

Oulton Neighbourhood Area Consultation Responses

Consultation period: 12th October to 23rd November 2018

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Historic England

Thank you for notifying Historic England about your Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation. As the Government’s adviser on the historic environment, Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. We are therefore pleased to have the opportunity to comment on your neighbourhood plan area at this early stage.

We note that this is the re-designation of the boundary, following administrative changes in Lowestoft. We would strongly recommend that, where the boundary of Oulton and Lowestoft’s neighbourhood areas runs together, a consistent approach to the management of these areas is considered.

Neighbourhood Plans are a great opportunity for local communities to set the agenda for their places, setting out what is important and why about different aspects of their parish or other area within the neighbourhood area boundary, and providing clear policy and guidance to readers - be they interested members of the public, planners or developers - regarding how the place should develop over the course of the plan period.

Paragraph 185 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) sets out that Plans, including Neighbourhood Plans, should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. In particular, this strategy needs to take into account the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of all types of heritage asset where possible, the need for new development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and ensure that it considers opportunities to use the existing historic environment to help reinforce this character of a place.

Information and guidance on how heritage can best be incorporated into Neighbourhood Plans has been produced by Historic England, including on evidence gathering, design advice and policy

writing. Our webpage contains links to a number of other documents which your forum might find useful. These can help you to identify what it is about your area which makes it distinctive, and how you might go about ensuring that the character of the area is protected or improved through appropriate policy wording and a robust evidence base. This can be found here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/plan-making/improve-your-neighbourhood/>. The recently published Historic England Advice Note 11- Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment available to download also provides useful links to exemplar neighbourhood plans that may provide you with inspiration and assistance for your own. This can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/neighbourhood-planning-and-the-historic-environment/>

The conservation officer at Waveney District Council (soon to be East Suffolk Council) will be the best placed person to assist you in the development of the Plan with respect to the historic environment and can help you to consider and clearly articulate how a strategy can address the area's heritage assets. Although the neighbourhood area does contain a number of designated heritage assets, at this point we don't consider there is a need for Historic England to be involved in the detailed development of the strategy for your area, but we offer some general advice and guidance below.

A desktop study of your Neighbourhood Plan Area indicates that it contains a number of designated heritage assets including six listed buildings, of which the Church of St Michael and the Manor House are of very high significance and listed Grade I or II*. It will be important that, as a minimum, the strategy you put together for this area safeguards those elements of your neighbourhood area that contribute to the significance of those assets. This will ensure that they can be enjoyed by future generations of the area and make sure your plan is in line with the requirements of national planning policy, as found in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The government's [National Planning Practice Guidance](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2)

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2> on neighbourhood planning is also clear that, where relevant, Neighbourhood Plans need to include enough information about local heritage to guide local authority planning decisions and to put broader strategic heritage policies from the local authority's local plan into action but at a *neighbourhood* scale. Your Neighbourhood Plan is therefore an important opportunity for a community to develop a positive strategy for the area's locally important heritage assets that aren't recognised at a national level through listing or scheduling. If appropriate this should include enough information about local non-designated heritage assets, including sites of archaeological interest, locally listed buildings, or identified areas of historic landscape character. Your plan could, for instance, include a list of locally important neighbourhood heritage assets, (e.g. historic buildings, sites, views or places of importance to the local community) setting out what factors make them special. These elements can then be afforded a level of protection from inappropriate change through an appropriately worded policy in the plan. We refer you to our guidance on local heritage listing for further information: HE Advice Note 7 - local listing: <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7>

The NPPF (paragraphs 124 - 127) emphasises also the importance placed by the government on good design, and this section sets out that planning (including Neighbourhood Plans) should, amongst other things, be based on clear objectives and a robust evidence base that shows an

understanding and evaluation of an area, in this case the Parish of Oulton. The policies of neighbourhood plans should also ensure that developments in the area, especially if you are considering allocating sites for development, establish a strong sense of place, and respond to local character and history by reflecting the local identity of the place - for instance through the use of appropriate materials, and attractive design.

One way that we would recommend gathering evidence on your local area and what your community consider to be important is to undertake a “Placecheck” exercise. This is simple and effective a way of assessing the qualities of a place, what is worth preserving, what could be improved, and developing a strategy for achieving both. More information on this can be found here: <https://placecheck.info/en/>

The plan could also include consideration of any Grade II listed buildings or locally-designated heritage assets which are at risk or in poor condition, and which could then be the focus of specific policies aimed at facilitating their enhancement. We would refer you to our guidance on writing effective neighbourhood plan policies, which can be found here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/plan-making/improve-your-neighbourhood/policy-writing/>

If you have not already done so, we would recommend that you speak to the staff at Suffolk County Council who look after the Historic Environment Record and give advice on archaeological matters. They should be able to provide details of not only any designated heritage assets but also non designated locally-important buildings, archaeological remains and landscapes. Some Historic Environment Records may be available to view on-line via the Heritage Gateway (www.heritagegateway.org.uk <http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk>). It may also be useful to involve local voluntary groups such as a local Civic Society, local history groups, building preservation trusts, etc. in the production of your Neighbourhood Plan, particularly in the early evidence gathering stages.

Your local authority might also be able to provide you with more general support in the production of your Neighbourhood Plan, including the provision of appropriate maps, data, and supporting documentation. There are also funding opportunities available from Locality that could allow the community to hire appropriate expertise to assist in such an undertaking. This could involve hiring a consultant to help in the production of the plan itself, or to undertake work that could form the evidence base for the plan. More information on this can be found on the My Community website here: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/funding-options/neighbourhood-planning/>.

The neighbourhood plan is an opportunity for the community to clearly set out which elements of the character and appearance of the neighbourhood area as a whole are considered important, as well as provide specific policies that protect the positive elements, and address any areas that negatively affect that character and appearance. An historic environment section of your plan could include policies to achieve this and these policies could be underpinned by a local character study or historic area assessment. This could be included as an appendix to your plan. Historic England’s guidance notes for this process can be found here: [HE Advice Note 1 - conservation area designation, appraisal and management](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-designation-appraisal-management-advice-note-1/) <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/conservation-area-designation-appraisal-management-advice-note-1/>, and here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/understanding-place-historic-area->

[assessments/](#)>. The funding opportunities available from Locality discussed above could also assist with having this work undertaken.

Your neighbourhood plan is also an opportunity for the community to designate Local Green Spaces, as encouraged by national planning policy. Green spaces are often integral to the character of place for any given area, and your plan could include policies that identified any deficiencies with existing green spaces or access to them, or aimed at managing development around them. Locality has produced helpful guidance on this, which is available here:

<https://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-local-green-spaces.>>

You can also use the neighbourhood plan process to identify any potential Assets of Community Value in the neighbourhood area. Assets of Community Value (ACV) can include things like local public houses, community facilities such as libraries and museums, or again green open spaces. Often these can be important elements of the local historic environment, and whether or not they are protected in other ways, designating them as an ACV can offer an additional level of control to the community with regard to how they are conserved. There is useful information on this process on Locality's website here: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/take-action/land-and-building-assets/assets-of-community-value-right-to-bid/> .

Communities that have a neighbourhood plan in force are entitled to claim 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds raised from development in their area. The Localism Act 2011 allows this CIL money to be used for the maintenance and on-going costs associated with a range of heritage assets including, for example, transport infrastructure such as historic bridges, green and social infrastructure such as historic parks and gardens, civic spaces, and public places. As a Qualifying Body, your neighbourhood forum can either have access to this money or influence how it is spent through the neighbourhood plan process, setting out a schedule of appropriate works for the money to be spent on. Historic England strongly recommends that the community therefore identifies the ways in which CIL can be used to facilitate the conservation of the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting, and sets this out in the neighbourhood plan. More information and guidance on this is available from Locality, here:

<https://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/community-infrastructure-levy-neighbourhood-planning-toolkit/>>

In addition to the Historic England guidance linked to above, the following general guidance also published by Historic England may also be useful to the plan forum in preparing the neighbourhood plan, or considering how best to develop a strategy for the conservation and management of heritage assets in the area. It may also be useful to provide links to some of these documents in the plan:

HE Advice Note 2 - making changes to heritage assets: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/making-changes-heritage-assets-advice-note-2/>>

HE Good Practice Advice in Planning 3 - the setting of heritage assets: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/>>

If you are considering including Site Allocations for housing or other land use purposes in your neighbourhood plan, you may need to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment. We would

recommend you review the following two guidance documents, which may be of use:

HE Advice Note 3 - site allocations in local plans: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans>

HE Advice Note 8 - Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment : <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainability-appraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>

We recommend the inclusion of a glossary containing relevant historic environment terminology contained in the NPPF, in addition to details about the additional legislative and policy protections that heritage assets and the historic environment in general enjoys.

Finally, we should like to stress that this advice is based on the information provided by Waveney District Council in correspondence of 12 October 2018. To avoid any doubt, this does not reflect our obligation to provide further advice on or, potentially, object to specific proposals which may subsequently arise as a result of the proposed neighbourhood plan, where we consider these would have an adverse effect on the historic environment.

If you have any queries about this matter or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Lowestoft Town Council

Do you think the submitted area is suitable for a Neighbourhood Development Plan?

Yes

Do you have any further comments that you would like to make?

Lowestoft Town Council would like to thank Oulton Parish Council for their co-operation with the resubmission of their Neighbourhood Area. The Town Council wishes them success with their Neighbourhood Plan.

Natural England

Thank you for your email dated 12 October 2018 notifying Natural England of the above Neighbourhood Planning Area.

Natural England does not wish to make comment on the suitability of the proposed plan area or the proposed neighbourhood planning body.

However we would like to take this opportunity to provide you with information sources the neighbourhood planning body may wish to use in developing the plan, and to highlight some of the potential environmental risks and opportunities that neighbourhood plans may present. We have set this out in the annex to this letter.

Natural England's role

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development. The local planning authority will be aware and should advise the neighbourhood planning body when Natural England should be consulted further on the neighbourhood plan.

Planning policy for the natural environment

Neighbourhood plans and orders present significant opportunities, but also potential risks, for the natural environment. Proposals should be in line with the National Planning Policy Framework. The key principles are set out in paragraph 109:

The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity,
- including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

The neighbourhood planning body should also consider the natural environment policies in the area's Local Plan. The neighbourhood plan or order should be consistent with these, and the neighbourhood planning body may decide that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan should provide more detail as to how some of these policies apply or are interpreted locally.

The attached annex sets out sources of environmental information and some natural environment issues you may wish to consider as the neighbourhood plan or order is developed.

Annex 1 - Neighbourhood planning and the natural environment: information, issues and opportunities

Natural environment information sources

The Magic (<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>) website will provide you with much of the nationally held natural environment data for your plan area. The most relevant layers for you to consider are: Agricultural Land Classification, Ancient Woodland, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Local Nature Reserves, National Parks (England), National Trails, Priority Habitat Inventory, public rights of way (on the Ordnance Survey base map) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including their impact risk zones). Local environmental record centres may hold a range of additional information

on the natural environment. A list of local record centres is available here (<http://www.nbn-nfbr.org.uk/nfbr.php>).

Priority habitats are those habitats of particular importance for nature conservation, and the list of them can be found here (<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>).

Most of these will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. Your local planning authority should be able to supply you with the locations of Local Wildlife Sites.

National Character Areas (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each character area is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan. NCA information can be found here (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>).

There may also be a local landscape character assessment covering your area. This is a tool to help understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identify the features that give it a sense of place. It can help to inform, plan and manage change in the area. Your local planning authority should be able to help you access these if you can't find them online.

If your neighbourhood planning area is within or adjacent to a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the relevant National Park/AONB Management Plan for the area will set out useful information about the protected landscape. You can access the plans on from the relevant National Park Authority or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty website.

General mapped information on soil types and Agricultural Land Classification is available (under 'landscape')

on the Magic (<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>) website and also from the LandIS website (<http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm>), which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

Natural environment issues to consider

The National Planning Policy Framework (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>) sets out national planning policy on protecting and enhancing the

natural environment. Planning Practice Guidance

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/> sets out supporting guidance. Your local planning authority should be able to provide you with further advice on the potential impacts of your plan or order on the natural environment and the need for any environmental assessments.

Landscape

Your plans or orders may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes. You may want to consider identifying distinctive local landscape features or characteristics such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls and think about how any new development proposals can respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness.

If you are proposing development within or close to a protected landscape (National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or other sensitive location, we recommend that you carry out a landscape assessment of the proposal. Landscape assessments can help you to choose the most appropriate sites for development and help to avoid or minimise impacts of development on the landscape through careful siting, design and landscaping.

Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed here <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Ancient woodland (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>). If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed here <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice here <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals> to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species.

Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 112. For more information, see our publication Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land (<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35012>).

Improving your natural environment

Your plan or order can offer exciting opportunities to enhance your local environment. If you are setting out policies on new development or proposing sites for development, you may wish to consider identifying what environmental features you want to be retained or enhanced or new features you would like to see created as part of any new development. Examples might include:

- Think about how lighting can be best managed to encourage wildlife.

- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.
- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.

You may also want to consider enhancing your local area in other ways, for example by:

- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).
- Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision.
- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
- Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see Planning Practice Guidance on this <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green>)
- Planting additional street trees.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).