

14. FI: YARE VALLEY URBAN FRINGE

LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

- 14.1. The Yare Valley Urban Fringe Character Area lies entirely within the Norwich Policy Area and occurs in a narrow band at the perimeter of the City of Norwich. The boundaries are marked by the transition of the valley form into the surrounding landscape at around 30m AOD.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **Broad semi-enclosed valley form** with wide flat flood plain and enclosing valley sides, occasionally opening up to adjoining tributary river valleys, resulting in a sense of containment and unity.
- **Large meandering river** flanked by characteristic wetland vegetation including reeds and fringing alder/willow woodland and grassland.
- **Presence of attractive flooded gravel workings** as a result of historic extraction of the glacial gravel deposits which are present.
- **Sense of inaccessibility** with transportation routes restricted to discrete transverse river crossings and non-vehicular bridleways.
- **Perceived absence of settlement within the valley although influenced by developments in the City of Norwich.**
- **Sense of remoteness and solitude** within the valley, remarkable given the closeness to a major city.
- **Green buffer and comprehensible development edge to the City of Norwich.**
- **Presence of recreational landscapes** including country parks and walks.
- **Evidence of early human activity**, for example Arminghall henge.
- **Strongly influenced by modern transportation corridors, in particular the Norwich Southern Bypass.**

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

- 14.2. The Yare Valley Urban Fringe forms a thin belt which extends to the district boundary south of the City of Norwich. It is a landscape type unique within South Norfolk and is quite different to other rivers in the district.
- 14.3. The Yare Valley Urban Fringe comprises a geology of alluvium upon the valley floor with sand and gravel and some areas of Glacial Till upon the valley sides. The sand

and gravel has been and continues to be commercially extracted and as a result there are a number of flooded gravel workings within the valley. The River Yare in this area is a large river, of similar status to the Waveney in the south of the district. This has resulted in a distinctive broad valley with large pronounced meanders. The floodplain is wide and there are a number of drainage channels crossing the valley floor. The floodplain widens where other valleys, notably the Tas, join the Yare and east of the character area the river swells considerably as part of the Norfolk Broads. The sides of the valley are fairly steep in places.

- 14.4. The valley has a naturalistic quality due to the comparative absence of arable farmland. This naturalism is accentuated by the wooded appearance of the floodplain and some areas of the valley sides. Wetland habitats found here include willow carr with informal bankside vegetation along the river itself and associated with the flooded gravel workings. Mixed woodland blocks and shelterbelts occur on the valley sides. The valley includes important recreational opportunities due to the presence of a number of public footpaths and rights of way across and within the valley, the 'country park' at Whitlingham, the presence of playing fields and golf courses plus the ski run within or visible from the valley.
- 14.5. There are a high number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the valley including a cluster around the Woodhenge at Arminghall with a number of associated sites and Cringleford Bridge (a limestone bridge dating from 1520). The presence of such a high number reflects the long history of human influences within the area including the proximity of the valley to Caistor St Edmund (Venta Icenorum) and, in later days, to Norwich.
- 14.6. Modern-day settlement within the valley is sparse and is restricted to a few locations notably Keswick, Trowse Newton, Harford Bridge and Cringleford, (which is the largest settlement), all primarily related to Yare crossing points. Similarly, on the north valley side, outside South Norfolk District the settlements of Bowthorpe and Eaton are located. Most development dates from the 1930s or the post-war period and brick is the usual building material. One of the few vernacular buildings of note is the weatherboarded Keswick Millhouse.
- 14.7. This character area is highly influenced by the City of Norwich. In addition to the historic cores of Eaton and Bowthorpe are a wide sweep of interconnected suburban areas that are partly visible on the north valley slope. In addition to these residential buildings are a number of large institutional buildings in or adjacent to the valley. These include the University of East Anglia, the Colney Research Park and new Hospital, and, towards the east of the area, the City of Norwich – including views to the Cathedral.
- 14.8. Overall the valley is relatively inaccessible and therefore has a peaceful undisturbed quality. This quality is intruded upon to some extent by infrastructure and transportation routes, particularly in the east of the district where the Norwich Southern Bypass marks the boundary and introduces noise and movement into the landscape. Other intrusions, again concentrated to the east, include the railway lines (which occupy the floodplain for some distance, crossing over the Yare at numerous points) and the electricity pylons which converge unattractively at the electricity substation near Arminghall.

- 14.9. The character of the Yare Valley Urban Fringe is illustrated on **Figure F1 Yare Valley Urban Fringe**

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
Presence of Scheduled Ancient Monuments	✓✓	Arminghall Henge is a very important site.
Presence of round-towered churches	✓	
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	✓	Keswick Mill
Windmills present	-	
Moats present.	-	
LOCAL:		
Pastoral Farmland with visible grazing animals.	✓	
Important Views that provide sense of place	✓✓	Views are very variable.
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	✓✓✓	The most comprehensible strategic break, separating Norwich from its rural hinterland.

See summary table for greater explanation of Landscape Assets

SENSITIVITIES AND VULNERABILITIES

14.10. The sensitivities and vulnerabilities of this particular landscape character area are considered to include:

- loss of naturalistic quality as a result of further intrusion of suburban development, large institutional buildings and tall structures in particular pylons upon the valley landscape;
- developments within the valley or adjoining character areas that would increase the perception of the level of development surrounding the valley, which would therefore weaken the current perception that the River Yare is unconnected to a major city;
- further disturbance of the tranquillity of the area by traffic, in particular detrimental impact of cross-valley links or upgrading of existing links;
- loss or inappropriate management of vegetation on the valley floor or sides and the need to maintain/improve the quality of the River Yare;
- sensitivity of recreational uses/users to losses in naturalistic quality including formalisation of recreational facilities;
- developments that intrude upon the views into the landscape, including views from the Norwich Southern Bypass;
- developments that break the current green mantle to Norwich provided by the Yare Valley which would blur the distinction between the settlements north of the River and the City of Norwich.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

- 1.4.11. It is recognised that this character area is particularly vulnerable to change due to its location at the periphery of East Anglia's premier city. Therefore the strategy for this area is to maintain an open and distinctive boundary to the city of Norwich to provide a 'green buffer' between the city and its rural hinterland. This will necessitate co-operation with Norwich City Council to ensure that development within the City will not adversely impact upon the character of the valley. Open views within the valley and, where possible, from the valley should be protected and views from and across the valley towards Norwich, particularly the cathedral, should be maintained and enhanced. Enhancement of landscape quality should be targeted, in particular:
- landscape improvements towards the eastern edge, where there is some erosion of landscape quality due to the presence of transportation and other infrastructure;
 - conservation and management of existing semi-natural woodland and wetland habitats to enhance the ecological and visual qualities of the valley;
 - Conserved and enhancement of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and their settings.

DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 1.12. Any development should respect the character and landscape assets of the Yare Valley Urban Fringe and this will necessitate consideration of the following criteria:
- respect the relative absence of development within the valley and ensure any new development relates to existing settled crossing points;
 - maintain the distinction between settlements to the south and north of the Yare;
 - maintain the role of the Yare valley as a comprehensible and tangible limit to the southern suburbs of the City of Norwich;
 - ensure new development (including associated landscaping) does not intrude upon the openness within the valley or character of the vegetation;
 - conserve the ecology of the River Yare and consider the direct or indirect impacts of development (including run-off) upon ecological character and quality;
 - protect the Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the valley and their settings including Arminghall Henge;
 - maintain open views to and from the Southern Bypass, the City of Norwich, and important landmarks;

- cooperate with Norwich City Council to avoid City-related developments which would affect these considerations.



- The Valley Urban Fringe is characterised by the presence of or views to large institutional buildings such as the University of East Anglia.



- Gravel workings continue to be an integral part of the valley character and as they become abandoned are restored to attractive flooded wetland areas.



- Keswick village is one of the few developed areas within the valley that has vernacular appeal and includes the weather-boarded Keswick Mill.



- In some areas of the valley such as near Whittingham there are views to the city of Norwich including the Cathedral.

Figure F1: Yare Valley Urban Fringe

Figure G1: Easton Fringe Farmland



- The large retail superstores adjacent to the Norwich Southern Bypass have a high impact upon the character area, affecting the perception of the City.



- Arable farmland, away from the developed ridge has a rural character, disturbed only by the electricity pylons.



- The 'ridgeway' settlement of Easton is highly visible from adjoining character areas (e.g. the Tud Valley) and can be discerned by its water tower which acts as a distinct landmark.

