
SURREY HILLS AONB

Boundary Review

Submission by



**West Horsley
Parish Council**

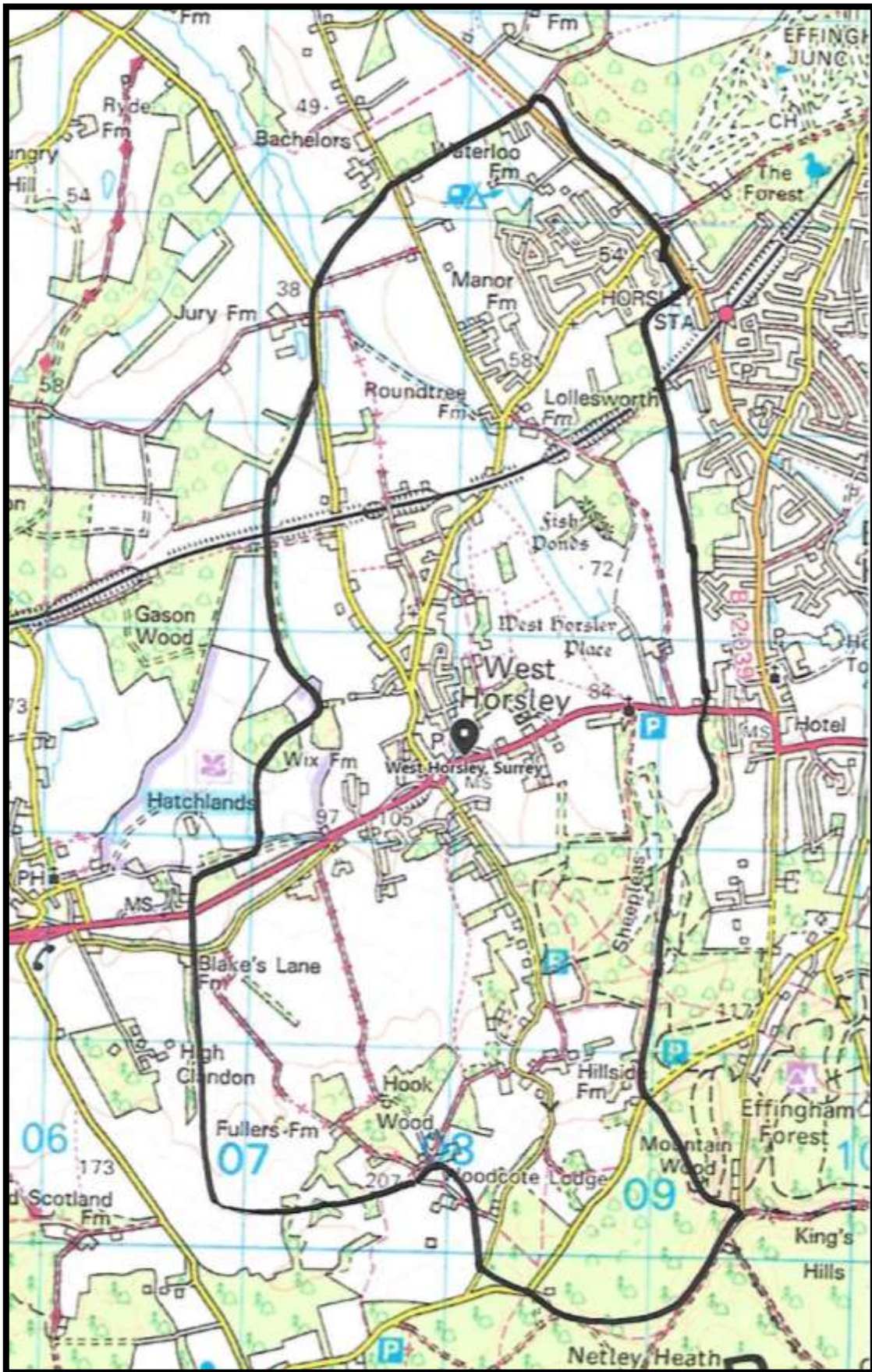


January 2022



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PARISH MAP

INTRODUCTION

Natural England has appointed consultants to undertake the assessments required for the boundary review. The project begins with a 'call for evidence' to gather a range of data and information in a structured way which addresses the specific technical requirements of the formal assessment process.

This document is submitted by West Horsley Parish Council (WHPC) as part of the stakeholder consultation exercise currently being conducted by the board of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) involving a review of the AONB's boundaries.

The village of West Horsley is located at the foot of the Surrey Hills, with nearly half of the Parish already sitting within the AONB boundary. It is our belief that much of the rest of our village deserves to be included in the AONB. We have therefore considered this Boundary Review very carefully. Our findings and the detailed evidence that we have prepared are presented in this document for assessment by the AONB board and its advisers.

PROPOSED AREA FOR INCLUSION IN SURREY HILLS AONB (EA6)

At present, the AONB covers the southern half of West Horsley. However, the landscape form for much of the rest of the parish is ancient woodland and open pastureland, scattered with listed buildings and buildings of local historical importance; with the exception of a small area to the northeast of the parish, which comprises medium density, predominantly 20th Century housing. We therefore propose that a natural extended boundary for the AONB is as shown.

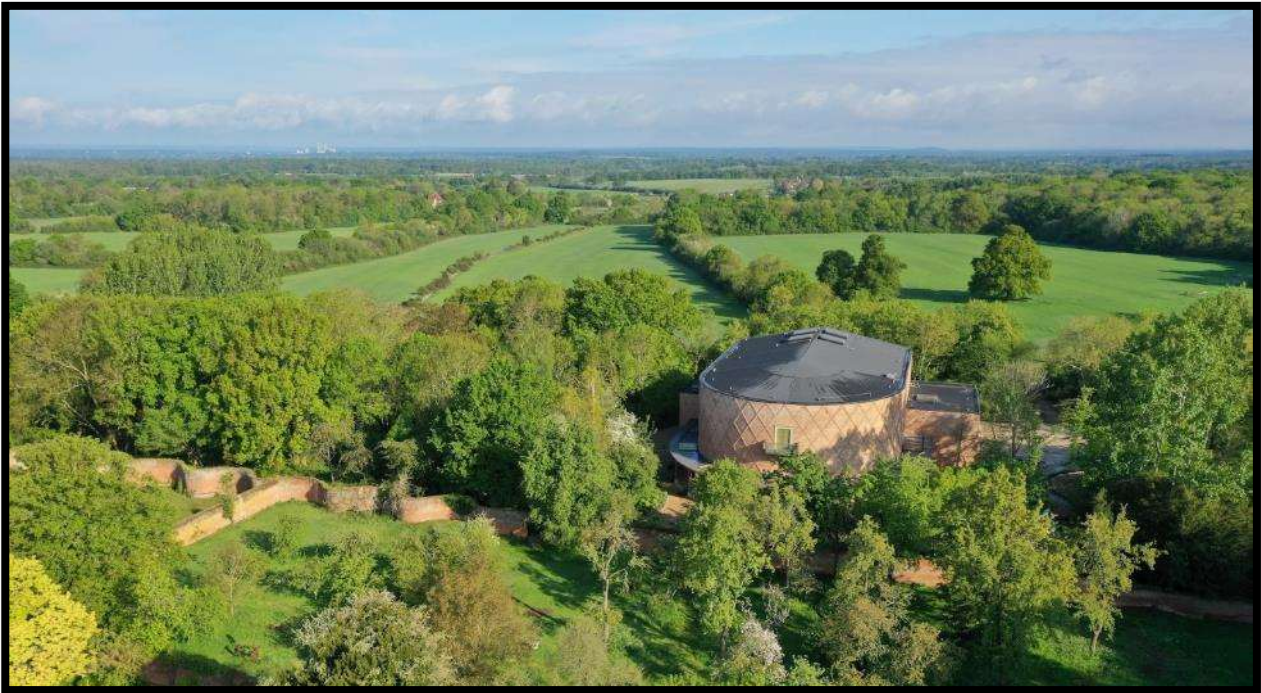
This will create a clearly defined and identifiable boundary for the AONB.

- *Black line = Parish Boundary*
- *Red line = WHPC proposed area for inclusion*
- *Pink line = AONB proposed area for inclusion*
- *Green line = Existing AONB Boundary*



1. LANDSCAPE QUALITY

West Horsley is an historic 'Designated Rural Village' situated at the foot of the Surrey Hills. Approximately 50% of the Parish is already located within the boundary of the Surrey Hills AONB. There are two Grade I and 40 Grade II Listed Buildings in the Parish.



One of the distinctive and defining characteristics of the Parish is the open outlook with views across open countryside. The area is particularly popular with walkers, cyclists and other outdoor activities, facilitated by a number of public footpaths, woodland areas and spectacular walks and views. The general rural character of West Horsley supports a range of land uses, notably arable and sheep farming, with open fields punctuated by mature hedgerows and parkland areas, which contribute significantly to the biodiversity of the area as a whole.



The topography is of gently rolling hills, incorporating small streams, ponds and drainage channels which are a feature of the heavy London clay on which the village is situated.

There are also fine views, notably from the Millenium Point viewpoint located within the Sheepleas Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI), from which the Central London skyline is visible; and looking West from Long Reach towards the North Downs.



There is a Conservation Area in the middle of the village with a number of striking houses dating back to the 17th century, with the post-war housing areas lying to the north of the railway bridge which spans the main arterial road (The Street /East Lane) around which most of the village is centred.

There are two principal country estates worthy of mention, namely West Horsley Place and Hatchlands Estate. The former is a Grade 1 medieval manor house of great beauty and significance which dates back to 1425 and comprises a 380-acre estate laid partly to formal gardens with a large, ancient, wooded area to the rear, which extends as far as the Guildford-Waterloo railway line. This is an area of great ecological interest. Adjoining the main estate is the recently constructed Grange Park Opera house which has proved a huge success with operagoers.

Almost immediately opposite West Horsley Place is the church of St Mary's, a Grade 1 listed Saxon building dating back to the 11th century, which celebrates its millennium in 2030.



The latter, Hatchlands Park, is one of the largest country estates in the southeast, with over 400 acres of rolling parkland and woodland. The imposing Georgian building was originally designed by Robert Adam, and the estate is run by the National Trust and is always busy with walkers and visitors to the house and grounds.

These two estates currently lie outside the boundary of the Surrey Hills AONB but contribute hugely to the rural amenity, ecology, and biodiversity of the area. Both are located north of the A246 Epsom Road, and it would seem to be a logical and appropriate extension of the AONB boundary to incorporate these estates and the area of West Horsley between, which include historic features such as the Village Green, with its iconic oak tree, the Village Pound, and the Village Orchard.

The area to the north of the railway line contains the ancient Lollesworth Wood and medieval fishponds to the east, and a vast area of open pastureland to the west, which also incorporates the newly opened Horsley Meadows (SANG), with spectacular views towards the North Downs.



As can be seen from the description above and accompanying photographs, West Horsley enjoys a profusion of fine views over open pastureland and rolling hills, with some historic wooded areas which provide a natural home for the ecologically diverse range of flora and fauna to be found in the Parish.



2. SCENIC QUALITY

West Horsley epitomises 'scenic quality' as the hillside of the village is already within the AONB boundary and the rest of the village has a combination of the natural features that provide the wonderful landscape; and the historic and cultural elements that are included within the village reflect social and land use changes over time. The feeling of lush scenic open spaces provides a true sense of wellbeing and tranquillity.



The landscape seen within the eastern parish boundary is classified as rural and is the site of West Horsley Place, a 14th Century manor house, and the ancient wood. The open fields and wooded areas border the full length of this side of the village. This offers a true sense of an open and calm accessible countryside village which is enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. The woods are also home to Grange Park Opera, with walled gardens, supporting the feeling of calm, beauty, and tranquillity of the area. The vibrancy and scenic views on this side of the village are exceptional and are unique to the village of West Horsley.

The landscape towards the western parish boundary, also classified as rural, boasts beautiful farmland,



rural housing and fields bordering the Hatchlands National Trust Estate. This runs along most of the length of the upper side of the village with many different floral and tree species. These slopes of the Surrey Hills continue the feel of wide-open spaces throughout the village and across the landscape views of spectacular sunsets can be seen.

The central section of this linear village, along The Street, is an area of medium density residential development, with a Village Hall, Methodist Church, and two village pubs, all sitting between the present AONB and the railway line. Many of the timber-framed properties found within the area are Listed Buildings, and the presence of this number of historic dwellings, together with a High Archaeological Potential designation by Surrey County Council shows off this area's historical status.



There are natural springs running throughout the centre of the village which is why stunning willow trees throughout the village are plentiful. This part of the village has a wide variety of indigenous plants as well as large trees within residential gardens and in our Village Orchard. The Orchard's varied produce is free to all in the village.





Towards the north, we reach the centre of the village where the Village Green is home to a 500-year-old Oak tree, which is stunning in winter as well as summer. The sense of history, longevity and beautiful, abundant vegetation within the village is loved and enjoyed by all in the community. The Parish Council's environmental initiatives support the village ethos.



It is also here that we find Lollesworth Wood, the only other major wooded area in the centre of West Horsley; a firm favourite with dog-loving residents, to whom this woodland is already considered an area of natural beauty; and it would certainly benefit from AONB inclusion.

The inclusion and protection of this natural boundary to village is quite special. Lollesworth Wood runs up to East Lane and borders with East Horsley.

Immediately north of the railway lie sports fields & facilities and Horsley Meadows, a new SANG (Suitable Alternative Green Space) which has spectacular views across to the Surrey foothills.



3. RELATIVE WILDNESS

The requirement for an extended AONB boundary is that it should be both defensible and definable.

There are several areas of West Horsley not currently included in the AONB which could be defined and described as relative wildernesses. Many of these areas are clearly identified in the West Horsley Neighbourhood Plan.



The area north of the A246 includes the Conservation Area and the considerable acreage of West Horsley Place. In that area, there is a maze of footpaths and bridleways which almost by definition are relatively unspoilt and wild. This includes several areas of ancient woodland, most particularly Lollesworth Wood.



Also, worth noting here is the ancient woodland area known as Little Wix Wood in the National Trust Hatchlands Park estate. Also nearby is the West Horsley Village Orchard.

North of the railway line and towards Green Lane is the new SANG, now known as Horsley Meadows.

West of Long Reach and bounded by the Parish boundary and bridleway 73 is an extensive area of agricultural land, with stunning open views across the Surrey countryside towards the Surrey Hills.

Please note that Green Lane West, part of the Parish boundary is itself a track (BOAT 537).

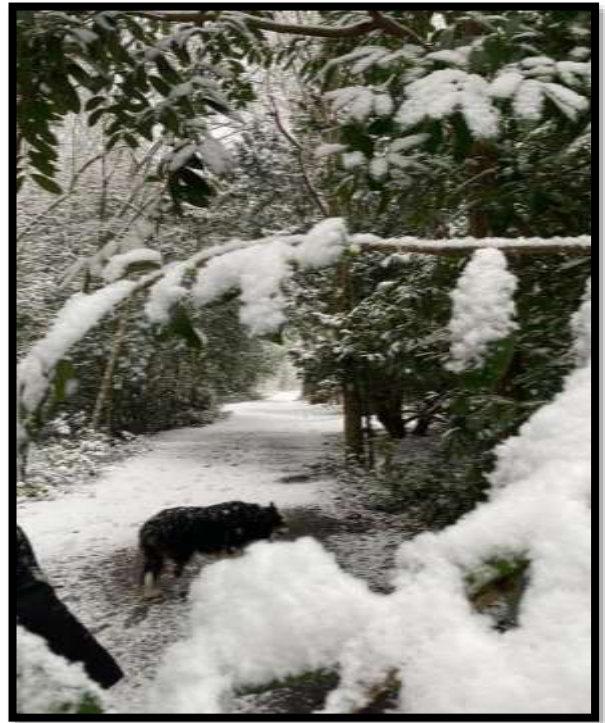


4. RELATIVE TRANQUILITY



The definition of tranquillity in the Oxford English Dictionary is the quality or state of being tranquil; calm. This is obviously difficult to put into words, so included are several pictures taken in West Horsley over the past year to demonstrate this, as it is said pictures portray 1000 words.

At the beginning of 2021 we had an unprecedented snowfall in the area and during that time I was out walking with my dog and took these wonderful pictures in Hatchlands. The serenity and calm cannot easily be captured in a photograph, but the beautiful woodland setting and emptiness can.





In summer, the green and peaceful setting of the surrounding fields are improved by the blue skies and dappled shade of the old and magnificent trees in the village.

Even as summer turns to autumn there is still plenty of wildlife around to enjoy the tranquil setting, and to go about their business in the woods. As winter returns once more the beauty, peace and allure remain.

A dark skies policy contained within the West Horsley Neighbourhood Plan and rigidly enforced by the Parish Council, adds to the night-time tranquillity of the village.

What does relative tranquillity mean to me as a resident of West Horsley? I moved to West Horsley from southwest London ten years ago and was drawn in by the rural location of West Horsley and the close proximity to the Surrey Hills being an area where I could enjoy the outdoor life and green surroundings. With the recent changes to the Green Belt these areas are becoming less and less in our village, and we need to preserve these to ensure future generations can enjoy similar settings and surroundings.

To become part of the Surrey Hills AONB would enable this and allow West Horsley to remain the tranquil rural location I fell in love with. To close I thought I would include one final picture in which the engraving on the back rest sums up what the village means to so many perfectly.



In spring the picture changes to bring new life and amazing colour to the surrounding rural areas of West Horsley that can only enhance an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty such as the Surrey Hills.



"Rest, reflect and simply enjoy all that is West Horsley"

5. CULTURAL HERITAGE

The extended area would include the important Grade 1 listed property West Horsley Place which, following the death of Mary, Duchess of Roxburghe, was transferred to a Charitable Trust.

West Horsley Place Trust objectives are: 'To preserve and maintain the house known as West Horsley Place in Surrey, together with its ancillary buildings and grounds as a place of historic and architectural interest, setting its history in a wider local and national context through a variety of teaching and learning methods. To encourage and promote the performing and visual arts'.



Unusually for historic houses, visitors to West Horsley Place are encouraged to touch and look at any object unless specifically requested not to do so.

In November 2021 West Horsley Place hosted in partnership with 'Surrey Hills Enterprises' the first 'Surrey Hills Christmas Fair' which gave visitors a unique opportunity to see and buy the best of Surrey Hills arts, crafts, artisanal produce, food and drink in the beautiful setting of West Horsley Place.



On land within the curtilage of West Horsley Place a new Opera House was built in 2016/17 known as 'The Theatre in the Woods' where Grange Park Opera performs a summer season. This includes new works such as 'The Life and Death of Alexander Litvinenko' as well as performances by their Primary Schools group known as 'The Primary Robins'.

Helen Allingham, R.W.S (1848-1926): There are 6 known paintings of West Horsley by Helen Allingham the well-known Victorian watercolourist and illustrator. They are thought to have been painted in 1907. Two of these are shown below.



Finally, West Horsley is now the base of the internationally known glass blower Adam Aaronson. His studio is on the northern side of the A246. He has been at the heart of British Studio Glass for the past 40 years, specialising in free blown glass. Adam moved to West Horsley in 2013 and the following appears on his website:

“Adam soon found inspiration from his new surroundings in the rolling countryside of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a new body of work began to take shape. The scale of Adam’s work grew larger, and he began to develop a series of sculptures for outdoor settings as well as water features alongside the work for which he is already well known.”



6. NATURAL HERITAGE

The suggested extension of the Surrey Hills AONB includes areas of Natural Heritage value. West Horsley Parish Council would recommend that this extension is further expanded north to include such sites as:



Lollesworth Wood, an ancient woodland, and Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) which lies on either side of the Waterloo to Guildford via Cobham railway line, part of the West Horsley Place Estate, and the Parkrow Copse SNCI adjacent to the southern part of Lollesworth Wood.

The medieval fishponds within that part of Lollesworth Wood that lie to the south of the railway line.

The Grade II Humphrey Repton designed park land at Hatchlands Park, a National Trust property lying between the A246 and the railway line. This includes, within the West Horsley Parish boundary, Little Wix Wood which is a notable local and much visited bluebell wood.

Aside from the above mentioned bluebell wood there is an abundance of native flora to be found within the suggested boundary extension

and to the north of the railway line but lying within the West Horsley Parish Boundary including: early purple orchids, lobularis narcissus (Lenten Lillies otherwise native daffodils), primroses, wood anemone, cowslips and large drifts of snowdrops and aconite within the grounds of Dene Place, a property on the Hatchlands Park Estate, now a BUPA Nursing Home but previously the Dower House of Hatchlands.



The formal walled gardens at West Horsley Place particularly the northern Crinkle Crankle or serpentine wall, together with the walled orchard which amongst its old heritage fruit trees there is an old mulberry tree.



An abundance of various fauna can be found, for example on the new SANG known as Horsley Meadows north of the railway line, skylarks, red kites, kingfishers, sparrowhawks, and kestrels. There are bats, foxes and badgers, roe deer and muntjac. In the preparation of the West Horsley Neighbourhood Plan a local naturalist provided a report identifying many species of butterfly and moths found in the Parish.

CONCLUSION

In 1896 the poet Matthew Arnold wrote, “as I looked at the landscape from the hill above Horsley, ‘the backbone of England’, I felt how pleasant a country it was, and how satisfied I could be to remain in it all my days”.

This has not changed since. West Horsley has so many historic, rural features that it is difficult to draw a straight line within the parish boundary. Therefore, we have opted for the inclusion of the remaining 50% of the village that is not already contained within the Surrey Hills AONB, with the exception of the area of twentieth century housing that lies to the north of East Lane and the east of Long Reach.

Based upon our evaluation of the six Natural England criteria for assessing the beauty of landscapes, we believe our evidence for extending EA6 as described above is compelling. It is our firm belief that in terms of natural beauty, our proposed area for inclusion in the Surrey Hills AONB ranks high.

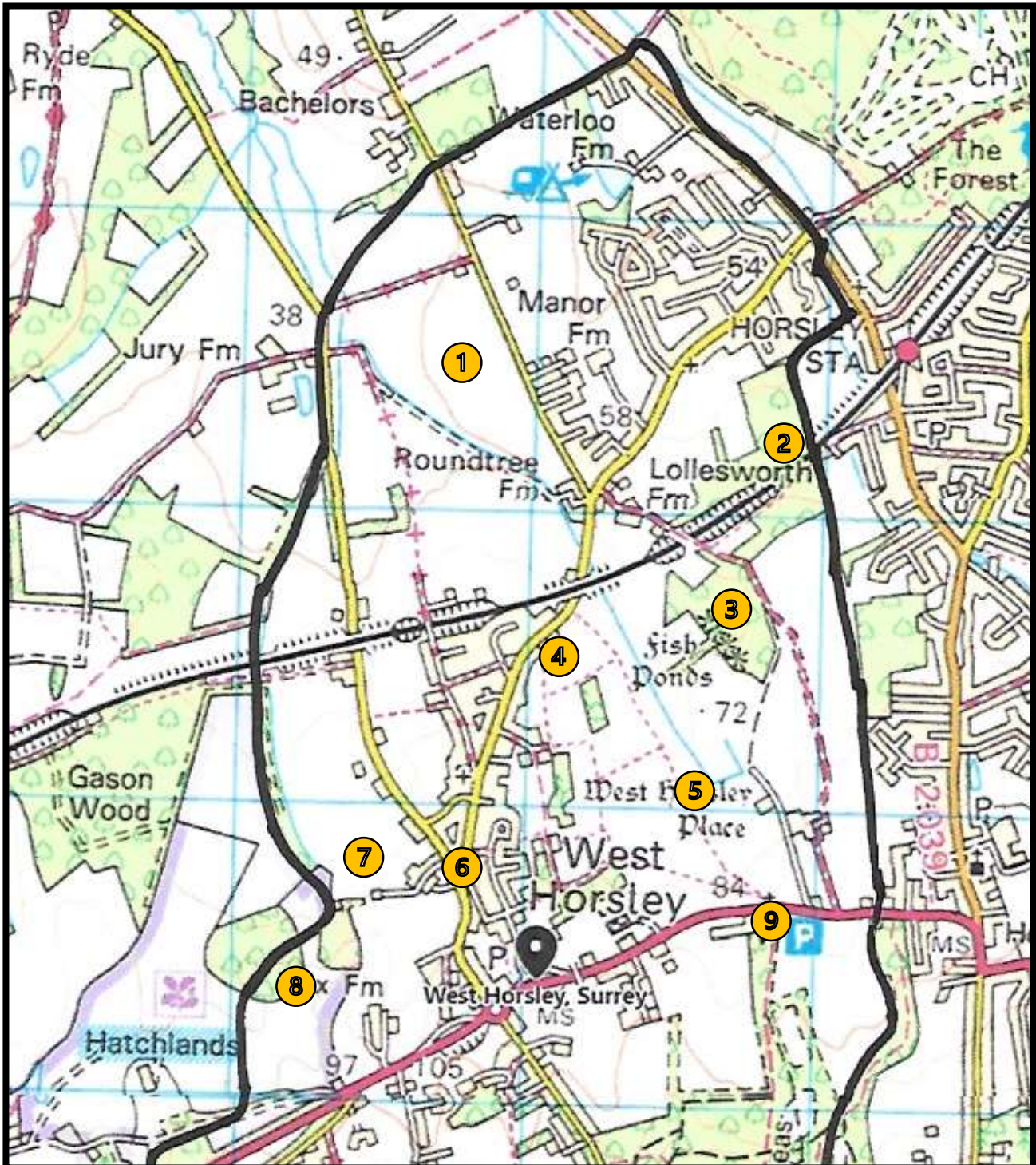
We believe our proposal demonstrates that West Horsley meets with the standards required to be classified as being an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Click here to read the

[West Horsley Neighbourhood Plan](#)

MAP SHOWING LOCATIONS OF PHOTOGRAPHS



- | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| ① Horsley Meadows (SANG) | ② Lollesworth Wood | ③ Medieval Fishponds |
| ④ Village Green | ⑤ West Horsley Place | ⑥ Village Orchard |
| ⑦ Hatchlands Estate | ⑧ Little Wix Wood | ⑨ St Mary's Church |

PHOTOGRAPHS WITH DESCRIPTIONS & GPS COORDINATES

Page	Description	GPS Coordinates
1	Buttercups in the fields to the west of West Horsley Place	51.264523 -0.446711
2	New snow near West Horsley Place	51.264523 -0.446711
5	Aerial view over West Horsley from above West Horsley Place	51.268775 -0.444254
	Views of the Surrey Hills from Horsley Meadows (SANG) at Long Reach	51.279625 -0.457354
	Track between Ripley Lane and Long Reach	51.281823 -0.459661
6	St Mary's Church, Epsom Road	51.262596 -0.441518
	Shepherdess and sheep at Lollesworth Fields	51.275639 -0.443323
	Medieval fishponds at Lollesworth Wood	51.270826 -0.444587
7	Early purple orchid between Lollesworth Wood & Parkrow Copse	51.270826 -0.444587
	Cornflowers on the West Horsley Place estate	51.264523 -0.446711
	A hedgehog spotted near West Horsley Place	51.264523 -0.446711
	A deer visits a garden in Meadow Way (near Lollesworth Wood)	51.279807 -0.441745
8	Aerial view over West Horsley Place looking towards London	51.265728 -0.440392
	The Hatchlands Lodge and Gates on Ripley Lane	51.265315 -0.458749
9	Sumners, The Street	51.261287 -0.445437
	The Laurels, The Street	51.266121 -0.456076
	Pincott Farm with a thriving Weeping Willow	51.266118 -0.457374
	The entrance to the Village Orchard	51.263918 -0.456839
10	The 500-year-old oak tree on the Village Green	51.270968 -0.453019
	Walking the dogs in Lollesworth Wood	51.270826 -0.444587
	Evening views across the Horsley Meadows (SANG) at Long Reach	51.279625 -0.457354
11	The BOAT at Silkmore Lane heading northeast	51.274401 -0.459188
	Misty fields north of A246 looking towards St Mary's Church	51.264503 -0.444313
12	Bluebells at Little Wix Wood	51.263596 -0.463083
13	Sunset over Long Reach	51.279625 -0.457354
	Heavy snow at Hatchlands	51.265158 -0.465142
14	Calves grazing in the Hatchlands Estate	51.260811 -0.470582
	Hatchlands in all its summer glory	51.260381 -0.463179
	Memorial bench on The Street	51.269857 -0.454102
15	West Horsley Place medieval manor with sheep grazing	51.265409 -0.439651
	The new Grange Park Opera in the grounds of West Horsley Place	51.266751 -0.442328
16	Victorian watercolours of West Horsley by Helen Allingham	
	Inside the Adam Aaronson's Glass Studio, north of the Epsom Road	51.261965 -0.449517
17	Heron enjoying the fishponds at Lollesworth Wood	51.270826 -0.444587
	Dene Place and grounds, Ripley Lane	51.266188 -0.460218
	The crinkle crankle wall at West Horsley Place	51.266457 -0.444006
18	A cheeky fox sits in a garden in Meadow Way (near Lollesworth Wood)	51.279438 -0.441764