

*Our*  
**LANDSCAPE**  
TODAY FOR TOMORROW

*An Assessment of the Landscape  
North and South of the Humber with  
Management Guidelines  
for its Future.*



**Prepared by:**



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*The Study Team from Gillespies were as follows; Vince Nevin, John Champion, Francis Hesketh, Sarah Thomlinson, Mandy North, Lorna Allen and team leader, Jim Gibson.*

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## PREFACE

The County of Humberside together with the area of North Yorkshire which incorporates the Yorkshire Wolds, is a diverse landscape. The contrasts range from high coastal cliffs to flat estuarine mudflats; from rolling chalk uplands to level, drained peatlands; from stone-built villages to modern petro-chemical complexes. This Landscape Assessment classifies and defines these different landscapes and offers landscape guidelines to assist the formulation of policies for countryside management, stewardship and development control.

A structured and systematic methodology is employed to make as objective as possible the sometimes complex judgements which are necessary. The Landscape Assessment is not concerned with the quality of scenery and does not offer subjective opinions on the relative attractiveness of different landscapes. It seeks simply to classify and describe the landscape in factual terms. Ten Regional Landscape Character Areas are determined and twenty-six Local Landscape Types are found within these.

Landscape is, of course, an ever-changing prospect; today's scenery is the product of physical structure and processes together with their interaction with man's activities over thousands of years. The Landscape Assessment is essentially a 'snap-shot' which records the landscape as it is today.

The assessment and guidelines are only a beginning providing a basis by which cooperation between all those concerned with a healthy, attractive and sustainable countryside can be coordinated.

This strategic approach to stewardship of the landscape is timely. The new planning authorities are in a position to action one of the key principles of the Government's recent Rural White Paper, 'Rural England - a Nation Committed to a Living Countryside'. This paper suggests: "the development of ideas that can act to focus action to strengthen the distinctive character of the land and the built environment".

This is precisely what 'Our Landscape - Today for Tomorrow' will help to do.

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# INTRODUCTION

## SECTION 1

# INTRODUCTION

1.1 Gillespies were commissioned in March 1995 to undertake a Landscape Assessment of Humberside County. The commission was jointly funded by Humberside County Council and the Countryside Commission. An extension of the project to include the northern portion of the Yorkshire Wolds was funded by Ryedale and Scarborough District Councils.

1.2 The brief for the assessment identified the main need for the preparation of a countywide landscape assessment and guidelines as the following:-

- *Assist the formulation of Local Authority policies;*
- *Aid development control;*
- *Enable a sustainable approach to landscape through policy formulation and action;*
- *Aid the monitoring and influencing of landscape change;*
- *Help in targeting areas in most need of resources;*
- *Act as an aid to the decision making of land managers.*

1.3 The landscape assessment was prepared in two phases. Firstly the assessment divided the County into ten Regional Landscape Character Areas (RLCA's) and twenty-six Local Landscape Types (LLT's). Secondly, landscape guidelines were prepared at a Regional and Local Landscape Character Level. During both stages exhaustive consultation, both with the Client bodies and relevant planning authorities was undertaken and subsequent drafts of the assessment were modified, where appropriate, to accommodate their views.

1.4 This document falls into several sections:-

- **Section 1.0 - Introduction**
- **Section 2.0 - Methodology** describes the methodology employed to undertake the systematic assessment of the County's landscapes.
- **Section 3.0 - Summary of Landscape Assessment** summarises the assessment results and provides a brief description of the County's 10 Regional Landscape Character Areas (RLCA's) the 26 Local Landscape Types (LLT's) and the Local Character Areas.
- **Section 4.0 - Change in the Landscape** evaluates the broad patterns of landscape change that have operated through the County, both in recent years, and historically.
- **Sections 5.0 to 14.0 - Landscape Assessment** provide the detailed results of the landscape assessment and identify landscape guidelines for each of the 10 RLCA's identified through the County. Each of these sections is divided into 3 parts detailing the following:- the landscape's character; landscape guidelines for the whole RLCA; and landscape guidelines for each Local Landscape Type within the RLCA.
- **Section 15 - Summary** summarises the assessment and guidelines and outlines a vision for the future, a strategy for the empowerment of the document.



# METHODOLOGY

## SECTION 2

## METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

2.1.1 The term landscape refers primarily to the visual appearance of the land, including its shape, form and colours. However, the landscape is not purely a visual phenomenon. Its character relies heavily on its physiology and history. The mosaic of contributory factors influencing our interpretation of the land include such studies as geology, topography, ecology, archaeology and architecture. To gather together all these inter-related strands of information, it is essential that the process of landscape assessment is structured and systematic.

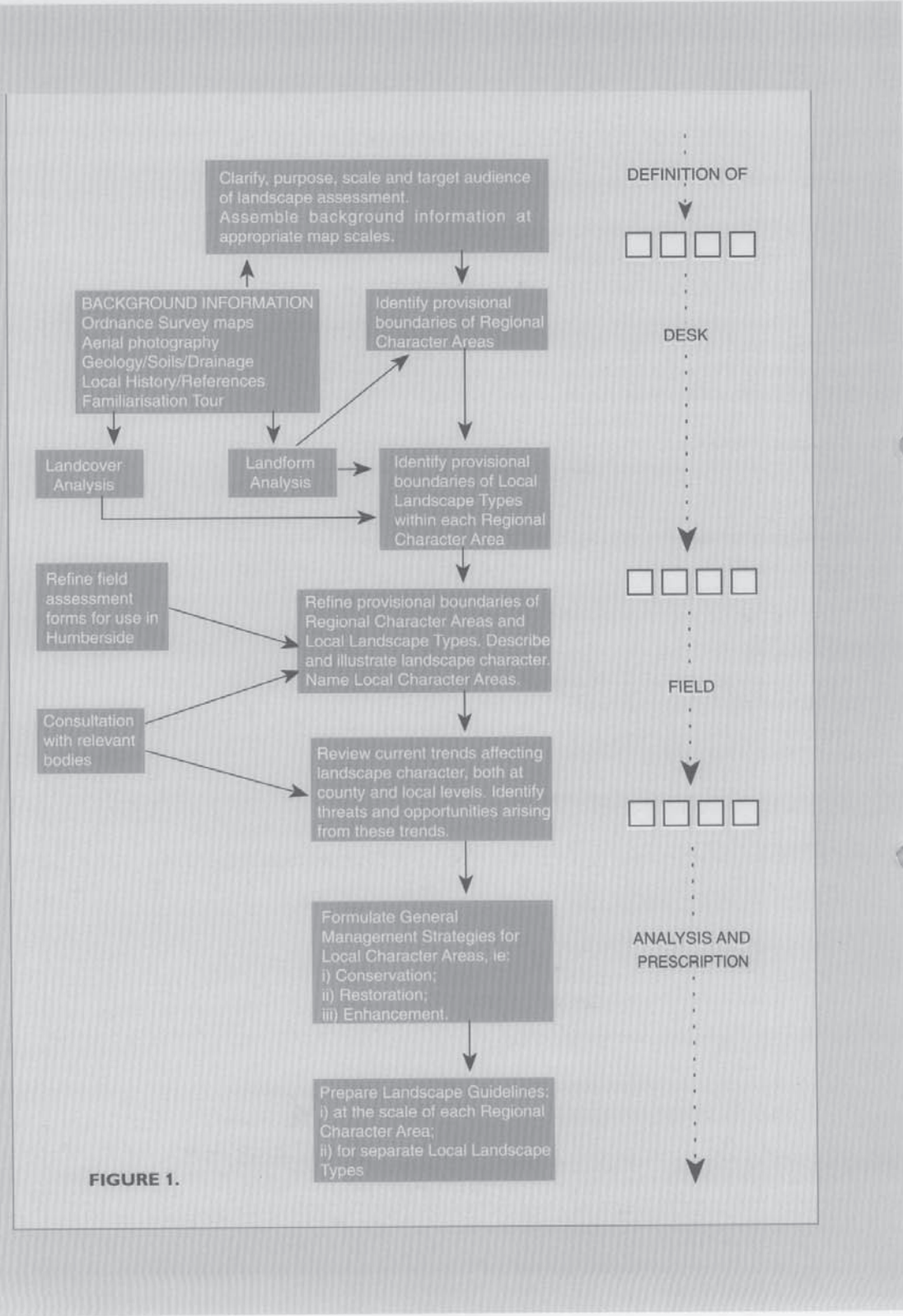
2.1.2 The accompanying method flow-chart illustrates the structured approach to assessment (Figure 1). The methodology broadly follows that refined for the assessment of Warwickshire County and the National Forest proposals in the Midlands (both guided by the Countryside Commission). The methodology is consistent, both in terminology and scale, with these assessments. It is intended that consequential Guidelines, policies and prescriptions will accord with these precedents in terms of level of detail.

2.1.3 The methodology follows a progression through four phases of work, as shown on the flow-chart (Figure 1). First is the definition of the task. It is critical at an early stage to gather all relevant information and focus on the overall size of the task. A county-wide assessment will inevitably result in a less sharply-focused classification of the landscape than would a district assessment.

2.1.4 For general working, a 1:50,000 scale was deemed appropriate, although plans at 1:25,000 and aerial photography at 1:10,000 were studied. The background information comprised:-

- (i) Ordnance Survey maps at 1:25,000 and 1:50,000;
- (ii) recent aerial photography at 1:10,000 (not fully available in the Wolds);
- (iii) geological information at 1:50,000 and 1:625,000;
- (iv) agricultural land classification maps and summary reports at 1:50,000
- (v) County Council structure plans, local plans, etc;
- (vi) archaeological reports;
- (vii) many local references, working papers, etc;
- (viii) a 'familiarisation tour' of the County, taken over 2 days, to allow the team to gain an overview of the range of landscape variation through the County.

2.1.5 Armed with this information, it quickly became possible to discern 10 'Regional Landscape Character Areas' (RLCA's) within Humberside. At this stage, no attempt was made to place exact boundaries or sub-divisions within each RLCA. This was the task of the next phases of work: desk study and field survey.



**FIGURE 1.**

**Desk Study**

2.2.1 The purpose of the desk study is to identify the provisional boundary of the Regional Landscape Character Areas, and then to sub-divide these into provisional Local Landscape Types (LLT's). This task can only be finalised with field survey. The division of time between desk study and field work is critical. Too great an emphasis on desk study can lead to inflexibility when engaged in field work. Too great an emphasis on field work can lead to conclusions being based on subjective impressions, which are difficult to support with objective data. This latter situation can lead to landscape assessments being challenged at planning inquiries and appeals. Consistently with other assessments, it is important to balance the requirement to objectively record the intrinsic qualities of the landscape, with the provision of limited scope for a more subjective opinion on the nature of the scenery.

2.2.2 During the preparation of the methodology two previous studies were examined. The 'Warwickshire' approach involves a significant allocation of desk time to landcover analysis, as a tool for identifying Local Landscape Types. The 'Harrogate District' approach involved a much simpler approach to landcover analysis, with more emphasis on field work to clarify the landscape. Following discussion with the Clients, the Warwickshire approach was felt to be more appropriate for Humberside.

2.2.3 The two principal tools for classification of landscape are landform analysis and landcover analysis.

2.2.4 Landform analysis uses topographic breaks, slope changes, major geological divisions or drainage patterns as the means for identifying broad regional character areas and, to a lesser extent, local landscape types within the character areas.

**KEY TERMS**

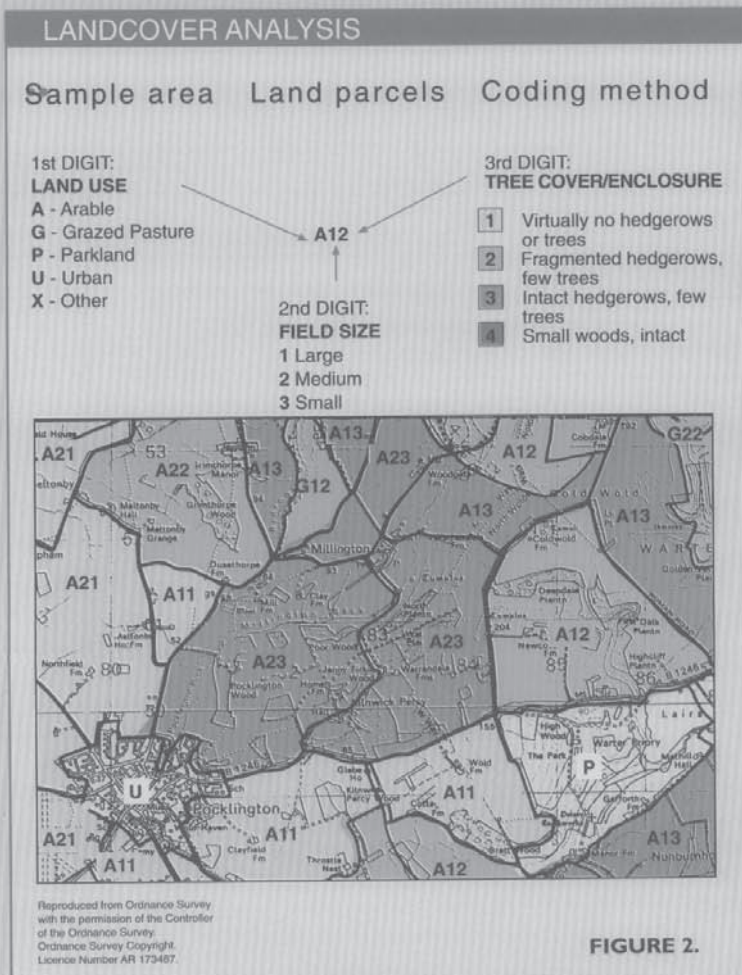
**Regional Character Area** : a large and geographically distinctive area of land, usually defined because of physical features, eg the Yorkshire Wolds. Each Character Area will consist of at least one, and usually more than two, Local Landscape Types.

**Local Landscape Type** : a unit of land with distinctive patterns of land use, topography, enclosure, ecology and vernacular. Local Landscape Types are usually described in generic terms, eg 'estate farmlands' or 'floodplain farmlands'. Local Landscape Types may be restricted to particular Character Areas, or they may occur in various different Character Areas. It is at the level of Local Landscape Types that landscape guidelines and policies can be formulated.

**Local Character Area** : a named and individual unit of land which should be recognisable to those who live and work in the area, eg Sledmere, Warter, Gypsy Race. Local Character Areas will be one landscape type. At a county level it is impractical to develop separate guidelines for each Local Character Area, but at a district or local level this may become possible, eg both Sledmere and Warter are 'estate farmlands' Landscape Types, with identical county guidelines and policies. However local policy might differentiate between the two, on account of the more enclosed nature of the Warter parkland landscape and the greater capacity to absorb new development.

2.2.5 Landcover analysis allows a greater resolution of assessment detail and permits the division of more homogeneous physiographic landscapes. Traditionally it has been a process most useful in lowland areas, where landform analysis may not detect with sufficient accuracy differences in landscape and land use which would be evident on the ground. Landcover analysis in Humberside involved the following steps:-

- (i) aggregation of fields into parcels of land, defined by features such as roads, parish boundaries, watercourses;
- (ii) derivation of a coding system (Figure 2);
- (iii) application of the coding to each parcel by means of study of aerial photographs;
- (iv) 'colouring up' of the coding system;
- (v) discernment of patterns which indicate likely boundaries between Local Landscape Types.



2.2.6 The results of desk survey include both tangible and intangible products. The tangible benefit is a plan which indicates provisional boundaries of Local Landscape Types for field assessment and description. The intangible benefit is an excellent overview of the detailed nature of the landscape in the minds of the landscape assessors.

2.2.7 The usefulness of landcover analysis in defining provisional boundaries between Landscape Types varied. In some situations, eg the Yorkshire Wolds and the Lincolnshire Edge, the provisional boundaries were reasonably apparent on the ground, eg in a greater degree of tree enclosure, or by differences in field pattern. In other situations, typically on more level ground, landcover analysis did pick up differences in landscape character but actual boundaries on the ground required substantial refinement, usually by repeatedly crossing the provisional boundary until a more satisfactory line was defined. In other situations, landcover analysis tended to suggest boundaries that were not in fact apparent on the ground.

### **Field Survey**

2.3.1 In order to maximise efficiency in the field, a structured survey form was used. This was refined from standard Countryside Commission forms and its aim was to ensure that the field surveyor was as objective as possible in description of the landscape and its elements. There is room for a subjective response to the landscape, but the surveyor was required to minimise use of qualitative terms such as 'attractive', 'scruffy' etc. Surveyors worked in teams of two (qualified landscape architect and ecologist) to aid discussion and recording.

2.3.2 In practice, a number of survey sheets were filled out per Character Area and a photographic record was built up. For the purpose of presentation, a single summary sheet was prepared for each Local Landscape Type which includes the landscape surveyors' impressions, supplemented by information about ecological associations, usually gained from literature review, consultation and general observation. These are attached at Appendix One.

2.3.3 The survey sheet also encouraged the surveyor to consider how 'first impression' landscape guidelines might be formulated. There is space to describe the attractive and detracting influences at play in the landscape and to identify the principal landscape issues which should be addressed. Appropriate management strategies could be suggested. These include:-

- (i) Conservation: of the existing landscape elements and arrangements;*
- (ii) Enhancement by restoration: to a previous condition when the landscape was 'better planned' or, alternatively, was more semi-natural;*
- (iii) Enhancement by creation of new landscapes: usually applicable to landscape where character and identity has been lost and where significant change would bring economic, tourism, recreational, or ecological benefits.*