

## 7. D: SETTLED PLATEAU FARMLAND

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### LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

- 7.1. There are two areas of the Settled Plateau Farmland Landscape Type, one to the east and one to the west of the Tas Valley around the settlements of Wymondham and Poringland respectively. The Settled Plateau Farmlands have been defined by virtue of their elevation, topography and settlement pattern. The boundaries of these areas are largely represented by the 40 and 50m AOD contours. However, small and fragmented areas above the 40m contour have not been classified as Settled Plateau Farmland and, likewise, the area does contain some areas above 50m AOD.

### KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **Distinct flat to gently rising elevated landform** as a result of the simplistic underlying Glacial Till geology.
- **Large fields of arable monoculture** principally characteristic swathes of cereal, oilseed rape and sugarbeet.
- **Variety of spatial experiences** due to the elevation and contrast between the openness of the arable fields and intimacy of the settlements.
- **Long views of the district from the plateau edges**, including views to Norwich, and internalised plateau views. Elements of plateau interior not visible except from other plateau areas or where tall intrusive elements are present.
- **Mature remnant oak hedgerow trees** are features in the agricultural landscape however hedgerows have been severely degraded or lost leading to fragmentation within the landscape.
- **Illusion of wooded horizons** due to the presence of significant areas of mixed woodland blocks, some intact hedgerows and the visual merging of hedgerow trees and woodlands in the landscape.
- **Presence of large communications masts** which interrupt of the sense of openness yet provide distinct landmarks.
- **Settled landscape** mostly comprising large edge-of-plateau towns and large villages with other smaller nucleated settlements dispersed across the plateau.
- **Some evidence of historical features within the landscape** including isolated churches (some of which are round-towered), moats, historic parkland and some farm ponds.
- **Some vernacular buildings** particularly in historic market towns, particularly including use of bricks, timber framing and stepped gable ends, but contrasted with settlements of modern bungalow development.

## LANDSCAPE CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

- 7.2. The main distinguishing feature of the Settled Plateau Farmland is the extent of settlement. This landscape type provides the location for many of the towns/large villages of South Norfolk; namely Wymondham, Poringland and Hethersett, as well as smaller settlements such as Mulbarton and Yelverton. These settlements are more nucleated than elsewhere and tend to occur at the plateau edge/transition. These areas are well connected with transportation corridors. Consequently, the landscapes appear tamed and humanised and have a high variety of experiences from the intimacy of the towns to the openness of the surrounding arable farmland.
- 7.3. There are strong contrasts in the townscape between the settlements found in the Settled Plateau Farmland. For example the town of Wymondham retains a historic quality, despite more recent peripheral development. It is believed that Wymondham once had a castle and it had an important church which became a Benedictine Abbey in 1107 (actually located in the Tiffey River Valley). It also has a long history as a market town, probably pre-dating Henry I's grant and continuing in use until the 17th Century. Certainly, by the 16th Century, it was one of the most heavily populated areas of the county. Later there were a large number of brickworks in Wymondham and therefore brick, often in combination with timber frame and stepped gables is a common building material. Later impetus for growth in Wymondham included the railway and A11. Other settlements, such as Mulbarton, with their village green and pond share Wymondham's timeless quality.
- 7.4. In contrast settlements such as Poringland and Hethersett have a much more modern character. Indeed Poringland (despite its early deer park) remained sparsely settled until after the nineteenth century. These more modern settlements are characterised by post-war bungalow development. In addition modern communications towers at the highest point of the Poringland Plateau visually disrupt the landscape although they do serve as a landmark in the wider landscape. Isolated churches and round-towered churches are present here but these are subservient to the landscape setting.
- 7.5. The solid geology of the Settled Plateau Farmland is predominantly Lowestoft Till. There are also some area of drift including sands and gravels and minor areas of alluvium. The corresponding soils are the heavy stagnogleyic soils of the farmed plateau with some areas of argillic brown earths and brown sands. The common heath that was present on the sandy soils of Poringland around 1797 has not survived. Typically the soil is Grade 3, although there are some small areas of Grade 2 and Grade 4.
- 7.6. This landform appears to be flat or moderately rippling, with some relatively small and even modulations. The area centred on Poringland has the greatest variation, rising up to a gentle 'dome' at 70m AOD, which is one of the most elevated areas in the district. There are good views within the plateaux and from the plateaux edge, which due to the proximity to Norwich, sometimes include views of the city. However, adjoining landscape areas beyond the plateau, views of the interior are restricted. Therefore, somewhat surprisingly, plateau elements do not figure prominently in the wider landscape character of the district, except where they are particularly large or intrusive (such as the communications masts).



- 7.7. Outside of the settlements these farmed plateau areas are almost wholly under arable cultivation particularly of cereals, oilseed rape and sugar beet. To facilitate machinery there has been clearance of hedgerows and boundary vegetation creating in places a very distinctive large scale, open character. However, there are also some good remnant hedgerows, particularly along the roads, and areas with wide flowery verges and roadside ditches. Furthermore these areas have retained farm woodlands and therefore have a more 'wooded feel' compared to the Plateau Farmland Landscape Type. There are some areas of parkland which add to the diversity of the landscape. There are no significant water features, although there are some farm ponds and moated sites and very small and minor upper reaches of tributary streams.

## LANDSCAPE ASSETS

✓✓✓ very characteristic/important ✓✓ characteristic/important ✓ noticeably present/important

- Asset not present/present but by virtue of extent or quality does not contribute significantly to landscape character

ASSET/LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE		NOTES
<b>NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL:</b>		
<b>Nationally important ecological assemblages</b>	✓	Ancient woodland but no national nature designations
<b>Presence of Scheduled Ancient Monuments</b>	✓	Few SAMs but Market Cross (scheduled) is one of the most important landmarks of the Wymondham townscape.
<b>Presence of round-towered churches</b>	✓	
<b>Presence of isolated churches</b>	✓✓	
<b>DISTRICT/COUNTY:</b>		
<b>Strong regional vernacular character</b>	✓✓	Very characteristic buildings but overall quality reduced by presence of modern settlement.
<b>Important Views</b> that provide sense of place	✓✓	Views to Norwich from plateau edge
<b>Presence of historic parkland</b> particularly EH listed.	✓	Much parkland has been lost from this landscape type
<b>Wooded appearance</b>	✓	Wooded horizons
<b>Distinctive valley landform</b>	-	
<b>Waterways</b> visible within the landscape	✓	
<b>Watermills</b> present	-	
<b>Windmills</b> present	✓	
<b>Moats</b> present.	✓	

<b>LOCAL:</b>		
<b>Pastoral Farmland</b> with visible grazing animals.	-	
<b>Willow pollard and/or poplar-lined watercourses</b>	-	
<b>Drainage ditches</b>	✓✓	
<b>Wide grass verges</b> alongside roads	✓✓	These in part represent areas where hedgerows have been lost/removed
<b>Good hedgerow network</b>	✓	Discrete areas limited to outskirts of towns and villages
<b>Mature hedgerow trees</b>	✓✓	
<b>Presence of river crossings</b>	-	
<b>Sunken Lanes</b>	-	
<b>Water bodies</b>	✓	Village ponds e.g. at Mulbarton
<b>Distinctive plateau landscape</b>	✓✓	
<b>Area of or including significant strategic breaks between settled areas</b>	✓✓✓	Both areas are close to Norwich and are settled – the areas between these settlements are therefore very important.

See summary table for greater explanation of Landscape Assets

## CHARACTER AREAS

- 7.8. The boundaries and character of these are subject to more detailed analysis and definition. The main subdivisions are anticipated to be:

### **Norwich Policy Area** (See Volume 2 for more details)

- Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland (D1)
- Poringland Settled Plateau Farmland (D2)

### **Outside Norwich Policy Area**

- (None)





- Large detached halls are characteristic, often with ornate brickwork and gables, such as Hedenham Hall.



- The tributary valleys such as Broome Beck are more wooded and pastoral in character than the surrounding arable valley sides.



- Ostentatious gateways indicate the presence of parklands and halls, such as Ditchingham Park.



- Areas of mature parkland including estate rail boundaries are one of the principal distinguishing characteristics of this landscape type as at Broome Place.

Figure C: Landscape Type C - Tributary Farmland with Parkland

Figure D: Landscape Type D - Settled Plateau Farmland



- Roads, such as the A11 near Wymondham connect the large settlements of the rural area to Norwich and beyond.



- Settlement is an important element in the landscape and punctuate the large scale open arable fields as at Poringland.



- Field boundaries are more intact on the edges of towns and villages, as here at the boundary of Framingham Earl.



- There are large settlements in this landscape character type, although these often retain vernacular appeal such as these flint and brick houses in Wymondham.

