

**The Parish of Froxfield  
Local Landscape Character  
Assessment 2011**



*“A High Land of Clay and Flint”*

*Edward Thomas*

# Foreword

In mid-2010 the Froxfield Parish Council (FPC) asked if a team of volunteers could be formed to produce a Local Landscape Character Assessment (LLCA) for the parish of Froxfield. Twenty local residents came forward to carry out this task and the project was launched at a meeting of the team on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2010. Representatives of the Froxfield Parish Council, East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) and Hampshire County Council (HCC) attended the meeting. A request from HCC for Froxfield's process, together with this LLCA document to be included as part of their project to develop a new HCC toolkit for use by any Hampshire parish, was approved.

As most of the preparatory work had already been done, the field-work began straight away. Due to the size of the parish, it was divided into seven roughly similar sized areas with two or three team members allocated to each. Their task was to produce detailed reports on the landscapes within their areas. All teams had copies of the CPRE toolkit "Unlocking the landscape" to use with discretion to diverge from it, if they so wished. The field work also involved considerable contact and consultation with the residents of each area through meetings, interviews and by inviting comments on emerging reports at each stage of drafting.

After acceptance by the full team in May 2011 the area reports were bound and are available if required as appendices 1 – 7 of this LLCA. These reports and a comprehensive photographic display were available for inspection and discussion at the June 2011 Froxfield Fete and over 80 local people visited the stand and expressed an interest during the day.

A small editorial group was formed in mid May 2011 to prepare the Froxfield LLCA. A very successful Community Outreach Day was held on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2011 attended by over 90 local residents and representatives from EHDC, HCC and SDNPA. The second draft of the full report was available as part of the displays, as were the area reports. Copies of "The Key Issues for the Parish" section of the draft LLCA were given to all attendees to provide background information for four parish walks, organised and led by LLCA team members. On their return to the village hall and following an enjoyable light lunch, discussions took place, first within each walk group and then with all groups, to consider the observations arising from the walks. Over 40 completed questionnaires were handed in containing further comments and observations. A significant number of these contained a request to attend the Evaluation meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

The Evaluation meeting was also well attended. The draft LLCA was discussed in detail and a number of amendments were accepted. The final draft was approved by the full LLCA team on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2011 and the completed Assessment was then approved by the FPC on 8<sup>th</sup> September. The FPC now has custody of the LLCA and will monitor and pursue the "Key Issues".

There are 912 residents in the parish of whom approximately 150 are of school age. The majority of these have been involved in the process of producing the LLCA through the close consultations during the production process of the seven area reports (which are appendices to this Assessment); by attending the three special events during the later stages, and a host of individual and small group discussions. We thank them all for their enthusiastic support demonstrating so clearly how much they value our landscapes. Considerable help and information was also received from the FPC, our farming community and the Historical Society. We would like to thank SDNPA, HCC, EHDC and CPRE (Hampshire) for their support and participation.

The Coalition Government's draft National Planning Policy Framework was published for consultation when our LLCA was nearing completion. There is, therefore, some uncertainty about the future of local planning. We hope that this LLCA will be adopted as an input for SDNPA's Management Plan and Local Development Framework and will also influence the development of policies by the EHDC. We understand it will be adopted as an input for HCC's toolkit project and be a reference for FPC's proposed Parish Plan.

# The Parish of Froxfield – Introduction



The parish covers some ten square miles of countryside to the north west of Petersfield and includes the villages of Froxfield and Privett. The ground rises from around 550ft at its western boundary, the A32, to 825ft at Warren Corner in the north east. The whole parish is well above the level of the surrounding areas and has many far-reaching and panoramic views. Most of its northern, eastern and southern boundaries drop steeply over an escarpment, covered by magnificent hanger woodlands. In addition to the external views, there are many much admired long views within it (see centrefold map).

Most of the parish lies within the Froxfield Clay Plateau. The beautiful, gently undulating landscape is predominantly farmland with a mosaic of pasture, arable fields and woodland blocks. Settlements are sparse and small in scale with little traffic on many of the forty five miles of country roads and lanes. It is an area of considerable ecological and historic interest and abundant wildlife. Several parts of it have wildlife designations or are protected historic sites. There is a strong sense of quiet remoteness and tranquillity.

In 1962, the whole parish was included in the East Hampshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is now in the South Downs National Park. Froxfield Green and parts of Privett are also designated as Conservation Areas in view of their architectural and historic interest.

The parish provides residents and visitors with a beautiful landscape, a series of fine views and an attractive range of quiet recreational activities.

## **Aim of the Froxfield Local Landscape Character Assessment**

This document aims to provide a detailed record of the special qualities and distinctive landscape features which are important to our local people and to help decision makers when they are considering changes affecting the landscape.

# The Importance of Our Local Landscapes for Us

Our landscapes give value:

- by providing the setting for our major economic activity ie, farming, and attracting many small businesses now established in ex-farm buildings. They have the potential to provide further economic activity especially relating to tourism;
- by providing an important sense of well-being, inspiration and pride within the community;
- by providing the setting for the historical roots of the parish;
- by providing a significant environmental haven for wildlife.

These factors are vital in identifying the special features in the parish which give a distinctive “sense of place” and can contribute key information to help inform the Management Plan and planning policies of the SDNPA. They will also help to ensure that individual planning decisions maintain local distinctiveness.

This LLCA has attempted to capture the features of our parish which make it so special for its inhabitants. We hope that it will:

- add more depth and individual details to the East Hampshire District Landscape Character Assessments;
- provide local material for the SDNPA Management Plan and planning policies;
- provide local views in a consistent and well informed way for when planning applications (and other proposals which may change the landscape) are considered;
- help to raise awareness of – and pride in – our local landscapes.

*“A high land of clay and flint  
with the feeling of somewhere  
different”*

The countryside within the parish of Froxfield includes two distinct landscape character areas which are classified and described in the East Hampshire District Landscape Character Assessments:

1. The Froxfield Clay Plateau, which covers the whole of the parish other than a small part of the southwest boundary.
2. The Bereleigh Downland Mosaic, which includes the southwest slopes of the parish – from Filmore Hill in the west to just before Petersfield Lodge in the east.

The descriptions, key sensitivities and future considerations identified by the East Hampshire District Landscape Character Assessments are reproduced with supplementary local comments (in green text) which amplify the assessments. Some relevant locations, relating to a number of the issues identified, are indicated on the map in the centre of this document.

The key issues for the parish are summarised at the end of the document. For completeness, it should be mentioned that the HCC has just produced Landscape Character Assessments (2011) of the East Hampshire Wooded Downland Plateau and of the Bighton and Bramdean Downs, which also relate to the Froxfield parish. The Hampshire County Integrated Character Assessment (2010) & the Privett and Froxfield Green Conservation Area Studies & Character Appraisals (June 2008 & 1982 respectively) are also relevant.



## Area 1: Froxfield Clay Plateau

### The East Hampshire District Landscape Character Assessment states:

“The Froxfield Clay Plateau is found on the elevated chalk upland of the Hampshire Downs. The extensive deposits of clay with flint that overlies the chalk result in poorer heavy soils. This gives rise to a landscape dominated by pasture and blocks of woodland with limited arable cropping, compared to the chalk downland. Fields are defined by woodland edges and hedgerows. Oak is dominant in woodland, hedgerows and as a hedgerow tree species.



There is evidence of more healthy vegetation occurring in relation to acidic soils with frequent growth of bracken in hedgerows”.

“This is a landscape of both openness and enclosure due to the variation in landform, field size and extent of hedgerow and woodland cover. Occasionally very long views in open, higher areas amplify the sense of remoteness. Elsewhere, tall hedgerows along roads and woodland blocks provide containment and enclosure. This is a simple landscape composed of few elements, farming is not overly intensive, settlements are few and small in scale and there is little traffic on the rural lanes. Overall this landscape has a strong sense of remoteness and stillness.”

“Key sensitivities include:

- Pockets of original pre-1800 (probably medieval) woodland which provides enclosure, biodiversity interest and textural contrast...
- Historic parkland landscapes, including the former medieval deer parks and 18<sup>th</sup> century designed landscapes at Basing Park and Broadhanger...
- Varied field patterns, including significant areas of assarts (e.g. at High Cross/Froxfield Green) and the presence of large areas of pasture managed by grazing.
- Low density of settlement and pattern of very small contained nucleated villages.
- Some long open views in higher areas which amplify the sense of remoteness.
- Strong rural, tranquil character arising from the simple landscape pattern, quiet roads and very low density of settlement.
- Views to church spires, as at Privett...
- Intact hedgerow network with hedgerow trees creating strong landscape pattern, seclusion and enclosure.”



## “Landscape Strategy and Guidelines

**The overall management objective should be to conserve the remote, quiet character of the landscape, formed by the pasture and woodland mosaic, quiet lanes and sparse settlement.”**

### “Landscape Management and Development Considerations include:

- Conserve the remnant features of the former medieval deer park at Basing and the 18<sup>th</sup> century designed landscapes and their settings...
- Encourage biodiversity enhancement within the parkland areas...
- Conserve the ancient woodland and linking hedgerow network and hedgerow trees...
- Encourage the reinstatement of woodland management by coppicing...
- Manage woodland to ensure a diverse (indigenous) species and age structure to minimise risk of damage as a result of increased storms and high winds...
- Seek to ensure that this remains as a predominantly pasture landscape managed by grazing...
- Conserve the diversity of field patterns and particularly the assarts.
- Conserve the numerous small field ponds...
- Conserve the very low density of settlement, quiet roads and rural lanes, and consequent deeply rural character and strong sense of remoteness and stillness...
- Conserve the small nucleated character of the villages centred around a church or green/pond and absence of larger or extended settlements.
- Ensure that new farm buildings and associated storage structures and working areas are sensitively sited and screened...
- Maintain open views across the higher plateau areas which contrast with the more enclosed areas...
- Avoid road ‘improvements’ and addition of signage that would alter the rural character of the quiet lanes. Control erosion of verges.

*“Spectacular sunsets and clear moonlit nights”*

**Supplementary local comments**, amplifying or adding to the East Hampshire District Landscape Character Assessment.

This is a mosaic landscape of different land use, generally in very good condition and blessed with many **magnificent views**. Froxfield village is the highest in Hampshire and the whole parish is well above surrounding areas. In 1857 Rev J Williams wrote “passing along the Ridge, we come to views which are scarcely to be surpassed”. This comment remains fitting today. Examples include the spectacular views from Privett to Cheesefoot Head, The Spinnaker Tower and the Isle of Wight and from Froxfield to Old Winchester Hill, Guildford Cathedral and the huge panorama of the South Downs with Chanctonbury Ring visible on a clear day.

Internally there are long and striking views throughout the parish which amplify the sense of remoteness such as those of the 160ft high spire of Privett Church widely visible for many miles, and the more homely spire of High Cross Church also widely visible.



The views of the parish from the surrounding areas are of open and undeveloped skylines and escarpments, heavily covered by fine hanger woodlands with their dramatically changing colours in spring and autumn.



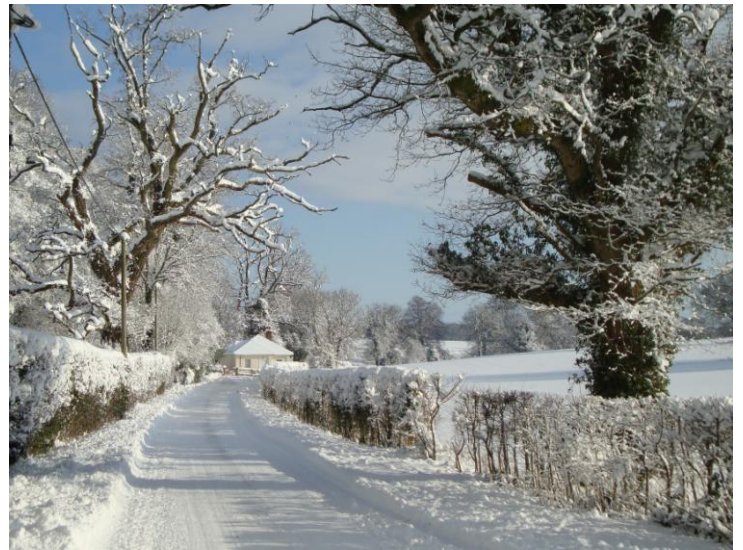
The famous WW1 poet, Edward Thomas, described Froxfield as “**the high land of clay and flint.**” So it is, but its **altitude** provides views of spectacular sunsets and sunrises, and the **exceptionally low level of light pollution** produces clear moonlit nights. Star gazing is a richly rewarding pastime.

Altitude is also an important factor in the special feel of place in the landscape. It is often cooler and spring arrives a little later, and driving up the winding road onto the plateau creates the feeling of coming to somewhere different, separated from the hustle and bustle of the surrounding low-lying areas.

In “normal” winters the sight of snow-blocked lanes here are often a total surprise to drivers as they come out of the thick beech woods onto an area of long and wide horizons.

- Conserve historic landscapes and their settings...
- Conserve views to church spires and their open settings which provide a point of reference in the landscape – of particular importance is the prominent and distinctive church spire at Privett.”

*“Lanes blocked with snow in normal winters”*



**Walking** through our tranquil, remote-feeling countryside is a constant pleasure with its unusual number of tracks and footpaths as well as its forty five miles of lanes, many with interesting historic origins. Many are also not convenient routes to anywhere else and are therefore little-used by traffic. They are well tended by the vigorous local **litter** picking organisation. With constantly changing external and internal views and the sound of birdsong, such walks can refresh the spirit.

Whilst the Froxfield and Privett areas of the parish share many characteristics, **Privett’s particular remoteness** and low population density (280), along with its parkland, field systems and predominantly arable farming, give it a subtly different sense of place.



The large numbers of **disused clay, flint and chalk pits** are now havens for wildlife and bio diversity. With their steep sides and rather secretive aspects, they are a special feature of the local landscape. So too are the many **ponds** – some in very good condition, some apparently overgrown but still very attractive to insects, amphibians and birds. Others have nearly disappeared because they no longer retain water. Relining or re-puddling is an expensive remedy.

The **woodland blocks and hedgerows** are also a beautiful characteristic of the landscape. There are a number of ancient semi-natural woodland sites (ASNWs), also classified as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) which are of considerable conservation interest. A half mile-long, woodland strip adjacent to Privett Church, contains an intermix of monkey puzzles and cedars, planted in the 1850s to form part of the main carriageway connecting Basing Park, the Church and the Petersfield Road.



The several hazel coppices are ideal for bluebells and are a glorious sight in the spring.

A half mile avenue of limes and maples, east of 27 Barnetside, is believed to have been planted by Canadian soldiers during WW1. Well maintained hedges surround most of the fields and trees, mainly oak, but also ash, hazel and holly often grow to full size within them. A number, primarily older oaks, are dying.



Many hedgerows and their adjacent verges contain a wide variety of species and some have locally important roadside flora. They give much pleasure and provide a record of land use and development over the past few hundred years. They are of increasing importance as linear wildlife reserves. After losing many hedges between the 1970s and 1990s it is encouraging to see the extent of current replanting.

Some residents greatly admire solitary trees in fields and it is good to see more being planted, particularly in the parkland area of Basing Park which is one of the very few ancient parklands in the south of England. On moonlit nights the trees' silhouettes, framed against the undulating landscape, are a spectacular sight.





In several places the excessive number of low voltage **power cables and poles** are blighting the landscape and spoiling views. An unsightly line of **high voltage pylons** crosses the landscape from north to south, totally out of keeping.

In recent years items which are locally regarded as undesirable **urbanisation creep** have appeared including orange street lights, kerbing, pavements and inappropriate and intrusive road signs with no apparent useful purpose or road safety improvement.

Our residents understand but regret the **decline in livestock farming**; there is just one milking herd left in the parish.

*“Farmers are the custodians of our landscapes – we must support them”*

However there is also agreement that our **major landowners and farmers** are firmly committed to preserving the beauty of our landscape and its wildlife. Our one mixed farm is also mainly organic and its lush pastures, rich in clover, wild flowers and birdsong give us real pleasure. It is hoped that the current shrinking margins affecting organic farming will improve soon. There is much appreciation, too, of the naturalistic and beautifully maintained 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape at Basing Park. A short distance to the east is Coles, with its magnificent post WWII garden created from twenty five acres of managed woodland. There is a stunning display of flowering rhododendrons, azaleas and bluebells in the spring and beautiful lawns lead down to a tranquil Japanese pond. It is a habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. The current owners open it biannually for charity.



It is agreed that the parkland landscape at Broadhanger should be conserved. Another attractive parkland landscape – now organic grazing pasture – stretches eastwards from The Slade, parts of which date from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. It was the residence of the Silvester family from the reign of King Henry VIII until 1928 when the family died out.



**Most of our landscape is farmed and farming is vital to it.** The soil quality and topography of the land at the eastern end of the parish means that there is little likelihood of its grazing pasture being changed. However the western end of the parish is now largely arable.



**Many factors could affect our farmers in the near future** such as the need for more food to be produced to improve food security, more crops relating to the fuel industry and the possibility of tensions within the National Park about landscape protection, access to visitors and the modern infrastructure needs of farmers now operating in a very complex market.

There will clearly be much discussion on such matters and the likely outcomes are far from clear at the moment. We can only wait and see, but we must also do all we can to provide practical help to our farmers. Our newly started Village Market and the Froxfield shop's policy of stocking more locally produced food are two current initiatives.



The parish has always been an oasis of **tranquillity** despite the proximity of the A3, A272 and A32. However the **noise levels** from these roads are sweeping further into adjacent countryside as traffic volume and noise steadily increase. The noise and dangers of motor cycles on the A32, A272 and C18 are both intrusive and worrying, especially to those who live in the west and south of the parish. Increased heavy goods vehicle traffic throughout especially on the C18 despite a weight limit is also of major concern. Off- road vehicles (4 x 4s) and bikes also visit unmade tracks in the parish. Their activity is both noisy and can be damaging to ancient tracks too. Controls need to be considered.



The other worrying noise problem affecting many people in the parish comes from the Colemore Airstrip just to the north of the Privett/Colemore boundary. In 2008 the Hampshire Microlight Flying Club (HMFC) which had used the grass strip for a number of years applied for and was granted (despite considerable local opposition) a Certificate of Lawful Use (CLU) in 2009. This has led to a substantial increase in flying activity from the strip, mainly by microlights and single-engined light aircraft. As a result noise and danger levels have significantly increased, especially in those areas which lie directly in the landing/take off flight paths. It is a serious intrusion into what is otherwise an area of great privacy, peace and tranquillity, and is a matter of considerable concern for the future unless effective controls can be introduced.



*“45 miles of lanes,  
many historic and several little  
used by traffic”*



The parish's narrow, attractive lanes follow natural bends within the landscape and many of them are bounded by **wide soft grass verges and hedgerows** with an abundance of wild flora and fauna. They provide important corridors for plant and animal movement.

Some of the lanes are sunken providing a strong sense of enclosure. The one which runs from Spitals Cross to High Cross is particularly deep cut and winding with hazel hedges set above the bank which teem with dog roses and honeysuckle in summer. Sadly the verges of many lanes are increasingly being eroded as vehicles drive on them to avoid oncoming traffic. Coupled with the general increase in the size of commercial vehicles this is a major worry as the resulting trenches and potholes are dangerous eyesores and take more than a season to repair.

Most of the buildings in the **settlements of the parish are well hidden** from view, both from long distances and approach routes. This includes the modern Dellfield and Deans Dell developments at High Cross which nestle well into the landscape despite the unsympathetic 1970s design of Dellfield.

The parish provides **excellent horse riding country** and the number of paddocks, stables etc has inevitably increased over the years. There is concern about their impact on the rural landscape and the associated loss of agricultural land. However, the sight of horses grazing well-tended areas can be an attractive part of the rural scene and offsets to some extent the near total loss of grazing milking herds and the consequent change of pasture to arable fields. It is important, however, that owners do their best to ensure that 'equestrian clutter' does not mar the landscape.

Of major concern is the recent discovery that, under a 2008 Amendment to the Town & Country Planning Act, extensive alterations and extensions to buildings can take place even within conservation areas and national parks under the title of **'permitted development'**. This means that planning authorities (in our case the EHDC and SDNPA) have lost much of their previous ability to protect local communities from inappropriate development, and that local communities have lost their right to be notified and consulted in advance of such development being carried out.

*“Overall objective should be to conserve the remote, tranquil character of the landscape with quiet lanes and sparse settlement”*



## Area 2 : Bereleigh Downland Mosaic



### **The East Hampshire District Bereleigh Downland Mosaic Landscape Character Assessment** states:

“The character area comprises a small area on the western edge of East Hampshire District, extending westwards beyond the district as part of the South Downs. A reduction in the extent of clay which caps the chalk distinguishes this area from the adjacent *Clay Plateau* landscape. To the south this area joins the steep scarp of the *Selborne Hangers to East Meon Scarp* and defines the upper edge of the Meon Valley.

The surface clay capping in this character area results in a high proportion of woodland cover which contributes to an enclosed character – the whole area is therefore defined as an ‘enclosed’ sub type. The character area is wholly within the South Downs National Park.”

*“Much local talent and commitment available for specific community task groups”*



**“Key Landscape and Visual Sensitivities** include:

- The areas of ancient woodland...
- The areas of early assarted enclosures with thick hedgerows and significant tracts of ancient woodland.
- The strong rural, secluded character arising from the low density of dispersed settlement.
- The views across the Meon Valley.
- The deciduous woodland, particularly that of ancient origin, and the well-developed hedgerow network which provides unity and biodiversity value.

The presence of trees and woodland limits visual sensitivity of the landscape. The prominent open ridges and hills are the most visually sensitive part of the landscape. The higher land of the hills permits views to and from adjacent landscapes – this landscape is therefore also visually sensitive to changes beyond its boundary.”



## **“Landscape Strategy and Guidelines**

**The overall management objective should be to maintain the strong rural, secluded character of this area and conserve the mosaic of farmland and ancient woodland.”**

**Supplementary local comments**, amplifying the East Hampshire District Landscape Character Assessment.

The area of the parish which lies within the Bereleigh Downland Mosaic is limited to the gently sloping farmland in the south west corner of Privett. From its north west corner (where Policeman’s Lane joins the A32) its boundary runs south down the A32 to the western edge of the field immediately behind the West Meon Hut. East along the A272 until just before Petersfield Lodge, north west just to the south of Privett Church and to the south also of Bailey Green, before reaching the A32 just north of Filmore Hill.

Essentially the whole area is part of two farms - Stocks Farm and Church Farm. There is little pasture now and both farms have given up dairy farming in the past thirty or so years and are now entirely arable. With the best quality soil in the parish they are intensely cropped and very well kept. Church Farm’s dairy barns were sensitively converted into houses about fifteen years ago. Some of Stocks Farm’s outbuildings have also been converted into houses and a new farmhouse built, which has a stylish staddle-stoned B & B building in the garden.

This is an area of **very large arable fields** bordered by low hedgerows increasing the sense of scale, whilst the heavier soils on the crest of the southwards slope create a **more enclosed landscape** with a succession of small woodlands, copses and wooded strips.

Dick’s Copse, just south of Privett Church, is classified as an **ancient semi natural woodland** and also as a SINC reflecting its biodiversity importance. It has 103 species of flowering plants, of which 32 are ancient woodland indicator species. One of these is the locally rare green helleborine.

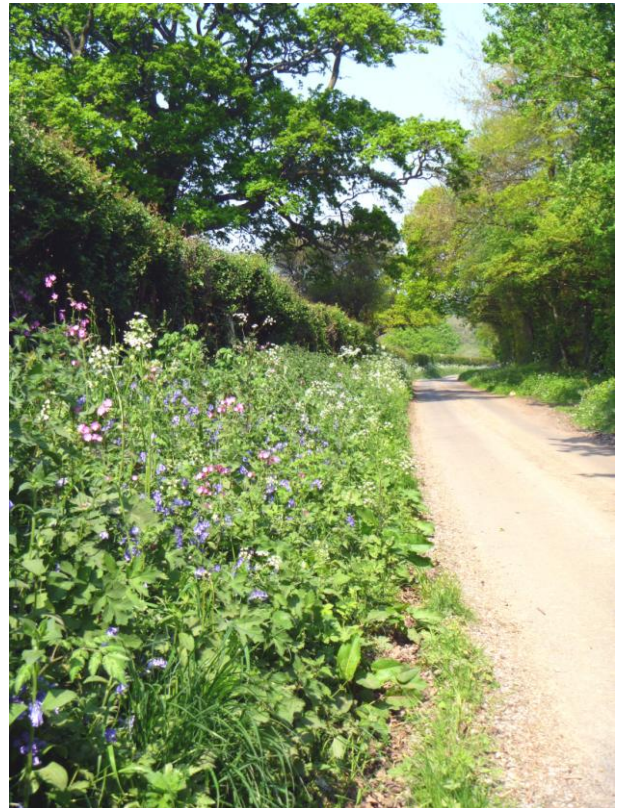
The old disused railway embankment going down towards the A272 was created from soil excavated when the 1000 yard long Privett Railway Tunnel was built in 1903. It is now being managed for the **conservation** of various species, especially butterflies because of the high content of chalk close to the surface which is the natural habitat for many of the species.

This is an area of **fine southerly views**, particularly from Church Farm, towards Butser Hill, five miles to the south east and over Bereleigh Estate to the south.

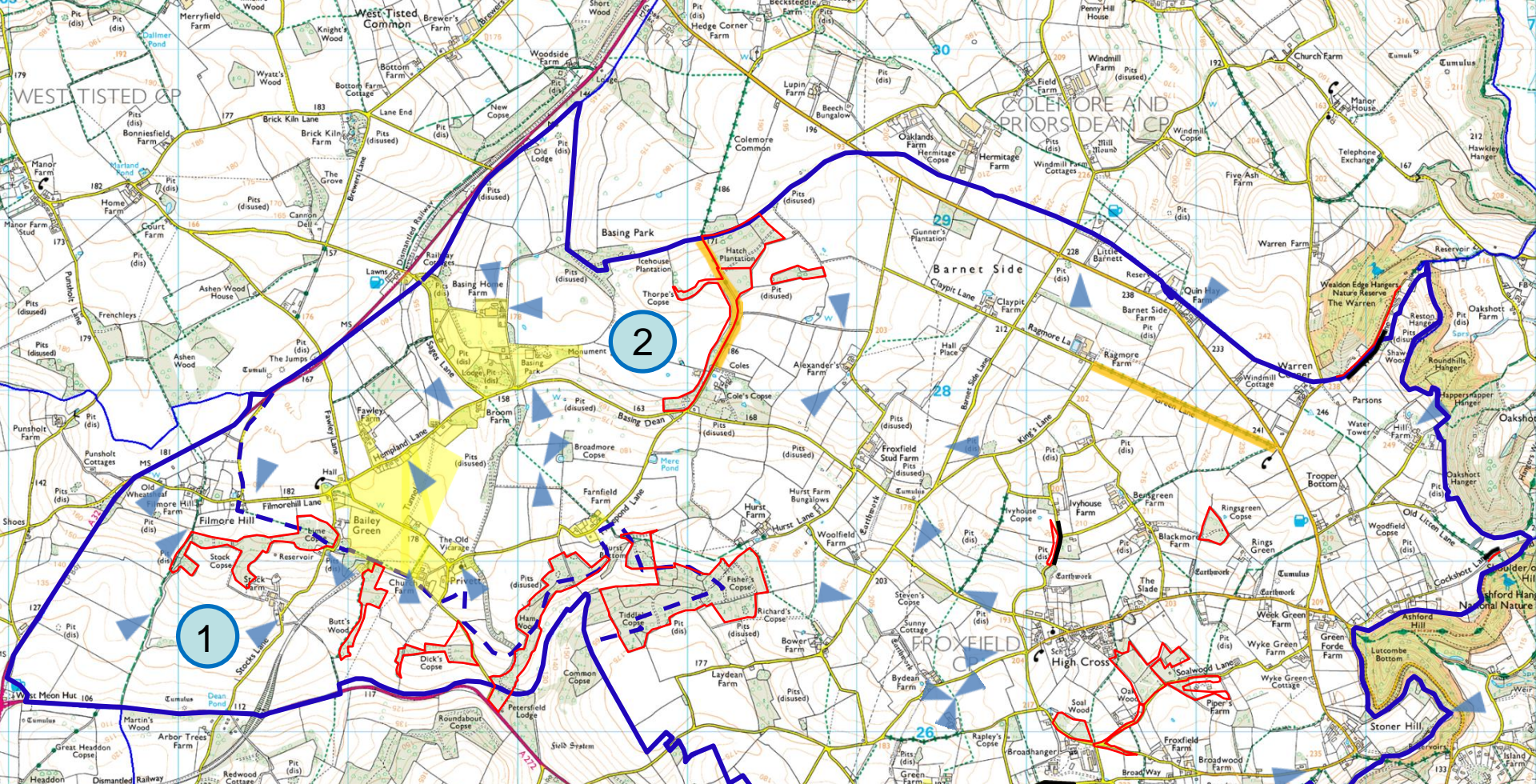
**“Landscape Management and Development Considerations** include:

- Conserve the areas of early assarted -enclosures and ancient woodland that are an important component of the historic landscape.
- Manage natural regeneration and manage woodland to ensure a diverse (indigenous) species and age structure...
- Support the conversion of arable land to species rich chalk grassland...
- Maintain and increase the species diversity of areas of semi-improved grassland...
- Encourage re-introduction of traditional woodland management techniques...
- Conserve and manage the intact hedgerow network with hedgerow trees which are of biodiversity interest...
- Promote appropriate management of arable farmland to create a wildlife-rich habitat supporting farmland birds...
- Avoid road ‘improvements’ that would alter the rural character of the unmarked lanes.
- Seek to ensure any development does not adversely affect the deeply rural character of this area.
- Encourage sympathetic re-use of traditional farm buildings...
- Consider views across the Meon Valley in relation to any change in this and adjacent landscapes.
- Conserve the low density of settlement consisting of dispersed farms and houses, which gives this landscape its strong rural, secluded character. Use of a consistent palette of building materials (flint, red brick and clay tiles) will conserve a unity in built form across the landscape.
- Maintain clear, undeveloped ridges and skylines. Seek opportunities to reduce the visual impact of existing visually intrusive elements on the downs such as prominent electricity pylons.
- Use existing woodland and planting to integrate any changes in the landscape.
- Conserve the rural setting and views along the A272.”

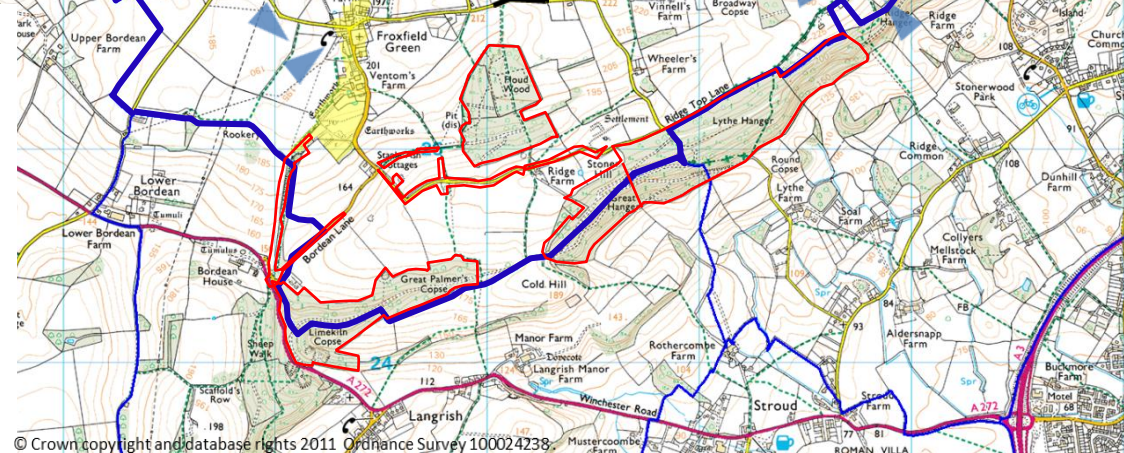
A **fly tipping** spotting exercise has been on-going for some months in this part of East Hampshire, with the aims of measuring the extent of what could be a growing problem and strengthening the case for increased Government interest.



*“Tranquillity threatened by noise from nearby A roads, light aircraft, off-road vehicles and motorbikes”*



- 1 Bereleigh Downland Mosaic
- 2 Froxfield Clay Plateau
- Road Verges of Ecological Importance (RVEI)
- Ancient Tracks being damaged by motorised recreation
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)  
Typically Ancient Woodlands. Further details at Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HCC)
- ▶ Notable Views
- Conservation Area





## Other Local Characteristics...

### *Settlements and Buildings*

The parish comprises several small nucleated settlements and many dispersed and isolated farmsteads, most of which no longer have any connection with farming. Many houses are of architectural or historic interest and some of the settlements date from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

For many centuries – it was first mentioned in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century – Froxfield Green (below) was the centre of Froxfield with a medieval church built on the site of an earlier Saxon church. However in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century a new road, which is now the A272, and also another new road up Stoner Hill, were built which led to the main focus of the village moving to High Cross. Froxfield Green slowly declined and none of the houses now around the Green are older than 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Four of them are listed, as is the church, built in 1887, along with three of the table tombs in the ancient churchyard. The two yews there are over a thousand years old. Froxfield Green was designated a Conservation Area in 1982.



The Stoner Hill settlement was first recorded in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and there are records of medieval settlement at Week Green Farmhouse and also at Stoner Hill Farm. The name of Wyke Green Farm can be traced back to 1209 and Spencer's Cottage could date back to 1490. Like Froxfield Green, Stoner Hill also declined in importance and activity as the building of the new road up Stoner Hill meant that the Alton to Petersfield turnpike no longer ran through the settlement.

High Cross was a very small settlement until the new parish church was built there in 1861/62 following the demolition of the medieval church at Froxfield Green. The settlement then steadily increased in size and, in the 1970s some thirty council houses were built there at Dellfield, followed by several more, built more recently at Deans Dell by the local housing association. These housing developments have provided a hub for the village with public transport, a shop, a village hall, a church, a school and a recreation ground.

Elsewhere in the village there are many old houses of interest, such as Trees, Honeycritch Cottage, Kings Cottage, Bydean Farm and its cottage, Thatchers, Bower Farm, Ivy House Farm and The Slade (below).



The population of Privett is only 280 – much smaller than Froxfield – and this is reflected in the small size of its settlements. The first reference to Basing Park was made in 1567. Three hundred years later it was bought by William Nicholson, an immensely wealthy gin merchant. He extended the main house and the estate which, when he died in 1909, consisted of 8,446 acres including much of Privett and Froxfield. After WWII the mansion fell into disrepair, was demolished in 1960 and the estate sold off piecemeal. The Langmead family built a smaller but still substantial house (below) on the site in 1964. They have kept the fine parkland to the south but the land to the north of the house is now farmed, creating a landscape of wide vistas.



Nicholson replaced many 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century buildings in Privett and also built some in Froxfield. Of a common form and style they all have distinctly-pitched plain tiled roofs and flint walls as shown below. They are interspersed with a few houses which survived the modernisation and make an interesting contrast. Overall, there is a very vernacular character to the area. Over the years most of the estate workers' houses have become private residences. Even the two pubs, the rather eccentric erstwhile shop, post office and Privett Railway Station (bottom photograph) are now private houses, as are many former farm buildings and barns.



**Privett Church is a famous local landmark with its 160ft high spire visible for many miles all around. Built in 1878 by William Nicholson at great expense, with Sir Arthur Blomfield as the architect, it is immense and finely ornamental. Grade II\* listed it is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust.**



Over the past twenty years, fifty new houses have been built as a result of the conversion of redundant farm buildings at Alexander's, Church, Stocks and Basing Farms in Privett and Claypit Farm in Froxfield. Small new developments have been built on the Froxfield brownfield sites of the old garage on the C18 and a farm contractor's yard at Broadway. Few, if any, further opportunities like these remain in the parish, and the Deans Dell development has left little further space on the site.

## ***Geological Influences***

The parish is the only Clay Plateau in the South Downs National Park. The nature of the soil, chalk overlaid by continuous clay capping, results in poorer, heavier soils than surrounding areas and has had a profound influence on the evolution of the current landscape, both natural and architectural.

The soil in Privett, however, is categorised as better quality agricultural land, capable of growing a range of arable crops with relatively few restrictions.

The very large numbers of disused chalk, clay and flint pits show how much the geology has influenced the traditional building materials of brick and flint and chalk clunch and also the widespread use of chalk on the fields before the introduction of modern fertilisers.

In past centuries, the lot of the local villeins must have been hard indeed as they struggled in the cold and wet with primitive ploughs pulled by one or two oxen on the heavy clay, deeply embedded with flints. As Edward Thomas wrote about Froxfield in his poem "Wind and Mist", "The clay first broke my heart and then my back".



## ***Historical and Cultural Connections***

Most of the rolling history of the parish over the centuries is there to see for those with the interest to look. Much is recorded in Tony Newman's book *Froxfield & Privett – A Taste of History* published in 1987. It is hoped that the publication of this LLCA will encourage further historical research as much of the history of the parish is still unexplored.



In prehistoric times, the parish was heavily wooded, and Privett was the western edge of the great Andredsweald which stretched, thick and impenetrable, across Sussex and into Kent. Even so there are several Bronze Age burial barrows (see above) in the parish. Later, the Romans valued the high ground and established themselves on two sites at Ridge Top Lane, in Froxfield. The Froxfield Entrenchments (see below), with their ramparts and ditches, were probably built by the Saxons to repel an enemy approaching from the west.



Whilst it appears that well into Saxon times Privett was uninhabited, the discovery of the Alton Hoard of Iron Age coins and Roman jewellery in 1996 on farmland in Privett and other artefacts in 1999 (now in the British Museum) suggest that the area may have been occupied.



The landscape we see today is very clearly influenced by the enclosure of the open fields, a process which began in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and ended in Froxfield in 1805 when 780 acres were awarded to 49 local allottees. The impact of William Nicholson can still be clearly seen particularly in the architecture of many houses and the churches at Privett and Froxfield Green. Edward Thomas, the WWI poet and Alan Gwynne-Jones, the important 20th century artist, both drew inspiration here. In 1822 one of William Cobbett's rural rides crossed the parish.

### ***Biodiversity Interests***

The parish of Froxfield is rich in wildlife and wild flowers. Our habitats of woodlands, farmland, organic pastures, arable fields, ponds, hedges, verges, sunken lanes and the host of disused pits provide a very important mix of habitats and support a good population and variety of trees, plants, birds, mammals and insects. The special nature of the clay cap geology is also very important for wildlife. Our farmers and many of our residents are doing all they can to encourage wildlife – for example one farmer planted a new one hectare indigenous wood, Hackwood, fifteen years ago, with the primary aim of increasing biodiversity. It is doing very well. There are many designated SINC's and Road Verges of Ecological Importance (RVEIs) in the parish.





*“Hampshire’s highest village  
with many panoramic views over surrounding areas”*





## Key Issues for the Parish:

The dominant theme from all our discussions with local residents has been “we live in a friendly and caring community in unspoilt, lovely, tranquil, green countryside with many splendid views and a strong sense of remoteness”. The following key issues have become apparent as particularly important to the people who live here. Places relating to a number of these issues are identified on the map in this document. Action plans are needed to address these concerns and develop solutions:

- The tranquillity and sense of remoteness, which is so important to residents depends on the conservation of the low density of development. The need to maintain this, which is highlighted in the East Hampshire District LCA of the Froxfield Clay Plateau is strongly supported. With little – or no – scope for further conversions of redundant farm buildings, and the Deans Dell site apparently nearly full, it is difficult to see how any further significant housing development – other than possibly a small number of affordable houses – can be built without breaching the East Hampshire District LCA Landscape strategy for the parish.



- Nearly all the settlements in the parish are shielded from short and long distance view and the buildings tend to nestle naturally into the landscape and integrate seamlessly. With only a few unfortunate exceptions, they reflect rural character rather than suburban identity. These factors have important implications for the setting and design of any new buildings.
- The views from within and towards our parish are an outstanding landscape attraction for residents, visitors and others who live in this part of East Hampshire and beyond. They should be carefully preserved, including preventing any development on skylines/ridgelines and maintaining the many long open views and the views to the church spires of Privett and High Cross churches.



- Farming is vital for the landscape and organic farming is particularly appreciated. However, many difficult pressures are likely to bear heavily on farmers in future years. The whole parish must do all it can to support the farming community so that it can continue to be an excellent custodian of our traditional countryside.



- Although it proved difficult to find local people to move into the latest new build of affordable houses at Deans Dell a few years ago, it could be that some further limited provision will be needed to provide rented homes for local residents who, otherwise, would not be able to continue to live here. With very few facilities in other areas of the parish and our (limited) bus service about to be withdrawn, the most suitable location would seem to be close to the existing affordable homes. It is most important that these houses are not allowed to move into private ownership in the future. This complex problem will require careful consideration in due course by the FPC in conjunction with SDNPA and EHDC as well as close consultation with local residents.



- The tranquillity of parts of the parish is suffering from noise from the A3, A272 and A32. We propose that options for reducing the aural impact should be identified through discussion by the FPC with the HCC Highways Authority.
- A haphazard and excessive web of low power cables and their poles exists in some parts of the parish. They blight the landscape and spoil views. Forming a parish working party to see if there is any scope for rationalisation and whether future plans can be based on an underground option would be a useful step in tackling this problem and we propose that FPC considers this possibility.

- The line of high voltage pylons crossing the parish is quite out of keeping and, when they are eventually replaced, the cables should be underground. Any increase in the number of pylons or the introduction of wind turbines would have a hugely negative impact on our landscapes.
- Although a large number of local residents objected, a CLU was given to the HMFC in 2009 to operate from a grass airstrip on Colemore Common just north of the Privett boundary. The HMFC now appears to be flying aircraft well in excess of their CLU limits and could potentially seek to develop the site. The tranquillity and peacefulness of the area is being seriously affected and there are safety concerns. In view of the possibility of this sort of problem spreading elsewhere in the National Park it is recommended that the SDNPA discuss how best to exercise effective control with the CAA, EHDC, HMFC, FPC and other neighbouring Parish Councils.
- The verges of our lanes are an important feature of our landscape. It is very worrying that they are increasingly being eroded and damaged by speeding and careless drivers and by the increasing size of many vehicles. The seasonal cuts carried out by contractors can also be overly enthusiastic on occasions. Flail hedge cutters should always be set above ground level to avoid wholesale destruction of wildlife and wild flowers. It would be helpful if FPC discussed this problem with HCC in the first instance.
- Off road 4 x 4 vehicles and bikes visit ancient tracks from time to time, particularly on Sundays. They are very noisy and can also damage the tracks. An effective management policy is needed to manage and, if necessary, to reduce these adverse intrusions. It is recommended that FPC discusses this problem with EHDC.



- The parish has an attractive range of quiet countryside activities to offer such as walking, cycling and horse riding. Careful planning is needed to ensure that extra visitors to this area of the National Park can enjoy themselves without avoidable adverse effects. We propose that FPC discusses this important prospect with the staff of the SDNPA.
- “Creeping urbanisation” is a problem, for example, orange street lights at Dellfield, pavements, kerbing and the amount of road signage clutter-much of it unsightly and seemingly unnecessary. We recommend that FPC discusses this problem – and particularly any health and safety and highway policy conflicts – with EHDC and the HCC Highway Authority.

- The parish is a rich haven for wildlife and wild flowers and there is a wide range of biodiversity developments. There would be great advantage in forming a wildlife/biodiversity group to help improve our knowledge base in this area and also to help advance improvement opportunities, such as pond renovations. Interested residents are discussing this possibility.
- The incidence of fly tipping should continue to be monitored and reported. The work of the Froxfield and Privett Litterati is very effective in keeping the lanes and roads free of litter and should be energetically supported.
- The parish provides excellent opportunities for horse riding and there has been an increase in the number of equestrian paddocks and stabling. Whilst it is good to see horses grazing well-maintained pasture the loss of productive farmland to equestrian paddocks is of concern. It is important that the impact on rural character of “equestrian clutter” is kept strictly under control by owners and we suggest that FPC considers taking steps to pursue this course of action.



- Another area of steady increase has been the number of redundant farm buildings converted to light industrial use. Whilst it is good to see these buildings brought back into use and creating local job opportunities, they can also result in a considerable increase in traffic using our narrow lanes with their vulnerable verges. It would be helpful if the managers of these units briefed visiting drivers of the need to be careful on our lanes. It is recommended that FPC pursues this suggestion.
- A recent change to the Town and Country Planning Act allows ‘permitted development’ within conservation areas and national parks. This is in conflict with their ethos and purpose. We request that the SDNPA reviews this anomaly on behalf of the parishes within the South Downs National Park.
- There would be merit in forming a parish working party to investigate alternative options for meeting current local energy needs. It is recommended that FPC investigates the feasibility of this.
- There is evidence that the lane running from the A272, through the centre of Privett, to the A32 is being used as a rat run by commuter traffic, thereby infringing the terms of the conservation area. Further investigation should be carried out by FPC and the problem should be raised with the Highway Authority.
- Many changes may be justifiable in themselves but there is a general concern that buildings tied to agricultural or equestrian use must be restricted to those purposes and not allowed to evolve into something less acceptable. It is proposed that FPC discusses this issue with SDNPA and EHDC.

## Abbreviations:

CAA: Civil Aviation Authority.  
CLU: Certificate of Lawful Use.  
CPRE: Campaign to Protect Rural England.  
EHDC: East Hampshire District Council.  
FPC: Froxfield Parish Council.  
HCC: Hampshire County Council.  
HMFC: Hampshire Microlight Flying Club.  
LLCA: Local Landscape Character Assessment.  
SDNPA: South Downs National Parks Authority.  
SINC: Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.  
RVEI: Road Verges of Ecological Importance.



## Appendices:

Froxfield Area 1  
Froxfield Area 2  
Froxfield Area 3  
Froxfield Area 4  
Froxfield Area 5  
Privett Area 1  
Privett Area 2

Copies of this document including the appendices have been sent to:

The South Downs National Park Authority  
East Hampshire District Council  
Hampshire County Council  
Froxfield Parish Council

A full list of other recipients is held by the Parish Clerk of Froxfield's Parish Council.

Electronic pdf versions will be available to download from the parish website

[www.froxfieldwithprivett.org.uk](http://www.froxfieldwithprivett.org.uk)

Page 19: The Froxfield Entrenchments photograph courtesy of the Hampshire Records office.  
Page 20: The Alton Hoard ©The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.





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