

Appendix 35: West Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment



Landscape Character Assessment

West Suffolk District

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Glem Valley - view from
Upper Street to Hawkedon
Church

1 Introduction

1.1 Scope and purpose

Landscape character assessment is used to identify the special character that gives a landscape its sense of place. Through this understanding the assessment helps inform planning and management of future change. Landscape character assessment recognises that all landscapes matter, not just those that are designated.

Focusing on the administrative district of West Suffolk, this West Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) provides a detailed understanding of the landscape. It explains the past actions and events that have helped shape the landscape we see today and identifies 25 unique landscape character areas in West Suffolk.

By classifying, analysing and describing the distinctive characteristics of these different landscape character areas, the LCA can be used to inform decisions about landscape planning and management which guide positive landscape change.

The LCA was commissioned in 2021. It underpins strategic policies in the West Suffolk Local Plan that recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and provide for the conservation and enhancement of the district's landscapes. It may also be used to:

- provide evidence to steer delivery of specific planning policy objectives, for instance in relation to housing land release, woodland creation, climate change adaptation, recreation and access
- target investment in conservation activity by identifying spatial priorities for the funding and management of programmes for restoring distinctive landscape features such as hedgerows, woodlands, ancient field patterns and green lanes and
- promote understanding and enjoyment of West Suffolk's beautiful and varied landscapes.

The LCA has informed a separate study, undertaken in parallel, which reviews the local landscape designations and valued landscapes within the district.

1.2 Approach

The methodology follows national good practice, with a carefully planned, phased programme of research, data collation, fieldwork and landscape classification. The LCA draws on information from a number of pre-existing character assessments, including:

- East of England Regional Typology (Warnock et. al., 2009)
- Suffolk County Typology (Suffolk County Council, available online)
- National Character Area Profiles - Breckland (NCA 85); The Fens (NCA 46); South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands (NCA 83); East Anglian Chalk (NCA 87); South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (NCA 86)
- Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks Landscape Character Assessment (Sheils Flynn, 2013)
- Brecks' special qualities. An analysis of identity and sense of place (Sheils Flynn, 2016)
- Stour Valley Project Area Valued Landscape Assessment (Alison Farmer Associates, 2020).

Landscape character is the distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements that makes one landscape different from another. Variations in geology, soils, landform, land use, vegetation, field boundaries, settlement patterns and building styles all help give rise to different landscapes. These differences are the product of both natural and human influences.

Landscape character assessment involves mapping, classifying and describing these variations in landscape character. It also involves making judgements about the character and condition of the landscape, and analysing forces for change. In classifying the landscape, 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 Ancient Rolling Farmlands, 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. For example, the Glem Valley or Elveden Estate Sandlands, which are each unique.



Simple, flowing chalk downland - Kennett Valley

Landscape character assessment can be applied at different scales from the national to the local level. The scale of assessment adopted in this study seeks to find a middle ground between existing coverage which comprises National Character Areas and detailed landscape types which exist for Suffolk County as a whole. This has been achieved by defining landscape character areas which draw out the unique character of each of the river valleys, fen basin and farmland plateau landscapes, as well as the land in between.

The process of defining and describing landscape character areas is informed by collating and layering multiple digital map layers to analyse and compare variations in patterns of landform, landcover and settlement at a detailed scale. This analysis also takes account of valued biodiversity and heritage assets, including the historic landscape characterisation of Suffolk. The data used to inform the LCA is listed in Box 1.

The LCA is underpinned by the Suffolk landscape typology, which is based on a detailed analysis of geology and landcover. The landscape character areas were initially defined via a desk-based assessment. This resulted in a draft classification which was subsequently checked and refined through fieldwork. The field survey provided an opportunity to gather new data, especially on perceptual aspects of the landscape, variations in landscape condition and evidence of pressures for change. The draft landscape classification was also discussed and tested with local stakeholders at two workshops during the course of the study.



Completely flat fenland at Sedge Fen in the north west corner of West Suffolk

BOX 1 - Data used to inform the LCA

Theme	Data
Base Mapping	OS vector and raster base mapping
Geology, Soils, Hydrology	Solid & Drift Geology Flood Risk and Catchments
Habitat and biodiversity	Habitat inventories Biodiversity opportunity mapping Green Infrastructure Strategy
Natural heritage designations	International, national and local designations
Woodland	Ancient Woodland Inventory; National Inventory of Woodlands and Trees Historic Parkland (wood pasture and veteran trees)
Historic Landscape Character	Historic Landscape Characterisation Historic maps
Cultural heritage designations	National and local designations (inc. conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens)
Current Landscape Character Assessments	Joint National Character Areas East of England Landscape Typology; Suffolk Landscape Typology Breckland LCA; King’s Lynn & West Norfolk LCA; Braintree LCA Uttlesford LCA; Mid Suffolk and Babergh LCA Greater Cambridge LCA
Tranquillity & Dark Skies	CPRE Tranquillity map CPRE Dark Skies map
Recreation	Public rights of way;Promoted/long distance routes (walking and cycling) Open access land
Planning	Public open space/Country Parks Settlement boundaries Development allocations Strategic Infrastructure Projects
Valued landscapes	Past Special Landscape Area boundaries Stour Valley Project Area Boundary; Breckland Project Area boundary; Newmarket Area of Local Landscape Value

2 West Suffolk Landscape

2.1 Physical influences

Figure 1 shows patterns of topography and drainage at a regional scale.

The Newmarket area in the west of the district and the Brecks in the north lie on the broad band of chalk that extends diagonally across England from the Chilterns to north-west Norfolk. Generally the chalk is upstanding as a gentle rolling ridge, but the Brecks lie on a slight depression between Newmarket and Swaffham where the chalk forms a low plateau, 15-30m above sea level.

This chalk plateau was shaped by the Ice Age glaciers, particularly the Anglian Glaciation in which lobes of ice extended right across Suffolk to the northern edge of the London Basin. The glaciers gouged out the relatively soft, older Mesozoic rocks to the west of the chalk to form the Fen Basin and transported huge quantities of these clays to the east and south, where they were dumped to form the deep chalky boulder clays (Lowestoft Till) of central Norfolk and Suffolk.

The broad Fen Basin, which surrounds the low-lying land inland from The Wash, extends to the edge of the Brecks chalk plateau in the north west part of the district. Within the Fen Basin the land is completely flat and low lying, with deep peaty soils, which formed as this vast area was repeatedly flooded and clogged by silt from rising sea levels and marsh from sluggish river courses. The transitional fen edge landscapes on the western fringes of the chalk plateau, are characterised by low, smooth 'islands' of chalk surrounded by deep hollows of pure peat.

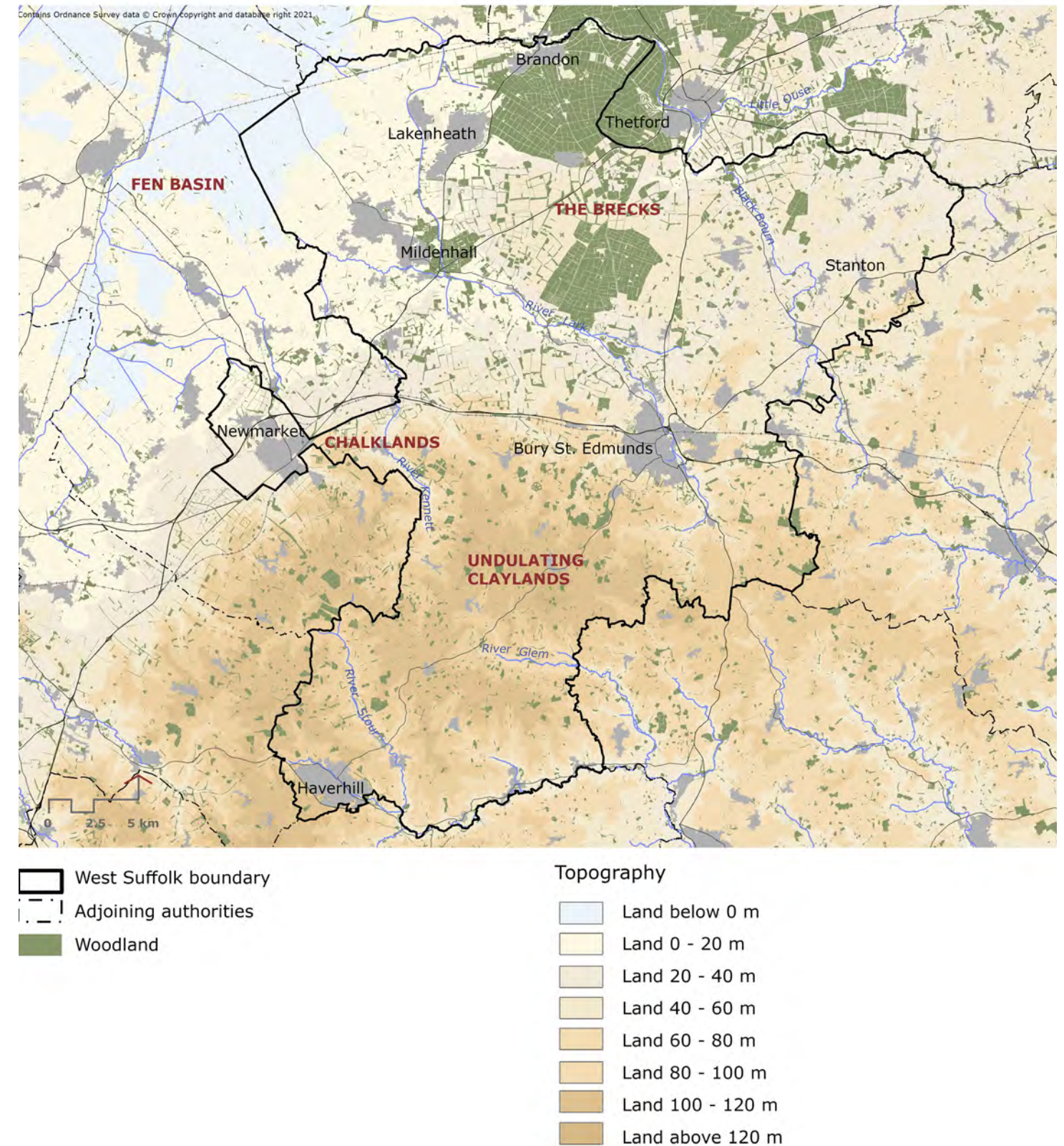
The ice sheets scraped a relatively low, gently undulating chalk plateau. The deposits of chalky boulder clay and outwash gravels left by the retreating Anglian glaciers vary in thickness and composition. On the Brecks the deposits are relatively thin and sandy; to the south the thick boulder clays of central West Suffolk have formed higher land and the main rivers of the district – the Little Ouse, the Lark, the Black Bourn and the Kennett flow northwards and westwards from these more elevated claylands, cutting through the rolling chalklands near Newmarket and the low dry chalk plateau of the Brecks, before flowing into the Fen Basin.

The central and southern parts of the district are dominated by the gently undulating clayland landscapes that have formed on a relatively elevated chalky boulder clay plateau. The thick layers of boulder clay are dissected by the River Stour and the River Glem and their dense network of minor tributary streams.



Heathland and forest plantations on the Brecks low chalk plateau

Figure 1
Landscape context



2.2 Historical and cultural influences

Evidence of early human habitation and activity, from prehistoric times, is concentrated along landscape edges, particularly the river valley terraces on the edges of floodplains and the transitional fringe landscapes, between the chalk plateau and the Fen Basin. Examples from the Neolithic period (4,000BC – 2,500BC) are the site of a wooden henge and ceremonial causeway at Fornham All Saints in the River Lark Valley and the site of a settlement at Hurst Fen on the fen edge north of Mildenhall. The presence of the Neolithic flint mines at Grimes Graves (on the chalk plateau within the Norfolk Brecks) would have been a catalyst for early settlement, industry and agriculture within the area. The route of the Icknield Way, an ancient trackway which broadly followed the crest of the chalk ridge from southern England to Norfolk, can be traced across the chalkland plateau between Gazeley in the west and Rushford in the north east of the district, crossing the River Lark near Lackford. It is likely to have been used as trading routes from Neolithic times, supporting the industry at Grimes Graves.

The majority of the ancient mounds or 'tumuli' that are visible in the landscape today date from the Bronze Age. These rounded 'bowl barrows' are burial graves and are often sited on slightly higher slopes such as the outer edge of floodplains or a minor ridge on a plateau; it is thought that they may have been intended to be seen against the local skyline in the open landscape. There are examples throughout the district, including 'Troston Mount', near RAF Honington and on the Brecks fringe plateau landscapes near Risby.



Tree-lined, sinuous lanes in the West Suffolk Claylands, near Horringer



The floodplain of the Black Bourn River at the village of Bardwell

River valleys continued to be the focus for settlement throughout the Iron Age, Roman and Anglo Saxon periods. Excavations at a large Roman site near Icklingham, in the River Lark valley, have revealed a linear spread of features including a building with underfloor heating, two cemeteries (one at each end of the town), pottery kilns, a possible pagan temple and a 4th century church. Nearby, at West Stow, archaeological evidence from the site of an Early Saxon settlement indicates a farming community which is thought to have been self-sufficient, growing wheat, barley, rye and peas, fishing and wildfowling in the wetlands nearby and keeping sheep, cattle, pigs, horses and goats.

The movement from a dispersed pattern of settlement to larger villages and towns corresponded with rising population and the spread of Christianity. St Edmunds Abbey in Bury was one of the richest and largest Benedictine monasteries in England and a popular place of pilgrimage and prestigious early medieval priories were established beside the River Stour at Clare and the Black Bourn at Ixworth.

The historic landscape character map (Figure 2) shows the striking contrast in landscape pattern between the sandlands of the Brecks and the surrounding free draining plateau landscapes and the claylands in the southern part of the district.

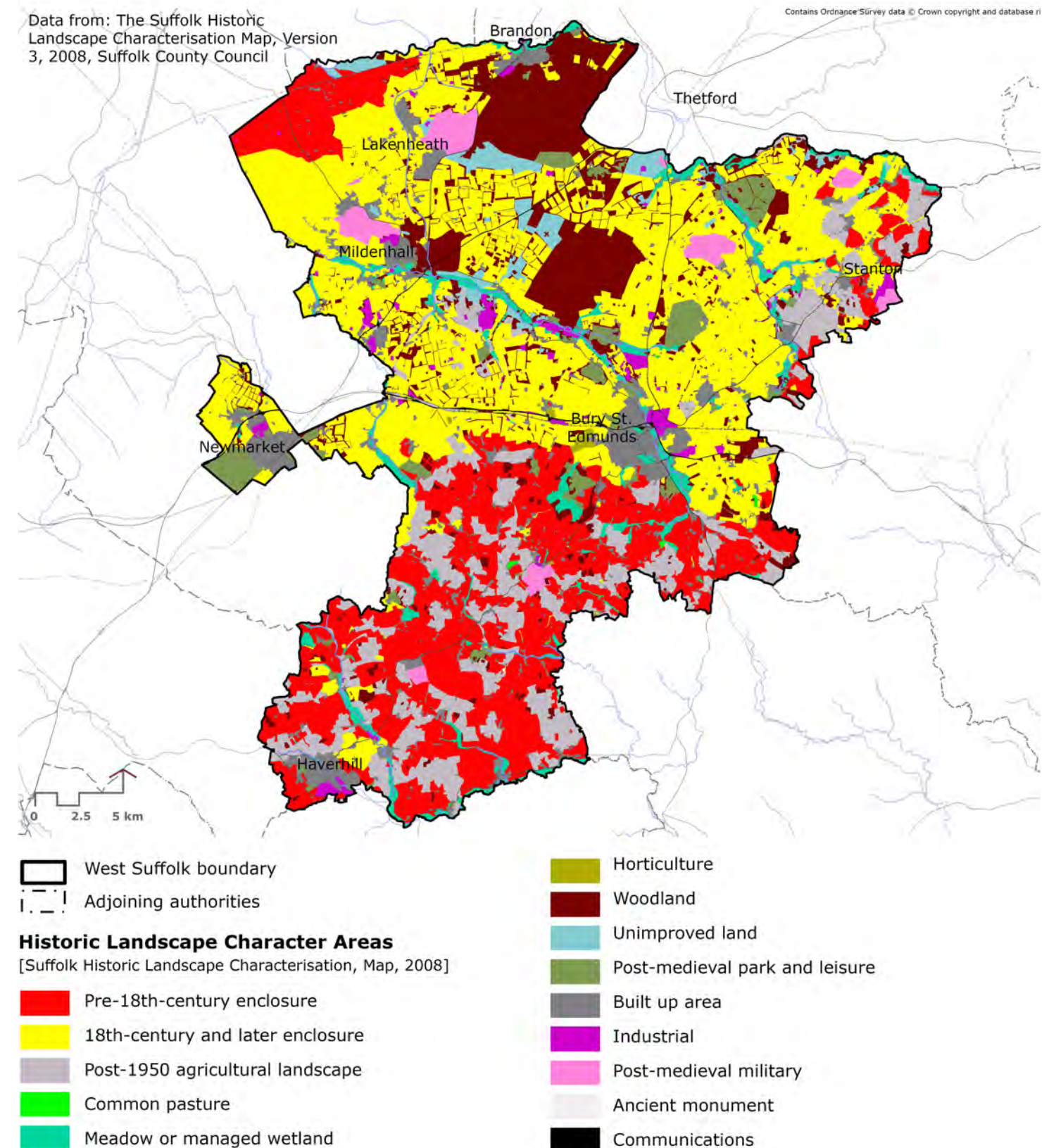
The towns and villages of the West Suffolk claylands were particularly densely populated and there are extensive areas where the pattern of field enclosures dates from the Saxon period. In some areas, a 'co-axial' form of enclosure relates to a principal longitudinal boundary, such as a road, but there are also examples of 'irregular' 'random' patterns of enclosure (eg. near Market

Figure 2
Historic landscape character

Weston). These ancient field patterns are rare and valuable evidence of centuries of cultivation. Woodlands were cleared for arable cultivation, with settlements often laid out around extensive 'greens' which provided common pastureland amidst the extensive cropped fields. The medieval landscape of settlement, green lanes, open fields (in some areas), moated manorial estates, deer parks and castles was often superimposed on the earlier patterns of enclosure and today's landscapes display an exceptionally strong time-depth, with visible remnant landscape patterns and features that date back to pre-medieval times.

The claylands of medieval West Suffolk were densely populated and intensively farmed. The settlement pattern here remained relatively dispersed, with larger nucleated settlements developing at markets. Many hamlets and farmsteads were sited on the fringes of 'greens' which were used for pasture. Woodland was scarce and valuable woodland trees were coppiced and protected by banks and ditches. Some ancient medieval woodlands survive today eg. Bradfield Woods and Hyde Wood. The scattered settlement pattern in this area, and the settlement shrinkage that occurred sporadically throughout the late medieval period, has often left isolated farmsteads, halls and churches within a deeply rural landscape context.

The sites of medieval moated manors are dotted throughout the claylands of West Suffolk, including Little Saxham Hall, built by Thomas Lucas, Solicitor-General to Henry VII and Depden Hall. There are approximately 24 medieval moated sites designated as scheduled monuments in West Suffolk. Many are within the grounds of more recent properties, which may have been built using stone from the original medieval structure. The water retaining clay soils ensured that moats could be constructed relatively easily, without the need for lining. Most comprised a rectangular moat surrounding a central 'island' on which the manor house was built. It was typically part of a wider complex, which included agricultural barns, a dovecot, orchards, fish ponds and gardens. At a larger scale, were medieval castles with defensive structures: the



Norman motte and bailey castle of Clare was built to defend the residence of Richard Fitz Gilbert and served as a prominent symbol of his power and status as the lord of a feudal estate. Smaller earthen castles at Freckenham, Denham and Lidgate are thought to date from the late 11th century and would have been built by lesser manorial lords who did not hold their lands directly from the king.

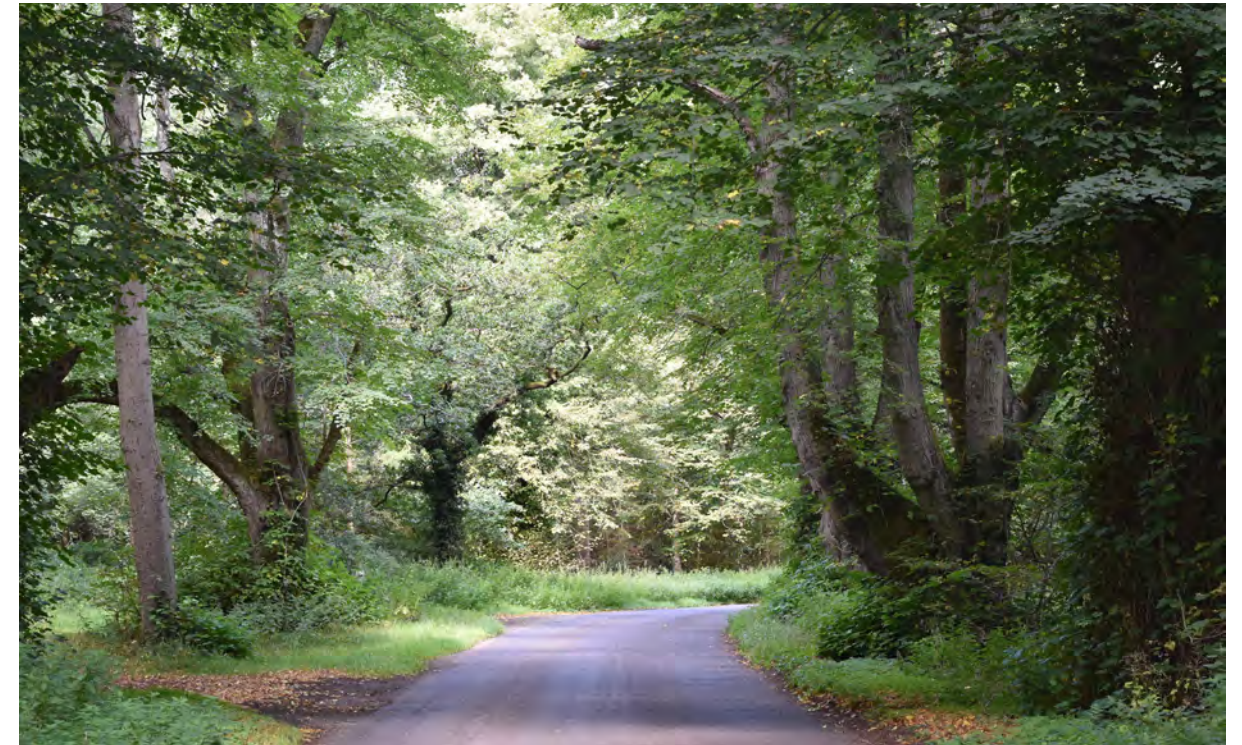
The light, infertile soils of the Brecks chalkland plateau and its surroundings had extensive areas of common heathland. A system for maintaining soil fertility was developed which depended on careful management of sheep flocks. Sheep were grazed on the heaths during the day and then 'folded' on fallow arable land to manure it overnight. The local economy was supplemented by rabbit farming. Vast areas of the dry sandy lands of the central Brecks were managed as rabbit warrens eg. Lakenheath Warren and Elveden Warren, and there were also extensive fen commons, including at Mildenhall. These areas had few nucleated settlements, with groups of cottages on the fringes of the heath.

Throughout the centuries, the landscapes of West Suffolk have been shaped by industry, as well as by agriculture. Textile and leather working were particularly important, with significant centres of activity in Bury St Edmunds and Clare. Work was 'put out' to a wide range of specialist workers, including carders, spinners, weavers, dyers, fullers and cloth finishers, who often worked in rural villages nearby. The countryside was also dotted with brick kilns, iron foundries, maltings and breweries from medieval times. Power for grinding corn came from watermills in the river valleys and increasingly, from the 17th century, windmills. The historic mills that survive today are evocative local landmarks which contribute a power sense of time-depth in the landscape.

Many of the great houses of the gentry remain landmarks in the landscape today. A few, including Hengrave Hall in the Lark valley and Euston Hall on the Black Bourn, date from the Tudor period but the majority were constructed in the 18th and 19th centuries and were often repeatedly remodelled in accordance with the architectural trends. Examples in West Suffolk are Ickworth House, Dalham Hall, Culford Hall, Great Thurlow Hall. Ampton Hall and Elveden Hall, which are associated with extensive parkland landscapes. There are also numerous small country house estates, including former medieval manors to houses of the 18th and 19th centuries, which are a prominent influence on the structure and landscape of towns and villages throughout West Suffolk. The development of designed parkland landscapes obliterated the earlier medieval farming patterns and provided opportunities for applying the latest agricultural innovations, particularly new crops and extensive marling techniques. However, large areas remain poor grazing land and there are vivid accounts of the aridity of the Brecks and the dramatic sand blows that were a regular occurrence during the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Parliamentary Enclosure Acts of the late 18th century and early 19th century encouraged landowners to enclose the open fields and heaths on the Brecks and the plateau farmlands that fringe the sandlands. The process resulted in regular pattern of large rectangular fields subdivided by hedgerows, as well as Scots pine shelterbelts and plantations. The 'pine lines' that are now such iconic landmarks in the Brecks originated as pine hedges, planted in the early 19th century. However, the claylands, which had been subdivided into enclosed fields since pre-medieval times, were less influenced by the Enclosure Acts and retain a more irregular ancient field boundary pattern.

Despite the extensive planting on landed estates, the Brecks remained a relatively open landscape until after World War I, when a national shortage of timber led to the 1919 Forestry



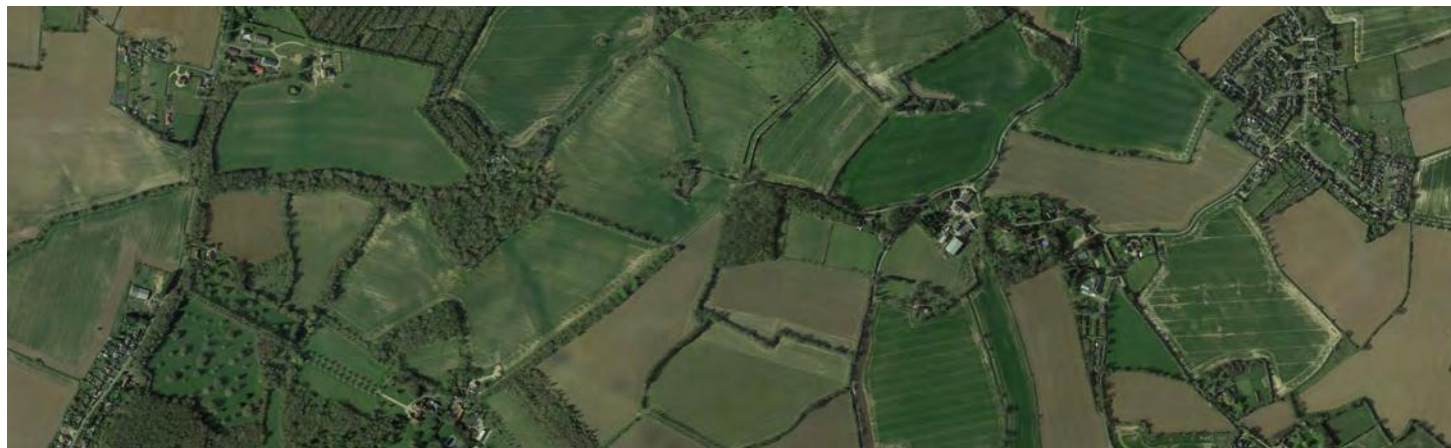
Mature avenue of limes in Thetford Forest is a remnant from the approach to Downham Hall



Pine lines or Scots pine are a distinctive and characteristic field boundary in the Brecks



Planned, regular pattern of enclosure on free-draining soils (example near Honington)



Ancient, irregular pattern of enclosure on claylands (example near Stanningfield)

Bill. By this time persistent agricultural depression had reduced the price of land and much of the 'improved' land had been abandoned. Extensive blocks of land were compulsorily acquired by the Forestry Commission at a relatively low price, including Brecks estates such as Elveden and Downham Hall. The extensive forest holdings at Thetford Forest and The King's Forest are managed sustainably for commercial timber production and biodiversity and have also become important for recreation and adventure tourism.

The relatively flat land on the fringes of the Brecks at Mildenhall, Lakenheath, Honington, Knettishall, Rougham and Shepherd's Grove (near Stanton) were used in World War II as military airfields. RAF Mildenhall, RAF Lakenheath and RAF Honington remain major air bases which are a locally dominant landscape influence and Rougham Airfield is still used for light aircraft.

The open, gently rolling chalkland landscapes in the west of the district were subject to the planned regular straight-edged enclosures of the 18th and 19th centuries. However, near Newmarket, where land is devoted to horse racing, the large fields have been subdivided into a gridded network of small paddocks divided by post and rail fences and narrow linear shelterbelts and plantations. This neat, regimented 'studscape' is also found in the Red Lodge area and to the west of Great Barton on the north east fringes of Bury St Edmunds.



Cavendish Green - looking south over the Stour Valley

2.3 Landcover and biodiversity

West Suffolk is predominantly an arable farmland landscape, but this broad description masks a diverse range of habitats which stem from variations in geology and soils.

The fundamental contrasts are between the free draining, nutrient-poor, sandy soils of the Brecks in the north of the district, the peatlands in the north west, the chalklands in the west and the heavy boulder clay plateau soils of the claylands in the south and east. The alluvial river valleys are a natural ecological corridor of wetland habitat, which are, in turn, influenced by their geological context.

The Brecks

The distinctive micro climate of the Brecks chalk plateau, which is relatively dry, with extremes of temperature, led to the development of dry grassland and heathland. The traditional system of livestock grazing, with a system of overnight folding of sheep flocks on arable land, transferred nutrients from heathland to arable land. This fold course rotation produced large areas of fallow arable every year, encouraging flora that required open, regularly disturbed ground. During the 18th and 19th centuries, local agricultural rotations included the 'brecks', areas of heathland that were converted to arable and cultivated for a few years before being left to revert to heath again. This practice also broke up the ground, encouraging the development of the Brecks' distinctive biodiversity.

Heathland was enclosed, marled and converted to arable throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, but the process was reversed in times of economic recession, when arable land was abandoned, creating sandy fallow Brecks which were grazed, mainly by rabbits. From the 1920s, large areas of heathland were forested and, with the use of fertilisers and irrigation, arable cultivation became increasingly intensive.

The diverse mosaic of fens, reedbeds, marshes and wet meadows within the river valleys has also been depleted as a result of drainage, reclamation, flood control and groundwater abstraction. The relatively peaty lowland fen habitat within the wetland mosaic of the Brecks river valleys is particularly valued for biodiversity.

Peatlands

The fertile deep peats and alluvial soils of the fen edge and deep fen landscapes in the north west corner of West Suffolk are artificially drained and intensively farmed.

The marginal fens, on the fringes of the Brecks chalk plateau, were drained in a piecemeal way, by private landowners, and this relatively small scale pattern of agriculture, small holdings and paddocks remains today in the areas surrounding the fen-edge villages. Further west, the deep peatlands of the Fen Basin are subdivided into huge arable fields, drained by a geometric pattern of drainage ditches.

The most valuable ecological habitats are the small remnant areas of fen, reedbeds, wet grassland, wet woodland and carr, particularly the extensive mosaic of wetland habitat along the floodplain of the Lower Little Ouse at Lakenheath Fen.

Chalklands

The smooth, rolling chalklands in the west of the district are farmed as arable land or managed to support the local Newmarket-based horse racing economy. Biodiversity value is generally



Water meadows beside the Upper Little Ouse River

confined to hedgerows and remnant woodland or river valley wetland habitats. However, extensive areas of Newmarket Racecourse and The Gallops on Warren Hill are species-rich calcareous grassland, valued for its rare chalkland flora.

Claylands

The undulating boulder clay plateau and river valley landscapes in the south and east of the district are also intensively farmed, but here the irregular pattern of fields and settlement is interspersed with a strong network of woodland and hedgerows which includes many semi-natural ancient woodlands.

The species-rich hedgerows and extensive ancient woodlands provide an exceptionally high diversity of species within core habitats and sustain a valuable ecological network.

The broad river valleys of the River Stour and the River Glem, and their numerous small tributary streams are important wildlife corridors with mosaics of floodplain meadow, riparian wetland habitat and carr woodland fringing the river channels on the valley floor.



Mosaic of woodland and lowland heathland at Knettishall Heath

Figure 3
Environmental designations

2.4 Environmental designations

Figure 3 shows the distribution of environmental designations across West Suffolk, including biodiversity and heritage sites which are designated for their regional, national and international importance.

This map provides a district-wide overview; the detailed mapping within the individual LCA reports shows these designations within their local context.

Figure 3 highlights the international biodiversity value of habitats within West Suffolk, which include:

- the Breckland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – for inland dunes with important open dry grassland habitats, dry heathland, semi-natural dry grassland and scrubland on calcareous substrate and habitats associated with the fluctuating meres
- Waveney and Little Ouse Valley Fens SAC, which includes Market Weston and Hopton Fens for their calcareous fen and purple moor grass vegetation on calcareous, peaty or clayey soils
- the Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) for the conservation of breeding populations of woodlark, nightjar and stone curlew
- Rex Graham Reserve SAC, to the north east of Mildenhall, which is designated for its large population of Military orchids
- Devils Dyke SAC, adjacent to the district boundary, where the dry grassland habitat hosts valuable orchids.

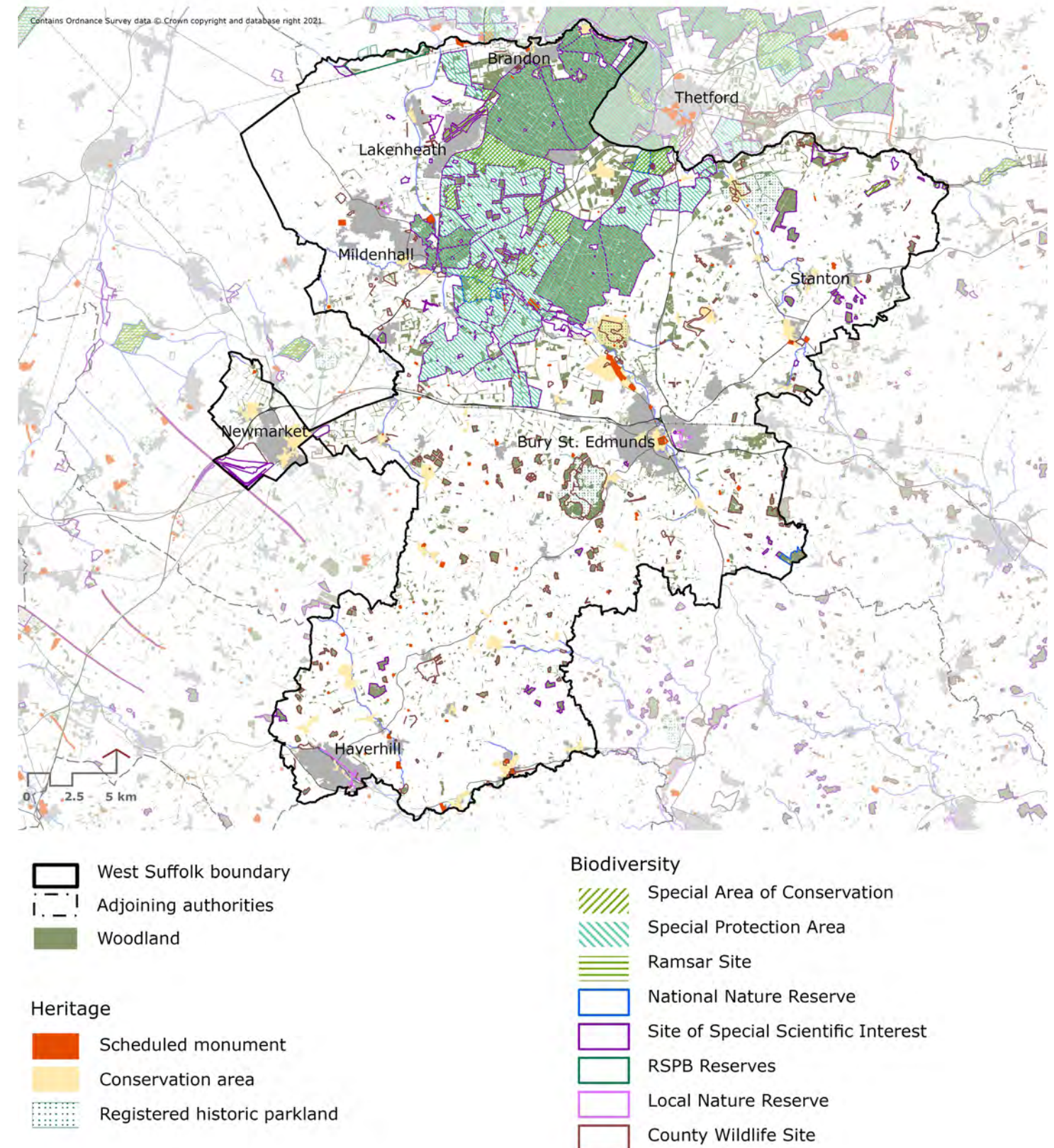
Elsewhere, the most important biodiversity habitats, which are designated for their national and regional importance, are:

- the lowland meadow and fen wetlands along the valleys of the River Lark and Little Ouse
- the calcareous grassland and flora of the chalklands at Newmarket Racecourse and in scattered remnant chalk quarries
- the semi-natural ancient woodlands that have survived over the centuries within historic parklands, on river valley slopes and particularly in the clayland landscapes to the south and east of the district and
- the carr woodland, meadow, marsh, reedbeds and open water of the river valley and fen edge wetlands.

The scale and diversity of semi-natural habitats has been reduced, but these remnant areas of species-rich grassland, woodland, heathland, fen, marsh and reedbed form a valuable network, which sustains an exceptionally diverse flora and fauna.

Figure 3 also shows the distribution of historic settlements with designated conservation areas and historic parklands that are registered as being of national importance, such as the parkland landscapes at Euston Hall and Ickworth House. It also shows the distribution of sites that are designated as scheduled monuments across the district.

Detailed mapping of heritage sites, including scheduled monuments and all listed buildings, is available within the individual LCA reports.



3 Landscape character

3.1 Landscape classification

The process of landscape character assessment involves identifying:

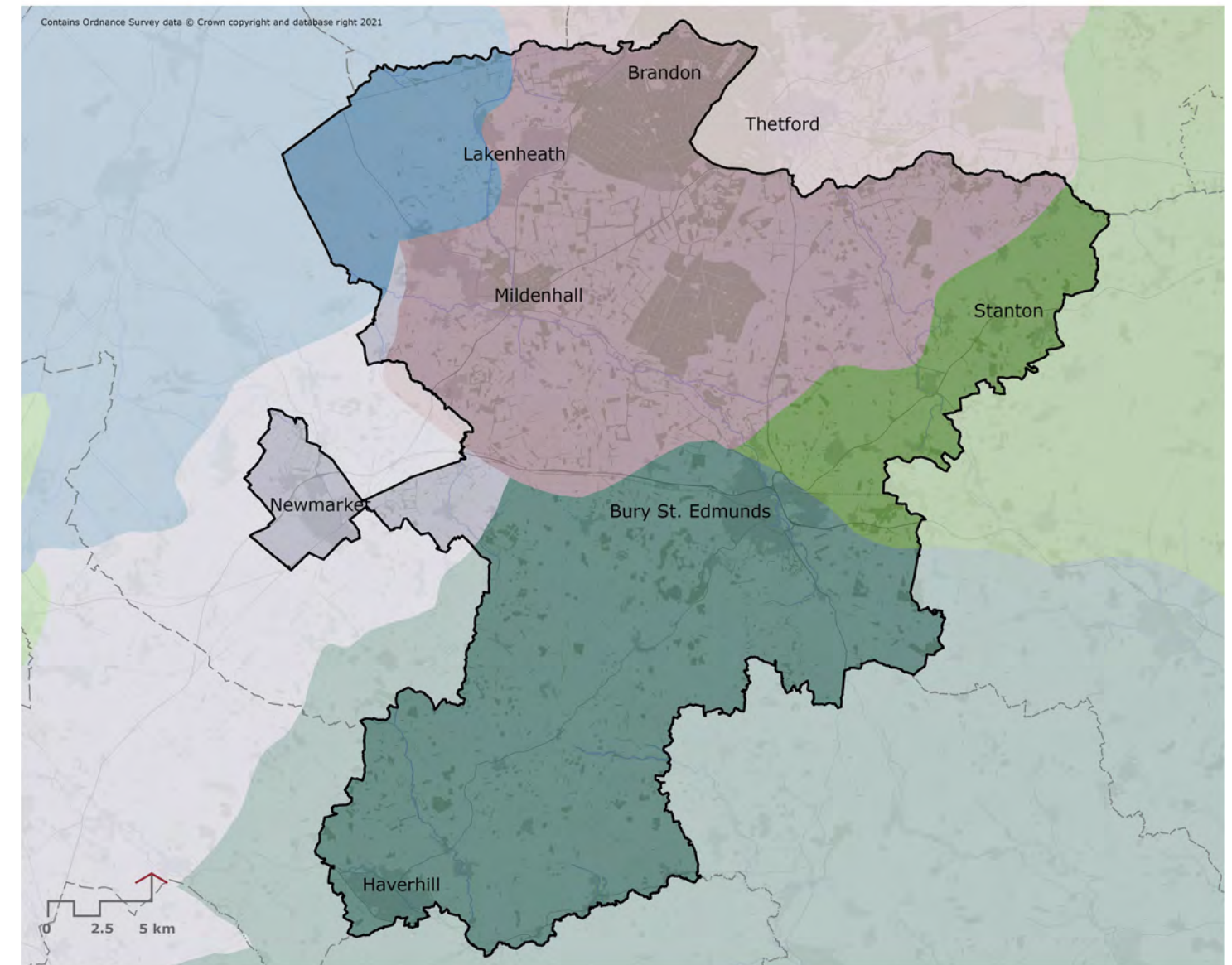
- **generic landscape character types**, which share broadly similar combinations and patterns of geology, topography, vegetation and settlement and can be found in different areas that share such physical characteristics and
- geographically unique **landscape character areas** with their own particular identity.

LCAs can be undertaken at any scale. It is useful to consider the hierarchy of landscape character types and areas that are described at a national/regional scale, as National Character Areas (NCA) and within the existing LCAs that have been adopted by neighbouring local authorities so that the West Suffolk LCA fits logically within this overall framework and the boundaries of landscape character types and areas are consistent with those that have already been defined.

Figure 4 shows the NCAs at a regional scale. Natural England has prepared a profile for each NCA, which describes landscape character, identifies key drivers for change and provides broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services.

There are existing LCAs for all the local authority areas that border West Suffolk. Each classifies its landscape into landscape character types and landscape character areas, generally with landscape character types providing an overall larger scale framework for more local landscape character areas.

Figure 4
National Character Areas



West Suffolk boundary
 Adjoining authorities

National Character Areas

- Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Claylands (88)
- East Anglian Chalk (87)
- South Norfolk & High Suffolk Claylands (83)
- South Suffolk & North Essex Clayland (86)
- The Brecks (85)
- The Fens (47)



3.2 Landscape character types

Detailed landscape typologies have been prepared for the whole of East Anglia and, at county level, for Suffolk and this regional typology provides a consistent, robust framework for the district-scale landscape classification.

Figure 5 (page 15) shows the classification of landscape character types at a regional scale. Based on the broad patterns of geology, topography, drainage and land uses, the classification shows 'at a glance' how the existing regional landscape types fit together across this part of the country. Figure 5 also shows the relationship between the landscape classification within West Suffolk District and the LCAs undertaken for each of the adjacent local authority areas.

Figure 5 shows how the pattern of regional landscape character types extends across West Suffolk. The sandlands in the north of the district are bordered to the west and south west by the chalklands on the fringes of the chalk plateau that underlies the Brecks. There is a transition to the deep peatlands of the Fen Basin to the north west, which extend across northern Cambridgeshire to the Wash. To the south and east of the Brecks chalk plateau, there is a transition to the large scale arable landscapes of the plateau farmlands and, further south, to the undulating claylands that extend eastwards across central Suffolk.

3.3 Landscape character areas

The LCA for West Suffolk is based on landscape character areas, rather than landscape character types, reflecting the way that local landscapes are perceived 'on the ground'.

Figure 6 (on page 16) shows the 25 landscape character areas that have been identified within West Suffolk District. Separate reports, for each of these landscape character areas, describe and map their distinctive landscape character and sensitivities, noting the key natural, cultural and perceptual features that are relevant within each area and providing strategic guidance for managing future landscape change.

Figure 5

Regional landscape character types

- West Suffolk boundary
- Adjoining authorities
- Landscape Character Types

Suffolk Landscape Character Types in combination with East of England Landscape Character Types (within West Suffolk)
- Ancient Plateau Claylands

A - Breckland: Settled Tributary Farmland

B - South Norfolk: Tributary Farmland
- Ancient Rolling Farmlands
- Estate Sandlands

C - KL&WN: Settled Farmland with Plantations

D - KL&WN: The Brecks – Plantations

E - Breckland – The Brecks – Plantations

F - Breckland: The Brecks – Heathland with Plantation
- Planned Fenlands

G - KL&WN: The Fens – Open Inland Marshes

H - Cambridgeshire: Fenlands
- Plateau Estate Farmlands

I - Breckland: Plateau Farmland
- Rolling Estate Chalklands

J - Cambridgeshire: Chalklands

K - Greater Cambs: Wooded Claylands
- Rolling Estate Farmlands
- Rolling Estate Sandlands
- Rolling Valley Farmlands

L - Braintree - Stour River Valley
- Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze
- Settled Chalklands
- Settled Fenlands
- Undulating Ancient Farmlands
- Undulating Estate Farmlands

L - Cambridgeshire: Chalklands

M- Greater Cambs: Lowland Chalklands

N - Braintree: Bumpstead Farmland Plateau
- Urban
- Valley Meadowlands
- Valley Meadows and Fens
- Wooded Chalk Slopes

O - Greater Cambs: Chalk Hills

P - Uttlesford: Ashdon Farmland Plateau

Q - Uttlesford: Cam River Valley
- Wooded Fens
- Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fen

R - Breckland: River Valleys

S - South Norfolk: Rural River Valley

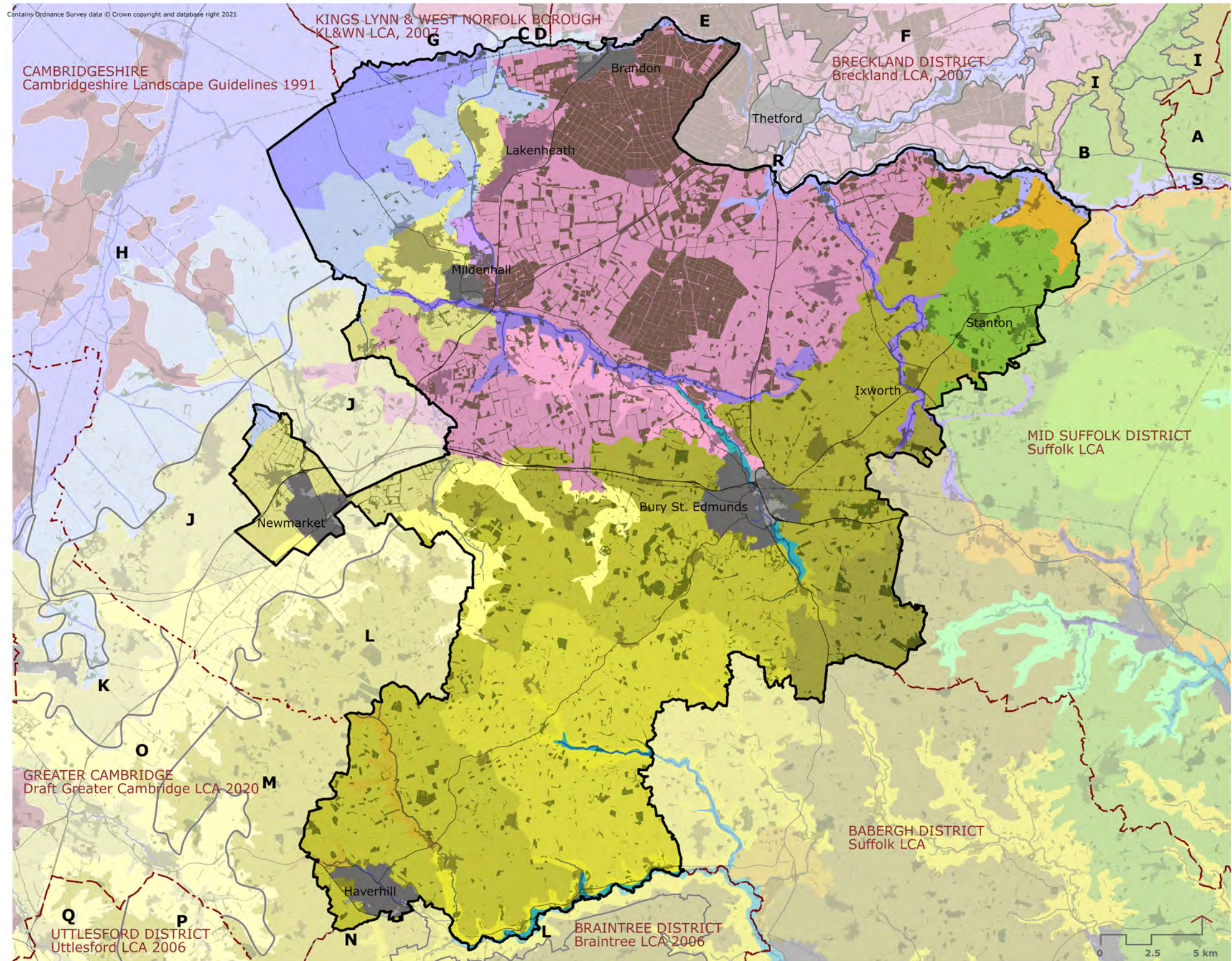
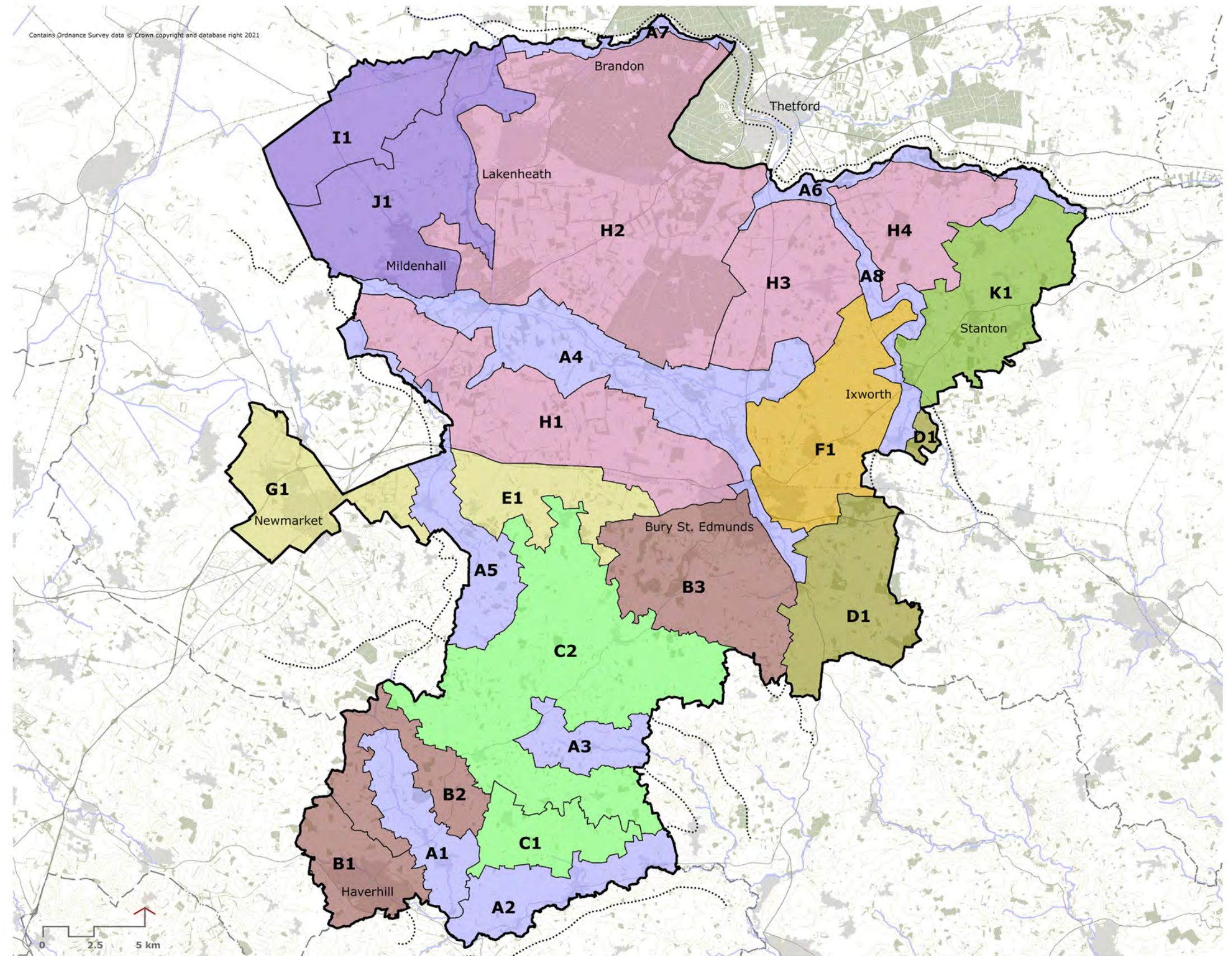


Figure 6
Landscape character areas



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