

# Plumpton Parish Neighbourhood Plan



Various reports in the parish magazine, and information on the Parish Council website, give information about the progress towards our Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Three public consultations have demonstrated overwhelming concern for our wildlife and countryside, and so we expect this to be a prominent feature in the policies identified in the plan for the future of the parish. From the recent survey (January 2015), when asked how significantly does the local countryside and wildlife contribute to your quality of life in the parish, 98% said very significantly. Similarly 94% said the footpath access to the countryside is very significant and 95% said views of the South Downs were very important to them.

As background to enable the development of these NP policies, a broad ranging report (an 'evidence document') is being prepared by one of the 'topic groups' and PW&HG. This will cover information ranging from our geology and landscape character to our protected species and their habitats. It will show the sites that are designated as protected and other sites of interest and concern. It will discuss the animal species that are found around the parish. It will also discuss the more general features of the parish that people cherish, and what you get out of our environment. Did you know that over 130 bird species have been recorded in the parish, and eight species of bat? Or that great crested newt and dormouse are widespread, but perhaps with focal populations in particular areas? There are 17km of streams and ditches, but only 7ha of standing water and marshland. There are 43km of species-rich hedges and 57ha of semi-natural woodland, plus 250ha of semi-improved grassland, some of which can produce very attractive, flower-rich meadows.

As well as being background information for the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan, we hope that it will have a more lasting value in being a report that is a sort of 'state of the nation' as it is now, for comparison with earlier histories of the nature of the parish and for future reference.

We cannot stop all development. We have an allocation of housing to be developed in the parish, which will focus on Plumpton Green, where most of us live. And there are other 'constraints' imposed on us. But we

can make recommendations about how to accommodate that housing with minimum impact on our countryside and its wildlife. Do we want development concentrated into one or two larger parcels or more smaller developments? What kind of locations (brown or green field, and their visual impact)? We can consider the design of developments and how they affect the countryside infrastructure and connectivity, and the design of the built structures as to how they can maintain a free flow of wildlife through and around the developed land, and how the buildings themselves can be designed to encourage wildlife as far as possible. Where extra land is needed, for example for drainage schemes, we can recommend that these are of a type of Sustainable Drainage Scheme (SuDS) that provides maximum benefit to wildlife and ourselves. From the recent questionnaire, 90% of responses said they wanted such matters taken into account. We also have the opportunity to make recommendations on potential for enhancement of biodiversity and public appreciation of our countryside, but would not want to do that where it will affect land that is already much valued and appreciated by our community as part of our 'natural' environment.

If you think there is information or records of species that are important to this process and that we may not be aware of, please let us know. If we don't have the information, then we can't take it into account.

*Tony Hutson*