

# Beccles Neighbourhood Area Consultation Responses

Consultation period: 16<sup>th</sup> June to 28<sup>th</sup> July 2017

Historic England.....	1
Natural England.....	2
Gladman Developments .....	7
Andrew Riley .....	12
Leigh Barber .....	12

## Historic England

Thank you for email of 16 June 2017 seeking Historic England advice on Beccles Neighbourhood Area designation application. Please find below our advice on this application.

Historic England has no objection to this designation, but we would like to take this opportunity to provide some initial advice on the matter and will send a copy to Beccles Town Council for their use.

The Neighbourhood Area incorporates a number of designated heritage assets including:

- 6 GI listed buildings
- 1 GII\* listed building (known as Northgate House)
- 140 Grade II listed buildings

It will be important that the strategy put together for this area safeguards those elements which contribute to the importance of these historic assets. This will assist in ensuring they can be enjoyed by future generations of the area and make sure it is in line with national planning policy.

The Design and Conservation team at Waveney District Council are best placed to assist the Town Council in the development of their Neighbourhood Plan and advising them to consider how the strategy might address the area's heritage assets.

We would also recommend that the Town Council speak to the staff at Suffolk County Council Archaeology and Historic Environment Service who look after the Historic Environment Record and give advice on archaeological matters. They should be able to provide details of not only any designated heritage assets but also locally-important buildings, archaeological remains and landscapes. Some Historic Environment Records may also be available on-line via the Heritage Gateway ([www.heritagegateway.org.uk](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk)). It may also be useful for the Parish Councils to involve local voluntary groups such as the local Civic Society, local history groups, building preservation trusts, etc. in the production of their Neighbourhood Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans need to include enough information about local heritage to guide planning decisions and to put broader strategic heritage policies from the local authority's local plan into action at a neighbourhood scale. If appropriate this should include enough information about local non-designated heritage assets including sites of archaeological interest to guide decisions.

Further information and guidance on how heritage can best be incorporated into Neighbourhood Plans has been produced by Historic England. This signposts a number of other documents which the Parish Council might find useful in helping to identify what it is about their area which makes it distinctive and how they might go about ensuring that the character of the area is retained. These can be found at:-

<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/plan-making/improve-your-neighbourhood/>

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

## Natural England

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

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

### Natural England's role

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present

and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development. The local planning authority will be aware and should advise the neighbourhood planning body when Natural England should be consulted further on the neighbourhood plan.

#### Planning policy for the natural environment

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Natural environment information sources**

The Magic<sup>1</sup> website will provide you with much of the nationally held natural environment data for your plan area. The most relevant layers for you to consider are: Agricultural Land Classification, Ancient Woodland, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Local Nature Reserves, National Parks (England), National Trails,

Priority Habitat Inventory, public rights of way (on the Ordnance Survey base map) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including their impact risk zones). Local environmental record centres may hold a range of additional information on the natural environment. A list of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

local record centres is available here<sup>2</sup>. Priority habitats are those habitats of particular importance for nature conservation, and the list of them can be found here<sup>3</sup>. Most of these will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. Your local planning authority should be able to supply you with the locations of Local Wildlife Sites.

National Character Areas (NCAs) divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each character area is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. NCA profiles contain descriptions of the area and statements of environmental opportunity, which may be useful to inform proposals in your plan. NCA information can be found here<sup>4</sup>.

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

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

General mapped information on soil types and Agricultural Land Classification is available (under 'landscape') on the Magic<sup>5</sup> website and also from the LandIS website<sup>6</sup>, which contains more information about obtaining soil data.

### **Natural environment issues to consider**

The National Planning Policy Framework<sup>7</sup> sets out national planning policy on protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Planning Practice Guidance<sup>8</sup> sets out supporting guidance.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nbn-nfbr.org.uk/nfbr.php>

<sup>3</sup>

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making>

<sup>5</sup> <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.landis.org.uk/index.cfm>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

<sup>8</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/natural-environment/>

Your local planning authority should be able to provide you with further advice on the potential impacts of your plan or order on the natural environment and the need for any environmental assessments.

### Landscape

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

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

### Wildlife habitats

Some proposals can have adverse impacts on designated wildlife sites or other priority habitats (listed here<sup>9</sup>), such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Ancient woodland<sup>10</sup>. If there are likely to be any adverse impacts you'll need to think about how such impacts can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

### Priority and protected species

You'll also want to consider whether any proposals might affect priority species (listed here<sup>11</sup>) or protected species. To help you do this, Natural England has produced advice here<sup>12</sup> to help understand the impact of particular developments on protected species.

### Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services for society. It is a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, a store for carbon and water, a reservoir of biodiversity and a buffer against pollution. If you are proposing development, you should seek to use areas of poorer quality agricultural land in preference to that of a higher quality in line with National Planning Policy Framework para 112. For more information, see our

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<sup>9</sup>

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-and-veteran-trees-protection-surveys-licences>

<sup>11</sup>

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

publication Agricultural Land Classification: protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land<sup>13</sup>.

### Improving your natural environment

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

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

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

- Setting out in your plan how you would like to implement elements of a wider Green Infrastructure Strategy (if one exists) in your community.
- Assessing needs for accessible greenspace and setting out proposals to address any deficiencies or enhance provision.
- Identifying green areas of particular importance for special protection through Local Green Space designation (see Planning Practice Guidance on this<sup>14</sup>).
- Managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips in less used parts of parks, changing hedge cutting timings and frequency).
- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network, e.g. cutting back hedges, improving the surface, clearing litter or installing kissing gates) or extending the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition, or clearing away an eyesore).

<sup>13</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35012>

<sup>14</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space/local-green-space-designation/>

## Gladman Developments

Gladman Developments Ltd (Gladman) specialise in the promotion of strategic land for residential development with associated community infrastructure. This letter provides Gladman's representations on the application made by Beccles Town Council for the designation of a neighbourhood area, for the purposes of preparing a neighbourhood development plan.

As this is the first formal stage of preparing a neighbourhood plan, Gladman would like to take this opportunity to comment on the Beccles Neighbourhood Area application to highlight a number of key requirements to which the development of the emerging neighbourhood area should have regard.

Gladman wish to participate in the neighbourhood plan's preparation and to be notified of further developments and consultations in this regard. We would also like to offer our assistance in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan and invite the Neighbourhood Forum to get in touch regarding this.

### Legislation

Before a Neighbourhood Plan can proceed to referendum it must be tested against a set of Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions, set out in §8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by section 28a of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004). The Basic Conditions which the Neighbourhood Plan must be found in compliancy with are as follows:

*(a) Having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the order.*

*(d) The making of the order contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.*

*(e) The making of the order is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area).*

*(f) The making of the order does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.*

If the Neighbourhood Plan is not developed in accordance with all of the Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions as set out above then there is a real risk that it will fail when it reaches Independent Examination.

### High Court Judgments

#### Woodcock Judgement

The Woodcock High Court judgment demonstrates the implications for progressing a neighbourhood plan where there is no local plan in place nor a five-year housing land supply. In summary, this High Court judgment demonstrates the following key points:

- That §14 and §49 of the Framework in regard to five-year housing land supply and the weight to be given to extant housing land supply policies applies equally to both emerging and 'made' neighbourhood plans as well as other development plan documents otherwise adopted and/or emerging by the local planning authority.
- There is nothing in policy or statute that elevates neighbourhood planning to a level above the wider development plan that enables special consideration.
- Neighbourhood Plans must respect national planning policy and the core planning principles outlined within the Framework.
- Prematurity must be assessed against the whole of the requirements of the PPG. In neighbourhood planning, there is no requirement for qualifying bodies to produce an objective assessment of housing needs.

#### Crownhall Judgment

On 21st January 2016, Holgate J handed down judgment in R(Crownhall Estates Ltd) v Chichester District Council [2016] EWHC 73 (Admin). This judgment summarises the respective legislation at §12-§28 (further detailed below), and the relevant principles at §29.

This judgment does not however mark the end of policy development, on 11th February 2016, the Secretary of State published a series of updates to the Neighbourhood Planning chapter of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). In particular, the PPG now stresses the importance of housing reserve sites and providing indicative delivery timetables to ensure that emerging evidence of housing needs is addressed to help minimise any potential conflicts that can arise to ensure that a neighbourhood plan is not ultimately overridden by the contents of an emerging Local Plan.

It is important to note that the updates to the PPG were drafted following the Crownhall judgment and it is essential that the steering group consider all of the advice and guidance contained in the PPG.

#### **National Planning Policy Framework**

The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. In doing so it sets out the requirements for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans and the role they must play in meeting the development needs of the local area in which they control.

Paragraph 16 of the Framework sets out the positive role that Neighbourhood Plans should play in meeting the development needs of the local area. It states that:



*“The application of the Presumption (In Favour of Sustainable Development, set out in paragraph 14 of Framework) will have implications for how communities engage in neighbourhood planning. Critically it will mean that neighbourhoods should:*

- *Develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development;*
- *Plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside of the strategic elements of the Local Plan”*

Further guidance on the relationship between Neighbourhood Plans and strategic policies for the wider area set out in a Council’s Local Plan is included in paragraph 184 of the Framework:

*“The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. To facilitate this, local planning authorities should set out clearly their strategic policies for the area and ensure that an up-to-date plan is in place as quickly as possible. Neighbourhood Plans should reflect these policies and neighbourhoods should plan positively to support them. Neighbourhood Plans...should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies”.*

It is clear from the above that neighbourhood plans should be prepared in conformity with the strategic requirements for the wider area as confirmed in an adopted Development Plan. As highlighted above, on 11th February 2016, the Secretary of State published a series of updates to the PPG for the preparation of neighbourhood plans. This update makes clear that neighbourhood plans should take account of the latest and up-to-date evidence of housing needs. In particular, where a qualifying body is attempting to identify and meet housing needs, a local planning authority should share relevant evidence on housing need gathered to support its own plan making.

Neighbourhood Plans should also provide indicative delivery timetables and consider the allocation of reserve sites to ensure that emerging evidence of housing need is addressed in order to help minimise any potential conflicts where a post Framework Local Plan is yet to be adopted.

A further update to the PPG was published on 19th May 2016. Paragraph 50 of the PPG<sup>15</sup> makes clear that all settlements have a role to play in delivering sustainable development and should avoid blanket policies restricting housing development. Accordingly, the neighbourhood plan should not include policies that would act to arbitrarily preclude the delivery of sustainable development coming forward within the neighbourhood area.

### Relationship with Local Plans

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<sup>15</sup> PPG Reference ID 50-001-20160519

To meet the requirements of the Framework and the Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions, Neighbourhood Plans should be prepared to conform to up-to-date strategic policy requirements set out in Local Plans. Where an up-to-date Local Plan has been adopted and is in place for the wider authority area, it is the strategic policy requirements set out in this document that a Neighbourhood Plan should seek to support and meet. When a Local Plan is emerging or is yet to be found sound at Examination, there will be lack of certainty over what scale of development a community must accommodate or the direction the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan should take.

#### Adopted Local Plan

The Waveney Core Strategy was adopted in January 2009, the majority of the Plan's policies cover up to 2021 with the exception of the Council's housing policies which cover up to 2025. The Plan requires the delivery of 6,960 dwellings over the plan period. However, this requirement was never based on an objective assessment of housing needs, and is therefore inconsistent with the requirements of national planning policy and guidance.

#### Emerging Local Plan

The Council are currently working on a new Waveney Local Plan. The Local Plan will set out the level of growth (including new housing, employment, retail and community uses) which needs to be planned in Waveney up to 2036. This plan is very much in its infancy and so it is important that the Beccles Neighbourhood Plan is flexible on housing site allocations and the plans stance on development outside of settlement boundaries. Failure to provide sufficient flexibility could lead to conflict with the emerging Local Plan, as s38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act states:

*'If to any extent a policy contained in a development plan for an area conflicts with another policy in the development plan the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to be adopted, approved or published (as the case may be).'*

#### **Neighbourhood Plan Policies and Proposals**

In accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions, Neighbourhood Plan policies should align with the requirements of the Framework and the wider strategic policies for the area set out in the Council's Local Plan. Neighbourhood Plans should provide a policy framework that complements and supports the requirements set out in these higher-order documents, setting out further, locally-specific requirements that will be applied to development proposals coming forward.

The Framework is clear that Neighbourhood Plans cannot introduce policies and proposals that would prevent development from going ahead. They are required to plan positively for new development, enabling sufficient growth to take place to meet the strategic development needs for the area. Policies that are clearly worded or intended to place an

unjustified constraint on further sustainable development taking place would not be consistent with the requirements of the Framework or meet the Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions.

Communities should not seek to include policies in Neighbourhood Plans that have no planning basis or are inconsistent with national and local policy obligations. Proposals should be appropriately justified, by the findings of a supporting evidence base and must be sufficiently clear to be capable of being interpreted by applicants and decision makers. Policies and proposals should be designed to add value to policies set out in Local Plan and national guidance, as opposed to replicating their requirements.

The community should liaise with the Council's planning team to seek advice on the appropriateness of the Neighbourhood Plan's proposals.

### **Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment**

The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan may fall under the scope of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations) that require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be undertaken where a Plan's proposals would be likely to have significant environmental effects. The requirement to undertake an SEA will be dependent on a Neighbourhood Plan's proposals, but is likely to be necessary where a Plan is proposing specific allocations or site designations.

In accordance with Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations, a Screening Assessment of a Neighbourhood Plan's proposals should be completed to assess whether an SEA must be prepared. Where an SEA is required this should be commenced at the earliest opportunity, alongside the preparation of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan's proposals have been properly considered through the SEA process, and appropriately justified against other reasonable alternatives. Where an adequate SEA has not been undertaken a Neighbourhood Plan is unlikely to meet the Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions.

Although Neighbourhood Plans do not require a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of their proposals, preparing an SA can help to show how a Neighbourhood Plan will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, a Neighbourhood Plan Basic Condition. Where an SEA is required, extending this assessment to the preparation of an SA is unlikely to require significant additional input.

The Council's planning team will be able to advise on the likely need for an SEA of the Neighbourhood Plan's proposals. To be compatible with EU obligations, further appraisals, such as a Habitats Regulations Assessment, may also be required depending on local circumstances.

Should you require any further information about the contents of this response or would like to arrange a meeting with a representative from Gladman then please do not hesitate to contact me.

## Andrew Riley

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

## Leigh Barber

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