

Environment and Place

Purpose

To preserve or enhance the natural, built and historic environments, making Lowestoft an attractive and sustainable place to live, work, visit and invest.

Rationale and Evidence

National Policy

Paragraph 9 of the NPPF supports the economic, social and environmental objectives that guide development towards sustainable solutions, taking local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area. Paragraph 16 reinforces that plans should be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 92 ensures that social, recreational and cultural facilities and services are provided that the community needs. Local Green Space designations are dealt with by Paragraphs 99 and 100. Paragraph 124 seeks the creation of well-designed places as a key aspect of sustainable development, by being clear about design expectations, grounded in an area's defining characteristics, particularly through Neighbourhood plans.

Local Policy

The policies in this section find support in Local Plan policies: WLP8.28 – Sustainable Construction; WLP8.29 – Design; WLP8.30 – Design of Open Spaces; WLP8.37 – Historic Environment; Policy WLP8.38 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets; Policy WLP8.39 – Conservation Areas.

The North Lowestoft Conservation area appraisal focuses on the medieval core of the town and explains the heritage value of this key location –

'At the core of the conservation area is the High Street, an historic and largely self-contained streetscape which follows the local topography, curving to follow the edge of the cliff. The narrow width of the street and its undulating character, combined with continuous building frontages of varied form, height, and materials creates an enclosed streetscape that draws in views and maintains visual interest. The scores punctuate this space to the east, providing long views towards the North Sea, whilst to the west, perpendicular streets terminate in wide and disjointed vistas towards Jubilee Way'.

Included within the northern limits of the Conservation Area is Belle Vue Park. The Waveney Strategic Play Evaluation Action Plan (2015) undertaken by Sentinel found that Lowestoft scored lowest after Halesworth and Holton for play space provision quality across the board, for toddlers, juniors and teens. Whilst this showed some improvement since 2010, this was a low base and requires enhancement.

Planning Rationale

The historic High Street and Scores area are the subject of a Heritage Action Zone. This recognises the need for regeneration and enhancement.

In terms of Open Space Provision per 1000 people, North Lowestoft has approximately 3.5 hectares per thousand and South Lowestoft has 2 hectares per thousand.

The National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) recommended minimum standard is 2.4 hectares of 'outdoor playing space' per 1000 population (commonly referred to as the '6 acre standard'). The Fields in Trust (FIT) is the operating name of the NPFA produced *Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play* which updated and modernised previous recommendations made in 'The Six Acre Standard' published in 2001, arriving at recommendations very similar to previous. FIT concluded that the total recommended standard for outdoor sport is 1.6ha per 1,000 population, which is consistent with the previous Six Acre Standard. This is reinforced by *Guidance for Outdoor Sport and Play England (April 2018)*

Overall, Lowestoft generally meets these standards, but with small room for improvement in the south of the town.

The coast off Lowestoft is designated as a Special Protection Area. As such, any development with the potential to impact on the SPA will need to be supported by information to inform a Habitat Regulations Assessment.

Larger-scale development of the Port would be classed as nationally significant infrastructure, so would be an excluded matter for neighbourhood plans. The policy on port development relates to smaller-scale development that would be subject to normal planning control.

Good design is a requirement for all development, including the strategic housing sites. The following policies draw on the Design Council's Building for Life 12. Local Plan WLP8.29 deals with design, but is vague and fails to differentiate between polite architecture and vernacular buildings, which makes its application particularly problematic in historic areas. The policies of this neighbourhood plan have been drafted to provide more specific design requirements and to deal with this discrepancy.

The North Lowestoft Conservation Area is subject to a draft character appraisal and management plan and this has informed the following policies.

The Port is important economically to Lowestoft, but there is a need to consider off-setting its considerable environmental impact.

Local Green Space (LGS) designations are based on a background appraisal document, against NPPF criteria. Chapter 14 of this plan also supports the LGS designations.

Larger landscape areas which have strategic importance to Lowestoft (a predominantly urban area) are recognised as Strategic Green Landscape. These form the backbone of Lowestoft's green

infrastructure. Such areas are protected for their amenity, recreational and environmental value. It also helps to ensure that new-build development is focused on brownfield sites and the need to regenerate the existing urban environment.

Lowestoft has larger areas of green space, which support community activities and provide essential green breaks in the otherwise urban structure.

Parks include: Sparrows Nest, Belle Vue Park, Kensington Gardens, Normanton Park, Fen Park, and Gunton Warren.

EP1: Design and Character

- 1. Development must be locally distinctive and sustainable, responding to the following requirements of this policy, proportionate to the scale and nature of the scheme.**
- 2. Design solutions must respond to the topography, landscape, heritage, boundaries and other features of the site and local context.**
- 3. An integrated approach should be taken to the design of buildings, townscape, streets, urban and green spaces and green infrastructure to create a safe, convenient, attractive and functional public realm, overlooked by active frontages with doors and windows to provide natural surveillance.**
- 4. Development must complement the scale, height, massing, set back from the road, and character of surrounding townscape, providing similar enclosure and definition to streets and spaces.**
- 5. Development must prioritise the amenities, safety and convenience of pedestrians, providing ease of movement within a site and connections to surrounding pathways. This includes designing street layouts for low vehicle speeds, with varied provision of parking so that the public realm is not dominated by traffic and vehicles.**
- 6. High-quality and durable materials with a high standard of finish must be used. Local, reclaimed or recycled materials will be supported. Green materials and construction with low embodied energy or superior environmental performance will also be supported.**
- 7. Future maintenance requirements must be considered in the design, layout and spacing of properties.**
- 8. Creative and innovative design solutions will be supported, especially where they add to the architectural quality and diversity of the area or where they incorporate superior environmental performance.**

Interpretation and Guidance:

Active frontages can include doors and windows at ground floor level and windows and possibly balconies at upper floors.

This policy and Policy TM1 encourage a varied approach to parking, so that the public realm is not dominated. This may best be achieved through mixed provision of garages, hard standing spaces and on-street. For apartments, parking could be incorporated into the ground floor.

Complementing local context is not about stylistic imitation, but in responding to the characteristics of the site and to the scale and townscape character of the local context.

Materials can be modern or traditional. In historic areas and locations, where using traditional materials, they should be authentic materials and not poor imitations, such as plastic windows or concrete roof tiles.

A suitable gap between properties to allow for maintenance would usually mean around 2 metres.

EP2: Green Infrastructure, Urban Green Space and Biodiversity

- 1. Development must have no adverse impact on ecology or wildlife habitats. Where there are negative impacts, they should be balanced by positive buildings design and landscape features to support the enhance ecology and wildlife. Development must achieve biodiversity net gain.**
- 2. Development of strategic housing sites should be based on a masterplan for the whole site, to avoid the risks of uncoordinated, incremental, unsustainable development. The masterplan should include the location of key pedestrian paths and new urban green space.**
- 3. Urban green space must be designed to provide an attractive setting for development and:**
 - a) Provide opportunities for social interaction and recreation;**
 - b) Include retention of existing trees and landscape features and new tree planting using native species;**
 - c) Incorporate layouts with active frontages to paths and green space and avoid flanking it with rear boundaries and high fencing.**

Interpretation and Guidance

The policy highlights the importance of creating urban green spaces and paths as an integral part of site planning, and not as an afterthought.

The nature of space provided depends on the specific site. For some sites, existing trees and landscaping may indicate the best location. For sites linking pathways, a linear space may be the best response.

EP3: Port Development

- 1. Development involving the port must balance environmental impacts by taking opportunities to improve the site, its boundary and environs.**

Interpretation and Guidance

The policy recognises the importance of the port and seeks in particular to ensure that development enhances the site, for example through boundary improvements, such as improved fencing and landscaping.

Larger scale developments would be dealt with under separate planning provisions for nationally significant infrastructure. Whilst neighbourhood planning policies would not apply in this instance, the Town Council would still seek to work with the Port to secure improvement of the site.

EP4: North Lowestoft Conservation Area

- 1. Development within or adjacent to North Lowestoft Conservation Area must preserve or enhance its character or appearance and special architectural interest, This includes maintaining and complementing the following key characteristics:**
 - The predominant 2-3 storey height, with occasional taller buildings;
 - Rear of the footway frontages;
 - Architectural diversity, resulting from development over the centuries;
 - Variations and contrasts in form, including commercial properties with shop fronts, warehouses, villas and town houses, religious and public buildings, terraced gardens and yards;
 - The varied palette of authentic traditional materials;
 - Surviving historic pub and shopfronts.
- 2. Development must not encroach onto the 'The Scores' footpaths or harm their character, accessibility or amenity.**
- 3. Creative and innovative design solutions will be supported, where they preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area and add to its architectural quality and diversity.**

Interpretation and Guidance

Preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area is not about stylistic imitation, but in responding to key characteristics of the area. Indeed, development should represent the time of its construction, in the same way that older buildings represent different periods of construction. Green design is positively encouraged within the Conservation Area, as elsewhere.

The palette of materials used in the area is varied. Walling materials include painted render, stucco, ashlar, roughcast, hanging tiles, red and white brick, faience and flint work. Dressings are sometimes of stone or contrasting brick. Roofing materials include slate and plain clay tiles. Ground surface treatments include cobble stone setts.

Where using traditional materials, they should be authentic materials and not poor imitations, such as plastic windows or concrete roof tiles.

EP5: Local Heritage

- 1. Development should take opportunities to preserve, enhance and reuse non-designated above-ground heritage assets and avoid harming below-ground non-designated heritage.**

2. **The South Pier (non-designated heritage asset) is of particular importance to Lowestoft as a seaside town. Development to realise the economic and community potential of the pier is encouraged and will be supported, providing it preserves or enhances the structure and its setting.**
3. **Development of designated or non-designated historic parks and gardens must preserve or enhance their historic, architectural and landscape character. Development adjacent to historic parks and gardens must enhance and have no adverse impact on their setting or historic, architectural or landscape character.**

Interpretation and Guidance

Designated heritage assets are already subject to special statutory duties under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Undesignated heritage assets fall outside of these duties. However, it should be noted that development affecting unlisted buildings within conservation areas is subject to the special statutory duty under Section 72. The policy augments Policy WLP8.36 of the Waveney Local Plan.

Parks are also protected by Policy EP7.

EP6: Local Green Space

1. **The following green spaces are designated as Local Green Space, based on the boundary plans contained in Chapter 14.**
 - i. **LGS1:**
 - ii. **LGS2:**
 - iii. **Etc.**
2. **Development must not encroach on Local Green Spaces. In exceptional circumstances, small-scale development may be supported within Local Green Spaces where it directly supports the community use of the space and;**
 - a) **does not harm the open and green character of the space;**
 - b) **includes design features to offset the loss of green space.**
3. **Development near or adjacent to Local Green Spaces must have no adverse impact on their accessibility, character, setting, amenity or safety.**

Interpretation and Guidance

Local Green Spaces enjoy similar protection to green belts. However, it should be noted that the purpose of LGS is different than that for green belts. The policy does make provision for small-scale development related to the community use of the space, for example a small storage building in a park or next to a sports pitch.

For small-scale-development, design features to offset loss of green space could include things like green roofing.

EP7: Strategic Green Landscape

1. The following landscape areas are recognised as Strategic Green Landscape (see Plan **):

- i. **List of landscapes**

2. Development must not encroach onto Strategic Green Landscape or harm their character as open areas of greenery with amenity value for communities and visitors.
3. Development adjacent to Strategic Green Landscape must have no significant adverse impact on their amenity, recreational and environmental value.

Interpretation and Guidance

The policy protects key green landscapes from development.

EP8: Parks, Recreation Spaces and Footpaths

1. Development must not encroach onto Lowestoft's parks, green recreational spaces or public footpaths.
2. Development adjacent to parks, green recreation spaces and footpaths must take opportunities to enhance, and have no significant adverse impact on, their accessibility, amenity or safety.
3. Development within parks may be supported, providing:
 - a) It is necessary to support the operation and community use of the park;
 - b) It preserves or enhances their architectural, historic or landscape character, as required by Policy EP4.

Interpretation and Guidance

The policy protects parks, recreation spaces and footpaths, but also recognises that limited development may be necessary in parks to allow them to adapt to changing requirements. Such development must be specifically related to community use of the park to meet the policy requirements. The policy would prevent parks being used for mainstream development.

Policy EP7 does not apply to designated Local Green Space, which is dealt with by similar provisions in Policy EP5. Policy EP4 deals with impacts on the character of parks and gardens.

The requirement for adjacent development to have no adverse impacts would include consideration of active frontages and overlooking, to create natural surveillance.