

South Norfolk Local Plan



Development Management Policies Document

Adoption Version
October 2015



Working with you, working for you

4.4 Natural Environmental Assets - Designated and Locally Important Open Space

Reasoned Justification

- 4.26 The **National Planning Policy Framework** requires not only that important designated **natural environmental assets** are protected, but requires that all development seeks positive improvements to the quality of the natural local environment jointly and simultaneously with other improvements¹. Development should protect and enhance all natural **environmental assets** including: valued landscapes (including those influenced by man-made features), geological conservation interests and soils, and minimise impact and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible. The National Planning Policy Framework also recognises the wider benefits of **ecosystem services** to peoples' lives and communities.
- 4.27 Part (a) of the Policy addresses the important natural **environmental assets** to be protected from any harmful impact arising from new development, and requires that new development contribute to the positive improvement of these natural environmental assets where opportunities arise. Sites will be identified on the **Policies Map** and in supporting evidence; the sites of highest status which are designated at International, National and County-wide level. Other important assets such as the best and most versatile agricultural land are not shown on the Policies Map but are identified in supporting evidence. It should also be noted that changes to the County Wildlife Sites register may change over the lifetime of the DPD.
- 4.28 Part (b) of the Policy addresses other Important Local Open Spaces that are also to be protected and positively improved where opportunities arise. These too are identified on the Policies Map as locally recognised important open spaces and natural **environmental assets** which are important to local communities and the natural environment. A small number of sites are designated as Locally Important Open Spaces where recognition is not otherwise provided in material planning policies and appraisals.
- 4.29 Part (c) of the Policy develops upon **Joint Core Strategy** Policies 1 and 2. More widely, the Council will work with partners to evolve strategies to ensure individual new development sites contribute effectively to the establishment and positive improvement of coherent ecological networks that will be resilient to future pressures. The basis of these strategies for Biodiversity Enhancement Areas and multi-functional **Green Infrastructure** Networks are set out in JCS Policy 1. The Council will work with partners (including the Local Nature Partnerships (Wild Anglia), the Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service and others to develop these strategies in more detail on a priority basis,

addressing areas under most pressure for change first, in order to ensure appropriate development that contributes to the enhancement of these networks. Specific detail will also be included in **Area Action Plans, Site Specific Allocations and Policies**, and community led **Neighbourhood Development Plans**.

Proposal Map designations of International, National and County-wide status

- 4.30 The International, National and County environmental designations are all included on the Policies Map.

Proposal Map designations of Important Local Open Spaces

- 4.31 A number of locally important multi-functional open spaces were identified in the South Norfolk Local Plan (2003); the need to retain some of these and also to include some new designations has been identified through the public consultation on the **Site Specific Allocations and Policies** DPD. These designations are listed below, and are shown on Inset Maps as indicated below:

(1) Poringland Conservation and Fishing Lakes Area

- 4.32 The Poringland Conservation and Fishing Lakes Association provides public access for leisure purposes and is in frequent use. The **Joint Core Strategy** identified that development in Poringland/Framingham Earl would have to take particular account of surface water flood issues. The fishing lakes provide a valuable attenuation area for surface water.
- 4.33 The designation is shown on Map 4.4 (1).

(2) Land to the west of Hethersett High School

- 4.34 This land was allocated for use as public open space in the **South Norfolk Local Plan (2003)**, to help meet previously identified deficiencies in open space provision in the village. Since that time, the farm buildings have been converted to residential use with some of the former open space allocation now being in residential use.
- 4.35 The **Joint Core Strategy** identified a need for enhanced **green infrastructure** in Hethersett. Although this site does not presently afford public access to the countryside, it forms a valuable element of the existing green infrastructure in the village.

4.36 The designation is shown on Map 4.4 (2).

(3) Old Costessey

4.37 Old Costessey is situated in the valleys of the rivers Wensum and Tud. Woodland is of 'immense scenic importance' (Landscape Character Assessment, LUC 2001); the woodlands in the Tud and Wensum Valleys create an important backdrop of trees and areas of heavily wooded, low-density development help give the settlement its character. Two important areas of woodland fall within the Old Costessey Development Boundary, to the north of Townhouse Road (including Green Hills) and between The Croft and Folgate Lane. Nearby Carrs Hill Wood also forms part of this feature, but is outside the Development Boundary for Old Costessey.

4.38 The designation is shown on Map 4.4 (3).

(4) Brooke

4.39 An important part of the character of the Brooke Conservation Area is derived from the prominence of trees and hedges, some are parts of private gardens, others like the Meres, part of public places. (The feature of the Meres water features tightly bound by public space and located outside of the Settlement boundary.) These features are protected as **Heritage Assets** under policy DM 4.10.

4.40 Outside of the Conservation Area, the open space at the corner of Brecon Road contributes significantly to the character of Brooke and is therefore designated as an Important Open Space designation – see Map 4.4 (4).

(5) Diss

4.41 The form and character of Diss is very heavily reliant on the contribution made by various open spaces. A landscape history research carried out by the Norfolk Gardens Trust in 1997 identified a high number of ornamental gardens but a lack of small parks and puts this down to the industrial nature of the town in the 18th and 19th centuries. As such the public open spaces that have survived and emerged since the late 19th early 20th centuries are of a particularly high value, and have an historical background.

4.42 Previously designations under the **South Norfolk Local Plan (2003)** Policy IMP 3 are the following areas:

Fair Green: Important as a space, historically as the site of the

medieval market, and a key setting for a number of listed buildings on the east and south sides:

The Park: Only came into public ownership in 1960, the main public access to the Mere. The view over the park and Mere to the town is unrivalled and a key element in the setting of the town.

The Mere and banks : The presence of the Mere dictated the pattern of the town and while the gardens and yards that form its boundaries on the three sides opposite the Park, have deteriorated over time, the open leafy character survives.

Parish Fields: An interesting space with the entrance off Mount Street purposely designed to enhance the setting of The Cedars a grand listed building on the road opposite. It is possible that the house was also remodelled to present its main elevation to the west to acknowledge the land opposite.

Mount Street Gardens: The land associated with the Manor House, The Grove and Eaton Lodge on the east side of Mount Street are remains of the ornamental gardens referred to above

Rectory meadows and school playing fields: Part of these grounds was associated with the Rectory, now Mere Manor, but is an important “green lung” bisected by a footpath.

- 4.43 These spaces contribute significantly to the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area in not just a visual sense, but socially, historically and architecturally. The designations are shown on Map 4.4 (5).

(6) Hethersett Village centre

- 4.44 This public open space and the adjacent public car park was created through the housing development at Great Melton Close. It is managed by the Parish Council and forms a small ‘village green’ space at the village centre. The designation is shown on Map 4.4(6).

<p>Policy DM 4.4 Natural environmental assets - designated and locally important open space</p> <p>a) The highest status natural environmental assets are identified on the Policies Map and in supporting evidence, and will be protected from any significant harmful impact arising from new development. New development impacting on these designated sites will be required to contribute positive improvement of these natural environmental assets where opportunities arise. International, National and County-wide level sites will be accorded the highest levels of priority.</p> <p>b) At the Important Local Open Spaces identified in paragraphs 4.32 – 4.44 and on Maps 4.4 (1) – (6) and on the Proposal Map, development will only be permitted where it retains the open</p>
--

character and appearance of the site, where it respects the contribution which the identified open site or open frontage makes to the form and character of the Settlement and where there is no significant adverse impact on the setting of any existing building. New development impacting on these designated sites will be required to contribute positive improvement of these natural environmental assets where opportunities arise.

- c) Developers will need to work with partners to evolve strategies to enable individual new development sites to contribute most effectively to the opportunities for the establishment and positive improvement of coherent ecological networks, Biodiversity Enhancement Areas and multi-functional Green Infrastructure Networks.**

Notes

- The Broads are internationally important with a national designation equal to that of a national park and fall within the Broads Authority planning area. However, development in adjacent areas of the district could impact on The Broads and the Council will liaise accordingly.
- See strategic diagrams for Bio-diversity Enhancement Areas, **Green Infrastructure** and the Green infrastructure Priority Areas at pages 28, 29 and 62 of the **Joint Core Strategy**. More detailed mapping and description will be prepared with partners on a priority basis, to identify a positive strategy to enhance multi-functional **green infrastructure** and bio-diversity to which relevant development might support. More detailed mapping will be made available through the Council's web pages as it becomes available.
- Further detail is provided in the *Green Infrastructure Strategy* (GNDP, 2007) and the *Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan* (GNDP, 2009). The latter document maps Core Biodiversity Areas for part of the district including the Hethersett / Cringleford Area.



-
- ¹ **Environmental assets** are defined in the Glossary - Source references for international, national, county and local designations are to be listed on the website.