

BINFIELD HEATH PARISH

Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2035

Pre-Submission Draft

April 2023 v1.0 Draft g



Prepared by Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

In conjunction with Bluestone Planning LLP

0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The residents of Binfield Heath have long held a wish to preserve the unique character of the parish. This was a significant factor behind the referendum vote to become a separate parish in 2003 and throughout the development of the Parish Plan, the Community Led Plan and now the Neighbourhood Plan.

This Plan enables us to influence how the parish develops. It has been prepared through regular communication and consultation with the community. Its production has been overseen by a steering group of residents drawn from around the parish.

To guide the development of our Plan, a Vision and supporting Aims and Objectives were established based on the Parish and Community Led Plans and subsequent consultations. The Vision, Aims and Objectives were refined as the work progressed. Newsletters and exhibitions have enabled the whole community to be consulted on progress and emerging plan content.

Binfield Heath is designated a Smaller Village in South Oxfordshire's Local Plan. As such it does not have to contribute to the district's overall housing requirement¹ beyond windfall and infill development. The Local Plan says that within Smaller Villages development should be limited to infill and the redevelopment of previously developed land or buildings².

Research into the history of the parish has helped us to understand how Binfield Heath has evolved, with three settlements and both individual and small clusters of houses scattered in open countryside. The settlements grew up around the entrances to the historic Heath.

The gaps between settlements and the tracts of woodland found throughout the parish, which reach into the village centre, are key to the distinctive character of Binfield Heath.

The main thrust of the NP is for future development to be within the existing settlements and not in open countryside. It seeks to preserve the woodland and gaps between settlements that contribute so much to the identity of the parish. But buildings forge the character of the area too. The Plan therefore aims to ensure that those valued by the community - both listed and unlisted - are protected from demolition or material alteration.

We also want new and replacement homes and extensions to fit in with their surroundings and a Design Guide has been produced to help achieve this.

¹ South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 Policy H8

² South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 Policy H16

0	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	2
1	PREFACE.....	6
1.1	WHAT IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?	6
1.2	STATUTORY CONTEXT – BASIC CONDITIONS.....	6
1.3	WHAT CAN BE INCLUDED?	7
1.4	SUBMITTING BODY & DESIGNATION	7
1.5	PLAN PERIOD, MONITORING AND REVIEW.....	8
2	OUR PARISH.....	9
2.1	DESCRIPTION	9
2.2	PARISH HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	12
2.3	ENVIRONMENT	17
2.4	DARK SKIES	17
2.5	HOUSING	19
2.6	DEVELOPMENT SINCE THE 2011 CENSUS	24
2.7	LOCAL ECONOMY	24
2.8	GETTING AROUND.....	25
2.8.1	Footpaths.....	25
2.8.2	Bus service	27
2.8.3	Roads	27
2.8.4	Speeding	28
2.8.5	Parking	29
2.9	COMMUNITY GROUPS AND LEISURE	29
3	NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROCESS	32
3.1	NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROCESS	32
3.2	SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	32
3.2.1	Engagement leading to development of the Neighbourhood Plan.....	32
3.2.2	Engagement during progress of the Neighbourhood Plan	34
3.3	MONITORING AND REVIEW POLICY.....	35
4	VISION, AIMS & OBJECTIVES.....	37
4.1	INTRODUCTION	37
4.2	OUR VISION	37
4.3	AIMS & OBJECTIVES.....	37



4.3.1	Landscape Character	37
4.3.2	Built Environment	38
4.3.3	Environment and Sustainability	39
4.3.4	Local Travel and Safety	39
4.3.5	Community Spirit.....	39
5	PLANNING POLICIES.....	41
5.1	NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	41
5.2	LOCAL POLICY	42
5.3	NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING POLICIES	45
5.3.1	Sustainable Development and Climate Change	45
5.3.2	Landscape Character	46
5.3.3	Setting of Settlements and Coalescence	61
5.3.4	Areas of Special Character.....	64
5.3.5	Important Views	70
5.3.6	Environment and Biodiversity	74
5.3.7	Local Green Spaces.....	78
5.3.8	Biodiversity	81
5.3.9	Dark Night Skies	84
5.3.10	Flooding and Drainage	86
5.3.11	Built Environment	88
5.3.12	Design	88
5.3.13	Conversion of Rural Buildings	93
5.3.14	Heritage.....	94
5.3.15	Infill and Redevelopment	95
5.3.16	Dwelling Extensions.....	99
5.3.17	Replacement dwellings.....	100
5.3.18	Community and Economy	103



5.3.19	Accessibility, Road Safety and Sustainable Transport	104
6	OUR PARISH OUR FUTURE - COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS	107
6.1	Introduction	107
6.2	Actions & Activities	107
6.2.1	Shop and Post Office	107
6.2.2	The Forge	107
6.2.3	The Environment	107
6.2.4	The Bus	107
6.2.5	Parish Archive	107
6.2.6	Business Directory	107
6.2.7	Neighbourhood Watch	107
6.2.8	Litter pick	108
6.2.9	Monthly Walks	108
6.2.10	Telegraph Poles	108
7	LIST OF FIGURES	109

Appendix A - Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes

Appendix B – Landscape Value Assessment

Appendix C - Landscape Character Assessment

Appendix D - Non-Designation Heritage Assets

Appendix E - Special Character Areas

Appendix F - Local Green Space Assessment

Appendix G – Community Assets

1 PREFACE

1.1 WHAT IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

Neighbourhood plans aim to give people more say³ in how their local area progresses over time. They are designed not to stop development but to allow communities to influence the location and appearance of any new building.

The plans describe the character of an area and the elements that the community wishes to preserve or enhance. They enable planners to understand what facilities and infrastructure the community needs and supports.

Once approved in a referendum a neighbourhood plan becomes a statutory part of the overall development plan for the area. Planning decisions must be taken in line with the development plan unless there is good reason not to do so⁴. This means neighbourhood plan policies have to be taken into account when deciding if a development should go ahead.

1.2 STATUTORY CONTEXT – BASIC CONDITIONS

Neighbourhood plans became part of the planning system under the Localism Act 2011⁵. They must⁶ comply with the following basic conditions:

- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
- be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in the area

³ The Government's Planning Practice Guidance website explains that "Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to plan for the types of development to meet their community needs and where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area" Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities & MHCLD, revision date 09/05/2019 Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 41-001-20190509.

⁴ Decisions on whether development should go ahead or not have to be made in line with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. They will all have to be considered in line with the Neighbourhood Plan policies Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

⁵ Supplemented by the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012

⁶ Under the terms of the governing legislation paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as applied to Neighbourhood Plans by Section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

- be compatible with European Union (EU) obligations and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) ⁷
- not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017⁸
- ensure that prescribed conditions are met in relation to the neighbourhood plan and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the neighbourhood plan

1.3 WHAT CAN BE INCLUDED?

Neighbourhood Plans must deal with the development and use of land⁹.

The survey and consultation work carried out during the Plan process for Binfield Heath parish has highlighted land use issues that are of concern to the community.

These include:

- The management of development in the parish
- The impact that development may have on the landscape and character of the area
- The desire to preserve the separation of the settlements from each other and from surrounding settlements
- The form and appearance new development should take
- The need to protect and enhance natural assets in the parish
- The effect new development will have on existing social and community infrastructure

During consultations parishioners raised other issues that are important to them but not necessarily to do with land use. These Community Aspirations are shown in Section 6 and may be referred to in the policy section if they are relevant.

1.4 SUBMITTING BODY & DESIGNATION

Binfield Heath Parish Council is the qualifying body responsible for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and is responsible for submitting it to South Oxfordshire District Council for examination.

The Parish Council made a formal application to designate a Neighbourhood Planning Area for Binfield Heath on 27 April 2021. Following consultation, the application was approved by South Oxfordshire District Council on 20 July 2021.

⁷ Schedule 4B (8(6)) also indicates that it is necessary to consider whether the neighbourhood plan is “compatible with the Convention rights”. The interpretation section (s.17) in Schedule 4B confirms that ‘the Convention rights’ has the same meaning as in the Human Rights Act 1998

⁸ [Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#)

⁹ [Section 19\(1B-1E\) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#)

The designated Plan Area is the parish boundary (see figure 1 below).

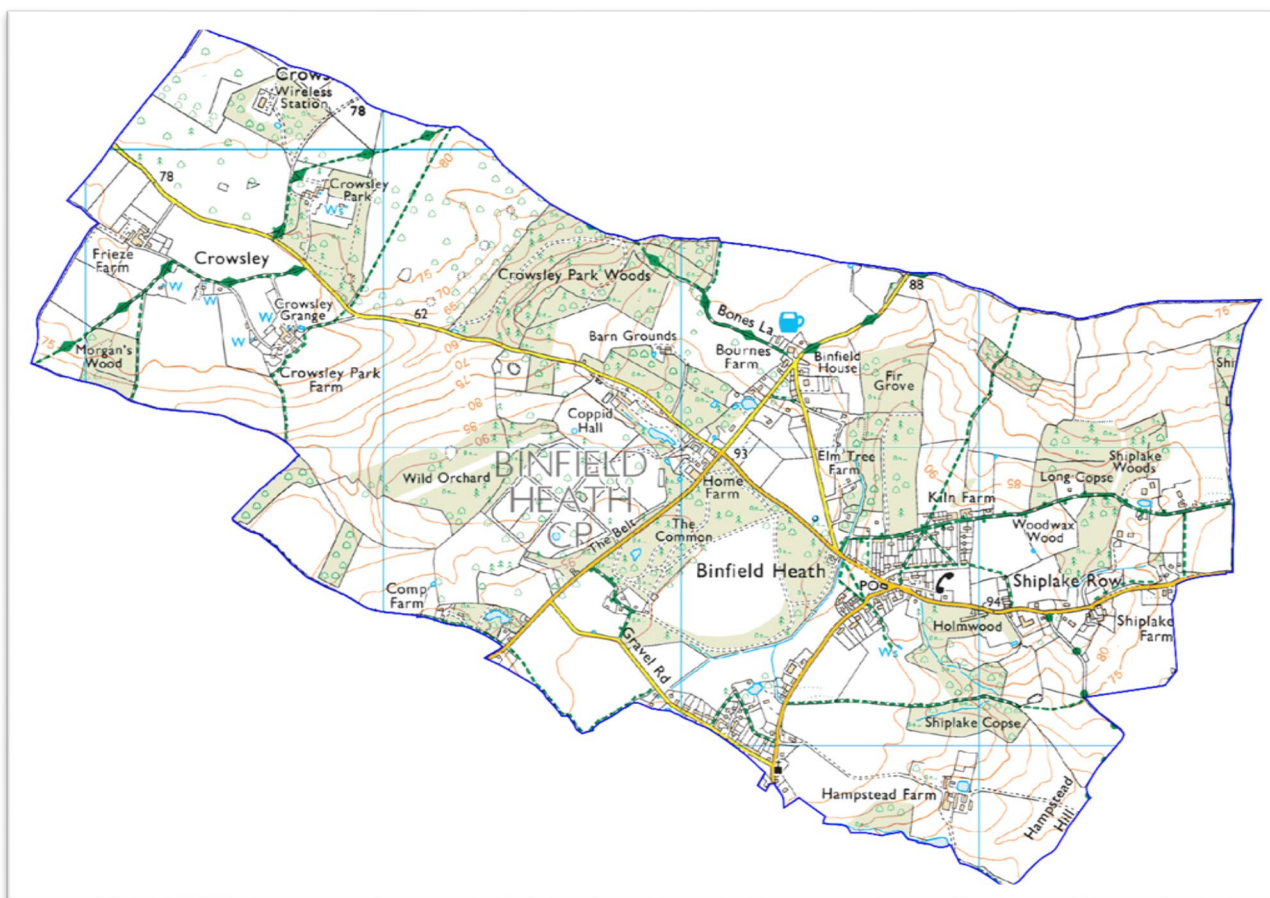


Figure 1: Extent of the Neighbourhood Plan Area as Designated by South Oxfordshire District Council 20 July 2021

1.5 PLAN PERIOD, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan will run concurrently with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035. However, it reflects the needs and aspirations of the community today and these are likely to change over time. Binfield Heath Parish Council will be responsible for reviewing the Plan to monitor delivery and ensure that it remains relevant.

2 OUR PARISH

2.1 DESCRIPTION

Binfield Heath is a rural parish covering about five square miles on the south-east edge of the Chilterns in South Oxfordshire.

It lies approximately four miles to the south of the market town of Henley on Thames and five miles north of Reading. Sonning Common, a larger village, is three miles to the west. Our neighbouring parishes are Shiplake, Eye & Dunsden, Sonning Common and Harpsden.

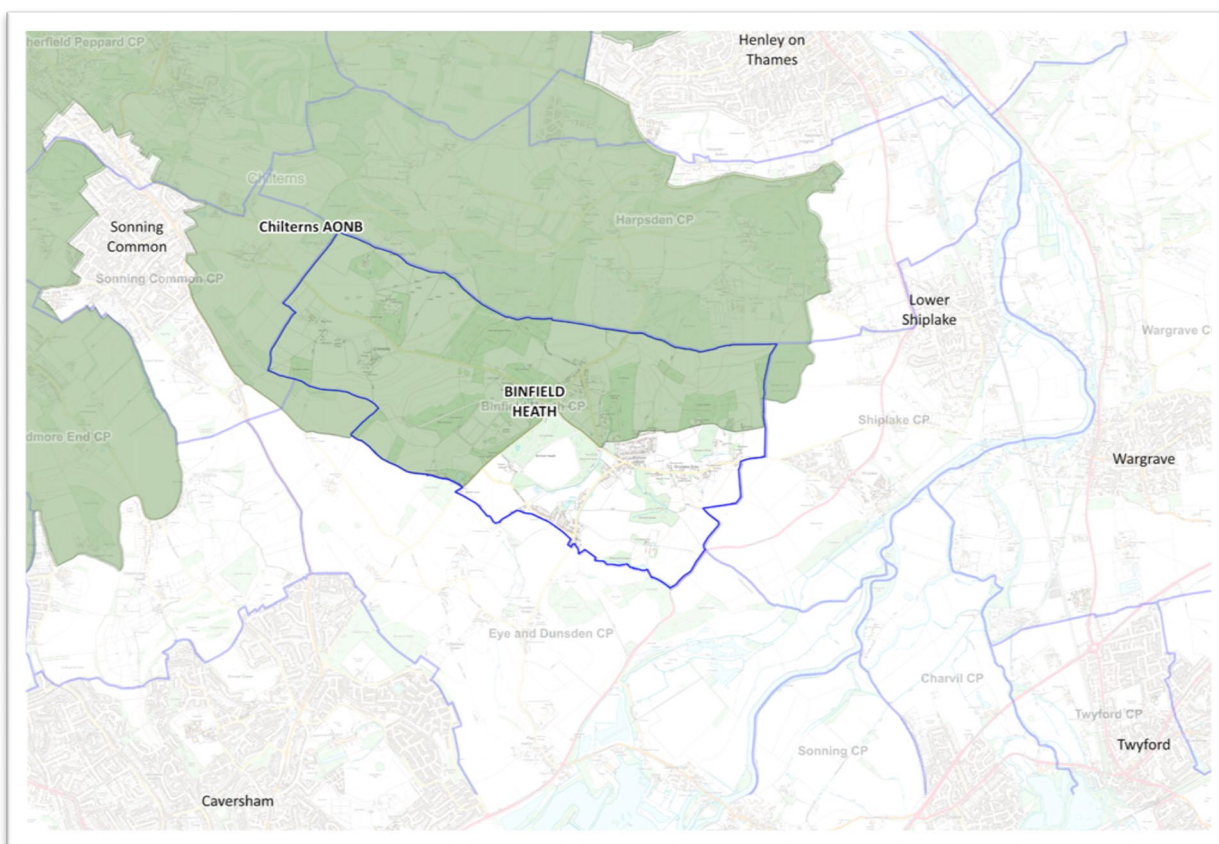


Figure 2 The location of the Parish in the wider context, with the area covered by the AONB highlighted in green

At the last count there were 722 people¹⁰ living in the parish, which includes the hamlet of Crowsley in the west. Binfield Heath is designated a Smaller Village in the South Oxfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2035.

The Neighbourhood Plan area is home to three distinct settlements along with individual dwellings and clusters of houses scattered in open countryside. In all there are 291 households. The settlements at the Shop, Gravel Road and the Bottle & Glass grew up around the ancient Heath that gave the parish its name. That pattern remains clearly visible today and the settlements are still separated by the open fields and woodland of the original Heath. Each has its individual character.

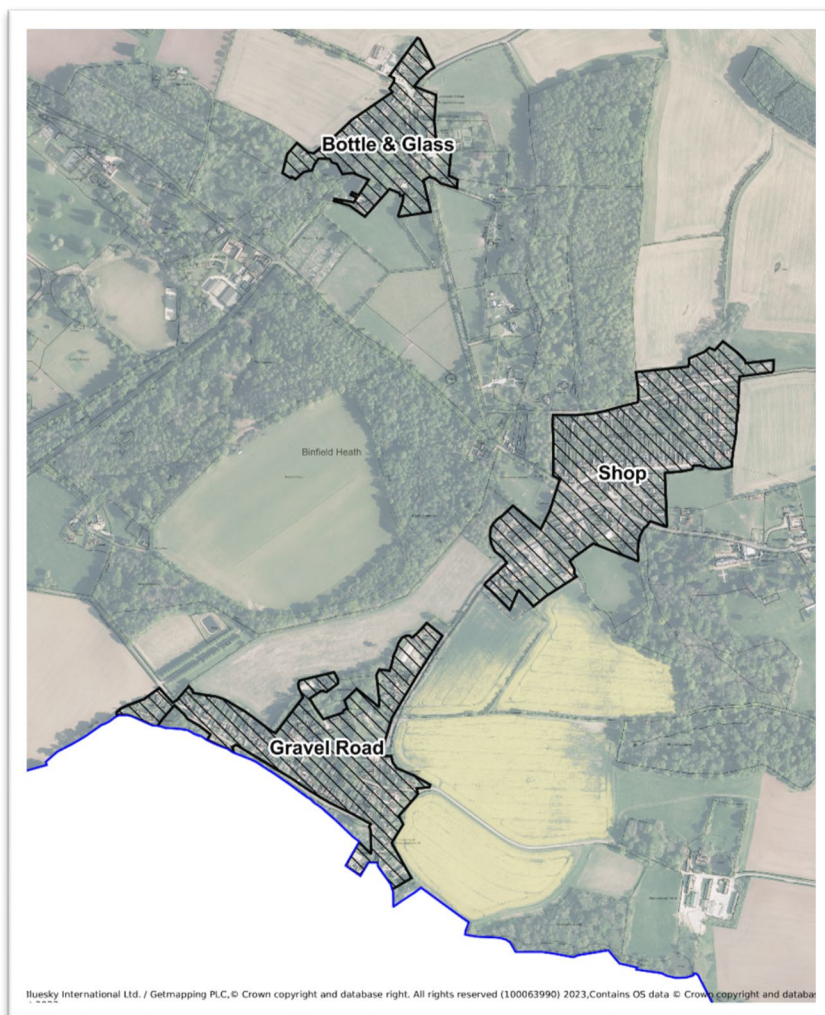


Figure 3 The three main settlement areas centred around Binfield Heath

¹⁰ Mid-Year Estimates, ONS 2019 Local insight © OCSI 2020, page 4

Three large country houses Holmwood, Coppid Hall and Crowsley Park and their historic estates, have played an important role in shaping the landscape, development and overall ‘feel’ of the parish.

The shop, which is also the Post Office, is the hub of the village. There are two restaurants, one of which is also an inn.

The nearest doctors’ and dentists’ surgeries are in Sonning Common, Henley and Caversham, which is four miles away. Children mainly start school at Shiplake primary in neighbouring Shiplake Cross. When they move up to secondary school many attend Gillotts in Henley.

We have a popular recreation ground that is the envy of many parishes and two sets of thriving allotments. There is also a polo field on the old Heath.



Figure 4 The Bottle and Glass Inn

Binfield Heath has a small evangelical chapel in Dunsden Way but other worshippers have to look beyond our boundaries.

Although the community is scattered, it is a friendly place. Some have lived here all their lives, with families spanning several generations; others are relative newcomers but once people are here they tend to stay. We are small enough to know each other and mingle, whether it is over tea and cakes at the Flower Show or just for a chat in the shop.

Buildings in the parish range in age from the 16th to the 21st centuries and the varied styles reflect the piecemeal evolution of the scattered settlements. We don’t want all our houses to look the same but we do want the village to be at ease with itself. Binfield Heath has a strong sense of identity and the desire to preserve that through good design is one of the reasons for producing this Neighbourhood Plan.

There is one feature that makes this parish exceptional: when we say the countryside goes to the heart of where we live, we are speaking literally and figuratively. Fields and woodland reach right to the centre of the village - in large part a legacy of the old Heath - and two thirds of the parish lies within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is this rural setting that gives the area its unusual



Figure 5 The Thatched Cottage - 17th Century, Grade II Listed Building

character and special atmosphere. It is also one of the things people value most about living here.¹¹



Figure 6 A present day view of Binfield Heath from Gravel Road. The tree-lined avenue leads to the polo ground

2.2 PARISH HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This is a summarised history of the parish with particular relevance to neighbourhood planning. A fuller history, still a work in progress as we find out more about our past, will be available later. It will be a ‘living’ history and people will be able to add information to it.

Binfield Heath is among the newest civil parishes in England, but its name dates back more than a thousand years. Its story can be traced to Saxon times when the Heath is thought to have been the meeting place for the Binfield Hundred, one of the old administrative divisions of Oxfordshire.¹²

The parish as we know it today was created in 2003, but in the past, the Heath and its settlements were split between the parishes of Shiplake and Eye & Dunsden.

Little is known about the people on the Heath before the first big manors and estates were formed in Saxon times. Everywhere, it was the lot of the local peasantry to work on the estates and farms. Part of their recompense was common rights for tilling and grazing.

¹¹ Community Led Plan (Summary Chapter 5): “The respondents value highly the distinctive nature of Binfield Heath . . . They value the character and differing styles of housing, together with the rural nature of the village and its surroundings, with little urbanization.”

¹² Victoria County History of Oxfordshire, Vol. XX (2022), page 384, 388

The land around our village was poor and left as heath. This was common land until the enclosures of the 19th century. What remains of the Heath now is bounded by Dunsden Way, Gravel Road, Emmer Green Road, Harpsden Road and the track to the east of Common Lane.

The earliest homes around the Heath would have been built along tracks that joined the riverside homes and farms in Shiplake and Dunsden to higher grazing towards Sonning Common.

Settlements, often gathered round a green or common, comprised simple homes for subsistence farmers, sometimes with an animal byre or threshing floor. Farms grew up in fertile

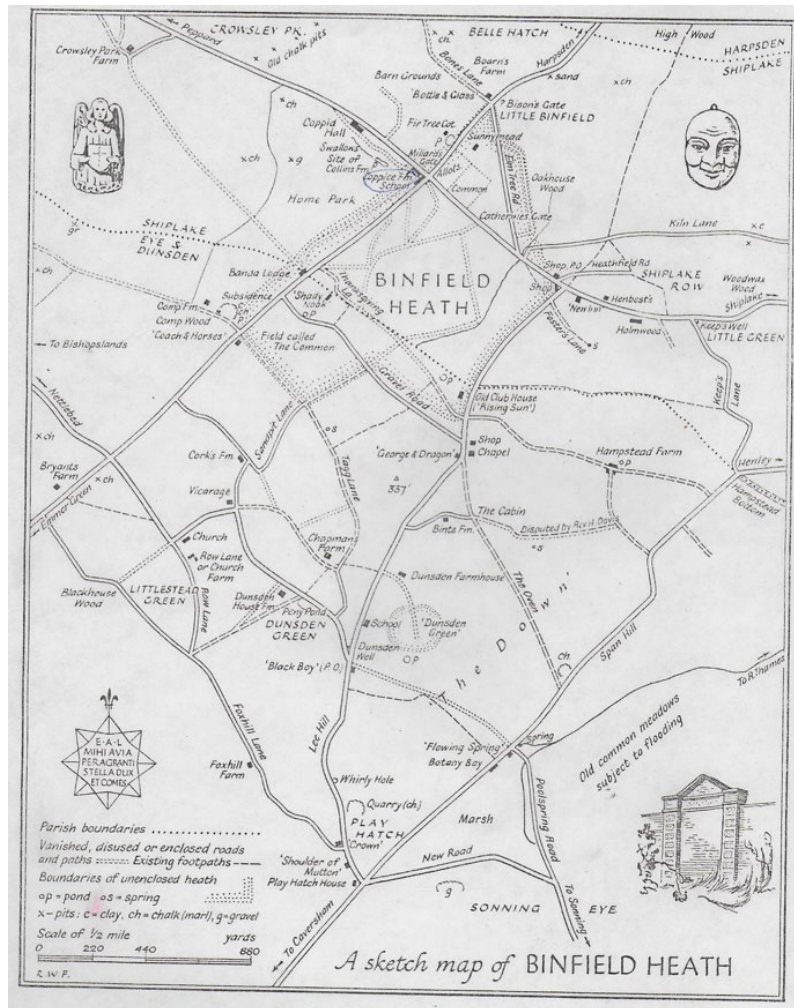


Figure 7 Old sketch map of Binfield Heath highlighting paths and other points of interest



Figure 8 Keeps Well in Shiplake Row

areas near water with labourers' cottages alongside. On the higher heathland homes were built near ponds and springs. Many of the ponds survive, while the domed Keeps Well, built by the owner of Holmwood in the 1700s, remains a familiar landmark.



Figure 9 Shiplake Rise Farm. The 18th Century Grade II Listed Farmhouse

From early times the Heath was crossed by two main routes, one from Reading to Henley via Caversham and Harpsden and the other from Shiplake Church to Sonning Common. They linked at Coppid Crossroads. The high road across the Heath declined in

importance after the present-day A4155 Reading to Henley Road was turnpiked in 1768.¹³

The Heath lay on a small knoll in the foothills of the Chilterns and its typical clay layers were dug for building materials, encouraging early construction. Brick and tile making was established from the 16th century, notably around Comp Farm in Emmer Green Road¹⁴ and in Kiln Lane, where the last working kiln closed in the 1930s.

Some of the parish's oldest surviving homes date from the 16th and 17th centuries.

Grander houses with associated farms and workers' cottages appeared in the 18th century, including Holmwood and other buildings in Shiplake Row. By 1841 there were 35 houses at the Eye & Dunsden end of the parish and 68 in the Shiplake part, including 18 in Shiplake Row and 10 south of Crowsley Park.¹⁵ Binfield Heath as we know it was beginning to take shape but it was still an area with no designated boundary.



Figure 10 Frieze Cottage, 18th Century Grade II Listed



Figure 11 The Old House, Early 18th Century, Grade II Listed

¹³ Victoria County History of Oxfordshire, Vol. XX (2022), page 385

¹⁴ Victoria County History of Oxfordshire, Vol. XX (2022), page 162

¹⁵ Victoria County History of Oxfordshire, Vol. XX (2022), pages 153, 389



Figure 12 Rose, Yew and Lilac Cottages -unlisted but good example of brickwork detailing

Housebuilding for the better-off continued in the 19th century. A few large, detached homes were built with big gardens, including Binfield House in Common Lane and Shiplake Rise in Shiplake Row. Victorian houses in the characteristic red and purple brick of local kilns appeared along several roads, including some for the kiln workers themselves. Many brick villas and cottages had dormer windows, slate or tiled roofs and patterned brickwork, the dark shapes of X and O known as diaper work, are still copied on the walls of some new houses today.

Changes of style came in the 20th century, between and after the wars, with more building in the 60s and 70s. Council housing was built in the 1950s, Heathfield Close appeared in the 1960s and the shared-ownership Kings Common Close was opened by Princess Anne early in the new millennium.

The built environment of this village has often been described as ‘eclectic’ but thanks to the open spaces, with fields and copses between the settlements, its rural character remains intact.

The histories of the parish’s three big houses, Holmwood, and Coppid Hall and Crowsley Park to the west were closely inter-connected through their owners.

Henry Baskerville of Crowsley Park and Sir Robert Phillimore of Coppid Hall enclosed parts of the Heath in the 1860s¹⁶. Some of the freeholders around the Heath were given a half-acre of land to compensate for loss of heathland grazing rights. Others were given allotments.

¹⁶ Victoria County History of Oxfordshire, Vol. XX (2022), page 399



Figure 13 View North West Towards the Bottle and Glass Inn – new development has recently taken place adjacent to the pub

At one time there were at least six pubs in the village, the oldest and best-known being the Bottle & Glass Inn, which along with The White Hart, now Orwells, is still in the hospitality business. The New Inn, the Coach & Horses, the George & Dragon and the Rising Sun (later renamed the Old Club House) are all now private homes.

Old maps show gates on to the Heath sited outside the Bottle & Glass, the New Inn, the Coach & Horses and at Coppid Crossroads. Children charged travellers pennies to open the gates.

There was a post office in the village by the 1890s¹⁷ and there were, at various times, bakers, newsagents, general stores, laundries and smithies. Now the only remaining store also serves as the post office.

South Oxfordshire District Council's decision in 1999 to carry out a parish review across the district presented the opportunity for the village settlements to unite as one parish with its own council. A postal referendum followed for electors living in the designated area, which included Crowsley. A large majority voted in favour and the new parish came into being in June 2003.



Figure 14 Jasmine and Timber Cottages are among the many listed buildings in Crowsley

¹⁷ Victoria County History of Oxfordshire, Vol. XX (2022), page 386

Binfield Heath today is a well-integrated community with a strong sense of identity. The parish has remained a close friend and partner of Shiplake and Eye & Dunsden, its two originating neighbours. It is a mark of the successful unification of its scattered parts that this still young parish is now preparing its first neighbourhood plan.

2.3 ENVIRONMENT

Most of the parish falls within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) but the south-eastern part is outside this national designation. Under the present South Oxfordshire Local Plan, the area is afforded no formal landscape designation. Historically however in previous versions of the Local Plan (South Oxfordshire District Council Rural Areas Local Plan, Adopted July 1992), the area outside the AONB was afforded an Area of Great Landscape Value designation. The council sought to *“...conserve and enhance the quality of the landscape and to protect it from development which is likely to have an adverse effect on its character and appearance.”* This also included *“control in relation to the design and siting of buildings and the use of land generally.”*

The designation dated back to the 1954 County Development Plan, but carried through in time as the area was considered to have high landscape value. While this designation no longer exists in the current Local Plan, the community considers that little has changed in this time in relation to the quality of this landscape.

Binfield Heath Parish Council appointed The terra firma Consultancy Ltd in March 2022 to undertake the Binfield Heath Parish Landscape Character Assessment. This was followed in November 2022 by the Binfield Heath Parish Landscape Value Assessment.

Full details can be found in these documents in the appendices, with a summary set out in the supporting text to the landscape policies in Section 5.

The entire Parish is at present under consideration for an extension to the AONB or potentially for National Park status. There is no confirmation of this, but it is further evidence to support that the area outside the AONB should be subject to a formal landscape designation to reflect its quality.

2.4 DARK SKIES

Binfield Heath Parish is blessed with very low levels of light pollution, adding to the overall tranquillity of the area in spite of its proximity to Reading five miles away.

CPRE, the countryside charity, (formerly the Council for the Protection of Rural England) identifies dark night skies and lack of light pollution as a major difference between rural and urban locations¹⁸.

"Starry skies are one of the most magical sights the countryside can offer," the charity says. "Light pollution not only limits our views of these skies but also disrupts wildlife's natural patterns."

There is an abundance of nocturnal wildlife in the parish, ranging from bats and owls to hedgehogs, foxes and deer. Intrusive or inappropriate lighting can disturb their natural behaviour, affecting their eating, breeding and migratory habits and ruining their habitats¹⁹.

It's not just animals that suffer. Excessive light can also disrupt sleeping habits and cause mood swings in humans²⁰. It wastes valuable energy too. South Oxfordshire District Council, which has declared both a climate and an ecological emergency, states in its Local Plan that the district should "minimise carbon emissions and other pollution such as water, air, noise and light . . ."²¹

Meanwhile, the Government's National Planning Policy Framework²² says that new development should *"limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation."*

The absence of street lighting is a major factor in preserving Binfield Heath's dark night skies. The Binfield Heath Parish Landscape Character Assessment, commissioned as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, says: *"The study area is generally tranquil . . . The lack of street lights and the generally scattered nature of the settlement contributes to the dark night skies."*

There are only two street lights, both in the centre of the village at Heathfield Close. But excessive exterior lighting at some properties and spill from the windows of others are a growing concern.

We value our dark skies and do not want any new development to detract from the rural nature and tranquillity of the parish, either by day or night.

¹⁸ <http://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-care-about/nature-and-landscapes/dark-skies/>

¹⁹ www.nationalgeographic.org/article/light-pollution/

²⁰ www.bbc.com/future/article/20160617-what-rising-light-pollution-means-for-our-health

²¹ South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011-2035 Objective 8.1

²² National Planning Policy Framework update July 2021. Chapter 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 185

2.5 HOUSING

271 dwellings in the parish in 2011
20 additional homes granted planning permission since 2011
60% of these are in the AONB
7.4% increase in dwellings since 2011
8 replacement dwellings approved since 2011

Table 1 - Housing Data in the Parish Since 2011

Binfield Heath has many attractive buildings, 26 of which are listed – a relatively high number for a parish this size. Not all are houses: our agricultural heritage has left some fascinating farm buildings such as those at Barn Grounds and Hampstead Farm²³.

The Plan area contains a listed grotto. This is at Crowsley Park House which, along with Holmwood and Coppid Hall, is one of the big country houses that have helped to forge the character of the area.



Figure 15 - Coppid Hall – unlisted and much enlarged / altered property now forming one of the larger country houses

Their old estate cottages, farms, lodges and walls are part of the fabric of the parish. Many of them are listed as well.



Figure 16 Crowsley Park House, believed to date from the early 18th century, is Grade II listed

Among the oldest surviving houses in the parish are Thatched Cottage and Hollow Tree Cottage in Dunsden Way and The Well House in Crowsley, all listed and dating from the 1600s. In total, just over 40 per cent of the domestic properties in Binfield Heath were built before 1900.²⁴

²³ Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/sitesearch?searchType=site&search=Binfield+Heath>

²⁴ Valuation Office Agency 2020, Local Insight profile for Binfield Heath ©OCSI page 32

Each settlement and cluster of houses in the parish has its own character with varying styles. Old agricultural labourers' cottages and converted farm buildings co-exist with Victorian and Edwardian villas built of bricks from local kilns as well as later 20th and 21st century newcomers.

Shiplake Row, which sits mainly outside the Shop Settlement, was one of the earliest areas to be inhabited. It was mentioned in the 1400s²⁵.

This is where you will find Holmwood, the Georgian house that plays host to the Binfield Heath Flower Show. Properties in Shiplake Row tend to be older, individual houses and there is a feeling of space around them. The Old House and Teapot Cottage, for example, are separated by the field where the flower show is traditionally held. The houses in Shiplake Row are set apart from each other until they reach the Shop Settlement.

The area around the shop is the most populated of the parish's three scattered settlements, all of which grew up around the Heath. The density of development is greater here than in Shiplake Row, with more semi-detached properties. Heathfield Avenue, for example, has a few detached houses but most are semi-detached from around the turn of the last century; Kiln Lane is a mix of detached and semi-detached homes of various ages, including villas built for workers at the kiln that gave the lane its name. Heathfield Close is a Sixties cul-de-sac with 13 detached properties, three of them bungalows.

Kings Common Close, off Dunsden Way on the southern edge of the Shop Settlement, is a shared ownership development from the early 2000s. On the opposite side of Dunsden Way, the older houses facing the Heath were more widely spaced leading out of the settlement, but this characteristic has been undermined through recent infilling.



Figure 17 The village shop, built on the edge of the Heath in 1926



Figure 18 Holmwood - Early 18th Century Country House - Grade II Listed

²⁵ Victoria County History of Oxfordshire, Vol. XX (2022), page 388



Despite the greater density of housing in the Shop Settlement there is still room for woodland in the heart of the village, where the recreation ground faces a copse.

In fact, population density in Binfield Heath is 1.2 people per hectare against a national average of 4.3.²⁶ Gardens have tended to be more generous than in many places. This may in some cases date back to the enclosure of the Heath, when those who lost their common grazing rights were given half an acre of land.

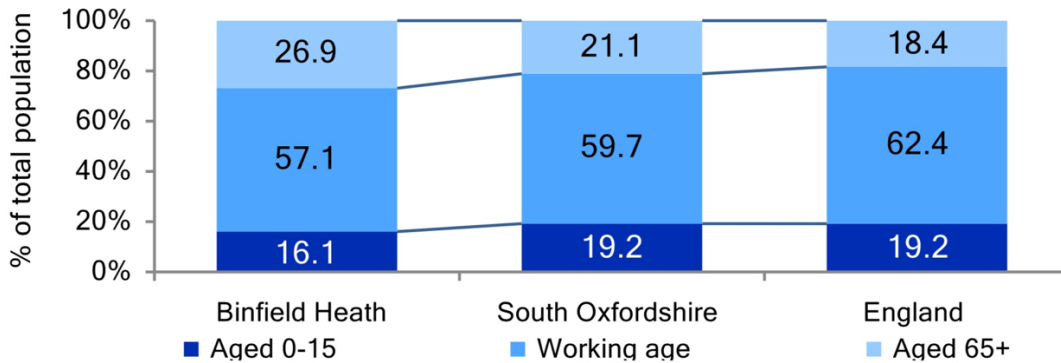


Table 2 - Population by Age – Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS) 2019²⁷

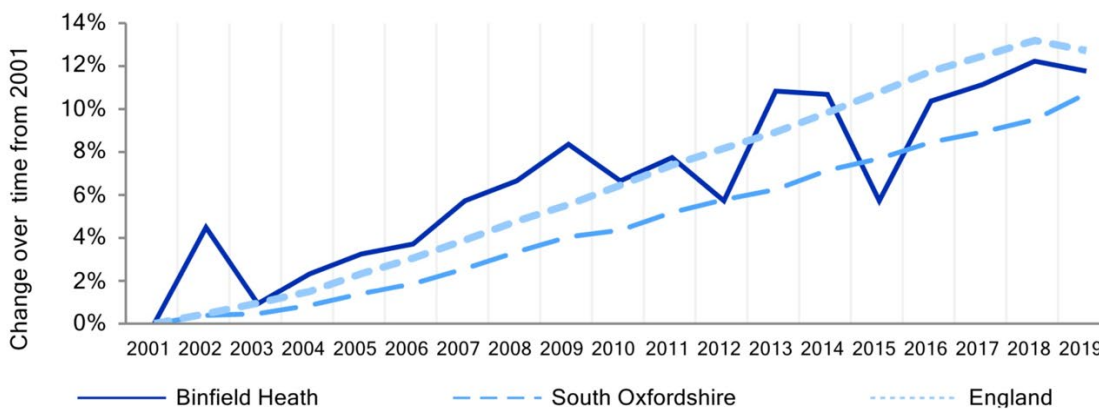


Table 3 - % Change in Total Population from 2001-2019 – Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS) 2019

²⁶ Office for National Statistics 2016, Local Insight profile for Binfield Heath © OCSI Page 29

²⁷ Local Insight profile for Binfield Heath © OCSI 2020, Page 4

The Bottle & Glass Settlement has lost some of this sense of space – and important views – through development in the last few years. This is in spite of the settlement being in the AONB. A priority of the Neighbourhood Plan is to avoid insensitive infilling and redevelopment that erodes this valued characteristic of the parish.

Farther to the west, the hamlet of Crowsley has changed little over the years giving it a timeless quality. In fact only one new residence has been built since 1877, and possibly much earlier. But the number of homes in Crowsley has grown by about 50 per cent through conversion of existing buildings, mainly in the last 30 years. Most of the houses in the hamlet are listed and sit along a quiet horseshoe-shaped single-track lane opposite the entrance to Crowsley Park. Almost all were linked with the Crowsley Park estate until they were sold off in the 20th century.

Thanksgiving Lane, tucked away off Emmer Green Road, has a similar “land that time forgot” feel, with its well-spaced individual estate cottages.

A woodland footpath leads from Thanksgiving Lane to the Gravel Road Settlement, which has a different character again. Bordered by fields and taking in part of Dunsden Way and the Gothic-style chapel, the settlement has an array of different housing types. Most of the 18 terraced homes in the parish are to be found here, along with some characterful detached and semi-detached houses, bungalows and social housing. Many of the properties in the settlement face open fields.



Figure 19 – New housing in Common Lane



Figure 20 – Converted Barns at Crowsley



Figure 21 – Typical 1.5 storey brick cottages

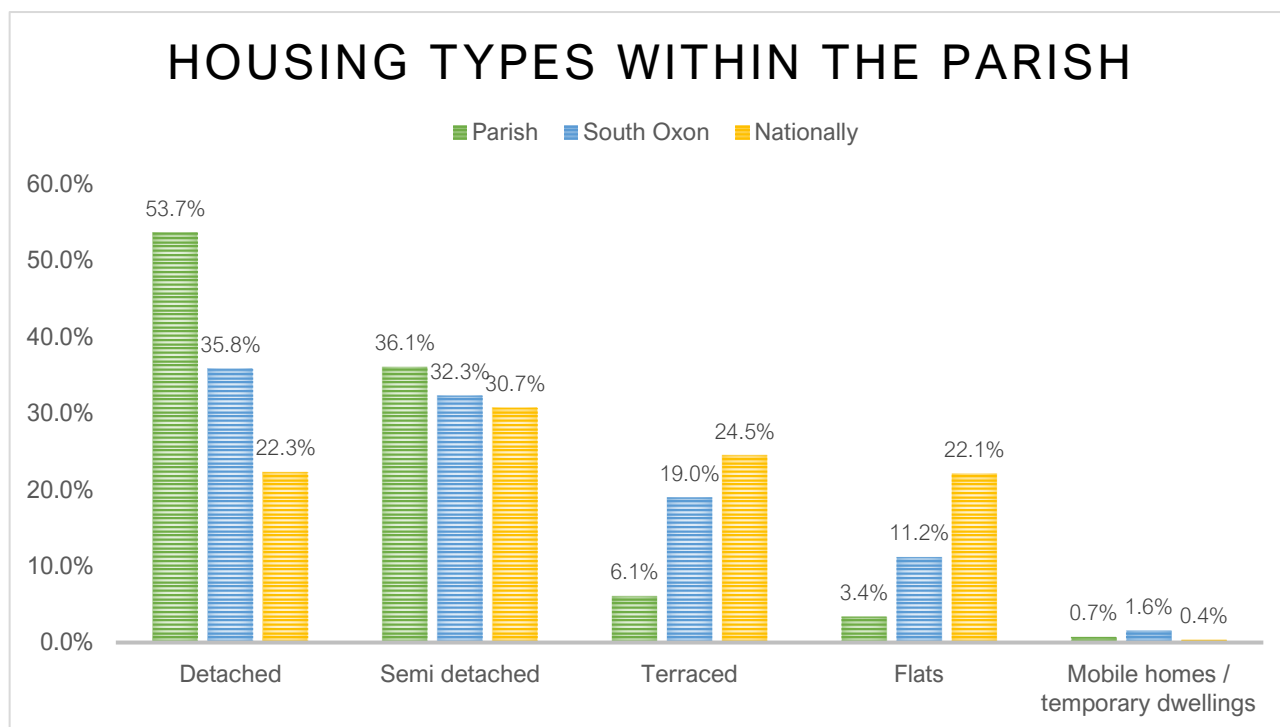


Table 4 -Comparison of housing types. Local Insight Report for the Parish 20th Jan 2021²⁸

It is clear from the graph above that the parish has significantly higher numbers of detached properties than average for both the district and nationally. Equally, there are fewer flats and terraced homes.

There is also a trend for further large dwellings either as new builds or replacement dwellings.

Of the 28 permissions granted since 2011 for new and replacement houses, 24 were for detached properties.

Most of the buildings are two storeys but there are also about 30 single storey houses. Three storey houses are a rarity in the parish although there have been some recent additions. Most of the homes are built along the roads and lanes and backfill development is very much the exception.

Binfield Heath had more owner occupiers than the national average (70 per cent versus 64 per cent), according to the 2011 census. Pensioners accounted for about 21 per cent of households – 59 per cent

²⁸ 2011 Census, Local Insight profile for Binfield Heath © OCSI 2020, Page 24

of those lived alone. Single people under 65 made up just over 11 per cent of households against 18 per cent nationally.

Forty-seven per cent of properties in Binfield Heath are in the highest F to H council tax bands against a national average of 9 per cent.²⁹

2.6 DEVELOPMENT SINCE THE 2011 CENSUS

Since 2011 when the last available census was taken, planning permission has been granted for 20 additional houses. That is an overall increase in housing numbers of 7.4 per cent. More than half of these were in the AONB, which reflects a worrying trend for those who value the countryside. Most were substantial executive style homes. Permission was also given for eight replacement houses.

2.7 LOCAL ECONOMY

Farming was historically the biggest employer in Binfield Heath. That is no longer the case but its effect on the life of the parish, not least through its influence on the landscape, is fundamental.

The rural character of the area attracts visitors, particularly walkers and cyclists. But there is also increased awareness of the importance of food security and the part farmers can play in protecting the environment.

The Phillimore estate farms about 2,500 acres in and around the parish from its base at Dunsden Green Farm. Wheat is the main crop, mostly grown for bread and biscuit making. Other crops include barley, oats, oilseed rape and forage maize.

Conservation work is high on the farm's agenda under the government's grant-aided schemes, complemented by other work paid for by the farm and estate. Projects include growing areas of seed-bearing plants alongside game cover strips to help feed wild birds in winter. Twelve acres of field margins have been cultivated to encourage rare arable plants. The estate also owns a number of properties in the parish.

The village shop serves as the post office, general store, off-licence and newsagent and as such is vital to the community. The listed Bottle & Glass Inn, the last remaining pub in the parish, has a restaurant and offers accommodation. Orwells, formerly the White Hart pub, is also a well-established restaurant.

There is a motor repair business at the former George & Dragon pub in Dunsden Way. The old woodyard, also in Dunsden Way, now houses small industrial units while Hampstead Farm is home to businesses including an upholsterer and a gin distillery.

²⁹ Valuation Office Agency 2020, Local Insight profile for Binfield Heath © OCSI 2020 Page 26

In a heavily wooded area it is useful to have tree surgeons on hand and there are at least two, along with gardening, fencing and plant hire businesses. There are also professional decorators and builders in the village, while Crowsley is home to a livery stable.

These are among the more visible enterprises in the parish but there are others including business to business companies, web design, and physiotherapy. Homeworking has increased since lockdown.

Airbnb, or similar, is also growing. This has given rise to some concern about houses being built specifically for the purpose. We would prefer new houses to be homes that meet local need and are occupied full time, so that the residents become part of the community.

2.8 GETTING AROUND

2.8.1 Footpaths

Binfield Heath has a good network of footpaths and bridleways which are well used by both locals and visitors. In a survey for our Parish Plan of 2013, 84 per cent of respondents said they used the various rights-of-way. Residents greatly value being able to walk from their front doors straight into the countryside.

The Chiltern Way passes through the parish, and there are good links to the Thames Path National Trail. The right-of-way network provides good connections with neighbouring parishes and nearby villages and towns, including Henley.

Local footpaths appear in many published walks and the varied routes attract visitors from outside the area. They also feature in the Chilterns Walking Festival which takes place in May and October each year.

However the network is not as extensive as we would like and certainly not as well connected as it used to be. Old maps show an intricate web of paths but many of these were lost after the enclosures of the 19th century.

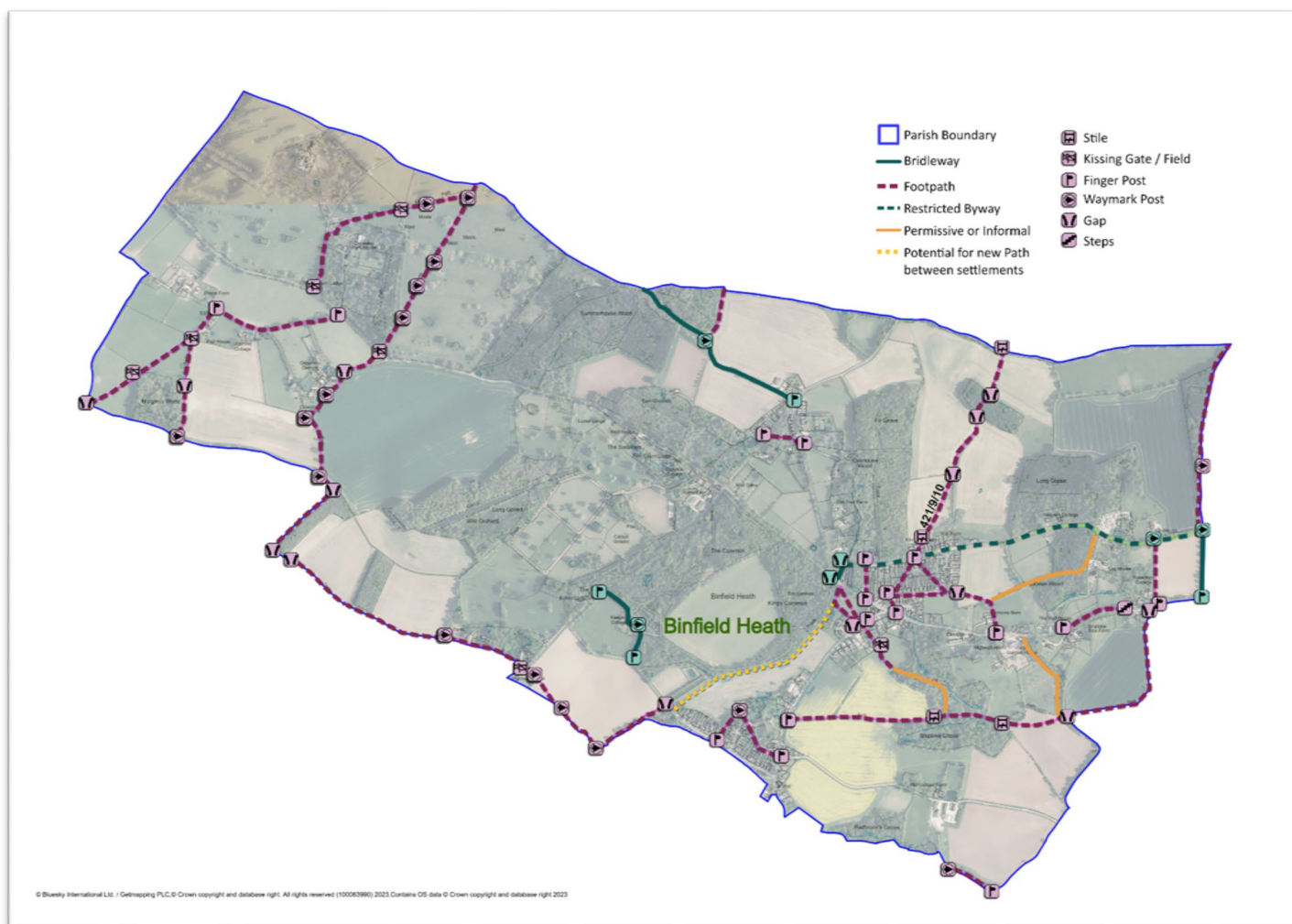


Figure 22 – Plan of Parish Public Rights of Way and Informal / Permissive Paths

One obvious gap in the network is a link between the village centre in the Shop Settlement and the Gravel Road settlement. A footpath from Gravel Road to the recreation ground across the old Heath would provide a safe route to the playground and shop, avoiding the roads. Another welcome addition would be a right-of-way running parallel with the A4155 connecting Keeps Lane with footpath No 421/24/10 at the top of Span Hill. This would keep walkers away from the busy Henley Road.

The Shop and Bottle & Glass settlements are linked by grass-verged Common Lane over what was part of the old Heath. This takes you into the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Bones Lane, an old pack horse route³⁰ and part of the Chiltern Way, leads you through ancient woodland to Crowsley.

³⁰ An ancient way that was used as a drive to cut off the river bend around Reading in the days when there were no locks (Henley on Thames.org)

Many of the best views in the parish are from the footpaths, often from the vantage of higher ground.

2.8.2 Bus service

The 800 bus service links Binfield Heath with our nearest towns and railway stations Henley (via Shiplake) and Reading. There are three stops in the parish, along Shiplake Row and Dunsden Way.

Until recently the village had an hourly bus service. Sadly, from January 2023 this was reduced to four buses a day each way. Had it not been for the county council subsidising the service we would have lost it altogether.

This has been a severe blow to those in the village for whom the bus is a lifeline – about 7 per cent of households do not own a car³¹. It is also a setback for the Neighbourhood Plan's aim to support sustainable travel. Encouraging the use of public transport is a key part of that aim.

As in other rural areas, most people who live and work in the parish rely on their cars. More than 41 per cent of occupied households have two cars, compared with under 25 per cent nationally.³² Any prospect of reducing this would require a considerably better bus service, not a worse one.

Driving is already the only option for most of those travelling the three miles to doctors, dentists and shops in neighbouring Sonning Common. There are no buses between the two and walking or cycling is not always a safe or practical option, particularly for the young and elderly.

2.8.3 Roads



Figure 23 - Common Lane, which has green triangles and fingerposts at either end, is in the AONB

³¹ 2011 Census, Local Insight profile for Binfield Heath © OCSI 2020 Page 56

³² 2011 Census, Local Insight profile for Binfield Heath © OCSI 2020 Page 56



Figure 24 Coppid Crossroads, where Emmer Green Road meets Harpsden Road. Much of the road network is heavily lined with trees



Figure 25 Harpsden Road looking north - the grass verges are protected by wooden logs to prevent their erosion

Two minor roads run through the parish. Both date from medieval times.

Shiplake Row connects Binfield Heath with Shiplake to the east and with Sonning Common in the west via Sonning Common Road. It links with the A4155 main Henley to Reading Road at Shiplake Cross via Memorial Avenue and Plough Lane.

Before the A4155 was turnpiked in the 18th century the main route from Reading to Henley crossed Binfield Heath. This is now Emmer Green Road, which runs north into Harpsden Road, a narrow winding road with passing places that drops steeply into Harpsden before reaching Henley.

Dunsden Way, a comparatively recent road, runs south from Shiplake Row in the village centre and heads downhill through Dunsden to join the A4155 at Playhatch.

Binfield Heath's roads and lanes are important to the rural character of the parish, which residents are keen to preserve. There are very few pavements: the only ones are at Heathfield Close, a small cul-de-sac built in the Sixties, the adjacent bus stops and a short stretch on either side of Arch Hill near the shop. Kerbstones and white lines are kept to a minimum.

The roadside grass verges, combined with grass triangles and traditional fingerposts at junctions, play a significant part in creating the rural feel and sense of remoteness in the parish. So does the absence of street lighting, which is found only at Heathfield Close.

2.8.4 Speeding

The combination of lovely scenery and relatively quiet roads makes Binfield Heath attractive to walkers, horse riders and cyclists. The Chilterns Cycleway passes through the parish as part of the 170-mile circular route around the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Speeding traffic is a concern however. Most of the problems are with drivers going too fast for the type and condition of the roads.

Parking in the road at Arch Hill tends to calm the traffic naturally as it passes the recreation ground but there is little to slow it along Emmer Green Road and Harpsden Road. Coppid Crossroads, where Sonning Common Road meets the two, has been a particular accident blackspot. However, white gates were installed on the verges in Sonning Common Road in an attempt to slow traffic approaching the crossroads. This seems to have had the desired effect without being too urban in a quiet area that borders the AONB.

Some of the roads and lanes through the parish are sunken, a familiar feature in the Chilterns, and many are so narrow that they are effectively single track with unofficial passing places. That makes the perennial problem of potholes a particular hazard.

2.8.5 Parking

Public parking in Binfield Heath is limited. The recreation ground has its own small car park but apart from a couple of spaces for visitors to the shop and a small layby at the post box in Dunsden Way, there are no other dedicated public parking areas.

Most properties have on-site parking but for some there is no alternative but to park in the road. As everywhere, this means residents must rely on drivers parking considerately.

On-site parking can also present challenges, particularly where infill development results in limited space. This makes it all the more important that parking is well designed and as unobtrusive as possible (see our Design Guide).

Parishioners are concerned about parking problems or potential parking problems in the following areas:

- Harpsden Road (the part in the Bottle & Glass settlement and within walking distance of the Bottle & Glass Inn)
- Common Lane (the part in the Bottle & Glass settlement and within walking distance of the Bottle & Glass Inn)
- Arch Hill from the junction with Common Lane and up to and including the houses adjacent to the bus stops
- Gravel Road (both the East end where there are houses and the West end where it is very narrow)
- Dunsden Way near the shop and at the bend near Dragon Cottage
- On the bus route if cars parked on those roads

2.9 COMMUNITY GROUPS AND LEISURE

The parish has a strong community spirit in spite of its scattered settlements. This was highlighted during the pandemic when volunteers did so much to help their neighbours and, more happily, when more than 300 people gathered on the recreation ground to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

In another illustration of that spirit, an anonymous local benefactor has donated the funds to buy the old Forge in the village centre for the benefit of parishioners. The Forge was until recently the Forge Garage and, as its name suggests, was originally a blacksmith's. Renovation of the building will open up social and educational opportunities for residents while also enhancing the heart of the village. A number of



trees have already been planted at the site. Trustees will oversee this ambitious project, which will call on the time, skills, effort and enthusiasm of volunteers to realise its full potential.

The annual Binfield Heath Flower Show and Dog Show, hosted by the owner of Holmwood, is the highlight of the parish's social calendar. Now approaching its 75th year it goes from strength to strength, attracting visitors from a wide area, thanks to the organising committee and an army of helpers.

Village Day, held on the recreation ground, is another chance for a yearly get-together with tea and cake and a variety of stalls. Money raised goes to support other local events such as the carol singing with a brass band at Christmas.

These are organised by the Village Society — every resident in the parish automatically becomes a member. The Society provided the vintage red telephone box that is our book-swap, a welcome addition, particularly since the mobile library service was withdrawn.

An annual litter pick by volunteers helps to keep the place tidy while the parish council ensures that our recreation ground is safe and certainly the best equipped and most popular for miles around.

The scout hut in Shiplake Row is home to the 1st Shiplake Scouts and currently serves as the meeting place of Binfield Heath Parish Council.

The crime rate in the village is lower than average³³ but there have been incidents. Our Neighbourhood Watch, which has become inactive, is being revived.

A walking group meets monthly outside the shop and the Book Club remains popular. Binfield Heath Polo Club's home is found off Gravel Road on the Phillimore estate. Matches are open to the public and its Summer Festival raises money for good causes.

Binfield Heath Chapel in Dunsden Way opened in 1835 “. . . to provide a place of public worship and burial ground for Protestant dissenters.³⁴” Today the independent evangelical church plays an active role in the community. Other worshippers have to look farther afield. Although our civil boundaries were redrawn in 2003, Binfield Heath and Crowsley remain in the Church of England parish of Shiplake with Dunsden.

A monthly Village Newsletter produced by a volunteer keeps parishioners up to date with local events and concerns. The parish council website also carries news of council, Neighbourhood Plan and other matters.

Looking into the history of Binfield Heath has encouraged us to set up a parish archive, which we hope to keep expanding.

³³ Local Insight profile for Binfield Heath © OCSI Page 34

³⁴ Reference from Norman Chapel website



Creating this Neighbourhood Plan has brought many things into sharper focus. As a result, a number of new projects are under discussion (see Section 6).

3 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROCESS

3.1 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROCESS

Binfield Heath's Neighbourhood Plan has reached the pre-submission stage. This issue and supporting documents are now being published for public consultation.

The parish council will consult on the Neighbourhood Plan for at least six weeks. Residents are strongly encouraged to comment: all comments will be collated and reviewed and the Plan will be updated where necessary.

A Consultation Statement will also be produced. The comments received will be tabulated and highlighted to show whether they have been noted, a change has been made or an explanation given. This document will then be available for public viewing to ensure that every comment has been properly considered.

At that stage the amended Plan will be prepared by the steering group and submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) for independent examination. SODC will then conduct a further six-week consultation where additional comments will be encouraged. Those representations will be posted on the SODC website and provided to the independent Examiner.

The Examiner will scrutinise the Neighbourhood Plan documents plus all the comments and representations as part of the examination.

Finally, if approved by the Examiner the completed Plan will go to a referendum. Everyone on the electoral register within the Neighbourhood Plan area will be entitled to vote on whether to approve the Plan. If more than 50 per cent of those voting are in favour then the Plan will be 'made' and adopted by the district council to sit alongside the Local Plan.

3.2 SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3.2.1 Engagement leading to development of the Neighbourhood Plan

When the residents of Binfield Heath and Crowsley voted to become an independent parish 20 years ago there was one over-riding driving force: it was the desire to have a greater say in their own destiny.

This neighbourhood plan is a natural progression in achieving that.

Binfield Heath was originally split between Shiplake and Eye & Dunsden parishes but it always had a strong sense of identity.



Writing in 1945, Thomas Scotcher noted: *“When Binfield Heath was born it was known that it would probably be a village all its life, and so it determined to be different from other villages”*³⁵

Half a century later the Oxfordshire Federation of Women’s Institutes found that spirit alive and well: *“Binfield Heath ... has no official separate status but the people who live there argue hotly that it is a village in its own right.”*³⁶

The chance to become independent came in 2003 after South Oxfordshire District Council carried out a review of parishes.

This led to a referendum of electors living in Binfield Heath and Crowsley who voted overwhelmingly to unite as one parish with its own council.

Five years later, on 31 March 2008 about 50 residents attended Binfield Heath’s annual parish meeting. An officer from Oxfordshire Rural Community Council described the benefits of parish plans (a forerunner of neighbourhood plans) and the process for producing one. Those attending, including parish councillors, voted in favour of creating a parish plan for Binfield Heath.

A steering group was set up and work on the Parish Plan progressed over a number of years while information and local opinions were gathered. This culminated in a detailed questionnaire being sent to every home and business in the parish in summer 2012.

The Parish Plan was published in June 2013 and has been updated regularly

In 2015 it was agreed that the Plan should be refreshed and that the best way to do this was to produce a Community Led Plan containing the result of actions from the Parish Plan. A sub-group of villagers and two parish councillors was formed and the Community Led Plan was published in 2016. It has been updated on several occasions.

Binfield Heath Parish Council had been considering producing a Neighbourhood Plan for a number of years and had consulted with South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and other small parishes. At a parish council meeting on 25 January 2021 an officer from SODC spoke to councillors and 20 residents about the advantages of developing a plan.

In March 2021 the parish council consulted as many households in Binfield Heath parish as possible with a short questionnaire via both email and hard copies asking whether a neighbourhood plan should be produced. The overwhelming majority of replies were in favour. A steering group was formed and an inaugural meeting was held on 1 July 2021.

³⁵ An English Village in War-Time, Thomas B Scotcher

³⁶ The Oxfordshire Village Book, Oxfordshire Federation of Women’s Institutes

3.2.2 Engagement during progress of the Neighbourhood Plan

Community engagement is at the heart of Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan and residents have been kept up to date as it has progressed. Dedicated newsletters have explained each stage of development, what has been achieved and what still has to be done. Parishioners have been invited to offer their ideas, expertise, help and advice to the steering group.

The November 2021 newsletter asked residents for their comments on, and photographs of, their favourite views and places in and around the parish as part of the Neighbourhood Plan’s Landscape Character Assessment. More than 140 photos were received.

The following January’s issue included a request for parishioners to identify houses, barns and other buildings of historic and/or local interest that help to give the parish its character.

The August 2022 issue included the list of selected buildings and asked residents to nominate others, or to object to the ones on the list. The final list is in Appendix D to this Plan.

The newsletters carried an email address or telephone number where parishioners could contact the steering group.

Binfield Heath parish councillors received a written and verbal report on the Plan’s progress at every council meeting.

In addition to the Plan’s newsletters, the monthly Village Newsletter has helped to keep the community up to date with Neighbourhood Plan events.

A sub-committee of the steering group put together an exhibition to encourage further community engagement. Twelve large posters illustrated the Plan’s progress in words, pictures and maps. Some highlighted the three settlements and explained the concept of Local Green Spaces while others recounted historical facts about the parish and told the story of the *Heath*. Residents were guided to a website where they could see details of each stage of the Plan’s development, including minutes of meetings and documents agreed by the steering group.

The exhibition was first held at the Binfield Heath annual parish meeting on 15 May 2022. Posters advertising both the exhibition and the meeting were displayed in advance on bus shelters, noticeboards, trees, in the windows of houses and in the local shop. Residents were also notified by newsletter. The annual meeting was attended by 25 residents. Steering group members were on hand to answer questions about the Neighbourhood Plan and paper and pens were supplied for those who wanted to leave written comments.

Binfield Heath Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Update 5: May 2022



Figure 26 May 22 Newsletter



Figure 27 Information Board



Figure 29 Neighbourhood Plan Display

The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebration lunch on Binfield Heath’s recreation ground on Sunday, June 5 provided a second venue for the exhibition. A tent bearing the Neighbourhood Plan banner was set up alongside the main marquee and the 300-plus parishioners attending the lunch were invited to view it and leave comments.



Figure 28 Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebration lunch

A third opportunity to see the exhibition came on August Bank Holiday at the Binfield Heath Flower Show, an annual event that attracts many locals as well as visitors from outside the parish. In 2022 an estimated 1,200 people attended.

The exhibition was staged in the main marquee. The marquee was busy all day and hundreds of people had the opportunity to view the exhibition. Some took the time to leave comments in the box provided.

Every comment received has been reviewed and tabulated to show whether it has been noted, if it has resulted in a change to the Plan, or if a response has been given.

3.3 MONITORING AND REVIEW POLICY

It is essential to monitor how effective the Neighbourhood Plan is to record whether policies are being implemented and delivered. Binfield Heath Parish Council will be mainly responsible for this, with assistance from South Oxfordshire District Council on more strategic elements.

Monitoring will include checking how far the Plan’s policies are shaping planning decisions; whether its aims and objectives are being achieved; whether the Plan conforms to any changes in national and local planning policy and if it needs to take account of any significant changes in the local area.

The Plan will be reviewed annually. Although the objectives will form the core of the monitoring, other relevant data collected and reported may be included. It is expected that the Plan will be formally



Figure 30 Neighbourhood Plan Flower Show & Annual Parish Meeting Displays





updated by the parish council on a five-year cycle or to coincide with a review of the Local Development Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented through the district council's consideration and determination of planning applications for development in the parish.

In preparing the Plan, we have taken care to ensure, as far as possible, that the policies are achievable. While South Oxfordshire District Council will be responsible for managing development, the parish council will use the Plan to frame its representations on submitted planning applications.

4 VISION, AIMS & OBJECTIVES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The following vision, aims and objectives have evolved as a result of surveys, consultation and discussions held in the process of producing first a Parish Plan, then a Community Led Plan and now a Neighbourhood Plan.

From these it is clear that residents value the distinctive character of Binfield Heath, particularly the rural nature of the village and its surroundings, with fields and woodland separating the groups of housing. They are happy with the size of the parish but recognise that some development will take place. They say this should be on a very small scale and they want to preserve the open spaces between the settlements and groups of housing.

In a survey of residents conducted for Binfield Heath's Community Led Plan in 2016, 96 per cent of respondents said that any development should be sympathetic to its location.

4.2 OUR VISION

To protect and enhance the rural character of Binfield Heath while ensuring that the parish has a sustainable future.

We will work to preserve the open spaces between the parish's individual settlements as well as the green gaps that separate us from neighbouring parishes.

As part of this we will aim to protect what remains of the historic Heath that gave the parish its name.

Buildings considered to be of heritage value to the community will be identified and protected.

The parish's strong community spirit will be encouraged and local businesses supported and helped to prosper.

We will play our part in addressing the climate emergency by caring for our natural environment, while continuing to push for the entire parish to be included in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

4.3 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

4.3.1 Landscape Character

Aim

To sustain the rural setting of the parish by preserving the natural landscape and farmland that separates both its individual settlements and the parish from its neighbours.

Objectives

- LC1 Maintain the rural character of the parish
- LC2 Carry out a landscape review to identify its special characteristics
- LC3 Preserve open green spaces between the settlements
- LC4 Designate and protect Local Green Spaces valued by the local community
- LC5 Identify and protect areas of landscape considered to be important
- LC6 Conserve, protect and designate Crowsley's parkland
- LC7 Conserve, protect and designate the historic Heath
- LC8 Conserve and enhance the existing network of trees, hedgerows, public spaces and rights of way
- LC9 Designate and protect significant natural assets and features identified in the Landscape Character Assessment
- LC10 Prefer development that does not lead to an increase in rural traffic
- LC11 Ensure proposals do not result in adverse noise and light pollution
- LC12 Protect narrow lanes from inappropriate development
- LC13 Encourage the linking of existing fragments of priority habitat woodland, grassland and wildlife corridors to Sites of Special Scientific Interest outside the parish
- LC14 Protect existing hedgerows and replace those lost as a result of development or disease, with a preference for local native species
- LC15 Trees lost as a result of development or disease must be replaced at a ratio of at least 3:1 within the site, with a preference for local native species
- LC16 Maintain existing woodland cover and encourage active management to ensure the survival of specialised species and to support biodiversity
- LC17 Ensure Tree Preservation Orders are enforced
- LC18 Continue to push for the whole parish to be included in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

4.3.2 Built Environment

Aim

To conserve and enhance the open, rural character of the parish and its historically scattered settlements by ensuring that any further development is sympathetic to its setting. We will identify and protect non-designated buildings valued by the community.

Objectives

- BE1 Ensure that any development is within the three settlement boundaries. It should be sympathetic to its surroundings and appropriate and sustainable in line with our status as a Smaller Village
- BE2 Maintain the existing settlement pattern
- BE3 Oppose expansion of settlements into the open countryside
- BE4 Ensure that any development respects the character of existing settlements and is designed to a high quality. Materials should be sustainable and sympathetic to those within the settlement; consistent with Neighbourhood Plan design codes and compatible with local styles
- BE5 Identify and protect the parish's heritage assets, including listed and other valued buildings
- BE6 Ensure an appropriate mix of house sizes is maintained

- BE7 Require planning applications to show how a new building would respect the landscape, village style and neighbouring properties. Drawings should accurately illustrate the streetscape, levels and cross sections of the site to show the size and architectural style of the proposed and adjacent properties. Appropriate space should be maintained between buildings
- BE8 Ensure that any modern farming or horticultural practices (e.g. polytunnels) do not compromise the beauty of the landscape
- BE9 Proposals for solar development should consider the impact on the valued, predominantly rural character of the area

4.3.3 Environment and Sustainability

Aim

To encourage environmental sustainability by seeking to minimise our impact on the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change wherever we can.

Objectives

- ES1 Identify, protect and enhance existing wildlife habitats and corridors
- ES2 Conserve and improve biodiversity and enhance natural habitats wherever possible
- ES3 Minimise light pollution and strongly discourage or prevent any non-essential use of artificial lighting between sunset and sunrise
- ES4 Promote effective and sustainable ways of managing water sources
- ES5 Ensure any new development minimises flood risk. This includes using permeable surfaces, maximising local water retention and not intentionally exporting surface water elsewhere
- ES6 Encourage energy efficiency and the installation and use of renewable energy

4.3.4 Local Travel and Safety

Aim

To maintain and promote safe, sustainable travel.

Objectives

- TS1 Preserve, enhance and extend pedestrian and cycling routes
- TS2 Preserve and encourage the use of public transport
- TS3 Encourage traffic to adhere to speed limits.
- TS4 Minimise the likelihood of flooding.

4.3.5 Community Spirit

Aim

To build on the parish's strong sense of community and identity.

Objectives

- CS1 Engage with parishioners at every stage of the development and implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan, drawing the community closer together in shared objectives



- CS2 Enhance the social and economic vitality of the parish by retaining and supporting its assets, services, facilities and events, including the shop/post office and pubs/restaurants
- CS3 Engage as many parishioners as possible in the development, activities and running of the Forge community centre.
- CS4 Retain and support the recreation ground, allotments and other community spaces

5 PLANNING POLICIES

5.1 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is an important guide in the preparation of local plans and neighbourhood plans. Published in 2018 and revised in July 2021, it sets out the government's policy in relation to land use planning matters.

The Neighbourhood Plan must demonstrate that it has had regard to/is consistent with the provisions of the NPPF as a whole. The relevant paragraphs of the NPPF are set out alongside the policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan in Section 5.

As stated in the NPPF, the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs as set out in Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly.

The NPPF (Paragraph 8) outlines the planning system's three overarching objectives:

- **A social objective** – Binfield Heath is a parish with a number of settlements but retains a good community spirit with a range of services and facilities. The aim of the plan is to ensure that the parish is better and safely connected via appropriate infrastructure, and maintains and enhances its service provision to all residents.
- **An environmental objective** – being partly within the Chilterns AONB it is imperative that our natural environment is at the heart of our Plan and improving biodiversity is an important focus.
- **An economic objective** – This Neighbourhood Plan seeks to assist in building a strong rural economy appropriate to the needs of the area.

The following paragraphs of the NPPF 2021 are especially relevant to the issues addressed by Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan:

- Supporting a prosperous rural economy (Paragraph 84)
- Good design (Paragraphs 126-136)
- Supporting healthy communities (Paragraph 8 & 92)
- Protecting local green spaces (Paragraphs 101-103)
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (Paragraphs 174-188)
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (Paragraphs 189-208)
- Neighbourhood planning (Paragraphs 12-14, 28-30, 37, 66, 67 & 70)

5.2 LOCAL POLICY

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) is the planning authority for Binfield Heath. The adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan contains the strategic vision for the district in terms of where development is directed. The policies principally focus new residential development on a number of allocated sites near Oxford, and move down the hierarchy of settlements (largely dependent on size and sustainability) through the towns and larger villages and ultimately to smaller villages and open countryside.

Binfield Heath is largely situated within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (see area washed over in green in Figure 31 below), with various small settlements and clusters of housing within the open countryside.

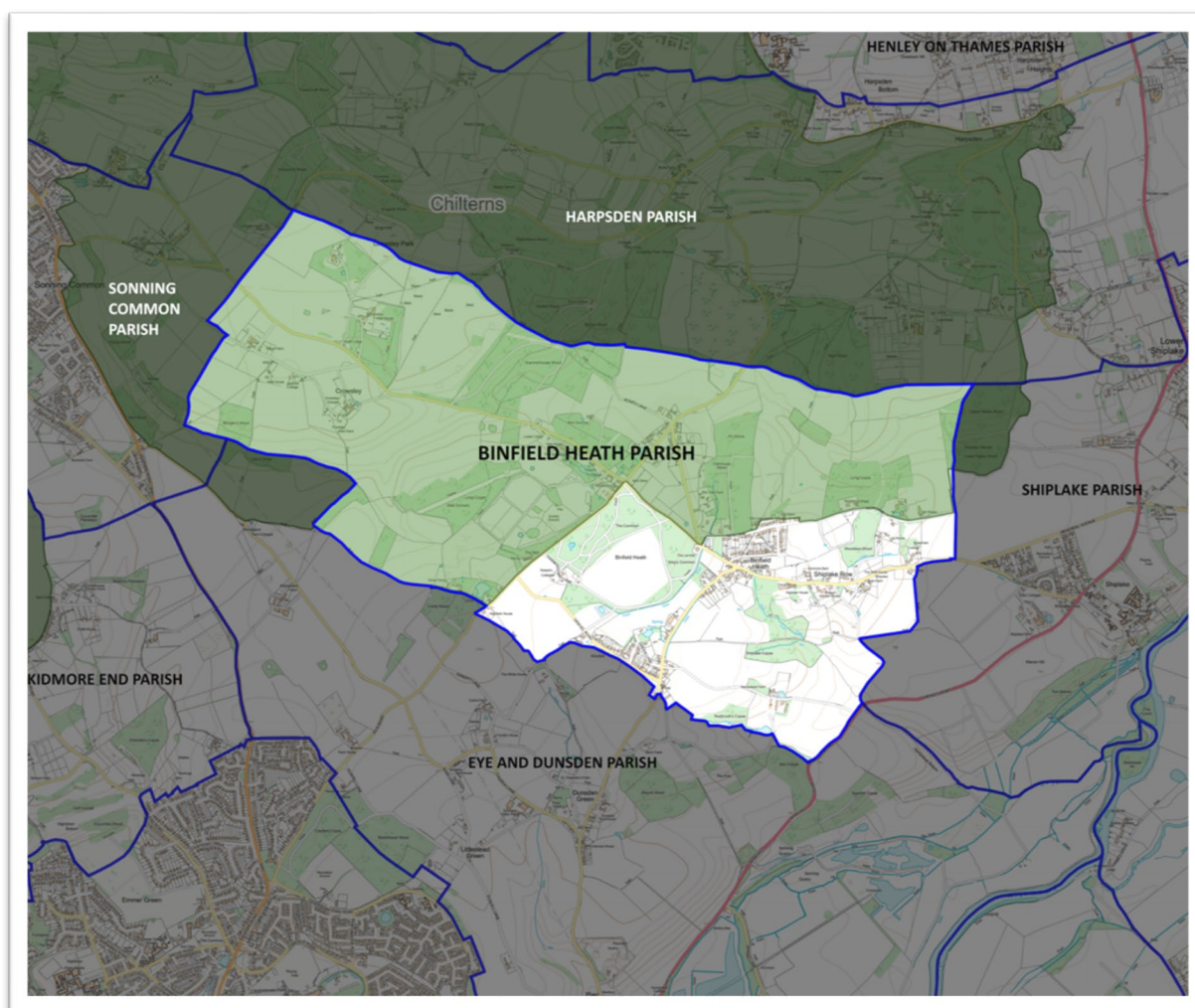


Figure 31 Location of the Parish within the wider context and coverage of the AONB

As such it is not subject to strategic housing allocations or significant housing or employment growth. Also, being classed as a Smaller Village in the settlement hierarchy, there is no defined requirement to

contribute towards delivering additional housing (beyond windfall and infill development) to meet the overall housing requirement of South Oxfordshire in such a Plan Area.

SODC Local Plan policy H8 confirms that within smaller villages the Local Planning Authority will support development where it is proposed by a Neighbourhood Plan and / or in accordance with Local Plan policy H16.

The level of growth proposed in a Neighbourhood Plan is set out in policy H8, which states it should be:

“commensurate to the scale and character of their village, and this is expected to be around a 5% to 10% increase in dwellings above the number of dwellings in the village in the 2011 census (minus any completions since 1 April 2011).”

Policy H16 explains that within smaller villages development should be limited to infill and the redevelopment of previously developed land. Infill is defined in policy H16 as:

“...the filling of a small gap in an otherwise continuous built-up frontage or on other sites within settlements where the site is closely surrounded by buildings. The scale of infill should be appropriate to its location.”

The housing policies in this Neighbourhood Plan will set out the current position in the Binfield Heath Plan area and provide a locally specific detailed set of criteria that will be used to determine the appropriateness of future housing development in the plan area. For ease of reference, the relevant Local Plan policy and NPPF references will also be included alongside each policy.

Design based policies follow those principles firstly set out in the National Design Guide, in the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Design Guide and then draw on the locally-specific Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes (see Appendix A). Adopted Local Plan policy DES1 sets out the criteria for delivering high quality development. These cover a variety of matters including: building materials, appearance, scale, mass, layout, plot coverage, relationship with surrounding development, landscaping and overall consistency with character and density of development.

Local Plan Policy ENV1 looks at landscape and countryside aspects specifically. It explains the weight and protection to be given to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the protection given to the general countryside and the role of economic growth in rural areas. It is considered that this policy is essential in setting out the general context to many of the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.

In particular there are areas of special character which warrant further protection and enhancement: Crowsley Park and the original Heath after which the area was named. A more detailed history of both areas is included in Appendix E, with a summary supporting the policy below.

There are a great many long distance and important local views which are of significant value, which are enhanced by green infrastructure assets including open countryside. These have been identified both in the Landscape Character Assessment and by the community. Details can be found in Appendix C.

The adopted Local Plan seeks to prevent the unnecessary loss of valued community facilities through policies CF1 and EMP10. The Neighbourhood Plan draws further on these criteria to identify individual

community facilities within the Binfield Heath Plan area that are considered sufficiently important to warrant protection in the future.

There are concerns regarding a loss of individual settlement identity and the potential for the merging of settlements through piecemeal and cumulative development. Green Gaps have been proposed to prevent the coalescence of neighbouring settlements.

The area contains a wide range of designated heritage assets (eg Listed Buildings) which are covered by the status as well as Local Plan policies. While these assets are especially important in defining the character of the parish, other buildings which are considered locally important are also identified and proposed as non-designated heritage assets (see Appendix D). Thus, the Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity to bring forward local policies to protect and improve these assets.

The policies within the Neighbourhood Plan have been positively prepared following national and local policies and guidance to allow appropriate development while balancing the great weight that should be afforded to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB and its setting.

Strategic policies within the Adopted Local Plan include:

• STRAT1: The Overall Strategy	• STRAT2: South Oxfordshire Housing and Employment Requirements
• STRAT5: Residential Densities	• H1: Delivering New Homes
• H8: Housing in the Smaller Villages	• H9 Affordable Housing
• H10 Exception Sites and Entry Level Housing Schemes	• H11: Housing Mix
• H12: Self-Build and Custom-Build Housing	• H13: Specialist Housing for Older People
• H14: Safeguarding Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople sites	• H16: Backland and Infill Development and Redevelopment
• H17: Subdivision and Conversion to Multiple Occupation	• H18: Replacement Dwellings
• H19: Rural Workers' Dwellings	• DES1: Delivering High Quality Development
• DES2: Enhancing Local Character	• DES5: Outdoor Amenity Space
• DES6 Residential Amenity	• DES7 Efficient Use of Resources
• DES8: Promoting Sustainable Design	• ENV1 Landscape and Countryside
• ENV2 Biodiversity – Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species	• ENV3 Biodiversity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENV4: Watercourses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENV5: Green Infrastructure in New Developments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENV6 Historic Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENV7: Listed Buildings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENV11 Pollution - Impact from Existing and/or Previous Land Uses on New Development (Potential Receptors of Pollution) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENV12 Pollution - Impact of Development on Human Health, the Natural Environment and/or Local Amenity (Potential Sources of Pollution)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP1 Air Quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP2 Hazardous Substances
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP3 Waste Collection and Recycling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP4 Flood Risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMP1: The Amount and Distribution of New Employment Land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMP2: Range, Size and Mix of Employment Premises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMP3: Retention of Employment Land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMP10: Development in Rural Areas

5.3 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING POLICIES

The following policies have been devised in response to the Vision and Objectives and the parish surveys / consultations that have taken place to date.

5.3.1 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

In line with South Oxfordshire District Council's declared Climate Emergency, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to mitigate climate change. Much of the guidance for this has already been set out in Local Plan policy, where proposals will only be supported if they can demonstrate that they will contribute towards the reduction of carbon energy in the Plan area in accordance with SOLP Policy DES8 and DES10: Carbon Reduction.

A Net-Zero Toolkit produced by a group of Councils is a recommended guide when considering energy efficiency measures in development proposals. For more information please see <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/urban-design/net-zero-carbon-toolkit/>

The overarching principle, however, is that new development must also contribute to the vitality and viability of the parish as a whole.

Development proposals will be supported where they improve resilience to and mitigate the effects of climate change and comply with other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Measures taken in this regard, alongside how proposals contribute to the sustainability (vitality and viability) of the Plan area, should be highlighted as appropriate in any submitted Design and Access Statement.

The Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes (Appendix A) contains two specific codes which cover new buildings and retrofits. These must be referred to in accordance with Policy BH10 which ensures that new development has regard to the considerations of the Design Code:

DESIGN CODE C1. SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

DESIGN CODE C2. RENEWABLE/LOW CARBON ENERGY

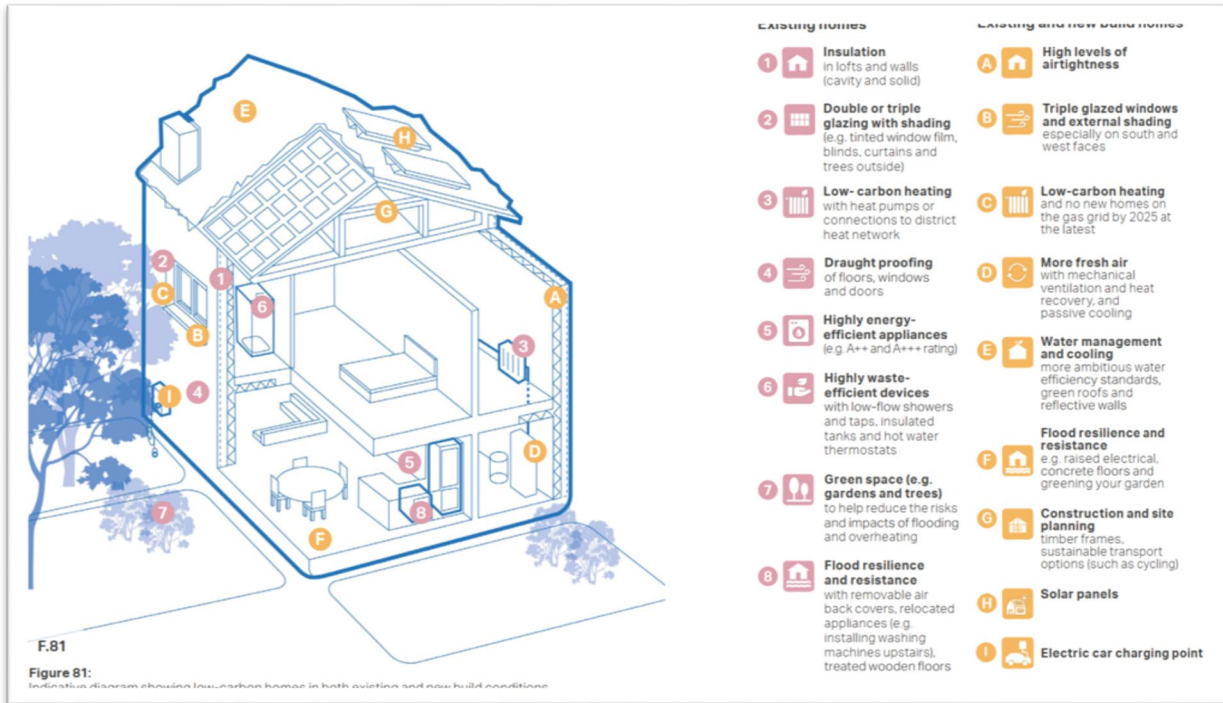


Figure 32 – Extract - Figure 81 from the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes (AECOM 2023) - highlighting low carbon homes (for both new build and existing buildings) and where energy saving measures can be included /installed

5.3.2 Landscape Character

The terra firma Consultancy was commissioned to evaluate the parish landscape both within and outside the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In particular, it is important to understand the landscape value of the area outside the AONB and the contribution it makes to the setting of the AONB.

It should be noted that there is an inconsistent approach to local landscape designations, as set out by the Landscape Institute:

“the absence of local landscape designations in England does not necessarily indicate there are no landscapes worthy of local designation... and lack of designation does not mean that a landscape has no value.”³⁷

³⁷ The Landscape Institute’s Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3) - paragraph 5.26

This is important in the case of the land outside the AONB, as the district council currently has no alternative landscape designation in its Local Plan.

The Landscape Character Assessment and the Landscape Value Assessment both look at the value of the landscape in the parish as a whole. These are based on The Landscape Institute's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Revision 3, 2013 (GLVIA3) which provide a summary of the range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscapes. This is in addition to Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21, which clarifies aspects in more detail in relation to assessing landscape value outside national designations.

The factors against which the Binfield Heath Parish Landscape Character Area had been assessed for landscape value are set out below.

- Landscape condition - ***Characteristics/features of a landscape identified as being valued***
- Rarity - ***Value conferred by virtue of scarcity either of landscape as a whole or elements within it***
- Conservation interest - ***Such as features of historical, wildlife or architectural value***
- Recreation value – ***Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important***
- Perceptual aspects (scenic) - ***Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily visual***
- Perceptual aspects (wildness and tranquillity) - ***Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies***
- Associations - ***With particular people, artists, writers, or other media, or events in history/reference to special cultural associations, such as important writing and paintings that feature local landscapes;***
- Functional - ***Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape***
- AONB / Setting of AONB / Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) – ***The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 made provision for the designation of AONBs to 'preserve and enhance natural beauty'. This original purpose of 'preserving and enhancing' was subsequently changed to 'conserving and enhancing' (Environment Act 1995).***

The Landscape Institute states: "A 'valued landscape' is an area identified as having sufficient landscape qualities to elevate it above other more everyday landscapes."

As set out in the both the Landscape Character and the Landscape Value Assessments, the entire parish is considered to have key valued landscape characteristics. The valued landscapes are summarised below with the views within and out of each area covered by a separate policy. Each valued landscape makes a significant contribution to maintaining the individual character of settlements. This is in addition to providing a setting for the numerous cultural and historic assets in the Plan area.

The following policies have been devised to protect the character of the landscape based on the views of the local community and the technical landscape work undertaken.

Figure 33 below highlights that most of the area falls within South Oxfordshire District Council Landscape Character Assessment (evidence base for the Local Plan 2033) as Landscape Character

Area (LCA) 10: Chilterns Plateau with Valleys. The remaining area on the eastern edge of the parish is LCA 11: Thames Valley and Fringes.

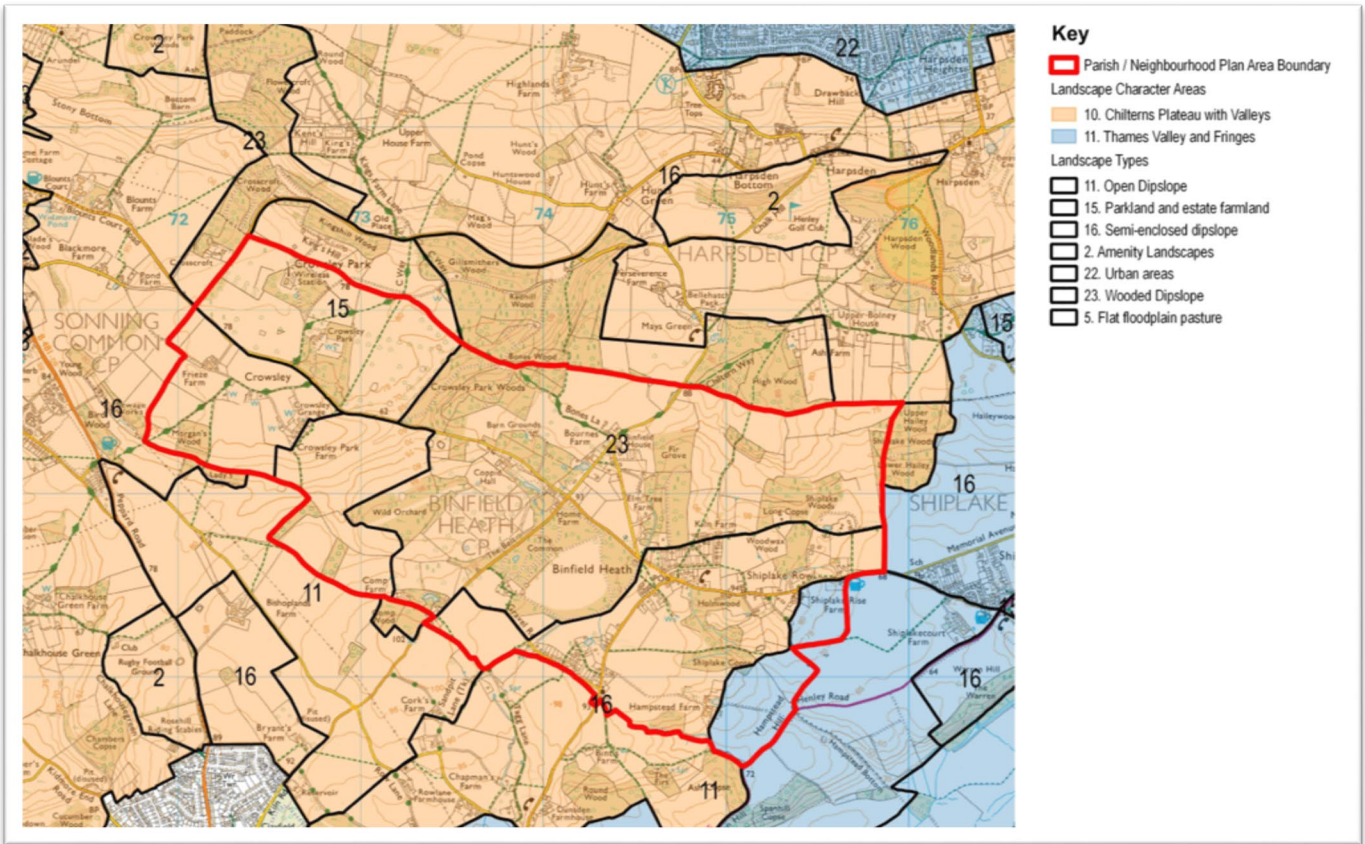


Figure 33 SODC Landscape Character Areas and Landscape Types

The key characteristics of LCA 10 are the heavily wooded areas (including extensive areas of Ancient Woodland) and commons, the narrow lanes and enclosure by tall hedgerows and mature trees. It is a sparsely settled area with only very small villages / hamlets and clusters of housing and current or former agricultural development. The pattern of settlement, and field enclosure and woodland is often little changed from the early Middle Ages.

This District Assessment has been examined in more detail with Parish Landscape Character Areas (PLCAs). While each is a distinct character, there are areas of transition between them and any boundary shown does not represent a sudden change in character. These seven PLCAs are shown in Figure 34, with a summary of the findings of the Landscape Character Assessment and key matters to avoid, retain or enhance.

Developers, landowners and homeowners should ascertain which PLCA their site / property falls within and follow the relevant guidance as set out below.

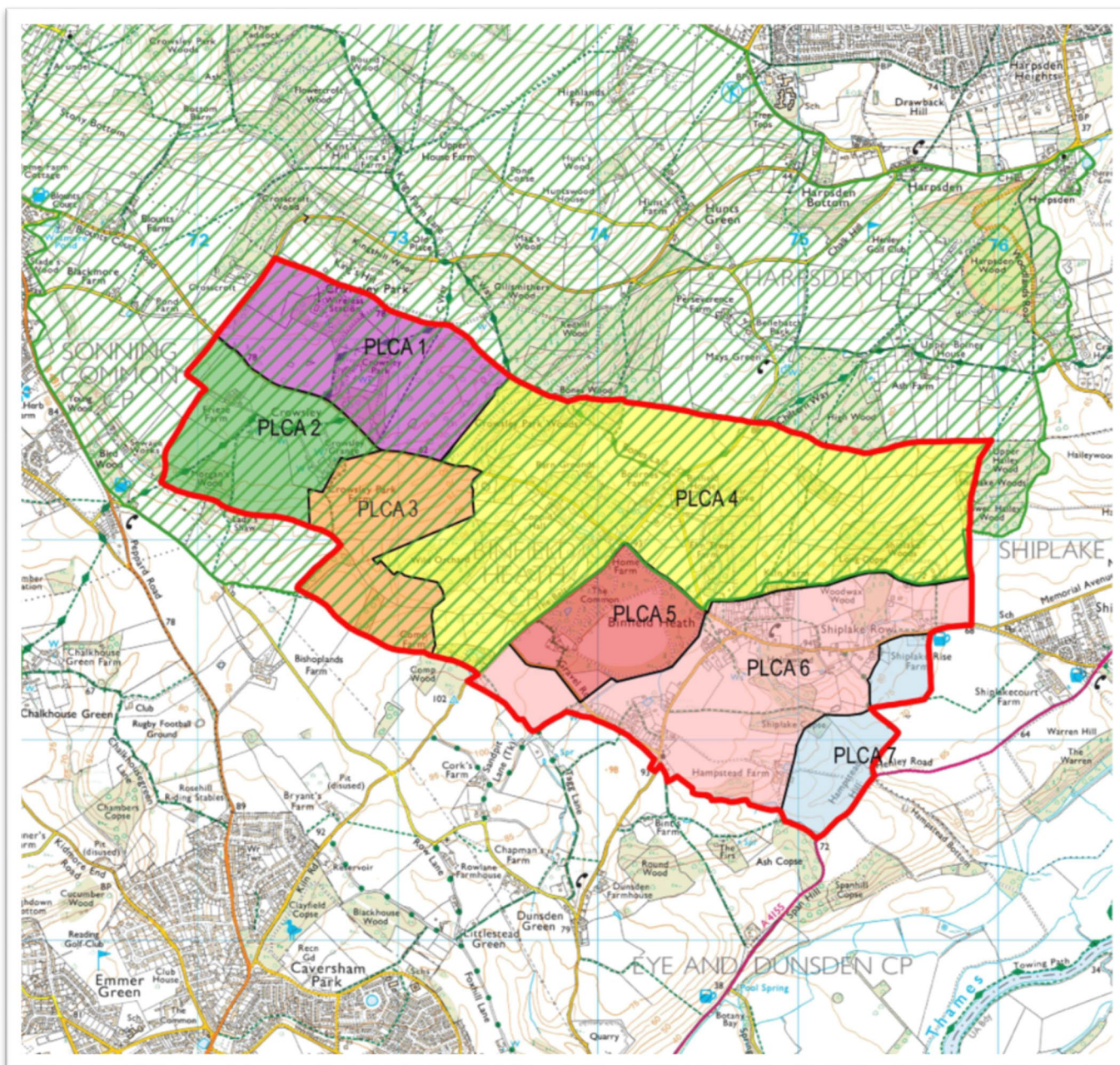
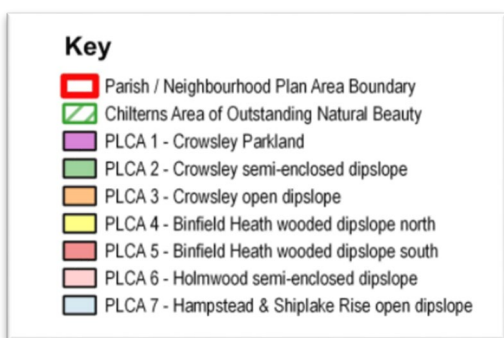


Figure 34 Parish landscape character areas (PLCA)



PLCA1: Crowsley Parkland

Most of PLCA1 comprises open ornamental parkland and is a designed landscape situated within the Chilterns AONB. The Grade II Listed landmark of Crowsley Park House is located in the centre of the area with a wireless station (BBC receiving station) to the north-west, with associated satellite dishes in parkland to the north. Blocks of woodland surround Crowsley Park House and the wireless station, with a number of individual, mature specimen trees.

Of further interest is the historical connection. During the 19th century the house was owned by Henry Baskerville, said to be the inspiration for Arthur Conan Doyle's 'most famous story "The Hound of the Baskervilles" Stone hounds' heads adorn the gateposts and the house.

It is a generally quiet landscape with little local traffic and only distant traffic noise. There are a number of important views in this area, which are set out separately.

It has good recreational value with public access provided through the parkland on The Chiltern Way.

The conclusions of the Landscape Assessments are that the Crowsley Parkland has a strong sense of place, comprising a recognisable parkland character with distinctive listed buildings, forming a relatively rare/ unique landscape type. It lies within the Chilterns AONB, and, as such, has a strong physical and functional link with this national landscape designation.

PLCA2 Crowsley semi-enclosed dipslope

PLCA2 comprises open farmland, with a mix of arable and horse pastures in the western part of the area. Morgan's Wood (Ancient Woodland), lies on the southern boundary of the area. The settled area is formed by Crowsley Grange and Crowsley Park Farm, on the eastern boundary of PLCA2, along with a number of properties (many Grade II Listed), including Frieze Farm, located on a lane which loops to the south of Sonning Common Road.

This forms a transitional landscape between Crowsley Park (PLCA1) to the north and is visually linked to the open, undulating farmland to the east in the adjacent character area. It lies within the Chilterns AONB and is crossed by The Chiltern Way and a number of public footpaths. It provides a setting to the heritage assets and an interface between the southwestern edge of the parish and the increasingly developed landscape surrounding Sonning Common, Emmer Green and Caversham to the south and southwest.

It is a generally quiet landscape with little local traffic and only distant traffic noise. There are a number of important views in this area, which are set out separately.

The conclusions of the Landscape Assessments are that, although much of PLCA2 comprises pasture and rolling arable land, the enclosed lanes and Chiltern Way, listed buildings and Crowsley Grange give a historic character, linked with, and providing a setting for Crowsley Park to the north. It lies within the Chilterns AONB, and, despite a number of perceptual detractors to the southwest, has a strong physical and functional link with this national landscape designation, providing a setting to historic Crowsley Park to the north.

PLCA3 Crowsley Open Dipslope



PLCA3 comprises farmland interspersed with woodland blocks overlaid on a complex rolling landscape. It lies within the Chilterns AONB There are largely arable fields with small blocks of woodland and game cover. Adjacent to the north-west corner lies a cluster of residential dwellings comprising Crowsley Grange, Crowsley Park Farm, converted barns and cottages.

It is influenced by the parkland landscapes of Crowsley Park and Coppid Hall and contributes to the setting of Grade-II listed Crowsley Park Farmhouse.

There is a sense of openness in the north with long views southwards. There are also more enclosed views in the south due to woodland.

It is a generally quiet area with little traffic. There are a number of important views in this area, which are set out separately.

The conclusions of the Landscape Assessments are that the open rolling arable landscape, contained by surrounding woodland, provides a largely rural and tranquil character, similar to PLCA2.

PLCA3 lies within the Chilterns AONB, and, despite a number of perceptual detractors to the southwest, has a strong physical and functional link with this national landscape designation, providing a setting to historic Crowsley Park to the north.

PLCA4 Binfield Heath Wooded Dipslope North



PLCA4 comprises a varied landscape which illustrates much of the history of Binfield Heath including former heathland and common-edge houses. It lies within the Chilterns AONB.

It contains areas of arable and woodland (including Ancient and Semi-Natural woodland), parkland, paddocks, residential and commercial uses. There are scattered residential properties in the south including Coppid Hall and its lodges, and Comp Farm. The Bottle & Glass Settlement is found within the area, with the southern boundary of the PLCA following Kiln Lane and including those properties on its northern side.

It is a visibly well-wooded area with a rural character. It also contains parkland, gardens and the cricket ground associated with Coppid Hall.

It is a generally quiet area with little traffic. There are a number of important views, which are set out separately.

PLCA 4 makes a major contribution to the wooded character of Binfield Heath and includes areas of the former heath, original common edge settlements, small-scale fields and designed parkland which contribute to a sense of history. Despite the high levels of woodland enclosure long views across the wider countryside are possible.

The conclusions of the Landscape Assessments are that the rolling arable landscape, contained by woodland within and surrounding the PLCA, provides a largely rural and tranquil character.

It lies within the Chilterns AONB and has a strong physical and functional link with this national landscape designation.

PLCA5 Binfield Heath Wooded Dipslope South



PLCA5 contains the largest remaining area of the original Heath which historically had been available for inhabitants to graze their livestock and gather bracken. It has since been enclosed and planted for private use, and includes a cluster of common-edge houses. It sits adjacent to the Chilterns AONB and forms part of its setting. The village centre lies immediately to the east.

It has a well-wooded character with mixed species woodland showing evidence of plantation and ornamental tree planting. In the centre is a large area of grassland used for polo. An avenue of trees and gated driveway leads from Gravel Road to the centre.

It is a generally quiet area with little traffic. There are a number of important views which are set out separately.

PLCA 5 makes a major contribution to the wooded character of the western side of Binfield Heath and despite the lack of public access, it is an important part of the area's history as it includes the major part of the old heath.

PLCA5 adjoins the boundary of, but lies outside, the Chilterns AONB. PLCA5 has strong landscape links with, and forms an important part of, the landscape setting of the current Chilterns AONB. It also shares many landscape characteristics and special qualities with the AONB, in particular: the special quality of common land, heaths and greens - evident in the extensive area of wooded heathland, as well as the wooded characteristics of the AONB. It also lies within an area historically designated as an AGLV

PLCA6: Holmwood Semi-enclosed Dipslope



PLCA 6 contains the village centre, and includes the main routes through the village of Binfield Heath (Dunsden Way and Shiplake Row). Farmland on the edge of PLCA6 transitions towards the more open slopes falling towards the Thames Valley to the south-east.

The area lies outside but adjacent to the AONB boundary. Parts of PLCA 6 contribute to the setting of the Chilterns AONB.

The areas of development are located around the margins of the Heath and set within a framework of woodland on the main routes through the village. Although the woodland beyond the boundaries of the PLCA provides containment to the north and north-west, farmland and woodland provides a setting to the south-east.

Quarrying clay was an important local industry, with brick and tile making established from the 16th century. Brick-making took place at Shiplake Kiln in Kiln Lane from 1869 and closed early in the 20th century.

The area contains the 18th Century, Grade II Listed Holmwood house and grounds. Other landmarks include Keeps Well.

There are a number of important views in this area, which are set out separately.

PLCA6 partially adjoins the boundary of, but lies outside the Chilterns AONB. It forms an important part of the landscape setting of the current Chilterns AONB and shares many landscape characteristics with adjoining PLCA4, including open farmland within a complex pattern of woodland and landform. It also lies within an area historically designated as an AGLV.

PLCA7: Hampstead and Shiplake Rise Open Dipslope 

Most of PLCA7 comprises arable farmland but there are some areas of grassland in the north-west. The only built form within PLCA7 is Orwells restaurant, Walnut Cottage, Shiplake Rise Farm, and the eastern part of Hampstead Farm.

It has dramatic sloping topography with large-scale open landscape and long-range panoramic views eastwards over the Thames Valley. It forms a skyline when viewed from the east.

There has been a recent large scale and prominent residential property constructed which is highly visible in an elevated position.

The area contributes to the setting of a number of listed buildings.

PLCA 7 marks the eastern extent of the parish and the point at which the plateau meets the Thames Valley in the dipslope. It plays an important role in the separation of Binfield Heath and Shiplake which are at their closest point on Plough Lane/Shiplake Row. Any additional development east of Orwells/Waylands or west of the junction of Plough Lane and Memorial Avenue risk coalescence of the two settlements.

There are a number of important views in this area, which are set out separately.

PLCA7 lies outside the Chilterns AONB. Along with the eastern slopes of PLCA6, it forms an important part of the landscape setting of the current Chilterns AONB, located to the northwest. These slopes are distinct when viewed from the low lying Thames valley to the east, providing a setting and transition to the AONB to the northwest.

Table 5 below sets out all the key characteristics of each Parish Landscape Character Area and those issues to avoid, elements to retain and/ or enhance as referred to in Policy BH1.

PLCA1 - Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and /or Enhance	
Crowsley Parkland	
Parkland / Trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, conserve and enhance existing parkland features, including veteran, avenue, and clumps of parkland trees; Retain the largely undeveloped parkland character;
Historic Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain historic character of Crowsley Park frontage with Sonning Common Road, and avoid suburbanisation of lodge properties and drive access to Crowsley Park House;
Inappropriate Features	<p>Resist the installation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> inappropriate suburban fencing lighting hedges of non-native evergreens
PLCA2 - Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and /or Enhance	
Crowsley semi-enclosed dipslope	
Landscape Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain the largely undeveloped character
Trees and Hedgerows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain, restore and enhance hedgerows with additional planting and traditional maintenance Retain, restore and enhance existing woodland with appropriate additional planting and management, and encourage planting of small-scale deciduous woodland blocks
Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid adverse effects on the landscape through overgrazing, untidy paddocks and inappropriate fencing, as a result of horse grazing
Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain long views across open fieldscapes
Inappropriate Features	<p>Resist the installation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> inappropriate suburban fencing (such as close-board) large gates



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lighting • hedges of non-native evergreens
<p>PLCA3 - Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and /or Enhance</p> <p>Crowsley Open Dipslope</p>	
Landscape Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain the largely undeveloped character
Trees and Hedgerows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain, restore and enhance hedgerows with additional planting and traditional maintenance
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid over-extension and suburbanisation of adjacent properties
Roads and Paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid road features such as pavements, street lighting and signage which would urbanise this area
Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain long views across open fieldscapes
Inappropriate Features	<p>Resist the installation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inappropriate suburban fencing (such as close-board) • large gates • lighting • hedges of non-native evergreens
<p>PLCA4 Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and /or Enhance</p> <p>Binfield Heath Wooded Dipslope North</p>	
Landscape Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain the largely undeveloped character
Parkland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard, maintain and enhance the characteristic landscape features of existing parklands including veteran trees, avenues of trees, lakes, woods and walls
Trees and Hedgerows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek opportunities to selectively remove non-native woodland and invasive exotic species and replace with locally characteristic native species
Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage commercial activities so that they do not have a detrimental effect

Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid over-extension and suburbanisation of adjacent properties;
Roads and Paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid road improvements such as pavements, street lighting, and signage which would urbanise this area;
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bury cables underground and seek opportunities to bury existing overhead cables
Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain long views across open countryside
Inappropriate Features	<p>Resist the installation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inappropriate suburban fencing (such as close-board) • large areas of glazing which could impact on dark night skies • large gates • sheds, other outbuildings and swimming pools in front gardens • lighting • hedges of non-native evergreens
<p>PLCA5 - Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and /or Enhance</p> <p>Binfield Heath Wooded Dipslope South</p>	
Landscape Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain the largely undeveloped character
Commons Settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain discrete 'common-edge' settlement in Thanksgiving Lane
Trees and Hedgerows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek opportunities to selectively remove non-native woodland and invasive exotic species and replace with locally characteristic native species
Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditionally, the commons would have been grazed but are now usually dominated by woodland, scrub and bracken. Selective clearance, followed by fencing and the re-introduction of grazing on appropriate sites, should be actively encouraged
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid over-extension and suburbanisation of adjacent properties

Roads and Paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid road features such as pavements, street lighting and signage which would urbanise this area
Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain long views across open countryside
Inappropriate Features	<p>Resist the installation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inappropriate suburban fencing (such as close-board) • large areas of glazing which could impact on dark night skies • large gates • sheds, other outbuildings and swimming pools in front gardens • lighting • hedges of non-native evergreens
<p>PLCA6: Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and /or Enhance</p> <p>Holmwood Semi-enclosed Dipslope</p>	
Landscape Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain the largely undeveloped character of the south-eastern part of the PLCA
Commons Settlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain the discrete 'common-edge' settlement of Gravel Road
Trees and Hedgerows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek opportunities to selectively remove non-native woodland and invasive exotic species and replace with locally characteristic native species • New development should be screened by the planting of tree and shrub species characteristic of the area to assist with greater integration
Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the visual impact of intrusive land uses on the edge of the settlements • Avoid adverse effects on the landscape through overgrazing, untidy paddocks and inappropriate fencing, as a result of horse grazing
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid over-extension and suburbanisation of adjacent properties
Roads and Paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid road improvements such as pavements, street lighting, signage which would urbanise this area

Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain long views across open countryside
Inappropriate Features	<p>Resist the installation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inappropriate suburban fencing (such as close-board) • large areas of glazing which could impact on dark night skies • large gates • sheds, other outbuildings and swimming pools in front gardens • lighting • hedges of non-native evergreens
<p>PLCA7: Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and / or Enhance</p> <p>Hampstead and Shiplake Rise Open Dipslope</p>	
Landscape Character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain the largely undeveloped character of the south-eastern part of the PLCA
Trees and Hedgerows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain, restore and enhance native hedgerows with additional planting and traditional maintenance
Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage commercial activities so that they do not have a detrimental effect on the rural character
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid over-extension and suburbanisation of adjacent properties
Roads and Paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid road features such as pavements, street lighting, and signage which would urbanise this area
Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain long, panoramic views eastwards across the Thames Valley
Inappropriate Features	<p>Resist the installation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inappropriate suburban fencing (such as close-board) • large areas of glazing which could impact on dark night skies • large gates

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sheds, other outbuildings and swimming pools in front gardens • lighting • hedges of non-native evergreens
--	--

Table 5 Key Characteristics for each Parish Landscape Character Area (PLCA)

The Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes (Appendix A) also sets out that the settlement pattern is dispersed in small groupings within the landscape. Development is, typically, low density with a discontinuous building line and is very much integrated into the landscape.

DESIGN CODE B1. PATTERN OF GROWTH

Code B1: Pattern of Growth states that development proposals should integrate with the local landscape context. To this end expansion should be proportionate and large-scale developments would be inappropriate. The creep or elongation of settlements into the open countryside will be opposed. Any proposals should have an irregular planted edge to ensure that they integrate into the surrounding landscape.

The Design Code must be referred to in accordance with policy BH1 below.

Policy BH1 – Landscape Character and Value

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a number of valued landscapes in figure 34 (Parish Landscape Character Areas) as follows:

- PLCA1: Crowsley Parkland
- PLCA2: Crowsley semi-enclosed dipslope
- PLCA3: Crowsley open dipslope
- PLCA4: Binfield Heath wooded dipslope north
- PLCA5: Binfield Heath wooded dipslope south
- PLCA6: Holmwood semi-enclosed dipslope
- PLCA7: Hampstead and Shiplake Rise open dipslope

Development proposals should demonstrate how they:

- Preserve or enhance the relevant Parish Landscape Character Area (PLCA) as set out above in Table 5 and take into consideration specifically the general recommendations of the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Code and Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Value Assessment

- Maintain the role they play in enhancing the character and special qualities of the AONB and its setting
- Maintain the openness of the landscape in the Plan area and the important contribution the landscapes make to the distinctive character and identity of the settlements
- Reflect the features that define the character of the wider landscape which is sited either within the Chilterns AONB or its setting including:
- Protect the historic pattern of fields, watercourses, copses, ancient woodland, roads, rights of way and boundaries (hedgerows, trees, historic walls etc) as shown in in this Plan

Local Plan Policy

ENV1: Landscape and Countryside

ENV2 Biodiversity – Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species

ENV3 Biodiversity

ENV4 Watercourses

ENV5 Green Infrastructure in New Developments

PENV12: Pollution

Core Objectives

LC1 – Maintain the rural character of the parish

LC2 – Carry out a landscape review to identify its special characteristics

LC8 – Conserve and enhance the existing network of trees, hedgerows, public spaces and rights of way

LC11 – Ensure proposals do not result in adverse noise and light pollution

LC13 – Encourage the linking of existing fragments of priority habitat woodland, grassland and wildlife corridors to Sites of Special Scientific Interest outside the parish

LC18 – Continue to push for the whole parish to be included in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

BE9 – Proposals for solar development should consider the impact on the valued, predominantly rural character of the area

ES1 – Identify, protect and enhance existing wildlife habitats and corridors

5.3.3 Setting of Settlements and Coalescence

Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan area is characterised by dispersed clusters of housing within the landscape. This has arisen from early housing being established at the entrances to the historic Heath which has over time developed into separate settlements. This pattern of separate settlements and individual houses in open countryside gives the parish much of its character and is highly valued by residents.

The policy below seeks to maintain this pattern of development and to ensure that the local identity is retained and where possible reinforced. Creep or elongation of the settlement into the open countryside risks erosion of the individual identity of the settlements. Both the Landscape Character Assessments and Design Code are clear that the individuality of each settlement should not be compromised.

In particular, the historical relationships between the settlements, landmarks (including the country houses and estates, Binfield Heath Chapel, Post Office and shop), heritage assets, woodlands, mature trees and other community facilities should be respected.

Proposals for large scale or intensive development in the open countryside, will not be supported, as they would be inconsistent with the NPPF paragraph 174 and 176, which states:

“The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.”

However, there are types of development which require and are acceptable in, a countryside location such as for agriculture or recreational purposes. In all cases they must be compatible with the local landscape. The policy sets out this requirement as well as the need to have irregular and natural (rather than formal), soft landscaped edges to ensure successful integration into the surrounding landscape.

DESIGN CODE B1. PATTERN OF GROWTH & DESIGN CODE B6. RESPECT SETTING

Individual infill plots or redevelopment of brownfield sites are preferable and should reflect the organic growth patterns of the settlement. This policy should be read in conjunction with policy BH13 on infill development, which highlights the settlement boundaries and where infill development is defined and supported.

The Design Code must be referred to in accordance with Policy BH2 below.

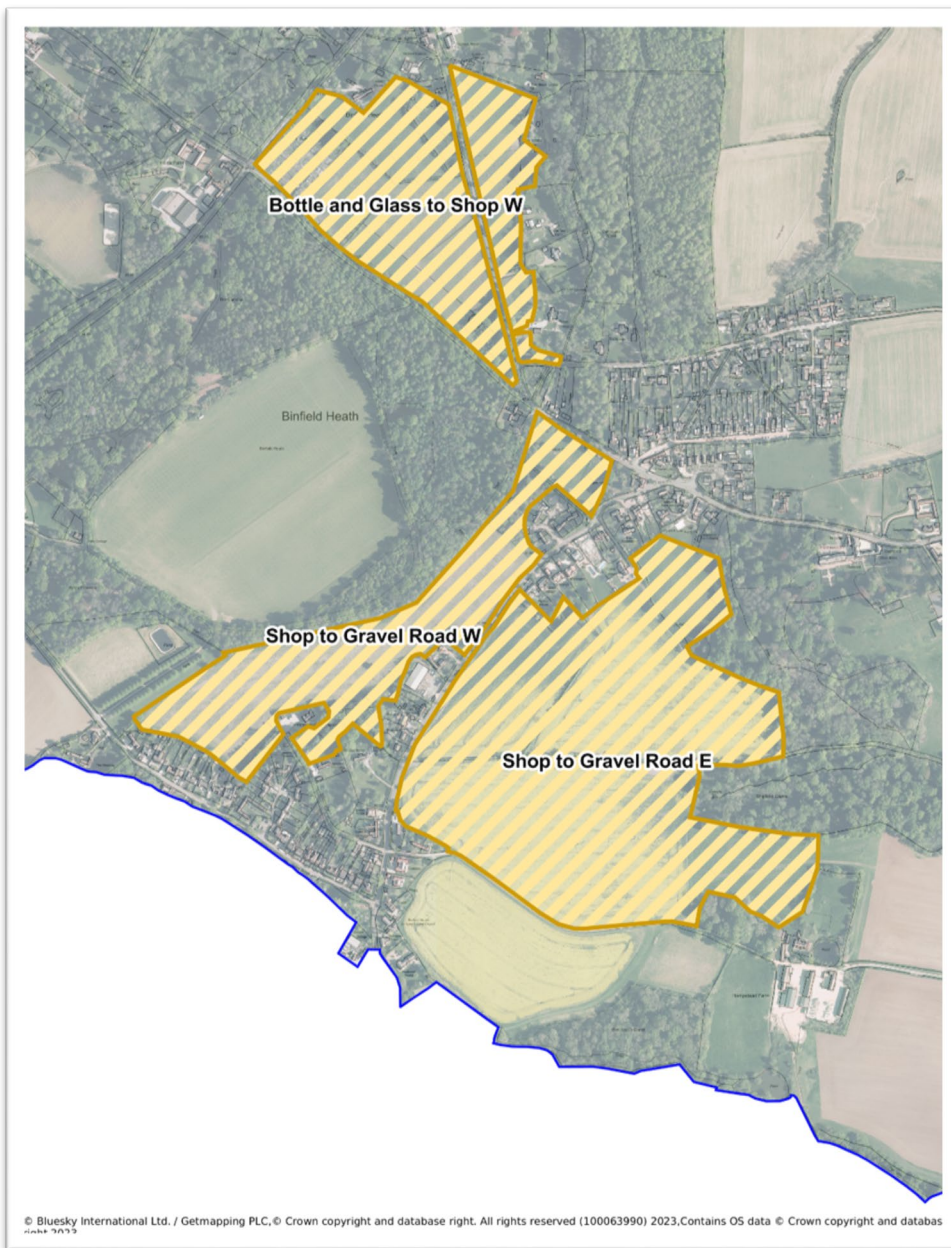


Figure 35 - Gaps to prevent coalescence and loss of settlement identity

Policy BH2 – Setting of Settlements and Coalescence

New development must respect the open countryside and rural landscape setting of the Neighbourhood Plan area and the distinctive physical separation between settlements which contributes to their identity.

In particular, the separation between:

- The Shop Settlement and the Gravel Road Settlement and
- The Shop Settlement and the Bottle and Glass Settlement

as identified in Figure 35

Development proposals on the land between the settlements for other land uses as defined in the NPPF such as agricultural development, allotments, outdoor recreation and or uses that would be non-intrusive and preserve the physical and visual separation between settlements should be accompanied by a landscape and visual impact assessment. This should demonstrate that the proposal will not unacceptably detract from the physical or visual separation of the settlements.

Proposals to redevelop brownfield land in the parish will be determined in accordance with the policies in the Local Plan and National Planning Policy.

Local Plan Policy

STRAT1 The Overall Strategy

ENV1: Landscape and Countryside

H1 Delivering New Homes

H8 Housing in the Smaller Villages

H9: Affordable Housing

H10: Exception Sites

H16 Backland and Infill Development and Redevelopment

Core Objectives

LC1 – Maintain the rural character of the parish

LC2 – Carry out a landscape review to identify its special characteristics

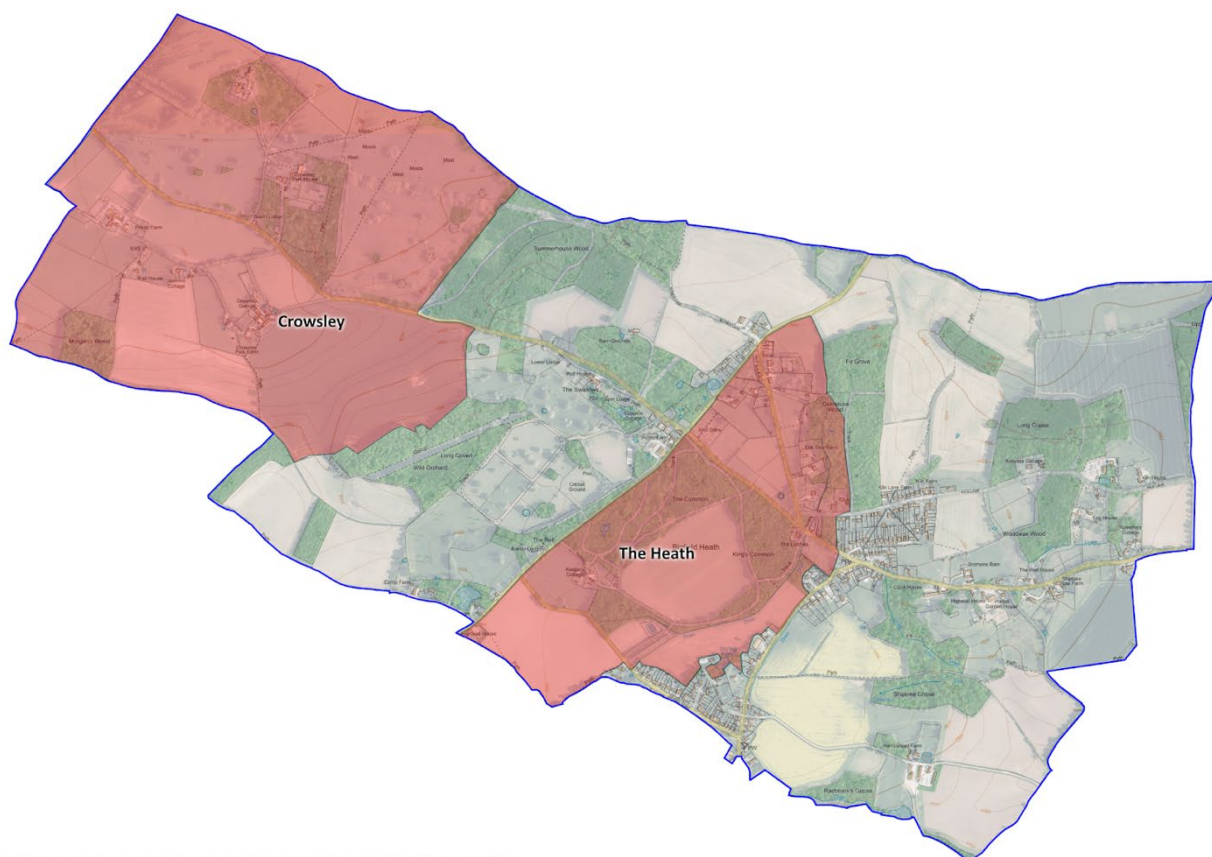
LC3 – Preserve open green spaces between the settlements

BE1 – Ensure that any development is within the three settlement boundaries. It should be sympathetic to its surroundings and appropriate and sustainable in line with our status as a Smaller Village

BE2 – Maintain the existing settlement pattern

BE9 – Proposals for solar development should consider the impact on the valued, predominantly rural character of the area

5.3.4 Areas of Special Character



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Figure 36 – Areas of Special Character

The following areas have been found to have distinctive special character:

- Crowsley Hamlet and Crowsley Park
- The Heath

Crowsley Hamlet and Crowsley Park

As set out in PLCA1-3 above, Crowsley hamlet and Crowsley Park have been identified as having a managed distinctive formal parkland and estate characteristics of great amenity value.

- KEY**
- Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan boundary
 - Chilterns AONB
 - Ancient Woodland
 - Woodlands
 - Original Historic Heath
 - Park
 - Priority Habitat Inventory-Traditional Orchards
 - Grade II listed building
 - Waterbodies
 - Road network
- PRoW**
- Footpath
 - Bridleway
 - Restricted Byway

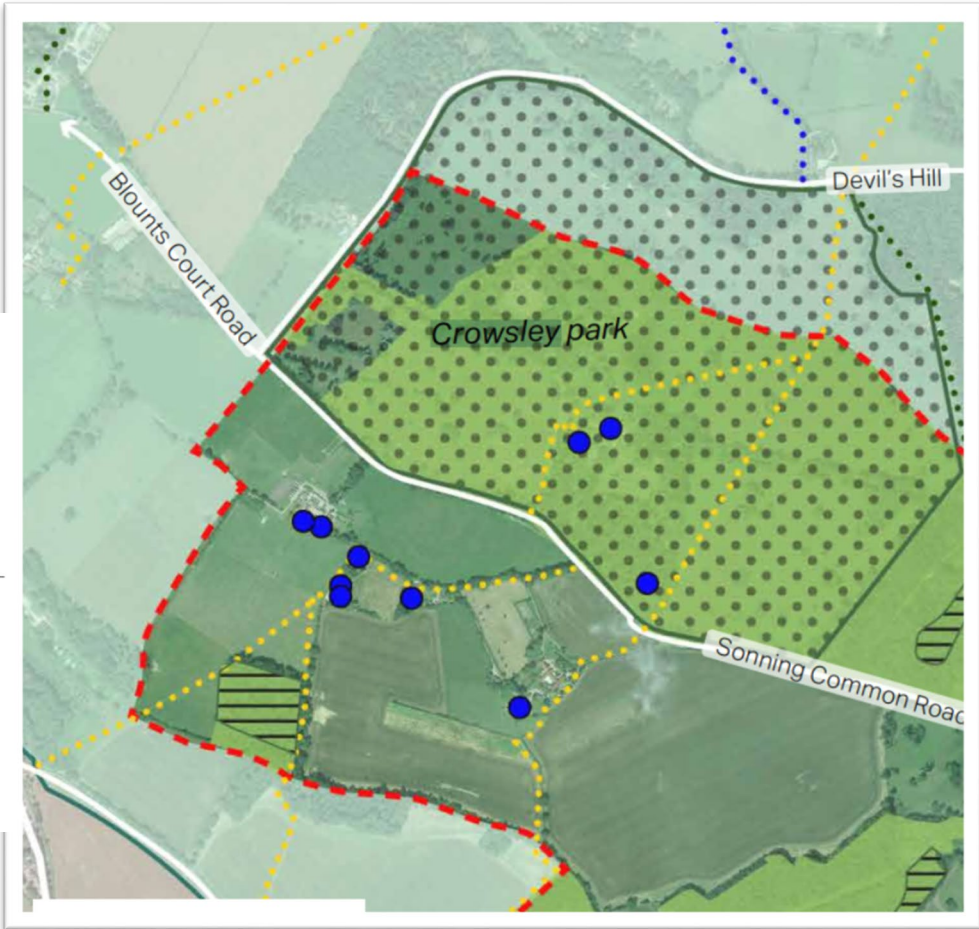


Figure 37 - Map of Crowsley Park and Hamlet

These are supported by estate farms and cottages, usually with their own distinct style or value in supporting these areas.

While the overall landscape character area has been discussed in detail above, it is the unchanged, distinct built environment and the tranquil natural surroundings that together form an area which is considered worthy of protection as a Special Character Area.

A detailed description of the entire area is set out in Appendix E and summarised below.

There are 17 residential properties in the area, of which 12 are Grade II Listed. Of these, six are converted former farm buildings rather than purpose-built dwellings. Only one newbuild residence (Orchard Cottage dating from the 1950s) has been built in Crowsley since 1877 or earlier, potentially much earlier. The number of residences in Crowsley has therefore grown through conversion of old buildings rather than newbuilds, mostly in the last 30 years.

Crowsley hamlet was part of the Crowsley Park Estate for centuries until October 1927 when most of the properties and land in and around Crowsley were sold at auction, with the exception of Frieze Farm, Jasmine Cottage, Timber Cottage and the remaining Frieze Farm Cottages which were sold off by the Estate in August 1947.

Crowsley Park, owned by the BBC since 1943, is possibly in a different category from the rest of Crowsley because of its ultimate ownership. The BBC bought the park from the Baskerville family, having used it for broadcast monitoring after the government requisitioned it at the beginning of the Second World War. The BBC expected to hand it back to the family at the end of the war but it then became apparent that there was a need for long distance monitoring of broadcasts from Eastern Europe. The long-term leaseholder of Crowsley Park House has substantially restored the property and its extensive gardens and arboretum and also manages the parkland which is used for grazing horses for part of the year. It is likely that the properties in Crowsley were in the past largely occupied by people who worked for or on the Crowsley Park estate.

Rural tranquillity

An essential quality of the hamlet of Crowsley much valued by its residents is its tranquil unspoiled rural setting. This is determined largely by most of the properties being arranged around, and accessed from, the very narrow unnamed Crowsley loop road, both ends of which join the busier Sonning Common Road.



Figure 38 – Images of the Crowsley Area

The Heath

The ancient heath that gave our village its name has been known since Saxon times. It is thought to have been the meeting place for the Binfield Hundred, one of the old administrative divisions of Oxfordshire.

Set on a knoll in the foothills of the Chilterns' southern edge, the heath defined the shape and character of today's Binfield Heath. Large parts remain untouched by development, the village settlements having grown up around it.

The land around the heath was largely forested before the Saxons started cutting back the woodland to farm. As the heath soil was poor, it was left as common land, where local inhabitants had rights to pasture their animals.

It was fenced, probably in medieval times, and gates guarded the entrances. Nineteenth century maps show gates at Coppid Crossroads and outside the Bottle & Glass, the New Inn and Coach & Horses pubs. While better farmland on the lower slopes was enclosed over the centuries that followed, the heath remained common land until the late 1860s.

The farms and cottages which grew up around its edge gradually developed into three separate settlements, giving Binfield Heath its distinctive, scattered shape. Parts of the old heath survive between the housing groups. Some of the best views in the village take in parts of the heath.

Residents believe that the remaining parts of the heath should be protected so that future generations can see and understand the history of their village. The best way to do that would be to designate it as an Area of Special Local Character.



Figure 39 - Plan of The Heath

- KEY**
- Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan boundary
 - Chilterns AONB
 - Ancient Woodland
 - Woodlands
 - Original Historic Heath
 - Park
 - Priority Habitat Inventory-Traditional Orchards
 - Grade II listed building
 - Waterbodies
 - Road network
- PRoW**
- Footpath
 - Bridleway
 - Restricted Byway

Policy BH3 - Areas of Special Local Character

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the following land as an Area of Special Local Character:

1. Crowsley Hamlet and Crowsley Park
2. The Heath

Where planning permission is required, all development (including extensions, alterations, and redevelopment) within these Areas of Special Local Character as identified on Figure 36 will only be acceptable if:

- the size, scale, layout, type, siting, detailed design and appearance of the development are compatible with the special character of that Area in terms of the features, characteristics or elements which are particularly distinctive to the area as set out for each PLCA and in Table 5
- Proposals better reveal key features or landmarks in these areas as identified in Table 5 of this Plan and/or enhance the landscape
- They comply with other policies in the NPPF, the Local Plan and this Neighbourhood Plan.

Local Plan Policy

H8 Housing in the Smaller Villages

H9: Affordable Housing

H10: Exception Sites

H16: Backland and Infill Development and Redevelopment

H20: Extensions to Dwellings

ENV1: Landscape and Countryside

DES1: Delivering High Quality Development

DES2: Enhancing Local Character

Core Objectives

LC5 – Identify and protect areas of landscape considered to be important

LC6 – Conserve, protect and designate Crowsley’s parkland and hamlet

LC7 – Conserve, protect and designate the historic Heath

LC9 – Designate and protect significant natural assets and features identified in the Landscape Character Assessment

BE4 – Ensure that any development respects the character of existing settlements and is designed to a high quality. Materials should be sustainable and sympathetic to those within the settlement; consistent with Neighbourhood Plan design codes and compatible with local styles

BE9 – Proposals for solar development should consider the impact on the valued, predominantly rural character of the area

5.3.5 Important Views

The highest point in Binfield Heath³⁸ is approximately 100 metres above sea level and there are many valued views both in and out of the parish. Some parts form sensitive skylines, particularly when viewed from the Thames Valley in the east. *“Development that breaks the skyline has the potential to be particularly visible.”*

Occasional long views across open countryside, especially where an elevated viewpoint allows an unexpected panorama, are particularly valued by residents. The view from Kiln Lane across open fields of the AONB towards High Wood, is one example.

The elevated position of Crowsley Park offers fine views in every direction, including avenues of trees within the park itself. The scattered nature of our settlements and housing clusters, separated by open countryside and woodland, gives Binfield Heath its unique character.

New development proposals should not be visually intrusive. This should be achieved through appropriate scaling and design, including landscape screening, as appropriate to each individual location.

Proposals should maintain visual connections to the surrounding landscape and long views out of the settlement. They should allow for space between buildings to preserve views of countryside beyond and maintain the perceived openness of the settlement.

Developments should seek to retain existing and frame new views and vistas towards the wider countryside. In particular, important views have been identified within the Landscape Character Assessment and by the community. Of those, the views considered to be of moderate / significant value are listed below as worthy of protection.

³⁸ Comp Farm

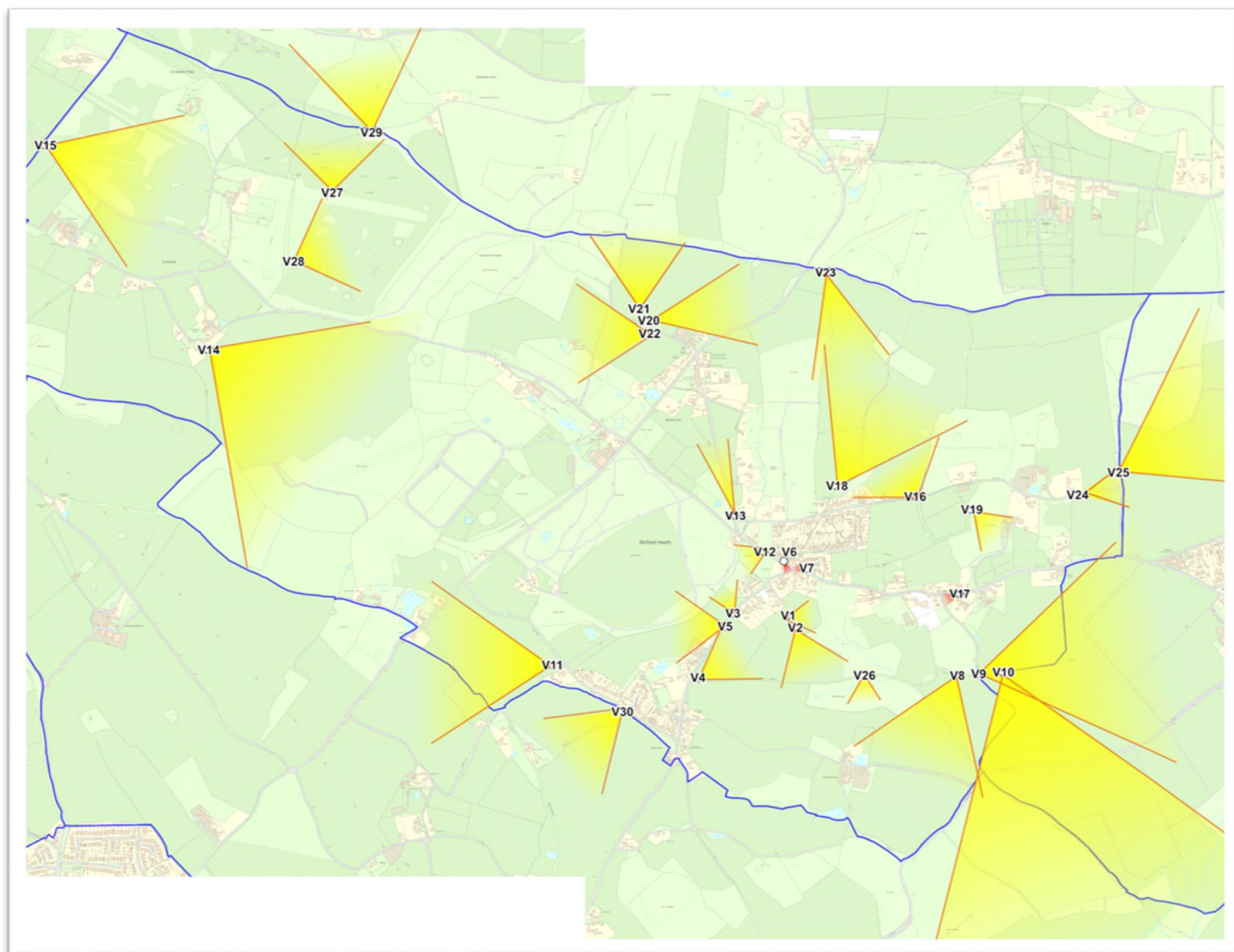


Figure 40 - Important Views

Policy BH4 – Important Views

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following Important Views in Figure 40. These are drawn from the Landscape Character Assessment (see Appendix B):

1. Footpath 421/13/10 bottom Fosters Lane looking East into paddock
2. Footpath 421/13/10 near Fosters Lane well looking SE
3. Dunsden Way near Prospect House looking NNW
4. Footpath 421/20/10 off Dunsden Way looking ENE to Prospect House

5. Dunsden Way near Prospect House looking W
6. Village Green looking SSE to Thatched Cottage
7. Village Green looking W to Shop
8. Near Keeps Lane 421/20/10 SSW to Hampstead Farm and A4155
9. Near Keeps Lane 341/10/20 towards Shiplake
10. Field east of Keeps Lane, mid footpath, view SSW across Thames Valley towards Surrey Hills
11. Footpath 421/22/10 near Gravel Road view west.
12. Arch Hill looking WSW into Recreation Ground
13. View NNE along Common Lane at junction with Arch Hill
14. Footpath 421/14 view SE across Crowsley dipslope
15. Junction of Sonning Common Road and Devils Hill view SE to Crowsley Park House
16. Kiln Lane 421/15/30 by Long Copse view NW
17. Keeps Well and pond from Shiplake Rise (Row?)
18. Footpath 421/9/10 off Kiln Lane, looking towards High Wood
19. View SE in Woodwax wood, midway along permissive path on western side
20. Bones Lane looking NE towards Harpsden Road and High Wood
21. Bones Lane looking North to Bones Wood
22. Bones Lane looking SW towards Barn Grounds
23. View from High Wood South towards Kiln Lane
24. Kiln Lane looking East towards the Thames
25. Bottom of Kiln Lane looking East to Shiplake and beyond
26. Bluebells at Shiplake Copse from footpath behind Holmwood estate
27. Ancient Cedar of Lebanon at Crowsley Park
28. Some of the '12 Apostles' at Crowsley Park
29. View from Crowsley Park looking North towards Rotherfield Greys
30. View from Gravel Road by Heath Drive SW along footpath 421/22/10



Development proposals should preserve or enhance the local character of the landscape and through their design, height and massing should recognise and respond positively to the various Important Views.

Development proposals should allow for spaces between buildings to preserve views of countryside beyond and maintain the perceived openness of the settlement.

Development proposals which would have an adverse impact on an identified Important View will not be supported.

Local Plan Policy

ENV1: Landscape and Countryside

DES1: Delivering High Quality Development

DES2: Enhancing Local Character

Core Objectives

LC1 – Maintain the rural character of the parish

LC2 – Carry out a landscape review to identify its special characteristics

LC5 – Identify and protect areas of landscape considered to be important



Figure 41 – Long Distance views to the southeast

5.3.6 Environment and Biodiversity

Two thirds of Binfield Heath Parish lies in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Its settlements are separated by open countryside. These rural surroundings provide ideal habitats for wildlife. Fields and hedgerows are interspersed with woodland; open ditches and grass verges border roads, lanes and tracks.

Ponds dot the landscape and streams run through Shiplake Copse and Holmwood estate. A larger stream, known locally as the River Bin, flows across part of the old Heath, under the bridge at Arch Hill and disappears in Oak House Wood, reappearing in the neighbouring parish of Harpsden.

Street lighting is kept to a minimum. The general absence of light pollution and the resultant dark skies in the parish benefit animals and humans alike.

Deer roam freely. Herds of fallow deer, often 50 or more strong, are a familiar sight resting in the fields or moving carefully through the woods. Muntjac and roe deer bark in the night; foxes have been seen sunbathing; stoats and weasels are glimpsed from time to time and hares spotted in the fields.

The tracts of woodland and hedgerows that reach into the heart of the village provide important corridors for animals. Bats roost in the woods and houses: species recorded include the brown long-eared bat, common pipistrelle, noctule, and soprano pipistrelle.

Gardens can be extensions of the countryside and the Neighbourhood Plan encourages residents to plant for nature. Their ponds are home to newts, frogs and dragonflies and in some cases a haven for wild ducks to hatch their young. Toads lurk in flowerbeds and holes cut in garden fences help endangered hedgehogs move more freely.

The diverse bird population is reflected in the number of Red and Amber List species frequently seen in the parish. They include skylarks and yellowhammers, fieldfares, starlings, house sparrows, house martins and swifts. Red kites are a common sight along with common buzzards, kestrels, sparrowhawks and peregrine falcons.

Owls are heard at night and you can see barn owls flying low along the hedgerows and quartering the fields as they hunt for prey at dusk.

Landowners and farmers play their part. Hedges are being established and improved and field margins are managed for wildlife.

One noticeable sign of wildlife activity is found in the hedgerows: tunnels everywhere along the roads and lanes show where animals cross, as they move throughout the parish and beyond. Several areas of the parish are designated as Ancient Woodland – that is having existed since at least 1600. The woods and fields host an abundance of flora including violets, spurge laurel, wood anemone, harebells and quaking grass. Bluebells carpet the woodland in spring.

Between Crowsley Park and Crowsley Park Woods lies an Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Site, designated for its lowland wood pastures and parkland, lowland dry acid and calcareous grasslands and lowland meadow.

Green and Blue Infrastructure, Landscaping and Planting

The policy below aims to protect and enhance the network of woodlands which defines Binfield Heath's character. Many of these are Ancient Woodlands or frame other important areas including the Heath itself. There are also many notable trees sited on public open space, as well as specimen planting within the formal parkland.

Development proposals should be rooted in a thorough understanding of the area and the range of mature trees and woodlands within it. They should also aim to enhance this network, otherwise there is potential for fragmentation and loss, both on individual sites and cumulatively.

New development should incorporate existing native trees and shrubs and must avoid unnecessary loss of flora. Any trees or woodland lost to new development must be replaced in line with the Woodland Trust Guidance³⁹.



Figure 42-Woodland Areas including Ancient Woodlands

Policy BH5 – Trees and Woodland

Development that damages or results in the loss of ancient trees or trees of good arboricultural and amenity value including areas of woodland listed below and shown in figure 42, will not normally be permitted. The parish is characterised by its woodland setting which could be

³⁹ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/protecting-trees-and-woods/campaign-with-us/campaign-in-your-community/neighbourhood-planning/creating-a-neighbourhood-plan/>

damaged either individually or cumulatively by inappropriate tree loss. Proposals should be designed to retain ancient trees or trees of arboricultural and amenity value.

Proposals should be accompanied by a tree survey that establishes the health and longevity of any affected trees.

1. Crowsley Park Woods
2. Summerhouse Woods (Bones Wood – AW)
3. Morgan’s Wood (AW)
4. Woods opposite Coppid Hall
5. Long Covert/ Wild Orchard (AW)
6. The Belt
7. The Common
8. King’s Common
9. Shiplake Copse (Bluebell Woods) (AW)
10. Radbrook’s Copse (AW)
11. Woods South of Holmwood
12. Woodwax Wood (AW)
13. Long Copse (AW)
14. Shiplake Woods
15. Upper and Lower Hailey Wood (AW)
16. Oakhouse Wood (AW)
17. Fir Grove
18. NW of Long Copse (AW)

*(AW) denotes part or full areas of Ancient Woodland

Local Plan Policy

ENV1: Landscape and Countryside

ENV2: Biodiversity – Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species

ENV5: Green Infrastructure in New Developments

DES1: Delivering High Quality Development

Core Objectives

LC8 – Conserve and enhance the existing network of trees, hedgerows, public spaces and rights of way

LC14 – Protect existing hedgerows and replace those lost as a result of development or disease, with a preference for local native species

LC15 – Trees lost as a result of development or disease must be replaced at a ratio of at least 3:1 within the site, with a preference for local native species

LC16 – Maintain existing woodland cover and encourage active management to ensure the survival of specialised species and to support biodiversity

LC17 – Ensure Tree Preservation Orders are enforced

ES2 – Conserve and improve biodiversity and enhance natural habitats wherever possible

5.3.7 Local Green Spaces

A Local Green Space (LGS) is a formal designation relating to a defined area of land which meets the criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as being:

- 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
- local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Development on the designated Local Green Spaces will only be considered acceptable in exceptional circumstances. The designation provides protection akin to a Green Belt designation.

A formal assessment of each of the proposed sites has been undertaken and the methodology and results can be found in Appendix F along with more detailed plans. Where the sites have been assessed as being suitable for designation, these are shown in Figure 43.

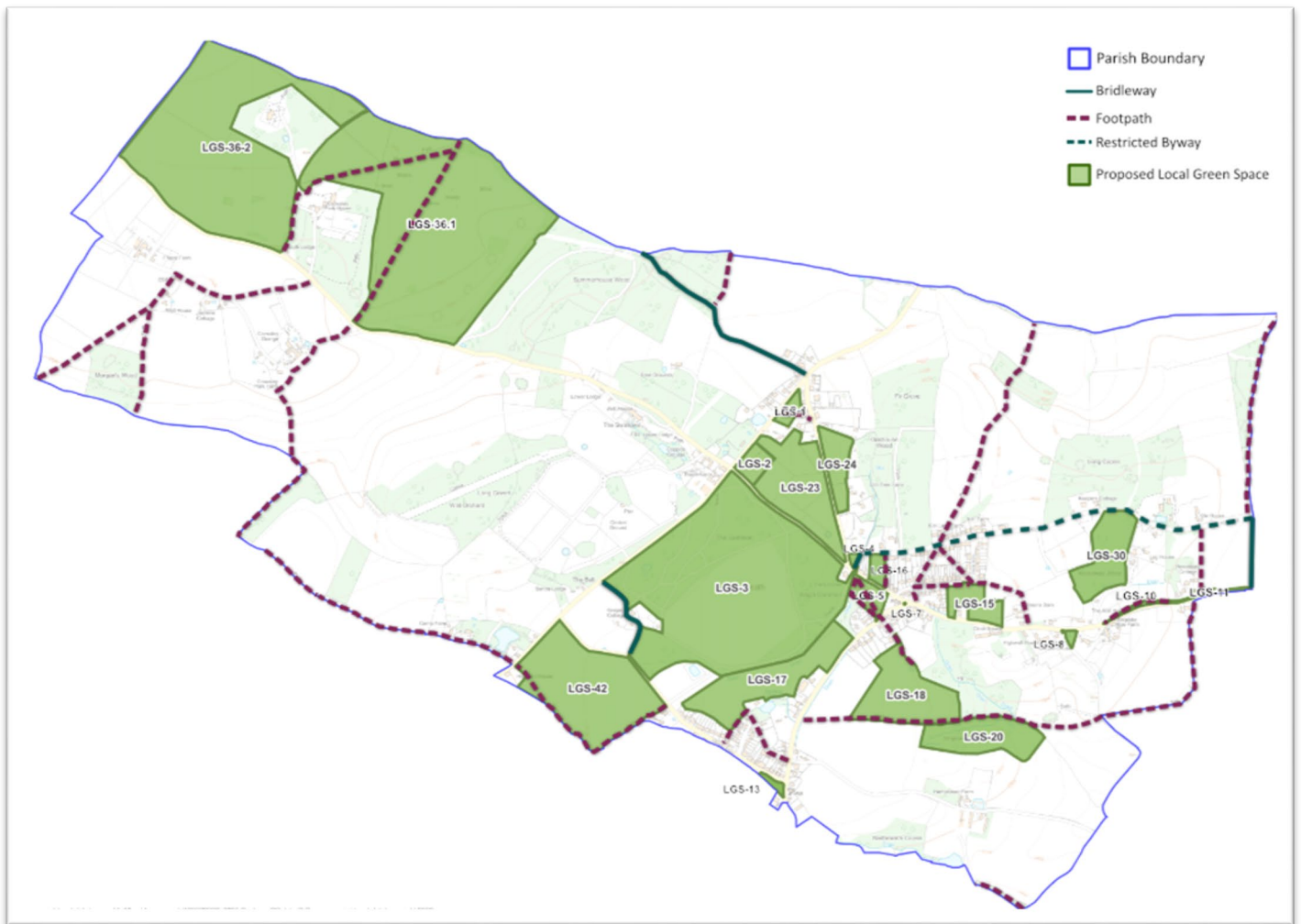


Figure 43 – Proposed Local Green Spaces

Policy BH6 - Local Green Spaces

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the following locations as Local Green Spaces as defined in figure 43:

LGS-1	Land between Harpsden Road and Common Lane
LGS-2	Allotment Gardens, Harpsden Road
LGS-3	Binfield Heath
LGS-4	Land adjacent to Arch Cottages
LGS-5	Recreation Ground
LGS-7	The triangle of land opposite the Post Office
LGS-8	Land surrounding Keeps Well and Green Pond
LGS-10	Land alongside public footpath 421/16/10 between Shiplake Rise Farm and the Scout Hut
LGS-11	Historic green to the front of The Spinney / Waylands
LGS-13	The Allotments in Gravel Road
LGS-15	Flower Show field
LGS 16	Wood opposite recreation ground
LGS 17	Field west of Dunsden Way (former Heath)
LGS 18	Field behind Dunsden Way
LGS 20	Shiplake Copse (known locally as Bluebell Woods)
LGS 23	Woodland/fields west of Common Lane
LGS 24	Field east of Common Lane
LGS 30	Woodwax Wood
LGS 36	(1 & 2) Crowsley Park
LGS 42	Land SE of Highfield House

Local Plan Policy



ENV1: Landscape and Countryside

ENV2: Biodiversity – Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species

Core Objectives

LC3 – Preserve open green spaces between the settlements

LC4 – Designate and protect Local Green Spaces valued by the local community

5.3.8 Biodiversity

While developments will differ in scale, they should proportionately seek to conserve, enhance and provide a net gain in the biodiversity of the area.

The Plan Area contains a significant number of Ancient Woodlands as well as priority habitats. These, together with sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Harpsden Wood and Highlands Farm Pit, which are nearby but outside the area, all require detailed consideration when planning development proposals.

In particular, wildlife corridors and links to sites in surrounding parishes are key to enhancing habitats. Particularly noisy or potentially harmful uses would not be supported.

Development proposals will be encouraged to include the creation of new habitats. Simple changes could include aligning gardens to create continuous ‘paths’ for wildlife. Where fences are installed, there could be small breaks or gaps to allow wildlife such as hedgehogs to pass unhindered. Installing bird boxes or bricks, insect houses, bee bricks or allowing access to roof voids for bats are all measures which can easily be incorporated.

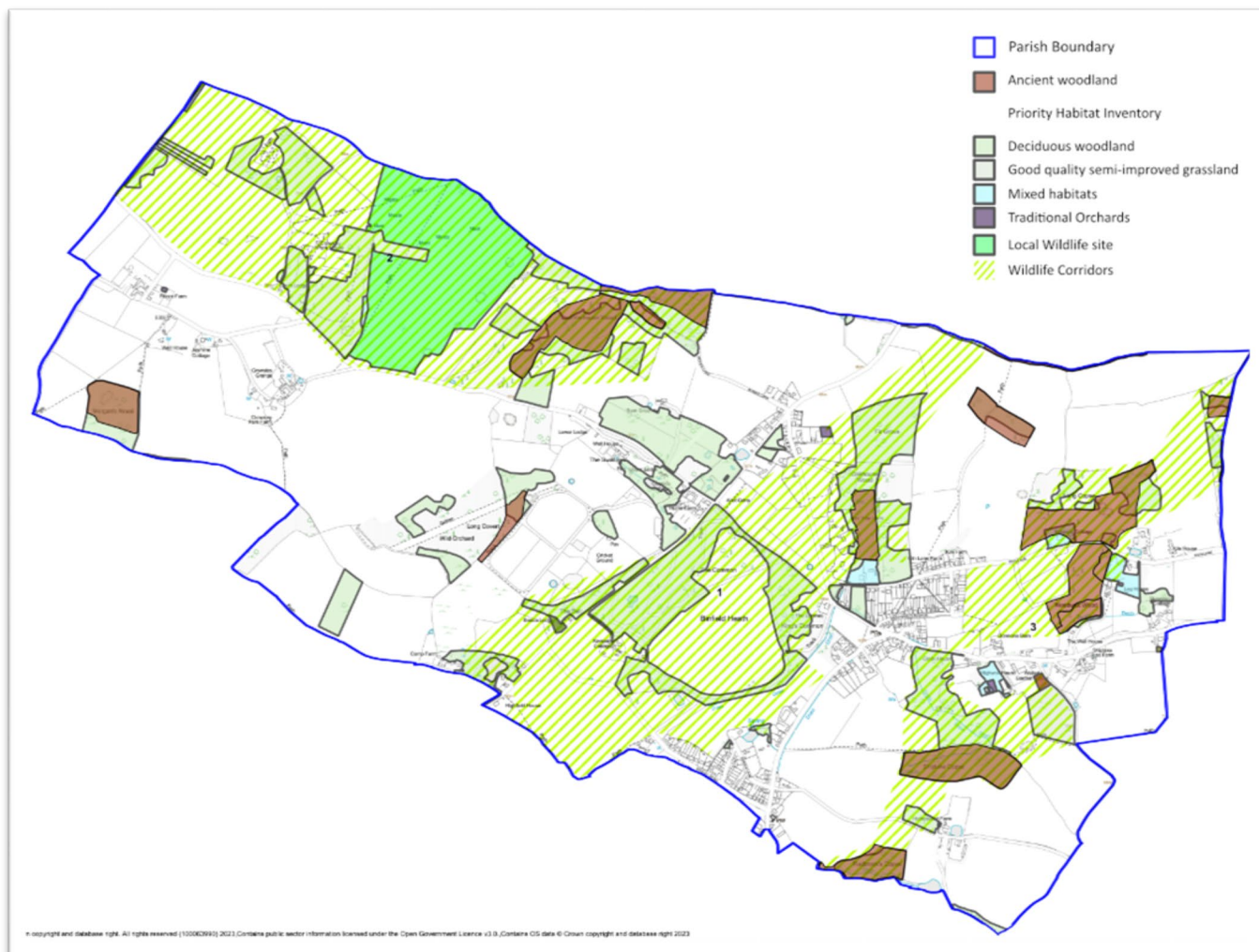


Figure 44 - Biodiversity Assets and Wildlife Corridors

Policy BH7 – Biodiversity

Development proposals should maintain and enhance the local biodiversity of the Plan area as shown in figure 44 including Ancient Woodlands and other identified local habitats.

Wildlife corridors between these assets as well as the maintenance and creation of wildlife corridors to and from

- Harpsden Wood / SSSI
- Highlands Farm SSSI

will be supported.

Existing wildlife corridors in adjacent Neighbourhood Plans should be extended where appropriate.

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should be accompanied by surveys/evidence that demonstrate a 10% biodiversity net gain and assess the impact of the development on local biodiversity.

Measures such as the installation of bird and bat boxes and insect houses will be supported.

Local Plan Policy

ENV1: Landscape and Countryside

ENV2: Biodiversity – Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species

ENV3: Biodiversity

ENV4: Watercourses

ENV5: Green Infrastructure in New Developments

Core Objectives

ES1 – Identify, protect and enhance existing wildlife habitats and corridors

ES2 – Conserve and improve biodiversity and enhance natural habitats wherever possible

ES4 – Promote effective and sustainable ways of managing water sources

5.3.9 Dark Night Skies

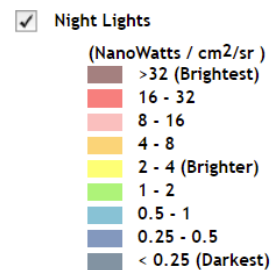


Figure 45 - Dark Night Skies Map

The lack of light pollution and view of dark night skies as set out in Figure 45 above is a key indicator of the difference between rural and urban locations as set out by CPRE The Countryside Charity on its Night Blight website⁴⁰.

Development proposals should seek to conserve and enhance relative tranquillity in the Plan area as this is one of its defining characteristics. The map above highlights that the vast majority of the area has very low levels of light pollution, particularly when compared to surrounding developed areas.

- The policy seeks to:
- Ensure measured and observed sky quality in the surrounding area is not reduced
- Protect species and habitats from unnecessary light pollution



Each pixel shows the level of radiance (night lights) shining up into the night sky. These have been categorised into colour bands to distinguish between different light levels. Please see the [REPORT](#) for more information on this.

⁴⁰ <https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/night-blight-2016-mapping-england-s-light-pollution-and-dark-skies/>



- Preserve the setting of valued landscapes
- Avoid building designs that result in increased light spill from internal lighting.

Policy BH8 – Dark Night Skies

Development proposals should conserve and enhance relative tranquillity in relation to light pollution and dark night skies.

Development proposals should also demonstrate that they meet or exceed the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance and other relevant standards or guidance (CIE 150:2017 Guide on the Limitation of the Effects of Obtrusive Light from Outdoor Lighting Installations), or any equivalent replacement/updated guidance for lighting within environmental zones.

Development proposals which include lighting should ensure that:

- If lighting is necessary and installed any adverse impacts should be avoided
- If it is demonstrated that the above is not achievable, then adverse impacts are appropriately mitigated eg activated by sensors and turned off by timers
- The measured and observed sky quality in the surrounding area is not reduced
- Lighting is not unnecessarily visible in nearby designated areas and key habitats
- The visibility of lighting from the surrounding landscape is avoided
- Building designs should avoid large areas of glazing which would result in light spillage into rural and unlit areas
- Glazing should be screened at night to avoid light spillage into rural and unlit areas

Local Plan Policy

ENV1: Landscape and Countryside

ENV5: Green Infrastructure

DES1: Delivering High Quality Development

DES2: Enhancing Local Character

Core Objectives

LC11 – Ensure proposals do not result in adverse noise and light pollution

ES3 – Minimise light pollution and strongly discourage or prevent any non-essential use of artificial lighting between sunset and sunrise

5.3.10 Flooding and Drainage

There are no rivers within the parish, but the south eastern area contains a number of small watercourses and ditches. Some areas are prone to surface water flooding – see figure 46 and 47 below. Where this occurs in settled areas any new development proposals will need to demonstrate that this will not increase the risk of flooding either on site or to neighbouring areas.

Provision of an appropriate foul drainage strategy when necessary (including appropriate treatment for new dwellings to prevent discharge into watercourses) should refer back to Local Plan Policy INF4: Water Resources.

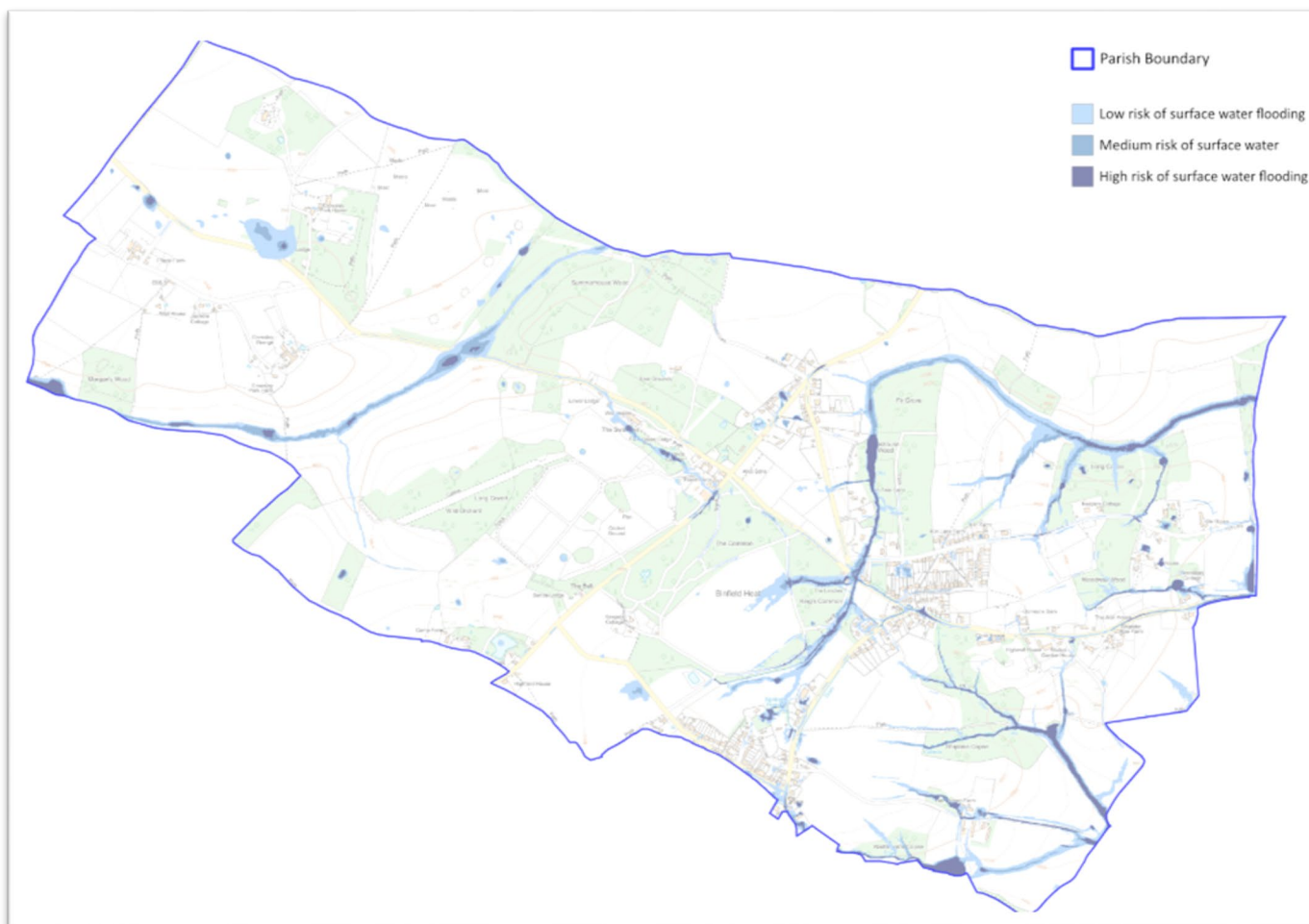


Figure 46 – Surface Water Flood Risk



Figure 47- Detailed Plan of Surface Water Flooding around the settlements

Policy BH9 – Flooding and drainage



<p>Development should demonstrate that surface water drainage will not add to the existing site runoff or cause any adverse impact to neighbouring properties and surrounding environment, particularly in those areas highlighted by figures 46 and 47 where surface water flooding is evident.</p>
<p>Local Plan Policy</p> <p>EP4: Flood Risk</p>
<p>Core Objectives</p> <p>ES5 – Ensure any new development minimises flood risk. This includes using permeable surfaces, maximising local water retention and not intentionally exporting surface water elsewhere</p> <p>TS4 – Minimise the likelihood of flooding</p>

5.3.11 Built Environment

5.3.12 Design

The Neighbourhood Plan is supported by the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes (Appendix A). This divides the parish into different character areas as shown in figures 47-50.

The Design Code should be read in conjunction with both the Landscape Character Assessment (Appendix B) and the Landscape Value Assessment (Appendix C). It is intended that the guidance should be followed and the details provided by the character appraisal work should be used to inform future development.

- The extracts below are from the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes and relate to the specific settlement area or parish-wide area in relation to materials and general design considerations. Specific codes have been devised for the following matters:

DESIGN CODE A1. CONSIDER THE LOCAL CONTEXT	DESIGN CODE B4. RESPECT THE TOPOGRAPHY AND VIEWS	DESIGN CODE B10. PARKING SOLUTIONS
DESIGN CODE A2. ENABLE WAYFINDING	DESIGN CODE B5. BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT / INFILL DEVELOPMENT/REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS	DESIGN CODE C1. SUSTAINABLE DESIGN
DESIGN CODE A3. RETAIN AND IMPROVE THE GREEN NETWORK	DESIGN CODE B6. RESPECT SETTING	DESIGN CODE C2. RENEWABLE/LOW CARBON ENERGY
DESIGN CODE B1. PATTERN OF GROWTH	DESIGN CODE B7. EXTENSION AND ALTERATION	DESIGN CODE C3. WILDLIFE FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT
DESIGN CODE B2. BUILDING HEIGHTS AND ROOFLINE	DESIGN CODE B8. BUILDING LINES AND BOUNDARY TREATMENT	DESIGN CODE C4. SERVICING
DESIGN CODE B3. BUILDING SCALE AND MASSING	DESIGN CODE B9. MATERIALS PALETTE	DESIGN CODE C5. STREET LIGHTING / DARK SKIES

The policy below requires that proposals are based on due consideration of the Character Appraisal and Design Code relating to each locally specific area and associated matters.

Policy BH10 - Design Code

Development proposals will be supported provided they are in accordance with the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes (Appendix A) see above.

The following have been identified as having distinct characteristics

1. Shop Settlement - see Figure 48
2. Gravel Road Settlement - see Figure 49
3. Bottle & Glass Settlement - see Figure 50
4. Open Countryside - see Figure 51

Proposals for new development (including residential extensions and replacement dwellings) will need to demonstrate within the Design and Access Statement or other submitted documentation, how the proposal accords with each matter set out in the Design Code as appropriate.

Local Plan Policy

DES1: Delivering High Quality Development

DES2: Enhancing Local Character

DES3: Design and Access Statements

DES5: Outdoor Amenity Space

DES6: Residential Amenity

Core Objectives

BE1 – Ensure that any development is within the three settlement boundaries. It should be sympathetic to its surroundings and appropriate and sustainable in line with our status as a Smaller Village

BE4 – Ensure that any development respects the character of existing settlements and is designed to a high quality. Materials should be sustainable and sympathetic to those within the settlement; consistent with Neighbourhood Plan design codes and compatible with local styles

BE7 – Require planning applications to show how a new building would respect the landscape, village style and neighbouring properties. Drawings should accurately illustrate the streetscape, levels and cross sections of the site to show the size and architectural style of the proposed and adjacent properties. Appropriate space should be maintained between buildings

ES6 – Encourage energy efficiency and the installation of renewable energy

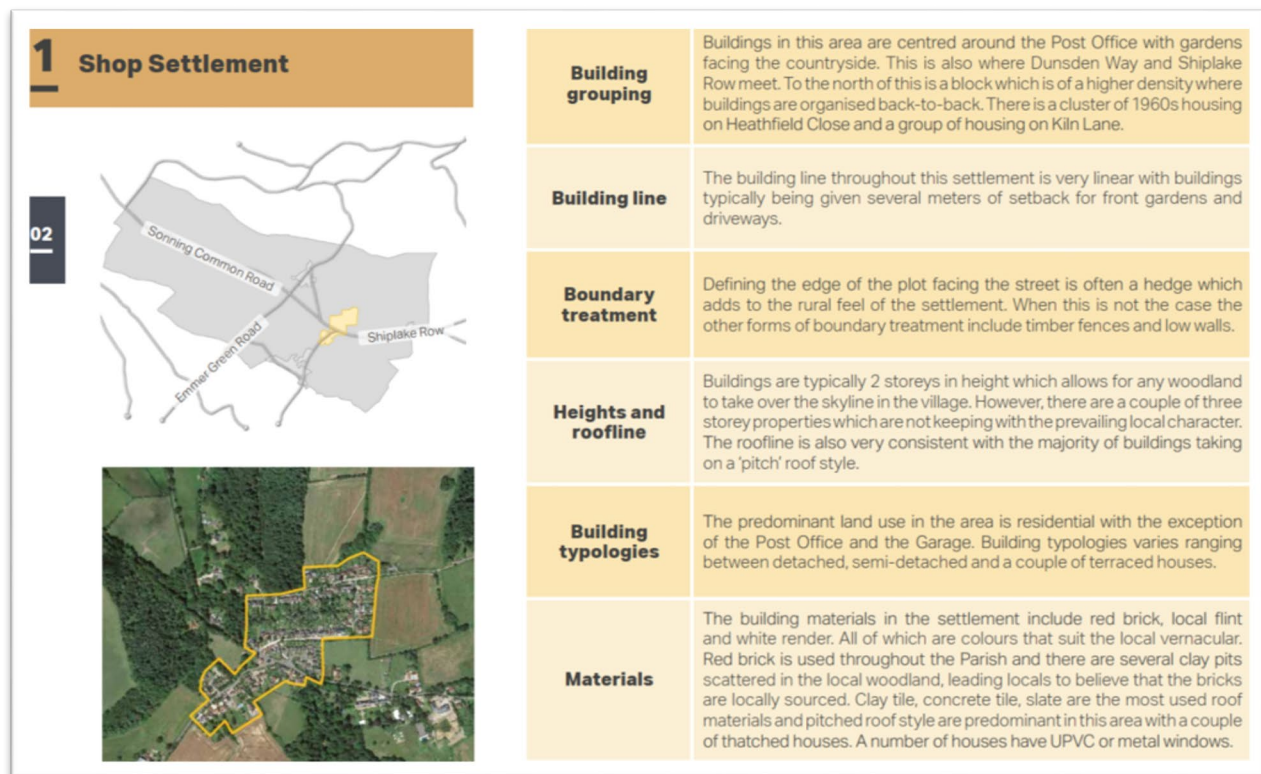


Figure 48- Shop Settlement Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023)

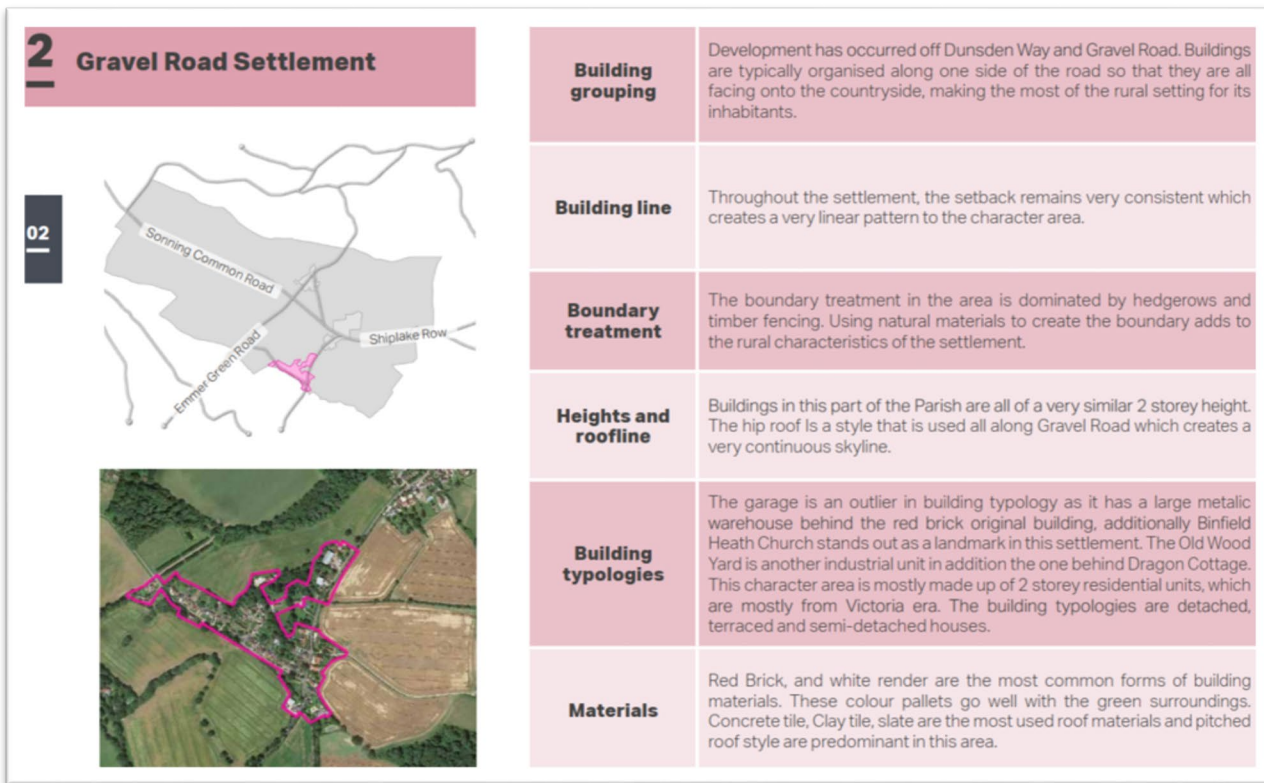


Figure 49- Gravel Road Settlement Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023)

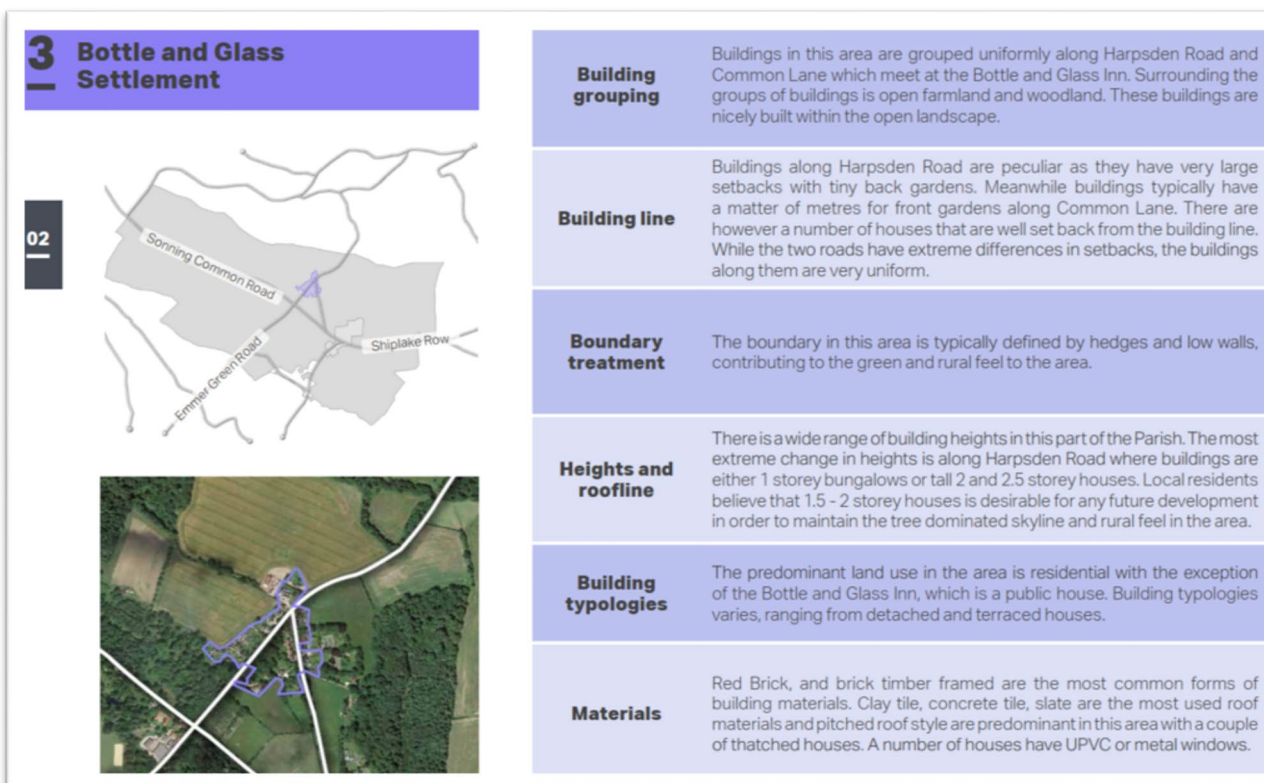
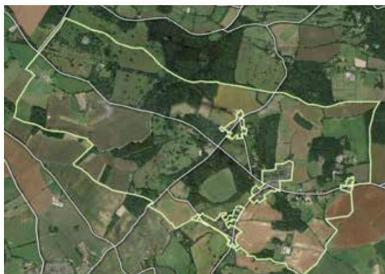


Figure 50 Bottle & Glass Settlement Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023)

4 Open Countryside

02



Building grouping	There are a couple of scattered individual groups of housing in the Neighbourhood Area, such as the houses on Kiln Lane. These normally sit in rural open space.
Building line	The group of houses usually follow the road line and are largely set back from the road.
Boundary treatment	A mix of hedges, low walls and fences are used within Open Countrysides.
Heights and roofline	These settlements have low density and the building height varies between 1 to 2 storeys.
Building typologies	The predominant land use in the area is residential. All properties are detached in this character area.
Materials	There are different materials used in these settlement such as red brick, a mix of brick and flint and render. Clay tile, slate are the most used roof materials and pitched and hipped roof style can be seen in this area. UPVC, timber and metal used for windows.

Figure 51 Open Countryside Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023)

Materials Palette

Fenestration			Roof			Wall		

AECOM

Figure 52 - Materials Palette

5.3.13 Conversion of Rural Buildings

Farming has played a major part in our history, as a result of which there are a number of agricultural and other rural buildings, some of them listed, that add to the character of the parish.

Where conversion of a rural building is appropriate it is important that designs are sympathetic to the existing form and scale of the building and relate to the character of its location.

Policy BH11 – Re-use of Rural Buildings

The conversion of rural buildings will be accepted only where the design has been informed by the Design Code and reflects the character of the local area and its proposed use is compatible with its setting. Proposals which will result in the inappropriate alteration of the existing form, scale and appearance of the building will not be supported.

Local Plan Policy

DES1: Delivering High Quality Development

DES2: Enhancing Local Character

DES3: Design and Access Statements

Core Objectives

LC10 – Prefer development that does not lead to an increase in rural traffic

BE2 – Maintain the existing settlement pattern

BE4 – Ensure that any development respects the character of existing settlements and is designed to a high quality. Materials should be sustainable and sympathetic to those within the settlement; consistent with Neighbourhood Plan design codes and compatible with local styles

BE7 – Require planning applications to show how a new building would respect the landscape, village style and neighbouring properties. Drawings should accurately illustrate the streetscape, levels and cross sections of the site to show the size and architectural style of the proposed and adjacent properties. Appropriate space should be maintained between buildings

BE8 – Ensure that any modern farming or horticultural practices (e.g. polytunnels) do not compromise the beauty of the landscape

5.3.14 Heritage

Detailed heritage policies are set out in the Local Plan (policies ENV5-10). However locally specific details regarding buildings and their setting are set out here. Also identified are unlisted locally important buildings which also require adequate protection and enhancement where possible.

The Plan area’s designated historic heritage assets and their settings, both above and below ground including archaeological sites are shown on Figure 53 and described in Appendix D. These will be conserved and enhanced for their historic significance and important contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place as per Local Plan policies.

This Neighbourhood Plan also proposes a number of non-designated heritage assets, which are considered to have local importance because of their age, appearance, historic or cultural associations. These are also shown in Figure 53.

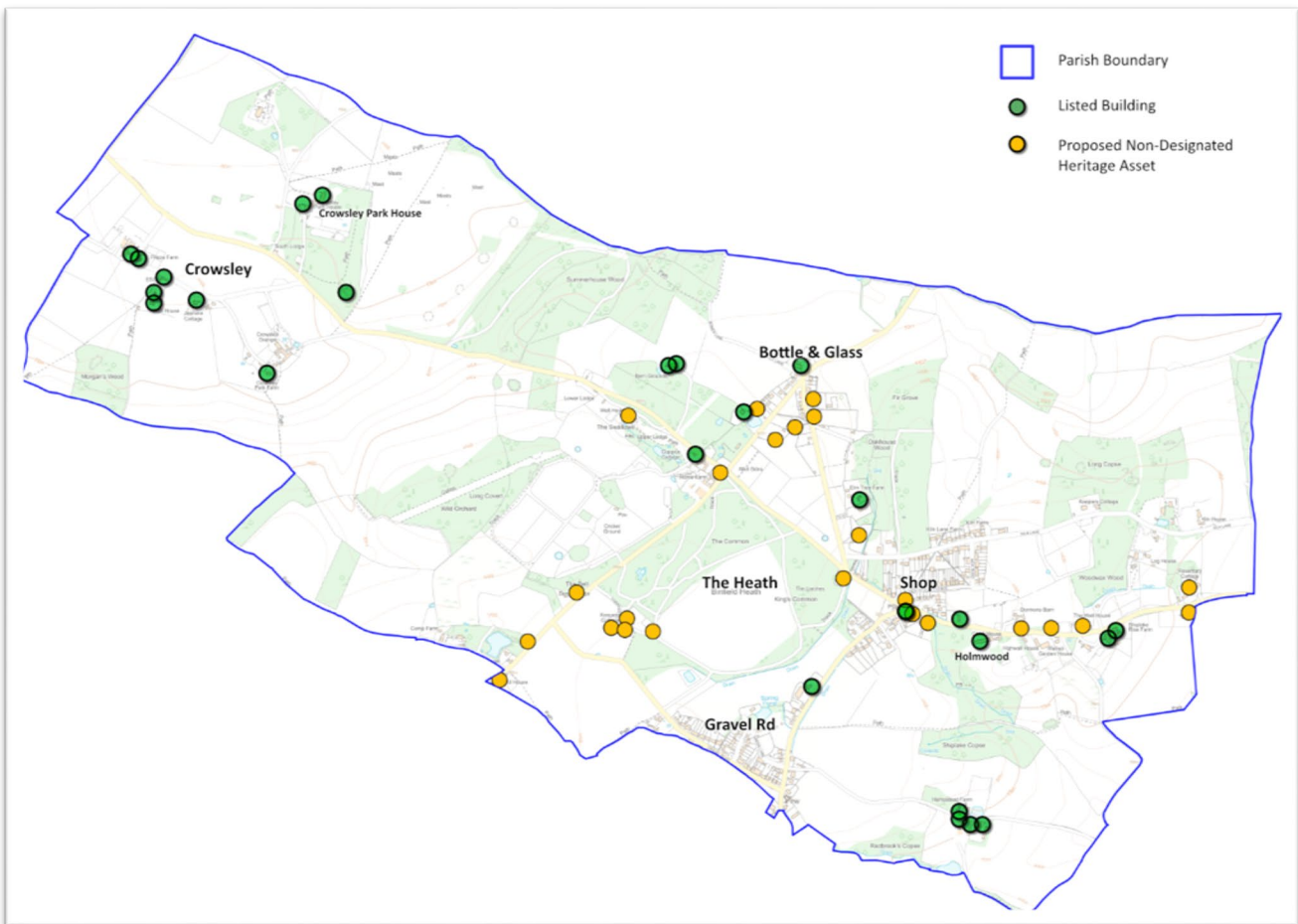


Figure 53 - Location of Listed Buildings and some Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Policy BH12 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets in the Plan area (see Figure 53) will be considered, taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the

significance of the heritage asset as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021).

Proposals for the conversion of non-designated heritage assets (as shown on Figure 53) would need to provide evidence on how the development would enhance the significance of the historic building. Where there is demonstrable harm to the non-designated heritage assets, a balancing exercise would need to be undertaken against any public benefits proposed.

- Proposals for extensions must demonstrate how the significance of non-designated heritage assets including their setting is preserved or enhanced where possible.

Local Plan Policy

ENV6: Historic Environment

ENV7: Listed Buildings

ENV8: Conservation Areas

ENV9: Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments

ENV10: Historic Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens and Historic Landscapes

Core Objectives

LC1 – Maintain the rural character of the parish

BE4 – Ensure that any development respects the character of existing settlements and is designed to a high quality. Materials should be sustainable and sympathetic to those within the settlement; consistent with Neighbourhood Plan design codes and compatible with local styles

BE5 – Identify and protect the parish’s heritage assets, including listed and other valued buildings

5.3.15 Infill and Redevelopment

The objectives of this Plan are to maintain sustainable settlements which are appropriate to the landscape in which they are situated. Sustainable development is supported where it is within the designated settlements (see Figure 54) and complies with the other policies in this NP. All proposals must ensure that they do not conflict with policies which aim to respect, for example, the environment, the character of the area, or important landscape features including the AONB and its setting.

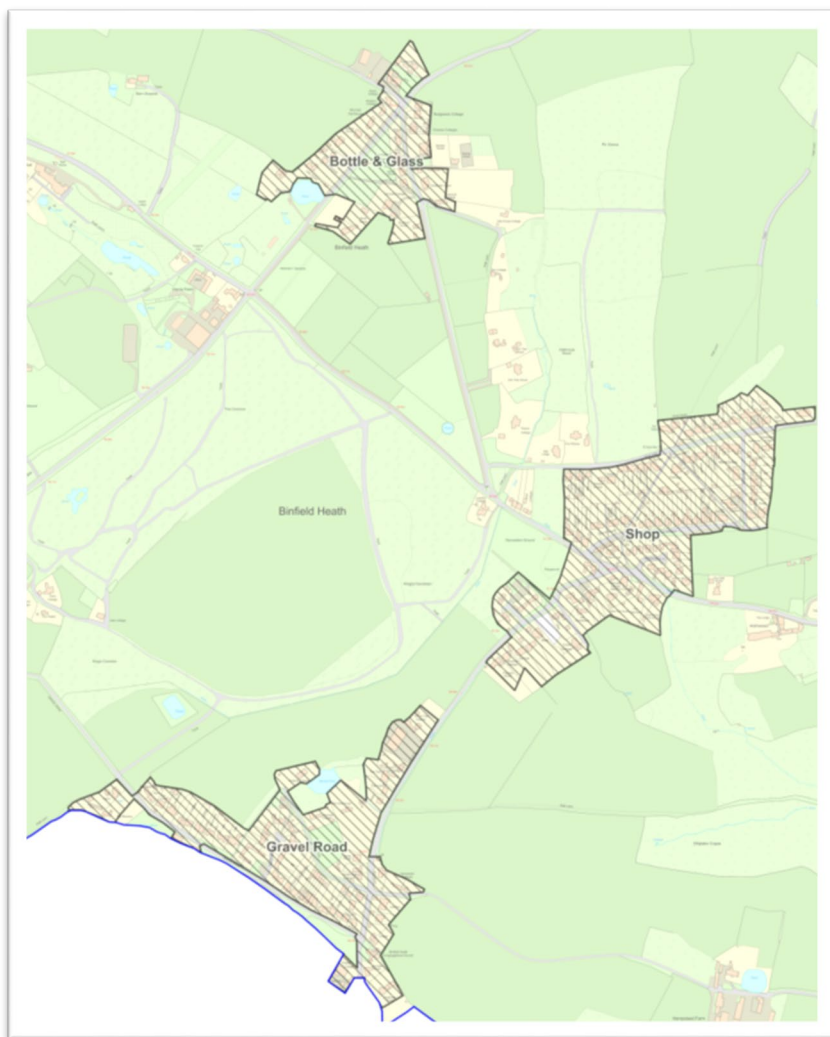


Figure 54 – Detailed Plan of the Settlements

With the exception of the three designated settlements, the Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan area is in planning terms known as open countryside. The definition of development suitable for open countryside includes uses relating to agriculture and forestry, outdoor sport and recreation and other businesses with a demonstrable need for a rural location.

This can include housing, but only within specific rural or affordable need circumstances, such as where it relates to housing for an agricultural worker (as justified) or where there is a community need for affordable housing as a rural exception site. Other housing on greenfield sites is likely to be inappropriate, particularly given the AONB designation.

The Chilterns Conservation Board set out its vision for the AONB in its Management Plan 2019-2024. Of particular relevance is point 10 which states:

“Given the Chilterns is already more developed than most protected landscapes and given the potential benefit of the landscape to millions, there should be no major development in the AONB; only the most essential development should take place and where it takes place, there should be no adverse impact on landscape, special qualities or access, and it should deliver an environmental net gain”

The Plan area has been subject to much incremental and piecemeal small-scale development in the last 20 years and this is now beginning to erode the quality of the AONB in some areas. It is therefore vital that infill development (notwithstanding exceptions) should take place only within the identified settlements as shown in Figure 54.

There have been a number of previous infill properties which have not respected the character of the area and there are concerns within the community that this, particularly within the AONB could lead to a significant erosion of character in the future.

Policy H16 of the Local Plan defines infill development as the filling of a small gap in an otherwise continuous built-up frontage or on other sites within settlements where the site is closely surrounded by buildings. The scale of infill should be appropriate to its location. **In the case of the Plan area, the Character Appraisal clearly sets out the nature of present development which should be adhered to. The scale of infill should be a single dwelling or two, no more than two storeys in height and sited to respect the existing building line. The design of any development should be appropriate to its character area.**

In addition to the general design considerations set out in the Design Code particularly:

DESIGN CODE B5 BACKLAND DEVELOPMENT / INFILL DEVELOPMENT / REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS

Attention should also be paid to:

- Plot size and ratio of built form to undeveloped space.
- Garden size
- Building lines and siting of buildings within their plots – including maintaining the largely linear nature of the settlements
- Gaps between buildings
- Position of outbuildings
- This should be consistent with surrounding properties.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Policy BH1 – Landscape Character and Value

Policy BH13 – Infill Development

Infill development will only be considered acceptable within the defined settlement boundaries (see Figure 54). These settlements are:

- The Shop Settlement
- The Gravel Road Settlement
- The Bottle & Glass Settlement

- The areas outside those defined on Figure 54 are considered to be open countryside.

Infill development proposals are expected to be a single dwelling or two, no more than two storeys in height and sited to respect the existing building line.

Proposals will only be supported within these settlements and where it is demonstrated that:

- The proposal is in accordance with and respects the local character of the area, as highlighted in the Design Code for each settlement
- The proposed development is of appropriate and proportionate scale, bulk, height, density, plot coverage, siting, layout and mass in keeping with the local area and reflect the characteristics highlighted in the Design Code
- The proposed development maintains appropriate gaps and landscaping between buildings to ensure that it will have no adverse impact on the residential amenity of the local residents and does not undermine the open character of the area by blocking views to the countryside
- The proposal provides suitably sized front and rear gardens together with adequate soft and hard landscaping works, as highlighted in the Design Code
- There is adequate mitigation of adverse impacts on narrow rural lanes
- Natural landscape features including trees and hedgerows are retained, integrated and enhanced

Only development that is necessary or suitable for Open Countryside will be acceptable outside the designated settlement boundaries.

Local Plan Policy

H1: Delivering New Homes

H8: Housing in the Smaller Villages

H9: Affordable Housing

H10: Exception Sites and Entry Level Housing Schemes

H11: Housing Mix

DES1: Delivering High Quality Development

DES2: Enhancing Local Character

DES5: Outdoor Amenity Space

DES6: Residential Amenity

Core Objective

LC11 – Ensure proposals do not result in adverse noise and light pollution

BE1 – Ensure that any development is within the three settlement boundaries. It should be sympathetic to its surroundings and appropriate and sustainable in line with our status as a Smaller Village

BE2 – Maintain the existing settlement pattern

BE3 – Oppose expansion of settlements into the open countryside

BE4 – Ensure that any development respects the character of existing settlements and is designed to a high quality. Materials should be sustainable and sympathetic to those within the settlement; consistent with Neighbourhood Plan design codes and compatible with local styles

BE6 – Ensure an appropriate mix of house sizes is maintained

5.3.16 Dwelling Extensions

To ensure that the character of the area is maintained it is essential that residential extensions and conversions respect the form of the original building. Local Plan Policy H20: Extensions to Dwellings provides details on parking and amenity areas as well as guidance for those properties within the Green Belt (not relevant to this Plan Area).

- There is concern however, that local character and identity are being lost or urbanised through over development and successive extensions. This is particularly an issue where the property is of historic interest or adds to local amenity value and character (see Figure 53 for non-designated heritage assets).
- It is important that the original dwelling remains the visible and dominant element of the property regardless of the scale or number of extensions. The newly built extension should not overwhelm the building from any given viewpoint.
- On smaller plots, extensions which significantly diminish the amount of private amenity area available to the occupants of a dwelling are unlikely to be supported. This is particularly the case where the remaining garden area is materially different from neighbouring properties or it results in little space between buildings. The latter is an important point in rural areas where the nature of landscaping and the space between buildings are key to the character.
- Where an extension seeks to retain the character of the building, it is important to keep the pitch and form of the roof.
- With regard to loft conversions, simple, low key and small-scale windows within the roof form are most appropriate. Traditional skylight windows which do not project significantly from the

roof plane are generally supported, although the potential for overlooking should be considered. Where there is an issue with privacy, windows can be obscure glazed or raised above eye level. More formal dormer windows should be few in number, respect any symmetry and small-scale. Where one or two single large windows or box dormers are proposed, this is often disproportionate and should be avoided (see Figure 55 below).

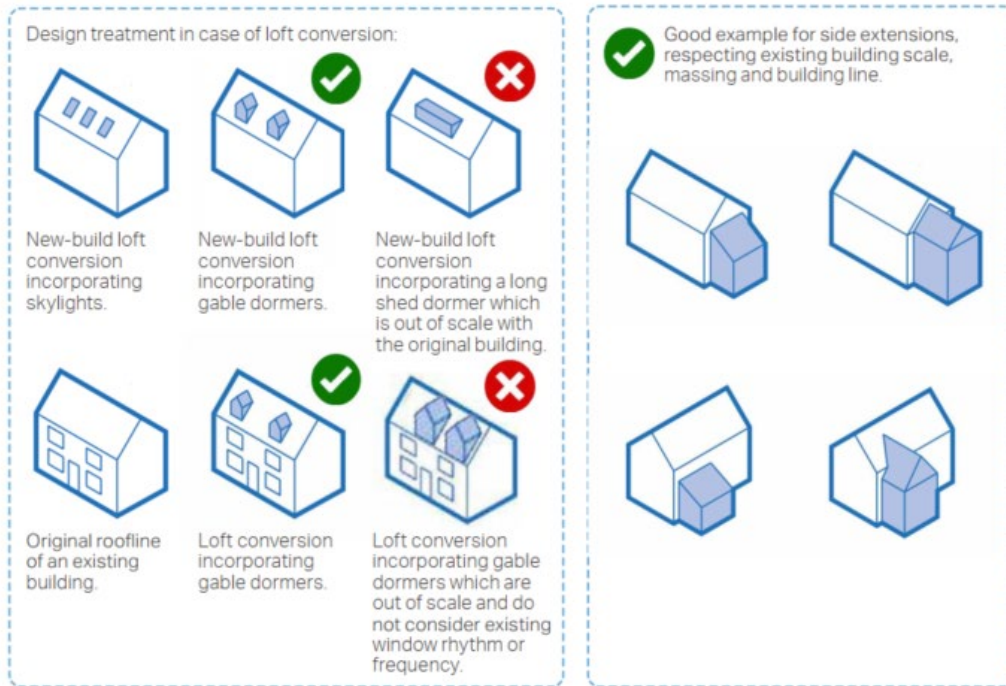


Figure 55 - Extension and Conversions - Good Practice (Design Code – AECOM)

- Materials and design should be in keeping with the existing property or provide adequate justification for a different approach (see Figure 52 above). While contemporary solutions can be appropriate where they are rooted in an understanding of the context of the area, this would need to be adequately demonstrated.
- More details are set out in the Binfield Heath Design Code:

DESIGN CODE B7. EXTENSION AND ALTERATION

Policy BH14 – Residential Extensions

- Development proposals for residential extensions will be supported where they comply with the Binfield Heath Design Code
- They should not result in over development of the site and instead should allow for sufficient gaps including space for landscaping between buildings in keeping with the overall character of the area.

5.3.17 Replacement dwellings

Many of the principles applying to extensions also apply to replacement dwellings.

The Neighbourhood Plan has identified a number of non-designated heritage assets it is considered important to retain (see Figure 53). Proposals that seek the demolition of an identified locally important building, or that would harm its setting, are unlikely to be supported owing to the contribution the asset makes to the character of the area.

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for such an asset to be replaced. However the proposal would need to include sufficient justification for this. Replacement dwellings should contribute positively towards the landscape character of the area and address any previous concerns in this regard raised by an existing property.

- It is usual for a replacement dwelling to be positioned within the same location as the original property, However, there may be cases where the existing dwelling is inappropriately sited, does not follow the prevalent building line or would benefit in terms of passive solar gain or the ability to implement renewable energy technologies. Such matters should be justified, but not at the expense of the character of the area.
- Where a proposal is significantly different in siting, scale, height, mass and / or form from the property it is replacing, sufficient information should be submitted with an application to demonstrate that it is in keeping with the character of surrounding properties.
- It is recommended that a study of the surrounding density as well as the ratio of built form to plot size is submitted with any application for a property of a significantly different size from the one it is to replace.

Policy BH15 – Replacement dwellings

Proposals for the replacement of a dwelling will be supported, where they meet the following conditions:

- The replacement dwelling will be in keeping with the character of the area as highlighted in the Binfield Heath Design Code
- It will include sufficient landscaping to contribute positively towards the wider landscape character of the area
- The dwelling to be replaced is not identified as a designated (Listed building) or non-designated heritage asset (as shown in Appendix D)
- The design, siting, appearance and materials proposed reflect the recommendations set out in the Binfield Heath Design Code or are justified in a Design and Access statement based on a contextual analysis of the area where they differ
- The new dwelling is positioned within the same location as the original property unless environmental and amenity factors prevent this. Any deviation should be justified

Local Plan Policy

H1: Delivering New Homes

H8: Housing in the Smaller Villages

H9: Affordable Housing

H10: Exception Sites and Entry Level Housing Schemes

H11: Housing Mix

DES1: Delivering High Quality Development

DES2: Enhancing Local Character

DES5: Outdoor Amenity Space

DES6: Residential Amenity

Core Objectives

BE1 – Ensure that any development is within the three settlement boundaries. It should be sympathetic to its surroundings and appropriate and sustainable in line with our status as a Smaller Village

BE4 – Ensure that any development respects the character of existing settlements and is designed to a high quality. Materials should be sustainable and sympathetic to those within the settlement; consistent with Neighbourhood Plan design codes and compatible with local styles

BE5 – Identify and protect the parish’s heritage assets, including listed and other valued buildings

ES3 – Minimise light pollution and strongly discourage or prevent any non-essential use of artificial lighting between sunset and sunrise

5.3.18 Community and Economy

There is strong community support for the safeguarding of important village assets. The parish contains a number of high-quality open spaces, many of which have opportunities for sport and recreation (although some are private), alongside well-used community buildings such as the Post Office, the Congregational Chapel and the scout hut in addition to The Bottle & Glass Inn and Orwells. All make an important contribution to the health and well-being of a community. These spaces serve different needs and are accessible to all residents in the local community.

Policy – Community Assets

Existing community facilities, as have been identified and depicted in Appendix G are as follows:

- Post Office & shop
- The recreation ground
- The Congregational Chapel
- Scout Hut
- The Bottle & Glass Inn
- Orwells
- Allotments

These assets are important to the sustainability of the NP area and the wellbeing of the local community. Permission will only be granted for proposals that will improve the condition of the asset and do not harm the amenity of neighbouring residents.

Proposals for the change of use of these assets will be resisted and only allowed in specific circumstances which include where:

- It is demonstrated that the current location is not sustainable. In such circumstances, a viability report providing financial evidence of the last 12 months is required to accompany any application
- An alternative location is considered by the community to be more appropriate
- An enhanced, stand alone or combined facility would be provided where it would have the support of the local community

Development proposals for other uses that are located in close proximity to or adjacent to an identified Community Asset will need to ensure that they will have no adverse impact on the viability of the Community Facility.

Proposals for new rural businesses and tourist uses on the site will be acceptable only where they do not unacceptably harm the character of the area and wider landscape views, neighbouring residential amenity and highway safety.

<p>Local Plan Policy</p> <p>EMP10: Development in Rural Areas</p> <p>EMP11: Tourism</p> <p>CF1: Safeguarding Community Facilities</p> <p>CF2: Provision of Community Facilities and Services</p>
<p>Core Objectives</p> <p>CS1: Engage with parishioners at every stage of the development and implementation of the Neighbourhood Plan, drawing the community closer together in shared objectives</p> <p>CS2: Enhance the social and economic vitality of the parish by retaining and supporting its assets, services, facilities and events, including the shop/post office and pubs/restaurants</p> <p>CS3: Retain and support the recreation ground, allotments and other community spaces</p>

5.3.19 Accessibility, Road Safety and Sustainable Transport

The road network within the Plan area consists of minor roads, two of which run through the parish. Shiplake Row connects Binfield Heath with Shiplake to the east and Sonning Common in the west via Arch Hill and Sonning Common Road. The hamlet of Crowsley lies in an unnamed lane off Sonning Common Road. East of the village, Shiplake Row runs into Memorial Avenue and Plough Lane in neighbouring Shiplake. These lead to the A4155 Reading to Henley Road.

From the south Emmer Green Road cuts across the old Heath, meeting Sonning Common Road at Coppid crossroads. Harpsden Road continues north from there, dropping down into Harpsden village and on to Henley.

Dunsden Way, once called Heath Road, runs from Shiplake Row near the shop to the village of Dunsden in the neighbouring parish and from there to Playhatch and the A4155.

There are further minor roads leading to residential properties and rural lanes to farms and cottages.

Current problem areas are summarised below:

- Parking down Arch Hill adjacent to the recreation ground, the entrance to Heathfield Close and the Bottle & Glass Settlement
- Coppid crossroads where there have been a number of accidents
- Exceeding the designated speed limits
- HGVs using the minor roads
- Increasing traffic resulting from developments within adjacent parishes

Should a new River Thames crossing be introduced to the south east of the parish, the roads within the parish would be totally unsuitable to accommodate additional traffic that could result from an additional bridge.

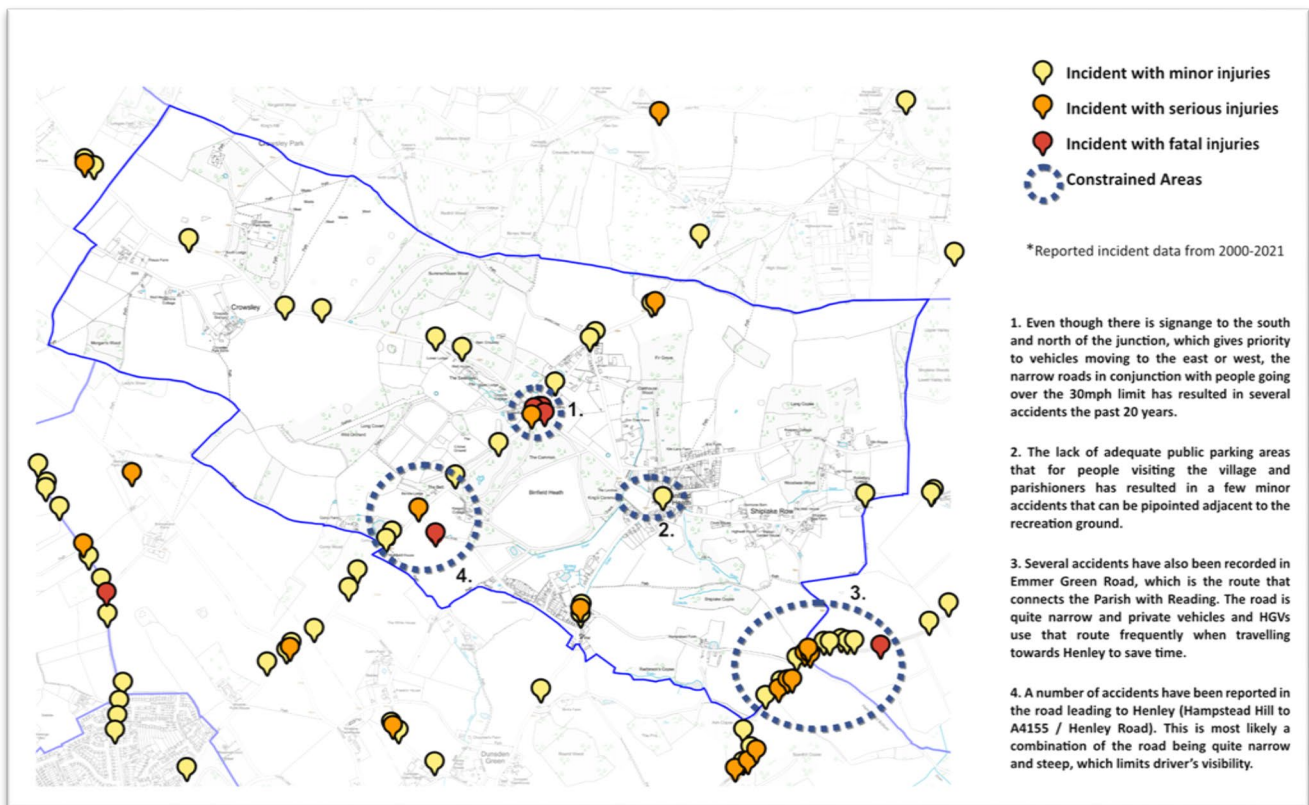


Figure 56 - Road Traffic Incidents and Constrained Areas / Routes

Not all the above can be dealt with in the Neighbourhood Plan. In these circumstances community aspirations are required to deal with matters such as speeding.

Proposals should show how appropriate consideration has been given to the following:

- Road safety impacts arising from new development
- The effect of new development on existing pedestrian and cycle access
- Incorporating safe and convenient walking routes to local services, Chilterns AONB and the River Thames beyond

Where mitigation measures are proposed to improve road safety, they should avoid adverse noise and light or the introduction of urbanising features.

Policy – Highways and Sustainable Travel

Proposals for a new pedestrian link between the Gravel Road and Shop settlements will be supported subject to compliance with other Development Plan policies.

Development proposals should:

- Be designed to avoid adverse impacts on road safety within the Neighbourhood Plan area and in particular those areas of concern as set out in Figure 56.
- Be designed to avoid additional parking problems by having adequate off-road parking
- Where justified, secure road safety improvements particularly for pedestrians and cyclists that do not detract from the rural character of the area
- Maximise opportunities for sustainable travel within and between the settlements and the surrounding area, including securing improvements to the Public Rights of Way that connect the settlements in the area (see Figure 22)
- Be accompanied by sufficient information to demonstrate how an increase in traffic (including HGV movements) which may be generated by a proposal could be accommodated with adequate and appropriate mitigation measures

Where traffic calming measures are proposed, these should be designed not to increase noise, urbanise the area or have a severe impact on residents or users of the route.

Local Plan Policy

TRANS2: Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility

TRANS5: Consideration of Development Proposals

Core Objectives

TS1 – Preserve, enhance and extend pedestrian and cycling routes

TS2 – Preserve and encourage the use of public transport

TS3 – Encourage traffic to adhere to speed limits and Stop signs to ensure safety and reduce air and noise pollution

6 OUR PARISH OUR FUTURE - COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This section covers aspirations that do not necessarily qualify for inclusion in the statutory part of the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.2 ACTIONS & ACTIVITIES

6.2.1 Shop and Post Office

Build on the support for the shop and post office. This a priority. Binfield Heath Stores provides a vital service to the parish, all the more so since the nearest bank branches are closing at an unprecedented rate.

6.2.2 The Forge

Ensure the success of the Forge project. Generous local benefactors have given funds to buy the old Forge for the benefit of the community. In doing so the donors were keen to keep the site, which is at the heart of the village, essentially unchanged. The Forge is being restored and, along with associated buildings, converted into a centre that will provide much-needed space for parishioners to meet and pursue a range of interests. Before that there is much work to be done and many hands will be needed. It is hoped that the extra footfall at the Forge will benefit the shop.

6.2.3 The Environment

Establish a group to support environmental policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, such as energy saving, nature-friendly gardening and extending public rights of way.

6.2.4 The Bus

Support sustainable travel by seeking a better bus timetable.

6.2.5 Parish Archive

Bring together under one roof the various collections of old pictures, maps and documents relating to Binfield Heath, some of which were used in compiling the history section of the Neighbourhood Plan.

6.2.6 Business Directory

Support local businesses and the community by establishing a business directory for Binfield Heath and making it available on the parish website together with a paper version.

6.2.7 Neighbourhood Watch

Rebuild the dormant Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

6.2.8 Litter pick

Recruit more volunteers to the annual parish litter pick.

6.2.9 Monthly Walks

Expand the walking group that meets outside the shop on the first Friday of the month at 10.30am.

6.2.10 Telegraph Poles

Prevent the proliferation of telegraph poles and overhead wires. Push for cables to be run underground.

7 LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Extent of the Neighbourhood Plan Area as Designated by South Oxfordshire District Council 20 July 2021	8
Figure 2 The location of the Parish in the wider context, with the area covered by the AONB highlighted in green	9
Figure 3 The three main settlement areas centred around Binfield Heath	10
Figure 4 The Bottle and Glass Inn	11
Figure 5 The Thatched Cottage - 17th Century, Grade II Listed Building.....	11
Figure 6 A present day view of Binfield Heath from Gravel Road. The tree-lined avenue leads to the polo ground.....	12
Figure 7 Old sketch map of Binfield Heath highlighting paths and other points of interest.....	13
Figure 8 Keeps Well in Shiplake Row.....	13
Figure 9 Shiplake Rise Farm. The 18th Century Grade II Listed Farmhouse	13
Figure 10 Frieze Cottage, 18th Century Grade II Listed	14
Figure 11 The Old House, Early 18th Century, Grade II Listed.....	14
Figure 12 Rose, Yew and Lilac Cottages -unlisted but good example of brickwork detailing.....	15
Figure 13 View North West Towards the Bottle and Glass Inn – new development has recently taken place adjacent to the pub	16
Figure 14 Jasmine and Timber Cottages are among the many listed buildings in Crowsley	16
Figure 16 - Coppid Hall – unlisted and much enlarged / altered property now forming one of the larger country houses	19
Figure 15 Crowsley Park House, believed to date from the early 18th century, is Grade II listed	19
Figure 17 The village shop, built on the edge of the Heath in 1926	20
Figure 18 Holmwood - Early 18th Century Country House - Grade II Listed	20
Figure 19 – New housing in Common Lane	22
Figure 20 – Converted Barns at Crowsley	22
Figure 21 – Typical 1.5 storey brick cottages	22
Figure 22 – Plan of Parish Public Rights of Way and Informal / Permissive Paths.....	26



Figure 23 - Common Lane, which has green triangles and fingerposts at either end, is in the AONB 27

Figure 24 Coppid Crossroads, where Emmer Green Road meets Harpsden Road. Much of the road network is heavily lined with trees 28

Figure 25 Harpsden Road looking north - the grass verges are protected by wooden logs to prevent their erosion..... 28

Figure 26 May 22 Newsletter 34

Figure 27 Information Board..... 34

Figure 28 Queen’s Platinum Jubilee celebration lunch..... 35

Figure 29 Neighbourhood Plan Display 35

Figure 30 Neighbourhood Plan Flower Show & Annual Parish Meeting Displays 35

Figure 31 Location of the Parish within the wider context and coverage of the AONB 42

Figure 32 – Extract - Figure 81 from the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes (AECOM 2023) - highlighting low carbon homes (for both new build and existing buildings) and where energy saving measures can be included /installed..... 46

Figure 33 SODC Landscape Character Areas and Landscape Types..... 48

Figure 34 Parish landscape character areas (PLCA) 49

Figure 35 - Gaps to prevent coalescence and loss of settlement identity 62

Figure 36 – Areas of Special Character 64

Figure 37 - Map of Crowsley Park and Hamlet 65

Figure 38 – Images of the Crowsley Area 67

Figure 39 - Plan of The Heath 68

Figure 40 - Important Views 71

Figure 41 – Long Distance views to the southeast..... 74

Figure 42-Woodland Areas including Ancient Woodlands 76

Figure 43 – Proposed Local Green Spaces 79

Figure 44 - Biodiversity Assets and Wildlife Corridors 82

Figure 45 - Dark Night Skies Map 84



Figure 46 – Surface Water Flood Risk	86
Figure 47- Detailed Plan of Surface Water Flooding around the settlements	87
Figure 48- Shop Settlement Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023)	90
Figure 49- Gravel Road Settlement Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023)	91
Figure 50 Bottle & Glass Settlement Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023)	91
Figure 51 Open Countryside Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023).....	92
Figure 52 - Materials Palette	92
Figure 53 - Location of Listed Buildings and some Non-Designated Heritage Assets	94
Figure 54 – Detailed Plan of the Settlements	96
Figure 55 - Extension and Conversions - Good Practice (Design Code – AECOM)	100
Figure 56 - Road Traffic Incidents and Constrained Areas / Routes	105