

4.5 Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Character

Reasoned Justification

- 4.45 The landscape of South Norfolk comprises a rich and often subtle diversity of character and features, whether natural or influenced by man. Outside the limits of the main built-up centres of the market towns and larger villages, expanses of agricultural land are punctuated by scattered settlements, woodlands, trees and hedgerows, commons, rivers, broads, and heaths.
- 4.46 The district has a slightly undulating topography with gentle transitions. River valleys provide the greatest natural variation in landform and contrast to the arable farmed plateaus, while man-made features such as the Roman town at Caistor St Edmund, railway lines and the dual carriageway by-passes for Norwich (A47) and Wymondham (A11) have imposed their own contrasts.
- 4.47 Throughout the district are identified assets that have helped enrich the landscape. There are many Registered Historic Parks, such as Kimberley, which has arguably one of the finest concentrations of veteran trees in the county, and also a number of locally significant parks and gardens. In addition are remnants of former estates, such as Costessey, the plantings of which still provide significant visual reminders of a grand past. Across the district are many sites of ancient woodland, and also an identified historic hedgerow pattern in the Dickleburgh area.
- 4.48 The landscape of the district includes four of the National Character Areas and studies commissioned by the Council have identified seven Landscape Types that share common characteristics of geology, topography and vegetation. The parts of the district within the Broads Authority area are subject to the Broads Landscape Character Assessment. The seven Landscape Types identified within the studies for this plan are: Rural River Valley, Tributary Farmland, Tributary Farmland with Parkland, Settled Plateau Farmland, Plateau Farmland, Valley Urban Fringe and Fringe Farmland. These in turn are further divided to give more detailed analysis.
- 4.49 Studies confirm the distinctive characteristics and special qualities of the five identified Rural River Valleys, the Valley Urban Fringe and their constituent Landscape Character Areas, within South Norfolk that are desirable to safeguard. They contribute:
- a distinctive character and sense of place;
 - contain important/rare features and landmarks and diverse habitats;

- grazed pastoral valley floors; intimate and enclosed landscape with overall small-scale character; and
 - enjoy a largely intact rural character, which in places is highly tranquil and undisturbed.
- 4.50 The Rural River Valleys and Valley Urban Fringe Extents are identified with the Landscape Character Areas to which they contribute.
- 4.51 The **National Planning Policy Framework** and **Joint Core Strategy** emphasise the importance of identifying and responding to **landscape character** and distinctiveness through good design. Development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have taken into account the key findings from the 2001 South Norfolk Landscape Assessment as updated by the 2012 review. This will be particularly relevant when the development sits in a location with distinctive and sensitive landscape characteristics.
- 4.52 The landscape character areas and river valley extents (Rural River Valley and Valley Urban Fringe) are shown on Map 4.5

Policy DM 4.5 Landscape Character and River Valleys

All development should respect, conserve and where possible, enhance the landscape character of its immediate and wider environment. Development proposals that would cause significant adverse impact on the distinctive landscape characteristics of an area will be refused.

All development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have taken the following elements (from the 2001 South Norfolk Landscape Assessment as updated by the 2012 review) into account:

- **The key characteristics, assets, sensitivities and vulnerabilities;**
- **The landscape strategy; and**
- **Development considerations.**

Particular regard will be had to protecting the distinctive characteristics, special qualities and geographical extents of the identified Rural River Valleys and Valley Urban Fringe landscape character types.

Notes

- Core Planning Principles para 17 (point 5) of the **National Planning Policy Framework** requires planning to account for the different roles and character of different urban and rural areas and recognising the 'intrinsic beauty of the countryside'. Section 11 addresses the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment including criteria for assessing proposals impacting on landscape. Paragraph

170 calls for landscape character assessments to be prepared in areas where expansion is considered.

- Sections 7 and 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework address how the impact of development on **landscape character** should be assessed.
- **Joint Core Strategy** Objectives 8 & 9 and Policy 2 address the need to reflect landscape character
- The South Norfolk Landscape Assessment Report (2001) identifies areas of distinctive landscape characters in the district. All development proposals should demonstrate how they have taken account of these characteristics.
- The source of Map 4.5 is the **2012 Local Landscape Designations Review** work on Landscape Character Areas and River Valleys in the Norwich Policy Area, carried out by Chris Blandford Associates. This confirms the boundaries of the Landscape Character Areas arising from the 2001 study findings and the Rural River Valleys and Valley Urban Fringe Extents. These will be identified on the Policies Map.
- The **South Norfolk Place-making Guide** also provides guidance in regard to landscaping.