

# AONB IMPACT ASSESSMENT

## MUNDESLEY HOLIDAY VILLAGE

CEASE THE USE OF THE AREA FOR SITE MAINTENANCE AND STORAGE AND STATION 6 HOLIDAY LODGES WITH DECKING AND ASSOCIATED WORKS.



Landmark Associates  
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# **AONB IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**MUNDESLEY HOLIDAY VILLAGE**

**PASTON ROAD,**

**MUNDESLEY,**

**NORFOLK,**

**NR11 8BT**

**FOR**

**MR T. HAY**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 A planning application, submitted, to North Norfolk District Council seeks approval to

*“Cease the use of the area for site maintenance and storage and station 6-holiday lodges with decking and associated works.”*

The site is located between the village of Mundesley and the Bacton Gas terminal within the Norfolk Coast AONB. An assessment of the impacts of the development on the special qualities of the AONB including the cumulative impacts of recent developments has been undertaken to accompany the application.



1.2 The Norfolk Coast AONB was officially signed and sealed on 28 November 1967, and was confirmed, without modification, by the Minister of Housing and Local Government on 8 April 1968.

1.3 The final area confirmed, (174 square miles, but re-measured in the 1990's as 451 square kilometres) included the greater part of the remaining unspoiled coastal areas between the Wash and Great Yarmouth. The western outlier, coming within two miles of King's Lynn, took in part of Sandringham Estate including Sandringham House, and also about six miles of the south-eastern corner of the Wash. The holiday resort of Hunstanton, and the coast immediately to the south of it, was not included, but from nearby Holme-next the-Sea a continuous coastal strip, varying in depth between three to five miles, extended eastwards to a point near Bacton, excluding the built-up areas of the resorts of Sheringham, Cromer and Mundesley. The eastern outlier stretched from Sea Palling to Winterton, Sea

Palling to Winterton, including the magnificent dune system of Winterton Dunes. (Extract from Norfolk Coast Partnership).

1.4 The statutory purpose of designating an area of land as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.

*“This comprises the area's distinctive landscape character, biodiversity and geodiversity, historic and cultural environment.*

*Two secondary non-statutory purposes of AONB's are also recognised:*

*To take account of the needs of agriculture, forestry, fishing and other local rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities, paying particular regard to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty; and*

*To seek to meet the demand for recreation so far as this is consistent with the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the area's natural beauty - and which preferably supports this purpose by increasing understanding, valuation and care for the area - and is also consistent with the needs of rural industries.” (Extract from Norfolk Coast Partnership).*

## **Guidelines to Conserve and Enhance the AONB**

1.5 The Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Five-Year Strategy (2019-24) is a working document that sets out the Norfolk Coast Partnership approach to the management of the Area.

*“The Strategy aims to:*

*Explain the duties of the Norfolk Coast Partnership and how it operates*

*Identify the distinctive landscape character of the area and its special qualities*

*Identify the key external factors that drive change in the Area*

*Present a vision for the future of the Area*

*Set out agreed objectives which will help secure that vision*

*Outline how progress will be monitored and reviewed”*

## **Landscape Character Baseline**

### **‘Countryside Character Initiative’ – Natural England**

1.6 Natural England has published a study on its website entitled ‘Countryside Character Initiative’. This initiative is concerned with the management of England's countryside through an understanding of its character. It aims to guide policy developments, national decision making, and give a context to local planning, action and development. This initiative is based on ‘The Character of England: landscape, wildlife and natural features’

map, first published in 1997, which divides England into National Character Areas (NCA's). These character areas were updated and republished in April 2014.

1.7 The NCA of relevance to the study area, the site and its vicinity is located within NCA 79. North East Norfolk and Flegg.

1.8 The key characteristics of 79: North East Norfolk and Flegg area are:

- *“A generally flat, low-lying landscape, compared to adjacent areas, which has limited topographic variation and slopes gently from west to east, becoming flatter as it merges with the Broads.*
- *Soils that are deep, loamy and free draining. They are very fertile and support productive arable farming. Horticultural crops are grown on the lighter soils towards the coast.*
- *Naturally active coastline of geological and geomorphological importance, providing the main source of sediment to the south of the NCA, within the sediment sub-cell. Internationally important Pleistocene sediment and fossil deposits are exposed in eroding coastal cliffs.*
- *Distinctive coastal sand dune system and deposits of marine shingle, with sections of sandy cliffs and long, wide, sandy beaches.*
- *Copses and large woodland blocks around Blofield Heath, East Rushdon and North Walsham, such as Bacton Woods, are important features of inland areas. They lend an intricate, enclosed character to the mix of pastures and arable land on the Broads margin, contrasting with the scarcity of woodland elsewhere. High hedgerows with prominent hedgerow oaks are notable features.*
- *The River Yare, which provides a distinctive riverine landscape and flows out through the tidal lake of Breydon Water to the North Sea.*
- *Strong vernacular style of domestic and agricultural buildings, reinforced by use of flint and red brick. Roofs are commonly pan tile. Norfolk Churches are very prominent in the open landscape with blocks of woodland and copses seen along the Broads margin. Reed thatch or pantiles. Isolated flint churches – either round-towered Saxon-Norman churches or medieval wool churches – are prominent in the open landscape.*
- *Nucleated villages and hamlets, linked by a dense network of small lanes. Chalet parks and large caravan sites dominate the settlement structure along parts of the coast.”*

### **Sub-Regional Character - Assessment of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

1.9 The Assessment of Landscapes within North Norfolk was commissioned by North Norfolk District Council and published in June 2009 as supplementary planning guidance. The purpose of the report was to assess the baseline study of the landscape character, at a sub-regional level that gives a further understanding of the landscape resource.

1.10 The key characteristics of the relevant sub-regional character area relevant to the study area are reproduced below:

*"10.1 Bacton to Sea Palling (CP1)*

*Key characteristics of this character area, which make it distinctive within its type*

- Generally, level or very gently rolling landscape which is relatively low compared with neighbouring coastal areas to the North. The landform gradually declines from Cromer to Sea Palling and then becomes sea level fen around Horsey.*
- Settlement pattern is linear along the coast with large areas of ad hoc development straggling along roadways between settlements. The pattern is distorted and disturbed but an underlying nucleated 'older' (pre late C19th) settlement pattern is still discernible in the older properties, road network and location of churches.*
- Away from the coast and mirroring the underlying pattern along the coastal part, the settlement structure is semi-nucleated with small villages (with a dispersed settlement pattern around a road network indicating small farmsteads and cottages with larger than average gardens) – an open, less controlled or estate type landscape based on individual small landholdings (other areas within the eastern part of the District demonstrate similar patterns).*
- No major roads. The coast road and main, unusually straight B1159 are the only major roads servicing this Area. Road disturbance tends to be less than average.*
- Bacton Gas Terminal dominates the landscape. Both in terms of daytime and night-time impact.*

*It can be seen from miles away (communication towers and lights). It has a strong influence over the perception of the landscape for a wide area around Bacton but not so much from the northern (Paston) side from which it is partly hidden by rising ground.*

- Large caravan and chalet parks. Most are sited along the coastal fringe and dominate the settlement structure – emphasising and encouraging (by additional development) the straggling structure. One centrally placed chalet park in Bacton is comprised of wooden huts of some antiquity; similarly the Ostend Crescent in Walcott; which gives a very definite historical 'pre-War' feel to this area. Others such as the Coastline flats and bungalows (Walcott) simply suburbanise, starkly rising out of the landscape.*
- Similarly remnant older bungalows of a wood and asbestos nature put up between the Wars or post 1945 give a definite character to parts of the coastal area.*
- The surprisingly large Bush Estate at Eccles is the epitome of ad hoc 'plotlands' holiday development being quite isolated down unadopted rough tracks.*
- Older settlements such as Happisburgh, Lessingham and Ingham Corner have an almost*

*'Broads' feel in terms of vernacular architecture with thatched roofs, coursed high quality flint work and small cottages with large gardens.*

□ *Field pattern is pre-Enclosure (mainly). But many field boundaries have been lost. Others are not hedged but banked only (and may always have been so). The presence of hedgerow trees is higher than the norm for the Type, but low compared to neighbouring Types (due to non-replacement of old trees – it appears that the landscape has become significantly less 'treed' during the past 50 years).*

□ *Views of the Happisburgh Lighthouse, Water tower and Churches (especially Walcott, Happisburgh (and Ruston), Lessingham) are very visually dominant in this open landscape."*

#### 1.11 The evaluation states:

##### *Evaluation*

*10.1.1 The condition of the landscape character varies from Poor to Moderate. Areas close to the coast (Bacton Walcott) show the most degraded and eroded character due to recent overlying developments. Areas away from the coast yet not overly degraded by field boundary removals show Moderate character.*

*10.1.2 The strength of character is Moderate – even the degraded or eroded parts demonstrate a highly distinctive if often unlovely, character which is often full of interest if somewhat generic nationally."*

## **Norfolk Coast Partnership**

1.12 The Norfolk Coast Partnership (NCP) was set up in December 1991 and brings together the many stakeholders who have a role in managing the area. Its objective is to

*"To bring about the sustainable management of the AONB in such a way that meets its specific environmental, social and economic needs whilst conserving and enhancing its natural beauty."*

## **Scope and Purpose**

The primary objectives of this document are fourfold:

1. To understand the key qualities of this area of AONB, as set out within the AONB Management Plan 2013-2018, the AONB Landscape Character Assessment as given above;
2. To assess to what extent the site contributes to the special character of the AONB in its current state.
3. To assess to what extent the site currently contributes to the future Vision for the AONB as set out in the AONB Management Plan.
4. To determine to what extent the development contributes to achieving the Vision for the AONB.

1.13 This report, which should be read in conjunction with the Planning, Design and Access Statement, the plans and the Landscape Impact report.

1.5 Following an assessment of the current and previous applications on the site, it is submitted that the previous and proposed development will not have a material adverse impact on the AONB and would not be contrary to the policies of the local plan, which seeks to protect the qualities of the AONB.



## 2 BACKGROUND

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### **Mundesley Holiday Village.**

2.1 Mundesley Holiday Village is located to the southeast of the coastal village of Mundesley and the east of the Paston Road. It has an isolated clifftop location. The site was formerly a traditional family-run holiday camp offering holiday accommodation, all meals in a restaurant, a laundry together with recreational and entertainment facilities including a swimming pool.

2.2 The application site is part of the Mundesley Holiday Village, which lies to the southeast of the coastal village of Mundesley. The site has been established for more than 50 years and has a long planning history. There are a significant number of buildings associated with the operation as a former holiday 'camp'. Some buildings have been demolished while others have been retained and converted into holiday accommodation in line with the new business model of a self-catering holiday village. Previous planning applications have resulted in the demolition of some buildings and the introduction of holiday lodges (caravans).

2.3 The proposals for 6 lodges logically follow from the demolition of the cafeteria, kitchens entertainment area and administrative offices and the stationing of 18-holiday lodges and associated works on the site. The application site lies within the overall context of the Mundesley Holiday Village (see plans accompanying the application).

### **Legislation and Policy Context - Landscape Planning Policies**

2.4 Guidelines, legislation and planning policy documents provide the framework for the protection and conservation of landscape within the study area, the most relevant of which are outlined below.

2.5 Of these, statutory regulations exist to ensure both direct and indirect protection of our most valued and important landscapes, their intrinsic visual qualities and the individual elements and components that constitute their appeal.

2.6 The most relevant local planning policy is set out below:

*“Policy EN 1 Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and The Broads*

*The impact of individual proposals, and their cumulative effect, on the Norfolk Coast AONB, The Broads and their settings, will be carefully assessed. Development will be permitted where it;*

- is appropriate to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area or is desirable for the understanding and enjoyment of the area;*
- does not detract from the special qualities of the Norfolk Coast AONB or The Broads; and*

- seeks to facilitate delivery of the Norfolk Coast AONB management plan objectives.

*Opportunities for remediation and improvement of damaged landscapes will be taken as they arise.*

*Proposals that have an adverse effect will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that they cannot be located on alternative sites that would cause less harm and the benefits of the development clearly outweigh any adverse impacts.*

*Development proposals that would be significantly detrimental to the special qualities*

## **National Planning Policy Framework**

2.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has at its core a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.

### **3 CURRENT AND POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE SITE TO THE AONB**

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3.1 The application site has the character of an enclosed space surrounded by rising land and hedges. These hedges show the impact of growth in a clifftop location. The present activities and the overall state of the site do not make a positive contribution to the AONB.

3.2 This holiday facility is an existing use within the landscape and AONB and has to be recognised as an activity that will continue on the site. As a result, the application should be seen in the context of the former holiday camp, which had a range of very ugly nondescript buildings, which have been demolished and replaced. Decorative cladding in pastel seaside colours has enhanced those buildings, which have been retained. The effect has been to improve significantly the visual appearance of the site in relation to the AONB.

3.3 The current condition of the landscape character has been assessed as being poor to moderate. The strength of the character is moderate.

3.4 The proposals for the application site will remove the current activities, which detract from the AONB and have the potential to enhance the site by the introduction of holiday lodges.

3.5 Despite the clifftop location, the shelter created by the change in levels offers the potential for this area to enhance the landscape character of the AONB by the introduction of appropriate plants, which can cope with a coastal location.

## **4 SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS**

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4.1 The proposals for the site have aimed to be in line with 'The Vision' for the AONB as set out in the Norfolk Coast Partnership 2019-2024 Management Plan and encapsulate the elements identified in the landscape character.

4.2 The site does not have an important historic value in that it has been used as a storage area associated with the original Holiday Camp and the Mundesley Holiday Village. The activities did not make a positive contribution to the site or the wider landscape given the vantage points where it is visible from. The buildings associated with the original holiday camp operation from the site had no heritage value and have been demolished. This with renovation works to the retained structures has made a significant improvement to the appearance of the area and reduced the impact of the site on the AONB.

4.3 The proposals for the stationing of 6 additional holiday lodges have taken precedent from the surrounding Holiday Lodges and buildings, which have been approved by the Council. The design and layout of the lodges have been designed to work in harmony with the remainder of the site.

4.4 Wider effects on the AONB of the changes to the overall site have been to bring about a series of improvements to the appearance and impact of the site and in doing so a reduction of the impact on the AONB. The new Holiday Village has reduced the volume of people on the site as the quantity of accommodation has been reduced. In addition, the visitors to the site spread over the year instead of high concentrations during the holiday period.

4.5 In terms of the effects of the site on the AONB it is submitted that there will be significant visual improvements over the present use and minimal impact due to the enclosed nature of the site due to the higher surrounding landforms and the hedges. It is argued that the distinctive character of the AONB landscape type will be enhanced. Long-range views from the wider landscape will not be significantly affected as do not exist as has demonstrated by the visual impact assessment and within the site and the private road used by the public the views of the site will be enhanced by the proposals to integrate the development within the landscape.