

Welcome and thank you for coming to see how we are progressing with the Winchfield Neighbourhood Plan Revision.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan? Neighbourhood Plans allow communities to set out a positive vision for how they want their area to develop over the next 25 years. The Plans cannot prevent development, but they can help to ensure that new homes, recreational spaces and commercial buildings are built in the right places.

Winchfield has a Plan – why revise it? Our Plan was ‘made’ in 2017 but since that time things have changed. In 2020 Hart District Council adopted a new Local Plan and some of the policies that we have in our current Neighbourhood Plan are no longer aligned with the Local Plan or changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. Revisions to our Plan are therefore necessary to ensure that it reflects current circumstances and is as up to date as possible.

Winchfield Parish Council is the ‘owner’ of the revised Plan, but a Working Group was appointed early in 2020 to take things forward. The Working Group comprises six residents who, for nearly two years, have volunteered their skills and time to work on this revision.

The Working Group has, from previous Community Engagement Meetings, collected your thoughts, ideas, wishes and suggestions to ensure that the revised Plan clearly reflects what you – residents of Winchfield - want to be used in future planning decisions. Being involved in the revision process gives you the opportunity to shape the size, form, and character of the village in the future.

The revised Plan provides an opportunity to suggest new policies and projects with the support of the community. When the time comes our Plan will be scrutinised by an Independent Examiner appointed by the District Council. Every policy must meet specific conditions, be backed-up by ‘evidence’, meet legal requirements AND be supported by residents.

If you would like to follow our progress, notes of meetings held by the Steering Group and the Working Group are available on the Parish Council website.

Going forward we hope the time line will be:

Community Engagement meeting, last one before the Plan starts the journey through the required legal process.	19 th June 2022 (tbc)
Pre-submission consultation and expert review of Plan (usually by a consultant who is a qualified Examiner) Reg 14 Amendments as necessary	May – June 2022
Submission of Plan to Hart District Council - Reg 15	May – August 2022
Pre-submission consultation of draft Plan, (Reg 16)	September – November 2022
Appointment of Examiner	October 2022
Independent Examination	November – December 2022
Post examination amendments as necessary to prepare the Plan for Referendum	January 2023
Referendum	February / March 2023
Make the Plan – Plan becomes ‘adopted’ by HDC	March 2023

The revised Plan should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It must also meet well-defined legal requirements, be aligned with the National Planning Policy Framework, and policies in the Hart Local Plan. New Neighbourhood Plan policies do not need to repeat existing higher-level policies but instead allow local matters to be addressed.

At previous community engagement meetings you have seen, and given your support to, our Vision and Objectives which are:

Our Vision

Winchfield, with its ancient and unusual dispersed settlement pattern is, in 2037, a vibrant, attractive village with its own unique character and ambience and sits at the very centre of Hart District. Our residents have embraced the opportunities offered by modern technology enabling them to live and work in a semi-rural and agricultural environment. The Grade 1 listed Norman Church and other historic buildings are cherished and used by the community; protected for future generations. The historic environment sits in harmony with several small, fully sustainable developments of sympathetically designed new housing which have enabled younger families to live in the village.

Our quiet, narrow lanes, bridle paths, well maintained network of rural footpaths and the Basingstoke Canal welcome residents and visitors alike, offering space for healthy outdoor leisure pursuits or quiet enjoyment of the peaceful rural scenery. Winchfield is the healthy heart and lungs of Hart; the physical and mental benefits of access to rural space enjoyed in our village contribute significantly to the overall diversity and opportunities this District has to offer. We value and protect the status of Hart as ‘one of the best places to live in the UK’

Our Objectives

- 1. To encourage, support, conserve, protect and enhance our Natural Environment*
- 2. To maintain, sustain and enhance our Historic Environment*
- 3. To influence the sustainability of our Built Environment for the benefit of all parish residents*
- 4. To promote health and wellbeing*
- 5. To support our local economy and sustain our agricultural heritage*
- 6. To ensure that our community thrives and that we respond to the needs of our residents. To value and cherish our village and promote a strong and vibrant community*
- 7. To introduce, promote and monitor safety measures to improve traffic management*

8. To support Hart District Council initiatives to become a carbon neutral district by 2040

The Plan now focuses on four themes which encompass those objectives:

1. Natural Environment,
2. Historic Environment,
3. Built Environment,
4. Parish and Community

At the last meeting we showed you information and draft policies which support those four themes. Today we are focussed on Parish and Community.

At the meeting on 19th June you will see, and be able to comment on, all the policies which will be in the draft Neighbourhood Plan Consultation document.

Today we thought you might like to see some astounding facts about just how important Winchfield is, not just to us, but to the whole district and the part we can play in Hart becoming carbon neutral by 2040.

WOW.....WINCHFIELD'S OUTSTANDING WILDLIFE

- Hampshire, the 7th largest county in the UK, has an area close to 40,000 hectares (ha). The Hart District has an area of 21,000ha and a population density approaching 5 persons/ha. The Parish of Winchfield has an area of just 705ha and a sparse population of close to 1 person/ha - **the "Rural Heart of Hart"**.

- We have researched historical and current national and regional data bases and archives, the records of several Political Counties and Districts, publications from HMG Departments, consultants' reports, library resources (both hard-copy and digital), scientific papers, the outputs from learned and specialist societies, the national wildlife charities and species focus groups (including "non-alarmist" journalese) in order to accurately describe the flora and biodiversity heritage now present within the Parish of Winchfield.
- *Tiny in area we may be - just 3% of the area of Hart District and only 0.2% of the County - but Winchfield is a floristic treasure-chest and a haven for biodiversity of importance not just locally but also regionally and nationally. The Evidence Base is quantitative, unequivocal and "Quite remarkable"!*
- It is the soils, climate, ancestral and current farming practices and enlightened land management alongside the historically constrained population density which have combined to provide the pristine mosaic of natural and semi-natural habitats and ecological niches for our modern-day biodiversity.
- Large areas of the Parish are now given Special Status for protection and/or conservation either regionally (by Hart District Council) or nationally (by Natural England) because of their wildlife biodiversity. **The 34 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) together with the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designated Basingstoke Canal and Conservation area, together, cover close to 200ha - i.e. about one-third of the Parish landscape. These Sites contain habitats and features which cannot be recreated; they must be protected.**

- Since 1970, the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) has documented 12 botanical inventories which have included Winchfield. **A total of 2,700 recordings have identified 680 different species of wild flowering plants within the Parish - representing almost 50% of the County's total botanical diversity!**
- A total of 102 species of our wild plants (i.e. 15% of the Parish total) are classified by the BSBI/HBIC (Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre) to be in some way "**Nationally Threatened or Vulnerable**" or "**Having Restricted Distribution**" or they are "**Rare or Scarce Within Hampshire**" and so, in each case, *these species are in need of urgent and ongoing protection and conservation.*
- The BSBI also list 46 other plant species found in the Parish to be "**Uncommon elsewhere in North Hampshire**" including one species, only discovered during 2021/2022, which is "**Very rare and nationally near-threatened**" and so it remains under guarded and diligent monitoring.
- **Woodlands designated as "Ancient"** are those which have been continually wooded for 300-400 years; they are a national treasure and cover just 2.5% of the UK. **They are irreplaceable and cannot be recreated.** They are outstanding in biological and cultural value and have evolved into unique combinations of plants, fungi, insects and microorganisms.
- Forty years ago, experts identified 100 species of wild plants which were strongly associated in the Southern Counties with woodlands of ancient origin. **Approximately two-thirds (65) of these "Indicator Species" are today present in Winchfield** - highlighting the significance of the Parish for the survival of this nationally-cherished habitat.

- Back in 1905, historical maps and records told us that 64ha (9%) of the Parish was Ancient Woodland. We have calculated from HBIC data that, **today, the area under Ancient Woodlands of oak, beech and chestnut totals 61ha. It is admirable and remarkable just how successive generations of Winchfield's farmers and landowners have valued, managed and conserved this treasured Parish woodland mosaic.**
- The Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) provide habitats for species designated as **"Nationally Scarce" or "County Scarce or Rare"** - they are: Great Crested Newt, Hazel Dormouse, Bird's Nest Orchid, a Carex sedge and a Dipsacus teasel.
- A total of 15 "Specialist Partner Organisations" contribute to the HBIC data bases. Between them, they rate **20 species recorded within Winchfield to be "Sensitive and Deserving of Protection"**. These records extend the HBIC status of **"Notable and Protected Species"** listed within the Parish to far beyond the BSBI records on flora - they are (with numbers of species within parentheses): **birds (96), flowering plants (54), mosses and liverworts (4), amphibians and reptiles (4), butterflies and moths (84), beetles and bugs (37), dragonflies and damselflies (4), wasps, bees and ants (6), true flies (1), bats (12), and the hedgehog, Euro otter, Eurasian badger and polecat.**

A remarkable total of 306 species from 1,351 recordings.

- In summary - **the biodiversity currently visible to the naked eye within the Parish as documented by more than 4,000 records taken by the HBIC, BSBI and 12 other Specialist Organisations and considered to be in some way "Special" includes at least 1,000 species. A quite staggering statistic!**

- Just 8% of the land area of England is devoted to locations which have national status as "Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)". These unique and very special places are designated to be the finest sites for wildlife, supporting rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features. **It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb or destroy either an area designated SSSI or the wildlife within it.**
- There are 118 designated SSSI in Hampshire; 16 of those are in Hart covering 2,696ha i.e. 12.8% of the District. The Basingstoke Canal SSSI is 51km long and was re-designated as SSSI in 1995. 21km of this critically important canal are within Hart and 5km are the sinuous route meandering along the SE border of the Parish.
- Water chemistry changes gradually along the length of the canal - from base-rich in the West to acidic in the East; this transition is unique for canals in England. The associated aquatic and marginal vegetation mirror this chemical gradient. Together with the adjacent towpath, hedges and Conservation Area, the canal provides a haven for biodiversity, and for aquatic and terrestrial species alike and including those for which only part of their life cycle is in water.
- There are at least 20 "Key Views" of the Parish landscapes from the towpath; deep shade from overhanging trees is rare; few domestic dwellings border the canal and so noise and light pollution are seldom troublesome; angling pressures are slight and seasonal; boat traffic is light with no commercial or roving or fixed trading permits; all powered craft have a walking pace speed limit of 4 mph.
- The 5km towpath facilitates seamless connectivity with the 9km network of trans-Parish footpaths and bridleways offering quiet enjoyment of Winchfield and the biodiversity within it.

- We have calculated from County Councils data that (pre-Covid pandemic) **visitor numbers to the canal towpath averaged between 3,900 and 4,500 persons per SSSI mile per month.** We know, from the take up of the 'Winchfield Walks' leaflets, just how significantly the numbers of visitors who park at the Barley Mow has increased, the footfall pressures on habitats and wildlife are already intense.
- The universal experience in the National Parks and in 70 or so of the Nature Reserves within our neighbouring counties is that "People bring Problems": anti-social behaviour, litter, inconsiderate parking, noise, accidental and criminal damage, trespass, poaching, theft.....the list goes on! **The future safety of our rural parish and heritage of wildlife biodiversity will depend on all of us being aware of rural criminality or anti-social behaviour and reporting it to the rural police teams on 101 (999 if it is a crime in progress) or using the QR code.**

You can take a picture of this and keep it on your phone.

We are also collecting information on road safety issues and accidents. If you witness an accident or a traffic incident PLEASE report it to the police. Speed limits in the village, which concern many residents, will only be reduced if there is sufficient evidence to justify it.

- Not all of our "botanicals" are welcome! A total of 18 Invasive Non-Native Species [INNS] have been recorded over the past 20 years. In abundance, three species dominate - Rhododendron, the Turkey Oak and Himalayan (Indian) Balsam. Landowners are encouraged to adopt cultural practices and habitat stewardship which seek to eradicate these INNS on a Parish-wide scale. In addition, there are "live" records listing 16 INNS other than plants: 10 birds, the Harlequin Ladybird, Signal Crayfish, Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner, Fallow Deer and the national plague which is the Grey Squirrel. All of these are "bio-threats".
- The Parish Council has “signed-up” as a pioneering and enthusiastic Local Authority within the Hart District to the **“National Tree Charter”** administered by the Woodland Trust and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). The ambition is to enlighten residents about the importance of trees, wooded areas and hedgerows within the Parish to our wellbeing, the sustainability of biodiversity around us and for combating climate change.
- **You have recently received a ‘Free Trees for Winchfield’ letter – please join in and take up this offer if you can.**

Trees and Hedges

The two maps show you where the wooded areas were around 1932 (black and white) and in 2022 (colour) which also shows all the trees which are designated and protected with tree preservation orders. Sadly most of the ancient oak trees which are numbered as ‘veteran’ trees are not in good condition but you can see that Winchfield has managed to maintain most of its woodland and hedgerows. There are gaps and it would be very beneficial if some of the hedge gaps could be replanted to provide continuous wildlife corridors.

Would you like to offer a few hours of your time for tree or hedge planting if volunteers are needed? Please use the 'feedback form' and make sure we have your name and contact details on it.

Climate Change and Carbon Neutrality

In April 2021, Hart District Council committed to becoming a carbon neutral authority by 2035 (brought forward from 2040) and a carbon neutral district by 2040. The Hart Climate Change Action Plan 2020 – 2023 sets out the process by which the Council will become a net zero carbon emitter. **“Reduction of CO2 is at the front and centre of our policies and formal decision making.”**

The Council has set out a target for 2020-2023 covering the whole district which includes a target for neighbourhood plans to include policies supporting:

- renewable energy,
- water and energy efficiency,
- minimising flood risk and
- promoting sustainable travel.

Winchfield has already drafted policies and development design considerations in our Plan to support these requirements.

The major contribution of Winchfield, however, is in its capacity as the "green lungs" of Hart. While this provides invaluable health and recreational opportunities for the residents and those of nearby communities, it makes a very significant contribution to carbon capture for the district. **Trees are the ultimate carbon capture and storage machines, woods and forests absorb atmospheric carbon and lock it up for centuries.** They do this through photosynthesis, the entire woodland ecosystem contributes including the living wood, roots, leaves, deadwood, surrounding soils and its associated vegetation.

Trees not only absorb carbon, they also help prevent flooding, reduce the temperature, reduce pollution and keep the soil nutrient-rich. Trees are our most powerful weapon, the ultimate multi-taskers in the fight against climate change. **Just 13% of the UK's land area is covered by trees (compared with an EU average of 37%). More trees are needed and we need to protect the ones we already have in Hart. We support initiatives for planting new trees and hedgerows or work to maintain the viability of ancient woodland.**

Our Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) describes how the Winchfield landscape comprises many stable and long-established natural and semi-natural habitats including hedges, orchards, individual trees outside of woodlands, heathland, grasslands, and wetland - all of which can sequester and store important amounts of carbon as well as providing benefits for biodiversity.

The largest carbon sequestration rates in semi-natural UK habitats are in native broadleaved woodlands, Winchfield has 61 hectares of such woodland. Analysis of the data shows that **Winchfield is not only a potential sink for its entire carbon output but the native broadleaf woodlands alone are making a significant contribution as a sink for the capture of carbon emissions from the whole of Hart District.**

Winchfield will support, and wherever possible enhance, all Local Plan policies relating to reducing the impact of climate change with specific attention to:

- supporting renewable energy by use of solar panels, ground or air source heat pumps or current technologies,
- encouraging any new building application to meet or exceed renewable or low carbon energy technologies,
- reducing energy consumption through sustainable approaches to building design and layout, such as through the use of low-impact materials and high energy efficiency,

- enhancing permeability in outdoor space by use of appropriate landscape materials and planting of hedges in preference to fencing to assist land drainage and minimise flooding,
- encouraging rainwater recycling by use of water butts and other storage options,
- encouraging walking or cycling whenever possible by ensuring that footpaths, signage and road markings are maintained and appropriate.

Are there other initiatives you think we should consider?

If another solar farm proposal was submitted would you support it?

Please use a post it note to tell us what you think

In the Neighbourhood Plan we can include ‘community aspirations’. These are not formal policies but they are ideas which could benefit our community if residents wanted to adopt them.

These are some ideas:

- Work with our neighbouring Parish of Dogmersfield to create a foot / cycle path to the Hart Leisure Centre.
- Create a circular walk within the Parish suitable for wheelchairs and push chairs.
- Create an area of land which will be available for community events.
- Investigate whether it is possible to make a safe cycle path to the station from the Church / Bagwell Lane and from the Hurst
- Assist landowners, at their request, by volunteering to help with woodland maintenance.

- Implement additional recycling collections in the village. Many items can be recycled but not by Hart, we could help reduce landfill by collecting toothbrushes, toothpaste tubes, coffee pods, ink cartridges, plastic pots / containers e.g. yoghurt cartons and fruit or vegetables trays, batteries, used stamps.
- There are also significant funds available, held by Hart District Council, for a major project in the Parish so please think about what would make a difference to residents and be a community asset to Winchfield, it has to be a 'new' project, not repairs or maintenance.

Do you have any other suggestions? If so please use a post it note to add them to this list.

If you would like to get involved with any of these ideas, please talk to us or write a note on your feedback form – please include your name and contact information.

Draft Winchfield Parish Council minutes re: Local Green Space

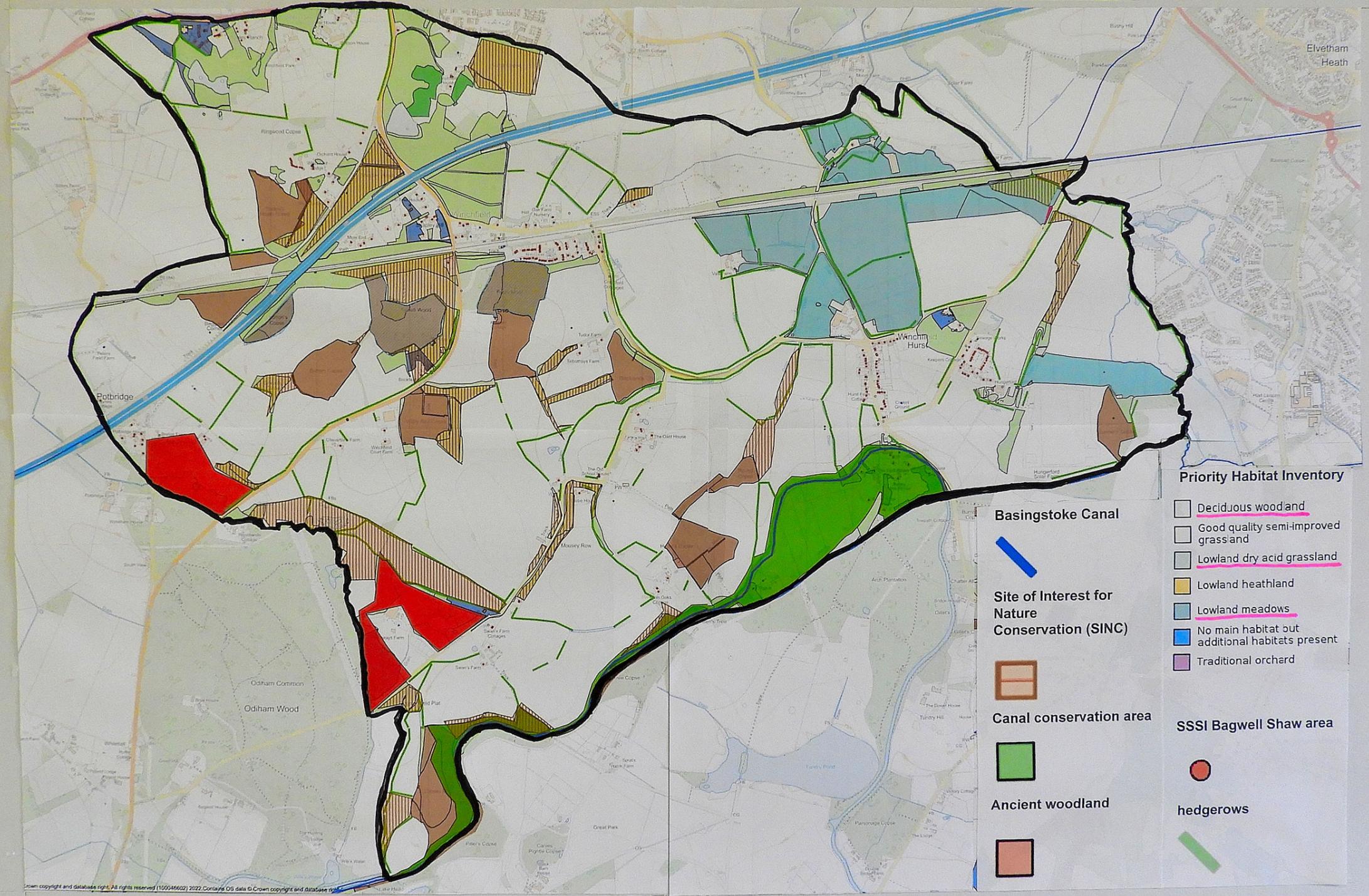
'Winchfield Parish Council has decided to withdraw the Local Green Space proposals for all the proposed sites in their entirety from consideration as part of the revised Neighbourhood Plan.'

A revision to a Neighbourhood Plan is an ongoing and evolving process, with formal public consultations on the draft Plan scheduled for later this year. Not only can the Plan be influenced by the local community but also by environmental data and studies that become available to the Parish Council at any given time. Based on information recently made available, the Parish Council is far more assured that all the land in question will remain undeveloped.

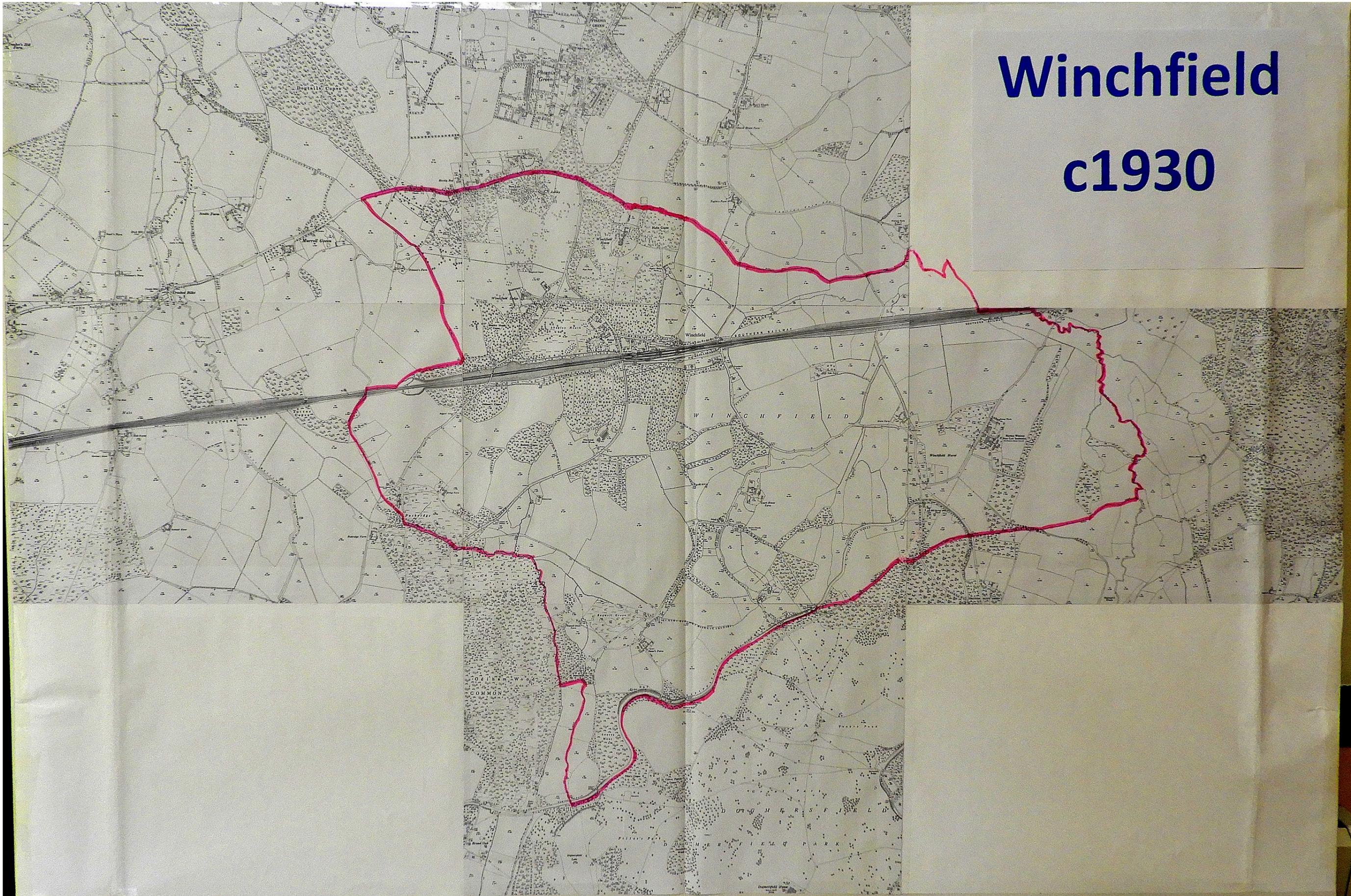
As a fundamental part of our deliberations, the Parish Council took account of three key elements:

- Firstly, our understanding that there is no intention to develop the proposed sites*
- Secondly, the feedback and comments we received at the public engagement meetings, and*
- Thirdly, the content of the detailed technical reports which were recently made public by Hart District Council, which it had commissioned to evaluate all the various planning considerations associated with the Shapley Heath Garden Village project.'*

Carbon storage and sequestration – why Winchfield is such an important carbon sink for Hart District



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Winchfield

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We are looking for photos to use in the Plan. If you have any favourite pictures of Winchfield that you would allow us to use please send them to cstrudwickwinchfieldndp@gmail.com

Thank you