



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

# Humber Estuary

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 41



## Introduction

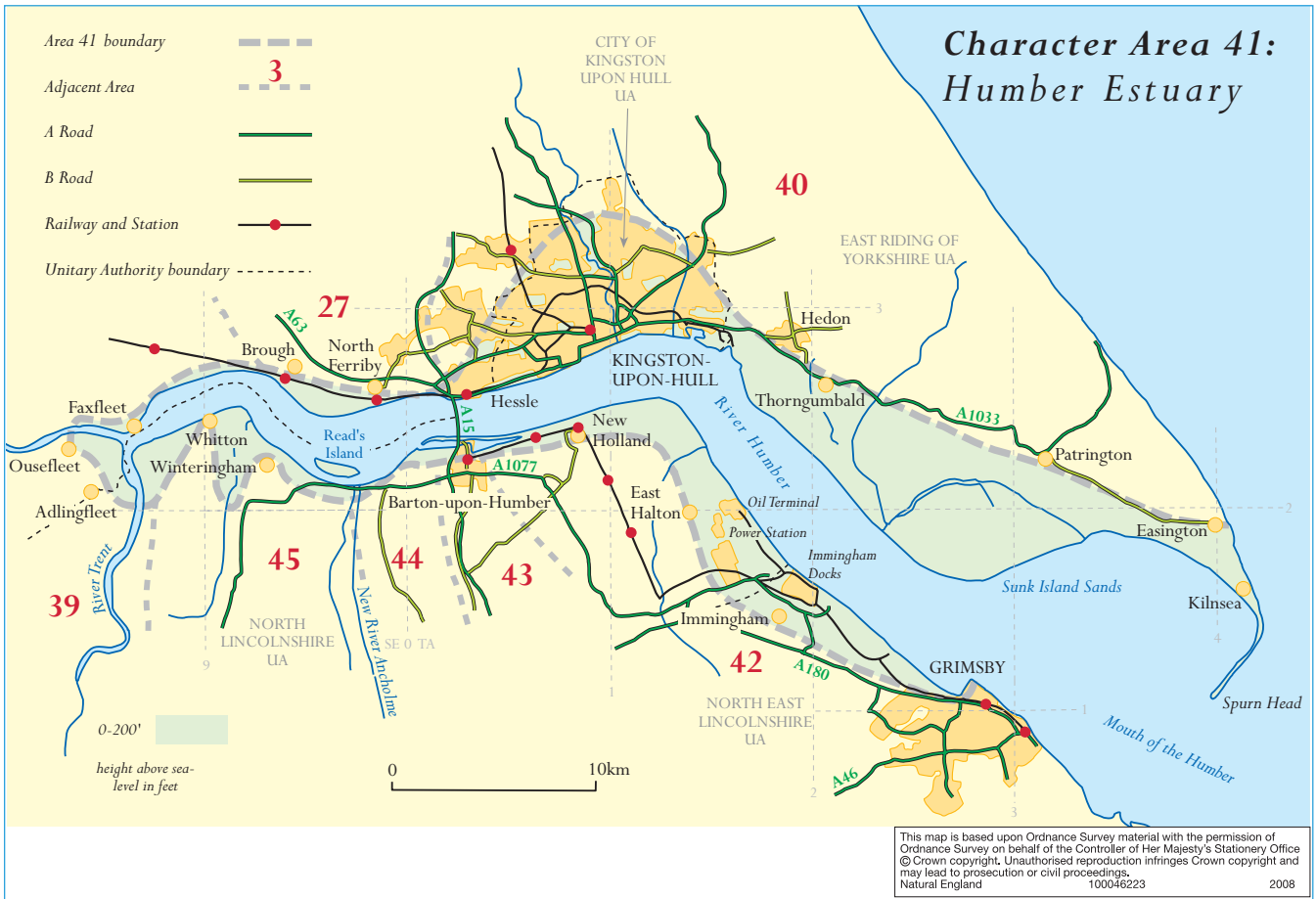
The Farmstead and Landscape Statements will help you to identify the historic character of traditional farmsteads and their buildings in all parts of England, and how they relate to their surrounding landscapes. They are now available for all of England's National Character Areas (NCAs), and should be read in conjunction with the NCA profiles which have been produced by Natural England using a wide range of environmental information (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>). Each Farmstead and Landscape Statement is supported by Historic England's advice on farm buildings (<https://historicengland.org.uk/farmbuildings>), which provides links to the *National Farmsteads Character Statement*, national guidance on **Farm Building Types** and a fully-sourced summary in the *Historic Farmsteads: Preliminary Character Statements*. It also forms part of additional research on historic landscapes, including the mapping of farmsteads in some parts of England (see <https://historicengland.org.uk/characterisation>).



This early 19th-century building – a granary over a cart sheds and stables, is a locally distinctive example of a building serving the arable-based farms that developed in association with enclosure in this period. Photo © Jen Deadman

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**Front cover:** View from above Goxhill towards the Humber Estuary, showing a landscape of early 19th-century reorganisation and enclosure of coastal grazing areas and earlier open fields (see map on p 8). Photo © Historic England 28479/027



This map shows the Humberhead Estuary, with the numbers of the neighbouring National Character Areas around it.

# Summary

See the National Farmsteads Character Statement for a short introduction to the headings below, including maps and tables.

The Humber Estuary is an expansive, low-lying, estuarine landscape dominated by the River Humber. The area is a predominantly reclaimed intertidal landscape with arable farming and coastal mudflats, and other wetland and coastal habitats important to biodiversity. There are urban and industrial influences especially around Hull and on the south bank. Of the area, 31% is defined as urban, 55% is cultivated and only 0.5% is woodland, with 5% designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The area shares many characteristics with the much larger Humberhead Levels (Area 39) to the north and west.

## Historic character

- The area has a varied and generally modern character of rural, urban and industrial land uses.
- The development of the area has been strongly influenced by the River Humber, which has provided transportation, communication and, through the practice of warping, a means of agricultural improvement.
- The area was extensively enclosed for improved arable-based agriculture in the later 18th and 19th centuries, with associated redevelopment and construction of farm buildings in both villages and in the open countryside. These relate to 17th-century planned drainage and older settlements on higher ground.
- Isolated regular-courtyard farmsteads are dominant, reflecting the 19th-century improvement of farmland and its subsequent exploitation.
- Building materials typically include locally produced brick and pantile, especially those manufactured in Barton upon Humber. Stone is limited and is likely to be a high-status material, as it is unavailable within the area, and is typically decorative where used.

## Significance

- The mapping of farmsteads in Lincolnshire has shown that the area has – in a national context – below-average survival of traditional farmsteads from around 1900. 46% have more than 50% of their historic form surviving (43% in Greater Lincolnshire) and 14% (28% in Greater Lincolnshire) retain some, but less than 50%, of their historic form. These are predominantly of 19th-century origin, any earlier examples being very rare.
- Pre-19th century buildings are very rare in this area, and form farmsteads that are almost all of regular courtyard plan which sit within their contemporary 19th-century fieldscapes. Both combine to form a landscape character that illustrates 19th-century approaches to land reclamation and planning farming landscapes of rectilinear planned fields enclosed by drains accompanied by high banked warping ditches with their working buildings and areas.

- Local brick and pantile reflect the proximity of early industry in the area, providing a link

between the historic rural and industrial economies.

## Present and future issues

- There are strong pressures associated with industrial expansion and sprawl, in particular around the Killingholme refinery, potentially reducing agricultural holdings and accelerating the conversion of agricultural buildings to other uses.
- The area is seeing an ongoing increase of tenanted and managed farms, with an associated decrease in the number of principal farmers.
- Today, many farmsteads have been amalgamated by limited companies and are

now run as large estates. Many traditional courtyard farms are in a poor state of repair and farmhouses abandoned and replaced by new builds including bungalows.

- In this National Character Area, the Photo Image Project (2006) recorded a low proportion of listed working farm buildings converted to non-agricultural use (25 %, the national average being 32%). The project also noted an above-average percentage (16.7%, the national average being 7.5%) of listed working farm buildings showing obvious signs of structural disrepair.

## Historic development

- The land on the banks of the Humber Estuary was once thickly wooded. This was largely cleared in the Neolithic period, leading to the formation of wetland and regionally important raised mires. Settlements of this time were established on higher ground, while the spread of wetlands enabled inter-regional communication with the Pennines and the Midlands. The wetland character, thus developed, was to persist for many centuries. During the early Roman period, the River Humber constituted the northern limit of the Empire, and several towns and villas grew up along its frontier banks.
- Of recorded farmsteads, 26% are sited in villages. Most isolated farmsteads relate to 17th-century and later enclosure. Some settlements in the area are known to date from the 11th century, having been established by Saxon and Danish settlers. While arable cultivation was possible on higher ground around these villages, the main historic land uses revolved around the exploitation of wetland habitats, including fishing and wildfowling. Where the marshes were seasonally inundated, farmers from both within and outside the area took advantage of the lush grass for summer grazing of

livestock. The damp soils also allowed for the cultivation of hemp and flax, which were the basis of industries such as weaving and rope-making in the area through to the late 19th century.

- The former wetland was much diminished by drainage undertaken in the 17th and 18th centuries, although the productivity of the land for grazing was enhanced by practices such as warping, by which the land was subjected to controlled inundation by silt-bearing river water. The distinctive high-banked warping drains remain as a feature in the modern landscape. The tendency to improve the land also resulted in the adoption of planned mixed farming regimes using the rotations of crops in the 19th century.
- Although farming has been the dominant economic activity in the area for much of its history, the ready availability of high-quality clay allowed a thriving brick and tile industry to be established along the riverbanks in the 18th and 19th centuries. The products of this industry have gone on to form a key and distinctive element of the built fabric of many surrounding areas.

- The Humber Estuary has historically served as a trading conduit to the North Sea. Although the modern port of Hull is clearly dominant in this field today, the small havens along the riverbank have a long history of small-

scale, overseas trade. In more recent times, the Humber bank between Immingham and Killingholme has been wholly transformed by the construction of deepwater ports in the early 20th century.

## Landscape and settlement

- The modern landscape of the Humber Estuary retains strong legibility of historic land uses and influences within its present day context of arable farming and heavy industry. The River Humber, although often unseen from the low-lying countryside, is the fundamental driver of the development of the area, both in terms of its physical and historical development.
- Settlements in the area are a mix of nucleated villages and towns located on higher ground within the former marshland, such as Barrow and Goxhill, and dispersed straggling lines of settlements and farmsteads set two to three miles inland of the river bank. Larger settlements display significant 20th-century expansion due to the proximity of large employment centres such as Hull, Scunthorpe and Grimsby, as well as major industrial facilities along the banks of the Humber such as the docks at Immingham and the industrial facilities of Killingholme Marsh. The construction of the Humber Bridge has also enabled easier connectivity between the north and south banks of the river, further increasing the pressure to expand rural settlements to accommodate commuters.
- The landscape to the seaward side of the settlement line is one of distinctive rectilinear field patterns and drainage systems where there was formerly marshland grazing. Field boundaries throughout the area are typically formed by ditches, drains and embankments rather than hedges, resulting in an open landscape with wide, long-distance views. This planned 19th-century landscape has a strong grain at right angles to the river bank, reflecting the main routes of both the artificial drainage system and the network of natural becks and streams.
- Isolated farmsteads in the former marshland tend to occur at frequent intervals along straight roads that lead from the villages towards the river. Many of these farmsteads are of planned regular types. While most such farmsteads in the area date from the enclosure and drainage of the land, it is possible that some of those nearer to the villages are remnants of shrunken medieval settlements. This is perhaps supported by the high proportion of medieval village and manorial earthworks found at intervals along the roads between the coastal settlements, for example at North and South Killingholme. Other farmsteads may have their origins as former monastic granges, indicated by place names and by the proximity of historic abbeys such as Thornton Abbey near Immingham.
- Although the historic brick and tile industries are now all but extinct, their infrastructure of clay pits now provides a number of recreational facilities along the south bank of the river, including watersports and nature reserves. In the case of the latter, the formation of reedbeds and wetland reflects the former marshland environments of the area.
- Although there is very little woodland coverage in the area, there are isolated examples of coverts and plantations dating from the 19th century. There are also many examples of shelter belts throughout the area, which provide screening and shelter from the often harsh weather, as well as protecting the soil from erosion.
- The modern industrial elements of the landscape provide a radical contrast to the fields and villages. The docks of Immingham and Killingholme, along with their associated

industrial development, dominate the southern part of the area. To the north, similar developments can be seen on the outskirts of Hull, on the road to Hedon. Tall chimney stacks and flare towers are often found side-

by-side with historic settlements. These ports, and their associated infrastructure of oil refineries and power stations, are perhaps the most influential and visible element of the modern landscape of the area.

## Farmstead and building types

- A small number of older farmsteads, with 18th-century or earlier houses but very rarely working buildings of this date, are located within or adjacent to medieval moats. Almost all farm buildings date from rebuilding in the 19th century, although some mid- to late 18th-century barns and possibly stables survive as buildings or the cores to later buildings.

buildings predominate (regular courtyards comprising 80% of those farmsteads recorded, with loose courtyards – mostly with buildings to three or four sides of the yard – comprising 15%), earlier farmhouses, including early examples built in brick and linear steadings (5% of the total) can be found in the area, and are likely to relate to periods of marshland grazing prior to the enclosure of land.

### Farmstead types

- Farmsteads in the area are mainly of the regular courtyard type and tend to be large in scale – full courtyard, U-plans and multi-yard plans being the most common. Yards are typically enclosed by long, low ranges of animal housing and dominated by combination and threshing barns.
- Although regular courtyard farmsteads and 19th-century farmhouses and working

### Building types


- Key building types, reflecting the high quality grazing land on the marshes, include early 19th-century threshing barns, commonly with loading hatches flanking cart entries; combination barns, often very large in scale, and shelter sheds and yards for fatstock. The transition to a more mixed farming regime is demonstrated by the construction of stables ranges and combined cart shed and granary

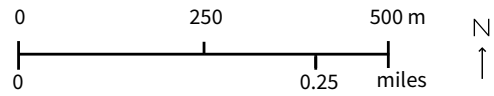


Many estate cottages still remain, and adopt a variety of decorative forms; they also illustrate the development of larger farms in this area. This example is property of the Crown Estates, a major land owner in the area. Photo © Jen Deadman



Maps are based on 2nd edition 25" Ordnance Survey maps, which show farmsteads after the last major phase in the building of traditional farmsteads in England.  
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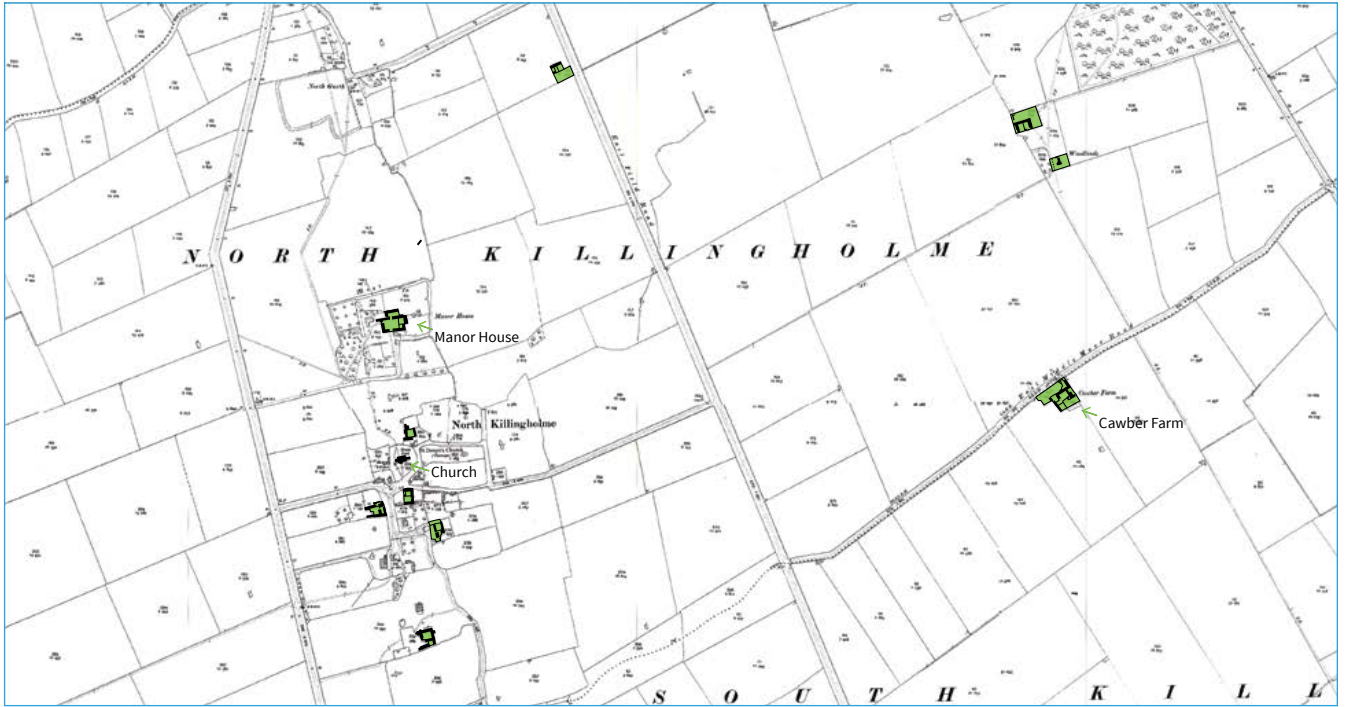
 Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



### Goxhill

Isolated farms in the parish of Goxhill. The strongly rectilinear pattern of early 19th-century drainage and reclamation is particularly clear, with a series of regular courtyard farmsteads established on the higher ground of the main road. Note the earlier boundaries within the smaller fields, in contrast to the more regular enclosure of the former coastal grazing marshes.

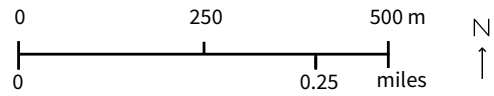




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Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



## North Killingholme

Landscape around North Killingholme. The distinction between the older enclosures around the village – where some pre-19th-century buildings remain and where farmsteads developed on a piecemeal basis – and the planned fieldscapes and farmsteads of the former marsh can be clearly seen. Away from the villages, pre-19th-century buildings are concentrated on the medieval moated sites that are common across this area. To the north of the village are the two moated sites at Manor Farm, within which are sited the 16th-century farmhouse and the mid-18th-century stable or granary.



This regular courtyard farmstead at Winteringham is typical of the late 19th- to mid-19th-century improvements undertaken in this area, with its house facing into its own garden away from the south-facing U-plan cattle yard with the taller barn at its head. Photo © Historic England 28479/024



This is one of the farmsteads on the Crown estate of Sunk Island, built to the designs of Samuel Sanders Teulon, an architect better known for his robust Gothic Revival churches. Note the detached house with its garden, the regular layout of detached buildings set around three sides of a cattle yard and the two-storey mixing barn range to the right, which would have processed crops taken from the rick yard (now with modern sheds) and mixed roots and other feed for livestock; external steps offer access to the granary over a cart shed range. Photo © Historic England 28480/002



An early to mid-19th-century roadside grouping, showing the use of brick and pantiles typical of this period. Photo © Jen Deadman



Village farm with cobble-built combination and hay barn. These predate the late 19th-century farmhouse with the combination barn, raised in brick at a later date. Photo © Jen Deadman



Many gable ends display the traditional tumbled eaves common to the area on 18th- and early 19th-century domestic and agricultural buildings. Photo © Jen Deadman



Smaller-scale farmsteads were also built to regular courtyard plans, as here at Goxhill. Photo © Historic England 28479/044

## Materials and detail

- The dominant building material in the area in post-17th-century buildings is red brick and pantile, reflecting the historic brickmaking industry of Barton and the surrounding riverbank.
- Some farms to north of the Humber are constructed in cobble.
- High quality building stone is not to be found in the area itself, and as such is an imported material used primarily in high status, civic and ecclesiastical buildings such as churches. Such examples as there are appear to the north of the River Humber.
- Tumbled eaves (pictured) are a common feature of traditional buildings in this NCA.
- Some larger farmsteads display use of ironstone and limestone from neighbouring areas in detailing such as quoins or window mouldings.



# Historic England

This guidance has been prepared by Alastair Macintosh and Adam Partington, Locus Consultants, with Jeremy Lake.

Please refer to this document as:  
Historic England 2020 Farmstead and Landscape Statement: Humber Estuary. Historic England: Swindon

The **Greater Lincolnshire Farmsteads and Landscapes Project**, led by Historic England, has mapped the historic character, survival and use of farmsteads. For the Assessment Framework and reports of 2015 see [https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/lincsfarm\\_he\\_2015/](https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/lincsfarm_he_2015/)

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