

Buffer zones around SSSIs and habitats we regard as of importance to the local area

## **Evidence and explanation for Policies CLU1 and ALU1 – Environmental Impact**

***Why do the Neighbourhood Plans add to the existing guidance on SSSIs and IRZs (Site of Special Scientific Interest & Impact Risk Zones) and NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) defining “buffer zones”?***

1. This is a Neighbourhood Plan – it expresses what we treasure and want to see protected and enhanced in our locality. The Plans reference areas where planning policy needs the nuance of local distinctiveness. The SSSI is based on national significance and our NP reflects what we think is important. Given the extent to which modern agriculture has affected East Anglia/East Midlands, remnants of mixed semi-natural habitat are much rarer here than in other parts of the country. Our NP recognises this local significance alongside the national importance.
2. The protection for Castor Hanglands SSSI is based on a designation of 30 years ago (see attached designation 1986). This designation has not been updated but the status of species and habitats has changed during this time. We are collecting more recent data (CPERC) and gathering our own data. We will develop a programme of surveying under the guidance of the specialist organisations (Froglife, Fresh Water Habitats Trust, The WildlifeTrust and The Langdyke Countryside Trust).
3. The designations do not include some species which are now very important. For example Nightingales are present in the Hanglands – and the population is known to be one of the best nationally – but they do not appear in the designation.
4. The use of an impact zone around SSSI for planning is guidance only and the legislation requires impact to be assessed in each individual case. Planning policy is shifting towards creating the opportunity for developers to mitigate loss in one area by enhancing the biodiversity of other areas. The area we are aiming to protect is too large and rich for this to be a viable alternative.
5. Natural England and The Wildlife Trust commended and enhanced the wording of our policy (and yet both are familiar with the provisions of the legislation).

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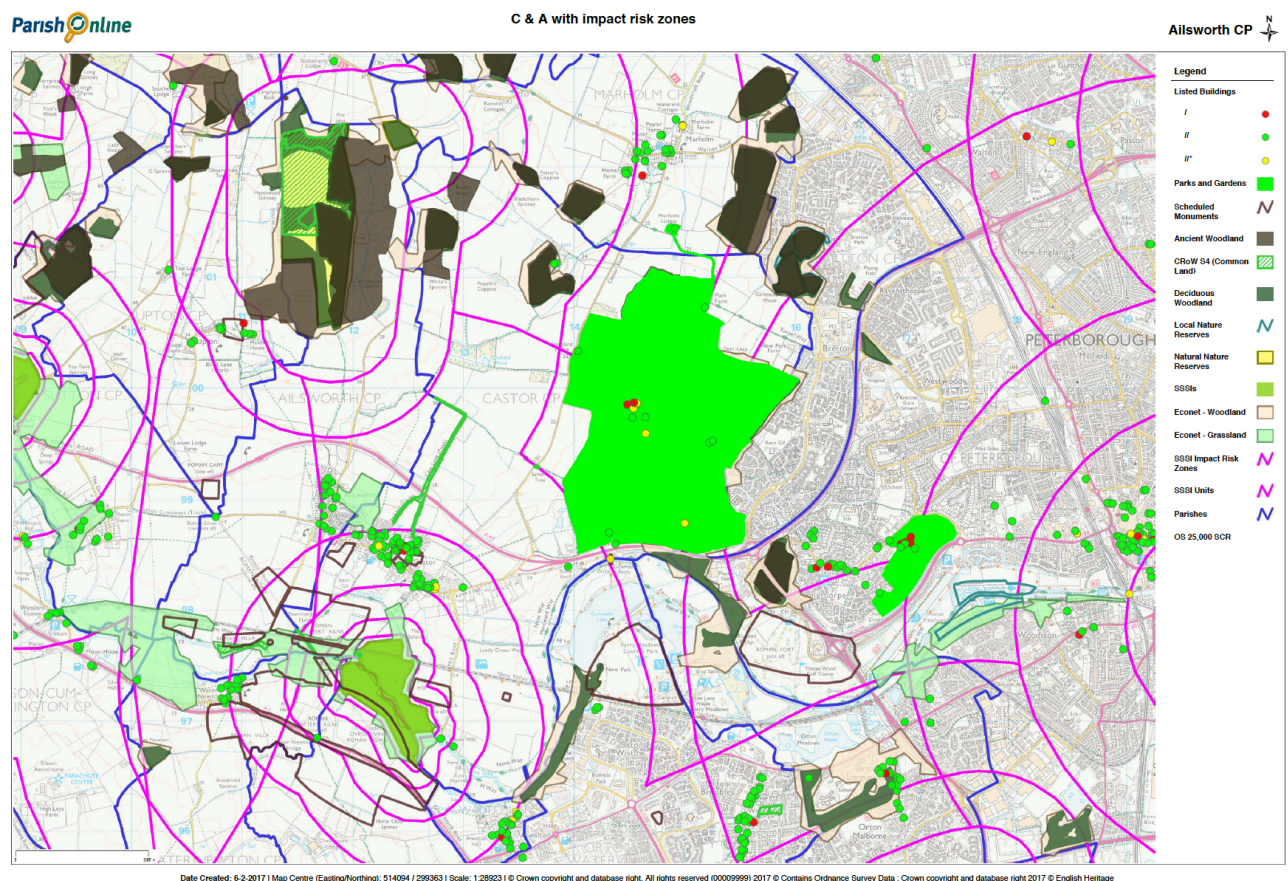
### Excerpt from the *SSSI Impact Risk Zones User Guidance – MAGIC*

The Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are a GIS tool developed by Natural England to make rapid initial assessment of the potential risks to SSSIs posed by development proposals. They define zones around each SSSI which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicates the type of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts.

[ ...]

Local planning authorities (LPAs) have a duty to consult Natural England before granting planning permission on any development that is in or likely to affect a SSSI. ....The IRZs do not alter or remove the requirements to consult Natural England on other natural environment impacts or other types of development proposal under the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (as amended) and other statutory requirements.

The SSSI IRZs can be used by developers, consultants and members of the public, who are preparing to submit a planning application. They will help them to consider whether a proposed development is likely to affect a SSSI and choose whether to seek pre-application advice from Natural England.



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### **Example designation for Castor Hanglands**

**COUNTY:** CAMBRIDGESHIRE **SITE NAME:** CASTOR HANGLANDS

**Status:** Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

**Local Planning Authorities:** Peterborough City Council

**National Grid Reference:** TF 116015, TF 123022

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 142 **1:10,000:** TF 10 SW

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):**

**Date of Last Revision:**

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1986

**Date of Last Revision:**

**Area:** 90.4 ha 223.4 ac

**Other information:** Castor Hanglands is a National Nature Reserve declared under Section 19 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

### **Description and Reasons for Notification**

This area possesses a range of habitat types from ancient broadleaved woodland to unimproved grassland and scrub. Some of these habitats are scarce in Britain. All are scarce in the East Midlands.

The woodlands of Castor Hanglands are primarily of an ash-maple type over soils of limestone, clay, cornbrash and sands. A large number of tree and scrub species are present. The ground flora holds many plants indicative of an ancient woodland, including wood melick *Melica uniflora*, yellow archangel *Lamium galeobdolon* and ramsons *Allium ursinum*.

Pockets of limestone grassland hold species-rich turf where plants such as purple milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus* and pyramidal orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis* grow. Additional grassy areas are neutral to acid in character and support a different flora. The drier areas contain herbs such as tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and crosswort *Galium cruciata* whilst wetter marshy areas contain marsh marigold *Caltha palustris*, marsh valerian *Valeriana dioica* and marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza incarnata*.

Other habitats on the site include ponds and ditches. These provide additional habitat diversity and hold a good aquatic fauna including a population of warty newt *Triturus cristatus*.

The whole area is of high value for invertebrates and some nationally uncommon species are present.

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**Excerpt from *Natural England's response to our Regulation 14 consultation*(February 2017):**

"The Plan fully recognises the ecological value of the surrounding area including Castor Hanglands Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserve and Castor Flood Meadows SSSI. Natural England welcomes acknowledgement within the Plan of the need to protect and enhance the important, scarce and often sensitive habitats and species that these sites and the surrounding countryside support.

We note that the Plan seeks to promote only very small scale development and includes policies to protect and enhance the natural environment. We particularly support Policy CLU1 Environmental impact which seeks to ensure that development will protect and enhance the ecological network. We welcome that developments that incorporate measures to sustain wildlife will be encouraged. In particular, we welcome that Castor Hanglands SSSI, and related nationally and regionally important wildlife sites, will be protected. Development proposals that will have an adverse effect on these sites will not be permitted."

**Excerpt from *The Wildlife Trust's response to Regulation 14 consultation***

Recommended revised wording which has been accepted:

Any proposals for an increase in dwellings within 500 metres around either Castor Hanglands or Oldfield Pond will not be permitted. Any proposals for an increase of dwellings between 500 metres and 1 Km of Castor Hanglands and within 500 metres of Oldfield Pond must include a strong and robust justification with proportionate evidence demonstrating how any impacts will be managed or mitigated to make the development acceptable.