

THE PROTECTION OF WHIMPLES ORCHARDS TO PREERVE THE HERITAGE OF THE VILLAGE AND HABITAT OF VARIOUS SPECIES INCLUDING LITTLE OWLS, BATS NEWTS ETC

1/WHIMPLES ORCHARDS ARE THE HERITAGE OF OUR VILLAGE

The village of Whimble has been developed and grown around the Cider industry (or Cyder as it was called then) since the early 1800.

In the 1890,s the railway made Whimble a main supply hub for the products of our orchards. Whiteway's became the most successful Cider producers in the world and exported as far as the far east. Many of Wimble's families have connections with the old cider factory, orchards and other industries that supported same. The industry flourished until the late 1980, s due to the decline and popularity of cider. After this point many of the orchards were turned back into farmland, but the village still has a few of the original and new current orchards which must be preserved as part of our heritage and also to protect the wide diversity of wild life, flora and fauna that now live and flourish in these orchards.

WHY ARE ORCHARDS PRIORITY HABITATS?

Orchards are priority habitats under the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan. So what is so special about them?

Fruit trees are particularly good habitats for wildlife because they are "early senescent". This means they get old relatively quickly and develop veteran features such as hollow trunks, rot holes, dead wood and sap runs.



These features are important for over 400 species of saproxylic invertebrates that live on decaying wood. These include Stag Beetle, Violet Oil-Beetle, and the beautiful and very rare Noble Chafer beetle.

The hollow trees are habitats to little owls, wood peckers, jackdaws and numerous other species.

Rot holes provide nesting sites for bats such as Noctule, while hollow trunks can provide a home



for Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and Little Owls.

Of course this “early senescence” means fruit trees don’t live for hundreds of years, like an oak. It is still possible, though, to manage an old fruit tree so that you preserve the dead wood, while encouraging new growth.

It’s not all about the decay though

Fruit tree blossom is an important source of nectar for pollinating insects including bees, hoverflies and butterflies.

Orchards often have ponds and hedgerows which provide habitat for amphibians such as great crested newts, birds and mammals, such as hedgehogs and voles.

And because orchard trees are more widely spaced than trees in a dense woodland, they let in more sunlight. This is particularly good for flying insects who need the warmth, such as bees and butterflies.

All in all, orchards are special places, not just for us to enjoy, but for a range of other creatures too.

TWO LIITTLE OWLS ON THE GARDEN FENCE, BRAMLEY GARDENS,WHIMPLE



WHY ARE ORCHARDS PRIORITY HABITATS?

Orchards are priority habitats under the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan. So what is so special about them?

Fruit trees are particularly good habitats for wildlife because they are “early senescent”. This means they get old relatively quickly and develop veteran features such as hollow trunks, rot holes, dead wood and sap runs.



These features are important for over 400 species of saproxylic invertebrates that live on decaying wood. These include Stag Beetle, Violet Oil-Beetle, and the beautiful and very rare Noble Chafer beetle. The People's Trust for Endangered Species are carrying out a national survey and [their website has information](#) on how to spot the signs of Noble Chafer (- just don't confuse it with the Rose Chafer, which is similar but much more common!).

Ecologist, Russell Miller, found the larva of a beetle in one of the orchards we were working with in Redbridge. It turned out to be a rare beetle not seen in London since 1928.

Rot holes provide nesting sites for bats such as Noctule, while hollow trunks can provide a home



for Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and Little Owls.

Of course this “early senescence” means fruit trees don't live for hundreds of years, like an oak. It is still possible, though, to manage an old fruit tree so that you preserve the dead wood, while encouraging new growth.

It's not all about the decay though

Fruit tree blossom is an important source of nectar for pollinating insects including bees, hoverflies and butterflies.

Orchards often have ponds and hedgerows which provide habitat for amphibians such as great crested newts, birds and mammals, such as hedgehogs and voles.

And because orchard trees are more widely spaced than trees in a dense woodland, they let in more sunlight. This is particularly good for flying insects who need the warmth, such as bees and butterflies.

All in all, orchards are special places, not just for us to enjoy, but for a range of other creatures too.

CONCLUSION

We are lucky enough to live in Bramley Gardens which overlook one of the orchards outlined in the attached plan and since our short time of being here (only three years), We have seen numerous little owls, green woodpeckers, Greater spotted woodpeckers, tree creepers and tawny owls. All of which use the old apple trees to nest in and feed on. We have also witnessed several species of bats in the summer which presumably also use the trees for roosting.

Unfortunately we have also witnessed the cutting down and removal of several of the older trees which were used to nest in by the little owls and could have been left for some years to come.



It has become obvious to us that something needs to be done to protect the original orchards in and around our village not only as part of our heritage but also as a very important habitat for some very rare and endangered species. It is essential that as part of the protection that it should be a condition of ownership that as trees are lost they are replaced with new under a managed and sustainable replanting scheme.

I have attached a plan highlighting the orchards I feel should be protected and designated as such within our local village plan before it is too late and they are lost forever.

I have also been in touch with the Whimble parish council and East Devon District Council as per the following email extracts

“We would like to also request that the Parish Council formally note that as part of the formation of the Neighbourhood Plan that consideration and action is taken to protect the historic Whimble Orchards. They are fundamental to the foundation of Whimble and it is possible to protect them (please see emails below from EDDC). Please can you confirm receipt of this email.

In addition in the last minutes that were reviewed at the PC meeting there was an anonymous note from a Whimble resident (I thought any comments considered had to be attributed to someone?) stating that they wished to note that a new road be considered running from Church Lane across the fields and Orchards running behind Bramley Gardens.

Please can you formally note that we strongly object to this proposal, it is very unnecessary, would run straight through a historic orchard and create a rat run behind properties in Bramley Gardens reducing the value of properties in its wake “

Subject: RE: Whimble Orchards

Dear Keith,

Sorry for my delay in responding but thank you very much for your reply it was very useful and informative.

I will continue to liaise with the parish council re including the protection of the orchards in the local plan.

Subject: RE: Whimble Orchards

Dear Neal

Thank you for your email, which the Countryside team has passed to us in Planning Policy to respond (I have copied in David Colman, Senior Arboricultural Officer).

The Local Plan 2013-2031 (adopted Jan 2016) sets the approach on the amount and location of future development in East Devon. It covers a wide range of issues, including conserving and enhancing the natural environment. There are several policies that could apply in considering impacts of development upon orchards, offering protection to them, such as:

- Strategy 47 – Nature conservation and geology
- Policy D1 – Design and local distinctiveness
- Policy D2 – Landscape requirements
- Policy D3 – Trees and Development Sites
- Policy EN5 – Wildlife habitats and features

The Local Plan can be seen on our website: <https://eastdevon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan-2013-2031/> You will also find an interactive map on this web page which shows how the Local Plan policies are applied.

You mention the new local plan – adoption of this is several years away, so I'd suggest it is best to rely on the adopted Local Plan and possibly emerging neighbourhood plan in the short term.

Note that you have emailed the parish clerk – you might want to raise the issue about protecting orchards with the parish council in their neighbourhood plan.

I hope that's helpful, but do let us know if there's anything else.

Regards, Keith

Keith Lane

Planning Policy Officer

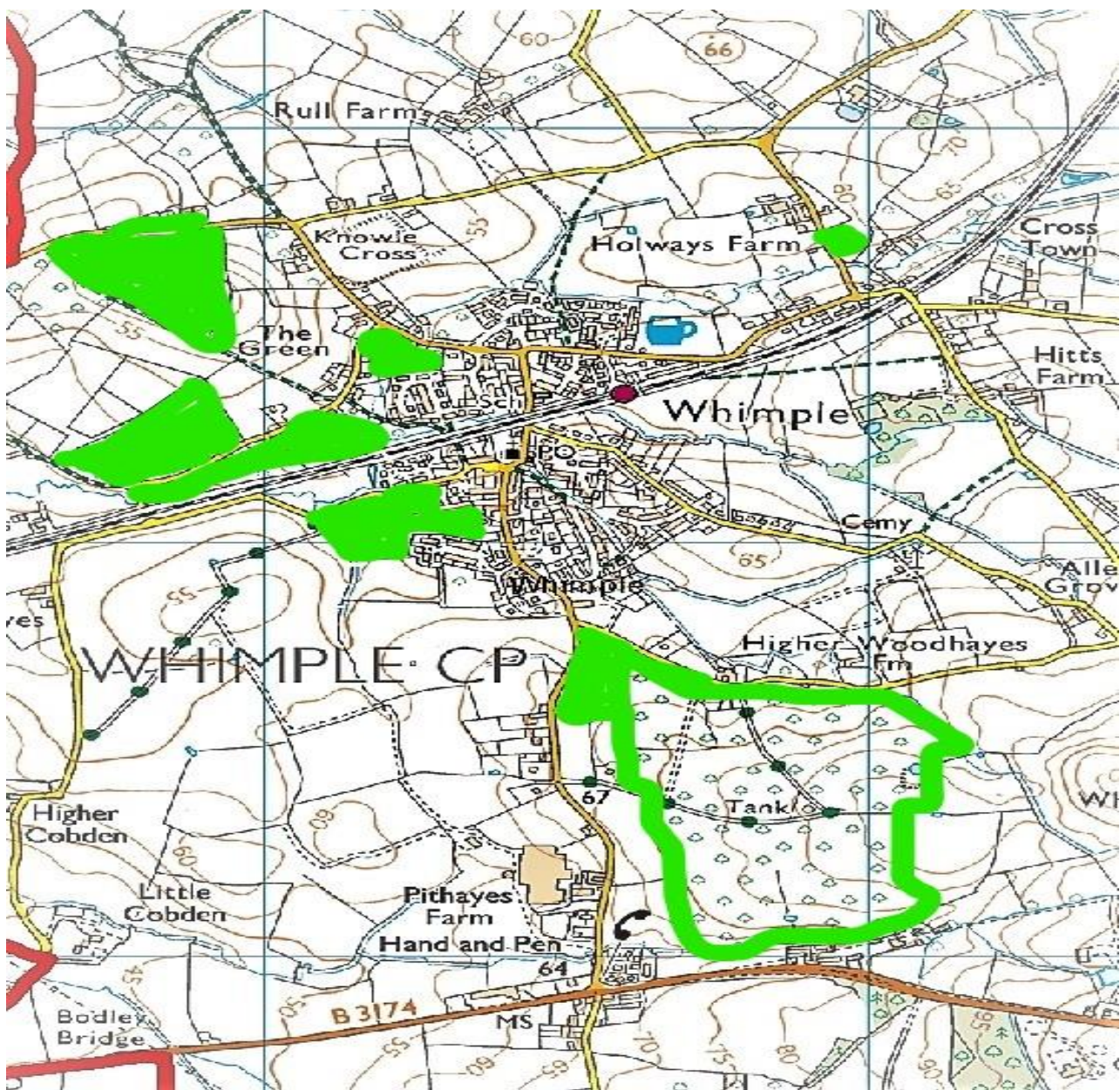
East Devon District Council

klane@eastdevon.gov.uk Direct: 01395 571684





WE STRONGLY REQUEST THAT THESE ORCHARDS ARE DESIGNATED PRESERVED AND PROTECTED AREAS AS PART OF THE WHIMPLE VILLAGE PLAN



Solid Green areas denote orchard areas to be protected. Area outlined in green is current comercial orchard which is maintained as a working orchard