

Core Strategy Issues and Options

**Natural and Built Environment Section
March 2009**



7 Built and Natural Environment.

7.1. This section covers the built and natural environment, a broad ranging area and as such crosses over many other subject matters which are dealt with in other sections. It deals with the natural environment and its constraints, including nature conservation, biodiversity, geodiversity and landscape character. It also covers constraints and issues related to flood risk and pollution. Finally it deals with the built environment and historic conservation.

Local Context

7.2. The local context for the built and natural environment is illustrated in the table below reflecting those objectives relevant in the Sustainable Community Strategies as far as they affect Babergh's environment

Transforming Suffolk Suffolk Strategic Partnership Community Strategy	Western Suffolk LSP Community Strategy	Babergh East LSP Community Plan	Babergh District Council Strategic Plan
Greenest County -Retain/enhance value of natural environment	Protect natural environment and local biodiversity and ensure sustainable development		Cleaner greener Babergh
Safe healthy and inclusive communities	-Create and support healthier communities -reduce avoidable early deaths by providing education and support on health and well being; -maximise the potential of all children and young people	Improve health and well being of young people	Safer healthier Babergh
Inclusive communities (access and opportunities for all)	Develop and maintain a safe, strong and sustainable community		Vibrant places and strong communities

The Natural Environment and Countryside

7.3. The Babergh district is a predominantly rural area and as such has a rich and varied environment which is attractive and worthy of protection. This includes the Stour Valley, parts of Constable Country and important river valleys. The main centres of population are Sudbury (with Great Cornard), the Ipswich Fringe and Hadleigh with the remaining areas in the district comprising countryside



interspersed with village settlements. The countryside and natural environment is of value throughout the district, some areas are however designated because they are of particular nature conservation or landscape value. These areas are shown on the Environmental Constraints Map.

Landscape Character

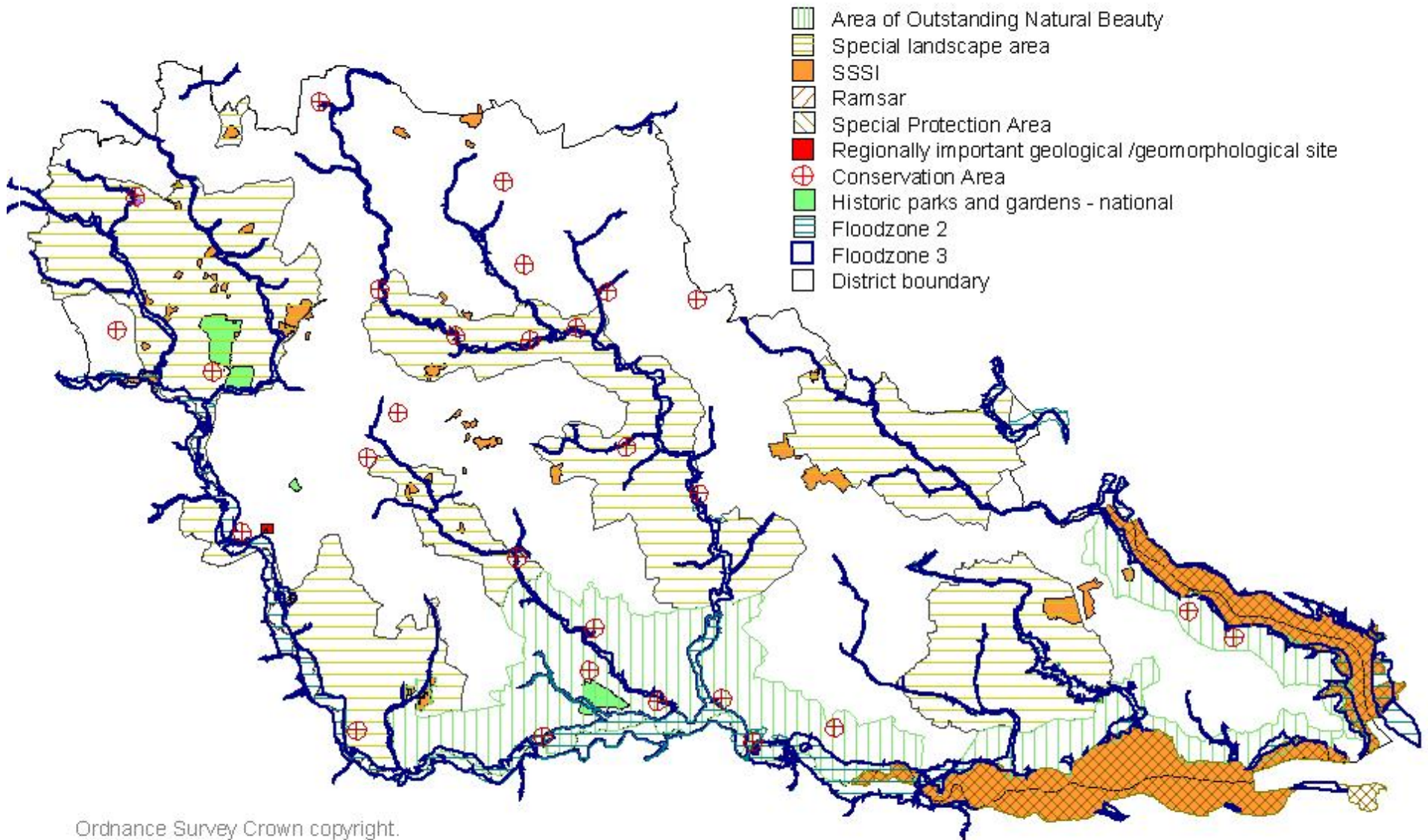
- 7.4. The Babergh District has a varied landscape consisting largely of undulating arable farmland interspersed with river valleys, and is framed on the eastern / south-eastern sides by the Orwell and Stour estuaries. It is mainly unaffected by large scale development due to the small size of settlements throughout the district, with the main exceptions being the Ipswich urban fringe and at Sudbury with Great Cornard.
- 7.5. In recognition of its nationally high landscape value, parts of the district are within the Dedham Vale and the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, (these areas are shown on the constraints map). Significant parts of its remaining countryside are designated in the current Local Plan as Special Landscape Areas, with the majority including river valleys, and which are of local landscape importance. The future of Special Landscape Areas and Landscape Character Assessment is most appropriately addressed in the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document, and in the meantime SLA designations continue to be covered by Local Plan policy identified to be “saved”.

Question NBE1: We consider that Special Landscape Areas / Landscape Character Assessment are best addressed by the development control policies. Do you agree?

Biodiversity

- 7.6. Having regard to the varied landscape of the district, there is also a wide range of natural habitats throughout the district. A large proportion of Babergh District is an ancient landscape of arable fields and improved grassland which is interspersed with significant clusters of ancient woodland, many of which are designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (as shown on the environmental constraints map).
- 7.7. The Stour and Orwell Estuaries are of international importance, mainly for their populations of waders and wildfowl which are dependent on the intertidal mudflats and saltmarsh. These afford statutory protection through SSSI designation and as a European Special Protection Area and Ramsar site, as shown on the environmental constraints map.

Environmental Constraints in the Babergh District



Geodiversity

- 7.8. Babergh has an important geological heritage, particularly in features from the Cretaceous, Palaeocene and Pleistocene periods. Babergh is particularly important for research into the changing warm and cold environments of the Pleistocene period, particularly during interglacial stages. Stutton and Bobbitshole (Wherstead) are nationally important sites which have SSSI designations for this reason. The conservation of the District's geodiversity is managed as part of the Suffolk Geodiversity Action Plan process. The protection of biodiversity and geodiversity features follows a hierarchical approach, set out in national and regional policy. It is the locally important sites or features which need to be considered in terms of the level of protection and management required. These matters are for consideration in development control policies.

Flood Risk

- 7.9. Flooding is a major issue in considering the location of new development. As part of the council's evidence base a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is being prepared which will be available in Spring 2009. In accordance with PPS25, this will enable the council to take flood risk into account at all stages of the planning process. The Flood Risk Zones 1, 2 and 3 are shown on the environmental constraints map. The overall aim of PPS25 is to direct development to sites of lower flood risk wherever possible, which should be reflected in the site allocations and policies for the Local Development Framework
- 7.10. The evidence base provides the council with the framework for carrying out the 'sequential test' and 'exception test' established in Annex D to PPS25, in all its planning, including in allocating sites for future development and assessing individual planning applications. With the knowledge of the extent and location of flood risk areas and the potential changes as a result of climate change, development in higher risk areas in Babergh can be minimised.
- 7.11. National and regional guidance provide a strong aim that there is a need to ensure that development is resisted in areas of flood risk unless the type of development is appropriate to the type of flood risk in each flood zone (Table D1 and D2 PPS25). It is necessary to embrace the concept of balance management, facilitating development which serves the social and economic needs of the community whilst controlling flood risk and ensuring it is properly managed and mitigated.

Question NBE2: Do you agree that development which can not be located in a lower flood risk area based on the sequential test should contribute towards mitigation of flood risk effects?

Question NBE3: To what extent do you consider development should take into account the implications of climate change and the likely impact on flood risk and what timescale should this be based on ?

Option 1

Consider flood risk based on 10 year climate change predictions

Option 2

Consider flood risk based on 25 year climate change predictions

Option 3

Consider flood risk based on 50+ year climate change predictions

Pollution

7.12. Pollution issues which often arise in planning are those related to noise, odour, light and air quality. The issues related to noise, odour and light can be adequately dealt with under development control polices and other legislation.

7.13. Air Quality: Good air quality is essential for our health, quality of life and the environment. The National Air Quality Strategy (2007 Defra) provides a clear, long term vision for improving air quality in the UK and offers options for further consideration to reduce the risk to health and the environment from pollution. Authorities are required to assess air quality in their area against Government air quality objectives. The Local Development Framework can help in delivering good air quality by ensuring new development is located away from any sources of pollution and by encouraging development in locations where the use of the private car is minimised. Air quality is monitored by the Council and for the most part is good. A few localised areas of concern are on the A12 between Capel St Mary and Stratford St Mary and in Sudbury at Cross Street / Ballingdon Street. An over riding aim is promoted by national guidance, to ensure that we work together to reduce air pollution and to make sure we locate development in appropriate locations to minimise air pollution.

Question NBE4: Should we identify the long term air quality in the locations where issues are identified through monitoring and seek to reduce the pollutants contributing to lower air quality in these areas?

Option 1

Locate development away from sources of air pollution and encouraging development in locations which minimise the use of the car

Option 2

If air pollution is identified as an issue in any development proposals, it should only be allowed if mitigation measures are put in place

Option 3

Develop a specific policy to increase the air quality management to try to improve air quality in the district

Built and Historic Environment

- 7.14. The environmental constraints map shows the predominantly rural nature of the district with a large number of small villages dispersed around the rural area. All of the settlements have a defined character influenced by building form, materials and design. Many are of particular importance due to the historic character of village and town centres. The district includes a very rich heritage including the settlements of Lavenham, Long Melford and Kersey. District-wide there are over 4000 listed buildings, 28 Conservation areas and 5 historic parks and gardens (shown on the environmental constraints Map). It is essential that development has particular regard to the historic character of many of the settlements in the district. It is necessary to accommodate additional growth in the district and at the same time ensuring that the historic environment is safeguarded and where possible enhanced. Many of the larger key and sustainable settlements also are of historic value with a rich heritage of listed buildings and important features within the historic environment. Where it is appropriate to accommodate growth this must have proper regard to the character of the existing settlement. Wider design issues including sustainable design are covered in the Sustainability and Climate Change section.
- 7.15. The spaces between buildings in our towns and village centres are as important as the buildings themselves. The quality of the spaces significantly affects the setting of buildings and the function of those spaces around them. Often enhancement can achieve many objectives, for the wider benefit of the town or village centre. National guidance through the Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) for example, provides a wealth of ideas in terms of design concepts. However, delivering improvements to key spaces is often difficult to achieve comprehensively.