

## Planned Fenlands

### Landscape Sensitivity & Change

This landscape is a flat peaty plain lying at or below sea level with only the roads rising as causeways a metre or two above it. It has deep peat soils with desiccating upper layers.

The Planned Fenlands are a vast open and uncluttered landscape, in which there is a feeling of extreme exposure and great distance. These distances are emphasised by the straight roads, uncluttered by development, and open dykes without trees stretching off towards the horizon.

The land is mainly settled with individual farms within their own lands, often set back from the main roads that are usually raised above the surrounding land. There are very few clusters of settlement.

Although there are few trees in the Planned Fenlands, the limited numbers of tree lines here do have a disproportionate to visual significance. This is because these trees are visible over such long distances.

In this expansive open landscape isolated agricultural buildings and farmsteads are prominent against the background of a constantly changing sky with vast cloudscapes.

Despite being an open landscape, large agricultural buildings and wind turbines can be absorbed, to an extent, into the Planned Fenland; this is because of its scale and visual simplicity, which is its defining feature.

The southern part of this landscape as it has been mapped in the Landscape Character Assessment is transitional with the adjoining Settled Fenland landscape type. Therefore in some locations, such as in The Delph or south of the vegetable packing station on the A1110 Burnt Fen Turnpike for example, it may be necessary to refer to the guidance for the Settled rather than the Planned Fenlands.

### Key Forces for Change

- Development of large agricultural and food processing buildings in open countryside.
- Development of wind turbines.
- Soil shrinkage and drop of levels due to the desiccation of the former fens.
- Large-scale land management for wildlife conservation.

### Development Management

#### **Large scale agricultural and food processing buildings in open countryside**

The siting, form, orientation and colour of these buildings can make a considerable

contribution to mitigating their impact. Particularly where these are associated with farmsteads, it is usually appropriate to extend or enhance planting.

If the new building is isolated and not associated with a farmstead it may still be possible to design an appropriate planting scheme to mitigate the visual impact of the development, however it is essential that these schemes are commensurate with the scale of the development *and the scale of the landscape* in the Planned Fenlands. In such cases it may be more appropriate to modify the colour and form of the building design so that it partially blends with the sky in this visually simple landscape, rather than to attempt to screen large isolated buildings, such as food processing plants, with planting.

#### **Development of large-scale wind turbines**

These developments have a significant local visual impact that cannot be effectively ameliorated. The very large scale of this landscape means that these large structures can be accommodated to some extent. However, because of their size they can have a significant and detrimental impact on adjacent more sensitive landscapes. Furthermore, because of the very long distance views available here, cumulative impacts and the creation of a “wind turbine landscape” is a significant risk that should be effectively assessed and controlled. Studies such as that undertaken for Fenland District Council on capacity and sensitivity provide useful guidance for developers and planners working in this landscape.

#### **Maintain the open nature of this landscape**

Avoid the visual intrusion of small-scale clutter associated with developments and infrastructure to help maintain the open exposed nature and scale of this landscape. Tree lines should be maintained and replanted as required to act as windbreaks to help reduce soil movement. Roadsides outside areas of settlement should generally be kept free of planting.

### **Land Management Guidelines**

- Restore and maintain the historic pattern of the regular dyke network.
- Restore and maintain the limited network of tree belts in the Planned Fenlands.
- Maintain the condition and habitat diversity of the dyke network with sympathetic management.
- Develop and deliver effective schemes for the re-creation of undrained fen habitats where appropriate.