

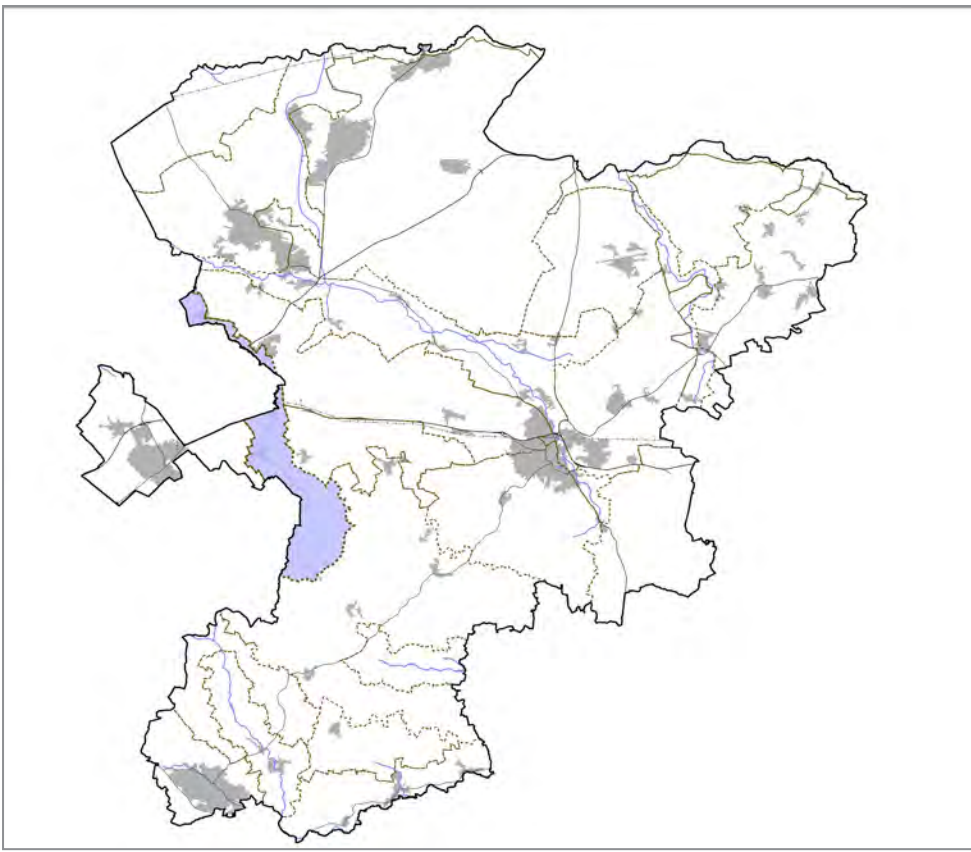


View to Dalham Hall and church across the Kennett Valley from Dalham Road

West Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Area A5

Kennett Valley

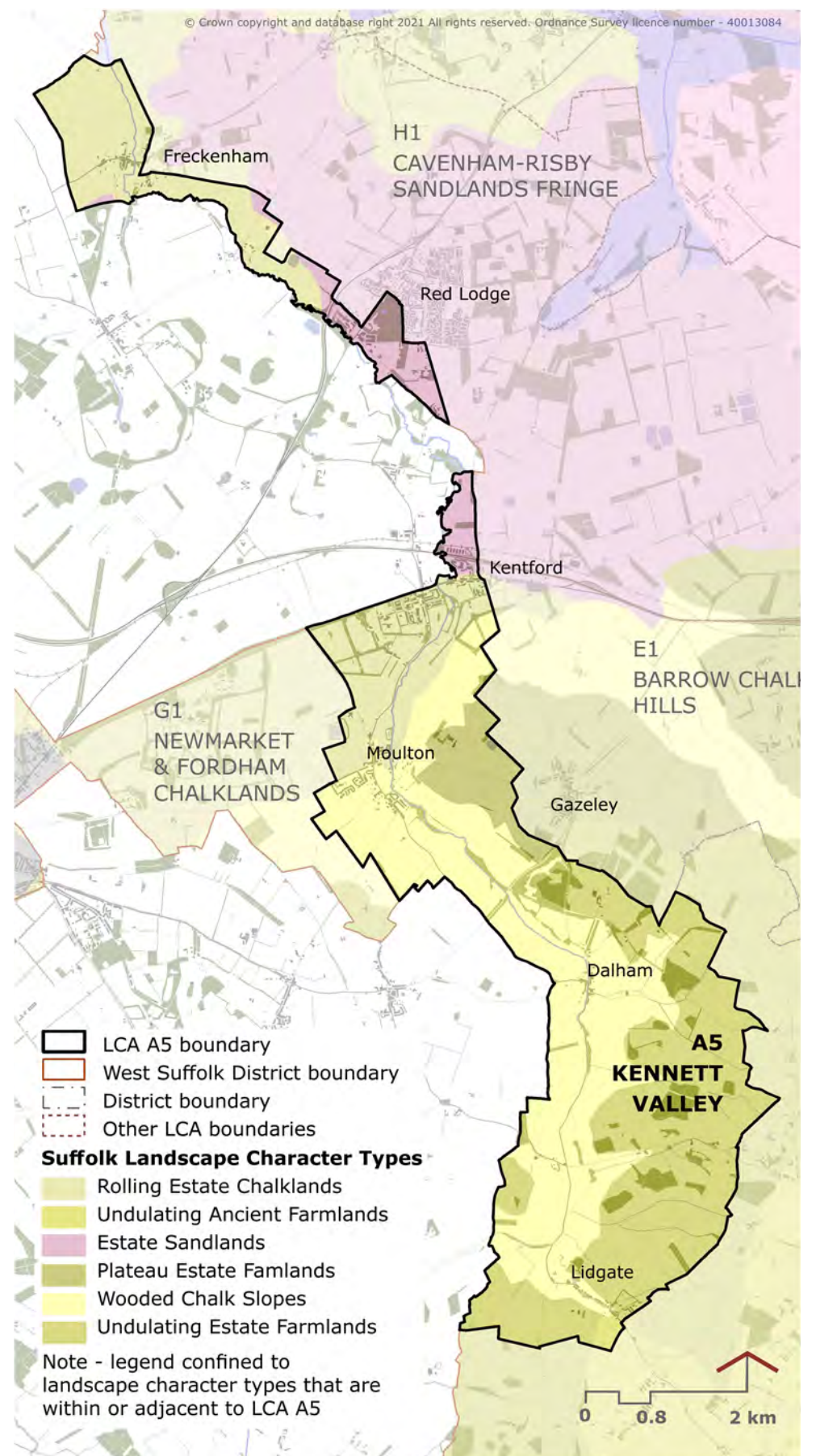


A5 Kennett Valley

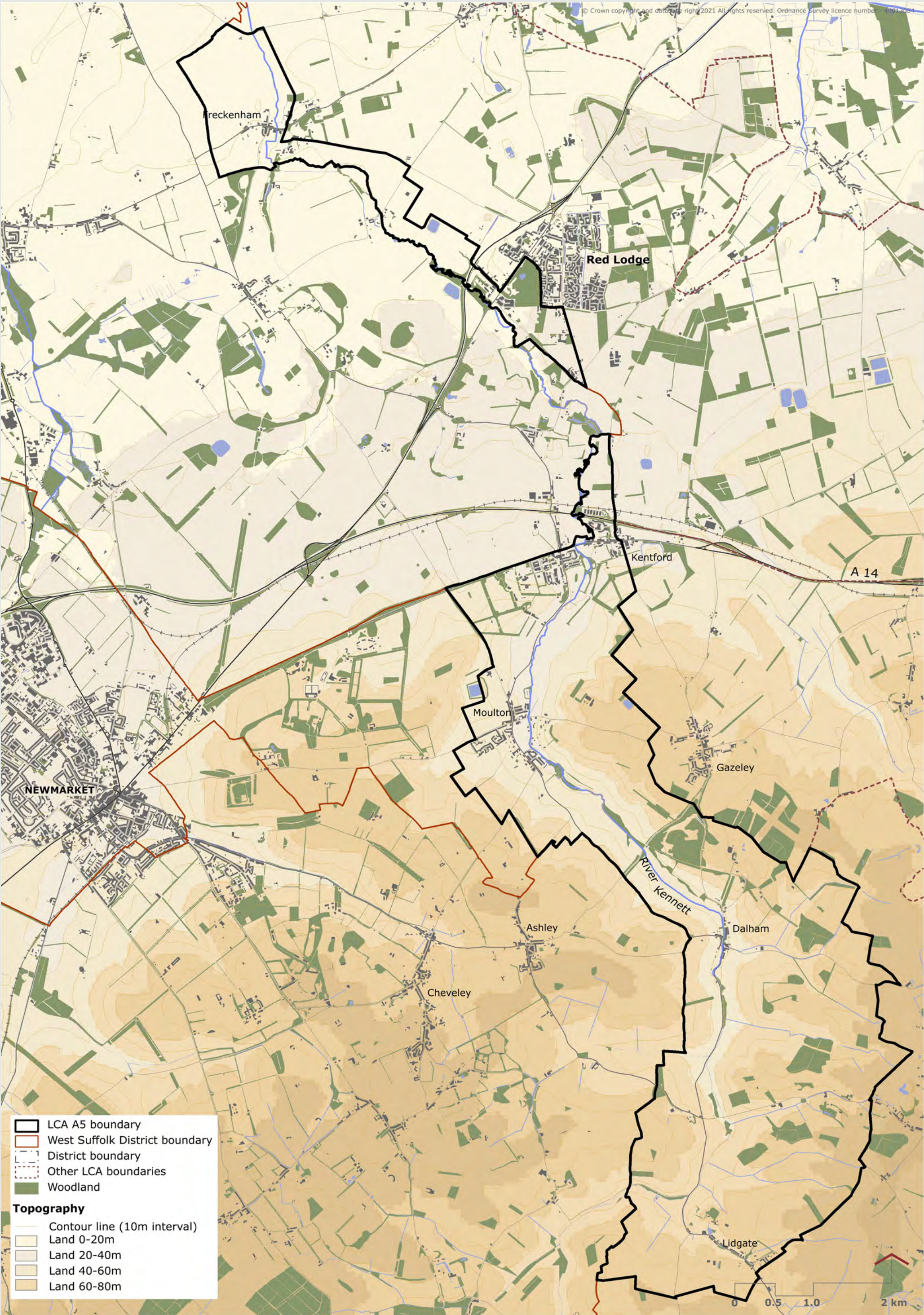
The River Kennett is a tributary to the River Lark and flows northwards from the hills around Lidgate to Freckenham close to the fen edge. This long narrow landscape character area (LCA) reflects the alignment of a distinctive river valley, with pronounced valley sides in its middle and upper reaches. The Kennett forms the boundary between West Suffolk and East Cambridgeshire - as such this character area extends outside of the study area.

The Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment classifies the county's landscapes into landscape character types. As the Landscape Classification map shows, the corridor of the River Kennett is part of the Valley Meadows and Fens landscape type. The river crosses a sequence of landscape character types:

- The Upper Kennett flows through the Wooded Chalk Slopes between Lidgate and Kentford, with well defined rounded valley sides topped by the Plateau Estate Farmlands on upper slopes.
- From Kentford through to Red Lodge it continues through the Estate Sandlands where the valley sides become shallower.
- North of Red Lodge the Kennett meanders through a low lying chalk landscape which forms the transition between the fen and sandlands. Here it is a subtle landscape feature but still distinctively different from the wider landscape.



LCA A5 Kennett Valley - Landscape classification



LCA A5 Kennett Valley - Landscape context

Key characteristics

- Pronounced valley landscape with steep rounded valley sides in the upper and middle reaches, becoming shallower in lower reaches.
- Narrow stream course flanked by vegetation becoming increasingly meandering through small scale valley floor pastures in the middle/lower reaches.
- Medium scale arable farmland on valley slopes with tree blocks and small-scale pattern of meadow, carr woodland, tree clumps and hedgerows on the floodplain in the middle and lower reaches.
- Repetitive pattern of historic nucleated villages along the lower valley slopes connected by sinuous lane which follows the course of the river for much of its length.
- Concentration of churches overlooking the valley and other heritage structures such as the packhorse bridge at Moulton and the castle at Lidgate.
- Strong parkland influence at Dalham and other remnant parkland at Kennett, and stud farm influence at Kentford.
- Vegetation pattern strongly reflects underlying geology - beech on the chalk, pines on the sandlands and oak/ash towards the fen edge.
- Concentrated and inter-connected mosaic of wetland and woodland habitat along the river course.
- A14 and railway between Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds cut across this landscape from east to west.
- Intimate, historic settled valley landscape with high degree of tranquillity despite settled character.



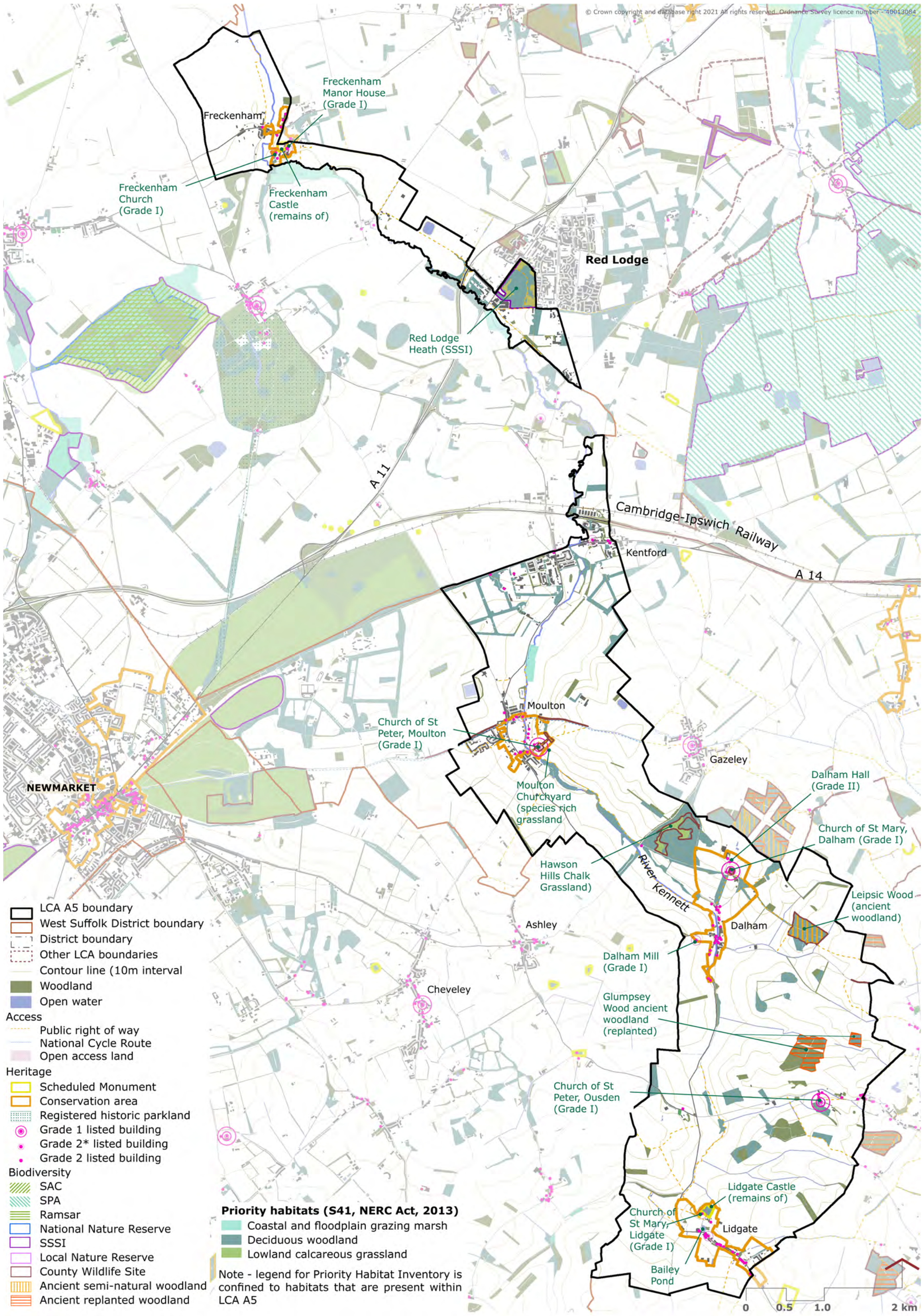
Thatched cottages cluster in estate village of Dalham



Freckenham Church and valley pastures

Pattern of woodland and arable farmland on steep valley slopes near Dalham





LCA A5 Kennett Valley - Landscape assets and features

Distinctive Landscape Character

The River Kennett flows from the boulder clays on the fringes of the plateau around Lidgate through the chalk of Dalham and Moulton to the sandy soils of the Brecks around Red Lodge before continuing to the fen edge around Freckenham. The valley slopes are most pronounced forming steep, smooth and rounded slopes in the upper and middle reaches and become shallow and indistinct in the lower reaches.

The river channel is typically bordered by a narrow fringe of small pastures, small woodlands and lines of riparian trees which broaden in extent in the lower reaches around Kentford and Red Lodge. This valley floor landscape contrasts with the much larger scale pattern of arable farmland and woodland blocks beyond (a number of which are ancient woodland). The narrow floodplain comprises alluvial deposits and some areas of peat.

The Kennett Valley has been the focus for settlement since prehistoric times and the present day settlement pattern comprises a string of villages along its length occurring at river crossing points on historic routes, a number of which were pilgrim routes to Bury St Edmunds. These old crossing points are marked by fords or the humped back bridge found at Moulton. Narrow sinuous roads along the floodplain margins connect the valley settlements with the villages located on the lower valley slopes above the floodplain. Village churches are local landmarks throughout the valley, as is the 18th century Lower Mill at Dalham - a former smock mill which sits on the middle slopes above the valley (currently under restoration).

The village of Dalham is associated with the historic park of Dalham Hall located above the village on the rounded chalk slopes with open views across the valley. The parkland trees/avenues, woodlands and lodges are distinctive features within the landscape.

The character of the Kennett Valley is substantially influenced by the surrounding landscape types with the lower reaches structured by the lines of pine shelterbelts and rectilinear fields of the Brecks and fen edge. In the upper and middle reaches the valley landscape pattern comprises large to medium scale arable fields defined by well trimmed hedges and blocks of woodland. This relative open pattern means that the rounded flowing landform of the underlying chalk is strongly evident. As the river progresses towards the Brecks landscape north of Kentford these open slopes are replaced by a more subtle topography and while the pattern of enclosure is more regular (reflecting later enclosure of former common) it nonetheless retains an open large scale.

Many of the buildings within the historic settlements date to the medieval and Tudor periods built in local vernacular styles including a high prevalence of thatch and knapped flint which reflect the natural resources of the river and chalk. The medieval history of Lidgate and Freckenham remain strongly expressed in the present day village layout. Both villages include a motte and bailey castle located in strong defence positions on raised land above the river. In the case of Lidgate the mound and its outer bailey has an unusual rectilinear form and whilst overgrown, it is still evident, with Bailey Pond thought to comprise an extant area of moat. The defence site is particularly valued as it was remodelled in the 16th century as a manorial complex. In the case of Freckenham the raised land north of the church remains legible and the sunken street pattern curves around the outer bailey ditch. Both sites are scheduled monuments.



Rounded chalk slopes on valley sides near Moulton



Thatched cottages in Moulton, with rising chalk slopes in background

Transportation routes have historically cut across this landscape connecting Newmarket to the west with Bury St Edmunds in the east and include the historic pilgrim route of the Icknield Way. Today major transport routes include the A14 and Cambridge-Ipswich railway which crosses the valley just north of Kentford, and the A11 which crosses the valley at Red Lodge.

Landscape Condition

The floodplain pastures are often in poor condition and subject to scrub encroachment, over grazing and proximity to intensively farmed arable. Field boundaries are often gappy or well trimmed and habitat networks are often fragmented.

The villages remain intact with a high concentration of listed buildings although at Red Lodge, Kentford and Moulton housing development (including estates) has disrupted traditional settlement pattern.

Landscape sensitivity - key natural, cultural and perceptual features

Natural	Cultural	Perceptual
<p>Broad, rolling valley landform in upper and middle reaches transitioning to shallow valley where the interplay between the river floodplain and the wider surrounding farmland and heathland landscapes is subtle.</p> <p>Striking transitions in landscape type along the Kennett Valley - from boulder clay plateau (around Lidgate) to chalk hills around Dalham, Moulton and Kenford, to Brecks sandlands and fen edge landscapes around Red Lodge and Freckenham.</p> <p>Small watercourse within a narrow riparian corridor flanked by riparian trees with a surrounding large scale arable farmland.</p> <p>Valuable habitat connections in the form of hedgerows and tree belts, linking the river corridor with woodlands and heath habitats.</p> <p>Chalk grassland habitats reflecting the underlying chalk geology at Moulton Churchyard and Harson Hills (part of the Dalham Estate) both of which are County Wildlife Sites.</p>	<p>Historic settlement pattern with a string of villages at river crossing points along the length of the valley.</p> <p>Strong influence of historic parkland landscapes at Dalham and Red Lodge.</p> <p>Historic small-scale pattern of meadows, managed wetland and carr woodland on floodplain between Dalham and Kentford and also at Freckenham.</p> <p>Network of narrow enclosed lanes, tracks and footpaths connect the villages and hamlets along the valley.</p> <p>Small white bridges across the Kennett in Dalham.</p> <p>Historic landmark structures including Dalham House, Moulton Packhorse Bridge and Dalham Mill and settlement churches (all of which are listed).</p> <p>Nationally important Medieval archaeology at Lidgate and Freckenham associated with motte and bailey castles which have influenced the form and evolution of the villages.</p>	<p>Intimate, enclosed valley floor contrasts with the surrounding large scale open farmland.</p> <p>Diverse range of landscape features and elements provide richly textured and varied landscape.</p> <p>Strong sense of history - time-depth; this valley landscape reflects centuries of settlement.</p> <p>Gaps between buildings in the villages enable views to the wider valley slopes reinforcing the strong connection between settlements and setting.</p>

Packhorse Bridge, Moulton



Bailey Pond, Lidgate



Lower Mill, Dalham



Lidgate Church

Strategic guidance for managing landscape change

The landscape strategy for the Kennett Valley LCA aims to conserve and reinforce local distinctiveness. Its focus is protection and enhancement of the key natural, cultural and perceptual features described on page 7. The following guidance is tailored to reflect the relevant forces for change in this area:

Floodplain land management and water quality - The River Kennett and its narrow meadow margins are vulnerable to changes in water flow and water quality. Encroachment of intensive agriculture on the wider valley slopes, the use of fertilisers and/or pesticides and soil runoff may result in sedimentation, eutrophication and damage to riparian habitats. The development of soil management plans to reduce soil erosion should be encouraged. Along the River Kennett there are opportunities to create wider buffers between the watercourse and arable farmland and to restore habitat connectivity where it has become fragmented, as well as conserving the existing pastures and woodland. In some areas valley floor pastures are subject to horse grazing with proliferation of post and rail fencing and subdivision with temporary tape. Riparian habitats can be conserved and extended by:

- agri-environmental schemes which encourage appropriate grassland management, predominately with cattle
- establishing indicators that demonstrate the key thresholds of risk and by monitoring these indicators
- environmental policies that raise awareness and direct behavioural change.

Agri-environmental subsidies may enable the management and gapping up of fragmented hedgerows, in order to restore landscape structure where it has become fragmented. This is especially important on mid slopes that help to define the upper and middle reaches of the valley and where such planting can reinforce the flowing chalk landform and restore habitat connectivity between areas of ancient woodland and valley floor pastures. Care should be taken to select appropriate plant species which reflect the underlying geology and natural changes in soil type along the valley. In the chalk areas of the valley, there are opportunities to introduce grassland field margins and manage lane verges in order to expand areas of calcareous grassland and enhance biodiversity.

Recreation - Proximity to Newmarket has the potential to place recreational pressure on this landscape. The main recreational route through the area is the Icknield Way, although there are other footpath routes along the valley floor and a bridleway along The Carrops at Red Lodge. The expansion of stud farms around Newmarket has the potential to encroach on this landscape. Where such changes may alter the landscape pattern on visually prominent slopes, especially where they form a backdrop of historic villages, this should be resisted.

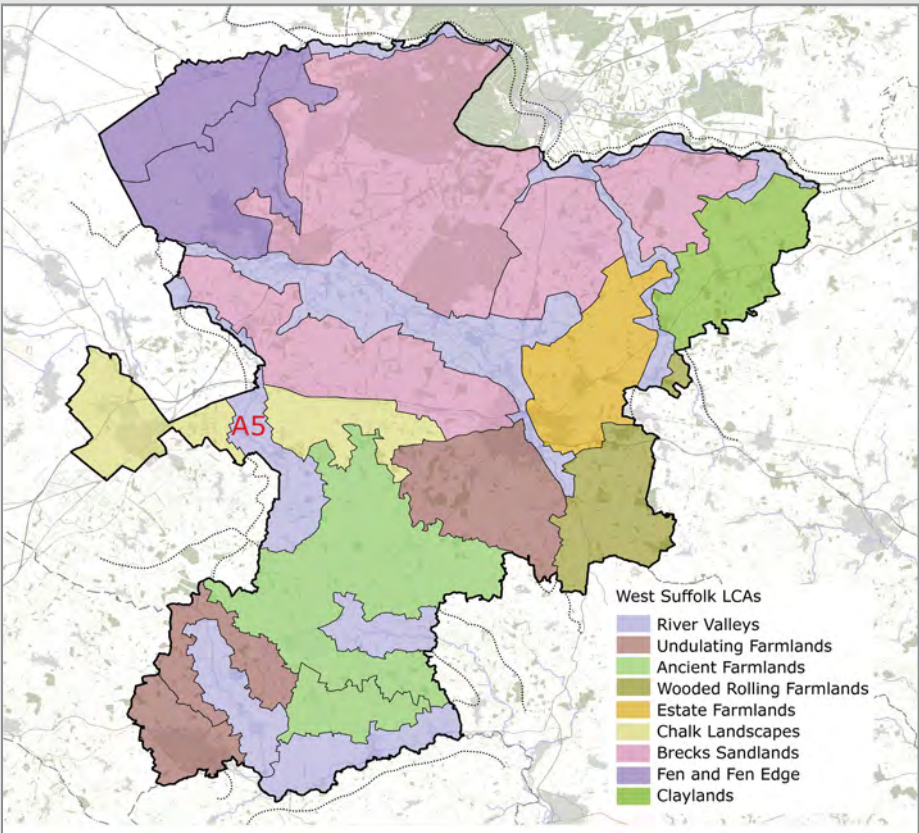
Built development - The riverside and valley setting of villages is sensitive to linear development along the roads altering settlement form and disrupting the relationship between the built form and river. Only small-scale built development and infrastructure is appropriate within the intimate landscape of the valley villages. Any new development should reflect local vernacular and suburban style garden boundaries, kerbs and lighting should be resisted. Care should be taken to avoid development which extends up the valley slopes or urbanises the rural lanes. Expansion of villages along the valley should be resisted in order to retain the individual identity of the settlements. Where existing development forms an abrupt edge with the wider landscape opportunities should be sought to soften these edges through appropriate hedgerow and tree planting.

Network of roads, lanes and tracks - The narrow road which traverses along the valley is subject to verge erosion due to heavy traffic and roadside parking within the villages. Roadside landscape features (for example, hedgerows, mature hedgerow trees, gate posts and white railings and footbridges within settlements) should be conserved and the introduction of non native hedging and boundary fencing should be avoided.

Management of historic sites and their settings - The motte and bailey castles and historic parkland of Dalham make a significant contribution to the character of this landscape and to settlement form. These historic features and their landscape settings are vulnerable to ad hoc change which does not take account of their heritage and landscape significance. Changes within the landscape setting of these features should avoid disrupting the interrelationships between built features and wider landscape elements where this adds to significance and appreciation.

Development of solar farms - There is pressures for this type of development. Arrays of solar panels are usually mounted on racks 3m high and there is typically associated infrastructure in the form of an on-site power house, security fencing, access road and a transformer and underground power cables. They should be sited in areas that are a distance from roads and public rights of way and should avoid visually sensitive open slopes. They may be screened by appropriate native planting although care is needed to ensure mitigation planting does not of itself give rise to adverse landscape effects. Development of this type should provide opportunities for improving habitat networks and re-creation/enhancement of areas of chalk grassland.

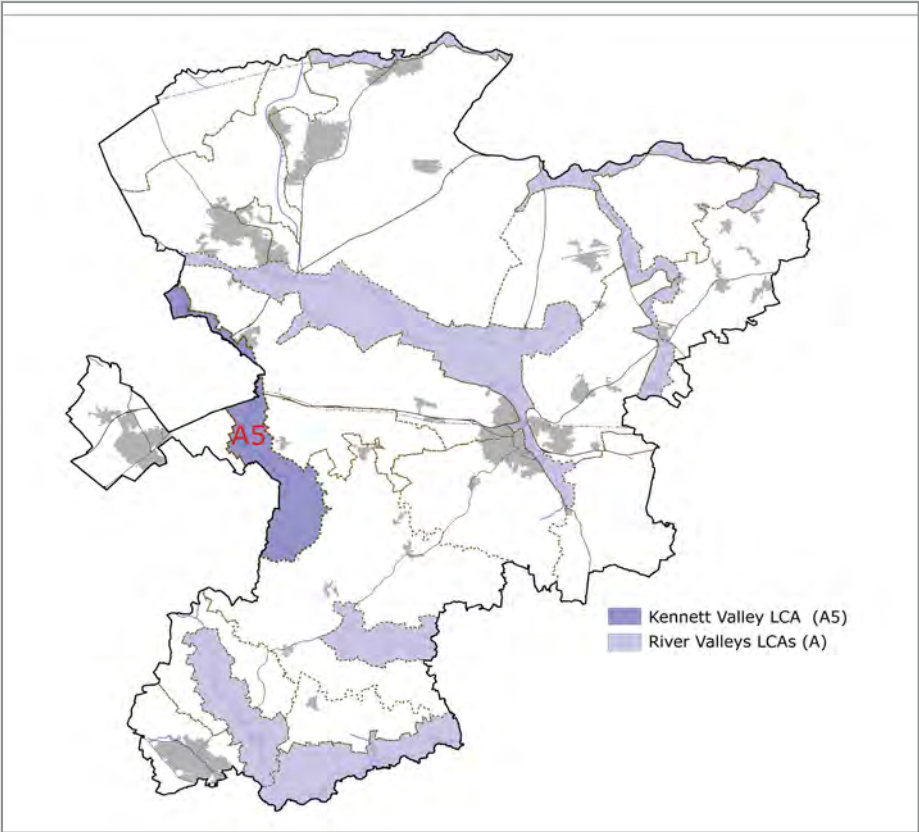
Note: additional relevant guidance notes are available in the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment - <https://suffolklandscape.org.uk/>



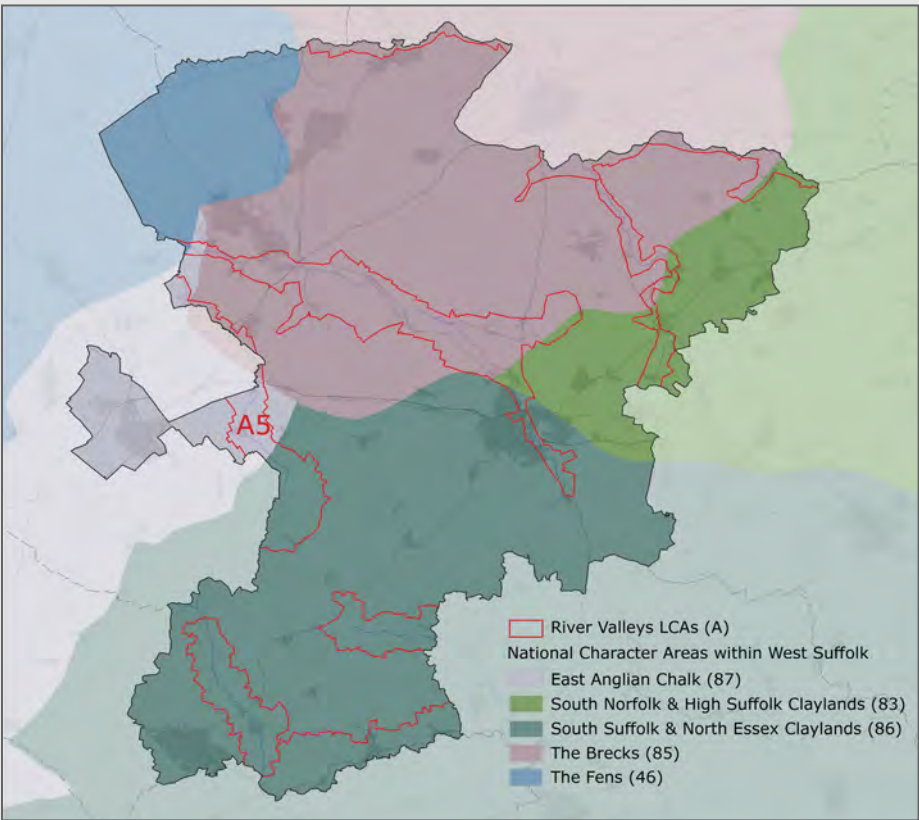
West Suffolk Landscape Character Areas

Landscape Classification

This report focuses on the Kennett Valley (A5) Landscape Character Area (LCA), which is within the group of West Suffolk LCAs that are part of the **River Valleys (A)**.
The inset maps also show how LCA A5 fits within the National Character Areas classification, which has been drawn at a broader scale.



West Suffolk Landscape Character Areas - River Valleys



National Character Areas

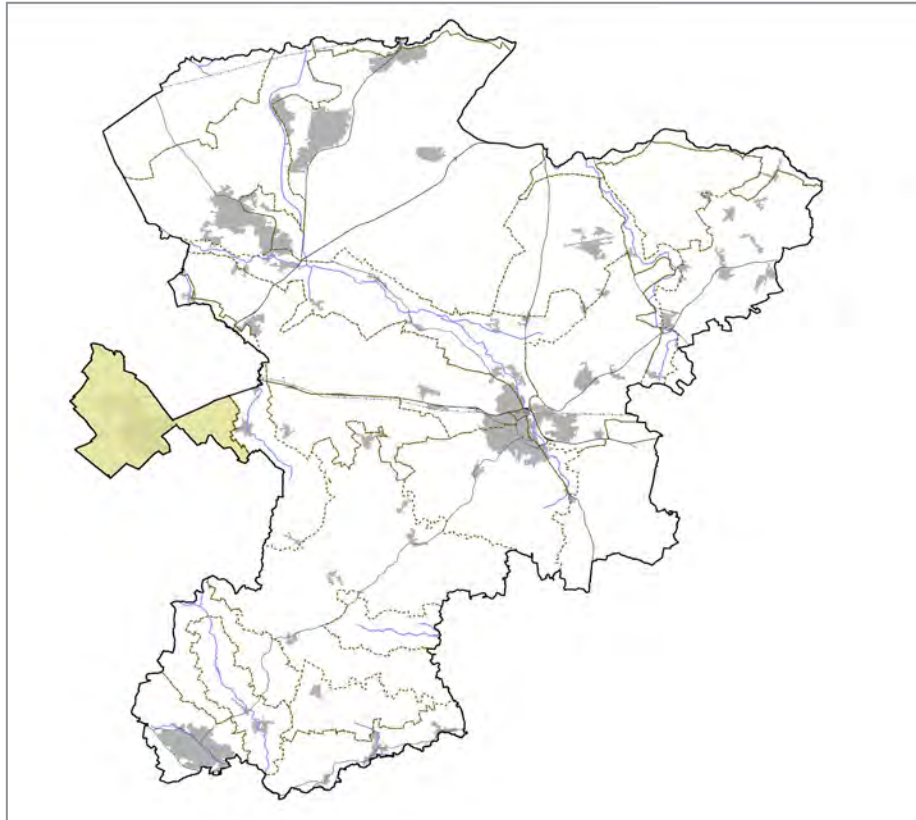


From Warren Hill looking north over Newmarket

West Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment

Landscape Character Area G1

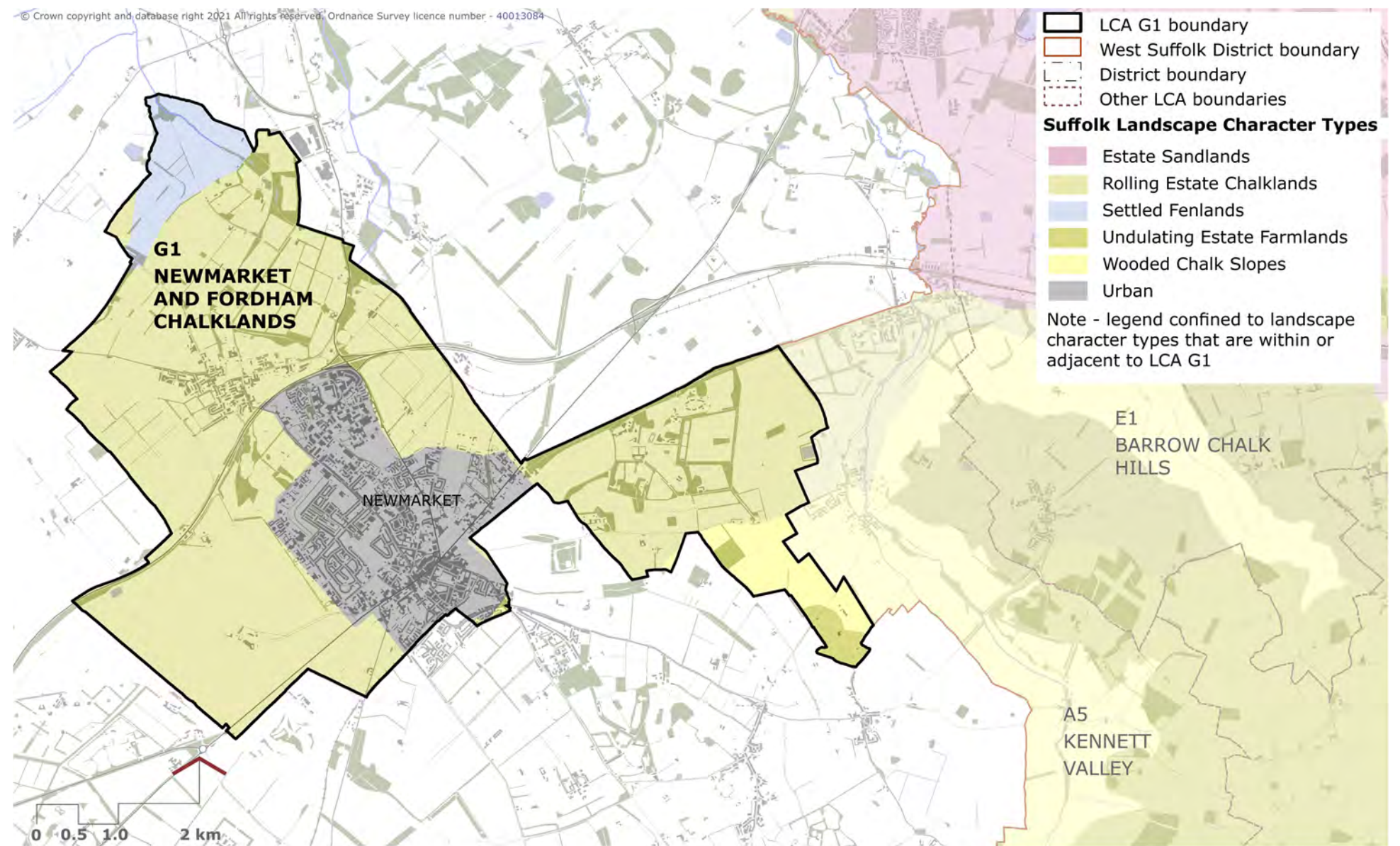
Newmarket and Fordham Chalklands



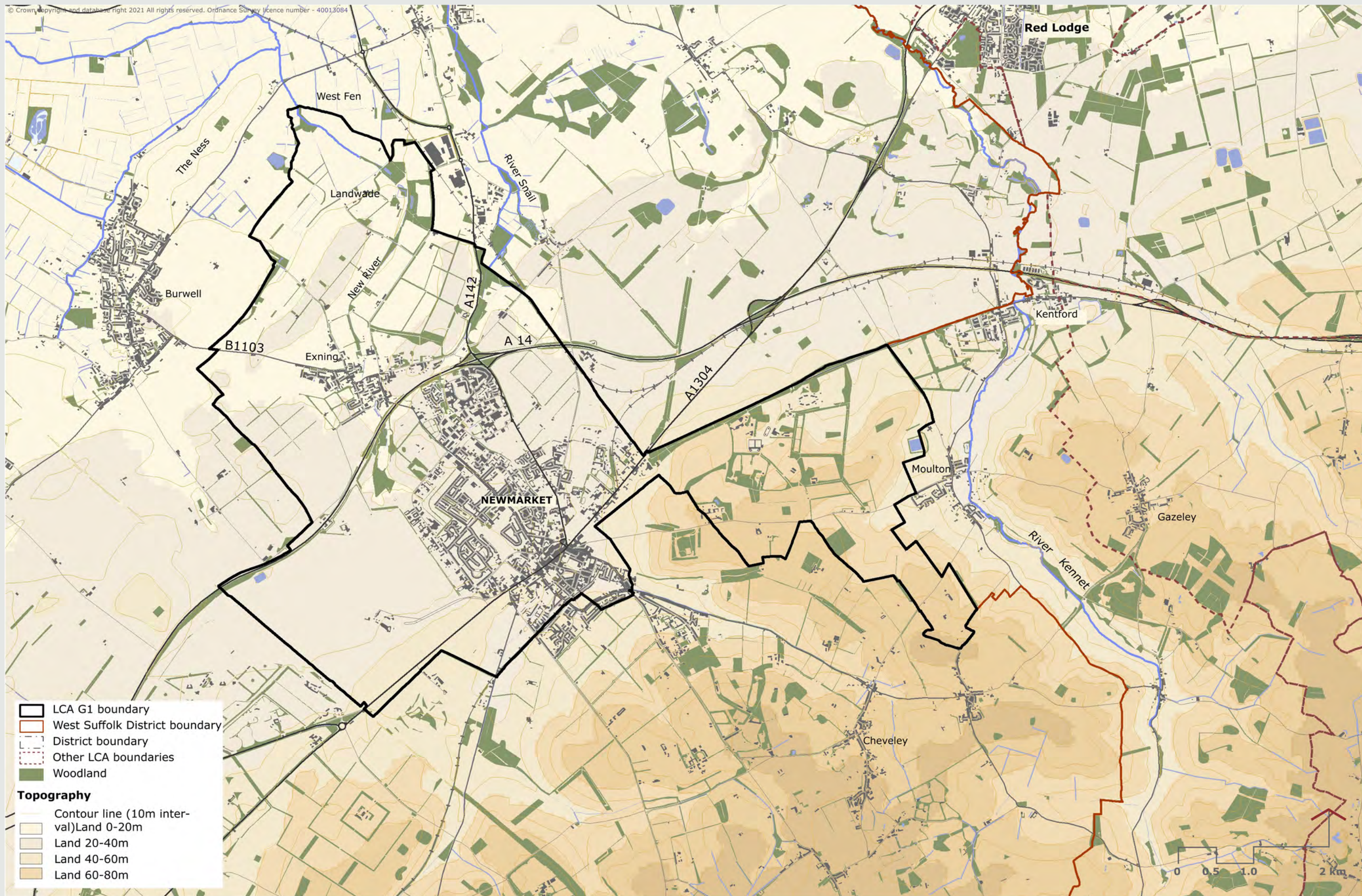
The Newmarket and Fordham Chalklands landscape character area (LCA), forms part of a wider chalk landscape that flanks the fenlands through East Cambridgeshire. This landscape forms a setting to the settlement of Newmarket and sits in the western extremities of West Suffolk.

The Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment classifies the county's landscapes into landscape character types. The majority of this landscape comprises the Rolling Estate Chalkland landscape type, with a small area of Settled Fenlands in the north around Landwade as shown on the Landscape Classification map.

G1 Newmarket and Fordham Chalklands



LCA G1 Newmarket and Fordham Chalklands - Landscape classification



LCA G1 Newmarket and Fordham Chalklands - Landscape context

Key characteristics

- Gently rolling or flat chalk landscape surrounding the racehorse town of Newmarket.
- Free draining chalky soils supporting areas of crop production in large scale rectilinear fields with sparse hedgerows.
- Areas of studscape landscape of small paddocks defined by post and rail fencing and straight shelterbelts.
- Stud farms have a distinct vernacular often with large gatehouses, courtyard stabling and mansion houses predominantly built of red brick and slate.
- Road network is often straight, converging on Newmarket.
- Fen edge settlement at Landwade reflects medieval pattern of moated manor and church.
- Modern infrastructure fragments the landscape including A14, Ely to Bury railway and A142.
- Open views from higher hills in the south overlooking Newmarket with the fen landscape beyond.
- Hedges are cut in a distinctive shape giving rise to perceptions of a well kept and tidy landscape.



Parkland landscape within Exning

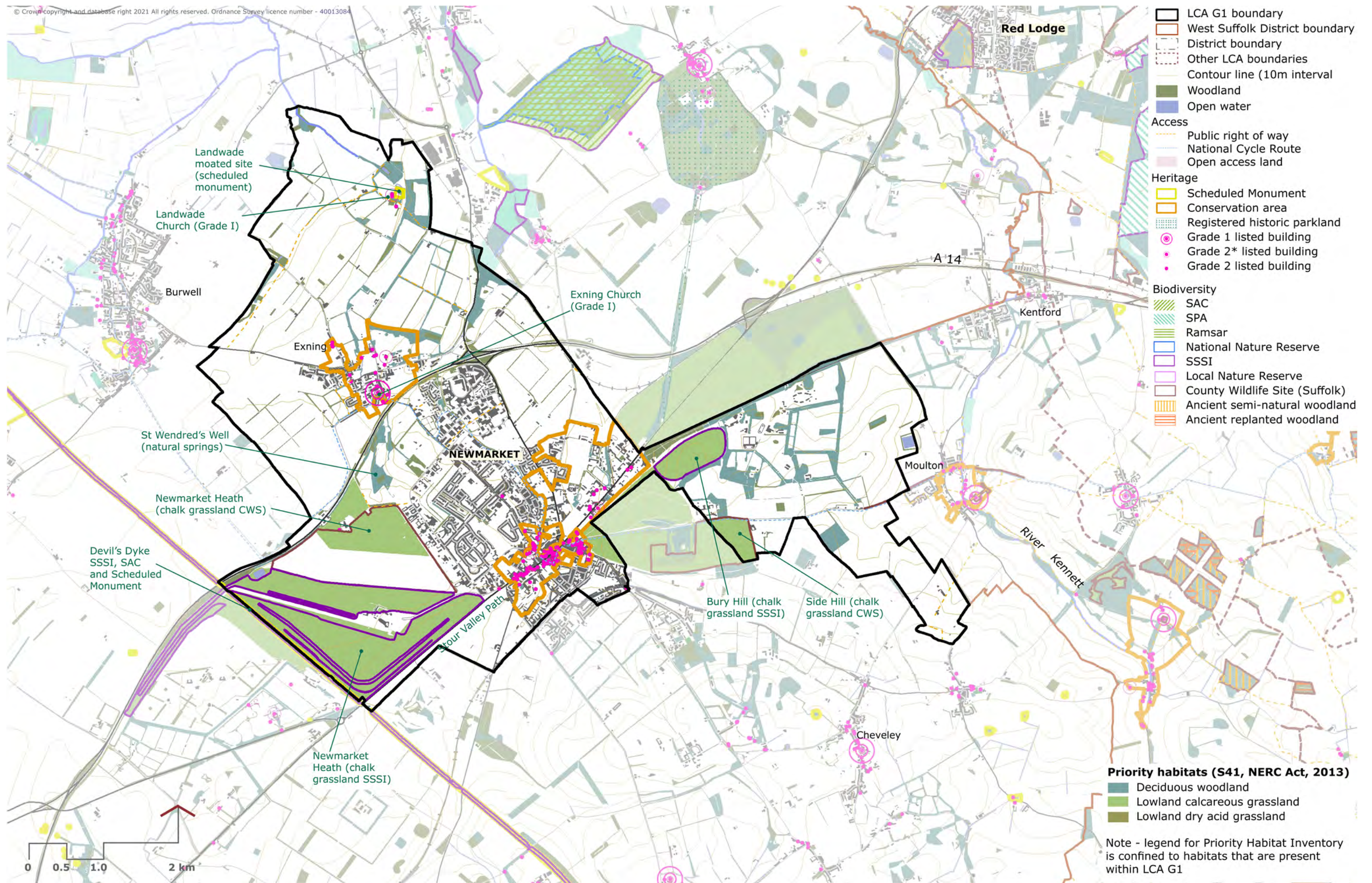


Large scale farms and associated barns within the wide expansive and intensively farmed arable landscape



Elevated views from Warren Hill illustrating the chalkland hills which form a setting to Newmarket - the landscape can be seen to rise to the south and west of the town with the distinctive horse paddocks enclosure seen in the middle distance

© Crown copyright and database right 2021 All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey licence number - 40013084



LCA G1 - Newmarket and Fordham Chalklands - Landscape assets and features

Distinctive landscape character

This landscape comprises chalky free draining mineral soils and deep loams over solid chalk which interface with the edge of the fen landscape. Topographically the area sits just above the wider fen adjacent to Landwade, forming gently undulating land, and a higher flatter 'shelf' on which Newmarket is located, before the chalk hills climb in a more pronounced fashion south and east of the town.

The chalk/fen interface gives rise to the natural occurrence of springs at Seven Springs and The Marsh between Newmarket and Exning, from which a shallow stream known as New River (formerly Monk's Lode) flows through Exning, onto Landwade and then into the fen beyond. It is likely that the presence and location of this spring influenced the early settlement of the area at Exning and Landwade. Landwade in particular is an example of a medieval church-hall complex, its former moated site, private church and associated earthworks are still evident. Similarly Exning focused around the watercourse, church, Exning Hall and parkland, all of which remain evident today, although the settlement has expanded to the west with the introduction of new housing and stud farms.

Newmarket was established as the 'new market' for Exning in the later medieval period and received royal patronage from James I for horse racing. This subsequently drove the horse racing industry and led to the development of the town and associated stud farms and distinctive studscape landscape which surround it. These landscape patterns comprise relatively small fields/paddocks defined by post and rail fencing/hedgerows and substantial shelterbelts. Hedgerows are frequently trimmed in a 'Newmarket' style with sloping sides and flat top. Shelterbelts comprise species such as oak, scots pine, willow and beech.

In the area of Exning and Landwade there is a concentration of mature mixed woodland tree belts and areas of wood pasture and veteran trees associated with former parkland and estates which give rise to an intimate and well treed environment. Beyond this the fertile soils support the growing of vegetables in medium scaled fields defined by well trimmed hawthorn hedges.

Local vernacular styles include the extensive use of red brick but also the use of flint and thatch particularly in Exning and occasional use of 'clunch' (chalky limestone rock) in some of the oldest buildings, for example barns at Landwade.

The road network comprises relatively straight roads converging on Newmarket which is overlain with the modern major infrastructure of the A14 passing between Newmarket and Exning. The A142 connects Newmarket with Ely to the northwest, while the A1304 follows the Icknield Way, believed to have been an Iron Age trackway and later Roman Road. To the southwest of Newmarket lies another straight ancient route called the Devil's Ditch - a deep ditch and bank thought to be Anglo-Saxon or earlier in date.

Extensive areas of open chalk grassland are a particular feature of the landscape around Newmarket reflecting the underlying geology and racehorse use of areas of former common and heath.

Landscape condition

This is a tidy and well managed landscape reflective of the race horse industry. The small scale paddocks and shelter belts give rise to an enclosed and often inward looking landscape that feels private. This contrasts with elevated views across open chalk grassland on the edge of Newmarket.

Many of the historic elements of this landscape such as ancient routes, watercourses and traditional settlement/parkland are still evident and give this landscape a long established feel north of the A14. Along major transport routes and junctions the establishment of industry and construction of large buildings has disrupted landscape and settlement patterns.



Beyond Newmarket and away from the stud farms the landscape has an open expansive character

Landscape sensitivity - key natural, cultural and perceptual features

Natural	Cultural	Perceptual
<p>Extensive areas of chalk grassland habitat - including Newmarket Heath SSSI (which includes Bury Hill) designated for their combination of unimproved chalk grassland and acid grassland or chalk heath. Other areas of chalk grassland occur along Devil’s Ditch (also known as Devil’s Dyke) and which is designated a SSSI and Special Area of Conservation. Newmarket Heath and Side Hill area also County Wildlife Sites valued for their chalk grassland.</p> <p>Natural springs occur at the margins of the chalk at a site between Newmarket and Exning known as Seven Springs and The Marsh and are associated with areas of wet grassland and carr woodland/scrub.</p> <p>Wood pasture and notable collections of veteran trees including lime, oak and horse chestnut in areas of former parkland and grounds. For example Exning Manor and Landwade Hall.</p>	<p>Natural springs south of Exning and watercourse (New River - formerly Monk’s Lode) has shaped location and pattern of settlement at Exning and Landwade.</p> <p>St Wendred’s Well located on the site of natural springs is thought to date to the Anglo Saxon period and to have healing properties.</p> <p>Intact church-hall complex at Landwade reflecting medieval moated site and grounds with earthwork remains and private church (scheduled monument and Grade I listed building respectively) and farm.</p> <p>Devil’s Ditch is an Anglo Saxon linear defence work which extends to the west of Newmarket comprising a deep ditch and high bank and is a scheduled monument.</p> <p>Newmarket was established in the medieval period as the ‘new market’ to Exning and is connected with James I who gave the town royal patronage in relation to horse racing. This drove the establishment of the nationally renowned horse racing industry seen today.</p>	<p>Well kept tidy landscape primarily managed for the race horse industry.</p> <p>Enclosed and private character due to studscape landscape and estates which contrasts with the wide open elevated panoramic views across open grassland on the edge of Newmarket.</p>



Open elevated views across areas of open chalkland used for gallops and exercise tracks by the race horse industry with Newmarket in the mid ground and wider fens beyond

Strategic guidance for managing landscape change

The landscape strategy for the Newmarket and Fordham Chalklands LCA aims to conserve and reinforce local distinctiveness. Its focus is protection and enhancement of the key natural, cultural and perceptual features described on page 7. The following guidance is tailored to reflect the relevant forces for change in this area:

Settlement fringe development - Pressures for development on the outskirts of Newmarket and along the A142 have altered settlement pattern and degraded the quality and condition of the landscape. This includes light industry, business park, residential development and solar parks and is often associated with a proliferation of signage and lighting. The cumulative effects have led to an erosion of the approach routes into the settlement and visual fragmentation. Where planning controls apply, conditions should require development to strengthen streetscapes and settlement gateways.

Chalkland grass management - Areas of existing chalk grassland and chalk heath in this LCA are a highly valued habitat forming the most extensive habitats of this type in the District. These areas should continue to be sensitively managed to encourage species diversity. Opportunities to enhance other areas of chalk grassland such as parkland landscape, road verges and field margins should be encouraged, especially where they can connect and extend existing sites. Where scrub encroachment on grassland sites has occurred, selective removal should be undertaken and re-establishment of sheep grazing achieved, if possible. Given the concentration of stud farms in this LCA there are opportunities for collaborative working to achieve biodiversity gains with bordering properties and to bring about more significant positive gains in terms of chalk grassland management and enhancement.

Woodland and tree management - Linear belts of woodland and avenues of trees are an important feature of this LCA associated with the horse racing industry, the riparian corridor between Exning and Landwade and parkland landscape. In the case of the latter, veteran trees set within parkland have a particular visual and ecological value - new planting will ensure continuity. Where new development occurs opportunities exist to introduce new planting to provide an attractive setting to built development but should also seek to retain and provide views from within the built up areas to the backdrop of rolling chalk hills. Expansion of woodland shelterbelts associated with the race horse industry into historically sensitive or visually prominent landscape should be avoided.

Development of solar farms - There is a relatively small solar farm north of Newmarket on the A142 and pressures for this type of development are likely to continue. Arrays of solar panels are usually mounted on racks 3m high and there is typically associated infrastructure in the form of an on-site power house, security fencing, access road and a transformer and underground power cables. They should be sited in areas that are at a distance from roads and public rights of way and should be screened by belts of native trees and hedgerows. They should avoid areas of varied topography, where they can appear more prominent or land which is important as a setting to a heritage asset. Development of this type should provide opportunities for calcareous grassland and large scale native woodland planting, which extends the network of farmland habitats to screen and integrate the new infrastructure.

Note: additional relevant guidance notes are available in the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment - <https://suffolklandscape.org.uk/>

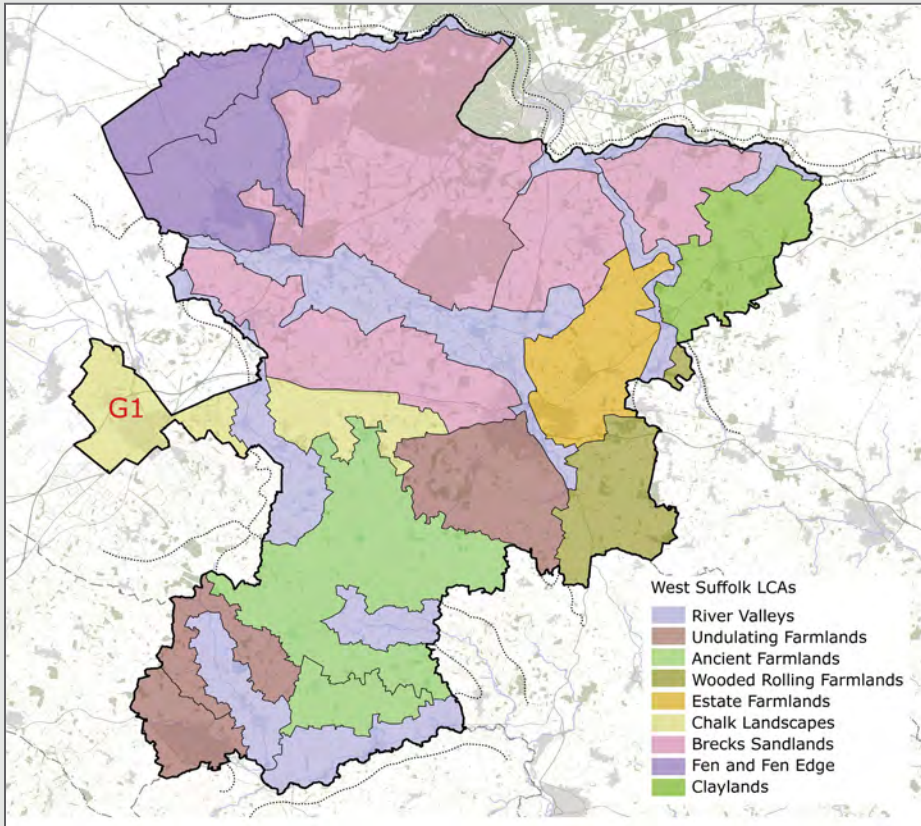
Priory Stables in Exning reflecting
tate buildings associated with Stud
Farms built of red brick with slate
roofs



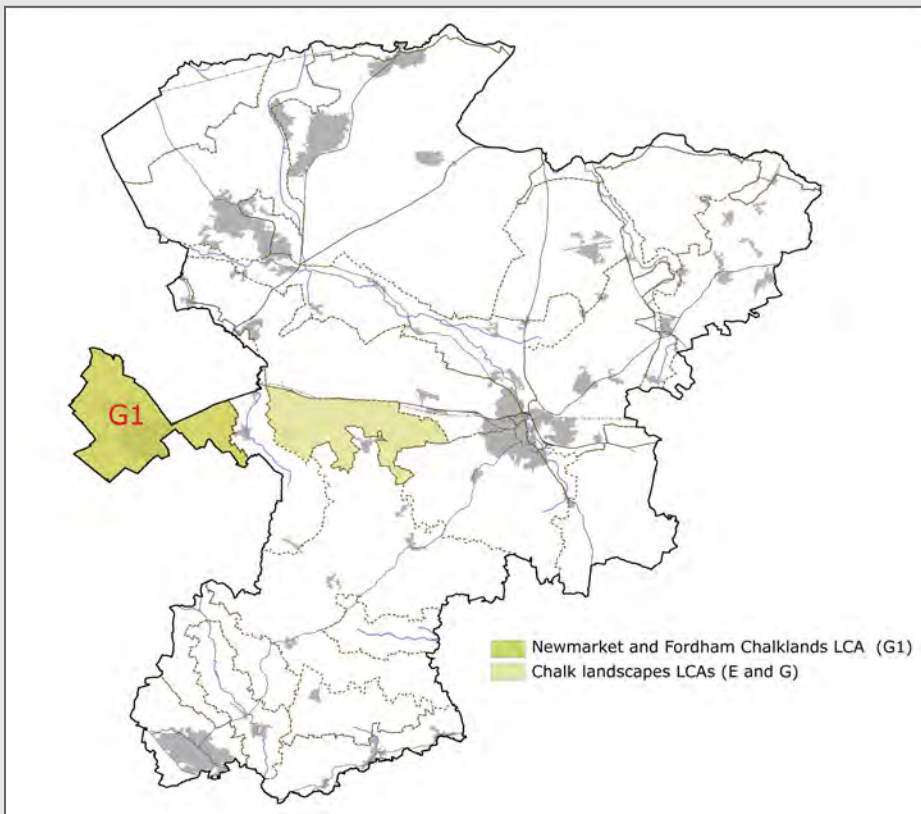
Landscape Classification

This report focuses on the Newmarket and Fordham Chalklands (G1) Landscape Character Area (LCA), which is within the group of West Suffolk LCAs that are part of the **Chalk Landscapes (E and G)**.

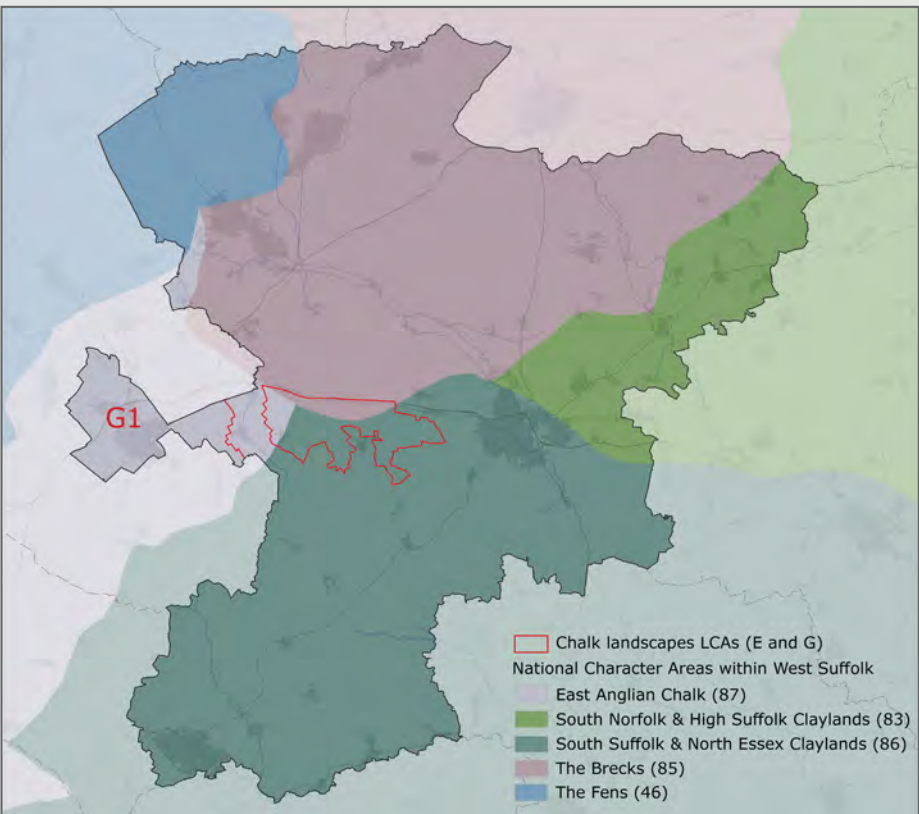
The inset maps also show how LCA G1 fits within the National Character Areas classification, which has been drawn at a broader scale.



West Suffolk Landscape Character Areas



West Suffolk Landscape Character Areas - Chalk landscapes



National Character Areas