

DRINKSTONE

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Natural Environment Report and Local Green Space Assessment

NOVEMBER 2019

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1. Introduction

Natural England has produced a series of National Character Area (NCA) profiles covering England and Wales (1). Drinkstone Parish falls within NCA 86 *South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands*. This is described as an ancient landscape of wooded, arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure, set on a gently undulating chalky boulder clay plateau.

There are complex networks of old species rich hedgerows, ancient woods and parklands, meadows with streams and rivers that mostly flow eastwards. The Black Bourn is the exception, flowing north to join the Little Ouse at Euston and then out to the Wash. Traditional irregular field patterns are still discernible over much of the area.

Semi natural habitats of particular importance include sparsely scattered small lowland meadows and ancient woodlands. The mosaic of valley floor habitats such as grazing marsh, fen and wet woodland support European protected species including Great crested newts, Otters, Long-eared and Pipistrelle bats (all are found in Drinkstone).

In December 2018 the Government launched a public consultation on its proposals to mandate that all new development must achieve a biodiversity net gain to be measured against a "DEFRA metric" (BD2020). The Government puts particular emphasis on enhancing ecological connectivity to help species recovery of threatened, isolated wildlife populations and as means of combating the effects of climate change. This was followed up in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Spring Statement on 13th March 2019 when he announced that the forthcoming Environment Bill will make biodiversity net gain mandatory in new property developments in England.

2. Drinkstone Wildlife Habitats and Protected Species

Although Drinkstone Parish does not contain any wildlife sites protected under the European Habitats Directive "Conservation of habitats and species and plants (Various Amendments (England and Wales) Regulations 2018) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest, four County Wildlife Sites have been designated in the Parish. County Wildlife Sites are recognised and protected in District Council Local Plans; they are identified and designated according to nationally agreed criteria by a panel of representatives from Natural England, Suffolk County Council, The Suffolk Wildlife Trust, and Suffolk Biological Information Service.

Bridge Farm Wood - Grid Reference TL961629

Bridge Farm Wood is listed in Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory and is also known as Cindron Hills. It lies to the north-west of Woolpit and is bordered in the north by the A14. The 3.31 ha woodland is situated on a sandy south-facing slope. Its margins are composed mainly of mature ash and oak. In contrast, the remainder of the wood has an open structure and consists of sycamore with some sweet chestnut and field maple coppice scattered throughout. The shrub layer is sparse, and where present is, dominated by elder. Large scale felling of diseased elm took place in the 1980s in the centre of the wood, although some areas of dead elm still remain. A number of mature dying birch are also present and these provide valuable habitat for hole-nesting birds for example, woodpeckers. Extensive replanting has taken place in this area. The ground flora consists of tall rank vegetation characterised by plants associated with disturbed soils for example, ragwort, hemlock and nettle. This wood is protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

Drinkstone Meadow - Grid Reference TL962622

This 2ha meadow is situated to the east of Street Farm, north of the village of Drinkstone and to the west of a large gravel pit. It is enclosed by dense hedges and two ditch lines cross the site. The meadow is composed of a mosaic of plant communities. In the northern section, creeping thistle is the dominant plant; further south the centre of the meadow is occupied by a species-rich plant community. A number of wetland plants, including southern marsh-orchid, ragged-robin, water mint and water forget-me-not are frequent in this area. Furthermore, other parts of the meadow are dominated by hairy willowherb and meadowsweet.

Pumping Station Meadow - Grid Reference TL963607

This small meadow of under 1ha is situated to the north of Drinkstone Green and is bordered by public Footpath Drinkstone 6 along the northern boundary. It is enclosed by mature dense hedges which support a range of woody species: hawthorn, blackthorn and field maple, amongst others. A large proportion of the meadow is dominated by meadowsweet but amongst the tall vegetation can be found many wetland plants although only in small quantities, for example ragged-robin, hairy sedge and watercress. Numerous other attractive wild flowers for example meadow vetchling, agrimony and self heal, can be found in the drier parts of the meadow. Of particular botanical value in the eastern end of the meadow is a thriving population of Betony; a one time a common plant in Suffolk it is now scarce or extinct in most of its former habitats.

Buck's Wood - Grid Reference TL952593

This small wood of 3.41ha to the north of Gedding Hall is listed in the Suffolk Ancient Woodland Inventory (Natural England). Public footpath Drinkstone 4 runs along the western margin of the wood. The entire wood was clear felled over 25 years ago. Subsequently it was replanted with a mixture of conifers and hardwoods which are now approximately 10-15m high.



County Wildlife Sites in Drinkstone

Drinkstone has a diverse population of birds of prey species; Tawny, Little and Barn owls all regularly breed in the Parish along with kestrels, sparrowhawks and buzzards. This can partly be attributed to the network of paddocks, meadows, hedgerows and mature trees that surround the two main settlement areas; these provide good hunting habitat and nesting opportunities for raptors.

Scarce and Protected Species Records (Source: Suffolk Biological Information Service)²

The following protected and scarce species have been recorded in Drinkstone since the year 2000.

Common Name	Taxon Name
Smooth Newt	Lissotriton vulgaris
Great Crested Newt	Triturus cristatus
Common Toad	Bufo bufo
Common Frog	Rana temporaria
Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis
Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus
Buzzard	Buteo buteo
Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus
Hobby	Falco subbuteo
Raven	Corvus corax
Water Rail	Rallus aquaticus
Golden Plover	Pluvialis apricaria
Woodcock	Scolopax rusticola
Turtle Dove	Streptopelia turtur
Barn Owl	Tyto alba
Little Owl	Athene noctua
Tawny Owl	Strix aluco
Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis
Green Woodpecker	Picus viridis
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos major
Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea
Dunnock	Prunella modularis
Mistle Thrush	Turdus viscivorus
Goldcrest	Regulus regulus
Marsh Tit	Poecile palustris
Treecreeper	Certhia familiaris
Starling	Sturnus vulgaris
House Sparrow	Passer domesticus
Bullfinch	Pyrrhula pyrrhula
Corn Bunting	Emberiza calandra
Greater Butterfly-orchid	Platanthera chlorantha
Bee Orchid	Ophrys apifera
Common Spotted-orchid	Dactylorhiza fuchsii

Southern Marsh-orchidDactylorhiza praetermissaLesser SpearwortRanunculus flammulaTormentilPotentilla erectaHoary MulleinVerbascum pulverulentumRagged-RobinSilene flos-cuculiBlack PoplarPopulus nigra subsp. betulifoliaTreacle-mustardErysimum cheiranthoidesCrosswortCruciata laevipesSanicleSanicula europaeaKentish SnailMonacha (Monacha) cantianaSwan MusselAnodonta (Anodonta) cygneaPipistrelle Bat speciesPipistrellusPiporene Bat speciesPlecotus auritusEuropean OtterLutra lutraPolecatMustela putorius	Heath Spotted-Orchid	Dactylorhiza maculata subsp. ericetorum
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European Otter Lutra lutra Polecat Mustela putorius	Long-eared Bat species	Plecotus
Polecat Mustela putorius	Brown Long-eared Bat	Plecotus auritus
	European Otter	Lutra lutra
	Polecat	Mustela putorius
Arvicola amphibius	European Water Vole	Arvicola amphibius
Brown Hare Lepus europaeus	Brown Hare	Lepus europaeus
Badger Meles meles	Badger	Meles meles

3. Hedgerows, veteran and significant trees

A hedgerow survey of the parish was carried out by local volunteers as part of the wider Suffolk Hedgerow Survey between 2010-11. This recorded 46km of hedgerow at a density of 5.07 kms per square km, which puts Drinkstone in the top quartile for the County of Suffolk. 77.6% of these hedgerows are species rich (8 or more species) compared to the County average of 51.7%. (3)



Drinkstone Hedges mapped from the 1999 aerial photos. Total length is 46km.Parish area 8.94 km². Hedge density 5.14km/km², considerably higher than the county average 3.7km/km² (Source: Suffolk Biological Information Service)



Veteran (V), Pollard (P), and Other Significant Trees (S)



Rattlesden Road Allotments Veteran Oak

0



"Nelson's Oak"



Oak Pollard beside Footpath 16





Tree symbol is purely indicative and does not denote the extent or number of trees covered by a particular TPO

4. Local Green Space Appraisal

The Natural Environment White Paper (The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature 2011) highlighted "the importance of green spaces to the health and happiness of local communities".

Green spaces, particularly natural green spaces, located close to local people provide a range of social, environmental and economic benefits, including –

- improved mental and physical health
- increased social activity
- increased physical activity
- reduced crime
- improvements to childrens' learning
- increased voluntary action
- improved community cohesion and sense of belonging
- potential for local food growing
- more attractive places to live, work, play, visit and invest
- enhanced opportunities for wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors
- climate change adaptation, for example by flood alleviation

The White Paper recommended that a new Green Areas designation be introduced that would give local people an opportunity to protect green spaces that have significant importance to their local communities.

Drinkstone has several green spaces situated either within or on the outskirts of the two built settlement areas. In the 1998 Mid Suffolk Local Plan some of these were designated as Visually Important Open Space (VIOS), to protect them from being developed. In the new Local Plan it seems likely that this designation will not survive; it is being replaced by a Local Green Space (LGS) designation, which is defined in paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states:

" 77. The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:

- where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land."

This section provides an assessment of the green spaces in Drinkstone against paragraph 77 of the NPPF, in order to support the designation of Local Green Space in Drinkstone Neighbourhood Plan.

Existing VIOS

All Saints' Churchyard The grounds of the Old Rectory

Potential LGS

All Saints' Churchyard Albert Horrex memorial oak and green Gedding Road allotments Cherry Tree Rise Green Close Pond and surrounding area at Green Farm The Cricket

The Cricket Park Road verges Gedding Road Verges Ratllesden Road Allotments Black Bourn verges

The assessment of each site can be found in the following pages. Policy DRN8 lists the sites found to meet the criteria, and to be designated as Local Green Space.





Site Details	
Description and Purpose	All Saints' Churchyard
Checklist	
Statutory designations	Grade II Listed Building
Site allocations	Visually Important Open Space (1998 Mid Suffolk Local Plan)
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning consent
Area	0.47 hectares
Ownership	Diocese of St Edmundsbury
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to community it serves	Lies in the centre of Drinkstone settlement
Public Access	Yes
Ecologically significant	Bats likely to be present. Two ancient yew trees plus a number of other significant trees.
Historically significant	Grade II* listed church within the green space. Churchyard contains graves dating back to 18th century.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular significance	The church with its churchyard forms a focal point in Drinkstone It has undoubted historical significance and being within its own enclosure provides a level of tranquillity.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Together with the Albert Horrex memorial oak and green it forms a green heart in Drinkstone. It is not an extensive tract of land.
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space designation.





Site Details	
Description and Purpose	Albert Horrex memorial oak and green
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	None
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning permissions
Area	0.01 ha
Ownership	Unknown, none claimed.
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to community it serves	Lies at the centre of Drinkstone settlement boundary
Public Access	Yes
Ecologically significant	No
Historically significant	Yes. Possibly a remnant of a medieval green.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular significance	Yes, contains memorial oak planted in memory of local resident and war veteran Albert Horrex 1909-1996. Adds to the setting to All Saints' Church and Churchyard
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Family local connection. Small plot of land
Conclusion	Qualifies for designation as Local Green Space





Site Details	
Description and Purpose	Gedding Road Allotments
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	None
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning permissions
Area	0.2 Ha
Ownership	Drinkstone Parish Council
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to community it serves	Site lies within Drinkstone Green Settlement Area close to the Village Hall
Public Access	Yes
Ecologically significant	No
Historically significant	Yes, appears on 1940 aerial photographs. Part of former Drinkstone Green
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular significance	Provides locally grown food. Tending allotments promotes health and mental well being benefits.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Contributes to green character of Drinkstone Green. Not an extensive tract of land
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space Designation





Site Details	
Description and Purpose	Green Close Verges
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	None
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning permissions
Area	0.15 Ha
Ownership	Mid Suffolk District Council. Adjoining property owners pay for site maintenance
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to community it serves	Site lies within the centre of Drinkstone Green
Public Access	Yes
Ecologically significant	No
Historically significant	Formerly formed part of Drinkstone Green
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular significance	Provides historical link with medieval green
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Greens were and still are a characteristic feature of this part of Suffolk. (See Landscape Appraisal)
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space Designation





Site Details	
Description and Purpose	Cherry Tree Rise Verges
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	None
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning permissions
Area	0.1 Ha
Ownership	Local residents
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to community it serves	Site lies within the centre of Drinkstone Green
Public Access	Yes
Ecologically significant	No
Historically significant	Formerly part of Drinkstone Green and the approach to The Cherry Tree Public House
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular significance	Provides a historical link to the old Cherry Tree Public House site. Provides connectivity and access to The Cricket recreation ground.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Respects the former site boundaries prior to housing development on The Cherry Tree site. Not an extensive tract of land.
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space Designation





Site Details	
Description and Purpose	The Cricket
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	Visually Important Open Space (1998 Mid Suffolk Local Plan)
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning permissions
Area	0.77 Ha
Ownership	Drinkstone Parish Council
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to community it serves	Site lies within the centre of Drinkstone Green
Public Access	Yes
Ecologically significant	No
Historically significant	Forms part of a former medieval green
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular significance	Well-used recreational area. Childrens' play equipment and football goal mouths.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space Designation





Site Details	
Description and Purpose	Rattlesden Road allotments and adjoining meadow
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	None
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning permissions
Area	0.2 Ha and 0.38 ha respectively
Ownership	Drinkstone Parish Council
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to community it serves	Yes, lies at southern edge of Drinkstone Green Settlement Boundary
Public Access	Yes to the allotments. Meadow leased to local parishioner.
Ecologically significant	Yes. Part of the network of meadows and tall hedges that provide hunting habitat for barn owls, tawny owls and little owls. Seasonally dry pond on eastern boundary beside the large oak. Bats likely to be present.
Historically significant	Yes part of former medieval green
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular significance	Provides locally grown food. Tending allotments promotes health and mental well-being benefits.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Possibly the largest oak tree in Drinkstone is growing on the eastern boundary of the allotments.
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space Designation





Site Details	
Description and Purpose	Park Road Verges
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	None
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning permissions
Area	0.17 На
Ownership	Suffolk County Council and adjoining landowner Mr Thurlow
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to community it serves	No
Public Access	Yes
Ecologically significant	Yes, species rich hedgerow and grass verges provide ecological connectivity.
Historically significant	Probably not
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular significance	Wide verge and adjoining species rich hedgerow provide an attractive approach to the village
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space Designation





Site Details	
Description and Purpose	Gedding Road Verges
Checklist	
Statutory designations	None
Site allocations	None
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning permissions
Area	0.13 Ha
Ownership	Suffolk County Council and adjoining landowner Tostock Farms
NPPF Criteria Assessment	
Close to community it serves	Very close to the cluster of dwellings at Hall Farm
Public Access	Yes
Ecologically significant	No
Historically significant	Probably not
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular significance	Part of former Drinkstone Green (see map below)
Local in character and is not	Attractive wide verge.
an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space Designation





Site Details		
Description and Purpose	Black Bourn Verges	
Checklist		
Statutory designations	None	
Site allocations	None	
Planning permissions	No outstanding planning permissions	
Area	0.2 Ha	
Ownership	Suffolk County Council and the adjoining owners of Home Farm and The Old Rectory	
NPPF Criteria Assessment		
Close to community it serves	Yes, lies within Drinkstone Settlement Boundary	
Public Access	Yes	
Ecologically significant	Yes. Part of the riparian habitats and ecological corridor of the River Black Bourn	
Historically significant	Yes, provides the setting for adjacent listed buildings	
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular significance	Yes	
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Yes	
Conclusion	Qualifies for Local Green Space Designation	

5. Drinkstone Greens



From Andrew Macnair's digital redrawing of Joseph Hodskinson's 1783 Map of Suffolk. <u>www.hodskinsonsmapofsuffolk.co.uk</u>

6. Public Footpaths



Drinkstone parish has approximately 11 miles of footpaths. Most paths are bounded on at least one side by mature hedgerows or trees. There are a few exceptions where paths cross open arable land or pastures. The trees and hedgerows are generally quite well maintained, as are most of the footpaths. The footpaths are short, usually less than 1 mile long, but are quite well interconnected and many

progress into neighbouring parishes. Where necessary small metal or wooden bridges and stiles have been erected and these are also well maintained. National Cycle Route 51 follows the Woolpit to Beyton Road (C432 & C439) through the Parish.

DRINKSTONE FOOTPATH NETWORK			
	(Distances are approximate)		
Footpath Number	Distance in Kilometres	Distance in Miles	
1	0.31	0.19	
2	1.08	0.67	
3	0.47	0.29	
4	3.27	2.03	
5	1.19	0.74	
6	0.51	0.32	
7	0.56	0.35	
8	1.44	0.90	
9	0.85	0.53	
10	0.39	0.24	
11	0.58	0.36	
12	0.20	0.13	
13	0.12	0.07	
14	0.51	0.32	
15	0.34	0.21	
16	0.59	0.37	
17	0.76	0.47	
18	0.46	0.28	
19	0.30	0.18	
20	0.44	0.27	
21	2.46	1.53	
22	0.08	0.05	
23	0.46	0.28	
Total	17.37	10.91	

7. Areas Subject to flooding

The plan below shows areas designated by The Environment Agency as falling within Flood Zones 2 & 3, as well as areas subject to surface water flooding. Park Road floods frequently after heavy rain and becomes impassable to vehicles, sometimes for many days.



Environment Agency Flood Zones 2 & 3. Roads subject to regular surface water flooding

References

1. National Character Area Profiles:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles

2. Protected and Scarce Species:

In Great Britain, a variety of status categorisation schemes exist, for sites, species and habitats. These include, for species and habitats, <u>Red Data Book</u> threat categories, national rarity and scarcity assessments and Biodiversity Action Plan statuses, and for sites, statutory statuses such as the <u>SSSI</u> concept, and non-statutory statuses such as county wildlife sites. The most widely established assessment system for rarity and scarcity is based around presence of species in the 10km squares of the <u>Ordnance Survey National Grid</u>. It is used in general parlance for species that are uncommon, but not rare. This can be defined more precisely for plants, 'Nationally Scarce' refers to species found in 15-100 10km squares in GB, for insects found in 15-100 squares the term used is 'Nationally Notable'. For mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds the terms "Scarce" is also used for species that have suffered a significant decline in their populations over the past 25 years. Source: Suffolk Biological Information Service. www.suffolkbis.co.uk

3. Suffolk Hedgerow Survey

Source: letter from Guy Ackers to Lyn Hannant, 21st June 2011 held by Suffolk Biological Information Service **www.suffolkbis.co.uk**



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