

SAHAM TONEY VILLAGE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT



Part One: Landscape Assessment

January 2019

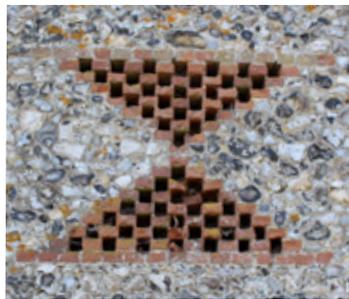


SAHAM TONEY
NEIGHBOURHOOD
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Saham Toney Parish Landscape Character Assessment

for Saham Toney Parish Council

January 2019



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1.0 Introduction

1. Lucy Batchelor-Wylam was appointed by Saham Toney Parish Council in July 2018 to undertake a landscape character assessment (LCA) of the parish. The LCA has three purposes. The first is to provide evidence and justification for various policies in the Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan that deal with character, setting and design, by identifying the key aspects that make up local identity in different parts of the parish. The second purpose is to provide an evidence base for a parallel settlement fringe sensitivity study, which forms part two of this appraisal, to inform and support decisions relating to the emerging neighbourhood plan as well as future change management. The third is to provide information to enhance the landscape related policies of the emerging neighbourhood plan.

What is Landscape Character Assessment?

2. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the process of identifying and analysing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive and create a sense of place. The guidelines for undertaking LCAs are set out in 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' (published by Natural England, 2014) and the detailed methods are not replicated here.
3. LCA helps to inform, plan and manage change and can be useful when undertaken at a scale appropriate to neighbourhood plan-making. It helps us to understand the ability of different landscape to withstand different types of development pressures and draw out the particular issues to which any future development should respond, such as;
 - Promoting understanding of sense of place and allowing development to respond to local building forms and patterns of development;
 - Integrating new development successfully into its landscape setting;
 - Consideration of the massing and scale of proposed development in relation to the topography; adjoining built form, and local views, vistas and landmarks, etc.
4. Landscape is understood as a result of the interaction of the natural, physical components of the environment with the human element - historical and cultural, land use and human interventions over time. It is not just experienced visually, but through sounds, smells, memories and cultural associations. Assessment and description of such attributes should be undertaken in a consistent, robust, transparent and structured way. It should map and describe the variations in physical, natural and cultural attributes that relate to

the rural landscape, as well as its experiential characteristics, such as tranquillity.

Townscape assessment

5. A similar, associated process is Townscape character assessment which looks at the variations in the character of the built form of settlements and highlights indicators of value. The definition of townscape, described in GLVIA3¹ is: "the landscape within the built-up area, including the buildings, the relationship between them, the different types of urban open spaces, including green spaces and the relationship between buildings and open spaces." (Paragraph 2.7) Guidance on the undertaking of Townscape assessments are less formalised but the Landscape Institute published a guidance note in 2017².
6. Indicators of value include:
 - Listed buildings/structures and their settings
 - Scheduled Monuments
 - Greenspaces which are designated in the Local and/or Neighbourhood Plan
 - Non-designated heritage buildings, open spaces, or other features, which contribute positively to the character of an area
 - Areas designated and protected for geological or biological conservation, such as SSSIs and County Wildlife Sites; Ancient woodland and veteran trees.
 - Key views.
7. Specific to townscape are an understanding of the historical evolution/development of settlement, movement and connectivity, scale, heights, massing and density of development, building lines, architectural style and materials, boundary treatments, and public realm.

Justification

8. The assessments were commissioned to provide the Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan Work Group the means of making sound decisions relation to spatial planning, to help explain to residents and land owners why such decisions were taken, to convey to developers the importance of attention to sense of place, to identify and protect aspects

¹ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) (Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013);

² Townscape Character Assessment LI Technical Information Note 05/2017. Revised April 2018. Townscape Character Assessment Technical Information Note.

1.0 Introduction continued:-

of value, and to ensure opportunities for enhancement are not missed. In relation to future development, the Neighbourhood Plan aims are to ensure development goes in the 'right' place and is well integrated into its setting, to the benefit of all.

Existing landscape classifications

9. Landscape character assessment analyses differences in topography, soils, hydrology, woodland and tree cover, land use and farm type, settlement patterns, and perceptual experience. These physical and human influences combine to create the unique and distinctive characteristics found in different landscapes.
10. In classifying landscapes, two categories may be identified:
 - Landscape character **types** - these are landscapes with broadly similar combinations of geology, landform, vegetation, land use, field and settlement patterns. They repeat across a landscape so that landscapes belonging to a particular type such as 'Valley Meadowlands', may be found in different places.
 - Landscape character **areas** - these are unique areas that occur in only one place and are therefore geographically specific. They have their own individual character and identity.
11. Landscape character assessment can be applied at different scales from the national to the local level. Nationally, there are 159 National Character Area (NCA) profiles. The descriptions for each are available on the Natural England website. Saham Toney is in area 84: Mid Norfolk. The NCA is mapped and its key characteristics are listed in Appendix A.
12. In 2007 work was undertaken by Land Use Consultants on an LCA for the Breckland District. This assessment divided the district into 6 character types, further divided into 27 character areas. Three of the areas are represented within the parish boundaries of Saham Toney. These are mapped in Appendix B.
13. No relevant previous townscape character assessments are available.

Development of assessment to Parish level LCA

14. This parish level study aimed to develop the information available at district level into a more detailed picture of the variations around the parish of Saham Toney - its 'settlement' areas, the rural-urban fringe as well as its tracts of unsettled farmland.
15. The study and site work was carried out during October 2018.
16. Key sources of information used during the course of this study have included:
 - Breckland Landscape Character Assessment;
 - Breckland emerging Local Plan;
 - Saham Toney emerging Neighbourhood Plan and information gathered on their website (stnp2036.org)
 - Breckland settlement fringe sensitivity assessment;
 - Soils data from Landis;
 - Listed building information from Heritage England;
 - Designations information from government GIS website Magic Map ³.

Approach

17. For brevity, a detailed methodology is not given here, but methods follow nationally accepted best practice and available guidance on undertaking Landscape Character Assessment ⁴.
18. The parish landscape was divided into 'rural' and 'village' settlement character areas. Five rural areas and six village areas were mapped and described. The settlement areas include mention of the land on the edge of the settlement, especially where it plays a key role in setting and in defining character. These settlement fringes are likely to be the focus for future change, given that the emerging Local Plan will consider new housing development "immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary" and they are dealt with in more detail in the Saham Toney Fringe Sensitivity Assessment.
19. The existing character type boundaries in the Breckland assessment were the starting point for defining boundaries at the parish level. Saham Toney features three Breckland district character types/areas. These are shown in Appendix B and comprise B5: River Wissey tributary Farmland, D2: Stanta Heath, and E5 Central Breckland Plateau.

³ magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap

⁴ 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', Natural England, 2014

20. Ideally district area boundaries would provide a direct basis for further division at a parish level. However, it was found that, owing to the scale at which the district study was carried out, the picture on the ground was a little different, but this is to be expected given the differing scale of the studies. The boundaries were drawn by a process of overlaying maps showing the district character areas, soil types, and topography over aerial photography. This led to the establishment of lines in the landscape along which characteristics appeared to diverge. The initial desktop stage resulted in a set of draft boundaries, which were then tested and adjusted following visual survey in the field. Their boundaries generally follow some line in the landscape or feature such as field boundaries or roads.
21. The settlement areas were more straightforward to determine - each focuses on one of the four clusters of settlement that make up the parish, and their peripheries. The extent of these peripheries are not defined but merge into the surrounding countryside towards the parish boundaries.
22. Each area is named after a local place or feature and its number code is prefixed with either RCA (Rural character area) or VCA (Village Character Area). Rural areas are mapped on Map 1 and village areas on Map 2.
23. The village character areas generally relate to Saham's settlement boundary, as defined in the Local Plan, because that forms a good basis for dealing with planning-related change. Subdivisions reflect distinct and different character features.
24. In a few places the village character areas extend beyond the settlement boundary to take in built form that contributes to the character of the street-scene. These included the Church, Parker's school, Parker's Close, and the open space at the village hall.
25. It is important to note that on the ground there is often a transition zone between one character area and another, so it follows that landscape character is unlikely to abruptly change at each boundary. When considering a piece of land near to a boundary the character description and guidelines for two or more areas may be relevant.

Rural character area analysis

26. Five rural character areas are described. These analyse the landscape under the following headings:

Constituent district landscape type/area

Provides reference to the relevant area description in the Breckland district LCA.

Location and Physical characteristics

Describes where the area falls within the landscape, how it sits within the topography

and a summary of its physical character.

Topography, soils and hydrology

Describes the landform, its elevation in metres above ordnance datum (AOD) and the soil types that dominate; whether there are water courses or ponds in the area; where watercourses drain towards.

Landcover and landuse

Describes how the land is being used, the types of farming or cropping, and whether it is being managed for game. It includes the amount and types of vegetation found; whether any semi-natural environments are found. Common hedge and tree species are listed.

Scale and enclosure

What patterns the landscape demonstrates in terms of the size and form of its fields, eg whether organic or geometric in shape, and the presence or absence of boundary hedges. These factors lead to a sense of intimacy from a fine grained landscape, or openness when enclosure patterns have been lost.

Routes and Settlement

Describes the amount, type, densities and pattern of settlement found, approximate age of the housing stock; lists commonly seen vernacular materials and details.

Landmarks and features of value

Lists the aspects of value - in terms of heritage such as listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments and non-designated heritage buildings; designated green spaces; wildlife sites, habitats and ancient woodland. Identifies any landmark or feature of orientation that is prominent in the area.

Visual and perceptual experience

Description of the visual experience - whether views are generally open or intimate, whether long or short; how scenic they are. Whether the areas feels noisy or tranquil, busy or remote and isolated. Whether the landscape feels well cared for and in good condition, or there are aspects that are degraded or cause visual intrusion.

Condition

What condition are the landscape and its features? How strongly does the historic character endure to this day?

Opportunities and Management aims

Measures suggested to protect aspects of value, special habitats, vegetative features, and views.

Management aims for the landscape - objectives for conservation or enhancement, future creation of ecological habitat, opportunities for expanded recreation, measures to address possible issues resulting from climate change, etc.

Settlement character analysis

27. Six village character area descriptions analyse the settlement and are covered under slightly different headings:

Location

Describes where the area falls within the parish.

Landscape setting

Describes landform, how it sits within the landscape and the topography

Landuses

What mix of land uses are present along the settlement edges.

Gateways and routes

Describes the road network and what the gateways into the village are like.

Settlement pattern

The shape or form and 'grain' of the settlement - The degree to which an area's pattern of subdivisions is small and frequent (fine grain), or large and infrequent (coarse grain). How today's patterns relates to the historic pattern.

Built form type

The approximate age of the built form, the types of houses found and how they are arranged.

Open / space public realm

The amount and forms of open space, both public and private, their character, and how they relate to the built form and contribute to character.

Settlement edges

What is the nature of the interface, how is the urban edge perceived. The role that vegetation plays in views and perceptions of the settlement edge and approaches.

Materials and enclosures

What materials are seen in the built form, roof coverings, enclosures. What vernacular detailing is present.

Landmarks and features of value

Lists the aspects of value in terms of heritage such as listed buildings, ancient monuments and non-designated heritage buildings; designated green spaces; wildlife sites, habitats or ancient woodland. Identifies any landmark or feature of orientation that is prominent in the area.

Visual experience and perceptual aspects

Notes any special, scenic or prominent views either within the built up area or around its peripheries.

28. For management and opportunities notes for the village areas, please refer to the Fringe Sensitivity assessment which provides more detail.
29. Photographs are provided for illustrative purposes. These were taken by the author, but are sometimes supplemented by screenshots from Google streetview, or other sources as cited.

Supporting work

30. The completed Landscape Character Assessment provided the basis for further assessment and guidance. Please refer to the Saham Toney Fringe Sensitivity Assessment which assesses zones of land on the urban-rural fringe for their sensitivity in landscape and visual terms. This provides guidance as to their suitability for development and identifies landscape related constraints and opportunities.
31. The following other documents were also developed following completion of this assessment:
- Saham Toney Design Guide. This is a collaborative document completed with input from the Neighbourhood Plan group. It provides guidance and advice on ensuring sympathetic design is achieved in Saham Toney. This covers aspects of site selection, design principles, connectivity, materials selection and detailing, amongst other factors.
 - Key View assessment. This sets out the location of a series of important views within the parish, representative photographs are provided and text to highlight the aspects within the views that makes them noteworthy.

2.0 Landscape context and settlement pattern

1. Saham Toney is a rural parish in southwest Norfolk, just north of the market town of Watton. It lies in an area of transitional landscape character, between the northeastern extents of the Brecks and the gently undulating clayland plateau farmlands of central Norfolk. The following gives an overview of its evolution. (This section is also highly relevant to the Fringe Sensitivity Assessment).

Topography and hydrology

2. The settled parts of the village lie to the south and central part of the parish occupying land on the edge of the historically marshy floodplain, and stretching north and west up onto the edges of the dissected farmed plateau. The northeastern and western extents of the parish are lightly settled and have a strongly rural character. The village is not nucleated but instead features a number of clusters and strings of development which occupy different positions across the gently undulating valley side. These radiate from the historic setting of the village, which formed small clusters around the historic Mere.
3. The village sits to the north of the floodplain of the Watton Brook, that flows west towards its confluence with the River Wissey, which continues west and eventually joins the Great Ouse at Downham Market. The brook and its associated valley floor has an important function in that it serves to separate Saham Toney from its larger neighbour, Watton, to the south.
4. The valley side, oriented generally to the southwest, is further dissected by numerous small rivers and tributary streams that drain into the Brook, that produce a gentle series of undulations. These provide variation in topography that sometimes helps to contain views and at other times offers long views from elevated points.

Geology and soils

5. The soils here overlie glacial moraines of till over the sedimentary chalky bedrock. The more elevated parts of the parish feature slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage. The lower areas adjacent to the river are a mix of loamy and sandy soils with naturally high groundwater and a peaty surface. See Appendix C for an overall soil types map.

Historic evolution of the village ¹

6. Understanding the evolution of the settlement, and its relationship with the landscape, helps to understand how well future change might be assimilated and integrated. Settlement in Saham Toney is ancient in origin and historically focused on the higher valley sides, beyond the marshy lands along the river, around the ancient Mere. It was an important settlement in the past, as the early people made use of the good farming land of the boulder clays to the north and the Mere would have supplied food (fish) and fresh water. Settlement developed on the trading routes that benefitted from the fording point across the Watton Brook. A series of tracks serving the medieval farms were added to the Roman road system and these developed into the permanent network of distinctive small lanes that endure to this day and give the village its distinctive dispersed form.
7. There is evidence that people were living around the Mere on silts in the Bronze Age, and remained through the Iron Age - remains of a fort have been found at High Banks near Saham Wood. The local woodlands provided fuel for domestic use and early industry - pottery and iron working.
8. The Mere is a roughly circular water filled depression covering 12 acres inside raised, crater-like edges. It is an ancient water feature, estimated to be 12,000 years old, and it gives the village its name, the first part of which means which literally means “settlement by the lake”. Although highly significant to the village and its origins, no public access is possible and the Mere is more or less screened from view by the belt of trees which surround it. It is used by a fishing club and legends surround the eels which breed within it;

‘Near the centre of the village is a lake, or mere, of 12A, abounding in fish, especially eels of two species, one noted for their delicious, and the other for their nauseous flavour.’

William White’s History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Norfolk 1864
9. It is thought Saham Toney today lies close by a significant Romano-British settlement. Evidence of Roman forts have been found - one in the south-west of the present-day parish and the other to the north-east. The Peddars Way footpath, partly using remaining Roman roads, passes close to the village and trade would have been important on the river, which was navigable up to the 17th century.

¹ This section borrows from “Background Information for an Historic Area Assessment”, September 2018, by the Saham Toney Neighbourhood Plan Work Group

2.0 Landscape context and settlement pattern continued:-



1. & 2. The organic curves in the road network conceal and reveal views to St. George's, the key landmark feature of the village

3. Only a brief glimpse of the mill tower possible from Ovington Road

Icenis controlled the area until around 100AD, when they were suppressed by the Romans. Finds show that the area continued to be lightly populated through the first millennium

10. By the 10th century, Saham Toney had grown and was more important than Watton till the late 14th century. It took the form of a settlement clustered around a wattle and daub Saxon chapel, thought to be on the site of the medieval church of St George.
11. It was likely surrounded by a typical Saxon farming patterns of unhedged organic shaped strips of land within a more wooded landscape. At the time of Domesday the population was 162, people living on land to the north of the Mere.
12. The arrival of the Normans meant land started to become more organised, and feudal in its organisation under the new group of landowners, who took land and manorial rights. Enclosure began to be seen - areas of hunting grounds were closed off for use by the nobility.
13. In 1199 King John granted the Manor to Roger de Toeni, and Saham became known as Saham Toeni, later Toney. During the medieval period that followed, the settlement patterns that are seen today began to establish. Land was divided between 7 manors - which included buildings - seen today in its outlying farms such as Page's Place which dates from the late 16th / early 17th century and is the oldest surviving building in Saham Toney, apart from the church. Saham Lodge and White Hall were likely to have been hunting parks and lodges on a grand scale during the Medieval era and these existed well into the

18th century.

14. Gradually more substantial farm houses replaced earlier buildings as late 16th century prosperity started to show itself in buildings that survive to this day. Examples of post-medieval farmhouses that endure to this day are Park Farm, Meadow Farm, Brick Kiln Farm and Saham Hall farmhouses.
15. Parts of the current Church building date from the early 1200's, with later chancel and Victorian restoration, and is set on a bend in the road north of the Mere, looking down the valley side. By 1600 records show about 40 families lived in the core area near the church and another 20 families were more widely spread in the parish.
16. During the Victorian era Watton gained a railway which added to its growth and predominance and Saham's population declined a little in response as travel by other routes became much easier. The village had a strongly agricultural purpose and character at this time. Some buildings from this era survive and contribute positively to the streetscape - eg the Mill at Mill Corner (b.1826), the almshouses on Richmond Road, and Parker's schoolhouse.

The road network

17. Saham Toney has a distinctive and extensive pattern of roads and lanes that are key to its character. The road network developed from a Roman Road which took advantage of

2.0 Landscape context and settlement pattern continued:-



1. Local black flint with buff brick quoins on Gatekeepers Cottage

2. Plethora of poles along Saham Hills

3. New houses on Coburg Lane have strived to replicate vernacular materials and details

a suitable crossing point over the Watton Brook - the course of Richmond Road can be traced back to Roman times. Leading off this route, various track developed to serve the outlying medieval manors that developed after the Normans arrived. There is an old east-west track known as Dark Lane that would have been a key local route, but this never became a metalled road, although its route through the countryside can be still seen today on aerial photos. Instead, as hunting Lodges were in existence for a long time, up until the 18th century in some cases, the tracks that served the Lodges and Manors became the basis for the winding network of lanes seen today. The dispersal of settlement along these lanes, and the opportunities for infilling this gave rise to, in the 20th century, strongly shaped the village today.

Twentieth century change

18. In common with much of the country, the period after the war saw much expansion in Saham. New houses were built along the southern part of Richmond Road and in small clusters, such as Mill View, off Ovington Road, Neville Close, the Oval, Mere Close and Bellmere Way. In the 1990s 39 new houses were built on Amy's Close, the sale of land for which funded the building of a community centre. Latterly 29 houses were completed on Ladybird Lane in 2016 and over previous decades small scale infill has continued to take place along the roads that radiate from the centre of the village, to form the ribbon like

settlement pattern seen today in some parts of the parish - areas like Saham Hills have a strongly linear form, with houses added in a 'one plot deep' formation along Hills Road.

19. The village, therefore, has an unusual settlement pattern. The distinctive-shaped and extensive road network, encircling the Mere, which once supported only scattered and dispersed settlement, provided substantial opportunity for infill in the 20th century. The separated clusters, that formed close to the medieval manors, are today subsumed within 20th century infilling that has overwritten the historic pattern, although each lane has a different landscape setting and has developed a subtly different character.
20. The southern and western parts of the village have a more suburban' feel with continuous, denser development and blocks of 20th century infill - these are attached to the historic Church-Mere clusters. In contrast, settlement along the outlying lanes has a more linear character, and when interspersed with views into undeveloped land, has a loose and more rural feel. Edges are often soft and strongly vegetated, and usually well integrated into the landscape.
21. The character of the built form also varies. Leading into the long-settled zone around the church and Mere, older properties endure and these contribute positively to the character of this central, nodal area of the village. Elsewhere, the older buildings are scattered more widely along the lanes and, where present, bring an important sense of

the local vernacular. However, 20th century infill often dominates the character of the built form and poorly integrated infrastructure can sometime detract, such as prolific telegraph poles and wires.

22. The vernacular materials are traditional Norfolk combinations of red brick and flint. Flint facings are found on cottage facades and boundary walls, and on agricultural buildings. Red brick is used widely and often decorated with grey brick quoins, adding detail to corners and windows. Brick chimneys are also often of ornate design. Attractive examples are seen on buildings on the Saham Hall estate and on cottages near Page's Place. Roofs coverings are traditionally slate or tiles, pantiles are particularly common, usually red, but there are several examples of dark coloured pantiles too. As elsewhere in the UK, the substantial infilling within the village clusters during the later part of the 20th century diluted vernacular character, increasing the styles and materials seen and widening the palette of materials used.

Summary

23. In summary, the character of the village is very much defined by its extensive distribution along the curving road network, and its multi-focal pattern. The assessment that follows demonstrates that the character of each of the clusters of settlement is different and distinctive.
24. Preventing coalescence and loss of the multi-focal pattern is, therefore, essential if the character of Saham Toney is to be conserved. The open spaces that separate the clusters are important for retaining the individual character and pattern seen in each area, and for orientation of the visitor within the parish. Development within the open spaces between clusters would serve to cause coalescence and linking of clusters, and loss of their individual identities.
25. Distinctiveness is strongest where the historic buildings and farmsteads remain dominant features in the streetscenes and landscape, and where there is interaction with topography and open space. Preservation and /or enhancement of these open spaces, and the historic buildings and their settings is of primary importance to retains the special character of Saham toney. This means any future development should be sympathetic to these sensitivities.
26. For more detail on the particular sensitivities found in each area please refer to the Fringe Sensitivity Assessment.

RURAL CHARACTER AREAS

3.0 Rural Character Areas

Rural Character Areas:

- RCA-1 - Watton Brook
- RCA-2 - Western estates
- RCA-3 - Page's Manor
- RCA-4 - Ploughboy farmland
- RCA-5 - Saham Waite

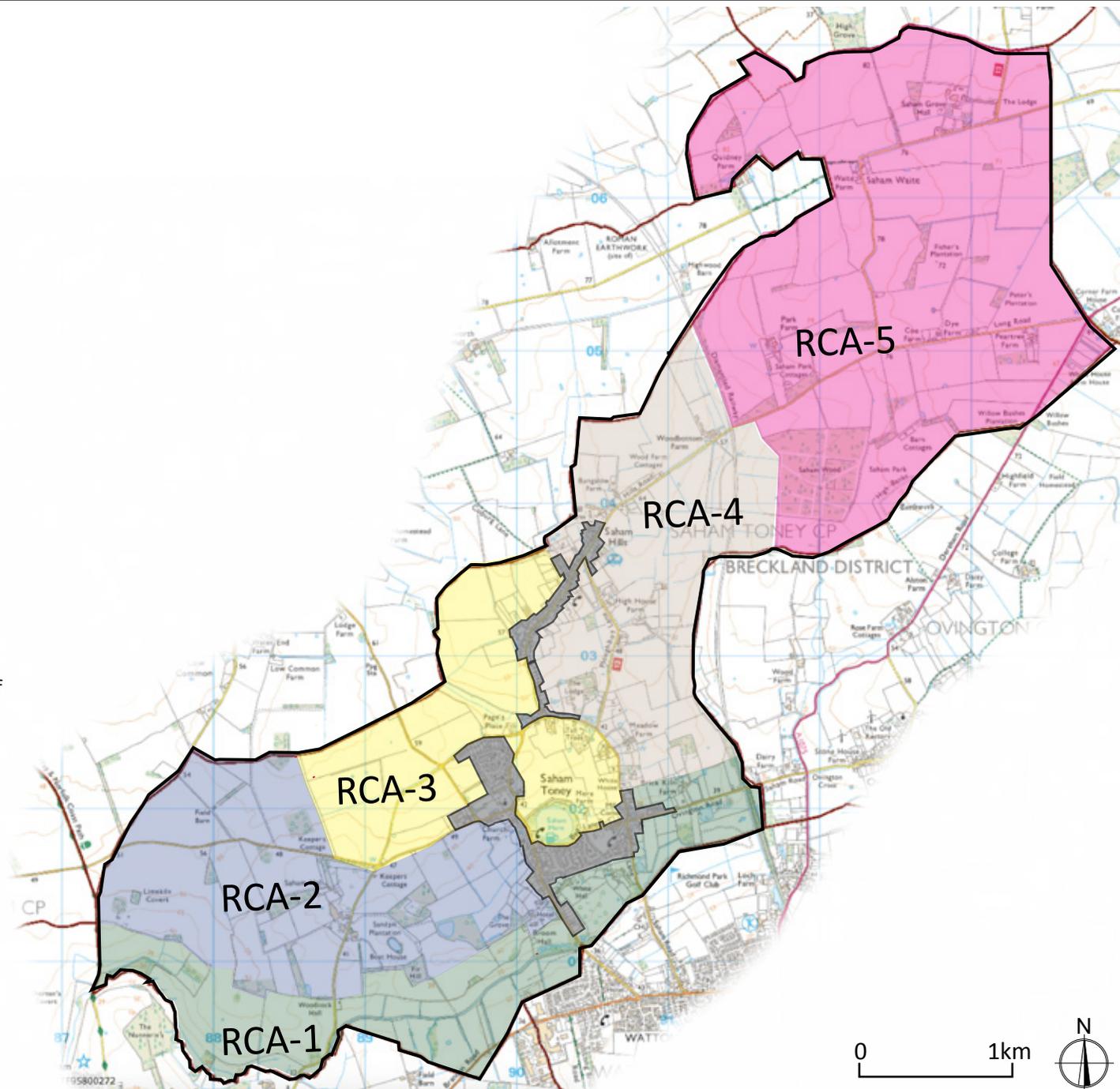
- Village character areas

The descriptions of each area that follow on the following pages are colour-coded for reference.

The grey area is comprised of 6 village character areas as mapped in more detail on map 2.

Boundaries have been drawn along recognisable features, routes or and lines in the landscape, but in reality zones of transition will exist.

Descriptions of more than one character area may be relevant in consideration of sites that fall close to boundaries.



Map 1

Rural Character Areas

Rural Character Areas:

RCA-1 - Watton Brook

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Low lying, gently rolling valley bottom below the 40m contour along the Watton Brook
- Soils are seasonally wet, sands loams and peats with high water table.
- Landuse dominated by meadows, used for hay and grazing.
- Forms of enclosure are gappy and scrubby hedges, and trees along ditches.
- Visual experience is varied. Open within the valley bottom, trees edge the skyline on the upper valley sides to the north. More intimate where small field systems endure to the east side of the village.
- Little settlement, which is instead is found on higher land, the exception being Ovington Road
- Lack of public access



Long views along the low lying, unsettled meadows that line the Watton Brook. Telegraph pole interrupt views along the valley bottom.

Church at Threxton is a notable landmark, sitting just outside the parish, but providing strong focal point



Glimpses of Mill possible from Ovington Road to the east of Mill Corner



RCA -1 - Watton Brook

Constituent district landscape type/area

Landscape Type: D: The Brecks

Landscape Area D2: Stanta Heath

Location and Physical characteristics

Narrow belt of land generally to the north of Watton Brook to the west, south and east of Saham Toney that winds gently through the farmland valleysides. Forms the rural gap between the village and Little Cressingham and Watton.

Topography, soils and hydrology

Found generally below the 40m contour, the land is low-lying, and feels flat or gently rolling, falling towards the Brook.

Soils are seasonally wet with naturally high groundwater. The lower areas adjacent to the river are a mix of loamy and sandy soils with areas of peat.

Landcover and landuse

In the west of the area landuse is predominantly meadowlands with strongly rural, valley bottom character. It is a somewhat empty landscape of sheep grazing the meadows, small woodland blocks and tree lined drainage ditches.

To the south and east of Watton the land is used as Richmond golf course and managed intensively. The club house features lodges and car parking and the feel is much less rural. Residential development is also encroaching into this area from Watton.

Tree species found include typical riparian species such as poplar alder and willow and there are also ash, oak and hawthorn - oaks stud the hedges along lanes. Hedges are a mix of elder, elm, field sizes are small in the valley bottom, increasing rapidly on the valleysides - boundary loss and amalgamation has formed some large field sizes

on the upper slopes.

In the east, there is a slightly different feel with a well vegetated small scale landscape of pastures in the valley bottom, striated by streams and drains taking water south to the Watton Brook. Small ponds are found. Enclosed, contained feel from linear, tree lined boundaries. Sense of time depth from the fine grain of the field patterns and pastoral landuse. Small business park on Saham Road, at farm on the Dereham Road junction.

Routes and Settlement

Owing to the seasonally wet soils, the landscape to the west is generally unsettled. Woodcock Hall is a small dwelling, enclosed by vegetation, found on the higher land on the edge of the area to the west.

To the east, the landscape has a more settled character with Mill Corner residential cluster sitting on the edge of the character area.

Aside from the golf course, public recreational access opportunities along the river appear to be absent.

Landmarks and features of value

The church tower and old barns at Thrextton are seen on the route out of the parish. These have strong landmark value and contribute a strong sense of time depth to views of the landscape.

White Hall and its barn and Brick Kiln farmhouse are listed buildings.

Woodcock Hall is a medieval manor but the land around is known to have had both Iron Age and Roman settlement and has been the source of many finds and is a designated Scheduled Monument. The dates of the objects indicate that this was an area of significant settlement from the Late Iron Age until the 4th century AD.

There is an old Mill tower southeast of the Mill Corner crossroads, but is not a prominent landmark as only glimpsed from a few points, within tree cover.

Visual and perceptual experience

Scenic meadowlands landscape. The western parts of the character area feels remote and quiet. In the far west, the setting of Thrextton Church and Farm, just outside the parish, have a historic feel and contributes positively to the rural character.

Views can be fairly long and open, especially where boundary loss has created large field sizes on the upper slopes. They include Key Views 7, 8, 9 and 10. Views are curtailed only by rising valleysides topped often by trees and woodland blocks on the skyline.

Visual detractors include the telegraph poles and wires along the valley bottom and movement and noise from the Brandon Road. Industrial landuse on the edge of Watton seen from some points.

Opportunities and Management aims

Condition is fair but poor in places. Settlement creeping into the floodplain at Watton infringes on the natural character.

Belts of dark green conifers planted to screen and enclose the water treatment plant close to the bridge appear out of place and have strong visual impact. These would be better replaced with species more suited to a river corridor.

Hedges in the valley bottom are sometimes in poor condition and would benefit from gapping up and managing more regularly, especially those with a high proportion of elm.

Retain quiet and tranquil character along Thrextton Road. Retain backroads feel - development here is likely to be intrusive and inappropriate. Avoid utility or highways interventions that detract from the rural character.

Generally development is unlikely to be appropriate in this landscape owing to its sensitivity and value as traditionally managed riverside meadows, and because of its function as undeveloped gap with Watton.

RCA -1

Rural Character Areas:

RCA-2 - Western estates

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently sloping farmlands between 40 and 60m AOD with sandy, easily worked soils
- Arable estate farmlands, with a strongly rural and unified feel. Parkland provides setting for Saham Hall.
- Wooded feel from frequent belts, plantations and small woodlands. No ancient woodlands. Oaks stud the field boundaries and parkland trees have skyline presence.
- Straight sided large arable fields with network of narrow straight lanes.
- No settlement other than the Hall and its associated cottages
- Unified estate style with flint facing, brick quoins and ornate chimneys. Flint features in walls.
- Sense of scenic well managed countryside. Quiet and tranquil feel. Some long views possible.



Parkland at Saham Hall



Well vegetated estate farmland

RCA-2 - Western estates

Constituent district landscape type/area

Landscape Type E: Plateau farmlands
Landscape Area: E5 Central Breckland Plateau

Location and physical characteristics

Area of estate farmland and parkland in the west of the parish. It has a regular, wooded, estate feel under the influence of Saham Hall. It is distinct from the valleysides to the south as it is more vegetated and has a unified feel. An area of parkland surrounds the Hall itself.

Countryside estates tend to bring a consistency to the vernacular of the built form and a regularity to the appearance and layout of the farmed landscape. Landscape is managed partly for the keeping of game, which influences its appearance.

Topography, soils and hydrology

Flat and gently sloping valleyside, between approx. 40m and 60m AOD. Gentle relief across the valleyside is provided by a stream that appears to rise north of Saham Hall. Light, freely draining slightly acid sandy soils.

Small ponds are present dotted across the landscape.

Landcover and landuse

Landuse is arable farmland growing cereals, maize and sugar beet which benefit from the easily worked soils. Pasture and parkland is also found, grazed by cattle.

Woodland is found regularly in small woods, plantations and belts, often featuring Scots Pine. Regular oaks stud the lanes and hedgerows. Well-managed piece of countryside with good management of elm that dominates hedges, and woodlands are under coppice rotations.

Underlying patterns in the landscape have an organic

form seen in the ancient shapes of the enclosure, tracks and lanes, but overlain with geometric forms. The estate farmland, which now overwrites it, has a more overt influence 'on the ground'. Field boundaries have been regularised and straightened, and strips of woodland add further linear geometry. Oak trees stud field boundaries adding to the regularity. Field sizes here are moderately large.

When estates were created in 18th and 19th centuries, larger fields with more geometric, rectangular forms were favoured as they were more easily managed. There was a further substantial amount of field amalgamation in the last century where many small straight-sided fields, seen on the early OS maps, were merged to create the large-scale arable landscape seen today.

Routes and Settlement

Settlement is generally very lightly scattered and comprises only Saham Hall and associated estate cottages.

Vernacular building materials include buff brick, slate roofs. Houses, farm boundary walls and barns often feature cobble flint panelling.

The road network is a network of usually straight, small roads, often hedged which provides a sense of intimacy.

A rights of way network is absent.

Landmarks and features of value

Parkland around Saham Hall is distinctive and offers views through of mature parkland trees. It gives rise to a strong sense of place.

Part of the Scheduled Monument - an area of the Roman fort associated with Woodcock Hall - falls within this character area but little is in evident on the ground.

Saham Hall farmhouse is a listed building

Visual and perceptual experience

Regular small blocks and strips of woodland intersperse the farmland and frame and contain views. However longer views are possible across open farmland.

Clumps of pines are distinctive emerging from woodland blocks and are a link to the Breckland landscapes to the south. Hedges appear well managed. Often single species - hawthorn.

It is a quiet and tranquil area, sufficiently removed from busy main roads and settlement to feel somewhat remote.

Opportunities and Management aims

Landscape is in good condition. Hedges here are in better condition than other landscapes where the influence of estate farming is not present.

Strongly wooded character is robust and this characteristic provides some capacity for development or land uses to be absorbed within it. However, the character of the area is very consistent so anything that departs from the settlement pattern or architectural forms would be noticeable.

Protect areas of parkland, and their individual features, for their important contribution to character

Apart from the woodland, semi-natural habitats are otherwise absent as this fertile farmland is valuable and productive.

Plan for enhancements to biodiversity, perhaps opportunities that might emerge through agri-environmental schemes

Seek opportunities to create public access where it is consistent with other land management aims.

RCA-2

Rural Character Areas:

RCA-3 - Page's Manor

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Flat or very gently sloping
- Landuse is entirely arable farmland (cereals)
- Simple, open farmland dominates. No woodlands. Hedges sometimes present. Roadsides often unhedged, or hedges present behind narrow verges. Ash trees in hedgerows.
- Large open fields with straightened boundaries.
- No settlement but views across open farmland to village edges of Ashill and Saham Toney are part of the visual experience
- Expansive views across large fields, under big skies
- No particular landmarks but poplar trees have skyline impact.



Long open views across farmland



Settlement often seen along the edges of the farmland

RCA-3 - Page's Manor

Constituent district landscape type/area

Landscape Type E: Plateau farmlands
Landscape Area: E5 Central Breckland Plateau
Landscape Type: D: The Brecks
Landscape Area D2: Stanta Heath

Location and physical characteristics

Open farmland that wraps from the southwest to the northeast of Saham Hills. It has an important function as part of the open rural gap between Saham Toney and Ashill.

Topography, soils and hydrology

Flat and gently sloping valleyside, between approx. 50m and 60m AOD with only gentle relief provided by a tributary stream northwest of Page's Place. Soils are slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage. No ponds are present.

Landcover and landuse

Landuse is arable farmland, conditions are ideal for growing cereals. Woodland is absent.

Open farmland wraps around the north side of the Mere. Historic maps show this a mosaic of smaller fields at the end of the 19th century. C20th amalgamation has formed a rather featureless open area. A number of Lombardy poplars dominate the skyline, remnants along an old field boundary on the edge of the character area, perhaps once planted as windbreaks.

Trees cluster along the village edge, and are found along roadsides - particularly ash. Small woodlands (beyond the area) link up along the distant skyline to give a lightly wooded feel to longer views. Skyline also punctuated by

tall clumps of poplar.

Underlying patterns have broadly been lost. Much field amalgamation has taken place to make this valuable farmland more productive and easily managed. The boundary loss has contributed to the a sense of openness.

There was a substantial amount of field amalgamation in the last century where many small straight-sided fields, seen on the early OS maps, were merged to create the large-scale arable landscape seen today.

Straight drainage ditches are found within the field network.

Routes and Settlement

Settlement is absent within the character area, but it borders the Parker's, Chequers and Saham Hills settlement area and views can contain settlement edges.

Vernacular building materials include buff brick, slate roofs. Houses, farm boundary walls and barns often feature cobble flint panelling.

The road network is a dissipated network of usually straight, small roads which are often hedged, providing intimacy.

Footpaths or other rights of way are absent.

Landmarks and features of value

No particular landmark features but tall poplar trees are seen punctuating the skyline.

Gardener's Cottage is a listed building.

Visual and perceptual experience

Openness with long views out to open countryside to the north and west and across farmland to the east of Pound Hill. Settlement edges seen along the peripheries of the arable landscape, tucked into vegetation.

It is relatively quiet area, away from the main roads it can

to feel fairly tranquil.

Opportunities and Management aims

Landscape is in moderate condition. Loss of hedgerows causes associated loss of historic character; absence of features showing time depth.

As the tree stock is limited and has a high percentage of ash - monitor for impact of Chalara dieback. Consider encouraging alternative species.

Semi-natural habitats are absent as this fertile farmland is valuable and productive.

Plan for enhancements to biodiversity, perhaps opportunities that might emerge through agri-environmental schemes.

Plan to increase the stock of trees and woodland in the landscape. Replace lost hedges.

Seek opportunities to create public access where it is consistent with other land management aims.

Rural Character Areas:

RCA - 4 - Ploughboy farmlands

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Gently sloping valleyside on the east side of the parish.
- Landuse is often pasture in the lower parts and arable farmland on the more elevated areas
- Where there is a network of hedges and trees an intimate feel is experienced. Opens out to long views when absent.
- Finer grain to the landscape, smaller field sizes than seen elsewhere. Strong sense of time depth.
- Settlement scattered along the west side of the area, often integrated within well vegetated settings but some stark edges.
- Disused railway embankment is a strong linear feature in the east.
- Vernacular materials are red brick and render houses, large decorative chimneys. Pantile roofs, some black coloured.



Less well integrated edges of settlement seen to the west from Ploughboy Lane



Approach to village edge from the northeast, vegetation effectively absorbs settlement from view

RCA -4 - Ploughboy farmlands

Constituent district landscape type/area

Landscape Type E: Plateau farmlands

Landscape Area: E5 Central Breckland Plateau

Landscape Type B: Settled tributary farmlands

Landscape Area B5: River Wissey tributary Farmland

Location and physical characteristics

This area comprises land to the east of Saham Hills; to either side of Hills Road and generally east of Ploughboy Lane, as far as the parish boundary.

Topography, soils and hydrology

Land is elevated plateau edge with only slight relief created by the effects of tributary streams draining southwards towards the Watton Brook.

Soils are slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage.

Landcover and landuse

Landuse is generally open arable farmland, but it also includes poorly drained lower-lying meadows associated with the tributary streams, for example beside the disused railway line. These often have better vegetated boundaries than the arable lands.

Routes and Settlement

Little settlement within this area itself - a scattering of farmsteads and cottages are present. The area abuts the Saham Hills settlement character area and the Chequers settlement area. The glimpsed edges of which form a small part of the visual experience.

Vernacular materials are red brick, tiled, sometimes pantiles are glazed black. Chimneys are tall and brickwork

is often ornate.

Footpaths or other rights of way are absent but the lanes are quiet and likely offer recreational opportunities.

Village edge at Saham Hills not prominent on the approach from the northeast. It is well absorbed within vegetation and then hidden from view on falling land beyond.

Landmarks and features of value

The disused railway line, raised on an embankment, is a strong feature across the landscape and its well vegetated nature makes for a strong form a physical break between the landscape either side of it. Distinctive bridge walls flanking road act as waypoint along route.

The Lodge and Meadow Farm are listed buildings in this area

Visual and perceptual experience

Generally visual experience is fairly open, across moderately large fields. Long views towards the south are possible. Smaller field patterns on lower lying land associated with the streams. Strong rural character owing to limited sense of settlement and the wooded horizons to the east formed by the block at Saham Wood and surrounding tree belts which link up along the skyline.

This area includes Key Views 4 and 5.

Opportunities and Management aims

Landscape is in moderate condition. Some loss of hedgerows and associated loss of historic character. Plan for improvement to hedge network.

Semi-natural habitats are absent as this fertile farmland is valuable and productive. Plan for enhancements to biodiversity, perhaps opportunities that might emerge through agri-environmental schemes.

Plan to maintain the stock of trees and woodland in the

landscape.

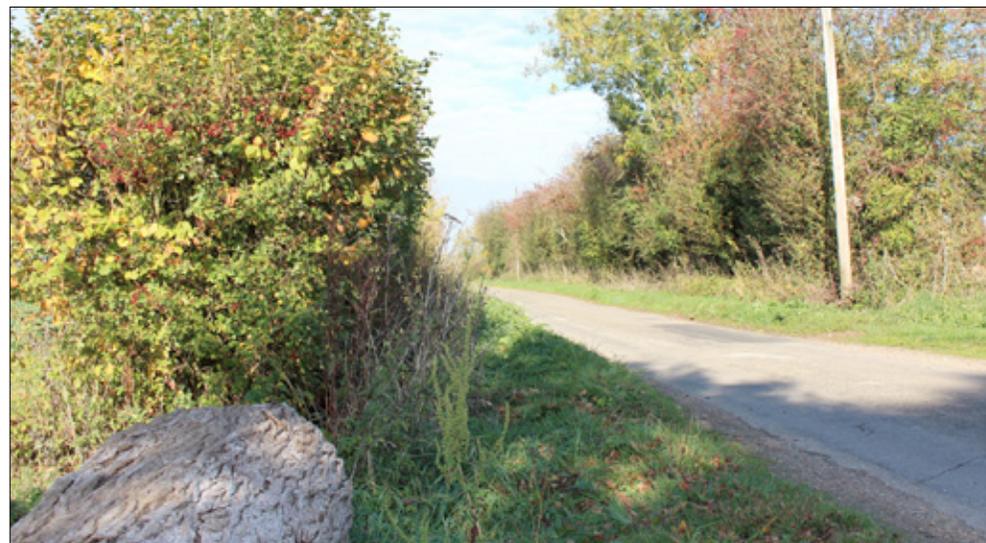
Seek opportunities to create public access along the disused railway line for recreation/tourism use, and radiating from the village edge through the farmlands.

Rural Character Areas:

RCA - 5 - Saham Waite

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Elevated plateau farmland in the far northeast of the parish
- Landuse is arable farmland with a well managed feel.
- Large woodland at Saham Wood (Ancient woodland) as well as regular plantations and coniferous shelter belts.
- Regularised landscape with geometric feel to the grid of lanes, fields have straight boundaries
- Settlement found in the form of scattered farms, some on the site of ancient manors and the location of medieval deer park
- Vernacular materials are red brick and render houses with pantile roofs, some black glazed.



Straight lanes with grass verges and well managed hedges



Glimpse into parkland at Saham Grove on the parish boundary

RCA-5 - Saham Waite Continued:-

Constituent district landscape type/area

Landscape Type E: Plateau farmlands

Landscape Area: E5 Central Breckland Plateau

Landscape Type B: Settled tributary farmlands

Landscape Area B5: River Wissey tributary Farmland

Location and physical characteristics

This area comprises fairly flat plateau farmlands east of the disused railway line, which has an estate feel and is representative of the character of much of mid-Norfolk's farmlands, with big skies overhead.

Topography, soils and hydrology

Land is elevated plateau with a flat or very gently sloping feel. It tops out around 80m AOD in the centre of the area, falling gently to either side (east and west) to just below 70m AOD.

Soils are slowly permeable seasonally wet, loamy and clayey soils.

Straight drainage ditches divide the fields. The landscape is studded with small ponds, often now marooned in large fields.

Landcover and landuse

Landuse is generally arable farmland with an organised and unified estate feel. The roads, fields and woodlands often follow straight lines giving a regular, geometric feel. Some of the roads are straight 'surveyors' roads. There are also paddocks under equine use. All frequently interspersed with woodland and shelter belts, some of these have a high proportion of conifers.

There is a small area with a parkland east of Saham Grove on the edge of the parish behind an attractive gatehouse and ornamental railings.

Fields are backed by woodlands and separated by continuous hedges which give an impression of well managed land. Ash trees are common in roadside hedgerows, oaks are more common studding the field boundary hedges. Long established and restored hedges feature a mix of native clayland species including hazel, hawthorn, rose, field maple, elder and blackthorn.

Routes and Settlement

Little settlement within this area itself - a scattering of farmsteads and cottages along the straight lanes.

Lanes have verges and hedges feel intimate. The A1075 Dereham Road clips the area in the eastern-most part of the parish.

Residential building materials are red brick and pantiles houses. Barns and houses are faced in knapped flint with red brick quoins. Fine Victorian country house at Saham Grove of red brick with grey/buff brick quoins and slate roof.

The cottages strung along Long Road have matching porches indicating association through a farm estate.

There are a number of permissive footpaths around Saham Grove Hall as part of stewardship agreement but other permanent footpaths or other rights of way are generally absent. A short length of byway falls within the parish, to the west of Waite Farm, heading towards Ashill. The lanes are quiet and likely offer recreational opportunities.

Busy Dereham Road brings noise and movement to the far east of the area.

Landmarks and features of value

This area features a number of historic features and indicators.

Ancient (replanted) woodland at Saham Wood and ancient and semi natural woodland at Park Woods.

Scheduled Monument southeast of Saham Wood - High Banks which also covers part of Ovington parish. Thought to be an Iron Age/Roman fort, one of two in the parish.

Park Farm, in the west of the character area, is thought to have been part of medieval or post-medieval deer park, associated with Saham Wood. Evidence for such is found on a 1586 map, as noted in Norfolk Heritage Explorer record 14158.

Park Farm house is Grade II listed.

Visual and perceptual experience

Visual experience varies from long open views, available from this most elevated part of the parish, which take in the far valley side of the Watton Brook several kilometres away. There is an occasional containment where tall shelter belts block longer views.

The skyline is strongly wooded.

Scenic, quiet and tranquil. Saham Waite hamlet feels particularly remote and isolated.

Opportunities and Management aims

Landscape is in good condition.

Semi-natural habitats are absent as this fertile farmland is valuable and productive. Plan for enhancements to biodiversity, perhaps opportunities that might emerge through agri-environmental schemes.

Plan to maintain and increase the stock of trees and woodland in the landscape. Continue to replace lost hedges.

Careful treatment of vernacular barns under residential conversion, as they contribute to the agricultural character.

RCA-5

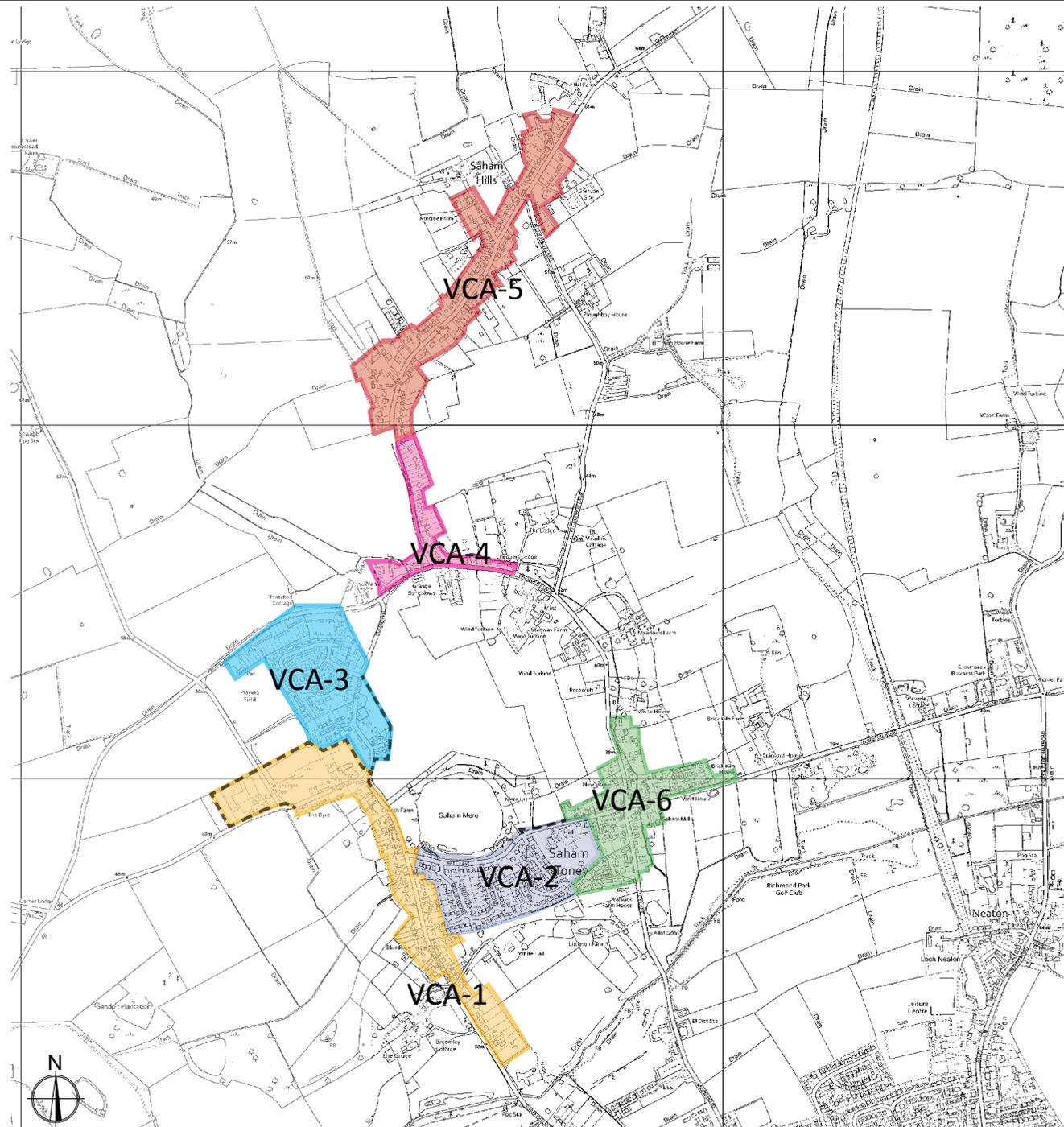
VILLAGE

CHARACTER AREAS

4.0 Village Character Areas

- VCA-1 Richmond Road
- VCA-2 - Bell Lane
- VCA-3 - Parker's
- VCA-4 - Chequers
- VCA-5 - Saham Hills
- VCA-6 - Mill Corner

 Character area boundaries generally correlate with Breckland Local Plan Settlement boundaries. Where dashed line shown boundary is extended to include additional areas of built form.



Map 2

Village Character Areas

Village Character Areas:

VCA -1 - Richmond Road

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Linear development along Richmond Road, generally one plot deep. Plot depths vary.
- Main road is busy and carries traffic from Watton to Ashill and other outlying villages
- Historical dwellings are scattered, in small clusters along the Richmond Road. Now much infilled with substantial 20th additions, all generally following the ribbon pattern
- No open space or public realm but opens out at junction with Bell Lane, and important node where adjoins space in front of St. George's. Important for orientation.
- Trees west of the mere provide a strong green edge
- Settlement edges are hard to experience from the highway but appear backed by well vegetated edges.
- Glimpses of church tower heading north along Richmond Road provide a series of key views to this landmark



Photos showing features of value, vernacular materials or landmarks:

1. Saham College
2. Mix of flint and render on cottage
3. The Terrace, built of brick and slate.
4. Views to St. George's church along Richmond Road
5. Views over meadows to Watton Brook at Broom Hall

VCA -1 - Richmond Road

Location and function

Settlement area to the south and west of Saham Toney comprising the linear settlement along the ancient Richmond Road, now a primary local route, passing the Mere on its west side. It connects into Watton to the south.

It covers the length of Richmond Road, the setting to St. George's Church and goes as far west as the pet food store on the junction with Cressingham Road.

Small paddocks and pastures often form the interface with the rural area behind the dwellings.

Landscape setting

Land rises gently from the floodplain and lies between the 35 and 45m contour. The Mere is found at around 40m AODm.

Land uses

Predominantly residential, generally established within mature plots. Pastures and paddocks sometimes provide backing along the west side. Adjoins recreational uses in the form of Broom Hall country house hotel; golf course alongside the river.

The ancient Mere occupies a fairly central position in terms of the spread of surrounding settlement clusters but is surrounded by vegetation which broadly prevent views in. The lack of visibility and lack of public access means it plays little role in the local sense of place.

Gateways and routes

Approach to village from Watton is up tree-lined incline, which partly conceals views to settlement edge. Glimpses into golf course to east and pastures to the east. Entrance to Broom Hall has presence and its driveway helps mark entrance to village.

Richmond Road has a fairly straight character, with only gentle bends, before it suddenly sweeps to the west in

front of the church where a small green is formed at its confluence with Pound Hill. This space, associated with the church, has a strong sense of place and its mature trees positively contribute to the streetscene.

Settlement pattern

Continuous ribbon development along much of Richmond Road. Density is moderate - mainly detached houses and bungalows, fronting directly onto Richmond Road.

Two large 18th/19th century listed properties, set within extensive grounds, sit behind the settled roadside - Broom Hall and White Hall to the west and east respectively.

By the end of the 19th century Richmond Road featured an agricultural college and a handful of houses along its length, including the terrace. These historic dwellings now are interspersed amongst 20th century infill, the greater quantity of which tend to dominate the character of the road.

The older cottages tend to sit right up to the road, or with a narrow set back. The more recent bungalows are often set back 15-20m and have suburban style planted front drives and gardens.

Built form type

Mixed housing styles and ages. Lack of unified character. Ornate Victorian houses sit alongside more modern houses and bungalows as a result of gradual infill over the 20th century. Building size is generally modest - one or two storey.

Older buildings contributing positively to the character, and provide examples of the local vernacular.

Open/space public realm

Regular mature trees and hedges provide a strongly vegetated character in parts. Green 'walls' of mature vegetation break up the built form. The edges of the Mere are densely vegetated. Almost all properties have a front garden, varying in depth according to the size of the house but always large enough for garden planting. Mature shrubs

and ornamental trees contribute much of the foreground greenery, with native species trees punctuating the views along the street or rising above rooftops.

Openness from small greenspaces either side of Bell Lane - the pub's garden and a small grass area opposite but otherwise there are no public open spaces. No footpath rights of way network is available.

Settlement edges

The outer edge of the settlement is not easily perceived from vantage points within the character area. Views are only possible from RCA-2 to the west side, from Cressingham Road to the north, and the village edge appears appear soft and well vegetated. Small scale fields often help provide a sympathetic transition into the open countryside adjacent.

Materials and enclosures

Red brick walls often define front boundaries along Richmond Road.

Attractive ornate iron railings in front of the Terrace.

Landmarks and features of value

- Adjoins the ancient Mere in the centre of the parish
- St. George's church and its Rectory -listed buildings.
- White Hall and its barn - Grade II listed buildings
- Non-designated heritage assets: Broom Hall, The Terrace; The Old College; Wisteria Cottage.

Visual and perceptual experience

Views are generally confined to within the urbanised 'corridor' of Richmond Road, the continuous nature of the development prevents views out to the wider countryside. The exception is the view to river corridor from Broom Hall driveway.

Tower of St. George's church is seen in the skyline in a sequence of views from the south.

This area includes Key Views 2 and 6.

VCA -1

Village Character Areas:

VCA -2 - Bell Lane

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Modern, compact, estate-type development dating from the 1980/90s.
- Served by two estate roads - Amy's Close and Bellmere Way/Mere Close - each displaying a unified built form type.
- Dwellings on Amy's Close have a particularly uniform appearance with little variation in house type or materials.
- Curved estate roads - no through roads with no connectivity
- Strong green edges of the Mere provide a well defined edge, and provide containment, preventing views to the north.
- No public open space within the estates but large area of open space adjacent at the village hall.
- Mature trees play a role on the skylines along boundaries to the north and south, but trees within the estates are smaller scale and more suburban in character.

1



2



Photos showing features of value, vernacular materials or landmarks:

1. Amy's Close
2. Bellmere Way

VCA -2 - Bell Lane

Location

Small well defined block of settlement lying to the south of the Mere. Comprises development fronting Bell Lane and estate-type development built in three or four phases in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

Landscape setting

Land feels flat and lies just above the 40m contour.

Land uses

Modern, residential estate development. No other landuses are present.

Gateways and routes

Bell Lane provides a link between Richmond Road and Mill Corner with the Old Bell Inn marking the junction. Bellmere Way and Amy's Close estate roads lead off to the south, and are well integrated within the row of Bell Lane properties. These have a typical curved form and are no-through roads with turning heads at the end.

Settlement pattern

Relatively dense and often repetitious house types set along curved estate roads. The only building in this area that predates the 1980s is the Old Bell Inn - a non-designated heritage asset.

Built form type

Houses have a fairly uniform appearance relating to the phase of development in which they were built. Bellmere Way and Amy's Close features mostly bungalows, Mere Close is dominated by two story dwellings.

Open/space public realm

The residential area adjoins the community open space to the east that provides the setting for the village hall. However, there is no direct pedestrian access, except from the Bell Lane access point. This greenspace features open grass with maturing trees, and some wooded edges and is available for informal recreation/dog-walking etc. It is important as is the only available public greenspace in the parish and significant given the lack of a footpath network in the local area.

Settlement edges

This area of development is well integrated into the village edge. It bounds open countryside to the south only, where a belt of mature trees provides a green edge. Settlement at Richmond Road and Mill Corner provide containment to the east and west. The belt of trees enclosing the Mere provide a dense screen to the north.

Materials and enclosures

Bellmere Way features pale brick bungalows with white painted timber panels. Mere Close has a more varied built form type with houses and single storey dwellings. Here there also is more variety in materials, with more red brick mixed concrete tile colours.

Amy's Close bungalows are a particularly uniform house type of red brick and pan tiles.

Landmarks and features of value

- Adjoins the ancient Mere in the centre of the parish
- The Old Bell Inn - non-designated heritage asset
- The Wells Cole Community Centre park land is a designated Local Green Space

Visual and perceptual experience

Views are generally confined to within the urbanised

corridors along the roads. This area is not visible from the wider village or countryside and views in and out are not experienced.

Village Character Areas:

VCA -3 - Parker's

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Slightly elevated and gently rolling landscape north of the Mere along Pound Hill between St. George's church and Page's Lane.
- Shallow soils over chalk, adjoining land use is both arable and unenclosed pastures.
- Comprises some older properties along Pound Hill, including the schoolhouse, but larger area is covered by unified 1970s bungalow estate development,
- The tracts of open arable land provides extensive views and are key to sense of place.
- Land bounding to the north provides separation between different clusters of settlement.
- Notable views to tower of St George's church along southerly route on Pound Hill.



Photos showing features of value, vernacular materials or landmarks:

1. Parker's Schoolhouse
2. Views to church tower along Pound Hill
3. Triangle of rural land east of The Oval has a rural feel
4. View towards Mere from Pound Hill - rising land and tree belts prevents views.



VCA-3 - Parker's

Location

This area focuses on the settlement cluster that sits north of St. George's Church between Pound Hill and Page's Lane.

Landscape setting

Land is very gently rolling and somewhat elevated, found between 45 and 55m AOD - the upper part of interfluvium between shallow tributary stream valleys that drain to the Watton Brook.

Shallow soils over chalk are found in this area. Farmland is arable or unenclosed pasture.

The open farmland to the northeast plays an important role separating different clusters of development - the main village to the south, and Saham Hills to the north.

Land uses

Settlement dominates and forms a dense block sandwiched between farmland to the east and west. The school is found to the east of Pound Hill.

Gateways and routes

Gateway to Pound Hill formed by the green in front of the church. The new development at Parkers Close also stands out as a marker point between the character areas.

Pound Hill and Page Lane are relatively busy as they carry traffic through to Saham Hills and beyond. Pound Hill is much wider than many of the surrounding lanes, and has a footway along its length that connects to Chequers Lane.

The estate road in The Oval has a number of loops but only connects onto Pound Lane from a single point so is effectively a no through road.

Settlement pattern

Historically this area was unsettled. North of the church

there was no settlement between the church and Pages Place, aside from the flint schoolhouse added in the Victorian period. All other dwellings seen today are post-war additions.

The character of the area is now most influenced by the post-war houses along the main roads. Ten houses were built on Pound Hill, and 24 semi-detached 'Council' houses were built on Page's Lane in the 1950s, and any gaps have been filled by later infilling.

In the 60s/70s The Oval infilled the undeveloped land between Pound Hill and Page's Lane. These houses are not easily perceived from the wider area, as they sit low down and are often concealed behind the curtilages of two story houses.

In the 1980's a small estate was added in St. George's Close, off Pound Hill, and Parker's Close was added in 2010 to a prominent site almost opposite the church. This is judged to have had a somewhat negative effect on the historic setting to the front of the church, given its finishes and unsightly weathering on the rendered facades.

Built form type

The Oval covers large proportion of the character area and comprises a large estate of bungalows along curving estate roads. Bungalows and two story modern houses front Pound Hill.

Page's Lane features two story Council houses set back from the road with spacious, vegetated front gardens.

Open/space public realm

The parish sports field occupies land to the west side of the block of settlement. It has a dense boundary hedge along the Watton Road and a recently planted community orchard.

The triangle of land at the junction of Pound Hill and Page's Lane remains undeveloped and is part of the wider setting to Page's Place.

Settlement edges

Housing rarely backs onto open land, rather it tends to front the roads, enjoying long rural views because the lanes and fields tend to feature little in the way of vegetated boundaries. A mature hedge provides a soft green edge along the west end of the block of development.

The school is enclosed by a strong line of coniferous hedging. New houses at Parker's Close have a starker edge with the adjacent farmland with little in the way of hedges.

Materials and enclosures

The Oval bungalows are red/brown bricks with red/brown pressed concrete tiles.

For traditional finishes, the Parker's school house represents the oldest building in the area, it is faced in knapped flint and has stone window casings.

New development on Parker's Close features brightly coloured render and black boarding which are not vernacular materials.

Landmarks and features of value

- Views to St George's Church - Grade I listed
- Parker's Schoolhouse - non-designated heritage asset

Visual and perceptual experience

Development along Page's Lane and Pound Hill is generally on one side only, meaning long views outwards are experienced from the village edge. Views of farmland and distant tree lines is part of the visual experience. The feel on the edges is much more open than in other parts of the village.

This area includes Key View 5.

Village Character Areas:

VCA -4 - Chequer's

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Flat and gently rolling landscape associated with a small stream
- Shallow soils over chalk, adjoining land use is both arable and unenclosed pastures.
- Features an ancient manor at Pages Place indicating the long settled nature of this area, as well as a number of attractive cottages displaying traditional vernacular finishes.
- Low density dwellings along the southern end of Hills Road and along the north side of Chequers Lane.
- Farmsteads are found at intervals along the southern side of Chequers Lane with large scale buildings and a sometimes commercial purpose and character, with associated visual intrusion.
- The tract of open arable land to the west of Hills Road provides extensive views.
- Rural feel maintained owing to little modern development and maturity of vegetated curtilages and edges which contribute positively to rural character.



Photos showing features of value, vernacular materials or landmarks:

1. Attractive cottage, Hills Road
2. Well restored cottages, Chequers Lane
3. View west along Chequers Lane

VCA -4 - Chequers

Location

This is the smallest of the village character areas and includes the linear settlement along Page's Lane/Chequers Road from Page's Place to Ploughboy Lane, and along the southern part of Hills Road.

Landscape setting

Sloping valleyside indented by gently rolling shallow valley of a tributary stream that rises north of Pages Place. Found between the 45 and 55m contour.

Landuses

Landuse is residential and agricultural. Surrounding farmland is mainly arable on the elevated parts, with a pastoral meadow system on less well drained land west of Pages Place.

Gateways and routes.

To the north, houses ascending Hills Road face open countryside and towards the village of Ashill to the west. The transition into the Saham Hills character area take place at the point settlement is found on both sides of the street.

Chequers Lane has a gently winding character, contributing to the distinctive curved shape of Chequers Lane. Settlement peters out to the south and the character becomes a little more rural as it transitions into RCA-4.

Settlement pattern

Pages Place is an ancient manor mentioned in Domesday and has endured as a farmstead, but today its impressive house and outbuildings are in a poor state of repair and fail to contribute to the streetscene in the way that they could.

The manor was supported with a scattering of nearby cottages, and further farmsteads developed to the east.

Spaces between the scattered cottages have since been infilled with 20th century development so that the overall pattern is a linear, one plot deep pattern. They are more densely spaced along Hills Road, and looser along Page's Lane and Chequers Lane where curtilages tend to be larger.

Dolphin Crescent, which now forms the southern-most section of Hills Road, was settled during the 1930s with uniform 'Council' type houses. These are not very well integrated and are somewhat prominent on the rising land on the valleyside and seen within the skyline from longer distances from the western end of Page's Lane.

Built form type

Small scale vernacular cottages are appreciated along Chequers Lane and around its junction with Hills Lane. They have more influence here than in any of the other character areas as they remain less diluted by 20th century additions.

In contrast to these small scale vernacular cottages, much of the character of the streetscape is somewhat generic along Hills Road and telegraph poles appear more prominent. A sense of uniformity is experienced from the repeating house types.

Page's Place is a farmstead of at least post-medieval origin and is a handsome gabled house with ornate hexagonal chimneys. It features a number of barns and outbuildings on its west side. After falling into a dilapidated state the farmstead is now under long term renovation.

The farms to the south of Chequers Lane contribute glimpses of large scale buildings to the street scene. They are under various landuses and are in a mixed state of repair and condition.

Open/space public realm

No public open spaces are present.

Settlement edges

A mix of better integrated settlement along Chequers Lane, backed by network of fields. Some of these associated with The Lodge to the east, a large property set in park-like grounds. Vegetated small scale fields provide a soft transition to the open arable land beyond.

Starker edges exist where development fronts onto open land.

Materials and enclosures

The older cottages, some well restored, are an attractive mix of flint and red brick, with white painted windows, and pan tiled roofs. Dormer windows are often present.

Landmarks and features of value

- Page's Place - grade II listed
- Adjoins grounds of The Lodge - grade II listed house in a parkland style setting.

Visual and Perceptual aspects

Visual experience varies. Feeling of containment when hedges and mature trees are present, Chequers Lane can feel quite intimate, but very open where boundary vegetation and rising land allows long views out to the west. The slopes here are very prominent in views from the surrounding area.

VCA -4

Village Character Areas:

VCA -5 - Saham Hills

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Elevated fringes of the plateau, indented with small streams. Heavier land - clayey and loamy soils over chalky boulder clay. Poorly drained meadows along tributary stream.
- Settlement pattern is strongly linear, gaps between historic scattered farmsteads and cottages since infilled with 20th century bungalows and houses. Important open space around Ploughboy Lane.
- Built form type mixed - older cottages and occasional farmsteads within 20th century additions
- No public open spaces, but footpath offers access to countryside from Coburg Lane. Undeveloped meadows adjacent to Ploughboy Lane contribute to character.
- No landmarks as such, but Chapel is notable in the streetscape.
- Contained visual experience often, longer views along streetscape where Hills Road straightens out and over countryside at either end of the cluster.
- Ornamental garden frontages and boundary treatments create a suburban feel at points in the streetscape.



Photos showing features of value, vernacular materials or landmarks:

3. Sheep graze meadows along Ploughboy Lane

4. The Methodist Chapel is a key building in the streetscape

5. Approach to village from north. Well integrated within vegetation.



VCA -5 - Saham Hills

Location

This area focuses on the linear settlement along Hills Road as far north as Wood Farm cottages, and spurs of settlement along Ploughboy Lane and other small lanes. It's sometimes backed by a belt of small-scale historic meadows that form the transition with the farmland beyond.

Landscape setting

Gently rolling topography of open elevated farmland indented with a shallow valley south of Ploughboy Lane, associated with a small tributary stream. Here there is a network of small pastures, with well vegetated boundaries that play a role in the street scene and contribute to the rural feel.

Landuses

Landuse is predominantly residential. Surrounding farmland is mainly arable on the elevated parts, with a pastoral meadow system on less well drained land around Ploughboy Lane. There is also a small caravan/campsite and tearooms in the centre of the area.

Gateways and routes.

Approach from north is low key, cottages mark the approach to the village edge but it's generally well assimilated in vegetation.

The roads and lanes have a very gently winding character. The roads straighten out towards the northern end of the character area.

Settlement pattern

Historically, this area featured a small number of farms, with a scattering of associated roadside cottages along its

length. It used to feature 4 tower windmills so was likely important in milling flour for a much wider area.

Today, it has a strongly linear character. The land in between the cottages and farms has been infilled to create one-plot-deep ribbon development, with houses generally fronting onto the road. All houses sit in generally well vegetated settings, some suburban style ornamental plantings creates a more suburban feel in places.

The ribbon formation is occasionally broken by short spurs where a lane or drive serves a small group of houses - Coburg Lane is the most significant of these.

Built form type

The 1970s/80s dwellings are more numerous and have the greater influence on character than the older properties.. Whilst there are a number of attractive small scale vernacular cottages, much of the character of the streetscape is somewhat generic. Along Hills Road, a waypoint comes in form of the Methodist church, jutting forward into the streetscene, and orientation is aided by the open 'gap' where Ploughboy Lane converges with Hills Road.

The scale of development comprises modest scale cottages and houses, numerous bungalows and one-and-a-half story chalet houses. Recently, larger houses have been built along Coburg Lane, but these are not appreciable from the principal route along Hills Road.

Open/space public realm

No public open spaces. A footpath leads west from Coburg Lane - notable for being the only one mapped in the whole parish.

Undeveloped meadows along Ploughboy Lane bring countryside into the heart of Hills Road and contributes to setting and bring a sense of traditional landuse.

Settlement edges

It is generally difficult to perceive the settlement edge from points on routes or in the landscape. The eastern edges tend to be backed by small scale fields with vegetated boundaries which provide a soft transition to the open arable land beyond. Settlement edge is therefore generally well absorbed.

Materials and enclosures

The older cottages are a mix of red brick and render. The red brick methodist chapel has buff brick detailing .

White painted railings over the stream and at Hill farm.

Landmarks and features of value

- Methodist chapel and Hunt's farmhouse are non-designated heritage assets.

Visual and Perceptual aspects

Visual experience generally one of containment from the continuous development which lines both sides of Hills Road.

Predominately 20th century infill means the character of the built form is not as distinctive than in other parts of the village. The topographical variation in the north of the area provides relief and offers some views down to the lower lying area around the junction of Ploughboy Lane.

VCA -5

Village Character Areas:

VCA -6 - Mill Corner

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Well vegetated, small scale pastoral valley bottom landscape provides setting. Tree belts line small fields.
- Low-lying village edge separated from Watton only by a narrow belt of undeveloped land. Golf course occupies much of the valley bottom.
- Linear settlement pattern where older cottages and 1970s/80s housing sit side by side. A recent small estate has been added at Labybird Lane. Farms and holdings west of Cley Lane.
- Settlement edges well integrated with well vegetated landscape. Enclosure from hedges and tree belts creates sense of intimacy. Long views are not obtained.
- A number of vernacular buildings are seen, small scale brick and flint cottages and a works building. Narrow plot frontages for older properties.
- Mill tower is local landmark, but not easily seen in the landscape owing to well wooded nature. View from the west from Ovington Road.



Photos showing features of value, vernacular materials or landmarks

1. Former Methodist chapel, now an industrial works building in soft red brick on Bell Lane
2. Mix of materials on cottages on Mill Corner crossroads
3. Equestrian barns at Littleton Farm seen on approach along Cley Lane backed by mature trees.
4. Modern day view of Bristow's Mill from the east
5. The Mill was much more visible in the landscape in 1960.

<http://www.norfolkmills.co.uk/Windmills/saham-toney-towermill.html>



VCA-6 - Mill Corner

Location

This area focuses on the well defined settlement cluster in the east of the parish around the crossroads where Bell Lane, Cley Road, Chequers Lane, and Ovington Road meet.

Landscape setting

Low lying area just above the flood plain of the Watton Brook around the 40m contour. It forms the most easterly of the village clusters and links into Bell Lane character area to the west.

Landuses

Mixed landuses. Houses front onto the lanes; equestrian landuse. Allotments. Richmond golf course to the south; Wispy Meadows - a small tourism site featuring small lodges around a newly built lake with extensive tree planting.

Small scale pastoral landuse backs the houses and flanks the lanes which have well vegetated edges; belts of trees dominate the skylines.

Gateways and routes.

From the south, there is strong sense of arrival into the parish at the bridge on Cley Lane, with the tree backed meadows to the west and allotments to the east.

Linear feel from straight roads, and straight sided fields in the lower valley. More organic curved forms begin to be found along Chequers Lane, which are also reflected in the adjoining enclosure patterns.

Settlement pattern

Historic cluster of settlement focused around the crossroads in a one-plot-deep pattern. Plot depths vary depending on the extent and depth of the previous field patterns.

Small estate of bungalows at Mill View contrasts with the one-plot-deep pattern that prevails elsewhere.

Built form type

Cottages and bungalows prevail. Older cottages are interspersed by 20th century infill which, because added incrementally, has a varied character. This gives rise to a mixed set of styles, house types and materials. Some sense of uniformity from the similar distances the houses are set back from the road and boundaries. Picket fences, low hedges and wall define plot frontages.

Open/space public realm

Public open space in the adjoining character area around the village hall has a pedestrian link from Cley Lane.

No footpath network.

Settlement edges

Settlement edge tends to be well absorbed, mature hedges and trees provide soft green edges and screen built form from approaches along the roads.

Materials and enclosures

Examples of vernacular cottage styles found on Ovington Road around the crossroads. Flint house at the crossroads with white painted brick quoins. Red brick disused Victorian chapel, now a works building is distinctive and attractive despite its state of repair.

Cottages are brick and render, with slate and pan tiled roofs, some red and some black. Some black painted plinths and barge-boards.

Landmarks and features of value

- Bristow's Mill Tower is a non-designated heritage asset

Visual and Perceptual aspects

Visual experience is contained - lack of elevation, and density of vegetation prevents views into the wider landscape. Short range views into linear, tree-lined meadows are characteristic to the east of the area.

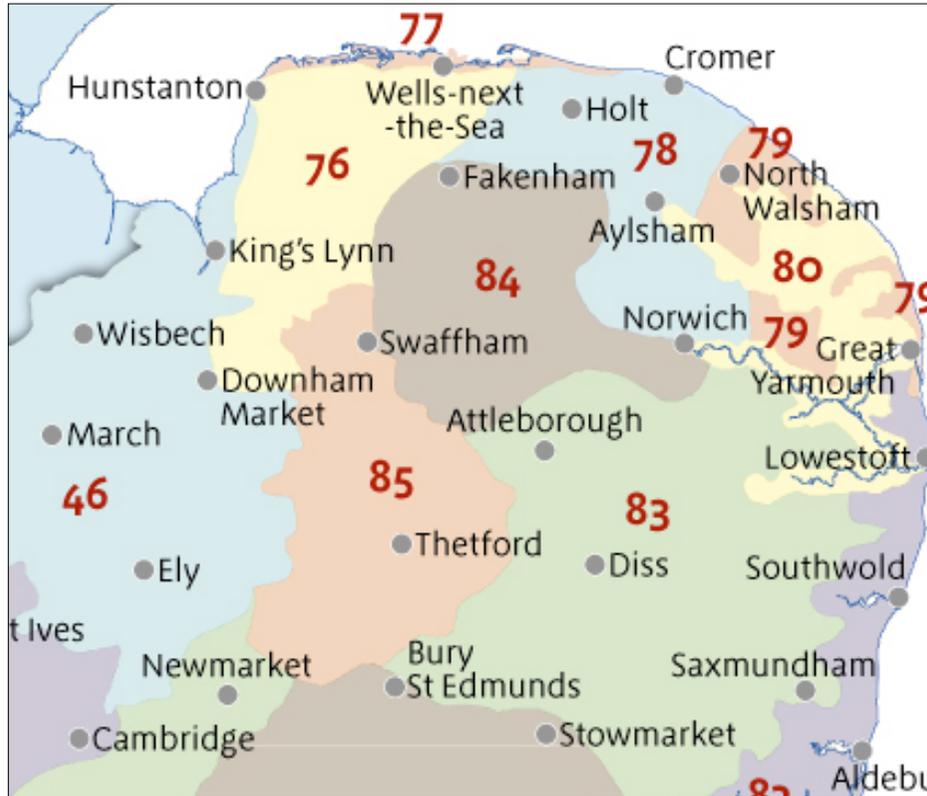
The Cley Road from Watton is relatively busy but the crossing lanes are quiet and have a rural feel. Along the Ovington Road the well vegetated nature of the landscape prevents views to Watton and contributes to a sense of remoteness that is surprising given the close proximity to the nearby town.

VCA-6

Appendices

Appendix A: National Character Profile

Character context - National Character Area 84



National character map of the East of England. Saham Toney falls into Character Area 84. For key characteristics please see overleaf.

Summary of National Joint Character Area No. 84. Mid Norfolk

“This is ancient countryside with a long-settled agricultural character, where arable land is enclosed by winding lanes and hedgerows, interspersed with woodland and heath and dissected by lush pastoral river valleys. A patchwork of cultivated land, numerous church spires, distant wooded horizons and big skies dominate the landscape.

This is a tranquil place, with isolated market towns, and scattered villages and farmhouses, their red brick and flint walls and pantile roofs an intrinsic component of Norfolk character. The area is rich in 18th-century estates and medieval churches, and the city of Norwich provides a cultural and economic centre. The many public rights of way (including the Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail and long-distance footpaths), country estates and parklands provide recreational opportunities.

Norfolk’s river valleys contain an important mosaic of habitats and species..... Woodland and remnant heathland are important for their biodiversity, and were once much more extensive in the area.

The main pressures for change to the area are posed by growth and a need to accommodate increased development, especially around Norwich. The potential for further agricultural intensification and a need for sustainable approaches to commercial farming practices are also key challenges. Maintaining the traditional farmed landscape of Mid Norfolk NCA – through sustainable land management practice to help protect its important natural processes and resources, its areas of high tranquillity and enhance the natural landscape for recreational opportunity, geodiversity and biodiversity – is also presenting further challenges into the future. “

Appendix A: National Character Profile

National Character
Area profile:

84. Mid Norfolk

Introduction & Summary

Description

Opportunities

Key facts
and data

Landscape
change

Analysis

Supporting documents

Key
characteristics:

Key characteristics

- Broadly flat, glacial till plateau dissected by river valleys which create a more intricate landscape to the west of Norwich.
 - Chalk bedrock overlain by gravels, sands and glacial till left behind by the retreating ice of Anglian glaciations, and the resulting complexity of soils, determine natural vegetation patterns.
 - Underlying chalk aquifer; small, fast-flowing chalk streams and biodiversity-rich, wide, lush river valleys with wooded valley slopes, including the internationally important chalk-fed River Wensum.
 - Tranquil agricultural landscape with extensive areas of arable land, dominated by cereals with break-cropping of sugar beet and oilseed rape, and some pastures along valley floors.
 - Ancient countryside, much of it enclosed in the 14th century, with a sporadically rationalised patchwork field system, sinuous lanes and mixed hedges with hedgerow oaks.
 - Largely fragmented, isolated mixed deciduous and pasture woodlands, with a notable area of ancient woodland at Foxley Wood.
 - Important alkaline valley fen communities and areas of remnant heathland.
 - Large number of 18th-century estates with their associated parkland, and a great density and stylistic variety of churches which are prominent features in the landscape.
 - Coherent vernacular architecture – marked by distinctive red brick and flint buildings with pantiled roofs, much dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, with some earlier timber frame – is an inherent component of the area's character.
- A mix of villages and many isolated farmsteads within a complex minor road network, with a traditional pattern of market towns connected by main roads, and the city of Norwich providing a centre for cultural and economic activity.
 - Dense network of public rights of way including bridleways and the Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path National Trail.



A tranquil agricultural landscape with extensive areas of arable land.

Toggle full screen

« Prev

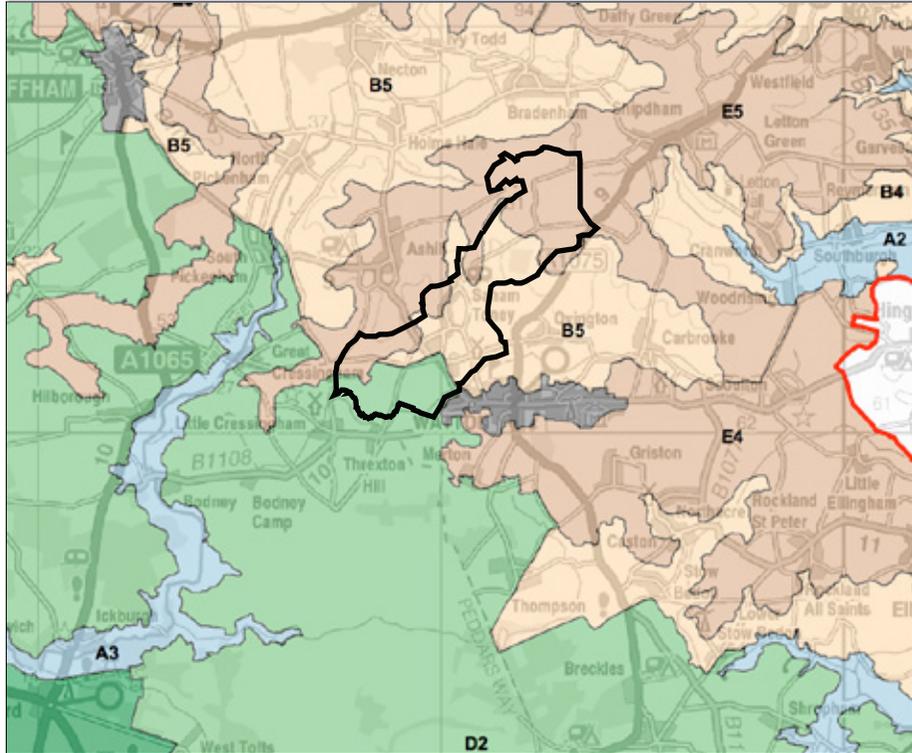
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Next »

Appendix B: District Character Profile

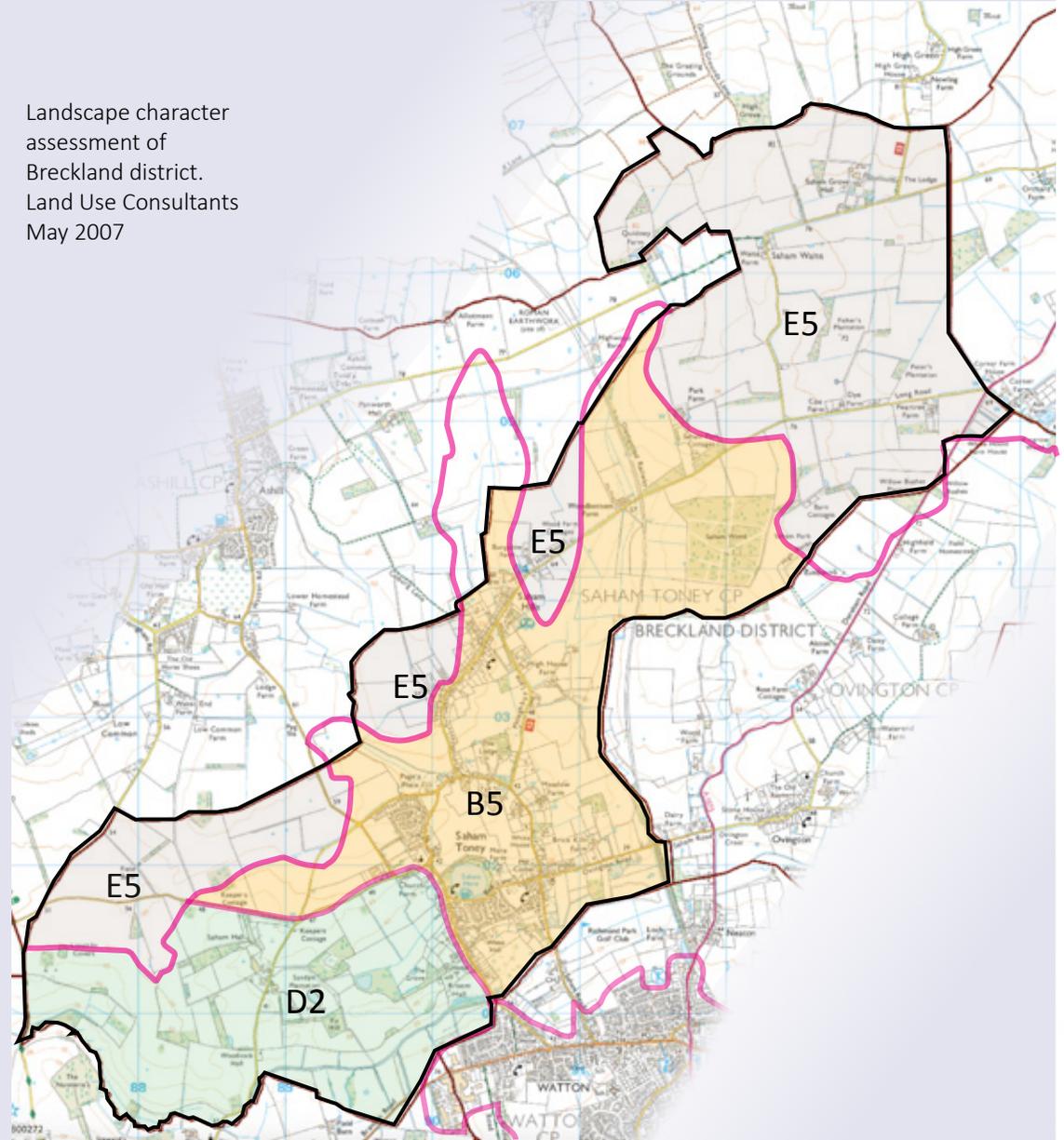
Breckland Landscape Character Assessment

Three character types/areas fall within the parish of Saham Toney (outlined in black):

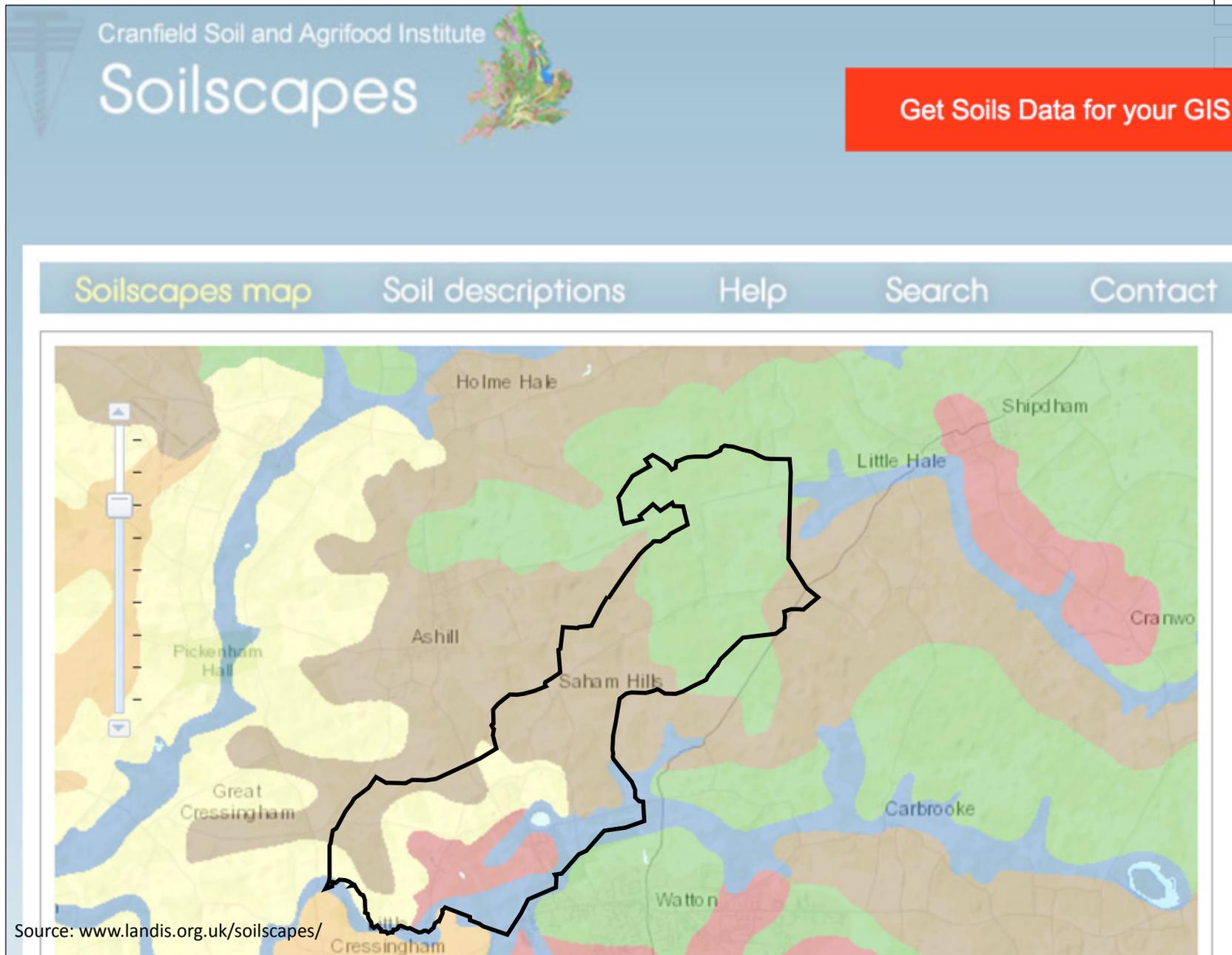


- Landscape Type B: Settled tributary farmlands
- Landscape Area B5: River Wissey tributary Farmland
- Landscape Type D: The Brecks
- Landscape Area D2: Stanta Heath
- Landscape Type E: Plateau farmlands
- Landscape Area: E5 Central Breckland Plateau

Landscape character assessment of Breckland district. Land Use Consultants May 2007



Appendix C: Soil Types Map



-  Scheduled monuments
-  Ancient (replanted) woodland
-  Ancient and semi natural woodland
-  Grade I listed building
-  Grade II* listed building
-  Grade II listed building

-  Soilscape 3:
Shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone
-  Soilscape 8:
Slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage
-  Soilscape 10:
Freely draining slightly acid sandy soils
-  Soilscape 18:
Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils
-  Soilscape 23:
Loamy and sandy soils with naturally high groundwater and a peaty surface

Source: www.landis.org.uk/soilsCAPES/

Appendix D: Historic map



This map from 1884 shows how settlement was distributed at the end of the 19th century and indicates the previously fine grained nature of the field patterns. Since this time, field amalgamation has been widespread, across Norfolk, and often only remnants of the old boundary patterns remain. Unusual and distinctive narrow, linear 'coaxial' field patterns can be seen along the Ovington Road.

Settlement was much more widely scattered and the village edge was much more porous than it is today. Decades of infilling has given it a much more linear form along its curving network of roads and lanes.

This map is useful reference and should be referred to for landscape restoration/enhancement proposals.



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**Saham Toney Parish
Council**