

Green Spaces of Chailey

Submission Version

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Green Spaces of Chailey

5 **1. Introduction**

The Parish of Chailey lies at the geographical centre of Sussex and in the Low Weald landscape area; it comprises four settlements (or hamlets) within its Bounds.

10

The National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF] Chapter 8 – Promoting Healthy Communities – refers to access to high quality open spaces for sport and recreation (§73) and states that *Planning Policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access* (§75). The geography of

15 Chailey is described in Lewes District Council & South Downs National Park: Rural Settlements Study §16 as follows:

15

16.1 Within the parish of Chailey are the four settlements of North Chailey, Chailey Green, South Street and South Chailey. The name is

20 *descriptive of the locality deriving from the Anglo-Saxon ‘chag’ meaning broom or gorse and ‘ley’ meaning open space, clearing or meadow, in other words an area with much uncultivated land. Chailey Common was recorded in the Domesday Book.*

20

25 *16.2 The four settlements are separated by open countryside, so are appraised individually but are all linked by the north/south aligned A275.*

25

Chailey is criss-crossed by a dense network of footpaths and their recreational use was emphasised during many of the consultation phases

30 which preceded this Plan – see especially Chailey Link Walk diagram below and the general map of Chailey.

30

The NPPF concludes (§78) that *Local policy for managing development within a Local green Space should be consistent with policy for Green*

35 *Belts*. Our Plan qualifies that by stating that the essential character of Chailey is defined by its countryside landscape, and that this landscape needs protection and special consideration.

35

The area known as Chailey in fact lies within two Landscape Character

40 areas: the Upper Ouse Valley, North of the A272, and the Western Low Weald, Southwards from the A272 [ref. East Sussex County Landscape Assessment, areas 3 and 14]. Certain areas of the Parish are specifically

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designated as SSSI or as Conservation areas (see Appendix) but this Plan further identifies the landscape views to the North (Upper Ouse Valley) and to the West and South-East (Western Low Weald) as views and landscape to be protected from future settlement growth which is not in keeping with the Key Landscape attributes – e.g. *Unspoilt and distinctive rural character with few intrusive features and no large urban areas* and frequent wide views towards the South Downs and North to Ashdown Forest.

Such protection will accord with the Key Strategic Issues: Protecting and enhancing the distinctive quality of the Environment, expressed in the Lewes DC Local Plan, Part I Core Strategy: *to conserve and enhance the character and quality of the district’s environment ... to attract new investment and achieve economic benefits through tourism* and similarly in the Vision Statement: *By 2030, the Low Weald villages and wider countryside would have retained and, where possible, enhanced their attractive and distinctive character and identity* (emphasis added).

2. Character of Chailey's Landscape

5 Chailey is a dispersed settlement, typical of the Lower Weald and of East
Sussex, an agricultural landscape of isolated farms and farm dwellings. If
reference is made to a 19th century map of Sussex, the villages of
Plumpton, Lindfield, Fletching and Newick surround a large un-named
area which represents (Chailey) North Common and South Common.
10 The Parish of Chailey still lies around the Common, and it is significant
that today's Ordnance Survey map marks numerous farms, many of
which have become private dwellings; however, at least six farms (the
Hooke, Townings, Wapsbourne, Bush, Vixengrove, and Heasemans) still
work the land; and the parish includes three stud farms – Chailey,
15 Bevernbridge, and River Farm.

15



Typical Landscape surrounding Chailey Green

20 The surrounding landscape character is influenced by several
distinguishing features, including relatively small, irregular fields; parcels
of small to medium sized woodland areas; and (remnant) heathland and
common land. Chailey Common (a designated SSSI and Local Nature

25 Reserve) borders much of the settlement to the north and west. The four settlements (the settlement areas of North Common, Chailey Green, South Street and South Common) are each relatively compact and, in landscape terms, well contained with very significant long-distance views into and from the surrounding area.



30

Panorama of South Common settlement looking South

35 The landscape area is typical of that area, known as the Low Weald, which lies on clay soil between the chalk Downs and the greensand Ridge. It is an area that has remained heavily wooded (especially with oaks) and characterised by isolated farmsteads. Pevsner [Sussex: East 2012] in his introduction writes:

40 *Yet careful planning controls over much of rural East Sussex, including the creation of the latest of the National Parks... have guaranteed the special character of the landscape and preserved a wonderfully unaltered scene in so many of the rural villages and towns.*

45 Lewes District Council's Local Plan states:

50 *The open countryside can also form the rural setting for towns and villages. The protection of this countryside from encroachment by inappropriate development, therefore, also serves to safeguard the setting and character of these settlements, as well as preventing their coalescence which could erode their separate identities.* [Chapter 7 - Coast & Countryside Environment – CT1 § 7.4].

55 Further [CT4] the Plan states that the District Council will not permit development that would result in the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a). Good quality farmland is not only recognised as an important resource locally and nationally, but also makes a valuable contribution to the landscape character of the rural environment.

60 The Parish of Chailey serves as the gateway to two of the major tourist attractions of Sussex: the Bluebell Railway whose terminus and locomotive sheds stand within Chailey; and Sheffield Park, the National Trust’s important garden (laid out by Capability Brown) on the further bank of the River Ouse which marks Chailey’s Northern Boundary. The visitor’s approach lies through the Low Weald landscape formed by the valleys of the Bevern stream and the Ouse River.

3. Types of Green Spaces in Chailey

5 In the following, the various open green spaces of Chailey will be further discussed. It is in the nature of a rural parish like Chailey that a large proportion of the area consists of open fields or woodland. This document is concerned mainly with those parts of the land that are open to the public. However, as noted above, Chailey’s Green Spaces also comprise a series of vistas (or Landscape Character Areas), several of which it is the intention of this Neighbourhood Plan to conserve, and which are considered valuable Green Space Assets for the community.

15 Chailey’s Green Spaces further comprise specific formal areas which already have protection as they are either within a Conservation Area, or a registered Common or Village Green, or constitute Allotments owned by the Parish Council. In these cases, it is the intention of this Plan to restrict development alongside such Green Spaces so as to protect their specific countryside aspect. As stated in the Lewes Local Plan, it is intended that *the countryside will remain in use for agricultural,*

20

woodland and recreational uses which are compatible with the conservation of the area. [CT1 §7.3]

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We have also identified relevant Character Areas using the dense network of footpaths which criss-cross the Parish and, importantly, the so-called Link Walk, whose route takes a path through the landscape and vistas which we seek to protect – see below.

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To qualify as a “Local Green Space designation” as defined in the NPPF §77, a green space should be:

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1. in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

2. demonstrably special to the local community;

3. of particular local significance; and

40

4. local in character and not an extensive tract of land.

These requirements will be addressed in the following text for each Green Space that is considered to merit Local Green Space Designation.

4. The Commons

“North Common” is the traditional term for the Northern part of the parish, which, unlike South Common, has retained significant common
5 land – Chailey Common. The Common comprises a series of four contiguous and individually named commons, with a fifth separated common (Lane End) to the North.

10 Chailey Common is one of the largest heathland commons in the South of England, covering 450 acres and was designated as a Local Nature Reserve in 1966. It was also made a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its heathland plants and diverse insect and bird communities.

15 More recently the value of heathland has been recognised by the Government, which has highlighted ambitious targets for heathland management and re-creation in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan – a result of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.



20

Part of Pound Common

Historically, Chailey Common was recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 and was used over a long period of time by local people for cutting wood and bracken for fuel and grazing livestock. The decline of

25 communal use has threatened the heathland by allowing bracken, birch
and gorse to take over, smothering the heather and grass.

30 Conserving lowland heathlands is important not just because they are rare
but because they support many rare species of plants and wildlife.
The heather and gorse provide a habitat for many birds, including the
Stonechat, and butterflies such as the Silver Studded Blue. Many unusual
plants like the Heath Spotted Orchid and Bog Asphodel depend on
heathland soil.

35 Chailey Common gives a great deal of enjoyment to walkers, riders and
dog owners. The sense of open space, freedom and natural habitat make it
a popular Nature Reserve for both young and old alike.

40 Chailey Common is open access land, but to minimise disturbance to
wildlife, visitors are encouraged to keep to the footpaths. Leaflets on self-
guided walks around the Common are available from East Sussex County
Council.

45 Horse riders are also welcome to ride on the commons but are requested
to keep to the higher, dryer paths during wet weather to avoid excessive
damage to the land.

50 One of the major threats to heathland is lack of management. Heathland
plants cannot survive in heavy shade, so invading birch, bracken and
gorse need to be removed by an active program of management.

55 Heathland's unique wildlife needs vegetation of different ages as well as
bare ground. These conditions can be created by managing heathland in a
cycle – controlled winter cutting or burning and grazing which suppresses
scrub growth.

60 Active management of the Reserve aims to re-create and conserve the
heathland through scrub clearance, mowing and grazing. Sheep were re-
introduced 15 years ago to help in this management, and the wildlife is
carefully monitored and protected.

65 See the Appendix “Flora & Fauna of Chailey Common” for further
information.

5. Chailey Green

The historic centre of the parish is now the Conservation Area of Chailey Green. Views into and out of the conservation area are limited as a consequence of the enclosing effect of the surrounding properties. Nevertheless, views of the wider countryside are possible along the northern part of Lewes Road between the Reading Room and Chailey Primary School, although these are limited by the mature trees located between the road and the fields. There is also a tree-lined vista into the conservation area from the south along Lewes Road, which also provides some views of the open countryside, the vista being terminated by Place Cottage and Beards.

15



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South from Chailey Green



25

South-west from Chailey Green

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35 Standing on The Green, looking at the properties that enclose it, also gives a number of interesting views and vistas. The conservation area has several public foot paths running through and around it, providing views and vistas of the village and the surrounding countryside. See the map of Chailey's footpaths in the Annex to this document.



40

East of Chailey Green towards The Moat

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Another tree-lined vista is found up and down the lane that leads to Chailey Moat. Fields either side of the lane can be seen through a continual line of trees.

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In view of its history and intrinsic character, Chailey Green is also eminently suitable as a candidate for Local Green Spaces Designation, as demonstrated below:

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- The Green is obviously in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, being central to the Chailey settlement.
- Moreover, the Green is demonstrably special to the local community, in view of the presence of several historically important buildings, including St Peter's Church and the Reading Room.

60

- Therefore, the Green is also of particular local significance and is obviously local in character and not an extensive tract of land, being a relatively small contained area.

6. Rowheath

5 Located north and south of Cinder Hill, only a short distance from the A-275 and close to Chailey Green, the ancient open communal space of Rowheath offers recreational possibilities for the young people of the parish. Currently, Rowheath is laid out as a football pitch and also provides a basket-ball hoop.



10

Rowheath Recreation Ground looking South

15 The area lies in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves, since it is quite central in the Parish and only about 1 km from Chailey Green. It is demonstrably special to the local community and of particular local significance in view of the fact that it provides one of very few recreational areas for young people. Moreover, it is certainly local in character and not an extensive tract of land, being approximately 1 acre in size. Therefore, Rowheath is another area suitable for Local
20 Green Space Designation.

7. The Sports Ground

5 Several acres of open playing fields are maintained by the parish to the south of the Sports Pavilion located about 500 metres west of the Kings

10 Head cross roads. This area is managed by the Chailey Sports Club. It offers opportunities for young people to become involved in organized team sports such as football, hockey and cricket, and is home to Chailey Colts and Chailey Cricket Club (founded 1758).



Chailey Sports Ground, with its iconic view to the Orion Dark Skies viewpoint on the Downs

8. Markstakes Common

5 To the south, the Parish boundary is formed by a stream at Bevernbridge. The area of open land originally known as South Common lies to the north west of Mill Lane, but is no longer a public Common. However Markstakes Common, to the east of South Street and south of Markstakes Lane, with Balneath Wood behind, still forms an important wildlife area.

9. Allotments

5 The parish council operates 20 allotment plots at a site next to Chailey Heritage School, Haywards Heath Road, North Chailey. To ensure that the various plots are used effectively and that they do not fall into decay, users of the allotments have formed an allotments society to manage various aspects of the site on behalf of the Parish Council.

10. Footpaths & Link Walk

An extensive network of public rights of way extends throughout the parish, as may be seen from reference to the attached map.

5

To celebrate the Millennium, the villagers of Chailey laid out a way-marked circular walk linking the North and South parts of the village. The walk *meanders through contrasting habitats of farmland, heathland and ancient woodland with extensive views across Sussex and the Downs*. See a map of the walk below.

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This description of the Walk encapsulates the landscape and vistas, which we seek to protect, and which are:

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The Downs from North Common;



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Panorama of the Downs from above Roeheath on Link Walk

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The broad sweep of farmland to the West of Bineham Wood and Townings Farm to Longridge Farm;

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Looking South from Track leading to Townings Farm – the Downs are visible in the distance

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Land lying to the South and West of St Peter's Church;

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South from St Peter's Church – St Peter's at Chailey Green is the centre of the village, typified by the green spaces and farmland which surround and embody the settlement

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Land lying to the South of Cinder Hill and across Balneath;

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Looking South from Balneath Manor towards the Downs

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And

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Vista to the North and Ashdown Forest across the Ouse valley.

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View from Banks Road North across Ouse Valley

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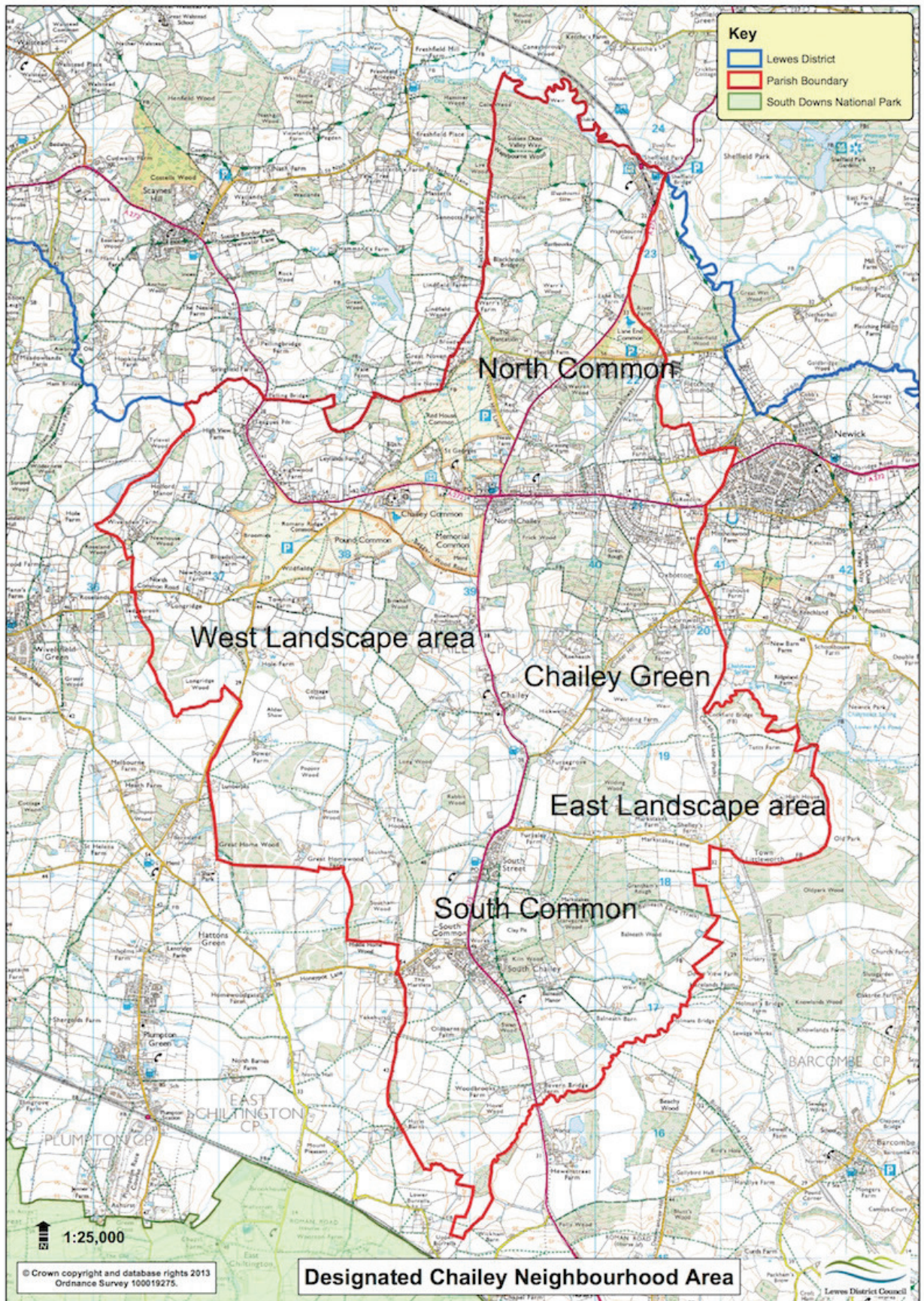
11. Reedons Meadows

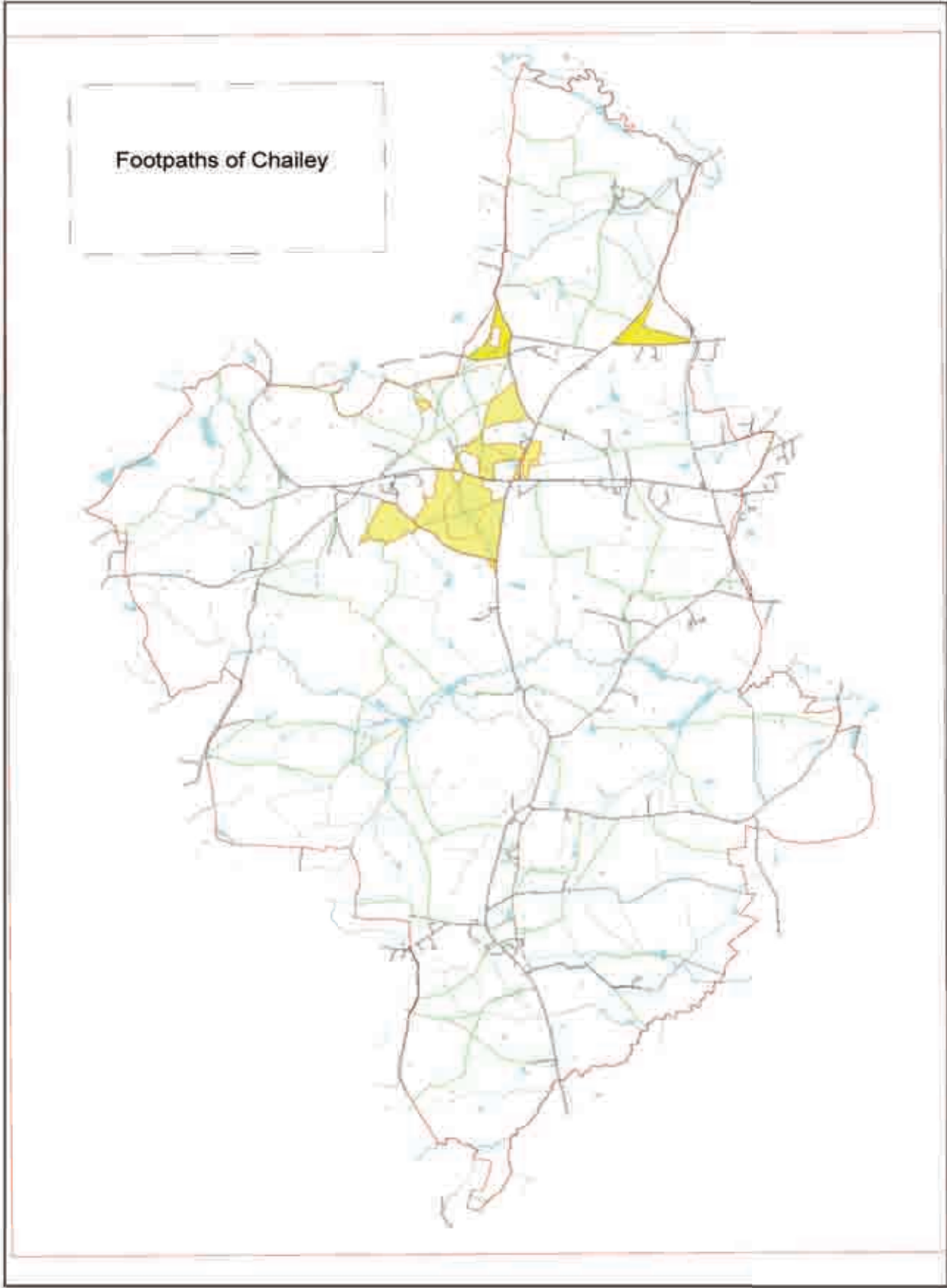
20 Reedens Meadows is a new area of natural greenspace open to the public which has been created on the western edge of Newick on the site bounded by Jackies Lane, Harmers Hill and Western Road (the A272). Whilst this new facility has been established by the developers of a site in Newick and volunteers from Newick will play a part in maintaining the site in the future, the site is in fact in Chailey Parish.

25 The area of greenspace is a welcome addition to the many outdoor facilities available to the residents of Chailey.

30

END





Flora & Fauna of Chailey Common

5 Chailey Common is a good example of the sub-atlantic English heath habitat. A variety of heathland plant communities are represented which in turn support diverse invertebrate and bird communities.

10 The mosaic of heath vegetation lies on Ashdown Sands and comprises acidic grassland, marshy grassland, wet and dry heath, and areas of continuous bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*. Species-rich acidic flushes are periodically associated with the small seasonal streams, and the two ponds have marginal plant communities. Scrub invasion is well established over parts of the common and in places the succession to
15 woodland is complete. Continuous bracken stands dominate much of the common but in places these give way to wet and dry heathland communities or acidic grasslands. Dry heath is dominated by heather *Calluna vulgaris* and bell-heather *Erica cinerea* with wavy hair-grass *Deschampsia flexuosa* and purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. In the
20 areas of wet heath these are augmented by cross-leaved heath *Erica tetralix* and *Sphagnum* mosses. This wet heath contains colonies of marsh gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe*, an uncommon species in the county, and pale heath violet *Viola lactea*, which has only three other known localities in East Sussex, has been reported in the dry heath.

25 Small linear areas of dry acidic grassland occur throughout the site and are dominated by sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris* and wavy hairgrass, with Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* and sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* in some parts. In poorly
30 drained areas purple moor-grass becomes dominant. Species-rich acidic flushes also contain *Sphagnum* species, divided sedge *Carex divisa*, and rushes *Juncus* species. A further three species uncommon in East Sussex are found in this habitat: bog asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*, round-leaved sundew *Drosera rotundifolia* and heath-spotted orchid
35 *Dactylorhiza maculata* ssp. *ericetorum*.

Areas of scrub dominated by gorse *Ulex europaeus* occur on the open common, while alder buckthorn *Frangula alnus* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* are more important constituents near the periphery. The
40 surrounding woodland consists of silver birch *Betula pendula*, downy birch *Betula pubescens* and pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* with a shrub layer of hazel *Corylus avellana*, elder *Sambucus nigra* and hawthorn

Crataegus monogyna, and a field layer dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus*.

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The stream, ditches and pond margins support a community which includes fool's water-cress *Apium nodiflorum*, hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus* and nettle *Urtica dioica*. Willow *Salix* species and alder

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Alnus glutinosa form scrub or woodland in these areas.

The common supports a variety of butterflies, including several notable species; the silver-studded blue *Plebejus argus*, grayling *Hipparchia semele*, pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne* and high brown fritillary *Argynnis adippe*. Two other species occur which are uncommon in the county: small pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria selene* and green hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*. The breeding bird community is varied and includes nightjar, stonechat, tree pipit and cuckoo.

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