

Allen Pyke Associates

FOSTON PARISH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT



Landscape architecture



Urban design



Environmental planning

Prepared on behalf of

FOSTON PARISH COUNCIL

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Photographs are taken by Christina Lees and Vanessa Ross

Image on front cover – View of Foston across the fields from Marshal Way

I. Introduction

- I.1 In January 2014, The Parish of Foston in Lincolnshire commissioned landscape architects, Allen Pyke Associates Ltd. to undertake a locally based landscape character assessment of the parish. The purpose of this study is to provide supporting information for a potential Neighbourhood Plan. The assessment has been undertaken by Vanessa Ross a Chartered Landscape Architect who is acting as a consultant to Allen Pyke Associates and who has prepared two similar character assessments for the nearby parishes of Stubton and Hough on the Hill.
- I.2 The assessment draws on the existing published landscape character assessment for South Kesteven and on the Lincolnshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (see sections below for further detail). Both documents are essential parts of the existing, adopted local planning policy and have therefore been important in the development of this parish based study which seeks, where relevant, to further sub-divide the area into a finer grain of characterisation.
- I.3 This study has been undertaken in line with the Natural England's best practice guidelines along with a focus on the experiences and perception of the local residents of their landscape and surroundings. As well as reviewing the elements that make up the character ie the physical nature of the landscape and its land use, the experience of living or working within the area or driving or walking around it has been considered. Important views, valued walks, local landmarks etc have all been discussed with the residents of the parish and the findings have been used to develop the landscape character areas set out below.

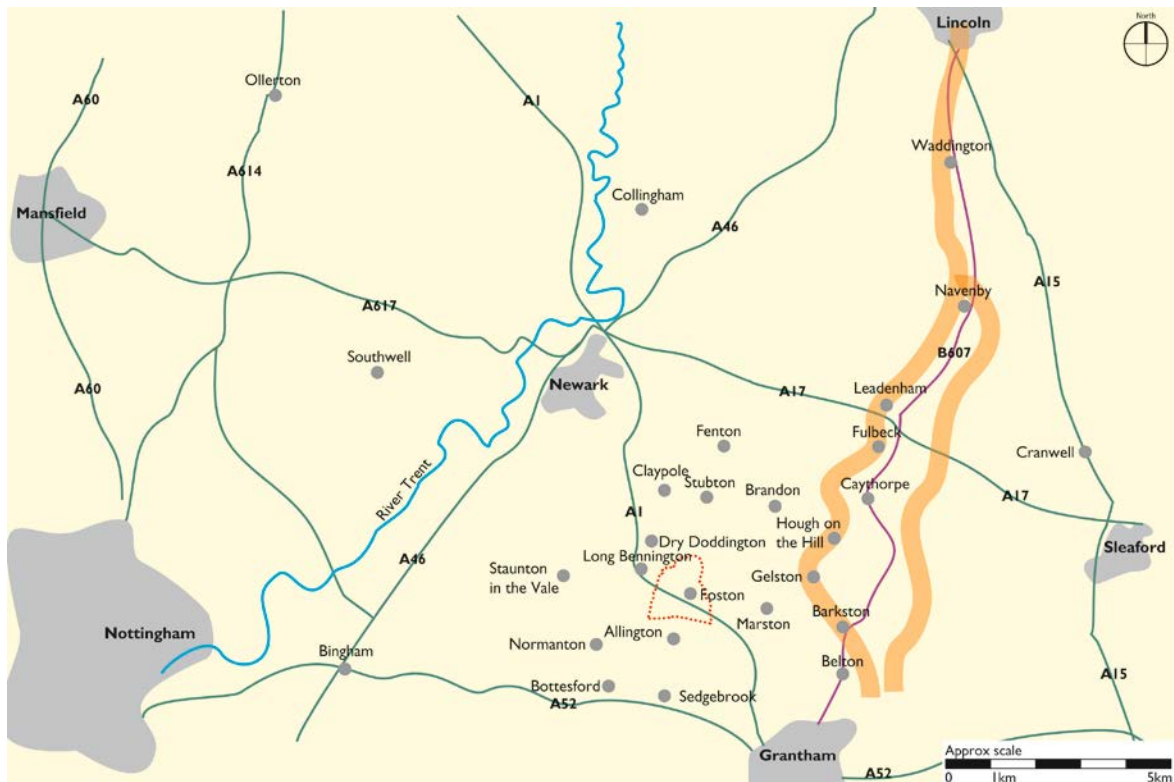


Fig 1 – Location of Foston Parish within the wider area (note – not all villages/roads are illustrated)

Methodology

- I.4 Landscape Character Assessment, as noted above, is the recognised methodology for describing the landscape and its defining characteristics at a variety of scales from national through to regional, district and parish. Guidelines for undertaking such assessments were published by Natural England (formerly the Countryside Agency) in 2002 and 'Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland' remains the recognised standard for such studies. Landscape character assessment is also recognised by national government within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- I.5 This parish based assessment has been undertaken in a number of stages. Following the development of the brief and scope of this study with members of the Parish Council, the first stage was to undertake a 'desk based' assessment which included a review of current and historical mapping, planning policy and existing, published, character assessments. The second stage involved a series of site visits and walking of most of the footpaths and lanes within the parish. These were recorded with photographs and written notes describing the features within the landscape, views, landmarks etc. The third stage involved drawing up an initial character area map and describing the key characteristics of each area. Stage four involved input from the community which sought to gain an understanding of how local people use, experience and feel about the landscape. This occurred through the use of a simple questionnaire and a workshop with local residents who reviewed the initial findings and the initial character area locations and descriptions. The final stage was the collation of information into a map and a description for the parish level character area. The findings were then used to consider the threats or implications of change on the landscape. This has been developed into a series of objectives and recommendations that may be used to inform future parish based policy.
- I.6 Whilst the assessment followed the above stages, this has not been a linear process and each stage has overlapped and informed the work of the other stages.
- I.7 The site work was undertaken during the winter months when trees and hedges were not in leaf. Seasonal change will affect the appearance of much of the landscape, especially that which is in arable production. The different annual and seasonal growing regimes result in an ever changing landscape ranging from deep ploughed fields, to the floral yellow cover of oilseed rape, to the bright green of young crops and the golden fields just prior to harvest.

2. Policy Context

National Planning Policy Context

- 2.1 At a national level the landscape is recognised as an important asset and this is set out in planning policy as well as being promoted by government bodies such as Natural England and English Heritage. In 2006 the government signed up to the European Landscape Convention which became binding in 2007. Part of delivering the objectives of the convention has been through the preparation and application of landscape character assessments. Such assessments have become important and recognised tools in helping decision making bodies, developers and the general public understand distinctions between landscapes at all scales as well as helping set policy relating to the conservation or enhancement of the landscape. The convention defines landscape as *“An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.”* (Council of Europe 2000)
- 2.2 Under the Localism Act 2011, the government sets out that local communities, through a Parish Council or through the formation of a local forum, can produce Neighbourhood Plans with a view to setting locally based guidance on where new development can go and what any such development should look like. This landscape character assessment will be used to inform the policies set out in the potential Neighbourhood Plan and will form part of the ‘evidence base’ for the Plan.
- 2.3 The NPPF forms the primary national planning policy in respect of new development and seeks to promote sustainable development across the country. Local Plans (those prepared by the District Councils) are also required to be in line with the NPPF. Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in line with both the NPPF and Local Plan policy.
- 2.4 The NPPF sets out 12 ‘core principles’ the first of which states that decision making should *“be genuinely plan-led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings, with succinct local and neighbourhood plans setting out a positive vision for the future of the area.”*
- 2.5 The fourth principle states that decision making should *“always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings”* and the fifth principle states that it should *“take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it”*.
- 2.6 Section 8 of the NPPF, Promoting Healthy Communities, sets out the national policy relating to access to open space and its importance to health and well-being, whilst much of this policy is concerned with formal open space and sports provision, paragraph 75 states that *“Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.”*
- 2.7 Section 11, Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment sets out how policy and decision making should protect and enhance the natural environment including minimising impact on bio-diversity and

'protecting and enhancing valued landscapes' with an emphasis on existing 'protected landscapes'. Section 12 goes on to set out policy relating to Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment noting that policy and planning decisions should take account of *"opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place."*

- 2.8 Paragraph 170, which sets out requirements for local authorities in respect of preparing an 'evidence base' to support their local plans, states that *"Where appropriate, landscape character assessments should also be prepared, integrated with assessment of historic landscape character, and for areas where there are major expansion options assessments of landscape sensitivity."*

Local Planning Policy Context

- 2.9 The Parish of Foston is located within the administrative boundary of South Kesteven District Council. The Core Strategy adopted in 2010 contains the current planning policy. Section 4 'Environmental Policies' sets out the Council's policy relating to environmental issues including landscape character which is set out in Policy EN1 'Protection and Enhancement of the Character of the District'. The preamble to the policy states that

"Landscapes are an important part of Lincolnshire's physical and cultural resource. They contain innumerable visible traces of human interaction with nature over many millennia. They contribute to the identity of the County, provide settings for everyday life, attract tourism and business, and are a source of enjoyment and inspiration. Virtually all landscape, however unassuming, means something to someone."

It goes on to state that

"The District's landscape character is not only its topography but is a blend of natural features, biodiversity and man-made structures. This policy aims to ensure that these resources are conserved and that the environment is protected and enhanced. It aims to make sure that development within the District does not compromise the variety and distinctiveness of the existing biodiversity and wider environment. It is intended to sustain an attractive, diverse, high-quality, accessible, thriving and environmentally healthy countryside in South Kesteven."

- 2.10 Policy EN1 States

"South Kesteven's Landscape Character Areas are identified on the map [paragraph 4.1.10]. Development must be appropriate to the character and significant natural, historic and cultural attributes and features of the landscape within which it is situated, and contribute to its conservation, enhancement or restoration. All development proposals and site allocations will be assessed in relation to:

- 1. statutory, national and local designations of landscape features, including natural and historic assets*
- 2. local distinctiveness and sense of place*
- 3. historic character, patterns and attributes of the landscape*
- 4. the layout and scale of buildings and designed spaces*
- 5. the quality and character of the built fabric and their settings*
- 6. the condition of the landscape*
- 7. biodiversity and ecological networks within the landscape*
- 8. public access to and community value of the landscape*
- 9. remoteness and tranquillity*
- 10. visual intrusion*

- 11. noise and light pollution*
- 12. Conservation Area Appraisals and Village Design Statements, where these have been adopted by the Council*
- 13. impact on controlled waters*
- 14. protection of existing open space (including allotments and public open space, and open spaces important to the character, setting and separation of built-up areas)”*

Parish Level Policy – The Foston Parish Plan

- 2.11 In 2007 the parish plan was published following and extensive consultation with residents on local amenities and issues facing the village and this has subsequently been used by the Parish Council to target delivery of amenities such as improvements to play and sports facilities within the village. It is anticipated that this will be updated following completion of the Neighbourhood plan process.

3. Existing Published Character Assessments

- 3.1 There are already studies which exist at a national, regional and district scale and this section will summarise the findings of these assessments as they form an important basis for the more detailed parish level assessment below.

National Landscape Character Area

- 3.2 Natural England is currently in the process of reviewing and re-publishing all national level character assessments. The parish of Foston falls within character area 48 Trent and Belvoir Vales (which was recently re-published in April 2013). This (see map below) covers a large area and is described as being:

“characterised by undulating, strongly rural and predominantly arable farmland, centred on the River Trent. A low-lying rural landscape with relatively little woodland cover, the NCA offers long, open views. Newark-on-Trent (generally referred to as Newark) lies at the centre with Grantham, Nottingham, Lincoln and Gainsborough on the peripheries. The southern and eastern edges of the Vales are defined by the adjoining escarpments of the Lincolnshire Edge and the Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Wolds NCA. To the west, the escarpment of a broad ridge of rolling landscape defines the boundary with the neighbouring Sherwood and Humberhead Levels NCAs. The area’s generally fertile soils and good quality agricultural land have supported a diversity of farming over a long period but, because of this, little semi-natural habitat remains. The powerful River Trent and its flood plain provide a strong feature running through the landscape. It is the greatest biodiversity resource, being a major corridor for wildlife moving through the area and supporting a variety of wetland habitats. It also provides flood storage as well as large amounts of cooling water for local power stations.”

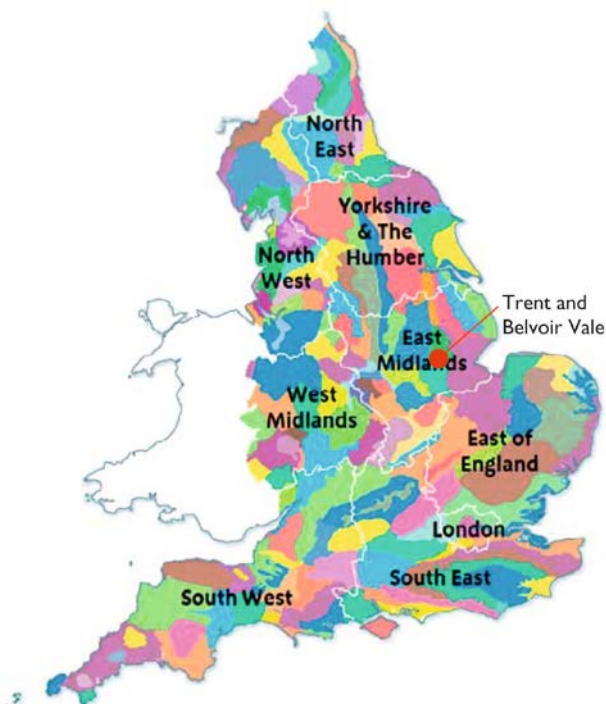


Fig 2 – National Landscape Character Area 48 – Trent and Belvoir Vale

- 3.3 It is of note that several photographs used to illustrate the character area within this publication are taken from within the nearby parish of Hough on the Hill and those looking west capture views looking down

across the Trent Valley from the elevated slopes of the escarpment. The full character assessment and the broader scale policies within it can be viewed on the Natural England website.

Regional Scale Character Area

3.4 The East Midlands Regional Landscape Character Assessment was published in 2010 on behalf of the East Midlands Landscape Partnership. At this regional scale the parish falls within the Character Type - 'Lowland Vales' and within Character Area 4a 'Unwooded Vales'. The key characteristics are described as follows -

- Extensive, low lying rural landscape underlain by Triassic and Jurassic mudstones and clays and widespread superficial deposits;
- Expansive long distance and panoramic views from higher ground at the margin of the vales gives a sense of visual containment;
- Low hills and ridges gain visual prominence in an otherwise gently undulating landscape;
- Complex drainage patterns of watercourses that flow within shallow undulations often flanked by pasture and riparian habitats;
- Limited woodland cover; shelter belts and hedgerow trees gain greater visual significance and habitat value as a result;
- Productive arable and pastoral farmland, with evidence of increasing reversion to arable cropping in recent times;
- Regular pattern of medium sized fields enclosed by low and generally well maintained hedgerows and ditches in low lying areas; large modern fieldscapes evident in areas of arable reversion; and
- Sparsely settled with small villages and dispersed farms linked by quiet rural lanes.

District Landscape Character Assessment

3.5 The South Kesteven Landscape Character Assessment was prepared by FPRC on behalf of the District Council in 2007. It forms part of current planning policy and is specifically referred to within the Core Strategy environment policies. The assessment, building on the national character assessment, divides the district into six character areas (see map below). The parish of Foston falls within the character area also called the 'Trent and Belvoir Vales'. The key characteristics for this area are described as follows -

- A relatively simple, medium to large-scale, open arable or mixed farming landscape.
- Flat or very gently undulating topography.
- Simple regular fields enclosed by hawthorn hedges.
- Relatively few hedgerow trees and virtually no woodland.
- Small villages typically located on slightly rising land.
- Church towers and spires visible across the landscape.
- Buildings styles vary, but a high proportion of brick with dark red pantiles

3.6 The landscape objectives for this character area are as follows:

- Maintain and improve field boundary condition.
- Retain ditch patterns.
- Maintain wet grassland areas.
- Protect any woodland cover.
- Maintain existing hedgerow trees and plant new hedgerow trees.
- Provide new woodland planting with any new large scale agricultural buildings.
- Maintain views to elevated villages and churches.

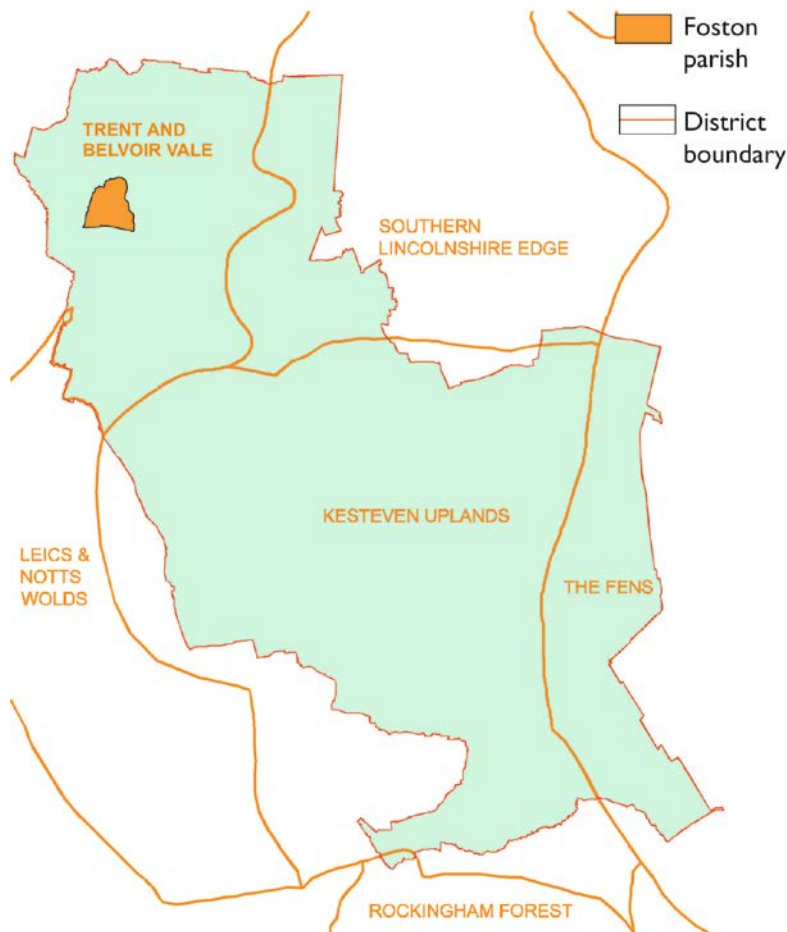


Fig 3 – SKDC Landscape Character Areas

Historic Landscape Characterisation

- 3.7 Lincolnshire County Council published the Lincolnshire Historic Landscape Project in 2010. The study, based on best practice methodology provided by English Heritage, seeks to define the existing landscape in terms of its historic development and influences. Foston falls within the wider Regional Character Area 6 known as The Trent Valley which notes “the entire area is characterised by nucleated settlements and isolated farmsteads” and notes the settlements to the far south of the area “are larger in size and more frequent forming a crescent following the edge of the low lying ground through which the River Witham flows”. At a more local scale, the Parish falls within the Character Area Zone TVL4 The West Grantham Farmlands within The Trent Valley Character Area. The zone is also described in terms of its agricultural development relating to the survival of ancient enclosures of the open field system and the strong survival of the planned enclosure landscapes with modern larger field boundaries retaining the east west alignments.
- 3.8 The description of the character area goes on to state ‘ the landscape of this zone is divided between flat, low lying areas of farmland and several small hills, on which the historic nucleated settlements are found. There are several watercourses that pass through the zone, including the River Witham and the Foston Beck”.

- 3.9 The landscape of the wider character zone is described as rural, displaying a 'strongly planned character'. Reference is also made to the well preserved ridge and furrow in some fields. During the 18th century, any remaining open fields or commons were enclosed either by private owners or under the parliamentary enclosures acts, which also resulted in the addition of dispersed farmsteads, beyond the existing settlements. Further modification to field patterns have taken place in the twentieth century resulting in some areas having larger fields to accommodate modern mechanised farming techniques.
- 3.10 The assessment refers to an 'extensive pattern of crop marks in the area between the River Witham and Foston Beck' which suggests Iron Age settlement in the area and notes that modern day settlement largely originating from the early medieval period.

4. Foston Parish Landscape Assessment

Introduction

- 4.1 As described in the introduction, the methodology for assessing the parish landscape character areas has been applied using a combination of published information and maps, site visits and consultation with local residents. This section provides a brief description of the main attributes contributing to the landscape of the parish of Foston. This is followed by a description of the parish level character areas.
- 4.2 The parish of Foston comprises a predominantly agricultural landscape with the village of Foston located to the south of the parish. The name of the village meaning the farmstead or village of a man named Fot (A Dictionary of Lincolnshire Place Names by Kenneth Cameron, 1998).
- 4.3 The parish lies to the west of Lincolnshire approximately 9 miles from Newark on Trent and 24 miles south of Lincoln. The A1 runs through the parish to the south of the village of Foston, though a few properties are located south of the road. The main East Coast railway line is located approximately 1.5 miles to the north east beyond the parish boundary.



Fig. 4 – Village Plan

Settlement

- 4.4 The village comprises some 200+ houses and is a broadly linear in a north – south direction with smaller lanes of housing leading from Main Street to the south and Long Street to the north. The properties in the village include a number of older listed buildings, but predominantly date in age from the 19th century to the early 21st century. The village until relatively recently included a number of facilities such as a school, pub and shop but these have all now closed. Whilst such amenities no longer exist, it is of note that there are a number of people either working from home or with small businesses based in the village. There is a village hall located in the north off Church Street, well used by local community groups and to the west of the village, south of Newark Hill lies Willow Lakes Fishery, a popular and well renowned recreational fishing lakes within a wooded area. The River Witham is also a popular fishing spot. The village playing fields and tennis courts are located to the east, off Chapel Lane. This is a popular and well used facility which the Parish Council maintain and manage the programme of on-going improvements.



The playing fields in use by a local football team



The playing fields with the escarpment beyond



View towards former Black Horse pub



View looking east along Goosegate Lane

- 4.5 During the 19th century and as a result of the location of Foston on a major coaching route there were a number of pubs and inns in the village. Following the introduction of rail and the bypassing of the village in 1926, these have all since closed with only the former Black Horse pub remaining in-situ, though this has been converted into housing. Similarly a number of barns and farm buildings have been converted in more recent years. The Foston Post Windmill was one of the oldest in Britain, dating back to 1624. It was demolished in 1966. It had been sited at one of the houses located close to the A1 called Mill House. Previous to that it was sited at Mill Close on Allington Lane and before that it stood immediately below the old Post Office on Newark Hill. At the time these mills were considered portable.

4.6 Buildings in the village are generally two stories with some bungalows or single storey conversions. The majority of properties within the village are built from redbrick with pan tiled roofs however there are also a number of houses that are built from limestone or which include limestone architectural detailing. Modern properties dating from the late 20th and early 21st centuries are again predominantly brick with more modern roofing materials but many combine a use of brick and lime stone.

4.7 The Parish Church of St Peters (Grade I listed) which is located within the church yard between Church Street and Long Street dates from the late 12th century though significant alternations were made in the 19th century. The church is built from Lincolnshire limestone with some iron stone and blue lias.



The Parish Church of St Peter



Foston Village Hall

4.8 A small number of properties lie to the south of the A1 detached from the main part of the village but accessible on foot by a crossing over the A1 at road level. The service station that is located here includes a shop and café along with facilities such as a cashpoint machine and parcel collection point.



Pedestrian route across the A1



Farm house and cottages on Long Street

4.9 A history of Foston was written by EM Brieant and GA Parker and first published in 1988 and the following information is taken from this publication. Settlement in the locality is known to date back to Roman times with a villa being excavated near the ford at the River Witham and subsequently the Vikings settled and governed the wider area. In Norman times the feudal system developed with Foston being part of the manorial court of Long Bennington. The pattern of farming evolved in the medieval period with open fields divided into strips, though this was subsequently replaced by the 18th century enclosures acts. Whilst modern farming techniques have resulted in field boundaries being removed there are still references within the boundaries to the pre-enclosures era.

- 4.10 The 1887 OS map below illustrates the layout of the village and field patterns demonstrating that little has changed since this period other than the introduction of the bypass and subsequent duelling of the A1.

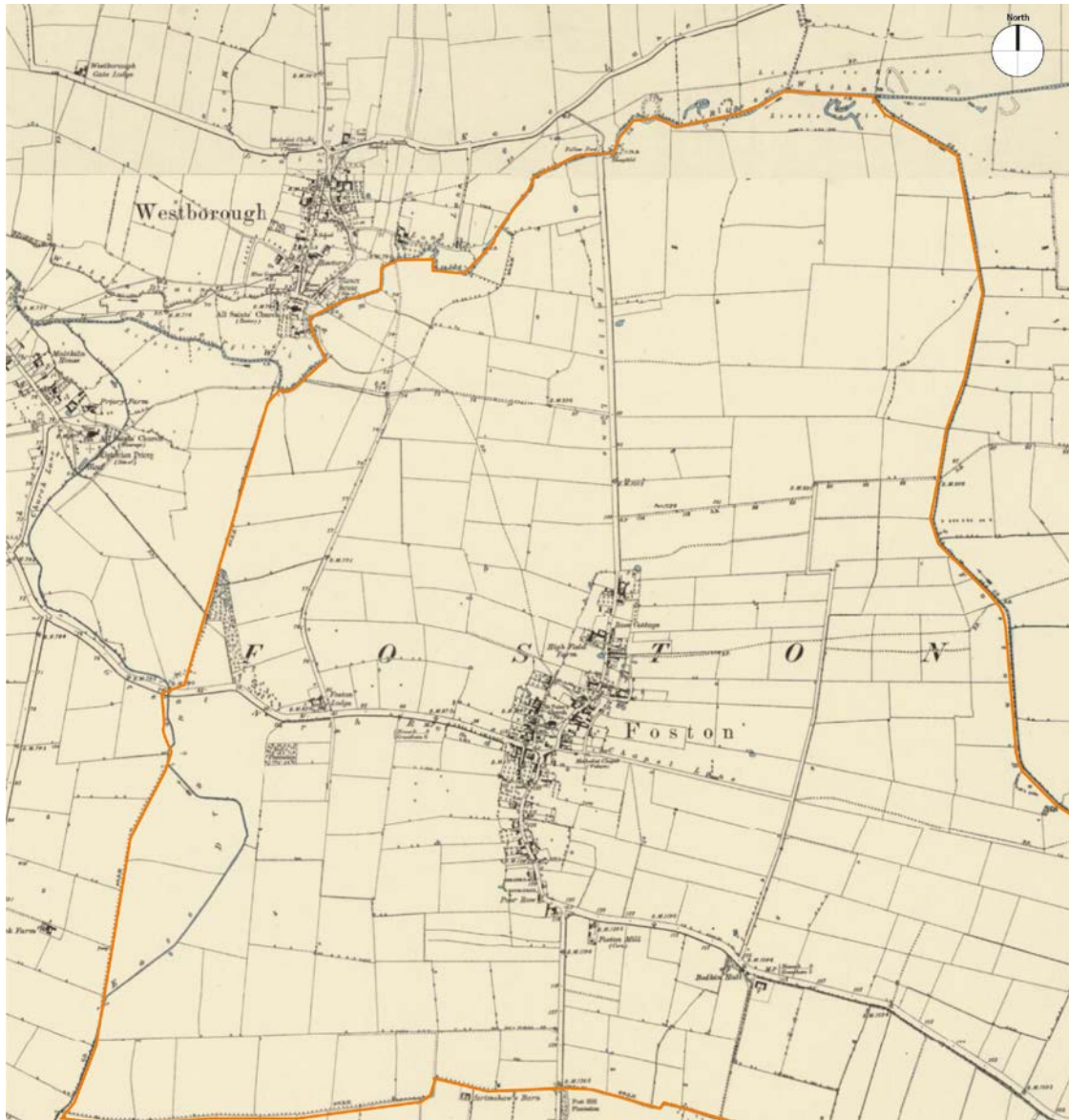
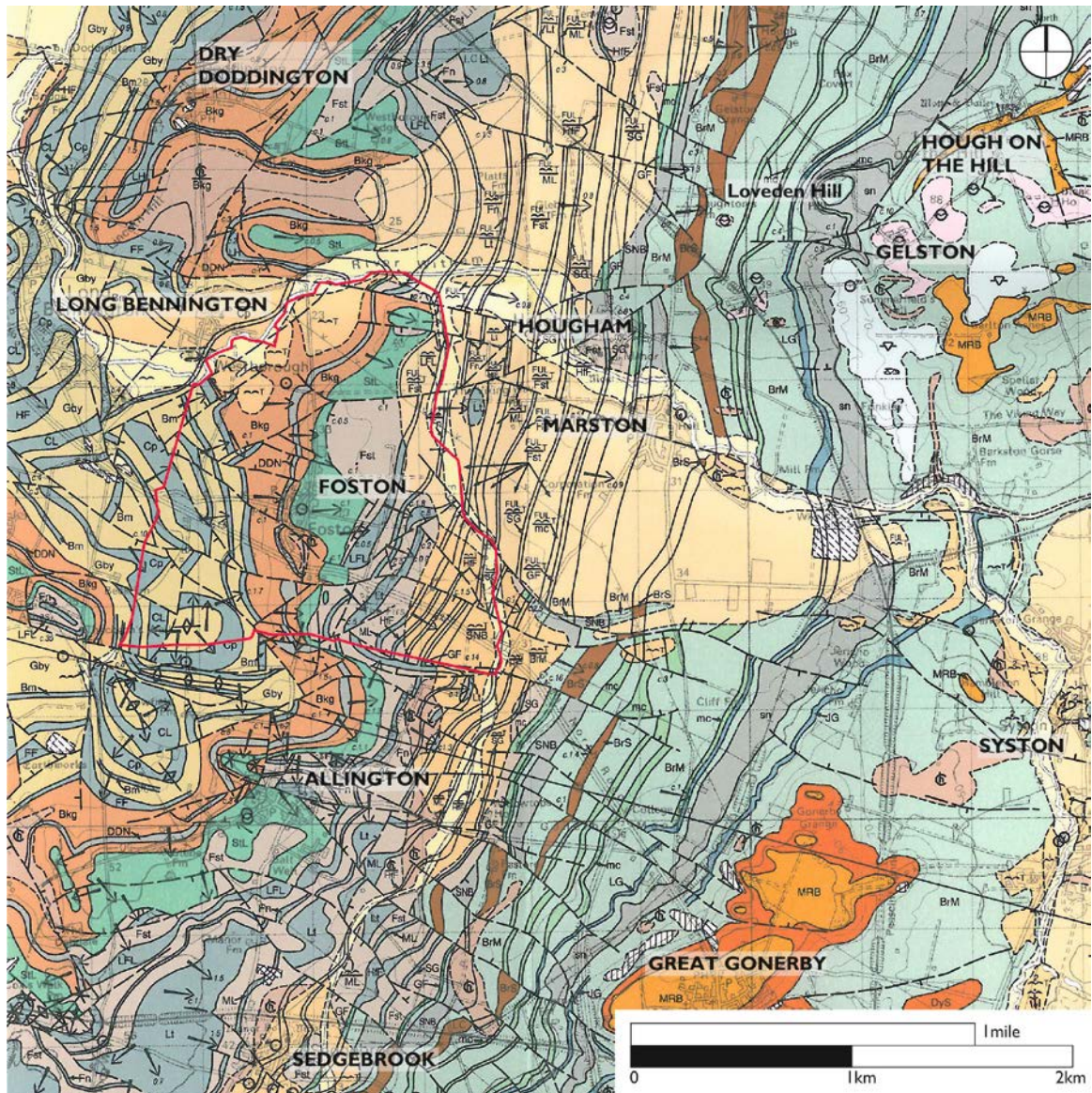


Fig. 5 – Extract from 1887 Ordnance Survey map (note south eastern area of parish not available)

Geology and Hydrology

- 4.11 The underlying geology of the parish is limestone and mudstone, with alluvium associated with the River Witham and Foston Beck which is divided by a seam of Limestone running north–south. Areas of old river sand and gravels are also located to the north and north east of the Parish.



Legend

	Parish Boundary		Alluvium		Sand and gravel of uncertain origin		Barnby Mudstone
	Worked Ground		River Terrace Deposits, 1st to 2nd as numbered		Brant Mudstone Formation		Granby Member Limestone
	Back-filled pits and quarries		River Terrace Deposits, undifferentiated		Brant Mudstone Ironstone		Beckingham Member Limestone
	Landscaped ground		Fullbeck Sand and Gravel		Stubton Limestone		Brandon Sandstone
	Made ground		Belton sand and Gravel		Brant Mudstone Limestone Nodules		Marlstone Rock Formation
	Landslip		Glaciofluvial Deposits, undifferentiated		Foston Member Limestone		Dyrham Siltstone Formation
	Head		Till		Foston Member Mudstone		

Fig. 6 – Geology of the Parish and surrounding areas

- 4.12 The northern boundary of the parish follows the line of the River Witham and the eastern boundary follows the line of the Foston Beck. The agricultural land across the Parish has a predominance field drains and there are some areas man-made lakes at Willow Lakes Fishery. A number of properties in the village and across the wider area are known to have wells.



View looking east from the footbridge over the River Witham



Willow Lakes Fishery

Topography, Views and Visibility

- 4.13 The topography of the parish is perceived as a predominantly a flat landscape with levels ranging between 25m AOD and 30m AOD, though the village itself is located on higher ground rising to approximately 40m AOD.

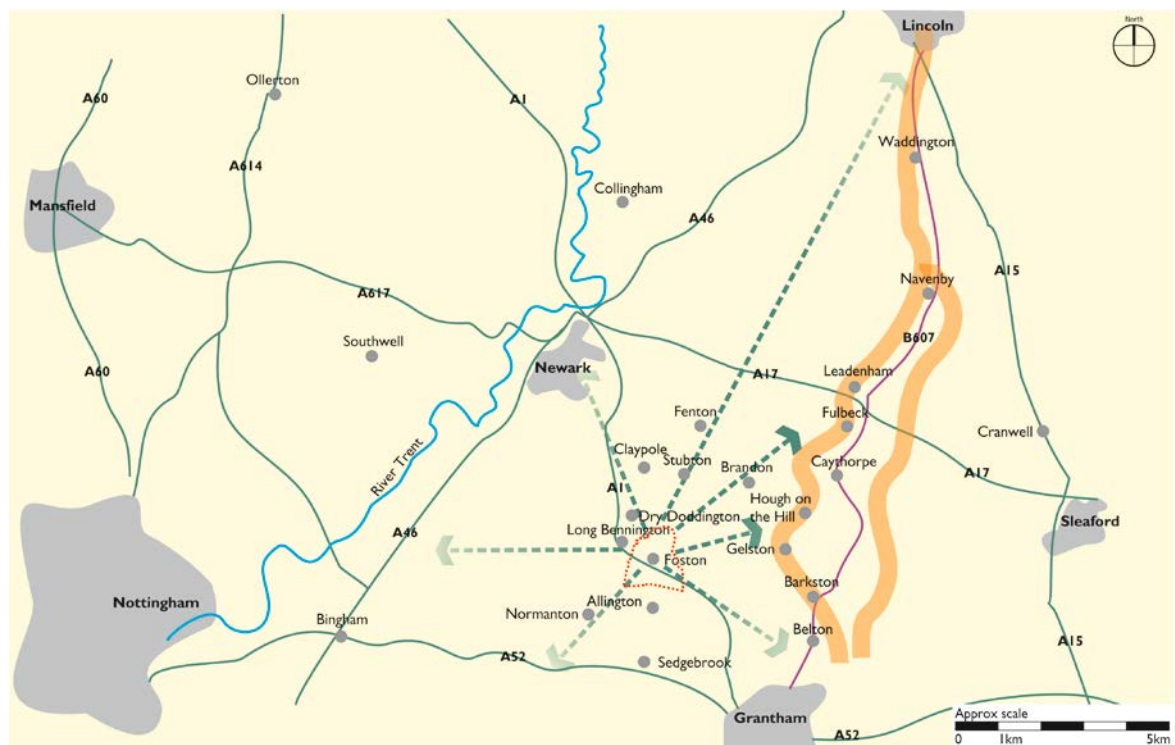


Fig. 7 – Illustrative map of key views towards the surrounding areas and the escarpment slopes (shown in orange)

- 4.14 Views out to the north are across the agricultural fields towards Lincoln and Newark. To the east the 'Lincoln Cliff' escarpment is clearly visible and to the south and west, again views are out towards agricultural land. The A1 can be seen in some views from the southern part of the parish, though is largely screened from views from the village by a dense bank of trees.



View from the Viking Way path (off Fallow Lane) showing 'ridge and furrow' in the foreground

- 4.15 A number of high status houses are site along the length of the escarpment, south of Lincoln, and these were deliberately located to benefit from the views out across the Trent Valley and along the curve of the escarpment itself; these include properties such as Fulbeck Hall (Grade II* Listed) and Leadenham House (Grade II* Listed). This is also the case for Belton House (Grade I Listed with a Registered Park and Garden), north of Grantham and some 4 miles from the parish. Bellmount Tower (Grade II* Listed), within the grounds of Belton House is located on elevated slopes to benefit from the view. The Tower, built in 1751 as a focal point and viewing tower has been the subject of a separate study 'The Belton House and Park – Setting Study and Policy Statement' 2010 (prepared by Atkins for South Kesteven District Council and The National Trust) and whilst the parish lies several miles away from the Park, it is clear that the countryside within the parish forms part of the wider view and landscape setting of Belton House and Park and in particular Bellmount Tower. Belvoir Castle is located approximately 5miles to the south and Foston church tower can be seen from the Castle



View looking south east from the Parish towards Belton – with the Bellmount Tower in the centre of the picture.



View looking across the A1 towards the service station

Land Use and Vegetation

- 4.16 The land use is predominantly agricultural fields with the majority of land being used for arable production growing wheat, sugar-beet, oilseeds, potatoes etc. There are a few fields used for grazing sheep adjacent to the village as well as some horse paddocks and fields for sheep, pigs, ornamental cattle and alpacas.
- 4.17 There is limited woodland/tree cover though there are some trees within hedgerows and along Foston Beck. Hedgerows grow along many field boundaries, and comprise native species with a predominance of hawthorn and blackthorn. As would be expected with any residential location, within the village there is a greater variety of trees and vegetation including ornamental trees, conifers and smaller fruit trees typical of garden planting.



View looking south from Chapel Lane towards A1 with escarpment on the horizon

Footpaths and Cycle Routes

- 4.18 There is a network of footpaths, tracks and bridleways throughout the parish and a number of loops are highlighted on the Lincolnshire County Council leaflet published in 2010 and identified below. Section 11 (Masrton-Woolsthorpe) of The Viking Way runs through the parish. This is a long distance path approximately 150 miles long connects The Humber in the north of the county with Rutland Water in the south. The Viking Way is also part of the much longer European designated long distance path, Route E2 which runs from Inverness in Scotland to Nice in France

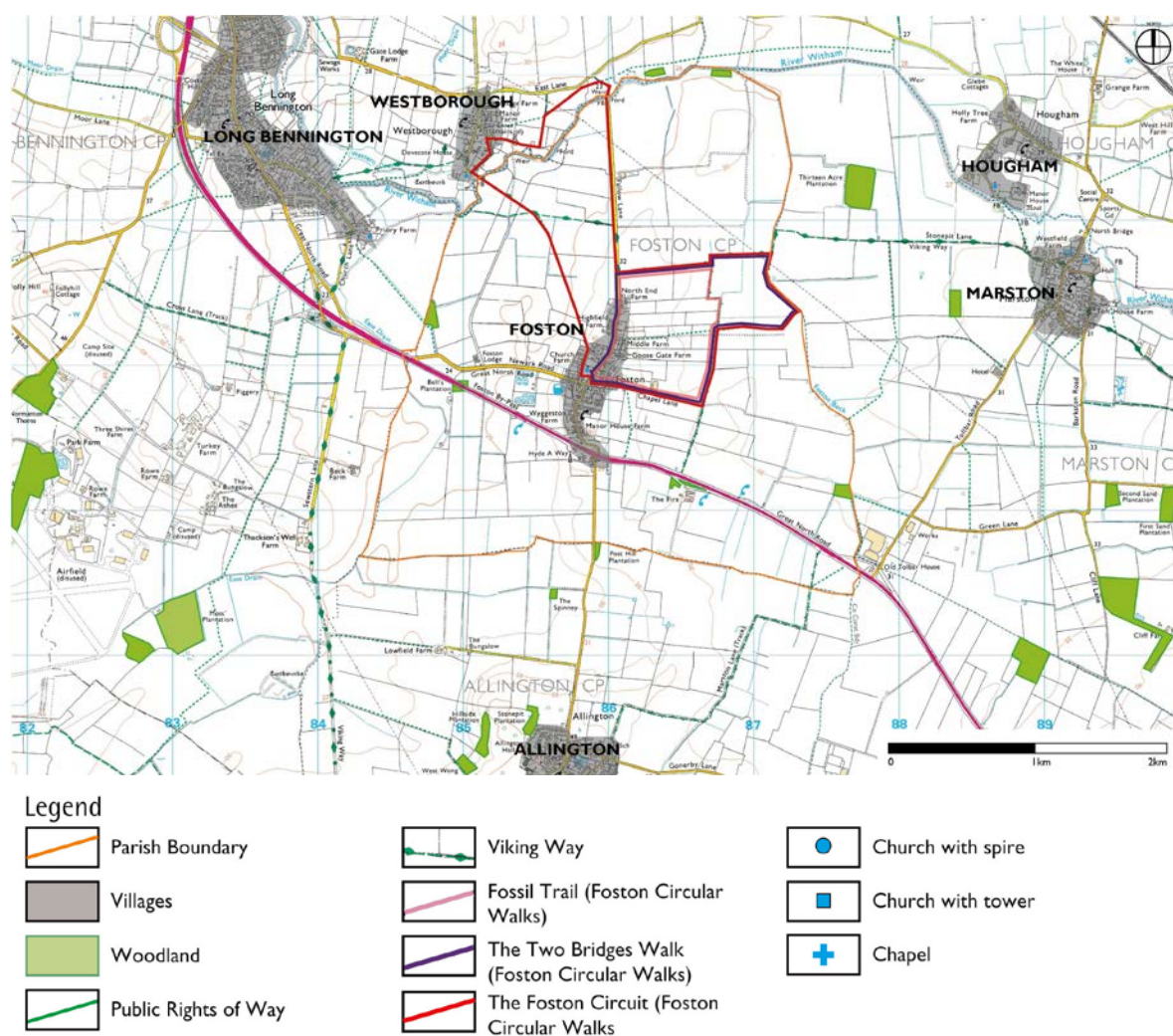


Fig 8 – Public rights of way, churches and areas of woodland

Consultation

- 4.19 Consultation is seen as essential part of the development of the parish character assessment and this has been done through a combination of liaison with the committee developing the Neighbourhood Plan, an initial questionnaire and a subsequent workshop.
- 4.20 An initial consultation questionnaire was issued to residents in the parish by the Parish Council as part of the background work to prepare a Neighbourhood plan. Whilst the number of returned questionnaires was not high there a pattern emerged regarding the value and status of the surrounding area. This included two questions relating to the surrounding landscape and countryside and the key findings of this were that residents valued most the rural and peaceful setting and that they valued the typical village character. Open views were highlighted as very important along with access to footpaths and other rural pursuits and a number of responses noted the historic assets and unspoilt nature of the area.
- 4.21 When asked what could be improved about the local countryside and landscape, a number of people wanted the area to keep in its current state and to improve signage and maintenance of footpaths. A greater number of responses wanted to see a restriction on development, particularly noting industrial and renewable developments.
- 4.22 At the workshop, which was held in June 2014, attendees were asked to discuss the following questions
- 1 - Which words would you use to best describe the character of the countryside within the parish?
 - 2 - What are the key elements, landmarks or features that you associate with the surrounding countryside?
 - 3 - What do you value most about your local countryside?
 - 4 - What, if any, are the negative aspects of the surrounding countryside?
 - 5 - Thinking about how you experience the local countryside, what, if any improvements could be made to enhancing this experience?
 - 6 - How do you use the countryside – eg walking, cycling, working etc.
- 4.23 Whilst questions 1 and 5 considered similar aspects of those in the initial questionnaire, the resultant discussions confirmed that the main characteristics were those associated with the rural nature and agricultural uses; the openness and the fact that people enjoyed it being a working landscape. The main features described followed on from this with 'big skies' and views of the local parish church and those in the surrounding countryside being of note. The views to the escarpment and the river were also noted as key features within the surrounding area.
- 4.24 When discussing what residents most valued about the countryside of the parish, the findings fell into two main areas; the first and overriding other responses was that the area is considered to be tranquil/peaceful and unspoilt the second related to how the ability of residents and visitors to use the countryside for recreational activities, particularly noting the footpaths and the safe and cycle friendly use of Fallow Lane and access to the river at the ford to the north of the parish. Wildlife was also noted as a valued asset.

- 4.25 When discussing the more negative aspects it was felt that the parish would benefit from additional tree and hedge planting, particularly where species such as elm and more recently ash have suffered dieback due to disease. It was also noted that one of the negative aspects was the view to the industrial scale cold-storage buildings to the south east (just beyond the parish boundary).
- 4.26 Regarding improvements that attendees would like to see, again trees and hedgerows were noted along with improvements to signage and maintenance of footpaths/bridleways – though it was acknowledged that the parish benefitted from a number of circular routes (as identified in the Lincolnshire County Councils leaflet), that some paths were not kept clear at certain times of year. Of specific note was the reference to providing a footbridge over the A1. Residents to the south of the A1 became isolated from the main village when the A1 was made into a dual carriageway and they now struggle to cross the road to visit the church or use the village facilities. This issue was discussed at length and in particular safety was a major concern, with residents in the main village also taking dangerous risks, crossing the road to use the amenities at the service station on the north bound carriageway. It was felt a safer crossing point would not only provide a safer connection, but also promote a better sense of community, connecting the residents on either side of the A1.
- 4.27 In addition to discussing the above attendees at the workshop considered a draft of the character area plan found in Figure 9 below. The majority agreed with the general classifications of character, however it was felt that given the high use of Fallow Lane, heading towards the river, as a recreational route that this was considered to be an extension to the village itself and as such should be highlighted as part of the character area within which the village sits. It is believed that part of the land by the river is Common Land.

5. Parish Character Areas

5.1 The following section describes the local landscape character areas. The characteristics are drawn from information collected in the desk based assessment but more importantly from visiting the area, walking around the landscape and consulting with local residents to gain an understanding of their views on the landscape and what they feel are the main characteristics.

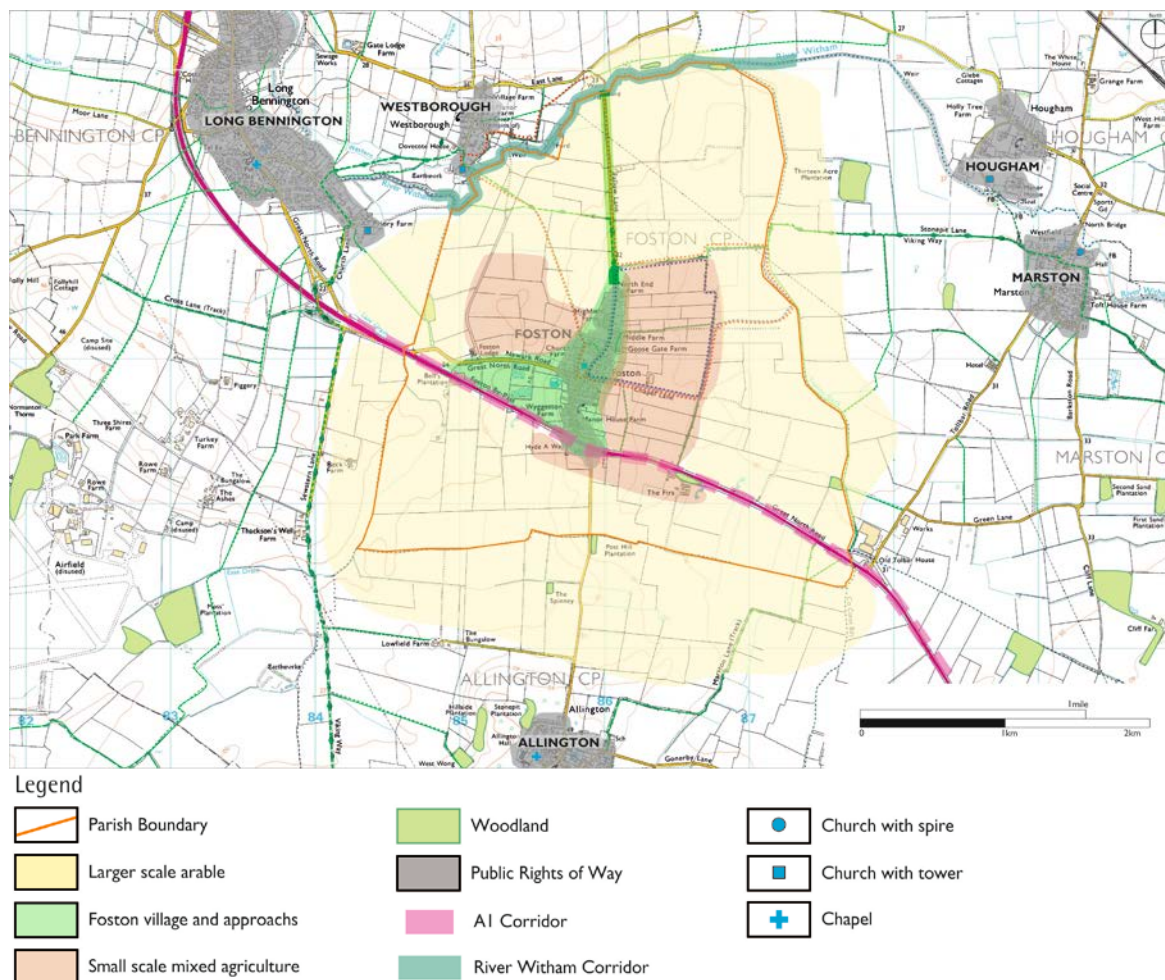


Fig 9 – Parish Council Character Areas

5.2 The assessment concluded that the land within the parish can be subdivided into to three character areas. Each are described below with a general description and a summary of key characteristics. There are a number of these key characteristics that are found across all three areas. The village of Foston falls within the Character Area PCA 2 – Foston Village and Approaches.

5.3 PCA I – Larger scale arable - This is the dominant landscape character within the area and its boundaries extend beyond the study area of the parish. The characteristics are broadly in keeping with the broader landscape character area of the Trent and Belvoir Vales described in the South Kesteven Assessment. The key characteristics for the PCA are

- Relatively simple, medium to large-scale, open arable fields.
- Flat or very gently undulating topography.
- Simple regular fields enclosed by predominately hawthorn / blackthorn hedges with some occasional hedgerow trees.
- Occasional farms (or former farms) with a range of residential buildings and some larger scale agricultural buildings.
- Church towers and spires visible across the landscape beyond.
- Buildings predominantly of brick with red pantiles.
- A generally tranquil area with only a very few minor roads.



Typical landscape across arable fields



View looking east from Fallow Lane towards Loveden Hill (Left of picture) and Gelston (Right of picture)

PCA 2 – Foston Village and Approaches – This is an area which comprises a mix of smaller scale arable fields and some pasture and also includes the land associated with the village itself. The distinction in this character area is drawn largely from the topography and the changes in land use around the edge of the village. The roads and fields approaching the village rise up with the highest point being within the village itself. Views out from the village are to the surrounding fields and across the landscape to adjacent parishes and beyond.

- Smaller to medium scale arable fields with some pasture.
- Undulating topography forming a hill.
- Simple regular fields enclosed by predominately hawthorn hedges with some hedgerow trees.
- Includes the village of Foston and service area to the south of the A1.
- Church towers and spires visible across the landscape.
- Pylons and other infrastructure visible across the landscape and that associated with the A1.
- Buildings style and ages vary, but a high proportion of brick with red pantiles.
- A generally tranquil area with some background noise associated with the A1 to the south.



View of the Old Hall



View along Newark Hill



View along Fallow Lane



View along Long Street

5.4 PCA 3 – Small scale agriculture - this area lies to the southern part of the parish and comprises smaller fields some associated with pasture and paddocks or larger fields with remnant hedgerows. Field drains and hedges or fences form the boundaries. Views include those back towards the village, across open countryside, where some pylons and other man-made structures are visible within the open countryside.

- Smaller to medium scale arable fields with some pasture.
- Generally flat to gently undulation topography.
- Simple regular fields enclosed by a mix of hedges and fences with drainage ditches with some hedgerow trees.
- Church towers and spires visible across the landscape.
- Pylons and other infrastructure visible in the distance, generally on the horizon across the landscape in a south-westerly direction.
- A small number of farms and associated buildings with high proportion of brick with red pantiles.



View looking across smaller fields towards houses.



View along Chapel Lane Bridleway

6. Parish Level Landscape Recommendations

- 6.1 This section draws on the findings of the character assessment and the comments from discussions held with local residents. Following the consultation draft of the initial character area plan and accompanying descriptions, the conclusion was that the landscape, as it is, is a highly valued local resource and that the character of the parish and its setting should be retained. Key aspects of the character across all areas relate to the open, unspoilt and rural nature which were valued as part of a working agricultural landscape. Of note were views to the surrounding areas in particular the most significant features being the large open skies, church towers and spires along with the escarpment, with approximately half of the properties benefiting from the views looking out towards it.
- 6.2 Through consultation with residents there were a number of issues identified that are seen as possible threats to maintaining the landscape character the two main issues raised were that relating to the potential loss of trees and hedgerows, larger industrial sized farming unit and the potential damage to the rural views and perceived tranquillity relating to industrial development and renewable energy projects.
- 6.3 A series of recommendations are made below which could be considered for adoption by the Parish Council. The aim is to assist the Parish in their promotion of the area for the enjoyment of residents and visitors specifically through the retention and enhancement of their valued landscapes and the distinct characteristics found within the Parish.

A - Access to the Landscape

- 6.4 A1 - Maintain footpaths by ensuring they are easily identified and accessible year round. Efforts should be made to ensure signs are located at specific junctions or changes in direction and that, particularly where footpaths cross fields in production, a clear and accessible route is maintained. It is noted that the responsibility for implementing this may fall to individual landowners and efforts should be made to maintain dialogue with the relevant parties.
- 6.5 A2 - Consider the option for new rights of way. Where possible circular off road routes should be encouraged for the safety and enjoyment of all users. A review of potential new routes could be undertaken by the Parish Council. Where possible liaise with landowners and adjacent parishes to review the use of existing tracks and field margins to create new routes.

B - Residential and Village Environment

- 6.6 B1 - Any new development should respect the style and scale of the existing properties and village. Through reviews of planning applications, all development including conversions, extensions and any new development should ensure that the scale of buildings do not change the existing characteristics of the villages and that building materials, including boundary treatments (front / side walls, fences etc) are in keeping with the prevailing materials the village. The impact of any other developments such as agricultural buildings, solar or wind generation should be considered with specific reference to the amenity and setting of residential properties.

C - The Landscape and Natural Environment

- 6.7 C1 - Maintain existing hedgerows and where possible encourage the planting of new trees and hedgerows. Where appropriate, the Parish Council should encourage enhancements to the bio-diversity of the area through the retention of existing vegetation and promotion of new planting, where possible using seeds / cuttings established from local sources. The responsibility for implementing this will be largely with private landowners.
- 6.8 C2 - Monitor trees for signs of disease. As trees are such a highly valued resource, efforts should be taken by the landowners and those using footpaths etc. to assist in the monitoring and identification of diseased trees. Information on identifying such diseases could be made available to residents (possibly through links to existing on-line resources). In order to maintain the level of tree cover in the longer term, the planting of disease resistant species to replace those under threat should be positively encouraged.
- 6.9 C3 - Maintain the character, setting and views of the parish. The views to and from the rural, undeveloped landscape have been identified as intrinsic and special aspects of the area. The character of the landscape and setting of villages and natural features are all highly valued. Care should be taken to maintain the character of the landscape, the setting of the village and the quality and nature of the views and this includes the ridge and furrow in fields seen from the public footpath from Goosegate Lane. When reviewing planning applications the Parish Council should consider the appropriateness or otherwise of any development with a view to avoiding change to the unspoilt and open nature of the area and views to and from it. To avoid harm, larger scale buildings and structures, which would be out of keeping with the openness and unencumbered views, should be avoided.

Policy Compliance

- 6.10 The following section demonstrates how the above recommendations relate to existing national and local policy including the objectives of the District level Landscape Character Assessment.

A - Access to the Landscape

A1 - Maintain footpaths by ensuring they are easily identified and accessible year round.

A2 - Consider the option for new rights of way

- 6.11 NPPF - paragraph 75 of Section 8 states that “*Planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.*”
- 6.12 SKDC Core Strategy – There are no specific local policies relating to public rights of way as these are covered by national policy (NPPF) and fall under the provisions set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, however reference is made to ‘public access to and community value of the landscape’ in Policy EN1 in respect of new development proposals.

B - Residential and Village Environment

B1 - Any new development should respect the style and scale of the existing villages.

- 6.13 NPPF – The NPPF requires that development “*always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings*”.
- 6.14 SKDC Core Strategy – Policy EN1 requires that development proposals should be assessed in respect of the following (items relevant to the above are listed)
- 2. *local distinctiveness and sense of place*
 - 3. *historic character, patterns and attributes of the landscape*
 - 4. *the layout and scale of buildings and designed spaces*
 - 5. *the quality and character of the built fabric and their settings*
 - 12. *Conservation Area Appraisals and Village Design Statements, where these have been adopted by the Council*
 - 14. *protection of existing open space (including allotments and public open space, and open spaces important to the character, setting and separation of built-up areas)*
- 6.15 SKDC Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document (adopted June 2013) Section 3.2 makes specific reference to Landscape and Visual Amenity and Box 2 states that site selection for turbines “shall have regard to the local landscape character”.

C - The Landscape and Natural Environment

C1 - Maintain existing hedgerows, trees and woodland and where possible encourage the planting of new trees and hedgerows.

C2 - Monitor trees for signs of disease.

C3 - Maintain the character, setting and views of the parish.

- 6.16 NPPF – Paragraph 109 of Section 11 in the NPPF requires that the planning system should ‘*contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by*’ - ‘*minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures*;
- 6.17 SKDC Core Strategy – Policy EN1 notes that “*development must be appropriate to the character and significant natural, historic and cultural attributes and features of the landscape within which it is situated, and contribute to its conservation, enhancement or restoration*” and notes that development proposals and site allocations will be assessed in relation to the following (items relevant to the above are listed).
- 1. *statutory, national and local designations of landscape features, including natural and historic assets*
 - 2. *local distinctiveness and sense of place*
 - 3. *historic character, patterns and attributes of the landscape*
 - 6. *the condition of the landscape*
 - 7. *biodiversity and ecological networks within the landscape*
 - 9. *remoteness and tranquillity*
 - 10. *visual intrusion*

6.18 SKDC Landscape Character Assessment – The recommendations above reflect the objectives for the district level character area – The Trent and Belvoir Vales which are as follows –

- Maintain and improve field boundary condition.
- Retain ditch patterns.
- Maintain wet grassland areas.
- Protect any woodland cover.
- Maintain existing hedgerow trees and plant new hedgerow trees.
- Provide new woodland planting with any new large scale agricultural buildings.
- Maintain views to and from the elevated villages and churches.



Foston Open Gardens 2013 with views out to the surrounding landscape.