



COUNCIL

Wednesday, 22 July 2020

ADOPTION OF NORTH LOWESTOFT HERITAGE ACTION ZONE DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone is a partnership project which began in 2018 with the aim of focusing on the use of heritage led assets to regenerate the area. The production of the Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document forms one part of this project.
2. The North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document seeks to ensure that new development conserves and enhances the character of the area and maximises its contribution to the heritage led regeneration of the area. Once adopted, the Supplementary Planning Document will be a material consideration in decision making on planning applications in the area.
3. The production of the Supplementary Planning Document has been informed by consultation. The Supplementary Planning Document identifies character areas within the Heritage Action Zone and sets out guidance related to the design of new development as well as identifying enhancements to the public realm.
4. The recommendation is that Council adopt the Supplementary Planning Document.
5. Along with the recommendation to adopt the Supplementary Planning Document, the report also seeks approval of full Council to a temporary suspension of the Statement of Community Involvement in relation to the requirements for the availability of hard copies of documents on adoption of the Supplementary Planning Document. Alternative measures are proposed to enable fair and equal access to documents.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
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Wards Affected:	Harbour and Normanston Gunton and St Margarets
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Cabinet Member:	Councillor David Ritchie Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
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Supporting Officer:	Andrea McMillan Principal Planner 01394 444567 andrea.mcmillan@eastsoffolk.gov.uk Ruth Bishop Senior Planner 01502 523028 ruth.bishop@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) is a five year programme that began in 2018, focusing on the use of heritage assets to regenerate the area. The HAZ programme itself is a partnership scheme between East Suffolk Council, Historic England, Lowestoft Town Council and the East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust. The project aims to improve the overall natural, historic and built environmental quality, making the area more attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors. The project covers a wide range of actions including engaging the community in the historic significance of the area and its assets, bringing vacant buildings back into use, working with private sector owners and landlords to jointly fund repair and restoration of historical features back onto the High Street and encouraging footfall by implementing improvements to pedestrian access.
- 1.2 One of the projects of the Heritage Action Zone is the production of a Design Guide to ensure new development conserves and enhances the character of the area and maximises its contribution to the heritage led regeneration of the area. In 2019, Place Services were appointed to produce a Design Guide for the Heritage Action Zone. The Design Guide has been produced as a Supplementary Planning Document and will therefore be a material consideration in determining planning applications for new developments within the Heritage Action Zone, and will be used in decision making alongside policies contained in the Waveney Local Plan. The Design Guide will also feed into other strategies and plans for the area. Whilst the HAZ project itself runs to 2023, the Design Guide will be a legacy of the HAZ project and will guide the design of development in the area beyond the timescale of the project. The project to prepare a Supplementary Planning Document has been undertaken by the Planning Policy and Delivery Team in partnership with the Regeneration Team.
- 1.3 The area covered by the Heritage Action Zone falls within part of the area covered by the strategy for Central and Coastal Lowestoft within the adopted Waveney Local Plan. The Local Plan sets out a number of objectives associated with the regeneration of this area including to improve the natural, historic and built environment, and the Heritage Action Zone projects will contribute towards meeting these objectives. Local Plan Policy WLP2.1 Central and Coastal Lowestoft Regeneration sets out that the Council will work with partners to deliver the objectives for this area. Further policies set out the approach for distinct areas within Central and Coastal Lowestoft, a number of which fall within the area covered by the Heritage Action Zone, and the Design Guide seeks to support the delivery of these policies.
- 1.4 Local Plan Policy WLP2.2 Power Park allocates land for employment uses and port related development and seeks to also bring about enhancementsA to the area including improvements to the public realm and improving connectivity with the surrounding area including the Scores and the historic High Street. Policy WLP2.5 East of England Park allocates 7.87ha of land as a destination park with the aim of enhancing and revitalising the existing open space. Policy WLP2.9 Historic High Street and Scores sets out a policy approach to conserve and enhance the area through heritage based regeneration. The Heritage Action Zone Design Guide will provide a basis for informing the design of development proposals to complement the delivery of these policies. A Neighbourhood Plan is also currently being produced by Lowestoft Town Council.
- 1.5 The Design Guide covers an area which extends further south than the Heritage Action Zone itself as through the preparation of the Design Guide it was considered appropriate to consider linkages within the wider Power Park area. The area covered by the Design Guide is shown on the map on page 5 of the document attached as Appendix A to this report.

- 1.6 The Design Guide focuses on design principles, layout, scale, appearance, landscaping and access, and will be applied to development coming forward across the area covered by the Design Guide. Through the preparation of the Design Guide five distinct character areas have been identified – High Street/Historic Core, Whapload Road, Power Park and surrounds, Historic Parklands and The Scores. The character areas are mapped within the Supplementary Planning Document which is appended to this report. The Design Guide sets out the planning policy context, describes the historic evolution of the area, contains a statement of heritage significance which describes the attributes of each character area, provides guidance for new development for each character area, provides guidance for the public realm including highways related guidance, sets out guidance for alterations and provides guidance for shopfronts.
- 1.7 A report was presented to Cabinet on 6th May 2020 with the recommendation that Cabinet recommend to Council that the Supplementary Planning Document is adopted. This recommendation was agreed by Cabinet and the Supplementary Planning Document is now presented to full Council for adoption.

2. PRODUCTION OF NORTH LOWESTOFT HERITAGE ACTION ZONE DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

- 2.1 Design consultants, Place Services, have been appointed to produce the Supplementary Planning Document. Work on the Supplementary Planning Document began in summer 2019 and initially involved a ‘walkabout’ with relevant officers and representatives of Lowestoft Town Council.
- 2.2 Following this, an initial draft of the Design Guide was produced and in October 2019 two consultation events were held. The Stakeholder workshop was held on 17th October, and a range of stakeholders were invited such as Suffolk County Council, Historic England, East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust, Lowestoft Town Council, the Council’s Local Plan Working Group and Council officers from Economic Development, Planning and Design and Conservation. The workshop involved a presentation given by the consultants, which described the Design Guide’s contents in detail, and feedback was invited. A public consultation event was also held, on 28th October, whereby an early draft of the Design Guide was made available at a drop-in session and the public were invited to ask questions and make comments. Thirteen members of the public attended the event.
- 2.3 The comments made at the two events were considered in preparing a draft Design Guide which was subject to a formal public consultation for six weeks between 13th December 2019 and 24th January 2020. In total 27 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation and between them they made 123 comments. There were 41 comments of support, 3 objections and 79 observations. In summary, the main issues raised through the consultation were:
- Overall support for regeneration of the area, with a number of specific locations referenced, and emphasis that respondents would like to see the proposals in the Design Guide implemented.
 - Objections and concerns regarding the perception of ‘conservation at any cost’, the financial implications for building owners including the colour palette for shopfronts.
 - Respondents provided additional historical information on the area and individual buildings.

- There is support for the well-illustrated document and clear and coherent set of principles.
- Support received for enhancing the appearance of the scores, widening footpaths, high quality surface finishes and planting.
- Requests for further guidance and information to be included in the document on climate change and flooding.
- Respondents suggested there should be further guidance on planting
- Requests for improved cycle routes as per the Waveney Cycle Strategy.
- Further reference should be included in relation to tourism including the presence of the North Denes Caravan Park.
- Further guidance should be included on designing out crime.
- Comments noted concern over the level of detail regarding highways proposals.
- Respondents identified concerns over traffic and parking, and the need for better public transport.
- Comments expressing support and concern for a pedestrian crossing at Crown Street.

2.4 The comments have been considered in finalising the document, and changes have been made to address many of the comments including through:

- Changes to reflect the provision of further historic information.
- Further references to actions that can support mitigating and adapting to climate change including linking with actions in the Waveney Cycle Strategy and referencing sustainable construction.
- Further explanation of appropriate approaches towards planting, including noting that in some locations this may not be suitable.
- Further recognition of North Denes Caravan Park as a tourism use in the area.
- Amendments to the section covering potential highways proposals to clarify that these are concepts and not firm proposals.
- Further reference to designing out crime in the Public Realm section of the document.

2.5 Further amendments have also been made to the document following further engagement with the Council's Design and Conservation Team, including in relation to clarifying the relationship with the North Lowestoft Conservation Area Appraisal, including further reference to the design policies of the Waveney Local Plan, including more description of the High Street/Historic Core, amendments to reflect recent changes to the Listed Building register and to clarify the status of heritage assets which are not listed and further clarification over the intended use of and reasoning for some elements within the Guidance chapters (chapters 7-10). It should be noted that potential alterations to North Lowestoft Conservation Area are currently being considered and the Guidance acknowledges this.

2.6 Further details of the consultation undertaken are contained in the Consultation Statement which is appended to this report (Appendix B).

3. CONTENT OF NORTH LOWESTOFT HERITAGE ACTION ZONE DESIGN GUIDE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

- 3.1 The final North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document is appended to this report (Appendix A). The paragraphs below summarise the content of the Supplementary Planning Document.
- 3.2 Chapter 1 'Introduction' sets out the background and purpose of the document, in that it will ensure that new development conserves and enhances the character of the area and maximises its contribution to heritage led regeneration.
- 3.3 Chapter 2 'Heritage Action Zones' provides information on Heritage Action Zones and specifically on the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone.
- 3.4 Chapter 3 'Aims and Scope' sets out the overall purpose of the document and introduces the character areas.
- 3.5 Chapter 4 'Policy and Guidance' sets out the relevant national and local planning policy.
- 3.6 Chapter 5 'Historic Evolution' provides an account of the historic evolution of the area covered by the Design Guide dating back to a map produced in 1578.
- 3.7 Chapter 6 'Statement of Heritage Significance' describes the historic significance of the area, considering each character area in turn, as summarised below:
- High Street/Historic Core – characterised by its independent commercial buildings and continuous frontages, set within burgage plots and punctuated by the Scores.
 - Whapload Road – characterised with remaining evidence of Lowestoft's maritime history, contributing to the town's industrial character and dominated with historic commercial warehouses and net stores now in light industrial uses.
 - Power Park and surrounds – largely of modern character with few remnants of historic built structures, although the Smoke House remains. This area covers the northern part of the Power Park allocation in the Waveney Local Plan (under policy WLP2.2) and also an area to the north of the allocation.
 - Historic Parklands – characterised by nineteenth century parks which are described as being significant features of the Heritage Action Zone.
 - The Scores – described as being a significant feature of the Heritage Action Zone, these are dispersed across the centre of the HAZ, each lane being distinct in its character.
- 3.8 Chapter 7 'Guidance for New Developments' sets out guidance for each character area as summarised below:
- Historic Core - The guidance identifies the scale, form, palette of materials, brick and architectural detailing and other characteristics of the High Street, and this area of the HAZ is described as having some of the finest buildings in the area. The guidance provides photographic examples of developments that have the design qualities that would be suitable on the High Street and directly behind the High Street.
 - Whapload Road - The guidance identifies the dominant gable frontage, long building depths, building orientation and palette of materials prevalent in the area. The guidance provides a sketch of an indicative development and photographs demonstrating the key principles of design.

- Power Park and surrounds - The guidance recognises key new developments and identifies a modern material and colour palette. The guidance provides an indicative sketch and photograph examples of suitable modern, industrial buildings.
- Parklands - The guidance notes the constraints of topography and access, identifies the mix of materials, and recognises the limited opportunities for development. The guide notes the importance of Bellevue Park as a registered park and other green spaces.
- The Scores - The guidance notes the unique and distinctive form of the scores to Lowestoft which contribute to the sense of place and history. The guide provides historic photos, character assessment, a palette of materials, an indicative backland development sketch, and photographic examples of developments.

3.9 Chapter 8 'Guidance for the Public Realm' provides detailed guidance on how works to the public realm can be undertaken in a way which would contribute to enhancing the character of the area. The chapter contains a number of aspirational approaches which are intended to inform any future proposals for public realm enhancements. The document provides guidance on street furniture, for example in relation to the colour of street furniture and advising that historic street furniture be refurbished / retained where possible. This chapter also sets out some aspirational concepts relating to potential highways works which would contribute towards meeting the heritage and regeneration aims for the area. Two of the highways related concepts promoted by the Design Guide relate to enhancing pedestrian priority in the High Street and provision of a pedestrian crossing to reconnect Crown Street, however it should be noted that these are presented as design concepts rather than as proposals. This part of the design guidance also contains guidance related to the enhancement of key public spaces of Blue Anchor Square and the Gateway to the Scores (outside of Christ Church). Guidance is also provided on plant palettes, i.e. the types of planting that may be suitable within each character area.

3.10 Chapter 9 'Guidance for Alterations' contains broad guidance on alterations to historic buildings, and it is expected that this would be used in conjunction with the more detailed guidance for each character area.

3.11 Chapter 10 'Shopfront Guidance' reflects that the High Street contains a variety of historic shopfronts albeit that a number have been altered in an inappropriate manner in the past. The guidance therefore sets out guidance on a range of matters including materials, display, shopfronts, advertisements, letters and symbols, A-boards and hanging signs.

4. HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE EAST SUFFOLK STRATEGIC PLAN?

4.1 The adoption of the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document supports the achievement of the following Strategic Plan theme – Growing our Economy ('Build the right environment for East Suffolk').

5. FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The production and adoption of the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document is covered by the existing budgets of the Planning Policy and Delivery Team and the Regeneration Team.

- 5.2 The production of the Supplementary Planning Document forms part of the North Lowestoft Heritage Acton Zone project which is a partnership between East Suffolk Council, Historic England, Lowestoft Town Council and the East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust. The production of the Supplementary Planning Document has been undertaken by East Suffolk Council through the Planning Policy and Delivery Team and the Regeneration Team, involving the use of consultants Place Services who were commissioned under Council's procurement process.
- 5.3 The process for production of Supplementary Planning Documents is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Plans) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). This requires the Council to undertake consultation to inform the production of the Supplementary Planning Document. This was undertaken through a stakeholder event and a public drop-in as described in paragraph 2.2 above. The Council's Statement of Community Involvement (How to get involved in Local Planning, Waveney District Council, September 2014 and How to get involved in Local Planning, Suffolk Coastal District Council, September 2014) also sets out what the Council will do at this stage and through provision and advertising of stakeholder and public events the Council has met its requirements.
- 5.4 The 2012 Regulations set out specific requirements for consultation on the draft Supplementary Planning Document. This requires that the document is published for a minimum of four weeks and that during that time it is available on the Council's website and that hard copies are available for inspection in the Council's offices. The Statement of Community Involvement states that at this stage the Council will also make copies available at local libraries and other local public places considered appropriate, will extend the statutory consultation period to six weeks, will contact those on the planning policy consultation database, will issue a press release and will use social media. The Council has met all of these requirements, as detailed in the Consultation Statement appended to this report.
- 5.5 On adoption of the Supplementary Planning Document the Council is required under the 2012 Regulations to publish the Supplementary Planning Document and Adoption Statement as soon as reasonably practicable on the website and to make hard copies available at Council offices.
- 5.6 The Council's Statement of Community Involvement also sets out what the Council will do on adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document. This reflects the regulatory requirements associated with the publication of documents on adoption and also sets out the Council's complementary measures. In addition to the regulatory requirements on publicity at adoption referred to in paragraph 5.5, the Statement of Community Involvement commits the Council to adding adoption information on the Council's social media sites and to making hard copies of documents available for inspection in local libraries.

- 5.7 Under the social distancing restrictions that have been put in place in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council's offices and libraries are not currently open to the public in the usual way for viewing documents and therefore adjustments will need to be put in place to ensure that fair and equal access to the documents can be provided. This report therefore asks Council to agree to a temporary suspension of the SCI in order that adjustments can be put in place. The provision of hard copies of the Supplementary Planning Document, the Adoption Statement and supporting documents by post, free of charge and on request, to those who are not able to access the documents online is considered to represent an appropriate adjustment that would enable fair and equal access to the documents, and these arrangements are set out in the 'Temporary Suspension of Parts of the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning Policy Purposes – Adoption of the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document' which is attached as Appendix F to this report. An urgent temporary suspension of the SCI relating to other planning policy areas of involvement was agreed on 1st May 2020 under powers delegated to the Head of Planning and Coastal Management, in the absence of full Council meeting at that time.
- 5.8 Arrangements for public access to the offices will be kept under review in order that documents can be made available for public viewing when it is safe to do so, following risk assessment. The position with public access to libraries to view documents will also be kept under review.
- 5.10 The Supplementary Planning Document and supporting documents will all be made available on the Council's website, and those who have asked to be notified of its adoption will be notified directly.
- 5.11 The provisions for the availability of hard copies of documents will be communicated on the Council's website, via social media and to those notified directly of the adoption.
- 5.12 Under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 screening was carried out on the draft Supplementary Planning Document to determine whether a full Strategic Environmental Assessment would be required. The screening concluded that this was not required. The Draft Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion was subject to consultation with the three consultation bodies as prescribed by the Regulations (Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) who concurred with this conclusion. The final Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion is appended to this report.
- 5.13 Screening was also undertaken under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) which concluded that guidance and proposals in the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document are considered to have no significant adverse impact on any Natura 2000 sites either independently or in combination with other plans and strategies and that it is therefore not considered necessary to undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document. Natural England were consulted as the appropriate nature conservation body and concur with this conclusion. The final Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Statement is appended with this report.

6. OTHER KEY ISSUES

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Screening Assessment was undertaken on the draft Supplementary Planning Document and was published alongside the draft Supplementary Planning Document for public consultation. The Screening Assessment concluded that no negative impact upon any group with protected characteristics was identified and therefore a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. The Screening Assessment did also identify positive impacts in relation to the protected characteristics of age and disability. The Screening Assessment has been revisited following amendments undertaken to the Supplementary Planning Document following consultation and is appended to this report.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation has been undertaken to inform the production of the Supplementary Planning Document as summarised in this report and in the Consultation Statement appended to this report.
- 7.2 Consultation has been undertaken to meet the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Plans) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.
- 7.3 A Stakeholder workshop was held on 17th October 2019 to which a range of stakeholders were invited such as Suffolk County Council, Historic England, East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust, Lowestoft Town Council, the Council's Local Plan Working Group and Council officers from Economic Development, Planning and Design and Conservation. The workshop involved a presentation given by the consultants, which described the Design Guide's contents in detail, and feedback was invited.
- 7.4 A public consultation event was held on 28th October 2019. The event was advertised on the Council's website and Facebook page as well as on Twitter. Posters were placed throughout the HAZ area along the High Street and Whapload Road. The Council also contacted the Most Easterly Community Group, which is a local community organisation. At the drop-in session an early draft of the Design Guide was made available and the public were invited to ask questions and make comments. Thirteen members of the public attended the event.
- 7.5 The comments made at the two events were considered in preparing a draft Design Guide which was subsequently subject to a formal public consultation for six weeks between 13th December 2019 and 24th January 2020. The public consultation involved contacting all of those whose details are held on the planning policy consultation database, advertising the consultation by poster in the local area, issuing a press release, publicising the consultation on the Council's website and issuing social media posts.
- 7.6 In total 27 individuals and organisations responded to the consultation and between them they made 123 comments. There were 41 comments of support, 3 objections and 79 observations. These comments have helped to inform the final Supplementary Planning Document as set out in section 3 above and the Consultation Statement which is appended to this report.

8. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 An alternative option would be to not adopt a Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document for the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone. However this would represent a missed opportunity to fully support the implementation of the HAZ project and to support the delivery of adopted planning policies for the area.

9. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 The North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document will inform the design of development coming forward in the Heritage Action Zone which will contribute towards meeting the overall aims of the project. The production of the document has been undertaken in accordance with regulatory requirements and has been informed by consultation.
- 9.2 The Temporary Suspension of the Statement of Community Involvement will enable the Council to put adjustments in place to ensure fair and equal access to the Supplementary Planning Document and supporting documents on adoption.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the content of the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document be noted and endorsed.
2. That the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document be adopted.
3. That the Head of Planning and Coastal Management, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Coastal Management, be authorised to make any factual or typographical amendments to the Supplementary Planning Document.
4. That the 'Temporary Suspension of Parts of the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning Policy Purposes – Adoption of the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document' be approved.

APPENDICES

Appendix A	North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
Appendix B	North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document – Consultation Statement
Appendix C	Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix D	Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion
Appendix E	Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Statement
Appendix F	Temporary Suspension of Parts of the Statement of Community Involvement for Planning Policy Purposes – Adoption of the North Lowestoft Heritage Action Zone Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Please note that copies of background papers have not been published on the Council's website www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk but copies of the background papers listed below are available for public inspection free of charge by contacting the relevant Council Department.

Date	Type	Available From
2014	Statement of Community Involvement - How to get involved in Local Planning	https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Waveney-Local-Plan/Statement-of-Community-Involvement/1Statement-of-Community-Involvement-September-2014.pdf https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/assets/Planning/Suffolk-Coastal-Local-Plan/SCDC-Statement-of-Community-Involvement.pdf
2019	Waveney Local Plan	https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy-and-local-plans/waveney-local-plan/ .