

9. F: VALLEY URBAN FRINGE

LOCATION

- 9.1. The Valley Urban Fringe Landscape Type is found in only one area: the Yare Valley which is found near the perimeter of the City of Norwich. In South Norfolk District, it is represented by a narrow band, with a large proportion of the landscape type extending beyond the district boundary into the area within the jurisdiction of Norwich City Council. The crest of the slope at about 30m AOD represents the boundary of this landscape type; as it is at this point that the character changes to a valley landform, focused on the River Yare.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **Distinctive broad meandering valley form** with wide flat flood plain and enclosing valley sides, occasionally opening up where tributary valleys such as the Tas valley link to the Yare valley.
- **Glacial gravel deposits**, which have been exploited resulting in remnant flooded gravel workings along the valley floor.
- **Large river** flanked by characteristic wetland vegetation, including reeds and fringing alder/willow woodland creating a well wooded appearance.
- **Inaccessible valley floor** with relatively few river crossings.
- **Evidence of early human activity**, for example the henge at Arminghall and presence of numerous Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- **Few distinctive vernacular buildings** mainly due to the relative lack of pre-war settlement within the valley.
- **Distinct absence of settlement within the valley**, apart from discrete areas nestled around river crossings, although influenced by Norwich urban fringe along parts of the upper valley sides.
- **Impenetrability** resulting in a sense of remoteness and solitude - remarkable given the closeness of a major city.
- **Large institutional buildings** occasionally visible from the valley.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

- 9.2. The Valley Urban Fringe is underlain by a chalk substrate, which has been cut into and exposed in places and overlain by glacial sand and gravel and alluvial and terrace deposits. This geology has affected the valley type through influence upon the landform and by creating opportunities for the commercial exploitation of the valley landscape. The underlying sands and gravels have led to the valley of the Yare being

important for mineral extraction and there are a number of locations at which gravel extraction is ongoing or where disused gravel pits have been flooded and landscaped. These make an important contribution to landscape character. The hydrology of this area is important since it is here that many of the smaller tributaries and rivers such as the Tas join the Yare to swell its waters and create the largest river of the district, which flows eastwards in pronounced meanders. The resulting landscape is a distinct broad valley form with a fairly flat valley floor that opens out where it is joined by other watercourses. The absence of the arable farmland associated with other river valleys in the district – the Rural River Valley Landscape Type - gives the Yare Valley a very distinct naturalistic character. Much of the valley sides and the riverbanks appear heavily wooded and the valley floor has a pastoral quality with occasional wet pastures supporting sheep and horse grazing. The woodland is mixed deciduous with blocks and copses of willow and other characteristic waterside trees on the valley floors and oak/conifer woodland on the slopes. Where the channel is visible good wetland habitats including fringes of reeds are present.

- 9.3. This river valley appears to have been settled particularly early and some of the most important finds from the Palaeolithic period in Norfolk have been found here. There is also an important Neolithic henge, at Arminghall, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The character of the Yare Valley is strongly influenced by the City of Norwich, which originally grew up around the banks of the Wensum, growing to an important administrative centre in 917 AD. Norwich was already the fourth largest town in England by the time of the Norman Conquest, which led to the construction of Norwich Castle by William 1st. The city expanded gradually, becoming an important market town in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Suburban development began in the early seventeenth century and accelerated rapidly to encompass Bowthorpe and other outlying settlements in the post-war period. However, there are no settlements that cross the river valley and very little development on the valley floor. As such the Yare Valley effectively represents the outer southern boundary limit to Norwich and contributes to the compact size and massing of the city when viewed from the south, such as from along the Southern Bypass. The exceptions to this are the discrete residential areas that have grown up around the (relatively few) river fording points, for example around Trowse Newton and Cringleford (south of the Yare within South Norfolk District) and Bowthorpe and Eaton (north of the river).
- 9.4. Residential areas extending from the city encroach upon the upper valley sides and include post-war and more modern estates, which affect the perception of the valley landscape and create a more urban character. The city centre is only visible from a few areas within the valley. Vehicular access, particularly along and across the valley is restricted and many roads leading into the valley are infrequently used dead ends. On both sides of the river there are large institutional developments within or visible from the valley landscape, which also contribute to this urban influence. These include the University of East Anglia, the Research Park at Colney and the new hospital. Other features that influence landscape character and quality are the modern road and railway bridges that cross the river and the high number of pylons, particularly around the area of Arminghall Henge. The noise of traffic on the Norwich Southern Bypass, which follows the line of Yare Valley and in the east of the district defines the boundary of the landscape type, disturbs the tranquillity of the

valley. Overall, despite these urban influences, the valley is mostly quiet and secluded.

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	-	Surprisingly no national designations within Yare Valley
Presence of Scheduled Ancient Monuments	✓✓	Arminghall Henge very important
Presence of round-towered churches	✓	Not especially noticeable
Presence of isolated churches	-	
DISTRICT/COUNTY:		
Strong regional vernacular character	✓	
Important Views that provide sense of place	✓✓	Variable
Presence of historic parkland particularly EH listed.	-	
Wooded appearance	✓✓	
Distinctive valley landform	✓✓✓	
Waterways visible within the landscape	✓	
Watermills present	✓	Keswick Mill
Windmills present	-	
Moats present.	-	
LOCAL:		
Pastoral Farmland with visible grazing animals.	✓	
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	✓✓	Many flooded ex gravel workings.
Distinctive plateau landscape	-	
Area of or including significant strategic breaks between settled areas	✓✓✓	The most important and comprehensible strategic break between Norwich and its rural hinterland.

See summary table for greater explanation of Landscape Assets

CHARACTER AREAS

9.5. There is only one character area of this landscape type:

Norwich Policy Area (See Volume 2 for more details)

- Yare Valley Urban Fringe (FI)



- Mature hedgerow trees and ditch-lined roads are features of the landscape such as here at Hales Street



- The flat elevated landscape affords long-range views particularly at the plateau edge, as at Welborne, and means that tall elements such as pylons are a feature of the landscape.



- There are some attractive buildings within the landscape such as Old Hall Farm - near Carleton Rode, which is constructed from characteristic warm red brick.



- Isolated churches occur on the plateau, as demonstrated by this fine flint square towered example at Fundenhall.

Figure E: Landscape Type E- Plateau Farmland

Figure F: Landscape Type F - Valley Urban Fringe



- The suburban edge of Norwich, including areas or recent development indicate the proximity of the urban area and influence the undeveloped perception of many areas within the valley.



- The River Yare is well-vegetated with attractive wooded banks and wetland habitats.



- Flooded gravel workings are a feature of the Yare Valley.



- The valley floor is flat with areas of wet grassland and some wooded areas.

