

Design and the Built Environment

Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings

The Parish of East Langton has an attractive built environment, which is highly valued by the community. Its protection and enhancement is a top priority as consultation has shown.

Much of the built environment is protected by statutory designations. There are currently 7 structures (see below) that have Listed Building Status, which means that they have been recognised nationally to be of special character or historical interest.

- Boundary wall to the Old Rectory
- Church of St Peter's
- Cottage with attached forge
- Leadclune Court
- The Bell public house
- The Hanbury Schools with attached school houses
- The Old Rectory

Langton Hall, a 17th Century building and grounds registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by English Heritage for its special historic interest, is in the adjoining West Langton Parish.

There are also two Conservation Areas covering much of the villages of Church Langton and East Langton (see maps), again in recognition of their special architectural and historic interest.

The Plan supports these national designations and the protection this gives them from inappropriate development.

Locally Listed Buildings

In addition, to the nationally important buildings and structures, highlighted above, there also a number of locally important buildings and structures. These locally important buildings are important to the history and distinctive and attractive character of the Parish. The Parish Council has identified a list of locally important buildings and structures known as 'The Local List' as identified in the policy:

Design

Consultation confirmed the importance of the design of new housing and the need for development to remain in keeping with traditional design in evidence across the Villages within the Parish.

This is reflected in the need for any new development to be in keeping with existing nearby dwellings and in particular to be aware of design features such as porches, use of rendering; roof lines; height.

The Parish of East Langton has a long history, with a wide number of listed buildings and attractive countryside which contributes to a distinctive local character.

Consultation has revealed a desire to protect the character of the Parish alongside the need for the villages to grow and evolve in a sensitive and proportionate manner in order to sustain the community and its facilities.

The policies in this section seek to reflect the design principles which the community believes will help to achieve this aim.

The overall aim is to protect the Parish of East Langton so that it retains its character as a unique and distinctive Parish. The planning system can support this aim to respond sensitively to the wide range of historic buildings, structures, landscapes and archaeology situated within the Parish. These assets form many of its key characteristics, and future development should seek to enhance, reinforce and preserve this distinctive historic environment.

In this section therefore, the Neighbourhood Plan sets out planning policies which seek to identify and protect the distinctive elements which together provide the special qualities of the landscape setting and built heritage of East Langton Parish.

Design requirements

New development proposals should be designed sensitively to sit within the distinctive settlement patterns of the Parish. Existing settlement patterns have grown incrementally over time. The buildings date from many different periods, providing a richness and variety of styles and materials. This traditional rural character should be enhanced by new development and schemes should be designed to ensure that new buildings sit comfortably within the existing settlement pattern, and are respectful of their surroundings, including the countryside. In this regard, the protection of trees is considered to be of great importance for their aesthetic qualities and their role in regulating temperatures, especially in hot weather which can be an issue particularly for older people.

The importance of introducing energy efficient development is amplified by the fact that parts of the Parish are off the gas grid.

The community consider it to be important that new residential development is of the highest standard to ensure that it is in keeping with the majority of residential properties in the village. It is not considered necessary to have a uniform series of properties that all look the same, rather to

ensure that new developments respect the features of buildings which make the villages of east and Church Langton desirable places in which to live.

New development proposals should be designed sensitively to ensure that the high quality built environment of the Parish is maintained and enhanced, particularly where schemes are located within or in close proximity to the Conservation Areas. New designs should respond in a positive way to the local character through careful and appropriate use of high quality materials and detail. Proposals should also demonstrate consideration of height, scale and massing, to ensure that new development delivers a positive contribution to the street scene and adds value to the distinctive character of the area.

Housing Provision

The draft Local Plan establishes a hierarchy of settlements to help to determine the most appropriate locations for development.

On the basis of this hierarchy, Church Langton is identified as a Selected Rural Village. Selected Rural Villages are identified on the basis of the presence of least 2 of the 6 key services (food shop, GP surgery, library, post office, primary school and pub) and are identified as being suitable for rural development 'of a smaller scale than Rural Centres (which have 4 of the 6 key services) primarily in the form of 'small-scale infill developments or limited extensions'. East Langton is classified as a 'Sub-Selected Rural Village' where development needs to be strictly controlled.

The precise approach to determining the settlement hierarchy for Harborough is yet to be confirmed, however the calculation as to how much of this requirement for 3,687 new dwellings the Parish should plan for is not straightforward. The draft Local Plan does not apportion a housing target to specific Selected Rural Villages. It does, however, put forward a number of options (4) for each of the Selected Rural Villages across the District. In the case of Church Langton, this could see the Parish having a minimum housing target of anywhere from 13 to 19 new homes. Church Langton is the smallest of all the proposed 'Selected Rural Villages' across the District.

In the absence of an agreed strategy, an approach has been adopted to establish a suitable and appropriate housing target for Church Langton in advance of the Adoption of the Local Plan. This was to take the average of the four options. Dividing the total housing numbers (65) by the number of options (4) gives a minimum housing requirement of 16 from April 2015 to 2031.

Windfall and Infill Sites

These are small infill or redevelopment sites that are made available unexpectedly and which have not been specifically identified for new housing in a planning document. Though windfall sites cannot be identified in advance, the high land values in the Parish coupled with the level of vacant and underutilised land and buildings mean that it is reasonable to expect that they will continue to provide a reliable source of housing supply.

Moreover, it is anticipated that future growth within the Parish can be secured through appropriate development land becoming available within a period of 5-10 years – well within the lifetime of this Neighbourhood Plan. Although not currently available, and therefore not relied upon for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan, the indication is that this land will, over time, be able to contribute to the housing growth within the Parish if windfall sites fail to deliver an appropriate amount, or if housing need increases during this period.

Until then, it is proposed that the minimum housing target for the Parish is met by small-scale windfall and in-fill development, in line with the approach to development for Selected Rural Villages identified within the draft Local Plan. The only SHLAA site within the Parish, for up to 13 dwellings,

is also a site of Open Space, Sport and Recreation as designated by Harborough District Council and highly valued by the local community who have also designated it as a Local Green Space (see 7.6)

However, if not sensitively undertaken and designed, such development can have an adverse impact on the character of the area. Such new development will generally increase car ownership and there is a need to ensure that it does not worsen traffic and parking issues, especially in those parts of the Parish not designed or suited for modern traffic, such as Back Lane in East Langton village.

Consultation has shown there are concerns about some of the windfall development that has taken place recently in the Parish; that it is of poor or out of keeping design and the type of housing that is being built (notably larger homes) does not reflect local need. For this reason windfall development will be required to meet criteria noted in Policy H2.

Development boundary

The drawing of limits to development can be considered to be an important tool to control development. However, there is a need to update the current maps to take into account existing development and future development needs. The following revised development boundaries are introduced as a means of controlling development activity. Outside of this boundary there will be a presumption against development except in exceptional circumstances.

Housing Mix

New building should make a positive contribution to meeting the needs of present and future residents of the Parish and ensuring a vibrant and mixed community. Analysis shows that the housing stock is imbalanced. It has a greater proportion of larger houses than the national and local averages.

Consultation events have shown that the community wants a variety of houses, especially smaller housing for young couples and housing to help local people stay in the area.

The Parish also is seeing an increase in the average age of the population (See section 4 'Our Neighbourhood' above). This raises issues at both ends of the age spectrum. Firstly, in terms of the need for more family housing to ensure a mixed community and secondly, for more elderly persons' housing to cater for the ageing population and to enable the many older people who live in larger homes and wish to stay in the Parish to downsize, thereby releasing larger homes for families.

The number of smaller houses (1-3 bedroom) are fewer than across Harborough district as a whole, whilst there are proportionately more larger homes (4 bed plus).

Affordable Housing

Average house prices in the Parish are very high. There is also a severe shortage of affordable housing (i.e. housing that is managed by the local authority or a Housing Association and is provided to eligible households whose needs cannot be met by the open market), with the proportion of the housing stock that is affordable housing far below the District and National averages. Many of the former affordable houses on Thornton Crescent in Church Langton have been lost to the Right to Buy. This results in much of the local resident population being unable to purchase or rent property on the open market – a particular problem for young people as demonstrated by the housing needs report within the appendices which shows the difficulty of first time buyers in entering the housing market.

Consultation shows that the provision of more affordable housing continues to be a top priority for the Parish.

The Core Strategy for Harborough requires that all new development in the Parish of East Langton should provide at least 40% affordable homes. This Plan supports and reinforces this Policy.

The need for more affordable housing is a major concern for the Parish. Average house prices have risen at a much faster rate than average earnings and as a consequence a high and growing number of people who wish to live in the Parish, including many residents, are unable to do so. This concern is highlighted in the findings of the consultation.

In addition, to meet identified needs and reflecting the evidence that housing affordability is of special significance to the Parish, the Plan requires that when affordable homes are allocated, priority is given to people with a local connection. In this context, 'local' is defined as 10 years permanent and continuous residence in the parish or an adjoining parish, or demonstration of an essential need to live close to someone who fits that requirement.

Traffic Management

Transport and accessibility is key to enable people to move between locations, especially in a rural setting such as the Parish of East Langton where people often have to travel long distances to access key services such as work, education, healthcare and shops.

At the same time the demand for travel needs to be balanced with the need to reduce congestion and some of other potential negative effects such as road safety and impact on the environment.

The consultation shows that this is a serious concern for many residents. They are especially concerned about road safety, noise, roadside damage and vehicle emissions associated with the growing volume and speed of traffic travelling along Back Lane in East Langton Village, a narrow road unsuitable for use by large vehicles. Residents wish to minimise the impact of additional traffic using narrow roads, including Back Lane, generated by new development.

Congestion

Parking and vehicular movements are a particular issue in the Village of Church Langton on Stonton Road at school drop-off and pick-up times.

Footpaths, Footways and Bridleways

The Parish has an abundance of footpaths, footways and bridleways (including a section of the Leicestershire Round). These are important for health, the environment and well-being of residents as well as helping people get around.

Public transport

The retention and enhancement of the public transport system was identified through consultation as an important feature for those living in the Parish. It is under threat through cuts in public services and this has resulted in a reduction in the frequency of the service which is a concern to older and disabled people living in the Parish as well as younger people without their own transport.

Employment Opportunities

There are some employment opportunities within East Langton Parish such as the school, local pubs and shops, farms and tourism related activities such as local bed and breakfasts. A relatively large and growing proportion of the working age population also work at home.

Small scale employment sites are important as they contribute to the vitality and sustainability of the Parish and mean for example that residents do not have to travel outside of the Parish to work.

At the same time, it is also important that employment related development is in keeping and does not conflict with the special nature and characteristics of the Parish. In addition, much of the road network in the Parish is narrow and is not designed for, or able to easily accommodate, modern traffic flows in terms of scale or size. There are already issues with traffic, especially heavy goods vehicles, having an adverse impact on the residential amenity in the Parish.

Business expansion

Given the pressures on existing road networks within the Parish, the expansion of existing commercial premises will only be supported if there is no adverse impact on surrounding areas. Through consultation, concern was expressed for the overdevelopment of a commercial site at

Grange Farm in East Langton Village and the adverse impact on local residents caused through excessive traffic; noise; damage to verges and concern over safety.

Home working

Home working has been welcomed through consultation exercises and proposals to develop home working will be supported through the Plan to help reduce car journeys, where this does not adversely impact on the parking on roads within the Parish

Protecting Key Community Services

Community facilities and services such as pubs and shops, community centres, schools, libraries, places of worship, sport and leisure facilities are important as they provide a focus for community life and interaction and are important for good health and long term sustainability.

The Parish has a good range of community facilities including a Primary School, two pubs, a community hall, an allotment site, Coronation Gardens, a Church and a cricket club.

Consultation shows that the protection and enhancement of these facilities is a top priority for the Plan.

Promoting additional community facilities and amenities

Community consultations have confirmed the value of enhancing the range of community services in the Parish, recognising their benefits locally.

Assets of Community Value

The designation of a community facility as an Asset of Community Value provides the opportunity to give it added protection from inappropriate development. In addition, if an asset is 'Listed' the Parish Council or other community organisations will then be given the opportunity to bid to purchase the asset on behalf of the local community, if it comes up for sale.

The Langton Arms pub and adjoining Grounds were listed as an Asset of Community Value in 2015. The following community services and assets are expected to be designated as Assets of Community Value and more may come forward over the life time of the Plan.

Church Langton:

- Langton Community Hall and grounds
- Church Langton Primary School and grounds
- St Peter's Church and Churchyard
- Allotments
- St Anne's Well

- Village Green/War Memorial

East Langton:

- Cricket ground and pavilion
- The Bell public house and grounds
- Coronation Garden

Protection of sites of environmental significance

An environmental inventory of all unbuilt land in the parish was carried out between July 2015 and February 2016. Information was compiled from existing sources (national and local designations, records and mapping) and fieldwork, together with the results of consultation.

Thirty sites were identified both as having significant environmental features (wildlife, history, landscape, etc.) and as being valued by the community. These sites were assessed and scored using the criteria in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012), and the six highest scoring (70% and over) are proposed as those best representing the Plan Area's most important, characteristic and valued open spaces. Their protection is regarded as essential.

The remaining 24 sites have significant natural or historical environment features but do not score as highly, particularly under the NPPF community and amenity criteria: some are formally inaccessible, or are distant from the settlement areas. Of these, those scoring 41% (15/36) or over are deemed to be key to preserving the characteristic environment and landscapes of the parish. While their combined area is less than 9% of the total area, these are the only sites in the Plan Area where significant, extant, natural and historical heritage still survives. Every effort should be made to resist development which threatens or damages them.

Biodiversity

As noted elsewhere, East Langton is a parish with a few isolated pockets of locally important habitat, little woodland and few species-rich hedgerows. Although much of the farmland is, or has been, under Entry Level and Higher Level Environmental Stewardship, overall biodiversity across the Plan Area is relatively low. The need for every Parish to make its own contribution to reversing the current threats to and loss of priority habitats and species is recognised in East Langton; the following Policy and related Community Action

are aimed at protecting the species and habitats that remain here and to begin the process of restoring lost habitats and enhancing biodiversity.

Biodiversity enhancement (species and habitats) is supported by the NPPF, which is itself compliant with the European Habitats Directive 1992 (*Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora*) and the UK *Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations, 2010, Amended 2012*.

Trees and hedges

For historical reasons there is a complete absence of natural and semi-natural woods in East Langton parish. However, trees and hedges are a significant feature of the Plan Area; they make an important contribution to the landscape and character of the area and enhance biodiversity. They are of two types: planted (ornamental) trees in the two villages (a combination of trees and shrubberies in the 19th and early 20th century landscaped grounds of the larger houses with late 20th century garden, roadside and amenity planting); and standard trees in 18th-19th century field hedgerows.

Both Church Langton and East Langton have conservation areas, in which trees are afforded some protection; in addition, other individual trees and significant groups are protected under Tree Preservation Orders, including those along Stonton Road, the lane to Glebe Farm and along the northern edge of the Churchyard (all in Church Langton).

Hedges have some protection under current legislation (Hedgerows Regulations, 1997) but the majority of trees across the parish are left without protection at present. Finally, no Phase I Habitat Survey has been undertaken by County Ecologists, so no trees have been designated as Local Wildlife Sites by Natural England.

Consultation shows that trees and hedges are highly valued by the local community, who wish to see them protected wherever possible.

Ridge and furrow fields

Like almost all other rural settlements in the Midlands (and across lowland northwest Europe) the open land of East Langton parish was almost entirely medieval ploughlands from the 12th century until the time of its Enclosure (1792). Historically, however, the parish had an interesting and uncommon arrangement of these open fields. Although the village of Church Langton marks the site of the original Saxon settlement in this area, it was its daughter settlement of East Langton which became the economic centre. The whole of East Langton parish (two villages) was one Manor through the medieval period; Church Langton therefore had no fields of its own, but was surrounded by the northern one of East Langton's three. The fields were used by people from both villages (under a succession of landlords) to grow a rotation of arable crops and to feed livestock. Centuries of ploughing produced the earthworks now known as ridge and furrow. Some Langton fields were turned over to grazing land, and the tenants and owners gave up their common rights, in 1744; all the rest were similarly Enclosed in 1792. The surviving ridge and furrow fields provide a surviving, extant record of this unique parish history.

Reflecting the national trend (loss of between 95% and 100% per parish, mostly since 1940), East Langton has lost a majority of its ridge and furrow fields. Only 16 of the c.90 fields (17% by number, 16% by area) in the parish retain well-preserved examples.

In English legislation, except for the few that are also Scheduled Monuments, ridge and furrow fields are not protected, despite a recognition that "as the open field system was once commonplace in NW Europe, these [surviving] sites take on an international importance"

Individual fields in the Plan Area are valued by the local community and any further, avoidable, loss of ridge and furrow in East Langton would be irreversibly detrimental. This policy not only seeks to protect the remaining ridge and furrow fields from development, but highlights their importance to the community, especially bearing in mind that many of the threats to ridge and furrow fields often involve types of development and practices that do not require planning approval.

Protection of views of local importance

Consultation during the Plan's preparation identified a widely-held wish to protect the rural settings of the settlements of East and Church Langton, in particular their relationship with one another and with the surrounding farmland and the wider landscape. Church Langton's hilltop position is especially characteristic, while maintaining its geographic, but not social, separation from its medieval daughter settlement of East Langton is regarded as important.

One of the main ways in which residents expressed this wish was by describing a number of important views within, between, away from and toward the two villages. These consultation findings were supported by the environmental inventory, which although principally aimed at identifying sites of environmental significance also confirmed the sight-lines of the suggested views and mapped them.

Areas of Separation

The Parish is made up of two villages – Church Langton and East Langton. Each has its own history, identity and character.



Consultation shows that maintaining the separation of the two communities is important to ensure that the distinct identity and character of these two villages is maintained. In addition, the field abutting the Parish boundary which separates East Langton from West Langton is important to ensure the continued separation of the villages.