

SHEARSBY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: THE PRESERVATION OF GREEN SPACES.

THE FIELD BEHIND ELMSBROOK AT THE TOP OF FENNY LANE AND BEARS' HOLE.

The field at the top of Fenny Lane covers approximately one acre and is very special to the village community.

It has two footpaths; one goes south up to Mill Lane, and one down to Bears' Hole and on to the Northeast side of the village where it connects with footpaths to Fleckney and beyond. These footpaths are the green, tranquil part of the circular village walk and are used daily by many villagers. As well as the local people, the footpaths are used by walkers coming up from Bruntingthorpe on the Leicestershire Round and heading North or East towards Saddington, Fleckney or Arnesby.

This field was until recently, kept as a wild flower meadow, and no chemical fertilisers or weed-killers were used on it. We have a photograph showing this field in full bloom. It was grazed by sheep for most of the time between March and November, but still supported a vast assortment of wild flowers including, lady smocks, violets, cowslips, primroses, buttercups, daisies, ox-eye daisies, foxgloves, vetches, and many more. During the last three years it has lacked husbandry and become very neglected, allowing the spread of the creeping thistle which is a pernicious weed and this is very sad. This once lovely area desperately needs care and attention.

Despite its recent neglect, the meadow still supports many species of birds and other wild creatures. Birds I see each day include blackbirds, robins, blue tits, great tits, long – tailed tits, chaffinches, greenfinches, wrens, pied wagtails, starlings, sparrows, dunnocks and pigeons. Those seen occasionally are thrushes, fieldfares, goldfinches, green woodpeckers, great spotted woodpeckers and pheasants. Owls are heard rather than seen.

There is a colony of bats which are only seen on warm still evenings in summer. They fly up from Bears' Hole past the front of my bungalow then swing round the ash tree at the top of the lane and fly back down the field.

They maintain this circular route for an hour or so towards dusk on warm evenings. I have watched these bats for the last 28 years.

Other wild creatures seen include hedgehogs, foxes, voles, moles, grass snakes, frogs, toads and newts.

The footpath leading Northeast goes down to Bears' Hole, which is a small area of land where the fields on each side drop down to a shallow stream. This piece of land is about ten metres wide and thirty metres long, and the slopes on each side of the stream are wooded. For at least a hundred years, Bears' Hole has been the play area for the village children, where they enjoy themselves building dens and taking part in adventurous activities.

The field at the top of Fenny Lane is known to be very wet in winter and holds water which eventually drains down into the village centre. The farmer who rented it until 2012, used it for sheep pasture, but kept it empty from November until March, and when the grass was short five or six ponds could be seen in the various hollows. There are photographs of these. Now in its unkempt state the ponds cannot be seen but the ground is sodden, still holding the water and thus preventing flooding in the village centre.

I trust that the points made about this field and Bears' Hole indicate in many ways their importance to the village community, and we recommend that both should be preserved as green spaces.

CRITERIA.

1. Public access – two footpaths.
2. Close proximity to the village – adjoins the top of Fenny Lane and the footpaths are part of the circular village walk.
3. Special to the local community :-
 - a) Until recently it was a beautiful natural wild flower meadow. It could still be restored.
 - b)
 - c) Many villagers use the footpaths daily.
 - d) Birdsong is heard and many species observed.
 - e) Very rich in wild life.

Mavis Jeffery. January 2016