

large valleys



Integrated landscape character



MAP 25a - Large Valleys Key Plan

The Large Valleys are shallow chalk valleys with indistinct crests, but strongly defined and distinctive valley floor landscapes. The smooth contours typical of Chalk are complicated by drifts of Boulder Clay and river terraces. Overall the valleys have fairly confined views, particularly along the valley floodplain, but there may also be quite long views out across the valley and to lower landscape types beyond. The valleys have long been strategic settlement sites. The Iron Age Fort at Warham has a defensive, circular form, but is sited within the Stiffkey valley (rather than in the classic hill-top hill fort location) where it would have helped control the river crossing and trade along this key valley route.

There is a diverse mix of landscape elements and land uses within the valley, with some well defined transitions between the arable fields on the valley sides and the smaller scale pattern of pasture, arable, woodland and occasional fen or rough carr on the valley floor. This transition often results from historic patterns of land tenure, which have helped to prevent the land being used for modern or larger scale agriculture. In some valleys pasture predominates and the Large Valleys generally have more pasture than other landscape types within the AONB. Fields are typically enclosed by hedges and banks, but networks of hedgerows become much denser, and the hedgerows taller and thicker with many hedgerow trees along the valley floor. The valley floor pastures are often bordered by open reed-fringed ditches. Many valleys retain the historic hedged 'ring boundaries' separating the valley floor from the sides. The sequence of wetland and small pasture habitats along the valley floodplains is a critically important part of Norfolk's ecological network as these wetland corridors link habitats within the intensively farmed agricultural landscapes to the coast (within the AONB) and to the Broads (to the south). The valley floor pastures are often unimproved and may be designated sites in recognition of their ecological value.

Woodlands are a feature of many of the valleys. They often occur as blocks or sinuous shapes, which conform to and accentuate the valley landform. Deciduous trees predominate, particularly on the valley floor where there are higher concentrations of older trees, wet woodlands and woodlands dominated by alder and willow, with some hazel, oak and birch. Stands of poplar trees may be prominent features in some valleys as the trees are reaching maturity. Woodlands on the valley sides are more widely spaced and may have a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees.

Bayfield Hall, an 18th century country house set in parkland, was developed on the site of an earlier Tudor house and medieval village. The formal designed woodlands, partially walled parkland, lake and meadows contrast with the surrounding mosaic of heath and arable land. Some large pollarded veteran oak trees within the Bayfield estate woodlands on the slopes of the Glaven valley date from 300 to 700 years old and are thought to indicate

Integrated landscape character (continued)

remnant heathland wood pastures dating from the late medieval period.

Settlement is generally in the form of small linear villages which in many cases appear to have developed as a result of the gradual coalescence of cottages, small holdings and farmsteads. None of the larger settlements which are found in the Large Valleys are within the AONB. However, the presence of the river has often had a marked influence on the development of the settlement pattern - isolated and individual cottages, farms and small holdings tend to cluster along the roads which run parallel to the floodplain, indicating the historical nature of the farming practice and the type of land tenure which was commonly found in valleys. Such tenures tended to include areas of wet pasture and areas for arable, dry pasture and woodland within one holding. Similarly, there was a higher tendency for land in these areas to be owner occupied or smaller tenanted farms, creating smaller ad-hoc enclosed fields, smaller houses and a more intimate landscape. The Large Valleys are relatively quiet landscapes; most minor roads conform to the topography of the valleys, either crossing at right angles or running more or less parallel to the valley floor.

Landscape sensitivity and change

Parts of the Large Valleys landscape are within the Norfolk Coast AONB but the more densely settled parts were specifically excluded from the designation due to existing development. Key environmental assets which are sensitive to change are:

- The historic small-scale network of pastures, wet woodland, alder carr, reed-beds, ditches, hedgerows and hedgerow trees on the valley floor, which is of exceptional biodiversity value.
- The irregular bands of wet woodlands on the valley floor, which are often mature woodlands with an unusual mix of species. All are a BAP priority habitat.
- The historic, sinuous 'ring boundary' hedgerows, which demarcate the edge of the floodplain (and often also the boundary of local roads) – they are of historic and visual importance and may often be exceptionally species-rich hedgerows, of superior ecological value.
- Small remnant areas of heathland, which is found on the valley sides of some valleys, where there are outcrops of sandy and gravelly soils.. Where it is present, it is a significant ecological feature and a BAP priority habitat.
- Networks of hedgerows, hedged tracks and hedgerow trees which are of ecological value and may serve to connect species-rich habitats within the Large Valleys to the surrounding (often more intensively farmed) agricultural landscapes.



Variations in character

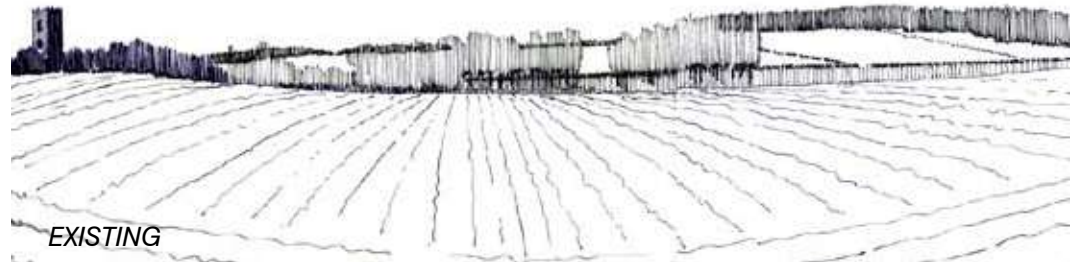
Variations in character and inherent landscape sensitivities are highlighted in the following distinctive landscape character areas within the Large Valleys landscape type (AONB area).

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
Stiffkey to Warham - LV1	<p>Steep-sided valley with prominently undulating landform. Wide valley floor which is frequently flooded. Deep canalised river with low raised banks (due to dredging). Villages on valley sides rather than the valley floor – Stiffkey and Warham have a bridge crossing linking sections of the village. Villages have a compact, older building style</p> <p>Well wooded valley side slopes</p> <p>Northern end of the valley has been excavated beyond 'White Bridges' for a waterfowl refuge</p> <p>Significant iron age fort at Warham</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent pattern of woodlands and undulating landform on the valley side slopes • Landscape setting of the historic settlements of Stiffkey and Warham • Landscape setting and views to the Iron Age fort at Warham • Variety of extensive wetland habitats on the wide valley floor – a core area from which to develop connections to adjoining landscape types

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
Wiveton to Letheringsett - LV2	<p>Wide former estuary landscape, with wide skies and light reflected from the sea (just over the Coast Road). Settlements of Cley and Wiveton concentrated on the valley sides at the northern estuary end, but at Letheringsett, the settlement is on the valley floor. Prominent parkland at Bayfield Hall, which encompasses and divides the valley mid way. The model village of Glandford (C19th) was developed as part of the Bayfield Estate. Relatively steep valley side slopes – remnant heathlands are a significant local feature and there are a few locations where older woodland assemblages occur on the valley sides.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sequence of valley floor habitats • Rural, undeveloped character • Heathlands on valley side slopes – potential to link to remnant heathlands in surrounding Rolling Heath & Arable landscape • Views to historic settlements • Landscape setting and intactness of historic parkland of Bayfield Hall • Mature woodlands on valley sides

OPEN SHALLOW VALLEYS SOMETIMES LACK ENCLOSURE AND DEFINITION

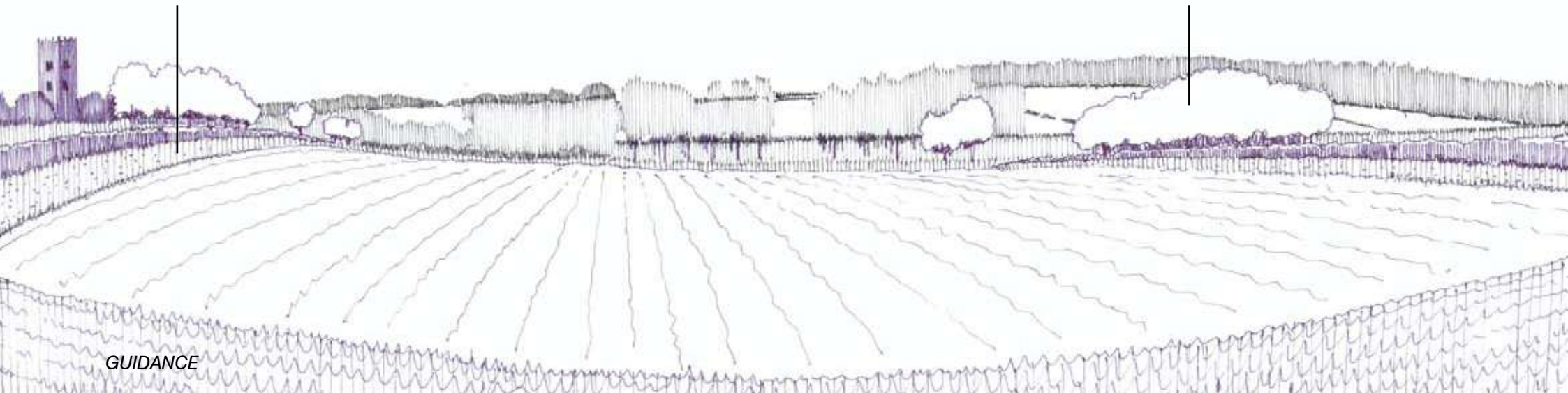
Key forces for change



- 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 pasture and recreation of heathland (from woodland).
- Loss of woodlands and hedgerow field boundaries as a result of agricultural intensification.
- Changes in woodland cover as a result of changes in management.

Establish field margins to enhance ecological connectivity

Introduce native planting to enhance visual and ecological connectivity



Key forces for change (continued)

- Small-scale, incremental and infill development within settlements – extensions to properties, subdivision of landholdings, loss of open space within villages, external lighting and inappropriate boundary fencing - which may be inconsistent with local built character and materials and which may erode their prominent and distinctive rural landscape setting.
- Introduction of new agricultural buildings, which are increasingly replacing older barns and the conversion of older barns to residential use, with the associated erosion of rural character this brings due to driveways, pylons, car parking areas, external lighting, gardens, fencing etc.
- Small scale changes to the parkland landscapes associated with the Bayfield Estate, including realignment of driveways and access tracks, erection of ancillary buildings, introduction of signage, lighting, increased parking and facilities to accommodate visitors.
- Changes to and development of the rural road network.

20 year vision

conserve and enhance

Tranquil sweeping valleys with a well-defined transition between arable fields on the upper slopes and floodplain pastures on the valley floor. Woodlands have curving outlines which accentuate the valley landform and historic sinuous 'ring boundary' hedgerows mark the edge of the valley floor. The floodplain is a functional wetland corridor with a diverse sequence of wet pastures, wet woodlands, scrapes and reed-fringed ditches linked to woodlands and hedgerows on the valley slopes.



Integrated landscape guidance

- 1 Conserve and enhance the river corridors, including their historic small-scale network of pastures, wet woodland, alder carr, reed-beds, ditches, hedgerows and hedgerow trees on the valley floor, which are of exceptional biodiversity and landscape value.**
 - Where possible, landcover changes should seek to reflect and enhance the existing distinctive and historic transitions in landform and landcover, particularly the break between the valley floor and valley sides.
 - Conserve and enhance the characteristic dense networks of tall hedgerows, woodlands, ponds, wetlands and pastures on the valley floor
 - Give priority to the conservation and enhancement of wet woodlands, which are a BAP priority habitat.
 - Seek opportunities to extend the valley floor pastures and associated habitats via arable reversion and or new planting.
 - Seek opportunities to create a more natural river profile in places, providing habitat enhancement and allowing controlled flooding and a more natural transition to wetland habitats downstream.
 - Create buffer zones of semi-natural habitat along the margins of valley floor pastures and encourage low input agricultural systems to reduce the possible impacts of eutrophication.
 - Conserve, enhance and where possible extend drainage ditches as landscape features and wildlife corridors.
- 2 Enhance connections to habitats in the farmed landscapes surrounding the Large Valleys**
 - Conserve and enhance all hedgerows, hedged tracks and hedgerow trees, which provide an inter-connected ecological network, with the potential to link habitats within the Large Valleys to the networks of hedgerows, tree belts and woodlands in the surrounding countryside.
 - New hedgerow or tree planting should aim to increase connectivity between networks of hedgerows generally and particularly with hedgerows and woodlands in adjacent landscape types.
 - Encourage wide field margins within arable fields to enhance the ecological value of the hedgerows as corridors for the movement of wildlife through intensively farmed areas.
 - Give priority to the extension and creation of heathland habitats on the valley sides, particularly in places where there are opportunities to create 'stepping stones' to heathland habitats in the adjacent Rolling Heath and Arable landscape type.

Integrated landscape guidance (continued)

- 3 Conserve the character and landscape setting of the distinctive Large Valleys settlements.** This landscape is very sensitive to minor changes in architectural or land use styles and the creeping influence of suburbanisation and gentrification which ultimately create a generic appearance.
- Avoid large-scale development on the fringes of settlements which will erode the rural character of the valley landscape and risk being be out of scale in relation to the intimate small-scale landscape pattern on the edge of the valley floor.
 - Give priority to the conservation and enhancement of trees, hedgerows and rural features on the fringes of settlements, at the gateways to settlements (along principal roads) and in key views.
 - Conserve the character of rural roads, avoiding improvements (kerbs, signage, access roads with wide sight-lines, standard road widths etc) which will erode the rural character of the landscape and encouraging hedgerow conservation and replanting along roads.
 - Avoid development of agricultural buildings for urban fringe uses or conversion to residential uses in order to retain the rural character of the countryside.
 - Avoid the development of major, prominent elements such as telecom masts which cannot easily be accommodated in this relatively small-scale, intimate rural landscape where views are often channelled along the valley.
 - New built development (or replacement development) should be designed to incorporate new tree and hedgerow planting so that settlements are integrated within the landscape in an organic way, with trees 'anchoring' and connecting the buildings to existing mature hedgerows and small woodlands. In most cases, hedgerows and tree belts are more appropriate boundaries for development plots than fences or walls.
 - Encourage carefully designed small-scale new tree planting on the fringes of settlements which is designed to replace existing trees, screen locally intrusive structures and frame views to the surrounding countryside, whilst retaining the characteristic intimate scale of this landscape type.
 - Avoid new built development or farm structures in prominent locations on the more open valley side slopes, and especially towards the crest of the valley landform, where there is a risk that built structure might break the skyline in views from within the valley.

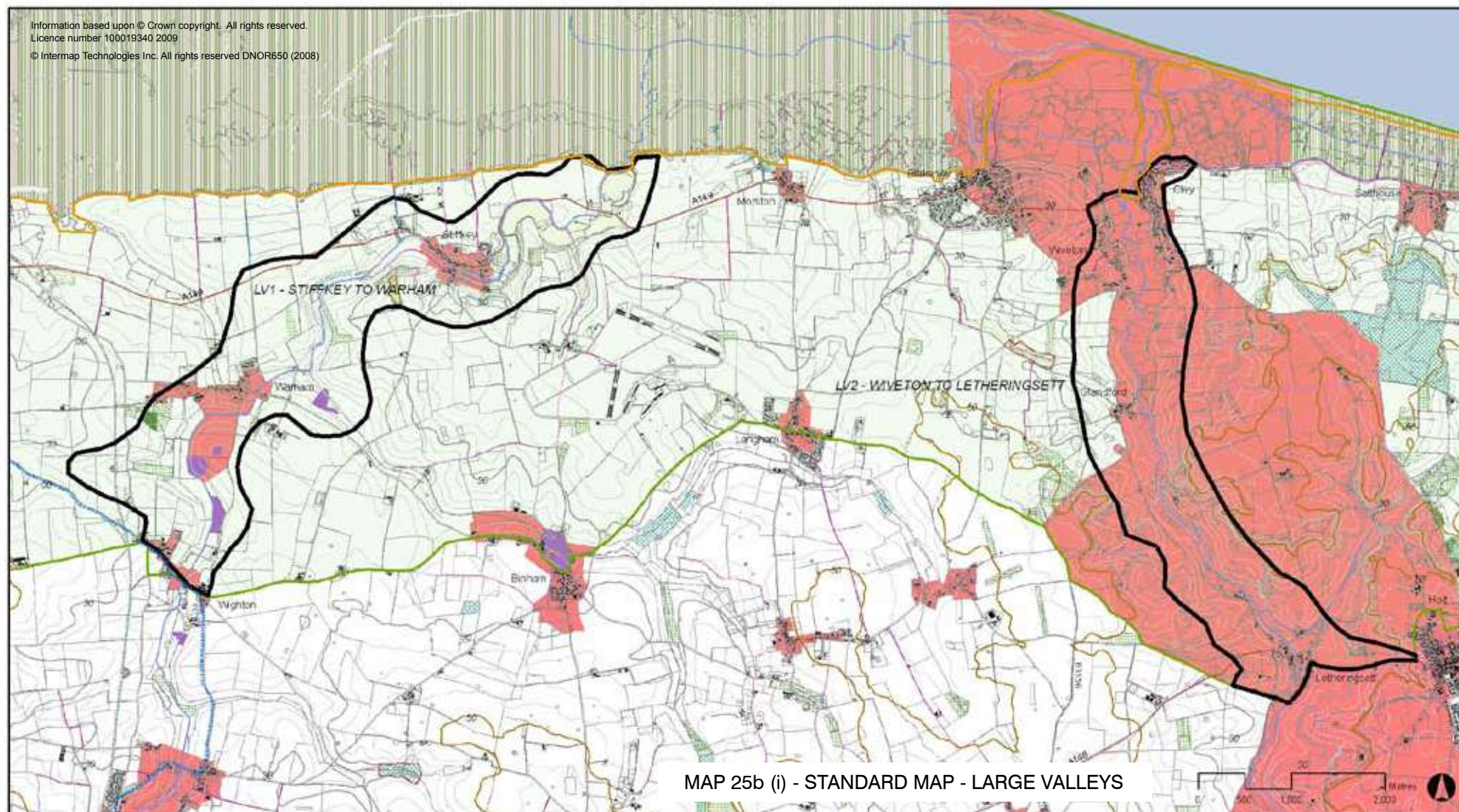
Detailed maps

- **Standard** - landform, drainage, rights of way and statutory designations
- **Biodiversity** - ecological networks ¹
- **Historic landscapes** - broad historic landscape character types ² and data from the Historic Environment Record ³

¹ Norfolk Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, July 2006, *Ecological Network Mapping Project for Norfolk*

² Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, January 2009, *Norfolk Historic Landscape Character - a report on the Norfolk Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project*

³ 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

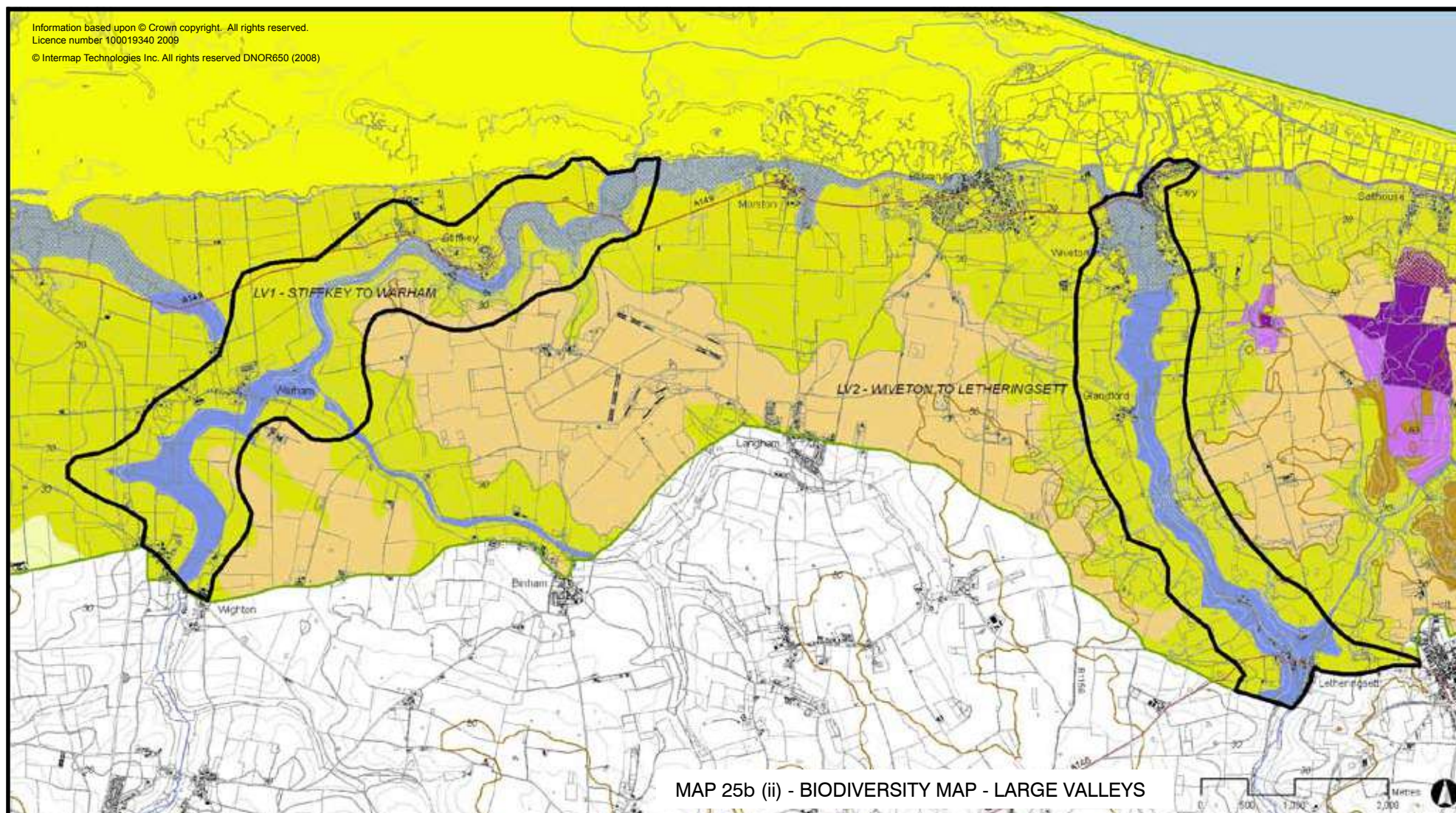
Connections

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

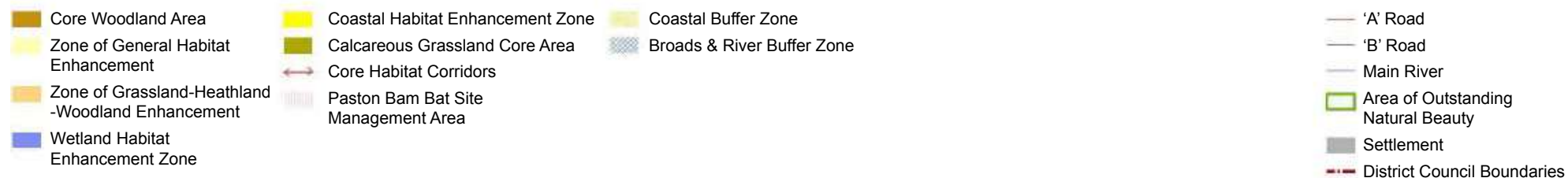
Topography

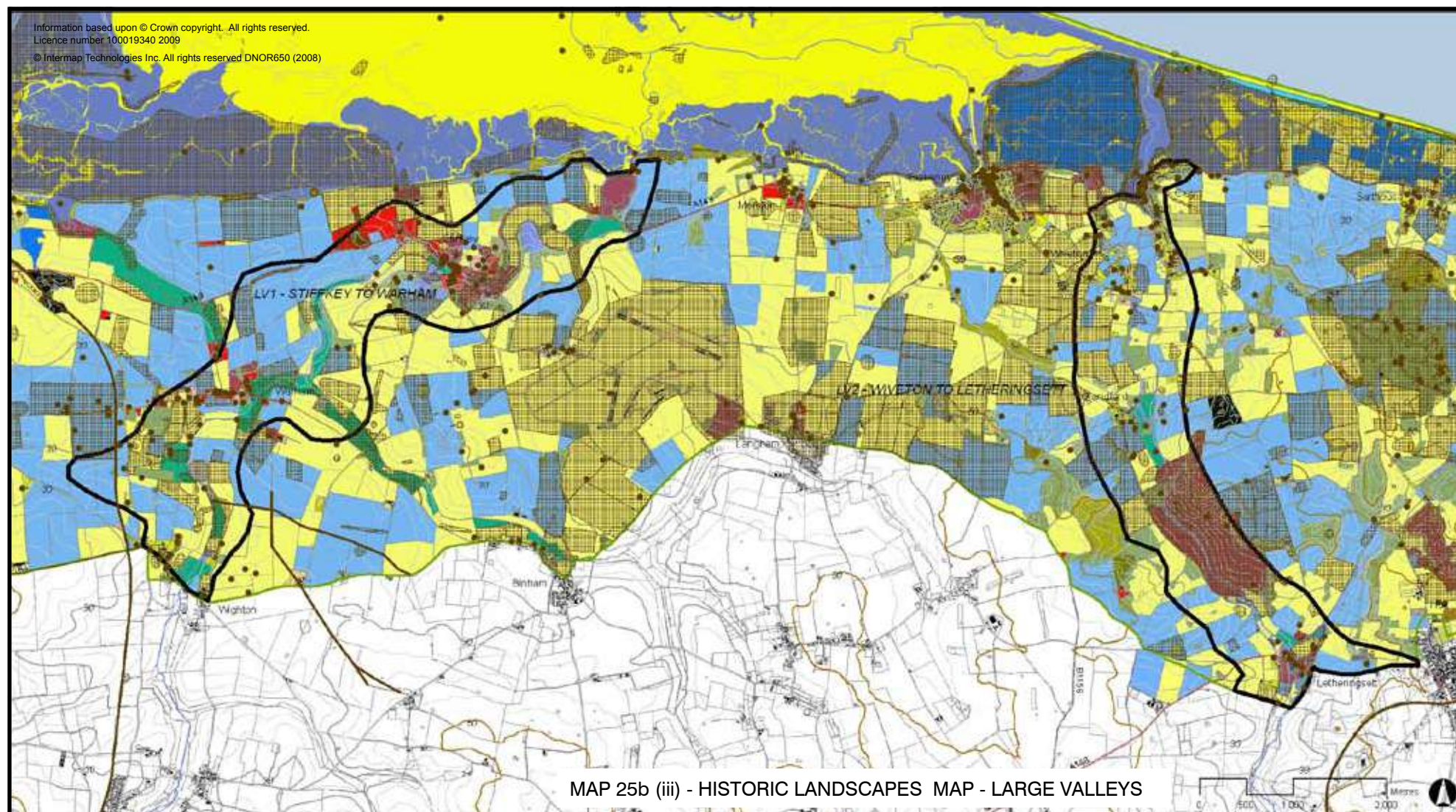
- Contour Line (Interval 5 m)
- 30 m Contour Line
- 50 m Contour Line

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



MAP 25b (ii) - BIODIVERSITY MAP - LARGE VALLEYS





MAP 25b (iii) - HISTORIC LANDSCAPES MAP - LARGE VALLEYS

