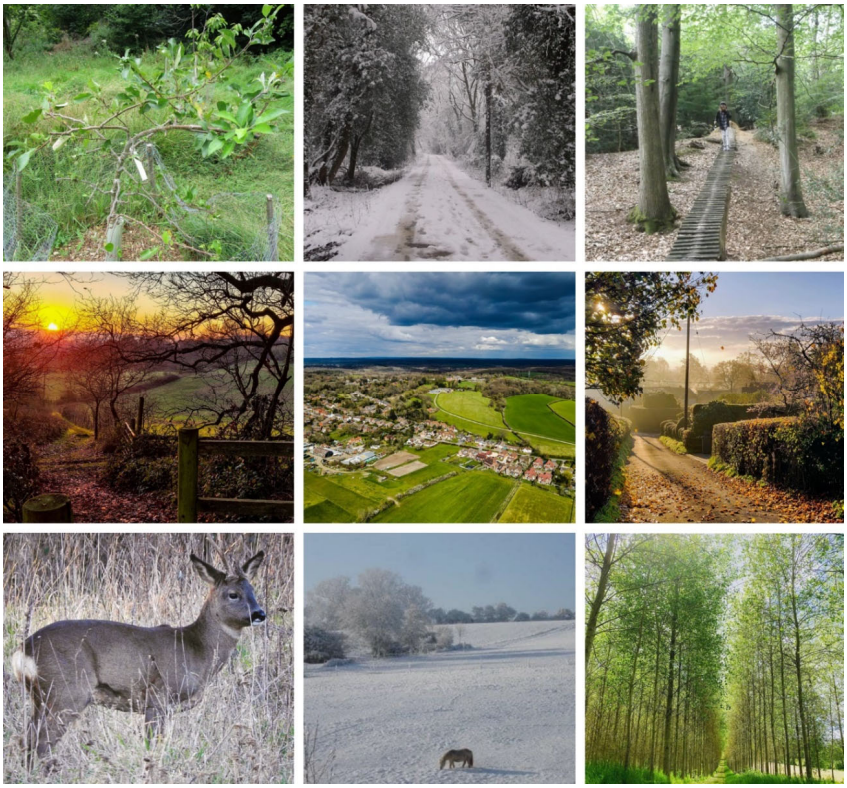
Cold Ash Parish

Neighbourhood Development Plan

2021 to 2039



~~Submission~~ Referendum Version~~Version Plan for consultation at Regulation 16~~

~~June~~ January 202~~3~~4

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Front cover images were supplied by parishioners as part of the photographic competition that took places to support the Neighbourhood Development Plan Open Day in 2021.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cold Ash P~~p~~arish is diverse in nature, sitting partially within an area of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (previously known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)) and comprising two village settlements, elements of two urban settlements, a small industrial area and large areas of countryside that includes wooded areas and agricultural land. It also has a rich history, centred around the villages of Cold Ash and Ashmore Green, and the hamlet of Henwick. It has therefore been essential that this plan takes account of this variety, aiming to protect those rural and historical elements that give the ~~p~~Parish its identity, and recognising that the urban and industrial areas have differing needs. To address this, our policies recognise the assets within the P~~p~~arish, many of which are the result of the P~~p~~arish being among the highest points in Berkshire. These include policies on iconic views, open green space, biodiversity and the blue and green infrastructure, and dark skies. Our policies on heritage cover protection of assets, which include key buildings and our sunken lanes. We intend to use these policies to assess development within the P~~p~~arish as well as the potential impact on the P~~p~~arish from neighbouring, adjacent, or nearby developments.

To handle the varying design considerations of the different areas of the ~~p~~Parish, we have identified three distinct zones:

1. Villages Zone – comprising the villages of Cold Ash and Ashmore Green, each with their own distinctive characteristics.
2. Urban Fringe Zone – comprising the more urbanised areas found on the outskirts of the Parish, which adjoin Thatcham (Southend and Florence Gardens) and Newbury (Manor Park). These areas are essentially part of those larger conurbations.
3. Rural Zone – comprising land within the Parish but located outside the other zones, where little to no development is expected to take place. If exceptional approval is given, then the design principles for the Villages Zone would apply.

The design considerations for each zone support the areas in question, with additional clarity being provided on the Villages Zone; the design considerations for the Urban Fringe Zone are to be in-line with those of the settlements of which they are part.

Movement around the ~~p~~Parish is a recognised issue, as many of the roads are little more than upgraded country tracks, several without public rights of way and some are single-track sunken lanes. The only substantial road is north-to-south through the centre of the P~~p~~arish. Resolving these issues would be a challenge, as any potential improvements would adversely impact on the character of the P~~p~~arish. It is for this reason that this plan has been developed based on the premise that no significant changes will be made to the road network (non-policy actions have been included to address the management of motorised traffic). The P~~p~~arish is well served with a network of Public Rights of Way (PROW), which are heavily used by pedestrians. Whilst the P~~p~~arish doesn't lend itself to bicycle traffic, being so hilly, there is a desire to develop further cycle networks, away from the main highways. Further non-policy actions are identified to further explore opportunities in this area.

Parking is a significant issue within the P~~p~~arish, particularly around the two schools at drop-off and pick-up times. These have been known issues for many years and all actions to address them to date have not had the desired effect. Further options will be explored during the lifetime of this plan. It is hoped that this plan meets our vision of maintaining the P~~p~~arish as: ***A beautiful, desirable place to live, preserving the distinctive rural villages of Cold Ash and Ashmore Green, with their own identities,***

whilst also providing a variety of settings and dwellings across the whole P~~p~~arish that take advantage of modern infrastructure and transport links to local towns and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cold Ash Parish Council thanks all those who have so generously given their time to make it possible to develop the Cold Ash NDP:

- All NDP Steering Group members, past and present, including Peter Adams, Anu Bailey, Bernard Clarke, Peter Ebdon, Marie Fenner, Richard Marsh, Ivor McArdle, Ian Mercer, Pete Murray, Ed Redhill, David Silsby, and Garth Simpson
- Alison Eardley, NDP consultant, without who's expert guidance this plan would have struggled to see the light of day
- Simon Vanstone for his highly detailed and comprehensive housing analysis
- Suzanne Jackson for her detailed work on the Design elements of the plan
- All those in the community who took the time to come to public events and respond to the questionnaires
- Volunteers who delivered leaflets and helped run events
- Linda Randall, Parish Clerk
- Members of West Berkshire Council for their support and engagement
- Entrants to the Neighbourhood Development Plan photograph competition

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

What is the Neighbourhood Development Plan?

1.1. This document is the Cold Ash Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan (CAPNDP). Its purpose is to guide land-use and set out locally specific planning policies, applicable in the period to 2039, that should be considered by anyone wishing to submit a planning application for development within the designated neighbourhood area.

1.2. The designated area shares its boundary with the P~~p~~arish boundary and was confirmed as a neighbourhood area by West Berkshire Council (WBC), as the local planning authority, on 19 March 2018. Figure 1 shows the designated Cold Ash Neighbourhood area.

1.3. The CAPNDP is being prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Development Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended).





Images show: View looking east towards Cold Ash from Public Right of Way 16; and view looking West from St. Mark's Church, Cold Ash

Who has prepared the Plan?

1.4. The Parish Council is the "Qualifying Body" leading on the development of the Plan and it established a Steering Group comprising local councillors and members of the community to oversee the process. In consultation with the local community, the Steering Group has put together a long-term vision for the P~~p~~arish and identified a series of objectives to deliver this. The process of producing the Plan has sought to involve the community as widely as possible and the different topic areas covered in the Plan are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance.

How is the Plan set out?

1.5. Each section of the plan covers a different topic; under each heading there is a justification for the policies, which provides the necessary understanding of the policy, what it is seeking to achieve and, where relevant, how it should be applied. The policies themselves are presented in the **green** boxes.

1.6. It is these policies, in parallel with the Local Plan policies, against which planning applications in Cold Ash P~~p~~arish will be assessed. It is advisable that, to understand the full context of any individual policy, each policy is read in conjunction with its supporting text and the relevant evidence documents that have been compiled to underpin the CAPNDP.

1.7. In addition to the policies, the Plan identifies local needs and community aspirations that are not met through the planning system, but which are nevertheless important to the well-being of the community. These projects will be met through community actions supported by a range of organisations, and these are set out in Section 10. The Plan also identifies priorities for any developer contributions, and a framework for monitoring and implementation.

1.8. This document has been designed to be read standalone so that the reader is informed sufficiently to understand it and ~~,~~ what it means for the P~~p~~arish~~, and ultimately if applicable, to vote whether to approve it at the Parish Referendum.~~ .

1.9. That said, no single document can represent all the details or include all the content associated with a neighbourhood development plan and there are several other documents that form part of the full CAPNDP 'Reference Pack', to which all readers are welcome to refer, should they wish to obtain more details about general issues such as planning or more specific information about either the Local Plan or this NDP. Full details about this NDP Reference Pack are shown in Section 15.



1: Looking south towards Newbury and Thatcham from Footpath 17

2: Looking south on Cold Ash Hill

3: St Mark's Church

4: Henwick Old Farm

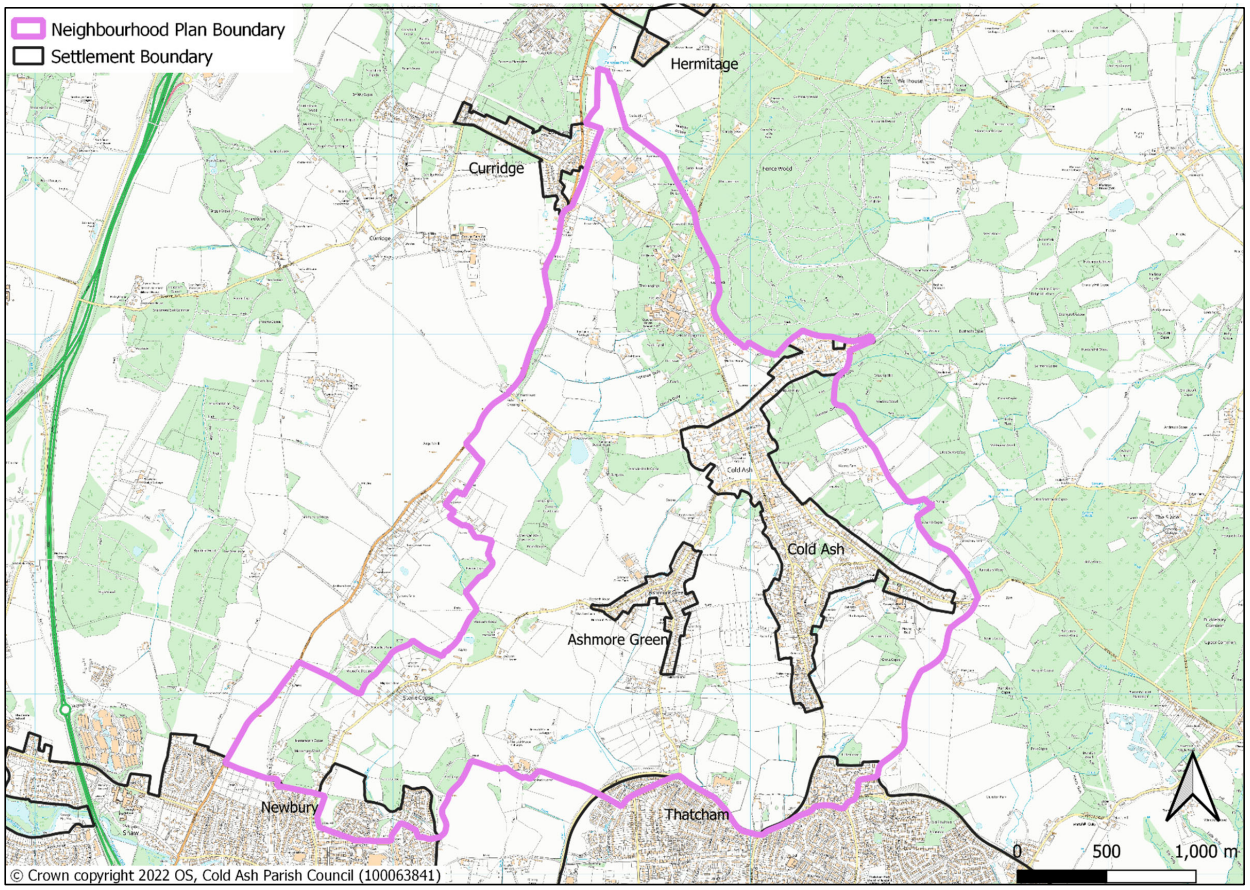


Figure 1: The designated Cold Ash Neighbourhood Development Plan area covers the whole of the Parish of Cold Ash

The Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy

1.10. The CAPNDP has regard to the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)~~,~~ and was independently examined in the context of the NPPF published on 5 September 2023.~~most recently updated in July 2021~~ All references are to that version of the NPPF. ~~-~~ Paragraphs 29 and 30 of the NPPF state:

> *"Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan**. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies** (NB: Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers their area).*
>
> *Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, **the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict**; unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently.*

Local Planning Policy

1.11. A Neighbourhood Plan needs to be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area. The current Development Plan for West Berkshire comprises:

- Core Strategy Development Document 2006 to 2026 (adopted 2012)
- Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted May 2017)
- Saved policies from the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 to 2006 – as amended in July 2012 and May 2017#
- South East Plan Natural Resource Management Policy 6 - relating to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2022-2037 (adopted 1 December 2022)

1.12. The current Local Plan plans for development up to 2026 and, in line with the NPPF, must be kept up-to-date and look ahead over a minimum 15-year period. The Local Plan is therefore undergoing a review to cover the period to 2039. Upon adoption, the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039 will replace in one document the first three existing documents mentioned above.

1.13. Of the sites allocated in Cold Ash in the Housing Site Allocations DPD 2006-2026, Policy HSA7 (St. Gabriels Farm The Ridge Cold Ash) has already been built out/nearing completion and Policy HSA6 (Poplar Farm Cold Ash) is not considered deliverable at this time.

1.14. The West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039 (the LPR) was submitted to the Secretary of State in March 2023 so that it can undergo independent examination. The Local Development Scheme states that the Local Plan Review is anticipated to be adopted in September 2024.

1.15. Whilst the CAPNDP must conform to the strategic Local Plan policies of the adopted Local Plan, as the LPR is at a fairly advanced stage, the CAPNDP has sought to synchronise with it.

1.16. Should the CAPNDP be made prior to the adoption of the Local Plan Review, this could trigger a light touch review of the CAPNDP. This is considered further in Section 10~~1~~.

What does the West Berkshire Local Plan Review say about Cold Ash?

1.17. For West Berkshire as whole, the LPR seeks to provide 8,721 to 9,146 net additional homes in West Berkshire for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2039; 513 to 538 dwellings per annum. The target figure of 538 dwellings per annum does not constitute a ceiling or cap to development. For the local economy, it seeks to deliver a minimum of 91,109 sqm commercial, industrial and office space.

1.18. The LPR's overarching strategy divides West Berkshire into three core spatial areas where Cold Ash Parish is located predominantly within the Newbury and Thatcham area, although a sliver to the east lies in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (previously known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)) area. The LPR policies seek to support the existing role and separate identity of the villages by identifying settlement boundaries. It states that smaller rural settlements (Service Villages), such as Cold Ash village, may offer some limited and small-scale development potential, appropriate to the character and function of the village, to meet local needs through:

- Infill, changes of use or other minor development within the settlement boundary; and
- Non-strategic sites allocated for housing and economic development through other policies in this Plan or Neighbourhood Plans; and
- Rural exceptions affordable housing schemes.

1.19. Ashmore Green, as a smaller village with a settlement boundary, may be suited to minor infill.

1.20. A housing requirement figure (of 40 dwellings) was originally identified for Cold Ash within the emerging draft of the LPR that was published for a Regulation 18 consultation between December 2020 and February 2021. The Steering Group undertook site selection work to try and identify suitable sites to meet this requirement. Further information about this can be found in the Reference Pack (Section 15), notably the document, "Evidence underpinning the Spatial Strategy for the Neighbourhood Plan". Whilst this work identified one suitable site, it is located within the settlement boundary whereby there is a presumption in favour of development. The approach for the Local Plan has been not to allocate sites within settlement boundaries because the principle of development is already established. In light of the site selection work, the Submission version of the Local Plan Review did not identify a housing requirement for Cold Ash. It is considered that there are other sites that will meet the housing need in the District. For this reason, the CAPNDP does not seek to allocate housing and this position has been agreed with WBC. There may be scope to reassess this in any future review of the CAPNDP.

1.21. Further information about this is contained in the Reference Pack.

The North Wessex Downs ~~Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)~~National Landscape

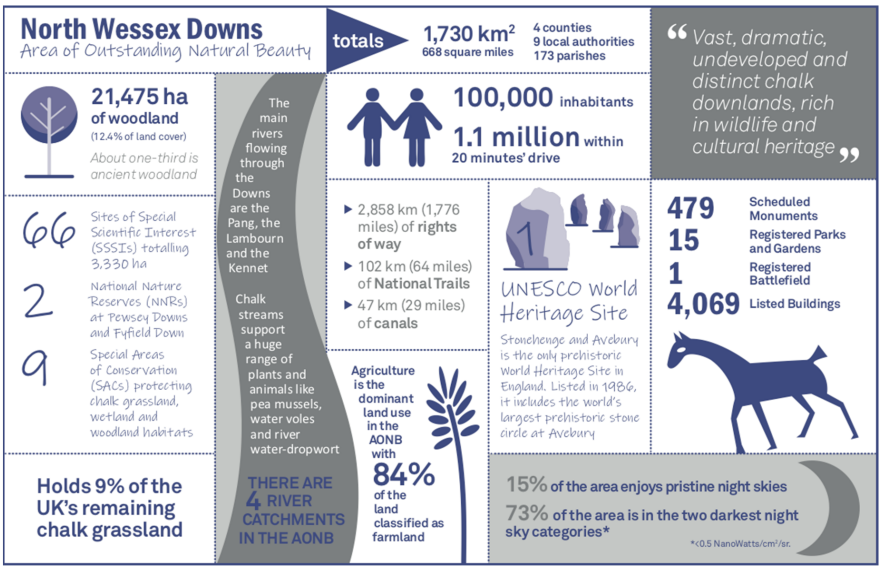
1.22. Straddling four counties, the North Wessex Downs is one of Britain's most beautiful chalk landscapes, recognisable by its dramatic scarp slopes, swathes of ancient woodland and sheltered

valleys criss-crossed by rivers and streams. As set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the primary purpose of the National Landscape~~AONB~~ is to 'conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area'.



The distinctive landscape of the North Wessex Downs

1.23. A small part of the north-eastern part of Cold Ash Parish is located within the eastern end of the North Wessex Downs ~~AONB~~National Landscape. Whilst the remainder of the ~~p~~Parish sits outside the North Wessex Downs~~AONB~~, it does form part of the setting of the National Landscape~~AONB~~ and therefore the Wessex Downs Management Plan is relevant as is the National Landscape~~AONB~~ Design guidance.



Facts about the North Wessex Downs National Landscape ~~AONB~~ (source: North Wessex National Landscape ~~AONB~~ Unit)

Existing Parish policies

1.24. The Cold Ash Village Design Statement (VDS) was prepared in 2002 and was thoroughly reviewed during the process of producing this CAPNDP. Where content is still considered relevant, it has been incorporated into the policies of this Plan; as the CAPNDP carries greater weight than the VDS, the planning policies effectively replace it. The main differences between this NDP and the VDS are summarised as follows:

- The NDP applies across the whole P~~p~~arish, not just the villages of Ashmore Green and Cold Ash.
- The NDP ***policies*** carry more authority in terms of planning law than the previous VDS ***guidelines***. In practical terms this means that developers must take these policies into consideration and demonstrate how they comply with them when planning and implementing new housing developments.

Community engagement

1.25. Work on the CAPNDP has sought to engage as widely as possible with the community, local businesses, and others with an interest in Cold Ash. Activities have included local surveys, workshops, and exhibitions. Table 1 summarises the engagement activities, comprising four main overlapping stages. Full details of the consultation ~~will be~~were included in the Consultation Statement that ~~will~~ accompani~~ed~~ed~~y~~ the Submission Version Plan~~, in due course~~.~~.~~

Table 1: Main stages of engagement activity

Date	Milestone	Key activities
Stage 1: 2017	**Establishment:** Setting up the SG committee structure and building capacity	• Steering Group and Working Groups established. • Training on neighbourhood planning. • Neighbourhood area formally designated. • Regular (monthly) SG meetings inaugurated. • Webpages developed. • Social media used to raise awareness, post invitations to meetings, etc. • Engagement and communications approach established.
Stage 2: 2018-2020	**Engagement:** Gathering and analysing evidence (from surveys, etc.).	• 3 x village public meetings held. • Engagement and activity on the Green Infrastructure Plan. • Exhibitions, including Village Show, Christmas Fayre. • Initial 'Village Development Survey". • Local Housing Needs Survey. • Parish-Wide questionnaire. • Working Groups fact-finding and preparing evidence base. • Meetings with LPA officers and committees. • Meetings with landowners and developers.
Stage 3: 2018-22	**Documentation:** Producing key documents, i.e. Draft Policies and Plan.	• Researching other NDPs • Selecting preferred format for CANP. • Response to emerging Local Plan consultation • Inputting findings from the NP process. • Initial drafting of Neighbourhood Plan policies and gaining feedback from the local community.
Stage 4: 2021-202~~3~~	**Finalising Policies & Plan:** Including final consultation and agreement via Referendum~~)~~.	• Preparation of the Pre-Submission Version Neighbourhood Plan. • SEA/ HRA screening undertaken. • Regulation 14 consultation. • Submission Version Plan submitted to LPA. • Examination and Referendum.

1.26. Discussions with officers at WBC have taken place on each of the topic areas covered by the Plan. In addition, communication with local interest groups and neighbouring parishes has been undertaken.

Sustainability of the Neighbourhood Development Plan

1.27. **Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment:** The CAPNDP has been screened by WBC to ascertain whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and/or Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be required. Following consultation with the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England, the Screening Determination Statement, issued on 27 November 2022, concluded that neither an SEA nor an HRA are required.

1.28. **Nutrient neutrality:** At a strategic level, on 16 March 2022 Natural England declared a "Nutrient Neutrality" Zone (NNZ) for the River Lambourn and its catchment area, one of 27 catchments across 74 Local Planning Authorities that are affected.

1.29. In rivers and estuaries, increased levels of nutrients (especially nitrogen and phosphorus) can harm wildlife. These nutrients are affecting the condition of internationally protected rivers - such as the River Lambourn.

1.30. Natural England and the Government have provided advice and support to help local planners and developers tackle two challenges that can sometimes be seen as in competition: building the homes the country needs while also protecting and restoring nature.

1.31. Under the guidance provided by Natural England, local planning authorities and developers are advised on how planning proposals can stop the expected increase in nitrogen and phosphorus from a new development so that they can become nutrient neutral.

1.32. It will be important that there are no bad effects in order to meet the requirements of the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended).

1.33. This means that, for planning applications in the River Lambourn catchment area (and the River Test catchment area), WBC needs to consider the possibility of adverse effects, as a result of additional nutrient loads (including from residential developments), as part of a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). Figure 2 shows the River Lambourn catchment areas on a map, where the very western part of the neighbourhood plan area falls within this zone. Figure 3 shows the area of Cold Ash Parish that falls within the Nutrient Neutrality Zone.

1.34. New development proposals within, and next to, the designated area will require statements on how drainage and surface water runoff will be treated at the time of submission. Failure to provide this information may lead to an automatic refusal.

1.35. When submitting the Nutrient calculator you will also need to provide evidence that you have received permission for connection or have applied for connection to Thames Water systems and which precise wastewater treatment works you have applied to connect to. It is recommend that developers contact Thames Water to discuss their development proposals by using their pre app service. Cold Ash Parish Council has agreed that issues surrounding nutrient neutrality will be dealt with at the strategic level a opposed to through the neighbourhood plan.

1.36. **Infrastructure provision:** Development should be of the size and scale that it can be mitigated in the schools and other local service providers within Cold Ash. This would reduce the need for movements outside the village and improve the sustainability of any development.

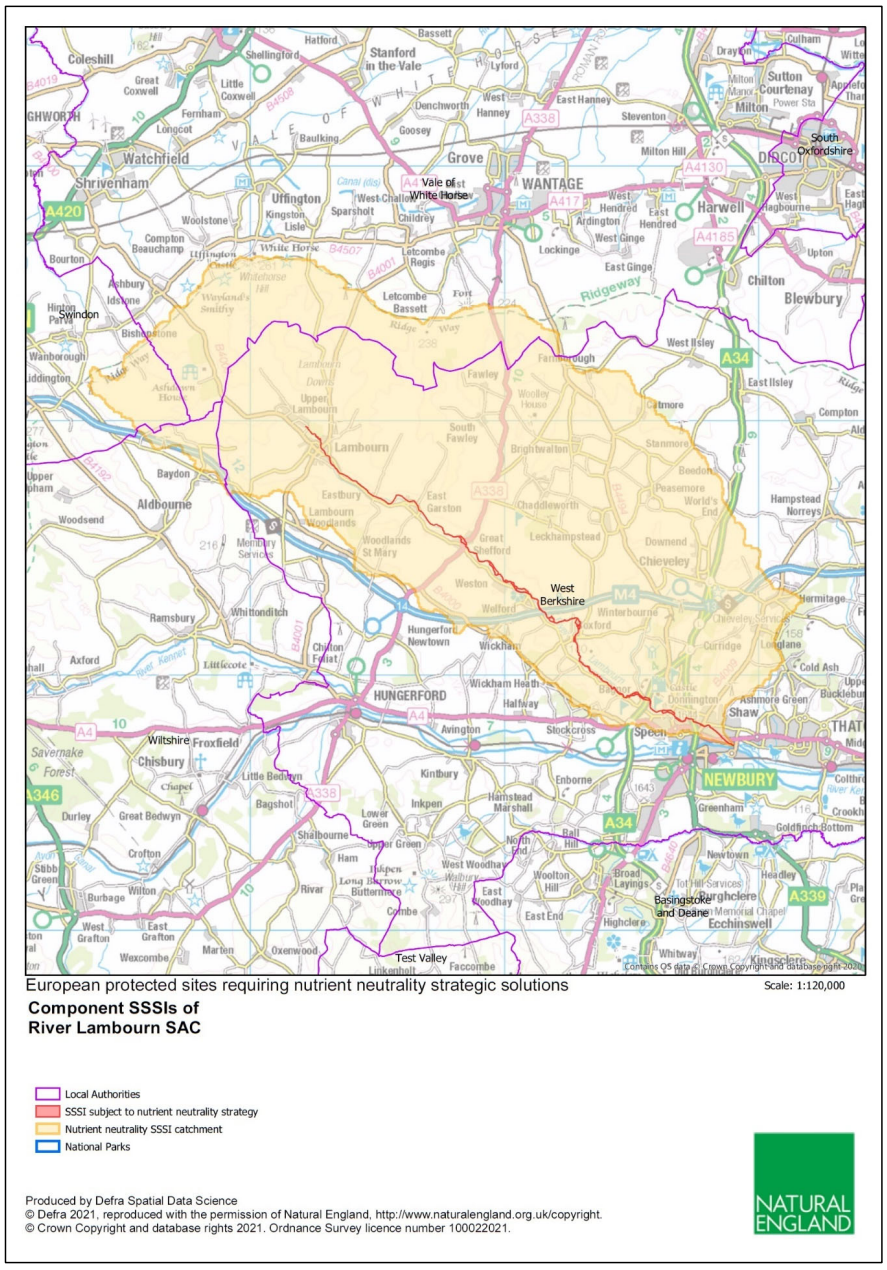


Figure 2: River Lambourn SAC Catchment Area

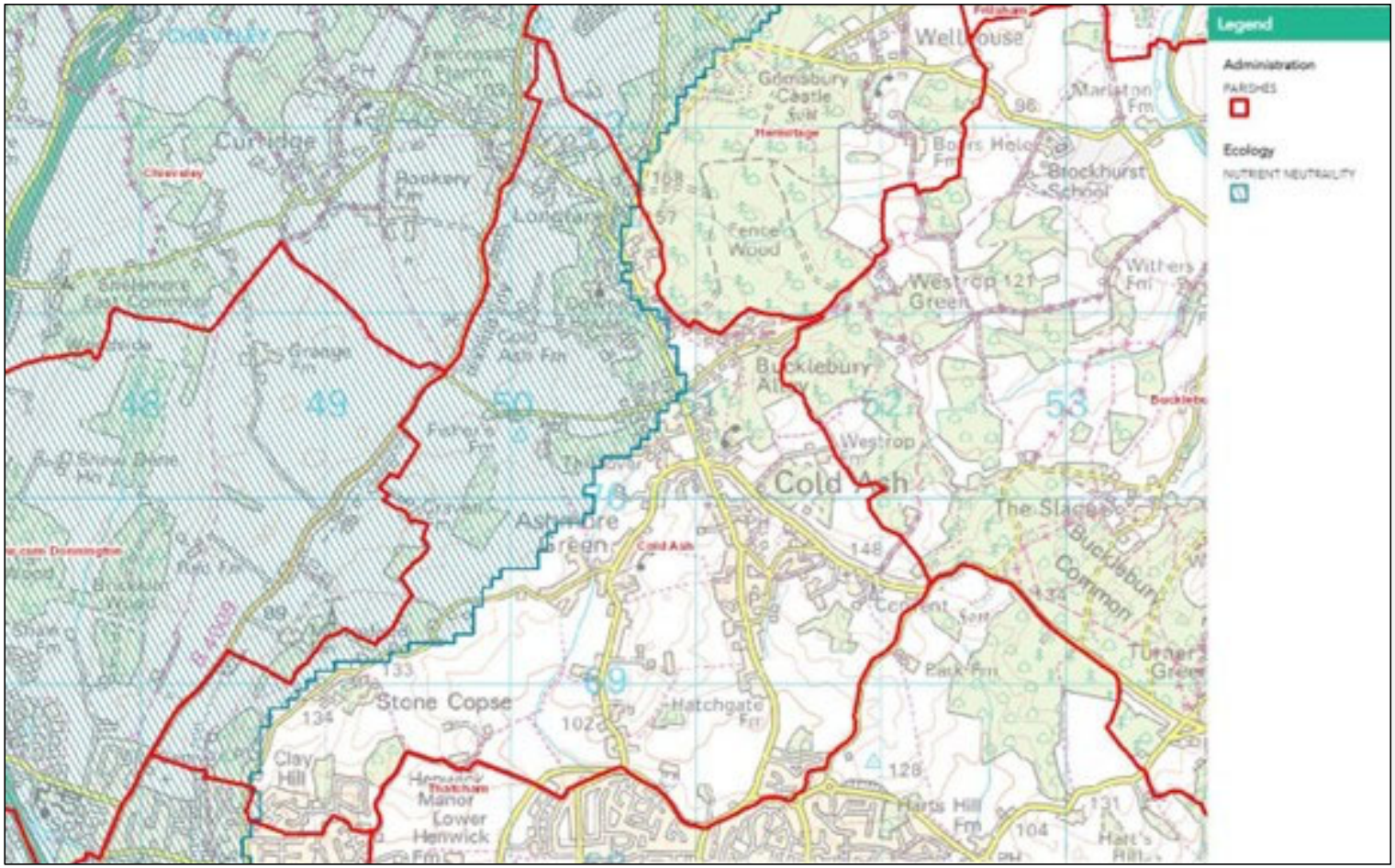


Figure 3: Map showing the area of Cold Ash Parish that falls within the Nutrient Neutrality Zone

2. OVERVIEW OF COLD ASH PARISH

2.1. **Location & Geography:** Cold Ash Parish lies in West Berkshire, centred around 51.42 degrees North and 1.27 degrees West (c SU 502 703). The P~~p~~arish boundary is loosely triangular in shape and lies on the northern boundary of Thatcham and parts of Newbury (Figure 4). It is also bounded by the parishes of Bucklebury to the east, Hermitage to the north, and Shaw-cum-Donnington and Chieveley to the west. It has an area of about 3 square miles (7.9 square kilometres) and a population of 4,063 (2011 Census). About 65% of the population resides in the villages of Cold Ash and Ashmore Green. The P~~p~~arish is primarily rural in nature, much of the land being open fields or woodland, though there are also some urban areas, principally in Manor Park, a term understood by residents for the area which is contiguous in its southern boundary with the area between Shaw and Benham Hill.

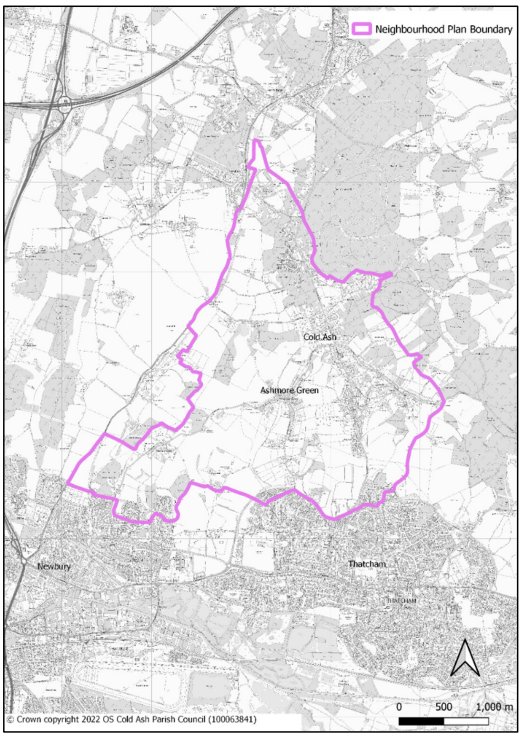


Figure 4: Map showing Cold Ash and surrounding areas

2.2. The centre of the Parish, population and facility-wise is Cold Ash village. Most of the community facilities are concentrated here, namely the village shop and Post Office, two public houses, three schools, church, village hall and the recreation ground. There is also a nationally recognised centre for Guides at Thirtover, between Cold Ash and Ashmore Green.

2.3. Some scattered coniferous woods remain, predominantly to the north and west. There is a

network of 27 well-used public rights of way through the fields and woods. All roads coming into Cold Ash pass through either open farmland or woodland, thus all the approaches to the P~~p~~arish are rural.

2.4. **History of Cold Ash & Ashmore Green:** The area was sparsely populated before about 1800 within a landscape of commons and a lot of early enclosed farmland with historic farmsteads.

2.5. During the Civil War, troops camped on Cold Ash Common before taking part in the Battle of Newbury.

2.6. In 1864 work commenced on the construction of St Mark's Church, which at that time came under the jurisdiction of the vicar and churchwardens of Thatcham. At 500ft above sea level this became one of the highest church sites in Berkshire.

2.7. St Mark's School was built in 1873 next to the church and remained there for some 100 years until it was rebuilt on the other side of the road on land originally owned by the St Helier family of Poplar Farmhouse, on Cold Ash Hill.

2.8. In 1894 Cold Ash broke away to form its own civil P~~p~~arish, a move that was vigorously opposed at the time by Thatcham. Most of newly formed Cold Ash P~~p~~arish was previously in Thatcham parish but the eastern part included part of what was previously in Bucklebury parish. The first vicar of Cold Ash, The Rev Walter Smith Grindle, served in the P~~p~~arish for nearly 55 years and helped bring about considerable change in the life of the village.

2.9. In the early 1900's Sir Reginald Acland had a family home built at Thirtover, and in 1925 his family donated land upon which the Acland Memorial Hall was built, and this remains in use today as the village hall. By the end of the 20th century Cold Ash & Ashmore Green had expanded considerably, and the whole P~~p~~arish now has about 1330 dwellings.

2.10. **Housing:** A comprehensive assessment of housing in the parish was performed by Simon Vanstone in 2017, and he updated this in 2019. It can be found on the CAPNDP website. There is a wide range of housing across the P~~p~~arish as shown by:

- Housing density in the P~~p~~arish varies from around 1 house per acre to over 12 houses per acre.
- Half of the dwellings are smaller houses (3 beds or less) and half are 4 bedrooms or more.
- About one third of dwellings are semi-detached or terraced houses.
- Around 15% of dwellings are bungalows.

2.11. Policy ADPP1 (Spatial Strategy) of the Core Strategy DPD identified Cold Ash village as a Service Village. Service Villages are settlements which have a more limited range of services and have some limited development potential.

2.12. Of the local service villages within West Berkshire, Cold Ash took the second highest increase in housing between 2001 and 2011. Only Hermitage took more, which underlines the pressure that has been put in and around our ~~p~~Parish.

2.13. **Demographics:** According to the Census 2011, Cold Ash P~~p~~arish had a population of 4,063, living in 1,365 dwellings. In the previous Census (2001) the population of Cold Ash was 3,623, living in 1,154 dwellings. This reveals a 12% increase in population over the 10 years and an 18% increase in dwellings.

2.14. The mean age of the population is 37.5 and the make-up of age groups is as follows:

- 5% of 0 – 4 age group
- 11% of 5 – 9 age group
- 36% of 10 – 19 age group
- 9% of 20 – 34 age group
- 40% of 35 – 64 age group
- 15% of 65+ age group
- 2% of 85+ age group

2.15. The Summer Survey conducted in 2019 reveals residents' strong desire to accommodate elderly housing (61%) and assisted housing (25%). 44% of the respondents also highlighted affordable housing for young families and for downsizing as important.

2.16. **Commerce:** There is a small light industrial area at the northern "point" of the Parish in the Red Shute estate. The Core Strategy DPD identifies the Red Shute Industrial Estate as a Protected Employment Area. -There are also small businesses scattered in various farm units across the ~~p~~Parish.

2.17. **Our ~~p~~Parish and what's important to us:** Cold Ash Parish contains one of the highest points in West Berkshire, within the village of Cold Ash, which is about 155 metres (approx. 500 feet) above sea level. The villages within the ~~p~~Parish are 'Ribbon Villages' with the village settlements of Cold Ash and Ashmore Green being on the key north/south and east/west routes of Cold Ash Hill/Hermitage Road and The Ridge/Ashmore Green Road. The Ridge, as its name suggests, runs along the top of a ridge that divides the Pang and Kennet valleys. From the P~~p~~arish's vantage points it is possible to view three other counties: Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire.

2.18. The heights provide iconic views, the protection of which have been a major influence on the siting of development within the centre of the ~~p~~Parish. This has seen sensitive development to protect the views. This continues to be particularly important to the P~~p~~arish as, being able to see most of the ~~p~~Parish from the key viewpoints, any development that breaks up the aesthetic qualities of the landscape, its flowing patterns, and colours, would have a major detrimental impact.

2.19. The height of the centre of the parish means that it is an ideal spot for stargazing. It is for this reason that it is important that the Dark Sky in the highest point of the P~~p~~arish is protected from light pollution. This means that both street lighting and private lighting, in particular security lighting, needs to be closely managed in this area.

2.20. The way the P~~p~~arish has developed historically has produced two unique villages, Cold Ash and Ashmore Green, each with distinctive characters. It is essential to parishioners that we maintain these.

2.21. There are also important environmental areas within the P~~p~~arish that attract a higher level of protection. These are:

- a small proportion of the P~~p~~arish is in the Wessex Downs National Landscape (previously known as AONB)~~AONB~~, as it flows down from the Ridge into the Pang Valley
- Cold Ash Quarry, which is a Geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (GSSSI)
- eleven designated Local Wildlife Areas fully within the P~~p~~arish and two partially within the P~~p~~arish

- numerous ancient woodlands

2.22. Whilst most of the parish is predominantly rural or comprising the village settlements, there are areas of "urban fringe" mainly on the southern border and some industrial /commercial in the north.

2.23. In the south of the P~~p~~arish lies the hamlet of Henwick. There are also the smaller settlements of Little Copse (Southend) and Floral Way, and in the south-west, the ~~p~~Parish ward of Manor Park, which are more in keeping with the neighbouring urban developments of Thatcham and Newbury. In fact, some of these areas align themselves more closely with their neighbouring districts (the element of the P~~p~~arish that is in Manor Park does not cover the whole of the Manor Park development). In the west of the P~~p~~arish there is a small development along Long Lane, which forms the western border of the P~~p~~arish. These dwellings and the residents also tend to align themselves to the other properties on Long Lane.

2.24. At the north end of the P~~p~~arish the Red Shute Industrial Estate is the main non-agricultural commercial area of employment.

2.25. The history and landscape of the P~~p~~arish has therefore resulted in two distinct characters, one rural and the other more urban. It is therefore important that the Neighbourhood Development Plan recognises and makes specific allowance for each of these.

2.26. The village and hamlet settlements in the centre of the P~~p~~arish are close to capacity. This, together with the need to protect the iconic views and the pattern and colours of the land, as it falls away from the heights, means that the majority of land that is suitable for development is predominantly on the fringes of the P~~p~~arish, particularly in the south and west. The one exception to development on the fringe of the P~~p~~arish is the area to the north of The Ridge, which is either in the Wessex Downs National Landscape~~AONB~~ or is part of the natural buffer area flowing into it.

2.27. The P~~p~~arish has several important green spaces covering land that is either owned or managed by the Parish Council. For instance, the Wildlife Allotment Garden and Hermitage Road Recreation Ground are owned by charitable trusts and managed by the Parish Council. Additional open spaces are owned by West Berkshire Council, and there is further land which is privately owned. There are also further green spaces in the P~~p~~arish that will be identified through this NDP, with the aim of securing Local Green Space designation for them.

2.28. The P~~p~~arish is rich in biodiverse wildlife, which is evidenced by the presence of eleven Local Wildlife Sites and several areas of Ancient Woodlands. Richness of biodiversity is something that it is critically important to support, both for the benefit of the ~~p~~Parish and the surrounding countryside. This fact further supports the need to protect the land in and around the village settlements, as a large proportion of it is critical to providing healthy biodiverse wildlife environments and provide corridors for wildlife to move around and colonise wider areas of the P~~p~~arish. These areas, together with the trees and hedgerows of the P~~p~~arish, have been identified as requiring active protection. Further sites have already been identified as having potential for securing an appropriate designation. The plan is to develop an Environmental Baseline for the P~~p~~arish, which will be used to drive further improvements.

2.29. The P~~p~~arish is well serviced by a network of Public Rights of Way (PROW), including public footpaths, public bridleways and byways open to all traffic (BOATS). There are in fact 27 PROW that link the various and disparate elements of the P~~p~~arish. The rights of way pass through and

around landowner's woods and fields, and other important Green Space. In some ways these rights of way are more important than the roads in connecting the various communities. In fact, they link both the rural and urban areas of the P~~p~~arish, providing parishioners living in both settings easy access into the countryside. The aesthetic quality of the walks brings together the sense of place and nature for the people using them. The landscape is therefore essential to the community in maintaining the perception of place (the collective memories, feelings, and sense of awe). This plan aims to support the various landscape elements that make up the perception of place, so that when viewing it from the key vantage points or walking through it on the various PROW, it retains the ability for people to connect with nature and provide a sense of awe. There is a BOAT on the northern edge of the P~~p~~arish (numbered COLD/5, COLD/25 and COLD/26), which is important to horse riders.

2.30. The key landscape characteristics have been formed by the geology and history of the P~~p~~arish. These influences have resulted in a diverse pattern of land use that, along with the emotionally engaging natural landscape, provide the rural sense of place for the communities in rural areas of the P~~p~~arish. These include, but are not limited to:

- generously scaled rolling landscape with some pronounced wooded ridges
- a complex pattern of landscape, dominated by woodland; coniferous, or mixed with beech and birch
- pastures
- heathland and woodland habitats – deciduous and mixed woodland to pasture and arable
- linear settlements within wooded areas; clustered farmsteads and private residences
- road pattern with complex winding sunken lanes (see 'Sunken lanes') with banks and hedgerows
- a comprehensive network of Public Rights of way (see Public Rights of Way), including a network of bridleways

2.31. A small area of the P~~p~~arish, to the north and east of The Ridge and Hermitage Road, is located within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape ~~Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty~~.

2.32. The area abounds with natural drains, issues and sinks, all of which help to ensure natural drainage and control the run-off of excessive rainfall. These are particularly evident in the local gaps between Cold Ash and the neighbouring parishes and are clearly marked on larger scale Ordnance Survey maps (see Flood Risk Management).

2.33. Woodland is a dominant natural feature in this area. The gravel plateau, for instance, is very acidic, and has created a typical landscape of Pine and Birch. The area along and round Hermitage Road, in particular, is densely treed and provides a contrast to the more open Oak dominated landscape of the clay soils which surround The Ridge. The Government's Landscape and Seascape Assessments document provides guidance on preparing landscape character assessments to identify and describe variation in the character of the landscape. The West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment provides further detail for Cold Ash.

2.34. Main tree species can be found including:

- Ash, throughout the P~~p~~arish
- Beech in Ashmore Green Road
- Oak in Ashmore Green Road, Bucklebury Alley, Collaroy Road, Stoney Lane and The Ridge
- Hornbeam in Stoney Lane

- Scots Pine at Downe House and on Hermitage Road and Slanting Hill
- occasional Sweet Chestnut and Cherry.

2.35. It is noticeable that the older parts of the villages are more wooded and have larger and more mature species than the newer parts. This arises largely from the earlier dates of planting and the larger gardens usually associated with the older properties. This creates a different character from the newer areas where the houses are more visible and where cypresses tend to dominate the vegetation. The smaller gardens and open space areas mean that most of the native trees such as Oak, Ash and Beech cannot be established, especially on the clay areas where set distances have to be maintained to avoid root damage to properties. The lack of large trees could have an adverse effect on the P~~p~~arish if sufficient open space is not provided in new developments to allow for planting larger trees. For these reasons, it is essential that a significant proportion of the mature trees in the P~~p~~arish be protected. There has been limited use of Tree Preservation Orders to date; this is something that will be rectified as part of the planning process.

3. A VISION FOR COLD ASH PARISH

Issues facing Cold Ash Parish

3.1. The P~~p~~arish is unique in facing the combination of the following circumstances, which the CAPNDP seeks to address:

- Predominantly rural or semi-rural but bordered by Newbury and Thatcham urban areas to the south.
- Severely impacted by the huge prospective housing development in north-east Thatcham.
- Service Village status, but relatively little in terms of facilities.
- Virtually the only predominantly rural or semi-rural P~~p~~arish in West Berks that is not protected by National Landscape (previously known as AONB) designation (although a small part of the north-eastern P~~p~~arish lies within the National Landscape~~AONB~~).
- A limited road network with increasing traffic.
- Some flood risks because of the prevailing topography.

Vision for the Neighbourhood Development Plan

3.2. The vision for Cold Ash Parish to 2039 that has been agreed with the community is:

A beautiful, desirable place to live, preserving the distinctive rural villages of Cold Ash and Ashmore Green, with their own identities, whilst also providing a variety of settings and dwellings across the whole P~~p~~arish that take advantage of modern infrastructure and transport links to local towns and beyond.

Underlying principles

3.3. Cold Ash is a lovely P~~p~~arish and one worthy of protecting for current and future residents. Poorly planned or excessive (in the context of the rural nature of Cold Ash) housing developments constitute a serious threat, so it is vital that development is carefully and sympathetically planned. Development should be designed and managed in a way that enhances the ~~p~~Parish. Thus, the principle underpinning the CAPNDP can best be described as:

To enhance and protect the character and heritage of Cold Ash Parish.

By **enhance** we mean:

- Ensure limited, sustainable high-quality development in keeping with the ambience and character of the P~~p~~arish localities.
- Ensure all developments are soundly integrated into the existing community, considering quality of life, traffic, transport, health, education, economy, and environment.
- Take advantage of modern design and materials to ensure the infrastructure is as cost effective and environmentally friendly as possible.
- Ensure any housing developments demonstrate how they avoid excessive traffic congestion.
- Identify important community assets and green spaces and how they could be enhanced

in years to come.

By **protect** we mean:

- Ensure the overall rural character and setting of the P~~p~~arish remains, with the minimum of intrusion on the existing surrounding green and agricultural space.
- Preserve the fundamental character and identity of Cold Ash and other villages as small, discrete, distinctive villages, avoiding creeping urbanisation.
- Ensure that the mix of new housing reflects the tradition / profile and style of the villages and locales across the P~~p~~arish
- Minimise disturbance and disruption (noise, traffic congestion) through the P~~p~~arish
- Preserve the P~~P~~arish's rural nature and landscape.

Neighbourhood Development Plan Objectives

3.4. The following six objectives aim to deliver the overarching vision:

1. **To support sustainable, high quality, energy efficient and carbon neutral development that is in keeping with and seeks to preserve the heritage and character of the village in terms of design and scale. Development should meet an identified need and be directed to the most sustainable locations within the defined settlement boundaries.**

2. **To protect the rural character and green spaces in and around the villages and other settlements, conserving and enhancing the attractiveness of the landscape, including its contribution to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape~~AONB~~, enabling access to the countryside, encouraging biodiversity, supporting the aims of the Local Nature Recovery Network Strategy for Berkshire and maintaining the Parish's distinct boundaries.**

3. **To reduce the reliance on cars by improving opportunities for walking, cycling, equestrian and public transport both within the Parish and to other nearby villages, towns, and services, which will help to improve people's physical and mental health and wellbeing as well as and road safety for all.**

4. **To maintain and enhance the existing 'village' atmosphere, ensuring the Parish remains a safe and friendly place to live, work and visit with a strong sense of community and a range of community facilities.**

5. **To support measures that will help to mitigate climate change that will improve air and water quality, tackle plastic pollution and restore habitats to allow plants and wildlife to thrive.**

6. **To encourage a thriving rural economy by supporting existing businesses operating in the P~~p~~arish and providing opportunities for new ones where this can be achieved sustainably.**

4. SPATIAL STRATEGY

Policy CAP1: Location of Development

Purpose

4.1. This policy sets out the CAPNDP's approach to the location of development within the P~~p~~arish. It emphasises the importance of new development being directed to the most sustainable locations, near to local services and amenities, which will help to protect the valued green spaces and corridors in the area and avoid sprawl and coalescence between both the individual settlements within the P~~p~~arish and those nearby urban areas, notably Thatcham and Newbury.

Justification

4.2. In a predominantly rural ~~p~~Parish such as Cold Ash, it is particularly important that development is directed to appropriate locations, where it minimises the impact on the natural environment and avoids sprawl and coalescence with surrounding settlements. The purpose of a settlement boundary is to provide that direction.

4.3. Within the Parish, two villages have a settlement boundary: Cold Ash is classified in the WBC Core Strategy as a 'service village', having a limited range of services and some limited development potential. It acts as a hub to Ashmore Green, which itself has a settlement boundary and is defined as a 'smaller village with settlement boundary', suitable only for limited infill development subject to the character and form of the settlement.

4.4. At the southern end of the P~~p~~arish, parts of the settlement boundaries for Thatcham and Newbury extend into the Cold Ash Parish boundary, and consequently the neighbourhood area. Beyond this, the P~~p~~arish is 'open countryside', with parts to the north-east falling within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (previously known as AONB)~~AONB~~.

4.5. The LPR does not identify a housing figure to be delivered through the Neighbourhood Plan, and it is considered that housing supply – to address both local and strategic housing needs - is being addressed adequately at the strategic level. The CAPNDP is a non-allocating neighbourhood plan and this position has been agreed with WBC. That is not to say that suitable sites may not become available in the future. An early review of the CAPNDP, therefore, will be undertaken to consider the policies of the LPR, once adopted, and the implications of these. This will provide greater clarity about the amount of growth that Cold Ash may be expected to accommodate over the new plan period.

4.6. The CAPNDP sets out a series of parameters to support WBC's proposed growth strategy and to reflect the comments received during the engagement on the Plan. These are:

i. supporting the provision of new dwellings in the period 2020 to 2039 in accordance with WBC's Core Strategy, Site Allocations Plan and Local Plan Review;

ii. directing development to take place within the existing settlement boundaries, as the most sustainable locations;

iii. protecting the individual and distinctive character of the villages within the P~~p~~arish and retaining the predominantly rural character and landscape of the P~~p~~arish. The rural gap between the villages and the Newbury and Thatcham settlement areas, which incorporate the urban elements of the P~~p~~arish, should be protected from development as this will restrict coalescence and reduce impacts on the North Wessex Downs National Landscape~~AONB~~ and its setting.

iv. strongly supporting the use of previously developed or 'brownfield' sites;

v. ensuring that the overall quantum of development does not put an unacceptable strain on infrastructure capacity.

4.7. In November 2022 the West Berkshire Appropriate Countryside Designation Study was prepared by WBDC to inform the identification of green gaps between settlements to restrict coalescence. Figure 5 shows the two green gaps proposed within Cold Ash Parish.

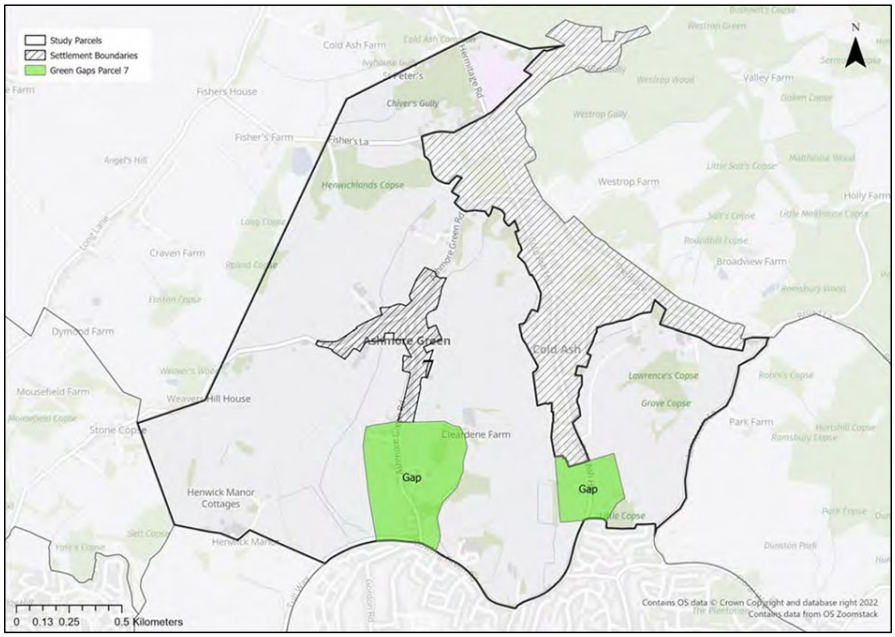


Figure 5: WBC proposed green gaps in Cold Ash Parish (source: West Berkshire Appropriate Countryside Designation Study)

4.8. The CANP seeks to slightly extend these gaps, in order to ensure that it is fully effective in restricting coalescence or encirclement of the village. Development should be avoided in these buffer zones, but any development that significantly compromises or reduces the green space buffers between any of the settlements will not be supported by policy CAP1.

4.9. The settlement boundaries, which mirror those in the LPR, are illustrated in Figure 6 and on the Policies Map.

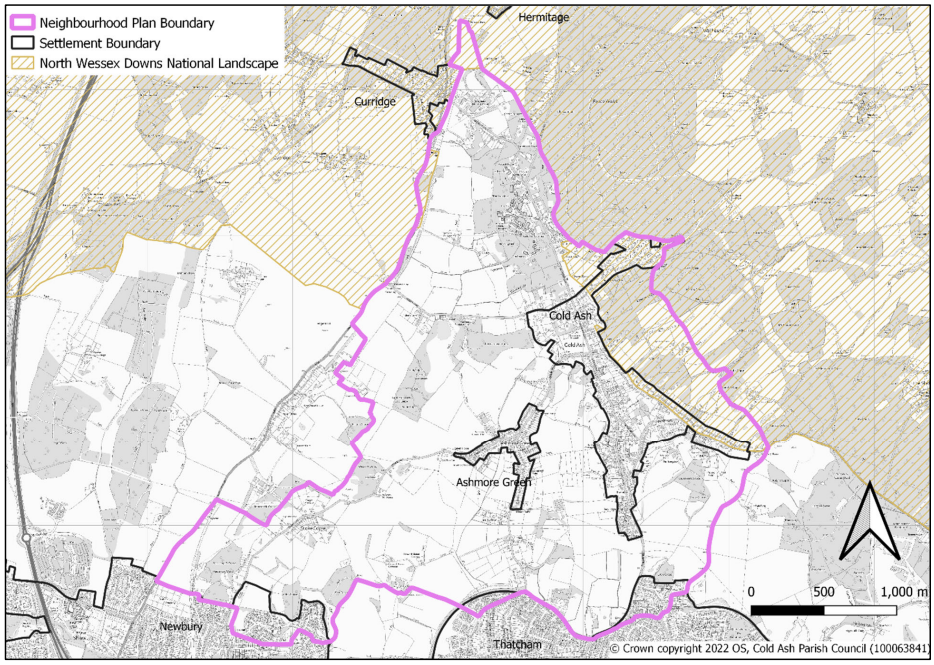


Figure 6: Settlement boundaries ~~and green gaps,~~ outside which ~~where~~ development should be avoided ~~to prevent~~result in further coalescence

POLICY CAP1: LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT

1. **Development shall be focused within the settlement boundaries (as defined in Figure 6).**

2. **Development proposals outside the settlement boundaries will only be supported where:**

    a. **it relates to appropriate uses in the countryside; or**
    b. **the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area, including the setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (previously known as AONB)~~AONB~~; or**
    c. **the development brings redundant or vacant agricultural/farm buildings or historic buildings of heritage value back into optimum beneficial use in a manner that does not cause harm in terms of additional traffic or compromise the amenity of residents in terms of size, light pollution, noise, dirt, loss of wildlife habitat; or**
    d. **it relates to necessary utilities infrastructure and where no reasonable alternative location is available; or**
    e. **it is on sites allocated for those uses in the West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations Development Plan or its successor.**

    ~~**Such development must not individually or cumulatively result in physical and/or visual coalescence and loss of separate identity of the individual settlements in the parish (Cold Ash or Ashmore Green) from neighbouring settlements, and from each other. The green gaps shown in Figure 6 demonstrate the areas most sensitive to this.**~~

3. **In determining development proposals substantial weight will be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within the settlement boundaries for either homes and/or other identified needs, or to support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land.**

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 1, 2; Adopted Core Strategy: ADP Policy 1 and 5, CS1; Housing Site Allocations DPD: C1; Local Plan Review: SP1, SP2, SP3, DM1; NPPF: 11, 29, 60,~~79,~~ 83, 8~~0~~4, 1~~19~~23,~~ 120,~~ 12~~1~~5, 12~~4~~8, 13~~50~~, 1~~74~~80, 1~~76~~82, 19~~06~~, ~~197~~200

5. CHARACTER, DESIGN, AND HERITAGE

Policy CAP2: Local character and heritage

Purpose

5.1. This policy defines what is meant by 'local character' in the context of Cold Ash Parish. It identifies three Local Character Zones and describes the essence of what makes each distinctive. This will help to guide applicants on how any development proposal can be in-keeping with the local area in which it is located and, where possible enhance it. The policy reinforces Policy CS14 of the Core Strategy and Policy SP7 of the Local Plan Review, expanding on them to include more locally specific detail.

Justification

5.2. Both the underlying geology and landscape, coupled with the activities of past generations of people and development, have created the features that give the P~~p~~arish its distinctive identity today. The largely rural P~~p~~arish contributes to the setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (previously known as AONB), with the north-eastern part falling within its boundary. Despite modest growth over the years, the P~~p~~arish's two main settlements, Cold Ash and Ashmore Green villages, have each been able to retain their own distinctive character, and it is essential to parishioners that these individual identities are maintained. It is important that coalescence both with one another, as well as with nearby Newbury and Thatcham – parts of which already extend into Cold Ash P~~p~~arish – is restricted, a factor which is addressed in Policy CAP1 through the definition of buffer zones.

Heritage assets in Cold Ash



Old Henwick Cottage, Grade II listed

5.3. Whilst there are no Conservation Areas in Cold Ash Parish, there are several notable heritage assets including 11 Grade II listed buildings, comprising traditional cottages, farmhouses and barns, and the War Memorial. In addition, the West Berkshire Historic Environment Record (HER) details on local archaeological sites and finds, historic buildings and historic landscapes within the P~~p~~arish. Not all of these are considered non-designated assets within the meaning and definition contained within the NPPF. Each entry within the HER will have varying levels of heritage significance. To merit identification as a non-designated heritage assets, the heritage significance would need to be towards the higher level.

5.4. WBC maintains a Local List of Heritage Assets that have special local architectural, archaeological, or historic interest, but are not nationally listed. They are considered to be significance to the local community and contribute to the environmental and cultural heritage of the district. The most recent list (May 2022) includes St Gabriel's Convent Chapel as a Local Heritage Asset and should be considered as a non-designated heritage asset for the purpose of Policy CAP2. Paragraph 20~~93~~ of the NPPF states: *'The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non- designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.'* An associated action with Section 10 of this CAPNDP will be to work with the Archaeology Team at WBC to consider additional locally important heritage assets.

5.5. Local Heritage at Risk: Historic England produces an annual Register of Heritage at Risk. Outside of London it does not include Grade II listings, apart from churches. Whilst no assets within Cold Ash have been identified at this time, an audit of buildings and assets should be undertaken in partnership with WBC. Where necessary, opportunities to restore assets should be taken when they arise, in partnership with the owner.

5.6. Local Character: In order to differentiate between different areas of the Parish and provide fuller detail of what is meant by 'local character' in the Cold Ash context, three broad 'Local Character Zones' have been identified, all of which are located within the neighbourhood boundary:

Villages Zone – comprising the villages of Cold Ash (Zone 1a) and Ashmore Green (Zone 1b), each with their own distinctive characteristics. This Zone falls wholly within the settlement boundary.

Urban Fringe Zone – comprising the more urbanised areas found on the outskirts of the Parish, which adjoin Thatcham (Southend and Florence Gardens) and Newbury (Manor Park). These areas are essentially part of those larger conurbations. This Zone falls within the settlement boundary.

Rural Zone – comprising land within the Parish but located outside the other zones, where little to no development is expected to take place. If exceptional approval is given, then the design principles for the Villages Zone would apply.

5.7. The zones are mapped in Figure 7 and fuller descriptions of each are provided in Table 2. Alongside Table 2, it is advised to review the information produced as a result of WBC's Historic Landscape Characterisation project. This work, undertaken between 2004 and 2007, analysed and recorded historic elements that make up the landscape today, using historic and modern mapping, aerial photographs and documents. The work fed into the identification of 91 Historic Environment Character Zones (HECZ). Three of these are relevant to Cold Ash Parish and the relevant reports summarise historic character, known archaeology and potential, conservation issues and research questions. These documents should be actively considered as part of the design of development. The relevant documents are:

- Villages Zone: HECZ: Curridge, Hermitage, Cold Ash Settlement (CHCAS)
- Rural Zone: HECZ: Shaw-Thatcham Open Field (STOF)
- Urban Fringe Zone: HECZ: Newbury Suburban Area (NSA) and Thatcham Suburban Area (TSA) (Interactive maps showing the HECZs can be found on the WBC website)

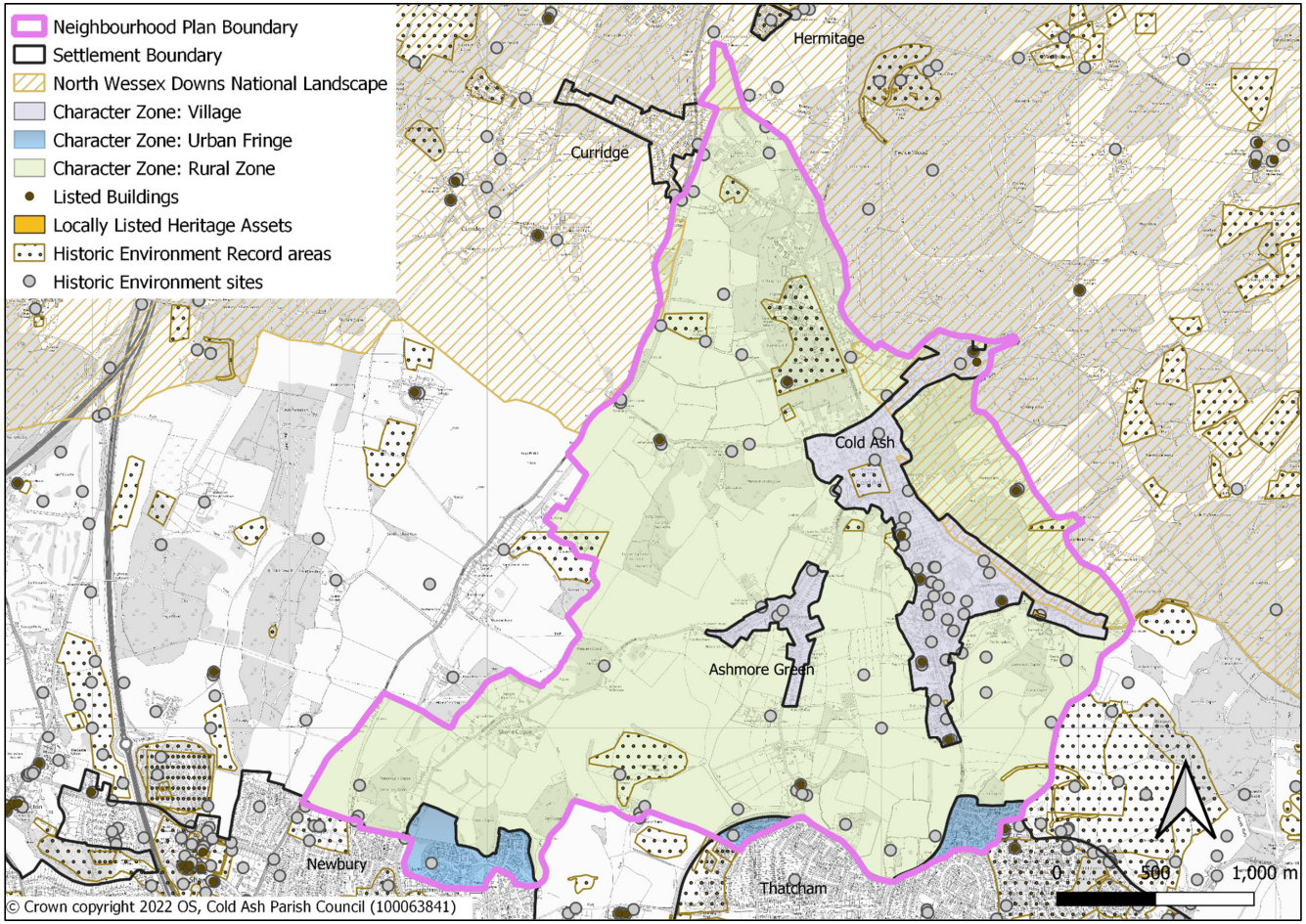


Figure 7: Identified Character Zones and local heritage assets within the Parish

Table 2: Local Character Zones

Zone 1: Village Zones – Cold Ash and Ashmore Green

Zone 1a. Cold Ash village is at the centre of the Parish, approximately four miles north-east of Newbury and less than two miles north of Thatcham. Much of the village stands on a ridge of the Berkshire Downs overlooking the Kennet Valley to the south and the Pang Valley to the north.




Older properties in Bucklebury Alley; Bungalows along The Ridge

It has a broadly linear pattern of development along Cold Ash Hill, The Ridge and Bucklebury Alley.

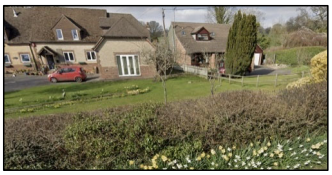
Cold Ash village is defined in the Local Plan as a local service village, where a small amount of development (particularly economic, or which extends the range of services available) may be appropriate. The village contains the majority of the Village Zone facilities with schools, pubs, and a post office/general store.

Housing styles are mixed across Cold Ash. The Ridge and Bucklebury Alley predominantly contain some of the oldest homes in the village – these comprise large houses, in traditional or semi traditional brick or wood clad styles, some thatched, set back from the road and mostly in substantial gardens with woodland or fields surrounding them.

Where the Ridge joins Cold Ash Hill, we see a mix of terrace styled cottages, two-storey mixed character dwellings, aged buildings and more modern bungalows. Cold Ash main village has a higher density of housing with traditional cottage styles, newer build brick houses and mid-20th Century bungalows. There is also a wider variety of house sizes than in the rest of the area allowing for a variety of household types ranging from young families through to the more elderly.

Many of the terrace styled or semi-detached cottages are set close to the main road, with bungalows and larger houses set further back behind front gardens and predominantly low scale fences. Leading off Cold Ash Hill there are single track lanes providing access to older cottages to the west and some later developments to the east.

Zone 1b. Ashmore Green Ashmore Green lies at a lower elevation, less than a mile to the south-west of Cold Ash Village. It also has a broadly linear pattern of development with its central spine being Ashmore Green Road, branching off to Stoney Lane. The linear development provides a strong connection to the countryside, with gaps between houses providing access to views both to the east and west.




Single storey housing, set within greenery and detached houses set back from the road Cold Ash

To the west of Ashmore Green, the land is mostly agricultural. There is a mixture of housing with detached larger properties, bungalows and attached (terrace styled) cottages near the small Village Green. In the

main the larger or detached properties are set back from the road and well-spaced, with front and rear gardens and established hedgerows prevailing. Low open fences (post and rail in the main), walls and hedgerows delineate the boundaries between properties and throughout the characteristic is predominantly rural in nature. Given the variety of housing, there is no single style that dominates, however a key feature throughout is single storey housing which ~~compliments~~complements and blends into both the settlement boundary itself and the fields or woodland surrounding it.

Overall, the two Village Zones share a rural characteristic with a significant focus on the sympathetic siting of properties within the settlement so that they conserve and enhance the surrounding landscape. The ~~m~~majority of any future development is envisioned to be infill within the existing settlement where it will be critical to maintain and enhance the village character.

Zone 2: Urban Fringe Zone

The Urban Fringe Zone is where the rural landscape meets the urban areas of Thatcham and Newbury which have, over the years, slowly extended into Cold Ash Parish.

In the main the housing in these areas is more modern and homogenous in style and scale. Predominantly red brick and tiled roofs, the majority of properties have gardens which can vary in size. These areas have a more 'planned' layout than the older areas in the Villages Zone.

In order to restrict the erosion of the rural and villages zones, it will be important to restrict significant expansion of the urban fringe zone.

Development within the urban fringe zone is effectively considered to be part of those larger settlement – Thatcham and Newbury ~~–~~ and should take their design cues from the prevalent styles in those areas. Where development sits alongside the open rural landscape, however, the density and massing of development should reduce, to establish a more gradual shift between 'urban' and 'open countryside'.



Modern housing in the north-east part of Newbury – the style is in stark contrast to the Villages Zone

Zone 3: Rural Zone

The Rural Zone is effectively the open countryside space that weaves between the settlements and in the main is largely agricultural. It is not anticipated that any development will happen in these rural environments – part of which are situated within the National Landscape~~AONB~~, and all of which contribute towards the National Landscape~~AONB~~'s setting - however should any replacement dwellings or exceptionally agreed developments be proposed, they should take their cue from the character of the Villages Zone as opposed to the Urban Fringe.

In this way, the character of the rural zone reflects the fact that Cold Ash Parish is not homogeneous and therefore will require any proposed development to have a different design response to ensure it will be completely complementing the landscape and its character.



Open countryside between Cold Ash village and the urban fringe zone of Thatcham – green 'buffers' should be protected from development, to restrict coalescence

5.8. As demonstrated above, the built character across each Local Character Zone ranges in style, age, size, and density (see Appendix A). For each Zone to maintain its identifiable character, a balance needs to be struck between the scale, bulk, density, and height of the built form and that of open green spaces and, where relevant, the countryside.

5.9. All development should be designed to a high quality and reinforce and enhance local character, heritage assets and the landscape setting of the area. The density of development should create a character that is appropriate to the site's context, including the landscape in which it is set, whilst making best use of the land available. Lower density housing should be located towards the outer edges of the settlement where it abuts open countryside, to maintain views from and into the individual settlements, and to establish a more sensitive 'edge' to development.

5.10. Development should have regard to both the character of the Zone in which it is set and to the character of the area overall.

POLICY CAP2: LOCAL CHARACTER AND HERITAGE

A. Development should conserve and enhance the character of the Zone in which it is located, as shown on Figure 7 and described in Table 2. Design proposals which exhibit design that responds to local context and reflects the character and vernacular of the area will be supported. Innovation in design will be supported, where this demonstrably enhances the quality of the built form in a character area.

B. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals should address the following criteria:

i be guided by the character descriptions contained in Table 2 and the information and advice contained in the Historic Environment Character Zones (HECZ) relevant to each Character Zone.

ii make a positive contribution to the character of the Zone and wider area, when viewed from the main highway and public rights of way approaches into the P~~p~~arish (Hermitage Road, Cold Ash Hill and Stoney Lane) as shown in Figure 7. Improvements and enhancements should include, where appropriate, additional tree planting, the enhancement of roadside green space, the reduction/consolidation of road signs and other street furniture and wider green infrastructure improvements that are identified as being necessary. Contributions from major development in the neighbourhood area will be used to enable this, collected through Section 106 Agreements or the Community Infrastructure Levy mechanism.

iii development proposals affecting heritage assets – including non-designated heritage assets ~~–~~ – either directly or indirectly, should enhance the significance and setting of the asset. This could include, where appropriate, the delivery of development that will make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, the heritage asset, or reflect and enhance local character and distinctiveness with particular regard given to the prevailing styles of design and use of materials in a local area. Proposals are expected to be accompanied by a Heritage Statement.

iv development proposals should demonstrate that they have taken into account the potential impact on above and below ground archaeological deposits to ensure that evidence which could contribute to the understanding of human activity and past environments is not lost. Where a scheme has a potential impact on archaeological remains (below or above ground) a Heritage Statement or similar should be prepared in support of planning applications.

C. A proactive stance will be taken to any heritage assets that may be at risk. This will include working with property owners to find a use that will enable them to be put back into optimum viable use.

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 1; Adopted Core Strategy: CS19; Local Plan Review: SP7, SP8, SP9; NPPF: 131~~26~~ to 1394, 19589, 1906, ~~19~~205~~ 9 to~~ 2~~05~~10

Policy CAP3: Design of development

Purpose

5.11. This policy supports high-quality inclusive design standards that reflect, integrate, and enhance - without overwhelming - the rural character of the P~~p~~arish. It complements existing design guidance, at the national and strategic level, and adds a local dimension to this, reflecting issues of importance raised by the local community and bearing in mind the proximity of the National Landscape~~AONB~~.

Justification

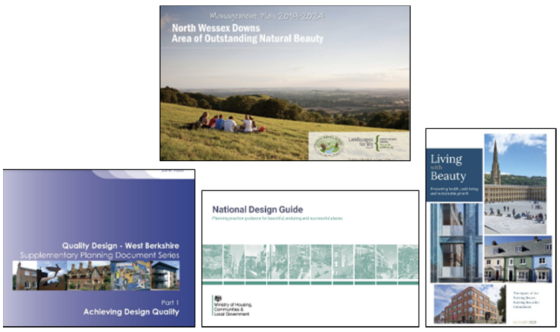
5.12. Good quality design has an important role to play in supporting the social wellbeing and quality of life for residents by improving the built environment, reducing crime, improving public health, easing transport problems and providing supportive neighbourhoods. Throughout the engagement on the CAPNDP, the community has stressed the need for new development (including smaller scale build, such as extensions to existing properties) to be sustainable and of a high quality that respects the character and rural feel of the P~~p~~arish and is in keeping with its immediate surroundings.

Strategic Design Guidance to draw on

5.13. Several strategic design guides exist that should be drawn upon by developers, homeowners and others, to inform development proposals in Cold Ash Parish, including:

- National Design Guide, 2021: in October 2019, the National Design Guide was published, forming part of the Government's collection of Planning Practice Guidance. It forms a material consideration in the decision-making process, particularly in the absence of local design guidance. The document sets out the ten characteristics necessary for creating a well-designed place, contributing to its physical character, a sense of community and addressing environmental issues affecting climate.
- Living with Beauty: promoting health, well-being and sustainable growth, 2020: a report by the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission, promoting an integrated approach to place-making that seeks to safeguard the values that matter to people – beauty, community, history, landscape.
- Building for a Healthy Life, 2020: the Government-endorsed industry standard for assessing the design quality of homes and neighbourhoods. Its criteria also link to other standards for housing design, including the Housing Quality Indicators (HQI) standards and Secured by Design. It provides a framework that stakeholders should use for development along with other policies contained within this plan for the neighbourhood area to achieve the industry standard's 'Built for a Healthy Life' commendation.
- The Quality Design West Berkshire: comprises 10 chapters covering different aspects of design, and this should be consulted as a technical guide to inform development proposals.
- The North Wessex Downs National Landscape~~AONB~~ Management Plan: contains policies relating to design within the National Landscape~~AONB~~. This is particularly relevant to Cold Ash, part of which is sited within the National Landscape~~AONB~~, whilst the villages are located within the broader setting.

5.14. When these building standards and guides are updated or superseded, this Neighbourhood Development Plan should use the updated standards for good quality, well-designed homes and neighbourhoods.



Design guides relevant to Cold Ash Parish

Local Design Principles for Cold Ash Parish

5.15. In addition to these overarching strategic design guidelines, the NPPF states that *"neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers*" (para 1~~27~~32).

5.16. Cold Ash Parish Council prepared a Village Design Statement in 2002 and this has been reviewed for the purposes of the neighbourhood plan; some elements are no longer relevant, while others remain important factors for any development proposals to consider.

5.17. A reworked set of local design principles has been established, informed using the feedback from the neighbourhood plan process. These principles are framed within the context of the characteristics for well-designed places, as set out in the National Design Code Planning practice guidance. In particular, the following characteristics have been focussed on: Context and identity; Nature; Built form; Homes and Buildings; and Movement (see Figure 8 ~~overleaf~~). Lifespan and Resources are considered within Policy CAP4 (Sustainable Design).

5.18. The guidance will have most relevance to the Village and Rural Zones and the rural edges of the Urban Zone. Urban Zones themselves will have greater scope to consider the prevailing character and design, reflecting their immediate areas.

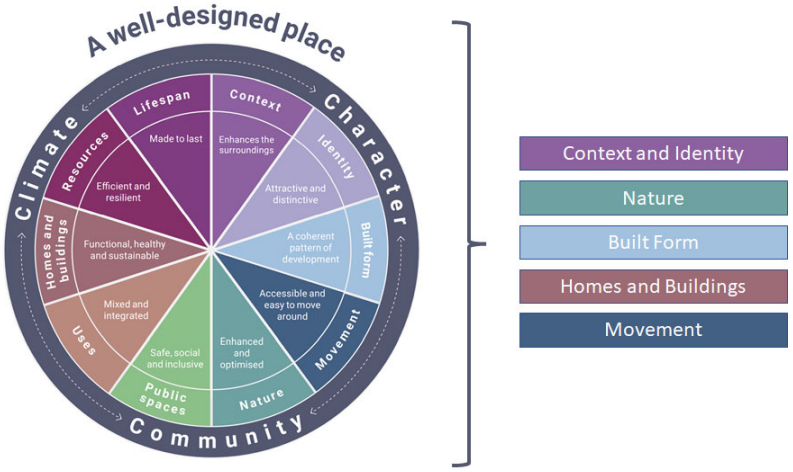


Figure 8: Applying the characteristics of well-designed places to Cold Ash Parish *(taken from 'The National Design Guide' 2021)*

Context and Identity



5.19. The **context** of any development is the location of the development and the attributes of its immediate, local and regional surroundings. The **Identity**, or character, of the Parish stems from the way that buildings, spaces, landscape and infrastructure combine and how parishioners experience them.

5.20. Within Cold Ash Parish, development should be landscape-led. Cold Ash and Ashmore Green villages, located within the Village Zone, contribute significantly to the setting of the National Landscape~~AONB~~, by way of their geographical location. It will be important, therefore, to ensure that the guidance contained within the National Landscape~~AONB~~ Management Plan is carefully considered and applied, particularly on higher, more visible ground and towards the settlement edges.

5.21. There are many iconic views within the P~~p~~arish and, as outlined in Policy CAP8 (Significant Local Views), these are of particular importance to parishioners. Developments should not negatively impact the aesthetic qualities of the landscape. In addition to the views across the five counties, it is also important that the views from the villages of Cold Ash and Ashmore Green to the wider countryside are maintained.

5.22. Developers are encouraged to conduct a landscape appraisal and demonstrate how the particular site context and existing green infrastructure shapes and informs the layout and how approaches to landscape and building form have been adopted.

5.23. Any proposed development should conserve the diversity and mix of landscape character types in the P~~p~~arish, e.g. the wooded setting of Cold Ash. The expectation is that any new development will enhance the existing surroundings and be of an appropriate scale for the site. Developers are encouraged to provide perspective (isometric) drawings to show how new developments would appear in relation to their overall rural surroundings and to the character and context of adjacent buildings and neighbouring properties. Any developments must also consider the context outlined in Section 2 of this Plan (Overview of Cold Ash Parish).

Nature

5.24. Nature contributes to the quality of the Parish, and to residents' quality of life. It is a critical component of well-designed places. The siting of any new developments should consider the need to retain open spaces and the rural nature of the Parish, together with maintaining and considering access to the numerous PROW enjoyed by the parishioners.



5.25. All new developments should prioritise nature so that a diverse ecosystem can flourish. Further detail on this is provided in Policy CAP6 (Biodiversity and the network of green infrastructure).

5.26. In any proposed development, grass verges, hedgerows, ditches, ponds and open spaces should be conserved and, where possible, enhanced in order to improve the habitat for wildlife and to maintain the rural nature of the area.

5.27. Environmentally friendly features, such as bat boxes, bird boxes, and hedgehog holes shall be specified in any ecology strategy and included in the landscape and building design.

5.28. In any development, mature trees and hedgerows should be retained. If it can be demonstrated that trees critically need to be felled, they should be replanted with native species of local provenance; the Emergency Tree Plan for the UK (2020) stipulates that 'if a tree must be removed, local authorities should implement minimum replacement planting ratios, which stipulate that for every non-woodland tree removed at least three new trees should be planted. These new trees should be located as close to the original location as possible and be the same type of planting (for example, street trees replaced by street trees)'.

5.29. Light pollution concerns are predominantly covered under the Dark Skies Policy CAP10. To support this policy any new development should aim as much as possible to reduce the creation or transmission of artificial light. Encouragement will be given to ensure that exterior lighting is both neighbourly and considers the impact on local wildlife, which are picked up in CAP 10 (Dark Skies):

- lighting should be deflected downwards rather than outwards or upwards and should be switched off after midnight at the latest; and
- any movement-sensitive triggers should be regulated to reduce illumination periods to a minimum; and
- habitats, particularly woodlands, should not be considered as a 'natural shield' to lighting, because of the impact on the unlit habitat. Non-native species of plants should not be planted near or next to habitats as these non-native species have the real potential to compromise the habitat a certain amount. These habitats, particularly if linear, are likely to be utilised by nocturnal fauna feeding and commuting.

Built Form

5.30. The Built Form contributes significantly to the character of the Parish and is the interrelationship between all the elements that create an attractive place to live, work or visit.

5.31. Development should be in-keeping with local character (with reference to the Local Character Zone it sits within) and be beautiful, as described in the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission report, Living with Beauty: promoting health, well-being and sustainable growth (section 5.16).

5.32. It is expected that the majority of new developments will be positioned within a limited number of infill sites within the existing Village Zone and Urban Fringe Zone. Any more substantial developments will be expected to produce a detailed Design Code.

5.33. Developments should incorporate areas of usable, accessible open space, utilising the natural topography to create a 'soft' edge to the residential development with attractive views into and from the surrounding countryside, and neighbouring properties.

5.34. Developments should respect the rural nature of the P~~p~~arish and be designed to promote spaciousness between dwellings, with uniform houses and plots being avoided.

5.35. The scale of development – height, massing and density - should diminish as the open countryside (defined as beyond the settlement boundaries and within Identity Zone 3) is approached, blending in seamlessly.

5.36. The use of green space within developments is encouraged. For example, through front gardens, greenspaces between developments, trees and shrubs in roadside verge. This is important to create a greener, softer look and feel to new housing developments and create habitats for local wildlife while providing a natural and sustainable drainage system.

Homes and Buildings

5.37. Well-designed homes and buildings are those which are functional, accessible, and sustainable. They provide environments that support the health and well-being of their users, and all who experience them.

5.38. New developments should demonstrate how the types of dwellings provided will help ensure a balanced mix of housing for Cold Ash Parish, particularly by the provision of homes designed for smaller households, and accessible purpose-designed homes for older people.

5.39. The Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles are useful in this context. They are based on 10 key design criteria, many of which are recognisable from good design generally - good light, ventilation, room to move around and good storage - but they have particular relevance to the spectrum of older persons' housing which needs to both offer an attractive alternative to the family home and be able to adapt over time to meet changing needs.

5.40. Any new development, or extension, should have a scale and form which would be complementary to surrounding properties and would not result in any significant loss of amenity to existing residents.

5.41. Cold Ash Parishioners have emphasised the need to respect the local vernacular in any new development. The characteristics of what exists already in the Village Zone and Urban Fringe Zone (as described in Table 5.1) should therefore be considered, and developments should be similar in character and scale to existing housing in the area being developed.

5.42. Given the individual nature of many of the existing properties in the Parish, building materials are not specified other than the need to complement local styles and be sustainable in nature. Sustainability is covered in Policy CAP4 (Sustainable Design); however it is worth noting from a design perspective that eco design principles do not prescribe any particular architectural style and can be adapted to fit a wide variety of built characters. A wide range of solutions is also available to retrofit existing buildings, including listed properties, to improve their energy efficiency.

5.43. Adequate storage for bins should be designed into development from the outset.

5.44. The height of new buildings should be in proportion to their surroundings. It is expected that new developments shall be no more than two storeys in height, or three storeys where roof space is utilised; any apartment buildings (for example retirement homes) should respect the scale of the surrounding houses.

5.45. Without compromising the overall design principles, groups of buildings should include variations to ensure variety and interest. Innovative designs, however, which respect and are sympathetic to the rural vision of the Neighbourhood Plan and the style of the surrounding homes/buildings, will not be discouraged.

5.46. Extensions of existing buildings should be in keeping with, and in proportion to, the size of the original building.

5.47. In addition to the Policy CAP10 (Dark Skies), light spill from within buildings is a cause for concern in maintaining the rural environment and will be reduced by:

i) All glazing to adhere to the appropriate building codes and standards; and

ii) Avoiding, recessing or containing behind permanent landscaping, large areas of vertical fenestration; and

iii) Avoiding glazing which is facing upwards (whether horizontal or angled) including conservatory roofs; and

iv) Within a site, locating and orientating development as sensitively as possible.

5.48. Native hedgerows of local provenance (such as hawthorn or beech) and/or post or rail fences should be used to define boundaries of new properties. Close boarded or similarly styled fencing or brick walls are regarded as urbanising features; wherever possible, these should be confined to visually non-prominent places, such as the division of back gardens.

Movement

5.49. Patterns of **movement** for our Parishioners are integral to well-designed places. Movement includes walking and cycling, transport, parking and access to facilities.

5.50. Suggested improvements to road usage (to encourage more sustainable modes of transport locally) are covered in Policy CAP11 (Encouraging Sustainable Movement), however development should additionally take road safety and environmental factors into account. Development along narrow lanes or single-track roads, for instance, is discouraged due to the increased traffic levels which would result and the difficulties that may be posed for pedestrians accessing those developments.

5.51. Sufficient off-road car parking – including the provision of electric car charging capability - should be provided for residents, visitors and service vehicles, in line with the West Berkshire Parking Standards. Equally, secure, covered bicycle parking/storage space should be provided. Where appropriate, garages or car ports should be set back from the street frontage and the style of provision be appropriate to the houses to which they belong, and the rural character of the area. They should not be larger in scale than the dwellings they service, nor should they be visually obtrusive. The Institute of Highways Engineers sets out considerations for parking solutions in the Residential Parking Policy for New Development.

5.52. All new developments will provide electric vehicle charging points for each dwelling.

5.53. Sufficient space must be provided for the storage of, and access to, refuse and recycling.

5.54. Existing PROW are to be maintained, with new landscaped connections into the site and the wider PROW network encouraged.

5.55. Policy CAP2 sets out the criteria to enable excellent design in Cold Ash Parish. It has a close relationship with Policies CAP4 (Sustainable design), CAP5 (Minimising the risk of flooding), CAP6 (Conserving and enhancing the natural landscape), and CAP8 (Iconic Views), of this Plan. Developments should take account of each of the policies.

POLICY CAP3: DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT

A. Development proposals are expected to incorporate a high quality of design, which demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of vernacular and local character, including existing buildings, landscape and local architectural precedents.

B. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals, including for infill, are expected to address the following criteria:

a. design should be landscape-led, supported by a landscape strategy and in-keeping with the Local Character Zone in which it is located.

b. the guidance contained in the Quality Design West Berkshire Supplementary Planning Document and the North Wessex Downs National Landscape ~~AONB~~ Management Plan. It should seek to address the Local Design Principles for Cold Ash, in particular it should:

i. respect the height, scale and local vernacular of the surrounding buildings in the context of the local topography; and

ii. be of a density in keeping with the immediate local context, respecting the rural nature of the P~~p~~arish, whilst ensuring the efficient use of land and, where appropriate, meeting identified local housing needs. It is recognised that some sites may be able to accommodate a higher density where it can be clearly demonstrated this would respect, and be sensitive to, the character and particular context of the locality in which it is located;

iii. provide high quality boundary treatment, comprising native flora, including the retention and enhancement of established trees and hedgerows; and

iv. demonstrate how the particular site context and existing green infrastructure shapes and informs the layout and how approaches to landscape and building form have been adopted; and

v. reflect architectural variety – such as roof and window styles - found locally and using materials that are in keeping with those used in existing buildings in the immediate locality; and

vi. Incorporate accessible and attractive public open spaces and creative use of Sustainable Drainage Systems; and

vii. Not have a significantly detrimental impact on the iconic views; and

viii. Provide adequate off-road parking – cars and bicycles - for residents, visitors and service vehicles, in accordance with the West Berkshire Parking Standards; and

ix. Provide adequate storage for waste and recycling containers.

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 1; Adopted Core Strategy: CS14; Local Plan Review: SP7; NPPF: 10~~4~~8, 11~~20~~8, 12~~0~~4, 1~~26~~31 ~~to~~ -14~~13~~6, 15~~7~~2

Policy CAP4: Sustainable design

Purpose

5.56. This policy seeks to ensure that development meets the highest environmental standards in terms of its construction, energy use and resource energy use such as materials, water, waste etc, to help mitigate climate change.

Justification

5.57. On 12 June 2019 the Government voted to amend the Climate Change Act 2008 by introducing a new target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. This is otherwise known as a net zero target. In preparation for this, by 2035, emissions will need to be reduced emissions by 78% (compared to 1990 levels). Locally, West Berkshire Council declared a Climate Change Emergency in July 2019 with an aim to deliver carbon neutrality for the District by 2030.

5.58. These are demanding targets, which will require everyone to contribute, from households and communities to businesses and local and national government. Being '2050 ready' will require new buildings to have minimal energy use and net carbon emissions over the year. They should follow the energy hierarchy, looking at such measures as insulation, energy efficient lighting and being fitted with or connected to low/zero carbon technologies (which includes renewable technologies. Consideration should also be given to the development reducing water demand through water efficiency methods and technologies.



Examples of discreet solar panels (source: Historic England)

5.59. Notwithstanding current building regulations, standards for low/zero carbon homes and developments are set out in WBC policy. Planners and developers are strongly encouraged to make use of energy efficient materials and to ensure that the design and layout of new development maximises its potential to be as energy efficient as possible and to encourage the use of renewable energy.

5.60. There is an opportunity to improve and promote sustainability in Cold Ash by:

- supporting passive environmental design, maximising the use of 'natural' sources of heating, cooling and ventilation to create comfortable conditions inside building;
- Integrating renewable energy systems into new development, including existing and new public buildings. Where appropriate and viable, there is support locally for solar panels to be incorporated into new development;

- reducing water consumption through grey water systems and water efficient systems;
- ensuring all further development incorporates high quality sustainable drainage systems and, where possible, retro-fits Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to existing properties and the public highway.
- promoting sustainable forms of transport through priority systems for pedestrians and cyclists and provision of individual and communal electric vehicle charging points;
- promoting public transport.

5.61. Policy CAP4 seeks to provide a local iteration of the national and local policy context for this important matter. While taking account of the importance of the Building Regulations in regulating and delivering energy efficiency measures, it identifies a series of locally distinctive design features which would be supported where they are incorporated into development.

POLICY CAP4: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

1. **Proposals which incorporate design and environmental performance measures and standards to reduce energy consumption, carbon emission and adapt to current and projected climate change scenarios will be supported.**

2. **Proposals which incorporate the following sustainable design features as appropriate to their scale, nature and location will be strongly supported, where measures will not have a detrimental impact on character, landscape and views:**

   a. **siting and orientation to optimise passive solar gain.**

   b. **the use of high quality, thermally efficient building materials and measures such as loft and wall insulation and double glazing.**

   c. **installation of energy efficiency measures such as LED lighting.**

   d. **providing low carbon sustainable design and avoid or mitigate all regulated emissions by following the energy hierarchy. For example, use less energy and manage energy demand during operation through fabric and service improvements; where feasible exploit local energy sources such as secondary heat and supply energy efficiently and cleanly, via low carbon technologies; maximise the use of zero carbon technology / renewable energy by producing, storing and using zero carbon / renewable energy on-site; only where necessary, off-site measures to deal with any remaining emissions.**

   e. **Providing the infrastructure for adequate electric vehicle charging points for each dwelling, where new parking provision is expected to be made.**

   f. **alterations to existing buildings should be designed with energy reduction in mind and comply with current sustainable design and construction standards, as set out in the Quality Design – West Berkshire SPD and the Building Regulations.**

   g. **Reducing water consumption through water re-use measures including rainwater harvesting, surface water harvesting and / or grey water recycling systems.**

3. **The retrofitting of historic buildings is encouraged to reduce energy demand and to generate low/zero carbon energy where appropriate, providing it safeguards historic characteristics.**

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 1, 5; Adopted Core Strategy: CS14, CS15; Local Plan Review: SP5, SP7; NPPF: 13~~50~~, 15~~27 to 155~~60

Policy CAP5: Minimising the risk of flooding

Purpose

5.62. This policy supports the essential requirement for development proposals to consider both existing risk and potential risk from flooding, as set out in Paragraph 15~~2~~7 of the NPPF, by maintaining sinks and drains and requiring new developments to include sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS).

5.63. Risks should not solely be considered for the new development site but must also consider the secondary effect of that development, or lack of a long-term maintenance plan, to other residents and the wider environment. A prime example of this is the potential impact to residents of Thatcham of developments in Cold Ash Parish.

5.64. This policy seeks to work in tandem with the West Berkshire Local Flood Risk Strategy document, and the Thatcham Surface Water Management Plan.

Justification

5.65. The hilly nature of the P~~p~~arish introduces a significant level of flood risk to the lower reaches of the P~~p~~arish and surrounding areas, including affecting areas of Newbury and Thatcham. Nature has addressed this through several natural solutions, notably sinks and ordinary watercourses forming around the P~~p~~arish. The P~~p~~arish had, historically therefore, benefited from natural features to contain and reduce the risk of flooding.

5.66. As development has taken place, however, some of these natural drainage solutions have been compromised or ceased to be fully effective. Whilst a number of man-made solutions have been introduced, it is now a priority that attention is paid to maintaining the remaining natural issues, sinks and ordinary watercourses.

5.67. There are four types of flooding that impact Cold Ash and its surrounding areas, notably:

- Fluvial flooding (from ordinary watercourses)
- Surface water flooding
- Groundwater flooding
- Sewer flooding

5.68. As recently as in the winter of 2013/ 2014, residents in Cold Ash have experienced flooding, including the flood water flowing down into Waller Drive and Turnpike Industrial Estate around 1.5m deep flooding all six of the industrial units and 11 properties on Turnpike Road. A farmhouse was flooded off B4009 Long Lane due to excessive surface water run-off. Properties along Ashmore Green Road frequently suffer from surface water flooding.

5.69. It is worth noting that the significant flooding to Thatcham in 2007 was not caused by fluvial (river) flooding but by a combination of surface and sewer flooding.

5.70. Properties along Ashmore Green Road, at present, frequently suffer from surface water flooding.

5.71. Whilst national policy includes robust guidance on fluvial (river) sources of flooding, this policy seeks to strengthen guidance to ensure that development proposals in Cold Ash Parish acknowledge the localised issues faced by communities from land drainage issues. The majority of the watercourses in the P~~p~~arish, for instance, are not main rivers and therefore fall under private

ownership and there is less robust national policy for these with regards to new development. There is a responsibility on the riperian owner for the maintenance of watercourses. In addition, the clearing of mature trees and areas rich in biodiversity contributes to the concerns regarding land drainage.

5.72. The Cold Ash Parish Flood Warden sits on the Thatcham Flood Forum and collaboration on the shared issues in the management and reduction of flood risk is ongoing.

5.73. The policy supports the need for development proposals to consider both existing risk and potential risk from flooding:

5.74. Existing risk:

a. Watercourses should remain open, and land safeguarded for management of existing flood risk, to avoid passing this risk on to others. New development should not alter or impede existing drainage patterns/overland flow-paths, as this can result in the displacement of surface water, causing increased flood risk to existing communities and infrastructure.

b. Highways drainage systems within the Parish are already impacted by heavy rainfall and there is a concern about how adequately these are being maintained, due to local authority budget constraints. As a result, the potential secondary impact on highway drainage of any new development should be considered.

5.75. Potential risk:

a. Where practicable, existing land drainage features should be retained (these are often lost to make room for development, provide access and amend site boundaries). Roadside ditches also perform an important function in the village. Development will be encouraged to protect and complement the existing drainage networks, providing betterment and more robust maintenance plans for these, both in the short and long term, to improve drainage within the village in the future. It should be noted that riparian owners have responsibility for maintenance of waterways in their ownership.

~~a.~~b. It is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for surface water drainage to ground, water courses or surface water sewer. It must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer, as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding. Where appropriate, planning permission for developments which result in the need for off-site upgrades, will be subject to conditions to ensure the occupation is aligned with the delivery of necessary infrastructure upgrades. The Local Planning Authority will seek to ensure that there is adequate water and wastewater infrastructure to serve all new developments. Developers are encouraged to contact the water/waste water company as early as possible to discuss their development proposals and intended delivery programme to assist with identifying any potential water and wastewater network reinforcement requirements. Where there is a capacity constraint the Local Planning Authority will, where appropriate, apply phasing conditions to any approval to ensure that any necessary infrastructure upgrades are delivered ahead of the occupation of the relevant phase of development.

~~b.~~c. With climate models projecting an increase in rainfall, it is essential that any new developments factor in the potential impact of the development on surface water. As

referenced in paragraph 5.66, the impact on the surrounding Parish should be considered in addition to the new development itself.

~~c.~~d. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are expected to be delivered on all new development and should be made attractive and accessible to people, as well as being designed to enhance biodiversity, as now required by the NPPF. SuDS plans are expected to be available for review at the early stage of any planning application. WBC have an adopted SuDS Supplementary Planning Document; this and any other relevant national planning and environmental legislation should be referred to. *It is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for surface water drainage to ground, water courses or surface water sewer. It must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer, as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding*.

Natural flood management

5.76. Rainwater runoff, particularly because of heavy rainfall, can quickly overburden the drainage system. In these circumstances, it is helpful to reduce the amount of the sediment in the run-off, which will help to maintain the full capacity of pipes; slow the water down so that there is more time for it to be naturally soaked into the earth; and provide additional opportunities for water to be soaked up into the earth so that it does not enter the pipes in the first place.

5.77. In Cold Ash, this might be achieved by maximising the use of "natural" SuDS features, including swales, streams, storage ponds, reed beds and the use of leaky dams and woody debris to retain water up stream.

5.78. These natural systems manage flood risk and can also secure other objectives, such as providing additional public open space integrated with cycling and walking routes, providing additional habitat, and contributing to the character of the new "place". Examples are shown below:

	Planting additional trees and hedgerows in public green spaces and along verges. Soakaway crates can be installed beneath trees, which serve to capture excess water, slowing its movement until it can be naturally soaked into the earth or taken in by the tree. Verges in the village could be used in this way, whereby kerbs beside green spaces can be lowered to enable water to flow into the green space.
	In areas where natural green space is lacking, small rain gardens can be created to capture surface water before it enters the drain. The use of larger stone and cobbles can assist in removing sediment from the water
	The use of ponds and reed beds to capture surface water. Ponds are noted for their biodiversity value as a habitat for a number of species and would therefore play a dual role in the P~~p~~arish. Great crested newts are found across the district and WBC has recently received a license to study these more closely. Additional ponds will enable further habitats for this important species.

5.79. Developers are required to consult as appropriate with the relevant water authority on sewage and drainage infrastructure. They are strongly encouraged to commence pre-application discussions with the water authority at the earliest possible opportunity.

POLICY CAP5: MINIMISING THE RISK OF FLOODING

1. **Existing watercourses (inclusive of all ditches, sinks and land drains) will be expected to remain open and properly maintained by the Riparian Landowner and the land safeguarded for management of existing flood risk.**

2. **Development proposals that protect or improve and complement existing drainage networks (watercourses and land drains specifically as well as highway drainage and storm water drains/public sewers) while providing long-term betterment and more robust maintenance of these to improve drainage within the village in the long term, will be supported.**

3. **Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) must be provided on site unless there are critical and compelling reasons why this is not possible. The absence of any on-site SuDS will only be permissible in such developments where a specific reason can be evidenced that prevents the use of SuDS. Should the development negatively impact surface, fluvial, groundwater or sewer flooding, the application is unlikely to be supported.**

4. **SuDS provision must demonstrate how its design will enhance wildlife and biodiversity, for example through the provision of SuDS as part of green spaces, and that includes green roofs, permeable surfaces and rain gardens, as well as minimising the impacts of flooding.**

5. **Applications for major developments, and those in a flood risk area, as identified by West Berkshire Council and on Environment Agency mapping, shall be accompanied by a drainage scheme maintenance and management plan. Other developments shall be accompanied by details that make clear the responsibilities for the long-term management of all surface and land drainage components on the site. This strategy should include:**

    a. **What actions the developer will take to adhere to the published and approved SuDS plans.**
    b. **How, if at any point, the defined targets/goals/standards of this plan are not met, this would be mitigated.**
    c. **How the developer will ensure the residents understand the performance and progress of the plan in the long, medium and short term.**
    d. **What safeguards, steps and mitigation are proposed should the management company fail, or is taken over, to ensure the SuDs commitment for the development is maintained.**
    e. **Clarification of who maintains responsibility for the longer-term oversight of any management body set up to enforce a SuDS agreement on behalf of the developer and/or the residents.**
    f. **Specifics as to how communication and appropriate working relations with the ~~p~~Parish are to be put in place should SuDs based issues or mitigations be required.**

6. **All applications for development will be expected to consider the potential risk to the surrounding environment and in particular the impacts of surface water, ground water and sewage systems to properties and residents further down the flood risk chain from any high ground.**

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 5; Adopted Core Strategy: CS16; Local Plan Review: SP6; NPPF: 1~~59~~65 – 1756~~9~~

6. ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE

Policy CAP6: Biodiversity and the network of green and blue infrastructure

Purpose

6.1. This policy seeks to ensure that the multiple benefits of green spaces and corridors within the P~~p~~arish – including their importance in combating pressure on wildlife, habitats, biodiversity and geodiversity and in off-setting the effects of air pollution - are recognised and enhanced. This applies particularly where individual spaces have a greater collective value as part of wider chains of green infrastructure. This will serve to support the requirement to conserve and, where possible, provide a net gain in biodiversity through planning policy whilst accommodating sustainable development.

Justification

6.2. The NPPF states that planning policies should seek to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity including by identifying and mapping habitats and networks. The Environment Act includes a provision for a mandatory requirement for new developments to provide a biodiversity net gain of a minimum of 10%, either on-site, off-site or as a combination of the two.



Looking North-East towards the Broadview Farm and the Pang Valley

6.3. The Environment Act also recognises the need to protect what it describes as "Nature Recovery Networks", joined-up system of places important for wildlife on land and at sea. It is considered important, therefore, to seek to enhance the green infrastructure assets (green spaces, wildlife sites, access routes and historic sites) of the ~~Neighbourhood area~~Parish where possible.

The Defra biodiversity metric has been designed to determine and quantify existing biodiversity value in terms of habitats and the consequent measures required to ensure measurable net gain. Net gain involves a post development increase in biodiversity units of 10%. Natural England considers this to be the most appropriate mechanism for determining current ecological value and delivering biodiversity net gain. Ecological assessment by suitably qualified people must utilise this metric on all habitats to determine net gain.

Ecological reports must be consistent with BS 42020 Biodiversity – code of practise for planning and development.

6.4. The landscape of the P~~p~~arish has been formed over many centuries by the geology and climate of the natural and human interactions. These influences have resulted in a diverse pattern of land use that, along with the emotionally engaging natural landscape, provide the rural sense of place for the communities in rural areas of the P~~p~~arish. Defined as Woodland and Heathland mosaic in the Landscape Character Assessment, the area is dominated by an east-west orientated, heathland ridge and characterised by varied topography, from flat plateau areas to steeply undulating slopes. Woodland is a key component in the varied and attractive land cover mosaic, giving it a distinctive role in providing a rural setting.

6.5. Figures 9 and 10 identifies on a map the green stepping-stones and, importantly, the unbroken green corridors within the area. It has been informed by the Landscape Character Assessment and biodiversity work undertaken by the North Wessex Downs~~AONB~~ National Landscape ~~u~~ Unit, WBC and the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC). It should be noted that Local Wildlife Sites boundaries are subject to change and should be obtained from the TVERC.

6.6. These are important spaces for the local community for recreational purposes and for visitors to the area, threading through the villages themselves. Access to open spaces is important for well being and mental health. They also provide critical spaces as wildlife refuges and routes for wildlife, such as bats, to prevent species becoming isolated.

6.7. The green and blue infrastructure assets of the Parish should be maximised and made properly accessible, where feasible. Development proposals are encouraged to facilitate improved connectivity between wildlife areas and green spaces that are used by the community. If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (for instance by locating to an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

6.8. Planning permission should also be refused for any development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland, veteran trees, trees of high conservation value and linear habitats (i.e. hedgerows, streams and ditches), unless the need for and benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss. In this instance, substantial compensation as quantified by the Defra biodiversity metric will be considered.

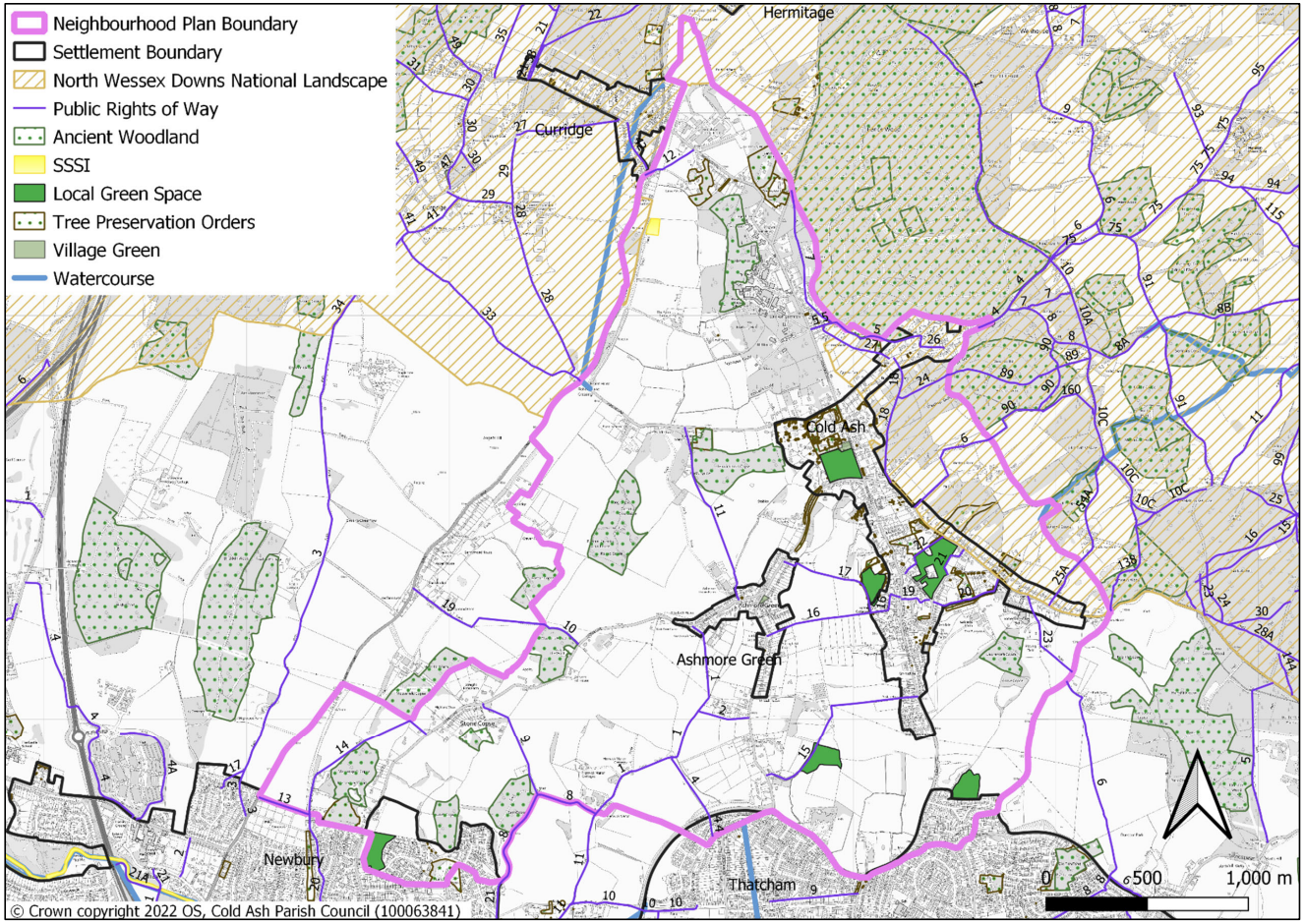


Figure 9: Green infrastructure (Parish wide)

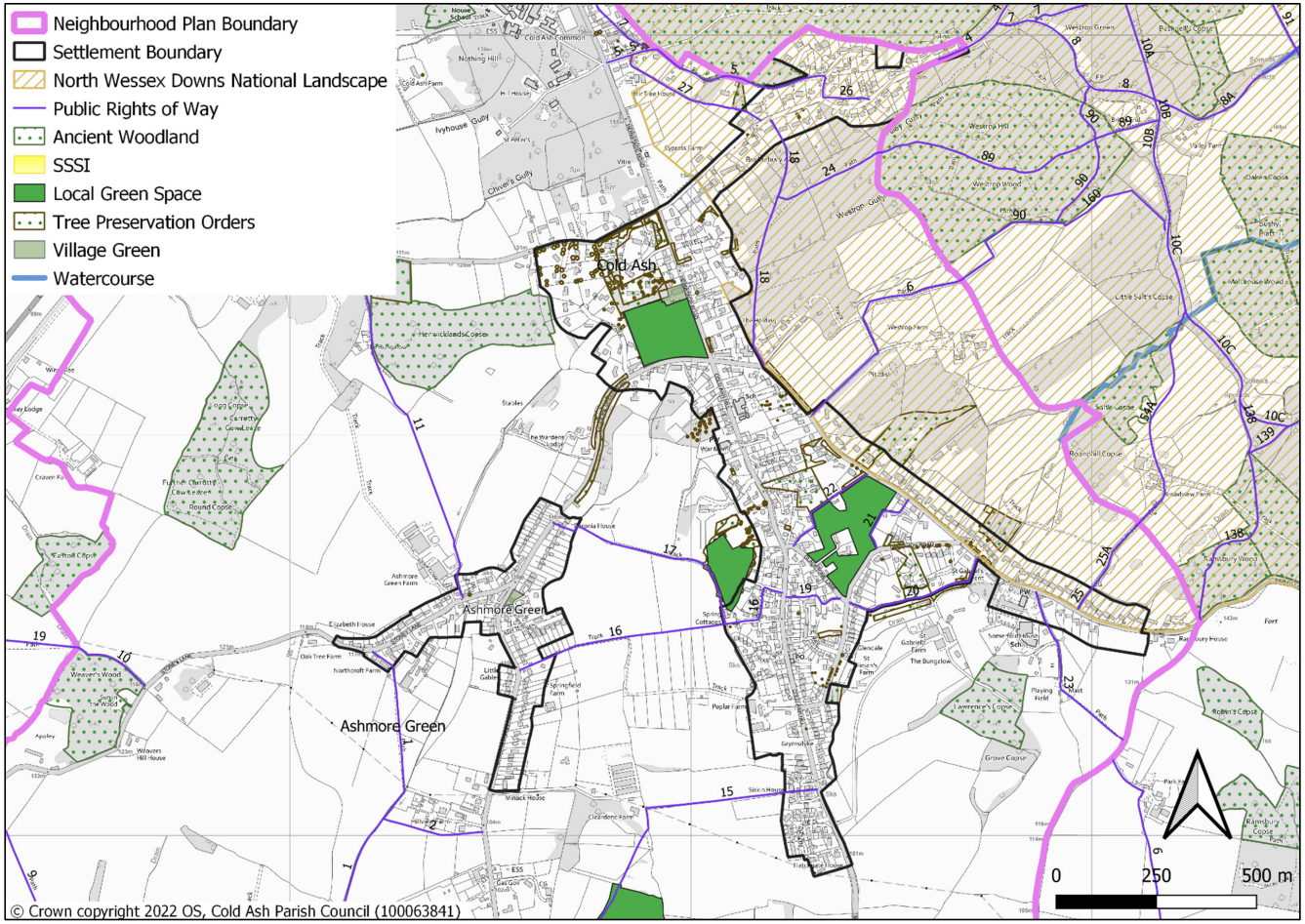
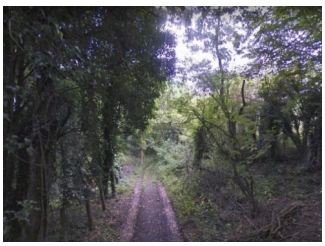


Figure 10: Green infrastructure (villages)

Trees and ancient woodland

6.9. The P~~p~~arish retains a significant number of trees and woodland – including veteran trees and ancient woodland – many of which are protected through Preservation Orders. As noted in the NPPF at paragraph 13~~1~~6, trees play a vital part in dealing with the effects of climate change and managing pollution. They provide shade, reduce flood risk, enable carbon capture, improve air quality and contribute to the purification of water. They also contribute to local character. While the P~~p~~arish has many existing Tree Protection Orders (TPOs), the Parish Council encourages all residents to come forward to recommend, and even apply for, new TPOs where it would benefit the P~~p~~arish.





Tree Preservation Orders along Ashmore Green Road and Weaver's Wood ancient woodland

6.10. Ancient woodland and veteran trees are irreplaceable habitats, which have both heritage and cultural value. Natural England advises that development which would result in the loss of, or damage to, ancient woodland and ancient or notable trees will not be permitted except in wholly exceptional circumstances, as set out in paragraph 180 of the NPPF. They also advise that it is preferable to link up fragmented areas of woodland, which might be divided by development, with green bridges or tunnels. Also, to buffer ancient woodland and notable/veteran trees by leaving an appropriate zone of semi-natural habitat between the development and the woodland, providing wildlife corridors, and balancing new developments and residential areas with green infrastructure and allowing space for trees.

Biodiversity opportunity areas within Cold Ash Parish

6.11. Many developments are able to deliver biodiversity gain on-site, which might include the provision of sustainable urban drainage systems. Whilst developments are encouraged to deliver in this way, this is not always possible; equally there may be opportunities to enhance other parts of the Parish in need of attention. It is therefore useful to consider where Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA) exist within Cold Ash. BOAs do not represent a statutory designation or a constraint upon development, rather, they are the areas where biodiversity improvements are likely to have the most beneficial results at a strategic scale. There is one BOA that has been identified by the Berkshire Local Nature Partnership and recorded within the TVERC. The P~~p~~arish intends to continue to explore BOA opportunities for the Local Green Space sites, and other green space within the ~~p~~Parish, with local landowners. Once potential sites are identified, we will aim to establish the necessary baseline data against which any Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) can be tracked and managed. Should we, in time, achieve any BNG, we will aim to establish the appropriate BOA(s) enabling the relevant landowner(s) to sell the BNG.

6.12. Within 18 months to two years, the Habitat Recovery Network for Berkshire will be in place. This process is being managed by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

6.13. **Bucklebury Plateau** – Covering much of the northern part of the P~~p~~arish, including those areas falling within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape~~AONB~~, this plateau extends between the Kennet Valley and the Pang Valley, incorporating, in the Cold Ash area, small patches of glacial deposits. The BOA extends across the Cold Ash Quarry, Site of Special Scientific Interest, and habitats include lowland meadow and woodland and, to a lesser extent in Cold Ash, heathland. Particular enhancements sought to the area are heathland management and restoration, lowland meadow management, restoration and re-creation, and woodland management. Woodland planting should be restricted to forming links but needs to carefully consider the value and potential of land for other habitats. This chimes with the priorities for the National Landscape~~AONB~~ for this type of landscape.

6.14. As associated action will be to consider the development of a Biodiversity Action Plan to set out preferred planting and habitat management principles.

Policy CAP6: BIODIVERSITY AND THE NETWORK OF GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

1. **Proposals should be designed from the outset to create, conserve, enhance and manage green and blue spaces and connect chains of green and blue infrastructure, as identified on the Policies Maps, delivering a measurable net gain in biodiversity of a minimum 10% using the most up to date biodiversity accounting metric developed by Natural England for local people and wildlife. Development which would result in the loss of ancient woodland, aged trees or veteran trees will not be supported unless there are wholly exceptional reasons as envisaged in the NPPF and a suitable compensation strategy exists.**

2. **Subject to their scale, nature and location, proposals for development must be supported by a biodiversity appraisal, which must demonstrate how negative impacts would be minimised, mitigated and biodiversity net gain achieved.**

3. **Proposals that seek to improve the connectivity between wildlife areas and green and blue spaces will be encouraged in order to enhance the green and blue infrastructure of the Neighbourhood area. In particular, proposals that support the enhancement and management of the identified Biodiversity Opportunity Areas will be supported. Conversely, proposals which threaten to damage such connectivity will be strongly resisted.**

4. **The planting of additional native species trees and/ or continuous hedgerows to provide wildlife corridors and to offset the effects of air pollution and to provide cooling and shelter for people as well as a habitat for wildlife will be supported.**

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 2; Adopted Core Strategy: CS17, CS18; Local Plan Review: SP10, SP11; NPPF: 180 ~~74, 175, 176~~182, 17~~9~~85, 18~~0~~6

Policy CAP7: Managing the environmental impact of development

Purpose

6.15. This policy seeks to ensure that development proposals have considered how they can enhance the natural environment – both flora and fauna – including the features of it that are particularly distinctive to Cold Ash. This is particularly important in the context of the Parish being located within the setting of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape~~AONB~~. It also seeks to ensure that development proposals contribute to the provision of adequate open space.

Justification

6.16. The NPPF, at para 18~~06~~, stresses that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment including requiring net gain in biodiversity. The landscape of the parish comprises:

- generously scaled rolling landscape with some pronounced wooded ridges;
- a complex pattern of landscape, dominated by woodland; coniferous, or mixed with beech and birch;
- pastures;
- heathland and woodland habitats – deciduous and mixed woodland to pasture and arable, some of which is ancient;
- linear settlements within wooded areas; clustered farmsteads and private residences;
- road pattern with complex winding sunken lanes (see 'Sunken lanes') with banks and hedgerows; and
- a comprehensive network of Public Rights of ~~w~~Way, ~~(see Public Rights of Way),~~ including a network of bridleways

6.17. The area abounds with natural drains, issues and sinks, all of which help to ensure natural drainage and control the run-off of excessive rainfall. These are particularly evident in the local gaps between Cold Ash and the neighbouring parishes and are marked on larger scale Ordnance Survey maps. Further strategic SuDS sites should be sought.

6.18. There are many natural assets within in the parish (Table 3), some of which are afforded a level of statutory protection.

Table 3: Environmental designations in the parish

Designation	Sites	Level of protection
North Wessex Downs National Landscape~~AONB~~	The north-eastern part of the parish lies within the National Landscape~~AONB~~. The remainder of the parish contributes to the setting of	Protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act).

Designation	Sites	Level of protection
	the National Landscape ~~AONB~~.	
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Cold Ash Quarry SSSI – a 0.4-hectare Geological Conservation Review site. The quarry is unique in Britain for the collection of fossil plants and insects which occur in a layer of silt and clay within the Reading Beds.	An area of particular interest to science due to the rare species of fauna or flora it contains - or even important geological or physiological features that may lie in its boundaries. Owners *must* manage the site appropriately to conserve its special features.
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	11 sites in the Parish: SU46Z01 Messenger's Copse SU46Z03 Yate's Copse SU46Z04 Stone Copse SU46Z05 Sett Copse SU46Z06 Weaver's Wood SU46Z08 Carrotty Cow Leaze/Round Copse SU56E01 Cleardene Farm Wood SU56E04 Lawrence's Copse SU57A02 The Hangings SU57A05 New Farm Gully SU46Z01 Messenger's Copse Proposed Extension	While they have no direct legal protection, Local Wildlife Sites are recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which gives them some protection from being developed.
Roadside Nature Reserves (RNR)	The TVERC are currently reviewing road verges that are important for wildlife in West Berkshire. See Figure 12.	They are not non-statutory sites but are home to a wide variety of flora and fauna. 20% of the Road Verge Nature Reserves (RVNR) across the whole region were classified as high risk.
Ancient woodland	Areas of ancient woodland, as shown in Figure 11: Big Copse / Round Copse	Protected landscape within the NPPF. See advice note: Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions

Designation	Sites	Level of protection
	Hardwick Copse Lawrence's Copse SU56E04 Messengers Copse SU46Z01 Sett Copse SU46Z05 Stone Copse SU46Z04 The Hangings SU57A02 Weavers' Wood SU46Z06 Yates' Copse SU46Z03	
Local Green Spaces	As set out in Policy CAP9 (Local Green Space)	Protected to the level of Green Belt, once designated.
Priority habitats	See Figure 11	Species and Habitats of Principal Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

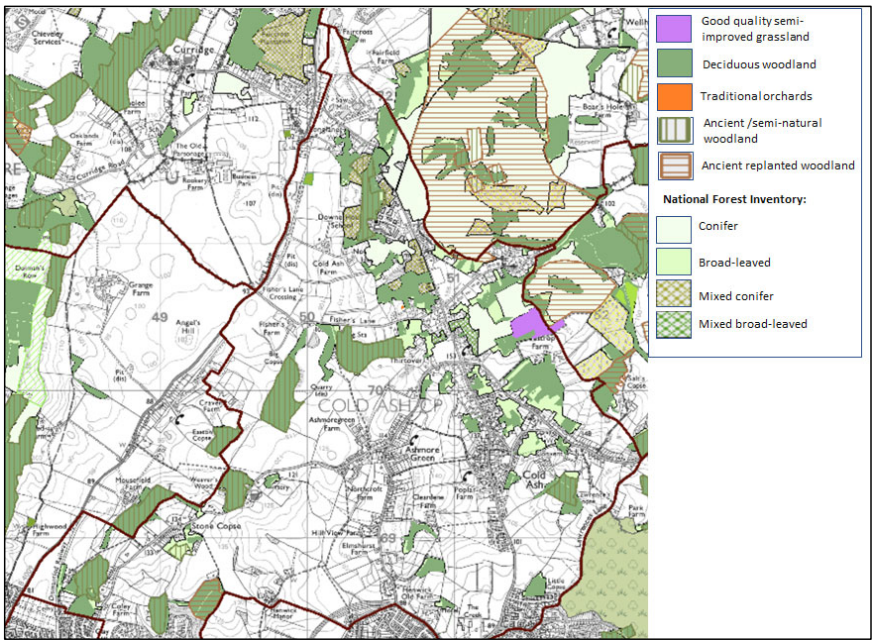
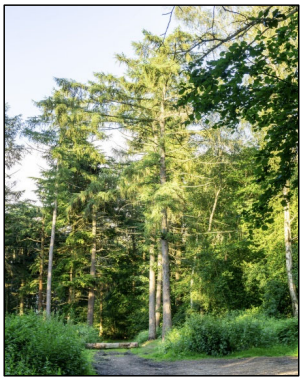


Figure 11: Priority habitats in Cold Ash Parish (Source: Magic Map, Defra)



Looking from Drove Lane into Fence Wood

6.19. Further distinctive natural features particular to Cold Ash Parish that are not protected, yet provide vital habitats for flora and fauna, include veteran and mature trees and established woodland, hedgerows, mature planted gardens, agricultural and grazing land and small waterways. Such features form vital corridors for many animals and birds, especially those migrating, to safely navigate around their domains.

6.20. **Trees, woodland, and hedgerows:** These are dominant natural feature in this area and help to maintain the rural nature of the Parish. The gravel plateau, for instance, is very acidic, and has created a typical landscape of Pine and Birch. The area along and round Hermitage Road is densely treed and provides a contrast to the more open Oak dominated landscape of the clay soils that surround The Ridge. The main tree species are Ash, throughout the Parish; Beech in Ashmore Green Road; Oak in Ashmore Green Road, Bucklebury Alley, Collaroy Road, Stoney Lane and The Ridge; Hornbeam in Stoney Lane; Scots Pine at Downe House and on Hermitage Road and Slanting Hill; and the occasional Sweet Chestnut and Cherry. Hedgerow species found locally include Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Beech.

6.21. These features provide important habitats and green corridors for the movement of a wide variety of wildlife: Dormice, Badger, Fox, Hedgehog, Muntjac and Roe Deer can often be seen, as well as Rabbits, Grey Squirrels and the occasional Weasel and Stoat. Adders, Grass Snakes and Slow Worms can also be observed in certain parts. It is critical, therefore, that the interconnectivity between trees and hedgerows is maintained.

6.22. It is noticeable that the older parts of the villages are more wooded and have larger and more mature species than the newer parts. This arises largely from the earlier dates of planting and the larger gardens usually associated with the older properties. This creates a different character from the newer areas where the houses are more visible and where cypresses tend to dominate the vegetation.

6.23. The smaller gardens and open space areas mean that most of the native trees such as Oak, Ash and Beech cannot be established, especially on the clay areas where set distances have to be maintained to avoid root damage to properties. The lack of large trees could have an adverse effect on the Parish if sufficient open space is not provided in new developments to allow for planting larger trees. For these reasons, it is essential that a significant proportion of the mature trees in the Parish be protected. There has been limited use of Tree Preservation Orders to date; this is something that will be rectified as part of this planning process.

6.24. It should be noted that where trees have died, they should be left dead standing where possible, because they are a great biodiversity resource for wildlife and if left as a monolith pose little risk.

6.25. **Small waterways and ponds:** Although there are no permanent streams or rivers, small waterways run most of the year. The Environment Agency advises that a suitable buffer strip is retained along the banks of these waterways to protect their corridors, surrounding habitats and encourage their use as a wildlife corridor. The use of leaky dams and woody debris to retain water up stream is also advisable. These waterways provide a suitable environment for frogs and toads, which also make use of garden ponds.

6.26. Ponds also provide an important habitat locally, supporting a range of freshwater species. WBC has a district licence enabling them to closely study Great Crested Newts, which are found across the area. This licence will increase the numbers of ponds in the district and the Newts terrestrial habitat connectivity.

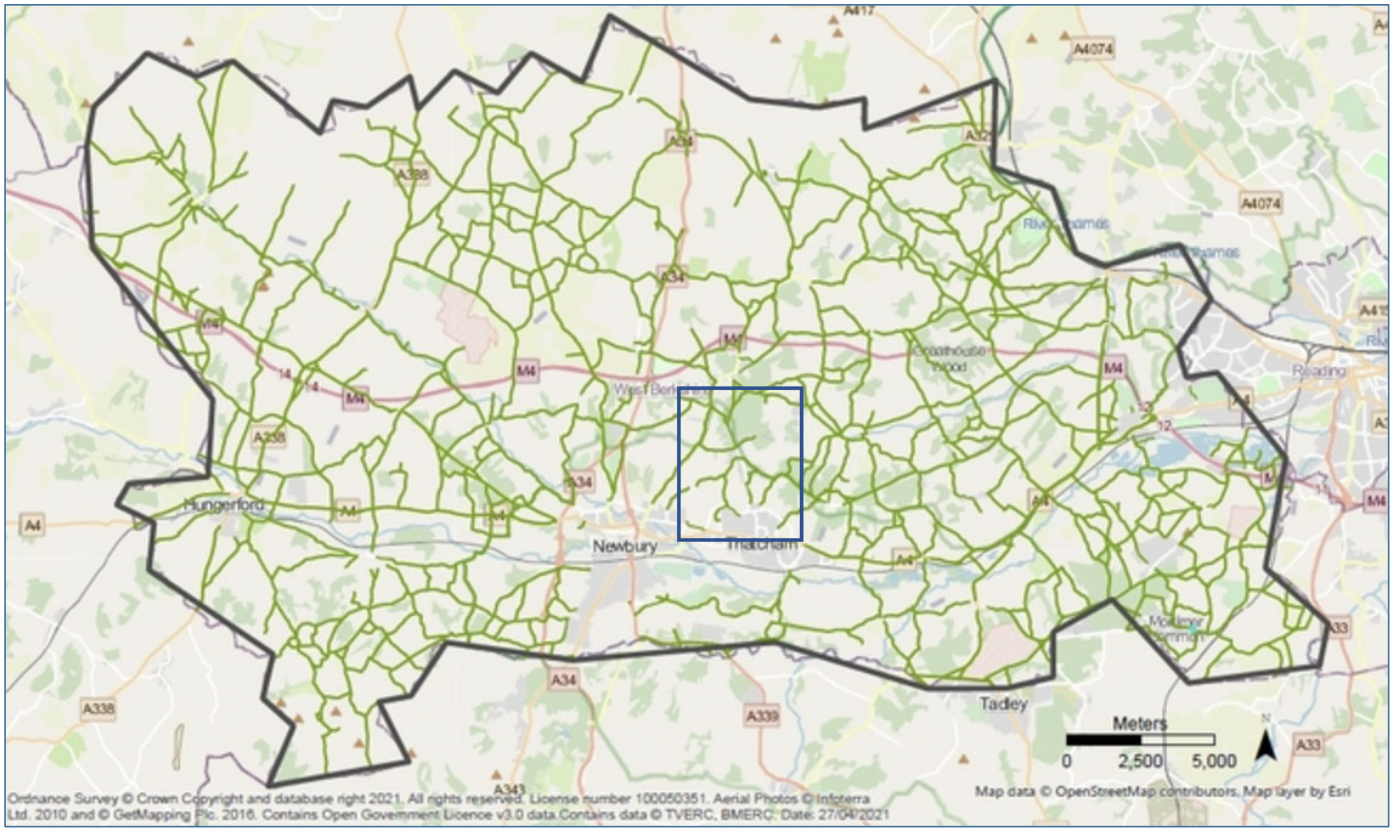
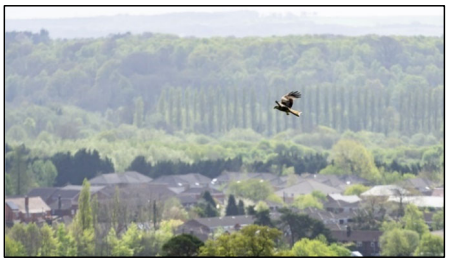


Figure 12: Roadside Nature Reserves in West Berkshire, with Cold Ash highlighted (source: Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)) – source: https://www.bbowt.org.uk/west-berkshire-wild-verges - it is recommended that the BBOWT is engaged

Small waterways are a feature of the landscape; Looking north from PROW 8 - red kite in flight

6.27. **Ancient turf and road verges:** St Mark's Churchyard retains an area of ancient turf with its rare wildflowers. A wide selection of wildflowers can also be found along the road verges, particularly where these are uncut.

6.28. Each of the features also supports the wide variety of birds found in the Parish. Sightings include Green and Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, various finches, Jays, Herons, Magpies, Skylarks, Sparrow Hawks, Buzzards, migrating Thrushes such as Fieldfare and Redwing, and the re-introduced Red Kite. Night birds include tawny and barn owls. Ground nesting birds are found in the area too and are often the most are affected by development.

6.29. Development proposals are expected to retain, protect, and enhance both the protected habitats and natural features that are important to Cold Ash. Where appropriate they should include a landscape and ecological management plan including a list of trees and shrubs to be planted to ensure the rural and green character of the Parish is enhanced and which should involve the planting of new trees and hedgerows of native and locally sourced species in gardens, communal areas or on roadsides where practical.

POLICY CAP7: MANAGING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT

Development proposals should maintain and, where practicable, enhance the natural environment, landscape character, and the rural setting of the Parish. This includes both designated sites and important landscape features including woodland, trees, hedgerows, waterways, verges and ponds, which contribute to local character and biodiversity. Proposals should demonstrate that they have addressed the following matters, as appropriate to their scale, nature and location:

a. **The guidance and advice contained in the Quality Design West Berkshire SPD, the North Wessex Downs National Landscape~~AONB~~ Management Plan, and the West Berkshire Council Landscape Character Assessment for the Cold Ash woodland and lowland meadow landscape;**

b. **Existing natural features, including grass verges, ditches, ponds and open spaces should be conserved and enhanced in order to improve the habitat for wildlife and to maintain the rural beauty of the area;**

c. Providing wildlife-friendly features, for instance hedgehog holes in new residential fencing and bird and bat nesting boxes;

Trees, hedgerows and planting

d. Existing trees shall be retained unless sufficient evidence is provided (in the form of a Tree Survey or Arboricultural Assessment) to justify their removal although where possible trees should be left as dead standing. Where there is an unavoidable loss of trees on site, replacement trees will be required to be planted on site at the rate of three trees for every one lost.

e. Proposals which include additional native tree or woodland planting will be supported, in particular where this enables public access;

f. Development that would result in the loss of, or the deterioration in the quality of, hedgerows will not be supported, with the exception of removal for vehicular access; in this case, the access should include trees at either end of the retained hedgerow to aid wildlife to cross overhead from crown to crown;

g. The use of non-native evergreen plants (such as laurel and leylandii) is discouraged.

Incorporate open space that is:

h. in usable parcels of land and not fragmented and that design layout does not enable land grab post development.

i. safe, easily accessible and not severed by any physical barrier.

j. is accessible to the general public.

k. creates a safe environment considering lighting and layout.

l. complemented by high quality landscaping schemes.

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 2; Adopted Core Strategy: CS14, CS17; Local Plan Review: SP10, SP11; NPPF: 1~~70~~80 ~~to~~ 18~~82~~

Policy CAP8: Iconic views

Purpose

6.30. This policy details a series of views in and across the P~~p~~arish, which have been identified by the community as being important to safeguard from inappropriate development. This is because they are considered to incorporate locally important feature, such as landscape and historic features that are characteristic of the Parish.

Justification

6.31. Views and viewpoints are important; they provide a sense of place to local people, enabling enjoyment and appreciation of the features of an area. They can also act as way markers, where they take in notable features or historic assets.



View ~~3~~6 footpath 15 looking SW, towards Newbury

~~*from Fishers Lane to Snelsmore Common*~~

6.32. Development in the P~~p~~arish has been focussed on the centre because of the topography and nature of the landscape. Cold Ash has some of the highest points in Berkshire and parishioners are afforded views of both the Parish and its villages, as well as longer-distance views to the four counties beyond, and this is greatly valued. Any development that breaks up the aesthetic qualities of the landscape, its flowing patterns and colours, would have a major detrimental impact.

6.33. The engagement process revealed nine favourite views that hold particular local significance and which should be safeguarded from detrimental development. Full details of the views, including photographs and text explaining why they are special, are included in Appendix B. A map, illustrating the views, is shown in Figure 13. The views, all from publicly accessible points, are:

1. From St Mark's Churchyard - south and west

2. From The Ridge across Westrop Farm and Gulley
3. From footpath 15 looking SW, towards Newbury
4. Looking NE towards Broadview Farm and the Pang Valley
5. From St Finian's Farm towards Watership Down

~~6. From Fishers Lane to Snelsmore Common~~

~~7.~~6. From Footpath 15 looking south

~~8.~~7. From Footpath 16 looking south

~~9.~~8. From footpath 15 looking east, towards Cold Ash Hill

~~10.~~9. View looking south east towards the Downs from the Quiet Garden off Gladstone Lane

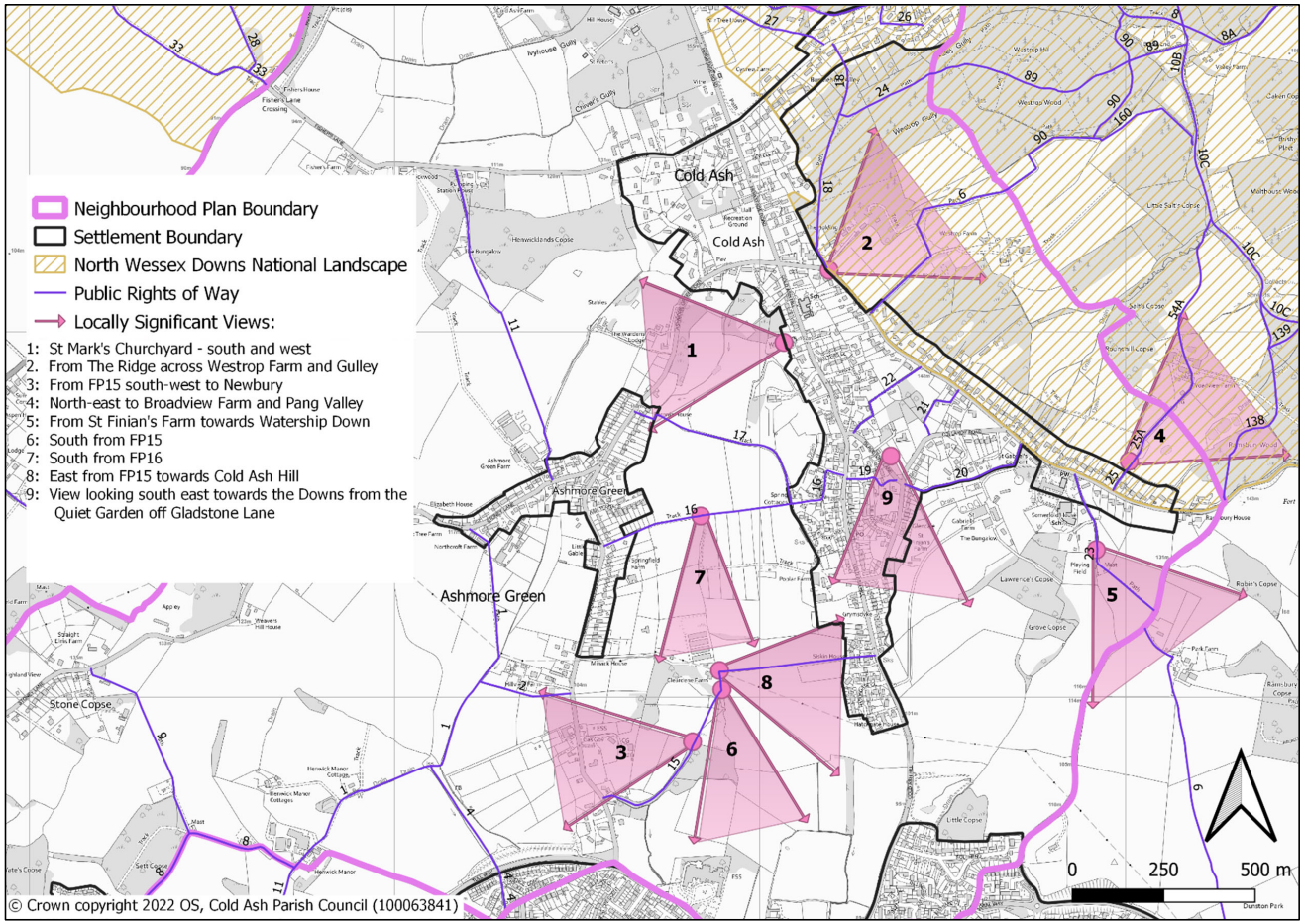


Figure 13: Map showing the location of the iconic views relating to Policy CAP8

6.34. Policy CAP8 requires that development proposals should be designed in a way that does not significantly harm the iconic view or views concerned, identified from publicly accessible locations. It attempts to provide the flexibility required for the wide range of development proposals which will come forward within the Plan period.

6.35. It should be noted that the CAPNDP policy is only relevant to sites within the neighbourhood boundary. Some of the views extend beyond this boundary, as illustrated on Figure 13, and in these cases the Parish Council will liaise with neighbouring parishes to consider if there is support to safeguard the views in those part of the neighbouring parishes.

6.36. In the majority of cases proposals will be of a minor nature and will have little or no effect on the identified views. In circumstances where the proposed development would be likely to have an impact on any identified key view, the planning application concerned should be accompanied by a landscape and visual impact assessment that is proportionate to the scale of the development proposed. Any appropriate mitigation measures – for instance retaining view corridors or glimpses, or considering the impact of building height, scale and colour - should be incorporated within the design of the development proposed and captured in the assessment.

POLICY CAP8: ICONIC VIEWS

Development should be located and designed in a way that does not significantly harm the iconic view or views concerned, identified from publicly accessible locations. Proposals will not be supported if potential impacts on landscape cannot be adequately mitigated through design and landscaping. Particular sensitivity should be shown for the iconic views, as listed below and identified on Figure 13:

1. **From St Mark's Churchyard - south and west**
2. **From The Ridge across Westrop Farm and Gulley**
3. **From footpath 15 looking SW, towards Newbury**
4. **Looking NE towards Broadview Farm and the Pang Valley**
5. **From St Finian's Farm towards Watership Down**
6. ~~**From Fishers Lane to Snelsmore Common**~~
7. ~~7.~~**From Footpath 15 looking south**
8. ~~8.~~**From Footpath 16 looking south**
9. ~~9.~~**From footpath 15 looking east, towards Cold Ash Hill**
10. ~~10.~~**View looking south east towards the Downs from the Quiet Garden off Gladstone Lane**

Development proposals that could affect the above Iconic Views should be supported by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment that is proportionate to the scale of the development.

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 2; Adopted Core Strategy: ADP5, CS19; Local Plan Review: SP7, SP8, SP9; NPPF: 131~~26~~, 1~~27~~32, 135~~0~~

Policy CAP9: Local Green Spaces

Purpose

6.37. Protecting green spaces was revealed as a top priority for residents in the engagement process for the CAPNDP. This policy seeks to designate a series of Local Green Spaces that are demonstrably special, so that they can be safeguarded from inappropriate development.

Justification

6.38. Under the NPPF, Neighbourhood Plans can designate Local Green Spaces which are of particular importance to them. This will afford protection from development other than in very special circumstances. Paragraph 10~~2~~ of the NPPF says that the Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community, it serves;
- demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
- local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.



Woodland Leaves Local Green Space

6.39. The following six areas (shown on Figure 14 and described and mapped in greater detail in Appendix C) are considered to fulfil all of the criteria of the NPPF:

1. Cleardene Wood
2. Wildlife Allotment Garden
3. Woodland Leaves Meadow
4. Little Copse
5. Hermitage Road Recreation Ground
6. Waller Drive Recreation Park

POLICY CAP9: LOCAL GREEN SPACES

The following six green spaces, as shown on Figure 14 and defined in Appendix C, are designated as Local Green Spaces:

1. **Cleardene Wood**
2. **Wildlife Allotment Garden**
3. **Woodland Leaves Meadow**
4. **Little Copse**
5. **Hermitage Road Recreation Ground**
6. **Waller Drive Recreation Park**

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 2; Adopted Core Strategy: CS18; Local Plan Review: SP10, SP11; NPPF: 10~~15 to 10~~37, 13~~7~~42~~ to ~~15~~61

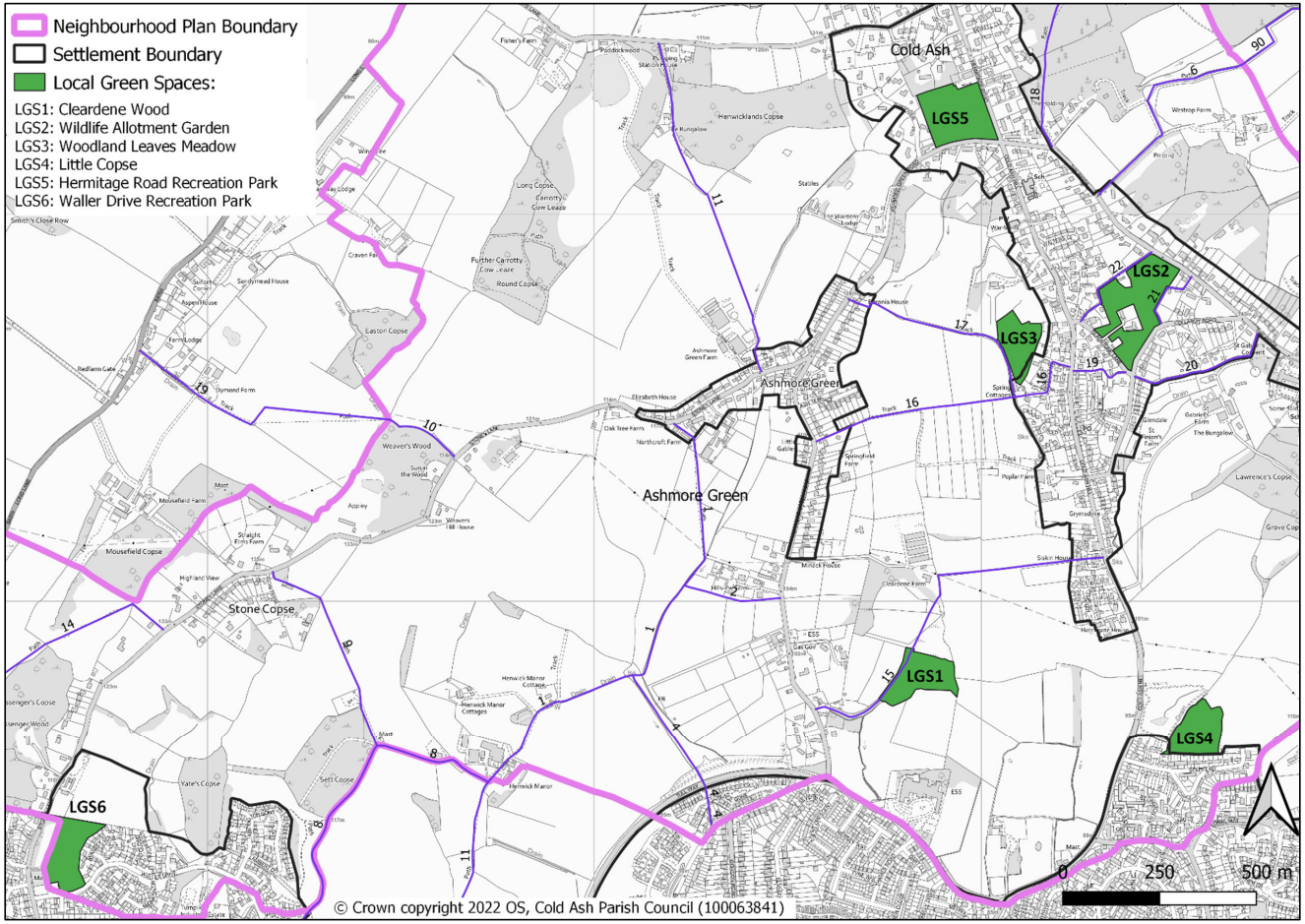


Figure 14: Local Green Spaces

Policy CAP10: Dark skies

Purpose

6.40. Cold Ash, being one of the higher parts of West Berkshire (it is approximately 150 meters above sea level) and a predominantly rural P~~p~~arish, provides an ideal location from which to enjoy dark skies and naturally lends itself to stargazing. The dark skies support both nocturnal and diurnal wildlife and provide enjoyment for parishioners. Policy CAP10 seeks to ensure that development does not encroach on this valued aspect of P~~p~~arish.

Justification

6.41. Cold Ash is still largely unlit, with very few streetlights outside the main villages. The dark night skies are predominantly unspoilt, and it is important that they are kept that way. An additional consideration is that parts of Cold Ash, to the north and east, lie within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape~~AONB~~ and light spill is detrimental to this ~~area of outstanding natural beauty~~National Landscape and to its wildlife. The National Landscape ~~AONB~~ supports dark skies, seeking to be a place where a sense of remoteness and tranquillity predominates and where vast night skies can thrill the eye, unaffected by light pollution

6.42. The benefits derived from the prevention of light pollution include:

- Enjoyment and appreciation – improving quality of life and providing creative inspiration
- Health – promoting better sleep patterns and reducing stress
- Wildlife – supporting a more natural environment for both nocturnal and diurnal animals
- Energy efficiency – reducing wastage from unnecessary or excessive lighting, thus reducing the parish's carbon footprint.
- The Parish Council is working with the Newbury Astronomical Society to undertake a star count in the parish. It will add additional detail to the Countryside Charity's (CPRE) existing data on dark skies, which reveals that Cold Ash Parish affords some of the darkest skies in the wider region (Figure ~~6.7~~15).

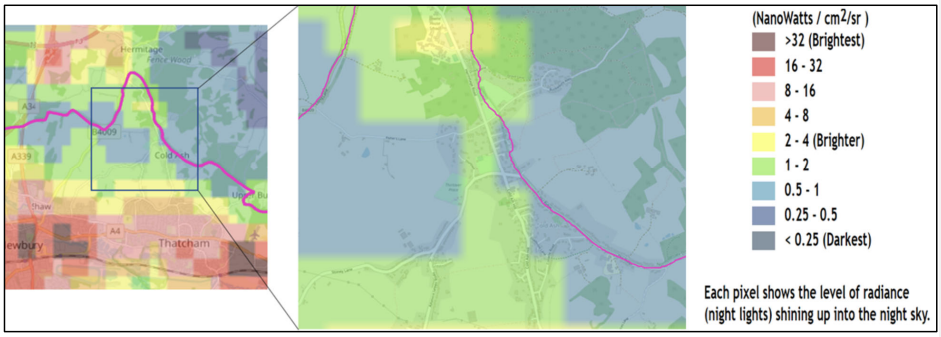


Figure 15: Map showing levels of radiance for Cold Ash Parish (source: CPRE, www.nightblight.cpre.org.uk)

~~*Figure 6.7: Map showing levels of radiance for Cold Ash Parish (source: CPRE, www.nightblight.cpre.org.uk)*~~

6.43. The Steering Group has identified a dark sky zone for the ~~p~~Parish (Figure 1~~5~~6), based on the CPRE mapping, but broadening it slightly to assist in retaining – and where possible – reversing light pollution. This area should be safeguarded from superfluous night lights.

6.44. The creation of artificial light is a factor that threatens the survival of protected and threatened local wildlife. In the case of security and other outside lighting on private and public premises, including floodlighting, encouragement will be given to ensure that it is neighbourly in its use:

- lighting should be deflected downwards rather than outwards or upwards and should be switched off after midnight at the latest; and
- any movement-sensitive triggers should be regulated to reduce illumination periods to a minimum.

6.45. These guidelines should be applied to all public premises and will be strongly encouraged on private premises by ensuring that businesses and householders are aware of the adverse effects of outside lighting on the environment and their neighbours. The Parish Council will continually seek to inform and educate businesses and householders to respect the Parish's dark skies policy.

POLICY CAP10: DARK SKIES

Development should not detract from the area identified as a 'dark sky zone' within the Parish, shown on Figure 16. Within this zone, proposals for development will be supported where it is demonstrated that, if external lighting is required, it protects the night sky from light pollution, where:

a. the lighting is necessary for operational, safety or security reasons
b. any light spillage beyond the application site is eliminated, or reduced by measures such as timing and proximity controls, orientation, screening, shielding or glazing
c. there is no adverse impact on nearby residential properties, wildlife, local heritage assets or the wider landscape
d. the guidance on lighting provided in the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Note GN01: The Reduction of Obtrusive Light (and any subsequent revisions) is adhered to. Proposals should consider carefully, and provide details of, the light source and intensity being used, the luminaire design, height, and angle, adding baffles and cut-off shields where required, and details of control mechanisms to dim or switch off lighting schemes when not required. Where appropriate, lights should be controlled by passive infrared detectors so that they only come on when needed.

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 2; Adopted Core Strategy: CS19; Local Plan Review: SP8; NPPF: 191~~85~~

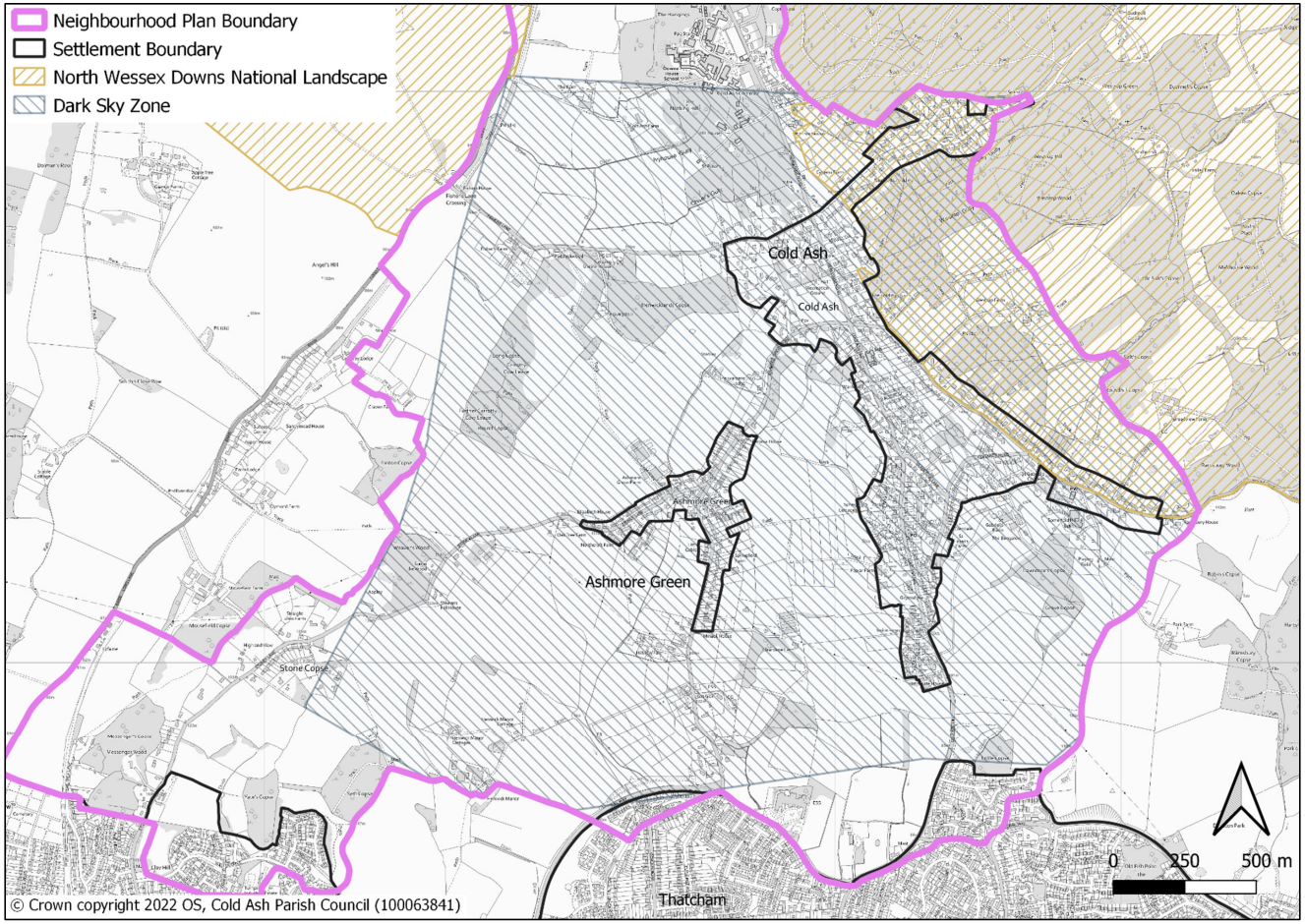


Figure 16~~16~~15: Area considered as a dark skies zone

7. GETTING AROUND THE PARISH

7.1. The community have commented frequently about traffic within the Parish, notably the volume and speed. A preliminary piece of work, Technical Appendix - Traffic, Transport and Travel, was commissioned by Cold Ash Parish Council, which draws on the West Berkshire Strategic Traffic Model. It seeks to appraise the current transport conditions and issues, consider future traffic forecasts for the Parish and the potential impacts these will have, and set out possible mitigation measures to address both the current problems and help alleviate the impacts of future traffic growth. An update to the preliminary piece of work, "West Berkshire Local Plan - Review of Transport Evidence Base" was prepared in February 2023, specifically to comment on the emerging West Berkshire Local Plan evidence bae relating to transport issues. It can be found on the Cold Ash Parish Council website. The work highlights the following main issues:

7.2. **Existing footways** – many of the roads lack footways or have very narrow ones. Footway provision is generally limited to the main north-south route, comprising Cold Ash Hill, Hermitage Road and Red Shute Hill, plus short sections of The Ridge, Collaroy Road, Ashmore Green Road and Stoney Lane. There are also no controlled pedestrian crossings and limited locations with dropped kerbs.

7.3. **Narrow lanes and blind bends** - The twisting alignment and undulating profile of the Parish's rural lanes means that visibility along the carriageway is severely restricted in places and well below the standards that would be expected in new highway construction. The safe use of these routes relies on good driver awareness and cautious behaviour. Reported traffic accidents involving personal injury are low but anecdotally there are frequent near misses and minor collisions that are unreported.



Many roads lack footways and have blind bends

7.4. **Car parking** - Parking pressure has increased over time with growing demand from new development. There are ongoing problems associated with limited capacity and associated overspill street parking, and these problems are likely to persist unless additional capacity can be found.

7.5. **Access to schools** – neither St Mark's nor St Finian's have adequate on-site parking provision to cope at pick-up and drop-off times. This leads to an uncontrolled situation whereby footways are blocked, children are forced to walk between vehicles and on the roads. The current travel plans for St. Marks (2005) and St. Finnian's (2009) are now somewhat out of date and ideally should be refreshed.

7.6. **Bus services and bus stops** – Bus services are very limited in terms of both frequency and routes. There are no weekend services. Passenger numbers are very low. Many bus stops have no shelters or seats.



Bus stop at Cold Ash Hill with no shelter or footway

7.7. Many of the mitigation measures proposed sit outside the scope of the neighbourhood plan. For instance, the introduction of speed restrictions, the extension of traffic calming measures, the provision of a school minibus service from Thatcham, the reduction of on-street car-parking and associated enforcement, and the introduction of weight limits to deter HGVs from the village centre. These issues are considered in Section 1~~1~~0 as associated actions and could be funded through, for instance, developer contributions. They will require further discussion with the Highways Authority.

7.8. Where the neighbourhood plan can make a tangible difference is in supporting proposals that would improve opportunities for walking and cycling in the Parish, improving public transport infrastructure and safeguarding existing car parking space. The policies in this section address these points.

Policy CAP11: Encouraging sustainable movement

Purpose

7.9. This policy seeks to encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport, particularly for shorter journey within the P~~p~~arish, by supporting proposals that enable active travel and improve the provision of infrastructure associated with public transport.

Justification

7.10. Encouraging active travel (walking, cycling and equestrian) will contribute to improving people's mental and physical health and wellbeing. This includes journeys taken for work purposes, to each local facilities or to engage in recreational activities, such as dog walking. Indeed, for residents of Florence Gardens and north west Thatcham, for example, Footpaths COLD/4, COLD/1, THAT/11 and THAT/10 provide a popular circular walk for recreation and dog walking. Sport England, supported by Public Health England, has developed a set of principles - Active Design - designed to create the right conditions within existing and proposed development for individuals to be able to lead active and healthy lifestyles.

7.11. Policy CAP11 supports these and has the following main aims:

a. To maintain and where possible improve the existing rights of way network within the ~~p~~Parish and to ensure that any new development is accessible to this network. This includes improving the wider movement network, particularly where it will enable pedestrian, cycle and, where possible equestrian, connectivity to surrounding areas, including to services and facilities in neighbouring areas of Thatcham and North Newbury. There are a number of quiet, less trafficked lanes that could be promoted for cycle access to neighbouring areas alongside the PROW network.

b. Where feasible, to widen footways to enable access for all users, including those with mobility issues and pushchairs. This will make it easier for journeys to be made by foot. WBC's draft Local Transport Plan 4 Strategy document seeks to introduce shared mobility initiatives in rural areas, which may be option for Cold Ash in due course.

c. To continue to investigate opportunities to introduce cycle lanes, away from mechanised traffic, where possible.



PROW through the Wildlife Allotment Garden

7.12. The policy will assist in promoting healthier lifestyles, reducing the impacts of traffic and congestion and improving air quality. It is supported by a series of non-policy actions in Section 10, including identifying additional circular off-road recreational routes.

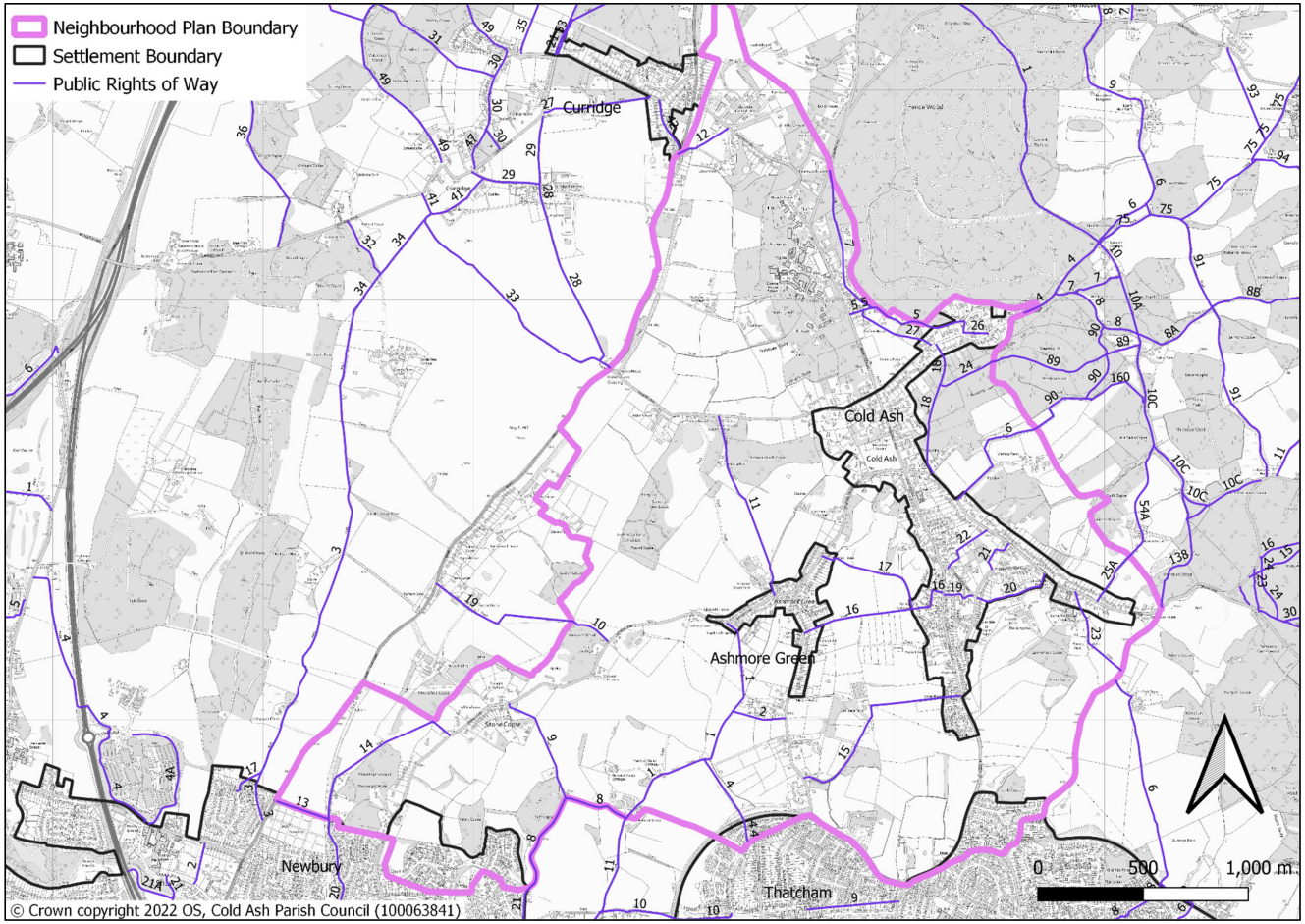


Figure 17~~17~~~~16~~: Existing rights of way in the ~~P~~parish (~~p~~Parish-wide)

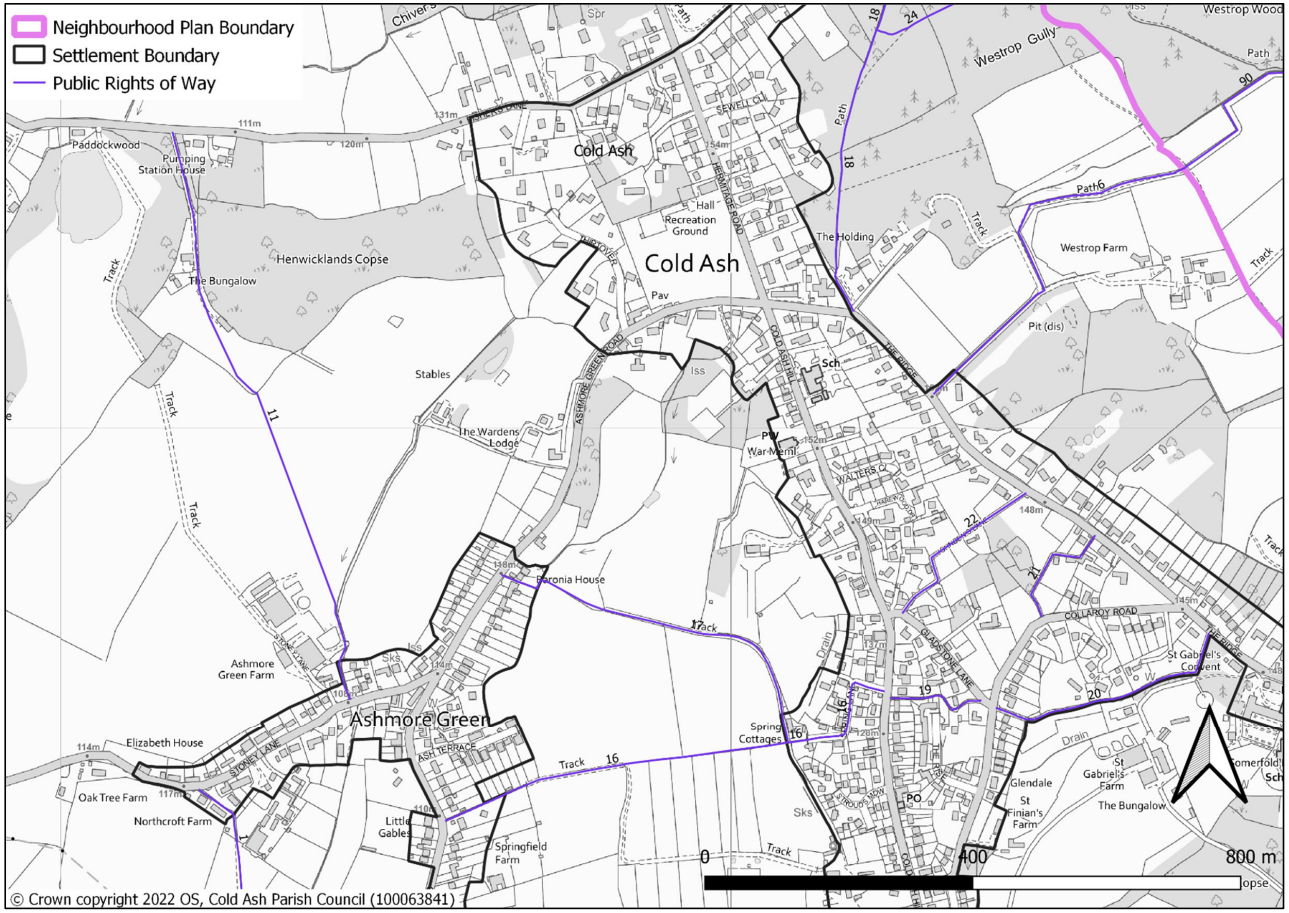


Figure ~~18~~1817: Existing rights of way in the ~~P~~parish (Cold Ash Village)

POLICY CAP11: ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABLE MOVEMENT

1. **To ensure that residents can access social, community, public transport, schools, the recreation ground local shops and other important facilities both within Cold Ash Parish and in neighbouring settlements (notably Newbury and Thatcham), new developments should ensure safe pedestrian, and where feasible, cycle access to link up with the existing public transport, public rights of way network, as shown in Figures 17 and 18. Opportunities should be sought to protect and enhance the Public Rights of Way network to make their use more attractive, for instance through planting and wayfinding.**

2. **The widening of footways, introduction of dropped kerbs, and installation of traffic calming measures, including a controlled crossing near to St Mark's School on Cold Ash Hill, will be supported. The design and layout of such works should enhance the rural, village character, for example retaining hedgerows, trees and soft verges where possible. Materials and layout must be sympathetic to local character, in accordance with Policy CAP2 (Character and Design) of this Neighbourhood Development Plan, the Quality Design guidance for West Berkshire, and the North Wessex Downs National Landscape ~~AONB~~ Management Plan. Development should have regard to the government's best practice advice for road and street design, Manual for Streets 1 and 2 and Historic England's 'Streets for All'.**#

3. **The provision of new public rights of way and cycle routes that, where feasible, are physically separated from vehicular traffic will be strongly supported. Such routes should be of permeable material where possible and ensure that access by disabled users and users of mobility scooters is secured.**

4. **Loss of public rights of way will not be approved unless suitable alternatives are provided.**

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 3; Adopted Core Strategy: CS13; Local Plan Review: SP23; NPPF: ~~92~~96, 104~~8~~ to 1100~~6~~

Policy CAP12: Sunken Lanes

Purpose

7.13. The policy seeks to identify and protect the network of historic sunken lanes, which provide a valuable movement network through the Parish, particularly for horse riders, as well as contributing to the rural character of the area and providing an important network of wildlife corridors.

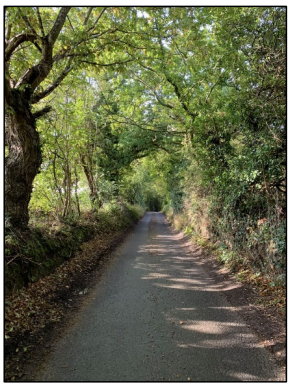
Justification

7.14. Some of the P~~p~~arish's narrow lanes are 'sunken lanes', i.e. the road surface is lower than the adjoining bank/land and/ or the lane is overhung by trees forming a natural arch. It is particularly important to retain the integrity of the banks of Cold Ash's remaining sunken lanes, which necessitates preventing the creation of additional property accesses off them. This does not necessarily preclude development along them; simply that any new development must make use of existing accesses.

7.15. The network of sunken lanes is shown in Figure 19, and sections of:

- Stoney Lane
- Fishers Lane
- Ashmore Green Road

7.16. Sections of Lawrences Lane have also been mentioned by some residents as potentially meeting the requirements of a sunken lane. Section 10 includes a non-policy action to explore this further.



Stoney Lane

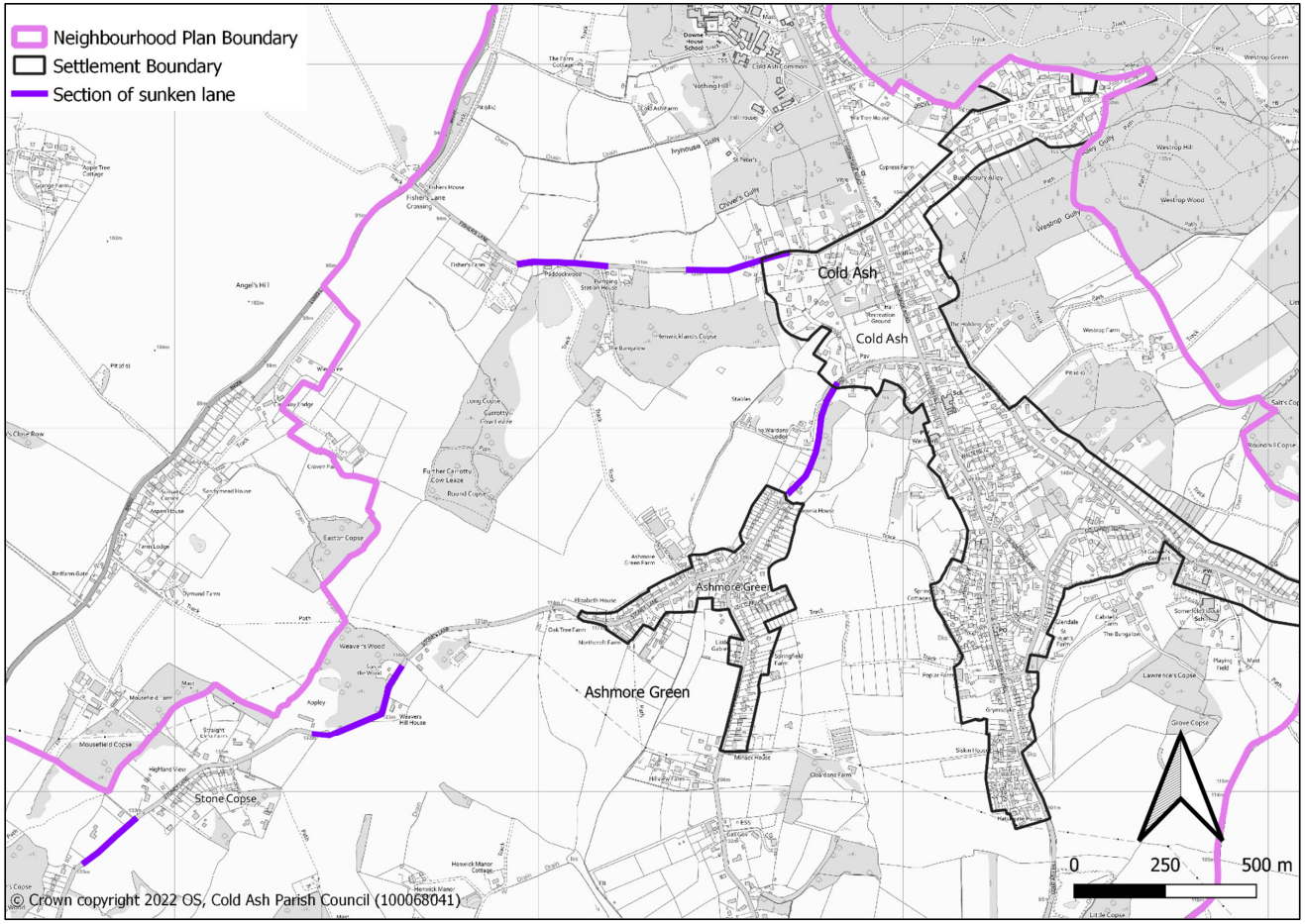


Figure ~~19~~19~~18~~: Sunken lanes in Cold Ash Parish

7.17. The nature of 'sunken lanes' is that they are roads or tracks that are significantly lower than the land on either side and that have not been formed by the recent engineering of a road cutting but are of a much greater age. The sunken lanes have been formed in a variety of ways over the years, including erosion by water and traffic, digging embankments to assist with the herding of livestock and/or to mark natural boundaries. These are the historic natural routes through the P~~p~~arish and, as such, are part of the heritage and landscape of the ~~p~~Parish to be protected. They also provide important wildlife corridors, for instance for bat movements.

7.18. Whilst the ~~p~~Parish is well serviced by public rights of way, the number of bridleways in the P~~p~~arish is limited, resulting in horse riders sharing the roads with vehicles. The roads that are used by horse riders are, in the main, those that are also sunken lanes. It is for this reason consideration is being given to establishing them as 'Quiet Lanes', as an associated action within Section 10~~1~~.

7.19. The policy supports the objectives of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, which seeks to conserve and enhance the intricate network of sunken and other country lanes through the sympathetic management of banks and verges.

Policy CAP12: SUNKEN LANES

Development proposals should respect the character and appearance of sunken lanes within the neighbourhood area. Development proposals which would detrimentally affect the character of a sunken lane or create a new access onto such a lane will not be supported. ~~**In particular, the following will need to be incorporated:**~~

~~**a. the level of the road or track should not be raised;**~~
~~**b. the height of the embankments should not be reduced;**~~
~~**c. the existing width should be retained, with no widening; and**~~
~~**d. minimal or, ideally, no road markings.**~~

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 2, 3; Adopted Core Strategy: CS19; Local Plan Review: SP8 SP9; NPPF: 1~~26~~31, 1~~27~~32, 1~~78~~04, 1~~75~~81, 1~~79~~85, 195~~89~~, 1960

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Policy CAP13: Public car parking

Purpose

7.20. This policy seeks to protect the provision of existing public parking and, where opportunities arise, provide additional parking, which should include infrastructure to support electric vehicles use and cycling.

Justification

7.21. Whilst the Plan seeks to promote, as far as possible, walking and cycling, the area is rural and there is a high car reliance. The village is rather spread out and there are either no footways or very narrow ones in some of the areas, making it difficult for pedestrians.



Parts of the village lack adequate footways

7.22. The issue of car parking, and particularly, the limited availability of parking spaces serving the Hermitage Road Recreation Ground and the schools. This was raised as a concern by the community during the engagement process.

7.23. There are limited areas for expansion of parking, however, it will be important to retain what exists and, where opportunities arise, to provide additional accessible public parking; this will be encouraged.

7.24. The provision of electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs) at such locations, and secure bicycle parking, will support the shift towards less polluting modes of transport.

POLICY CAP13: PUBLIC CAR PARKING

1. **Development proposals that would result in the loss of publicly accessible car parking will not be supported unless they include alternative and equivalent provision in an accessible location near to the Cold Ash village facilities.**

2. **Proposals that enable the provision of additional, publicly accessible car parking, particularly serving the village centre facilities, Hermitage Road Recreation Ground and the schools, will be strongly supported.**

3. **Any new or replacement car parks should incorporate the following facilities:**

   a. **dedicated bicycle parking facilities, preferably covered and secure.~~; and~~**
   ~~b. future-proofed four-hour or faster electric vehicle charging points (or wireless charging facilities) that are affordable, reliable and open access electric vehicle charging points. At minimum, proposals for EVCP's should conform to the requirements for electric vehicle charge points in non-residential buildings outlined in the English Buildings Regulations, Approved Document S.~~

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 3; Adopted Core Strategy: CS13; Local Plan Review: SP23; NPPF: 9~~62~~, 10~~84, 105, 106~~ 110

8. COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL

Policy CAP14: Important community facilities

Purpose

8.1. Cold Ash Parish has a wide range of community, recreational and cultural facilities, however the Parish is reliant on the nearby urban areas of Thatcham and Newbury for doctors, dentists and larger shops. This policy identifies the community facilities particularly valued by the community and seeks to protect them from loss or change of use, where possible. It supports proposals to enhance these facilities.

Justification

8.2. Table ~~4~~8.1 shows the community facilities that have been identified as particularly important to the community and which should be safeguarded from loss. It also details improvements, where noted by the community, that would be supported by the policy. These are mapped on Figure 20.



The village shop and post office

Table 4: Community Facilities and supported improvements

Important Community Facility	Description	Supported improvements
Acland Hall	Provides a community hub with meeting rooms and pre-school.	• Enhancement /expansion of the village hall to act as a community hub.
Village Shop/Post Office	A small community shop providing post office services.	
Village Pubs (The Spotted Dog & The Castle)	Two well established pubs next to each other in the village.	

Hermitage Road Recreation Ground	The field includes a playground for younger children, playing fields, tennis courts and a cricket square. It also hosts numerous community activities such as football clubs and fitness activities, as well as informal parishioner enjoyment. The site also includes a storage building known as the "rifle shed".	• Repurposing the rifle shed to offer additional facilities. • Provision of facilities for older children and teenagers. • Provision of outdoor fitness equipment. • Provision of public toilets
St Mark's Church	Provides religious services as well as a community hub with meeting rooms.	

8.3. Proposals for new development, which involve these important community facilities, identified in ~~the table~~Table 4 ~~above~~, will be supported only if the proposal does not result in the loss of, or have an adverse effect on, the asset or facility concerned, unless satisfactory alternative facilities are provided or unless it can be clearly proven that such assets are no longer required; or unless the new development will provide sufficient community benefit to outweigh the loss of the existing facility, meeting evidence of a strong local need.

8.4. In terms of sporting and recreational facilities, opportunities to enable wider community access to sporting facilities with Downe House School are being explored by ~~CPC~~the Parish Council.



Acland Hall

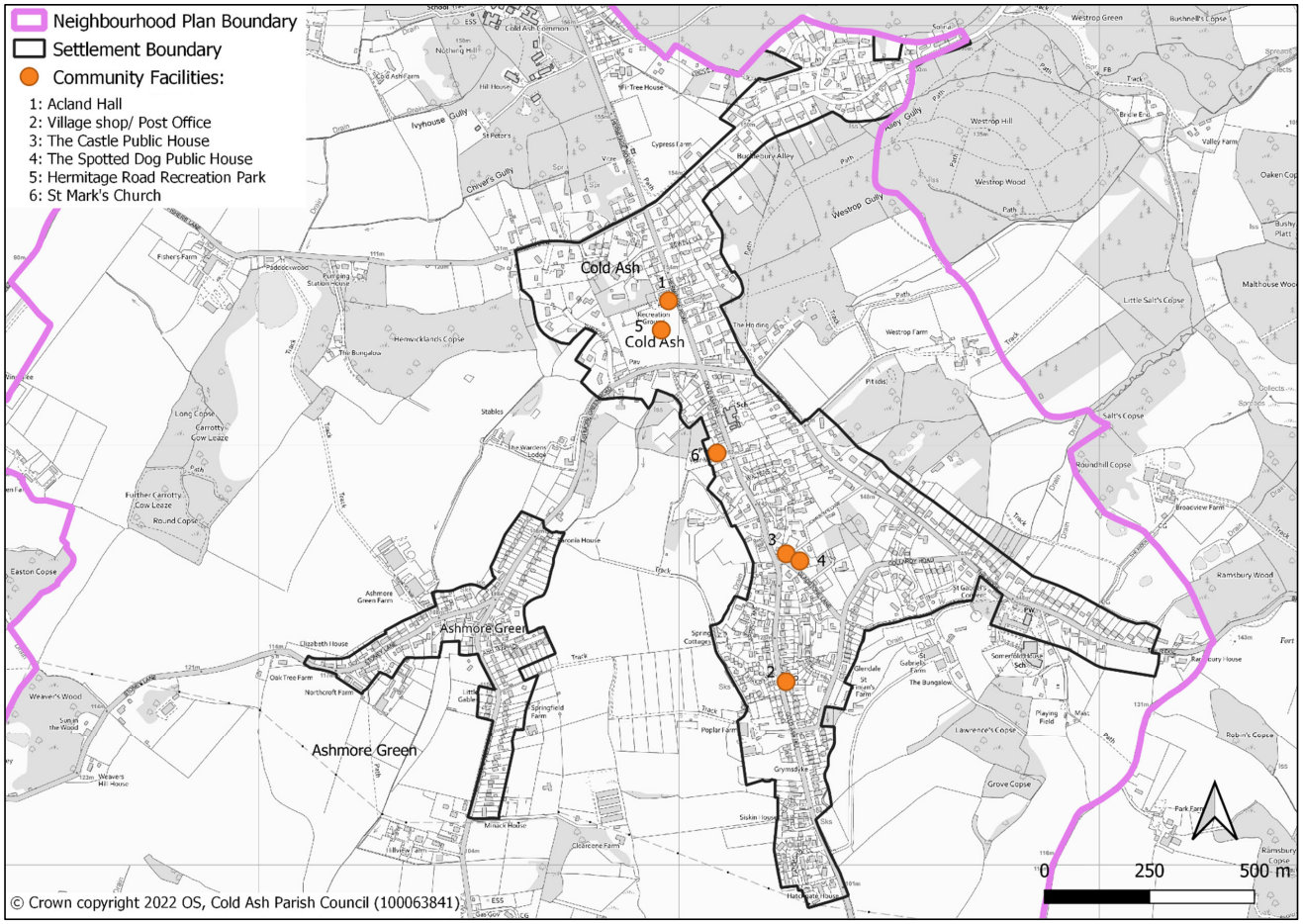


Figure ~~2020~~19: Map showing key community facilities

8.5. In parallel with this policy, Cold Ash Parish Council will explore options to formally list the facilities as Assets of Community Value.

POLICY CAP14: IMPORTANT COMMUNITY FACILITIES

1. **Development proposals that would result in the loss of all or part of the following important community facilities, will not be supported unless alternative facilities of equivalent standard and convenience have been agreed incorporating adequate safeguards for delivery:**

   a. **Acland Memorial Hall**
   b. **Cold Ash Village Shop and Post Office**
   c. **The village pubs: The Spotted Dog, and The Castle**
   d. **The facilities at Hermitage Road Recreation Ground**
   e. **St. Mark's Church**

2. **Development proposals to upgrade or expand these facilities, or to provide new ones, to enable either their continued operation or for an alternative community use, which deliver the following shall be strongly supported:**

   a. **the provision of additional and improved youth facilities, including improvements to the facilities at the Hermitage Road Recreation Ground;**
   b. **the provision of additional play areas to serve the needs of children of all ages, in line with the WBC's quantity and quality Standards and designed in accordance with Sport England's design guidance notes. Where possible, these should incorporate areas for 'natural play'.**
   c. **the provision of outdoor gym equipment at the Hermitage Road Recreation Ground;**
   d. **the provision of accessible toilet facilities.**

   Such proposals will be required to address the following criteria:
   a. **the proposal would not have significant harmful impacts on the amenities of surrounding residents and the local environment; and**
   b. **the proposal would not have significant unacceptable impacts upon the local road network; and**
   c. **the proposal would respect the historic importance and integrity of the buildings.**

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 4; Saved Local Plan Policy: RL2, SHOP5; Adopted Core Strategy: ADP2; Local Plan Review: SP24, DM39; NPPF: 90~~86~~, 9~~26~~, 9~~37~~

9. COMMERCIAL AND LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

Policy CAP15: Supporting commercial businesses ~~and expansions~~

Purpose

9.1 This policy seeks to encourage a thriving, sustainable Parish economy, by encouraging commercial activities within the ~~p~~Parish.

Justification

9.2 Historically, farming has been the key driver behind the prosperity of the Parish. But in line with experiences across the British countryside, employment opportunities in the agricultural sector have reduced. Cold Ash ~~p~~Parish has seen a steady growth in population with a substantial number of residents working outside the Parish commuting to the local towns of Newbury, Thatcham and Reading, and further afield to Basingstoke, Swindon and London. Notwithstanding this, the CAPNDP would be supportive of proposals that would support the agricultural sector in the P~~p~~arish.

9.3 Cold Ash village has retained a post-office, general-purpose grocery shop, and two pubs. The main commercial area in the P~~p~~arish is the Red Shute industrial estate, a designated Protected Employment Area in the Local Plan, located in the northern part of the P~~p~~arish. Larger-scale commercial activity should continue to be focussed on this site, ~~althoug~~although~~h~~ smaller-scale sustainable growth, for instance through the conversion of existing vacant or underused buildings, which are 'suitably located' and of appropriate scale, form and high-quality design, and which adhere in total to the policies set out in this plan, will be supported in the Parish; 'suitably located' means where they do not adversely affect the locality and the amenities of residents.

9.4 A further significant organisation in the Parish is Downe House School, established in 1907 and widely recognised as one of the leading all-girls' schools in the UK, Downe House also features in the independently researched Fortune/Statista list of 100 World's Top Boardings Schools 2023. It is a traditional boarding and day school for girls aged 11-18 and is noted for it~~'~~s contribution to sustainability and environmental awareness, having been awarded the Green Flag Award, the highest Eco-Schools achievement.

9.5 Supporting proposals for local employment opportunities will not only provide greater prospects for local people to access local jobs but will ensure that these are sustainable in terms of the patterns of commuting that they generate.

POLICY CAP15: SUPPORTING COMMERCIAL BUSINESSES~~, EXISTING AND EXPANSIONS~~

Proposals for new or expanded commercial and~~,~~ business ~~and service~~ activity (Use Classes B2, B8 and E(g)) will be supported within~~at~~ the Red Shute industrial estate~~, or~~ where they bring redundant or vacant land based rural operations back into use, or where they help to diversify the rural economy, subject to the following criteria:

a. **the proposal, including any associated premises, would not have unacceptable harmful impacts on the local environment;**
b. **the proposal would not have unacceptable harmful impacts on the amenity of neighbouring uses, particularly residential, through excessive noise, smell, lighting, vibration or other emissions or pollution; and**
c. **the proposal would not have unacceptable adverse impacts upon the local road network; and~~.~~**
d. **the proposal respects the character and appearance of the immediate locality in terms of height, scale, design and massing; and**
~~c.~~
e. **the proposal would encourage the re-use of previously developed land where opportunities exist.**

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 6; Adopted Core Strategy: ADPP2, CS9; Local Plan Review: SP1, SP20; NPPF: 8~~15~~, 8~~26~~, 8~~48~~–90~~, 85, 86~~

Policy CAP16: Supporting SMEs~~,~~ and flexible start-ups~~, and homeworking~~

Purpose

9.6 This policy recognises the growing contribution of home-based and smaller businesses to the P~~p~~arish and seeks to encourage opportunities for them. This would provide a greater incentive and opportunity for local people to work locally. ~~Homeworking is defined as a person who is working from their house, apartment, or place of residence, rather than working from the office.~~

Justification

9.7 Cold Ash has a well-qualified workforce, but with most people working outside the Parish, the supply of higher value job opportunities in the P~~p~~arish is limited. This suggests a need to consider attracting specialist companies to relocate to the Parish (as supported in ~~our in~~ Policy CAP15) and/or encouraging new start-ups. To provide flexible start-up space, it is necessary to encourage appropriate buildings that can be rented out at sufficiently low rents to attract their use by business start-ups and existing home workers. A potential source of such space in Cold Ash Parish is vacant farm and rural buildings.

~~9.8 As homeworking becomes more possible, this can be encouraged by supporting the creation of spaces for uses which can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to its amenity, for instance home office spaces. The intention is to allow non-residents to be employed from the domestic premises, albeit subject to the activity meeting the limitations set out in Clause 2 of the policy. Such a policy does give encouragement to economic activity within the parish whilst incorporating controls to prevent activities having a detrimental impact on the amenity of the locality. This policy only applies where the scale of activity is such that there is a need for planning permission, as much working from home can take place without planning consent being required.~~

~~9.9~~9.8 The roll-out and continued improvement of digital infrastructure will be supported to ~~o~~ ~~support~~enable SMEs, start-up businesses ~~homeworking a~~and other activities~~.~~. Through the Berkshire Digital Infrastructure Group, the Berkshire Unitary Authorities are implementing a Digital Strategy and have set-out a "Connected Berkshire Vision and Strategy" to ensure that over 95% of households and business have access to full fibre coverage (providing Gigabit capable connectivity) and to eliminate all 4G poor coverage areas by 2025. ~~all new residential, commercial and community properties within the parish should be served by (or be ready for) a superfast broadband (fibre optic) connection, unless it can be demonstrated through consultation with British Telecom that this would not be either possible, practical or economically viable. The Parish Council will explore, with the local authorities and commercial providers, opportunities for this and the deployment of improved mobile coverage in the parish.~~

POLICY CAP16: SUPPORTING SMES AND ~~,~~ FLEXIBLE START-UPS ~~AND HOMEWORKING~~

1. Proposals to provide working spaces that encourage ~~homeworking and~~ creative small industries, for instance through incubator/start-up business space on flexible terms, will be supported through:

a. t~~T~~he provision of new buildings, or extensions to, or conversion of existing buildings, including redundant farm and rural buildings.~~; and~~

~~b. enabling extensions and small new garden buildings to facilitate homeworking, within Use Class (E(g)(i).~~

2. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals must:

a. respect the surrounding rural landscape and not compromise or reduce the amenities of neighbouring residents and other users and its setting in regard to size, light pollution, noise, dirt, smells or smoke, air pollution, or loss of wildlife habitat; and
b. not have any unacceptable impact on the local road network; and
c. work in harmony with agriculture and other land-based activities and rural recreational activities; and
d. be accompanied by appropriate protected species and habitat surveys, avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity and seek to achieve a net gain through enhancements; and
e. seek, where possible, to sustain any historic, architectural or archaeological interest the building may have either individually or through association with one or more heritage assets, unless unavoidable harm is justified on the basis of the public benefits, including the enabling of the building's optimum viable future use; and~~.~~
f. respect the character and appearance of the immediate locality in terms of height, scale, design and massing; and
g. encourage the re-use of previously developed land where opportunities exist.

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 6; Adopted Core Strategy: CS9; Local Plan Review: SP1, SP20; NPPF: 8~~5~~0, 8~~3~~6, 848

10. NON-POLICY ACTIONS

10.1 Table 5~~he table below~~ identifies a series of actions that have arisen through the community engagement in preparing the CAPNDP. These were considered by the community to be important matters but do not necessarily require planning permission. As such, they are not the subject of planning policies in the ~~Neighbourhood Plan~~CAPNDP. These non-policy actions will be reviewed in line with the rest of the Neighbourhood Plan as part of the Local Plan Review, to take account of changing circumstances and community aspirations.

Table 5: Non-policy actions

Ref	Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partners
1.	Potential to identify locally significant heritage assets to add to the Local List.	Review any local heritage site candidates with WBC to ascertain if any are worthy of adding to the Local List.	CAPC, WBC Archaeology Team, Local history society, Downe House School
2.	Improve access to local heritage assets	Review access arrangements and improve.	WBC, heritage assets
3.	Improve information about local history and heritage	Seek funding for information boards at sites where appropriate, and erect interpretation boards to enhance understanding and appreciation of local heritage sites.	WBC, landowners
4.	Community energy	Explore, with the community, options for a community energy scheme.	CAPC, local residents, landowners
5.	Potential to improve areas in the Parish for biodiversity, including both sites and wildlife corridors	Establish a local wildlife group to explore locations where biodiversity improvements could be made and sources of funding to enable this. A first step is to develop an Environmental Baseline against which to consider future improvements.	CAPC, volunteers, landowners
6.	Protecting the dark skies against light pollution	Undertake regular star counts to feed into National Landscape and CPRE data. Consider ways to highlight the importance of dark skies to local homeowners with examples of how this can be achieved at the very local level.	Local astronomical group, local community, schools, North Wessex Downs National Landscape~~AONB~~ Unit
7.	Potential to establish Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA)	We intend to explore BOA opportunities for the Local Green Space sites, and other green space within the Parish, with local landowners. Once potential	CAPC, volunteers, landowners, Local Wildlife

		sites are identified, we will aim to establish the necessary baseline data against which any Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) can be tracked and managed. Should we, in time, achieve any BNG, we will aim to establish the appropriate BOA(s) enabling the relevant landowner(s) to sell the BNG. Parish Council to explore the development of a Biodiversity Action Plan, to set out preferred planting in the Parish. Consideration to be given to trees in the Parish that should be protected by a Tree Protection Order and pursuing this with WBC.	Trust, WBC, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (managing the Habitat Recovery Network covering the wider strategic area)
8.	Difficulties for pedestrians (including children) crossing Cold Ash Hill.	• Investigate options for a formal crossing point on Cold Ash Hill, in the vicinity of St Mark's School and the church. • Maintain existing footpaths and footways to keep them clear of undergrowth. Explore options to upgrade surfacing in a way that is sympathetic to local character.	CAPC, WBC
9.	Lack of cycle parking	Provide a bike rack adjacent to the rifle club shed.	CAPC
10.	Lack of cycle lanes	To continue to investigate opportunities to introduce cycle Lanes, away from mechanised traffic, where possible	CAPC, WBC
11.	Lack of bus services	Work with stakeholders to identify funding to materially improve bus frequencies, route choice and operating hours.	CAPC, WBC, bus operators
12.	Safeguarding sunken lanes against inappropriate traffic volumes	Work with partners to have these lanes officially designated as Quiet Lanes. Explore whether other lanes in the Parish might be suitable to designate as Quiet Lanes. Consider whether there are other lanes (e.g. sections of Lawrences Lane) that might meet the criteria of a sunken lane.	CAPC, WBC, CPRE
13.	Speeding traffic	Options to help manage traffic speeds include: • Extend existing traffic calming measures on Hermitage Road (between Slanting Hill and Ashmore Green Road) to include Cold Ash Hill and Red Shute Hill. • Add frequent 30mph roundels (road markings) throughout the route from the village gateway on Cold Ash Hill through to Red Shute Hill.	CAPC, WBC

		• Provide a new 'gateway' feature, with signage on both sides of the road near the industrial estate in Red Shute Hill. • Additional vehicle actuated speed limit signs to be installed to supplement the existing signs on Cold Ash Hill (near Hatchgate Close) and on The Ridge. Three additional signs are proposed, one near St Mark's School, one near the Post Office and one in Red Shute Hill. • 20mph zones are introduced outside both schools; with associated entry signs and 20mph road markings.	
14.	Need to reduce congestion and improve pedestrian safety at schools	Explore potential to: • Remove some street parking to allow room for improved footway/verge provision in places, increase capacity for pedestrians and reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. However, further waiting restrictions (Traffic Regulation Orders) would be needed to enforce the parking restrictions and the displaced parking would need to be replaced with additional off-street parking, subject to land availability either at or near the schools or extensions to existing ones. • a subsidised school mini-bus service from Thatcham to reduce the numbers of pupils travelling by car. • Investigate potential for 'school walking bus' or car sharing schemes.	CAPC, WBC, Schools, existing car park providers/ those with land that could be used for car parking (the church?)
15.	HGVs using inappropriate routes through the villages (despite existing weight limits)	• Additional signs to increase awareness of both the weight limit and the fact that routes are unsuitable for HGV's. • At Stoney Lane, the existing weight limit sign, with supplementary warning "No turning area beyond this point", near Waller Drive, is mounted on the off-side of the road and not prominent for approaching drivers. A duplicate sign is proposed on the nearside (this could be attached to the street lamp column opposite Waller Drive). Similar signage is proposed in Ashmore Green Road at the junction with Stoney Lane. • Additional signs stating "Unsuitable for heavy good vehicles" on Stoney Lane, near Pine Ridge. • At Fisher's Lane, place a supplementary sign plate with a warning message "No turning area beyond this point" at the entry to Fisher's Lane from the B4009. Provide a further sign stating "Unsuitable for heavy good vehicles" at the entrance to Fisher's Lane.	CAPC, WBC (Traffic and Road Safety Team)

16.	Longer term aspirations for the recreation ground	Produce a sustainability plan for the recreation ground	CAPC
17.	Support the ongoing provision of community amenities	Consider additional local community facilities to nominate as Assets of Community Value, based on the list in Policy CAP14.	CAPC
18.	Scope to improve the facilities offered at the Recreation Park.	In consultation with the community, consider which improvements are feasible.	CAPC, community, teens
19.	Establish an online business directory for the Parish.	Local businesses will be encouraged to contribute to the setting up of a Cold Ash specific business directory and website.	CAPC, local busineses and facilities
20.	Supporting active travel	Identifying additional recreational routes to encourage walking, cycling and equestrian. There are opportunities for circular routes in particular. Explore, with Downe House, the creation of a circular walk within the school grounds, to be available for local schools and the wider community to access through the appropriate channels.	CAPC, Local Access Forum, neighbouring parishes, British Horse Society, Downe House School

11. IMPLEMENTATION AND PLAN REVIEW

11.1 Cold Ash Parish Council is the qualifying body responsible for the CAPNDP.

11.2 Once the Plan has been 'made', there will be a series of actions that will need to be undertaken to ensure that the policies within the CAPNDP are being interpreted and used in the way intended. It will also be necessary to maintain a watching brief on changes to the planning policy landscape, both at the national and local planning authority levels, which may have an impact on the Plan's policies. Finally, any non-planning-related projects and activities that were identified will need to be prioritised for delivery, in partnership with other organisations.

11.3 Specific actions to be undertaken are as follows:

- Pursuing the projects and activities that are not policy-based, but nevertheless contribute to the delivery of the Plan - these are set out in Section 10, divided into priorities towards which developer contributions may be directed and broader, community projects, which have been collated throughout the process, but which sit beyond planning policy. A range of organisations may be involved in delivering these projects and there will be a need for a co-ordinated approach. Many will require funding and therefore it would be helpful to consult with the community to understand the potential costs and achievability of each. Funding may be sourced from developer contributions or tailored funds, such as the Big Lottery Fund, member's bids, Greenham Trust, and other WBC funding opportunities to provide potential sources of funding.
- Commenting on planning applications or consultations relating to the neighbourhood plan area – the Parish Council has a role in ensuring that the CAPNDP policies are being adequately considered, where relevant, in decisions to determine the outcome of planning applications in the Parish. A meeting between local councillors, planning committee members and the supporting planning officers at WBC would be a useful step in ensuring that the purpose and application of the policies is fully understood by all parties. This will assist in ensuring that policies are interpreted and applied in the way intended.
- Monitoring the application of the CAPNDP policies to ensure they have been applied consistently and interpreted correctly in response to planning applications – there is scope to identify indicators to measure the effect that each policy is having and the extent to which this is delivering against the associated objective. As a minimum, the Parish Council would wish to maintain a log of planning applications relating to the neighbourhood area, detailing which policies have informed the Parish Council response and the outcome of the decision. This will assist in understanding whether the policies have been used in the manner intended or whether changes may be required, for instance in any future review of the CAPNDP.
- Maintaining a dialogue with WBC regarding the timing and content of the Local Plan Review adoption – it will be important to consider the policies in the document and how these may impact the CAPNDP policies. The adoption of the Local Plan Review may trigger a light-touch review of the CAPNDP.
- Maintaining a dialogue with WBC and the promoter/developers of any sites allocated within the Local Plan or coming forward as windfall.

- Maintaining a watching brief on the national policy landscape – changes at the national level may impact on the policies contained in the Local Plan Review and the Neighbourhood Plan. It is therefore important to keep abreast of this, as this could also provide a trigger to undertake a light-touch review of the CAPNDP.
- Maintaining a dialogue with neighbouring parishes on cross-boundary projects.
- Maintaining a dialogue with the local community on the plan implementation – ensuring that all records of how the plan has been used should be made public. It is also recommended that a regular update – for instance at the Annual Parish Meeting – is provided, to feed back to the community on progress about both the effectiveness of the policies and the pursing of the projects.
- Considering gaps in the CAPNDP – local issues, concerns or opportunities may arise during the lifespan of the Plan that trigger the need for the inclusion of a new policy. Such issues can be most effectively understood by maintaining open dialogue with the community and other partners.

11.4 Whilst it is not a legislative requirement to review a Neighbourhood Plan, it is good practice to do so periodically. This may be because of any of the points noted above. A light-touch review will enable the Parish Council to keep the CAPNDP up to date in general terms, and to ensure that it remains in general conformity with the wider development plan. Any review should be undertaken in partnership with and ensuring the engagement of the wider community.

11.5 The CAPNDP has been prepared whilst WBC is preparing a Local Plan Review. This Local Plan Review will cover the period up to 2039. The Parish Council recognises that it will be important to keep the neighbourhood plan up to date in general terms, and to ensure that it remains in general conformity with the wider development plan. In this context it intends to commence a review of the CAPNDP within six months of the adoption of the Local Plan Review.

12. INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS AND PROVISION

12.1. The Parish Council wishes to influence how developer contributions are spent in the neighbourhood area to the full extent of their powers under national legislation and planning guidance.

12.2. There are different types of contributions arising from section 106 agreements, section 278 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

- A section 106 agreement (based on that section of The 1990 Town & Country Planning Act) or planning obligation is a private agreement made between local authorities and developers and can be attached to a planning permission to make acceptable development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms.
- A section 278 agreement refers to a section of the Highways Act 1980 that allows developers to enter into a legal agreement with the local authority to make alterations or improvements to a public highway as part of a planning application. It is paid directly to the planning authority for highway alterations rather than to the Parish Council for them to utilise.
- The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a non-negotiable charge on development based on a fixed rate per square metre of net additional development on a site and is levied by WBC. Different charge rates apply for different types of uses and in different areas. The levy is intended to fund the provision, improvement, replacement, or maintenance of infrastructure required to support development in an area as set out in its Local Plan.

12.3. With a 'made' Neighbourhood Plan, the local community will benefit from an uplift in the level of CIL received, from 15% (capped at £100 per existing property) to an uncapped 25% of CIL receipts from the Cold Ash Parish Neighbourhood Area.

13. POLICIES MAPS

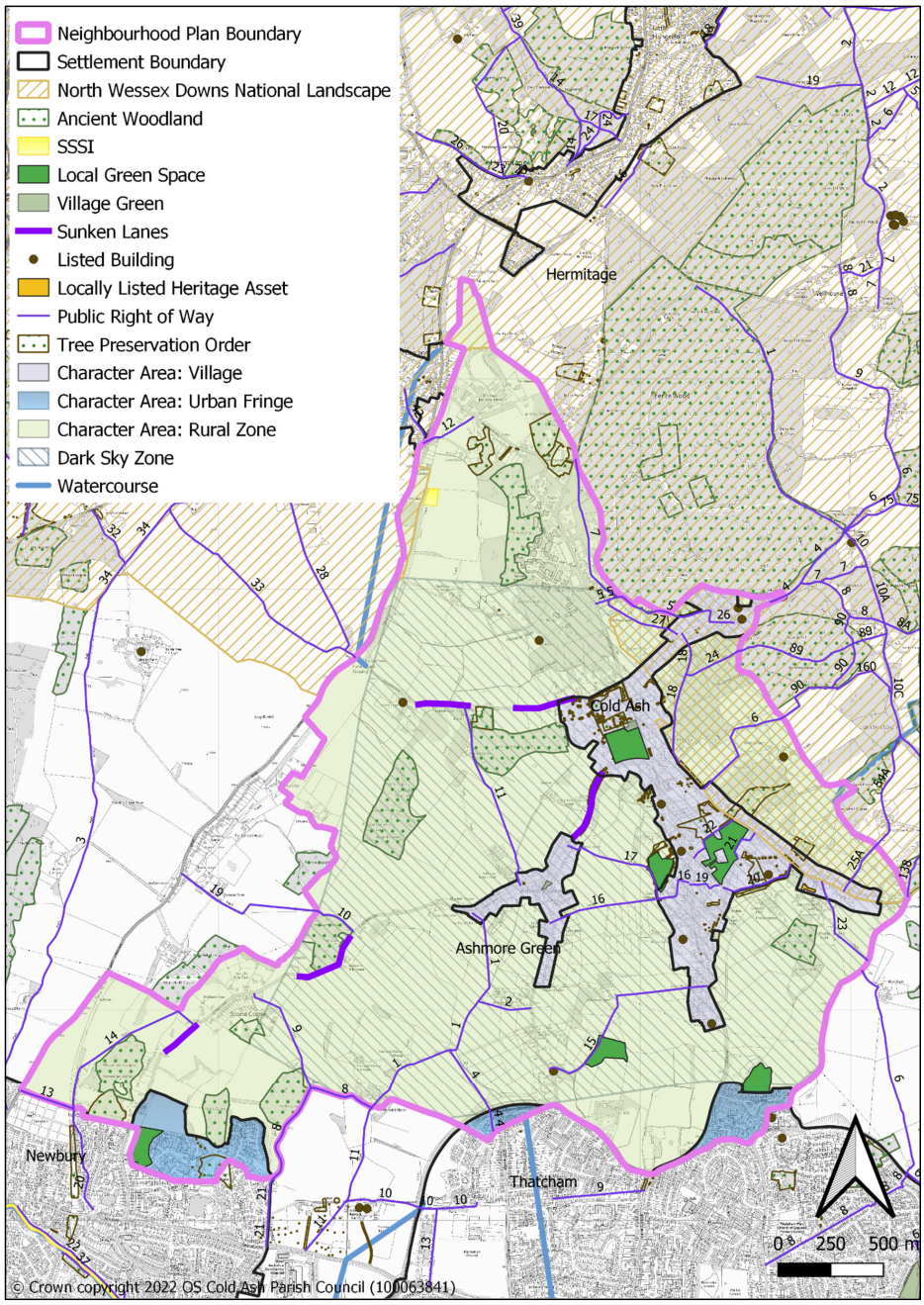


Figure ~~21~~[21~~20~~]: Parish-wide policies map

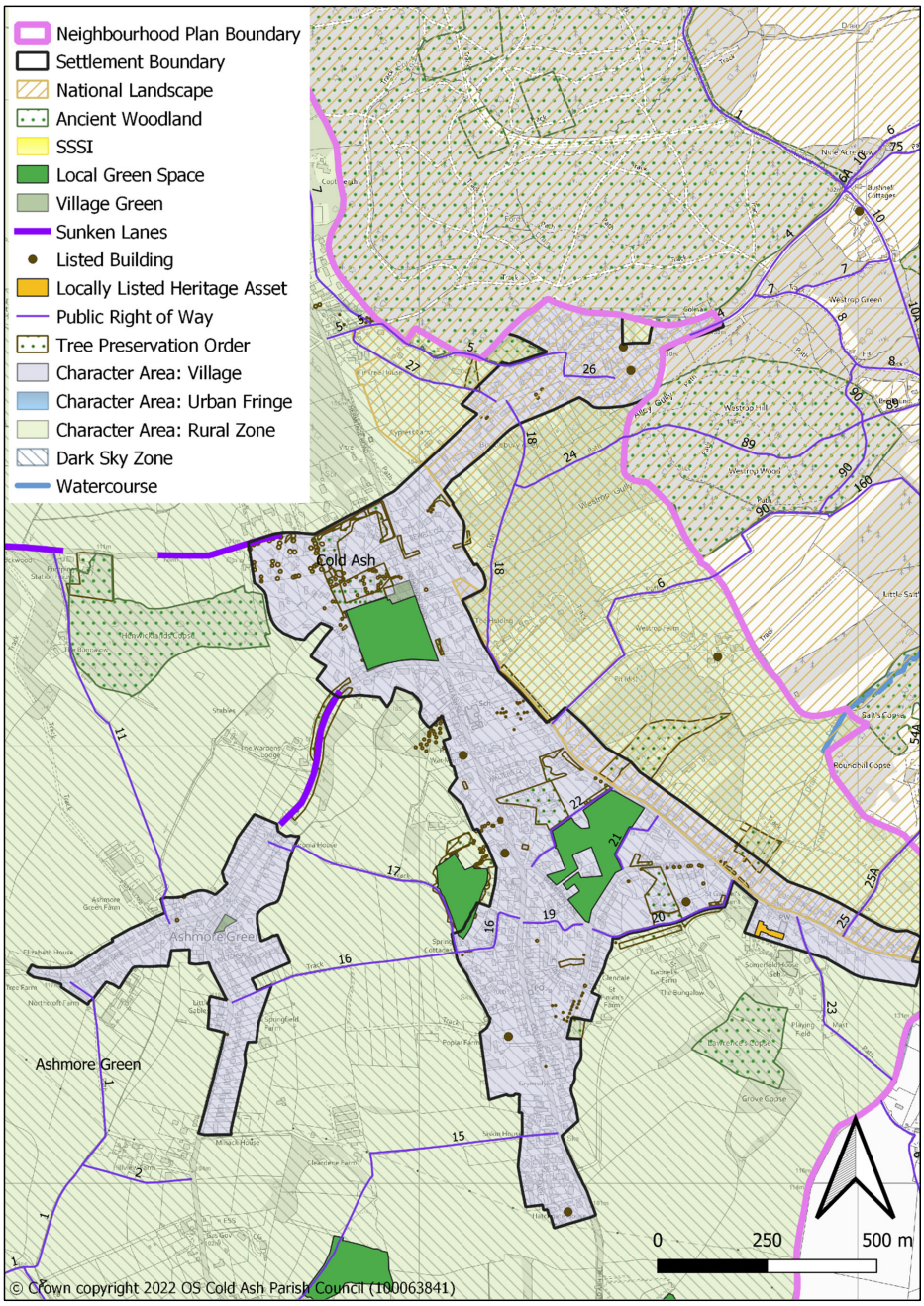


Figure ~~22~~22~~21~~: Parish-wide policies - villages

14. GLOSSARY

- **Ancient Woodland:** an area that's been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD.
- **Affordable housing:** housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers).
- **Archaeological interest:** There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
- **Buffer Zones**: Relatively sensitive and narrow gaps of undeveloped countryside outside of Green Belt, where there is a risk of coalescence, as a result of development pressure.
- **Change of Use** - A change in the way that land or buildings are used (see Use Classes Order). Planning permission is usually necessary to change a "use class".
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** – a fixed, non-negotiable contribution that must be made by new development. It is chargeable on each net additional square metre of development built and is set by WBC.
- **Conservation (for heritage policy):** The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.
- **Conservation area:** an area of notable environmental or historical interest or importance which is protected by law against undesirable changes.
- **Consultation Statement**: a statement submitted by the qualifying body detailing the public consultations undertaken in its neighbourhood Development Plan
- **Dark Sky:** a place where the darkness of the night sky is relatively free of interference from artificial light.
- **Designated heritage asset:** A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.
- **Development Plan:** A document setting out the local planning authority's policies and proposals for the development and use of land and buildings in the authority's area. This includes adopted Local Plans and neighbourhood plans, together with any regional strategies that remain in force. It is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- **Footway:** A pedestrian route along the side of a road.
- **Green infrastructure:** A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.
- **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA):** is a process that determines whether or not development plans could negatively impact on a recognised protected European site beyond reasonable scientific doubt.
- **Habitats site:** Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.
- **Heritage Statement:** outlines the overall significance of a building, conservation area, neighbouring heritage assets and its setting.
- **Homeworking:** is defined as a person who is working from their house, apartment, or place of residence, rather than working from the office.

- **Local Green Space:** is a designation that provides special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities.
- **Local Plan:** Local Plans set out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure – as well as a basis for safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design for the area they cover. They are a critical tool in guiding decisions about individual development proposals, as Local Plans (together with any Neighbourhood Development Plans that have been made) are the starting point for considering whether applications can be approved. It is important for all areas to put an up-to-date Local Plan in place to positively guide development decisions.
- **Local planning authority:** The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. For Cold Ash, this is West Berkshire Council.
- **Local Wildlife Sites (LWS):** are areas with locally significant nature conservation value. They come in all shapes and sizes, from small wildflower meadows and secluded ponds to ancient woodlands. Most are owned by private individuals.
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**: the national planning policy document which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
- **Non-strategic policies:** Policies contained in a neighbourhood plan, or those policies in a local plan that are not strategic policies.
- **Open space:** All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.
- **Previously developed land/ brownfield land:** Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be PDL Previously Developed Land developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.
- **Priority habitats and species:** Species and Habitats of Principal Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- **Public Right of Way:** There are three types of PROW in Cold Ash Parish; public footpaths, public bridleways and byways open to all traffic (BOATS). A pedestrian route along the side of a road is described as a 'footway' in this document.
- **Qualifying Body:** The makers of a neighbourhood plan – in our case, Cold Ash Parish Council
- **Section 106 agreement (or s106):** A mechanism under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which makes a development proposal acceptable in planning terms that would not otherwise be acceptable.
- **Section 278 agreement (or s278):** is a section of the Highways Act 1980 that allows developers to enter into a legal agreement with the council (in our capacity as the Highway Authority) to make permanent alterations or improvements to a public highway, as part of a planning approval.

- **Settlement boundaries: These** identify the areas in the district of primarily built form, rather than countryside the main built-up area of a settlement within which development is considered acceptable, subject to other policy considerations. While allowing for development, settlement boundaries protect the character of a settlement and prevent unrestricted growth into the countryside. They create a level of certainty about whether or not the principle of development is likely to be acceptable.
- **Stepping-stones:** Pockets of habitat that, while not necessarily connected, facilitate the movement of species across otherwise inhospitable landscapes.
- **Strategic environmental assessment:** A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.
- **Sunken lanes:** these are lanes that have been developed through historical use. Their appearance is sunken, due to the erosion through use over many years. They are seen as a strong historical feature, and one that needs to be protected.
- **Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS):** are drainage systems that are considered to be environmentally beneficial, causing minimal or no long-term detrimental damage. They are designed to manage stormwater locally (as close its source as possible), to mimic natural drainage and encourage its infiltration, attenuation and passive treatment.
- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):** Supplementary Planning Documents may cover a range of issues, both topic and site specific, which may expand policy or provide further detail to policies contained in a Development Plan Document, where they can help applicants make successful applications or aid infrastructure delivery.
- **Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC):** manages and shares information on species, habitats and important wildlife and geological sites in Berkshire and Oxfordshire.
- **Tree Preservation Order:** an order made by a local planning authority in England to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands in the interests of amenity.
- **Use Classes Order:** The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (As amended in 1995, 2005, 2013 and 2020) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories. Planning permission is not needed for changes of use within the same use class.
- **Wildlife corridor:** Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations.
- **Windfall Sites:** those sites which become available for development unexpectedly and are therefore not included as allocated land in a planning authority's development plan.

15. REFERENCE PACK

All evidence base documents are available to view on the CAPNDP website: https://coldashpc.org.uk/
Document website addresses shown below are correct at February 2023.

Document/ Evidence	Author	Year
Dark Skies of the North Wessex Downs: A Guide to Good External Lighting	North Wessex Downs ~~AONB~~National Landscape Unit	2021
Biodiversity metric	Defra	2021
Building for a Healthy Life	Design for Homes	2020
Census	Office for National Statistics	2011
Climate Change Act 2008	HM Government	2008
Cold Ash Village Design Statement	CAPC	2002
Core Strategy Development Document 2006 to 2026	WBC	Adopted 2012
Environment Act 2021	HM Government	2021
Biodiversity metric: calculate the biodiversity net gain of a project or development	Defra	2021
Guidance Note: Residential Parking	The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation	No date
Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development	North Wessex Downs National Landscape~~AONB~~ Unit	2020
Heritage at Risk Register	Historic England	ongoing
Housing Density Analysis for Cold Ash Parish (available from the CAPC website)	Prepared for CAPC by Simon Vanstone	2017/ 2019
Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI)	Housing LIN	2012
Housing Quality Indicators	Homes and Communities Agency	2011
Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document	WBC	Adopted May 2017
Housing Standards Review	HM Government	2012 (and amended)
Living with Beauty: promoting health, well-being and sustainable growth	HM Government	2020
Local Development Scheme	WBC	April 2020
Local List of Heritage Assets	WBC	2020
Local Plan Review to 2037 – Regulation 18 version	WBC	2020
Local Plan Review to 2039 – Regulation 19 version	WBC	2023
Localism Act 2011	HM Government	2011
National Design Guide		2021
National Heritage List for England (NHLE)	Historic England	ongoing
National Planning Policy Framework (amended July 2021)	HM Government	Amended 2021
Neighbourhood Development Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended)	HM Government	2012
Nightblight: Reclaiming our skies	CPRE	ongoing
North Wessex Downs Management Plan 2019 to 2024	North Wessex Downs ~~AONB~~National Landscape Unit	2019
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004	HM Government	2004
Quality Design West Berkshire	WBC	2006

Document/ Evidence	Author	Year
Saved policies from the West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991 to 2006	WBC	Saved policies 2007
Secured by Design	Police Crime Prevention Initiatives	ongoing
South East Plan Natural Resource Management Policy 6 - relating to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. In February 2013 the South East Plan was formally abolished except for Policy NRM6 which relates to new residential development close to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.	South East Plan	From 2013
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Decision Notice	WBC	13 December 2021
Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report Post Consultation Version	WBC	13 December 2021
Technical Appendix - Traffic, Transport and Travel	SW Transport Planning Ltd	March 2021
Town and Country Planning Act 1990	HM Government	1990
Urban Air Quality	Woodland Trust	2012
Use Classes	Planning Portal	2021
West Berkshire Historic Environment Characterisation Project	WBC	2004-2007
West Berkshire Historic Environment Record	Historic England in partnership with ALGAO and IHBC	ongoing
West Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment	WBC	2019
West Berkshire Local Plan Local Development Scheme	WBC	January 2023
West Berkshire Local Plan - Review of Transport Evidence Base	SW Transport Planning Ltd	February 2023
West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2022-2037	WBC	1 December 2022
West Berkshire Parking Standards	WBC	2014

Appendix A – Prevailing housing densities

The following table has been prepared for the CAPNDP to illustrate the housing densities of different parts of the Parish.

	Acres	M^2	Total Houses	Houses per Acre	Houses per Hectare	Comment
Ashmore Green North	7.29	29543	35	4.80	11.86	
Ashmore Green Road (Recreation Ground)	3.96	16020	10	2.53	6.24	
Ashmore Green South	21.06	85224	73	3.47	8.57	
Ashmore Green West	10.45	42272	46	4.40	10.88	
Bucklebury Alley	22.14	89608	51	2.30	5.69	
Cold Ash Hill	19.42	78615	113	5.82	14.38	Omits The Vicarage
Cold Ash Hill - Harewood Drive	3.44	13933	9	2.62	6.46	
Cold Ash Hill - Hatchgate Close	4.76	19273	26	5.46	13.50	
Cold Ash Hill - Spring Lane	4.15	16810	22	5.30	13.10	
Cold Ash Hill - Strouds Meadow	2.57	10382	24	9.34	23.08	
Cold Ash Hill - Walters Close	2.77	11201	12	4.33	10.70	
Cold Ash Hill - Total	37.11	150214	206	5.55	13.72	
Colloroy Road	13.58	54996	48	3.53	8.73	
Colloroy Road - The Rise & Hazels Paddock	2.15	8712	26	12.09	29.88	
Drove Lane	13.81	55888	30	2.17	5.37	
Fishers Lane	23.46	94938	35	1.49	3.69	Omits Fishers Farm
Gladstone Lane	3.81	15443	15	3.94	9.73	
Hermitage Road	29.45	119259	60	2.04	5.03	
Johnson Lane	0.85	3459	3	3.53	8.72	
Long Lane	5.44	21993	18	3.31	8.18	Omits Cold Ash Farm
Red Shute Hill	23.58	95408	24	1.02	2.52	
Slanting Hill	8.81	35649	5	0.57	1.40	
Stoney Lane (Excl Ashmore Green West)	40.19	162657	46	1.14	2.83	
The Ridge	55.28	223704	106	1.92	4.74	

	Acres	M^2	Total Houses	Houses per Acre	Houses per Hectare	Comment
The Ridge - Westrop Farm	1.43	5771	3	2.10	5.18	Area = curtilage of residential part of farm only
Thirtover	10.24	41447	12	1.17	2.90	
Henwick	12.92	52289	18	1.39	3.44	Omits Elmhurst Farm
Pear Tree Lane	3.47	14056	3	0.86	2.14	
Heath Lane (The Creek)	4.83	19541	11	2.28	5.63	
Southend	17.46	70643	181	10.37	25.62	
Thatcham (Florence Gardens)	6.79	27466	60	8.84	21.84	
Manor Park	22.87	92567	243	10.63	26.26	
Total Village	**323.64**	**1309933**	**806**			Omits Cold Ash Farm, Elmhurst Farm, Fishers Farm, The Vicarage
Total Ward (Old Definition)	**369.11**	**1493928**	**1079**			
Total Parish	**391.98**	**1586495**	**1322**			

Appendix B – Iconic views

Ref	Name and description
V1	**From St Mark's Churchyard south and west** From the rear of St Mark's Church, over the graveyard and beyond, provides an idyllic view of the west of the P~~p~~arish including Berkshire and Wiltshire. This view is important to residents as it provides the backdrop to the tranquil space enjoyed by parishioners when they spend time in the church grounds, graveyard and the Fisher Rooms (the church function room) 

V2	**From The Ridge across Westrop Farm and Westrop Gulley** From the western end of The Ridge, the view to Frilsham and Yattendon provides an idyllic view across the Pang Valley to the north-west of the ~~p~~Parish. This view is important to residents as it provides one of the few remaining views from The Ridge, as most are now masked by buildings. 

V3	**From Footpath 15 looking SW towards Newbury** From Footpath 15, provides an idyllic view of the south-west of the ~~p~~Parish towards Newbury, including Berkshire and Hampshire. This view is important to residents as it provides views across the last open landscape between the ~~p~~Parish and Newbury and Thatcham. It also adds to the enjoyment of walking Footpath 15. 

V4	**View looking NE towards Broadview Farm and the Pang Valley** From the eastern end of The Ridge, the view from the proposed redirection of Footpath 25 provides an idyllic view across the Pang Valley, to the north-west of the P~~p~~arish. This view is important to residents as it provides one of the few remaining views from The Ridge, as Footpath 25 runs behind the houses that mask the view. It adds to the enjoyment of walking Footpath 25. 

V5	**From the aerial position at St Finian's Farm to Beacon Hill, Greenham and Watership Down** At the eastern end of the ~~p~~Parish, off The Ridge, the view from Footpath 23 provides an idyllic view across the Kennet Valley, to the south of the P~~p~~arish. This view is important to residents as it provides one of the few remaining views now that the introduction of five new homes has~~ve~~ masked the last remaining view from The Ridge. The view includes Berkshire and Hampshire, and the iconic sites of Beacon Hill and Watership Down. It adds to the enjoyment of walking Footpath 23. 

~~V6~~	
V6~~7~~	**From the high point of Footpath 15 looking south towards Ashmore Green Road and Cold Ash Hill** From the high point of Footpath 15, provides an idyllic view of the south of the Parish towards Newbury, including Berkshire and Hampshire. This view is important to residents as it provides views across the last open landscape between the ~~p~~Parish and Newbury and Thatcham. It also adds to the enjoyment of walking Footpath 15. This is part of the panoramic view that also includes view V3. 

V~~7~~8	**From Footpath 16 at Ashmore Green looking south to Spring Lane by Cold Ash Hill** From the high point of Footpath 16, provides an idyllic view of the south of the P~~p~~arish towards Newbury, including Berkshire and Hampshire. This view is important to residents as it provides views across the last open landscape between the ~~p~~P~~P~~arish and Newbury and Thatcham. It also adds to the enjoyment of walking Footpath 16.  

V~~8~~9	**From Footpath 15 looking east, towards Cold Ash Hill** From the high point of Footpath 15, provides an idyllic view of the heart of the Parish, including the village of Cold Ash. This view is important to residents as it provides views across the green space around the village, giving it the rural character and feel that is so important to residents. It also adds to the enjoyment of walking Footpath 15. 

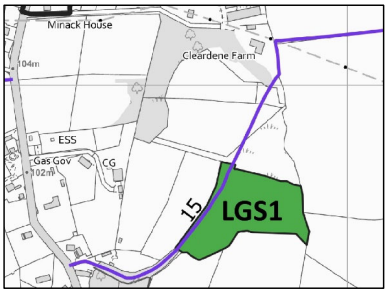
V~~9~~10	This view is from the Wildlife Allotment Garden across the valley to Hannington, in Hampshire. The viewpoint is situated in a Quiet Garden, specifically designed for visitors to sit surrounded by nature while they enjoy the view. The view is particularly important as the site is owned by a charitable trust, of which Cold Ash Parish Councillors are trustees, and is for the benefit of parishioners.



Appendix C - Local Green Spaces

1. Cleardene Woods





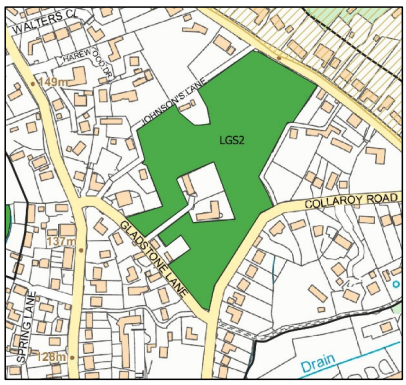
Site Name	Cleardene Wood
Site Owner	Ian Young & Suzanne Jackson
Location	On the outskirts of Cold Ash and Ashmore Green villages, between Cold Ash Hill and Ashmore Green Road
Status/Designations	Local Wildlife Site
Size	1.55ha
Description	A local woodland that provides a good habitat, supporting biodiversity, and a tranquil setting for the Public Right of Way that passes through it.
Boundaries	Hedges and wire fencing
Distance from Village	Close to the settlement boundaries of the two main villages in the Parish, Cold Ash and Ashmore Green, and adjacent to the Hamlet of Henwick
Uses	Wildlife landing space, as part of the wildlife corridors. Supports biodiversity
Quality	A significant area of high-quality trees and land that supports biodiversity and provides a transit point for the wildlife corridors
Facilities	No direct facilities, but a Public Right of Way passes though the space
Visual Attractiveness	An attractive copse which has been enhanced by additional planting of trees
Historical Significance	There is no specific historical significance associated with the site
Recreational Value	The area is not open to the public, but adds to the enjoyment of using adjacent Public Rights of Way

Tranquility	**A tranquil setting that is surrounded by open farmland and farm buildings**
Wildlife Value	**Offers a haven for wildlife and could potentially be a transit point for wildlife corridors. Although a Local Wildlife Site, boundaries for such sites can alter, hence the local desire to designate the space a Local Green Space.**
Recommend as an LGS	**Proposed on the basis of its importance for local wildlife, as a transit point, and being a tranquil route for the Public Right of Way**

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2. Wildlife Allotment Garden





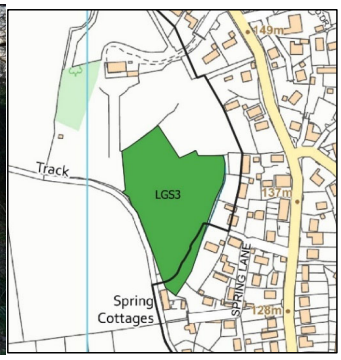
Site Name	Wildlife Allotment Garden
Site Owner	**Poor's Allotment and Recreation Ground Charity (no. 300138), of which Cold Ash Parish Council is trustee**
Location	**The Wildlife Allotment Garden (WAG) covers some 3.03ha in the heart of the Parish.**
Status/Designations	**The land was given to the poor of the Parish in 1852. A charitable trust was established to manage the land in 1922 (the Poor's Allotment and Recreation Ground Charities), of which Cold Ash Parish Councillors are trustees.**
Size	**3.03ha**
Description	**A local woodland that provides a good habitat, supporting biodiversity, and a tranquil setting for recreational use by the public, bordered on two sides by Public Right of Ways. The site includes paths, a Quiet Garden, allotments, and fields that house sheep and goats. It has been recognised as an ideal mix of woodland and meadow**
Boundaries	**Hedges and Public Rights of Way**
Distance from Village	**Within the settlement boundary of Cold Ash village**

Uses	**Wildlife biodiversity, allotments, housing livestock and recreation**
Quality	**The quality of the site has been assessed and it is recognised as having the ideal mix of woodland, meadows, and fields for livestock. It has standing water that also supports biodiversity. It also houses 29 allotments for use by local parishioners.**
Facilities	**Allotments, grazing fields, Quiet Area, picnic areas and educational zone, with various benches, paths and green space. A number specific wildlife habitats have been added to enhance biodiversity**
Visual Attractiveness	**The site is very visually attractive with views across several counties. It is viewed by parishioners as the environmental heart of the Parish.**
Historical Significance	**The site was given to the poor of the Parish in the late nineteenth century for growing their own fruit and vegetables and grazing their livestock (it was originally known as the 'Labouring Poor Allotments').**
Recreational Value	**A tranquil oasis for walking, picnicking and generally socialising**
Tranquility	**A green oasis in the centre of Cold Ash village**
Wildlife Value	**Offers a haven for wildlife and could potentially be a transit point for wildlife corridors**
Recommend as an LGS	**Proposed on the basis of its importance for local wildlife and the local community**

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3. Woodland Leaves Meadow





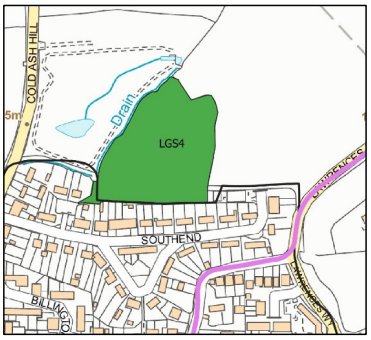
Site Name	**Woodland Leaves Meadow**
Site Owner	**Michael and Alice Liebreich**

Location	**On the edge of Cold Ash village settlement boundary, forming part of the space between Cold Ash and Ashmore Green villages**
Status/Designations	**None, but numerous mature trees of various species with TPOs**
Size	**1.27 ha**
Description	**A local meadow with woodland boundaries that provides a good habitat, supporting biodiversity, and a tranquil setting in the heart of Cold Ash village, lying between a Public Right of Way and Cold Ash Hill**
Boundaries	**Hedges and wire fencing**
Distance from Village	**On the edge of Cold Ash village settlement boundary, forming part of the space between Cold Ash and Ashmore Green villages**
Uses	**Wildlife and flora biodiversity, and ground water management**
Quality	**Very high potential. Neglected for many years, several issues currently in need of attention (ground water flows, some trees in bad state, overgrowth of wet areas reducing biodiversity).**
Facilities	**No direct facilities, but a Public Right of Way passes adjacent to the space. Significant impact on views from neighbouring properties, potential for important public view from Cold Ash Hill.**
Visual Attractiveness	**A highly attractive site with views across several counties**
Historical Significance	**Part of the grounds of a property previously owned by a notable local parishioner**
Recreational Value	**No direct recreational value but forms an attractive setting for the Public Right of Way that borders it**

Tranquility	**Top part of land subject to road noise from Cold Ash Hill, remainder of it is tranquil, particularly North-West side abutting on neighbouring woodland and open farmland.**
Wildlife Value	**Offers a haven for wildlife and could potentially be enhanced as a in important transit point for wildlife corridors**
Recommend as an LGS	**Proposed on the basis of its importance for local wildlife and being a tranquil site linking a Public Right of Way and Cold Ash Hill**

4. Little Copse

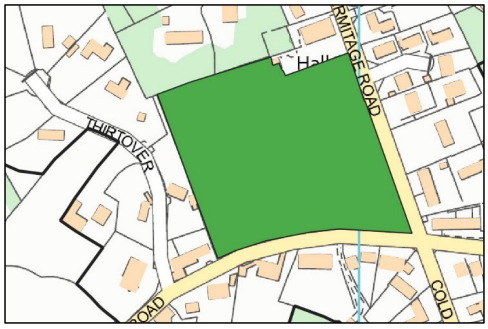




Site Name	Little Copse
Site Owner	West Berkshire Council
Location	Adjacent to the built-up area of Southend
Status/Designations	None
Size	1.48 ha
Description	A local woodland that provides a good habitat, supporting biodiversity, and a tranquil setting for recreational use by the public
Boundaries	Hedges and streams
Distance from Village	Located between the settlement boundary of Cold Ash village and the area known as Southend
Uses	Wildlife biodiversity and recreation
Quality	A good quality woodland that provides both a home for local wildlife and a welcome space for parishioners to walk and exercise their dogs
Facilities	Woodland walks and green space
Visual Attractiveness	An attractive setting that is an important addition to the Southend area of the Parish
Historical Significance	The site has no know historical significance
Recreational Value	A tranquil oasis for walking, exercising dogs and for children to play in
Tranquility	A green oasis adjacent to Southend
Wildlife Value	Offers a haven for wildlife and could potentially be a transit point for wildlife corridors
Recommend as an LGS	Proposed on the basis of its importance for local wildlife and the local community

5. Hermitage Road Recreation Ground





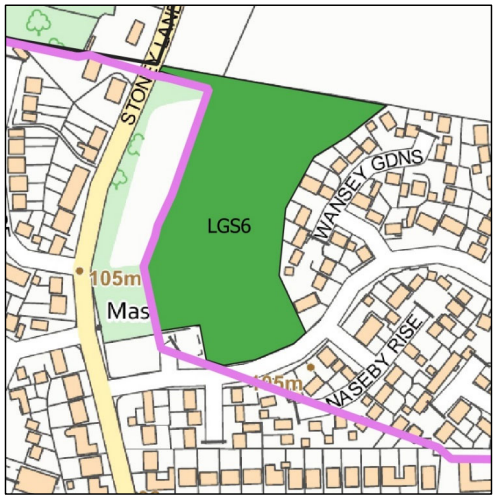
Site Name	Hermitage Road Recreation Ground
Site Owner	Poor's Allotment and Recreation Ground Charity (no. 300138), of which Cold Ash Parish Council is trustee
Location	Within Cold Ash village settlement area
Status/Designations	The land was given to the poor of the Parish in 1852. A charitable trust was established to manage the land in 1922 (the Poor's Allotment and Recreation Ground Charities), of which Cold Ash Parish Councillors are trustees.
Size	2.44 ha
Description	A recreational park with provision for cricket, football and tennis, plus a children's play park. It is the recreational heart of the villages within the Parish
Boundaries	Hedges
Distance from Village	Located within the settlement boundary of Cold Ash village
Uses	Recreation
Quality	The site has high quality sporting facilities, including tennis courts, football pitches and a cricket pitch
Facilities	Cricket pitch, football pitch, tennis courts and play park with children's play apparatus
Visual Attractiveness	An attractive green space in the heart of Cold Ash village
Historical Significance	The site was given to the poor of the Parish in the late nineteenth century for recreational purposes
Recreational Value	A good site for recreation and sport

Tranquility	**This is not the main aim of the site, due to the nature of the facilities and it's uses**
Wildlife Value	**Has a number of trees and a lot of hedgerow, which enable the transit of wildlife through the Parish**
Recommend as an LGS	**Proposed on basis of its importance to local community for recreation and for local wildlife**

6. Waller Drive Recreation Park







Site Name	Waller Drive Recreation Park
Site Owner	**West Berkshire Council**
Location	**The site is located in the south of the neighbourhood area and within the Newbury settlement boundary. The neighbourhood boundary crosses the site; it is the area within the**

	neighbourhood plan boundary that would be subject to a Local Green Space designation.
Status/Designations	**The site has no statutory designations. It is managed as an open space by West Berkshire Council.**
Size	**1.6 ha**
Description	**This is an open space, laid to grass, surrounded by trees on all sides.**
Boundaries	**Mature trees surround the site. Residential to the west, south and east. Open fields to the north.**
Distance from Village	**The space is located within the settlement boundary of Newbury.**
Uses	**Its main use is recreational, for walking and exercising dogs. It is an important area for the more urban area of the Parish**
Quality	**The site provides high quality green space for local residents to exercise and enjoy**
Facilities	**Laid to grass with benches.**
Visual Attractiveness	**An attractive site within the urban area of Manor Park.**
Historical Significance	**The site has no known historical significance**
Recreational Value	**Used by dog walkers and residents from the surrounding housing estate for informal games and outdoor fun.**
Tranquility	**This open space is surrounded by mature trees on all sides and is an oasis within an otherwise residential area, where residents can play where the surrounded housing is obscured from view.**
Wildlife Value	**The nature of the site makes it good for wildlife and link to the wildlife corridors**
Recommend as an LGS	**Proposed on the basis of recreational and tranquility value**