



plateau farmland



Integrated landscape character



MAP 20a - Plateau Farmland Key Plan

The Plateau Farmland is an upland landscape within this area of Norfolk and the transition from the surrounding landscapes is clearly defined by the combination of a change in elevation and a switch to strikingly flat terrain. Views from farmland on the high plateau are often limited by landform, but there are long panoramic views from the plateau edges across the Coastal Slopes to the north and west. The Plateau is underlain by Chalk, but the typical smooth Chalk landform is complicated by layers of glacial Boulder Clay, which overlie parts of the Chalk and form a series of rounded summits on the eastward sloping Chalk dip-slope.

Little evidence of ancient settlement remains today, although the Peddars Way long distance footpath follows the route of a Roman Road. This has long been an agricultural landscape and the open fields and fold course systems (dominated by sheep and cereals, especially barley) persisted until Parliamentary Enclosure in the late 18th century, when the straight hedgerows that characterise the landscape today were first planted.

This is an open, exposed agricultural landscape. Intensively farmed arable fields are sometimes unenclosed, but often bordered by low hedgerows. The older hedgerows aligning roads often contain mature hedgerow trees. These hedgerows tend to be relatively tall and dense and may channel views along the roads, restricting wider views across the plateau. Drainage ditches are also a key characteristic and frequently form the only boundary between rural roads and open fields. Scott's pine shelterbelts are prominent linear features in some areas. Points of focus across the plateau are limited but landmarks including village churches and windmills are eye catching elements. Pylons and masts also occur but do not dominate the entire skyline which is predominantly undeveloped and open, with a flat, simple horizon and wide open skies.

There are small villages and hamlets throughout the Plateau Farmland, but none of these occur within the AONB area. However, isolated individual farmsteads and agricultural buildings may be prominent on ridgetop sites. The network of narrow rural lanes cuts across the plateau, but movement is fairly limited and the landscape feels relatively empty and peaceful.

Landscape sensitivity and change

Only a small part of the open, elevated Plateau Farmland occurs within the Norfolk Coast AONB. It has no settlements, but is characterised by long, open views across the adjacent Coastal Slopes. Key environmental assets which are sensitive to change are:

- The network of hedgerows and shelterbelts which encloses the large arable fields and provides an ecologically valuable network of habitats.
- Mature hedgerow trees and the hedgerows along roads and tracks, which are often much older than field hedgerow boundaries.
- Drainage ditches, where these border fields on the plateau.
- Scattered blocks of woodland which are exceptionally prominent (often skyline) features.
- Distinctive vernacular farm buildings.



Variations in character

Variations in character and inherent landscape sensitivities are highlighted in the following distinctive landscape character areas found within the Plateau Farmland (AONB area):

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
Docking - PF1	Gently undulating plateau farmland radiates from the large village of Docking at its centre (which is well to the south of the AONB). Settlement pattern is sparse, consisting of isolated farmsteads and small hamlets forming ribbon development along the roads that cross the area. Farmland comprises generally large, regular shaped fields (separated by low to medium mature hedgerows), interspersed by occasional blocks of woodland and tree belts, which punctuate the skyline. Few tracks and footpaths cross the area other than the Norfolk Coast Path National Trail. A strong sense of tranquillity, isolation and exposure is apparent throughout the open, sparsely populated area. Long distance, panoramic and open views across farmland are characteristic and contribute to the generally large-scale nature of this landscape character area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long distance, panoramic and open views across farmland are characteristic and vulnerable to changes which might have an impact on the local skyline or in the adjacent Coastal Slopes. • The network of hedgerows which border the arable fields and particularly the mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees along rural roads • Individual blocks of woodland (eg on Beacon Hill) and shelterbelts, which are exceptionally prominent features in this open landscape

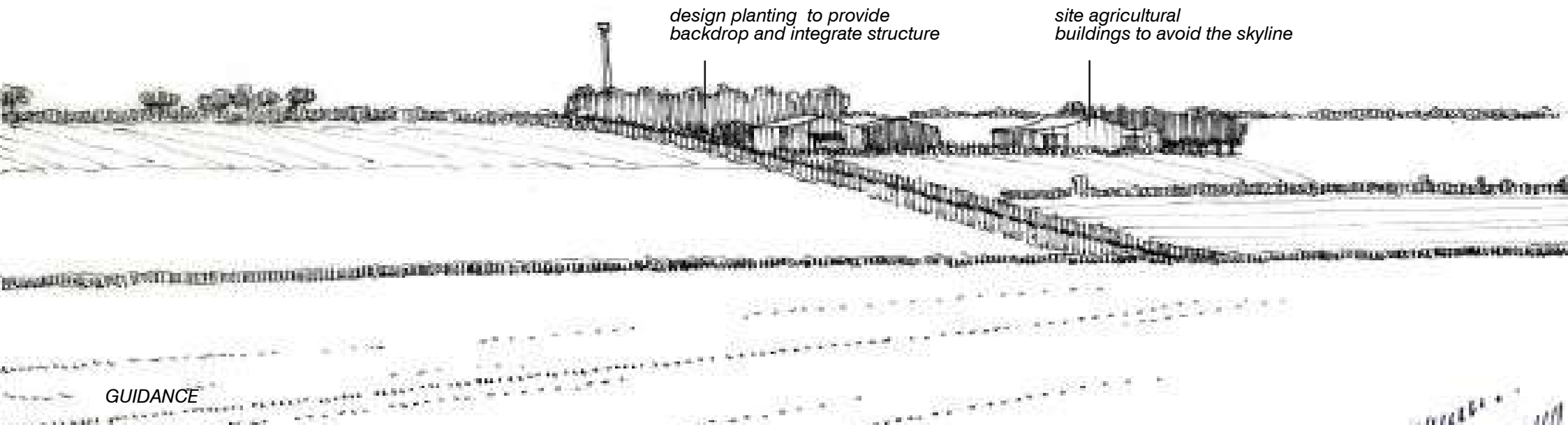
Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
Bircham - PF2	<p>A mixture of gently undulating arable farmland and parkland. Landscape pattern is dominated by a series of relatively large (predominantly arable) fields, with field boundaries demarcated by hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees. The hedgerows are gappy and denuded in places or have been replaced by post and wire fences. There is a relatively strong sense of tranquillity throughout the area and open views across the arable farmland, which contribute to a sense of openness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally mature landscape structure including belts and copses of (plantation) woodland, mature trees and patches of intact hedgerows. • Wide panoramic views across the farmland and towards landmark churches.

AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS CAN BE PREDOMINANT AGAINST OPEN SKY



Key forces for change

- Potential farm diversification, resulting in conversion of agricultural buildings to houses and recreational facilities.
- Potential loss of mature hedgerow field boundaries as a result of agricultural intensification or damage by large agricultural machinery.
- Changes to agricultural management – possibly to less intensive agriculture.
- Potential wind turbine developments.
- Increased pressure on rural roads as a result of increased second home ownership, and increased tourist activity along the North Norfolk Coast.



20 year vision

enhance and create

Large scale open farmland with a flat, undeveloped horizon and wide open skies. The skyline is punctuated by new blocks of woodland or shelterbelts and glimpsed farm buildings, which are partially enclosed by groups of trees. The large fields are structured by restored straight hedgerows or reed-fringed ditches bordered by wide arable field margins, providing and linking wildlife habitats. Hedgerow trees alongside rural lanes and trackways provide a more intimate experience



Integrated landscape guidance

- 1 Conserve the typical long open views – this is a relatively undeveloped rural landscape with little scope for mitigating impacts of built development or tall structures**
 - Conserve open views across the sea, marshes and adjacent Coastal Slopes.
 - Give priority to the identification and conservation of views from the Naional Trail and the network of rural roads, which provide the majority of public viewing points.
 - Conserve the characteristic smooth skylines, by ensuring any new development is well integrated with appropriate large scale planting.
 - Ensure the sensitive location of necessary development involving tall structures (such as telecommunications masts and wind turbines) in relation to prominent skyline locations both within the character area and within adjacent character areas.
- 2 Conserve and enhance the character, quality and connectivity of the mature structuring elements within the landscape type as a whole – the pattern of hedgerows, drainage ditches, Scots pine shelterbelts and dispersed blocks of woodland**
 - Conserve all existing shelterbelts and woodlands, aiming to extend and improve their visual/ecological structure by new planting (to maintain the typical age structure) and by the creating of buffer zones of semi-natural habitat along the margins of the woodland/shelterbelt edge.
 - Design new woodland or shelterbelt planting to create or enhance connections with the existing matrix of existing woodlands and hedgerows.
 - Conserve drainage ditches (which are often reed-lined with grassy banks), as landscape features and wildlife corridors.
 - Aim to increase the diversity of landscape elements and habitats within the landscape – take opportunities to create new woodlands, hedgerows and shelterbelts when integrating necessary new development.
 - Manage and where possible replant hedgerows to maintain the scale and pattern of the landscape and enhance ecological connectivity.
 - Replace mature specimen hedgerow trees (with native local species) so that they are conserved as positive local landscape features.

Integrated landscape guidance (continued)

- 3 Manage arable farmland to enhance its biodiversity value.**
 - Establish arable field margins as potential nest sites for ground nesting birds and habitats for small mammals and invertebrates.¹
 - Manage arable farmland as habitat for game birds.
- 4 Conserve the rural character of farm buildings, which are often exceptionally prominent in the wider farmland landscape.**
 - Avoid the introduction of suburban features, including gardens, fencing, lighting and entrance driveways, which can cumulatively alter the rural character of the landscape.
 - New farm buildings or conversions require exceptionally high standards of siting and design – large scale woodland, shelterbelt and hedgerow planting may be required to integrate these structures into the surrounding landscape.
- 5 Conserve and enhance the character and quality of the network of rural roads**
 - Give priority to the conservation of the hedgerows and hedgerow trees which line many rural roads, ensuring that these are replaced if there are minor changes to road alignments, for instance as a result of improvements to sightlines or the introduction of passing places.

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

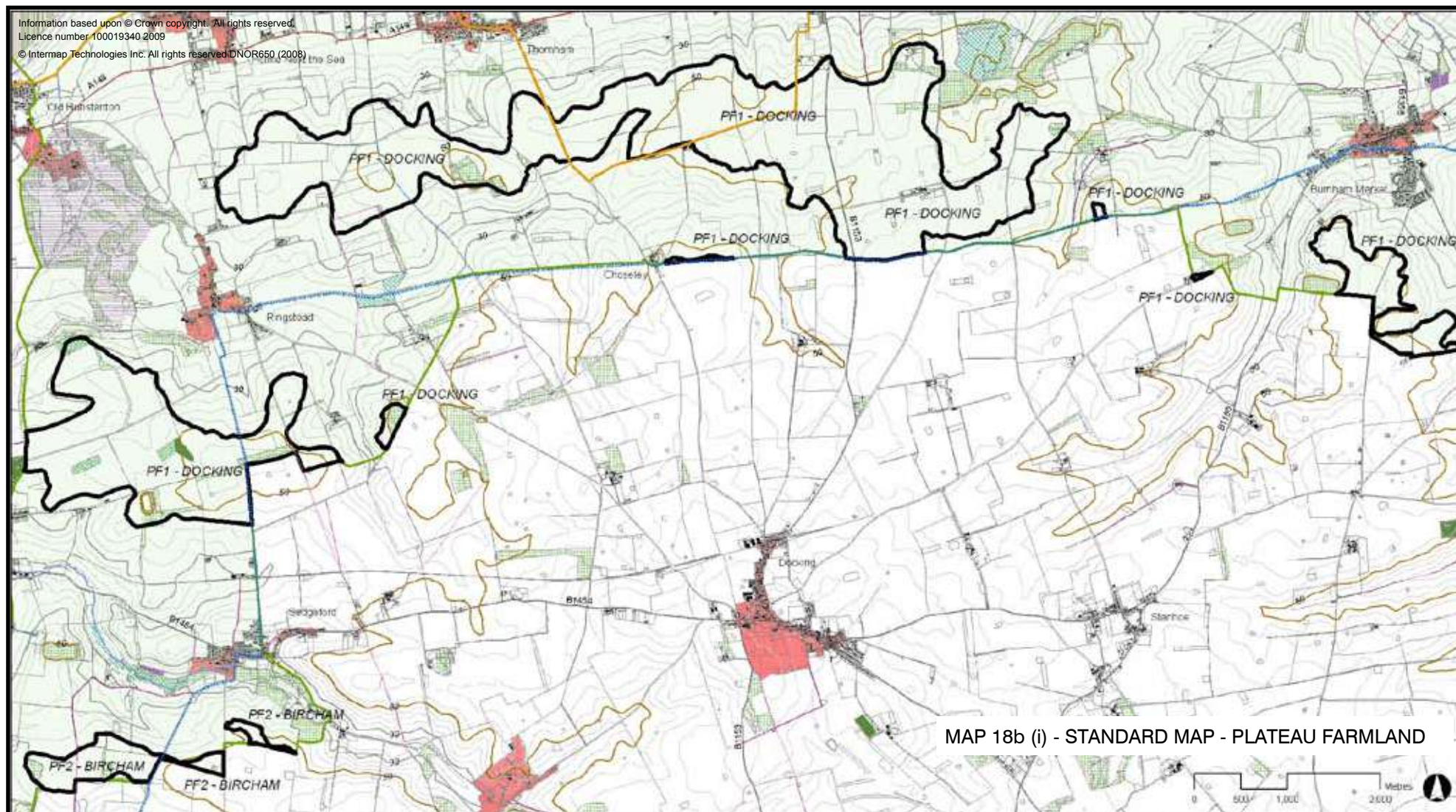
Detailed maps

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

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

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

⁴ 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



MAP 18b (i) - STANDARD MAP - PLATEAU FARMLAND

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

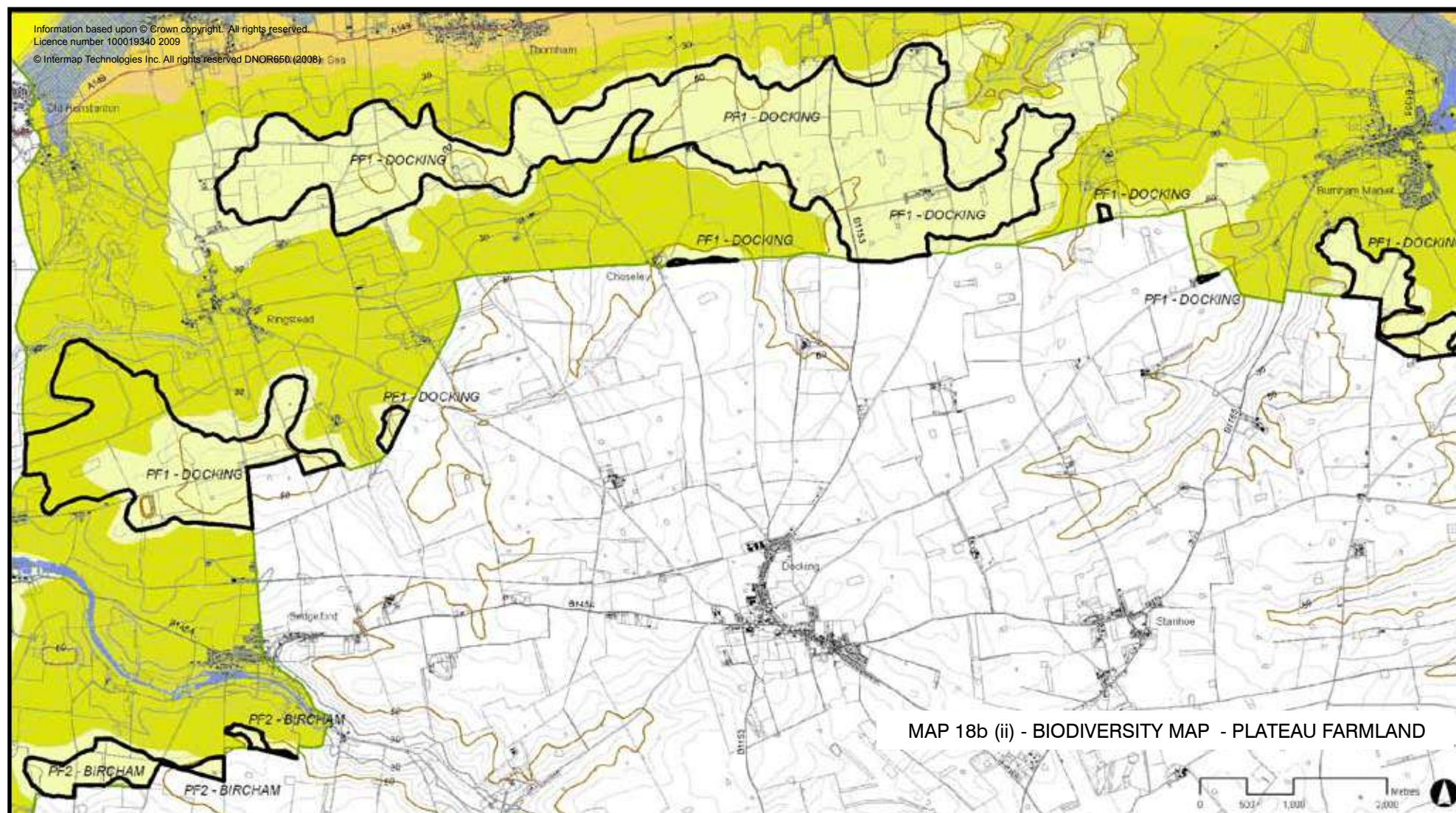
Connections

- 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

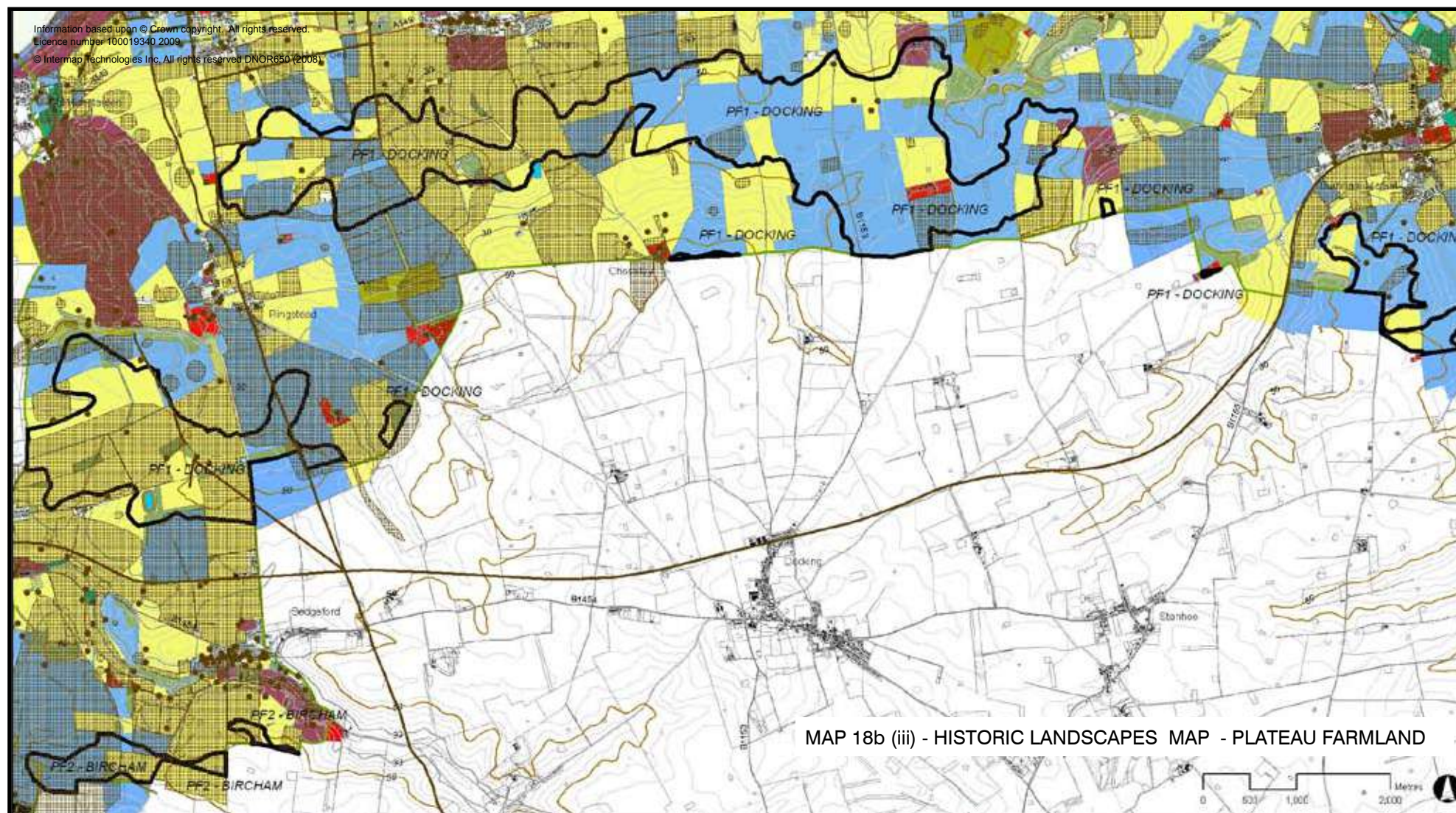
- 'A' Road
- 'B' Road
- Main River
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Settlement
- District Council Boundaries



MAP 18b (ii) - BIODIVERSITY MAP - PLATEAU FARMLAND

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|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Core Woodland Area | Coastal Habitat Enhancement Zone | Coastal Buffer Zone |
| Zone of General Habitat Enhancement | Calcareous Grassland Core Area | Broads & River Buffer Zone |
| Zone of Grassland-Heathland-Woodland Enhancement | Core Habitat Corridors | |
| Wetland Habitat Enhancement Zone | Paston Bam Bat Site Management Area | |

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



MAP 18b (iii) - HISTORIC LANDSCAPES MAP - PLATEAU FARMLAND

