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Wooded Plateau Claylands



Summary

Overall description:

An ancient wooded landscape of arable farms, associated with heavy clay soils on gently rolling plateaux, which are lightly dissected by minor river valleys.

Location:

Occurs in Norfolk, from Attleborough northwards to Fakenham and eastwards as far as Loddon; in Suffolk on the clay plateau edge in an arc from Stowmarket to Diss and from Lowestoft south to Hadleigh; and in two smaller areas in northeast Essex.

Physical environment

Landform:

A gently rolling landform associated mainly with glacial till plateaux, but also occurring on London clay in Essex. This landscape is often dissected by small river valleys around the edge of the plateau, creating more complex slopes.

Natural / water features:

Areas of poor drainage/waterlogged soils where ponds are a common feature.

Vegetation and land use

Ecological character:

A scattering of small to medium-sized ancient woodlands, connected by an irregular network of similarly ancient hedgerows. A relatively high proportion of this landscape is primary habitat (> 4%), but little is specifically protected (less than 1%).

Primary land use :

Arable land use.

Tree cover:

Relic patches of ancient semi-natural woodland and scattered hedgerow trees (oak, ash and field maple).

Cultural pattern

Historic features:

Villages often associated with medieval greens, in places called tyes. Parklands are prominent in some parts such as East Suffolk (eg Helmingham). There are also a large number of medieval moats throughout this landscape.

Enclosure pattern:

Varied field pattern including a mixture of irregular and sinuous boundaries, the latter often defined by bushy hedgerows. 20th-century boundary removal and reorganisation has led to some regularisation of field shapes.

Settlement pattern:

Rural settlement is fairly dense, comprising a clustered pattern of villages, hamlets and large outlying farms, connected by a network of winding, often hedged lanes and paths. Little to no 20th century development.

Strong vernacular tradition of timber-framed buildings, tiled roofs and some thatch. Also some 19th and 20th century brick buildings, especially in the linear hamlets and on the enclosed greens.

Historic development :

This is a landscape dominated by enclosures of medieval and earlier origin, including some areas with co-axial patterns. Late enclosures are a minor element. Fields have seen significant modification in the 20th century.

Perceptions

Tranquility:

The rural nature of much of this landscape and high incidence of ancient woodland, mean that it has a high degree of tranquillity, despite a relatively dense rural settlement.

Views:

Despite being a reasonably well-wooded landscape the rolling plateau landform allows frequent longer views. The comprehensive network of winding lanes and tall hedges, however, often provide a more intimate feeling.



Wooded Hills and Ridges



Summary

Overall description:

This is a varied and textured landscape characterised by undulating hills and steep ridges, which are cloaked in woodland, with clearings of arable farmland and pasture.

Location:

Located in the south of the East of England in Essex and Hertfordshire.

Physical environment

Landform:

Undulating land, often steeply sloping, with distinctive ridges and narrow plateau summits.

Natural / water features:

Minor streams drain the hills and feed into adjacent river valleys/low lying landscapes.

Vegetation and land use

Ecological character:

A combination of heavy, gleyed soils supports a high cover of ancient deciduous woodland. Survival of Ancient Woodland is relatively high, much of which is found in large blocks and protected by designated sites (>1%).

Primary land use :

Mixed farming (pasture and arable) between extensive areas of woodland. Some peri-urban land uses including horse grazing, golf courses and country parks.

Tree cover:

Frequent, often large ancient woodlands, in places associated with parkland.

Cultural pattern

Historic features:

Small to medium sized parklands and relic commons. Historic churches in settlements act as local landmarks.

Enclosure pattern:

Field pattern is generally irregular and sinuous. Areas that have been extensively modified through field reorganisation tend to have a more regular pattern.

Settlement pattern:

Settlement is densely dispersed, with many linear clusters along roadsides. The influence of towns (both new developments and vastly expanded historic settlements) are also a feature within this landscape.

To be completed at a later date.

Historic development :

Historically this landscape has comprised a mixture of wooded areas and fields, many of which are likely to have been created by assarting. Fieldscapes tend to be dominated by early enclosures, with significant areas of co-axial fields.

Perceptions

Tranquility:

The hilltops and lanes are relatively tranquil, however near to settlements and road infrastructure tranquillity reduces considerably.

Views:

Enclosed character due to woodland cover and mature hedgerows. Where there are breaks in the woodland cover the elevated nature of these hills and ridges affords long distance views.

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