

## 6. A3: TUD RURAL RIVER VALLEY

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### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

- 6.1. The Tud Rural River Valley is entirely within the Norwich Policy Area and is defined by the landform of the upper valley sides, generally at about 30m AOD. The character area also incorporates the woodland along the valley crest to the south (Long Dell and West Lodge) which forms an important enclosing vegetation belt along the Norwich Southern Bypass and areas of the ridge between the River Wensum. These woodlands are visible from within the valley and are essentially part of the valley character.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **Small intimate rural valley with confined valley form** and restricted views, although more distant views are possible from the upper slopes.
- **Small scale river channel** only evident at the points where it is crossed by the Costessey - New Costessey Road and the Ringland Road.
- **Sand and gravel drift geology** resulting in poor-quality soils with areas of wooded common land with 'heathy' understorey.
- **Presence of mineral working sites** to exploit geological resources.
- **Intricate sinuous topography** accentuated by the wooded valley sides and relatively narrow open valley floor.
- **Small-scale, very sparse settlement** comprising occasional isolated farmsteads. The pastoral valley floor creates an important 'green' gap between the settlements of Costessey and New Costessey which extend onto the upper valley sides.
- **Remote, very rural, character** despite proximity to the City, as a result of extremely restricted access through the valley – with no roads or footpaths.
- **Strongly wooded character** with the presence of a mix of coniferous and deciduous large woodland blocks on the valley sides, plus long lines of poplar trees found in association with the river. Single trees and plantations of Scots pine are a distinctive feature.
- **A wooded gateway** to Norwich is created by the woodland present on the upper valley slopes. This is an important component of the landscape adjoining the Norwich Southern Bypass.

- **Distinctive agricultural landscape** common on the valley sides created by earth fields and regularly spaced corrugated pig shelters, with other areas used for arable farmland.
- **Important** views into the Tud valley from the Norwich Southern Bypass and views out of the area from the upper valley crest.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 6.2. The River Tud is a small easterly-flowing river with few small meanders and is virtually invisible in the landscape except at the few (unremarkable) river crossings. It is an intimate valley, with a narrow open valley floor and relatively steep wooded sides. Drift deposits of Sand and Gravel underlie the Valley, with a band of Alluvium lining the valley floor. Sand and gravel extraction remains an important land use within the Tud Valley, with a number of active large scale workings, as well as the smaller local 'hummocky' topography characteristic of extraction from areas of common land.
- 6.3. The geology has resulted in Brown Sand soils of low agricultural grade, which may have formerly supported heathland and are now used for plantation woodland including small areas of the coniferous plantations, which are strongly associated with the adjoining Breckland district. Areas of wooded common land are also evident, with some retaining a heathy understorey as well as small-scale farm woodlands. As a result the Tud Valley has a more wooded character than other river valleys in the district. The woodland follows the contours of the land resulting in a distinctive wooded landscape on the valley sides. The Ringland Hills woodlands include a small area of ancient woodland. The valley floor is also well-wooded and includes distinctive regular lines of poplars. Despite the combination of wood and wetland there are no SSSIs or other nationally-recognised designations within this area.
- 6.4. Alongside the more common arable farmland comprising crops such as sugar beet, pig farms are also present on the valley sides with their characteristic local landscape of bare earth fields and the regular spacing of the tent-like pig shelters. Elsewhere, within the more open cultivated areas, hedgerows have been significantly denuded and so the remnant field sizes are large or broken by post and wire fencing. The agricultural character of the valley is also distinctive.
- 6.5. The valley appears settled, although settlement is relatively sparse and is confined to small-scale farm houses and their associated agricultural buildings. These often include brick and white-painted buildings with red roofs which are integrated into the landscape. Vehicular access and public footpaths into the valley are highly constrained and create a strong sense of remoteness and a very rural quality. Nevertheless, the settlements of Costessey and New Costessey are located on the upper valley sides either side of the Tud, with some linear expansion into the valley at their peripheries and here they impart a more suburban character.
- 6.6. The pastoral valley floor creates a very important green corridor of natural landscape separating the two settlements and extending into the urban area. Modern urban influences include the Norwich Southern Bypass, which is both visible and audible

within the valley, and views to the pylons and retail warehousing and water tower in the adjoining Easton Fringe Farmland Character Area (GI).

- 6.7. The character of the Tud Rural River Valley is illustrated in **Figure A3: Tud Rural River Valley**.

## 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
<b>NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL:</b>		
Nationally important ecological assemblages	✓	Ancient woodland but no other habitats worthy of national recognition
Presence of Scheduled Ancient Monuments	-	
Presence of round-towered churches	-	
Presence of isolated churches	-	
<b>DISTRICT/COUNTY:</b>		
Strong regional vernacular character	✓	Predominantly post-war development including suburban residential, some farmsteads of vernacular appeal.
Presence of historic parkland particularly EH listed.	-	
Wooded appearance	✓✓✓	
Distinctive valley landform	✓✓✓	
Waterways visible within the landscape	✓✓✓	
Watermills present	-	
Windmills present	-	
Moats present.	-	
<b>LOCAL:</b>		
Pastoral Farmland	✓✓	Pig-farming is particularly characteristic.
Important Views that provide sense of place	✓	Views to water tower at Easton and the Norwich Fringe.

Willow pollard and/or poplar-lined watercourses	✓✓✓	
Drainage ditches	-	
Wide grass verges alongside roads	✓	
Good hedgerow network	-	
Mature hedgerow trees	-	
Presence of river crossings	✓	River-crossings low-key and functional.
Sunken Lanes	✓	
Water bodies	✓	
Distinctive plateau landscape	-	
Area of or including significant strategic breaks between settled areas	✓	Settlements in adjacent areas sensitive to coalescence or engulfment in the Norwich Fringe.

See summary table for greater explanation of Landscape Assets

## SENSITIVITIES AND VULNERABILITIES

6.8. The principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of the character area will include:

- the need to conserve the remote rural character in the face of gradual incremental development which is impinging both visually and audibly on the valley;
- threat of 'suburbanisation' and coalescence with settlement extending down the valley sides plus imposition of large scale development associated with proximity to the A47;
- the need to control potential further mineral extraction and ensure appropriate restoration of existing and future extraction sites;
- management of the woodland resource and maintenance of the sense of 'wooded rural gateway/threshold' from the Norwich Southern Bypass to the City;
- further decline in landscape quality associated with changes in farming practice with some areas being managed intensively (pig raising), other areas used as hobby farms and some areas being neglected leading to loss of hedgerows.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

6.9. **The overall strategy is to conserve the 'remote' rural quality of the Tud river valley, and its distinctive landscape character created by the open pastoral valley floor and wooded sides. The valley should continue to provide a wooded gateway/threshold to the City on the approach from the A47. Particular opportunities or initiatives to consider include:**

- landscape restoration in association with sand and gravel extraction sites, including the option for re-creation of a more 'heathy' character. The latter objective will require further research to establish landscape history and would need to conform to wider initiatives being implemented in the adjacent Breckland area;
- opportunities to provide further low key public access to the valley, particularly where this can be associated with access within the Wensum or Yare;
- initiatives and landscaping to minimise adverse effects of the Bypass upon the rural landscape e.g. tree planting;
- cooperation with adjoining Districts to develop comprehensive strategies for the Rivers Tud and Wensum.

## **DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.10. Any development must respect the character of the Tud Rural River Valley and conserve and enhance the key landscape assets as described in the landscape character assessment. In particular it must seek to maintain the remote, rural qualities of the valley. This will include reference to the following considerations:
- respect the sparsely settled character of the valley, with occasional farm buildings and general absence of access by the road or lane network east-west through the valley;
  - maintain the distinct and separate character of the settlements of Costessey and New Costessey, with their location on the upper valley crest/ridge and prevent incremental development down the valley sides into this character area;
  - maintain the open pastoral valley floor which provides an important natural green corridor and strategic gap to prevent coalescence of Costessey and New Costessey;
  - consider the impact of developments within the adjacent landscape character areas, particularly Easton Fringe Farmland (GI) on the character of the Tud Valley. This will include visual impacts, light spill and audible impacts – all of which have the potential to erode the remote character of the valley;
  - consider the impact of any development upon the wooded quality of the landscape.





- Contrasts between the deciduous and coniferous woodlands on the valley sides and poplar plantations on the valley floor are a feature of the Tud Valley.



- The Tud Valley is sparsely settled with clusters of farmhouses which integrate into the rural landscape (Costessey Park).



- Pig farms with their characteristic pig shelters, post and wire fencing and bare earth are particularly evident within the valley of the River Tud.



- Avenues of plantation poplar are characteristic of the Tud Valley floor, as seen here from the Norwich Southern Bypass.

Figure A3: Tud Rural River Valley

Figure A4: Wensum Rural River Valley



- Flooded Wensum Rural River Valley near Costessey showing diversity of bankside vegetation.



- Wooded river channel with pasture land valley floor on the outskirts of Costessey.



- Distinctive lines of poplars set against flooded gravel works are a feature of the Wensum Valley, as here near the Ringland Hills.

