

Regional Landscape Character study by Landscape East 2011	Planned Peat Fen: a flat, low lying and sparsely populated landscape in the north of Greater Cambridge. It is characterised by dark peaty soils, a grid like pattern of large arable fields bounded by drainage ditches and wide views to distant, often dramatic skies. Physical environment: Landform: An expansive, low-lying (often below sea level), landscape with a distinctively flat landform. Natural / water features: The Hundred Foot Washes are a key water feature when flooded in winter, as are the altered courses of major rivers (e.g. Old Bedford River and the Nene). There are also occasional gravel extraction lakes (e.g. at Needingworth). Vegetation and land use: Ecological character: A uniform and low-lying landscape, characterised by drained fenland, but supporting a mosaic of wetland habitats including fens, reedbed, wet woodland and patches of grazing marsh. Primary land use: An intensively farmed arable landscape. Tree cover: Almost no tree cover - restricted to infrequent patches of secondary woodland/scrub and discrete conifer belts around farmsteads. Cultural pattern: Historic features: The area is dissected by long straight roads with 90 degree bends, often located on dykes above the arable fen fields, or following ditches. Occasional pump houses are a feature. Enclosure pattern: Planned geometric landscape with large fields defined by straight ditches. There is little apparent structural difference between the early and recent episodes of field creation. Settlement pattern: Settlement is sparse and limited mainly to isolated brick-built farmsteads on former fen islands. Most are post-medieval in origin reflecting the late reclamation of the area for agriculture. Thorney is the only historic nucleated settlement.
	Historic development: A landscape created by drainage from the medieval period onwards to create farmland. Most comprises recent (18/19th century) fen enclosures, but significant areas of early (16th-18th century) enclosure also exist in the south and around Thorney.