

## Section 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 base 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 pavements or have very narrow pavements. 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 pavements 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 pavements are blocked, children are forced to walk between vehicles and on the roads.

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 pavement*

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 11 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.

## **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 parish, by supporting proposals that enable active travel and improve the provision of infrastructure associated with public transport.

### **Justification**

7.10. 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:

1. To maintain and where possible improve the existing rights of way network within the 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 and cycle 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.
2. Where feasible, to widen pavements 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.
3. To continue to investigate opportunities to introduce cycle lanes, away from mechanised traffic, where possible.



*Footpath 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.

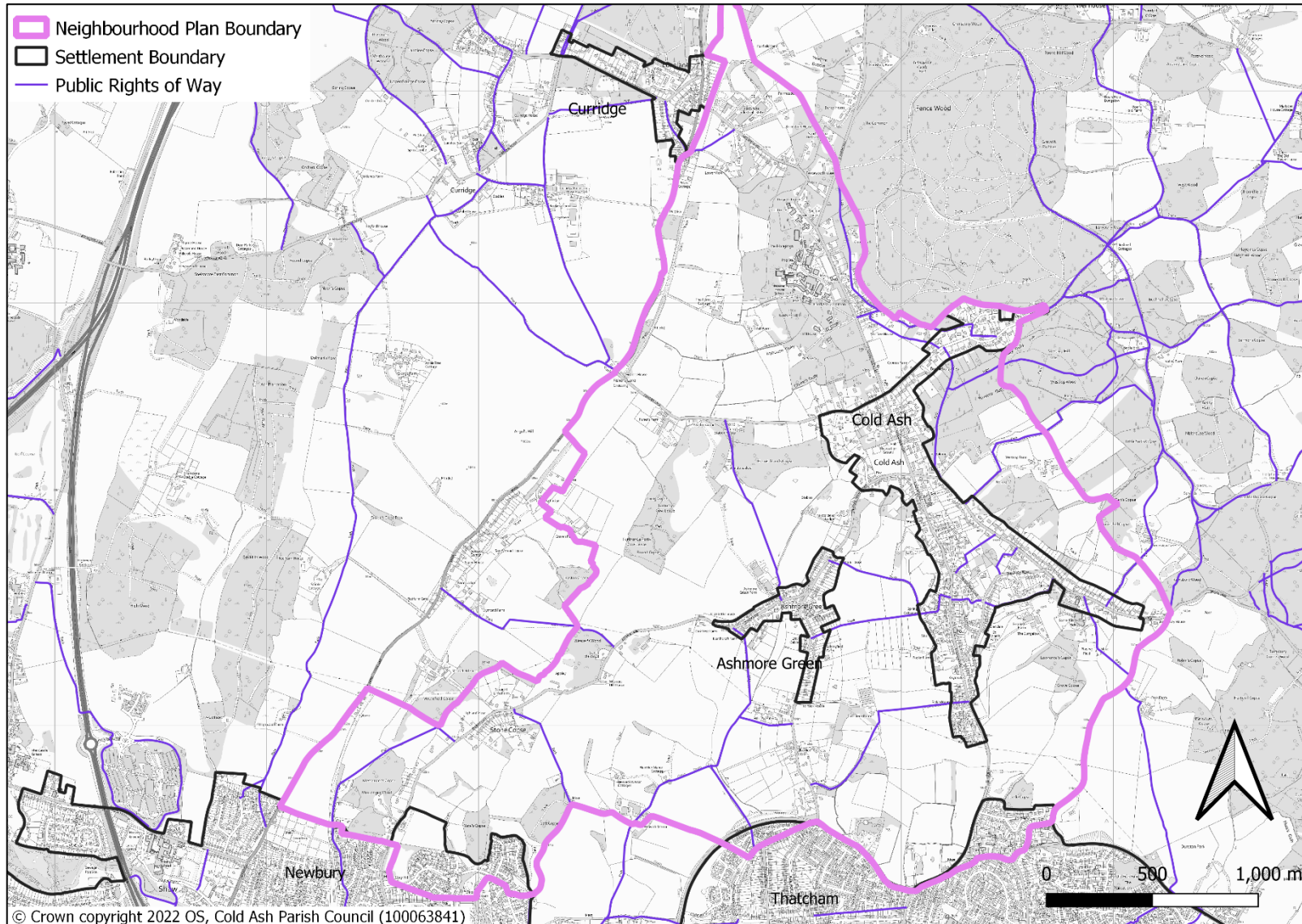


Figure 7.1: Existing rights of way in the parish (parish-wide)



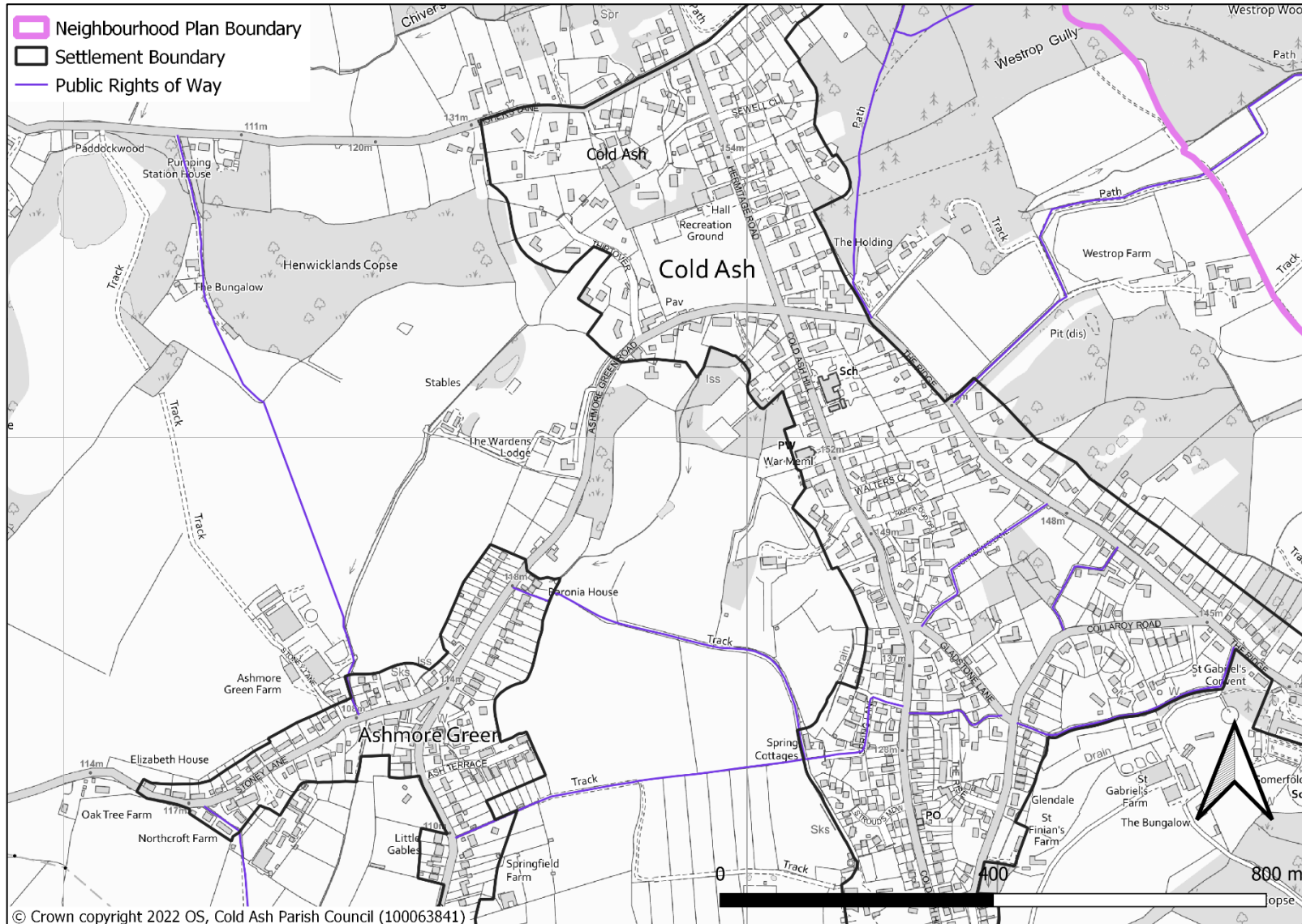


Figure 7.2: Existing rights of way in the parish (Cold Ash Village)

#### **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, footpath and cycleway network, as shown in Figures 7.1 and 7.2. 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 pavements, 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 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 footpaths 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 bridleways and footpaths will not be approved unless suitable alternatives are provided.**

Conformity Ref: CAPNDP Objectives: 3; Adopted Core Strategy: CS13; Local Plan Review: SP23; NPPF: 91, 98, 102, 103, 104

## Sunken Lanes

### Purpose

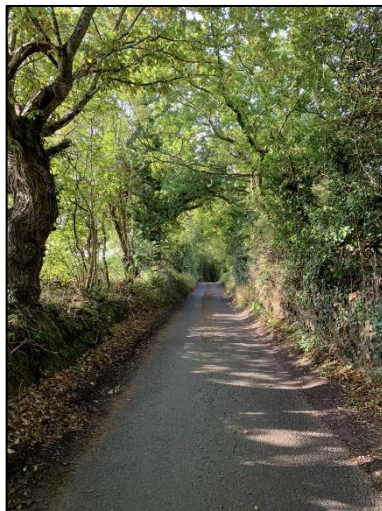
7.13. The policy seeks to identify and protect the network of historic sunken lanes, which provide a valuable movement network through the parish, particularly for horse riders, as well as contributing to the rural character of the area and providing an important network of wildlife corridors.

### Justification

7.14. Some of the parish'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 7.2, and sections of:

- Stoney Lane
- Fishers Lane
- Ashmore Green Road



*Stoney Lane*

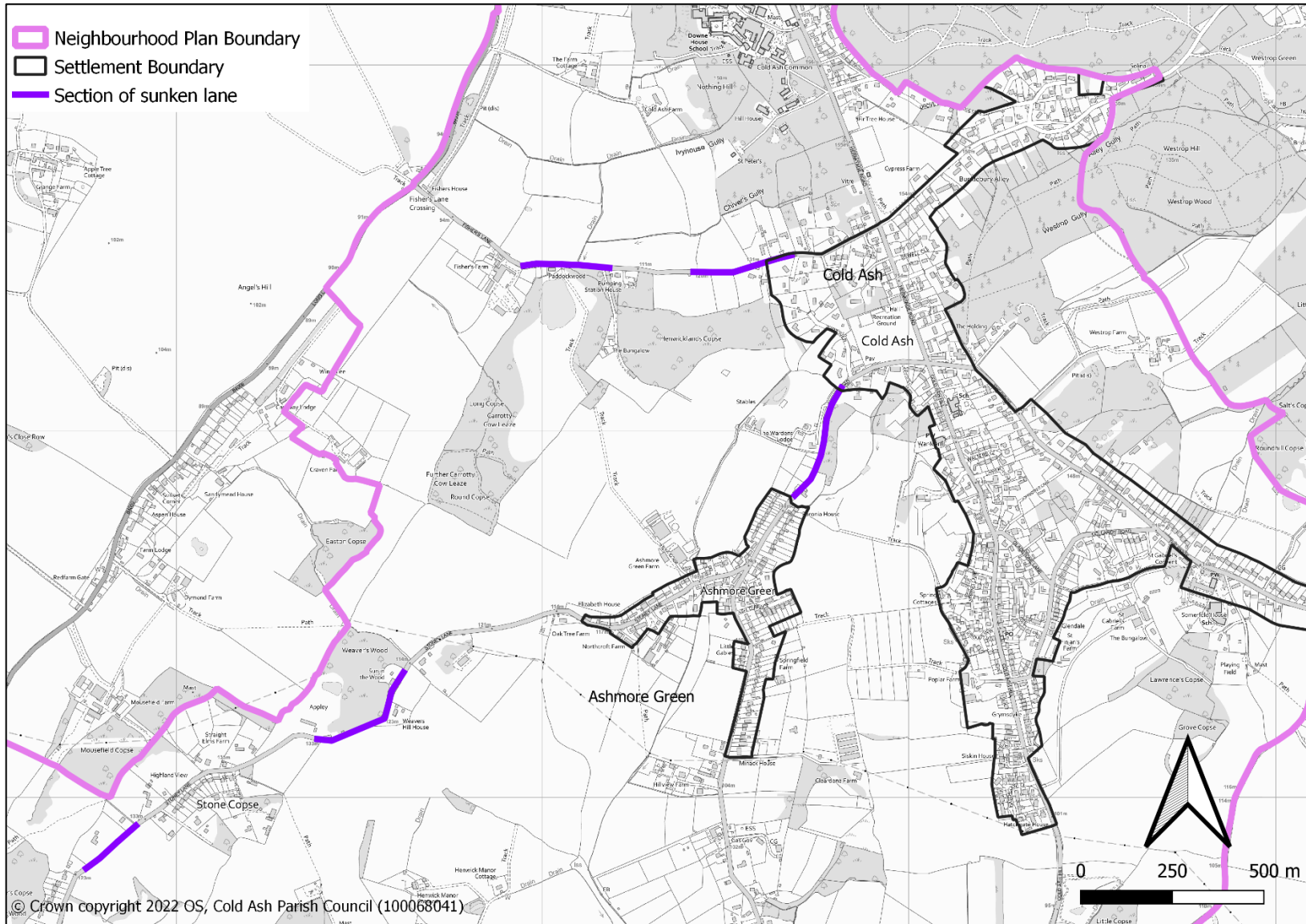


Figure 7.2 Sunken lanes in Cold Ash Parish



- 7.16. 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 parish and, as such, are part of the heritage and landscape of the parish to be protected. They also provide important wildlife corridors, for instance for bat movements.
- 7.17. Whilst the parish is well serviced by footpaths, the number of bridleways in the parish 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 11.
- 7.18. The policy supports the objectives of the North Wessex Downs, 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.**

## Public car parking

### Purpose

7.19. 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

7.20. 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 pavements or very narrow ones in some of the areas, making it difficult for pedestrians.



*Parts of the village lack adequate pavements*

7.21. 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.

7.22. 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.

7.23. The provision of electric vehicle charging points 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](#).**