

# HARTEST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## CHARACTER ASSESSMENT - LANDSCAPE AND NATURAL FEATURES

In 1855, Hartest was described as “a pleasant village, in the bosom of a deep valley . . . the parish rises in bold undulations . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Today, a cyclist, starting at the northern edge of the village (where the village sign coincides with the 30mph limit), can free-wheel along the road down to The Green and sometimes, given enough momentum, go over the bridge by the Church and part way up Hartest Hill before coming to a stop.

These two descriptions help to put in context the setting of the village within the wider landscape that surrounds it and make up the particular features of the parish.

The parish of Hartest lies in an area described as “undulating ancient farmland”. The land is gently sloping with heights ranging between 45 and 90m (above sea level), on clay overlying chalk. Field sizes are mainly large (up to about 20 hectares) with some smaller ones. Field boundaries are mostly defined by hedgerows and, in some cases, by tracks, footpaths and roads or sometimes by ditches. Distribution of hedgerows across the parish is fairly even though there are a few “gappy” areas (due probably to Government policies in the 1960s and 1970s). Arable crops include wheat, oilseed rape and sugar beet. In some locations, fields are used for grazing, to support horses, sheep and an occasional donkey.

Trees are a notable feature of the landscape and many mature trees are found within the hedgerows. Most frequent tree species in hedgerows include oak, ash and field maple. Isolated trees occur occasionally within fields, but these are probably relics of hedges that have been removed rather than indicators of former parkland or wood pasture. Over 55 “veteran” trees have been recorded within the hedgerows (see hedgerow survey, below) though the total number in the parish is certainly higher. These veteran trees contribute to the potential range of habitats, encouraging ecological diversity as well as being cherished for their aesthetic value within the landscape.

There are a few isolated areas of woodland best described as copses or expanded hedgerows along the edges of fields, with some blocks of more recent plantations. One of these, Hartest Wood, was planted in 1999 as a “Millennium” woodland project. Other woodland areas include the strips along the bank of the river both above and below the built-up stretch within Hartest village. Emphasis must be given to the high ecological value of this river stretch, together with its adjacent banks and field margins, as a wildlife corridor.

The village of Hartest is set in the valley bottom, at the intersection of four roads that run roughly north-south and east-west and meet at a crossroads towards the southwest corner of The Green. Houses of the village lie along these roads with just a few isolated farms and houses away from the central roads. Within the village and across the surrounding countryside, there are a number of farm buildings and barns associated with working farms. A section of the river runs through the central part of the village, in some cases forming part of the gardens of houses alongside it.

The surrounding landscape is an integral part of the village setting with access to extensive views across it from many of the houses and public spaces, from the footpaths and the four roads.

## ***Further details of certain landscape and natural features are given below***

### **Hedgerows**

There is an extensive network of hedgerows throughout the parish of Hartest. While many of these are an integral part of the agricultural landscape, forming boundaries to fields and also along the sides of roads, tracks and footpaths, some form boundaries to residential properties, particularly those adjacent to agricultural land. The hedges become an important feature of any views out of (and into) the village.

Management of the hedges varies with some being coppiced (showing varying stages of regeneration), and others are trimmed regularly while some have become rather overgrown and neglected. A few show indications of being "laid" but this is not being carried out currently. Those within the village and associated with gardens are generally cut back more frequently than those on open farmland.

A hedgerow survey within the parish was undertaken by volunteers between 2007 and 2011. This contributed to the wider "Suffolk Hedgerow Survey" (1998 - 2012)<sup>2</sup>. Data were recorded for hedges along 238 field boundaries (including 26 without hedges), representing about 62% of the field boundaries within the parish. Surveyors recorded woody species within a length of hedge, together with presence of trees, type of hedge and its maintenance and nature of the land adjacent to the hedge. They noted whether trees were coppiced, pollarded or veterans.

Of particular interest was the number of species within a length of hedge as this gives an indication both of species diversity and age of the hedge. Older hedges tend to have a higher number of species, though some recently established hedges have been deliberately planted with a mixture of species so the relationship with age does not apply to these.

Hartest is shown to have notably high counts of species-rich hedges (i.e. 8 or more species). These amounted to nearly 80% of those surveyed and a number of hedges had as many as 14 or 15 species. The richness of Hartest is emphasised by comparison with the figure for an "average" county parish (in Suffolk) for 8 or more species, which is 52%. The importance of the hedgerow network and the value of the hedges as an integral part of the landscape is brought out in the following quote from the report<sup>3</sup> completed after analysis of the Hartest data:

The Hartest "... hedgerow records confirm that the parish has an above average density and with such a high percentage of species rich hedgerows, consequently the variety of flora and fauna may be very good also, especially for wildlife to use the network for breeding, feeding, raising young, refuge and for corridors to move between habitats ...".

### **Trees**

Mature trees occur frequently in the hedgerows, as noted in the hedgerow survey (see above). In many hedges, trees have been coppiced and showed different stages of regrowth to more mature trees. There are some fine examples of pollarded oaks and a notable group of pollarded elms towards Boxted. (These were last pollarded about 30 years ago.) Other mature trees include ash, maple, poplar and willow. In some hedgerows, hawthorn, hazel and blackthorn have grown to be represented as small trees and both crab apple and plum (bullace) are scattered within the hedges. Some rarities include black poplar and fern-leaved beech as well as at least one example of small leaved lime. In a few fields, there are isolated mature trees, suggesting relics from hedgerows.

Within the residential parts of the village there is a greater diversity of tree species, associated with gardens, private properties and the open space at the centre (The Green). Trees of sycamore, horse chestnut and limes are found particularly around The Green and the pub. On the open farmland there

are relatively few conifers but these are more obvious associated with residential areas.

Fruit trees are found distributed through many of the gardens within the village - as individual trees or collected into small orchards. Species represented are mainly apples, pears and plums with some others such as medlars and quinces.

The “veteran” trees, referred to earlier and found mostly in the hedgerows, make an important contribution to providing a range of habitats for a diversity of species as well as being appreciated for their aesthetic value. Removal of a dying and decaying tree (often for “safety” reasons) at the same time destroys these valuable ecological habitats. The young “replacement” tree will take many decades (or even hundreds of years) to offer a similar range of diversity.

A number of trees in the parish are designated as having a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). Several of these are on or close to The Green and one oak with a TPO stands a short way along the road towards Somerton. Another TPO (a black poplar) is found in a cluster of houses towards Somerton. There are other trees in the parish for which a TPO would be justified in recognition of their value in the landscape, both aesthetic and as a habitat for wildlife. Reference has been made above to the many veteran trees and some rarities, all of which contribute to and enhance the landscape and natural environment within the parish.

Further details of trees in the parish are included in references to woodland (see below).

## **Woodland**

Throughout the parish, woodland is represented by scattered small copses or broadened strips of trees, say as extended hedgerows close to field margins, along the banks of the river and occasional blocks adjacent to residential properties. Typically, tree species include ash, field maple, hazel and some oak. In addition, for the woody species, there is likely to be blackthorn, hawthorn, spindle, willows, poplars and crab apple.

Hartest Wood was established in 1999 as a Millennium project in conjunction with the Woodland Trust. It occupies 1.2 hectares and lies close to Cook’s Farm bounded by the Lawshall Road and arable fields. Its layout represents a map of the village with a sculpture “The Gift” forming a focal point at the centre. The original planting reflected mainly native species for this area. Maintenance of the woodland is undertaken by volunteers from the community of Hartest.

An area of ancient woodland, of SSSI status, occurs in the Chadacre Estate, some of which lies in the neighbouring parish of Shimpling. Some younger plantations of woodland have been established within and towards Chadacre.

## **River (stream)**

The river (described by some as the stream) runs from the boundary with Somerton, through Hartest and on to Boxted. The upper part lies within farmland, then a stretch passes directly through the area with houses in the village, emerging again into farmland below Blind Lane. The river is a tributary of the River Glem though there appears to be no official name to the river from its source in Somerton and through Hartest. However, some older books on Hartest refer to it as “Smithbrook” (sensible in view of the current use of “Smithbrook Lane”).

Two recent surveys have been undertaken by Suffolk Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Group. The first (September 2015<sup>4</sup>) focussed on the length of river within the built up part of the village and there are some examples of interference with the river by residents, including restructuring of banks and tipping of compost and rubble into the river. Evidence of otter activity was recorded as

well as kingfisher, fish and signal crayfish. To quote from the report:

“The survey found that the river which flows through Hartest is of high ecological value and acts as a wildlife corridor for species such as otter. The river is a reactive water course with fluctuating water levels reflecting rainfall patterns . . .”.

The second survey (November / December 2015<sup>5</sup>) was undertaken from the bridge on Smithbrook Lane towards the boundary with Somerton. The surveyors showed considerable enthusiasm for this stretch of river as an example of relatively undisturbed habitat (including the banks and field margins either side) and a fine example of a natural meandering watercourse. There was evidence of badger activity and it is likely that the otters from downstream may also use this stretch of river. To quote from the report:

“the river is a natural meandering watercourse of high ecological value which provides an undisturbed wildlife corridor for mammals, avifauna and invertebrates . . . The stones and gravels of the riverbed provide potential habitat for fish and the woody debris will promote terrestrial and aquatic invertebrate communities . . .”.

The full reports provide further evidence of the ecological importance of the river and its adjacent habitat as wildlife corridors, linking with other natural habitats, such as the network of hedgerows, within the parish and through to neighbouring parishes.

## **Ponds**

A map dated 1839 shows approximately 83 ponds across the parish of Hartest. While some of these still exist as ponds, many have now disappeared. Modern maps show a few remain and most of these are on private land. Loss of natural ponds, for whatever reason, inevitably contributes to a reduction in habitats, and likelihood of a loss of species diversity.

A survey of “natural” ponds was initiated in 2013, carried out by a group of local residents, following the Suffolk Wildlife Trust “Open Water survey” guidelines. Only a few surveys were completed and now the “expert” has moved away from the village. It seems that these records have not yet been passed to the Suffolk Biological Records.

## **Footpaths and bridleways**

A network of footpaths runs throughout the parish, connecting also to the neighbouring parishes of Somerton, Brockley, Lawshall, Shimpling and Boxted. Footpaths within the parish of Hartest are numbered 1 to 17, though number 4 seems to be in Shimpling rather than Hartest. In addition there are two lanes (Smithbrook Lane and Rogers Lane) and these provide useful links with the footpath network. Darney Lane, towards the northern edge of the parish, is another important and ancient track, leading out of the parish through to Whepstead. In most cases, access to the footpath is from appropriate points along the paved roads - the exception is Parsons Walk, directly from The Green.

These footpaths are used frequently, some on a daily basis, particularly those close to the village. They are used mainly by residents of the village, enjoying the walking, but also from time to time by visitors to the area, exploring the various footpath routes. The footpaths provide access to the “countryside”, with opportunities for extensive views across the landscape and into the village as well as more detailed observations of plant and animal life in the hedges, across the fields and patches of woodland.

## **Roads and verges**

The five roads that lead into (and out of) the village converge on The Green. High banks are characteristic as the verges of the hilly sections of these roads, notably Hartest Hill, Lawshall

Road, the end of The Row past Blind Lane, the first part of Somerton Road and, to some extent, between The Green and Cross Green. These high banks support a variety of vegetation, sometimes with woody growth (which may or may not be coppiced), elsewhere with hedges at the top of the bank.

Other verges along the roadsides are mostly relatively narrow, generally with mixed grassy vegetation cut back at intervals through the year. Some of these have hedges running along the side away from the road. Those that border open farmland tend to be flat and wider, e.g. along the road to Somerton. None have special status for designation of the mowing regime to encourage diversity of species, though many show a variety of flowers (such as cowslips, followed later by cow parsley, red campion oxeye daisy and several grass species) at different times of year, before the mowers come into action. In a few stretches, owners of houses impose their own close mowing regime, likely to result in a reduction of species diversity along those stretches.

A tarred pathway (“pavement”) runs along one side of the road from Cross Green, towards The Green, bordering the western side of The Green and along The Row.

## **Cemetery**

The cemetery, located on Hartest Hill, has been a burial ground since 1857, with extensions at later dates. The most recent enlargement was of 0.1 hectares (0.25 acres) of land acquired in 2010, on which a mixed hedge and trees were planted in 2013.

A survey was carried out in 1994 (on the earlier 0.41 hectares of the site), as part of the Suffolk Churchyard Survey, organised by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT). The survey recognised this area as a “remnant of species-rich grassland, of considerable value for wildlife.” To quote (from a fuller description<sup>6</sup>):

“In addition to a number of fairly common wild flowers such as ox-eye daisy and cowslip, the cemetery also supports several uncommon species e.g. pyramidal orchid and hairy St John’s Wort.

Species-rich grassland is declining in Suffolk and throughout the country. Hartest Cemetery is therefore a valuable addition to the Register of County Wildlife Sites (Babergh District).”

More recent visits by SWT have reinforced this view and further surveys by local residents have helped to maintain the species list and emphasise features of interest.

Management of the cemetery is by the Parish Council. Based on SWT guidelines for management of grasslands for wildflowers, a plan for the mowing regime was drawn up (in 2008) so that some areas (near to recent burials) and certain paths are mowed more frequently while in other parts of the cemetery mowing takes place only two or three times a year, after the main flowering season is over. There are also benefits in managing the hedges and rough vegetation around the edges of the site, away from the burial plots, in ways that encourage species diversity. An effective way to implement a suitable regime is to cut these bordering areas in sections, in successive years, but not all at the same time. Such an approach should help maintain this important site in terms of species diversity.

Further surveys, say by local residents, could be undertaken to help generate interest in and understanding of this valuable site as a habitat for wildlife.

## **Churchyard**

Parts of the churchyard are managed by the Parish Council and, like the cemetery, the vegetation is allowed to grow longer, whereas the area surrounding the entrance and leading up to the Church is managed by the Parochial Church Council and mown closely.

A number of churchyards have been surveyed by the British Lichen Society but it appears that no survey

of lichens has been undertaken in Hartest. However, in neighbouring parishes (Lawshall, Shimpling, Hawkedon and Stansfield) surveys have been completed and the records there suggest Hartest would also show an interesting range of lichens.

At least three species of bats (Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Serotine) are known to be associated with the Church itself and the surrounding churchyard. At a “Bat Evening” in August 2013 (led by a member of the Suffolk Bat Group), plenty of activity was noted in the churchyard and adjoining garden towards the river. It is likely that more bat species live in and around buildings in Hartest.

## **The Green**

The importance of The Green as the centre and focal point of the village is described in the Character Assessment of the Built Environment, so considered here in the context of “natural features”.

Management of the mowing of this grassy area is the responsibility of the Parish Council. Currently, this involves frequent close mowing though a few banks are allowed to grow more freely. This gives The Green an urban rather than rural character. In the 1940s, older residents can recall cows on The Green and around thirty years ago, some goats grazed on The Green (the grass was long enough to support this). At that time, there was generally a more informal atmosphere as children played on The Green and residents walked to and from the shop and Post Office.

In more recent years, there have been attempts (and agreements) to have a more relaxed mowing regime and so encourage plant diversity in specified sections of The Green. However, these intentions have not been sustained. However, it is encouraging that orchids are noted most years in the northern part of The Green. These are staked so that they are avoided when mowing in the area.

The scattered trees on The Green are also referred to in the section on Trees (above). These have been planted at different times and most are non-native trees, characteristic more of parks and large gardens and not typical or representative of the trees in the surrounding countryside.

## **Use of land within the landscape**

The fields are used to grow a range of arable crops, including wheat and barley, beans (also known as field beans or tick beans), oil seed rape and sugar beet. One farm has an area with commercial organic vegetable crops. Some fields are used as leys, harvested mainly for haylage. Other more permanent pastures are used for grazing (horses, sheep, some cattle, donkey and alpacas).

At different times of the year, the field crops provide food and cover for a variety of fauna and contribute to the overall species diversity within the landscape. As examples, rape is good for bees and other insects, beans are good for wildlife and occasional over-winter stubble and even bare ground all contribute to enhancement of diversity in the environment.

Farmers are guided by different government policies and regulations that aim to encourage environmental diversity. Currently these include the requirement to have at least three types of crops over the year, the widths of field margins and permitted distance from water courses for spraying. Farmers also take their own decisions with respect to management of the land in ways that enhance biodiversity. For example, farmers decide when they cut hedges and how often. At least one farm does the hedge cutting every other year (and not in August), allowing fuller growth of the hedgerow with resulting benefits for birds. Even a fallen tree, if rolled into a nearby hedge rather than being removed and “tidied up”, can continue to provide valuable habitats for different species.

Across the parish, there are plenty of examples of wide field margins and buffer strips which, as well as their benefit to the agriculture and wildlife diversity, contribute to the overall visual patterns within the landscape. A list provided by Longs Farm<sup>7</sup> records wild flowers seen at and around the farm - in the

hedgerows, brews and headlands, wild-life strips and non-cropped areas as well as “field plants” (usually considered as weeds in the crops).

Inevitably, farming practices change, as do the regulations and requirements. The large scale machinery in current use, may have some unexpected environmental benefits as often it is unable to reach into corners of fields, leaving them uncultivated. Old field names (such as “Long meadow” and “Stack yard”) serve to remind the modern day farmer of former uses of the land. In some cases, as described above, steps are being taken to encourage establishment of areas, even if quite small, that contribute to a diversity across the habitats within the parish.

## **Wildlife in the parish**

Within the parish of Hartest, there is plenty of evidence of an abundance of wildlife (referring here mainly to animal species). Mention has been made (in the river survey) of badger activity and signs of otters. Bats are known to inhabit the Church and surrounding area. Residents often see herds of deer (roe and fallow) in the fields and sometimes crossing the roads at night. To this list of mammals can be added foxes and muntjac seen in gardens, rabbits, hares, grey squirrels, polecat and weasels.

In many gardens there is a rich variety of bird song and bird enthusiasts are able to enjoy sightings when walking along the footpaths beside fields. One resident (in Green View) has so far recorded 36 bird species, in and above their garden. A bird survey has been carried out over several years at Long’s Farm and a selection from the extensive list there includes: kestrels and buzzards; yellow hammer, greenfinch, goldfinch and dunnock; wheatear, corn bunting, larks and barn owls<sup>7</sup>. But this selection represents only a fraction of the birds that people observe across the parish.

Grass snakes and slow worms are reptiles reported from time to time in garden compost heaps and sightings of amphibians include toads and newts. Butterflies and moths (and their caterpillars) are often noted as well as a mass of “bugs and beetles” and other insects in the vegetation - some of them less welcome pests in crops or garden produce.

In the soil, ponds and ditches there is a myriad of invertebrates, many of which are less familiar but nevertheless are an integral part of the food chains and food webs which in turn contribute to the diversity of species throughout the parish.

## **Wildlife corridors**

As described earlier, in the parish of Hartest, the landscape is essentially made up of farmland, in which fields of arable crops predominate. But within this matrix, there are important features that act as wildlife corridors and contribute to the links between Hartest and neighbouring parishes and across the countryside for distribution of plant and animal species and their continuity.

Examples of these features include hedgerows (notably Rogers Lane, Smithbrook Lane and parts of Darney Lane). These outstanding examples are complemented by the network of hedgerows across the parish, many of which have high species diversity. Within the hedgerows, the veteran trees play an important role by providing reservoirs of habitat diversity. In addition, field margins are often generous, particularly along stretches of the river and some of the well-used tracks and pathways. The river and surrounding strips (including where it goes under the road) also provides a valuable wildlife corridor and this was highlighted by the recent surveys carried out by Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT).

Comments made by the collator of the hedgerow survey and by the SWT river survey - both carried out by professional organisations - emphasise the importance of these wildlife corridors within the wider landscape across the countryside.

In 1946, a resident of Hartest (William Payn) returned to Hartest after spending nearly 6 years away during the war years. He describes, with feeling, some of the changes that had occurred within the parish over these war years.

“New farming practices and the huge new machinery that had evolved during the war years . . . had brought about changes in the countryside greater and more extreme than anything that had taken place on farms and fields during the previous one hundred years . . . Much of the once so familiar landscape had disappeared altogether. The four beautiful old meadows that girdled the house and garden . . . had been ploughed up, their tall hedges and old hedgerow trees uprooted. In springtime, they had always brightened our days with their sheets of cowslips, early Orchis and lady’s smock . . .”

In 2016, further change is inevitable, but it is still important to emphasise the essential value of the living continuum of and interacting diversity of plant and animal species, throughout the parish and connecting with neighbouring parishes and across the wider countryside. This is the contribution made by the network of hedgerows, verges and banks and river and probably far more important than the odd occurrence of a rare species (though that may indicate presence of suitable habitats). Perhaps one small step would be to reduce the enthusiasm for close mowing and removing vegetation (The Green, roadside verges, people’s own gardens and hedges). This would be one way to help enhance and encourage biodiversity within our landscape and a continuity of species across the countryside.

## Postscript

To keep things in perspective, it is perhaps worth seeing “Planning”, in its widest sense, as being closely akin to DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid), the biological molecule now familiar as the central controlling and hereditary factor within cells of living organisms. As details of the structure of DNA gradually unfolded, biologists could see how this structure can provide a mechanism for both change and continuity, from one generation to the next and across populations of species, whether they be plant or animal. In a similar way, it is hoped that the framework developed for planning, within Hartest or any other parish, can allow for the change that is inevitable as the world around develops and adapts to the contemporary needs of people but at the same time retains those features of the landscape and built environment that are essential to the character of Hartest and a link with its historical past.

## References

- 1 *White’s Directory of Suffolk, 1855*
- 2 *Suffolk Hedgerow Survey (1998 - 2012)*
- 3 *Report from Chairman relating to Hartest hedgerow surveys*
- 4 *SWT river survey (Sept 2015)*
- 5 *SWT river survey (Nov / Dec 2015)*
- 6 *Babergh [from a Register of County Wildlife Sites]*
- 7 *Observations at Longs Farm, Hartest: birds, wildflowers and field plants (representing observations over many years)*

February 2017

# HARTEST : ITS HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

## A HARTEST AS A COMMUNITY

### 1 CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

A church in Hartest, with 80 acres of land, was recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086, and the present church – mainly of the 14th and 15th centuries – is the village’s most obvious physical example of the medieval period.

Early in the 17th century Robert Reyce, commenting on the area of Suffolk of which Hartest is a part, noted that ‘the middle parts of the country are rich in pasture and plenty of meddowes butt their chiefest in corne grounds from all which riseth the gain that filleth their purses.’ 17th century records also show that Hartest had clothiers, staplers, yeomen, weavers, websters and wool combers, all connected with the cloth trade. In the decade from 1640 the average annual population was 612.

By 1851 the population of the parish had risen 832 ; the 1841 Census had recorded no fewer than 24 farms. The population in 1891 had reduced to 590, but the 1892 edition of Kelly’s Directory of Suffolk recorded the following, capturing the extensive range of commercial activity at that time :

Baker & shoemaker	Carpenter
Shopkeepers (3)	Harness makers (2)
Cattle dealer & farmer	Shoe maker & post office
Builder	Maltster and miller
Farmer & butcher	Surgeon
Butcher	Carrier and shopkeeper
Grocer and draper	Organ builder and baker
Beer retailer and carrier	Plumber and decorator
Bakers (2)	

The builder was Thomas Cadge, responsible for the construction of the Institute.

As late as 1937 Kelly’s Directory listed a substantial number of commercial and other activities, totalling 22. The Directory also noted that there were 14 farmers active in Hartest.

Inevitably, the pace of social change has meant that today the situation is very different. The Crown Inn – bought by Greene King in 1921 – continues as does a butcher and the ‘motor engineer’. The village enjoys the presence of a branch of the Glemsford medical practice. However, during recent times Osborns – ‘the Fortnum & Mason of Suffolk’ offering 40 different kinds of cheeses and 140 different wines – closed in 1990, and the Post Office in 1997.

By 1971 Hartest’s population had declined to 290, just 35 percent of the 1851 number. Since then it has gradually increased to a figure of around 460.

## 2 A VIGOROUS COMMUNITY

During the second half of the 19th century much was happening in Hartest. The 'burial ground' on Hartest Hill was consecrated in 1857 to be extended in 1911. More cheerfully, a village school, occupying land gifted by the Weller-Poley family of Boxted Hall and opposite the site of the present school, was built in 1859, and enlarged in 1875.

A Congregational chapel, facing the Green, opened in 1864, closed in 1980. In 1890 a Plymouth Brethren meeting room was established on Hartest Hill. This closed in 1977 and both have since reverted to private dwellings, reflecting their origins. A major restoration of the parish church was carried in 1879 and 1880, with further repairs and restoration undertaken in 1890.

A significant addition to the village in 1888 was the opening of the Boxted and Hartest Institute, again funded by the Weller Poley family who were at that time 'the principal owner' of land in the parish. The Institute was established as a reading room as well as a meeting place. Opposite the Institute the First World War memorial, in the form of a portland stone obelisk, was unveiled in 1921.

The regular arrival of a travelling fair on the Green was keenly anticipated throughout this period as a reflection of locally based entertainment. One particular indication of local activity at this time is the fact that in 1891 the Ancient Shepherds Lodge, which met at the Bell Inn, had a membership of 85, while the Foresters, who gathered at the Crown, boasted as many as 200 members.

## 3 HARTEST TODAY

To chart the many significant changes that have occurred in the life of the village over many years should not obscure the fact that Hartest remains a vigorous community. It is true that the cricket club has not survived and that the Hartistes drama group no longer performs at the Institute, but a considerable range of activities and some key facilities continue to flourish.

In 1966 a new village primary school opened, replacing the victorian building. As part of the County Council's school Organisation Review, moving from 3 to 2 tiers, the school has, since 2011, educated children up to the age of 11. The facilities have been extended to accommodate the increased numbers involved.

For some years the victorian school building was used as a branch of the Glemsford medical practice. This was demolished and a new purpose – designed building came into operation in 1987. With the assistance of a substantial Heritage Lottery Fund grant, the Institute underwent a major refurbishment and re-opened in 2002 as a greatly enhanced and much valued community facility.

Without seeking to be exhaustive, the following selection provides an indication of life in Hartest today :

- the annual Village Fete, staged in the Green each August Bank Holiday Monday
- a monthly (first Saturday) Farmers Market at the Institute
- the Hartest & District Gardening Club which stages regular shows

- a programme of concerts and other events at the parish church
- the Hartest & District Women's Institute, which meets monthly
- the Guy Fawkes Bonfire Party, organised by the Hartest Pre-School committee
- regular visits to the Insitute of the Eastern Angles Theatre Company

The most recent initiative is the establishment of the Hartest Community Choir 'for people to get together and get to know each other better'.

## **B THE BUILDINGS OF HARTEST**

### **1 EARLIER BUILDINGS IN THE VILLAGE**

Two medieval structures in particular are prominent in Hartest. The church consists of work from the 14th to the 16th centuries ; the upper stages of the tower were rebuilt in the 1650s following a collapse. A major 'restoring and repairing' of the building, which was in a poor condition, was carried out in 1879 – 1880. The internal arrangement that resulted is essentially the same today.

In his Buildings of England volume on Suffolk Pevsner drew particular attention to the Crown Inn. This impressive timber-framed structure, with a jettied upper storey on the north side, was described in 1707 as 'the Mansion house called Hartest Hall'. It has been suggested that the manorial courts were held in parts of the building during the medieval period. The change of use to an inn goes back to the 18th century.

The national official schedule of Listed Buildings identifies no fewer than 51 in Hartest. This represents 25% of the village's total housing stock, an unusually large proportion. A significant number of these are timber-framed structures including several around the Green and along the Row as well as many of the farmhouses in the outer reaches of the parish.

### **2 A 'MIDDLE PERIOD'**

During the 18th and 19th centuries the amount of new building in Hartest was limited. Two significant examples from earlier in this period was Stowehill on the Brockley road, dating from the 1790's, and the former Rectory of 1821. On a smaller scale, Tower Lodge, off the Lawshall road, was built in 1849.

In The Row the village school – now demolished - appeared in 1858. Close by the Institute of 1888 is of some architectural importance. Occupying a prominent position overlooking the Green, it is a good example of the Arts and Crafts style with two characteristically large oriel windows at the front. The building is an early work by Reginald Blomfield, commissioned by the Weller Poley family. Sir Reginald, as he became, was a most distinguished architect and garden designer who served a term as president of the RIBA.

Shortly after the First World War a number of semi-detached houses for rent were erected by the Melford Rural District Council on the Brockley road, facing west towards Somerton. These were part of a major national publicly funded house-building programme during the 1920's providing modern facilities and generously sized gardens. Examples can be seen in many Suffolk towns and villages.

### 3 THE MORE RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF THE VILLAGE

Following the Second World War there was a further concentration on public housing for rent as Government policy. Reflecting this, in the early 1950's the rural district council erected a further group of semi-detached and terraced houses in the Row. In both locations these properties have largely been purchased by private owners and often extended in various ways.

Historically the Row was a lane with a group of buildings at either end and extensive stretches of open countryside with open views on both sides in between. The council's dwellings represented the beginning of the infilling of the road with housing during the second half of the 20th century. The majority of this more recent development is owner-occupied although Babergh District Council owns and manages 6 bungalows for rent on the eastern side of the road.

The replacement school of 1966 occupies a substantial site at the northern end of the Row, with the Doctor's Surgery located opposite. This road is now occupied by buildings throughout its length on both sides.

Away from the Row, in the 1970's Green View, in a central location off the Lawshall road was a significant new private housing development. This consists of 13 detached and sem-detached properties within a cul-de-sac layout.

A small group of substantial private houses was erected during the early 1980's on the Somerton road, opposite the Institute, whilst a few years later a terrace of 5 houses known as Coppy Meadow was developed on 'brownfield' land off the Brockley road and close to the village centre.

Since the turn of the century there has been limited new housing development in Hartest. The most significant is Banhams Yard, again occupying 'brownfield' land, located off the Row and adjacent to the Crown Inn. This consists of five substantial detached properties in the form of a spacious cul-de-sac. Otherwise, new housing has taken the form of a small number of individual properties at various points in the village.

Reflecting a widespread national trend, the most evident building activity has involved work on existing properties, in many cases consisting of extensions to provide increased space. This has tended to reinforce the shortage of smaller units of housing within the village.

# The Built Environment – Character Analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Hartest is dominated by a compact group of houses located around a village green. The shape of the village relates logically to three important historic features:

- The stream (defined as the River in other parts of the document)
- The B 1066 running north south through the village
- The Shimpling and Somerton Roads running east west through the village

At the core of the village is the village Green, an unusual triangular green whose shape relates directly to these historic features. On its western side the Green is bounded by a main road, the B1066, on its eastern side by houses with the stream behind them, and on its southern side by a minor road.

The stream passes under the B1066 at the northern end of the Green, then swings round in a half circle, along the eastern edge of the Green, under the bridge on Shimpling Road, past the Church, behind the houses on the Row and out to the southern end of the village.

The stream has shaped the settlement pattern to the south of the Green, as it runs behind the houses on the Row. To the north of the Green, the stream no longer influences the pattern of development. Instead this pattern is determined entirely by the layout of the roads, both the existing Bury Road (B1066) and the older droving road which runs north from Cross Green through Darney Lane to Bury St Edmunds.

The east west route from Shimpling to Somerton runs over the bridge and through the southern end of the Green, and is lined by the more significant historic buildings in the village, notably the Church, the Pub and the Old Rectory.

To the east and north of the Green are outlying clusters of houses, still very much part of the village but separated from its core.

There are around 200 dwellings in the village of around 25% are listed. The Pub and the Church are two non residential listed buildings. The old telephone box is also a listed structure. The church is the only Grade I listed building in the village.

There are some commercial and community buildings in the village, including the Church, Pub, Institute, School, Doctors Surgery, Garage, Butcher and some small businesses working from dedicated premises or from houses. There are also several working farms, some of which have farmhouses attached to them.

## VILLAGE GREEN

The centre of the village is arranged around the village Green, a large area of mown grass and now planted with a number of mature trees including limes, chestnuts and London planes. The Green is bisected by a number of small tracks, one of which serves as the driveway into Green Farm. In common with many older villages, some of the roads around the Green are sunk down into the

ground, probably as a result of carts wearing the ground away, so the Green stands somewhat above these roads and appears as a continuous soft surface.

On the eastern edge of the Green we find some of the oldest buildings in the village, with the earliest dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is these buildings which help to identify the character of Hartest Green. They are often portrayed in photographs of the village. The stream runs behind these houses and has formed a natural barrier to development. It is for this reason that the backs of the houses are an important part of the character of the village, being clearly visible from the Lawshall Road. The western and southern edges of the green are less urban in character than the eastern edge with grass and trees dominating the street scene and with more generous gaps between the buildings. There is relatively little street clutter (signs, lights, or painted lines) to detract from the character of the space although some overhead cables still survive to undermine this.



Pevsner (2015 revision)<sup>1</sup> refers to the buildings around the green in his book on Suffolk, saying:

"The church is nicely placed in a dip, at the south east corner of a large and very attractive green dotted with limes and other trees . . . The north east side is . . . a delightfully varied yet utterly harmonious row: some red brick, some painted brick, but above all plastered timber-framed houses, some jettied, some thatched, brightly but contrastingly painted. Even the twentieth-century garage, at the far end, of corrugated iron, fits in."

The southern edge of the Green is relatively open with generous spaces between and around the buildings, front gardens, hedges and some trees. Within this group is the Crown Public House, the Rectory and the Church, all listed buildings. There are views from the Green through the Pub garden to the fields beyond (see central photo above) and it is these views which illustrate how significant the Pub garden is to the character of the village.



The houses on the eastern side of the Green are set close to the road edge, a few with gardens and some walls or hedges. It has a relatively urban feel, with buildings often linked or close together with narrow paths between them. Behind these houses the stream has been directed

through an artificial channel but broadly follows its original path. Views through to the hill beyond are an important part of the character of the Green.

Along the western side of the Green (B 1066) are more dispersed buildings. The first of these is the Village Hall or Institute (a fine Victorian Arts and Crafts building) and to the north of this there are three houses and a large green space which forms part of Place Farm.

Hedges and trees form a central part of the character of the village. The four roads which connect at the southern end of the Green are all lined by dense vegetation as they approach the built up area of the village. When looking out from the Green there is a strong sense of being in the countryside. However, this is the character familiar of today, and clearly any material loss of trees and hedges, which local people have identified as a key part of the character of the village, would substantially impact on this unique character.



## THE ROW

Beyond the historic core of the village is a cluster of around 7 historic houses, some hundreds of metres from the village on The B1066. 20<sup>th</sup> century development has infilled the area between this cluster and the Village Green so that the Built Up Area Boundary now extends a finger southwards to encompass this entire area. The B1066 follows the contours along the valley and has a high bank on its western side with houses standing above the road on that side. On its eastern side, often below the road, there are houses built relatively close to the road. Behind these the land falls further to the stream. At the southern end of the Row is a medieval cluster of seven historic and listed buildings.



The layout and character of these historic buildings at the end of the Row follows a somewhat different pattern to those on the Green. They are less densely grouped with small front gardens and they are generally tight to the highway edge. They are timber framed and rendered with varying paint colours and several with thatched roofs. Again, as on the Green, the backs of these historic houses are in many ways as important as their fronts. The footpath on the other side of the stream at the bottom of their gardens provides important views of these houses and their settings. As on the Green, some views of the higher ground beyond these houses are clearly visible from the Row and have been identified as a significant part of the character of the village.

Along the western side of the Row the twentieth century buildings all face the highway with long front gardens. A group of them were built as Council Houses and this is the source of their large gardens. Most of the original tenants exercised the Right to Buy, and these houses have been largely altered and extended to provide for the needs of 20<sup>th</sup> century living. The character along the western side of the Row is generally open and generous. Cars are either parked in front gardens or on the road. The houses are often built of brick, some with rendering, and with concrete roof tiles.

At the northern end of the Row is the school. It sits on a generous site alongside the B1066 elevated above the road. It is an example of a 1960s modern school building, extended several times in more recent years and now includes the Pre-School. It sits back from the highway edge with green spaces in front, some semi mature trees, and a staff car park. Part of its boundary with the road is a well managed hedge. Along the northern edge of the school grounds is a good example of an old hedge, rich in hedgerow species.

On the opposite side of the road is the Doctors Surgery, built tight to the road edge with a car park to the south. Next to the Doctors Surgery is one of the old village farms (Potash Farm now called Potash Cottage), with its small garage - the last remnant of the old Victorian school building, and a hedge along the road. The house was historically accessed from the Green and therefore is really part of the Green, even though it is now accessed from the Row. Beyond Potash Cottage are largely 20<sup>th</sup> century houses, some bungalows and some two storey but always respectful of the views of the hill beyond.

Where the Row joins the Green there is a high hedge with trees on the western side and a flint wall on the eastern side. These provide one of the green wedges coming into the heart of the village, creating a strongly rural character to the village.

## HOUSES AND BUILDINGS BEYOND THE GREEN

Beyond the Green and the Row the village is characterized by smaller clusters of buildings and isolated houses located alongside the roads which feed into the village.

### 1 CROSS GREEN AND POORHOUSE HILL

On the northern side of the Village Green the B1066 rises up a moderately steep hill and the pattern of development becomes much sparser. The character becomes one of hedges, open fields and isolated clusters of houses. Cross Green, some 400 metres north of the Village Green is another of the significant medieval settlements, with a number of timber framed buildings both thatched and tiled. They are often close to the highway edge and their small front gardens contrast with those on the Village Green (east side) which are tight to the road edge.



At the north of Cross Green is a row of former Council houses. These former Council houses were built in the 1930s and sit relatively close to the road. They have smaller front gardens than those on the Row (no dig for victory here).

Beyond this there is some open farmland, and some larger houses, often set back from the road in extensive grounds.

### 2 PEARTREE FARM

The second cluster of buildings on the road north out of the village is centred around Peartree Farm. It is a relatively open grouping of buildings but contains one significant historic house, Burnt House Farm which helps to define its character, being set with its original gable to the road.

Beyond this isolated houses appear on one side or the other of the B1066 until, at the northernmost edge of the village, we come to the edge of Brockley where a quirk of Parish boundaries has included a small group of relatively modern bungalows within the Parish of Hartest. A tiny part of the parish appears some way up the B1066 on the edge of Brockley. These houses have closer links to Brockley than to Hartest in terms of their siting, appearance and layout.

### 3 HARTEST HILL

The east - west route through the village is also home to some significant medieval clusters of buildings. Once over the bridge the right hand fork in the road goes up Hartest Hill, (Suffolk's steepest hill). This road rises some 50m from the Green to the highest point on the Parish

boundary. Again it is a sunken road on the hill, tightly enclosed where it passes through dense trees and hedges.

Hartest Hill has two distinct clusters of buildings many of which are listed. The first cluster known as OLD MILL on the sharp bend is the site of one of the former village windmills with two associated mill workers cottages and a number of early historic buildings, some dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. These houses are sometimes close to the road and sometimes set back from the road with generous front gardens, relatively dense planting but with a strong presence of buildings in the street scene.



The second cluster of houses, FOSTERS, further up the road has a different character. Here the houses are set well back from the road (apart from Claycott, a former barn) with dense planting and a stronger sense of landscape dominance than the earlier grouping. A large part of this cluster is within the curtilage of listed buildings and two of the houses are significant medieval timber framed houses.



Clusters on Shimpling Road, Hartest Hill

The Lawshall Road branches off the east west route through the village, starting at the junction next to the old Telephone Exchange and is lined by high hedges. It is narrow and very enclosed close to the village, then opens out as it leaves the settlement with more expansive views across open fields. A 1970s development of 13 bungalows, chalet bungalows, and houses known as Green View, occupies land above the Lawshall Road. It is well hidden from view by the dense hedges on the edge of the road. Just beyond Green View on the Lawshall Road there is a significant view back to the medieval houses on the Green. This is one of the very few places where this strongly defined group of buildings is visible from a public highway.



Towards Lawshall the road continues up to higher ground, again with sections sunk into the surrounding landscape (those carts eroding the earth), bordered by hedges and Hartest Wood. Beyond this is the last group of buildings around Cooks Farm. A large timber barn sits tight to the road edge on the bend, and defines the character of the group associated with the listed building of Cooks Farm.



### SOMERTON ROAD

The road which runs in a westerly direction from the Green towards Somerton passes the side of the Institute and is cut into the hill (again those carts!) between high hedges. These give a strong sense of the countryside reaching into the village. A 1970s development of 5 houses is partly visible to the south of this road, but well hidden behind hedges and a significant oak tree, and still within the Built Up Area Boundary. The road then passes the back entrance into Place Farm, a group of trees to the north of the road, and out into open countryside, climbing all the time. Further isolated houses can be found along the Somerton Road, surrounded by farmland. On the higher ground above the village are views both to the north and to the south across a high quality landscape (SLA), isolated houses, some former farms, and an extensive pattern of large open fields with some hedges.

### A CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF THE OUTLYING CLUSTERS REFERRED TO IN THE NP POLICIES

The outlying clusters identified on the NP map have been selected on the basis that they are relatively densely developed groups of buildings, all with at least 4 dwellings and many with more than this, generally along either the B1066 or on Shimpling Road, otherwise known as Hartest Hill, and always separated from the core of the village by open fields and hedges. It is this green separation between the core and the outlying clusters which is key to their definition as clusters.

For the purposes of the plan, 4 clusters have been defined on the map. The character analysis shows that they are all slightly different in character.

## 1. Peartree Farm Cluster



This cluster is the northern most of the 4 clusters, and straddles the B1066. It is made up of some larger dwellings and farm buildings, and some smaller dwellings, all in relatively close proximity to each other. The buildings are generally set back from the road edge with hedges protecting them from the highway.

Peartree Farm is by far the most dominant group of buildings in the cluster. It is situated on the eastern side of the B1066, with the replacement farmhouse at its southern end, set well back from and below the highway on a steep slope, and finished with render and a tiled roof. The farm complex was extensively added to in recent times with larger and more dominant farm buildings to the north of the main farmhouse. Together they create a strong built form at this point in the cluster.

Pear Tree Farm bungalow was built as a workers bungalow at the northern end of the farm in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is built of brick with a tiled roof.

Burnt House Farm is the only listed building within this cluster. Its character is defined by the substantial two storey house, set perpendicular to the highway. It is rendered with a tiled roof. It has three outbuildings to the south of the house. Two of these are single storey and one is larger and relatively modern. Together with the farmhouse they create a strong group of buildings on the western side of the highway.

Springfield is a modern brick clad bungalow to the south of Burnt House Farm. It creates a link between the buildings on the east and west sides of the 1066 and in turn enables this group of buildings to be defined as a cluster.

Hedges and trees along the highway differentiate the cluster from the open fields around, where vegetation has largely been removed in recent years.

## 2. Cross Green Cluster



This is by far the largest cluster outside of the village core with around 20 dwellings. There are no farms within this cluster so the older houses are more modest in scale than those in the Peartree Farm cluster.

Most of the older houses are small one and a half storey structures dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, some with thatched roofs, some with tiled or slate roofs and all rendered and colourwashed. There are almost no outbuildings to add to the variety of scale. The 20<sup>th</sup> century houses which represent around half of those within the cluster are larger in scale than the historic houses, being 2 storey with more generous footprints and therefore a more dominant scale.

The older buildings are generally situated close to and facing the road with a predominance of hedges along the road frontage. Those houses which surround the small grassed area known as Cross Green are positioned close to the back edge of the grass and their frontages are open so the buildings themselves dominate the street scene. The 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings which extend the cluster northwards and eastwards are generally set further back from the highway edge. The former Council Houses which face the highway were built as ribbon development beyond Cross Green and because the field opposite, Maddy's Meadow, provides stunning views of the open countryside, there is relatively little in the way of hedges and trees in front of these 4 semi detached houses. This is one of the few places within the 4 clusters where this absence of planting exists.

Poorhouse Cottages are the only buildings on the western side of the B1066. They are tight to the road. A new high brick wall was built tight to the northern side of Poorhouse Cottages as part of a

highway improvement scheme, designed to create a continuous footpath from this cluster into the village. The wall is alien to the character of the cluster and creates a harsh over engineered barrier between the road and the listed cottages at this point, clearly demonstrating that hedges are a more sensitive boundary treatment than high walls.

This cluster is around 400m from the Village Green and is well connected via a narrow footpath which is regularly used by people walking into the village.

### 3. Old Mill Cluster



The Hartest Hill cluster is on the high ground above the steep hill out of the village, known as Shimpling Road. Within it are several listed buildings, one of Hartest's three mills, a pair of mill workers cottages and two late 20<sup>th</sup> century farm workers cottages.

The three listed buildings in this cluster are Elizels, Pompes and Pippin Cottage. Elizels is the oldest of the three, a hall house which dates back to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. It is an imposing building, set well back from the road and now extended to the rear. Old Mill House is the former mill built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in front of it right on the road are two mill workers cottages. Shrublands Cottages (the former mill workers cottages) are all built very close to the road, and indeed we find this pattern recurring in all 4 clusters, with the smaller and therefore more modest houses generally being on very small plots and tight to the road. It is this variation in the pattern of development which helps to create the distinctive character found in the outlying clusters.

The cluster is relatively tightly developed although there are two reasonable gaps between buildings, notably between Elizels and Brega, and between Pompes and Old Mill House. The buildings, as at Cross Green, have a strong presence in the street scene.

The older houses in the cluster are all rendered and colour washed with the 3 listed buildings being thatched, the Old Mill and its workers cottages being roofed with slate and the farm workers

cottages being brick and tiled. One of these cottages has been extended and altered with timber cladding and a pantiled roof (now renamed Whistlers in honour of its windy elevated position).

The narrow highway has a sharp bend within this cluster, something which helps to create a sequence of views and an element of surprise. The highway is also the footway, but to our knowledge there has never been any danger associated with cars and pedestrians sharing the space, at least in the last 35 years.

#### **4. Fosters Cluster**



This cluster lies around 600 metres from the Village Green. It has a distinctive character which is defined by the fact that all the buildings are either medieval timber framed houses or former barns converted into houses located within a very densely planted setting.

Two of the five houses are listed, and both were substantial farmhouses in their own right. Cawstons is possibly the oldest of the five houses, with Fosters being slightly less old although still 16th century. Top o the Hill, although not listed, has been dated to 1600. All 3 houses stand well back from the highway with large front gardens and in the case of Fosters a meadow. All the houses have hedges on their front boundaries with relatively concealed entrances, something which helps to reinforce the rural nature of the cluster. Cawstons is thatched but all the other houses have tiled or slate roofs.

Claycott, a former barn, is a clay lump building, rendered and colour washed. It stands very close to the highway on a small plot. Although it has a tall hedge on its front boundary, and no drive, it is the most visible of the houses in the cluster and, as described above, creates the variety of layout which helps to define the clusters.

Top Barn, part of the Fosters Farm complex was converted in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century from a granary into a house. It is boarded with a slate roof. It is set well back from the highway and perpendicular to it.

Both Cawstons and Fosters have substantial ranges of outbuildings, with the most dominant of these being the two storey barn in front of Cawstons. It is positioned tight to the road at the very end of the cluster. It breaks with the tradition of more subservient outbuildings, reducing in scale towards the edge of the clusters, instead presenting a very dominant building right at the furthest point in the cluster. Again, this variation in scale, position of buildings, form and materials adds character to this particular cluster and demonstrates the contribution unpredictable building scales make to the whole. Cawstons has a more or less complete four sided moat adjacent to it (only visible on three sides).

The location of the cluster within large hedge-free open fields, means that it has a more clearly defined special character than the other three clusters. It reads as a densely planted settlement into which houses have been inserted, with a very strong emphasis on the green boundary to the open fields as well as to the highway. The houses, apart from Claycott, remain relatively well concealed from view.

This cluster is on the same narrow road as the Hartest Hill cluster, and pedestrians and cars share the same surface.

## Conclusion

As has been shown above, all 4 clusters have subtly different characteristics, defined by their historic and economic functions, their proximity to the village, their layouts, their building types and materials and their boundary treatments.

# SUFFOLK HEDGEROW SURVEY

## Hartest hedgerow survey - Report

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*Please note that the report was sent by Guy Ackers as a letter to the coordinator - this is an edited version, in which some of the administrative and other details or queries have been removed, resolved or modified. In essence, the bulk of the report is unchanged.*

*Erica Clark - Coordinator for Hartest (16 March 2012)*

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### From Guy Ackers - Chairman Suffolk Hedgerow Survey

Very many thanks for the completed package for the above parish hedgerow survey. I am pleased to say I have finished the audit and statistics analysis for your parish and am now able to write with my comments, statistics, etc.

I have spent an enjoyable couple of days working through all the survey forms which were very well completed and apart from one or two usual arithmetic errors, the entire recording process is exceptionally good. In almost every respect the survey is a model for all the other parishes to follow.

As promised I have calculated your mid point grids for you. Likewise I checked your master map using a green highlighter which emphasizes and illustrates the status and distribution of the species rich hedgerows (8 and more species). The impact of the species rich ratio (79.9%) is self-evident on the overall hedgerow network, but they appear haphazardly spread throughout the parish with little or no pattern so much so that corridors and connectivity are not apparent to any great extent. However there would appear to be potentially one or two on the north-south axis where some plant infilling could be beneficial. It needs to be pointed out that these observations are not part of the brief for the Project but are just one of the many spin-offs that can develop from the raw data the survey produces.

It has to be said that in this case, we have a very well documented and accurate example of how the survey should be conducted and confirmation of the terrific contribution that you and your team have made. It is also impressive to record that the survey was started in June 2007 and concluded recently after 212 landscape hedgerows had been surveyed and another 26 field boundaries without hedges, making a total of 238 field boundaries plus the 'no access' and other boundaries [144], making a grand total of 384.

The accuracy of the data is top quality and the overall appearance is very flattering for the parish with high counts of species-rich hedgerows. It was good to see 25 veteran oak trees, 11 Ash, 2 Willow, 3 Field Maple, 1 Black Poplar, 1 ordinary Poplar, 1 Horse Chestnut, 1 Beech, 1 Yew, 1 Lime, 2 Crack Willow, 4 Elms and 2 Sycamore veterans. Your Copper Beech (333\*), Small Leafed Lime (556), Wayfaring Tree (512) Buckthorn (30 and 42), Black Poplar in (50) and Fern Leafed Beech in 125 are all exceptional records and notable for Babergh District Council and the client in Suffolk Biological Records Centre. The last mentioned is a record for the survey so far,

not ever having been recorded elsewhere. It was also good to see high species counts for 14 species in 10 hedgerows, 15 species in h/r 109, 208, and 288, and 16 species in h/r no.125, 556 and 529, and 18 species in h/r no.126.

I have made a statistical analysis in three forms:

**Firstly** to compare your parish results for species richness (which is what the survey is mostly concerned with), against a theoretical “average parish” (calculated from surveys throughout Suffolk from a sample of 259 completed parishes and 32554 hedgerows so far), as follows.

**Hartest data**

Species group	no of hedgerows	% of hedgerows	“County norm” (%)
4 or fewer species	11	5.2	16.7
5, 6 and 7 species	32	15.1	31.5
8 and more species	169	79.7	51.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>		

From the above, it would appear that Hartest compares well with the “average parish”. Even though the notion of “average parish” exists only in statistical terms, this gives a useful measure especially when comparisons are made into Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) type (see below). It is also very clear that the distribution of hedgerows is pretty constant throughout the parish and the status of species rich hedgerows is evenly spread. There are mainly large field sizes but there are also some smaller. There are also one or two gappy areas which may be due to the Whitehall Policy of the 60s and 70s when landowners were paid to grub out some of their hedgerows in the interests of production. In other areas there may still be some examples of the old feudal system of field boundaries prior to the Enclosures Act of the mid 18th century. Your village historian could find the answers to this maybe, from the 1830s tithe map and early OS maps from the late 1890s to before WW2 and from more recent Google maps prior to the 1960s. The fact that some 144 field boundaries could not be surveyed may distort this effect somewhat.

**Secondly**, more recently, I have needed to produce statistics also for the Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) types (as mentioned above) of which Hartest is classified as Undulating Ancient Farmland (UAF). In the UAF type for the parishes surveyed so far, we have only a sample of 8 parishes (1295 hedgerows) and the data should normally be more significant and more comparable on a like-for-like basis as follows.

	4 or fewer species	5, 6 and 7 species	8 and more species
Hartest data	5.2%	15.1%	79.7%
<b>U.A.F type</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>64.7%</b>

Within this comparison, Hartest stacks up with some closer correlation with variations of minus 2.0%, minus 13.0% and plus 15.0% res:. The variation in species rich hedgerows is

unusual for farmland types but does just illustrate how fortunate the parish is to have such a wealth of species rich hedgerows. It is well known that clayland supports a greater variety of flora but Hartest more than matches it. The range of species rich ratios in all the 5 Clayland LCA types vary between 42 to 67% so this places Hartest well above. I should say at this point, I am not running any form of league table as I only need to confirm the fact that correlation exists with parishes in the same LCA type and variation between other peer groups is constant and significantly different.

As an example, with regard to the two types of Sandland, they are notoriously weak in the high ratio species richness with a figure of 29.4% which is in a totally different ballpark from your own and notably about half that of Clayland. Rolling Valley Farmland with Furze also has a much lower high ratio of species-rich hedgerows, currently being 38.5% (but only based on data from 7 parish results so far). When we have larger sample sizes we shall be able to firm up on their correlation. This comment applies to Hartest as well but I suspect the sample size will not increase too greatly with so few parish surveys yet to complete, meaning that Hartest is blazing a bit of a trail for the Project!

There are 31 different LCA types but Clayland, Farmland, Sandland and Chalkland are the four principle soil types accounting for some 19 of the LCAs, the others not being too relevant to Suffolk hedgerows - such as Fenland, Coastal Dunes and Levels, Coastal Fens, Planned Fens, Wooded Fens, Wooded Valley Meadowlands and Fens, Saltmarsh and Intertidal Flats, Urban, Meadowlands, etc.

I am not running statistics on the 'no hedge' count but Hartest is about average with only 26 (10.9%). These again may be an indicator of where planting, gap filling and re-planting could be usefully employed and the data from the survey will show which species are most likely to survive and hence, those that may not. There may be opportunities for planting stand alone hedgerows here also (where they may have been grubbed out earlier) and your data will show which species to plant having the optimum chance of growing on and by exception those species best not planted.

**Thirdly** - this leads me on to the third analysis of data, namely the Species Frequency. I have extracted a count of every species listed in every surveyed hedgerow and the attached graph clearly illustrates the spread of the more common (successful) species and the less frequently occurring species. Not necessarily unsuccessful but a clear indication of the species less likely to grow on perhaps.

Suffolk County Council have provided me with their data records on area and hedgerow density which for Hartest is 822 hectares and a density of 5.20 kms of hedgerow per square km (in a range of 1 to 9). This places your density in the top quartile for the county.

Your hedgerow records confirm that the parish has an above average density and with such a high percentage of species rich hedgerows, consequently the variety of flora and fauna may be very good also. Wildlife can use the network for breeding, feeding, raising young, refuge and for corridors to move between habitats. The south of Babergh District Council is particularly rich in Dormice and Stag Beetles which make the hedgerows even more important to endangered species of fauna. Your Hazel status is 5th from the top which may influence Dormice should the hedgerows join suitable habitats. This therefore could be an opportunity to plant and enrich

hedgerows for their benefit as well as to improve the connectivity and corridors for the living landscape that surely helps to make Suffolk the Greenest County. This is not obligatory of course, nor an immediate target as the objective for the Project remains the recording of the raw data and the establishment of species-rich hedgerow data benchmarks. There are however spin offs from using the data that could be of benefit to the parish and these may be some of them.

Whilst on the subject of connectivity, local migrating birds and maybe great crested newts, etc could use these corridors to move as little as 50 to 100 miles through the county to warmer parts in winter (without joining the major international migrations that already use well established routes across the nation). This is one of the main reasons why connectivity and wildlife corridors are so important, not just on any one landowner's holding, nor even just one parish but across whole swathes of countryside in Suffolk.

Finally, on a more personal level, I really must give you my congratulations and deepest appreciation for taking up the coordination role and for such an excellent survey and considerable effort on your own part. You have made a good job, done well and can now rest on your laurels in the certain knowledge that you have made an indelible, permanent and unequivocal contribution to the heritage and inheritance for future generations of the landscape hedgerows in your parish.

This has been a great achievement and your community should be justly proud of your endeavours, as indeed I am also. At this time I really must also send my congratulations and appreciation to your many helpers (*see separate list*). This has obviously been a true community survey for which the wider community and your Parish Council will be indebted and grateful. If you agree, I think it would be appropriate if you were to copy my report to the PC clerk and / or chair for their parish council records. It may be of interest for you to note that this survey is the 259th to complete in Suffolk and 43rd in Babergh District Council, accounting for an overall number of 32554 landscape hedgerows in Suffolk, so far.

*\* numbers in brackets, page 1, refer to the hedge numbers, as used for the survey*

# Hartest river corridor survey

<i>Project no.</i>	<i>Report</i>	<i>Date</i>
56/15	Final	21st September 2015
<i>Prepared by</i> Penny Hemphill BSc. Hons	<i>Checked by</i> Simone Bullion BSc. Hons, PhD., MCIEEM	

**SWT Trading Ltd**

Suffolk Wildlife Trust  
Brooke House  
Ashbocking, Ipswich  
Suffolk IP6 9JY

Ralph Carpenter  
Fosters, Hartest  
Suffolk



## **SUMMARY**

Hartest Parish Council commissioned SWT Trading Ltd: Ecological Consultants to undertake an ecological survey of the river which flows through the village. The river is a reactive water-course with fluctuating water levels reflecting rainfall patterns. Otter are using the river and will find an adequate food resource in the signal crayfish present. The river is too shaded by bankside trees to have high floristic diversity but the stones and gravels of the river bed provide good habitat for fish such as bullhead. Himalayan balsam occurs frequently along this section of river and it is recommended that it is controlled. Adjacent habitat is dominated by gardens and where possible, if a buffer of bankside vegetation is left uncut in future, this will enhance the river habitat and increase the overall biodiversity

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Hartest Parish Council commissioned SWT Trading Ltd: Ecological Consultants to undertake an ecological survey of the river and provide recommendations to enhance the channel and adjacent habitat. The information gathered from the survey will help inform the parish Neighbourhood Plan.

## **2 SITE ASSESSMENT**

The river is a tributary of the River Glem, part of the Stour river catchment which is the county boundary between Suffolk and Essex. This is a reactive water-course which will take water from the surrounding arable ditches and as a result will have fluctuating water levels and is likely to be virtually dry in summer months. The stretch of river included in the survey is from north-west of the road bridge at TL 83290 52700 to the southern end of the village at TL 83246 51832. The river has steep banks up to four metres in height in places which are sometimes vertical with earth cliffs and bankside tree roots scoured out by high winter water levels.

The northern section of the water-course flows behind buildings and through gardens. Most of the banks along this section are either walls or have been reinforced so there is little natural habitat. Trees are frequent along the banks which shade the channel and the river bed is stones, boulders and gravel with sand and occasional silt. As a result there is no aquatic vegetation.

The southern section from Hartest Hill road bridge to the southern end of the village is steep banked, with a wider channel up to 4m wide in places. This section is more natural with vertical earth cliff banks, trees and scrub dominating each bank and shading the channel. Where the river flows through gardens towards southern end, the channel has been narrowed and the banks reinforced. In places particularly some gardens, there are fewer trees and the channel is more open and less shaded.

## **3 METHODOLOGY**

A site visit was made on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2015 by Penny Hemphill on a warm sunny day. Water levels were low allowing the survey to be conducted from the channel where access was possible. The river was assessed for fauna and flora particularly protected species including otter and water vole.

## **4 RESULTS**

The results are shown on Map 1 and are summarised as follows:

- Otter activity was recorded along the northern stretch. Footprints in soft mud on the left bank and a spraint was located on a boulder under a bridge. The spraint was full of signal crayfish shell.
- Scrub habitat and occasional mature trees provide potential otter holt sites along the southern section particularly on the left bank where there are no gardens but a belt of trees and scrub between the river and adjacent arable land.
- Signal crayfish burrows recorded on the southern section of the river low down along the bank at water level. The river bed is ideal for this species which live under stones and

boulders and it is known that the River Glem has a high population of this non-native species.

- Floristically the river is devoid of aquatic plants due to the shaded conditions and stone dominated channel. Willowherb, bramble and nettles occurred on the banks most frequently along with Himalayan balsam a non-native species which was recorded generally as single plants throughout the survey section. Ferns and liverworts thrive in the shaded conditions afforded by the bankside trees - ferns were recorded growing out of walls and liverworts covering stones and boulders in the northern section. There was a short stretch of more open water along the northern section where water parsnip dominated the channel.
- The habitat is not suitable for water vole and no field signs were recorded. Water vole thrive in areas where the channel is not shaded and where there is an abundance of emergent bankside vegetation so could be present upstream of the northern road bridge where the habitat appeared from observation to be more suitable.
- Fish fry were seen along the channel and it is likely that bullhead is present under the stones in the river bed where water levels allow.
- Kingfisher burrows were recorded high up on a sand cliff along the left bank in the southern section.
- A toad was recorded crossing the river.
- Evidence of the river being used as a compost heap by residents was recorded and at one point a load of rubble had been deposited in the channel.
- The various methods of reinforcing the river banks are inventive and effective, however in some instances have reduced the ecological value of the channel.
- The section of river by the rectory was inaccessible. From observation from the public footbridge it appears the water levels are held up by a weir creating habitat more suitable for water vole.

## 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The river is of high ecological value and acts as a corridor for otter: a European protected species. The nature of the river makes it difficult to make any improvements to the adjacent habitat as much of it consists of private gardens.

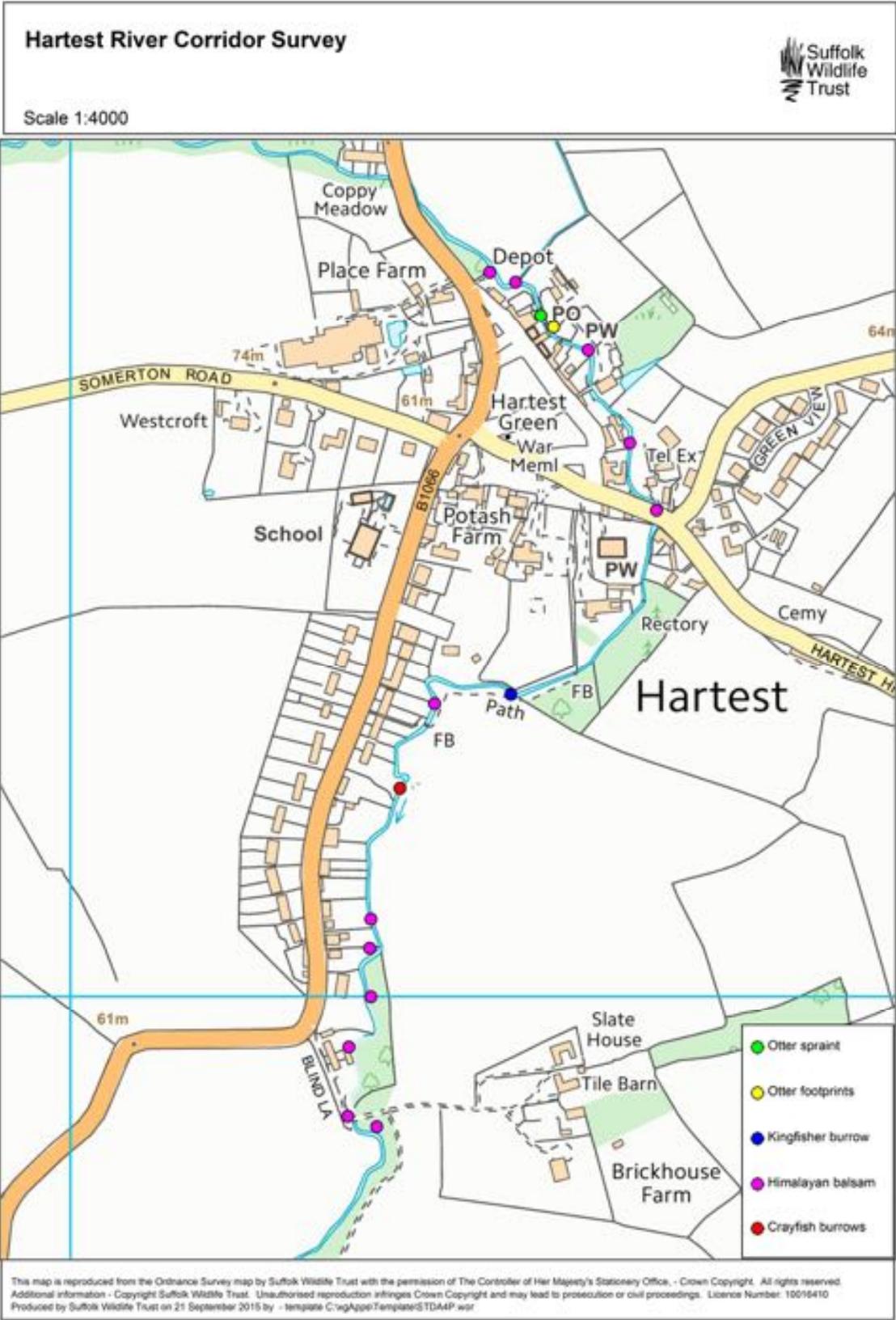
- The tree and scrub habitat on the left bank along the southern section is ideal habitat for otter and there are occasional mature trees which are suitable holts sites for the animals. This habitat should remain undisturbed.
- Himalayan balsam is an invasive species which will eventually become the dominant plant along the river if not controlled. The seeds are dispersed by an explosive action when touched, so it is important to pull the plant when it is in flower and before it has set seed to avoid further dispersal of the seeds. Either the residents could be encouraged to pull the plant along their section of river, or Suffolk Wildlife Trust could assist through their 'Water for Wildlife' Project. Any work along this river could be hazardous due to the steep banks, so that must be taken into account before any work in the channel is attempted.
- The current impact from signal crayfish on the channel is minimal however they will affect the invertebrate and fish populations of the river and can cause bank erosion through burrowing. If residents wish to remove them from the river it is necessary to apply for a trapping licence from the Environment Agency to do so. Co-ordinated trapping is not recommended, as this results in the removal of the largest crayfish and this has been shown to have an adverse effect on fish and aquatic invertebrate populations. This is because the

- larger crayfish prey on the smaller crayfish and to some extent this reduces the impact on this non-native species.
- Although water vole was not recorded on this stretch of river, they may be present further upstream where the habitat is more suitable. It is possible that mink travel along the river and if any residents would be interested in having a mink raft to monitor any mink activity, Suffolk Wildlife Trust can lend rafts and traps and give the necessary training.
  - In general the gardens do not impact on the river corridor itself. However, it is recommended that residents are encouraged not to put garden waste or rubble in the river. Where the lawns meet the river, it is recommended that a 1m strip of bankside vegetation is left uncut. This will provide habitat for invertebrates and small mammals and enhance the habitat for water vole by providing suitable cover if the animals are passing through.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

The survey found that the river which flows through Hartest is of high ecological value and acts as a wildlife corridor for species such as otter. The river is a reactive water-course with fluctuating water levels reflecting rainfall patterns. Otter are using the river and will find an adequate food resource in the signal crayfish present. The river is too shaded by bankside trees to have high floristic diversity but the stones and gravels of the river bed provide good habitat for fish such as bullhead. Himalayan balsam occurs frequently along this section of river and it is recommended that it is controlled. Adjacent habitat is dominated by gardens and where possible if a buffer of grass is left uncut this will enhance the river habitat and increase the overall biodiversity.

7 APPENDICES



**Photographs**



Steep sided river channel



Himalayan balsam



Earth cliff & tree roots scoured out by high flow



Kingfisher burrows in top of cliff



Signal crayfish burrows



Stones and boulders on river bed suitable for crayfish



Otter footprints recorded on muddy ledge right bank



Otter footprints



Otter spraint on boulder, river channel dry



Good otter habitat on both banks southern section



Ferns & liverworts in shaded channel northern section



Liverworts covering boulder

Various methods of bank reinforcement along the channel



# Hartest Brook

## Extended river corridor survey



<i>Project no.</i>	<i>Report</i>	<i>Date</i>
Water for Wildlife	Final	1 <sup>st</sup> December 2015
<i>Prepared by</i> Leonie Washington BSc. Hons	<i>Checked by</i> Penny Hemphill BSc. Hons	

Suffolk Wildlife Trust  
Brooke House  
Ashbocking, Ipswich  
Suffolk IP6 9JY

Hartest Parish Council  
Hartest  
Suffolk



## **SUMMARY**

In September 2015, SWT Trading Ltd undertook a river corridor survey along Hartest Brook through the village. It was then requested that the survey be extended to the parish boundaries and this was undertaken in November through SWT's Water for Wildlife Project. The section of river walked in November was upstream of the village north of Smithbrook Lane towards the parish of Somerton. The river is a natural meandering watercourse of high ecological value which provides an undisturbed wildlife corridor for mammals, avifauna and invertebrates. Badger activity was recorded and as otter were recorded downstream in September it is likely they area also using this section of the river although no field signs were recorded. The river is too shaded by bankside trees to have high floristic diversity but the stones and gravels of the riverbed provide potential habitat for fish and the woody debris will promote terrestrial and aquatic invertebrate communities.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Hartest Parish Council commissioned SWT Trading Ltd: Ecological Consultants to undertake an ecological survey of the river, which flows through the village from Copsy Meadow to Blind lane in September 2015. The survey was undertaken to help inform environmental statements within the new Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

An extension to this survey was undertaken in November 2015 upstream of the village to the parish boundary by SWT Water for Wildlife Advisers at the request of Erica Clark. Within the parish, the only section of Hartest Brook not surveyed is downstream of Blind Lane to the south of the village.

## 2 SITE ASSESSMENT

Hartest Brook is a tributary of the river Glem and is part of the Stour river catchment. The stretch of river surveyed was approximately 1.3km from TL 82729 52733 to TL 81762 53166 upstream of the village and north-west of the Smithbrook Lane bridge. It is a narrow river corridor flowing through undulating arable land with relatively poor connectivity to the wider countryside but a very important feature in the landscape for both aquatic and terrestrial species.

Water from the surrounding arable land drains into Hartest Brook creating a reactive watercourse with fluctuating water levels, however it is likely this stream dries out in summer. The river is an excellent example of a natural meandering self-sustaining water course demonstrating a series of riffles, pools and runs over a gravel river bed. The banks are steep and wooded with occasional vertical earth cliffs and tree roots exposed by high winter levels scouring the banks. This natural river system is unaffected by engineering other than a short 30 metre stretch between TL 82205 53175 and TL 81820 53103 where a straight channel had been cut to bypass a series of steep sided meanders with narrow banks, possibly to reduce erosion and tree loss.

The riverbed is comprised of stones, boulders and clean gravel with occasional silt. Woody debris from fallen trees and brash has further enhanced this stretch by deflecting flow and creating riffles, pools, sediment traps, gravel banks and waterfalls. The habitat is ideal for otter offering good cover with many potential holt sites. Overhanging branches offer refuge for fish and clean gravel substrates provide good opportunities for fish fry.

Trees are frequent along the banks forming a canopy which shades the channel. There is no aquatic vegetation until TL 81984 53087 at the upstream end of the survey site. At this point the channel narrows, the tree canopy becomes less dense, the bank slopes become more gentle and emergent vegetation such as canary reed grass occurs, making this stretch more suitable for water vole.

Continuous tree cover, creating a belt of undisturbed woodland with variable scrub fringe and grassy field margins makes this excellent habitat for birds, invertebrates and mammals.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

Water for Wildlife advisers, Penny Hemphill and Leonie Washington made a site visit on 23rd November 2015 on a cool sunny day. Water levels were low allowing access to the channel when needed and the habitat was assessed on foot. Flora and fauna observed were recorded and particular emphasis was placed on identifying habitat suitable for protected species such as otter, badger and water vole.

## **4 RESULTS**

The results are shown on Map 1 and are summarised as follows:

- Otter activity was not recorded. No spraints or prints were found but many potential otter holts were identified. Cavities in banks, hollows in fallen trees and holes in standing mature trees offer potential holt sites. It is likely however that otter use this section of the river as they were recorded downstream in the initial survey.
- No signal crayfish burrows were recorded although the riverbed where accessed provided ideal habitat. Signal crayfish live under stones and boulders, and are known to be present in other local tributaries.
- The surrounding landscape is important for farmland bird assemblages such as lapwing and turtledove.
- The density of scrub and variety of species offers shelter and breeding opportunities for many birds and small mammals and nectar and fruit for avifauna and pollinating insects.
- Aerial cavities in mature willow and oak may support bats and offer breeding and roosting opportunities.
- Rotting wood within the river channel will support aquatic invertebrates and on land promote invertebrate, lichen, moss and fungi communities.
- Formations such as gravel bars, pools and riffles occur as a result of the natural gravel bed, sinuous path and woody debris present.
- The river corridor is frequently used by badger. Numerous runs between vegetation were observed and over 18 sett entrances and 3 latrines were recorded on the southern field margin.
- Floristically the majority of this river section is devoid of aquatic vegetation due to the shaded conditions and stone dominated channel. Bank side vegetation varies. Willow dominates the lower banks with exposed root systems and their fallen limbs create valuable woody debris. Hawthorn, blackthorn, oak, ash, field maple and sycamore occur on the slopes and tops of the banks with hazel coppice, spindle, dog rose, and bramble scrub leading into grassy field margins. Occasional mature specimens of Corsican pine, silver birch, apple and fern leaved beech are also present.
- The habitat is not suitable for water vole and no field signs were recorded. Water vole thrive in areas where the channel is not shaded and where there is an abundance of emergent bankside vegetation. Although isolated, the most suitable habitat for water vole assessed during this survey was west of TL 81984 53087 at the upstream end of the survey site.
- No fish fry were observed within the channel but it is likely that fry are present where favourable conditions such as adequate water levels, stones and gravel occur along the riverbed. Additionally overhanging trees and roots over water will provide refuge for fish.
- Arable field margins up to 10 metres wide buffer the banks providing a continuous wildlife corridor around fields and along the river's edge. Taller herbs such as willow herb, teasel, cow

parsley and common nettle thrive here offering seed heads for birds in the winter, overwintering opportunities for invertebrates and shelter for small mammals.

- Designated and informal footpaths occur respectively on the northern and southern edges and as such walkers and horse riders frequently use the river corridor, therefore this river system situated within an otherwise arable landscape is particularly important for both people and wildlife.
- Giant hogweed has been recorded along this stretch of river in the past, but it was not recorded during this survey. Downstream of the village there are two records of giant hogweed occurring however both sites are treated with herbicide by the landowner and the Dedham Vale Project Officer annually.

## **5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

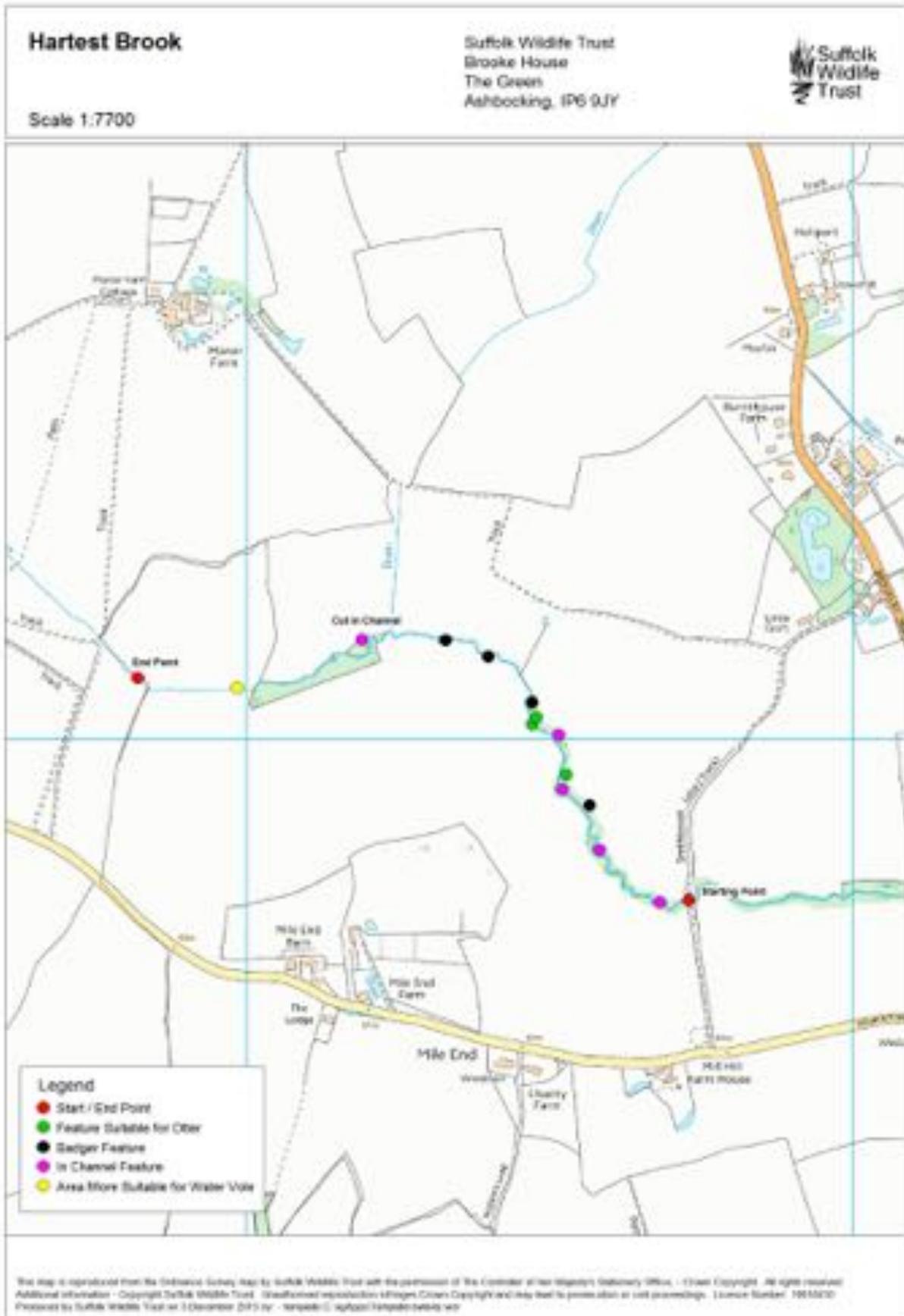
The river and its margins are of high ecological value and act as a corridor for otter and badger, which are both protected species. The natural healthy state of the river system itself reduces the need for much improvement but the following suggestions could be considered:

- The tree and scrub habitat is ideal for mammals, invertebrates and avifauna and should largely remain undisturbed. However occasional willow pollarding along the southern bank and the reinstatement of rotational hazel coppicing on the northern bank would bring additional light to the river and banks and thus may promote bankside and aquatic vegetation making the site more suitable for water vole colonisation.
- The current impact from signal crayfish further downstream is known. No observations were made along this stretch but the channel should continue to be monitored for their presence.
- Although water voles were not recorded on this stretch of river, they may be present further upstream where habitat is more suitable. A survey in the spring would help to confirm their presence or absence.
- It is possible that mink travel along the river. If the landowner is interested in having a mink raft to monitor activity, Suffolk Wildlife Trust can lend rafts and traps and give the necessary training.
- Although otter were not recorded along this stretch, many opportunities for them exist and a specific survey to search for field signs would confirm their presence or absence.
- A large badger set occurs at TL 82398 53138 on the edge of the southern field margin. This species is protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. An informal (undesigned) path runs along the southern field boundary directly across the sett. The sett may therefore need to be temporarily fenced off to reduce disturbance and also to prevent injury to walkers and horses.
- Monitor the river corridor for the presence of giant hogweed.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

The survey found that the river, which flows between Hartest and Somerton, is of high ecological value and acts as a wildlife corridor for mammals, avifauna and invertebrates. The river is a reactive watercourse with fluctuating water levels reflecting rainfall patterns. Badgers are using the river corridor and otter may be present. The river is too shaded by bankside trees to have high floristic diversity but the stones and gravels of the riverbed provide potential habitat for fish and the woody debris will promote terrestrial and aquatic invertebrate communities.

7 APPENDICES



## Photographs



Fallen willow in channel creating refuge for fish



Large fallen willow across channel with hollow cavities for otter



Large woody debris in channel



Brush across channel with accumulated leaf litter creating sediment trap and riffle



Cavity under willow root system high on bank. Potential otter holt.



Fallen willow across channel creating small waterfall and deep pool



Gravel bank/shoal formed on meander



Cut in channel (right) original path (left)



Since diverted river bed now scrubbing over



Old riverbed holding pools of water



Narrowing channel upstream. More suitable for water vole



Small badger latrine on left bank



Larger badger latrine in scrub buffering right bank



Recently dug badger sett



Adjacent sett entrance with fresh bedding

## OBSERVATIONS AT LONGS FARM, HARTEST: birds, wild flowers and field plants

These observations of bird and plant life have been made over many years at Longs Farm in Hartest. They include a summary of a Bird Survey undertaken by RSPB in 2012.

- A. Key results from RSPB Volunteer and Farmer Alliance Bird Survey carried out at Longs Farm Hartest in 2012
- B. Longs Farm Newsletter, 4 February 2011
- C. Wild Flowers seen at and around Longs Farm, Hartest

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### A. Key Results from RSPB Volunteer and Farmer Alliance Bird Survey Carried out at Longs Farm Hartest in 2012

The survey was carried out over 4 visits during Spring 2012 the aim being to discover which birds of conservation concern were regularly present on areas of the farm.

#### Birds that were on the Red List (Species of High Conservation Concern) and Amber List (Species of Medium Conservation Concern) that were recorded

	Considered having territories	Other sitings
Skylark	13	0
Yellowhammer	11	12
Whitethroat	5	3
Linnet	3	2
Dunnock	1	0
Bullfinch	0	1
House Martin	0	3
Lesser Black Headed Gull	0	1
Mistle Thrush	0	1
Swift	0	5
Swallow	0	8
Song Thrush	1	0

The record was taken over a mid-morning walk around the farm on 4 different occasions during the spring and early summer months. Many other more common birds were observed but not recorded.

## B. Longs Farm Newsletter

4<sup>th</sup> February 2011

The RSPB has recently carried out its Garden Birdwatch when it asks people to survey the birds in their gardens. You or a member of your family may have taken part. Participants are asked to observe the number of, and different types of birds in their garden during the period of an hour. As you probably gather from the frequency they appear in the newsletter, we are very interested in birds and enjoy having so many types around the farm (pigeons are an exception - someone else can have our share of them!). You can see what was on the Top 50 list last year on the RSPB website ([www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)).

There are several common and some rarer birds that are seen in the countryside but not usually in gardens. Being on a farm, we get more regular sightings of these and we thought you might like to see our Farm Birdwatch list - things you might well see or hear when out in the local countryside.

Of the RSPB Garden Top 50 we see all but the Nuthatch, Redwing, Siskin, Parakeet, Lesser Redpoll, Grey Wagtail, Stock Dove, Brambling, Marsh Tit and Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. They may be around and keep out of sight (probably not the Parakeets) or just reside in a more select neighbourhood. Things we see:-

### Regularly

Skylarks  
Swallows  
Swifts  
House Martins  
Canada Geese  
Kestrels  
Little Owls  
Red Legged Partridge  
Corn Bunting

### Less Often

Whitethroat  
Chiff Chaff  
Garden Warbler  
Cuckoo  
Snipe  
Heron  
Goldcrest  
Oyster Catcher  
Kite  
Swan  
Stonechat  
Lapwing  
Golden Plover  
Barn Owl  
Tawny Owl  
Grey Partridge  
Wheatear

This gives a total of 65 seen around the farm, certainly something that greatly enhances life in Hartest.

We, or family members, have been at this end of the village for around 70 years and the observed list has obviously altered throughout the years of change in the countryside. Some of the birds on the farm are part of the RSPB's Red List of those that have suffered serious decline or are now rarely seen:-

**Lapwing** 30 or 40 years ago during autumn cultivations there would be large numbers following the plough along with the gulls and rooks. They often stood on one leg observing the frenzied activity going on, waiting to nip in for a quick bite. They disappeared for a while but are now back in a group of about 50 that travel around the farms of the area. In Spring, one or two are often seen over the beet fields and fallow areas performing their mating flight.



**Cuckoo** Used to be heard regularly throughout late spring, a call always eagerly anticipated. Over the last 10 years heard less and less – 2 actually seen last year

**Grey Partridge** Has lost out to the Red Legged version (perhaps it needs to change its fashion sense?), one or two pairs or the occasional covey seen, but there are a lot of their French cousins.

Skylark Has never really declined but likes the set-aside and fallow areas, the wildlife strips, the veg plot and the sugar beet fields. Song a welcome accompaniment to field work.

Fieldfares Large flock most of the winter

Starlings Large groups 30 to 40 years ago that used to nest in the roof of the farmhouse, and we watched them from the breakfast table as they flew back and forth to the far off cut silage and hay fields to bring back grubs for their nestlings. Still a fair sized group about, often working in partnership with the fieldfares.

Song Thrush Not as numerous as years ago but great to hear at the top of the tree and breaking snail shells.



Sparrows Used to be large numbers, now rarely seen, a lot at the end of the lane disappeared about 20 years ago. Farm practices were not really changing at that time, the significant changes came a good while before that. Perhaps the grain barns are more carefully sealed now and certainly the sparrowhawks have increased. Other birds have taken over – the eaves and nooks and crannies of the buildings now house nesting wagtails, robins, wrens, great and blue tits. The thick hedges where they made such a noise at dusk are full of finches, dunnocks and buntings.

Yellow Hammers Used to flock into the yard like canaries, having declined they are now back in large numbers, liking the spring crops, fallows and plot areas.

Corn Buntings Similar story to the above, both types are as persistent as the cat waiting for its tea when we are late in the morning putting out the tail wheat, barley and weed seeds for them.

We are only enthusiastic amateur bird watchers, but this is what we are observing at the moment. It's good to see that some of the threatened species are doing OK in our part of the countryside.

Rodger Bird  
Longs Farm  
Hartest

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### **C. Wild Flowers seen at and around Longs Farm, Hartest**

Plants found in the hedgerows, brews and headlands, wildlife strips and non-cropped areas

Knapweed  
Cowslip  
Dandelion  
Ox Eye and Common Daisy  
Teasel  
Round Leaf and Sharp Leaf Fluellen  
Bee Orchid  
Shepherds Needle  
Red and White Campion  
Dead and Common Nettle  
White and Red Clover  
Buttercup  
Vetches  
Treffoils  
Cranesbill  
Violet  
Cow and Sheeps Parsley  
Plantain  
Ribwort  
Horsetail

#### Field Plants

Cleavers  
Charlock  
Speedwell  
Creeping and Sow Thistles  
Black Bindweed  
Bellbind  
Pale Persicara  
Chickweed  
Shepherds Purse  
Willowherb  
Scarlet Pimpernel  
Poppies  
Mayweed

## HARTEST NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - NATURAL FEATURES [showing some LANDSCAPE FEATURES IN THE PARISH]



A view across the landscape showing the pattern of fields with their boundaries defined by hedges and trees



Landscape dominated by farmland with arable crops, surrounded by trees and hedges



Smithbrook Lane with mature trees in the hedgerow



Wide field margins adjacent to a block of trees alongside the river (towards Somerton)



Some of the fruits in the hedgerows that help support a diversity of wildlife



A pollarded oak - an example of a veteran tree on the roadside, with farm bales visible behind