CHANGE IN THE LANDSCAPE

SECTION 4

CHANGE IN THE LANDSCAPE

INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 The landscape of Humberside has evolved over many centuries as a result of man's use of the land, the rivers and the sea. The inherent diversity of landscape types has been eroded during the 20th Century by built development obscuring the landscape and by agricultural improvement which has blurred underlying distinctions between landscape types in a drive for high yields from the soil.

4.1.2 A healthy sustainable landscape, like a human community, is dynamic. Change is inevitable and need not be deleterious. In considering the landscape of the next century, the emphasis must be on the appropriateness of changes and the balance between the needs of development and the needs of the environment.

4.1.3 The landscape guidelines proposed for each of the Regional Character Areas seek to:-

(i) **Recognise and strengthen the inherent qualities of each landscape.**
(ii) **Recognise inherent diversity of landscape type.**
(iii) **Recognise the existing value placed on different landscapes, eg by the planning system.**
(iv) **Recognise the activities likely to bring pressure on the landscape.**

LANDSCAPE CHANGE

4.2.1 This section identifies the activities likely to bring pressure for change and notes the elements of the landscape most vulnerable to change.

4.2.2 Landscape change can occur in three ways:-

(i) **Loss** of features that provide colour, interest, shape and scale, eg loss of hedgerows by field enlargement, loss of views, replacement of traditional agricultural buildings by modern 'off the peg' sheds, infill of open space within the rural villages.

(ii) **Introduction** of new features. Such change is inevitable and can have either a positive, negative or neutral effect on the landscape. Features that might be introduced into the landscape are new housing, windfarms, transmission lines, quarries, roads, new woodlands, etc.

(iii) **Decline** in quality or state of repair of features of the landscape, eg dereliction of the urban fringe, neglect of hedgerows, loss of a smooth rolling topography due to scrub invasion, introduction of standardised suburban styles to a previously architecturally diverse settlement.

PRESSURES ON THE LANDSCAPE

4.3.1 The 20th Century has been extraordinary in terms of the magnitude and pace of change in Humberside, although many of the forces of such change had their roots in the Industrial Revolution of the 19th Century.

4.3.2 Technology and trade have brought many undeniable improvements in the quality of life. With such improvements, however, has come a move to standardised solutions for building, agriculture, and communications which tend to ignore, rather than reflect, the landscape character of places and the differing ecosystems of the area.

4.3.3 Development has tended to introduce change and loss of features which have important implications for the landscape of Humberside. The main pressures which could influence the landscape during the next decades are as follows:-

(i) Agricultural Practices
(ii) Urban and Village Growth
(iii) New Housing in the Countryside
(iv) Roads and Access to the Countryside
(v) Tourism and Recreation
(vi) Forestry, trees and woodlands
(vii) Communications, Infrastructure, Power Generation and Transmission
(viii) Quarrying and Extraction
(ix) Large Buildings in or on the Edge of Countryside
(x) Coastal Activities and Natural Processes

(i) AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

4.4.1 Agricultural practices have reflected changed markets and the effects of Common Agricultural Policy subsidies. New and different crops continually emerge and it is impractical to consider proscribing any crop on landscape grounds.

4.4.2 Recent shifts in European and UK policy are placing greater emphasis on agri-environment measures whereby farmers are encouraged to turn proportions of their land over to non-arable or set-aside uses. These usually have wildlife benefits and often have landscape benefits for the area of the farm in which they are implemented. However, it is possible for farmers to continue farming the balance of their holding on intensive lines, without neglecting watercourses, hedges, hedgerow trees and other important landscape features.

4.4.3 Increased agricultural demand for water, coupled with predictions of climatic warming, will place greater demands on rivers and aquifers. Although partly regulated by abstraction consents, decline in groundwater may lead to loss of wet grassland, floodmeadows and ecologically valuable vegetation. A reaction to this decline, in the form of farm reservoir construction, may have visual implications.

4.4.4 Farm diversification may lead to greater use of farmland for leisure and tourism. Whilst diversification will be essential for maintenance of a thriving rural economy, siting of new buildings, car parks or signs can have visual impacts.

4.4.5 The landscape issues associated with changing agricultural practices are:-

SUMMARY ISSUES

(i) Potential of set-aside arable land to diversify habitats and provide landscape benefits.
(ii) Potential loss or degradation of landscape features of local importance on non-set-aside land.
(iii) Protection from the effects of drainage and groundwater decline on watercourses, wetlands and floodmeadows.
(iv) Potential restoration of landscape features of local importance where these have become degraded or lost.
(v) Risk of damage or loss of sites of archaeological value.

(ii) URBAN AND VILLAGE GROWTH

4.5.1 Recent projections of national demands for new housing (up to 4.4 million new households by AD2016) take into account the changing nature of society and the increased number of single people. This demand will inevitably place pressure on the urban fringe, on existing villages and may also be accommodated by construction of new settlements.

4.5.2 Growth accommodated in villages may be to the benefit of small village communities on the margins of economic viability but the landscape impact, felt at a local level, will usually be controversial.

4.5.3 In accommodating growth of settlement, a number of landscape issues arise:-

SUMMARY ISSUES

(i) Whether growth should be by infill of open spaces within settlements or by expansion.
(ii) Where infill is appropriate, protection of trees, walls, historic buildings, ponds and other features of potential landscape value, should be a priority.
(iii) Where expansion is appropriate, consideration of how the new edge of settlement will appear. This can often be harsh where inadequate landscape treatment is provided.
(iv) Choice of building materials, detailing and design methods.
(v) Consideration of scale, siting and relationship with neighbouring property.

(iii) NEW HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

4.6.1 Although present planning policies strictly limit the scope for new housing in open countryside, there will always be some demand for re-use of old farm buildings, construction of dwellings for agricultural workers/retired farmers and new dwellings, sometimes of an innovative nature, eg buried 'earth-shelters'.

4.6.2 Key landscape issues to consider are:-

SUMMARY ISSUES

(i) Relationship of the proposed new housing to the landform and to local landowners. Skyline locations are usually very intrusive.
(ii) Choice of building materials, detailing and design methods.
(iii) Relationships between outdoor spaces, fencing, walling, garages, outbuildings and access, and potential conflict with each other or with local character.

(iv) ROADS AND ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

4.7.1 Highway standards in terms of minimum curves, visibility, safety barriers, surfacing and signage have brought a welcome reduction in accidents and journey times. Yet the use of standardised solutions in highway design has often eroded the rural character of many roads (exemplified by hedges, ditches, verges, trees) and has opened up quiet areas to noise and disturbance.

4.7.2 The visual impact of roads and traffic can be significant in open, elevated or low-lying landscapes, eg the Yorkshire Wolds high farmland. Although immediate pressure for major new road building has lessened due to government financial stringencies, there will remain a programme of minor improvements carried out by Highway Authorities or their agents. Future economic expansion may lead to repeated pressure for significant roadbuilding, eg between Hull and York.

4.7.3 Some existing roads are not well integrated into the landscape, eg the A1079 crossing the high Wolds and parts of the A180. There may be scope for landscape integration schemes to reduce present visual impact.

4.7.4 With increased mobility and leisure expectations will come increased demand for access to the countryside for informal recreation. This usually involves parking the car before walking/cycling, etc but some leisure activities are based on motorised access to the countryside.

4.7.5 Factors to consider in providing improvements to the road network are:-

- The need for a strategic overview of need, alternatives and environmental assessment in major and moderate scale road schemes.
- The careful use of colours, materials and designs in road 'furniture' and landscape treatment.
- Attention to restoration of roadside landscapes following improvements.
- Selection of optimum routes, laybys, car parks, should include consideration of considered and opportunities taken to highlight local landscape character, eg at roundabouts, edges of settlement, river crossings etc.
- The need to monitor, plan for and zone (if necessary), off-road motorised leisure such as scrambling, 4WD pursuits, etc.

A useful reference is 'The Good Roads Guide' (Department of Transport).

SUMMARY ISSUES

(i) Road improvements may degrade the character of rural roads.
(ii) Careful appraisal of the strategic need and environmental impact of major road-building schemes is needed.
(iii) Mitigation techniques may help integrate existing roads into the landscape.
(iv) Car access into the countryside may require monitoring and controls.
(v) The design all new and existing road schemes need careful consideration in terms of landscape issues.

(v) TOURISM AND RECREATION

4.8.1 Tourism is the third largest industry in Great Britain and is important at a national level, in terms of foreign exchange earnings, and at a local level in terms of employment. The Humberside coast is promoted for its character and its beaches. Areas such as Spurn and Flamborough are well-visited by those interested in nature conservation and walking. Beverley, the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Wolds are used for days out by local people and their guests.

4.8.2 Whilst tourism is not a major industry in Humberside, it is growing annually and there is considerable visitor pressure on certain sites. Landscape issues should be considered as part of a strategic approach in provision for tourists and visitors.

4.8.3 Key landscape issues to consider are:

SUMMARY ISSUES

(i) Where built development is considered, the location and design of facilities should address the issues relevant to new houses and village expansion. Poor siting and design can lead to intrusion, particularly for areas such as caravan sites where it is difficult to control colours of vans.
(ii) Signing of attractions can lead to clutter and confusion in the landscape.

(vi) FORESTRY, TREES AND WOODLANDS

4.9.1 Woodland represents only 3% of the landcover of Humberside, as compared with a national average of over 10%. When it is recognised that this figure includes the large pine woods east of Scunthorpe, the relative openness of most of Humberside's landscape becomes even more evident.

4.9.2 Most landscape types in Humberside could comfortably absorb many more trees and woodlands. The exceptions are those types most dependent on openness in the definition of their character, eg Wolds High Farmland, Goole and Crowle Lowlands.

4.9.3 Creation of new woodlands usually brings new opportunities for paths and management or creation of other habitats as a subsidiary requirement of grant aid. Environmental guidelines produced by the Forestry Commission seek to ensure that new woodlands bring social and environmental benefits. These guidelines need to be tailored to individual sites. The landscape guidelines formulated for each Regional Character Area and each Local Landscape Type identify some of the key considerations in woodland design that should be considered alongside the Forestry Commission guidelines.

4.9.4 The use of native species in new woodland can bring ecological benefit, eg where lost ecosystems can be reconstructed. The best example might be alluvial (or floodplain) forests; a nationally rare type but one which could be reconstructed in the Ancholme Valley, the Ouse and Trent Lowlands and the Vale of York.

4.9.5 However, it should be recognised equally that exotic and naturalised species have made a very significant contribution to Humberside's landscape character, eg the pine woods of the Lincoln Edge, the beech/sycamore woodlands of the Wolds, the Lombardy poplars of the Ouse and Trent Levels and also the mixed woodlands of the Vale of York.

SUMMARY ISSUES

(i) Consideration of local diversity in species choice.
(ii) Potential for restoration of ecological landscapes, eg in the floodplains of the major rivers there is huge scope for alluvial woodland.
(iii) The need for management of visually or ecologically important woodland when present financial incentives are so limited.

There are many useful references but the Forestry Commission guidelines are perhaps the most comprehensive.

(vii) COMMUNICATIONS, INFRASTRUCTURE, POWER GENERATION AND TRANSMISSION

4.10.1 South Humberside has a number of conventional and gas-fired power stations with extensive transmission cabling. Those in the Trent Valley are very intrusive. North of the Humber, there are fewer power stations but transmission cabling is very visible in open rolling landscapes. Power lines are usually intrusive but the effects can be reduced by careful siting and strategic consideration of alternative alignments or rationalisation of existing pylons.

4.10.2 The use of underground cabling tends to be restricted to urban areas and is prohibitively expensive in all but the most sensitive rural locations. The Holford Rules seek to minimise visual intrusion by routing cabling away from settlements, roads and areas of high landscape value. However, professional landscape advice is essential.

4.10.3 Another technical development is the increasing feasibility of wind power generation along the North Sea coast and on high ground inland. Although wind farms are exciting means of generating 'clean' electricity, by their nature they tend to be sited in areas of high visibility and often high landscape value.

4.10.4 Planning authorities have an important role to play in the development of wind power, but must balance the requirement for prominent sites with the need to protect landscape quality. Other issues to consider are ecology, noise and secondary effects, eg new transmission cabling and access roads.

4.10.5 There are a number of landscape principles which should be brought to bear on the selection of sites for wind power generation and overhead cabling.

SUMMARY ISSUES

(i) Consideration of the design of the structures themselves and the number and layout within each group of structures.
(ii) Consideration of local landscape type and its potential to accommodate large vertical structures.
(iii) The impact of skyline development and potential use of 'backgrounding' vegetation or ridges.
(iv) Consideration of the zone of visual influence and the possibility of landscape mitigation and integration by offsite planting.
(v) The need for strategic environmental assessment, consideration of alternative sites and the use of professional landscape advice.

(viii) QUARRYING AND EXTRACTION OF AGGREGATES

4.11.1 The economy of Humberside has historically benefited from various mineral resources. At present, chalk quarries and clay/sand/gravel extraction sites are active. Peat, clay and Jurassic limestone have also been important and continue to be extracted on a small scale. The development of Scunthorpe was dependent on ironstone extraction.

4.11.2 One issue of concern is the proposal to deep-mine coal in the Selby coalfield which has the potential to affect the hydrologically and ecologically sensitive Lower Derwent Valley.

4.11.3 Although most present day quarries are subject to detailed conditions of restoration and aftercare, the quality of restoration can be variable and much depends on enforcement. In monitoring restoration and agreeing variations, advantage can be taken of opportunities to improve habitat restoration or visual mitigation.

4.11.4 Selection of sites for new quarries is subject to environmental assessment. Key landscape issues are:-

SUMMARY ISSUES

(i) Maintenance of high standards of environmental assessment, taking into account all aspects, particularly hydrology and archaeology, and overall scale of development in the landscape.
(ii) Potential for restoration of abandoned workings to maximise ecological/visual benefits, especially in the peatlands of Goole and Crowle.
(iii) Effects of restoration proposals on local landscape character in terms of landform, species choice, etc.

(ix) LARGE BUILDINGS IN OR ON THE EDGE OF COUNTRYSIDE

4.12.1 The nature of Humberside's agricultural and industrial economy means that large buildings are frequent and often visible, eg agricultural stores, silos, industrial units, power stations, petro-chemical installations. In most instances it is not possible to screen or hide such buildings and instead attention should be given to choice of materials, quality of design, scale in the landscape and boundary treatments.

SUMMARY ISSUES

(i) Siting of large buildings in terms of visual impact by consideration of landform, landcover, opportunities for background landscaping.
(ii) Potential for use of appropriate natural materials and colours.
(iii) Potential for sensitive use of modern materials such as profile metal sheeting.

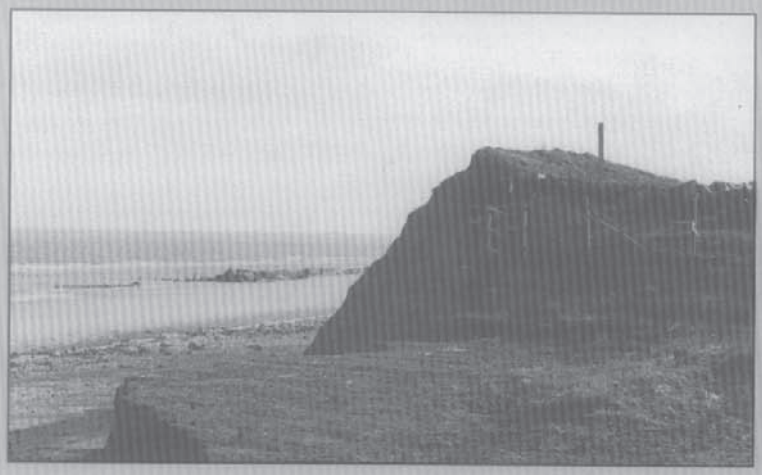
(x) COASTAL PROCESSES AND MANAGEMENT

4.13.1 The Holderness and Lincolnshire coasts, along with the Humber Estuary, function as a coastal cell in which processes of erosion and deposition would naturally be in a form of balance. However, the armouring of sea defences has led to a net reduction and a lack of recharge of sediments within the estuary.

4.13.2 These complex processes have been described in some detail in the 'Humber Estuary and Coast', (November 1994), a report prepared by the Environment Sub-committee of the County Council. The coast is an area of diversity and value. Flamborough and Spurn are internationally important for birds and are tourist destinations in their own right. The Holderness and Lincolnshire coasts are valuable for leisure and forms of family-orientated tourism.

4.13.3 The coast and estuary also support many industries which are critical to the regional economy. The complexity of coastal processes is only now beginning to be understood. At the same time, a number of issues relating to the continued heavy financial commitment to coastal defences and the future planning status of the coastline are rising up the political agenda. PPG 22 (Coastal Planning) makes important distinctions between developed and undeveloped coasts. This distinction is likely to lead to formulation of new or previously untried (in Britain) approaches to coastal management in undeveloped coastal areas.

4.13.4 While most coastal and estuary planning will be affected by sea defence, property value and ecological issues, there are some landscape principles which are relevant.



SUMMARY ISSUES

(i) Potential for landscape qualities to be recognised in strategic management planning.
(ii) The potential for applying the principals set out in PPG 22 and to landscape planning, such as stressing the importance of the undeveloped coast and restricting developments to those dependent on a coastal location.
(iii) The potential for guidelines set out for new development and town/village expansion being applied to the location and landscape treatment of coastal development.