

Beeston, Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Neighbourhood Development Plan

2017 - 2030

December 2017



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1.1 Foreword

The Beeston, Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Neighbourhood Development Plan has been produced in response to the Localism Act 2011, which aimed to shift power from Central Government to local people.

The Neighbourhood Plan, along with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part 1 of which has been adopted; Part 2 is presently being prepared) forms the basis of planning policy for the area to 2030.

Change is inevitable, but part of the task of both Residents and the Parish Councils is to ensure that any such changes are for the better. Equally, whilst there is a desire to protect rural settings, it must be recognised that there will be a need for development of an appropriate nature in the near and long term future.

This Neighbourhood Plan is not just aimed at the community, but is also part of the statutory planning process, containing Policies that the community wishes to see implemented with respect to land-use.

1.2 Acknowledgements

It is appropriate to give thanks to the Community Development Foundation, which has given grant support for this project, to Cheshire West and Chester Council, and to Cheshire Community Action, which has provided advice throughout to the Working Group. The Working Group is also indebted to all community members who have contributed to this project.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 *Neighbourhood Plans*

A Neighbourhood Plan is a statutory document setting out the vision for an area and planning policies for land-use and development of the area. These policies are local policies that are consistent with and support the Cheshire West and Chester Local (Plan Part 1) and the 'saved' policies of the Chester City Local Plan. Cheshire West and Chester Council is preparing the Local Plan Part 2.

The formal requirements for the Neighbourhood Plan are set out in the Localism Act and include a Referendum in the designated Plan Area where at least 50% of respondents must agree to accept the plan before it becomes 'Made'.

This Plan is now part of the statutory development plan and its policies carry equal weight to those in the Local Plan and shall be used in making decisions on planning applications. The Neighbourhood Plan focuses on land-use and development, but in doing so also considers directly related and relevant issues including transport, community activities/assets and the local environment.

2.2 *A Neighbourhood Plan for Beeston, Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall*

The Beeston, Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Neighbourhood Plan includes policies that seek to steer and guide land-use planning decisions in the area. There is a statutory requirement that Chester West and Chester Council have regard to them in considering development proposals and developing future plans and policies.

Where neighbouring parishes feel that they have geographical and communal similarities they can apply for approval of a single Neighbourhood Plan Area. Both Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston Parish Councils feel that there are strong common links between the Parishes and accordingly successfully applied to have a Neighbourhood Plan Area designated that covers both parishes.

The area is predominantly agricultural in nature, interspersed with low density housing in small rural clusters and a few small businesses. The whole length

of the border between the parishes is an important corridor that carries the Chester to Crewe railway line, the Shropshire Union Canal and the River Gowy. This valley corridor gives both parishes strong common interests in terms of tourism, housing and commercial activities whereby developments on either side of the corridor could have a very significant effect on the adjacent parish. The Neighbourhood Plan is felt to be essential to ensure that future development is in keeping with the character of the whole area and is sustainable; particularly in terms of the well-being of residents and protection of the quality of both current and future built and natural environments.

The Parish Councils already represent their parishes on a variety of issues. However, the development of a Neighbourhood Plan has enabled the Parish Councils to canvass the community more comprehensively on a whole range of issues, thereby obtaining views and understanding that might not otherwise be forthcoming.

There had already been some proactive steps taken in Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Parish, particularly the production of a Parish Plan in 2006 (a copy of the Parish Plan can be viewed on the Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Parish Council website at: <http://www.tiverton-cheshire.org.uk/ParishPlan/>). Whilst that Plan (which will continue in use) contained many more action plans and broader issues than a Neighbourhood Plan, it did assist the Parish Council in identifying the key planning and development issues that are re-addressed in this Plan.

It is anticipated that the Neighbourhood Plan will also be used as a tool to identify and support the kinds of projects or businesses, within the Parishes, that might seek to benefit from programmes and funding available for rural regeneration projects.

The broad indications are that residents care deeply about the villages in which they live, and wish to play a role in supporting their community and protecting their local environment. There is scope to build on those activities that already take place. It is intended that the Neighbourhood Plan Policies will help to create a framework to inform and further involve residents in activities and issues in which they have expressed an interest. For example, the expression of support by many residents for taking part in environmental projects will, hopefully, engage a wider group of residents than those who have already participated.

The Neighbourhood Plan could also be used to inform funding organisations by providing relevant information to support applications for grant funding, for proposed community development activities or projects.

2.3 *Planning Regulations*

A key requirement of a Neighbourhood Plan is that it must be consistent with national and local planning policies. At national level, the Department of Communities and Local Government sets policy and, in 2012, a National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was issued that defined broad and specific guidelines for all planning policy in England and how that should be applied. Care has been taken to ensure that this Neighbourhood Plan is consistent with National Planning Policy.

3. BEESTON, TIVERTON AND TILSTONE FEARNALL

3.1 *A Brief History*

Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston Parishes encompass three villages that lie 10 miles east of the county town of Chester. For administrative purposes the Parishes are within the Tattenhall Ward of Cheshire West and Chester Council

The Parish boundaries extend to either side of the River Gowy, which runs alongside the Shropshire Union Canal. To the north of Tiverton lies Tarporley and to the East of Beeston is the village of Bunbury. To the West, 4 miles away, lies the village of Tattenhall. The villages are dissected by busy major routes – the A49, which leads to Shropshire in the South and the M56 in the North, and the A51, which leads to Crewe and the M6 in the South East and to Chester in the North West.

The villages sit on the Cheshire Plain, with many areas enjoying views of Beeston Castle, and the Peckforton Hills. Part of 'The Sandstone Trail', a long distance walking route, also runs through the Parishes and the area provides gentle undulating walks in one of the most attractive areas of the Cheshire landscape.

There are parts of all three villages that were designated in the Chester City Local Plan as Conservation Areas (ENV35-41), several listed buildings, and two

sites of National Importance, Beeston Iron Lock on the Shropshire Union Canal and, Beeston Castle (ENV31) which are both Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

There are a number of historical reference points for the villages, from their inclusion in the Domesday Book, participation in the Civil War, and in later times, the stationing of American troops, during the First and Second World Wars. There have also been a number of prominent families, some of who left their mark with the construction of various large country houses. John Tollemache, responsible for Peckforton Castle nearby, was perhaps the best known local benefactor, who, during the 19th Century, contributed amongst other things, to the construction of the Parish church, The Methodist Chapel, a School and Tiverton Village Hall.

The Shropshire Union Canal (formerly The Chester Canal) also runs through the parishes. Construction of the Canal was begun in the late 18th Century as a link to the Midlands, but it also provided an important stopping off point for the area, serving local farms and villages with supplies. By the mid nineteenth century the canal began to lose out to the Railways - in this case the Chester to Crewe main line.

The establishment of Beeston and Tarporley Station in Beeston Parish, just outside the Tiverton Parish boundary, allowed local dairy farms to begin shipping their milk out of the area. The station was closed in the 1960s but it is clear that there is considerable local support over a wide area for its re-opening.

The area of the three villages bordering the Shropshire Union Canal, the River Gowy and the Chester to Crewe railway line was designated as an Area of Nature Conservation Value in the Chester City Local Plan (ENV29) and is for the most part a designated wildlife corridor. The area also contains within it a Site of Regional or County Importance (ENV33).

Beeston village contains a National Monument in the form of the mount and Castle which was built in the 13th Century and is a visitor attraction managed by English Heritage.

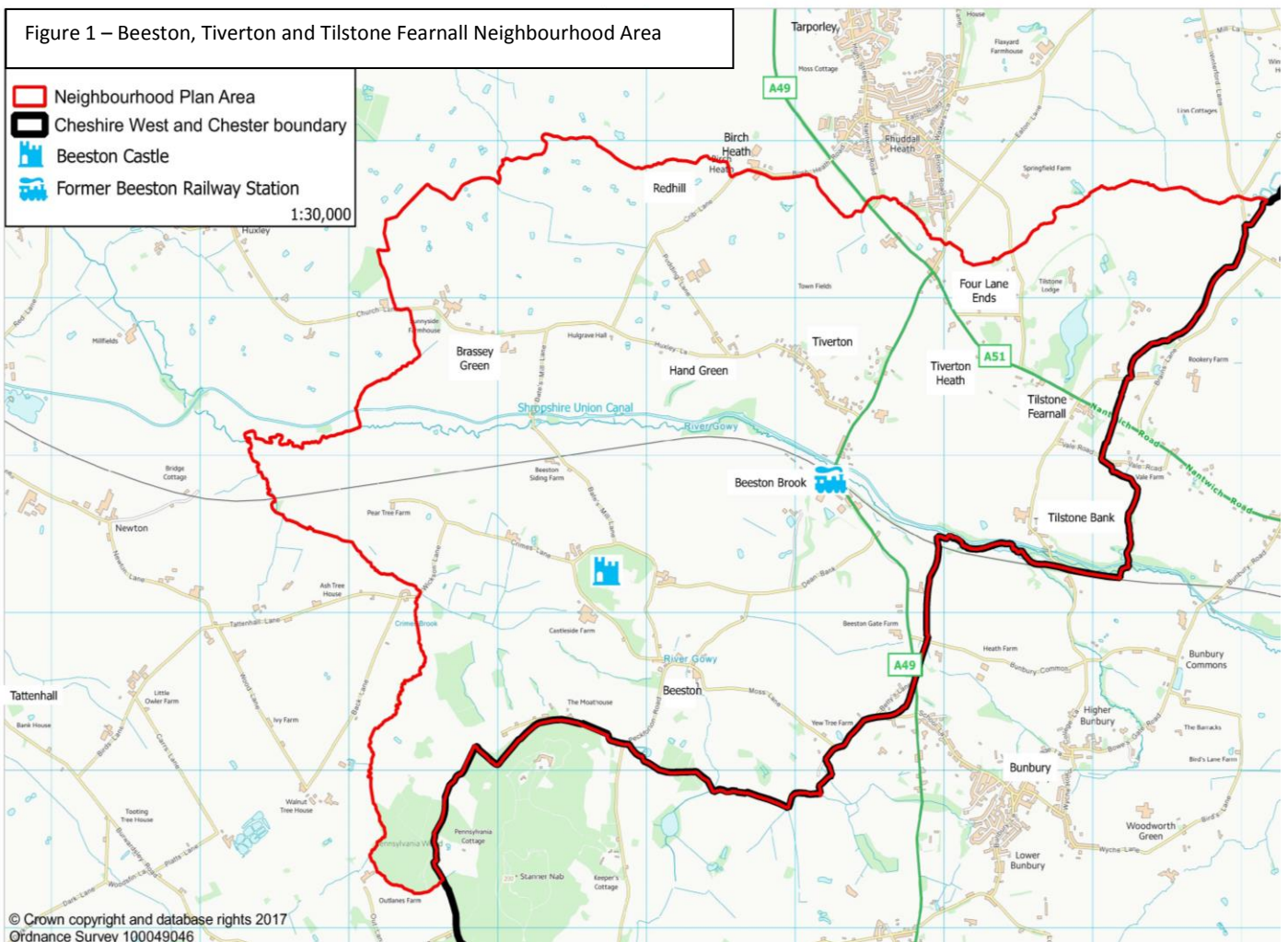
Residents from the Parishes commute to work to a variety of places in the North West and Shropshire - Chester, Liverpool, Winsford, Crewe and Shrewsbury to name but a few. Commuters rely heavily upon the motorcar; the 2011 census statistics revealed that no fewer than 140 residents drove to

work by car/van and only 6 used a bus. However, there is only a limited once weekly bus service in the area (that goes to Chester and Nantwich).

Residents are, by a large majority, concerned to protect the character and “peace and tranquillity” of the villages. However, residents do support housing and small business developments of an appropriate size and location.

3.2 Village Demographic

2011 census statistics indicate a population of 376 for Tiverton, 107 for Tilstone Fearnall and 188 for Beeston. The population is spread across the Parishes, within the three villages and in surrounding hamlets – Tiverton Heath, Tilstone Bank, Beeston Brook, Brassey Green, Hand Green, Redhill and Four Lane Ends. A map showing the Plan area and settlements is set out at Figure1, below.



3.3 *The Villages' Economy*

The local economy is largely agricultural. The three villages are surrounded by grazing farmland mostly owned by the Tollemache and Leverhulme estates.

However, there are other businesses including a boat hire/fitting and servicing yard, a small showroom supplying soft furnishings, a long established family run servicing/repairs garage and an antiques showroom. A number of self-employed/sole traders, also work and trade from the villages. The 2011 census statistics revealed 235 people in employment, 66 of whom worked mainly at or from home.

The nearest services and local shops are in Tarporley and Bunbury.

3.4 *Community Facilities*

The villages have no local school. Tilstone Fearnall Primary School, which formerly also catered for children of Tiverton, was closed in 1990, due to a "falling roll". Beeston Primary School also closed in 1969 and is now an outdoor activity centre. The current catchment school at Bunbury is up to 2½ miles away and is full to capacity. There are other schools situated in other villages, at a similar distance. These schools feed into Tarporley High School. Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall have Village Halls, whilst Beeston shares the Village Rooms with Peckforton Village. Sports clubs /facilities within the parishes are restricted to the well-established Deeside Ramblers Hockey club which is based within 'Gardenhurst' (the grounds of a former country house and school, demolished in the 1960s, but which now also includes a small cluster of houses). The parishes also include St Jude's Church, in Tilstone Fearnall, Tiverton Methodist Chapel, in the heart of Tiverton Village, (now only used once every month), and Brassey Green chapel - built for the Baptists, it is hidden away from view, and is used by church groups as a small camping/activity centre.

4. PROCESS

4.1 *Community Engagement*

In Summer 2013 as part of the Neighbourhood Plan development process every household and business in Beeston, Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall received a questionnaire based on a revised version of the one used in 2004 for the Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Parish Plan. This helped to establish residents views on a variety of topics principally focussing on the shape, size and nature of future land use and developments in the three villages. This was considered to have been a robust basis for the formulation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group established 5 Topic Groups which developed text based on the survey results. Following discussion with Cheshire Community Action it was considered that a further survey was required to ensure that the Plan and its Policies were aligned to the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations. Accordingly a Policy Proposals Survey was issued to all households in early 2015. A Policy Proposals Report was prepared from this survey and this formed the basis for the policies contained in the Neighbourhood Plan.

4.2 *Results of the Questionnaire*

Across the three villages 134 (approximately 55%) of the 2013 questionnaires were returned. The questionnaires expressed the views of 343 people across the three Parishes.

For the Policy Proposals Survey issued in February 2015 a total of 115 Surveys were returned out of the 310 distributed, a return of approximately 37%.

The age ranges of responses showed that Tiverton has the largest proportion of over -60s (40.2), Tilstone Fearnall has the largest proportion of 20 to 60 year olds (50.9%) whilst Beeston has the largest proportion of younger people (27.7%).

5. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

5.1 Vision

Following on from the review of the consultation responses, a vision statement was developed to reflect the community's aspirations for the future of the area:

Beeston, Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall will retain its rural character and be a peaceful, beautiful and safe places to live and work. The environment, historic landscape and features will continue to be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. The three villages will remain as distinctive communities with their own identities that will be enriched by small-scale changes to the built environment. Residents will be able to enjoy a good quality of life, with safe and sustainable transport options, and through access to a range of local businesses, services and social opportunities. The parishes will be well connected with the wider world via excellent utilisation of modern technologies.

5.2 Aims

The Neighbourhood Plan aims to:

- 1. manage housing growth to 2030;*
- 2. ensure that the residential development is small scale and contributes to the range of housing available in the villages, and is in keeping with adjacent properties;*
- 3. encourage small-scale development that enhances economic sustainability and employment opportunities;*
- 4. support the continued and enhanced provision of local retail outlets;*
- 5. welcome measures that result in improvements to the safety and accessibility of the transport network;*
- 6. preserve and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets, historic buildings, the waterways and natural environment;*
- 7. maintain rural tranquillity and dark skies;*
- 8. sustain and safeguard long-standing and established community places, and;*
- 9. seek improvements to the speed and capacity of the communications network.*

6. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES

6.1 *Built Environment*

People living in the three communities regularly comment on the special character of the villages. They are well established, close communities and in planning for housing growth it is vital that the qualities which make the locality so valued and popular are protected.



POLICY BE1: NEW BUILT DEVELOPMENT

New development will be of an appropriate size, height, scale, mass, materials, layout, access and density that respects the character of the local built environment, its history and surrounding natural landscape, including rural skyline, and seeks to reinforce this character through quality design.

Regard should be had for the latest Landscape Strategy from CWAC.

The villages' communities understand the need to accommodate a limited amount of housing and other development growth. However, there is concern that new development within the villages could erode the very qualities that make them special. In short, growth needs to be carefully managed in terms of its location, scale and design. A Landscape Strategy for Cheshire West and Chester Borough, 2016, provides the latest strategy for managing the landscape and guiding landscape change beyond the built up areas of the Borough to 2030. It supersedes previous landscape character assessments and landscape guidance.

POLICY BE2: DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS

New development should:

- **address the impact that it is likely to have on local facilities, either directly or through developer or other contributions.**
- **incorporate, where practicable, energy efficiency measures .**
- **minimise water usage.**

A Zero Carbon Footprint will be strongly encouraged

Whilst there is no intention that Policy BE2 should be regarded as prescriptive, it has been worded so as to provide the strongest possible steer, towards those seeking to facilitate development, that the resultant environmental changes are positive.

POLICY BE3: HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Future housing proposals should, where feasible:

- **Limit development to an appropriate scale which complies with STRAT 9 of the CWAC Local Plan;**
- **Provide a suitable mix of housing types and sizes to reflect the identified local housing needs;**
- **Provide affordable homes as part of any development of 5 units or more on a single site;**
- **Ensure that developer contributions are utilised for the benefit of the local community, primarily to fund infrastructure improvements;**
- **Retain as many mature/established trees as possible;**
- **Provide sufficient external amenity space, refuse and recycling storage;**
- **Provide adequate vehicle and bicycle parking and high quality streetscape.**

Policies BE1, BE2 and BE3 place an emphasis on the landscape character of the area encompassed by the three Parishes. The Landscape Strategy for Cheshire West and Chester 2016 provides profiles of the following features within that area:

Beeston Crag (2d)

Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Rolling Farmland (7a)

Hargrave, Hoofield and Beeston Plain (9b)

Gowy Valley (15i)

Beeston to Duckington Sandstone Fringe (3b)

Any type of development should conform to the profiles of those areas and their surroundings.

This policy seeks to ensure that new developments meet the needs for the types of new housing as identified in the CWAC Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2013). This is extended to any updates to that document or any future local housing needs survey. CWAC's Housing Market data can be found at the following link:

http://inside.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/policies_plans_and_strategies/housing_strategies_policies_and_research

Changes to government policy have introduced a threshold (of 10 units or less) under which requirements for affordable housing should not be imposed. Designated rural areas can, however, choose to implement a lower threshold of 5 units or less. As the Beeston, Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall NP Area lies within the rural area designated under Section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985, a lower threshold of 5 units can be applied. As such, affordable housing contributions are sought within all new residential developments of 5 or more units. In accordance with Policy SOC1 in the Local Plan, affordable housing will be sought on eligible sites up to a target of 30%.

6.2 Economic Development

There are a number of farms operating in the area providing employment opportunities, as well as some small home based businesses. There are also a

wide range of small scale commercial ventures in the area (all are listed at Appendix 1).

There is support for the development of more small businesses and new craft/industrial workshops; development in these areas could introduce more employment opportunities. There are a very limited number of sites in the villages where such developments could occur for which the use of 'brownfield' sites is encouraged. Prioritisation of such sites is supported, rather than the use of residential or agricultural land. The utilisation of existing buildings to keep the character of the local area would be preferred.

POLICY ED1: NEW EMPLOYMENT

- **Applications for development generating employment which meet the criteria of STRAT9 of the Local Plan will be supported. All employment development should respect the character of its surroundings, by way of its massing, scale and design, and safeguard residential amenity. Such development must include adequate provision for vehicle and cycle parking.**
- **Proposals for new development that combines living and small-scale employment space will be supported, provided there is no adverse impact on the character and amenity of existing nearby residential areas.**

The creation of small/start up business units will be encouraged. Such proposals could include workshop facilities, small offices, community businesses and 'bed & breakfast' accommodation. The communities are committed to seeing a growth in local job opportunities, particularly for under-30s, who currently migrate away in search of work.

The "Rural Workspace Study" BE Group 2009 identified a lack of small scale workshops and whilst the viability of live/work units is unknown in relation to Beeston, Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall, it is considered wise to not preclude that option from the range of choices available for employment development. However, Policy ED1 should not be seen as a 'back door' to residential development and it is important that any planning permission granted for live/work units is robustly stated so as to ensure that the employment 'work' aspect of that use is preserved.

POLICY ED2: CHARACTER AND SCALE of EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENTS

- **Development for employment uses should not have a harmful impact on the built development and historic character of the locale through high quality design. Use of materials such as local sandstone and native wood from sustainable sources should be considered. Overground warehousing/storage uses will only be permitted where they would not have a negative visual impact on their immediate surroundings.**

As with the policies for housing set out above, it is felt particularly important that employment development should not have a negative visual impact on the environment; as such it is anticipated that the choice of design and materials for employment-related built development should be set at a similar level to those required of residential proposals. Whilst it is not the intention to stifle new employment development by burdening proposals with additional costs, it is considered to be particularly important to ensure that any resulting buildings and structures are of a high standard and do not detract from the character and setting of the area.

The concerns about the lack of employment opportunities for those resident in the area have been expressed through the results of the surveys that have been undertaken.

Employment development proposals, outside those for agriculture, that result in built development that has a low floorspace to employee ratio are likely to be out of character with existing built development. Warehouse development, storage uses and other similar proposals with significant visual impact could be an unwelcome intrusion in the countryside and every effort will be made to ensure that a more locally appropriate development form is considered.

POLICY ED3: EXISTING BUSINESSES

- **Development that supports the retention of existing businesses will be supported, subject to it being of an appropriate form and scale. Similarly, proposals for change of use of existing business premises away from employment activity will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that reasonable attempts have been made to preserve employment or that the premises are not viable.**

There are a number of small businesses in the area that may wish to develop their premises in the future to ensure viability and/or pursue growth. Subject to the development being of an appropriate form and scale (see Policies ED1 and ED2) such proposals will be encouraged and supported.

The value of residential property remains high and there is an ongoing pressure to convert existing built development to residential use. However, the potential loss of employment that may arise from any such proposals should be factored into any decision to allow a change of use away from employment to residential and/or other uses unless the proposed development is consistent with Policy ED1

POLICY ED4: RETAIL PREMISES

- **Small scale proposals to consolidate, expand or add to local retail provision in the villages will be broadly supported. Such proposals could reasonably include licenced premises or café-style uses.**

Community consultation has indicated a preference for more convenience shops, as well as a pub and/or café in the local area. There is an issue on whether the villages could support a traditional village store or pub, although the opening of a community shop or convenience store would be welcome. While there is some interest (Parish Plan – 95% of respondents) in the development of new retail premises in the area, it would be unlikely to be of the same scale as found in nearby Tarporley or Bunbury. Location constraints would also need to be factored into a decision for new retail outlets.

POLICY ED5: Broadband

- **Proposals that seek the expansion of electronic communication networks and high speed broadband, along with improvements to connectivity, will be supported.**

The provision of good telecommunications is particularly important in rural areas and for the support of rural enterprise, home-working and children's education. Currently fibre optic connections are the most robust and future-proof method of delivering high performance connectivity and this should be the aim for all new developments, building on the recently upgraded installations.

Residents in the Neighbourhood Plan area consider their broadband service to be adequate in the village centres, but very poor at the fringes (Brassey Green, and Horsley Lane). There is a strongly expressed desire for improvement.

POLICY ED6: RADIO AND TELECOMMUNICATION MASTS

- **The development of radio and telecommunication masts must be sited and designed to minimise the negative impacts on the character and appearance of the Neighbourhood Plan area.**

There is reasonable 2G coverage of all but Tiverton village and Tilstone Bank, with 3G only available on the fringes of the area towards Brassey Green and Horsley. The numbers of radio and telecommunication masts should be kept to a minimum, consistent with the efficient operation of the network.

CWAC's Landscape Strategy 2016, which is supported by a Landscape Sensitivity Study and Guidance on Wind and Solar Photovoltaic Developments, should be referenced when proposals for radio and telecommunication masts are being put forward.

6.3 Transport

Both Parish Councils have been heavily involved for over a decade in issues relating to declining levels of public transport and ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure in and around the Parishes, such as pavements and roads.

The 2013 Household Survey clearly indicated that residents would like to see improved public transport links. Among other matters raised, there was notable support for the reopening of Beeston Station, the use of Dial-a-Ride, and uprated Bus Services.

POLICY T1: BEESTON RAILWAY STATION

- The re-opening of Beeston Railway Station, with adequate nearby parking provision and associated facilities, will be fully supported. The site of the former station and immediate environs is to be protected from development that could compromise the future provision of a new rail station and associated facilities. The extent of the area to be protected is shown at Figure 2.

The vast majority of residents (95%) support the reopening of the former railway station at Beeston, coupled with adequate nearby car parking provision. The station is broadly equidistant between Crewe and Chester and would remove the unwanted tag of the longest stretch of railway line in England without a station.

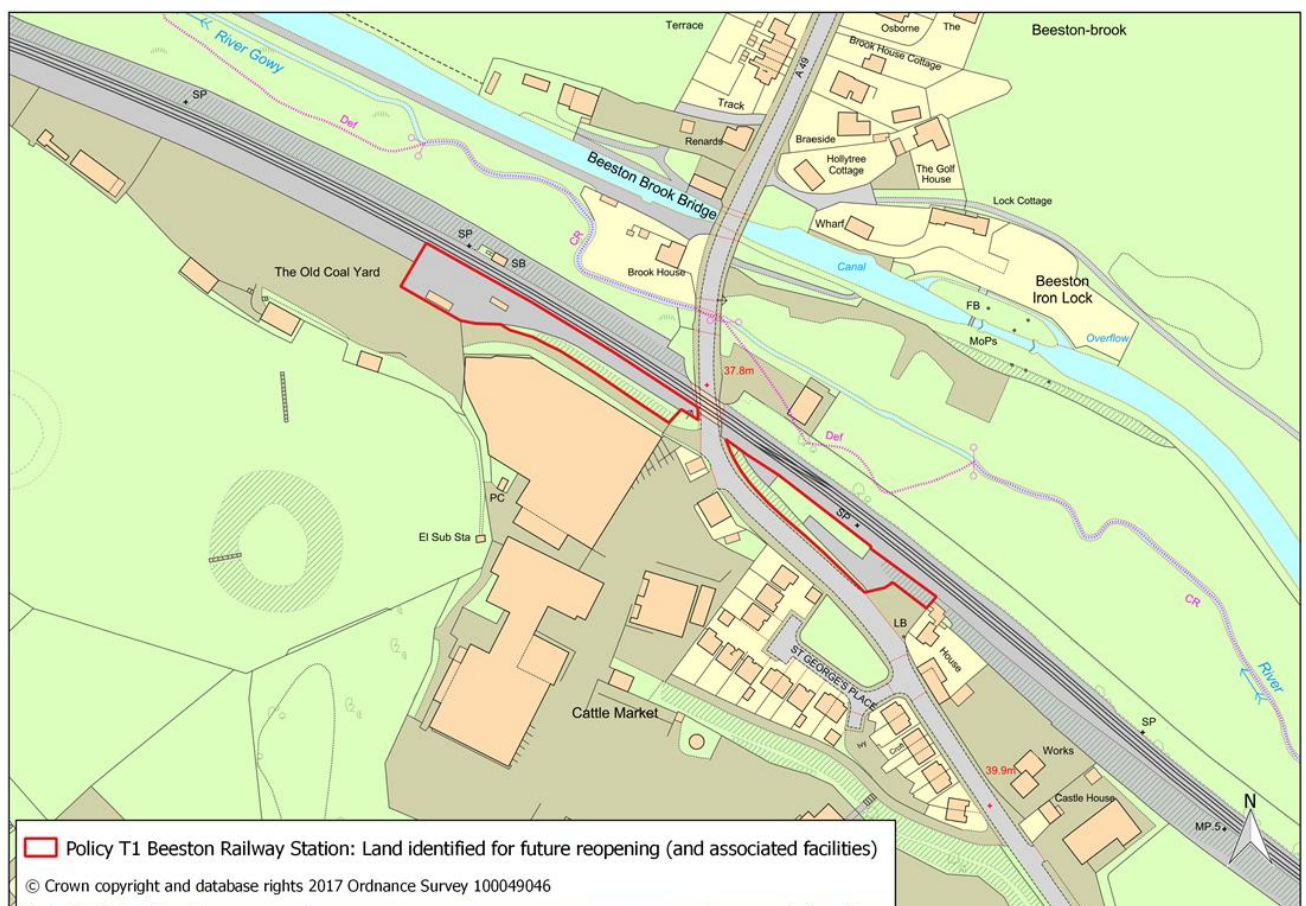


Figure 2: Land at former Beeston Railway Station

The 2013 findings were very much in line with the outcome of the Beeston area Transport Needs Assessment survey, which was carried out in 2000. It is considered that reopening the station would prove popular with regular commuters, occasional business travellers and leisure users. Knock on benefits would be a reduction in traffic volumes on the busy A49 and A51 and ease of access to nationwide connections, including Manchester and Liverpool Airports, from Crewe.

With planning permission having been granted for 129 new homes on the combined former Beeston Castle Hotel and Beeston Market sites, with the potential for 250+ new residents, the case for re-opening the station becomes more persuasive; more so when the current planned housing development at nearby locations (Tarpoley and Bunbury) are also considered.

Additionally, if Beeston Station were to be re-opened, there would almost certainly be better use of local buses by introducing an interchange at the Station. Increased railway services would help to reduce the demand for longer distance bus routes, thus creating capacity for more frequent local services.

The Local Road Network

Whilst a significant number of residents have regularly expressed support for a by-pass for both villages, current Government policy does not include any proposals for by-passing the A49 or the A51 within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Proposals that may come forward for highways schemes to bypass all or any of the three villages will be broadly welcomed, dependent on the routes proposed and the resultant environmental impacts.

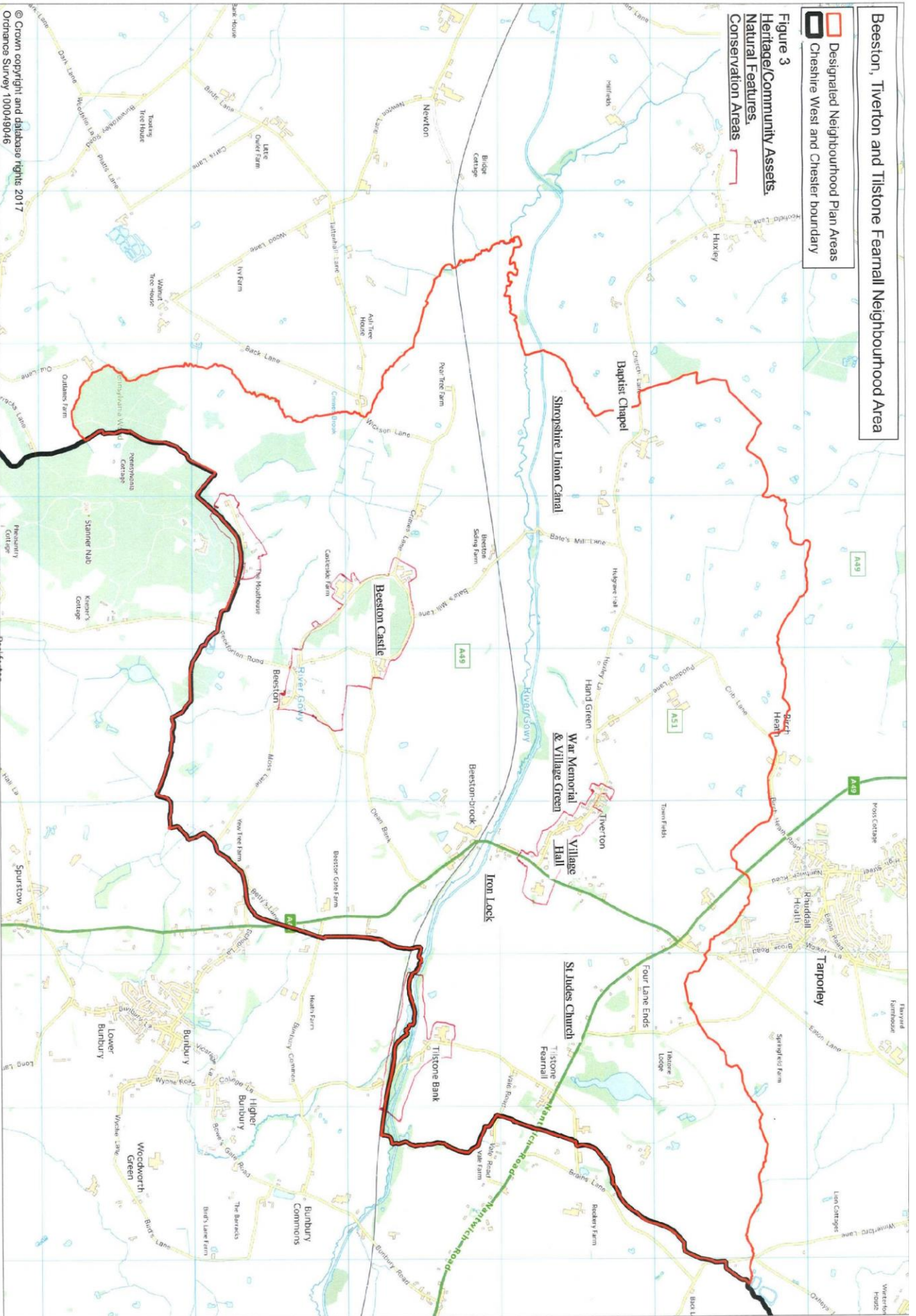
6.4 *Natural and Historic Environment*

The parishes lie in an historic rural setting that residents value and appreciate. The communities benefit from many noteworthy features including Beeston Castle, The Sandstone Trail, four Conservation Areas, 2 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, listed buildings and the Shropshire Union Canal. These features are shown in Figure 3.

Beeston, Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall Neighbourhood Area

- Designated Neighbourhood Plan Areas
- Cheshire West and Chester boundary

Figure 3
Heritage/Community Assets,
Natural Features,
Conservation Areas



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Ordnance Survey 100049046

The countryside is regarded by residents as highly important to their quality of life and residents have consistently expressed the need to protect a range of its features. Specific protection of environmental features was overwhelmingly supported; up to 83% of respondents in the 2013 household survey agreed this was needed. This finding is consistent with the 2004 household survey carried out in Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall, in which 85% of respondents agreed.

It is therefore evident that the residents of the three parishes place significant value on a wide range of environmental features including waterways and the canal, trees, hedgerows, footpaths, stiles, ponds, open spaces and Beeston Castle. Respondents also recommended that Cheshire railings, nesting sites and wildflower areas are significant and should be maintained.

The communities' overall objectives for the environment are; to maintain and protect the rural and tranquil nature of the area; and, to maintain and protect traditional rural features.

To assist in these aims Cheshire Wildlife Trust were commissioned by the Neighbourhood Plan Group to produce a report specific to the Plan Area and a copy is attached as Appendix 2.

This report identified the core, high ecological value sites for nature conservation in the Plan Area and summarised that "Future development of Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston villages should respect the local environment. The most intact landscapes in terms of biodiversity, landform and historical /cultural associations should be valued highly when planning decisions are made. Protection and enhancement of Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston's natural assets is of crucial importance for nature conservation and ecosystem services but is also important for the enjoyment of future generations."

POLICY NE1: BEESTON CASTLE

- **Public views of Beeston Castle and its setting within the local landscape should not be adversely affected by new development. The design, massing and orientation of development proposals should respect the character, appearance and importance of Beeston Castle and its setting within the local landscape.**

Beeston Castle (known as the ‘castle of the rock’ in medieval times), is managed by English Heritage and is a significant tourist attraction. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 1007900 and lies in an Area of Special County Value (ASCV). On a clear day you can see from it the Pennines, the Welsh mountains and across eight counties.

With steep cliffs on three sides, this spectacular crag in Beeston attracted prehistoric settlers and remained a significant settlement throughout the Bronze Age. Later, an immense Iron Age hill fort was built, and its earthwork defences were used and adapted by medieval castle-builders who built much of what we see today. A rich history surrounds the castle, including a significant role in the English Civil War, during which it held out as a royal stronghold, finally surrendering to Parliament in November 1645 after a long and eventful siege.

The survey rated Beeston Castle most highly with 83% of respondents thinking it needs protection. Much of the responsibility for this falls to English Heritage but development within our area needs to be respectful towards the setting of this nationally significant treasure.

Historic England Guidance on the “setting” may be found in “The Setting of Heritage Assets: Historic Environments Good Practice Advice in Planning;3(2015)”

Waterways

The area is fortunate enough to have two significant waterways within them; the Shropshire Union Canal and the River Gowy. Along with Beeston Castle, these too are highly appreciated locally, and additionally attract a significant number of visitors and support employment within our area. 82% of respondents think these waterways should be protected.

POLICY NE2: WATERWAYS

- **The River Gowy, Shropshire Union Canal, towpath and embankment are important features of the local environment. Development proposals that would adversely affect the recreational value, visual amenity and historic value of the canal or River Gowy setting or damage their environments will be strongly resisted.**

Shropshire Union Canal

The stretch of the Shropshire Union Canal that goes through the parishes covers 5.49km and was built in the 1770s. Beeston Castle is visible along much of the canal and is an important part of its attraction.

The communities, along with Chester Canal Heritage Trust (CCHT), regard the whole of the canal as an important environmental feature within our area that needs protection. The Neighbourhood Plan group also support the Chester Canal Conservation Area Character Appraisal(Consultation Draft) which includes recommendations for the stretch of canal in the Plan area.(Area H Rural CW&C.)

There are several significant buildings and monuments along the canal that should be highlighted. Beeston Iron Lock is grade 2 star listed and is of particular historical importance because of its unique construction; as such it is designated an Archaeological Site of National Importance and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument No.1006759.

Also listed are Beeston Stone Lock, Tilstone Lock, Beeston Lengthman's Hut, Tilstone Lengthman's Hut, Tilstone Fearnall Mill and The Wild Boar Hotel. The whole length of the canal is an Area of Nature Conservation Value with its surrounding embankments and countryside providing a home to rich habitat and wildlife (CCHT 2014).

The Lengthman's Huts at Tilstone and Beeston are two of only three such huts in existence (the third being at Tarvin Road Lock) and historically significant. The hut at Tilstone Lock has been repaired in recent years by volunteers and Canal and River Trust heritage staff. The one at Beeston remains in a state of serious disrepair and urgently needs restoring to protect it. The environment group felt strongly that this should be pursued as a matter of priority.

River Gowy

The Gowy corridor, in Tiverton, is home to some of the best grasslands in Cheshire.

This whole stretch of The Gowy is of significance, partly because after the canal was built intensive agriculture did not take place to the same extent as on surrounding land. The Gowy has European eels, *Anguilla anguilla*, which are critically endangered.

Members of the Environment topic group also report sightings of Red Kites, Little Egrets and other rare species along this stretch of river. This habitat needs to remain undisturbed and it is important that no developments or indeed any spillage/effluent from any developments should damage this fragile area.

Both the Canal and River face threats from non-native species. Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam are current concerns (coming in to the river via the canal). CWT has adopted a firewall policy to try and keep it out of the most sensitive areas, acknowledging that it will be impossible to eradicate it altogether.

Footpaths

The area benefits from hosting some of the finest walks in Cheshire, including a beautiful section of the Sandstone Trail. In total, the Sandstone Trail stretches for 34 miles/55 kilometres from the market town of Frodsham in the north, to Whitchurch in the south. It passes through Tiverton and Beeston offering superb views across the countryside to Beeston and Peckforton castles.

POLICY NE3: FOOTPATHS

- **New development should protect and maintain all public footpaths and bridleways and The Sandstone trail throughout the parishes.**
- **Proposals to improve access to the local footpath network will be favourably considered.**

Tiverton Parish has around 30 footpaths within its boundaries providing some 21km of pathway, while Tilstone Fearnall has 11 footpaths providing 7km of pathway. The Parish of Beeston has 35 footpaths providing over 20Km of walks. In total the Public Rights of Way in Beeston have 63 stiles, 43 gates of varying types and 15 bridges to be enjoyed. These popular local walks, including The Sandstone Trail, attract visitors to the parishes. They are used and appreciated by local people, and 80% of respondents think that they should be protected.

A Plan showing the various Public Rights of Way including the Sandstone Trail and other routes across the Neighbourhood Plan area is shown at Appendix 3

Views

Large swathes of the Area offer attractive views and the prevalence of public access in the form of footpaths. A plan showing the more valued views and their location is set out at Appendix 4.

POLICY NE4: VIEWS

- **New development should not adversely affect key views as identified in Appendix 4.**
- **New development should not adversely affect views of open countryside or local landmarks from public footpaths.**

Stiles

A characteristic of the footpaths in the parishes is the stone stile. It consists of two leaning sandstone posts with slots on their interiors faces to take about three horizontal wooden bars. The heavy sandstone slabs are supported at about 30 degrees to the vertical by smaller slabs beneath the leaning side that serve as props. Often there is a base slab to encourage a firm footing when climbing the horizontal bars.

Tiverton is the parish with the largest number of these stiles. There were seven in use in Tiverton at the turn of the century, but since then two have completely disappeared including one on the border with Tilstone Fearnall. Beeston is not known to have any remaining. This highlights the vulnerability of these countryside features and 71% of respondents want stiles to be protected.

POLICY NE5: STILES

- **Stone and wooden stiles within the parishes should be preserved. New gates and/or access ways created should not disturb the existing stiles.**
- **Accessible stiles and gates should be built alongside traditional stiles, rather than replace them altogether.**

Some stiles have been removed as part of footpath improvements and have been replaced with standard wooden stiles or metal kissing gates. This may also be part of access improvements and moves to make the footpaths and countryside accessible to all persons are welcomed. However this should be balanced with the protection of traditional features.

Details of the remaining stiles are set out at Appendix 5

Trees

The vital role played by trees and woodlands in our habitat is increasingly recognised. However The Woodland Trust has noted that “more than 1,000 irreplaceable ancient woods in the UK have been threatened over the last 10 years. Thousands more are dying without much-needed careful restoration.” (<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/campaigning/>). It advocates local action as the most effective way of protecting trees and woodlands.

POLICY NE6: TREE PLANTING

- **All new housing developments will be encouraged to plant at least one new tree, of a native species, for each new dwelling.**

The area has a wide selection of trees and woodlands within it, some of which have Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). TPOs can apply to individual trees and/or woodlands. There is also the protection for trees which is afforded by the fact that many are in Conservation Areas.

Hedgerows and verges

Hedgerows form an important historical and environmental part of the local landscape and 69% of respondents thought they needed specific protection.

Hedgerows have been planted and managed in Cheshire since Anglo-Saxon times. Traditional Cheshire hedgerows include Hawthorn, Oak and Beech varieties. Throughout Cheshire, hedgerows have been in decline for several decades due in part to the expansion of fields but also through neglect. The former Cheshire County Council estimated that by 1992, 66% of Cheshire’s

hedgerows had been destroyed, with high quality agricultural land having the greatest loss of all.

As well as being historically significant, hedgerows are important to wildlife, providing essential habitat for many different species of plants and animals. Hedgerows are preferable to fencing for wildlife as they provide an important corridor for it to pass through and shelter within. Along with the hedgerow itself, it is important to preserve surrounding features including ditches, grass margins and sandstone walling. These features, in conjunction with the hedgerow, help form an ecological network within which different species live and move.

POLICY NE7: HEDGEROWS

Development proposals should:

- **Preserve existing hedgerows and their surrounding features, including sandstone walls; and,**
- **Incorporate landscaping plans that, where possible, use traditional hedgerow plants such as Hawthorn and Beech.**
- **Regard Townfield Lane as an important feature in the landscape and its hedgerows and wildlife should be protected from development.**

Within Tiverton and Beeston nine randomly selected hedgerows were surveyed for woody species in line with DEFRA guidelines in November 2009. Out of these, six (67%) were found to be species rich - compared to a national average of 46%. Fourteen woody species were found and four climbing species. The findings of this survey are shown in Appendix 6 and illustrate the richness of the local hedgerows.

A survey of the hedgerows along Townfield Lane was commissioned by Tiverton Parish Council in May 2014 to assess their condition and value for wildlife. This report provides details of the animals, insects and plants that use this stretch of hedgerow and is attached in full in Appendix 8. The report concludes that Townfield Lane *“forms an important feature in the landscape and provides good habitat and a good corridor for dispersal for a wide range of species”*. It also recommends how this could be enhanced and supported in addition to the protection all hedgerows receive from the Hedgerow

Regulations 1997. The report demonstrates the importance of protecting hedgerow along Townfield Lane.

Ponds

Beeston, Tiverton and Tilstone Fearnall have an abundance of meres, mosses and ponds. The County of Cheshire had more ponds than any other county in England: in fact, Cheshire boasted 25% of all ponds in England. 60% of the survey respondents think they need specific protection.

The local ponds are an important part of the area's heritage reflecting the areas unique history from the Ice Age to World War II.

In the last Ice Age, a huge ice sheet from the north travelled south coming to a halt around the Plan area. It then retreated with a sheer face of ice, about one kilometre in depth and, due to the huge size of the lumps of ice that fell off that face, our meres and mosses were created. Many local names reflect these events including Beeston Moss, Moss Lane and Peckforton Mere.

The majority of ponds in the parishes are flooded marl pits, dug out originally by gangs of wandering contractors to provide a primitive early fertiliser. Marl pits can be recognised by their small size and regular shape; many can be seen from Beeston Castle. Today they provide valuable habitat for fish, frogs and newts, as well as water birds such as moorhens, coots and herons (see www.sandstonetrail.com/ponds-and-marl-pits).

The final historical event that contributed to the abundance of ponds was WWII. Enemy planes flew over Cheshire on their way back home from their bombing raids on Liverpool and Manchester. The pilots dropped unused bombs on Cheshire, presumably to save fuel, before heading back home. The cavities created by this devastation gradually became ponds and now support significant wildlife.

POLICY NE8: PONDS

Proposals for new development, including extensions of existing buildings, should be designed so as to not adversely affect ponds.

Dark Skies

One feature of the Area that is a reflection of its openness and rural nature is the lack of night time illumination. The community has a desire to see that character preserved.

POLICY NE9: DARK SKIES

- **Dark skies are to be preferred over street lights except where there are overriding highway safety considerations. Future lighting schemes should be designed to be in keeping with the local character. In all cases, outdoor lighting sources should have a minimum impact on the environment, should minimise light pollution, and should minimise adverse effects on wildlife.**

6.5 COMMUNITY ASSETS AND ACTIVITIES

Consultation has confirmed that community assets and activities are highly valued by residents and support community cohesion. Many elderly or vulnerable residents who benefit from local social and learning events would otherwise be isolated from social interaction. Additionally, this reflects the interest, involvement and enthusiasm to protect and sustain the structure of village life.

Developments which result in new or improved facilities for community use will be encouraged and supported.

Beeston shares a Village Hall with Peckforton. - The Hall was placed in the Trust of a committee in 1895 by the Tollemache Estate. It has recently acquired funding for refurbishment and plans to improve access for the elderly, young or disabled are close to completion.

Tiverton War Memorial and Tiverton Village Green are assets belonging to the Parish of Tiverton. These features are shown in Figure 3.

Other community used assets include:

- Tiverton Village Hall (built in 1984)
- St Jude's Church (Grade II listed building erected in 1836)
- St Jude's Church Parish Room

- Tiverton Methodist Chapel (built in 1864)
- Brassey Green Baptist Chapel (used for small conferences, school visits, scout camps etc.)

POLICY CP1: COMMUNITY ASSETS

- **Tiverton War Memorial and Tiverton Village Green and their settings should be protected from the adverse effects of any development.**
- **Development or improvement of facilities for public use will be encouraged.**

Community Activities

Community Activities are a valued part of the parishes, and the communities, individuals and community groups play a significant role in maintaining and developing them; including Tiverton Garden club, the Village Hall committee, fitness classes and dancing as well as various voluntary sector organisations and the Parish Councils.

POLICY CP2: COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- **Proposals that seek to sustain and safeguard long standing and established community activities will be encouraged.**

APPENDIX 1 – LIST OF BUSINESSES

Hotel and catering

Wild Boar Hotel
The Red Fox Indian Cuisine, Four Lane Ends
The Shady Oak, Bates Mill Lane
Lockgate Cafe
Ringside Cafe (auction days)
Beeston Castle Cafe (weekends)

Beeston Wharf

Morgans Garage
Chas Hardern Boats
Fine Fabrics of Tarporley
Tiresford Guernsey Gold Yoghurts, Tiresford Farm
Cheshire Grandfather Clocks, Nantwich Road
A. M. Lea Builders
Plasterer, The Gables

Tiverton Village

Furniture Upholsterer, Cedar Bank
Meredith Builders, Stable Cottage, Huxley Lane, Tiverton
Arthur Wilson Electricians, 3 The Dale
Alan Stubbs Plumbing and Heating Engineers, 2 Smithy Cottage,
Balloon Monsoon (Tarporley) Novelty Balloons, Hand Green House, Pudding Lane
J Lloyd and Sons, Builders

Tilstone Fearnall

Tilstone Bank Gallops

Beeston Brook

Wright Manley Auctions
Agricultural Products shop auction site
Richard Reeves Fencing
Beeston Animal Health

The Reclamation Yard

Beeston Reclamation and Landscaping Services

All Slates Ltd

North Cheshire Antiques

Rockridge Shacks.

Beeston Parish

Beeston Outdoor Education Centre

Beeston Castle, English Heritage

Cestrian Loos, Bates Mill Lane

Working Farms

Tiverton

Fearney Lees

Brassey Green Hall Farm

Sunnyside Farm, Brassey Green

Tiresford Farm

Bank Farm

Tilstone Fearnall

Tilstone Bank Farm

Beeston

Beeston Gate Farm

Castleside Farm

Castle Gate Farm

The Home Farm

Lower Rock Farm

Pool Farm

Protecting and Enhancing Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston’s Natural Environment



Cheshire
Wildlife Trust

July 2016

Introduction

Neighbourhood Planning has provided an important opportunity for communities to shape their local environment for future generations. Identifying and evaluating opportunities and constraints will mean that communities are in an informed position and therefore better able to protect their valuable natural assets.

In 2011 the government published their Biodiversity 2020 '*strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem services*' which built on the recommendations of the earlier Natural Environment white paper. The mission of the Biodiversity 2020 strategy is to '*halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.*'

The NPPF, published in 2012 drew on these principles and protecting and enhancing biodiversity and creating ecological networks are central to this framework. Indeed 'biodiversity' is mentioned 15 times in the NPPF with protection and improvement of the natural environment as core objectives of the planning system.

According to Biodiversity 2020 there are numerous ways to work towards achieving these aims, with landowners, conservation charities and individuals playing a part. However the planning system has a central role in achieving the aims of Biodiversity 2020, particularly strategic planning, but also development control. At a local level Neighbourhood Planning has the potential to be a key factor in determining whether the aims of Biodiversity 2020 are realised, by identifying local priorities for nature conservation and ecosystem services and ensuring these are taken into consideration in the planning process.

Objectives of the study

The first stage to protecting and enhancing the natural environment is to identify the natural assets that exist in the neighbourhood. This report aims to identify the core, high ecological value (high distinctiveness) sites for nature conservation in Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston as well as sites deemed to be of medium value (semi-natural habitat). As well as nature conservation, the high and medium distinctiveness habitats are also those that provide ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and storage, pollination, soil formation, water purification, air purification and cultural benefits.

Parcels of land identified as high distinctiveness are recommended for protection through the neighbourhood planning process and the medium distinctiveness parcels could be considered as biodiversity opportunity areas subject to further evaluation. Medium and high value sites should also act as an alert in the planning system triggering full evaluation should they be proposed for future development.

The report also aims to identify key local and regional ecological networks within the neighbourhood planning area and recommends that these are protected through the neighbourhood plan. It also identifies key natural characteristics associated with the landscape character of the Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston area so these can be referenced in planning policies.

Background – ecological networks

In 2010 Professor Sir John Lawton submitted a report to DEFRA entitled 'Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network'. The report identified that we need a step change in our approach to wildlife conservation from trying to hang on to what we have, to one

of large-scale habitat restoration and recreation, under-pinned by the re-establishment of ecological processes and ecosystem services, for the benefits of both people and wildlife. The report also identified that this vision will only be realised if we work at local scales in partnership with local people.

The natural environment is fundamental to our well-being, health and economy and provides us with a range of ecosystem services such as food, water, pollination, materials, flood defences and carbon sequestration – and biodiversity underpins most, if not all, of them. The pressures on our land and water are likely to continue to increase and we need to learn how to manage these resources in ways which deliver multiple benefits, for example, achieving profitable and productive farming while also adopting practices which enhance carbon storage, improve flood water management and support wildlife.

England's wildlife habitats have become increasingly fragmented and isolated, leading to declines in the provision of some ecosystem services, and losses to species populations. Ecological networks have become widely recognised as an effective way to conserve wildlife in environments that have become fragmented by human activities.

Ecological networks generally have five components (see Figure 1) which reflect both existing and potential ecological importance and function.

- *Core areas*
These are areas of high nature conservation value which form the heart of the network. They contain habitats that are rare or important because of the wildlife they support or the ecosystem services they provide. They generally have the highest concentrations of species or support rare species. They include protected wildlife sites and other semi-natural areas of high ecological quality.
- *Corridors and stepping stones*
These are spaces that improve the functional connectivity between core areas, enabling species to move between them to feed, disperse, migrate or reproduce. Connectivity need not just come from linear, continuous habitats; a number of small sites may act as 'stepping stones' across which certain species can move between core areas.
 - *Restoration areas*
These are areas where measures are planned to restore or create new high value areas (which will ultimately become 'core areas') so that ecological functions and species populations can be restored. They are often situated so as to complement, connect or enhance existing core areas.
- *Buffer zones*
These are areas that closely surround core areas, restoration areas, 'stepping stones' and ecological corridors, and protect them from adverse impacts from the wider environment.
- *Sustainable use areas*
These are areas within the wider landscape focussed on the sustainable use of natural resources and appropriate economic activities, together with the maintenance of ecosystem services. Set up

appropriately, they help to ‘soften the matrix’ outside the network and make it more permeable and less hostile to wildlife, including self-sustaining populations of species that are dependent upon, or at least tolerant of, certain forms of agriculture. There is overlap in the functions of buffer zones and sustainable use areas, but the latter are less clearly demarcated than buffers, with a greater variety of land uses.

Figure 1. The components of ecological networks (Making Space for Nature report)

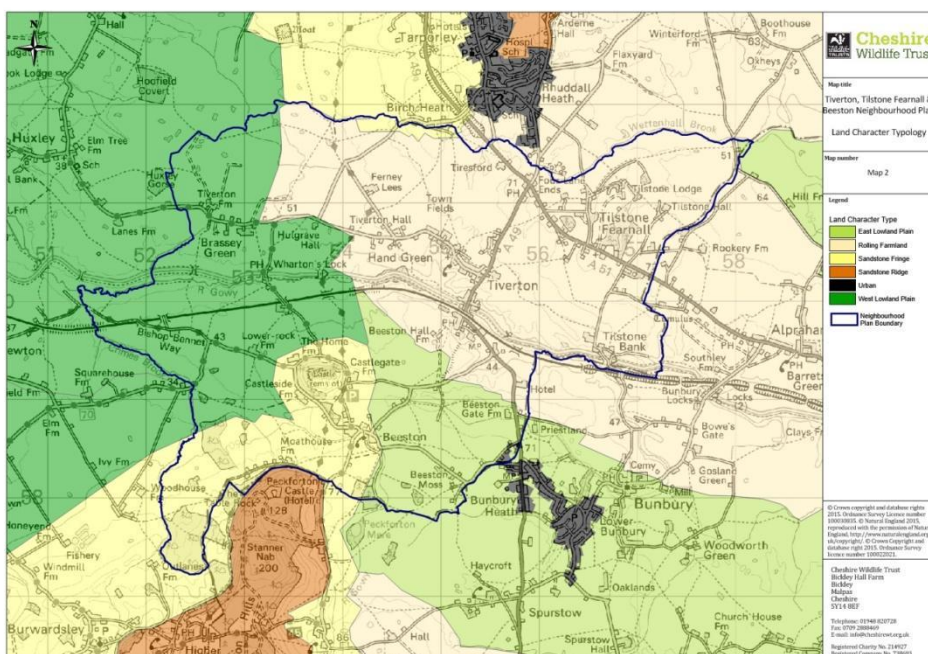
The principles of creating coherent ecological networks have since been embedded within many planning and policy documents. The Natural Environment White Paper ‘The Natural Choice’ which was published in 2011 reiterated a Government commitment to move from net biodiversity loss to net gain, by recognising the importance of supporting healthy, well-functioning ecosystems and establishing more coherent ecological networks.

The National Planning and Policy Framework published in 2012 also includes the establishment and conservation of a coherent ecological network as a core principle including:

- The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.
- Local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure.
- To minimise impacts on biodiversity planning policies should identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation; and promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations.

Landscape Character Assessment for the Cheshire region

On a national level Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston lies within National Character area 62 Sandstone Ridge, a discontinuous ridge that rises sharply from the gently rolling Cheshire Plain with



a high cover of semi-natural and plantation woodland compared to the surrounding landscape. More locally the Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment of 2008 identifies recognisable patterns in the landscape and classifies the Cheshire Landscape into 20 broad Landscape Character Types (LCTs). Different aspects such as geology, landform, soils, vegetation and landuse have been used to identify character areas.

The assessment is intended to be used as a basis for planning and the creation of future landscape strategies as well as raising public awareness of landscape character and creating a sense of place.

The Landscape Character Assessment 2008 (map 1) identifies four recognisable character types (LCTs) within the Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston Neighbourhood planning area. These are further refined and subdivided into Landscape Character Areas (LCAs):

Type 3 - Sandstone Fringe¹ LCT

Type 5 – Rolling Farmland² LCT

Type 6 – West Lowland Plain LCT

Type 7 - East Lowland Plain LCT

LCT Type 3 - Sandstone Fringe

Key Characteristics

- Transitional zone between the high ground of the Sandstone Ridge and the surrounding low-lying landscape
- Strong visual elements including the sandstone outcrops of Helsby Hill and Beeston Crag
- Extensive views across Cheshire and beyond to Merseyside, North Wales and Shropshire
- Deciduous and mixed woodland on the steepest slopes
- Remnants of acid grassland
- Pasture and some arable on the flatter land
- Fields enclosed by hedgerows and some sandstone walls
- Combination of nucleated villages and dispersed farms and halls

LCT Type 5 – Rolling Farmland

Key characteristics

- Gently rolling and undulating topography, interspersed with streams
- Irregular and semi-regular small and medium fields (up to 8ha)
- Hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees
- Numerous water bodies – mainly ponds created through marl pit digging
- Low woodland density, mainly riparian
- Unimproved grasslands
- Medium settlement density combining nucleated centres and dispersed halls, farms etc.

1

A review of LCAs and LCTs in 2016 will place Beeston Castle into LCA 2d Beeston Crag (Sandstone Ridge LCT2)

2

A review of LCAs and LCTs in 2016 will rename this area of Rolling farmland 'Undulating enclosed farmland' (LCT 5). Two additional LCAs will be incorporated: Type 7a Tiverton and Tilstone (Rolling farmland LCT 7) and Type 15i Goway Valley (River valleys LCT 15).

LCT Type 6 – West Lowland Plain

Key Characteristics

- Flat and almost flat topography
- Irregular and semi-regular small and medium fields (up to 8ha) used mainly for pasture
- Hawthorn hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees, mainly oak
- Low density dispersed settlement
- Low woodland cover
- Black poplar trees
- Large number small water bodies
- Scattered species rich grasslands

LCT Type 7 – East Lowland Plain

Key Characteristics

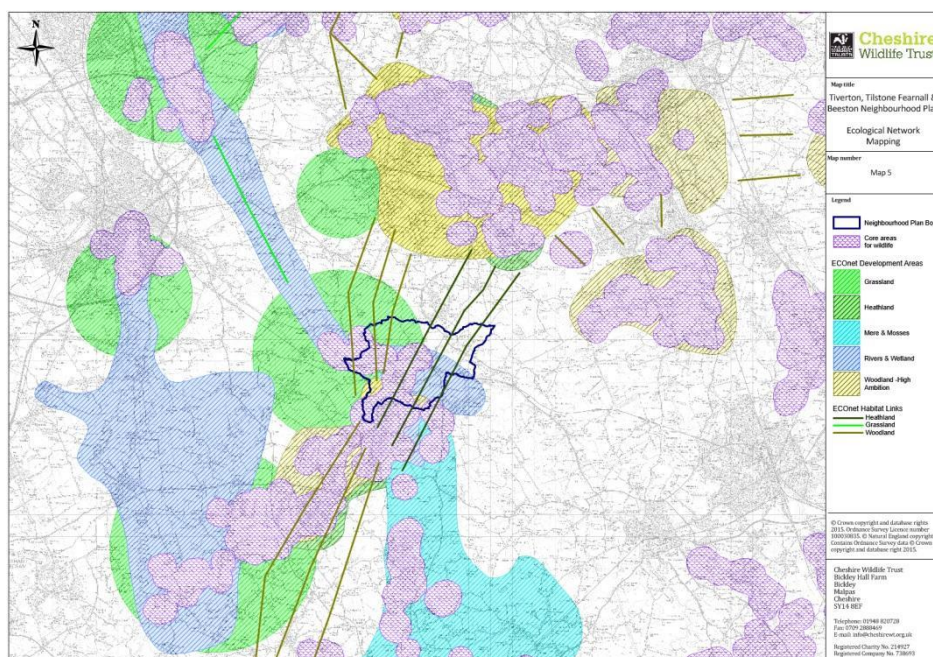
- Flat and almost flat topography
- Small to medium sized fields up to 8ha used for pasture and arable farming.
- Mainly hawthorn hedgerows and hedgerow trees, some mixed species hedgerows
- Dispersed hamlets and Farms with predominantly low density and some nucleation
- Intensive farming and large farm businesses
- Large number of small water bodies
- Scattered species rich grasslands
- Riparian ancient woodlands and field sized coverts
- Medieval moated sites

Econet – Integrated vision of the Cheshire County Ecological Network

Between 1999 and 2003 the then Cheshire County Council were a partner within the Life EConet Project. A project supported by the Life-Environment Programme of the European Commission to demonstrate in Cheshire and in Emilia-Romagna and Abruzzo (Italy) how ecological networks can help achieve more sustainable land use planning and management, as well as overcome the problems of habitat loss, fragmentation and species isolation.

The Econet study is an integrated vision of a Cheshire County Ecological Network of ecological cohesion. The vision acts as a framework for nature conservation in the region by identifying areas of strategic importance for wildlife. It is intended as a guideline for making decisions in local and strategic planning in relation to biodiversity.

The 2003 study identified numerous core areas of key importance for wildlife. It also identified development areas which were assessed as having the greatest potential to contribute to the viability of the core areas through habitat restoration and creation schemes. The aim of any future work should be to expand the core areas and to create habitat connectivity (wildlife corridors) in order to create a robust ecological network in Cheshire. The guidance provided by the Econet project has been incorporated into the conclusions of this report created for the Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston Neighbourhood Plan.



The Econet maps have highlighted that the Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston area is an important component of the county wide ecological network. The central and southern regions of the Neighbourhood Planning area hold important grassland, woodland and wetland habitats with good ecological connectivity to the south and northwest. These important habitat areas are mapped as ‘core areas for wildlife’ within the Cheshire region.

Connecting the ‘core areas for wildlife’ are ‘Econet habitat links’ which are shown as lines on the map. Habitat restoration along these links will enhance ecological connectivity between different core wildlife areas within the county.

Methodology

Creating a habitat distinctiveness map

In line with current Defra methodologies to determine ‘no net loss’ of biodiversity, habitat data from the sources listed below was attributed to one of three categories listed in the table:

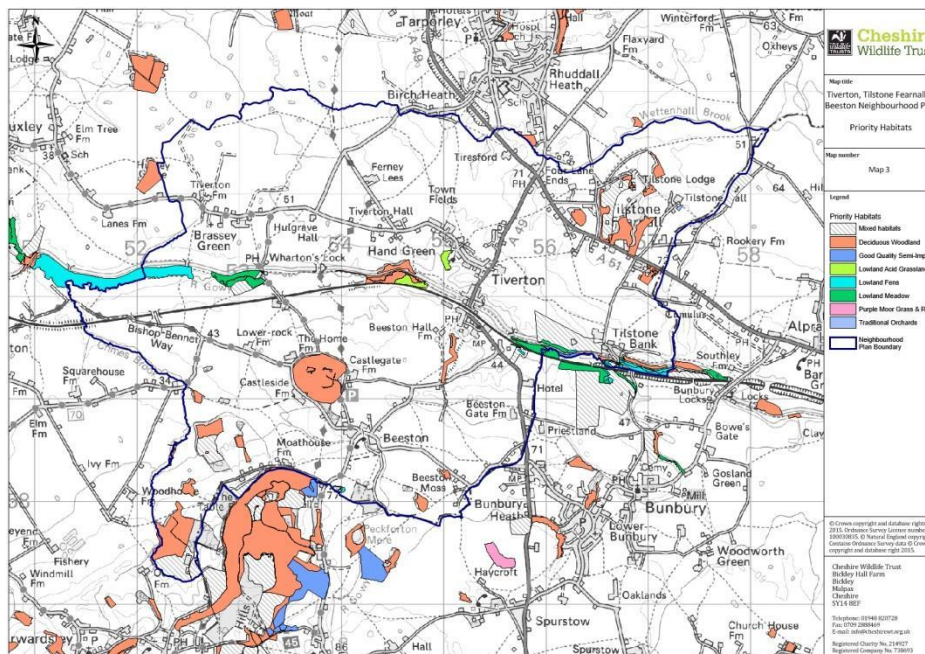
Habitat type band	Distinctiveness	Broad habitat type covered	Colour on map
High	High	Priority habitat as defined in section 41 of the NERC Act	Red
Medium	Medium	Semi-natural	Orange
Low	Low	E.g. Intensive agricultural but may still form an important part of the ecological network in an area.	n/a

Habitat type bands (Defra March 2012)

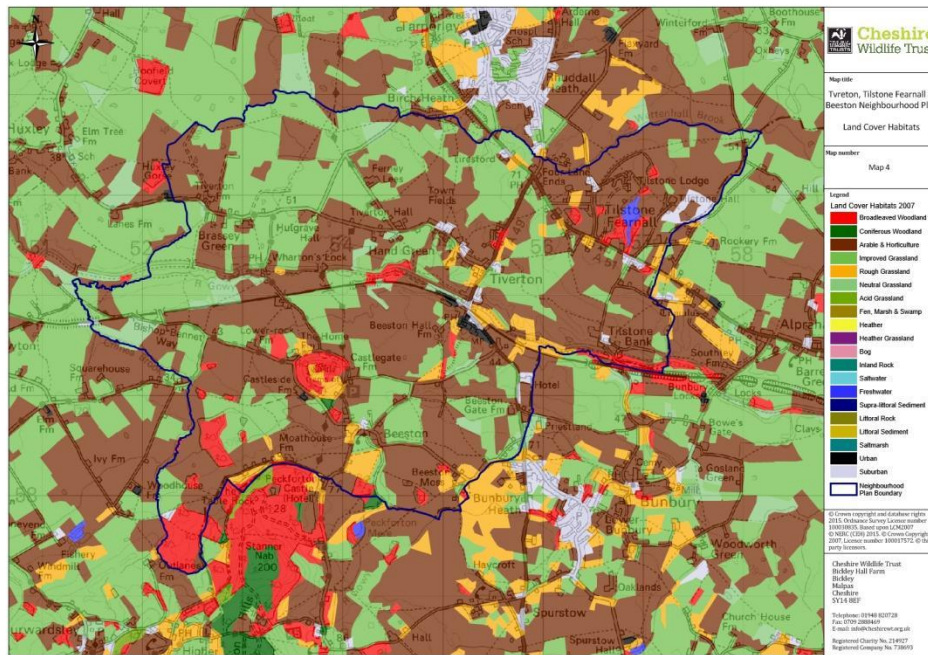
1. Four published data sets were used to produce the habitat distinctiveness maps.
 - Priority habitat Inventory, Natural England 2014 – coded as high distinctiveness
 - Protected sites (including Special Areas of Conservation SAC, Special Protection Areas SPA, Ramsars, Sites of Special Scientific Interest SSSI, Local Wildlife Sites LWS, Local Nature Reserves), Natural England, CWT/CE Local Authority – coded as high distinctiveness
 - Agricultural land classification Natural England - grade 4 medium distinctiveness, grade 5 high distinctiveness (adjusted where other data is available).
 - Landcover data Centre for Ecology and Hydrology 2007. Priority habitats (principal importance) and semi-natural habitats coded as medium distinctiveness (data in appendix 1)
2. In addition habitat data from recent planning applications in Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston was used in the analysis.
3. Aerial photography (Microsoft Bing™ Imagery) was used to validate the results by eye.
4. The Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston NP area Land Character Assessment and Econet categories were mapped and the results were used to inform the conclusions.

Mapping

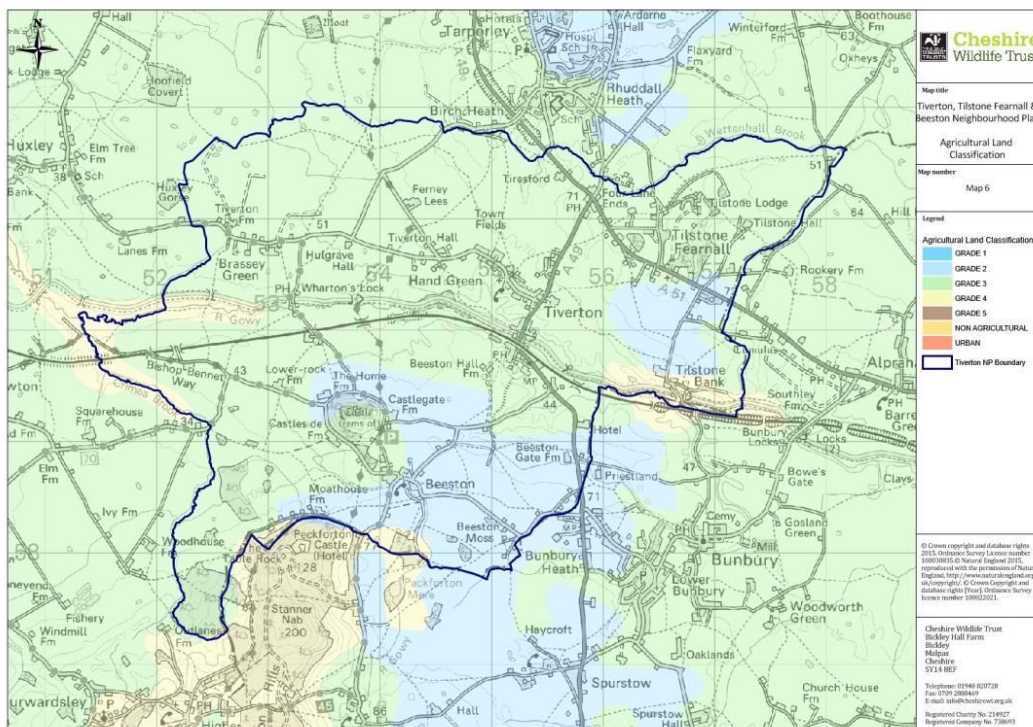
Priority habitat – Natural England 2014



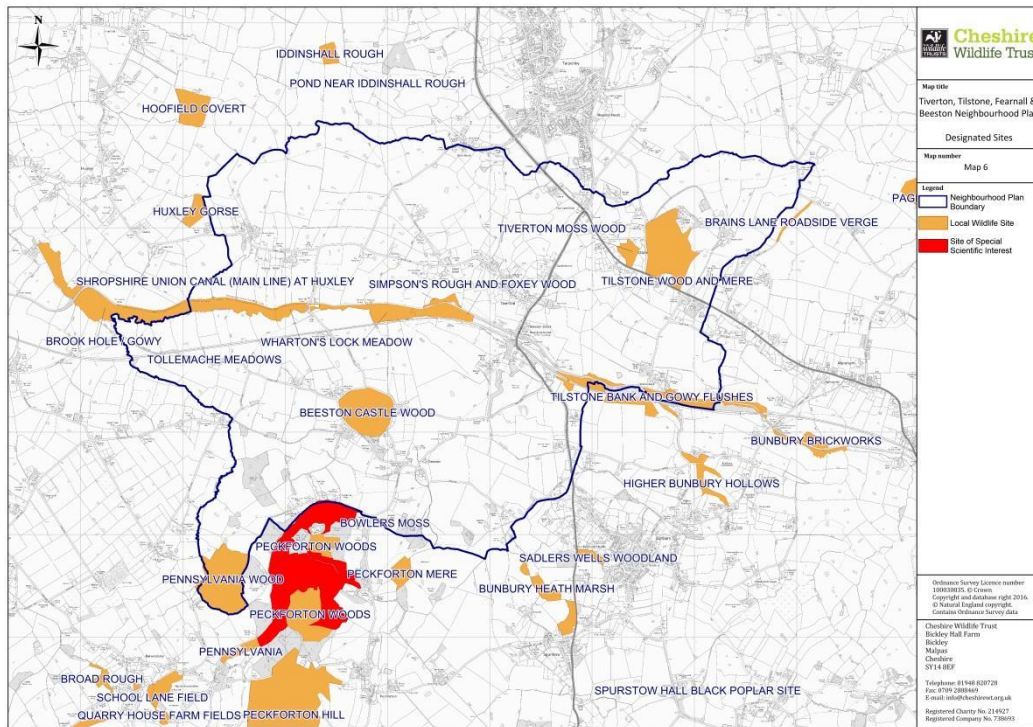
Land Cover Map 2007 (LCM2007) is a parcel-based classification of satellite image data showing land cover for the entire United Kingdom derived from a computer classification of satellite scenes obtained mainly from the Landsat sensor



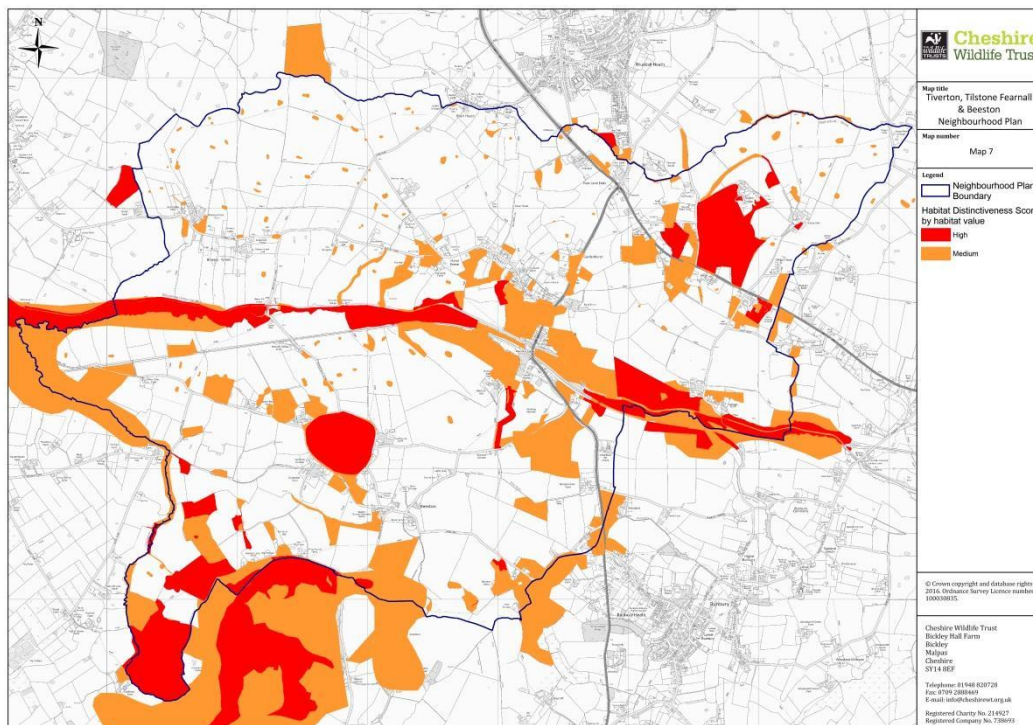
Agricultural land grading



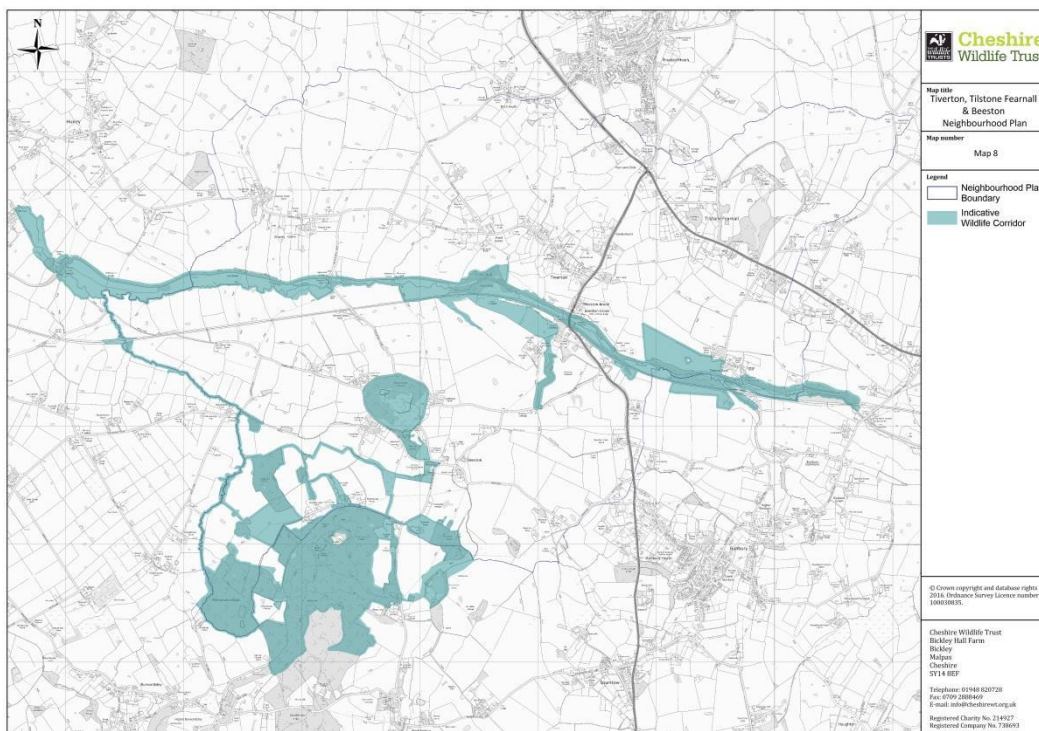
Protected sites for nature conservation, including international, European, national and local sites



Habitat distinctiveness map



Indicative Wildlife Corridors



Results

High distinctiveness habitat

This study has identified several major areas of high value (high distinctiveness) habitat in the Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston NP area. These are shown on map 7 and include eleven areas designated as Local Wildlife Sites: Tilstone Wood and Mere, Tilstone Bank and Gowy Flushes, Wharton's Lock Meadows, Simpson's Rough and Foxy Wood, Tollemarch Meadows, Brookhole/Gow, Beeston Castle Wood, Bowler's Moss, Pennsylvania Wood, Shropshire Union Canal at Huxley, Tiverton Moss Wood.

Further areas of undesignated woodland habitat are located in the vicinity of Gregory's Wood, Crimes Brook, Beeston Moss, Beeston Hall, Tilstone House and east of Brook Cottage, Wickson Lane. These have been mapped as high distinctiveness habitat however some of these woodlands may be secondary or plantation woodland and not necessarily priority habitat. There is an area of undesignated 'high distinctiveness' acid grassland close to Tiverton War Memorial and an undesignated 'high distinctiveness' orchard at Tilstone Hall. Additional parcels of unspecified high distinctiveness habitat are located close to Woodend Farm and Tilstone Bank; these are likely to be species-rich grassland habitats.

Medium distinctiveness habitat

This study has identified several major areas of 'medium distinctiveness' habitat in the Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston NP area. These are shown on map 7 (displayed as orange) and provide important wildlife habitats in their own right as well as acting as ecological stepping stones and

corridors. The majority of these areas are thought to be semi-natural or species-rich grassland. There is a possibility that some of these areas have been undervalued and an ecological survey may indicate they should be mapped as 'high distinctiveness' priority habitat (which would be displayed as red in map 7). Conversely there may be areas which have been overvalued, particularly if recent management has led to the deterioration of the habitat; in which case these areas should be removed from the habitat distinctiveness map.

Several sections of Wettenhall Brook have been highlighted as 'medium distinctiveness' due to the presence of riparian habitat. Riparian habitat of medium distinctiveness is also present on an unnamed tributary of the Gowy, south-west of Brassey Green. The study has highlighted a particularly high number of field ponds in the area to the north of Brassey Green which have been mapped as medium distinctiveness.

Discussion

Notable habitats

The Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston Neighbourhood Planning area has a relatively high cover of wildlife habitat compared to other areas of lowland Cheshire. This is mainly due to extensive areas of semi-natural grassland and riparian habitat along the river Gowy and its tributaries. Much of the important habitat is located on steep slopes of the river corridor or other areas difficult to farm. Poor access and lower grade soils (such as those found on steep slopes) usually means that land is less intensively farmed and as a consequence semi-natural habitat is able to persist. This is the reason why the grade 4 agricultural land identified in map 5 correlates well with semi-natural habitats of medium or high distinctiveness.

The cover of semi-natural woodland in the neighbourhood is generally low, although several significant but scattered blocks occur at Pennsylvania Wood, Gregory's Wood, Tilstone Wood, Beeston Castle and Simpson's Rough/Foxy Wood. Pennsylvania Wood and Simpson's Rough/Foxy Wood both host areas of ancient semi-natural woodland. Previous Local Wildlife Site surveys have found that several of these important woodlands have problems with invasive species including variegated yellow archangel, cherry laurel, giant hogweed and rhododendron, all of which can severely impact the quality of the habitat.

Immediately to the south of the neighbourhood planning area lies Peckforton Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) on the slopes of the Sandstone Ridge. This ancient sessile oak woodland is particularly unusual and consequently important on a national scale. It supports notable populations of Pied Flycatcher, Redstart and Wood Warbler. These species are also likely to occasionally use the adjacent blocks of woodland present in the south-west of the neighbourhood planning area. Increasingly rare Common Lizards are present along the edge of Pennsylvania wood and on nearby heathland areas at Bickerton Hill.

In the far north-east corner of the neighbourhood planning area there are two important Local Wildlife Sites which are located on peat. Tiverton Moss Wood LWS is a relict mire community which now supports wet Alder woodland and Tussock Sedge. Tilstone Wood and Mere LWS supports rare

Bog Myrtle and some veteran trees. There is some valuable habitat in the vicinity of these two sites although they are poorly connected to other wildlife areas.

The area in the vicinity of Vale Road is likely to support valuable habitat including mature native hedges and semi-natural grassland. A traditional orchard is present in the grounds of Tilstone House. Traditional orchards are increasingly rare and provide niche habitats for lichens, invertebrates as well as wintering birds such as Fieldfare which feed on fallen fruit in the winter.

Wildlife corridors

Wildlife corridors are a key component of local ecological networks as they provide connectivity between core areas of high wildlife value/distinctiveness enabling species to move between them to feed, disperse, migrate or reproduce. In conjunction with the results of the Econet analysis (2003) this study has identified a wildlife corridor network (shown in map 8) with ecological connectivity within and beyond the Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston Neighbourhood Planning area.

A main east-west wildlife corridor runs through the centre of the area, broadly following the river Gowy and the Shropshire Union Canal. Although the A41 cuts through this corridor there is still likely to be a degree of connectivity under the bridges for species such as amphibians, mammals, plants and invertebrates. The road is less of a problem for birds, bats and other airborne species. Improving ecological connectivity and habitat quality in the vicinity of the bridges is highly recommended. Further upstream on the Gowy (where it curves to the east of Beeston Castle) the riparian habitat is poor quality, mainly due to more intensive farming methods and the lack of buffering habitat to protect the water course. This section has not been incorporated into the wildlife corridor.

This study has highlighted that the Crimes Brook provides ecological connectivity along the western boundary of the parish by linking Pennsylvania Wood/ Peckforton Wood SSSI with the river Gowy corridor. Although Crimes Brook is culverted under a railway line close to the Bishop Bennet Way, there is still likely to be some ecological connectivity for more mobile species. Furthermore the Bishop Bennet Way railway bridge is also likely to provide a degree of ecological connectivity over the railway line.

Beeston castle retains some ecological connectivity to the south via small blocks of woodland that link the Peckforton Woods SSSI with Beeston Castle, but this could be improved by gapping up hedges, particularly in the areas indicated on the wildlife corridor map.

Protection of the wildlife corridor and other high distinctiveness habitat

Map 8 shows an indicative boundary for the wildlife corridor; however this is likely to require refinement following detailed survey work. The corridor should be wide enough to protect the valuable habitats identified in map 7 and for this reason we have incorporated a 15 metre buffer zone around any high distinctiveness habitat. The buffer is necessary to help protect vulnerable habitat from factors such as water and light pollution, predation by domestic pets, and invasive garden species.

A 15m buffer zone is also appropriate for any land lying outside the corridor network that, following an ecological appraisal, is subsequently found to be high distinctiveness priority habitat (this may

currently be mapped as medium distinctiveness due to lack of information). Any potential development proposals which are adjacent to a high distinctiveness habitat or a wildlife corridor should demonstrate substantial mitigation and avoidance measures to lessen any impact on wildlife. For example low spillage (bat sensitive) lighting should be recommended for use on the outside of buildings or in car-parks and along pathways. Surface drainage water from developed areas should always be directed away from sensitive areas due to the risk of pollution unless the source of the water is clean, such as rainwater collected from roofs. Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS) are useful in providing additional wildlife habitat and preventing flooding, but they may still hold polluted water so should not drain directly into existing wildlife habitat unless the filtration system is extensive.

Not all sections of the wildlife corridor provide high quality habitat and measures to improve the ability of the corridor to support the movement of species is desirable. Enhancement of the corridor may be facilitated by opportunities arising through the planning process (e.g. S106 agreements, biodiversity offsetting/compensation) or through the aspirations of the local community.

Medium distinctiveness habitat outside the wildlife corridors

In addition to the 'wildlife corridors' the use of Defra's habitat distinctiveness methodology has identified further areas of medium 'habitat distinctiveness' (map 7). Although these sit outside the wildlife corridors, they nevertheless may provide important wildlife habitats acting as ecological stepping stones. These areas mainly comprise semi-natural or species-rich grassland, important hedgerows and ponds.

Hedgerows in the landscape are important as they increase the permeability of the landscape for wildlife, as well as providing important habitat in their own right. Hedgerows with native trees such as oak are especially valuable. Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston still have some good networks of hedgerows, many with mature trees. Several of the good hedgerows are associated with small irregular shaped fields and consequently also contribute greatly to the landscape character and historical value of the area.

Old meadows supporting species-rich grassland are the fastest disappearing habitats in the UK. These grasslands are particularly important for pollinating insects and insectivorous birds and mammals. It is extremely important that the highlighted 'medium distinctiveness' areas should be thoroughly evaluated in the development control process. If they are found to support species-rich grassland they should be re-classified as 'high distinctiveness' (priority/principal importance) habitat and they should not be built on (as stipulated in the Local Plan and the NPPF). In order to achieve no 'net loss' of biodiversity, compensation may be required should these areas be lost to development when avoidance and mitigation strategies have been applied in line with the guidance set out in the local plan.

To the north-west of the NP area there is a particularly large concentration of ponds that extends beyond the parish boundary. These are likely to be old marl pits that were dug to provide a source of fertiliser to spread on the surrounding fields. Although ponds are a common feature of the Cheshire countryside this high density over such a wide area is unusual. If the ponds are adequately buffered

from high inputs of modern fertilisers it is likely that they will support good populations of amphibians, aquatic invertebrates and a varied wetland flora.

Conclusion

The important wildlife habitat in Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston is mainly associated with the watercourses, semi-natural grasslands, woodlands, hedgerows and ponds, all of which provide ecological connectivity within the landscape. These areas are highlighted on map 7 as 'medium or high distinctiveness' habitats.

By attributing habitat distinctiveness values to different land parcels this study should be used as a guide for future decisions regarding planning policy and development control. We strongly recommend that further (phase 1) habitat survey work is undertaken at the appropriate time of year, in particular to verify that 'medium distinctiveness' habitats have not been over or undervalued. This is especially important if adjacent land is to be developed.

Most notably the analysis has identified a wildlife corridor network (incorporating a 15m buffer zone) which largely follows the courses of the Gowy and its tributaries, encompassing connected habitats including semi-natural grasslands, woodland and hedgerows.

In accordance with the guidance relating to ecological networks set out in the NPPF, we recommend that the wildlife corridor network is identified in the Neighbourhood Plan and protected from development. If new areas of high distinctiveness habitat are subsequently identified these should also be protected by a 15 metre non-developable buffer zone.

Any future development of sites adjacent to high distinctiveness habitat or a wildlife corridor should be able demonstrate substantial mitigation and avoidance measures to lessen any potential impacts on wildlife.

To summarise, future development of Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston villages should respect the natural environment. The most intact landscapes, in terms of biodiversity, landform and historical/cultural associations should be valued highly when planning decisions are made. Protection and enhancement of Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston's natural assets is of crucial importance for nature conservation and ecosystem services but it is also important for the enjoyment of future generations.

Recommendations for improving and protecting habitat in order to create a coherent ecological network

Following adoption of the neighbourhood plan CWT advises that the following recommendations should be actioned:

1. **Improve the quality of the ‘wildlife corridor network’ and assess against Local Wildlife Site selection criteria**

The ‘wildlife corridor network’ identified in map 8 may include land which would meet the criteria for Local Wildlife Site selection. These areas should be selected as Local Wildlife Sites if the criteria are met, as LWS status is likely to provide a greater level of protection within the planning system.

The wildlife corridor should be in ‘favourable condition’³ to provide breeding, foraging and commuting habitat for the species that live there. Ideally it should be surveyed by a qualified ecologist and management recommendations should be implemented where this is possible. Management work may include measures to control invasive species, particularly in the ancient woodlands and along the river banks. All semi-natural grassland should be cut or grazed each year to maintain its wildlife value, and hedgerows that form part of the wildlife corridor should be restored as a priority.

2. **Protect, enhance and connect areas of high/medium value which lie outside the wildlife corridor**

Opportunities should be explored to restore or create more wildlife friendly habitat especially where connectivity with other areas of valuable habitat can be achieved or where valuable sites can be buffered. Larger areas of better connected habitat support larger and healthier species populations and help prevent local extinctions.

Ways to enhance connections or to buffer sites may include restoring hedgerows, creating low maintenance field margins and sowing locally sourced⁴ wildflower meadows. Woodland expansion is desirable; however tree planting should only occur on species-poor (low value) grasslands. Professional advice should always be sought when creating new habitat.

3. **Phase 1 habitat mapping**

It is strongly recommended that the Tiverton, Tilstone Fearnall and Beeston Neighbourhood Planning area is phase 1 habitat mapped. This will provide a high level of detail and could be used to verify the results of the habitat distinctiveness mapping (map 7). Phase 1 mapping may identify further areas of medium or high distinctiveness (priority) habitat. Areas identified as having medium value habitat in this report should be targeted for survey as a priority. Phase 1 mapping should also be used to determine the exact position of the wildlife corridor network.

3

The definition of ‘favourable condition’ for Local Wildlife Sites is provided in appendix 2

4

Cheshire Wildlife Trust can provide advice on locally sourced wildflower meadow creation.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Habitats, LCM2007 classes⁵ and Broad Habitat subclasses for LCM2007 CEH

LCM2007 class	LCM2007 class number	Broad Habitat sub-class	Broad habitat sub-class code	Habitat Score
Broadleaved woodland	1	Deciduous	D	Medium
		Recent (<10yrs)	Dn	Medium
		Mixed	M	Medium
		Scrub	Sc	Medium
'Coniferous Woodland'	2	Conifer	C	Low
		Larch	Cl	Low
		Recent (<10yrs)	Cn	Low
		Evergreen	E	Low/Medium
		Felled	Fd	Medium
'Arable and Horticulture'	3	Arable bare	Aba	Low
'Arable and Horticulture'	3	Arable Unknown	Aun	Low
		Unknown non-cereal	Aun	Low
		Orchard	O	Medium
		Arable barley	Aba	Low
		Arable wheat	Aw	Low
		Arable stubble	Ast	Low
Improved Grassland'	4	Improved grassland	Gi	Low
		Ley	Gl	Low
		Hay	Gh	Low
LCM2007 class	LCM2007 class number	Broad Habitat sub-class	Broad habitat sub-class code	Habitat Score

⁵ No habitat scores higher than 'medium distinctiveness' due to the reliability of the data

Rough Grassland	5	Rough / unmanaged grassland	Gr	Low/Medium
'Neutral Grassland'	6	Neutral	Gn	Medium
'Calcareous Grassland'	7	Calcareous	Gc	Medium
Acid Grassland	8	Acid	Ga	Medium
		Bracken	Br	Medium
'Fen, Marsh and Swamp'	9	Fen / swamp	F	Medium
Heather	10	Heather & dwarf shrub	H	Medium
		Burnt heather	Hb	Medium
		Gorse	Hg	Medium
		Dry heath	Hd	Medium
Heather grassland	11	Heather grass	Hga	Medium
'Bog'	12	Bog	Bo	Medium
		Blanket bog	Bb	Medium
		Bog (Grass dom.)	Bg	Medium
		Bog (Heather dom.)	Bh	Medium
'Montane Habitats'	13	Montane habitats	Z	Medium
Inland Rock'	14	Inland rock	lb	Medium
		Despoiled land	Ud	Medium
Salt water	15	Water sea	Ws	Medium
		Water estuary	We	Medium
Freshwater	16	Water flooded	Wf	Medium
		Water lake	Wl	Medium
		Water River	Wr	Medium
LCM2007 class	LCM2007 class number	Broad Habitat sub-class	Broad habitat sub-class code	Habitat Score

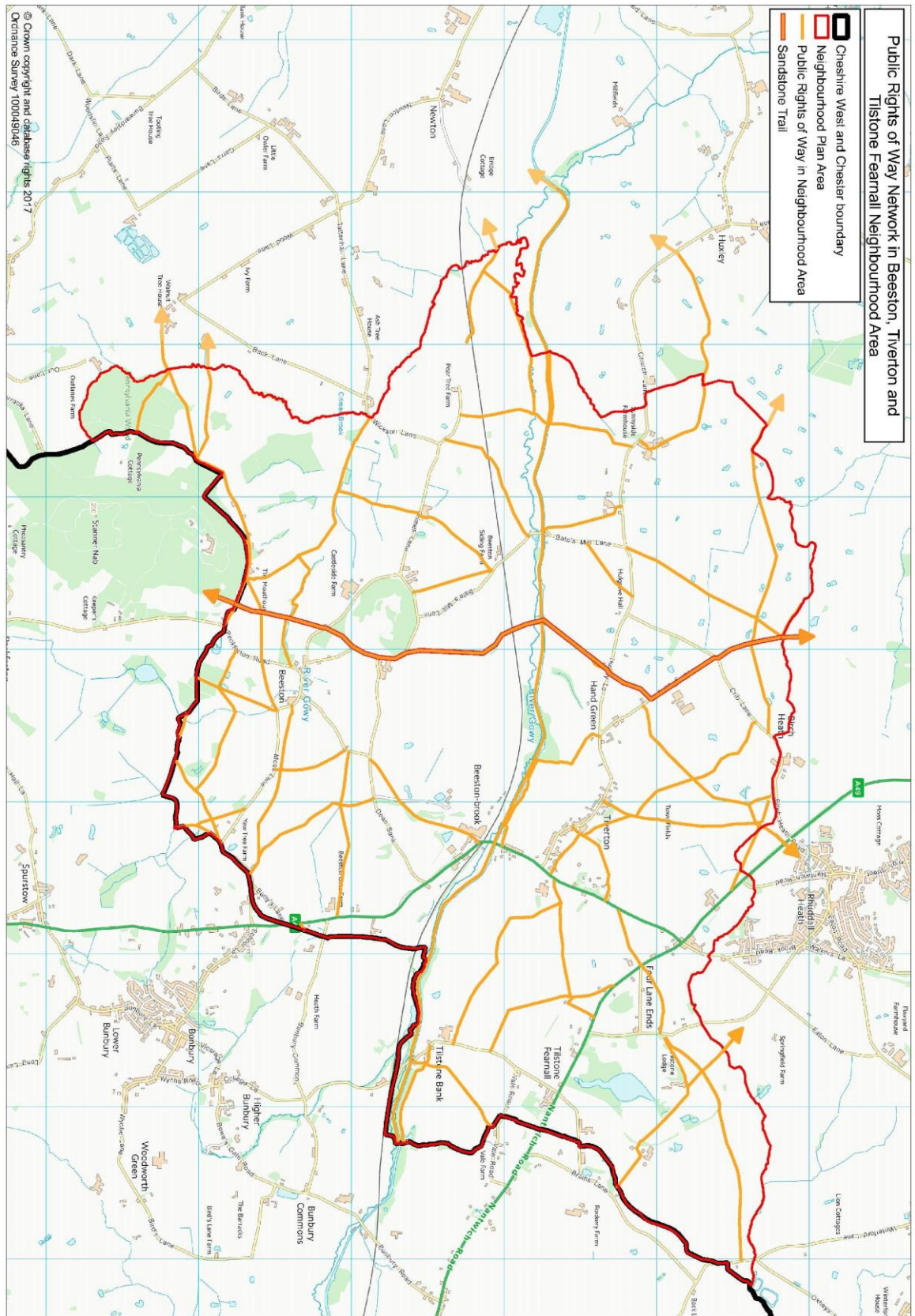
'Supra-littoral Rock'	17	Supra littoral rocks	Sr	Medium?
'Supra-littoral Sediment'	18	Sand dune	Sd	Medium
		Sand dune with shrubs	Sds	Medium
		Shingle	Sh	Medium?
		Shingle vegetated	Shv	Medium
'Littoral Rock'	19	Littoral rock	Lr	Medium
		Littoral rock / algae	Lra	Medium
Littoral sediment	20	Littoral mud	Lm	Medium
		Littoral mud / algae	Lma	Medium
		Littoral sand	Ls	Medium
Saltmarsh	21	Saltmarsh	Sm	Medium
		Saltmarsh grazing	Smg	Medium
Urban	22	Bare	Ba	Low
		Urban	U	Low
		Urban industrial	Ui	Low
Suburban	23	Urban suburban	Us	Low

Appendix 2

In order for a Local Wildlife Site to be recorded as 'in positive management' all four of the following should be met:

- The conservation features for which the site has been selected are clearly documented.
- There is documented evidence of a management plan/management scheme/advisory document which is sufficiently targeted to maintain or enhance the above features.
- The management requirements set out in the document are being met sufficiently in order to maintain the above features. This should be assessed at 5 year intervals (minimum) and recorded 'not known' if the interval is greater than 5 years.
- The Local Sites Partnership has verified the above evidence.

APPENDIX 3 – FOOTPATHS AND PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (INCLUDING THE SANDSTONE TRAIL)



APPENDIX 4 – KEY VIEWPOINTS and Locations Map

Number	Description
1	From Tilston Bank Lane looking west to Beeston Torr
2	From Pudding Lane (pond at south end), looking south to Beeston Torr
3	From Shropshire Union Canal at Stone Lock, looking west towards Iron Lock and Beeston Brook
4	From Castle View Cottages (at centre of Tiverton Village), looking west towards Stocks Bank and the Methodist Chapel
5	From "Four Winds" Moss Lane, looking NW towards Beeston Torr
6	From junction of Crimes Lane and Wickson Lane, looking east to Beeston Torr

View 1



View 2



View 3



View 4



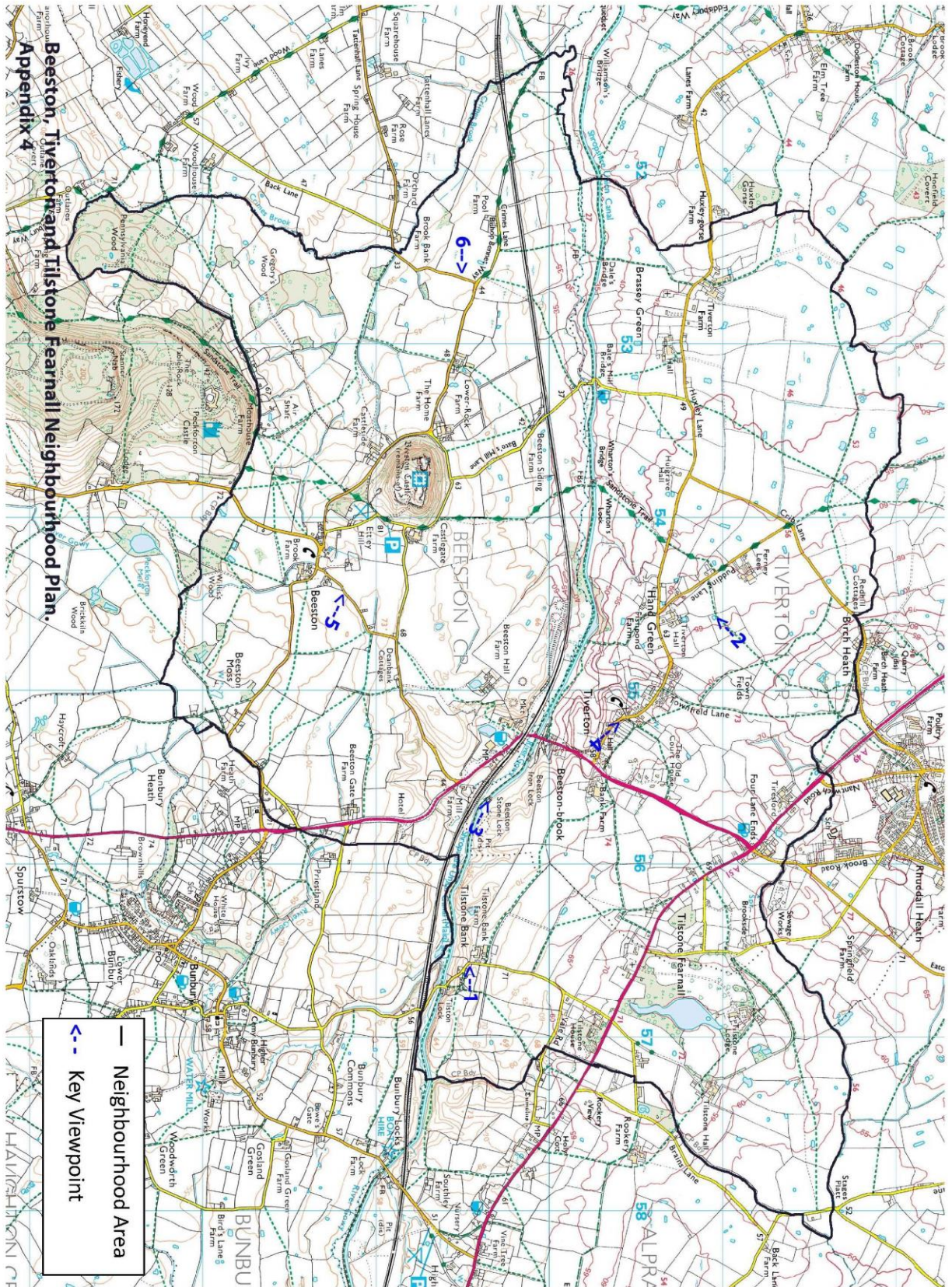
View 5



View 6



View Locations



APPENDIX 5 – STONE STILES

A characteristic of the footpaths in this area of Cheshire is the stone stile. It consists of two leaning sandstone posts with slots on their interior faces to take three horizontal wooden bars. The heavy sandstone slabs are supported at about 30 degrees to the vertical by smaller slabs beneath the leaning side that serve as props. Often there will be a base slab to ensure a firm footing when starting to climb over the horizontal bars.

Tiverton seems to have the largest number of these stiles with seven in use in the parish a decade ago. Over the last 20 years, three have completely disappeared (FP6 by the canal, FP19 on the parish boundary with Tilstone Fearnall and Pudding Lane end of FP5). Regrettably, this seems to have happened as a result of improvement programmes to footpaths in the area where both stiles, in a state of some deterioration, have been replaced by a standard wooden stile and the sandstone subsequently removed.

Later replacement of the wooden stiles around 2010 by metal kissing gates at several of the better preserved stone stiles has resulted in removal of the wooden rungs, eg FP20 at Townfield Lane and FP1.

The remaining 7 sandstone stiles can be found on:

A: FP1 (A49 to Tilstone Fearnall)



B: FP 15 (A49 layby)



C: FP 16 Tiverton Heath



D:, E:, F: FP 20 Townfield Lane to The Bitham (there are three on this path)



G: FP 7 Redhill Cottages to Sandstone Trail (a single upright remains hidden within the hedge and some distance north from the wooden stile that replaced it)



There are examples in nearby parishes e.g., on Peckforton 6 (back of Elephant and Castle) and Tarporley 10 (up to Hill Farm)

APPENDIX 6 – TIVERTON HEDGE SURVEY SUMMARY 2009

An initial sample of 9 randomly selected hedges, totalling 1349 metres in length, was surveyed for woody species, using the guidelines provided by DEFRA.

Of these 6 out of 9 (67%) were identified as species rich. This compares with a national average of 46% (figures for Cheshire not available).

Some other species are present in the parish, but did not appear in the samples.

Species	Shrubs % cover	Trees No.	Species	Shrubs % cover	Trees No.
Alder, common (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>)	x		Plum, wild (<i>Prunus domestica</i>)	x	
Apple, crab (<i>Malus sylvestris</i>)			Poplar, black (<i>Populus nigra betulifolia</i>)		
Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	x		Privet, wild (<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>)		
Aspen (<i>Populus tremula</i>)			Rose, dog- (<i>Rosa canina</i>)		
Beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>)			Rose, field- (<i>Rosa arvensis</i>)		
Birch, downy (<i>Betula pubescens</i>)			Rose (<i>Rosa</i> sp.)	x	
Birch, silver (<i>Betula pendula</i>)			Rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>)		
Blackthorn (<i>Prunus spinosa</i>)	x		Spindle (<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>)		
Broom (<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>)			Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>)	x	
Buckthorn (<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>)			Wayfaring-tree (<i>Viburnum lantana</i>)	x	
Cherry, wild (<i>Prunus avium</i>)			Willow, grey (<i>Salix cinerea</i>)		
Dogwood (<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>)			Willow, goat (<i>Salix caprea</i>) opulus		
Elder (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>)	x		Willow salix opulus	x	
Elm, English (<i>Ulmus procera</i>)					
Elm, wych (<i>Ulmus glabra</i>)					
Elm, (<i>Ulmus</i> sp.)					
Gorse (<i>Ulex europaeus</i>)	x				
Gorse, western (<i>Ulex gallii</i>)					
Guelder rose (<i>Viburnum opulus</i>)					
Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus</i> sp.)	x				
Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>)	x				
Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	x				
Hornbeam (<i>Carpinus betulus</i>)					
Lime, large-leaved (<i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>)					
Lime, small-leaved (<i>Tilia cordata</i>)			Hops humulus lupulus	x	
Maple, field (<i>Acer campestre</i>)			Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.)	x	
Oak, pedunculata (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	x		Honeysuckle (<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>)	x	
Oak, sessile (<i>Quercus petraea</i>)			Ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>)	x	
Pear (<i>Pyrus communis</i> sensu lato)			Traveller's-joy (<i>Clematis vitalba</i>)		
Pine, Scots (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)			% Gaps/access openings		

Hedgerow Survey

Townfield Lane

Tiverton

Cheshire

Compiled by: Ben Gregory and Natalie Webb
Date: May 2014

Introduction

Townfield Lane lies in the Parish of Tiverton in the Borough of Cheshire West and Chester, map grid reference SJ 551610. The lane forms part of a public footpath which runs from Tiverton, through Town fields to Birch Heath. A survey of the hedgerows along Townfield Lane was commissioned by Tiverton Parish Council to assess their condition and their value for wildlife.

The surveys were undertaken by Ben Gregory (Gowy Connect Project assistant, Cheshire Wildlife Trust) and Natalie Webb (Gowy Connect Project assistant, Cheshire Wildlife Trust) on 20/05/2014 and the weather was mild and overcast.



Figure 1. Location of Townfield Lane

Methodology

The hedgerow survey was undertaken using an adaptation of the methodology taken from the DEFRA hedgerow survey handbook. The completed forms should accompany this report.

Protected species and BAP priority species/habitats

The site was assessed for its suitability to host species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The presence of UK Priority Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) and Cheshire BAP species and habitats was recorded.

Bats (protected species)

The trees present within the survey area were visually examined for features such as cavities, raised bark, cracks and dense covering of ivy, all of which could provide potential habitat for bats.

Badgers (protected species)

Evidence of badger occupation was recorded

Other species

All other species present were recorded including invertebrate and bird populations and potential nesting areas.

Results

Bats (protected species)

The survey highlighted numerous trees along the survey length which have the potential to provide roost sites for bats. There are a number of trees which have tears, splits and scars as well as a large proportion of the trees along the survey route having a dense covering of ivy which provides good habitat for bats.

Badgers (protected species)

Evidence of badger occupation was recorded at one point during the survey. A sett was recorded which was deemed to be active due to signs of fresh excavations.

Other species

Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* were recorded in adjacent fields to the hedgerows on Townfield Lane. Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, Blackbird *Turdus merul* and, Great Tit *Parus major* were recorded on the lane itself. (It is important to note the hedgerow survey was not undertaken at the most suitable time of day for a bird survey and this should not be treated as an exhaustive bird inventory for the survey length).

An inventory of some of the more prevalent ground flora was recorded along the survey length, and the following species were recorded.

Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*

Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*

Red Campion *Silene dioica*

Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*

Cleavers *Galium aparine*
Common nettle *Urtica dioica*
Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*
Rosebay Willowherb *Chamaeneiron augustifolium*
Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*
Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*
Bramble / Blackberry *Rubus fruticosus agg.*
Ivy *Hedera helix*

Conclusion

The boundary hedgerows along Townfield Lane have, in the main have been allowed to grow into two lines of trees forming a canopy for the around half of the survey length (section 2 of the survey). Some of the trees that form this canopy are in terminal decline. Although the hedgerows on either side of the lane within section 1 of the survey show some signs of management (laying) in the past, this is unlikely to have occurred within the past 50 years. There is also evidence of some flailing on small sections of the hedgerow, most likely undertaken by the land owners adjacent to the lane to prevent encroachment of the hedgerow into the adjoining arable fields.

In conclusion the lane provides good habitat for a range of species including birds, small mammals (particularly bats), terrestrial invertebrates and badgers. Features such as standing dead wood, tears and scars in trees and trees covered in ivy provide excellent habitat for such species. It is important to note that some of the standing dead wood may have to be removed in the near future as it may be deemed to be dangerous to have such features on a public right of way. The lane also provides a valuable corridor for species moving through the landscape and provides an excellent link with other good in field boundaries at the northern most extent of the lane. Current predictions for a warming climate make corridors that allow species to move from south to north extremely valuable.

It is also worth noting the small amount of English Elm present in the hedgerow along Townfield Lane. As a species which has seen a dramatic decline due to Dutch Elm disease, and with their importance as a food source for the caterpillar of the white letter hairstreak butterfly, these trees, which are probably the suckers of older elm trees which would have once been prevalent in the county are significant. Even in their very early stages they can provide a valuable food source to the white letter hairstreak butterfly, a species which has seen a huge decline correlated with the reduction in elm trees due to disease.

If any restoration of the hedgerows along Townfield Lane was to take place it would be recommended that sections highlighted in Figure 2 below could be gapped up using a native mix of hedgerow plants. The ground flora (mainly bracken) within these gaps should be strimmed prior to any planting taking place and it would be recommended that spot spraying using a herbicide or hand weeding should be maintained for the subsequent three years post planting.



Figure 2. Area recommended for gapping up

In summary from the surveys undertaken Townfield Lane forms an important feature in the landscape and provides good habitat and a good corridor for dispersal for a wide range of species. With some sympathetic management, predominantly hedgerow gapping up the corridor could be further enhanced.

References

The Wildflower key, British Isles – N.W. Europe Francis Rose: 1981.