

Section 5: Character, design, and heritage

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 parish its distinctive identity today. The largely rural parish contributes to the setting of the North Wessex Downs AONB, with the north-eastern part falling within its boundary. Despite modest growth over the years, the parish'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 parish – 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) records a series of non-listed assets within the parish. These are identified as non-designated heritage assets within the CAPNDP and should be conserved as they provide insight into the history of the parish. As the listing is subject to change, applicants are advised to check the HER for details.

- 5.4. WBC also maintains a [list of heritage assets](#) that have special local architectural, archaeological, or historic interest, but are not statutory listed. The heritage assets included in the Local List are of significance to the local community and to 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. 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.

Local Heritage at Risk

- 5.5. 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.
- 5.6. Where necessary, opportunities to restore assets should be taken when they arise, in partnership with the owner.

Local Character

- 5.7. 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 wholly 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.

- 5.8. The zones are mapped in Figure 5.1 and fuller descriptions of each are provided in Table 5.1.
- 5.9. Alongside Table 5.1, 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 \(TSA\)](#)

- 5.10. [Interactive maps](#) showing the HECZs can be found on the WBC website.

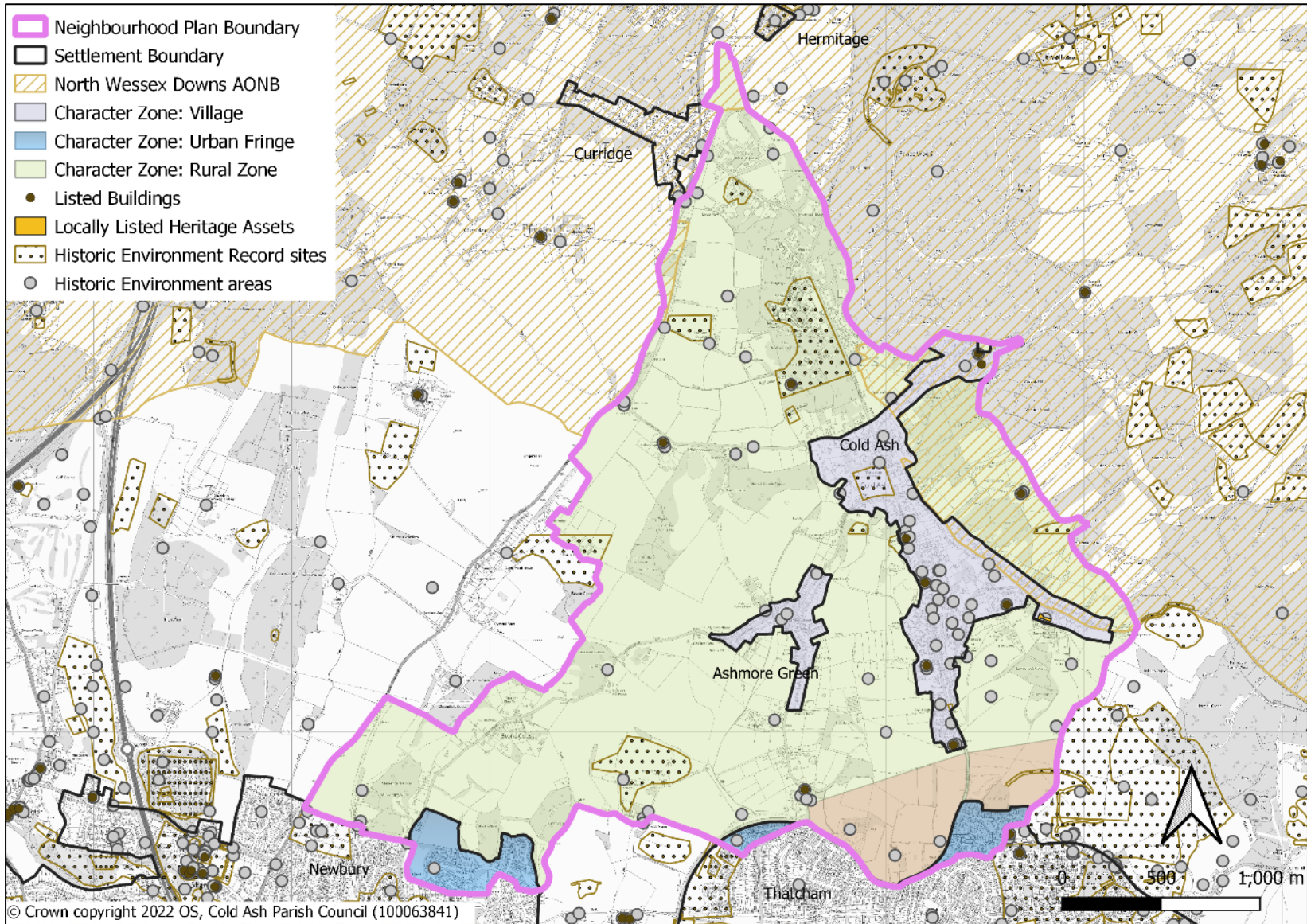


Figure 5.1: Identified Character Zones and local heritage assets within the Parish

Table 5.1: 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 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 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 AONB, and all of which contribute towards the 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

- 5.11. 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.
- 5.12. 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.
- 5.13. 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 5.1. and described in Table 5.1. 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 5.1 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 footpath approaches into the parish (Hermitage Road, Cold Ash Hill and Stoney Lane) as shown in Figure 5.1. 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: 16, 17, 28, 117, 120

Design of development

Purpose

- 5.14. This policy supports high-quality inclusive design standards that reflect, integrate, and enhance - without overwhelming - the rural character of the parish. 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 AONB.

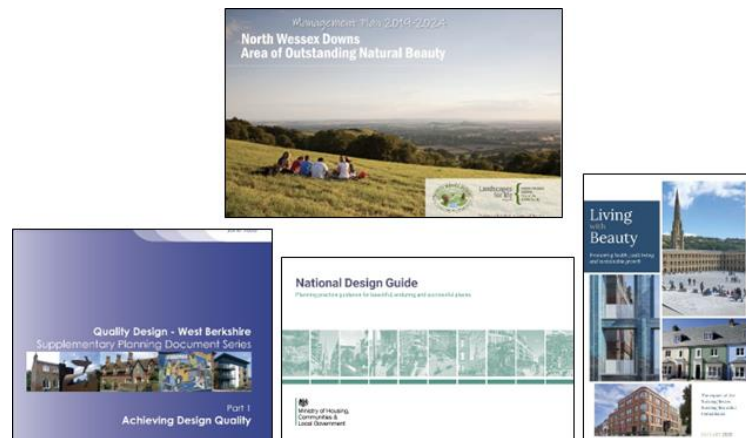
Justification

- 5.15. 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 parish and is in keeping with its immediate surroundings.

Strategic Design Guidance to draw on

- 5.16. 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 AONB Management Plan](#): contains policies relating to design within the AONB. This is particularly relevant to Cold Ash, part of which is sited within the AONB, whilst the villages are located within the broader setting.

- 5.17. 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

- 5.18. 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 127).
- 5.19. 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.
- 5.20. 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 5.2 overleaf). Lifespan and Resources are considered within Policy CAP4 (Sustainable Design).
- 5.21. 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.

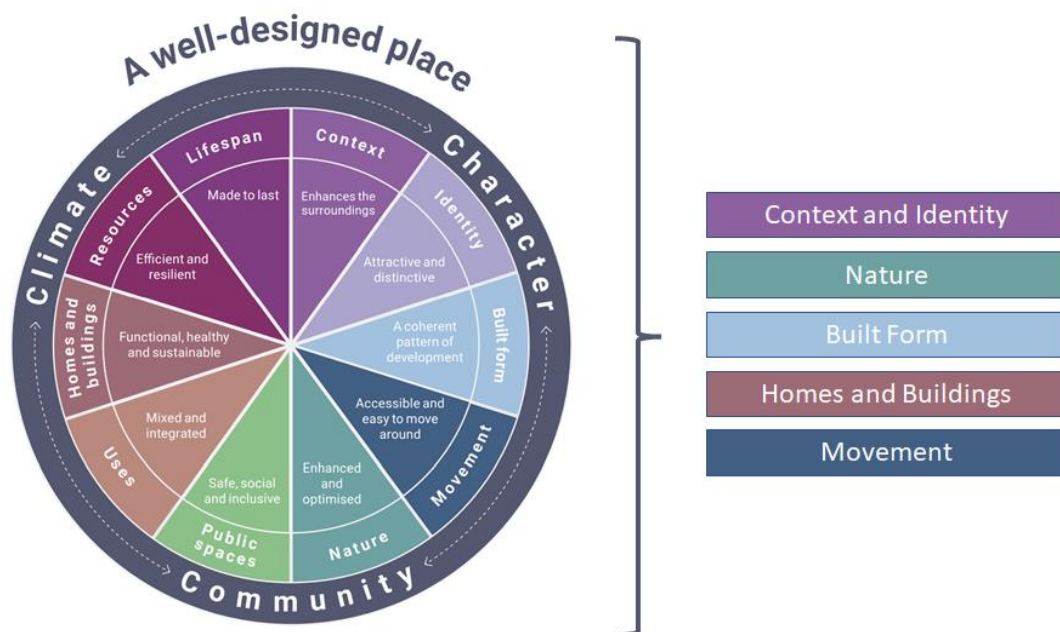


Figure 5.2: Applying the characteristics of well-designed places to Cold Ash Parish (taken from 'The National Design Guide' 2021)

Context and Identity



- 5.22. 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.
- 5.23. 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 AONB, by way of their geographical location. It will be important, therefore, to ensure that the guidance contained within the AONB Management Plan is carefully considered and applied, particularly on higher, more visible ground and towards the settlement edges.
- 5.24. There are many iconic views within the Parish 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.

- 5.25. 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.
- 5.26. Any proposed development should conserve the diversity and mix of landscape character types in the parish, 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

- 5.27. 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 public footpaths enjoyed by the parishioners.



- 5.28. 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).
- 5.29. 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.
- 5.30. 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.
- 5.31. 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)'.
- 5.32. 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.

Built Form

- 5.33. 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.
- 5.34. 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 \(section 5.16\)](#).
- 5.35. 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.
- 5.36. 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.
- 5.37. Developments should respect the rural nature of the parish and be designed to promote spaciousness between dwellings, with uniform houses and plots being avoided.
- 5.38. 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.
- 5.39. 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

- 5.40. 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.
- 5.41. 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.

- 5.42. 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.
- 5.43. 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.
- 5.44. 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.
- 5.45. 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.
- 5.46. Adequate storage for bins should be designed into development from the outset.
- 5.47. 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.
- 5.48. 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.
- 5.49. Extensions of existing buildings should be in keeping with, and in proportion to, the size of the original building.
- 5.50. 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.

- 5.51. 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

- 5.52. Patterns of **movement** for our Parishioners are integral to well-designed places. Movement includes walking and cycling, transport, parking and access to facilities.
- 5.53. 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.
- 5.54. 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](#).
- 5.55. All new developments will provide electric vehicle charging points for each dwelling.
- 5.56. Sufficient space must be provided for the storage of, and access to, refuse and recycling.
- 5.57. Existing public footpaths are to be maintained, with new landscaped connections into the site and the wider footpath network encouraged.
- 5.58. 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, in accordance with Policy CAP2.**
 - b. the guidance contained in the Quality Design West Berkshire and the North Wessex AONB Management Plan and Design Guidance. 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 parish, 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 including the retention and enhancement of established trees and hedgerows, in line with Policy CAP6; 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, in line with Policy CAP6 and creative use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in line with Policy CAP5; and**
 - vii. Not have a significantly detrimental impact on the iconic views as set out in Policy CAP8 (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.**

Sustainable design

Purpose

5.59. This policy seeks to ensure that development meets the highest environmental standards in terms of its construction, materials and energy use, to help mitigate against climate change.

Justification

5.60. 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). 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 build to have minimal energy use and net carbon emissions over the year. They should be highly insulated, have low water demand and be fitted with or directly connected to renewable energy systems.



Examples of discreet solar panels (source: Historic England)

5.61. Notwithstanding current building regulations, standards for ecologically sustainable homes and developments are optional, but 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.

5.62. 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. In particular there is support locally for solar panels to be incorporated into new development;
- reducing water consumption through grey water systems;
- ensuring all further development incorporates high quality sustainable drainage systems and, where possible, retro-fits 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.

5.63. 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 and climate effects 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.**
 - c. Installation of energy efficiency measures such as loft and wall insulation and double glazing.**
 - d. Incorporating on-site energy generation from renewable sources such as solar panels, ground source heating and energy generation etc.**
 - e. Reducing water consumption through water re-use measures including rainwater harvesting, surface water harvesting and/or grey water recycling systems.**
 - f. Providing low carbon sustainable design and avoid or mitigate all regulated emissions using a combination of on-site energy efficiency measures (such as insulation and low energy heating systems), on-site zero carbon technologies (such as solar panels) and, only where necessary, off-site measures to deal with any remaining emissions.**
 - g. Providing the infrastructure for adequate electric vehicle charging points for each dwelling, where new parking provision is expected to be made.**
 - h. 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.**
- 3. The retrofitting of historic buildings is encouraged to reduce energy demand and to generate renewable 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: 153, 154, 155

Minimising the risk of flooding

Purpose

- 5.64. This policy supports the essential requirement for development proposals to consider both existing risk and potential risk from flooding, as set out in Paragraph 152 of the NPPF, by maintaining sinks and drains and requiring new developments to include sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS).
- 5.65. 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.
- 5.66. This policy seeks to work in tandem with the West Berkshire Local Flood Risk Strategy document, and the Thatcham Surface Water Management Plan.

Justification

- 5.67. The hilly nature of the parish introduces a significant level of flood risk to the lower reaches of the parish and surrounding areas. Nature has addressed this through several natural solutions, notably sinks and ordinary watercourses forming around the parish. The parish had, historically therefore, benefited from natural features to contain and reduce the risk of flooding.
- 5.68. 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.
- 5.69. 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
- 5.70. 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.
- 5.71. 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.
- 5.72. Properties along Ashmore Green Road, at present, frequently suffer from surface water flooding.
- 5.73. 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 parish, 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 riparian 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.

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

5.75. 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.

5.76. 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.
- b. 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. 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 prepared a SuDS Supplementary Planning Document; this and any other relevant national planning and environmental legislation should be referred to.

Natural flood management

- 5.77. 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 runoff, 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.
- 5.78. 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.
- 5.79. 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:

	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
	<p>In areas where natural green space is lacking, small rain gardens can be created to capture surface water before it enters the drain.</p> <p>The use of larger stone and cobbles can assist in removing sediment from the water</p>
	<p>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 parish.</p> <p>Great crested newts are found across the district and WBC has recently received a licence to study these more closely. Additional ponds will enable further habitats for this important species.</p>

- 5.80. 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 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: 159-169