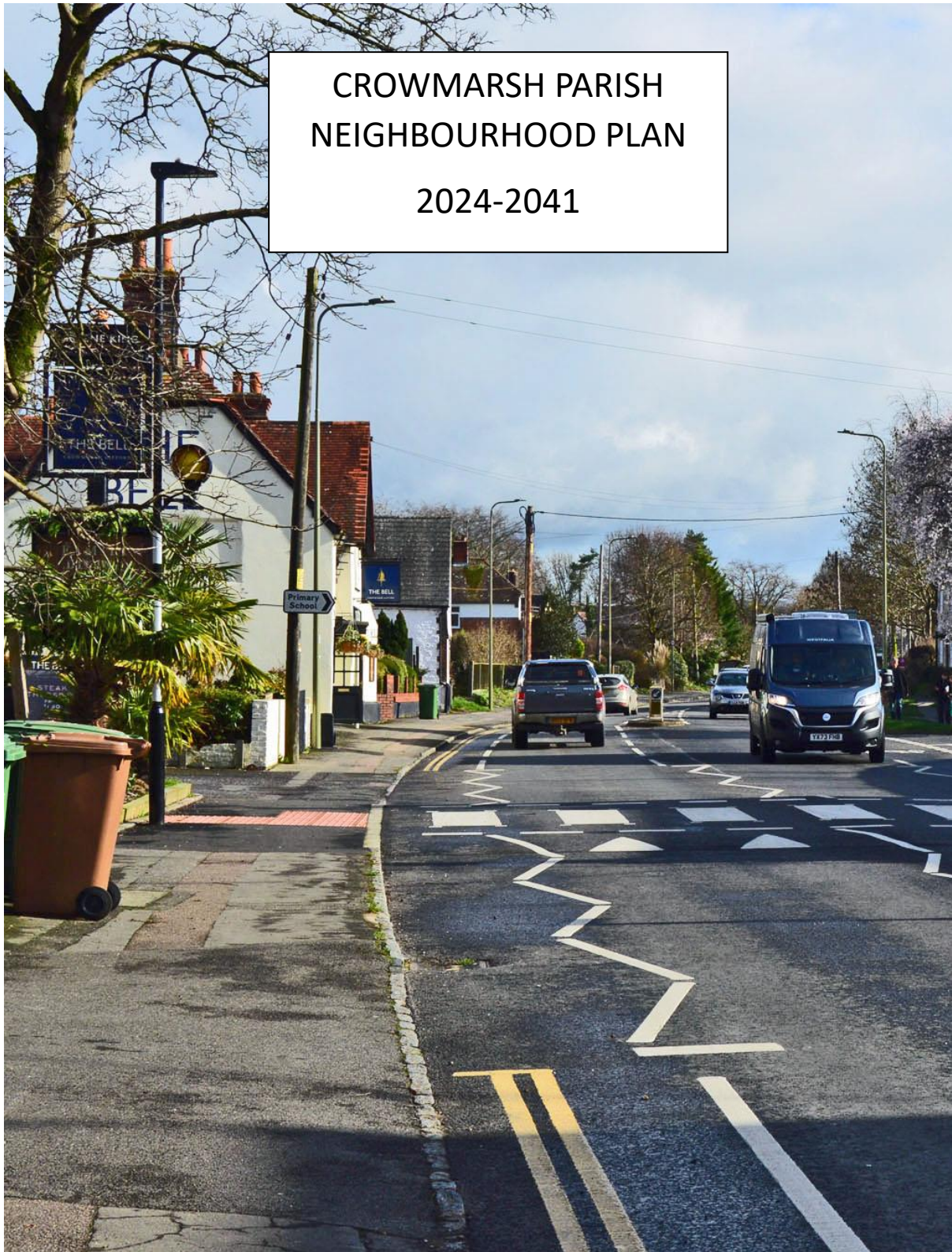


**CROWMARSH PARISH
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
2024-2041**



Cover picture: New pedestrian crossing in The Street, Crowmarsh Gifford

CROWMARSH PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2024-2041

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Crowmarsh Parish Council

December 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Neighbourhood Plans are a planning document subsequent to the Localism Act (2011), which came into force in April 2012. Neighbourhood Plans are intended to give local people a greater say in the future of their communities. However, Neighbourhood Plans must generally conform to the overarching strategic policy framework, and conform to the basic conditions set out below in paragraph 1.9, which includes the Development Plan which comprises the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.

1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan cannot be used to resist appropriate development that is required. However, the Neighbourhood Plan must consider how development needs are met so that it can be used to influence the type of development that takes place in a neighbourhood area, where it takes place and the mix of uses proposed that are to be included. The Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision for the future of Crowmarsh Parish over the next 17 years and provides a strategy to manage housing development and develop land for employment use. The Plan also identifies improvements within a land use framework for development.

1.3 Crowmarsh Parish Council elected to prepare its first Parish Neighbourhood Plan in April 2017 and to revise and update the Plan in September 2024. The Plan covered the whole Parish, an area designated by the local planning authority, South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC), under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The designated area, the Parish, is shown in Figure 1.

1.4 Neighbourhood Plans provide local communities with the chance to shape the future development of their areas. The purpose of the revised Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan is to make planning policies that can be used to determine planning applications in the Plan area during the period to 2035. The policies aim to plan positively for growth but do so in a way that protects the special character of the Parish. The original Neighbourhood Plan was approved at Referendum. The Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan (2021-2035) will be succeeded by this revised version which will become part of the development plan for the area and will carry full weight in how planning applications are determined.

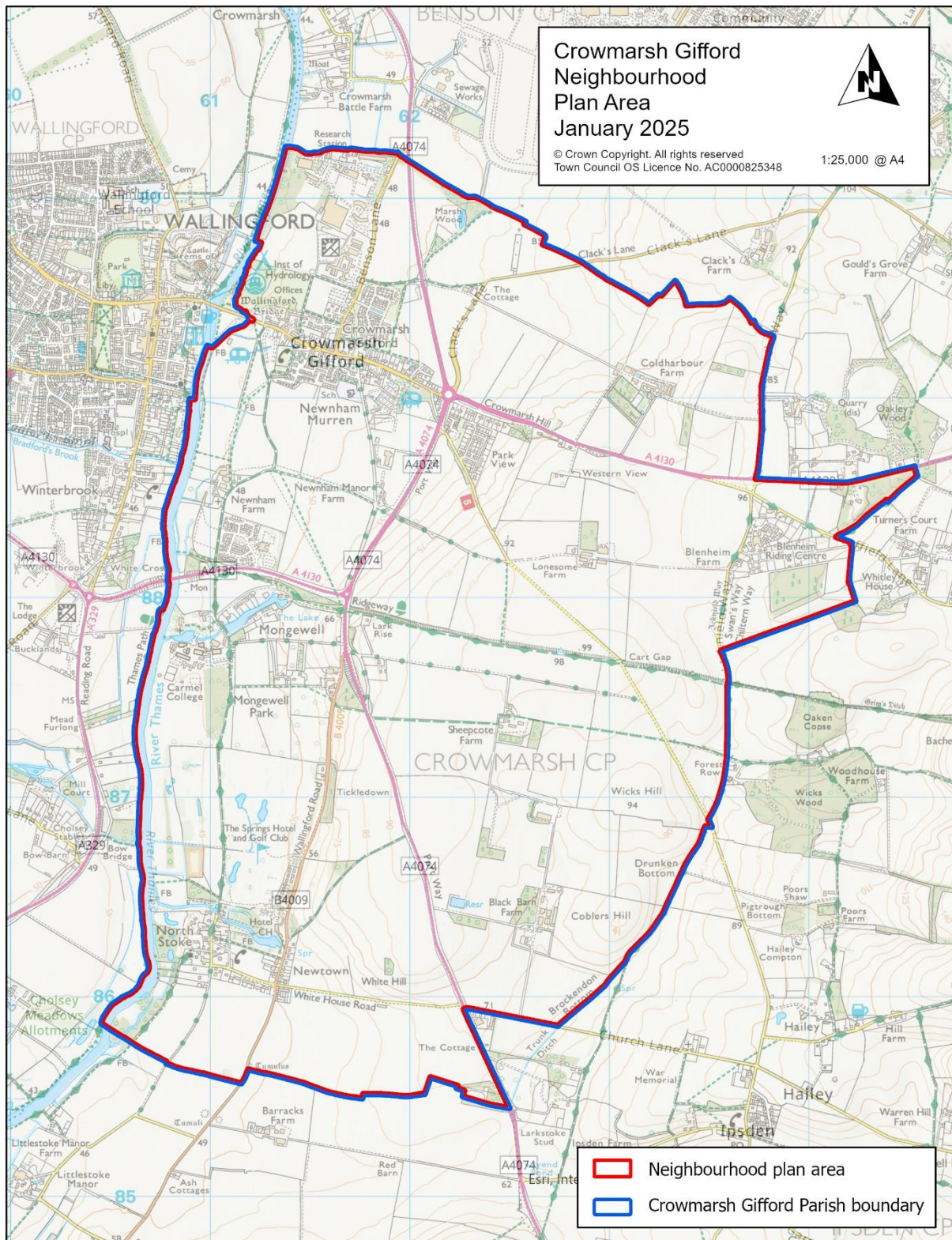


Figure 1 Designated area of Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan [Ordnance Survey Rights 2024: CPC Licence Number AC0000825348]

1.5 The Vision for the Parish at 2041 is:

THE PARISH VISION

The population of the Parish will increase due to housing developments already approved. There will be increased availability of local employment opportunities on land allocated for this purpose at Howbery Park, Crowmarsh Gifford. New infill housing within the designated village footprints will focus on social housing for young families and apartment type housing for the elderly. New builds should achieve a net carbon zero goal. The managed landscape of the greater part of the Parish is not developed for housing because it is within, or it is overseen by, the Chilterns National Landscape, or it lies within the Thames Corridor flood plain. Heritage is protected while the setting of listed buildings and other heritage assets is to be enhanced through any new development. Similarly, new development will provide a measurable net gain in biodiversity and managed land in the Thames corridor and should aim towards enhancing biodiversity and protecting rare species.

1.6 The Objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan aim to facilitate the vision for the Parish while ensuring that any adopted proposals are sustainable:

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

- Promote Crowmarsh Parish as a sustainable home to a thriving working community that is strongly linked to its environment and to its neighbours, including the town of Wallingford.
- Develop a Parish which has its own identity in which any future housing and employment use development adds to the quality of life of its residents.
- Preserve the rural character of the Parish, and of its two smaller villages, North Stoke and Mongewell, and uphold relevant national and regional strategies and policies for safeguarding the countryside.
- Promote the development of housing suitable for those on modest budgets and for the elderly.
- Preserve the green spaces within Crowmarsh Gifford and enhance heritage protection within the Parish.

1.7 The primary purpose of this Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan is to ensure that any development, housing, employment use or recreational, meets the needs of Crowmarsh Parish's existing and future residents, fits into the overall character of the Parish, and contributes to long term sustainability and the wellbeing of the residents of the Parish. The Oxfordshire County Council initiative on Health and Wellbeing Placement is a useful guide towards healthy living, notably encouraging walking and cycling to and from local destinations using well signed pathways, provision of a suitable stock of housing for everyone, access to retail outlets for healthy food, access to a GP, to early years education and so on.

1.8 Neighbourhood Plans can only carry land use policies that can be used for planning purposes. Other important issues of interest to the local community that cannot be addressed in a Neighbourhood Plan can be pursued through alternative means not directly related to planning.

1.9 Although there is considerable scope for the local community to decide on its planning policies, Neighbourhood Plans must comply with the basic conditions set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended (Independent examination, basic conditions of a draft order) and applied to neighbourhood plans by section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Meaning of 'Neighbourhood Development Plan'). The basic relevant conditions, a, d, e, f and g, are:

- a. having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State it is appropriate to make the order (or neighbourhood plan).
- d. the making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
- e. the making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area).
- f. the making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, assimilated [EU] obligations.
- g. prescribed conditions are met in relation to the order (or neighbourhood plan) and prescribed matters have been complied with in connection with the proposal for the order.

In addition, the Parish Council must be able to show that it has properly consulted local people and other relevant organisations during the process of making its Neighbourhood Plan and has followed the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012) as amended. The consultation with local people and with statutory and other consultees is reported in the Consultation Statement (Appendix 7 attached to the Plan) and in Section 4 of this document.

1.10 The revised Plan incorporates Minor (Non-Material) Modifications, and will be made by approval of the District Council. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to ensure its general conformity with the policies of the Development Plan Documents, i.e. the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. The 'reasoning and evidence' of the Local Plan 2035 has, therefore, informed the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan as this is crucial for the long-term success of the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.11 A housing needs survey was carried out for Crowmarsh Gifford (Appendix 3 attached to the Plan) which revealed a need for affordable housing for a projected increase in young families and young individuals who wished to live near, but independently from older family members. It also showed a need for smaller dwellings, suitable for the growing number of older members of the village (65 to 85 years) to downsize to, once their own families had left home. The housing strategy, therefore, addresses:

- both the needs of existing and future residents;
- development to be proportionate in scale to the existing size of the villages;
- development to contribute to improving the amenities and environment.

1.12 Sites allocated for housing should satisfy the tests carried out against the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Framework. The SEA process comprised screening, scoping (including consultation with statutory consultees), and testing the plan objectives and policies against the developed SEA framework, providing outcomes to draft report stage (Appendix 6 attached to the Plan). The adopted sustainability objectives in the framework are:

1. Increase housing supply, especially affordable housing
2. Improve the mix of housing size and tenure
3. Preservation and enhancement of the rural landscape and sense of place
4. Risk of Flooding
5. Threats to biodiversity and opportunities to enhance it
6. Heritage assets and the historic environment are irreplaceable resources
7. Improved traffic management within and through the Parish
8. Enhance the setting of new housing and conservation of rural setting

2. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

2.1 The village of Crowmarsh Gifford is located in the County of Oxfordshire and is approximately 18km south of Oxford. Crowmarsh Gifford is the main settlement in Crowmarsh Parish, and had a population of 1327 reported in the 2021 Census (Appendix 1 attached to the Plan). 22% of the village population were under 19 years old, 49% were in the age range 20 to 49 years, and 28% were over 60. The population living in the Parish (including North Stoke and Mongewell) was 1723.

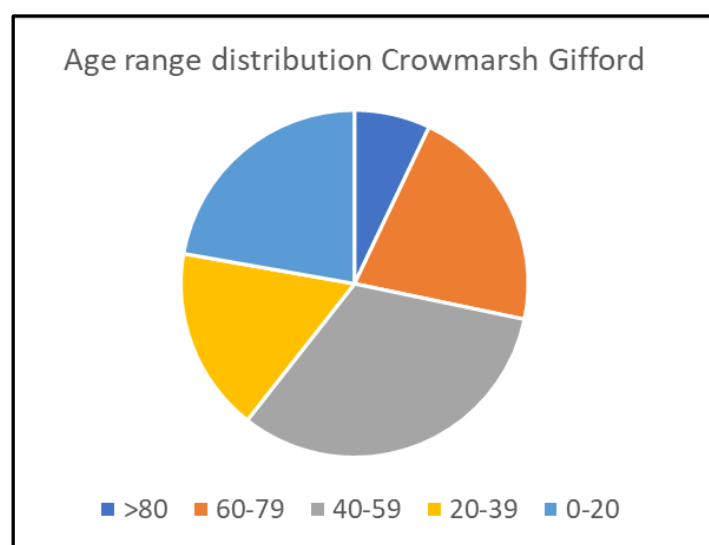


Figure 2 Distribution of age ranges in Crowmarsh Gifford (population 1327) based on 2021 Census

The housing stock population recorded by the Local Taxation Office in 2017 was 587 dwellings in Crowmarsh Gifford, plus 75 and 47 in the small villages of North Stoke and Mongewell respectively, i.e. 709 dwellings focused on the three settlements in the Parish. By 2024 this stock had expanded to 742 dwellings in Crowmarsh Gifford, 91 new dwellings at an isolated site on land adjacent to the CAB International offices, situated between Crowmarsh Gifford and Mongewell, 48 in Mongewell and 77 in North Stoke, i.e. 958 dwellings representing an increase of 35% in seven years. The newly completed properties include only 80 dwellings classed as affordable.

2.2 Future expansion of the housing stock in Crowmarsh Parish includes 166 new dwellings already granted planning permission at Carmel College, Mongewell and 100 at Crowmarsh Gifford, south of Newnham Manor which have a resolution to grant planning permission. Other housing developments will include single houses, infill, including the former Jewsons site at Crowmarsh Gifford, change of use of existing buildings and development of the former SODC site in Benson Lane.

2.3 The dwelling stock at 2015 according to Local Taxation banding showed an exceptionally high number of Band D, E and G houses and relatively few Band A and B houses compared to the national average. This reflected a relatively privileged and wealthy community compared to both county and national averages. The distribution of dwelling types according to the number of bedrooms was:

- 1 bedroom 3%
- 2 bedrooms 24%

- 3 bedrooms 44%
- 4 bedrooms 23%
- 5 or more bedrooms 6%

The main change to this distribution is an increase in the availability of one and two bedroom affordable dwellings and expensive four bedroom dwellings.

2.4 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan identifies the housing requirement as 0 for Crowmarsh Gifford, as 571 dwellings have been completed or committed as of 1 April 2020 (table 4f). The Housing Needs Assessment (Appendix 3 attached to the Plan) for Crowmarsh Gifford identifies the types of dwellings needed, which are:

- New affordable accommodation needed for growth in number of first-time buyers
- New accommodation required for growth in number of age range 35 – 50
- New accommodation required for growth in number of elderly people in age range 65 – 85.

2.5 Average house prices in South Oxfordshire District rose from £440,000 in September 2021 to £446,000 in September 2023. The national house price average was £290,000 in January 2023 (Office for National Statistics). The high prices in the OX10 postcode could be interpreted as a shortage of housing in the area, but they more likely reflect the desirability of the area in terms of good educational facilities and favourable location.

2.6 Crowmarsh Parish borders Benson Parish to the north, Nuffield to the east, Ipsden to the south east, South Stoke to the south; across the River Thames is Cholsey Parish to the south west, Wallingford Town to the west and Brightwell to the north west. Wallingford traverses the river at Wallingford Bridge into what would otherwise be Crowmarsh Parish with a small bridgehead and the adjacent Riverside Park area which was gifted by a former land-owner to Wallingford Town Council.

2.7 Crowmarsh Gifford developed from the cross-roads of the north-south Oxford to Reading road and the east-west Henley to Wallingford road which continues west towards Didcot. The cross-road was off-set, and until the by-pass for the A4074 was constructed through the east of the village, was a cause of much congestion despite traffic light control. Only two of several pubs survive near the cross roads, The Bell and the Queen's Head. The Street is the main east-west highway today, carrying traffic from Wallingford Bridge through the original cross roads with Benson Lane and Old Reading Road and uphill towards a busy roundabout crossing the A4074, the Oxford to Reading road, which separates the Crowmarsh Hill settlement from the lower part of the village.

2.8 The Parish hosts a large scientific campus at Howbery Park. Howbery Park has a strong and growing reputation as a centre for innovation in water and environmental technology. It employs some 800 staff and is the home of HR Wallingford, a major base for the Environment Agency as well as 20 or so other smaller, mainly scientific businesses. Next door, also in Benson Lane, is the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and a placement of staff from the Meteorological Office. On the By Pass to the south of Crowmarsh, Nosworthy Way, is CAB International, Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International. Collectively these scientific institutions employ more than 1200 technical and support staff. However,

few of these people live in the Parish with most staff commuting in from surrounding towns, principally, Didcot, Reading and Oxford. The village has also been host to the South Oxfordshire and Vale district councils until a fire destroyed the offices in 2015. The councils have elected not to return to the site which will become available for other uses by 2028 when it ceases to be used as a local depot for council field workers.

2.9 Crowmarsh Gifford has a primary school and two pre-schools. The school currently enjoys an OFSTED 'Good' status, and as such makes the Crowmarsh Gifford School catchment a desirable place to live for families with young children. Most of the primary school children progress to secondary school in Wallingford. The primary school is situated on a small and confined site with no room for further expansion. Parking is a problem during the morning and afternoon arrival and departure of children accompanied by parents.

2.10 The closest mainline railway station is Cholsey which is 5 km away. There is a frequent bus service through Crowmarsh Gifford to Oxford, and via Wallingford to Reading, buses also pass through Crowmarsh between Henley and Didcot and there are services between Benson and Cholsey and to Abingdon. North Stoke has a minibuss service that runs between Goring and Wallingford.

Geology and Groundwater (Appendix 2 attached to the Plan)

2.11 The Chiltern Hills are an expression of the erosion resistant Cretaceous Chalk Supergroup which dips gently to the east with a steep scarp slope locally overlooking the Thames valley. The Upper Chalk and Middle Chalk are characterised by flinty chalks with occasional hard beds. The Lower Chalk passes from fractured chalk with fewer flint bands down into an increasingly marl dominated sequence. At the base of the Chalk is the Glauconitic Marl, an impervious unit that hydraulically separates the groundwater in the Chalk from the deeper artesian Greensand aquifer below. The weakly permeable base of the Chalk aquifer creates a distinct spring line adjacent to the outcrop of the basal chalk marls and Glauconitic Marl.

2.12 The Glauconitic Marl forms a band (concealed beneath the Thames gravels) roughly between the Thames Water pumping station at the eastern end of Wallingford Bridge [SU61358950] and Crowmarsh Parish Church [SU61458935], with Lower Chalk to the east giving way to Middle Chalk roughly at the entrance to the Oakley Wood Recycling Depot [SU64208900] above Coldharbour Farm.

2.13 Superficial strata comprise the silt- and clay-bound gravels of the First Terrace and an alluvial strip along and adjacent to the River Thames. The gravels vary in thickness up to 4.3 m (penetrated by a borehole in the north eastern quadrant of the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology site [SU61728970]). The gravels vary in thickness from 2 to 3 m towards Benson Lane where they are partly replaced by grey lacustrine clay at a depth of 2.5 m below ground, to a feather edge to the east towards the line of the A4074 road.

2.14 There are no minerals within the Parish, apart from shallow gravel reserves, which are being extracted at one site south of Wallingford. In the past, bell-shaped flint mines, widening towards the bottom, provided flints for building and construction and remains of these pits are known in the Chiltern Hills. Chalk has been used as a crushed medium for application to acid land and for cement production. However, there is no evidence that either activity ever took place within the Parish. The riverine gravels are interbedded with clays and silts and trial test drilling by the British Geological Survey (see interactive map on BGS web site) shows that there are few areas with workable and clean gravel deposits of more than 3 m thickness within the Parish.

2.15 The Middle and Upper Chalk collectively form part of a 'Major Aquifer' under current Environment Agency classification. The groundwater is unconfined and the water table follows a subdued version of the topography. The water table is highest along a groundwater divide beneath the scarp ridge roughly through Nuffield and Stoke Row. From here groundwater flows both eastward towards Nettlebed and Henley and westward towards Crowmarsh. There is no runoff except under exceptional and prolonged wet weather. As the groundwater flow is pinched out towards the base of the Chalk aquifer to the west of the scarp by the weakly permeable Lower Chalk marls, so it flows to surface as springs or discharges, some into the overlying gravel deposits (Figure 2).

2.16 Major spring discharges occur along this spring line at Marsh Wood Spring, Mongewell Spring and at North Stoke (Figure 3). There are several ephemeral wet weather spring discharges, notably at the gateway to 119 The Street in Crowmarsh Gifford and towards the north west corner of the approved housing development site at land east of Benson Lane.

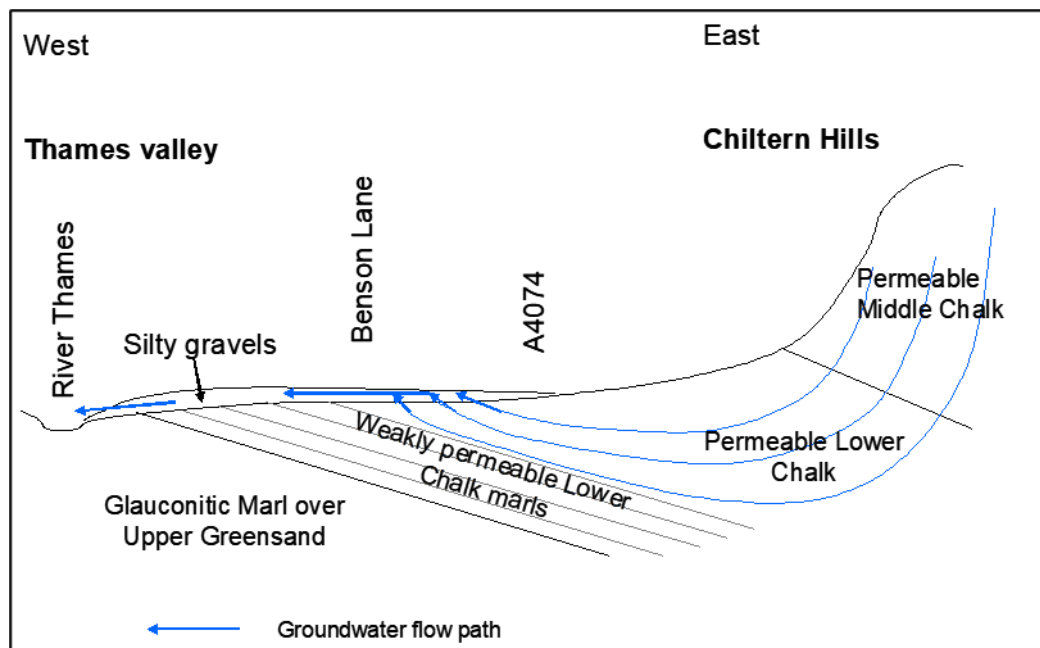


Figure 2 Schematic cross-section of groundwater flow system through Crowmarsh Gifford (after Robins N, 2014, Groundwater and Crowmarsh Gifford. Report prepared for Crowmarsh Parish Council)

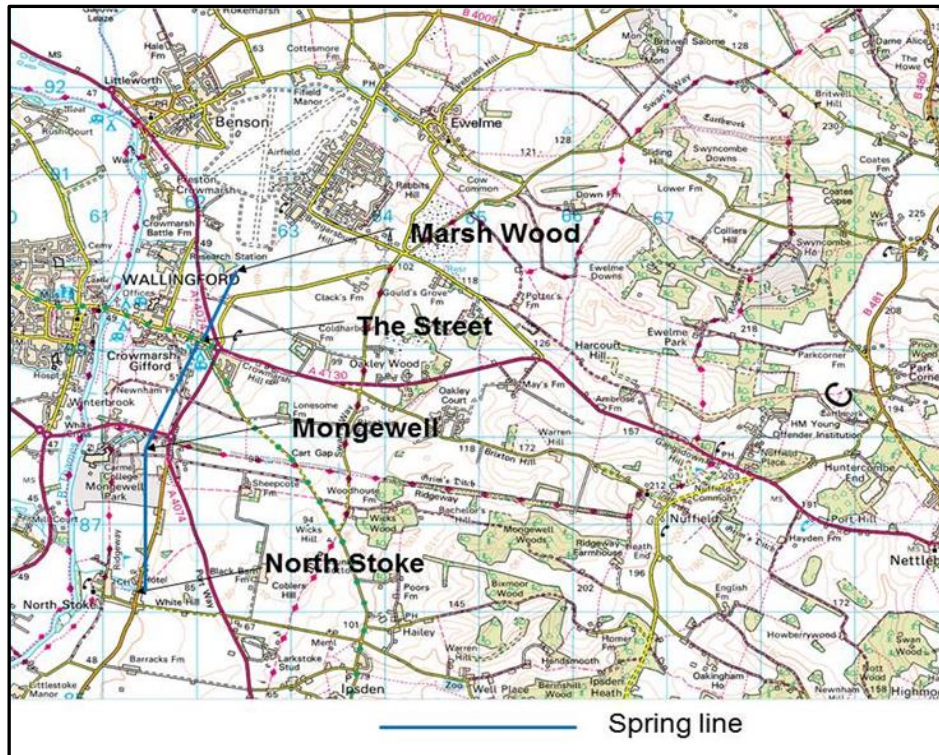


Figure 3 Location of spring line and main springs, after Robins, N, 2014 [Ordnance Survey Rights 2024: CPC Licence Number AC0000825348]

2.17 The Environment Agency Flood Risk map shows an area of low land adjacent to the river that is at serious risk of flooding. However, this land is protected as flood plain and contains little damageable infrastructure. The river in this area is allowed overbank in preference to lower stretches of river where infrastructure and housing are at risk. Otherwise, the zonation as shown in Figure 4 is divided into three zones, Zone 2 and more particularly Zone 3 being the critical ones.

Zone 1 Low Probability Land having a less than 1 in 1000 annual probability of river flooding. (Shown as 'clear' on the Flood Map – all land outside Zones 2 and 3)

Zone 2 Medium Probability Land having between a 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000 annual probability of river flooding. (Land shown in light blue on the Flood Map)

Zone 3 High Probability Land having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding. (Land shown in dark blue on the Flood Map)

2.18 There are built areas in the Parish liable to groundwater flooding; some dwellings on the western edges of Crowmarsh Gifford and Mongewell are situated in Flood Zone 2. Over-bank floods are exacerbated by groundwater discharge which backs up against the elevated river stage within the surficial gravel deposits (see Figure 2). This surface and groundwater flood was last seen at Crowmarsh Gifford in 2024. Ground floor properties in Retreat Gardens, Crowmarsh Gifford have suffered flood damage on several occasions and now have protective waterproof barriers that can be fitted across the doorways. Groundwater flooding is common during prolonged wet weather on land adjacent to the south eastern corner of Thames Mead in Crowmarsh Gifford.



Groundwater flooding behind Thames Mead, November 2004

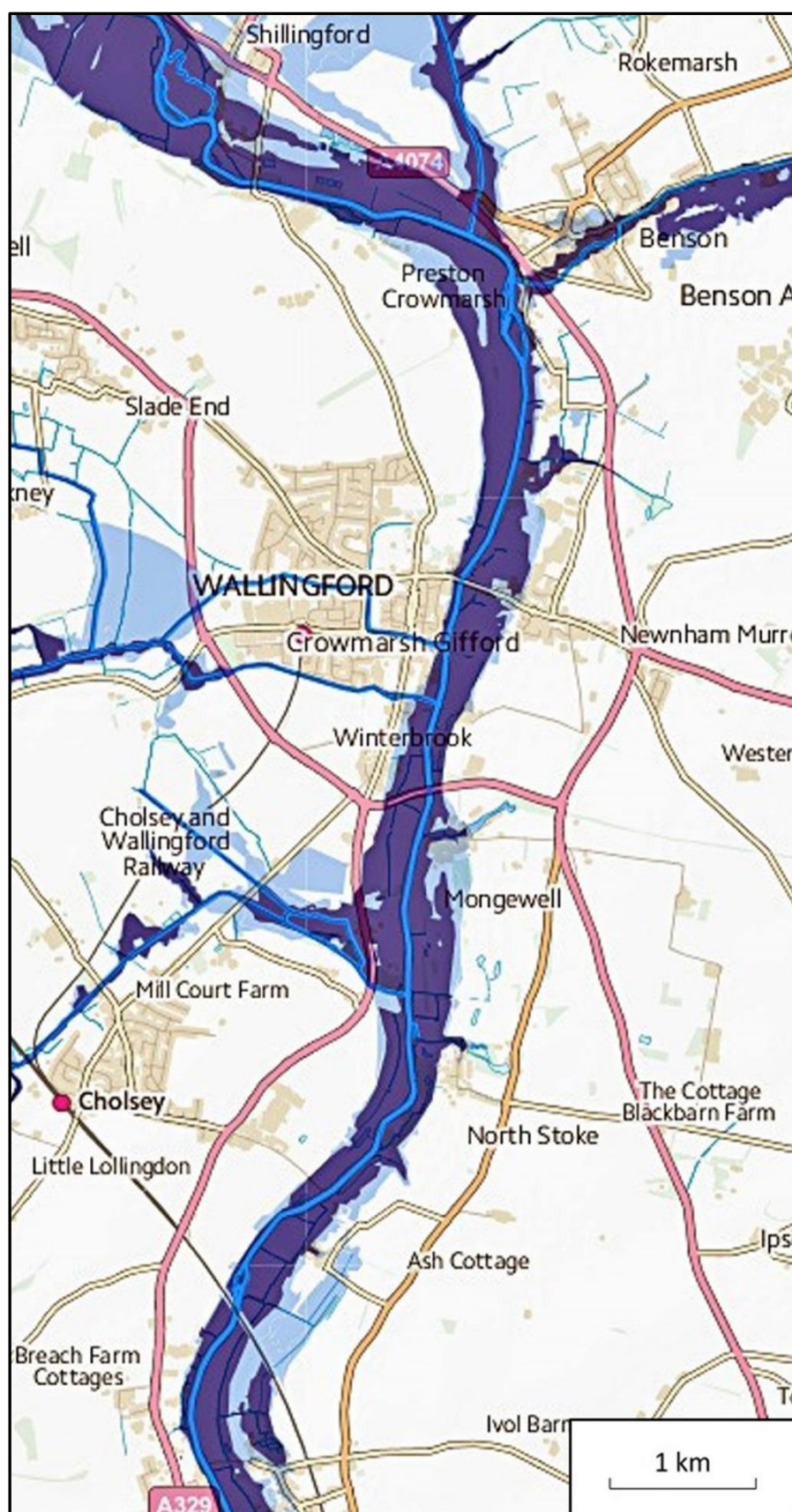


Figure 4 Environment Agency Flood Risk Map, see text above for key [Open Government Licence]

Environmental Protection and Land Classification

2.19 A large part of the Parish is contained within the Chilterns National Landscape (Figure 5). A National Landscape is an area of countryside which was formerly designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, for conservation, due to its significant landscape value. Areas are designated in recognition of their national importance, by Natural England. Areas designated as National Landscape enjoy levels of protection from development similar to those of UK National Parks, but unlike National Parks the responsible bodies do not have their own planning powers. They also differ from National Parks in that they have more limited opportunities for extensive outdoor recreation. The Chilterns National Landscape, which extends into a large number of local authority areas, has its own statutory body, the Chilterns Conservation Board. Protection from unsightly development extends beyond the Chilterns National Landscape wherever that land overlooks a potential development site.

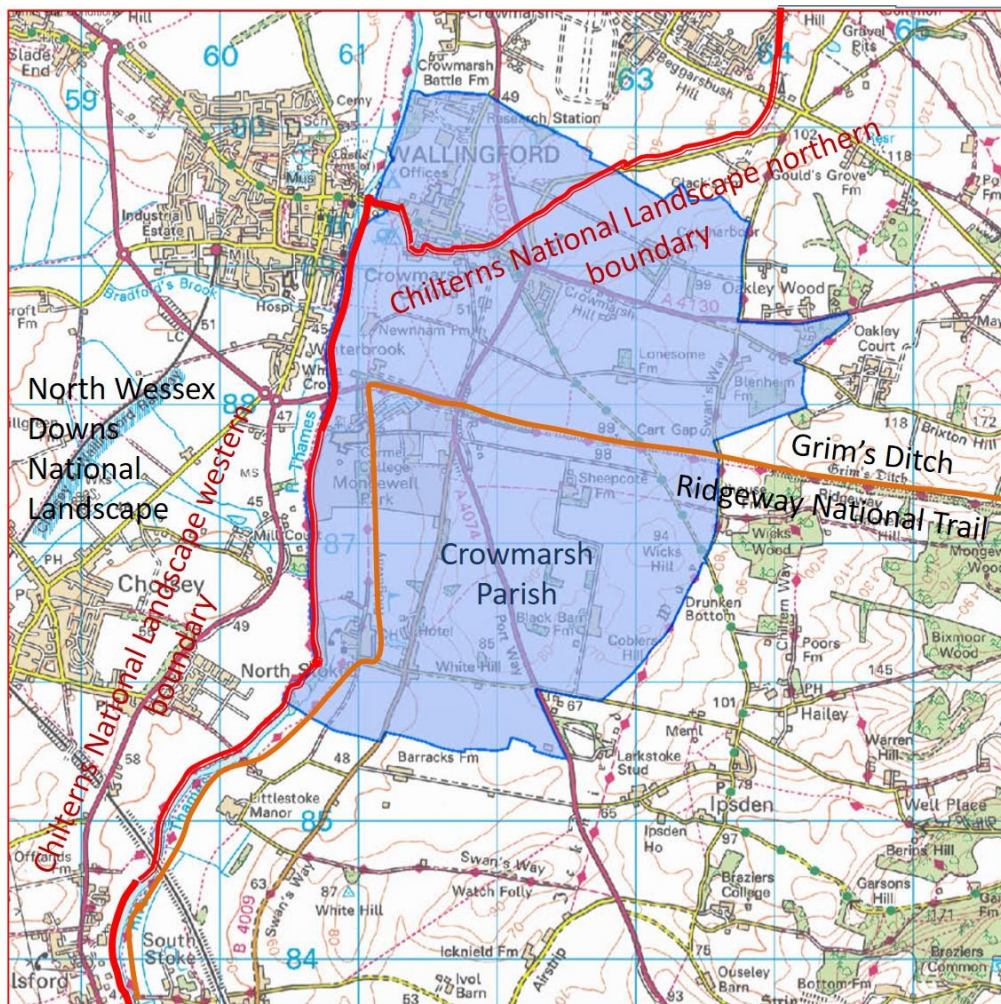
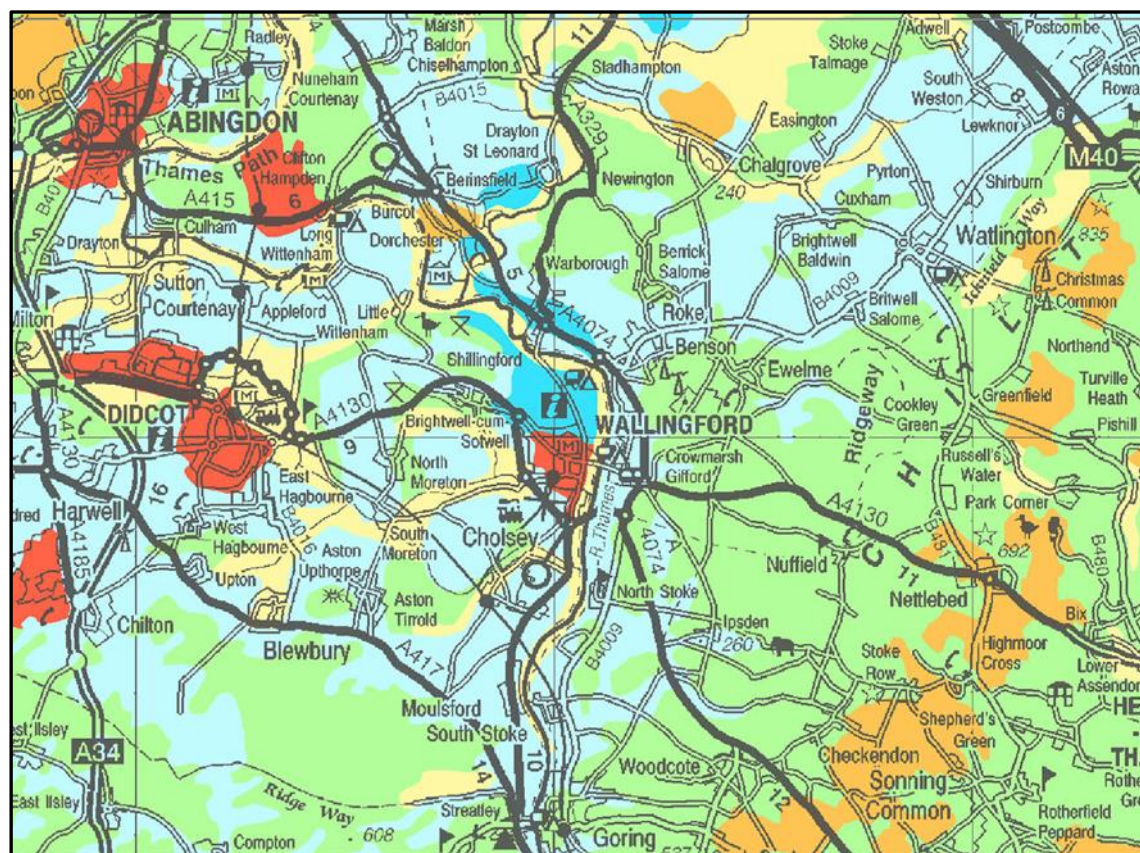


Figure 5 Chilterns National Landscape showing also the Ridgeway National Trail [Ordnance Survey Rights 2024: CPC Licence Number AC0000825348]

2.20 The neighbourhood plan area contains priority habitats, protected species, ancient woodland and part of the Thames Corridor Wallingford to Goring Conservation Target Area.

2.21 Land Classification is a means of ascribing an agricultural value to land in five categories ranging from 'Excellent' to 'Very Poor'. Much of Crowmarsh Parish is Grade 3 land 'Good to Moderate' although the land adjacent to the river and a triangular shaped area from the river at Crowmarsh east to Coldharbour Farm is Grade 2 'Very Good' as also is a lozenge-shaped area north of North Stoke (Figure 6). Towards the top of the Chalk scarp the soil is thin and the ridge area is designated Grade 4, 'Poor'. The Grade 2 land is used for arable crops for human and animal consumption, while the land liable to periodic flooding is given over largely to pasture for cattle. All the Grade 2 land is highly productive.



Grade	Description
1	Excellent
2	Very Good
3	Good to Moderate
4	Poor
5	Very Poor
Non-Agricultural Land	
	Other land primarily in non-agricultural use
	Land predominantly in urban use

Figure 6 Natural England Agricultural Land Classification [Open Government Licence]

History

2.22 Crowmarsh Gifford village and Crowmarsh Parish share a long and proud heritage. Numerous archaeological findings, artefacts and fine buildings are evidence of that heritage and the long and fascinating history of Crowmarsh Gifford, Newnham Murren, Mongewell and North Stoke.

2.23 The distribution of listed buildings (Figure 7) partly reflects the wealth of Wallingford compared with that of Crowmarsh. Nevertheless, Crowmarsh has some distinctive historic buildings including Howbery Court, Newnham Manor, its Norman church St Mary Magdalene, the Dower House in Benson Lane as well as the farm cottages on the upper part of The Street, one with a Blue Plaque commemorating the former home of agricultural inventor Jethro Tull, and the Queen's Head Public House. North Stoke has ten listed buildings while the former Carmel College site includes another four. Each of these buildings illustrates facets of the Parish history and each illustrates a part of that history; nowadays safeguarded from significant architectural modification as heritage artefacts.

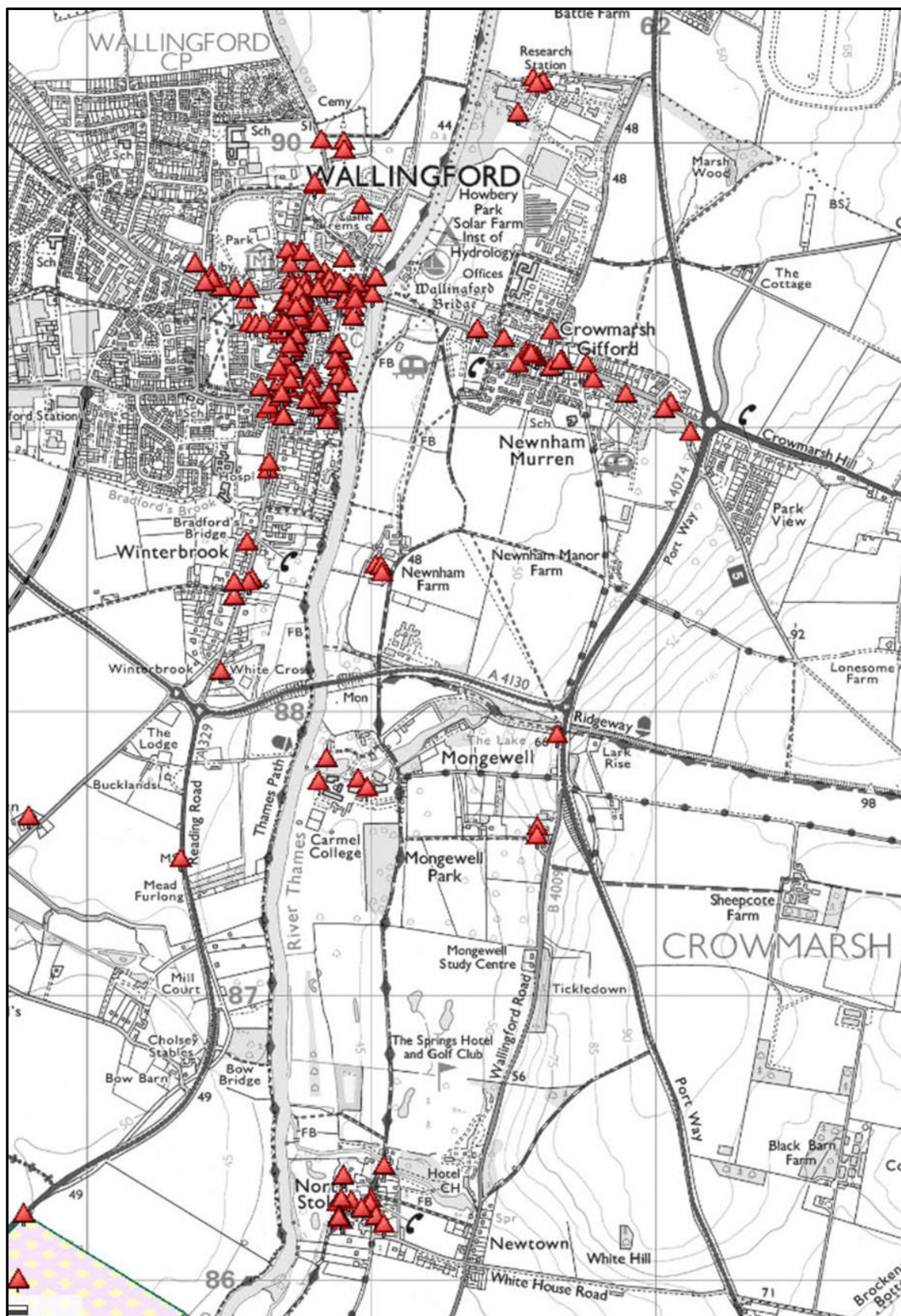


Figure 7 Listed buildings in and around Crowmarsh Parish, after English Heritage [Ordnance Survey Rights 2024: CPC Licence Number AC0000825348]

2.24 There is extensive evidence of prehistoric activity, from the Palaeolithic onwards, within the Parish. Early Bronze-Age pottery found in association with a narrow driveway at Howbery Park suggests stock-keeping alongside the Thames, possibly by a settled population responsible for nearby monuments including a contemporary round barrow. The site was reoccupied during the Roman period, probably still connected with stock rearing between riverside pastures to the west and arable land to the east. On higher ground near Coldharbour Farm, a late fourth century Roman cemetery containing 25 high-status burials (one of them in a lead coffin) was probably associated with a nearby farmstead or villa set within an enclosure surrounded by a ditch. The only identifiable structure, however, was a corn drying oven used to process cereal grains for brewing and storage. (See Pedgley B & Pedgley D 1990. *Crowmarsh: a history of Crowmarsh Gifford, Newnham Murren, Mongewell and North Stoke*. Crowmarsh History Group.)

2.25 Crowmarsh is an Anglo-Saxon place name. Until the creation of a separate manor with its own agricultural community in (probably) the tenth or eleventh century, the area presumably formed an outlier of Benson's large royal estate, exploited for its pasture, meadow, and wood. How early separate settlement developed is unclear, but by the ninth century the Thames crossing between Crowmarsh and Wallingford was well established, and landmarks along Crowmarsh's southern boundary with Newnham Murren suggest a carefully managed landscape. Features included a 'heathen burial place' (possibly an execution cemetery), from which the boundary followed a ditch to the 'boundary way' or Wallingford–Henley road. Later drainage or boundary ditches and cultivation layers, possibly of Pre-Norman date, have been located alongside the same road some 300 m from the river, while a tenth or eleventh century Anglo-Saxon sword found in the east of the parish suggests high-status occupation somewhere in the vicinity. The place name Howbery (though recorded only from the sixteenth century) is also Anglo-Saxon, and means 'a spur of land (hōh) by a defended enclosure (burh)'.

2.26 The Wallingford–Henley road formed both the southern boundary of Crowmarsh Gifford and the main village street. It may have originated as a prehistoric trackway from the Thames to the Chilterns, running roughly parallel to the Iron-Age Grim's Ditch further south. The creation of a burh at Wallingford in the ninth century added to the importance of the road, which increased further in the twelfth or thirteenth century when a stone bridge (replacing an earlier timber structure) was built across the Thames. A possible Roman road from Benson to Pangbourne may have passed close to Coldharbour Farm, running parallel to the ancient Icknield Way (which formed a short stretch of the old parish boundary) a little further east. Another north–south route (called Stockbridge Lane in the fourteenth century and later Benson Lane) subsequently formed the eastern boundary of Howbery Park, but was often waterlogged because of spring discharges and poorly maintained drainage ditches.

2.27 Crowmarsh Gifford village developed mostly along the north side of the Wallingford to Henley road, opposite houses belonging to Newnham Murren Manor and Parish. The twelfth century church lies towards the western end of the village some 450 m from the Thames, while closer to the river is the site of one of King Stephen's siege castles, raised in the years 1139–53 to besiege Matilda's garrisons at Wallingford. A second siege castle was probably erected on the riverside meadow 200 m to the south-west, but following the end of the conflict the fortifications were quickly removed and the land reverted to agricultural use. Opposite the castle on the south side of the Wallingford to Henley

road, Matilda endowed a leper hospital which survived until the Reformation, and which was included in Crowmarsh Parish by a southerly deviation of the boundary. Development of a built-up area, presumably along the village street, is suggested by a late twelfth century grant of three houses to Thame Abbey, and by the thirteenth century a street-side manor house may have been built between the church and the castle site.

2.28 This rich history has led to the discovery of many interesting archaeological findings and ancient artefacts. Grim's Ditch is of particular interest, a large-scale earthwork running from Wallingford to Henley (see Figure 5). The earthwork probably dates from the late Iron Age and the part of it in Crowmarsh Parish is a scheduled ancient monument (SM32). An excavation through the bank and ditch was undertaken in the 1980s prior to the construction of Nosworthy Way. It exposed a preserved Neolithic soil layer, late Neolithic or early Bronze Age plough marks and Bronze Age settlement evidence in the form of a series of post-holes forming a circular enclosure and a probable six-post granary structure. Further evidence of Neolithic settlement has been recorded nearby along with evidence of Anglo-Saxon settlement. Rare evidence of Iron Age Cord-Rig cultivation has also been recorded; a feature previously only recorded in Scotland and Northern England.

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The Plan area lies within South Oxfordshire District. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published by the Government in 2012 and revised in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024 is an important guide in the preparation of Local and Neighbourhood Plans. The Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan must demonstrate that it is consistent with the provisions of the NPPF. The following paragraphs of the NPPF (2024) are particularly relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Non-strategic policies (paragraphs 29-31)
- Supporting a prosperous rural community (paragraph 88-89)
- Promoting healthy and safe communities (paragraph 96)
- Protecting local green spaces (paragraphs 105-108)
- Achieving well-designed places (paragraph 131)
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (paragraph 187)
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (paragraph 202)

3.2 The development plan for the Parish currently comprises the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. The Local Plan has informed the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

3.3 The Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan will need revision when the emerging South & Vale Joint Local Plan 2025-2041 is made. The 'reasoning and evidence' of the emerging Local Plan has not informed the preparation of the revised Neighbourhood Plan.

3.4 The current strategy for the District is set out in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035, STRAT1: the Overall Strategy in the Local Plan 2035. Policy STRAT1 sets out the overall strategy including: supporting and enhancing the roles of Larger Villages, including Crowmarsh Gifford, as local service centres; supporting Smaller and Other Villages by allowing for limited amounts of housing and employment to help secure the provision and retention of services; and protecting and enhancing the countryside and particularly those areas within the two AONBs [National Landscapes] and Oxford Green Belt by ensuring that outside of the towns and villages any changes relate to very specific needs such as those of the agricultural industry or enhancement of the environment. The key objectives of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 regarding settlements and housing are:

1. Settlements

- 1.1 Support the settlement hierarchy, the growth and development of Didcot Garden Town, the delivery of new development in the district, the growth of our market towns and the vitality of our villages.
- 1.2 Support rural communities and their 'way of life', recognising that this is what attracts people to the district.
- 1.3 Meet identified housing needs by delivering high-quality, sustainable, attractive places for people to live and work.

1.4 Focus growth in Science Vale through delivering homes and jobs, retail and leisure facilities and enhanced transport infrastructure.

2. Housing

2.1 Deliver a wide range of housing options to cater for the housing needs of our community (including self-build and older persons' accommodation).

2.2 Support the regeneration of housing and facilities to strengthen communities and address deprivation issues.

2.3 Support meeting the economic and housing needs of the county as a whole, reflecting the special character of South Oxfordshire.

3.5 The planned growth for the larger villages is for each to grow proportionally by around 15% from the 2011 base date, on top of Core Strategy allocations where these exist. Thus, for Crowmarsh Gifford, which is classed as a larger village despite its modest population, the Local Plan 2035, as set out in table 4f states that 15% growth plus Core Strategy is 312 new dwellings, but as 571 have been completed and committed, the outstanding requirement is 0. Thus, no further land is allocated for housing within this Neighbourhood Plan.

3.6 The rural economic development strategy favours rural diversification, tourism development and home working, provided proposals respect the quality of their countryside location. Policy EMP10 within the Local Plan 2035, addresses some of these issues.

3.7 The affordable housing policy framework is well-established and is not likely to change in respect of the proportion of overall housing numbers required per scheme. However, national changes to affordable housing policy are likely to alter the economics and, therefore, mix of tenure type that can be planned for through the local planning system.

3.8 There is a comprehensive framework of landscape protection policies that are relevant to the Plan area (Appendix 2 attached to the Plan), given its proximity to the Chilterns National Landscape and River Thames Corridor. The framework allows for appropriate development but reinforces the importance of ensuring all development proposals respect the landscape character. The policies in the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan inform development site selection and other aspects of planning. These policies do not repeat national policy, but do reinforce the importance of having full regard to heritage assets, whether formerly or locally designated.

3.9 The local policy framework contains a range of generic design and development management policies to be applied to all types of development proposals across the District. There is an opportunity for the Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan to refine this framework so the guidance is specific to the Parish within the prescription given by the Supplementary Planning Document Joint Design Guide (2022). However, design characteristics of new buildings have not been prescribed in the Neighbourhood Plan because preferred styles change with time and because different styles are

required in different settings. The framework retains the multi-functional benefits of green infrastructure assets and requires their protection, achieving no net loss of biodiversity. Such assets are especially important in defining the character and in the functioning of the villages and the wider Parish.

3.10 Further relevant guidance includes:

NPPF (2024) Paragraphs 170 to 182 provide guidance in flood risk assessment for Local Planning Authorities. Essentially it asks that Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3 areas be not built upon.

NPPF (2024) Paragraph 189 states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. 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.

Schedule 7A (Biodiversity Gain in England) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as inserted into the 1990 Act by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021, states that every grant of planning permission requires the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met (“the biodiversity gain condition”). This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.

3.11 The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2019-2024 (extended to 2025) Policy DP1 ensures that planning decisions take full account of the importance of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB [National Landscape]. Policy DP2 sets out what to consider in order to give great weight to conserving and enhancing the AONB. It applies to all development in the AONB, both minor and major. Policy DP4 states: In the setting of the AONB, take full account of whether proposals harm the AONB. For example, development of land visible in panoramic views from the Chilterns escarpment, or which generates traffic in or travelling across the AONB, or which increases water abstraction from the chalk aquifer, thereby reducing flow in chalk streams.

3.12 With regard to heritage, the NPPF (2024), Paragraph 203 states:

Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

- the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
- opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.

3.13 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 states that the District's heritage assets, both above and below ground, such as nationally designated assets, including listed buildings, historic parks and gardens, historic battlefields and scheduled monuments as well as Conservation Areas and their settings, will be conserved and enhanced for their historic significance and their important contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place.

3.14 Proposals for development that affect non-designated historic assets will be considered, taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

3.15 The Local Authority states that there will be a presumption in favour of physically preserving nationally important archaeological remains and their setting, whether scheduled or not.

3.16 In assessing proposals affecting any non-designated archaeological sites or deposits of significance equal to that of a nationally important monument, great weight will be given to their preservation in the balancing judgement.

4. COMMUNITY VIEWS

4.1 Explanatory articles on the review process were published in *Crowmarsh News*, March and April 2024 editions, the second article also advising the venues for consultation exhibitions. The exhibitions and public consultation events were held at North Stoke Village Hall on Saturday 6 April and Crowmarsh Gifford Village Hall on Saturday 13 April 2024. A questionnaire was available at the exhibitions as hard copy and was also advertised as available on line.

4.2 The main concern in North Stoke was preservation of the privately owned field that is central to the village. Residents from Mongewell voiced concern over lack of development of the former school site in their village as this would improve security, which is an ongoing problem with occasional intrusion into empty and abandoned buildings.

4.3 The exhibition at Crowmarsh Gifford showed a preference for the development of the SODC site was overwhelmingly in favour of some kind of community hub. Most responses accepted that housing was appropriate for the Jewson site and for part of the SODC site.

4.4 The community is concerned that rapid and significant expansion of the housing stock has put extensive pressure on the infrastructure before funding becomes available to catch up with increased demand. There are seven major concerns and consequent infrastructure needs:

1. Crowmarsh Gifford Church of England Primary School is one of the key attractions for residents with young families to want to come and live in Crowmarsh. The school currently has a maximum of 210 places, with a single class per year age intake. The school cannot expand on its present site. There is a real concern that children from the Parish may need to be bussed to other schools. *Need a larger capacity school on a new site in the medium term.*

2. The Wallingford Medical Centre and the practice at Benson serve Crowmarsh Parish. However, Wallingford cannot cope with the present demand and is subject to massive pressure from ongoing building in the area. The practice at Benson is being enlarged but only to cope with new housing proposed at Benson. Dentistry is available in Wallingford. *Need an enlarged medical centre at Wallingford.*

3. Traffic management: the ancient bridge between Crowmarsh Gifford on the one side of the River Thames and the town of Wallingford on the other is barely capable of sustaining present traffic levels and is on the edge of one of three designated Air Quality Management Areas in the District. A knock-on effect of traffic congestion is the disruption of bus schedules. *Need to promote alternative and sustainable forms of transport and encourage home working where appropriate.*

4. Crowmarsh Gifford does not have a shop but has access to retail facilities in Wallingford. Many Crowmarsh residents with access to cars prefer to shop in Didcot or further afield, however, those without transport are obliged to depend on Wallingford while others use web-based delivery services. *Need better range of retail facilities at Wallingford along with improved parking.*

5. There are few new job opportunities in Crowmarsh Gifford and Wallingford. Opportunities for school leavers are essentially poorly paid, mainly within the retail and catering trades. There are few moderately priced one- and two-bedroom starter homes available in the Parish suitable for the younger members of the community. *Need a widened employment base and increased stock of starter homes.*

6. The utility provision in Crowmarsh Gifford is of inadequate capacity. *Upgrade utility structure: overhead cables to be protected, sewerage system to be improved to cater for new housing.*

7. The potential effects of new development on the heritage assets of the Parish and the condition of those assets are potential sustainability issues. *Need to protect setting of heritage assets from unsightly development.*

4.5 There is now real concern that the increase in population the Parish faces will adversely impact the three village communities of Crowmarsh Gifford, North Stoke and Mongewell. It is apparent that the communities feel that they have been let down by the planning process and are now subject to what they call 'significant overdevelopment'.

4.6 A core bone of contention in Crowmarsh Gifford is that it is classified as a 'major village', and thus liable to significant development according to the Adopted Development Plan. Residents argue that as the smallest of the 'larger villages' it has precious few amenities and has to rely on other centres in the district, Wallingford, Didcot and Benson, for access to shops and other essential service, and cannot support any further housing development.

4.7 Amelioration of the concerns can only occur with investment. It is not apparent where this investment will come from and there would seem little hope of improved infrastructure during the tenure of the Plan. Community Infrastructure Levy monies generated from new housing development in the Parish need to target a priority list identified through consultation with parishioners and sanctioned by Crowmarsh Parish Council. A key concern is traffic management and a start has been made by the implementation of 20 mph speed limits in the villages and a new pedestrian crossing in the Street at Crowmarsh Gifford.

4.8 These issues are an important part of the overall vision for the Parish although it is recognised that they are difficult to ameliorate without support and appropriate funding.

5. LAND USE PLANNING POLICIES

5.1 The Objectives of the Land Use Planning Policies are to promote Crowmarsh Gifford, Mongewell and North Stoke villages as home to a thriving working community that is strongly linked to its environment and to its neighbours, a place which has its own identity and in which any future development adds to the character of the village and to the quality of life of its residents. The Plan strives to preserve the rural character of the Parish and to uphold relevant national and regional strategies and policies for the countryside. The Policies prescribe the conservation of the rural aspects of the Parish and the rural setting of its communities and their valued landscapes, while allowing small growth of housing stock to satisfy the current housing needs. Available and deliverable land is also allocated for employment use.

5.2 Land use policies are used to determine planning applications made for development proposals. They can establish the principles for retaining or changing the use of land in settlements and in the countryside.

5.3 The Policies avoid repeating existing national or local planning policies and are intended to provide the additional local perspective. The policies, therefore, focus on a small number of key development issues in the Parish and in Crowmarsh Gifford in particular. For all other planning matters, the national and local policies of other planning documents – the National Planning Policy Framework and the various policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 - will continue to be used. The Crowmarsh Parish Neighbourhood Plan also encompasses the reasoning behind the policies (Appendix 6 attached to the Plan) and the evidence base of the Adopted Development Plan.

5.4 Set out below are the Policies Map and the proposed policies of the Plan. There is also a short statement explaining the intention of each policy and identifying supporting information and evidence sources.

5.5 The countryside within the Parish is managed as arable land and pasture for grazing, with small areas of woodland. Most of the land lies within the Chilterns National Landscape and the agricultural land classification is 2 (very good) and 3 (good to moderate) apart from the upper lands of the Chiltern Hills where the soil is thin. The countryside is home to a variety of protected species including, for example, adders, barn owls and stag beetles. Low-lying land is liable to flooding by the river, exacerbated by spring discharges via alluvial gravels from the base of the permeable chalk where it overlies marly chalk. The Parish is rich in artefacts that reflect its important heritage. Grim's Ditch, which forms part of the Ridgeway National Trail, is a scheduled ancient monument. Guidelines and policy statements from the various guardians of the countryside protect the land primarily for agricultural use and recreation.

5.6 The Policies Map (Figure 8) includes three inset maps, Inset Map A for Crowmarsh Gifford, Inset Map B for Mongewell and Inset Map C for North Stoke (Figures 8A, 8B and 8C).

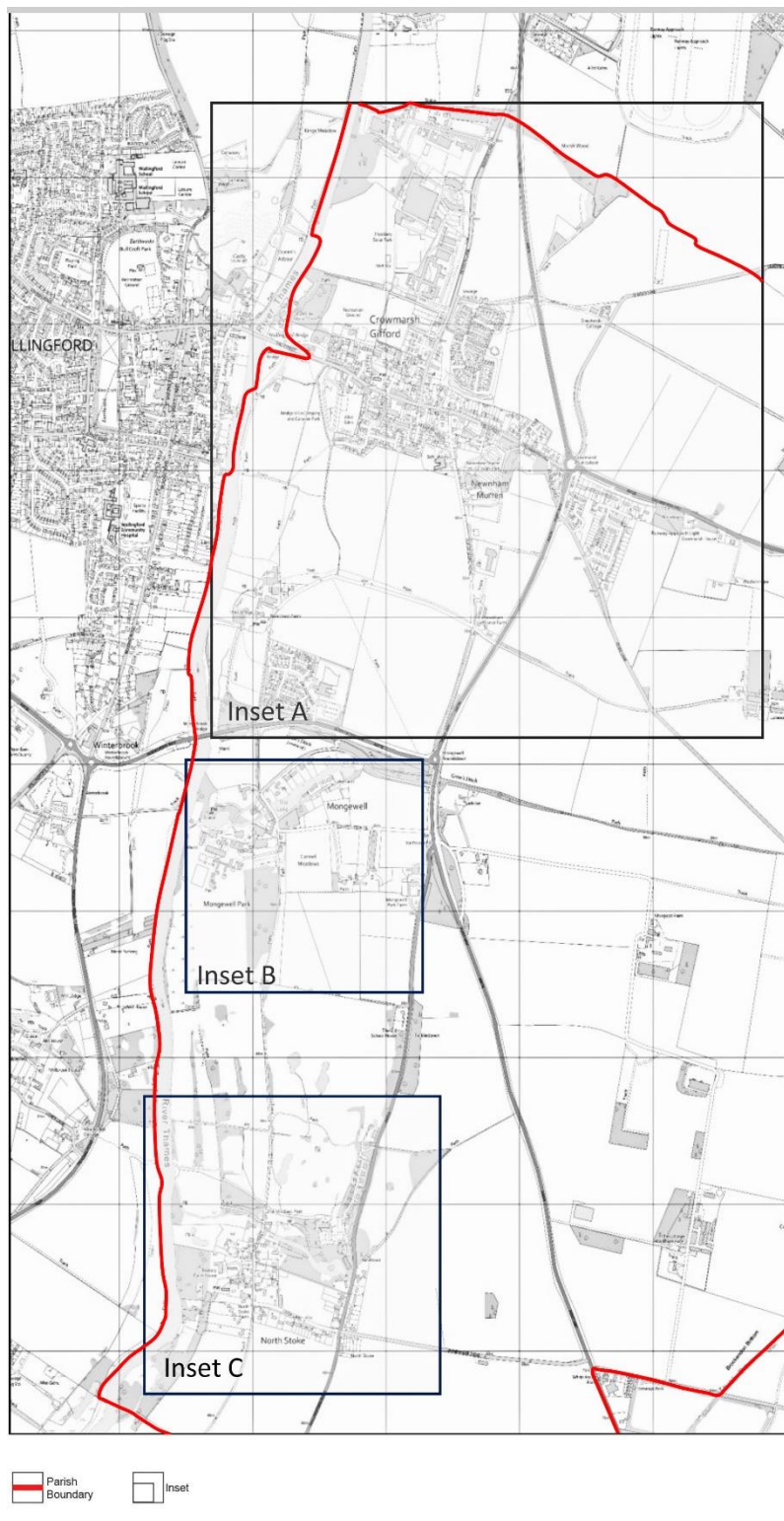
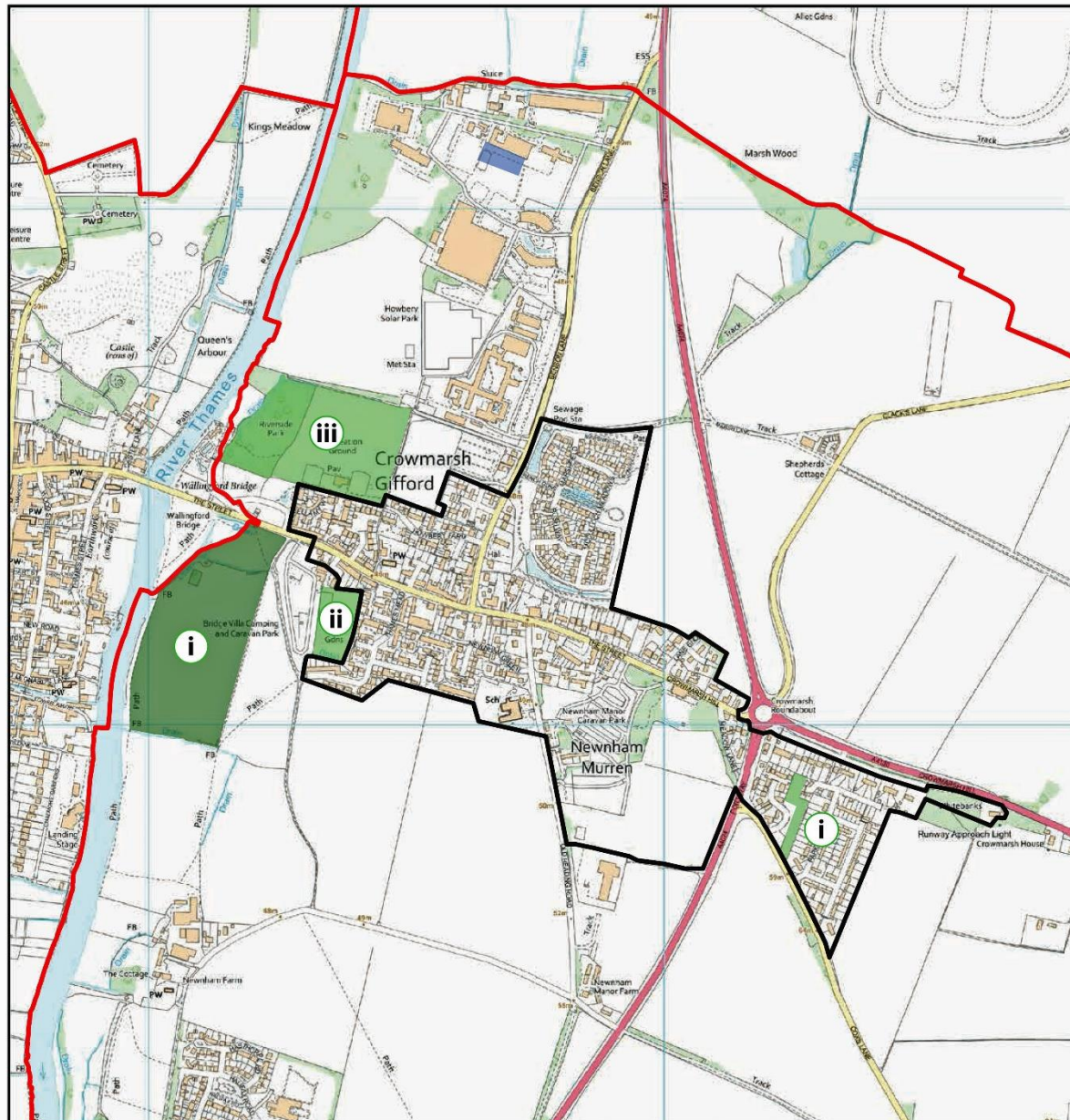


Figure 8 Crowmarsh Parish Policies Map showing inset locations A, B and C [Ordnance Survey Rights 2024: CPC Licence Number AC0000825348]



- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|--|
|  | Parish Boundary |  | CRP6: Local Green Space
i Riverside Meadows |
|  | CRP1: Village Boundary |  | CRP6: Public Open Spaces
i Parkside Allotments
ii Emery-Owen Allotments
iii Recreation Ground and Nature Area |
|  | CRP3: Land at Howbery Park | | |

Figure 8A Policies Map: Inset map A, showing detail for Crowmarsh Gifford village [Ordnance Survey Rights 2024: CPC Licence Number AC0000825348]

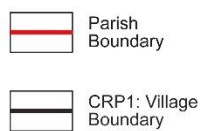
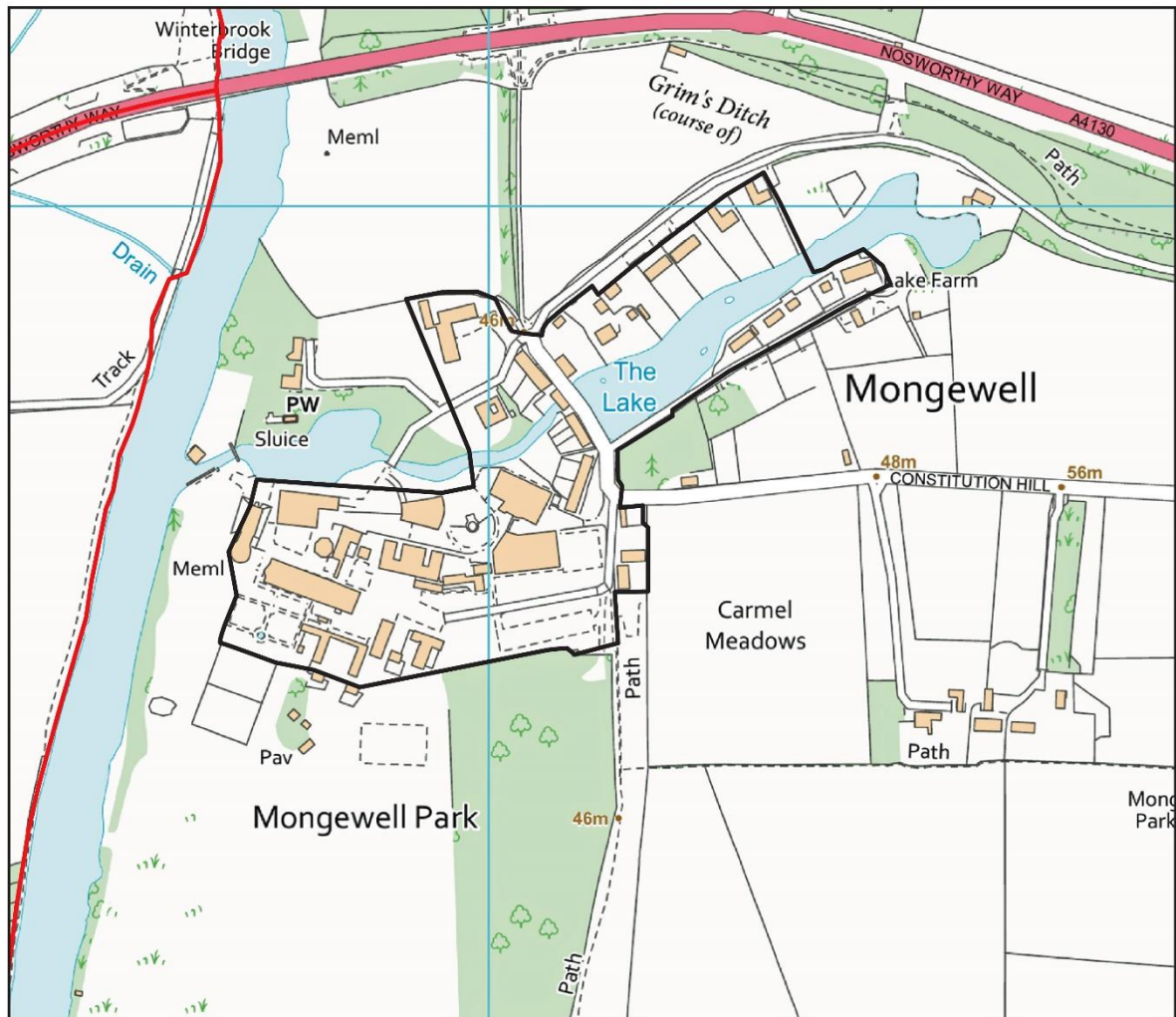
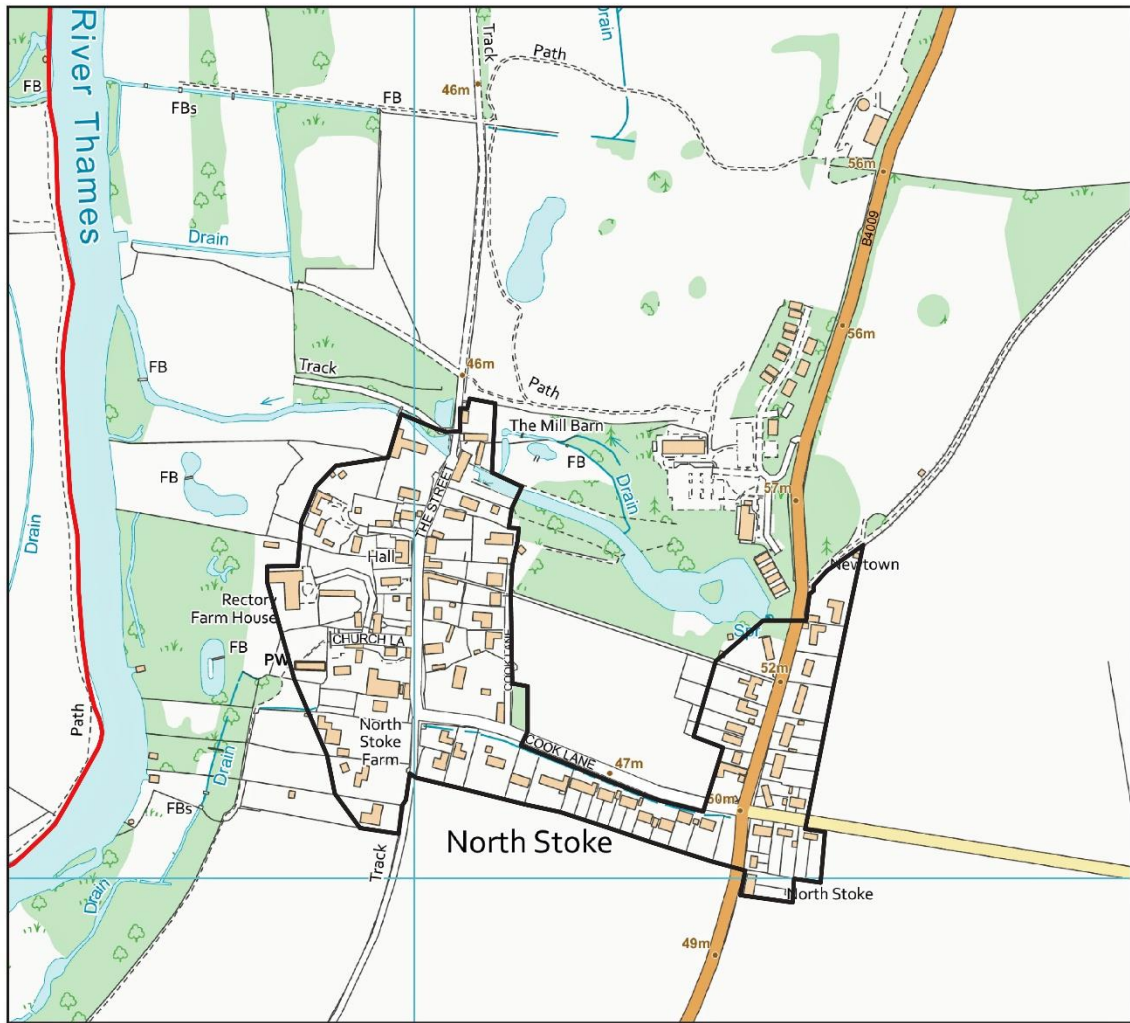


Figure 8B Policies Map: Inset map B, showing detail for Mongewell village [Ordnance Survey Rights 2024: CPC Licence Number AC0000825348]



-  Parish Boundary
-  CRP1: Village Boundary

Figure 8C Policies Map: Inset map C, showing detail for North Stoke village [Ordnance Survey Rights 2024: CPC Licence Number AC0000825348]

POLICY CRP1: VILLAGE BOUNDARIES AND INFILL DEVELOPMENT

The Neighbourhood Plan defines Village Boundaries at Crowmarsh Gifford, Mongewell and North Stoke, as shown on the Policies Map Insets A, B and C.

Proposals for infill development within the village boundaries will be supported, relative to their specific settlement hierarchy classifications and requirements, provided they accord with the design and development management policies of the development plan and other policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Proposals for development outside the boundaries will only be supported if they are appropriate to a countryside location and they are consistent with development plan policies.

5.7 Policy CRP1 derives directly from the Plan Objectives. Firstly, it contributes towards making Crowmarsh Parish a sustainable home to a thriving working community that is strongly linked to its environment. Secondly it contributes to a Parish in which any future housing development adds to the quality of life of its residents. Thirdly, it preserves the rural character of the Parish.

5.8 This policy is intended to distinguish between the built-up area of each of the three settlements in the Parish and their surrounding countryside in order to manage development proposals. The boundaries have been drawn using conventions deployed by other local planning authorities that use this development management tool, but essentially, the boundaries follow the observed settlement edge formed by buildings and perimeter fences, which have a clear functional relationship to each village.

5.9 The boundaries also reflect plot boundaries where they are clearly defined in the street-scene or within the landscape, e.g. mature trees/hedges, boundary walls/fences. Features that appear visually as part of the open landscape – roads, waterways, large open gardens with no/few built structures – are excluded from the boundary, irrespective of their functional relationship to land within the boundary. Extensive and long gardens have been cut off on the western edge of North Stoke to form a more coherent built area within the settlement boundary.

5.10 The principles for the delineation of a Settlement Boundary were established in the Cheshire East Council Settlement Boundary Assessment Guidance as reproduced in Appendix 9 attached to the Plan.

5.11 A number of planning applications have also been approved within the Parish but not yet built, and these have been included within the settlement boundaries, defined by the perimeter of the development site boundary that protrudes beyond a present village boundary. At Crowmarsh Gifford, construction work started in June 2020 at the site east of Benson Lane beyond the northern edge of the built village and was completed in 2023. The Newnham Manor site to the south of the village holds

a resolution to grant planning permission and is also included in the policy settlement boundary. Acceptable development for this site shall include low density housing, landscaping at the edge of the National Landscape, Toucan crossing of the A4074, safe route to school, mixed development with 40% affordable dwellings and land to be made available for the primary school on Old Reading Road. Development on an approved site at Mongewell having stalled, the settlement boundary for that village is defined by the existing buildings only.

5.12 The Strategic Environmental Assessment (Appendix 6 attached to the Plan) identifies a potential negative impact on the sustainability objective for heritage. The risk is that competition for infill land within the village boundaries may adversely impact the setting of nearby listed buildings. Suitable mitigation wording has, therefore, been incorporated into the policy: ‘...provided they accord with the design and development management policies of the development plan and other policies of the Neighbourhood Plan’.

5.13 This policy is consistent with a number of policies in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan to encourage sustainable forms of development and does not affect the definition of each settlement in the settlement hierarchy of the Adopted Development Plan, where the settlement of Crowmarsh Gifford remains defined as a ‘Larger village’, with Mongewell and North Stoke as ‘Other villages’.

5.14 Infill development is 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. Residential development on sites not allocated in the Local Development Plan 2035 will be permitted, for example, where it is development within the existing built-up settlement area of villages, provided an important open space of public, environmental, historical or ecological value is not lost, nor an important public view harmed. Policy STRAT5: Residential Density in the Local Plan 2035 sets out the approach to residential densities across the district.

5.15 The policy requires that development proposals outside the defined boundary are in line with the relevant policies of the Local Plan 2035 (policy ENV1: Landscape and Countryside) and the Neighbourhood Plan in respect of protecting local landscape and character of the natural environment. These recognise the valued function of the countryside and working farmland in shaping rural character. Proposals for development outside the settlement boundaries will not, therefore, be supported unless they are appropriate to a countryside location.

5.16 The Neighbourhood Plan does not make any housing site allocations given that the District Council has confirmed that the housing requirement figure for the Parish has been met through existing completions and commitments. However, the local community recognises the potential value that small scale, infill housing development may have in enabling access to homes in the Parish suited to younger people and ‘downsizers’.

POLICY CRP2: HOUSING MIX AND TENURE

A. Proposals for new residential development will be required to demonstrate a mix of dwelling types and sizes which:

A. Meet the needs of current and future households, and

B. Address the district wide shortage of smaller houses, and

C. Are appropriate to the site in terms of style and design, and

D. Demonstrate they have followed all relevant principles within the South

Oxfordshire Design Guide.

B. Proposals that recognise the need for smaller dwellings and comprise single houses, terraced cottages or groups of small detached or semi-detached houses with a maximum of 3 bedrooms will be particularly supported.

5.17 Policy CRP2 derives from the Plan Objectives. Firstly, the policy helps towards developing future housing development that adds to the quality of life of its residents. Secondly, it promotes the development of housing suitable for those on modest budgets and for the elderly. Thirdly, it promotes design and location of new builds towards a net zero carbon demand, and of sustainable high quality design, compatible with surrounding buildings as prescribed in the Joint Design Guide.

5.18 The policy refines the Local Plan 2035 Policy H11: Housing Mix by setting a specific requirement for all new homes in the Parish. It is necessary to start to rebalance the current mix of homes so that it better reflects local housing needs.

5.19 The Housing Needs Assessment (Appendix 3 attached to the Plan), concludes that the stock of dwellings in Crowmarsh Gifford was 587 in 2017 of which 44% had three bedrooms and only 3% had single bedrooms. The balance was mainly two and four bedroom dwellings. Thus, there was adequate provision for starter homes in two bedroom accommodation but with prices in excess of £300,000 none could be assigned as 'affordable' to lower income groups. These same houses are also needed by the elderly and as both groups will increase in number by 2035, greater provision of two bedroom accommodation, some on one level, will be needed. There is also a need to increase the number of one bedroom apartment style dwellings as a more affordable option for first time buyers to help ease the demand on two bedroom homes.

5.20 The village of Crowmarsh Gifford has an increasing number of youngsters below the age of 15. If these children choose to stay in the village, they will need access to suitably priced first-time buyer's accommodation or modestly priced rental accommodation. There is currently only a small population of older teenagers and this will work its way through the system as time progresses and will moderate the number of affordable houses needed to some extent. There will be a small, but increasing, demand for affordable dwellings for one-parent families. More significant is the projected increase in individuals in the age range 35 to 50 (about 44 individuals) who will require additional family type housing to accommodate them. There will also be a small increase in the number of elderly people in

the village, some of whom may choose to downsize in property and will require one- and two bedroom dwellings, ideally bungalows, to be made available.

5.21 The policy, therefore, requires that new infill homes provided for by Policy CRP1 include a majority of 2 bed and 1 bed apartments style homes. Although while over the lifetime of the plan this may only marginally influence the balance of housing stock, it is considered to be a necessary step to provide opportunities for younger people and 'downsizers' to be able to access housing which otherwise the market would not deliver.

POLICY CRP3: LAND AT HOWBERY PARK, BENSON LANE, CROWMARSH GIFFORD

The Neighbourhood Plan allocates 0.28 ha of land at Howbery Park, as shown on the Policies Map Inset A, for commercial, business and service use (Class E). This is part of a preferred site of the landowner for development for commercial, business and service use. Development proposals for commercial, business and service use, particularly for offices or research and development of products or processes, will be supported provided that the scheme:

- A. Delivers a 'net gain' overall biodiversity value on site;***
- B. Sustains and enhances the significance of the setting of the Grade II listed buildings in close proximity to the site;***
- C. Is arranged and designed so it follows the alignment of the existing Innovation Centre***
- D. Incorporates a belt of trees planted along the western boundary of the site;***
- E. Avoids any adverse impact on surface water or fluvial flood risk on any adjoining land;***
- F. Incorporates uses which will be compatible with existing uses on adjacent land;***
- G. Incorporates buildings which are of similar scale and height to the existing buildings in the Business Park and of a design to reduce their visual footprint;***
- H. Is supported by a transport assessment in accordance with the development plan to manage satisfactorily its traffic effects on the road network and to encourage and enable improvements to sustainable transport methods.***

5.22 Policy CRP3 relates to the Objectives of the Plan as follows. Firstly, it contributes towards Crowmarsh Parish being a sustainable home to a thriving working community. Secondly, it ensures any employment use development within Class E (for office use and for research and development of products or processes) adds to the quality of life of its residents. Thirdly, it preserves the rural character of the proposed development area.

5.23 The policy allocates 0.28 ha of employment land at Howbery Park. By doing so it is in accordance with the adopted Local Plan. The site allocated comprises part of the southern portion of the SHLAA/SHELAA site CRO3 identified for employment use by the Local Authority when determining an application for housing on the whole site in 2008 (Appendix 5 attached to the Plan).

5.24 The Howbery Manor industrial site is an established area devoted mostly to scientifically focussed employment use. It provides an important centre of specialist employment opportunities in the district with employees drawn from a large catchment that include, Oxford, Reading and Didcot. The allocated development site lies within the heart of Howbery Manor industrial area and is currently grassland adjacent to a large car parking area. The principle for development within this area has, therefore, already been established by the existing Howbery Manor industrial park and the landowner has now made the site available for further employment use.

5.25 The Strategic Environmental Assessment (Appendix 6 attached to the Plan) identifies potential negative impacts on the sustainability objectives for heritage, biodiversity, traffic and flooding. Impact on heritage is potentially negative because there is a risk of adversely impacting the setting of Howbery Court [Howbery Manor], loss of biodiversity is potentially negative due to reduced green space, traffic is negative due to increased workforce commuting into and off the site, and flooding of adjacent land could be caused by runoff from hard standings and roofs on the site. Suitable mitigation wording has, therefore, been incorporated into the Policy.

5.26 The policy also sets out other key development principles to manage the potential effect of the site. However, it is possible to avoid or mitigate any significant adverse environmental effects by ensuring compliance with the requirements of the policy. Criterion G of the policy addresses building heights. In this context development on the site should be one or two storeys in height, with the adjacent Innovation Centre providing a good guide for such heights. This approach will allow the listed Howbery Manor to retain a dominant character on the site and in views from its surroundings.

POLICY CRP4: CONSERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The rural character of the Parish is to be preserved, with particular regard to its neighbours and including the Chilterns National Landscape, the River Thames Corridor and the North Stoke Conservation Area. In addition to the national policies and guidelines pertaining to these areas any development proposal should, as appropriate to their scale, nature and location:

A. Protect and, where possible enhance, important views and visually sensitive skylines from footpaths, bridleways in the Chilterns National Landscape and the Ridgeway National Trail.

B. Enhance the ecology and biodiversity of their local setting and the rural area as a whole.

C. Include high-quality design which respects the natural beauty of the countryside and reinforces the sense of place and local character.

D. Conserve or enhance the local historic environment.

5.27 Policy CRP4 derives directly from the Plan Objectives. Firstly, the policy promotes Crowmarsh Parish as a sustainable home to a thriving working community that is strongly linked to its environment and to its neighbours, including the town of Wallingford. Secondly, it preserves the rural character of the Parish, and upholds relevant national and regional strategies and policies for safeguarding the countryside.

5.28 The policy focuses on the managed rural landscape that is characteristic of the Parish. Parts of the Parish are subject to controls of the Chilterns National Landscape and the low-lying land along the river Thames, although not designated, is conserved as the River Thames Corridor, much of the latter being within Flood Zones 2 and 3. This policy supplements existing national and regional policies to conserve the countryside, rather than prescribing new policies specific to the Parish (Appendix 2, attached to the Plan).

5.29 Areas of National Landscape are designated by the Government for the purpose of ensuring that the special qualities of the finest landscapes in England and Wales are conserved and enhanced. In policy terms they have the same planning status as National Parks. The Chilterns National Landscape was originally designated in 1965 as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and extended in 1990. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a statutory duty on local authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of designated National Landscapes when coming to decisions or carrying out their activities relating to, or affecting, land within these areas.

5.30 The Chilterns National Landscape covers 13 local authorities and the Councils work together to safeguard the future of this shared nationally protected area through the Chilterns Conservation Board. The Board prepares a statutory National Landscape Management Plan which has been endorsed by SODC as a material consideration in planning decisions.

5.31 The Chilterns National Landscape is a nationally designated landscape and as such permission for major developments will be refused unless exceptional circumstances prevail as defined by national planning policy. National guidance explains that whether a proposal constitutes major development is a matter for the relevant decision taker, taking into account the proposal in question and the local context. For the purposes of this plan, 'major development' will not be restricted to the definition of major development in the Town and County Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 or to proposals that raise issues of national significance, and will include consideration of whether a proposal has the potential to have a serious adverse impact on the Chilterns National Landscape.

POLICY CRP5: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

As appropriate to their scale and nature new development proposals should provide a measurable net gain for biodiversity using the most up-to-date information available.

Development proposals which result in a loss of mature trees, hedgerows or other forms of wildlife corridors will not be supported. Where the loss of a mature tree, hedgerow or other form of wildlife corridor is unavoidable, the proposals should make provision for suitable replacements where it is practicable to do so.

5.32 Policy CRP5 derives directly from the Plan Objectives. Firstly, it promotes Crowmarsh Parish as a sustainable home to a thriving community that is strongly linked to its environment. Secondly, it promotes a Parish in which any future housing and employment use development adds to the quality of life of its residents. Thirdly, this Policy helps to preserve and enhance the rural character of the Parish.

5.33 The position of the parish, between the Chiltern Hills and the River Thames, makes it in an ideal location to secure tangible gains for biodiversity both at specific development sites as well as through a piecemeal approach. Landscape management schemes include the work by Earth Trust at Riverside Meadows, which is an excellent example of high-quality habitat creation. Small projects range from the conversion of a World War Two Pill Box into a home for bats, and on a larger scale the selected mowing of meadowland to facilitate wildflower growth.

5.34 Provision of enhanced biodiversity is prescribed in general within guidelines issued by a number of authorities including Natural England, as well as the various codes for good farming practice. A minimum increase in biodiversity of 10% is a mandatory requirement of national policy.

POLICY CRP6: GREEN SPACES

Local Green Space

The Neighbourhood Plan designates Riverside Meadows as a Local Green Space, as shown on the Policies Map Inset A. Development proposals within Riverside Meadows will only be supported in very special circumstances.

Public Open Spaces

The Neighbourhood Plan also identifies the following as Public Open Spaces within the village settlement boundaries, as shown on the Policies Map Inset A:

I. Park View allotments

II. Emery-Owen allotments

III. Crowmarsh Gifford Recreation Ground and Nature Area.

Development within a Public Open Space should preserve and where possible enhance public access and the contribution of the site to the health and well-being of visitors and residents.

5.35 Policy CRP5 derives directly from the Plan Objectives. It promotes Crowmarsh Parish, and Crowmarsh Gifford village in particular, as a sustainable home to a thriving working community by preserving the green spaces within and adjacent to Crowmarsh Gifford which also enhances heritage protection.

5.36 The policy has the effect of managing development proposals in line with NPPF provisions, which prevent any development of the land unless the ‘very special circumstances’ test can be met.

5.37 This policy serves two purposes. Firstly, it designates a much cherished and historically important open space in a prominent location in the Parish as a Local Green Space in accordance with paragraph 107 and 108 of the NPPF, that it is:

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- b) 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; and
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

The designated Local Green Space satisfies all three of these requirements:

- a) The Local Green Space lies adjacent to the western edge of the built area of Crowmarsh Gifford. It is adjacent to the bridgehead and Riverside Park which are both within Wallingford Town. Importantly, it provides a distinctive divide between the town of Wallingford and the village of Crowmarsh Gifford which, along with the river itself are key to the separate identity of the village from the adjacent town. This policy identifies the attractive landscape setting of the village, in that the designated Local Green Space forms an important local landscape feature that contributes to the visual and historic character and appearance of the village. As such, it warrants protection from harmful development.
- b) The site offers an important recreational focus for the community. The site, known as Riverside Meadows, is an important part of the River Thames Corridor and a focus for visitors and tourists. It is managed on behalf of the owners, the District Council, by Earth Trust. Cattle graze Riverside Meadows as a form of management, but the site is important in its own right. Various biodiversity projects have been implemented on the site and it is part of Natural England’s countryside stewardship scheme. In addition, the site is home to various protected and rare species including the Daubenton’s or Noctule Bat and the Banded Demoiselle. It is of significant historical importance and contains ancient earthworks and other historical artifacts.
- c) The site is an important component of the Thames corridor. The site is managed with the objective of restoring its traditional ecology and biodiversity. As such it is a local feature of small scale.

The part of the policy which relates to the Riverside Meadows Local Green Space takes the matter-of-fact approach set out in paragraph 108 of the NPPF. In the event that development proposals come forward within the Plan period the District Council will be able to assess development proposals within the designated local green space for any very special circumstances on a case-by-case basis.

5.38 Secondly, the policy identifies Public Open Spaces that, whilst not meeting the tests to be designated as Local Green Spaces, are still worthy of protection from harmful development. These sites provide open areas which provide a direct link to the open countryside beyond the village

boundary. They offer recreational opportunity that is important to the community including a small area of natural land in which the community may enjoy direct contact with the environment.

5.39 The NPPF paragraphs 104 require that such designated Public Open Spaces should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 The Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented through a combination of the local planning authority's consideration and determination of planning applications for development in the parish.

Development Management

6.2 The Parish Council will use a combination of the Local Plan and this Neighbourhood Plan policies to inform and determine its planning application decisions. The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications made in the parish and it will be made aware of any future planning applications or alterations to those applications by the planning authority. It will seek to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan policies have been identified and applied correctly by applicants and by officers in their decision reports.

6.3 Where necessary, the Parish Council may seek to persuade the Secretary of State to call-in a planning application that it considers is in conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan but which the planning authority has deemed to consent. Similarly, it may also seek to persuade the Secretary of State to recover an appeal of a refused application, where the conflict with one or more Neighbourhood Plan policies has been important in the reasons for refusal. In both cases, the Parish Council will do so if it considers matters of national policy significance (for neighbourhood planning) are raised.

Local Infrastructure Improvements

6.4 There may be opportunities through S106 agreements (or through the Community Infrastructure Levy) to secure financial contributions to invest in improving local infrastructure. Should an opportunity arise, the Parish Council will review the evidence base and community consultations for the Neighbourhood Plan to inform its view in liaising with South Oxfordshire District Council.

Other Non-Planning Matters

6.5 During the process of preparing and revising the Neighbourhood Plan, there have been many proposals for improving or addressing current problems in the parish that lie outside the scope of the land use planning system. The Parish Council has noted these issues and will take them forward through its day-to-day business and in partnership with the local community and relevant parties.