

Little Cornard Parish Council



**Little Cornard
Neighbourhood Plan
2020 - 2037**

**Referendum Version
Published May 2022**

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	3
1 INTRODUCTION	4
Purpose of the plan.....	4
Policy context.....	4
Consultation	5
Monitoring the Plan	5
2 LOCAL CONTEXT	6
Little Cornard – the past.....	6
Little Cornard – the present	7
Environment and ecology.....	8
Planning context	8
3 CHALLENGES AND OBJECTIVES	11
Main issues and challenges in Little Cornard	11
Neighbourhood Plan objectives	12
4 PRESERVING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	13
Cornard Mere and Great Cornard Country Park	13
Access to the countryside.....	17
Views	21
Dark skies	26
5 PROTECTING OUR RURAL CHARACTER AND HERITAGE	27
Barns and out-buildings	27
Non-designated heritage assets	28
6 OTHER ISSUES	31
Traffic.....	31
Energy efficiency	32
Electricity supply	32
Residential annexes	33

Rewilding	33
7 POLICIES MAP.....	34
APPENDIX A - CIRCULAR WALKING ROUTES.....	35

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES

LCO1: Cornard Mere and Great Cornard Country Park	16
LCO2: Access into the Countryside	20
LCO3: Views	25
LCO4: Dark Skies	26
LCO5: Conversion of Agricultural Barns and Out-buildings	28
LCO6: Non-designated Heritage Assets	30

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Little Cornard neighbourhood plan area	5
Figure 2: Settlement boundary - Bures Road	9
Figure 3: Settlement boundary – Upper Road/Wyatts Lane	10
Figure 4: Habitat potential of Cornard Mere and Gt Cornard Country Park	13
Figure 5: Footpath linkages between Cornard Mere and Gt Cornard Country Park	14
Figure 6: Wildlife corridors	15
Figure 7: Public Rights of Way and other types of access across Little Cornard	18
Figure 8: Potential PROW routes between Workhouse Green and Bure	19
Figure 9: Potential PROW routes between Workhouse Green and Bures (sections within Little Cornard Neighbourhood Area	19
Figure 10: Views to be preserved	22
Figure 11: Location of the Pillbox (on Spout Lane)	29

FOREWORD

First of all, thanks should go to Little Cornard Parish Council who initiated the idea of a Neighbourhood Plan and put out the call for volunteers who would need to donate a lot of time and energy into collecting evidence to enable the formation of a plan which represents the ideas of Little Cornard.

A special thanks must also go to Little Cornard residents who actively engaged and supported the process throughout from the initial meeting (pre Covid) and latterly via Zoom giving feedback and offering many suggestions, completing the questionnaires and providing useful photographic evidence.

Thanks also goes to neighbouring parishes who consulted on the plan.

Little Cornard Steering Group

Ruth Adams (Cllr), Jonathan Belsey, Gerald Bird, Cheryl Crane (Cllr), Dave Crimmin (Clerk), Lilly Gore, Karen Gilbert (Cllr), Ciaran Griffin, Nick Hammond (Cllr Chair), Mark Irwin (Cllr), Rob Smith and Chris Bowden of Navigus Planning our consultant who talked through our ideas with us and fashioned them into this document.

1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the plan

- 1.1 This document represents the Neighbourhood Plan for Little Cornard for the period 2020 to 2037. The Plan contains a vision for the future of Little Cornard parish and sets out clear planning policies to realise this vision.
- 1.2 The principal purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development within the parish. It also provides guidance to anyone wishing to submit a planning application for development within the parish. The process of producing a plan has sought to involve the community as widely as possible. The different topic areas are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance to Little Cornard, its residents, businesses and community groups.
- 1.3 Some of the Neighbourhood Plan policies are general and apply throughout the Plan area, whilst others are site or area-specific and apply only to the appropriate areas illustrated on the relevant map. Nevertheless, in considering proposals for development, Babergh District Council will apply all relevant policies of the Plan. It is therefore assumed that the Plan will be read as a whole, although some cross-referencing between Plan policies has been provided.
- 1.4 The process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan has identified a number of actions which have not been included in the policies. This is because these are not specifically related to land use matters and therefore sit outside the jurisdiction of a Neighbourhood Plan. These actions will be addressed by the Parish Council outside of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

Policy context

- 1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan represents one part of the development plan for the neighbourhood area over the period 2020 to 2037, the other part being the Babergh Core Strategy 2014 and the saved policies from the Babergh Local Plan 2006. Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council are working together to deliver a new Joint Local Plan (JLP) which will cover the period up to 2037. Once adopted, it will replace all other policies across the two Districts.
- 1.6 Babergh District Council, as the local planning authority, designated the Little Cornard Neighbourhood Area in August 2018 to enable Little Cornard Parish Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has been prepared by the community through the Little Cornard Neighbourhood Plan Group.
- 1.7 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has prepared the plan to establish a vision for the future of the parish and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning and controlling land use and development change over the plan period.
- 1.8 The map in Figure 1 below shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area, which is the same as the administrative boundary of Little Cornard parish.

Figure 1: Little Cornard neighbourhood plan area



- 1.9 The Babergh Core Strategy was adopted in 2014 and therefore, under the guidance provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) regarding the completion of plan reviews within five years of adoption, is out-of-date. Whilst it is still part of the development plan and its policies are used to determine planning applications (and therefore it has been ensured that the Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with its strategic policies), it does not provide an up-to-date spatial framework to inform the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. Rather, the reasoning and evidence informing the policies in the emerging Joint Local Plan has been taken into account when preparing the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. After a meeting with the planning inspectors in December 2021, Babergh District Council is now progressing the current emerging JLP as a 'part 1' local plan. This will be followed by the preparation of a 'part 2' local plan.

Consultation

- 1.10 Since the decision was made in June 2018 to prepare a neighbourhood plan and a steering group subsequently set up, there has been much activity to inform the plan. This has included working with neighbouring Great Cornard Parish Council on common issues and engaging with a number of other organisations including the Dedham Vale AONB Partnership, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Little Cornard Church PCC, Little Cornard Conservation Group and the History Society.
- 1.11 The Steering Group also undertook a questionnaire in 2019 to capture residents views as well as those of other interested parties. In total, 106 responses were received.
- 1.12 Local residents have been informed of progress with the plan through the parish magazine and other interested parties have been contacted as necessary.

Monitoring the Plan

- 1.13 Little Cornard Parish Council, as the responsible body, will be responsible for maintaining and periodically revisiting the Plan to ensure relevance and to monitor delivery.

2 LOCAL CONTEXT

- 2.1 The parish of Little Cornard is set in the Stour Valley to the south of Sudbury and Great Cornard, and to the north of the village of Bures.

Little Cornard – the past

- 2.2 There has been settlement and activity on the land of Little Cornard since prehistoric times. There are widespread deposits of worked flints from the Neolithic and Mesolithic periods, confirming human presence back to the last ice age, while isolated hand axe finds in the area suggest occupation much further back.
- 2.3 As for many English villages, the first mention of the village name – ‘Cornierda’ – appears in the Domesday Book in 1086. The name means corn-yard (in the same sense as vineyard) and reflects that this was considered high quality arable land.
- 2.4 For most of the past 500 years, Little Cornard was the archetypal English rural parish. Living standards for the resident population – the vast majority of whom worked on the land – were harsh and demanding. Even into the 20th century conditions were basic, to say the least. There was no mains water or electricity in the village until the 1950s and the main road between Sudbury and Bures was little more than a dirt track until the late 1960s.

All Saints Church



Little Cornard – the present

2.5 Data from the 2011 Census shows that Little Cornard parish had a population of 286 living in 133 households. The proportion of people aged 65+ was 32.5%, significantly higher than in Babergh (21.4%) or England (16.3%). There were only 30 children under 16. A very high proportion (82%) of houses were owner-occupied.

2.6 Over the last 25 years the population of the parish has changed. Historically it was a farming parish but there are few residents left who work on the land in the traditional sense. The main Causton's Hall estate, which has been owned by the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution since 1955 is now contract farmed, with no resident farm workers living in the village. The employment pattern is very mixed. A significant number of people commute for work - to London, to the larger employment centres of Colchester and Ipswich, or more locally to Sudbury. A number of self-employed people either work from home or run their business from home.



2.7 There are over 20 small businesses in Little Cornard, with a cluster centred on Yorley Farm including a popular nursery, automotive and equestrian businesses. Communications are therefore important. Residents complain about poor mobile phone coverage and broadband speeds which are slowly improving for some residents.

2.8 There are a number of active groups in the village including the History Society, Conservation Society and a successful Village Hall Management Committee which manages the Hall on behalf of the Parish Council.

The old medieval bell frame as found



The new bell frame and bells



2.9 All Saints Church is situated at the northern end of the village and is regularly used by residents. It has a church hall and a number of regular events are organised. In 2017, after

raising £100,000, the bells were restored. Having been originally hung in the bell tower in 1399, they had not been rung in over 100 years. Since being rung again in 2018, a band of Little Cornard bell ringers use the bells in the church regularly and in 2019 welcomed over 200 visitors from all over the United Kingdom to ring them.

Environment and ecology

- 2.10 Cornard Mere is a precious wildlife reserve which is a site of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Little Cornard Parish Council own half of the Mere. The other half is owned by Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT). The Parish have leased their half to SWT for management purposes. It is separated from the Cornard Country Park, which is owned by Great Cornard, by a stretch of privately owned farmland through which a footpath runs linking the two areas. The two councils are working together to preserve and enhance these important environmental assets.
- 2.11 There are two County Wildlife Sites (CWS) within the parish boundary of Little Cornard.; Mumford's Wood and Fitch's Farm which form part of Lord's/Fitch's/Mumford's Woods CWS and Appletree Wood/Meadow CWS. These sites are recognised as 'Locally Designated Sites' within the National Planning Policy Framework.

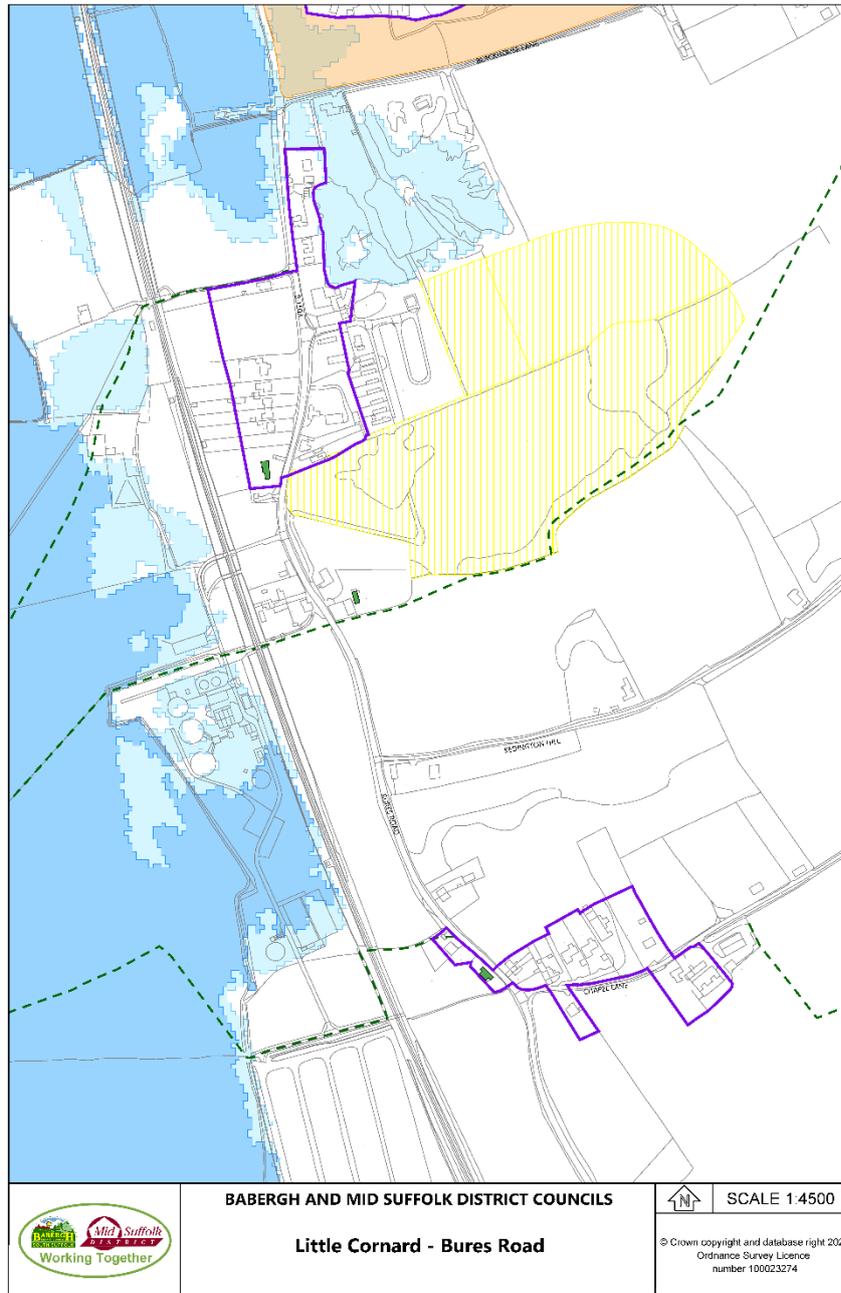
Planning context

- 2.12 Policy CS2 of the Babergh Core Strategy 2014 did not identify the built-up parts of the parish as core or hinterland villages. This meant that the parish falls into the countryside where development is only permitted in exceptional circumstances. The Emerging Joint Local Plan proposed that specific settlement boundaries are identified for its built-up areas and that they are classed as Hamlet Villages. These are:
- Two areas on Bures Road (see indicative Figure 2).
 - Upper Road/Wyatts Lane – comprising an area on Upper Road and Workhouse Green and a smaller area on the junction of Wyatts Lane and Bures Road (see indicative Figure 3).
- 2.13 The Parish Council had no objection to the identification of these settlement boundaries. However, as the emerging Joint Local Plan is now split into two parts, the settlement boundaries in the existing adopted Core Strategy are to be carried forward into the Part 1 document of the emerging Joint Local Plan. This means that settlement boundaries will not be updated or, in this case, designated until the Part 2 document.
- 2.14 In addition, the minimum housing requirement figures set out in the emerging Joint Local Plan now become indicative. The figure for Little Cornard was 3 dwellings. As of November 2020, all of this requirement has been met. It is anticipated that with the introduction of the settlement boundaries for the parish at some point in the future, the principle of development within these boundaries will then be established. If further allocations are needed to meet the housing requirement then this can be achieved through the Part 2 document or a review of the Neighbourhood Plan as appropriate and necessary. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to encourage further development other than to address the specific needs of the community. Planning permission for the development of three bungalows (planning

application reference B/15/00813) at land north of The Bungalow, Bures Road, was granted in March 2016 and remains extant.

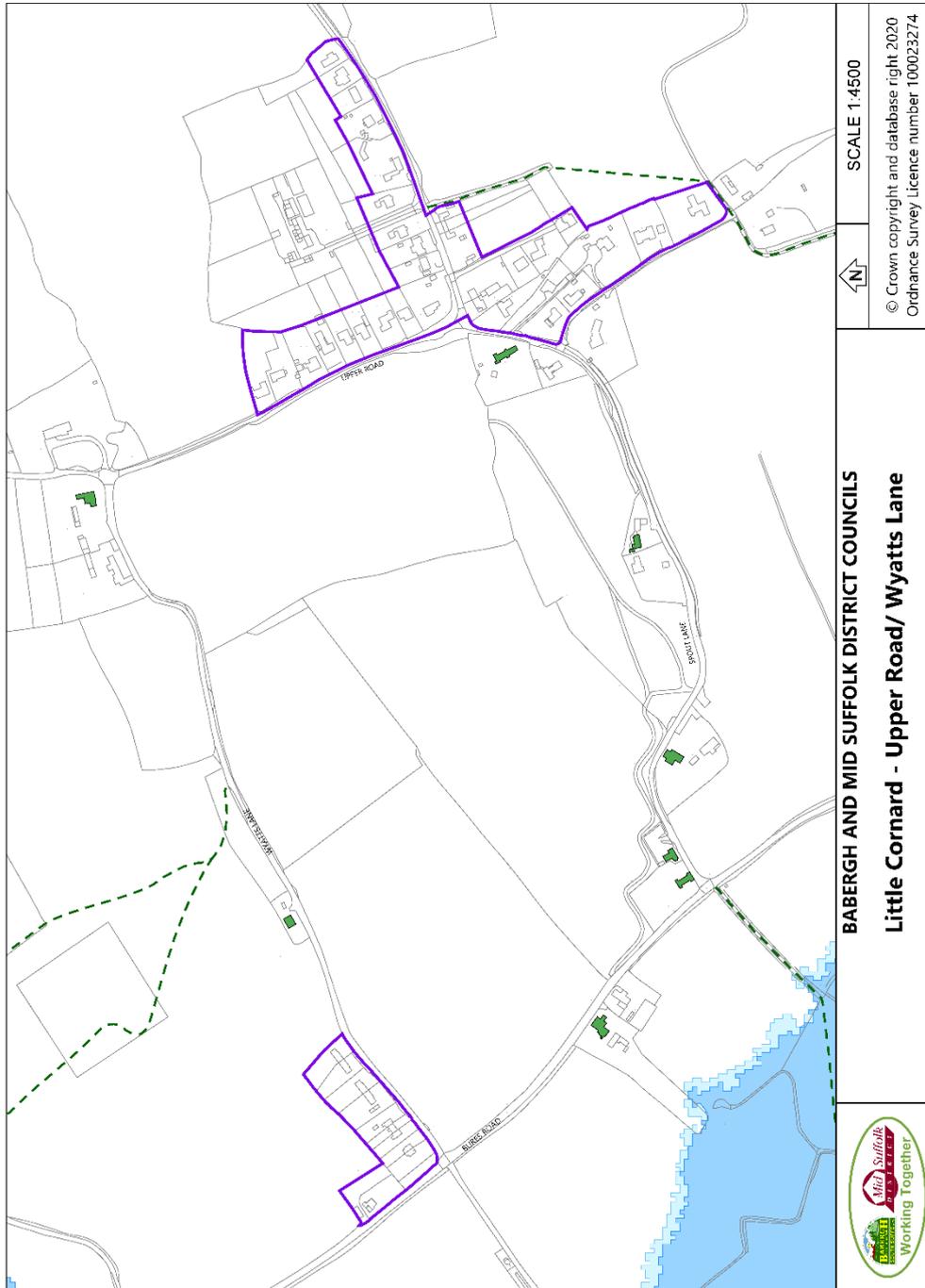
- 2.15 The Historic Environment Record maintained by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service contains further information about the history of the Parish, which can be found at <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.net/>.

Figure 2: Settlement boundary of Little Cornard – Bures Road



Please note that this map is indicative and for information purposes only. It has been taken from the emerging Joint Local Plan and has no planning status at the time of writing.

Figure 3: Settlement boundary of Little Cornard – Upper Road/Wyatts Lane’ (known locally as Upper Road/Workhouse Green)



Please note that this map is indicative and for information purposes only. It has been taken from the emerging Joint Local Plan and has no planning status at the time of writing.

3 CHALLENGES AND OBJECTIVES

Main issues and challenges in Little Cornard

3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address, as far as is possible, the challenges that face the community of Little Cornard parish. These issues were identified through community consultation and are summarised below:

- There is a delicate balance between providing for the needs – principally housing – of the community of Little Cornard and preserving and maintaining the unique countryside of the Stour Valley for the benefit of the wider population. This must recognise the decline of farming and the associated opportunities that barn conversions create.
- The leisure opportunities that the Stour Valley, Cornard Mere and Great Cornard Country Park offer need to be enhanced, but not such that this fails to protect the landscape and the precious environment.
- Little Cornard does have a small but significant local heritage that the community wishes to preserve.



3.2 Reflecting these issues, the high level vision for Little Cornard is as follows:

In 2037 Little Cornard will be a place that has developed so that:

- ***It has maintained its own character and individuality.***
- ***It is a place where people of all ages can live in a safe, supportive, friendly and vibrant community which promotes the wellbeing of residents.***
- ***The natural landscape, environment and rural heritage has been protected and enhanced allowing residents and visitors to safely enjoy the tranquil countryside.***

Neighbourhood Plan objectives

3.3 The objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan as identified through engagement with the community are as follows:

Objective 1: To preserve and enhance the environmental assets in the parish, both for the wildlife which is part of it and for the local community to enjoy.

Objective 2: To improve the health and wellbeing of the community by expanding public rights of way linkages into the countryside.

Objective 3: To protect the high quality landscape of the Stour Valley that surrounds Little Cornard.

Objective 4: To protect the rural character of Little Cornard as reflected in its agricultural buildings.

Objective 5: To protect the local heritage of Little Cornard.

4 PRESERVING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Cornard Mere and Great Cornard Country Park

- 4.1 The area of Cornard Mere and Great Cornard Country Park is one of the most precious environmental assets in the wider area. The Mere is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is therefore of national importance. It is also a nature reserve managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT). The SWT owns part of the Mere and the Parish Council owns the other part. It is a seasonally flooded area of fen, species-rich vegetation, woodland, scrub and grassland. As well as its vegetation and grasses, it attracts over-wintering birds such as snipe and provides a habitat for a variety of insects, including an uncommon sawfly. Based on data from the SWT, the habitat potential of the Mere is high (see Figure 4).
- 4.2 Due to lack of parking access is restricted to pedestrian only. This does restrict use as an educational resource to local school visits on foot or as a research project for individual students.

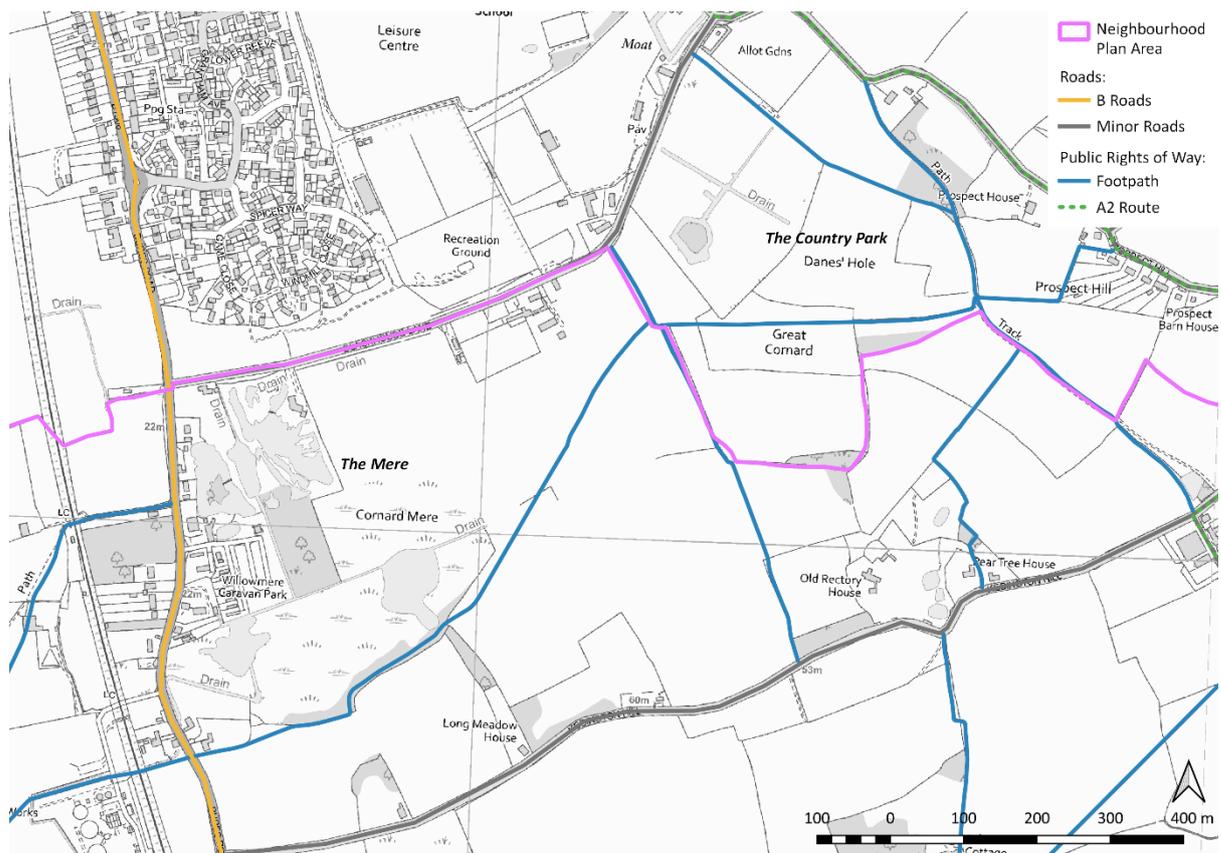


Figure 4: Habitat potential of Cornard Mere and Great Cornard Country Park



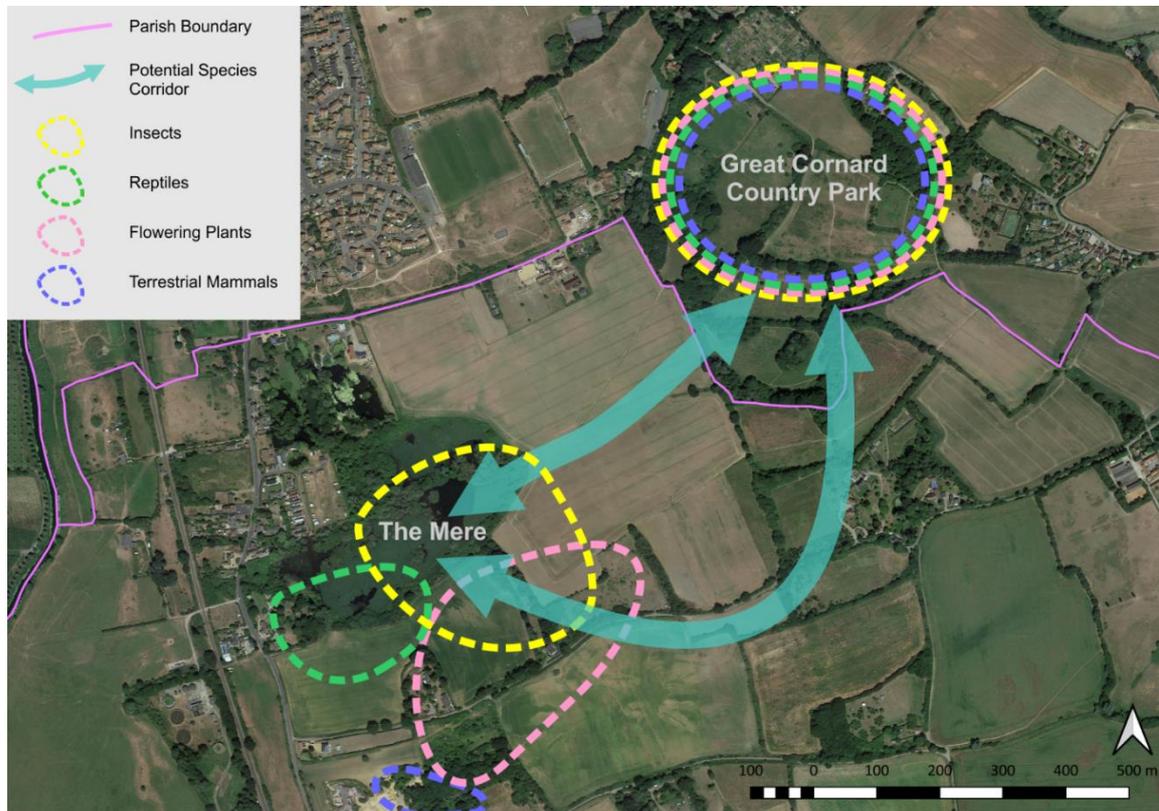
- 4.3 To the north-east and east of the Mere lies Great Cornard Country Park. It provides an important and popular resource allowing countryside access to the local population and visitors. It also provides one of the best wildlife habitats in the locality and the wildlife value continues to increase noticeably. The mix of small meadows with ancient hedgerows along with the plantation areas which are slowly increasing in interest all contribute to a mosaic of habitats that support a wide range of wildlife. The old wooded banks are home to ancient woodland indicator species including moschatel, pignut and native bluebell. It has in recent years been home to a pair of non-breeding barn owls as well as linnets, reed buntings and yellow hammers. Based on the SWT biodiversity data, the habitat potential ranges from high to medium (see Figure 4).
- 4.4 The Country Park extends into Great Cornard parish. Little Cornard Parish Council will work closely with Great Cornard Parish Council to support the protection and enhancement of the Park. The land between the Park and Cornard Mere is in private ownership but the two councils will work with owners to develop schemes to maintain and enhance essential wildlife corridors and the natural countryside between the Park and Cornard Mere.
- 4.5 The Mere and the Country Park are connected by a series of footpaths, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Footpath linkages between Cornard Mere and Great Cornard Country Park



- 4.6 Analysis of the species present from SWT data shows that there are a number of potential wildlife corridors which should be preserved (see Figure 6). Any proposals that increase human activities across these wildlife corridors must ensure that they protect the corridors and do not restrict the movement of the different species.

Figure 6: Wildlife corridors



- 4.7 The Mere and the Country Park are therefore important places for wildlife and people alike and it is important that both are allowed to thrive in harmony together. Policy LCO1 seeks to ensure that the wildlife is protected whilst opportunities to increase access for people to both the Mere and the Country Park are encouraged. Such access helps to increase the health and wellbeing of the community.
- 4.8 It is important to note that, as shown on Figures 4 and 6, a large part of Great Cornard Country Park is outside the parish boundary which is also the Neighbourhood Plan boundary. The policy can therefore only apply to proposals within the Little Cornard Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 4.9 There are a number of other important wildlife sites in Little Cornard. In line with national and local policy, it is expected that all future development in Little Cornard should protect and enhance biodiversity, promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species. All new developments are encouraged to demonstrate that they result in the net gain of Priority Habitats and not result in a negative impact upon protected and Priority Species.

POLICY LCO1: CORNARD MERE AND GREAT CORNARD COUNTRY PARK

- A. Otherwise acceptable development proposals that maintain and enhance pedestrian connectivity between Cornard Mere and Great Cornard Country Park will be strongly encouraged.**
- B. In order to restore fragmented habitat networks and demonstrate net gains to biodiversity, development proposals should seek to maintain the connectivity of the green corridors (shown in Figure 6 and on the Policies Map) between Cornard Mere and Great Cornard Country Park. Proposals to enhance the function of these corridors will be strongly encouraged.**
- C. All proposals to change/enhance connectivity for wildlife and pedestrians must ensure all species are safeguarded. It is recommended that an updated management plan be developed to ensure any additional protection required is provided.**

ACTIONS RELATING TO CORNARD MERE AND GREAT CORNARD COUNTRY PARK

- 1. Little Cornard Parish Council to work proactively with relevant organisations and local groups to create and maintain a register of protected species found in Little Cornard and to identify the priority habitats where they are found.**
- 2. Little Cornard Parish Council to engage constructively with landowners to ensure continued protection and enhancement of Priority Habitats.**
- 3. Little Cornard Parish Council to support local initiatives to provide new and protect established wildlife habitats.**
- 4. Little Cornard Parish Council to engage constructively with any developers to ensure there is complete understanding of their responsibilities towards wildlife and habitats in any proposals within Little Cornard.**

Access to the countryside

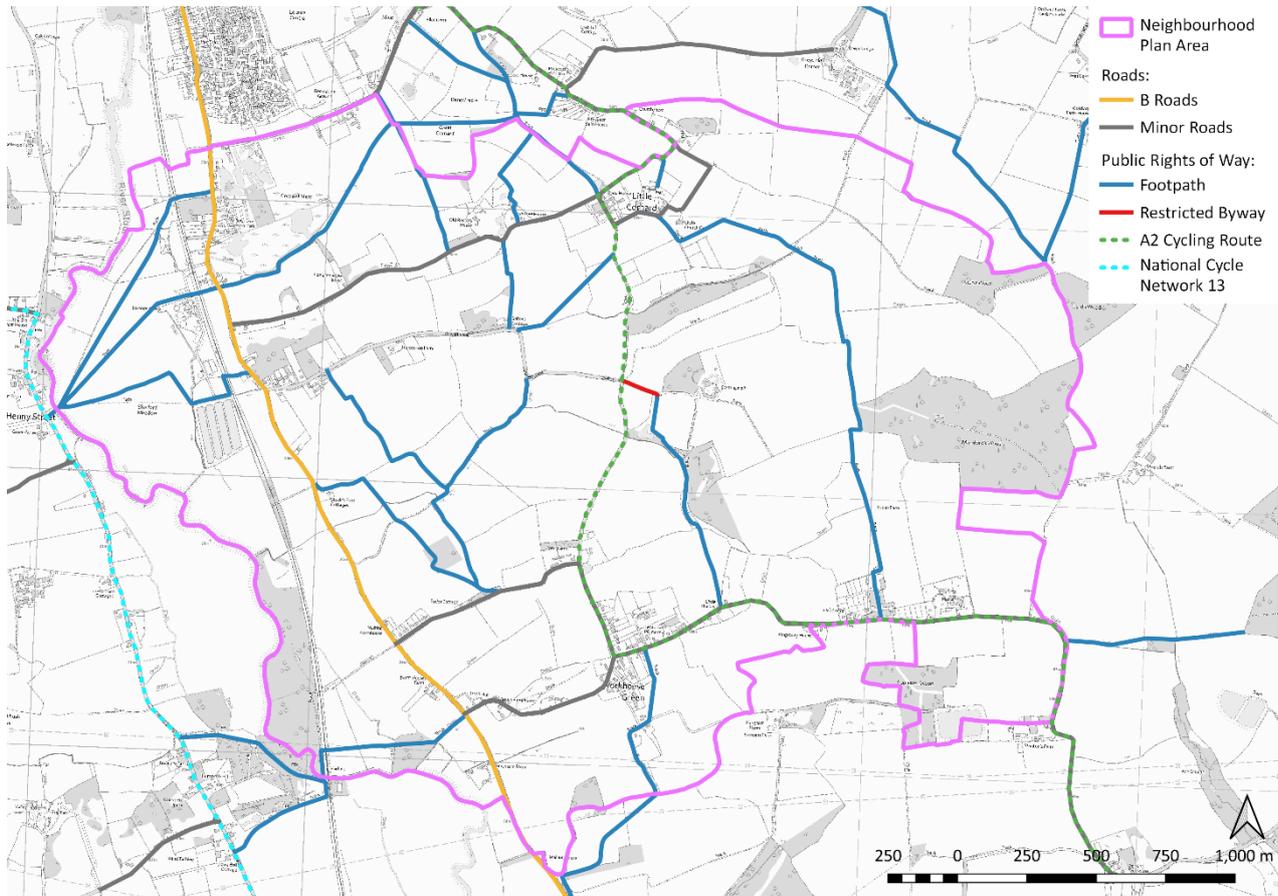
4.10 In a rural community such as Little Cornard which lacks a range of public green spaces or community facilities at its heart, access into the countryside is particularly important. The need for access as a means of exercise, to walk dogs and for general wellbeing is vital. Without this, the community becomes reliant on use of the private car to access leisure opportunities elsewhere, which creates lots of short distance car trips that do not contribute positively to sustainability.



4.11 The NPPF states that 'planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks' (paragraph 100).

4.12 Little Cornard parish is currently well served with Public Rights of Way (PROWs) which cross the parish and provide good access to Great Cornard, the Country Park and the Mere (see Figure 7). In addition, there are good access routes to and from Henny, Middleton and Assington parishes, Little Cornard's closest neighbours. The parish has several equestrian centres and horse riding is commonplace, despite the absence of bridleways in the parish.

Figure 7: Public Rights of Way and other types of access across Little Cornard

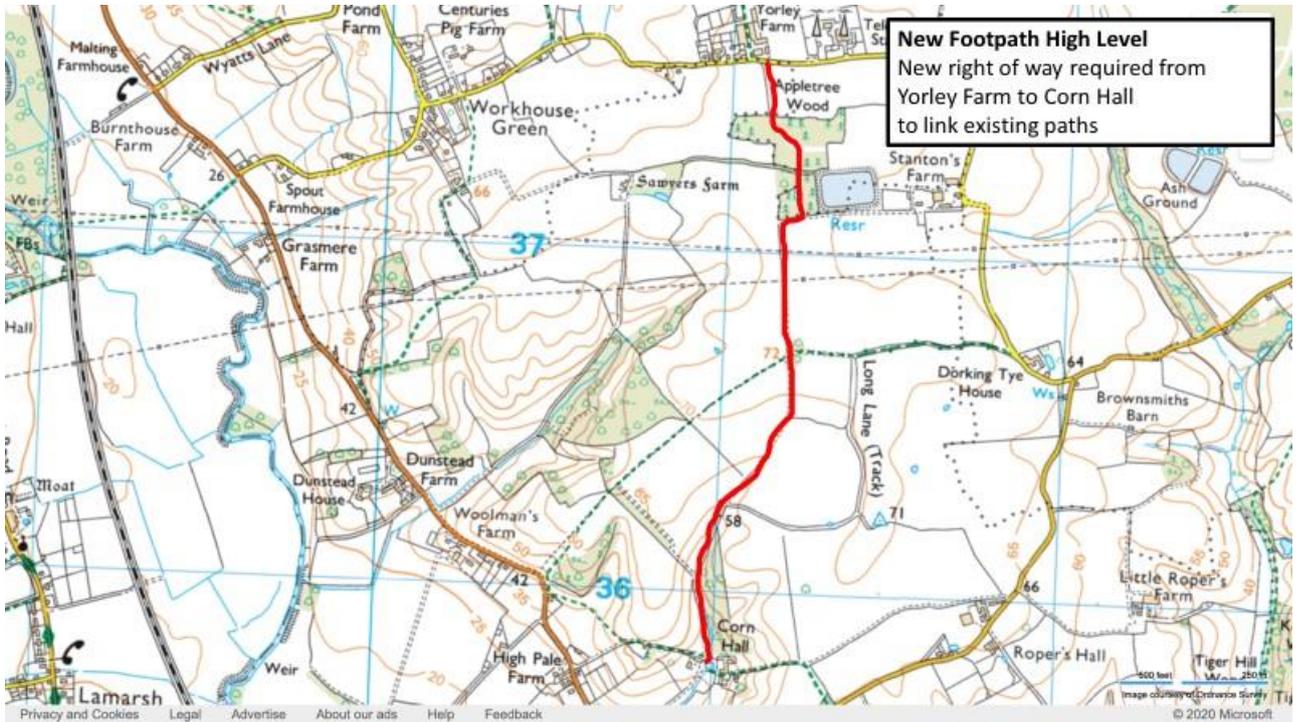


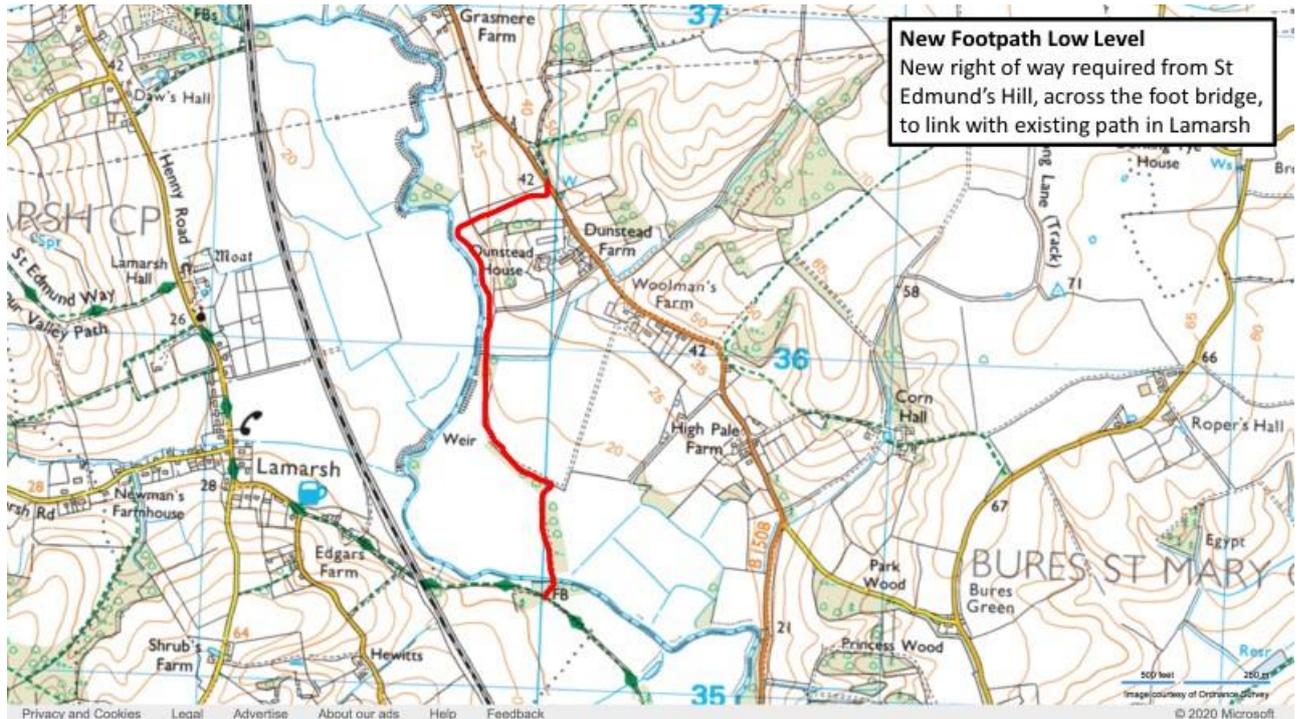
- 4.13 The development of the Gainsborough Trail is welcomed and one objective of the Neighbourhood Plan is to encourage and enable development of more extensive PROWs better linking parts of Little Cornard with surrounding parishes. In particular it is important to improve pedestrian access to Bures, which for those in Workhouse Green is the nearest settlement providing services. Whilst the southern parts of the two identified route options are outside the Neighbourhood Plan boundary, improvements to these routes within the parish will help to make access easier. It is recognised that adopting new footpaths is a statutory process and that appropriate consultation with landowners and Bures Parish Council must take place before any applications can be made.
- 4.14 Figure 8 shows the potential routes in question in their entirety and Figure 9 shows the individual parts that are within the Neighbourhood Area in more detail.

Figure 8: Potential public right of way routes between Workhouse Green and Bures



Figure 9: Potential public right of way routes between Workhouse Green and Bures - sections within Little Cornard Neighbourhood Area





POLICY LCO2: ACCESS INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE

- A. Access to the countryside will be promoted through protection and maintenance of the existing Public Rights of Way (PROW) network (see Figure 7), its enhancement where possible, provision of bridleways and the safety of users of rural roads and lanes.
- B. Any developments which leads to the loss or degradation of any PROW will not be permitted in other than very special circumstances. Proposals to divert PROWs or cycleways should provide clear and demonstrable benefits for the wider community. Where possible, development should enhance PROWs by improving existing routes and improving connectivity through the creation of new routes.
- C. Proposals to create a pedestrian route between Workhouse Green and Bures and to secure this as a PROW will be strongly encouraged.

4.15 Through the Neighbourhood Plan, a series of five circular walks have been identified (see Appendix A). These routes connect up existing footpaths using some on-road sections. Whilst not ideal to have on-road route sections, this does help to create some attractive walking routes. Proposals to enhance these routes through improved signage and by making them more accessible for a greater part of the year would be welcomed. Again, a number of parts of these routes are in neighbouring parishes, therefore it will be necessary to work with those parishes to deliver improvements along their entire routes.

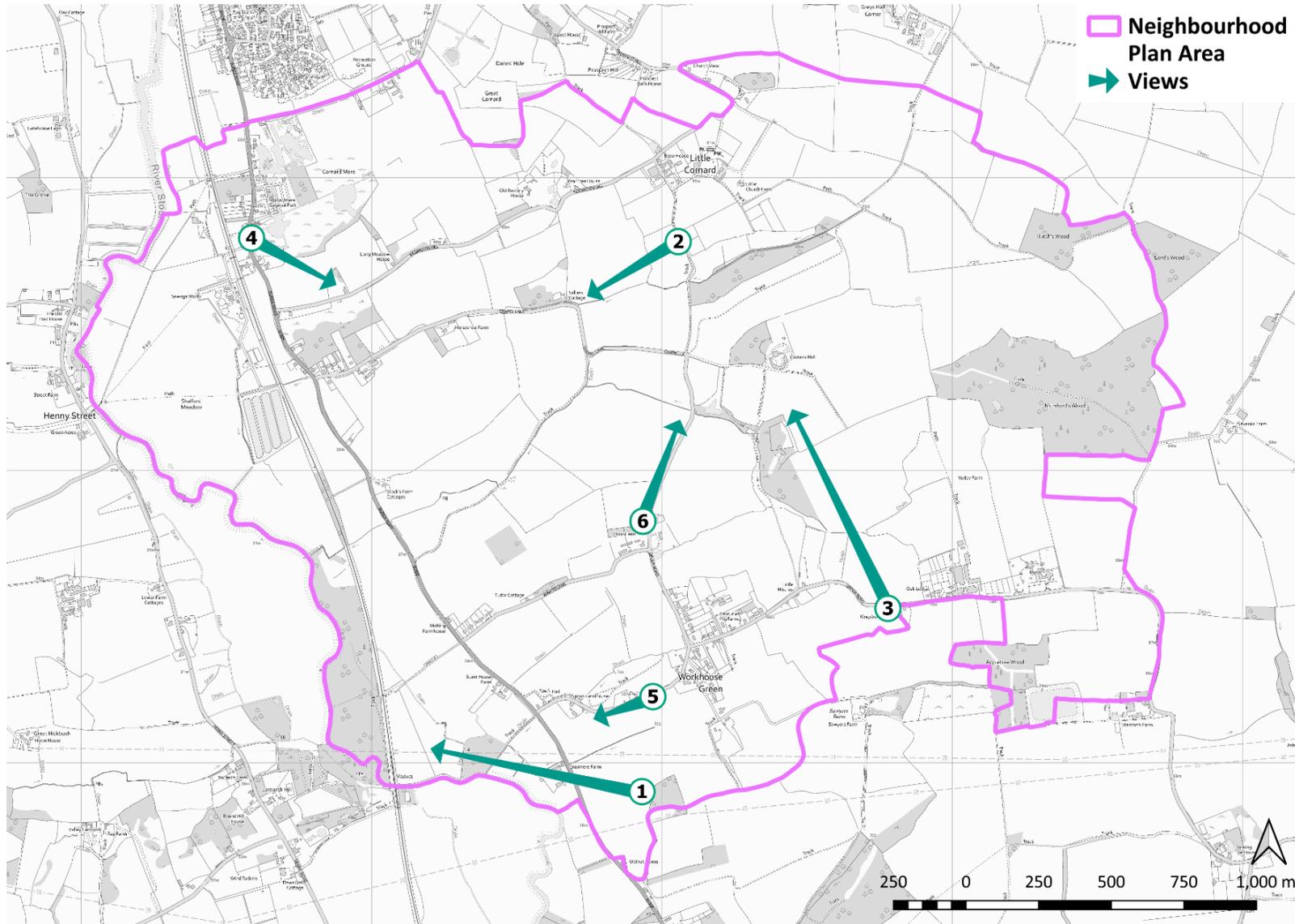
ACTIONS RELATING TO IMPROVING PEDESTRIAN FOOTPATHS

- 1. Little Cornard Parish Council to engage relevant landowners and work with Babergh District Council, relevant neighbouring parish councils and Suffolk County Council to improve the public rights of way network and circular walking routes, including through improved signage and year-round accessibility.**
- 2. Little Cornard Parish Council to work with equestrian interests to identify footpaths that may be suitable for upgrading to bridleways. Then to work with landowners to ascertain the feasibility of this on the relevant routes.**

Views

- 4.16 The countryside location of the parish of Little Cornard, nestled into but rising up the side of the Stour Valley, is arguably one of its greatest assets. The combination of ancient countryside, semi-natural habitats, winding lanes and agricultural landscape creates many attractive vistas across the parish.
- 4.17 Due to its nature as a series of rural hamlets, built development will be very limited over the plan period. However, the conversion of barns, commercial activity and potential routes for utilities improvements mean that there could be proposals which will need careful design to ensure they do not have an unacceptable impact on the features that define this landscape.
- 4.18 As part of the evidence collecting process for the Neighbourhood Plan, the community was asked to contribute suggestions and photos which were considered to be important both for the visual impact of the area and also the wellbeing of residents and visitors. The Neighbourhood Plan has reviewed these suggestions and identified a series of views which are considered to be of aesthetic value such that they should be preserved when development proposals come forward. These views are shown in Figure 10 and described below.

Figure 10: Views to be preserved



- 4.19 **View 1.** A fine view of the River Stour and the meadows from St. Edmunds Hill on the southern boundary of parish. The river provides an attractive, treasured view being both an historic and aesthetic asset to the parish. The river is internationally renowned as part of 'Constable Country'. In fine weather canoeists can often be seen using this stretch on the way towards the estuary at Harwich and Felixstowe.



- 4.20 **View 2.** This view is from the 'Green Road,' an unmetalled ancient trackway, looking south-westerly towards Chapel Lane and the opposite side of the Stour Valley. It shows an example of rolling ancient farmland that is characteristic of the parish. This lane is on the A2 cycle network and together with being used regularly by residents as an access to the church, it is utilised by horse riders and walkers. This brings many visitors to the area.



4.21 **View 3.** A view from Upper Road looking in a north-westerly direction towards the Grade II listed outbuildings formerly belonging to Costen's Hall (now demolished) comprising an octagonal building at the west end which is said to be a horse mill and a range of outbuildings extending to the east in the form of a half



octagon. Originally the outbuildings enclosed an octagonal courtyard, but the northern range has been mostly demolished. The octagonal building has a doorway on the north side with a small bulls eye window above. The roofs are of slate and the octagonal building has a weather vane with the date 1844. This historic building is now under development as permission has been granted to change the use from agricultural to residential.

4.22 **View 4.** A view from Cornard Mere towards Long Meadow House. This area is a distinctive part of the parish being situated in the lower valley (Bures Road) section of Little Cornard. As a Site of Specific Scientific Interest, the Mere provides a rich diversity of wildlife that can often be seen as part of the view.



- 4.23 **View 5.** A view alongside Spout Lane, an historic high banked lane originally a cart track used by generations of rural workers. Spout Lane is aptly named due to the many springs which have emerged from time to time. The view frames the setting of the Grade II listed Spout Farm, another example of a well-maintained timber framed and plastered house built on an L-shaped plan with wings, with parts of it dating back to the 16th century date.



- 4.24 **View 6.** A view of Chapel Lane going down the hill away from Workhouse Green. This is a good example of one of the many single-track roads that service the majority of the parish. The Workhouse Green area is also on the popular A2 route for cyclists that starts in Great Cornard and finishes near Raydon. The undulating ancient landscape of wooded arable countryside with species rich hedgerows lined in places with mature oak trees rises up from the valley up onto the plateau area.



POLICY LCO3: VIEWS

Development proposals are expected to conserve the scenic beauty of the parish. In particular, the cherished views shown in Figure 10 shall be preserved. Development which may impact on any of these views must demonstrate through its layout how vistas from public viewpoints will be preserved.

Dark skies

- 4.25 CPRE tranquillity mapping¹ shows parts of Suffolk as having some of the most tranquil areas in the East of England. In the area covering Little Cornard this is particularly in relation to a lack of light pollution and the ability to see dark night skies. This is a valuable asset that is important for wildlife, benefits the health and wellbeing of residents and tourists. In the Neighbourhood Plan survey with residents, the peace and tranquillity and the dark skies were identified as an important feature of life in Little Cornard that was particularly highly valued.

POLICY LCO4: DARK SKIES

While ensuring new developments are secure in terms of occupier and vehicle safety, dark skies are to be preferred over lighting systems that emit unnecessarily high levels of light. Any future outdoor lighting systems should have a minimum impact on the environment, minimising light pollution and adverse effects on wildlife. Low energy lighting technologies should reduce consumption and minimise glare in order to keep night-time skies dark.

- 4.26 Where practical, residents are asked to consider whether any improvements could be made to existing lighting systems to achieve 'Dark Skies.'

¹ <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/tranquility-map-england/>

5 PROTECTING OUR RURAL CHARACTER AND HERITAGE

Barns and out-buildings

- 5.1 Due to its agricultural heritage, Little Cornard has a significant number of barns and agricultural out-buildings. They are an important part of Little Cornard's history and a notable feature on its landscape. With the changing nature and scale of agriculture, need for these barns has fallen and many have been converted into alternative uses, most commonly residential. Where planning permission is required, the Neighbourhood Plan will look to ensure sympathetic conversion of these historic buildings to preserve their setting in the village landscape.

Example of a sensitively designed conversion of a heritage barn



- 5.2 It is important that agricultural barns, which are an important part of Little Cornard's history and a notable feature on its landscape, preserve their character and any important features which are part of that. Conversions that are sensitively designed – such as in the picture above – can retain these heritage features of Little Cornard.

Pond Farm Barn



POLICY LCO5: CONVERSION OF AGRICULTURAL BARNs AND OUT-BUILDINGS

Proposals to convert and/or redevelop existing or former agricultural barns or out-buildings will be expected to demonstrate that they have preserved the features of the structure that contribute to the historic character of Little Cornard.

Non-designated heritage assets

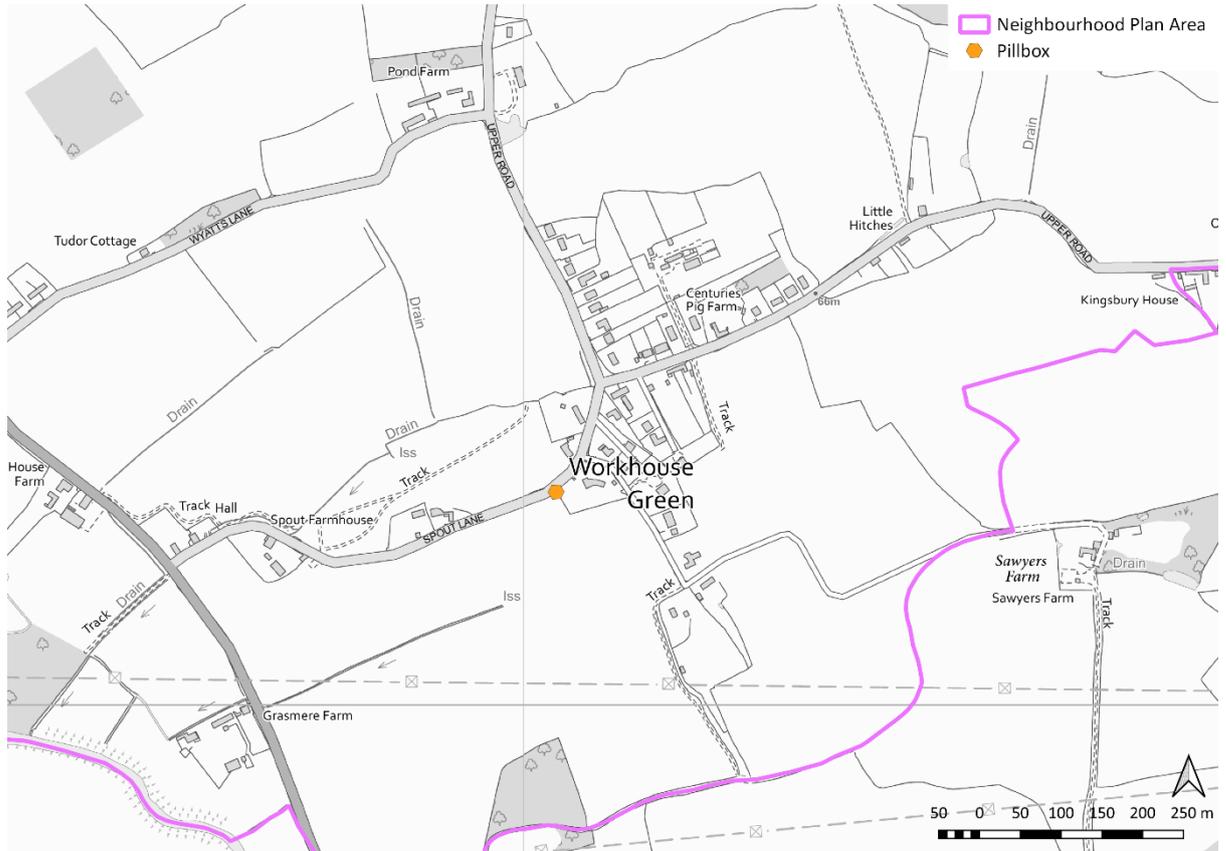
- 5.3 As a community with a strong rural heritage, Little Cornard has a number of listed buildings and structures. In total it has 16 nationally listed buildings, with 15 of these being Grade II listed and All Saints Church being Grade I listed.

Pillbox on Spout Lane



- 5.4 Along with these nationally listed buildings, the pillbox in Spout Lane is considered to have historic merit of local significance. During World War II, this Type 23 pillbox stood alongside a searchlight battery site which was destroyed. It is in good condition and is an important reference to the local activity which supported the war effort. As a 'non-designated heritage asset' it has significance which should be taken into account when considering planning applications which either directly affect the asset or its setting. Its location is shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Location of the pillbox



5.5 In addition to this, the eight barns or out-buildings identified in Policy LCO5 are considered to represent non-designated heritage

POLICY LCO6: NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

- A. The pillbox in Spout Lane is identified as a Non-Designated Heritage Asset.**
- B. Proposals for the re-use of Non-Designated Heritage Assets will be supported if they are compatible with the significance of the asset (including any contribution made by setting) and demonstrate a high quality of design and the use of appropriate materials.**
- C. New uses should seek to retain the asset's physical structure wherever possible. Consideration will be given to the nature of the physical structure and whether it is structurally unsound or beyond feasible and viable repair (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect).**
- D. Where a development proposal would result in the loss of, or harm to a non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement will be made as to the acceptability of the proposal having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.**

ACTIONS RELATING TO NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

Little Cornard Parish Council to consider placing an information board by the old pillbox explaining its significance.

- 5.6 Developers of planning applications are advised to consult Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service for advice on developing a planning application for a site or likely requirement on any consent.

6 OTHER ISSUES

Traffic

- 6.1 An issue raised by many in the community during the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan was the increase in traffic on the small, rural lanes of Little Cornard. This is not a matter that the Neighbourhood Plan can resolve and, with little by way of new development expected, it is not expected to significantly worsen.
- 6.2 The increase and speed in traffic on the B1508, which runs through the parish between Bures and Great Cornard, also causes significant concern. To this end, a group of residents established a Community Speed Watch Scheme in 2020 and conduct speed watches twice weekly at two different locations within the 30mph zone. Any car travelling at 35mph and above is reported to the Police; on average, a car is noted speeding every two minutes. The highest recorded speed thus far is 74mph.
- 6.3 Further, residents and the Parish Council have worked hard to reinstate a Speed Indicator Device (SID) previously destroyed in a road traffic accident. The new SID will rotate between three locations on the B1508 and hopefully encourage drivers to reduce their speed.
- 6.4 Nevertheless, proposals to help keep Little Cornard's lanes quiet and rural will be strongly supported. Little Cornard Parish Council recognises the importance of road safety, in particular on our Quiet Lanes, and will support and encourage measures to improve safety for residents and visitors using any of the roads in the parish.

Quiet Lanes

- 6.5 In 2020, Suffolk County Council Community Fund secured funding to roll out the 'Quiet Lanes Suffolk' project across the county during 2021. A 'Quiet Lane' is a nationally recognised designation of single track road (i.e. no line markings), typically used by less than 1,000 vehicle per day. Quiet Lanes expect the lane to be used by a variety of people, animals and transport, and to respect the rights of others to considerate road use.
- 6.6 Suffolk County Council's target is to add at least 200 new designations to the initial 13 pilot lanes, providing over 200 kilometres of additional routes. As at, January 2021, the level of interest across the County had increased to 192 parishes with 399 routes totalling 507 kilometres in scope for Quiet Lanes. 49% of all parishes in Babergh District have now registered their interest. This will help to preserve the rural nature of those locations and encourage more active modes of travel for local residents and visitors on safer routes, supported by an awareness campaign.
- 6.7 Each Lane is hosted by a local, rural community, such as a parish or village group, who recognise that Quiet Lane designation can bring benefit to their local quality of life.
- 6.8 Little Cornard Parish Council successfully registered their application in December 2020 to be included within the County's Quiet Lane initiative. The lanes proposed to be designated as Quiet Lanes are Spout Lane, Upper Road, Wyatts Lane, Chapel Lane, Kedington Hill, Prospect

Hill and Blackhouse Lane. Initial public consultation with the parish will commence early Spring 2021.

- 6.9 Quiet Lanes are an aspiration for better and more considerate use of the rural lanes within the parish.

Energy efficiency

- 6.10 With the growing recognition of the climate crisis and the contribution of buildings to carbon emissions, many in the community stressed the importance of reducing this impact and ensuring that new buildings are designed and constructed to be as energy efficient as possible. The Emerging Joint Local Plan and national planning policy already addresses this and requires particular standards of all new development. These standards are expected to be strengthened over the plan period in order that the UK is able to meet its legal obligation to be net zero carbon by 2050. This is therefore not an issue explicitly dealt with in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, the strengthening of standards is supported.

Electricity supply

- 6.11 Little Cornard residents strongly support local, where appropriate, and national renewable energy projects. There is, however, considerable concern about electricity transmission lines. In May 2012, after significant local and county council lobbying, National Grid in the Executive Summary of their Connection Options Report made the following statement regarding the Stour Valley.

'In the Stour valley, a 3.8km underground cable section is proposed from west of Dorking Tye to the Bramford-Braintree-Rayleigh overhead line south of Twinstead Tee. Undergrounding would be appropriate for this section of the connection because of the particular qualities of the landscape and its cultural associations.'

- 6.12 The Stour Valley is managed as if it were already designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Statutory bodies, thematic groups and the public have consistently indicated their view that it would be appropriate to adopt undergrounding in this area. The attractiveness of the landscape for tourism, an important contributor to the local economy, would be enhanced by the associated removal of the 132Kv overhead line.
- 6.13 The case for a new 400Kv line was based on routeing electricity supply from a new nuclear power station at Sizewell. The Sizewell project was delayed and none of the above work was undertaken. Since 2012 there has been substantial investment in offshore windfarms and the Sizewell project is set to move forward following EDF's involvement. These new projects will all generate large amounts of electricity on completion.
- 6.14 Residents of Little Cornard are concerned that if new transmission lines are proposed to pass through Little Cornard, they should be undergrounded as originally conceived by National Grid. At the same time the existing 132Kv line should be removed.
- 6.15 As stated by National Grid, the high quality of the landscape of the Stour Valley, combined with the strong cultural links associated with nationally recognised artists Constable and Gainsborough, has to be protected and where possible enhanced.

Residential annexes

- 6.16 One issue raised by the community was the importance of allowing required residential annexes to be built. With a high proportion of older people and an ageing population generally, coupled with high property prices, the number of multi-generational households where all members are over the age of 18 (i.e. the household has no dependent children living there) is likely to increase. The need to provide for such circumstances is therefore important.

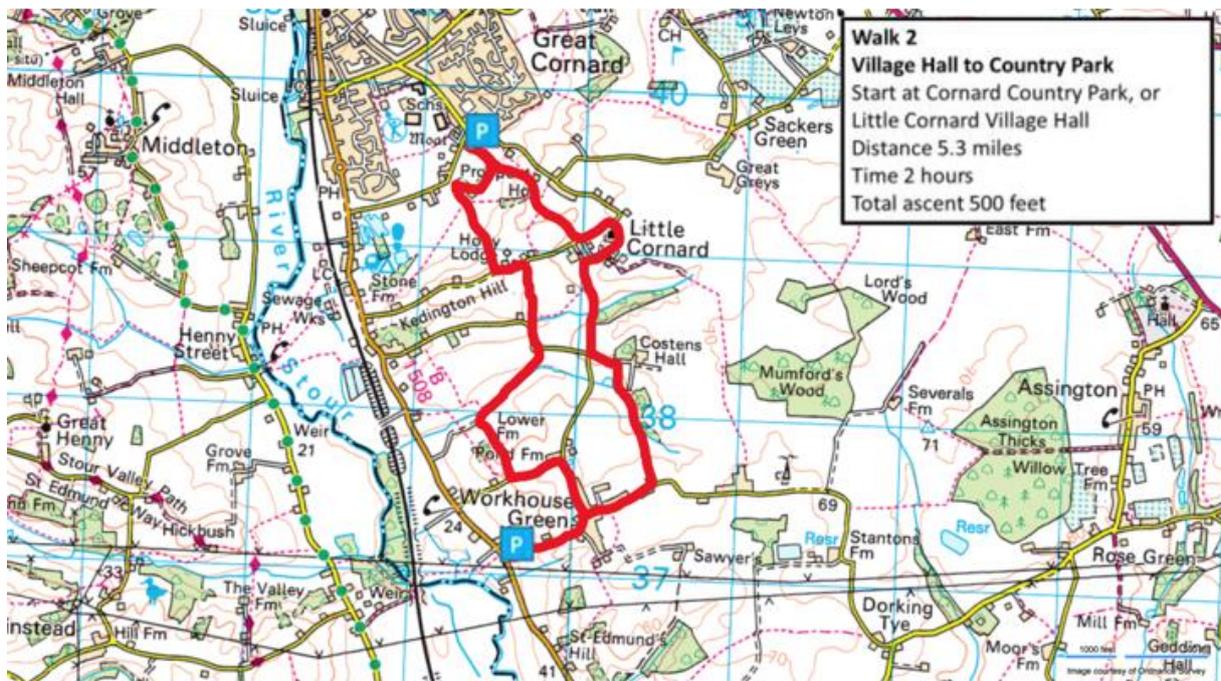
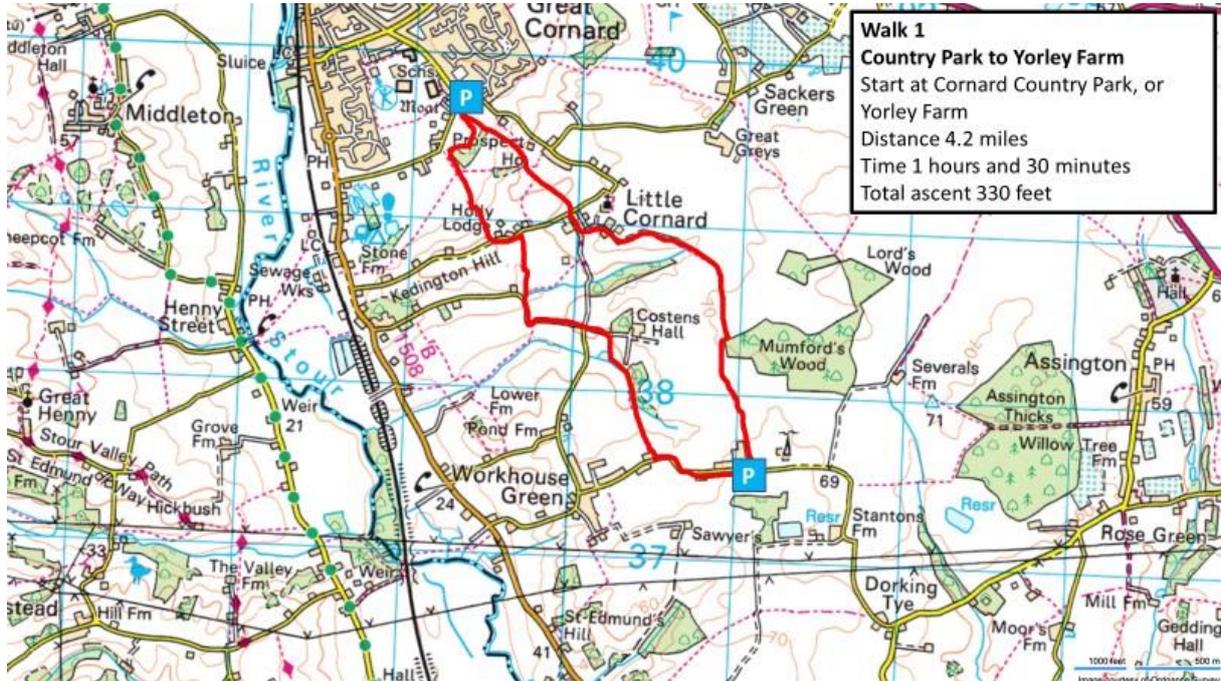
This matter is addressed by Emerging Joint Local Plan Policy LP02 (Residential Annexes) which states that: *"Proposals for residential annexe accommodation attached to the main dwelling may be considered favourably, providing the proposal is designed so that it can continue to be used as an ancillary and subordinate part to the main dwelling, without creating an independent dwelling and/or separate planning unit at present or in the future."*

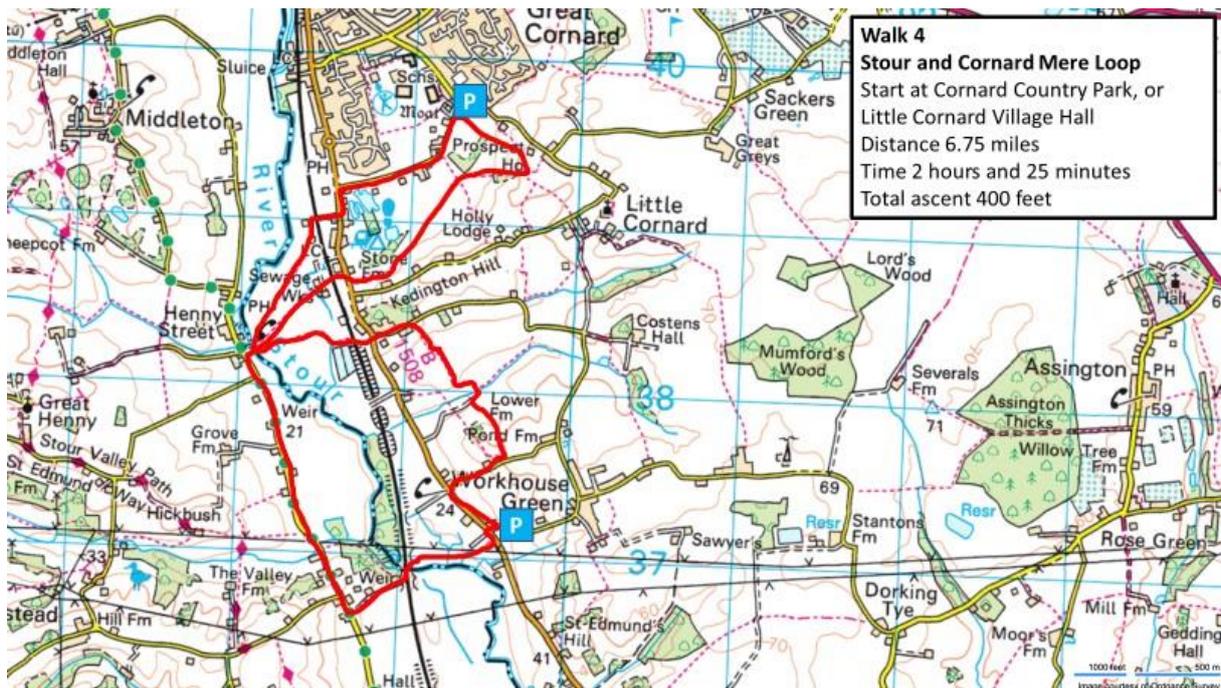
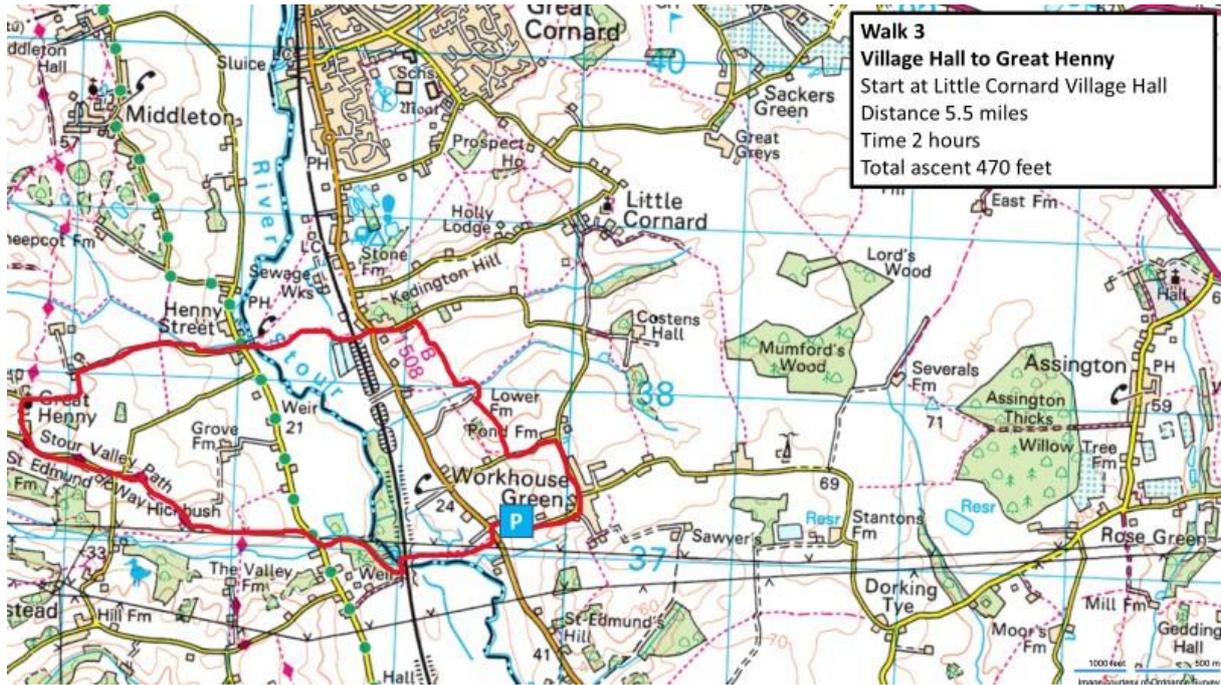
- 6.17 This policy is supported by the Neighbourhood Plan.

Rewilding

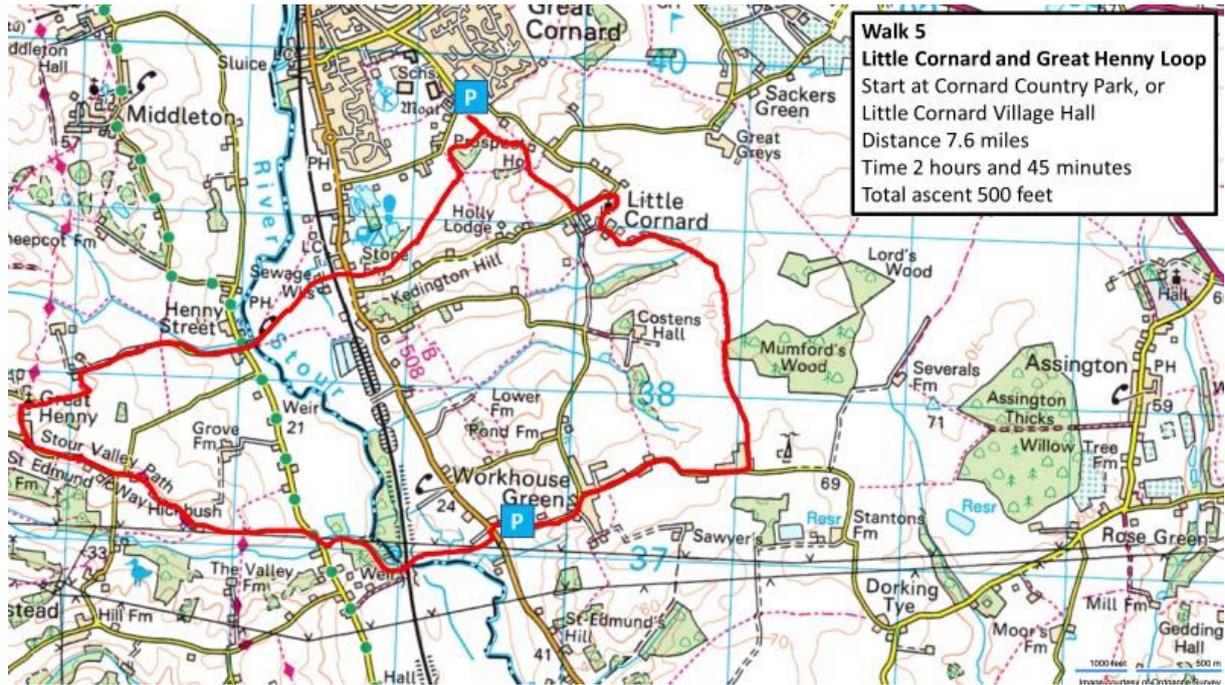
- 6.18 Little Cornard Parish Council strongly support initiatives undertaken by local residents and landowners to 'let nature take care of itself' on land they own. These initiatives come under the generic heading of 'rewilding' and can be quite small scale or larger schemes.
- 6.19 The potential for improving the natural environment in the Blackhouse Lane area on land owned by Great Cornard Parish Council, Little Cornard Parish Council and private landowners is considerable. Improving species connectivity between the Country Park and the Mere by improving hedging and planting local tree species together with increasing the area of land allowed to develop naturally, whilst at the same time improving public access, would be a significant benefit. It is hoped that in the future it may be possible to develop a scheme with the support of the different landowners.
- 6.20 There are a number of current smaller initiatives which are worthy of mention, including Toms Wood at Pond Farm, Fleurs Wood at Costens Hall, the gardens and adjoining meadows at both the Old Rectory and Church View Bungalow. There are other initiatives which demonstrate the desire by many residents to protect and enhance the natural environment of Little Cornard. There are, for instance, examples of combining restoring and improving vegetation by supporting particular animal and bird populations. 'Kintons,' at Kedington Hill is a mecca for birds of prey and the numbers of buzzards and red kites soaring over Little Cornard has increased considerably.

APPENDIX A CIRCULAR WALKING ROUTES





Little Cornard Neighbourhood Plan - Referendum Version



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