Hoxne Neighbourhood Plan

SUPPORTING DOCUMENT 8 –

Landscape and Wildlife Evaluation 2021

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DISCLAIMER

This report has been compiled in accordance with BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of practice for planning and development, as has the survey work to which it relates.

The information, data, advice and opinions which have been prepared are true, and have been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

This survey was carried out and an assessment made of the site at a particular time. Every effort has been made to date to provide an accurate assessment of the current situation, but no liability can be assumed for omissions or changes after the surveys have taken place.

It is our policy to submit any biological records to the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service, in accordance with BS42020 (6.4.7). We will do this 3 months after the submission of this report. If you wish to discuss this, please contact us within this time period.

Executive Summary

SWT Trading Ltd: Ecological Consultants, the consultancy of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, was instructed by Hoxne Parish Council to undertake a landscape and ecological evaluation of the parish as part of their review of the existing Neighbourhood Plan. This document seeks to provide the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group with an evaluation of landscape character and in particular, highlight specific habitats and associated ecological networks as a rich source of biodiversity.

There are three different landscape character types within the parish. Two of these types cover the majority of the Parish, with 'Rolling Valley Claylands' occupying a large area in the north and parts of the east, with a linear stretch extending beyond the southern boundary and 'Plateau Claylands' covering the majority of the south of the Parish and parts of the eastern boundary. 'Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fens' extend around the northern and eastern boundaries, encompassing the River Waveney and River Dove. Overall, these landscape character types help define the different habitats across the parish and also the species within them.

Hoxne Brick Pit to the south of Hoxne village, is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its world-renowned geological interest. There are also five non-statutorily designated sites within the parish: Hoxne Meadow, Hoxne Wood, Depperhaugh Wood, The Slades and Grove Wood; and one which extends beyond the Parish boundary: River Waveney (Sections). The Waveney and Dove Valleys Special Landscape Area also covers the rivers and extends south through Hoxne Village at Low Street and Cross Street, and on to Heckfield Green. However this designation will be superseded once the Babergh-Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan is adopted.

Nine Priority Habitats have been identified within the Parish, including hedgerows, mixed deciduous woodland, ponds, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, wet woodland, lowland meadows, wood pasture and parkland, traditional orchards, and rivers and streams. Across the Parish, 64 UK and Suffolk Priority Species have been recorded, as well as Suffolk Rare Plant species which complement and help define the biodiversity value of the locality.

The principal ecological network throughout the parish is associated with the water courses, including the rivers Waveney and Dove and their associated habitats, as well as the Gold Brook and Chickering Beck. Continuous riparian habitat is associated with the river corridors marking the northern and western boundaries of the parish. On a smaller scale, the network of hedgerows, ditches, ponds and woodlands amongst the arable land within the parish also provide local connectivity.

Development Management guidance for any new developments within the area covered by this Neighbourhood Plan should seek to protect existing landscape and ecological assets and restore, enhance and reconnect the ecological network.

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Brief and Terms of Reference

SWT Trading Ltd: Ecological Consultants, the wholly-owned consultancy of Suffolk Wildlife Trust, was instructed by Hoxne Parish Council on 19th February 2021 to undertake a landscape and ecological evaluation of the parish as part of their Neighbourhood Plan that is currently being compiled.

The Civil Parish of Hoxne, within its formal parish boundary is the 'Neighbourhood Area' for the purposes of the plan. The Parish Council advise that the main purpose of their Neighbourhood Plan is to provide evidence for policies which will seek to protect and enhance exiting habitats, including green spaces around the villages and the surrounding landscape to help retain the rural setting of the Village. They also wish to identify specific sites to be protected and if any additional areas could be improved [1].

This document seeks to provide the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group with a consideration of landscape character and use this as a basis to highlight key habitats and associated ecological networks as a rich source of biodiversity.

1.2 Parish Location and Statistics

Hoxne is a settlement located at the northern boundary of the District of Mid Suffolk (now linked with Babergh District through the Councils' 'Working Together' scheme), located approximately 8km east of the town of Diss, Norfolk. It covers around 1639 hectares and its central point grid reference is close to TM 1730 7510. The parish also shares boundaries with the Suffolk civil parishes of Brome and Oakley, Eye, Denham, Horham, Stradbroke, Wingfield and Syleham and also Brockdish and Scole in Norfolk.

Data from the 2011 UK Census indicate that Hoxne is a village with a population of around 2060 people with approximately 868 households [2]. The Parish includes the settlements of Hoxne, Cross Street, Heckfield Green and South Green and also comprises part of the villages of Chickering, Denham and Denham Green. Built up areas represent about 10% of the parish, concentrated around the small villages, but also includes some moderate farm steadings and large houses with parkland. The Parish also encompasses a portion of the former RAF Horham Airfield in the south.

Outside of the road and rivers network, buildings and gardens the majority of the land is used for arable cropping with some horse pasture, ancient woodland and wet woodland. Along the river valley, it is mainly cattle grazed. The Parish contains a large number of ponds, mainly associated with the arable fields.

2. Planning and Development Context

An outline of elements of the current planning system and associated strategic documents will help to place this present evaluation in context:

2.1 Localism Act (2011)

The Department of Communities and Local Government promoted the Localism Act (2011) [3]. The subsequent Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012) provide the statutory framework for Neighbourhood Development Plans. These allow communities to establish the general planning policies for the development and use of land in a neighbourhood. 'Neighbourhood Plans allow local people to get the right type of development for their community, but the plans must still meet the needs of the wider area'.

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is statutory guidance published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (February 2019), which provides national planning policy [4].

Of particular relevance to this project is Paragraph 170, under Section 15 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment', which states

The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits of ecosystem services; including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate

The NPPF also sets out the plan-making framework in Paragraph 17, in that development plans must include strategic policies to address each local planning authority's priorities for the development and use of land in its area. These can be contained in a local plan and/or a spatial development strategy. Policies to address non-strategic matters are also included in local plans and in neighbourhood plans. These set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic polies in the development plan that covers the area.

2.3 Mid Suffolk District Local Plan (with reference to the emerging Joint Local Plan)

The emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan is in its development stages, with the Pre-Submission (Reg 19) Document submitted in November 2020 [5]. This will replace the existing Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998) and Mid Suffolk District Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008) [6].

Relevant existing 'saved' policies from the Local Plan 1998 and Core Strategy 2008 documents include:

- Core Strategy Policy CS5 – Mid Suffolk's Environment
- Local Plan Policy CL5 – Protecting Existing Woodland
- Local Plan Policy CL8 – Protecting Wildlife Habitats
- Local Plan Policy CL9 – Recognising Wildlife Areas

The documents are to be superseded by the following policies proposed in the Pre-Submission Document (November, 2020):

- Strategic policy SP09 – Enhancement and Management of the Environment
- Local Policy LP18 – Biodiversity & Geodiversity
- Local Policy LP19 – Landscape is also applicable with regards to protecting and enhancing landscape character.

Hoxne is described as a Hinterland Village in the emerging Joint Local Plan, with a proposed allocation for Hoxne - Cross Street /Heckfield Green (Hinterland): (LS01) Land South of Denham Road for 30 dwellings.

2.4 Biodiversity Net Gain

Following the consultation on mandating biodiversity net gain in development, it was confirmed in March 2019 that the government will use the forthcoming Environment Act to mandate 'biodiversity net gain' – meaning that new developments must deliver an overall increase in biodiversity.

Net gain in planning terms describes an approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. The approach to delivering net gain still requires the application of the mitigation hierarchy, in that impacts on biodiversity should be first avoided, then minimised and only as a last resort be compensated. Where losses cannot be compensated within the development footprint then biodiversity losses may be offset by delivery of gains elsewhere. As a very minimum a target of 10% net gain should be sought as currently specified in the emerging Environment Bill. However, it should be noted that impacts on irreplaceable habitat cannot be offset to achieve no net loss or net gain.

A key part of the process is demonstrating measurability and The Biodiversity Metric 2.0 Beta Edition designed by Natural England (often termed the 'Defra Metric'). This metric provides the means to account for the ecological value of a site and how changes arising from development or management will impact on this value over time.

Achieving the best outcomes for biodiversity requires credible evidence derived from ground-truthing and justifiable choices based on ecological knowledge. In addition, the delivery of net gain is dependent upon the financial means to undertake the necessary habitat management, in order to secure a long-term biodiversity benefit.

3. Methods

3.1 Field Survey

A 'Phase 1 type' field survey and ecological audit of the parish was undertaken on 24th February 2021. The objectives of the field survey was to investigate and record land use, habitat types and notable plant and animal species and take digital images to illustrate these features. Using public highways, bridleways and footpaths it was possible to view and comment upon all but a small percentage (around 10%) of the parish land area.

3.2 Desktop Survey

A variety of existing source material was consulted including (but not limited to):

- Suffolk County Council website and other documents
- Mid Suffolk District Council website and other documents
- Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service website and databases
- The MAGIC website (provides geographic information about the natural environment from across a range of government sources) including Sir Dudley Stamp 1933-1949 Land Use Inventory).
- Suffolk Wildlife Trust databases
- Suffolk Hedgerow Survey – County Report
- Suffolk Bird Atlas 2007-11

3.3 Evaluation of Landscape and Wildlife Assets

The descriptions and evaluation that follow in the report draw on information collected during the field and desktop surveys. For convenience and clarity, elements concerned with the wider landscape are considered first in Section 4. These are then followed in Section 5 by wildlife elements, from protected sites through to wider ecological networks habitats.

However, these two sections should be considered together as there is integration of significant landscape and wildlife elements, resulting in a network of landscape and wildlife features.

4. Evaluation of Landscape Assets

4.1 Protected Landscapes

Hoxne does not lie within or close to any Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). However, the Waveney and Dove Valleys Special Landscape Area (SLA) runs along the eastern and northern boundaries associated with the rivers and extends through Hoxne Village via Low Street into Cross Street and Heckfield Green.

4.2 Local Landscape Policy

Previously, many local authorities in England have used Local Landscape Designations (LLDs) to protect locally important landscapes. In different authorities LLDs are variously termed 'Areas of Great Landscape Value', 'Areas of Special Landscape Importance' or here, in the case of Suffolk, 'Special Landscape Areas' (SLA). Unlike National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Special Landscape Area is a non-statutory designation. However, it was created to categorise sensitive landscapes to assist their protection from development or other man-made influences. In 1987 Suffolk County Council identified a number of broad areas of land for designation as SLAs. They considered that these areas possessed a quality of landscape that was of countywide significance. District Councils were made responsible for the precise delineation of each SLA boundary, a process that entailed a careful assessment of each using aerial photographs and site surveys.

Mid Suffolk Local Plan (1998) Proposal 6 describes SLAs as:

a. River valleys which still possess traditional grazing meadows with their hedgerows, dykes, and associated flora and fauna;
b. Areas of Breckland including remaining heathland, and the characteristic lines and belts of Scots Pine;
c. Historic parklands and gardens;
d. Other areas of countryside where undulating topography and natural vegetation, particularly broad-leaved woodland, combine to produce and area of special landscape quality and character.

The Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance document, August 2015[7] provides guidance on development in the countryside. Section 1 of the document provides background information for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk Districts, outlines the reasons for the Landscape Guidance Document and highlights the Designated Landscapes. Section 2 is focused on guidance for development in the countryside, and Section 3 describes the Landscape Character Types found in Babergh and Mid Suffolk and their respective locations.

Policy LP19 – Landscape within the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Pre-Submission (Reg 19) Document (November 2020) sets out the landscape policy for Mid Suffolk District. When adopted, this will replace existing Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) as defined in earlier Mid Suffolk District plans and policies. The new policy seeks to protect and enhance the landscape, taking account of its natural beauty, characteristics and features of natural, archaeological or historic interest. All new development proposals need to ensure it responds to and reinforces the local distinctiveness of the area in scale, form, design, materials and location.

Although the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan will no longer use the designation of SLA, it can also be reasonably argued that paragraph 170 of the NPPF 2018 (Section 2.2 above) continues

to give some weight to areas which have or formerly had a Local Landscape Designation such as SLAs, in the context of a 'valued landscape':

"Planning Policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by

- protecting and enhancing <u>valued landscapes</u>, sites of biodiversity and geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identifies quality in the development plan).

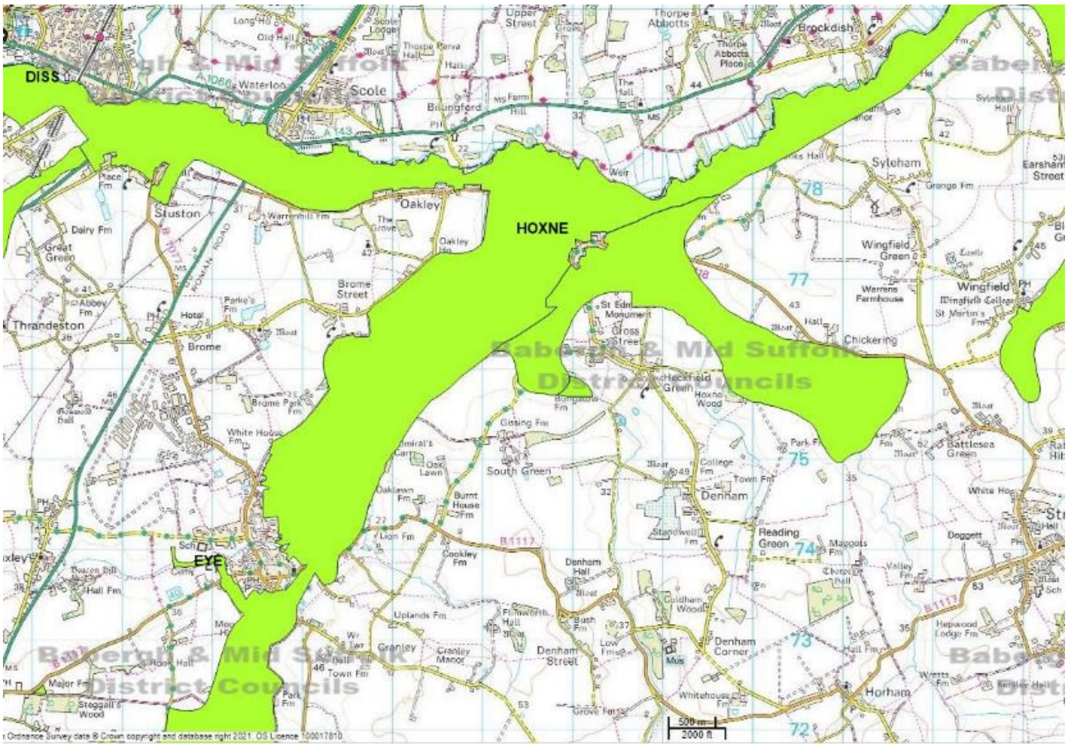

Figure 1. Hoxne Section of The Waveney and Dove Valleys Special Landscape Area (Source: MSDC Interactive Map)

4.3 Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment

In 2008, Suffolk County Council completed a project to describe landscapes throughout Suffolk in detail and assess what particular character and qualities make up the different landscape areas of the county. This is known as the Level 2 Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) [8]. The guidance required the preparation of landscape character assessments in order to review and/or replace local landscape designations. The results of these assessments could then be used as supplementary planning guidance and to help produce landscape management guidelines.

Suffolk County Council worked in partnership with the Living Landscapes Project based at Reading University, private consultants and all District and Borough Councils in Suffolk, using methodology in which discrete units of broadly homogeneous land were identified according to a set of physical and cultural characteristics. These characteristics were defined by four principal attributes: physiography, ground type, landcover and cultural pattern, which in turn were derived from six mapable datasets: relief, geology, soils, tree cover, farm type and settlement. Application of this methodology maintained a consistent approach across Suffolk.

It is highly appropriate for the Hoxne Neighbourhood Plan to acknowledge and make full use of both the descriptions and the land management guidelines related to the three Landscape Types that exist within the parish.

The main Landscape Character Types (LCT) which cover Hoxne parish are:

- **Rolling Valley Claylands** (coloured dashed pale green on Figure 2)
- **Plateau Claylands** (coloured dotted olive on Figure 2)
- **Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fens** (coloured lilac/blue on Figure 2)

For each of these Landscape Character Types, Suffolk County Council has produced written guidance involving detailed descriptions of:

- key characteristics
- sensitivity to change
- key forces for change
- development management guidelines
- land management guidelines

SCC notes highlight that the guidance documents have been written principally to address the needs of development management. That is, to provide a summary of the forces that have been and are at work in the landscape and the key forces for change operating in the landscape at the time of writing.

However, the caveat is added that guidance cannot be considered to be definitive for a particular site, nor is it exhaustive. Rather it is intended to give a clear indication of the issues raised and principles to be followed when dealing with a particular type of development.

This evaluation for the Neighbourhood Plan therefore distils the essence of the information provided - as it applies to Hoxne - as a guide for any future development here. Much of the discussion on development guidance is taken verbatim from the documents, but linkages and comments are added that make it relevant to this parish.

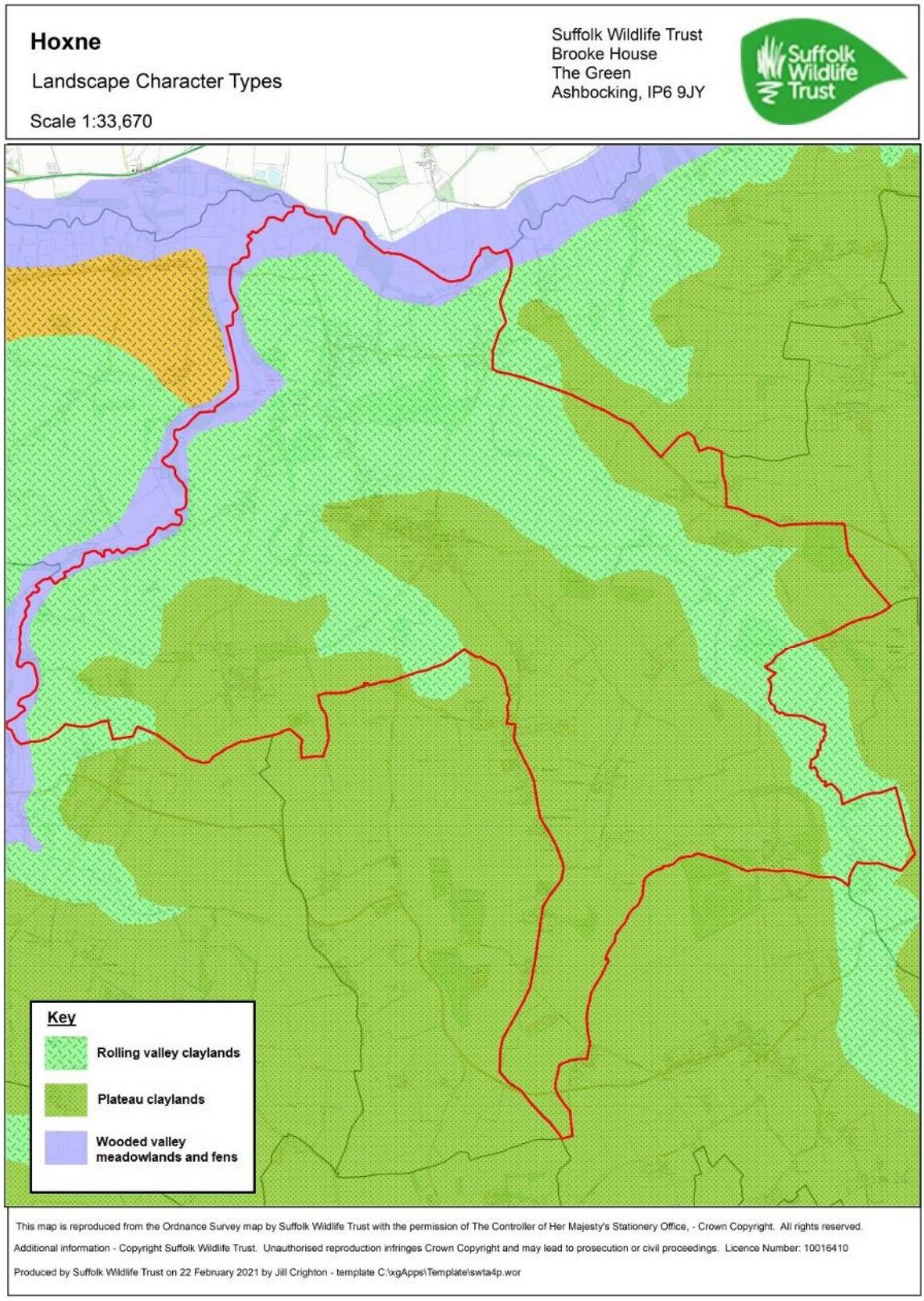

Figure 2: Suffolk Landscape Character Types ascribed to Hoxne

4.3.1 Rolling Valley Claylands

These landscapes occur on the sides of the valleys that cut through the central clay plateau of Suffolk. Most of the valleys are moderately sloping, however, occasional notable steeper slopes occur. At Hoxne, the narrow, steep ridge between the Waveney and the Chickering Beck valleys inspired comparison with a heel sinew (hohsinu in Old English) and hence the name 'Hoxne'. Altogether, these slopes make an unexpected and striking contribution to the landscape. The soils tend to be medium clay but can be more mixed, especially in the valley of the river Dove.

Key characteristics of this Landscape Type as they refer to Hoxne are:

- Gently sloping valleys on medium clay soils
- Ancient woodland on the upper fringes of the valley sides and the adjacent plateau
- Fields often smaller than on surrounding plateaux
- Hedgerow networks around field margins, with some removed to create larger field areas
- Former landscape parks at Hoxne, including Oakley Park off Low Road
- Focus of settlement. The Parish consists of timber-framed houses (usually plastered and painted) interspersed with red-brick ones and timber-clad and tarred barns, the roofs mainly tiled (plain or pantiles) or thatched

Gently undulating landscape of the Rolling Valley Claylands

Key potential changes and Development Management guidance related to this landscape type:

- Intrusive valley side developments or changes of land use - expansion of garden curtilages and the widespread introduction of horse grazing.

- Expansion of settlements
- Construction of large agricultural buildings
- Expansion of garden curtilage
- Change of land use, especially the creation of horse paddocks
- Impact of deer on the condition of woodland cover.

Land Management guidelines for this Landscape Type relevant to Hoxne include:

- Reinforce the historic pattern of sinuous field boundaries
- Recognise localised areas of late enclosure hedges when restoring and planting hedgerows
- Maintain and restore historic parklands (particularly around Chickering Hall)
- Maintain and increase the stock of hedgerow trees
- Increase the area of woodland cover; siting should be based on information from the Historic Landscape Characterisation and in consultation with the Archaeological Service
- Maintain and restore the stock of moats and ponds in this landscape.

4.3.2 Plateau Claylands

Plateau Claylands cover a huge area across central Suffolk. They are formed from the great plateau of glacial till or boulder clay deposited by the retreating ice-sheet of the Anglian Glaciation. The heavy clay soils tend to be gently undulating or flat and are seasonally water-logged. Better soils are present towards the edges. This is a working, farmed countryside, where an 'ancient' field pattern with sinuous and substantial hedges and ditches, often in 'co-axial' patterns is present. It was primarily used for cattle grazing but the addition of field drains allowed arable crop production. This led to the removal of hedges to amalgamate fields, weakening the earlier field patterns, leading, in some places, to the creation of very open 'prairie' landscapes. Even where boundaries survive, they are often now only ditches, the hedges having been lost as their stock-retaining function disappeared. Hedges, where present, are variable in their visual impact, often gappy and many are nothing more than lines of suckering elms. Boundary trees, especially ash and oak (often pollarded) are, however, present in many of the hedges.

Key characteristics of this landscape type as they refer to Hoxne are:

- Plateaux of heavy clay soil very gently undulating or flat dissected by small streams
- Ancient organic pattern of fields
- Extensive areas of hedgerow loss creating "arable prairies"
- Dispersed settlement, villages with multiple nuclei, landscape scattered with farmsteads and hamlets
- Large modern agricultural buildings a recurrent feature
- Redundant WWII airfields (RAF Horham is in the south of the Parish)
- Small copses in villages and around farmsteads, some ancient woodland blocks associated with the valleys of Chickering beck and the Gold Brook
- A working landscape on which suburbanisation is only beginning to make an impact compared with other parts of the county.

There are pockets of well-preserved field systems and some superb greens in this landscape, but much has been considerably influenced by changes to farming practices in the last two centuries.

Horham Airfield, looking north

Open landscape, with hedgerows removed, east of Denham Road

Key potential changes and Development Management guidance related to this landscape type:

- Expansion of garden curtilage
- Change of land use to horse paddocks and other recreational uses
- Settlement expansion eroding the characteristic form and vernacular styles
- Conversion and expansion of farmsteads for residential uses
- Large-scale agricultural buildings in open countryside
- Redevelopment of former airfield sites to new uses
- Development of wind turbines
- Intensive pig and poultry production

Land Management guidelines for this Landscape Type relevant to Hoxne include:

- Reinforce the historic pattern of sinuous field boundaries
- Recognise localised areas of late enclosure hedges when restoring and planting hedgerows
- Maintain and restore greens and commons

- Maintain and increase the stock of hedgerow trees
- Increase the area of woodland cover based on information from the Historic Landscape Characterisation and in consultation with the Archaeological Service
- Maintain and restore the stock of moats and ponds in this landscape

4.3.3 Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fens

This landscape character is only found in two interlinked river valleys on the northern boundary of Suffolk including a thin section of Mid Suffolk; from outside the district boundary (Suffolk Coastal District) along the valley of the Waveney westwards into Mid Suffolk, and southward along the River Dove to Eye and Wetheringsett. The valley system was formed by glacial outwash at the end of the great Anglian Glaciation but areas on the Waveney overlie deposits known associated with a pre-Anglian river; the Bytham River.

The flat valley bottom has poor drainage, and some sections have steep slopes, particularly around Bungay, which is uncharacteristic of the general Suffolk landscape, giving it a quiet and undisturbed feeling. There are scatterings of historic farmsteads and churches on the few areas of higher land.

Key characteristics of this landscape type as they refer to Hoxne are:

- Flat valley bottom
- Narrow band of peat deposits, but generally replaced by water-logged clays along the Dove valley
- Cattle grazed pasture
- Network of drainage ditches
- Widespread plantation and carr woodland, including cricket bat willow
- Localised settlement on the valley floor “islands” to the south (Eye)
- Sense of quiet and rural isolation in many places

View across the flat valley bed across the Mill Stream to the north of Hoxne Village

Looking east along the River Waveney on the northern boundary of Hoxne Parish

Key potential changes and Development Management guidance related to this landscape type:

- Development and land use change adjacent to this landscape type, such as construction of buildings on the valley sides
- The loss of grazing by cattle, allowing scrub encroachment
- The creation of new woodlands, also promoting scrub growth
- The introduction of horse grazing, with taped paddocks degrading the quality and condition of the landscape
- Neglect of the characteristic ditch and hedgerow networks
- The conversion of grassland to arable production
- Restoration and maintenance of valley fens for wildlife conservation

Land Management guidelines for this Landscape Type relevant to Hoxne include:

- High standards of design using sympathetic and unobtrusive materials, along with effective mitigation strategies for any permitted development on valley sides, restricting development to existing clusters and avoiding buildings which project above the skyline
- Mitigate the impact of horse grazing by designing field layouts in keeping with the local field pattern or historic pattern of boundaries, using sensitive materials and appropriate stocking densities
- Support the continuation of traditional economic activities such as sheep and cattle grazing
- Restore and retain the pattern of drainage
- Maintain levels of grassland through arable reversion or expanding livestock enterprises
- Encourage and support appropriate planting and management of woodlands

4.4 The Significance of the Landscape for the Neighbourhood Plan

The descriptions and discussions in Sections 4.1 - 4.3 indicate how Landscape Character Assessment is increasingly underpinning development management guidance. In the case of Hoxne Parish, the importance of sensitive development and the retention and enhancement of existing features typical of the three Landscape Character Types is highlighted.

As well as adherence to Local Plan Policy, development management guidance for any new developments within the area covered by this Neighbourhood Plan should consistently reflect the Development Management and Land Management Guidelines drawn up within the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment and the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance.

5. Evaluation of Wildlife Assets

5.1 Local Biodiversity Policy

Mid Suffolk District Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2008) includes **Policy CS5**: Mid Suffolk's Environment. The policy seeks (amongst other things) that:

All development will maintain and enhance the environment, including the historic environment, and retain the local distinctiveness of the area.

To protect, manage and enhance Mid Suffolk's biodiversity and geodiversity based on a network of:

- Designated Sites (international, national, regional and local)
- Biodiversity Action Plan Species and
- Habitats, geodiversity interests within the wider environment Wildlife Corridors and Ecological Networks

The emerging Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan is in its development stages, with the Pre-Submission (Reg 19) Document submitted in November 2020 [5]. The following policies apply:

Strategic policy SP09 – Enhancement and Management of the Environment
1) The Council will require development to support the enhancement and management of the natural and local environment and networks of green infrastructure, including: landscape; biodiversity, geodiversity and the historic environment and historic landscapes through detailed development management policies set out in the Plan, including environmental protection measures, such as biodiversity net gain and sustainable urban drainage systems. Cross-boundary mitigation of effects on Protected Habitats Sites.
2) Development that creates new dwelling(s) within the identified Protected Habitats Sites Mitigation Zone will be required to make appropriate contributions through legal agreements towards management projects and/or monitoring of visitor pressure and urban effects on Habitats Sites and be compliant with the HRA Recreational disturbance and Avoidance Mitigation Strategy. Development will otherwise need to submit separate evidence of compliance with the Habitats Regulations Assessment regarding predicted impacts upon relevant designated sites.
3) All development proposals will be required to support and contribute to the Councils' project to maintain, enhance and protect biodiversity net gain, the networks of habitats and green infrastructure.

Local Policy LP18 – Biodiversity & Geodiversity
1) All development should follow a hierarchy of seeking firstly to; enhance habitats, avoid impacts, mitigate against harmful impacts, or as a last resort compensate for losses that cannot be avoided or mitigated for. Adherence to the hierarchy should be demonstrated.

2) Development should:

a. Protect designated and, where known, potentially designated sites. Proposed development which is likely to have an adverse impact upon designated and potential designated sites, or that will result in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable biodiversity or geological features or habitats (such as ancient woodland and veteran/ancient trees) will not be supported.

b. Protect and improve sites of geological value and in particular geological sites of international, national and local significance.

c. Conserve, restore and contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity and geological conservation interests including priority habitats and species. Enhancement for biodiversity should be commensurate with the scale of development.

d. Plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of local networks of biodiversity with wildlife corridors that connect areas. Where possible, link to existing green infrastructure networks and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation so that these ecological networks will be more resilient to current and future pressures.

e. Identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains, equivalent of a minimum 10% increase, for biodiversity. Where biodiversity assets cannot be retained or enhanced on site, the Councils will support 'biodiversity offsetting' to deliver a net gain in biodiversity off-site in accordance with adopted protocols.

f. Apply additional measures to assist with the recovery of species listed on S41 of the NERC Act 2006.

3) Development which would have an adverse impact on species protected by legislation, or subsequent legislation, will not be permitted unless there is no alternative and the local planning authority is satisfied that suitable measures have been taken to:

a. Reduce disturbance to a minimum; and
b. Maintain the population identified on site;
c. Provide adequate alternative habitats to sustain at least the current levels of population.

4) Where appropriate, the local planning authority will use planning obligations and/or planning conditions to achieve appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures and to ensure that any potential harm is kept to a minimum.

5.2 Statutorily designated sites for biodiversity

The quality of the natural environment in Suffolk is reflected by the extent of its land area with statutory protection for its wildlife. 8% of the county has national designation as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), reflecting the importance of habitats and species found here. Many of these areas are also of European or international importance, with designations as Special Areas for Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Ramsar Site. Large areas of the nearby estuaries and coastline are protected in this way.

5.2.1 Sites of European and International Importance

There are no sites of European and International Importance within Hoxne Parish, with the closest being the Ramsar site Redgrave and South Lopham Fen, located 10.6km north west of the Parish boundary. The Ramsar designation is due to it being an example of spring-fed lowland base-rich valley, remarkable for its lack of fragmentation and the range of rare and scarce invertebrates, including the Fen Raft spider *Dolomedes plantarius*. The diversity of the site is due to the lateral and longitudinal zonation of the vegetation types characteristic of valley mires[9]. This site is also designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), entitled Waveney and Little Ouse Valley for its habitats: Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils; and Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae;* and also, for supporting the Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* [10]. This site is managed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust as a Nature Reserve.

5.2.2 Site of Special Scientific Interest in Hoxne

There is one Site of Special Scientific Interest within Hoxne Parish, Hoxne Brick Pit Hoxne Brick Pit

is a world-famous geological site; one of the most important Pleistocene sites in Britain; with research dating back to the 18th Century. The sediments are described as interglacial lacustrine deposits occupying a basin in the chalky till, overlain by fluviatile deposits penetrated by ice-wedge casts. The upper deposits contain abundant vertebrate material [11].

For completeness, it should be noted that Redgrave and Lopham Fen 10.6km to the east is also designated as an SSSI (Redgrave and Lopham Fens), designated due to its diverse characteristic flora and fauna [12].

5.3 County Wildlife Sites

5.3.1 Rationale behind this non-statutory designation

County Wildlife Sites (CWSs) are areas known to be of county or regional importance for wildlife. They have a key role in the conservation of Suffolk's biodiversity and are important links in Suffolk's 'Living Landscape', as described on the Suffolk Wildlife Trust website [13]. CWS designation is non-statutory but is recognition of a site's high value for biodiversity. Suffolk currently has over 900 County Wildlife Sites representing approximately 2.6% of the county's land area.

CWSs have been identified throughout Suffolk and range from small meadows, green lanes, dykes and hedges through to much larger areas of ancient woodlands, heathland, greens, commons and marsh. Outside of areas with statutory protection (such as SSSSIs, Local and National Nature Reserves), CWSs are therefore the most important areas for wildlife in Suffolk and can support both locally and nationally threatened wildlife species and habitats.

Many County Wildlife Sites support UK Priority Habitats and Species (see 5.3 and 5.4 below). They complement the statutory protected areas and nature reserves by helping to buffer and maintain habitat links between these sites.

It is important to note that the designation of a site as a CWS does not confer any new rights of access either to the general public or conservation organisations.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service and Natural England manage the Suffolk County Wildlife Site system in partnership. This CWS system involves:

- Maintaining an up to date database of CWSs in Suffolk. Partners and local authorities have copies of the database
- Designating new CWSs, extending existing CWSs and modifying information held on existing sites when changes occur. New sites and site extensions are notified in accordance with selection criteria.
- Supplying information on wildlife interest of CWSs to landowners and other organisations whose work may affect CWSs. The importance of CWSs is recognised by local authorities in Suffolk and they have all developed policies that give CWSs some protection in line with national planning policy. If a CWS is likely to be affected by development the views of the CWS partners is normally sought as part of the consultation process.

CWSs are implicitly recognised by the NPPF as having a fundamental role to play in meeting overall national biodiversity targets. In the NPPF 2019 they are described as 'Locally Designated Sites'. CWS are not protected by legislation, but their importance is recognised by local authorities when

considering planning applications. Under current planning policy there is a presumption against granting permission for development that would have an adverse impact on a CWS.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust monitors planning applications for potential impacts on County Wildlife Sites. The high wildlife value of many CWSs has developed through land management practices that have allowed wildlife to thrive, for example traditional and historical management such as rotational coppicing of woodland, hay cutting or grazing of grasslands. Ensuring the continuation of such appropriate management is vital to maintain the wildlife value of a site. Establishing and maintaining good working relationships with landowners and managers is therefore essential.

The CWS partnership appreciates the difficulties that achieving the conservation management of CWSs can present and is therefore happy to offer advice on management and on potential sources of funding. Free advice is available from Suffolk Wildlife Trust to CWS owners and managers and includes:

- Information on the wildlife and nature conservation interest of the site;
- Advice and site visits can be made to establish the best management to maintain and enhance wildlife value.

5.3.2 County Wildlife Sites in Hoxne

There are six County Wildlife Sites associated with Hoxne. Five lie within the Parish boundary; Hoxne Meadow, Hoxne Wood and The Slades within Plateau Claylands; Depperhaugh Wood and Grove Wood within Rolling Valley Claylands, and one overlaps with the adjacent Parish of Syleham; River Waveney (Sections) in Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fens. Extracts from the citations are as follows:

Hoxne Meadow – Mid Suffolk 89: TM 198 754
2.03ha: Lowland Meadow
This agriculturally unimproved meadow has borders of species-rich mature hedgerows and a stream running through the centre. Representative indicator species of this habitat are present including pepper saxifrage, lesser burnet saxifrage, field wood rush and cowslip, making this rare and declining habitat of High Conservation Value.

Hoxne Wood – Mid Suffolk 90: TM 198 757
3.84 ha: Ancient Woodland (Listed on Ancient Woodland Inventory)
This small, isolated wood is an important feature in a largely arable landscape. It is dominated by hornbeam coppice, but also contains oak, ash and sycamore with a small conifer plantation in the south eastern corner. There are also areas of dense blackthorn, although the understorey is sparse with mainly elder. Some less common woodland species such as ramsons, early purple orchid and wood sedge can be found amongst mainly dog's mercury, nettle, primrose, bluebell and lords-and-ladies. The woodland is used for timber production and pheasant shooting.

The Slades – Mid Suffolk 92: TM 215 760
9.65 ha: Ancient Woodland (Listed on Ancient Woodland Inventory)
Another woodland dominated by hornbeam, with frequent ash, oak and field maple with a dense canopy.

Depperhaugh Wood – Mid Suffolk 91: TM 211 753
9.02 ha: Ancient Woodland (Listed on Ancient Woodland Inventory)

A large proportion of this wood is considered to be medieval in origin, enclosed by typical ancient woodland features of ditches and banks. The southern half is mainly hornbeam with some large coppiced stools, along with ash, oak and field maple. Spruce has been planted in the woodland, which has caused a depreciation in the shrub and herb layers by overshading. Dog's mercury dominates the woodland floor but there are some uncommon species such as wood melick, Midland hawthorn and hairy wood rush.

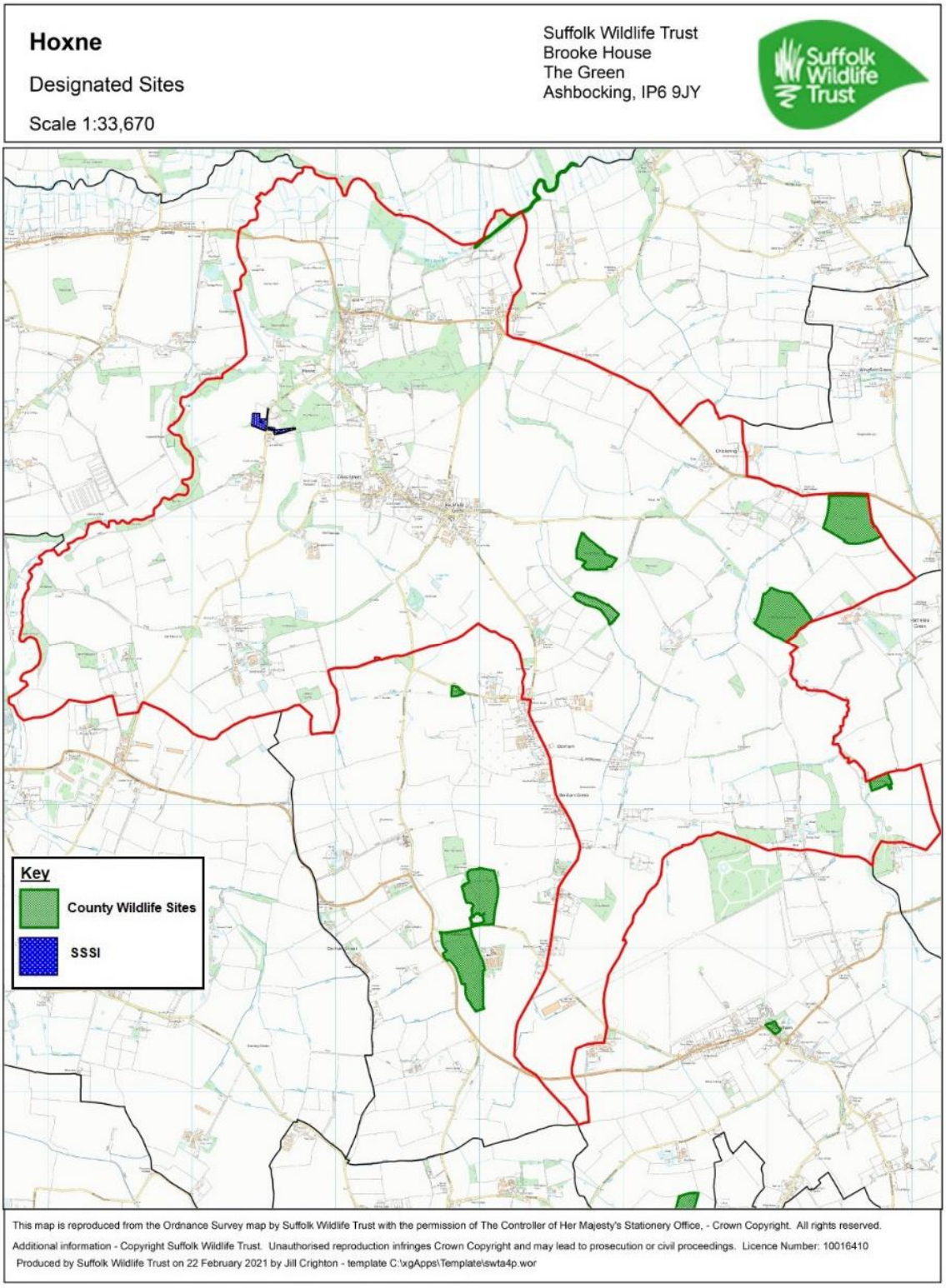

Figure 2: Location of designated sites for biodiversity

Grove Wood – Mid Suffolk 93: TM 218 742

1.14 ha: Ancient woodland (not Listed on Ancient Woodland Inventory)

This woodland represents an important feature in a largely arable landscape. This woodland is also mainly comprised of hornbeam coppice with field maple, ash and oak. There are a number of old hornbeam pollards which testify to its age. Ground flora is largely dog's mercury, bramble and nettle. The woodland is used for pheasant shooting.

River Waveney (Sections) – Mid Suffolk 88: TM 100 795

8.02 Ha: River flora and fauna

One of five sections of the River Waveney selected for its importance for aquatic wildlife, with species-rich marginal flora such as pond sedge, reed, marsh marigold and nodding bur-marigold providing habitat for wildfowl. Within the water course there is arrowhead, yellow water lily and spike water-milfoil. The River Waveney supports a notable population of breeding kingfisher.

The Water Mill at Hoxne on the northern extremity of the Parish, where the River Waveney section of CWS associated with Hoxne begins and extends north-east

5.4 Biodiversity Action Plans and Priority Habitats

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP, 1994) was the UK Government response to the 1992 International Convention on Biological Diversity. The UK BAP listed a range of habitats, plus a number of birds and species from other taxa of conservation interest. National targets and priorities were set in order to address the particular needs of those species. The list was amended in August 2007 to include additional species and habitats to reflect concerns over continuing declines. Much of the work previously carried out under the UK BAP is now focused through from country level down to local level through the creation of local biodiversity strategies. However, the UK BAP lists of priority species and habitats remain important and valuable reference sources.

In addition, Section 40 of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act states that 'Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the

proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. UK Priority habitats and species, listed within Section 41 of the Act, are normally taken as a good benchmark for demonstrating biodiversity duty.

In January 2014, Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership (SBP) - a consortium of over 20 organisations working for wildlife within the county - published revised statutory lists of Priority Habitats and Species occurring in Suffolk, [14] and these have been subsequently updated and amended. In a small number of cases where previously no national BAP existed, certain species are described as Suffolk Character Species to reflect their particular importance within the county.

The following section deals with the Priority Habitats that are present in Hoxne, identified using Defra's 'MAGIC' maps [15] and other sources such as the Suffolk Hedgerow Survey. In most cases the habitat descriptions include Priority Species and other notable species as supporting evidence. For the majority of species, they are only referenced if they were noted during the field survey or are recent records (post 2000) held by Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service.

5.5 Suffolk Priority Habitats in Hoxne

Of the 24 Suffolk Priority habitats, nine are known to be present in Hoxne parish:

- Hedgerows
- Mixed deciduous woodland
- Ponds
- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Wet woodland*
- Lowland Meadows
- Wood Pasture and Parkland
- Traditional Orchards
- Rivers and Streams

*Although there are no areas of wet woodland shown on Defra's MAGIC maps, the Wooded Valley Meadowlands & Fens landscape character type includes this priority habitat, and it was recorded in locations along the River Waveney and Mill Stream.

The Priority Habitats are described in more detail below to highlight the significance of these ecological assets within the parish. The format is in three parts:

1. General descriptions of the habitats as they relate to Suffolk
2. These are followed by descriptions of the Priority habitat as found in Hoxne during the field survey, noting any associated UK and Suffolk Priority species
3. Finally, reference is made from the Suffolk BAPs (or other sources) to those development activities that are most likely to affect the Priority Habitat as it exists in Hoxne.

5.5.1 Hedgerows

5.5.1.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

Hedgerows are boundary lines of trees and/or shrubs, sometimes associated with banks, ditches and grass verges. Those considered ancient or species-rich or both are an important reservoir of biodiversity in the farmed landscape as well as being of cultural, historical and landscape importance. Hedges act as wildlife corridors, linking habitats of high biodiversity value such as

woodland and wetland, thus enabling bats, other small mammals and invertebrates to move around under cover from predators.

Ancient hedgerows, which support a greater diversity of plants and animals than subsequent hedges, may be defined as those that were in existence before the Enclosure Acts, passed roughly between 1750 and 1850.

Species-rich hedgerows contain five or more native woody species on average in a 30 metre length. Those which contain fewer woody species, but a rich basal flora may also be considered as important. The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 define 'important' hedgerows as those with seven woody species, or six woody species in a 30m length, plus other defined features.

Key Priority species in Suffolk which use hedges and associated grassy verges include: brown hare, grey partridge, song thrush, linnet, turtle dove, corn bunting, tree sparrow, bullfinch and various species of bats. Hibernating reptiles and amphibians and invertebrates such as white-letter hairstreak butterfly on elm hedges also all make use of this Priority Habitat.

5.5.1.2 Hedgerow Priority Habitat in Hoxne

The field survey noted the main concentration of hedgerows was associated with the Ancient Valley Claylands landscape. There are fewer hedgerows within Plateau Claylands; likely due to their removal between field boundaries leaving only ditches between fields and giving more of an open 'prairie' feel to the landscape in areas.

During the walkover survey, it was noted that many of the hedgerows associated with field boundaries, and roadsides are maintained by flailing, resulting in dense but relatively low hedgerows. Many of these hedgerows are associated with ditches and banks, indicating their ancient pattern. However, hedgerows associated with private drives and footpaths tend to be unmanaged, much taller and more leggy, with ash and oak standards.

Hedgerows are important for a number of bird Priority Species and the Suffolk Bird Atlas 2007-11 recorded several species typical of this habitat: dunnock, yellowhammer, linnet, bullfinch and also redwing and fieldfare in winter.

Hoxne was one of the many parishes covered by the Suffolk Hedgerow Survey, 1998-2012. The 2012 report on this project [16] shows that, although access was not granted to some landholdings, out of the 172 hedges surveyed for woody species:

12 contained 4 species or fewer
31 contained 5, 6 or 7 species
129 contained 8 species or more

Therefore at least 93% of the sampled hedgerow resource within the parish can be deemed species-rich. It should be noted that the hedgerow resource of the parish in this survey is attributed to the Plateau Claylands and Rolling Valley Farmlands landscape character types, with no reference to any hedgerows within Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fens. Because the latter is a minority landscape feature within the Parish, the decision may have been taken to report under only the dominant landscape character types for the purposes of the hedgerow survey.

It was found that a large majority of the hedgerows within the two above-mentioned landscape character types contained 8 or more species, with Plateau Claylands showing 61.9%, and Rolling Valley Claylands showing 61.1% of the total hedges surveyed.

It must be noted that this summary is based on data collected in the early stages of the Suffolk Hedgerow Survey (2004) and that changes will have occurred since that time, both positive and negative. However, it remains broadly true that the hedgerows in the parish are an important reservoir for wildlife.

Managed hedgerow lining the northern side of Chickering Road

Unmanaged hedgerow with mature oak standards along a track/footpath descending into the Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fens

5.5.1.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect Hedgerow Priority Habitat in Hoxne

- Removal to facilitate development, subsequent fragmentation of the hedgerow network arising from development;
- Under-management and neglect of hedges leads to a reduction of their biodiversity value and structural coherence (and occasionally leads to their complete disappearance);
- Too-frequent flailing can lead to structural incoherence and – if carried out in successive years - loss of hedgerow fruit in autumn, as flowering and fruiting normally takes place on second year growth;
- Mature hedges with a minimum grass strip separating them from arable land may suffer damage to tree and shrub roots through ploughing;
- Fertilizer and other agro-chemical drift may degrade plant and invertebrate populations, especially where a crop extends to the hedge base;
- Losses of veteran trees that may not be replaced by new plantings.

5.5.2 Mixed Deciduous Woodland

5.5.2.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

This Priority habitat includes all broadleaved stands and mixed broadleaved and coniferous stands which have more than 80% of their cover made up of broadleaved species. It also includes patches of scrub of above 0.25 hectares forming a continuous canopy, areas of recently felled woodland and other successional types, along with the other integral features of woodland such as glades and rides.

These woodlands may be ancient (where cover existed before c 1600) or recent (where cover has been created since c 1600). Both these age designations may have semi-natural cover or plantation cover, depending on past management. Management can vary from coppice or coppice with standards to wood-pasture, high forest or minimum intervention. The latter, when found in ancient semi-natural woodland, contains some of the most important wildlife assemblages of any habitat.

5.5.2.2 Mixed Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat in Hoxne

There are several blocks of this habitat throughout the Parish of Hoxne, some of which are described in 5.3.2 (Hoxne Wood, The Slades, Grove Wood and Depperhaugh Wood). Other named woodland blocks include The Plantation, The Willows and Well Plantation around Hoxne village, New Plantation, Oak Plantation, Colcy's Corner and Coney Wood in the south of the Parish and The Grove in the east.

There are linear stretches of Priority habitat woodland along the Dove and Waveney River valleys, Gold Brook and Chickering beck including Big Carr and Little Carr on the River Waveney, as well as a number of small copses associated with farm steadings and manor houses. Defra's MAGIC map highlights between 40 and 50 areas of this habitat of differing sizes and structures throughout the Parish. Several of the woodlands are hornbeam dominated.

Hoxne Wood CWS ditch boundary

Hoxne Wood, showing good structural diversity with open glades and mosaic of understorey

The Slades CWS with even aged structure

Wet ditch surrounding The Slades

5.5.2.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect the Mixed Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat in Hoxne

- Further fragmentation of and within the existing woodland areas;
- Further loss of small copses of woodland within built-up areas;
- Overgrazing and over-browsing by expanding deer populations changes woodland structure through reduced regeneration;
- Lack of canopy management leading to over-shading and decrease in quality of understorey and ground flora;
- Intensification of management between woodland fragments reduces the ecological value; of edge habitats and the connectivity between woodland blocks in the landscape.

5.5.3 Ponds

5.5.3.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

For the purposes of classifying this Priority Habitat, ponds are defined as permanent or seasonal standing water bodies up to 2 hectares in extent which meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Habitats of international importance
- Species of high conservation importance, for example ponds supporting Priority Species
- Ponds of high ecological quality, as determined by standard survey techniques

5.5.3.2 Ponds Priority Habitat in Hoxne

Information provided by Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service and from aerial photographs indicate that there are approximately 201 ponds spread throughout the Parish of Hoxne. This may be an underestimate as this does not include all ponds within individual gardens.

Considering only the land south of the railway line, a density of 12.3 ponds per km^2 shows that Hoxne contains more than the average of 9.6 ponds/km^2 throughout the rest of the Mid Suffolk District, and more than double the entire County average of 5.9 ponds/km^2 [17]. This is likely to be due to the clayey nature of the soil in the East Anglian Plain (central and southern Suffolk), which contains the highest average pond density in the County.

Pond at the south-eastern corner of Hoxne Wood

Pond associated with a field boundary in the north of the Parish

Several of the ponds are associated with the arable field network and are spread evenly throughout the Rolling Valley Claylands and Plateau Claylands. Ponds on the boundaries of woodlands are also common in the parish.

As access was limited it was only possible to visit very few of these ponds during the walkover survey, but reference to Google Earth imaging suggests that the majority still exist. There may also be an additional network of garden ponds, which it was not possible to identify during the field survey.

5.5.3.3 Activities and developments that could affect the Ponds Priority Habitat in Hoxne

Ponds are dynamic systems, being both lost and created over time. However, loss or degradation of ponds - even if they are at low densities within a landscape network - may lead to a reduced diversity of wildlife as ponds become more isolated from one another, compromising species that may rely on a network of ponds for their survival. Examples of how such changes may occur include:

- Complete infilling due to loss of economic value or new development;
- Loss of terrestrial buffer zones in areas of intensive land use;
- Diffuse or point source pollution from nutrients or other chemicals;
- Inadvertent or deliberate introduction of non-native species such as New Zealand pygmyweed (Australian swamp stonecrop), least duckweed or ornamental fish;
- Neglect and/or lack of management resulting in heavy shading and drying out.

It should be noted that some apparently neglected ponds and many ephemeral ponds are of great interest for biodiversity and that a pond survey based on a standard procedure can do much to inform management decisions.

5.5.4 Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh

5.5.4.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

This type of grassland is found on low-lying alluvium along the floodplains of rivers and adjacent to the Suffolk coast. It is characterised by a water table at or above ground level for some part of the year.

Grazing marsh is defined as periodically inundated pasture or meadow, with ditches to maintain the water levels. Almost all areas are grazed and some are cut for hay or silage. Sites may contain seasonal ponds with emergent swamp communities, but not extensive areas of tall fen species like reeds. However, grazing marsh may merge with fen and reed swamp communities. The mosaic of habitats within these sites provides diverse conditions, which support a wide range of plants, invertebrates, birds and animals.

These areas of flat, grazed land can be especially important for breeding, roosting and feeding waders and wildfowl. Ditches are especially rich in plants and invertebrates. Large losses of this habitat have occurred throughout the UK in the last century.

The seasonal inundation of water gives the vegetation a distinct composition, with species such as orange foxtail, creeping bent-grass, southern marsh orchid and lesser spearwort.

Important components of the grazing marsh ecosystem are the ditches that often form the field boundaries. These can support a variety of marginal and aquatic plant species, including water soldier, arrowhead, water-violet and frogbit. These ditches also support a variety of animals including water vole and invertebrates such as the Norfolk hawker dragonfly.

5.5.4.2 Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh in Hoxne

This habitat type is represented by the low-lying grassland within the valley of the River Waveney and parts of the River Dove on the western and northern boundaries of the Parish. The largest area of this habitat within the parish occupies the north-western extremity (north of the B1118 between Hoxne and Oakley), where a large area of grazing marsh is present, bisected by a number of ditches all connecting to the southern bank of the River Waveney.

The River Waveney is prone to seasonal flooding during the winter months, often leaving the grazing areas inundated for several weeks at a time.

Grazing marsh also continues along the Waveney valley adjacent the River Waveney and Mill Stream, within the flat landscape of the Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fens. This habitat supports wildfowl and waders, with evidence of shellfish predation spread across the grazing marsh.

Grazing land north of Mill Stream, still partially flooded from seasonal rainfall

Large area of grazing land north of the B1118

5.5.4.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect Coastal Floodplain and Grazing Marsh Priority Habitat in Hoxne

- Agricultural intensification, including over grazing, 'over-efficient' dredging of dykes, maintenance of low water levels and spray drift from surrounding agricultural land;
- Neglect through decline in levels and extent of traditional grazing, including grazing of marginal vegetation ;
- Impacts of drought and ground water abstraction;
- Ecologically insensitive flood defence.

5.5.5 Wet woodland

5.5.5.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

Wet woodlands occur on land that has waterlogged or seasonally waterlogged soils, where the water table is correspondingly high and drainage poor. They are frequently associated with river valleys, floodplains, flushes and plateau woodlands.

Typical tree species include grey willow, alder and downy birch. The habitat supports a number of important Priority species in Suffolk. These include mammals such as otter and various bat species, birds such as marsh tit and various scarce species of beetles and weevils.

5.5.5.2 Wet woodland in Hoxne

The wet woodland in the parish is associated with the River Waveney riparian corridor, within the Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fens landscape character type. It is largely willow and alder carr, with cricket bat willow plantations punctuating the landscape.

Wet woodland adjacent Mill Stream, which loops to the south of the River Waveney

5.5.5.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect Wet woodland Priority Habitat in Hoxne

- Changes in the flow patterns in the land drainage systems causing changes to woodland hydrology;
- Inappropriate management causing changes in the structure and flora, leading to poor regeneration and changes in the floristic diversity;
- Poor water quality leading to changes in the flora and invertebrate communities;
- Colonisation of the woodland by non-native species, for example Himalayan balsam;
- Direct loss of the habitat through a change to other land uses;
- Climate change may have a significant impact on the hydrology and biology of these woods.

5.5.6 Lowland Meadows

5.5.6.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

Often termed 'old meadows', these grasslands are characterised by a long history of traditional management of haymaking and have not been altered through ploughing or the use of agro-chemicals. This definition is also broad enough to include unimproved pastures where livestock grazing is the main land use.

In addition to species-rich swards of grasses and other flowering plants, unimproved hay meadows and pastures support a wide range other wildlife, including birds, small mammals and invertebrates. 96% of this BAP Habitat has been lost in Suffolk since 1939, with less than 100 hectares still remaining, though churchyard flora and fauna can mirror this habitat to some extent.

5.5.6.2 Lowland meadows in Hoxne

Hoxne Meadow CWS is an example of this habitat, described in Section 5.3.2.

The northern section of Hoxne Meadow CWS, looking in a north-westerly direction

5.5.6.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect Lowland meadows Priority Habitat in Hoxne

- Declining agricultural value of species-rich hay and reduction in the availability of the appropriate type and size of farm machinery for traditional hay making;
- Changes in plant communities through inappropriate grazing/cutting regimes;
- Lack of resources for long-term management of hay meadows;
- Abandonment leading to rank overgrowth and scrub encroachment.

5.5.7 Wood Pasture and Parkland

5.5.7.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

Lowland wood pastures and parkland are the products of historical land management systems and represent a vegetation structure rather than being a particular plant community. Typically, this structure is one of large open-grown or high forest trees (often pollarded) at various densities, in a matrix of grazed grassland, heathland and/or woodland floras. It can include non-native species introduced as part of a designed landscaping scheme.

Historic landscapes can provide a wealth of habitats and niches for wildlife, especially fungi, invertebrates, bats and woodland birds.

5.5.7.2 Wood Pasture and Parkland in Hoxne

There are three areas of Wood Pasture and Parkland Priority Habitat listed on Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory on MAGIC: Area surrounding The Coach House, south of Chickering Hall, Land associated with Oak Lawn House in the south of the parish and the ground of Oakley Park, within Hoxne Village.

Parkland and wood pasture managed as pastures within the grounds of Oak Lawn House

Unmanaged parkland and wood pasture, with rough vegetation associated with The Coach House, Chickering Hall

5.5.7.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect Wood Pasture and Parkland Priority Habitat in Hoxne

- Reduction in structural and age diversity of woody species, including lack of replanting to replace lost mature/veteran trees or damage to young trees by cattle;
- Unsympathetic tree surgery including removal of fallen deadwood or standing deadwood (unless required for safety reasons);
- Cessation of grazing by cattle or sheep leading to changes to grassland habitat.

5.5.8 Traditional Orchards

5.5.8.1 General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

Traditional orchards are structurally and ecologically similar to wood pasture and parkland, with open-grown trees set in herbaceous vegetation. However, they are set apart by a number of factors as follows:

- Species composition - trees grown for fruit or nut production, such as apple, pear, plum, damson, walnut, cherry and cobnut;
- Management – low intensity grafting and pruning with little or no use of chemicals;
- Spacing – denser arrangement with good ground flora structure;
- Scale – small individual habitat patches;
- Dispersion and frequency – wider and greater occurrence in the countryside.

Traditional orchards are hotspots for biodiversity supporting a range of wildlife, particularly when associated with other features such as ponds, hedgerows, scrub, fallen deadwood and streams.

The minimum size of a traditional orchard is defined as five trees with crown edges less than 20m apart.

Traditional orchards are not to be confused with commercial orchards which tend to be much larger in size, have more of a monoculture and are much more intensively managed.

5.5.8.2 Traditional Orchards in Hoxne

There are two traditional orchards listed on Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory on MAGIC, one associated with the gardens of a large house within the hamlet of Heckfield Green and the other at South Green, which was not visited due to lack of access.

Heckfield Green Traditional Orchard within garden

5.5.8.3 Activities and developments most likely to affect Traditional Orchards Priority Habitat in Hoxne

- Inappropriate management;
- Use of pesticides;
- Pressure from land development;
- Neglect;
- Intensification of agriculture.

5.5.9 Rivers and Streams

5.5.9 1. General description of this Priority Habitat in the context of Suffolk

During a 2007 national review of BAP Habitats and species by Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) it was considered appropriate to create a new BAP specifically for rivers. The criteria for a Rivers BAP were published by JNCC in July 2010 and include:

- Headwater reaches;
- Presence of specific vegetation communities;
- Chalk rivers;
- Active shingle rivers;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest designated for riverine features or species;
- Presence of priority BAP (Priority) Species or other indicator species.

Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership is currently in the process of drawing up a rationale, criteria and management prescriptions for rivers in Suffolk identified as Priority Habitat.

5.5.9.2. Rivers and Streams Priority Habitat in Hoxne

The rivers and streams throughout the Parish are an important feature of the landscape. The River Dove runs along the western boundary, meeting the River Waveney in the north, which marks the County boundary between Suffolk and Norfolk. In addition, there are several tributaries including the Gold Brook which flows via Nuttery Vale through Hoxne Village before meeting Chickering beck which in turn flows into the River Dove.

Although the first five criteria above do not apply to the River Dove or Waveney, comparison between the list of Suffolk Priority Species and records for Hoxne held by Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service shows the presence of otter and water vole recorded along the river channels. Various bat species are also recorded in the parish and will most likely feed along the wooded margins of river channels, particularly the species which tend to be associated with river valleys such as Daubenton's bat and soprano pipistrelle. The River Waveney in particular, is renowned for its sections of species-rich flora and fauna, but the other rivers and streams also have suitable characteristics to support these species.

The Mill Stream, mentioned above under section 5.5.4 and 5.5.5, provides water flow via the Water Mill on the banks of the River Waveney. There are also several smaller streams and water courses throughout the parish, several associated with footpaths and bridleways, which offer drainage to the surrounding landscape.

The Gold Brook, at Nuttery Vale

Goldbrook Bridge (capture site of St Edmund)

The River Dove as it passes through Hoxne village

The River Waveney on the right, separating into the Mill Stream on the left before flowing through Hoxne Weir

Chickering beck extending along the eastern boundary of the Parish, this section is associated with Valley Farm

One of the small streams alongside a bridleway in Cross Street

5.5.9.3. Activities and developments that could affect the Rivers and Streams Priority Habitat in Hoxne

Inappropriate management of and adverse events within the river channel would include:

- Extensive dredging or channel re-alignment;
- Passage of major infrastructure schemes without mitigation of effects;
- Extensive removal of bankside trees;
- Severe point source pollution events.

5.6 Suffolk Priority Species in Hoxne

Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service has provided records of species within the Parish. Those that are listed as protected or Priority species are as follows:

Mammals: Bats including soprano pipistrelle, Daubenton's, Natterer's, Leisler's, serotine, Western barbastelle, brown long-eared and several records of unidentified species, including pipistrelles. There are hedgehog records for the more residential areas. Additionally, water vole and otter have been recorded in association with the rivers in the north of the Parish. N.B. Badger is also recorded and whilst is not a Priority species, it is protected under its own specific legislation.

Birds: A large number of Red List and Amber List Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) have been recorded, most of which are also Priority Species. Some will breed in the parish; others arrive as winter visitors or are recorded on passage.

Key species likely to be associated with woodland, hedgerows, scrub and farmland include yellowhammer, linnet, grey partridge, skylark and bullfinch. There are also records of the exceedingly rare turtle dove. The species also associated with settlements include starling, song thrush, house sparrow and dunnock. Spotted flycatcher and lesser redpoll are also recorded.

Various birds are associated with wetland and riverine habitats including herring gull, black-tailed godwit, lapwing, marsh tit, willow tit, reed bunting and cuckoo.

Swift and barn owl are also recorded and are Suffolk Priority Species. Swift is classed as Endangered as a GB breeding bird according to International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) criteria. Barn owl is listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Invertebrates: Moth species recorded include the Lunar yellow underwing, which is a Priority species and a number of moths listed as 'Research-only' including oak hook-tip, sallow, grey dagger, mouse moth, dot moth, rustic, buff ermine, rosy rustic, white ermine, small phoenix, blood-vein, centre-barred sallow, knot grass, brown spot pinion, large nutmeg, dusky thorn, sprawler, latticed heath, small square spot, green brindled crescent, rosy minor, mottled rustic, beaded chestnut, flounced chestnut, large wainscot and shaded broad bar.

Three amphibian and reptile species have been recorded in the parish: Grass snake, common toad and great crested newt, the latter of which has several records in surrounding parishes also.

The European eel has also been recorded in association with the River Waveney.

A number of Suffolk Rare Plant species have been recorded throughout the parish including hoary plantain, wild strawberry, treacle mustard, sulphur clover, spiny restharrow, night-flowering catchfly, round-fruited rush, black poplar, lesser spearwort, heath speedwell, early meadowgrass, crosswort, corn chamomile, sainfoin, Butcher's broom, field scabious, cornflower, galingale, spreading hedge parsley, green-winged and greater butterfly orchids. The latter appears to have declined severely in recent years and has only been recorded at a small number of locations in Suffolk (Sandford, 2010).

There is also a record of yellow archangel, which is listed as invasive on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This record is adjacent to a garden in the centre of the residential area of Hoxne and is likely a garden escape.

5.7 Built Environment and Associated Habitats

5.7.1 General description of this habitat in the context of Suffolk

This habitat refers broadly to the wide range of structures, materials and microhabitats found in the built environment, including (though not exclusively) farm buildings, houses, gardens, allotments and waste land. These built-up areas, gardens and associated spaces can form a significant proportion of the land use within a settlement, but still provide a wide range of habitats with significant biodiversity value. All provide opportunities and in some case refuges for a wide range of species to complete their life cycles.

The conservation importance of the built environment and its associated habitats also lies as much in the opportunities they provide for people to have close contact with wildlife as in the protection of common and scarcer species. Becoming familiar with the wildlife in a garden often stimulates interest in species and habitats within the wider countryside.

5.7.2 Built Environment Habitat in Hoxne

Hoxne is a parish steeped in history with a long history of human settlement. Its most ancient record is the discovery of a 400,000 BC Lower Paleolithic period hand axe, as well as the Hoxne Hoard; the largest hoard of late Roman silver and gold discovered in Britain, and the largest collection of gold and silver coins of the 4th and 5th centuries found anywhere within the Roman Empire, dated after 407 AD [18]. Hoxne manor was mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Book, with a residency of 20 villagers and 51 smallholders, placing in in the largest 20% of settlements recorded in Domesday [19].

Hoxne Village is the largest of the settlements within the Parish. Down Abbey Hill to the south, Cross Street and Heckfield Green run together along one main street (Cross Street) in the centre, with Nuttery Vale extending further south-west towards South Green, the smallest of the settlements. Cross Street has more of an ancient settlement feel, with a number of Listed Buildings, whilst Heckfield Green has more modern houses.

There are a number of green spaces amongst the areas of housing. The historic green at Hoxne is located on Low Street, and there are large mature gardens associated with many of the manor houses and The Swan Pub. There is also a recreation ground at Heckfield Green. As well as these open spaces, the landscape character feature of small woodland copses associates with farm steadings is evident throughout the Parish.

Oakley Park mansion house with parkland landscaping and ancient woodland on the upper fringe of the River Dove valley, the former site of Hoxne Hall

Church of St Peter and St Paul

5.7.3 Activities and developments that could affect this habitat in Hoxne

Rather than note adverse actions, there is a wide range of information and websites generally available on wildlife gardening. Some of the positive actions than individual gardeners can consider include:

- Creating ponds and mini wildflower meadows;
- Putting up swift boxes on buildings;
- Creating hedgehog highways between gardens;
- Composting and creating deadwood areas;
- Harvesting rainwater;
- Avoiding garden chemicals.

5.8 Ecological Networks and Connectivity

5.8.1 The significance of ecological networks and connectivity

Maintaining and improving connectivity between habitats is important in ensuring the longer-term survival of biodiversity in an increasingly fragmented landscape and with a changing climate.

An ecological network is the basic natural infrastructure that enables biodiversity assets (both habitats and species) to become re-established if damaged or in decline and become resilient to the impacts of climate change. Integrated with the natural cycling of water, soil and nutrients, biodiversity provides what are increasingly recognised as vital 'ecosystem services'. These services are not only of intrinsic of social and economic value but will create social and economic problems if they fall too far into deficit.

The major components of an ecological network can be identified as:

- Core Areas: existing areas/features/resources of importance for biodiversity
- Corridors: existing linear features providing structural connectivity between Core Areas and into the wider landscape
- Stepping Stones: existing habitat patches providing functional connectivity between Core Areas and into the wider landscape
- Restoration Areas: areas/features/resources with the potential to become future Core Areas, or to improve connectivity, if they are enhanced or restored
- Buffer zones: can be included around all these elements to lessen the likelihood of direct or indirect impacts upon them

As already noted, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 states that Plans should take a strategic approach to biodiversity. It includes a range of requirements to conserve and enhance the natural environment, among them requiring Local Plans (and by association Neighbourhood Plans) to: '…promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species.' Consequently, it is essential that decision makers have access to high quality ecological advice in order to meet these requirements.

In addition, Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystems services also features a number of Priority Actions, including to 'establish more coherent and resilient ecological networks on land that safeguards ecosystem services for the benefit of wildlife and people'.

5.8.2 Ecological networks in Hoxne

The principal ecological network throughout the parish is associated with the water courses, including the rivers Waveney and Dove and their associated habitats, as well as the Gold Brook and Chickering Beck. Continuous riparian habitat is associated with the river corridors marking the northern and western boundaries of the parish.

Although the majority of the landscape is arable farmland, there is a network of hedgerows and ditches which connect to woodlands and ponds throughout the parish, which also provide local connectivity. The extensive network of footpaths, lined with un-managed hedgerows, mature trees and ditches and a significant number of manor houses associated with extensive gardens also contribute to connectivity, both within the Parish and with the adjacent Parishes.

5.9 The significance of wildlife and ecological assets for the Neighbourhood Plan

Hoxne contains the statutorily designated geological site, Brick Pit SSSI, along with 6 County Wildlife Sites. In addition to the above, eleven Priority habitats have been identified within the parish making it highly diverse ecologically, offering a wide variation of habitats supporting 64 protected/and or Priority species including 2 amphibians, 1 reptile, 21 birds, 11 mammals, 28 invertebrates and 1 fish. 21 Suffolk Rare Plants have also been recorded within the Parish.

Linear features such as the rivers and streams and their associated habitats, along with hedgerows, mature trees and ditch networks provide the basis of an important network across the parish, with the addition of ponds, meadows and woodlands spread across the parish, rather than being concentrated into a particular landscape character type.

Development Management guidance for any new developments within the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan should seek to protect existing ecological assets and restore, enhance and reconnect the ecological network.

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