

Stinsford

Neighbourhood Plan



2021 - 2038

Produced by: Stinsford Parish Council & Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
Referendum Version – February 2022

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SUMMARY – what this plan (and the consultation on it) is all about...

Our **Neighbourhood Plan** has been created by our community. Local people and businesses in the parish have decided what kind of place Stinsford parish should be, and what changes need to be made to planning policies to ensure that the right type of development is allowed, in the right places, at the right time.

The Plan has at its heart **a shared vision** for the protection and development of the Parish that reflects our values, hopes and needs today, and into the future, until 2038. It has given us an opportunity to create policies that will **shape the places where we live and work**. If and when it is agreed, the Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the statutory development plan for our area.

We are a rural parish, on the edge of the county town of Dorchester. There has not been a great deal of development over recent years – although this could change if Dorset Council decide to press ahead with their ideas of a northern extension to Dorchester. Otherwise there is no expectation that our parish should have much, if any, development at all.

Most of the plan, not surprisingly, is about our natural and historic environment.

The beautiful countryside, the peace and tranquility, the variety of wildlife, the historic buildings, and the cultural connections (particularly with Thomas Hardy) are points that almost everyone said they felt were special about our parish. So our plan has reflected these attributes and its aim is to safeguard and enhance the Parish's outstanding natural beauty and heritage. Extensive research means that we have been able to prepare wide-ranging policies with a common theme:

protection.

- Protecting and strengthening our local wildlife and habitats, and playing our part in tackling climate change through the protection and enhancement of our trees, woodland and forest - see [pages 6-9]
- Reinforcing the local landscape character (including the tranquility of the countryside and dark skies, and the undeveloped gaps between settlements) - see [pages 9-14]
- Protecting our important local views - see [pages 15-17]
- Encouraging appropriate recreational access to the countryside - see [pages 18-19]
- Protecting Stinsford's historic environment - see [pages 20-27]
- Positively managing the Thomas Hardy connection – see [pages 27-28]
- Better building design (that balances the importance of our beautiful places with the need to build sustainably) - see [pages 35-38]
- Protection of groundwater resources - see [page 38]

Given the prospect of possible strategic development north of Dorchester, the issue of housing growth in the parish was discussed at length. The outcome of the consultation shows that local residents support **very limited new housing** in the parish, of which half should be **genuinely affordable, giving priority to local people**. The Kingston Maurward College (KMC) Masterplan (July 2019) indicates an intention to build about 18 homes, including some low-cost

housing, and there are mixed views on the sites put forward so it will be important to ensure that the aspirations of the College and the community are aligned – see [page 28-32].

Another element in the KMC Masterplan is a proposal to create additional business incubation units at Stinsford Enterprise Park and this was generally considered to be acceptable by the community. However, it was felt that any future **employment opportunities and business growth** should be restricted to the footprints of the three existing Business Parks, and any impacts on traffic and the environment should be carefully managed. see [pages 32-33].

We are fortunate to benefit from a wide range of **recreational opportunities** linked to the countryside. While a shop or a pub may not be commercially viable, in future we may be able to take advantage of new multi-purpose community facilities thanks to KMC who may be in a position to offer the community a venue suitable for social and recreational activities – see [page 33-34].

Traffic was the **number one issue** highlighted by residents when asked about what they disliked about living in the Parish. The busy A35 is the main noise source and has other negative effects on the Parish. And, given we are a rural parish, it is inevitable that car is the dominant form of transport for residents, commuters and visitors. Our roads are very rural in nature, so we don't have pavements or cycleways, and walkers and cyclists are forced to share our lanes with cars, lorries and tractors. So we plan to promote safe access for walkers. We also have ambitious plans to improve and extend our network of cycle routes. Ultimately this should help reduce the reliance on cars - see [pages 39-47].

Cycle route improvements is an example of one of a significant number of specific **projects** designed to further improve our natural landscape and address some of the concerns raised by our community. These will be taken forward by Stinsford Parish Council.

The Council also knows that many local residents are **vehemently opposed** to the proposal for possible major growth north of Dorchester and is committed to reflect their concerns.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this plan.



development, and the lack of facilities. Just under half (20 of the 52 businesses that were known to be based in the parish) responded to the business survey. This survey showed a wide range of business size and activities, and that there were very few who considered that they would be relocating, but some were planning to enlarge their premises. All of the data, thoughts and opinions from these consultations has helped to inform the production of this Neighbourhood Plan. More details about these consultations are available in the Consultation Statement.

What area does it cover?

1.6 The Neighbourhood Plan relates to the parish of Stinsford. It covers an area of land to the north and east of Dorchester of 1,352 hectares (3,336 acres).

1.7 The parish boundary (and therefore the Neighbourhood Plan area) is marked by a red boundary on the map:

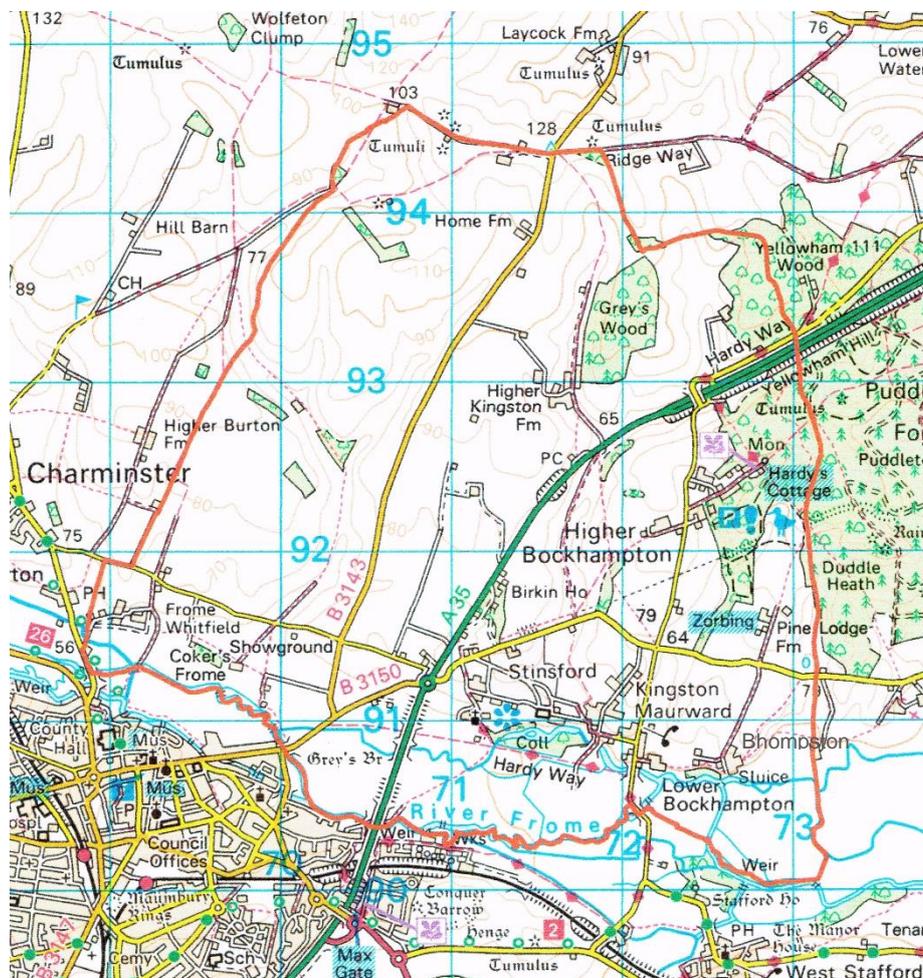


Figure 1. The Parish of Stinsford

What timescale does the Plan cover?

1.8 The Plan Period that this Plan will cover is 2021 – 2038 (in line with the proposed Dorset Local Plan). However, it is likely that the Plan will be reviewed within the next 5 years, given the potential changes in the Local Plan and national planning policy.

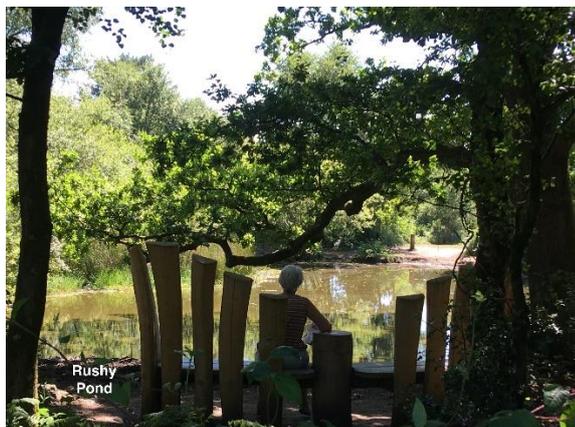
A bit of Local Context...

1.9 The northern parish boundary follows the route of the Ridgeway at Waterston, where nearby there are two tumuli. Here the land lies approximately 125 metres above sea level with far reaching views. The River Frome, running west to east at around 50 metres above sea level, marks the southern boundary of the parish, beyond which lies the county town of Dorchester, to the south-west. The western boundary follows long established field boundaries, passing Three Cornered Copse in the north down to join the River Frome below Frome Whitfield. The eastern boundary runs down from the Ridgeway to the northern edge of Grey’s Wood, through Yellowham Woods and the western fringe of Puddletown Forest, taking in Rushy Pond and Heedless William’s Pond, before continuing south to join the River Frome west of Duddle Farm.

1.10 From west to east the landscape changes from chalk downland to heathland formed on tertiary sands and clays. Some of the soils are amongst the best and most versatile agricultural land nationally.

1.11 Bridleways and footpaths cross the area offering far reaching views. The Hardy Way, a long distance circular walk of some 220 miles, enters the parish to the north of Higher Bockhampton and ends at Stinsford Church.

1.12 The parish has one major road running through it: the busy A35, part of the Highways England trunk road network. This connects from Bere Regis (where the road splits off to the A31 to connect up to Wimborne and on to the M27, or continues on to the Poole / Bournemouth conurbation) through to Stinsford, around the Dorchester bypass and on into Devon. This once followed the route of the Roman Road, a scheduled monument, which also runs through the parish from the Stinsford roundabout to Tincton, and connected Dorchester (Durnovaria) with Badbury Rings (Vindocladia), near Wimborne.



1.13 The River Frome, from Greys Bridge flowing east, is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, important for its aquatic and bankside vegetation, invertebrates, fish and breeding riverside birds. The wider swathe of water meadows is also rich in wildlife, and contain the hatches once used in the ‘drowning’ of the meadows to encourage early growth. Significant mixed, ancient woodland occurs within Grey’s, Yellowham and Thorncombe Woods. Heathland and forest form part of the landscape before giving way to green pastures and the Frome valley.

1.14 Amongst the important monuments in the parish today are Kingston Maurward Old Manor, Kingston Maurward House, and Stinsford Church. There are conservation areas in and around Stinsford, Lower Bockhampton and Higher Kingston, together with a wide variety of Listed Buildings. The road into the parish from the county town of Dorchester is over the scheduled monument of Grey’s Bridge, and the parkland around Kingston Maurward is of national importance as a designated Registered Park and Garden.



1.15 The parish is especially well known for being the birthplace and home of the novelist and poet Thomas Hardy (1840 – 1928), in the heart of Hardy’s fictional ‘Wessex’. The parish is considered to be his fictional ‘Mellstock’ and features in many of his works.

1.16 Within this rural setting live some 330 or so people. During the last 20 years, there has been very little new housing in the parish, other than a small number of barn and farm building conversions. This contrasts markedly with the scale of development that has happened at Dorchester, which adjoins the parish.

1.17 The main settlements within the parish are Stinsford and Lower Bockhampton, with smaller settlements at Higher Kingston, Bhompston, Higher Bockhampton and Frome Whitfield, most of which are mentioned in the Domesday Book. During term time, however, the parish is temporary home to up to 45 student boarders at Kingston Maurward College. The College, awarded an “Outstanding” assessment in its 2019 OFSTED Inspection, is one of only two centres in South West England specializing in teaching land-based skills, and attracts many hundreds of students to its

courses each year. More recently Dorset Studio School has been set up (co-located with the college) and provides a similar land and environment focused education for secondary school age students. The College is also home to a popular Animal Park with a cafe and beautiful gardens and a small business centre. There are two other business parks in the parish, as well as holiday accommodation, cafés and an award-winning restaurant.

The Planning Context

1.18 Neighbourhood Plans are required to have regard to national policy and guidance and be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area (which in our case would be the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan that was adopted in October 2015, together with the Minerals Strategy, Mineral Sites Plan and the Waste Plan that deal with ‘county matters’ of minerals and waste development).

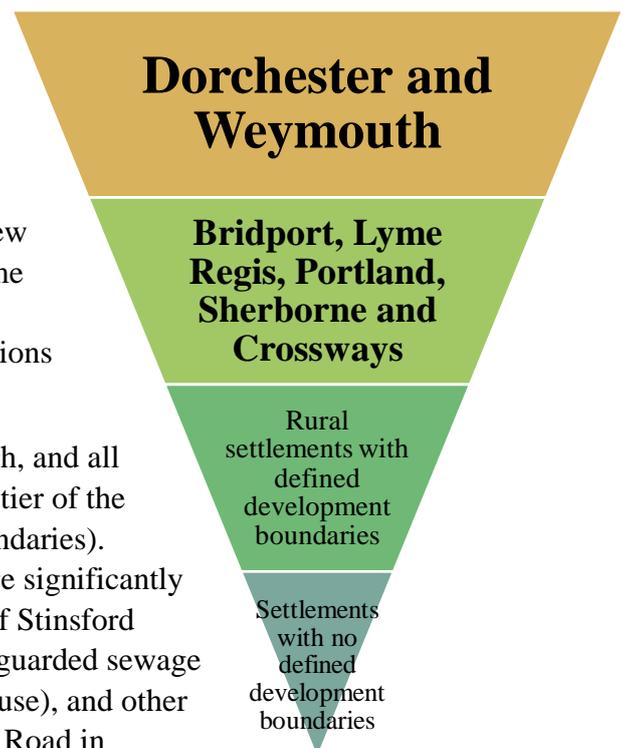
1.19 National planning policy sets out how plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area, and that they should be sufficiently flexible to adapt changes in the economy. There is a lot of guidance on how plans should help:

- Deliver a sufficient supply of homes (and is very clear that Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than proposed through the strategic policies for the area);
- Promote healthy and safe communities and sustainable transport;
- Achieve well-designed places;
- Meet the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change;
- Conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment.

1.20 The Local Plan covers a wide area stretching from Tolpiddle to Lyme Regis, and from Portland up to Sherborne, and has considered the level of housing, employment and infrastructure needed up to 2031. It sets out the hierarchy of settlements, with the larger towns of Dorchester and Weymouth being the main locations for new development; down to rural settlements that may have some growth to meet their local needs, but where in general development will be strictly controlled. Major site allocations have been made at the towns.

1.21 There were no site allocations made in Stinsford parish, and all of the settlements within our parish fall within this lowest tier of the settlement hierarchy (having no defined development boundaries). Therefore there is little expectation that they should change significantly unless there is a clear local need for development. Parts of Stinsford Parish are subject to minerals safeguarding, there is a safeguarded sewage treatment works site south of Stinsford (near Stinsford House), and other safeguarded areas relating to waste sites along St Georges Road in Dorchester, just south of the parish boundary.

1.22 The Inspector who examined the Local Plan noted that development proposals for Dorchester would fall short of meeting the anticipated needs towards the end of the plan period, and as a result asked for the plan to clearly state that options for meeting the future needs of Dorchester would be



considered through an early review of the plan. This review started in 2018, with the Local Plan Review ‘Preferred Options’ consultation proposing a major expansion of the town to its north side, going north of the River Frome (so a lot of the development would be in Stinsford parish).

1.23 In June 2019 the newly formed Dorset Council took the decision to focus on the production of a Dorset-wide Local Plan. The first consultation on the options for development started in January 2021, and included proposals for the major expansion to the north of Dorchester, north of the River Frome to provide around 3,500 homes 10 ha of employment land, as well as new schools and open space (Policy DOR13). The plan also included a policy referring to the masterplanning of the development and expansion of Kingston Maurward College (Policy DOR11).

1.24 In August 2020 the Government announced its intention to make major reforms to the planning system, which would include a new zoning system (identifying growth and renewal areas for development, and protected areas where more stringent controls would apply) and streamlining the development management content of Local Plans, using nationally prescribed development management policies. This could significantly impact on the role and content of both the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans. It is clear that the Government continues to see an important role for Neighbourhood Plans in the new system, but at the time of drafting this document, the details about how the new system would work, and when it would come into play, are as yet unclear. Watch this space...

2. *Vision, Aim, and Objectives*

2.1 The Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan will have at its core a ***shared vision*** for the protection and development of the Parish, that reflects and meets the community's values, hopes and needs for the period to 2038. The following aim and objectives were tested through the early consultations, and received a high degree of support.

2.2 The ***aim*** of the Neighbourhood Plan is to safeguard and enhance the Parish's outstanding environment and heritage, whilst encouraging appropriate development and acknowledging the pressures associated with climate change, by pursuing the following ***objectives***:

- to maintain, protect and improve the beauty, tranquillity and accessibility of our rural landscape, together with its diverse wildlife, that residents and visitors value so highly;
- to protect vulnerable habitats from the impacts of climate change and build climate resilience;
- to care for its built and literary heritage and to welcome appropriate numbers of visitors;
- to respond to the need for a demographically mixed population, a viable economy, and training, education and employment opportunities within the parish;
- to provide appropriate levels of housing and other facilities to meet the needs of the local community;
- to uphold principles of sustainable development and good and climate-friendly building design;
- to play its part in tackling climate change and helping the UK to reach its goal of net zero emissions by 2050 through the protection and enhancement of its trees, woodland and forest;
- to promote good and safe access links for walkers, cyclists and other road users, whilst working to reduce the reliance on fossil-fuel transport.

3. *The Natural Environment*

To maintain, protect and improve the beauty, tranquillity and accessibility of our rural landscape, together with its diverse wildlife, that residents and visitors value so highly.

To protect vulnerable habitats from the impacts of climate change and build climate resilience.

To play its part in tackling climate change and helping the UK to reach its goal of net zero emissions by 2050 through the protection and enhancement of its trees, woodland and forest.

Key policies:

- Protecting and strengthening our local wildlife and habitats
- Reinforcing the local landscape character (including the tranquillity of the countryside and dark skies, and the undeveloped gaps between settlements)
- Protecting our important local views
- Encouraging appropriate recreational access to the countryside

Projects:

- Woodland Survey and Planting
- Lobbying for noise-reduction measures on the A35
- New and improved recreational routes and green spaces

Local Wildlife and Habitats

3.1 Stinsford parish has a far greater wildlife value than perhaps suggested by its small size. It hosts a range of different habitats, including patches of ancient and broadleaved woodland; the water meadows associated with the River Frome along the southern edge of the plan area (which is a nationally designated wildlife site¹), the calcareous grassland around Waterston Ridgeway in the north, and the dry heathland edging Thorncombe Wood in the east.

Thorncombe Wood is a mix of ancient and deciduous woodland and heathland, and has been designated as a Local Nature Reserve. All



of these habitats in turn host a wide variety of birds, insects, invertebrates, fish and mammals. For example, kingfishers can be seen along the river, there are owls hunting at dusk, as well as signs of badgers and smaller mammals include the dormouse, water vole and the water shrew. More information on the range of notable wildlife species found in the parish is described in Table 1, and more details are included in Appendix 1.



¹ The River Frome SSSI (which runs from Dorchester to Wareham) is an important chalk stream habitat supporting aquatic and bankside vegetation. The site also supports rare and scarce aquatic invertebrates, riverside birds and a range of fish species which includes some of particular importance in a European context.

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/2000220.pdf>

Table 1. Wildlife research findings

Mammals
Badgers, foxes and roe deer are quite frequently sighted when they emerge from cover, and otters have made a major comeback - a DEFRA survey of 2001/2002 reported widespread signs of them on the River Frome. Occasional sightings continue to be made along the river near to Lower Bockhampton. Smaller mammals include the dormouse, the water vole and the water shrew.
Birds.
Many of the bird species are associated with water: notably Kingfisher, Water Rail, Grey Wagtail, Marsh Tit and Mute Swan; also Reed, Sedge and Cetti's Warblers. Local raptors include Little, Barn and Tawny owls as well as Sparrow Hawks and Kestrels, with Buzzards being the most often seen. Nightjars are seen and heard each summer on the heathland. Large numbers of Jackdaws gather in the oriental Plane Tree next to Stinsford Church, before roosting on nearby roofs, and there is a large rookery next to the A35 south of Higher Kingston Farm.
Reptiles and Amphibians
All 3 British Snakes - Adders, Grass and Smooth Snakes - have been sighted; and Palmate and Smooth Newts are found in a number of our ponds.
Butterflies and Moths
Butterfly Conservation has recorded 28 butterfly species within the parish: of these, the most spectacular is the Silver Washed Fritillary (Thorncombe Wood), a species noted for its spectacular courtship flight; a less common species is the Silver Studded Blue found on the dry heath near Thorncombe Wood
Insects and Spiders
The Green Tiger Beetle is noted on the dry heath near Thorncombe Wood. The watery habitats are good for dragonflies including Emperor and Golden Ringed Dragonflies, and the less common Four Spotted Chaser. Also associated with water are the Wolf Spider and the more fully aquatic Raft Spider - one of Britain's largest species.
Fish
With good water quality reported there are a number of species seen including Brown Trout and Salmon. Grayling, Dace and Roach breed in the Stinsford Branch of the River Frome. Eels and Lampreys have been seen.

3.2 Research² has shown that, whilst Dorset is particularly rich in wildlife (and this in itself attracts a large numbers of tourists, who benefit the local economy), Dorset's environment has been seriously degraded over the past 80 years, for example through the significant loss of neutral and calcareous grasslands, impacts of nitrogen deposition and habitat fragmentation. This is likely to apply equally to Stinsford. Whilst a lot of this is due to changing agricultural practices, these impacts and possible mitigation measures are something that this Neighbourhood Plan must take into account.

3.3 The Government is intending to set a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity in all planning applications as part of the Environment Bill currently working its way through Parliament. Dorset Council requires the submission of a certified Biodiversity Mitigation Plan in cases where the site size exceeds 0.1ha and on smaller sites where there could be important habitats or protected species present (for more details please refer to their validation process), and seeks to ensure a net biodiversity gain through such mechanisms.

² <https://valuing-nature.net/sites/default/files/documents/Reports/DorsetNatCapTrendsReport.pdf>

3.4 Sustainably managed woodland plays a key role in tackling climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere and locking it away for centuries. In addition to the areas of Ancient Woodland (as identified in Natural England's inventory) we have also identified areas of local historic woodland using local knowledge checked against historic maps from the turn of the 20th century. Increasing tree and woodland cover and other initiatives such as protecting our soils (which also store carbon) can not only help combat climate change but also provide wider environmental benefits.

3.5 Poole Harbour (which the River Frome flows into) is an important, internationally protected wildlife site, but has been deteriorating due to the increased nitrogen levels from sewage and agricultural practices in the surrounding area that gradually make their way to the harbour. As all of Stinsford parish is within the catchment zone of Poole Harbour, by law all new residential development, tourism attractions and tourism accommodation will need to be nitrogen neutral. This can be achieved via improvements to sewage treatment mechanisms so that they remove more nitrogen, or through changing the management of agricultural land to a use that requires less nitrogen input³.

3.6 The heathland in the eastern part of the parish (primarily Black and Bhomepston Heaths, to the east side of Thorncombe Wood) is an important wildlife habitat, albeit fragmented from the protected heathlands further to the east (in areas such as Warmwell and Tadnoll). These areas are particularly vulnerable to recreational pressures, and to climate change from drought and increased temperatures. As Lower Bockhampton and Bhomepston lie within 5km of internationally protected heathland sites⁴, by law all new residential development within this zone will need to ensure that it does not give rise to further recreational pressures on the protected heathland⁵.

Policy SNP1. Protecting and strengthening our local wildlife and habitats

Development must protect and, where practicable, enhance biodiversity to secure an overall biodiversity gain, taking into account the existing wildlife interest and habitats in the local area, and how these are under threat (for example through land / forestry management practices, water resource management, recreational pressures and climate change).

Measures to support the ecological improvement of wildlife habitats, including their climate change resilience, will be supported. This could include:

- wildlife -friendly and climate-resilient farming practices;*
- habitat enhancement schemes, including where appropriate tree planting and the expansion of woodland and heathland areas;*
- improvement and expansion of the network of wildlife sites, corridors and stepping stones, including their management.*

Development must avoid having an adverse effect on the integrity of internationally important wildlife sites. The loss of ancient and local historic woodlands and the loss of heathland habitats within the parish will be strongly resisted.

³ Guidance on this is provided in [The Nitrogen Reduction in Poole Harbour Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\)](#). Applicants are encouraged to liaise with Dorset Council and Natural England to confirm that any measures proposed (including financial contributions) are sufficient to fully mitigate the impacts of the development on the Poole Harbour internationally designated sites.

⁴ See map https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605111947/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/south_west/ourwork/heathlands/dorsetmaps.aspx

⁵ Guidance on this is provided in the [Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework SPD](#), which advises on appropriate mitigation measures to divert recreational pressure away from heathland.

3.7 Many of the woodlands, large and small, consist of ageing trees and there are concerns that without a management plan and replacement planting, many of these could become depleted to the detriment of the landscape quality of the parish. It is also unclear to what extent recreational pursuits in woodland areas (such as mountain biking and horse riding) may be having a detrimental impact on their biodiversity. A survey of the parish's woodlands, particularly focusing on those that are not in active management or where there is significant recreational use, is therefore suggested as a first step to understanding these potential threats.

3.8 It may also be possible to utilize public spaces (e.g. recreational areas and verges) and work with local landowners to improve climate resilience and enhance the environment through rewilding and other initiatives.

Project P1. Woodland Survey and Planting

The Parish Council will investigate undertaking a survey of the parish's woodlands, so that appropriate management can be encouraged.

The Parish Council will work with landowners, businesses and residents to:

- *encourage the appropriate planting of trees, woodland creation and other activities to help combat climate change and further enhance our natural environment;*
- *use public spaces (such as recreational areas and verges) to improve climate resilience and enhance the environment through rewilding and other initiatives;*
- *assess and manage the environmental and ecological impacts of potentially damaging activities in woodland areas (such as mountain biking, horse riding and other recreational pursuits) with a specific focus on reducing any detrimental impacts on soil carbon and habitat quality.*

Local Landscape Character

3.9 Stinsford parish lies almost entirely within the Dorset Downs and Cranborne National Character Area⁶, much of which has been designated as a nationally important landscape. However the parish itself lies just beyond the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which runs through the Piddle Valley at Piddlehinton to the north of the parish, and to the south side of the A352 through Winterborne Came and Whitcombe. The AONB was designated more than 60 years ago (in 1959), and at that time Stinsford parish was excluded despite areas such as Waterston Ridge having much the same topography and characteristics. The case for a National Park for Dorset⁷ highlights the importance of Egdon Heath and Stinsford parish, in that this landscape forms ‘the heart of Hardy’s Wessex’ – and suggests that, if it is to be preserved for posterity, then the parishes of Stratton, Charminster, Stinsford and Puddletown, that currently lie outside of the AONB, all need to be protected.

3.10 The landscape of Stinsford parish is characterised by contours that create discrete parcels of land, which in turn hide and reveal many beautiful vistas, crisscrossed by ribbons of hedgerows subdividing the field systems and a scattering of woodlands.

3.11 The varied topography, soils and history have brought about a rich mix of landscapes, primarily based on small-scale farming, with very few large fields (the average field size is around 10ha), with many of the boundaries relatively unchanged from Saxon times.

⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5848412540895232> – although a very small part – mainly Puddletown Forest – lies within the adjoining Dorset Heaths NCA <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/4961534241406976>

⁷ <https://www.dorsetnationalpark.com/post/thomas-hardy-heritage>

3.12 The parish has three main landscape types (as defined in the local landscape character assessments undertaken by the Local Planning Authority⁸), whose main characteristics are described in Table 2 below:

- river valley pasture (associated with the River Frome and its flood plain) – much of which is included as land of local landscape importance in the Local Plan, but extends slightly further north to include the first fields to the north side of the unnamed road that connects from Westleaze past Frome Whitfield and Cokers Frome to the Stinsford roundabout, as well as Stinsford itself and up to the southern limits of Lower Bockhampton and Bhompston.,
- chalk valley and downland, becoming more open to the north (this landscape includes the northern part of the parish and the settlements of Lower and Higher Bockhampton, Bhompston and Higher Kingston)
- heath / forest mosaic (covering Puddletown Forest and the area around Greys and Yellowham Woods)

Table 2. Local landscape characteristics

Landscape characteristic	river pasture	chalk	heath / forest
peaceful, tranquil character	✓	in part *	in part *
small, dispersed settlements, separated by large undeveloped areas	✓	✓	✓
rural lanes that run along historic transport routes	✓	✓	
intricate network of public rights of way and private access tracks			✓
predominantly open landscape	✓	✓	
relatively small-scale fields bordered by hedgerows	✓	in part	
water channels / meadows and associated historic structures	✓	in part	
small deciduous woodlands / copses, including ancient woodland	✓	in part	
extensive tree cover			✓
patches of lowland heath			✓

* the tranquillity is disturbed within the A35 noise corridor - <http://www.extrium.co.uk/noiseviewer.html>

3.13 It is important that development respects the local landscape characteristics. The peace and tranquil nature of the area was a particular characteristic noted by local residents – although the areas closest to the A35 main road are affected by noise from the traffic using the A35 main road.

3.14 The river valley pasture landscape (including the Land of Local



⁸ <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/countryside-coast-parks/the-dorset-landscape/landscape-character-assessment-map.aspx> - these supplement the more general descriptions given in the National Character Areas profiles which are also worth studying – the parish lies partly within the Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase NCA 134 and partly with the Dorset Heaths NCA 135 [National Character Area profiles - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

Landscape Importance (LLLI) identified in the adopted Local Plan) and the separation of the settlements and open spaces between these is shown diagrammatically on Figure 2. In particular the notably vulnerable gaps, as listed in Table 3, are considered particularly fragile due to their limited length. Whilst there may be a general policy of restraint towards development in the open countryside, some development (such as new farm buildings) may still be permitted, and it is therefore important that such development does not take place in these most vulnerable gaps.

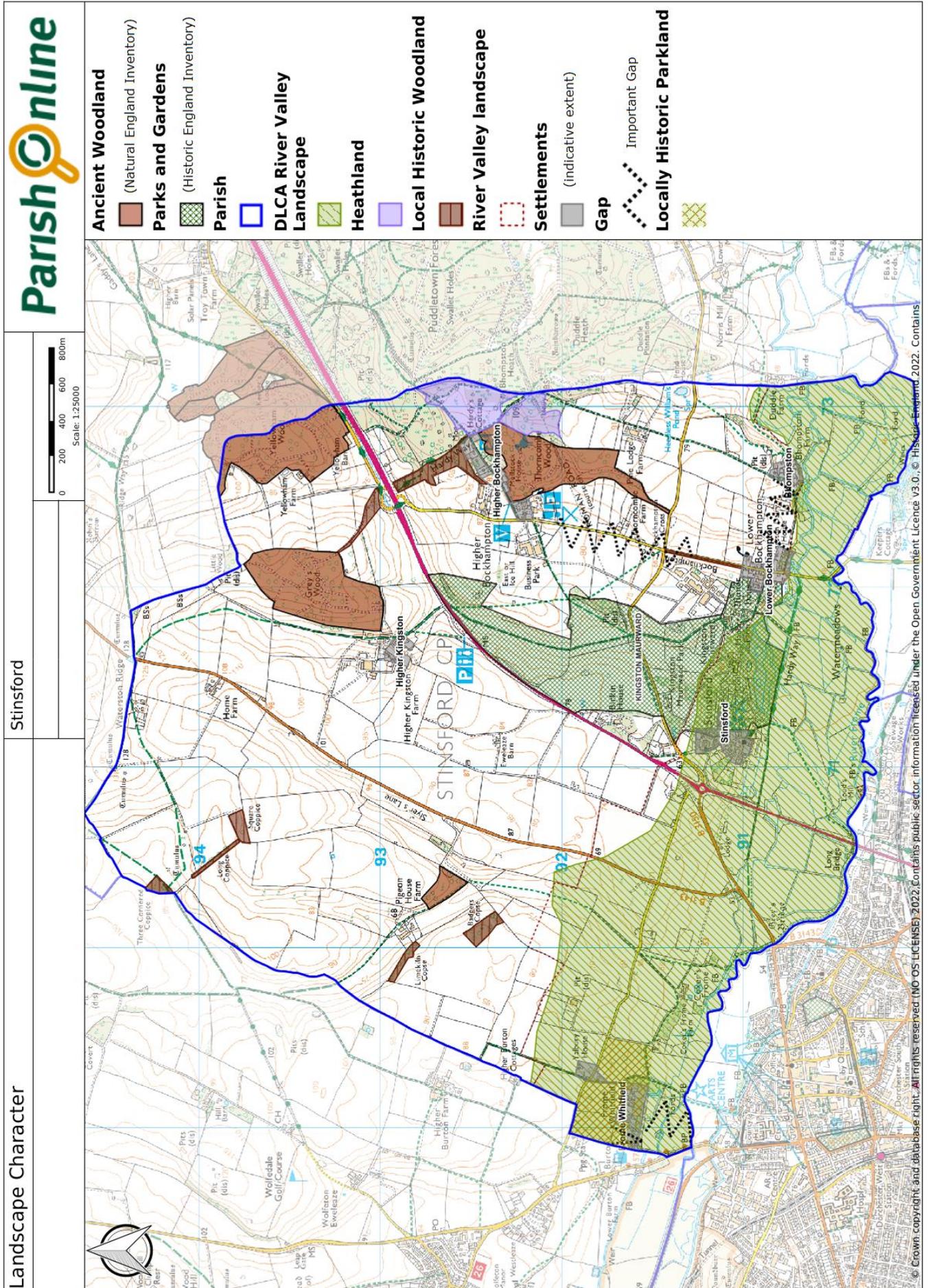
Table 3. Important Open Gaps

Gap	Description	Length
Frome Whitfield to Lower Burton	The gap between Frome Whitfield and Burton has historically been quite narrow, with part of the gap located beyond the Neighbourhood Plan area. Whilst farm buildings along the westward-leading track have been converted and added to, further infill, or development on the fields to the north, would be particularly harmful in reducing the feeling of separation between these two settlements.	< 200m
Frome Whitfield to Dorchester	Whilst most of the gap here is within the flood plain, and therefore is unlikely to be developed, the prospect of a northern extension to the town could increase pressure for infrastructure through this gap which would diminish its value as a gap.	500m
Kingston Maurward and Lower Bockhampton to Higher Bockhampton	The northward extension of Kingston Maurward College towards Bockhampton Cross has greatly reduced the feeling of separation between the two Bockhamptons. There has also been pressure for further development at and around Hampton Farm Business Park and Greenwood Grange. Given the rural setting of the Cross and the rising topography, further infill development to the north side of the Cross would be particularly harmful.	800m
Lower Bockhampton to Bhompston	The gap between Lower Bockhampton to Bhompston has historically been quite narrow, and further diminished with the westward spread of farm building at Bhompston. Further development, particular within the undeveloped field to the east of Lower Bockhampton Farm, would be particularly harmful in reducing the feeling of separation between these two settlements.	200m

3.15 The gap between Stinsford and Lower Bockhampton is also not specifically listed in Table 3 – as its character is primarily related to the presence of the Elizabethan Manor and Kingston Maurward House and their associated grounds, and these grounds are statutorily designated on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England. Today much of this area is part of the College’s estate, and any development would need to respect the particular historic significance of the gardens and parkland.

3.16 All of the river valley pasture has a particularly rural, agricultural feel, and this characteristic is central to the setting of the string of settlements along its length, as well as the wider setting of Dorchester. Whilst no decision has yet been made on the possible northern extension to Dorchester, there would be a clear tension between trying to locate development close to the town, whilst respecting this river valley landscape setting.

Figure 2. Key landscape characteristics and green gaps diagram



3.17 The gap between Frome Whitfield and Cokers Frome is not specifically listed in Table 3, because Cokers Frome is not a settlement in the same historic or current sense, and its associated buildings are much more scattered and considered to be part of this river valley landscape. It should however be noted that the remnants of parkland associated with Frome Whitfield House, containing a number of specimen trees, adds a particular character to this area. This has created an ornamental agricultural appearance, recognized in the 2018 Local Plan options consultation as significant to the setting of Dorchester's Conservation Area. In the recent past a number of the trees have been lost.

3.18 Opportunities should be taken, where possible, to enhance the rural character of the area. In particular there are opportunities for planting to help screen some of the larger buildings that have intruded into the more open countryside. For example, the replacement planting of the parkland trees at Frome Whitfield would help reinforce the historic landscape character of this settlement, and native hedgerow and tree planting to the south side of Mellstock Business Park would bring about substantial benefits in screening the business units. Similarly additional landscaping around the Studio School would help reduce its impact on the rural setting of Bockhampton Cross.

3.19 Even if the proposed northern extension of Dorchester is agreed through the Local Plan, the following policies would still be relevant in terms of guiding the masterplan for the site, in particular with regard to the treatment of the settlement edges, the design of new or upgraded routes (including any associated lighting) and the retention of landscape features that would be appropriate to ensure that such development respects the area's character.

3.20 Information on the historical and cultural links to the landscape is included in section 4.

Policy SNP2. Local Landscape Character

Development will respect and where possible enhance the rural character of the local landscape.

In particular:

- *the peaceful, tranquil character of much of the countryside should be retained, and measures supported to reduce noise disturbance from existing sources;*
- *the pattern of small scale farmed fields should be respected, with particular efforts taken to protect field boundaries that have been unaltered since historic times;*
- *the open and expansive nature of the chalk downland should be respected;*
- *the network of lanes and tracks should remain rural in character, and not become urbanized (for example through the introduction of lighting, kerbed pavements or large metal signage);*
- *the river corridors, streams and ditches with their associated vegetation, remnants of managed water meadows and small humped bridges should be protected;*
- *areas of ancient and local historic woodland should be retained, and additional woodland and hedgerow planting should be sought, characteristic of the scale and species found in the area. Where appropriate this should be used to soften the visual impact of more visually intrusive development in wider views;*
- *new roads should be tree lined, unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary.*

Policy SNP3. The Landscape Setting of the Settlements

The string of small settlements along the river valley should retain their individual character, and care should be taken to avoid reducing the undeveloped nature of the gaps between the settlements, particularly with reference to those described in Table 3.

The characteristics of the river valley pasture landscape (including those characteristics identified in Table 2), which provide the setting for Dorchester and the Stinsford river valley settlements, should be respected.

3.21 The level of traffic on the A35 (which at the last count in 2017 was about 33,000 vehicles on an average day⁹) and the road surface treatment, which uses concrete in part, mean that the A35 is the main source of noise in the parish. Whilst the levels of traffic are unlikely to reduce in the future, a different re-surfacing could reduce noise levels, and the Parish Council will continue to lobby for this with Highways England.

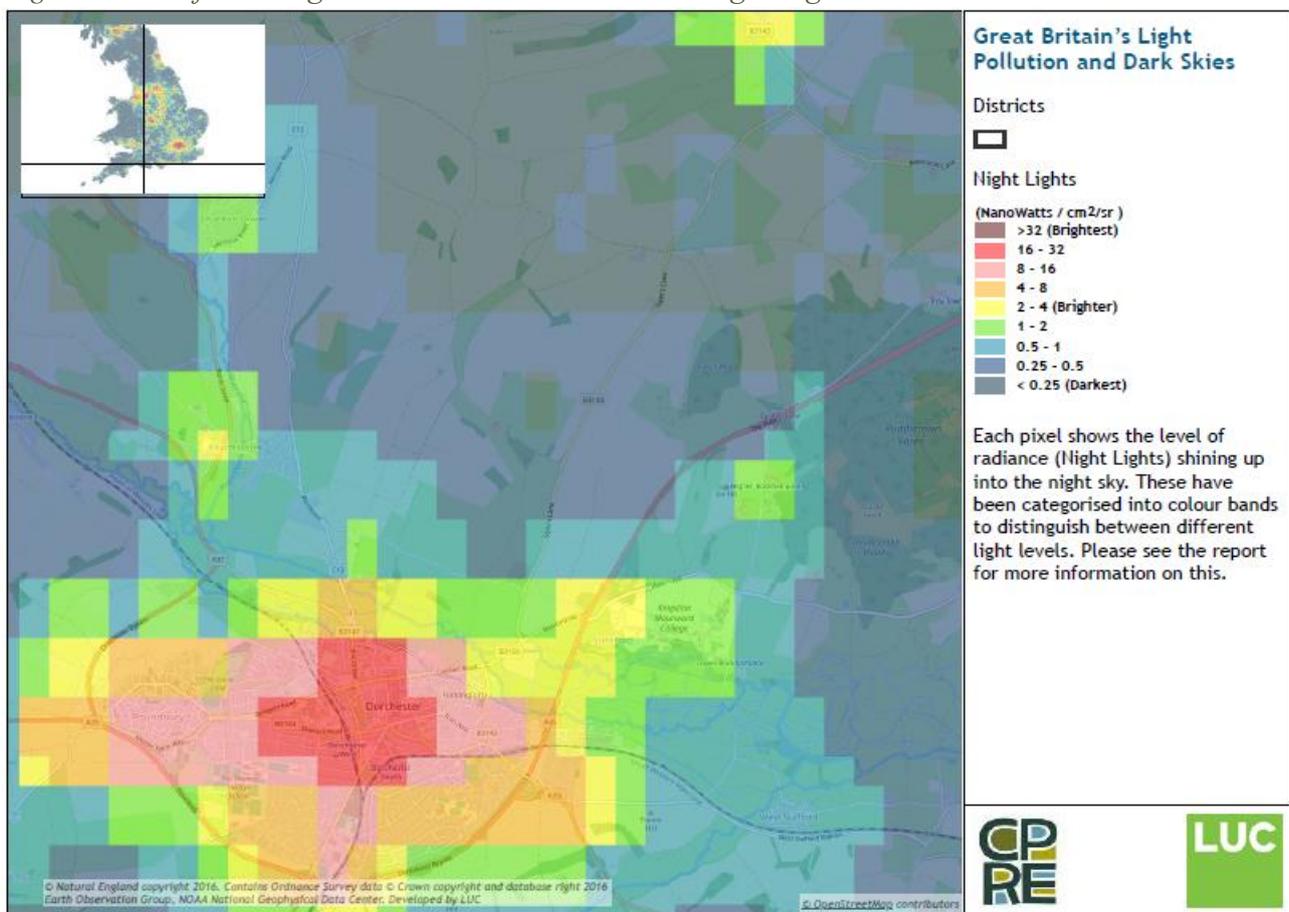
Project P2. Noise-reduction measures on the A35

The Parish Council will continue to lobby for noise-reduction measures on the A35.

Stinsford's Dark Skies

3.22 The area enjoys dark night skies for the most part, as illustrated on the following map (courtesy of the CPRE / LUC) although light spill from Dorchester does intrude into the parish. There is hardly any street lighting in Stinsford, and no desire for this to change.

Figure 3. Stinsford's Light Pollution and Dark Skies: Nightblight



3.23 Whilst there are limitations on what can and cannot be achieved¹⁰, this shouldn't stop us from encouraging the best approach for our area. Where lighting is considered necessary, the choice of

⁹ <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/manualcountpoints/46381>

¹⁰ impacts of light pollution show little respect for boundaries, and can be seen from considerable distances. Moreover, the planning system has little control over the installation of external lighting on existing buildings.

lighting should consider how best to avoid light spillage and glare. Movement sensitive and timed PIR lights, down-lighters or ‘wall washers’ are examples of lighting schemes that generally have less adverse impact whilst providing appropriate illumination. In general, light sources should be fully shielded and pointed downwards, so that light is not emitted above the horizontal.

Policy SNP4. Dark Skies

Development should be designed to retain the dark skies, through minimizing exterior lighting / illuminations and including measures to control light spillage and glare, particularly in areas of open countryside and on the edge of settlements. Street lighting should not be provided in developments unless required to address site-specific safety or operational issues.

Important Local Views

3.24 Whilst “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”, some aspects of the landscape within the parish have universal appeal. This is reflected in the consultations on the plan, which show how much residents value the peaceful rurality of the parish. As part of the 2019 Residents Survey, we asked people to tell us about their favourite views in the parish. The views suggested naturally reflect those parts of the parish that people tend to visit more – such as those areas closest to the settlements and well-used rights of way. The findings in particular highlighted that views from the Frome river path across the associated water meadows are very popular, as is the southerly view from the Roman Road in Thorncombe Wood. Views from less well-trodden paths may have received fewer mentions, but perhaps are no less deserving of protection.

3.25 The main views are shown in the following map and described in Table 4. Other views also mentioned by local residents are noted on the map.

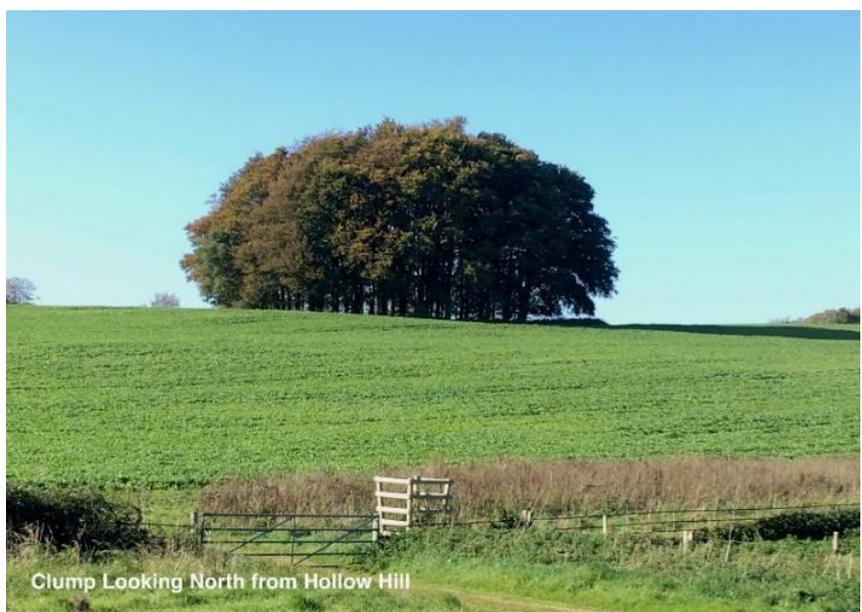


Table 4. *Important Local Views*

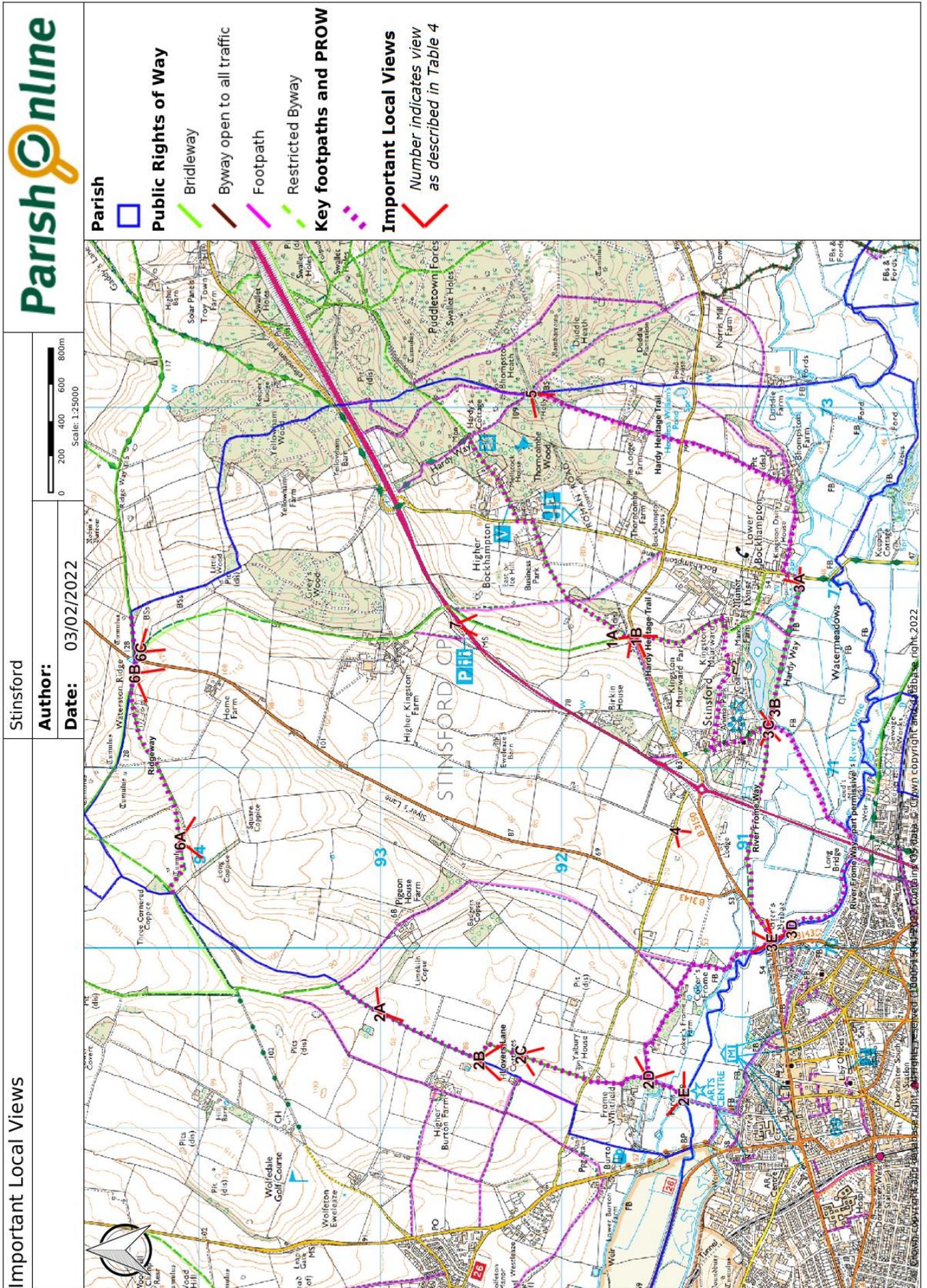
Viewpoint/s	Description
1. Hollow Hill	<p>1A: To the north the view includes the Roman road (adjacent to the viewing point), the prominent tree clump within Kingston Maurward’s parkland, and the rise of the chalk above the quarry (close to the viewpoint). The footpath was frequented by Hardy on his walk from the Cottage to Dorchester.</p> <p>1B: To the south the focal feature is Kingston Maurward House, considered to be the Knapwater House in ‘Desperate Remedies’; and it also features as the Manor in ‘Under the Greenwood Tree’.</p>
2. Lovers’ Lane	<p>2A: View south-east from the old drove road into secluded chalk valley, and expansive view south towards Dorchester’s skyline.</p> <p>2B: View to south and east from Lovers’ Lane over Dorchester to the South Dorset Ridgeway beyond, with iconic landmarks of Dorchester including the Listed Buildings of Art Deco period County Hall with its copper roof, and St George’s Church in Fordington.</p> <p>2C: Looking south down the former drove road, with the well-treed landscape of the historic parkland of Frome Whitfield in the middle distance, and the Dorchester skyline beyond, including St George’s Church in Fordington.</p> <p>2D: View east from a ford with raised walkway beside, through a kissing gate (a feature often mentioned in Hardy literature) the footpath to the east follows the Frome Valley across relic historic parkland with ancient oaks. Looking south the towers of the church spires and tall chimneys of Dorchester’s skyline can be seen.</p> <p>2E View from Blue Bridge looking northwards across an intimate view of the convergence of the Cerne and Frome rivers, beyond which lies Chapel Close field which is the site and remains of the medieval village of Frome Whitfield and St Nicholas Church (the view of the site of the medieval village is also possible from the footbridge to the north).</p>
3. River Frome Walk	<p>3A: From the river path near Bockhampton Bridge, looking north-easterly to Bridge Cottage House (considered the prototype of Farmer Shiner’s cottage in ‘Under the Greenwood Tree’). The area downstream is a view into Tess of the d’Urbervilles “Valley of the Great Dairies” and to the right is where Angel Clare carried the milk maids across the water on their way to church.</p> <p>3B: From Stinsford Ford looking east along the embowered path featured in Hardy’s <i>The Dead Quire</i> and in <i>Under the Greenwood Tree</i> (and you can also see the leat taking the water to Kingston Maurward Lake)</p> <p>3C: looking west giving views of Three Bears Cottage (the gardener’s cottage for the Stinsford Estate) and across the water meadows, with its ditches, remains of sluices and low bridges. Further along the path there are views north to Stinsford House.</p> <p>3D: From Grey’s Bridge looking eastwards, across the water meadows, and Hardy’s ‘Durnover Moor’ in the Wessex novels.</p> <p>3E: From Grey’s Bridge looking northwards, features being the old natural swimming pool, the hatches, and Hatch Cottage – remnants of the historic management of the water meadows and a pool historically used for recreation.</p>

continued on next page

3. River Frome Walk <i>(continued)</i>	This is an area associated with many characters in Hardy’s novels and poems – Michael Henchard in ‘The Mayor of Casterbridge’, Fanny Robin pausing on her way to the Union Workhouse, or Farmer Boldwood going to the prison in “Far From the Madding Crowd”.
4. Top of Exhibition Field	The view south-west over the Exhibition Field which was used for the Bath and West and Southern Counties Show in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Beyond is “Mellstock” Lodge and the Stinsford Park and water meadows with historic Horse Chestnut and Sycamore trees and the footpath often taken by the young Hardy on his daily walk to and from Dorchester. The poem “the Third Kissing Gate” refers to this. Along the road and up ‘Mellstock’ Hill is the re-created avenue of Limes, and beyond this Dorchester with Admiral Hardy’s Monument in the distance.
5. Thorncombe Wood Roman Road	Looking south-west, with Rushy Pond and its associated poem “At Rushy Pond” close by, are views down the Roman Road and across rare heathland habitat, part of Hardy’s Egdon Heath, which features in ‘The Return of the Native’ <i>“Ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress”</i> .
6. Waterston Ridge Way	6A: From a point beside Fiddlers Green (the remains of Shepherd Fennel’s home in the story Three Strangers) and close to one of the many tumuli along the ridge, looking south towards Cokers Frome Road (the view mentioned in the poem The Revisitation, with to the East the Piddle Valley Road (‘the grey, gaunt, lonely Lane of Slyre’)). 6B: A view from west of Slyers Lane (the Piddle Valley road), looking south over Dorchester towards the South Dorset Ridgeway, with further west the now distinctive profile of Poundbury. Maiden Castle, Britain’s (and Europe’s) largest Iron Age Hill Fort occupies the middle distance. The skyline is punctuated by the numerous Bronze Age burial tumuli clearly visible along the crest of the South Dorset Ridgeway leading the eye west to Hardy’s Monument at the top of Black Down. 6C: A view east of Slyers Lane, looking south-east towards the ancient woodlands of Grey’s Wood and beyond to Yellowham Wood, an area which features in Hardy’s novel Far from the Madding Crowd.
7. Kingston layby on A35	Looking south from the A35 adjacent to Higher Kingston, a sweeping view into Kingston Maurward parkland, with Kingston Maurward House as the focal point.

3.26 It would not be possible or indeed appropriate to stop any development within these views, particularly in the long term if the northern extension of Dorchester is given the go-ahead (which would be apparent from a number of the viewpoints suggested). Nor is it possible to identify every viewpoint that residents enjoy. However it is important that the impact of development on these views is properly balanced in the planning decision, with moderate to significant weight given to their protection. In particular, attention should be paid to the extent to which the enjoyment of the view may be impacted, taking into account the focal points and/or wide expanse of the view and the number of people who regularly enjoy the view. It may be possible, through landscaping or the careful siting, scale and design of development, to significantly reduce the adverse impact of development.

Figure 4. Map of Important Local Views



Policy SNP5. Protecting our important local views

Development that would have a significant adverse impact on an Important Local View (as shown on Figure 4 and described in Table 4) should be avoided, unless there would be a clear and over-riding public benefit and all reasonable measures have been taken to mitigate the impact.

Recreational access to the countryside

3.27 The parish is crisscrossed by a comprehensive network of footpaths and bridleways giving access to the countryside to walkers, horse riders and cyclists. This brings multiple benefits, for health (both in terms of people's physical and mental well-being), the local economy (as a major resource and attraction for visitors who may stay locally or use the local services) and wildlife (which uses the green corridors these routes create). They are also important in providing access to some of the most spectacular views in the area (see Table 4 in locally important views).

3.28 However these paths and places are themselves vulnerable to over-use, as has been witnessed along the River Path which has been eroded in places (as a result of the level of users and localized flooding). Likewise, visitors to Thorncombe Woods (which is next to the National Trust visitor attraction of Hardy's Cottage) have increased significantly in recent years, and whilst income generated can help fund the site's management, it is important that increasing the number of visitors does not adversely impact on the biodiversity and quiet enjoyment of this site. There are also some paths on the network that end on, or have to cross, a busy highway, where the highway verge is not particularly safe.

3.29 Whilst the amount of housing development required to meet local need within Stinsford is unlikely to trigger the need for additional recreational open space provision, further pressure on the existing sites could potentially arise from the further expansion of the school, visitor pressure and the growth of Dorchester's population. It is highly unlikely that improvements to the existing sites would mitigate this impact, and indeed our existing open spaces such as Thorncombe Wood may struggle to cater for any increase in demand, to their detriment. It is therefore important that further sites for additional open space of an appropriate quality are identified and brought forward in a timely manner to soak up any such increase in demand.

Did you know...

Dorset Council is responsible for maintaining the surface of rights of way according to their status, and clearing any surface vegetation or undergrowth from the path.

Landowners are responsible for cutting back hedges, trees or shrubs overhanging a public right of way.

Landowners are responsible for maintaining stiles or gates, but Dorset Council may help with funding.

To report a problem -

<https://mapping.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/rightsofway/reportproblem>



Policy SNP6. Encouraging appropriate recreational access to the countryside

The improvement and expansion of the existing public rights of way network, permissive paths and open access land within the parish will be supported, and should focus on:

- *creating a joined-up network of paths and spaces that provide a wide variety of options in terms of circular routes, including options that are suitable for use of people with mobility difficulties, wheelchairs or buggies, and options suitable for horseriders;*
- *providing effective management for visitor and wildlife benefit, and reducing the pressure on those paths and sites that are most vulnerable to over-use.*

Development that would adversely impact on access to, and the health and wildlife benefits of, the public rights of way network in the parish will not be supported.

Where new development would generate an adverse level of demand on the existing recreational network of accessible green spaces and rights of way, additional provision will be sought in order to mitigate any substantial cumulative harm, at a level appropriate to the scale and likely impact of the development.

3.30 The current adopted standards for natural and semi-natural greenspace¹¹ suggests a requirement of 5ha per 1,000 person. For the County Town of Dorchester¹², this would suggest a requirement of at least 105ha accessible natural greenspace in easy reach of the town, rising to over 160ha if the town grows to the extent that the Draft Local Plan proposes. At the current time, the main open access areas around Dorchester are:

- Maiden Castle to the south,
- Poundbury Camp / West Ward Common to the west (although much of the common is not readily accessible)
- Thorncombe Wood to the east, within Stinsford Parish, which is more distant from the town and therefore more likely to be visited by car.

3.31 Kingston Maurward College is investigating the improvement of signage and route marking across its estate, linking from Hardy's Cottage at the north-eastern edge of the estate to his house, Max Gate, in Dorchester. Other suggestions raised through the Neighbourhood Plan include the potential for a safer link to West Stafford, as Bockhampton Lane can become busy when used as a cut through and is relatively narrow, particularly where the lane crosses over bridges.

3.32 Should the option to expand Dorchester into Stinsford Parish be included in the new Dorset Council Local Plan, it is clear that the development will need to provide a significant level of public open space and improvements to the existing recreational routes across the parish in its masterplanning. Otherwise the development will put increasing unsustainable pressure on Thorncombe Wood and the recreational routes that link to it, damaging the very essence of what visitors come to enjoy.

Project P3. Investigating new and improved recreational routes and accessible green spaces

The Parish Council will work with local landowners to investigate potential options to provide new and improved recreational routes and accessible green spaces.

¹¹ [Planning Obligations Guidelines](#), as adopted in February 2010 by West Dorset District Council

¹² Based on its 2018 ONS population estimate of 21,082 residents

4. The Cultural and Historic Environment

To care for its historic and literary heritage and to welcome appropriate numbers of visitors.

Key policies:

- Protecting Stinsford's Historic Environment
- Positively managing the Thomas Hardy connection

The Historic and Cultural Context

4.1 Stinsford's history has an incredible time-depth. To the north of the parish along Waterston Ridge there are a number of barrows and tumuli thought to date to the Bronze Age (c.2000-700 BC). The course of the Roman Road runs through the parish, which originally linked Dorchester to Badbury Rings and beyond. In fact, the book of Stinsford also records evidence of an even earlier Roman Road running slightly to the south, which was unearthed in excavations by Kingston Maurward College in the late 1980s, and potentially ran across the parish from Grey's Bridge to Tincleton Road (by Heedless William's Pond).

4.2 There are remains of a medieval settlement at Frome Whitfield, and many of the settlements are mentioned in the Domesday Book. Stinsford Church is probably the oldest surviving building in the parish, with parts dating back to Norman times. The area is especially rich in Manor and country houses, farmhouses and labourers' cottages, with the various estates having a major influence over the development of their land. Thomas Hardy's literature has also brought many parts of the parish to a world-wide audience. A review of the area's heritage assets by settlement, and including both designated and non-designated buildings of interest, follows. Many of these have been described in the Conservation Area Appraisal, or identified through local knowledge and a review of historical maps and local literature. A full list of the designated and non-designated heritage assets is included in Appendices 2 and 3.

Table 5. A review of the main historic and cultural associations with the parish

Bhompston

Bhompston is recorded in the Domesday Book as Frome, gaining the Boneville name tag from the 13th century. It is recorded as part of the Stinsford estate under the ownership of John Strangways and subsequently the Earl of Ilchester, but today the farm is in the ownership of the Wakely family.

Bhompston Old Farmhouse (unlisted) was the inspiration for 'Blooms End', the Yeobrights' house in Hardy's novel 'The Return of the Native'.

Coker's Frome

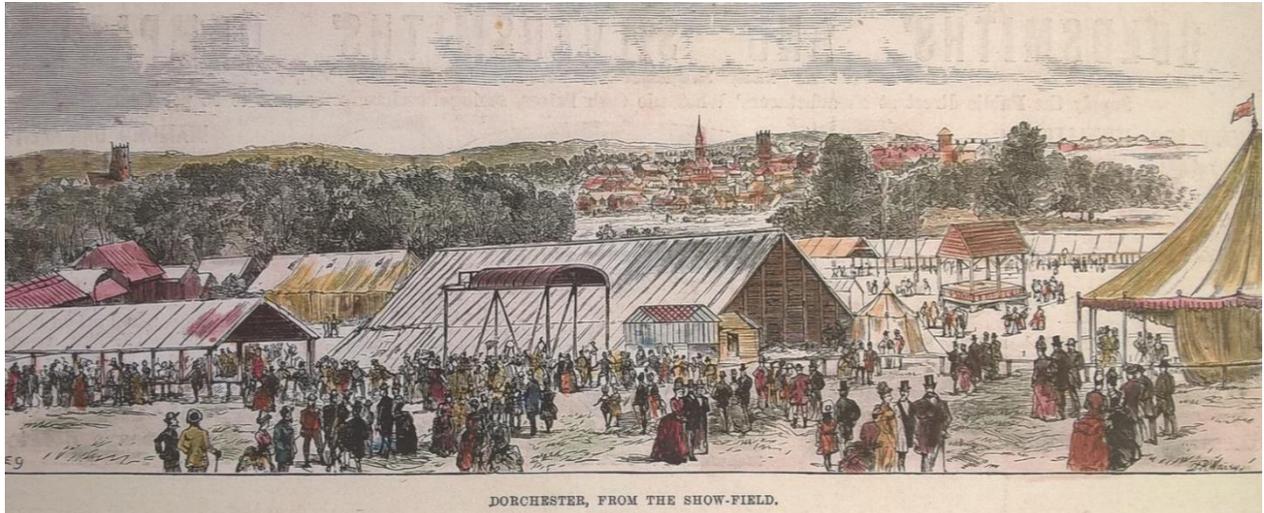
Sir William Whitfield & wife Margery of Frome Whitfield left part of the estate, "Cokers Frome" to their daughter Alice in 1335, as they had no male heir (and the estate would revert to the King). Alice's descendants became part of the Coker family, and early records mention a Manor belonging to the Coker family from 1433.

There are settlement earthworks of probable medieval origin, visible as earthworks on aerial



photographs and LiDAR imagery west of Cokers Frome Dairy House.

Land around Coker's Frome was added to the Stinsford parish in 1894. The Mayo family have farmed this area for over 150 years, and at one point owned land as far north as Waterston Ridge. Today Coker's Frome is perhaps most famous as the **Dorset County Showground**, with the history of the show dating back some 180 years. The county show takes place annually on the fields either side of Slyers Lane, and has been its current location since the turn of the century.



Frome Whitfield

Mentioned as Frome in the Domesday Book, land north of Dorchester was granted to Robert Whitfield in 1189, from whence it takes its name. The settlement includes the site of **the medieval village and St Nicholas Church** (an unscheduled monument, believed to have been destroyed by 1549) in a field called 'Chapel Close'. Frome Whitfield was a parish in its own right until 1610 when its depopulation caused it to merge with the parish of Holy Trinity Church, Dorchester before being added to the parish of Stinsford in 1894.

The Civil War Politician, Denzil Holles, whose mausoleum is in St Peter's Church Dorchester, owned and lived at Frome Whitfield when it was known as Holles Frome. There is a wall plaque within the church commemorating his ownership, dated 1658.

Frome Whitfield was bought by the Dorset Henning family in 1799 and **Frome (Whitfield) House** (unlisted), a new Georgian style house was built replacing the older house on that site. The parkland with its fine trees still defines the character of this hamlet and is overlooked by **Yalbury Lodge**, a late Victorian characterful cottage mainly built of Broadmayne brick under a plain clay tiled roof, and the more recent Yalbury House. To the south-west lies **Frome Whitfield Lodge**, its wall plaque dating it to 1879 and marking one entrance into the estate. The **Blue Bridge**, a Victorian iron bridge constructed in 1877, provides easy walking passage to Dorchester across the River Frome.



Blue Bridge looking North

Higher Bockhampton

The first cottage at Higher Bockhampton is believed to have been built in the 1800s. This hamlet has very strong associations with Thomas Hardy. **Hardy's Cottage** (Grade II Listed), the attractive cob and thatched cottage at the end of the lane in Higher Bockhampton was built by Thomas Hardy's great-grandfather at the beginning of the 19th century, but belonged to the Kingston Maurward estate (it is



recorded in their records as East Lodge). Hardy's father carried out his building business from a small office here, and it was home to the famous novelist and poet who was born here in 1840. It was where he grew up and a place to which throughout his life he constantly returned. "Under the Greenwood Tree" and "Far from the Madding Crowd" were written whilst living at the Cottage. In his poem 'Domicilium' Hardy describes the Cottage which today backs on to Puddletown Forest yet in Hardy's day this was mostly heathland. Other places nearby – such as Rushy Pond – also feature in his works. The Cottage today is owned by the National Trust, who bought it in 1948.

The private approach lane to the cottage has several attractive houses and 19th century cottages. **Woodlands** (a pair of cottages since converted into a single residence) is another original building thought to have survived along with Hardy's Cottage. **Greenwood** is believed to have been built as a pair of brick cottages by the Hardy family, and **Egdon Cottage** (the original part) is the sister cottage to Hardy's cottage built by his grandfather. The brick-built quadrangle of



barns in the centre of the **Greenwood Grange** holiday complex are understood to have been constructed by Hardy's father in 1849 for Francis Martin, then owner of the Kingston Maurward estate. Thorncombe Woods forms the backdrop to the hamlet, with woodland walks and the Roman road passing through it about 400m to the south.

Higher Kingston

Higher Kingston was part of the Kingston Estate owned by the Pitt Family who were based at Kingston Maurward. The farmhouse **Higher Kingston House** (Grade II Listed) is believed to have been constructed by the turn of the 19th century. When the estate was sold to Cecil Hanbury in 1914, Major Balfour retained the farm. He subsequently sold this in 1920 and the farm since 1946 has been in the ownership of the Holland Family. The area was designated as a Conservation Area in 1990, but does not benefit from a Conservation Area Appraisal.

Kingston Maurward

The place name of Kingston / Kyngeston Marleward was first recorded in the 13th century, linked to Geoffrey Mauregard, and suggests that it was part of the royal manor. The **Old Manor**



House (Grade I Listed) is Elizabethan, built in 1591 by the Grey Family who some years earlier had married the Maurward or Marlewarde family heiress. It passed down to the family heiress Lora Grey, who married George Pitt of Stratfield Saye in 1700, and who in 1748 commissioned the construction of **Grey's Bridge** (Grade 2 Listed). It is referred to as Knapwater House in Thomas Hardy's *Desperate Remedies*, his first published novel. Augusta Way, thought to be the inspiration for *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, moved here in the 1880s. There is a **plaque to George Singer**, on the wall of the Manor House, commemorating his birth here in 1847. He made his fortune from sewing machines but also pioneered the manufacture of cycles and cars.

Kingston Maurward House (Grade I Listed) was commissioned by George Pitt and built during 1717-1720. It was at the time constructed of brick and in the late 18th century clad in Portland stone by John Pitt (who was MP for Wareham and Dorchester for 34 years, and had inherited the estate as it was passed down the family).

Approached via the **Lodge House** (which is Listed by virtue of being within the curtilage of the House and of interest in its own right, with its Victorian red brick and stone, slate roof,



strong chimney stack, porch canopy in the angle of two wings, composes well with entrance piers and balustraded wall). The parkland and lake in the valley below the mansion were also laid around this time. The Prime Minister William Pitt (to whom he was related) visited the house a number of times. Thomas Hardy visited Kingston House when it was in the hands of Francis and Julia Martin. Julia claimed she 'taught Tom his letters'. Lady Hanbury instigated the formal gardens to the west of the house after the conclusion of the First World War (all Grade II* historic parkland). There is a Hanbury monument in Stinsford Church in the north aisle.

The grounds of Kingston Maurward Park were used as a military camp in World War II, clearly visible on aerial photographs from that time. It is understood that the Royal Army Medical Corps were stationed here after their evacuation from Dunkirk in 1940, and later the 1st Division of the US Army. The estate was purchased by the Dorset County Council and opened in 1949 as a post-war agricultural college, which has now been expanded to include the Dorset Studio School on the campus.

Lower Bockhampton

Bockhampton is mentioned in the Domesday Book. Much of the land was controlled by John Pitt in the late 18th century, after Benjamin Pryce undertook a full survey of the manor in 1774 (reported more fully on in the Book of Stinsford). The land became part of the Kingston Maurward Estate in 1803 when it was sold to William Morton Pitt, and at the turn of the century a number of properties bore a Kingstone rather than Bockhampton name tag. Today the village is



no longer part of the estate. Whilst the village has no buildings earlier than the 18th century, it is possible that it existed earlier as an adjunct to the Elizabethan Old Manor. During the 19th century there was a Reading Room, **Post Office** (Grade II Listed) and a **Victorian School House** (unlisted) which Thomas Hardy attended at the age of eight (when it opened in 1848). The school closed in 1961, but its bell can still be seen above the door. A **K6 telephone box** is also noted.

It is described as a linear settlement in the Conservation Area Appraisal, with about twenty properties (mainly thatched and slate cottages built from rendered cob, brick or limestone rubble) strung out in a ribbon along Bockhampton Lane. The properties on the western side of the Lane are mainly detached and set further back off the road with front and rear gardens, and include the former school. **Bockhampton House** (unlisted) is set at right angles to the Lane, facing the river, seemingly an accretion of several cottages of various materials and dates. Thomas Hardy recalls that there was a cluster of cottages and farm buildings to its south side (shown on the 1774 map) which were pulled down in the early part of the 20th century. **Lower Bockhampton Bridge** is Listed, and the **brick-built bridge** further to the south (on the parish boundary) is also of historic interest.

Apart from **Lower Bockhampton Farm** (unlisted), the older, eastern properties all lie on or close to the road edge. Lower Bockhampton Farm is an exception, as a substantial brick house, and may have been built by Thomas Hardy's father. Otherwise most properties are modest, semi-detached or terraced cottages, with **Yalbury Cottage** (Grade II Listed), formerly two cottages, now a restaurant and accommodation. The **Cottage and Morello**, and **Bockton and Pump Cottages** are also Grade II Listed (Bockton Cottage is believed to have been built partly on the site of the poor house which existed there in 1774), and the row of four rendered cottages, from **Hillcrest to Gardeners Cottage** (unlisted), are specifically mentioned in the appraisal as contributing to the character of the Conservation Area. The southernmost property, **Bridge Cottage** (Grade II Listed) was both a blacksmiths and a beer shop in the mid 19th century – the pub that never was!



Going north towards Bockhampton Cross, the **avenue of trees** is a notable local feature that has “deeper cultural roots” in that the limes that are now standing replaced an avenue of elms that once lined that lane. Bockhampton Cross is also believed to be the setting of Thomas Hardy’s poem ‘By Mellstock Cross at the Year’s End’, which was published in December 1919.

Stinsford

Stinsford is described in the Conservation Area Appraisal as a small, nucleated settlement. It is recorded in the Domesday book as being two parcels: Stitsford and Stincteford. It is centred around **Stinsford Manor House** (Grade II Listed), a large gentry house built in a long succession of rooms, facing south over small walled gardens and with two north-south wings. It was restored following a fire in the late 19th century. From 1963 to 1984 it was used as a school for boys, before being granted permission to convert it into a number privately owned apartments in 1997. To the west, on the far side of the Dorchester bypass, **Eagle Lodge** (unlisted) is the gate lodge to Stinsford House, thought to have been built together with the two stone piers originally with eagle finials in 1861. Both House and Lodge are considered to be the places mentioned in Hardy’s poem ‘The Widow Betrothed’.

There are long-standing links between Stinsford Manor House (which was owned by Thomas Strangways, following his marriage to the estate’s heiress, Eleanor (Alianor) Talboys, in the late 15th century) and Melbury House at Evershot (which was acquired by his son) and later becoming part of the Ilchester Estate. The Honourable Mrs Charlotte Townshend, the current owner of Ilchester Estates, is patron of St Michael’s Church.

The Church of St. Michael (Grade I Listed) is a pre-reformation church dating back to the 13th century, although elements such as the tower, south and north aisles were added in the 14th, 15th and 17th centuries, and further took place alterations in the 19th century. It features as the "Mellstock Church" in Thomas Hardy's novels, and his heart was buried in the churchyard in 1928. The churchyard is also home to the memorial slate of Cecil Day-Lewis, author and Poet Laureate, and a great admirer of Thomas Hardy. To the north east, built on glebe land in circa 1837, is the ‘**The Old Vicarage**’ (unlisted), a smaller gentry house.

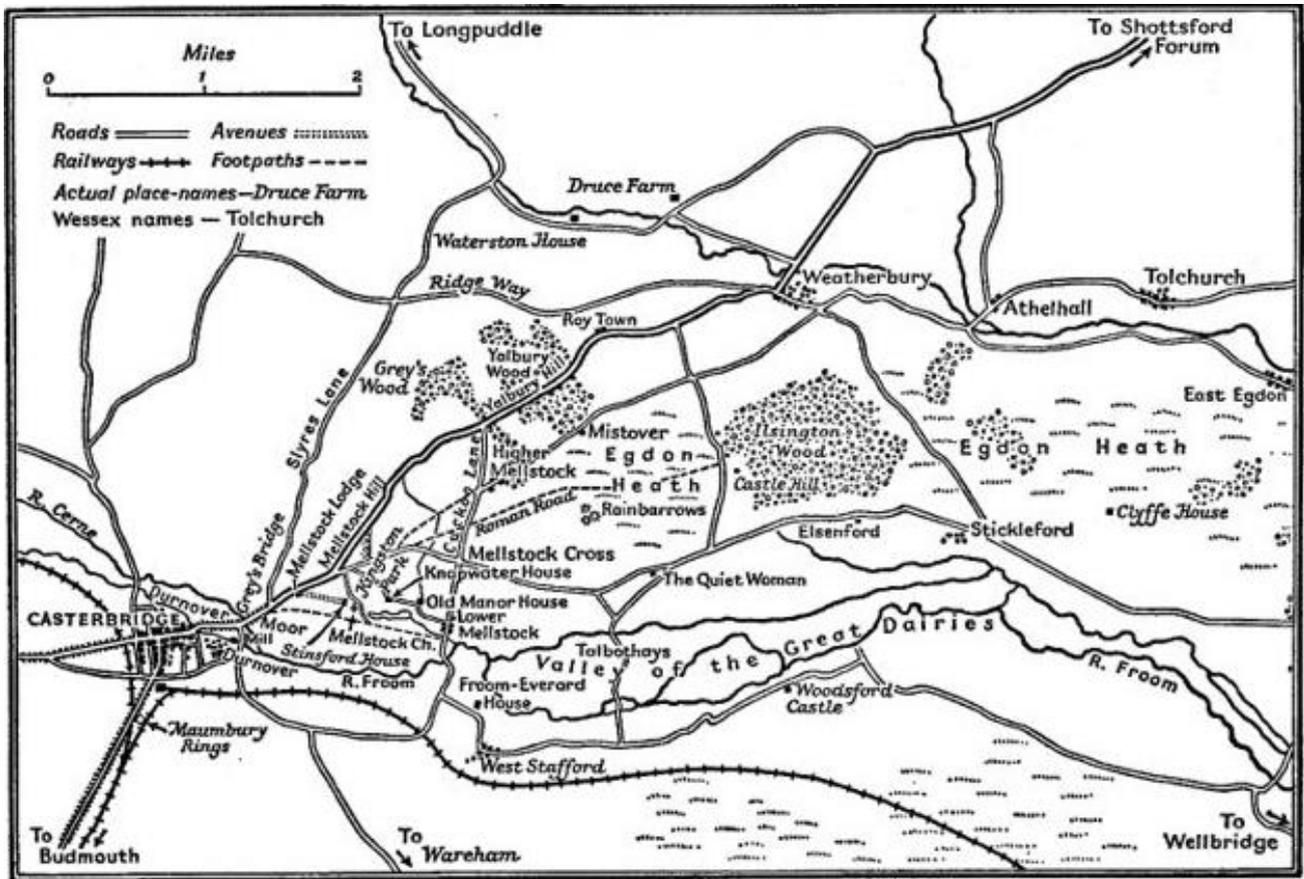


Further south, **Three Bears Cottage** (unlisted), a much extended thatched cottage formerly referred to as Gardener’s Cottage, marks the southern limits of the village, and would have been passed frequently by the young Thomas Hardy on his daily walk to and from Dorchester.

To the north side, **Stinsford Farm House** (Grade II Listed) was the former dairy house to Stinsford House and is now operated as a Business Centre. **Birkin House** (Grade II Listed) is further north still, and set slightly apart from the main village. This was built as a Victorian country house in 1874, for the banker Reginald Thornton. There are also four small blocks of cottages in its locality, including **Stinsford Cottages** (Grade II Listed) that face across a green towards the A35 London Road.

4.3 Hardy's influence is not limited to the buildings listed in Table 5 – his books and his experiences span the wider landscapes in and around Stinsford (Hardy's Mellstock). The richness by which Thomas Hardy observed and described the natural world in fine detail have helped us to identify some of the people and locations in his works, although others are still debated. Appendix 4 includes some of places associated with Hardy's fictional characters who traversed the hamlets, paths, bridleways, tracks, and roads of 'Mellstock' during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Figure 6. Hardy's Mellstock (source: *A Hardy Companion*, FB Pinion)



The Heart of Wessex

Policy SNP7. Protecting Stinsford's Historic Environment

Development should preserve the significance of the many non-designated heritage assets and associations with Thomas Hardy (see Appendices 3 – 4 and Figure 5) and other designated and non-designated heritage assets, taking into account the balanced judgement required under national policy. Proposals which enhance or would lead to a better appreciation of these assets will be looked on favourably.

4.4 With the strong Thomas Hardy connections, and the captivating, historic landscape, the area attracts more than its fair share of tourists. Tourism brings significant benefits to the local economy and residents, but it does have some ongoing negative impacts on the environment and character of the area, and on some communities, as a result of the increased visitor pressure and accompanying traffic (such as at Higher Bockhampton).

4.5 In light of this, any future tourism initiatives relating to the history and cultural associations, whilst welcome in principle, will need careful consideration to ensure that the environment and character of the area, and amenities of local residents, are not unduly harmed, and that there are

robust measures in place to manage any traffic and visitor numbers appropriately. The Local Plan seeks to ensure that tourism development is located close to established settlements or re-uses existing buildings where practical, and while this approach is supported, it is recognized that Thomas Hardy's associations are not limited to one area and that the infrastructure and environment in some settlements may not be able to cope with the levels of visitors that may come.

4.6 In order to consider all these factors in a balanced manner, applicants are encouraged to include an assessment (ideally independently undertaken) of:

- the economic and educational benefits that any new or expanded tourism proposals will bring;
- the anticipated visitor numbers that the project is seeking to achieve (to achieve a viable business) and how those visitor numbers and traffic arising from the proposals will be managed, particularly with the aim of mitigating any adverse environmental and amenity impacts if visitor numbers were to exceed expectations.

Visitor management plans...

- ✓ set out how visitor numbers and their impacts (e.g. traffic; parking; littering, trampling) will be monitored;
- ✓ identify measures to reduce the harm caused by visitors, including ways to manage capacity, e.g. use of booking systems, coordination with associated attractions;
- ✓ can raise visitor awareness of how they can act responsibly to avoid detracting from the place they visit, and help guide the marketing of a destination.

Policy SNP8. Positively managing visitors and the Thomas Hardy connection

The provision of any new facilities for tourists and visitors, whether related to the history and cultural associations with Thomas Hardy or to other attractions of the parish, must not detract from the parish's cultural, landscape and wildlife qualities or significantly impact on the amenity of local residents. In assessing the potential for harm to these qualities, consideration should be given to the cumulative impact of the development (in association with existing developments and attractions) as well as the direct and indirect impacts.

Any new attractions or facilities should be located in close proximity to an established settlement or comprise the reuse or replacement of a rural building. Where visitor numbers and/or travel patterns will need to be restricted in order to avoid harm, such as in the neighbourhood of Higher Bockhampton, a visitor management plan will be required.



cc-by-sa/2.0 - Thomas Hardy Locations; The... by Nigel Mykura - geograph.org.uk/p/667106

5. *Housing, Employment and Community Facilities*

To respond to the need for a demographically mixed population, a viable economy, and training, education and employment opportunities within the parish.

To provide appropriate levels of housing and other facilities to meet the needs of the local community.

Key policies:

- Supporting the provision of affordable housing in the parish – use of rural exception sites
- Supporting local employment opportunities through the re-use or replacement of existing premises
- Protecting and enhancing our community facilities

Projects

- Developing the Kingston Maurward Masterplan

What development is needed

Housing

5.1 There is no set housing or development target for the parish of Stinsford in the current Local Plan, which was adopted in 2015. This means that, under the policies in the current Local Plan, Stinsford is regarded as a rural parish with no ‘defined development boundaries’. Therefore, in principle, no general market housing development is currently permitted here, except through the conversion of existing buildings. Farm and other rural workers’ dwellings may be permitted where it can be shown that, because of the nature of their work, they need to live on site and there are no other feasible options, and these are typically ‘tied’ to remain with the business. The other exception is for affordable housing, through ‘rural exception sites’, which are dependent on landowners offering their sites for well below market value, with the homes remaining affordable through future sales or re-lettings.

5.2 In a Consultative Draft of the new Dorset Local Plan in January 2021¹³, a method for calculating the minimum housing need for parishes was proposed. For rural areas, this was based on projecting forward the typical additional “windfall” housing that had taken place previously, together with any existing planning consents. On this basis, Stinsford would be expected to accommodate at least 8 new homes in the period up to 2038. The Draft Plan made clear that this was simply what was expected in a ‘do nothing’ scenario, and would not require the neighbourhood plan to propose housing sites.

5.3 These figures are dwarfed by the additional allocation in the new draft Dorset Local Plan of land for a further 3,500 homes in the parish¹⁴, north of Dorchester (see also paragraph 1.3, above),

¹³ Draft Dorset Local Plan - Volume 1, page 57 <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/285538/DCLP-Jan-2021-DorsetCouncilLocalPlan-vol1.pdf/7e0ff0f0-426f-523d-bd45-cc1fe4d60fac>, and Appendix 2 <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/285538/DCLP-Jan-2021-appendices-1-5.pdf/50747301-c2cd-2667-aece-e91248c2bb0d>, retrieved 1 Sept 2021

¹⁴ Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation document - Volume 2 - Central Dorset <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/285538/DCLP-jan-2021-vol-2-central-dorset.pdf/e80498e5-b868-3b20-2882-8d00ddb46e1> Policy DOR13, page 168, retrieved 1 Sept 2021

which impacts the settlements of Frome Whitfield, Cokers Frome, Stinsford, Upper Stinsford, Waterston Ridge and Higher Kingston.

5.4 In the light of the current Local Plan and the policies in the draft Dorset Local Plan, Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan need not allocate land for housing.

5.5 On the other hand, research and local consultation¹⁵, conducted during the preparation of this neighbourhood plan, have indicated some need for new affordable housing in the parish, particularly for local people. The research also indicated possible need and support for some smaller open market homes to be built (but not large houses with 4+ bedrooms). Recent consultation in the parish¹⁶ explored how much housing of these types would be welcomed. The results are shown in Table 6 below. The conclusion was that, during the period to 2038, approximately 9 new affordable homes and approximately 7 new open market homes, of smaller size, would be acceptable to most of the people who expressed a view

Table 6. *Housing growth options – what local residents said*

	Weighting	Affordable homes		Open market homes	
		Responses	%	Responses	%
None	(0)	26	36%	30	40%
Between 0 to 1 per 5-year period (maximum 3 over 15yrs)	(2)	9	12%	14	19%
Between 0 to 1 per year (maximum 15 over 15yrs)	(9)	19	26%	16	21%
Between 1 to 2 per year (maximum 30 over 15yrs)	(23)	16	22%	13	17%
More than 30	(35)	3	4%	2	3%
Median		up to 1 dwelling p.a.		up to 1 dwelling / 5yrs	
Weighted average		9		7	

5.6 During the period when Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan was being prepared, Kingston Maurward College (KMC) prepared a ‘masterplan’ to guide the development of their estate over the next ten years. One of its proposals was for small housing sites giving a total of approximately 17 new homes at three locations, namely:

- Housing opposite Knapwater Crescent, Lower Bockhampton - potential for approximately 8 new dwellings;
- Housing off Church Lane, south to Stinsford Farm, Stinsford - potential for approximately 6 new dwellings;
- Housing at Maurward Close, Hollow Hill - for approximately 3 new dwellings.



¹⁵ See Stinsford Housing Needs Assessment, 2019, AECOM; and reports on public consultation in Stinsford, at <http://www.stinsfordnplan.org.uk/evidence-base.html>

¹⁶ See reports on public consultation in Stinsford, at <http://www.stinsfordnplan.org.uk/evidence-base.html>

5.7 KMC's proposals for 17 new homes over the next 10 years do not align with the results of consultations on Stinsford Neighbourhood Plan, where the majority view was for fewer homes over a longer period.

5.8 KMC have kept Stinsford Parish Council updated about their masterplan, and Stinsford Neighbourhood Planning Group has fed back initial comments on a draft of the masterplan. The College Principal has also given public information talks in the parish. There has however not been a formal public participation process in preparing KMC's masterplan. The masterplan was adopted by the College's Board of Governors in 2019.

5.9 In the first draft of the new Local Plan in January 2021¹⁷, Dorset Council has included a policy, DOR11, which proposes:

The future development and expansion of Kingston Maurward College within the college estate will be supported in accordance with a masterplan agreed by Historic England and Dorset Council.

5.10 The KMC masterplan is yet to be agreed by Dorset Council, and this policy will only come into effect if it remains in the new Local Plan when it is adopted (2023/4).

5.11 In order to safeguard the wishes of Stinsford residents that any new housing in the parish should emphasise affordable housing for local people, and that any open market housing should provide smaller, entry-level homes, a policy reflecting those wishes is proposed: SNP9, below. This policy should not be seen as endorsing any of the proposals in the KMC masterplan. As a statutory consultee, the Parish Council will scrutinise and respond to all individual planning applications as they come forward.

Policy SNP9. Supporting the provision of affordable housing in the parish

The provision of rural exception sites for affordable housing, potentially including a limited amount of open market housing, may be permitted within or well-related to the main settlements of Stinsford and Lower Bockhampton provided that all of the following criteria are met:

- i) the proposal is capable of meeting an identified, current, local need arising from within the parish (including social and affordable rented homes, entry-level market rent and shared ownership options), which cannot otherwise be met;*
- ii) there are secure arrangements to ensure that the benefits of affordable housing to meet local needs will be enjoyed by subsequent as well as initial occupiers;*
- iii) the scheme is small scale, in relation to the settlement, and does not exceed 9 dwellings in any one location;*
- iv) there are safe walking routes from the site to the community facilities within the settlement;*
- v) the development would not adversely impact on the amenity and quiet enjoyment of nearby residents or recreation areas;*
- vi) any open market housing provided as part of the mix must comprise smaller dwelling types (mainly two and three-bedroom properties), be necessary to facilitate the affordable housing, and must not exceed 50% of the total housing mix on that site;*
- vii) the scheme is of a character, scale and design appropriate to the settlement and location and would demonstrate good practice in terms of its sustainable design.*

¹⁷ Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation document - Volume 2 - Central Dorset

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/285538/DCLP-jan-2021-vol-2-central-dorset.pdf/e80498e5-b868-3b20-2882-8d00ddb46e1> Policy DOR11, page 156, retrieved 1 Sept 2021

5.12 The KMC Masterplan may also need to be revised due a change in circumstances to the Studio School, as the existing school building was only designed for 300 pupils aged from 14-19 years, but the school has since become a standard secondary school intake of students aged 11-16 years. As a result, a permanent solution to resolve the accommodation needs of the school is required.

5.13 Stinsford Parish Council will liaise actively with KMC, Dorset Studio School and Dorset Council, with a view to securing a good fit between the development needs of the College, the Studio School and the views and needs of local residents.

Project P4. Developing the Kingston Maurward Masterplan

The Parish Council will engage and liaise with Kingston Maurward College, Dorset Studio School and Dorset Council in the development of a masterplan to secure the long term future of the College.

Employment

5.14 Kingston Maurward College is the largest employer based in the parish. It employs over 300 members of staff (140 full time, 195 part time), most of whom reside within the Dorchester – Weymouth area. At least 50 other local businesses were also identified as part of the Neighbourhood Plan’s research, which would add considerable to this total. Whilst some businesses operate from home, there are three distinct employment clusters in the parish: Stinsford Business Centre, Hampton Business Park and also Mellstock Business Park. The developed area of the three business parks is shown in Figure 7.

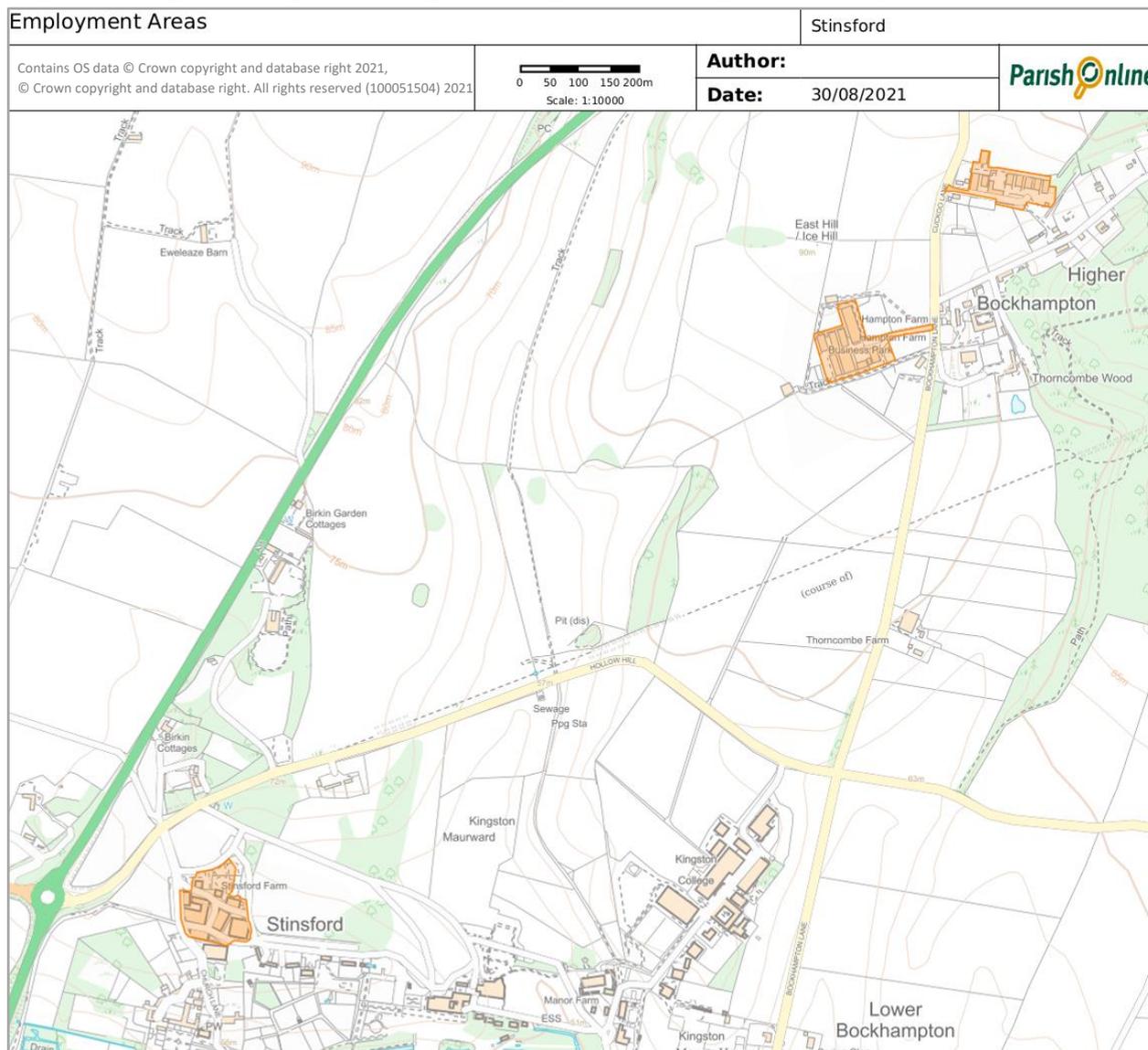
5.15 The College has indicated that it wishes to create additional business incubation units for small businesses to support local entrepreneurial development and links with college syllabus at Stinsford Enterprise Park, and this proposal is included in their draft masterplan. The adopted Local Plan policy allows the conversion or replacement of the existing buildings for business use, and as such this development should be possible (in principle) under existing policies.

5.16 The adopted Local Plan does not support the creation of new business premises extending into open countryside (as evidenced by the refusal of an additional unit at Hampton Business Park in 2020¹⁸). Our consultation in late 2020 indicated that any significant expansion of the business parks is unlikely to be supported by the community, and that there are widespread concerns about the impact of increased traffic (and particularly larger vehicles) on the local lanes that could arise from further business growth. The proposals for business incubation units for small businesses at Stinsford Farm was generally considered possible on the basis that this had reasonably direct access onto the A35 and the small scale nature of the units would be less likely to result in a significant increase in traffic movements.

5.17 The following policy has therefore been drafted, to reflect the opportunities that redevelopment of the existing buildings and employment areas may provide, and to enable limited development within the existing footprint of the business parks (but not extending further into open countryside) where this would improve the environmental performance of the businesses and ideally reduce traffic impacts. Developers are encouraged to consider whether they can go further than the minimum Building Regulations, and may wish to consider achieving targets such as BREEAM “good” or higher for UK new non-domestic buildings (which basically shows that the building would be in the top 50% of all such buildings in terms of energy efficiency).

¹⁸ WD/D/19/001982

Figure 7. Maps showing the developed area of the business parks in Stinsford Parish



Policy SNP10. Supporting local employment opportunities

The re-use or replacement of existing business premises for employment uses, and proposals for additional new buildings within the existing developed area of the business parks, will be supported, provided that all of the following criteria are met:

- i) the proposals would be of a character, scale and design appropriate to its location, including landscaping to ensure any building or use of land is not unduly prominent in the landscape;*
- ii) the development would not adversely impact on the amenity and quiet enjoyment of nearby residents or recreation areas;*
- iii) any additional buildings should achieve high standards of environmental performance;*
- iv) a traffic impact statement must accompany proposals, quantifying the predicted traffic impact of the development on the road network in Stinsford parish, and indicating what will be done to avoid adverse impacts on the safe use of the rural lanes by all users (including pedestrians, cyclist and equestrians).*

Proposals that would result in a reduction in motor vehicle traffic levels (particularly lorry movements) to achieve a safer highway network are encouraged.

Community Facilities

5.18 Perhaps because of the proximity of Dorchester, two miles away, there are currently no shops, pubs, or village halls in the Parish. The beer-shop at Lower Bockhampton closed in the 1860s, the primary school in 1961 and the Post Office closed some ten years later. The church of St Michael, in the village of Stinsford itself, continues to provide a place of worship in the parish. And Kingston Maurward College (together with the Studio School), not only provides locally-based education and training, but also runs a number of facilities that are available for community use, including room hire for functions and events. There are also a number of eating establishments in the area, such as Yalbury Cottage, Pine Lodge Farm, the Greenwood Tree Café and the café at the Kingston Maurward Animal Park & Gardens. The lack of facilities is certainly an issue that the local community ‘dislike’ and would want to change. A community hall / meeting place was the top suggestion, followed by a shop and a pub.

5.19 Recreational opportunities are more widely available, mainly through access to the countryside via the public rights of way network, and the Local Nature Reserve at Thorncombe Woods. St Michael's Churchyard and the Cecil Hanbury Memorial Garden in Stinsford provide places for quiet reflection. There is also a playground in Lower Bockhampton that is held in trust by the National Playing Fields Association and managed by the Parish Council, and an indoor play barn at the Kingston Maurward Animal Park & Gardens. The Equestrian Centre in the College (at the Manor Stables) runs riding lessons for children and adults of all abilities.

5.20 It is clear that any new facilities need to be economically viable, which is linked to having a sufficiently large catchment population that will use their services. At the current time there is no obvious commercial interest in running a shop or pub. However, as part of the College Plans, there is a proposal to create a new multi-purpose hall to the south side of (and to replace) the Outdoor Activities Centre. In 2020 the College were awarded a £3.5 million grant by the Dorset LEP to build a University Centre & Rural Business Development Hub, which would also support wider business use. The building on the Outdoor Activities Centre would be around 400m² comprising a large hall and a small number of separate meeting rooms, and would be available for hire for community uses. In order to be able to provide for social / recreational activities arising from within the community, it will be important that the rates are, and remain, affordable to local groups.

Policy SNP11. Protecting and enhancing our community facilities

Development proposals to sustain and improve the provision of community facilities in a manner in keeping with the character of the area and supporting opportunities for social interaction for all age groups and sectors of the parish, are encouraged.

New facilities should be well-located to avoid increased motor vehicle trips adversely impacting on the safe use of the rural lanes by all users (including pedestrians, cyclist and equestrians).

A traffic impact statement must accompany proposals, quantifying the predicted traffic impact of the development on the road network in Stinsford parish, and indicating what will be done to avoid adverse impacts on the safe use of the rural lanes by all users (including pedestrians, cyclist and equestrians).

Possible major growth North of Dorchester

5.21 As explained in the introduction to this Plan, whether the suggestion for major growth in the form of a whole new ‘neighbourhood; north of Dorchester goes ahead or not, is a strategic decision which cannot be decided through a Neighbourhood Plan. We realise that many local residents are vehemently opposed to this idea, and their concerns have been voiced, and will continue to be voiced, by Stinsford Parish Council in the responses to the Local Plan consultations.

6. Sustainable Development and Climate Change

To uphold principles of sustainable development and good and climate-friendly building design

Key policies:

- Better building design (that balances the importance of our beautiful places with the need to build sustainably)
- Protection of groundwater resources

Building Design and Layout



6.1 Given the range of building types and ages across the parish, there is no one clearly defined style or building material that should form the basis of future designs. Perhaps the greatest emphasis on design should be retaining the rural character and history of the area,



with its range of grand gentry homes, farmhouses and cottages, many of them grouped together to make coherent clusters within the wider landscape. Much of this is reflected in the earlier policies on landscape and heritage.

6.2 There is a rich palette of building materials and detailing found in the area, as described in the Conservation Area statement for Stinsford and Lower Bockhampton. This includes local oolitic limestone, chalk-based cob, smooth render (traditionally lime-based), flint and local clay brick (brown to grey in colour), thatch, clay plain tiles and pantiles, as well as slate and occasionally stone tiles. Boundaries are typically marked by hedgerows, walls or wrought / cast iron work. Porches, window detailing, ridgelines and chimneys all add further interest and variety.

6.3 But whilst new building should look to fit comfortably within this setting, it need not simply mirror what has gone before. In the UK, 49% of annual carbon emissions are attributable to how we construct and use buildings. It is more important than ever to take the best of the 21st century building design skills to ensure that all new buildings are truly sustainable in terms of their carbon footprint and use of materials.



6.4 Whilst some of the measures that go into achieving zero carbon homes (such as cavity wall insulation and low energy lighting) are detailed matters that have little bearing on the design and layout of buildings, thinking about how to achieve zero carbon effectively starts at a much higher level and therefore needs to be considered at the planning stage. The landscaping and surfacing of the site are also relevant, for example in terms of the inclusion of sustainable drainage systems, native planting that can provide both biodiversity and climate benefits.



	<p>replaced) will reduce the use of energy to transport material long distances, as well as supporting a sustainable local economy. BRE's Green Guide https://www.bregroup.com/greenguide provides a simple ranking system of most construction materials.</p> <p>The roof form and materials will impact on the extent to which solar / photovoltaic panels can be integral to the initial build (which is both more economic and reduces their visual impact) – or indeed the potential use of green roofs. It is expected that most new builds should include solar panels, and these should be clearly specified on the plans.</p>
Windows and doors	The extent and depth of glazing (and therefore the recesses in the building design) should be considered, to reduce heat / energy loss whilst ensuring there are good levels of natural light
Chimneys	Are a characteristic feature of many houses in the area, and whilst increasing limitations on gas / wood / oil fired boilers and wood-burning stoves may make them appear less essential at this time, their inclusion can provide one means of managing ventilation requirements, and may help future-proof options.
Architectural features	Can have a purpose, such as providing shading or to incorporate rainwater capture. The appropriate use of overhangs, awnings and shutters, gutters / downpipes and venting can contribute positively to a building's character and interest and the placement and material used should be included in the detailed design drawings.
Parking provision	Ensuring that there is sufficient room for cycle storage, and that electric cars have easy access to a charging point.
Sustainable Drainage	The provision of swales, ponds, reed beds and other green spaces designed to temporarily hold and soak in rainwater runoff within a development can be included as part of a sustainable drainage system, reducing flood risk and also enhancing biodiversity and water quality.
Landscaping	The inclusion of planting areas within the design should also be considered at an early stage, as some elements (such as trees) will require space, and there may be opportunities to provide shading where this may help cooling in summer, link a series of green corridors together for wildlife and sustainable drainage benefits.

6.5 Whilst many of the buildings in the parish are Listed or lie within the Conservation Area, proposals to alter or extend these buildings should still consider the energy efficiency and carbon impact of the proposed changes, balanced with the conservation of their character and appearance.

Policy SNP12. Better Building Design

New development should respond to the area's local character and history to reinforce the sense of place, and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, with a high standard of amenity.

Within and adjoining established settlements, the layout and boundary treatments should reflect the character of that settlement. A mix of building styles and materials is encouraged, where appropriate respecting the tendency for cohesive groups. Affordable housing should be indistinguishable in character and quality from open market homes.

The layout should provide sufficient parking (so as to not dominate the street scene), and sufficient private garden areas (proportionate to the dwelling size, and providing sufficient space for an outdoor clothesline, to store bins, cycles and gardening equipment, and space to sit outside without excessive shade, and, in respect of family homes, space for children to play).

New buildings, and alterations and extensions to existing buildings, should seek to minimise the carbon footprint of the development, and address inefficiencies where opportunities exist, that would not have a detrimental impact on the historic character of the area. Sustainable technology (such as solar panels), bin stores, meter boxes and similar utility requirements should be clearly shown on the planning application drawings to demonstrate how these are successfully integrated into the property. A sustainability statement should be submitted with applications to provide details of the sustainable design and construction measures included within the proposal, addressing the elements listed in Table 7, detailing in particular how design, construction and operation has sought to:

a) Reduce the use of fossil fuels.

b) Promote the efficient use of natural resources, the re-use and recycling of resources, and the production and consumption of renewable energy.

c) Adopt and facilitate the flexible development of low and zero carbon energy through a range of technologies.

d) Adopt best practice in sustainable urban drainage.

Regard should also be had to the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code.

Groundwater.

6.6 Boreholes within Stinsford parish supply drinking water, not only for many homes and businesses in the parish, but also for Kingston Maurward College and a large proportion of Dorchester residents. The continued availability of unpolluted groundwater is therefore a matter of great importance to the health and sustainability of these communities today and in the future.

6.7 The Local Plan contains a general policy regarding the prevention of development what would result in an unacceptable risk of pollution to groundwater. Development can impact on groundwater levels through the use and design of soakaways and drainage systems (which can help replenish groundwater in a managed way) and the incorporation of ground source heating systems (which could cause the groundwater to become polluted). It is therefore important that particular attention is paid to their design, and the following policy therefore adds more detail on this matter, to ensure that this is not overlooked in planning decisions.

6.8 The following policy has been drafted to highlight a potentially under-recognised risk in view of the increased uptake of ground source heating systems. Guidance on groundwater protection, including the protection of water intended for human consumption, and specifically the possible hazards associated with the use of ground source heating and cooling, is provided by the Environment Agency (see list of supporting documents). Issues with nitrate pollution are also a concern, particularly in relation to the indirect impacts on Poole Harbour (see Section 3).

Policy SNP13. Protection of Groundwater

The ongoing maintenance and management of drainage systems and ground source heating systems should ensure against the potential for groundwater pollution.

7. Safe and Accessible Travel

To promote good and safe access links for walkers, cyclists and other road users, whilst working to reduce the reliance on fossil-fuel transport.

Key policies:

- Road traffic on the rural lanes: traffic management and transport assessments
- Planning for a robust and effective cycle network: improving cycle routes

Projects:

- Traffic management measures
- Cycle infrastructure improvements

7.1 Being a rural parish it is not surprising that the car is the dominant form of transport for Stinsford residents, with over 85% of people responding to the 2019 survey saying it was their main form of transport. According to the 2011 Census, over half (59%) of the working population commute by car¹⁹ – although this was slightly lower than the previous census (seemingly due to the rise in home working).



7.2 There is no regular bus service to the settlements, although the X12 and 187 services stop on the A35 near the Stinsford Roundabout, and the X11 stops at the Sun Inn on the C12 near Charminster. However the Parish Council will look to liaise with Dorset Council and the local bus companies to encourage better provision, for example through identifying more appropriate ‘stops’ or investigation the potential for a dial-a-ride service.

Project P5. Public Transport Project

The Parish Council will work with Dorset Council and bus operators to explore potential improvements to the local bus services in response to suggestions from the local community.

7.3 Few people cycle or walk to work in Stinsford, which may also be a feature of a lack of cycle routes and the seemingly busy, narrow lanes. There are no dedicated cycle routes in the parish – the one advisory cycle route²⁰ is on-road, coming into the parish from the Puddletown direction using the Tincleton Road as far as Bockhampton Cross, turning south onto Bockhampton Lane before heading west via the permissive route through the Kingston Maurward Estate as far as Stinsford. It stops short of reaching Dorchester.

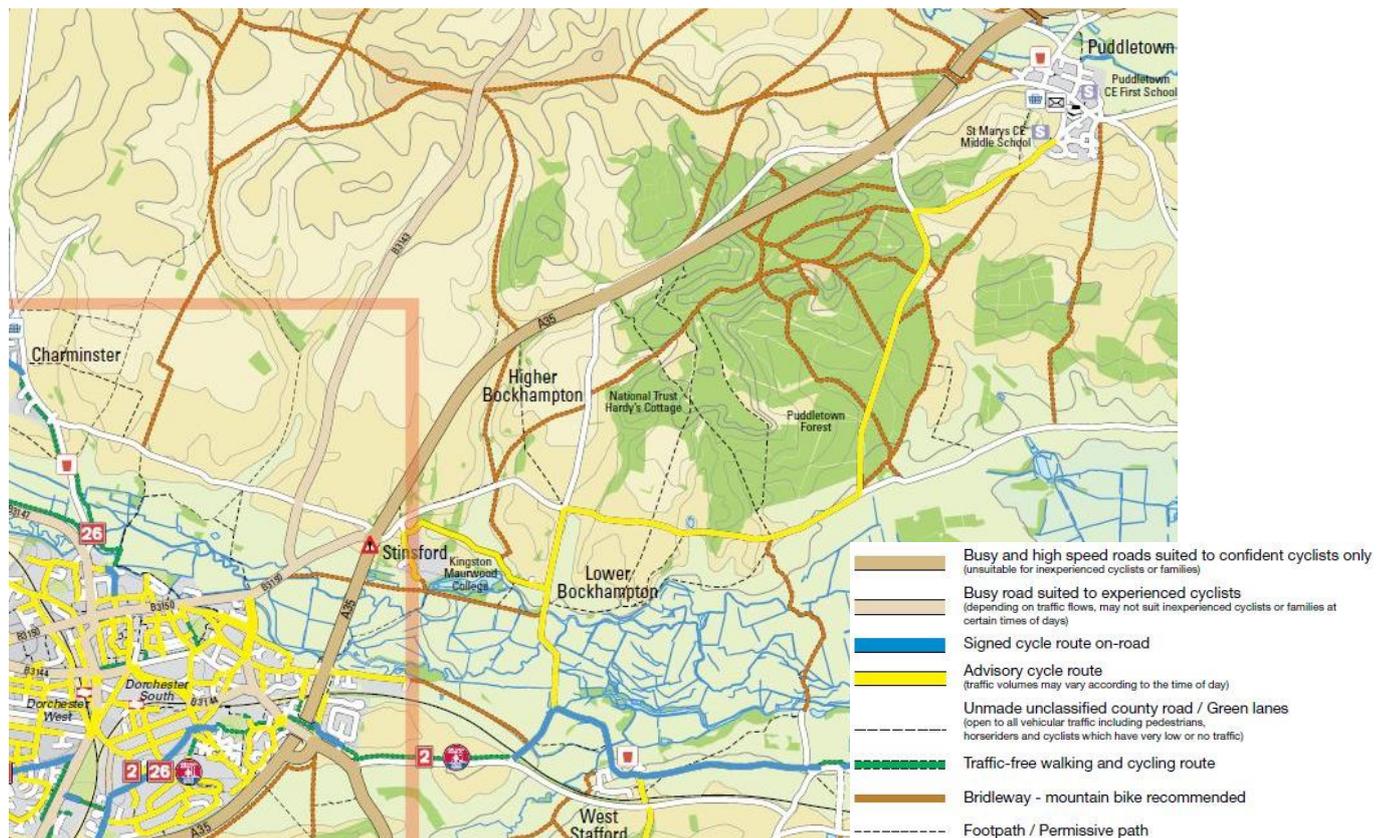
7.4 The same car-dominance applies to visitors. Whilst some may undertake the bulk of their journey by coach or train, their journey through Stinsford Parish is generally by car. As visitor numbers to Thorncombe Wood and Hardy’s Cottage and Visitor Centre have increased over recent years, parking has become an issue and frequently in the summer, visitors leave their cars in passing

¹⁹ 2011 and 2001 census based statistics from <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/> including QS701EW - Method of travel to work and KS015 - Travel to work

²⁰ <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/sport-leisure/cycling/cycle-routes-and-maps/cycling-in-west-dorset>

places and on verges (which further hampers the safe movement of traffic). Most businesses said that the number of visitors and deliveries was likely to stay the same or increase in the future.

Figure 9. Extract from the Dorchester & Surrounding Villages Walking & Cycling Map



7.5 Traffic was the number one factor highlighted by residents (91%) when asked what they disliked most about living in Stinsford. Just over half of the businesses responding to the local business survey also said that they had problems with traffic and access. The main problems mentioned were:

- Speed – traffic speeds in the parish were too high – many of the roads are set at the default national speed limit;
- Amount and size – the general volume of traffic was too high, particularly during the holidays, weekends and at peak times, and this was particularly an issue connected with larger heavy goods vehicles and college buses using the narrow country lanes;
- Traffic inappropriately diverting from the main routes was also raised - particularly relevant to Cuckoo Lane when the A35 is closed, and through the lane linking from Stinsford Hill to Westleaze, past Cokers Frome and Frome Whitfield.

As a result a number of local residents said that they were put off walking or cycling, as the roads were simply seen to be too dangerous.

7.6 The A35 is a very busy trunk road that has the following negative effects on the parish:

- it bisects the parish and makes journeys between the two parts particularly difficult;
- it is a source of light, noise and air pollution;
- when the road becomes congested, traffic disperses through narrow country lanes in the parish, particularly Cuckoo Lane and Bockhampton Lane.

7.7 According to reported crashes²¹, and excluding the trunk road, the location with the highest number of serious accidents in the parish is Bockhampton Cross (with two serious accidents the last 10 years, as well as a slight collision in the last 5 years), and the main place for cycle accidents has been Hollow Hill and the Stinsford Roundabout, as well as being the other major hotspot for collisions (including a pedestrian hit by a car when the driver was unable to see clearly due to the bright sunlight and shade).

7.8 The map shows the main areas of traffic safety concern as expressed by local residents and businesses, which are explained in more detail in Table 8.

Table 8. Road safety concerns

Ref	Location	Issue
1	Lower Bockhampton (Bockhampton Lane) south	The bridge has been repeatedly damaged by heavy and speeding traffic; there is also a difficult exit from the bridleway for horses, cyclists, pedestrians.
2	Lower Bockhampton north	Traffic arrives at village at an excessive speed, created by a long, straight access road.
3	Higher Bockhampton – access lane	There is considerable traffic generated by Hardy’s Cottage and Visitor’s Centre - when the main car park is full and this creates overspill and access problems.
4	Cuckoo Lane / Bockhampton Lane	There is poor provision of passing spaces; those that exist are badly signed and managed; and the verges have been damaged
5	Cuckoo Lane	When the A35 trunk road is blocked by accident or heavy traffic, large numbers of vehicles use the lane as an alternative route. Speed is a particular issue with driver frustration.
6	Kingston Maurward main entrance	This entrance involves a difficult right turn across traffic with poor visibility, for those travelling from the west.
7	Kingston Maurward rear entrance, Hollow Hill	There is poor visibility with blind bends in both directions. There has been a considerable increase in traffic since the Studio School opened and the College re-organised its bus routes.
8	Hollow Hill (C80)	The high volume of buses / coaches and narrow functional road width makes two-way traffic difficult. This often forces other traffic onto the verges, causing further degradation. The sunlight and shade created by the trees can also reduce the driver’s vision
9	Bockhampton Cross	Collisions have been caused by speeding traffic from all directions.
10	Stinsford, Kingston Maurward exit	Access to the village is affected by traffic from the A35 exiting at high speeds and there is extremely poor visibility.
11	Un-named road from Westleaze to Stinsford Hill (D20661)	This rural lane has a much higher level of use than designed for, as it can be used inappropriately as a short cut for traffic both commercial and private to avoid delays in Dorchester and on the A35. The relatively high levels of traffic compared to the width and visibility, makes resident access difficult and dangerous.
12	Junction of B3143 and D20661	At this junction, high levels of traffic cross a busy, fast road. The crossing has low visibility and no signage. This has caused accidents in the past.

²¹ <https://www.crashmap.co.uk/Search>

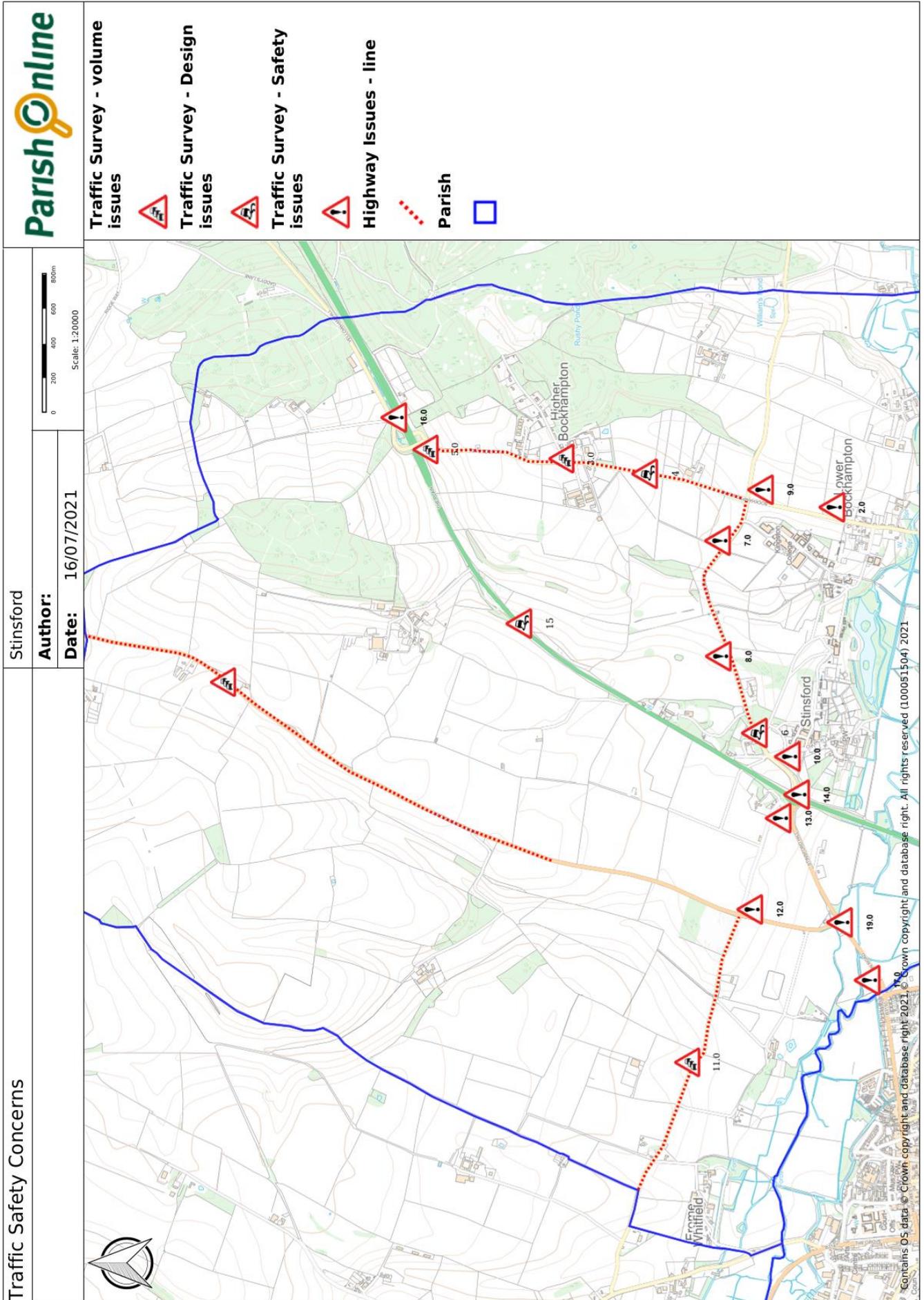
13	Right turn from London (Dorchester) Road B3150 to access D20661	The turning is within 20 metres of the A35 roundabout where improvements to the roundabout have increased the speed of traffic entering and exiting. This has caused accidents in the past.
14	A35 Stinsford Roundabout	The dual lanes on the roundabout are regularly used as an overtaking opportunity for both east and west-bound traffic on the A35 and this has increased the speed and unpredictable nature of traffic at all exits, making this dangerous for both cars and pedestrians travelling to / from Hollow Hill.
15	A35 lay-by	This effectively a ‘service point’ but it is poorly accessed and turning vehicles can block traffic in both directions.
16	A35 - old Puddletown Road access	There are no slip roads to access the turn-off and the exit road is poorly signposted from the A35. There have been a number of collisions in this location
17	Grey’s Bridge (B3150)	There is a hidden footpath entrance directly onto London Road and the adjoining pavement is only a foot wide. Pedestrians face an exceedingly difficult crossing.
18	Slyers Lane (B3143)	The road is heavily used by heavy traffic from the Piddlehinton Business Park (and also cyclists), and is not wide enough for trucks to pass. The road is particularly narrow and dangerous at Home Farm, with very poor visibility from the properties that access onto it.
19	Right turn from Slyers Lane (B3143) onto London Road	The speed of traffic from the direction of the Stinsford roundabout makes this junction particularly dangerous for cyclists looking to cross both carriageways to turn right towards Dorchester.

7.9 The recent establishment of the Studio School at the Bockhampton crossroads, without effective amelioration of the impact of increased traffic, is an example of the importance of understanding and addressing the impact of traffic through planning. The transport statement that accompanied the planning application in 2013 estimated an additional 131 vehicle movements in the morning and afternoon peak hours (of which about 50 would be buses), with the vast majority of trips routed along Hollow Hill to the Stinsford roundabout. It didn’t consider the suitability of the functional road widths – which are generally around 5.0m for much of its length (typical bus and lorry dimensions are 2.5m plus wing mirrors, so 5.5m is generally considered the appropriate width for roads where buses and lorries will be passing²²). As a result, whilst there are no accidents per se, there are plenty of conflicts between vehicles on this stretch of road (so the road feels much less safe for vulnerable road users) and the road edges are breaking-up. These issues have been raised at meetings of the Parish Council, and taken up with the School, but it is uncertain what, if anything, the School can do to resolve the problems.

7.10 The following policies therefore seek to ensure that in assessing the impacts of development, the rural nature of, and existing problems known, on the many lanes in the parish are fully considered and that appropriate traffic management is encouraged. It highlights specific local issues to be considered in a Transport Assessment, which should be included alongside issues that have wider transport implications.

²² Guidance taken from Manual for Streets https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/341513/pdfmanforstreets.pdf

Figure 10. Traffic safety concerns – the hot spots



Policy SNP14. Traffic Management

Traffic management proposals will be supported, where these will help achieve the following objectives:

- *contribute to the safety and attractiveness of the pedestrian and cycle routes, so that more people are encouraged to walk or cycle locally;*
- *create layouts that allow traffic flows to be safely distributed and that discourage the use of rural routes as a means of avoiding congestion / delays on the main roads;*
- *discourage on-street parking in locations where this impedes traffic to the detriment of the safety of pedestrians and cyclists;*
- *help reduce traffic speeds;*
- *adhere to the Dorset Rural Roads Protocol, so that the designs are sympathetic to the character of the rural settlements.*

Policy SNP15. Transport Assessments

Transport assessments, where required, should:

- *be informed by traffic counts that reflect the peak volumes generated by holiday and school traffic;*
- *include clear consideration of the likely size and volume of the vehicles accessing the site and functional width of the roads that they will use, including the availability of passing places, and including the impact on pedestrians and cyclists using the highway, where there are no pavements or accessible verges;*
- *take into account the highway safety issues raised in Table 8.*

Project P6. Traffic Management Measures

The Parish Council will work with local landowners, Dorset Council as the Highways Authority, and Highways England (with regard to the A35) to identify and prioritize traffic management measures that will address the concerns raised by local residents and businesses as described in Table 8. This may include:

- *Placing gateway entrances, appropriate road markings and signage at the entrances to the various settlements where these do not currently exist;*
- *Supporting measures to reduce speeds to 20mph within the settlement limits, around the college/school and where bridleways exit onto the road;*
- *Including road markings to emphasise the narrow nature of the rural lanes;*
- *Providing additional passing places (suitably signed and located);*
- *Supporting measures to make access across the A35 where it bisects existing footpaths / bridleways safer to navigate.*

Creating more and safer opportunities for cycling

7.11 A safe and effective cycle network is one which:

- is physically separated from high volume and/or fast motorized traffic, and ideally separated from pedestrians;
- has smooth, all-weather multi-user surfacing that also allows soft surfacing sections for horses alongside (and designed in a manner consistent with Stinsford's mainly rural nature);

- provides a joined-up network of routes that take account of how users actually behave, the main destinations and the priority to provide credible alternatives for the most dangerous routes / junctions.

7.12 From comments made on the 2019 survey it is clear that residents consider the Stinsford roundabout to be unsafe for cyclists (with the high volume of fast moving traffic). The narrow nature and levels of fast moving traffic along many of the rural roads are off-putting to cyclists. On road, it is important to reduce traffic speeds, and improve the level of road maintenance (particularly at the road margins). They also felt that the bridleway that runs from Greys Bridge into Stinsford is not of suitable quality for most cyclists, particularly as in the winter the surface is only suitable for off-road bicycles. Off-road, there would be a real benefit from having more cycle paths.

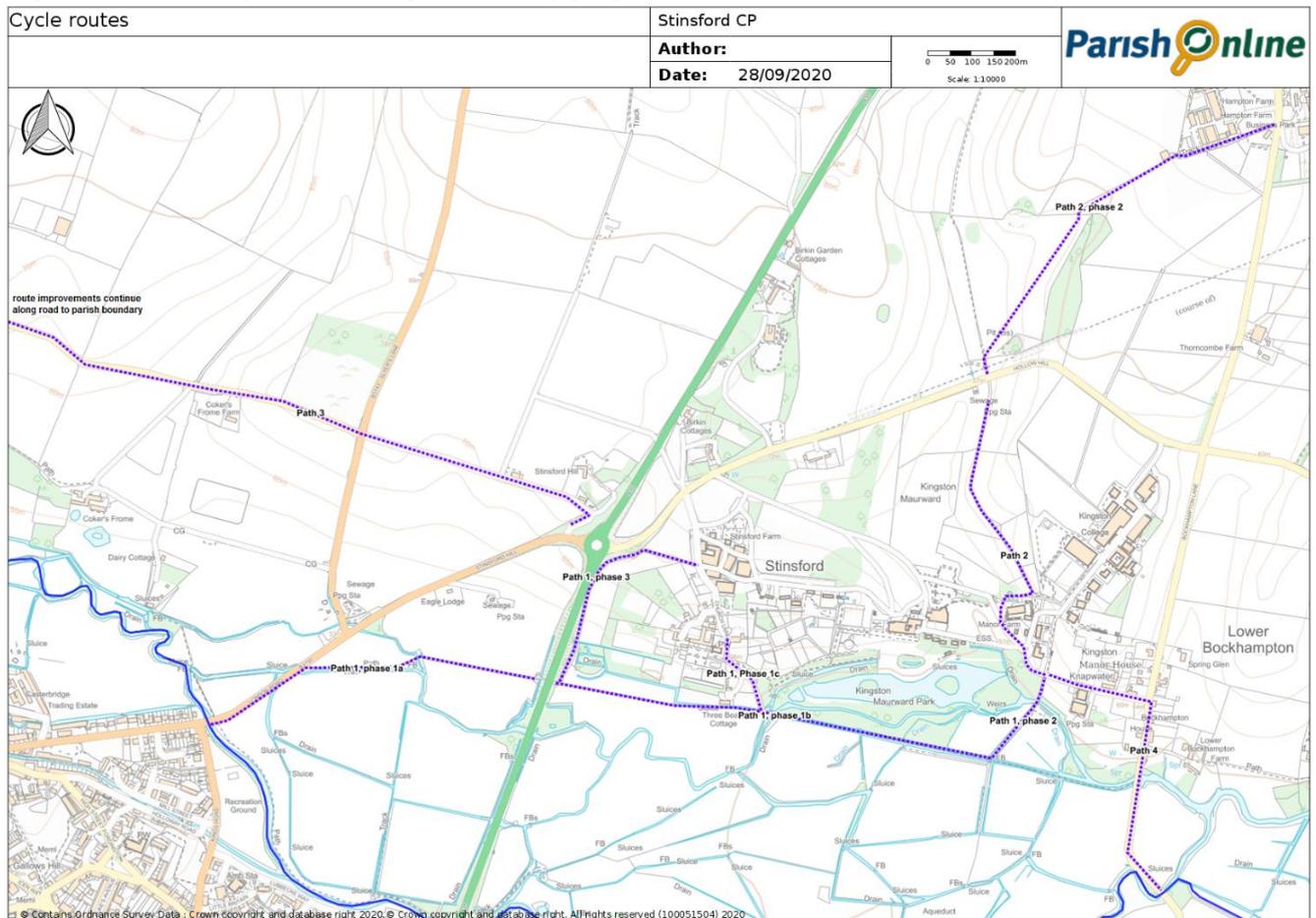
7.13 Local residents and cyclists have worked together to identify a number of potential improvements that could be made to provide alternative safer and more comprehensive network of routes for cyclists, as listed in Table 9. Upgrading the bridleway running from Greys Bridge to Stinsford and Lower Bockhampton to a suitable quality for most cyclists (so it is not limited to off-road bicycles) would have major benefits (particularly given the potential use of this route by school-aged children), and provides the basis for future links to Higher Bockhampton (to both the employment and recreation opportunities there).

Table 9. *Improvement opportunities: cycle routes (routes as indicated in Figure 11)*

Ref	Aim	Location	Works required
1	Improve links between Dorchester and Kingston Maurward College. Studio School	1a: Greys Bridge along of B3150 London Road, and bridleway S40/22 to underpass	Create shared pavement on south side of road to start of bridleway, upgrade path to all-weather multi-user surface to underpass, rural in style, wide enough for shared use.
		1b: Underpass to bottom of Cow Track using bridleway S40/22	Upgrade path to all-weather multi-user surface, rural in style, wide enough for shared use. Undertake repairs and anti-flood measures at bridges near 3 Bears Cottage.
		1c: Bridleway S40/13 from river path to Church Lane	Upgrade path to all-weather multi-user surface, rural in style
	Include connection to Lower Bockhampton	2: Cow Track (footpath S40/23)	Designate as Bridleway. Upgrade path to all-weather multi-user surface, rural in style.
	Include connection to Stinsford hamlet	3: Private 'Machine track', from underpass uphill to Church Lane by Stinsford Farm	Negotiate consent to use as permissive route. Upgrade path to all-weather multi-user surface.
2	Improve access to Hardy's Birthplace, Thorncombe Woods and Puddletown	1: Bridleway S40/3 from top of Cow Track to Hollow Hill near Pump House	Upgrade path to all-weather multi-user surface, rural in style

	Forest (and alternative onward route to Puddletown avoiding Bockhampton Cross).	2: Bridleway S40/3 from Hollow Hill to Cuckoo Lane	Upgrade path to all-weather multi-user surface, rural in style
3	Improve links to the westernmost settlements and national cycle network 26	Along D20661 from Stinsford Hill to Frome Whitfield (and beyond to link with national cycle network)	Likely to require off-road alternative to this very heavily-used route (and would need to be considered as part of any strategic decision for development in this area).
4	Improve links to national cycle network route 2 and West Stafford.	From top of Cow Track along Bridleway S40/3 and Bockhampton Lane towards West Stafford.	Better signage (and potentially including traffic calming measures) on Bockhampton Lane through and south of Lower Bockhampton.
5	Explore the potential to develop new routes	Parish-wide, especially north-south links	Identify new routes and negotiate with land-owners over new access options.

Figure 11. Diagram showing location of proposed routes



Policy SNP16. Improving cycle infrastructure

The improvement and expansion of the cycle route network within the parish will be supported, and should focus on:

- The improvement opportunities to cycle routes identified in Table 9;
- Providing cycle storage facilities at key visitor, community and workplace destinations within the parish.

Project P7. Cycle Project

The Parish Council will work with local landowners and the Highways Authority and take account of the views of local residents to bring forward the cycle route improvements identified in Table 9 as funding and resources permit.

8. Monitoring and Review

8.1 The decision to review the Plan will need to be made by the Parish Council (as the responsible body), with local residents involved in the review process, as they have been with the drafting of this Plan. The consideration of the timing of the review will depend on:

- the timing and proposals contained with the new Local Plan (likely to be finalised in 2023/4),
- the extent to which the proposed planning reforms (first announced in August 2020) may shape the future role and influence of Neighbourhood Plans,
- the degree to which the Neighbourhood Plan is seen to be influencing planning decisions when considered against this plan's objectives,
- the extent to which new planning matters may come to light which would justify making changes to the plan.

9. List of Supporting Documents

2011 Census results for Stinsford, Summary by Stinsford NPG, 2019

http://www.stinsfordnplan.org.uk/uploads/1/2/4/3/124360045/2011_census_results.pdf and Area Profile for Stinsford <https://apps.geowessex.com/insights/AreaProfiles/Parish/stinsford>

Basic Conditions Statement, prepared by: Dorset Planning Consultant Ltd on behalf of Stinsford Parish Council, August 2021 <http://www.stinsfordnplan.org.uk/evidence-base.html>

Consultation Statement Stinsford NPG, August 2021 <http://www.stinsfordnplan.org.uk/evidence-base.html>

Dorchester Area Cycle Map, Dorset Council, <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/sport-leisure/cycling/cycle-routes-and-maps/cycling-in-west-dorset>

Dorset Explorer mapped constraints, Dorset Council <https://explorer.geowessex.com/>

Dorset Road traffic collision data website <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/roads-highways-maintenance/road-safety/road-traffic-collision-map.aspx> supplemented by CrashMap data <https://www.crashmap.co.uk/Search>

Dorset's Ecological Networks <https://dorsetnpg.org.uk/dorsets-ecological-networks/>

Dorset Heathland Consultation and Advice Areas, Natural England,

https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140605111947/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/south_west/ourwork/heathlands/dorsetmaps.aspx

Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2020-2025 Supplementary Planning Document, Dorset Council, April 2020 <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents>

Geology of Britain viewer

<https://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html?location=stinsford>

Great Britain's Light Pollution and Dark Skies, CPRE

<https://www.nightblight.cpre.org.uk/maps/>

Green Guide to Specification, BRE, <https://www.bregroup.com/greenguide/podpage.jsp?id=2126>

Historic Maps, Ordnance Survey / National Library of Scotland, 1842-1952

<https://maps.nls.uk/os/6inch-england-and-wales/>

Kingston Maurward Masterplan 2019-2029, A&Q Partnership, Version 3 - July 2019

<http://www.stinsfordnplan.org.uk/kingston-maurward.html>

Landscape Character Assessment, Dorset Council,

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/countryside-coast-parks/the-dorset-landscape/landscape-character-assessment-map.aspx>

Manual for Streets

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/341513/pdfmanforstreets.pdf

National Character Area profiles, Natural England, September 2014,

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles>

National Heritage List for England <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

National Planning Policy Framework and relevant planning practice guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

Nitrogen Reduction in Poole Harbour, April 2017, <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents>

North of Dorchester Heritage Impact Assessment, LUC for Dorset Council, January 2021,

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/dorset-council-local-plan/evidence/north-of-dorchester-heritage-impact-assessment.aspx>

Planning Obligations Guidelines, West Dorset District Council, February 2010

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents>

Puddletown, Stinsford and Lower Bockhampton and Tolpuddle Conservation Area

Appraisal, December 2007, West Dorset District Council <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/-/conservation-areas-west-dorset>

Stinsford Housing Needs Assessment (HNA), AECOM, 2019

http://www.stinsfordnplan.org.uk/uploads/1/2/4/3/124360045/stinsford_hna_report_final.pdf

Strategic noise mapping data <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-noise-mapping-2019>

The Book of Stinsford, Kay Kearsay and Mike Cosgrove, 2008 – printed copy only

www.halsgrove.com

The Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection, Environment Agency, 2018

(Version 1.2) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/692989/Environment-Agency-approach-to-groundwater-protection.pdf

The Green Guide Explained, BRE Centre for Sustainable Products, 2015

https://www.bre.co.uk/filelibrary/greenguide/PDF/The-Green-Guide-Explained_March2015.pdf

Thomas Hardy's Wessex website <http://www.eugenebirchall.co.uk/>

Trends in Natural Capital, Ecosystem Services and Economic Development in Dorset.

Bournemouth University, Poole, UK Newton, A.C., Watson, S.C.L., Evans, P., Ridding, L., McCracken, M., Anger-Kraavi, A., and Bullock, J. (2019) <https://valuing-nature.net/sites/default/files/documents/Reports/DorsetNatCapTrendsReport.pdf>

Walks: A Mellstock (Poems) Walk, Thomas Hardy Society,

<https://www.hardysociety.org/media/files/5835-Mellstock-Walk.pdf>

West Dorset Landscape Character Assessment, West Dorset District Council, 2009

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents>

West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan, October 2016, jointly prepared and adopted by West Dorset District Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council
<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/adopted-local-plans/west-dorset-weymouth-and-portland-adopted-local-plan>

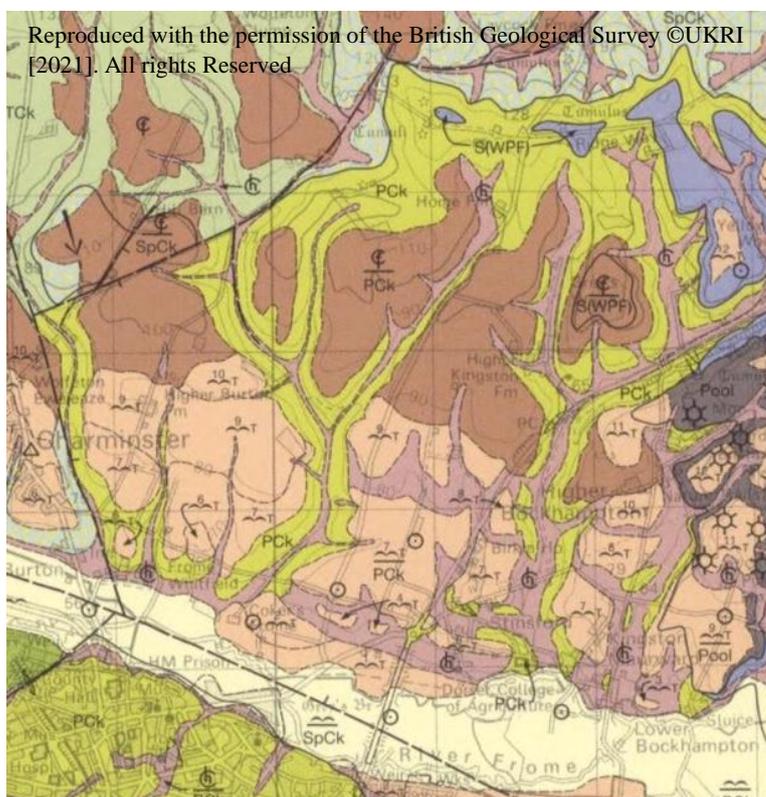
Appendix 1: Wildlife Interest in the Parish

Sources: Nature of Dorset, British Geological Survey, Butterfly Conservation, Wikipedia, The River Restoration Centre (report on the Frome), National Biodiversity Network atlas, DEFRA

Geology

The Geological Map covering the Parish shows :

- Chalk to the north, towards Waterston Ridge (as yellow green areas), comprising Mesozoic (65million+years old) layers of the Upper Chalk.
- alluvial deposits to the south associated with the River Frome and its associated channels (the pale yellow areas).
- the Quaternary deposits in between (beige to brown areas), mostly poorly stratified clays and sandy clays, often with flints washed out from the Chalk during the last Ice Age.



Wildlife Habitat Types and Examples.

<i>Broadleaved Wood</i>	Thorncombe wood
<i>Parkland</i>	Kingston Maurward
<i>Calcareous Grassland</i>	Waterston Ridge, very limited strips
<i>Dry Heath</i>	Small amount near edge of Thorncombe Wood
<i>Watermeadow</i>	Floodplain of the River Frome
<i>Ditches and streams</i>	Either side of the Hardy Way south of Kingston Maurward
<i>Ponds</i>	Heedless William Pond
<i>Rivers</i>	The River Frome and its associated channels

Species

Clearly the wildlife present is determined by the habitats available. Many of the species recorded are associated with the watercourses, rivers and other bodies of water in the parish.

Mammals

Large mammals noted are badgers, foxes, roe deer and otters. Otters have made a major comeback in the county- a DEFRA survey of 2001/2002 reported widespread signs of them on the River Frome. Smaller mammals noted include the dormouse, the water vole and the water shrew. (Bats...)

Reptiles and Amphibians

All 3 British Snakes have been sighted (Adders, Grass and Smooth Snakes-the last near Thorncombe Wood). Also Palmate and Smooth Newts (in ponds).

Fish

With good water quality reported there are a number of species seen including brown trout and salmon. Grayling, dace and roach breed in the Stinsford Branch of the River Frome. Eels (personal sighting) and lampreys have been seen.

Birds

Again many of the species are associated with water. Notably kingfisher, water rail, grey wagtail, marsh tit and mute swan. Also Reed, Sedge and Cetti's warblers. Local raptors include little, barn and tawny owls as well as Sparrow hawks and kestrels, with buzzards being the most often seen. A large numbers of jackdaws roost near to Stinsford Church, and there is a large rookery next to the A35 south of Higher Kingston Farm. A local resident (Chris Courtaux) has recorded over 100 different species in the Parish (mainly in the area around Bhompston) over the last 20 years, including:

- Barn Owl
- Blackcap – usually a couple of sightings per year between Feb and April
- Brambling – a single sighting in Jan 2016
- Cetti's Warblers made a visit in 2013/14
- Chiffchaff – seen and heard every year
- Common Wheatear – 3 records on the meadows
- Cuckoo – heard on average every other year
- Egyptian Goose – seen regularly along the Frome
- Fieldfare and Redwing – in large numbers
- Garden Warbler – single bird sighting in 2004
- Grasshopper Warblers – single bird sightings in 2010
- Greater Spotted Woodpecker
- Green Sandpiper – seen regularly in the period up to 2010 but not since
- Greenfinch
- Grey Wagtail
- Hobby – 10 records over 20 years, and now seen every year between May and July since 2014
- Long-tailed Tit
- Marsh Tit – a single record in December 2018
- Osprey - a one off visit in Aug 2003 (juvenile)
- Peregrine Falcon – a one off fly over in 2007
- Pheasant
- Red Kite – two sightings in the past 3 years.
- Red-legged Partridge,
- Reed Warbler.
- Rose-ringed Parakeet – a single record in 2017
- Sedge Warbler
- Siskin – seen almost daily since 2018
- Skylark
- Spotted Flycatcher – a reasonably regular with 11 records since 2000
- Waders - Snipe and Lapwing (flocks up to 100) common up to 2010, but not seen recently.
- Water Rail - seen once in 2009 and again in 2018
- Whinchat – a single record in 2002 – a passage migrant

- Willow Warbler – seen and heard every year
- Yellowhammer

Insects and spiders

Butterfly Conservation has recorded 28 butterfly species within the parish. Of these the most spectacular is the Silver Washed Fritillary (Thorncombe Wood), a species noted for its spectacular courtship flight. A less common species is the Silver Studded Blue found on the dry heath near Thorncombe Wood. Also the dry heath the green tiger beetle is noted. The watery habitats are good for dragonflies including Emperor and Golden Ringed Dragonflies and the less common 4 Spotted Chaser. Also associated with water are the Wolf Spider and the more fully aquatic Raft Spider - one of Britain's largest species.

Appendix 2: Designated Heritage Assets in the parish

Settlement	Description	Category	Grade	HE Ref
Higher Bockhampton	Hardy's Cottage	Listing	II	1119859
Kingston Maurward	Kingston Maurward	Parkland	II*	1000719
	2 Flights of Stone Steps 50m W Kingston Maurward House	Listing	II	1119860
	The Old Manor House	Listing	I	1119861
	Dorset College Of Agriculture, Kingston Maurward House	Listing	I	1154732
	Pair Stone Piers, 100m W of Kingston Maurward House	Listing	II	1154755
	Stone Steps 7m S of Kingston Maurward House	Listing	II	1154758
	Walls and Steps to terrace in front of Old Manor House, and Boundary Wall to the South	Listing	II	1154768
	Kingston House	Listing	II	1323622
	Garden Temple 130m ESE of Kingston Maurward House	Listing	II	1323652
	Walls and Steps to Walled Garden, immediately west of Kingston Maurward House	Listing	II	1323653
Lower Bockhampton	The Cottage, And Morello	Listing	II	1119863
	Bockton Cottage, Pump Cottage	Listing	II	1154774
	Bridge Cottage Including Outbuilding On Right	Listing	II	1154845
	Greenwood Cottage, Old Post Office	Listing	II	1303674
	Yalbury Cottage	Listing	II	1323654
	Lower Bockhampton Bridge	Listing	II	1425920
Stinsford	Gate Piers 30m West Of Stinsford House, And Dwarf Walls Linking These To The House	Listing	II	1002691
	Gate Piers At Entrance To Churchyard Of The Church Of Saint Michael	Listing	II	1004562
	3 Hardy Monuments, in the Churchyard Immediately N of the 4 Headstones (Item 8/127)	Listing	II	1017262
	Meaden Monument, and one unidentified Monument, in the Churchyard, 50m N of the Church of Saint Michael	Listing	II	1019408

Settlement	Description	Category	Grade	HE Ref
	4 Hardy Monuments, in the Churchyard immediately N of the Thomas Brooks Monument (Item 8/126)	Listing	II	1110616
	Unidentified Monument, in the Churchyard, 30m NE of the Church of Saint Michael	Listing	II	1119091
	Stinsford Cottages	Listing	II	1119852
	William Cox Monument, in the Churchyard 2m N of the John Cox Monument (Item 8/124)	Listing	II	1119854
	Cull Monument, in the Churchyard 5m S Of The South Wall of the Church of Saint Michael	Listing	II	1119856
	Birkin House	Listing	II	1119862
	Boundary and Garden Walls, Steps And Alcoves, South And South East Of Stinsford House, Including Boundary Wall To Churchyard	Listing	II	1119864
	William Jacob Monument, in the Churchyard, 3.5m N of the Church of Saint Michael	Listing	II	1119865
	John Cox Monument, in the Churchyard, 6m N of the Church of Saint Michael	Listing	II	1154590
	Church Of Saint Michael	Listing	I	1154863
	Thomas and Martha Brooks Monuments, in the Churchyard 14m N of the Church of Saint Michael	Listing	II	1323623
	Stinsford Farm House	Listing	II	1323650
	Stinsford House	Listing	II	1323651
n/a	Bell Barrow 70m West of Fidler's Green	Scheduling		1119092
	Roman Road In Kingston Park	Scheduling		1119093
	Milestone	Listing	II	1119851
	Remains Of Cross, At SY 730915, Near Parish Boundary	Listing	II	1119853
	Roman Road over Thorncombe Wood and Black Heath	Scheduling		1119855
	Grey's Bridge	Listing	II	1119857
	Bridge Over River Frome Backwater on Charminster Road 200 Yards North Of Junction With A37 (Maiden Newton Road)	Listing	II	1119858
	Three Bowl Barrows at the Western End of Waterston Ridge, 360m North West Of Fidler's Green Farm	Scheduling		1154598
	Milestone	Listing	II	1154889

Appendix 3: Non-designated Heritage Assets in the parish

Name	Location	Description
Bhompston Old Farmhouse	Bhompston	The inspiration for 'Blooms End' the Yeobrights' house in Hardy's novel 'The Return of the Native'
Blue Bridge	South of Frome House	A Victorian iron bridge built in 1877
Bockhampton House	Lower Bockhampton	A handsome brick house early/mid 19 th century range (formerly separate cottages) of brick and stone, with a detached former coach house or stable.

Brick Bridge over the Frome	Lower Bockhampton	A second bridge on the parish boundary, which once had an area of water that local children used as a swimming pool. Hardy is documented as often walking along the water meadows to the south of Lower Bockhampton and across Bockhampton Bridge.
Deserted settlement (remains of)	Coker's Frome	Settlement earthworks of probable medieval origin, visible as earthworks on aerial photographs and LiDAR imagery.
Dorset County Showground	Coker's Frome Farm / North of Stinsford Hill	Of key cultural importance to the local agricultural industry – the exhibition ground was on the field to the east in Thomas Hardy's time.
Eagle Lodge	Stinsford Hill	Gate lodge to Stinsford House, thought to have been built together with the two stone piers originally with eagle finials in 1861, and mentioned in Hardy's poem 'The Widow Betrothed'.
Egdon Cottage	Higher Bockhampton	Egdon Cottage (the original part) thought to be the sister cottage to Hardy's cottage built by his grandfather, and was the estate gun room in the early 1900s. Interior includes fireplace and bread oven, as well as skilfully cut Blue Lias stone slabs close laid on the earth floor. Deeds dating back to 1938 when Lady Effield Hanbury; Daniel Hanbury; Bertrum Symons-Jeune; The Hon. Lancelot Joynson-Hicks were joint proprietors of the land.
Fiddler's or Fidler's Green	Waterston Ridge	Considered to be the most likely site most likely site for Shepherd Fennel's Cottage, where a ruined cottage still stands.
Frome (Whitfield) House	Frome Whitfield	A new Georgian style house that replaced the older house on that site
Frome Whitfield Lodge	Old Sherborne Road, close to River Frome backwater	Lodge / gatehouse with wall plaque dating it to 1879 and marking the southern entrance into the estate
Granite Memorial Stone	Behind Hardy's Cottage	Erected to Thomas Hardy by American Admirers in 1932
Greenwood	Higher Bockhampton	19 th century brick cottages believed to have been built as a pair by the Hardy family
Greenwood Grange barn	Higher Bockhampton	The brick-built quadrangle of barns understood to have been constructed by Hardy's father in 1849 for Francis Martin
Hillcrest to Gardeners Cottage	East of Bockhampton Lane	All with front porches, casements and tall chimneys and pots; of group value; these were apparently single storey and thatched until substantially rebuilt in 1894;
K6 telephone box	North of Yalbury Cottage	Old traditional telephone box, notable for quality of design and increasing rarity value

Lower Bockhampton Farm	Along the track off Bockhampton Lane	A substantial Victorian brick block house with a central entrance (the house may have been built by Thomas Hardy's father); two 19 th century barns, of brick and with pantiled roofs to the rear
Rushy Pond	Higher Bockhampton	Rushy Pond was the inspiration for Hardy's poem 'At Rushy Pond'
St Nicholas Church / deserted settlement (remains of)	Frome Whitfield	Settlement remains (earthworks) of probable medieval origin, visible as earthworks on aerial photographs. The most prominent feature is alleged to be the site of the church dedicated to St. Nicholas
Stinsford Park Gate & Piers	SY705911	Mid 1800s formally with Eagles on each pier
The Old Vicarage	Church Lane	A mid/late 19 th century brick detached house, with central door and wooden sashes, a large return wing off the lane entrance and attached service buildings. A handsome and unspoilt building, in a key position adjacent to the Church and churchyard.
The Victorian School House	Lower Bockhampton	Handsome early Victorian stone and tile Tudor house and schoolroom: altered and extended, but of real presence and with Thomas Hardy connections (he attended the school);
Three Bears Cottage	Continuation of Church Lane	Formerly Gardener's Cottage, much extended thatched cottage that dates back to the late 19 th century
Tumuli Group	South of Eweleaze Barn	Putative Bronze Age cemetery on land south of the hedge field boundary. The barrows were identified due to a reassessment of a post war aerial survey and there may be other ploughed out barrows on the downland leading up to Waterston Ridge.
Woodlands	Higher Bockhampton	A pair of 19 th century cottages since converted into a single residence
Yalbury Lodge	Frome Whitfield	A late Victorian characterful cottage mainly built of Broadmayne brick under a plain clay tiled roof.

Appendix 4: Literary Associations with the Landscape, The Heart of Hardy's Wessex

Stinsford Parish provides the background for many scenes in Thomas Hardy's novels and poetry. In the numerous references that have been made, some of the more well-known are mentioned here.

Hardy created a 'partly real partly dream country' and many scholars have identified the people and locations in his works, others are debated. Included within are some of those which can be more easily identified with both real associations and Hardy's fictional characters who traversed the hamlets, paths, bridleways, tracks, and roads of 'Mellstock' during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Walk along his 'embowered' path by a tributary of the river 'Froom' to fully enjoy this favourite local footpath. Listen perhaps to 'Moaning Hill' said to take its name from the wind among the trees which cover it. Or do as the author and lean 'upon a coppice gate' in the depth of winter and hear '*The Darkling Thrush*' the bird's powerful song at this time is described as of 'joy illimited'.

(the poem is dated 31 December 1900). The image of the thrush today adorns the left side of the West door on the tower of St Michael's.

Casterbridge (Dorchester) and its relationship with the Landscape

If one stands at the Top o' Town in the county town of Dorchester, Hardy's 'Casterbridge', and looks down the High Street the town and parish can be seen as Hardy described it in his novel 'The Mayor of Casterbridge'. Greys Bridge gives way to a view of 'deep green'. Meadows, Lime and Horse Chestnut trees form the edge of this part of the parish. "Casterbridge was the complement of the rural life around not its urban opposite. Bees and butterflies in the cornfields at the top of the town, who desired to get to the meads at the bottom took no circuitous course but flew straight down High Street without any apparent consciousness that they were traversing strange latitudes." "Country and town met at a mathematical line".

Dorchester is the principal location in the novel 'The Mayor of Casterbridge'. The rural parish of Stinsford wraps around its north and eastern sides. The town's history can be traced back some 4,000 years. The Roman influence is recognized in and around the town: "Casterbridge announced old Rome in every street, alley, and precinct. It looked Roman, bespoke the art of Rome, concealed dead men of Rome. It was impossible to dig more than a foot or two deep about the town fields and gardens without coming upon some tall soldier or other of the Empire, who had lain there in his silent unobtrusive rest for a space of fifteen hundred years."

Over Durnover Moor – the landscape north of Grey's Bridge to Waterston Ridge

At Greys Bridge by 'Durnover Moor' (deriving from the Roman name Durnovaria) looking a few meters north along the River 'Froom', and featuring in 'The Mayor of Casterbridge', is 'Ten Hatches Weir'. Today only **five hatches remain** and nearby this part of the river is used as a local swimming pool. The hatches are mentioned in the poem 'Before My Friend Arrived' which commemorates the burial of Horace Moule, son of the vicar of Fordington "the eve-lit weir, Which gurgled with sobs and sighs". Another poem relating to this area is 'Sitting on the Bridge'.



The Fennels' Cottage, Higher Crowstairs, Henry Macbeth-Raeburn's frontispiece for Wessex Tales, Vol XIII in the Complete Uniform Edition of the Wessex Novels, (1896)

Further along the river is Hatch Cottage, then Dairy Cottage, barns, farmhouse and buildings and the hamlet of Frome Whitfield with its parkland trees. The river Cerne comes in and joins the Frome from the north west and all give way to the gentle rise of fields towards Higher Waterston. Over this landscape are three ancient coppices, named Long, Square and Three Cornered and two copses, named Limekiln and Badgers. Hardy's 'Higher Crowstairs' is here and Fiddler's / Fidler's Green where you find the site of 'Shepherd Fennel's cottage' which features in the short story 'The Three Strangers'.

On reaching the Wessex Ridgeway consider the poem 'The Revisitation' which first appeared in print in 1904. The author recalls an early romance some 50 years before at a meeting here amongst the ancient barrows and stones.

Across the landscape to the south and east are views over much of the action of *'Far From the Madding Crowd'* one of Hardy's best loved novels whilst to the south west the Elizabethan Wolfeton Manor becomes the home of 'Lady Penelope' in one of Hardy's stories from a *'Group of Noble Dames'*.

Mellstock Hill – the landscape east of Grey's Bridge

From Greys Bridge along the London Road to the Stinsford roundabout is 'Mellstock Hill.' Hardy often walked this way over the bridge to and from Dorchester, on his way to school and later to work at the office of John Hicks, an architect in South Street, next door to the school run by William Barnes, the Dorset poet and scholar. Many of his characters took the same route, including 'Farmer Boldwood', 'Fanny Robin', and 'Sergeant Troy' in *'Far From the Madding Crowd'*, and 'Michael Henchard' and 'Farfrae' in *'The Mayor of Casterbridge'*. The hill features in the poem *'The Widow Betrothed'* as the author passes the 'lodge' and the 'avenue' of trees leading to Stinsford House. It also features in the poem *'On Stinsford Hill at Midnight'*.

Lower Mellstock and the watermeadows – the river valley below Stinsford

Stinsford Parish holds the scenes in Hardy's novel *'Under the Greenwood Tree'* almost entirely. Characters 'Old William Dewy', 'Reuben Dewy', 'Dick Dewy' and 'Michael Mail' sit in places occupied by Hardy's grandfather, his father, James Hardy and James Dart in the church gallery.

The stories of the 'Mellstock Quire' are many as Hardy recounts them in various poems and locations around the parish especially when 'Going The Rounds' carol singing at Christmas along the 'embowered' path by the 'Froom' which runs from Church Lane to Lower Bockhampton bridge. It follows a course below Kingston Maurward House.

The poem *'The Third Kissing Gate'* tells the story of one young couple's romantic meeting at dusk. There were once five gates of this type, along the path from Grey's Bridge to Lower Bockhampton, which allows people but not stock to pass through. The path is by "the Mead of Memories" of the "Quire" and through the water meadows.

At this point you are on the route of the long-distance circular walk 'The Hardy Way' of about 213 miles as it nears its end at Stinsford 'Mellstock' Church. The centre of 'Mellstock' can be considered to be Stinsford House and Church. This area relates especially to numerous Hardy's works. Poems include *'A Church Romance'* in which Hardy recalls the moment his mother first saw his father playing in the church string choir in the gallery. *'Afternoon Service at Mellstock'* recalls the author attending church as a youth. The poem *'The Noble Lady's Tale'* is Hardy's view on the real story of the Earl of Ilchester's eldest daughter and her marriage to the actor William O'Brien. They lived out their lives at Stinsford House and there is a memorial plaque in the church chancel together with a vault built by Hardy's father for them. The famous poems of 1912-13 feature greatly in this area. These were written by Hardy following the death of his first wife Emma Lavinia Gifford, buried in the churchyard. The author recounts his feelings and the past in poems such as *'Rain on her Grave'* and *'The Voice'*. After Hardy's own death in 1928 the Hardy Memorial window by Douglas Strachan was installed within the church. Hardy's heart is buried alongside his two wives and the Hardy Family Graves. His ashes lie in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey.

Church Lane leads down to the 'embowered' wooded path below Kingston Maurward House and eastward on to Lower Bockhampton. On reaching the bridge the view to the east looks towards "the Vale of Great Dairies" of *'Tess of the d'Urbervilles'* where Angel Clare and Tess spent their happiest times.

Northward along Bockhampton Lane there is a track and footpath to the right which leads to Bhompston, and Hardy's 'Blooms- End' the home of the 'Yeobrights' in the novel *'The Return of The Native'*. This route passes through cottages and farm buildings to reach lush meadows with good views over the River Frome. Looking across from here to the right is considered to be where 'Angel Clare' carried the milkmaids including 'Tess' over the floods on their way to church.

Continuing up Bockhampton Lane the old Post Office is reached on the right and just off the Lane to the left the School which Hardy attended as a boy aged eight. It is the School of *'Under the Greenwood Tree'*, where 'Fancy Day' was school mistress, and the bell can still be seen above the door. Today both are a private residence.

Mellstock Cross, Upper Mellstock and on to Egdon Heath – around Higher Bockhampton

Bockhampton Lane runs to the north to Bockhampton Cross which intersects the Stinsford to Tingleton road running east below 'Egdon Heath'. This is 'Mellstock Cross'. Further North is Cuckoo Lane leading to Higher Bockhampton 'Upper Mellstock'.

A turning at the top of this lane to the right goes down to the magnificent Thorncombe Woods and to Hardy's Cottage, today owned by the National Trust, where the novelist and poet was born and where the Hardy family lived for over a century. This area is considered to be the setting for the poem *'The Oxen'* 'In the lonely barton by yonder coombe Our childhood used to know'. The cottage itself is bordered at the back by heathland and the poem *'Childhood Among the Ferns'* recounts the time before trees were grown here. Whilst living at the cottage Hardy wrote *'Far From the Madding Crowd'* and *'Under the Greenwood Tree'*. In the latter, the cottage becomes the fictional Tranter's house. Several characters in this novel relate to the real residents living here along this lane as well as in the parish at the time. The poem *'Domicilium'* describes the cottage as it was told by his grandmother 'when first we settled here'. From the mixed woodland close by the cottage and Thorncombe Woods, paths lead up to Rushy Pond and the route of the Roman Road. Also to three Rainbarrows the most prominent of which is the 'Rainbarrow' that features in *'The Return of the Native'*. 'It formed the pole and axis of this heathery world'. Standing here there are good views of furze, heather and water courses and the characteristics of the heath which was open in Hardy's day with no afforested areas.

Knapwater House 'on a hill beside a lake' – through the Kingston Maurward Estate

The footpaths and bridleways which Hardy trod on his way to Dorchester, Kingston Maurward or other surrounding parts could take several routes. Just off the top of Cuckoo Lane one path leads down across the 'Eweleaze' which offers views of the Kingston Maurward Estate. It continues down to join another part of the course of the Roman road which runs to the side of Hollow Hill, along the Tingleton road. A permissive footpath runs through the estate. Hardy as a boy often visited Julia Martin the wife of the then owner of Kingston Maurward House and also attended the Harvest Suppers which were held in a barn situated nearby the Old Elizabethan Manor. The poem *'The Harvest Supper'* tells of one such occasion.

Kingston House features as 'Knapwater House' in *'Desperate Remedies'* Hardy's first published novel. To the south of the house 'the broad, graceful slope', runs down from the terrace. 'The Fane', a summerhouse, built in the form of a Grecian temple, still exists overlooking the lake as does the 'weir' to the east. Both the House and Old Manor match Hardy's descriptions in the novel.

When on the estate you are in the territory of two of Hardy's early works *'Desperate Remedies'* and *'Under the Greenwood Tree'* and in this novel the House is referred to as 'the Manor'. In 1921

Thomas Hardy was asked to become Godfather to the then owner's daughter Caroline Fox Hanbury and on doing so presented her with a poem in a silver box To C.F.H. *'On Her Christening- Day'*.

Returning to the top of 'Mellstock Hill' and taking the second turning off the roundabout towards 'Casterbridge'. A turning immediately to the right brings you along a narrow road overlooking Exhibition Field which takes its name from when the Bath and West and Southern Counties Show was held here during Hardy's lifetime recorded as 1872, 1887, 1908 and 1928. The views over the meadows, river, town to include the spire of All Saints and the towers of St Peter's and St George's and the Victorian brick-built prison and surrounding countryside of Hardy's Wessex are outstanding.

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The Thomas Hardy Society