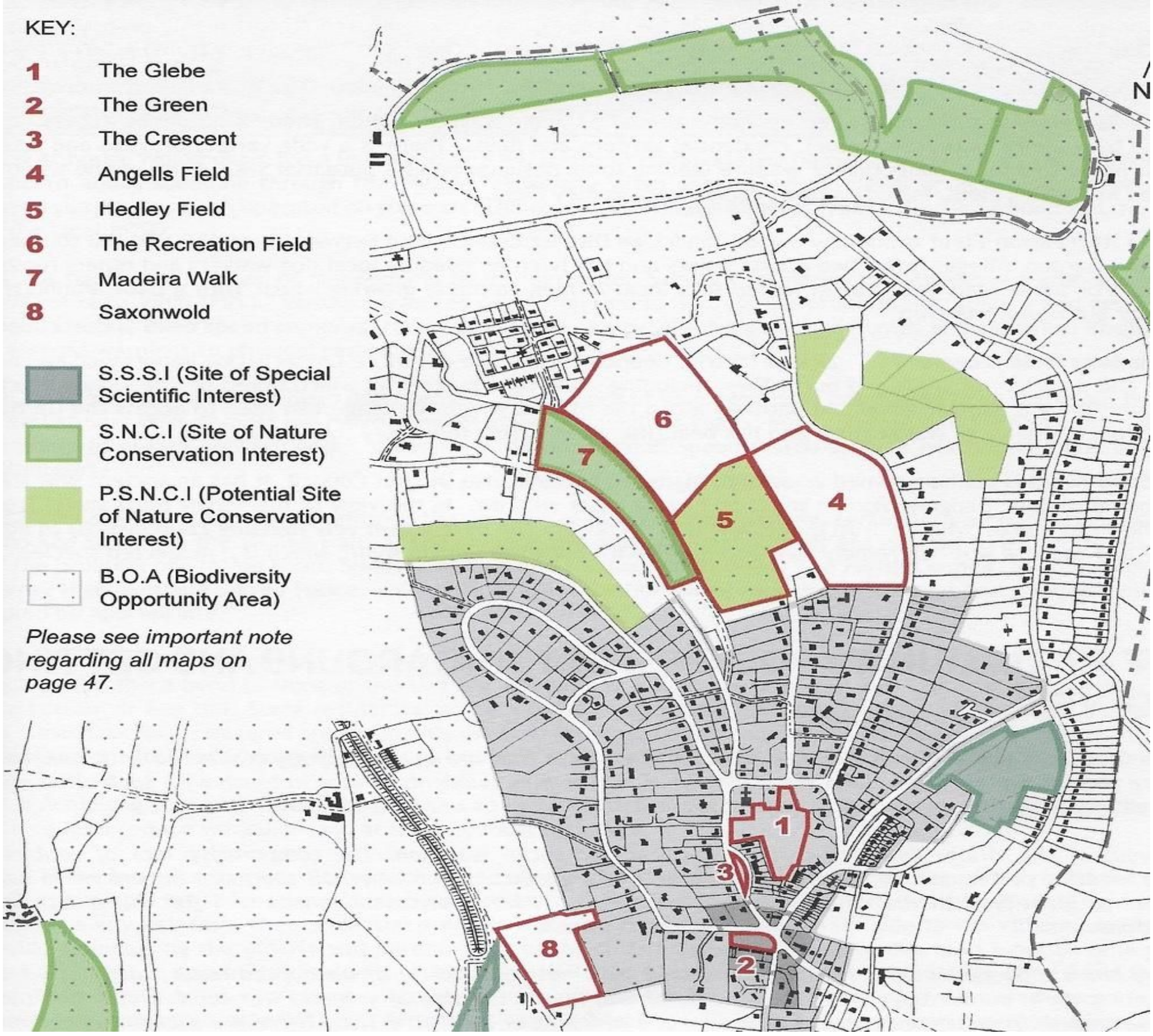
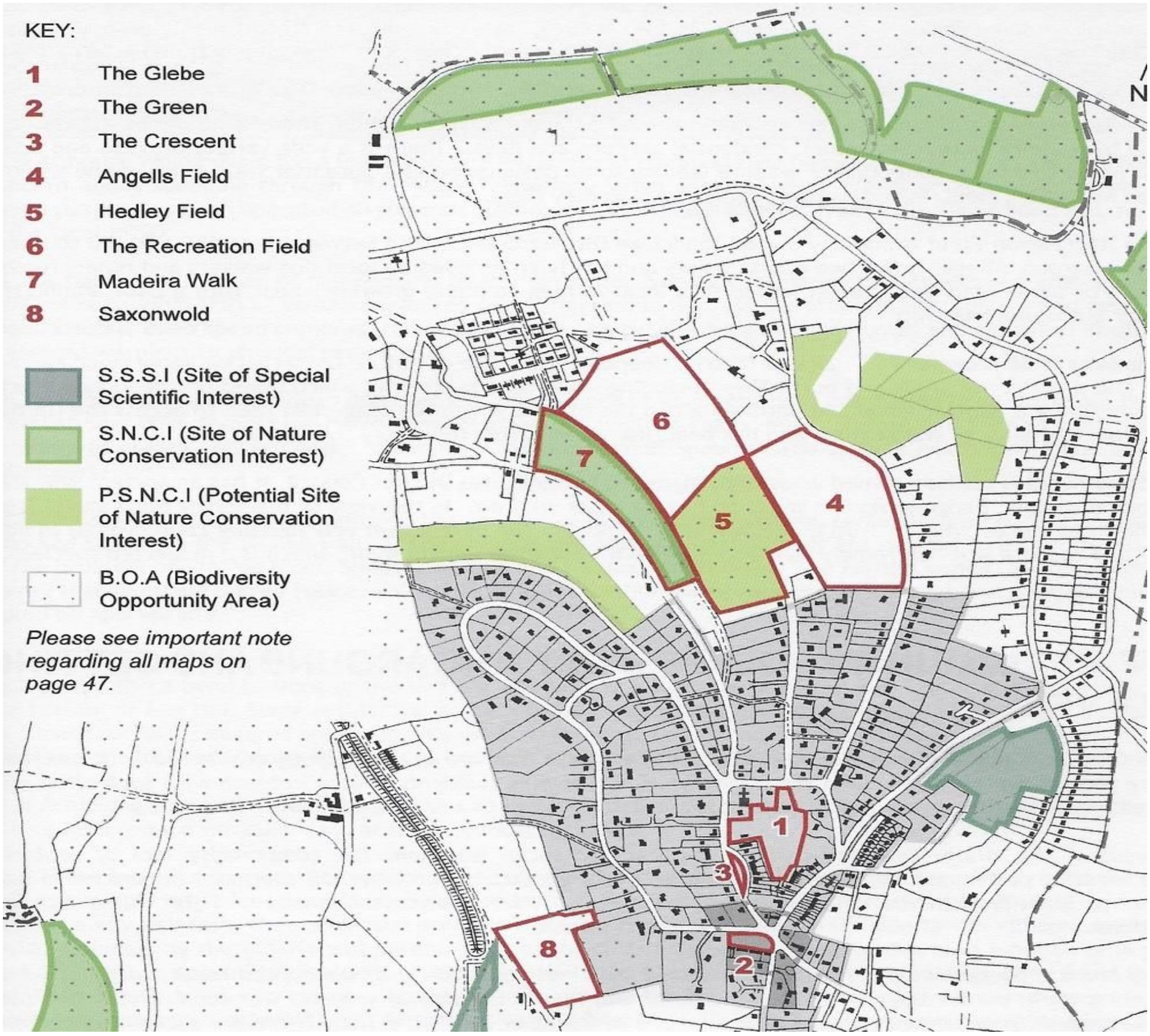


THE WOLDINGHAM COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

– PROTECTING COMMUNITY LAND



Community is many things; friendship, support, a shared sense of passion for our Village, shared ownership? Let's talk about this last one, what if we as a Village could protect some of the best parts - walks, woods and open spaces. What if you owned 1% of a field, a wood and a beautiful walk? Would you enjoy the walk more with your family, keep it and pass it through the generations or owners of your home? You'd be closer to the community, have a closer bond with our beautiful surrounding. That is what this article is about. It is also the story of a project that has been implemented over the last few months and the creation of something called Woldingham Residents Community Interest Company. If after reading this you are interested in being involved and we really hope you are, **please email** wold.res.cic@gmail.com .

The "Recreation Field" (area 6 on the map) lies between Lunghurst Road and Long Hill, and between the main Village and the Garden Village. Madeira Walk (area 7 on the map) is a beautiful walk, and the parallel bridleway a horse ride through the woods from Long Hill to the Garden Village. It is a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, it is also a stunning place to watch a sunset, walk a dog or ride a horse. The field is farmed under a lease but public access is always maintained, it is enjoyed by many in the village, and hopefully more in the future.

On with the story...... The land was owned by Tandridge District Council; over the years there have been suggestions that TDC might be considering selling this land for development and recently we heard a rumour that a developer was interested in the Recreation Field.

As a result, the Chairman of the Parish Council approached the Chief Executive at TDC to see if they would in principle be willing to sell the land to the residents of Woldingham. After a few weeks, she came back with an independent valuation of the freehold for the field (including part of Madeira walk and woods adjacent) and the message that as long as the Resources Committee and the elected Members of the Council voted in favour, TDC were happy to sell the land to the residents.

It was agreed by the Parish Council that this was an acquisition that the Parish Council would be very keen to support, though it did not have the resources to make the purchase itself. Therefore completely separately from the Parish Council and in great secrecy, so as to avoid the possibility of a developer trying to outbid the residents, a small consortium of ten residents was put together who were willing to initially fund the purchase with the intention of making ownership of the land available much more widely once it was secure.

There is a legal regulatory structure called a “Community Interest Company” (CIC) that has been devised specifically for situations like this. Among other things, it prevents the assets of the company being sold to an entity other than a similar “asset locked” entity, defines the price at which shares are traded, limits the shareholding that any one household can control and requires shareholders to be residents of Woldingham. It also has the advantage that when people leave The Village (or at any other time if they choose) the shareholding can be sold; it is an asset not a donation. So Woldingham Residents, CIC was born and on 24 April the land was acquired and is now safe from development.

So what next...... Whilst the field is now safe, we now want to create a stronger sense of community and a wider resident involvement. We had to do this in a small group to ensure that the land did not fall into the hands of a developer but now we look for it to be truly owned and loved by The Village. The wider the ownership, the more it is aligned to residents and community. If you would consider becoming a shareholder of the CIC (this can be very small or up to 8%) or a volunteer or just want to know more then please contact us wold.res.cic@gmail.com

Keith Jecks