

# Explore Dorchester's Timeless Land

**SAVE OUR  
COUNTRYSIDE!**



STAND – Save The Area North of Dorchester.  
Supported by CPRE

[www.stand-dorchester.net](http://www.stand-dorchester.net)



**Protecting Dorset**  
Campaign to Protect Rural England

# Treasures of the Natural World

Stand quietly on Blue Bridge and wait for the wildlife to appear. Use your ears as well as your eyes and you may hear geese and snipe or the high-pitched whistle of a kingfisher as it flies from perch to perch. Come out at dawn and you may see an otter and at dusk bats swoop over the river and tawny owls hoot. Climb the path to the heights of Waterston Ridge and you will see a rich variety of wildlife on your way.

Developers want to build 3,500 houses here.

## THREATENED:

- Lovers' Lane: a wildlife corridor and habitat for a multitude of plants, butterflies and rare insects, small mammals and yellowhammers – a bird on the Red List of endangered species in Britain.
- 117 different types of bird have been seen in the water-meadows, downland fields and hedgerows north of Dorchester.
- The River Frome Site of Special Scientific Interest and the internationally important habitat of Poole Harbour – large-scale developments here could cause pollution and flooding downstream.
- Ancient trees support a wealth of wildlife including very rare lichens.
- Daubenton's bat – this and other rare bats can be seen catching insects over the river. They use the hedgerows to navigate over fields.
- Farm land – we need fields for food production. Growing food closer to home is better for us and the environment. Cereals, beans and cattle and sheep are farmed here.
- Old pasture land is a carbon sink; it absorbs lots of CO<sub>2</sub>. Building here would add to the climate crisis.



### Spot it!

Dragonfly or damselfly ☐  
Yellowhammer ☐  
Bluebell ☐  
Oak tree ☐



# Map



- Walk 1: around 2 miles
- Walk 2: around 3 ½ miles
- Walk 3: around 6 ¼ miles



Bronze Age barrows on the high ground at Waterston Ridge.



Lovers' Lane is an old drove road once used by farmers to bring sheep and cattle down to the river or to market. It is full of bluebells and wildflowers in spring.

The site of Shepherd Fennel's cottage in Thomas Hardy's tale *The Three Strangers*.

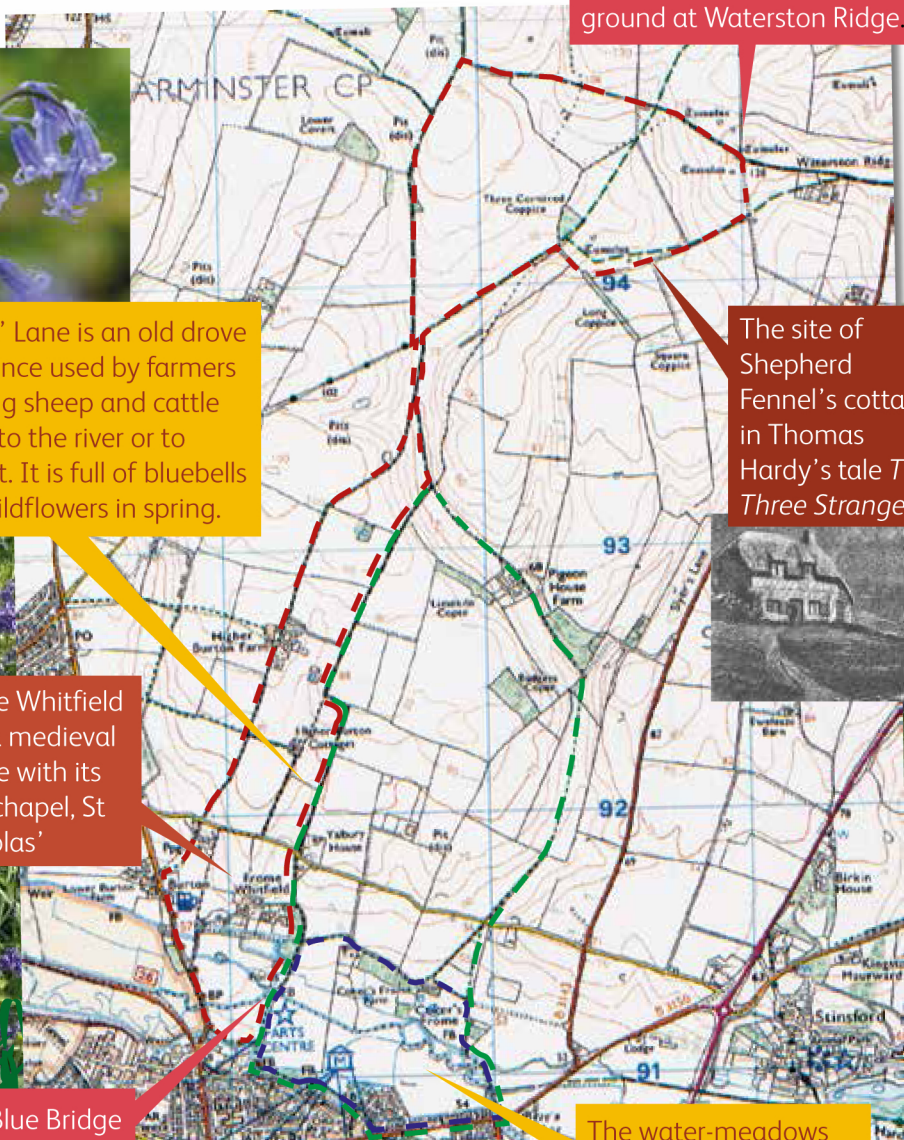


Frome Whitfield was a medieval village with its own chapel, St Nicholas'

Blue Bridge

Gasterbridge, as has been hinted, was a place deposited in the black upon a corn-field. There was no suburb in the modern sense, or transitional intertexture of town and down, it stood, with regard to the wide fertile land adjoining, clean-cut and distinct, like a chessboard on a green table-cloth. The farmer's boy could sit under his barley-mow<sup>10</sup> and pitch a stone into the office-window of the town-clerk; reapers at work among the sheaves nodded to acquaintances standing on the pavement-corner; the red-robed judge, when he condemned a sheep-stealer, pronounced sentence to the tune of Baa, that

The water-meadows are a rich area for birds, bats, water voles and dragonflies. Otters have been seen here.



# Treasures of the Ancient World

Long before the arrival of the Romans, Dorchester's landscape was already ancient. Above the River Frome's floodplain and on the surrounding chalk ridges, great monuments were built out of massive oak trunks, sarsen stones and earth banks.

They date from the time of Stonehenge and the Great Pyramid in Egypt (2,500 BC) and were built by the Bronze Age 'Beaker People'. You've probably seen Maumbury Rings, which they also built. We don't know much about how they lived, but when important people died they buried them in mounds of earth – barrows – on high ground. There are several on Waterston Ridge.

**Developers want to build over a great arc of land between Charminster and Stinsford.**

## THREATENED:

- A probable Bronze Age cemetery. Aerial photos of the land on the eastern side of the proposed development show ring ditches around six burial mounds – an exciting discovery that could be of regional significance.
- Remains of a medieval village. Aerial photos show the line of a medieval street near Coker's Frome Farm. Close by was the ancient settlement of Frome Whitfield with its chapel of St Nicholas. This was one of several satellite settlements around Dorchester, some of which were deserted at the time of the Black Death.
- The northern boundary of Dorchester – which has been the same since Roman times – will be lost forever.

## Spot it!

Bronze Age barrow ☐  
Channels built in the 17th century to flood the water-meadows and provide year-round grass for cattle ☐





# Treasures of Thomas Hardy's World

**Casterbridge** was the name given to Dorchester by the writer, Thomas Hardy, in his novels *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Hardy's descriptions of Casterbridge and Mellstock (Stinsford) draw people from around the world to visit Dorset.

Walk up to Waterston Ridge and you will discover the landscape of one of Hardy's best loved novels, *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Waterston Manor is the setting for Bathsheba Everdene's farm and Wolfeton Manor was used by Hardy as the home of Lady Penelope, one of the Group of Noble Dames. Find Fiddler's Green and you can discover Shepherd Fennel's cottage, Higher Crowstairs, from the evocative short story *The Three Strangers* published in *Wessex Tales*.

**Developers want to build an urban area larger than Poundbury on Hardy's Far From the Madding Crowd country.**

## THREATENED:

- The wide open downland of Bathsheba's farm will be lost forever under concrete and tarmac.
- Hardy's Casterbridge will be unrecognisable.
- Our tourist industry will be damaged. Visitors come from around the world to discover Casterbridge and the countryside around it.
- Dorchester's character as a town embedded within its countryside would be dramatically and irrevocably changed.

## Spot it!

The Ten Hatches on the River Frome, described in the *Mayor of Casterbridge* ☐

Walk in Hardy's footsteps up to Shepherd Fennel's cottage at Fiddler's Green ☐

The view from the northern slopes to Hardy's Casterbridge. ☐



# Treasures of Our World

**Lots of us love this stretch of countryside, whether it's to walk the dog, play in the river at Blue Bridge, or to stand on the ridge and watch the clouds.**

**We want to save it.**

There are other sites for house-building:

- 47 brownfield sites in the local area
- 5 acres of land at the former prison in Dorchester,
- and more of Poundbury yet to be built.

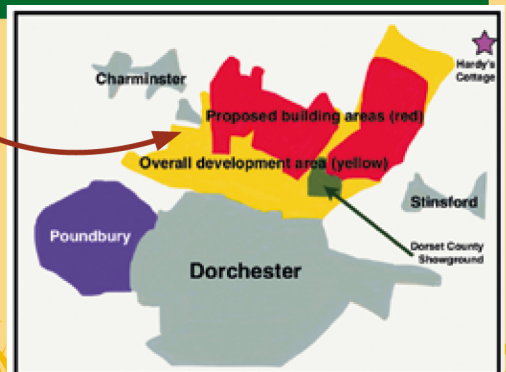
There is no guarantee of affordable housing for local people in 'North Dorchester' and the impact on local services – especially the hospital – would be enormous. The site doesn't connect easily with the town so it would lead to a large increase in traffic.

## We think there are better ways of doing things:

- ways of building sustainably so that we don't add to the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity,
- building council houses for people on the housing list,
- encouraging community land trusts to develop small sites for local people,
- making best use of existing buildings and ensuring we don't have empty houses.

If you'd like to know more about the proposal to build 3,500 houses here, have a look at our website. You can also sign the petition there, or get involved in the campaign:

**[www.stand-dorchester.net](http://www.stand-dorchester.net)**



**STAND – Save The Area North of Dorchester – is a group of local people campaigning to protect this area of countryside. We include people from all walks of life and all political opinions; some of us are more recent arrivals, but many of us were born and bred here.**