

Review of Isle of Axholme Historic Landscape Character Assessment

Final

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North Lincolnshire Council

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This report describes work commissioned by North Lincolnshire Council. Matt Amy and Louise Martin of JBA Consulting carried out this work.

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Purpose

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1 Introduction

JBA Consulting were commissioned by North Lincolnshire Council to complete a high-level review of the Isle of Axholme Historic Landscape Character (HLC) study (Miller 1997), which forms the evidence base for Local Plan Policy LC14 (2003), and the later Lincolnshire HLC study (LHLC 2011). The aim of this review is to assess the continuing validity of Miller's HLC character areas and types, highlight areas of change within Local Plan Policy Area LC14 and determine whether the document should remain part of the Local Plan evidence base. Recommendations for revisions to these studies are also presented.

The main objectives of this project were to:

- Summarise the context and methodology of the original studies, highlighting where the original reports identified limitations;
- Map the HLC areas/types with the boundary for Local Plan Policy LC14 and OS base mapping;
- Collate the data for HLC types from both surveys for Policy Area LC14;
- Identify any key changes to the areas/types within the LC14 Policy area;
- Complete site visits to assess these changes and groundtruth information collated from documentary and online sources;
- Summarise how relevant the previous HLC studies remain within the current landscape context for Policy Area LC14; and
- Identify any key recommendations for further review or revisions to the studies.

This work was carried out by Matt Amy and Louise Martin of JBA Consulting on behalf of North Lincolnshire Council (NLC).

2 Context and Background

The Isle of Axholme is an area of raised ground in an otherwise flat landscape in this part of North Lincolnshire. The area has been of importance for its well-preserved historic landscape and was noted as having one of the largest areas of preserved medieval strip fields in the UK (Miller 1997, 1).

The area is known as the Isle of Axholme as it was originally bordered by four rivers and due to regular flooding was largely only accessible by boat. The area was subject to extensive draining in the 1620's (Miller 1997, 28) and modern farming practices introduced, however, many farmers on the Isle of Axholme itself, disregarded these modern developments and continued farming communally in strips (Miller 1997, 30). This led to a unique landscape which was largely devoid of the boundaries and enclosures seen in most of the country. Combined with the nature of the area as raised ground, the open landscape contrasts starkly with the surrounding areas of early and recent enclosed fields.

The area was chosen to form part of an early use of HLC assessment by Miller in 1997 and was assessed again in 2011 as part of a larger scheme to map the HLC of Lincolnshire as a whole.

2.1 Local Planning Policy

The North Lincolnshire Local Plan was adopted in May 2003 and was replaced by the Local Development Framework in 2011. The 2003 Local Plan identified the unique character of the Isle of Axholme, in particular the medieval open strip fields and Turbaries, which are of national importance. The Local Plan states *'These attributes together with enclosed land and the overall settlement pattern of the area make it unique in the country. It is essential therefore that future development is not allowed to adversely impact on this valuable historic resource. This is particularly so in relation to the character of settlements and to individual buildings or overall groups of buildings in the open countryside'* (NLC 2003, 185).

There are saved policies from the 2003 Local Plan which concern the historic environment and landscape which include:

LC14 - Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest

The Isle of Axholme is designated as an area of Special Historic Landscape Interest. Within this area, development will not be permitted which would destroy, damage or adversely affect the character, appearance or setting of the historic landscape, or any of its features. Development required to meet the social and economic needs of rural communities and small scale tourist and outdoor sport and recreational development will be permitted provided such development is related to the historic landscape and its features. A high standard of design and siting in new development will be required reflecting the traditional character of buildings in the area and the character of the historic landscape, and using materials sympathetic to the locality. Schemes to improve, restore or manage the historic landscape will be sought in connection with, and commensurate with the scale of, any new development affecting the area of Special Historic Landscape Interest.

The Local Plan was replaced by the current North Lincolnshire Core Strategy which was adopted in June 2011 and forms part of the Local Development Framework. Section seven of the Core Strategy makes reference to preserving the historic character of the area and specifically the strip fields and turbaries along with the historic villages such as Epworth in area LC14 (NLC 2011, 58). Planning policy relevant to area LC14 and the historic environment are detailed in Section CS6: Historic Environment, which states:

The council will promote the effective management of North Lincolnshire's historic assets through:

- *Safeguarding the nationally significant medieval landscapes of the Isle of Axholme (notably the open strip fields and turbaries) and supporting initiatives which seek to realise the potential of these areas as a tourist, educational and environmental resource.*
- *Preserving and enhancing the rich archaeological heritage of North Lincolnshire*
- *Ensuring that development within Epworth (including schemes needed to exploit the economic potential of the Wesleys or manage visitors) safeguards and, where possible, improves the setting of buildings associated with its Methodist heritage.*
- *Ensuring that development within North Lincolnshire's Market Towns safeguards their distinctive character and landscape setting, especially Barton upon Humber, Crowle and Epworth.*

The council will seek to protect, conserve and enhance North Lincolnshire's historic environment, as well as the character and setting of areas of acknowledged importance including historic buildings, conservation areas, listed buildings (both statutory and locally listed), registered parks and gardens, scheduled ancient monuments and archaeological remains.

All new development must respect and enhance the local character and distinctiveness of the area in which it would be situated, particularly in areas with high heritage value.

Development proposals should provide archaeological assessments where appropriate.

The North Lincolnshire Local Plan is currently under review and has reached preferred Options stage. A draft plan scheduled to be completed in 2020 with adoption of a new Local Plan in 2021 (NLC 2020). This report will form part of the evidence base for updating the Core Strategy/Local Plan documents. In order to protect the special historical characteristics and landscape character types of The Isle of Axholme identified through the 1997 and 2011 studies a Preferred Policy is being proposed (HE2p). The Local Plan includes allocation of land in Epworth and Haxey, in addition to development limit changes for

several settlements' areas of importance within LC14. These sensitive areas will require further assessment before any allocation/changes are implemented.

Policy HE2p: Area of Special Historic Landscape Interest states:

The Isle of Axholme is designated as an area of Special Historic Landscape Interest.

Within this area, development will not be permitted which would destroy, damage or adversely affect the character, appearance or setting of the historic landscape, or any of its features.

Development required to meet the social and economic needs of rural communities and small scale tourist and outdoor sport and recreational development will be permitted provided such development is related to the historic landscape and its features.

A high standard of design and siting in new development will be required reflecting the traditional character of buildings in the area and the character of the historic landscape, and using materials sympathetic to the locality.

Schemes to improve, restore or manage the historic landscape will be sought in connection with, and be appropriate with the scale of, any new development affecting the area of Special Historic Landscape Interest.

3 Summary of Reports

3.1 Miller 1997

Overview

A comprehensive and targeted HLC survey was undertaken in 1997 by Keith Miller on behalf of the Countryside Commission in order to create a framework for future management of the landscapes in the area of the Isle of Axholme. This report also served the purpose of acting as a national pilot study to test the methodology of HLC assessment and its application to relatively small areas (Miller 1997, 1). In completing this survey, Miller not only listed the different landscape types contained in the area but also undertook extensive research to provide a detailed background of their history, distinguishing attributes, condition and survival, visibility and contribution to the landscape character, rarity and recommendations for conservation management. Whilst undertaken over 20 years ago this report is still viewed as the definitive and authoritative document on the Isle of Axholme.

Character Types Identified

Miller attributed a total of six different HLC types within the LC14 area:

- Designed/ornamental (parklands)
- Early Enclosed Land (EEL)
- Areas of Open Strip Field (AOSF)
- Moorland Allotments (MA)
- Raised Mire and Turbary (RM&T)
- Recently Enclosed Land (REL)
- Riverside Area of Open Strip Field (Riverside AOSF)

A further two types, Industrial and Transport were designated by Miller but not attributed to the LC14 area.

A significance focus of the report was on areas of open strip fields (AOSF), which are a rare survival of the characteristic land use of the area and were considered to be the most at risk of encroachment by development and changes in farming practices.

The strength of the Miller study of 1997 is in its descriptions of the significance of the individual character types as well as the historic landscape as a whole. This makes it a very useful document in conjunction with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in assessing the significance, setting and impacts on the historic landscape and protecting it from development which would adversely affect this.

Miller's survey describes the landscape in terms of its historical origins and associations. Pockets of existing development within the field type did not define his character types, but if allowed to proliferate would begin to erode the character.

3.2 Lincolnshire HLC 2011 (LHLC)

Overview

In 2011, a county wide HLC study was completed as part of the Lincolnshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project funded by Historic England. As a county wide study its focus was on providing a more generalised study, without a specific focus of the Isle of Axholme.

This assessment followed the approach to HLC studies and attribution of character types consolidated since the 1990s and used in other studies around the country completed by English Heritage. It used the character types seen in neighbouring counties as a basis to which further types were added (LHLC 2011, 5). A particular point is made within the report that this study had the benefit of utilising the knowledge gained from around the country as Lincolnshire was one of the last areas to undertake a project of this type (LHLC 2011, 5). Two project officers based in the Lincolnshire County HER completed the work.

The study utilised aerial photographs, historic mapping, documentary research and site visits to confirm the character types (LHLC 2011, 6). Further to the designation of parcels of land to character types, this study also listed previous land uses for each parcel (LHLC 2011, 6). This allows further information for each parcel to be gleaned, especially useful in areas where the historic character is no longer visible.

Character Types Identified

In total the study attributed the following 34 different character types to the land in the area covered by LC14. Along with the field types, similar to those identified by Miller, this report also designated areas of development into different types and industries.

- Ancient Enclosure
- Artificial Open Water
- Brick and Tile Works
- Cemeteries
- Clay Pit
- Detached Housing (c18th C)
- Detached Housing (c19thC)
- Detached Housing (c20th C)
- Educational
- Estate Field
- Golf Course
- Historic Settlement Core
- Isolated Farmstead
- Nature Reserves
- Nurseries
- Orchards
- Other Factory
- Other Industrial Works
- Parliamentary Planned Enclosure
- Planned Residential Development
- Plantation Woodland
- Pre 1960s Semi Detached Housing
- Private Planned Enclosure
- Re-organised Piecemeal Enclosure
- Recreational Ground
- Religious

- Junction
- Leisure
- Livestock Rearing
- Modern Fields
- Strip Fields
- Terrance Housing (c20th)
- Village Farmstead
- Warehouse and Distribution

As a purely mapping project, the 2011 study can be utilised in places to provide some updates to the mapping from Millers 1997 study, however it is limited to this purpose. The 2011 study specifically states that it did not seek to define the significance, setting or impacts on the landscape types, it therefore does not have the same weight within the planning framework.

4 Methodology

The data for the two studies was imported into GIS software and mapped onto the area covered by Local Plan Policy LC14 (Appendix A, Figures 1 and 2). As the LC14 area as whole is almost 92km² it was determined in consultation with the Historic Environment Team at North Lincolnshire Council to use the types defined by Miller's 1997 study to split the LC14 area into separate land parcels for study. In total there are 27 parcels of land which are numbered and assigned to their type according to Miller (Appendix A, Figure 1). Further maps were also produced to show areas seen to have changed from aerial mapping (Appendix A, Figure 3) and to overlay Miller's areas onto the 2011 study (Appendix A, Figure 4).

A desk-based assessment of the land parcels was completed using aerial mapping and readily available online historic OS-maps, compared to the maps created for the 1997 and 2011 surveys to determine areas where there may have been changes in land use or landscape character. The study area was visited on the 3rd of September 2020 by Matt Amy and Louise Martin of JBA Consulting. The purpose of this visit was to ground truth the possibly changes seen in the desk-based research and assess the visible characteristics of each type at ground level. Photographs taken during this site visit are included as plates and referred to in the text (Appendix C).

Limitation in timeframe for this project did not allow the full area to be investigated during the site visit or detailed map regression performed to fully understand the changes in field use over time. Only limited areas of potential change were selected to make best use of time and historic maps consulted in a few cases to confirm these changes where appropriate.

The definition, key attributes, significance, sensitivity, limitations of assessment and recommendations for each of the 1997 HLC types is described in Table B1, Appendix B and is drawn from Miller's original report (1997). Each of the 27 land parcels level of current survival is described with reference to Miller's key distinguishing features in a table (Table B2, Appendix B). Any suggestions for updating to a new type are listed along with reference to the 2011 survey where appropriate.

5 Results

The results are presented in a table included as Appendix B. A summary of the assessment of each landscape character zone as described by Miller (1997) is presented in Sections 5.1-5.6.

5.1 Areas of Open Strip Fields (AOSF) and Riverside Areas of Open Strip Fields (Riverside AOSF) - Areas 1-9

Miller identified nine parcels of these landscape types across the LC14 Policy area. From the initial desk-based study it was seen that the parcels survive to a large degree and that Millers study remains valid. Extended areas such as those running along the spine of the Isle of Axholme ridge appeared to be in relatively good condition, with large open fields,

devoid of visible boundaries such as hedges or trees. The s-shaped boundaries between plots also appeared to survive well in most places and add much to the character of the area.

The 2011 study identified considerable expanses of these areas to now be Modern Fields. Whilst these fields are no longer farmed in strips, the change in use does not necessarily detract from its historic character as former strip fields. Where no straight boundaries have been introduced between these plots the historic open character is often preserved.

The site visit confirmed that whilst the fields are no longer farmed in thin strips, the landscape remains open with legible historic features. Close inspection of these areas showed that they often retain s-shaped boundaries and the lack of hedges and visible boundaries is stark. The 'stripey' character of the land as mentioned by Miller is no longer apparent, although this is not unexpected given the use of modern farming techniques. Whilst the strip field method of farming is no longer legible, the open landscape identified by Miller, which characterises this type, are still in the main preserved and valid, with little loss of the overall character recorded by Miller.

The trackways or meres, and public footpaths across the areas are described by Miller (1997, 39) as another of the defining characteristics of the AOSF zone. These were found to be largely well preserved and maintained and still appear to be well used by the local community (Plate 2). The maintenance of these footpaths is communal and an important but less visible characteristic of the historic landscape.

The study did identify a number of changes in the Riverside areas (Areas 7, 8 and 9). These fields have been amalgamated into very large fields, sown with cereal crops. The s-shapes and former strips are not visible in most areas, unless the crop has been cut on the line of a former boundary (Plate 1). Visibility of the strips is more difficult to comprehend in this area due to the flat nature of the land, whilst the strips and s-shapes are more apparent on the hillsides of the raised area of the Isle of Axholme. This is in line with the descriptions in LHLC (2011, 16) and Miller (1997, 46) that the biggest drivers for change were amalgamations of fields and the sowing of crops for cereals and biofuels.

Some small areas close to the settlements of Epworth and Haxey have been encroached upon by housing and paddocks since the 1997 and 2011 assessments (Plate 3). Whilst development in these areas has caused a limited reduction in the areas of strip fields themselves, it also blocks views of the landscape from roads and villages. When driving along the A161 only partial views are visible due to increases in hedges and buildings along this road. Some areas such as a small enclosure to the east of Epworth (Plate 4) also show the planting of hedges and trees to surround paddocks which are very recent. These small enclosures in the middle of the large open strip fields will become more apparent over time and clash with the overall character of the landscape.

5.2 Early Enclosed Land (EEL) - Areas 10-14

This character type forms large areas which fringe the spine of Areas of Strip Fields (AOSF) running along the Isle of Axholme. Miller described them as acting as almost a barrier between the older open strip fields and the Recently Enclosed Land (REL) further afield (Miller 1997, 55). Their key characteristics are small enclosures with hedges and ditches acting as boundaries. They are often irregular in shape when compared to more recent enclosures. The site visit found that this type has been most affected by changes in modern farming practices. The stark contrast mentioned by Miller between EEL and the open strip fields appears to be less apparent in places today. Modern changes to these EEL fields have made them larger and more open through significant boundary loss which reduces the visual impact. This is more apparent on the east side of the Isle with far reaching views showing relatively few boundaries and hedges (Plate 5).

Miller attributed areas 10-14 to early enclosed land with small enclosures. However, the 2011 survey attributes the majority of it to later parliamentary enclosure and modern fields, likely because of the larger field size (Appendix A, Figure 2). Miller acknowledged

that one of the limitations of this character type being that it is almost indistinguishable from REL, perhaps, accounting for the 2011 characterisation. Further documentary research, was recommended by Miller and taking forward a more detailed study of sources such as historic mapping may provide the additional detail to delineate the character types from one another and assess change, in particular where boundaries such as hedges, dykes and drains have been preserved and/or lost.

The character type remains valid as a whole and large parcels remain across the LC14 area, most noticeable to the west. The smaller enclosures of this type provide the contrast to the AOSF type which is so characteristic of the Isle of Axholme, making it worthy of protection as one of its most valuable landscape features.

5.3 Moorland Allotments (MA) – Areas 15-18

Miller identified four small parcels of this type in the west of the LC14 area and are characterised by long, narrow allotted plots. The 2011 survey did not record these character types instead mapping them as Modern Fields and Detached Housing. These character types are particularly prone to change, when smallholder cottages are replaced by larger dwellings and allotments are subdivided (A Williams pers. comm.).

Such vulnerability to change was identified in this study, with Area 15 (Low Closes) observed through aerial mapping as being enclosed into small, triangular plots with hedge boundaries. However, these changes are historic with Ordnance Survey mapping showing the triangular plots were created between 1956-71 and also follow the lines of historic trackways which ran through the allotments, alluding to their historic character. Area 18 (Haxey) appears from aerial mapping to have been enclosed into modern fields, they are rectangular or square in shape and no longer contain the characteristic of moorland allotments. Both these areas were never settled and developed by smallholder in the way that Stockholes Turbary (Area 16) and Epworth Turbary (Alison Williams pers comm), which possibility resulted in the changes identified.

In contrast, Area 16 is still labelled on maps as 'Stockholes Turbary' and the aerial mapping shows that small plots are still in existence, although modern development includes a number of extensions to the original cottages. Area 17 is still shown on mapping as 'Epworth Turbary' and the long, narrow plots are still visible from the aerial imagery. Similar to Area 16, there has been some encroachment by through modern development, with the long narrow plots in the western extent of the parcel being altered to squares with a large detached building surrounded by trees. Both 'Stockholes Turbary' and 'Epworth Turbary' have good examples of original cottages, along with some extended examples, which are characteristic of the Moorland Allotment type and should be protected in particular from further change to protect the historic character of these areas.

The site visit confirmed the conclusions from the aerial mapping that whilst there is survival of these character types in Areas 15 and 16 there has been some small scale encroachment and adaptation of the boundaries (Area 15), however the character type is still legible and worthy of protection. In Areas 17 and 18 the aerial mapping undertaken as part of this study has revealed that they have seen some development from rebuilding and extension of the original cottages present on the allotments, and that their historic character as moorland allotments is under threat (Plate 6). Many of these developments appeared to be of recent origin and appear to be large detached houses, although the aerial mapping shows that the former boundaries of the allotments have been respected and retained in places, retaining the legibility of these character types in the landscape. The extensions to a small number of properties do not detract from the character types legibility as a whole and only further serves to highlight the importance of protecting the original cottages character in future.

5.4 Raise Mire and Turbaries (RM &T) – Areas 19-21

Miller identified three parcels of turbaries within the LC14 area which are characterised by small heathland areas used historically for cutting peat. The southernmost parcel (Area 21) has been quarried, as recorded by Miller in 1997 where sand extraction was identified as a vulnerability. The quarry appears to have expanded further since the 2011 mapping and the quarried areas are now left as large ponds. The other two parcels identified in 1997 (Areas 19 and 20), are now nature reserves, with Area 19 being shown as a nature reserve on the 1987 Ordnance Survey mapping. The open heathland and exposed peat cuttings which characterised this type are no longer visible from aerial imagery and the site visit identified they are now populated by woodland, largely made up of silver birch (Plate 7). The woodland protects the legibility for the historic character type and contains earthwork features of historic peat cutting or retting on the turbarry.

5.5 Recently Enclosed Land (REL) – Areas 22-25

Broad swathes of the lowland area surrounding the Isle of Axholme are made up of this character type. Miller defines the type as being land enclosed in the post-medieval period, including both modern and Parliamentary enclosures. The 2011 study distinguishes between these types. The REL is characterised by large enclosed blocks with regular straight lines and right angles. The fields are divided by ditches and occasional larger drains and dykes. As modern farming practices have become more widely adopted, boundaries have been removed and smaller enclosures amalgamated into larger fields. Miller's designation as a type remains valid and the 2011 survey has rather refined the historic origins of the zone.

5.6 Design and Ornamental (Design) – Areas 26 and 27

Only two areas of this type were described in the 1997 study, both located to the northern area of LC14 Policy Area. The first (Area 26) is the golf course to the north of the M180 which is confirmed by aerial mapping as still present. The second (Area 27) was the area of a former country house and gardens known as Temple Belwood and Gardens. The site visit showed that this area is now a farmhouse and paddocks surrounded by modern fields (Plate 8). It is characterised in the 2011 survey as partially former estate fields and the remaining modern fields. Whilst the landscape character of Temple Gardens is no longer recognisable and part of the former estate/designed landscape part of which has been lost by the M18 bisecting through the area, however, the historic character of designed landscape is still legible through the retention of some boundaries of the landscape. The site visit identified a garden wall in the Temple Gardens, identified behind vegetation and whilst this wall appeared to have been repointed or rebuilt, it aligns with structures shown on historic mapping, indicating vestiges of the former designed landscape survive within this character type.

5.7 Other Types

A number of types were mapped as part of the 2011 survey including quarrying, industries such as brick and tile works, clay pits, factories, industrial works and warehouse/distribution. Whilst these were not mapped individually, they are all contained within Recently Enclosed Land mapped by Miller. Quarrying was seen by the site visit to have increased in areas such as Area 21 which is currently in use.

6 Validity of Previous Miller Report

6.1 Miller 1997

The 1997 report formed an early example of HLC study and was compiled following extensive study and application of local knowledge of the LC14 Policy Area. It provides a comprehensive insight into the background, heritage significance, rarity and risks

associated with each character type, when compared with the 2011 study where a solely descriptive approach was applied. It mapped the important characteristics of the Isle of Axholme landscape and outlined distinguishing features which have proven invaluable for the compilation of this review.

Whilst it was undertaken over 20 years ago and as expected, some change has occurred in the intervening years since this study, the work remains a valuable and valid evidence base for the historic landscape of the Isle of Axholme. It provides a detailed history of the area, its unique value and national importance. Some encroachment by developments has occurred in small areas since 2011, though this is minor.

7 Discussion and Recommendations

The two HLC studies reviewed here are based on different methodologies for defining and describing historic landscape character. Miller's report provides the most in depth study of the Isle of Axholme landscape yet completed. It is a very valuable document for its detailed background of the history, development and emphasis on the value of the character of the Isle of Axholme. Miller describes the Isle as 'the most varied survival of open-field strip-cultivation in the country' and many of the threats to this landscape have been seen by this survey to be present today (Miller 1997, 1). The report therefore remains a valid document for the ongoing protection of the area from these threats.

The later 2011 survey completed as part of a larger HLC study for the county as a whole labelled many land parcels as modern fields which were previously mapped in 1997 as AOSF or EEL by Miller. Miller notes that the EEL type and REL types are almost indistinguishable and only detailed analysis of historic mapping can identify the ages of the boundaries. Further research would be required to understand if mistakes have been made and these land parcels have been erroneously interpreted in 2011.

The two reports are perhaps best utilised in conjunction with each other. Miller's report provides comprehensive descriptions which contribute to a greater understanding of the character types, whilst the 2011 mapping includes some updates due to minor encroachment by development and field amalgamation.

Some changes appear to have occurred since the 1997 and 2011 surveys were completed. Some land parcels uses have changed and site surveys completed for this review have shown that amalgamation of the early enclosures and strip fields is having an effect on the character of the area. Housing developments have encroached in some smaller areas of former strip fields and housing extensions within the turbaries have had some change, though their historic character is still legible in their boundaries. The Moorland Allotment type is particularly vulnerable to change from the demolition or extension to original cottages, the subdivision of historic plots and overdevelopment, and require ongoing protection from large scale inappropriate development to protect their historic character.

Saved Policy LC14 from the 2003 Local Plan, the current Core Strategy (Section CS6: Historic Environment in the North Lincolnshire Core Strategy) and the proposed policy HE2p, provide a mechanism for the council to safeguard the historic character of area LC14 as part of the planning process. These policies ensure that no development is undertaken that will destroy, damage or adversely affect the character, appearance or setting of the historic landscape, or any of its features, ensure that any new development is designed sympathetically and there is an emphasis on improving, restoring or managing the landscape, where new development affects area LC14.

However, such policies are unable to address the major risk of degradation of this character of the AOSF strip fields which is not from development but changes in farming practices, as was the case in 1997.

Suggestions for the safeguarding of the historic landscape character will therefore have to be through a variety of mechanisms which are presented for consideration.

Firstly, it is recommended that an updated HLC study is undertaken prior to the adoption of a future Local Plan in 2026. As it is shown in this report that the 1997 survey is largely still valid, this updated HLC could be a constrained project completed by adding a further GIS layer to the current mapping. This would also allow, in conjunction with the 2011 study, a time-lapse of change since the earliest study. This can be further supplemented by the detailed descriptions and background of the 1997 study to provide detail on the character types and their significance.

Whilst the 'stripey' nature of the AOSF strip fields themselves is difficult to preserve as strip farming is no longer an efficient method of farming, the underlying nature of the boundaries and open aspect and unenclosed nature of these fields can be preserved through appropriate management. Further to this, the open aspect is made more difficult to comprehend if the views from the higher ground are restricted by housing and tall hedges. The common ways and access tracks (meres) are a valuable part of the landscape and still widely used by the local community and visitors alike. Their preservation should also be a priority as part of the Local Plan and wider schemes to manage the area. Understanding of the uniqueness of the Isle of Axholme and its history could be further improved by the addition of information boards/leaflets.

Potential exists for engagement with stakeholders (such as Natural England) and local farmers to further raise awareness and reduce the pressure on the historic strip fields and early enclosures by entering into Countryside Stewardship Schemes (CSS). There are currently no known schemes relating to the strip fields in place. An audit of the Historic Environment Record/SHINE dataset should be undertaken to ensure historic landscape features which meet the criteria for management are included as part of these datasets. Opportunities as to whether the historic landscape could be managed through Environmental Lands Management Systems (ELMS) which is due to replace Basic Payments should also be explored. There is also potential to progress further research, understanding and management of the unique historic character of the Isle of Axholme through Partnership Schemes, such as the Humberhead Levels, the third phase of which is currently being prepared by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT 2020).

There are also opportunities to improve engagement, with the local community through education about the uniqueness of the area and its national importance. This could be through meetings or events.

8 Conclusion

The studies reviewed in this report have identified that the Isle of Axholme remains a nationally significant area for its historic landscape. The character types and assessment of significance as presented by Miller (1997) remain valid and continue to carry great weight in material planning decisions. The threats to these character types from development and changes in land use as described by Miller, and seen in minor changes since the 2011 study, only add greater weight to its ongoing use as a basis for the protection of the area. The mapping created in 2011 is useful in tracking these changes but lacks the assessment of significance, setting and impacts provided by Miller (1997) which are vital to protect the Isle of Axholme's unique character as part of the NPPF. It has been shown here that there are difficulties in preserving some of the characters types from changes in farming practices and the amalgamation of fields, however inappropriate development can and should be prevented within the areas defined by Miller as of national significance such as the Areas of Open Strip Fields, Early Enclosed Land and Moorland Allotments, which give the Isle of Axholme and the LC14 area its unique character.

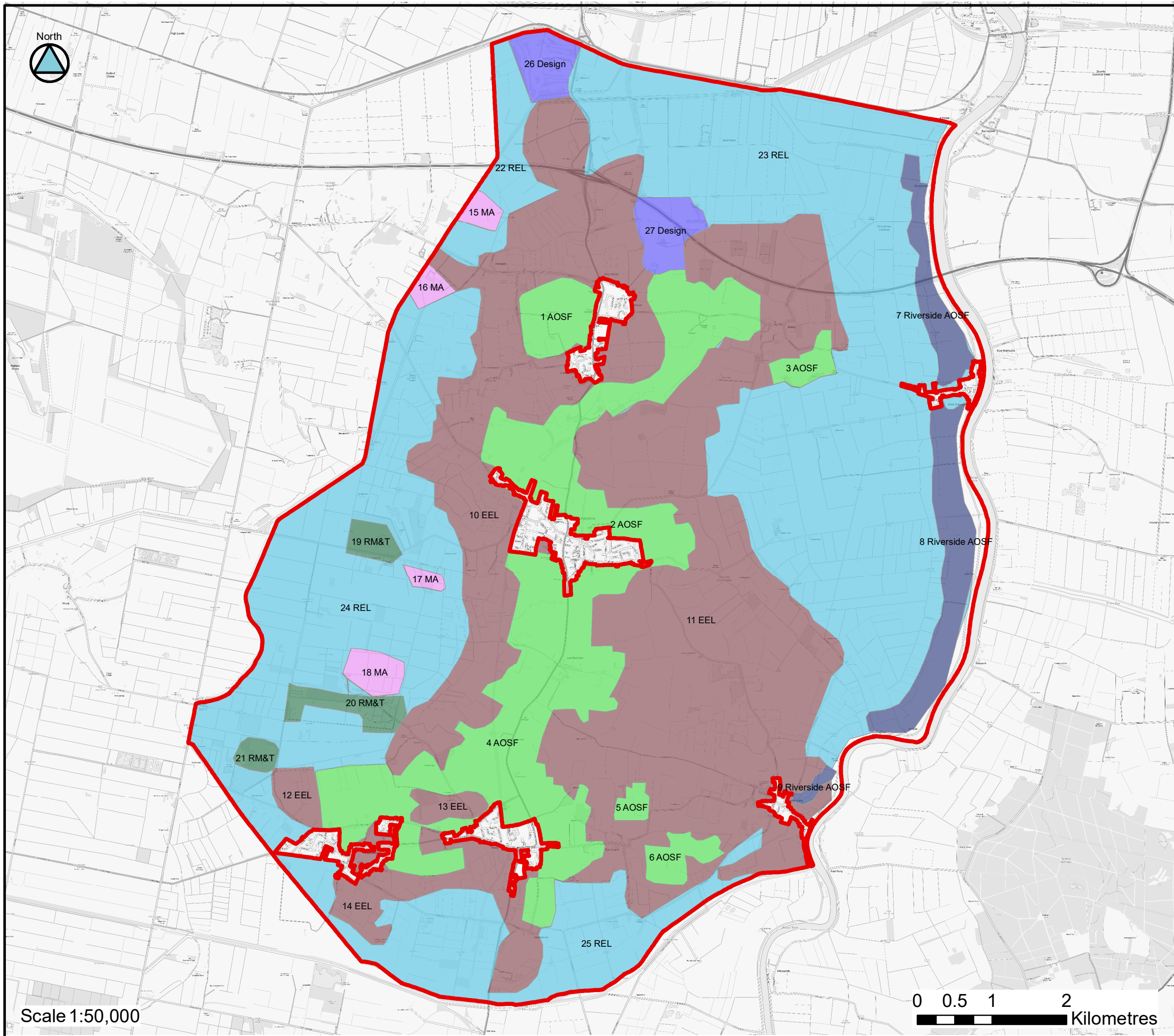
9 References

- LHLC (2011) The Historic Character of The County of Lincolnshire. English Heritage Project No. 4661.
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- NLC (2003) North Lincolnshire Local Plan. <https://www.northlincs.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-policy-the-north-lincolnshire-local-plan/#1593095254001-ec189f5a-67c8>. Accessed 04/11/2020
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A

Appendices

Figures



KEYPLAN

Scale 1:250,000

LEGEND

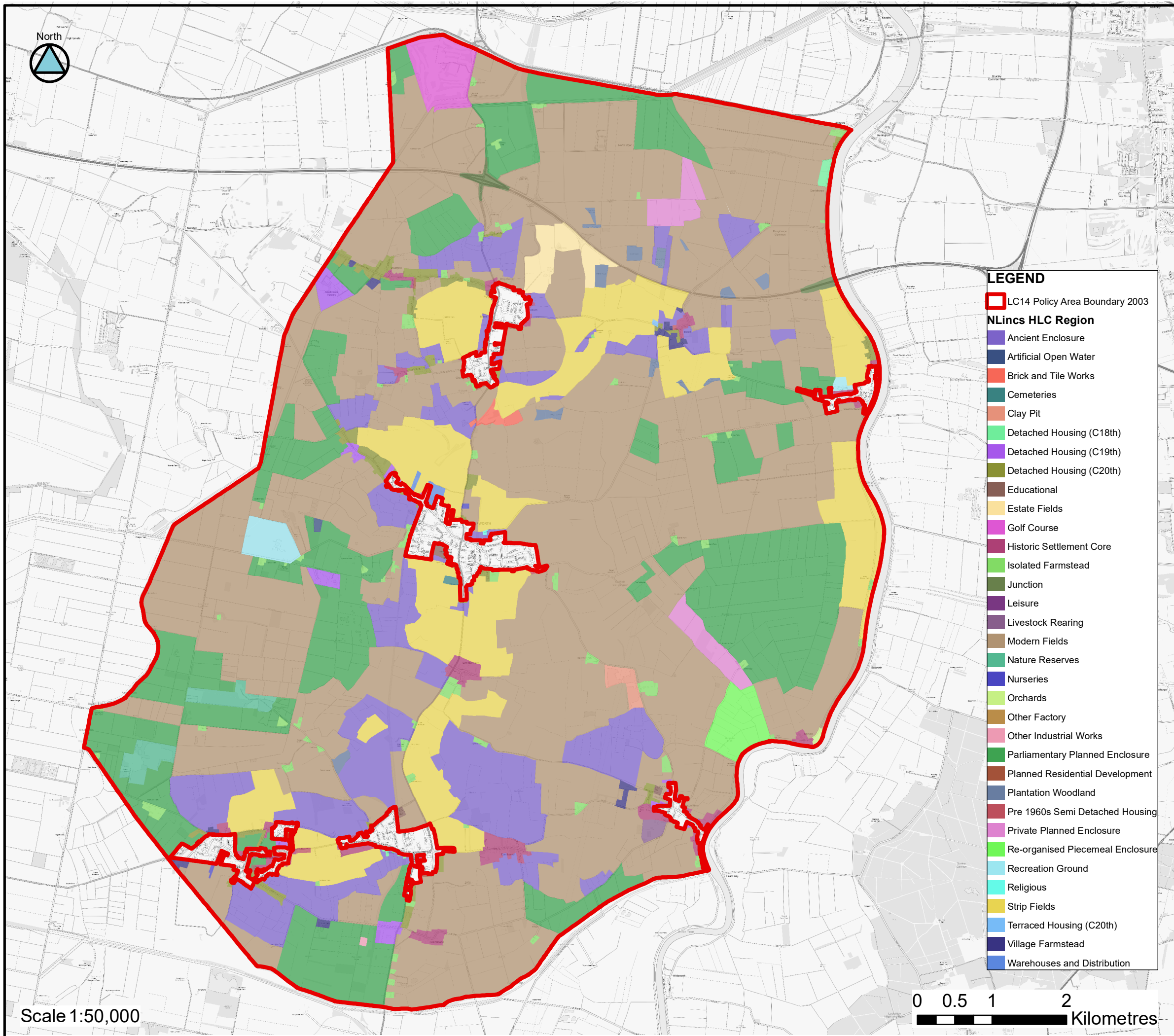
- LC14 Policy Area Boundary 2003
- Axholme HLC Zones After Miller 1997 Region**
 - Design/Ornamental (Parklands)
 - Early Enclosed Land
 - Area of Open Strip Field
 - Moorland Allotments
 - Raised Mire and Turbary
 - Recently Enclosed Land
 - Riverside Area of Open Strip Field

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2018s0596 - FIGURE 1

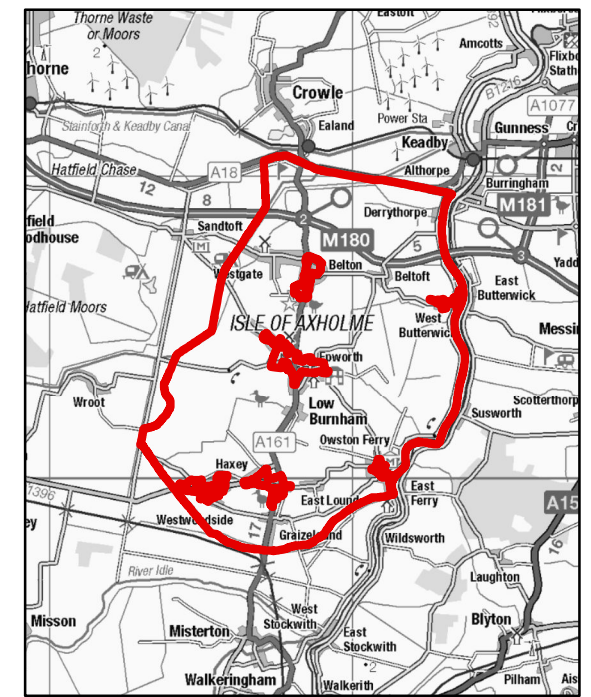
LC14 Policy Area and Isle of Axholme Historic Landscape Characterisation data (Miller 1997)

Scale 1:50,000



Scale 1:50,000

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LEGEND

LC14 Policy Area Boundary 2003

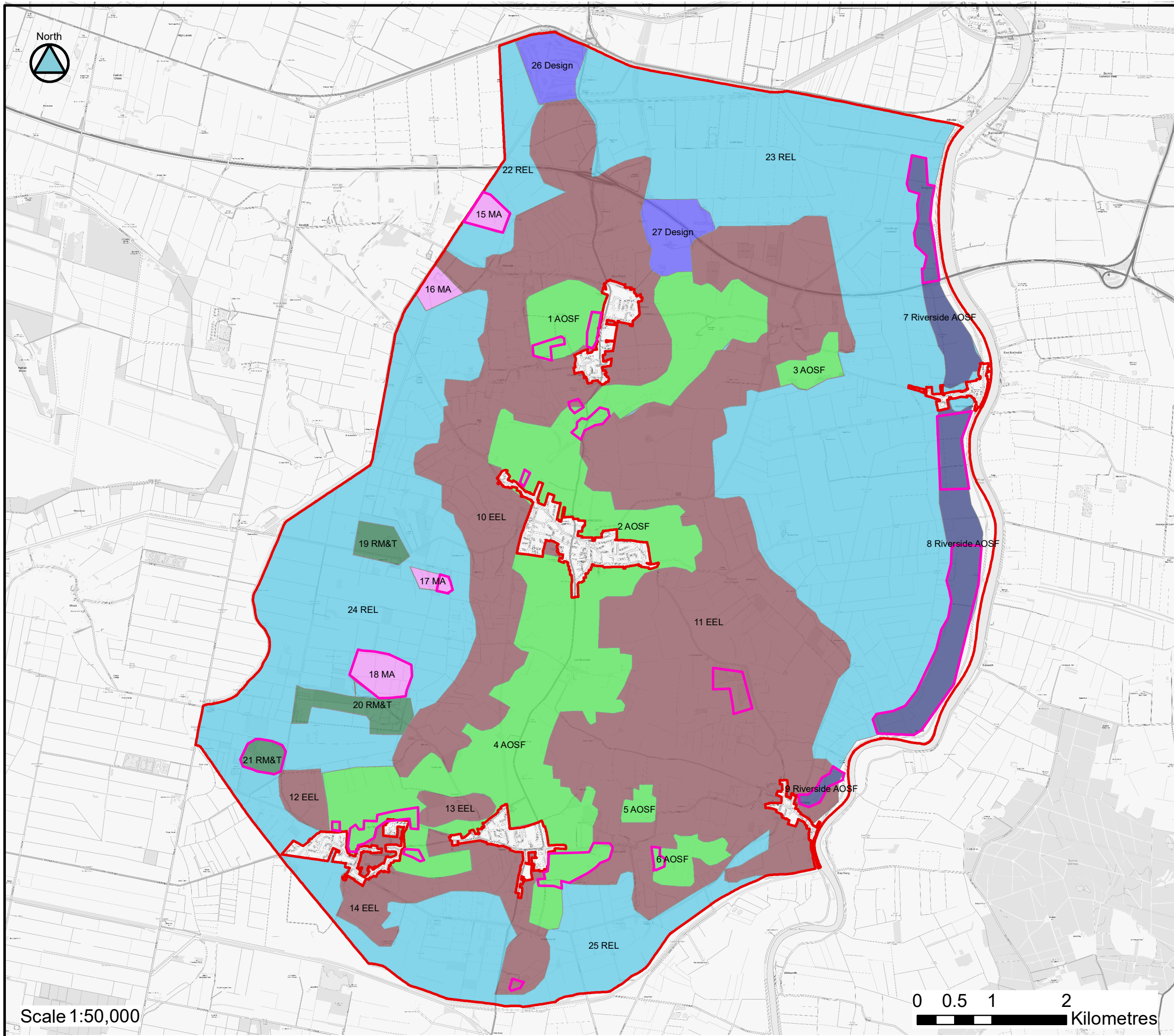
NLincs HLC Region

- Ancient Enclosure
- Artificial Open Water
- Brick and Tile Works
- Cemeteries
- Clay Pit
- Detached Housing (C18th)
- Detached Housing (C19th)
- Detached Housing (C20th)
- Educational
- Estate Fields
- Golf Course
- Historic Settlement Core
- Isolated Farmstead
- Junction
- Leisure
- Livestock Rearing
- Modern Fields
- Nature Reserves
- Nurseries
- Orchards
- Other Factory
- Other Industrial Works
- Parliamentary Planned Enclosure
- Planned Residential Development
- Plantation Woodland
- Pre 1960s Semi Detached Housing
- Private Planned Enclosure
- Re-organised Piecemeal Enclosure
- Recreation Ground
- Religious
- Strip Fields
- Terraced Housing (C20th)
- Village Farmstead
- Warehouses and Distribution

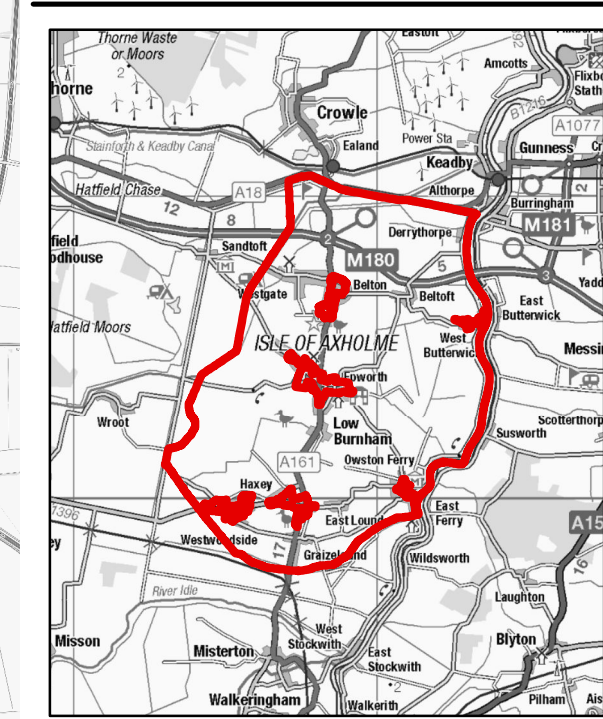
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2018s0596 - FIGURE 2
LC14 Policy Area and Lincolnshire Historic
Landscape Characterisation data (LCC, 2011)



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LEGEND

- Areas of Potential Change
- LC14 Policy Area Boundary 2003
- Axholme HLC Zones After Miller 1997 Region**
 - Design/Ornamental (Parklands)
 - Early Enclosed Land
 - Area of Open Strip Field
 - Moorland Allotments
 - Raised Mire and Turbary
 - Recently Enclosed Land
 - Riverside Area of Open Strip Field

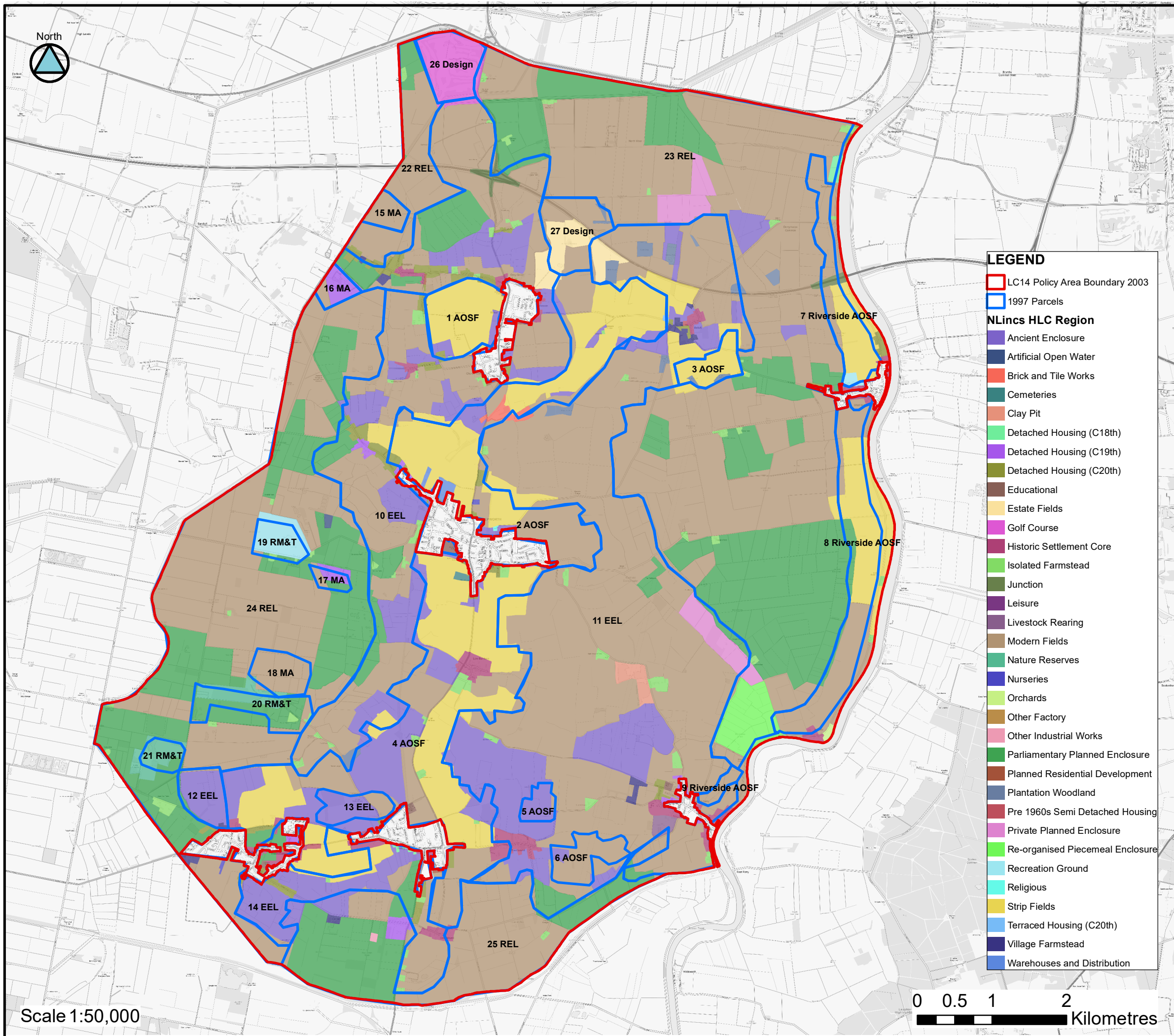
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2018s0596 - FIGURE 3
Potential Change in Historic Landscape
Characterisation data from Miller 1997 identified from Aerial Photographs and OS maps

Scale 1:50,000

0 0.5 1 2 Kilometres



KEYPLAN Scale 1:250,000

1997 Abbreviations

Design - Design/Ornamental (Parklands)
EEL - Early Enclosed Land
AOSF - Area of Open Strip Field
MA - Moorland Allotments
RM&T - Raised Mire and Turbary
REL - Recently Enclosed Land
Riverside AOSF - Riverside Area of Open Strip Field

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2018s0596 - FIGURE 4

LC14 Policy Area Miller 1997 overlay of Historic Landscape Characterisation data (LCC, 2011)

B Summary Tables

HLC Zones	Definition	Key Attributes	Significance (Miller 1997)	Sensitivity (Miller 1997)	Limitations (Miller 1997)	Recommendations (Miller 1997)
Ancient Open Strip Fields (AOSF)	Open arable fields with cultivation strips. Of medieval origin.	Undulating open fields. Groups of strips that vary in size and direction sometimes still evident. Intricate networks of roads, tracks, paths and meres. On the riversides, low lying open fields with long strips of cultivation with occasional dikes and tracks between them. Ridge and furrow occasionally present.	The largest single area of Ancient Open Strip Fields in the country. Of National Importance.	Strip amalgamation and enclosing of fields. Reduction in range of crops has reduced the varied texture that was distinctive. Intrusive modern developments.	Difficult to distinguish between other open field types such as EEL and REL in a rapid assessment.	Further research of ownership of land and documentary sources required. Increased awareness of its importance and rarity. Increasing threats must be assessed.
Early Enclosed Land (EEL)	Land enclosures in former open arable fields. Not always 'early' but enclosure was more piecemeal than later parliamentary enclosures.	Fairly small in size with irregular shape. Shape depends on type of field or strip that was enclosed, often long strips. Boundaries rarely straight often following tracks, watercourses and landforms. Located in and around settlements. Some ridge and furrow present.	Type of landscape 'often held in affection' and 'immediately recognisable as old'. Makes a strong contribution to the landscape character. Its texture softens what would otherwise be a stark landscape.	Closes near settlements colonised for housing. Intensive arable farming reduced EEL to patches around settlements. M180 cut through one of the best preserved areas.	Sometimes indistinguishable from REL. Much of the land recorded as EEL may have been consolidated AOSF.	Further documentary research required to define areas more clearly. Control of new developments intruding into EEL areas. Management of existing boundaries such as hedges, dikes and drains.

HLC Zones	Definition	Key Attributes	Significance (Miller 1997)	Sensitivity (Miller 1997)	Limitations (Miller 1997)	Recommendations (Miller 1997)
Recently Enclosed Land (REL)	Land enclosed mostly in large blocks, to plans prepared by surveyors.	Regular layout dominated by straight lines and right angles. Divided by ditches and occasional larger drains and dikes.	Makes up the largest proportion of the area and is a highly efficient agriculturally. Only of regional significance for its history of enclosure and 17th Century drainage and warping.	Despite the losses of many hedges this type is immediately recognisable and imposing in the landscape. Only sensitivity is to buried archaeology which is at risk from deep ploughing.	Very difficult to determine between REL and earlier piecemeal enclosures without further documentary research to date them.	Possibly replanting hedgerows to better distinguish between the HLC types though not appropriate in all areas.
Raised Mire and Turbary (RM&T)	Peat moors with open heathland and regenerated woodland; exposed peat and peat cutting; sandy carrs and old sand pits.	Small heathland areas used for cutting peat.	Makes a major contribution to the landscape character. Turbaries clearly visible from the Isle of Axholme villages.	Some areas seriously damaged by further peat and sand extraction. Under some pressure from modern development. Further threatened by improved drainage.	N/A	Restricting development on moorland. Need for conservation of turbary cottages.
Moorland Allotments (MA) defined as a sub-zone	Allotment plots on the moorland RM&T zones.	Long, narrow allotted plots.	Only defined a sub-zone of RM&T	N/A	N/A	N/A

HLC Zones	Definition	Key Attributes	Significance (Miller 1997)	Sensitivity (Miller 1997)	Limitations (Miller 1997)	Recommendations (Miller 1997)
Design/Ornamental	Landscapes specifically created for a purpose other than agriculture. Either recreational, ornamental or functional.	Golf courses, Parklands, airfield etc. Often with 'naturalistic' landscaped grounds.	Country house parks are most significant with landscaped grounds and relict features such as grassland, mature trees and woodlands.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Industrial/Commercial (Not mapped by Miller in LC14)		Extraction sites such as for peat, sand or gravel.	Area such as the turbaries show scarring from extraction which contributes to its character.	N/A	N/A	N/A
Transport and Communications (Not mapped by Miller in LC14)	Lines of communication.	Navigable rivers, canals, roads and railways.	Have a large visual impact on the area. Clear relationship with the zones they pass through and settlements they serve.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Ancient Open Strip Fields (AOSF) Miller 1997	Site Visit
Area 1- Small parcel west of Belton.	Appears open still in character, s-shaped pattern very apparent, possibly reduced in south and east by paddocks and encroachment of Belton. Most areas still appear to be farmed in strips though north fields are same crop. Site visit showed some fenced enclosures and expansion of housing but minimal.
Area 2- Large parcel extending from east of Belton to Epworth in south.	Still mostly open in character, s-shaped pattern still legible. Farming in strips still present but patchy. Possibly modern farm, south of Belton. Some enclosure and housing north of Epworth. Fields east of Epworth appear modern in character though some wavy boundaries still survive. Site visit showed addition of farms and small enclosures/tree planting in places.
Area 3- Small parcel south of Beltoft.	S-shaped pattern still visible with possibly some strips. 50% though now farmed in single crop and resembles more EEL than AOSF though still valid. Site visit showed area largely survives.
Area 4- Very large parcel extending from Epworth to Westwoodside and Haxey in the south.	Largest surviving area of AOSF. S-shaped pattern still visible in large areas with open character. Some encroachment from Epworth into northern fields Strips only survive in patches. Areas around Westwoodside and Haxey have become enclosed or encroached upon. Site visit shows open character remains but fields no longer in strips.
Area 5- Small parcel north-east of East Lound.	Not visited. Mapping appears to show 2011 to be valid but historic mapping and archival study required.
Area 6- Small parcel east of East Lound.	Survives well as open land, some strips still apparent and possibly trees encroaching in west side. May actually be larger than shown in 1997, appears to extend further to south and east. Site visit showed area retains open character but strips no longer evident.
Area 7- Riverside north of West Butterwick.	Strip survive well south of M180 but north half appears to have been enclosed and amalgamated into modern fields. Site visit showed area open but strips not apparent
Area 8- Riverside south of West Butterwick.	Appears to have largely been amalgamated into modern fields with straight boundaries. Some wavy strips do survive in the centre but only a small patch. Site visit showed area open but strips not apparent.

Early Enclosed Land (EEL) Miller 1997	Site Visit
Area 10- Large parcel extending from north of M180 to Haxey in south.	Survives well as a whole. Fields remain relatively small with irregular shapes. Some regular boundaries have been introduced. Some settlements lie within this area which are not recorded but do not contribute to its character. Site visit showed area largely remains with small enclosed fields.

Area 11- Very large parcel extending from north of M180 to Haxey and Owston Ferry in the south.	Survival is patchier on this side of the A161. Large areas of small irregular fields remain but some areas, most notably south-east of Epworth appear to have been amalgamated into larger modern fields. Quarry seen in site visit and historic maps.
Area 12- Small parcel north of Westwoodside.	Area not visited. Mapping shows small fields still apparent, but boundaries look very regular and straight. Difficult to distinguish from modern.
Area 13- Small parcel north of Haxey.	Area not visited. Mapping shows small enclosures with very straight boundaries, difficult to distinguish from modern fields. Some trees/scrub in areas.
Area 14- Large parcel south of Westwoodside and Haxey.	Settlement of Graizelound and Haxey crosses some areas which separates the area. New reservoir in the south. Fields again difficult to distinguish from modern/REL with straight boundaries. Reservoir seen in site visit. Area remains largely preserved.

Recently Enclosed Land (REL) Miller 1997	Site Visit
Area 22- Small parcel north-west of Belton.	No change.
Area 23- Very large parcel north of M180 to Owston ferry in the south.	Area not visited.
Area 24- Very large parcel west of Belton to Westwoodside in the south.	Area not visited.
Area 25- Large parcel south of Haxey.	Area not visited.

Raised Mire and Turbary (RM & T) Miller 1997	Site Visit
Area 19- Small parcel west of Epworth.	Survives as a nature reserve. Still valid.
Area 20- Small parcel north of Westwoodside.	East end of parcel fields and detached housing. West side preserved as nature reserve. Similar to area 19. Site visit showed area houses to be extended but plots still remain, area still valid.
Area 21- Small parcel north-west of Westwoodside.	Area not visited. Mapping shows large quarry.

Moorland Allotments (MA) Sub-zone Miller 1997	Site Visit
Area 15- Small parcel north of Westgate.	Appears as small enclosed fields now with straight boundaries. Triangular possibly because of the irregular shape of the parcel. Site visit showed area split into modern paddocks.
Area 16- Small parcel south-west of Westgate.	Area not visited. Mapping shows very small fields with housing. Still known as Stockholes Turbary. Does not appear to be long narrow plots anymore, possibly repurposed as paddocks
Area 17- Small parcel west of Epworth.	Some narrow allotments seem to survive in centre. Mostly overtaken by housing though. Still known as Epworth Turbary. Site visit showed area subsumed by housing.
Area 18- Small parcel north of Westwoodside.	Does not appear to survive as allotments. Now small fields with straight boundaries. Site visit showed area appears as modern fields.

Design/Ornamental Miller 1997	Site Visit
Area 26- Golf Course north of M180.	Not Visited.
Area 27- Small parcel north-east of Belton.	Paddocks and larger fields with some survival of features from its historic character as a designed landscape. Still Valid.

C Plates



Plate 1- S-shaped boundary of two AOSF Riverside parcels in Area 8 shown by crop cutting facing west.



Plate 2- Footpath between former strip fields east of Epworth in Area 2 facing south.



Plate 3- Paddocks and housing north of Haxey in AOSF Area 4 facing south-east.



Plate 4- Newly planted trees surrounding a paddock east of Epworth in AOSF Area 2 facing north-east.



Plate 5- Shot facing east from east of Epworth overlooking EEL Area 11 and REL Area 23 showing open land and large modern fields.



Plate 6- Area 16 'Stockholes Turbary' formerly Moorland Allotments, now subsumed by housing developments, facing west.



Plate 7- Area 20 now a woodland nature reserve, facing south-west.



Plate 8- Area 27 'Temple Gardens' showing paddocks facing north-west.

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