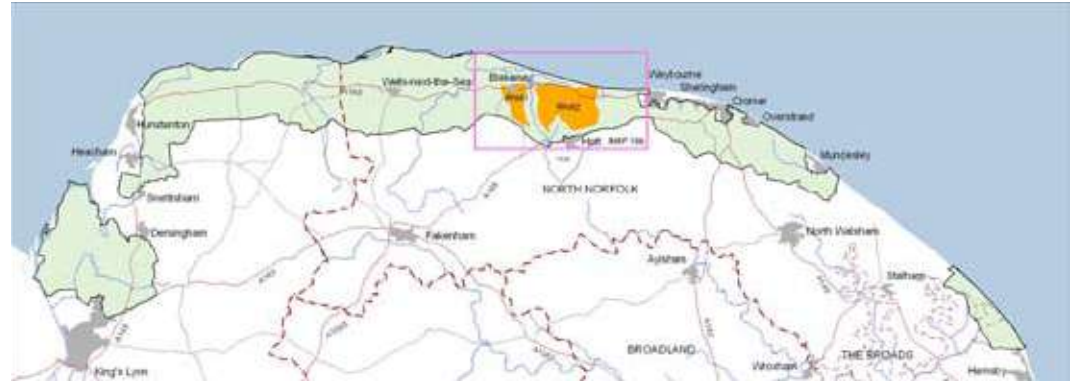




# rolling heath & arable



# Integrated landscape character



MAP 19a - Landscape Character Type - Rolling Heath and Arable

The Rolling Heath and Arable landscape type has developed on a ridge of terminal moraine which extends from the Cromer Ridge to the Blakeney Esker. The underlying Chalk bedrock is completely smothered by this dramatic ridge of glacial deposits, which results from the meeting of two glacial lobes during the Anglian Glaciation. The ridge is made up of contorted layers of sands, gravels, clays and chalk, but the heathlands of the Rolling Heath and Arable landscape type have developed where the upper layers are dominated by sandy deposits.

The combination of elevated land, long seaward views and a mosaic of heathland landscapes makes this one of the 'feature' landscapes of the AONB. The heathy ridge abuts the coast, ending in sandy cliffs so there is a strong, immediate juxtaposition between heathland slopes and sea. This contrasts with the coastline to the west, where the hills and sea are typically separated by a vast extent of open marsh. The light sandy soils and long views across adjacent lowlands would have been attractive to early settlers and Kelling Heath is one of the richest known early Mesolithic sites, with scattered flintwork found over an extensive area. Settlement on the heaths continued through the Neolithic and Bronze Age. A group of over 30 early Bronze Age barrows has survived on the uncultivated heathlands of Salthouse and Kelling and there is evidence that some may have Neolithic origins.

Heathland has developed on light sandy soils, which dry out rapidly. On higher land the soils become pure sandy gravels which have long been marginal for agriculture. The majority of the heaths were common land, used for a wide variety of purposes. Wood, furze and turf were cut for fuel; clay, sand, gravel and local stone were used as building materials and the foldcourse system of managing sheep required common grazing, especially on the heaths. During the 18th and 19th centuries, extensive heathlands were enclosed, reclaimed and converted to arable land. This practice would have been most successful in areas where the glacial sand and gravel deposits were relatively shallow so that marl pits could be dug and the chalky material spread on the fields. The soils of the core heathlands (such as Kelling Heath) would have been too acidic to reclaim for agriculture and it is likely that the heathlands have persisted here for generations<sup>1</sup>. They are remnants of an ancient landscape, probably little altered since the Bronze Age?

Here a varied mosaic of heath, scrub, light woodland and acid grassland has developed. The heathland and areas of acid grassland are of exceptionally high biodiversity value - the Rolling Heath and Arable Landscape Type has the most extensive stretches of heathland found outside the Brecks and all of the heathland areas are nationally or locally designated sites. Woodland is found in the wetter hollows and on the crests of hills. It is generally the result of

<sup>1</sup> Tom Williamson, *Heaths and Wood Pastures: aspects of the landscape history of Norfolk Heathland*. UEA, 2006

## Integrated landscape character (continued)

natural regeneration from heathland and the diverse, subtle range of variation in habitat type and scale is of high ecological value. The areas of woodland tend to break up the heathland into smaller discrete blocks and make the area feel much larger than it actually is. On flatter land, small arable fields are bounded by banks and low spare, gappy hedges. Some of the hedges are sculpted by the wind and are significant features in the wider landscape. There are occasional older tree assemblages, older field boundaries (with multi-species hedges), coppiced woodland, veteran trees and ponds. The intimacy of the rolling small hillocks and slopes of Muckleborough Hill and the Kelling and Salthouse Heaths is strangely contrasted with the long views out from within these areas over the sea and along the coast in either direction. Settlement is compact and densely clustered at Salthouse, Blakeney and Cley. The settlements have a strong core of vernacular buildings, each with a prominent church. Beyond the historic core, post-war development bears no resemblance to the character and layout of the original settlement. There are few farmsteads or other buildings outside the settlements.

# Landscape sensitivity and change

The whole of the Rolling Arable & Heathland landscape type is within the Norfolk Coast AONB. It is a highly distinctive and sensitive landscape, of exceptional visual and ecological value. Key environmental assets which are sensitive to change are:

- The diverse mosaic of heathland landscapes, which include open heathland, acid grassland, light woodland and heathland scrub, which are ecologically valuable.
- Long views to the coast – the juxtaposition of heathland and sea – with sandy cliffs abutting the coastal marshes – is in contrast to the extensive flat farmland and marshland landscapes which characterise the shoreline to the west.
- Individual distinctive mature landscape features – including wind-sculpted hedges, mature clumps of trees (particularly on hill tops), older field boundaries (with multi-species hedges), coppiced woodland, veteran trees and ponds.
- Wild, undeveloped character – virtually no development outside the clustered settlements of Salthouse, Cley & Blakeney.
- The vernacular historic buildings and layout of the clustered settlements.
- Sites which are of national importance for geology and geomorphology, including Kelling Heath, a nationally important example of relict glacial outwash plain, including ice-contact slopes and dry valleys.



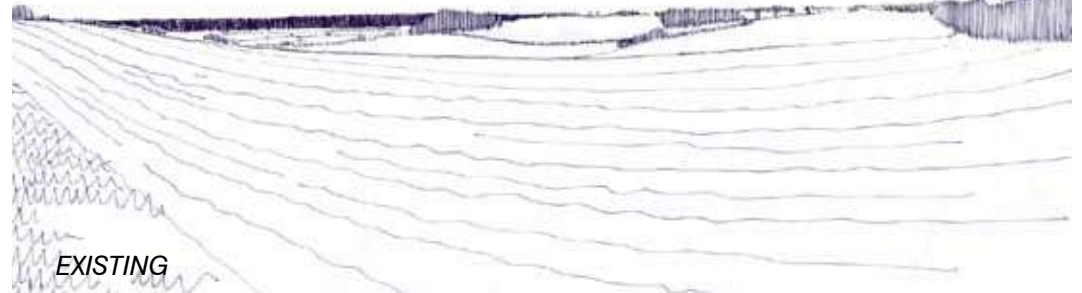
# Variations in character

Variations in character and inherent landscape sensitivities are highlighted in the two distinctive landscape character areas found within the Rolling Heathland & Arable landscape type:

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
<b>Blakeney - RHA1</b>	<p>Gradually sloping landform, rather than the scarp slopes of terminal moraine in other parts of the type. Blakeney Esker is a ribbon of gravely soil ridge, forming an interrupted heathy line diagonally across the area (designated as SSSI for geology, part of which is also a Local Nature Reserve). Lower presence of heathland &amp; woodland than in other parts of the type. A larger area of woodland associated with Bayfield Hall, but this is distinct from the more 'heathy' woods over the majority of the type because it is more mature. Area around Wiveton Downs has strong traditional character</p> <p>Significant erosion has taken place where the esker has been quarried in the past</p> <p>Blakeney village is a relatively large settlement with a clustered, nucleated structure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heathland ridge associated with the esker – landform, geology and heathland ecology</li> <li>• Wild character of the heathland mosaic. Sense of semi-remoteness</li> <li>• Undeveloped character (outside clustered settlements)</li> <li>• Long coastal views</li> <li>• Mature woodland and trees of Bayfield Hall</li> <li>• Distinctive vernacular character &amp; mature tree cover of central core of Blakeney</li> </ul>

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
<b>Salthouse &amp; Kelling - RHA2</b>	Relatively recent forestry on former heaths in southern part of the area. Presence of ad hoc horsiculture, a very prominent garden centre, together with some gentrified barn conversions, new railway sheds, telecom masts etc – erodes the otherwise wild character of the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parts of the area are very remote and have a wild character – Salthouse &amp; Kelling Heaths</li> <li>• Ecological and visually important heathland landscapes – natural pattern of the heathland mosaic with natural transitions between acid grassland, regenerating woodland and open heath</li> <li>• Long views over heaths and out to sea</li> <li>• Intimate rolling hillocks and hills in Kelling area</li> <li>• Undeveloped character – contributes to wild, remote feel</li> </ul>

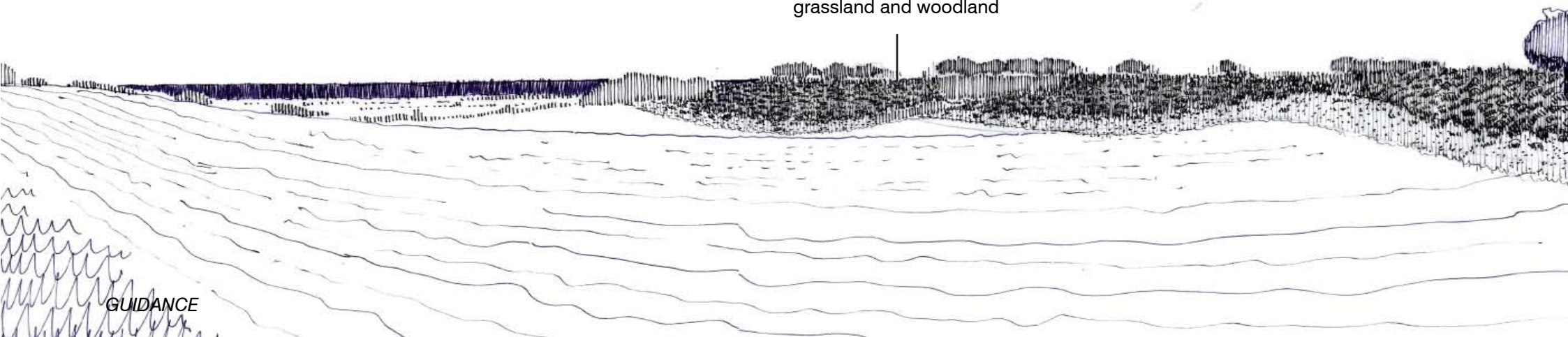
THE VALUABLE MOSAIC OF HEATH/SCRUB/WOODLAND  
AND ACID GRASSLAND IS OFTEN LOST TO A LARGER ARABLE FIELDS



## Key forces for change

- Changes to the agricultural economy and particularly the introduction of agri-environmental grants, have led to positive changes in landscape character – reinstatement or conservation of hedgerows and woodlands, arable reversion to heath/acid grassland habitats and wide grassed field margins.
- Pressure for extensions to properties, conversion of vernacular buildings and farm buildings, loss of gardens with mature trees, and introduction of new agricultural buildings, all of which tend to erode the undeveloped, wild character of the landscape.
- Homogeneous estate-type development on the fringes of the principal clustered settlements, which undermine the traditional form of settlement and the gateways and views towards them.

Reintroduce the characteristic mosaic of lowland heath,  
grassland and woodland

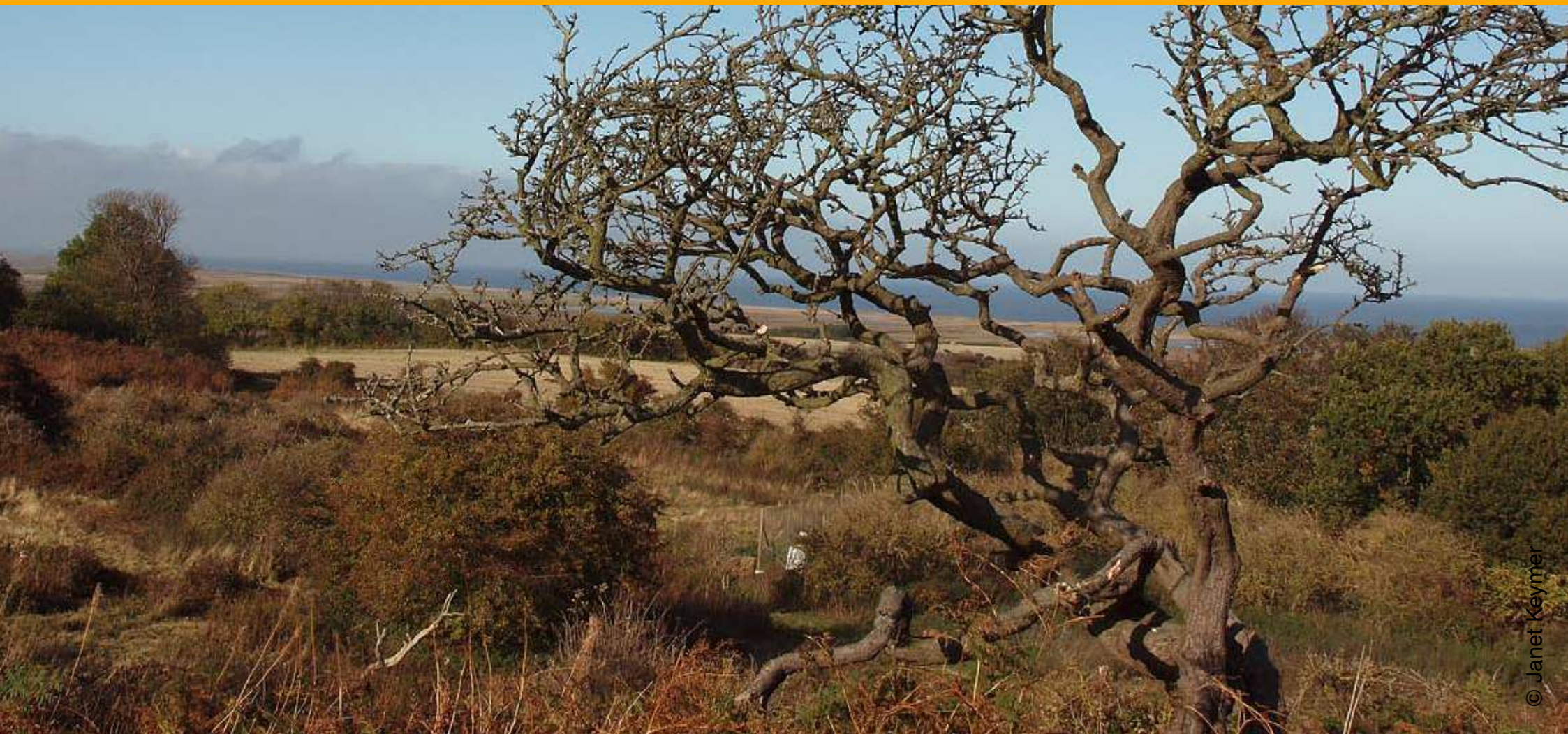




## 20 year vision

enhance + create

A natural mosaic of acid grassland, mire and open heath grazed by stock and bordered by areas of regenerating woodland, copses and veteran trees. The heathlands are expanding and existing heaths are surrounded by an inter-connected network of former arable land in various stages of reversion to heathland. The undulating heathy ridge has a wild, remote character with exhilarating seaward views.





# Integrated landscape guidance

## 1 **Conserve the diverse mosaic of heathland landscapes and the balanced natural transitions between them, which are in a constant state of flux**

- Aim to extend the core existing areas of lowland heathland habitat, which is a nationally rare and ecologically important landscape (and a priority BAP habitat).
- The imposition of new cropping regimes or woodland cover could alter the balance between the elements in the heathland mosaic. The aim should be to retain an ecologically rich balance of open heathland, scrub, acid grassland and woodland in an interconnected matrix.
- Aim to achieve a net gain in heathland area through changes in the balance of the landscape mosaic – ie create new heath on arable land, or new woodland on arable land and heath on woodland.
- Woodland is a defining and highly valuable landscape feature within the overall mosaic – because it is valuable in habitat terms and because (from a visual perspective) the woodlands serve to compartmentalise the landscape, making a relatively small heathland area seem bigger than it actually is.
- Proposals for heathland restoration within existing woodland areas should be accompanied by proposals for woodland creation of the same area on other land within the same visual envelope of land (in order to retain the existing but secure the future landscape/ ecological character of the area).
- Minimise conifer plantations – where commercial plantations occur, they should generally be small in scale and on areas adjoining heathland landscapes, so that they do not impinge on the ecologically rich heathland areas, but provide cover for wildlife on heathland margins.
- Establish arable field margins as potential nest sites for ground nesting birds and habitats for small mammals and invertebrates <sup>1</sup>.
- Manage and where possible replant hedgerows to maintain the scale and pattern of the landscape and enhance ecological connectivity.
- Changes of use from arable to intensive ‘horsiculture’, stud farms or other semi-agricultural practices would be contrary to the character of the landscape, difficult to integrate and likely to be jarring features.

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/countryside/farming/advice/farmhabitats/margins/index.asp>

# Integrated landscape guidance (continued)

## **2 Conserve the remote, wild character of the heathland areas**

- Avoid siting wind turbines on elevated ridgetops, offshore or in adjacent landscape types which are visible in views from elevated heathland landscapes.
- New developments – even of small scale structures, farm buildings or changes to road alignments can cumulatively erode the wild remote qualities of this highly sensitive landscape. Every intervention requires careful visual appraisal and design to ensure that it is integrated within the landscape.
- Roads, tracks and driveways should avoid standard ‘suburban’ highway features such as kerbing, signage, ‘entrance’ pillars, widening and mown verges.
- Avoid ‘tidying up’ and removal of heathy vegetation following landscape intervention or change, for instance in relation to the restoration of gravel workings or the quarried areas on the Blakeney Esker. Remediation should aim to recreate the natural contours and reintroduce the ecological character of the area, allowing reversion to managed heathland so that the wild, natural character of the landscape is reinforced.

## **3 Conserve the characteristic long, uninterrupted views to the sea, inland and along the coast**

- Ensure the sensitive location of development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines for example) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- Changes to the use of prominent landscape features or settlements can impinge on views over extensive areas eg built development, quarries, roads, commercial buildings, petrol filling stations etc.
- Avoid gentrification of the few isolated buildings in the wider rural landscape as this has a severely detrimental impact on the wild character of the area.

# Integrated landscape guidance (continued)

## 4 **Conserve the distinctive character and layout of local clustered settlements**

- Ensure any new development is well integrated with appropriate large scale planting, if necessary, taking every opportunity to extend the mosaic of heathland landscapes and features which are characteristic of the area.
- The gateways and approaches to settlements are under particular pressure for change – roads, new development and boundary treatments in these areas should be designed to take account of the view from the road and the 'first impression of the settlement. Avoid suburban-style fencing, ribbon development along the road, dominant signage and wide road carriageways.
- Avoid the introduction of suburban features, including gardens, fencing, lighting, large windows, parking areas and entrance driveways, which can cumulatively alter the rural character of the landscape.
- Retain mature trees within gardens (with Tree Preservation Orders) and conserve the remaining areas of open space within and on the fringes of settlements – avoid cramming necessary development within the existing boundaries of settlements with consequent loss of trees and open spaces which contribute to the character of the settlement (and its integration within the countryside in views from afar).
- Consider further expansion on suitable sites which may be outside settlement boundaries, utilising the best adjacent characteristics of the built and rural landscape to inform the character of the new development. Such development could also enhance or reinforce those areas of villages which have degraded character.
- Consider the impact of new development in views from the surrounding (particularly elevated) rural views.
- New farm buildings or conversions require exceptionally high standards of siting and design – large scale native woodland and hedgerow planting, with organic, natural edges, may be required to integrated into the surrounding landscape.

## Detailed maps

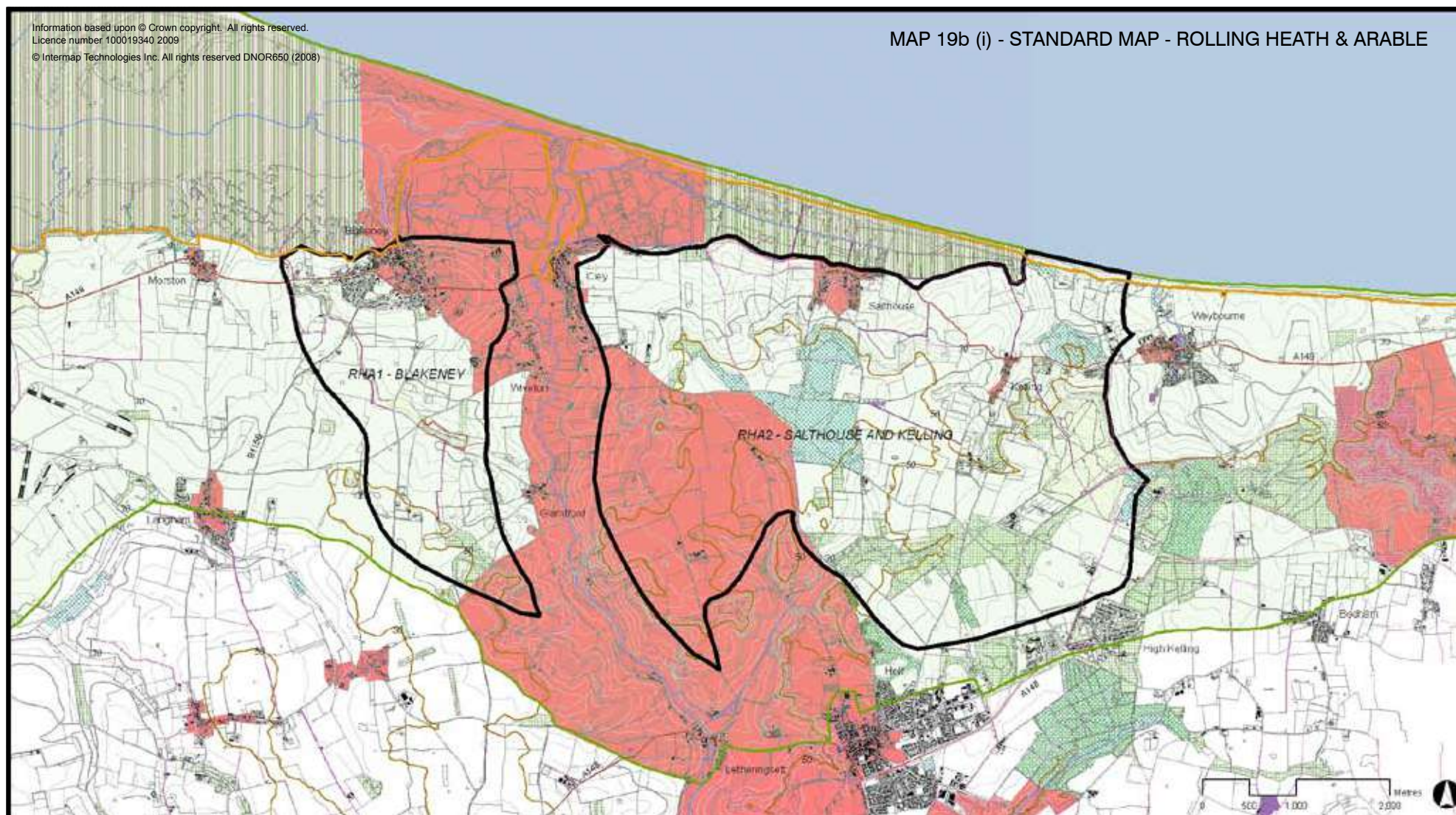
- **Standard** - landform, drainage, rights of way and statutory designations
- **Biodiversity** - ecological networks <sup>2</sup>
- **Historic landscapes** - broad historic landscape character types <sup>3</sup> and data from the Historic Environment Record <sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Norfolk Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, July 2006, *Ecological Network Mapping Project for Norfolk*

<sup>3</sup> Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, January 2009, *Norfolk Historic Landscape Character - a report on the Norfolk Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project*

<sup>4</sup> [www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk) - provides a computerised, searchable database (with integrated digital mapping) of all areas of known archaeological activity, sites, finds, cropmarks, earthworks, industrial remains, structures and historic buildings in the county





#### Statutory Designations

- Ramsar Site
- Special Protection Area
- Ancient Woodland
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- County Wildlife Sites

- Local Nature Reserve
- Forestry Commission Woodland
- Special Area of Conservation

#### Heritage

- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Conservation Areas
- Historic Parks and Gardens

#### Connections

- National Cycle Route
- Cycleways
- Long Distance Path
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Restricted Byway

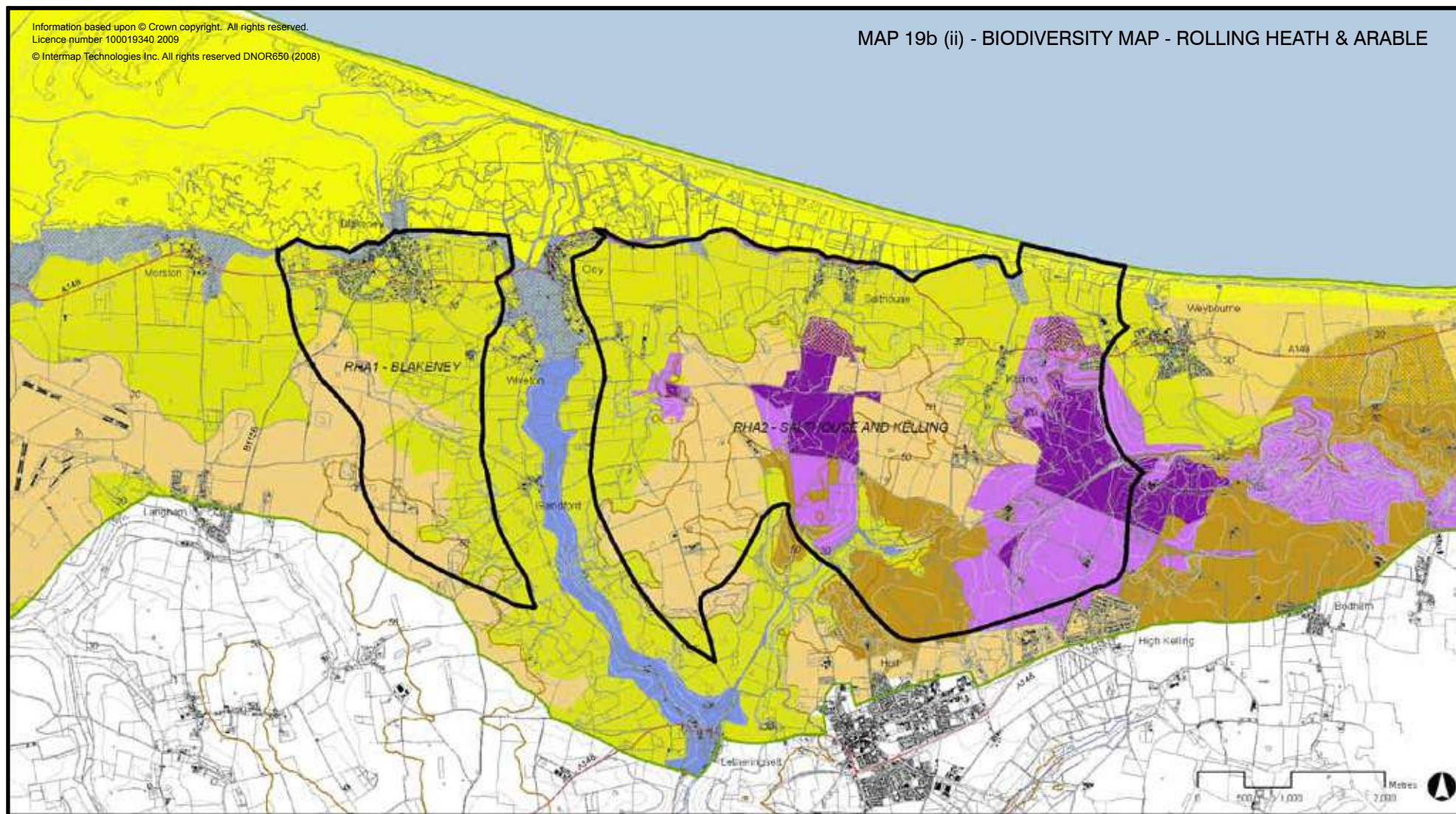
#### Topography

- Contour Line (Interval 5 m)
- 30 m Contour Line
- 50 m Contour Line

- 'A' Road
- 'B' Road
- Main River
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Settlement
- District Council Boundaries



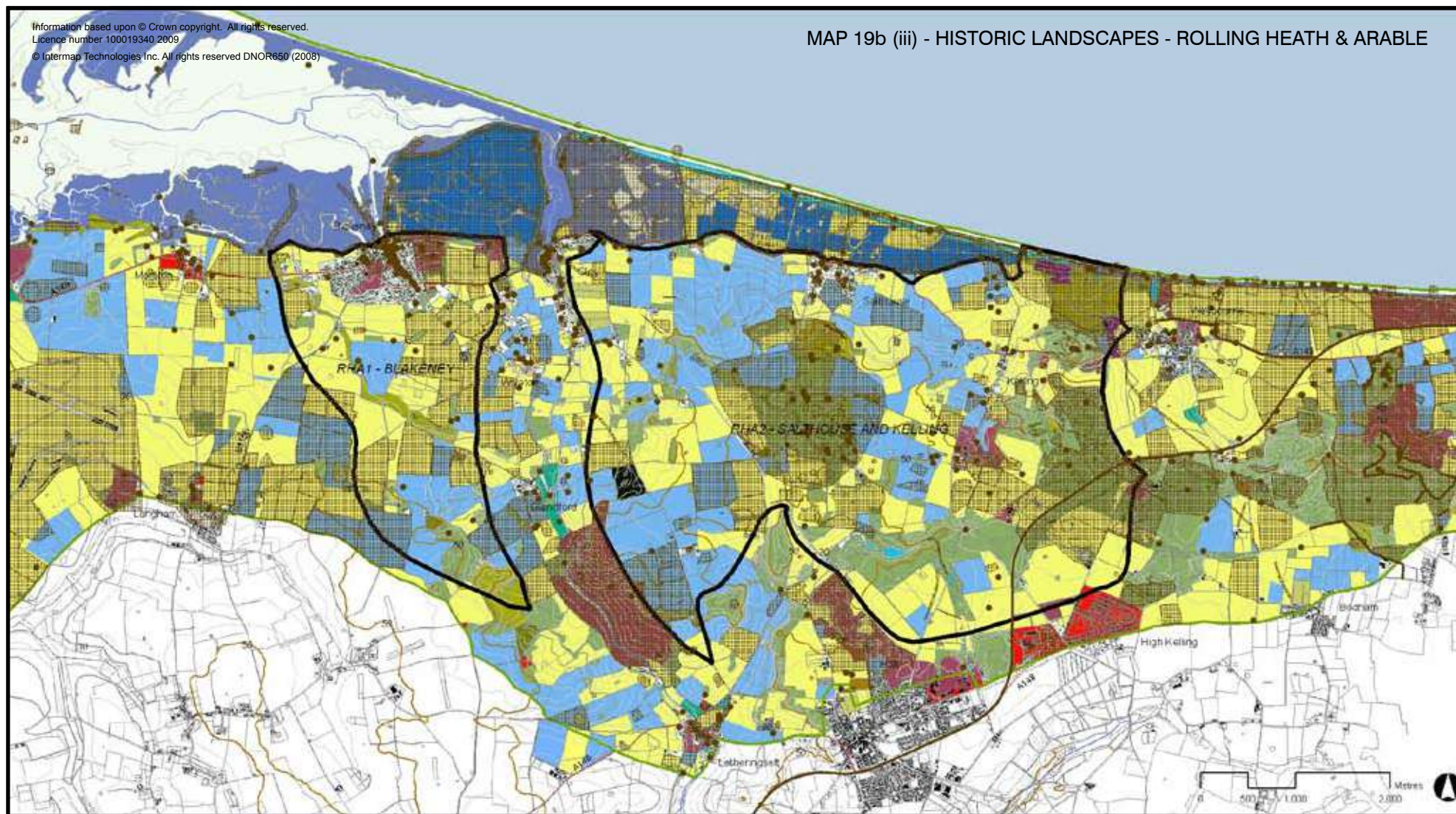
MAP 19b (ii) - BIODIVERSITY MAP - ROLLING HEATH & ARABLE



- |  |                                     |                            |   |                                    |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Core Woodland Area                               | Coastal Habitat Enhancement Zone    | Coastal Buffer Zone        | Priority 1 Heathland Creation Areas<br>(Scores 33 or Above) | 'A' Road                           |
| Zone of General Habitat Enhancement              | Calcareous Grassland Core Area      | Broads & River Buffer Zone | Priority 2 Heathland Creation Areas<br>(Scores 21-32)       | 'B' Road                           |
| Zone of Grassland-Heathland-Woodland Enhancement | Core Habitat Corridors              |                            |   | Main River                         |
| Wetland Habitat Enhancement Zone                 | Paston Bam Bat Site Management Area |                            |   | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
|  |                                     |                            |   | Settlement                         |
|  |                                     |                            |   | District Council Boundaries        |



MAP 19b (iii) - HISTORIC LANDSCAPES - ROLLING HEATH & ARABLE



- |                              |                          |                             |                |             |                                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| 18th-19th Century Enclosure  | Commons, Wastes, Heaths  | Marginal                    | Water Features | HER 'point' | 'A' Road                           |
| 20th Century Agriculture     | Communications           | Military                    | Woodland       | HER 'line'  | 'B' Road                           |
| Built up Areas - Historic    | Historic Earthwork       | Mineral                     |                | HER 'area'  | Main River                         |
| Built up Areas - Modern      | Horticulture             | Miscellaneous               |                |             | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| Coastal - Drainage Enclosure | Industry                 | Parks, Gardens, Recreation  |                |             | Settlement                         |
| Coastal - Managed Wetland    | Inland - Managed Wetland | Pre- 18th Century Enclosure |                |             | District Council Boundaries        |