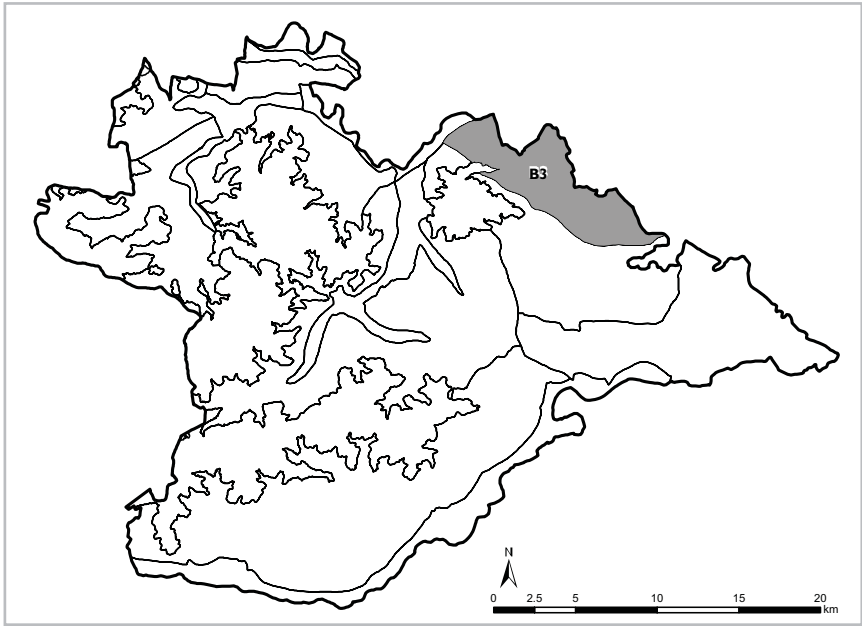
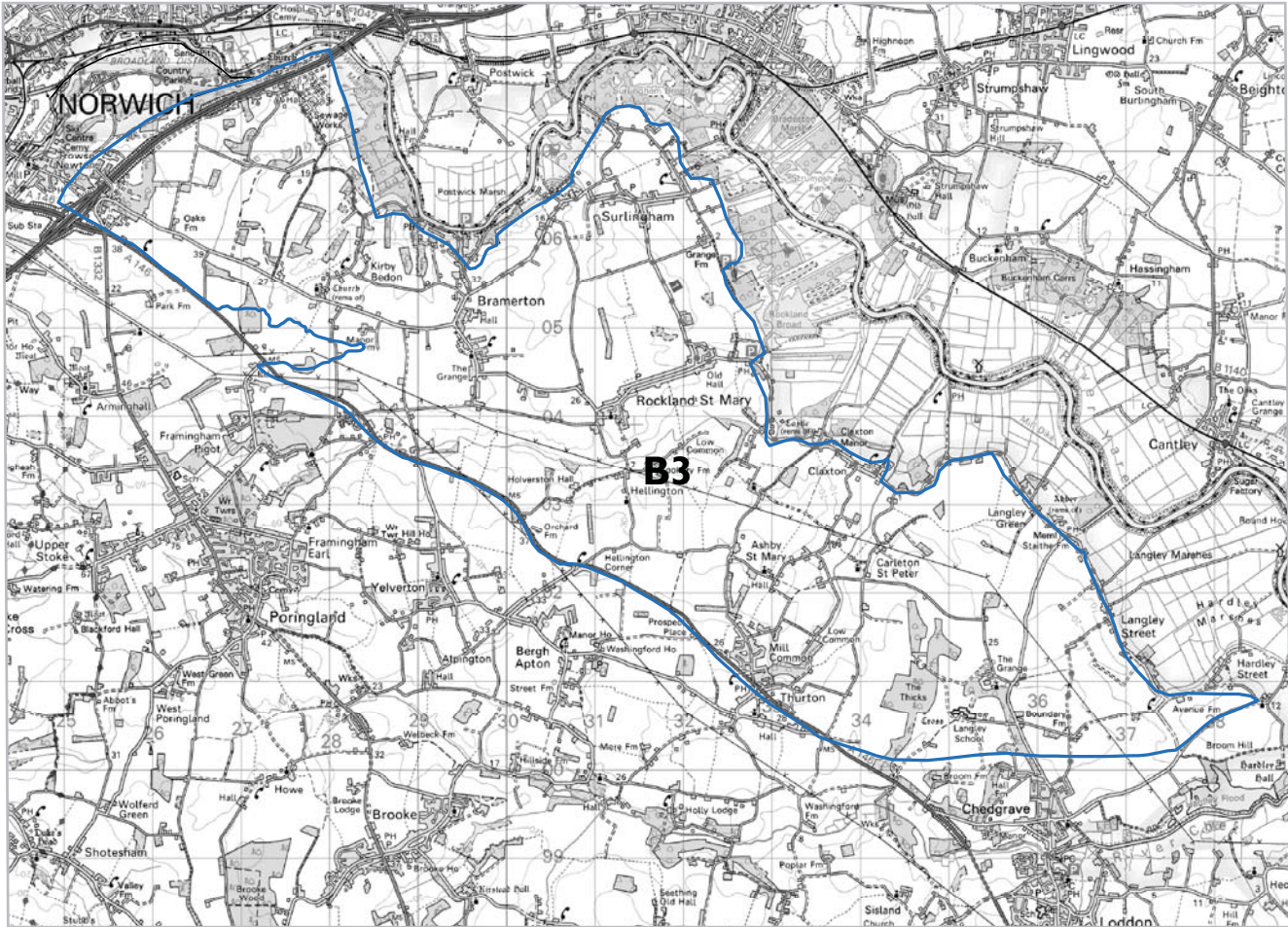


Character Area: B3
Rockland Tributary Farmland



Location within South Norfolk District



Extent of the Rockland Tributary Farmland Character Area



View from Langley Green at the edge of the character area towards The Broads



Characteristic 'isolated' round-towered flint church at Helington with pylons dominant in the foreground



Large scale arable landscape near Surlingham with sparsely distributed mature hedgerow trees



Exposed, open character where field boundaries have been lost

10. B3: ROCKLAND TRIBUTARY FARMLAND

DESCRIPTION

- 10.1. **Location and Boundaries:** The Rockland Tributary Farmland is found to the east of Norwich. At this eastern edge lies the boundary with the Yare Valley Urban Fringe and Tas Tributary Farmland. The northern perimeter is defined by the edge of The Broads and the southern perimeter by the A146 abutting the edge of the Chet Tributary Farmland and the Poringland Settled Plateau Farmland. This character area occurs below 40 m AOD, split approximately half and half between the NPA and RPA.
- 10.2. The character of **Rockland Tributary Farmland** is illustrated in **Figure B3**.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **Gently undulating landform shelving towards the north** with small scale tributary valleys and streams which do not feature prominently in the landscape.
- **Semi-enclosing landform opening out to distant views** of the distinct landscape of the Yare Valley (Part of The Broads) along the northern edge.
- **Predominantly large-scale arable farmland** with views towards adjoining flat pastoral valley floor farmlands.
- **Predominantly open landscape with bleak denuded arable ‘hillcrests’** but with an increasingly wooded and enclosed quality towards the west of the area (within the NPA).
- **Small villages, particularly linear villages** along the edge of the Yare floodplain, with small nucleated settlements inland.
- **Presence of electricity pylons throughout area** which cut across the landscape in straight lines and disrupt the sense of unity.
- **Enclosed sunken lanes and rural roads** cross the landscape.
- **Peaceful, rural, remote quality.**
- **Vernacular appeal** due to the small-scale of the settlements and presence of Dutch Gables and unique village signs.
- **Presence of numerous isolated ‘Saxon’ churches** which are important landmark features.
- **Visual influence of adjoining Broads** landscape with areas of wet woodland, views to a flat grazed plain, presence of boats and tourism destinations.

Geology and Soils

- 10.3. Geologically, this character area is underlain by Glacial Till with sand and gravel predominant along the northern boundary and peat deposits along the tributary valleys.

Landform, Topography, Scale and Enclosure

- 10.4. The tributary valleys create a certain degree of undulation which leads to a sense of semi-enclosure within some areas. The northern boundary is defined by the edge of The Broads where the River Yare opens out into a wide meandering floodplain which has been cut through with ditches. Consequently, the land dips gently towards the north.

Land Cover and Biodiversity

- 10.5. The Rockland Tributary Farmland contrasts strongly with The Broads landscape. Arable agriculture is the predominant land use in the area. The soil is argillic brown earth and fields of cereal monoculture are prominent, although sugarbeet and speciality crops such as sunflowers are also present. Field sizes are usually large to very large with hedgerows notably scarce and denuded. Where the absence of vegetation combines with an undulation it can result in somewhat bleak bald 'ridges'.
- 10.6. The tributaries, known as 'The Beck' and 'Carleton Beck', have little influence on the character of the landscape, appearing as little more than streams with adjoining water-filled ditches. The only SSSI of the character area is Duncan's Marsh, an important wet grassland habitat, which adjoins Carleton Beck near Carleton St Peter.
- 10.7. Woodland is not particularly characteristic of the area although there is a notably higher proportion of woodland to the east of the area within the Norwich Policy Area with the presence of a number of linear woodland belts; wet woodland along the edge of the Yare floodplain and in the south around Langley School.

Historic Character

- 10.8. One of the areas of woodland around Langley School called 'The Thicks' is of ancient origin and is the largest woodland block of the character area. This forms part of Langley Park, an eighteenth century parkland attributed to Capability Brown, which is listed as Grade II on the English Heritage Register (part lies within the adjoining Chet Tributary Farmland Character Area). Also within the parkland is Langley Cross, a medieval cross listed as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Settlement and Built Character

- 10.9. Settlement in the area is sparse and dispersed and tends to be made up of a mixture of older vernacular and newer post-war buildings. There were a high number of brick works located in this area in the 18th and 19th centuries. Consequently there are a number of brick houses with (predominantly) Dutch Gables, such as the Manor House at Surlingham.
- 10.10. Settlement comprises a number of small linear villages along the edge of the The Broads, such as Surlingham and Claxton with a few larger villages further away from

the floodplain, including Rockland St Mary, Bramerton and Thurton. Between these a number of small hamlets or clusters of buildings are present including a remarkable number of isolated churches or churches at some distance from the adjoining settlement, such as at Carleton St Peter. These provide physical reminders of the former densely settled landscape and evoke a sense of abandonment in parts. The settlements are connected by a network of small rural lanes. At some village edges, such as at Claxton, fields have been divided by temporary fences and horse paddocks are a feature.

- 10.11. There are a number of Halls within the character area but these tend to be hidden and do not contribute significantly to landscape character. Many of the settlements have characteristic distinctive village signs, such as Surlingham's 'metalwork boat' or Ashby St Mary's 'wooden windmill', which add to the vernacular appeal of the area. This is interrupted by a chain of electricity pylons which transverse the landscape, adversely interrupting the small scale and peaceful quality of the area. These are particularly visible due to the sense of openness.
- 10.12. North of the District are The Broads which are within the Broads Authority Area. This is an area of national ecological and recreational importance that has equivalent status to a National Park. The pastoral landscape of the Yare Valley with its distinctive flat landscape and grazing cattle is visible from the edge of the character area. Although the River Yare is rarely visible boats on the river can be seen from the boundary of this area. Consequently, The Broads affect the character of the northern fringe and impart a strong sense of 'borrowed' character on the landscape.
- 10.13. The city of Norwich is visible from some areas in the north-east of this area. In the north the Norwich Southern Bypass creates a more urban, active and noisy landscape. The A146, which runs approximately along the watershed between the River Chet and the Becks, is the prime access route into this character area and defines its southern boundary. This is an important route from which people can experience the landscape of the Rockland Tributary Farmland.

EVALUATION

Significant Landscape Assets

National/International

- SSSI designated Duncan's Marsh, an important wet grassland habitat, which adjoins Carleton Beck near Carleton St Peter.
- Areas of ancient woodland - The Thicks.
- Scheduled Ancient Monument – A medieval cross at Langley Cross.
- Presence of round tower churches - Carleton St. Peter.
- Role as setting to The Broads.

District/County

- Seven County Wildlife Sites including areas of ancient woodland (The Thicks), coppice woodland with standards (Furze Close), parkland (Bramerton Hall Grounds), fen and wet scrub woodland with open ponds (Whitlingham Fen), marshy neutral grassland (Duncan's Marsh and The Beck Meadow) and well-drained neutral grassland (Surlingham Meadow).
- Strong regional vernacular character influence of newer development has lessened vernacular appeal.
- Presence of historic parkland particularly EH listed Langley Park is a significant feature of the area (crosses into adjoining Character Area).
- Wooded appearance although highly variable with some open denuded areas.
- Valley landform.
- Waterways visible within the landscape - The Beck and Carleton Beck.
- Moats present.
- Important views that provide sense of place with important views to Norwich Cathedral and The Broads.

Local

- Pastoral farmland with visible grazing animals.
- Willow pollard and/or poplar-lined watercourses.
- Drainage ditches.
- Wide grass verges alongside roads.
- Presence of river crossings.
- Sunken lanes.
- Water bodies.
- Area of, or including significant strategic breaks between settled areas.

Sensitivities and Vulnerabilities

10.14. The principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of this landscape character area have been identified as:

- particular vulnerability of the open landscape to visual intrusion of tall elements, in particular further pylons, masts or potential large agricultural buildings;
- further loss of boundary hedgerows or woodlands from the landscape which would increase the sense bleakness already apparent in some parts of this landscape and intensify the effect of pylons and other structures;

- sensitivity of the area as setting to The Broads and loss of positive views to The Broads and/or from The Broads;
- loss or intrusion of positive vernacular elements or quality, for example neglect and dereliction of the isolated churches, infill between churches and settlements, or replacement of characteristic signs with standard 'highways' signage;
- inappropriate development associated with the A146 or Norwich Southern Bypass.

Landscape Strategy

10.15. The overall landscape strategy for the Rockland Tributary Farmland is to maintain the remote and rural agricultural character with its distinct settlement character of dispersed and edge-of-Broads villages and isolated round towered churches. Landscape enhancements should be targeted at conserving and restoring woodlands and hedgerows, particularly where this would be beneficial to minimising the impact of existing pylons and increasing the sense of intimacy in 'exposed' landscapes. It may be beneficial to consider:

- targeting hedgerow restoration or new woodland planting in areas which suffer the most from bleakness as a result of bare vegetation-free ridges and skyline developments such as pylons;
- undertaking a study and preparing a landscape strategy for the area to identify, preserve and enhance the positive visual links to The Broads and Norwich;
- development of recreational routeways in the area to encourage people to explore the landscape, perhaps linking with Whitlingham Country Park nearby, and into the Yare Valley;
- enhancing positive views from the Bypass and to/from Norwich in the north of the area.

Development Considerations

10.16. Any development must respect the character and landscape assets of the Rockland Tributary Farmland and should:

- respect the existing characteristic pattern of linear settlements at The Broads fringe with settlements dispersed across the landscape elsewhere and prevent the growth of edge-of-settlement development that would create uncharacteristic large settlements within the area;
- maintain the peaceful rural quality including the rural lane network and the characteristic village signage;
- respect the integrity of important landmarks and their settings, particularly the strong character of the isolated churches;
- protect the sensitive Broads edge setting and maintain key views into and from The Broads;

- consider the impact of structures, particularly tall structures, upon the skyline of open areas;
- ensure sensitive siting and design to integrate new agricultural buildings into the landscape with minimum visual impact, e.g. through screen planting or avoidance of skylines;
- consider any impact upon views to Norwich and views from the Norwich Southern Bypass.