

HERITAGE COUNTS 2017

East of England

Introduction

Heritage Counts 2017 is the sixteenth annual survey of the state of England's historic environment. This Regional Report is prepared by Historic England on behalf of the East of England Historic Environment Forum. This year's theme is Conservation Areas at 50, chosen to celebrate 50 years since the Civic Amenities Act 1967, which introduced the concept of Conservation Areas. Visitors to the [Heritage Counts website](#) can download the research projects commissioned to support this year's report and access the full set of local statistics detailing the historic environment for the East of England.

50 Years of Conservation Areas

Research commissioned for Heritage Counts 2017, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of conservation areas employs a novel approach to analysing trends in conservation areas by benchmarking performance against matched non-conservation areas (OCSI *et al*, 2017). The research provides a comprehensive review of conservation areas nationally using spatial data and national statistical indicators over time:

- Conservation areas form a vital part of England's built environment covering 2,938 sq. km or 2.2% of land and containing homes for over 6.9 million people. There are currently over 10,000 conservation areas in England since the very first designation of Stamford in Lincolnshire in 1967.
- The public support the principle of conservation areas. Three quarters of all adults (74%) in England believe Local Authorities should have the powers to restrict changes to buildings and streets in order to protect the character and appearance of a conservation area.
- Residents are willing to pay a premium to live in conservation areas. In 2016, house prices were on average 50% higher in town centre conservation areas compared to matched non-conservation areas, 33% higher in urban residential conservation areas and 22% higher in rural conservation areas relative to comparable non-conservation areas.
- The popularity of conservation areas is increasing. House prices in conservation areas are growing at a pace that outstrips growth in non-conservation areas. People want to live in conservation areas – they are generally examples of good place making.
- It is the success of conservation areas designation in preserving the historic character and architectural features of the conservation areas that adds value, rather than the designation itself. 88% of conservation area residents agreed or strongly agreed that “conservation area designation is effective in protecting the character and appearance of my area”. In fact, house prices are lower amongst conservation areas that are ‘at risk’ from neglect, damage or inappropriate development in comparison with conservation areas not at risk.
- Conservation areas are not barriers to growth. Conservation area designation does not imply no new development – in England 5.1% of transactions inside designated conservation areas are for new build compared with 6.9% in the country as a whole. Overall socio-economic conditions in conservation areas, as measured by indicators of good growth, are improving over time. A large number of conservation areas are outperforming matched non-conservation areas across different dimensions of good growth. Conservation areas are more stable and resilient compared to non-conservation areas according to the economic growth indicator.

Regional Findings – East of England

- The results from the East of England largely reflected national trends, but there are several specific findings to draw out from the OCSI survey.

Our suburbs and villages are attracting more highly educated people

- Suburban and Rural Conservation Areas in the East of England have seen a rise in the number of people educated to degree level, compared to non-designated areas.

People in our town centres and suburbs are more likely to work long hours

- According to census data, between 2001 and 2011 the number of people working more than 49 hours a week was higher in town centre and suburb conservation areas than non-conservation areas, but rural conservation areas in the east saw a quicker reduction in working hours on average.

Our town centre conservation areas are performing well

- Between 2005 and 2015, there was a fall in unemployment within all conservation areas in the East. However, our town centre conservation areas in Great Yarmouth, Ipswich, Waveney and Norwich City districts also have seen some of the greatest falls in unemployment area nationwide. Ipswich town centre conservation areas saw larger falls in unemployment than any other conservation areas in the country.

However, are conservation areas in the Eastern region becoming less affordable to live in?

- On average, the majority of conservation areas in the region saw substantial increases in average house price between 2005 and 2016. Overall, the majority of all conservation areas in England saw house price rises greater than similar non-designated areas. What isn't clear is whether being designated as a conservation area specifically contributes to these rises, or whether it is simply reflective of the quality and desirability of the areas more generally.

Case Study: Affordable housing and good growth in Mildenhall, Suffolk

16 Mill Street Mildenhall (grade II) is a former domestic building subsequently used as shop and commercial office that faces onto the road. Used for many years as the offices of a local builder's merchant, by 2011 it had been unoccupied 10 years and was in a very poor condition. Proposals were then put forward by the Havebury Housing Association to repair and convert the building to provide five affordable residential units. At the same time, the plot to the rear of the building, which contained several nineteenth and twentieth century outbuildings behind an earlier sixteenth century wing, was redeveloped to provide 12 affordable dwellings of between 2 and 4 bedrooms. This was arranged in a 'mews style' layout that also provided a pedestrian route through from the High Street, via the churchyard, to Mill Street.

The new buildings at the rear of the site are designed in a contemporary style, but utilise a pale clay brick to anchor them to the character of Mildenhall, and reference the materials used in the listed building to the front of the site. Despite initial concerns from English Heritage (now Historic England) about the demolition of the large nineteenth century workshop, and the potential for the development to harm the conservation area, negotiations with the local authority resulted in the size and massing of two units being reduced. This allowed them to better reflect the need to preserve the character of the area, and respect the setting of the Grade I listed St Mary's Church to the rear.

Overall, the scheme resulted in a new development of 100% affordable housing in a conservation area, with a good standard of design exhibited by the new buildings. It respects the importance of the church in its setting and contributes positively overall to the conservation area. Heritage benefits of the scheme were the removal of a heritage asset from the St Edmundsbury buildings at risk register, and the improvement of key frontages to Mill Street and the aspect facing the churchyard.

Image: The front, street facing elevation of 16 Mill Street. © Edward James



Image: The rear range of the listed building with the modern additions and repairs, the new domestic development to the left, and church tower also visible. © Edward James



Image: The development responds sensitively to its location, melding with its surroundings facing into the churchyard. © Edward James



Key developments in East of England

Heritage Action Zones

- The East of England region was awarded one of the first 'Heritage Action Zones' in the country, which is King's Lynn. Historic King's Lynn is an attractive place to live, work and visit. It occupies a strategic location on the road and rail network and, as the principal town in west Norfolk, it is planning for significant housing and economic growth.

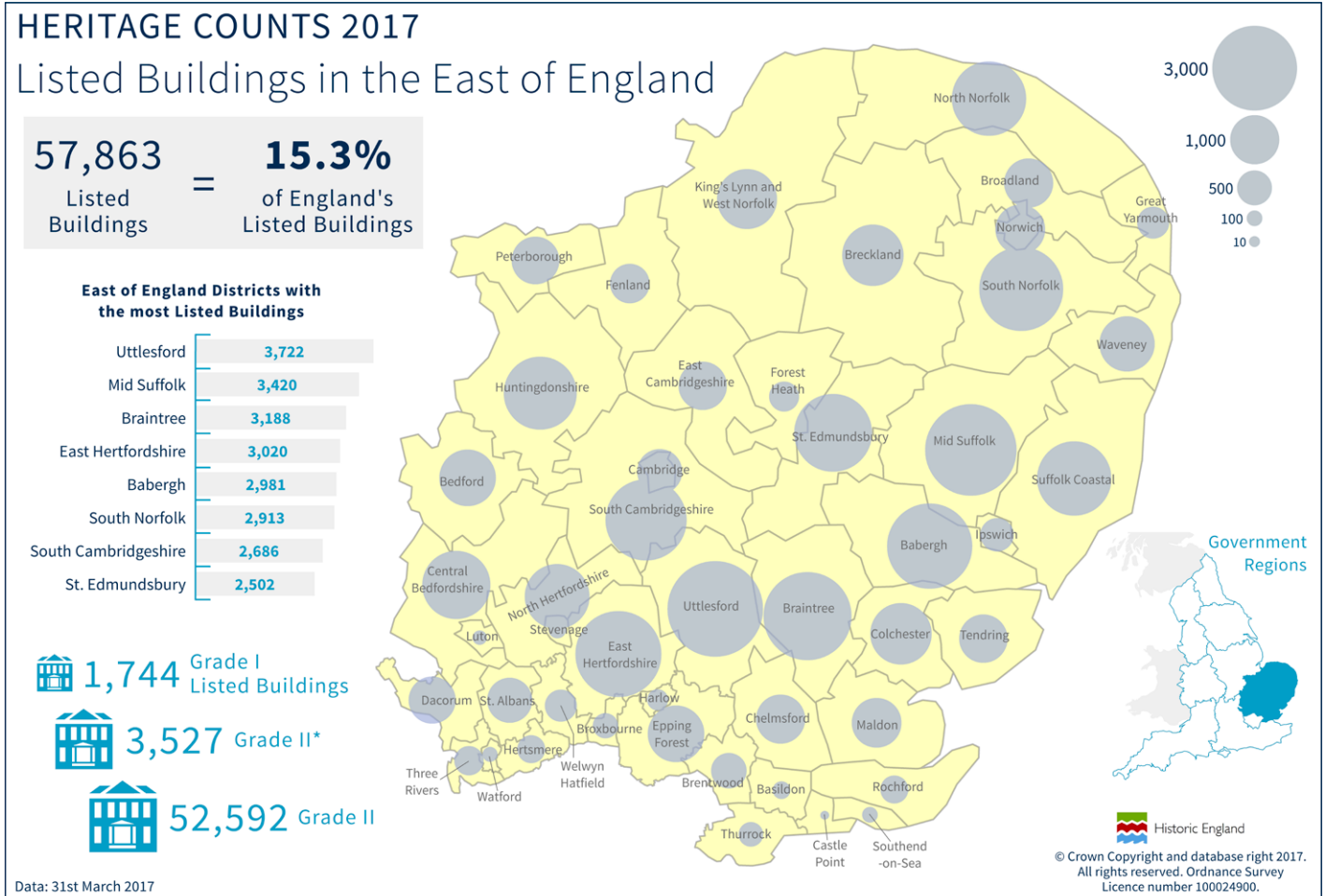
- The purpose of the Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) is to help new development respond to and respect the historic environment of King's Lynn, and use it as a basis to reinforce the economic, social and environmental vitality of this modern medieval town.
- The HAZ aims to turn what could be seen as a threat into an opportunity to show how well-designed new development which works with historic King's Lynn can reinforce the economic, social and environmental vitality of this modern medieval town.

Historic Environment Statistics for the East of England

Heritage Assets in the East

East of England Heritage Assets	2016 Totals	2017 Totals	Change
Scheduled Monuments	1,732	1,741	+9
Listed Buildings Grade I	1,751	1,744	-7
Listed Buildings Grade II*	3,523	3,527	+4
Listed Buildings Grade II	52,468	52,592	+124
Conservation Areas	1,235	1,211	-24
Registered Parks and Gardens	215	218	-3
Registered Battlefields	1	1	N/A
Protected Wrecks	2	2	N/A
Accredited Museums	*162	Unknown	N/A

* Data provided by Arts Council England, collated November 2016



Historic Environment Staff – East of England

Role	2006	2017	% change
Conservation Officer	96	69	-28.2%
Archaeological Officers	66	55	-16.7%
Total Staff	162	124	-23.5%

Heritage at Risk

- The number of heritage assets on the national Historic England Heritage at Risk register has dropped below 400 this year, with more than 100 of the entries that were on the register in 2015 now removed. The national register includes all designated heritage asset types at risk except secular grade II listed buildings (apart from in London, where grade II listed buildings are included). Grade II listed buildings at risk are in some cases included on local at risk registers administered by local planning authorities.
- This year, there has been particular success seen in removing churches from the register, with 32 being taken off since 2016. There has also been a steady reduction in the number of scheduled monuments on the register, dropping from 193 in 2015 to 175 in 2017. However, sadly it's not all good news for our heritage at risk, and this year has seen an increase in the number of secular buildings on the register. The number of Conservation Areas on the register also has unfortunately risen for another consecutive year, with these two factors perhaps indicating a worrying trend regarding the condition of many of our historic places in the face of the continuing challenging economic circumstances.

Attitudes to Conservation Areas in the East of England

- The findings of a YouGov poll of the general public and their attitudes towards the conservation areas, which has been undertaken to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Civic Amenities Act 1967, provide some valuable and very positive insight into the ways in which people appreciate their historic places. In the East of England, the poll reveals that 94% of people had heard of conservation area designations, with over 80% indicating that they understand and know about them to varying degrees. The poll also reveals that 73% of people in the East of England agree that councils should have the power to restrict changes to buildings and streets to protect the character and appearance of conservation areas. Indeed, nationally, people that live in conservation areas appear to like them, and are far more likely than those not living in one (75% to 58%) to rate the appearance of where they live as good.
- Some issues transcend designation boundaries, however, as the two top issues reported as negatively affecting the appearance of places were car parking (43% of people inside and outside conservation areas) and litter/fly tipping (38% of people inside areas and 41% outside). However, only 56% of people who live in conservation areas are aware that they live in one. This suggests a need for Historic England, and also local councils, to raise awareness amongst residential owners and businesses and provide more guidance and advice.
- Overall, the survey indicates that conservation areas are generally highly thought of and supported by the majority of people across the country. They remain a vital tool for local authorities to manage change to their special historic places, ensuring that new development contributes positively to the character of villages and towns, and protects the historic environment that is precious to local communities. The survey highlights also the need for local authorities to maintain the resources and staff expertise they need in order to appropriately manage that change in the face of a worrying fall of almost 30% in the number of conservation staff in the East of England since 2006.

This **Heritage Counts 2017** Regional Report is edited by Edward James and produced by Historic England on behalf of the East of England Historic Environment Forum (EoE HEF). The East of England HEF comprises the following organisations:

Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers; Association of Preservation Trusts; Campaign to Protect Rural England; East of England Civic and Amenity Societies; Heritage Lottery Fund; Historic England; Historic Houses Association; Institute of Historic Building Conservation; National Trust.



Historic England