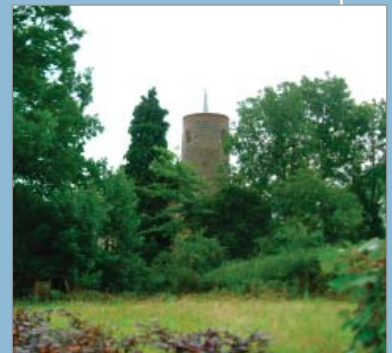


South Norfolk District

Landscape Character Assessment

Volume 4

Landscape Character Areas of the Rural Policy Area



Final Report

for South Norfolk District Council by Land Use Consultants



**SOUTH NORFOLK
LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS
OF THE RURAL POLICY AREA**

Prepared for

South Norfolk Council

By

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April 2006
Final Amendments January 2007

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I. INTRODUCTION

THE SOUTH NORFOLK LANDSCAPE: THE ASSESSMENT CONTEXT

- I.1. South Norfolk is a landscape of arable farmland intersected by river valleys. The area remains a highly rural, peaceful landscape. The district landscape has been assessed and it is described in **South Norfolk Landscape Assessment Volume 1: Landscape Types of South Norfolk District** (LUC 2001). This was a framework study of the entire district undertaken at 1:50,000 scale and identified seven generic landscape types, reflecting the subtly varied landscape of the district ranging from the rural river valleys, to the plateau farmland. A more detailed study was subsequently undertaken comprising **Volume 2: Landscape Character Areas of the Norwich Policy Area** (LUC 2001). The later report identified and described the character areas falling within the northern part of the district closest to Norwich, within the policy area defined in the Norfolk Structure Plan 1999. These character areas are subdivisions of the generic landscape types and are identified at 1:25,000 scale.
- I.2. The current study, presented in this report, is the final volume of the series covering the remaining part of the district, i.e. the landscape falling within the **Rural Policy Area**. It is undertaken at 1:25,000 scale and complements the character assessment of the Norwich Policy Area.
- I.3. Further details on the assessment hierarchy are included in chapter 2.
- I.4. The study area is shown on **Figure 1: Location and Context of the Rural Policy Area**. It covers the entire southern part of the district from The Broads in the east to the Waveney Valley and the boundary with Suffolk (Waveney District and Mid Suffolk District) to the south and to Breckland District to the west. There are two small market towns at Diss and Harleston on the southern boundary plus market towns of Hingham and Loddon. Otherwise it is sparsely settled with small rural villages and hamlets.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

- I.5. The assessments seek to present a fully integrated view of the landscape of South Norfolk. These include the physical, ecological, historic and cultural forces that have shaped the fabric and perception of the present day landscape.
- I.6. The specific purpose of this volume of the South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment is to provide a clear understanding of the character of the landscape within the Rural Policy Area. In particular, the assessment process aims to describe the distinctive features or characteristics that are important to the landscape and to provide guidance on those aspects of the landscape that are most sensitive to change.
- I.7. This volume of the landscape assessment builds on the landscape type descriptions identified in Volume 1 to identify the detailed geographic character areas within the Rural Policy Area. The specific objectives of the current volume are:

- identify how the district landscape types contribute to the character of the Rural Policy Area;
- identify the specific landscape character areas of the Rural Policy Area and describe the unique qualities and attributes of each geographic area;
- identify and understand the specific characteristics and attributes ('assets') that are important within the Rural Policy Area;
- appraise the particular vulnerabilities and sensitivities of each character area to change;
- suggest an overall strategy targeting the conservation and enhancement objectives for each landscape character area;
- formulate a set of key guidance notes for each area which will be important to consider in relation to future change and management.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

I.8. The structure of this report is as follows:

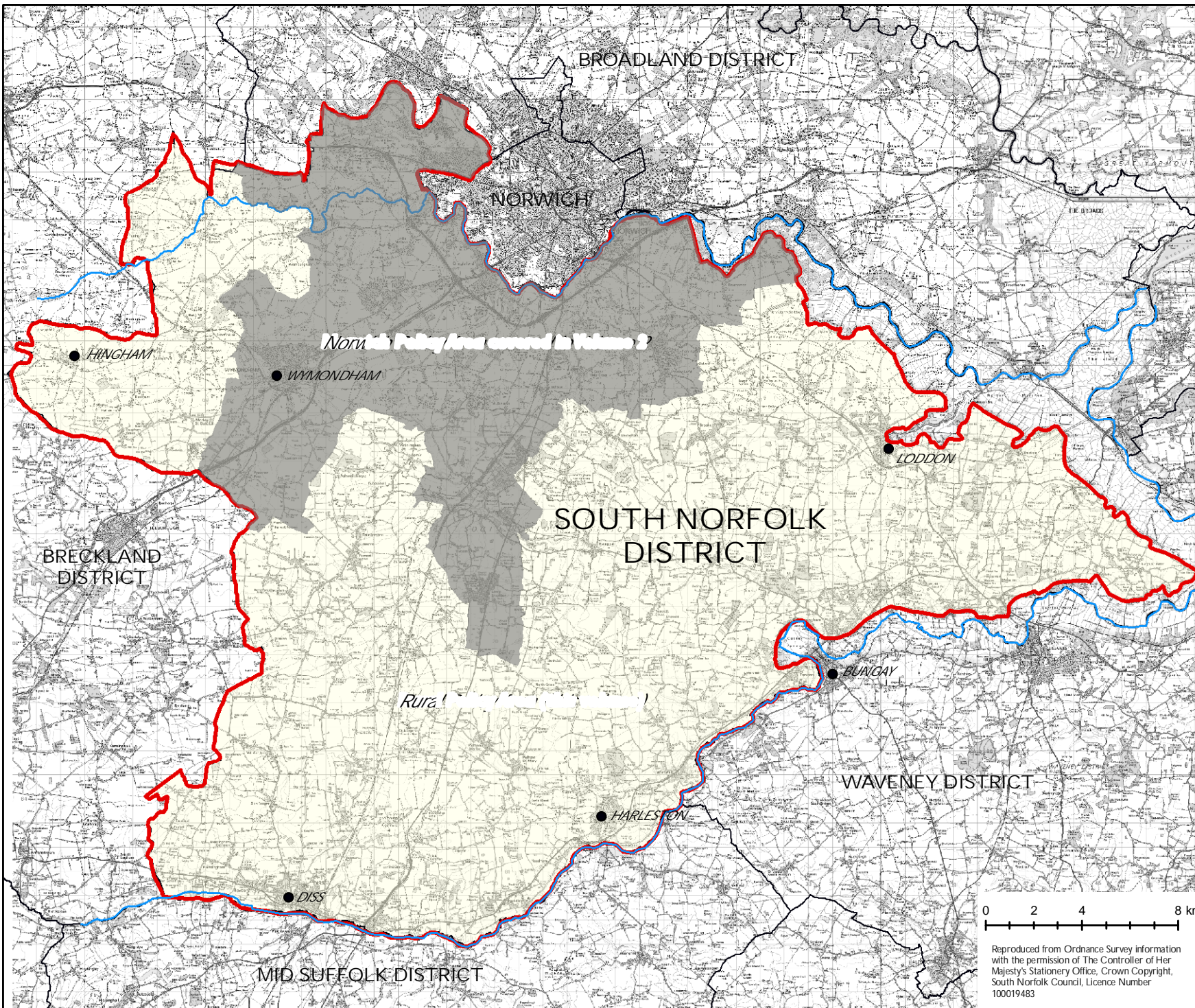
Chapter 1 Introduction: Introduces the landscape of South Norfolk, context for the assessment, and the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter 2 Method Statement: Summarises the approach for undertaking the study.

Chapter 3 Landscape Type Summary: Provides a summary of main findings of the previous work (Volume I).

Chapter 4 The Landscape Character of South Norfolk (Rural Policy Area): This is the main body of the report and contains a description and evaluation for each character area, following a standard format.





I.9. In addition to this report, the main outputs have also been prepared as a GIS database.



South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 1: Location and Context of Rural Policy Area

Key

-  Norwich Policy Area
-  District Boundary
-  Surrounding Districts
-  Rural Policy Area



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2. METHOD STATEMENT

- 2.1. The approach to this study followed best practice as promoted by the Countryside Agency in the *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland* (2002). The earlier study of the NPA (2001) was undertaken according to the *Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance*. Nevertheless both studies have been prepared to a consistent format and therefore both studies should work together.
- 2.2. The method aims to be transparent, objective and robust. It has involved four main stages, each of which is described below, namely:
 - Data Collation;
 - Characterisation;
 - Field Survey;
 - Evaluation.

DATA COLLATION

Baseline Data

- 2.3. This stage involved the collation and mapping of a wide range of existing information on the characteristics of South Norfolk District from sources including baseline maps of geology, topography, soils and drainage. Throughout the study GIS was used as the tool for collating, analysing and presenting data.

Landscape Character Context

- 2.4. **National:** The Countryside Agency and English Nature have produced a map showing national joint character areas. As part of the initial investigation the context provided by the framework of four joint character areas was reviewed and boundaries mapped to place the district in context within this national hierarchy. South Norfolk District falls within four of the joint character areas (**Figure 2**), namely:

78: Central North Norfolk

80: The Broads

83: South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands;

84: Mid Norfolk.

- 2.5. **Local Context:** Existing character assessments within the county and district were reviewed and an analysis of the key characteristics of each landscape type and character area described within these assessments was undertaken. The relationship of this study with the district wide landscape types is illustrated further in Chapter 3.

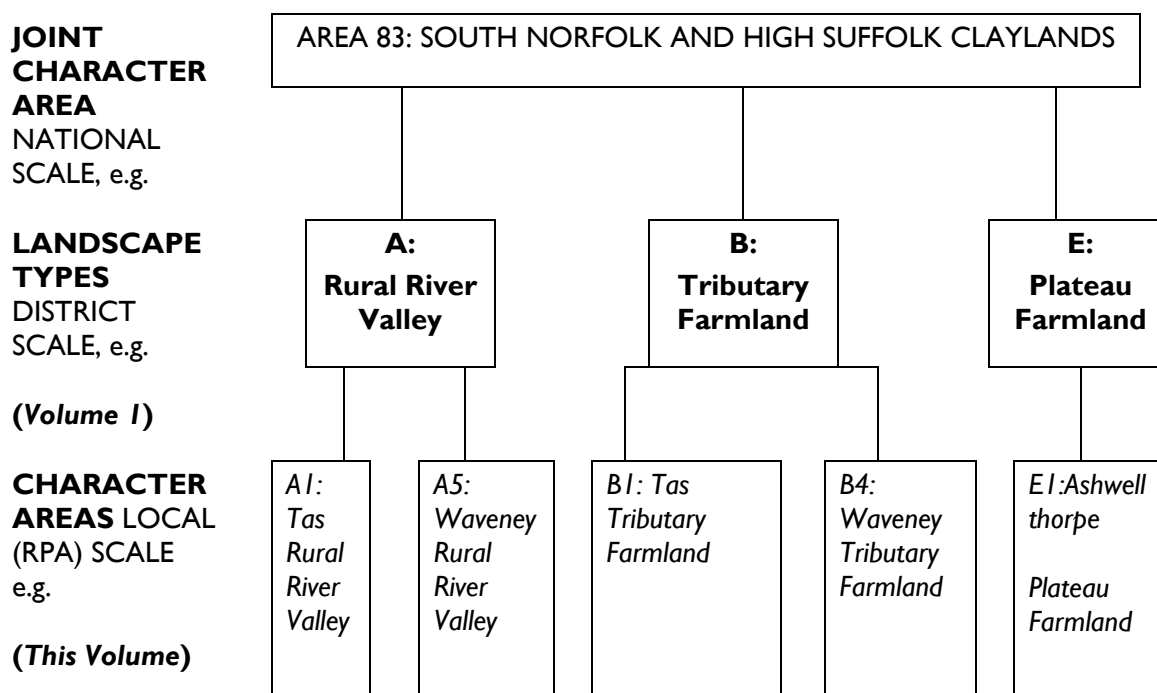
Characterisation

2.6. The process of characterisation drew together all the information outlined above, to develop a draft classification. The approach follows best practice as promoted by the Countryside Agency in the *Interim Landscape Character Assessment Guidance 1999* in maintaining a clear distinction between landscape types and character areas, and developing a hierarchical approach as follows:

- **Landscape Types** - which are generic and share common combinations of geology, topography, vegetation and human influences, e.g. *Settled Plateau Farmland* or *River Valley*. These were established for the whole district and seven landscape types and are described in *Volume 1: Landscape Types of South Norfolk District*;
- **Character Areas** - which are single and unique, discrete geographical areas of the landscape type, e.g. *Great Moulton Settled Plateau Farmland* or *Waveney Rural River Valley*. In this study some 14 local character areas are presented of these 8 are wholly within the Rural Policy Area, with a further 6 crossing the boundary and also included within the Norwich Policy Area and therefore also presented in Volume 2.

The Hierarchy in South Norfolk

2.7. This hierarchy is demonstrated in the following figure.



Survey

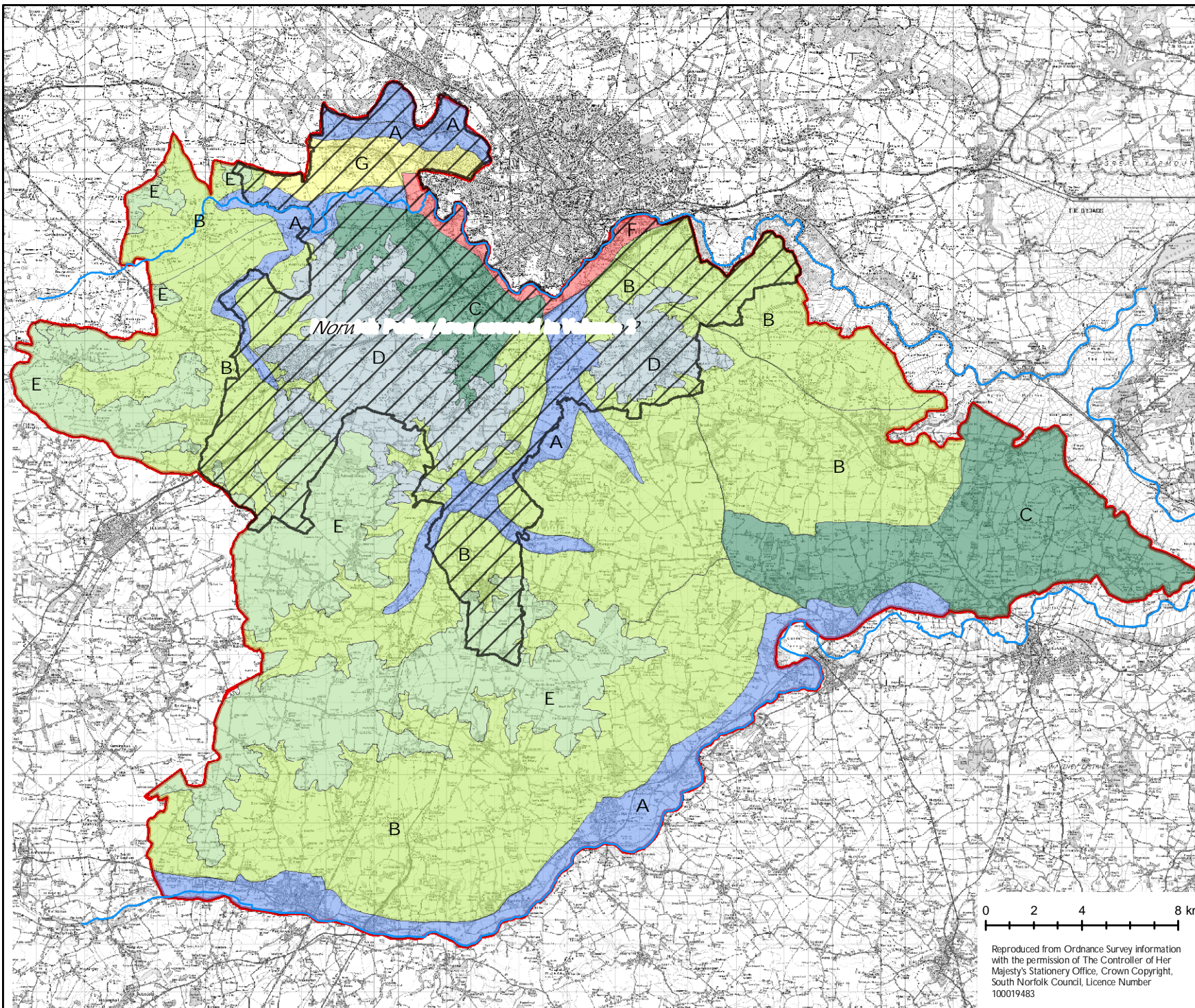
2.8. A detailed field survey focussing on the Rural Policy Area was undertaken to establish landscape character areas. The purpose of the survey was to:

- refine boundaries;
- record landscape character;

- record key assets and sensitivities;
 - note particular landscape conservation and enhancement opportunities.
- 2.9. A systematic and rigorous approach was adopted for the survey, with information recorded on 1:25,000 scale maps and on a Field Record Sheet (See: *Appendix 2*).

Analysis

- 2.10. A process of analysis followed the field survey whereby key landscape assets were identified and each landscape type and character area were appraised to gauge the extent and importance of each identified landscape asset within them. The analysis also considered key sensitivities and vulnerabilities, based on an understanding of character and change. An overall strategy was developed with detailed guidelines for landscape management and development considerations.



South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 2: Landscape Types of the Rural Policy Area

Key

- District Boundary
- Norwich Policy Area

Landscape Types

- A: Rural River Valley
- B: Tributary Farmland
- C: Tributary Farmland with Parkland
- D: Settled Plateau Farmland
- E: Plateau Farmland
- F: Valley Urban Fringe
- G: Fringe Farmland

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3. LANDSCAPE TYPES OF THE NORWICH POLICY AREA

INTRODUCTION

- 3.1. The ***South Norfolk Landscape Assessment – Volume 1: Landscape Types*** describes a total of seven landscape types within the district, listed below and illustrated on **Figure 2**.

- A: Rural River Valley
- B: Tributary Farmland
- C: Tributary Farmland with Parkland
- D: Settled Plateau Farmland
- E: Plateau Farmland
- F: Valley Urban Fringe
- G: Fringe Farmland

- 3.2. Of these types A, B, C, D and E all occur within the Rural Policy Area and are considered in more detail in this report. Types F: Valley Urban Fringe and G: Fringe Farmland are only present within the Norwich Policy Area, and as such are considered in Volume 2. A summary of the landscape types and their important features is provided below. This summary also highlights links between the Norwich Policy Area Assessment (volume 2) and the Rural Policy Area Assessment (this volume).

A: Rural River Valley

- 3.3. Five areas corresponding to the valleys of the Yare/Tiffey, Tud, Wensum, Waveney and Tas - defined by the distinct valley form. Principal characteristics are:
- distinct valley landform with wide flat valley floodplains;
 - semi-enclosed landscape with long internal and restricted external views;
 - presence of watercourse clearly recognisable as a 'river', although often invisible within the wider landscape;
 - characteristic ecologically-rich wetland and fen vegetation and other uncommon habitats such as heathland relating to the underlying geology;
 - attractive river crossings including fords and old bridges approached by sunken lanes;
 - areas of pastoral floodplain set within arable landscape valley sides;
 - historic quality including the earthworks, watermills and river crossings;
 - predominantly small vernacular nucleated settlements and scattered farmsteads adjacent to the valley floor or linear settlements at the valley side crest, with a few large towns distinct to the Waveney;

- characteristic vernacular architecture particularly including red brick and Dutch gable ends, windmills, weatherboarded watermills and round towered churches.

Landscape Type A: Rural River Valley		
Character Areas	NPA (Vol 2)	RPA (this Volume)
A1: Tas Rural River Valley	✓	✓
A2: Yare/ Tiffey Rural River Valley	✓	✓
A3: Tud Rural River Valley	✓	X
A4: Wensum Rural River Valley	✓	X
A5: Waveney River Valley	X	✓

B: Tributary Farmland

- 3.4. Six areas corresponding to the farmland surrounding the valleys of the Yare, Tiffey, Tud, Wensum, Waveney and Tas. Defined by the distinct topography and presence of small tributaries cutting through farmland. Key characteristics are:

- shelving and gently undulating landform created by small tributary valleys;
- transitional landscape between the upland plateaux and the river valleys;
- occasional long views;
- tamed and peaceful medium to large-scale arable farmland;
- scattered small farm woodlands and sparse and/or overgrown hedgerows and hedgerow trees;
- dispersed but evenly distributed settlement pattern of small farmsteads and small, nucleated villages;
- intricate network of narrow, winding rural lanes bounded by banks or ditches;
- tributaries elusive - usually hidden within the landscape by topography or trees;
- presence of occasional remnant parklands;
- mixed architectural character with modern bungalow development and traditional vernacular buildings.

Landscape Type B: Tributary Farmland		
Character Areas	NPA (Vol 2)	RPA (this Volume)
B1: Tas Tributary Farmland	✓	✓
B2: Tiffey Tributary Farmland	✓	✓
B3: Rockland Tributary Farmland	✓	✓
B4: Waveney Tributary Farmland	X	✓
B5 Chet Tributary Farmland	X	✓
B6: Yare Tributary Farmland	X	✓

C: Tributary Farmland with Parkland

3.5. Two areas comprising the farmland adjacent to the Waveney in the east of the district and around the Yare tributary streams close to Norwich. Key characteristics are:

- gently undulating landform created by small tributary valleys;
- transitional landscape between the upland plateaux and river valley landscapes;
- presence of large parkland estates with estate railings and gatehouses particularly within the tributary valleys;
- wooded parkland with areas of pastoral farmland and horse grazing;
- peaceful medium to large-scale arable farmland with occasional small fields of speciality crops such as sunflowers or asparagus bounded by banks of coppiced willows;
- scattered small farm woodlands including ancient woodland;
- sparse hedges and hedgerow trees;
- dispersed, evenly distributed settlement pattern of small farmsteads and nucleated villages;
- intricate network of small rural roads often bounded by banks or ditches;
- tributaries elusive, often hidden within the landscape by topography or trees, particularly where they are associated with parkland;
- mixed architectural character;
- isolated flint round towered churches particularly evident;
- characteristic large detached halls and manor houses.

Landscape Type C: Tributary Farmland with Parkland		
Character Areas	NPA (Vol 2)	RPA (this Volume)
C1: Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland	✓	X
C2: Thurlton Tributary Farmland with Parkland	X	✓

D: Settled Plateau Farmland

3.6. Two areas corresponding to the settled plateau areas around Poringland and Wyndmondham-Hethersett-Mulbarton. Principal defining characteristics are: ·

- distinct flat to gently rising elevated landform;
- large fields of arable monoculture particularly cereal, oilseed rape and sugarbeet;
- long views of the district from the plateau edges and internalised plateau views;
- few hedgerows;
- remnant oak hedgerow tree avenues lining roads are distinctive features;
- wooded horizons created by visual merging of distant woodland blocks and hedgerow trees;
- presence of large communications masts;
- settled landscape comprising edge of plateau market towns and large villages with other smaller nucleated settlements dispersed across the plateau;
- isolated churches (some of which are round-towered), moats, historic parkland and some farm ponds;
- Vernacular buildings especially in historic market towns that include the use of bricks and timber framing.

Landscape Type D: Settled Plateau Farmland		
Character Areas	NPA (Vol 2)	RPA (this Volume)
D1: Wyndmondham Settled Plateau Farmland	✓	✓
D2: Poringland Settled Plateau Farmland	✓	X

E: Plateau Farmland

3.7. Three areas (of which some join beyond the District boundary) corresponding to the plateau areas around Ashwellthorpe, Great Moulton and Hingham. Characteristics include:

- distinct flat and elevated landform;
- large fields of arable monoculture;

- strong sense of openness and exposure due to scarcity of enclosing elements;
- long views of the district from the plateau edges and across the plateau;
- presence of some mature remnant oak hedgerow trees;
- straight plateau-top roads with wide grass verges and ditches;
- wooded horizons;
- presence of tall structures which interrupt the sense of openness;
- sparsely settled landscape mostly comprising small nucleated and long linear settlements;
- presence of historic features within the landscape including isolated churches, moats, and farm ponds;
- some vernacular buildings particularly including use of bricks and Dutch gable ends.

Landscape Type E: Plateau Farmland		
Character Areas	NPA (Vol 2)	RPA (this Volume)
E1: Ashwellthorpe Plateau Farmland	X	✓
E2: Great Moulton Plateau Farmland	X	✓
E3: Hingham-Mattishall Plateau Farmland	X	✓

F: Valley Urban Fringe

3.8. One area corresponding to the valley of the River Yare on the outskirts around Norwich. Key characteristics are:

- distinctive broad meandering valley form with broad flat flood plain and enclosing valley sides opening up where joined by tributary valleys;
- large river flanked by characteristic wetland vegetation often with well-wooded valley sides;
- presence of gravel workings and remnant flooded gravel workings on the valley floor;
- inaccessible valley floor with relatively few river crossings resulting in a sense of remoteness and solitude;
- evidence of early human activity such as the earthworks at Arminghall;
- discrete areas of vernacular interest such as the weather boarded mill at Keswick;
- absence of settlement within the valley, apart from discrete areas around river crossings;
- visibility of Norwich urban fringe along parts of the upper valley sides;
- visibility of large institutional buildings within or adjacent to valley, such as the University of East Anglia.

Landscape Type F: Valley Urban Fringe		
Character Areas	NPA (Vol 2)	RPA (this Volume)
FI: Yare Valley Urban Fringe	✓	X

G: Fringe Farmland

3.9. One area, relating to the area between the valley of the Tud and the rural Yare. The principal defining characteristics are:

- gentle ridge of land marking the dividing line between the valley landscapes;
- history of mineral extraction, particularly sand and gravel workings, resulting in scarred and reclaimed areas;
- presence of urban fringe uses including out-of-town shopping and park-and-ride;
- significant level of settlement including the Norwich suburb of New Costessey and the smaller linear settlement of Easton;
- rural farmland origins and context including both arable and pastoral farmland;
- absence of large wooded areas.

Landscape Type G: Fringe Farmland		
Character Areas	NPA (Vol 2)	RPA (this Volume)
GI: Easton Fringe Farmland	✓	X

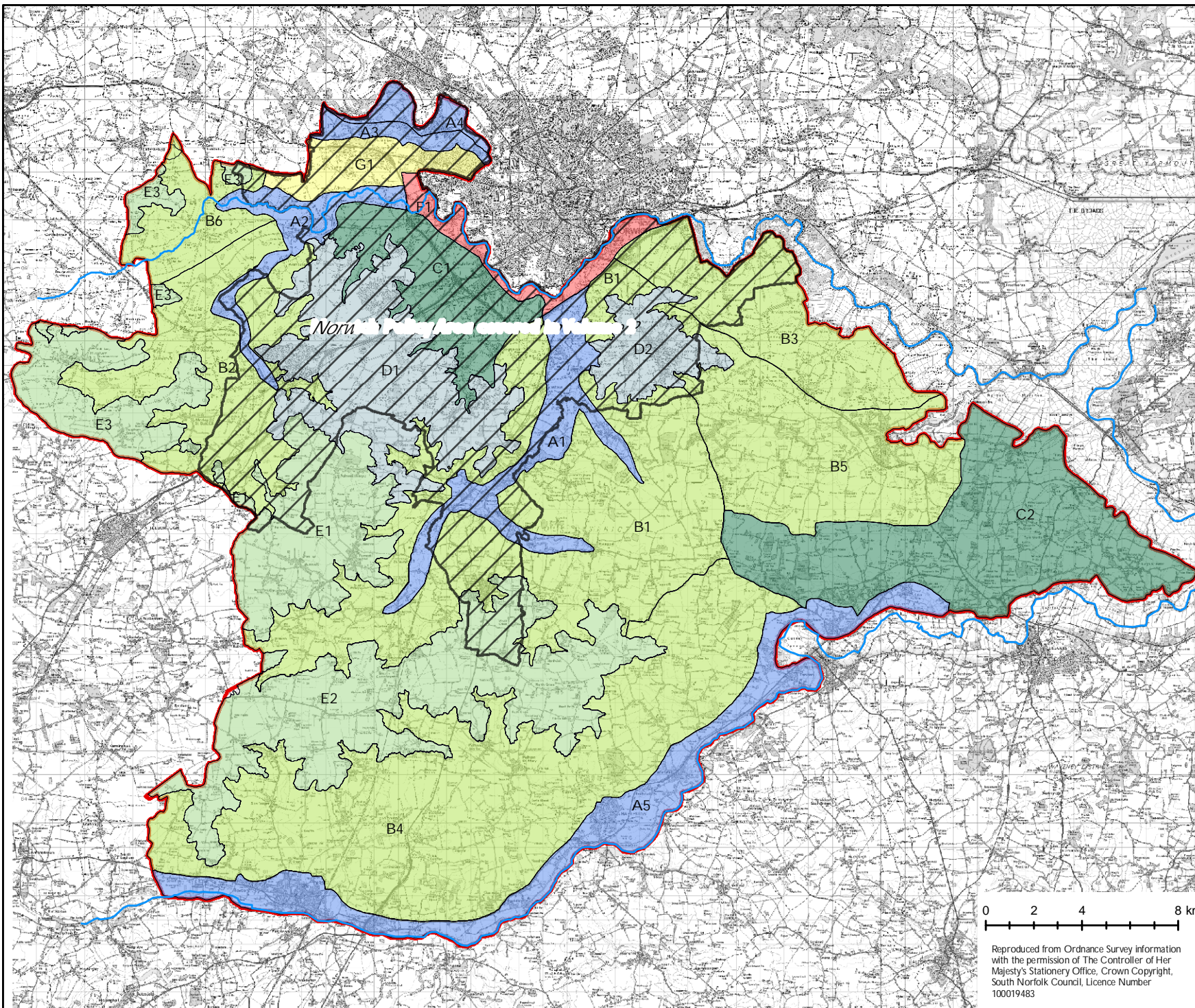
4. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

INTRODUCTION

- 4.1. In total, 14 individual character areas occur within the Rural Policy Area as illustrated in **Figure 3: Landscape Character Areas of the Rural Policy Area**

Landscape Type	Landscape Character Area	Also in Norwich Policy Area (NPA)
A: Rural River Valley	A1: Tas Rural River Valley	✓
	A2: Yare/ Tiffey Rural River Valley	✓
	A5: Waveney Rural River Valley	X
B: Tributary Farmland	B1: Tas Tributary Farmland	✓
	B3: Rockland Tributary Farmland	✓
	B2: Tiffey Tributary Farmland	✓
	B4: Waveney Tributary Farmland	X
	B5 Chet Tributary Farmland	X
	B6: Yare Tributary Farmland	X
C: Tributary Farmland with Parkland	C2: Thurlton Tributary Farmland with Parkland	X
D: Settled Plateau Farmland	D1: Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland	✓
E: Plateau Farmland	E1: Ashwellthorpe Plateau Farmland	X
	E2: Great Moulton Plateau Farmland	X
	E3: Hingham-Mattishall Plateau Farmland	X

- 4.2. This report presents detailed description and evaluation for the 14 Character Areas within the Rural Policy Area. Of these, 6 also occur within the Norwich Policy Area (Volume 2), and for completeness, this information is also presented in this report.



South Norfolk Landscape Character Assessment

Figure 3: Landscape Character Areas of the Rural Policy Area

Key

- District Boundary
- Norwich Policy Area

Character Areas in the Rural Policy Area

- A: Rural River Valley**
 - A1: Tas Rural River Valley
 - A2: Yare/Tiffey Rural River Valley
 - A5: Waveney Rural River Valley
- B: Tributary Farmland**
 - B1: Tas Tributary Farmland
 - B2: Tiffey Tributary Farmland
 - B3: Rockland Tributary Farmland
 - B4: Waveney Tributary Farmland
 - B5: Chet Tributary Farmland
 - B6: Yare Tributary Farmland
- C: Tributary Farmland with Parkland**
 - C2: Thuriton Tributary Farmland with Parkland
- D: Settled Plateau Farmland**
 - D1: Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland
- E: Plateau Farmland**
 - E1: Ashwellthorpe Plateau Farmland
 - E2: Great Moulton Plateau Farmland
 - E3: Hingham - Mattishall Plateau Farmland

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