

**2.1 Parish opinion of Aston and the surrounding countryside**

Views and opinions of residents were assessed as part of the Parish Census and Opinion Survey 2003. Over 67% of respondents ranked rural views and open spaces 2nd and 4th as their most liked and valued benefit of living in Aston.

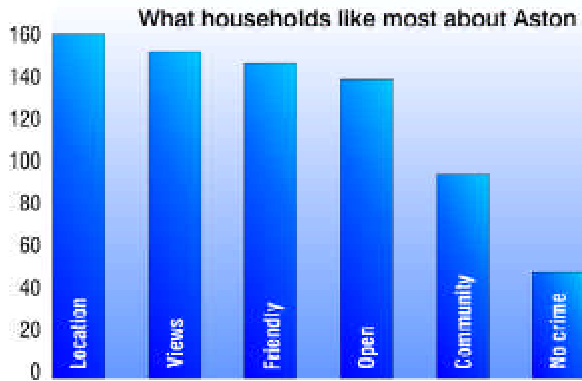


Fig 2<sup>1</sup>

Rural location, views from and of the parish were identified as 'likes' by 75% and 71% respectively. The strength of feeling on this issue was clearly demonstrated in 1997, when the Green Belt between Aston and Gresley Way was threatened at the last Structure Plan EIP (See Section 3.1).



Looking over the Beane Valley from the Village Hall

**Action: AD 5**

*Monitor all proposals so that Stevenage remains only peripherally visible from Aston.*

**2.2.1 Statutory protection - Metropolitan Green Belt**

The entire parish is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

One of the stated purposes of including land within the Metropolitan Green Belt is to prevent coalescence of town and country. Close proximity of Stevenage requires strict compliance with the District Council's policies on the Green Belt to avoid 'engulfing' the parish, as happened to Aston's diocese's sister village of Shephall.

Stevenage Golf Course, whilst located outside the eastern boundary of the parish, is also within the Metropolitan Green Belt and therefore currently acts as a buffer to further development.

East Hertfordshire District Council's adopted and proposed Local Plan policies relating to the Green Belt are reproduced in full in Annexes 11 and 12.

**2.2.2 Statutory protection - Landscape Conservation Area**

The entire Parish is designated as a Landscape Conservation Area (LCA) within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The LCA determines the shape and form of new build, modifications and extensions. The Government is changing this approach towards a 'landscape character assessment' which will affect Aston in due course. The District Council is in the process of modifying its Local Plan Proposals to reflect this change in Government stance.



Looking west towards Aston Farm

Aston is not visible from the roads that surround it due to its topography and the dense hedges and mature trees that surround it. Photographs taken from outside the village, looking towards it, illustrate how little can be seen of Aston's built environment.

Looking south towards Aston over Redwings from Gresley Way



Looking east towards Aston from Sainsburys

The Parish Plan supports the spirit of the District Council's proposed modifications. The revised wording is as follows:

- 1 Within Landscape Conservation Areas the District Council will give special consideration to the landscape implications of proposed developments and have particular regard to the setting, siting, design and external appearance of such development as is permitted.
- 2 Improvements to the landscape will be sought wherever development is permitted, including the provision of native broad-leafed tree and shrub species and the reinstatement of traditional landscapes in appropriate areas.
- 3 Planning permission will not be granted for development which will have a detrimental effect on the landscape, or detract from the visual quality of Landscape Conservation Areas. Within the landscape conservation areas the District Council will give special consideration to the landscape implications of proposed developments and have particular regard to the setting, siting, design and external appearance of such development as is permitted.
- 4 In considering proposals for development the District Council will promote the consideration and strengthening of landscape character, guided by Landscape Character Assessments undertaken in accordance with the Hertfordshire methodology. Wherever possible, the Council will require the conservation, enhancement or creation of landscape features, which are desirable to strengthen local landscape character. (current modification)

East Hertfordshire District Council's adopted and proposed Local Plan policies relating to Landscape Conservation Area's are reproduced in full in Annexes 11 and 12.

### 2.2.3 Aston Village Conservation Area

The concept of Conservation Areas was introduced in 1967 in order to be able to conserve whole groups of buildings and their settings in addition to the listing of individual buildings.

Much of the village of Aston is designated a Conservation Area although a number of the most historic buildings are outside it. EHDC started producing character assessments for each of the 42 Conservation Areas in its area in 1992, but this process has not yet reached Aston. A map of the existing Conservation Area is attached (Map 5). This also shows a suggested extension of the Conservation Area being proposed by the Parish Plans Group.

### Action: A 3

*The Parish Council will seek the support of the District Council to extend the Aston Conservation Area in accordance with the proposed new boundaries shown in Map 5.*

### 2.3 Contemporary Land Use

Aston has a record of adopting a progressive balanced and informed view to land use.

Lands, once part of this rural community, have given way to strategic and local retail outlets and the development of 5,570 new homes in Stevenage, housing 13,000 people. Land use in the parish has not stood still elsewhere - nowhere is this more evident than with regard to earlier farmed land.

Until the mid 1970's Aston was essentially an agricultural community. Even as late as 1991, 10% of Aston's residents still had agricultural interests. The advent of milk quotas, cheap imported alternatives and aggressive wholesale pricing policies changed the face of British farming. Aston's farmers, like those elsewhere sought other outlets to make a living.

In its heyday most of the parish area was either under the plough for animal feed stuffs and cereal production, or used for grazing.

Within many parishioners' living memory Aston farmed 600 head of dairy/beef cattle, 500 pigs and upwards of 20,000 turkeys and chicken. Animal husbandry and related products were therefore very much in evidence and pervaded the landscape.

Local milk production and distribution was well established during this period. Lords Farm at Aston End had 120 milking cows, heifers and calves. It produced enough milk to deliver to Stevenage, Shephall, Datchworth, Knebworth and Woolmer Green - five miles from the farm. That ceased in the late 1960's as the farm turned its hand to farming swine, largely for pork production. It achieved a quality standard that won the East of England's 'Best Carcase' Award. In the mid 1960's, neighbouring White Farm was awarded the UK Model Farm Award for its innovative farming techniques. In those days Aston End enjoyed a reputation for agricultural excellence nationally.

With the change of focus at Lords Farm, Astonbury Farm took over the mantle of milk supply to the area. As an experimental animal feed farm, then owned by Rank Hovis McDougall, it had 450 head of dairy cattle including 150 milking cows.

Poplars Farm, like many, also saw a significant shift in emphasis during this period. Whilst still continuing its cereal production, the loss of the bulk of its acreage through compulsory purchase by the New Towns Commission to form Poplars, now in Stevenage, required the owners to

seek alternative revenue sources. From the 1960's until the early 1990's Poplars Farm complex moved into egg production and at its height had 4,000 reared birds and 10,000 hens producing 3 million eggs a year.

The 1978 plan of the Stevenage Development Corporation saw 117 hectares, largely cereal, taken out of production at Poplars. Expansion of Stevenage at Chells Manor saw a further loss of 70 hectares.



*The old turkey farm, Tatlers Lane*

The parish has subsequently supported diversification of farming lands, where appropriate.

A turkey farm in Aston End converted to build 3 detached bungalows. Another converted to light industrial (upholstery) use.

Another converted to light industrial (upholstery) use.

Existing farm buildings developed to house a rural business park supporting 12 business interests, employing 125 personnel.

Existing farm buildings converted for horse riding, tuition, equestrian retail and stabling for 120 horses at Aston End, Holbrooks Farm and Hooks Cross.

Barn conversions for residential purposes have been supported at Holbrook Farm, Aston Park Farm, Astonbury, Astonbury Farm, and within the Grounds of Aston Dene (Oddies Barn).

Barn conversions adjacent to Centre Field at Park Farm, in the centre of Aston, have also been supported for craft and light industrial use as have barns at Astonbury Farm to the south of Aston, for business use.

Conversely, whilst opposed at the time, a smallholding developed opposite Shackle Dell, Aston End Road, known as Brookfield Farm was put to intensive agricultural use. The site has been developed and now houses a private household and a rural butcher's retail outlet.



*Three bungalows on the Turkey Farm plot*

Whilst Brookfield Farm generates increased traffic movement and is somewhat over zealous with its signage, both of which are of concern, its current status is generally endorsed.

## Action: AC 1

*The Parish Council will work vigorously with statutory agencies to ensure that business signage accords with Parish Plan Policy PCI(d)*

The Parish Council has not steered away from making other difficult recommendations in the broader community interest. For example, it supported new family homes on agricultural land and development within the Village Conservation Area to enable the parish to acquire Centre Field.

In the mid 1960's Aston Village saw the first of a number of developments that would change the feel of Aston.

Until then the land to the north of Benington Road to New Park Lane, and east of Aston End Road to what is now known as School Lane was largely waste land, save for the old School House on Aston End Road and allotments in the Garden Field area.

During the period, 18 houses were constructed between Aston Cottage and School Lane, and on the allotment lands now known as Garden Field.

In the mid 1970's the remaining quadrant of land to the east of Aston End Road was developed to house some 55 mixed tenure homes. Now known as Brookfield and Wright's Orchard, the mixed development provided much needed smaller accommodation for many younger indigenous residents. Since enlarged to meet extended family needs, the development is very much part of an integrated village community.

Also in the mid 1970's development of a further seven detached houses extended the then northern fringe of the Village envelope within the Metropolitan Green Belt, now known as Arundel Close.

Collectively, these eighty homes increased the number of properties in the Village core by nearly 60%. Not surprisingly, that affected the indigenous culture that was then Aston. It also led to a significant downward shift in the average age within the parish as a whole, a new Primary School that thrived with local pupils, and a new vitality that saw the local funding of its Village Hall, the launch of the Village Society, the winning in two successive years of the Hertfordshire Best Kept Village competition, and a range of clubs and facilities not seen in Aston previously.

In order to support households with growing family sizes to remain in the Village, the Parish Council did not generally oppose house extensions. During the period 1985 to December 2002 some 90 extension applications were submitted to East Hertfordshire District Council, equivalent to 30% of the number of households in 1981. As a result of this earlier policy the number of smaller, less

expensive houses in the parish has declined as a percentage of the available housing stock<sup>2</sup>. Despite trying to address this in recent years, such extensions continue to be approved.



St Mary's Close

Most significantly, in 1986 the Parish Council agreed to housing development on land within the Village Conservation Area. Eight luxury, detached homes in St Mary's Close were endorsed in exchange for the transfer of land at Park

Farm on a 999 year lease, the purpose of which was to form a village owned, perpetual green field, now known as Centre Field.



Centre Field, towards St Mary's Close from the pavilion

## 2.4 The Beane Valley - An important nature and hydrological resource

Situated on chalk, the parish is fortunate in having a strong network of underground springs which feed various ponds, brooks and rivers (see Section 2.6.4) which occasionally rise to the surface, as with the Aston End Brook. The springs may be more obvious during spells of prolonged wet weather when large ponds appear in unlikely places, causing flooding. There are a number of water meadows and flood plains both in the parish and in adjacent fields, which collect the considerable volume of water that winter rains produce, providing a safe but controlled environment. Nevertheless, some areas have been prone to flooding in wet winters causing distress to residents.

The water resources of Aston Parish are of great importance to nearby Stevenage, which draws 85% of its water supply from Aston from pumping stations at Stoney Ford and Whitehall in the Beane valley. Three valleys Water have a licence to pump up to five million gallons a day from the aquifers in the river Beane Valley. As a consequence, even in times of drought, water is still abstracted lowering the water table until the river ceases to flow. When first measured by the Environment Agency in 1998, the water table had been pumped ten metres below its natural level. This problem is being addressed by the Environment Agency (see Annex 22) and a report was due in Autumn 2003.

In December 2003 the Parish Council was advised that measures to reduce extraction from the Beane Valley had to be put on hold pending studies into the water needs of the Stansted expansion and the proposed M11 development, further down the water system in the Stort Valley. Also the interaction between all the small Hertfordshire rivers, Ash, Beane, Mimram, Rib and Ver is to be studied. Therefore, we are unlikely to see action to restore the Beane for some years.

### Action: AD 6

*The Parish Council will support the River Beane Restoration Society in pressing the authorities to ensure that the River Beane flows continually throughout the year.*

## 2.5 Aston values its ancient past which has shaped its settlement pattern

The Parish of Aston has a richness and interest that owes much to its topography, geological make-up as well as archaeological evidence of earlier settlements.

### 2.5.1 Form and topography

For the purpose of this plan the Parish of Aston comprises three locations: Hooks Cross, Aston Village and Aston End. Each is embraced within both the Metropolitan Green Belt and viewed as a single Landscape Conservation Area for formal planning purposes. Aston End is both historically and presently strongly culturally linked to Aston, as recognised by Aston Parish Council (APC) Policy P4.

Despite the loss of 25% of its western area to Stevenage over time, Aston retains a tranquil and rural perspective.

#### Adjacent Towns

The town closest to the parish is Stevenage with a population of around 76,000 which seeks to grow to 125,000 by 2021. Although only a short distance from the village, due to geographical layout, only glimpses of the peripheral part of the town are visible. Stevenage, however, provides key amenities that the parish lacks.

**Hooks Cross** is served by Watton at Stone, a larger village with small shops, pubs, farms, railway station and a local school. The Watton at Stone by-pass has taken the through-traffic around the edge of the village, but traffic is still channelled through Hooks Cross which carries an average of 18,500 vehicles each day. A by-pass for Hooks Cross has been included in highway plans for many years and now forms part of the Government's accelerated Capital Programme.

### 2.5.2 Geology

The Eastern part of the parish forms the western half of the River Beane valley. This consists of well drained calcareous loams over chalky drift on the valley slopes - with chalk visible on the plateau to the west (Aston End and Aston) with slowly permeable calcareous clay soils over chalky till.

To the south of the parish the land is undulating parkland dominated by the Astonbury and Frogmore estates with slowly permeable calcareous clay soils over chalky till with a small gravel plateau and chalk quite close to the surface (Ref: Herts CC Landscape Character Assessment October 2001).

### 2.5.3 Archaeology

There are a number of sites of archaeological interest in the parish showing that the River Beane Valley has been occupied since paleolithic man 150,000 years ago. The main sites and finds listed by the County Council are shown on Map 2. Notes on the most significant ones are set out below:

**Early Paleolithic** - Acheulean hand axe

**Neolithic** - Hand axes and other flints and about 20 crop-marked ring ditches

**Bronze Age** - crop-marked ring ditches, other evidence of occupation, pottery and bronze implements

**Iron Age** - evidence of occupancy, gold coins, cremation burial site which yielded a rare engraved bronze mirror (British Museum)

**Roman** - extensive findings of pottery, tiles and coins and the site of a Roman villa where a small bath house has been excavated, a dodecahedron and a bronze cockerel (both in The British Museum).

**Saxon** - evidence of a Saxon or Danish camp.

**Medieval** - double bladed axe.

**Post-medieval** - two planned farms, early Tudor sword, site of former smockmill.

Apart from the three objects noted as being in the British Museum, others are exhibited at Hertford, St Albans, Stevenage and Abelsmith museums.

## 2.6 The parish places great importance on protecting its natural features and habitats

A feature of the parish, which distinguishes itself from the adjacent town of Stevenage, is the narrow lanes, ancient hedgerows, the abundance of trees and copses and a wealth of other natural habitats providing cover for many endangered species.

### 2.6.1 Woodland and Nature Reserves

The parish contains eight sites designated by Hertfordshire County Council as County Wildlife Sites. They are home to an extensive range of endangered and protected species of plants and animals. (See Map 3)

The largest site is Astonbury Wood which was planted to serve Astonbury Manor House. The woodland remains today as an area noted for its bluebells. Running through the wood are reminders of an earlier history with a section of a drovers' trail, used to drive sheep and cattle to market in Hertford. The Woodland boundary has remained unchanged for well over 150 years.

Currently owned by Herts County Council it is managed by Hertfordshire Outdoors and the Astonbury Wood Management Committee. It is an educational nature reserve with its own field centre for teaching.



*Bluebells in Astonbury Wood*

Thousands of schoolchildren and adults pass through its gates each year. Access to the wood is by permit only.

The remainder, in decreasing order of size, are :-

#### Frogmore Pit

To the south of Astonbury, near to Frogmore House, is an old quarry, no longer worked for gravel. Hidden from the road, this is also a delightful nature reserve with many trees, wild flowers and a lake which forms during the wet months. It houses much wildlife and is managed by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.

#### New Wood

Ancient woodland in the north of the parish.

#### The Rookery

In the south-east of the parish - formerly a 19th c. plantation, excavated for gravel, back-filled and replanted in 1989.

#### Stocking Grove Wood and Hopground Spring

Ancient woodland with ponds at the southern edge of the parish.

#### Frogmore Hall and Grounds

Old park and grassland - important for protected species.

#### Astonbury

Land, buildings and ponds - important for protected species.

## 2.6.2 Hedgerows and trees

There are numerous hedgerows in the parish - both marking field boundaries and lining most of the lanes through the parish. Since 1997, with some exceptions, hedgerows over 20 metres long have been under statutory protection<sup>3</sup>. There are also regulations giving further protection to hedgerows in the Conservation Area.

### Trees

The trees on the west side of Aston are particularly fine; great oaks, beeches, sycamores, ash and poplar. There are also many fine trees in the village itself; some in the Conservation Area already have Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) although trees over 7.5cm diameter and 1.5m in height are automatically protected in the Conservation Area.

In the past, there were several large houses with extensive grounds whose owners were keen tree planters, and although these buildings have now been divided into more manageable units, the magnificent and now mature trees remain.

### Aston House

Now demolished, still has a great many large specimens in its former grounds and park (now Stevenage Golf Club and Yeomans Drive).

### Aston Dene

The Dene and it's successor as the rectory, Gregor House, both now split into several properties, retain beautiful, mature oak, beech, sycamore and poplar. There is an immense old oak behind Aston Dene Lodge and several magnificent Scots Pines at Gregor House.

### Park Farm House

On the corner of Aston Lane and Stringers Lane, has some very large oaks along its boundary.

### Mill House

The site of an old windmill, has some huge old ash trees visible from the Beane Valley.



*New woodland planting, Chells Farm*

### Bareleigh

Now split into separate dwellings, has some huge mature limes, beeches, a walnut and a very large London Plane -with a pair of resident tawny owls.

### St Mary's Church

The churchyard also has some significant old trees.

### General

Tree planting is actively encouraged. Programmes have been undertaken on Village Field and in the churchyard. Residents were earlier encouraged to plant trees, provided through

the Parish Council, in their grounds where they can be seen by passers by. In the last few years new plantations were established at Chells Farm and in the grounds of Aston Dene.

### Action: AD 1

*The Parish Council will apply to EHDC for TPO's on the finest trees outside the Conservation Area*

The golf course, formerly the park land of Aston House, provides a verdant, open aspect between the village and Stevenage but the geographical layout keeps it hidden. Many mature trees, a small wood and a pond stocked with fish add to the beauty of the landscape.

### Action: AD 3

*The Parish Council will check with Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) whether relevant trees on the golf course are protected by TPOs. If not seek to encourage SBC to apply TPO's accordingly.*

## 2.6.3 Hydrology and water resources

Situated on chalk, the parish is fortunate in having a strong network of underground springs various ponds, brooks and the river Beane. The springs may be more obvious during spells of prolonged wet weather when large ponds appear in unlikely places, causing flooding. There are a number of water meadows and flood plains both in the parish and in adjacent fields, which collect the considerable volume of water that the winter rains produce, providing a safe but controlled environment. Nevertheless, some areas have been prone to flooding in wet winters causing much distress to residents.

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**Action: AD 6**

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**2.6.4 Rivers and water courses**

**Rivers**

The river Beane flanks Aston's eastern boundary. A tributary of the Lea and hence the Thames, it rises from the chalk in Walkern and flows through the Beane Valley, a beautiful, natural area created from prolonged erosion by earlier glacial waters. It was once a much larger river with boating and fishing activities. There are records of fishing rights being leased and boating parties held at Frogmore Hall, a large estate on the edge of the parish, where brown trout were common in the clean chalk water.



*River Beane at Whitehall*

**Brooks**

The two main brooks are Stevenage Brook, which enters the parish close to Astonbury Wood and Aston End Brook which forms part of the western boundary of the parish and joins Stevenage Brook at the golf course. The joint brook then flows into the river Beane at The Rookery. Both are culverted in parts, maintaining a good flow most of the time, often carrying

more water than the river itself as they do not suffer from excessive extraction.

**Ponds and their sources**

Ponds may exist due to natural drainage or seepage where they lie below ground water table level, or may be man-made features, dependant upon natural impermeable deposits or an artificial lining to retain water. A few local ponds have an inflow and outflow, acting to some extent as a balancing mechanism in the drainage system. The inflow may be from a ditch, stream drainage pipe or gutter, or from a local spring. There are pollution problems with ponds receiving run-off from road surfaces where oil film can affect the quality of water, as with the one located at the junction of Tatlers Lane and Short Lane.

Ponds have been used over the centuries for a multitude of different purposes and have played a fundamental role in rural life. Early maps of Hertfordshire indicated a pond in virtually every field for stock watering and some farms had as many as twelve or thirteen ponds. The majority of

ponds in the parish are thought to be artificial. During the last century, however, the importance of ponds has declined because of changed agricultural practices and, with no further economic or functional use, ponds of all types have fallen into disuse and either become victims of neglect, pollution and general misuse or simply disappeared under building development.

Improved drainage techniques have resulted in culverts, deepening ditches and streams contributing to the loss of ponds. Within Hertfordshire, thousands of hectares of land, previously too wet for use as anything but rough pasture, have been drained and reseeded for intensive grazing, or ploughed and cultivated for arable crops.



*Pond at Home Field, Long Lane*

The drainage of catchment areas, lowering of water tables and deepening and straightening of watercourses has had a devastating effect upon the ponds in the area. This has important implications for wildlife, especially aquatic invertebrates, amphibians and birds.

There remain at least seventeen ponds in the parish, many of which have a long history associated with their agricultural use. It is critical to wildlife that these are preserved and properly managed.

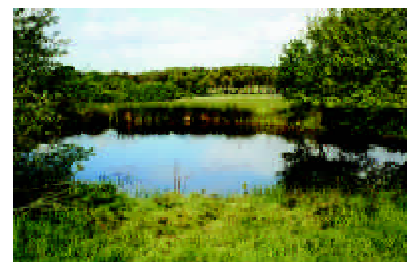
The main surviving ponds in the parish are:

Oxypiss Pond, situated behind Oddie's Barn, was a typical farmyard duck pond. It has recently been renovated and is now privately owned.

The pond in Little Orchard acts as a useful drain for excess water from Aston End Road and drains into Oxypiss Pond.

Due to the division of land, Whitney Pond at the end of School Lane has three separate owners. It was allegedly named after Major Whitney, a local highwayman who, it is said, watered his horse here. It sits on a clay cap and retains a good level of water throughout the year. Occasional maintenance ensures the viability of this feature which is on the edge of the recreational field. The local school uses the pond for educational purposes.

At the junction of Short Lane and Tatlers Lane is a small pond on the corner of Rustic Farm field which has recently been created by



*Pond at Oaks Cross Farm*

a landowner in order to enjoy a spring which rises at this point. During winter months this corner is prone to flooding and severe and prolonged icing of Tatlers Lane.

An old stock pond, recently enlarged and improved, is located at Oaks Cross Farm.

The pond by the drive to Astonbury Farm House is part of a natural drainage system that subsequently flows into the ponds on the adjacent golf course.

### Action AD 7

*Encourage landowners to improve the management of ponds and watercourses, and encourage environmental improvement groups to actively support this.*

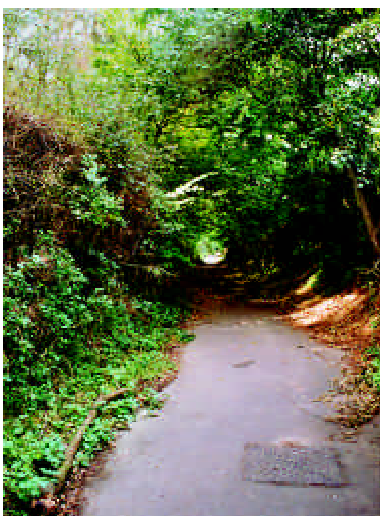
### 2.6.5 Flora and fauna

The whole parish is an important reservoir of wildlife, supporting thriving populations of large mammals - fallow and muntjac deer, badgers (several active setts), foxes, hares etc. The many small ponds support amphibians - frogs, toads and newts - and a huge variety of birds which nest in the trees, hedges and gardens of the parish. During the preparation of this plan a total of 80 species of birds was recorded.

Although no comprehensive surveys have been carried out on the ponds in the parish, many are recorded by the Hertfordshire Biological Centre as being critically important to protected and endangered species such as water vole, smooth newt, great crested newt, common frog, grass snake and toads. The ponds support a good range of marginal and emergent plants and many species of dragon and damsel flies.

The areas where protected species have been identified are shown on Map 4.

### 2.6.6 Old highway lanes and verges



Lanterns Lane north of Gresley Way

Lanterns Lane is typical of the old lanes that permeate Aston. It is a sunken lane formed from a river bed that still feeds Aston End Brook. The lane has been surfaced only comparatively recently. Like other sunken lanes, it was probably used by drovers to drive their sheep to market while carrying hurdles on their backs. At night they would use the hurdles to close off

the lane, so penning their sheep in while they frequented the local hostelry. There are other sunken lanes in the village, indicating a long history of use.

Some of the hedges along the old roads and surrounding some of the old fields are likely to have been planted before the Roman invasion.

### Action AF 5

*Encourage preservation of the characteristic soft edges to lanes and sunken lanes.*

### 2.6.7 Protecting and developing the footpath network

Volunteers in the parish have adopted the major footpaths and report problems to the Parish Council, which works in partnership with the County Council's Parish Paths Partnership - 'P3', to maintain and improve the path network. This seeks to keep rights of way and countryside access open to the many visitors that look to Aston for recreational, health and leisure walking. (see Section 6.3.3)

The Parish Plan endorses and supports the District Council's existing policy. It particularly welcomes the proposed additional policy wording shown in *italics* as this is consistent with the objectives of the Aston Travel Plan and the increasing use of the horse for young adults, and general recreational purposes:

*"The District Council will support the County Council, other District Councils, organisations and groups in the preservation, improvement, rationalisation, management and maintenance of the public rights of way network, for recreational purposes and where appropriate, promoting the use of more sustainable methods of transport such as walking, cycling and horse riding."*

Summary of policies proposed by the Parish Plans Group for consultation, with a view to some or all being formally adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) within the statutory planning framework, that are relevant to this Section:

### Policies D

#### Landscape & Environmental considerations

- 1 *The rural aspect of Aston, both from outside the village and looking out from within it shall be preserved. No development which destroys the "invisibility" from outside or the rural outlook from within will be endorsed. Section 2.1.*
- 2 *Any proposed development which adversely affects the sustainability of historic ponds, water courses and other wildlife habitats will be resisted. Section 2.6.3 (SPG8)*
- 3 *Soft edges to lanes and sunken lanes which are a particular feature of Aston should be conserved, wherever possible. Section 2.6.6 (SPG9)*

# LANDSCAPE SETTING & ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- 4 *The open character of the parish should be preserved and significant open spaces or gaps important to the form and or/setting of the parish be maintained. Section 2.1 (SPG 18)*

<sup>1</sup> Taken from the Aston Parish Census & Opinion Survey January 2003.

<sup>2</sup> See also Table 22 of the 1991 Census for evidence

<sup>3</sup> Hedgerow Regulations 1997, SI1160