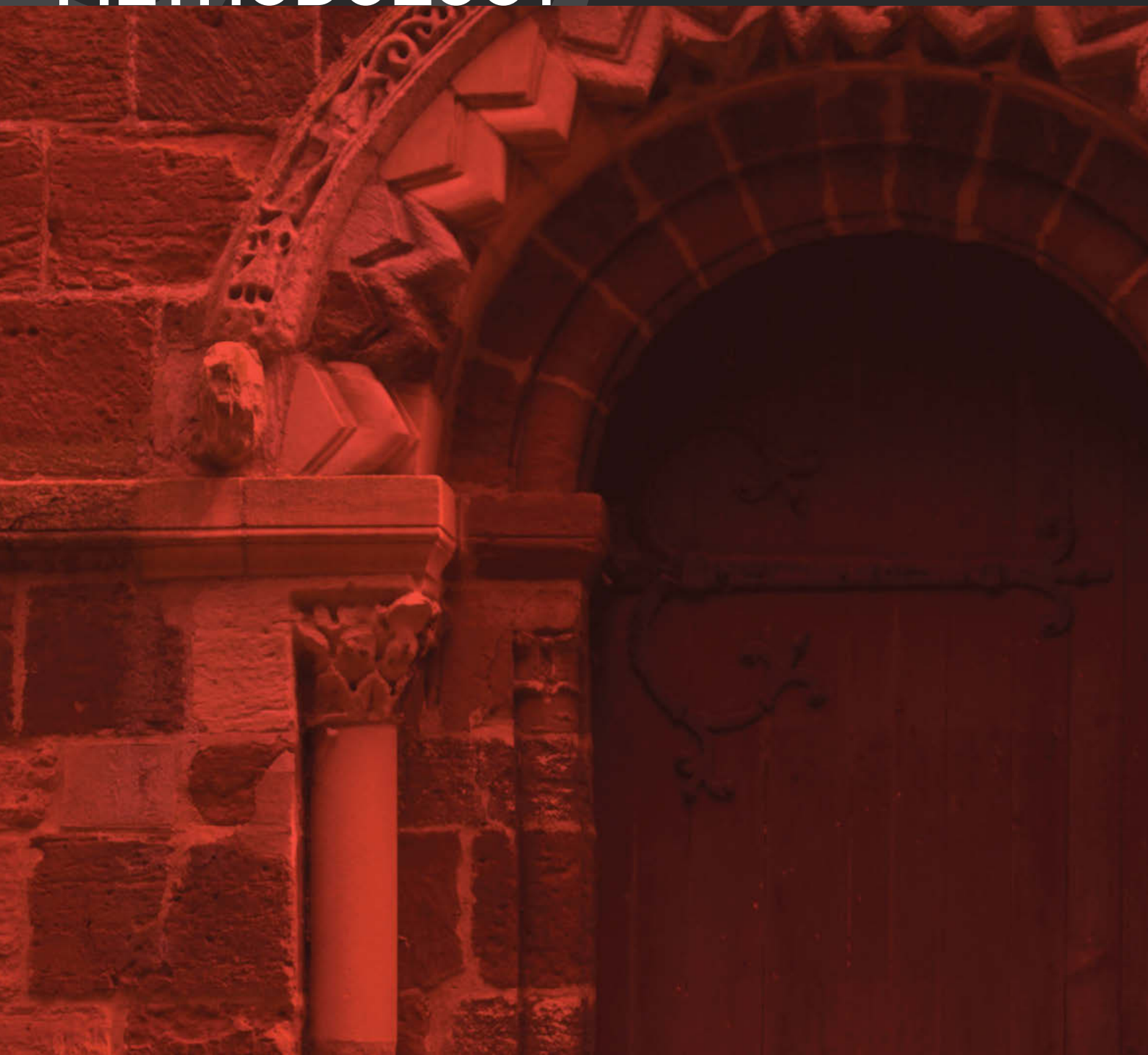
HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY



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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE'S HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

HLCA METHODOLOGY

1. INTRODUCTION

Northamptonshire County Council, Built and Natural Environment Section together with consultants LDA Design Consulting LLP are currently preparing a landscape character assessment model for Northamptonshire. The overall model will comprise four separate assessments, Current Landscape Character Assessment (Current LCA), Biodiversity Character Assessment (Biodiversity CA), Historic Landscape Character Assessment (Historic LCA), and Physiographic, all of which are to be integrated to form one overarching Environmental Character Assessment (ECA), as well as be capable of standing individually.

Northamptonshire Archaeology has undertaken preparation of the historic model on behalf of the Landscape Character Assessment Team of Northamptonshire County Council. The work was begun in April 2003 with a target completion date of October 2004.

This report details the background, rationale and methodology used for producing the historic assessment. It is designed to accompany the digital data set of Historic Landscape Character Areas that will be used in the combined characterisation model. Separate analyses and reports will be produced to accompany the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) database that has been used in formulating the Historic Landscape Character Areas.

2. BACKGROUND

Previous Characterisations of the Historical Environment
The historic character of the county has been variously described and summarised over the years. Antiquarian county histories and descriptions by such as Baker and the Victoria County History were largely based upon parish or other administrative units and "focused on the parish church and the manor house; a natural tendency arising out of their frequently clerical and genteel origins" (Steane 1974, 125). More recent surveys have taken a wider perspective presenting period based, economic and social views of the county's history (eg Steane *op cit*, Greewwnall 2000).

The principal modern description of the archaeological monuments of the county was the survey undertaken by the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments England in the 1970s. This parish based survey included descriptions of the surviving elements of the medieval fields systems and analysis of village forms, two streams of evidence which featured significantly in medieval studies undertaken in the county. As well as visible archaeological features, the Royal Commission volumes also included data on buried archaeological sites and evidence from fieldwalking and aerial photographs. These data were part of the burgeoning archaeological evidence that was being collected in the 1970s and which pointed to the density of settlement in the county since prehistoric times. The Commission volumes included discussions and analysis of the distribution of these monument types and a separate atlas of period based distribution maps was also produced (RCHME 1980).

In addition to the Royal Commission's work there have been many further studies of individual elements of the county's historic environment such as its historic parks and gardens and deserted medieval villages. The county has also greatly benefited from having a tradition of active fieldwork and study into the development of its agrarian history and fieldscapes by individuals such as David Hall, Christopher Taylor and Dr Steven Hollowell.

A number of studies have focussed in more detail upon particular areas or regions of the county. In the 1980s the English Heritage funded Raunds Area Project examined the historical development of a number of Nene Valley parishes whilst a similar project is currently being undertaken around the Whittlewood Forest area (Dyer 1999). A major landscape survey, complementing the County Landscape Assessment, is also underway in the Rockingham Forest area. This latter project incorporates a major HLC component (Foard et al 2003).

The county has also been included in regional studies such as Patrick Clay's analysis of the prehistory of the East Midlands claylands (Clay 2002), the Leverhulme Trust's study of settlement form (Lewis et al 1997) and the English Heritage sponsored survey of surviving ridge and furrow cultivation (Hall 2001). However, overall there has not been a major attempt to provide a general, broad characterisation of the county's existing historic environment.

The English Heritage Historic Landscape Characterisation Project
In addition to the Northamptonshire County Character Assessment, a parallel process of characterising the county's historic environment has been taken up as part of a nationwide project sponsored by English Heritage. The English Heritage programme seeks to map "the historic dimension of today's urban and rural landscapes" (Clark et al 2004). It uses approaches adapted and developed from the Countryside Commissions Landscape Assessment programme. Amongst the tenets of the HLC project is the belief that 'landscape' is a cultural construct, which exists only in the present. As such landscape character is deemed to exist everywhere and not just in 'special' areas. The historic environment is studied as areas not as individual sites and focuses on the general rather than the specific.

The output from the Northamptonshire part of this project will comprise a GIS database along with a written report and analysis. The project is due to be completed by the end of November 2004 and it is the HLC database, which forms the basis of the

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Landscape Types and Areas produced for this Historic Assessment. A fuller description of the relationship between the outputs of the projects will be included within the HLC report.

The database comprises the entire county mapped as GIS polygons, each of which bounds an area of similar historical character. Data is attributed to these polygons within a hierarchy of levels. Each polygon is assigned to one of a small number of broad Historic Landscape Types
and the general character is then described based upon its present day attributes. Where possible, its character during a period of previous 'time slices' is assessed and coded. Finally, additional interpretative data such as the origin of the land parcel and descriptive data such as the presence of significant historic features are added. A summary of the structure of the database is presented in Appendix 1.

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INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Landscape Assessment historic modelling was to divide the county into series of contiguous areas of similar historic character. The areas had to be defined by a set of criteria that could be applied regularly across the county. The process for producing these areas needed to be as objective as possible and also be capable of being repeated.

Compared to natural features such as geology or topography, the historic character of an area is a less precise phenomenon. Following from the HLC view that landscape is a cultural construct, settling upon any list of criteria for characterising an area must be seen as a subjective process: no single definition can be seen as wholly 'correct'. It was therefore decided that for the purposes of this historic model the most suitable result would be that which proved most useful for the task at hand, namely a model which was compatible with the other elements of the Landscape Assessment.

Initial testing of the methodology showed that basing landscape character types on historic elements such as parkland or settlement form would produce areas of isolated features whose boundaries would be vague and difficult to define. The simple practicality of producing coherent and rigorous boundaries therefore demanded the use of a different set of data.

Historically, Northamptonshire is an 'enclosed landscape'. The unhedged open fields, which covered the county in the medieval period, were subject to enclosure from at least the fifteenth century onwards and after the great periods of parliamentary enclosure in the 18th and 19th centuries the county saw a landscape of hedged fields and attendant road systems established. Unlike some other areas of the country, Northamptonshire has little surviving in the way of unenclosed land such as heath, common or uncultivated areas. Examination of the HLC database showed approximately 75% of the county's area is covered by polygons defined as 'enclosed land'. Settlement polygons were next highest covering approximately 7% of the area and woodland polygons approximately 4%. Other HLC Landscape Types all formed less than 2% each of the area (Fig 1). As such the principal defining characteristic of the Northamptonshire landscape was considered to be its fieldscapes.

It was therefore proposed that these fieldscapes would provide the most suitable linking factor across the county as their consistent presence would produce areas of sufficient scale to be compatible with the other elements of the County assessment. The smaller HLC landscape types and other historic data would then be used to provide descriptions and aid distinctions between the various areas.

Within the HLC model, the enclosed land was subdivided principally upon its form, degree of survival and date of origin. Consequently, it was decided to sort the fieldscapes based upon these criteria. The following Historic Landscape Character Types (HLCT) were created:

Non parliamentary enclosure
1. Pre 19th Century non parliamentary enclosure
2. 19th Century non parliamentary enclosure
3. Fragmented non parliamentary enclosure

Parliamentary enclosure
4. Earlier parliamentary enclosure
5. 19th Century parliamentary enclosure
6. Fragmented parliamentary enclosure

Modern fields
7. Large modern fields
8. Reinstated mineral extraction
9. Flooded mineral extraction
10. Modern fields
11. Fragmented modern fields

Woodland
12. Woodland

The two exceptions to using the 'enclosed land' polygons were HLCT 9 Flooded Mineral Extraction and HLCT 12 Woodland. Searches on the HLC Type woodland showed that the occurrences of woods dating from the 19th and 20th centuries were too sporadic to form coherent HLCTs. However, examples of 'ancient' or 'replanted ancient' woodland were deemed to have enough contiguous polygons and to be significant enough landscape features to warrant their own category. Similarly searches on the HLCT type Water revealed that only examples of flooded mineral extraction were extensive enough to be considered as an HLCT.

Formulation of descriptions
The process for defining the areas was to use MapInfo to query the HLC database to select polygons fulfilling the criteria for particular HLCTs. The principal algorithms are presented below, although some minor additional searches and queries were used in order to resolve boundary issues. Pre-defined areas of urban settlement were excluded from the analysis.

1. Pre 19th Century non parliamentary enclosure	
CRITERIA	
non parliamentary enclosure present on the first edition Ordnance survey map and remaining largely unchanged to present day.	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
1810	'en' OR 'ei' OR 'er'
Period	'b' OR 'c'

2. 19th Century non parliamentary enclosure	
CRITERIA	
Non parliamentary enclosure altered or created in the 19th century but little changed since.	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
1880	'en' OR 'ex' OR 'ee'
Period	'd'
Boundary Change	'none' OR 'min'

3. Fragmented non parliamentary enclosure	
CRITERIA	
non continuous examples of areas predominantly comprising HLCTs 1 or 2 but broken by other period fieldscapes or non enclosure character types.	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
NA	NA

4. Earlier parliamentary enclosure	
CRITERIA	
Parliamentary enclosure created pre 19th century and little altered since.	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
1810 AND 1880 AND 1950 AND 2000	'ep'
1810 AND 1880 AND 1950 AND 2000	'es'
Period	<> 'd' OR 'e'

5. 19th Century parliamentary enclosure	
CRITERIA	
Parliamentary enclosure altered or created in the nineteenth century and little altered since.	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
1880	'es'
(Various)	1810 = ep OR 1810 = es AND 1880 = ee AND Period = d
Boundary Change	<> 'maj'

6. Fragmented parliamentary enclosure	
CRITERIA	
non continuous examples of areas predominantly comprising HLCTs 4 or 5 but broken by other period fieldscapes or non enclosure character types.	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
NA	NA

7. Large modern fields	
CRITERIA	
Large fields (over 10ha) created by pre 2000AD boundary removal.	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
2000	'ee' OR 'el' OR 'et' (excluding mineral extraction in 1950s)
Size	'l'
Boundary Change	'maj'
Period	'e'

8. Reinstated mineral extraction	
CRITERIA	
Former areas of mineral extraction now reinstated.	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
1810 AND 1880 AND 1950 AND 2000	' me' OR 'de' OR 'lf' OR 'rm'
Period	'e'

9. Flooded mineral extraction	
CRITERIA	
Areas of flooded mineral extraction	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
2000 OR 1950	'mf'

10. Modern fields	
CRITERIA	
fields created or significantly modified post 1950 (excluding areas of reinstated mineral extraction and fields over 10ha in size)..	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
(Various)	Boundary Change = 'gain' AND Period = 'e' (Mineral extraction excluded) 2000 = 'en' AND 1950 <> 'en'
(Various)	Boundary Change = 'maj' and 2000 = 'et' AND Field Size = 'ml' OR 's' (Mineral extraction excluded) Period = 'e' AND 2000 = 'ee' AND Field Size <> 'l'

11. Fragmented modern fields	
CRITERIA	
non continuous examples of areas predominantly comprising HLCTs 7 to 10 but broken by other period fieldscapes or non enclosure character types.	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
NA	**NA**

12. Woodland	
CRITERIA	
All woodland, subdivided by period	
HLC Database field	*Coding*
Type = WOO	
1810, 1880, 1950, 2000	'ws''wa''wr''wp''wm''wg''wl''wt'

RESULTS

The queries produced a series of maps showing the distribution of the various HLCTs (Figs 2 - 6). Contiguous areas of similar types were then subdivided into Historic Landscape Character Areas (HLCA). This was done on a visual basis with the criteria that individual areas should not generally be less than 1000ha in size. The HLC Areas were then differentiated and further described based upon their geographic location and the presence or absence of certain historic features within them (Appendix 2). Each HLCA was given a name based primarily upon their geographical location and a list of these is given in Appendix 3. Written descriptions of both the HLC Types and HLC Areas are currently being produced to the same format as the other models of the Landscape Assessment.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig 1 HLC Land use

Fig 2 Non Parliamentary Enclosure

Fig 3 Parliamentary Enclosure

Fig 4 Modern Fields

Fig 5 Water

Fig 6 Forest and Woodland

Fig 7 Parliamentary Enclosure

Fig 8 Parliamentary Fieldscapes

Fig 9 Modern Fields

Fig 10 Woodland

Fig 11 Northamptonshire Historic Landscape Character map

APPENDIX 1: HLC DATABASE STRUCTURE

Landscape Type	
CIVIC	Public buildings, emergency services, cemeteries, utilities, landfill sites etc.
UNENCLOSED LAND	Heathland, unimproved land etc
ENCLOSED LAND (FIELDSCAPES)	Agricultural fields and other enclosed land.
WOODLAND	Forest, plantations, woodland etc
INDUSTRIAL LAND	Industrial estates, factory complexes etc
MILITARY	Airfields, military bases etc
PARKLAND AND GARDENS	Historic parkland, formal gardens, landscaped gardens etc
RECREATIONAL	Sports fields, golf courses, municipal parks, leisure villages etc
SETTLEMENTS	Villages, hamlets and urban areas
ORCHARDS AND ALLOTMENTS	Commercial orchards, nurseries, civic allotments etc
COMMUNICATIONS	Service stations, canal complexes, railway junctions, road interchanges etc
WATER BODIES	Reservoirs, lakes, flooded mineral extraction etc

Description database fields for enclosed land			
Pattern	*Internal Boundaries*	*Field Size*	*Boundary Change*
The overall organisation of the fields within the polygon.	The predominant shape of the individual field boundaries.	The modal size of the field within the polygon.	Degree of change since the 1st edition 6" OS mapping.

Time slices			
The character of the poygon (if known) is entered for each period			
2000	*1950s*	*1880s*	*1810s*
Modern OS mapping	OS 25000	OS 6" 1st edition	OS 2" Surveyors map

Other data						
Relict Features	*Secondary Features*	*Place Names*	*Origin of Enclosure*	*Origin of Woodland*	*Confidence*	*Period*
Archaeological features such as earthworks	Significant features not large enough to warrant their own polygon such as small copses.	Significant place names that inform the origin or character of the polygon			Overall confidence in the interpretation of the polygon	Overall

APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL DATA USED IN HLCA DESCRIPTIONS

NAME	ORIGINATOR	HELD BY	DETAILS
Battle	HET	B&NE	Sites of nationally significant battles designated by English Heritage (n.d.)
Consarea	HET	B&NE	Conservation areas designated by District Councils (n.d)
Medfield	HET	B&NE	Good survival of former medieval fields associated with medieval settlement
R_&_f	HET	B&NE	All identified survival of former cultivated fields associated with medieval settlement (c. 1990)
regpark	HET	B&NE	Features of national importance having special historical/ornamental/design interest, designated by English Heritage (n.d)
SAMS	HET	B&NE	Scheduled Ancient Monuments

Abbreviations

B&NE: Built and Natural Environment, Northamptonshire County Council
HET: Heritage Environment Team, Northamptonshire County Council

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF HLCAS

1. Pre 19th Century non parliamentary enclosure
1a Thornby –Watford Hills and Valleys
1b Brampton Brook – River Ise Watershed
1c Avon River Valley: Lilbourne
1d Holdenby Uplands
1e Rushton Clay Plateau

2. 19th Century non parliamentary enclosure
2a Farthinghoe – Kings Sutton Clay Uplands
2b Nene Floodplain: Fotheringhay -Pilton
2c Charwelton Hills and Valleys
2d Barnwell Valley Sides

3. Fragmented non parliamentary enclosure
3a Sywell Clay Plateau

4. Earlier parliamentary enclosure
4a Welland Valley: Dingley - Ashley
4b Bulwick Limestone Valley
4c Welland Valley: Duddington - Wakerley
4d Lamport – Moulton Uplands
4e Middleton Cheney Hills and Valleys
4f Nene Valley: Yarwell – Wood Newton

5. 19th Century parliamentary enclosure
5a Easton – Collyweston Plateau
5b Welland Valley: Gretton - Harringworth
5c Naseby – East Farndon
5d Thorpe Malsor – Braybrooke Uplands
5e Crick Undulating Clayland
5f West Haddon – Harpole Uplands
5g Nene Valley: Irthlingborough to Wadenhoe
5h Syresham - Croughton Limestone Plateau
5i Tove Valley: Cosgrove to Towcester
5j Bozeat Claylands
5k Nene Valley: Ecton – Great Doddington
5l Nene Valley: Oundle to Warmington

6. Fragmented parliamentary enclosure
6a Western Clay Uplands
6b Sibbertoft Plateau
6c Welland Valley: Middleton - Rockingham
6d Everdon – Badby Upper valley
6e Kings Cliffe Plateau
6f Grafton – Warkton Clay Plateau
6g Southern Nene Valley Side: Hardingstone – Castle Ashby

7. Large modern fields
7a Titchmarsh – Lutton Clay plateau
7b Hemplow Hills
7c Preston Capes
7d Hackleton Clay Plateau
7e Newton Bromswold Clay Plateau
7f Nene Valley: Little Addington - Ringstead
7g Ise Valley Side: Broughton - Harrowden
7h Wilbarston – Brampton Ash Valley Sides
7i Apethorpe - Blatherwycke limestone valleys
7j Nene Valley Side: Irchester - Wollaston

8. Reinstated mineral extraction
8a Nene Valley Side: Wakerley to Weldon
8b Lowick – Finedon Valley Side
8c Newton - Rushton
8d Nassington -Yarwell

9. Flooded mineral extraction
9a Nene Valley: Woodford - Grendon

10. Modern fields
10a Brampton Brook Ironstone Uplands
10b: Cherwell River Valley: Warkworth - Aynho

11. Fragmented modern fields
11a Nene Valley: Dodford to Onley
11b Leam Valley: Charwelton - Newbold

12. Woodland
12a: Fineshade
12b Salcey Forest
12c: Yardley Chase
12d: Whittlewood Forest
12e: Rockingham Forest

FIGURES

PLEASE REFER TO THE DOCUMENT **'HLCA METHODOLOGY - FIGURES 1-11'**.