



Photo credit: John Le Brocq

Case Study: hEdges of Hilperton and Paxcroft Mead

A community arts project commissioned by Wiltshire Council through planning obligation funding between 2013 and 2015.

Working within an arts framework, the project brings together the local community to celebrate the heritage of a changing place and particularly the old hedges field boundaries which are disappearing beneath the new homes. The project asks us to recognise and remember the past and look towards the future.

The project included a local photography competition, 24 artwork installations, celebratory foraging events and fruit tree planting—all designed to encourage the community to come together, engage with, learn about and interpret their local landscape.

Arts Symposium—17 November 2015



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Stonehenge, Avebury
and Associated Sites
inscribed on the World
Heritage List in 1986

Wiltshire Council
Where everybody matters

Devising a plan

Wiltshire Council engaged [Commission Projects](#) in 2013 to develop an arts plan for a public art project relating to the housing development sites from which developer contributions had been secured. Commission Projects researched the site and consulted with the community to create a plan and a process for achieving a sustainable arts project which would be relevant to the context or use of the site.

Particular opportunities were identified in the networks and linkages of footpaths, byways, cycle routes, district centres, schools and the linear park, Biss Meadows. The project required the artist to take account of the local community, its historical context, legibility, orientation, accessibility and open spaces with their potential for supporting healthy living.

[ruralrecreation](#), led by artist Alex Murdin, devised the hEdges art project by working with a steering group of community representatives. It celebrates the unique heritage of an agricultural area now being developed for housing, and in particular the old fields boundaries and hedges. The ancient field systems of Hilperton and Paxcroft have already shaped the way new housing has grown up and some of the old hedgerows that used to keep in the cows and sheep still exist amongst the new housing. Nevertheless many of the hedgerows that supported wild plants and wildlife have been taken out. The project engaged the community in this vanishing landscape and ask questions of what a sustainable environment might look like in the modern world.

Community engagement

As land for food is replaced by land for homes, the project has been engaging the local community in the idea of planting food for free in the suburbs, wild plants that can be used by anyone - making the verges, paths and parks edible. This included foraging and hedgerow cocktail making days, a community photography competition and the development of a collection of hedgerow recipes as well as planting wild plum and medlar trees.

Achievements, outcomes and reflections

- Provided learning opportunities for the local community to explore the area's heritage and environment. *"I thoroughly enjoyed the foraging and event with the Ethicurean crew. It was a great success."* foraging event participant
- Benefited from project champions that ensured community groups and residents involvement in the creation of the 24 art works
- Creation of 2 planting areas with 10 fruit trees for community use.
- Developed a project website with 3,000 hits a month, which will continue to engage people
- Involved a 100 people from the local community
- Overall the project asks us to remember the past and rethink the future with a new sort of common land, both nature reserve and human food source – a new model suburban farm for tomorrow.



Physical artworks

Twenty one signs with old field names and images of residents gardens selected from the photography competition were installed on lampposts in October 2015 which define the old 19th century field boundaries. Alongside these, three sculptures of hedge furniture, gates and stiles, all 1/3 scale and inspired by the eccentric English tradition of model villages.



All photos: John Le Brocq

www.h-edges.org.uk

Commissioners, key project partners, stakeholders and funders:

Wiltshire Council · Commission Projects · ruralrecreation with Alex Murdin, Ginkgo Projects, Ethicurian chefs and Somerset Forge · Hilperton Parish Council · Paxcroft Mead Residents Association · Curo Housing · Abbey Homes · Taylor Wimpey

Cost: £25,000