

Broad Character: Enclosed Land

Character Type: Reclaimed Land

Regional Perspective: Southern England

Compiled by Seazone Solutions Ltd / M A Ltd, January 2011, after comment from D Hooley, English Heritage

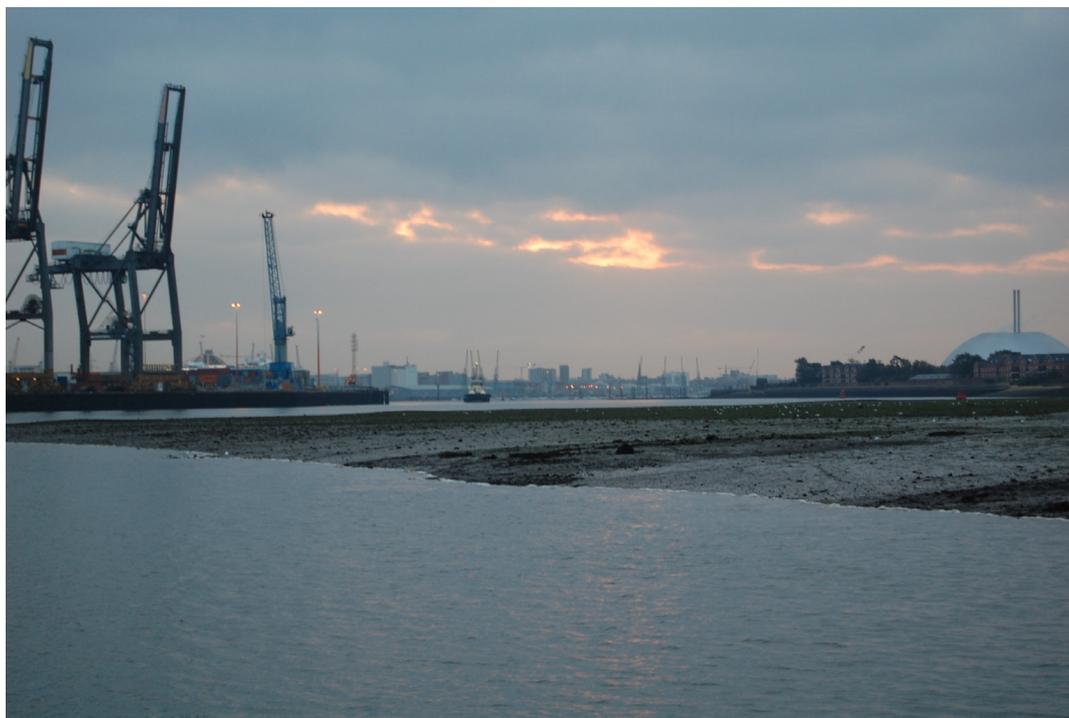
INTRODUCTION: DEFINING/DISTINGUISHING ATTRIBUTES

This Character Type refers to areas of land enclosed, drained and taken in from along the coast for a variety of mostly agricultural purposes. The following Sub-types are included:

- Reclamation from sea
- Reclamation from tidal marsh
- Reclamation from wetland

There are pockets of reclaimed land across the Southern England region. These areas are variously utilized as coastal grazing marsh, golf courses, and wildlife reserves, marina development as well as docks and other industrial activities.

The most extensive areas of reclaimed land in the region are near the main ports and harbours for example Portsmouth Harbour and Southampton Water. The reclamation of land in these areas began in the late eighteenth century (Hampshire County Council 2010) and continues today.



**Southampton Water, an area of reclamation since the late eighteenth century
(© Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology)**

HISTORICAL PROCESSES; COMPONENTS, FEATURES AND VARIABILITY

Land reclaimed from marsh would have historically been used for grazing, and there is evidence that this occurred from the Neolithic or Bronze Age onwards (Hampshire County Council 2010).

Reclamation was undertaken before the industrial revolution (particularly between AD1600 – 1900) on small scale through embankment of mudflats. The reclaimed areas were associated with grazing and there is also some evidence that some forms of processing took place in this coastal zone (perhaps slaughter and salting meat), for example in Langstone Harbour, Fawley, Hamble and Newtown Salterns (Hampshire County Council 2010).



**Langstone Harbour, an area of reclamation since before the industrial revolution
(© Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology)**

Reclaimed land in the Hampshire coastal region continues to be dominated by coastal grazing marsh (eg in New Forest area), but is also important for saline lagoons and unimproved grassland often with international habitat designations (Hampshire County Council 2010). Upper saltmarsh, by its geographic location, has been very susceptible to reclamation and pressure from landward development particularly along the Portsmouth and north shores of Langstone (Hampshire County Council 2010).

Much reclaimed land has been developed for modern intensive uses, discussed elsewhere under the other Character Types which now dominate those areas. Such uses include marinas (for example Ocean Village in Southampton), golf courses, landfill and ports and docks.

VALUES AND PERCEPTIONS

The values and perception given to reclaimed land differs across the region, depending on the way that the reclaimed land has been utilized.

The reclaimed land that has not been intensely developed but remains mostly coastal grazing is valued as a highly tranquil environment close to the water and an accessible natural space close to settlements. This is particularly so in the case of the Solent conurbation (Hampshire County Council), where it forms part of the area's 'green infrastructure' and is well used by visitors, local residents and wildlife enthusiasts.

The marina developments, for example Ocean Village in Southampton, are perceived as another form of recreation, as well as increased living space in the City.

In complete contrast the land proposed for reclamation for industrial purposes can be very controversial. Dibden Bay, an area of reclaimed land along Southampton Water is the site of a proposed port expansion by Associated British Ports (ABP). It was argued that this was essential for the continued economic development of the Port of Southampton but the development was vigorously opposed by conservation groups due to Dibden Bay's intertidal marshlands having international significance with Ramsar status. The application for expansion was rejected in April 2005 as it was considered that there were alternative sites for port expansion in southern England which had not yet been fully explored. In July 2009, ABP launched a consultation on a 20-year masterplan for Southampton port which sets out plans for future growth. It states that "In identifying the Dibden reclaim as the only possible location for port expansion, ABP is fully aware of the nature conservation value of the site and the adjoining foreshore... Our demand forecasts indicate that expansion into the Dibden reclaim will become necessary between 2021 and 2027" (www.abports.co.uk)

Areas such as these can be highly contested. When under pressure from development their cause is often taken up by local (and national) conservation groups who lobby the government and run campaigns to raise public awareness of the damaging effects of the development of such land.

RESEARCH, AMENITY AND EDUCATION

Multi-disciplinary projects can offer opportunities to investigate the reclamation of coastal land. This might explore phenomena like the relict field patterns, often defined by networks of drainage ditches, or the early development of sea defences.

CONDITION AND FORCES FOR CHANGE

Reclaimed land is vulnerable to many changes, natural and human. The land can often be subject to storm surges and tidal flooding, although embankments are constructed to provide as much protection from wave action and coastal inundation as possible (see the Character Type text on 'Flood and Erosion Defences').

Reclaimed land is also highly valued as areas prime for development, either residential or industrial. This intense development changes the character (and hence Character Type) of the areas concerned and impacts greatly on the wildlife and ecology.

RARITY AND VULNERABILITY

Reclaimed land is found in pockets across the Southern England region, mostly around the busy ports and harbours where it is most prized. It is often subject to development pressures, both residential and industrial, which may change its character although some areas are protected by conservation designations, such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar Sites

PUBLISHED SOURCES

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Hampshire County Council, 2010, Hampshire County Integrated Character Assessment 2
Status: Draft March 2010 South East New Forest Coastal Plain

LDA Design, 2010 Dorset Coast: Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment

Tapper B, and Johns C, 2008 *England's Historic Seascapes. Consolidating the National Method. Final Report*, Historic Environment Service Cornwall County Council on behalf of English Heritage, Cornwall

Tubbs, C, 1997 The Ecology, Conservation and History of the Solent

WEBSITES

www.abports.co.uk