

A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction

Scheme Number: TR010037

Volume 6

6.3 Environmental Statement Appendices **Appendix 7.1 – Planning policy context**

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a)

Planning Act 2008

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed
Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

March 2021

Infrastructure Planning

Planning Act 2008

**The Infrastructure Planning
(Applications: Prescribed Forms and
Procedure) Regulations 2009**

The A47/A11 Thickthorn Junction
Development Consent Order 202[x]

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT APPENDICES
Appendix 7.1 – Planning policy context

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Appendix 7.1 Planning Policy Context

1. Planning policy context

1.1. Introduction

- 1.1.1. The following provides a summary of relevant landscape related policy and supplementary planning guidance.

1.2. European policy

- 1.2.1. The UK is a signatory to the European Landscape Convention (ELC), which seeks to achieve improved approaches to the planning, management and protection of landscapes throughout Europe. The ELC and its definition of landscape underpins DMRB Standard LA107 Landscape and Visual Effects (Revision 2, 2020) and the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA 3, 2013) which have been followed by this assessment.

1.3. National policy

National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.3.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are applied. Part 15 of the NPPF sets out the framework with respect to conserving the natural environment. Paragraph 170 states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.

National Policy Statement for National Networks

- 1.3.2. The National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPS NN) (2014) sets out the government's policies to deliver development of nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIP) on the national road network in England. The Secretary of State (SoS) uses the NPS NN as the primary basis for making decisions on such development consent applications.
- 1.3.3. The NPS NN requires that where a development is subject to an environmental impact assessment (EIA), an assessment of any likely significant landscape and visual impacts should be undertaken (paragraph 5.144). The assessment should consider any relevant local development plan policies, significant effects during construction and operation, and visibility and conspicuousness (paragraphs 5.146-148). The NPS NN states that where a local development document in England has policies based on landscape character assessment, these will be given particular consideration. More specifically, local designations will be given consideration in decision making by the SoS but not be used in themselves to refuse consent (paragraph 5.156). In taking decisions, the SoS will consider

whether the Proposed Scheme has been designed carefully, taking account of environmental effects on the landscape and siting, operational and other relevant constraints, to avoid adverse effects on landscape or to minimise harm to the landscape, including by reasonable mitigation (paragraph 5.157). The SoS will also judge whether visual effects on sensitive receptors outweigh the benefits of the development (paragraph 5.158).

- 1.3.4. This assessment of the Proposed Scheme considers the matters raised by the NPS NN and provides the relevant landscape and visual information that is required by it to enable appropriate decision making.

1.4. Highways England Policy

Highways England Licence

- 1.4.1. The Highways England Licence (2015) outlines the commitments, duties and obligations of Highways England to the Department of Transport. Environmental commitments related to the LVIA are detailed in section 5.23:
- 1.4.2. *“In complying with 4.2(g) and its general duty under section 5(2) of the Infrastructure Act 2015 to have regard to the environment, the Licence holder should:*
- a. Ensure that protecting and enhancing the environment is embedded into its business decision-making processes and is considered at all levels of operations;*
 - b. Ensure the best practicable environmental outcomes across its activities, while working in the context of sustainable development and delivering value for money;*
 - c. Consider the cumulative environmental impact of its activities across its network and identify holistic approaches to mitigate such impacts and improve environmental performance;*
 - d. Where appropriate, work with others to develop solutions that can provide increased environmental benefits over those that the Licence holder can achieve alone, where this delivers value for money...;*
 - e. Calculate and consider the carbon impact of road projects and factor carbon into design decisions, and seek to minimise carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases from its operations;*
 - f. Adapt its network to operate in a changing climate, including assessing, managing, and mitigating the potential risks posed by climate change to the operation, maintenance, and improvement of the network;*

- g. Develop approaches to the construction, maintenance and operation of the Licence holder's network that are consistent with the government's plans for a low carbon future;*
- h. Take opportunities to influence road users to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from their journey choices."*

1.5. County policy

Environmental Policy (2019)

1.5.1. Norfolk County Council's Environmental Policy sets out a number of high level environmental 'goals' embodied in key policy aims, including:

- Using and managing land sustainably
 - Embedding an 'environmental net gain' principle for development, including housing and infrastructure
 - Improving soil health
- Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes
 - Recognising that Norfolk is losing biodiversity, particularly insect populations
- Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing
 - Planting more trees to improve biodiversity and as a potential mitigation measure for climate change in appropriate locations

Transport Plan (2011)

1.5.2. The Norfolk Transport Plan for 2026 sets out the strategy and policy framework for transport within the County and is to be used as a guide when determining planning or delivery decisions. Policy 4 of the Norfolk Transport Plan for 2026 is relevant to this assessment.

Policy 4: Protecting the Environment

1.5.3. "Transport decisions should take account of the character of the historic environment, landscape and local biodiversity. In particular:

- *Negative impacts should be mitigated*
- *Reasonable opportunities for creating habitats taken*
- *Due regard should be given to ecological networks and European designated sites*
- *Impact assessments should be undertaken where necessary."*

1.5.4. Supporting information provided alongside Policy 4 includes the following relevant to this assessment:

“All new streets will be designed so as to consistently achieve high standards and reflect how the space is used. Good design, particularly in sensitive historic and environmental areas, will not only encourage more efficient movement and result in more attractive public spaces, but can reduce future maintenance costs if materials are selected on the basis of whole life costing. We will make existing highway environments more liveable by: . . . Learning lessons from work we did with government to trial innovative measures on rural roads such as strategic planting.” (Norfolk Transport Plan for 2026, paragraph 3.17)

1.6. District policy

1.6.1. The Site and almost all the 1km radius study area are in South Norfolk. A small area at the far eastern fringes of the study area to the east of the river Yare is in Norwich. Given the nature of the Proposed Scheme and the intervening presence of the built-up area of Cringleford village, local planning policy in Norwich has not been considered further in this assessment.

1.6.2. The South Norfolk Council Local Plan comprises:

- A Joint Core Strategy (2011 with amendments in 2014)
- Site specific allocations and policies (2015)
- Development Management Policies (2015)
- The Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan (2014)

South Norfolk Local Plan - Joint Core Strategy

1.6.3. The Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (Greater Norwich Development Partnership (2014), adopted March 2011, amendments adopted January 2014) sets out spatial planning objectives, area wide policies and policies for places. The following are relevant to the assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Scheme.

Spatial Planning Objective 9

1.6.4. Overarching Spatial Planning Objective 9 seeks to *‘protect, manage and enhance the natural, built and historic environment, including key landscapes, natural resources and areas of natural habitat or nature conservation value.’* This policy objective seeks to minimise the loss of agricultural land and protect and enhance locally distinctive landscapes.

Area-wide Policy 1: Addressing climate change and protecting environmental assets

1.6.5. Extracts from Policy 1 text box relevant to this assessment:

“To address climate change and promote sustainability, all development will be located and designed to use resources efficiently, minimise greenhouse gas emissions and be adapted to a changing climate and more extreme weather.

“In areas not protected through international or national designations, development will:

- minimise fragmentation of habitats and seek to conserve and enhance existing environmental assets of acknowledged regional or local importance. Where harm is unavoidable, it will provide for appropriate mitigation or replacement with the objective of achieving a long-term maintenance or enhancement of the local biodiversity baseline*
- contribute to providing a multifunctional green infrastructure network, including provision of areas of open space, wildlife resources and links between them, both off site and as an integral part of the development*
- help to make provision for the long-term maintenance of the green infrastructure network”*

Area-wide Policy 2: Promoting good design

1.6.6. Extracts from Policy 2 text box relevant to this assessment:

“All development will be designed to the highest possible standards, creating a strong sense of place.”

“In particular development proposals will respect local distinctiveness including as appropriate...

- the landscape setting of settlements including the urban/rural transition and the treatment of ‘gateways’...*
- the landscape character and historic environment, taking account of conservation area appraisals and including the wider countryside and the Broads area”*

Policies for places - Policy 10: Locations for new and expanded communities

1.6.7. To support planned housing growth in the vicinity of Hethersett and Cringleford the Proposed Scheme site and study area are identified as falling within a priority area for green infrastructure. Within this area greater public access to the countryside is encouraged.

South Norfolk Local Plan - Site Specific Allocations and Policies

1.6.8. The site and study area are identified as falling within the Norwich Policy area (NPA). There are no site-specific allocations or policies that directly relate to the potential landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Scheme.

South Norfolk Local Plan - Development Management Policies Document

1.6.9. Relevant development management policies include the following.

Strategic Policy DM1.4 Environmental Quality and Local Distinctiveness

1.6.10. Strategic Policy DM1.4 states that *'the Council will work with developers to promote and achieve high quality and positive environmental improvement from all development. All development proposals must demonstrate an understanding and evaluation of the important environmental assets including locally distinctive characteristics and justify the design approach'*. The full text of the policy seeks to ensure that development takes all reasonable opportunities to contribute to local character, maintain local distinctiveness and enhance biodiversity.

DM 4.5: Landscape Character and River Valleys

1.6.11. This policy states that *'all development should respect, conserve and where possible, enhance the landscape character of its immediate and wider environment. Development proposals that would cause serious adverse impact on the distinctive landscape characteristics of an area will be refused'*. It states that all development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they have taken the following elements (from the 2001 South Norfolk Landscape Assessment as updated by the 2012 review) (SNLA) into account:

- The key characteristics, assets, sensitivities and vulnerabilities
- The landscape strategy
- Development considerations

1.6.12. It is stated that particular regard will be had to protecting the distinctive characteristics, special qualities and geographical extents of the identified Rural River Valleys and Valley Urban Fringe landscape character types.

Policy DM 4.6: Landscape Setting of Norwich

1.6.13. This policy is concerned with the landscape setting of Norwich and is understood to apply to the Norwich Policy Area (NPA) within which the Site and study area fall. The full wording of the policy states that *"all development proposals will not harm and where possible should enhance the landscape setting of Norwich with regard to the following considerations:*

- *NSBLPZ: All development proposals within the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ), as shown on the Policies Map, should have regard to protecting the openness of the Zone and, where possible, enhancing the landscape setting of the southern bypass, including the practice of wild flower planting and management regimes.*

- *Key Views: All development proposals located within the Key Views ‘cones’ shown on the Policies Map should ensure they do not obstruct the long distance views to and from the City.*
- *Undeveloped Approaches: All development proposals within the visual zone of influence viewed from the identified Undeveloped Approaches to Norwich should reinforce and avoid undermining the rural character of the Undeveloped Approaches to Norwich.*
- *Gateways: All development proposals on the approaches to defined Gateways (shown on the Proposal Map) shall reinforce and avoid undermining the significance of these Gateways as the visual points of the landscape and townscape change marking the ‘arrival’ at and ‘departure’ from the city of Norwich.*
- *Development which would significantly harm the NSBLPZ or the landscape setting of the Norwich urban area will not be permitted.”*

Much of the Site of the Proposed Scheme is located within the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ). The B1172 Norwich Road, A11 and mainline railway in the vicinity of the Site are all identified on the proposal map as undeveloped approaches to Norwich.

Notes following the policy refer to the South Norfolk Landscaper Character Study (2001, updated 2012) (SNLA).

Policy DM 4.7: Strategic Gaps between settlements within the Norwich Policy Area

- 1.6.14. This policy is concerned with the strategic gap between Cringleford and Hethersett and states that *‘development will be permitted in the Strategic Gaps identified on the Policies Map, between the development boundaries of the Settlements listed ..., where it would not erode or otherwise undermine the openness of the Strategic Gap, and complies with other Development Plan policies’*. The reasoned justification states that *‘in order to ensure the protection and conservation of local landscape character (discussed in more detail in the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment) and the setting of urban areas, towns and villages, the Council has defined open land or ‘Strategic Gaps’ that maintain the segregation and individual identities of certain settlements in the Norwich Policy Area and so avoid areas of development ‘sprawl’ which would be detrimental to the rural character of the area’* and that *‘within ‘Strategic Gaps’ development that would result in a loss of the sense of openness and which diminishes the gap between the settlements in question will be resisted.’*
- 1.6.15. Paragraph 4.65 of the reasoned justification for strategic gaps between the settlements within the Norwich policy area refers to the need to protect and conserve landscape character as discussed in more detail in the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment (2001, updated 2012) (SNLA).

Policy DM 4.8: Protection of Trees and Hedgerows

- 1.6.16. This policy is concerned with promotion of the retention of significant trees and woodlands.

Policy DM 4.9 Incorporating landscape into design

- 1.6.17. This policy promotes good landscape design specifically stating that Landscape schemes will be required to respect the character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and should ensure that any land remodelling respects the local topographic character in terms of height, slope, angle and character. Landscape schemes should be clearly and properly specified'. The reasoned justification states that *'good quality landscaping should make an important contribution to good design. All development proposals will be expected to respect the character and distinctiveness of the local landscape, its pattern, vegetation type and landform; the Landscape Character Assessment provides advice on this'*.

Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.6.18. The Cringleford Neighbourhood Plan was formally made part of the Development Plan by South Norfolk Council in 2014. The Plan area includes parts of the Site and study area to the east of the A47. The Proposals Map includes provision for a landscape buffer along the eastern side of the A47 and for green infrastructure corridors to the north and south. The Neighbourhood Plan includes the following relevant policies:

ENV1 – Landscape setting

- 1.6.19. This policy states that *'a defined, continuous green landscaped corridor of 145m depth from the edge of the carriageway of the A47 will be provided to maintain the landscape setting of the village, maintain the existing wildlife corridor, mitigate traffic noise (Landscaped Protection Zone) and retain a key strategic gap at the edge of new development.No new built development will be allowed within the zone unless the proposers can demonstrate that it will enhance the landscape and not have an adverse impact on the Strategic Gap between Cringleford and Hethersett, wildlife and buffering traffic noise...'* and that *'the visual impact of new development when viewed from approaching main roads and the surrounding countryside should be minimised by the use of site-appropriate landscape bunding, screening and mature tree planting. New and existing protected areas will require an effective management regime to enhance biodiversity'*.

ENV3 - Hedgerows

- 1.6.20. ENV3- seeks to minimise further the loss of hedgerows which are shown on the Proposals Map which should be protected and wherever possible enhanced.

1.7. Supplementary Planning Documents

- 1.7.1. The following landscape related supplementary planning document has been considered to inform the content of the assessment and Proposed Scheme design.

The South Norfolk Place-Making Guide (2012)

- 1.7.2. This document forms part of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP) Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and the South Norfolk Local Plan. It provides guidance on applying a range of Policies in the Greater Norwich Development Partnership Joint Core Strategy 2011, but principally Policy 2: 'Promoting Good Design'. The document builds on the NPPF which promotes well-designed, sustainable development which protects and enhances the quality of the built and natural environment and in particular, para 58 which states that *'planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation'*. The document provides guidance to help ensure good design and the preservation of local distinctiveness with reference to the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment landscape character areas.

1.8. References

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1.9. Glossary

DPD – Development Plan Document

EIA – Environmental Impact Assessment

ELC – European Landscape Convention

GLVIA 3 – Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3

NPS NN – National Policy Statement for National Networks

NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework

NSIP – Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

SoS – Secretary of State