

Allen Pyke Associates

STUBTON PARISH  
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER  
ASSESSMENT



Landscape architecture



Urban design



Environmental planning

Prepared on behalf of

**STUBTON PARISH COUNCIL**

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Photographs are taken by Allen Pyke Associates and local residents

Image on front cover – Autumn view looking east from Stubton towards the escarpment

## I. Introduction

- I.1 In June 2013, The Parish of Stubton in Lincolnshire commissioned landscape architects, Allen Pyke Associates Ltd. to undertake a locally based landscape character assessment of the parish. This study was commissioned alongside one for the neighbouring parish of Hough on the Hill. The purpose of this study is to provide supporting information for a potential Neighbourhood Plan.
- 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.

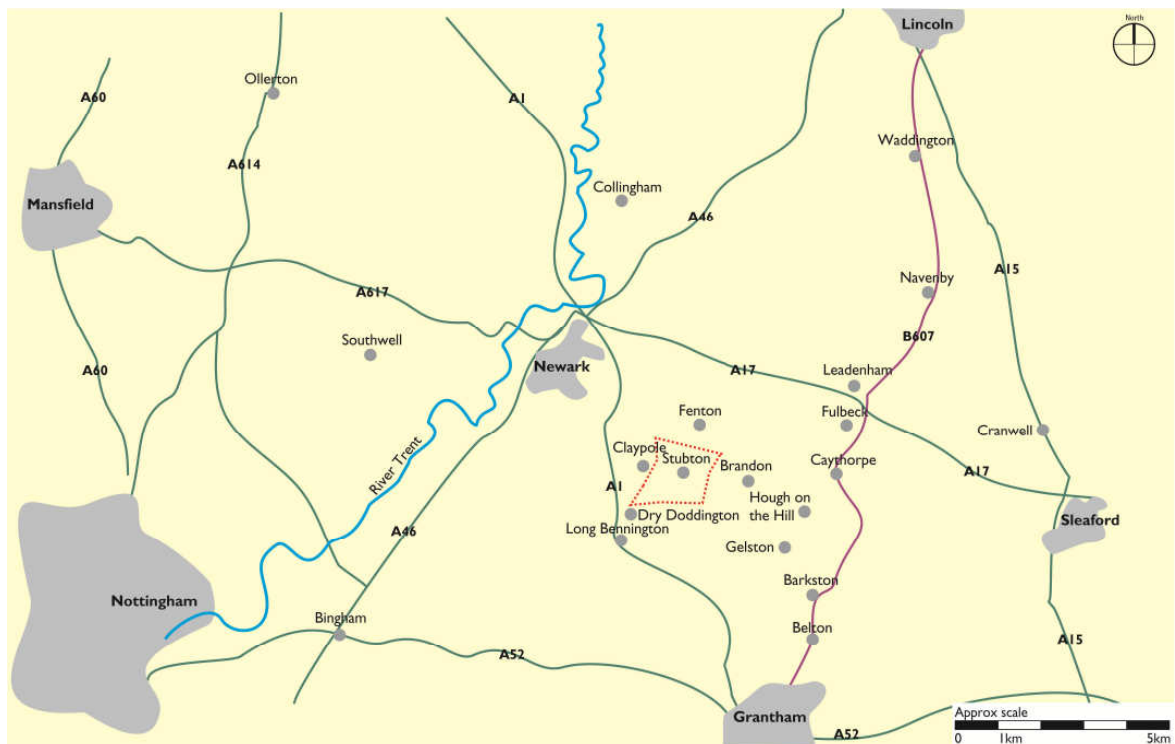


Fig 1 – Location of Stubton Parish within the wider area (note – not all villages/roads are illustrated)

**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 series of descriptions for each 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 summer months when trees and hedges were in leaf and visibility in places restricted. It is also noted that whilst the majority of photographs were taken in summer months and in good weather conditions, but as demonstrated in some photographs, 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 Stubton 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)”*

### 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 Stubton 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.”*

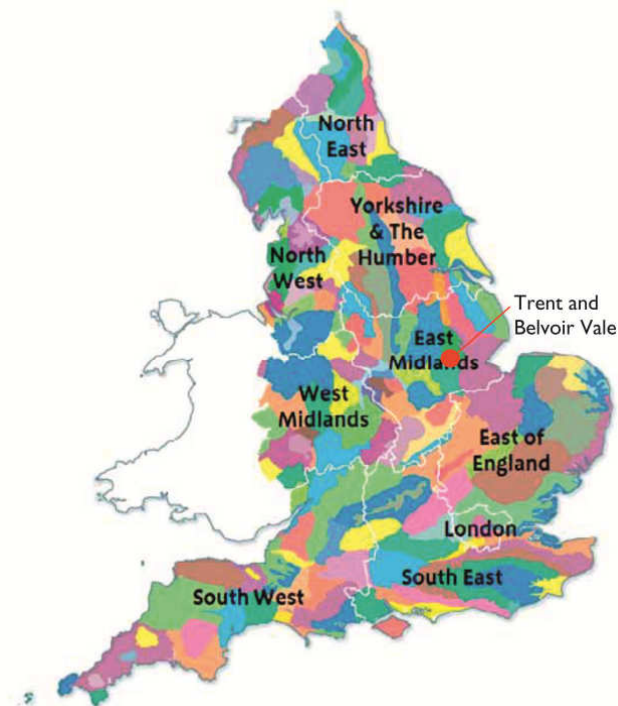


Fig 2 – National Landscape Character Area 48 – Trent and Belvoir Vale



- 3.3 It is of note that several photographs used to illustrate the character area within this publication are taken from within the adjacent parish of Hough on the Hill looking towards Stubton. These are of 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 Stubton 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.

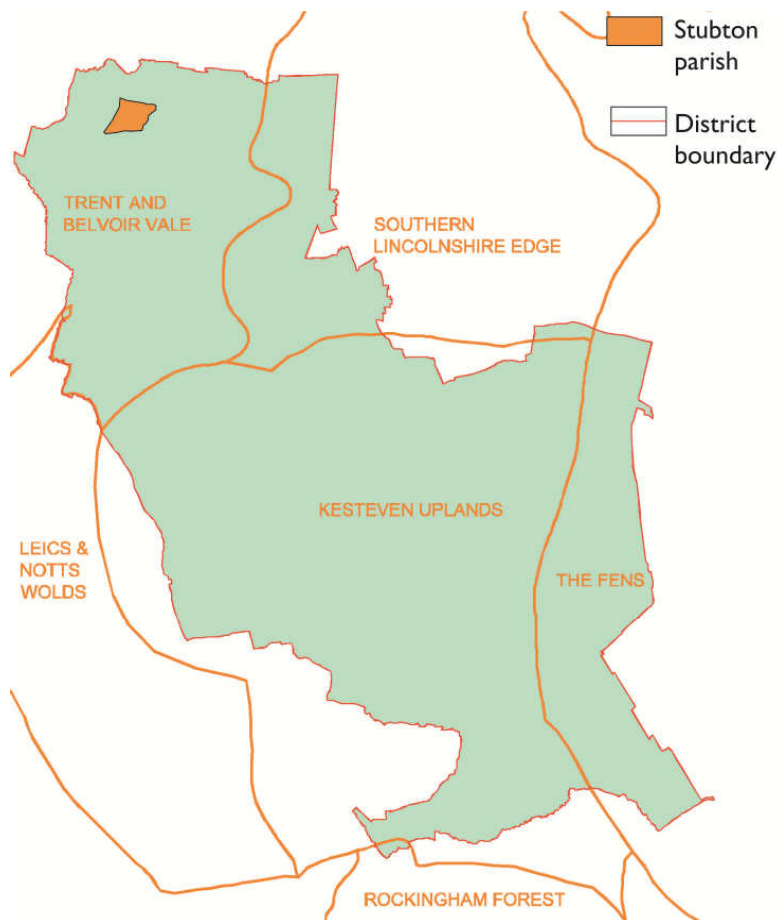


Fig 3 – SKDC Landscape Character Areas

### 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. Stubton falls within the wider Regional Character Area 7 known as The Southern Cliffs which notes the “high proportion of surviving parliamentary planned enclosure to be found throughout” and notes the wooded plantations and shelter belts, often associated with the larger country houses. At a more local scale, the Parish falls within the Character Area Zone TVL3 The Valley Fens within The Trent Valley Character Area. The zone is also described in terms of its agricultural development relating to enclosures and the more recent loss of field boundaries. Reference is also made to the characteristic use of red-brick and pantiles within buildings in the area.
- 3.8 The description of the character area goes on to state *‘The area is well wooded, with a mixture of ancient woodland and more recent plantations. The large country estates in the area have also enhanced the woodland cover of the area through the planting of shelter belts, screens and game coverts. There is a greater occurrence of woodland in the rolling hills of the south than on the heath. There is less woodland cover on the eastern slopes at the fen edge, perhaps indicating the greater arable productivity of the soil in this part of the area.’*

- 3.9 Sheep farming and the wool trade is referred to as one of the contributing factors to the historic wealth of the area, which is evident in the surviving stone built farm houses dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is noted that the area retains strong elements of its historic character but with areas of ancient enclosure on the uplands having been lost to the pressures of modern day farming practices.
- 3.10 The historic character zone, The West Grantham Farmlands (TVL4) notes that the zone is '*divided between the flat low lying areas of farmland and several small hills, on which the historic nucleated settlements are found*'. 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.
- 3.11 During the 18<sup>th</sup> 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.
- 3.12 Settlement is described as dating from the early medieval period, with the village of Stubton mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086.

## 4. Stubton 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 Stubton. This is followed by a description of the parish level character areas.
- 4.2 The parish of Stubton comprises a predominantly agricultural landscape with the village of Stubton located centrally within in it. The Lincolnshire Dictionary of Place Names (Cameron, 1998) notes that the meaning could either be ‘Stubba’s’ farmstead or village or be the farmstead or village among tree stumps.
- 4.3 The parish lies to the west of Lincolnshire approximately 7miles form Newark on Trent and 18miles south of Lincoln. The main East Coast railway line passes through the south-western corner of the parish. The village is on a cross roads connecting to nearby villages of Brandon in the east, Claypole to the west, Fenton to the north and Dry Doddington to the south.



*Stubton Village – looking north*

### Settlement

- 4.4 Stubton is a small residential village with the majority of buildings constructed of brick. Stubton Hall and the much smaller but originally higher status Manor House are built from Lincolnshire limestone. The village developed around the Hall, however since the 1960s there has been significant change and infilling with the majority of properties dating from the later 20<sup>th</sup> century including many of the houses either side of Claypole Road. Much of the perimeter brick wall associated with the Hall’s former kitchen garden is in existence south of Brandon Road, though land within it has been re-developed to include a residential property with a drive and gardens.



*The Manor and Brechin Cottage on Doddington Lane*

- 4.5 Similarly land within the village at Home Farm which sits at the cross roads, has also seen some redeveloped for housing and this in part was due to a tragic incident in 1962 when a bomber on a test flight from Radlett Aerodrome crashed into and destroyed the 17<sup>th</sup> century farm house.

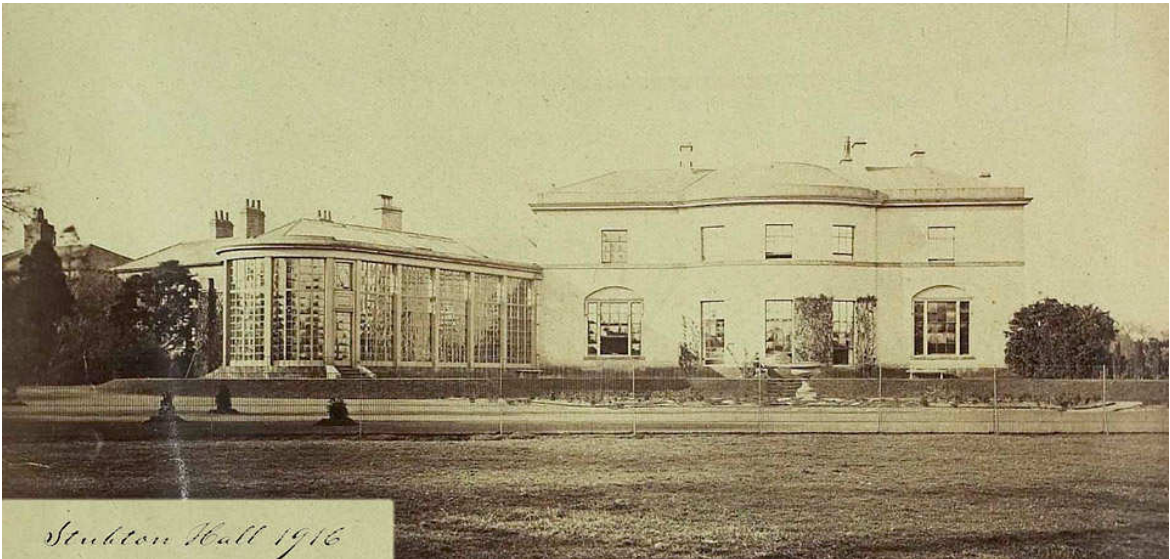


*View looking west along Brandon Road*

- 4.6 Stubton Hall, which is Grade II Listed, is located on the north eastern edge of the village. This former country house dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was designed by Jeffry Wyatt (or Wyatville), a Victorian architect who worked on Windsor Castle as well as the Orangery at Belton House, near Grantham. Stubton Hall and its grounds, is now a prestigious wedding and events venue employing local residents and attracting guests from across the country and further afield; it is currently undergoing further expansion. Set within approximately 24 acres of parkland, including the recently constructed ornamental canal and other associated planting, Stubton Hall is a prominent feature of the village and of local significance to those both in the parish and further afield. It is visible from a number of footpaths and when driving towards the village from the east.



*View looking toward Stubton Hall from within the grounds*



*Historic view of Stubton Hall 1916*

- 4.7 The Hall itself is located on slightly higher ground and benefits from extensive views across the wider landscape to the south and east. Prior to its more recent conversion, the Hall was a boarding school which again influenced the development of the village, with an additional access lane being located off Cherry Lane, via the headmasters house. A Grade II listed ice house, formerly associated with the Hall is located to the north in nearby woodland.
- 4.8 The church of St Martins is a Grade II\* Listed building dating from approx 1800. It is a stone church with a tower and located on the east of the village on Brandon Road. There is reference to a church in Stubton within the Domesday Book of 1086 and it is known that the current church replaced a former medieval church, which was located in what are currently the grounds of Stubton Hall.



*St Martins Church*

- 4.9 A small number of farms (or former farms) are located within the parish. These comprise farm houses, barns (some converted for residential or commercial purposes) and where farms are still active agricultural buildings including some of modern construction.
  
- 4.10 The parish has a strong sense of local community, focussing on the village and in particular the church and village hall which is in frequent use for both day and night time events. In 2012, Stubton received the “Best Kept Village” award, a testament to and reflection of the value local residents place on their surroundings.



*The Village Hall and ‘Best Kept Village’ awards*



**Geology and Hydrology**

- 4.11 The underlying geology of the parish is Lower Lias clay to the west and river sand and gravels to the east divided by a small seam of Limestone running north–south. To the north west corner of the parish there is an area of alluvium associated with a former course of the River Witham.
- 4.12 Water courses within the parish are limited to a small stream to the west and field drains. There are some areas of standing water associated with field irrigation. A number of properties are known to have wells.

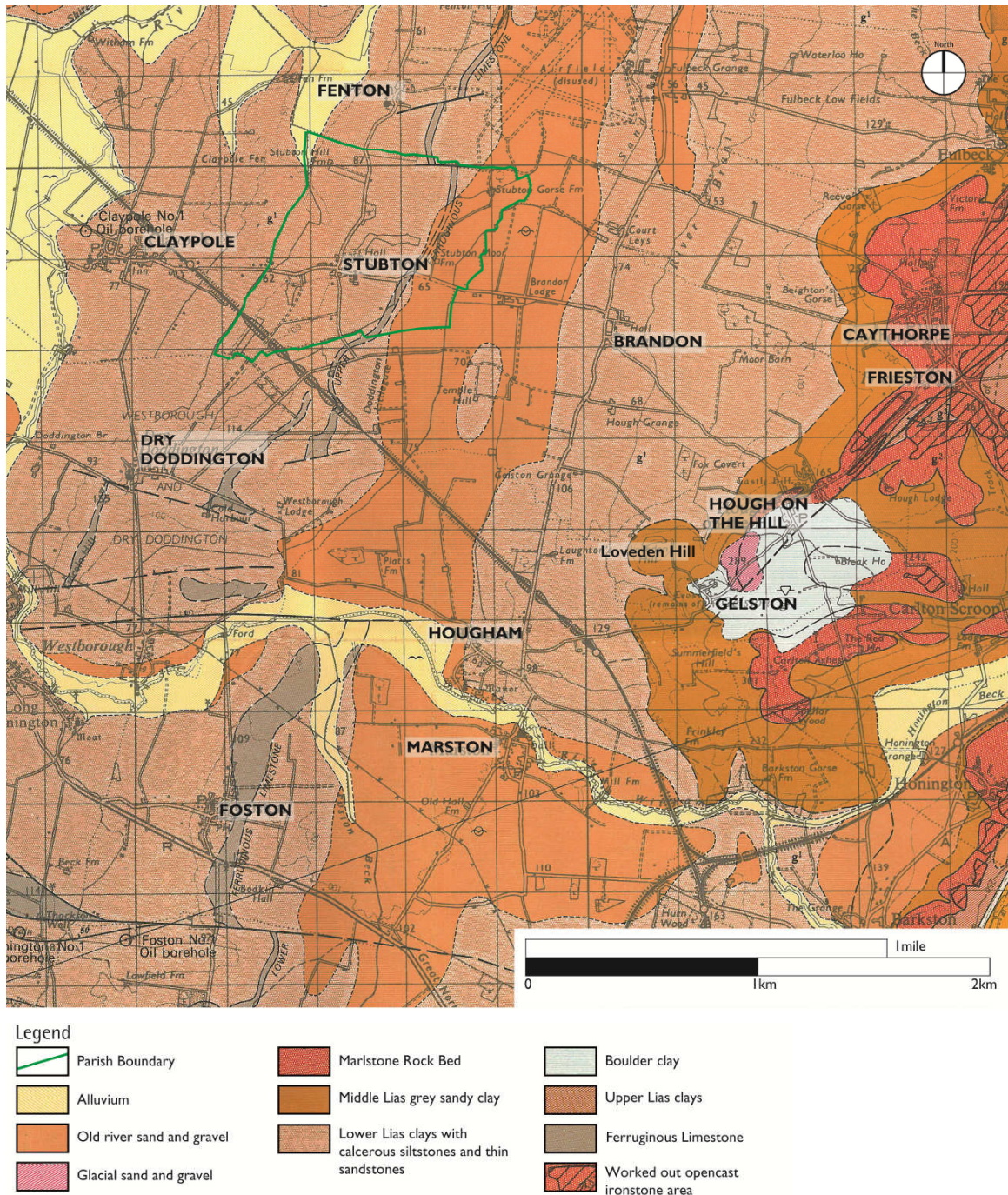


Fig. 4 – Geology of the Parish and surrounding areas



### Topography, Views and Visibility

- 4.13 The topography is predominantly a flat with much of the land between approx 15 and 20m AOD. There are gentle undulations across the landscape and occasional hills such as at Stubton Hill with rises to 26m. There is a shallow ridge running from south west towards Stubton including Stubbers Hill Plantation which rises to 36mAOD. It is noticeable when travelling around the landscape that due to the much greater area of flatter landscape to the east these smaller rises in level within the parish appear more noticeable.
- 4.14 Due to the topography of the underlying landscape, the views and visibility are of significance and a key feature when describing the landscape of the Parish. Whilst many of the field boundaries are comprised of hedgerows and mature trees and as noted above, there are larger woodland plantations within the parish, there is a pre-dominance of long distance views, often many miles beyond the parish boundaries.
- 4.15 The time of year affects the nature of these views; for example the loss of leaf cover on trees and hedgerows in winter opens up some otherwise contained views. At other times of year, the angle of the lower setting sun highlights particular features such as the limestone church spires and towers in villages along the escarpment to the east and Bellmount Tower, within the grounds of Belton House, approximately 8 miles to the south east. The views from properties and public rights of way form, in many cases, large vistas as indicated in Fig 5 below.

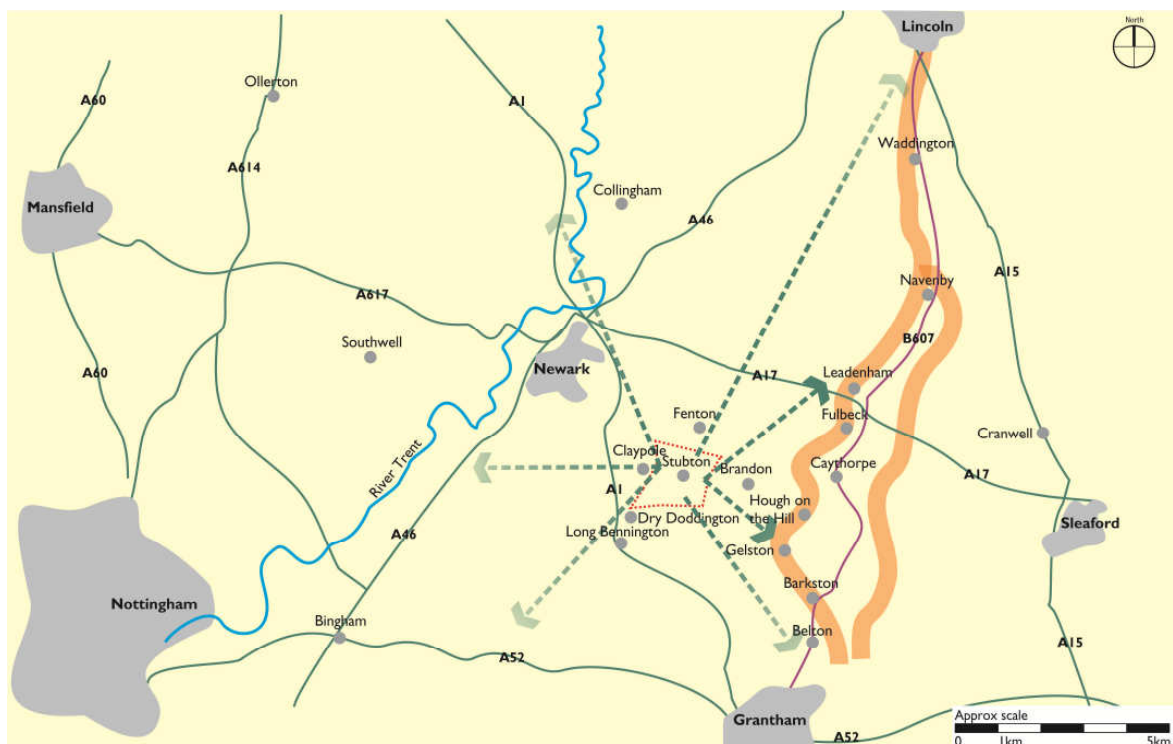


Fig. 5 – Illustrative map of key views towards the surrounding areas and the escarpment slopes (shown in orange)

- 4.16 To the east, views are across arable fields with intermittent belts of trees and hedges, towards the escarpment which forms the horizon. A number of villages such as Caythorpe, Hough on the Hill and Gelston are visible, with their respective churches and houses, including some higher status historic

properties. These are notable features on the horizon though often set within denser groups of trees. In the far distance a large scale telecommunications pylon and single wind turbine can be seen and whilst these are the only noticeable modern interventions in the landscape, there is also a temporary anemometer mast within the fields near Brandon, which is visible in the views looking east.

- 4.17 As noted in section 4.6 above, the views to and from Stubton Hall are of specific local significance, the Hall itself being located on higher ground with extensive panoramic views towards the escarpment to the east. The Hall is also a local landmark when arriving in the village from the east.



*View looking south-east from the grounds of Stubton Hall*

- 4.18 Looking south, the views are largely across open arable fields, again with belts of trees and hedges. The roof tops and churches at Dry Doddington and Hougham are visible. Very intermittent glimpses of trains can be seen from some view points.
- 4.19 Views to the west are again across arable fields towards the village of Claypole. On the horizon, larger scale electricity pylons are visible along the horizon and again very intermittent glimpses of trains can be seen from some view points.



*View looking south-west across paddocks towards properties on Claypole Road*

- 4.20 Looking north, the views are towards Fenton and the horizon is formed by the escarpment to the north east and the wider open arable landscape to the north west. Again a number of church spires are visible and in the far distance, approximately 17miles away, the city of Lincoln can be seen as can the cooling towers of the power stations such as at Cottam along the River Trent approximately 25 miles away.



*View north along Fenton Road*

- 4.21 A number of high status houses are visible along the length of the escarpment, south of Lincoln, and these were clearly 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 Stubton Hall located on the edge of the village and Belton House (Grade I Listed with a Registered Park and Garden), north of Grantham and some 5 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.



*View looking east from a right of way to the south west of the parish towards the escarpment on the horizon*

### **Land Use and Vegetation**

- 4.22 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.

- 4.23 There are a number of small areas of deciduous woodlands, generally in planned, linear formations along field boundaries. A larger group of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees are located within the grounds of Stubton Hall which presents a parkland setting distinct from the other areas of woodland.
- 4.24 Hedgerows grow along many field boundaries, and comprise native species with a predominance of hawthorn and blackthorn. Groups of trees occur at some junctions with other field boundaries and occasional larger mature trees such as oaks, ash and horse chestnut occur within the hedgerows and along some roads. Many of these have been planted within the last 40-50 years and some photographs taken of the area in the 1960s/1970s, show far fewer trees in many areas. The presence of trees particularly along field boundaries within the parish are a distinctive feature and this is found to be contrary to district level character assessment which refers to “*Relatively few hedgerow trees and virtually no woodland*”.
- 4.25 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. Approaching the village, the tree planting in and around it often screens all but the tallest buildings such as the church. Some shelter belt planting occurs around the edges of farms and include species such as the distinctly fastigate Lombardy Poplars as well as other larger growing species including oak, ash, chestnut, willow and poplar.



*View looking south east from the Rectory towards the escarpment on the horizon with intervening hedges and tree belts*

**Footpaths and Cycle Routes**

4.26 There is a network of footpaths, tracks and bridleways throughout the parish (see map). The characteristics and views from these paths are described above. The majority of the paths are well used and popular recreational routes for local residents and the Parish Council is active in promoting their use and maintains regular dialogue with local land owners with regard to maintaining access. The National Byway also passes through the parish along Claypole Road and Brandon Road. This is a 3300 mile cycle route around England, Scotland and Wales and is intended to “make a contribution towards a lasting change in the quality of U.K. life through the integration of the social, environmental, health, economic and educational benefits to be derived by the community from bicycling”. ([www.thenationalbyway.org](http://www.thenationalbyway.org)).

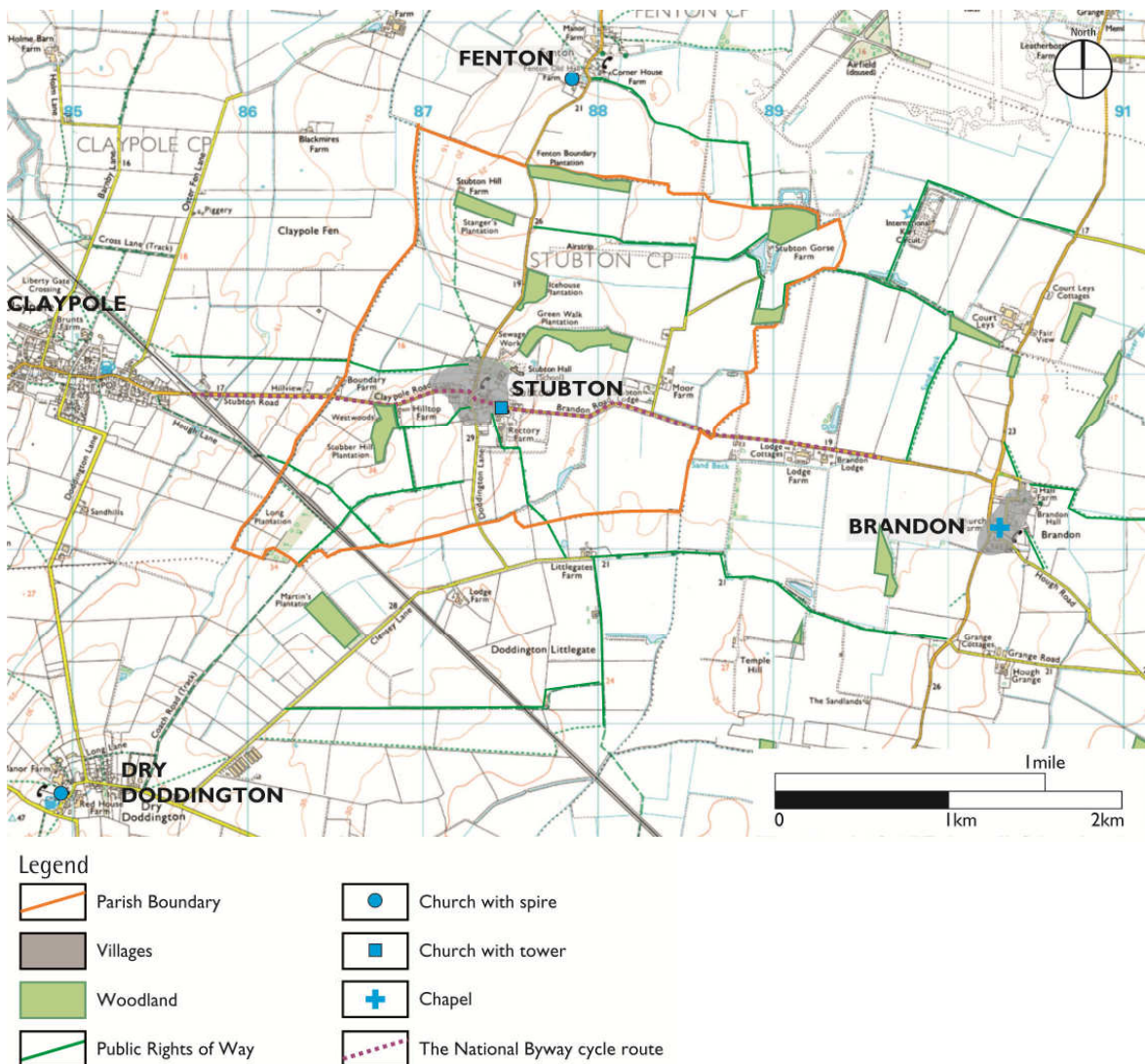


Fig 6 – Public rights of way, churches and areas of woodland

### **Consultation**

4.27 The following summarises findings of the initial public consultation exercise which included the receipt of over 30 questionnaires.

4.28 Residents were asked the following questions

1 - Which 5 words would you use to best describe the character of the countryside within the parish?

2 What are the 5 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 often do you use the local footpaths/bridleways etc?

7 - Which is your favourite footpath/walk/local area and why?

### **Question 1**

4.29 The foremost characteristics of the area, as viewed by local people, is the unspoilt and peaceful, tranquil nature of the rural surroundings. Though agricultural in character, featuring a number of working farms, the area is considered to be undeveloped. Words such as picturesque, open, green and verdant were used and woodland and wildlife referred to in several responses.

### **Question 2**

4.30 Key landmarks and locations such as Stubton Hall and church spires and towers were identified by many. Accessibility, footpaths and views were highlighted in both questions one and two as being important. Other features of note included the woodlands, hedgerows, the 'Lincolnshire Cliff' and open skies. Further reference was made to the unspoilt character reinforcing the importance of this aspect identified by many in question 1.

### **Question 3**

4.31 Peace, quiet and tranquillity were cited by many and clearly of great value to residents. Many responses again referred to the unspoilt views and lack of obtrusive development. The abundance of wildlife and access to the countryside via footpaths/bridleways were referred to by many respondents. Reference to the 'English Landscape' and reference to a 'retreat from urban life' reinforce the value given by all respondents to the rural location.

### **Question 4**

4.32 Residents did however identify heavy traffic, in particular lorries/goods vehicles being sited as negative features by many as well as poor roads and verges. Features such as pylons were noted and the threat of

wind turbines mentioned in several responses. Noise, including that caused by traffic, the nearby go-cart track and bird-scarers were considered to be negative aspects.

**Question 5**

- 4.33 Residents were positive about increasing access and would like to see additional and improved footpaths. The control of traffic, in particular noise and speed were raised by several respondents. The control of new development as highlighted as important however a number of people noted that some new small houses could provide improvements to the area. The promotion of wildlife and biodiversity was raised by several respondents with specific references to the provision of nest boxes, the maintenance of woodland and hedgerows and provision of interpretation boards. A small number of people chose to answer this question by stating that they felt nothing could be improved.

**Question 6**

- 4.34 Though not all residents responded to the question of how often they used local footpaths and bridleways, those who did all use them regularly with only a small number of people saying they used them rarely.

**Question 7**

- 4.35 Whilst the most popular route identified were the paths near Littlegate Nursery and those towards Dry Doddington, all other paths within the parish were mentioned reflecting the popularity of walking riding and cycling within the parish.

## 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.

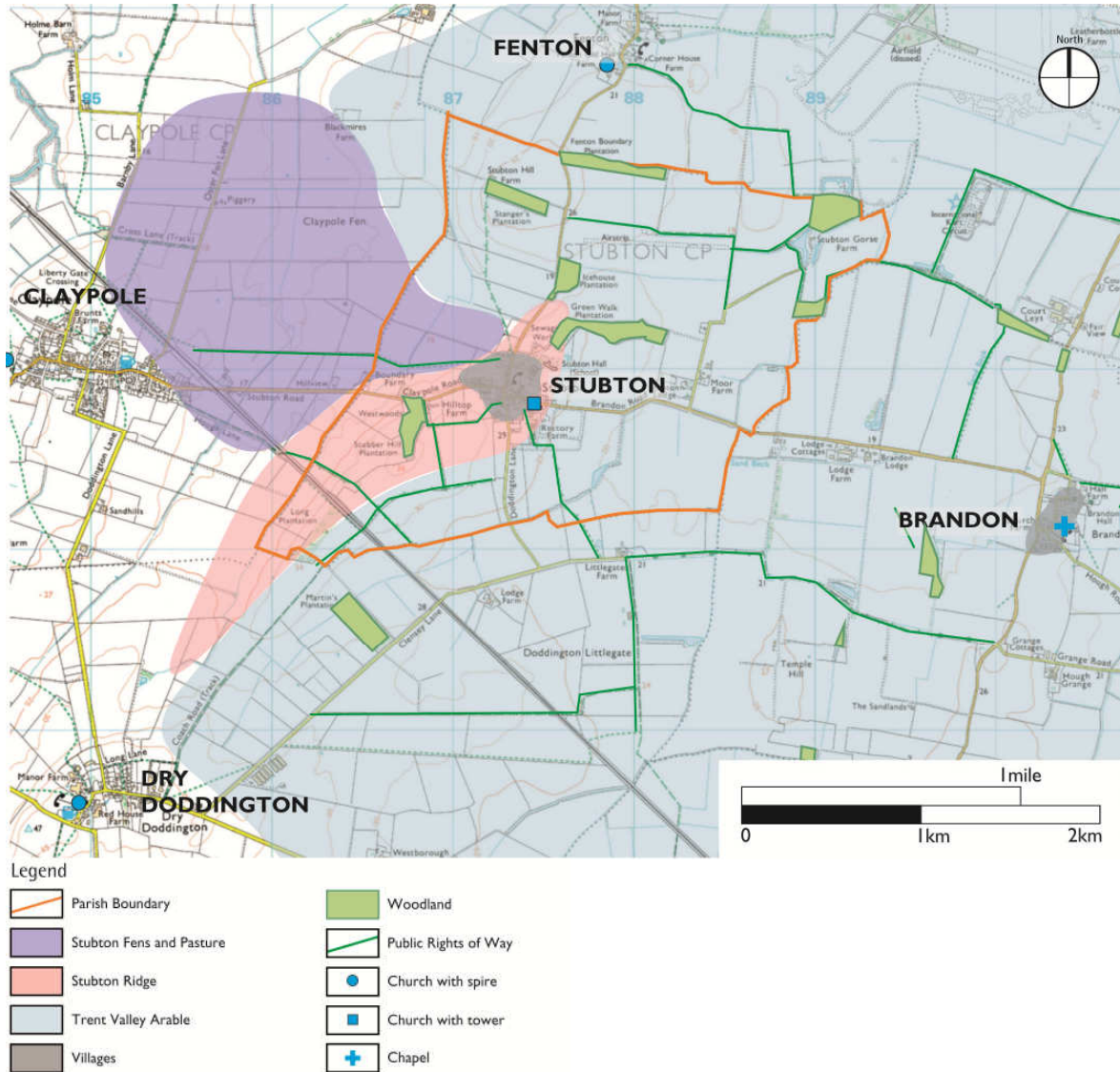


Fig 7 – Parish Council Character Areas

5.2 The assessment concluded that the land within the parish can be subdivided into 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.

5.3 The village of Stubton falls within the Character Area PCA 2 – Stubton Ridge and whilst a detailed assessment hasn't been undertaken, there is a distinct 'sub' character on the eastern edge, where the parkland setting of Stubton Hall and the Rectory present a more open prospect looking east towards the escarpment.



5.4 PCA 1 - Trent Valley Arable - This is the dominant landscape character within the wider area and its boundaries extend well beyond the study area of the parish. The characteristics are 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.
- Some hedgerow trees and small pockets of plantation woodland.
- Occasional farms (or former farms) with a range of residential buildings and some larger scale agricultural buildings (barns/silos etc).
- Church towers and spires visible across the landscape particularly towards the elevated land of the escarpment to the east. .
- Scattered buildings with high proportion of brick with red pantiles.
- A predominantly tranquil area with only a very few minor roads.



*Typical images across arable fields looking towards belts of trees and towards the escarpment*

5.5 PCA 2 – Stubton Ridge – This is an area of mixed arable and pasture which also includes the land associated with the village itself. The distinction in this character area is drawn largely from the topography. Views from the ridge are across open countryside to the adjacent character areas with some views north including the larger electricity pylons and other manmade features on the far horizon. The railway line to the south west is present but noticeable only from the southwest end of the ridge and when trains are passing through. Views from the higher areas looking east are of the open landscape of PCA 1 Trent Valley Arable towards the escarpment on the horizon.

- Smaller to medium scale arable fields with some pasture.
- Undulating topography forming a ridge.
- Simple regular fields enclosed by predominately hawthorn hedges.
- Some hedgerow trees and small pockets of plantation woodland.
- Includes the village of Stubton.
- Church towers and spires visible across the landscape and on the horizon formed by the escarpment to the east and south east.
- Pylons and other infrastructure visible in the distance generally on the horizon across the landscape to the west and north.
- Buildings styles vary, but a high proportion of brick with red pantiles.
- A predominantly tranquil area with only a very few minor roads and with only intermittent noise from the railway which occasionally interrupts the tranquillity.



*Images of the raised areas across arable fields and paddocks and of the village of Stubton*

5.6 PCA 3 – Stubton Fens and Pasture - this area lies to the west of Stubton and comprises smaller fields some associated with pasture and paddocks. There are field drains and hedges or fences along the boundaries. Views are generally towards the village, north across open countryside towards Lincoln or west, 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 topography.
- Simple regular fields enclosed by a mix of hedges and fences with drainage ditches.
- 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 to the west and north
- Scattered buildings with high proportion of brick with red pantiles.



*Images across arable fields and paddocks*

## 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 of the parish and wider area and that the views to and from the parish are of importance, with the most significant features being the church towers and spires, historic buildings and the absence of larger scale built form.

6.2 Through consultation with residents there were a number of issues identified that are seen as threats to maintaining the landscape character, which are summarised as follows:

- Change of landowners – as much of the land is in arable agricultural use there is a concern that if the nature of farming changed then this could affect the character of the area – for example through the construction of large scale agricultural buildings.
- An increase in the provision of alternative energy – whilst there are currently very distant glimpses of wind-turbines on the horizon, there is a threat from current or future planning applications which would affect the open and uninterrupted views across the countryside, particularly in the case of turbines which would interrupt the horizon.
- Loss of trees and hedgerows – there is a potential threat of loss of hedgerows through either lack of management or pressure to remove them for agricultural reasons. There is also a significant threat to trees, specifically those susceptible to disease such as Ash, Oak and Horse Chestnut, all of which are present within the parish.

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 highly 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 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, trees and woodland and where possible encourage the planting of new trees and hedgerows. Where appropriate, the Parish Council should encourage enhancements to the biodiversity 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. 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 NPPE - 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.

