

Planning Committee

8 May 2026

Agenda item number 9

Broads Authority Landscape Character Assessment SPD

Report by Heritage and Design Manager

Summary

The Broads Landscape Character Assessment was first completed in 2006, with an update produced in 2016. An exercise to bring the document up to date and make it accessible has been completed and it is intended that it be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Recommendation

To endorse the Broads Authority Landscape Character Assessment SPD and recommend its approval by the Broads Authority.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (see Appendix 1) is an updated version of the current Broads Authority Landscape Character Assessment (2016), which was not a SPD and can be viewed [here](#). The original landscape character assessment was completed in 2006, was subsequently added to in 2012 and updated and edited in 2016 as part of a second stage Heritage Lottery bid. Amendments have now been made to ensure that it is in accordance with current guidance and reflects any changes that have occurred to the landscape in the intervening period. The format of the document has also changed to ensure it meets current accessibility standards. It is part of the evidence base for the Broads Authority's new Local Plan and be used to inform planning applications as well as used in decision-making. It will also be a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 1.2. The NPPF 2024 defines supplementary planning documents as '*documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.*' The Authority is aware that the Government is seeking to phase out the use of SPDs.

However, the transition arrangements to phasing out SPDs and the progress of the emerging Local Plan for the Broads are such that the Authority considers it appropriate and relevant to produce this SPD, which will give the guidance more weight.

2. The Broads Authority Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

- 2.1. The purpose of this LCA SPD is to provide an assessment of the different landscape characters within the Broads Authority Executive area to enable informed planning and management of the landscape, for example to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF 2024 sets out at paragraph 189 that ‘great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty’ in the Broads, which has the highest level of protection in relation to these issues. It goes on to state that, ‘development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impact on the designated areas’. Paragraph 190 requires that applications for major development in the Broads should include an assessment of any detrimental impact on the landscape and the extent to which that impact could be moderated. By providing accessible baseline information on the character and condition of the landscape, the LCA will support these requirements.
- 2.2. The Norfolk and Suffolk Broads is a protected landscape with a unique, nationally significant mosaic of gentle landform, habitats, lakes and rivers. The document sets out how this interplay between the land, water and people has shaped the landscape of the Broads over many centuries.
- 2.3. Landscape character can be defined as the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics in the landscape that make one landscape different from another. Landscape character assessment is the process of identifying and describing such variations in character across a landscape. It also seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of features and attributes (characteristics) that make different landscapes distinctive. This LCA SPD identifies the 13 landscape types found in the Broads and assesses the 31 different landscape character areas.
- 2.4. This document is primarily intended to inform the planning process and will be a material consideration in determining planning decisions. It will be of use to all those involved in the planning process, including site owners, applicants, architects, agents, the Local Planning Authority and the Planning Inspectorate. It has helped to inform planning policies relating to the landscape and should be read alongside policies SP7, DM16 and DM43 of the Local Plan for the Broads and successor policies. It also provides information that may be of interest to a wider audience, including those managing landscape-based projects (for example ecologists, statutory bodies or arboriculturists) and the wider public. The advice and guidance that it contains will not add unnecessary financial burden to development rather it will inform and improve decision making.

- 2.5. In producing this document, it became apparent that the accompanying spatial data needs some re-alignment in relation to the latest digital interpretation of The Broads area and other data sources. This piece of work will be progressed but may take some time to complete. It does not negate the existing LCA.

3. Consultation

- 3.1. The Town and Country Planning (Local Plans) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) require the Authority to undertake consultation to inform the production of the Landscape Character Assessment SPD. As a minimum, they require that the draft document is published for four weeks and during that time it is available on the Authority's website with hard copies available for inspection in the Authority's office.
- 3.2. The Authority's approach to engagement in the preparation of SPDs is set out in the Statement of Community Involvement. The consultations were advertised on the Authority's website and through social media posts. Consultation documents were available on the Authority's website, in libraries, district council offices and at the Authority's office.
- 3.3. Two periods of consultation have taken place. The first between 12 January and 9 February 2026 and due to some issues with version control on some maps and some minor changes to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening (Appendix 2) an additional second period of consultation took place between 9 March and 7 April 2026.
- 3.4. We received 14 responses to the first round of consultation and 2 to the second round. Where appropriate the document has been amended to incorporate suggestions made by consultees. Details can be found in the Consultation Statement (Appendix 3).

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. The Broads Authority Landscape Character Assessment SPD will provide a useful tool for those involved in the planning process and its adoption as a SPD will give it more weight.
- 4.2. The officers' recommendation is that Members endorse the Broads Authority Landscape Character Assessment SPD for approval at the Broads Authority meeting on 15 May 2026.

Author: Kate Knights

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[Broads Plan](#) strategic objectives: Theme D2 – Maintain up to date Broads Landscape Character Assessment

The following appendices are available to view on [Planning Committee - 8 May 2026 \(broads-authority.gov.uk\)](#)

The following appendices 1a-f constitute the Broads Landscape Character Assessment SPD

Appendix 1a – [LCA Part 1: Introduction and sections 1 and 2](#)

Appendix 1b – [LCA Part 2: Section 3 map of the 31 character areas](#)

Appendix 1c – [LCA Part 3: Section 3 character areas 1 to 9](#)

Appendix 1d – [LCA Part 4: Section 3 character areas 10 to 21](#)

Appendix 1e – [LCA Part 5: Section 3 character areas 22 to 31](#)

Appendix 1f – [LCA Part 6: References and bibliography](#)

Appendix 2 – [Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening](#)

Appendix 3 – [Consultation Statement](#)