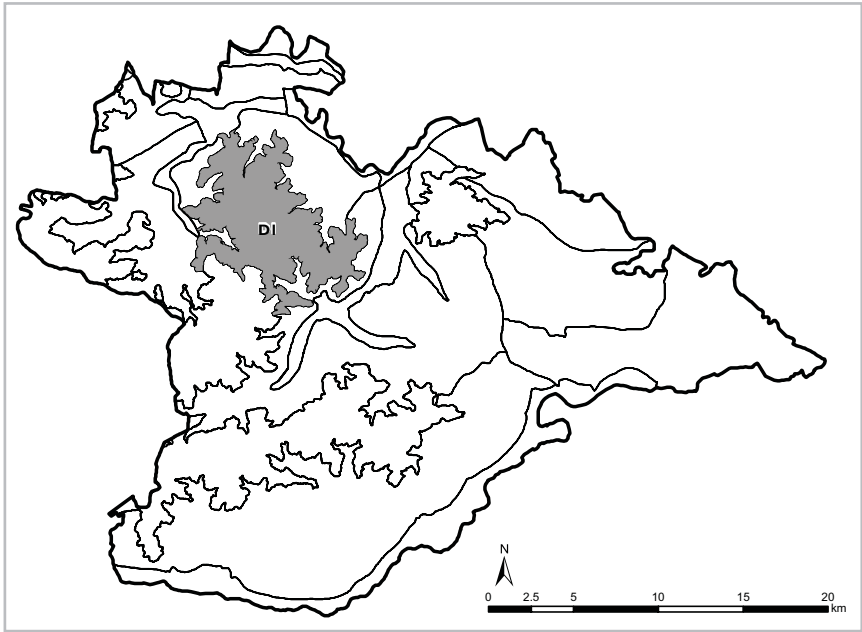
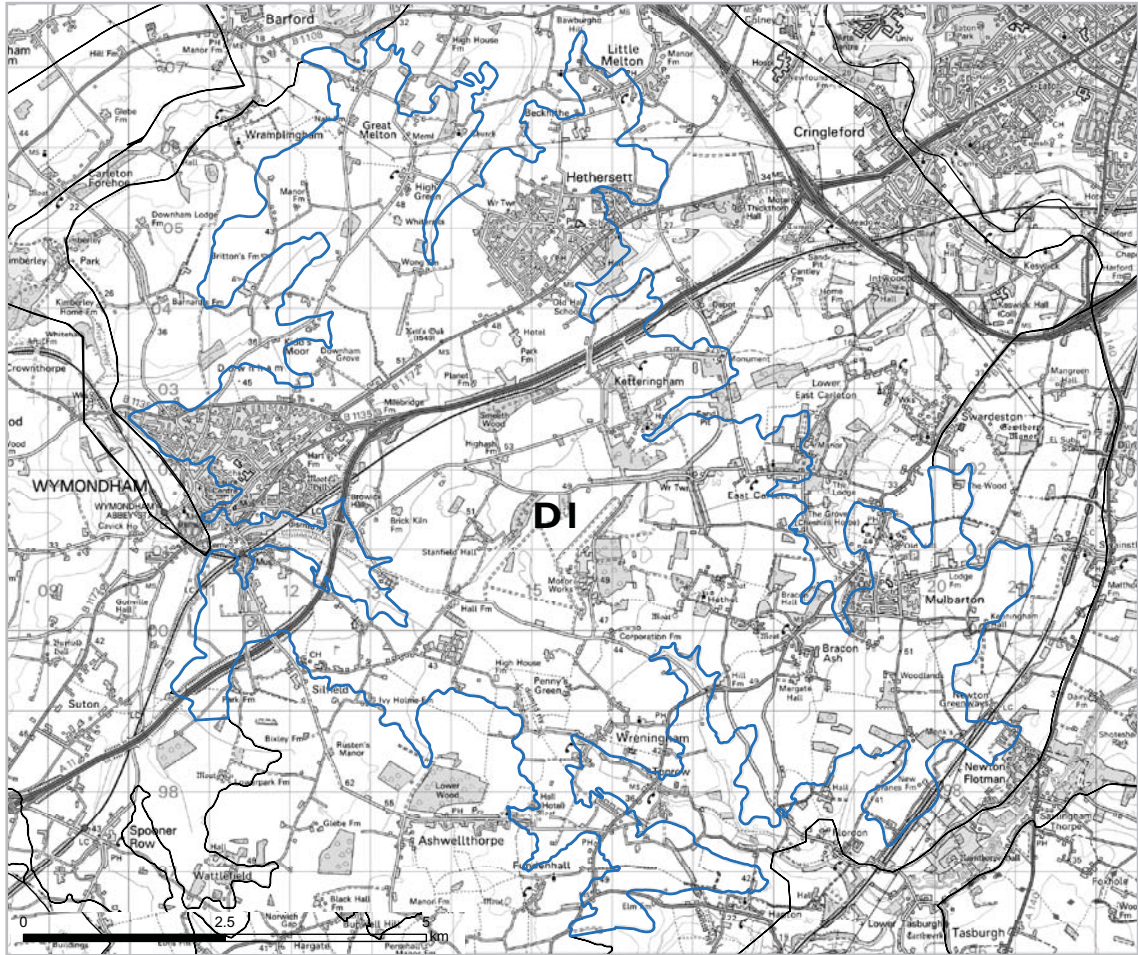


Character Area: DI

Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland



Location within South Norfolk District



Extent of the Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland Character Area



Plateau top view



View of the plateau demonstrating the flatness and sense of openness, in part due to the removal of field boundaries



Mulbarton church and pond illustrating the character of the smaller settled villages on the plateau



Typical Wymondham street with appealing timber-framed and brick vernacular architecture

15. D1: WYMONDHAM SETTLED PLATEAU FARMLAND

DESCRIPTION

- 15.1. **Location and Boundaries:** The Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland occurs to the southwest of Norwich, above contour level 40m AOD. It covers a large part of the Norwich Policy area and includes the medium sized settlements of Wymondham and Hethersett.
- 15.2. The character of **Wyndmondham Settled Plateau Farmland** is illustrated in **Figure D1**.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- **A settled landscape with** large edge-of-plateau towns (including market towns and those of more modern origin) and villages plus smaller, nucleated settlements which are dispersed across the plateau.
- **Large expanse of flat landform** with little variation over long distances with strong open horizons – the archetypal ‘Norfolk’ landscape of popular imagination.
- **Large scale open arable fields** including sugarbeet, cereal and oilseed rape monocultures creating simple, often monotonous, character.
- **Long views from plateau edge**, including to Norwich from the northern plateau edge.
- **Poor hedgerows generally**, which accentuates the openness of the landscape. The resulting wide verges beside roads often contain attractive wildflowers. Some mature hedgerow trees are found, particularly beside roads, which are a distinctive feature. Areas of more intact hedgerow network sometimes occur around settlements.
- **Sparsely wooded** but with occasional woodland blocks, sometimes associated with former parkland areas, creating a more wooded character and wooded horizons in parts of this generally open landscape.
- **Vernacular buildings** particularly brick built, timber framed, and stepped gables. Some isolated churches, sometimes hidden by dense screening churchyard vegetation.
- **Historic Market Town** at Wymondham.

Geology and Soils

- 15.3. The geology of this area is predominantly chalky Glacial Till with small areas of glacial sand and clay.

Landform, Topography, Scale and Enclosure

- 15.4. The landscape is flat to gently rolling and due to its relatively elevated position and predominantly arable land cover is open, with panoramic and long range views. In particular, there are long views possible from the plateau edge. In the north of the area this includes identifiable key views towards the city of Norwich.

Land Cover and Biodiversity

- 15.5. The predominant land use is arable farmland comprising a mix of cereal crops and sugarbeet. The large fields have frequently been denuded of hedgerow and boundary vegetation, although some of the areas on the central part of the plateau retain good diverse mixed hedgerows, immediately adjacent to the roads. There are also some remnant mature hedgerow trees. A notable veteran tree, within the area is Kett's Oak named in honour of William Kett who led a rebellion in 1549. The landscape is generally sparsely wooded, however there are a few woodland blocks which together create wooded horizons. These tend to be associated with the few halls or remnant parkland present on the plateau. Broadleaved woodland blocks are a particular characteristic within the area to the east of the A11 including a number of ancient woodlands.

Historic Character

- 15.6. The largest settlement is Wymondham, which is an attractive historic market town. In part this was based upon the close presence of Wymondham Priory, founded in 1107, which became the Benedictine Wymondham Abbey in 1448 and is located in the Tiffey Valley (Yare/Tiffey Rural River Valley Character Area). However, the growth of Wymondham centred upon the market town status, which had probably existed before Henry I's official grant. The attractive timber framed 'market cross', built in 1615 in the town centre is a reminder of this past eminence and is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. A moot hall on the outskirts of Wymondham is also listed. Due to redevelopment following a fire the town centre now has a strong seventeenth century vernacular. The settlement grew organically as a result of the development of industries including woodturning and weaving and the foundation of brickworks to exploit the Glacial Till geology. Consequently, from the eighteenth century, brick and pantile became a common building material, surpassing the earlier timber-framed building and often used in combination with flint. A number of the brick buildings have now been painted black and white.
- 15.7. The second largest settlement is Hethersett, which is a large village/small town. Much of Hethersett is new estate development however there are older vernacular buildings of brick and brick/flint including stepped gables. Mulbarton is also a significant settlement, again with a high proportion of vernacular brick-built residences. It has a large triangular green known as The Common, which is an unusual feature and also has a large village pond. Elsewhere, particularly around Hethel, there are a number of moated structures. The smaller settlements include Great Melton, East Carleton, Bracon Ash, High Green, Hethel and Wrenningham. These are all attractive settlements with a combination of brick and other buildings. These include stepped brick gables and, more rarely, shaped or 'Dutch' gables. Other vernacular features include a windmill, without sails, near Silfield. Parkland was once a feature of the landscape of this area, but of the original seven areas only

two – Hethersett Hall and Ketteringham – remain. The Great Melton Parkland is still a distinctive area in the landscape.

Settlement and Built Character

- 15.8. The presence of settlement is the defining characteristic with large villages/small towns, such as Wymondham, Mulbarton and Hethersett, located at the plateau edge interspersed with a scattering of smaller villages and dispersed dwellings and farms across the plateau. Most settlements are very visible within the open plateau landscape.
- 15.9. The character area includes more recent infrastructure development including the route of the A11, which cuts across the plateau and introduces an element of noise and movement into the landscape resulting in marginalized land in the corridor. There are also a number of 'industrial' type farm buildings, including grain towers and silos that punctuate the horizon (particularly near Silfield), and the Lotus Car works, although the latter is not a major visual intrusion being partially screened by woodland. A disused airfield, a feature of this part of Norfolk, is also located on the plateau top.

EVALUATION

Significant Landscape Assets

National/International

- Areas of ancient woodland.
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments - Wymondham Market Cross is a local landmark.
- Presence of round-towered churches.
- Presence of isolated churches.

District/County

- Strong regional vernacular character, partly eroded by modern development.
- Hethersett Hall and Ketteringham parkland remain.
- Wooded appearance.
- Waterways (of little visual influence).
- A windmill without sails is present near Silfield.
- Moated structures occur around Hethel.

Local

- Important views to Norwich from north of area.
- Drainage ditches.

- Wide grass verges alongside roads.
- Good hedgerow network.
- Mature hedgerow trees, e.g. Kett's Oak.
- Water bodies e.g. village pond at Mulbarton.
- Distinctive plateau landscape.
- Very important strategic break(s) between Wymondham-Hethersett-Cringleford and Norwich.

Sensitivities and Vulnerabilities

15.10. The principal sensitivities and vulnerabilities of this character area have been identified. They include:

- imposition of insensitive developments and tall structures such as masts/grain silos and other large scale farm or industrial/commercial buildings that break up the skyline and intrude upon the sense of openness;
- loss of vernacular character particularly as a result of sprawl from the edge of the existing plateau top settlements;
- developments that intrude upon the view to important landmarks, e.g. Wymondham Abbey or the City of Norwich;
- further “opening-up” of the landscape through loss of woodland, hedgerows or hedgerow trees;
- the potential for settlement coalescence particularly associated with the vulnerable A11 corridor or B1172 between Wymondham and Hethersett.

Landscape Strategy

15.11. **The overall strategy for the Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland is to maintain its open agricultural landscape character, with its distinct pattern of concentrated settlement on the plateau edge with more dispersed nucleated villages and isolated farm buildings across the plateau top. At the same time there is an opportunity to enhance landscape character through conservation and restoration of features including:**

- restoration of hedgerows and field boundaries, particularly at settlement edges where vegetation could help integrate settlement into the landscape;
- woodland management (including former parklands) and, where appropriate, woodland creation to screen intrusive developments and enhance the ‘wooded horizon’ whilst retaining the positive aspects of openness;
- restoration and enhancement of the landscape adjacent to the A11 corridor.

Development Considerations

15.12. Any development must respect the character of the Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland. This will include reference to the following criteria:

- respect the distinctive settlement pattern comprising concentrations of development at plateau edge locations and smaller nucleated village settlements and dispersed buildings across the plateau;
- maintain the nucleated clustered character of the settlements and limit edge sprawl out into the adjacent landscape; well planned infill and edge development may be acceptable;
- consider (cumulative) impact of all tall structures such as masts, energy developments, farm buildings on skyline views and sense of 'openness' and particularly on views to the plateau skyline from the surrounding lower tributary farmland;
- maintain key views from the plateau edge to/from the City of Norwich;
- maintain strategic gaps between settlements, and in particular prevent further growth of Wymondham and/or Hethersett which would lead to coalescence of settlement along the A11 leading to the merger of Wymondham/Hethersett or Hethersett/Norwich.