

**Newark and Sherwood  
Landscape Character Assessment**

**The South Nottinghamshire Farmlands Chapter**

**Newark and Sherwood Council**

## **Chapter 6 South Nottinghamshire Farmlands**

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## 2.0 SOUTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FARMLANDS

### 2.1 PHYSICAL AND HUMAN INFLUENCES

#### Introduction

The **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** extend over a relatively large tract of land between the southern edge of the Greater Nottingham conurbation and the urban edge of Newark. The valley of the River Trent forms their northern boundary. To the south, behind a line of well-wooded hill and escarpment features, lie the higher lands of the **Nottinghamshire Wolds**. The south-eastern boundary of the region is formed by a low escarpment which marks the division with the flat claylands of the **Vale of Belvoir**. The **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** contain some of the finest quality agricultural land in the County. The drainage and cultivation of the alluvial levels in the south and north-east of the region have served to reinforce this arable tradition. The pre-eminence of arable cultivation is now one of the most important factors in determining the region's overall character: over 80% of the farmland is under arable cultivation.

#### The Shape of the Land

The **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** are closely associated with a belt of Triassic rocks which lie to the south of the River Trent between Gotham and Newark. These Triassic beds continue in a broad belt to the north of the river, and comprise the largest single geological formation in Nottinghamshire. The main rock type of this formation is the Mercia Mudstone group, comprising a considerable thickness of reddish mudstone containing occasional bands of hard sandstone or "skerries". These are less well-developed than those occurring to the north of the Trent, resulting in a more restrained topography. Gypsum also occurs in quantity, especially in the upper part of the formation, which outcrops between Cotgrave and Newark. This outcrop of gypsum is marked by a number of mines and plaster works. The uppermost beds of the Mercia Mudstone pass into the shaley Rhaetic beds, which give rise to a low escarpment along the south-eastern boundary of the region.

In the **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands**, the Mercia Mudstone forms a subdued, south-eastward sloping escarpment, which dips gently towards the **Vale of Belvoir** and the **Nottinghamshire Wolds**. The highest part of the region is thus along the edge of the Trent Valley, where a line of hills rising to just over 75 metres falls steeply into the broad trench cut by the River Trent in the underlying mudstone. To the rear of these hills, which are particularly

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prominent between East Stoke and Radcliffe, the land falls away more gradually towards the Rhaetic escarpment. Within this dip slope, alluvium has been deposited in a series of depressions that are believed to have been formed by a lowering of the land surface as a result of gypsum solution in the upper layers of the mudstone. This has created a distinctive topography of low-lying alluvial flats separated by narrow mudstone ridges. These ridges typically rise 5 to 10 metres above the surrounding alluvium and have historically provided dry sites for settlement.

In the West Bridgeford area, the mudstone escarpment has been deeply dissected by streams running off the **Nottinghamshire Wolds** to the south, leaving only isolated hills at Wilford and Clifton. A small basin, almost completely enclosed by higher ground, has developed behind these hills. Much of this basin, known as Ruddington Moor, is floored by alluvium, overlain in places by peaty surface horizons. The **Nottinghamshire Wolds** rise steeply to the south and west of Ruddington Moor, providing a prominent backdrop to this area.

The southern area of the region drains directly to the Trent, with the Fairham and Polser Brooks constituting the main water courses. Further north the land forms part of the Smite/Devon catchment with drainage following the easterly dip slope of the mudstone outcrop. These rivers converge before flowing into the Trent at Newark. The Alluvial Levels are drained by a series of dykes and artificial drainage ditches, which have removed the risk of flooding.

Along its extreme eastern margin, the region extends over the Rhaetic escarpment on to the Lias, and includes part of an extensive alluvial flat at Bennington Fen. The small area of Lias is characterised by a level to gently rolling landform, whilst peaty surface horizons are still evident on the low-lying fen. This area may form part of a separate regional character area that is more fully represented within Lincolnshire. The area has been included within the South Nottinghamshire **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** because it is too small to warrant separate treatment, and because the landscape management priorities are similar.

**Soils [to be read in conjunction with Figure ]**

On the Triassic mudstones slightly stoney, sandy loam brown earth soils have developed, along with reddish, fine loamy or fine silty soils. These lie over slowly permeable clayey subsoils. Reddish clayey soils have developed in the area to the north of Plumtree.

Deep clayey alluvial soils are widespread on the valley floors of the Smite and Devon and adjoining alluvial flats. Subsoils are slowly permeable, with groundwater the primary source of waterlogging. Peaty and peaty loam soils were once a feature of the larger alluvial flats but these are now greatly diminished.

The alluvium of Fairham Brook occupies much of the open expanses of Ruddington, Gotham and Bradmore Moors. Mottled clayey soils have developed in the greyish and brownish alluvium. There are now only small remnants of the peat which once covered the surface. Topsoils are humose clay loams or sandy clay loams with sandy silt and sandy loam subsoils. Soils are often gypsiferous.

**Landscape History**

The landscape of the South Nottinghamshire **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** is superficially a creation of the enclosure movement of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, modified to meet the needs of the post-1945 economy and modern farming techniques. Behind this, however, stands over 2,000 years of settlement and land use which have influenced over successive generations the development of today's countryside. Together with the Trent Valley, this region was consistently the most densely settled and economically strong area of pre-industrial Nottinghamshire, from late prehistory to the end of the 18th century.

Early prehistoric activity throughout the region is demonstrated by the frequent finding of flint tools and fabrication debris on the surface of ploughed fields, and by the remains of funerary and ritual monuments, such as the now built-over Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age henge monument at Bingham or ring-ditches in the Smite Valley, which appear amongst the cropmarks recorded from the air wherever the soils of the region are favourable to the production of differential crop growth over buried ditches, pits, foundations and floors. Studies are insufficiently advanced at present to permit meaningful estimates of the effect of this activity upon the forest landscape which developed after the end of the Ice Ages, although the grazing of domesticated livestock and cultivation will have affected the flora of the woodland and produced localised thinning and clearings. This appears to be a major factor in the

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national diminution of elm after 4000 BC and an increase in hazel. Locally, the composition of the woodland will have varied with the soil conditions, being largely oak, lime, and alder dominated. Around Bingham and west of Ruddington and Bradmore there were considerable areas of marshland, with more localised pockets in low-lying areas elsewhere.

The 1st millennium BC and the early centuries AD saw large-scale landscape change. During late prehistory the **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** became extensively settled, with farms and associated field systems becoming ubiquitous throughout the region. Occasional larger settlements, probably serving some sort of market and religious functions adjacent to important crossroads and river crossings, developed near Bingham and probably East Stoke. When the Romans arrived in the middle of the 1st century AD, they found an already densely settled and well-developed landscape. In the initial conquest period the Fosse Way was built through the new Roman province as a principal route, which in this region almost certainly followed an existing line of communication above the Trent Valley. Military forts were established at Margidunum, outside Bingham, and Ad Pontem, at East Stoke. These commanded the existing larger settlements and their important communications. The forts had a relatively short life as the focus of military and political activity moved north, but the importance of the larger settlements remained. They became small towns, centres for markets, tax collection (especially of the corn tribute), and local administration. Settlement and agricultural exploitation in the region remained extensive; Roman sites are known in almost every parish, including high status villas in Shelford, Sibthorpe, Car Colston and Barton in Fabis.

The result of this history was the clearance of the natural woodland and the development of an agricultural landscape of arable and pasture fields. Grain and seeds from a Roman site at Bunny indicate the cultivation of wheat and other arable crops, together with the presence of grassland and possibly hedgerows, while bones demonstrate the keeping of sheep and some pigs. At Margidunum, animal bones found in excavations largely represent stock brought in from the surrounding area, covering both part of this region and the Trent Valley. From these it appears that sheep were important in the early Roman phases, but after the last quarter of the 1st century AD cattle predominated. Putting this evidence together with our knowledge of the late prehistoric and Roman economy, it would not be unreasonable to envisage much of the clays being given over to corn production with pasture and meadows along the Smite and Devon Valleys, beside streams and in other lower damp areas. The marshlands mentioned above will have served also for grazing and wild fowling.

What happened at the end of the Roman period is not clear. Doubtless the region shared in the general decline in population during the 4th and 5th centuries and saw its share of social and economic change as Roman institutions and organisation withered. From the end of the 5th century, Anglo-Saxon settlement is indicated by place names and cemeteries at Holme

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Pierrepont, Cotgrave, Bingham, and East Stoke, but no actual settlement remains have been found and it must be assumed that these lie beneath modern villages. The early date of some place names and the general distribution of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, together with the social and economic arrangements suggested by later documents, particularly Domesday Book, suggest that the **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** substantially retained their population and economic vitality and were in consequence attractive to Anglo-Saxon incomers seeking wealth and power. Current models of Early and Middle Saxon settlement patterns are of dispersed farms and some larger settlements, not dissimilar to the basic pattern of later prehistory and the Roman period. The landscape of this region during the period up to the later 8th or 9th centuries, then, is likely to have been little different from that of these earlier periods, although it is possible that woodland may have temporarily increased somewhat and that some arable had been converted to pasture as former pressures on land use diminished.

By the 9th century and more particularly from the 10th century, after the Scandinavian invasions and settlement of the East Midlands, substantial changes in the countryside appeared. Under the growing pressures of a rising population and the growing powers of local landlords, the dispersed settlement pattern began to be replaced by one of nucleated villages with people grouping together around the farm of the local lord, or at other geographically favoured locations. This was probably accompanied by reorganisation of landholdings to create early forms of open fields, farmed in common. Thus the typical village pattern of the English Midlands and Nottinghamshire began to be created. It was a gradual process, however, and took many generations to create: there is evidence that the nucleation of some Nottinghamshire villages was still in progress in the 12th century. In the **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands**, however, it is likely that village formation was well advanced when Domesday Book was drawn up in 1086. The foundation of the modern landscape of the region, then, was substantially laid by the end of the 11th century.

By 1086, as Domesday Book shows, this region was part of the most densely settled and cultivated areas of Nottinghamshire. Indeed, the area around Bingham supported the highest population and the greatest number of plough teams of the whole County. Calculations of the areas of land use nominally represented in Domesday Book imply that in every community the land was totally taken up in farming. Arable cultivation predominated everywhere and in many, but not all, communities meadow was recorded, often in small amounts. Woodland was rare, being recorded in only 6 communities and usually of small extent. The impression is strongly of a long-established, extensively cultivated countryside.

This was the pattern for the early Middle Ages. Continuing population growth saw most villages expand in size and the continuing development in field organisation to create a landscape of open fields, cropped on a 3 or 4 course rotation, with meadow and grazing in valley bottoms, along the Smite/Devon Valley, in the marshlands and on other pockets of land

unsuitable for tillage, and some, comparatively few, hedgerows around villages, along lanes and between the open fields. By the late 13th century, when the mediaeval population reached its height, the agricultural regime had become heavily weighted towards arable production and cultivation extended into pastures and marginal land.

The development of the modern **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** landscape has its origins in the 14th century. The Black Death in 1349 and repeated subsequent visitations of plague reduced the national population by over one third. The documentary record is insufficient to permit an accurate estimate of the effect of these epidemics in this region, but there is no reason to believe that it suffered any less than elsewhere. However, in Nottinghamshire it appears that outbreaks of disease were not consistent from one place to another; while one community might be struck badly, another might escape almost completely. Contrary to common belief, there is no evidence that any community in this region disappeared as a direct consequence of the plague. The 14th century epidemics, however, did usher in a period of protracted change in society and economy, which had its effect on the countryside. With reduced population and social change, there was a swing away from arable production. Marginal ploughlands and pastures were restored to grassland and open field rotations reorganised to allow for longer fallows, temporary grass, and the creation of closes of permanent grass. Vacant tenancies were engrossed into occupied farms, creating more differential between large and small farms. With land exchanges the tendency grew for the larger farms to be made up of consolidated blocks of land within the open fields, and for boundaries of these to become fixed. Overall, the 15th and 16th centuries saw the establishment of convertible husbandry, with a more balanced, mixed farming regime.

Not all communities prospered in these changed social and economic circumstances. By the late 15th century, some were so weakened and the incomes so reduced that some landlords and tenants saw enclosure and conversion to grazing as their most profitable option. The **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** and the Trent Valley led the way in this movement, with some of the earliest enclosures in the County at Wiverton in 1510, and Holme Pierrepont in 1501. In these instances and a few others, such as Hawton and Cotham, enclosure resulted in virtually complete depopulation, but this was usually less drastic than it appears because the communities were already in decline. In the case of Wiverton, where the village was totally emptied to be included in the grazing and pleasure park outside the Hall, only 5 houses were involved and it is likely that the landlord had little economic choice. In the case of Holme Pierrepont, some 36 people were put out in the process of converting 220 acres of arable and meadow to grazing for sheep. These were but extreme examples of a trend to convert land to grazing and to enclose on a piecemeal or community-wide basis. During the 16th and 17th centuries virtually two thirds of the parishes in the **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** were enclosed in whole or part, for permanent or temporary grass. This does not take account of much of the small-scale piecemeal enclosures by which closes and small fields were, or had

already been, created immediately adjacent to most villages and which are recognisable today by their irregularity and species-rich hedges with mature trees.

Enclosure of the remainder of the region came in the second half of the 18th and early decades of the 19th centuries. This was the age of agricultural improvement, when open fields were seen as anachronistic and an impediment to progress and enclosure was promoted through Acts of Parliament to overcome objectors. Laid out by surveyors, the field systems created through parliamentary enclosure tend to be larger and more regular than those of the preceding centuries. They were also intended for arable and crop rotation rather than long-term or permanent pasture. With enclosure came new developments, both in qualities of livestock and in the improvement of the land. The Smite Valley and Vale of Belvoir parishes had long been recognised for the breeding of cattle; in the late 18th century there were a number of farmers in the region breeding improved types of both sheep and cattle, particularly at Ruddington and Holme Pierrepont. By this date also, work had begun upon improving the drainage of land. The Smite was being straightened and brought under control in the 1790s, changing both the appearance and the land use capabilities of its valley, and only a little earlier the poor rents from extensive boggy land in Edwalton were transformed by improving watercourses and drainage. By the late 18th century a start had also been made on draining the moors between Gotham and Ruddington, although substantial areas of open common pasture remained until after 1836.

Enclosure, and the move towards more grassland, also brought the opportunity for the owners of country houses to embellish them with parks serving both pleasure and husbandry, laid out to be ornamental and provide grazing for sheep and cattle. One of the first of this type of park was at Wiverton, created after the enclosure of 1510; others followed throughout the succeeding centuries, and from the late 18th and 19th centuries any large house of high social standing might be expected to have at least large ornamental gardens. Over a dozen of such parks and gardens are known in this region and contributed, indeed still contribute, oases of trees and greenery to the agricultural landscape. More important to the general character of this countryside, however, was the rebuilding of villages in brick. Beginning with the houses of the nobility and gentry, Holme Pierrepont Hall being one of the first early in the 16th century, by the late 18th century it was usual for the humblest of new dwellings to be built in brick. Gradually, during the 18th and 19th centuries, the old style of buildings with timber frames or of mud-and-stud construction and thatched roofs were replaced, or encased, in brick with pantile and some plain tile roofs. Local clay pits and brick kilns were often the source of the bricks.

The pattern of convertible husbandry established in between the 15th and 17th centuries continued throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, within the landscape created by the two main episodes of enclosure. Despite fluctuations in demand and the effects of the

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importation of foodstuffs, it was not until the effects of the post World War II farming policies were felt that there was substantial change in this countryside. This change has seen the modification of the enclosure landscape by the removal of hedges and ditches so that fields might be amalgamated and modern large machinery be deployed, and the ploughing up of much grassland, some untouched since the 16th century, as production swung back to a preponderance of arable.

Many of the modern features of the countryside of the **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** are relatively recent in its long history. The red brick character of its villages is the product of the 18th and 19th centuries, while the enclosure pattern of its field systems was laid out between 1500 and 1820. The current manifestation of the tradition of arable farming, with much of the openness of the alluvial flats, is due to boundary clearance and virtual monoculture over the last 50 years. On the other hand, the fundamental characteristics of the region are a continuity of land use and settlement pattern going back to Late Saxon times, and earlier. The agricultural vitality of the region, high population, extensive cultivation and lack of woodland are dominant themes which were established early and have influenced its landscape in every generation of its history.

## 2.2 VISUAL CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE

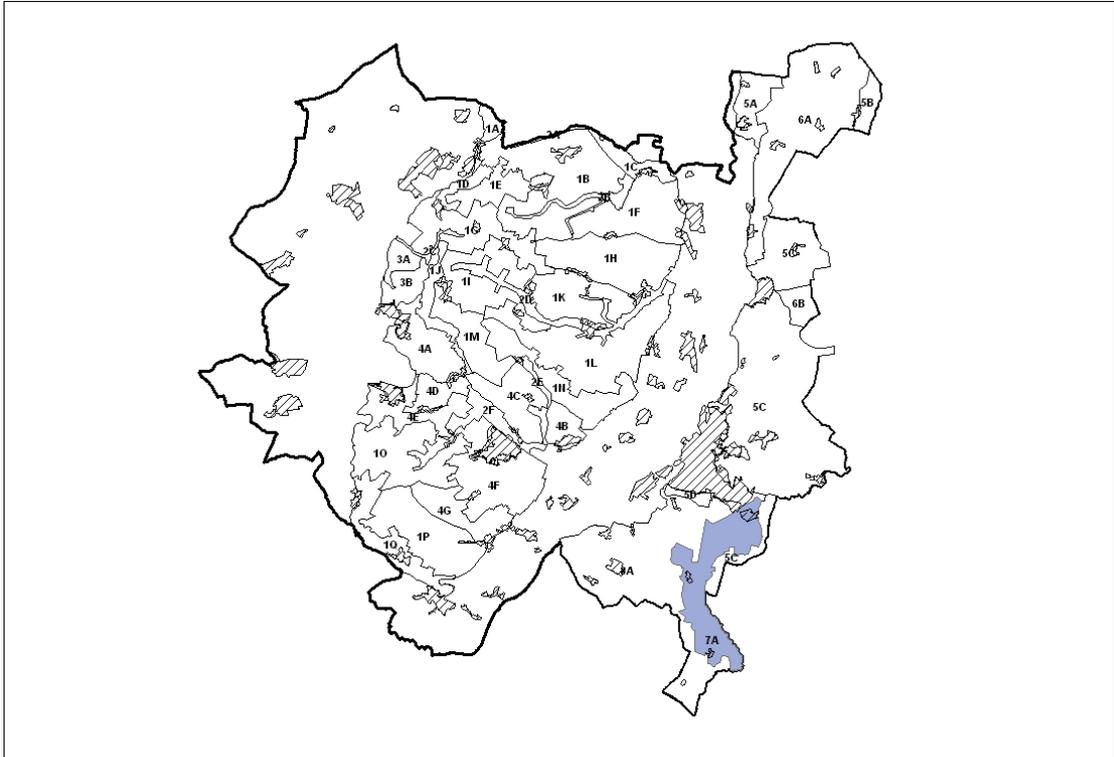
### **Introduction**

This is a tract of rolling lowland landscape dominated by arable cultivation. The area contains some of the highest quality agricultural land in the County and has a very strong arable tradition. Areas of low-lying alluvial land to the south and north east have been drained and agriculturally improved which has reinforced the arable tradition. The settlement pattern has a strong impact on the character of the landscape with large nucleated commuter villages and towns introducing a suburban influence to an otherwise distinctly rural landscape. In the more remote parts of the **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** the traditional red brick character of the small villages has survived intact. A low level of woodland and regular pattern of medium to large-scale hedged fields has led to much of the landscape diversity and interest being associated with village side pastoral landscapes and isolated pockets of mature parkland.

The **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** can be sub-divided into two distinct landscape types. These have been classified generically which means that, theoretically, the landscape types could occur at any location within the country where there are similar physical resources and historical patterns of land use. In reality the landscape types possess a distinctively local character, because they share the broad characteristics of the regional character area, or represent a particular aspect of that character.

**Landscape Character Parcels**

**Type 7 - Meadowlands**



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**7A – Cotham Meadowlands**

Flat, low-lying, uninhabited and often inaccessible landscapes with a strong sense of space, characterised by open areas of farmland and a remnant pattern of large hedged fields

**Characteristic features**

- Flat low-lying topography
- Seasonally wet alluvial and peaty soils
- Open, spacious views, sometimes enclosed by rising ground
- Remnant pattern of large hedged fields defined by thorn hedges or ditches
- Small broad leaved plantations
- Absence of farmsteads or other buildings

### Landscape description

These are simple, but distinctive landscapes that have evolved from former areas of moor, fen and open pasture on low-lying alluvial land. The levels were largely enclosed by the beginning of the 19th century and remained under meadow and pasture until being agriculturally improved after the Second World War. The character of the Alluvial Levels is now controlled to a large degree by the predominance of arable farmland. The largest Alluvial Levels within the region include the Ruddington Moors area, the broad open levels of the Smite/Devon catchment and parts of Bennington Fen.

One of the key features that distinguish the Alluvial Levels from the adjacent Village Farmland landscapes is their relatively uninhabited and inaccessible character. There is virtually no settlement within the levels themselves with the isolated farmsteads and villages preferring drier locations on the mudstone, to the edge of the alluvium. This historic settlement pattern reflects the properties of the alluvial and peaty soils, which are naturally prone to waterlogging.



Access to the farmlands is generally along a sparse network of narrow lanes and hedged trackways. The farmsteads adjoining the levels in the north east of the region are served by a number of straight narrow lanes, which run directly across the levels, and also link the small red brick villages on the adjoining mudstone.

Another feature is occasional small geometric plantations and coverts. These sometimes form prominent landscape features, being highly visible across the broad levels. Elsewhere the only tree cover arises from the very occasional and sporadic hedgerow tree, and from trees and shrubs along the many small streams, ditches and dykes that drain the levels.

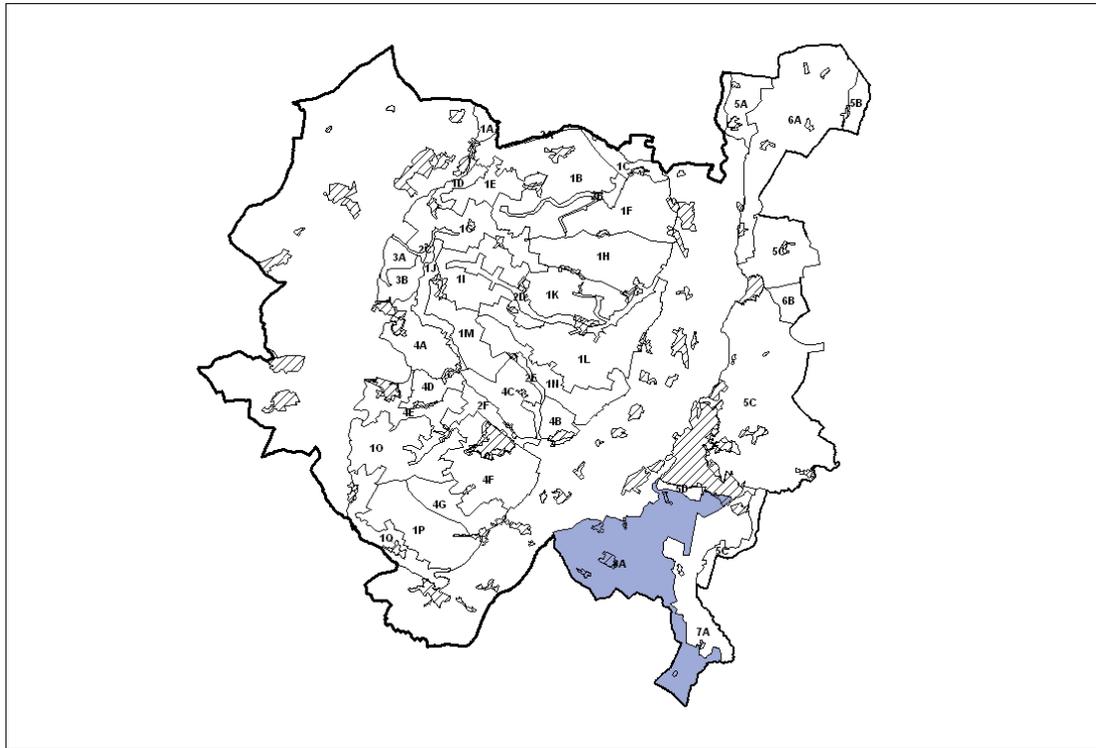
The levels of the Ruddington Moors area are confined to a low basin, in the form of a large expanse of flat level terrain. To the south it is framed by rising and often wooded ground. The lands were enclosed by the beginning of the 19th century, with the exception of Clifton Pasture and Barton Moor. Field hedges have now been almost entirely removed, producing open, intensively managed, and relatively featureless landscapes. The open character is very distinctive and further compounded by the absence of roadside hedgerows and the general lack of tree cover. The central parts of the landscape are devoid of features, making the traversing pylon lines more visible, adding to the exposed and unnatural character of the landscape. Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station is situated to the west and, although it is partially screened by low wooded hills, the open landscape ensures that it can be viewed from most positions. Urban influences are strongly imprinted along the northern margins of the basin,

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which runs to the residential edges of Clifton and Ruddington. On the southern and eastern fringes the landscape becomes progressively more enclosed. The fragmented remains of the old enclosure field pattern are present in the form of gappy low hedgerows and taller bushy hedgerows with the occasional hedgerow tree.

In the north east of the region the Alluvial Levels are also distinguished by their very broad, open and spacious character. Relatively large areas of the flats have been enclosed by a pattern of medium to large-scale hedged fields. Field patterns are more prominent along the margins of the levels where they are sometimes well defined by ditches and low hawthorn hedges. The flat landform and low level of tree cover allow extensive views and the many pylon lines originating from the power stations in the Trent Valley assume great prominence. In other areas the enclosure pattern has fragmented or become totally lost. In places, the landscape has a distinctive "prairie" style character characterised by open, featureless landscapes with remnant thorn hedges. The levels in this part of the region flank the rivers Smite and Devon which flow in a northerly direction to drain into the Trent close to Newark. Both rivers have low channels that are cut well below the level of the surrounding farmlands. The drainage of the levels has enabled arable cropping to encroach to the river channel edges over most of their course. Consequently the rivers do not have a strong landscape identity or riparian character. This is particularly true of the Smite which has been canalised to prevent flooding.

**Type 8 - Village Farmlands**



**8A** – Elston Village Farmlands

**8B** – Alverton Village Farmlands

A gently rolling agricultural landscape with a simple pattern of large arable fields and village settlements

**Characteristic features**

- Gently rolling topography
- Simple pattern of large arable fields
- Neatly trimmed hawthorn hedges
- Nucleated villages with traditional red brick and pantile roofed buildings
- Suburbanised commuter villages and small towns
- Small-scale pastoral landscapes along village edges

### Landscape description

Corresponding with the Mercia Mudstone outcrop lying between Nottingham and Newark, this is a relatively large tract of land that dips eastwards from the Trent Trench to the lower-lying alluvial lands of the Smite/Devon catchment. The regular, medium to large-scale field pattern of low, trimmed and often gappy hedgerows is the dominant feature of the landscape. The gently rolling landform and general lack of tree cover allows medium distance views over predominantly arable landscapes of homogenous character. Longer distance views open up eastwards following the fall of the dip slope. The relationship between the solid and drift geology is the overriding factor in determining the structure and character of the landscape in the north-eastern areas of the Village Farmlands. Narrow bands of mudstone stand 5- 10 metres above sinuous channels and broad open flats of alluvium.

Intensive management of the arable farmlands has produced large areas where the field pattern is formed from low, neatly trimmed hawthorn hedgerows. These have often become gappy, although the overall enclosure pattern of medium to large fields is still very much intact. The dominance of arable cultivation and general lack of tree cover



creates the impression of a landscape with a comparatively uniform character and weak “sense of place”. The strength of this impression varies throughout the landscape with the more distinctive and intimate landscapes being found adjacent to settlement.

A varied settlement pattern is evident arising from the series of small nucleated villages, larger commuter villages and small towns. The enlarged commuter settlements have expanded as a result of residential housing development, gravitating toward the Greater Nottingham Conurbation, They include Ruddington, Keyworth, Cotgrave, Radcliffe on Trent and Bingham. The settlements have a strongly suburban character with a mix of housing styles. A core of traditional red brick and pantile roofed buildings marks the old village centres, with sharp and abrupt residential edges now abutting the adjacent arable farmlands. The sense of landscape integration and unity can be particularly poor in these areas. The urban edge of Greater Nottingham is also largely suburban in character, with golf course developments, garden centres, a supermarket development and a new country park attracting people to the urban fringe. Heavy traffic along the network of country roads that link the commuter settlements with Nottingham reinforces the impression of a rural landscape, with a growing suburban character.

In the more remote areas the smaller, red brick villages often link directly with intimate pastoral landscapes containing small irregular field patterns, species-rich hedgerows and

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mature hedgerow trees. A profusion of mature garden trees along the village edges also helps to create intimate, well treed landscapes that are well integrated with the surrounding farmlands. Occasionally the pastures contain ridge and furrow. These landscapes have a strong “sense of place” and a unified and harmonious character.

To the north east it is the drier conditions prevailing on the mudstone that have determined the historic settlement pattern. The red brick villages and isolated farmsteads sit on the mudstone, often at the margin of the lower-lying alluvial deposits. On many farms large modern buildings have been erected which are highly visible due to the close proximity of the open alluvial landscapes.

Woodland is not a significant component of the Village Farmlands landscape although locally it does help to break down the rather uniform character. The woodland pattern is formed from a scattered distribution of small-scale, straight-edged blocks of mainly broad-leaved woodland. The sparse distribution of hedgerow trees also compounds the general lack of tree cover. Ash, oak and willow are the main hedgerow tree species with sycamore and horse chestnut more prevalent on the approaches to settlement. Lines of willow along ditch lines and small streams are also a notable feature within the landscape.

Pockets of mature parkland occur at Whatton Manor, and Flintham, Tollerton, Bunny and Ruddington Halls. Although individually quite limited in extent, these areas do help to introduce local variety and diversity into the landscape. Integral elements of the parkland landscapes are the many small blocks of broad-leaved woodland, which have been established both internally and along the margins of the parks. These restrict views out to surrounding areas and produce interesting, well-wooded landscapes of great maturity and character. The integrity of certain parkland landscapes has been eroded by the ploughing up of permanent grassland, and the subsequent conversion to arable cultivation. This creates areas of “remnant” parkland, where mature and sometimes dying trees have been left in place.

The landscape, therefore, is largely rural in character with suburban influences being introduced by the larger settlements. To the south of Newark and Balderton, urban fringe and industrial influences associated with gypsum mining have had a large impact. These influences are heavily etched into the landscape to the south of Balderton where the activities of the gypsum mining industry are made more visible by the open nature of the surrounding farmlands. A number of voids, earth mounds and restored areas are found with associated plant and buildings. Straight residential edges, industrial units, scrap-yards and areas of rough grass lie beyond the gypsum works to form the urban edge of Newark. The landscape has also been affected by gypsum mining in the area to the west of Cropwell Bishop. Deep-mined coal activities at Cotgrave have now ceased, but their legacy, particularly the pit heaps, will continue to dominate the skyline of surrounding farmlands.

## 2.3 LANDSCAPE EVOLUTION AND CHANGE

### Introduction

This section examines the main forces that have brought about change and evolution within the **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** over recent decades. It does this by discussing how the current structure and pattern of land use have developed, paying particular regard to agriculture, woodland, transport, industrial/residential development and mineral extraction. It also considers the trends and pressures that may produce landscape change in the future.

### Agriculture

The **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands** contain some of the highest quality agricultural land in the County with slightly over 80% of the farmland under arable cropping. Large parts of the region have historically had a high proportion of land under cultivation; this is particularly the case on the unbroken tract of Triassic mudstone between Nottingham and Newark. This land is classified as high quality agricultural land by MAFF, along with substantial areas of land to the south of West Bridgford stretching as far as Bunny and Keyworth. The mudstone soils have permeable topsoils and slowly permeable subsoils producing a risk of temporary winter waterlogging. However, the soils respond well to drainage and the climate is generally favourable. Cereals are the principal crops grown, although a wide range of other crops is also found. Winter cereals are sown in rotation with oilseed rape and short-term grass. Kale, sugar beet and potatoes are sometimes included within the rotation. Spring cultivation is possible in all but the wettest years which enables root crops to be grown. Soil nutrient reserves are naturally good, with rich resources of potassium, calcium and magnesium derived from the underlying mudstone.

Prior to drainage the valley bottoms and alluvial flats of the Smite\Devon catchment were almost entirely set to pasture. The slowly permeable soils were often waterlogged, with ground water levels fluctuating in response to changes in the river levels. These areas are now drained, with autumn and spring cereals the dominant arable crop. Root crops are sometimes grown although harvesting difficulties can occur due to the soil wetness. Farms and settlements in the area are located on the drier mudstone sites at the edge of the alluvium, taking advantage of the full range of soil resources.

The Ruddington basin was formerly an area of grass moorland, encompassing the Ruddington, Barton, Gotham, Bradmore and Bunny Moors. The area has now been drained, leaving well-structured humose soils with good agricultural potential. The soils are now only

occasionally seasonally waterlogged. A wide range of crops is grown on a mix of high and moderate quality agricultural land. Late frosts can sometimes present a problem.

In many areas arable intensification has altered the fabric of the landscape through the removal of hedges and the creation of large fields to facilitate the use of modern farm machinery. In places this has fragmented the overall unity of the landscape, leaving isolated features such as remnant gappy hedgerows and dead or dying trees set within open arable farmland. Such features not only appear out of scale with their surroundings, but often impart an impression of dereliction and decline. Although further agricultural expansion is now less likely, declining incomes and continued uncertainty in the short term may result in further intensification of production on existing farmland. In the longer term, new incentives may encourage more environmentally sensitive farming, with perhaps a return to more traditional mixed farming regimes.

In the last decade a number of factors have resulted in a reversal of some of the more damaging aspects of agricultural policy. Of particular significance has been the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which has led to a series of measures designed to reduce the level of agricultural surpluses. The most recent reforms have introduced a new regime which requires farmers compulsorily to set aside 15% of their arable land on a rotational basis. This is already beginning to have an effect on the appearance of the countryside, although at present the temporary nature of the scheme means that opportunities for landscape enhancement are limited. The introduction of a new non-rotational set-aside option, however, does allow some scope for the land to be managed in more environmentally beneficial ways.

### **Woodland/Tree Cover**

The South Nottinghamshire Farmlands is a sparsely wooded region with a woodland cover figure of less than 2%. Most of this woodland is broad-leaved and concentrated in small pockets of mature parkland at Ruddington Hall, Tollerton, Bunny Park, Whatton Manor and Flintham Hall. Elsewhere there is a thin scattering of small woodlands. Dutch elm disease had a major impact upon the landscape during the period 1960-1980, leading to loss of virtually all hedge and roadside elms. Ash and oak are now the dominant hedgerow tree species.

### **Transportation**

Two major roads run through the area; the A1 and the A46. The A46 is currently undergoing upgrade work to dual carriageway status and a new route is also being implemented. The A1 runs through a small section of the character area to the extreme north east. These roads

provide the main access points to the network of country lanes that serve the many villages and settlements. The road network is heavily used within the commuter belt, to the south and east of Newark.

### **Urban and Industrial Development**

The main urban areas within the district are centred on Nottingham and Newark. Past industrial and residential expansion of these areas has led to the coalescence of outlying villages and the loss of historical settlement pattern and rural character.

The settlement pattern in the region is one of small rural villages, with the historic market town of Newark-on-Trent lying to the north. Large-scale new development has been relatively well controlled so that the region's rural character, and the historic settlement pattern of small red brick villages, is still intact.

There is a continuing demand for land to accommodate new housing within Nottinghamshire. The East Midlands Regional Plan (Adopted March 09) defines 5 Principal Urban Areas (PUAs) which include Nottingham. These are settlement conurbations that can develop into sustainable urban communities where people will wish to work and invest. Sub Regional Centres (SRGs) are also identified which include Newark in the Northern sub area. These perform a complementary role to the PUAs and have potential to accommodate further growth.

The plan identifies 14,800 new dwellings to be provided within Newark and Sherwood District. Within the Plan, New Growth Points, including Newark, are designated where there is considered to be the potential to accelerate the delivery of new housing. The Newark Growth Point is centred around the Newark Urban Area (which is made up of the built-up areas of Newark, Balderton and Fernwood.), parts of which are located in the **South Nottinghamshire Sandlands**. It is therefore likely that a large proportion of new housing and employment development will be focused in and around the Newark Urban Area.

Limited provision will be made for residential development in other selected towns and villages as identified in the Local Development Frameworks.

East Midlands Regional policy also seeks to focus economic activity to, and adjacent to, Principal Urban Areas and Sub Regional Centres, since they have the greater needs and greater potential in terms of available labour and services. Provision will also be made for a limited amount of employment development in towns and villages as identified in Local Development Frameworks.

Although new developments are being confined to the existing urban areas where possible, it is clear that economic and social factors will continue to exert pressure on rural areas of the region and it is likely that the demand for rural housing will continue to grow, driven by the increasing number of people who want to live in a rural location. The rehabilitation and conversion of old farm buildings to high quality residential dwellings is now widespread. If the trend continues there may be further consequences for the future pattern and character of the rural landscape.

Employment development will also be directed toward the built-up areas of the region. In the rural areas planning permission will not be granted for employment development unless associated with the agricultural or mineral sectors, or for the expansion of an existing business. Present local planning policies allow for the granting of planning permission for the conversion of agricultural and other rural buildings in the countryside to small-scale employment uses, provided that they help to diversify the rural economy. Continued uncertainty in the agricultural sector and declining incomes will ensure that rural tourism and farm diversification play an increasing role in the economy of the area. This is likely to result in the conversion of existing agricultural buildings, and in some cases demands for new built development. It is likely that emerging Local Development Framework policies will take a broadly similar approach as they are based on national Planning Policy.

### **Energy**

The power generating industry warrants separate consideration due to its enormous impact on the landscape of the region. There are two functioning coal-fired power stations located in the **Trent Washlands**, Cottam, and West Burton. (High Marnham has now been decommissioned). Their combined output amounts to 20% of the UK's generating capacity. The proximity of productive coalfields, a good water supply, adequate communications and favourable topography were the main economic factors in their siting, coal is now imported from outside the region.

The power stations and associated web of high voltage power lines constitute the most dominant and visually intrusive landscape features within and out-with the **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands**.

National Power are currently constructing a power station at Staythorpe on a redundant energy site. This will be a combined cycle gas turbine station (CCGT). It will produce enough electricity to power around 2 million homes. This is in line with the former Structure Plan policies for use and re-use of existing energy sites. The nature, location and scale of further developments will be dependent on future national and international economic factors. It is

likely, however, that the development of gas powered plants will proceed, gradually replacing coal production capacity and reducing the life expectancy of existing power generation plant.

### **Renewable Energy**

National policy is placing a greater emphasis on the promotion of renewable energy sources, such as wind-farms. The East Midlands Regional Plan states that by 2020, at least 20% of electricity supplied in the East Midlands should be provided from renewable energy sources. Currently, the figure is just 2%.

Regional policy encourages planning authorities to develop plans and strategies to promote and encourage (rather than restrict) the use of renewable energy resources. There are likely to be future applications for the location of wind-farms in the South Nottinghamshire Sandlands. These structures have the potential to change the landscape character of the **South Nottinghamshire Farmlands**, particularly the more sparsely settled southern areas.

The power generation industry will continue, therefore, to be a dominant feature in and around the region.

### **Mineral Extraction**

Gypsum mining has had a significant impact upon the landscape and countryside of the north-eastern section of the region. The minerals industry takes advantage of the Newark gypsum resource, which includes some of the world's finest deposits. Staple and Bantycok Quarries are located to the south of Balderton where they are serviced by the Jericho Works, a major manufacturing centre. A second manufacturing centre is located further south, at Staunton. Opencast gypsum extraction occurred at Kilvington Quarry until it was exhausted by 2004. Production was then transferred to Bantycok Quarry which has been dormant since 1991. British Gypsum state that high purity reserves at Bantycok will be sufficient for 6 years, following exhaustion of Kilvington, and therefore should last until 2015. 98 hectares of land to the south of Bantycok Quarry are allocated for gypsum extraction.

Although the mineral is extracted by opencast methods, the level landform helps to reduce the visual impact of the extraction sites, with the voids hidden from view. The surrounding landscapes, however, have a very open character which affords greater prominence to the overburden storage heaps and manufacturing plant. The general lack of trees and hedgerows along the gypsum outcrop near Newark means that there is scope for reclamation schemes to improve the environment, by including a greater level of planting than was present prior to extraction. The standards of reclamation have improved in recent years, as shown by the

## Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment South Nottinghamshire Farmlands

excellent restoration of Kilvington Quarry. Restoration is mainly to agriculture, although creation of lagoons of high wildlife value is also common. The high overburden to mineral ratio allows areas to be backfilled to original ground levels. 120 hectares of land are to be added to existing permissions at Bantycok Quarry; no other allocations are made within the forthcoming Minerals Local Plan. Deep-mined coal activities at Cotgrave have now ceased.

### 3.0 LANDSCAPE POLICY SHEETS

#### **Landscape Character Parcels**

The South Nottinghamshire Farmlands region that falls within the Newark and Sherwood District contains 10 Landscape Description Units [LDUs] [Figure 16]. These were then subdivided into 4 Landscape Character Parcels [LCPs] [Figure 17]. The completed Landscape Character Assessment field survey sheets are included at Appendix B5. This information was then tabulated to help determine the Draft Policy Zone [DPZ] boundaries in preparation for the Landscape Condition and Sensitivity survey contained at section 5.4.

#### **Draft Policy Zones**

Following on from the Landscape Character Assessment of each LCP a total of 3 Draft Policy Zones [DPZs] were created [Figure 18]. A table showing the derivation of each DPZ is included at Appendix C5. A subsequent Landscape Condition and Sensitivity Assessment was then undertaken of each DPZ, this information is detailed on the Landscape Condition and Sensitivity field survey sheets which are included at Appendix D5.

**SN PZ 01 Cotham Meadowlands**  
**Land Cover Parcels: ES12**

**Policy: Create**

**Character Summary**

The area is located south of Newark, encompassing part of the busy A1 road in the northern sector of the Policy Zone, stretching down to Staunton in the Vale in the south. Along with the A1, several minor roads also transect the area. The disused Cotham railway/mineral line runs north-south through the Policy Zone, and partially bounds the western edge. The recently developed town of Fernwood is situated to the north-east, whilst the village of Cotham lies at the centre of the area, with a number of farms and isolated houses throughout. The settlement of Fernwood is entirely modern, whilst Cotham and the part of Staunton in the vale that fall within the Policy Zone have historic cores, with some modern infill evident. A number of listed buildings exist in these areas:

<u>Staunton in the Vale:</u>	4 x Grade II	<u>Cotham:</u>	1 x Grade II
	2 x Grade II*		1 x Grade II*

Topographically the area is a low lying, generally flat arable landscape. Open views are often visible, however hedges and pockets of woodland sometimes restrict long distance views. Frequent small to medium scale woodlands are evident particularly in the south. There is also occasional parkland in evidence at Balderton old hospital site and also Staunton Park, Staunton in the Vale.

The intensive nature of land-use in the Policy Zone is evident through the presence of numerous mineral works sites: Staunton Works in the south, Cotham Gypsum Works and Kilvington Quarry. Intensive arable farming is the dominant land use with medium to large scale fields. Some pastoral land and parkland is noted in the vicinity of settlements, particularly near Staunton in the Vale.

Field boundaries are composed predominantly of well maintained Hawthorn hedgerows. These are often strongly trimmed, fragmented or lost altogether where fields are large and intensively arable. Hedgerows closer to village cores tend to be denser and more species-rich. Some Poplar trees are evident around the industrial works sites. Oak, Ash and Horse Chestnut outgrown trees are often present within mixed hawthorn hedges.

Other vegetation exists within the Policy Zone, with some scrubby field boundaries adjacent to drainage ditches, some riparian vegetation following drains, along with some areas designated as Biological SINC:

- 2/750 – Mineral Line, Cotham ‘Scrub and base-rich grassland along a disused railway line’
- 1/104 – Cotham Station ‘Species-rich calcareous grassland and scrub developed on an ex-industrial site’
- 1/86 – Staunton Quarry ‘A valuable area of wetland, grassland and scrub communities on base-rich – of botanical and invertebrate zoological interest’
- 2/802 – Staunton Works ‘A disturbed area of land behind the Staunton Gypsum Works with notable botanical and zoological communities’
- 5/226 – Folly Hill Grassland and Pond ‘Notable species-rich meadows, partly tree planted’

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Geological SINCDesignations also exist:

2/1024 – Bantycok Gypsum Pit, Newark ‘A quarry showing the complete geological succession of the area, from the Mercia Mudgroup (Keuper Marl) through to the Lower Lias, and also the mode of gypsum occurrence’

2/1025 – Old Stone Pits, Staunton in the Vale ‘An abandoned quarry containing an interesting spoil heap of fossiliferous Lower Lias Limestone’

A number of threats and drivers for change exist in the area. These include:

- Increased development of both industrial and residential, especially to the north of the area. Potential for planned settlement of Fernwood to expand.
- Increased intensity of agriculture particularly in the south.
- Loss of parkland and parkland trees.
- Fragmentation and loss of hedgerows, leading to subsequent further field pattern loss.

**SN PZ 01 COTHAM MEADOWLANDS**

PHOTOGRAPH	CONTEXT												
	<p>NCC Landscape Type: Meadowlands Policy Zone: SN PZ 01 Landscape Character Parcel: ES12</p> <p><b>Condition</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1043 439 1473 663"> <tr> <td>Good</td> <td>REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE &amp; REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate</td> <td>CREATE &amp; REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE &amp; CREATE</td> <td>CONSERVE &amp; RESTORE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Poor</td> <td>CREATE</td> <td>RESTORE &amp; CREATE</td> <td>RESTORE</td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Low                  Moderate                  High</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sensitivity</b></p>	Good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE	Moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE	Poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
Good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE										
Moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE										
Poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE										
<p><b>CHARACTERISTIC VISUAL FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flat and open topography with northern section situated on urban edge.</li> <li>• Predominantly intensive arable land use, with well trimmed hawthorn hedgerows to boundaries, often fragmented in places.</li> <li>• Some pastoral fields and horseyculture, generally in vicinity of settlements.</li> <li>• Views interrupted by power lines and pylons running east to west through the area, and by the busy A1 to north-eastern area.</li> </ul>													
<p><b>LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS</b></p>	<p><b>SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS</b></p>												
<p><b>Landscape Condition</b></p>	<p><b>Condition                  Very Poor</b></p>												
<p>The Landscape Condition is defined as <b>very poor</b>.</p> <p>The area has an <b>incoherent</b> pattern of elements composed of predominantly arable fields and isolated farms, landfill sites and industrial works ; there are <b>many</b> detracting features, including numerous industrial sites, mineral extraction and associated spoil heaps and tips, pylons and pylon lines and busy roads bisecting the area (A1). Overall this gives a visually <b>significantly interrupted</b> area. There are a number of Biological SINC designations (2/750 – Mineral Line, Cotham; 1/104 – Cotham Station; 1/86 – Staunton Quarry; 2/802 – Staunton Works; 5/226 – Folly Hill Grassland and Pond). Geological SINC designations also exist (2/1024 – Bantycok Gypsum Pit, Newark; 2/1025 – Old Stone Pits, Staunton in the Vale). There is also part of the Staunton in the Vale MLA included in the Policy Zone.</p> <p>In ecological terms the area provides a <b>moderate</b> habitat for wildlife, with a relatively intensive arable land use with good hedgerow networks. Cultural integrity is <b>variable</b> in that the field pattern is generally intact, with hedgerows sometimes fragmented, although generally well maintained. A <b>significantly interrupted</b> area with a <b>coherent</b> functional integrity gives a <b>very poor</b> landscape condition.</p>	<p>Pattern of Elements:                  Incoherent</p> <p>Detracting Features:                  Many</p> <p>Visual Unity:                  Significantly Interrupted</p> <p>Ecological Integrity:                  Moderate</p> <p>Cultural Integrity:                  Variable</p> <p>Functional Integrity:                  Coherent</p> <p>(Where one criterion is 'very poor' or 'very weak', this pushes the policy description into the next lowest category)</p>												
<p><b>Landscape Sensitivity</b></p>	<p><b>Sensitivity                  Very Low</b></p>												
<p>The Landscape Sensitivity is defined as <b>very low</b>.</p> <p>The components of the landscape are <b>indistinct</b> to the South-Nottinghamshire LCA. The time depth is <b>recent</b> (50 years) giving a <b>very weak</b> sense of place overall.</p> <p>The landform is <b>apparent</b> with <b>intermittent</b> tree cover giving a generally <b>moderate</b> visibility value within the Policy Zone. Views are intermittent due to the networks of generally mature hedgerows. A <b>very weak</b> sense of place and <b>moderate</b> visibility leads to a <b>very low</b> landscape sensitivity overall.</p>	<p>Distinctiveness:                  Indistinct</p> <p>Continuity:                  Recent</p> <p>Sense of Place:                  Very Weak</p> <p>Landform:                  Apparent</p> <p>Extent of Tree Cover                  Intermittent</p> <p>Visibility:                  Moderate</p>												

## Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment South Nottinghamshire Farmlands

### **ACTIONS – Create**

#### **Landscape Features**

- **Create** new hedgerows and restore existing, seek opportunities to recreate historic field pattern where feasible. Contain new development within historic boundaries.
- Seek opportunities to restore arable land to pastoral.
- Enhance tree cover and landscape planting generally, in particular along the A1, to **create** increased visual unity and habitat across the Policy Zone.
- **Create** small scale woodland to contain and soften built development, particularly around Fernwood.
- Conserve the ecological diversity and biodiversity of the designated SINCS.

#### **Built Features**

- **Create** new development which reflects the local built vernacular.
- Conserve what remains of the rural landscape by concentrating **creation** of new development around existing settlement.

**SN PZ 02 Elston Village Farmlands**  
**Land Cover Parcels: ES14 and ES15**

**Policy: Conserve and Create**

**Character Summary**

The area is located to the south of Newark and Farndon, and encompasses the villages of Syerston, Elston, East stoke, Thorpe, Hawton and part of Balderton (south of Newark). The River Trent forms part of the north-west boundary, whilst the Cotham Dismantled Railway forms much of the eastern boundary. The A46 bisects the area and a number of minor roads cut across the landscape throughout.

Pylons and power lines also intersect the landscape, particularly in the centre of the Policy Zone, running from north to south. Some restored mineral workings are apparent, with newly planted broadleaved woodland, fishing lakes and wetland areas. Some industry is evident to the north-east corner of the Policy Zone, whilst further to the south, the area is dominated by large arable fields with highly fragmented hedgerows and views interrupted by the numerous pylon lines.

The landform is generally flat, with open views out to higher ground, interrupted intermittently by wooded skylines and pylons & power lines. The existence of a relatively strong network of hedgerows and occasional woodland planting mean that views are often intermittent.

Arable farmland dominates the area, with some pastoral fields evident around the vicinity of the settlements. Field scales are generally medium to large when associated with arable land use, and small to medium when associated with pastoral land use. Field boundaries are predominantly formed by generally well maintained Hawthorn hedgerows and sometimes by ditches where hedgerows have been lost. Hedges to the larger scale intensive arable fields are sometimes fragmented or lost in areas, however, those bounding smaller scale pastoral fields are often mature and species-rich. Some horseyculture exists in these pastoral fields, and post and rail fencing and some temporary electric fencing is evident.

Hedgerows and field margins provide a good network throughout the area, along with riparian links. Along with these vegetation links, there are a number of Biological SINC designations:

- 2/803 – Lowfield Lane Grasslands, Balderton ‘Damp alluvial grasslands’
- 5/2129 – Balderton Works Meadow (II) ‘Notable neutral horse paddocks with a rich flora’
- 2/804 – Balderton Works Meadow (I) ‘A small remnant of species-rich grassland’
- 5/208 – Balderton Dismantled railway South ‘A dismantled railway with substantial areas of grassland and scrub’
- 2/637 – Lowfield Grassland, Balderton ‘A small species-rich remnant of a once notable grassland’
- 5/222 – Hawton Tip grassland ‘A large area of ruderal and base-rich grassland developed on gypsum spoil’
- 5/2258 – The Grange Ditch, Hawton ‘A drain of interest for Water Beetles’
- 5/2168 – Cotham Flash ‘An area of open water and associated habitat of ornithological note’
- 5/2229 – Hawton Old Gypsum Works Ponds ‘Ponds of interest for Water Beetles and Water Bugs’
- 5/2173 – Hawton Works Grassland ‘A large area of grassland with notable plant species’
- 2/974 – Hawton Civil War Front ‘A notable pasture community on an archaeological site’
- 2/588 – River Devon (North of Cotham) ‘A historically interesting water course with valuable riparian features and a locally diverse aquatic flora’
- 2/971 – Back Dyke Grassland, Cotham ‘A species-rich grassland adjacent to Back Dyke’
- 2/749 – Trent Lane Wood ‘A small but characteristic area of deciduous woodland’
- 5/345 – Primrose Plantation ‘A trentside woodland with notable plant species’
- 2/585 – Flintham Wood ‘A well-wooded river bluff’

## Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment South Nottinghamshire Farmlands

2/694 – River Trent (Gunthorpe to Fiskerton) ‘A representative length of the Trent of high wildlife value’

2/695 – The Nabbs ‘A large and valuable community of gravel colonists and scrub developed on an island in the River Trent’

Two MLA designations also exist in the Policy Zone: East Stoke and Balderton.

Isolated woodland occurs throughout the Policy Zone. Of particular note is the area of woodland south of Hawton (Fox Covert) at Pyketts farm, where new planting can be seen as part of restoration works, and include poplars grown for Biomass fuel. Several Industrial sites are located within the area, particularly in the north of the Policy Zone, south of Newark, (Jericho Gypsum Works, Hawson Gypsum Works and Lowfield Works). There is also a sewage works near Balderton.

There are a number of settlements in the Policy Zone including; Syerston, Elston, East Stoke, Thorpe, Hawton and part of Balderton (south of Newark). The majority of these settlements have historic cores with vernacular characters (aside from the more recent development of Balderton). Some infill and peripheral development is evident in the villages, however, a number of Listed Buildings exist:

<u>Hawton:</u>	1 x Grade II	<u>Thorpe:</u>	2 x Grade II	<u>East Stoke:</u>	6 x Grade II
	1 x Grade I				1 x
	Grade II*				
<u>Elston:</u>	7 x Grade II	<u>Syerston:</u>	7 x Grade II		
	2 x Grade II*				
	1 x Grade I				

A number of threats and drivers for change exist in the area and these include:

- The construction of the new A46 route through the west of the area is likely to have a highly disruptive impact, with loss of hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- Encroachment of horseyculture on existing fields.
- Intensification of arable farming and/or lack of management leading to further fragmentation and loss of hedgerows and consequent loss of existing field pattern.
- Redundant mineral workings provide opportunities for new landscape and vegetation.
- Further residential development, particularly to the fringes of Balderton.
- Further Industrial development.

**SN PZ 02 ELSTON VILLAGE FARMLANDS**

PHOTOGRAPH	CONTEXT												
	<p>NCC Landscape Type: Village Farmlands Policy Zone: SN PZ 02 Landscape Character Parcel: ES14 and ES15</p> <p><b>Condition</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1043 439 1473 663"> <tr> <td>Good</td> <td>REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE &amp; REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate</td> <td>CREATE &amp; REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE &amp; CREATE</td> <td>CONSERVE &amp; RESTORE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Poor</td> <td>CREATE</td> <td>RESTORE &amp; CREATE</td> <td>RESTORE</td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Low                  Moderate                  High</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sensitivity</b></p>	Good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE	Moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE	Poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
Good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE										
Moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE										
Poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE										
<p><b>CHARACTERISTIC VISUAL FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flat and open topography with north-eastern section situated on urban edge.</li> <li>• Predominantly intensive arable land use, with well trimmed hawthorn hedgerows to boundaries, often fragmented in places.</li> <li>• Some pastoral fields and horseyculture, generally in vicinity of settlements.</li> <li>• Views interrupted by power lines and pylons running east to west through the area, and by the busy A46.</li> <li>• Predominantly vernacular settlements of Syerston, Elston, East Stoke, Thorpe and Hawton, along with the more recent development of Balderton.</li> </ul>													
<p><b>LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS</b></p> <p><b>Landscape Condition</b></p>	<p><b>SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS</b></p> <p><b>Condition                  Moderate</b></p>												
<p>The Landscape Condition is defined as <b>moderate</b>.</p> <p>The area has a <b>coherent</b> pattern of elements composed of predominantly arable fields and isolated farms; there are <b>some</b> detracting features, including sewage works, Industrial works, the busy A46 and new A46 under construction, and pylons and pylon lines. Overall this gives a visually <b>coherent</b> area. There are a number of Biological SINC designations (2/803 – Lowfield Lane Grasslands, Balderton; 5/2129 – Balderton Works Meadow (II); 2/804 – Balderton Works Meadow (I); 5/208 – Balderton Dismantled Railway South; 2/637 – Lowfield Grassland, Balderton; 5/222 – Hawton Tip Grassland; 5/2258 – The Grange Ditch, Hawton; 5/2168 – Cotham Flash; 5/2229 – Hawton Old Gypsum Works Ponds; 5/2173 – Hawton Works Grassland; 2/974 – Hawton Civil War Front; 2/588 – River Devon (North of Cotham); 2/971 – Back dyke Grassland, Cotham; 2/749 – Trent Lane Wood; 5/345 – Primrose Plantation; 2/585 – Flintham Wood; 2/694 – River Trent (Gunthorpe to Fiskerton); 2/695 – The Nabbs). There is also the East Stoke and Balderton MLA included in the Policy Zone.</p> <p>In ecological terms the area provides a <b>moderate</b> habitat for wildlife, with a relatively intensive arable land use with good hedgerow networks. Cultural integrity is <b>variable</b> in that the field pattern is generally intact, with hedgerows sometimes fragmented, although generally well maintained. A <b>coherent</b> area with a <b>coherent</b> functional integrity gives a <b>moderate</b> landscape condition.</p>	<p>Pattern of Elements:          Coherent</p> <p>Detracting Features:          Some</p> <p>Visual Unity:                  Coherent</p> <p>Ecological Integrity:          Moderate</p> <p>Cultural Integrity:              Variable</p> <p>Functional Integrity:          Coherent</p>												
<p><b>Landscape Sensitivity</b></p>	<p><b>Sensitivity                  Moderate</b></p>												
<p>The Landscape Sensitivity is defined as <b>moderate</b>.</p> <p>The components of the landscape are <b>characteristic</b> to the South-Nottinghamshire LCA. The time depth is <b>historic</b> (post 1600) giving a <b>moderate</b> sense of place overall.</p> <p>The landform is <b>apparent</b> with <b>intermittent</b> tree cover giving a generally <b>moderate</b> visibility value within the Policy Zone. Views are intermittent due to the networks of generally mature hedgerows. A <b>moderate</b> sense of place and <b>moderate</b> visibility leads to a <b>moderate</b> landscape sensitivity overall.</p>	<p>Distinctiveness:              Characteristic</p> <p>Continuity:                      Historic</p> <p>Sense of Place:                Moderate</p> <p>Landform:                        Apparent</p> <p>Extent of Tree Cover          Intermittent</p> <p>Visibility:                        Moderate</p>												

## Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment South Nottinghamshire Farmlands

### **ACTIONS – Conserve and Create**

#### **Landscape Features**

- **Create** new hedgerows and restore existing, seek opportunities to recreate historic field pattern where feasible. Contain new development within historic boundaries.
- Seek opportunities to restore arable land to pastoral.
- Enhance tree cover and landscape planting generally, in particular along A46 roadside, to **create** increased visual unity and habitat across the Policy Zone.
- **Conserve** the ecological diversity and biodiversity of the designated SINCs.

#### **Built Features**

- **Create** new development which reflects the local built vernacular.
- **Conserve** what remains of the rural landscape by concentrating **creation** of new development around existing settlement.

**SN PZ 03 Alverton Village Farmlands**  
**Land Cover Parcels: ES16 and ES17**

**Policy: Conserve**

**Character Summary**

The area is relatively compact and extends from east of Shelton to the west of Normanton, encompassing the villages of Alverton, Kilvington and part of Staunton in the Vale. There are very few roads bisecting the area, aside from Grange Lane that connects the villages. The Kilvington Dismantled Railway draws a linear line through the centre of the Policy Zone, running north to south. A relatively large section to the west of the Policy Zone is occupied by a disused Quarry (west of Kilvington), now restored as a nature reserve, including a lake and new planting.

Landform is predominantly flat, being a broad flood plain, with some small undulation occurring in places. Views are long distance to the east towards the Vale of Belvoir, although areas of woodland and mature hedgerows often interrupt views.

The landscape is a mix of arable and pastoral farmland. Arable fields tend to be medium to large scale whereas pasture is contained in smaller fields located near to the villages. Well maintained hedgerows with trees are a common feature and form the majority of the field boundaries. Post & rail and post & wire fencing also feature in places, generally around the pastoral fields.

Woodland is also a feature of the area, where the restoration of the disused quarry exhibits areas of sensitive landscape improvement and recent woodland planting. A number of blocks of mixed woodland are also present along with shelterbelts along field boundaries. Species include Oak, Ash and Horse Chestnut. A number of Biological SINCs are designated throughout the Policy Zone and these include:

- 5/376 – Kilvington Lakes ‘A series of lakes of botanical and ornithological interest around former gypsum workings’
- 5/219 – Kilvington Railway ‘A representative section of dismantled railway with botanical interest’
- 2/842 – River Devon, Staunton ‘A notable length of water course’
- 2/813 – Staunton Park Pastures ‘Two damp grasslands of botanical interest’

There is also part of the Staunton in the Vale Mature Landscape Area designation present in the east of the Policy Zone.

The villages of Alverton, Kilvington and part of Staunton in the Vale that lie within the area are generally of a vernacular nature, all with historic cores. Remnants of a historic landscape exist in the area, particularly in the east around Staunton Hall and Manor farm. A number of Listed Buildings are present within the villages:

Kilvington: 4 x Grade II

A number of threats and drivers for change exist in the area, and these include:

- Increase in residential development within and to periphery of settlements.
- Loss of woodland due to land use change.
- Intensification of agriculture and/or lack of management leading to fragmentation and loss of hedgerows, resulting in loss of field pattern.

**SN PZ 03 ALVERTON VILLAGE FARMLANDS**

PHOTOGRAPH	CONTEXT												
	<p>NCC Landscape Type: Village Farmlands Policy Zone: SN PZ 03 Landscape Character Parcel: ES16 and ES17</p> <p><b>Condition</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1043 439 1473 663"> <tr> <td>Good</td> <td>REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE &amp; REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Moderate</td> <td>CREATE &amp; REINFORCE</td> <td>CONSERVE &amp; CREATE</td> <td>CONSERVE &amp; RESTORE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Poor</td> <td>CREATE</td> <td>RESTORE &amp; CREATE</td> <td>RESTORE</td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Low                  Moderate                  High</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sensitivity</b></p>	Good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE	Moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE	Poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE
Good	REINFORCE	CONSERVE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE										
Moderate	CREATE & REINFORCE	CONSERVE & CREATE	CONSERVE & RESTORE										
Poor	CREATE	RESTORE & CREATE	RESTORE										
<p><b>CHARACTERISTIC VISUAL FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flat and open topography due to being broad flood plain.</li> <li>• Predominantly intensive arable land use, with well trimmed hawthorn hedgerows to boundaries.</li> <li>• Also permanent pasture and some horseculture, generally in vicinity of settlements.</li> <li>• Pylons and power lines run in the south-west of the Policy Zone.</li> <li>• Vernacular settlements of Alverton and part of Staunton in the Vale.</li> </ul>	<p><b>SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS</b></p>												
<p><b>LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS</b></p> <p><b>Landscape Condition</b></p>	<p><b>Condition</b>                  <b>Very Good</b></p>												
<p>The Landscape Condition is defined as <b>very good</b>.</p> <p>The area has a <b>coherent</b> pattern of elements composed of predominantly arable fields and isolated farms; there are <b>few</b> detracting features, including an electricity sub-station and pylons &amp; pylon lines. Overall this gives a visually <b>unified</b> area. There are a number of Biological SINC designations (5/376 – Kilvington Lakes; 5/219 – Kilvington Railway; 2/842 – River Devon, Staunton; 2/813 – Staunton Park Pastures). There is also the Staunton in the Vale MLA included in the Policy Zone.</p> <p>In ecological terms the area provides a <b>moderate</b> habitat for wildlife, with a relatively intensive arable land use with good hedgerow networks. Cultural integrity is <b>good</b> in that the field pattern is generally intact, with hedgerows sometimes fragmented, although generally well maintained. A <b>unified</b> area with a <b>strong</b> functional integrity gives a <b>very good</b> landscape condition.</p>	<p>Pattern of Elements:          Coherent</p> <p>Detracting Features:          Few</p> <p>Visual Unity:                  Unified</p> <p>Ecological Integrity:          Moderate</p> <p>Cultural Integrity:              Good</p> <p>Functional Integrity:            Strong</p> <p>(Where one criterion is 'very good' or 'very strong', this pushes the policy description into the next highest category)</p>												
<p><b>Landscape Sensitivity</b></p>	<p><b>Sensitivity</b>                  <b>Moderate</b></p>												
<p>The Landscape Sensitivity is defined as <b>moderate</b>.</p> <p>The components of the landscape are <b>characteristic</b> to the South-Nottinghamshire LCA. The time depth is <b>historic</b> (post 1600) giving a <b>moderate</b> sense of place overall.</p> <p>The landform is <b>apparent</b> with <b>intermittent</b> tree cover giving a generally <b>moderate</b> visibility value within the Policy Zone. Views are intermittent due to the networks of generally mature hedgerows. A <b>moderate</b> sense of place and <b>moderate</b> visibility leads to a <b>moderate</b> landscape sensitivity overall.</p>	<p>Distinctiveness:                Characteristic</p> <p>Continuity:                      Historic</p> <p>Sense of Place:                 Moderate</p> <p>Landform:                        Apparent</p> <p>Extent of Tree Cover          Intermittent</p> <p>Visibility:                        Moderate</p>												

Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment  
South Nottinghamshire Farmlands

**ACTIONS – Conserve**

**Landscape Features**

- Seek opportunities to restore arable land to pastoral.
- **Conserve** the ecological diversity and biodiversity of the designated SINCs.
- **Conserve** hedgerow trees and replace where necessary.
- **Conserve** permanent pasture and parkland area near to Staunton hall, seek opportunities to restore arable land to pasture.

**Built Features**

- **Conserve** what remains of the rural landscape by concentrating new development around existing settlements of Alverton, Kilvington and Staunton in the Vale.

SPECIES LIST

The following list includes native tree and shrub species that are commonly found within the South-Nottinghamshire Farmlands and are suitable for inclusion in planting schemes. These are important for determining the area's regional character. A range of other native species may also be appropriate to particular locations or sites. In these cases professional advice should be sought.

● **Dominant Species**      ○ **Other Species Present**

TREES	Woodlands/ Plantations	Hedges	Hedgerow Trees	Wet Areas/Streamsides	Individual/ Parkland Trees
Alder (Common)	○			○	
Ash	●	○	●	○	
Beech	○				
Birch (Silver)	○				
Cherry (Wild)	○				
Crab Apple	○	○			
Elm (Wych)	○	○			
Horse Chestnut	○				
Lime (Small Leaved)	○		○		
Lime (Large Leaved and Hybrid)	○				
Oak (Common)	●	○	●		
Willow (Crack)	○	○	○	●	
Willow (White)			○	●	

● **Dominant Species**      ○ **Other Species Present**

Newark and Sherwood Landscape Character Assessment  
 South Nottinghamshire Farmlands

SHRUBS	Woodlands/ Plantations	Hedges	Hedgerow Trees	Wet Areas/Streamsid es
Blackthorn	○	●		○
Dogwood (Common)		○		
Hawthorn	●	○		
Hazel	○	●		●
Holly	○	○		
Osier	○	○		○
Privet (Wild)	○	○		○
Rosa Sp.	○	○		○
Willow (Goat)	○	○		○
Willow (Grey)				○