

Whimble Neighbourhood Plan Update
Report to Whimble Parish Council on 16th February 2026

Update since last meeting

Actions have included:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment / Habitat Regulations Assessment

Per the WPC decision, a request was made of EDDC's Neighbourhood Planning Officer for work on a scoping report for these items to get underway; this has required a significant amount of time be spent updating documents produced earlier in the programme to give the Scoping Opinion a base from which to draw a conclusion. While this has taken time away from other elements of the programme which will need to be pushed back, it has highlighted a number of areas where work can likely be streamlined (due to duplication of policies introduced in the eEDLP) or a WPC decision will be required (where objectives/policies are in conflict), and completing the work early is also likely to shorten the timeline later down the process. Initial SEA/HRA scoping is now thus underway

- Compliance of the Neighbourhood Plan with other areas of national and local planning policy

At the previous meeting, we discussed potential procedural issues around the timing of adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan relative to that of the new East Devon Local Plan, and whether this could have implications for the policy effectiveness of the WNP.

As things stand, EDDC advice is that, given the requirement for Neighbourhood Plans to be in accordance with the rest of the Development Plan, including the emerging Local Plan, there should be no policy conflicts that arise between the WNP and eEDLP, and as such there is no policy reason to specifically look to adopt before or after the new EDDC Local Plan. In administrative terms, the advice is to keep preparing as if the WNP will be adopted under the existing Local Plan, as there are provisions to amend the plan during the examination process (or even after adoption) to account for the change in Local Plan.

More seriously, Members will recall the District Councillor's update in January 2026 which highlighted proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework that could significantly affect the planning policy environment in Whimble, with a particular impact on the proposed landscape and visual impact policies in Chapter 4 of the draft WNP. While those changes remain out to consultation and are thus subject to change, if implemented they may yet require a significant rethink of WNP's approach. It is proposed that we keep a watching brief on this issue.

- Seeking advice ref. the WNP's proposed policy on Devon Banks from EDDC tree/ecology officers

Completed and no further actions required.

- Clarifying the situation as regards the Community Governance Review and its interaction with the Whimble Neighbourhood Plan

Members will be aware that the provisional CGR recommendations currently out to consultation propose removing a few small areas of SANG from the Western edge of the Parish and transferring them into Cranbrook; as the designated Whimble Neighbourhood Area includes those areas, if CGR remains on its current trajectory as concerned with

Whimble Neighbourhood Plan Update

Report to Whimble Parish Council on 16th February 2026

these areas, WPC will either need to a) agree the WNP jointly with Cranbrook Town Council, as it would cover part of their administrative area, or b) request that EDDC revise the Neighbourhood Area designation to exclude those transferred areas, and if approved to revise the draft WNP accordingly.

- Letter to landowners of longlisted sites, and specification for masterplanning work

A verbal update on these will be provided as it is anticipated there will be movement on them between the publication of this report and the meeting on 16th February.

- Costings for footpath between Whimble and Hand & Pen – re. s106/CIL commitments

A verbal update on this will be provided as the Neighbourhood Plan Lead is attending a meeting on the subject to inform a costings exercise between the publication of this report and the meeting on 16th February.

In light of that exercise, WPC might wish to highlight at this stage other significant projects whose costings should be explored prior to drafting of the s106/CIL section.

Review of Sections 1 – 4

Accompanying this report are the first four sections of the redrafted Whimble Neighbourhood Plan, which Members will recall were deferred from the previous meeting to allow everyone time to fully review. These sections are:

- Section 1: Introduction – talking about the purpose and structure of the plan, as well as offering a profile of Whimble and its context
- Section 2: Contextualising the Plan – a largely procedural section setting out the position of the plan within national and local planning policy, and the requirements of the plan
- Section 3: Our Plan Vision, Aims & Objectives – sets out a strategic, high-level vision for a future of Whimble that the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to guide the neighbourhood area towards, as well as a set of more specific aims and objectives, all derived from community consultation and intended to set out a framework for the policies introduced by the Plan
- Section 4: Landscape & Natural Environment – the first of four substantive policy chapters of the plan, which looks at the physical and ecological natural environment of the parish, considering issues like protecting views, conserving the village's setting, and protecting and enhancing ecology and the environment

While there will be several further steps of revision and refinement, including with public input, at this stage Members are invited to offer comments and revisions to these four sections – whether those points are big or small. Members may wish to consider some of the following questions as prompts:

- Do the plan's vision, aims, and objectives cover all the issues raised by the community that the plan should address? Conversely, are there any issues identified that aren't necessary to include?
- Is the profile of the parish set out in section 1 a sufficiently complete picture? Bearing in mind that it is not intended to be exhaustive, are any important details missing?

Whimble Neighbourhood Plan Update

Report to Whimble Parish Council on 16th February 2026

Does it effectively capture the essential character and history of the village, and the challenges facing it?

- Is the structure of the plan and role of supporting documents clear?
- Is the narrative around the place of the Neighbourhood Plan within national and local policy contexts, and the requirements set upon it as a result, clear and accessible?
- Are the issues set out sufficiently introduced and contextualised? Is their importance, of themselves and to the community, clear? Are they linked clearly to national and local policy?
- Bearing in mind the remaining sections still to be brought before Members, do the policy tests and requirements set out achieve the aims and objectives of the plan? Are they clear, and sufficiently and appropriately robust?
- Where policies relate to specific areas, are these in the right place? Are any missing?

Informal feedback from East Devon, on which a WPC view is sought, included:

- Consider whether the length of the vision is appropriate – it is longer than other made Neighbourhood Plans, which tend to be a sentence or two, but in EDDC’s view is more substantive, useful, and meaningful as a result, particularly in light of the Government’s approach to vision-led plan making set out in the NPPF – **recommend vision is unchanged**
- Affordable housing provision – suggest early engagement with Registered Providers / EDDC Housing Service to show deliverability of the policy – no WNP revision required
- Aims & Objectives – strongly endorse these, and in particular the focus on adding to EDDC policy – no WNP revision required
- Landscape – consider whether there should be a link between protected views identified in policy 02 and the broader visibility issue addressed in policy 01, and in particular whether the expansive scope of 01 is appropriate or whether it should focus on public viewpoints (advice is that it should) – **no recommendation; for WPC discussion**
 - In favour of a change – the policy as drafted is expansive and could be seen as an examiner as being too strategic a policy in shaping where development can happen, and thus not compatible with the broader development plan
 - Against a change – the policy is deliberately addressing a unique landscape feature of the Parish that is not appropriate for inclusion as a strategic policy in the Local Plan; policy 02 sets out a higher level of protection for public viewpoints specifically because they are public, recognising that policy 01 is a more expansive approach
- Impact of Community Governance Review – as set out in update section above – no WNP revision required
- Maps – consider making these portrait rather than landscape so they can be bigger on the page – **recommend change is made**

Members should also note that Section 4 in particular, but to a lesser extent the Parish Profile in Section 1, would significantly benefit from photographs to illustrate the various points and issues being discussed. These need to be high-resolution originals to avoid any issues with attribution and licensing, and any assistance obtaining these would be welcome.

Whimble Neighbourhood Plan Update

Report to Whimble Parish Council on 16th February 2026

Next Steps & Programme

Members will recall a draft timetable was discussed at the previous meeting. This is updated below.

There remain a number of further steps to take in the production of a completed provisional draft plan before the remainder of the plan-making process can proceed. These are:

- Consideration of the remaining sections of the plan – proposed to be done in two parts:
 - Sections 6 (Community Amenities) and 7 (Employment & Business) – proposed for **March** WPC meeting
 - Section 5 (Built & Historic Environment) – proposed for **April** WPC meeting
 - Remaining sections – proposed for **May** WPC meeting
- Selection of a site for 100% affordable housing to include in Section 5 – including precursors:
 - Consultation with landowners regarding site availability – proposed to be undertaken reported to **March** WPC meeting to inform shortlisting
 - Completion of further detailed site assessment picking up issues identified in AECOM report – underway, proposed to report to **March** WPC meeting to inform shortlisting
 - Council decision on identification of shortlisted sites – proposed for **March** WPC meeting
 - Final decision on site selection – subject to any feedback from specialist consultees, but proposed ideally for **April** WPC meeting to align with consideration of Section 5
- Production of masterplans for sites allocated in the emerging East Devon Local Plan, either through the engagement of specialists or otherwise – see recommendations below, but assuming agreed then decision required at **March** WPC meeting and allow two months for work to be undertaken
- Review of SEA/HRA Scoping and determination of way forward – target **March** WPC meeting
- Instruction of SEA assessment if required following obtaining of quotes – target **April/May** WPC meeting
- Completion and approval of remaining background documents – target **July** WPC meeting

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

1.1.1 The Whimble Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) area encompasses the entire parish of Whimble within the designated neighbourhood boundary established in 2016 by East Devon District Council. This boundary is depicted in **Figure 1** below in red.

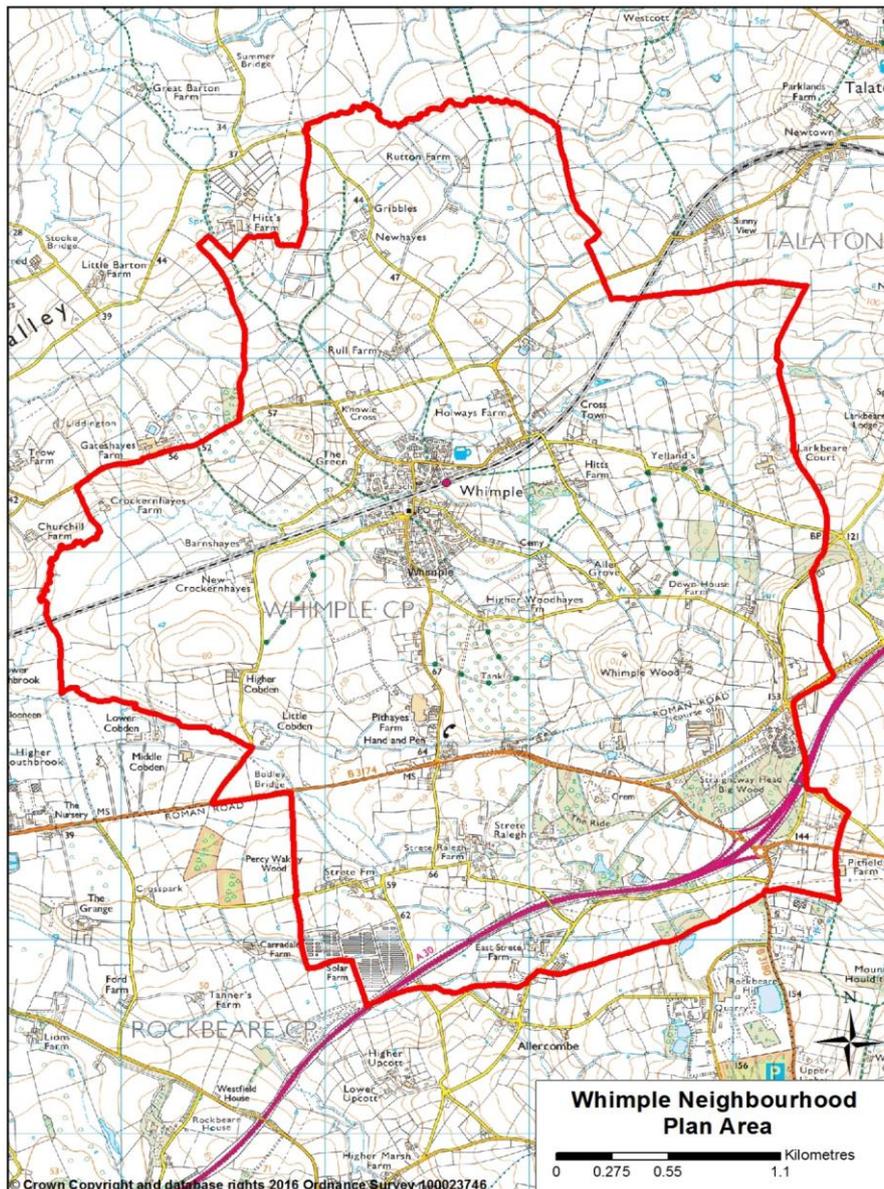


Figure 1: Whimble Neighbourhood Area

1.1.2 Since the making of this boundary East Devon District Council (EDDC) have adopted the Cranbrook Plan (CP) as part of the local development plan, which designates an area in the West of the Parish as an expansion area for Cranbrook town. At the time of writing, an ongoing Community Governance Review may lead to that area being transferred out of the parish, but for the moment it remains part of Whimble, and as such remains part of the



Whimble Neighbourhood Area. Each policy within the plan specifies its applicability to this area, which for ease of reference is referred to as the ‘Cranbrook Plan area’.

1.2 WELCOME TO WHIMBLE: PARISH PROFILE AND PLAN CONTEXT

- 1.2.1 Whimble is a village and civil parish located in East Devon, England. The village was first recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086 as "Winple," and was officially recognized as a Parish in 1653.
- 1.2.2 It is situated approximately 9 miles east of Exeter and 3 miles from Ottery St Mary. According to the United Kingdom Census 2021, the population of Whimble is 1,983, up from 1,173 ten years earlier.
- 1.2.3 In addition to the main village of Whimble, there are several outlying satellite hamlets of various sizes within the parish. These are referred to throughout the WNP, and for reference are shown on **Figure 2** below.

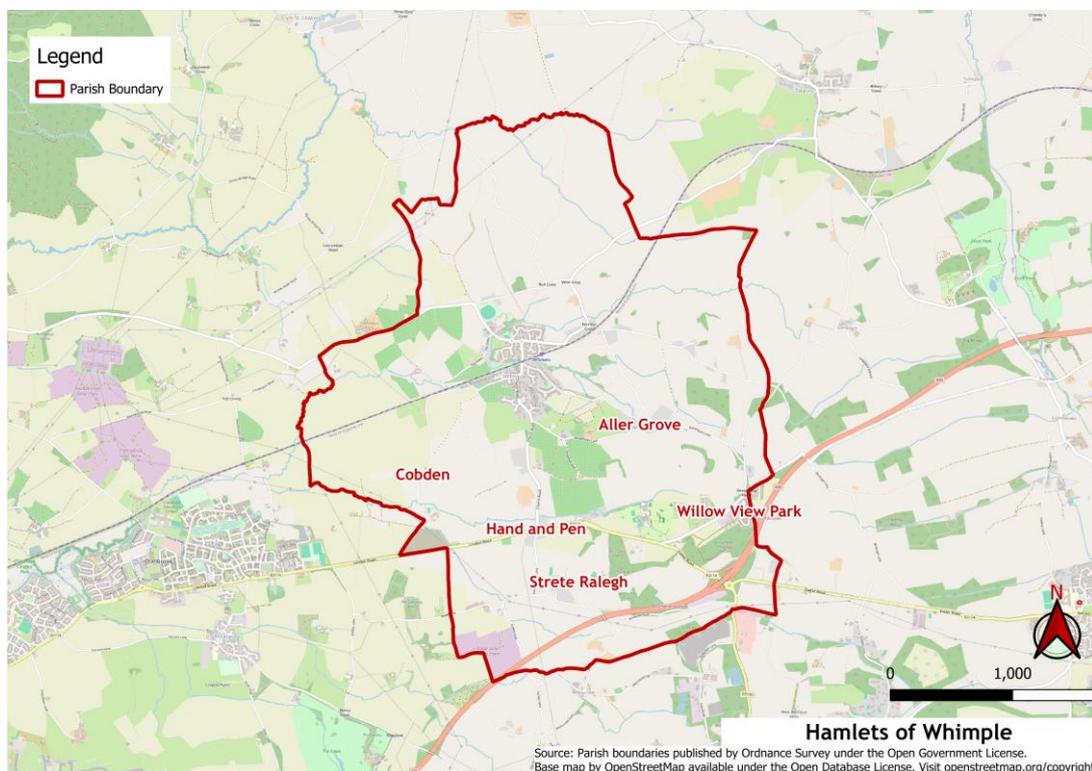


Figure 2: Hamlets of Whimble

- 1.2.4 The village centre was designated as a Conservation Area in 1992 due to its distinct historic character.
- 1.2.5 Farming has played a significant role in the village's history. The main village of Whimble is surrounded by agricultural land, and is known for its cider apple orchards. More recently, Whimble was home to the Whiteway's Cyder and Perry factory until it closed in 1989 - the land subsequently being sold for housing development in the 1990s. During its prime, Whimble had the largest apple orchards in the world, and many of these old orchards can still be seen surrounding the village today.



- 1.2.6 Whimble Parish has a variety of amenities including the church, a village hall, two public houses, a village shop, cricket club, railway station, and a primary school. Additionally, there are two playing parks, a Parish Field and extensive sports facilities. These facilities are used by a wide variety of local organisations, clubs, and societies, as well as day-to-day by local residents and businesses. Appendix II includes a list of known facilities, organisations, and businesses, which is referred to throughout this plan and illustrative of the tight-knit and vibrant community that calls Whimble home.
- 1.2.7 The parish is well-connected to major transportation routes, with proximity to the M5 and the A30, and Exeter International Airport located within 5 miles. Whimble railway station is on the West of England Main Line, which connects London Waterloo to Exeter.
- 1.2.8 Whimble is also in close proximity to several local centres, including the city of Exeter - a commuting destination for many residents - as well as smaller rural centres at Honiton and Ottery St Mary, the emerging new town centre at Cranbrook, and the burgeoning Enterprise Zone and Sky Park between Cranbrook and the edge of Exeter.
- 1.2.9 Today, the Parish and wider area are facing significant change from the expansion of the new town of Cranbrook. Currently, the village is separated from Cranbrook by an area designated by the East Devon District Council as a "green wedge". There is an extremely strong desire throughout the community to preserve this separation for a variety of reasons - not least as a vital part of preserving the rural character of the main village and wider parish.
- 1.2.10 Whimble is an increasingly elderly village. Consultation and evidence gathering for the plan has highlighted a significant need for more appropriate, and more affordable, housing for families and younger people, whether in further/higher education or employment. The lack of brownfield opportunities within the village means that any new housing is inevitably on the greenfield sites that are so fundamental to local character.
- 1.2.11 While the village has reasonable transport links to Exeter, including Exeter Science Park and associated employment areas, it has only limited employment opportunities within the Parish. Agricultural holdings, as well as the village's two public houses, shop, and a number of small employment facilities represent a source of some further jobs, but these remain limited.
- 1.2.12 This profile begins to identify the major strengths, and opportunities to grow and improve, that face the Parish. These are developed further throughout the WNP.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN

- 1.3.1 To help with navigating the WNP, this section sets out the structure of both this main plan document and the various companion and supporting documents that sit alongside it.
- 1.3.2 A glossary of terms and acronyms used in the plan is provided at Appendix I.

MAIN PLAN

- 1.3.3 The main WNP document includes the neighbourhood planning aims and objectives for the designated neighbourhood area, which have been developed through dialogue with the



community and shaped by existing planning policies, plans, and input from key organisations and agencies.

- 1.3.4 In accordance with requirements, the Whimble Neighbourhood Plan is built on four key components:
- a long-term vision for the future of the community (**Vision**),
 - a set of aspirations for what the plan hopes to achieve (**Aims**),
 - specific objectives to be pursued through the implementation of the plan (**Objectives**), and
 - individual policy statements to guide decision-making towards achieving the plan's vision, aims, and objectives (**Policies**).
- 1.3.5 The WNP groups the aims emerging from community consultation into **themes**, covering Landscape & Natural Environment, Built & Historic Environment, Community Facilities, and Employment & Business. These are set out as numbered section headings in coloured banners, with subheadings that connect aims and objectives to the issues discussed and policies set out in this plan.
- 1.3.6 The WNP's main influence on planning decisions is via specific planning policies. Where the WNP defines a **policy** test or measure in line with an objective, these are formatted separately in a light red box, with a policy number and heading. Each policy is situated within a relevant section of text that contextualises the policy within the issue identified, summarises relevant responses from community consultations and other sources of evidence, and justifies the policy - including by reference to other local and national policy documents.
- 1.3.7 All of these levels of structure are shown on the main contents page.
- 1.3.8 The WNP then concludes by highlighting priority areas for Section 106 and Communities Infrastructure Levy funds, derived from community consultation; an explanation of how we will monitor and review the plan; and a glossary that clarifies the planning terminology used in the document.

COMPANION DOCUMENTS

- 1.3.9 Legislation and planning practice guidance requires that the Neighbourhood Plan be accompanied by a number of further documents. These include:
- 1.3.9.1. A Neighbourhood Area Designation Application, which sets out the area to be covered by the Neighbourhood Plan and the reasons for that area,
 - 1.3.9.2. A Basic Conditions Statement, which sets out how the WNP meets the legal tests set out by government, including how the plan conforms with national and local planning policies, and



1.3.9.3. A Consultation Statement, setting out what consultation has been undertaken with the community and local organisations, and detailing how that feedback has helped to shape the plan.

1.3.10 The Plan should also be read alongside a number of further local evidence documents produced to support the Plan:

1.3.10.1. A Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base document, which includes the background data and references supporting relevant sections of the plan, as well as detailing any methodologies or criteria used in decision-making and policy-writing for the Plan,

1.3.10.2. A Housing Needs Assessment, estimating the number and type of affordable homes required within the parish,

1.3.10.3. A Design Code, referenced in policy later in this document, which assesses the design qualities of the main village and details requirements for new development in and adjacent to those areas,

1.3.10.4. A Site Options and Assessment report, produced for the Parish Council by AECOM, which sets out an early stage assessment of potential site allocations for affordable housing, and

1.3.11 Future documents to be developed and added to the plan include:

1.3.11.1. A Housing Site Assessment, going into further detail on sites considered for affordable housing allocations following the conclusions of the Site Options and Assessment report,

1.3.11.2. A Site Masterplan for housing allocations made in the emerging East Devon Local Plan, and

1.3.11.3. Depending on a scoping assessment by the Local Planning Authority, a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the WNP.



SECTION 2: CONTEXTUALISING THE PLAN

2.1 HIERARCHY OF PLANNING POLICY

2.1.1 Planning policy in England has multiple levels, within which Neighbourhood Plans cover the smallest areas and are the most locally specific. **Figure 3** below shows this hierarchy, and where the WNP fits within it.

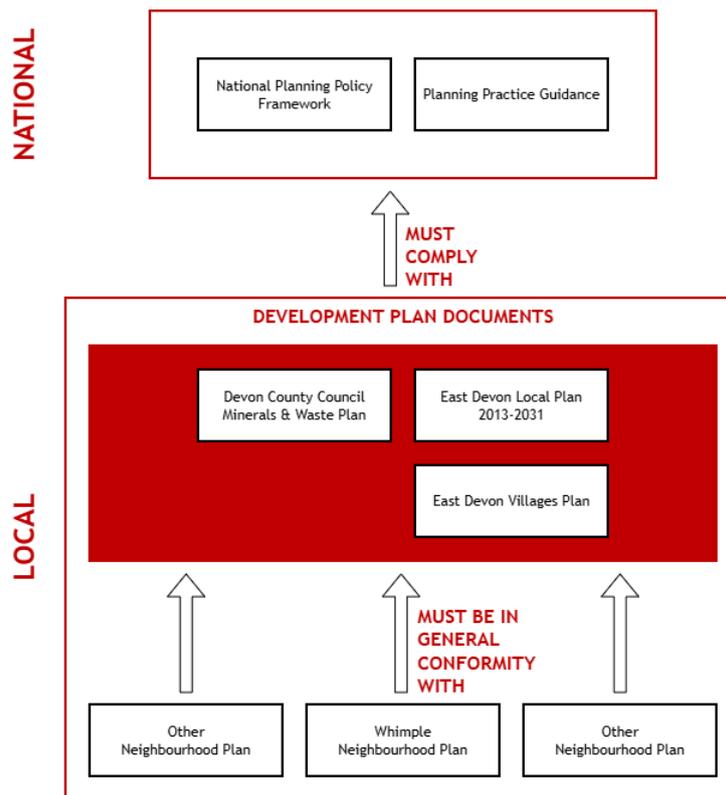


Figure 3: Hierarchy of Planning Policy

2.1.2 The WNP therefore has to have regard to, and be compatible with, the provisions of these other levels. This means:

- 2.1.2.1. Having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework,
- 2.1.2.2. Taking account of advice and direction issued by the Secretary of State, and
- 2.1.2.3. Ensuring the WNP is in general conformity with the policies within the existing local development plan, of which it will form a part upon adoption.

2.1.3 While the WNP has been generally drafted to accord with the spirit and letter of these policies, for clarity, each individual section of this plan makes reference to key elements of national and local planning policy relevant to that section.



2.2 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 2.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the main document that sets out the fundamental principles, objectives, and uniform national policies that apply throughout England.
- 2.2.2 The ‘golden thread’ running through the NPPF is a “presumption in favour of sustainable development”; all planning policy in England is required to function as an extension of this thread.
- 2.2.3 While ‘sustainable development’ has elements of subjectivity and therefore often means different things to different people, a 1987 United Nations commission defined the term as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The NPPF (para. 7) adopts this same definition, but also breaks it down into three main objectives which planning policy should seek to deliver (para. 8):
- 2.2.3.1. The economic objective, which is concerned with job creation, economic growth, and improvements in productivity. Here, the role of the planning system is to foreground infrastructural needs, such as roads, broadband, and space for businesses.
 - 2.2.3.2. The social objective, which seeks to ensure current and future generations’ needs for safe, appropriate housing, strong communities and social engagement, and accessible services are met, enhancing people’s health and wellbeing. The role of planning here is to ensure sufficient housing delivery to meet needs, as well as ensure that local services and facilities are delivered.
 - 2.2.3.3. The environmental objective, which foregrounds the need to protect the world around us; to improve and enhance nature and biodiversity, minimise resource use, waste, and pollution, to protect the historic environment, and to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change.
- 2.2.4 The WNP, as a planning policy document, is required to contribute to the overall aim of achieving sustainable development, as well as to these three ‘pillars’ of sustainable development.

2.3 LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.3.1 As explained above in section 2.1, the WNP will sit within a multi-level framework of planning policy documents.
- 2.3.2 The level above the Neighbourhood Plan principally comprises policy developed by the Local Planning Authority (LPA), EDDC. This is made up of a number of separate Development Plan Documents (DPD), three of which are principally relevant to the WNP. This section briefly explains the function and relevance of each.
- 2.3.3 It should be noted that Devon County Council’s (DCC) Minerals and Waste Plan also forms part of the local statutory development planning framework. As it is not considered that



this document is relevant to Whimble’s circumstances or the development of this Neighbourhood Plan, it is not considered below.

ADOPTED EAST DEVON LOCAL PLAN (2016)

- 2.3.4 Adopted on 28th January 2016, the adopted East Devon Local Plan (aEDLP) aims to guide development in the district until 2031 and includes both strategic and development management policies. It will remain the principal development plan for the East Devon area until it is superseded by the adoption of the emerging East Devon Local Plan.
- 2.3.5 The aEDLP’s strategic policies cover a wide variety of policy areas covering all three pillars of sustainable development, including the provision of housing and employment land and protection of the environment. The WNP is required to be generally in alignment with these strategic policies, of which there are 50.
- 2.3.6 The aEDLP also includes development management policies, which guide the decision-making of EDDC’s planning officers in specific circumstances - for example, the design of dwellings. The aEDLP acknowledges, however, the authority of neighbourhood plans to introduce local development management policies for their respective areas, specifically stating that through a Neighbourhood Plan, a Parish Council or relevant neighbourhood group can produce a plan that supersedes some or all of the development management policies in the Local Plan.

ADOPTED VILLAGES PLAN (2018)

- 2.3.7 The Villages Plan, adopted on 26th July 2018, sits alongside the adopted East Devon Local Plan. It has a specific focus on guiding and regulating development in East Devon’s rural communities.
- 2.3.8 The Villages Plan defines Built-up Area Boundaries for fifteen East Devon villages - including Whimble - that are classed as ‘Service Villages’ as they are assessed as being able to sustain a limited level of growth. The aVP also sets out specific policies to protect and promote village centres, as well as tests that new developments must satisfy to ensure they do not harm rural character, increase flood risk, or cause harm to environmental or heritage characteristics and features.
- 2.3.9 The Villages Plan will remain in effect until superseded by the adoption of the emerging East Devon Local Plan.

ADOPTED CRANBROOK PLAN (2022)

- 2.3.10 The Cranbrook Plan is a development plan document akin to the Local Plan, insofar as it includes both strategic and development management policies. However, it applies exclusively to Cranbrook and its expansion zones, rather than to the entire East Devon District. It was adopted on 19th October 2022, and unlike the aEDLP and aVP will remain in effect following the adoption of the eEDLP.
- 2.3.11 Because of its limited geographic jurisdiction, the Cranbrook Plan is by and large not relevant to Whimble Parish. The only exception is where the Cranbrook Plan Area overlaps slightly into Whimble Parish, and the Whimble Neighbourhood Area, on the West side of the Parish. This overlap largely comprises land



designated for greenspace, however also includes land designated for a gypsy and traveller site, as well as fringes of the development allocation for the Cobdens Expansion Area.

EMERGING EAST DEVON LOCAL PLAN

- 2.3.12 The emerging East Devon Local Plan is being produced as a result of the District Council's Local Plan Review, which determined that the existing plan - despite ostensibly running until 2031 - is out-of-date. When adopted, it will supersede both the aEDLP and aVP.
- 2.3.13 While it will update and seek to improve upon the policies set out in those existing documents, it is fundamentally intended for the same purpose - to guide, strategically and in detail, development within East Devon, including through the provision of housing and employment land and protection of the environment.
- 2.3.14 The eEDLP is currently at Regulation 19 stage. While this means it has some weight in the process of decision-making on planning applications, it is not yet a formal part of the development plan with which this Whimble Neighbourhood Plan must be in general alignment. It is, however, sufficiently advanced such that regard should be paid to its contents through the production of the WNP - and as set out later in this document, its adoption will comprise a trigger point for a formal review of this Plan to ensure it remains compliant and up-to-date.

2.4 REQUIREMENTS AND PURPOSE OF THE WHIMBLE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 2.4.1 In addition to the requirement to be in compliance with other national and local planning policy, and with the 'golden thread' of sustainable development, the WNP must comply with a number of other requirements.
- 2.4.2 Principle among these is the need for the WNP to be embedded in strong and consistent consultation with the communities within the parish that it will affect.
- 2.4.3 To achieve this, we have conducted extensive consultation and engagement with our local community to gain insight into the needs and areas of influence that could be addressed through neighbourhood planning policies. The methods used in the consultation process, which have been documented in detail in our Consultation Statement, include public exhibitions, meetings and events, articles in the parish newsletter, website pages, noticeboards and poster sites, and surveys and discussions with local businesses and community groups.
- 2.4.4 In addition to the need for community consultation, the Localism Act 2011 and the NPPF impose a requirement for organisations developing planning policy - at all levels below national - to work across borders and with neighbouring authorities.
- 2.4.5 This means that the WNP will need to account for comments and issues raised not only by EDDC as the LPA, but also by neighbouring Town and Parish Councils, who must be consulted before the plan can be considered for referendum and adoption. These neighbouring authorities are shown on the below **Figure 4**.



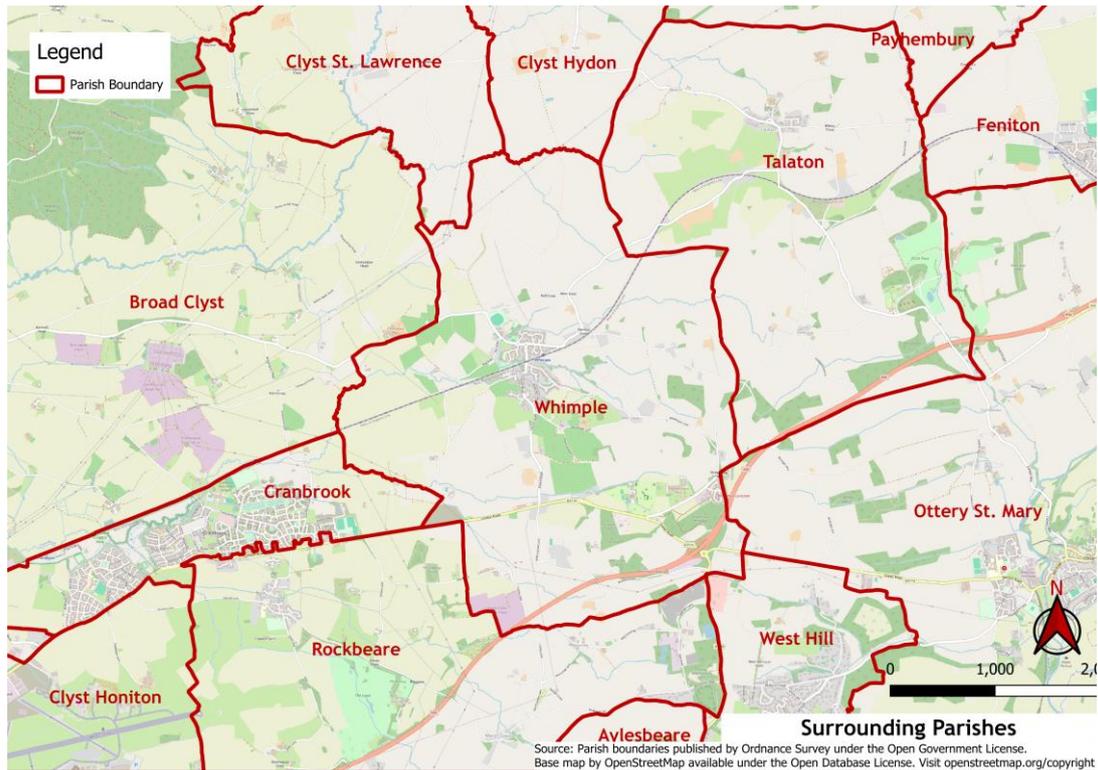


Figure 4: Surrounding Parishes

- 2.4.6 Once adopted, this Neighbourhood Plan will hold the status of a statutory development plan, meaning its policies will carry significant weight in the decision-making process for development proposals submitted to the local planning authority. It will serve as the local level of planning policy within the boundaries of our Parish and will be integrated with the district-wide Local Plan developed by East Devon District Council, also a statutory development plan, and guided by the national planning policy outlined in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 2.4.7 It should be noted that the policies outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan do not guarantee approval or rejection of a development proposal, but rather are given significant weight, along with the policies of the NPPF and the East Devon Local Plan, in evaluating the suitability in planning terms of any proposal under consideration.



SECTION 3: OUR PLAN VISION, AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- 3.1.1 The vision, aims, and objectives set out below are the product of many years of consultation and interactive work by the community.
- 3.1.2 Initial consultation on issues and priorities for the Neighbourhood Plan was commenced in 2017, running for over twelve months before it was reported back to the Parish Council in early 2019. A further community consultation was then undertaken in the first half of 2022.
- 3.1.3 The highlights of those consultations were drawn together to identify key issues that the Plan should seek to address, as well as pull out the community's aspirations for the future of the village. These coalesced into an initial vision and set of objectives in late 2023.
- 3.1.4 Whimble Parish Council convened a workshop in late 2023 to review the in-progress draft of the Plan, and the suggested vision and objectives. This exercise identified a number of areas of objectives where the Plan would significantly and unnecessarily overlap with national and local policy, and a further set of areas that were not currently covered by the Plan.
- 3.1.5 This led to a revised version of the plan vision and objectives being produced, as set out below.

Whimble will remain a distinct and independent rural parish, defined by its isolation in a tranquil rural environment that remains deeply embedded in its historic natural and agricultural roots. We will protect Whimble's traditional orchards and woodlands as part of its natural and cultural heritage, taking opportunities to sensitively expand areas of orchard within the parish, and preserving the village's isolated natural setting. We will also encourage greater ecological and human connectivity to the Clyst Valley Regional Park, to support local biodiversity and boost our access to nature. Above all, we will ensure that nature remains at the heart of our community and a defining characteristic of our village, and enhance it - and our access to it - where we can.

We will support small-scale, controlled growth within the village that protects nature and residents' amenity and avoids worsening problems with traffic through the village's historic centre or increasing flood risk from Cranny Brook. New development will be sensitively designed, respecting the varied character of different areas of the village and avoiding further fragmenting its visual and architectural identity, and will be to provide small, genuinely affordable, and adapted homes of mixed tenures to help make sure young people, new families, and retirees can stay within the village they call home.

From the village shop to our community spaces and sports facilities, we will safeguard built and natural community assets from loss or inappropriate development, while recognising that some community facilities need growth to help keep them open. We will work to improve connections between these facilities and the different areas of our parish, particularly by taking



opportunities to create new walking and cycling connections, for example by fulfilling our long-held aspiration for an off-road link between the main village and otherwise isolated development and businesses at Hand and Pen.

We will support our historic farmholdings to thrive, by protecting their natural assets and enabling sensitive and proportionate diversification and commercialisation, such as that seen at Cotleigh Farm. Beyond agriculture, we will encourage proposals that empower local people to work in ways that suit them best - whether that's in new developments that are designed to support working from home, or by supporting new or expanded starter business premises or hubs, such as those at The Hive or Milestone Business Park.

3.1.6 In constructing the vision, the Plan seeks to draw out four broad areas where it seeks to guide future development in the village: landscape and natural heritage; built and historic environment; community amenities; and employment and business. Those four areas broadly correspond to the four paragraphs of our vision.

3.1.7 The table below shows the aims and objectives we have identified, grouped by theme.

Landscape & Natural Environment	Built & Historic Environment
<p>Aim: Preserve core landscape characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain key views • Uphold character and isolation of individual settlements • Prevent loss of hedgerows and encourage introduction of new hedges and Devon Banks <p>Aim: Respect, protect, and enhance local habitats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect local woodland and ancient trees • Maintain priority habitats and enhance ecological connectivity • Encourage re-wilding to foster biodiversity • Maintain and improve significant local waterways and accompanying habitats <p>Aim: Conserve unique historic features to protect landscape heritage and character</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent further loss of historic orchards and orchard features • Encourage restoration of local orchards and cider-making heritage 	<p>Aim: Protect Whimble's identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect green wedges and prevent settlement coalescence • Uphold the Conservation Area and local built heritage <p>Aim: Recognise key constraints on development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avert worsening of traffic bottlenecks • Prevent exacerbation of flood risk • Minimise flood risk to new development <p>Aim: Provide the housing that Whimble needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure availability of genuinely affordable housing • Encourage adapted and appropriate housing for the elderly • Ensure Whimble's young people have the choice to stay in Whimble and live independently • Require an appropriate housing mix <p>Aim: Influence the design of new development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent overdevelopment • Recognise the need for green infrastructure and interconnectivity • Respond to the Climate Emergency and achieve Net Zero Whimble • Preserve and enhance local architectural character



Community Amenities	Employment & Business
<p>Aim: Safeguard and enhance Whimble's community spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent the loss of community spaces to non-community uses • Ensure new development contributes to community integrity and vitality • Maintain and enhance local education provision <p>Aim: Embed nature at the heart of our parish</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realise opportunities for linking with the Clyst Valley Regional Park • Protect village green spaces from inappropriate development <p>Aim: Improve connections with the local area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve walking and cycling connectivity • Support better public transport links to the right places 	<p>Aim: Conserve Whimble's historic connections with farming and agricultural holdings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable reasonable agricultural expansion to support smallholding viability • Support farm diversification without compromising local food production <p>Aim: Support local entrepreneurship and business growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage controlled expansion of local facilities for business • Ensure appropriate facilities and infrastructure for home working • Cultivate opportunities in hospitality and tourism sectors

3.1.8 The remainder of the WNP seeks to tackle each of these themes, aims, and objectives broadly in the order that they are set out above. In places, there are exceptions to this:

3.1.8.1. Where an aim or objective cuts across multiple themes or aims - e.g. in the case of protecting green wedges and preventing settlement coalescence, these appear under both the Landscape & Natural Environment and Built & Historic Environment themes - the Plan seeks to take a pragmatic approach, either addressing different aspects of the issue in different sections where appropriate, *or* describing policy in only one section or the other; where this is the case, no inference should be drawn from headings, which are set out as a guide for the reader, and

3.1.8.2. Where the Plan concludes that an issue is sufficiently dealt with by other existing or emerging local policy, for brevity it will set that conclusion out clearly and rely on a robust review mechanism to ensure that that assessment remains up-to-date, or if not that any new or revised policies or wording can be implemented as soon as practicable.



SECTION 4: LANDSCAPE & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

4.1 CONTEXT

- 4.1.1 Whimple is a quintessentially rural parish. Its landscape, environment, and ecology are fundamental characteristics of the area, and together are identified throughout consultations as vital aspects of the neighbourhood area warranting protection and enhancement.
- 4.1.2 This section of the plan seeks to protect these vital aspects of our Parish, in line with national and local policy approaches that seek to both protect *and enhance* the natural environment.
- 4.1.3 Section 15 of the NPPF makes clear that planning policies should protect and enhance the natural landscape, both for views and enjoyment and in recognition of its intrinsic value through natural capital and ecosystem services. This sits in the context of the Framework's overarching environmental and social objectives, where protection of the natural environment as well as the integrity of our communities and their identity.
- 4.1.4 Within section 15, paragraph 187 specifies that planning policies should protect and enhance valued landscapes (187a), take into account both the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside as well as its wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services (187b), and provide for biodiversity net gain, including by establishing new ecological networks (187d). Paragraph 188, concerned with plan-making, makes specific reference to avoiding the allocation of land with meaningful environmental or amenity value, and to seeking to maintain and enhance networks of habitats and green infrastructure.
- 4.1.5 The aEDLP and eEDLP both make strong reference to the importance of landscape protection and conserving and enhancing the natural environment and ecology. eEDLP Strategic Policy OL01 protects landscape and rural areas from harmful development, with specific protections for patterns of settlement and associated rurality, distinctive views and more general prevention of significant visual intrusions, while aEDLP Strategy 7 and eEDLP Strategic Policy SP06 provide general protection from development in rural areas outside defined settlement boundaries.
- 4.1.6 The majority of the parish falls within the Clyst Lowland Farmlands Devon Character Area, which specifically highlights a number of relevant distinctive characteristics of the area:
- 4.1.6.1. Lowland, undulating farmed landscape,
 - 4.1.6.2. Landscape crossed by streams and meandering watercourses,
 - 4.1.6.3. Generally well treed appearance due to significant numbers of hedgerow trees,
 - 4.1.6.4. Notable small orchards often on the outskirts of villages,
 - 4.1.6.5. Overarching perceptions of tranquility and quintessential English lowland farmland when away from infrastructure and communication corridors and a sense of isolation in parts, and



4.1.6.6. Views to surrounding ridges of higher land.

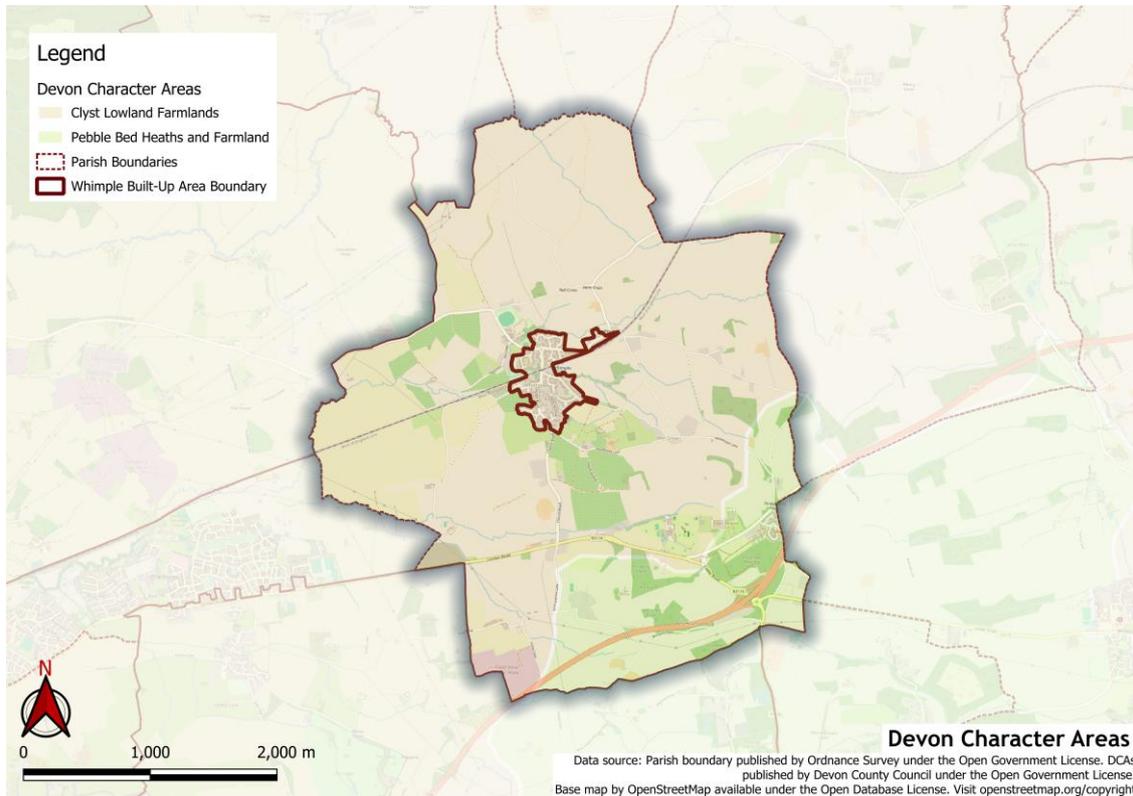


Figure 5: Devon Character Areas

4.1.7 Devon Landscape Character Type 3E (Lowland Plains), within which again much of the parish falls, also highlights a number of significant characteristics of the parish:

- 4.1.7.1. Variable woodland pattern, sometimes with small discrete woodlands, large plantations, hilltop beech clumps or linear amenity planting,
- 4.1.7.2. Roadside hedges,
- 4.1.7.3. Long views variable in quality, sometimes marred by pylons and communication masts, and
- 4.1.7.4. Surprising feeling of remoteness in some parts.

4.1.8 Together, these designations highlight various critical characteristics of the parish that the WNP seeks to protect.



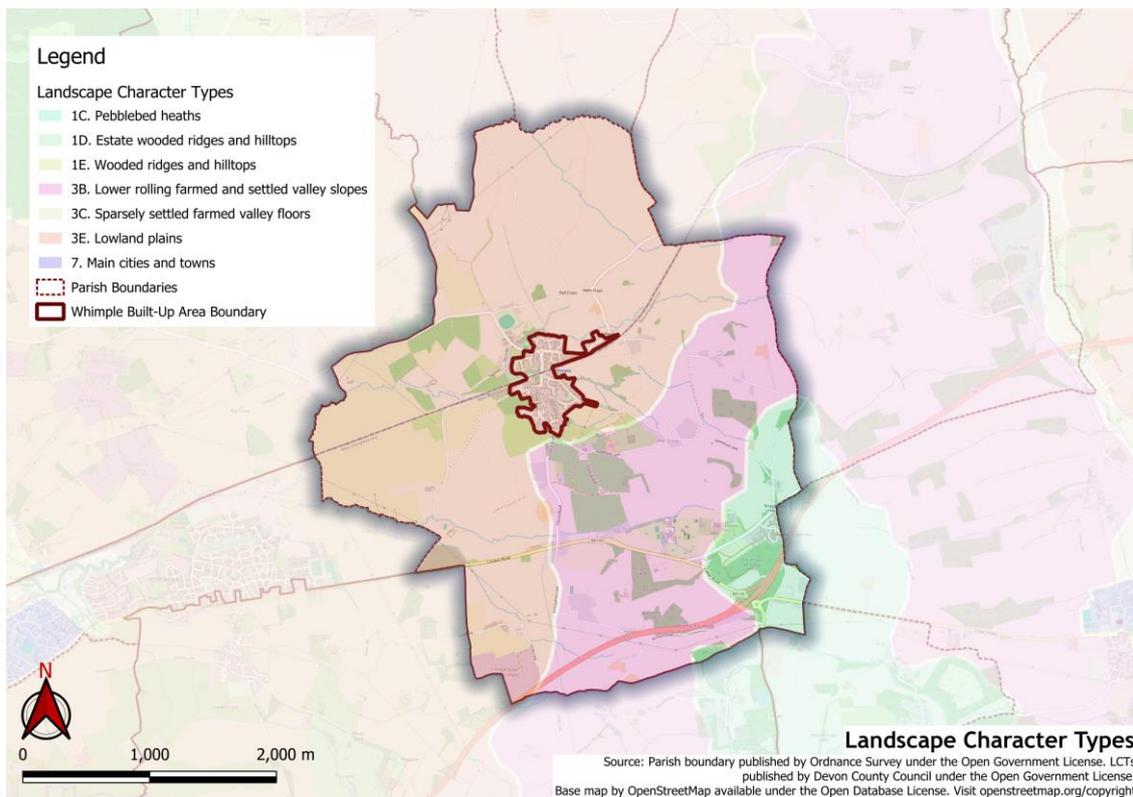


Figure 6: Landscape Character Types

4.2 LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

- 4.2.1 Landscape is a vital part of Whimble’s village identity. The fundamentally rural character of the parish - with strong historic links to agriculture - is not only a defining feature of its physical environment, but also plays a substantial role in defining its attractiveness as a place to live, as well as helping to shape the lives of the people in our community.
- 4.2.2 In physical landscape terms, Whimble sits within a ‘bowl’ - surrounded by hills and ridges - which both create the attractive and isolated rural setting for the village and block views of the main village from within the wider landscape.
- 4.2.3 **Figure 7** below illustrates this landscape setting, showing a visibility analysis for the main built-up area of the village. Darker red shading shows areas from where a greater percentage of that built-up area can be seen - the corollary of which is that those areas are also increasingly visible from within the built-up area of the main village.



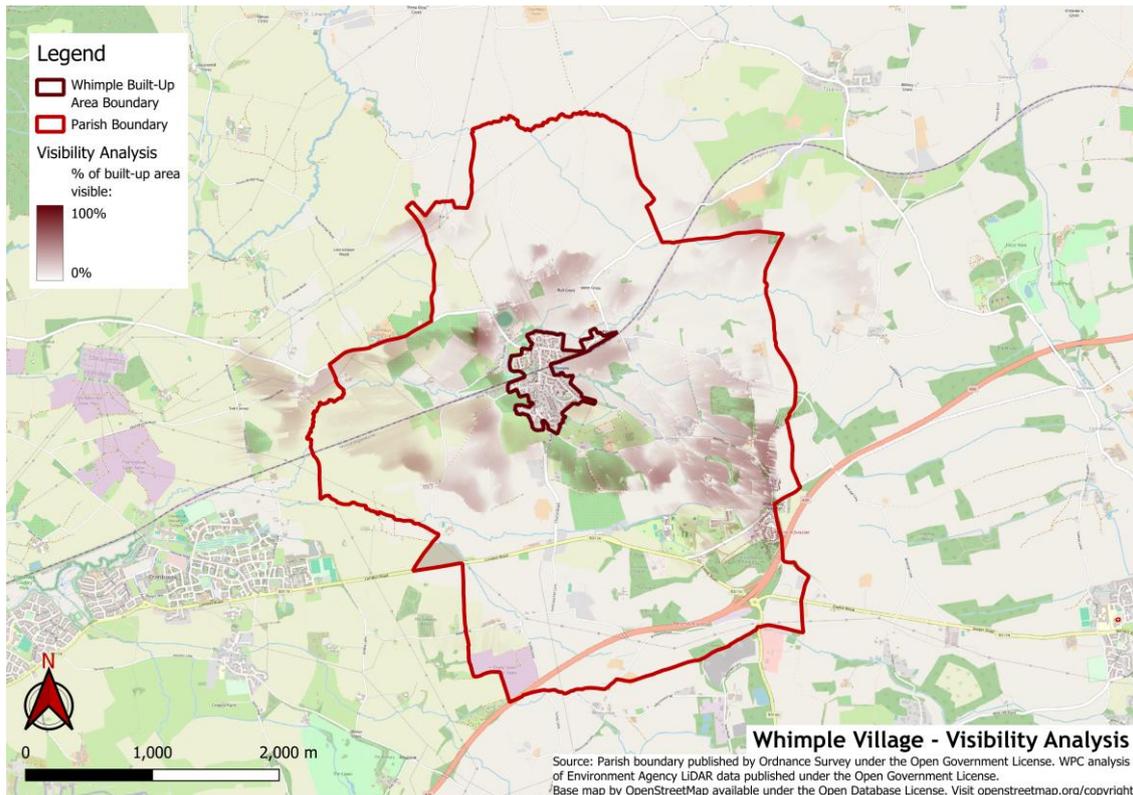


Figure 7: Visibility Analysis

- 4.2.4 While there remain specific individual views that this WNP seeks to protect, this landscape characteristic of isolation represents a fundamental element of the setting of Whimple village that merits protection in its own right.
- 4.2.5 This protection is also critical for addressing widespread community opposition to the spectre of continuing eastward expansion of Cranbrook, and in particular to the prospect of settlement coalescence at some future date. That concern has been recognised in eEDLP Strategic Policy SD29, which includes a special provision within the allocation of housing site Whim_08a - located on the western edge of the village, South of the railway line - to avoid breaching a ridgeline to the West of the site vital for obstructing views of the new town.

Policy WHM01: Protection of Village Setting

- a) Proposals for new development must not lead to new visibility of the village from places that cannot currently see it, including by expanding the village's main built-up area through development adjacent to or otherwise extending its existing edge shown in Figure 7.
- b) All proposals must have special regard to avoiding and preventing visibility between and intervisibility of Whimple village and Cranbrook town.
- c) Proposals for new development must not introduce substantial additional built form into areas with high intervisibility with the main village or any adjacent development that has the function of extending the built-up area of the village shown in Figure 7.



- d) Where proposals conflict with (b) above, they may be considered acceptable under this policy if the proposal is:
- a. For development that is necessary for the continued viability of an existing agricultural holding, or
For a limited and proportional extension of existing residential or commercial buildings, or
For development that is considered compatible with open countryside and natural settings, or where there is a clear need for the use to be within such a location, judged on a site-by-site basis - e.g. buildings for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries with ancillary buildings, and allotments, *and*
 - b. Fully screened by new or improved planting, or through similar natural mitigation measures that preserve the existing landscape.

4.2.6 Policy WHM01 aligns with national policy that places “great weight” on conserving scenic beauty, including in areas without formal landscape designations but where areas constitute “valued landscapes”. The contribution of the landscape setting of the village to its character and the lived experiences of residences clearly places the surrounding landscape in such a category.

PROTECTED VIEWS

- 4.2.7 The NPPF does not make explicit reference to protected views, referring only to the importance of landscape conservation.
- 4.2.8 Protecting key views is nevertheless recognised as a requirement in both existing and emerging Local Plans. aEDLP Strategy 7 and eEDLP Strategic Policy OL01 both prohibit development that would disrupt public views that contribute to local character; aEDLP Policy EN10 and eEDLP Policy HE03 explicitly protect views of, within, or out of designated Conservation Areas, which includes the centre of Whimble village; and eEDLP Strategic Policy OL04 introduces specific protections for various classes of key view, including those identified through Neighbourhood Plans.

Policy WHM02: Protected Views

Proposals must conserve and where possible enhance key views within the Parish, identified in **Figure 8**:

- 1: Weather Station Hill / Whimble Footpath 6: view approximately to the East, of Whimble village, including Whimble Church, and setting.
- 2: London Road / adj. The Paddock: view approximately to the West, of South Whimble Parish, the Whimble-Cranbrook Green Wedge, and further West towards Cranbrook, Broadclyst, Pinhoe, and Exeter, across the West End of East Devon.
- 3-8: Sequential views from North-South unnamed road at Straightway Head: view approximately to West, of Whimble village, including setting, and beyond to Whimble-Cranbrook Green Wedge, and further West towards Cranbrook, Broadclyst, Pinhoe, and Exeter, across the West End of East Devon.



- 9: West of Lilypond Lane / Whimble Footpath 3: view approximately to the North West through South West, of Whimble village, including Whimble Church.
- 10: Church Road / adj. New Fountain Inn: view North along Church Road, of Whimble Church and historic residences fronting Church Road, functioning as entrance to Whimble Conservation Area.
- 11: Whimble Cricket Club: view approximately to the South of Whimble village, including Whimble Church, and setting.
- 12: South of Cobden Lane: view approximately to the East of Whimble village, including Whimble Church, and setting.
- 13: Church Road / South of Woodhayes Lane junction: view approximately to North of the main vehicular entrance to Whimble village.

Development proposals should pay special attention to conserving and enhancing sequential views, and not result in adverse cumulative impacts within views.

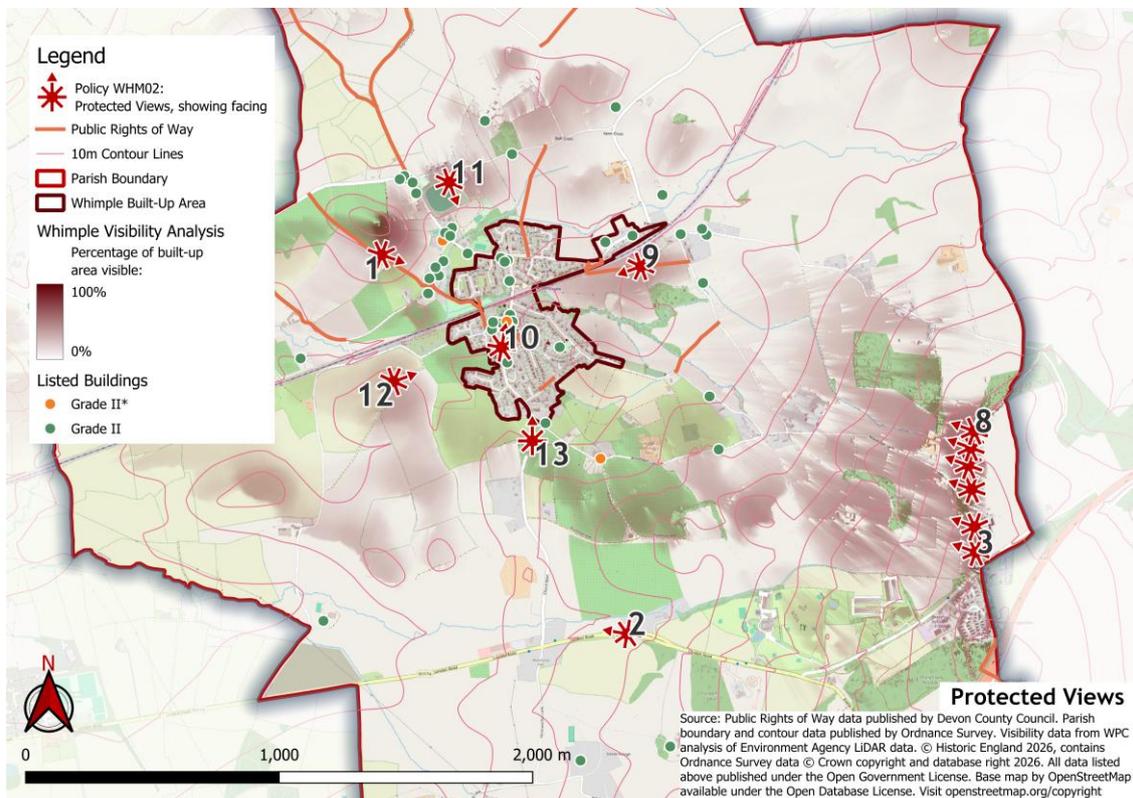


Figure 8: Protected Views (Policy WHM02)

4.2.9 Policy WHM02 seeks to protect valued views within the Parish for their amenity and environmental value - particularly those that show the village in its setting, emphasise its strong rural identity, and (reflecting policy requirements regarding protection of historic views) contribute to the historic value of Whimble Conservation Area, but also including broader vistas to the West towards Cranbrook and Exeter.



4.3 ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION & ENHANCEMENT

- 4.3.1 Whimble Parish is characterised by a central development within the village, surrounded by semi-natural habitats, including numerous designated traditional orchards, other non-designated orchards, and mixed agricultural fields, primarily composed of grazed pasture. Field boundaries are typically demarcated by Devon hedge banks and hedgerows, and the Parish benefits from significant tree coverage, both through hedge trees and in local copses and orchards. Streams flow through the Parish, largely into the Cranny Brook. The area is also traversed by several roads, bridleways and public rights of way.
- 4.3.2 The Parish covers four county wildlife sites, including Newhayes Orchard, a designated traditional orchard; Rutton Farm, designated for unimproved marshy grassland; Highland Orchard, another designated traditional orchard; and Mardles Copse, an ancient semi-natural woodland.
- 4.3.3 Whimble is also home to several protected and notable species, including great crested newts, hazel dormice, several bat species, otters, reptiles, badgers, hedgehogs, common and widespread amphibians, and numerous bird species. The Parish is currently within a designated Devon County Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone, and records of great crested newts and toads (a priority species) have been found in the area. Although invertebrate records are unknown, Whimble could support a diverse range of species, particularly those associated with the orchards, woodlands, and hedgerows.
- 4.3.4 The emerging East Devon Local Plan also extends the subregional Clyst Valley Regional Park into Whimble Parish, approaching the village from the West along and around Cranny Brook, running broadly parallel to the railway line that bisects the village. This represents a significant opportunity for supporting the development of wider networks of priority and other habitats.
- 4.3.5 While section 4.2 recognises and protects Whimble's physical landscape for its intrinsic and amenity values, this section recognises the importance of conserving our flora and fauna. While perhaps not scientifically unique or benefitting from international designations like the Pebblebed Heaths, community consultation has made clear that the ecology of our Parish, not just its landscape, are nevertheless a vital part of the contribution of the natural environment to Whimble's identity, and worthy of protection via the Neighbourhood Planning process.
- 4.3.6 National policy is clear that ecological protection and enhancement are a key component of the environmental pillar of sustainable development, both as part of wider requirements to protect and enhance the countryside for its natural capital and specifically to provide biodiversity net gain.
- 4.3.7 Building on those requirements, the emerging East Devon Local Plan introduces significant new protections for local ecological features on top of the protections for statutorily designated (at local through international level) wildlife sites. Those include:
- 4.3.7.1. Policy PB03, which designates ancient woodland; ancient, veteran, and mature trees; Devon hedges; and traditional orchards as irreplaceable, with proposals resulting



- in the destruction or degradation of these to be refused in the absence of “wholly exceptional reasons”,
- 4.3.7.2. Strategic Policy PB05, requiring major developments in East Devon to deliver 20% biodiversity net gain, over and above the statutory requirement for 10%,
 - 4.3.7.3. Strategic Policy PB06, supporting the development of nature networks and requiring that biodiversity net gain contributions go towards those networks, or features adjacent to them,
 - 4.3.7.4. Policy PB07, requiring various wildlife features in new developments, including integrated bird and bat boxes, and permeable garden fencing for hedgehog movement, and
 - 4.3.7.5. Policy PB08, providing protections for all trees and woodland on development sites, and requiring new trees to be provided in line with East Devon’s Tree, Hedge, and Woodland Strategy,
- 4.3.8 Together, these protections are a significant step forwards for ecological conservation in East Devon and specifically in Whimble Parish, bringing the plan in line with new protections set out in the NPPF and going beyond it in some areas. The remainder of this section looks at four specific elements of ecological conservation and enhancement in light of these stringent requirements.

HEDGEROWS & DEVON BANKS

- 4.3.9 Distinctive hedgerows, including the well-known ‘Devon bank’, are a widely-recognised feature of the landscape not only in Whimble Parish but throughout the county.
- 4.3.10 Within the Neighbourhood Area, landscape assessments make specific reference to historic, well-treed hedges, which have significant ecological in their own right and as critical features of local habitat networks.
- 4.3.11 Policy in the emerging East Devon Local Plan maintains general protections for hedgerows, and introduces some special protections for ‘Devon hedges’, but given the local significance of Devon banks and well-treed hedgerows, these merit specific policy attention - both to protect existing features, and to seek to introduce more of these traditional local features as part of any new proposals.

Policy WHM03: Hedgerow Protection and Enhancement

Proposals should have special regard to avoiding impacts on existing Devon banks. Loss and/or degradation of these hedgerows will only be considered acceptable in wholly exceptional circumstances, where:

- a. impacts are minimised, proportionate, and strongly justified,
- b. mitigation measures are proposed, with particular attention to mitigating and minimising any disruption of ecological networks, for example by maintaining continuous tree canopy cover, and
- c. as a last resort, any compensatory planting is of similar ecological and amenity value or better, comprised of species-rich



native planting, including regular trees, and in the form of a traditional Devon bank wherever appropriate, and with special regard paid to ensuring that compensatory planting is functional as a habitat and boundary feature in the near term.

Any proposals involving the creation of new boundary features should, where appropriate, seek to introduce new species-rich and well-treed Devon banks in place of conventional hedges or ‘built’ boundary features such as fences or walls.

TREES, VETERAN TREES, AND ANCIENT TREES

4.3.12 The Woodland Trust records twenty-two individual Ancient and Veteran Trees within Whimble parish. Of these, two are Ancient Trees - one just East of Whimble Station, and one to the West of Whimble Cricket Club on the West side of Broadclyst Road - and the remainder are Veteran Trees. **Figure 9** shows the location of these trees.

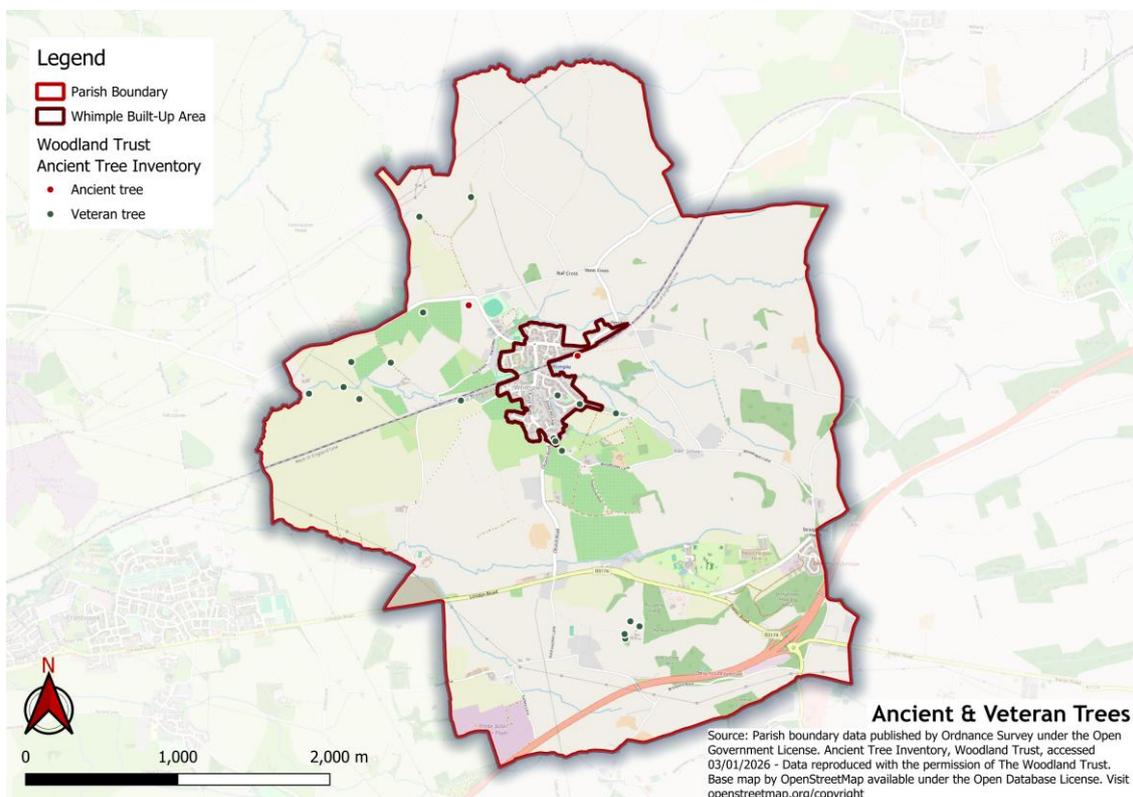


Figure 9: Ancient & Veteran Trees

4.3.13 Policy PB03 within the emerging East Devon Local Plan is unequivocal about the importance of such trees, describing them as “irreplaceable habitats” and requiring wholly exceptional reasons for their loss or degradation. Similar protections exist in paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework.



- 4.3.14 It is considered that this policy is sufficient so as to not warrant additional protections imposed in the WNP. This is to be reviewed pursuant to section 9.2 as the eDLP progresses towards examination by the Planning Inspectorate, and following adoption.
- 4.3.15 It is however recognised that the data identifies a cluster of Veteran Trees in the ground of Strete Raleigh House, in the South of Whimble Parish. Current and former grounds of this historic listed property, including properties to the West, also include a large number of well-established mature trees that lend this area of the Parish a parkland characteristic. While not publicly accessible, the area has intrinsic amenity and environmental value, as well as being visible from public viewpoints along local highway, and it is thus considered appropriate to designate special protection for this area.

Policy WHM04: Strete Raleigh Parkland

Proposals must not lead to the loss or degradation of parkland at and close to Strete Raleigh House, shown in **Figure 10**, whether total or in part. While this primarily applies to proposals falling within the current and former grounds of the property shown in Figure 10, which should avoid reducing the openness of the site or compromising views within and across the designated area, proposals outside of this area should seek to preserve its wider landscape setting, including views to the West. Where necessary, the latter may be achieved via appropriate screening.

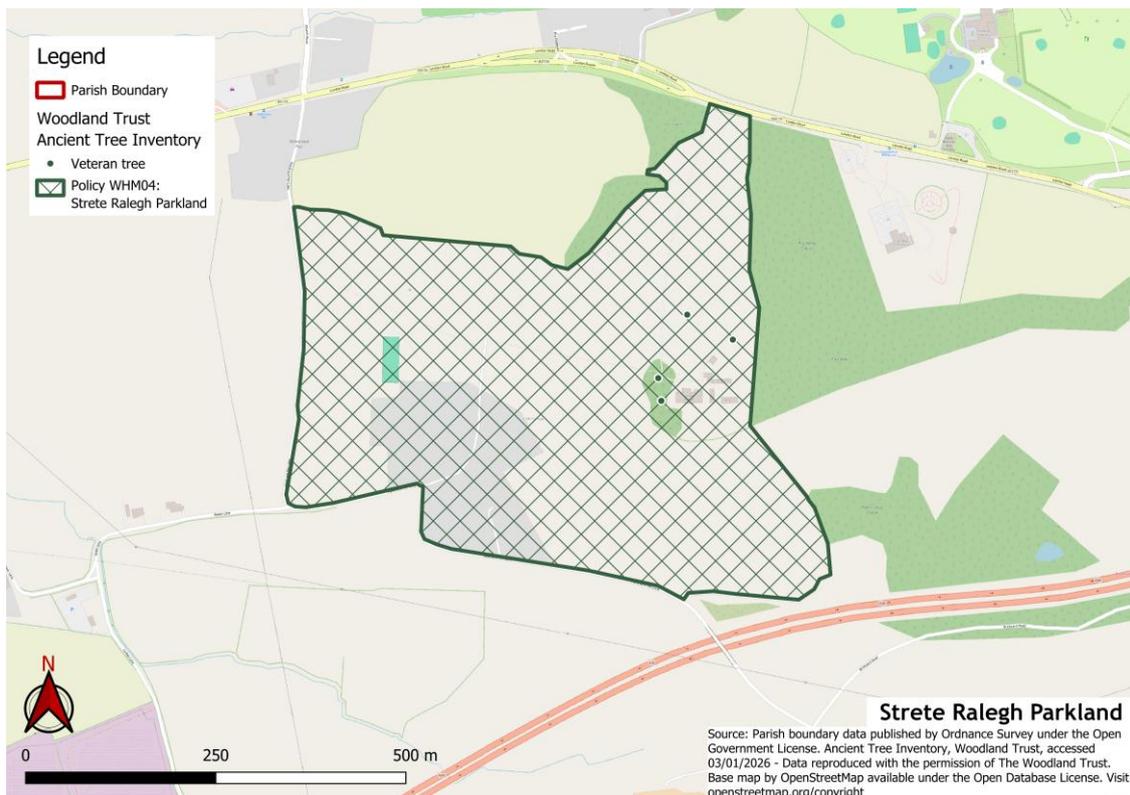


Figure 10: Strete Raleigh Parkland (Policy WHM04)

PRIORITY HABITATS & WOODLAND

- 4.3.16 Three principal types of priority habitat are designated by Natural England within Whimble Parish. Of these, the vast majority are



traditional orchards, primarily adjacent to the village on its Western and Southern sides though with smaller patches elsewhere, and deciduous woodland, primarily to the East of the village and around Strete Raleigh House and the ‘Daisymount’ A30 junction. A small area of semi improved grassland is identified in the North of the Parish. **Figure 11** shows these designated areas.

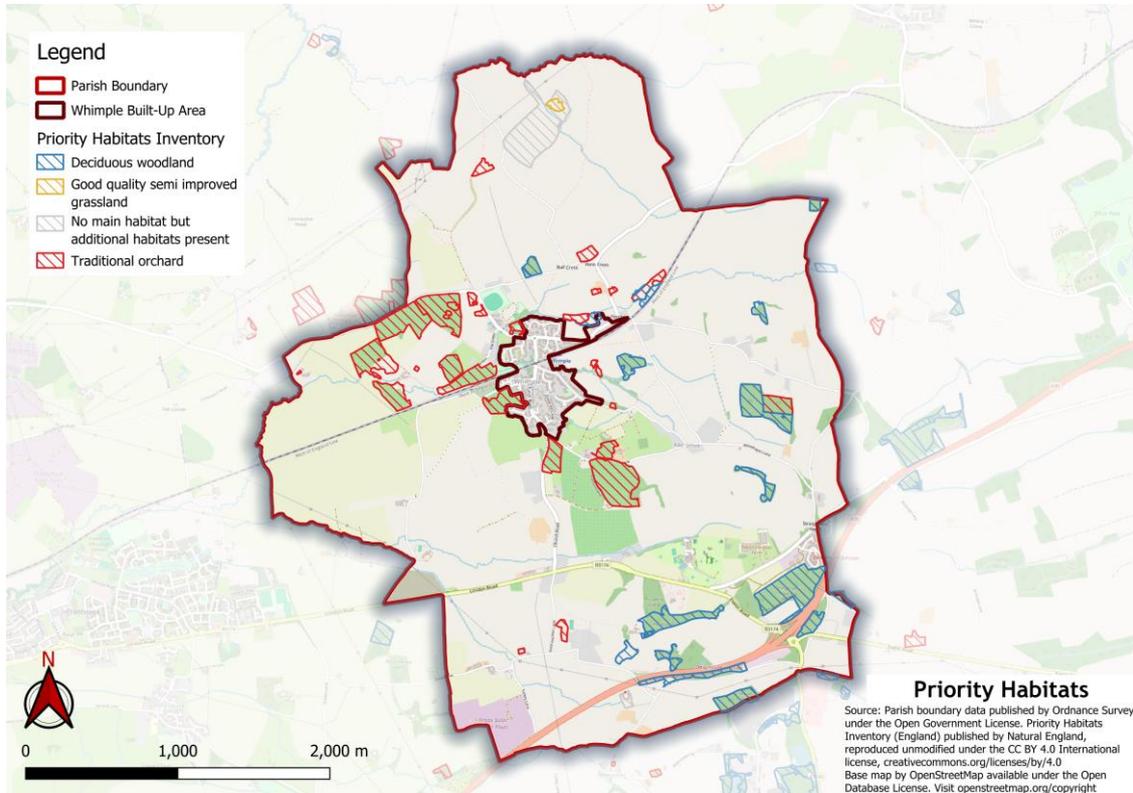


Figure 11: Priority Habitats

- 4.3.17 It is not clear whether the same protections set out in paragraph 193 of the NPPF also apply to priority habitats, though the broader Framework clearly implies strong protections for such sites - as does the aEDLP, which lacks language specifically protecting priority habitats. This is in contrast to the eEDLP, which includes significant protections through Strategic Policy PB03.
- 4.3.18 Ancient woodland, by contrast, does explicitly benefit from the “irreplaceable habitat” definition and protections set out in paragraph 193, in addition to the same protections set out in eEDLP Strategic Policy PB03. The village benefits from two separate ancient woodland designations - Mardles Copse and Cotleigh Wood - which together form one contiguous area of designation in the East of the Parish, shown in **Figure 12**.



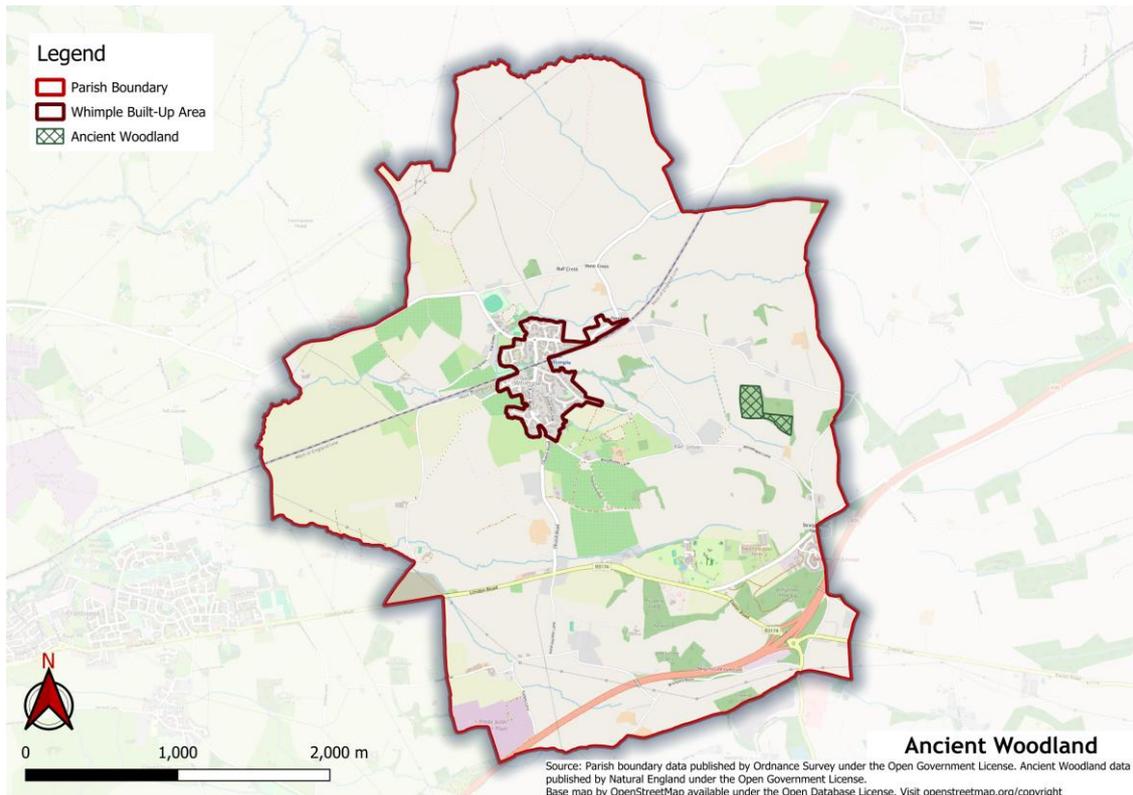


Figure 12: Ancient Woodland

- 4.3.19 As part of Whimble’s unique heritage, the issue of orchards is covered substantively by subsection 4.4. For the remaining classes of priority habitat within the parish, and for ancient woodlands, it is considered that protections set out in national and district policy are sufficient so as to not warrant additional protections imposed in the WNP. This is to be reviewed pursuant to section 9.2 as the eEDLP progresses towards examination by the Planning Inspectorate, and following adoption.
- 4.3.20 There remain, however, several areas of woodland within Whimble Parish that do not benefit from the specific protections due to ancient woodland and priority habitats. For these areas, general NPPF requirements regarding preserving the benefits of natural capital and protecting trees remain, in addition to provisions regarding biodiversity net gain and protections resulting from woodlands’ contribution to landscape and social amenity - protections which are also reflected in Strategy 46 of the aEDLP. Reflecting the implied national policy approach, Policy PB08 of the eEDLP does however allow loss of trees where this is deemed “justifiable and unavoidable”, provided adequate replacement planting is provided.
- 4.3.21 As such, given the value of woodland for Whimble’s landscape and ecology - and indeed their broad relationship with the significance of orchards to the village’s sociocultural and economic heritage - it is considered appropriate to stipulate specific protections for otherwise non-designated woodland within the Parish.

Policy WHM05: Protection of Undesignated Woodland

Woodland forms a vital part of the landscape of Whimble Parish. Development must not lead to the loss, damage, or deterioration



of woodland. Proposals within woodland areas will only be considered in exceptional circumstances where they:

- a. are a use that is compatible with the natural environment, and do not lead to harm to the woodland,
- b. do not introduction additional built form, and
- c. must be located in a woodland location, for example for agricultural or tourism purposes.

This policy applies only to woodland not designated as priority habitat or ancient woodland, as shown on **Figure 13**.

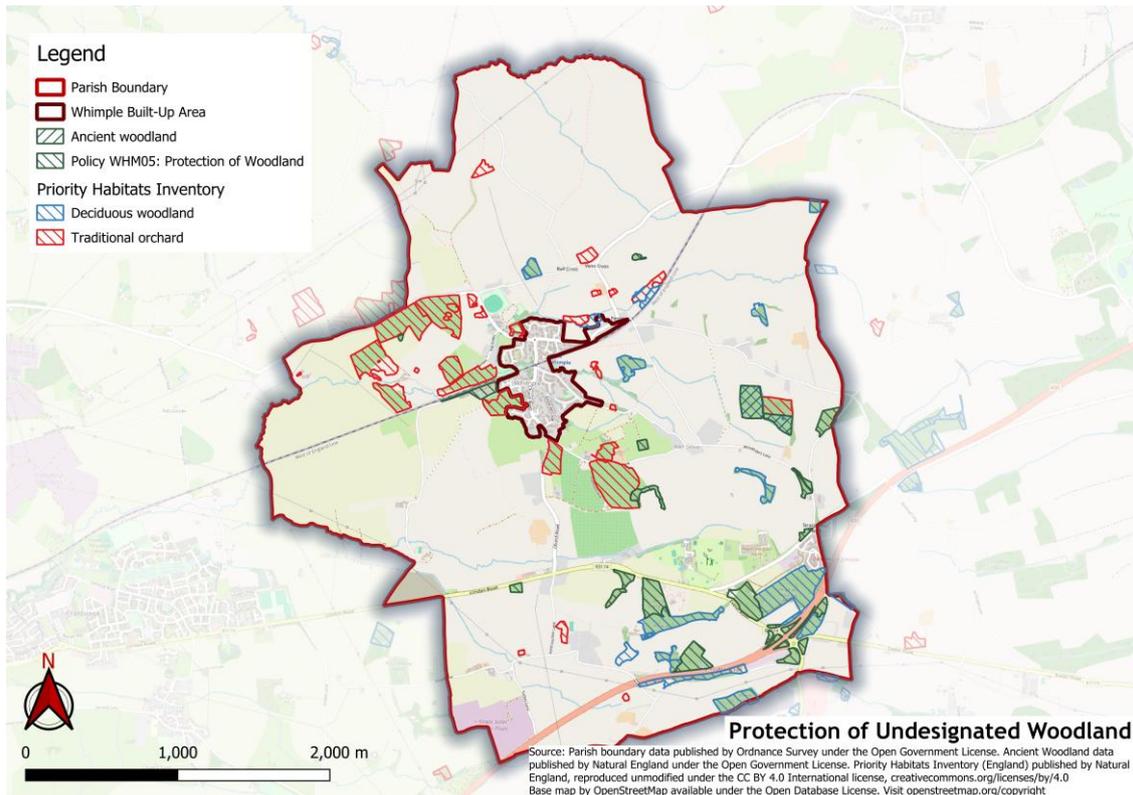


Figure 13: Protection of Undesignated Woodland (Policy WHM05)

RE-WILDING AND ECOLOGICAL NETWORKS

4.3.22 The NPPF is very clear that features of environmental and ecological value are not only significant in their own right, but also as part of interconnected networks of habitats supporting diverse species and encouraging nature recovery. Paragraph 187d explicitly links establishing and enhancing ecological networks to biodiversity net gain, and paragraph 188 requires planning policy to “take a strategic approach” both to maintaining and improving those networks and to bettering natural capital beyond local administrative boundaries, which clearly implies a joined-up, network-based approach. Paragraph 192 specifically requires local plans to both map and safeguard wildlife corridors and other connecting features.

4.3.23 Strategies 5 and 47 of the aEDLP set out similar requirements, while eEDLP Strategic Policy PB06 and Policy PB07 both support a network- and connectivity-based approach to biodiversity gain and nature recovery.



4.3.24 Natural England data suggests that just shy of 53% of Whimple Parish is either an existing designated priority habitat or falls within their ‘Network Enhancement Zone 1’ designation, shown in **Figure 14**. This designation covers land within close proximity to existing priority habitats that is more likely to be suitable for habitat re-creation for the particular habitat, based on an analysis of known environmental factors.

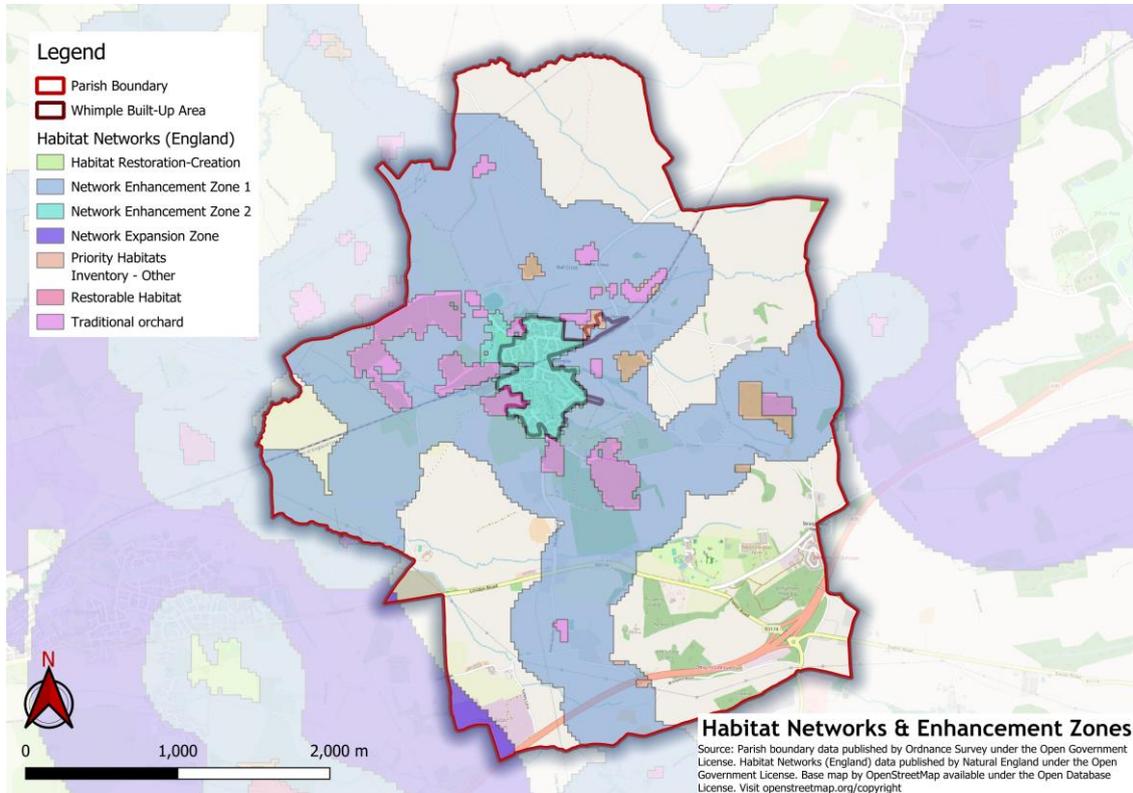


Figure 14: Habitat Networks & Enhancement Zones

4.3.25 While a clear goal of national and local planning policy approaches, existing concrete policy measures typically cover general approaches to implementing and improving nature networks within planning applications. It is considered that there is thus an opportunity for the WNP to express explicit support for proposals that create new, or enhance existing, linkages between designated priority habitats that are found within the Parish - going beyond policy regarding the protection and creation of nature-rich hedgerows set out elsewhere in the Plan.

4.3.26 Building on the requirements in paragraph 192 of the NPPF, while the role of hedgerows (and particularly treed hedgerows) in the Parish has already been highlighted, there are two further specific types of nature network within the Parish to consider in policy: the Exeter to Waterloo railway line, which runs on an East-West axis through the Parish and provides a largely uninterrupted corridor of hedging and other habitats, as well as a high quality commuter route for bats; and the many streams and waterways that run throughout the Parish, which are habitats themselves (also typically being lined with hedges and trees) as well as being vital contributors to natural processes that support the rest of the terrestrial ecosystem. These ecological network features merit specific policy for their protection and enhancement.



Policy WHM06: Nature Networks

All planning proposals should seek to contribute to enhancing nature networks by linking to adjacent network or habitat features, with particular priority given to ecological connectivity with priority habitat designations found within the Parish - mainly traditional orchards and deciduous woodland. Where there are no appropriate features to link into, proposals should nevertheless incorporate features that any subsequent proposals - or bespoke nature recovery projects - can later link into to create and enhance local ecological networks.

Proposals that cover or are adjacent to ecological corridors running along the Exeter-Waterloo railway line and/or waterways within the Parish, shown on **Figure 15**, must avoid damage to or loss of these corridors, and should have special regard to improving the quality of and linking ecological features into these corridors, as well as taking advantage of any opportunities to link in habitats on adjacent land otherwise not connected to these corridors.

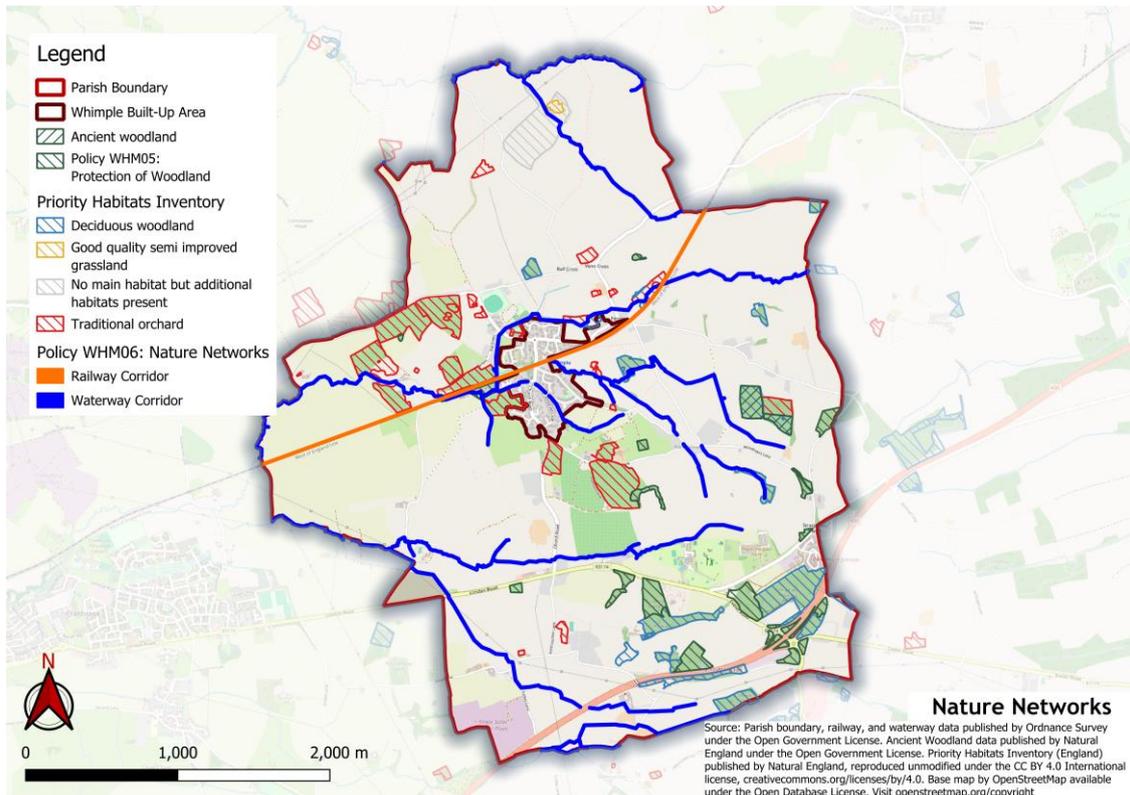


Figure 15: Nature Networks (Policy WHM06)



4.4 WHIMBLE ORCHARDS

- 4.4.1 Whimble's long association with the cider industry dates back to the early 1800s. The arrival of the railway in 1890 made Whimble a major supply hub for the products of the local orchards, particularly Henry Whiteway's 'Whiteway's Cider', which became one of the most successful cider producers in the world - producing widely-recognised brands like Cydrax and Peardrax. Many families in the village have connections to the old cider factory, orchards, and other industries that supported them. However, many historic orchards were lost after the Second World War due to farm modernisation and a decrease in labour availability. Additionally, in the late 1980s, there was a decline in the popularity of cider, leading to the conversion of many traditional orchards to farmland. Whimble remained home to the Whiteway's Cyder and Perry factory until it closed in 1989 - the land subsequently being sold for housing development in the 1990s.
- 4.4.2 Despite the decline of the industry locally, Whimble's cider-making heritage remains a significant part of its sociocultural fabric, with an annual traditional wassail rekindled in 1993 and held annually since. A large number of orchards still remain in the Parish - over a hundred acres of designated traditional orchard priority habitat alone - and it is essential to preserve them as part of the village's agricultural and social heritage, as well as to protect the diverse wildlife, flora, and fauna that thrive in these unique environments. The environmental and sociocultural value of orchards to the village are recognised in the Clyst Valley Regional Park masterplan, a significant component of the strategic approach to landscape conservation, nature recovery, and improving access to nature set out in both the adopted and emerging East Devon Local Plans.
- 4.4.3 In addition to the trees themselves, many of Whimble's orchards retain historic orchard ridges, a characteristic feature of Whimble orchards, and an important part of the historic character of these former orchards. These ridges, which often survive as parallel linear earthwork banks, should be conserved as heritage assets.

Policy WHM07: Conservation and Enhancement of Whimble Orchards

Proposals must not lead to the degradation or loss of any orchards within the Parish, whether or not the site in question benefits from a formal designation as a traditional orchard priority habitat or as any other relevant designations. Where orchard ridges and other traditional orchard features are present, this protection extends beyond orchard flora and habitat to include those additional features.

Proposals for new development should seek to provide new areas of community orchard where practical, and with special attention paid to this where a site is adjacent to an existing orchard, or is otherwise in reasonable proximity and connected by an ecological corridor.

