

1. OVERVIEW OF LANDSCAPE

From a mile or two away from Great Horwood the church tower appears above the tree line, marking the centre of this North Bucks Village. The surrounding farmland is gently undulating and divided into moderately sized fields which are hedged and used for arable and livestock farming. There are small pockets of woodland. Roadside hedges contain some mature trees, mainly ash and oak. The varied width verges managed in different ways, add to the informal rural aspect.

a. Underlying Geology

The underlying soil structure is Oxfordshire Clay, overlaid by calcareous clayey soil, (ph6.8-7.00) and liberally fed with springs.

b. Effect of Management

On farmland many fields have a drainage system into ditches along their boundaries which together with protective hedges are an advantage to wildlife. However the reduction of wet and marsh areas has resulted in loss of habitat for some other species. This is particularly noticeable in two of the three areas designated of special biological interest.

2. BUILT UP AREAS

Within the built-up areas of the parish, boundaries are a mixture of hedges, walls and fences. These restrict views both into and away from the village, but enhance the rural aspect and provide wildlife corridors and windbreaks.

Open Spaces

a. Gardens and Allotments. Most houses in the village have sufficient garden space to allow the production of flowers, fruit and vegetables.

In a village without a shop, this can be a very positive asset and is to be encouraged in any future residential development.

b. Recreational Areas. Two large open spaces one on either side of the A421 are used for cricket and football, both maintained by the appropriate club. In 2009 a new recreation ground was opened which is widely used and is managed by a Trust set up for the purpose. On the outskirts of the village are an increasing number of equestrian areas.

c. Education. Great Horwood C.E. Combined School is beautifully situated with plenty of space for the children's play and outdoor activities, including a conservation area of approximately one acre with potential to be developed for greater biodiversity.

d. Other Public Spaces. The churchyard, village green and roadsides create a feeling of space within the village and are further areas for our wildlife.

e. Special Sites. There are three sites notified having biological interest in the parish. The largest of these is College Wood and Copse, a County Wildlife Site actively managed by the Woodland Trust. There are permissive paths through the site and the Trust seeks to increase the proportion of native broadleaved species and further open the rides to encourage regeneration of woodland plants. Their efforts are showing the signs of success and we have had many reports of interesting species of wildlife in the woodlands. It is thought that wetland species on the other two sites have been adversely affected by land drainage.

f. Footpaths. Great Horwood and Singleborough have a fair number of footpaths most of which are well maintained. Regular checks need to be made on condition of these paths and the stiles, gates and way-markers along the paths.

Signage where appropriate should alert walkers to the presence of livestock in a field and remind them that dogs must be kept under control. Walkers who notice defects should contact the parish council whose aim is to encourage the use of this facility. They also wish to increase the number of circular walks available in the parish, to create a pedestrian route to College Wood and to make links with adjoining parishes.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO LANDSCAPE AND ENVIRONMENT

a. Housing. We would wish that future development takes place in such a way as to maintain the rural village aspect of the parish. New Housing should be designed to harmonise with the existing stock and sited with due consideration to the surroundings. Due to limited local employment it is necessary for families to have independent transport and off road parking facilities should reflect this need Porous drives and parking areas are to encouraged.

b. Industrial And Business Units

New industrial and business units, correctly sited, could increase employment for residents. Care, however should be taken to control the visual impact of such developments regarding size, colour and material used for buildings.

A boundary of natural screening using mainly indigenous species should be planted and it would be advisable to review the appearance of all buildings of this type regularly, to ensure that original planning criteria are still maintained and that compliance with later guidelines are being observed

c. Technology Innovation. Both being developed at present and likely to emerge in future, may bring into conflict the needs of society as a whole and the visual and auditory disadvantages attendant on them. Planning applications which clearly violate the interests of residents should be considered with the aim of resolving the issues to the satisfaction of all concerned.

d. Biodiversity. The preparation of this report included a survey of Flora and Fauna in the parish. There has been a considerable response to this initiative and it is hoped to continue and develop the survey. If any group, or club wish to increase the biodiversity within their particular area there are various sources of information and support available. Details can be obtained from AVDC Countryside officer.