

A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction

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6.3 Environmental Statement Appendices **Appendix 7.3 – Landscape Character Area**

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Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

**The Infrastructure Planning
(Applications: Prescribed Forms and
Procedure) Regulations 2009**

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ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT APPENDICES
Appendix 7.3 – Landscape Character Area

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Appendix 7.3 Landscape character area

1. Landscape character area

1.1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. The landscape character area considered by the assessment has been taken from the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment (SNLA) (2001, reviewed and confirmed 2012). It was identified as the basis for assessing the landscape character effects of the Proposed Scheme following a review of published landscape character studies (both national and local) combined with site observation. A preliminary assessment was undertaken to consider whether adjacent character areas beyond the host landscape character area required consideration. This concluded that they did not (an explanation of this judgement is provided in Environmental Statement (ES) Chapter 7, Landscape and visual **(TR010037/APP/6.1)**).
- 1.1.2. The settlement of Cringleford falls across the boundary of two landscape character areas identified by the SNLA. Due to its distance from the Proposed Scheme, topography and low sensitivity, there is no potential for a significant effect on townscape character at Cringleford. It has therefore been deemed unnecessary to consider the settlement as a separate townscape character area.
- 1.1.3. This document provides the detailed assessment of the effects of the Proposed Scheme on the Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland (Character Area C1 in the SNLA). The extent of the landscape character area is shown by ES Figure 7.3 Landscape Character **(TR010037/APP/6.2)**.
- 1.1.4. The following text summarises the baseline context, sensitivity and construction and operation effects of the Proposed Scheme on the landscape character area.

1.2. Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland

Baseline Context

- 1.2.1. The Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland landscape character area was originally identified by the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment of 2001. A review undertaken in 2012 confirmed the assessment but provides some updated information on its key characteristics, sensitivities, vulnerabilities and development considerations.
- 1.2.2. The Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland is a landscape defined by the rural and urban upper reaches of the River Yare. It is an essentially peaceful and rural landscape which acts as a transition between the sparsely settled plateau farmland to the west and the urban areas of Norwich within the lower Yare valley

to the east. Near the Proposed Scheme, however, local character is modified by the presence of several roads, the existing Thickthorn Junction and a railway.

1.2.3. The updated South Norfolk Landscape Assessment (2012) identifies twelve key characteristics. Those most relevant to the study area for the Proposed Scheme are as follows:

- Shelving landform with a gently undulating topography created by the presence of small tributary stream valleys cutting through the landscape providing a variety of open/more intimate landscape settings and long/framed views.
- Transitional landscape occupying the mid ground between the upland plateau of the Wymondham-Hethersett settled plateau farmland and the principal Yare Valley and forming part of the transition between the rural and urban landscape.
- Peaceful farmland with small farm woodlands and intermittently wooded tributary valleys creating a quiet rural atmosphere.
- Presence of large parkland estates particularly associated directly with the tributary valleys. Estate railings, boundary fences, tree-lined avenues and traditional wooded park land contribute to landscape character.
- Sparsely settled landscape of small clusters of farmhouses, small villages and rural dwellings interspersed with large manorial buildings and halls.
- A sense of impenetrability and remoteness despite the presence of major transportation corridors. The Norwich Southern Bypass and A11 Wymondham Road trisect the landscape and the area is also traversed by the main Norwich London railway line. These routes create corridors of movement and noise in this otherwise peaceful landscape. Elsewhere, there is an intricate network of narrow rural roads and lanes.
- The Yare's minor tributary streams are somewhat elusive - often hidden within the landscape by topography or trees noticeable only at fording points or at close-range.
- Arable and pastoral farmland of cereals and sugarbeet with more pastoral land uses within the immediate tributary valley corridor. Fields surrounded by sparse hedges and hedgerow trees, with occasional mature/veteran oaks forming a distinctive feature alongside the lanes.

1.2.4. The principal identified sensitivities and vulnerabilities of this landscape character area that are relevant to this assessment are:

- Proximity to Norwich and loss of rural farmland character through expansion of the urban edge of the City beyond the Yare Valley and development associated with the Southern Bypass/A11 or to the west of Cringleford.
- Particular vulnerability to loss of clarity of the rural/urban divide created by the Yare Valley.

- A gently shelving topography from the plateau and long views making this area especially sensitive to the location of any new development/ infrastructure – and potential impact on views to the City.
- Loss of mature tree boundaries (without replacement) resulting in further 'opening up' of views plus loss of woodland.

1.2.5. These sensitivities and vulnerabilities have informed the focus of the assessment of landscape character effects and have led to the following development considerations.

1.2.6. The document (Final report – 01/06/01) suggests that any development must respect the character of the Yare Tributary Farmland and Parkland character area, and conserve and enhance the key landscape assets as described in the landscape character assessment. In particular development must seek to maintain the peaceful farmland landscape and a clear rural/urban transition. This will include reference to the following key criteria of greatest relevance to the Proposed Scheme:

- Protect the quality, character and setting of the key landscape assets, notably the tributary corridors and the historic parklands which characterise the Yare Tributary Farmland and Parkland.
- Consider impact of proposals on the intricate rural lane network – avoid widening and kerb lighting which will quickly impart a more urban character.

1.2.7. The general condition and quality is generally good, but less so within the local study area due to the greater influence of transport infrastructure associated with the existing Thickthorn interchange.

1.2.8. Forces for change within the study area are evident in the proposed extension on the western edge of Cringleford. A residential development known as St Giles Park is currently (January 2021) being constructed on the western fringes of Cringleford between the existing settlement and the A47. The masterplan for this phased residential development includes a buffer public open space between the new housing and the A47. Designs for this buffer public open space are not yet available but it is anticipated that the landscape design would include areas of new tree planting to create both a landscape and a visual buffer to the east of the A47. It is anticipated that all phases of the residential development, including both the housing and the buffer public open space, would be largely complete by 2023. This is likely to coincide with the early phases of the construction of the Proposed Scheme.

Sensitivity

Value

- 1.2.9. The Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland landscape within the study area does not associate with any overarching landscape designations at either national or local level. A degree of value is locally attributed to the landscape's rural character and role in providing separation between urban areas and distinction from them. The Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland landscape within the study area also features individual trees and areas of woodland of considerable age, remnants of former designed parkland landscapes and, in proximity to the scheme, heritage features that contribute to character (the tumuli at Cantley Wood). These features and overall character combined with the localised influences of existing highway infrastructure afford a medium value to that part of the Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland landscape that falls within the study area.

Susceptibility

- 1.2.10. Susceptible landscape features and characteristics within that part of the Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland character area which falls within the study area include tree cover and the more intimate and enclosed character associated with Cantley Stream. The landscape within the study area is vulnerable to the erosion of its rural character, despite the proximity of large-scale existing highway infrastructure. The susceptibility of the character area is therefore considered to be medium.

Sensitivity

- 1.2.11. The overall sensitivity of that part of the Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland character area which falls within the study area has been assessed as **medium**. This assessment balances acknowledgement of the influence of existing highway infrastructure with the landscape's susceptibility to further loss of its peaceful rural character. That character helps to deliver separation between settlements and distinction between urban and rural areas.

Construction effects

- 1.2.12. During the temporary construction period areas of existing vegetation, areas of woodland and some individual trees would be removed from within the immediate highway corridor in the vicinity of the A47 and A11 and at Cantley Lane South. Construction activity would focus on the cuttings and embankments of the main interchange, the new Cantley Lane Link road and overbridges; and the realignment of a short section of Cantley Stream. Despite the large scale of some of the works they would largely occur on the alignment of or close to the existing

highway infrastructure (including large scale construction works below that existing infrastructure), limiting the wider effect on surrounding landscape character.

- 1.2.13. Away from the existing trunk road corridors impacts would be limited to localised areas at Cantley Lane South and within the enclosed field to the south of B1172 Norwich Road. The relatively low-lying position of the Site and the relatively high levels of surrounding tree cover would limit visibility of the works from surrounding parts of the landscape character area. During construction the Proposed Scheme would result in a **minor adverse magnitude** of landscape character change. This assessment reflects that the construction period is temporary (duration being factored into the assessment of the landscape character change) and that the effect on landscape character of the loss of trees and woodlands is primarily captured in the assessment of landscape character change at year 1 of operation. Given the presence of, and proximity to the existing Thickthorn Junction, the reasonably enclosed location limiting the geographical extent of influence, and the temporary nature of the construction period, the effect on the Yare Tributary Farmland and Parkland landscape character area during construction would be limited to a **slight adverse significance** of effect.

Operation effects

- 1.2.14. Following completion of construction of the new A11-A47 connector road, this principal feature of the Proposed Scheme, tucked in against the existing trunk road infrastructure and largely hidden from view within a deep cutting (other than for drivers passing through), would have a very limited influence on surrounding landscape character. The landscape integration and visual separation of this new slip road in cutting would be further strengthened by the inclusion of a bunded false cutting on its southern side along with new hedgerow and tree planting. This mitigation will ensure that views from the south in the vicinity of Cantley Lane South would not feature either the traffic movements or lighting columns associated with the slip road giving a strong sense of separation between the new slip road and the rural landscape to the south.
- 1.2.15. Elsewhere, away from the existing trunk road corridors, at year 1 of operation new planting associated with the new Cantley Lane Link road and overbridges and changes to the alignment and levels at Cantley Lane South, including substantial new embankments, would not have reached maturity. A change in character would occur at the new junction between Cantley Lane South and the new Cantley Lane Link road due partly to the need to adopt modern highway standards which will be inconsistent with the narrow and informal existing character of this rural lane. Some large, mature trees along Cantley Lane South would have been removed and new replacement tree planting would be

immature. New planting would initially do little to soften the appearance of these new structures and junction within the peaceful, rural setting and away from the busier trunk road infrastructure.

- 1.2.16. At year of opening the Proposed Scheme would result in a **moderate adverse magnitude** of landscape character change. Overall at year of opening, there would be a **moderate adverse (significant)** effect on the Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland character area due to the relative prominence of the Proposed Scheme infrastructure away from the trunk road network (including the Cantley Lane Link road overbridges and junction); due to the residual year of opening loss of mature trees and woodlands relative to the existing baseline and due to the newly created junction at Cantley Lane South (which would need to reflect modern highway standards in contrast to the current, sometimes very narrow, character of Cantley Lane South).
- 1.2.17. Over time proposed planting will mature and begin to mitigate the adverse effects of the Proposed Scheme identified at year of opening in the vicinity of Cantley Lane South. New woodland planting on the embankment of the new Cantley Lane Link road would begin to gain height, soften the appearance of the new infrastructure and begin to integrate it into the existing rural character. This would lead to increasing enclosure which will more closely replicate baseline conditions. However, although the new junction between Cantley Lane South and the new Cantley Lane Link road would be softened and partially integrated into the landscape, its geometry would remain different from that which currently characterises the narrow country lane. Furthermore, new and replacement tree planting along Cantley Lane South would have matured to a degree but would not yet have attained the stature of some of the existing trees that would have been removed.
- 1.2.18. By year 15 of operation, the Proposed Scheme would result in a **minor adverse magnitude** of landscape character change. By year 15 of operation, the establishment of Proposed Scheme landscape mitigation would contribute to a reduction in the magnitude of landscape change. However, localised residual landscape character effects would remain beyond year 15 as an outcome of the changes associated with the enlarged junction and overbridges at the Cantley Lane Link road and because replacement tree planting along Cantley Lane South will not replicate the stature of some of the existing trees to be removed within a fifteen year timeframe. Several mature oak trees of considerable age and stature will have been replaced by oak trees (or similar species) which would be maturing, but still relatively small (it has been assumed that the replacement trees along Cantley Lane South will have attained a height of approximately 6m within 15 years compared to existing trees of between 10m and 15m, some of which are also of considerable girth and spread). Despite some degree of landscape integration, a degree of erosion of the distinct underlying rural

character would persist away from the existing trunk road infrastructure. Despite the integrating contribution of new planting, a localised **slight adverse (not significant)** effect on the Yare Tributary Farmland with Parkland character area would persist at Cantley Lane South due to localised changes to the character of this rural lane and the still relatively small size of replacement trees.

1.3. Glossary

AOD – Above Ordnance Datum

PRoW – Public Rights of Way

SNLA – South Norfolk Landscape Assessment