

F1 Team – LCA – Froxfield Green & Laydean Farm

Key Characteristics of F1 - Froxfield Green & Laydean Farm

This area is predominantly Clay Plateau with shallow valleys sloping to the south and west. To the far south of the study area, the plateau edge is characterized by Hangers on the chalk scarp (Great Palmers Wood). The soil type is Clay with Flints overlaying Chalk, which is exposed in places and evidenced by a number of clay pits, creating a gently undulating high dry plateau with shallow dry valleys.

The landscape is mostly open arable farmland with small to medium fields interspersed with limited areas of pasture given over to stock (sheep and cows) Arable land has increased over last 20 years and dairy herds lost. The fields are bounded by hedgerows and have small blocks of mixed and single species woodland and small coppices alongside or between them. There are many single trees, Oak and notably, Holly within the hedgerows. There is a general sense of openness with many views being long to medium in length. The feeling is one of exposure tempered by shallow valleys and



intimate woodland with a deep sense of tranquility and stillness interrupted by the occasional light aircraft or, if the wind is in a southwesterly direction, the distant traffic hum of the A3 and A272.

The area to the north of the F1 sector, between Spital's Cross and Pummel (?) /Post Office Lane (?) comprises fairly large open fields and a number of copses. The fields are a mixture of arable and

pasture. The ground is gently sloping with a small valley. There are a number of long views all around but particularly good towards Privett in the WNW and towards West Meon, Old Winchester and the downs in the SW. The copses are largely conifer with native deciduous plants such as hazel around the outside. The principle building within the sector is Bower Farm, a symmetrical mid 19th century farm house of flint and brick. The house and surrounding farm buildings have been substantially renovated and adapted during the period from 2006. The feeling of the sector is one of broad open views and general calm.

Agriculture and Land Use

The area comprises two principal farms: Venthams and Bower. Both farms are currently arable, although there was a dairy herd at Bower farm until recently. The buildings which had been used as a dairy there have been sensitively restored and converted into a house. On these farms, the arable fields are large, open and wide, and have a feeling of exposure, but, where they remain, the dairy pastures are smaller, lush and intimate.



There are small areas where sheep can be seen (and heard!) grazing: at Froxfield Green opposite Venthams Farm

Cottages and in the church yard at St Peter's on the Green.

Arable crops comprise wheat, barley and oilseed rape and in the recent past, maize, marrowfat peas, flax seed and hemp.

At Venthams there is a pheasant shoot so some of the arable fields edges are planted with pheasant cover (comprising among other things: Jerusalem Artichoke, Sunflowers and Maize)



To the north of Froxfield Green there is a small holding (Fair Acres Farm) with some cattle, horses and a poultry farm. At Froxfield Green there are also fields to the rear of two properties given over to horses, with the associated field partitions comprising electric fencing and stabling.

To the northwest of this area are two areas of managed coniferous woodland (Spruce?) bounded by deciduous trees, these contrast with Floud Wood, an area of ancient oaks on the south-eastern boundary of the F1 area.

Pockets of undeveloped, overgrown ground, disused ancient deep/shallow clay -pits, damp areas and occasional mere ponds, considered by some to be untidy or even unsightly, provide valuable pockets for wildlife and enrich the biodiversity of the area.

Lanes, Verges and Hedges, Signage, Land access and Footpaths

Staple Ash Lane turns sharply off the A272 to Froxfield Green. After two sharp bends, it rises steeply, emerging at Froxfield Green where it splits in two, becoming westbound Newman's Lane and continuing eastbound through The Green, past Broadhanger House becoming eventually The Broadway (F2 area). This lane forms one of the main arteries through Froxfield but due to its gradient is generally impassable to all but 4 wheel drivers in snow!

The lane is way marked using traditional cast iron black and white road signage which has been restored in sympathy with the character of the Green which is a conservation area. Litter dropping and fly tipping can be a problem along this lane but has recently been kept in check by the "literati", an organization of local residents who pick up litter and report on fly tipping on a voluntary basis.

The lane is bounded on one side by a tall hedge but has a wide rough verge where it emerges at the top of the hill below Venthams Farm. Primroses can be seen in abundance here in spring.



Staple Ash Lane ends at a distinctive crossroads known locally as "Spital's Cross" (folklore has it that a hermit once lived here and provided weary travelers with much needed help and rest in days of old) where there is a choice of two routes to the A272: southwesterly, Jennings' or Genesis Lane (which has hedgerows full of honeysuckle in summer) and westerly along Old Down Lane past coniferous woodland and low hedgerows and (in spring) beautiful bluebell woods. Both of these lanes approach the main road steeply passing houses on the very edge of the parish and outside the F1 area. From here hares can be seen boxing in spring.

Hedgerows are mixed with Hazel, Field Maple, Blackthorn, Dog-rose and Honeysuckle growing in them. Where the verges are exposed there are Buttercups and Stitchwort in the summer with Foxgloves, Herb Robert and Rosebay Willow Herb in the banks and in the ditches and damp areas in spring Celandines and Lady Smocks.

The lane east bound from Spital's Cross to High Cross (known as High Cross Lane and sometimes Post Office lane) is deep cut and winding with hazel hedges set above the bank. In summer these hedges are teeming with dog roses and honeysuckle flowers. From this lane the lane northwesterly to Bower Farm (marked on some maps as Pummel Lane) is distinctive for its deep hedgerows, Foxgloves, isolated holly trees and winding undulating passage. This lane forms the boundary of the F1 area.

From Bower Farm the lane westbound through Laydean Farm (cow byre now the only remaining building) dips gently into a damp but primarily dry valley. Here there are abundant snowdrops in the early spring. The lane rises out of the tranquil valley and



continues westerly along a route lined by an avenue of mature oak trees. At the corner there is a view to the coniferous woods known as Tiddle's Copse and Fisher's Copse upon rounding the corner there is a poorly maintained mere pond which is no doubt vital to the ducks which frequent it. This lane joins High Cross lane at a small grassy triangle.

Many well used public footpaths crisscross the area south of Spital's Cross and are popular with both ramblers and dog walkers alike. There are few footpaths in the north of the F1 sector and notably none which pass through woodland areas.

Farms and Buildings

Buildings in the area are distinctive and traditional in style, many are of flint with bricks construction, some are thatched. With the exception of Rapley Lodge on the boundary of the F1 area none has been constructed in the last one hundred years or so. Froxfield Green is the most notable settlement in this sector the other dwellings are scattered and isolated or form small groupings of three or four dwellings (Trees ,Bower Farm) The buildings large and small are numbered according to the system of numbering of the Nicholson's estate of which they were all once part. The Green forms part of a conservation area and the red telephone box has a preservation order. There is no shop or pub but there is a much loved church which is used once a month and a daily bus service. The Green has an enclosed feel and, rural character in the most part un-spoilt by road furniture other than the black and white cast iron finger post at the junction with Staple Ash Lane. There are no street lights or pavements and the road around the green is unmade reflecting the rural nature of the village.

The main farms in this area are Bower and Venthams. The farm buildings at Bower farm including the aforementioned cattle sheds have been converted into a single dwelling along with the farm house. The land, now given over to arable is still farmed by a local farmer, although not by the owners of the farm house.

Venthams Farm, which is mainly arable with some areas set aside to accommodate a pheasant shoot, is farmed by resident farmers who live in the farmhouse at Venthams Farm at Froxfield Green. The outbuildings at Venthams are used for a mixture of purposes: storage of farm vehicles and light industrial/wood working/carpentry.

The view looking west from Venthams Farm is characterized by a line of electricity pylons which have been there since the 1930's, these run in a north/southerly direction, crossing Newman's Lane before Spital's Cross and bisect the F1 sector.

Historical Points of Interest

At Froxfield Green the buildings are currently all residential although in the past they have been variously used as a shop and Post Office (Staple Ash House), library (Pound House) and a school (Love's Charity). Holly Lodge was once the rectory. Two of the table tombs in the church yard at St Peter's on the Green are listed. Part of the Froxfield entrenchments (documented in "Froxfield A Taste of History") can be seen at Venthams Farm. St Peter's on the Green replaces a Saxon church. The yew trees on the church path are a particularly attractive feature and possibly date back to this time.



Sounds

Froxfield Green and its environs are regarded by its residents as a peaceful place to live. Silence pervades at night and is interrupted only by calling owls and the occasional vehicle. During the day birdsong fills the air and is the back drop to the gentle grunting or baaing of sheep in the churchyard. In the open areas of arable land Skylarks can be heard in the summer and Buzzards can be heard wheeling high above. Sometimes a cockerel crows or a cow moos in the distance. There is occasional noise from mowers in the summer and agricultural vehicles as they go about their business of working the land and the urgent hum of combines towards the end of the summer.

Over head micro lights and Chinooks can be a source of momentary irritation and, if the wind is in the right direction, there is the sound of the motorcyclists or a police siren from the A272!

Views of Residents /Matters of Concern

We sent out questionnaires to 30 residences. Including our own, there were 7 responses. By far the most frequently valued aspects of living in Froxfield were the beauty, peace, tranquility and unique character of the countryside and the lack of development. The residents clearly value where they live and wish to see it respected, cared for and preserved.



Treasures

These included beautiful woodland, trees and hedgerows teeming with Dog Roses and Honeysuckle; traditional architecture and the "iconic" and spacious setting of the church at Froxfield Green.

Eyesores

Pylons; landfill, tipping and piles of rubble at Venthams Farm; a shabby telephone box; chicken sheds at Froxfield Green and litter from McDonalds.

Concerns

Most frequently mentioned topics:

Energy: a general feeling that wind turbines would not be welcome but also a concern that in the future we may have to address energy needs as a community due to rising cost of oil. Could a working party be set up to look at this?

Communications: all mentioned a need for improved Broadband.

Farming: a general desire for practices which would support wildlife rather than destroying it; improve care of the hedgerows and verges; many would like to see more livestock farming in the area although a recognition of economic reasons for the increase in arable.

Public Transport: a need for this to be more appropriate in size to protect hedgerows and lanes but service vital for an aging population. Explore ways of using technology to make this more efficient and effective.

Planning: maintain a vigilant attitude to over-development; a need for provision of housing for local youngsters; consider re-development of disused agricultural buildings carefully.

Employment: encourage crafts rather than light industrial; opportunities limited by poor Broadband.

Restoration and preservation: many residents expressed a desire to see St Peters restored and preserved in its setting; also a concern for upkeep/ maintenance of footpaths and stiles, hedgerows and verges; record, restore and reinstate ponds.

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