



Historic England

Farmstead and Landscape Statement

# Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 42



# 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>).



A large 19th-century combination barn, with a large granary over a cart shed attached to it, is the principal survival from this large farmstead at Theddlethorpe St. Helen which, like many pre-19th-century farmsteads in this area, developed within its own ditched enclosure. Note the earthworks relating to earlier land use and straight 19th-century ridging for drainage. Photo © Historic England 28519/003

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**Front cover:** A cluster of three early to mid-19th-century farmsteads at South Somercotes, showing the L-plan layouts typical of small to medium-size farms in this area and the sinuous outline of fenland drainage ditches. Photo © Historic England 28518/022



This map shows the Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes, 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.

This is a wide, coastal plain which extends from Grimsby in the north to Skegness on the edge of The Wash. It is bounded inland by the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds. The Character Area is 8.1% urban, with the principal settlements being located along the coast. It has no land-based national designations, but there are several coastal areas designated as Special Areas of Conservation, or as Ramsar Sites.

## Historic character

- Two parallel landscapes, both with high densities of farmsteads, exist in the Character Area:
  - Historic, middle-marsh landscape of nucleated settlements and former strip farming in the west
  - Reclaimed Outmarsh landscape of wide, low-lying plains intersected by creeks and man-made drainage channels in the east.
- Historic economy was based on salt production and the grazing of cattle on rich marshland grass, this shifting to an arable-based economy from the late 18th century.
- Extensive reclamation had begun with the by-products of industrial-scale medieval salt making, known as saltern mounds, on which temporary settlements were established.
- Settlement is broadly dispersed, with straggling, linear settlements adhering to higher ground, such as former sea-banks. There is a clear distinction preserved between traditional, nucleated settlements and village farmsteads in the Middle Marsh and the dispersed pattern of linear settlements and isolated farmsteads in the Outmarsh. Isolated farmsteads occur along historic drove roads connecting the Middle Marsh and Outmarsh landscapes and leading up to the neighbouring uplands of the Wolds.
- Settlement and colonisation spread from west to east as land was reclaimed, resulting in a series of 'daughter settlements' forming staged and parallel linear patterns to their parent villages (for example Saltfleetby St Peter).

## Significance

- Farmsteads Mapping in Lincolnshire has shown that the area has, in a national context, a below-average survival of traditional farmsteads from around 1900 – 44% have more than 50% of their historic form surviving (42.85% in Greater Lincolnshire) and 27% (28% in Greater Lincolnshire) retaining some, but less than 50%, of their historic form. Any pre-19th-century buildings are very rare.
- Many farmsteads are in proximity to medieval and post-medieval features, such as monastic sites, moated sites, and deserted settlements.

- Historic grazing land is common in the Outmarsh and currently undergoing restoration in several areas.
- The influence of estates is strong, especially in the north of the area, with associated architectural motifs.
- There was extensive rebuilding in brick and pantile in the later 18th and 19th centuries, leaving some traces of earlier mud and stud as rare survivals of a regional building tradition that has been largely swept away. Pre-1840 farm buildings, mostly comprising small threshing barns, are rare.

## Present and future issues

- The ongoing transition from mixed and pastoral farming to large-scale arable cropping is leading to redundancy of buildings and decline in livestock numbers.
- Coastal settlements and resort towns are expanding into rural areas around existing settlements.
- The industrialisation of the coastal landscape around Grimsby and Humberston continues due to the growth of energy facilities, including gas terminals and power stations.
- Increased tourism and leisure use of the coastal area may lead to change of use and conversion of agricultural buildings.
- The total farmed area has shown signs of increasing whilst farm ownership has reduced between 2000 and 2009. There has been a loss of medium-size farm enterprises, which have largely been edged out.
- 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 (25%, the national average being 7.5%) of listed working farm buildings showing obvious signs of structural disrepair.
- Climate change may lead to changes in flood management, increased instances of flooding in the coastal area, and may also alter the types of crops that can profitably be grown.

## Historic development

- There is a clear distinction in the historical development of the two components of this coastal landscape; the Middle Marsh, which runs north–south in a broad band along the western side of the Character Area, and the Outmarsh, which runs parallel with it and the county’s eastern coastline.
- Early settlement took place on the higher ground of the Middle Marsh, with evidence of prehistoric and Roman salt making found throughout the area. The present-day settlement pattern of the Middle Marsh was largely formed in the 10th and 11th centuries, with the establishment of settlements first by Saxon and then by Danish colonists. The earthwork remains of medieval religious houses, such as Louth Abbey, Hagnaby Abbey and Markby Priory, indicate the extensive pre-reformation influence of the church on the landscape. Numerous moated sites preserved within modern villages mark the sites of medieval manors, homesteads, farms and granges.
- Over 16% of recorded farmsteads are sited in villages. Most isolated farmsteads relate to 18th- and 19th-century enclosure. The settlements of the Middle Marsh follow a largely nucleated pattern, not unlike that found in neighbouring Character Areas, although the medieval arable farming and crop rotation appears to have taken place within a system of drained enclosures

rather than in typical open fields. The opportunities for arable cultivation in the area were somewhat restricted by the low-lying and poorly drained nature of much of the landscape. However, this allowed for rich grazing on surrounding common land.

- The Outmarsh landscape provided a number of resources to the medieval settlements of the Middle Marsh, with grazing and salt making being perhaps the most profitable activities. The process of salt making resulted in large quantities of waste material, such as sand and clay, which was deposited in large mounds known as salterns. These were sufficiently large and numerous to create areas of elevated and dry ground in the marsh. This had the effect of pushing the coastline further away from the original settlements of the Outmarsh, and necessitated the establishment of so-called 'daughter settlements' nearer to the coast in order to continue the salt-making process. These settlements often retained the names of their parents, and as they grew large enough to require a church or chapel added the suffix of the Saint's name to which the church was dedicated, for example the settlements of Saltfleetby St Peter and Covenham St Bartholomew.
- The marshland of the Greater Lincolnshire coast provided excellent grazing during the summer months, and allowed fattening of large numbers of cattle and sheep. This was exploited both by the farmers of the Middle Marsh and by those from further afield, including flocks from Scotland and Ireland.

Land in the marsh was often rented or purchased by farmers from the Lincolnshire Wolds, who would drive livestock down from the hills to the coast. Thus there is a close cultural connection between the Wolds and the Lincolnshire Coast and Marshes, most clearly seen in the arrangement of drove roads that run east-west through the area.

- Although drainage was undertaken in area piecemeal fashion since medieval times, more organised and prolific drainage of Outmarsh in the 18th and 19th centuries led to the planned enclosure of much the marshland. Associated with this was an extensive migration of farmsteads from the villages to more isolated locations set amongst the new fields. The movement also necessitated the construction of farm workers' cottages closer to the new farmsteads. The drainage, improvement and enclosure of lands was an expensive undertaking and attracted the interest of several large estates situated both in the area itself and in the Wolds, including the extensive holdings of the Earls of Yarborough.
- Twentieth-century developments have included extensive industrialisation of the northern part of the area, especially around Grimsby and Immingham, reflecting the construction of deepwater ports in the neighbouring Humber Estuary Character Area. There has also been extensive development of the southern and central coastal areas for recreational and leisure pursuits, such as the large areas of caravan parks around Skegness and Mablethorpe, which became favoured tourist destinations in the late 19th century.

## Landscape and settlement

- The present-day landscape of the Coast and Marshes Character Area reflects the changing approaches to coastal land reclamation and livestock movements during the last thousand years. The difference between the Middlemarsh and the Outmarsh is still clear, and the two areas can readily be discerned by their differing patterns of settlement and fieldscapes.
- The nucleated settlements of the Middlemarsh extend in a north-south alignment from the Humber Estuary to The Wash, incorporating large towns such as Alford and Manby, as well as numerous smaller villages. These are surrounded by productive arable and pasture, with mixed farming remaining a common type of agriculture. The fields around the Middlemarsh towns are a mixture of small, irregular ancient enclosures immediately adjacent to village cores and larger planned

enclosures over the former open fields and commons. Many of the villages expanded during the 18th and 19th centuries, and their cores are characterised by buildings of this date built of red brick and pantile.

- By contrast, the Outmarsh settlements are a mixture of straggling linear villages along former east-west drove roads and isolated farmsteads set in 19th-century planned fieldscapes. More extensive nucleated settlement is concentrated on the coast, formerly based around fishing and coastal industries, several of which have expanded as holiday resorts in more recent times. Many settlements may also represent aggregations of former hamlets, which have coalesced through 20th-century ribbon development along main roads.
- The rural Outmarsh has been overwritten in places by large-scale 20th- and 21st-century settlement expansion, especially in the north around Grimsby and Cleethorpes, and in the vicinity of the resort towns in the south. However, the Outmarsh still retains significant legibility of small-scale, irregular and ancient field systems developed through the medieval period, defined by drainage ditches. Vestiges of ridge and furrow under grass indicate former arable farming.
- Small plantations provide shelter around the farmsteads and settlements of the Outmarsh. Larger blocks, including some areas of ancient woodland, accompany the settlements and historic parklands of the Middle Marsh.

## Farmstead and building types

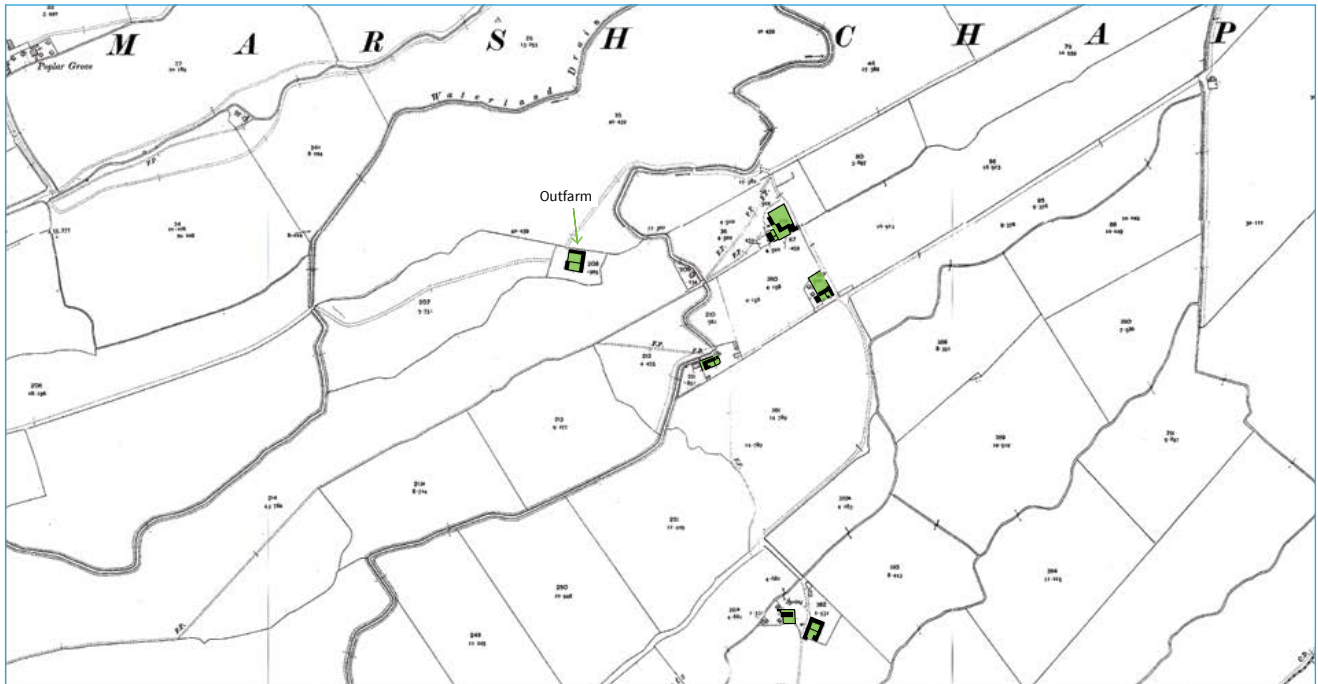
- There are some 18th century and earlier buildings in mud and stud, but most farmsteads date from the mid to late 19th century.

### Farmstead types

- The majority of farmsteads in the Character Area are constructed to either a loose (14.4%, most of these with detached buildings to two or three sides of the yard) or regular (72%) courtyard plans. Earlier survivals include village-based linear farmsteads, with some displaying parallel plans. Farmsteads often occur along former drove roads leading to the reclaimed marsh along the coast, and have their origins as small sheep farms.
- The area is typically characterised by small farm holdings, and this is reflected in the relatively small size of farm complexes and buildings. Linear and dispersed plan types, over 10% of those recorded from maps of about 1900, were historically associated with these smallholdings and small farms and are concentrated towards the Fens in the south of the area. Many were extended and remodelled as courtyard plans in the 19th century to allow for more effective arable cultivation, and surviving examples of dispersed and linear form have the potential for earlier fabric and settlement archaeology.

### Building types

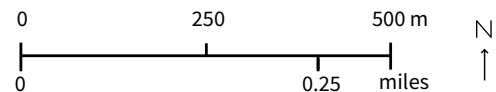
- Key farmstead buildings include cattle courts served by mixing rooms, loose boxes and shelter sheds, and are often dominated by multi-functional combination ranges or with central mixing barns. These latter – with their full or half lofts – replaced most of the area's small threshing barns of early 19th-century and earlier date, which are now very rare.



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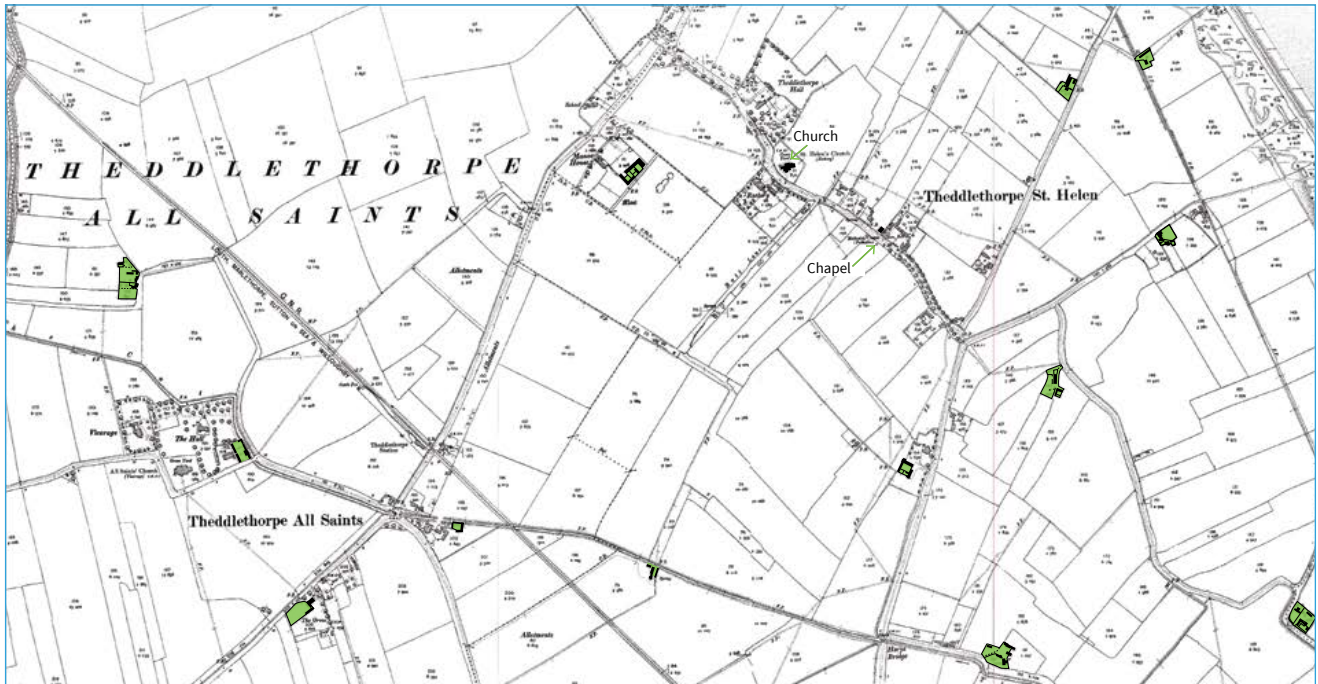
Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



## Marshchapel

Reclaimed marshland to the east of Marshchapel. The sinuous drainage system reflects the former creeks that once drained the marshland of the area. The isolated farmsteads shown here are likely to have been constructed on top of saltern mounds in the marsh, while the straight north-south aligned field boundaries indicate 19th-century planned enclosure. Note also the planned regular courtyard layouts, in contrast to the piecemeal enclosure and loose courtyard plans at Theddlethorpe.

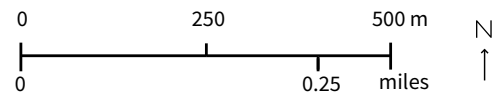




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Farmstead, showing the buildings in black and the boundaries of the main yards (highlighted in green), working areas and gardens.



## Theddlethorpe

Isolated farmsteads in the Lindsey marsh reflecting the piecemeal development and dispersed nature of settlement in the area. Note the clear contrast between the irregular piecemeal enclosure to the east of the map around Theddlethorpe St. Helen, with more regular enclosures around the large, regular multi-yard farmstead to the top of the central area of the map.



A 19th-century courtyard farmstead situated on a former drove road. The large barn – with a cart shed adjoining the road – is indicative of arable cultivation, which likely dates this farmstead to the period following drainage and enclosure of the former grazing marshes. Photo © Jen Deadman.

## Materials and detail

- Early farm buildings in the area are thought to have been constructed largely of mud and stud, locally available and inexpensive materials used throughout Greater Lincolnshire's wetland areas.
- Some mud and stud buildings survive in the area, along with examples of reed thatch.
- Following extensive rebuilding in the 18th and 19th centuries, surviving historic farm buildings are typically constructed of locally made brick and pantile. Some of these materials were sourced in the neighbouring Humber Estuary Character Area, but there was also a flourishing local pantile industry in the Coast and Marshes.
- Stone was not available within the immediate local area, and as such its use is limited; where it occurs it is used for decorative purposes such as quoins or lintels.
- It is thought that some later 19th-century buildings may include re-used ships' timbers recovered from the ship-breaking industry in the Mablethorpe and Sutton area, however evidence for this is limited.



# Historic England

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