

12. DI: WYMONDHAM SETTLED PLATEAU FARMLAND

LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

- 12.1. The Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland occurs to the southwest of Norwich, above contour level 40m AOD. It covers a large part of the Norwich Policy area and includes the medium sized settlements of Wymondham and Hethersett.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **A settled landscape with** large edge-of-plateau towns (including market towns and those of more modern origin) and villages plus smaller, nucleated settlements which are dispersed across the plateau.
- **Large expanse of flat landform** with little variation over long distances with strong open horizons – the archetypal ‘Norfolk’ landscape of popular imagination.
- **Large scale open arable fields** including sugarbeet, cereal and oilseed rape monocultures creating simple, often monotonous, character.
- **Long views from plateau edge**, including to Norwich from the northern plateau edge.
- **Poor hedgerows generally**, which accentuates the openness of the landscape. The resulting wide verges beside roads often contain attractive wildflowers. Some mature hedgerow trees are found, particularly beside roads, which are a distinctive feature. Areas of more intact hedgerow network sometimes occur around settlements.
- **Sparsely wooded** but with occasional woodland blocks, sometimes associated with former parkland areas, creating a more wooded character and wooded horizons in parts of this generally open landscape.
- **Vernacular buildings** particularly brick built, timber framed, and stepped gables. Some isolated churches, sometimes hidden by dense screening churchyard vegetation.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

- 12.2. The geology of this area is predominantly chalky Glacial Till with small areas of glacial sand and clay. The landscape is flat to gently rolling and due to its relatively elevated position and predominantly arable land cover is open, with panoramic and long range views. In particular, there are long views possible from the plateau edge. In the north of the area this includes identifiable key views towards the city of Norwich.

- 12.3. The predominant land use is arable farmland comprising a mix of cereal crops and sugarbeet. The large fields have frequently been denuded of hedgerow and boundary vegetation, although some of the areas on the central part of the plateau retain good diverse mixed hedgerows, immediately adjacent to the roads. There are also some remnant mature hedgerow trees. A notable veteran tree, within the area is Kett's Oak named in honour of William Kett who led a rebellion in 1549. The landscape is generally sparsely wooded, however there are a few woodland blocks which together create wooded horizons. These tend to be associated with the few halls or remnant parkland that are present on the plateau. Broadleaved woodland blocks are a particular characteristic within the area to the east of the A11 including a number of ancient woodlands. The presence of settlement is the defining characteristic with large villages/small towns, such as Wymondham, Mulbarton and Hethersett, located at the plateau edge interspersed with a scattering of smaller villages and dispersed dwellings and farms across the plateau. Most settlements are very visible within the open plateau landscape.
- 12.4. The largest settlement is Wymondham, which is an attractive historic market town. In part this was based upon the close presence of Wymondham Priory, founded in 1107, which became the Benedictine Wymondham Abbey in 1448 and is located in the Tiffey Valley (Yare/Tiffey Rural River Valley Character Area). However, the growth of Wymondham centred upon the market town status, which had probably existed before Henry I's official grant. The attractive timber framed 'market cross', built in 1615 in the town centre is a reminder of this past eminence and is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. A moot hall on the outskirts of Wymondham is also listed. Due to redevelopment following a fire the town centre now has a strong seventeenth century vernacular. The settlement grew organically as a result of the development of industries including woodturning and weaving and the foundation of brickworks to exploit the Glacial Till geology. Consequently, from the eighteenth century, brick and pantile became a common building material, surpassing the earlier timber-framed building and often used in combination with flint. A number of the brick buildings have now been painted black and white.
- 12.5. The second largest settlement is Hethersett, which is a large village/small town. Much of Hethersett is new estate development however there are older vernacular buildings of brick and brick/flint including stepped gables. Mulbarton is also a significant settlement, again with a high proportion of vernacular brick-built residences. It has a large triangular green known as The Common, which is an unusual feature and also has a large village pond. Elsewhere, particularly around Hethel, there are a number of moated structures. The smaller settlements include Great Melton, East Carleton, Bracon Ash, High Green, Hethel and Wreningham. These are all attractive settlements with a combination of brick and other buildings. These include stepped brick gables and, more rarely, shaped or 'Dutch' gables. Other vernacular features include a windmill, without sails, near Silfield. Parkland was once a feature of the landscape of this area, but of the original seven areas only two – Hethersett Hall and Ketteringham – remain. The Great Melton Parkland is still a distinctive area in the landscape.
- 12.6. The character area includes more recent infrastructure development including the route of the A11, which cuts across the plateau and introduces an element of noise

and movement into the landscape resulting in marginalized land in the corridor. There are also a number of 'industrial' type farm buildings, including grain towers and silos that punctuate the horizon (particularly near Silfield), and the Lotus Car works, although the later is not a major visual intrusion being partially screened by woodland. A disused airfield, a feature of this part of Norfolk, is also located on the plateau top.

12.7. The character of the Wymondham Settled Plateau farmland is illustrated on **Figure DI: Wymondham Settled Plateau 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	✓	Areas of ancient woodland
Presence of Scheduled Ancient Monuments	✓	Wymondham Market Cross is a local landmark
Presence of round-towered churches	✓✓	
Presence of isolated churches	✓✓	
DISTRICT/COUNTY:		
Strong regional vernacular character	✓✓	Character partly eroded by modern development
Presence of historic parkland particularly EH listed.	✓	Most parkland has been lost
Wooded appearance	✓	
Distinctive valley landform	-	
Waterways visible within the landscape	✓	Of little visual influence
Watermills present	-	
Windmills present	✓	
Moats present.	✓	
LOCAL:		

Pastoral Farmland with visible grazing animals.	-	
Important Views that provide sense of place	✓	Important views to Norwich from north of area.
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	✓✓✓	Very important strategic break(s) between Wymondham-Hethersett-Norwich.

See summary table for greater explanation of Landscape Assets

SENSITIVITIES AND VULNERABILITIES

12.8. The principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of this character area have been identified. They include:

- imposition of insensitive developments and tall structures such as masts/grain silos and other large scale farm or industrial/commercial buildings that break up the skyline and intrude upon the sense of openness;
- loss of vernacular character particularly as a result of sprawl from the edge of the existing plateau top settlements;
- developments that intrude upon the view to important landmarks e.g. Wymondham Abbey or the City of Norwich;
- further “opening-up” of the landscape through loss of woodland, hedgerows or hedgerow trees;
- the potential for settlement coalescence, particularly associated with the vulnerable A11 corridor or B1172 between Wymondham and Hethersett.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

12.9. **The overall strategy for the Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland is to maintain its open agricultural landscape character, with its distinct pattern of concentrated settlement on the plateau edge with more dispersed nucleated villages and isolated farm buildings across the plateau**

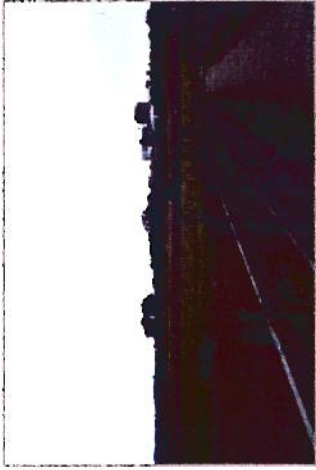
top. At the same time there is an opportunity to enhance landscape character through conservation and restoration of features including:

- restoration of hedgerows and field boundaries, particularly at settlement edges where vegetation could help integrate settlement into the landscape;
- woodland management (including former parklands) and, where appropriate, woodland creation to screen intrusive developments and enhance the 'wooded horizon' whilst retaining the positive aspects of openness;
- restoration and enhancement of the landscape adjacent to the A11 corridor.

DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

12.10. Any development must respect the character of the Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland. This will include reference to the following criteria:

- respect the distinctive settlement pattern comprising concentrations of development at plateau edge locations and smaller nucleated village settlements and dispersed buildings across the plateau;
- maintain the nucleated clustered character of the settlements and limit edge sprawl out into the adjacent landscape; well planned infill and edge development may be acceptable;
- consider (cumulative) impact of all tall structures such as masts, energy developments, farm buildings on skyline views and sense of 'openness' and particularly on views to the plateau skyline from the surrounding lower tributary farmland;
- maintain key views from the plateau edge to/from the City of Norwich;
- maintain strategic gaps between settlements, and in particular prevent further growth of Wymondham and/or Hethersett which would lead to coalescence of settlement along the A11 leading to the merger of Wymondham/Hethersett or Hethersett/Norwich.



- Typical Wymondham street with appealing timber-framed and brick vernacular.



- View of the plateau demonstrating the flatness and sense of openness, in part due to the removal of field boundaries.



- Mulbarton church and pond illustrating the character of the smaller settled villages on the plateau.



- Typical Wymondham street with appealing timber-framed and brick vernacular architecture.

Figure D1: Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland

Figure D2: Poringland Settled Plateau Farmland



- Characteristic wide verge near Upper Stoke in this case with a diverse assemblage of wildflowers.



- Large open fields near Framingham Earl broken by wooded blocks that help integrate the settlement into the landscape.



- Tall communications pylons at the high point of the plateau are visible throughout much of the eastern part of the district.



- Rural road outside Poringland with denuded roadside hedgerows and attractive mature oak hedgerow trees. Hedgerows around the settlement are more intact than elsewhere.

