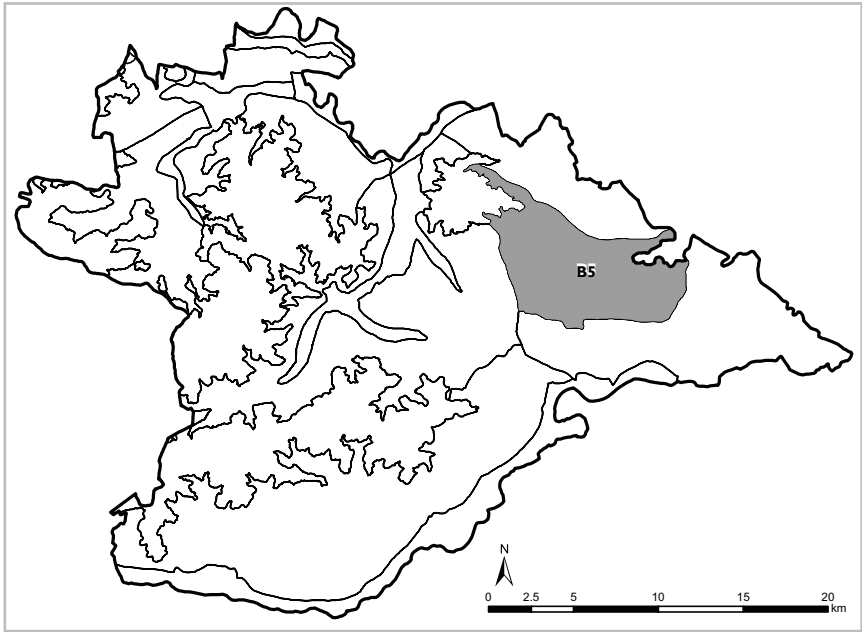
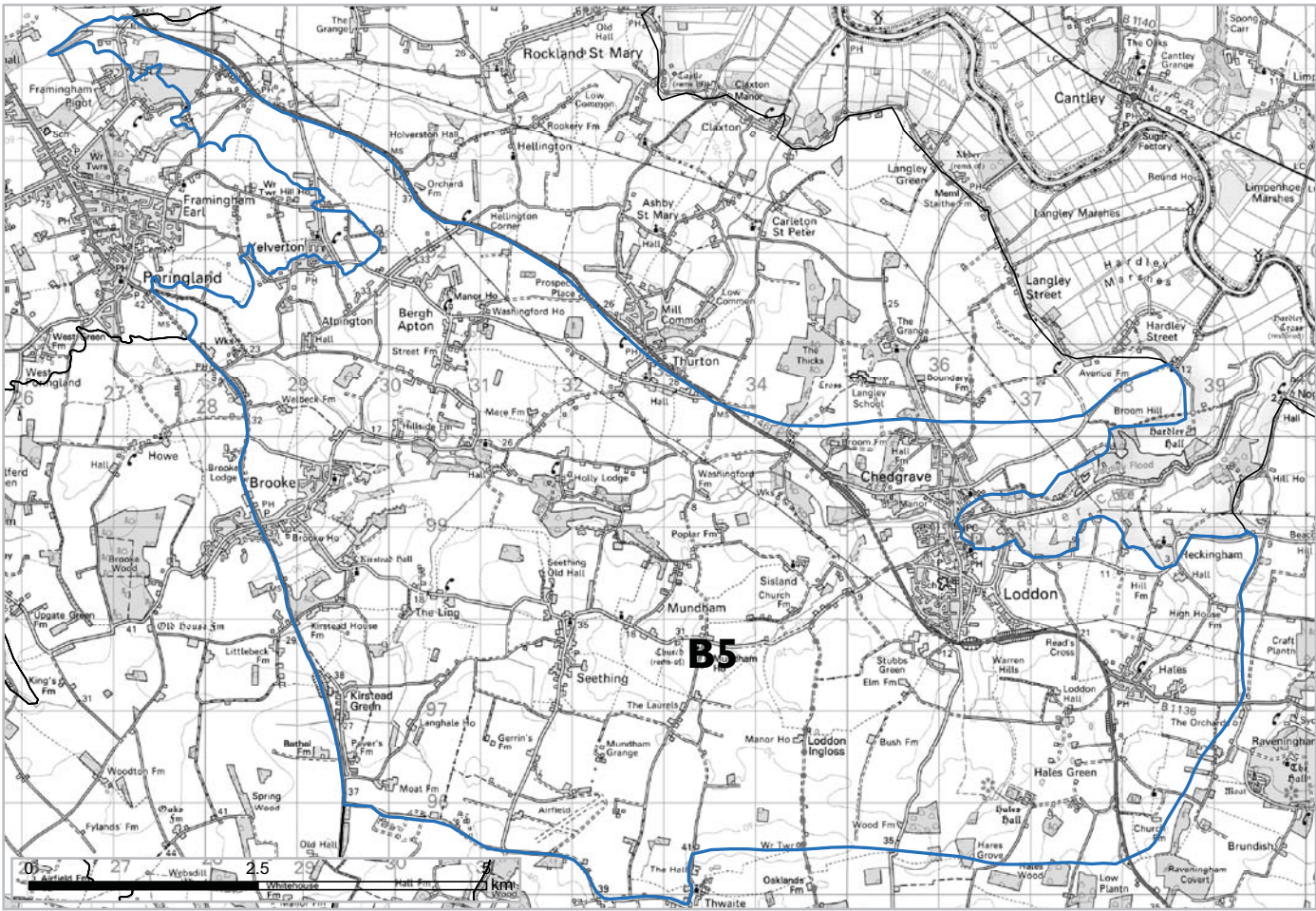


Character Area: B5  
Chet Tributary Farmland



Location within South Norfolk District



Extent of the Chet Tributary Farmland Character Area



View to round tower church at Seething



View across open fields to wooded tributary valleys and pylons on the ridge



Rural road flanked by hedgerows and trees. White railings typically mark the road bridge over the tributary stream.



Remnant oak trees along rural roads are important features



Seething Mere



View to open land across Seething Airfield





## 12. B5: CHET TRIBUTARY FARMLAND

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### DESCRIPTION

- 12.1. **Location and Boundaries:** The Chet Tributary Farmland lies in the east of the District with its north eastern edge, abutting the Broads at Loddon and Chedgrave. It comprises land rising gently from the Broads and is cut through by the River Chet and its tributaries.
- 12.2. The character of the **Chet Tributary Farmland** is illustrated in **Figure B5**.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **A flat to gently undulating landscape** cut by tributary valleys of the River Chet.
- **Landform sloping gradually upwards** from the River Chet and low-lying Broads in the north east at Loddon and Chedgrave to higher ground towards the south and south west.
- **A varied sense of enclosure** ranging from medium scale and open across areas of flatter ground to intimate and enclosed along tributary valleys and winding rural roads lined with trees and hedgerows.
- **Dissected by the Chet and series of Becks** running eastwards to the Broads. **River courses are defined by vegetation** and are otherwise often imperceptible and inaccessible.
- **Tributary rivers have an obvious influence in the landscape.** Associated features include **pockets of pasture, road bridges, village ponds and willow trees.**
- **Predominantly arable farmland** with geometric field pattern. Fields are smaller within the valleys and medium to large on the flatter, open areas.
- **Gappy hawthorn/ash/beech hedges** divide fields in places. Hedgerow trees are frequent especially large mature oaks.
- **Woodland is most concentrated** along the River Chet corridor, running east to west through the centre of the character area.
- **Diversity of ecological assemblages** including grassland, common land, wet habitats and woodland.
- **Large common grazing lands or greens** are a particular local feature.
- **Round tower and isolated churches occur.** Moats are also a feature.
- **Settlement occurs sporadically throughout the character area.** Villages either occur sheltered in valleys or on the gently sloping valley sides.

- **Market town of Loddon** lies on the River Chet with an imposing and beautiful church, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century houses and a pretty staithe.
- Outside the main settlements are **larger modern farm units plus more traditional red brick barns**.
- **Presence of the A146** - Otherwise a network of winding rural roads and lanes dissect this very rural area.
- A **peaceful and rural** landscape.

### **Geology and Soils**

- 12.3. Geology is predominantly chalky Glacial Till with fine loamy over clayey soils. Where this Glacial Till has been incised by tributary streams there are corresponding bands of sands and gravels and alluvial deposits. There are also deposits of peat along the tributary valleys related to the neighbouring landscape of The Broads.

### **Landform, Topography, Scale and Enclosure**

- 12.4. A flat to gently undulating, low-lying landscape, varying between 10-40m AOD. The lowest land is associated with the River Chet tributary streams that have cut into the higher, flatter land resulting in subtle undulations. It forms a transitional landscape as it rises gently from the neighbouring Broads in the north east towards higher ground in the south and south west of the character area at the boundaries with Thurlton Tributary Farmland with Parkland and Tas Tributary Farmland.
- 12.5. Across the character area there is a contrasting sense of enclosure. The narrow tributary valleys are an important local feature providing pockets of intimacy and enclosure. In these areas channelled, corridor views are defined by hedgerows, waterside vegetation and the rising topography of the valley sides – all contributing to the enclosed character. In stark contrast views become more open and distant across the larger fields on the flatter, higher land. These views are occasionally framed by woodland but more frequently extend across to the wooded tributary corridors and include remnant hedgerow lines with prominent hedgerow trees. Important views within this character area are to the neighbouring Broads at Loddon and Chedgrave and to round and square village church towers that are distinctive features within the rural landscape.

### **Land Cover and Biodiversity**

- 12.6. In common with much of South Norfolk, land cover is predominantly arable farmland. In addition, there are some small areas of pasture, in particular around Upgate, associated with the tributary valleys but these occur very infrequently. Field patterns aligning the tributary valleys are small/ medium, becoming larger towards the higher flatter land. Fields are regular in shape, divided by hedges that are often very gappy or denuded. Hedgerow trees, in particular, large mature oaks, are a feature of the landscape occurring either as part of the hedgerow pattern or as stand alone features where hedgerows have been lost. Large common grazing lands or greens are a particular local feature occurring within or at the edges of villages, e.g. Hales Green.

- 12.7. Tributaries of the River Chet cut through the landscape forming narrow valleys and there is a noticeable increase in tree cover and they consequently appear as conspicuous wooded strips - hedgerow lines are also more intact here. Most of the streams are imperceptible and inaccessible but have an obvious influence on the character of the landscape identifiable by the vegetation flanking their courses or by small bridges marked by roadside railings crossing the roads. Further significant defining features include village ponds and small greens, as at the gateway to Brooke and Sisland. In places rows of poplar trees align the road. Confined within the tributary stream valleys are important areas of marshy grassland such as at Green Man Lane.
- 12.8. Dispersed across the arable landscape are pockets of woodland - mixed and deciduous blocks and belts. Woodland is most concentrated along the River Chet corridor, running east to west from Chedgrave to Brooke. Some of the woodland is ancient (primarily neglected coppice with standards) and many of the woodlands are afforded with County Wildlife Site status e.g. Hales Hall Wood, Hare's Grove, Kiln Grove and Eight Acre Wood. In addition, more recent plantations adjoin neighbouring areas of woodland at Long Plantation, Tub Plantation, Park Plantation. These plantations are often related to large adjoining farmsteads and possibly relate to nearby former estates - Long Plantation to Chedgrave Manor, Park Plantation to Kirstead Hall.
- 12.9. Areas of neutral grassland occur at Hales Green, the largest of the County Wildlife Sites in the character area, and semi-improved grassland within parkland at Bergh Apton House, with scattered mature oaks across the park.
- 12.10. Seething Airfield in the south of the character area includes Seething Observatory and a diversity of habitats across the airfield.

### **Historic Character**

- 12.11. A moated site at Hales Hall in Loddon is the only Scheduled Ancient Monument listed within this Character Area. The surrounding farm buildings form a Grade I listed group. Two additional moated sites are shown on the OS map at Moat Farm, south of Kirstead Green and to the west of the church at Hales.
- 12.12. At Langley Park, a Grade II English Heritage listed park and garden, there is an 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape park and woodland attributed to Capability Brown. Only the southern part of this park lies within this character area. Bergh Apton comprises parkland adjacent to Bergh Apton House.
- 12.13. A particular local feature is the large common grazing lands or greens. An extensive area of Common Land is present at Hales Green, with grazing rights used by neighbouring farmers. Further areas of Common Land are also found at Chedgrave and two separate sites in Mundham. Village greens listed as commons include Stubbs Green at Loddon and Lye's Heath, Chedgrave.

### **Settlement and Built Character**

- 12.14. Settlement is dispersed across the character area but where it does occur is generally quite compact, often clustered around greens of 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century origin (such as at Hales, Loddon, Chedgrave) within an intricate network of minor roads.

Village ponds are also a feature including Brooke Pond and Seething Mere, the origins of which may have been the extraction of clay for building. Settlement is either located within the wooded tributary valleys (Brooke) or on the gentle slopes of the valleys (Bergh Apton, Seething). The largest settlements are at Loddon and Chedgrave. Loddon is an attractive Market Town at the heart of the southern Broads which features many 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century houses, an impressive church and a pretty staithe. The Old Mill over the river marks the boundary between Loddon and Chedgrave and is the start of navigation out to The Broads.

- 12.15. Most villages have a distinctive village core comprising traditional red brick and timber frame houses with mixed building styles and materials at the more recent, suburban edges. Black and white signs are a re-occurring feature, with small sign boards announcing the villages and signposts giving directions.
- 12.16. Norman round-towered churches are a distinctive feature of this landscape. They are located within villages (Seething, Brooke) or as isolated features within the landscape (Hales) forming very visible features on the highest ground. Churches are generally built of chequered red brick and flint. A more unusual example is found at the St. Margaret and St. Remigius church at Seething which features a thatched roof. Churches at Church Plantation near Bergh Apton and at Church Farm in Kirstead have square towers.
- 12.17. Large farm buildings and farm processing units occur throughout this landscape. Older farm buildings are characteristically red brick and tiled. From the 1790s onwards Norfolk acquired a national reputation for its barns. Hales Barn, in the south of the character area, is an excellent example of a brick barn, located on the edge of common land.
- 12.18. The character area is cut from south to north by the A146 from Hales to Chedgrave, elsewhere there is a network of minor rural lanes. A line of pylons also crosses the character area broadly following the course of the A146. Seething Airfield, south of Ugate, originally a USAAF base for the 448<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group (1942-3) is in active use and is the home of the Waveney Flying Group.

## **EVALUATION**

### **Significant Landscape Assets**

#### ***National/International***

- Diversity of different habitat types including grassland, commonland, wet habitats, woodland, some of which are ancient - Kiln Grove and Eight Acre.
- Scheduled Ancient Monument (a moated site at Hales Hall in Loddon is the only Scheduled Ancient Monument listed within this Character Area. The surrounding farm buildings form a Grade I listed group and this is the site of the Manor House).
- Presence of round tower churches (Brooke, Seething, Hales).
- Adjacent to and setting for The Broads.

### ***District/County***

- Numerous County Wildlife Sites including a rich diversity of species. Ancient woodland with broad leaved plantation (Hare's Grove), plantation (Park Plantation), broad-leaved woodland (Kirstead Hall Wood), neglected old coppice with standards (Hales Hall Wood), neutral grassland with scrub and ephemeral ponds (Hales Green), semi-improved parkland and grassland (Bergh Apton House), damp grassland (Seething Observatory), unimproved and semi- improved marshy grassland (Green Man Lane, Kirstead).
- Presence of listed parkland at Langley Park and Bergh Apton House.
- Tributary watercourses.

### ***Local***

- Mature hedgerow trees (usually Oak).
- Areas of common land e.g. Hales Green, Mundham Common.
- Presence of road bridges across tributary streams.
- Water bodies (moats and village ponds).

### **Sensitivities and Vulnerabilities**

12.19. The principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of the Chet Tributary Farmland are:

- the visual and physical relationship to The Broads – and sensitivity to any change in views to and from The Broads;
- the hedgerow and woodland structure as further loss could create a more open monotonous landscape;
- the diversity of habitats especially those sensitive to development, fragmentation and change in water level/quality;
- the characteristic water features in this landscape and the threat of loss through drainage;
- the overall peaceful, rural character;
- the distinctive and extensive areas of common land and smaller village greens;
- the views to and setting of the prominent churches;
- the network of rural roads and their associated verges;
- the character of the rural settlement which are frequently clustered around a village green.

### **Landscape Strategy**

12.20. **The overall strategy is to conserve the rural, peaceful quality of the Chet Tributary Farmland with its links to The Broads, strong farmland**

**character, presence of watercourses, varied enclosure and field pattern and diversity of ecological assemblages. This will include:**

- maintain and manage moats and village/field ponds;
- conserve and manage commons and village greens/grass verges and seek to ensure that grazing management is sustained;
- conserve the contrast between the open arable landscapes and the more intimate tributary valleys;
- conserve areas of pasture and in particular seek to conserve and extend pasture along the tributary valleys;
- maintain the stock of hedgerow trees, particularly along roadsides and encourage new generations of hedgerow trees to replace existing stock;
- consider opportunities to reinstate hedgerows, where they have been lost and especially along roadsides;
- manage woodland to conserve character and enhance biodiversity. Consider opportunities to extend and link woodland including the creation of new woodland around villages.

### **Development Considerations**

12.21. Any development in the area must respect the character of Chet Tributary Farmland.

- conserve the essentially rural, peaceful character with settlements primarily relating to the tributary valleys. Conserve locally distinctive vegetation that characterise the valley settlement such as willows;
- conserve the character and identity of the market towns (Loddon/Chedgrave) and the villages with their compact form clustered around a historic core;
- seek to avoid further linear development along roads and suburban development along edges which can create the perception of a much larger developed area, and result in merging of settlements and loss of individual identity;
- conserve visual links to The Broads and consider the effect of any change on views to and from The Broads and their setting;
- conserve the local vernacular features that contribute to the rural character including the distinctive roads sides and lane names. Conserve the rural, quiet character of the roads and lanes that cross the landscape and prevent upgrading that could create a more (sub) urban character;
- protect the views to and setting of churches, which form distinctive landmark features within the landscape;
- conserve and enhance the rural setting of the A146 and avoid linear development associated with the road corridor that would impinge on the rural setting.