

Statement of Importance

Fala Rolling Farmland and Policies Special Landscape Area

Name and location

This Special Landscape Area (SLA) comprises the **Fala Rolling Farmland and Policies**. It is located in eastern Midlothian on its border with East Lothian.



Overview

Key reasons why this area is a SLA are:

- The rolling landform of this landscape which is cut by densely wooded burns and strongly patterned by woodlands, hedges and roadside trees.
- The rich architectural heritage of mansion houses and small villages which contributes to the diversity of this landscape.

The rolling pasture of this area is cut through by several well-wooded burns, and further divided by shelterbelts and farm woods, estate parkland and woodland, hedges and roadside trees. A scattering of farmsteads and small mansion houses, in addition to the small villages of Fala and Fala Dam, adds to the settled character of this landscape, which is in parts contained and intimate, and in other parts is characterised by a sense of openness where the ready and prominent background of the nearby hills is experienced.

Landscape description

Key components of the landscape are:

- The intimately scaled, deeply incised and often well-wooded valleys.

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- Rolling pastures strongly enclosed by hedgerows and small woodlands.
- Mature oak, ash and beech trees aligning narrow roads.
- The small tightly clustered settlements of Fala and Fala Dam which have a strong architectural integrity.
- The estates of Whitburgh and Woodcote Park which feature parkland and ornamental plantings.
- Views to the scarp of the Lammermuir Hills which provides a dramatic backdrop to this landscape particularly to the south-east within neighbouring East Lothian.

The SLA has a rolling landform which is deeply incised by a number of broadly parallel streams running from the Lammermuir Hills and hill fringes to the lower-lying agricultural plain of East Lothian to the north-east.

The routes of the watercourses – including the Linn Dean and Costerton Waters, and Fala Dam, Routing, Salters’ and Dean Burns – are steep-sided valleys that, in the main, are well-defined and enclosed by dense mixed woodland and occasional areas of scrub. These valleys contrast with and divide rolling expanses of pastureland, within which mixed hedgerows, mature oak, beech and ash roadside trees, and small woodland blocks, copses and shelterbelts add further diversity to the well-wooded character of this SLA.

Some of the areas of woodland are associated with the policies of the small estates of Whitburgh House, an early 19thC mansion house at the north-western end of the SLA and, to a greater extent, the parklands and ornamental plantings of Woodcote Park to the south-east. Although Victorian in origin, the latter estate centres upon a 1970s modernist villa that replaced much of the original house, and contrasts with the more traditional stone farmsteads and cottages that are dotted across this landscape. In several places farm ponds, often fringed by large trees, are attractive farmland features. Aside from the roads that form the south and south-western boundaries to this area, the few other roads that run through the farmland tend to run in a north-easterly direction broadly parallel with the stream courses, with small stone bridges marking occasional crossing points. Both the hamlet of Fala Dam and the village of Fala are designated as Conservation Areas.

Views tend to be contained within this landscape through a combination of topography and mature woodland, adding to its intimately scaled character. Occasional glimpses can be obtained outwards towards the scarp of the Lammermuirs which is particularly dramatic

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to the south-east within neighbouring East Lothian. This landscape is also important in forming the foreground to panoramic views of the Lothians and the Firth of Forth from the A68 as it crosses Soutra Hill.

Choice of boundary

Where possible firm boundaries have been chosen for their longevity and robustness to define and identify the SLA. The boundaries of the SLA are formed by the administrative boundary between Midlothian and East Lothian to the north (which often follow major valleys), the A68 trunk road, a woodland strip west of Fala Mains and the Dean Burn to the south, and a minor road forking off from the A68 to the north-west.

Opportunities for change

Management

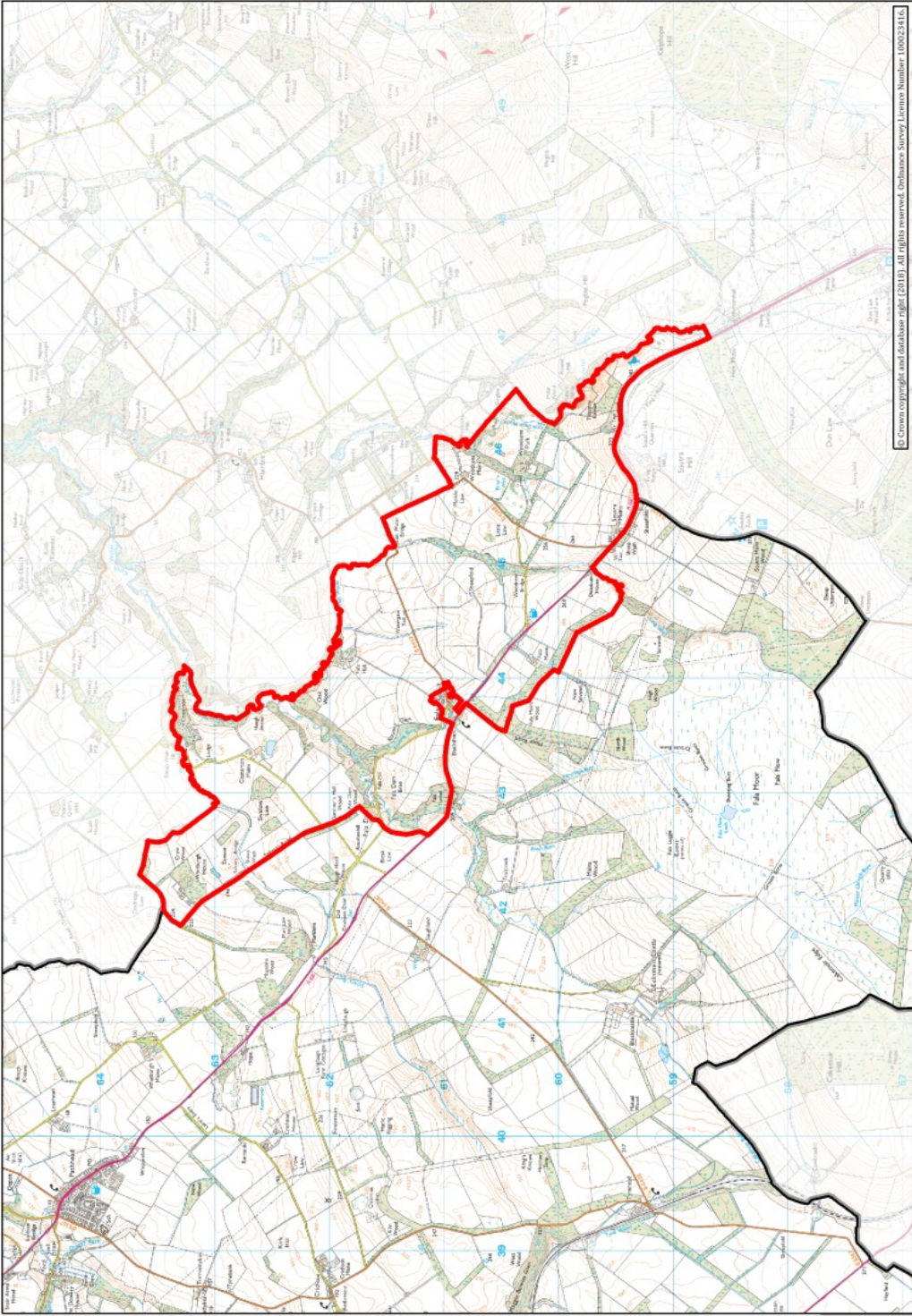
Good management of the existing tree plantations and woodlands is important to the value and appearance of this landscape.

The focus for landscape improvements should be on management of mature field boundary trees and trees aligning roads with replacement planting where they are moribund or gaps have occurred. The management of parkland and woodlands within the Woodcote Park estate additionally requires attention. Improved access for walkers within the attractive wooded valleys of Costerton, Linn Dean and Fala Dam should also be considered where the terrain allows.

Development

Important considerations for landscape impact in the preparation and assessment of development proposals include:

- The impact of development on the often intimate scale of this landscape.
- Potential for intrusion on designed landscapes and any impacts on their key components.
- Impacts on the character and setting of historic settlements and buildings.
- Impacts on the character of the richly patterned rolling farmland and narrow tree-lined roads.



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