

Wild Landscapes

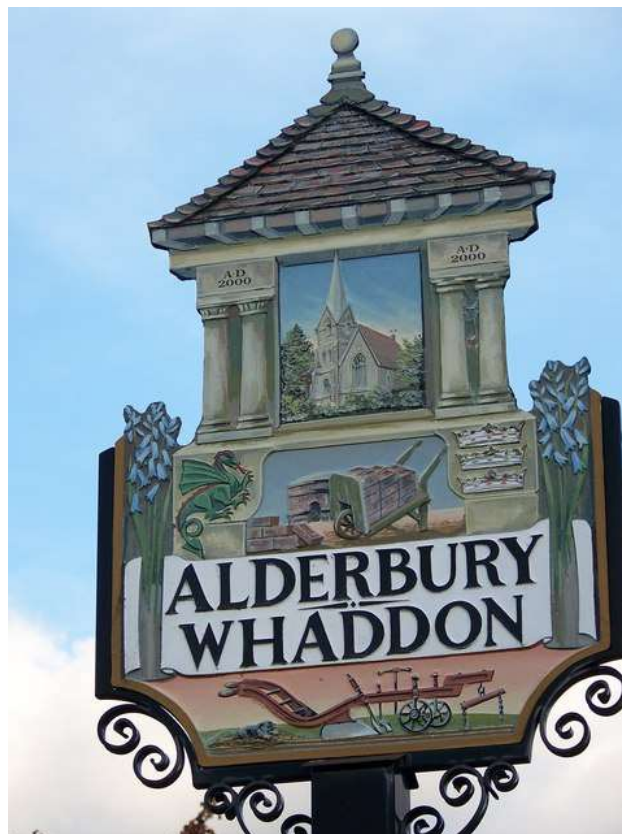
Creating green spaces for wildlife and people

Wildlife Friendly Alderbury

Client: Steve Milton – Alderbury Parish Council

Project Title: Preliminary Site Assessment Report

Location: Alderbury, Wiltshire



Control Sheet

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0.1	05/06/21	NS	NS	First Draft
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1. Site Information

Site name	Wildlife Friendly Alderbury	
Owners Address	Alderbury Parish Council Alderbury Village Hall Rectory Road Alderbury SP5 3BH	
Grid Reference	SU 19171 26759 (Village Hall)	
Contact details	Name	Steve Milton – Clerk APC
	Email	clerk@alderburyparishcouncil.gov.uk
	Number	N/A

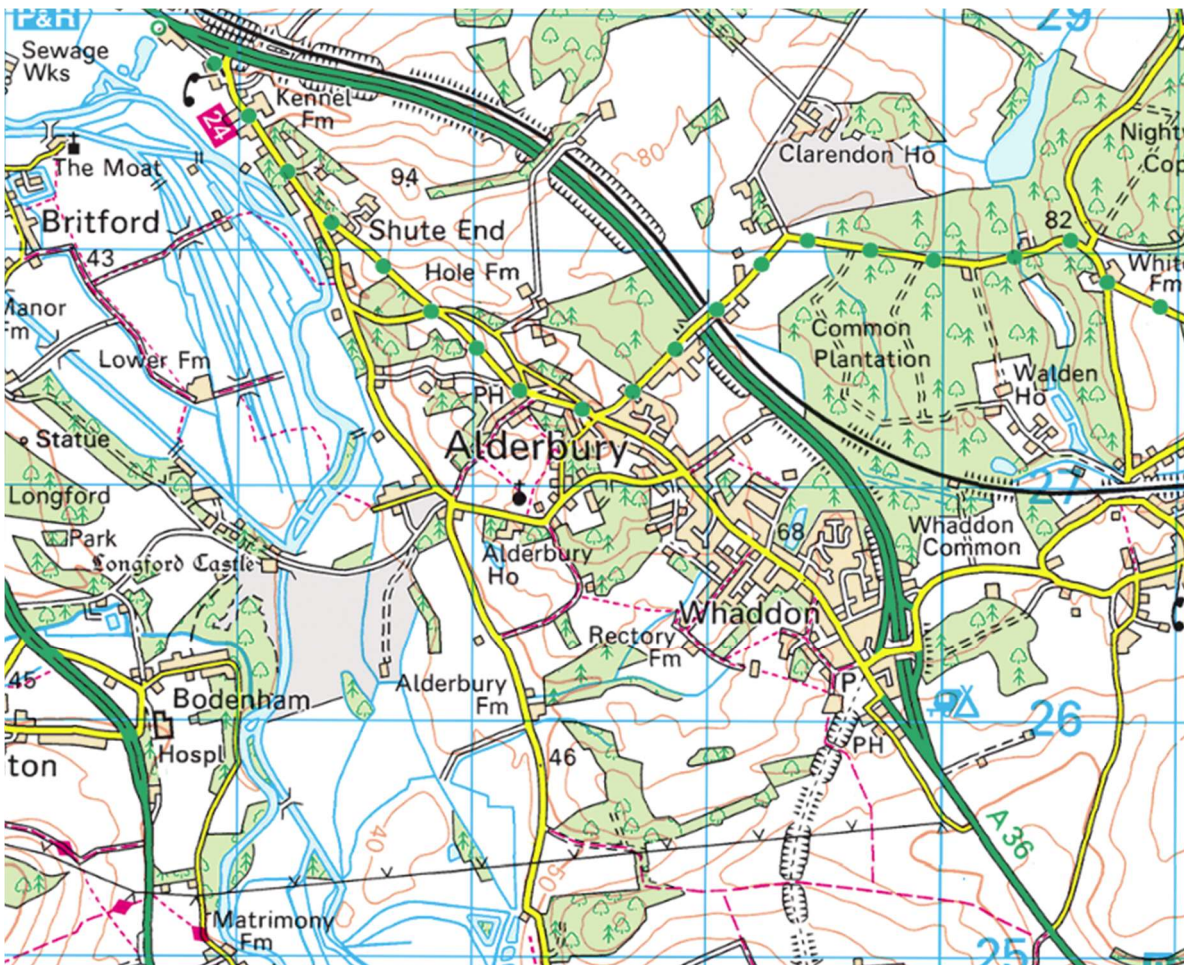


Figure 1: OS map of the parish (Bing Maps)

2. Introduction

Wild Landscapes project at Wiltshire Wildlife Trust were contacted by Alderbury Parish Council in February 2021. During an email exchange conducted on 10 February 2021, clerk to Alderbury Parish Council, Steve Milton, stated that 'the Parish Council has been increasingly dismayed at the loss of natural habitat through new development and the gradual, creeping urbanisation of our rural village'

Milton went on to say 'We have some areas of land to turn into wildlife friendly habitats. We would like to plant trees, hedgerows and orchards, and encourage local people to get involved.'

This conversation led on to the concept of a 'Wildlife Friendly Village', which can be described as a 'network of wild areas, maintained and created by residents, on both public & private land to benefit wildlife & people'. (Wildlife Friendly Village 2021)

The vision of Risby Wildlife Friendly Village is to link-up with other Wildlife Friendly Places across the country and to create, and be part of a Nature Recovery Network (Wildlife Friendly Village 2021).

Nature Recovery Network is an initiative from The Wildlife Trusts that promotes a joined-up network of habitats that allow wildlife and people to thrive and is driven by local authorities' requirement to do this. (The Wildlife Trusts 2018)

Aim

This aims of this report are:

- To provide Alderbury with a well-considered plan and recommendations.
- To enable Alderbury Parish Council to continue to develop and improve the parish.
- To provide a starting point for future development.
- To find a workable balance between the needs of both wildlife and people.
- For Alderbury to begin to link up with other villages using the Nature Recovery Network.

Methodology

This report has been formed through the undertaking of an initial site assessment visit on May 17th, 2021, and close liaison with Alderbury Parish Council. In addition an ecological and historical desk study was carried out. Finally, on May 20th, 2021, a public engagement session was held during an annual parish meeting. The feedback from this presentation and a 'questions from the audience' session were used to inform the recommendations.

3. Site Overview

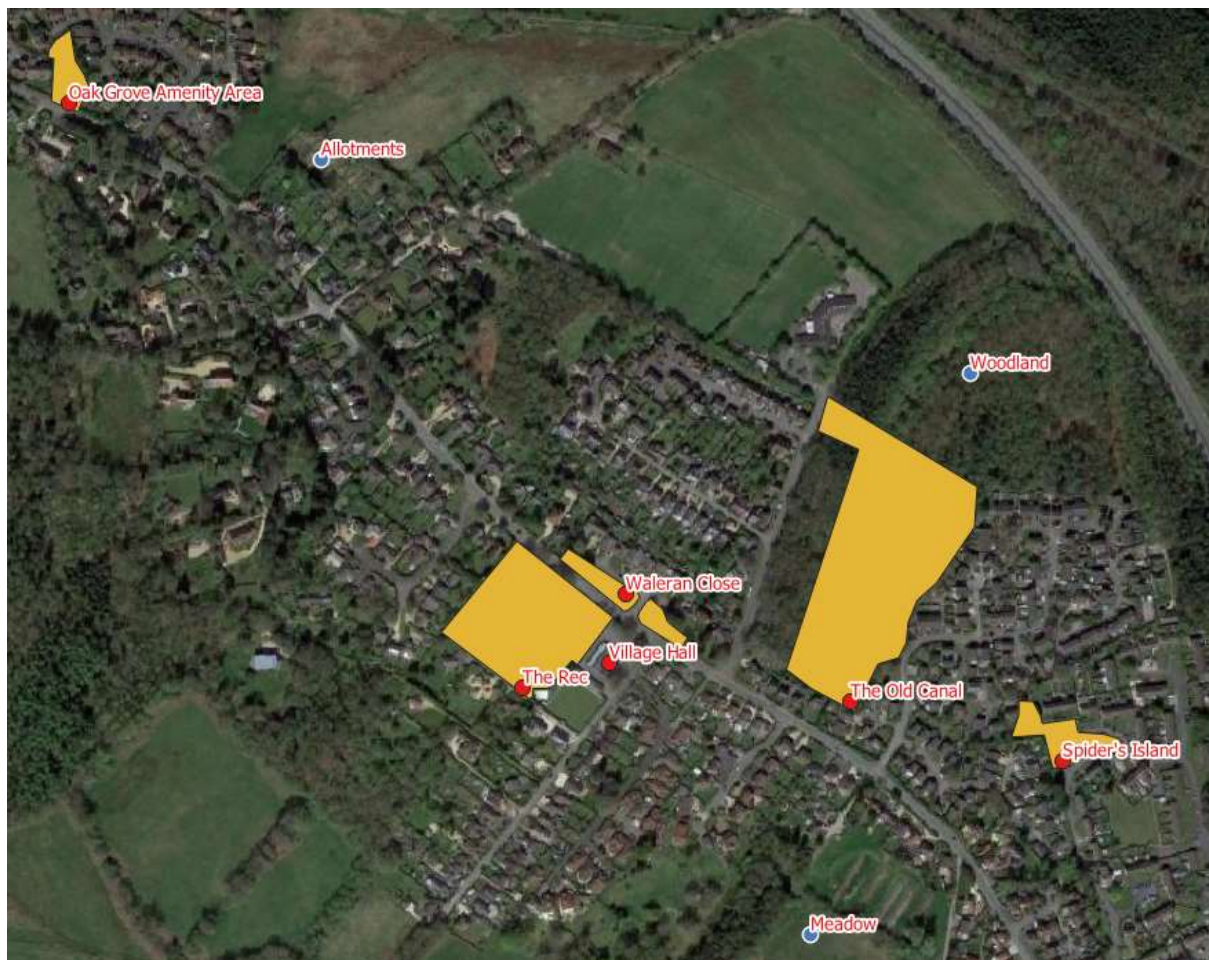


Figure 2: Village overview showing visited areas (QGIS Software)

The parish of Alderbury lies about 3 miles south east of Salisbury. It is situated east of the River Avon and bordered by Clarendon Park to the north east and Longford Park to the west. To the east are the railway and the main A36 road from Salisbury to Southampton. The soil across most of the parish is clay, sand and gravels which have shaped its development through history.

Clarendon Park, which was originally built as a hunting lodge in Norman times, and Waleran the Hunter held the manor of Whaddon. Longford Park was bought by the Earl of Radnor in 1717 and his descendants have lived there ever since. The Salisbury and Southampton canal was in use by 1802, but by 1834 it had closed.

In the 1960's the parish was designated as a prime area for development. In the 1970's the by-pass was completed and a conservation area was proposed for the oldest part of the village. The development at Oakwood Grove was complete by the 1990s. Today further development is resisted by the villagers. (Wiltshire Community History 2021)

4. Project Plan Areas, Advice and Ideas

On May 17th 2021, a site visit was carried out at Alderbury under the guidance of parish councillors. A number of areas within the village were visited and on-site advice was given.

This section provides a compilation of the suggested projects, incorporating feedback from the site visit day and the subsequent public engagement session. However, the level of detail is such that each project could not be completed from this document alone. At the time that a specific project is taken forward, Wild Landscapes can provide detailed information, advice, site assessments, management plans, and/or work quotations as appropriate.

It is recommended that a time-line or work-plan is produced from these discussions based on which projects the parish council wish to implement, and the order in which they wish to carry them out.

Photographs of these areas can be found in section 7.

Biological Recording

The importance of recording sightings of flora and fauna, across Alderbury Parish, cannot be understated. All conservation management is based on an understanding, and knowledge, of what is already present in a habitat or place. Once it is known what is present, management can be tailored to suit best practice across the site, or a particularly important species. Initial biological surveys can also help gain support for the work to be carried out, and inform the public of the flora or fauna being protected and nurtured. (Hackett 2019)

Continue to encourage recording by groups and individuals across the parish. All records, monitoring and wildlife sightings should be submitted at least annually to the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC). This can be done through the WSBRC website.

However, one very easy method of submitting biological data is via the iRecord website (<https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/>). This website has a smart-phone app and is run by the Biological Records Centres, across the country. It is a very powerful, yet simple, way to get records to where they need to be, so that they can be verified by WSBRC's county recorders.

Verge Cutting

Road verges are a vital part of the Nature Recovery Network. It is the road verges that will link up the special areas for wildlife. Simple management changes like delaying the cut until later in the summer can give many wildflowers time to flower and set seed. This will also help support many invertebrates like butterflies and bees. (Hackett 2019)

Health and Safety must still be observed and there will be grass verges that must be cut regularly, particularly around junctions and sharp bends. Outside of this most verges can be left to grow and cut in late summer. The ideal situation is for cuttings to be collected and removed. This stops nutrients from re-entering the soil which favours the coarser herbs and grasses. Some councils are making piles of cuttings under hedges on wider verges.

The decision on which verges to let grow should come after all verges are surveyed to assess what species are already present. Verges dominated by coarse herbs and grasses, such as nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), could require remedial management and possible reseeded to bring back to an herb-rich status.

Further detailed planning information regarding verge cutting can be found in, *Managing Grassland Road Verges* (Bromley et al 2019). A link to this document is in the references section.

Tiny Forest at Spider's Island

A Tiny Forest is a dense, fast-growing native woodland that is around the size of a tennis court. Once planted it will become an excellent habitat for butterflies, birds, bees and small mammals. (Bruns et al 2019)

The Wildlife Trusts have always believed in a philosophy of working for wildlife and people, a Tiny Forest is an example of this philosophy in action. Not only is the Tiny Forest a great place for wildlife, but it's also a nice place for people. Children can learn in an outdoor classroom, and neighbours can come together to relax and socialise. The Tiny Forest concept originated in Japan and is now gaining traction in Europe and the UK. (Bruns et al 2019)

Several possible sites at the Spider's Island area of Alderbury, were discussed during the initial site visit. One particular area of waste ground, between two rows of houses, looked particularly suitable. There are many opportunities to involve local people in the design, planting and maintenance of a Tiny Forest; indeed the original Japanese concept stipulates that the Tiny Forest should be planted by a local community group.

One benefit of using the Tiny Forest planting method is that by using a combination of local native tree and shrub species and innovative planting and mulching techniques, it is possible for a Tiny Forest to reach maturity in around ten years. Usually, in a natural situation a woodland would take at least 100 years to mature.

Further detailed planning information regarding Tiny Forests can be found in, *Handbook: Tiny Forest Planting Method* (Bruns et al 2019). A link to this document is in the references section.

Invertebrate Wall at the Rec

The creation of an invertebrate, or green wall at the side of the storage building at the north end of the Rec is a quick and simple project to take forward. An invertebrate wall is essentially a vertical structure, covered in vegetation and other natural features that provide feeding, roosting and protective opportunities for insects and other wildlife. (Urban Greening 2013)

Further information regarding green walls and urban greening can be found in, UK Guide to Green Walls (Urban Greening 2013). A link to this document is in the references section.

Prior to commencement of this project, it is recommended that Wild Landscapes create a detailed design and planting plan document.

Community Orchard at Waleran Close

The open-space at Waleran Close is situated in the centre of the village, across the road from the village hall and car-park. This, combined with the large, traditional, village sign makes it a focal point of village activity and an area that should retain a formal element.

The area, thus lends itself to a formal community orchard, which has biodiversity interest and acts as a focal point for parish biodiversity improvements, community events, festivals and gatherings.

At its simplest, a traditional orchard is a collection of local variety fruit trees planted among grass full of wild flowers. In the past traditional orchards were often the centre of village life and became a cornerstone of the rural economy. In modern times community orchards are excellent places for people to come together for community activities such as Apple Day, village picnics, or just as a haven in which to relax. (Communities and Local Government 2011)

Much initial planning information regarding community orchards can be found in, Community Orchards How to Guide (Communities and Local Government 2011). Whilst more detailed information can be at the website of Wiltshire Traditional Orchards Project. A link to both these sites is contained in the references section.

Nature Haven at Oakwood Grove

Currently, Oakwood Grove amenity area is managed with an urban park type maintenance regime. In conjunction with community engagement, Oakwood Grove holds great potential to deliver biodiversity and habitat gains and improvement. This can be achieved by moving to an extensive and sympathetic, nature reserve type management plan, whereby a grassland, scrub, woodland 'matrix' is created from the habitat already present.

The exact make up of this habitat creation can be decided using community involvement. Indeed, this site lends itself to being looked after and maintained by a volunteer, community group in the future. Public involvement and 'ownership' is crucial to the success of the site.

It is recommended that at the inception of this project Wild Landscapes is commissioned to carry out a full preliminary ecological appraisal of this site. The appraisal will take include a historical and ecological desk study to inform the planning process, then take into account soil-type, wildlife already present, aspect and many other features to create a comprehensive project plan.

Documents containing more information regarding the habitat management of woodland, grassland and scrub can be found in the references section.

Nature Haven at the Old Canal

A nature haven, or nature reserve, at the site of the Old Canal is, perhaps, the biggest project that is detailed in this report. Although the area can deliver the greatest biodiversity gain, it is not without some major issues that will need to be addressed before the project can be considered.

The area containing the Old Canal and all associated woodland to the north is owned by the Longford Estate. Permissive public access has been granted and there are well used tracks through the wood, used by dog walkers and parents taking their children to school. Any project that seeks to maintain the area as a nature reserve would need to negotiate a lease with Longford Estate.

One large area to the west of the site has been taken over as a mountain bike track on an adhoc basis. No formal permission has ever been sought, or received for this activity. Therefore, it is recommended that Alderbury Parish Council do not take on the leasehold and associated public liability of this part of the site.

It is recommended that a full preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) be carried out on the Old Canal site. This can be carried out in the short-term with permission from Longford Estate. The PEA should be carried out before a lease is negotiated, so that any constraints or problems can be addressed and mitigated. Further surveys may be required following the PEA, particularly for protected species such as bats and great crested newts.

Once this has been done, funding will be required to carry out any resulting project. One source of potential funding for this type of project is National Lottery Heritage Fund, a link to which can be found in the references section.

Other Areas

In addition to the areas detailed above there are a number of other areas that could be looked at in the future, should time, and finances, allow. These include:

- Create a parish biodiversity or environmental policy or biodiversity action plan
- Allotment area
- Larger woodland area north of the Old Canal
- Priority habitat meadow at Whaddon

5. Recommendations

1) Initial Tasks

- a) Create a timeline or work-plan based on the recommendations in this report
- b) Consider initial mapping project of local habitats, species and areas of ecological interest, using data obtained during the initial site visit and from WSBRC
- c) Encourage local people to record their wildlife sightings using iRecord or other online means
- d) Consider holding an ecological recording and iRecord training session over Zoom, for local people

2) Small Scale / Easier / Quicker Projects

- a) Assess road verges for management change suitability
- b) Consider implementation of a Tiny Forest at Spider's Island
- c) Consider implementation of an invertebrate wall at the Rec

3) Medium Scale Projects

- a) Consider implementation of a community orchard at Waleran Close
- b) Consider implementation of a nature haven at Oakwood Grove
 - i) Carry out site assessment
 - ii) Engage with local community
 - iii) Create volunteer group

4) Large Scale Projects

- a) Consider implementation of a nature haven at the Old Canal
 - i) Carry out preliminary ecological appraisal
 - ii) Liaise with Longford Estate and negotiate lease
 - iii) Research funding options and seek funding
 - iv) Design, plan and implement project
 - v) Maintain site to agreed management plan

6. References

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7. Photographs

All authors own (May 2021)



Old Canal



Mountain Bike Track



Oak Grove Amenity Area



Open Area Orchard Site



The Rec



The Rec, Verge & Hedge



The Rec Invertebrate Wall



Tiny Forest Site

8. Moving Forward

Wild Landscapes can continue to support this project, either in an advisory capacity, through the production of preliminary ecological appraisals, site assessments, management plans, or with practical delivery, should the client wish. If there are any queries regarding the information contained within this document, please get in touch using the contact details below.

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