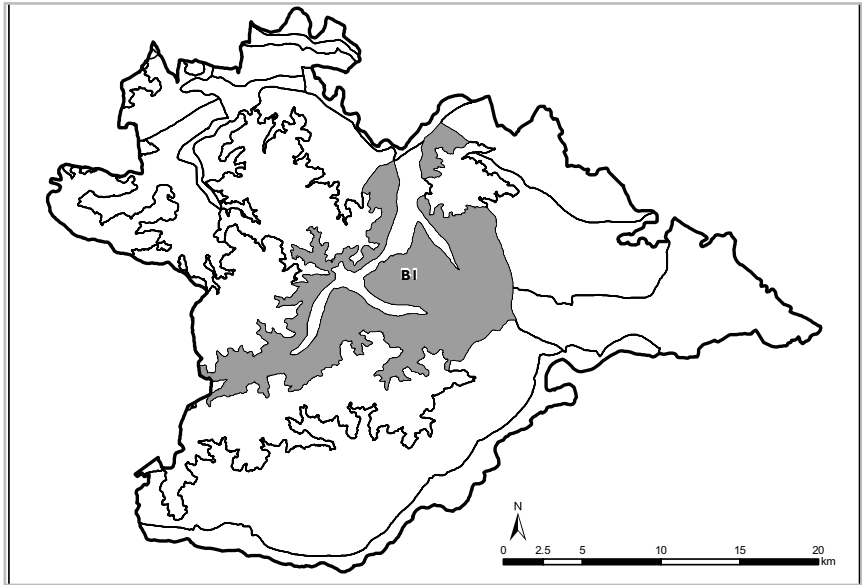
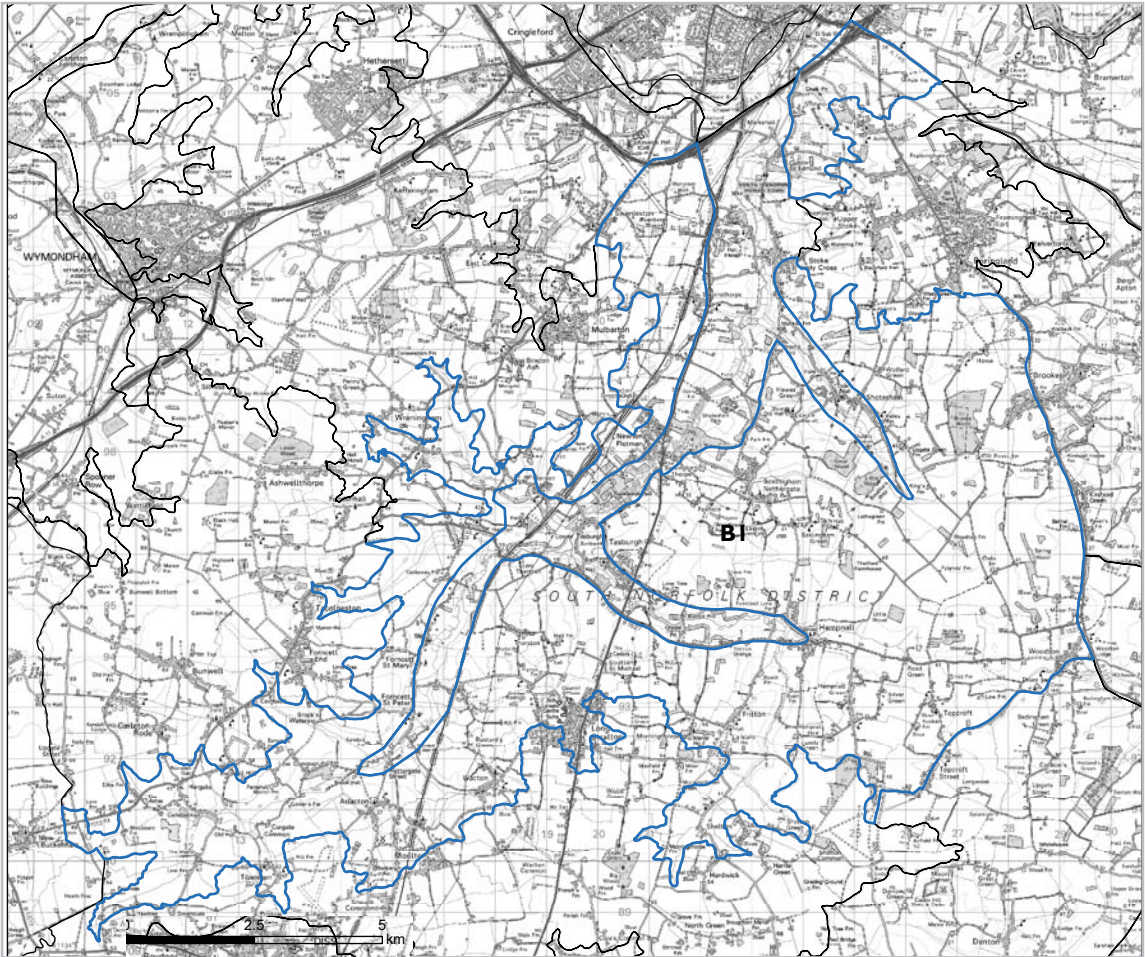


Character Area: BI
Tas Tributary Farmland



Location within South Norfolk District



Extent of the Tas Tributary Farmland Character Area



The area includes attractive isolated churches with the regionally-characteristic round-tower such as St. Michael's at Aslacton



Typical open arable landscape near Hempnall



Characteristic sloping arable farmland with remnant oak hedge-row standards and a characteristic wooded horizon near Caistor St Edmund



The small tributary streams are screened in the wider landscape by the presence of bankside vegetation as at this example near Bunwell Hill

8. BI: TAS TRIBUTARY FARMLAND

DESCRIPTION

- 8.1. **Location and Boundaries:** The Tas Tributary farmland is a large area of land encompassing the Tas River Valley character area. Located in the heart of South Norfolk, it lies at an elevation of between about 30m AOD and up to 50m AOD. The character area is bounded to the north, south and west by surrounding Plateau areas. To the east the character area adjoins Chet Tributary Farmland and Waveney Tributary Farmland. The character area lies within the Rural Policy Area with a small portion to the north lying within the Norwich Policy Area.
- 8.2. The character of **Tas Tributary Farmland** is illustrated in **Figure B I**.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **Open, gently undulating to flat and sloping landscape incised by shallow tributary valleys**, the tributary streams of which are not prominent landscape features.
- **Large open arable fields** of cereal, sugarbeet and occasionally sweetcorn.
- **Framed open views** across the countryside and into adjacent character areas.
- **Small blocks of deciduous woodland** of high ecological and visual quality. These create wooded horizons which add variety to and create intimacy within the landscape.
- **Damp grasslands of ecological importance** located within the tributary valleys.
- **Scattered remnant hedgerow trees**, particularly oak, sometimes including intact avenues lining the roads or marking former, denuded, field boundaries.
- **Transportation corridors** including main connecting roads.
- **Network of recreational footpaths**.
- **Ditches, low banks and wide grass verges** associated with the network of rural roads.
- **Settlement characterised by a small number of large villages** including the administrative centre of South Norfolk – Long Stratton - with smaller hamlets, scattered farmhouses and agricultural buildings.
- **Mixed vernacular** of timber-frame, stepped and Dutch Gables, thatch and round-towered churches.

Geology and Soils

- 8.3. The Tas Tributary Farmland Character Area is found between the Tas River Valley and the plateaux lying at an elevation of between 30m AOD and 40/50m AOD. It is

almost entirely underlain by Glacial Till incised by a number of alluvial bands occupying the minor tributary valleys. This has resulted in a landscape of gentle slopes leading down to shallow tributary valleys, the streams of which are frequently hidden within the landscape. The soils are predominantly Grade 3 Argillic Brown Earths, although there are a few discrete areas of Grade 2 (the highest agricultural grade found in the district). Consequently, the predominant land use is farmland, almost exclusively arable farmland with characteristic crops of cereals and sugarbeet. There are also a small number of pockets of pastoral land, often bounded by wooden fences.

Landform, Topography, Scale and Enclosure

- 8.4. The large scale arable landscape has an open to semi-enclosed character with few hedgerows remaining. Where hedgerows are present they are frequently overgrown of mixed hawthorn, field maple and blackthorn. Hedgerow trees are sparse and appear as lone landmarks in the farmed landscape. There are also a number of remnant intact avenues of mature oak standard hedgerow trees which punctuate the open arable landscape and provide an important vertical element. A more secluded enclosed landscape occurs within the minor tributary valleys. Willow belts are associated some minor tributaries.
- 8.5. There are views to Norwich and the Norwich Southern Bypass from the northern area of the Tas Tributary Farmland and also into the Tas Rural River Valley Character Area, including towards the earthworks of Venta Icenorum (Caistor St Edmund). In the north of the area there are clear views into The Broads. The eastern part of the area includes modern infrastructure, with a large double line of pylons and electricity substation, west of Dunston Hall. A large transmitting station west of Howe is visible from a wide area extending vertically from wooded horizons.

Land Cover and Biodiversity

- 8.6. Small deciduous woodlands including oak and some elm are frequently associated with the sloping sides of the tributary valleys. There are also a few larger mixed woodlands and areas of coppice. These woodlands create a wooded horizon throughout much of this character area. However, the landscape retains a predominantly open character throughout. Many of these woodlands are classified as being ancient and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These include Little Wood – an important ancient hornbeam ‘coppice-with-standard’ woodland and a remnant of the original woodland cover of the District. A small part of Whitlingam Country Park lies in this character area, the majority in FI Yare Valley Urban Fringe.
- 8.7. There are also some areas of important grassland – particularly Fritton Common, which is an SSSI designated large grassy common of important acidic grassland. North of Caistor St. Edmund, in this character area there is a SSSI designated Chalk Pit.

Historic Character

- 8.8. Medieval deer parks and a number of historic parklands were once a characteristic of this area, including examples at Bixley, Stoke Hall, Kirstead Hall, Brook House, Woodton and Boylands, but these have now largely disappeared.

Settlement and Built Character

- 8.9. Settlement is dispersed across the wider landscape comprising small hamlets and farmsteads, frequently clustered within small areas of woodland. The dispersed settlements are connected by a series of small rural lanes, often bordered by fairly wide verges and substantial ditches. As a result of this, houses are frequently accessed by small bridges over these ditches e.g. at Wacton. There are also a number of agricultural buildings, which occur at intervals across the landscape, the more traditional of which are built of red-brick.
- 8.10. A typical example of a small settlement in this character area is Swainsthorpe with its fine round-towered church of St. Mary. Outside of this settlement on the Ipswich Road is the noteworthy Dun Cow Inn with its attractive shaped 'Dutch' gables. Generally there is a mix of both stepped and Dutch gables in this area. Part of the settlement of Newton Flotman, including numerous fine brick built buildings, falls within this character area, with the remainder crossing into the Tas Valley. The settlement of Saxlingham Nethergate is characterised by its many timber-framed houses and thatched cottages. Round towered Norman churches - at Topcroft and Fritton - and square towered churches - at Stratton St. Michael and Tibenham - are features within this landscape and are visible across the character area when located on areas of higher ground.
- 8.11. The principal settlement of this character area is Long Stratton. This large village/small town is clustered along the main Norwich-Ipswich road (A140) which is based upon an earlier Roman Road that linked Scole to Long Stratton and Caistor St. Edmund. Modern estates have been developed to the west of the village. There are a number of buildings of vernacular appeal including an interesting ice house, visible from the main street. The South Norfolk District Council Offices are also of (more modern) architectural interest.
- 8.12. The character area has been affected by the presence of transportation corridors. These include the Norwich Road (A140) and the London-Norwich Railway. In the north of the area views of and noise from the A47 (Norwich Southern Bypass) are dominant. Pedestrian links are also important, including sections of the Tas Valley Walk and Boudica's Way – recreational routeways that pass through this character area.

EVALUATION

Significant Landscape Assets

National/International

- SSSI designated ecological assemblages including hornbeam coppice habitats and ancient woodlands of particular importance - Little Wood, plus some grasslands – Fritton Common. North of Caistor St. Edmund - SSSI Chalk Pit.
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments feature parts of the remains of medieval settlements at Bixley and Arminghall.
- Presence of round-towered churches e.g. Topcroft and Fritton.

- Presence of isolated churches e.g. Tibenham.

District/County

- A number of County Wildlife Sites including several sites of ancient woodland - Great Wood, Popes Wood, Pye's Covert and, Brooke Wood, Howe Grove - semi natural woodland (Hill Farm Woodland), old plantation (Privett Plantation, Howe Lane, Pecks Plantation), coniferous plantation (Spring Wood East), neutral to calcareous grassland (Spring Meadow, Brock's Watering), wet woodland with fenland (Bunwell Fen) and farm ponds (Eagle Farm and Tas Pond).
- Strong regional vernacular character.
- Wooded appearance.
- Distinctive valley landform.
- Waterways visible within the landscape.
- Moats present.

Local

- Pastoral Farmland with visible grazing animals.
- Important views that provide sense of place, particularly in the north of area towards The Broads.
- Willow pollard and/or poplar-lined watercourses.
- Drainage ditches and wide grass verges alongside roads.
- Mature hedgerow trees, some particularly noteworthy remnant hedgerow avenues.
- Presence of river crossings.
- Sunken lanes.
- Farm ponds e.g. Eagle Farm, Tas Pond.
- An area providing a significant strategic break between settled areas – particularly the area north of the Poringland Settled Plateau farmland and south of Norwich.

Sensitivities and Vulnerabilities

8.13. The principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of the landscape to change are considered to be:

- the small scale dispersed pattern and vernacular character of settlement and potential for incremental development and infill;
- further loss of vegetation structure including woodland and hedgerows from the landscape which would lead to a greater sense of openness;

- gently sloping topography and open landscape making this area sensitive to intrusion by tall and large elements, including large farm buildings and pylons;
- potential for adverse effects upon views in the north of this character area to/from Norwich and the Bypass;
- key reciprocal views to and from The Broads.

Landscape Strategy

8.14. The strategy for the Tas Tributary Farmland is to maintain the open and agricultural character of the landscape, conserve the ecological value of the area and protect key views. Enhancement of the landscape should include active management of the woodlands and grasslands, conservation and restoration of key hedgerows and replanting of hedgerow trees, particularly adjacent to roads. In particular:

- consider strategies and explore screening options to reduce the visual and aural impact of the A140, A47(T) and other transportation corridors (railways) on the rural ambience of this area and adjacent character areas – particularly the Tas Valley;
- develop a targeted woodland strategy to reinforce the wooded horizons and create additional woodland habitats, and conserve and manage existing woodland/coppice.

Development Considerations

8.15. Any development permitted should respect the character and features of the Tas Tributary Farmland including:

- respect the existing small-scale and dispersed settlement pattern
- avoid infill and edge development that would result in merging of settlements;
- ensure any developments respect the vernacular character of existing settlements and avoid urbanising of rural lanes and loss of grass verges and hedges forming property boundaries;
- maintain positive views of the Tas Tributary Farmland from the Norwich Southern Bypass and to/from the City of Norwich;
- consider the impact of any development upon the skyline and sense of openness of the character area;
- maintain positive views to/from Venta Icenorum in the Tas Valley;
- consider the impacts of any development upon the nature of the relationship of Long Stratton to Norwich and upon Long Stratton's perceptual role at the geographical and administrative heart of South Norfolk.

