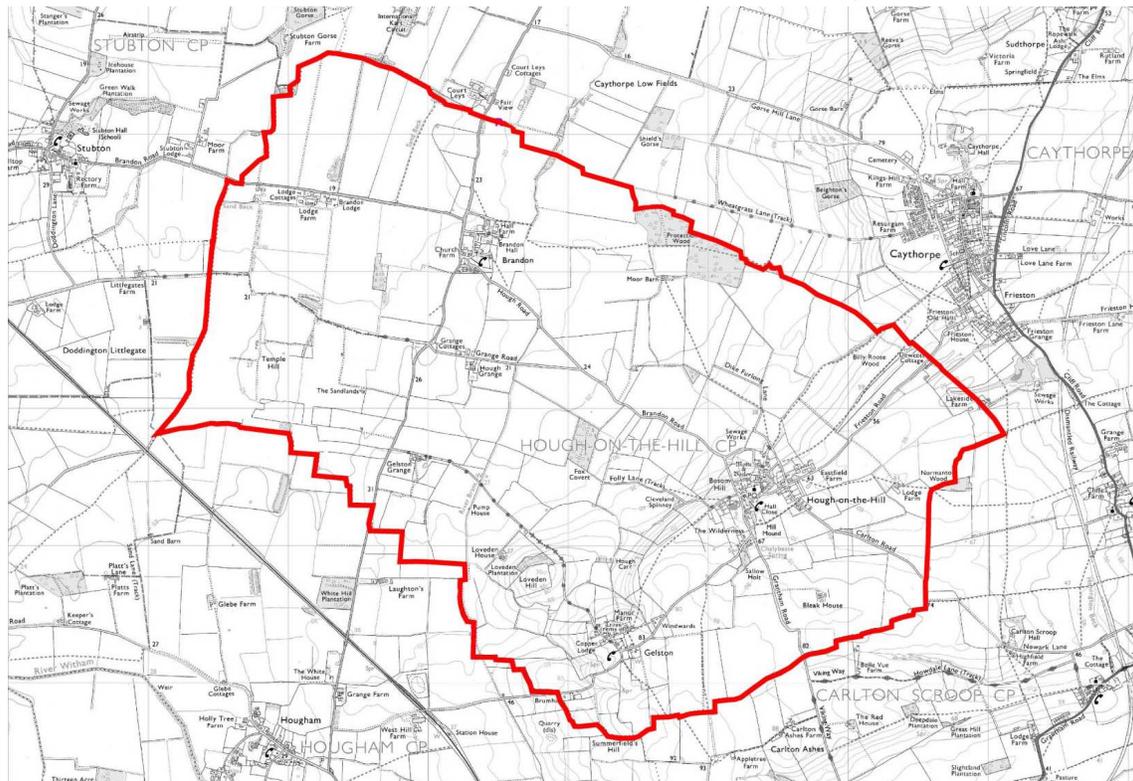


## 2 ABOUT THE AREA AND ITS PEOPLE

### The Plan Area

- 8 Hough on the Hill Parish is located within Lincolnshire approximately 7 miles north of Grantham, 12 miles east of Newark on Trent, and 18 miles south of Lincoln. It was formally designated as a 'Neighbourhood Area' by South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) in February 2013. The map below indicates the boundary:

**FIGURE 1 Hough on the Hill Parish Boundary**



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- 9 Hough on the Hill Parish is rural in character and contains three main settlements - Gelston, Brandon and Hough on Hill itself – as well as scattered farms. The population at the 2011 Census was approximately 400 persons, with a broadly similar age profile to that of the wider District and the East Midlands as a whole. The area's primary economic function is agricultural with some associated recreation and tourism. The sections below briefly outline relevant information about the area.

### History and Heritage

- 10 The earliest sign of habitation in the Parish is extensive crop marks around Temple Hill, dating from the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British periods. Evidence of a Roman villa was also

found near Hough. During the Anglo Saxon period Loveden Hill was an important burial site, and probably the meeting place for the Loveden Wapentake (Hundred).

- 11 Hough, Gelston and Brandon were all established villages by the Anglo Saxon era and are listed (*Hache, Cheuelestune and Brandune*) in the 1086 Domesday Book.
- 12 Little documentary evidence then exists until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. By this time nearly all the fields had already been enclosed and much of the land was farmed by tenants of a few large landowners, principally Lord Brownlow (of Belton House). The farms were a mixture of arable and pastoral, with the latter being mainly sheep. The population was similar to that recorded in the Domesday Book (and similar to today). In 1850 there were several farms in the villages (also a similar size to today), plus a number of outlying farms.
- 13 The population seemed to peak in the 1860s, before continuing industrialisation and an agricultural slump drew people towards towns and cities. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the population had shrunk by nearly a quarter and many of the men were employed in the ironstone quarries to the east and south of Hough.
- 14 By the 1950s there were more cattle than sheep and a dairy was built on Stubton Road. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century dairy farming became uneconomic and the land is now mainly arable. Some of the smaller, isolated farm buildings have been demolished. Although some fields have been merged to aid mechanisation, most of the post-enclosure hedgerows remain.
- 15 Property in the village of Hough on the Hill itself was predominantly owned by the Brownlow family (Belton House) during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with many of the houses built in a typical 'Brownlow' estate style creating a unified appearance across the village. The Brownlow estate was sold in the 1970s. Most of the village is now a Conservation Area in recognition of its picturesque quality, distinctive architectural style, archaeological significance, topography and striking, far-reaching views out over the Trent and Belvoir Vales. The Conservation Area contains 8 listed buildings and is currently the subject of a review being undertaken by South Kesteven District Council (available within the 'Evidence Base' for this Plan). It is proposed to expand the boundary to encompass more of the former estate cottages and three fields which show evidence of ridge and furrow.
- 16 The Parish Church of All Saints at Hough on the Hill (Grade I listed) dates from the 11<sup>th</sup> century and has a distinctive Saxon circular tower. A nearby Augustinian priory was founded in 1164 but only earthworks remain. Brandon has an Early English 'Chapel of Ease' and a Wesleyan Chapel in Gelston was in use from 1839 to 1958. Some of the main farming families around Brandon were Quakers and held meetings at Brandon Lodge, as well as supporting the Meeting House at Brant Broughton.

- 17 As well as a large number of listed buildings – such as Brandon Old Hall c1500 – the Parish has a motte and bailey at Hough on the Hill (known as Castle Hill) and a 15<sup>th</sup> century cross on Gelston green (both of which are Scheduled Ancient Monuments).

## Local Character, Landscape and Environment

- 18 Each of the three separate and distinct settlements within the Parish enjoys a unique sense of place derived from the landscape and built environment. Hough on the Hill and Gelston are perched on the ridge overlooking the vale to the west and uplands to the east and each benefits from extensive panoramic views across the Trent Valley. In addition to the numerous church towers and spires visible in the landscape a number of historic buildings can be seen including Lincoln Cathedral, Belvoir Castle, Newark Castle and Southwell Minster. There are very few modern man-made structures visible; these include Staythorpe Power station near Newark, Cottam Power Station (some 25 miles away) along the River Trent, the Recycling Station at Lincoln and the sugar factory in Newark.
- 19 By contrast Brandon is located in a pivotal position in the vale itself. These lower contours enable uninterrupted views of the full curvature of the escarpment and flatlands. This allows sight lines to historic churches both inside and outside the Parish, noticeable through their towers and spires which pierce the skyline.
- 20 In sporadic locations there are well preserved ridge and furrow earthworks, providing a link with the past. The many walkways which criss-cross the contours of the varied landscape provide their own special experience enhanced by dramatic sunsets. Changing seasons and colours add to the attraction of the views.
- 21 The road networks and pathways are quintessentially rural in character, particularly the elevated routes which meander between the villages. All thoroughfares are narrow and only suitable for light traffic. These quiet country lanes allow for unencumbered enjoyment of the countryside where tranquillity and nature can be appreciated.
- 22 The built environments of the villages have a nucleated pattern. The architectural style is fairly consistent, employing a traditional palette of materials across most buildings. Stone and red brick walling is common along with slate and pantiled roofs. The more historic buildings feature dressed stone detailing. Brandon in particular is small in scale and many of the buildings are dormer style including single storey barn conversions in places. Conversely, Hough on the Hill has more structures with a three storey configuration. Gelston creates its own distinctiveness by virtue of predominantly 1½ and 2 storey buildings nestled around the village green. The building materials are more varied in this settlement with the introduction of rendered walls in places.
- 23 Taking the Parish as a whole it has the advantage of a varied topographical landscape which has remained relatively unchanged over time. The built environment works in harmony with the terrain and boasts a long history dating back to the Saxon period and beyond.
- 24 In response to residents' views regarding the importance of the landscape to their enjoyment of life in the Parish, in 2013 the Parish Council commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment study. The resulting report forms a key part of the evidence underpinning this Plan (and is presented in full at Appendix 1). The study identifies **four key character areas** across the Parish:

**FIGURE 2: Landscape Character Areas**

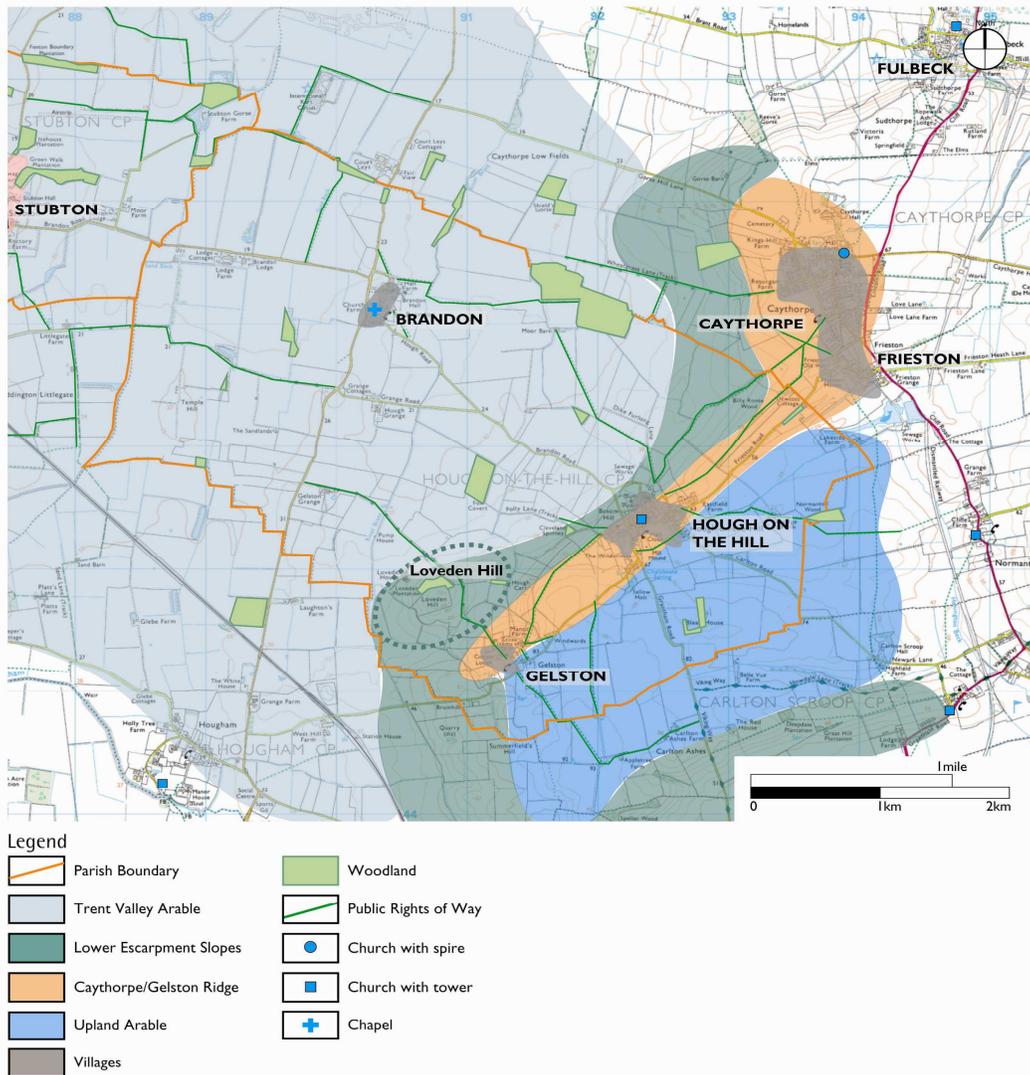


Fig 8 - Map of Parish Landscape Character Areas

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**Trent Valley Arable** - This is the dominant landscape character within the wider area and its boundaries extend well beyond the Parish. The characteristics are in keeping with the broader landscape character area of the Trent and Belvoir Vales. It includes the village of Brandon as well as a number of farms.

**Lower Escarpment Slopes** - This area comprises the undulating slopes of the limestone escarpment which runs through the Parish. With the highest area to the east, the slopes within the study area are generally north-west facing. The land use is generally pasture with some arable fields on the more gently sloping areas. The northern part of Hough on the Hill sits within the character area and includes the pasture to the south of Lower Road and some houses and farm buildings on the edge of the village. Loveden Hill also sits within this character area and comprises a distinct hill with an area of woodland to the north.

**Caythorpe Gelston Ridge** - This area forms a narrow strip between the two adjacent character areas but is distinct in that it forms a ridge, affording 360 degree views from many locations. The area includes the village of Hough on the Hill, Gelston and Frieston/Caythorpe (outside the Parish).

**Upland Arable** - This area lies to the south and east of Parish and comprises arable fields on a plateau between the two faces of the escarpment. Views to the east are towards the upper escarpment slope.

## **Farming & Wildlife Conservation**

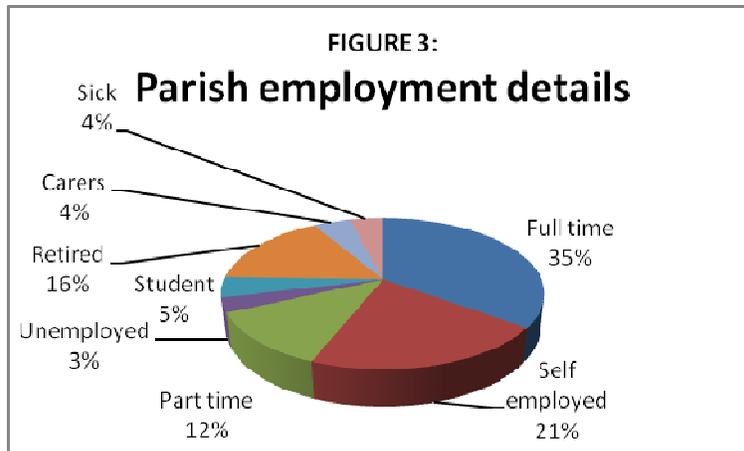
- 25 Farming, as the predominant economic activity, plays a significant role in both shaping and preserving our landscape. The Parish is perhaps fortunate that one resident family of farmers owns and manages some 70% of the land (including over 30 miles of hedges and 8 miles of dykes), which they have done for generations. The considerable care they, and other farmers, take in their stewardship role is of great value locally. During the last four decades at least 10 copses and spinneys have been planted, the Protection and Foxcovert woods have been partially felled and extensive replanting schemes implemented. On an annual basis between 1000 and 1500 hedging plants of varying species are planted to maintain and improve the existing hedges.
- 26 There has also been success in efforts to increase the number and diversity of birds and mammals that are resident or visitors to the Parish, by encouraging lapwings for example. Over the last five years all of the Barn Owls that have been reared in the owl boxes have been tagged, with a total of 48 Barn Owl chicks tagged to date.

## **Housing**

- 27 The 2011 Census data records a total of 167 dwellings in the Parish, all of which are detached, semi-detached or terraced houses or bungalows. The SKDC Housing Register records a total of 20 affordable housing units (10 in Hough on the Hill, 2 in Gelston and 8 in Brandon). A detailed housing needs assessment is not currently available for the Parish, but the Housing Register records 5 persons with a local connection seeking 2-bedroom accommodation.

## **Economy**

- 28 The predominant economic activity within the Parish is agriculture. There are several working farms, mainly arable crop production, and with sheep and a few cattle. There are also areas used for raising, and shooting, pheasants. Other local businesses include the Brownlow Arms, the Paddocks Riding Centre and Johnson Packaging (manufacture and supply).
- 29 Of the 293 persons aged between 16-74 years in the 2011 Census, 35.5% are classified as working fulltime, 12.6% part-time, and 21.5% as self-employed. 3.1% are classified as unemployed and retired persons comprise 16.7%.



30 It is assumed that the majority of the working population travel outside of the Parish to their place of work, although commuting patterns are not known. The number of persons working from home is also not known.

### **Transport and Movement**

31 The road network in the neighbourhood is rural in character. The lanes are narrow and many have a sinuous pattern. They are all Minor “C” road classification. The main vehicular routes are beyond the neighbourhood and consist of the A1, A17 and A607.

32 Data obtained from the Department of Transport (2010 traffic flow data) confirms that the usage is low, fairly typical of most villages sited in the countryside. Perhaps the greatest traffic movements are present on the C001 Stragglethorpe Road which cuts through the Parish linking the A17 to the A1. However, the traffic recordings are only 7.5% of a typical A road in the region. The accident rates for Stragglethorpe Road (the C001) in comparison to the A17 are considerably higher (some 4-6 times more likely). This is possibly due to the sinuous road configuration and the 60mph speed limit.

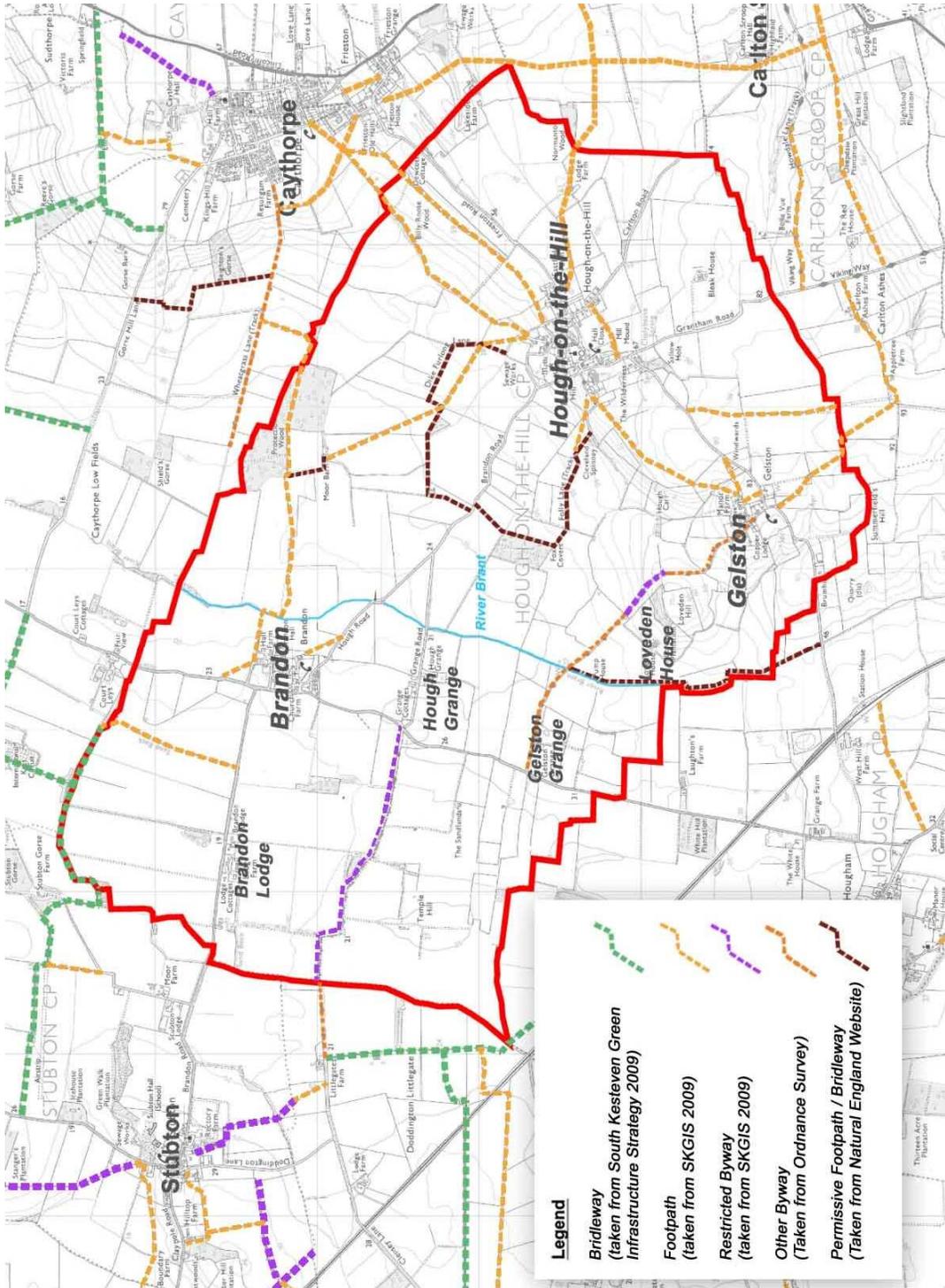
33 There are a large number of public rights of way in the form of footpaths, country lanes, bridleways and byways. Many lead to and from Hough on the Hill. When considered with the archaeology and place names it is clear that Hough on the Hill historically was a significant location. The roundtop Loveden Hill which is associated with the ancient Loveden Wapentake also forms a prominent feature in the landscape.

34 There is no regular public transport in the neighbourhood. However, bus stops are located in the nearby villages of Caythorpe, Stubton, Marston and Hougham. This means that the majority of the community are reliant on motor vehicles or the Call Connect mini bus service. Some residents commute via the East Coast Mainline with stations at Grantham and Newark Northgate as well as using cross country trains to Nottingham and Leicester from Grantham.

35 A portion of the population own cycles for either recreation purposes or as a means of transport. The National Byway for cyclists runs through the villages of Hough on the Hill and

Brandon. Gelston and Hough on the Hill are also located along the Hougham Village Cycle Route, a circular leisure cycling route.

- 36 Horse riding is also popular. There are three riding businesses with 105 associated riders operating within the Parish.
- 37 A plan showing the extent of the designated footpaths and roads in the neighbourhood is illustrated in the figure overleaf. (NB It should be noted that there are also a number of 'Permissive Paths' operational within the Parish where local farmers and landowners currently allow public access and for which they have been receiving government funding. This funding arrangement is now ending, and future funding arrangements are unclear. It is therefore possible that a number of these paths and bridleways, which are popular and well-used, may cease to allow public access.)



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**FIGURE 4: Roads, Footpaths and Byways**

*NB The designation of the 'Restricted Byway' shown above is taken from a SKDC source; however we understand this track to be a 'Byway Open To All Traffic'*

## **Flood Risk, Water Quality and Geology**

- 38 There are areas of flood risk within the Parish, and also areas identified as being at risk of surface water flooding, most particularly around the Brandon area. Dykes and watercourses are under the jurisdiction of the Environment Agency and Upper Witham Internal Drainage Board. These authorities control bylaws which need to be respected when considering any form of development.<sup>1</sup>
- 39 Hough on the Hill drains into the River Brant catchment, with the village being served by a small Anglian Water Sewage Treatment Works. The Upper Brant is failing good status due to elevated levels of phosphate. The lower River Brant is also at poor ecological status.
- 40 The Parish is predominantly underlain by the geology of the Charmouth Mudstone Formation, which is of low environmental sensitivity with regard to groundwater. However, the western part of the Parish is underlain by the Highfield Farm Limestone bed, which is classified as a secondary A aquifer, whilst the Charmouth Mudstone is interbedded with some more permeable layers of Brandon Sandstone and Marstone Rock, which are also secondary A aquifers. There are no Source Protection Zones within the Parish. There are also no current or historic landfill sites within the Parish.

## **Facilities, Services and Community Organisations**

- 41 There are very few facilities and limited services available within the Parish. The majority of properties (and all properties within Brandon and Gelston) are not on mains drainage and none has mains gas. Water supply at Gelston relies on a pump (run by Anglian Water) to maintain supply. The main electricity supply to the villages is through low-level, medium-voltage cables and transformers. There are frequent interruptions of supply in strong winds and high consumption periods, suggesting that provision is operating at or near to capacity.
- 42 Broadband speeds are currently poor and are a concern locally. Hough on the Hill and Gelston are in phase 5 of the Lincolnshire 'Superfast Broadband' project with 78% of properties due to receive superfast (above 24Mb/s) by June 2015. Brandon however is in phase 8 which won't be implemented until March 2016. The remaining properties will be below the superfast level, but improved from the current situation. There are of course other solutions that are available now (e.g. fibre to wireless in Brandon and Gelston) but these can be more expensive than existing connections.
- 43 The only licensed premise in the Parish, the Brownlow Arms in Hough on the Hill, is the last remaining service since the adjacent shop and post office closed and the closure of the village school. Brandon and Gelston were once served by cottage 'stores' and mobile suppliers, but these are long gone. The nearest shops are available at Caythorpe and Claypole, outside the Parish, as are several primary schools in larger villages (eg at Caythorpe, Marston, Barkston) and

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<sup>1</sup> All development is subject to SKDC Local Development Plan policies relating to flooding and treatment of surface water (Policy EN2).

a GP Surgery, with Pharmacy, also at Caythorpe. Hospital services, including Accident and Emergency, are available at Grantham. The nearest Public Library is at Grantham (and the Mobile Library service currently visits Gelston once a month).

- 44 The Parish Council owns the Playing Field in Hough on the Hill, and manages a small, enclosed playground there with swings and other play equipment. The Parish Council also owns a small area of land in Brandon where there used to be a village hall (destroyed by fire).
- 45 The Church of All Saints in Hough on the Hill offers regular worship, and some services are also held at the Chapel in Brandon.
- 46 There is a local Parish charity, the Hough on the Hill Relief in Need Charity, which derives rental income from its ownership of two local fields. Monies are distributed annually to assist the elderly and people with disabilities.
- 47 The community organisation of longest standing in the Parish is the Hough History Society. Formed in 1984 to preserve, promote and record the local history of the Parish, the Society has accumulated an extensive archive of photographs, news cuttings, old maps, census records and other material providing a rich picture of local historical life.
- 48 Of more recent establishment is the Hough Community Project. In 2000, the Parochial Church Council began to explore ideas for converting parts of All Saints Church in Hough on the Hill to create more accessible and useable space for community access. The Parish has no community centre and the closure of facilities such as the village school meant there were few opportunities for residents to get together socially or hold community activities and events. Successful fundraising provided resources for the completion of Phase One works in 2012, opening up the rear of the nave to create a 75sq metres clear space and constructing an accessible toilet and new serving facilities. The new community space is now used by the Parish Council for its meetings, for the weekly Pilates group, for talks, concerts and regular Coffee Mornings. Fundraising continues for Phase Two works which propose the creation of a new meeting room on the ground floor of the church tower.
- 49 A 'Riding for the Disabled' charity is based at the Paddocks Riding Centre.