingham Woods and Chambers Farm Wood.

The development of the new marina at Burton Waters and improvements to the waterfront in Gainsborough will provide new moorings and are likely to encourage increased boating activity on the Trent, as well as the ever popular Fossedyke waterway.

- Frequent viewing points and small car parks (with advanced signs) along roads will provide more opportunities for visitors to experience the landscape, reduce congestion and encourage people to leave their cars.
 - Development and management of footpaths for short distance (2-3 mile) walks will open up local areas of landscape to a large number of people.
 - The use of local materials for buildings and infrastructure developments associated with tourism will help to ensure that they are well-integrated with the surrounding landscape and reflect a strong sense of local identity.
 - The nostalgic value of the airbases and their importance to aviation heritage should be recognised and retained in plans for their future re-development.
 - The 'nodes' of West Lindsey's waterways (bridges and crossing points) provide important opportunities for views and for appreciating the wider landscape context as many of the waterways are enclosed by steep embankments. They should be a priority for tourist activity and enhancement programmes.
 - Allocation and enforcement of specific mountain bike routes will help to reduce erosion on other tracks and footpaths.
 - In naturally wooded landscapes, appropriate planting around caravan parks will help reduce their landscape impact while retaining outward views; in more open landscapes, landform screening may be more appropriate. Control of the scale of caravan parks will also help to limit visual impact.
 - Waterside and marina developments can be used to enhance and invigorate poor quality urban waterfronts.
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4.1 A STRATEGIC APPROACH

The Landscape Assessment highlights the value of landscape diversity and of recognising and reinforcing contrasts in landscape character. It covers *all* the landscapes within West Lindsey, not just those which are widely recognised for their scenic, nature conservation or heritage value, and places particular emphasis on those landscapes which provide the setting to local towns and villages.

The countryside is a dynamic resource; patterns of land use and landscape character have evolved over hundreds of years of cultivation, land management and settlement. The landscape assessment identifies the key forces for change which are currently most influential and provides guidance to help accommodate change in a positive way. However, it also indicates those landscapes which are particularly sensitive to change and highlights the need to consider the capacity of the landscape to accommodate development, new activities and changes of use without loss of local character and identity.

Nevertheless, there is also a strong emphasis on the potential for enhancement and on finding opportunities to improve landscape character through the design and management of new and existing landscapes, including those which are recognised and protected for their landscape, heritage or wildlife interest.

In recent years, the increasingly standardised approach to development has led to the homogenisation of both urban and rural landscapes. The landscape assessment is intended to build an understanding of the striking variations in landscape character across West Lindsey and to describe how the design of new buildings and the management of the countryside resource can help to conserve landscape diversity and (in many instances) bolster its capacity to accommodate further development. This requires a proactive approach. Areas under pressure for development have a particular need for strong design to counteract the tendency for homogenisation and to ensure that development always reinforces local landscape quality and diversity.

Encouraging high quality design must therefore be a priority. This implies providing clearer guidance and advice to planners and developers on the siting, design and layout of developments in different settlements and landscape types. It also implies a more integrated and locally-based approach to design and planning in which opportunities for conservation, environmental enhancement and landscape management are considered in parallel with opportunities for development.

4.1.1

A Baseline for Monitoring Future Landscape Change

The landscape assessment provides a detailed survey of landscape character and condition. It is one of several surveys which can be used as a baseline against which future landscape change can be monitored. Other possible resources for monitoring change in West Lindsey include the *Lincolnshire State of the Environment Report* ⁽¹⁾ and the *Lincolnshire Phase 1 Habitat Survey*, a habitat and land use survey based on aerial photographs which provides simplified but useful baseline information.

Suggested indicators for monitoring landscape change in each of the district's 14 landscape character areas are shown in *Table 4.1* below.

Table 4.1 *Possible Baseline Indicators for Monitoring Landscape Change*

LCA	Possible Indicators
1. Loughton Woods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of heathland within LCA • Proportion of conifer : broadleaf woodland • Number of individual field boundary oak/ash trees per 200m boundary • Retained clear views to village churches
2. Trent Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of hedgerows (measured in metres) • Average number of hedgerow trees per 100m hedge • Proportion of conifer : broadleaf woodland • Area of woodland • Area of semi-natural woodland (using indicator species for semi-natural ancient woodland)
3 Till Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of woodland • Proportion of woodland : woodland edge species • Length of hedgerows within LCA • Length of historic enclosure roads (wide verges + hedgerows). • Number of new farm buildings
4. Lincolnshire Cliff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of pasture : arable fields • Area of broadleaf woodland • Quality of water in ponds at foot of scarp • Area of village greens and number of mature trees associated with public open space within villages.

(1) Lincolnshire State of the Environment Report, 1995, Lincolnshire County Council

LCA	Possible Indicators
5. Limestone Dip Slope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of hedgerows lost • Average number of hedgerow trees per 200m hedgerow • Length of historic enclosure roads (wide verges and hedgerows) • Water flow within dip-slope streams • Area of limestone grassland on the roadside verges and in minor-dry valleys • Length of limestone walls • Number of redundant air base buildings
6. Lincoln Fringe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of village greens and number of mature trees associated with public open space within villages. • Length of hedgerows lost • Average number of hedgerow trees per 200m. • Area of pasture
7. Fenland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average number of field boundary trees per 400m • Length of watercourses with established riparian vegetation • Number of large agricultural buildings.
8. Lincolnshire Limewoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of ancient woodland and number of rare indicator species - monitor in line with <i>Design Plan</i> • Proportion of conifer : broadleaf woodland • Proportion of pasture : arable fields • Number of derelict farm buildings • Average number of hedgerow trees per 100m
9. Lincolnshire Clay Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of hedgerows lost • Average number of hedgerow trees per 200m. • Area of pasture • Length of watercourses with established riparian vegetation • Length of enclosure roads (wide verges + hedgerows) • Number of derelict farm buildings
10. The Kelseys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of pasture • Number of hedgerow trees per 200m • Length and condition of mature avenues • Length of ancient hedgerows • Area of acidic grassland
11. Heathland Belt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of conifer : broadleaf woodland • Area of pasture • Number of hedgerow trees per 200m • Length and condition of mature avenues • Length of ancient hedgerows • Area of heathland
12 N W Wolds Escarpment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of chalk grassland • Proportion of arable : pasture • Number of mature beech and Scots pine in summit clumps • Length of hedgerows.

LCA	Possible Indicators
13 Lincolnshire Wolds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of chalk grassland • Proportion of arable : pasture • Proportion of conifer : broadleaf woodland • Number of hedgerow trees per 200m • Number of redundant air base buildings • Length of historic enclosure roads
14 Wolds' Estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area of chalk grassland • Proportion of arable : pasture • Proportion of conifer : broadleaf woodland • Number of hedgerow trees per 200m

4.1.2 *Using the Landscape Assessment*

The landscape assessment is designed for use by everyone involved in the planning and management of landscapes. It provides a common point of reference and will encourage inter-agency co-operation. It may also be used as an educational tool for promoting landscape and conservation issues.

In practice, the assessment is most likely to be used by local authorities, government departments and agencies, voluntary conservation organisations, developers and consultants (landscape architects, architects, urban designers, ecologists, planners, foresters, recreation and tourism specialists etc) from the private sector. It may also be used by local community groups and schools. In addition, researchers from a range of different academic fields would benefit from the systematic approach adopted by the assessment, and from the availability of a baseline description of the landscape at a point in time.

Landscape issues relate to a complex web of forces for change. One development pressure will often directly or indirectly affect others and their impacts will be unevenly distributed. It is therefore crucial to adopt an integrated approach - to the broad issues of land use and landscape management, and to the specific issues relating to the siting and design of new development. The landscape assessment provides a common framework for this integrated approach, establishing principles to guide the decision-making process at a range of different scales, from landscape management strategies (eg for a country park) to design briefs for individual development sites.

4.1.3 *Summary of Key Issues Arising from the Landscape Assessment*

At a strategic level, the key issues affecting West Lindsey's landscapes can be summarised as:

- *The loss of distinctive landscape settings to settlements*
- *The erosion of distinctive rural landscape patterns and features*
- *The impact of agricultural buildings in the rural landscape*
- *The future of West Lindsey's redundant air bases*
- *The decline of natural habitats*
- *Damage to the landscape setting of historic and archaeological features.*

4.2 *THE LOSS OF DISTINCTIVE LANDSCAPE SETTINGS TO SETTLEMENTS*

West Lindsey has a relatively dispersed settlement pattern, with numerous small villages and hamlets. There is a strong relationship between landscape character and settlement; many villages are sited on springlines or on slightly elevated land, so that there are distinct 'lines' of settlement which reflect the local topography.

Most settlements derive their sense of place and identity from distinctive views, local landmarks or landscape features. However, recent expansion has often ignored these distinctive landscape settings, resulting in settlements which are fringed by housing estates and approached through a ribbon of suburbia. Large housing estates on the fringes of settlements tend to cut villages and towns off from their landscape setting, blocking local views and footpaths and destroying the often subtle relationship between local field patterns and the pattern of streets and buildings. The expanded villages which are within commuting distance of Lincoln are particularly affected, but the issue is relevant throughout the district.

Priorities for Action

- *Incorporate the Landscape Assessment into the Local Plan, as it is reviewed, and into site-specific Development Briefs to ensure that development proposals respect distinctive landscape settings and form a positive relationship with the surrounding landscape. When adapted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, the Countryside Design Summary will also help to promote high quality design and an appreciation of the importance of landscape setting.*
- *Recognise the landscape settings of towns and villages and avoid a standardised approach - for instance the implementation of broad landscape belts around new development which could obscure views and detract from the local relationship between settlements and their landscape context.*

- *Ensure new development is associated with schemes for landscape enhancement, particularly at key locations, such as entrances along principal approach roads and local settlement edges, where recent development may have been detrimental to the landscape setting.*

4.3

THE EROSION OF DISTINCTIVE RURAL LANDSCAPE PATTERNS AND FEATURES

The landscape assessment defines and describes important variations in landscape character and landscape diversity across West Lindsey. The assessment identifies the distinctive rural landscape patterns and features which contribute to scenic quality at both local and regional scales; prominent examples, such as the pattern of fields and woodlands on the slopes of the Wolds' escarpment, are of regional importance, but more subtle variations in landscape pattern also merit recognition and conservation. Examples are the contrast in enclosure and field pattern between the rolling, relatively wooded farmland on the fringes of Gainsborough and the expansive arable fields of the *Till Vale* or between the small-scale, contoured field pattern typical of the chalk valleys and the broader, rolling field pattern of the 'tops'. Even relatively nondescript elements, such as the tall hedgerow ash trees, found throughout the district and often seen in isolation against the sky, make a crucial contribution to local landscape character.

Distinctive rural landscape patterns and features are uniquely site specific as they are directly related to variations in the underlying bedrock and to physiographic features. Most have evolved over the years from traditional patterns of farming, forestry and settlement, which have in turn been influenced by physical landscape factors.

Since most of the region's distinctive landscape patterns and features are historic remnants, they are particularly vulnerable to landscape change resulting from development, land management practices or simply neglect. The landscape assessment provides ample visual evidence of the ongoing erosion of distinctive landscape patterns and features. It is occurring in a piecemeal way, but the effects are cumulative. Each of the Landscape Character Area descriptions includes sections on *Landscape Sensitivity*, which highlight the most sensitive parts of the landscape, and *Principles for Landscape Management*, which provide guidance on how to tackle the problem in different types of landscape. In general terms, landscapes which are described as sensitive are particularly vulnerable to the erosion of distinctive landscape patterns and features.

Priorities for Action

- *Recognise the importance of conserving distinctive landscape features and patterns throughout West Lindsey by incorporating the landscape assessment and its recommendations into the Local Plan and making particular reference to the conservation of those parts of the landscape which are identified as 'sensitive' (such as skylines, river corridors, pastures etc.).*

- *Develop landscape management action plans to ensure the conservation and enhancement of key landscape features (such as the 'Cliff' escarpment slopes) rather than site-specific protected areas which only form part of the overall composition.*
- *Establish a programme for monitoring the extent of key landscape features such as hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with a scheme for their ongoing management and replacement, taking account of the landscape patterns which typify the different landscape character areas.*
- *Adopt an integrated approach to landscape issues, liaising closely with organisations such as the Lincolnshire Trust, the Environment Agency, English Nature and the Forest Enterprise.*
- *Review the relevance of the designated Areas of Great Landscape Value in the light of the landscape assessment, which adopts the premise that all landscapes are important and that policies should focus on promoting landscape diversity and distinctive landscape character.*

4.4

THE IMPACT OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS IN THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

Taken as a whole, West Lindsey has a relatively expansive landscape characterised by long views and big skies. The *Till Vale*, *Fenland* and *Lincolnshire Clay Vale* landscapes are particularly open, with a large scale pattern of fields and prominent, dispersed groups of farm buildings. As agriculture has become increasingly intensified, the buildings required for storing produce and machinery and the specific structures designed for intensive poultry rearing have become dominant landscape elements. They are often silhouetted against the skyline. Many are associated with stands of conifers which create a harsh, blocky outline and often serve to draw attention to the structures.

Traditional farm buildings are often redundant and most are derelict or only partially used. While a new grant is available to encourage their restoration and use as agricultural buildings for livestock farming, there is also ongoing pressure to convert isolated barns and other farm buildings for residential use. This raises some difficult issues; conversion requires sensitive design to ensure that windows, chimneys and doors do not detract from the distinctive agricultural character of the buildings. Access roads, electricity cables, garden fencing and ornamental planting can all be intrusive in a predominantly agricultural setting. On the other hand, such conversion may offer a way to conserve historic buildings which are significant landscape features in their own right. Inevitably each case must be taken in context. Conversion may be inappropriate in some of the district's most sensitive landscapes, while in others it may represent a realistic way forward. In each case the immediate landscape setting of the farm buildings and views from surrounding routes and footpaths must be taken into account.

Priorities for Action

- *Publish guidelines for the siting and design of large agricultural structures which include detailed guidance on tree planting, the use of materials and the relationship of the structures to adjacent buildings.*
- *Adopt a cautious approach to the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use, taking account of the immediate landscape setting and key views and considering the detailed design of boundaries, planting and access roads, as well as the architectural design of the building itself.*

4.5

THE FUTURE OF WEST LINDSEY'S REDUNDANT AIR BASES

West Lindsey's many redundant air bases have a strong and generally negative influence on local landscape character. They are concentrated on the exposed, relatively flat farmland of the *Limestone Dip Slope* (Hemswell Cliff, Scampton) the *Till Vale* (Sturgate, Blyton), the *Lincolnshire Clay Vale* (Faldingworth) and the *Wolds Dip Slope* (Binbrook). Some are virtually intact and partially used for commercial enterprise, but others lie derelict. All have many redundant buildings, acres of concrete and inaccessible fenced-off land. The air bases represent a substantial under-used land resource, which has much economic potential. However, the cost of redeveloping large brownfield sites in this rural location is relatively high and it has proved extremely difficult to find viable new land uses.

The air bases contribute little to the surrounding landscape character and generally have a degrading influence. Many are prominent as they tend to be located on exposed, elevated sites. Their redevelopment would require the restoration of a landscape structure which integrates with the scale and character of the surrounding farmland.

Priorities for Action

- *Ensure that proposals for the re-development of the district's redundant air bases are accompanied by large-scale planting. The planting should be designed to create a new landscape structure for the whole area, which integrates with surrounding field patterns and forms a robust framework for new development.*
- *Where possible, new development should incorporate some local aviation landmarks (control towers, hangers, runway alignments etc) which have become an important part of the history of the site.*

4.6

THE DECLINE OF NATURAL HABITATS

The conservation and management of semi-natural habitats, such as chalk and limestone grassland, ancient woodland, washlands and heathland is vitally

important to maintain and enhance natural biodiversity. West Lindsey has important examples of all such habitats, which are of national significance. However, the district also has a rich matrix of verges, hedgerows, ditches, field margins and copses which, though relatively minor in national terms, are nonetheless of immense cumulative value. Such landscapes also make an important visual contribution to the landscape, but because they are of little direct economic value, they are under constant pressure from all aspects of landscape change and particularly from built development.

There are opportunities to conserve and enhance the matrix of habitats across the district, concentrating on developing links between existing disparate linear elements, such as hedgerows and verges, and creating a richer diversity of natural habitats.

Priorities for Action

- *Indicate all designated sites of nature conservation importance (national and local) in the Local Plan, so that they can be conserved and enhanced through the development control process.*
- *Encourage a practical and proactive approach to the ongoing design and management of all sites of nature conservation importance.*
- *Make use of the Lincolnshire Phase 1 Habitat Survey, a set of plans based on an aerial survey which provides an invaluable baseline record of the district's natural resources.*
- *Wherever possible, build on the educational potential of sites of nature conservation potential, encouraging visitors and informal recreation at sites where small numbers of visitors will not damage the conservation resource.*

4.7 **DAMAGE TO THE LANDSCAPE SETTING OF HISTORIC AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES**

West Lindsey's wealth of historical and archaeological features is a unique and priceless aspect of its landscape heritage; many churches and deserted medieval village sites are also important and well-known landmarks. However, they are threatened by neglect and by ongoing landscape change, particularly in the form of agricultural intensification, infrastructure and built development.

There is a need for careful conservation of the features themselves, and wherever possible, their wider landscape setting. This may most easily be accomplished as part of a careful process of site appraisal and design. The presence of heritage features on a site will often form the basis for a more distinctive design, contributing to local identity and to the conservation and enhancement of landscape character.

Priorities for Action

- *Recognise and promote the importance of the wider landscape setting of historic landscape features, taking account of local views and historic or visual relationships.*
- *Indicate historic landscape features (and their landscape settings) in the Local Plan, so that they can be conserved and enhanced through the development control process.*
- *Encourage a pro-active approach to the ongoing design and management of historic sites and designed landscapes, taking account of relevant historic research and precedents, but incorporating fresh ideas and techniques wherever appropriate. There is a tendency to allow heritage sites to become 'fossilised' and consequently to suffer from degradation and neglect.*

4.8

A VALUABLE HERITAGE

This landscape assessment is intended to lay the foundation for a common framework for policies and action on the landscape by all concerned. It may be used as a tool for creative conservation and landscape enhancement as well as a basis for seeking opportunities for robust and attractive new development and for providing guidance on siting and design.

West Lindsey's landscapes are a unique and valuable asset. They contribute to the special quality of life of the people who live and work in the region and are likely to be increasingly important in encouraging economic investment in the form of employment and tourism. Yet the landscape represents a vulnerable resource, faced with mounting pressures for change. If left unguided and unchecked these pressures will gradually erode the landscape's special qualities. Action now will enable landscape change to be positive, creative and effective.

GLOSSARY

Analysis - the process of breaking the landscape down, usually in descriptive terms, into its component parts in order to understand how it is made up.

Approach - the step-wise process by which a landscape assessment is undertaken.

Assessment - an umbrella term used to encompass all the many different ways of looking at, describing, analysing and evaluating landscape.

Character - a distinct pattern or combination of elements that occurs consistently in a particular landscape.

Character Area - a geographic area with a consistent character and identity.

Characteristic - an element that contributes to local distinctiveness (eg narrow winding lanes, vernacular building style).

Classification - a process of sorting the landscape into different types, each with a distinct, consistent and recognisable character.

Description - verbal description of what a landscape looks like. This is usually carried out in a systematic manner, but may also include personal reactions to the landscape.

Element - a component part of the landscape (eg hedges, road, woods).

Feature - a prominent, eye-catching element (eg wooded hilltop, church spire).

Landcover - combinations of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface.

Landform - combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface.

Landscape - the term refers primarily to the visual appearance of the land, including its shape, form and colours. However, the landscape is not a purely visual phenomenon; its character relies on a whole range of other dimensions, including geology, topography, soils, ecology, archaeology, landscape history, land use, architecture and cultural associations.

