

GREAT BEALINGS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



A VILLAGE IN A LANDSCAPE

March 2016

Great Bealings Neighbourhood Plan

‘A Village in a Landscape’

Mission Statement

Our aim is to maintain and enhance the special character of our small village within its natural setting while ensuring that the community who has chosen to live here can control, shape and contribute to how it evolves for the benefit of themselves, future residents and subsequent generations.

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Supporting documents

Where not included in this full printed version of the Plan, these are published on the website, www.gbnp.co.uk, with kind permission, and available from their respective publishing bodies: Great Bealings Neighbourhood Plan: Landscape and Wildlife Evaluation, published by Simone Bullion, Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Suffolk’s Nature Strategy, published by Suffolk County Council

Great Bealings Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire, published by Great Bealings Parish Council

Housing Needs Survey, published by Community Action Suffolk

The Plan as a whole is published by Great Bealings Parish Council, March 2016

Cover photo by Gary Farmer – thanks also to the many contributors

Submission Version 19.00, 8 March 2016

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In April 2009 the parishes of Great Bealings, Little Bealings, and Playford worked together to produce a Parish Plan. This was a valuable exercise in setting out the concerns and aspirations of those who live in the villages but it had no legal force. The circumstances have now changed however and under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)^[1] and the Localism Act it is now possible to write a Neighbourhood Plan which, once formally made, has statutory force and becomes the basis for determining future planning applications in the parish in conjunction with the Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC) Local Plan^[2].
- 1.2. SCDC will continue to decide on planning applications but the policies in our Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) will have statutory force and must be reflected in any decision taken by SCDC. A Neighbourhood Plan thus gives real power to the Parish Council in a way Parish Plans never could. Great Bealings Parish Council (the PC), an approved body for the purposes of Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act and therefore the appropriate body to represent the neighbourhood area, applied to SCDC who agreed under Regulations 6 and 7 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 that the PC could prepare the Plan for the parish of Great Bealings (See map at Appendix 1. Note that in drafting the Plan it is assumed that the parish and the village are one and the same). Great Bealings consulted with Playford and Little Bealings but those parishes decided not to participate in the Plan. Little Bealings, designated as a Local Service Centre, is not intending to write a Plan whereas Playford, an 'Other Village' like Great Bealings, is intending to write its own Plan. Great Bealings therefore proceeded on the basis that its Plan would be confined to its own parish boundary.
- 1.3. Before the Plan can be 'made', SCDC must confirm that it is in conformity with existing national and local policies and that it meets the requirements of paragraph 8 of Schedule 4b of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. It must then get the support of a majority (50% plus 1 'yes' vote) of residents (aged 18 or over) who will be asked to vote on it in a referendum, such referendum to be arranged by SCDC. The formal process of creating a Neighbourhood Plan is laid down in the NPPF and a full extract of the relevant guidance is attached at Appendix 9.
- 1.4. Great Bealings is a small rural village set in the valley of the River Lark some 7.5 miles east of Ipswich and 2.5 miles west of Woodbridge. Data from the 2011 UK census indicates a population of 310 in 120 households, with 222 names on the electoral roll. It is considered by SCDC to be an 'Other Village' as set out in policy SP28 of their Local Plan, that is to say it has no services (shop, pub, etc.) and is deemed to be part of the countryside. Over the last 25 years the population of the village has changed. Historically it had its roots in farming, but there are no residents left who work on the land in the traditional sense. While the proportion of older people is higher than for SCDC as a whole - 75% compared to 60% - there are now many more families with young children. As one might expect for a rural community, there are a number of retired people – 36% of the population compared to 16% for SCDC as a whole. There are also many who work in Woodbridge, Ipswich, or London. Of particular relevance is the fact that, reflecting modern trends, there are several

self-employed people who either work from home or run their business from home – 22% compared to 8% for the SCDC area. Communications are therefore important, as is broadband connectivity. There are a number of residents who run consulting businesses from their home, three bed and breakfast premises, several houses with studios, and a riding school and livery stables. There is an active group – Friends of Great Bealings Church – that organises social events for fundraising purposes, and a wildlife group has also been set up recently. This is not a dying community. Many people have chosen to live here for the very reasons set out in this Plan.

- 1.5. Although Great Bealings has no local services within the parish, it has access to the school in Little Bealings, shares the use of the Village Hall and the John Belstead Playing Field, and holds certain functions during the year together with Little Bealings. Both parishes are part of the Benefice of Great Bealings, Little Bealings, Playford, and Culpho and many of the services in the four churches rotate through the benefice. A new rector has recently been appointed and for the first time for many years she is resident in the Benefice. Although there are therefore a number of links with the neighbouring parishes, each community is distinct and has its own characteristics. Each village has its own Parish Council and Parochial Church Council and guards its independence with some pride.
- 1.6. One might ask why such a Plan is necessary. SCDC's Local Plan sets out how rural villages and the countryside should be protected (see Section 3 below) and indeed much of Great Bealings is already designated as a Special Landscape Area (SLA). That is only part of the story. Whilst the Plan must be in conformity with SCDC strategic and development management policies, it is also based on the views, wishes, and concerns of those who live here. It is their Plan. The PC will in effect enter into a compact with the residents to implement and enforce the policies in the Plan in accordance with the views of those who live here. It is proposed that the PC will write an Annual Monitoring Report for discussion at the Annual Parish Meeting so that all residents have the chance to see how the Plan is being followed up and used. This offers the chance to reinvigorate the relationship between the residents and the PC for the better, ensuring that the objectives of the Plan create a basis for the future of the village. The Plan therefore contains several aspirational elements by setting out and encouraging an approach to development generally that respects the landscape setting as well as the built character of the village. The fact is that however diligent SCDC are in pursuit of their own policies under their Local Plan, we cannot expect them or their officers to have the same sense of responsibility for what happens in our own village as those who live here. That is the point of Localism.
- 1.7. We do not know what threats might arise over time. Great Bealings is an oasis of calm surrounded by ever increasing development. Local plans will be reviewed every 5 years and the Government will inevitably be looking for more housing. There is already pressure to re-open the debate on the Ipswich Northern Bypass. By writing a Plan for Great Bealings now we can create a basis which can be used to argue our position in future and influence situations that might arise for the benefit of the village. More than that, the process of writing the plan has taught us a great deal about what is already here. From that knowledge,

and from what we know is important to those who live here now, we can build a Plan for the future.

- 1.8. In accordance with Regulation 38(B)1 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 this Plan is intended to have life of 10 years at which point it should be reviewed as appropriate both in terms of any wider developments in Government policy, any revised Local Plan issued by SCDC, and on the evidence of the success of the Plan over its initial life in achieving the objectives set out in Section 3 below. The Plan would have to be revised earlier if relevant changes in legislation so required.
- 1.9. The Plan has been drawn up in accordance with the Basic Conditions set out in the Localism Act 2011. These conditions require the Plan to:
- have regard to national policies and advice issued by the Secretary of State;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - be in conformity with SCDC's Local Plan; and
 - be compatible with relevant EU regulations.

Given the limited scope of this Plan in the context of the 'Other Village' status of Great Bealings, these matters will be most relevant in the context of SCDC's Local Plan. Their advice has been sought throughout the process and their support has been extremely valuable.

- 1.10. The Plan will be subject to an independent examination to ensure compliance with the following documents:
- NPPF (2012)
 - PPG (2014)
 - TCPA (1990)
 - Localism Act (2011) – including the Basic Conditions referred to above
 - Neighbourhood Plan Regulations (2012)
 - SCDC Local Plan (Adopted 2013)
 - SCDC Saved Policies (Saved 2013)
- 1.11. Much of the evidence upon which the Plan is based has been derived from a study commissioned by the PC and carried out by Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT), which is annexed to the Plan at Appendix 5. This identified and provided evidence of the topography, habitats, trees and hedgerows in the parish. The survey demonstrates the significant attributes of the Plan area and provides evidence to support the core objective of protecting the landscape, as well as laying a basis for its enhancement. Further support has been demonstrated by Suffolk's Nature Strategy, published in 2014 by Suffolk County Council (SCC)^[3], which identifies the importance of the county's river valleys, and which clearly sets out how the landscape and environmental features of the area contribute to general wellbeing. The setting of Great Bealings can thus be seen as a common good, deserving of recognition and protection.

1.12. As pointed out by SWT, SCC's strategy has strong relevance and linkages to the Neighbourhood Plan process. Within the 'Our Health and Wellbeing' section, it makes direct reference to Neighbourhood and Parish Plans, stating that:

- 'Once adopted, these plans become part of the Local Development Plan and as such become part of the statutory planning framework. These new powers provide a significant opportunity for communities to recognise, protect and improve local environmental assets.
- There is great scope for benefiting the environment, by designating green spaces to establish 'green corridors', by linking open spaces and improving local watercourses. We will support communities' writing and implementing their plans and help describe the wider context as we seek to build ecological networks across Suffolk.'

This Plan seeks to support this approach both through its policies and through engagement with local landowners so as to achieve the above objectives. We would hope that landowners will also benefit, for example in the context of entering into agri-environmental schemes for which this Plan could provide evidence and support.

1.13. Given its position so close to the proposed expansion of North Ipswich and the growth of Martlesham, Kesgrave, and Woodbridge, Great Bealings will inevitably be subject to increasing pressure from traffic and the search for rural development opportunities.



Traffic in Boot Street

1.14. However, the gentle landscape that we enjoy along the river valley, where if you are lucky kingfishers, otters, heron, and water voles can still be seen, therefore needs to be recognised and protected. This Plan, in accordance with the views expressed so strongly through the Questionnaire and at the various public meetings held over the last two years, is designed to set out how that protection can be achieved.



The Lark Valley from Hasketon Road

2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- 2.1. As with many villages, Great Bealings as we see it today is the product of its past. It is mentioned in Domesday Book, which cites the meadows and mills in the village of Belinges Magna (the name was changed to Bealings Magna in the 17th century and to Great Bealings in the 19th century). Its roots run deep through the fabric of Suffolk and indeed through the history of England.
- 2.2. It was established on a river with access to the sea and the gravel banks in the area are full of the signs of our ancient predecessors. The sequential development of the land by Ancient Britons, Romans, Saxons, and Danes, have all left their traces. There have been Bronze Age and Iron Age finds in the area, as well as Roman coins, Saxon swords, and other artefacts. Of particular note is the fact that Suffolk has yielded some of the greatest evidence of Neolithic implements anywhere in England, especially in the form of scrapers, which would have been used to hollow out the log canoes that were used to paddle up the rivers. Indeed the River Lark, a tributary of the River Deben, was navigable throughout this period. It was not until Victorian times that it became the small river we see today. It is widely thought that the name of the former Boot Inn (in Boot Street) is a contamination of the Suffolk pronunciation of “boat”. Stories are recorded of smugglers carrying their booty up the river and using the Rector’s horse and cart to distribute it to their clients, always leaving, of course, a gift by way of thanks to the Rector for his own enjoyment.
- 2.3. Suffolk has always been an area of prosperity built around trade and agriculture. The once prosperous ports of Dunwich and Orford thrived before becoming eroded or silted up, and before the discovery of the Americas led to a decline in North European trade. The remarkable discoveries at Sutton Hoo, with its close access to the River Deben, show how rich and powerful the settlements built around the rivers could become. Suffolk and Norfolk were among the most developed areas of the country and had a much larger proportion of ‘free peasantry’, one reason why they attracted distinct treatment in the Domesday Book and were separately catalogued in the ‘Little’ Domesday Book, which is more detailed than its ‘greater’ cousin. Suffolk gets 114 pages in the translated version, more than any other county in England except Norfolk. Bealings appears under the entry for Carlford Hundred, largely held by Robert Malet. A ‘sokeman’ by the name of Wulfnoth is listed as holding 14 acres, one plough, and half an acre of meadow. In a separate entry for the same Hundred, but under land held by Hervey de Bourges, ten free men are shown (one of which is called Stannard – a family that lived in the village until very recently), as well as Anund the Priest, whose name appears on the plaque in St Mary’s Church as the first rector of the parish in 1086. This entry lists 100 acres ‘in demesne’ to the manor of Wulmaer, including two ploughs belonging to the men, three acres of meadow, four horses, four head of cattle, and 16 pigs.
- 2.4. Suffolk’s prosperity was built on these agricultural foundations. The next stage in the story brings in Great Bealings’ most famous residents, the Seckfords. They had been established in the area in the 12th century, and it is believed that they took their name from the ‘sedge ford’ across the River Fynn at Martlesham. Confusingly there were three Seckfords called Thomas: the first was buried in St Mary’s, Great Bealings in 1505. The second, called

Thomas the Settler, presumably because he sold lands elsewhere to settle on his estates at Woodbridge and Bealings, built Seckford Hall, and died in 1575 having had seven sons and two daughters. He and his wife are also buried at St Mary's. One of his sons – Thomas the Benefactor – went on to achieve high office, second only to Lord Burghley, in the court of Queen Elizabeth the First. It was this Thomas who built the porch at St Mary's in memory of his parents and placed the Seckford Memorial in the church where it still stands. The Seckford crest was a Talbot, a broad mouthed, large-eared, hound (now extinct), a carving of which can be seen on some of the pew ends in the church.



St Mary's Church

- 2.5. Seckford the Benefactor was a lawyer, administrator, cartographer, MP for Ipswich, and loyal servant to the Queen. He had no children and as was typical of the age, he prepared to meet his maker by endowing almshouses in Woodbridge and making bequests to the church of St James in Clerkenwell where he also had property close to the former hospital of St John of Jerusalem. His brother, Henry, also lived there in a grace and favour apartment by virtue of his post as Master of the Queen's Tents and Pavilions. Thomas held the post of Master of the Court of Requests for 27 years, travelling round the country with the Queen. This proximity to the centralised power base of the Tudor throne allowed him access to great wealth and great opportunity. When in 1564 the lands of Woodbridge Priory were sold off, Thomas bought them. His mother was a Wingfield, and her family had been the tenants of the estate following the dissolution but the crown now needed the money from the sale. The estates of the dissolved Priory covered land in Martlesham, Great

Bealings, Hasketon, and Grundisburgh, all within the Liberty of St Etheldreda, a remnant of the land held by the monastery of Ely. The liberty (a phrase most popularly recalled in relation to the Liberties of the Savoy in London) was a distinct legal entity (very similar in boundary to SCDC's area today), responsible for its own courts and the collection of fines. When Seckford became the Steward of the Liberty he moved the court from Melton to Woodbridge and built the Sessions House (now the Shire Hall) in which courts were held until 1986. Thomas Seckford thus made his mark on Great Bealings in a way that shapes the village we see today. Seckford Hall itself, the finest Elizabethan building in the parish, is now a prestigious hotel and its splendid Tudor profile and architecture remind us of those past glories.



Seckford Hall Hotel

- 2.6. The church of St Mary's was begun in the 12th century. Standing on a pronounced rise to keep it safe from flooding and overlooking meadows tucked into a bend in the river, the site is believed to have been a long barrow and a place of worship well before the current church was built. The manor of Bealings Hall was built next to the church, as was often the case, and the settlements where most of the inhabitants of the village lived were outside the demesne of the Hall and some way removed, grouped around the two ancient river crossings. The Hall fell into disrepair and was finally demolished in the 19th century. A sturdy red brick wall still stands at the boundary with the church, reminding us of the Hall that once stood there. Masonry remains from the Hall were used in the construction of Great Bealings House (see Moor, below). Since then the church has stood alone, both dividing and linking the two parts of the village.

- 2.7. Within the church there are memorials to Thomas (The Settler) and Elizabeth Seckford, as well as to the son of another great Elizabethan, John Clench. Both Clench senior and Clench junior were judges. The memorial is particularly fine, including representations of their children, both surviving and deceased, and unusually has their hands in prayer protruding from the main entablature of the memorial itself. A plaque records the names of the rectors from Anund the Priest to the present day, and shows how the ravages of the Black Death caused many changes of incumbent in a very few years. One of the rectors who had a particularly important role in the history of the village was Edward Moor.
- 2.8. Edward Moor was the son of another Edward, who had fought in the Mahratta army in Southern India in the campaign against Tippoo Sultan, Georgian England's favourite tyrant. Moor senior returned from India in 1805 as a result of his health, having served with distinction as Commissar General for the English army in Bombay for 6 years, and settled at Great Bealings House. He married Elizabeth Lynn, the daughter of John Lynn, a surgeon from Woodbridge who specialised in gynaecology and urinary infection. Lynn's other daughter, Emma, married Sir Augustus Frazer, who served alongside Wellington in the Peninsular War as commander of the Royal Artillery, and subsequently at Waterloo. Moor himself became a noted writer on Hindu mythology, and was made a member of the Royal Society in 1806 and a member of the Society of Antiquaries in 1818. It is believed that in the year he returned to Great Bealings, he planted the cedar trees that still stand in the park, as well the one that blew down in 1975 in the churchyard at St Mary's. His friend, Phillip Meadows, who was the rector at St Mary's at the time and living at The Lodge, also planted cedars, one of which still stands today. Moor's daughter, Charlotte, married William Wood, who became Lord Chancellor under Gladstone, and was ennobled as Baron Hatherley. The reredos in the church commemorates him. Both he and Charlotte are buried in St Mary's churchyard.
- 2.9. Edward Moor's son of the same name became the rector in 1844 and remained as incumbent for over 40 years. The Rectory was built by him in a prominent position with a commanding view of the church itself and the surrounding meadows. While he was rector he carried out substantial work on the church and gave it the appearance we see today. He had to rebuild one of the walls, repair the roof, and attend to the pews, many of which were in a sad state of decay. In this context he appointed Henry Ringham of Ipswich, one of the country's most respected woodcarvers, to restore the pew ends. Ringham was so admired that he was put on the shortlist to carry out much of the carving work in Pugin's new Houses of Parliament, a commission which in the end he did not carry out. Moor also wrote a diary, in several volumes with pictorial illustrations, that still stands as one of the definitive descriptions of the life of a Victorian country parson. In more recent times The Rectory was the home of the late Lord Belstead, Lord Lieutenant of the County and sometime Minister of State for Northern Ireland and Leader of the House of Lords under Margaret Thatcher.
- 2.10. Great Bealings today no longer has a pub, a post office, or a shop (the nearest ones are now in Grundisburgh, a couple of miles away) and the figures of the past may only be glimpsed

in the buildings and the memorials they have left behind. In some cases, such as Margaret Catchpole, there is no tangible legacy, only the fact that she is believed to have worked on Nathaniel Southgate's farm for a couple of years before going into service with the Cobbolds in Ipswich. The buildings that remain however are strong reminders of the stories of those who have lived here over the years, as described in the preceding paragraphs.

- 2.11. Many of the houses are built along the stratum line between the higher sandy soils and the lower clay base, so as to take advantage of the springs that rise there. Originally these houses would have used this supply of water to feed their wells, and some houses still do. Great Bealings has no village green or visible 'centre' in the accepted sense. Its charm and appeal however lie in the low key character of what there is, interspersed with some fine listed buildings, but also relying on a more subtle interplay of landscape and the built environment. It is exactly because the character of the village is so hard to define that the PC is seeking to protect it through the Plan. Small changes can have a significant effect on the character of the area, and the Plan sets out to propose ways in which those changes can be managed to retain both a living community and the charms of a traditional Suffolk village.

3. STRATEGY AND APPROACH

- 3.1 The Plan's primary objective is to create an approach to the management of future development based on the views of the people who live in the village and which is consistent with relevant government policies and guidance. In that sense it is a Plan directed at land use, as required by the NPPF. In writing the Plan, it has become apparent that the 'default' position of seeking to manage and steer development through the process of determining planning applications solely in relation to the built environment is not sufficient in the case of Great Bealings. Under section SP28 of SCDC's Local Plan the village is designated as an 'Other Village' such that there is no requirement to allow for increased residential development. Great Bealings is thus considered as part of the countryside and the infrastructure and services that would be required to support sustainable development do not exist.
- 3.2 The landscape setting of the village and its rural character are the defining features that residents enjoy and appreciate. Of particular relevance is the way the countryside penetrates the heart of the village, creating the gaps and spaces that define it. Buildings and how they are used will change over time, and indeed that process itself is part of the creation of character. It is the gaps and spaces between the buildings that do so much to define the setting and which led us to our strapline: '*A Village in a Landscape*'. The Plan expands on this approach by providing extensive evidence of the diversity and importance of the landscape setting in which the village is situated and defining where this intimate relationship of buildings and the natural environment is especially apparent and why it is so clearly appreciated by those who live here. The policies in the Plan are thus based on this approach.
- 3.3 The PC established a Working Group (the NPWG), chaired by the Chairman of the PC, which adopted the following approach:
- Survey opinion;
 - Catalogue and understand what is here already so as to establish the evidence base;
 - Analyse how the evidence, the consultation process, and SCDC's Local Plan between them create the basis for the Neighbourhood Plan's strategy, approach, and content;
 - Draw up policies accordingly.
- 3.4 Two open days were held in June 2013 to illustrate the benefits of such a Plan, to consider the proposed objectives, and to seek guidance on the views of residents and those businesses active in the village. Over 40 people attended these open days. Topics covered views, landscape issues, traffic, SCDC policies, listed buildings and potential Non Designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs), affordable housing (a display by Community Action Suffolk) and other matters. The responses were very helpful in guiding the NPWG towards a first draft of the Plan. Comments made during the open days also clarified what needed to be covered by the Questionnaire, which the NPWG was then able to draft. This was circulated in June 2014 (Appendix 9a) and very nearly two thirds of residents responded: a remarkably high level of engagement. A further public meeting in November 2014 was then held to publicise the results of the Questionnaire and to set out the way forward. Some

30 people attended this second public meeting. From that point, the NPWG had the basis on which detailed drafting of the Plan and its supporting policies could begin.

3.5 The responses to the Questionnaire (Appendix 8b) made it clear that the proposed approach had wide support:

- 94% agreed with the stated aims of the Plan.
- 97% supported the existing SLA designation of much of the village.
- 97% agreed that natural assets should be considered in the context of any new planning application.
- 95% agreed that any proposals for Affordable Housing should be subject to the same assessment as any other development and should be subject to specific local consultation. (However it should be noted that 56% of respondents when asked if they agreed that Affordable Housing should be provided in the village did not support such provision.)
- 98% agreed that no new development should take place in flood risk areas.
- 92% would like to see protection for wildlife habitats.
- 86% would like to see a conservation plan designed to protect the landscape.
- 72% wanted more protection for non-designated heritage assets.
- Percentages are based on replies received – 120 copies distributed; 79 copies returned; 66% response rate.

3.6 These responses show that there is considerable support for the core objectives of the Plan as follows:

- *To ensure that the landscape and other natural assets are considered in every planning application and that wildlife habitats are given appropriate protection.*
- *To create a conservation plan designed to protect the landscape.*
- *Any new buildings or changes to existing buildings should respect the character and quality of the village and its setting in the landscape and enhance the surrounding area.*
- *Affordable housing should be subject to the same criteria as other development and should be subject to local consultation.*
- *No new development should take place in flood risk areas both as to avoid any impairment to the flow or run-off of flood water and to avoid intrusion on the landscape value of the river valley.*
- *The value of Non Designated Heritage assets should be recognised and such properties given additional protection.*

These objectives reflect the responses to the Questionnaire and further opinions expressed by people in the community by way of feedback at public meetings. The policies which have been drawn up in sections 4 and 5 below are constructed so as to give effect to these objectives.



Examples of the landscape between Boot Street and Lower Street

3.7 There are several fundamental strategic policies (SPs) and development management policies (DMs) in SCDC's Development Plan Document adopted in July 2013^[2] which are of significance for Great Bealings and underpin the policies within the Plan.

- SP19 sets out the Settlement Hierarchy for the district and makes clear that in the case of Great Bealings the expected level of housing growth will be minimal. This is because Great Bealings has been classified as an 'Other Village' under SP28 and has therefore not been given a unit allocation under the wider requirement to meet government housing targets for the region.
- In addition, the effect of SP29 is that the village is regarded as being part of the Countryside, where development is severely limited.
- DM3 states that new housing would only be allowed where it comprises:
 - Replacement dwellings on a one to one basis where the replacement is no more visually intrusive than the building to be replaced;
 - Sub-division of a larger dwelling to meet a local need;
 - Affordable Housing as an exception under the terms of DM1;
 - Conversion subject to certain controls (DM13); or
 - Minor infilling (DM4): but note that any such proposal would also come under SP15 in relation to the preservation of gaps, spaces, and the avoidance of coalescence.
- SP14 provides for biodiversity and geodiversity to be protected in the countryside and enhanced through a number of measures.
- SP15 aims to protect and enhance the various landscape character areas including the river valley, which is the underlying rationale for the current Special Landscape Area (SLA) status of the valley and tributaries of the River Fynn (which include the River Lark that runs through the village). SP15 also enables the Plan to designate and protect gaps and spaces which make an important contribution to the village in their undeveloped form. In essence, the combined effect of these strategic policies is that unless there are exceptional circumstances, new housing is limited to the conditions set out in DM3.
- DM6 states that the creation of self-contained annexes may be permitted if they provide, for example, capacity for the care of an elderly relative or the capacity for short term letting as bed and breakfast accommodation or holiday accommodation,

subject to meeting the other design, scope, visual impact, and environmental considerations set out elsewhere in the Plan.

- DM21 sets out an approach to design aesthetics that this Plan supports, specifically in relation to scale, setting, the preservation of gaps and spaces, and the importance of protecting landscape, ecology, heritage, amenity, and related considerations.
- DM27 stresses the importance of protecting biodiversity and geodiversity, important objectives in the context of this Plan's approach to the natural environment and the setting of the village.
- DM28 addresses flood risk, which is relevant to Great Bealings in the context of the flood risk posed by the River Lark.

3.5 The relationship between the landscape and the buildings that sit within it forms the core of the Plan. The outstanding landscape quality of the river valley has been recognised by its designation as an SLA. The river and its floodplain form the thread that links the different areas of the village and gives it its distinctive character. Along this valley the Plan proposes a designated series of interlocking **Landscape Protection Areas** (LPAs, a phrase used specifically for the purposes of this Plan) that contain and frame the village. They have been selected because they best illustrate the fundamental relationship between the landscape setting and the built environment that is at the heart of the Plan. However they also provide detailed evidence in support of the existing SLA designation, interpreting it at the local level.

3.6 The strapline '*A Village in a Landscape*' is no accident. The LPAs all contribute to the overriding effect of a village that sits comfortably within its landscape context. This relationship can be seen through and across its contours from either the road network, the footpaths that run through the village, or the views that people have from their houses. The latter was a point made consistently in the responses to the Questionnaire.

3.7 The five LPAs are each described in more detail in Section 4. The objective is to ensure that no new development should take place within an LPA, or which would have a detrimental effect on an LPA, in order to ensure that the village's distinctive visual appeal is preserved. Such matters as trees, hedges, and habitats would need to be considered in this context, as well as the application of policies to ensure that any building that is visible in or from an LPA should not be enlarged or otherwise developed so as to prejudice view lines, scale, materials, or roof heights.

3.8 The Plan also considers the built environment of the village. The buildings listed by English Heritage echo its development and history and create a strong sense of form and structure. However given the disparate nature of the village and its lack of a conventional central point such as a green, the Plan seeks to capture its character through the identification of **Non Designated Heritage Assets** (NDHAs) – a denomination that is now accepted in policy terms by the NPPF and for which SCDC has published comprehensive guidelines which the PC has adopted for the purposes of this Plan. These houses, structures, or architectural features will be identified and validated not only so as to protect them

individually but also so as to underwrite guidance in relation to designs and materials that would be appropriate in the context of future developments within the village as a whole. While permitted development (either agricultural or domestic) would not be affected, there will be a presumption in favour of retaining and repairing NDHAs.

- 3.9 It is important to state that the purpose of the Plan is not to prevent the natural evolution of the way people live in their homes or remove their permitted development rights. Change is what creates interest, variety, and appeal. However, in accordance with the NPPF paragraph 60, the Plan seeks to promote and reinforce local distinctiveness. Well-designed additions to or enhancements of existing buildings add to the character and setting of the village rather than detracting from it. The Plan can influence what people do and draw attention to the importance of such issues in the context of any proposed development.
- 3.10 This dual approach built around the landscape setting of the village and its built environment forms the basis of the Plan. The SWT report, and other supporting evidence, are all set out in the Appendices.

4. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

- 4.1 Within the Plan, the Natural Environment is considered in the context of its two key elements: the character of its landscape and its wildlife assets. These are, however, clearly interdependent. The SWT report noted (at page 34) that as a result of the nature of the landscape, 'Great Bealings has a high quality ecological network' compared to many other Suffolk parishes.

Landscape Character

- 4.2 The majority of the landscape of Great Bealings is contained within the Lark river valley. In 1987 SCC and SCDC designated the valley of the River Fynn and its tributaries, which includes the River Lark, as a Special Landscape Area (SLA). This is a countywide designation, which primarily highlights the special landscape qualities of the river valleys. One of the objectives of the Plan is to underscore the value and importance of the SLA and show how through local application it can be given added weight and support within the parish.
- 4.3 **The Fynn Valley SLA** covers approximately 80% of the village. Within the parish only one area in the west, two in the north and a small section in the southeast are not covered by this designation. These areas comprise farmland which is arguably less vulnerable to change than the rolling river valley landscape which is included within the SLA.
- 4.4 In 2008, SCC carried out a countywide Landscape Character Assessment,^[4] which was a more in depth study to describe and assess the particular character and qualities of landscape areas of the county. The assessments of 'landscape character' have more precise prescriptions and guidelines than those relating to SLAs. They therefore complement but significantly extend the concepts reflected in the Fynn Valley SLA. This more detailed assessment confirmed the special landscape qualities of the parish and is reflected in the SWT report.
- 4.5 The SLA is a saved policy and the status of the SLA designation is under review. According to the SCDC Local Plan (para 3.156) '*Any decision that may be taken in the longer term to either delete or amend the SLA designation, would be based on the findings of the Landscape Character Assessment and the success in implementing any guidelines generated by it. The success or otherwise of this approach may be monitored. In the meantime, the SLA boundaries will continue to apply and these will be set out in the relevant site allocations and area specific policies documents.*' SCDC have confirmed that the LPAs sit neatly under the SLA designation, supporting that policy and adding local detail and validity to the overall landscape assessment of the region. This is exactly what a Neighbourhood Plan is designed to do.
- 4.6 The Plan considers the significance of both the SLA and Landscape Character Assessment. It also relies heavily on SCC's Development and Land Management Guidance for each landscape character^[4]. In so doing the Plan supports the review process and demonstrates

how the SLA and landscape character assessments are both vitally important in achieving the objectives of the Plan.

- 4.7 SCC identified and described two types of landscape character areas within Great Bealings: **Ancient Rolling Farmlands** ('Arable Landscape'), the traditional arable landscape which occurs largely to the north and east, stretching from Hasketon Road to Seckford Hall, and **Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze** (gorse) ('Valley Landscape'), situated primarily to the west and south of the Parish. (See map at p 10 of the SWT Report)
- 4.8 **The Arable Landscape** is characterised by rolling arable farmland dissected by the river valley, with sinuous field boundaries, substantial open areas, scattered ancient woodland parcels and hedges of hawthorn and elm with oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees.
- 4.9 **The Valley Landscape** is typical of valleys with prominent river terraces of sandy soil, co-axial field systems, multi-species hedgerows and fragmentary cover of woodland. There is a very close correlation between the boundaries of the Fynn Valley SLA and the Valley Landscape within the village. It is this landscape which contributes significantly to the special character of the village. The river forms a corridor through the village and the field margins and hedgerows that emanate from it, like the spokes of a wheel, add to the effect.
- 4.10 The following photograph taken from Holly Lane looking east, shows Valley Landscape in the foreground with trees and glimpses of the Arable Landscape in the distance.



Holly Lane looking east

Impact of the Landscape on planning development in Great Bealings

- 4.11 Great Bealings sits within an area of largely unspoiled landscape which, given its proximity to Ipswich and Woodbridge, sets it apart and creates the special character the Plan is

intended to protect and, where possible, enhance. While the day to day management of much of that landscape is in the hands of the farmers who own it, it is hoped that this Plan, as set out in paragraph 1.12 above, will provide a basis for a mutually beneficial approach as between the policies in the Plan and their objectives.

- 4.12 SCDC's overarching policy for the Countryside, SP29, provides a clear statement that development within the Countryside must be based on necessity and must accord with other relevant policies. SP14 is designed to ensure the protection of biodiversity and geodiversity using a framework based on a network of features which includes landscape character types.
- 4.13 The effect of SLAs being a 'saved policy' within the SCDC's Local Plan is that SCDC has committed to ensuring that no development takes place which would be to the *material detriment of or materially detract from the special landscape quality of the SLA*.^[5] This is due largely to the fact that river valleys are considered to be the landscape element most vulnerable to development because they are the least changed of Suffolk's rural landscape types, being still managed largely under traditional farming practices.
- 4.14 Also relevant is the development management guidance issued by Suffolk County Council for each landscape character type (see below). The SCC guidance addresses the needs of development management and sets out the principles to be followed when dealing with particular types of development.
- 4.15 The approach adopted in the Plan is to incorporate best practice in accordance with the SCC guidance. For instance, it provides a basis on which a dialogue can be had with residents and local farmers to encourage and support an approach which meets the overall objectives of the Plan.

SCC Development and Land Management Guidance relating to the Arable Landscape

- 4.16 The SCC Development Guidance^[4(b)] notes that in arable landscapes settlements tend to be '*scattered widely throughout this landscape, with parishes tending to have multiple built clusters of various sizes: large groups often elongated; outlying groups often based on green side settlement; and wayside settlements and farmsteads.*' The risk is that '*historic patterns within parishes are easily lost to infill and ribbon development.*' It also identifies '*expansion of garden curtilage, change of land to horse paddocks, and other recreational uses as akin to settlement expansion, eroding the characteristic form and vernacular styles*'. The guidance advises that new or expanded garden curtilage should always be designed to fit into the local context and respect the existing local pattern. '*Any new buildings should be close to and subordinate in size to existing buildings. Any new agricultural buildings should be designed to integrate the development into the character of the landscape. Change of use to horse paddocks should include strategies to mitigate any adverse impact on grassland in more ecologically sensitive areas and should be in keeping with the local field pattern or the historic pattern of boundaries.*'

- 4.17 SCC's Land Management Guidance ^[4(b)] refers to reinforcing the historic pattern of boundaries where they exist, coppice management of hedgerows, maintaining and increasing hedgerow trees, and maintaining the extent of and improving the condition of woodland cover with effective management

SCC Development and Land Management Guidance relating to the Valley Landscape

- 4.18 In view of the close correlation between the Valley Landscape and the Fynn Valley SLA, the guidance from SCC relating to this landscape is of particular significance to the parish.
- 4.19 SCC Development Guidance ^[4(d)] refers to '*expansion of settlements, expansion of garden curtilage and change of land use, especially the creation of horse paddocks*' as being among the key forces for change within this landscape. The Guidance makes the (perhaps obvious) point that '*in these valley side landscapes, the visual impact of new vertical elements is increased by the landform. Therefore new buildings are likely to have a significant impact on both the character and visual amenity of the valley floor and valley side landscape types.*' In order to protect this landscape, the Guidance advises that it is important to maintain the existing pattern of settlement clusters and to be aware that '*settlement expansion in a valley is likely to have a significant visual impact and adversely affect the character of the landscape, including that of the adjoining valley floor. A comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is essential to identify the risks and options for mitigation. These developments tend to create highly visible new 'roofscapes' on the sides of valleys*'. Another salient point is that new structures should be located to make the best use of existing hedges and trees both to screen the development and as a backdrop. Existing hedge lines should also be reinforced to improve the mitigation they provide.
- 4.20 The importance of maintaining and increasing the stock of hedgerow trees and woodland cover applies equally in the Valley Landscape as in the Arable Landscape. Further, any new woodland should respect the historic landscape characteristics.

Wildlife and Nature Conservation

- 4.21 The parish contains a number of areas and habitats which have been designated or identified as of local importance for wildlife. These are discussed in more detail in the next paragraphs.

County Wildlife Sites

- 4.22 County Wildlife Sites (CWS) are areas which the Suffolk County Wildlife Site Panel has identified as being of county or regional importance because of their habitat characteristics and the potential for wildlife. There are three in the parish: Kiln Farm Meadow, Queech Wood and Meadow Cottage Wood. All three are in private ownership. CWS status does not however confer any right of access either to the general public or to conservation organisations, and there is no statutory requirement to manage them so as to preserve their value. Should such protection be considered in the future, this Plan would provide supporting evidence of the importance of a CWS in its surrounding environment.

- **Kiln Farm Meadow** to the northeast of Lower Street is a small, 0.75 hectare species-diverse wet fen meadow. This habitat is relatively rare in Suffolk.
- **Queech Wood** is a 3 hectare ancient wood surrounded by a ditch and bank and is listed in Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory.
- **Meadow Cottage Wood** is a 2.15 hectare wet woodland, notable for some scarce plant species associated with this habitat.

Priority Habitats

4.23 It is government policy, as set out in 'Biodiversity 2020 – a strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services', to seek an overall improvement in the status of the country's wildlife. SCC's Nature Strategy, which is in line with Biodiversity 2020, is designed to ensure that habitats and species of conservation interest are recognised and protected. Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership (SBP) identifies and publishes statutory lists of Priority Habitats and Species occurring in Suffolk. The SBP is also responsible for producing the Suffolk Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), which identifies ecological assets which are of value to their local areas. [3]

4.24 SBP have identified 24 Priority habitats across Suffolk, of which the following eleven are found in Great Bealings:

- **Rivers and streams.** The Rivers Lark and Fynn flow through the parish.
- **Lowland heath including acid grassland** as found in Bealings Lane and near Cherry Tree Farm.
- **Floodplain grazing marsh** adjacent to the River Lark and at the confluence of the Lark and Fynn.
- **Ancient species rich hedgerows**, found in 65% of the extensive network of hedgerows within the parish.
- **Lowland mixed deciduous woodland**, most notable of which is Queech Wood CWS. There are ten other non-designated areas throughout the parish.
- **Wet woodland** which is to be found at Meadow Cottage Wood CWS and three other areas within the Fynn Valley SLA. It is also notable that, for virtually all of its course through the parish, the River Lark is fringed by a ribbon of relatively closely spaced trees and shrubs, which has a very high wildlife value.
- **Lowland meadows**, often termed 'old meadows', which have a long history of traditional management including haymaking, and include unimproved pastures where livestock grazing is the main use. The Churchyard of St Mary's church supports a moderately rich meadow-type flora.
- **Fens.** Kiln Farm Meadow CWS is a prime example of a fen meadow.
- **Wood pasture and parkland** found to the west and south of Bealings House. The views of Bealings House taken from the South show the house and its surrounding parkland which contains a number of specimen veteran oak trees.
- **Arable field margins** between cropped areas and field boundaries which can provide valuable habitat where they are wide or contain wild flowers. There are several examples throughout the parish, such as along Seckford Hall Lane and Bealings Lane.

- **Ponds.** There are at least nine non-garden ponds within the parish but Great Bealings is an area of relatively low pond density.
- 4.25 Priority habitats are prime ‘core areas’ for biodiversity. They are also important in providing wildlife ‘corridors’ (especially hedgerows, arable margins and riparian features), ‘stepping stones’ (smaller areas of deciduous woodland and the ponds) and ‘restoration areas’ with the potential for enhancement into ‘core areas’.
- 4.26 Priority habitats which are adjacent to each other further enhance biodiversity. Notable are the linked habitats of Floodplain Grazing, Marsh and Wet Woodland along the River Lark. Other photos of Priority habitats can be seen in the SWT Report.
- 4.27 The NPPF (para 117) requires Local Plans (and by association their integrated adopted Neighbourhood Plans) to *‘promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations. It is essential for local decision makers to have access to high quality ecological advice in order to meet these requirements’*.
- 4.28 SCC’s Nature Strategy at page 16 highlights the importance of the Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan and its associated Priority Species and Habitats, which are required to be *‘... embedded in local planning policies’*. It adds that *‘impacts on legally protected species are a material consideration in the planning process, whilst impacts on priority species and habitats are also capable of being material considerations.’* ^[2]
- 4.29 SCDC’s Policy DM27 and its associated guidance provides that *‘all development proposals should:*
- (a) Protect the biodiversity and geodiversity value of land and buildings and minimise fragmentation of habitats;*
 - (b) Maximise opportunities for restoration, enhancement and connection of natural habitats;*
 - (c) Incorporate beneficial biodiversity conservation features where appropriate’*.
- 4.30 These requirements mean that development proposals which would have an adverse effect (whether alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on designated areas such as County Wildlife Sites or priority habitats and species will not be permitted. An exception to this may be made if it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development outweigh both the impacts on the features of the site and any wider ecological network. In such circumstances, the standard mitigation hierarchy should be applied (first avoid, then mitigate, finally compensate). Any required mitigation/compensatory measures must be secured via the approval process and implemented for the life of the development project.

Trees and Hedgerows

- 4.31 Trees and hedgerows are prominent features throughout the parish, having survived in the river valley setting in greater numbers than would have been the case in more intensively farmed areas. They include: several areas of mixed deciduous woodland; the wet woodland near the river (the Meadow Cottage Wood CWS); species rich hedgerows; groups and rows of trees; and many mature or veteran individual trees.



Hedgerow trees in Hall Farm Road



Woodland near Rosery Lane

- 4.32 The parish has retained an above-average number of veteran hedgerow trees, which are important both visually and for the wildlife habitat they provide. A comprehensive hedgerow survey was carried out a few years ago to demonstrate the age and variety of hedges in the area. A copy of this survey is held by SCDC. Hedges are not generally covered by planning policies or conditions and, as a general rule, hedgerows will thrive only if residents and landowners continue to plant and maintain them. However, the Plan creates a basis for ensuring that in the context of a planning application, the effect on hedges can be considered to protect against their removal and encourage replacement if necessary.
- 4.33 A few trees are currently protected by TPOs. As part of the policy to protect and enhance habitats for wildlife, the Plan proposes that work should be undertaken to assess whether any other individual trees or groups of trees, such as hedgerow oaks, are of such significant value to the parish that they should also be protected. When this review is completed it is intended to identify those trees or groups of trees which may need formal protection and to produce a supplementary policy note for formal adoption and incorporation within the Plan.
- 4.34 However the majority of trees, whilst not eligible for the protection afforded by TPOs because they are not currently deemed to be under threat, nevertheless play a vitally important role, both individually and collectively, in a number of ways:
- they make a highly visible contribution to the rich and varied landscape of the Lark Valley SLA;
 - they provide important ecological habitats, supporting a wide range of wildlife;
 - they provide a link between the built environment and countryside, helping to set the village in its landscape context;

- they help to reinforce the distinctive, rural character of the village;
- they provide privacy for those residents whose houses are hidden from the road behind hedges.



Hedges and trees in Lower Street

4.35 The crucial value of trees and hedgerows in the landscape has been a major factor in the selection of the LPAs; and their importance is recognised in Objective LP1.

Landscape Protection Areas and Areas to be Protected from Development

4.36 86% of the people who responded to the parish questionnaire said that they would like to see a conservation plan designed to protect the landscape. The Plan, relying on SCDC's SP15 makes this possible. SCDC has recognised (para 3.159) that *'the setting of settlements within their wider landscape context is an important function in defining and maintaining quality of place and identity. Further, across the District there are many instances where the space between settlements or smaller, more isolated groups of buildings makes an important contribution to the sense of place and where the introduction of new development could result in coalescence or the perception of coalescence (for example ribbon type development) and should be avoided'*.

4.37 SP15 sets out the commitment of the local authority to protect and enhance the various landscape character areas within the district. It also considers that the *'valleys and tributaries of the ... Fynn... are considered to be particularly significant'*. SP15 also makes provision for Neighbourhood Plans to include and protect *'sites, gaps, gardens and spaces that make an important contribution to a particular location in their undeveloped form ... or... where development in these locations would lead to coalescence'*.

4.38 The Plan has identified five LPAs within the village which are considered particularly important in supporting and validating the existing SLA and where development (even if it would otherwise be justified under SP28) would be tightly controlled because the Community considers that their value to the parish in their current, undeveloped state substantially outweighs the benefits of any development.

4.39 Furthermore, by way of logical extension to the concept of the LPAs, and in support of SCDC's replacement of 'saved' policy AP28, it is proposed that within certain of the LPAs there should be identified Areas to be Protected from Development (APDs). These will serve to support the overall objective of preventing any development which could lead to infilling and the resulting loss of the 'gaps and spaces' which would be detrimental to the character of the area. This proposal is wholly consistent with SP15.

The evidence for the LPAs and APDs

4.40 The decision to designate five areas within the village as LPAs has been taken on the basis of the following elements which are considered to be of particular importance to the village and should therefore be conserved:

- they are all within the Fynn Valley SLA and play an important role in demonstrating the special landscape character of the river valley;
- they contain key environmental features and important wildlife habitats, as evidenced in the SWT Report;
- some have a value in maintaining the current balance of gaps and spaces which reduce the risk or perception of risk of coalescence;
- they provide views from public roads and footpaths which residents have consistently said at public meetings are of particular value;
- some contain listed buildings.

4.41 Individually and collectively, they show the importance of the relationship between the village, the landscape, and the natural environment in which it sits, creating the overarching setting that the Plan seeks to protect and enhance by making development in these areas extremely difficult to justify. The five areas are clearly marked on the map in Appendix 1.

[1] Area around Bealings House and Rosery Farm

4.42 This is the most easterly of the LPAs, stretching from the historic parkland surrounding Bealings House in the north to the River Lark in the south. It includes the fields around Rosery Farm, which marks the western boundary of the LPA. It is bordered largely by woodland to the east.



Bealings House



Rosery Farm

- 4.43 The parkland surrounding Bealings House contains a number of large trees, notably oak, Scots pine and a number of cedars planted c. 1804. Of particular significance is what is left of an old oak avenue which runs down to the river and is abutted by mixed woodland on Bird's Hill, currently being regenerated. The area contains the most significant parkland priority habitat in the village and provides a wealth of cover for wildlife. Priority species the area is likely to support include brown long-eared bats and birds such as song thrush and starling. This area is not currently listed as historic parkland under SPG6 but should be considered when that policy is reviewed.
- 4.44 There are also views across the traditional farmland to the river valley. The group of farm buildings centred on Rosery Farm – a listed building - are a significant element in this landscape and form a composition which should be protected.
- 4.45 Other listed buildings in this area include Birds Hill, Bealings House, and The Rosery and, accordingly, are subject to specific protection.
- 4.46 The area could be enhanced by the planting of young oak trees to replenish the oak avenue. The current owner has indicated that he will seek to achieve this.

[2] The approach to the village along Lodge Road

- 4.47 This LPA lies to the east of Lower Street beyond a row of houses in Lodge Road. It is bordered on the east by the footpath to Meadow Cottage and stretches south from Lodge Road across the valley farmland to the River Lark. A small section lies to the north of the Road around Green Close.



Views of the Valley Landscape to the south of Lodge Road

- 4.48 To the south there are views across the farmland towards the river which provides habitat for Priority species such as otter and water vole. The arable land within the area also provides suitable habitat for species such as skylark.
- 4.49 From the east and south there are pleasing views of the houses framed by trees and hedges. To the north is an attractive farmed landscape with views towards Rosery Lane and the wood above Kiln Lane.



Lodge Road, from the east



North section of LPA, from Rosery Lane

4.50 These views frame the eastern approach to the village and because of their visual importance it is considered essential that they should be protected from development. They have been identified as spaces that should be retained in their undeveloped form and therefore it is proposed that both sides of Lodge Road in this area should be designated as an APD.

[3] Kiln Lane

4.51 This is a very significant area as the landscape penetrates right into the heart of the village where Kiln Lane joins Lower Street, and provides a classic illustration of the extent to which the village and the landscape work in harmony. It includes the area of rolling farmland and woods to the east of Kiln Lane. It is bounded to the north by Rosery Lane and to the west by properties in Lower Street. The farmland provides habitat for Priority species such as skylark and yellowhammer. Grayling butterfly have also been recorded in this area.



The harmony of village and landscape in Kiln Lane viewed from north and south

4.52 Any new housing other than on existing plots is highly likely to detract from the views and change the special character of Kiln Lane itself and the area where it joins Lower Street. Furthermore, Kiln Lane is an unsurfaced restricted by-way and is not suitable for any increase in traffic.

4.53 For these reasons the land either side of Kiln Lane as far as Kiln Farm is to be protected from development by being designated as an APD.

[4] St Mary's Church and surrounding meadowland

4.54 The village does not have a village green and the Church, which is a listed building, is both the historic heart of the village and its fulcrum, linking the two residential areas of Boot Street and Lower Street. The church tower is a prominent feature which is visible from almost every direction as one approaches or goes through the village.

4.55 The area of meadowland around the church and the distinctive avenue of lime trees help to anchor the church in the landscape and enhance the views of the historic building. Some of the trees are old and some are in poor condition and therefore this is an area where some sensitive enhancement could be achieved.



The church and meadowland



The avenue of lime trees

4.56 This LPA covers the valley and meadows along the River Lark, from Hall Farm Road in the north to Lower Street in the east. The River marks the western and southern boundaries. The adjoining areas of floodplain grazing marsh, wet woodland and lowland meadows are all Priority habitats. These provide habitat for Priority species such as otter, water vole and barn owl.



Water meadows and farmland west of Lower Street

4.57 The small field to the south and west of Lower Street beyond the end of the current built up area is a flood meadow that serves to protect neighbouring properties from flooding. It is designated as an APD so as to prevent the encroachment of development into this sensitive area and protect the river margin and the views across to the church.

[5] Boot Street

4.58 The LPA stretches south from Boot Street across the valley farmland and floodplain as far as the parish boundary. To the north, it includes the area to the east of the footpath leading from Boot Street to Hill Farm Cottage. It is bordered in the east by the River Lark.

4.59 The primarily residential settlement of Boot Street contains a great variety of properties, with nearly all the gardens backing onto farmland or open countryside and the houses having good views over open countryside on both sides. The river valley creates a green corridor and provides a beautiful visual amenity for this part of Great Bealings.

4.60 To the north and north-east lies a very attractive farmed and rolling landscape with some dominant groups of trees; to the south is a more open landscape. Both areas have distant views down the valley towards the River Fynn. Furthermore, the River Lark, with its fringing trees and shrubs, forms a valued wildlife asset and is a Priority habitat, supporting species such as otter and water vole.



The Lark Valley north of Boot Street



Towards Boot Street Bridge from the west



Boot Street approach from the west



Farmland to the south

4.61 At the eastern end of Boot Street stands the hump-backed bridge – a scheduled monument - which has some visual appeal in its own right and provides a vantage point overlooking the river and its adjoining meadows. Between this bridge and the nearest houses are open gaps of about 100 metres on each side of the road. Both are within or adjacent to the flood plain and have poor sight lines along the highway. These factors, in addition to the visual amenity which these gaps provide, lead to the conclusion that any proposals for their

development should be strongly resisted and for this reason the area either side of Boot Street in the vicinity of the bridge should be designated as an APD.

4.62 Similarly at the western approach to Boot Street the open landscape to the south and the restricted width of the highway militates against any possibility of development and for this reason this area also should be designated as an APD.

4.63 Objectives and Policies relating to the Landscape and Biodiversity

Objective:

To ensure that the landscape and other natural assets are considered in every planning application and that wildlife habitats are given appropriate protection.

Policy LP1

All development must protect and enhance the special landscape qualities and the biodiversity of the area. This is equally important whether the development occurs within a settlement cluster or in the countryside. All development proposals must demonstrate that they do not have any detrimental impact on the SLA in general, or on an LPA in particular. Planning applications must be supported by relevant landscape, visual impact assessment and ecological evidence in accordance with SCDC's validation requirements in order to demonstrate that the proposed development:

- complies with all relevant Development Management Guidance issued by Suffolk County Council in relation to the character of the local landscape;*
- is located to make the best use of existing hedges and trees to screen the proposed development;*
- protects the biodiversity and geodiversity value of land and minimises the fragmentation of habitats;*
- incorporates appropriate biodiversity enhancement features;*
- does not adversely affect a County Wildlife Site; and*
- does not adversely affect any Priority habitat and species.*

A development may be regarded as having a detrimental impact on the SLA if one or more mature trees or established hedges have to be removed to enable the development to take place. There will be a presumption in favour of the retention of valuable, distinctive or specimen trees but each case will be reviewed on its merits.

A developer must demonstrate that where it is proposed to remove any trees, hedges or shrubs that currently screen a property, adequate landscape improvements will be put in place to compensate for the loss of the trees or shrubs.

Permitted developments such as porches, minor extensions, sheds, garages, etc. that do not require planning permission would not need to undertake landscape, visual impact, or ecological surveys but consultation with the Parish Council would be encouraged in all cases to guard against removal of screening hedges and trees so as to maintain the rural appearance of the street scene.

Objective:

To create a conservation plan designed to protect the landscape.

Policy LP2

The LPAs 1 - 5 shall be designated as protected spaces in accordance with SCDC Policy SP15. In accordance with the principles of sustainable development and permitted development rights, new development will be expected to be limited to that which comprises:

- *the replacement of existing dwellings on a like for like basis, to include trees and hedgerows where relevant; or*
- *the sub division of an existing larger dwelling, where there is a demonstrated local need, as set out under SCDC Policies SP28 and DM3.*

Proposals to replace or adapt existing dwellings must comply with all relevant SCDC policies relating to both the Landscape and the Built Environment. Should development proposals be brought forward in these areas under SP28 or DM3, they would be required to demonstrate that enhancements would be included such that the LPA in question was protected and enhanced as a result.

The APDs identified in each of the designated LPAs are intended to give effect to SCDC policy SP15 in relation to gaps, spaces and the avoidance of coalescence.

5. BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

- 5.1 The special and outstanding qualities of the countryside within which Great Bealings is located have been clearly set out in the previous section but it is worth repeating that the river valley dominates the landscape linking the two principal settlement clusters around Boot Street and Lower Street. Sitting midway between the two is the dominant feature of St. Mary's church.
- 5.2 The Lower Street area is in the valley and gives the appearance of being secluded. The housing is largely low density and detached, apart from the row of cottages at the junction of Lower Street and Kiln Lane. The houses are mostly inward looking though some have open views over distant landscape. There is a wide variety of house types, ages and sizes while the important presence of hedgerows (where these have not been removed by householders) gives an intimacy of scale. This wide variety is unified by the effect of planting. Trees are the dominating element forming important entrance gateways at the beginning of the built up part of this area particularly on Lodge Road. There are good examples of materials and colours in the more visible dwellings.



- 5.3 In comparison, the Boot Street area, which is situated at a slightly higher elevation, is more open in character, with strong linear form and a higher housing density compared to Lower Street. Although it is more visible than Lower Street, there are trees, brick walls or

hedgerows which screen many of the houses from the road. Sporadic development originally started with the oldest dwellings near the bridge over the River Lark. Infill development over a period of time has led to a variety of types and ages which add interest, character and visual history to this locality. Mature trees form important gateways into the built up area from the parish boundary at the western end of Boot Street and at the Grundisburgh Road entrance.



- 5.4 In both settlements the landscape is the dominant element and apart from a few landmarks such as the church tower the built form has developed within the landscape setting to create the symbiotic relationship between the two that characterises the village.
- 5.5 In both areas, the increased use of hedgerows and trees adjoining the road, especially where hedges have been removed, would enhance the rural nature of the village.

Objectives and Policies relating to the Built Environment

New Housing

- 5.6 The effect of the designation of Great Bealings as an “Other Village” (for which no physical boundaries have been defined) is that, subject to the exception relating to affordable housing (see para 5.14 below), new housing is restricted to the conditions set out in DM3 (see paragraph 3.7 above) and further referred to in SP28 and SP29 as well as paragraph 55 of the NPPF.

Design Aesthetics

- 5.7 The SCDC Local Plan recognises that the district as a whole has a distinctive character even in non-designated areas. As noted in 5.2 and 5.3 above, each of the two principal areas of the village covered by the Plan has its own distinctive characteristics in relation to its setting and layout. Development proposals should where possible follow these characteristics, supported by the design approach recommended in the Plan. Such an approach would add supporting detail to the SCDC Local Plan in the context of DM21, 22, and 23.

- 5.8 Although any development proposal is likely to be restricted to single properties, it is recognised by the PC that poor design can have a significant adverse impact on the neighbouring area, whether the property is within a settlement cluster or is more isolated within the countryside. In such a sensitive overall setting issues such as mass, height, screening, and proximity to other buildings or natural features can have a disproportionate effect.
- 5.9 The Plan therefore focuses on the delivery of high quality outcomes by guiding the overall scale of a building, its height, landscaping, layout and materials to ensure that it connects appropriately to its locality.
- 5.10 The effect of SCDC Policy DM21 is that: *'proposals that comprise poor visual design and layout or otherwise seriously detract from the character of their surroundings will not be permitted. Development will be expected to establish a strong sense of place, using street scenes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. SCDC will support and strongly encourage the conservation of energy and the use of alternative and renewable sources of energy in the design and layout of proposals for new buildings and conversion of existing buildings, provided it would not seriously detract from the character of the area'*.
- 5.11 The Plan fully supports the objective, set out in SCDC Policy DM21 and paragraph 60 of the NPPF, of not trying to stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles but recognises the importance of ensuring that any new development promotes and reinforces local distinctiveness, reflecting the identity of local surroundings and materials. The Plan also expects all development to take every opportunity to improve the character and quality of the neighbourhood.

Objective:

Any new buildings or changes to existing buildings should respect the character and quality of the village and its setting in the landscape and enhance the surrounding area.

Policy BE1

All development proposals should demonstrate good quality design and respect the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including, where appropriate, the re-use of land that has already been developed. Development should reflect available opportunities to enhance the character and quality of the surrounding land. In order to achieve this requirement, all development will:

- *Use good quality materials that complement the existing palette of materials used within the area;*
- *Be sustainable in its design and construction;*
- *Demonstrate how it respects and enhances the unique qualities and character of the area;*
- *Be proportionate in scale (height, mass and siting etc.), both to the size of the plot*

and in relation to neighbouring properties; and

- *All proposals should also demonstrate that they comply with all relevant guidance and development management policies issued by SCC or SCDC; in particular DM3, DM6, DM21, DM24 and DM28.*

Sustainable Construction

- 5.12 The Plan supports the approach set out in SCDC's Local Plan, specifically Policy DM24, where it states that the Planning Authority '*will expect all new developments, including the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing buildings, to use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care in order to reduce emissions potentially linked to changes to the climate*'.

Residential Annexes

- 5.13 In accordance with DM6 and SCDC Core Strategy paragraph 5.22, the conversion of existing buildings or the erection of new, ancillary buildings to accommodate, for example, an elderly or disabled dependant, will only be permitted where they are small in scale, well related to the main dwelling and cause no detriment to residential or visual amenity. In particular, because the village is considered to be part of the Countryside, there must not be a material impact on the landscape.

Affordable Housing

- 5.14 SP28 permits new housing to address local needs but only in exceptional circumstances. The exception that relates to Great Bealings concerns the provision of affordable housing. The SCDC Local Plan states (at paragraph 4.95): '*affordable housing will be permitted which meets an identified local need where its provision is supported by a parish plan or statement or Local Needs Housing Survey*'. Under DM1 it is further made clear that any such development must be in keeping with its setting.
- 5.15 The PC commissioned a Housing Needs Survey which was carried out by Community Action Suffolk in 2013 (Appendix 6). The report suggested that there was a potential need for 2/3 units over the next 3 to 5 years.
- 5.16 Of the people who responded to the parish questionnaire in 2013, 95% of people agreed that affordable housing should be subject to the same criteria as other development and should be subject to specific consultation. 56% of responders did not support the provision of affordable Housing. The Parish Council currently has no plans for making any proposals for affordable housing in the village but would deal with any such proposal as set out in Policy BE2.

Objective:
Affordable housing should be subject to the same criteria as other development and should be subject to local consultation.

Policy BE2

The Parish Council would support a proposal for a small scale affordable housing development, the potential need for which was indicated by the Housing Needs survey carried out in the context of the Plan, provided that:

- *the proposal contributes to meeting the affordable and social rented needs of people with a local connection;*
- *its use will be governed by an appropriate Section 106 Agreement;*
- *the development is outside any Landscape Protection Area;*
- *the development complies with all other policies in the Plan and relevant SCDC and national policies and sustainable development principles;*
- *appropriate detailed consultation has been conducted both at the parish level and in the area proposed for the development.*

Flood risk

5.17 Many properties within the village are situated in the Lark Valley. Most are protected from flooding due to the presence of water meadows either side of the river and by a bund that has been constructed in the area of the Boot Street bridge. It is important to ensure that any new development will not be at risk from flooding, does not impede the flow of the River Lark, and does not cause a reduction in flood storage capacity or exacerbate flooding problems elsewhere. A map of the Environment Agency's designated flood zones is attached at Appendix 1.

5.18 SCDC's Core Strategy states, at paragraph 5.74: *'it is important to ensure that new development is not at risk from flooding, which would endanger life and damage property. Similarly, it is important to ensure that new development does not impede flood flows, reduce flood storage capacity or exacerbate problems of flooding in areas downstream through an increase in run-off from impermeable surfaces such as roofs and paved areas.'* DM28 provides valuable guidance for dealing with development proposals which may impact on the flood plain. It will also be necessary to consult the Environment Agency on any proposal which may be considered to pose a flood risk.

Objective:
No new development should take place in flood risk areas both so as to avoid any impairment to the flow or runoff of flood water and to avoid intrusion on the landscape value of the river valley

Policy BE3

The distinctive valley landscape of the village reflects the presence of the River Lark and related water courses. Development proposals must show that they:

- *meet the requirements of SCDC Policy DM28, so as to minimise flood risk;*
- *will not impede surface water run-off from existing buildings or structures (such as roads);*

- *where appropriate, incorporates design features that negate any potential flood risk to the new or adjacent buildings otherwise arising from the development; and*
- *meet the requirements of LP1 and LP2 (above).*

5.19 Great Bealings has one scheduled monument - the Boot Street Bridge, pictured, and fourteen Grade 2 buildings listed by Historic England, details of which can be found on the Historic England website. A summary of their citations is included in Appendix 2 together with photographs. These include some outstanding examples such as Seckford Hall, Great Bealings House and the Old Rectory. These are recognised as being of national historic and architectural importance and are protected by law. Historic England is responsible directly for the bridge and SCDC controls what work may be carried out on the listed buildings. Demolition or alteration of any sort must have Listed Building Consent as well as any Planning Permission that might be required.



Boot Street bridge

Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs)

5.20 Whilst not being of national importance there are a number of other buildings and structures in Great Bealings which are of local architectural or historic interest or make a valuable contribution to the character of the village and should be considered as assets. The responses to the Questionnaire made it clear that many people in the village want more protection for unlisted buildings that give character to the village. It is, therefore, important that these are recognised, valued and understood so that future alterations or additions are given due consideration in the interests of maintaining and enhancing a sense of Great Bealings' identity.

5.21 The NPPF ^[1] has encouraged local communities, in partnership with their local authority, to draw up a list of NDHAs. These need not all be buildings but can include walls, landscape areas, sites, places, monuments, historic post boxes or other structures and artefacts. A list of such assets based on SCDC's agreed guidelines has been drawn up in consultation with SCDC's Conservation Officer. SCDC has published these guidelines (Appendix 4) which are based on those set out by Historic England and it is proposed that these are adopted under the provisions of this Plan. In summary, each building or structure should meet one or more of the following criteria:

- it makes a contribution to the identity of the parish e.g. Grotto Farm, Lodge Road; Hill House, Orchard Lane.
- it is of local architectural or historic interest e.g. The War Memorial, Hall Farm Road.
- it is unique to the parish e.g. Lodge Cottage, Lodge Road.
- it has group value that is a recognisable part of the parish e.g. Rose Cottage, castellated water tower and The Coach House, Playford Mount.
- it is a good example of conversion, alteration or extension that is appropriate to the parish e.g. Bealings Barn, Grundisburgh Road; extension to Kiln Farm Cottage.

5.22 The full list of current NDHAs with brief descriptions and identification photographs is included in Appendix 3. The list may be amended at any time by the addition of properties that meet the criteria or the removal of those that are no longer considered to be of local importance or whose owners no longer wish them to be included.

5.23 The primary purpose of identifying a property as an NDHA is to preserve and, where possible, enhance it. There is a presumption in favour of retaining and repairing NDHAs unless it can be clearly demonstrated that a building is no longer of local importance or is beyond repair. The proposed redevelopment would have to demonstrate substantial benefits for the community.

5.24 Inclusion on the list does not affect individual permitted development rights and, importantly, is not a first step in the process of being listed by English Heritage. However where a planning application is involved, the effect of such a proposal on an NDHA will need to be taken into account by the planning authority in determining the application. A balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the importance of the asset.

5.25 Whether works require a full Planning Application or are covered by Permitted Development Rights, all such works would be encouraged, as suggested above, to follow relevant design guidance and advice. Full details of proposed design criteria and materials are to be found in the Appendix 4. Any replacement should be of equal or higher standard of design, should reflect the character and density of the surrounding area, and should incorporate sustainability features. Contemporary design may have a place but would need

a very considered approach and response to its location. Traditional materials such as brick, render, timber and clay tiles can be employed in a contemporary way and modern materials need not be ruled out if used creatively. A sensitive contemporary design could well become tomorrow's heritage asset.

Objective:

The value of Non Designated Heritage Assets should be recognised and such properties given additional protection.

Policy BE4

There will be a presumption in favour of the retention of a Non Designated Heritage Asset. Where a proposed development involves the demolition of all or part of such a building, the proposals must demonstrate that:

- *the building is no longer of local importance or is beyond sustainable repair;*
- *any replacement building will be of a comparable standard of design to the building which it is proposed to replace.*

All proposals relating to the redevelopment of a Non Designated Heritage Asset must, in addition to complying with all other relevant policies in the Plan, demonstrate that the development:

- *complies with all relevant SCDC policy;*
- *respects the context and setting of the surrounding area;*
- *incorporates sustainability features; and*
- *will incorporate the use of traditional materials in the context of its setting and the design guidance set out in the Plan.*

6. OTHER MATTERS

- 6.1 While the Plan as set out above deals with those things that are within the formal scope of a Neighbourhood Plan, there are other matters which will be considered by the PC in the context of the Plan and in the course of its wider considerations. The PC will be guided by the Plan and its strategic approach to the way that developments of any sort are proposed that might affect the village and will seek to engage the local community in relation to issues that fall outside the policies set out in the Plan itself.

Enhancements

- 6.2 Opportunities shall be sought to encourage:
- Tree preservation and new planting;
 - Management and enhancement of wildlife habitats, for example by the creation of a community asset which can be managed as a wildlife reserve;
 - Responsible best farming practices, including support for farmers in the village who might wish to apply for agri-environmental schemes and can show local community support;
 - Community engagement in the above activities.

Traffic

- 6.3 This is often the most contentious of issues for a rural village. Great Bealings already participates in a voluntary speed watch scheme. An initiative has also been launched to bring together a number of villages on the northern borders of Ipswich to consider the traffic implications of the proposed new settlement in the Westerfield road area. SCC is the body responsible for traffic matters, but combined action will be the best way to respond to these issues as they develop.
- 6.4 The PC registered an interest in the Quiet Lanes scheme proposed and trialled by SCC, but the scheme has been very slow to get off the ground, largely due to lack of finance. However the PC has now been asked to nominate those roads which could be considered under the scheme. If the proposal were to go forwards, the PC would have to consult with interested parties regarding the actual areas to be covered, the placing of signs, and other matters. This consultation would be separate to that required for the Plan itself. The roads suggested include:
- Seckford Hall Road
 - Lodge Road
 - Rosery Lane
 - Lower Street
 - Kiln Lane
 - Hasketon Road
 - Grundisburgh Road
- 6.5 Should any scheme come forward to build a northern bypass round Ipswich, the Plan gives us a strong basis for arguing for appropriate protection and the PC would be guided accordingly.

Broadband

- 6.6 The PC will give consideration to any scheme that provides better broadband access to the village. At the moment speeds through the Grundisburgh exchange are very slow. Opportunities will be sought to consider funding for any such scheme from whatever sources might be available.

National Infrastructure

- 6.7 We can expect considerable disruption when the cabling is laid for the EA1 offshore wind farm (see map of cable route at Appendix), especially now we know that capacity will be included for a further scheme in the future. The Plan provides evidence of landscape, habitat, and other features that are worthy of protection and thus gives us a basis for arguing for suitable measures to offset or alleviate any disruption, either during construction or during the operational period. We are aware that there will be access points to allow maintenance of the cable, and some of these will be in sensitive areas. Joint pressure from neighbouring parishes will be of particular importance in this context.

7. REFERENCES – accessed 1 September 2015

1. National Planning Policy Framework Ref: ISBN 9781409834137 Accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2
2. Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan- Core Strategy & Development Management Policies; Development Plan Document July 2013 – Suffolk Coastal District Council, Melton Hill, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 1AU
3. Suffolk’s Nature Strategy published by Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, RSPB and the National Trust - www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/suffolks-countryside-and-wildlife/protecting-the-environment/suffolk-nature-strategy/#sthash.Ri13bwWI.dpuf
4. Suffolk County Council’s Descriptions and Guidance Notes on the landscape character areas throughout the County can be accessed via its website: www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/default.aspx and follow links to Landscape Typology and PDF Downloads:
 - (a) 4. Ancient Rolling Farmlands EP/Edit1/02.08.10
 - (b) 4. Guidance Note Ancient Rolling Farmlands EP/Edit1/1.10.10;
 - (c) 19. Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze EP/Edit1/02.08.10
 - (d) 19. Guidance Note Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze EP/Edit1/1.10.10
5. Suffolk Coastal District Plan Remaining saved Policies accessed via www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/planning/policy/local-plan/saved-policies