

Section 3: A Vision for Cold Ash Parish

Issues facing Cold Ash Parish

3.1. The parish 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 (and much fewer than Lambourn, for instance, which is a service centre).
- Virtually the only predominantly rural or semi-rural parish in West Berks that is not protected by AONB designation (although a small part of the north-eastern parish lies within the 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 parish that take advantage of modern infrastructure and transport links to local towns and beyond.

Underlying principles

3.3. Cold Ash is a lovely parish 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 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 parish 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 parish 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 parish
- Minimise disturbance and disruption (noise, traffic congestion) through the parish
- Preserve the Parish'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 AONB, enabling access to the countryside, encouraging biodiversity, and maintaining the Parish's distinct boundaries.**
- 3. To reduce the reliance on cars by improving opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport both within the Parish and to other nearby villages, towns, and services, which will help to improve both health 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 parish and providing opportunities for new ones where this can be achieved sustainably.**