

## Section 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 parish boundary and [was confirmed as a neighbourhood area](#) by West Berkshire Council (WBC), as the local planning authority, on 19 March 2018. Figure 1.1 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 Footpath 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 parish 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 parish 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, what it means for the parish, 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*

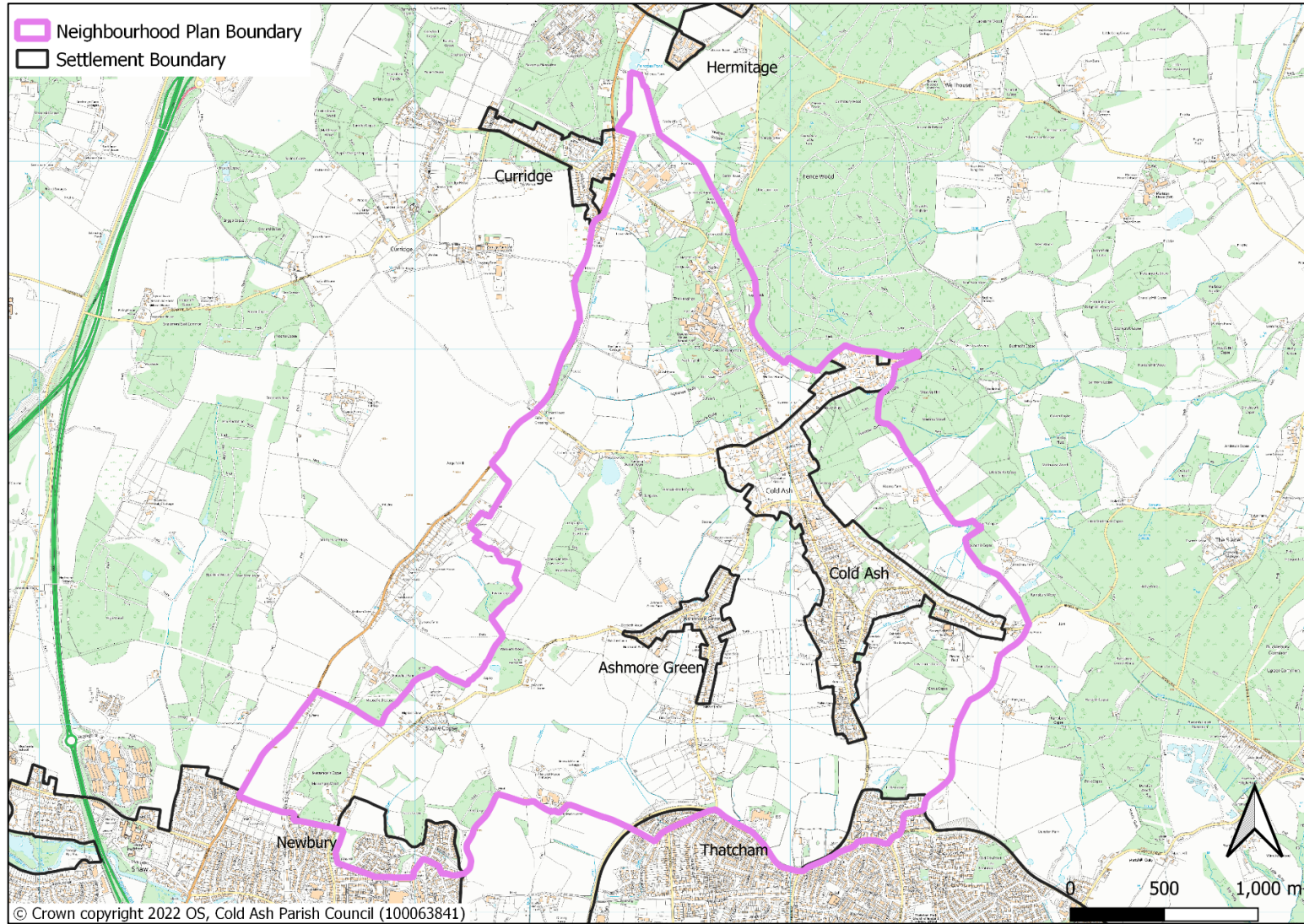


Figure 1.1: The designated Cold Ash Neighbourhood Development Plan area covers the whole of the Parish of Cold Ash

## 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), most recently updated in July 2021. Paragraphs 29 and 30 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. In West Berkshire the strategic policies are contained within the Core Strategy. The existing Local 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
  - [Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire](#) - incorporating alterations adopted in December 1997 and May 2001
  - [Waste Local Plan for Berkshire](#) [8Mb] adopted December 1998
- 1.12. A Local Plan Review is currently being developed and will replace the three existing WBC documents. Of the site allocations noted in the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 and the Housing Site Allocations DPD 2006-2026 relating to Cold Ash, Site HSA7 (St. Gabriels Farm The Ridge Cold Ash) has already been built out/nearing completion and Site HSA6 (Poplar Farm Cold Ash) is not considered deliverable at this time.
- 1.13. The West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039: Proposed Submission (Regulation 19 draft) (the LPR) was published for consultation in January 2023. The [Local Development Scheme](#) states that the Local Plan Review is anticipated to be adopted in September 2024.
- 1.14. 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.

1.15. 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 11.

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

1.16. 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.

1.17. 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 Down 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.

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

1.19. The LPR does not provide a housing figure to be delivered through the CAPNDP. It is considered that the combination of existing commitments, the strategic site allocations, and windfall sites within the settlement boundary, will adequately contribute to the local and strategic housing need. 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.

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

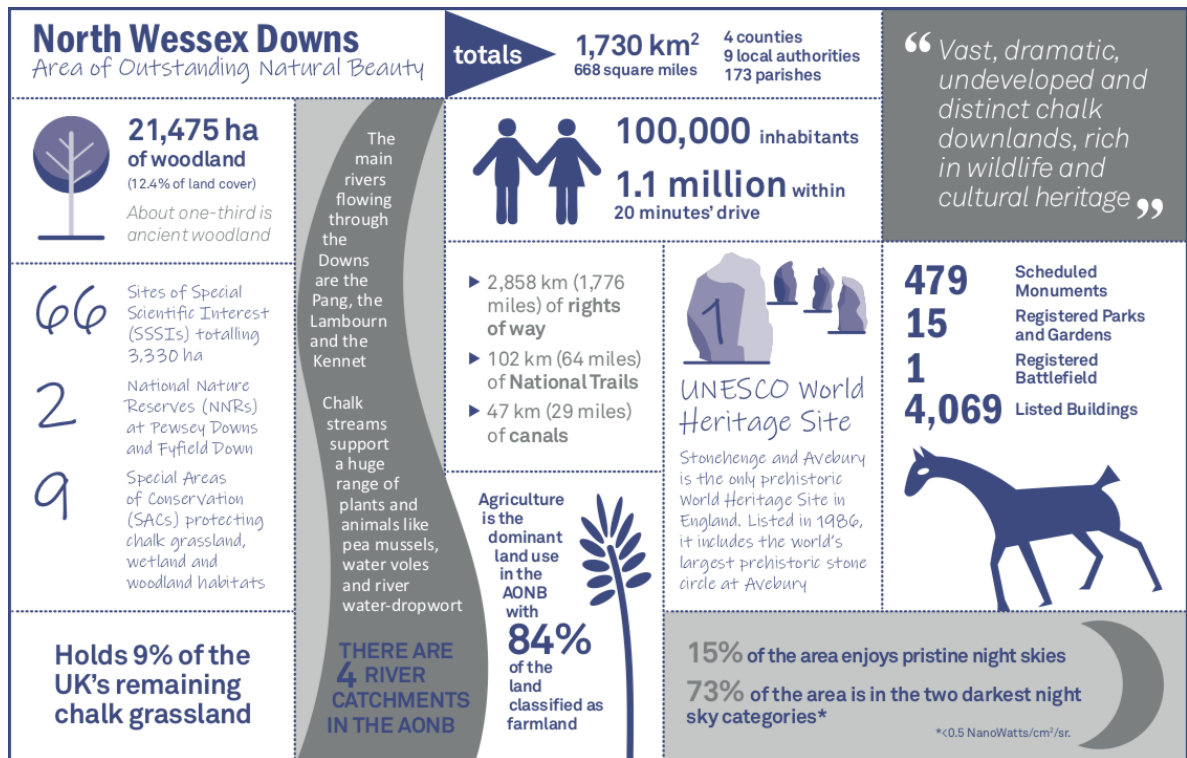
**The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

1.21. 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.



*The distinctive landscape of the North Wessex Downs*

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



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

### Existing Parish policies

1.23. 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 parish, 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

1.24. 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. Figure 1.2 summarises the engagement activities, comprising four main overlapping stages. Full details of the consultation will be included in the Consultation Statement that will accompany the Submission Version Plan, in due course.

Date	Milestone	Key activities
<b>Stage 1:</b> 2017	<b>Establishment:</b> Setting up the SG committee structure and building capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steering Group and Working Groups established.</li> <li>Training on neighbourhood planning.</li> <li>Neighbourhood area formally designated.</li> <li>Regular (monthly) SG meetings inaugurated.</li> <li>Webpages developed.</li> <li>Social media used to raise awareness, post invitations to meetings, etc.</li> <li>Engagement and communications approach established.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 2:</b> 2018-2020	<b>Engagement:</b> Gathering and analysing evidence (from surveys, etc).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 x village public meetings held.</li> <li>Engagement and activity on the Green Infrastructure Plan.</li> <li>Exhibitions, including Village Show, Christmas Fayre.</li> <li>Initial 'Village Development Survey'.</li> <li>Local Housing Needs Survey.</li> <li>Village-Wide questionnaire.</li> <li>Working Groups fact-finding and preparing evidence base.</li> <li>Meetings with LPA officers and committees.</li> <li>Meetings with landowners and developers.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 3:</b> 2018-22	<b>Documentation:</b> Producing key documents, i.e. Draft Policies and Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response to emerging Local Plan consultation, to input findings from the NP process.</li> <li>Initial drafting of Neighbourhood Plan policies and gaining feedback from the local community.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage 4:</b> 2021-2023	<b>Finalising Policies &amp; Plan:</b> Including final consultation and agreement via Referendum).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of the Pre-Submission Version Neighbourhood Plan.</li> <li>SEA/ HRA screening undertaken.</li> <li>Regulation 14 consultation.</li> <li>Submission Version Plan submitted to LPA.</li> </ul>

Figure 1.2: Main stages of engagement activity

1.25. 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

### Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment

1.26. 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.

### **Nutrient neutrality**

- 1.27. 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.
- 1.28. 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.
- 1.29. 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.
- 1.30. 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.
- 1.31. 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).
- 1.32. 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).
- 1.33. Figure 1.2 shows the River Lambourn catchment areas on a map, where the very western part of the neighbourhood plan area falls within this 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 WwTW you have applied to connect to.
- 1.36. Cold Ash Parish Council has agreed that issues surrounding nutrient neutrality will be dealt with at the strategic level as opposed to through the neighbourhood plan.





European protected sites requiring nutrient neutrality strategic solutions

Scale: 1:120,000

**Component SSSIs of River Lambourn SAC**

- Local Authorities
- SSSI subject to nutrient neutrality strategy
- Nutrient neutrality SSSI catchment
- National Parks

Produced by Defra Spatial Data Science  
 © Defra 2021, reproduced with the permission of Natural England, <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/copyright>.  
 © Crown Copyright and database rights 2021. Ordnance Survey licence number 100022021.



Figure 1.2: River Lambourn SAC Catchment Area