

Supporting Evidence F
ESBG NP Green Infrastructure Report

Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green
Neighbourhood Plan



Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Evidence Report

Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Evidence Report

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1. Introduction

1.1. Green Infrastructure (GI) is the interconnected network of natural areas and green spaces, Public Rights of Ways, wildlife habitats, landscapes and historic features which promotes a healthy and diverse environment and an attractive place to live. It is an important resource that fundamentally supports biodiversity and also benefits the public as an integral factor in a good quality of life. It is crucial to protect and enhance the natural environment to secure the long-term health of our natural landscape, increase biodiversity, whilst also benefitting the parishioners through offering attractive environments for outdoor pursuits and exercise, and creating a sense of place within the community.

This is reflected in the NPPF which defines Green Infrastructure as follows

Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.

This report identifies GI assets and habitats in the parish to inform policy.

2. Policy and Precedence

2.1. Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011 - 2029

2.1.1. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) defines Green Infrastructure (GI) as an interconnected network of natural areas and green open spaces that directly contribute to the health and quality of life for the local communities. The Vision underpinning this strategy is to provide a planned and managed network of Green Infrastructure across Basingstoke and Deane which not only provides residents with local access to green spaces, but also positively contributes to biodiversity to thrive alongside the built environment. (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, 2011).

2.1.2 Policy EM1 (Landscape) sets out principles that should apply to new development, allowing it only where it can be demonstrated that the proposals are sympathetic to the character and visual quality of the area concerned, taking into account scenic quality, important views within and out of settlements and the local character of buildings and settlement, open areas and landscape features such as ancient woodland and hedgerows (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, 2011).

2.1.3. Policy EM4 (Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Nature Conservation) sets out that development proposals will only be permitted if significant harm to bio- and/or geodiversity can be avoided or at least adequately mitigated. To secure opportunities for biodiversity improvement, development proposals will be required to where possible contribute to a net gain in biodiversity which could be achieved through focus on identified Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and Biodiversity Priority Areas (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, 2011).

2.1.4. Policy EM5 (Green Infrastructure) points out the importance of the green infrastructure network and requires important corridors or links not to be severed and highlights its mission to protect and enhance the quality of public open space and public rights of way (Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, 2011).

2.2. Green Space Standards

2.2.1. The BDBC Local Plan adopted Green Space Accessibility standards for the Borough and these were used in the BDBC's Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018) to assess provision of accessible Green Infrastructure. Standards are provided in terms of distance and quantity for 'multi-functional green space', including Amenity Green Space, Natural Green Space, parks, play areas and allotments. For instance, the maximum distance threshold for natural green space is 10 minutes (600m walking or 1500m cycling). For amenity green space the figure is 5 mins (300m walking). In terms of quantity, the standard is 32m² per person for a rural area, the absolute minimum requirement being 20m² per person.

2.2.2. BDBC's Green Infrastructure Strategy assesses GI provision by ward, so includes Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishop's Green (ES & BG) Parish under Highclere, Burghclere and St Mary Bourne, which unhelpfully distorts the picture towards a positive outcome. In fact, although ES & BG is a rural Parish, Appendix F of BDBC's Green Infrastructure Strategy shows only moderate access to Accessible Natural Greenspace, most local natural landscapes being privately owned and not freely accessible. Under the wider definition of Green Infrastructure, however, including amenity green spaces, sports fields and play areas, parks and gardens, and green corridors (& Public Rights of Way), the Parish is much better provisioned (although it is notable that some of these are not fully represented for this Parish on the report's maps!). However, it should be noted that Green Space provision in the Parish for those whose mobility is limited is an area of concern.

2.2.3. BDBC's Green Infrastructure Strategy states that for areas within lower-than-average provision of Accessible Green Space, provision of Green Space that demonstrably meets the declared standards should be a priority within any plans for development.

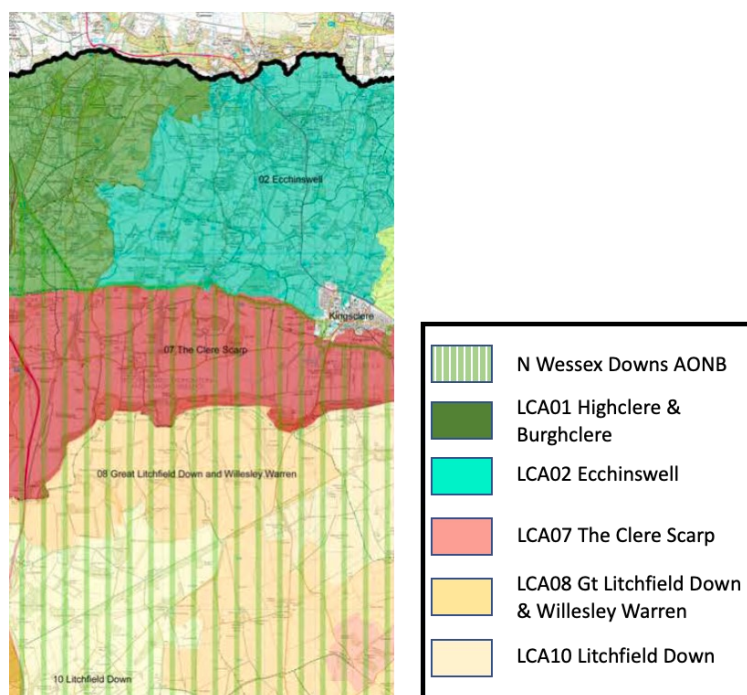
3. Features Specific to ES & BG

3.1. Like many rural parishes, ES & BG Parish is distinctive in how the village and smaller settlements within the Parish connect with the surrounding landscape. Through public consultations, local residents expressed a clear view that ES & BG's landscape setting and the Parish's green infrastructure assets are highly valued.

3.2. The Basingstoke and Deane Landscape Character Assessment (May 2021) defines 20 distinctive landscape areas across the County, several of which are to be found within ES & BG Parish. These units are referenced in the brief descriptions below. As well as describing the character of each area, this document highlights current and future issues and is thus a key potential resource when considering future environmental challenges for the Parish.

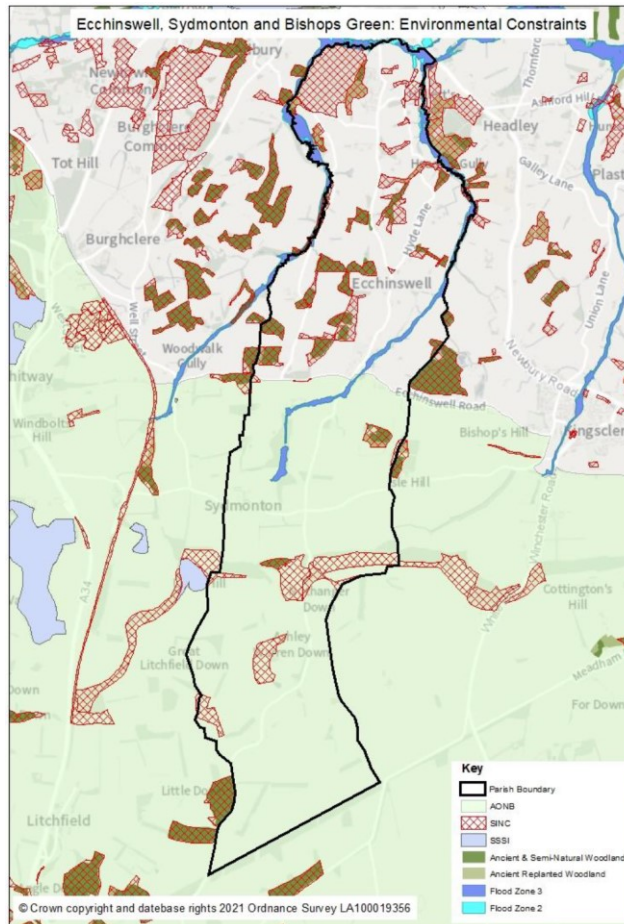
3.3. ES & BG Parish is notable for being elongated in the north-south direction, while being relatively narrow east to west. This leads to significant variation in the landscape character due to changes in underlying geology and variations in land use. To the south the chalk plateau area around Great Litchfield Down and Hare Warren Down (LCA's 8 & 10) has a wide-open aspect with extensive views and a preponderance of arable farming, with scattered copses and shelter belts. The Chalk scarp (LCA 7) to the north is a distinctive landscape feature with steep slopes with pasture for sheep or planted with Beech. A small part of the Ladle Hill ancient monument and chalk grassland falls within the parish. Below the scarp, a lower but still substantial feature is formed by the Greensand underlying the chalk (also LCA 7). This is home to a mixed farming regime, is quite open, but with steep-sided gullies, and has significant areas of woodland. A

further narrow ridge of chalk is found just to the south of the centre of Echchinswell village. The presence of the village in this location is evidence of the springs that break out at the junction between permeable chalk and overlying impermeable clays. The area running north from Echchinswell village centre almost to the limit of the Parish (LCA 2) has its character defined by Tertiary deposits of mixed clay, sand and loam. These give rise to much heavier soils and so more emphasis on pasturing for cattle, sheep and horses/ponies and rather less arable cultivation. The spring line gives rise to the Echchinswell stream that is a characteristic feature in the east of the Parish, while a similar stream partly bounds the Parish in the north-west. Both streams still have adjacent areas subject to winter flooding. In the far north of the Parish, poor, gravelly soil overlies the clay. Formerly heathland, this area (LCA 1) now holds the woodland of Sydmonton Common, a mixture of broad-leaved and coniferous plantation, which slopes down to the river Enbourne. Here, at the northern boundary of the Parish, is found the village of Bishop's Green.



3.4. The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NWD AONB) which crosses the south of the Parish presents the Parish with far reaching views over the rural landscape, for instance from the Chalk Scarp adjacent to Ladle Hill and from the Greensand ridge near Nuthanger Farm.

3.5. The Site of Special Scientific Interest at Ladle Hill does not extend into the Parish and thus ES & BG has no land designated as SSSI. However, the part of the Ladle Hill site that falls inside the Parish boundary, plus numerous other areas within the Parish, are designated by Hampshire SINC Partnership as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The majority of these sites are classed as Ancient Woodland. Although as a rule these are privately owned and not designated as Open Access, a number are viewable by the public from the extensive local network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW).



3.6. The amount and quality of green infrastructure assets that can be accessed through the extensive right of way infrastructure in the Parish is of high importance to the residents. According to feedback received from local consultation, protection of the rural character of the Parish, its trees and hedges is considered to be of great value.

4. Methodology

4.1. The online 'Map And Geographic Information Center' tool, Magic Maps, which collates datasets from organisations such as Natural England, Defra, the Environment Agency, Historic England, the Forestry Commission and the Marine Management Organisation, has been used to identify areas in ES & BG Parish that have been designated as habitats of importance.

4.2. Hampshire Rights of Way Online provided all information of the extensive network of footpaths, bridle ways and by-ways across the Parish and connect the GI assets of the North and South of the Parish with the villages of Ecchinswell and Bishop's Green.

4.3. Information on biodiversity has been obtained from data published by organisations such as the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre, the Hampshire Bat Group, Hants Moths and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Branch of Butterfly Conservation. Locally-held information from interested individuals living within the Parish has been called upon where appropriate.

4.4. With help of the above tools an audit was conducted to identify important GI assets in the Parish and inform the decision-making process of the Local Green Spaces to be designated as well as highlight opportunities to further enhance the Parish's GI network.

5. Habitats in Ecchinswell, Sydmonton and Bishop's Green Parish

5.1. Priority Habitats

5.1.1. The Magic Maps tool identifies areas of different habitat types within the Parish considered to be Priority Habitat, as summarised below.

5.1.2. Priority Habitat – Lowland Calcareous Grassland is to be found in a number of places in the south of the Parish, notably the eastern extremity of the Ladle Hill site, but also the dell to the south of Shepherd's Cottage, Sydmonton, and a couple of dry valleys to the west of Ashley Warren Farm and Hare Warren Farm respectively. Finally, the section of the scarp slope of Watership Down falling within the Parish is also similarly designated. A stretch of Priority Habitat – Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland is to be found along the northerly section of the Ecchinswell Stream as it runs up the eastern side of the Parish (from north of Hyde Farm to Bishop's Green).

5.1.3. Priority Habitat – Lowland Heathland has been identified in a couple of pockets to west and south-west of Sydmonton Common. These are far from obvious when viewed on the ground and presumably are of largely historical significance.



Bluebells, Birch Copse, from FP10a

5.1.4. ES & BG Parish is endowed with a significant area of woodland habitat. Many of the areas of woodland, particularly in the northern half of the Parish, are designated as Priority Habitat – Ancient & Semi-natural Woodland. Examples include Brock's Copse, Waterleas, Birch and Moor Copses, Crowmarsh Copse, Upper and Lower Berry Woods, and part of Nuthanger Copse. Other areas are classified as Priority Habitat – Ancient Replanted Woodland, such as parts of Sydmonton Common, Short Bushes Copse and part of Nuthanger Copse. Many of the remaining areas are included within the designation Priority Habitat – Deciduous Woodland, such as east of Brock's Green, further sections of Sydmonton Common, and the beechwoods on the chalk scarp. Collectively, these woods form a substantial and valuable environmental resource across the Parish.

5.1.5. The National Forest Inventory captures all the above woodland areas, plus others such as the planted conifers at Sydmonton Common and north of Brock's Green, with some additional granularity in terms of woodland types recorded (e.g. coppice with standards, mixed, scrub, young trees etc).

5.1.6. A small plot at Long Court Farm is designated as Priority Habitat – Traditional Orchards.

5.1.7. Two substantial areas within the Parish have the designation Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat; around Sydmonton Court, and further north between Brock's Green and North Sydmonton Farm. In the latter case, the land in question is currently almost entirely under arable cultivation.

5.2. Non-designated Habitats

5.2.1. A number of distinct habitats are found within the Parish that are not covered by official national designations. They are as follows:

5.2.2. Ecchinswell Church was originally founded close to the village centre but the site chosen was prone to waterlogging and flooding, so that a new church and churchyard were established in the mid-19th Century to the north of the village centre. Ecchinswell's churchyards are home to long-established grassland that has been managed with low inputs and excellent floral diversity is found at least two of the sites. The land known as Digweeds, the site of the old church and adjacent to the old churchyard, and fronting the spring-fed sources of the stream (see below), is also church property. It is currently an open space for public use, with lawn and shrub borders.



Ecchinswell Churchyard

5.2.3. Ecchinswell Pond is located at the junction of Ecchinswell Road and Hyde Lane. It is believed to have been refurbished in the not too distant past (the 1960's?), but the pond and its surrounds have a diverse flora and the pond supports both Great Crested and Smooth Newts and a variety of dragonflies.

5.2.4. Ecchinswell Stream arises from springs within and just south of the village centre. Previously, a water mill was established in the village and the water level is still controlled by leats and sluices for about 300m. The spring-fed nature of the stream means that it does not freeze over in winter and so is popular with various birds, including Little Egret, Grey Wagtail

and Kingfisher. Further north the stream returns to a more natural profile and its course is largely shaded by trees, somewhat limiting the opportunities for plants and invertebrates.

5.2.5. On the west side, the Parish border runs along a stream valley with a more natural aspect. Although confined within woodland, this has the form of coppice with standards and in spring has a glorious show of Wild Garlic and Bluebells, amongst others. The stream still maintains its natural meanders and accumulates woody debris and banks of shingle, providing a diverse aquatic habitat. Some work has been carried out in thinning the major trees to provide more light to the stream and its margins.

5.2.6. Of course, farmed land makes up the majority of the Parish landscape. These landscapes are home to and/or used by, a range of plants and animals. Some of these are generalists, taking advantage of opportunities for feeding as they arise (examples might include corvids, birds of prey, hedgerow birds, deer, rabbits and other medium/small mammals). Some species, on the other hand have specific habitat requirements that can be met by farmed land under the right conditions (e.g. Skylarks, Stone Curlew, Lapwing, Grey Partridge, Brown Hare). The southern part of the Parish is particularly suited these species and measures to promote the nesting and feeding of some of these have been pursued.

5.2.7. It is notable that the ES & BG Parish does not have much in the way of freely accessible natural open spaces that can be enjoyed by the public. As a result, much use is made of the footpath network and walking along the minor roads. That being the case, it is particularly important to the Parish inhabitants that the road verges are well looked-after and florally diverse.

5.3. Multi-functional Green Space – open space in built areas

5.3.1. As well as sites clearly recognised for their natural interest, the Green Infrastructure Strategy for Basingstoke & Deane (2018-2029) defines a number of categories of “Multi-functional Green Space” that can contribute to Green Infrastructure. These are mostly applicable to built areas and include amenity green space (e.g. suitable for formal or informal team games), equipped play areas, parks, green corridors or buffers and allotments. A number of such areas can be identified in the villages within ES & BG Parish. Further details of some of these are presented in Section 6.

5.3.2. In Echinswell Village, there is a recreation field alongside the village hall, as well as a children’s play area. Digweeds (mentioned above), is a small publicly-accessible park near the stream in the centre of the village. There is also an area of allotments accessed from the end of Oakfields Close.

5.3.3. Bishop’s Green plays host to two children’s play areas, one near to Eagle Road and the other next to the village hall, where there is also amenity green space next to Beech Road. Further north, on the boundary of the housing estate, a grassed area and hedgerow alongside Harrier Road provide a green buffer zone to adjacent fields. In general, the modern development in Bishop’s Green retains a number of small grassed areas with occasional groupings of shrubs and a number of mature trees (many with preservation orders), which collectively can be considered as contributing to Green Infrastructure in the village.

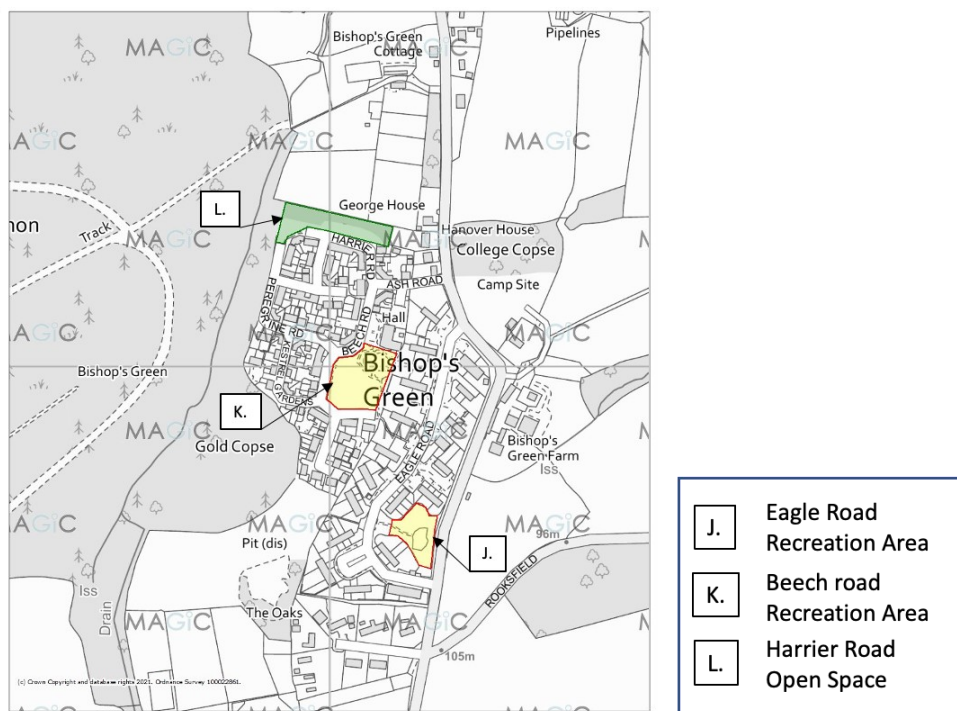
6. Echinswell, Sydmonton and Bishop's Green Parish Green Infrastructure Assets

6.1 ES & BG Green Infrastructure Assets Locations

6.1.1. The following map shows locations of GI Assets within Echinswell village.



6.1.2. The following map shows locations of GI Assets within Bishop's Green village.



6.2. ES & BG Green Infrastructure Assets Description

Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishop's Green Parish is unfortunately not blessed with significant areas of freely accessible open space (e.g. commons, country parks or nature reserves). The following sites are either of limited area, in private ownership but with public access via rights of way, and/or have other uses where access to nature comes as an added benefit.

Map ID	Name	Location	Designation	Current Use	Size	Match to criteria
A.	Ecchinswell Pond	Junction of Hyde Lane and Ecchinswell Road (opposite Palmers Yard)	N/A?	Village Pond	0.17Ha approx	<p>Beauty/Historic significance: The Hyde Lane location is believed to be the historical site of the village pond; however, its current form is believed to date back to the 1960's or 70's, when it was remodelled and the bed resealed with clay. The appearance of the pond is of significant value to the residents, and the parish funds the maintenance of the surrounding area via a regime of mowing and tree pruning. Once a year the vegetation in the pond is managed by a working party of volunteers.</p> <p>Recreation value/tranquillity: The pond is freely accessible from both Ecchinswell Road and Hyde Lane. A mown path is maintained on the eastern side. Although the pond sits alongside the main road through the village, there is not too much disturbance from traffic and a bench is provided on the eastern bank where one can sit and enjoy the wildlife.</p> <p>Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: Despite the fact that the pond appears to be refilled only from field and road runoff, it maintains a good diversity of marginal and aquatic plants. The more invasive of these – reedmace and flowering rush, are managed on a yearly basis to stop them becoming dominant. The pond is notable for populations of Great Crested Newt and Smooth Newt (these are taken into account when managing the pond). The pond has a diverse surround of trees, providing a variety of unshaded/shaded habitat. A range of dragonflies have been seen at the pond, including Broad-bodied Chaser, Southern Hawker and Ruddy Darter.</p>
B.	Ecchinswell Stream	From The old churchyard, north through Ecchinswell centre, then up the eastern boundary of the Parish to the River Enbourne	N/A		Approx 5km	<p>Beauty/Historic significance: The stream has played a key role in the history of Ecchinswell, having played host to a mill, which dictates the current form (wide and shallow) of the stream in the village centre. The millstream runs behind the Royal Oak pub and other historic buildings and is a core feature of the character of Ecchinswell. Further north, the stream reverts to a more natural form, being much narrower, with steep banks. Much of this course is shaded by trees.</p> <p>Recreation value/tranquillity: The stream is accessible in the area around the pub. To the north, it is backed onto by gardens but, further on, a public footpath runs along the bank as far as the pumping station. In the more northerly part of the Parish, a number of footpaths run down to the stream, but without offering the intimate access seen further south.</p> <p>Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: Knowledge of the wildlife along the stream is rather limited. A number of birds, including Grey Wagtail, Kingfisher and Little Egret regularly use the shallow open areas of the millstream and a variety of dragonflies and damselflies have also been seen. (Daubenton's Bat?). The shading of the stream further north probably limits the potential biodiversity by reducing the aquatic vegetation. The northern part of the stream course falls within Biodiversity Opportunity Area 07 (see below).</p>
C.	Ecchinswell Recreation Ground	Behind Ecchinswell Village Hall, which is opposite the War Memorial and the school.	Parish Council land	Recreation Ground	2.2Ha approx	<p>Beauty/Historic significance: The history of the recreation ground is not known. Its open area is laid out for sports and is surrounded on three sides by mature trees and hedgerows, forming a pleasing natural backdrop. There is also a children's play area adjacent to the village hall.</p>

						<p>Recreation value/tranquillity: The recreation ground is a popular open space within the village when not being used for sports events. The proximity of the village hall and the children's play area in the same place provides a focus for outdoor socialising and play. The recreation ground car park also acts as the start point for many walks in the Ecchinswell area.</p> <p>Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: The wildlife of the recreation area has not been assessed, however, the presence of mature tree/woodland margins on three sides suggests significant potential for birds, mammals and invertebrates to be using the area. There is scope to investigate further and provide enhancements in the future.</p>
D.	St Lawrence's Churchyard	Approximately 0.5 mile north of the village centre on the east side of the main road.	Church property	Graveyard	0.5Ha approx	<p>Beauty/Historic significance: Ecchinswell church was rebuilt in this location in 1856, the original site in the village centre being prone to damp and flooding. The churchyard is surrounded by a screen of mature trees and is divided by a gravel path from the gate to the church door. The area in recent use lies to the south of the path and is kept in good order, while the area to the north is managed with some sympathy for wildlife.</p> <p>Recreation value/tranquillity: The surrounding backdrop of trees coupled with the rural atmosphere provide a peaceful setting. A noticeboard in the gatehouse tells the story of the old and new churches.</p> <p>Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: Despite only having been converted to a churchyard 170 years ago, there is a remarkable display of spring flowers, notably featuring large quantities of Meadow Saxifrage. The wild daffodils may well have been planted, but the overall show with buttercups, clovers, primroses, wood anemones and many more represents a valuable environmental resource.</p>
E.	The Old Churchyard	Approximately 150m south of the Royal Oak Pub on Ecchinswell Rd	Church property	Graveyard	0.2Ha approx	<p>Beauty/Historic significance: This is next to the original location of Ecchinswell Church and has a history going back at least to the 15th Century, probably to Domesday and beyond. It is largely laid out to grass with old gravestones dotted about and surrounded by a brick wall. There are several mature trees, including a few Yew trees. There is also an area shrubs/undergrowth on the side away from the road. A small gate provides access. The site appears relatively lightly maintained.</p> <p>Recreation value/tranquillity: The churchyard in its current condition maintains a good balance between history and nature, being not too heavily managed, and certainly exhibits an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity.</p> <p>Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: The wildlife of the churchyard has not been assessed, however, it possesses many attributes that suggest excellent potential as a site for nature, as with many disused churchyards. The grass appears to have a reasonably diverse flora, and is not cut too short, providing habitat for small mammals and invertebrates. The shrubbery and mature trees are beneficial for birds – in the winter of 2019, Hawfinches were observed feeding on the Yew berries. The gravestones and brick walls have potential for lichens.</p>
E.	The Old Methodist Churchyard	Opposite Ecchinswell Pond	Church property	Graveyard	0.05 Ha approx	<p>Beauty/Historic significance: This is next to the former United Reformed Church, now a private residence. It is largely laid out to grass with old gravestones dotted about and surrounded by a brick wall, iron railings and wooden fence. There are several mature trees and a number of shrubs. A small gate provides access. The site appears relatively lightly maintained (by the Trustees?).</p> <p>Recreation value/tranquillity: The churchyard in its current condition maintains a good balance between history and nature, being not too heavily managed, and certainly exhibits an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity.</p> <p>Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: The wildlife of the churchyard has not been assessed, however, it probably has potential as a site for nature, as with many disused</p>

						churchyards. The grass currently appears to be cut quite short, so not ideal. The shrubbery and mature trees are beneficial for birds. The gravestones and brick walls have potential for lichens.
F.	Digweeds	To the rear of houses along Ecchinswell Road, approximately 100m south of the Royal Oak Pub	Church Property?	Open space/garden	0.1Ha approx	<p>Beauty/Historic significance: This open space is near to the Old Churchyard and is closely connected with the original church. The name derives from John Digweed, former churchwarden, who was buried in the church and whose grave marker is still present. The site is managed by the Parish as an open space amenity both as an informal garden and with a view to encouraging wildlife interest. The Ecchinswell Stream runs through the site and some of its springs may arise here.</p> <p>Recreation value/tranquillity: The site is specifically maintained for use as a natural space by the village and is appreciated by many. It is set back from the roads and so has a pleasing sense of seclusion and tranquillity.</p> <p>Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: The wildlife of this site has not been formally assessed, however, those that visit note the varied birdlife, including Kingfisher and many woodland species. Also seen are slow worms and a White Admiral Butterfly. There is a good mix of mature trees and shrubs resulting in a diverse habitat that is likely to support many other species. The potential for wildlife enhancement is high.</p>
G.	The War Memorial	On Ecchinswell Road, opposite the Village Hall and recreation ground	Parish Council land	Memorial	0.04Ha approx	<p>Beauty/Historic significance: The site for the War Memorial was donated to the Parish in 1921 by the Earl of Carnarvon. There is a monument honouring the men of the parish who lost their lives in the two World Wars. The immediate surrounds are maintained as an informal garden, grading into a more natural wooded background.</p> <p>Recreation value/tranquillity: Being located right on the main road and next to the school, the site is not particularly secluded. However, it is set out so as to form a respectful tribute to those commemorated, and is a focus for the village on Remembrance Sunday every year.</p> <p>Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: The wildlife of this site has not been formally assessed, however, although the site is small, the gradation from the monument itself into the surrounding natural environment provides an opportunity both for existing wildlife and for further enhancement.</p>
H.	Ladle Hill (part)	On the chalk scarp, west of Watership Down and south of Sydmonton. Only part of the larger site falls within ES & BG parish.	AONB/SINC (within the parish)	Nature Reserve/Grazing	2Ha approx	<p>Beauty/Historic significance: A small fraction of the Ancient Monument (hill-fort) and chalk grassland nature reserve falls within the parish boundary. Access is open across the whole site and those entering via the ES & BG portion will experience the natural beauty of the chalk scarp.</p> <p>Recreation value/tranquillity: Designated by BDBC as Accessible Natural Green Space and provides a means of access to the rest of the ancient monument and nature reserve, whilst connecting to several rights of way.</p> <p>Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: Whilst designated as a SINC rather than SSSI, the ES & BG portion of the site is managed as a unit with the whole and provides a number of opportunities to experience the wildlife of the downland scarp.</p>
I.	Watership Down (part)	A portion of the scarp face of Watership Down, accessible from Road U2 part-way up the hill from Sydmonton.	AONB/SINC (within the parish)	Grazing	8.75Ha approx	<p>Beauty/Historic significance: The steep scarp slope of Watership Down forms a key part of the downland landscape.</p> <p>Recreation value/tranquillity: Designated by BDBC as Accessible Natural Green Space. The area is open access, reached from the U2 road from Sydmonton to Ashley Warren and Hare Warren farms.</p> <p>Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: Designated by HCC as a SINC as a remnant of open chalk downland and therefore an area of priority habitat within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area 03 (Northern Scarp)</p>
J.	Recreation Area, Eagle Road,	Between Ecchinswell Road and Eagle Road, Bishop's Green, accessed via two footpaths.		Recreation/Play Area	0.2 Ha approx	<p>Beauty/Historic significance: The area was provided as part of the housing development and is owned and maintained by BDBC. The play</p>

	Bishop's Green					equipment sits in a small grassed area bordered by trees and bushes along the main road Recreation value/tranquillity: Intended for recreational use by children, but there is also grassed space to sit and meet. Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: Wildlife value has not been formally assessed, though the surrounding trees and bushes would be of value to birds.
K.	Recreation Area, Beech Road, Bishop's Green	In the centre of Bishop's Green, next to the village hall on Beech Road.		Recreation/Play Area	0.4Ha approx	Beauty/Historic significance: The area was provided as part of the housing development and is owned and maintained by BDBC. The play equipment sits next to the village hall and alongside an amenity green space that is used for informal team sports of different types (with some equipment to support this). Recreation value/tranquillity: Of significant value both for young children in the play area and for older children on the green space. Space is also available to sit and meet. The space is surrounded on three sides by homes or other buildings so not really designed for tranquillity. Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: Probably of limited wildlife value, though some small trees have been planted and one side is partly bordered by a hedge.
L.	Harrier Road Open Space, Bishop's Green	Bounding Harrier Road, Bishop's Green, where it runs east-west on the northern edge of the estate		Open Green Space	0.25Ha approx	Beauty/Historic significance: The area was provided as part of the housing development; ownership is not clear. It forms a green outlook for houses along Harrier Road. At the west end, abuts onto the area of woodland called Gold Copse. Recreation value/tranquillity: Has an intrinsic value as a green open space and being on the edge of the development lends an air of tranquillity. Richness of wildlife/Biodiversity value: The wildlife value of this site has not been assessed, but appears to have potential, being backed by a substantial hedge with a number of mature trees, backing onto open fields. A significant asset to the estate.

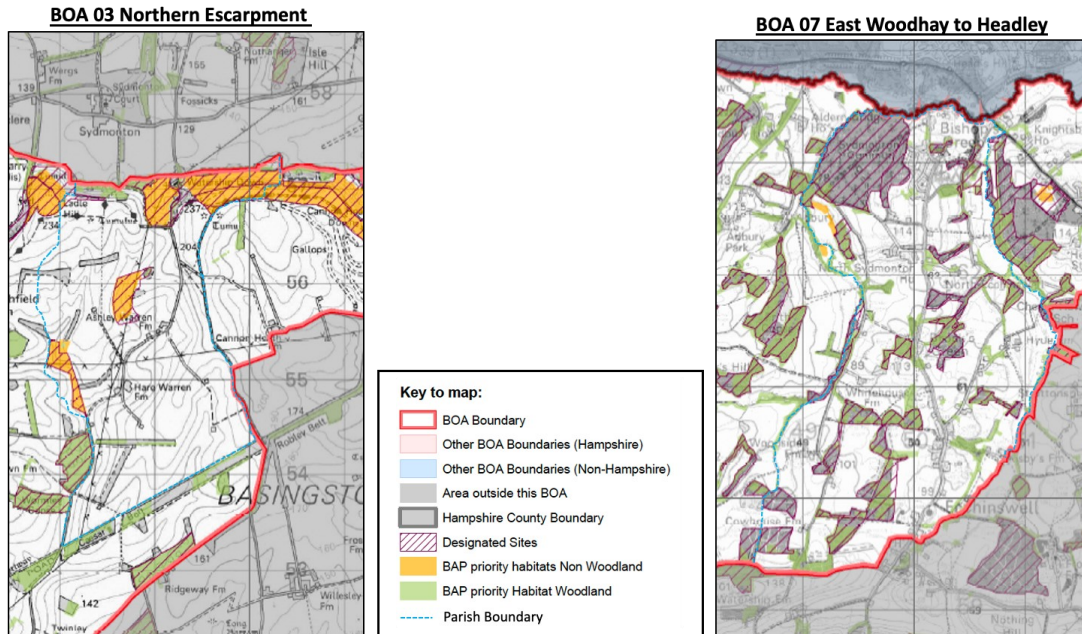
7. Biodiversity and Land Management

7.1 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

7.1.1. Hampshire County Council has recognised the importance of the conservation of the county's biodiversity. A rich biodiversity not only promotes economic development and prosperity but is also crucial in enriching people's lives through the provision of relaxation and enjoyment and the promotion of health and well-being.

7.1.2. To that end, HCC has instituted the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership to coordinate action for biodiversity in the county, including the production of a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Hampshire. The Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) provides a consolidated reference source for biodiversity data (habitats, species and designated sites) whether generated by HBIC, or provided by partner organisations.

7.1.3. While the Biodiversity Action Plan proposes action for specific priority habitats and species, a number of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas have been identified across large parts of the county. The aim within these areas is to identify locations and habitats that offer the potential in improve biodiversity at a local level.



7.1.4. Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishop’s Green Parish intersects with two BOA’s, namely BOA 03: Northern Escarpment West Woodhay to Watership Down, and BOA 07: East Woodhay to Headley. Within these areas, the BAP priority habitats (woodland and non-woodland) are identified, as well as sites carrying existing designations (e.g. SINCs). The accompanying BOA statements offer short descriptions of the character of the BOA, while identifying key species and priority habitats in the area. These are pretty general and non-prescriptive in terms of actions, in contrast to the main BAP, which provides relatively well-defined targets.

7.1.5. BOA 03 (Northern Escarpment) covers the whole of ES & BG Parish to the south of Sydmonton. The BAP priority habitats are Lowland Calcareous Grassland and Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland. The former is found mostly on the steep scarp slope of Watership Down, plus the dell to the south of Sydmonton and scattered fragments further south. The latter is again found on the steep scarp slope, plus small copses and shelter belts further south, but is of relatively lower importance than the grassland. The area is described as important for birds, including Lapwing and Stone Curlew.

7.1.6. BOA 07 (East Woodhay to Headley) intersects with ES & BG Parish from the middle of Ecchinswell village all the way to Bishop’s Green and the River Enbourne. Several BAP priority habitats are listed, of which three are probably of relevance in the Parish. Most notably, there are substantial pieces of BAP Priority Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland across this stretch, many already designated as SINCs. Also identified as a BAP priority is Wet Woodland, which refers to the woodland, dominated by Alder and Willow, found along parts of our streams and their associated flood plains. Apart from Sydmonton Common, most of the woodland in the north of the Parish is included in these two categories. Finally, some small non-woodland areas are identified in the north-west of the Parish, which are designated as Lowland Heath. Within this BOA, woodlands are clearly of primary importance within the Parish.

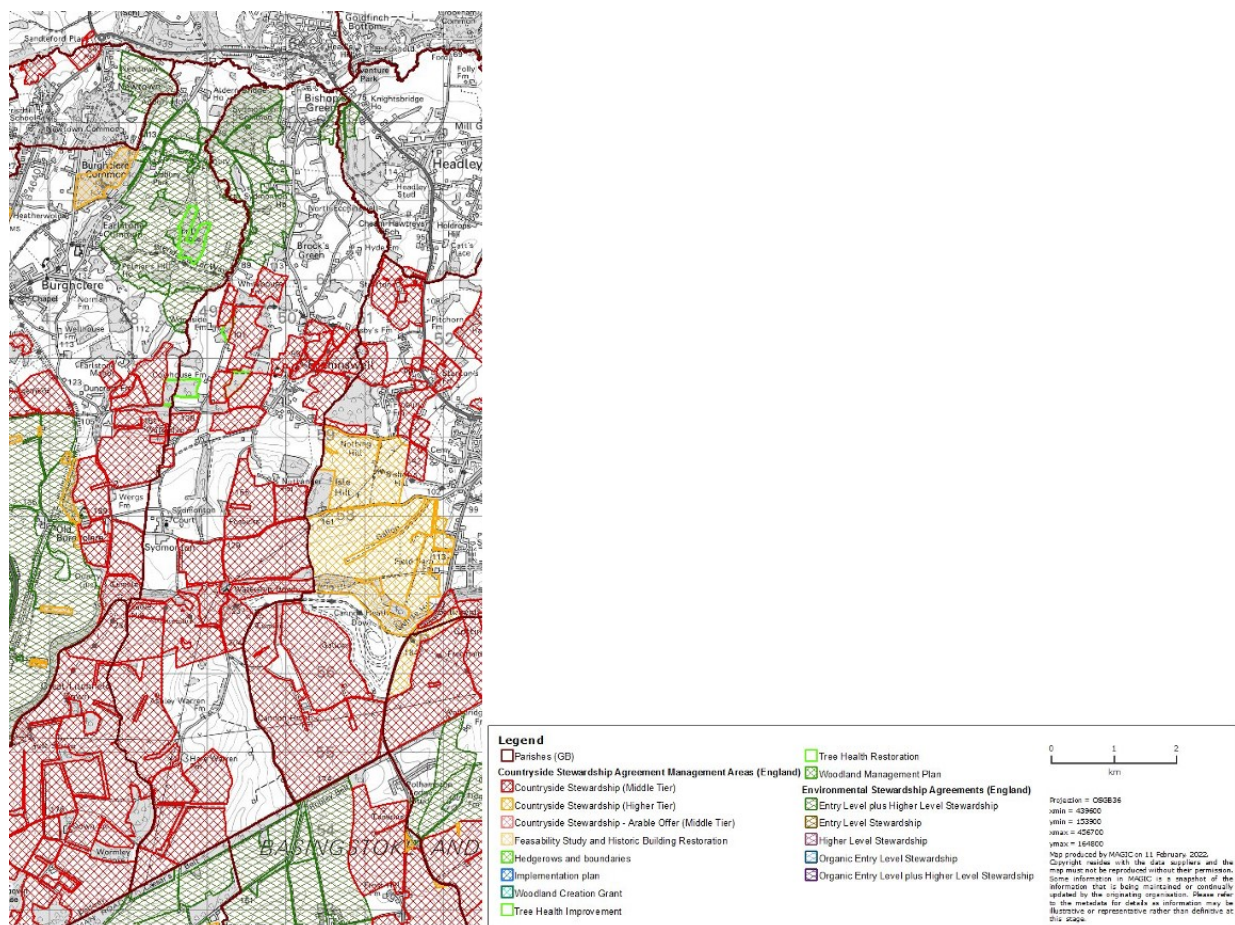
7.1.7. As a general principle, from the point of view of improving Green Infrastructure Assets within the Parish, focus should fall on Assets which form part of or can link to BAP priority habitats identified on the relevant BOA.

7.2 Stewardship Schemes

7.2.1. As stated previously, the majority of land within the Parish is devoted to agriculture of various kinds. Financial support is available from Government for managing land in ways that are beneficial to wildlife. MAGIC Map shows a significant proportion of the agricultural land within the Parish to be under either Countryside Stewardship or Environmental Stewardship (see map below).

7.2.2. In addition, many of the areas of woodland within the Parish are covered by Woodland Grant Schemes. As noted previously, many of these woods are declared as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs).

7.2.3. Stewardship schemes provide incentive for works in aid of biodiversity in the wider landscape. Examples include leaving forage strips along the edges of arable fields, bare areas within fields for the benefit of ground-nesting farmland birds, tree-planting, hedgerow restoration, leaving areas of rough grassland, and so on. Examples of all of these can be seen in many parts of ES & BG parish.



MAGIC Map plot of stewardship schemes within ES & BG Parish

8. Species

8.1. Birds

8.1.1. In line with the main ES & BG parish habitats, the birds typically recorded are those of open farmland and deciduous woodland. Of the open farmland species, some, such as Skylark, Stock Dove and Yellowhammer are distributed across the parish, whilst Grey Partridge, Corn Bunting, Lapwing and (more rarely) Stone Curlew are characteristic of chalk uplands. Barn Owl have been observed in winter in a number of different parts of the parish and breeding is possible, especially in the most least populated areas. Woodland birds of note include Marsh Tit, Bullfinch, Woodcock and Lesser Redpoll. The stream valleys play host to water birds, such as Little Egret, Kingfisher, Grey Wagtail and (in wooded areas) Mandarin Duck.

8.1.2. Over the recent decades, changes have been noted in the abundance of bird species. Unfortunately, many species have been seen to decline, notably Cuckoo, Spotted Flycatcher, Corn Bunting and Little Owl. Others previously recorded have not been seen for a number of years and may now be extinct in the parish, notably Turtle Dove, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Willow Tit.

8.1.3. More positively, some bird species have been recorded increasingly in recent year. Birds of prey are a good example with Red Kite and Common Buzzard now breeding in several places. Ravens have also colonised, particularly up on the downs. Little Egret are a fairly recent addition and although they probably breed elsewhere, are often seen on the Mill Stream. Firecrest have been observed in the woods of Sydmonton Common. Amongst garden birds, Goldfinch have increased greatly, along with Blue and Great Tits and Great Spotted Woodpecker.

8.1.4. Information on birds found in the parish can be obtained from the Hampshire Bird Atlas (2007-2012) and the annual Hampshire Bird Reports.

8.2. Bats

8.2.1. A search of MAGIC Map showed that there are seven records of European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licences for bats within the Parish (DEFRA, 2019). The Hampshire Bat Group's Species Distribution Data suggests presence of seven bat species: Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-Eared Bat, Noctule, Serotine, Daubenton's and Natterer's Bat (Hampshire Bat Group, 2019). Local observation has revealed Common Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared Bat.

8.3 Mammals

8.3.1. Some of the most visible mammals are deer, specifically Roe Deer and Reeve's Muntjac. Both species are browsers, having an impact on vegetation structure in areas where they are common, which can affect other species. Species of conservation priority that are present in the parish include Brown Hare, Yellow-necked Mouse, Water Shrew and Dormouse, the latter having been recorded in the areas adjacent to Bishop's Green. Hedgehogs are present in the parish but, as elsewhere, are likely to be in decline.

8.4 Amphibians & Reptiles

8.4.1. The Echinswell Pond is known to have a breeding population of Great Crested Newt, a Scheduled species, as well as Smooth Newt. Common Frog and Common Toad are also present in the parish. Slow Worms have been found in garden compost heaps, as well as, occasionally, Grass Snake. There is a report of an Adder being seen at Digweeds.



Painted Lady at Ratts Cottages

8.5 Butterflies & Moths

8.5.1. ES & BG parish plays host to most of the species that are widely distributed in the countryside, such as Brimstone, Orange Tip, Large and Small Whites, Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma, Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper. Species associated with the woodlands are occasionally seen further afield, such as Silver-washed Fritillary, White Admiral and Purple Hairstreak. Evidence for the more specialist species of open grassland is sparse, but Common Blue, Small Copper and Marbled White are present as are Large and Small Skippers. The chalk grassland areas of Ladle Hill and Watership Down within the parish are north-facing and have relatively coarse grasses, so not especially favourable for specialist species.



Poplar Hawk Moth at Ratts Cottages

8.5.2. Over 450 species of moth have been recorded, many of these being generalists, or associated with woodland trees or with garden habitats. Species clearly associated with chalk downland habitat have been recorded a surprising distance from the downs, as have others associated with heathland. Moth abundances across many species have been in decline for many years, reflecting a general decline in insect numbers generally.

8.6 Dragonflies

8.6.1. A number of species of dragonflies and damselflies have been recorded across the parish, with breeding opportunities presented by the two streams and the pond, but also in the shape of small ponds in the gardens of residents. Individuals may stray some distance from waterbodies whilst reaching full maturity and so can be found in any location suitable for feeding, such as woodland rides, glades and mature gardens. Species observed in the neighbourhood of the main pond include Broad-bodied Chaser, Common and Ruddy Darters,

Southern Hawker, Brown Hawker and Migrant Hawker Dragonflies, and Large Red and Azure Damselflies. Species deriving from moving water and so seen near the streams include Beautiful Demoiselle and Banded Demoiselle.



Southern Hawker at Ratts Cottages

8.7 Plants

8.7.1. As mentioned earlier, ES & BG parish does not contain much in the way of significant designated open green spaces, so the local flora is mainly experienced by the use of the road and footpath network. Many of the woodlands are considered to be “ancient and semi-natural” and can have a quite diverse ground flora. In the north, this is characteristic of heavy clay soils, and includes Primrose, Wood Anemone, Solomons Seal, Bluebell, Pignut and Wood Spurge. Wild Garlic occurs in profusion along the western stream margins and Pendulous Sedge is also common elsewhere. Still to be found on the west bank of the Ecchinswell Stream in the north of the parish is Small Teasel, a fairly scarce plant. Red Campion and Meadowsweet are well distributed along the road verges, which also feature Nettle-leaved Bellflower on Hyde Lane, the uncommon orchid Violet Helleborine in Brock’s Green, and a small colony of the very scarce Green Hellebore to the north of Primrose Cottage. Further south, opposite Pentico, a roadside bank supports an unusual flora with Betony, Slender St John’s Wort and Hawkweed, all usually indicators of high-quality woodland.



Solomon’s Seal on road verge

8.7.2. In the north, Sydmonton Common sits on acid gravelly soils and this supports different species, such as Wood Sage and Heath Speedwell, as well as violets and Wood Anemone along the margins. Within the plantations, the flora appears somewhat limited, though gorse and broom occur in open areas and some patches of bilberry can be found.

8.7.3. To the south where the chalk occurs, different plants may be found. Chalk grassland can be very diverse but unfortunately the best areas locally fall outside the parish boundary; those inside tend to be dominated by longer coarser grasses and fewer flowering plants. On Foxs lane west of Ecchinswell, a remnant road verge preserves a scatter of Cowslip, Common Rock-rose, Pyramidal Orchid and Field Scabious, with White Helleborine and the occasional Fly Orchid in adjacent woodlands. The scarp of Watership Down, while not as rich as Ladle Hill, is well grazed and has Cowslip, Yellow Rattle, Salad Burnet, plus scattered Common Spotted Orchid and a few Meadow Saxifrage.

8.7.4. All roadside wildflowers are critically dependent on being allowed to complete flowering and set seed without being impacted by verge mowing at the wrong time. Although Hampshire Council has a policy for managing wildflower verges it does not seem to be applied to any great extent in ES & BG Parish, despite the notable locations mentioned above.

9. Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishop's Green Rights of Way

9.1 Introduction

ES & BG Parish has an extensive network of public Rights of Way (RoW) providing access for residents and visitors to enjoy the natural attractions of our countryside. Access is available for walkers, horse-riders and cyclists where appropriate. Walkers have access to two long-distance footpaths, namely The Wayfarers Walk and the Brenda Parker Way. The former traces the ridge of the North Wessex Downs from Inkpen Beacon to Basingstoke and ultimately heads on to the south coast, while the latter traces a 78-mile meandering path across north Hampshire from Andover to Aldershot. The section from Kingsclere to Highclere threads its way to the north of Ecchinswell.

9.2. Rights of Way Types

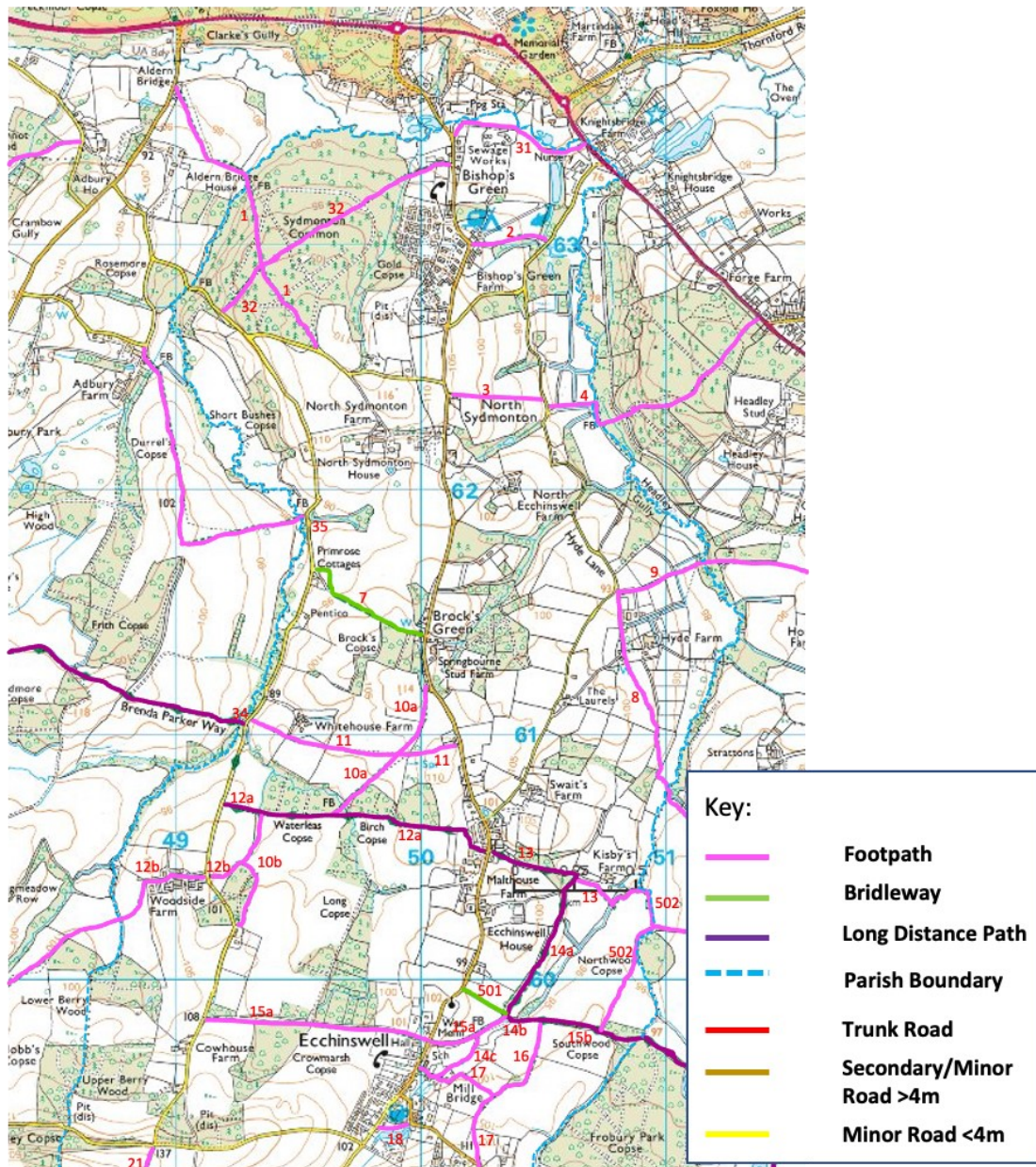
There are four types of public right of way:

- Footpath - for walking
 - Bridleway - for walking, horse riding and cycling
 - Restricted Byway - for walking, cycling, horse riding and horse drawn carriages (or other non-motorised vehicles)
 - Byway Open to All Traffic - for walking, cycling, horse riding, horse drawn carriages and motorised vehicles. Most do not have a surface suitable for ordinary motor traffic
- ES & BG Parish does not have any Byways Open to All Traffic within its boundaries.

9.3. Rights of Way Maps

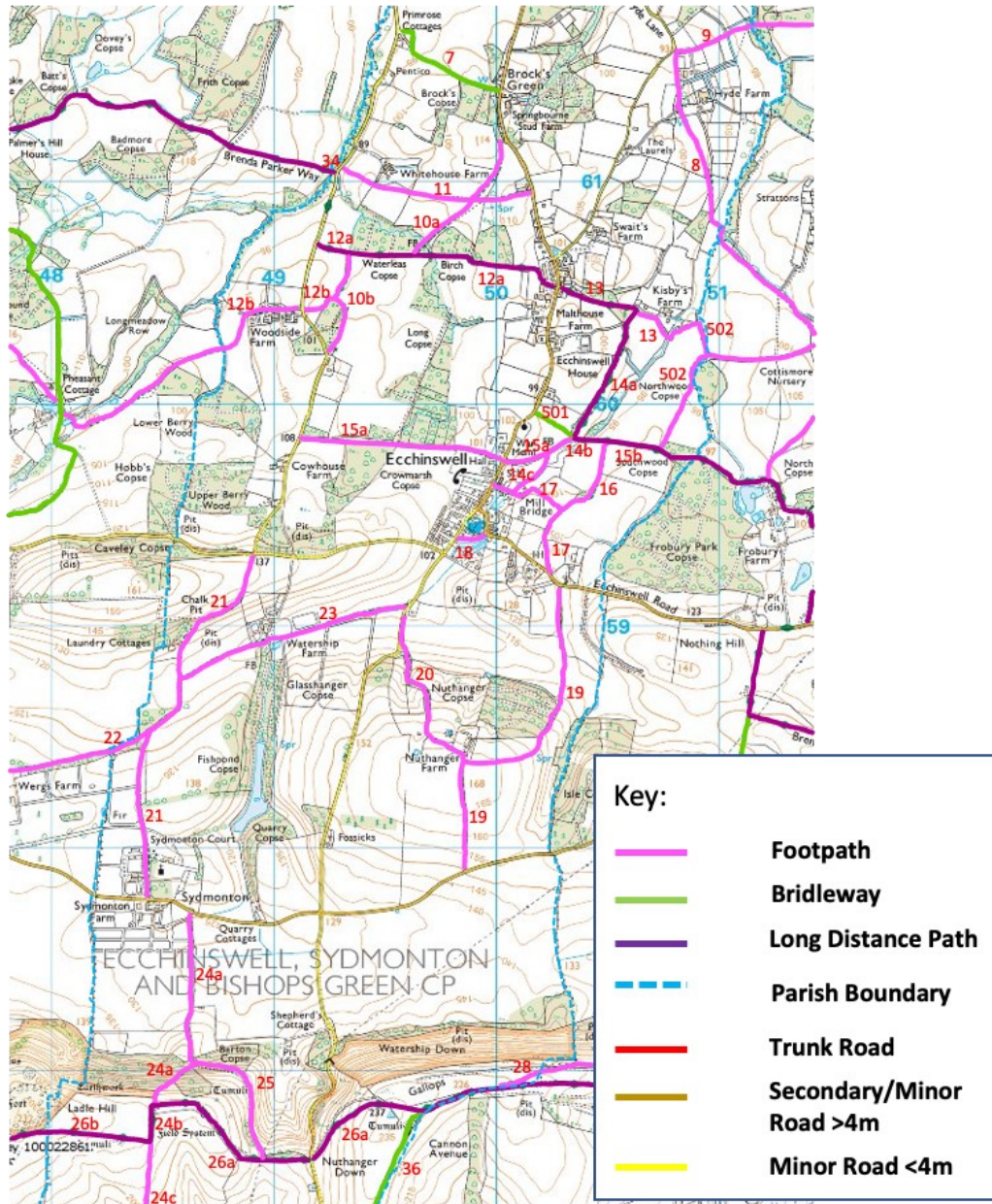
The three maps below show the locations and designations of Rights of Way across Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishop's Green Parish. The designations shown only apply within the parish as this is how they are recorded by HCC, therefore, some designations close to the parish boundary only apply to short "stubs" of RoW. The routes are numbered on the maps according to HCC's "Definitive Statements" (see below). The numbers for routes extending beyond the parish have been omitted.

9.3.1 ES & BG Parish Rights of Way Map – North



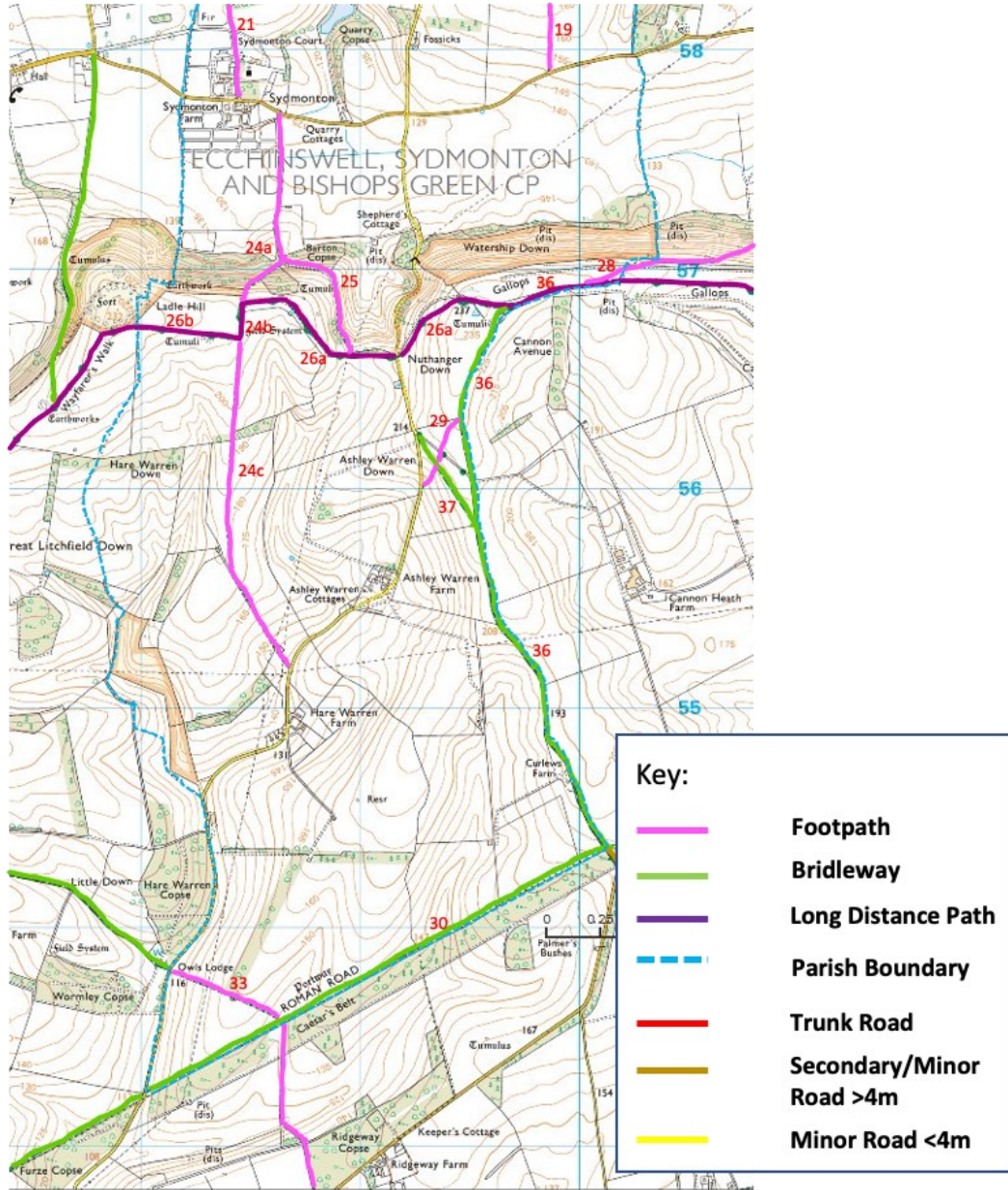
View NE from FP11 towards Whitehouse Farm

9.3.2 ES & BG Parish Rights of Way Map – Central



View south from FP19 near Ecchinswell Road

9.3.3 ES & BG Parish Rights of Way Map – South



View east from FP24c

9.4. Rights of Way Descriptions

Below are descriptions taken from the official Definitive Statements for the RoW in the Parish. I have not quoted the full definitive statements as they are not all up to date.

RoW Number	Status	Description
1	Footpath	From Road C171, across Sydmonton Common to footbridge on Parish Boundary near Aldern Bridge House
2	Footpath	From Road C171 south of Knight's Bridge to Road C.155 in Bishop's Green
3	Footpath	From Road C.155 at 'The Sun House' to Road U.31
4	Footpath	From Road U.31, north of Platts' Farm to footbridge on Parish Boundary
7	Bridleway	From Road C.155 at Brock's Green, to Road U.14 at Primrose Cottage
8	Footpath	From Road U.31 past Hyde Farm to Parish Boundary
9	Footpath	From No. 8, north of Hyde Farm to footbridge on Parish Boundary
10a	Footpath	From Road C.155, south of Brock's Green to No. 12a
10b	Footpath	From No. 12a to Road U.14 at Keeper's Lodge
11	Footpath	From Road C.155, at Ratt's Cottages, north of Congregational Chapel, to Road U.14
12a	Footpath	From Road C.155, at Malthouse Farm to Road U.14
12b	Footpath	From No.12a to Road U.14, then past Woodside Farm to Parish Boundary
13	Footpath	From Road C155, Ecchinswell, past Kisby's Farm to Parish Boundary
14a	Footpath	From No. 13, west of Kisby's Farm to the Pumping Station
14b	Bridleway	From the Pumping Station to No. 15b
14c	Footpath	From No. 17 near Mill Bridge to No. 15a
15a	Footpath	From Road U14, north of Cowhouse Farm to Village Hall, then across C.155 to pumping station
15b	Bridleway	From No. 14.b to Parish Boundary
16	Footpath	From No.17 along field edge to No.15b
17	Footpath	From Road C.155, south of School to Road U.2 at Clere House
18	Footpath	From Road C.155 at White Hill to Road U.2 north of Vicarage
19	Footpath	From Road U.2 at Clere House to Road C.57, south of Nuthanger Farm
20	Footpath	From Road U.2, south of Ecchinswell to No. 19 at Nuthanger Farm
21	Footpath	From Road C.57 at Sydmonton Farm, past Laundry Cottages to Road U.18
22	Footpath	From Parish Boundary to No.21
23	Footpath	From Road U.2, south of Ecchinswell to No. 21
24a	Footpath	From Road C.57 at Sydmonton to No. 26a on Ladle Hill
24b	Bridleway	From No. 26a to No. 26b on Ladle Hill
24c	Footpath	From No. 26b on Ladle Hill to Road U.2, near Hare Warren Farm
25	Footpath	From No. 26a on Ladle Hill to No. 24a at Sydmonton Park
26a	Bridleway	From No. 36 on Nuthanger Down to Road U.2, then to No. 24 on Ladle Hill
26b	Bridleway	From No. 24b to Parish Boundary at Ladle Hill
28	Footpath	From No. 36 at Watership Down to Parish Boundary
29	Footpath	From Road U.2 at Ashley Warren Down to No. 36
30	Bridleway	From Parish Boundary and Road U.2, to No. 36 and Parish Boundary (The Portway)
31	Footpath	From Road A.339 at Knight's Bridge to Road C.155 in Bishop's Green
32	Footpath	From Road C.155 to Road C.171 at Sydmonton Common
33	Footpath	From Road U.2 at Hare Warren Cottage to No. 30 The Portway, and Caesar's Belt
34	Footpath	From Road U.14 west of White House Farm to Parish Boundary
35	Footpath	From Road U.14 north of Primrose Cottage to Parish Boundary
36	Bridleway	From Parish Boundary on Watership Down to Parish Boundary and No. 30 at Caesar's Belt
37	Bridleway	From Road U.2 to No. 36
501	Bridleway	From Road C.155 to No. 14b
502	Footpath	From No. 15b to parish boundary

9.5. Comments on ES & BG Rights of Way

9.5.1. It is important to assess the network of ES & BG Rights of Way with the aim of identifying any areas for improvement. While the network is quite well-distributed, for anyone who has walked significant portions, it will be evident that their suitability is as a means of recreation rather than a mean of pedestrian access to other areas or lines of communication (e.g. shops, medical services, bus routes).

9.5.2. Access to the nearest shops beyond the parish requires one to reach Kingsclere, a distance of a good 2.5km (or more depending on one's location) in a straight line and significantly further by footpath. The surfaces of footpaths in this area, due to the underlying geology, deteriorate rapidly after any wet weather and cannot be considered a feasible means of communication for any but the fully able-bodied. If avoiding footpaths, one must resort to walking along the road, which is narrow, has many blind corners, and is not provided with a pavement for pedestrians. Thus, the Rights of Way system as it stands cannot be considered fit for purpose as viable means of communication for the parish community as a whole to the nearest neighbouring centre.

9.5.3. Access to main roads for bus services requires one to reach the A339 at suitable points where local buses have scheduled stops. One of these is beyond the far north of the parish, adjacent to Greenham Business Park. The route to there from Bishop's Green (approximately 1km) is provided with a pedestrian pavement and so, for this community, can be said to be viable. However, access for the community to the south of Bishop's Green, down to Brock's Green and Echinswell, is once again a narrow and winding road with no pavement and distinctly hazardous for pedestrians. Brock's Green is 2.5km from the A339 and Echinswell even further. Buses can be caught from the vicinity of the former Cottismore Farm, or to the north of the Shell petrol station, but in order to reach either of these locations one must navigate a complex route of footpaths (distance maybe 1.5km), where, as described, the underfoot conditions leave much to be desired. As previously, the alternative is to walk the road to Kingsclere with the hazards already described.

9.5.4. Therefore, it can be seen that the Rights of Way network falls short of being fit for purpose when considered as a pedestrian means of accessing essential services, as opposed to being used as a means of recreation. One solution to this would be to identify reasonable routes to primary destinations (shops, medical centres, bus routes) and provide properly paved routes accessible by the community as a whole. Alternatively, the provision of direct bus/minibus services from the villages at a viable (and affordable) level, would largely obviate the need to fulfil this function.

10. Summary & Conclusions (Key Messages)

10.1. The following comprise the key outcomes of the evidence gathering exercise conducted with regard to Green Infrastructure within Echinswell, Sydmonton & Bishop's Green Parish.

- **Section 2.2. – Green Space Standards:** - Although a rural parish, ES &BG only has moderate access to Accessible Natural Green Space (per BDBC criteria). Although considering sports grounds and play areas improves this, opportunities for attaining additional Accessible Natural Green Space should be sought. In addition, any new developments must be required to meet the Green Space Accessibility standards in the current BDBC Local Plan.

- **Section 5. - Habitats:** - ES & BG Parish has a wide range of habitats owing to its elongated north-south shape. Many of these are designated as Priority Habitats, however, relatively few areas are publicly accessible, except by Rights of Way. As a result, footpaths and road verges are important accessible natural habitats and require appropriate and sensitive management.
- **Section 6. – Green Infrastructure Assets:** - Eleven sites are listed as Green Infrastructure Assets for the parish, being at least partly accessible, having existing natural value and/or potential for improvement. These sites should form the core of site lists for potential designation as Local Green Space, or for inclusion in a Nature Recovery Plan.
- **Section 7. – Biodiversity Opportunity Areas:** - ES & BG parish intersects with two HCC Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA's). While these do generally focus on previously-designated sites and habitats, there may be the potential to use links to BAP priority habitat in the relevant BOA to support plans for Nature Improvement/Recovery and to encourage private landowner activities that would increase biodiversity.
- **Section 8. – Species:** - Information on species present within ES & BG Parish may be key providing defences against inappropriate developments. Also, such information may assist in the development of Nature Recovery Plans.
- **Section 9. – Rights of Way:** - The network of Rights of Way within ES & BG Parish, while extensive, is mostly appropriate for recreational use and does not except in limited cases, represent a viable means of accessing nearby services or transport links.