

**Reference:**

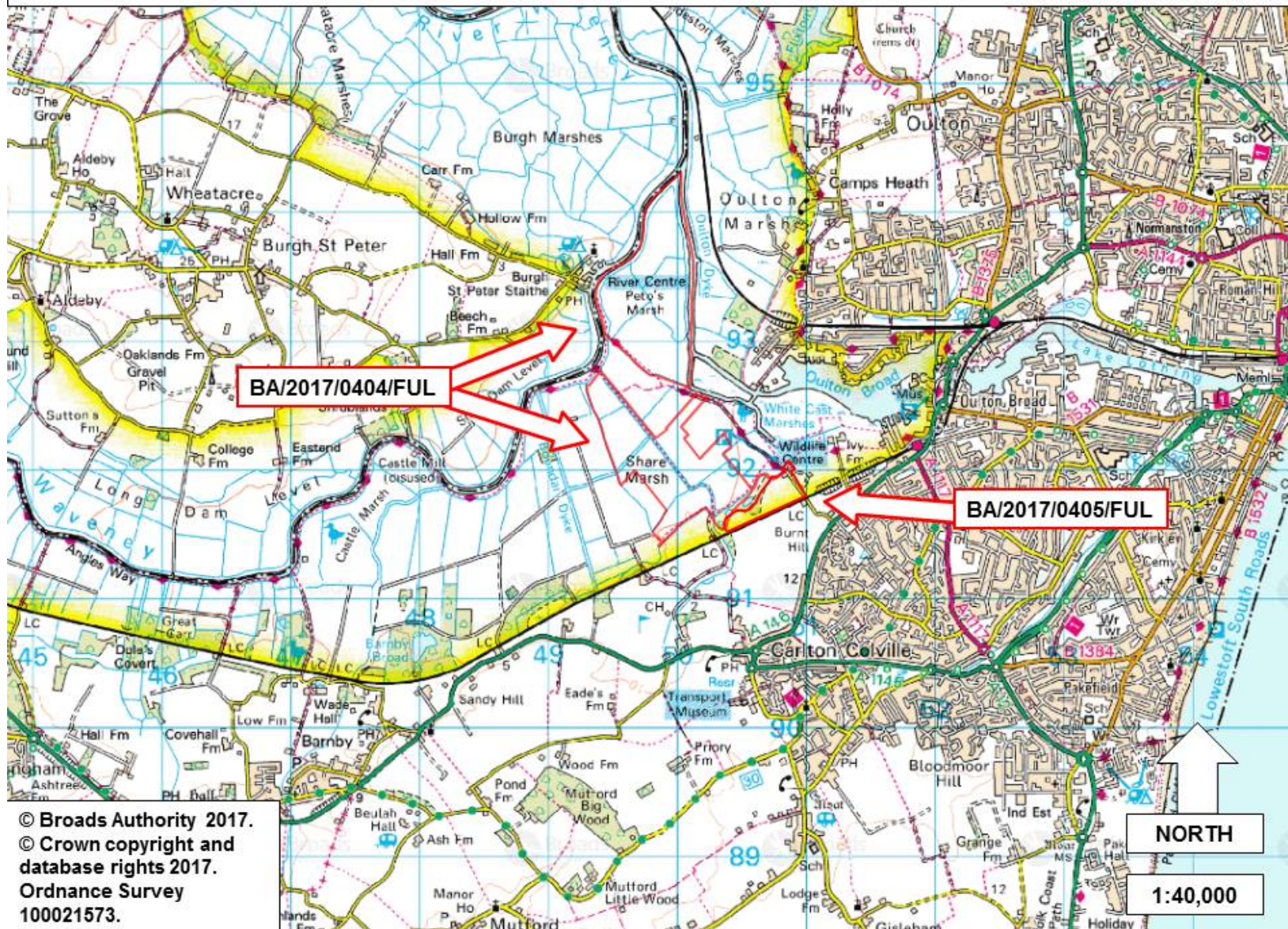
BA/2017/0404/FUL

BA/2017/0405/FUL

**Location**

Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve, Carlton Colville

BA/2017/0404/FUL - Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve and BA/2017/0405/FUL - Study Centre, Carlton Marshes



**Application for Determination**  
Report by Planning Officer

<b>Parish</b>	Carlton Colville
<b>Reference</b>	BA/2017/0404/FUL <b>Target date</b> 13 February 2018 BA/2017/0405/FUL
<b>Location</b>	Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve, Carlton Colville
<b>Proposal</b>	Habitat creation within two blocks of arable marsh (BA/2017/0404/FUL). Erection of new visitor centre and conversion of existing education centre to single dwelling (BA/2017/0405/FUL).
<b>Applicant</b>	Suffolk Wildlife Trust
<b>Recommendation</b>	Site Visit
<b>Reason for referral to Committee</b>	Major Application

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The existing Suffolk Wildlife Trust site known as Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve is the subject of a major project to almost double the size of the existing reserve and provide new 'gateway' facilities. The wider scheme seeks to restore the natural wetland landscape through habitat creation, while the 'gateway' facilities, primarily in the form of a new visitor centre, seeks to encourage more people to visit, use and appreciate the reserve. The expanded reserve will become the Trust's 'flagship' reserve which is proposed to become the 'Suffolk Broads National Nature Reserve'.
- 1.2 The proposals for the habitat creation and visitor centre are two distinct elements of one overall project and as such have been submitted as two complementary planning applications. The sites are on adjoining areas of land and would form part of one functioning nature reserve, therefore the proposed site visit would encompass both application areas.

## **2 Description of Site**

- 2.1 The existing Nature Reserve site is located to the west of Lowestoft, predominantly either side of Oulton Dyke and as far south as the railway line from Beccles to Oulton Broad South. The Nature Reserve comprises a

number of interlinked or adjacent marshes across a wide expanse of marshland, separated by dykes and drains. The primary route into the nature reserve is via an existing education centre which also features a sizeable car park.

- 2.2 The existing site comprises Oulton Marshes which is sited to the east and north of Oulton Dyke, White Cast Marshes which is sited to south of Oulton Dyke and east of Slutton's Dyke, and Castle Marshes which is sited approximately 1km to the west and on the southern bank of the River Waveney. The existing site is mostly grazing marsh but also includes some areas of reedbed, fen meadow, scrub, open water and alder carr within the floodplain. In total the Nature Reserve site covers approximately 163 hectares. The education centre is located to the south of the site and accessed via Burnt Hill Lane, this forms part of an old barn complex, the remainder of which is in private residential use. The car park for the centre and visitors lies to the front (north) of the education centre.
- 2.3 Access to the Nature Reserve is by private vehicle via Burnt Oak Lane to the south, or via Church Lane which is sited to the east of Oulton Marshes. The Angles Way footpath runs across the site on a section that runs from Lowestoft to Beccles. A foot ferry runs from the Waveney River Centre which is located across the River Waveney from Peto's Marsh. There are also moorings available at the Dutch Tea Gardens which is located on Oulton Dyke adjacent to Oulton Marsh.
- 2.4 The proposed habitat creation site comprises two substantial areas of arable marsh which are adjacent to the existing Nature Reserve site, and which the Trust is in the process of purchasing. The site is made up of Peto's Marsh comprising approximately 76 hectares in effectively an inverted 'V' shape defined by the River Waveney and Oulton Dyke, and Share Marsh comprising approximately 68 hectares which is of an irregular shape and is sited to the south of Peto's Marsh and west of White Cast Marsh. The site is a flat area of marshland that was previously under arable cultivation but has now been allowed to revert to rough grassland with not insignificant areas of reed growth. There are a number of foot drains running across each site, and a well established track runs diagonally across Share Marsh.
- 2.5 The proposed visitor centre is on an area of land to the southern edge of the existing Nature Reserve site and encompasses the existing education centre and car park. The site, comprising an area of 11.33 hectares and made up of arable fields and part nature reserve, is bounded by Burnt Hill Lane to the east, the Oulton Broad South to Beccles railway line to the south, and Landspring Drain to the north and west. The land rises gently from north to south. The proposed visitor centre building would be sited 90m to the south-west of the existing education centre, adjacent to and running parallel with Landspring Drain.
- 2.6 Part of the site at its south-eastern point is within an area designated as the Sprat's Water and Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Broadland Special Protection (SPA), Broads Special Area of Conservation

(SAC), and a Ramsar site. The majority of the designated area is sited to the east/south east of the habitat creation site area. In relation to the visitor centre site area the existing nature reserve elements are within the designated areas, with the arable field elements being on adjacent land. Although not currently designated as a BAP Habitat the site has been identified as having high potential for future designation.

### **3 Proposed Development**

#### BA/2017/0404/FUL - Habitat Creation

- 3.1 The primary objective of the scheme is to increase the amount of good quality wetland habitat in this part of the Broads through habitat creation. The existing reserve will almost double in size, and the proposals will significantly improve the overall biodiversity value, as well as making the site more adaptable and resilient to future changes as a consequence of climate change impacts.
- 3.2 A secondary objective, linked to the separate planning application for a new visitor centre and car park, is to improve access and viewing opportunities for people within the new reserve, without compromising the biodiversity interest. This will be achieved through the extension of existing trails, use of public rights of way, creation of new permissive paths, and the installation of new hides and viewpoints.
- 3.3 A summary of the proposed works is as follows:
  - Major earthworks
  - Low-level bunds and water level management structures, including a windpump
  - Floodbank strengthening along the River Waveney and Slutton's Dyke
  - Improvements to access routes used by visitors including new and extended hard surfaced paths
  - New boardwalk and widening of an existing path
  - Construction of six hides and viewing platforms
- 3.4 Peto's Marsh is proposed as a large reedbed through a combination of reedswamp, dykes and open water pools. The area will be subdivided into four separate management compartments through the installation of low-level bunds and water control structures. One compartment will have scrapes and low intensity grazing to create wet, tussocky grassland with a reeded fringe. The other three compartments will have deeper pools and wet reed that would be managed by rotational cutting. Part of the historic dyke pattern will also be reinstated. A perimeter bund, located just inside the existing soke dyke, would also need to be constructed.
- 3.5 Share Marsh is proposed as the re-instating of wet grassland and fen meadow through the addition of new lengths of dyke, foot drains, shallow scrapes and turf ponds. This will replicate the habitats already present on the adjoining part of the existing reserve including the part designated as a SSSI. A raised earth track running parallel to the Share Marsh track and public

footpath that runs down to the IDB pump will be provide, this will be used for machinery access in order to minimise tracking on the footpath which could cause damage and conflict with visitor access.

#### BA/2017/0405/FUL - Visitor Centre

- 3.6 This application is primarily in the form of visitor centre building. In addition to providing resources for visitors to the Nature Reserve it will also feature a café and shop. The centre will include a large education room, an external education pavilion, a viewing deck facing north across the reserve, a staff room, and storage areas. For unpaid interns working with Suffolk Wildlife Trust two short term bedsit units are proposed. The façade of the building would be a mix of frameless structural glass and vertical timber cladding, with a zinc roof.
- 3.7 The existing education centre has a footprint of approximately 207sqm, the proposed visitor centre would have a useable footprint of approximately 448sqm, but taking into account the roof overhang and covered walkways the overall footprint would be approximately 744sqm.
- 3.8 Immediately south of the proposed visitor centre is a 'discovery play landscape' which would fill the space between the visitor centre and railway line to the south. The play landscape will predominantly be formed by grass slopes and ramps.
- 3.9 A new car parking area will be provided to the east of the proposed visitor centre, with a new access from Burnt Hill Lane a short distance to the south.
- 3.10 It is proposed to change the existing education centre to a single residential dwelling along with conversion of part of the existing car park area to provide a garden and parking area for the new dwelling, with the remainder of the car park reverting to agricultural land.
- 3.11 Other works include the widening of Landspring Drain where it passes the proposed visitor centre, the provision of improved disabled access, and fencing and access gate along part of Burnt Hill Lane.
- 3.12 The removal of the three grain silos and derelict farmhouse form part of the proposed works.

#### **4 Main issues**

##### BA/2017/0404/FUL - Habitat Creation

- 4.1 The main issues in the determination of the habitat creation application are likely to be the impact on the character and appearance of the area, the effect on biodiversity and the impact on the local hydrology.

##### BA/2017/0405/FUL - Visitor Centre

- 4.2 The main issues in the determination of the visitor centre application are likely to be the impact on the character and appearance of the area, site layout and design issues, the effect on biodiversity and the designated areas of the site, impact on the residential amenity, impacts on highway safety, sustainable construction, flood risk, and the principle of conversion of the existing centre to residential use.
- 4.3 These matters will be outlined in detail and an assessment provided in a report to a subsequent Planning Committee.

## **5 Policies**

- 5.1 The following Policies have been assessed for consistency with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and have been found to be consistent and can therefore be afforded full weight in the consideration and determination of these applications.

### [NPPF](#)

#### [Core Strategy \(adopted 2007\)](#)

CS1 Landscape Protection and Enhancement  
CS2 Nature Conservation Designations  
CS4 Creation of New Resources  
CS5 Historic and Cultural Environments  
CS8 Response to Climate Change  
CS9 Sustainable Tourism  
CS11 Tourism and recreation development  
CS16 Access and Transportation  
CS17 Recreational Access to Land  
CS24 Residential Development

#### [Development Management Policies \(adopted 2011\)](#)

DP1 Natural Environment  
DP2 Landscape and Trees  
DP3 Water Quality and Resources  
DP4 Design  
DP11 Access on Land  
DP29 Development on Sites with a High Probability of Flooding

- 5.2 The following Policies have been assessed for consistency with the NPPF and have found to lack full consistency with the NPPF and therefore those aspects of the NPPF may need to be given some weight in the consideration and determination of these applications.

### [Core Strategy \(adopted 2007\)](#)

CS7 Environmental Protection  
CS18 Rural Sustainability  
CS20 Development and Flood Risk

### [Development Management Policies \(adopted 2011\)](#)

DP5 Historic Environment

DP14 General Location of Sustainable Tourism and Recreation Development  
DP21 Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside  
DP28 Amenity

## **6 Recommendation**

- 6.1 It is recommended that Members undertake a site visit prior to determining these applications. Taking into account the rural and isolated location and the nature and scale of works proposed it is considered Members would benefit from viewing the proposals on site prior to determining the application.

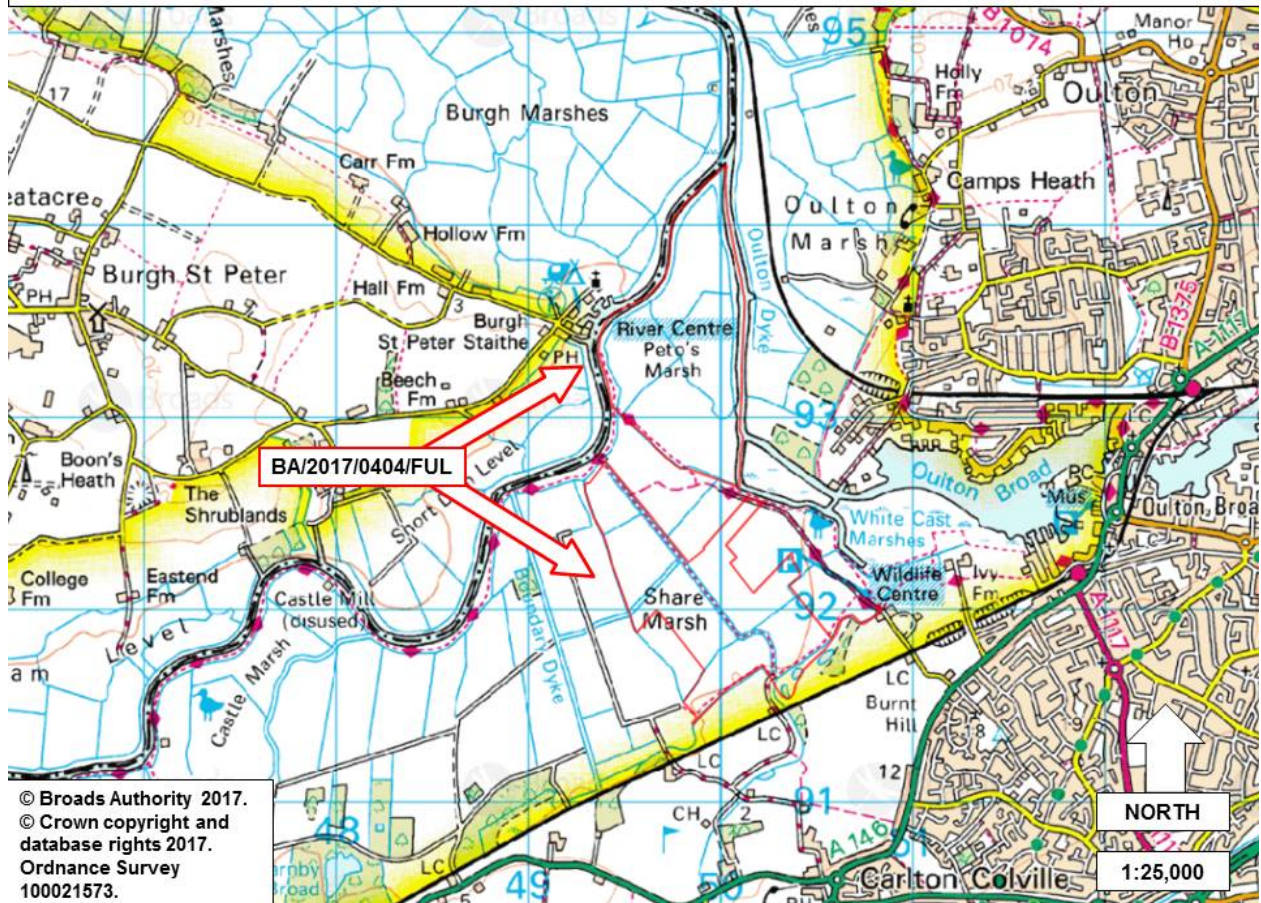
Background papers: Application Files BA/2017/0404/FUL and BA/2017/0405/FUL

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List of Appendices: Appendix A – BA/2017/0404/FUL Location Plan  
Appendix B – BA/2017/0405/FUL Location Plan

## APPENDIX A

BA/2017/0404/FUL - Carlton Marshes Nature Reserve



## APPENDIX B

BA/2017/0405/FUL - Study Centre, Carlton Marshes

