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10th August 2011

Dear Sarah

Appropriate Assessment update – Ipswich Core Strategy

Thank you for asking for advice on the implications of the Deben Estuary Visitor Survey made available by No Adastral New Town, in July 2011.

The report gives details of a visitor survey carried out in April and May 2011 to provide detailed local information on recreational activities in the Waldringfield area (including Martlesham church car park and Hemley). The visitor survey methodology used a similar but reduced methodology to the South Sandlings Visitor Survey which is discussed in the Appropriate Assessment. Although the methodology and report have some fundamental problems (for example it is unclear if all survey points were surveyed simultaneously, people at Waldringfield may have been double-counted at the car park and beach, and some data looks anomalous), the results have some consistency with the South Sandlings Visitor survey and so are helpful.

The average size of groups of people was similar, and the proportion of people walking with or without dogs is similar between the Deben Estuary and South Sandlings surveys. The proportion of dog walkers compared to walkers without dogs was however much less in the Deben Estuary survey. The overall proportion of people who travelled by car was very similar in both surveys, although people tended to stay longer on the Deben Estuary perhaps because of the pub at Waldringfield.

The proportion of visitors who visit all year round was also significantly lower in the Deben Estuary visitor survey compared to the South Sandlings. This is a key point because wintering birds are vulnerable to disturbance in the estuary, yet visitor numbers are lowest in winter according to the Deben Estuary survey.

The distances people travelled to reach the survey points on the Deben Estuary survey are very different to the distances people travelled to the South Sandlings. For example, the arithmetic mean of the distance travelled on foot to the Deben Estuary survey points was 3.8km, with a number of people recorded as walking to the survey area from Ipswich, Woodbridge and from even further away such as Trimley St Mary near Felixstowe. The South Sandlings in comparison used medians to work out where most people came from, with a median distance of 400m travelled on foot to an access point to the South Sandlings.

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The Deben Estuary survey did not question people about their walks, for example where they went or how far they went. Data on estuary-side walks is absent; whether people simply walked a short distance along the beach at Waldringfield, walked a circular route along the estuary returning inland, or other route, is not known. The number of people walking away from the busy beach area at Waldringfield is not known. Fifteen groups of people out of 510 groups were interviewed across the 16 days of interviews at Manor Farm, away from car parks and a point on one circular walk from Waldringfield car park, suggesting that few people walk that particular circular route.

The Deben Estuary visitor survey is helpful in pointing out the activities which visitors carry out, (primarily walking, sailing, outing with family, pub, dog walking) and giving a general picture of the survey area, but does not have the data or analysis to predict changes in visitor numbers. Generally the report is targeted towards the implications of increased visitors from strategic allocations within Suffolk Coastal District, particularly from the strategic allocation east of Ipswich at Martlesham.

The impact on European sites of strategic allocations within Ipswich Borough is not changed from that described in the Appropriate Assessment following consideration of the Deben Estuary Visitor Survey.

Natural England has published the results of a 2010 / 2011 national visitor survey¹ which gives a national picture of visitor use of the countryside, urban greenspaces and the sea coast. The report shows reasonable consistency with the local surveys; most people travelled by foot to their greenspace, and most journeys were under a mile (1.6km). This is considered likely to reflect the routine use of convenient local greenspace by most people most of the time, with occasional visits at greater distance. Most people travelled less than 8km to a greenspace, consistent with the findings of the Dorset study and South Sandlings visitor survey already considered in the Appropriate Assessment.

The conclusions of the Ipswich Borough Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment are unaffected, in that the mitigation proposed in the Appropriate Assessment remains as described, and the overall conclusion of no adverse effect upon the integrity of European sites remains unchanged. For clarity, the Appropriate Assessment for the Core Strategy and Policies comprises three documents; the September 2009 Appropriate Assessment, the November 2010 updated Appropriate Assessment, and a May 2011 Addendum, with a further letter of advice from The Landscape Partnership to Ipswich Borough Council also forming part of the LDF document library.

Yours sincerely



Nick Sibbett
Senior Ecologist

¹ Natural England (2011) Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment: The national survey on people and the natural environment Annual Report from the 2010-11 survey NECR083