

Easton Design Guide

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Quality information

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1. Introduction

This report presents a summary of the character of the Easton Neighbourhood Plan Area and a set of design guidelines. It has been prepared by consultants at AECOM on behalf of Locality, working closely with the Easton Neighbourhood Group and is based on a detailed appraisal of the area carried out through a desk study and fieldwork.

The document uses landscape character assessment techniques to inform the creation of specific Design Guides for the Easton Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Design Guide seeks to inform development proposals, address existing townscape issues and enhance the character of Easton. This approach is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which states that neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies based on an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics (MHCLG, 2018). In doing so, policies can ensure that development responds to local character and history, and reflects the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

1.1 Aims of the Design Guide

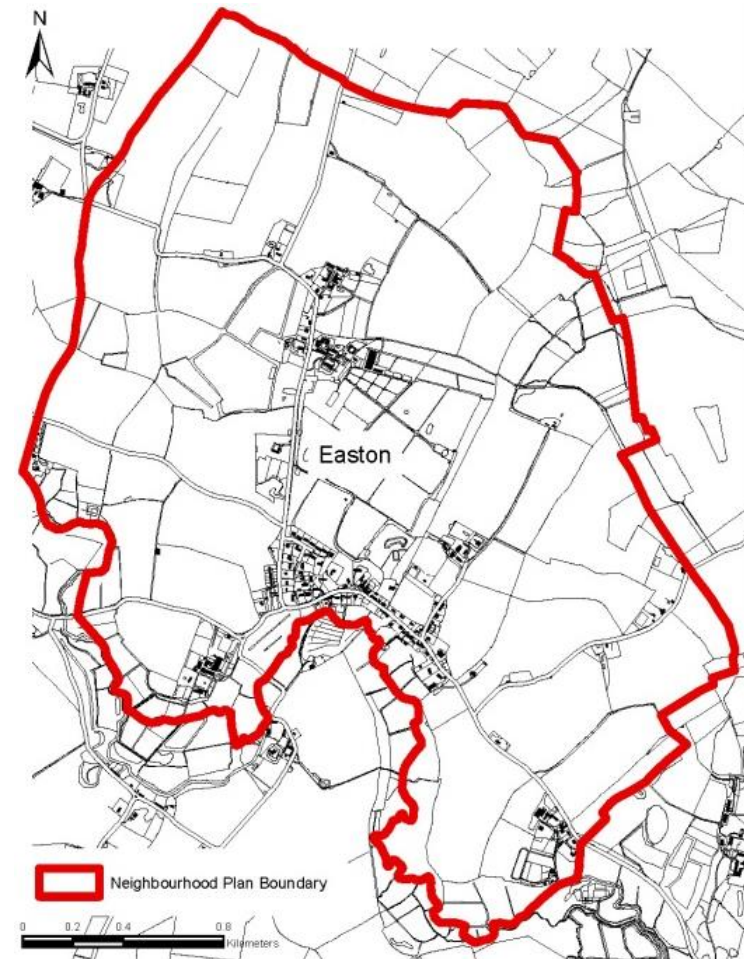
This guidance has been prepared to set out clear design principles to guide future development within the area and to encourage a design-led approach to development. This Design Guide aims to provide general guidance on the form that new development should take.

1.2 How to use the Design Guide

This Design Guide is intended to be a design manual and a working tool. It is intended for frequent reference and will be essential for all those involved with preparing or assessing the quality of planning applications. It is designed to be read by councils, applicants and householders. Compliance with the design guide will help speed up the planning process by reducing the chance of objections due to poor design.

It is expected that future development proposals will show evidence in their design of having visited the site and conducted effective site analysis. This requires a site

visit to survey the opportunities and constraints offered by the site. This process will identify any potential hazards as well as any opportunities to incorporate design features into the proposals that will complement the local character and contribute to the local distinctiveness of Easton.



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Figure 1 Easton Neighbourhood Plan Area



2. Context

This section of the report describes the location and context of the Easton Neighbourhood Plan area and summarises current planning policies which are relevant to the study.

2.1 Location

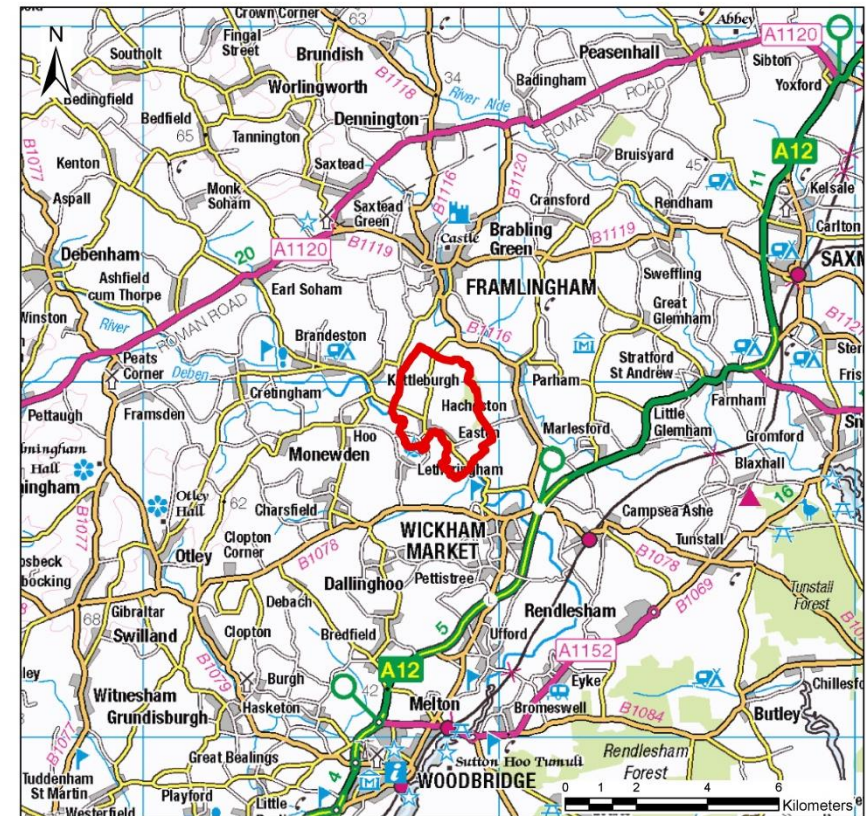
Easton is a small village situated in the valley of the River Deben in Suffolk, within the Suffolk Coastal Local Plan Area of East Suffolk. The village is located 8 km south of Framlingham and 4 km north from Wickham Market, as shown in Figure 2. The total area of the Easton Neighbourhood Plan Area is approximately 600 ha and according to the most recent census the population was 331 in 2011.

The geographical location of Easton along the Deben valley and historic parkland of former Easton Park to the north, creates a unique setting for the area. Groups of large mature trees such as Cedar, Pine, Beech and Oak emphasize the historic character of the place. Most of the village is set on the gentle hills rising to the north which enables long and short distance interconnecting views. The River Deben creates a natural southern boundary to the Neighbourhood Area.

Country roads connect Easton with the local road network located outside the neighbourhood area. The B1078 to the south of Easton provides access across south west Suffolk and links to the A12. The B1116 leads north to Framlingham and also links with the A12 to the south. The A12 is a strategic road which provides connections between London and Great Yarmouth. The A12 also links with the A14 which is an important national transport route connecting Felixstowe Port and Catthorpe. The nearest railway station is in Wickham Market providing services to Lowestoft and Ipswich.

The key gateway is located at the south west entrance to the village which is emphasized by a welcome sign. The view from this gateway towards the rooftops of the historic buildings in the centre of Easton strengthens the sense of arrival.

The parish contains a network of public rights of way connecting the village with the countryside to the north and west. National Cycle Route (NCR) 1 follows along Framlingham Road and connects Easton with cycle routes to Dover and the Shetland Islands.



 Neighbourhood Plan Boundary

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Figure 2 Location and Context

2.2 Planning Policy Context

2.2.1 National planning policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2023

The NPPF sets out that a key objective of the planning system is “to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”, which will be achieved through three overarching objectives including “an environmental objective - to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment...” (Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities, 2023).

Part 12, Achieving well-designed places, states that “Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics. Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development”. Part 12 goes on to state: “policy and decisions should ensure that developments... are visually attractive... (and) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)”. An understanding of history and heritage is therefore important in developing neighbourhood plans to explain how this should inform future development.

Part 16, Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, states that “Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment... (taking) into account: ...the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of place.”

National Design Guide

The National Design Guide (DLUHC, 2019) illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring, and successful can be achieved in practice. The guidance within this document broadly sets out ten key characteristics of a well-designed place which “work together to create physical character.”

These characteristics refer to a place’s:

- context
- identity
- built form
- movement
- nature
- public spaces
- uses
- homes and buildings
- resources
- and lifespan.

Due consideration to each of these characteristics are critical to ensure that development helps “nurture and sustain a sense of community... and work positively to address environmental issues.”

2.2.2 Local planning policy and guidance

East Suffolk Council, Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, 2020

The Local Plan will guide development across the district until 2036. It establishes the overarching vision of the district, which is to “maintain the distinctive character and role of settlements, while conserving and enhancing the built, historic and natural environments”. It replaces Development Management and Core Strategy policies (2013), the Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies DPD (2017), and the remaining ‘saved’ policies in the 2001 Local Plan. The document includes strategic policies related to housing, economic development, and the environment. Many of these policies are relevant to the design guides of Easton and are found in:

- Policy SCLP5.2: Housing Development in Small Villages
- Policy SCLP5.3: Housing Development in the Countryside
- Policy SCLP5.4: Housing in Clusters in the Countryside
- Policy SCLP5.8: Housing Mix.
- Policy SCLP5.10: Affordable Housing on Residential Developments
- Policy SCLP7.2: Parking Proposals and Standards
- Policy SCLP8.1: Community Facilities and Assets
- Policy SCLP8.2: Open Space
- Policy SCLP11.1: Design Quality
- Policy SCLP11.2: Residential Amenity

- Policy SCLP11.3: Historic Environment
- Policy SCLP11.4: Listed Buildings
- Policy SCLP11.5: Conservation Areas

Suffolk Design: Streets Guide, 2022

The Streets Guide is a guidance document designed to assist the delivery of well-designed streets. It sets new approaches to designing how sites for development should be accessed by focusing on the routes people need to travel by foot, wheel, or cycle instead of vehicular accesses being starting points for the design process.

Easton Village Character Assessment, 2021

The Easton Village Character Assessment provides a helpful overview of Easton's built qualities (2021). By considering topography, land use, layouts, routes, morphology, landmarks, natural features, streetscape and views, the Assessment provides eight distinct character areas, each with their own unique features. Guidance within this document should be considered alongside the Easton Village Character Assessment to gain a full understanding of the village's local vernacular to ensure that development proposals respect and enhance these features.

2.2.3 Topography and hydrology

Easton lies in the valley of the River Deben, which defines the southern boundary of the neighbourhood plan area. The River Deben flows from Debenham and enters the North Sea at Felixstowe creating an extensive tidal estuary. The River Deben is a narrow watercourse which strongly meanders through the local landscape including water meadows which flood periodically. The river is a defining feature of the landscape and forms an important setting to the village.

Easton's topography strongly informs the character of the linear village, following the shape of the valley. The landform rises in the north with the highest point near Glebe Wood at approximately 45 m AOD and with the lowest point at the riverbed, in the south, at approximately 17 m AOD. The considerable variation in elevation creates a prominent backdrop to the village which is essential to its character.

2.2.4 Cultural associations

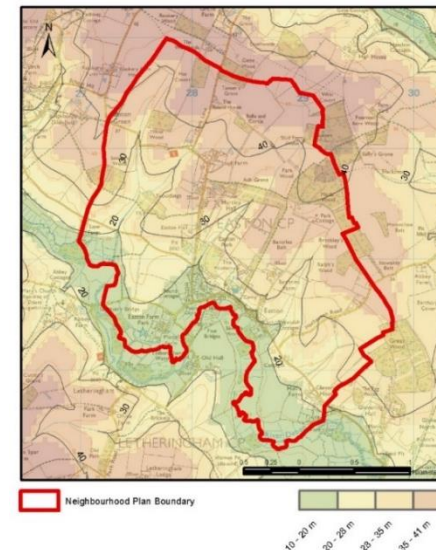
Easton is a former estate village going back to the Easton Mansion where Sir Arthur Wingfield made his home in 1627. In 1688 the Earl of Rochford purchased

the Mansion. The 5th Earl of Rochford made improvements to the estate including the construction of the serpentine wall surrounding his 150 acre estate. After the 5th Earl died, the estate went to the Duke of Hamilton. The Duchess Susan Hamilton, wife of the 10th Duke of Hamilton, made several improvements on the Estate by rebuilding a number of cottages and building the first village school.

2.2.5 Landscape designations

Statutory and non-statutory landscape designations have been reviewed to determine the levels of protection currently given to the landscape within the area:

- Easton Park is designated as a Historic Park and Garden to protect the important historic features. The parkland's elements of local and regional importance also enhance the character and appearance of the village; and
- Deben Valley is designated as a Special Landscape Area in the East Suffolk Local Plan, to protect the valuable grazing meadows with their hedgerows, including the associated dykes, flora and fauna.



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Figure 3 Topography and Hydrology

2.2.6 Existing Landscape Character Assessment

Existing character assessments have been reviewed to provide some context to this more detailed assessment. The study area falls within National Character Area (NCA) 83: South Norfolk and High Suffolk Claylands, as defined by Natural England (Natural England, 2014). This NCA is broad but provides some context to the character of the study area. The key characteristics of this area which are of particular relevance to this assessment are:

- *Scattered areas of ancient woodland, game copses, shelterbelts, valley floor plantation and carr woodland as well as hedgerow trees provide a treed landscape character, despite much boundary loss.*
- *Remnant parkland, ancient woodlands, commons and greens with a diverse grassland flora. River valleys support areas of ecologically rich unenclosed 'semi-wild' fenland and remnant dry heaths dominated by poor dry grassland.*
- *Small slow-flowing rivers and streams.*
- *Extensive areas of arable land dominated by cereals with break cropping of sugar beet and oilseed rape, and some pastures along valley floors.*
- *Large number of isolated moated timber-framed farmhouses and farm buildings with steeply pitched clay-tiled or long-straw thatched roofs. Little flint, some brick (especially in towns).*
- *A dispersed settlement pattern of small nucleated market towns with architectural variety and colour, loosely clustered villages and scattered hamlets. Settlement is often focused around large medieval greens. Many of the market towns have modern extensions.*
- *Sinuous field boundaries are formed by deep ditches, some with hedgerows and hedgerow trees.*

At a local level, the study area falls mostly within the L3 Easton and Glevering Estate Claylands landscape character area (LCA) with part of the study area falling within B7 Deben Valley LCA, as defined within Suffolk Coastal Landscape Character Assessment, AFA, 2018.

L3 Easton and Glevering Estate Claylands

- *It is a quiet and tranquil area, sufficiently removed from busy main roads and settlement to feel somewhat remote;*
- *Strongly wooded character is robust and this characteristic provides some capacity for development or land uses to be absorbed within it. However, the character of the area is very consistent so anything that departs from the settlement pattern or architectural forms would be noticeable;*
- *Easton Park and Glevering Park are scheduled by Suffolk Coastal District Council as being Heritage assets under policy 'SSP37: Historic Parks and Gardens'. Glevering Hall is a Grade II* listed building, in a parkland originally designed by Humphry Repton;*
- *There are Medieval moats [which are] Scheduled Monument[s];*
- *Within the blocks of woodland that are dispersed along the centre of the plateau, are four Ancient woodlands – Catts Wood in Glevering North Park, Great Wood, Briockley's Wood and Maids Wood;*
- *Many of the cottages and farmsteads scattered across the countryside are listed.*

B7 Deben Valley LCA

- *The scenic, meandering course of the River Deben provides the focus all the way down the valley with its networks or tree edged pastures and scenic gently rolling landform providing strong traditional rural character. There are minimal detracting modern features, except for the interruption by major transport corridors which pass through the valley at Wickham Market;*
- *The unity and quality of the historic, linear villages, with a wealth of listed buildings, strung along the valley contributes positively to its character, as do the ancient farmsteads encountered in the countryside.*



3. Design Guide

The following section is divided into two parts.

The first is a set of key elements to consider when assessing any design proposal. These are presented as general questions the neighbourhood group are seeking clarification on from applicants and their design teams.

The second is a set of outline design guidelines illustrating the aspirations of the neighbourhood group identifying built form characteristics that are considered to be locally important.

3.1 Key elements to consider when assessing applications

This section states a general design principle followed by a number of questions against which the design proposal should be judged. The aim is to assess all proposals by objectively answering the questions below. Not all the questions will apply to every development. The relevant ones, however, should provide an assessment overview as to whether the design proposal has taken into account the context and provided an adequate design solution. The following issues need to be considered when assessing the suitability of applications. Do the proposals:

3.1.1 Harmonise and enhance existing settlement in terms of physical form, pattern or movement and land use.

- What are the particular characteristics of this area which have been taken into account in the design?
- Is the proposal within a conservation area?
- Does the proposal affect or change the setting of a listed building or listed landscape?

3.1.2 Relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long distance views.

- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing gaps between villages?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the identified views?
- Does the proposal harmonise with the adjacent properties? This means that it follows the height, massing and general proportions of adjacent buildings and how it takes cues from materials and other physical characteristics.
- Has careful attention been paid to height, form, massing and scale?
- If a proposal is an extension, is it subsidiary to the existing property so as not to compromise its character?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing landscape features?
- How does the proposal affect the trees on or adjacent to the site?
- How does the proposal effect the character of a rural location?

- How are long distance views incorporated in the design?

3.1.3 Reinforce or enhance the established village character of streets, squares and other spaces.

- Does the proposal maintain the character of dwelling clusters stemming from the main road?
- What is the character of the adjacent streets and does this have implications for the new proposals?
- Does the new proposal respect or enhance the existing area or adversely change its character?
- Does the proposal positively contribute to the quality of the public realm/streetscape and existing pedestrian access?
- How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area?
- Can any new views be created?
- Does the proposal meet requirements to minimise light pollution and protect dark skies as is detailed in the Easton Neighbourhood Plan (Policy ETN3)?

3.1.4 Reflect, respect and reinforce local architecture and historic distinctiveness.

- Has the local architectural character and precedent been demonstrated in the proposals?
- If the proposal is a contemporary design, are the details and materials of a sufficiently high enough quality and does it relate specifically to the architectural characteristics and scale of the site?

3.1.5 Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development.

- What are the important features surrounding the site?
- What effect would the proposal have on the streetscape?
- How can the important existing features including trees be incorporated into the site?

- How does the development relate to any important links both physical and visual that currently exist on the site?

3.1.6 Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing.

- Is the scale and height of the proposal appropriate to the area?
- Should the adjacent scale be reflected?
- If a higher than average building(s) is proposed, what would be the reason for making the development higher?
- Would a higher development improve the scale of the overall area?
- If the proposal is an extension, is it subsidiary to the existing house?
- Does the proposed development compromise the amenity of adjoining properties?
- Does the proposal overlook any adjacent properties or gardens?

3.1.7 Adopt appropriate materials and details.

- What is the distinctive material in the area, if any?
- Does the proposed material harmonise with the local material?
- Does the proposal use high quality materials?
- Have the details of the windows, doors, eaves and roof details been addressed in the context of the overall design?

3.1.8 Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity.

- What are the essential characteristics of the existing street pattern?
- How will the new design or extension integrate with the existing arrangement?
- Are the new points of access appropriate in terms of patterns of movement?
- Do the points of access conform to the statutory technical requirements?

- Do the new points of access have regard for all users of the development (including those with disabilities)?

3.1.9 Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality.

- Is there adequate amenity space for the development?
- Does the new development respect and enhance existing amenity space?
- Have opportunities for enhancing existing amenity spaces been explored?
- Are there existing trees to consider?
- Will any communal amenity space be created? If so, how will this be used by the new owners and how will it be managed?

3.1.10 Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features.

- What effect will services have on the proposals as a whole?
- Can the effect of services be integrated at the planning design stage, or mitigated if harmful?
- Has any lighting been designed to avoid light pollution?

3.1.11 Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other, to provide a safe and attractive environment.

- Has the proposal been considered in its widest context?
- Is the landscaping to be hard or soft?
- What are the landscape qualities of the area?
- Have all aspects of security been fully considered and integrated into the design of the building and open spaces?
- Has the impact on the landscape quality of the area been taken into account?
- Has the appropriateness of the boundary treatments been considered in the context of the site?

- In rural locations has the impact of the development on the tranquillity of the area been fully considered?

3.1.12 Make sufficient provision for sustainable waste management (including facilities for kerbside collection, waste separation and minimisation where appropriate) without adverse impact on the street scene, the local landscape or the amenities of neighbours.

- Has adequate provision been made for bin storage?
- Has adequate provision been made for waste separation and relevant recycling facilities?
- Has the location of the bin storage facilities been considered relative to the travel distance from the collection vehicle?
- Has the impact of the design and location of the bin storage facilities been considered in the context of the whole proposals?
- Could additional measures, such as landscaping be used to help integrate the bin storage facilities into the development?
- Has any provision been made for the need to enlarge the bin storage in the future without adversely affecting the development in other ways?

3.1.13 Efficient use of resources

- Use of energy saving/efficient technologies should be encouraged
- If such technologies are used (e.g. solar, panels, green roofs, water harvesting, waste collection, etc.), these should be integrally designed to complement the building and not as bolt-ons after construction.
- For standalone elements (e.g. external bin areas, cycle storage, etc.) materials and treatment should be of equal quality, durability and appearance as for the main building.

3.2 Design Guidelines

This section identified the design elements which need to be considered when reviewing proposals. The local pattern of streets and spaces, building styles, materials and ecology should all help to determine the character and identity of a development. Design should not stifle innovation and should recognise that new building technologies are capable of delivering acceptable built forms and may sometimes be more efficient. It is important with any proposals that full account is taken of the local context and that the new design embodies the “sense of place” and also meets the aspirations of people already living in that area. The aim of this section is to produce design guidelines that help to assess the design quality and appropriateness of the proposed development.

When assessing each element of the design the assessor should consider how the proposals respond to the existing landscape character identified in section 3.

3.3 Opportunities for positive change

The combination of the Easton Village Character Assessment and the Design Guides offer the best method for achieving appropriate future development in Easton. This provides a baseline against which change can be monitored and managed.

Additionally, the evolution of the landscape will continue and therefore the management of change is essential to ensure that sustainable social, environmental and economic outcomes are achieved. This section therefore considers various factors which may influence change and inform the policies set out in the Easton Neighbourhood Plan.

3.3.1 Positive aspects of character

There are a number of positive aspects of character which should be sustained, reinforced or enhanced. These relate to the small scale historic character of Easton.

- Traditional linear settlement pattern with development concentrated along The Street with less development on the smaller side roads;
- Prominent trees of Easton Park create the distinctive backdrop in views and strongly contribute to the estate character of the place;

- Large front gardens and grass verges contribute to the open character of the village;
- Boundary treatments usually of similar height give a structure and contain the streetscape;
- Distinctive gateway emphasises the sense of arrival to the village;
- High quality materials and elaborate architectural detailing contributes to the historic character of Easton;
- Various roof structures and materials create diverse roof lines in short and long distance views.

3.3.2 Issues to be addressed

The following issues have been identified which could be addressed through new development or active management. These are principally related to the new housing developments in the village and increasing development pressure.

- New development located south east of Easton Primary School does not correspond with the context of small scale village settled in the valley of the River Deben. The development restricts views towards the village from the Hacheston Road;
- Increasing housing requirement to allocate sites for 10 dwellings up to 2036 poses a risk of changes to the small scale character of the village;
- Restricted access to Easton Park prevents public enjoyment and appreciation of the Historic Park and Gardens;
- The lack of designated open green space is an acute, ongoing issue within Easton which leaves residents of the village lacking adequate spaces for rest, interaction and play. Provision of such spaces is considered to be an important issue for residents and, where possible, proposals should take considerable measures to address the lack of open green space within the village.
- There are only a small number of public rights of way leading to the countryside;
- The flood zone is extensive, reaching into the conservation area;

- Replacement of historic and traditional features such as timber windows and doors with uPVC and other modern non-traditional building materials has taken place and should be avoided in future.

3.3.3 Opportunity areas

There are some areas within Easton which could benefit greatly from development in line with these Design Guides. These relate to the sustainability and provision of local amenities:

- New development should provide a mix of residential, commercial and recreational land uses;
- The importance of trees in both public and private spaces needs to be understood, as they are significant contributors to the character of Easton. New development should not normally result in the loss of existing trees and tree groups. Proposed trees should be incorporated into new development especially where trees have been lost or removed;
- Improvements in public transport through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and/or Section 106 (S106) contributions;
- Designating new Public Rights of Way increasing access to the countryside would be of a great benefit to Easton and increase the connectivity with the wider landscape. This could be achieved through a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and/or Section 106 (S106) contributions;
- Use of sustainable urban drainage systems to decrease the flooding zone should be included where appropriate;
- Use of sustainable energy sources such as solar panels should be included where appropriate.

3.3.4 Street pattern and building layout



Figure 4 Street Layout

Easton has retained a historic linear layout concentrated along The Street and Framlingham Road. Less development has taken place on smaller side roads leading away from these two main roads. The alignment of The Street is parallel to the River Deben. The depth of the development along the primary route is generally narrow, typically only a single dwelling, which allows views of the surrounding countryside from and within the settlement. Several cul-de-sacs such as Harriers Walk, School Lane and private roads reduce connectivity across the village. Car parking provision is limited to one village car park and some off street parking concentrated around the Village Green.

Development in Easton has three distinct areas; Easton Park, Harriers Walk and the Conservation Area. Development in the Conservation Area comprises detached, semidetached and terraced buildings. Rectangular and more unusual round buildings are situated on large plots often set between well-kept front gardens and back gardens.



Figure 5 Concentration of Built Form

A cluster of housing is located behind the tall brick wall of Easton Park on the corner of The Street and Framlingham Road, as a result of the redevelopment of the private estate.

Development along Harriers Walk comprises a complex of one-acre plots of modern bungalows set behind large front gardens and grass verges. Mature vegetation in the back gardens contribute to the secluded character of the area.

Design Principles

- New development proposals should be responsive to the historic linear layout of the village as well as the plot widths, proportions, density, building lines and positions within the plots.
- Development proposals in or adjacent to the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings should consider the setting and context within which the application site is set; whilst clearly demonstrating that the proposals complement the local character and these design principles.
- Development proposals in the valley of the River Deben should be reviewed against flood zones in the area and flood risks addressed where necessary.
- New development proposals should include off street parking provision.
- Future development should reflect the current mix of housing. Proposals should therefore be of various housing types, layout and sizes.

3.3.5 Open space and public realm

Easton Park comprises prominent trees such as Cedar, Oak, Pine, Beech and Yew which form a distinctive backdrop in views and contribute to the estate character of the village. The Village Green alongside to the White Horse Pub and green verges in front of the entrance to the All Saints Church create a little green space which defines the centre of the village, creating an open setting to the cluster of adjacent listed buildings. The palette of street furniture is limited to simple wooden benches, wooden bins and a sympathetic village sign. A limited palette of materials has been used in the public realm and is restricted to tarmac roads and tarmac pavements. This provides an opportunity for the creation of a new palette of materials inspired by local examples. A limited network of public rights of way restricts access to the countryside. National Cycle Route 1 connects Easton with Dover and goes as far north as Scotland.



Approximately half of the green space in the village is formed by the private gardens as shown on Figure 6. Well maintained front gardens are separated from the road generally by low boundary treatments which contribute to the small scale, historic and open character of the village. Hedgerows, small fruit trees and climbing plants decorating façades contribute to the streetscape and variety of planting in the village.



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Figure 6 Private Gardens and Designated Green Space

There is no street lighting within the village, and the resulting lack of light pollution is an important contributor to village character. Whilst street lighting can bring safety benefits, light pollution can be a source of annoyance to people, harmful to wildlife, undermine enjoyment of the countryside or detract from enjoyment of the night sky. For these reasons, the starting point for development proposals is that they should not include street lighting.

Design principles:

- New development should provide sufficient open space appropriate to the location and size of the dwelling, preferably through including front and rear gardens which incorporate trees to enhance the estate character.
- Building proposals should retain the pattern of the built form parallel to the road, and front garden and traditional boundary treatments should reflect the character of the village.
- New development should maintain and enhance access to the River Deben Special Area.

- Areas of green space and grass verges in the village should be retained and enhanced in new development proposals.
- Materials used in the public realm should be of high quality and respond to the character of the village.
- The network of public rights of way and connectivity should be improved through new development proposals.

3.3.6 Views



The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies important views of the countryside experienced from the village. Short distance views along The Street towards prominent buildings such as the All Saints' Church, Octagonal House and the White Horse Pub are some of those identified within the appraisal.

One of the most prominent open views of Easton is experienced from the country lane connecting Hoo with Easton. The elevated level of the builds located on the hill, opens the view into the village and exposes the architectural detail of elaborate rooflines. The Kennels and the Old Rectory are distinctive and punctuate the view. The mature trees of Easton Park create a distinctive backdrop, whilst hedgerows

and trees in the intervening fields and private gardens frame the view. These landscape features create an important gateway to the village and emphasise the sense of arrival.

Design Principles:

- New development should retain the Important Views identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal.
- The distinctive gateway on the country lane connecting Hoo with Easton should be emphasised and retained in new development.

3.3.7 Boundary treatments



Boundary treatments in Easton strongly contribute to the rural character of the area. Residential fences and walls are usually of a similar height and give a unified boundary structure to the road edge. A wide range of materials contributes to the variety of styles and quality of boundary treatments in the settlement. By contrast, the unique serpentine boundary wall of Easton Park is one of the most significant features in Easton and in the region. This historic serpentine wall defines the street scene on the approach to Easton, leading into the centre of the village.



Examples of wooden picket fence, hedgerow and wooden gate.

Design Principles:

- The position of boundary features in proposed development should reflect the existing alignment and tie in with neighbouring properties.
- New development should use boundary treatments which are common or complementary to the street and enhance the estate character of the village.
- The materials proposed for new boundary treatment should be of high quality, responding to the character of the buildings in the area, and have strong attention to architectural detailing.
- Modern materials that complement the street scene may be appropriate where they enhance the local character.
- Boundary treatment should reinforce the continuity of the building line along a street.

Typical boundary treatments

- Walls: White and red brick, flint;
- Fences: Timber picket, post and rail fence;
- Hedges: Hedgerow and wooden gate;
- Bollards: Timber bollards;



Examples of flint wall, white brick retention wall.

3.3.8 Buildings heights and roof lines



One of the most unique aspects of Easton is the diverse roof line determined by underlying topography and various roof structures. The diverse roof line is present in short and long distance views. Predominantly steep pitched roofs with prominent chimney stacks define the skyline. More unique round or octagonal roofs are scattered across the village and are distinctive accents in panoramas. A variety of traditional materials such as thatch, pantile, plaintile and more modern flint contributes to the historic character of the village. Architectural features such as

gables, dormers and elaborate ridges add to the quality and variety of architectural detailing. Two storey and single storey buildings contribute to the small scale of the village landscape.

Design Principles:

- New development proposals should be consistent with the steep pitched roofs prevalent in the village.
- New development should be no more than two storeys and respond to the historic context and setting of the village.



- Extensions are more likely to be successful if they do not exceed the height of the original building. Two storey extensions should be constructed with the same angle of pitch as the existing roof.
- Materials of a high quality consistent with the historic character of the village should be used in new development. Concrete tiles, artificial slates, plastic and aluminium windows and doors, cement render and modern bricks, should all be avoided.
- Typical roof features such as chimney stacks, gables, and ridge tiles should be incorporated into new development proposals to correspond with the historic character of the village.

Material Palette



Examples of roof materials such as: thatch, clay and slate pantile, clay pantile.

Typical Roof Features:

- Large chimney stacks made of brick, with octagonal flutes, start caps and moulded base;
- Dormers, sash windows and gables with timber picket and half timbering;
- Decorative ridge tiles.

Traditional Materials:

- Thatch, clay, slate, pantile and plaintile.



Examples of architectural features regarding roof treatment including: gable ends; chimney stacks and decorative ridges.

3.3.9 Architecture, material and surface treatments

Variety of architectural detail and range of materials is important for the historic character of the village. Traditional materials comprise mainly red, gault, white Suffolk brick and timber frame. Black weatherboard cladding is a good example of suitable modern material.

Material Palette



Examples of façade materials such as: red, white and yellow brick, timber frame, flint panel and black weatherboard.

Window Architectural Detail



Examples of window detailing including gothic arch and Victorian paned timber.

Door Architectural Detail



Examples of wooden door with gothic arch and a modern wooden door with a porch.

Elaborate windows and doors decorate façades of the houses in the conservation area. Victorian tall paned timber windows and gothic arch windows are also a dominant feature. The quatrefoil motif is also present on some of the façades.

There are many boarded doors often with gothic arches which are characteristic architectural details present in the buildings at Easton. A wide range of porches emphasise the entrance to buildings. Gabled porches are large and are often made of the same materials as the building. More rustic wooden porches are smaller and have been adapted in the modern development proposals across the village.

Design Principles:

- Design should demonstrate an understanding of the historic context and complement the existing materials and architectural detailing.
- Future development proposals should positively contribute to the setting of the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings through appropriate choice of scale, form, materials and detail.
- New development proposals are likely to be more successful if they comprise high quality, traditional materials such as red, gault, white Suffolk brick and timber frame.
- Future development should consider Victorian and gothic arch windows as well as dormer and sash windows.
- Future development should consider bespoke doorways with gothic arches and porches.

3.3.10 Design Guide check list

Design Element	Description	Proposals consistent with design guide (yes / no)
Street pattern and building layout	Do the development proposals respect and respond to the linear pattern of the built environment in the village?	
Open space and public realm	Do the development proposals contribute to the quality and provision of open space and public realm in the village?	
Views	Do the development proposals retain and emphasise identified important views and gateways?	
Boundary treatment	Do the development proposals use boundary treatments which are common or complementary to the street and reinforce the continuity of the building line?	
Buildings heights and roof lines	Do the development proposals respond to the context of the built environment with regards to the height, structure and complexity of the roofline?	
Architecture, materials and surface treatments	Do the development proposals complement historic materials and architectural detail?	



4. Next steps and sources of further information

A wealth of further information and support is available to assist Easton Neighbourhood Group in applying the principles set out in this assessment. The Locality website is a useful starting point and is updated regularly. Current guidance which may be of interest includes:

- Good Design in Neighbourhood Planning:
<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/good-design-neighbourhood-planning/>

Further technical support is also available to priority neighbourhood planning groups and forums through Locality, funded by MHCLG. The other packages of support currently available are:

- Establishing a Neighbourhood Forum
- Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)
- Site Options and Assessment
- Masterplanning
- Design including Design Codes
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
- Evidence Base and Policy Development
- Plan Health Check Review

Further information is available in the Neighbourhood Planning Grant Guidance Notes produced by Locality: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/about/grant-funding/>.

4.1.1 Embed guidelines into draft neighbourhood plan

The report can be used as evidence to support the forthcoming neighbourhood plan (and its draft policies) where the analysis highlights relevant issues and opportunities that can be influenced by land use planning interventions.

4.1.2 Engage with the council

The inputs from the District Council's policy and development management specialists would be invaluable in advance of formal consultation and submission. A Steering Group should consider how our recommendations can be transposed into policy through discussions with the District Council and use of the best practice guidance from Locality to prepare draft policies for consultation. A starting point would be Locality's 'Writing Planning Policies' guidance which sets guidance on how different planning policies are designed to achieve different things.

4.1.3 Ensure guides used in site development and application process

Ensure that applicants use the Design Guidelines and that the checklist in section 5 should be used to check this. Evidence should be provided where deviations from the Design Guides are proposed.



5. References

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