

BINFIELD HEATH PARISH

Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2035

October 2024 v1.0



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 Neighbourhood 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 village, comprising three distinct settlements, 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 Neighbourhood Plan 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 Design Guidance and Codes have been produced to help achieve this.

¹ South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 Policy H8

² South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 Policy H16

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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 residents wish 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
- be compatible with European Union (EU) obligations and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)⁷

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

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

- 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.

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

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](#)



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 southern 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.

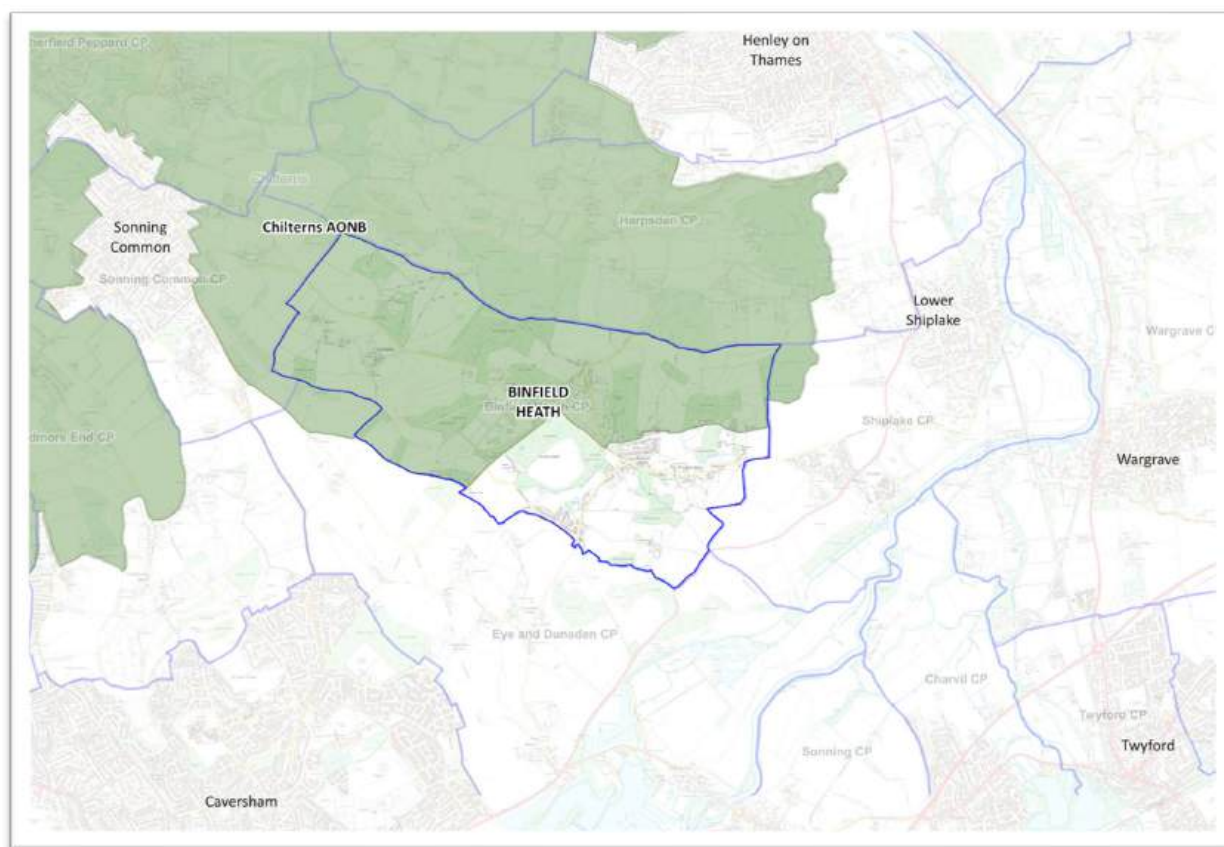


Figure 2: The location of the parish in the wider context, with the area covered by the Chilterns National Landscape highlighted in green

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

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

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.

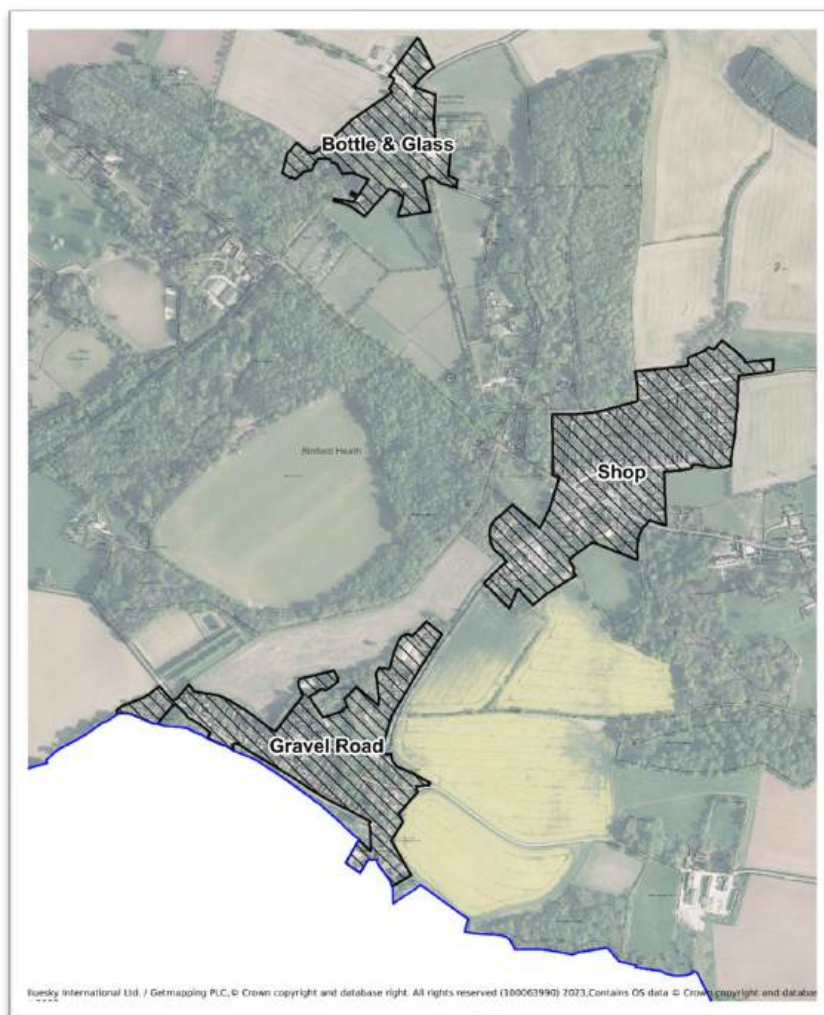


Figure 3: The three settlements forming Binfield Heath village grew up around the Heath

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 old Forge in the village centre is being redeveloped for use by the community.

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.

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 National Landscape. It is this



Figure 4: The Bottle & Glass Inn is Grade II listed



Figure 5: The Thatched Cottage dates from the 17th Century, Grade II Listed

rural setting that gives the area its unusual character and special atmosphere. It is also one of the things people value most about living here.¹¹



Figure 6: A view of part of the old 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: Keeps Well in Shiplake Row

landmark.

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

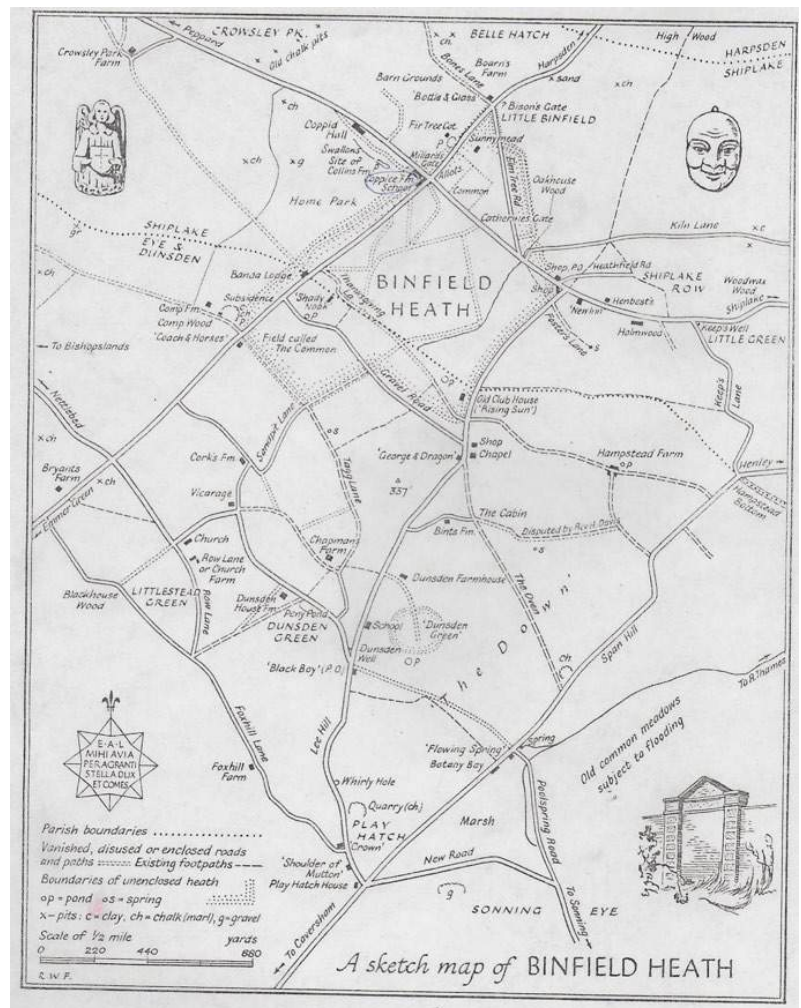


Figure 8: An old sketch map showing the Heath and a network of paths

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



Figure 9: Grade II listed Shiplake Rise Farm was built in the 18th Century

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 was originally part of the Crowsley Park estate, 18th Century Grade II Listed



Figure 11: Dating from the early 18th century, The Old House has a distinctive patterned roof and is 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 illustrate some of the attractive brickwork found in the area

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 The Princess Royal 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: New development in the Chilterns National Landscape has recently taken place next to the thatched Bottle & Glass Inn

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 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

2.3.1 Overview

Most of the parish falls within the Chilterns National Landscape (formerly 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 Chilterns National Landscape 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.

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

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 and the description of the landscape prepared by The terra firma Consultancy Ltd reproduced below.

The Binfield Heath Parish Landscape Character Assessment, March 2022, identifies seven Parish landscape character areas (PLCAs), defined in Figure 15. These PLCAs are based on the district level assessments, including the South Oxfordshire District Council Landscape Character Assessment (SODC LCA). As noted in the Parish Landscape Character Assessment, ‘*whilst the PLCAs require boundaries (as do the wider district studies) these generally represent zones of transition between adjacent character areas rather than a sudden change and as such it is often helpful to refer to the characteristics of the adjacent PLCA in addition.*’

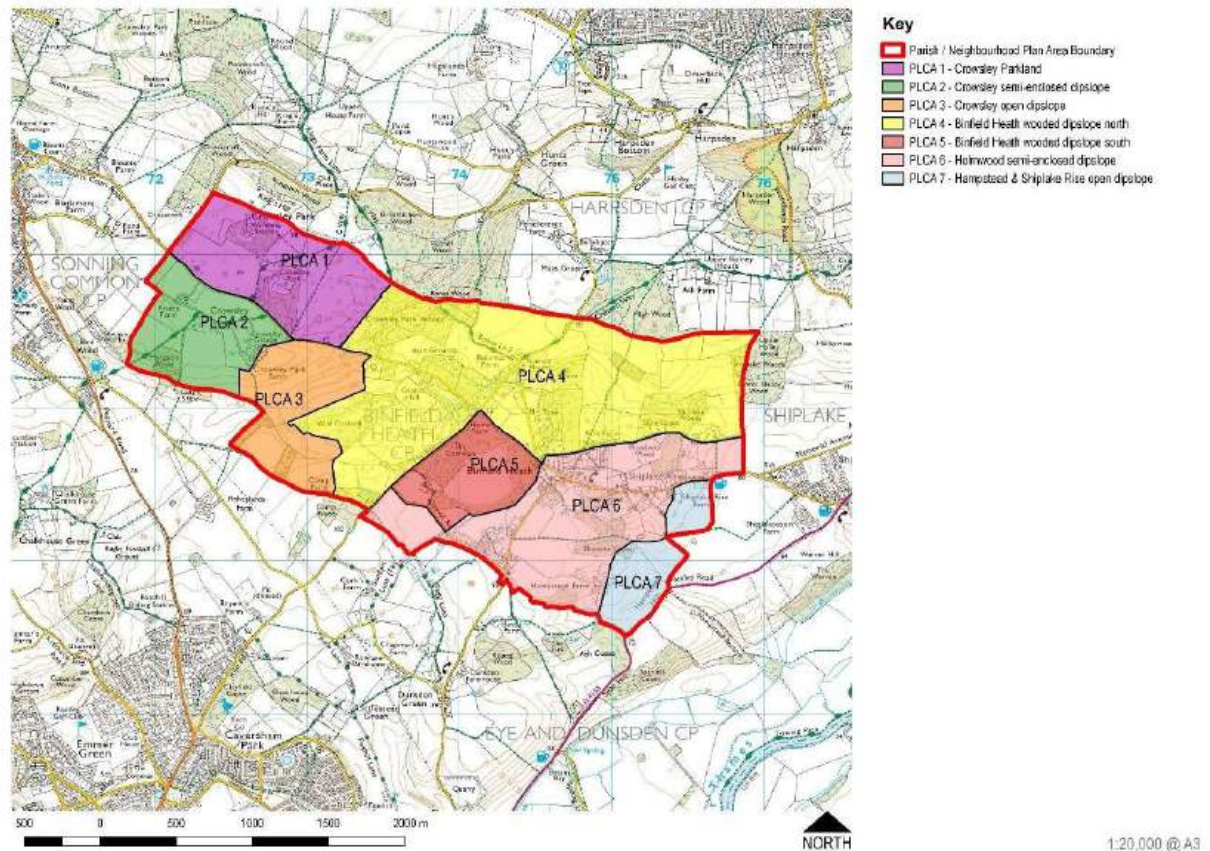


Figure 15: Parish landscape character areas (PLCA)

2.3.2 Description of Parish Landscape Character Areas (PLCAs)

2.3.2.1 PLCA1: Crowsley Parkland

PLCA1 comprises the area of LCT 15: Parkland and estate farmland, as identified in the SODC LCA, that lies within the parish. The Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment (HLCA) (2017) identifies the area covered by PLCA1 as being ‘Ornamental Parkland / Designed Landscape’.

PLCA1: Crowsley Parkland largely comprises open parkland, within Crowsley Park. Crowsley Park House sits within the centre of the PLCA, surrounded by a number of historical features within its grounds, including a grotto, icehouse, stable block and coach house. The PLCA has an identifiable parkland character, with features typical of historic parkland landscape, including veteran trees, ornamental tree planting, clumps of parkland trees within open grassland, and avenue trees.

2.3.2.2 PLCA2: Crowsley semi-enclosed dipslope

PLCA2 comprises a discrete area of LCT 16: Semi-enclosed dipslope, as identified in the SODC LCA, that lies within the parish and the Chilterns National Landscape. It is defined in the SODC LCA as being a semi-enclosed dipslope landscape, adjoining the parkland landscape of PLCA1 to the north and the open dipslope landscape of PLCA3 to the southeast.

PLCA2 forms a transition landscape between the distinct parkland character of the landscape in Crowsley Park (PLCA1) to the north, and the open, undulating farmland of PLCA3 to the east. A dry valley runs along the southern boundary of the parish and the PLCA.

Although largely comprising open farmland, the mix of both arable and horse pasture in PLCA2 is enclosed by: woodland on the southern boundary of the PLCA, including 'Morgan's Wood'; mature vegetation following field boundaries, lanes and public rights of way (PRoW), and vegetation associated with a cluster of buildings, including Crowsley Grange and Crowsley Park Farm forming the small rural hamlet of Crowsley.

2.3.2.3 PLCA3: Crowsley open dipslope

PLCA3 comprises the area of LCT 11: Open dipslope that lies within LCA 10: Chilterns Plateau with Valleys, as identified in the SODC LCA, that lies within the parish and the Chilterns National Landscape. It adjoins the semi-enclosed dipslope landscape of PLCA2 to the northwest, the parkland landscape of PLCA1 to the north, and the wooded dipslope of PLCA4 to the east.

PLCA3 largely comprises open arable fields with a number of small blocks of woodland to the south. Woodland at 'Wild Orchard', located within the wooded dipslope landscape of PLCA4 contains the area to the east. A dry valley continuing from PLCA 2 to the west, divides within PLCA3 with the two branches extending eastwards through the area.

2.3.2.4 PLCA4: Binfield Heath wooded dipslope north

PLCA4 comprises the area of LCT 23: Wooded dipslope, as identified in the SODC LCA, that lies within the parish and the Chilterns National Landscape. It adjoins the parkland landscape of PLCA1 to the northwest; the open dipslope landscape of PLCA3 to the southwest; and the semi-enclosed dipslope of PLCA6, and wooded dipslope (that lies outside the Chilterns National Landscape) of PLCA5 to the south.

PLCA4 is a varied landscape which includes areas of arable and woodland, parkland, paddocks, scattered residential properties including Coppid Hall and its lodges, and Comp Farm, and common-edge settlement centred on the Bottle & Glass public house (Bottle & Glass settlement), and on Kiln Lane. It illustrates much of the history of Binfield Heath including areas of designed parkland, former heathland and common-edge settlements. The centre of Binfield Heath village lies immediately to the south.

The wooded landscape of PLCA4 includes a number of ancient woodlands at 'Bones Wood', 'Long Covert' and 'Oakhouse Wood'. The PLCA extends to the edge of the Chilterns plateau in the south of the PLCA, and is incised by small dry valleys to the north-east and north-west.

2.3.2.5 PLCA5: Binfield Heath wooded dipslope south

PLCA5 comprises the area of LCT 23: Wooded dipslope, as identified in the SODC LCA, that lies within the parish and outside of the Chilterns National Landscape. It adjoins the wooded dipslope of PLCA4, (located within the Chilterns National Landscape), to the north, and the semi-enclosed dipslope of PLCA6, (located outside of the Chilterns National Landscape), to the south.

The majority of PLCA5 comprises private mixed woodland which surrounds an open area of amenity grassland used for polo. Two small groups of common-edge houses are located on Thanksgiving Lane to the west and in the eastern corner of the PLCA at the junction of Arch Hill and Common Lane. PLCA5 contains the largest area of the former Heath, around which the village historically evolved and from which it takes its name.

The history of Binfield Heath is closely linked with the heath / common land in the area. Oxfordshire was divided into 'hundreds' by the early 10th century, and within Binfield Hundred a rough area of heathland, straddling both Shiplake and Dunsden parishes, became known as Binfield Heath. This poor-quality land, located roughly where the village lies today, was left as a heath or common where local inhabitants had the right to pasture their animals. Better farmland on the lower slopes was gradually enclosed, while the Heath remained common land. Extensive open areas at Binfield Heath and beyond were not fully enclosed until the late 19th century, with what remains of the former heath bounded by Dunsden Way, Gravel Road, Emmer Green Road, Harpsden Road and Common Lane. Three scattered settlements, Shop, Bottle and Glass, and Gravel Road settlements have developed around the Heath, and along with smaller clusters of common-edge dwellings, (as described within PLCA5), now form the village of Binfield Heath.

2.3.2.6 PLCA6: Holmwood semi-enclosed dipslope

PLCA6 comprises the area of LCT 16: Semi-enclosed dipslope, as identified in the SODC LCA, that lies within the parish and outside of the Chilterns National Landscape. It adjoins the wooded dipslope of the Chilterns plateau within PLCA4 and PLCA5 to the north and the open dipslopes of the Thames Valley and fringes within PLCA7 to the southeast.

PLCA6 contains areas of largely residential development forming discrete settlements (the Shop and Gravel Road settlements). PLCA6 contains the village centre (Shop settlement) and includes the main routes through the village of Binfield Heath (Dunsden Way and Shiplake Row), along which other houses in the open countryside are located on the margins of the former heath.

Farmland on the edge of PLCA6 transitions towards the more open slopes falling towards the Thames Valley to the south-east. Woodland, including ancient woodland at Shiplake Copse, Woodwax Wood and Radbrook's Copse, provides enclosure on the southeast facing slopes of the PLCA.

2.3.2.7 PLCA7: Hampstead and Shiplake Rise open dipslope

PLCA7 comprises the area of LCT 11: Open dipslope, that lies within LCA 11: Thames Valley and fringes, as identified in the SODC LCA, and outside of the Chilterns National Landscape. It adjoins the semi-enclosed dipslope of the Chilterns plateau within PLCA6 to the northwest.

The majority of PLCA7 comprises arable farmland, with some areas of grassland in the north-west. Both parcels of land fall from the northwest and Chilterns plateau, towards the Thames Valley and parish boundary in the southeast.

2.4 DARK NIGHT 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 Chilterns National Landscape
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. 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: Coppid Hall was much extended in the 19th century



Figure 17: Crowsley Park House, believed to date from the early 18th century, is Grade II listed

Among the oldest surviving houses in the parish are The 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 18: The shop was built on the edge of the Heath in 1926



Figure 19: Grade II-listed Holmwood dates from the 18th century

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.

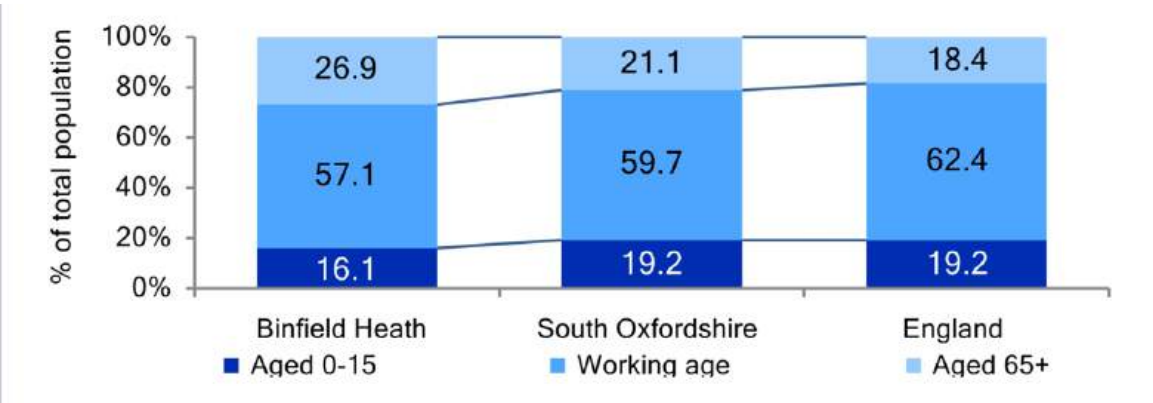


Table 2: Population by age – Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS) 2019²⁷

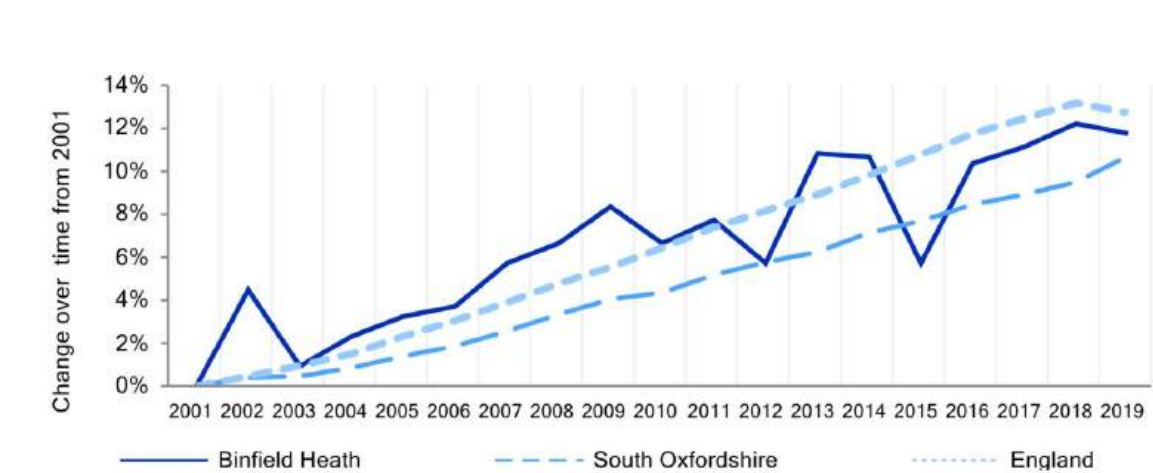


Table 3: % Change in total population from 2001-2019 – Source: Mid-Year Estimates (ONS) 2019

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 Chilterns National Landscape. 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 20: New housing in Common Lane



Figure 21: Converted barns at Crowsley



Figure 22: Typical 1.5 storey brick cottages

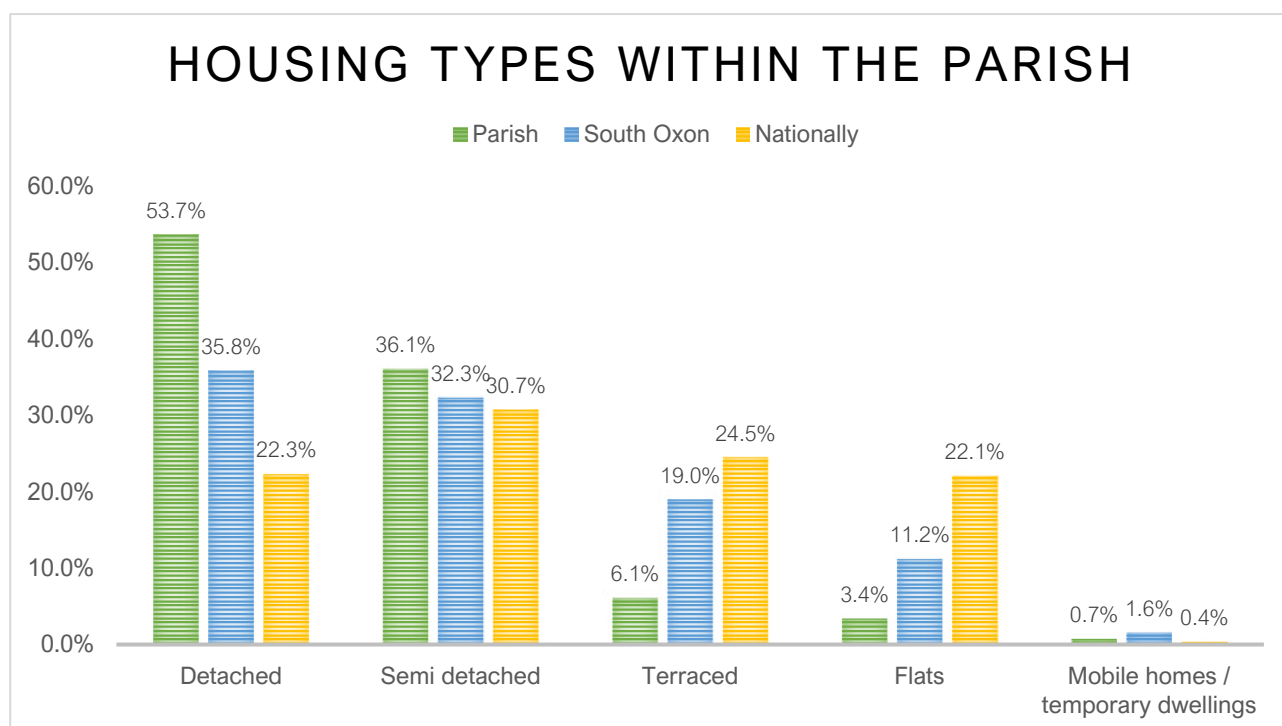


Table 4: Comparison of housing types. Local Insight Report for the Parish 20th Jan 2021²⁸

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

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

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 Chilterns National Landscape, 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 Chilterns 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.

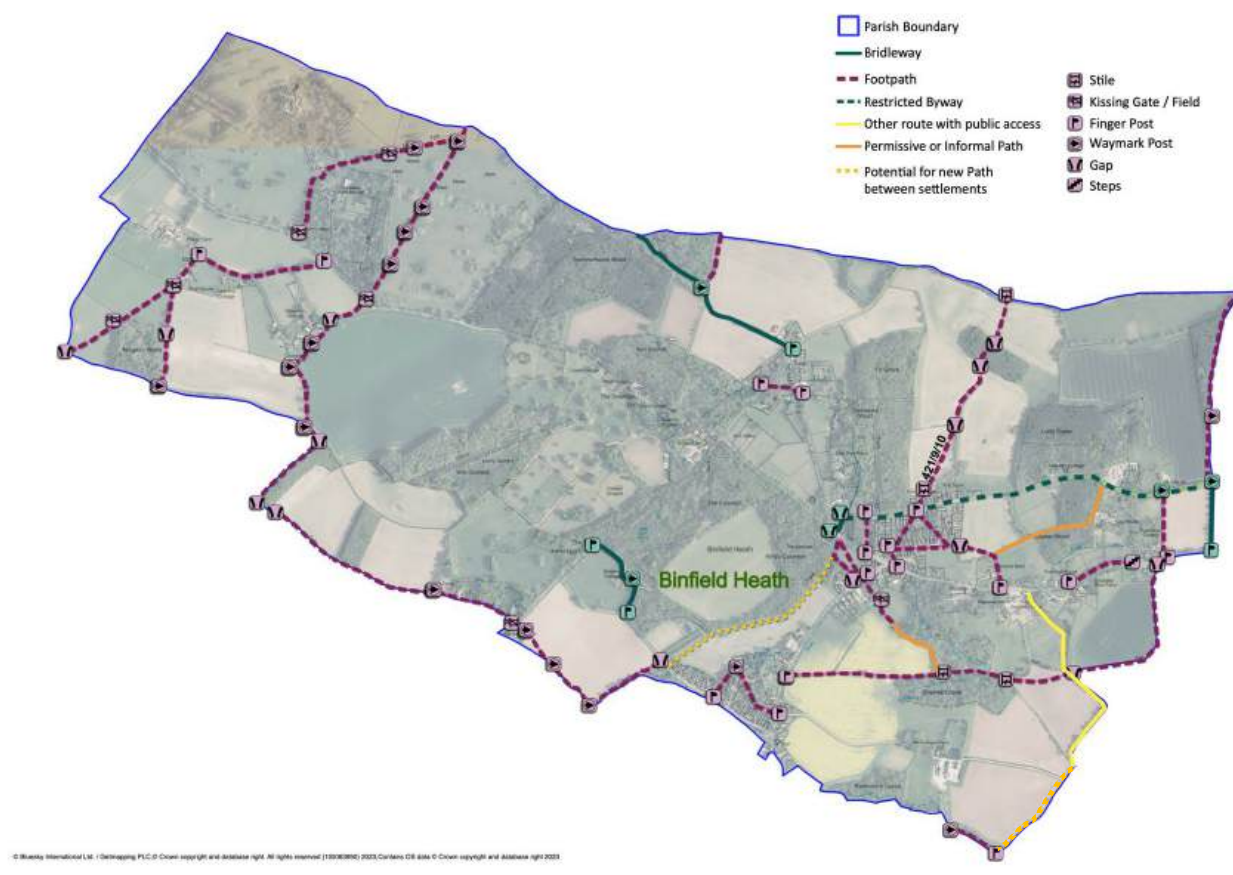


Figure 23: Plan of Parish Public Rights of Way and Informal / Permissive Paths

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 National Landscape. Bones Lane, an old pack horse route³⁰ and part of the Chilterns 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 24: Common Lane, which has green triangles and fingerposts at either end, is in the Chilterns National Landscape

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



Figure 26: Harpsden Road looking north - the grass verges are protected by logs to prevent their erosion

Two minor roads run through the parish meeting at Coppid Crossroads. 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 National Landscape.

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 Chilterns National Landscape.

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 Guidance and Codes).

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, anonymous local benefactors have 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.

³³ Local Insight profile for Binfield Heath © OCSI (2020) Page 34

³⁴ Reference <https://www.binfieldheathchurch.org.uk/>



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.

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 DEVELOPMENT

Binfield Heath's Neighbourhood Plan took more than 3 years to produce.

The parish council consulted on the Neighbourhood Plan for over six weeks at the presubmission consultation stage. Residents were strongly encouraged to comment: all comments were collated and reviewed and the Plan was updated where necessary.

A Consultation Statement was produced. The comments received were tabulated and highlighted to show whether they were noted, a change was made or an explanation given.

The amended Plan was prepared by the steering group and submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) for independent examination. SODC then conducted a further six-week consultation where additional comments were encouraged. Those representations were posted on the SODC website and provided to the independent Examiner.

The Examiner recommended that subject to modifications (included in this document) the completed Plan should proceed to referendum. 'Made' Neighbourhood Plans 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

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



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.

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.



Figure 27: May 22 Newsletter



Figure 28: Information Board

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.



Figure 30: The exhibition tent at the Jubilee lunch

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 29: Queen's Platinum Jubilee 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. 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



Figure 31: The Binfield Heath Flower Show, above, and the Annual Parish Meeting provided venues for the Neighbourhood Plan exhibition



national and local planning policy and if it needs to take account of any significant changes in the local area.

Regular monitoring will inform an annual review of the effectiveness of the Neighbourhood Plan. 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 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

Our vision is to:

- Protect and enhance the rural character of Binfield Heath while ensuring that the parish has a sustainable future
- Preserve the open spaces between the parish's individual settlements as well as the green gaps that separate us from neighbouring parishes
- Protect what remains of the historic Heath that gave the parish its name
- Identify and protect buildings considered to be of heritage value to the community
- Support local businesses
- Maintain the parish's strong community spirit
- Play our part in addressing the climate emergency by caring for our natural environment,
- Continue to push for the entire parish to be included in the Chilterns National Landscape.

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 Park and hamlet
- 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 National Landscape

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 Secure sufficient public transport to make it a credible alternative to the car
- 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 project.
- 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 and December 2023, 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 National Landscape 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 2023 are especially relevant to the issues addressed by Binfield Heath Neighbourhood Plan:

- Supporting a prosperous rural economy (Paragraph 85)
- Good design (Paragraphs 131-141)
- Supporting healthy communities (Paragraph 8 & 96)
- Protecting local green spaces (Paragraphs 102-107)
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (Paragraphs 180-188)
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (Paragraphs 195-204)
- Neighbourhood Planning (Paragraphs 12-14, 28-33, 37, 66, 67 & 71)

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 National Landscape (see area washed over in green in Figure 32 below), with three small settlements and clusters of housing within the open countryside.

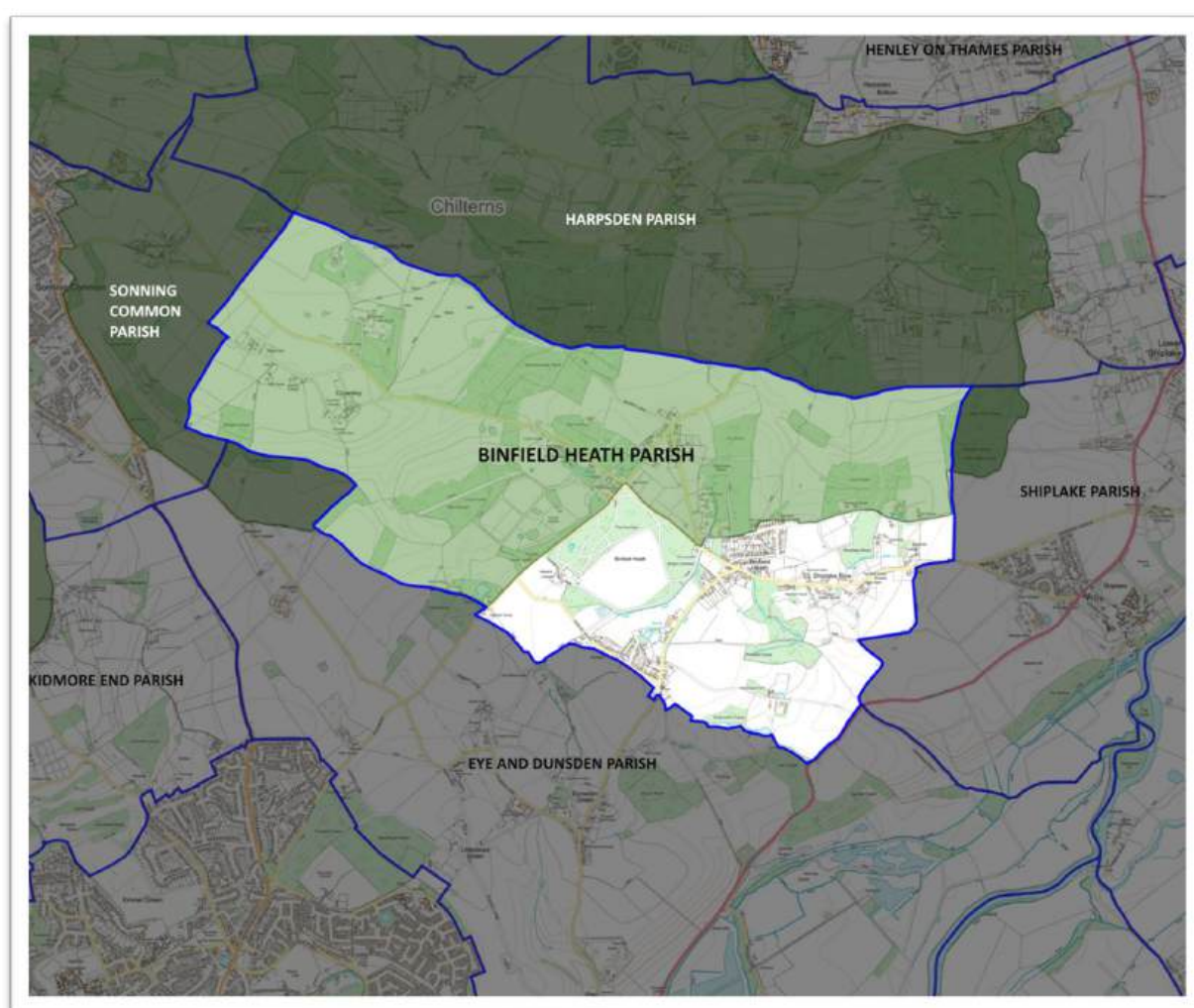


Figure 32: Location of the Parish within the wider context and coverage of the Chilterns National Landscape

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 National Landscape, 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 hamlet and the original Heath after which the area was named.

There are a great many long distance and important local views 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.

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 National Landscape 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
• ENV4: Watercourses	• ENV5: Green Infrastructure in New Developments
• ENV6 Historic Environment	• ENV7: Listed Buildings
• ENV11 Pollution – Impact from Existing and/or Previous Land Uses on New Development (Potential Receptors of Pollution)	• ENV12 Pollution – Impact of Development on Human Health, the Natural Environment and/or Local Amenity (Potential Sources of Pollution)
• EP1 Air Quality	• EP2 Hazardous Substances
• EP3 Waste Collection and Recycling	• EP4 Flood Risk
• EMP1: The Amount and Distribution of New Employment Land	• EMP2: Range, Size and Mix of Employment Premises
• EMP3: Retention of Employment Land	• EMP10: Development in Rural Areas

5.3 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING POLICIES

The following policies have been devised in response to the Vision, Aims 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 BH9 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

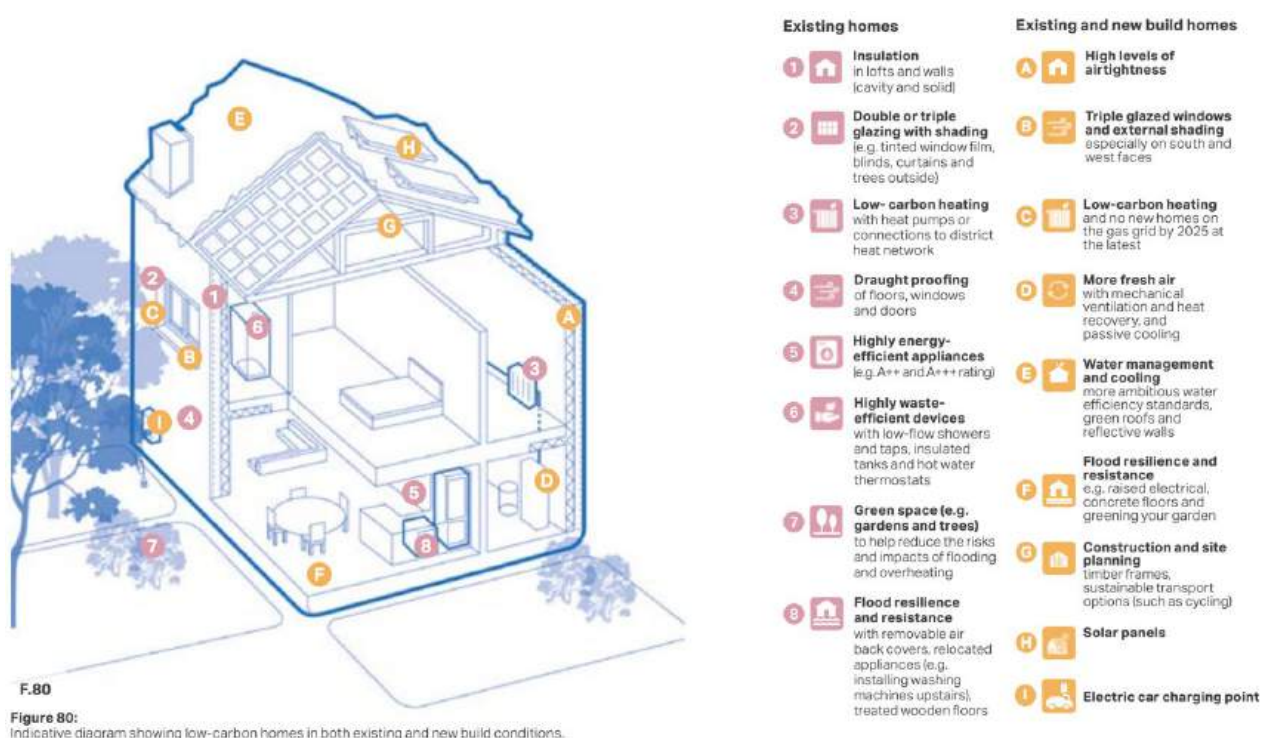


Figure 33: Extract - Figure 80 from the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes (AECOM 2023) - highlighting low carbon homes (for both new build and existing buildings) and where energy saving measures can be included /installed

5.3.2 Landscape Character (Policy BH1)

The terra firma Consultancy was commissioned to evaluate the parish landscape both within and outside the Chilterns National Landscape. In particular, it is important to understand the landscape value of the area outside the Chilterns National Landscape and the contribution it makes to the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape.

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

This is important in the case of the land outside the Chilterns National Landscape, as the district council has no alternative landscape designation in its current 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

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

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 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 34 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.

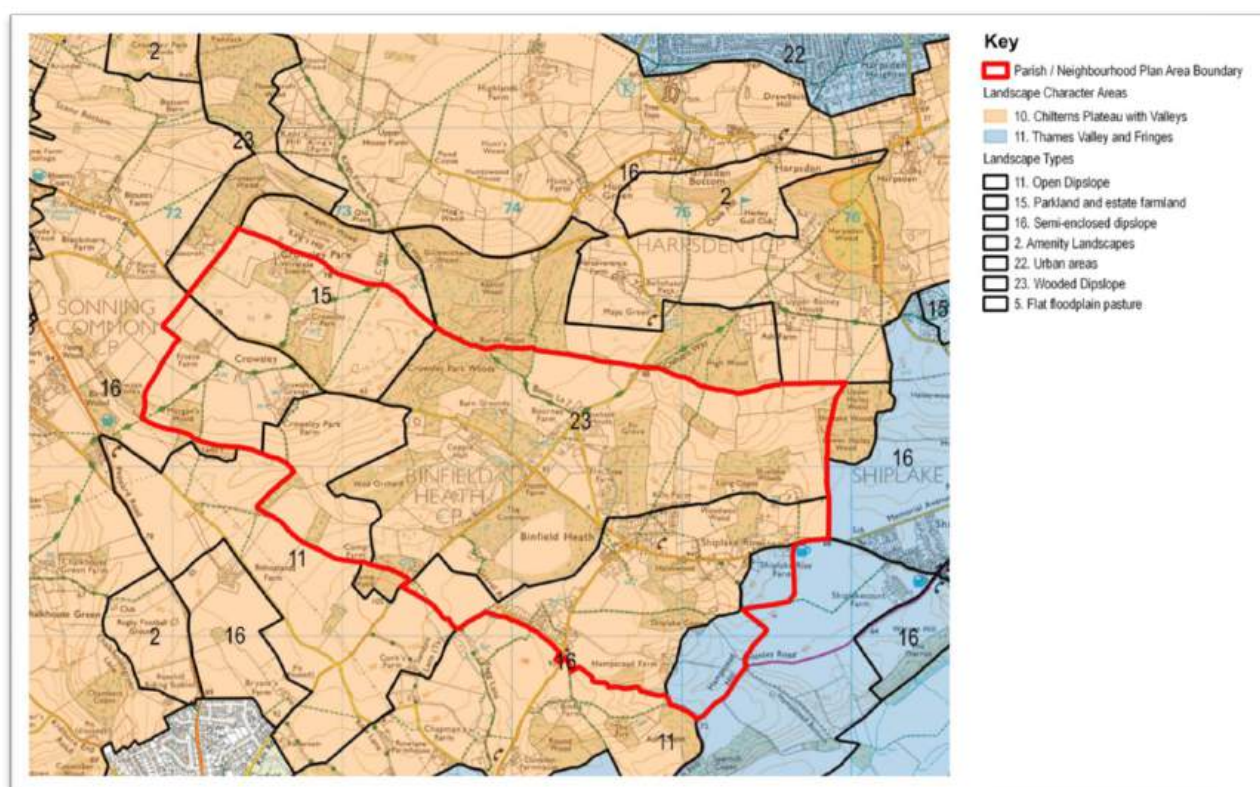


Figure 34: SODC Landscape Character Areas and Landscape Types

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 35, 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.

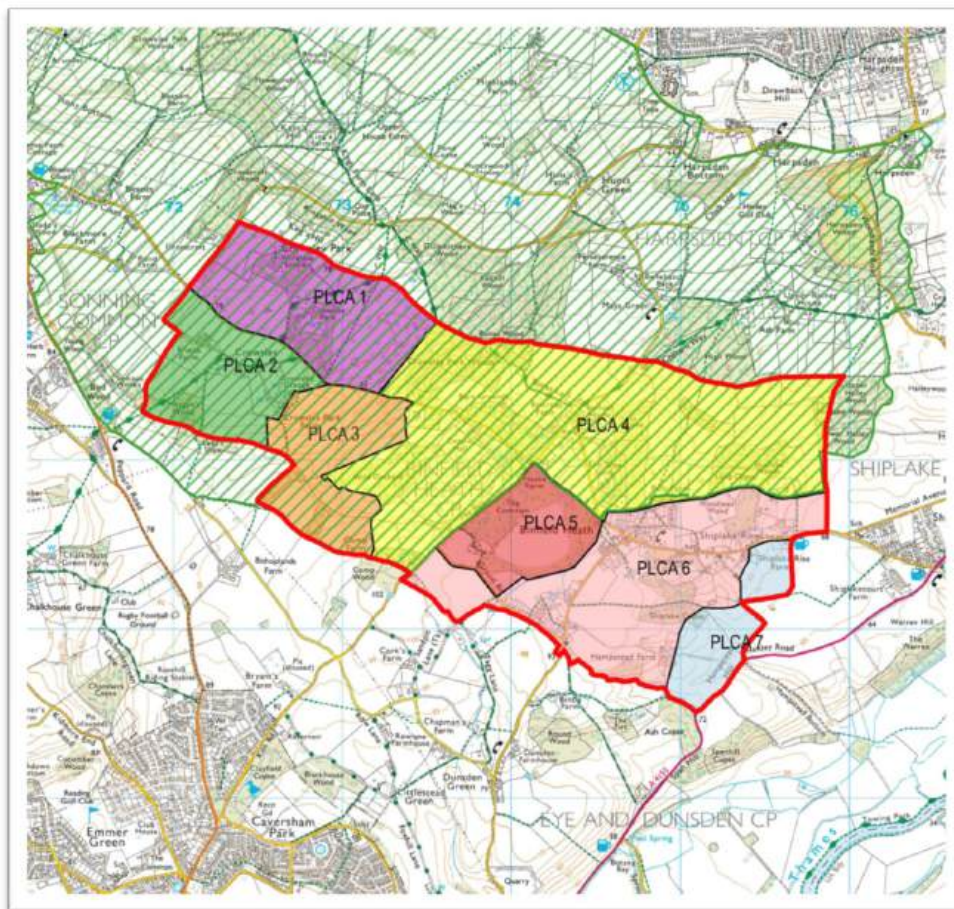


Figure 35: Parish landscape character areas (PLCAs)



PLCA1: Crowsley Parkland



Most of PLCA1 comprises open ornamental parkland and is a designed landscape situated within the Chilterns National Landscape. 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 wolves' 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 Chilterns 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 National Landscape, 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 National Landscape and is crossed by The Chilterns 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 Chilterns 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 National Landscape and despite a number of perceptual detractors to the southwest, has a strong physical and functional link with this national landscape designation.

PLCA3 Crowsley Open Dipslope



PLCA3 comprises farmland interspersed with woodland blocks overlaid on a complex rolling landscape. It lies within the Chilterns National Landscape. 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 National Landscape, 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 National Landscape.

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 National Landscape 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 National Landscape 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 National Landscape. PLCA5 has strong landscape links with, and forms an important part of, the landscape setting of the current Chilterns National Landscape. It also shares many landscape characteristics and special qualities with the Chilterns National Landscape, 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 Chilterns National Landscape. 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 Chilterns National Landscape boundary. Parts of PLCA 6 contribute to the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape.

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 National Landscape. It forms an important part of the landscape setting of the current Chilterns National Landscape 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 risks 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 National Landscape. Along with the eastern slopes of PLCA6, it forms an important part of the landscape setting of the current Chilterns National Landscape, 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 Chilterns National Landscape 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resist the installation of: 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resist the installation of: inappropriate suburban fencing (such as close-board)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large gates • lighting • hedges of non-native evergreens
PLCA3 - Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and /or Enhance Crowsley Open 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
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
Views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain long views across open fieldscapes
Inappropriate Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resist the installation of: • inappropriate suburban fencing (such as close-board) • large gates • lighting • hedges of non-native evergreens
PLCA4 Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and /or Enhance Binfield Heath Wooded Dipslope North	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resist the installation of: • 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
PLCA5 - Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and /or Enhance Binfield Heath Wooded Dipslope South	
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 improvements 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resist the installation of: 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
PLCA6: Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and /or Enhance Holmwood Semi-enclosed Dipslope	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resist the installation of: • 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
PLCA7: Key Characteristics to Avoid, Retain and / or Enhance Hampstead and Shiplake Rise Open Dipslope	
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 improvements 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resist the installation of: • 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

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 35 (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

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should:

- 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 Codes, Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Value Assessment
- Where relevant, maintain the role the PLCAs play in enhancing the character and special qualities of the Chilterns National Landscape 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
- Where relevant, reflect the features that define the character of the wider landscape in the Chilterns National Landscape or within its setting.
- Protect the historic pattern of fields, watercourses, copses, ancient woodland, roads, rights of way and boundaries (hedgerows, trees, historic walls etc)

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 National Landscape

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 (Policy BH2)

The ancient Heath gave Binfield Heath not only its name but its shape and character too. While many other villages are settlements surrounded by countryside, Binfield Heath is countryside surrounded by settlements – because they grew up at the entrances to the Heath.

That pattern, which over time developed into today's separate settlements and individual houses in open countryside, gives the village a distinct identity that residents feel it is important to retain.

The old Heath itself has historical significance that makes it worthy of preservation in its own right. It is believed to have been the meeting place of the Binfield Hundred, one of the Anglo-Saxon administrative divisions of Oxfordshire.

According to Victoria County History of Oxfordshire³⁸: *“The feld element in the name Binfield (open land where bent grass grows), contrasting with neighbouring woodland, is well attested before 730 and implies early occupation, which intensified from the 10th century after the ancient heath became the hundred meeting place.”*

The policy below seeks to maintain Binfield Heath's historic 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 Guidance and Codes 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.

³⁸ Victoria County History of Oxfordshire Vol XX (2022), p388

Proposals for large scale or intensive development in the open countryside will not be supported, as they would be inconsistent with the NPPF paragraph 180 and paragraph 182 which states:

“The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas³⁹ 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 BH8 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.

³⁹ AONB, National Parks and the Broads

Policy BH2 – Setting of Settlements and Coalescence

Development proposals should respect the open countryside and rural landscape setting of the parish and the distinctive physical separation between settlements which contributes to their separate identities.

Proposals for appropriate rural development beyond the three settlements should be non-intrusive and preserve the physical and visual separation between the settlements.

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 Local Green Spaces (Policy BH3)

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.

New development will not be supported on these sites except in very special 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 E along with more detailed plans. Where the sites have been assessed as being suitable for designation they are shown in Appendix E and most are shown in Figure 36.

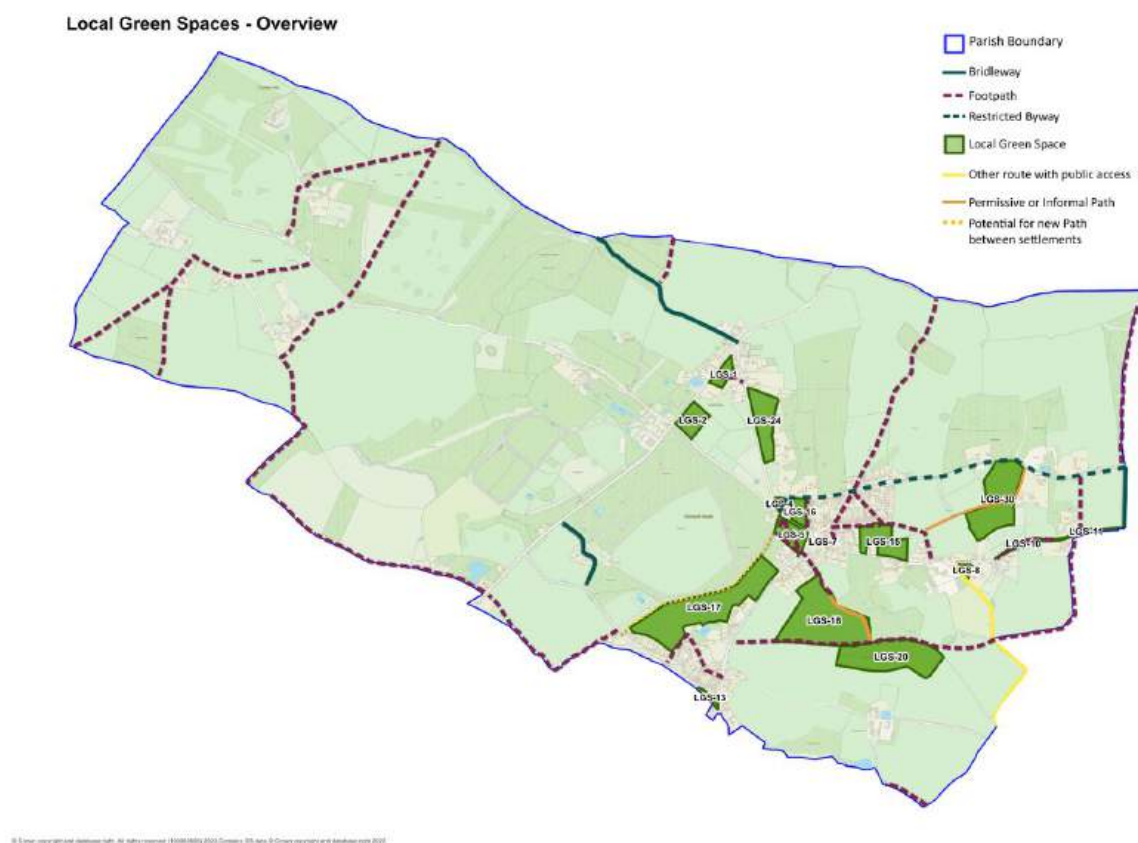


Figure 36: Local Green Spaces

Policy BH3 - Local Green Spaces

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the following locations as Local Green Spaces as defined in Appendix E (and see Figure 36):

LGS1	Land between Harpsden Road and Common Lane
LGS2	Allotment Gardens, Harpsden Road
LGS4	Land adjacent to Arch Cottages
LGS5	Recreation Ground
LGS7	The triangle of land opposite the Post Office
LGS8*	Land surrounding Keeps Well and Green Pond
LGS10*	Land alongside public footpath 421/16/10 between Shiplake Rise Farm and the Scout Hut
LGS11*	Historic green to the front of The Spinney / Waylands
LGS13	The Allotments in Gravel Road
LGS15	Flower Show field
LGS16	Wood opposite recreation ground
LGS17	Field west of Dunsden Way (former Heath)
LGS18	Field behind Dunsden Way
LGS20	Shiplake Copse (known locally as Bluebell Woods)
LGS24	Field east of Common Lane
LGS30	Woodwax Wood

New development will not be supported on these sites, except in very special circumstances.

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

*The land in LGS-8, LGS-10 and LGS-11 are partly within the maintained highway (they are within highway land and the County Council is the relevant Highway Authority). It is acknowledged that Highways have existing rights over the highway land.

5.3.5 Important Views (Policy BH4)

The highest point in Binfield Heath⁴⁰ 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 Chilterns National Landscape 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.

⁴⁰ Comp Farm

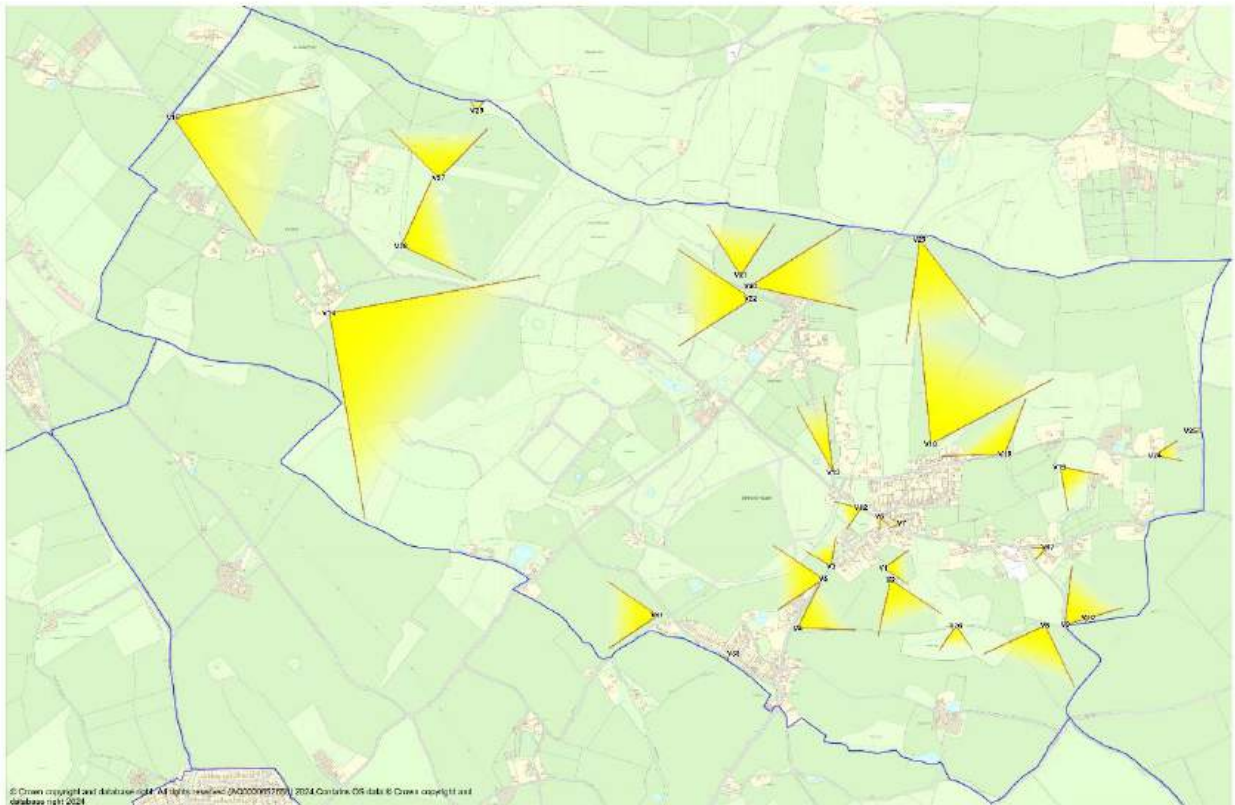


Figure 37: Important Views

Policy BH4 – Important Views

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following Important Views in Figure 37 and Figure 38. These are drawn from the Landscape Character Assessment (see Appendix C):

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 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

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should preserve, or where practicable enhance, the local character of the landscape and through their design, height and massing should recognise and respond positively to the identified Important Views (as shown in Figure 37).

Wherever practicable, development proposals should allow for spaces between buildings to preserve views of the countryside beyond and maintain the perceived openness of the settlement concerned.

Development proposals which would have an unacceptable 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 38: Long distance views to the south-east stretch beyond the parish across the Thames Valley

5.3.6 Heritage Assets (Policy BH5)

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 require adequate protection and enhancement where possible.

The Plan area's designated historic heritage assets and their settings, are shown on Figure 39 and described in Appendix G. 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 in Appendix D, which are considered to have local importance because of their age, appearance, historic or cultural associations. These are also shown in Figure 39. Policy BH5 addresses this matter. It follows the approach taken in paragraph 209 of the NPPF (December 2023).

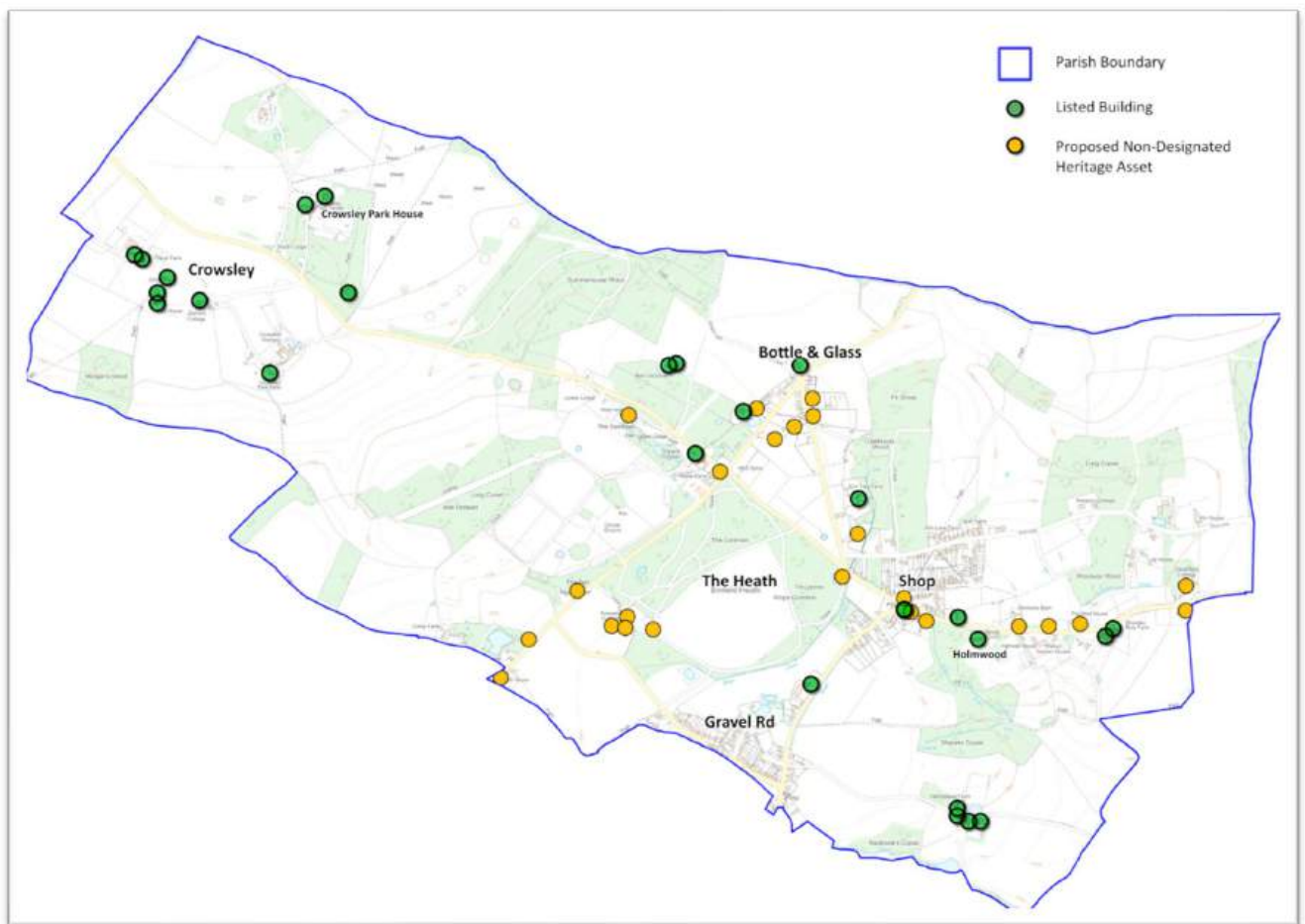


Figure 39: Location of listed buildings and some Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Policy BH5 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets

The Plan identifies a series of non-designated heritage assets in Appendix D.

Development proposals affecting an identified non-designated heritage asset should demonstrate how the proposal will preserve or enhance the significance of the asset. Where a proposal would demonstrably harm a non-designated heritage asset, the damage caused to the identity and character of the asset will be weighed against the overall benefits that would arise from the proposed development.

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

5.3.7 Design Code (Policy BH6)

The NPPF states the following at Paragraph 139: 'Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

- a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or
- b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.'

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 Figure 40 to Figure 43.

The Design Code should be read in conjunction with both the Landscape Value Assessment (Appendix B) and the Landscape Character 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.

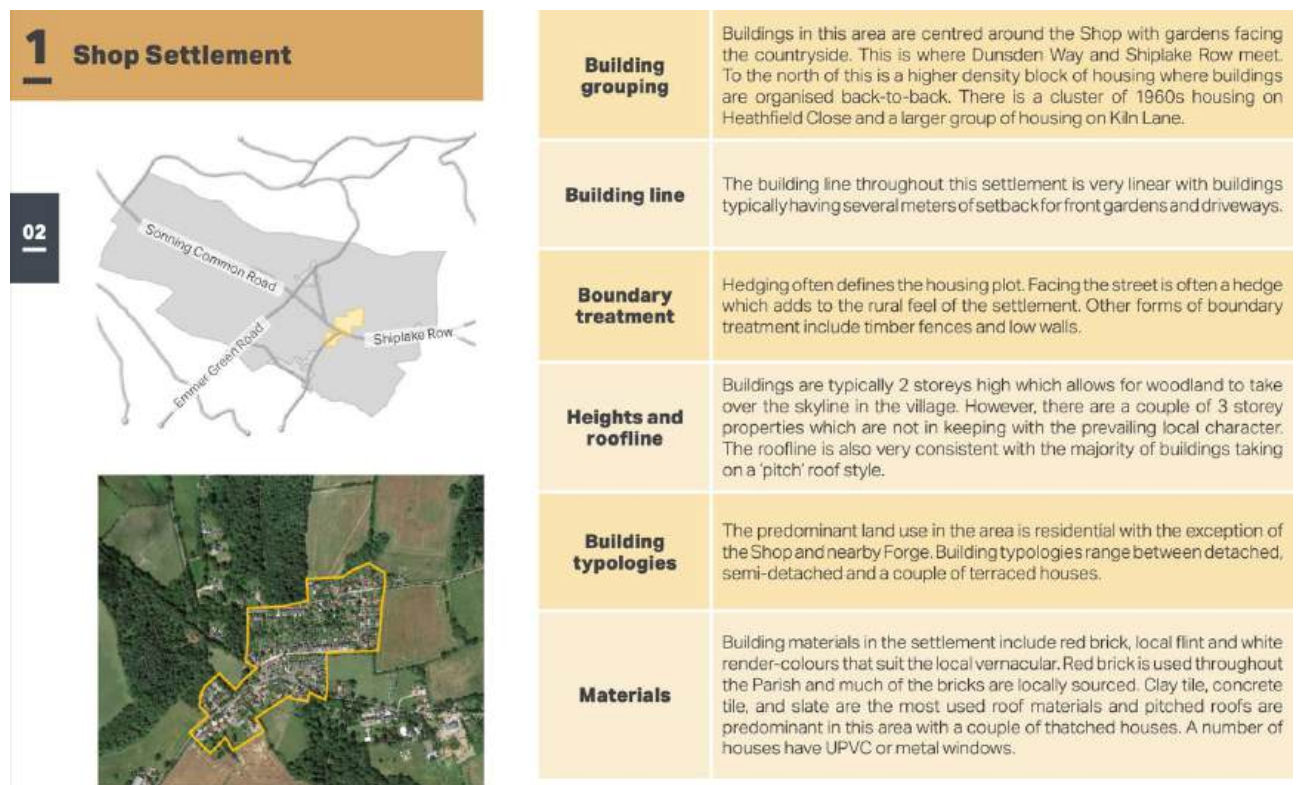


Figure 40: Shop Settlement Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023)

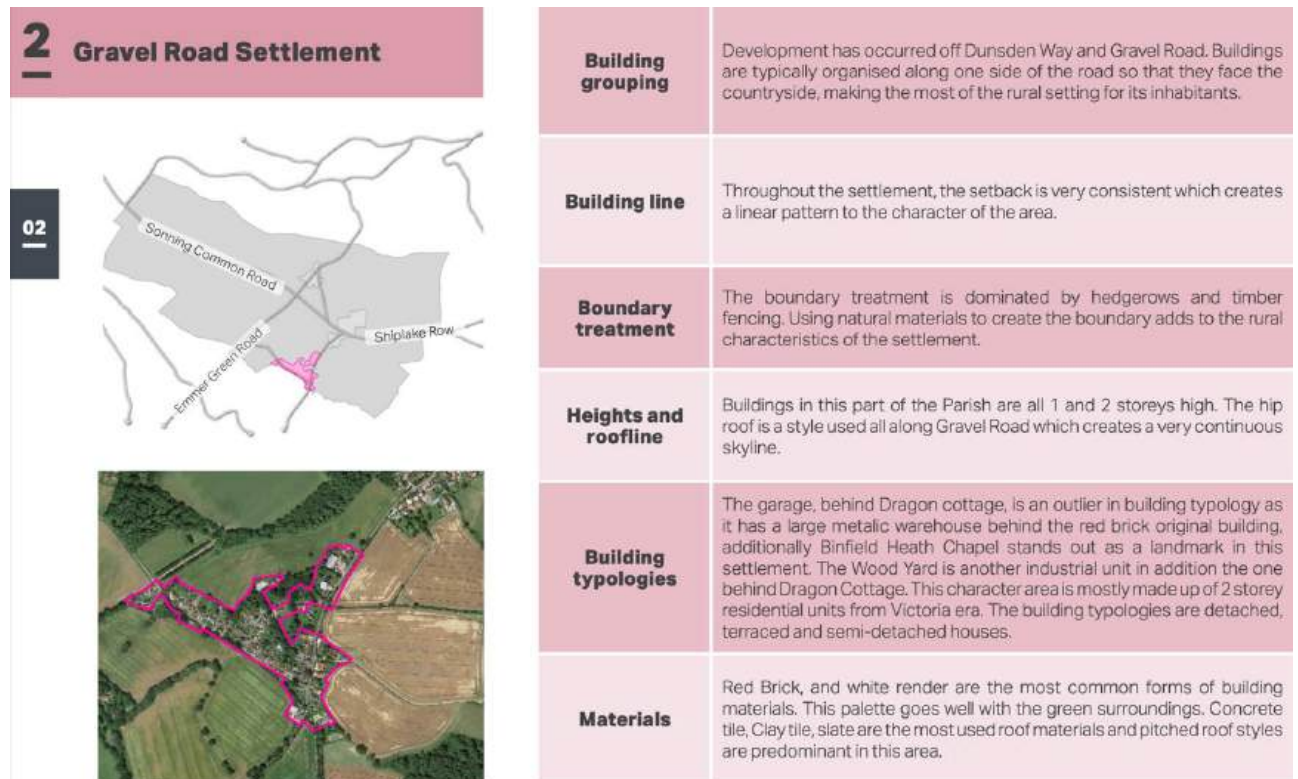


Figure 41: Gravel Road Settlement Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023)

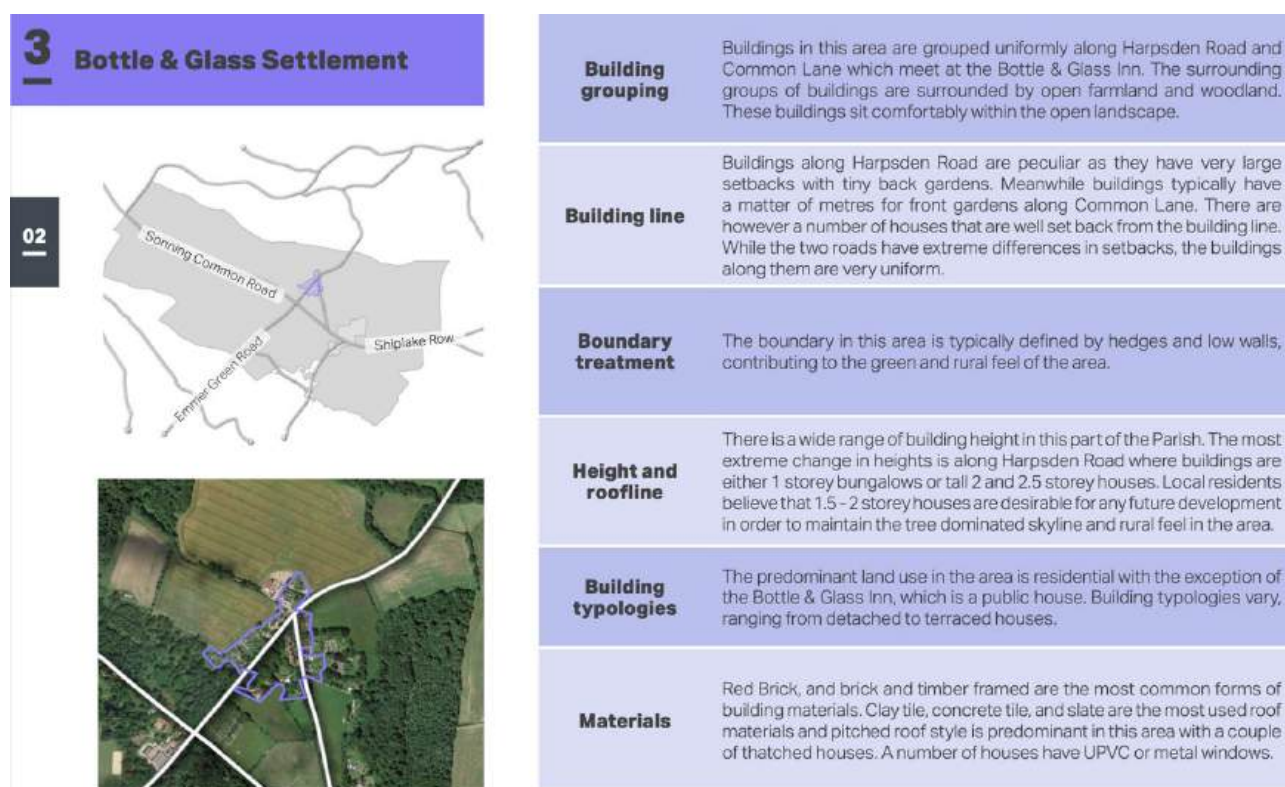


Figure 42: Bottle & Glass Settlement Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023)

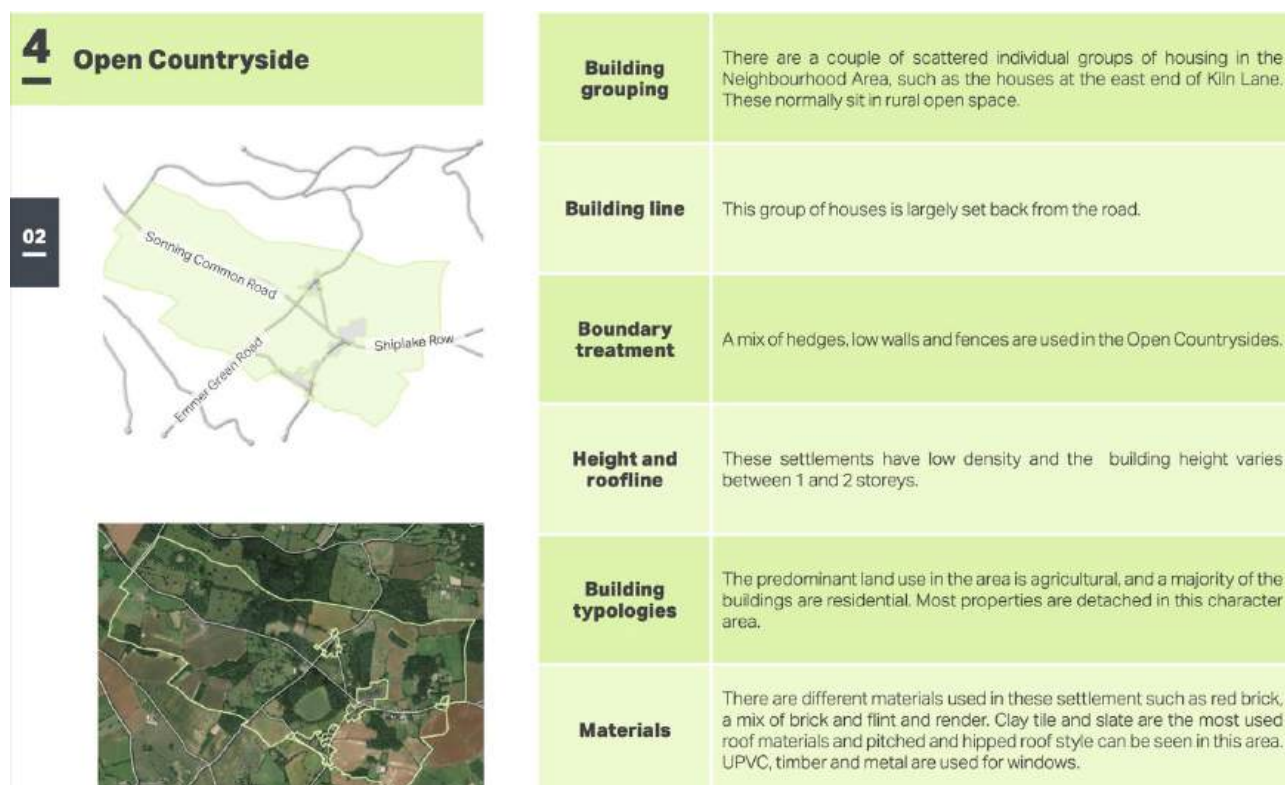


Figure 43: Open Countryside Character – As extracted from the Design Code (AECOM 2023)



Figure 44: Materials Palette

Policy BH6 – Design Code

Development proposals should respond positively to the relevant sections of the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes (Appendix A), taking account of the details about the following locations:

- Shop Settlement – see Figure 40
- Gravel Road Settlement – see Figure 41
- Bottle & Glass Settlement – see Figure 42
- Open Countryside – see Figure 43

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should demonstrate within their Design and Access Statement, or other submitted documentation, how they accord with each relevant matter set out in the Design Code.

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

5.3.8 Re-use & Conversion of Rural Buildings (Policy BH7)

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 BH7 – Re-use & Conversion of Rural Buildings

Proposals for the conversion of rural buildings will be supported where they otherwise accord with the development plan and their design has been informed by the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes and reflects the character of the local area.

Proposals which will result in the inappropriate alteration of the existing form, scale and appearance of the building concerned 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

5.3.9 Infill and Redevelopment (Policy BH8)

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 45) and complies with the other policies in this Neighbourhood Plan. 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 Chilterns National Landscape and its setting.

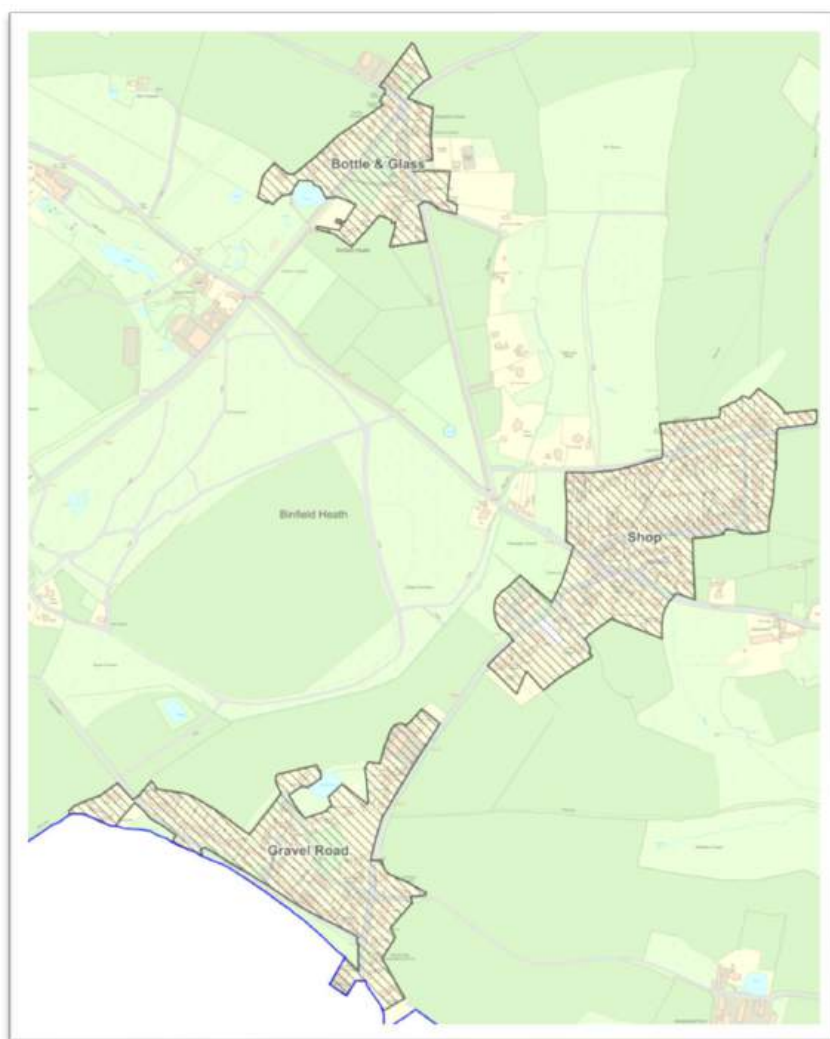


Figure 45: Plan highlighting the Gravel Road, Shop and Bottle & Glass Settlements

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 Chilterns National Landscape 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”

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
- Consistency with surrounding properties.

Policy BH8 has been designed to be supplementary to the contents of Policy H16 of the Local Plan. It should be read in conjunction with Policy BH1 – Landscape Character and Value and Policy BH12 – Accessibility, Highways and Sustainable Transport. For residential it should be read in conjunction with policy H1 of the Local Plan.

Policy BH8 – Infill Development

Within the settlement boundaries of Gravel Road, Shop and Bottle & Glass (as identified on Figure 45), infill development, the redevelopment of previously developed land or buildings and backfill development will be supported where such proposals accord with relevant policies in the development plan.

In addition to the approach taken in Policy H16 of the Local Plan, proposals for infilling or redevelopment should respond positively to the following principles:

- The proposal is in accordance with and respects the local character of the area, as highlighted in the Landscape Character Assessment;

- The proposed development is of appropriate and proportionate scale, bulk, height, density, plot coverage, siting, layout, and mass in keeping with the immediate locality and reflects the characteristics highlighted in the Design Code;
- The proposal provides suitably sized front and rear gardens together with adequate soft and hard landscaping works, as highlighted in the Design Code;
- The proposal can be safely accommodated within the local highways network; and
- Any natural landscape features including trees and hedgerows are retained, integrated, and enhanced.

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

H16: Backland and Infill Development and Redevelopment

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

5.3.10 Dwelling Extensions (Policy BH9)

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 Appendix D 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 46 below).

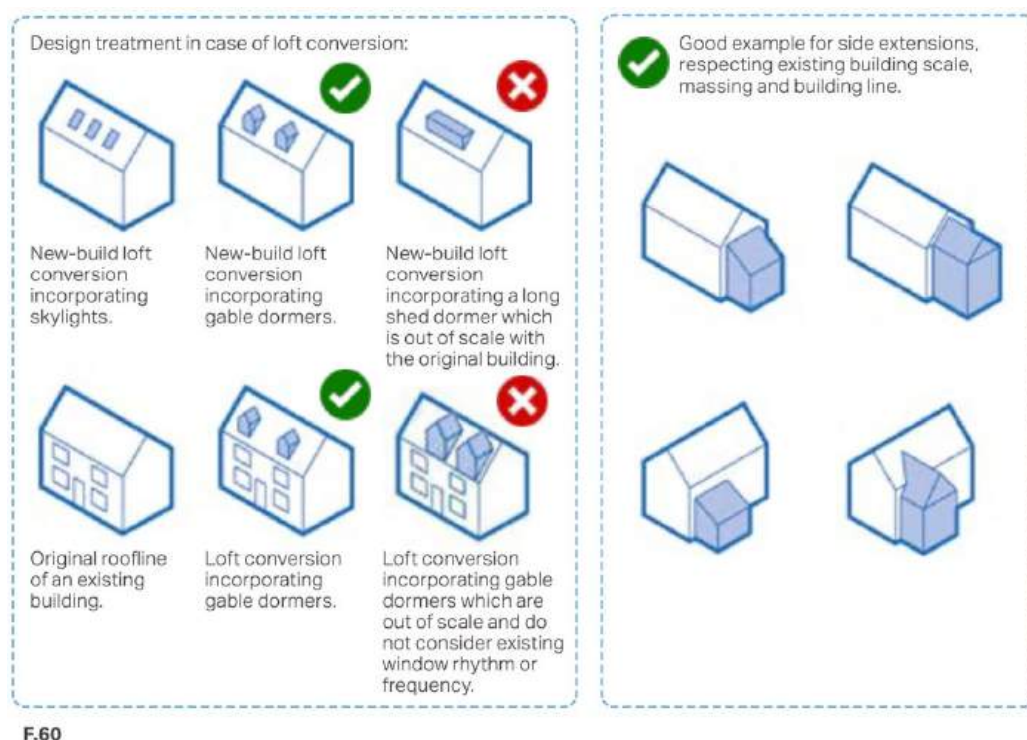


Figure 46: Illustration of good practice for extensions and conversions from the Design Guidance and Codes (AECOM)

Materials and design should be in keeping with the existing property or provide adequate justification for a different approach (see Figure 44). 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 Guidance and Codes.

Policy BH9 – Dwelling Extensions

Development proposals for residential extensions will be supported where they comply with the relevant policies in the development plan and take account of the Joint Design Guide and the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes.

The scale and nature of the extension should retain sufficient gaps between buildings (including space for landscaping) which is in keeping with the overall character of the area.

Local Plan Policy

H8: Housing in the Smaller Villages

H9: Affordable Housing

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

5.3.11 Replacement dwellings (Policy BH10)

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 Appendix D). 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 BH10 – Replacement dwellings

Proposals for the replacement of a dwelling will be supported where they comply with the relevant policies in the development plan and meet the following conditions:

- The replacement dwelling will be in keeping with the character of the area and take account of the District Council's Joint Design Guide and the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes.
- 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), unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits
- The design, siting, appearance and materials proposed reflect the recommendations set out in the Binfield Heath Design Guidance and Codes 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 justify an alternative approach.
- Proposals to demolish and replace buildings should show that the environmental cost of rebuilding rather than reusing has been considered.

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

5.3.12 Community facilities and associated commercial uses (Policy BH11)

There is strong community support for the safeguarding of important parish assets (Appendix F). 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 BH11 sets out an approach to safeguard important facilities in the parish. In the case of proposals which are submitted with a viability assessment the information provided should be consistent with that required by Policy CF1 of the Local Plan

Policy BH11 – Community facilities and associated commercial uses

The Plan identifies the following community and associated facilities:

- Post Office & shop
- The Forge
- Chestnut tree in the village centre
- Phone box
- The recreation ground
- The Congregational Chapel
- Scout Hut
- The Bottle & Glass Inn
- Orwells
- Allotments
- Victorian letterbox in wall at Old Acres
- Keeps Well and Green Pond
- Crowsley Park gate pillars
- Cast iron ER post box 1950s opposite Crowsley loop
- Old kiln office in Kiln Lane
- High wall in Shiplake Row (Old Acres and Highwall House)

- Old Oxon County fingerposts (various locations)

These facilities are important to the sustainability of the parish and the wellbeing of the local community. Proposals that improve or enhance the asset, and do not harm the amenity of neighbouring residents, will be supported.

Proposals for the change of use of these community facilities will not be supported unless:

- It would lead to the significant improvement or the replacement of an existing facility equally convenient to the local community it serves and with equivalent or improved facilities
- It has been determined by appropriate, detailed and robust evidence that the community facility is no longer needed; or
- In the case of commercial services, it is not economically viable. In such circumstances, a viability report providing financial evidence of the last 12 months is required to accompany any application
- Development proposals for other uses that are located in close proximity to or adjacent to an identified Community Facility will need to demonstrate and provide evidence that they will have no adverse impact on the viability of the Community Facility.

Proposals for new rural businesses and tourist uses should be designed so that they respond positively to the character of the area and wider landscape views, neighbouring residential amenity, and highway safety.

Local Plan Policy

EMP10: Development in Rural Areas

EMP11: Tourism

CF1: Safeguarding Community Facilities

CF2: Provision of Community Facilities and Services

Core 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: Retain and support the recreation ground, allotments and other community spaces

5.3.13 Accessibility, Highways and Sustainable Transport (Policy BH12)

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 of the parish, the roads within the parish would be totally unsuitable to accommodate additional traffic that could result from an additional bridge.

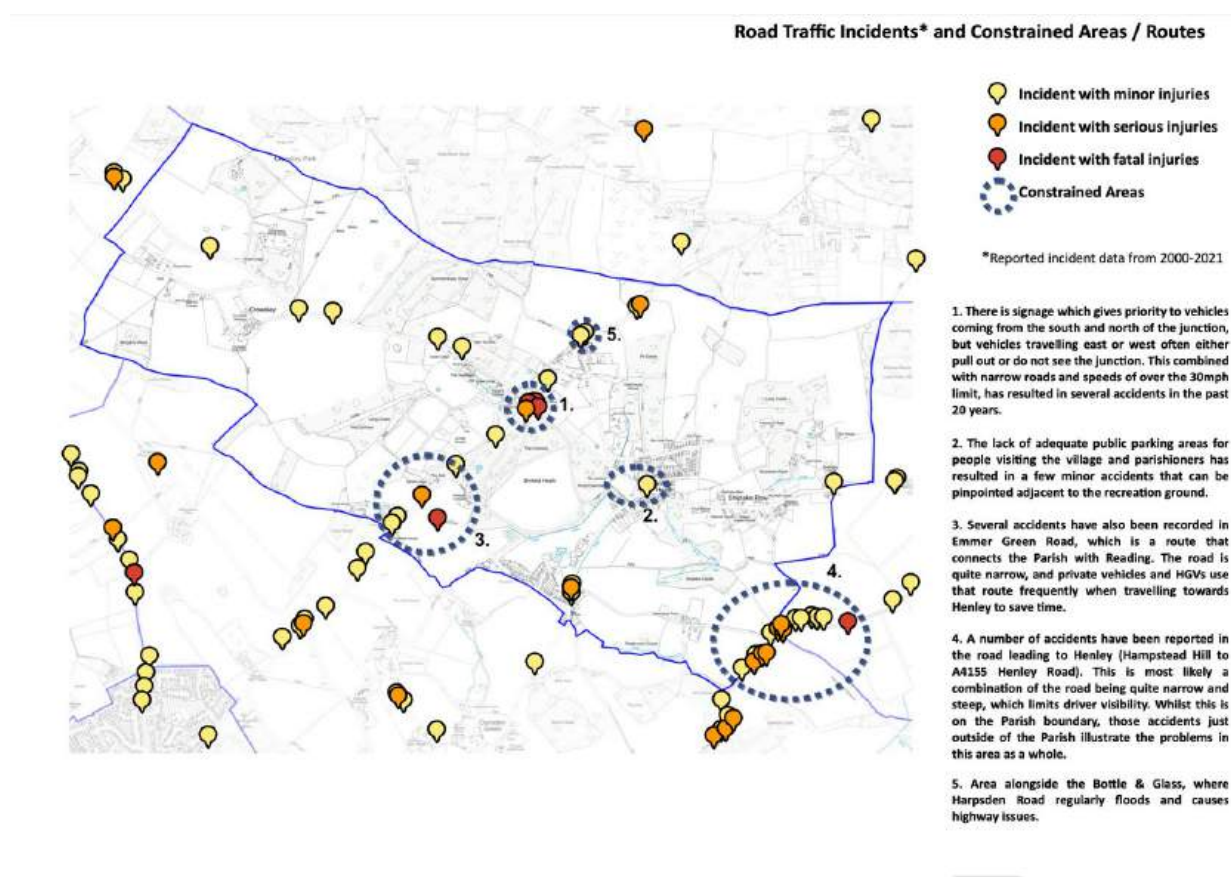


Figure 47: Road Traffic Incidents and Constrained Areas / Routes

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, the Chilterns National Landscape 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 BH12 – Accessibility, Highways and Sustainable Transport

As appropriate to their nature, scale and location, 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 47.
- 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 23)
- 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

Insofar as planning permission is required traffic calming measures should be designed so as not to increase noise, urbanise the area concerned, or have an unacceptable impact on residents or users of the route.

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

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

5.3.14 Flooding and Drainage (Policy BH13)

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 48 and Figure 49 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.

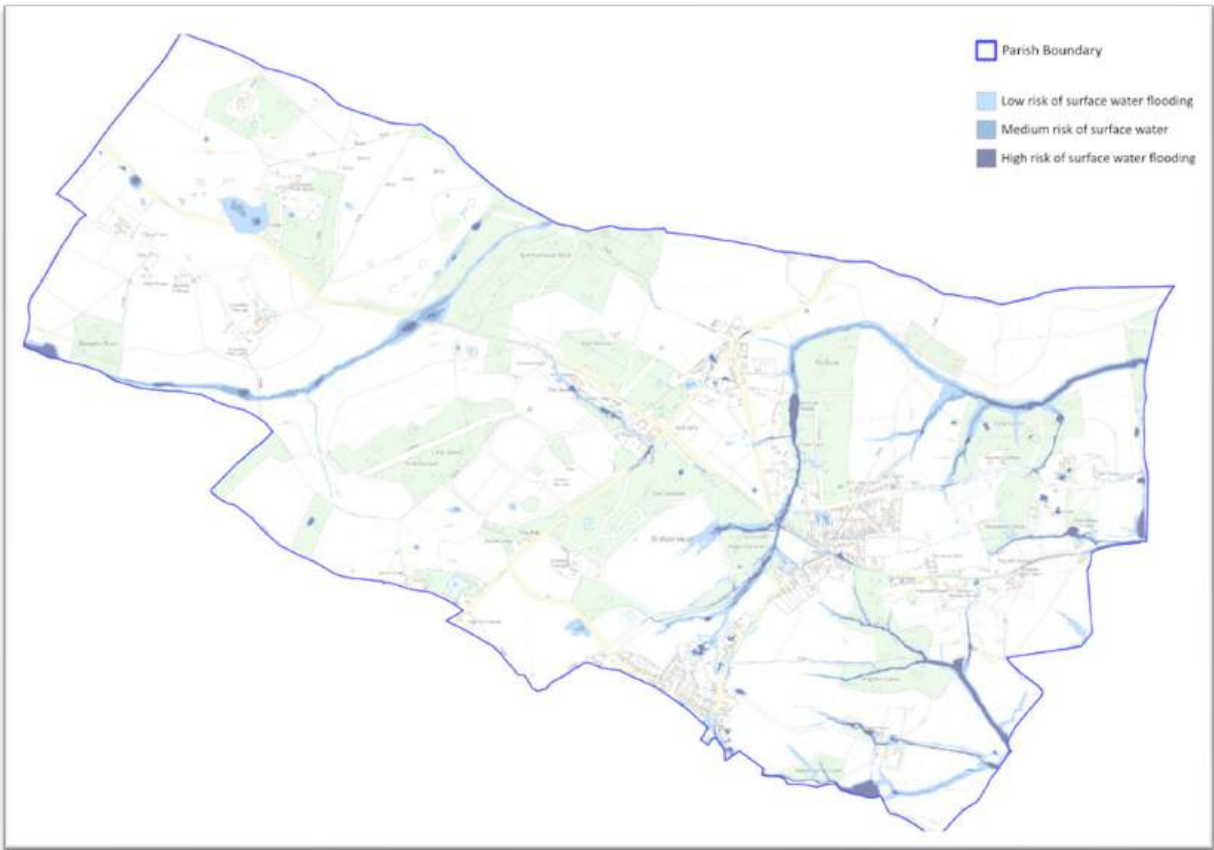


Figure 48: Surface Water Flood Risk

Surface Water Flood Risk



Figure 49 Detailed plan of surface water flooding around the settlements

Policy BH13 – Flooding and drainage

As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should incorporate a sustainable and integrated approach to the management of flood risk, surface water (including run off) and foul drainage. These proposals should be robust to the expected impacts of climate change.

All development involving the loss of permeable surfaces, loss of trees, loss of soft landscaping or loss of any other feature that reduces flood risk is required to use appropriate mitigation measures to prevent an increase in flood risk within the site or elsewhere. This should be proportionate to the scale of the proposal, with small interventions (such as planting or use of permeable surfaces) acceptable for minor developments in areas of low flood risk.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be used proportionately to mitigate any predicted increase in flood risk. These may include:

- i. Planting, particularly trees.
- ii. Introduction of permeable driveways, parking or other 'hardstanding' areas.
- iii. Rainwater harvesting and storage features (including butts).
- iv. Green roofs.
- v. Attenuation tanks.
- vi. Soakaways.
- vii. Attenuation ponds.

SuDS must be designed as an integral part of the green infrastructure and street network. The system should effectively mitigate any adverse effects from surface water run-off and flooding on people, property and the ecological value of the local environment. A surface water sewer should be seen as a last resort and no surface water will be permitted to enter the public foul sewage network. Major developments must provide a SuDS Strategy and drawings showing all SuDS features. This must be supported with calculations showing how surface water flood risk will not increase.

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 Figure 48 and Figure 49 where surface water flooding is evident.

Local Plan Policy**EP4: Flood Risk**

Core Objectives

ES5 – Ensure any new development minimises flood risk. This includes using permeable surfaces, maximising local water retention and not intentionally exporting surface water elsewhere

TS4 – Minimise the likelihood of flooding

5.3.15 Trees and Woodland (Policy BH14)

The outcry over the felling of the Sycamore Gap tree at Hadrian's Wall is testimony to how much people care about trees.

Binfield Heath is no different. The parish has its own celebrity trees, such as the Twelve Apostles and the majestic Cedar of Lebanon in Crowsley Park. The chestnut tree at the centre of the village is not on such a grand scale but is no less revered.

There are notable trees elsewhere in open spaces, as well as specimen planting within the formal parkland. Several areas of the parish are designated as Ancient Woodland, which means they have existed since at least 1600.

Woodlands reach into the heart of the village as well as framing important areas such as the Heath. They are an essential part of the character of the parish – and in some cases of its history. Ancient Woodwax Woods was the scene of a tragic tree-felling accident that claimed the life of the owner of nearby Holmwood in 1839. And Comp Wood is infamous for an incident in the 1950s when the ground opened up and swallowed entire trees.

The woodland walks around Binfield Heath attract many visitors from outside the parish at all times of the year, not least in spring when bluebells carpet the woods.

The importance of woodland to the community means that development proposals should be rooted in a thorough understanding of the area and the range of mature trees and woodlands within it. The policy below aims to protect and 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 should be replaced in line with the Woodland Trust Guidance⁴¹.

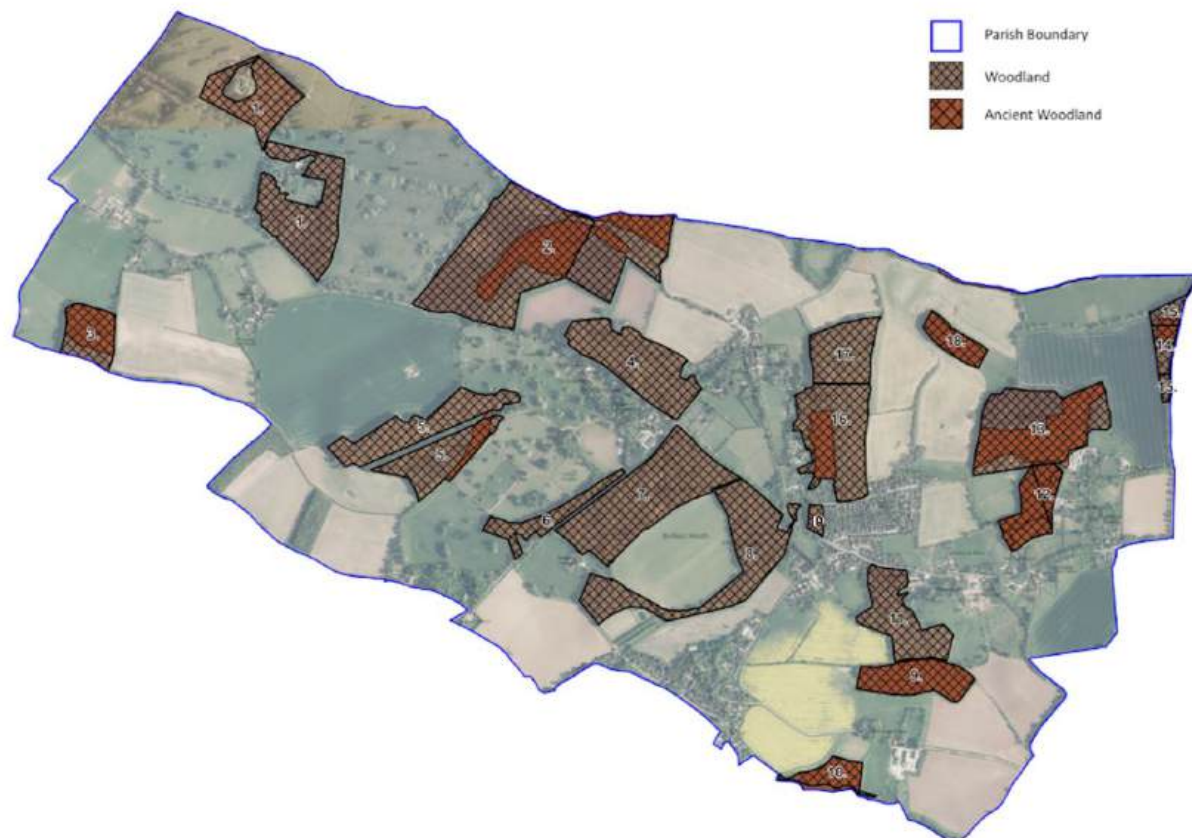


Figure 50: Woodland Areas including Ancient Woodlands

Policy BH14 – Trees and Woodland

Development proposals should incorporate existing native trees and shrubs where possible and should avoid unnecessary loss of flora. Any trees or woodland lost to new development should be replaced in line with the Woodland Trust Guidance.

⁴¹ <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/protecting-trees-and-woods/campaign-with-us/campaign-in-your-community/neighbourhood-planning/creating-a-neighbourhood-plan/>

Development proposals should seek to ensure no loss or significant harm is caused to sites of biodiversity value with attention to any effect on those areas of ancient woodland and as detailed in Figure 50 and listed below:

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)
19. Copse in Arch Hill opposite the recreation ground

*(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

5.3.16 Biodiversity (Policy BH15)

Two thirds of Binfield Heath Parish lies in the Chilterns National Landscape. 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 Arch Hill and disappears in Oak House Wood.

Street lighting is kept to a minimum. The general absence of light pollution and the resultant dark skies 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 through the woods. Muntjac and roe deer bark in the night; foxes have been spotted sunbathing; stoats and weasels are glimpsed from time to time and hares sighted in the fields.

The tracts of woodland and hedgerows that reach into the centre 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 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. The woods and fields host an abundance of flora including violets, spurge laurel, wood anemone, harebells and quaking grass.

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.

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. Particularly noisy or potentially harmful uses would not be supported.

In particular, wildlife corridors that are within the parish are key to enhancing habitats. New wildlife corridors that connect to existing corridors in neighbouring parishes bordering the plan area will 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.

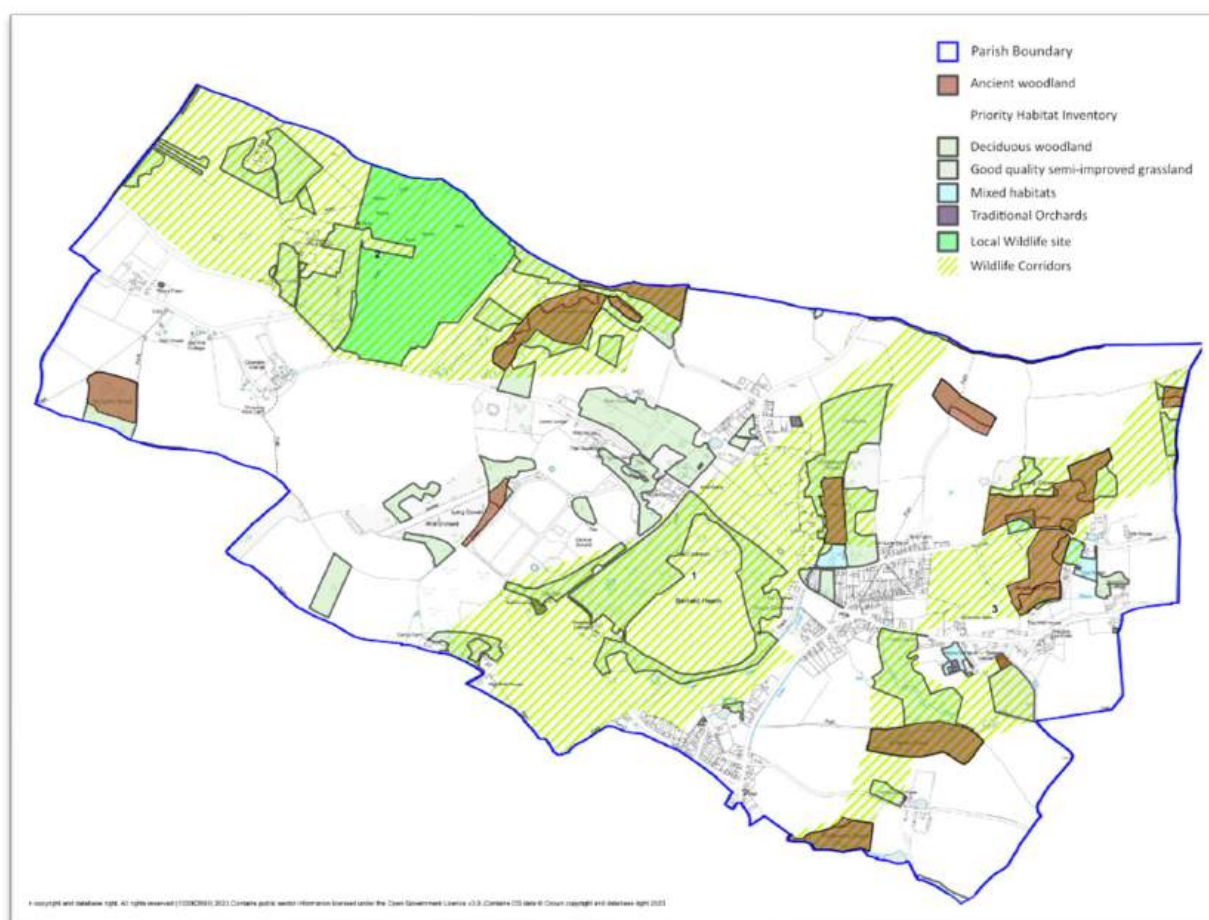


Figure 51: Biodiversity Assets and Wildlife Corridors

Policy BH15 – Biodiversity

Development proposals should maintain and enhance the local biodiversity of the Plan area as shown in Figure 51 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.

New wildlife corridors that connect to existing corridors in neighbouring parishes bordering the plan area will be supported.

Development proposals should achieve a biodiversity net gain of 20% where appropriate and no less than the 10% minimum required level.

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

5.3.17 Dark Night Skies (Policy BH16)



Figure 52: Dark Night Skies Map

The lack of light pollution and view of dark night skies as set out in Figure 52 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 website⁴².

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

Light Levels

(NanoWatts / cm ² /sr)
>32 (Brightest)
16 - 32
8 - 16
4 - 8
2 - 4 (Brighter)
1 - 2
0.5 - 1
0.25 - 0.5
< 0.25 (Darkest)

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.

⁴² <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 BH16 – 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:

- Adverse effects from the installed lighting 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 where possible

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

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 is 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

Encourage people to pick up litter generally and 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 Communications & Telegraph Poles

Investigate the scope for improvements to internet and mobile phone coverage.

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

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