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SAVE OUR STOCKBRIDGE (SOS) SUBMISSION TO TVBC PLANNING POLICY TEAM IN RESPECT OF THE NEXT LOCAL PLAN - REFINED ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION DATED JUNE 2020

INTRODUCTION

1. We are a group of like minded individuals who live in or near Stockbridge in the Test Valley, and in June 2018 we formed SOS, Save Our Stockbridge, to respond to a proposed development in the centre of the village which involved many residential buildings and a large car park on the floodplain and on meadowland outside the Settlement Boundary, to the south of the High Street. We kept and keep members of the public informed and many people from Stockbridge and beyond asked to join our database. They remain supporters of what we are trying to do. The developers did not pursue their proposal but as a result we became very interested in maintaining the character, particularly the landscape character of Stockbridge. , the Head of Planning at TVBC, described Stockbridge at its Annual Parish Meeting in April 2019, as the 'jewel in the crown of the Test Valley'. SOS wants to keep it that way.

2. We therefore wish to make submissions to the Planning Policy Team of TVBC in respect of the next Local Plan, particularly on the issues of climate change which TVBC acknowledges is 'one of the greatest challenges which we face', the environment including the historic environment of Stockbridge, its landscape character, its biodiversity, the flood risk to Stockbridge and the current settlement boundary. All these are issues raised in the Council's Refined Issues and Options Consultation document. However we prefer to make our submissions not just in response to issues raised, but more generally, and we ask the Planning Policy Team to take our points into account. A number of the SOS Committee have lived in or around Stockbridge for well over 40 years so that we speak from direct knowledge of Stockbridge over that time. We have also carried out research to augment our knowledge.

3. We are aware that the very recent Government White Paper on revision of the planning system may well require TVBC to change their approach to the next Local Plan. We would wish to reserve our position to make further comments in the light of any such change. Nevertheless we are still making the submissions contained in this paper as we consider they are of general application whatever change in approach is adopted and of course the deadline for comments is fast approaching.

THE STOCKBRIDGE FLOODPLAIN

Climate Change

4. As is well known by the Planning Policy Department Stockbridge is situated on a floodplain. For ease of reference we attach a map (image 1) entitled Stockbridge Constraints which shows that Flood Zones 2 and 3 apply to large areas of Stockbridge Parish. These are the flood risk zones defined by the Environment Agency. Stockbridge High Street is Flood Zone 2 and there are many areas behind both the north and south of the Settlement Boundary (and in two cases on the north side within the Settlement Boundary) that are designated Flood Zone 3.

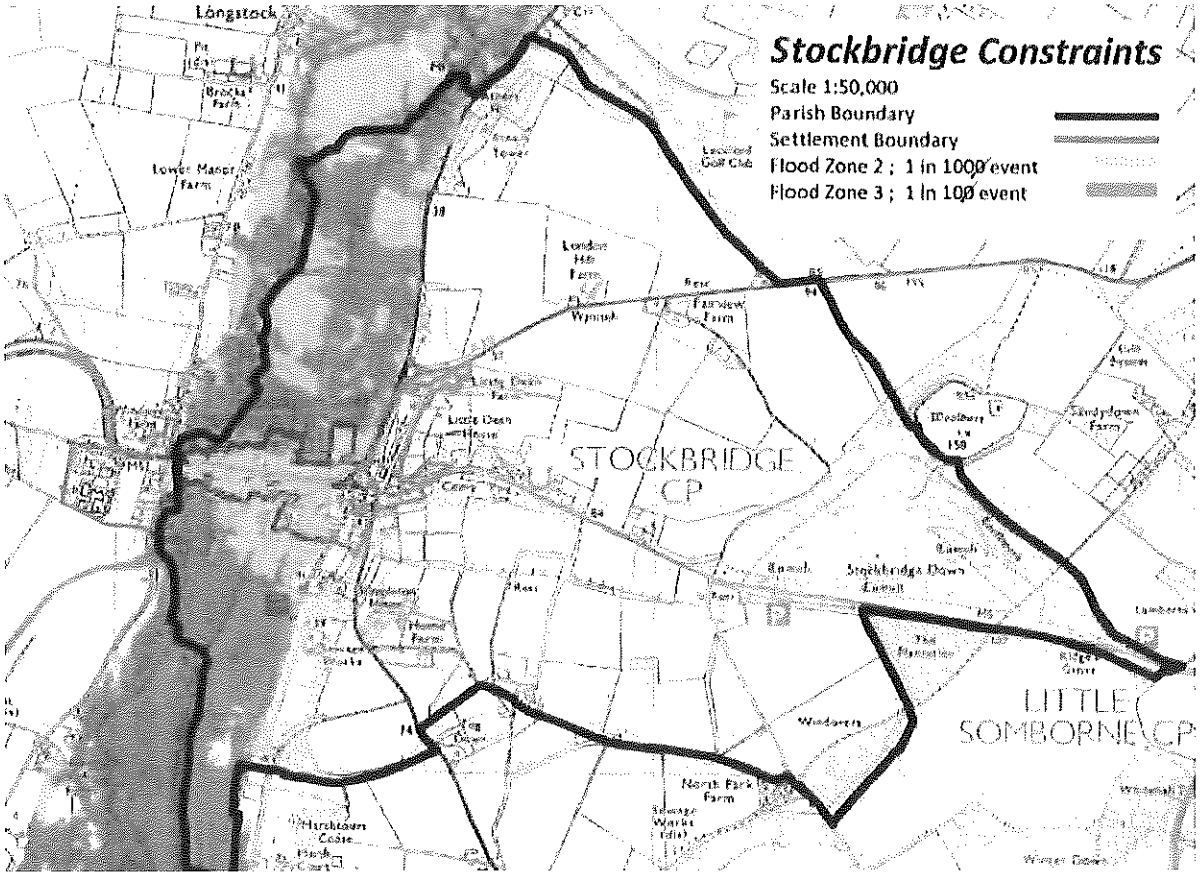

image 1

5. The TVBC current Local Plan at para. 7.51 states: The importance of climate change is echoed in the National Planning Policy Framework which requires local planning authorities to adopt positive strategies towards dealing with climate change. The NPPF identifies a number of factors which need to be considered over the longer term. **For the Borough [TVBC] this means focusing on ...avoiding areas at risk of flooding** (our emphasis). Further, para. 7.60 of the current Local Plan states: Following the flooding within the Borough in 2013/14, the Council is working with the relevant agencies to develop measures to manage risks of flooding in the future. Implementation of any measures would depend on the availability of funding.

6. In the current consultation document, paragraph 7.44 it is stated: '**We will update our evidence in relation to all types of flood risk to inform how we prepare policies on this matter and the allocation of land for new development**' (our emphasis).

The Effect of Climate Change on Stockbridge

7. Stockbridge has suffered two potentially dangerous floods in the past 6 years, the first during the winter of 2013/14 and the second in the winter of 2019/20. Prior to that, and after the construction of the 'new' bridge at the western end of the High Street in the late 1960s, there had been no significant flooding for several decades. The new bridge had allowed the water in the River Test to flow more freely so that flooding was prevented. But the river system was not able to cope with the sustained and heavy rainfall suffered in the winters of 2013/14 and 2019/20. It seems from available evidence that extreme patterns of weather will increase as the world becomes warmer, with warmer wetter winters, and extreme rainfall events in both winter and summer. As Sir David Attenborough said about climate change in January 2020: '... the moment of crisis has come, we can no longer [avoid it]'. We are pleased that TVBC acknowledges the importance of climate change in establishing a revised Local Plan – (paras. 2.3-2.4 of the Consultation Document). In 2013/14 when the Test river system flooded, at least three houses off the High Street were flooded and one to the north of the High Street had to be demolished. People who lived on the High Street were supplied with sandbags to keep the threat of water from their doors, the water meadows were by and large submerged and residents were caused considerable alarm. Fortunately that threat to residents' homes subsided, but with evidence of increased global warming and in particular warmer, wetter winters here in the UK, the threat to Stockbridge is ever present and needs to be anticipated.

8. As a result of the flooding over the winter of 2013/14 in Stockbridge, measures were taken and funding provided in about 2017 to mitigate its effects. To explain the works carried out it is necessary to look at the geography of the Test Valley in Stockbridge. To the north of Stockbridge the River Test follows two divergent courses finally coming together above the main bridge at the end of the High Street. There is a course on the eastern side of the village (near where the second roundabout exists near the London Road) and the other course is on the western side of the village running parallel to the Longstock Road . The eastern course travels sharply towards the west and thence into Borough Lake which is situated to the north of the Greyhound on the Test. In normal times water passes from the south of Borough Lake and into a weir, almost adjacent to the Greyhound, to join the western course of the river. There is a difference in levels between Borough Lake and the river of about two feet.
9. Flooding was caused in 2013/14 because of a long period of sustained heavy rainfall such that Borough Lake and the weir became increasingly incapable of discharging the high levels of water produced into the main (now joined together) river so that it could pass freely under the main Test bridge at the western end of the High Street. In that winter the excess water produced seeped in an easterly direction along the north side of the High Street, and flooded the low lying parts of the village on that side. As a result of sustained pressure on the

Environment Agency, when Stockbridge was at real risk of being overwhelmed, the western bank of Borough Lake was deliberately breached as a temporary measure. Despite this action three houses on the north side of the village were flooded.

10. In 2017, and mindful of the increasing perils of climate change, the Houghton Fishing Club (based in Stockbridge) presented proposals to the Environment Agency and to Natural England to create two flood relief projects which would offer better long term protection for the village, and in particular that part north of the High Street, in all but a catastrophic event. The first was to create a permanent concrete and steel 2.5 metre wide spillway on the west side of the eastern course of the river above Borough Lake, to allow excess water to flow into the western course of the river. This would alleviate the problem of seepage into the east of the village on the north side. The second proposal was to build a bypass sluice at Kingsmead Weir which is situated about 150 metres south of the main River Test bridge at the end of the High Street. The aim was to drain the water backing up on the north side of the bridge and to allow the excess water to flow south across the valley floor over the water meadows. The sluice is about 2.5 metres wide and the boards descend to the bottom of the river which allows for maximum discharge when rain is heavy and sustained.

11. Both of these proposals were given the necessary statutory approval and were paid for by TVBC and Hants CC. Houghton Fishing Club maintains and repairs them as necessary. In the winter of 2019/20 the flooding was thus managed with these new structures in place and the Houghton Club River Keeper, kept an ever vigilant eye on the levels of the two courses of the river and the various carriers running through Stockbridge from north to south. In addition water drained from the farmland along the Houghton Road on the west side of the valley and to the south of the High Street, flooded the road and ran into the water meadows on the other side of the road, and thence into the Test.

Flooding in Stockbridge in 2019/20

12. Despite the works and the constant vigilance of the Houghton Club, a drone video taken in February 2020 shows the extent of the flooding suffered in and around Stockbridge (image 2 - this can be found at the following link, which is password protected and the password will be supplied separately) https://player.vimeo.com/video/394297439. Nevertheless the extensive flooding caused no damage to any property in Stockbridge. It seems that the measures taken to mitigate flood damage will work well again in times of flooding unless

there is a catastrophic event. Extensive flooding of the valley twice within six years is however a new phenomenon and clearly results directly from climate change. It is, notwithstanding the measures taken in 2017 to reduce the risk, understandably of grave concern to Stockbridge residents.

The Stockbridge Water Table

13. There are two kinds of rainfall that can cause flooding and therefore can cause damage to homes, shops and other property in Stockbridge. The first is caused by sudden high intensity rainfall over a very short period, often less than an hour, which can overwhelm the capacity of the High Street drainage system to disperse the water into the gullies and thence into the river system. This is a 'flash flood' which is usually dispersed very quickly after the rain has stopped, although it can cause considerable damage to property while it is ongoing. The second, and more dangerous threat of flooding occurs after prolonged and sustained heavy rainfall over several weeks and months. This causes the aquifers, which are essentially the chalk hills around the valley of the Test, to become increasingly saturated, which in turn creates an increasingly high discharge of excess water into the valley floor. This higher discharge is manifested by an increase in volume and size of springs appearing in the valley floor which feed the river. In normal circumstances, the river drains and takes this discharge harmlessly down-stream, but in conditions of excessive and prolonged rainfall the water table in the valley floor increases in height, right across the valley floor, and this causes potential flooding as the river system becomes less and less capable of discharging the water downstream.

14. The water table in Stockbridge is normally at its highest at the end of the winter and slowly reduces, since the spring and summer rainfall is normally considerably less than in the autumn and winter. However the difference in height of the water table, from lows at the end of summer to highs at the end of the winter, is usually only between one and two feet, which provides only a small additional margin to cope with abnormal rainfall in the summer. These water table conditions are prevalent throughout the Test valley, and are certainly present both north and south of Stockbridge High Street.

15. In the winter surface flooding frequently occurs on the meadows in Zone 2 of the floodplain and the Common Marsh always has small areas where water collects as soon as there is rain. Indeed the Marsh well and truly lives up to its name in winter months. But even in the summer, and even when there has been a long period of dry weather, the water is not far below the surface and any rain causes the areas to become waterlogged. For example if rain falls before the weed is cut in the carriers, the water floods from the stream beside the former Lillies tea shop (in the middle of the High Street, on the south side, at the beginning of the Marsh Path), and across the Marsh Path into the meadows to the west. Water is a wonderful feature of Stockbridge; it gives the place great character and appeals to residents and visitors alike. But water on the floodplain is an ever present concern particularly when climate change is very likely to make flooding more frequent and more extreme.

16. As Stockbridge is built on a floodplain, the effect of more serious climate change means that it will be at increasing risk of flooding in the future. We therefore urge the Planning Policy Team not to increase this risk, 'avoiding areas at risk of flooding' (Current Local Plan), and

not including the Stockbridge floodplain for any 'allocation of land for new development' (Current Consultation Document). Furthermore any development on the valley sides leading down into the floodplain would reduce the permeability of the surrounding chalkhills, increase the run off on to the valley floor and thereby exacerbate the risk of flooding in Stockbridge. What we urge is founded in common sense, the changing climate and TVBC's own policies.

STOCKBRIDGE RIVER AND WATER MEADOWS SYSTEM

17. TVBC planning department recognizes that the water meadows system was used in and around Stockbridge and from recent aerial photography (images 3 to the north and 4 to the south) there remains clear evidence of those water meadows. As the majority of the land on either side of the High Street beyond the Settlement Boundary has never been built on, the water meadows system is thus reasonably preserved. A Hampshire County Council leaflet entitled *The Conservation of Water Meadows Structures* (published probably soon after 2002) stated that: 'Only 4% of water meadows in Hampshire are classified as 'well preserved', and '40% of water meadows originally recorded in Hampshire have been destroyed'. We suggest that the system in Stockbridge, as it is reasonably well preserved, should be recognized in the revised Local Plan as being of historical, cultural, ecological, environmental, and educational importance.

image 3

18. We must acknowledge our debt to one of our Committee for his painstaking research on the subject of the Stockbridge water meadows system. In addition we have been greatly assisted by Dr Hadrian Cook, environmental scientist and Trustee of the Harnham Water Meadows Trust, and Dr Kathy Stearne, landscape ecologist and expert in Hampshire Water Meadows. They co-wrote *The Origins of Water Meadows in England* for the Agricultural History Review. Both have generously given of their time and expertise to help us.

image 4

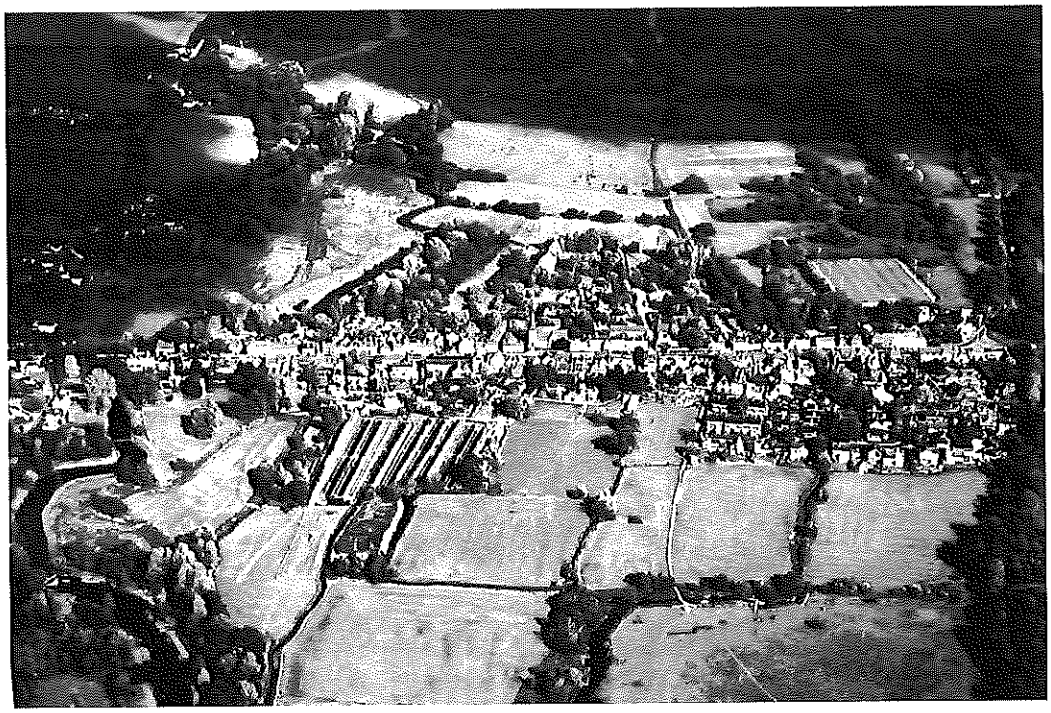

image 5

The Historical and Cultural Context

19. Stockbridge sits in the valley of the world renowned River Test and is a linear settlement on and near a causeway (image 5), built east to west over the rivers possibly by the Romans to link the cities of London, Winchester and Salisbury. The road on the causeway (now the High Street, A30) remains a busy thoroughfare between those cities. In addition there was and remains a north/south road linking Andover (and beyond), Romsey and Southampton – all historic towns – and the two roads cross in Stockbridge. In 1221 Stockbridge was granted the right to hold a market and its association with sheep became increasingly important. The sheep trade continued until well into the 20th century and Welsh farmers habitually drove their sheep to and through Stockbridge to the market there and to the dockyards in Portsmouth. This is evidenced today by an advertisement on a house, the Drovers House, on the Houghton Road close to the River Test bridge where in the Welsh language it states: 'Season's Hay - Rich Grass - Good Ale - Sound Sleep', (image 6).

20. The pastures in Stockbridge were therefore crucial to the livelihoods of its inhabitants and it seems that from the late 17th century local farmers adopted the Bedwork water meadows

image 6

system to enhance and increase the available pasture for their sheep and for those brought to and through Stockbridge on the way to market. There was also a need for such hay for horses in Stockbridge because of its coaching inns. Furthermore the business of horse racing has been traced back to the late 18th century in Stockbridge and in 1839 a new racecourse was built at Danebury, a mile or so to the north and west of Stockbridge. The new Sprat and Winkle line railway line was then built through Stockbridge connecting London, Andover, Southampton and Portsmouth. Many people used the train to travel to the races which were very fashionable not least because the Prince of Wales was a keen racegoer, as was Lillie Langtry who owned a house in Stockbridge. John Day and his family were famous horse trainers for many generations from the late 18th century and they trained their horses in Stockbridge. Tom Cannon who was a Derby winner jockey, married into the Day family, and he had stables at Chattis Hill between Stockbridge and the Danebury racecourse. These horses all required hay and the water meadows system helped the local farmers to fulfil this need. The racecourse was suddenly closed in 1898 but during the Great War horses were transported by railway to Southampton docks via Stockbridge and once again Stockbridge farmers were able to supply the required hay. It was only with changing agricultural practices in the mid 20th century that the water meadows became redundant.

Water Meadows – Recognition for Planning Purposes

21. As Historic England quoted in their 2017 publication, *Conserving Historic Water Meadows,* water meadows have been described as 'one of the greatest achievements of English agriculture'. Historic England go on to say that water meadows are 'an important part of our [England's] cultural and agricultural heritage', (page 3). In the same publication Nicky Smith writes, **'In addition to their importance for wildlife and the historic environment, there is good evidence that water meadows provide wider environmental benefits. They can contain flood water, trap silt and help to reduce the nutrient load in water returned to rivers', (ibid. page 3,** our emphasis**).**

22. Section 16 of the 2019 National Planning Policy Framework states: **'These [heritage] assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations', (page 54** our emphasis). The NPPF continues: 'Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

a) The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets....;

b) The wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring; ....

and d) opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.'

23. There are three Hampshire County Council Planning Policies for the conservation of water meadows' heritage and character in Hampshire. Policy 1 states as follows: The character and integrity of the remaining water meadows, and their settings, should be conserved recognizing their local distinctiveness. The document goes on to state: '**It is important that the critical role of water meadows to the character of Hampshire's distinctive river valley scene be recognized, and that their conservation and management should be a matter of local, regional and national importance,' (Hampshire CC Environment Policy Review Committee 6th March 2002,** our emphasis). **The Water Meadows in Stockbridge Today and in the Past**

image 7

24. Recent aerial images to the north and south of Stockbridge High Street (images 3 and 4) show clear evidence of the complex system of carriers, ditches, and earthworks of such a water meadows system. Many of the original carrier streams remain today, often running through or delineating the boundaries of meadows and properties in Stockbridge, and a number are clearly visible running under the High Street from the north. In addition there are a good many ditches running alongside meadows which no longer contain water but, when the valley floods, become filled with standing water and some begin to flow. There also remain a number of more recent wide concrete bridges to meadows which allowed local people to access the meadows to cut the hay and haywains to collect the harvested hay, (image 7). Old sluices have also been identified and it may be that with more research more structures are discovered.

25. The Hampshire County Archaeologist has provided us with historic maps from Epoch 1 (images 8 to the north and 9 to the south), which we understand date back to about 1870, which show where the water meadows were in Stockbridge and the various numbers they were allocated. He has also provided us with three recent LiDAR images of the north and south of the High Street (images 10, 11 and 12) which show the earthworks associated with the water meadows system in Stockbridge. Dr Kathy Stearne, the acknowledged expert on

Hampshire Water Meadows, tells us that 'the water meadows in Stockbridge date back to the 17th century and would have been in continuous use through to the mid 20th century'.

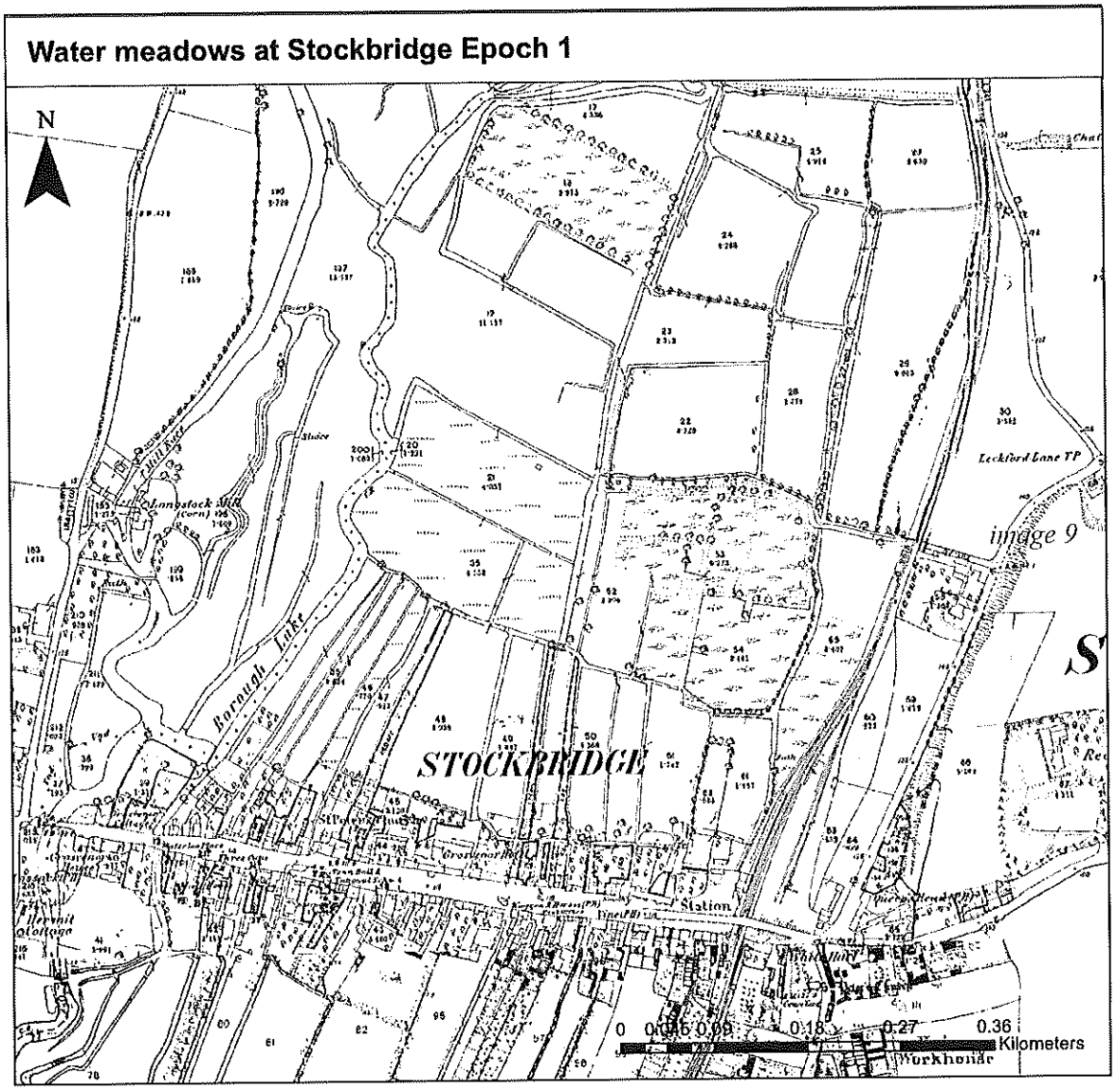

image 8

image 9

Water meadows at Stockbridge Epoch 1

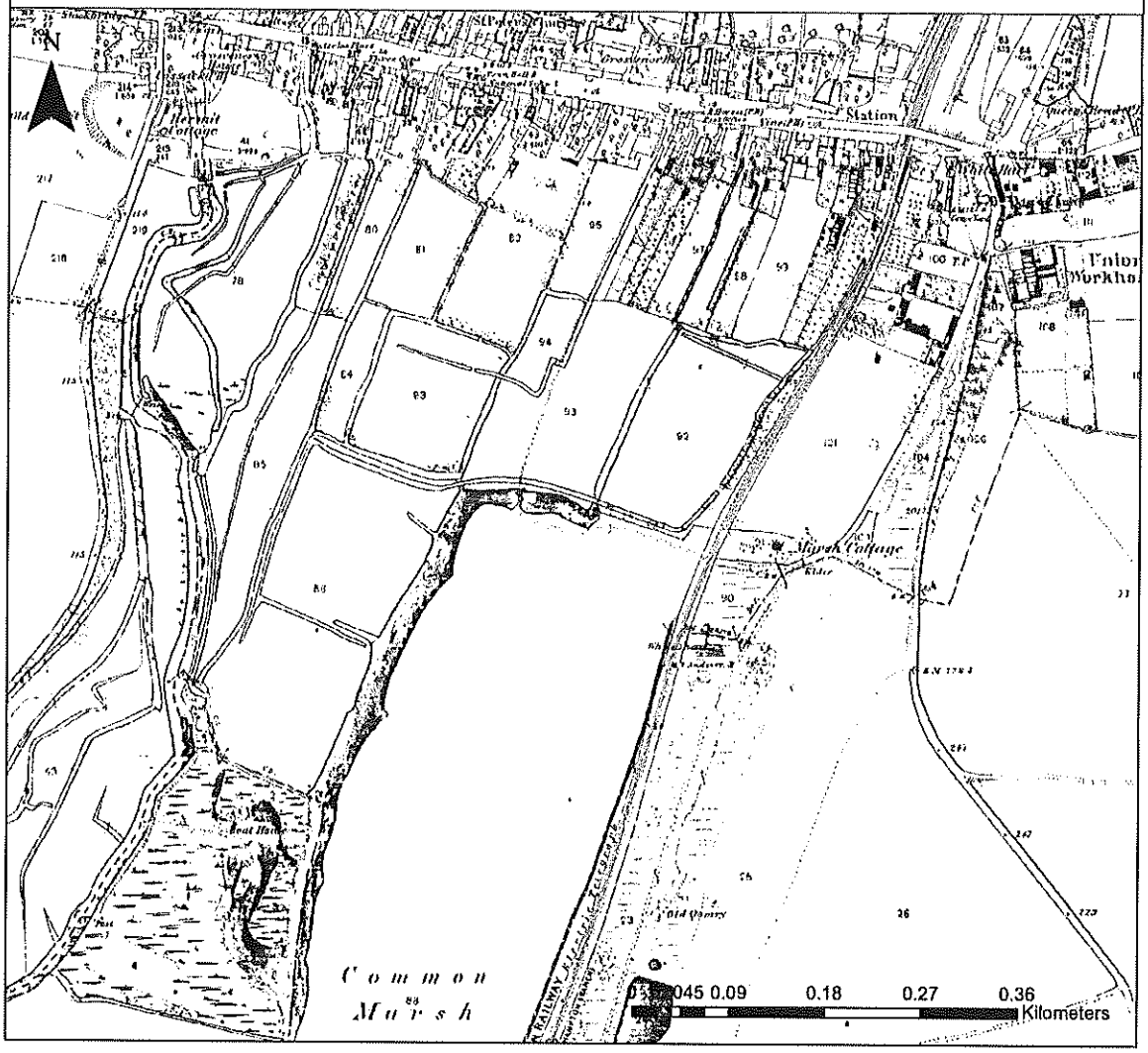

image 9

Water meadows at Stockbridge Lidar image

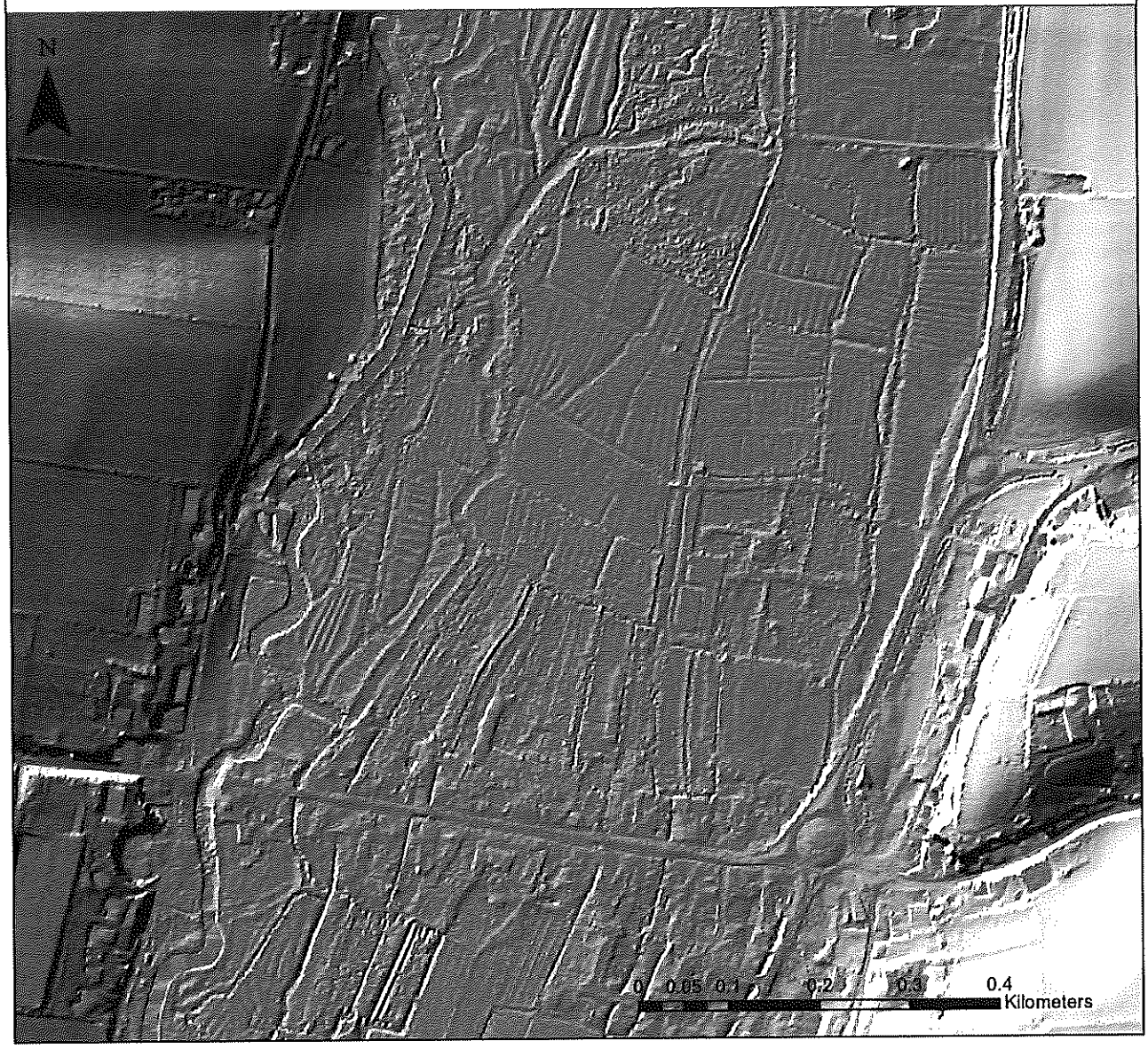

image 10

Water meadows at Stockbridge Lidar image

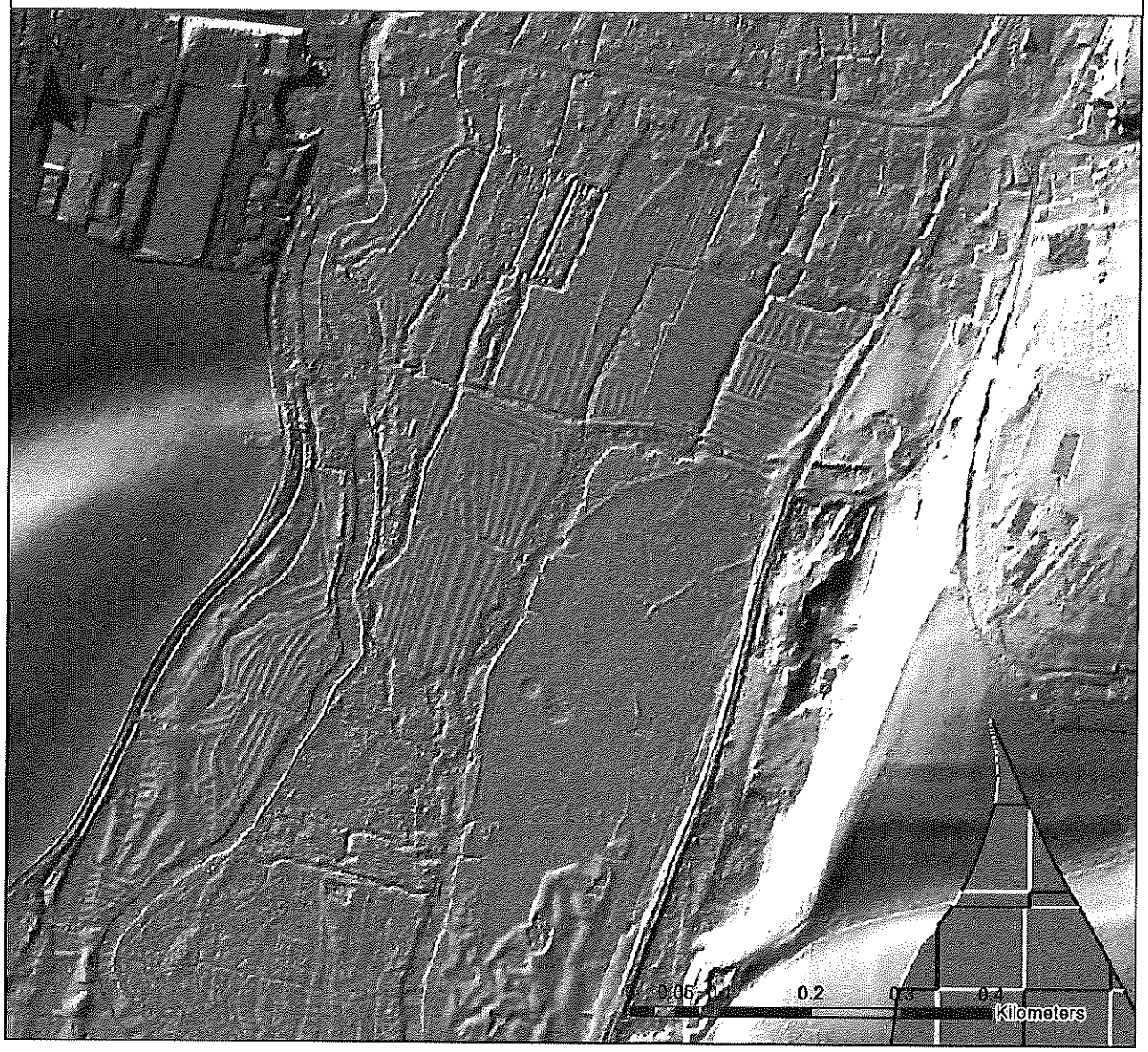

image 11

Water meadows at Stockbridge Lidar image

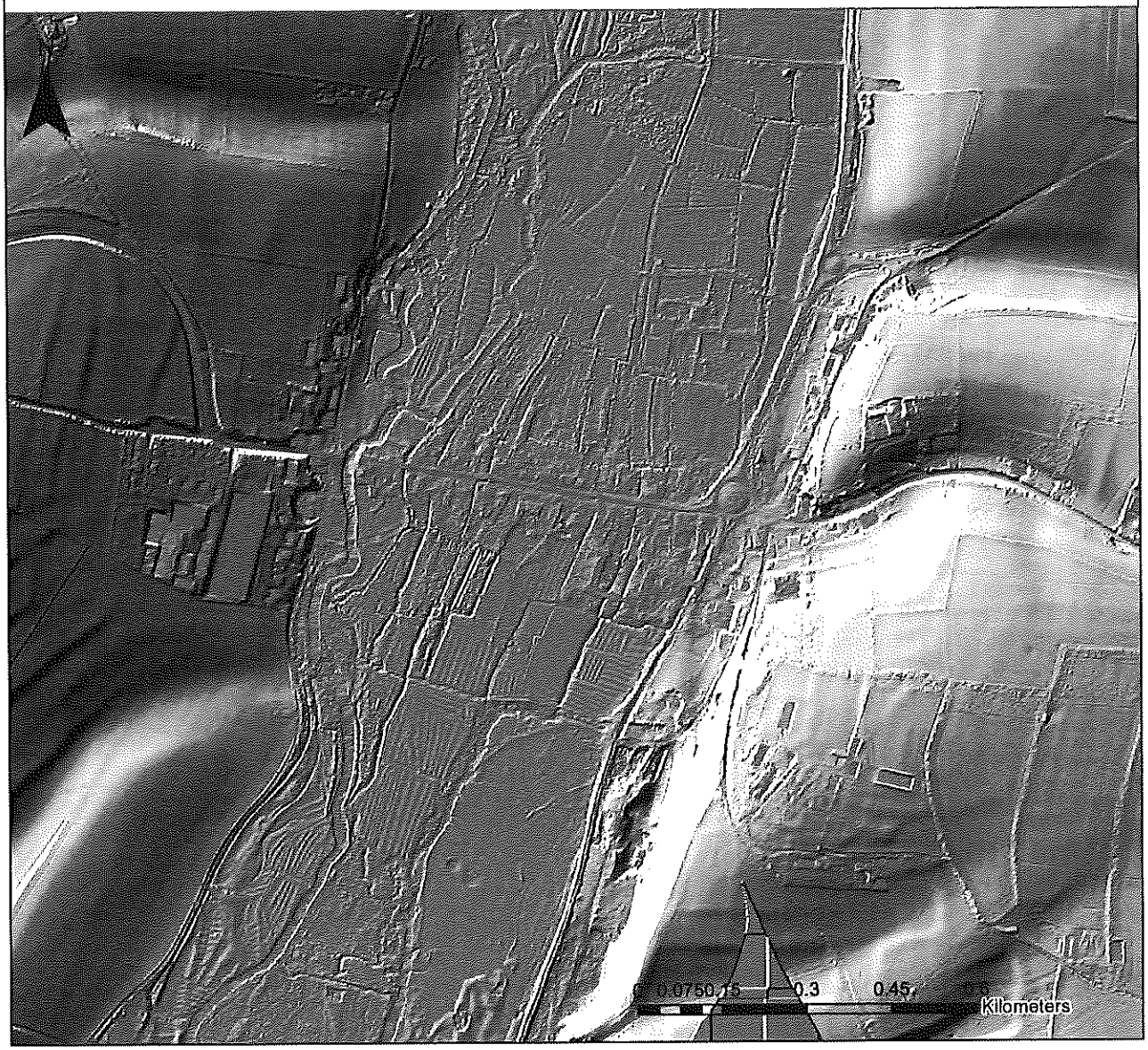

image 12

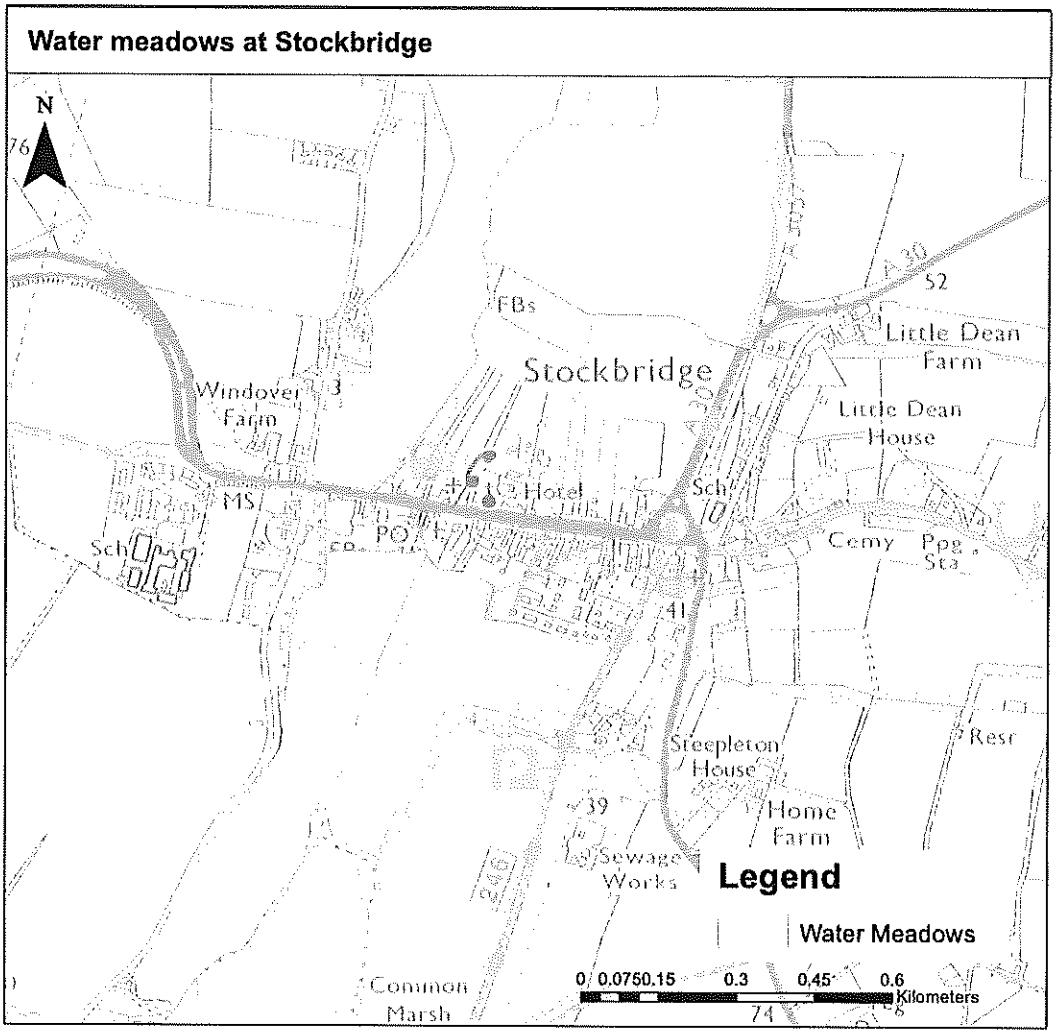

image 13

The Current Hampshire CC Map of Stockbridge Water Meadows circa 2000

26. The County Archaeologist has also provided us with a map of a survey carried out in about 2000 showing where the water meadows in Stockbridge were situated, (image 13). He described the survey as 'rapid and desk based' and 'no ground truthing was done'. While it shows where some of the water meadows exist we do not believe that it shows their full extent as they were in 2000 or indeed are today. It is the areas immediately to the north and south of the High Street, behind the houses and shops, that appear to have been omitted from the map. We have looked at the Tithe Map of Stockbridge dated 1840 (image 14), and its accompanying Index (see examples of pages at images 15 and 16), which provides full details of the various plots of land, the landowners, occupiers, the name and description of each plot, the state of cultivation and the amount of tithe owed for each piece of land.

27. By way of example, on the north side of the High Street on the Tithe map (image 14), plot number 248 is stated to be a water meadow on the Tithe Index (image 15), named Lower Kingshead Meadow which was owned by Edward Watts as lessee from the Earl of

Portsmouth, and occupied by Charles Sherry. Similarly the plot numbered 248a on the Tithe map (adjacent to 248) is stated to be a water meadow, named Higher Kingshead Meadow, and also owned and occupied by the same persons (image 15). These are plots of land to the north of St Peter's Church and going west behind other houses and shops on the High Street.

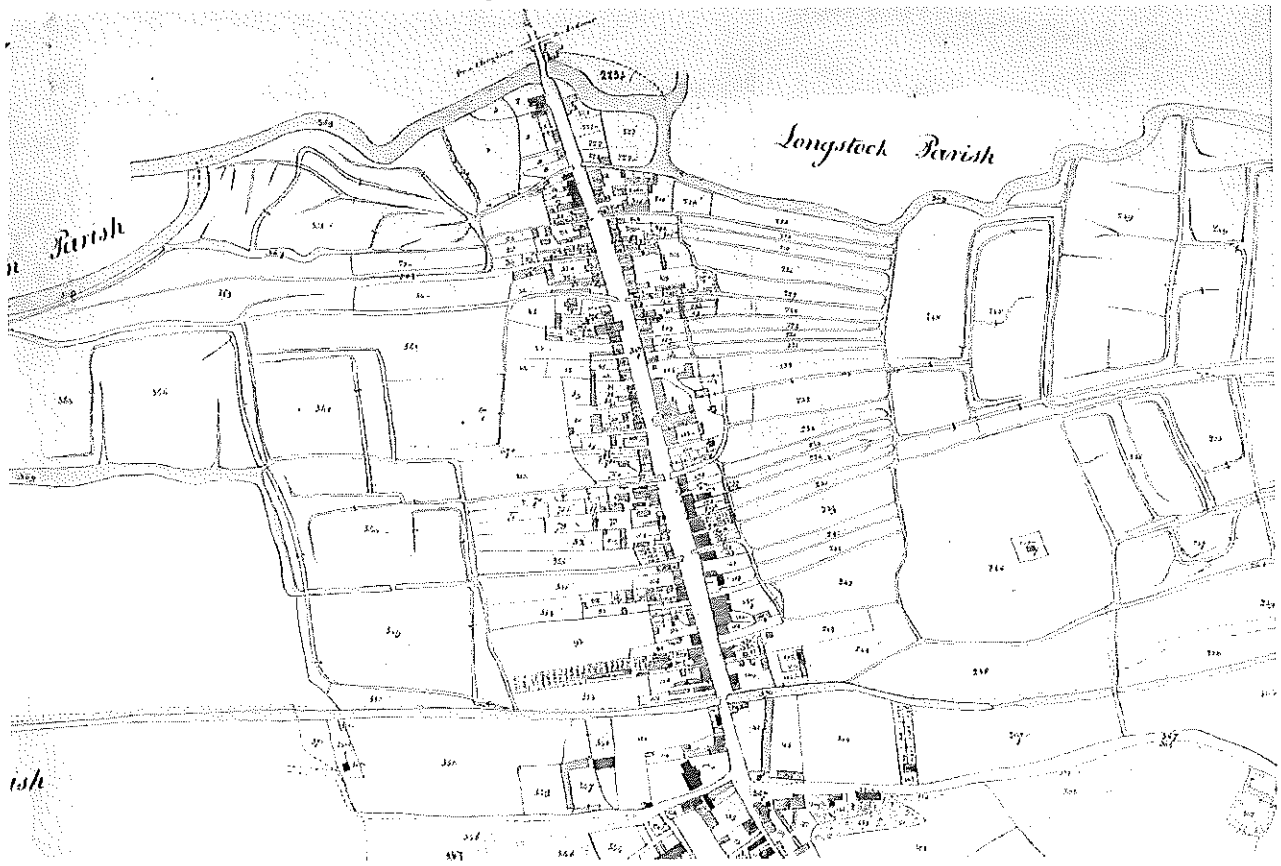

image 14

If one then looks at the historic water meadows map Epoch 1 to the north of the High Street (image 8), the Lower Kingshead Meadow is shown as a water meadow (number 35) as is the Higher Kingshead Meadow (also image 8) where it is numbered 20 and 21). Yet neither water meadow appears on the 2000 map of Stockbridge water meadows although neither plot has been built on, neither has been farmed and to all intents and purposes, from a ground inspection and from aerial photos, they remain water meadows.

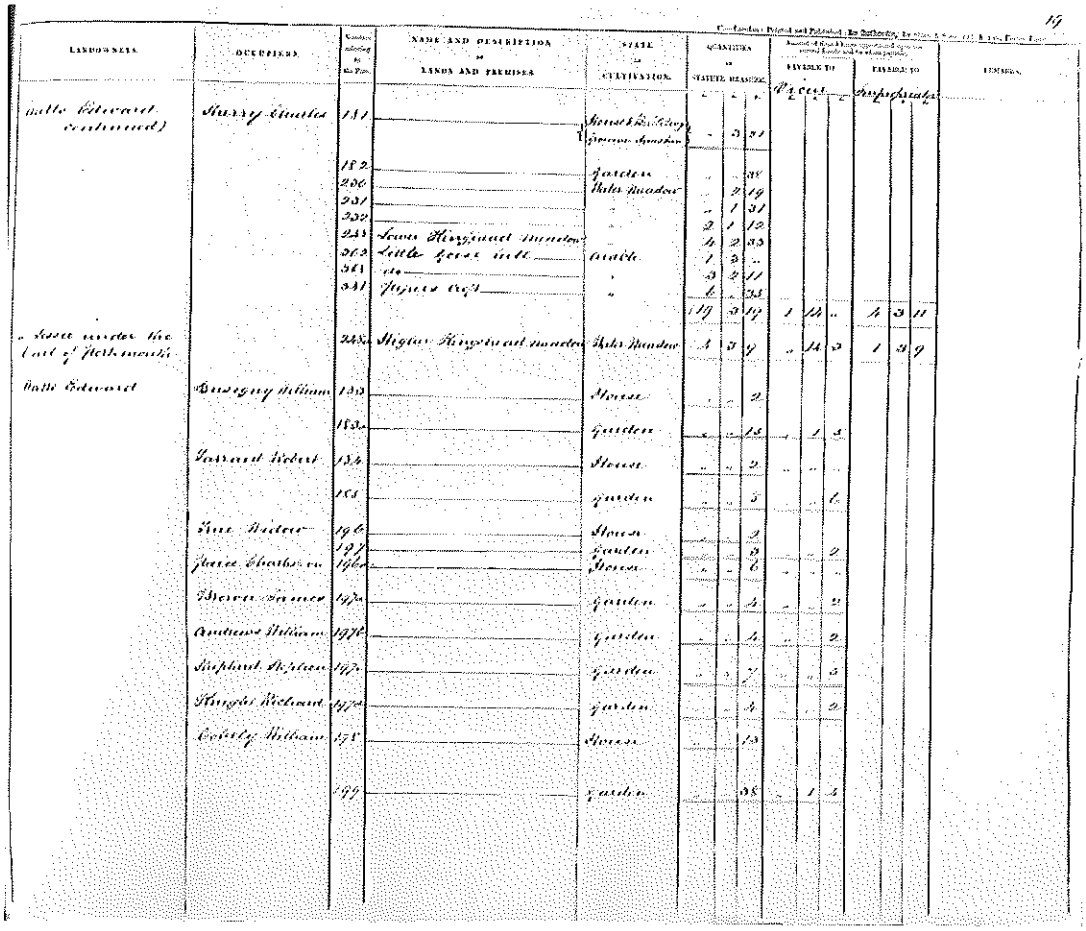

image 15

28. Again by way of example, to the south of the High Street the plot numbered 358 on the Tithe map (image 14) is stated to be a water meadow on the Tithe Index, owned by Edward Watts and occupied by Mary Dowling (image 16). The plot runs adjacent to the Marsh Path adjacent to Stockbridge allotments. The historic water meadows map Epoch 1 also shows the plot as a water meadow, number 95 (image 9). Yet on the 2000 Stockbridge water meadows map it is not shown as a water meadow. Once again it has not been built on or used for anything else than cutting hay or grazing sheep in the interim.

29. These are but examples to illustrate our submission that the 2000 Stockbridge water meadows map does not fully reflect the water meadows still in existence. Many of the plots on the north side of the High Street immediately behind the houses and their gardens were and remain water meadows with carriers and ditches running between them which were 'drowned' to enrich the hay until the last century. But, as can be seen from the 2000 Stockbridge Water Meadows map (image 13), they are not depicted as water meadows. But that is what they are and we consider they should be preserved and indeed recognized as water meadows.

30. Thus we would urge the Planning Policy Team not to accept at face value the latest Stockbridge Water Meadows map circa 2000 as the definitive statement of where water

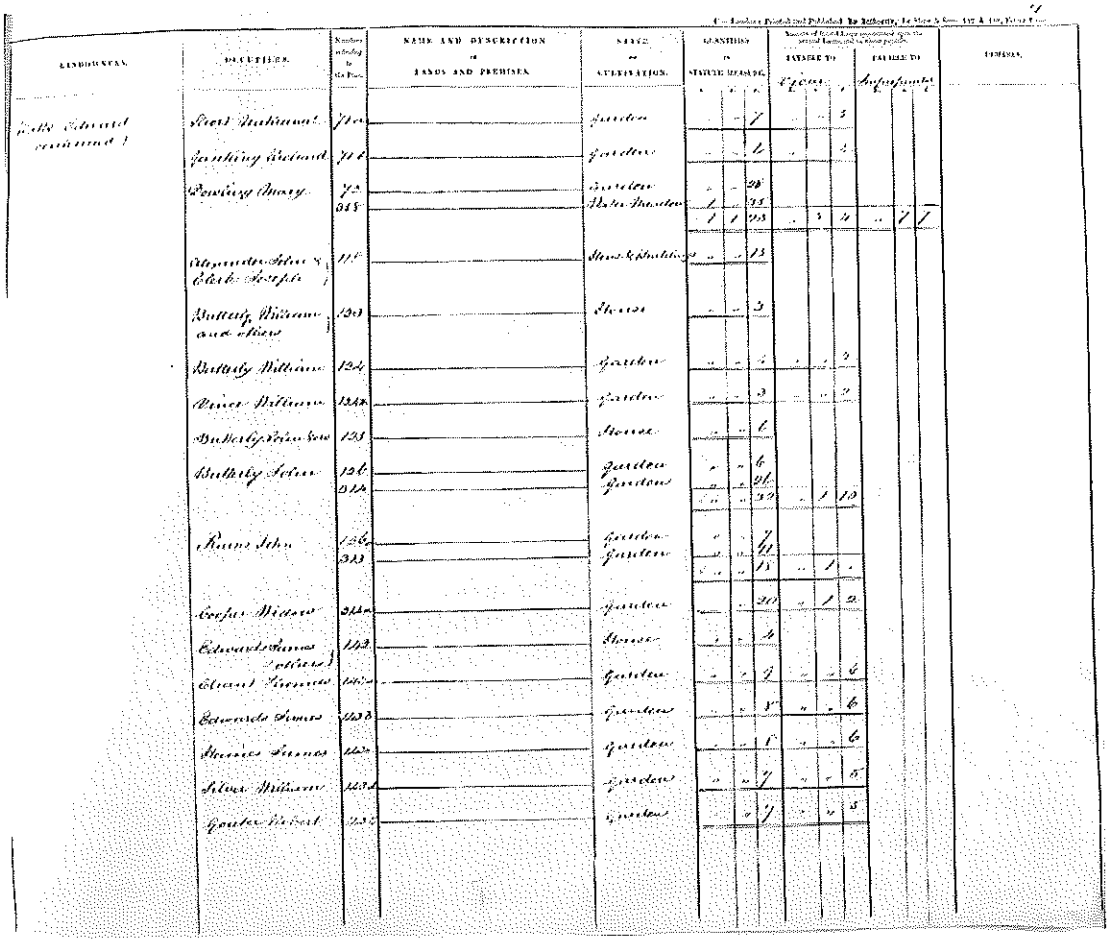

image 16

meadows currently exist in Stockbridge. We are also writing to the County Archaeologist about our research so that if we have misunderstood the position in any way he can so inform us and we will of course notify the Planning Policy Team. In our view the more accurate plan of the water meadows that still exist are the historic maps entitled Epoch 1. These show the water meadows extending from the River Test right up to the Test Way and even beyond, both to the north and to the south of the High Street. In other words they reach as far as the valley sides on the east of the High Street. Similarly the water meadows reach to the River Test on the west with the valley side on the west rising within yards of the river.

31. One other matter of some note is that the Common Marsh (now an SSSI and owned by the National Trust) to the south of the High Street may never have been used as part of the water meadows system. In our view its depiction as a water meadow in the Stockbridge water meadows map of circa 2000 (image 13) may well be incorrect. It seems, according to the National Trust which owns the Common Marsh, that the land has been held in common since Norman times. Hence in the historic map Epoch 1 of the south of Stockbridge (image 9) no water meadows are shown on what is now known as the Common Marsh and the recent LiDAR images of the south of the High Street also show no evidence of the water meadows system on the Marsh. The water meadows however lie around the Marsh on all sides save to the east where the Marsh runs along the Test Way (the old railway line) which is at the foot of the valley side.

Stockbridge Water Meadows as a Heritage Asset

32. Fortunately, because Stockbridge and its surrounding land is on the floodplain, the water meadows have not been the subject of development or arable farming and they remain in a reasonable state of preservation, although not presently functional. Most of the buildings in Stockbridge are built on or along the old causeway. In the early 1970s a development was permitted on meadows to the south east of the High Street, between the High Street and the Common Marsh, all of which had to be built on piles. Sadly it appears that development was permitted on three of the existing water meadows – numbers 57, 58, and 59 on the historic map Epoch 1 (image 9). The football and recreation ground was also created in the 1978 to the north of the High Street on a water meadow, numbered 51 on the historic map Epoch 1 (image 8). It may well be that part of water meadows numbered 48 and 49 (image 8) have also been built on as they now seem to be within the settlement boundary and were where the houses flooded in 2014. But otherwise the many water meadows delineated in the historic maps of circa 1870 remain unbuilt on and reasonably preserved.

33. Nowadays sheep are sometimes grazed on these meadows near to the river and sometimes cattle and occasionally horses on the water meadows away from the river, but generally they are used, as they always were, for hay. Grazing of large livestock, such as cattle, may be detrimental to the water meadows since the hooves of large animals may break up and expose the peat. There is now no man-made drowning of the meadows, which run along and between the River Test and its various carriers, but as stated above they flood from time to time when there is heavy rain as they are on the floodplain. This allows even today for sustainable production of grass and hay.

34. We have done such research as our limited resources allow but we respectfully suggest that TVBC makes a thorough survey of the Stockbridge water meadow system in order to establish its extent, its state of preservation and how it should be conserved for the future. The water meadows in Stockbridge (and elsewhere) are a heritage and valuable asset to the Test Valley and to Hampshire, which in our view should be recognized and preserved for generations yet to come. They form an essential part of the landscape character of Stockbridge.

Nutrients

35. We are aware that this is a topical issue and we understand that the water meadows system in Stockbridge helps deal with nutrients (see para 21 above) which would otherwise flow into the Test and thence into the Solent. Both the Solent and the River Test are designated SSSIs, so that nutrients flowing into the River Test would adversely affect the biodiversity of both rivers. For the most part, the soil at the top of the water meadows is peat. Floodwater on the water meadows filters through the peat and leaves silt, organic particles and associated

nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus. Although the water meadows no longer function as they did in the past nevertheless the uneven grassed floodplain still works to trap nutrients and sediment from the river system. This not only enhances the quality of the grass on the meadows; it also means that some of the nutrients do not drain back into the river. The water meadows also retain floodwater helping to prevent flooding further down the valley. If building is allowed on the water meadows then the filtering peat will be removed to the extent of the area of any such buildings, car parks or other man-made structures. This will have a detrimental effect on the risk of flooding but also on wildlife (see para 38 below).

36. In 2019 TVBC recognized that nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus, were flowing into the Solent from a number of Hampshire rivers, including the River Test. These nutrients have had a serious detrimental impact on the biodiversity of the Solent. It was considered that new houses and other buildings were contributing to this build up of nutrients and so development was halted unless the builder could demonstrate that the development was nutrient neutral. No simple answer has been found but very recently some development has been permitted where a developer has purchased an area of arable farmland in Hampshire and taken it out of production so as to offset the extra nutrients that the development will produce.

37. We make three points: (i) at the moment because of its water meadows Stockbridge has a natural filter which traps some of the nutrients and prevents them flowing into the Test; (ii) there is no legal way (as far as we are aware) that any area of land taken from arable farming can be maintained as such in perpetuity; and (iii) at the moment the need for nutrient neutrality only seems to apply to new houses – yet many offices already provide (and increasingly will provide) for every office to have kitchen facilities, lavatory and often shower facilities. We therefore submit that since Stockbridge has its own preserved water meadows system which traps nutrients so that they do not flow into the River Test or the Solent, this is a further reason why no development should be permitted on the meadows because it will interfere with that system, and any new buildings will create even more nutrients.

Biodiversity

38. We now turn to the biodiversity aspects of the water meadows in Stockbridge. The River Test is an SSSI as are the Common Marsh and other areas in the floodplain (image 17). The backchannels, and floodplain all contribute to and protect the ecology and biodiversity of the Test. The river, carriers and water meadows are full of different species of wildlife. We are not, sadly, qualified to comment on the variety of plant life but there are mature oaks, horse chestnuts and walnut trees that have grown up on the water meadows, all of which encourage wildlife. Cormorants, egrets, herons, kingfishers, swans, many species of duck, swifts,

swallows, martins, starlings, goldcrests and even cetti's warblers, are but some of the birds that are regularly seen. Buzzards and kites regularly patrol particularly when the grass on the meadows is cut and kestrels are also often seen, as well as the occasional peregrine. Barn owls and short eared owls nest in the trees that have grown up on the water meadows and the barn owls frequently quarter the meadows at dusk. Water voles were until very recently a regular feature of the carriers and the river but their numbers have reduced since otters have made their appearance in Stockbridge. Bats from the large colony at Mottisfont which are a European Protected Species (EPS) hunt up and down the Test Valley, including in Stockbridge. The river and water meadows attract a whole range of butterflies, dragon flies and damsel flies, and of course the mayfly in abundance. All this wildlife is cherished by those who live or visit Stockbridge – it adds greatly to the quality and enjoyment of life in this village and people come from far and wide to enjoy all it has to offer.

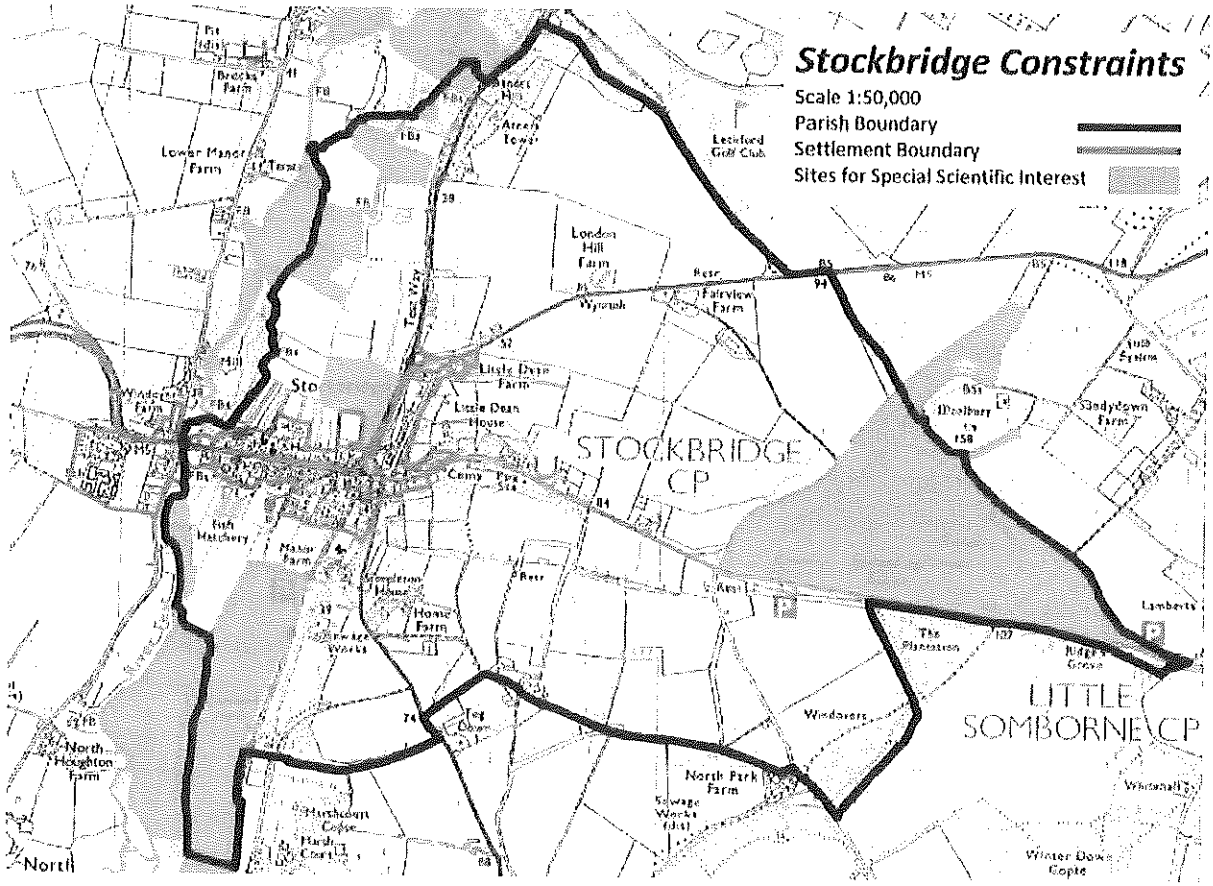

image 17

39. Again a detailed and expert biodiversity survey of the Stockbridge water meadows is beyond our limited resources and we therefore suggest that such a survey might be carried out by TVBC to discover the full extent of the contribution made by the Stockbridge water meadows to wildlife, plant life and the ecology of the area. This would help the Planning Policy Team make policies for the next Local Plan which recognize the extent and value of biodiversity on the Stockbridge water meadows.

Education

40. Our final submission with regard to the Stockbridge water meadows is their educational value to everyone and particularly to local pupils at both the Primary School and Test Valley School. They are a wonderful introduction to the geography and history of the village, its culture, its topography, its wildlife and the surrounding environment – all of this adds up to the water meadows playing a large part in the character of Stockbridge, which should be recognized and preserved for generations to come. They form part of the whole landscape character of Stockbridge and are sufficiently rare to warrant recognition and preservation. We urge the Planning Policy Team to recognize the full extent of the contribution of Stockbridge water meadows to its place as the jewel in the crown of the Test Valley.

NEW DEVELOPMENT IN STOCKBRIDGE

41. We are aware that more sites may well be needed to be allocated for housing in the Test Valley in the next Local Plan despite the current good allocation in Andover and Romsey. The Government has recently announced a plan to require Councils 'to designate areas for growth, renewal or protection'. Robert Jenrick, the Housing Minister, was quoted in the Times of 6th August 2020: 'We will cut red tape but not standards, placing a higher regard on quality, design and the environment than before'. On the basis of our submission above about the risks of building on a floodplain and the destruction of water meadows, permitting new development on those areas in Stockbridge would fly in the face of that Ministerial pronouncement.

42. It may be that areas for new development will be set out in the new Local Plan. However any suggestion of new development outside the Stockbridge Settlement Boundary should, we submit, be resisted for the reasons set out below.

43. Although Stockbridge acts as a commercial centre for a range of retail shops, and for pubs and restaurants, as well as a surgery, dentists, solicitors, and hairdressers, it is by virtue of its geography a small town. It should be remembered that there are fewer than 600 residents in Stockbridge – it cannot be compared therefore to Andover (a population of about 42,000) or Romsey (a population of about 21,000) or even Alresford (a population of about 6,000). It would be easy to swamp the current residents and the town by a new development either in Stockbridge or near to its parish boundary.

44. There is one site identified by the landowners as a potential site for development and that is adjacent to the west side of the Houghton Road, near to the River Test bridge. It is outside the settlement boundary and within Houghton and Longstock parishes. The land proposed is

the bottom corner of a very large agricultural field situated on the valley side to the south of Test Valley School. The owners have put forward the site for a suggested 150 homes in the SHELAA document. However their agents have informed the three affected Parish Councils of Longstock, Stockbridge and Houghton that they are wanting to build up to 300 houses on that site. Such a development would swamp Stockbridge – it would double the existing population at a stroke and would obviously affect adversely the existing infrastructure. Stockbridge would just not be able to cope with such an influx. It is obvious that if permission were given for a new development on that site it would only be a matter of time before a further suggestion was made by the landowners for the rest of the field to be developed. It would in effect create a new town.

45. Furthermore that site is land on the side of the western valley of Stockbridge, and is one from which water flows in periods of heavy and sustained rain, flooding the Houghton Road, flowing across it and on to the floodplain and the watermeadows on the opposite side of the road. That part of the floodplain on the east side of Houghton Road is currently designated an SSSI. As the field is situated on the side of the valley surface water runs freely down on to the road, and no doubt below ground as well. A development of any size will add greatly to that flow of water and will make a significant contribution to flooding in times of heavy and sustained rainfall and will therefore have an adverse impact on the SSSI on the opposite side of the road.

46. We set out a number of issues which we submit the Planning Policy Team should take into account when deciding whether or not to allocate land in the new Local Plan for development in the countryside in or around Stockbridge and outside the current settlement boundary:

(i) Development on the floodplain would greatly increase the risk of flooding.

(ii) Development on the water meadows would destroy these heritage assets.

(iii) Development on the valley sides would lead to the increased and overwhelming discharge of run-off water into the floodplain and, in some places, into an existing SSSI.

(iv) In all the above cases there would be the question of how to deal with the extra sewage generated by the development, and further in times of heavy rain, water could overwhelm the new flood defences that have been built and managed so carefully in the last few years.

(v) There is little or no mainstream employment in Stockbridge itself so that the large majority of new residents would have to travel to work. That means travelling by car as only very limited public transport is available. If two people in every new house works away from home (and there may be more) that means two more cars per household driving to and from work each day to Andover, to Winchester, to Romsey or to Salisbury or even farther afield. These will cause an avoidable and dangerous

increase in traffic on local rural roads and will also cause an avoidable and dangerous increase in emissions. Rather than a looked for reduction in carbon emissions to help climate change, a large development in Stockbridge will add significantly to the generation of carbon emissions.

(vi) Current local services would not be able to cope with such an increased demand – the General Practitioner Surgery would probably be overwhelmed, the Primary and Test Valley Schools would find that they needed more classrooms and more teachers, community services run by Stockbridge residents such as Community Care would not be able to cope with extra demands, and the local police and fire service would find the demands on their services greatly increased. Obviously the larger the development the worse the problems but the idea of 300 or more new homes being permitted just outside Stockbridge would be a catastrophe for local services.

(vii) At the moment Stockbridge is able to attract those who live in nearby villages, who come to do their local shopping, visit the surgery or take their children to school, and it also attracts people from afar who see it as a charming and characterful village where they can enjoy the scenery, the rivers and streams, the walks, the boutique shops on the High Street and the various restaurant facilities. The heritage and character of Stockbridge, with its various water courses, make it an attractive destination. The views of Stockbridge whether one is approaching it by road or in its midst are features which attract people to come. The whole ethos of Stockbridge adds to the quality of life of its residents and its visitors. It is small and unique in the Test Valley – and any large new development would destroy its unique character and assets.

(viii) At the moment, while there are occasional grumbles from residents and visitors that they find it difficult to park in the High Street, that is as nothing against the many people who live here or love coming to Stockbridge because the parking is free. The wide street and the fact that it is all on the flat making it accessible to all, make it a destination of choice for many. Any large influx of residents would drive visitors away from shops, restaurants and from the free and cherished amenities that Stockbridge has to offer or a demand for more parking.

(ix) However there is just no suitable land on which a car park could sensibly be built. A car park would need to be near the High Street so as to allow visitors to get to the shops, restaurants and various amenities. That would mean it would have to be built on one side or the other of the High Street, and so well and truly on the floodplain and therefore liable to flooding. It would also sit on the water meadows which, as we have stated above, should in our view be protected as a heritage asset for future generations. A car park in the centre of Stockbridge would destroy its landscape character, the very thing which attracts residents and visitors in the first place.

(x) Currently there is a workable balance between the needs of residents, traders and visitors where all can enjoy the benefits and amenities which Stockbridge has to offer. A significant increase in population would destroy that balance and would alter the whole character of Stockbridge forever.

(xi) This not Nimbyism or a suggestion that house prices will tumble if largescale development is allowed in Stockbridge. This is a claim to preserve Stockbridge as a community asset for those who live here and those who visit – its countryside, its character, its beauty and its charm are special and should be recognized and preserved as a heritage asset. It is a place which adds to the quality of life for all.

(xii) None of this means that Stockbridge should be preserved in aspic. It has changed greatly in the last 100 years but incrementally – where there were antique shops now there is a variety of shops, where there were garages there is now a delicatessen and restaurants, where there were old fashioned pubs there are now inns with rooms, attractive gardens and restaurants. Where people used the A303 formerly to bypass Stockbridge they now come from the A303, or the A30, to make Stockbridge their destination of choice. Stockbridge has become more of a delight as the years have gone by and incremental change which enhances Stockbridge is welcomed.

(xiii) Any large, new development with many more residents living and shopping in Stockbridge would destroy its whole character, its heritage and its charm. Indeed on the application of any sequential test increasing the population and necessary services in this environment would cause irretrievable, significant and unacceptable damage to Stockbridge's high value social and community assets in the Test Valley.

STOCKBRIDGE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY

47. The Settlement Boundary (image 17) is currently drawn close to the curtilages of the existing houses on either side of the High Street and wherever there are existing houses. Well designed, incremental development within the Settlement Boundary is welcomed. Building outside the settlement boundary on the floodplain and water meadows, or even on the valley sides, would be catastrophic. If all new building work is kept within the existing Settlement Boundary, most of which is within Flood Zone 2, then it seems that the flooding that is bound to occur can be safely managed; and the water meadows will be preserved as they have been for centuries. However if more building and development is permitted outside the existing Stockbridge Settlement Boundary then the consequences of heavy and persistent rain and storms will cause increasing problems to Stockbridge and its inhabitants and it will at the same time destroy the heritage and character of the town. We therefore submit that the Settlement Boundary should remain drawn as it is and that no land should be allocated in the revised Local Plan for new development outside the Settlement Boundary.

SUBMISSIONS

We submit that:

1. It should be recognized in the revised Local Plan that Stockbridge and the whole of the valley abutting the river Test lies in a floodplain.
2. It should be recognized that this area is liable to flood in extreme weather conditions, despite by the measures taken to mitigate the risk, and that climate change is likely to make flooding more frequent and more extreme.
3. It should be recognized that the water meadows in Stockbridge are a heritage asset which should be valued as part of the heritage and character of Stockbridge.
4. It should be recognized that the many water meadows that remain in existence (i) mitigate flooding and the effects of flooding, (ii) retain nutrients in the soil so that they do not all drain into the Test and Solent, and (iii) encourage the sustainable production of grass.
5. It should be recognized that the water meadows system is of historical, cultural and educational value in the Test Valley and should be preserved.
6. It should be recognized that the area of the floodplain and the water meadows is of considerable ecological importance and encourages a whole range of biodiversity.
7. It should be recognized that the existing Settlement Boundary has been drawn to reduce the effects of flooding and the adverse effects on the landscape character of Stockbridge. No extension of the Settlement Boundary should be made and no land situated outside the Settlement Boundary should be allocated for new development.
8. This is a crucial moment to conserve the heritage and character of Stockbridge for future generations. We urge the Planning Policy Team to grasp this opportunity.

Jean Boney QC

Chair of SOS

Save Our Stockbridge (SOS)

August 2020

LIST OF IMAGES

1. Image 1, Stockbridge constraints, Flood Zones, Parish Boundary, Settlement Boundary
2. Image 2, video (2020), John Wrayton, ww.stockbridgeridingschool.co.uk
3. Images 3 and 4, (2020), north and south of Stockbridge High Street, Google Earth
4. Image 5, (2017), Stockbridge, Ed Crispin www.Edwardcrispinphotography.co.uk

5. Image 6, (2017), (Drover's House),and image 7 (2019), concrete bridge, Alex Lawrence

6. Image 8 and 9, (circa 1870), Water Meadows at Stockbridge Epoch 1, Hampshire County Council, David Hopkins, County Archaeologist

7. Images 10, 11 and 12, Water Meadows at Stockbridge LiDAR images, David Hopkins, County Archaeologist

8. Image 13, (circa 2000), Water Meadows at Stockbridge, Hampshire County Council, David Hopkins, County Archaeologist

9. Images 14, 15 and 16, (1840), Tithe Map and Index of Stockbridge, Hampshire County Council, Records Office

10. Image 17, Stockbridge Constraints, Sites for Special Scientific Interest, Parish Boundary, Settlement Boundary