

SUTTON POYNITZ



Village Survey

1999

Produced by



Sutton Poyntz Society

Affiliated to the Council for the Protection of Rural England

SUTTON POYNTZ VILLAGE SURVEY 1999

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INTRODUCTION

On the evening of 30th October 1997 councillors and officers of Weymouth and Portland Borough Council attended a public meeting in the Mission Hall, Sutton Poyntz to explain and answer questions concerning the Council's environmental and planning policies relevant to Sutton Poyntz.

At this meeting the Chief Planning Officer Richard Burgess invited the Sutton Poyntz Society to submit on behalf of the village its observations and recommendations for consideration by the Council in its preparation of a revised local plan due to be completed by 2001.

The Society committee agreed to prepare a Sutton Poyntz Village Conservation and Environmental Survey by the end of 1998. This became delayed because of consideration as to whether we should engage in a full-scale Village appraisal, but this has now been decided against. We still look to the date of the Council's revised Local Plan.

The survey will show that Sutton Poyntz, though favoured and popular in many ways and described as the "jewel in the crown" of the Borough, faces the future with three problems that need to be addressed - the danger of flooding, the narrowness of the roads and subsequent heavy traffic problems and the vulnerability of its open gaps to building development. The survey does not seek to provide definitive solutions but highlights the problems and makes some recommendations. Attention to these problems must be given high priority if the village is to retain its rural and mainly peaceful character.

Visual impact is fundamental to the nature of the survey and photographs are therefore a dominant feature accompanied by a written commentary.

AIMS OF THE SURVEY

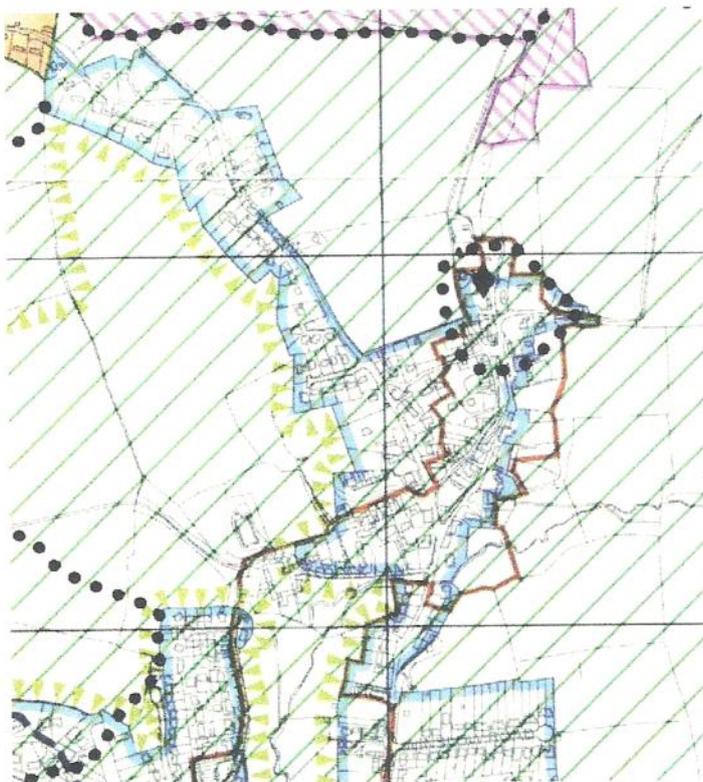
The prime purpose of the survey is to fulfil the broad aims of the Society: "to maintain and improve upon the natural beauty of the village and to protect the area from unnecessary and ugly development".

It is hoped that the survey will be adopted by Weymouth and Portland Borough Council's Planning and Environmental Department as an influential consultative document.

It is hoped also that it will be used as a basis for proposals and decisions concerning the revised Local Plan and thereafter as a basis for determining future planning applications in the village and its environs.

VIEWS FROM THE SURROUNDING HILLS

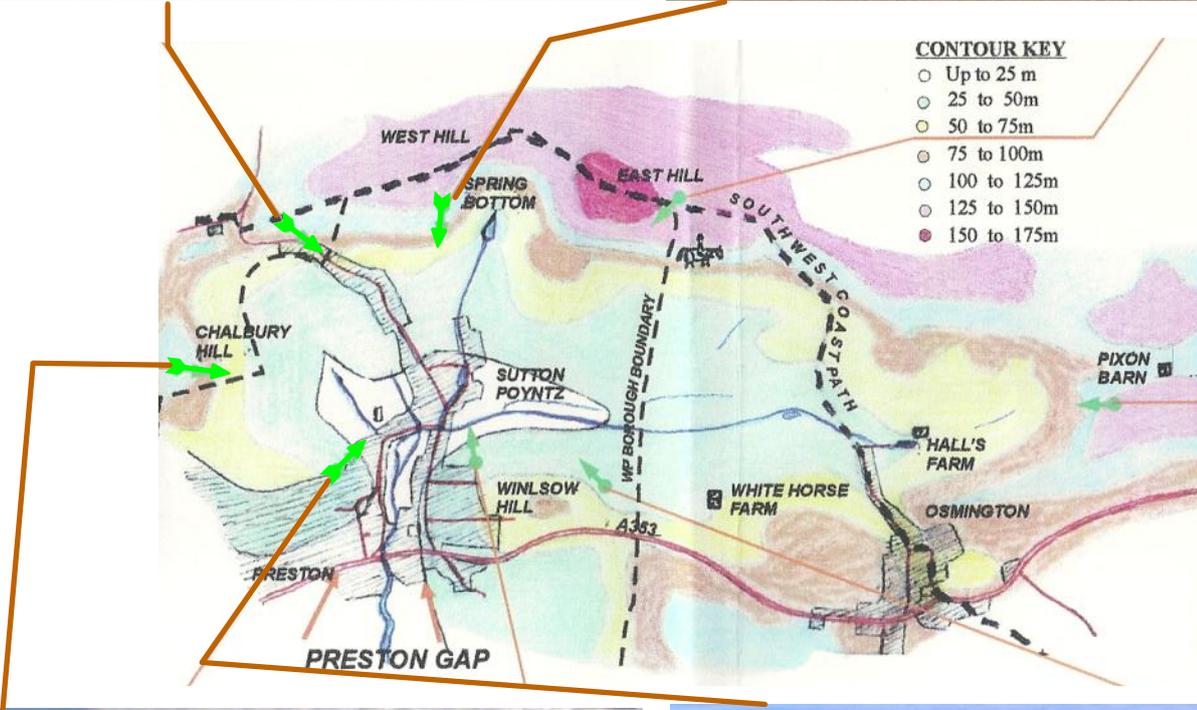
The following page is a panorama from around the rim of the Jordan valley. The views are from eight points of the compass looking into the centre of the village. They show Sutton Poyntz nestling almost unobtrusively in the lowest point of this beautiful valley, unspoiled by roads and building sprawl. This illustrates how important it is to resist any temptation to extend the development boundary.



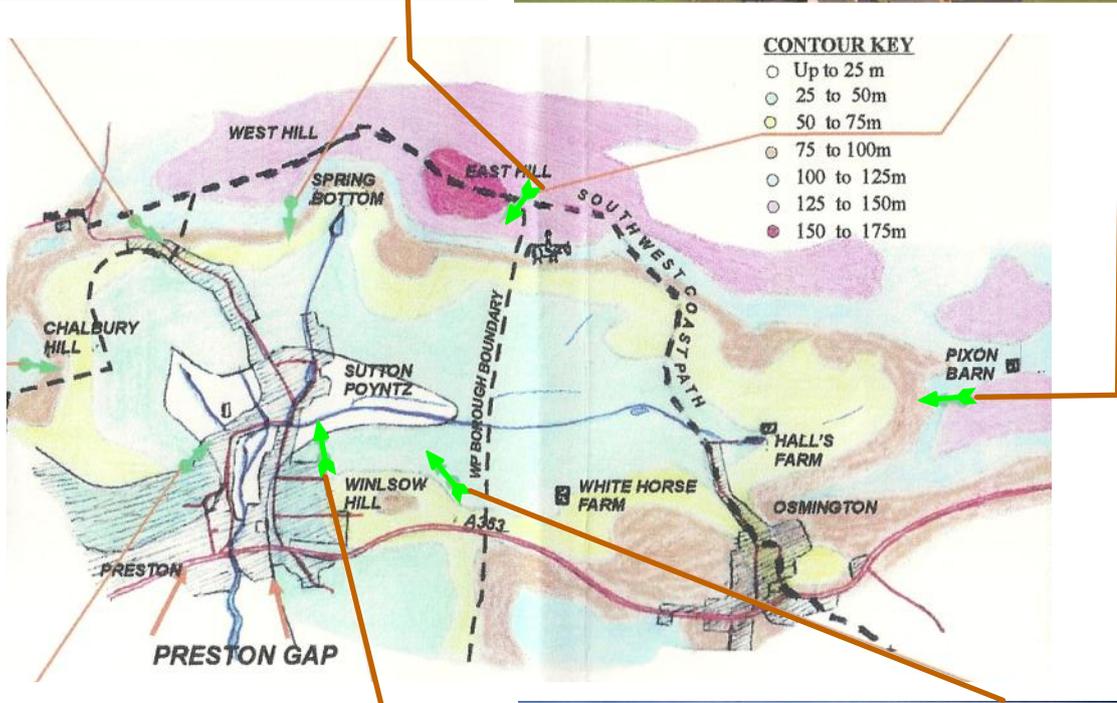
LEGEND	
	Development Boundary
	Area of National Archaeological Importance
	Areas of High Archaeological Importance
	Conservation Area
	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
	Site of National and International Nature Conservation Importance
	Important Open Gap

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VIEWS FROM THE SURROUNDING HILLS (North and West)



VIEWS FROM THE SURROUNDING HILLS (South and East)



IN AND AROUND THE VILLAGE

The following five pages with commentary aim to convey the appealing character and atmosphere of the village and its surroundings. In doing so they emphasise the characteristics that should be protected in order to preserve and enhance this attractive part of the borough. The prevalent use of thatch in the village announces its character. As a regional craft, thatching should be encouraged and maintained to blend harmoniously with the existing buildings.

Scale is as important as the colour and texture of materials. Recent construction of substantial properties at the lower end of Plaisters Lane and in White Horse Lane demonstrate the need for more careful consideration concerning building heights in order to avoid an overbearing impact on the area and adjacent dwellings.

The importance of trees to the visual character of the village cannot be overstated. Sadly the number of mature trees in and around the village has diminished due either to disease or felling in connection with building developments. Protection of mature trees carries the weight of the law; we must be vigilant. The Village Millenium Group's tree planting proposal is a good start towards reversing this depletion and attrition of the natural beauty of the area.

THE CENTRE AND FRINGES OF THE VILLAGE



The North edge of the village. Behind its tidy boundary hedge a cluster of buildings, thatch, slate and tiled roofs, haphazard but in harmony, softened by the stature of scots pines in the background.

Behind the Mission Hall, looking through this lovely old orchard to the hills to the North.



This view depicts a kind of harmony, a field meets with the edge of the village, a cottage dwelling and the hills above Spring Bottom as a backdrop.

Eastern edge of the village, the mellow stone under tile and slate of Northdown Farmhouse and outbuildings.



THE CENTRE AND FRINGES OF THE VILLAGE



*Late evening looking towards Winslow Hill.
This skyline has escaped the development
blight thus far.*

Looking East across the pond.



*The rustic old stone footbridge at the south
end of the pond with the millrace beyond.*

The focal centre of the village.



THE CENTRE AND FRINGES OF THE VILLAGE



Looking North from the village centre.

Recent development to White Horse Lane is out of scale and overbearing.



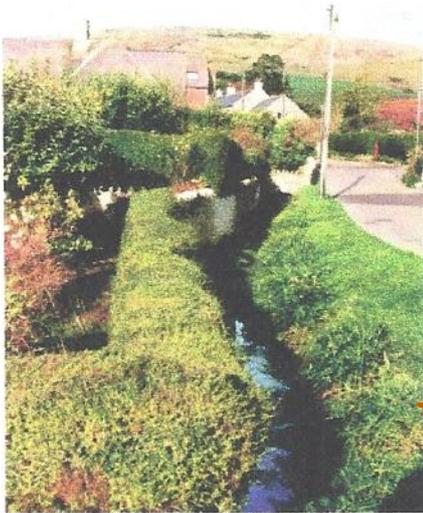
SUTTON ROAD



Inviting passageway between the Mill House and Sutton Mill connecting with Silver Street. Blue Shutters (thatched cottage in the background) is one of the oldest houses in the village.



The Waterworks at the centre of an area of high archaeological potential. West Hill in the background to the North.



Tributary stream to the Jordan with well kept grass bank abutting the edge of the road. A stone wall and manicured hedge on the opposite side of the stream make for an attractive approach to the village centre.



Without its trees the village centre (unusually clear of parked vehicles in this photo) would lose its charm. See the almost magical effect of the late sun filtering through the weeping willows. Plant more trees in and around the village?



The view to the East survives, but only just! This once broad and important gap has almost disappeared due to creeping building development over the last twenty five years. The diminutive Jordan in the photo is deceptive, in times of heavy rains it can be brimming over its banks.



A marvellous unspoilt view looking out from the village centre. Must be preserved.

PUDDLEDOCK LANE



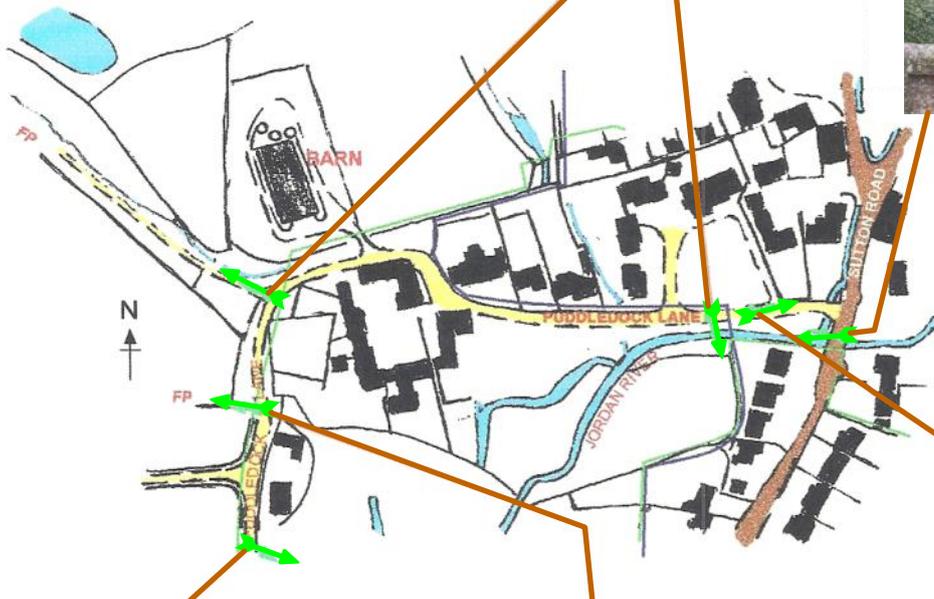
Public footpath/track into designated 'Important Open Gap', the Downs and Chalbury Hill beyond. Poor drainage leaves the track wet and muddy due to springs and storm surface water.



Important Gap. Attractive ford across the Jordan from Puddledock Lane. Difficult to imagine that in flood conditions only the gate, fence, trees and foliage show above the water.



A charming glimpse of the Jordan flowing out from under Sutton Road and running parallel with Puddledock Lane. Hopefully this view cannot be threatened by any future development.



- Development Boundary
- Conservation Area Boundary
- Area of high archaeological potential
- FP Footpath



Looking over the River Jordan to houses bounding Sutton Road. This open area is part of the designated 'Important Open Gap' and serves as a flood water catchment. The new development of four dwellings seen in this photo will exacerbate the road traffic pressure and the flooding problem. This part of Puddledock Lane in the foreground has also been under water in times of flooding.



Another important unspoilt entry for walkers off Puddledock Lane into open country towards Chalbury Hill



Looking towards Puddledock Lane and across Sutton Road. Its rural character is helped by the open view at the end of the lane out into countryside beyond.

WHITE HORSE LANE



White Horse Lane. Just hanging on to its rural character but like Mission Hall Lane building development threatens change.

MISSION HALL LANE



East end of White Horse Lane. Inviting open countryside with a choice of footpaths just beyond the gate.

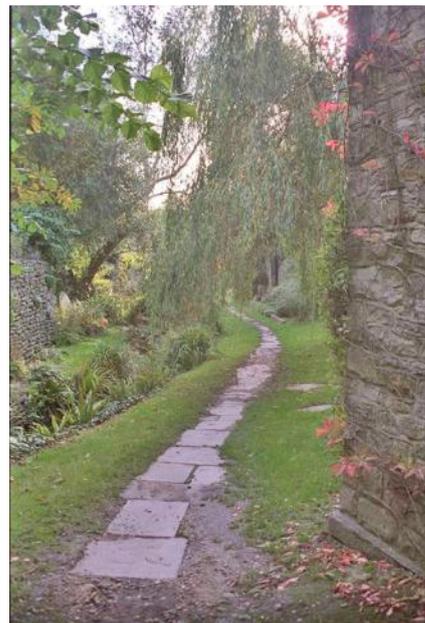
SILVER STREET



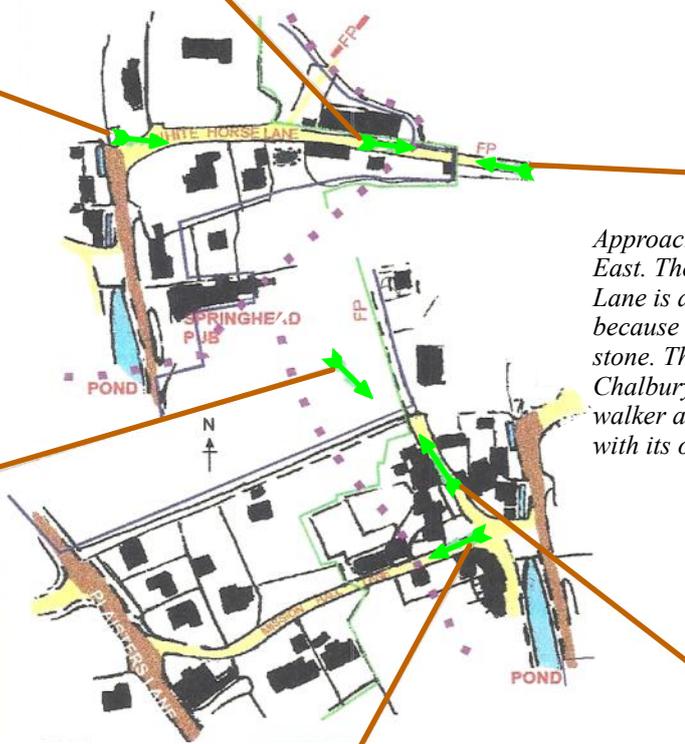
Approaching the village on foot from the East. The first building seen in White Horse Lane is an old Dorset cottage, unobtrusive because of its modest scale and mellow stone. The unblemished grandeur of Chalbury Hill as a backdrop gives the walker a feeling of entering a small village with its own place in the Jordan Valley.



Entering the village on foot from the North. Winslow Hill in the distance. Unspoilt by skyine development. Pass through the gate and just a few paces to the village pond.



Silver Street. May once have been the village main street, now a lovely walk for villagers and visitors.



Mission Hall Lane and hall in background. Increasing vehicle use and building developments are having a detrimental impact on the character and safety of this very narrow lane.



Important gap. One end of Mission Hall Lane. Mellow stone cottages lead to the edge of the village and suddenly into open countryside drawing you to the hills beyond.



The entrance to Silver Street off Plaisters Lane invites exploration.

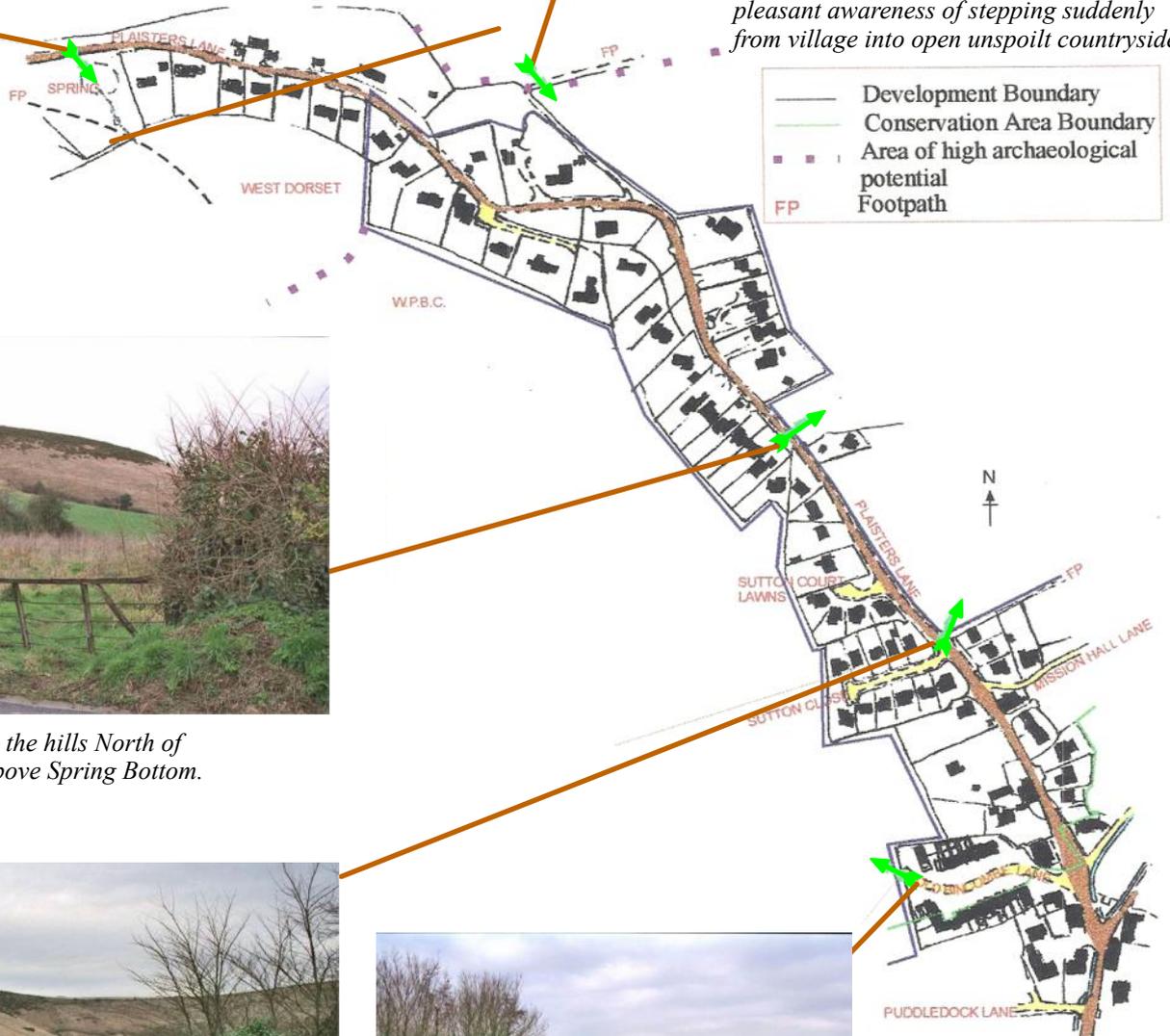
PLAISTERS LANE



View of Sutton Poyntz from near the highest point in Plaisters Lane, an attractive thatched house being the first habitation on entering the village from the North West. The important open gap (middle of photo) shown clearly reaching down to the edges of the village reinforcing the development boundary.



One of the eight footpaths into and out of the village. Compact tidy limits create a pleasant awareness of stepping suddenly from village into open unspoilt countryside.



Unspoilt view to the hills North of Sutton Poyntz above Spring Bottom.



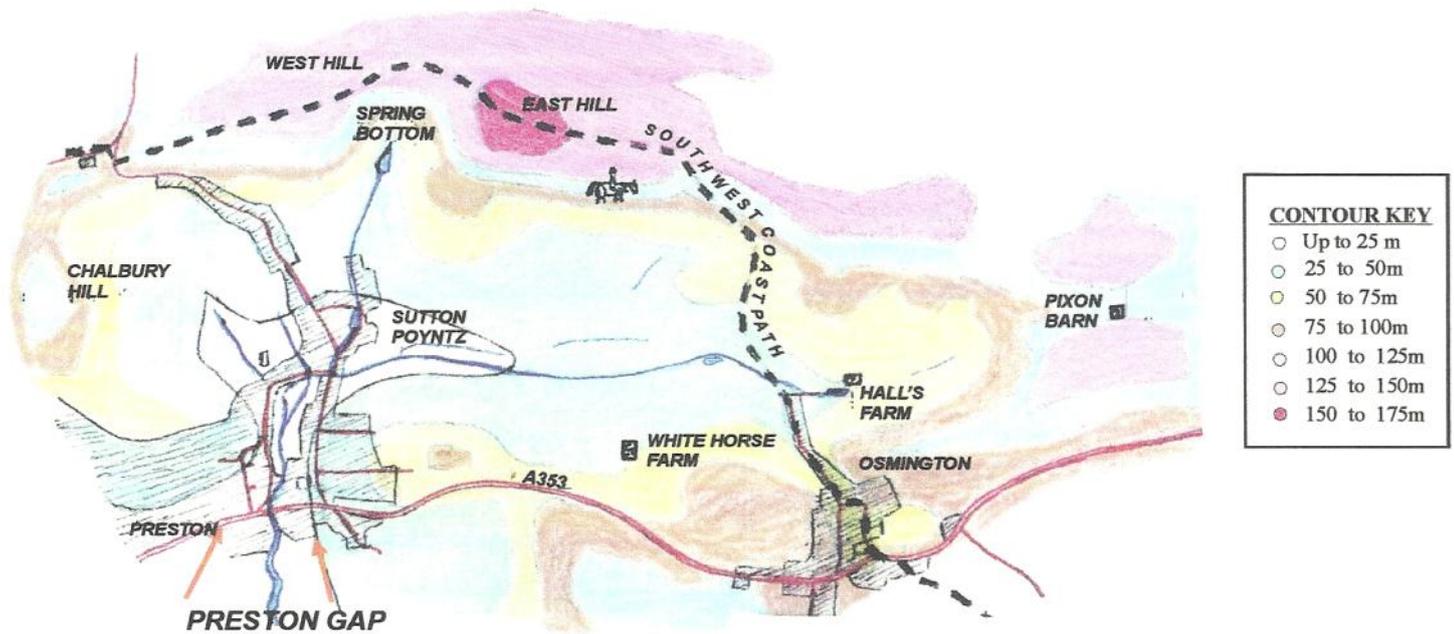
Another important uninterrupted view from Plaisters Lane towards Spring Bottom.



View up through the open gap to the top of Plaisters Lane. Maintaining this open area is very important in order to protect the village identity and character.

TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

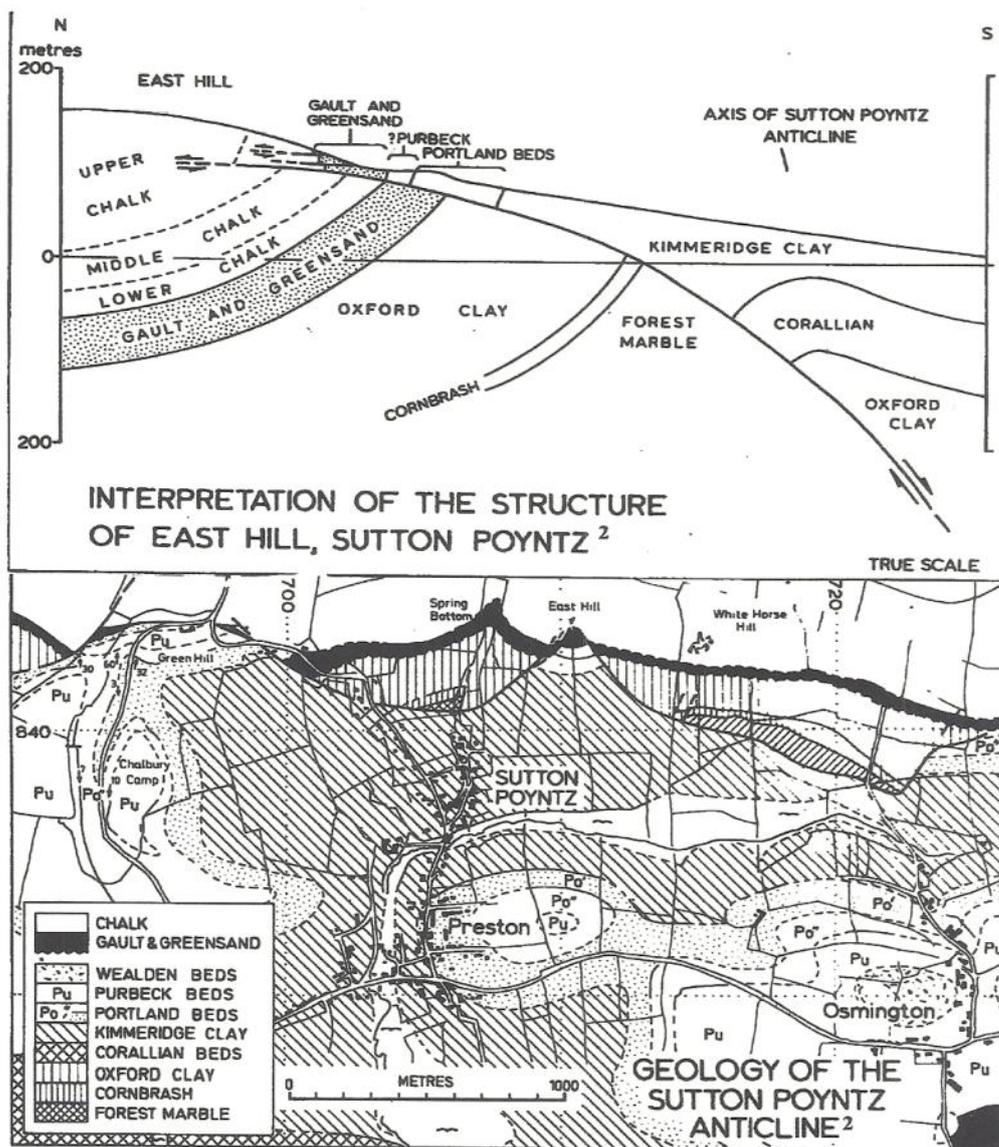
Topography. The Sutton Poyntz basin rises from a height above sea level at the village of just 15 metres to 150 metres at East Hill¹. Little standing vegetation is evident apart from gorse and scrub. Deciduous and evergreen trees border the stream from the reservoir to the water works area. On the rising ground there is little to restrict the run off of surface water except the prevalence of coarse grasses. The land to the West and East of the basin is farmed under cultivation and stock is frequently placed on the grassland that rises towards East Hill.



Geology. The basin surrounding Sutton Poyntz comprises part of the Ridgeway Fault. To the west side of the duck pond there are indications of the Lower Kimmeridge clay zones that are prevalent in the area. To the North of the waterworks there is evidence, in the Kimmeridge clay, of Kimmeridge oil shales.

The diagram below shows the basin to be composed almost entirely of a shallow layer of Kimmeridge clay above a deeper layer of Oxford clay interspersed with Forest marble². On the rising ground towards East Hill layers of Greensand and Chalk are evident.

To the East of the village Kimmeridge clay is prevalent along the river Jordan as it approaches Osmington. On the higher ground to the North the chalk of East Hill continues as evidenced by The White Horse. To the West a similar structure is evident towards the Chalbury area but melds into an area of Portland sand, Portland stone, chalk and traces of marble.



Summary. The topography and geological structure of the area surrounding the village is ideal for the ready collection of water as it rapidly runs off the hillside as a result of the impervious substructure. The steeply rising ground from a height of 15 metres at the village to 150 metres at East Hill aids and accelerates the rate of run off. Although water is abstracted to a daily quota there is no guarantee that this abstraction will continue in the future. The present serious management problem caused by excess water would then be further exacerbated.

FLOOD EXPOSURE

General. The topography and geology of the Sutton Poyntz area create a natural collecting basin for water run off from the hillside that surrounds the village from the West to East. The supplying area to this basin comprises an area of 1400 acres from upper Poxwell in the East to Chalbury Hill in the West. The only natural escape for water, in excess of that abstracted through the Wessex Water reservoir system, is via the River Jordan and subsequently through the "Preston Gap" to the sea.

Water Volume in The Sutton Poyntz Basin. There is no definitive flow measurement procedure in place to gauge the daily volume of water passing along the River Jordan. By the application of the Micro Low Flow technique an estimated figure of Mean Annual Flow (MAF) at the mouth of the river may be derived as 10 megalitres per day (a Megalitre being one million litres). The maximum daily allowance for water abstraction through the Sutton Poyntz water works is 12.42 Megalitres per day. The average abstraction per day for the year ending December 1998 was 9.87 Megalitres³. If the abstraction of water were to cease in the future, due to developments in Wessex Water's strategy, then the total daily flow volume of water would be 19.87 Megalitres (10 + 9.87). This situation would exacerbate an already critical dispersal problem.

Present Situation. The lowest lying parts of the village (only 15 metres above sea level), around the Cartshed and Puddledock Lane, bear the brunt of the run off. The lack of a rapid off-take ensures this area becomes a storage point for excess water producing significant flooding. The extensive housing development in this area, during recent years, has compounded the known problem of water dispersal. The large bore culvert, in place prior to the development of The Puddledocks, has been abandoned and replaced by smaller bore culvert, the regular maintenance of which is not in evidence. Culverts that cross private properties are cleared by individual householders. The web of water channels approaching Puddledock Lane from the North are unable to accept the excess water caused by heavy rainfall and the culvert system appears to be inadequate to move the water rapidly into the River Jordan. The river is bordered in parts by sheep netting which in itself creates an additional obstruction when debris fouls the netting. The higher areas of the village are frequently subject to problems with water run off manifested by flooded roads, springs appearing at regular intervals in random places and saturated agricultural land. Some of these problems are compounded by housing development on previously natural water collection areas and dew ponds in several locations adjacent to Plaisters Lane. In the central area of the village there appears to be a network of old, somewhat primitive drainage channels and culverts to drain away the ground water. Knowledge of the existence, location and orientation of this drainage web is apparently lacking. The effect of disturbance to this system is being manifested by the drainage problems being encountered in the development of a dwelling in the Mission Hall Lane. If the purpose of this tenuous drainage system is ignored then the effects will continue to be apparent throughout the centre of the village until a permanent, managed drainage system is installed.



THE RIVER JORDAN

A shallow gradient and restricted channel create



..... a significant downstream effect



Planning Consideration in Flood Risk Areas. Government circular 30/92 states:

- **Local planning authorities should "guide development away from areas that may be affected by flooding and restrict development that would increase flood risk".**

- **Any new development in flood risk areas may increase the quantity of run off and the rate at which it reaches water courses which may cause their capacity to be exceeded at times of flood risk, especially where there are artificial restrictions such as culverts.**

Recent comment and observations on the problems associated with development in the Sutton Poyntz flood risk areas are fully covered in the SPS objection to the proposed erection of a barn⁴. It is emphasised however that the Department of Environment enquiry inspector's report stated that -"it would be imprudent to allocate areas subject to flooding for development until the likely effects have been thoroughly investigated and the form and feasibility of mitigation measures properly established"⁵. In March 1999 an appeal against Weymouth and Portland Borough Council's decision to refuse a planning application for a barn in the Puddledock Lane⁴ was sensibly rejected. Although the decision was based very largely upon the visual impact factor of such a large structure the problem of water dispersal caused by this style and size of development must not be ignored.

Observations. Alleviation of the flooding problem for the lower part of Sutton Poyntz could only be achieved by the creation of more water courses and "holding areas" to disperse or contain the excess water coupled with due regard for the Government advice on development in such areas. Most significantly the only egress for the water to the sea is via the narrow River Jordan and the "Preston Gap" following a very shallow gradient. Enlargement of the Jordan is ecologically unsound and financially impracticable. Efficient maintenance and improvement to the existing system would ensure a manageable balance is maintained and some control maintained over the flood risk.

Summary. The geography of Sutton Poyntz ensures that the area collects water effectively and some of this product is withdrawn for domestic treatment. The excess water produced during periods of heavy, prolonged precipitation readily flows to the lowest part of the village. In this location it floods due to an inadequate culvert system, obstruction by debris and the narrow channel of the River Jordan. Government advice is to discourage development in such areas. Additional development in this area will compound the flooding risk due to the structure of the soil and the excessive amount of water funnelling into a constrained area of poor drainage.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Traffic Pressures

Any future development in Sutton Poyntz will invariably attract an increase in the number of cars. At present a significant number of village residents use one car or possibly do not own a car. This situation has pertained for many years but, with a change in the demographic structure and the influx of younger working families to the village, the ownership of two cars per family is becoming normal. The fragile infrastructure of the village roads is almost overloaded by the volume of residents' and visitors' cars. The CPRE's "Lost Lanes" campaign⁶ will seek to pressure Government to create safer country lanes by highlighting the effects of an increase in traffic on country lanes and the impacts of excessive speed. Whilst welcoming all to our midst whether to reside, spend money or relax in the beautiful surroundings we must be mindful of the following implications of future development:

- An increase in cars to and through the village aggravates the road safety problems faced by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders in Sutton Road and Plaisters Lane. The total absence of any footpaths along Sutton Road and Plaisters Lane presents all road users, other than vehicle drivers, with a severe hazard.
- The quality of the environment is further degraded together with erosion of the verges and vegetation.
- An increase in pollution levels is introduced.
- Additional private houses built in this village will not be designed for those of a social grouping who use public transport as a matter of course.

PPG 13⁷ offers the following guideline to planning in rural areas.

Structure plans should avoid any significant incremental expansion of housing in villages and small towns where this is likely to result largely in car commuting to urban centres and where the travel needs are unlikely to be well served by public transport (PPG 13 paragraph 4.50).



Hazards presented to other road users and the environment by heavy traffic usage of Sutton Road.



Plaisters Lane evolved for agricultural access and is overloaded by the demands of 21st Century traffic.



Parking

There is a problem of too many vehicles parked on roads in the centre and around the village. A recent comment "the centre of the village looks like one big car park" is apt. At times the density of parked vehicles is overwhelming and seriously detrimental to most peoples' visual senses and therefore to the ambience we are trying to protect. It is also, in some areas, causing obstructions and dangerously restricted visibility.

Visitors come and go and their vehicles are parked for a relatively short period of time. Predominately it is local residents' vehicles that are the cause of the problem, compounded by the presence of vehicles parked in connection with commercial activities operating within the village. This is not a problem peculiar to Sutton Poyntz. The combination of population growth, increasing vehicle ownership per household and many village properties having been designed and built before the motor car was invented inevitably leads to an increase in on-street parking.

Other villages are no doubt making and achieving varying degrees of success in resolving their parking problems. Maybe we could learn from their experiences and consider what practical solutions, if any, would be appropriate for Sutton Poyntz.

Government Policy

The government's future policy on traffic management is quite specific. The following is quoted from the DETR paper⁸:

- Planning guidance will give clearer advice on the location and form of housing development.
- Local authorities will have to be mindful of the future travel patterns that would be created when planning for new homes.
- The revised guidance will stress the need for careful planning of those places and sites that are not close to existing public transport.

Further, the travel impact of all development should be considered. Cumulatively, small scale developments can have just as much impact on the need to travel as a single large development⁷ (paragraph 2.18)

Worthy though these principles are it is hoped that the advice in the policy document will be observed. All the factors cannot apply precisely to the situation in Sutton Poyntz. The village has only an average public transport service and that only in the direction of Weymouth. Car usage is a prerequisite for most residents.

Car Ownership and Usage

National statistics on car ownership and usage show that:

- The occupants of one private household generate on average 3-5 return daily trips on a weekday, between 4 -5 trips on a Saturday and 3-4 trips per day on a Sunday. A trip is considered as an out and return⁹.
- This type of movement produces a peak time (5-6 pm) flow of 60 vehicles per hour⁹. Any increase in development that generates a two-car family will increase these factors significantly in the congested roads of the village.
- In the Weymouth and Portland area (figures for 1991)¹⁰:
 - 48,3% of households owned one car
 - 17.4% owned two cars
 - 3.1% owned three or more cars(Assumption - The percentage of families owning two cars will have increased since 1991)
- Ownership of private cars in Dorset has risen from 304000 in 1990 to 319000 in 1996 (the latest statistics available)¹⁰. The proportion of car owning households in rural areas has risen to 78% (National travel survey 1992/94-Department of Transport)

Summary

The overall increase in car ownership is reflected in the village. An overloaded road system creates traffic management problems and inherent dangers for other road users. **Any future development will attract more vehicles and would be detrimental to the environment and against the government's future policy guidelines.** Car usage patterns by residents are unlikely to change due to the lack of reliable public transport schedules

SURVEY SUMMARY

The main focus of this survey is on three primary areas of concern. They are:

- Threats to the visual character of the village and its perimeter
- Vulnerability to serious flooding
- Increasing volume and dangers of road traffic

Building development is the one common factor impacting negatively on all three.

The features of the village that make it so attractive also make it vulnerable. The beautiful setting, fine views and treasured visual gaps have attracted an increasing number of people wishing to reside in this environment to an extent that over the last 40 years the number of domestic dwellings in Sutton Poyntz has increased by 119% from 88 to 193¹, (physical count and electoral register).

The geology and topography of the area foster the collection of water in to a confined area so creating a continuing threat of flooding during periods of heavy rain. The infrastructure to dissipate this water is inadequate and poorly maintained.

The growing number of residents, increase of through and service traffic together with a statistical increase in car ownership takes its toll on the fragile, overloaded road system. The volume of traffic presents an increasing danger to other road users particularly those wishing to enjoy the scenery and environment in a more leisurely ecological manner.

Local knowledge, central/ local government guidelines and agency policies/inspectors' reports referred to and used in the production of this survey combine to conclude that the maximum limits and density of building development in the area have already been reached. Particular heed should be paid to the Government Circular 30/92 and the Department of the Environment Inspector's report about the impact of development in areas prone to a risk from flooding.

The existing development boundary should not be extended at any point; future building development should be very strictly limited and policies to protect the Preston and Sutton Poyntz Conservation Area and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should be rigorously enforced.

References

The following are referenced or reproduced in this document with acknowledgements and licences as stated:

1. Ordnance Survey - Weymouth & Portland Borough Council Licence No. 086088/Dorset County Council Licence No 0765570
2. Geology of the Dorset Coast - Michael House
3. Wessex Water Pic, Bournemouth and the Environment Agency, Blandford.
4. Planning Application - Weymouth and Portland 97/00599/FUL.
5. Weymouth & Portland Local Plan - Inspector's report by Mr J Davies
6. CPRE "Our Countryside"
7. PPG 13 - A Guide to Better Practice
8. DETR - A New Deal for Transport-Better for Everyone (July 1998)
9. TRICS (Trip Rate Information Computer System) Data Card Version 3.8 February 1998
10. The Dorset Data Handbook 1998

Credits

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