



Net Zero  
Teesside

# Preliminary Environmental Information Report

Volume III - Appendices

Appendix 17A: Landscape Character

The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended)



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Prepared by: **AECOM**



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# 17A. Landscape Character

## 17.1 National

17.1.1 The Study Area contains 3 National Character Area (NCA) Profiles:

- NE435:NCA Profile:15: Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau (Natural England, 2013/04/22);
- NE439:NCA Profile: 23 Tees Lowlands (Natural England, 2014/08/26) and;
- NE352:NCA Profile 25: North York Moors and Cleveland Hills (Natural England, 2015/01/14).

17.1.2 The relevant characteristics of these NCA's are summarised in Table 17A-1 below:

**Table 17A-1: NCA Summary Table**

National Character Area	Key Characteristics
National Character Area  NCA 23: Tees Lowlands (Natural England, 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“A broad, low-lying and open plain of predominantly arable agricultural land, with low woodland cover and large fields, defined by wide views to distant hills;</i></li> <li>• <i>A large area of urban and industrial development around the Tees Estuary, much of which is on reclaimed land, contrasts with the quieter rural areas to the south and west;</i></li> <li>• <i>Major industrial installations around Teesmouth form a dramatic skyline, but are juxtaposed with expansive mudflats, sand dunes and salt marshes;</i></li> <li>• <i>Slow-moving rivers Tees and Leven meander through the landscape with steep, well-wooded banks;</i></li> <li>• <i>A distinctive area of low-lying farmland with remnants of former wetland habitat in the flood plain of the River Skerne to the north-west;</i></li> <li>• <i>Permo-Triassic red mudstones and sandstones are masked by glacial drift and alluvial material but can be seen outcropping at the coast in places;</i></li> <li>• <i>Principal transport corridors, power lines and energy infrastructure are conspicuous elements in the landscape. Industrial development fringing the tidal reaches of the River Tees contrasts with the surrounding rural landscape;</i></li> <li>• <i>Brownfield sites where semi-natural vegetation has started to regenerate on previously developed land; and</i></li> <li>• <i>Green corridors such as minor valleys and former railway lines provide links between urban areas and the surrounding countryside.”</i></li> </ul>
NCA 25: North York Moors and Cleveland Hills (Natural England, 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Upland plateaux, generally below 400 m, dissected by a series of dales – some broad and sweeping but others narrow, steep sided and wooded – creating strong contrasts between open moors and enclosed valleys;</i></li> </ul>

National Character Area

Key Characteristics

- 
- *Extensive areas of heather moorland on plateaux and hills, largely under sporting ownership, including large expanses of upland heathland and blanket bog habitats, creating a sense of space, expansiveness and openness;*
  - *Mosaics of upland heathland vegetation supporting internationally important populations of breeding merlin and golden plover;*
  - *Some areas of extensive conifer and mixed plantations, especially in the south-east, and broadleaved woodland on steep valley sides;*
  - *Valley landscapes characterised by pastoral farming, with a clear demarcation and strong visual contrast between the enclosed fields with some species-rich grasslands and wetlands, farms and settlements, and the bracken-fringed moorlands above;*
  - *Drystone walls and hedgerows enclosing the small pastures and meadows in dales and fringing farmland, often replaced by fences in arable areas;*
  - *Large-scale arable landscapes to the south and east;*
  - *Jurassic sandstones, mudstones and limestone forming a dramatic coastal landscape of high cliffs, high vegetated maritime slopes, and small coves and bays, with coastal towns and compact fishing village;*
  - *Sparsely settled, with scattered farmsteads and small villages, and traditional buildings constructed of local sandstone or limestone and with red pantile roofs, creating a strong visual unity;*
  - *A rich archaeological heritage from many different periods, especially on the moorland plateaux; and*
  - *Panoramic views over moorland plateaux, ridges and dales and out over surrounding lowland landscapes and the North Sea.”*

NCA Profile 15: Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau (Natural England, 2013)

- 
- *“Open, large-scale landscape with big fields, low hedges and few trees on the plateau tops, incised with stream valleys along limestone escarpment to the west and denes running down to the coast to the east.*
  - *Dramatic coastline with exposed cliffs of limestone and boulder clay, undulating series of small, sheltered bays and headlands, flower-rich Magnesian Limestone grassland, steep-sided wooded coastal denes, and sand dunes and beaches that support large populations of waders and seabirds.*
  - *Striking west-facing limestone escarpment forming a series of spurs and vales, heavily quarried but still supporting a mosaic of limestone grassland, scrub and woodland.*
  - *Strong influence of historic mining industry on both local culture and the landscape, in the form of ex-coal mining towns and villages with distinctive surrounding areas of allotments and pony paddocks, reclaimed colliery sites, disused and existing railways, and industrial archaeology.*
  - *A productive farmed landscape with a high proportion of large arable fields and some pasture for sheep and cattle grazing.*
  - *Historic villages subject to a high degree of 20th-century expansion.*
  - *Widespread urban and industrial development in the north and major transport corridors throughout.”*

17.1.3 At a national scale the Study Area includes the Marine Character Area (MCA): North East described in the National Seascape Character Assessment for England (MM01134) (Marine Management Organisation, 2018). The relevant characteristics are summarised in Table 17A-2 below:

**Table 17A-2: MCA Summary Table (Marine Management Organisation, 2018)**

Seascape Character Area	Key Characteristics
<b>Marine Management Organisation 2018</b>	
MCA 22 Tyne, Tees and Wear Estuaries and Coastal Waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Shelving coastal waters off the extensively developed coast of the Tyne, Tees and Wear lowlands encompassing Tynemouth, South Shields, Sunderland, Seaham, Hartlepool and Redcar, deepening to approximately 30-50 metres offshore. Encompassing the estuaries and tidal rivers inland;</i></li> <li>• <i>Contrasting areas of undeveloped exposed coastline of sweeping sandy beaches, punctuated by estuaries and rocky outcrops that form slight headlands between South Shields and Hartlepool;</i></li> <li>• <i>Diverse ecological habitats and important populations of rare species. Rocky foreshore and sandy beach that regularly supports internationally important numbers of purple sandpiper, ruddy turnstone and little tern (Northumbria Coast Ramsar site and Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA);</i></li> <li>• <i>Offshore, the East Coast War Channels were vital for transporting coal and other goods from the Tyne to the Thames and France, during WWI and WWII. Additional protection was provided from Heugh Gun Battery 26 of 69 (Scheduled Monument) located on the Headland at Hartlepool and the ‘disappearing gun’ at Trow Point. The coast includes a range of important military heritage sites;</i></li> <li>• <i>Global influence of shipbuilding in the area, focused around Sunderland, Teesside, Hartlepool and Tyneside dating from the late 13th Century. Shipbuilding now largely replaced by vessel and marine structure decommissioning and the offshore wind industries;</i></li> <li>• <i>Large fishing fleets based at the region’s major commercial fishing and shellfish ports at North Shields, with other landings at smaller ports such as Hartlepool and Blyth;</i></li> <li>• <i>Good coastal access along much of the coast providing increasing opportunities for recreation and tourism, including fishing from the now clean former industrial beaches and walking along stretches of the England Coast Path;</i></li> <li>• <i>Expansive views across the North Sea including the moving turbines of the Teesside and Blyth (Demonstrator) Offshore Wind Farms;</i></li> <li>• <i>Viewed from the sea, the coastline is perceived as a well lit. The southern part of the MCA is intensely lit by the extensive industrial facilities at Middlesbrough;</i></li> <li>• <i>The exposure of the coast with general absence of sheltering headlands results in a wild and unforgiving seascape when storms sweep in from the North Sea;</i></li> <li>• <i>Open, large-scale landscape with big fields, low hedges and few trees on the plateau tops, incised with stream valleys along limestone escarpment to the west and denes running down to the coast to the east;</i></li> </ul>

## Seascape Character Area

## Key Characteristics

- *Dramatic coastline with exposed cliffs of limestone and boulder clay, undulating series of small, sheltered bays and headlands, flower-rich Magnesian Limestone grassland, steep-sided wooded coastal denes, and sand dunes and beaches that support large populations of waders and seabirds;*
- *Striking west-facing limestone escarpment forming a series of spurs and vales, heavily quarried but still supporting a mosaic of limestone grassland, scrub and woodland;*
- *Strong influence of historic mining industry on both local culture and the landscape, in the form of ex-coal mining towns and villages with distinctive surrounding areas of allotments and pony paddocks, reclaimed colliery sites, disused and existing railways, and industrial archaeology;*
- *A productive farmed landscape with a high proportion of large arable fields and some pasture for sheep and cattle grazing;*
- *Historic villages subject to a high degree of 20th-century expansion; and*
- *Widespread urban and industrial development in the north and major transport corridors throughout.*

## 17.2 Regional

17.2.1 The Site and Study Area is not covered by any regional Landscape Character Assessment.

## 17.3 Local

17.3.1 The Study Area is covered by three local landscape character assessments:

- Redcar and Cleveland Landscape Character Assessment (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, 2006);
- Stockton and Tees Landscape Character Assessment (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, 2011); and
- Hartlepool Landscape Assessment (Hartlepool Borough Council, 2000).

17.3.2 Redcar and Cleveland Landscape Character Assessment divides the rural areas of the Borough into broad Landscape Character Tracts (LCTr). Four of the landscape tracts fall within the Study Area. The relevant characteristics of these landscape tracts are summarised in Table 17A-3 below:



**Table 17A-3: Landscape Tracts summary table (Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, 2006)**

**Landscape Character Tract      Key Characteristics**

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**Redcar & Cleveland Landscape Character Assessment**

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Eston Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Characterised by a complex of prominent steep-sided hills linked by low saddles which form a parallel series of foothills, or outliers, to the main escarpment of the Cleveland Hills, which lie within the North York Moors National Park. Open moorland and wooded hillsides and escarpments contribute to the distinctive character of this area and give it an identity unlike any other part of the Borough. An area of parkland at Wilton is important within the tract;</i></li> <li>• <i>Extensive and contrasting views are available from many locations; to the south there is the backdrop of the Cleveland Hills. To the north there are views over the urban and industrial developments of Teesside and Redcar;</i></li> <li>• <i>The Eston Hills Tract consists of three distinct but closely grouped elevated areas: the Eston Hills upland between Dunsdale and Ormesby, the higher land at Upleatham, and that situated between Skelton and Slapewath. Associated with these uplands are ‘saddles’ of relatively lower land linking them and the slopes that edge them. Also included are the upper reaches of Skelton Beck, known as Tocketts Beck and Waterfall Beck in this tract; and</i></li> <li>• <i>Under the Character Assessment, the landscapes in this tract are classified into Sensitive Landscapes over the landscape units on the higher land, the beck valleys and the parkland, with Restoration Landscapes over the remainder. The uplands have a high strength of character, a product of a dominant landform and a strong woodland pattern. The lower-lying areas are characterised by a more open landscape structure of isolated woods and hedges set within a farmland context.”</i></li> </ul>
Redcar Flats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“The Redcar Flats are contained by the escarpment of the Eston Hills to the south and the coast to the north. Over the inland part of the tract, the presence of high quality farmland has encouraged intensive arable cultivation and the enlargement of fields. The hedgerow pattern is sparse and there are few landscape features to interrupt the open, gently sloping landscape;</i></li> <li>• <i>Long views predominate in this landscape, and skyline features take on particular importance. The industry at Wilton Works, and the abrupt urban edges of Redcar, Marske, New Marske, Saltburn and the A174 and railway corridors have a strong local influence on landscape character;</i></li> <li>• <i>Under the Character Assessment, the coastal zone in this tract is classified as Sensitive Landscape. In this open landscape, largely the product of maritime exposure, any development will be very open to view; and</i></li> <li>• <i>Other Sensitive Landscape areas in this tract are the parkland at Kirkleatham and the wooded valley at Hazel Grove, where the priority is the retention of existing landscape constituents. The remainder of this tract, inland of the coast, is classified as Restoration Landscape. Existing features in this denuded landscape are relatively sparse, due to hedgerow decline and loss, and their retention is important to ‘place’ new</i></li> </ul>

**Landscape Character Tract**      **Key Characteristics**

	<p><i>development, to act as the basis for additional planting, or for the creation of 'new landscape.'</i>"</p>
<p>Guisborough Lowland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"This tract encompasses Guisborough and lies to the south of the Eston Hills. It is gently undulating with a distinctive lightly wooded character. Woodland blocks are numerous but small, and hedges tend to be thin or gappy with few trees. It is physically confined, sandwiched between Eston Hills to the north and the Langbaourgh Ridge to the south. The largely arable farmland is undulating in the west, but is flatter towards Guisborough and starts to rise towards Roseberry Topping;</i></li> <li>• <i>The urban edge of Nunthorpe has an intrusive visual impact on fringe farmland, and the A171 is prominent locally;</i></li> <li>• <i>The tract to the west of Guisborough takes its character largely from the hedgerow network over the farmland, with only scattered small woodlands, rather than from any strongly wooded content;</i></li> <li>• <i>To the east of Guisborough, however, there is a varied character of farmland, hedges and woodland associated with the parkland at Gisborough Hall. Under the Character Assessment, the landscape in this tract is classified as Restoration Landscape, except for the parkland at Gisborough Hall, which is a Sensitive Landscape; and</i></li> <li>• <i>The landscape of this tract out with the parkland is noted for the scarcity of hedgerow trees and the scattered small woodland blocks."</i></li> </ul>
<p>East Cleveland Plateau</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>This tract comprises an open, elevated coastal plateau rising towards the south to meet the North York Moors. The plateau has an exposed, open rural character with largescale farmland bordered by hedges. A number of lanes are also characterised by hedges on each side. The plateau is dissected by a complex system of deeply-incised sheltered, heavily-wooded valleys or gills, which meet the coast at two points within this tract; these are separated by higher land, where dramatic cliffs fall to wave-cut platforms at sea level;</i></li> <li>• <i>A history of mining and related industries within the tract has left its mark on the landscape, and pockets of industry associated with villages and, in the open countryside, spoil heaps and disused mineral railways, have a strong influence on the landscape character. Many of the spoil heaps have now been regraded and planted, as at Liverton Mines and Lumpsey, and some have been removed as at Lingdale. Others, though, remain, most notably that at Kilton which is visible over a wide area;</i></li> <li>• <i>Under the landscape Character Assessment, the wooded valleys and coast are classed as Sensitive Landscapes, whilst the remainder of the tract falls in the Restoration Landscape classification;</i></li> <li>• <i>The coast within this tract, classified as Sensitive Landscape in the Character Assessment, is within 'The North Yorkshire and Cleveland Heritage Coast,' where protection of character is given priority. Where development does take place, its location and design are of crucial importance; and</i></li> <li>• <i>New planting for screening or integration should closely reflect the nature and detail of the existing vegetation.</i></li> </ul>

17.3.3 The Study Area includes the East Billingham to Teesmouth Landscape Character Area as defined by Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment 2011. East Billingham to Teesmouth and Thorpe and Billingham Beck Valley Character Areas fall within the Study Area. The relevant characteristics of this Landscape Character Area are contained in Table 17A-4 below:

**Table 17A-4: Landscape Character Areas Summary Table (Stockton on Tees Borough Council, 2011)**

Landscape Character Area	Key Characteristics
<b>Stockton on Tees Landscape Character Assessment</b>	
East Billingham to Teesmouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Extensive and contrasting views are available from many locations; to the south there is the backdrop of the Cleveland Industrial landscape fringing Billingham integrated with large areas of open space including wetlands and reclaimed semi improved pasture;</i></li> <li>• <i>Farmland is open and flat with minimal landscape features;</i></li> <li>• <i>Industry dominates area to the east along the River Tees;</i></li> <li>• <i>“Open space within industrial areas contain significant wildlife value with a number of ecological designations present including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI’s), Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar Site and Teesmouth National Nature Reserve;</i></li> <li>• <i>Important ‘ridge and furrow’ within the field pattern around the settlement of Cowpen Bewley;</i></li> <li>• <i>The Stockton to Hartlepool railway line is notable feature within the landscape, dividing the Landscape Character Area between estuarine and non-estuarine/rural fringe influences; and</i></li> <li>• <i>Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park provides the only wooded element within this Landscape Character Area;</i></li> <li>• <i>The key landscape characteristics of this area are the ecological wetland habitats, in particular the SSSI’s at Seal Sands and Cowpen Marsh. These are unique features within the Borough and provide a substantial amount of ecological benefit to an otherwise industry dominated landscape. Industrial features such as large storage tanks and flares associated with the oil refineries and chemical works within the Tees estuary dominate views towards the east with vertical features outside the industrial areas, comprising transmission towers and overhead power lines; and</i></li> <li>• <i>The River Tees runs along the southern boundary of this area where it exits land at Tees Mouth, just north of Seal Sands.”</i></li> </ul>
Thorpe and Billingham Beck Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Green corridor stretching from the rural areas of the Stockton on Tees Borough into the heart of the conurbation creating a ‘Green Wedge’ between Stockton and Billingham;</i></li> <li>• <i>Wide beck valley gradually narrowing as it extends into Billingham Beck valley extending between Stockton and Billingham;</i></li> </ul>

**Landscape Character Area**

**Key Characteristics**

- *Field sizes vary from medium well-defined fields to larger field pattern in the west with poorly maintained hedgerows;*
- *Land use consisting mainly of semi improved and improved pasture along the valley floor and extending up the sides;*
- *Transport links include A19, A177 and Stockton to Darlington railway line cutting through the agricultural landscape; and*
- *A network of minor roads create a complex vehicle network across the area. Public footpath links are limited.”*

17.3.4 The Hartlepool Landscape Assessment, 2000 defines seven Landscape Types. The Study Area includes four landscape types as defined by Hartlepool Landscape Assessment: Coastal Fringe, Estuarine, Rural Fringe and Undulating Farmlands. The characteristics contained in Table 17A-5 below:

**Table 17A-5: Landscape Character Types Summary Table (Hartlepool Borough Council, 2000)**

**Landscape Character Types    Key Characteristics**

**Hartlepool Landscape Assessment**

Coastal Fringe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“The coastal fringe area to the east of the Borough encompasses not only the beach area itself but also those adjoining areas of land which can clearly be seen to have been influenced by or be part of the maritime ecosystem; and</i></li> <li>• <i>This character area, for the purposes of the study, extends to the normally exposed tidal beach, exposed rock and sea cliff areas, and also man-made features such as coastal defences, harbour or sea wall installations. In addition to these features are the fringe elements normally found adjoining the coast itself, these being defined as coastal dunes, coastal grassland, salt marshes or areas of low tree and shrub cover.”</i></li> </ul>
Estuarine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“The estuarine area lies in the southeast and eastern fringe of the Borough. Typically it is defined by flat, featureless plains, which are permeated by or in close proximity to estuarine water bodies;</i></li> <li>• <i>This definition includes areas of semi-natural open water (tidal and fresh), associated salt marsh, reed beds, sand and mud flats. These areas also typically include low lying agricultural land, low tree and shrub cover and some coastal grassland. Estuarine land characteristically does not exceed 10 metres AOD; and</i></li> <li>• <i>The Estuarine landscape occupies a small but visually unique area of the study area, which suffers due to its proximity to the adjacent oil storage depot, BNFL power plant and Tioxide works. On a broader scale, the visual backdrop created by the Teesside industrial complex has a strong visual influence on the general landscape, an influence that is unfortunately</i></li> </ul>

**Landscape Character Types**      **Key Characteristics**

	<i>exacerbated by the flat, low-lying nature of the surrounding landscape.”</i>
Rural Fringe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“The rural fringe refers to those areas adjacent or in close proximity to the urban environment, which typically have either lost or had the rural character influenced by adjacent urban development (consequently, the Rural Fringe boundary extends along the edge of the built area of Hartlepool, and surrounds the built edge of the outlying village settlements;</i></li> <li>• <i>Such areas are often subject to litter/vandalism/tipping or malicious damage, and include sites that are unmanaged or poorly maintained or enclosed within degraded boundaries; and</i></li> <li>• <i>The majority of Rural Fringe sites are in a generally good or acceptable condition.”</i></li> </ul>
Undulating Farmland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“The farmland landscape covers the majority of the western Borough area, and largely defines the rural area of Hartlepool;</i></li> <li>• <i>Appropriate and aesthetically pleasing sense of scale and enclosure created by hedgerow boundaries and field patterns;</i></li> <li>• <i>Boundary hedgerows and tree belts create visual interest and provide a rich tapestry of varied field patterns that contribute positively to the overall character and value of the landscape;</i></li> <li>• <i>Generally pleasant view across sprawling, largely unspoilt rural landscape; natural landscape division between urban area and outlying settlements;</i></li> <li>• <i>Removal of hedgerows, and subsequent field enlargement, in some locations disrupts aesthetic sense of scale and enclosure, and introduces barren, industrial element into the rural landscape; and</i></li> <li>• <i>Industrial farm buildings extremely prominent in many areas, with little or no attempt to ameliorate visual impact.”</i></li> </ul>

## 17.4 References

- Hartlepool Borough Council (2000) *Hartlepool Landscape Assessment*;
- Marine Management Organisation (2018) *MMO 1134: Seascape Character Assessment for the North East Inshore and Offshore marine plan areas*
- Natural England (2013) *NE435:NCA Profile:15: Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau*;
- Natural England (2014) *NE439:NCA Profile: 23 Tees Lowlands*;
- Natural England (2015) *NE352:NCA Profile 25: North York Moors and Cleveland Hills*;
- Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council (2006) *Redcar and Cleveland Landscape Character Assessment*;
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (2011) *Stockton and Tees Landscape Character Assessment*;

