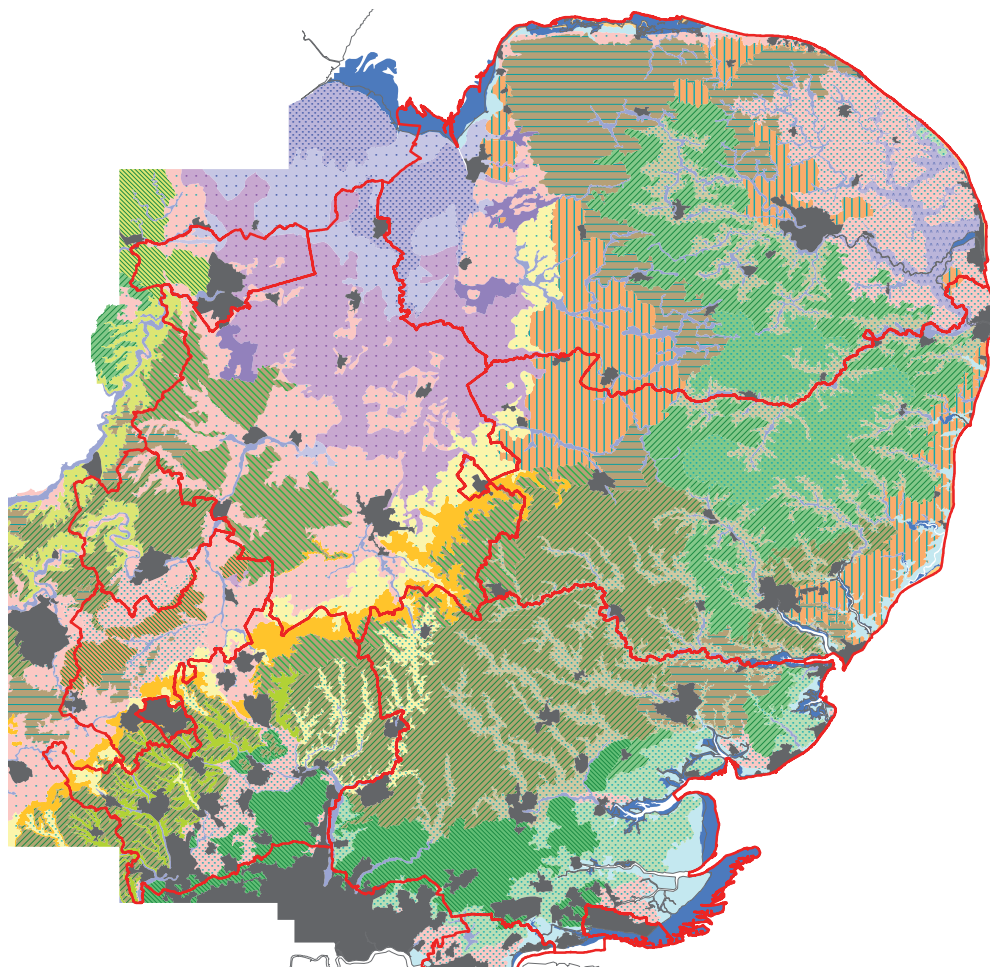


Assessing landscape sensitivity in the East of England at the regional scale

landscape is important

Landscape is everywhere, it provides a setting to people's lives, both physically and through memories and associations (the experiential, aesthetic dimensions of landscape). Landscape is the meeting ground between natural and cultural influences. It is dynamic and constantly changing. Landscape defines sense of place and is important in defining national, regional, local and personal identity. Landscape provides a wide range of benefits, goods and services essential for human survival and well-being.

landscape is an essential part of a sustainable future



social

Landscape, and the experience of it, are essential to sense of place, place-making, community cohesion, quality of life and health and well-being.

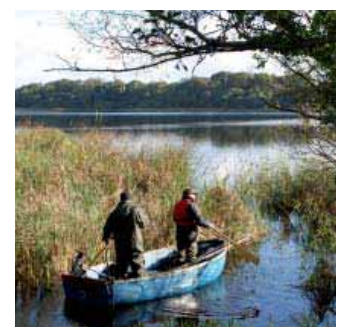
economic

Landscape provides the backdrop to economic activity including recreation and tourism. It is an

economic asset and driver of the economy in its own right attracting inward investment and stimulating economic growth.

environmental

How landscape is managed fundamentally affects the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, cultural heritage, and natural resource protection.



The East of England: a sense of place



The landscape of the East of England is rich and diverse - rolling chalk plateaux, ridges and valleys, arable farmland, expansive fenland landscapes, low lying wetlands and river valleys.

The distinctive landscape character of the region is defined in the East of England Landscape Framework which identifies 27 separate landscape types.

The landscape types of the region are variously important for their character, biodiversity, the opportunities they afford for access and recreation, and for their cultural value and local distinctiveness.

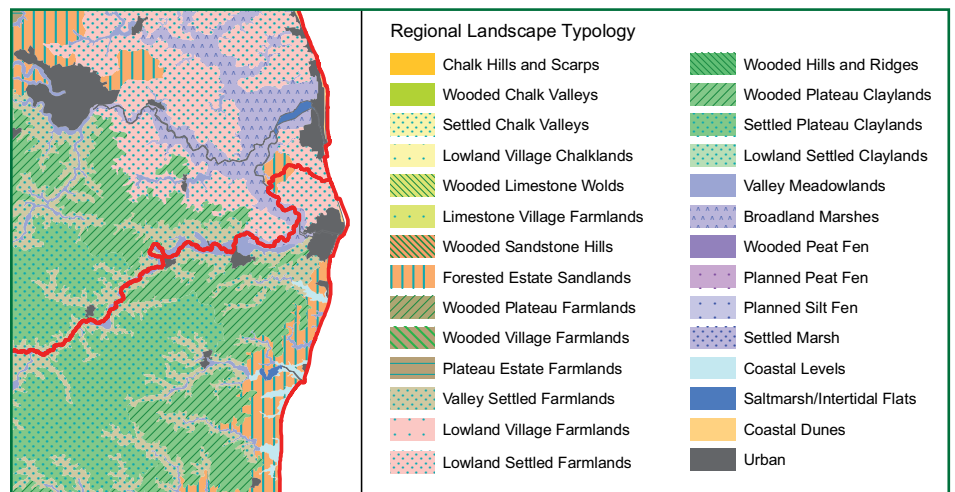
Positive action is needed to protect and enhance the most distinctive aspects of the region's landscape, whilst enabling it to adapt to future change and needs.

Our landscape is neither natural nor static. It is the product of a myriad of planning, design and management processes, activities and ideas. Change is therefore a fundamental characteristic of the landscape. A wide variety of issues and forces

for change continue to affect the landscape of the East of England. All present challenges for those who need to plan for such change, and ensure that it is delivered in ways that enhance or respond to character and sense of place.

Key forces for change relate to the likely levels of future growth and substantial expansion of some settlements, associated infrastructure such as transport corridors and highways, and renewable energy. Other changes may result from land management and wider environmental forces such as climate change.

Clearly the implications may be significant in terms of landscape character. Here we set out a straightforward method by which decision makers can identify the impact of such change at a regional level (sensitivity analysis) and positively focus change through appropriate design and management.



Landscape sensitivity - what, why, how

what

Assessing landscape character sensitivity requires judgement about the degree to which the landscape can accommodate change in a way which responds to character.

This involves making decisions about whether or not significant characteristic elements of the landscape will be liable to loss, or whether important aesthetic aspects may be liable to change.

why

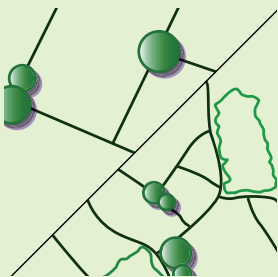
Understanding the landscape, what has shaped its appearance and why elements are important to landscape character, and valued by people, is fundamental to guiding change to secure positive outcomes which respond to sense of place and local distinctiveness.

There are also opportunities for creative planning to create new character and places with a strong identity.

how

- Identify the forces for change acting on the landscape in question.
- With reference to the East of England Landscape Framework, identify character and important physical, cultural and aesthetic characteristics of the landscape which may be sensitive to that change. Landscape factors to consider in this respect are set out in the diagrams below left.
- Assess how the landscape characteristics will be affected by the proposed change (sensitivity).
- Devise a landscape strategy - develop design and management guidance in relation to the type of change within the landscape, and to ensure that change responds to local distinctiveness, and reinforces or creates character.

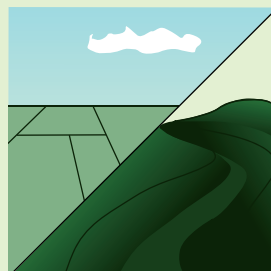
consider: elements



pattern



scale



landform

forces for change



solar arrays



housing developments



wind turbines

identify effects

- guide change
- design principles

A method for assessing landscape sensitivity in the East of England

applying the method

The approach to assessing landscape sensitivity has been designed for use at the regional scale, although the principles within it can apply to more local studies. Some pointers for those wishing to commission landscape sensitivity studies are set out below.

Ensure that sensitivity analysis is always based on an understanding of landscape character. Use available relevant information (natural character areas/relevant landscape typologies/landscape character assessments and landscape strategies).

Landscape sensitivity studies should be focused on a particular type of change.

Ensure the method and data sources are correct for the scale of the study. All sensitivity studies should be streamlined, avoiding use of data for its own sake.

Where visual sensitivities are also considered, these should be clearly separate from those concerning landscape character.

Data should be relevant - avoid over complexity or reliance on large amounts of data. The analysis should be clearly stated and explained, with the method transparent and easy for non landscape professionals to follow.

Where possible, judgements should be strengthened by stakeholder views.

Landscape sensitivity judgements should link back to landscape character.

more information

Further information on the East of England Landscape Framework and the full guidance in relation to landscape sensitivity assessment is available at the Landscape East website at:

www.landscape-east.org.uk

