

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT.**

### **Introduction.**

Hazelbury Bryan is a large parish of 997 hectares (2415 acres) in the south-west of the Blackmore Vale and is within the Blackmore Vale Landscape Character Area. It is bounded to the north by Ridge Drove, Smetherd Farm and Deadmoor Common, by Mount Pleasant Farm on the east, Park Gate to the South and a tributary of the River Lydden in the west, joining the Lydden itself south of Lyddon House. The village comprises seven separate hamlets with open fields between them, which is unusual, if not unique, in Dorset. They are : Kingston, Wonston, Pidney, Partway, Woodrow, Droop and Park Gate.

NDDC policy HB1 states that: “any development which would lead to the coalescence of the separate hamlets of Hazelbury Bryan will not be permitted”. Examples are the open area between Partway and Wonston and the field behind the Antelope pub separating Pidney from Partway/Woodrow. Environment advice note 3, Important Open Gaps states they should be preserved: “where there are settlements in close proximity and further built development would undermine their distinction”.

### **Geology.**

The geology is complex, with Oxford clay to the North around Smetherd, limestone around the church and cemetery, marl clay at Pidney, sandy soil at Wonston and Kingston and Kimmeridge clay at Park Gate. This gives rise to an undulating landscape crossed by many streams, for example the Selwaie brook which flows through Hazel Wood and crosses beneath the road at the bottom of Silly Hill, eventually to join the Lydden.

### **Archaeology.**

Close to the stream in Hazel Wood is the “Holy Well”, a registered Historic Monument excavated in 1999 by the East Dorset Antiquarian Society. This area is called “Halliwell” on the 1607 map and “Hollywell” on the 1838 tithe map. It is a natural spring enclosed by a low wall and with a paved area alongside, so it must have been of importance to local people.

The County Archaeologist has produced a very detailed Historic Environment Record (HER) of the parish with accompanying maps. This shows all the known archaeological sites, listed buildings and other buildings of note as well as ancient field systems and medieval drove roads.

### **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).**

Alners Gorse is a 14.4 ha. nature reserve owned and managed by Butterfly Conservation and forming the southern part of the Blackmore Vale Commons and Moors SSSI. It includes associated meadows which fall within our parish including those just south of Smetherd Farm and the ancient Fifehead/Hazelbury Boundary hedge. This SSSI is a unique remnant of relatively intact clay vale grasslands with unimproved commons and moors found nowhere else in this part of North Dorset. It hosts a number of pairs of breeding nightingales, the threatened marsh fritillary butterfly and many other species.

### **Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and Ancient Woodland.**

There are a few small SNCIs: Cockcrow Copse, Thorncroft Copse,, Locketts Copse and Marsh Copse. Also a small Ancient Woodland NW of Mount Pleasant Farm.

## **Trees and Hedges**

### **Trees**

Some individual trees or groups of trees are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). These include, for example, the trees between Alec's field and the adjoining Keep field, those bordering the road opposite the Antelope and the large Lime tree alongside the Antelope. The full list is held by NDDC. In addition, the trees in the Wonston Conservation Area are protected. If NDDC gives permission for a dead or dangerous tree covered by a TPO to be felled, it must be replaced.

Ancient or Veteran trees are defined as those with a diameter of more than 1 metre at breast height, including those with hollow trunks or limbs. Several are known within the parish. A map showing the location of TPO protected trees is attached.

### **Hedges**

A feature of the Blackmore Vale is the irregularly shaped fields enclosed by thick hedges. Many of these hedges are ancient and species rich and are classed as 'important' which means they are protected and the local planning authority (LPA) will refuse permission to remove them. Hazelbury Bryan is extremely fortunate in that there is a very detailed map of the parish published in 1607, drawn by the well-known map-maker Ralph Treswell for the Earl of Northumberland who at that time owned the parish. The original is at Alnwick Castle. It shows the all the field boundaries at that time. Many of these survive today and are shown on the HER map.

A species-rich hedgerow is defined as having 5 or more native woody species in a 30m stretch. An example is the hedge on the southern side of the overgrown lane between The Beeches house and the former farmyard which has 7 woody species. This lane is shown on the 1607 map as continuing much further on than it does today. The hedges between Alec's Field and the Keep and those south of Smetherd Farm are also on the 1607 map, a section of which is attached.

### **Hazel Wood.**

This is a 5.74ha mixed deciduous woodland owned and managed by the Woodland Trust. It was planted in 1999 to mark the Millennium, within old field boundaries of mature hedges. The southern boundary is a narrow strip of ancient woodland traversed by the Selwaie brook. A pond was created at the same time, to commemorate the Millennium. The wood is traversed by a public footpath from Kingston and the whole wood is Open Access, with a number of informal paths.

### **Rights of Way.**

There are 41 public Rights of Way in the parish, of which 5 are Bridleways, and one is a Restricted Byway. Several are shown on the HER as medieval drove roads. They include Coney Lane, which runs between Wonston and Pidney, and also Drum Lane from Wonston. Ridge drove, BR35 on the boundary with Kings Stag, was "the waie to Sherborne" according to the 1607 map, while FP30 Normead drove, a lane running south from West Lane, is now only designated as a FP.

The footpath network is extensively used, particularly the paths between the various hamlets, which enable walkers to avoid the winding, narrow roads. Some are designated as important pedestrian routes in the Neighbourhood Plan. A number of the footpaths have self-closing pedestrian gates installed some years back under a "walk to school" initiative. These allow use of the network by those unable to climb stiles and people with baby buggies or mobility vehicles.

Geraldine Hobson.



**Legend**

- TPO\_Individual
- TPO\_Group\_Point
- ▨ TPO\_Woodland
- TPO\_Group\_Outline
- TPO Areas
- ▨ Conservation Areas

