

Castle Acre 'The Past is All Around Us' Project
Conservation Management Plan for Castle Acre

Wildlife Habitats and Species.

Castle Acre as a village where nature is at the heart of our lives, cherished and conserved equally with the historic landscape, now and for the future.

Places where wildlife is abundant and where ecological processes work well are vitally important for both the biodiversity they sustain and the benefits they provide to society.

This Conservation Management Plan is an opportunity to put together a coherent approach that helps wildlife to flourish and for us to connect to nature and make a positive difference to our environment.

The Conservation Management Plan for Castle Acre will contribute content for the 'Conservation Area Character Appraisal Review'.

In particular, it will address:

- wildlife habitats and species.
- management of habitats and wildlife environment against recreational amenity use

The focus for action:

- protection of wildlife;
- improving the condition of habitats and ecosystems;
- making and improving green corridors between habitats;
- helping the recovery of populations of threatened or re-introduced species;
- promoting everyday access to nature for the community.

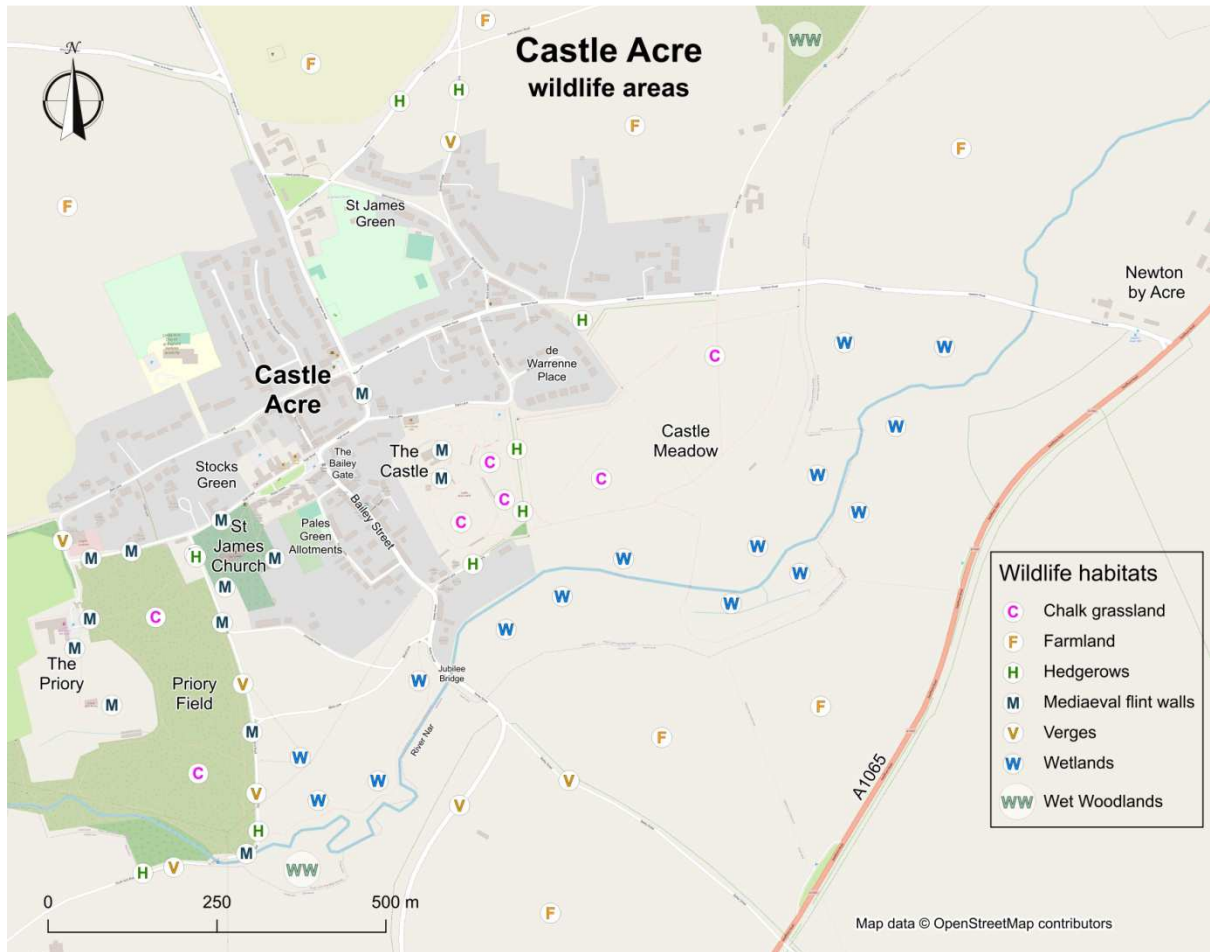
The Action Plan:

- On-going surveys of wildlife in Castle Acre, initially carried out for 'The Past is All Around Us' Project.
- Assessment of the condition of existing habitats for wildlife;
- Recommendations for improvements and enhancement of existing habitats;
- Suggestions for new sites where trees, shrubs and wildflowers can be established;
- Identifying and mitigating negative impacts on wildlife;
- Programme for monitoring and longer-term sustainability;
- Timetable for practical tasks;
- Training requirements to deliver the resources, skills and knowledge needed to deliver.

Other Considerations:

- Identification of the budget required to implement the Plan and then sustain it;
- Professional advice and support and examples of best practice;
- Liaison with the Holkham Estate as the landowner for approval of this Plan and for a commitment to support and help deliver it.

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Habitats and Natural Features

The following natural features will be protected from development that would have a significant adverse impact upon their character, appearance and wildlife value:

- The River Nar Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- Minns Meadow
- The Water Meadows to the south and east of the village.
- Broadmeadow Common, Emanuel's Common and Castle Acre Common.

This Conservation Management Plan aims to promote a net gain in biodiversity through:

- the creation of new natural habitats
- enhancement of existing habitats
- the planting of additional trees and hedgerows
- restoring and repairing fragmented biodiversity networks.

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Areas identified for improvement

Gardens and Allotments – these play a key role in connecting habitats, especially across built areas and provide safe refuges for wildlife

Allotments often have many of the same features as gardens but without the physical boundaries between plots so offer a larger area for wildlife to utilise.

Suggestions for wildlife management:

- water butts
- compost heaps
- chemical - free
- space for bird and bat boxes.
- mini-habitats such as log piles

Churchyard

Churches have been a focus for communities for thousands of years and, alongside their primary purpose, are refuges for many species of wildlife and many even contain remnants of ancient grassland, never ploughed.

Suggestions for wildlife management

Rather than mow the whole of the churchyard, have a designated un-mown area, possibly on the south side of the churchyard, to encourage wildflowers, butterflies, moths and other insects.

To create and maintain this wild area within the churchyard, a site-specific management plan will be needed, with a programme of work, a timetable and volunteer involvement such as removing ivy from the perimeter churchyard walls.

Survey Questions

- Which species are using the church building? e.g. bats, birds, insects.
- Do the church grounds support wildflowers in the grass?
- What is the grass-cutting plan?
- Are there mature trees in the grounds?
- Are there gravestones with lichens or mosses on them?
- Is it an active burial site?

School Grounds

The grounds of the school can be used as an educational resource for the ecologists of the future, identifying an area in the grounds that is suitable for designation as a wildlife area.

Survey Questions

- Are there opportunities around amenity areas to have longer grass or plant trees?
- Is there an area suitable for wildflowers?
- Can water be provided safely?
- Are there sites for nest boxes?
- Is there a site for a thick hedge and trees?

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Hedges along the lanes and footpaths, dating from the medieval through to eighteenth century enclosure boundaries, provide nesting and song sites, food and shelter for a range of birds and habitat for plants and insects.

- Does this hedgerow require restoration, gaps to be re-planted or further tree planting? Is this hedgerow within 15m of another hedgerow or woodland that it could link to?
- Is this hedgerow associated with any protected or rare species?
- Does the hedgerow form part of a green lane, with associated grassland?
- Does it include a wall, ditch or earth bank within part of the length?
- Is the hedgerow already managed by a landowner or County Highways?
- How best can it be managed for biodiversity

A hedgerow survey with volunteers and in partnership with the Holkham Estate Manager will enable management needs to be identified and planned. The more extensive practical work will have to be undertaken by the Holkham Estate as part of its responsibility as the landowner.

Trees have many benefits for biodiversity and provide a complex network of micro-habitats for a wide range of species.

Some trees in Castle Acre have statutory protection because of their size, their age, their contribution to the area's character and the wildlife they support.

Updated tree survey ?

Trees to be planted – native species ?

The medieval flint walls of the castle, priory, church and other buildings are the ideal environment for ferns, lichens and mosses and other plants which are suited to the dry conditions and being shallow-rooted in lime mortar.

From 2022 and as a legacy of 'The Past is All Around Us' project, a group of volunteers is helping English Heritage care for the site of the castle. This includes removing ivy from the lower walls and carrying out seasonal wildlife surveys.

This work might be extended to walls elsewhere in the village, especially the churchyard and priory, if there are enough volunteers willing to do this.

Local Green Spaces The following areas are designated as Local Green Space. Playing field and Castle Meadow. East Green, St James' Green; enclosed area top of Pales Green are open village Greens

Grassland habitats are not limited to meadows – roadside verges can be a rich habitat and provide green corridors for a range of species, as can the margins to arable fields if they are free from chemicals.

Roadside Nature Reserve.

It is No 40 on the County List of 111. It is for the plant Danewort.

Sambucus ebulus, also known as danewort, dane weed, danesblood, dwarf elder or European dwarf elder, walewort, dwarf elderberry, elderwort and blood hilder, is a herbaceous species of elder. The name danewort comes from the belief that it only grows on the sites of battles that involved the Danes. The term 'walewort' or 'walwort'

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meant 'foreigner plant.' The plant's stems and leaves turn red in autumn and this may explain the link with blood.

Chalk grassland is short turf rich in plant life and butterflies, day-flying moths and invertebrates. It is a rare habitat nationally and Castle Acre is fortunate to have three areas: the site of the castle; the meadow adjacent to the castle and the Priory Field.

Survey Questions

- Is there a mix of wildflowers and grasses?
- Was the grassland sown with wildflower seeds in recent years?
- Does the area have a range of weeds such as thistle, nettle and bindweed?
- Is it grazed by livestock?
- Is it cut for hay?
- What is the potential for making green corridors?

English Heritage has a management plan for the chalk grassland castle site and a summary is included.

Priory Field ? Castle Meadow ? How best to manage?

The River Nar is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and its banks are a mix of habitats: wet woodland; reedbed; watermeadows and unploughed commons.

It is a globally rare chalk-stream and along its 21 mile course, progresses from chalk river to fen river, giving it high conservation value.

The River Nar has a Catchment Plan designed to help conserve and enhance the Nar's rich and diverse ecology to achieve what is termed "Good Ecological Status or Potential" (GES or GEP) under the European Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Responsibility for keeping it in favourable condition rests with ----- EA / NE / NRT / Holkham Estate?

Monitoring by volunteers, both formally and informally, can include:

- Does the water flow swiftly or slowly?
- How much vegetation covers the channel?
- Are there nearby trees?
- Are any willow pollards with evidence of being managed?
- Is there woody debris in the water to provide additional habitat?
- Does the waterway support any protected species e.g. otter or water vole?
- Are there any non-native invasive species present e.g. Himalayan Balsam?
- Are there opportunities to improve management of the banks, or create/restore adjacent pools or backchannels.

Lack of grazing animals has meant that rank vegetation is crowding out several wetland plant species and that greater willowherb has taken over the riverbanks.

The resolution to the problem is not straightforward because of the public access on the permissive path between Jubilee Bridge and South Acre Ford, very popular with dog walkers whose dogs are not always on leads.

This means that livestock – sheep or cows – are not a viable option.

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To fence off an area for grazing to create a low sward habitat is not cost-effective nor sustainable in terms of time and resources.

Holkham Estate mechanical equipment to cut dense vegetation in selected areas to help Orchids; Lady's Smock and other wetland plants.

Farmland

The landscape surrounding Castle Acre is intensively farmed and many farmers manage parts of their land to encourage wildlife.

Farmland provides habitat that already offers corridors for wildlife in the local landscape. The hedges, ditches and flower-rich margins on the edge of an arable field will offer food and shelter for birds and invertebrates; the crop itself will host skylark and brown hares. The soil itself is a precious resource that needs nurturing and protecting for future generations.

Public footpaths giving access across farmed land are vital for local communities to interact with and understand the benefits that nature-rich farmland brings.

Survey Questions (with landowner's permission)

- What habitat features are present in the farmed landscape?
- Are there existing hedges, ditches, trees, ponds, flower-rich margins or uncultivated headlands that could- working with the landowners - be retained and/or restored?
- Are there opportunities to work with landowners to consider widening these habitat corridors?
- Are there opportunities for less-or-unproductive land to be taken out of cultivation and managed for wildlife or resource protection, if the owners' desire?

Conclusion.

Appendices:

Birds seen or heard

Barn Owl
Blackbird
Blackcap
Black-headed Gull
Blue Tit
Buzzard
Chaffinch
Chiffchaff
Coal Tit
Collared Dove
Coot
Crow
Dunnock
Feral Pigeon
Gadwall
Grasshopper Warbler
Goldcrest

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Goldfinch.
Great Tit
Great Spotted Woodpecker
Greenfinch
Green Woodpecker
Herring Gull
House Martin
House Sparrow
Jackdaw
Jay
Kestrel
Linnet
Little Owl
Long tailed Tit
Magpie
Mallard
Moorhen
Partridge
Pheasant
Pied Wagtail
Red Kite
Reed Bunting
Robin
Sedge Warbler
Siskin
Sparrowhawk
Starling
Swallow
Swift
Whitethroat
Willow Warbler
Wood Pigeon
Wren

Plants

Site of the Castle and Castle Meadow

Bird's Foot Trefoil
Biting Stonecrop
Black Medick
Bramble
Bulbous Buttercup
Canadian Fleabane
Cat's Ear
Cherry Pie /Valerian
Common Gromwell
Common Nettle
Common Sorrel
Cotoneaster
Creeping Cinquefoil
False Brone
False Oat Grass
Fern Grass
Field Scabious

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Forget-Me-Not
Grey Sedge
Groundsel
Hairy Sedge
Hart's Tongue Fern
Hawthorn
Hedge Bedstraw
Hoary Mullein
Ivy
Ivy Leaved Toadflax
Lesser Burdock
Lesser Calamint
Mallow
Mouse-Eared Hawkweed
Nipplewort
Pellitory of the Wall
Perforated St John's Wort
Polypod
Poppy
Prickly Lettuce
Prickly Sow Thistle
Privet
Ragwort
Red Clover
Rough Hawkbit
Slender Speedwell
Smooth Sow Thistle
Soft Brone
Spear Thistle
Spleenwort
Timothy
Wall Rue
Wall Speedwell
Weld
White Bryony
White Clover
Wild Rose
Yellow Oat Grass

St James the Great Churchyard

Alkanet
Bedstraw
Beech nuts from Beech tree
Bracket fungus on old tree root
Buttercup
Campanula
Cat's Ear
Clover
Comfrey
Creeping Buttercup
Dandelion
Dwarf Thistle
Forget-me-not
Geranium

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Germander Speedwell
Goosefoot
Grey Mouse ear
Ground Ivy
Ivy
Lords and Ladies
Many seeded Goosefoot
Marjoram
Moss on north side of wall
Mouse -ear
Nettle
Pentaglottis (AKA Bugloss or Green Alkanet)
Potentilla reptans
Ragwort
Red Goosefoot
Sedge Grass (Galingale)
Sedum
Self heal
Spear Thistle
Speedwell
St John's Wort
Stinging nettle
Sunspurge
Teasel
Thistle
Trifolium campestre
Verbascum (not in flower)
Violet
Wall fern
White Bryony
Wild primrose

Priory Field

Bramble
Broad leafed dock
Burnet-saxifrage
Buttercup
Cocksfoot
Common Birdsfoot Trefoil
Common Poppy
Common Ragwort
Common Sorrel
Cow Parsley
Creeping bindweed
Creeping Thistle
Dandelion
Dead nettle
Dock
Elder
Field Bindweed
Giant Burdock
Greater Burdock
Goat's Beard
Greater or Marsh Birdsfoot Trefoil

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Greater Plantain
Greater Willowherb
Ground Ivy
Hogweed
Horsetail
Ladies Bedstraw
Lesser Burdock
Lords and Ladies
Marjoram
Marsh Thistle
Meadow Buttercup
Meadow Thistle
Meadowsweet
Nettle
Plantain
Ragwort
Rosebay Willowherb
Rough Chervil
Rye Grass
Selfheal
Sheep Sorrel
Spear Thistle
Speedwell
Stinging nettle
Thistle
Various grasses
White Bryony
White Campion
White Clover
Wild Arum
Wild Carrot
Yellow Oat Grass
Yorkshire Fog

Common Lane

Blackberry
Bramble
Bullace
Burdock
Campion
Cleavers (Goosegrass)
Coltsfoot
Cow Parsley
Creeping Buttercup
Creeping Thistle
Dead nettle
Dock
Dwarf Thistle
Dog Rose
Elder
Fat hen
Field Bindweed
Goat's Beard
Greater Horsetail

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Ground Elder
Ground Ivy
Hawthorn
Hedge Woundwort
Herb Bennet
Hogweed
Hops
Knapweed
Lords and Ladies
Mallow
Mugwort
Nettle
Nipplewort
Plantain
Ragwort
Rosebay Willowherb
Sanicle
Spear Thistle
Thistle
Wild rose
Woodaven
Wood Sage
Woundwort
Yarrow

Trees and Shrubs
Blackthorn (Sloes)
Common Hawthorn
Crab Apple
Field Maple
Hazel
Oak

Priory Road

Oregano
Calamint
Black Horehound
Common Mallow
Common Yarrow
Hedgerow Cranesbill
Snowberry
Lilac

South Acre Road

Bramble
Dogwood
Dwarf Elder
Elderberry
Feverfew
Spear Thistle
Spindle
Wild Arum

South Acre Ford

Lesser Water Parsnip

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Water Forget-Me-Not

Minns Meadow

Bettony
Bittersweet (Woody Nightshade)
Clover
Common Water Crowfoot
Convulvulous
Creeping Buttercup
Creeping Thistle
Dogwood
Erect Hedge Parsley
Great Willowherb
Hemp Agrimony
Herb Robert
Horseradish
Knapweed
Loosestrife
Meadow pea / vetchling
Meadowsweet
Nightshade (woody)
Nipplewort
Pineapple Mayweed
Purple Loosestrife
Ragwort
Reedmace
Silverweed
Spindle
Vetch
Water forget me not
Watermint
White Deadnettle
Wild Angelica

Mammals

Badger
Fox
Hare
Roe Deer
Muntjac
Rabbit
Water Vole

Reptiles and Amphibians

Common Lizard
Grass Snake
Eel

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Butterflies and Day Flying Moths

Brown Argus
 Comma
 Essex Skipper
 Gatekeeper
 Green-veined White
 Large White
 Meadow Brown
 Peacock
 Red Admiral
 Ringlet
 Small Skipper
 Small Tortoiseshell
 Small White

Moths Recorded

Humming Bird Hawk Moth
 Cinnabar

Butterflies to find in Castle Acre

	Month	Where	
White-letter			
Hairstreak	July	Elm Tree canopy and bramble	
Purple Hairstreak	July	Oak Tree canopy	
Green Hairstreak	April/May	Scrub and grassland	
Speckled Wood	Several broods	Scrub and woodland	
Small Heath	Several broods	Short grassland	
Small Copper	Two broods	Short grassland	
Common Blue	Two broods	Short grassland with Bird's Foot Trefoil	
Painted Lady	all summer	Village	
Orange Tip	April/May	Village	
Large Skipper	June/July	Village	
Holly Blue	Several broods	Village - holly ivy	
Clouded Yellow	late summer	grassland	migrant
Dingy Skipper	April/May	Short grassland	scarce

Day Flying moths to find in Castle Acre

	Month	Where
Silver Y	mostly summer	village

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Six-spot Burnet	July	grassland Wild Thyme, Marjoram on Castle	
Lace Border	Two broods	mound	scarce
Mother Shipton	May June	grassland	
Burnet Companion	May June	grassland	

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