



Landscape Character & Sensitivity Assessment December 2022

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Refer also to the separate Appendix document



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1. Introduction

Author's credentials

1. I am a Chartered Landscape Architect with 15+ years experience of working in the field of landscape assessment and appraisal in East Anglia. In recent years I have undertaken a number of Neighbourhood Plan studies in villages in Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire, as well as a district level landscape character assessment and settlement fringe sensitivity assessment for East Suffolk Council, in association with Alison Farmer Associates in 2018. I also regularly undertake LVA and LVIA for all types of land use applications
2. Necton Parish Council have appointed a Neighbourhood Plan Working Party and are in the process of preparing their Neighbourhood Plan. This landscape assessment was commissioned in summer 2022 to assist them in the development of their Plan, and with managing change in the future.
3. The aims of the assessment are:
 - To provide a parish-wide character assessment as a framework for understanding and defining the character of the landscape and the features of value.
 - To identify aspects of landscape and visual sensitivity in the different parts of the village fringes. The results of this will help identify the more sensitive aspects and areas, and help enable their protection. It will also support site selection for potential site allocation on less sensitive parcels of land, if that stage is wanted, in the Neighbourhood Plan.
 - To define important views to help form policy around protecting particularly valued views within the village.
 - To help understand how to mitigate the effects of a large infrastructure project (Vanguard/Borea) north of the main village.
4. As well as informing the Neighbourhood Plan, this document will be useful to the parish and district councils in managing future applications for development, to landowners to understand the parameters which might limit changes in land use, and to householders or developers considering development options.
5. A Village Design Guide has also been recently completed by AECOM. This should also be referred to when considering development and appropriate design responses. Together these two documents aim to ensure Necton retains its character and high quality sensitive design prevails in future.
6. The report is set out in the following order;
 - Overview of the history and evolution of the village and its current form. *Understanding how a village developed, and its position within the landscape, is key to understanding its sense of place and, therefore, appropriate future forms of development;*
 - A review of existing character assessments that describe the landscape context. *These documents form the key documents in all planning policy relevant to Necton that reference landscape character;*
 - The character assessment map that defines the 6 parish character areas
 - A character description, illustrative photos and a table addressing; sensitivity and value for each character area;
 - A brief summary

2. Necton's landscape history

1. Necton is a rural parish in the district of Breckland in mid-west Norfolk. The main village lies on the south side of the A47, just to the east of Swaffham, midway between Norwich and Kings Lynn. The parish covers an area of 2,618 hectares and is a large settlement with a population of over 2,000 people. The village has a number of businesses, it's identified as a local service centre within the Breckland Local Plan, with sufficient facilities for its residents, but direct access onto the county's major A road means many people are easily able to commute into the nearby market towns for employment and secondary schooling.
 2. From its origins as a small agricultural village, it has grown into a larger centre between the surrounding smaller villages. North Pickenham, Holme Hale and Bradenham lie to the south and east, and Sporle, Little Dunham and Great and Little Fransham encircle on the north side of the A47. The settlement takes the form of a main village, a dense nucleated form, with small additional clusters of settlement to the east at Chapel Road, Ivy Todd and Mona Hill, which are outside the Local Plan settlement boundaries.
 3. The parish forms a roughly rectangular shape, some 4 to 5km wide (east to west) and 3 to 3.5km deep from north to south. It is bisected by the A47 which climbs from the valley floor in the west up onto the plateau edge to the north. The corridor of this busy A road forms a strong line in the landscape and also marks a change in landscape and visual character.
- Topography and hydrology**
4. Necton is a valleyside village and all three settlement clusters sit at a similar elevation above the valley floor. The core of the historic settlement, around the Conservation Area, sits between 50 and 55m AOD. This is also reflected in the cluster on Chapel Road. Ivy Todd sits a little higher, between the 60 and 65m contour.
 5. The more modern parts of the settlement, the areas of significant 20th century expansion sit below the 50m contour, on the edge of the flood plain. A small spur along Tuns Road also ascends the valley towards the junction with the A47 between 55 and 65m.
 6. Across the parish the topography is very gently undulating, with a total range in height from 35m AOD in the south to 80m in the north. The low-lying areas in the south feel flat and contained which transitions to a gently, rolling feel in the centre and north of the parish, and here views begin to open up. Land in the centre and along the north of the parish feels more elevated and longer views are offered over the valley below.
 7. The parish forms part of the upper catchment of the river Wissey, which has eroded a shallow valley system through the western edge of the mid Norfolk clay plateau. This plateau forms a ridge of higher ground that stretches from Hunstanton in the NW to Attleborough and Long Stratton in the SE. Only a short distance to the east rivers flow in the opposite direction, toward Norwich and the North Sea beyond. Here, however, rivers drain westwards and join the Great Ouse, eventually emptying into the Wash.
 8. The Wissey is a small chalk-fed river which rises from a complex arrangement of streams and drains which coalesce south of Necton and head inland in a southwest direction towards Mundford. The wide and shallow topography of the valley is subtle, forming gentle slopes. Topography, therefore, plays only a moderately important role in defining different areas of character within the parish.
 9. The name Necton is said to derive from old English and is said to mean '*farmstead on or by a neck of land or ridge*'. Whilst this ridge can be seen on topographic maps the ridge is not immediately apparent when moving around the village today. The settlement has expanded significantly from its ancient roots and the fairly complete infilling means today a visual connection with the surrounding landscape is often not possible.

2. Necton's landscape history continued:-

Figure 1: The main village, and the two other clusters of settlement, sit halfway up the valley side

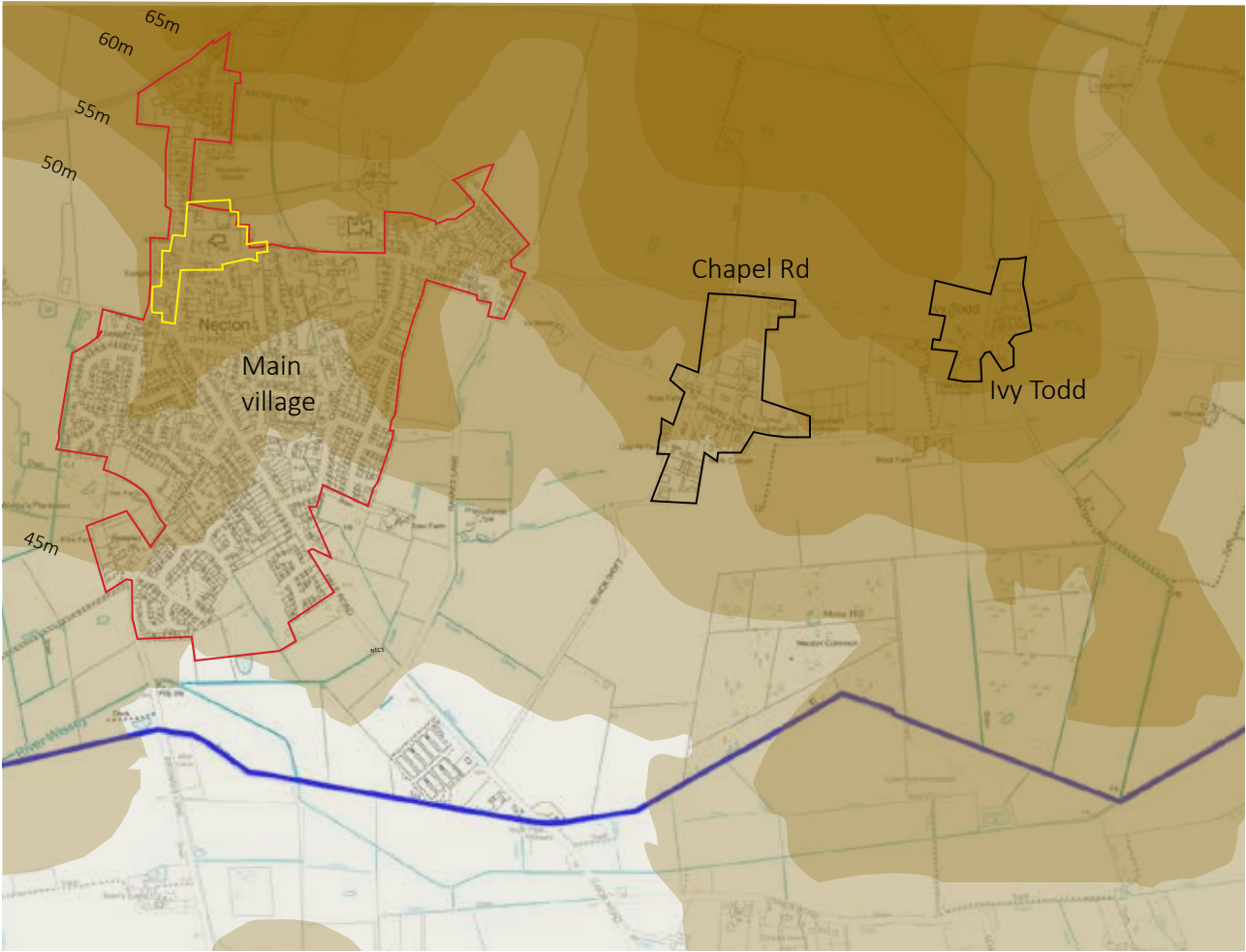


Figure 3: From Faydens map from 1749. Necton had a large heathland on its south side.

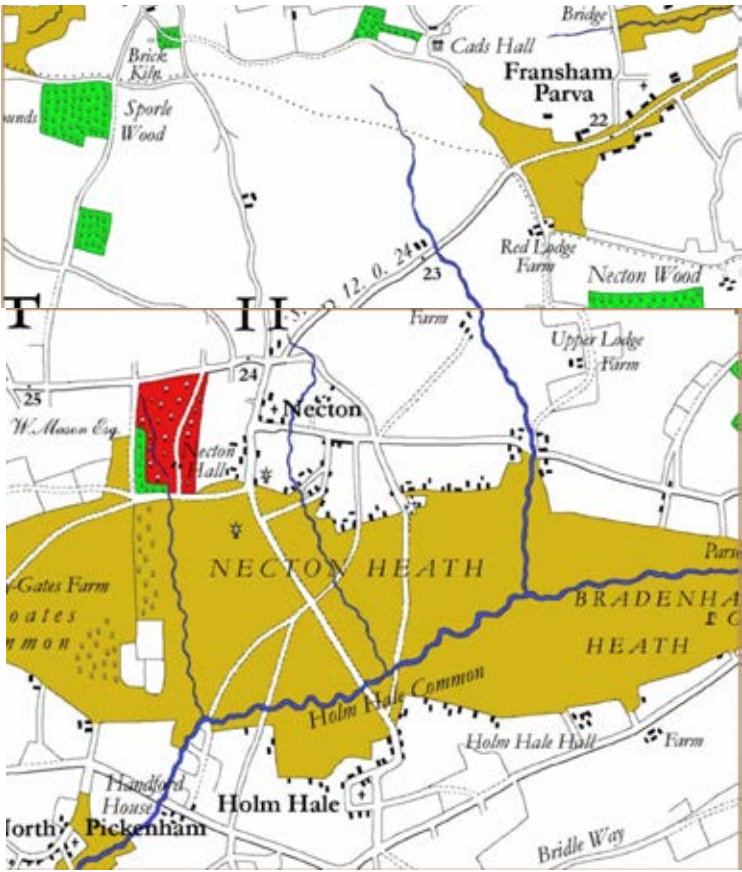
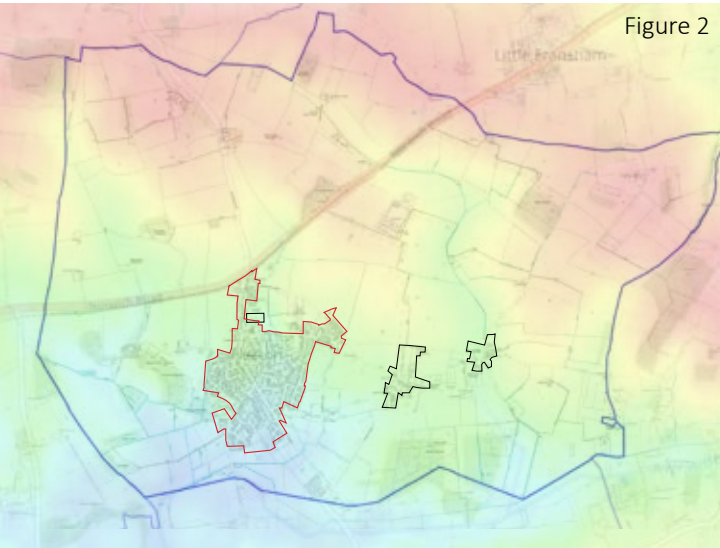
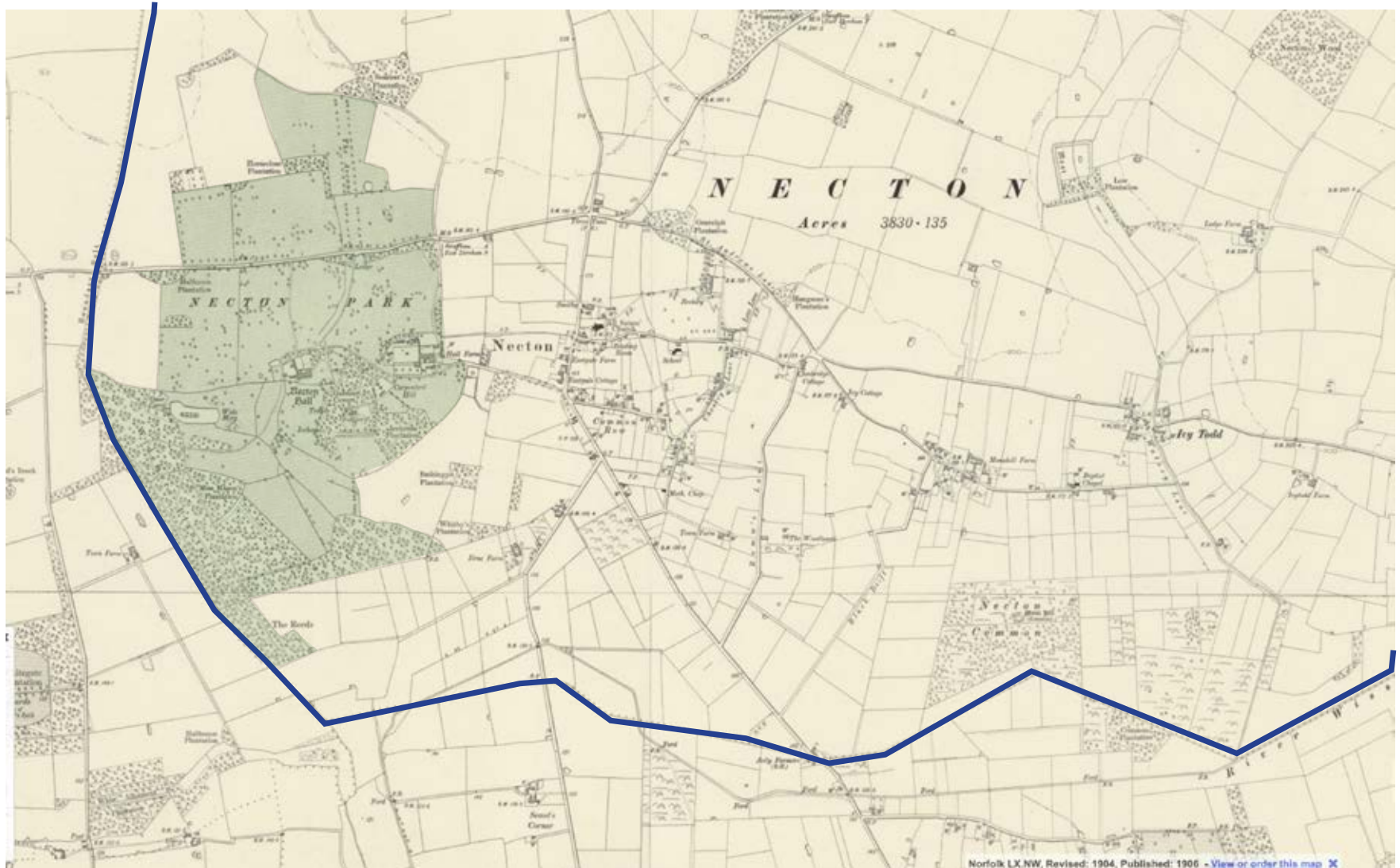


Figure 2: Topography pattern across the parish - elevated plateau fringes in the north gives way to valley bottom in the south.



2. Necton's landscape history continued:-

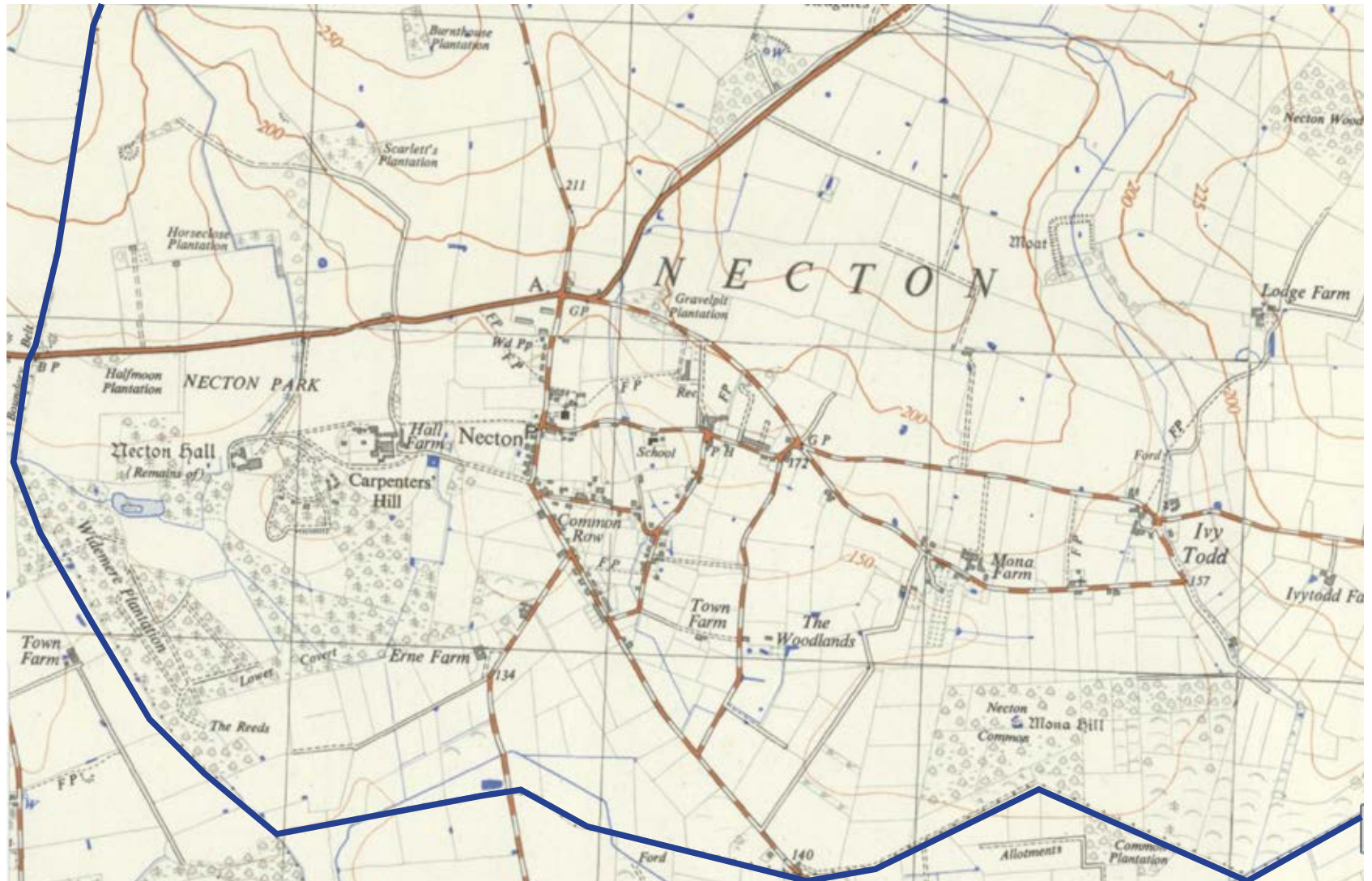
Figure 4:
Map from 1906



Source: National
Library of Scotland
<https://maps.nls.uk/>

2. Necton's landscape history continued:-

Figure 5:
Map from 1949



Source: National
Library of Scotland
<https://maps.nls.uk/>

2. Necton's landscape history continued:-

Soils and farming

10. The transition across the parish from valley bottom to plateau top is reflected by a variety of soil types and, consequently, related historic land uses. Added to the complexity is the fact the boundary of Brecks is somewhat 'fuzzy' along its eastern edge and Breckland features creep in to the landscape, for example, just west of the parish Scots pine lines, perhaps associated with the old parklands of Necton Hall, reflect those commonly found in the adjacent Breck landscapes.
11. The lowest lying land, fringing the river Wissey to the south is peaty and water logged and poorly drained. Unsuitable for cropping, here land use is historically pastoral and today, traditional cattle grazing management practices continue. Reed fringed ditches and lines of willow add to the texture, movement and sounds in the landscape.
12. Necton Common also sits along the southern boundary. This was part of a large belt of Heathland that stretched across several parishes, named Bradenham Heath and Holme Hale Common in the east and south, and Necton Common and Coates Common in the west, as shown on Fayden's 1797 map (previous page). There are areas of acid grassland here but much of it no longer has a heathland appearance and instead it has become colonised by successional woodland. It is listed as a County Wildlife Site but has no public access - only the air -soft activity centre offers limited public access along the southern edge.



Predominantly grassland, the once more expansive common would have offered grazing for the sheep of the villagers. It features a tumulus known as 'Mona Hill' which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

13. Above the valley floor, the more elevated parts of the parish to the north feature loamy soils, some appear light and sandier, others with a higher clay percentage and with impeded drainage. In this zone land use is dominated by arable farming. Historically this zone featured common land as well as 18th century parkland. The character of woodland is more varied with mixed deciduous and coniferous copses and belts, as well as stands of poplar.
14. What once was Necton Park lies immediately west of the settlement and is a noteworthy historic designed landscape feature, although only the structural bones of it remains today. Old maps from the 1700s show a the parkland, created by the Mason family, associated with Necton Hall - the medieval manor. The house was unfortunately lost, as so many were, in the early 20th century. Norfolk Heritage Explorer states:

Necton Hall was built in Elizabethan style with a chapel and was the home of the Mason family since the time of Henry VIII. It was demolished before the 1950s, but the 19th century stables still survive. These probably incorporate an earlier building.



2. Necton's landscape history continued:-



Necton Hall (now demolished)

15. Parkland creation tended to happen where when less valuable lands (i.e. less farmable) could be accumulated. However, as here at Necton, many parklands were changed back into farmland when fortunes of the landed gentry faded and in tandem with the introduction of agricultural innovations which made otherwise marginal lands more farmable. Today, where irrigation is available, sandy loam soil types are highly valued for their suitability for high value crops. Around Necton, high value vegetable crops, as well as arable crops, are grown.
16. Today, the well wooded estate-like character of the farmland west of the village is still perceived, the patterns and structure of the parkland landscape endures. Most of the park lies south of the A47 but there is a section to the north in the west of the parish where the vestiges of the parkland are still perceivable. All is now under arable farming.
17. Elsewhere, land use in the parish is dominated by large-scale farming practices

with large field sizes, arranged geometrically for the often high value crops which make use of the free draining, easily worked soils.

18. Enclosure, the process by which open, commonly farmed land was hedged or walled into individual fields came late to Necton. Large areas of common land were not left without enclosure until Parliamentary Enclosure Acts came into force between 1790 to 1840. The HLC maps show some land south of the current village edge, retains its 18th century historic character, but most of the landscape today is a result of reorganisation and amalgamation in the 20th century.
19. Nevertheless, clues for the ancient nature of the underlying landscape can be seen from modern maps and aerials. Where lanes and field patterns are irregular, organic and meandering they are likely echoes of the Saxon and even Roman eras. Where boundaries are straight and fields are organised in more regular and geometric patterns, organisation has come later to overwrite such ancient patterns.

Settlement history

20. This area has yielded plenty of evidence of a long settled landscape. Several Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age artefacts and ground features have been found and identified including arrowheads, an axehead, stone mallet all recovered in the 19th century. A possible hoard of Middle Bronze Age metal objects (NHER 2664) was found in 1849. Iron Age ring ditches and mounds and a scatter of Roman material including coins, pottery and metal work. Pieces of Late Saxon pot have been recovered from several sites (NHER 4186 and 8698) including the churchyard (NHER 4642). This suggests that the centre of Saxon settlement may have been located close to the present medieval church, but this is not certain. However, records and documentary evidence points to Necton being an important and wealthy holding in the Saxon period.
21. Medieval Necton was a relatively large settlement. It had a recorded population of 58 households in 1086, putting it in the largest 20% of settlements recorded in Domesday. The village is called 'Nechetuna' or 'Neketuna' at this time, and was

2. Necton's landscape history continued:-

acquired by Ralph of Tony after the Conquest, from Earl Harold Godwinstone, father of King Harold II.

22. William White's History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Norfolk of 1883 states, of Necton, *'Robert Harvey Mason, Esq., J.P., is the principal owner of the soil, and is lord of the manors called Sparham Hall, Cocket's (or Corbet's), and Churchman's, formerly held by the De Toneys, Nevilles, Bedingfields, Eyres, Colliers, &c. He resides at the Hall, a handsome Elizabethan mansion, which is situated in a park of 300 acres, containing some of the finest oaks in the county.'*
23. The lords of the manor oversaw a very rural settlement, with its inhabitants focused on agriculture. The type of agriculture was likely mixed. In the medieval era the main crops on lighter soils would have been barley, rye and oats, and sheep were the predominant livestock.
24. Necton remained only a strung out collection of dwellings, along the cell-like network of rights of way, right up until the mid 20th century when its character began to change dramatically. The network of lanes left parcels of farmland

which have gradually but comprehensively become infilled in the following decades. Post war, like all villages, local authority housing began to appear, supplemented through the 60s, 70s and 80s by speculatively developed small groups and small estates. This has resulted in a somewhat suburban patterns of cul-de-sacs which lead off the network of old lanes. The subsequent form of the village is dense with green spaces rarely playing a role in the streetscene and where views out to the countryside are scarce.

Heritage

25. Necton has a small Conservation Area which focuses around the oldest buildings in the village, a roughly 'L' shaped area, centred over the church, extending a leg south along Hale Road to include Eastgate House. This characterful, historic part of the village acts a central focus, but is not visually prominent in its role, key buildings are tucked off the main road down School Road or screened behind mature trees.
26. All Saints Church is built over the remains of an earlier building, the north wall



2. Necton's landscape history continued:-

Key streetscape buildings



Victorian Swiss Cottage overlooks the churchyard



Characterful small barn at Church Farm



Gateway arch into the churchyard



All Saints church



The old library and reading rooms



Large trees are important in the street scene

2. Necton's landscape history continued:-

Key streetscape buildings



School Road cottage.



Windmill Public and Flint Cottage on Mill Street



Ground floor remains of Necton windmill



Cottage on School Road



Cottage at Mill Street junction with Chantry Lane.

2. Necton's landscape history continued:-

of the chancel is said to be the only surviving fragment of the original Norman building. The current architectural style seen is Victorian Gothic style dating from the mid 1800s. It features an ornate bell turret on its tower and internally reveals a renowned roof, of carved angels, which is said to be one of Norfolk's finest.

27. Surrounding the church are other buildings of note. The old Church reading rooms and library on School Road which faces the church, is not listed but is considered a designated heritage asset. Reading rooms were created in the Victorian era, generally for the working classes by the upper classes, usually the church and local landowners.
28. Grade II listed Church Farm is tucked behind the church to the north but is not visible, only an old barn sits along the roadside and hints at the post-medieval building beyond. Instead, Swiss Cottage, a house in the Victorian Tudor revival style, overlooks the churchyard more prominently to the north.

Transport and roads

29. In the past, railway travel was available to the residents of Necton. There was a railway line with a station at Holme Hale. This was on the Great Eastern Railway line between Swaffham and Thetford but closed in 1964.
30. Today, transport within the village focuses on road traffic. The main road in Necton village (Tuns Road) passes north south and today terminates with a junction on the A47. A series of minor roads lead from it, predominantly on its east side, which connect to form a network offering circular routes to the clusters of settlement at Ivy Todd and Chapel Lane.
31. The A47 junction features a recently completed mini 'services', west of Tuns Lane. There is a Co-op filling station and mini-supermarket, electric car charging station, and a Costa coffee. To the south is a

garage business, separated by stark security fencing, and an empty commercial building. These are all surrounded by expanses of hard standing and street lighting overhead. The entrance into Necton from the north is therefore dominated by these land uses, which somewhat undermine the rural character of the rest of the parish. The lack of screening planting of new trees is obvious, and the development has had a detrimental effect on the character of the gateway to the village. Opportunities to make environmental improvements should be sought.

Cultural associations and leisure

32. Necton is a vibrant village with a number of clubs and societies. Necton Area Trust is an organisation committed to making environmental improvements. They undertake projects to increase and to improve the local greenspace and help run and promote events like Dogs Shows and Open Gardens events.
33. The village have some plans and aspirations to improve the gateway point with a village gate and associated planting on the western side of the Tuns road /A47. Improvements to the western side are also planned to match it to the other side of the road (Treasure Grove).
34. Play and exercise areas for adults and children are maintained beside a MUGA which front the football pitches beside the village Sports and Social Club. Silver

New coffee chain and filling station, with stark boundary treatments and lighting, are poorly integrated into the village or the landscape.



2. Necton's landscape history continued:-

Threads is a club for the elderly which provides social interaction, countering loneliness and is held in the village Hall. A peace garden to be added to the village as part of the Breckland 'Mindful Village' initiative, possibly between the adult exercise equipment and boundary of the playing field area. Village facilities include a vibrant pub and historic church. An aspiration is to add a village gardening club to the successful allotments association.

Ecology

35. The parish does not feature any site designated for wildlife at European or National level. There are none within 2km of its boundaries. It does have three sites which are designated County Wildlife sites. Necton Wood, in the NE of the parish is considered 'Ancient' woodland, and Necton Common and Necton Old Common are also wooded now owing to encroachment and lack of management (grazing) to maintain grassland conditions on what was the old heathland.

Greenspace and Trees

36. Local green spaces are designated in the Local Plan under ENV04. These include:
- The school playing fields north of the church
 - The churchyard and the war memorial site
 - Folly View and Masons Drive - two small modern greens
 - Brier close - very small modern green
 - Jubilee Way - two small green spaces
 - a parcel south of Elizabeth Drive
 - Allotments east of Browns Lane (outside parish boundary)
37. There are a number of veteran trees mapped in the parish at <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/tree-search>. Their locations are:
- one to the south of the church
 - one to the south of the old school on School Road
 - two west of Necton Grange
 - one where the drive to Necton hall meets the A47
 - two in Ivy Todd
 - three in a hedgerow between Chantry Lane and Bells Meadow and Watery Lane.

38. There is also a high number of trees with Tree Protection Orders, these can be viewed at: www.breckland.gov.uk/mymaps.

Ongoing issues

39. Pressure for new housing continues. Infill is either planned or being built out on a number of sites in or near the village envelope. These include developments in Kingfisher Drive, Oak Avenue, Old school building and playing field sites, and small site with access from Brackenwoods. The district council has recently (2022) approved plans to build up to 22 new 'starter homes' just south of the A47 on land north of St. Andrew's Lane.
40. Necton is one of the villages most affected by the on-shore infrastructure needed for a large offshore wind farm, off the east coast of Norfolk. An existing sub-station at Necton, northeast of the main village, is the subject of significant expansion, plus a new substation to the east is also proposed. Power from the wind farm will be brought underground to Necton where it will be converted and put into the National Grid. Necton Substation Action Group has been actively challenging the two linked projects named 'Boreas' and 'Vanguard' over the last few years.
41. Whilst the site is generally not easily seen from the main village owing to intervening topography, and vegetation, there are parts of the eastern fringes of the village and lanes where the sub-station will be visible. Due to the scheme's size it is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). In February 2022 the Norfolk Vanguard Offshore Windfarm Development Consent Order (DCO) was issued (for the second time. The original DCO was granted on 1 July 2020, but on 18 February 2021 it was quashed in the High Court). Consent for Norfolk Vanguard follows consent for its 'sister' project Norfolk Boreas.
42. The cap on capacity generated by Vanguard and Boreas was initially set at 3.6 GW but this cap has recently been removed as a non-material change. However, planning approval has subsequently been sought for an expansion to the associated National Grid substations. Mitigation of this major infrastructure (Boreas and Vanguard) is important and has been requested by NSAG and the Parish Council on behalf of the village. The Secretary of State has asked for this to be properly considered through Independent Design Review.

2. Necton's landscape history continued:-

A selection of old photographs from the parish website



3. Designations and Rights of Way

This plan shows the designations that are present around the main village and the small number of Rights of Way (ROW).

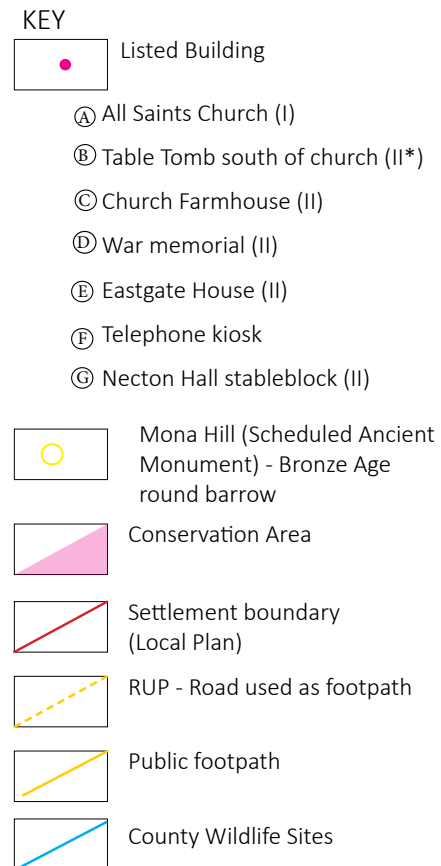


Figure 6. Designations and ROW

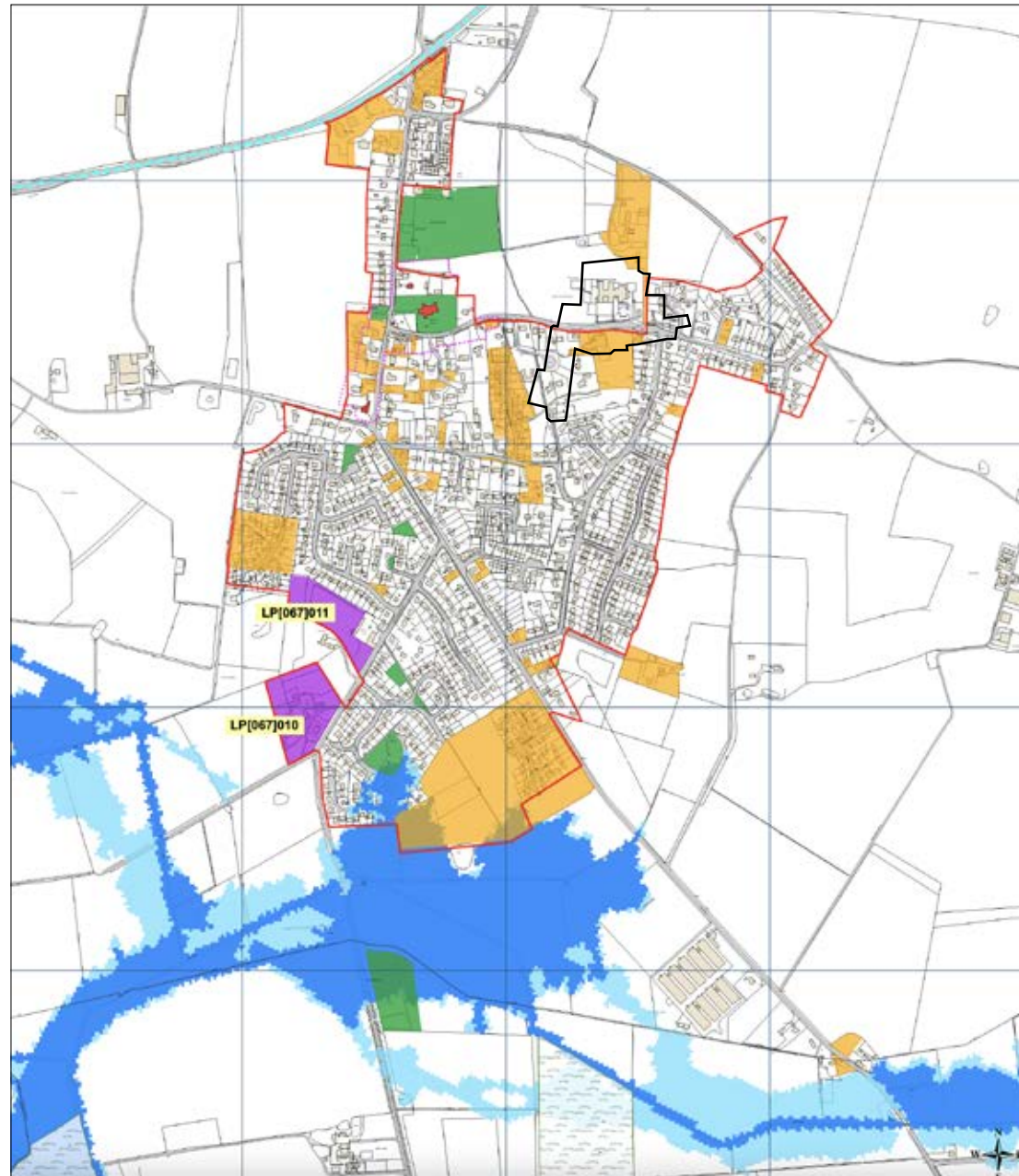
Figure 7: Local Plan map of Necton

4. Local Plan designations

This plan shows the Breckland Local Plan village policy map. There are a substantial number of sites with planning permission/allocations at the time this map was made. Some of these are now complete or in progress.

KEY

-  Settlement boundary
-  Conservation Area
-  Sites with planning permission
-  Open space under Local Plan Policy ENV04
-  Residential allocation
-  Listed buildings
-  Flood Zone 3
-  Flood Zone 2



5. Landscape Character Context

Policy

1. The need for Local Authorities and applicants to understand and respond to local character is now emphasised at all levels of the planning system. Following the lead of the District Council, Neighbourhood Plan Groups must also integrate a requirement for the protection of landscape character and settlement identity into their plan-making process. This makes for better design outcomes and ensures compliance with the planning framework that NPs sit within.
2. At the National Level the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out principles for how landscape character must be considered.

NPPF Paragraph 130:

“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

(a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

(b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

(c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

(d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;...”

3. Gaining an understanding of what makes up landscape character and sense of place is therefore crucial to all planning and design proposals and decisions. ‘Landscape’ is understood as the interaction of the natural, physical components of the environment with the human elements - historical and cultural, land use and human interventions over time. Assessment of character maps and describes the variations in physical, natural and cultural attributes that relate to the landscape, as well as its experiential characteristics, such as tranquillity. Landscapes are not just experienced visually, but through sounds, smells, memories and cultural associations. Character Assessment presents

descriptions of these attributes in a consistent, robust and structured way so the characteristics of different areas can be understood and compared.

4. Breckland’s current Local Plan was published in 2019. With regards to landscape, it states, on page 188;

In determining proposals for new development, regard shall be had to the Council’s Landscape Character Assessment, ensuring that all proposals respect the key visual sensitivities of the landscape that are a fundamental part of its character. The integration of new development into the existing landscape will be expected to be achieved in all development proposals without causing harm to the features that define them. The Council will give high protection to the River Valleys and Chalk Rivers from development that would harm their defining landscape characteristics.

5. Policy ENV05 is directly related to landscape character, it states;

Policy ENV 05 Protection and Enhancement of the Landscape

The landscape of the District is valued for, its benefit to the rural character and in the interests of biodiversity, geodiversity and historic conservation. Development proposals will be expected to contribute to and where possible enhance the local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Development should have particular regard to maintaining the aesthetic and biodiversity qualities of natural and man-made features within the landscape, including a consideration of individual or groups of natural features such as trees, hedges and woodland or rivers, streams or other topographical features.

Development proposals will have regard to the findings of the Council’s Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Settlement Fringe Landscape Assessment. Development should also be designed to be sympathetic to landscape character.

High protection will be given to The Brecks landscape, reflecting its role as a regionally significant green infrastructure asset. Proposals within The Brecks Landscape Character Areas will not be permitted where these would result in harm to key visual features of the landscape type, other valued components of the landscape, or where proposals would result in an unacceptable change in the landscape character.

High protection will also be given to the river valleys and chalk rivers in Breckland as identified in the Landscape Character Assessment, recognising their defining natural features, rich biodiversity and the undeveloped character of their shallow valleys.

Landscape Character Assessments

6. Parish-level character assessments like this fit into the wider structure of landscape characterisation that has been developing over the last 25 years in the UK. At the larger spatial scale there is the National Character Assessment, and Breckland District Council have also commissioned a number of district-level studies in the last 15 years. These published studies provide the context into which this parish level study fits.
7. This study will help provide an understanding of Necton's 'sense of place' by looking at;
 - how the village developed historically
 - its position in the landscape, and how this should influence any future growth;
 - the aspects of value that make it distinctive, including heritage assets
 - how character varies across the parish
 - how its heritage, open spaces and vegetative features contribute to character and how these, and other aspects of value, should be subject to protection;
 - where and how any important views within the village contribute to its identity
8. Taking a landscape character-led approach to the Neighbourhood Plan will ensure that local distinctiveness is maintained and enhanced, highly valued places and views are identified and development is directed to the 'right' places. The assessment will also seek to identify opportunities for landscape enhancement that could be the subject of future projects.
9. This parish study identifies rural landscape character *areas*. Landscape character areas are unique units that occur in only one place and are therefore geographically specific. They have their own individual character and identity and are labelled according to some local place or feature.

Existing studies

10. The landscape and architectural character of different parts of the district have already been assessed in a number of reports at different scales and levels of detail:
 - The National Landscape Character Area Profiles: No 84. Mid Norfolk (2014);
 - Breckland District Landscape Character Assessment (2007) by Land Use Consultants;
 - Breckland District Settlement Fringe Landscape Assessment (2007) by Land Use Consultants;
 - Breckland Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (April 2022) Tibbalds and LUC
11. Referral to the detailed information in the source documents is recommended, but a brief summary is attempted for each here, to help provide context.

National level Assessment

12. At the largest scale of character assessment in the UK there are 159 National Character Areas (NCAs). The full descriptions for these are available on the Natural England website.
13. Necton is on the very eastern edge of NCA 84 'Mid Norfolk'. This comprises a large area of central Norfolk from Norwich in the east to Swaffham in the west and Fakenham to the northwest. It is distinctive from the Breckland landscape to the west, and the coastal landscapes to the north, although some historic land uses/features are commonly shared.
14. It is a broadly flat, to gently undulating landscape, with distant wooded horizons and prominent church spires giving way to spectacular big skies. It is described as;

'.. ancient countryside with a long-settled agricultural character, where arable land is enclosed by winding lanes and hedgerows interspersed with woodland

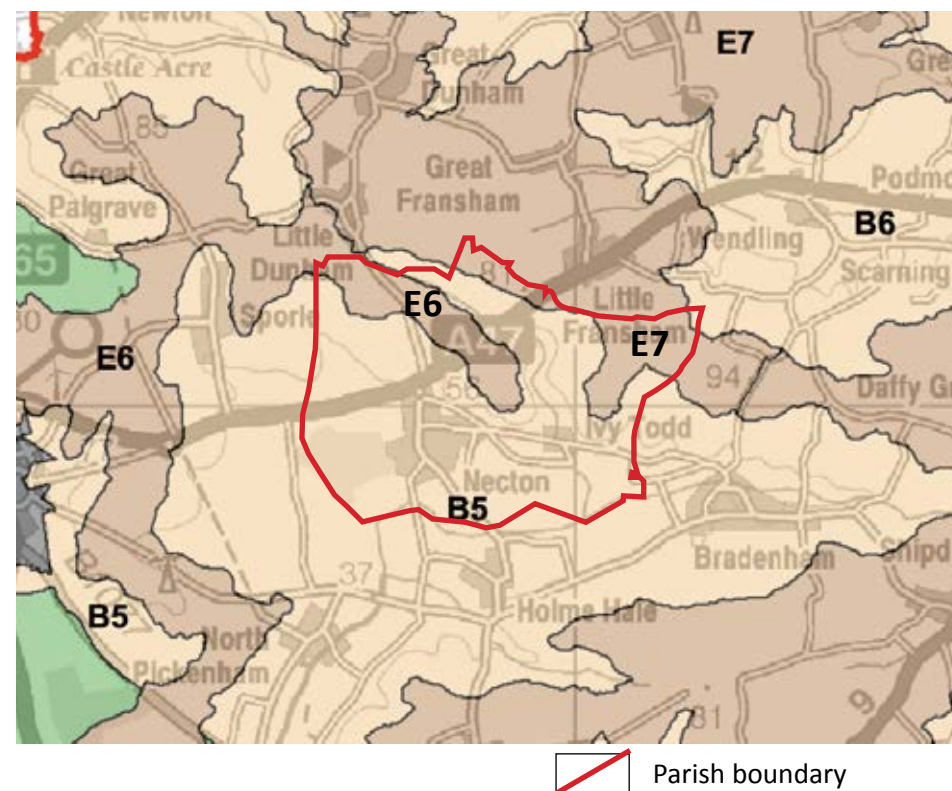
and heath and dissected by lush pastoral river valleys. A patchwork of cultivated land, numerous church spires, distant wooded horizons and big skies dominate the landscape ... This is a tranquil place, with isolated market towns, and scattered villages and farmhouses, their red brick and flint walls and pantile roofs an intrinsic component of Norfolk character. (p3).

15. The set of key characteristics is reproduced in Appendix A (separate appendices document).

District Level Assessments

16. Offering a finer grain of detail is the 2007 Breckland District Landscape Character Assessment (Land Use Consultants). The assessment describes three Landscape Character Areas in the parish of Necton, as shown in figure 8. It puts most of Necton in an area called 'B5 River Wissey Tributary Farmland' also covering North Pickenham, Holme Hale, and Bradenham. A ridge of higher land, through the north of the parish is in 'E6 North Pickenham Plateau'. Small areas of the northern fringes of the parish are mapped in area 'E7 Beeston Plateau'.
17. The B5 type surrounds the settlement and is the most relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan. It describes the sloping transitional landscapes between the valley bottom and the plateau above, a landscape with an undulating landform, and variable field patterns and field boundaries. Topography varies from 20-50m AOD. Its characteristics are listed fully in Appendix B in the separate appendices document.
18. B5 is described as essentially a 'tamed' landscape composed of a number of elements (farmland, settlement, parkland, fen, woodland, etc) unified by the gently undulating landform. Predominantly a large-scale landscape, variation and texture are provided by smaller fields with drainage channels, and by the tributaries and wetland vegetation. It has a tranquil quality due to its rural character and the network of narrow rural roads. Views are to hedged and wooded skylines, adjacent character areas being generally concealed. The church tower at Necton is a distinctive element of views, as are the wind turbines at Swaffham. In the lower reaches the landscape includes a range of wetland

Figure 8: Breckland District Landscape Character Assessment map (2007, LUC)



features associated with drains and fens, and upslope, larger scale landscapes that are associated with arable farming. ¹

19. The local vernacular buildings vary but are typically:
- timber framing, plastered or often faced with brick, and thatched or clay pantile roofs;
 - masonry construction, mainly red brick buildings with pantile and some slate roofs;

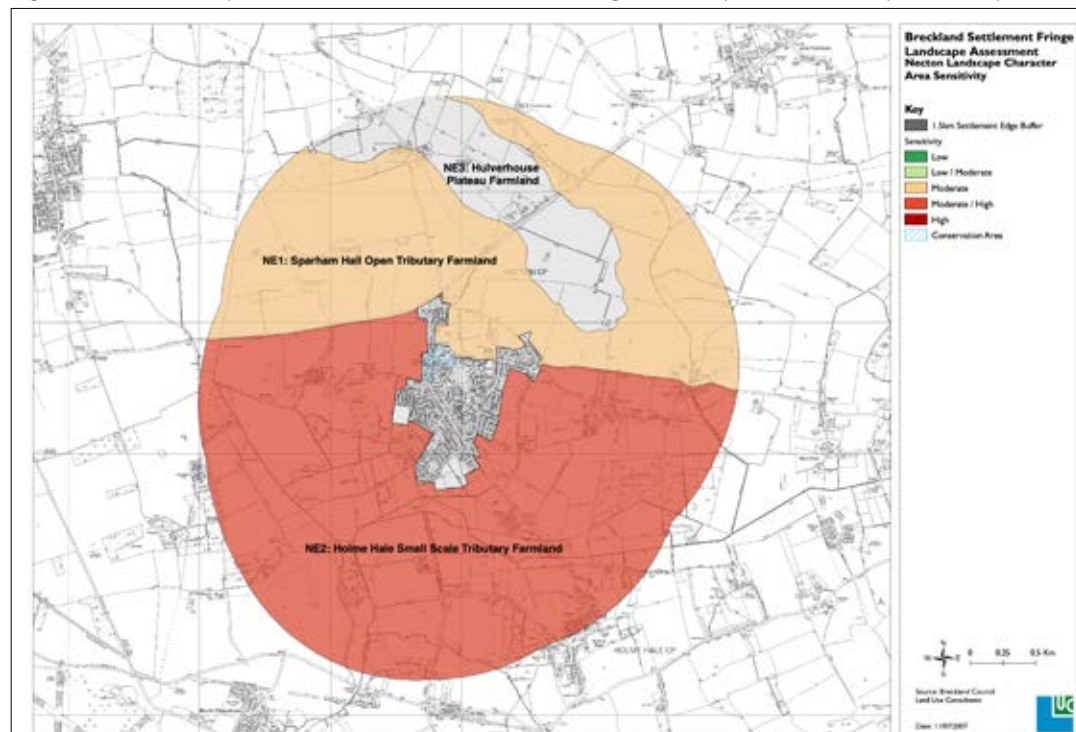
¹ p. 147. Breckland District Landscape Character Assessment

- some clay lump with rendered walls or a brick facing;
- there is relatively little flint in this area.

Landscape sensitivity

20. Following completion of that report, the same landscape consultants also looked at the sensitivity of the landscape to development around the fringes of the towns and larger villages in Breckland District.
21. For Necton, the landscape of 'B5 River Wissey Tributary Farmland' was separated into two further areas of study in the succeeding report labelled NE1 and NE2. These three areas are mapped on figure 8.
22. The study judged that the landscape around the village was mainly of 'moderate/high' sensitivity. South of the A47, the only part that was at a lower level - 'moderate' sensitivity - was the land along the northern edges of the village between Tuns Road and School Road.
23. The southern part of the village was judged more sensitive because the landscape here is made of a juxtaposition of varied elements which are in a generally good, managed condition. Particularly sensitive elements include historic natural features such as rush or willow lined meadows, divided by ditches and tributary drains, and the mixed native hedgerows. It also notes the features associated with the designed and planned landscapes of Necton Hall, including the listed building and the plantations. The remaining areas of common and the SAM are also inherently sensitive.
24. Visually, views of the church tower, and its setting are considered to be of the highest sensitivity. Views to the south of the settlement edge are filtered by field boundary hedgerow vegetation and blocks of mixed woodland, here visual sensitivity is lower. It is higher along the more open, eastern edges of the village.
25. The landscape north of the village, most of it to the north of the A47, was considered less sensitive to change, because the landscape

Figure 9: Necton map from the Breckland Settlement Fringe Landscape Assessment (2007, LUC)



High-Moderate Sensitivity:

Many of the key characteristics of the landscape would be adversely affected by development on the settlement fringe. A valued landscape in moderate or good condition/or of good quality. The proposed change would result in a noticeable alteration to the character of the settlement fringe and its landscape setting.

Moderate Sensitivity:

Some key features/characteristics that make up the landscape/settlement edge are likely to be affected by introduction of development on the settlement fringe. A moderately valued landscape or containing moderately valued or some valued elements. A landscape in moderate/good condition whose characteristics or elements make some positive contribution to wider landscape character. Containing landscape characteristics/elements that are likely to be replaceable to some extent. In considering any change, design and mitigation guidance should be followed.

here has been modified and is less intact. The open, large scale farmland is interspersed only occasionally with field boundary hedgerows. Many of the historic field boundaries have been lost to agricultural intensification.

26. Whilst the 2007 study is a useful starting point for thinking about issues of sensitivity, the village has continued to expand during the ensuing 15 years and the study it is now somewhat out of date. The scale is also too broad for assisting planning at the Neighbourhood Plan level and more contemporary guidance on methods for assessing sensitivity is now available. It appears to focus most heavily on landscape sensitivity and does not put enough emphasis on visual issues and settlement pattern, for example.
27. This author's study, therefore, provides an update that takes account of the village boundaries in 2022, accords with recent published methods, and provides a finer grain of detail more useful for plan making at the parish scale.

Settlement character analysis

28. The most recent available character study focuses on settlement rather than the landscape. The April 2022 '[Breckland Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment](#)' (Tibbalds and LUC) developed a typology which classified all the villages and market towns in Breckland. This was carried out as part of the analysis stage for the government's National Model Design Code process. The expected end result will be a new Breckland Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

29. It defined Necton as an Agricultural village with 'Nucleated Single Focus'.
'This morphological form is characterised by small settlements which initially originated as a series of dispersed buildings which have since developed into villages The settlements generally exhibit evidence of later extensions to the urban form and infill development. (p80)



6. Important Views

1. The final piece of evidence referred to before undertaking the assessment that follows, is work the NP Group have done to understand which views around the parish are particularly valued.
2. The community were asked, at a consultation event in 2021, about which views they valued in the parish. Nineteen different views were put forward and are plotted on figure 10.
3. These views represent frequently identified viewpoints that have notable qualities or a particularly attractive composition that might cause people to pause and appreciate the scene. More than an 'everyday' view, these are likely to feature in people's perceptions of what Necton looks like in their memories, and provide heightened feelings of connectedness and wellbeing.
4. Once identified, important views can be subject to policy which can try to conserve their composition and qualities. Further work could be done by the community, or commissioned, to photograph the views and identify and define the aspects of value in each.

Figure 10: Important views



7. Method of Assessment

1. The first stage of this study was the parish-wide character assessment. This was followed by an analysis of issues of landscape and visual sensitivity in the settlement fringes of each character area. Methods follow nationally accepted best practice and available guidance ¹ and, in the interests of brevity, are not replicated here.
2. The study does not consider the different character areas within the settlement itself - this has been carried out already by AECOM in their Design Codes report (2022)
3. The initial desktop stage resulted in a set of six draft character areas, which were then tested and adjusted following visual survey in the field. Existing mapped lines and 'on the ground' features were used to define and draw the boundaries.
4. The draft boundaries and a short description were submitted to the Neighbourhood Working Party for comment before the final descriptions for each area were written up in full.
5. The descriptions are supported by a set of representative illustrative photographs. The topics are considered under set headings, as set out in table 7.1.

Parish Landscape Character Assessment

3. The boundaries for the parish LCA were initially drafted through desktop study. The starting point was the available Breckland Character Assessment - the boundaries used for this assessment helped provide a basis for parish character areas.
4. To develop a further level of detail, mapped information was overlaid, using Adobe design software, on the district character type boundaries. The following sources were used:
 - Topography data from OS maps
 - Soils and geology data from Landis/BGS
 - Designations for heritage and ecology information from government GIS website Magic Map ²
 - Historic mapping from National Library of Scotland website
 - Google's aerial photography
 - Historic England designation maps
 - Historic Landscape character mapping accessed via the Norfolk Vanguard project consultation material
 - Breckland GIS mapping software

These maps are provided in the separate Appendix document.

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

2 magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap

Table 7.1 Landscape character assessment: Headings and explanation:

Physical landscape	Location and underlying character type	Reference to the relevant underlying landscape type/area in available Character Assessments. The location of the area within the village.
	Topography / hydrology /soils	Describes where the area sits within the landscape and landform, its elevation in metres above ordnance datum (AOD); whether there are water courses or ponds in the area; Soil types.
	Landcover/Landuse	Describes how the land is being used, the types of farming or cropping, and whether it is being managed for other activities, such as shooting. It describes the pattern of enclosures. What patterns the landscape demonstrates in terms of the size and form of its fields, e.g. whether organic or geometric in shape, and the presence or absence of boundary hedges.
	Trees and woodland Cover cover	The amount and type of woodland present. Whether it's ancient or of more recent origin. Whether there are hedges and the condition they are in.
Cultural perceptual, and aesthetic:	Scale and enclosure	Whether a feeling of openness or containment prevails, given the arrangement of vegetation and topography. The degree to which an area's pattern of subdivisions is small and frequent (fine grain), or large and infrequent (coarse grain).
	Historic landscape/time depth	Lists historic aspects of value such as Listed buildings/structures and their settings. How today's patterns relate to the historic pattern.
	Settlement interfaces and road network	Describes the pattern of settlement found, the shape or form and 'grain' of the settlement. Describes the transition between settlement and the countryside. Includes the forms of roads.
	Perceptual and visual experience/tranquillity	Whether the area feels noisy or tranquil, busy or remote and isolated. Whether the landscape feels well cared for and in good condition, or where there are aspects that are degraded or cause visual intrusion. Judgement about the level of tranquillity. Identify any sources of noise, movement and disruption. Description of the visual experience - whether views are generally open or intimate, whether long or short; how scenic they are. Whether the area feels noisy or tranquil, busy or remote and isolated. Whether the landscape feels well cared for and in good condition, or where there are aspects that are degraded or cause visual intrusion. Are there any Key views in the area?
	Indicators of value and Rights of Way	Areas designated and protected for geological or biological conservation, such as SSSI's and County Wildlife Sites; ancient woodland and veteran trees. Designated greenspace or public open space, or other features which contribute positively to the character of an area. The presence of any footpaths or rights of way or recreation sites.
Management issues	Issues / Change pressures	Is any aspect under threat? What should be the objectives for conservation or enhancement? Are there possibilities for future creation of ecological habitat, or expanded recreation, etc?

7. Method of Assessment continued:-

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

8. The next step was to assess the sensitivity of the character areas, focusing particularly on the land fringing the settlement. Work on settlement fringe sensitivity was first done in 2007 by Land Use Consultants³. This study refers to that work but aims to provide updated information and a further level of detail.
9. A set of tables were devised that allowed sequential assessment of the landscape value and visual sensitivity in each part of the village fringe. This is presented as the final part of each character area description. It provides detail on the specific landscape and visual issues in each part of the village fringe and sets out future management objectives.
10. Necton has a large single defined settlement cluster plus undefined further clusters at Chapel Road and Ivy Todd. These lack settlement boundaries so are effectively in 'countryside' in planning terms. Development in countryside has less support in the NPPF and district planning policy and must meet strict tests to be acceptable. But where land abuts the existing built-up area there is usually more scope for development than on land separated from the village edge. This is why the fringes are likely to experience most pressure for future change and development and why they are the focus of study in this way.
11. This study will assist with the following task and decisions:
 - a) provide the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party an aid for making sound decisions in relation to spatial planning and policy formation, in relation to landscape;
 - b) provide evidence to help the parish respond to future planning applications;
 - c) help identify and justify land for allocation, (or not) and aid site planning. New housing should only be consented or planned in appropriate locations that do not harm the special character of the village, or its valued views or features, (and where all other policy tests are met).
 - d) aid transparency; it is important that residents and land owners understand why decisions have been made, particularly in relation to allocation, and understand where development might be supported and where it might be discouraged;
 - e) identify opportunities for the enhancement, management and conservation of the landscape and views.
12. It is important to note that the results of the study are not intended to suggest specific development site areas or define future settlement boundaries. The study also takes no account of other factors that would influence development, for example such as availability of land, flood risk, sustainability issues or whether highways access is possible.

Method

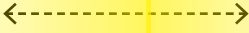
13. Methods for assessing landscape sensitivity have only fairly recently been published. *"An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management"* was published in June 2019 (Christine Tudor, Natural England). The guidance urges studies to be simple, transparent, robust and defensible. An idealised process schematic is shown at the end of this document.
14. The guidance provides the following definition of sensitivity (p5):

‘..Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value... a process that assesses the resilience / robustness of landscape character and the visual resource – and what we value - to a defined change, or changes..’
15. The assessment relies on the premise that development or change should be more readily acceptable in the least sensitive areas, and where appropriate forms of mitigation would be possible. Development would be least acceptable in areas of higher landscape value and where visual sensitivity is high, and/or where conditions are such that the landscape would be sensitive to available mitigation measures.
16. Example circumstances indicating higher and lesser value and sensitivity are given in tables 7.2 and 7.3. Landscape factors and visual and perceptual factors are dealt with separately.

Table 7.2: LANDSCAPE - EXAMPLE INDICATORS

LANDSCAPE FACTORS		Lower value and/or sensitivity ←-----→ Higher value and/or sensitivity		
Physical landscape and vegetation	Vulnerability of 'sense of place' to the loss or erosion of visible landform or hydrological features. Extent that vegetative features such as woodland, significant trees, or hedges, would foreseeable be lost/compromised as a result of change or development.	Topography and landform play little role in defining local character. No significant vegetation would be lost, or minor losses but easy to mitigate.	Some vulnerability of landform or water features that plays some role in defining character. Moderate vulnerability of vegetative features but mitigation generally viable.	Significant vulnerability of land form, vegetative feature and/or water courses that contribute strongly to character, and where mitigation difficult.
Settlement Pattern and gateways	Vulnerability of the distinctive and historic settlement pattern to development. Consideration of the nature and form of the adjacent settlement edges and gateways. Likelihood of successful integration with existing edges - modern or historic. Likelihood of causing coalescence between the main village and other hamlets. Prominence of site relating to gateway or arrival points where sense of place would be influenced.	Development here could fit well with the historic settlement pattern given its location, size and position in the landscape. No impact to distinctive arrival points.	Development would be somewhat discordant with the historic settlement pattern, given its location, size and position in the landscape; potential for minor impact to distinctive arrival points.	Development of the Site would be very discordant with the historic settlement pattern, given its location, size and position in the landscape; potential for adverse impact to distinctive arrival points.
Local rural character	To what extent does the area contribute to local landscape character and how vulnerable would it be development took place. (Character as defined in the District LCA and by any parish-level detail identified in this study).	Area contributes little to local landscape character, possibly with even detracting elements. Loss of historic patterns; hedges absent. Landscape in poor condition and good potential for enhancement	Area contributes to distinctive rural character. Condition of features mixed, some hedgerow trees endure. Some indication of time-depth/historic continuity	Area contributes notably to distinctive rural character and features intact hedges, mature trees - landscape in good condition. Strong indication of time-depth / historic continuity
Biodiversity and wildlife	Extent of potential harm to features with ecological value and as part of ecological network.	Little foreseeable impact to ecological system/wildlife and/or mitigation very feasible	Limited foreseeable impact to ecological system or to wildlife and mitigation feasible	Foreseeable harmful impact to ecological system and mitigation unlikely to be feasible
Historic Landscape	Relationship of the area to the settings of Listed Buildings or to the Conservation Area. Extent of potential impact on the historic landscape.	No impact on Heritage Assets or CA. No loss of historic landscape features.	Some inter-visibility between Heritage assets and the parcel of land. Some loss of a historic landscape features.	Foreseeable direct impact on setting of designated asset or loss of a historic landscape feature.

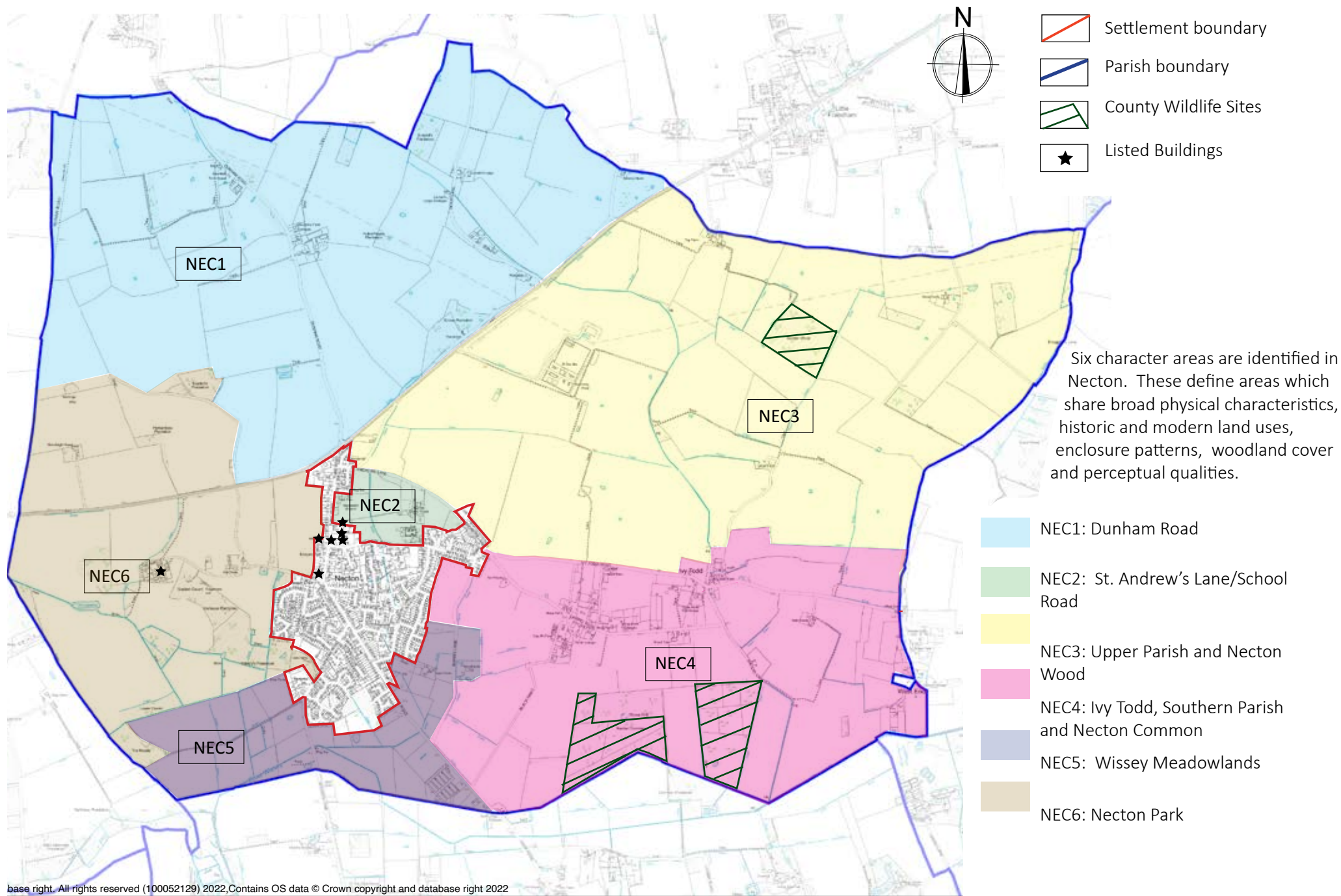
Table 7.3: VISUAL: EXAMPLE INDICATORS

VISUAL AND PERCEPTUAL FACTORS		LOWER value and/or sensitivity  HIGHER value and/or sensitivity		
Visual prominence	How generally visible the parcel is from the surrounding landscape, and how prominently the land is located within views from the village edge or principal roads. Vulnerability of skylines. Impact on any notable views.	Conditions combine to make views of land generally difficult to experience. Limited visibility from principal routes. Intact hedge network, woodland or existing urban edge provides good screening and assimilation potential. No	Some views available where conditions allow. Moderately visible in views from principal routes or village edge. Boundaries partially open, some opportunity for screening and assimilation but mitigation required.	Visually prominent, forming part of view from many points. Integral part of view from one or more principal routes or village edge.. Boundaries very open, little opportunity for screening and assimilation. Extensive mitigation would be needed.
Visual amenity	Nature of impacts on the visual amenity of existing residents and other sensitive receptors such as users of footpaths.	No views from visually sensitive receptors. Any visual impacts are on receptors of low sensitivity; e.g. minor road users, people at work.	Views from a few visually sensitive points and/or at longer range. Views are Moderately sensitive; e.g. some views from dwellings at some distance.	Direct and close range views from one or more sensitive receptors. Highly sensitive receptors such as footpath users and residents with ground floor views.

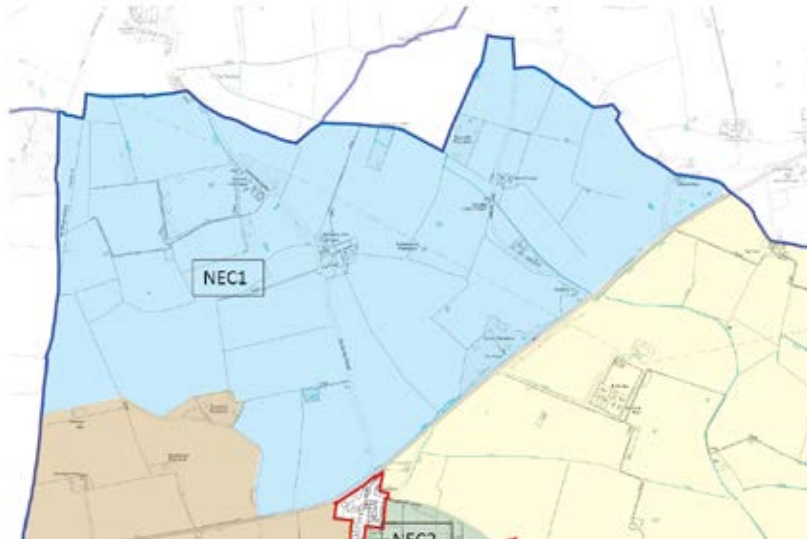
8. Parish Character and Sensitivity Assessment



Figure 11. Parish Character Area Map



NEC1 - DUNHAM ROAD - Character description



Location and underlying landscape type

This is gently rolling, upper valleyside and plateau top between the 60m and 90m contours. It is one of the largest character areas in the parish and is almost entirely farmland, bisected by the road to Little Dunham and a lane, mapped as Moor Lane, to the east. It comprises all the land north of the A147 except the area in the west that was part of Necton Park which has remnant landscape features that still ties its character to NEC6. NEC1 incorporates district character areas E6, E7 and B5.

Topography / hydrology / soils

Soils are loamy with some heavier clay areas, which are seasonally wet. Fertility is moderate to high. Water courses are limited to a few drains/streams draining towards the south, and a few scattered ponds within arable fields, indicating the clay content of the soil.

Landcover/land use

Arable farmland dominates, sometimes punctuated with small plantations and woodland strips at intervals.

Woodland and trees

Although there are no large woodlands here there are enough strips and copses that some horizons appear distantly wooded. Sporle Wood, outside the parish boundary to the NW, forms a strong skyline feature. In other parts the expansive fields lead the eye to a featureless horizon.

Scale and enclosure

Field sizes are medium to large and are arranged in both regular and irregular edged enclosures often, but not always, hedged. Whilst the organic shape of the winding lanes and some of the field boundaries are likely to be more ancient in origin, the Historic Landscape Character assessment maps this an areas of 'late' enclosure, (18th-19th century) with some 20th century reorganisation.

Historic landscape/Time depth

There are no listed buildings in this area. The remnant underlying organic enclosures and routes hint at centuries-past landscape patterns but this can also feel like a modern landscape, with modern farmsteads, pylons and a busy A road along its southern boundary.

Settlement interfaces and road network

The area is generally unsettled except for a few working farms, converted farm buildings and a few farm cottages. The area features both historic narrow winding lanes as well as the busy carriageway of the A47 which cuts through the landscape to the south.

Perceptual and visual experience/Tranquillity

This is a relatively isolated, unsettled part of the parish, but tranquillity is limited owing to the constant noise from the A47. A tall row of pylons marches through the north of the area and is dominant in the skyline. Although overall the valley is relatively shallow, land here can an elevated feel and views from Dunham Road include the church tower which can be seen emerging from the village rooftops.

Indicators of value and rights of way

There are no rights of way or heritage features.

Issues / Change pressures

In the east of the area, adverse impacts from the proposed Vanguard/Boreas proposal should be properly assessed and mitigated.

NEC1 - DUNHAM ROAD - Illustrative photos



View north up Moor Lane from the A47



View southward along Dunham Road at Boundary Farm Cottages



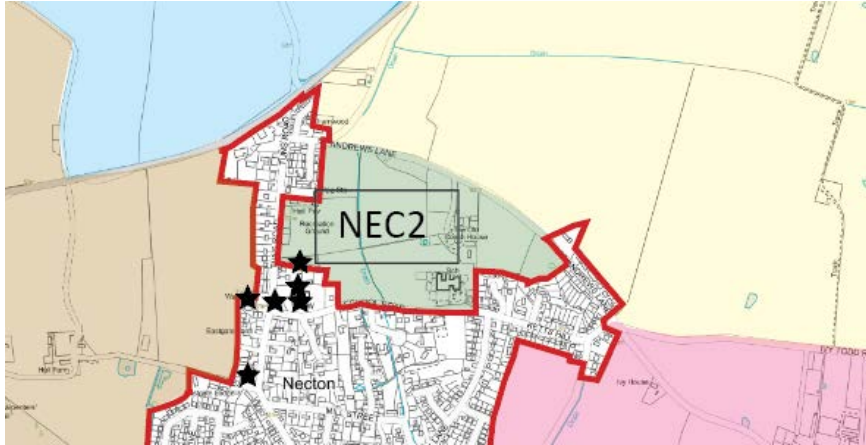
View northeast from the A47, west of the new services

Images
from
Google
streetview

NEC1 - DUNHAM ROAD - Sensitivity and value

	Sensitivity Factor:	Source /Evidence / Indicator	Assessment of sensitivity and value	Management recommendations	Sensitivity H/M/L
LANDSCAPE FACTORS	Physical landscape including vegetation Impact on distinctive topography / water features / significant trees or other vegetation.	<i>OS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	The topography is not particularly distinctive, and is common to much of the plateau in this part of Norfolk. There are no vulnerable water features here. There is no significant woodland or any parkland trees. There are some good farmland hedgerows in good condition.	Protect and enhance the hedgerow network	LOW
	Settlement pattern and gateways Fit with historic pattern; prominence of parcel in relation to arrival points; nature of road network	<i>OS maps; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	Development in this character area at any scale would not fit with the pattern of settlement. This is a broadly unsettled part of the parish. The settlement pattern is for outlying farms and cottages only.	Development is not appropriate in this elevated position in the landscape. Individual plots related to farmsteads, or conversions, maybe be acceptable if other policies are met.	HIGH
	Local rural landscape character Contribution of parcel and setting to local character and distinctiveness	<i>County and District Character assessment; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	The character area is somewhat elevated and open and it plays a role as rural setting and gap between Necton and villages to the north. It is typical mid norfolk farmland, arranged in reasonably large scale enclosures, interspersed with lanes and hedges. Some hints of ancient enclosure patterns but also much straightening and amalgamation and hedge loss. Skylines would be vulnerable on the open parts of the parcel.	Protect the undeveloped rural character of the landscape north of the village.	MOD
	Biodiversity and wildlife Impact on designated features or features with potential value as part of ecological network	<i>Reference to GIS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	No designated features in the area but just outside the parish adjacent is CWS Sporle Wood. Good roadside and field hedge networks.	Protect Sporle Wood from land use changes through appropriate ecological assessment and mitigation. Look for opportunities to create and link biodiversity networks.	LOW
	Historic landscape Landscape as setting to designated heritage features; impacts on Conservation Area; SAMs; etc	<i>Reference to Historic England mapping; site observations.</i>	Landscape does not play role to heritage settings except to the south end of Dunham Lane where some views of the church tower are experienced.	Protect any views towards the church tower that contribute to local distinctiveness and orientation	LOW
VISUAL / PERCEPTUAL	Visual prominence Prominence of parcel in general views around the village; impacts to skyline; impacts on any important views;	<i>Site observations and professional judgement relating to visual sensitivity</i>	This area is elevated over the village and offers a distant rural skyline. It's openness means its potentially visually sensitive - change could be experienced over wide areas. However area is not usually prominent in views out from the village. There is a thick hedge along the boundary with the A47 which generally blocks close range views. Views sideways along the valley side from Dunham Road are also hard to experience owing to roadside hedges.	Protect the undeveloped rural character of the skyline. Ensure development proposals appropriately assess visual impacts.	MOD
	Visual amenity and perceptions Nature of receptors experiencing visual Impacts; types of experiences perceived	<i>Site observations and professional judgement</i>	There are no ROWs here to offer views. A small number of dwellings on the northern edges of the village, eg Treasure Grove, would be sensitive to change. Traffic is busy on the A47 - constant vehicle movements and noise limits perceptions of ruralness. Traffic speeds are relatively high on these long straight roads and large HGVs pass regularly.	Look for opportunities to create new rights of way - there are none in this area. Seek measures to reduce sound from the road corridor.	MOD

NEC2 - ST. ANDREW'S LANE/SCHOOL ROAD - Character description



Location and underlying landscape type

This is the smallest character area and comprises the undeveloped area between two northerly spurs of the settlement between Tuns Road, St. Andrew's Lane and Church Road. It includes the recreation field and the grounds of the primary school. NEC2 is in district character areas B5.

Topography / hydrology / soils

It is gently rolling valleyside that lies between 50 to 60m contours. A tributary stream runs north to south through the area. It is lightly acid loamy and clayey soil with impeded drainage. Fertility is moderate to high.

Landcover/land use

Village edge uses - adjacent to the settlement there is a community greenspace/sports pitch on Tuns Road, and the primary school, and its grounds, along school Road. Beyond this is arable farmland arranged into small fields. These are used for arable/vegetable crops.

Woodland and trees

There is no woodland in this small character area, but there are hedgerows and hedgerow trees including, apparently, a number of mapped veteran trees west of Necton Grange (the Old Rectory) also covered by TPOs. There is a disused gravel pit on the south side of St.

Andrew's Lane now covered with trees which sit along the skyline. Properties that back onto this area also offer a mature vegetated edges, so the overall feel is leafy.

Scale and enclosure

The scale of the landscape is of a finer grain than the expansive outlying arable landscape beyond to the north of St. Andrew's Lane. Fields here are fairly small and have not been subject to 20th century amalgamation that the wider farmland has.

Historic landscape/Time depth

Some sense of time-depth in this area because it abuts the most historic part of the village. This landscape looks to have changed little since the early OS maps were published - field sizes remain small, there are veteran trees in the hedgerows which indicate long standing enclosure patterns. The Church retains some degree of its relationship with the countryside with views out from the churchyard to the northwest still possible - the area interfaces with the Conservation Area.

Settlement interfaces and road network

Because the character area penetrates into the village it is prominently seen from some parts of the village edge, particularly School Road, St. Andrew's Lane and glimpses are also experienced from Tuns Road where it forms backdrop behind the recreation ground.

Perceptual and visual experience/Tranquillity

Limited tranquillity given the proximity to the A47 and village edge. This parcel of land is important in views experienced from both Tuns Road and School Road where it provides a sense of the valleyside topography and the rural setting of the village.

Indicators of value and rights of way

Valued landscape for formal and informal recreation; valued as part of school grounds; adjoins the Conservation Area. The footpath that once connected the Church and Old Rectory has been lost.

Issues / Change pressures

Area is generally screened from the Vanguard/Boreas project area.

Historic rights of way have been lost.

NEC2 - ST. ANDREW'S LANE/SCHOOL ROAD - Illustrative photos



View from School Road towards the east



The recreation ground with scenic tree topped backdrop

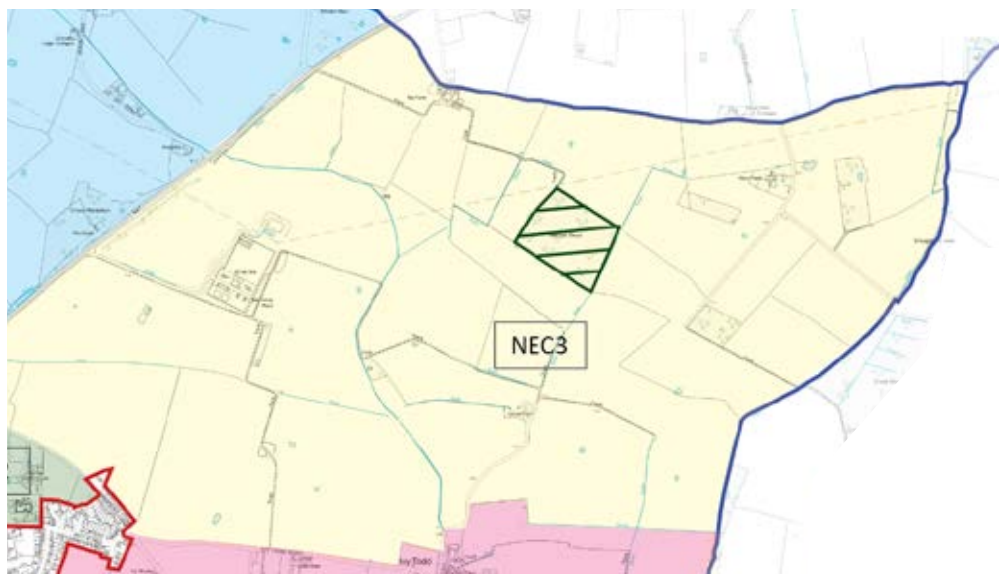


Views out from the churchyard/Conservation Area

NEC2 - ST. ANDREW'S LANE/SCHOOL ROAD - Sensitivity and value

	Sensitivity Factor:	Source /Evidence / Indicator	Assessment of sensitivity and value	Management recommendations	Sensitivity H/M/L
LANDSCAPE FACTORS	Physical landscape including vegetation Impact on distinctive topography / water features / significant trees or other vegetation.	<i>OS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	The value in this area relates to the stock of mature and veteran trees and the recreational value of the playing field and school grounds. The sensitivities in this area relates to the sloping topography which is topped with blocks of skyline trees - this provides a distinctive rural backdrop within views of the village edge, and thus in its identity and sense of place..	Protect community greenspaces. Protect undeveloped slopes which contribute to local distinctiveness and setting. Protect all mature trees and hedgerows.	HIGH
	Settlement pattern and gateways Fit with historic pattern; prominence of parcel in relation to arrival points; nature of road network	<i>OS maps; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	The lower lying parts of the land parcel are well related to the historic core of the village and sit at the same elevation. However, any new development here could impact the Conservation Area and would have to be very sensitive and limited in size so would not become visually dominant. Most scope for expansion in the far east of the parcel where land is very contained by tall hedges and existing settlement on Larwood Close.	Ensure any development is small scale and sensitively designed where adjacent to the Conservation Area.	LOW
	Local rural landscape character Contribution of parcel and setting to local character and distinctiveness	<i>County and District Character assessment; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	This parcel is sensitive because it makes a positive contribution to character in the north of the village. Its small scale patterns, well vegetated edges and gently rolling topography makes for an attractive rural backdrop. Forms a rural gap in the settlement between the Rectory and the Primary School which contributes to the rural feel of the setting of the Conservation Area and School Road.	Protect the pattern of small scale enclosures, and stock of important trees.	HIGH
	Biodiversity and wildlife Impact on designated features or features with potential value as part of ecological network	<i>Reference to GIS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	No designated wildlife features. Value is likely to lie in the hedge and tree networks.	Protect ecological networks related to hedges and trees. Look for opportunities to enhance biodiversity.	MOD
	Historic landscape Landscape as setting to designated heritage features; impacts on Conservation Area; SAMs; etc	<i>Reference to Historic England mapping; site observations.</i>	Area is most sensitive where forms setting and backdrop to the Conservation Area, the focus of almost all Necton's Listed Buildings as well as non-designated heritage assets such as the Old Library /Reading Room.	Protect the setting of the Conservation Area.	MOD
VISUAL / PERCEPTUAL	Visual prominence Prominence of parcel in general views around the village; impacts to skyline; impacts on any important views;	<i>Site observations and professional judgement relating to visual sensitivity</i>	Land parcel is prominent from minor roads - close range views in from St Andrew's Lane to the north and School Road to the south. Also glimpses from the Tuns Road over the recreation ground.	Ensure views through to the rising land are maintained.	MOD
	Visual amenity and perceptions Nature of receptors experiencing visual Impacts; types of experiences perceived	<i>Site observations and professional judgement</i>	There are no ROWS here to offer views. A small number of dwellings on Tuns Road and School Lane would be sensitive to change as would users of the recreation ground and walkers using the minor lanes.	Look for opportunities for pedestrian routes and linkages especially that connect to the recreation ground.	MOD

NEC3 - UPPER PARISH AND NECTON WOOD - Character description



Location and underlying landscape type

Large area to the northeast of the main village, between the corridor of the A47 and the hamlet of Ivy Todd. It is somewhat isolated, large-scale farmland with little settlement. NEC3 incorporates district character areas E7 and B5.

Topography / hydrology / soils

This is a very gently rolling plateau edge landscape, occupying a position between 60m to almost 80m AOD. Soils are clayey loams and can be seasonally wet.

A tributary stream flows south through Ivy Todd towards the River Wissey.

Landcover/land use

Land use is here is almost entirely large and medium scale arable farmland.

The National Grid substation (soon to be expanded significantly) is located in the centre of this area.

Woodland and trees

Woodland is found in the form of a large block of (ancient) woodland - 'Necton Wood' as well as three smaller blocks to the east. Elsewhere woodland is absent in the character area, although it often seen along the skyline line in adjacent land parcels. Field hedges are generally

present, but not always.

Scale and enclosure

The area feels elevated and often quite open. The ancient enclosure patterns have been subject to amalgamation in the 20th century leading to large field sizes. Public access is generally not offered but it is judged the perceptual experience would be influenced by the expansiveness and relative remoteness.

Historic landscape/Time depth

Little sense of the historic landscape owing to 20th century reorganisation. The farms are fairly modern and do not feature listed houses or barns. There was a rectangular moat to the east of the sub station on the early OS maps, but only the traces can now be seen in aerial views, it has disappeared under farmland.

Settlement interfaces and road network

NEC3 has minimal interaction with the village edge and is generally unsettled. Apart from a few farms accessed by driveways/tracks, there are no public roads in this area.

Perceptual and visual experience/Tranquillity

Relatively isolated and quiet part of the parish, with a prevailing agricultural purpose. Long views are possible from the upper parts across the Wissey Valley. Traffic noise is likely to be an issue close to the corridor of the A47.

Indicators of value and rights of way

Necton Wood - County Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland.

There are no listed assets or rights of way in this area.

An application has been made to re-open the footpath and bridleway from Ivy Todd past Lodge Farm to Goggle's Lane, Fransham that was ploughed up without permission in the 1960s. This is a historic access way shown on old maps.

Issues / Change pressures

The expected adverse impacts from the proposed Vanguard/Boreas proposal should be properly assessed and mitigated, particularly on residential receptors along the village edge. Look for opportunities to add public access routes into any new woodland creation, for example.

NEC3 - UPPER PARISH AND NECTON WOOD - Illustrative photos



View north from St. Andrew's Lane

Images from Google
Streetview

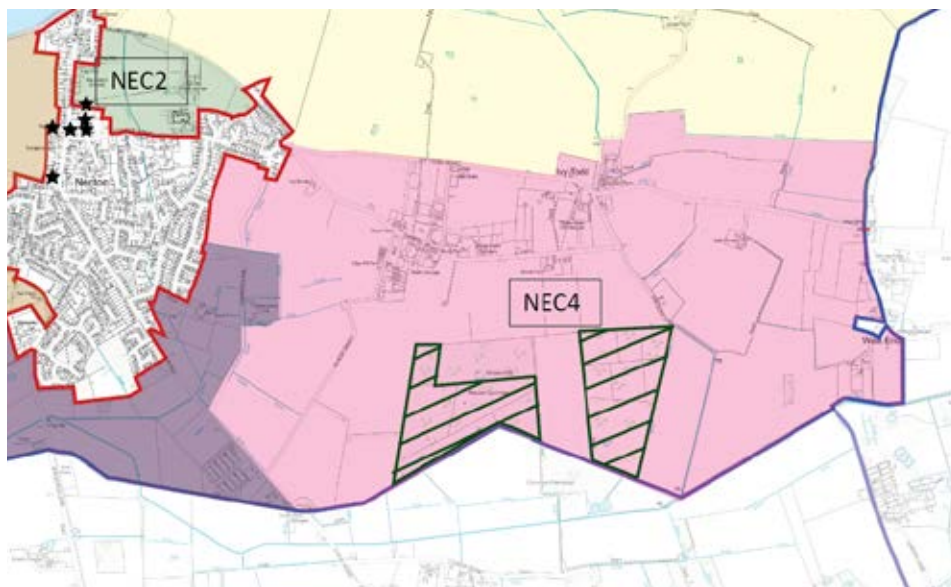


View from A47 towards the south from the far north of NEC3

NEC3 - UPPER PARISH AND NECTON WOOD - Sensitivity and value

	Sensitivity Factor:	Source /Evidence / Indicator	Assessment of sensitivity and value	Management recommendations	Sensitivity H/M/L
LANDSCAPE FACTORS	Physical landscape including vegetation Impact on distinctive topography / water features / significant trees or other vegetation.	<i>OS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	This parcel is sensitive in topographical terms because of its elevated position and openness, boundary removal has created large scale landscape - skylines are vulnerable. The woodlands are features of value.	Avoid any further loss of landscape structure. Plan new woodland planting in response to the substation expansion plans - reflect woodland blocks seen to the northeast corner of the parish	MOD
	Settlement pattern and gateways Fit with historic pattern; prominence of parcel in relation to arrival points; nature of road network	<i>OS maps; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	This area adjoins the settlement boundary only for two short sections. Residential development here, where well related to the boundary, might be acceptable with appropriate mitigation. The majority of the land parcel would be sensitive to built development as it is generally unsettled and new development would be prominent and discordant.	Residential development would be hard to integrate. Acceptable proposals would have to be small scale and well related to settlement pattern.	HIGH
	Local rural landscape character Contribution of parcel and setting to local character and distinctiveness	<i>County and District Character assessment; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	This is a modernised landscape where the straight-sided, late enclosure field network has been amalgamated into an open and large scale arable landscape with some loss of historic character.	Impacts from the substation proposal will potentially be felt over a wide area. Restore landscape structure in this area to make its character more robust.	MOD
	Biodiversity and wildlife Impact on designated features or features with potential value as part of ecological network	<i>Reference to GIS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	Ecological value is generally low in large scale arable landscapes but value lies in Necton Wood and the other small plantations, and along hedges and field margins particularly where they together form connected habitats.	Conserve and restore ecological value in the County Wildlife Site. Create more landscape structure.	MOD
	Historic landscape Landscape as setting to designated heritage features; impacts on Conservation Area; SAMs; etc	<i>Reference to Historic England mapping; site observations.</i>	Area not sensitive to heritage - there are no listed buildings in this area and no views from the Cons. Area. Early OS maps show this area did once have a moated site, west of Lodge Farm, but it seems to have been ploughed over and lost in the 20th century.	No particular recommendations for heritage.	LOW
VISUAL / PERCEPTUAL	Visual prominence Prominence of parcel in general views around the village; impacts to skyline; impacts on any important views;	<i>Site observations and professional judgement relating to visual sensitivity</i>	This area is not easy to see into from the main village, from Ivy Todd Road or from the hamlet itself. The edges of Ivy Todd are well vegetated and prevent views out. But land is elevated so any large scale changes could potentially be visible over a wide area - the northern edges of the villages as well as the carriageway of the A47.	The skylines here will be affected by the large scale substation development. As well as sensitive building design, landscape structure should be increased to provide opportunities for screening and assimilation - new woodland blocks.	MOD
	Visual amenity and perceptions Nature of receptors experiencing visual Impacts; types of experiences perceived	<i>Site observations and professional judgement</i>	Few sensitive receptors as the area is lightly settled and there are no rights of way across it.	Look for opportunities for pedestrian routes and linkages which are lacking in this area.	LOW

NEC4 - IVY TODD, SOUTHERN PARISH AND NECTON COMMON - Character description



Location and underlying landscape type

This is a subtly sloping valleyside landscape that includes a small tributary valley, east of Ivy Todd which adds a little complexity to the slope form. The area lies to the east of the main settlement and includes the hamlets of Chapel Road, Ivy Todd and Mona Hill. NEC4 is in district character area B5.

Topography / hydrology / soils

It is lower lying slopes of the shallow valley between 43 to 53m AOD. Soils are mixed and include some base-rich loamy and clayey soils. Where drainage is impeded straight edged drains take water southwards to the valley floor.

There are also some sandy loams from underlying glacio-fluvial deposits from river terraces which explains the heathlands that were present in past centuries.

Landcover/land use

Simple arrangement of straight-edged fields, narrow network of lanes, and two large blocks of woodland. Farming dominates the landscape and there is a strong, slightly isolated, rural feel. The large farm complex at Claypit Farm dominates the centre of NEC4 and its tall structures provide orientation in the landscape.

Woodland and trees

Woodland in this landscape is focused at Necton Common where it forms a blocks of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland as well as areas of acid grassland.

Scale and enclosure

Backing clusters of settlement, there is fine grain to the landscape and enclosures take the form of small, narrow fields. (The early OS maps show this area, much of it previously common land, organised in a grid of dozens of small straight edged fields.) But away from the settlement edges amalgamation of fields has since created some large arable fields.

This creates a mixed visual experience - there is a sense of enclosure along the hedged lanes, and in the hamlets, which contrasts with the openness experienced in the farmed landscape.

Historic landscape/Time depth

Today's enclosure pattern is mostly the product of the 20th century reorganisation and amalgamation but glimpses into the small scale fields that remain, and grazed river meadows offer a glimpse back in time.

Settlement interfaces and road network

There is a complex network of lanes that cross the landscape linking the main village and Ivy Todd and West End, as well as the farms that are scattered along the lanes and tracks.

NEC4 meets the village west of Ramm's Lane, an area where new developments are changing the character of the village edge bringing some new stark edges.

Perceptual and visual experience/Tranquillity

Strong rural feel in the narrow lanes away from the main village. Sense of tranquillity where modern development is out of sight. Long scenic views over the shallow valley are possible from unhedged lanes, e.g. from Ivy Todd Road over the subtle contours of the valley, to distant wooded horizons.

Indicators of value and rights of way

Mona Hill in Necton Common woodland is a SAM. There are no listed buildings in this area.

There are no designated rights of way but there is a RUPP (Black Drift) as well as permissive paths, that are currently available, between Ivy Todd Lane, Chapel Lane, Ramm's Lane and Hale Road.

Issues / Change pressures

The expected adverse impacts from the proposed Vanguard/Boreas proposal should be properly assessed and mitigated, particularly on residential receptors on Chapel Road and Ivy Todd.

NEC4 - IVY TODD, SOUTHERN PARISH AND NECTON COMMON - Illustrative photos



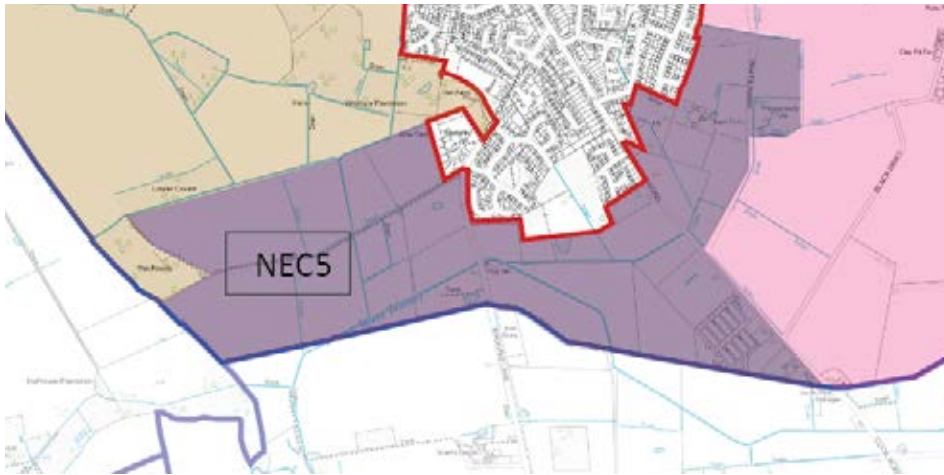
Views from the lanes
around Ivy Todd



NEC4 - IVY TODD, SOUTHERN PARISH AND NECTON COMMON - Sensitivity and value

	Sensitivity Factor:	Source /Evidence / Indicator	Assessment of sensitivity and value	Management recommendations	Sensitivity H/M/L
LANDSCAPE FACTORS	Physical landscape including vegetation Impact on distinctive topography / water features / significant trees or other vegetation.	<i>OS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	Value in this area relates to its subtle valleyside topography which allows long scenic rural views to the south, punctuated regularly by trees and woodland.	Conserve the stock of trees and woodlands. Increase the stock of roadside trees, particularly in areas where they have been removed - e.g. Black Drift.	LOW
	Settlement pattern and gateways Fit with historic pattern; prominence of parcel in relation to arrival points; nature of road network	<i>OS maps; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	Adjoins the main village west of Ramm's Lane, and development pressure here is possible. Edges are straight and modern but settlement usually well assimilated by boundary hedges and trees. Some recent development has stark unvegetated edges. In the hamlets, the scattered settlement pattern and network of lanes is historic and distinctive and sensitive to disruption.	Protect the historic hamlets from expansion. Protect land that forms gaps between the main village and the outlying settlement clusters. Protect the character of the narrow lanes. Ensure new edges are well integrated with native boundary planting of trees and hedges.	MOD
	Local rural landscape character Contribution of parcel and setting to local character and distinctiveness	<i>County and District Character assessment; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	More regularly vegetated than the NEC3 to the north, with better survival of its ancient underlying patterns - the winding narrow lanes, scattered cottages and blocks of woodlands create a strong rural feel and robust character.	Focus any development adjacent to the settlement edge where there is some scope to assimilate.	MOD
	Biodiversity and wildlife Impact on designated features or features with potential value as part of ecological network	<i>Reference to GIS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	Necton Common is a remnant of the large common that once covered a large part of this area. Necton Old Common and Fox Covert are County Wildlife Sites with semi-natural woodland and acidic grassland to the south.	Conserve and restore ecological value in the CWS's. Manage any remnant heathland with traditional methods and avoid encroachment by woodland to promote diversity. Support agri-environment schemes targeting biodiversity improvements.	MOD
	Historic landscape Landscape as setting to designated heritage features; impacts on Conservation Area; SAMs; etc	<i>Reference to Historic England mapping; site observations.</i>	Area not particularly sensitive to built heritage - there are no listed buildings in this area and no views out from the Conservation Area. Views of the church tower are possible from Ramm's Lane and Chapel Road however. There is a SM in the woodland at Necton Common - the remains of a moat and small hill which may at some time have enclosed a structure.	Protect views to the church tower from the approaches to the east.	LOW
VISUAL / PERCEPTUAL	Visual prominence Prominence of parcel in general views around the village; impacts to skyline; impacts on any important views;	<i>Site observations and professional judgement relating to visual sensitivity</i>	This large and often open parcel is visually prominent from the west side of the village, the approach from the south and to the hamlets that lie within it. Sensitivities relate to vulnerable skylines and the sense of openness - impacts of change could potentially be widely experienced - including change in NEC3 to the north from the sub station expansion.	Consider impacts on skylines. Protect views of the church tower.	HIGH
	Visual amenity and perceptions Nature of receptors experiencing visual Impacts; types of experiences perceived	<i>Site observations and professional judgement</i>	Receptors to any visual change would be a mix of sensitive village edge residents and walkers, however, most settlement edges are well vegetated. There are permissive paths around headlands in this area as well as the Black Drift RUP, and the quieter lanes are also used for informal recreation.	Current permissive paths highly valued. Negotiate with land owners to retain some routes in future.	MOD

NEC5 - WISSEY MEADOWLANDS - Character description



Location and underlying landscape type

This is a small character area in the far south of the parish. It covers an area both sides of the Wissey and is bisected by Browns Lane and Hale Road. It comprises the low-lying pastures that flank the small river channel and the tributary streams and drains. NEC5 is in district character area B5.

Topography / hydrology / soils

Sitting between the 38m to 45m contour the area is formed of the flood plain and the lowest slopes of the valley. Soils are mixed. Loamy soils with patches of sandier soils are present and groundwater is naturally high. There are peaty surfaces along the margins of the river.

The fields are divided regularly by drainage ditches that drain into the Wissey. Much of this area is in the EA's Flood Zone (2 and 3).

Landcover/land use

Land is mostly pastoral here as the low water table means it is too seasonally wet for arable cultivation. Meadows in the valley bottom are either grazed and/or growing a hay crop, whilst arable fields begin to appear upslope.

Woodland and trees

There is little woodland, as such, here on the valley floor but fields are fringed with trees, often wet-tolerant species such as alder, willow and tall stands of poplar. The feel is therefore somewhat wooded as views are frequently contained by roadside hedges and regular belts of vegetation. There appear to be areas of woody vegetation and scrub around the southern edges of the village.

Scale and enclosure

Fairly small-scale field patterns prevail in this area, straight sided and geometric. This was likely common land that became enclosed during the parliamentary enclosures - the Historic Landscape Character map for Norfolk shows enclosure was 'late' here, dating from the 18th-19th century.

Historic landscape/Time depth

Time depth is sensed in that the pastoral land use and activities such as hay-making will have been taking place here for centuries - large scale modern farming is not suited to this zone of poorly drained soils.

Settlement interfaces and road network

The area wraps around the indented southern part of the village, either side of Pickenham Road/Browns Lane, and Hale Road, and to the southeast of Chantry Lane around Town Farm. The settlement edges are all modern (C.20th) in origin. Some small enclosures in the far south have been put inside the settlement boundary but are, so far, undeveloped.

The boundaries tend to be well vegetated and well integrated into the landscape - there are few stark edges. Settlement looks inwards and does not have a relationship with the landscape that surrounds it.

The area is regularly crossed by roads and tracks. A poultry production unit sits in the far south.

Perceptual and visual experience/Tranquillity

Away from the main road (Hale Road) and the smaller lanes, which cut through this area north-south, the area projects a sense of quiet tranquillity, however, public access is not available and experience of the landscape is restricted to the roads and the allotments (Holme Hale parish).

Views are short in length and are often hard to experience- roadside hedge soften prevent views into the meadow networks .

Indicators of value and rights of way

Allotments south of the river are designated 'Open Space' in the Local Plan but these are in Holme Hale parish.

There are no rights of way.

Species rich hedgerows and ditches, are important ecological habitats.

Issues / Change pressures

There is substantial pressure for development in the southern village fringes.

NEC5 - WISSEY MEADOWLANDS - Illustrative photos

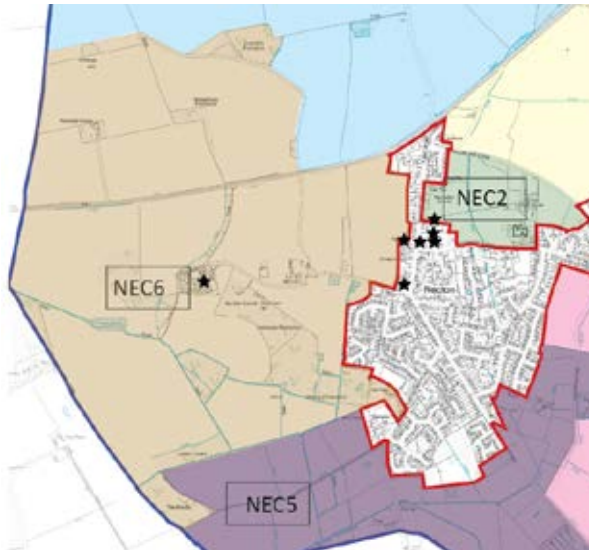


Meadows and streams in the Wissey meadowlands character area.

NEC5 - WISSEY MEADOWLANDS Sensitivity and value

	Sensitivity Factor:	Source /Evidence / Indicator	Assessment of sensitivity and value	Management recommendations	Sensitivity H/M/L
LANDSCAPE FACTORS	Physical landscape including vegetation Impact on distinctive topography / water features / significant trees or other vegetation.	<i>OS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	The value in this area relates to the rare chalk stream channel of the River Wissey, its flood meadows and network of tributary small watercourses, the stock of trees and the resultant habitat networks.	Protect the stock of structural vegetation. Protect and enhance the functions of the flood plain and water quality in the Wissey.	HIGH
	Settlement pattern and gateways Fit with historic pattern; prominence of parcel in relation to arrival points; nature of road network	<i>OS maps; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	Settlement has encroached into the lower valley, below the 45m contour, into the edge of the flood plain. It is small estate development, often laid out along cul-de-sacs. This is divergent from the historic settlement pattern which tends to be scattered and linear and located above the 50m contour. Development pressure continues to be felt in this area. The area provides the setting and experience for approaches to the villages from the south - its character is very distinct from the approach to Necton from the plateau to the north.	Avoid settlement expansion in this area. Protect the traditional grazed floodplain pastures that provide setting to Necton..	MOD
	Local rural landscape character Contribution of parcel and setting to local character and distinctiveness	<i>County and District Character assessment; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	The area has distinctive and scenic valley bottom character, less common than the surrounding interfluvial areas of upper valley side and plateau top. The scale of the landscape is much more fine-grained here with lines of trees along the water courses and small scale fields enduring, often creating a feeling of containment and enclosure.	Avoid development here. Protect the small scale enclosures and character through traditional land management methods e.g. grazing by sheep/cattle and haymaking. (Limit equestrian land use)	HIGH
	Biodiversity and wildlife Impact on designated features or features with potential value as part of ecological network	<i>Reference to GIS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	The Wissey is an important small chalk-fed stream with high ecological potential. Value lies in the network of linked habitats - the streams, ponds, reed lined ditches, traditional meadows, trees and hedges.	Support farmers in initiatives such as Water Sensitive Farming as water quality is sensitive to agricultural run-off.	HIGH
	Historic landscape Landscape as setting to designated heritage features; impacts on Conservation Area; SAMs; etc	<i>Reference to Historic England mapping; site observations.</i>	No built assets in this area. Historic value lies in the generally small scale patterns - unlike the modified and amalgamated landscape upslope, small fields and traditional management endures. There are no listed buildings in this character area.	No particular heritage mitigation required.	LOW
VISUAL / PERCEPTUAL	Visual prominence Prominence of parcel in general views around the village; impacts to skyline; impacts on any important views;	<i>Site observations and professional judgement relating to visual sensitivity</i>	This character area is not visually prominent in views from Necton as it is low lying and regularly vegetated with trees and hedges. It is sensitive as setting to the approach to the village from the south.	Protect views of the meadows that are experienced along the approaches to the village.	MOD
	Visual amenity and perceptions Nature of receptors experiencing visual Impacts; types of experiences perceived	<i>Site observations and professional judgement</i>	There are no ROWS here to offer views. Although the area wraps around the settlement edge, views out into NEC5 from the village are not commonly experienced as there is often substantial intervening vegetation.	Look for opportunities for new pedestrian routes and linkages which are lacking in this area.	LOW

NEC6 - NECTON PARK - Character description



Location and underlying landscape type

Land to the west of the settlement that was formerly laid out as a planned park associated with Necton Hall (since demolished). It lies generally south of the A47 but a small part lies to the north - the patterns here still reflective of its previous life as parkland. South of the A47 it adjoins a large section of the village envelope. NEC6 is in district character area B5.

Topography / hydrology / soils

Very gently sloping valleyside that feels fairly flat. It lies between the 42 to 62m contours. Soils are sandy loams and clay loams. There are some small water bodies, managed by sluices, and natural tributary streams have likely been modified into the drainage ditches seen on today's maps.

Landcover/land use

Today this character area is arable farmland north and south of the A47, interspersed with plantation woodlands, with an estate feel. Hall Farm sits in the centre of the area, surrounded by large scale arable farmland. It has a farmhouse and, to the west, a separate large cluster of modern barns which includes the Listed stable block.

Woodland and trees

The farmland is studded with small woodland plantations and coverts. These are a mix of coniferous plantation and deciduous woodland. These add to the sense of an estate farm character. Old maps show woodland was once much more extensive along the western edge.

Scale and enclosure

This landscape is of moderate to large scale - the fields to the north feel larger in size where hedges are not present. Enclosures are a mix of straight edges and organic forms, shapes that endure from the designed parkland. Smaller more organic shaped enclosures endure in the south of the area.

Historic landscape/Time depth

Hints of the previous parkland character are present in the regularly placed woodlands, straight boundaries and drives, and the estate farm appearance of Hall farm in the centre. The landscape shows both hints of ancient underlying organic patterns - reflected by-curved and irregular edges, as well as modern straightened and organised boundaries, designed into a parkland in the 1800s.

Settlement interfaces and road network

This area interfaces with the west side of Tuns Road which includes the new filling station/services. The straight, modern edge backing Tuns/Hale Road is generally vegetated and well integrated. Settlement here is modern and linear, one plot deep pattern, as it reflects incremental 20th century.

There is also a straight and modern interface with Mason's Drive, also well integrated into the landscape with tree planting - a finger of woodland projects almost into the village north of Pickenham Road.

Settlement looks inwards and has little relationship with the landscape that surrounds it.

Perceptual and visual experience/Tranquillity

The A47 is very busy road and brings a good deal of road noise to the northern part of this character area.

This area is hard to experience but is likely to be quiet. There is no public access so views are limited to the carriageway of the A47 where a glimpse of the impressive stable block is caught. Elsewhere the continuous line of development along the village edge, backed by trees, screens the area from public view.

Indicators of value and rights of way

As well as the heritage value related to the historic parkland, there is value of the Grade II Listed Stable block at Hall farm - but this not visible from village and is just glimpsed by traffic passing along the A47.

There are no rights of way or permissive paths in this area.

Issues / Change pressures

Possible pressure for further commercial land uses along the A47.

NEC6 - NECTON PARK - Illustrative photos



View southwards down North Pickenham Lane (just outside the parish)



View to the church tower from the west (zoomed in view)



View from A47 south towards Hall Farm buildings

NEC6 - NECTON PARK - Sensitivity and value

	Sensitivity Factor:	Source /Evidence / Indicator	Assessment of sensitivity and value	Management recommendations	Sensitivity H/M/L
LANDSCAPE FACTORS	Physical landscape including vegetation Impact on distinctive topography / water features / significant trees or other vegetation.	<i>OS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	This historic designed landscape is the most wooded part of the parish - its stock of small woodlands and water courses is still a key aspect of value, although nearly all the individual parkland trees seen on the 1906 map have been lost.	Protect the woodlands and other remnant parkland features.	MOD
	Settlement pattern and gateways Fit with historic pattern; prominence of parcel in relation to arrival points; nature of road network	<i>OS maps; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	The central parts of the land parcel are well related to the historic core of the village in that they sit at the same elevation. But this area is generally unsettled and just features Hall Farm in its centre. It backs the north western fringes of the village and has value as a large scale farmland setting to the northern gateway to the village. The new service station feels a little stark.	Improve the gateway/approach from the north; integrate the new services with trees/ structural vegetation. Potential pressure for further commercial land use along A47 - ensure any proposals carefully assessed and mitigation proposed.	MOD
	Local rural landscape character Contribution of parcel and setting to local character and distinctiveness	<i>County and District Character assessment; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	The character in this area is as distinctive from the rest of the parish as it was altered and shaped into a designed parkland, now all converted to arable. Although weakened, the parkland character is still legible. Today it has a Breckland estate farm feel.	Protect the historic parkland structure and character.	HIGH
	Biodiversity and wildlife Impact on designated features or features with potential value as part of ecological network	<i>Reference to GIS mapping; Site observations and professional judgement</i>	Value for wildlife will lie in the networks of habitats - small woods, ponds and water courses. There is little value in the open farmlands.	Protect habitat features and look to enhance links.	MOD
	Historic landscape Landscape as setting to designated heritage features; impacts on Conservation Area; SAMs; etc	<i>Reference to Historic England mapping; site observations.</i>	There is one listed buildings in this character area - the stable block at the Old Hall Farm is grade II listed. This is only visible at a distance - there are no rights of way through the old park. The openness of the area means that views to the church tower are possible across NEC6 from the A47.	Protect the listed barn and its setting as rare surviving remnant of the built heritage that was once found at Necton Hall. Look for opportunities for pedestrian routes and linkages which are lacking in this area. Protect views to the Church tower.	MOD
VISUAL / PERCEPTUAL	Visual prominence Prominence of parcel in general views around the village; impacts to skyline; impacts on any important views;	<i>Site observations and professional judgement relating to visual sensitivity</i>	Land in the south of NEC6 is not easily seen as it screened behind woodland blocks and a tight village edge prevents views out. In the north, land beside the A47 is prominent and visually sensitive as the landscape is large scale and open. Views across to the church tower are possible from the A47. Skylines would be vulnerable on the open parts of the parcel.	Protect views to landmarks/heritage features that provide sense of place and aid orientation.	MOD
	Visual amenity and perceptions Nature of receptors experiencing visual Impacts; types of experiences perceived	<i>Site observations and professional judgement</i>	There are no ROWS here to offer views. Views into NEC6 from main village are not easily experienced owing to a lack of gaps in the tight development form. A small number of dwellings on Tuns Road would be sensitive to change from rear elevations only. Any change in the north of the area could be easily perceived by traffic on the A47.	Change/development in the north could be visually prominent - ensure any proposals carefully assessed and mitigation proposed. Development in the south could be more easily assimilated within mature landscape structure.	MOD

9. Summary

1. Necton has a subtly varied landscape setting with both open, elevated plateau tops and enclosed, lower-lying valley bottom meadows. A gently rolling, partly wooded valleysides lies in between and it is here on the valley sides that the historic settlement became focused.
2. Right up until the 1950s Necton was a small, scattered, settlement with farmsteads and cottages clustering along the network of lanes. The second half of the 20th century saw substantial change. The old village became subsumed beneath the modern estates and cul de sacs which comprehensively filled in between the network of lanes, to create a dense, nucleated village form. Another big change was brought about by the completion of the A47 which caused traffic to bypass the village, permanently altering the street pattern.
3. The village does retain a small historic focus, centred on listed buildings including the church and Church Farm, and the Victorian reading rooms opposite, the Conservation Area focuses around the junction of School Road and Hale/Tuns Road. This area is the most distinctive part of the village and the Church tower is a notable skyline feature in the wider landscape. Further distinctive buildings are nearby on Mill Lane including the base of the old windmill and the Windmill pub. There is some Victorian architecture but it is not always evident, tucked away in between modern suburban style housing.
4. The resulting main village is quite 'inward' looking and the rural landscape is rarely able to interact with the streetscape - only in a few locations, such as along School Road, east of the Rectory, or on Tuns road adjacent to the recreation ground, does the countryside have an influence on sense of place. In these places, those views become particularly important and sensitive to loss. The historic parkland character of the farmland around Hall Farm, for example, has little impact on the main village - views out to the west are all but impossible from the village.
5. Therefore, today, the main impression to those passing through Necton is of a predominantly modern village. The new Coop filling station and coffee drive-thru, at the A47 junction, and the modern housing opposite further confound any sense of a historic settlement, an issue which the Neighbourhood Plan may wish to address.
6. Elsewhere, the smaller cluster of settlement at Chapel Road and Ivy Todd, retain more of their historic character and have much stronger relationship with the countryside and its agricultural functions. - The farms and cottages are served by a network of winding lanes and here small-scale historic field systems endure and countryside flows all around the clusters and long views across modernised but rural landscape are possible.
7. Landscape value is strongest where there is an interaction between the natural chalk river system of the Wissey catchment and the other linked habitats - reed-lined ditches, woodland and hedge networks. As well as having ecosystem functions, biodiversity value and shows historic continuity in terms of land management, it forms a distinctive area of landscape character, rare in East Anglia. The remnant pieces of common and the designed parklands are also distinctive and valued at a local scale.
8. Value is lessened where historic patterns have been lost, and expansive mono-cultural arable farmlands prevail - these are less locally distinctive and are repeated across mid Norfolk.
9. Future management changes should focus on protection of the most distinctive and valued landscapes elements, ensure new development is integrated into the landscape with native vegetation and achieve effective mitigation for the sub-station expansion that is sympathetic to the character of the valleyside.
10. The following guidance is recommended:
 - Conserve the landscape setting of Necton, in particular the aspects of value that are identified in this assessment.
 - Ensure that future development does not cause the coalescence of its separate settlement clusters
 - New development should be well related to the main settlement. Detailed analysis of the potential landscape and impacts of any proposals should be subject to site specific assessment.
 - New development should be designed to the highest standards, using local materials that fit sympathetically with the local vernacular. Refer to AECOM's Necton Design Code.
 - Residential units should be delivered at densities that reflect those found in neighbouring areas. Prominent new rooflines must be avoided by generally limiting development to two storeys and by limiting storey heights. The scale of new buildings must not be noticeably greater than in neighbouring areas. Proposals for dwellings of three storeys will require strong justification and evidence that no significant harm will result.
 - In larger developments break up rooflines internally by creating space for 'forest scale' trees with appropriate foundation design, as needed, to enable this.

- Avoid standardised residential plot planting schemes with excessive use of ornamental species. Propose boundary treatments (walls, fences and hedges) that reflect the local character, inappropriate boundary treatments can have a substantial negative effect.
- Ensure adequate resources are planned for, and made available, to ensure successful establishment and on going management of structural planting schemes. Do not allow structural boundary planting to be conveyed to new residents. They should be managed strategically.
- Rigorously applied highway standards can have a sizeable adverse impact in rural areas. Use discretion to limit their application particularly where new access points are created onto existing roads. A minimal approach to lighting, signage, concrete kerbing, safety railings is recommended.
- Retain and enhance existing vegetative features as much as possible, particularly intact hedgerow and trees, as well as existing features such as ditches. Any unavoidable loss of trees or hedges must be more than adequately offset by new planting which should seek to restore local landscape character.
- Consider the perimeter of new developments very carefully. Avoid hard edges directly onto open farmland which create a stark interface. Landscaped buffers are generally desirable to help developments integrate and are expected to be substantial enough to mitigate negative impacts. They should comprise predominantly native species. However, screening planting should not be regarded as a substitute for well-designed developments.
- Ensure that the species proposed in new structural vegetation is locally appropriate to character.
- Do not allow surface water attenuation basins to fill public open spaces and render them unusable. Creative solutions to SUDS should be required rather than allowing developers to revert to the cheapest options for water attenuation. SUDS schemes should be properly integrated so that high quality, usable public spaces result.
- Identify sites of high biodiversity value and plan for links to create larger, contiguous networks. Developments must soon achieve Net Gain. Where this is not achievable on site, opportunities in the wider parish could be identified.
- Control the use of visually intrusive and unnecessary lighting or signage. Design any needed with simple forms and appropriate local materials so that are well integrated within the surrounding landscape.
- Mitigation of the major infrastructure (Boreas and Vanguard) is very important. The latest is the Secretary of State has asked for this to be properly considered through Independent Design Review.
- Improve the entrance to the village from the north. Better integrate the commercial land use at the new A47 services with structural planting. .
- Gaps in the Rights of Way network are an obvious issue to address. Public access is limited and generally informal (permissive). This is not easy to change but is an aspiration to improve. A starting point could be the DEFRA supported permissive paths - some of which could be made permanent. Improving health and well-being could be a focus for the negotiation with landowners, using the Neighbourhood Plan as a vehicle.
- From the results of the questionnaire, residents would like the village to retain its character with trees and green spaces a priority. Green spaces that play a role in defining sense of place that are seen from the streetscape should be protected.
- Address the flooding issue in the lowest parts of the village as referenced in the ideas for improvement. in the AECOM Design Code document.
- New farm buildings should not be located close to roads - they are characteristically placed back from roads and seen in the middle distance, backed by trees.
- Avoid harm to the mapped important views. Although this does not mean that additional views or other elements or attributes of setting do not also merit protection and consideration.