

9. B2: TIFFEY TRIBUTARY FARMLAND

LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

- 9.1. The Tiffey Tributary Farmland occurs in the south east of the Norwich Policy Area and beyond, between upper limits defined by the edges of the Plateau Farmland Landscape Type (at 50m AOD) and the Settled Plateau Farmland (at 40m AOD) and with the lower limits defined by the Yare/Tiffey Rural River Valley (at below 30m AOD). Approximately half of this character area occurs within the NPA. This character area is the first area of South Norfolk experienced driving along the A11 towards Norwich from Breckland District.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **Flat, shelving to gently undulating landscape** incised by small hidden tributary streams and their small-scale shallow valleys.
- **Pleasant rural working landscape** of farmland with sparse settlement.
- **Limited woodland cover creating wooded horizons**, but including a number of ecologically important woodlands, some of which are ancient.
- **Large scale arable farmlands** in large fields with sparse hedgerows and hedgerow trees with some pastoral farmland in the valleys.
- **Framed and long-range views** into adjoining Yare/Tiffey Rural River Valleys and towards important landmarks including Wymondham Abbey.
- **Water bodies of national ecological and historical importance** including moated sites and natural lakes, some of which are listed SSSIs or SAMs.
- **Sparse settlement comprising villages and isolated dwellings** but connected by a dense network of rural lanes.
- **Elements of vernacular interest** including isolated churches, timber-framed buildings, stepped gables and a windmill.
- **Presence of important transportation links** including the A11 which makes the area an important gateway into South Norfolk.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

- 9.2. The geology of the Tiffey Tributary Farmland comprises Glacial Till incised into and overlain by channels of Alluvium. The landscape here is gently shelving flat land which is occasionally undulating in the vicinity of the small tributary streams and valleys, including the upper reaches of the River Tiffey. These tributaries tend to be very small and the water is generally invisible in the landscape with its presence indicated only by vegetation, landform and fords (usually dry).

- 9.3. The main characteristic of this landscape is large scale arable farmland which is crossed by numerous rural lanes connecting a small number of villages and dispersed farm buildings. Consequently views within and from the area are frequently long-range, including views into the adjoining rural river valleys, including the important landmark of Wymondham Abbey in the Tiffey Valley. Frequently these views are framed due to the influences of vegetation, including areas of wooded valley in the adjoining Yare/Tiffey Rural River Valley and occasional woodland blocks or valley woodlands within this character area. The woodland blocks are mostly deciduous and some of these - Peasacre Wood, Groundsel Wood, Morley Wood and Farthingale Wood – are ancient woodlands. The few valley woodlands which are present follow the tributary corridors and include species such as ash, willow and alder. Hedgerows within the area are very gappy with sparse hedgerow trees. More intact hedgerows and correspondingly smaller field sizes are associated with the farmland surrounding settlements. Some ditches are also found surrounding the fields.
- 9.4. The small-scale tributary valleys which incise the arable farmland are lower grade agricultural land with gley soils and therefore support pastoral farmland in the area, locally resulting in a more intimate landscape. There is also a natural lake within the tributary valley area, one of the few in south Norfolk – Sea Mere, which has been given SSSI status on account of its important wetland habitats including species rich fen and grazing marsh.
- 9.5. The area has a long history of settlement and Crownthorpe, today little more than a hamlet, was a large village in Roman times. In addition Wicklewood had an important mediaeval market. The small settlement of Spooner Row was named after the medieval spoonmaking industry that was centred here. There were originally a number of parklands in the area but these have now disappeared and only the halls remain. There are a number of Scheduled Ancient Monument designations in the area including tumuli in Forehoe Wood, moated sites at Old Hall Kimberley and in Gelham's wood, and a Roman Celtic temple near Wicklewood. There is a dense network of rural roads connecting the area, which presumably relate to the changing needs for connectivity with surrounding important centres including Caistor St Edmund, Wymondham and Norwich.
- 9.6. In contrast to the historic pattern, settlement is currently sparse comprising a small number of nucleated villages – Morley St Botolph, Spooner Row, Wicklewood and Kimberley – and interspersed farm buildings. A number of the more industrial farm buildings feature prominently within the landscape. The villages are a mix of old and newer residences. The vernacular character of these includes a conspicuous number of timber framed houses and examples of stepped gables. Interestingly round towered churches do not feature here although there are a number of isolated square-towered churches. One of the most memorable buildings is the restored windmill at Wicklewood.
- 9.7. The overall character of the area is rural. However, there are some important transportation corridors passing through here including the railway and the A11 which affect the rural ambience. These make the area strategically important, since this is one of the main points of entry into South Norfolk District.

9.8. The character of the Tiffey Tributary Farmland is illustrated on **Figure B2: Tiffey Tributary Farmland**

LANDSCAPE ASSETS

✓✓✓ very characteristic/important ✓✓ characteristic/important ✓ noticeably present/important

- Asset not present or present but by virtue of extent or quality does not contribute significantly to landscape character

ASSET/LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE		NOTES
NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL:		
Nationally important ecological assemblages	✓✓	Numerous ancient woodlands and an SSSI.
Presence of Scheduled Ancient Monuments	✓✓	Particularly moated features
Presence of round-towered churches	-	Churches predominantly with square towers
Presence of isolated churches	✓✓	
DISTRICT/COUNTY:		
Strong regional vernacular character	✓✓	
Presence of historic parkland particularly EH listed.	-	
Wooded appearance	✓	
Distinctive valley landform	✓	
Waterways visible within the landscape	✓	
Watermills present	-	
Windmills present	✓	Restored windmill at Wicklewood
Moats present.	✓✓✓	Important scheduled moats at Gelhams Wood and Old Kimberley Hall.
LOCAL:		
Pastoral Farmland with visible grazing animals.	✓	
Important Views that provide sense of place	✓✓	Views of Wymondham Abbey (in adjacent valley), Wicklewood Windmill etc create sense of place.
Willow pollard and/or poplar-lined watercourses	✓	
Drainage ditches	✓	
Wide grass verges alongside roads	✓	

Good hedgerow network	✓✓	
Mature hedgerow trees	✓	
Presence of river crossings	✓	
Sunken Lanes	✓	
Water bodies	✓✓	
Distinctive plateau landscape	-	
Area of or including significant strategic breaks between settled areas	✓✓	Some areas contribute to the sense of separation between Wymondham and Hethersett.

See summary table for greater explanation of Landscape Assets

SENSITIVITIES AND VULNERABILITIES

9.9. The key sensitivities and vulnerabilities of the Tiffey Tributary Farmland Character Area are considered to be:

- further hedgerow loss, particularly around settlements, and loss of hedgerow trees leading to a sense of bleakness and loss of the pleasant framed quality of the views;
- introduction of tall elements, in particular large agricultural warehouse buildings, that may disturb the visual balance;
- sensitivity of areas with positive views into surrounding areas, in particular views of landmarks such as Wymondham Abbey;
- presence of important buildings, such as isolated churches, SAMs and other features of vernacular or archaeological interest or their settings which require protection from disturbance or visual intrusion.
- development associated with the A11 road corridor.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

9.10. **The strategy for the Tiffey Tributary Farmland is to conserve the character of the working farmed landscape with its sparsely settled character and distant views over open arable fields. Landscape enhancement should include:**

- conservation and restoration of remaining hedgerows, particularly around settled areas;
- management of the woodlands to encourage ecological richness and, where appropriate, creation of new woodlands to enhance the framed quality of views;
- management of the tributary corridors to encourage biodiversity;
- enhancement to the A11 corridor to improve the role of the area as a major gateway into South Norfolk.

DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

9.11. Any development in this area should respect the character and assets of the Tiffey Tributary Farmland and in particular:

- maintain the perception of the area as being predominantly rural and ensure new development relates to the existing pattern of small villages with occasional scattered development;
- respect and conserve the rural quality of the small and intricate network of roads;
- ensure sensitive siting and design of new agricultural buildings (e.g. below skylines) to minimise visual impact upon the landscape;
- consider the setting of the A11 and avoid linear developments associated with this important transportation corridor;
- protect views to landmarks and their settings, in particular Wymondham Abbey, Wicklewood Windmill and the isolated churches and ensure these are not adversely affected by development proposals.



- The area includes attractive isolated churches with the regionally-characteristic round-tower such as St. Michael's at Aslacton.



- The small tributary streams are screened in the wider landscape by the presence of bank-side vegetation as this example near Bunwell Hill illustrates.



- Characteristic sloping arable farmland with an intact 'avenue' of remnant oak hedgerow standards and displaying a characteristic wooded horizon near Caistor St Edmund.



- Typical open arable landscape near Hemphall denuded of hedgerows with a rural road bordered by a wide verge and ditch.

Figure B1: Tas Tributary Farmland

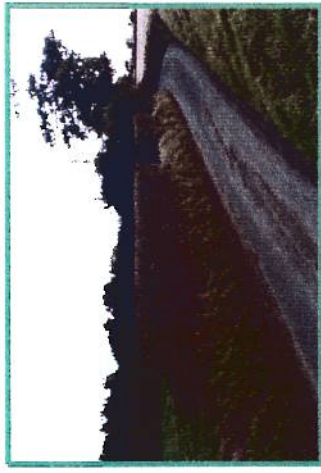
Figure B2: Tiffey Tributary Farmland



- The landscape is sparsely settled comprising isolated farm buildings set within the farmland between the villages. Example from near Wicklewood.



- The tributary valleys, including this area near Moneyhill Farm, have created areas of undulating landform with more intimate wooded areas.



- The area has a distinctive intricate network of rural lanes but roadside and field hedgerows have been denuded or are gappy as this scene near Hingham illustrates.



- Wicklewood Windmill is a distinctive local landmark that contributes to local landscape character.

