



Cuckfield Parish Council

Neighbourhood Plan

Biodiversity Assessment

July 2012

1 INTRODUCTION

Cuckfield Parish Council (CPC) Biodiversity Assessment is a summary of the background studies and material available from previous work conducted by various Ecology studies and interested groups in the village.

The primary authors are David Mortimer, trained ecologist, author and trustee of New England Wood nature reserve and Dr John Dickie a qualified botanist.

The Biodiversity Assessment will form a part of the evidence base for CPC's Neighbourhood Plan and will be used to help inform on the future development and allocation of land for housing and associated infrastructure requirements.

This is a background paper only and it is not a statement of Parish Council policy.

This Biodiversity Assessment is one of several background documents and technical reports that are being prepared to inform the plan. Further information on these background documents can be viewed on the website: www.cuckfieldplan.com or by visiting the parish office.

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	Context.	5
2.1	The Convention on Biological Diversity, Nagoya, Japan, 2010.	5
2.2	The United Nations.	5
2.3	The United Kingdom's Response.	5
2.4	County Level	8
2.5	The Sussex Wildlife Trust	9
2.6	District Level.	10
2.7	Community Level.	11
2.8	Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire	12
3	Maps with 2km radius around Cuckfield.	14
3.1	Habitat Map	14
3.2	Ownership & Management Map.	15
3.3	Designated Site Map.	16
3.4	SSSIs (yellow, black outline) and Local Nature Reserves	17
3.5	Footpaths in and around Cuckfield.	18
3.6	Ouse and Adur catchment area, showing watercourses and springs (S)	19
3.7	High Priority ELS Grassland for Pollinating Insects	20
3.8	Biodiversity Opportunity Areas	21
4	General Introduction to the Area Surrounding Cuckfield.	22
4.1	Ancient Woodlands: Weald Ancient Woodland Society Survey.	23
4.2	Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, SSSIs, Local Nature Reserves & SNCIs	24
4.3	Important Plant Areas.	24
4.4	Notable Road Verges (see Map 2.4)	25
4.5	Species-Rich Hedgerows.	25

4.6	Springs & Watercourses (See Map 2.6)	26
5	Species Records and Sightings	26
5.1	Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre Inventory (excluding birds)	26
5.2	Birds	28
5.3	Butterflies	29
5.4	Environmental Stewardship High & Medium Priority Species.	30
5.5	Bats in The Local Area.	31
5.6	Dormice In the Area.	31
5.7	Dragonflies in the Area.	31
6	SWOT Analysis	34
7	Environmental Aspirations.	35
7.1	Key to References Below.	36
7.2	Framework within Which Our Aspirations are Formed.	36
7.3	Cuckfield's Aspirations.	37
7.4	Actions Necessary to Achieve 4.2.	38
7.5	Objectives.	38
8	Conclusions	38

2 Context.

The following global policies are considered.

2.1 The Convention on Biological Diversity, Nagoya, Japan, 2010.

Commitment signed by 190 nations:-

‘Take effective and urgent action to halt the loss of biodiversity, so that by 2020 ecosystems are resilient and continue to provide essential services, thereby securing the planet’s variety of life, and contributing to human well-being’

To meet this five strategic goals were set out:-

- Address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society;
- Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use;
- Improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity;
- Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building.

2.2 The United Nations.

In 2011 the United Nations General Assembly declared the period 2011-2020 to be The United Nations Decade on Biodiversity.

All the countries of the European Union were among the 190 signatories. In June 2011 the EU member states launched the EU’s biodiversity strategy Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020. Shortly afterwards, DEFRA launched Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystems.

2.3 The United Kingdom’s Response.

The Lawton Report Making Space for Nature, September 2010.

This is dealt with very briefly, its recommendations being largely subsumed in DEFRA’s White Paper of June 2011, *The Natural Choice* (see below)

Among Lawton’s principal recommendations for England are:

- Improve the quality of current wildlife sites by better habitat management;
- Increase the size of existing wildlife sites;
- Enhance connections between sites, either through physical corridors or through ‘stepping stones’;
- Create new sites;
- Reduce the pressure on wildlife by improving the wider environment.

The Natural Choice, White Paper issued by DEFRA, June 2011.

(This has not yet been enacted into law, and for the time being can only be taken as intent.)

In her introduction the Secretary of State at DEFRA, Caroline Spelman, noted that:

‘the White Paper – the first on the natural environment for over 20 years – places the value of nature at the centre of the choices our nation must make: to enhance our environment, economic growth and personal wellbeing. By properly valuing nature today, we can safeguard the natural areas that we all cherish and from which we derive vital services. Everyone can think of places near where they live that languish, neglected and damaged. In many cases, with well-informed intervention, we can make progress towards restoring nature’s systems and capacities. We can put right damage done in previous years.’
‘The natural environment becomes degraded when people lose their sense of contact with it. Human health and happiness also suffer. The White Paper aims to strengthen connections between people and nature, to the benefit of both.’

Valuing nature properly holds the key to a green and growing economy, one which invests in nature – not just for us but for our children’s children.’

The Natural Choice endorsed the importance of the NEA, *the National Ecosystem Assessment*, to which reference will be made later in this section (see 1.3.2 & 1.4.1) . For our purposes the key commitments in *The Natural Choice* come under three heads:-

(a) Protecting & enhancing the natural environment

- New Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) to enhance and reconnect nature (the Lawson report recommendations); (2.27-2.32).
- Support Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) to strengthen local action;
 - (2.15-2.26).
- Core objectives of planning system to be ecologically coherent in protecting and improving the natural environment; (2.33-2.37)
- Piloting biodiversity offsets to make the impacts on biodiversity simpler & more consistent. (2.38-2.42).

(b) Public Health

- Improve public health locally by making high quality green space available to all; (see *National Ecosystem Assessment*, and the Marmot review *Fair Society, Healthy Lives (2010)* (4.5-4.13; 1.26-1.30).
- Get more children learning outdoors & increase schools’ abilities to teach outdoor; (4.14-4.20; 1.26).
- New Green Areas Designation empowering communities to protect local environments that are important to them; (4.23; 2.80).

(c) Green Economy

- Actions to support the creation of new markets for green goods and services; (3.24-3.30).

(N.B. The White Paper stresses that economic growth is vital, but needs to be green because linked to the creation of new markets and services. 'Services' is open to a wide interpretation in the Paper, and includes (for example) education, tourism and public health. At the same time the White Paper makes clear that unless a designated or important wildlife site, such as an SSSI or LNR, the countryside must contribute realistically to the green economy.)

Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife & Ecosystem Services (DEFRA 2011).

This was issued hard on the heels of *The Natural Choice* and makes substantially the same points. A key sentence from Biodiversity 2020's Mission Statement is taken as a guiding principle behind the Aspirations that comprise Section 4 of the Biodiversity Assessment of Cuckfield's Neighbourhood Plan, namely: *To have a policy which halts biodiversity loss and pursues opportunities to achieve a net gain in biodiversity in the District; support healthy, well-functioning ecosystems; and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature which benefit wildlife, including people.*

The UK government's revised (March 2012) National Planning Policy Framework:

Para 73: Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for recreation make an important contribution to the health & well-being of communities.

Para 74: Local communities should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space....will be able to rule out development.

Para 77: Local Green Space designation should only be used where:

- (i) the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
the green space is local in character & not an extensive tract of land; and
- (ii) the green space is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular significance – e.g. because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or richness of wildlife.

2.4 County Level

West Sussex County Council

In July 2011 WSCC's Environment and Climate Change Board (ECCB) issued *Using Less, Living Better: Plan of Action*. Among the important points made one stands out particularly – that ‘in parallel with the increased pressure put on the environment by climate change is **the fact that human activities are reducing the ability of the environment to adapt to change.**’

Using Less, Living Better also notes that we can expect:

- (i) more droughts – summer rainfall could drop by a quarter.
- (ii) more flooding – winter rain and snow could increase by a third.
- (iii) more heat waves like that in 2003 that caused 2000 more UK deaths than normal.
- (iv) changes in growing seasons affecting crops, food & wildlife.

Other key points:

- Account must be taken of ‘climate space’ for wildlife species, allowing for migration across the landscape;
- Issues such as tree cover are important in helping to address these challenges;
- The *National Ecosystem Assessment* reported that 30% of the ecosystems on which we depend (clean water, crop pollination, climate regulation and habitats for wildlife) are in a degraded state or in long-term decline, and stated that we must therefore work to ensure the high quality of our environment so that it can contribute to good health and well-being;
- Sensitive land management is essential. Fragmented landscapes with isolated nature reserves and other protected sites cannot sustain wildlife in the long term;
- Large, interconnected areas of habitat are likelier to be sustainable in the long term & will help to protect against climate change. In large areas natural processes can act to maintain habitats & species, and there is less need for deliberate and costly habitat management;
- The ECCB therefore wants people to engage & create pathways for change. Among its listed Specific Actions is ‘Engage with young people in further and higher education sectors and of school age to develop age-relevant messages;

2.5 The Sussex Wildlife Trust

The value of ecological systems: The national Wildlife Trust and Dr Tony Whitbread, head of the Sussex branch, were very much involved in the shape and content of the Lawton Report (1.2.1) and by association, therefore, *The Natural Choice*. Both, in turn, lean heavily on the *National Ecosystem Assessment*. Taking the last-named as its guide, the Sussex Wildlife Trust has given invaluable guidance in how to assess the value of ecological systems to our economic and general well-being, and with the backing of the Mid Sussex Sustainability Partnership an ecosystems mapping exercise is in progress.

Where does biodiversity fit in?

Ecological Functions	underpins ecological processes & indicates their health (supporting, regulating)
Genes & Crops Species	Species & genetic variety give direct products like crops, livestock, fibre pharmaceutical products etc (provisioning)
Valued by people	Appreciation of wildlife provides spiritual, educational and recreation benefits, improves health, sense of place (cultural)

How ecosystems feed services and enterprises.

ENTERPRISES	Risk Hazard reduction Markets (healthy people) Waste absorption Pollution ameliorat'n Climate change	Materials Materials/produce Energy Infrastructure Working premises	People Quality work environment “ living env’t Market benefit from location, brand, people interactions
SERVICES	Regulatory services Local weather/globe, climate, Pollination Hazard reduction (eg floods Pest/disease regul'n Noise Detoxification/purification	Provisional services Crops, food Timber/wood Food Energy Fish Water Pharmaceutical prods	Cultural Services Tranquillity Health Landscape character Sense of place Recreation Tourism Spiritual Aesthetic inspiration

ECOSYSTEMS	<p>Rich and healthy</p> <p>Core eco processes Water cycling Mineral cycling Solar energy flow Ecological interact'ns</p>	<p>Support services biodiversity</p> <p>Ecosystem structures Vegetation structure Soil Water bodies Species distribution/ dominance Habitat connectivity Food web structure</p>	<p>Living Landscape</p> <p>Undiscovered services</p>
-------------------	---	--	---

2.6 District Level.

Mid Sussex District Council.

MSDC has compiled a *Mid Sussex District Plan Sustainability Appraisal (2011)*. In the revised draft of June 2012, 5 of its 15 Strategic Objectives (nos 1 – 5) fall under the heading 'Protecting and Enhancing the Environment'. They are:

- To promote sustainable development that makes best use of resources and increases the 'self-sufficiency' of communities within Mid Sussex, and its ability to adapt to climate change;
- To promote well located and designed development that reflects our distinctive towns and villages, retains their separate identity and character and prevents coalescence;
- To protect valued landscapes for their visual, historical and biodiversity qualities;
- To create and maintain easily accessible green infrastructure corridors and green spaces around and within the towns and villages to act as wildlife corridors, sustainable transport links, along with leisure and recreation routes.
- To ensure that development is accompanied by the necessary infrastructure in the right place at the right time that meets needs, supports development and creates sustainable communities.

2.7 Community Level.

Cuckfield Parish Plan (2007)

There has been no Parish Plan since 2007. Obviously, therefore, the Nagoya agreement, the Lawton Report, the DEFRA White Paper and MSDC's Strategic Assessment all pre-date it by three or four years. Nevertheless the Parish Plan drew attention to certain features that are relevant in the context of Policy:-

- Cuckfield's unique historic landscape within its boundaries to be preserved;
- The strategic gap between Cuckfield and Haywards Heath to be maintained and coalescence prevented, learning the lesson from Lindfield's absorption by Haywards Heath;
- Any development must not be allowed to compromise the views to open countryside from within the village;
- The highest quality, in full sympathy with the surroundings, to be applied to any new buildings;
- Small business development to be encouraged by Cuckfield with the aim of increasing local jobs and reducing commuter traffic (*N.B. i.e. reducing carbon emissions*);
- Encourage the use of alternative energy sources (both businesses and homes) and anticipate the possibility that as these became more affordable they might be made mandatory for future developments in the village.

Final draft of the Village Design Statement (VDS) (February 2011)

Throughout 2010 drafts of the VDS were used for wide consultations in Cuckfield, but the final draft was put on hold when impending legislation (Localism Bill) made it clear that a more extensive Neighbourhood Plan would be required.

The VDS substantially expands upon the recommendations of the earlier Parish Plan by providing 10 'Landscape guidelines':-

- All new development in or around Cuckfield or Brook Street to recognize the importance of its unique urban shape and position on a ridge of the High Weald, surrounded by the AONB (north and west) , Local Gap (east) and unique, unspoilt medieval setting south of the church.
- New development should minimise the impact on and from the landscape by preventing damage caused by reducing or blocking the wide views and open spaces of the area. Well considered landscape architecture will be used rather than the reliance on vegetation to simply screen buildings.
- Rural space within the village must be maintained to ensure the distinction in character between the built-up areas and the open countryside

- The approach roads from Haywards Heath run through an important area of countryside and this must be protected to retain the separate identity of Cuckfield by preventing coalescence with Haywards Heath, and **sustain the existing wildlife corridors.**
- Public open spaces are **important to the health and well-being** of the community and must continue to be available for use by all local residents and new development should provide adequate open space suitable for informal recreation.
- Buffer zones on the perimeter of any new development are an important safeguard for the **wildlife conservation of the area** and must be incorporated into the design of all new development.
- All stake holders should work together to **conserve, manage and enhance Cuckfield's natural heritage, including all hedgerow habitats, woodland areas, landscape and small green spaces and extend community woods and create community orchards.**
- Landscape design advice should be obtained for the planning of open spaces and planting should be of appropriate native species to retain the landscape character.
- Where new public open spaces are created, sufficient financial resources must be obtained through the development to ensure the long term care of the area
- Any new development should fully adhere to **Sustainable Drainage Systems principles, encompassing swales and ponds, to prevent any additional run-off causing flood problems downstream.** Groundwater movement in the development vicinity shall be fully understood so as not to affect the multitude of natural springs.

(**Bold** is used in 1.6.2 to indicate issues that tie in with *The Natural Choice* White Paper)

2.8 Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire

The detailed results of the community consultation are published at www.cuckfieldplan.com/documents

There were 2 questions related to Biodiversity which are summarised below. NB the term strategic gap was used in early thinking to denote the gap between Cuckfield and Haywards Heath boundary.

Q8: *What are the three most important things about Cuckfield that should be preserved or enhanced?* A strong response listed: 1. Village character; 2. The Strategic Gap; 3. Countryside.

Q9: *What are the two highest priorities for Cuckfield?:* 1. Control over development; 2. Preservation of the Strategic Gap.

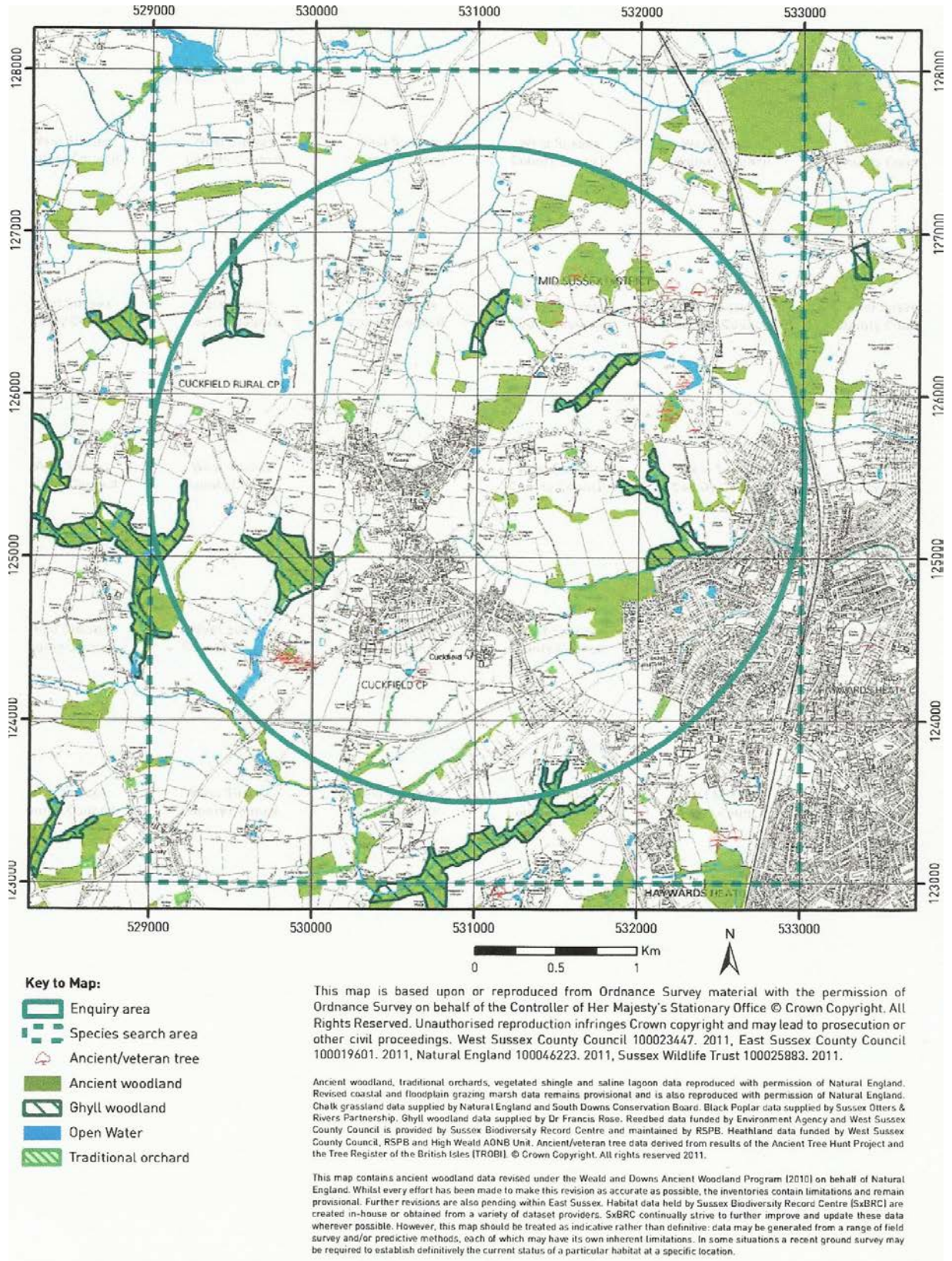
Adjoining Parishes.

Ansty & Staplefield: Cuckfield has a working relation with Ansty and Staplefield with regards to Biodiversity. We share two ambitions in common – the restoration of species-rich meadows and creating a wildlife corridor by linking the ancient woodlands to link with the denser woodlands to the north in the High Weald AONB.

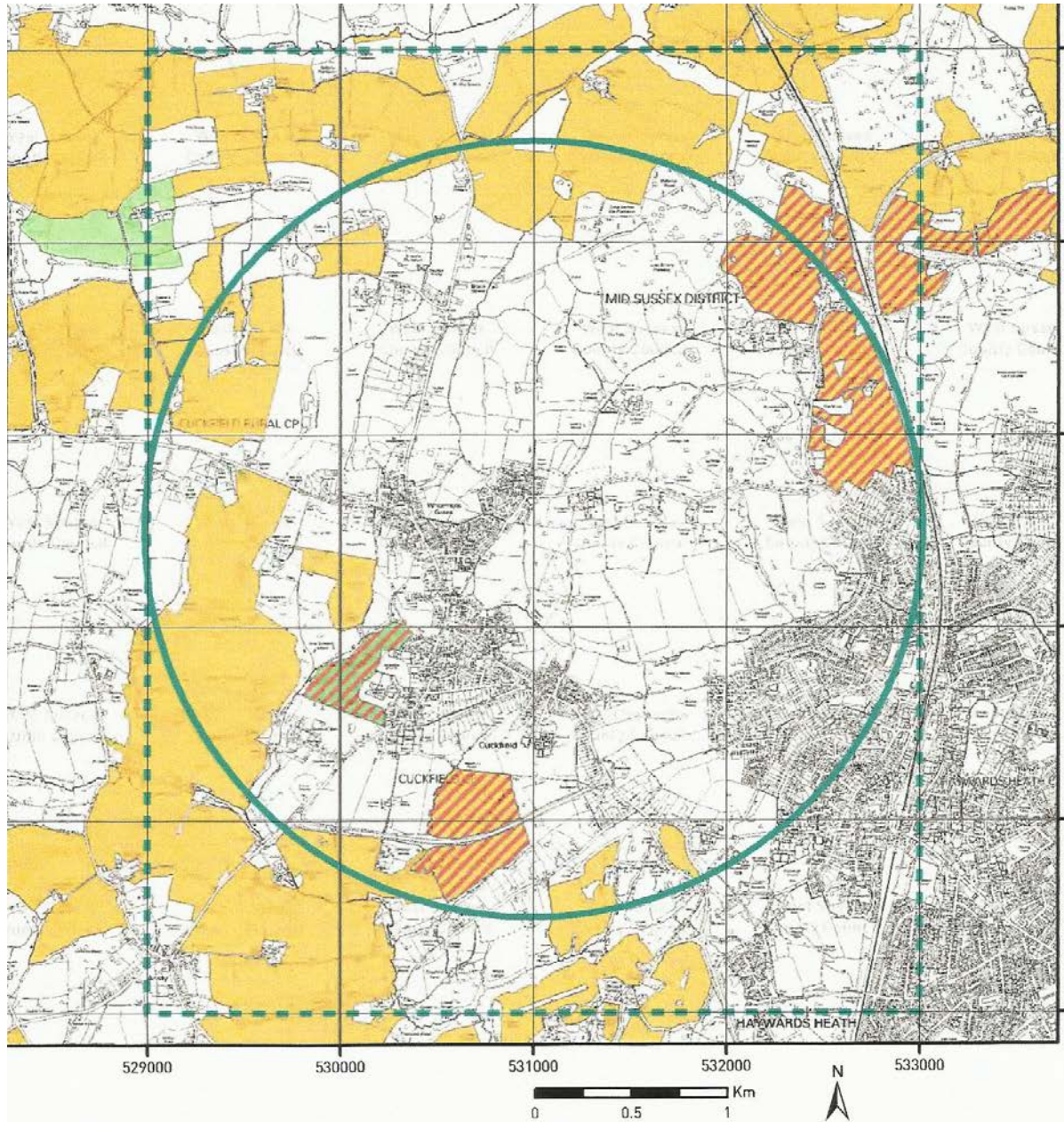
Haywards Heath Town Council: First meeting was held with Steve Trice, Town Council Clerk, on 20th January 2012. We share a common interest in seeking to avoid coalescence.

3 MAPS WITH 2KM RADIUS AROUND CUCKFIELD.

3.1 Habitat Map



3.2 Ownership & Management Map. (Environmental Stewardship Agreements)



Key to Map:

- Enquiry area
- Species search area

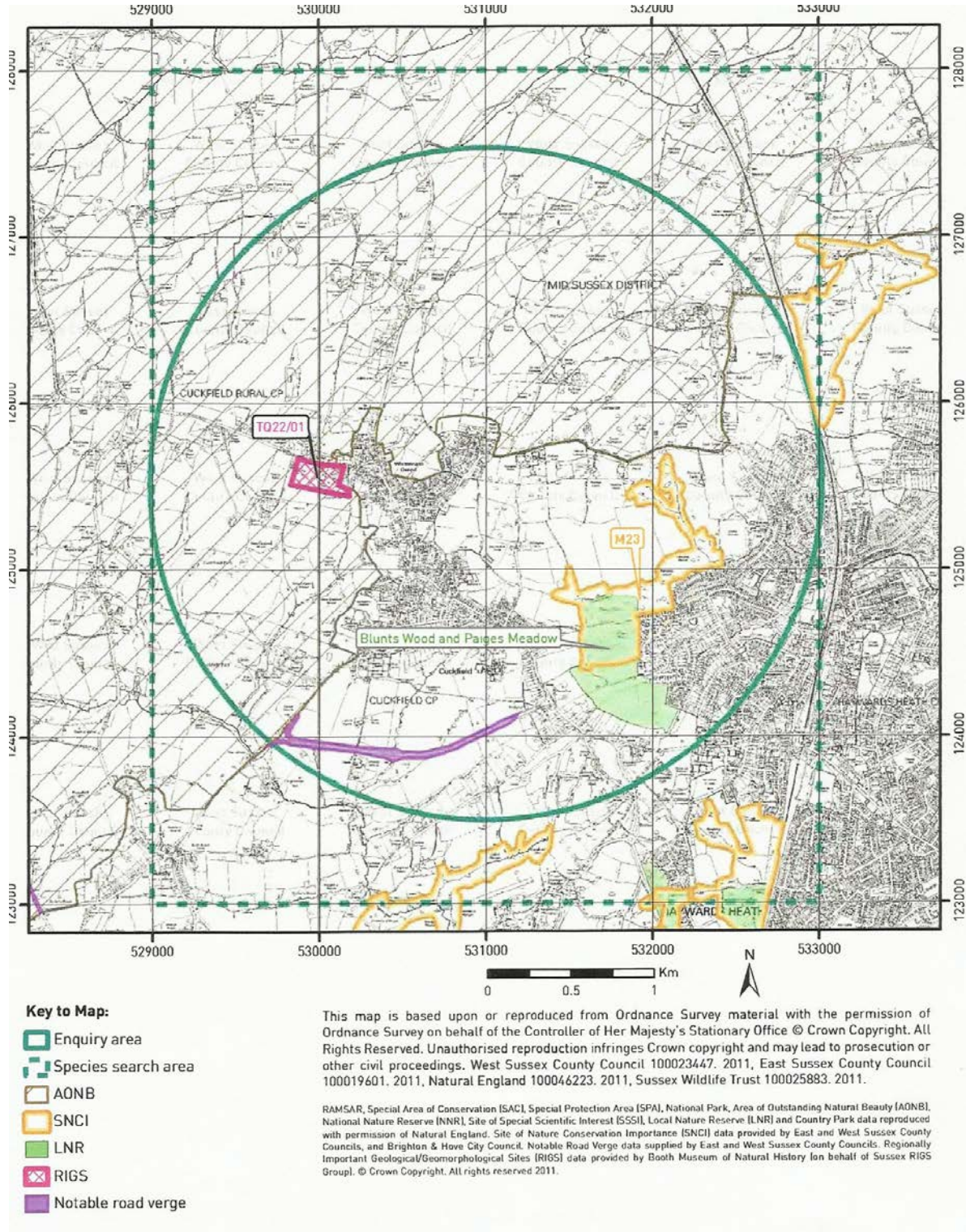
Environmental Stewardship Agreements:

- Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)
- Entry Level Stewardship (ELS)
- Organic ELS
- Organic ELS plus HLS
- ELS plus HLS

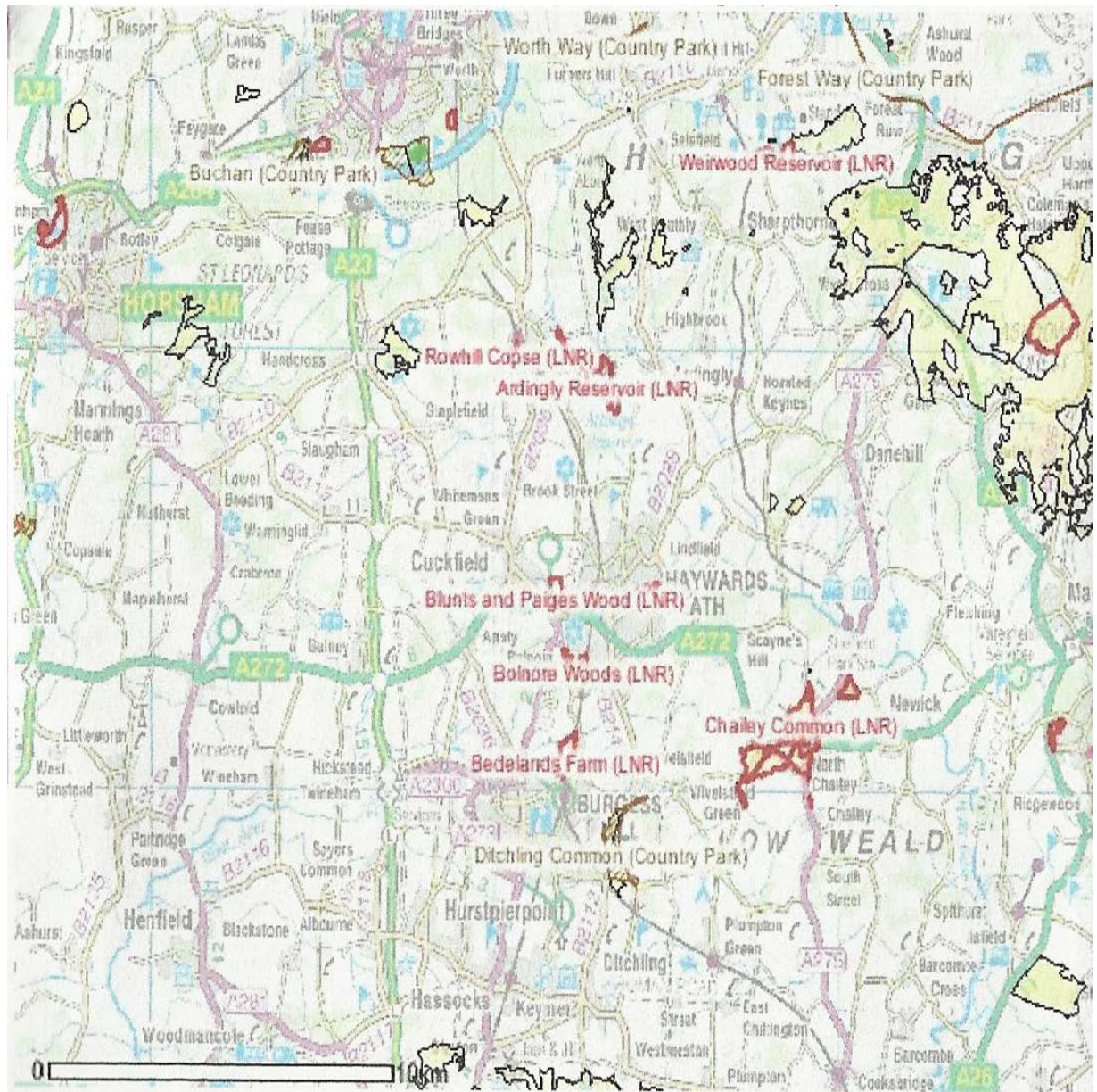
This map is based upon or reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office © Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or other civil proceedings. West Sussex County Council 100023447. 2011, East Sussex County Council 100019601. 2011, Natural England 100046223. 2011, Sussex Wildlife Trust 100025883. 2011.

Environmental Stewardship Agreement data reproduced with permission of Natural England. Other datasets reproduced respectively with permission of the Woodland Trust, National Trust, Sussex Wildlife Trust and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved 2011.

3.3 Designated Site Map.



3.4 SSSIs (yellow, black outline) and Local Nature Reserves



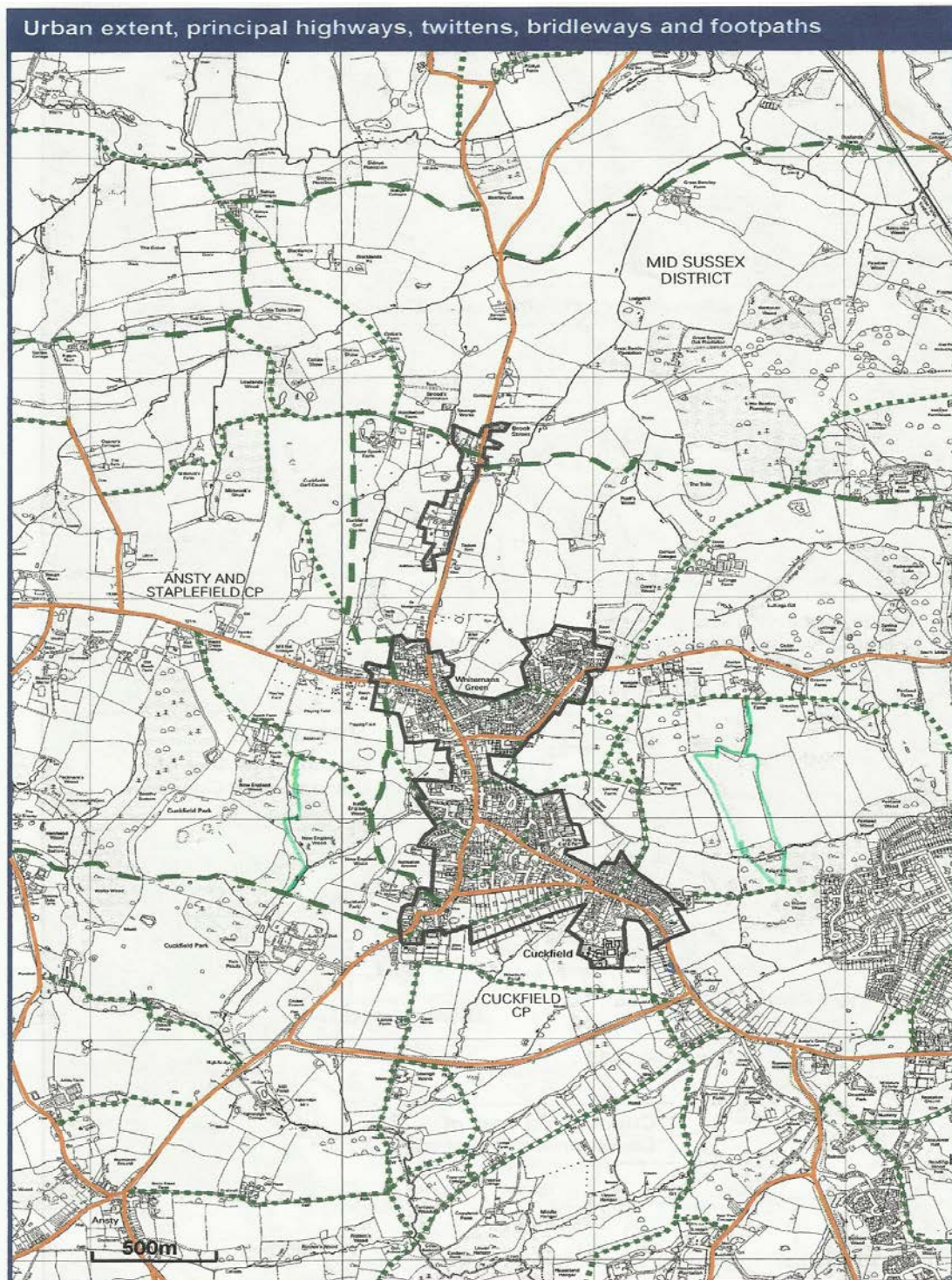
1. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100022021. © Crown copyright. Licence number 100022432.

3.5 Footpaths in and around Cuckfield.

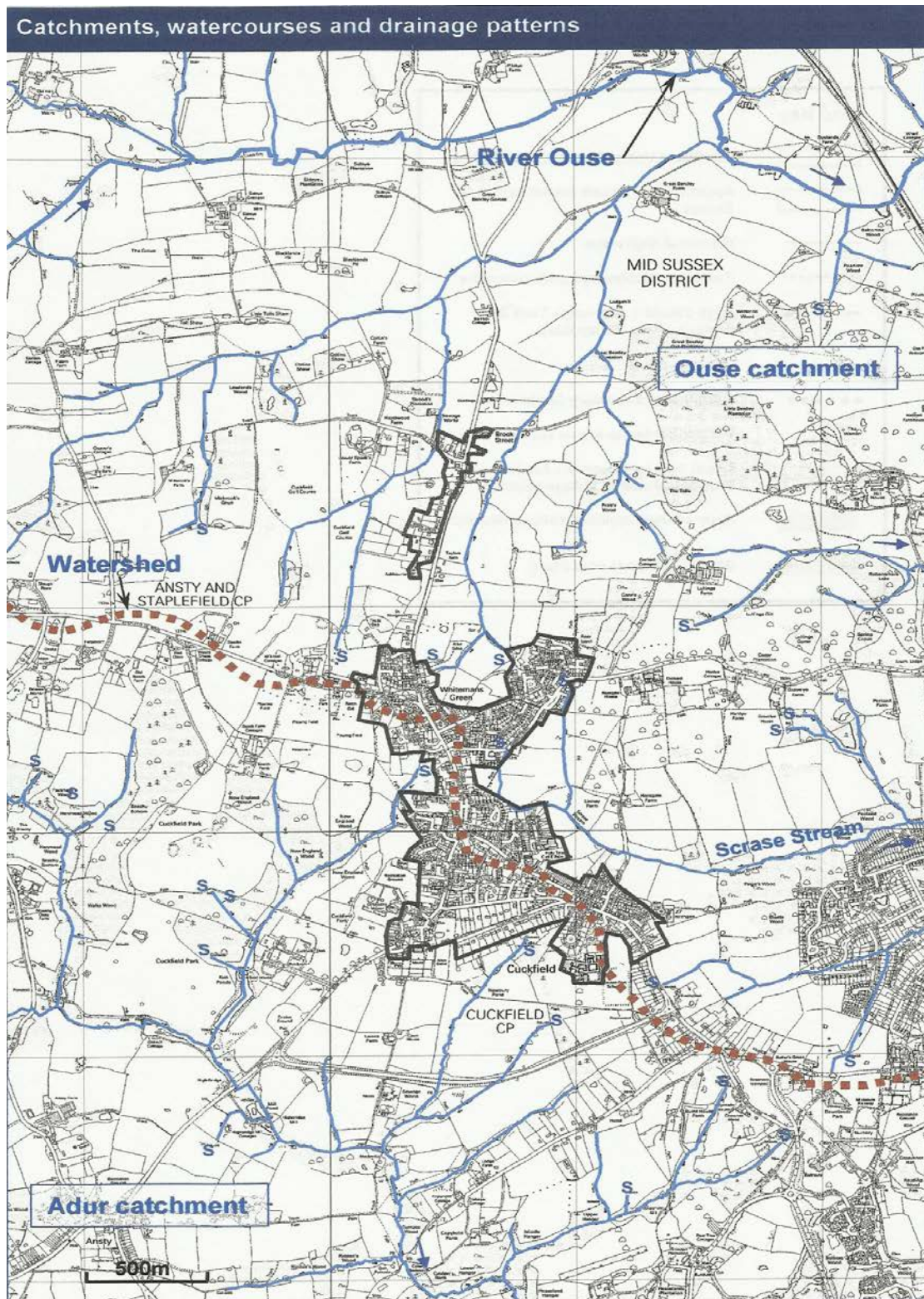
Green dashes = High Weald & Ouse Valley long-distance paths

Green dots = official local footpaths

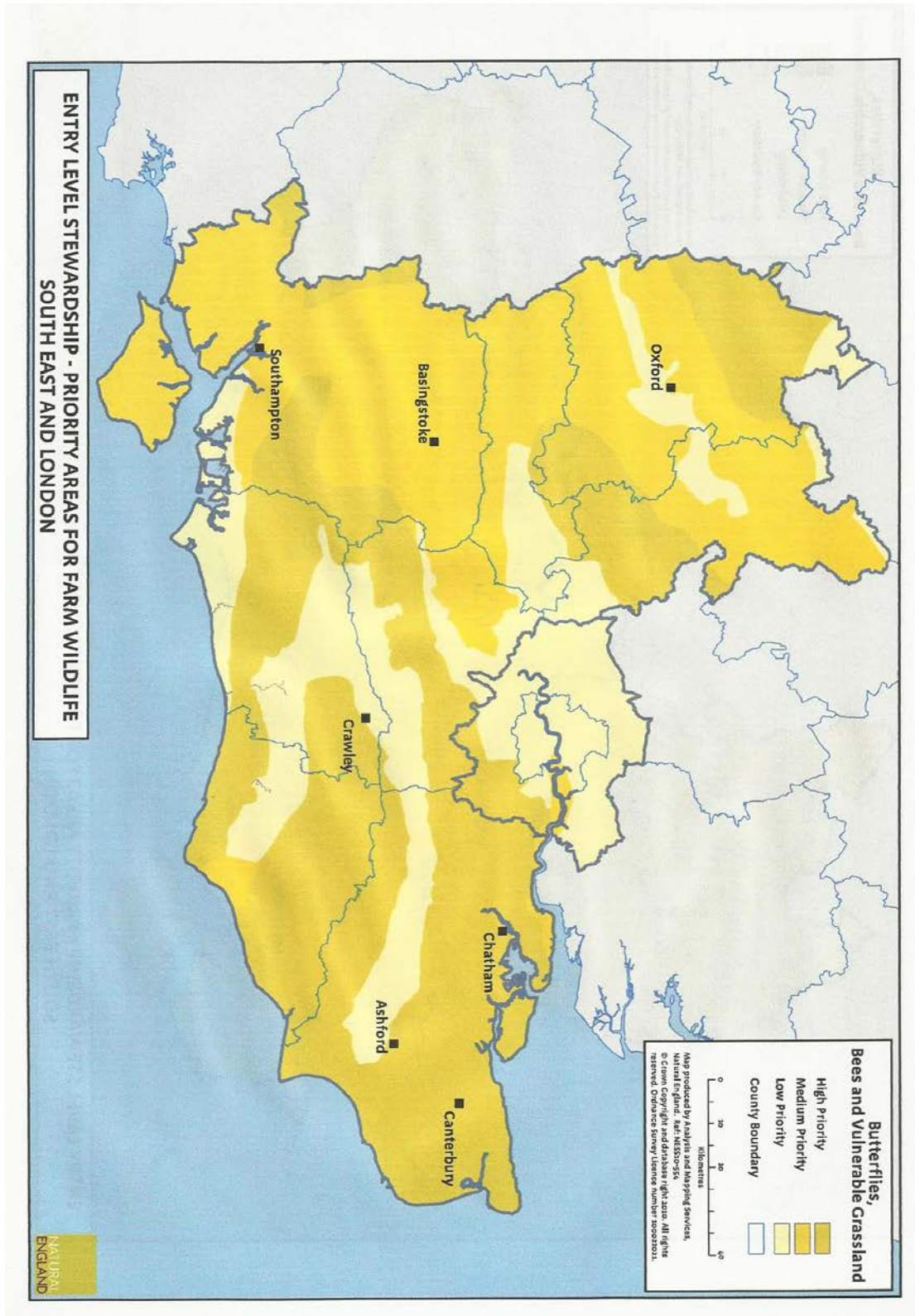
Solid green lines = established permissive footpaths



3.6 Ouse and Adur catchment area, showing watercourses and springs (S)



3.7 High Priority ELS Grassland for Pollinating Insects

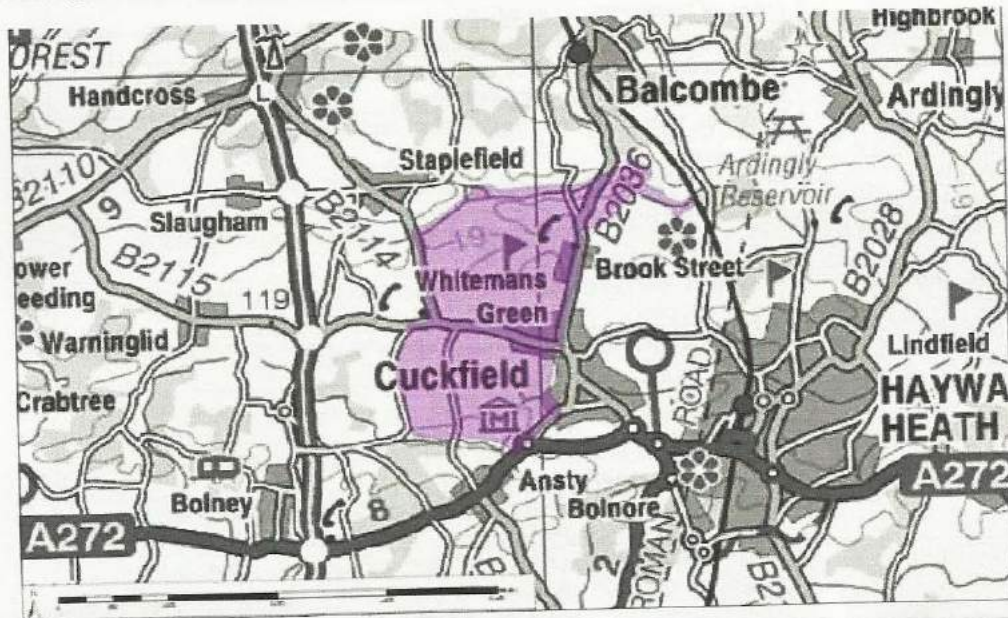


3.8 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas

Lower Adur Ouse watershed Biodiversity Opportunity Area

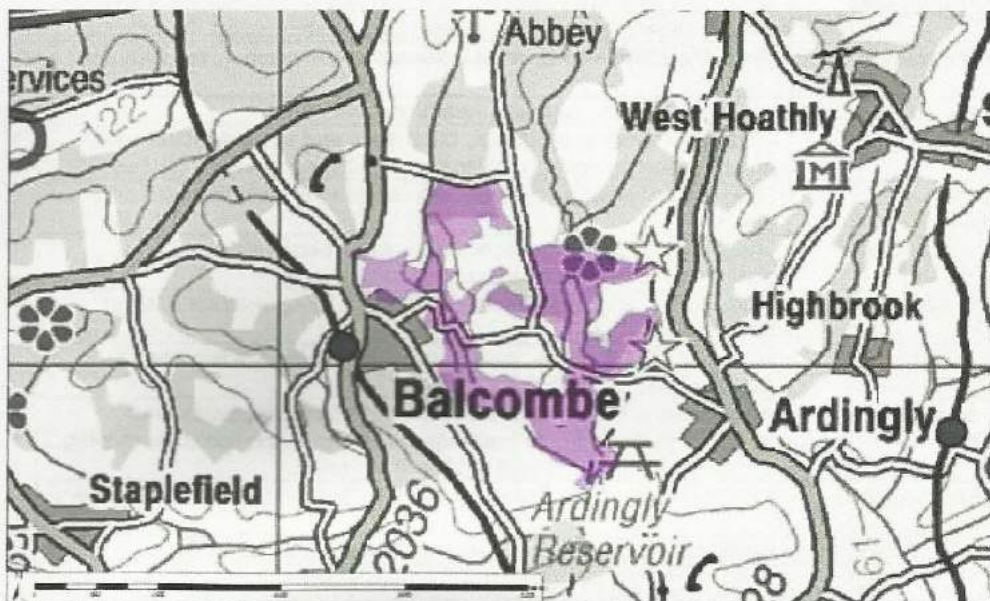
Joint Character Area High Weald

Geology The lower Adur Ouse watershed lies on sandstone, siltstone and mudstone



Ardingly Reservoir Biodiversity Opportunity Area

Joint Character Area High Weald



4 General Introduction to the Area Surrounding Cuckfield.

Cuckfield, incorporating Whitemans Green and Brook Street, lies athwart a prominent east-west sandstone ridge containing a designated RIGS site where fossils of the world's first four dinosaurs were found. The ridge is the watershed of two prominent river systems – the Ouse to the north and the Adur to the south – and the village is surrounded by springs, issues & drainage courses (map 2.6).

The village stands on the boundary of the High Weald (an AONB that hugs the northern & western boundaries of the village) and Low Weald. The High Weald is characterised by ancient and ghyll woodland (map 2.1) and many species-rich hedgerows of which some, according to old maps, are ancient. These characteristics continue to the south of the village, and within the Local Gap to the east.

South and east of the village is officially Low Weald, characterised by small enclosed fields interspersed with woods, ghyll woods, hedges, shaws & rews – in other words not dissimilar to Cuckfield's High Weald surroundings. However, the 2001 Phase One Habitat Survey carried out by a group of 12 volunteers indicated around the village a number of small MG5 unimproved natural grasslands, on mineral soil with a pH between 5 & 6.5 (independent expert verification of this would be required). This is a habitat in sharp national decline, estimates suggesting that only between 5K and 10K hectares remain. Sussex claims around 17% of these, and the conditions for the correct mineral soil extend in a broad sweep from south of Horsham in an upward arc between Ditchling in the south and Forest Row in the north – in other words likely to encompass the Cuckfield area. Map 2.7 indicates that Cuckfield falls within the High Priority area for the recovery of vulnerable grasslands and pollinating invertebrates.

Mid Sussex Strategic Assessment: Consultation Document (2011)

- Soil quality:
- Grade 1 (Excellent Quality) - none in Mid Sussex;
 - Grade 2 – 1.4% of district classified 2 – mainly in South Downs National Park and in the High Weald;
 - Grades 3a & 3b – 63.7% of district is classified as 3, but no distinction made between 3a & 3b. Grades 1,2 & 3a are regarded as the best and most versatile agricultural land definition;
 - Grade 4 – 23.2% of the district is classified as 4;
 - Grade 5 (Very Poor Quality) – 11.7%
- Air quality: In general air quality in Mid Sussex is good. There are no Air Quality Management Areas.
- Land Contamination: Few large-scale contaminated sites in the district. Some small-scale ones such as former gas holders.

Public Rights of Way: Footpaths - 475 km
 Bridleways - 117km
 Byways – 5km

N.B. Cuckfield lies on the route of two major trails– The High Weald Landscape Trail and the Sussex Ouse Valley Way. The extensive network of footpaths in and around Cuckfield connects to these trails. (see Map 2.5)

4.1 Ancient Woodlands: Weald Ancient Woodland Society Survey.

for High Weald AONB Unit (2007, see Map 2.1)

If a circle of 4km diameter were drawn round Cuckfield the Revised Ancient Woodland Inventory for Mid Sussex shows within it:

- North-East of Cuckfield (Ouse Valley): Gore's Wood (531150/125900); Lullings Wood* (presumed name 531750/126050); unnamed* (531100/126500) and five other small woods within 2km radius between Great Bentley Farm and Gore's Wood.
- West of Cuckfield (Adur West): New England Wood* (nature reserve 529800/125000) and the wooded ghyll between it & the village (530250/125050); Henmead Wood and Beechy Bottom* (529000/12125000) are designated as
- Plantation on Ancient Woodland site rather than AW.
- East of Cuckfield (Scrase Stream): Blunt's, Paige's & Penland Woods 531750/124750; the northward extension of Penland Wood* (532000/125450); and the shallow gills running east-west across the Millennium Wood (531600/125350)
- South of Cuckfield (Adur South): The woodlands running continuously south from Copyhold Gill through Hanger, Riddens, Freizeland, Great, Hookhouse and Prongers Woods*

* = officially designated Ghyll woodland

Summary: Cuckfield is surrounded by scattered areas of ancient and ghyll woodland. None is of any great size – typically between 20 and 30 acres – but on the west, and to the east-north-east, of the village there are areas closer together – in other words, with the potential to form corridors of ancient woodland. The potential linkage is helped by two large areas of recent plantation.

In the **Adur West** sector New England Wood, Henmead Wood and Beechy Bottom have been linked by broad-leaved plantation dating from the late 1980s (*NB check date*); to the east, in **Scrase Stream** sector, the Millennium Wood of approximately 75 acres was planted in 2000. Millennium Wood was planned by the Forestry Commission to be species rich, but with a leaning toward sweet chestnut for harvesting purposes.

Ansty to A23(M): Worth noting that the Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and the Plantations on Ancient Woodland sites either side of the A272 and between Ansty and the A23(M) form a substantial area of joined up woodland.

4.2 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, SSSIs, Local Nature Reserves & SNCIs

(Sites of Nature Conservation Interest.)

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (see Map 2.8)

- Lower Adur Ouse Watershed BOA: a priority area for the delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan targets in which 20 BAP species are recorded. It is officially described as ‘a patchwork of ghyll woodlands, small ancient woodlands, streams and ponds against an agricultural backdrop. The area could play an important role in the migration of key mammal species between river catchments.’ This BOA covers 940 hectares from Ansty in the south almost to Staplefield in the north-west, and extends over a mile westwards of Cuckfield’s western boundary.
- Ardingly Reservoir BOA: Covering 340 hectares this fragmented BOA curls round Balcombe’s eastern edge reaching south-eastwards until it almost coalesces with the north-east tip of the Lower Adur Ouse Watershed BOA. 98 BAP species have been recorded here.
- Since BOAs are designated as priority areas for restoration and creation of BAP habitats, they indicate the relevance of Cuckfield as ‘green village’ around which wildlife corridors can be encouraged to flow.

SSSIs closest to Cuckfield (see Map 2.4)

- Cow and Harry’s Woods (Nymans) 4.8km to the north-west;
- Wakehurst and Chiddingly Woods approx 5.5km to the north;
- Freshfield Lane to the east;
- Ditchling Common to the south.

LNRs closest to Cuckfield (see Maps 2.3 & 2.4)

- Rowhill Copse (Nymans) to the north-west;
- Ardingly Reservoir to the north;
- Blunts, Paiges & Bolnore Woods to the east;
- Bedelands Farm (inc Valebridge Common) to the south.
- *Note: New England Wood is a nature reserve owned and managed by a Trust on behalf of Cuckfield*

SNCIs closest to Cuckfield (see Map 2.3)

- The northward extension of Penland Wood. bordering Millennium Wood on its eastern flank;
- the complex of connected woodlands 1km due S of Cuckfield church – Riddens, Freizeland, Hanger, Great, Hookhouse & Prongers Woods;
- *Note: the Millennium Wood, to immediate E of Cuckfield, is a proposed SNCI awaiting decision from WSCC;*
- Balcombe Estate Rocks & Rowhill and Station Pastures approx 4.4km to the north.

4.3 Important Plant Areas.

Wealden Sandrocks.

Core areas closest to Cuckfield of this nationally rare habitat are (i) west of West Hoathly and around Wakehurst Place (335318/533359); (ii) the SSSI at Cow and Harry's Woods (Nymans). Wealden Sandrocks include uncommon plants such as Tunbridge filmy fern (*Hymenophyllum tunbrigense*), some important lichens and bryophytes such as *Dicranum scottianum*, *Orthodontium gracile*, *Tetrodontium brownianum*, *Scapania gracilis* & *Blepharostoma trichophyllum*.

Several species uncommon in Sussex are in Wakehurst and Chiddingly SSSI, notably ivy-leaved bellflower, hay-scented fern and green hellebore.

Balcombe Marsh SSSI.

This small reserve, which is 5km north of Cuckfield, is officially described as of 'exceptional importance botanically'. Its extremely herb-rich flora includes many uncommon species currently in decline in southern England. It is, e.g., now the only known locality in West Sussex of the rare Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*).

4.4 Notable Road Verges (see Map 2.4)

NRV's are given protection if any or all of the following criteria are present:

- Site supports locally rare, notable or protected species of flora or fauna;
- Site is a good example of an uncommon, remnant or declining habitat;
- Site has good overall species diversity;
- The assemblage of wild flowers has high aesthetic value;
- Site has wildlife value that is regarded as important by the local community.

Cuckfield bypass is the only NRV in the locality, being listed for Common spotted orchids. In fact, the rather more uncommon Dyer's greenweed (*Genista tinctoria*) is also said to be present, though this needs verification.

4.5 Species-Rich Hedgerows.

Species-rich hedges can contain, provide a habitat and/or provide a food source for up to 600 plant species, 1500 kinds of invertebrates, 65 bird species and 20 mammals (source: Sussex Wildlife Trust's *Hedgerow Survey of Sussex* – ongoing). They are therefore of huge importance to a healthy environment.

The Cuckfield Phase One Habitat Survey conducted in 2001, the data from which was recorded as a map by SBRC in 2003, marks the species-rich hedgerows around Cuckfield as far south as the Bypass. The records compiled by the surveyors of the 52 hedgerows examined contain measurements, map references and species lists. Of the 52 hedgerows, 38

were species-rich – i.e. containing five or more species of tree and shrub (*Can be attached as an Appendix if desirable*).

These hedgerows were re-examined in Spring 2012 by David Mortimer, who was trained in hedgerow assessment by the Sussex Wildlife Trust, and assisted in surveying all the hedgerows on the Knepp Castle estate over a three-year period 2008-2010.

Of the species-rich hedgerows in the Cuckfield Phase One Habitat Survey of 2001 it was found that one had been grubbed up in 2012, but the remaining 37 had not undergone any damage or deterioration in the eleven intervening years.

4.6 Springs & Watercourses (See Map 2.6)

Map 2.6 demonstrates Cuckfield's position astride the Adur and Ouse catchment areas. Springs are clearly marked with an S and the map shows three tucked into the northern boundary of Cuckfield/Whitemans Green; one close in to the waist of Cuckfield on its western side; and one (Newbury Pond) on the southern edge of the current built-up boundary. A multiplicity of springs surrounds the village at greater distances of 100 – 500 metres.

5 Species Records and Sightings

5.1 Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre Inventory (excluding birds)

We have the SBRO's species lists for an area of 2km around Cuckfield (as shown by the circle on maps 1,2 & 3). This list covers fungi (23), lichens (69), liverworts (6), mosses (32), ferns (16), conifers (5), flowering plants (513), molluscs (6), spiders (2) dragonflies (13), beetles (8), butterflies (34), moths (421), other inverts, amphibians (5), reptiles (4) and terrestrial mammals, incl bats, (23).

N.B. These lists run between 1969 (earliest records) and 2010. There are instances of some plants and many lichens that have not been recorded for 20 – 40 years. (Can be attached as an Appendix if desirable.)

Sussex Rare Species Inventory Report.

The following are recent records from the Cuckfield area (date in brackets):

Purple emperor (*Apatura iris*): 4 sightings in Millennium Wood (July 2010)
1 sighting “ “ “ (July 2011)
Sightings in Ashenground Wood (2000)

Boletus aereus – fungus – Millennium Wood (September 2010)
Boletus porosporus (*Sepia bolete*) – fungus – Millennium Wood (Sept 2010)
Hornet moth (*Sesia apiformis*) - Whitemans Green (10/06/2006)
Blossom underwing (*Orthosia miniosa*) – Millennium Wood (18/05/2010)
Yellow-legged clearwing (*Synanthedon vespiformis*) - Ashenground Wood (2000)

The following is a list of moths, ranging from nationally scarce to locally confined. All were observed between 2007 – 2009 in Sergison Road, Haywards Heath

- Grey Ermine moth (*Yponomeuta sedella*)
- Apple-pith moth (*Blastodacna atra*)
- Marsh grey moth (*Eudonia pallida*)
- Pied grey moth (*Eudonia delunella*)
- Dotted border wave moth (*Idaea sylvestraria*)
- Red green carpet moth (*Chloroclysta siterata*)
- Cypress carpet moth (*Thera cupressata*)
- Grass rivulet moth (*Perizoma albulata*)
- Lead-coloured pug (*Eupithecia plumbeolata*)
- Triple-spotted pug (*Eupithecia trisignaria*)
- Great Oak beauty (*Hypomecis roboraria*)
- Alder kitten moth (*Furcula bicuspis*)
- Orange footman moth (*Eilema sororcula*)
- Square-spot dart *Euxoa obelisca* subsp. *Grisea*)
- Square-spotted clay (*Xestia rhomboidea*)
- Varied coronet moth (*Hadena compta*)
- Common fan-foot (*Pechipogo strigilata*)

A local moth expert, Tim Newnham, has been moth-trapping in north Cuckfield since 1995, and has compiled lists, numbering 138 species, of specimens trapped in the 16 succeeding years. These have all been notified to the County Recorder, Colin Pratt. Mr Newnham has also recorded 24 species of butterfly.

Also to be noted:

- Shining hookeria (*Hookeria lucens*), a moss rare in S E England, was found in a ghyll in Paiges Wood (7/04/2011) by Dr Margaret Pilkington. This has been reported to, but not yet entered on, the SBRO's rare species record.
- Violet helleborine (*Epipactis purpurata*) is uncommon, possibly rare, in Sussex, being found mainly in Kent, Surrey & the Chilterns. The SBRC species list contains only three sightings between 1982 – 2010, two of which are the specimens in New England Wood and the Millennium Wood.
- New England Wood contains 77 species of fungus. The site has been monitored at regular intervals from 1988 to the present by Dr Margaret Pilkington, an authority on the subject. This number is greatly in excess of the number listed by the Sussex Biodiversity Centre.
- Great crested newts were identified in Parkland Pond by the ecology assessors monitoring a proposed development site in the south of the strategic gap. They are also present - & have been for many years – in privately owned ponds bordering Cuckfield churchyard.
- Colin Pratt, County Recorder of Moths for East and West Sussex has recently published his 3-volume *Complete History of Butterflies & Moths of Sussex*. Even a cursory reading of his tables of sightings and records of moths in Mid Sussex shows that since 2000 there has been a decline in most species of moths recorded in the district.

5.2 Birds

SBRC Bird inventory & Breeding Bird Survey (BBS)

There are no records specific to the Cuckfield area, other than records kept by local observers, for example by the Millennium Wood (recording group) and New England Wood (Helen Crabtree – breeding sites).

Key to the lists following:

- * Birds marked with an asterisk have been seen and recorded by observers in Millennium Wood 2010 & 2011
- + Birds so marked have been noted in New England Wood (where normally only breeding records are kept). In 2006 the British Trust for Ornithology recorded only ten active Marsh tit nests in England, of which two were in New England Wood.
- ^ Birds so marked are recorded by bird watchers in and around the village, most notably (a) on a wildlife map, now in Cuckfield Museum, compiled in 1990 by M Eade - this map noted a 'hot spot' for birds, including 4 red listed species, in the fields to the west & south west of Warden Park school (530700/124250); and (b) over a 4-year period 2007-2010 by birdwatchers observing the copse & fields immediately north of Chatfield Road (currently a development site).

BBS Sussex population trends 1994-2010

Red listed: Skylark[^], Song Thrush[^], Starling^{*^}, House sparrow^{*^}, Yellowhammer[^].
Of these, Skylarks and Yellowhammers have declined significantly since 1994. *See also paragraph 3.10.1 (d) below.*

Amber listed: Mallard, Green woodpecker^{*^}, Swallow^{*}, Dunnock[^], Whitethroat^{*^}

SBRC Report – Birds Of Field & Woodland

Red listed: Turtle dove^{*}, Cuckoo^{*+}, Lesser spotted woodpecker[^], Skylark[^], Song thrush^{*^}, Redwing[^], Willow tit[^], Marsh tit^{*+^}, Spotted flycatcher[^], Starling^{*^}, House sparrow^{*^}, Linnet[^], Lesser Redpoll[^], Yellowhammer[^], Corn bunting[^]

Amber listed: Kestrel^{*+^}, Merlin, Barn Owl, Swift^{*}, Kingfisher, Green Woodpecker^{*+^}, Swallow^{*}, Meadow pipit[^], Grey wagtail, Whitethroat^{*}, Mistle thrush, Willow warbler^{*}, Firecrest, Bullfinch^{*^}.

To be noted additionally:

- In 2012 a Hen Harrier was seen repeatedly in Cuckfield churchyard and the fields immediately surrounding it.
- In May 2012 nightingales (amber listed) were heard in the Millennium Wood and Blunts Wood by Phil Haskell, the Warden of Buchan Country Park. It is some years since they were last recorded around Cuckfield. Nightingales are known only in south-east and south-central England. Their numbers declined by 40% during the 1990s, and the decline has continued in the first decade of this century.

5.3 Butterflies

Butterflies are an important indicator species.

Butterfly Conservation and the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology.

Their report for the ten year period to 2010, based on a survey of 59 species, reports a decline in 72% of species throughout the country. The population of species considered common and widespread fell by 24%.

Butterflies in the Cuckfield area: Michael Blencowe's report, February 2012.

Michael Blencowe is a butterfly expert and author of national standing with an especially authoritative knowledge of butterflies in Sussex, being Vice-chairman of Sussex Butterfly Conservation (SBC). His report on the Cuckfield area is as follows: 'Over the past two years (2010-11) SBC has been undertaking a major survey of the distribution of butterflies in Sussex. As co-ordinator of this work I am able to give you a list of the species which we currently know occur in the Cuckfield area – around the TQ3024 square (*the full list with Blencowe's comments on rarities can be attached as an Appendix if desirable*). Our data shows that the area holds a rich and varied butterfly fauna of 28 known species* (*see note following list for two additions*). This represents a good number of butterflies for a non-downland site in Sussex. Most of these species you would expect to find in the wider countryside, but the list also includes a number of species of special interest.'

The list is as follows: (*UK BAP = UK Biodiversity Action Plan*)

Brimstone	Brown Hairstreak (UK BAP priority species)
Clouded yellow	Comma
Common Blue	Gatekeeper
Green Hairstreak	Green-veined White
Holly Blue	Grizzled Skipper (UK BAP priority species)
Large Skipper	Large White
Marbled White	

(missing when area surveyed 1990-94, but now present. Needs strips of grassland, verges, field margins, woodland clearings)

Meadow Brown	Orange-tip
Painted Lady	Peacock
Purple Hairstreak	Purple Emperor (UK BAP priority species)
Red Admiral	Ringlet
Small Copper	Small Heath (UK BAP priority species)
Small Skipper	Small Tortoiseshell
Small White	Speckled Wood
White Admiral	(UK BAP priority species)

N.B. Two additions to Blencowe's list have been seen and recorded in the Cuckfield area in the past two years, and have been given to him following his report: Silver-washed Fritillary (frequent in New England Wood and noted in Millennium Wood); and Dark Green Fritillary, photographed in Millennium Wood in 2010 and identified by Neil Hulme, Chairman of Sussex Butterfly Conservation

The Blencowe report also notes that two species that were present in the 1990-94 survey are missing from the current one, the Essex Skipper and the Dingy Skipper, the latter being a UK BAP priority species. In Sussex it is to be found in woodland rides and clearings, and at the ends of woodland, so the Cuckfield area should be ideal for its restoration.

Blunts And Paiges Woods Meadows.

Records only kept for the five years 2007-2011, covering 27 species. These cannot be regarded as adequate since butterfly numbers exhibit a fluctuating ‘sawtooth’ pattern and a minimum period of eight years is considered necessary for assessing trends. Nevertheless, the Blunts & Paige’s Woods meadows seem to be working according to this pattern, as a period of increase from 2007-2010 was followed by a slump back to 2007 levels in 2011. Two UK BAP butterflies are in the records – Brown Hairstreak and White Admiral. Marbled Whites (see Blencowe’s comment) are recorded in significant numbers (109 in 2010).

Millennium Wood.

Records of sightings have been kept only for 2010-2011, so again the evidence is unreliable. 24 species were recorded in 2010, and 26 in 2011, the additions in 2011 being brown and purple hairstreaks. However the rare Purple Emperor was present in both years in the same location, suggesting that it is breeding. In all three UK BAP priority species are on record here – Purple Emperor, White Admiral and Brown Hairstreak (including eggs). Marbled Whites are also present.

New England Wood.

After a gap of many years, and special work to restore the right conditions, White Admirals returned to this site in 2011 (UK BAP priority species.)

5.4 Environmental Stewardship High & Medium Priority Species.

(see Map 2.2).

The primary objectives of this DEFRA scheme, which is delivered by Natural England, are to:

- Conserve wildlife (biodiversity)
- Maintain & enhance landscape quality & character
- Protect the historic environment
- Protect water & soil resources
- Promote public access & understanding of the countryside.
- High & Medium Priority Species In Local ELS Stewardship Schemes.
- As map 2 in section 2.1 shows, there are various levels of entry, and a lot of the land around Cuckfield has been registered for the 5-year Entry Level of Stewardship (ELS). Within ELS, the Use of Farmland section denotes 4 endangered wildlife groupings, and indicates for each High, Medium and Low priority areas in different parts of the country. The land around Cuckfield is rated High Priority for –
- Butterflies, bees and vulnerable grassland (see Map 2.7)
- Bats & dormice –

- and as Medium Priority in the two other categories –
- Dragonflies, water voles, newts and toads;
- Important populations of 10 most wanted bird species, these being grey partridge, lapwing, turtle dove, yellow wagtail, tree sparrow*, corn bunting*, skylark, linnet*, yellowhammer & reed bunting. (The three marked * are recorded by M Eade as present in the area in 1990)

5.5 Bats in The Local Area.

- The SBRC report confirms the presence of Noctule, Serotine, Pipistrelle and Brown long-eared bats in the area.
- On 14th May 2011, the Sussex Bat group monitored the Millennium Wood and recorded the presence of Common pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle, Long-eared, Noctule and Serotine bats.
- Blunts and Paiges Woods have been monitored by the Sussex Bat group and recorded Daubenton, Common pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle, Long-eared, Noctules and Serotine bats.
- Common pipistrelle are present in the New England Wood records of 1981-1993.

5.6 Dormice In the Area.

- There are few official records of dormice, other than in the strip of species-rich hedgerow to the immediate north-west of the Bylanes development site.
- There is rich evidence of dormice from householders with gardens backing onto Penland and Blunts Woods. They have been observed in these gardens and in one instance a cat brought a dormouse indoors. The householder called the wildlife rescue group from East Grinstead and the dormouse in question is now part of a breeding project at a local zoo. Dormice boxes were put up in Blunts and Paiges Woods LNR in 2011. The results have not yet been properly assessed by a licensed dormouse handler, but he has found evidence of dormouse droppings on the site.
- Dormice boxes were installed in New England Wood in the summer of 2011, but again no results are yet available. The habitat is right for dormice, and they are present in the species list observed and compiled between 1981 and 1993.

5.7 Dragonflies in the Area.

- The Millennium Wood records of 2010 & 2011 record Golden-ringed (*Cordulegaster boltonii*), Emperor (*Anax imperator*), Broad-bodied chaser (*Libellula depressa*), Brown Hawker (*Aeshna grandis*), Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*), Migrant Hawker (*Aeshna mixta*), Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*) and Scarce Chaser

(f) (*Libellula fulva*). The last-named occurs only sporadically in West Sussex, and is not recorded at all in East Sussex.

- Emperor dragonflies have been noted in Blunts and Paiges Woods LNR and on 21/05/11 two Scarce Chasers (f) were seen and photographed in North Meadow.
- The SBRC report listed 13 species of dragonfly recorded in the area around Cuckfield. These are all the above seven, plus Large red damselfly (*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*), Blue-tailed damselfly (*Ischnura elegans*), Common blue damselfly (*Enallagma cyathigerum*), Azure damselfly (*Coenagrion puella*), Indet dragon/damselfly (*Odonata*) & Banded demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*).
- The New England Wood records 1981-1993 record two species – Broad-bodied chaser and Brown Hawker.
- Butterflies, Bees & Pollinating Invertebrates (See Map 7).
- DEFRA's White Paper, *The Natural Choice*, provides the following national statistics:
 - 84% of our crops are dependent on pollination;
 - The annual value of pollination to the UK is £440 million;
 - In the last 20-year period 38% more crops dependent on pollination;
 - In the same 20-year period there has been a 54% decline in bee numbers.
- Recently published research by the University of Reading confirms point (d) above – a 54% decline in UK bee numbers – and compared this to an average 20% decline across the rest of Europe.
- English Nature reported in 2002 that 97% of English wildflower meadows, on which pollinating insects depend, have been lost.
- The above was corroborated by the *Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat Descriptions* (2008) which reported that unimproved neutral grassland habitat had declined by 97% in the 50-year period 1934-1984, by which time only 200,000 ha remained; and that in the years since the decline had continued at a rate (depending on locality) between 2% and 10%.
- The Invertebrate Conservation Trust reported in 2010 that since WWII the UK has lost over 3 million hectares of wildflower-rich habitat, and wildlife farming schemes have succeeded in restoring only 6,500 hectares. The Trust further noted that livestock diet is improved, and methane emissions reduced, on unimproved grassland, which has the additional benefit of locking up CO₂.
- In the High Weald 95% of wildflower meadows have been lost in the last 50 years (Source: Weald Meadows Initiative report 2009-2011).

- Well over 90% of the world's known phosphate resources have already been mined. Farmers need phosphate, but we are running out.
- It will be seen from the above that it is a matter of national importance, verging on emergency, that the severe decline in the quality of meadowlands is reversed.
- It should be noted that many fields immediately around Cuckfield are in poor condition, many of them semi-improved neutral or acid grassland and therefore rich in nutrients. This is bad for pollinating insects and wild flowers. The latter thrive on unimproved meadowland where nutrients have leached from the ground; the larvae of the former cannot feed on the cellulose in the grasses.
- However the fields immediately south of Hanlye Lane and west of Court Meadow/Horsgate House are more promising. Square metre transects examined in May, June & July 2012 showed 16 species of flora present in parts of the area. 15 are needed as the foundation for species-rich restoration and since there will probably be late-summer species yet to come through this figure may be exceeded further. (*Illness prevented a late summer transect being taken*).
- Unimproved grasslands, if managed through correctly timed grazing and cutting, can be returned to rich wildlife habitats with more than 100 plant species in a single field. The meadows of Paiges Wood LNR, and the rides in the Millennium Wood (proposed SNCI, where 79 flora species are recorded to date) are testimony to what is possible, and the fields immediately south of Hanlye Lane, mentioned in the previous paragraph, could probably be brought to a similar pitch.
- The WMI (Weald Meadows Initiative) is run to help farmers develop wildflower-rich meadows, backed by the High Weald Landscape Trust funded by the Nineveh Charitable Trust.
- One of the aspiration to draw this Initiative into the LNP (Local Nature Partnership) it seeks to benefit the area.
- Economic benefits can be garnered from well managed unimproved grasslands under agri-environment initiatives – e.g. the harvesting, sale and marketing of grassland products such as wildflower and grassland seed and hay; plant extracts can be obtained for natural oils, cosmetics, medication and alimentation.

6 SWOT Analysis

The following is a summary of the Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity and Threats for the village and surrounding area;

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Patchwork of Ancient Ghyll Woodlands around village * High Weald AONB wraps around W & N of village * Proximity of 3 nature reserves (2 LNR & one privately owned & managed by village) 2 SNCIs and a Provisional SNCI * Watershed of Ouse and Adur rivers – there -fore many springs & drainage channels around village * High proportion of DEFRA ELS land to N, W and S of Cuckfield * Rich network of footpaths through & round village connecting to 2 long distance paths * The area is rich in species, inc 3 plants & several invertebrates that are rare locally or nationally and including dormice. * Lower Ouse Watershed Biodiversity Opportunity Area to west of village. * Open Area between two urbanised areas, preventing coalescence, providing crucial green space with health, leisure, education and tourism opportunity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * No DEFRA ELS land in east of village. * Disappearance of species-rich meadows around village, thus making essential restoration more demanding * national danger of decline in pollinating insect numbers * Fragmented land ownership to the east of the village * Developers already own considerable land bank surrounding village * Intentions of other local landowners not yet clear

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Maximise green space benefits for health, leisure & tourism development. * To establish a wildlife field craft centre in at Horsgate Hse for youth education and public health; also information for walkers (tourism). * Develop a Local Nature Partnership with local District & Town Councils, Health, Authorities, Schools etc in order to create a Nature Improvement Area. * Exploit the need for green space and environmental restoration created by increasing urban and light industrial development proposed for the area. * Seek collaboration with selected local landowners to restore species-rich meadows and pollinating insects. * Seek collaboration to create corridors connecting ancient woodlands. * Create allotments for production of local produce; study possibility of community orchard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Threat of being engulfed by broad, N-S developed corridor resulting from ‘Gatwick Diamond’ and massive northward & westward expansion of Burgess Hill. * Continuing development of remaining Parish (& surrounding) open spaces. * Degradation of buffer zones around nature reserves and SNCIs, to the detriment of wildlife resulting from encroachment of further development. * Further decline in numbers of pollinating insects thus exacerbating grave national problem. * Further decline in number of red and amber listed bird species in mid Sussex.

7 Environmental Aspirations.

Note: For broad brush references to areas around Cuckfield the following names are adopted:

Ouse Valley – to N of village; north of Staplefield Road & Ardingly Rd/Hanlye Lane

Scrase Stream – to E of village, between Ardingly Rd/Hanlye Lane to N and Butlers Green Rd to S (i.e. the Local Gap)

Adur West – to W of village, between Staplefield Rd and A272 towards Ansty

Adur South – to S of village bounded by A272 on W and parish boundary to E.

7.1 Key to References Below.

NEA = *The National EcoSystem Assessment*

DEFRA-TNC = DEFRA's White Paper *The Natural Choice*

BIO20 = Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy (DEFRA)

NPPF = National Planning Policy Framework, as revised March 2012

ULLB = WSCC Environment & Climate Change Board's Action Plan *Using Less Living Better*

DP = Mid Sussex *District Plan & Sustainability Appraisal Consultation Document*

VDS = Cuckfield Village Design Statement

LNP = Local Nature Partnership

7.2 Framework within Which Our Aspirations are Formed.

The region as a whole faces the prospect of substantial development, represented by plans for both the Gatwick Diamond and a major commercial and housing development extending along the A2300 towards the upgraded A23. If there is to be the concentration of bricks and mortar that this implies it is imperative that commensurate care and attention is devoted to ensuring that the natural environment is provided for. To do otherwise would be to contradict the purpose stated by the Nagoya Convention & the *United Nations' Decade in Biodiversity*; and would fly in the face of the United Kingdom's NEA, TNC and Bio2020, not to mention the highly pertinent points made by West Sussex CC's ECC Board in ULLB.

The key points from these important national documents are laid out in Section 1 above. Accordingly the joint vision contained in the Neighbourhood Plans of both Cuckfield and Ansty & Staplefield Parishes foresees the necessity for a broad wildlife corridor sweeping east-north-east from the A23 passing both sides of both Ansty and Cuckfield on into the High Weald AONB towards Ardingly.

The intention of this Neighbourhood Plan is therefore:

- to follow the guidance provided by DEFRA-TNC and Bio20 (both 2011) for improving the quality of wildlife sites, and enhancing connections between sites through physical corridors and/or stepping stones,
- to contribute to Outcome 1D of Bio20's Mission Statement in restoring at least 15% of degraded ecosystems,
- in parallel to provide benefits for public health, education and tourism. In connection with these aims we note in particular that, according to the World Health Organisation, depression will be the second most prevalent form of ill health by 2020; that the cost to the NHS of an inactive lifestyle is reckoned to be £8million p.a.; that people with access to green space are 24% more active; and that 59% of children aspire to play more in natural areas.
- to seek LNPs with relevant local and regional bodies in the achievement of these objectives.

- to follow the aspirations of DP (8) and the VDS in preventing coalescence and retaining the separate identity and character of towns and villages; and in maintaining easily accessible green corridors and spaces...to act as wildlife corridors. This has the additional benefit of limiting the 'heat island' effect of urban surroundings.
- to follow the intentions of Cuckfield Parish Council and the VDS in maintaining the open Space between Cuckfield and Haywards Heath; preserving Cuckfield's unique historic landscape and characteristics within its boundaries.

There is an obvious and considerable overlap in these national and local intentions.

7.3 Cuckfield's Aspirations.

Bearing in mind the transformative developments proposed for the region as a whole – i.e. Gatwick Diamond, and the extension of Burgess Hill northward/westward to the A23(M) – we regard it as of critical importance to have the land between Haywards Heath & Cuckfield given a Green Space designation (DEFRA-TNC sections 2.80 and 4.23; NPPF 73-77). This would assist in achieving Cuckfield's aspirations:

- a) The enhancement of wildlife corridors passing either side of Cuckfield, and on into the High Weald AONB, by connecting the numerous pockets of existing ancient woodland (ghyll woodland in many cases) and species-rich hedgerows with shaws and rews; (ULLB & DP, Strategic Objective 4.)
- b) To press for a Green Belt designation north of the proposed Burgess Hill extension to prevent further urban sprawl in the future;
- c) The restoration of species-rich meadows to help in reversing the decline of pollinating insects (DEFRA-TNC). The ideal locations are the fields immediately south of Hanlye Lane and W & S of Horsgate House (map ref: 531200/125500), and immediately W of Warden Park school (530700/124300) the latter having the additional virtue of adjoining the small meadow where the Parish Council has recently been working to create a wildflower meadow. In time, products from such meadows can become a commercial proposition, the proceeds helping to fund the running costs of an environmental learning centre (see (e) below).
- d) To encourage local residents, especially those around the narrow waist of Cuckfield's hourglass shape, and where Courtmead Road and Broad Street meet, to enhance gardens attractive to pollinating insects and birds, thus acting as aerial corridors across the village;
- e) To establish in the **Scrase Stream** sector, east of Cuckfield, an environmental learning centre for the use of Mid Sussex schools, and public, to meet the aspirations of DEFRA-TNC & ULLB's Community Innovation), which stresses the need for an increase in children learning outdoors and in the ability of schools to teach outdoors (sections 1.26 & 4.14 – 4.20); *Note: we are unaware of any other such centre in Mid Sussex, the closest being in Pulborough (RSPB), Henfield (SWT) and Exeat, Seven Sisters.*

- f) To take advantage of the wealth of footpaths in and around Cuckfield, and connecting directly to two long-distance trails, to promote simultaneously tourism and public health (DEFRA-TNC sections 1.26 – 1.30 & 4.5 – 4.13; also DP Strategic Objectives 10 & 14)). The environmental learning centre will, of course, be a major asset in this context;
- g) We would like to establish a second allotment and, although perhaps a little longer-term in prospect, a community orchard in **Adur South, Scrase Stream** or **Ouse Valley**. Annual rentals from the allotment could contribute to running costs of the environmental learning centre, and the produce from an orchard could be sold in Cuckfield's successful monthly Food Market of Local Produce established in 2009.

7.4 Actions Necessary to Achieve 4.2.

Pursue discussions with –

- local landowners;
- local businesses, such as Ockenden Manor & Borde Hill;
- local government, public health and educational bodies;
- Sussex Wildlife Trust, the Bee Unit at Sussex University, The Weald meadows Initiative and/or similar bodies.

7.5 Objectives.

- To acquire a Green Space designation for Scrase Stream and Adur South as expressly allowed in the revised NPPF of March 2012.

8 Conclusions

Cuckfield has a rich diversity of flora and fauna surrounding the built up area, which is a significant characteristic of the village.

