

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Cabinet Member for Environment	Report Number: BCa/17/65
To: Cabinet	Date of meeting: 12th April 2018

SUFFOLK COAST AND HEATHS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY PROPOSED BOUNDARY CHANGES CONSULTATION RESPONSE.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To endorse the Council's response to Natural England's consultation on the proposed boundary changes to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 1.2 To support the proposed changes to the AONB's boundary subject to the Council's consultation response.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet endorses the Council's response to Natural England's consultation on the proposed boundary changes to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as detailed in Appendix A.
- 2.2 That Cabinet supports the proposed changes to the AONB's boundary relevant to the areas that cover Babergh District subject to 2.1 above.

Reason for Decisions: To endorse the Council's response to Natural England's proposed boundary changes to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are none associated with this report.

5. Risk Management

- 5.1 The key risks are set out in the table below. There are no risks in the Corporate Significant Risk Register directly associated with this report.

GENERAL FUND			
Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Making a consultation response that leads to an error in the designation	2 (Unlikely)	3 (minor)	Officers and Members have taken part in the pre-consultation and consultation exercise and comments only

GENERAL FUND			
Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
that may result in a claim against the Council.			made against AONB inclusion criteria.

6. Consultations

- 6.1 Officers and Members of the AONB Partnership took part in pre-consultation exercises involving key stakeholders in late 2016 and throughout 2017, which gave an opportunity to shape the consultation.
- 6.2 The formal consultation began on the 26th January 2018 and finishes on the 20th April 2018.
- 6.3 Natural England organised four briefing events on the 12th and 13th February 2018 for Parish and Town Councils, Local Authority Members, Special Interest Groups, local business and landowning interests.
- 6.4 Two further events were held on the 20th and 21st February 2018 for members of the public.

7. Equality Analysis

- 7.1 There are no equality issues arising from this report.

8. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 8.1 The Council has been a long-standing supporter of the AONB partnership. The extension of the AONB area (if designated) will strengthen the partnership. It is anticipated that this will result in more organisations joining the partnership. It will also attract more visitors to a wider more dynamic AONB area.

9. Links to Joint Strategic Plan

- 9.1 The environment of Babergh provides a unique resource that our communities, businesses and visitors value. The protected landscape of the AONB and the work of the AONB team and its partners make a significant contribution to the Council vision to create an environment where individuals, families, communities and businesses thrive and flourish.

10. Background Information

- 10.1 For many years there has been a local desire to extend the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB southwards into Essex, which was supported by the AONB partnership.
- 10.2 A formal request was put to Natural England by the AONB Partnership proposing a variation to the AONB boundary to extend the designation across the Stour Estuary.
- 10.3 Assessments were made to investigate which landscapes met the legal requirements for inclusion in an AONB and proposals have been developed to designate specific areas.
- 10.4 In addition to the proposed extension towards Essex (which includes parts of Brantham and the Babergh part of the River Stour) there were also two further areas in Babergh that were identified. These are proposed extensions within the Samford Valley (including peripheral areas) and at Freston Brook. Appendix A illustrates the current relevant AONB area and the

proposed extensions within Babergh and Essex. The process of inclusion had respect to areas identified by the Council for both residential and economic growth.

- 10.5 Prior to the formal consultation which began on the 26th January 2018 members of the AONB partnership including officers and Councillors were invited to be part of a number of pre-consultation meetings that helped shape the extension project.
- 10.6 Full details of the consultation are available as background papers and are also available on: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-england/suffolk-coast-and-heaths-aonb>
- 10.7 The Consultation Document attached as Appendix B summarises the specific proposals within Babergh and the rationale for including each area as part of the AONB expansion proposal referred to on pages 10 to 16.
- 10.8 The AONB Partnership recruited consultants to assess the boundary proposals and their report is included as Appendix C. It is proposed to support the recommendations in the report and reference to this has been included in the proposed consultation response.
- 10.9 The proposed consultation response is attached as Appendix D

11. Background Documents

Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Boundary Review Project: Supporting Documents.

Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Boundary Review Project: Consultation Document and Pack.

These documents are also available online at:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/natural-england/suffolk-coast-and-heaths-aonb>

Authorship:

Peter Garrett
Corporate Manager - Countryside and
Public Realm
TEL: 01449 724944
peter.garrett@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Clare Dawson
Strategic Planning Policy Officer
Strategic Planning
Mobile: 07860 826998
clare.dawson@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk