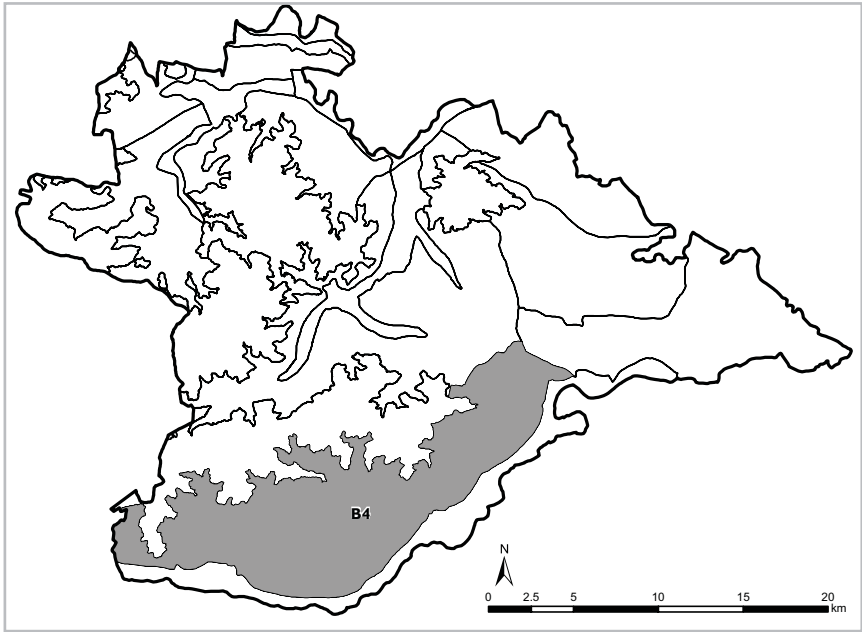
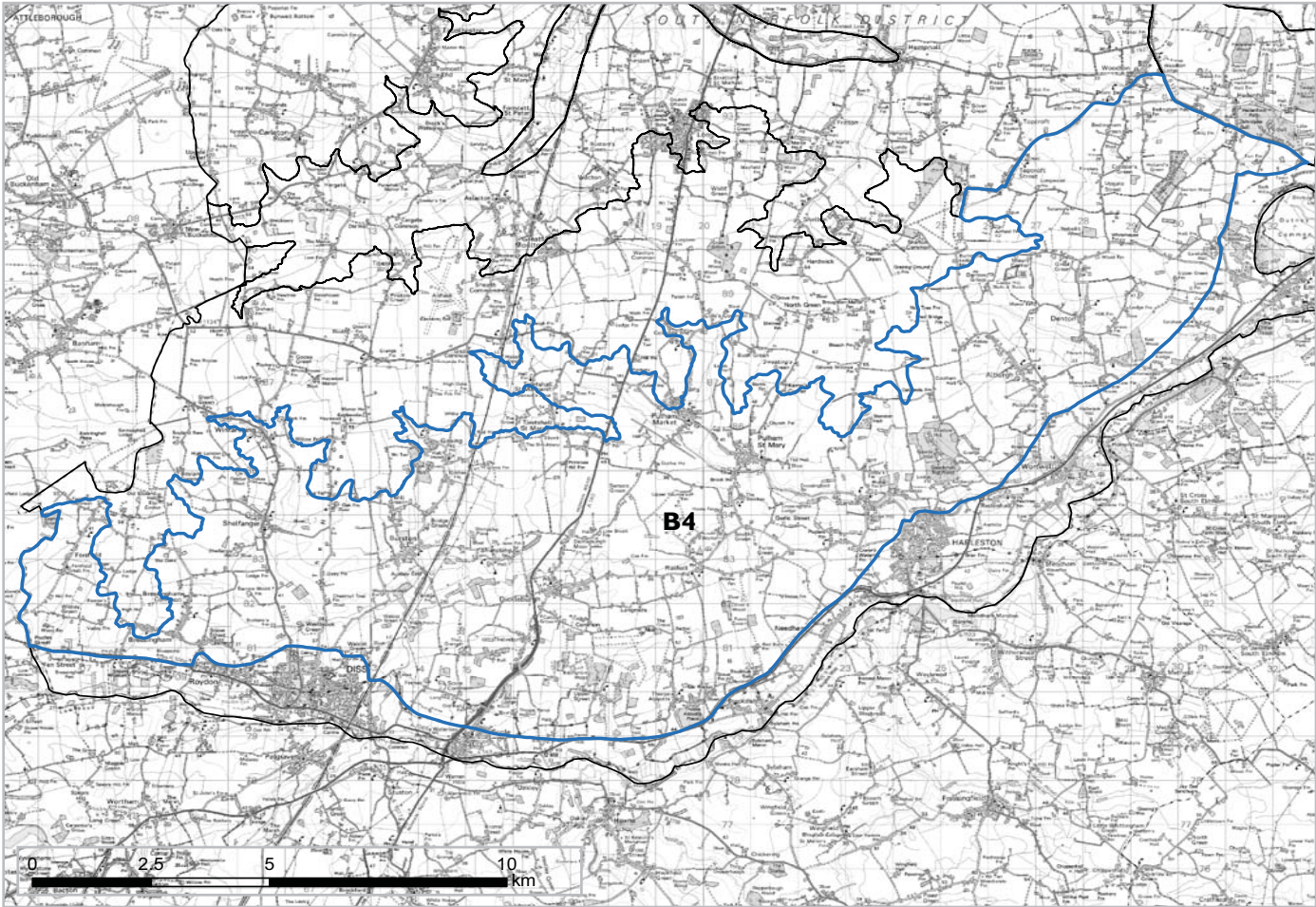


Character Area: B4
Waveney Tributary Farmland



Location within South Norfolk District



Extent of the Waveney Tributary Farmland Character Area



Ponds and moats are a feature



Ditches and wide grass verges occur alongside roads



Characteristic black and white signposts



Large oaks are distinctive as hedgerow trees



Pylons cut through the area



View across arable fields towards farm buildings

11. B4: WAVENEY TRIBUTARY FARMLAND

DESCRIPTION

- 11.1. **Location and Boundaries:** The Waveney Tributary Farmland character area lies wholly within the Rural Policy Area. It covers an extensive area in the southern part of the District, incorporating land which slopes down to the lower lying Waveney Valley, which forms its southern boundary. Its north western boundary is defined by the 50m AOD contour and the higher land of the plateau. The South Norfolk/Breckland District administrative boundary forms the western edge of the character area.
- 11.2. The character of the **Waveney Tributary Farmland** is illustrated in **Figure B4**.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **Transitional landscape** occupying the mid ground between the upland plateau (Great Moulton Plateau Farmland) and the main river valley (Waveney Valley).
- **Undulating landform to the south of the area** where it is dissected by tributaries. **Land is higher and flatter towards the north of the character area** adjoining the Great Moulton Plateau Farmland.
- **A large-scale open landscape** on the higher ground with some distant views. **Pockets of enclosure and intimacy** associated with the tributaries.
- **Narrow streams, drainage channels (within grass verges) ponds and moats** are characteristic. Ditches occur along road sides and in places divide fields.
- **Predominantly arable farmland** with a varied field pattern. Fields are small to the south of the character area, larger on the higher plateau areas.
- **Mature hedgerow trees are very distinctive** especially large mature oaks.
- **Hawthorn/ blackthorn hedges** divide fields.
- **Scattered blocks of woodland** with some larger blocks having SSSI designations.
- **Pockets of parkland** and remnant parkland occur.
- **Diversity of ecological assemblages** including grassland, wet habitats, woodland, some of which are SSSI.
- **Round tower and isolated churches** are distinctive landmarks. Moats and earthworks are a feature.
- **Settlement occurs throughout the character area.** Villages are frequently linear along roads with some villages set around greens.

- **Large farm units and processing units** are present plus pylons which cut through this area.
- **The A140 and the Norwich-Diss railway line** cut across the character area north south. Otherwise winding rural roads, and sunken lanes dissect the rural area.
- **A peaceful and rural landscape.**

Geology and Soils

- 11.3. Geology is predominantly chalky Glacial Till (Lowestoft Till) with fine loamy over clayey soils. Where tributary streams have incised this Glacial Till there are corresponding bands of sands and gravels and alluvial deposits.

Landform, Topography, Scale and Enclosure

- 11.4. This is a transitional landscape gently sloping from the higher plateau landscapes (at 50m AOD) to the Waveney Valley (at approximately 30m AOD). In the north, such as around Tivetshall St Mary, the landform is a higher and flatter reflecting the transition to the adjacent Great Moulton Plateau Farmland. In the south of the character area the topography is more undulating where tributary streams dissect the landform. The narrow tributary valleys are an important local feature providing pockets of intimacy and enclosure contrasting with the larger scale open landscape found on the higher ground.

Land Cover and Biodiversity

- 11.5. In common with much of South Norfolk, land cover is predominantly arable farmland. The field pattern is varied with small/ medium fields becoming larger towards the higher plateau land. Fields are irregular in shape, divided by hawthorn/ blackthorn hedges and occasionally ditches. Hedgerow trees are a feature, particularly large mature oaks. These sometimes occur alongside the grass verges, which flank rural roads forming distinctive 'avenues'. Small areas of grazed pasture are associated with the tributary valleys; these are infrequent, but nevertheless an important local landscape feature. Numerous streams, ditches and drainage channels occur and along with the moats and ponds these are a significant and defining characteristic.
- 11.6. Small pockets of woodland occur throughout the character area, but are particularly characteristic in the area south of Burston and Dickleburgh, towards the River Waveney, where they create a more intimate and enclosed landscape. A large number of these are of ancient origin such as Billingford Wood, Middle Wood and Big Wood to the south of Dickleburgh and Dodds Wood and Olivers Wood to the east of Dickleburgh. Further east the area is characterised by larger woodland blocks; Gawdy Hall Big Wood and Sexton Wood are larger areas of broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland, with SSSI designations. Further tree cover is provided by poplar shelterbelts, such as those around Alburgh and Denton and areas of historic parkland as at Thorpe Abbots Place on the edge of the River Waveney, The Old Hall at Gissing, Gawdy Hall and Earsham Park. A range of woodland habitats are also protected as County Wildlife Sites. These include Home Wood and The Belt and New Plantation - a varied woodland site, with the presence of a wild service tree,

which is a rarity in Norfolk. East Wood, South of Denton has outstanding ground flora while Abbey Farm Orchard west of Alburgh is an old orchard with species-rich semi improved grassland.

- 11.7. Areas of unimproved grassland occur at Boyland Common and Langmere Green, west of Dickleburgh with areas of damper vegetation and scrub at Beck Meadow west of Denton. Shelfanger Meadows SSSI is an area of neutral lowland grassland containing shallow wet flushes. Other wet habitats include the Carr and Dark Belt (south of Burston). The Carr is a mosaic of woodland, grassland and swamp adjacent to tributary of River Waveney and criss-crossed by numerous drains. Dark Belt is a diverse wet site consisting of species-rich marshy grassland with planted and semi-natural woodland. These are all County Wildlife Sites.

Historic Character

- 11.8. Castle Hill, Hangman's Hill and the adjoining earthworks north west of Denton are a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Castle Hill is a mound surrounded by a ditch and flanked by a horseshoe shaped earthwork, beside it is a knoll known as Hangman's Hill.
- 11.9. Parkland and associated halls and mansions buildings occur throughout the area. Thelveton Hall with its Elizabethan/ Jacobean brick façade lies to the south west of Dickleburgh. Parkland/ estate land also remains where buildings have been demolished e.g. at Thorpe Abbots Place. Locally, the tree belts, plantations and parkland trees contribute to a more enclosed wooded character. Moats feature throughout the character area usually associated with old halls (e.g. Shelfanger Hall) and farms.
- 11.10. The regular pattern of small fields around Dickleburgh is a topic of debate with at a number of explanations for its appearance. The most widely accepted is that it is as a coaxial system of pre- or proto-historic type, which predates the building of the earliest Roman road in the area. Other views are that it derives from a regularly planned land allocation contemporary with the Roman road, or that most of the field shapes are post medieval, being based upon routeways following natural features, only occasionally conforming to a grid by chance.

Settlement and Built Character

- 11.11. The tributary farmlands were one of the first areas to be settled and by Roman times the area had been extensively settled – a general trend which continued with the Saxons. Settlement is concentrated in the heart of the character area with linear villages frequently occurring along roads or at crossroads. Some village are more compact and set around village greens (Pulham Market, Shelfanger and Burston) while others lack a distinct centre/ core. To the east and west of the character area settlement is less concentrated. Building styles include a mix of traditional to the more suburban edges. Black and white signs are a re-occurring feature, with small signs announcing the villages and signposts giving directions. The cores of Winfarthing, Gissing, Burston, Dickleburgh, Pulham Market, Pulham St Mary, Starston are all designated as Conservation Areas.
- 11.12. Within the wider landscape, large farm buildings and farm processing units occur and are often visually dominant. Older farm buildings are characteristically red brick and

tilled. Lines of pylons cross the character area offset east and west of the Norwich to Diss Railway line. Airfields are a feature of the area with a former airfield to the south east of Dickleburgh. The former Pulham Airstation played a significant role in the testing of trans-Atlantic crossings of airships in the first half of the twentieth century.

- 11.13. Churches are a distinctive feature of this character area with towers often being significant in rural views. Large, prominent churches are found at Dickleburgh and Pulham St Mary with round tower churches sited at Thorpe Abbots and Gissing. Alburgh has a small church with a distinctive tall tower and an isolated round c13 tower church occurs amid fields south of the village of Shimpling.
- 11.14. The A140 cuts north to south through the area bypassing Dickleburgh. Otherwise this character area is dissected by quiet winding rural roads and in places sunken lanes. Crossing points across the tributary streams are a feature e.g. Burston Bridge. To the west of the A140 and running in parallel is the railway line which connects Norwich and Diss.

EVALUATION

Significant Landscape Assets

National/International

- Diversity of habitats including ancient woodland and unimproved meadows, some of which are SSSI (Shelfanger Meadow, Gawdy Hall Big Wood and Sexton Wood).
- Scheduled Ancient Monument (Castle Hill, Hangman's Hill and the adjoining earthworks north west of Denton).
- Presence of round tower churches (Thorpe Abbots and Gissing).
- Presence of isolated churches (south of Shimpling and Denton).

District/County

- Presence of historic parkland scattered across the area.
- Wooded appearance created by the mix of hedgerows, remnant historic parkland and woodland blocks.
- Presence of tributary watercourses.
- Historic field pattern around Dickleburgh.
- A range of County Wildlife Sites including woodland, grassland and wetter habitats.

Local

- Drainage ditches.

- Wide grass verges alongside roads.
- Good hedgerow network.
- Mature hedgerow trees.
- Presence of river crossings.
- Sunken lanes.
- Water bodies (moats and farm ponds).

Sensitivities and Vulnerabilities

11.15. The principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of the Waveney Tributary Farmland are:

- the hedgerows and woodlands, which create pattern and variety in the landscape and contribute to a more intimate and enclosed character in some areas;
- the distinctive character and form of the individual small villages and settlements (linear and set around village greens) and the rural setting of villages;
- small-scale local vernacular features including the black and white fingerposts, black lane signs, and distinctive tributary crossing points;
- the rural road verges and lines of hedgerow trees which are especially sensitive to upgrading;
- 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/ infilling;
- the views to and setting of the distinctive and prominent churches;
- the historic field pattern around Dickleburgh;
- the overall peaceful, rural character and absence of visual and aural intrusion.

Landscape Strategy

11.16. **The overall strategy is to conserve the rural, peaceful quality of the Waveney Tributary Farmland with its strong farmland character, threaded by small tributary watercourses, and mix of more intimate, wooded, enclosed valleys contrasting with more open landscapes. There are opportunities to enhance the landscape to reinforce local character:**

- maintain and manage moats, field ponds and drainage ditches;
- protect and manage rural grass verges;
- maintain areas of pasture within the tributary valleys and seek opportunities to extend pastures along watercourses;

- 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 particularly along roadsides;
- manage woodlands to conserve character and enhance biodiversity and consider opportunities to extend and link woodland, including the creation of new woodlands around villages;
- conserve and restore historic parkland landscapes;
- conserve the distinctive small-scale historic field pattern around villages as at Alburgh, Dickleburgh, Denton and Burston.

Development Considerations

11.17. Any development in the area must respect the character of Waveney Tributary Farmland and in particular consider the following:

- conserve the rural peaceful character, with the pattern of small villages and settlements set within the agricultural landscape, but not dominating it;
- conserve the character and individual identity of the villages either set around greens or loosely following roads. Infilling or extension of settlements could result in a change to a more compact character and merging of settlement and loss of individual identity;
- seek to maintain the soft grass verges and open frontages that characterise the settlements along rural roads and avoid creation of hard boundaries or surfaces which would impart a more urban character;
- conserve village greens and commons;
- conserve the local vernacular features that contribute to the rural character – including the distinctive road signs and road names. Conserve the quiet, rural character of the narrow lanes that cross the area;
- consider potential effects of potential large-scale developments (for example relating to airfield sites).