



Cookham Neighbourhood Plan

Area Analysis



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for Cookham Parish Council
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper builds upon the initial review prepared in October 2019, summarising the policy position of relevance to the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, the status of the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM) Local Plan and potential areas of focus for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 This document presents a summary of the analysis and research undertaken to help drive and inform emerging policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. It includes a summary of key statistics and data, analysis of the wider context and setting for the Parish, as well as local information.
- 1.3 Further analysis will be undertaken as part of the production of Design Codes/site specific guidance to be provided through the Locality Technical Support programme. As such, the paper does not seek to duplicate those efforts. Furthermore, as the Neighbourhood Plan evolves and objectives are agreed, additional evidence will be collected as appropriate to supplement this paper and the drafting of policies for incorporation in the Plan.

2. Location and Setting

Location

- 2.1 Cookham is a historic village and civil parish on the River Thames in the north-easternmost corner of Berkshire. The Parish includes three villages: Cookham Village – the original village; Cookham Dean – the most rural village in the parish; and Cookham Rise – the area in-between that grew up around the railway station.
- 2.2 Cookham is bordered in the north and east by the River Thames with a band of Green Belt separating it from the town of Maidenhead approximately two miles to the south. As you can see on the map below, Cookham Village is located on the river in the eastern part of the Parish, with Cookham Rise located more centrally and Cookham Dean, which is more sprawling, is found on the western side.
- 2.3 The north and eastern boundary of the parish is formed by the River Thames. This forms an important backdrop to the setting of the Parish, with riverside meadows and paths in regular use for recreational purposes. Likewise, this part of the Thames is regularly used for leisure purposes, including canoes, sailing and rowing boats.



Figure 1: Cookham Neighbourhood Area (Source: Cookham Village Design Statement)

- 2.4 Cookham Rise and Cookham village both have defined village centres in the emerging Local Plan. The Borough retail study¹ notes that these are small in scale (relative to the main centres in the borough) and comprise a limited range of retail

¹ Cushman & Wakefield for RBWM, December 2015, Retail and Town Centre Study

and service uses that principally service local convenience-based shopping and service needs. The report does though note that in such centres, community-based facilities (such as Post offices and health care) are vital services can be the core attractor. It notes that, where possible, these should be afforded protection. It also notes the importance of flexibility between use classes, maximising occupancy.

Setting

- 2.5 According to the RBWM: Part 1 – Landscape Character Assessment, the Parish can be divided into three separate character areas²: Settled Farmed Floodplain, Farmed Chalk Slopes and Settled Wooded Chalk Knolls.
- 2.6 Cookham Dean is located in the Settled Wooded Chalk Knolls character area. This is characterised as a diverse and mature rural character, wooded and often undulating. The dipslopes of the chalk formation combined with drift deposits of clay and gravel form gently rolling slopes with localised ‘knolls’ and flatter plateau areas. Cookham Dean in particular is characterised by a large number of greens or commons that often form the central focus; most of these greens are areas of open grassland. Another key feature is the dense network of country lanes, tracks and footpaths which connect the network of tiny hamlets and individual farm groups, creating a ‘highly permeable landscape’. The urban form of Maidenhead can be glimpsed from Cookham Dean, with further human influences evident in the form of the A404 that cuts through the southern part of this character area.
- 2.7 Cookham Rise is located in the Farmed Chalked Slopes Character Area. This is defined by flat to rolling chalk slopes and dry valleys, mixed land uses of arable, pasture, woodlands and commercial equine, and various wooded areas. Cookham Rise in particular is characterised by fruit growing; once a major industry in the area, the orchards between Furze Platt and Cookham Rise now grow cherry, apples and plums.
- 2.8 Cookham Village is characterised as Settled Farmed Floodplain, the key characteristics of which include diverse river edge habitats, flat open flood plain with a rich farming heritage, intimate waterside routeways and riverside recreation hotspots. Cookham Village’s setting is dominated by its floodplain landscape and is generally composed of open grazing pasture. Meanwhile, arable farmland and woodland belts occur beyond the flood line to the south. Further to the south exists the chalk scarp of Quarry Wood. The character of the river edge is contrastingly open.
- 2.9 At the heart of Cookham Village lies Cookham Moor which once belonged to the Ancient Royal Manor of Cookham. Today, the Moor is often the focal point for

² RBWM: Part 1 - Landscape Character Assessment 2004. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/201027/planning_guidance/1440/supplementary_planning_guidance_spg/9

local events and fetes. Much of the moor is cut as amenity grassland but several areas across the site are being managed for nature conservation.

- 2.10 To the north, on the banks of the River Thames, is Cock Marsh, a designated national Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The marsh is common land that has been grazed by cattle for centuries. The grazing means that the land has become rich in wildflowers and protected plants – Cock Marsh is one of just 12 sites in the UK where brown galingale (an endangered species) can be found³. The site is also home to four circular Bronze Age burial mounds (tumuli) which are Scheduled Monuments.
- 2.11 The significance of the landscape setting is recognised in the Cookham Village Design Statement⁴, particularly in respect of the *'way in which Cookham's green spaces inter-relate with its built environment'*, both in respect of glimpses of the surrounding landscape but also through the presence of green fingers and corridors that connect the settlements with the surrounding countryside. Poundfield has particular importance as a green space, acting as an important green wedge within the built form, a valuable wildlife area and important setting for the conservation area. The emerging Local Plan proposes to designate this as a Local Green Space, which will afford it the same level of protection as Green Belt.
- 2.12 Due to its location on the Thames, the Parish is at significant risk from flooding. Though the village itself is on slightly higher ground (located within Flood Zone 2⁵), it is entirely surrounded by low lying ground. This has the effect of isolating the village in all directions during flooding conditions, with the Causeway between Cookham Village and Cookham Rise the only means of access. It is thus important that this route is maintained to allow access at times of flooding. Cookham Village does benefit from the presence of flood defences, including a bund across Cookham Marsh and the lowering of the sill levels at Cookham weir. Cookham Rise and Cookham Dean are situated within Zone 1 and therefore at lower risk.
- 2.13 A number of other statutory environmental and historic designations exist within the parish. These include: Quarry Wood to the north west which is a Site of Specific Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation; Cookham Dean Conservation Area which extends from the built up area up to the River Thames; a designated Local Green Space that covers Poundfield (proposed in the emerging Local Plan), a set of fields used for grazing in the north east of Cookham Rise; and several Local Wildlife Sites throughout the Parish.
- 2.14 As part of the emerging Local Plan RBWM has prepared an 'Edge of Settlement Analysis'⁶, which reviews land around the main towns and villages across the

³ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/maidenhead-and-cookham-commons/features/walking-at-cockmarsh>

⁴ Cookham Parish Council and The Cookham Society, May 2013, Cookham Village Design Statement (Adopted by RBWM as a Supplementary Planning Document)

⁵ RBWM Council SFRA 2017. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200209/planning_policy/488/strategic_flood_risk_assessment

⁶ RBWM, July 2016, Edge of Settlement Analysis

borough in terms of performance against the tests of the Green Belt. This has helped to inform which areas are recommended for release from the Green Belt and comprise allocations for development in the emerging Local Plan. For Cookham it is important to note that land between Cookham Rise and Maidenhead is assessed as very strongly contributing to the purposes of the Green Belt, and that *'it is vital that these areas and their functions are protected and maintained'*. In particular, the analysis notes that land to the south of Cookham Rise contributes to the separation between Maidenhead and that and development here would cause risk to that separation and increase the impression of sprawl. This reflects messages in the Village Design Statement which note the importance attached by the community to the separate identity between Cookham and Maidenhead. The Edge of Settlement Analysis also has similar findings in respect of land west of Cookham Rise and south of Cookham village. These help to emphasise the separate identity and character of the settlements within the Parish, but also between Cookham and Maidenhead.

Artistic Interest

"I like to take my thoughts for a walk and marry them to someplace in Cookham"

Stanley Spencer

- 2.15 Artist Sir Stanley Spencer (1891-1959) was born in Cookham where he spent much of his life. He is perhaps best known for his paintings depicting biblical scenes occurring as if in Cookham. Spencer referred to Cookham as "a village in Heaven" and, in his biblical scenes, fellow-villagers are shown as their Gospel counterparts.
- 2.16 Having studied at the Slade School of Fine Art he became one of the leading painters in England between the World Wars, with his experiences of serving in World War I being a source of inspiration for many of his works. In World War II he served as an official war artist, documenting the shipbuilding yards of Port Glasgow, Scotland.
- 2.17 Spencer's works often express his fervent if unconventional Christian faith. This is especially evident in the scenes that he based in Cookham which show the compassion that he felt for his fellow residents.
- 2.18 In addition to his depiction of biblical events, Spencer also painted a series of landscapes. Everyday life in Cookham was captured in his pictures; cows ambling across the Moor, boatyards on the Thames banks and the hazy meadows that surround the villages. Standing on the causeway over the Moor today gives a view towards the village that hasn't changed since being captured by Spencer in his painting 'Cookham Moor'.
- 2.19 Spencer was made a Royal Academician in 1950, awarded a CBE in the same year and knighted in 1959.

- 2.20 Scottish author Kenneth Grahame (1859-1932) also has a strong association with Cookham. Grahame moved to Cookham at the age of five with his siblings to be cared for by his grandmother. Whilst working at the Bank of England Grahame had a series of short stories published before retiring when he then wrote his most famous book: *The Wind in the Willows*. Written from his home in Cookham, Quarry Wood and the River Thames are believed to be the inspiration for the setting of the story.
- 2.21 The National Trust, whom own and manage the Cookham Commons, note that *“the impressive vistas and great expanses of open grassland offer an idyllic rural landscape that inspired the likes of Stanley Spencer and Kenneth Grahame to some of their most impressive and iconic works”*⁷. Walking routes suggested by the National Trust, linking Cookham Dean, Cookham Dean Common and Quarry Wood allow visitors to take in the sights and sounds that inspired Grahame to write *The Wind in the Willows*.
- 2.22 The works of Spencer and Grahame represent important artistic interest for Cookham, relating to our appreciation of and therefore the significance of the landscape and its setting as a cultural and heritage asset. Their work contributes to the significance of both the place that is seen and experienced, as well as the place you are looking from.
- 2.23 The NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment through protection and enhancement of valued landscapes. It also notes that development plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment and which should consider, amongst other factors, cultural benefits, local character and distinctiveness. Planning Practice Guidance confirms that *“part of the public value of heritage assets is the contribution that they can make to understanding and interpreting our past”*⁸. It goes on to state that heritage interest can be artistic, can be reflected in the general aesthetics of a place as well as interests in creative skills. The example of sculpture as a creative skill is given.
- 2.24 Guidance prepared by Natural England in respect of landscape sensitivity⁹ notes that the landscape comprises an inter-related set of elements and combinations between these that make places distinctive and unique. They include natural elements, such as landform, cultural and social elements, such as land use, and aesthetic and perceptual elements. This last group of elements includes a range of visual aspects, such as colour and texture, but also other experiences, such as memories and associations. Similar references are made by Historic England¹⁰,

⁷ <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/maidenhead-and-cookham-commons/lists/cookham-commons>

⁸ Planning Practice Guidance, Historic Environment: Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 18a-002-20190723, Revision date: 23 07 2019

⁹ Natural England, June 2019, An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management

¹⁰ Historic England, October 2018, Historic England Advice Note 11, Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment

noting that it is often a place's distinctive heritage that makes it special, and that this can relate to local character and setting. The Spencer paintings in particular are strongly associated with Cookham but also inform a wider understanding of the place and its evolution over time.

- 2.25 Examples of artistic interest being used to inform policy include the designation of Dedham Vale ('Constable Country') as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Although the designation reflects the national importance of the area in terms of its landscape quality, this is further enhanced through its close association with the works of John Constable. Natural Beauty in respect of the Denham Vale AONB relates to landscape and scenic quality, relative wildness and tranquillity. 'Cultural Heritage' features are also recognised and relate to the life and work of local artists, how they have interpreted the area and contribute to knowledge of the landscape, its management, working practices, labour and industry over time.
- 2.26 Elsewhere, the Oxford View Cones Assessment¹¹ makes extensive use of and reference to the paintings of JMW Turner whose 'contribution to the iconography of the city is outstanding'. Alongside material from poets and authors including Wordsworth, Hardy and John Britton, the paintings are used to appreciate the growth, evolution and setting of the city, its built form and relationship with the natural landscape.
- 2.27 Many of the paintings of Cookham produced by Spencer depict key views, scenes, facades and other details from in and around the area. Among the works with the greatest relevance are the landscapes painted from the ridge which extends from Woodlands Farm down to The Mount, looking across the valley towards Hedsor, Cliveden and Taplow Court, together with various paintings around Poundfield and Englefield. Several works provide views of the river, including the series 'Christ Preaching at Cookham Regatta', and there are many which show parts of Cookham village as well as specific buildings.
- 2.28 The retention and safeguarding of the Spencer views are important to the character and identity of Cookham. Equally, they contribute towards the local economy, with visitors to the area attracted because of the Spencer legacy, for leisure and recreation activities. This is recognised in the Cookham High Street Conservation Area Statement which notes that '*due to the international focus on Sir Stanley this [the setting of the paintings] is not solely of significance to Cookham in isolation, but is an issue of interest to a much wider audience.*'¹²

¹¹ Historic England and Oxford Preservation Trust, 2015, Assessment of the Oxford View Cones

¹² RBWM, November 2002, Cookham High Street: Conservation Area Statement

3. Demographics

- 3.1 According to the 2011 census, the Parish of Cookham has a total population of 5,779 people living in 2,395 households¹³. This equates to 2.41 people per household. Most homes are either owned outright (42.2% of all Cookham Households) or owned with a mortgage or loan (35.9% of all Cookham households).
- 3.2 The most prominent household type in the Parish is a detached house or bungalow, comprising 35.3% of the housing stock. This is followed by semi-detached houses or bungalows which make up 33.6%¹⁴.
- 3.3 The largest age group in the Parish is the 45 to 59 age group, accounting for 22% of the total population of Cookham. Cookham has an ageing population: RBWM has the highest proportion of population over 65 years (15%) and over 85 years (20%) of all authorities in Berkshire¹⁵ and Cookham surpasses these figures, with 18% and 2% respectively. Population projections for RBWM suggest that there will be an increase across the Borough of nearly 24% in the 65-84 age range and a 55% increase in the number of over 85-year olds. Though the majority of Cookham residents (85.3%) were reported to be in good or very good health¹⁶, this ageing population demographic may bring about new and diverse needs such as requiring specialist care or housing¹⁷.
- 3.4 In terms of educational attainment in Cookham, almost half the population aged 16 and over (43%) have level 4 qualifications and above, which is much higher than the national average at 27.2%. 39.3% of residents are in full time employment, with the unemployment rate amongst economically active residents just 2.5%; this is in fact just above the rate for Windsor and Maidenhead as a whole but well below the UK average of 3.9%. The majority of residents work in either Wholesale, Retail Trade and Repair industries (13.2%), Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities (12.2%) and Information and Communication (11.6%).¹⁸

¹³ Office for National Statistics. Cookham Parish Local Area Report. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04001214#section_7_0

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Planning for an Ageing Population 2010. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/downloads/download/178/planning_for_an_ageing_population_spd

¹⁶ Office for National Statistics. Cookham Parish Local Area Report. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04001214#section_7_0

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *ibid.*

4. Movement & Accessibility

- 4.1 Cookham Railway Station is located in Cookham Rise on Station Hill. Rail services to and from Cookham are provided on the Maidenhead to Marlow branch line which is operated by Great Western Railway. Currently, the service provides an 'each way' service every hour (approximately). This service is referred to locally as the "Marlow Donkey"¹⁹. Onward journeys to London Paddington require either a single change at Maidenhead or a double change at Maidenhead and then Slough (which is a slightly quicker journey). Cookham Station provides a ticket office, pay phone, free Wifi, toilets and waiting rooms for its users. The vast majority of bus passenger needs are met by the Arriva Route-37 (High Wycombe to Maidenhead & Bourne End) which passes through Cookham Village and Cookham Rise.
- 4.2 A survey in The Cookham Plan – Transport and Traffic 2008²⁰ shows that Cookham's location and transport links are a valued asset amongst Cookham residents, with 46.1% of respondents identifying 'good transport links', and 72% of respondents identifying 'convenient geographical location' as answers to 'What do you like about living in the Cookhams?'
- 4.3 The main vehicle route between Cookham and Maidenhead is via the B4447, Switchback Road: a relatively modern road but with a pinchpoint where it goes under the railway line. The A4094 also provides access from the parish south to Maidenhead, with routes then coming together at Cookham bridge to cross the Thames and provide onward access to Bourne End via Ferry Lane. The main east west route through the Parish is provided by The Pound, Lower Road and Dean Lane. This also connect Cookham Village High Street, Cookham Moor, Cookham Railway Station and Cookham Rise Village Centre. It is thus an important route providing links to important community facilities and services.
- 4.4 Road safety was raised as a major concern in the aforementioned survey, with 72.8% of residents expressing apprehensions about speeding and accident black spots²¹. Figure 2 shows the location of traffic incidents over the period 2010-2019 in the Parish. This is taken from the online resource 'Crashmap' and is based upon information collected by the police relating to reported injury collisions. Swtichback Road (the B4447), which is the main link between Cookham and Maidenhead, has been witness to the greatest number of incidents over this period, which is perhaps reflective of the volume and speed of traffic making use of this route. There are also however other hot-spots within the Parish, including the junction of Switchback Road and Lower Road, and on the approaches into Cookham Village, including the A4094.

¹⁹ The Cookham Plan – Transport and Traffic 2008. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.cookham.com/cookhamplannew/transportrevised/transportandtrafficcontents.htm>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

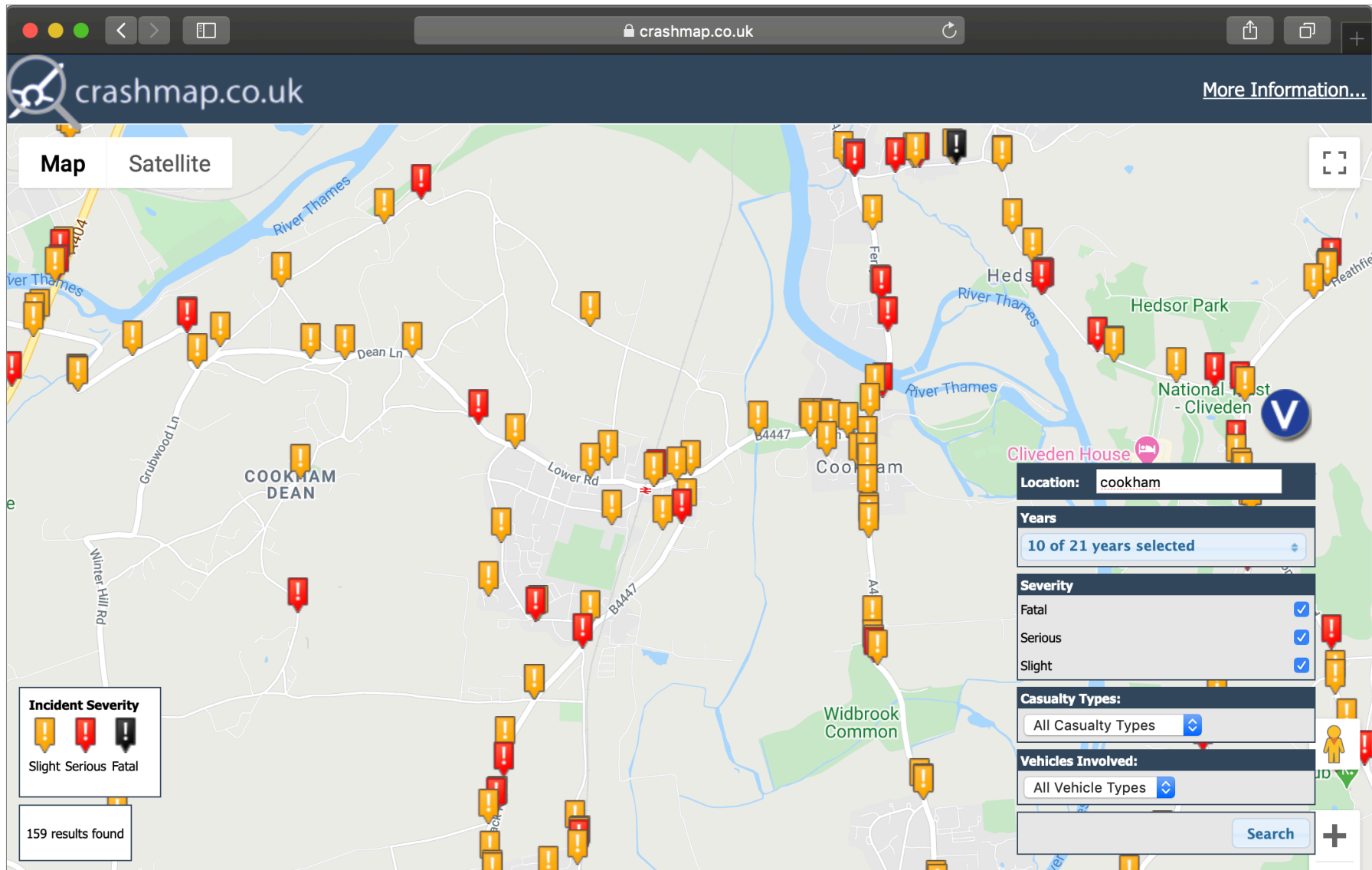


Figure 2: Location of traffic incidents 2010-2019 in Cookham, involving all vehicle types (source: crashmap.co.uk)

4.5 The Parish benefits from an extensive network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that connects the three settlement areas, providing good accessibility for residents and visitors wishing to travel between them on foot. This network extends into the northern part of the Parish, providing easy access for ramblers, dog-walkers and visitors to Cock Marsh. Similarly, Quarry Wood in the east of the Parish is well-covered by footpaths and bridleways.

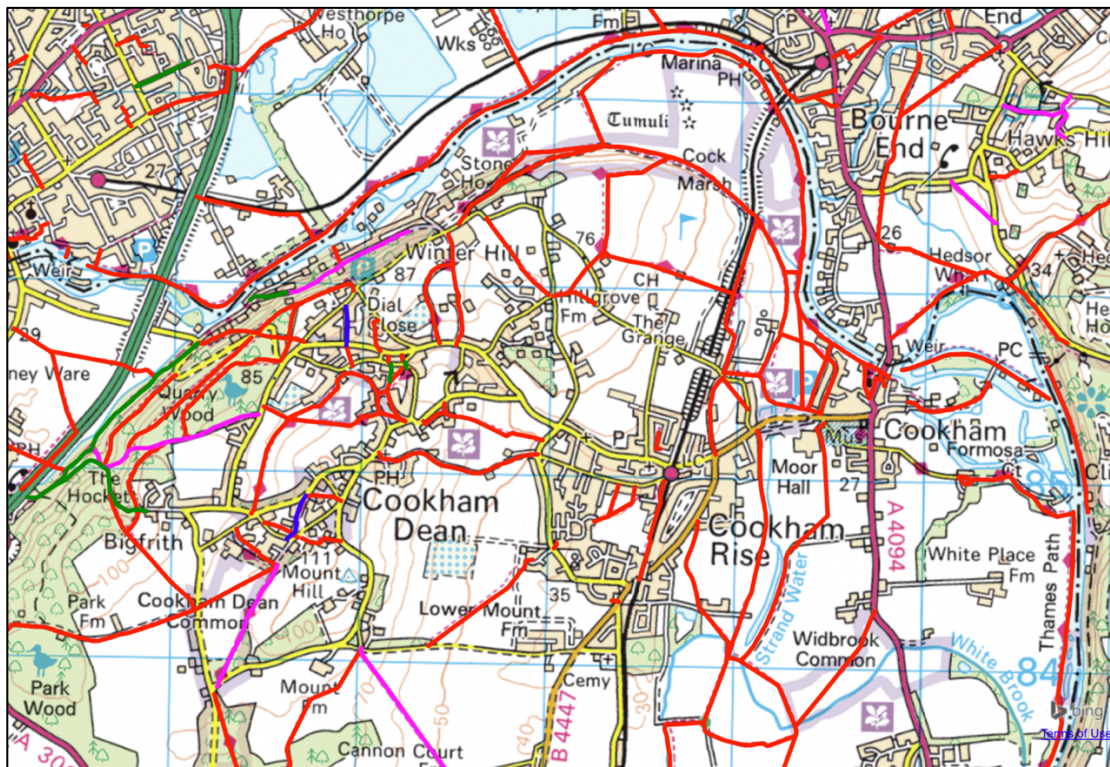


Figure 3: Public Rights of Way (Source: rowmaps.com)

4.6 The RBWM Cycling Action Plan 2018-2028²² uses the Propensity to Cycle Tool²³ to establish the existing cycling activity in the Bisham and Cookham Area Profile, noting that the area has low numbers of commuter cyclists (less than 50 per day). Well used routes include the A4094 Sutton Road/Sheet Street Road and the B4447 High Street/The Pound/Maidenhead Road/Cannondown Road/Switchback Road; both of which are main access routes into the Cookhams. Minor roads well used include Quarry Wood Road, Dean Lane and Lower Road.

4.7 With regard to cycling infrastructure, the permitted cycle route between Maidenhead and Cookham Rise forms part of the National Cycle Network Route 50; this was recently upgraded to address poor surfacing. Other local routes include the shared use footway that runs along the east side of Switchback Road North and Cannondown Road, providing a link between Maidenhead and Cookham Rise. Public cycle parking has been provided at Cookham Station.

²² Cycling Action Plan 2018-2028. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/200211/cycling/828/cycling_action_plan

²³ Propensity to Cycle Tool. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.pct.bike/>

- 4.8 The Action Plan also identifies a number of key issues for the area. These include: the existing cycle route between Cookham Rise and Maidenhead failing to link through to the centre of either settlement; in general, there being few dedicated cycle routes; local lanes being shared with fast-moving motorists at peak times; and cross-boundary links being poor. To address these issues, the Action Plan lays out a number of strategies, ranging from low cost, soft measures such as a Bikeability training programme for local schools to take part in, to harder measures such as a new cycle route between Maidenhead and Cookham.
- 4.9 At the wider Borough level, RBWM enjoys enviable levels of connectivity to London. The M4 runs east-west through the middle of the Borough, serving Windsor (via Junction 6) and Maidenhead (via Junctions 8/9), while the M3, M25 and M40 are all within easy reach²⁴. The Borough also benefits from having 10 rail stations, served by a combination of main line and branch lines services. Heathrow is also nearby, providing connections to more than 180 destinations across the world.
- 4.10 However, the Local Transport Plan 2012-2026²⁵ acknowledges that transport networks in the area are under pressure, affecting local residents and businesses. The 2018 RBWM Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)²⁶ considers the transport infrastructure required to support future growth in the wider Borough and address some of the existing issues. The major transport schemes are set out in the Thames Valley Berkshire Strategic Economic Plan (2015/16 – 2020/2021); these are to be delivered locally with support from the Local Growth Deal funding and include major schemes such as ‘Maidenhead Station Access’ and ‘Maidenhead Town Centre – Missing Links’.
- 4.11 Although there are no major schemes directly related to Cookham Parish, improvements are being delivered at Maidenhead station as part of the Crossrail programme. When Crossrail is complete, four Elizabeth line trains an hour will allow passengers to travel to Central London (from Maidenhead) without having to change trains, and two Elizabeth line trains an hour will run between Maidenhead and Reading²⁷.
- 4.12 Direct train services between Cookham and London Paddington were cut from three per hour to two per hour (during peak travel times) in the late 2000’s, with the direct service being cut completely in 2017, in anticipation of the Elizabeth Line opening. Whilst the direct service from Maidenhead into central London may be of some benefit for residents from Cookham, it does not address the lack of direct through services to Cookham. With peak time services from Maidenhead to London often already full before passengers from Cookham can change, there is

²⁴ Local Transport Plan 2012-2026. [ONLINE] Available at:

https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/downloads/download/90/local_transport_plan_documents

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2018. [ONLINE] Available at:

https://www3.rbwm.gov.uk/info/201026/borough_local_plan/1351/submission/1

²⁷ *ibid.*

a potential need to explore whether direct services could be reintroduced. This is particularly important given the current one-per-hour train service from Cookham to Maidenhead and the limited accessibility for residents (and visitors) this results in.

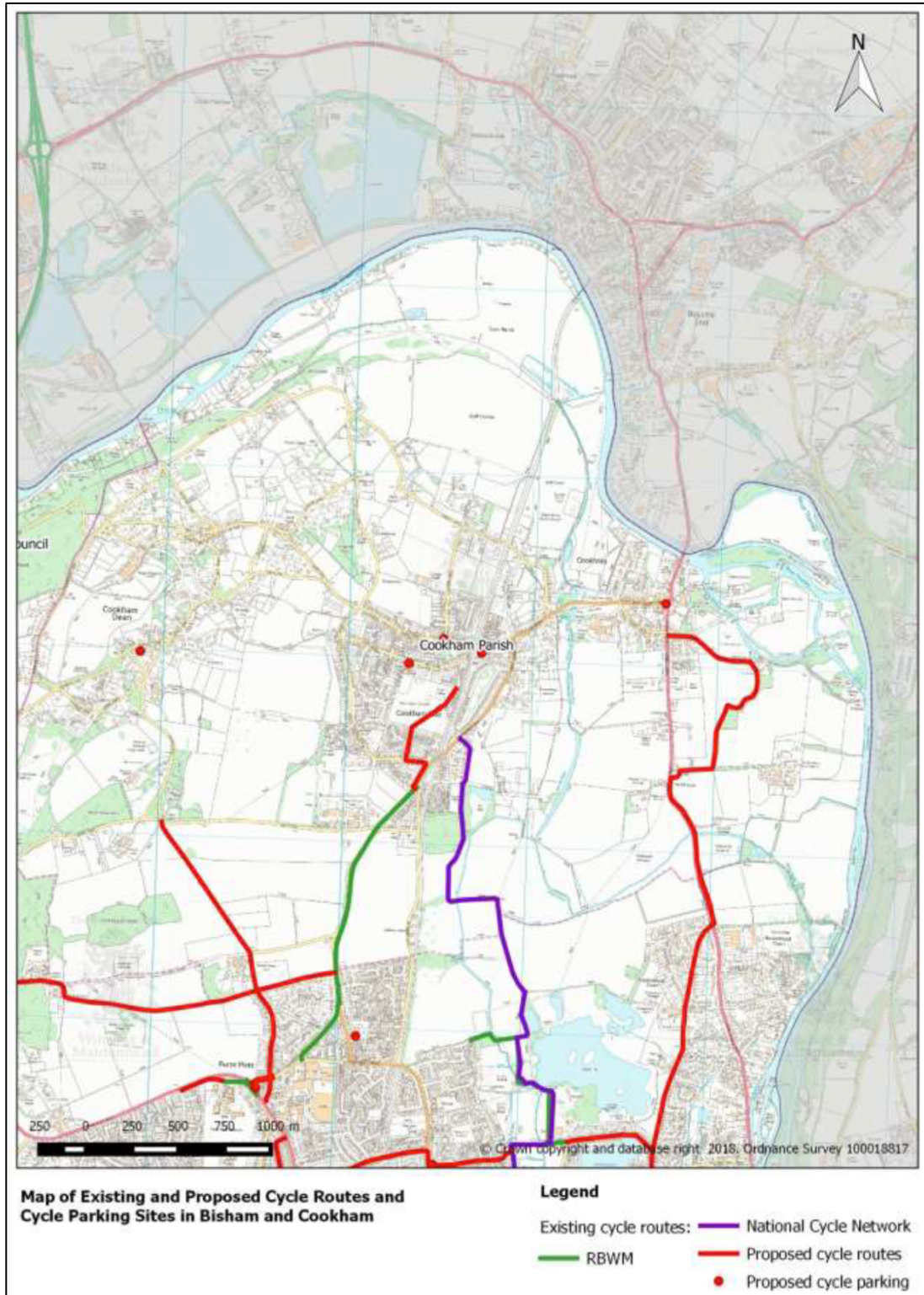


Figure 4: Map of Existing and Proposed Cycle Routes (Source: Cycle Action Plan)

5. Character

Townscape

- 5.1 In 2010 RBWM published a Townscape Assessment²⁸ covering the towns and larger villages across the entire Borough. The Cookhams are addressed in Volume 1, though Cookham Dean does not form part of the assessment. The assessment identifies key features. Landmarks and views. It states that *“the Cookhams are two (excluding Cookham Dean) clearly related, but distinct historic village settlements, separated by The Moor, with an intimate, rural village character, rich variety of built heritage, and quintessential views to the river, across historic open spaces and to the distinctive wooded backdrop (including those features by Stanley Spencer in his paintings.”*
- 5.2 The Townscape Assessment presents a series of recommendations for consideration in future policies, development projects and public realm schemes, including:
1. The conservation of the riverside landscape setting of Cookham and glimpsed views to the river from the village and vice versa.
 2. The retention of the compact, contained village form.
 3. The maintenance of the distinction between the two settlements (Cookham and Cookham Rise) including the associated role of The Moor and Poundfield (e.g. the sense of open space and separation between the two settlements or distinctive elements).
 4. The conservation of views to and from The Causeway, Holy Trinity Church and the Stanley Spencer gallery within Cookham, and the railway station and two churches within Cookham Rise.
 5. The conservation of long views across The Moor and to the Cliveden Estate, including those views from The Moor and more elevated land as at Poundfield and in Cookham Dean.
 6. The retention of the High Street and The Moor as the main focus for the settlement.
 7. Consider the appearance of Cookham Rise in views from Cliveden and the elevated chalk landscape, as well as from the edge of The Moor.
 8. The conservation of the eastern approach to the core of the village from the former ferry crossing, the western approach from The Moor, the northern approach from the Cookham Bridge, and the southern approach from Sutton Road as gateways into the historic core of Cookham.
 9. The conservation of the eastern approach from The Moor, the western approach at the junction with the Maidenhead Road and the railway station and gateways into the historic core of Cookham Rise.

²⁸ LUC for RBWM, June 2010, Townscape Assessment, Final Characterisation Report

10. The retention the Tarrystone, the War Memorial and Churchgate in Cookham and the railway station and cluster of shops at Lower Road in Cookham Rise as key nodes and focal point.
- 5.3 The Townscape Assessment forms supporting evidence to the emerging Local Plan, but is expanded upon in the Cookham Village Design Statement (2013), which extends to cover the entire Parish and which presents additional analysis, detail and recommendations. This is particularly important given the absence of Cookham Dean from the Townscape Analysis, despite its own qualities, including its very green and rural nature, which differentiates it from Cookham Village and Cookham Rise. The Townscape Assessment also refers to the conservation of certain areas, which is reflected in the designation of Conservation Areas for Cookham High Street and Cookham Dean, with more information in each presented in the respective appraisal documents.

Conservation

- 5.4 The Cookham High Street and Cookham Dean conservation areas were both originally designated in 1969, with statements for each last prepared in 2002 and 1998 respectively. These form evidence to the emerging Local Plan. The extent of the Conservation Areas are shown in the mapping appended to this document.
- 5.5 In the Cookham High Street Conservation Area Statement²⁹ it is noted that the character and appearance of the village is heavily derived from use of a limited range of traditional materials, building styles and features. These should be maintained and use of materials that would cause detriment to the area, such as uPVC, avoided. The variety of boundary walls are also recognised as an important feature, including the importance of using traditional lime mortar for repairs. Furthermore, importance is attached to maintaining the quality of the public realm and avoiding installation and siting of street furniture that would cause visual intrusion and movement hazards. The Conservation Area has been subject to review by RBWM, with consultation taking place in 2016 and 2018, though an updated version has still to be published. The boundary of the Conservation Area as currently drawn includes part of Marsh Meadow (to the north of The Moor), though not all of it, with land along the river bank currently excluded from the Conservation Area. Consultation responses to RBWM suggested that the boundary should be extended to include the entirety of Marsh Meadow, being important to and forming part of the character and setting of Cookham Village. Marsh Meadow and the riverbank is also significant as the setting of Spencer paintings, particularly those from Cookham Bridge, and thus important to the wider character and appreciation of Cookham.
- 5.6 The Cookham Dean conservation area covers a large area and, within the Conservation Area Statement³⁰, is broken down into a series of sub-areas which

²⁹ RBWM, November 2002, Cookham High Street: Conservation Area Statement

³⁰ RBWM, November 1998, Cookham Dean, Conservation Area Statement

possess their own characteristics, including (a) Winter Hill, (b) Cookham Dean Bottoms, (c) Dean Lane / Alleyns Lane, (d) Hardings Green and Cricket Pitch, and (e) Cookham Dean around St John the Baptist Church. The Conservation Area Statement highlights the 'overtly rural appearance' of the area, areas of woodland which form pleasant backdrops to the small communities, and the distinctiveness of the greens and commons which often form 'the central focus for groups of residential properties'. The network of country lanes, tracks and footpaths threading their way through the area are also considered to be characteristic of the conservation area. This is also recognised by Wild Cookham³¹, who note that in addition to the heritage value, the hedgerows along these routes have an important wildlife value. The group is keen to avoid the loss of hedgerows and is preparing guidance to support year-round maintenance. Furthermore, the Village Design Statement notes the characteristic nature of country lanes and associated green verges, which it recommends should be retained and, where they have been lost, opportunities taken to reinstate them.

Design

5.7 The Cookham Village Design Statement (VDS)³² was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in May 2013. Building upon the Townscape Study and Conservation Area Statements outlined above, it provides more detail on the qualities of the built and natural environment specific to the Parish, with advice and guidance set out on how this should be used when preparing and determining planning applications. Given the relatively limited scale of development that has taken place since the VDS was prepared the information and guidance within it remain relevant and provide a good basis for the creation of design policies within the Neighbourhood Plan. The VDS is clear that Cookham '*must not be immune to change, but the best of what Cookham has to offer should be protected and where possible, enhanced*'. Indeed, the qualities and characteristics of the area are important design cues for future development.

5.8 In respect of built form, the VDS notes:

- Roofs: Pitched and gabled roofs overwhelmingly predominate. Variation and contrasting roof heights create visual interest, but where there is overall harmony in size, pitch and height. Unrelieved areas of flat roofing should be avoided.
- Materials: Red brick and clay tiles are the dominant building materials. 'Weathered red' is the most typical colour and decorative tiling is sometimes seen in the area. Victorian yellow brick stocks are also present, as is white wash and render. Flint is used fairly extensively on public buildings and exposed timber framing is also common. Materials used in new development should reflect those common to Cookham.

³¹ WildCookham is a community group focused on discovering, celebrating and supporting biodiversity in Cookham. See: <https://www.wildcookham.org.uk/>

³² Cookham Parish Council and The Cookham Society, May 2013, Cookham Village Design Statement (Adopted by RBWM as a Supplementary Planning Document)

5.9 The VDS highlights the importance of the rural character of Cookham and the influence this has on settlement character. Key points are:

- The need to maintain a degree of spaciousness between properties, with allowance for some individuality and irregularity in layout and building alignment, reflecting the organic nature of growth in the area. Harsh, linear lines and 'off-the shelf' approaches to housing design should be avoided.
- The importance of providing front gardens to properties, including hedged and tree-studded boundaries. Tall boundary walls and gates should be avoided, enclosing properties and the street. Historic walls should however be retained and maintained. The removal of trees and hedgerows should be avoided.
- Retention and use of natural materials at ground level, avoiding excessive use of hardstanding. Parking should be discreet and carefully managed within the street scene so as not too visually dominate. Where parking is provided it should ideally be integrated with landscaping. This applies to parking associated with individual buildings as well as larger car parks, including areas of public parking.
- Retention of green fingers and spaces through the settlements in the Parish, together with green verges, and retaining the natural state of these.
- Where lighting is provided this should generally be low level and avoid an urbanisation effect through increased light pollution.
- Along the riverside development should be set back from the river edge, retaining accessible green space, allow for views of the river and countryside, including glimpsed views between properties.

5.10 The above does not preclude innovation in design nor more contemporary use of materials in Cookham, though the VDS notes that where this does occur, proposals should be informed by existing character and setting, and harmonise with the buildings and landscape. Disproportionately large areas of glass, flat roofs and stark linearity should be avoided, particularly where development comprises multiple buildings (whether that be residential, commercial or another use).

5.11 The rural nature of the Parish is also reflected in the numerous farm and agricultural buildings found in the area, often in quite close proximity to the settlements. The VDS recognises that many farm buildings and operations need to change and evolve to remain fit for modern purposes. However, it notes that the potential visual impacts of new farm buildings might be reduced through careful choice of materials and use of planting which reflect the countryside setting. Noise impacts from buildings sited in close proximity to settlements can also impact residential amenity. Furthermore, the impact of additional farm buildings and installations in the countryside, including the repurposing of agricultural buildings for other uses, contributes to the sense that development is extending into the countryside. This can undermine the nature of 'gaps' between

settlements, particularly between Cookham Rise and Maidenhead, where the already narrow gap between the two is at risk from coalescence. This is exacerbated where buildings are sited in highly prominent positions.

- 5.12 Permitted development rights exist for some forms of development where the farm is five hectares or greater. However, the issues outlined above are reflected in the emerging Local Plan which notes that activities should respect the character of their rural location and protect or enhance the area's countryside, that existing buildings should be reused where possible, and that opportunities should be taken to improve the appearance and environment of agricultural holdings, particularly through appropriate diversification schemes. Policy and guidance that helps address this in the Neighbourhood Plan might be explored further.

Appendix: Conservation Areas

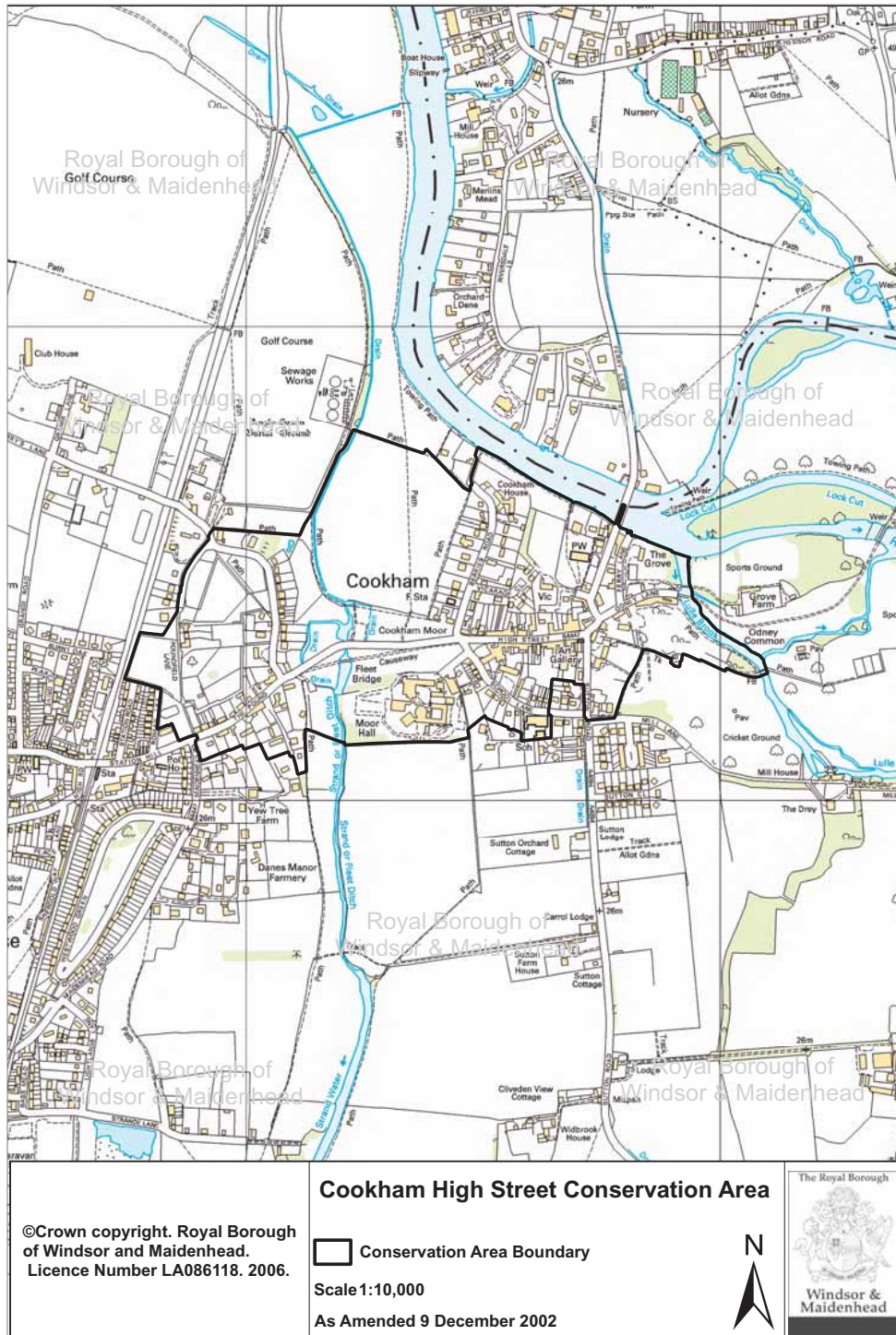


Figure 5: Cookham High Street Conservation Area

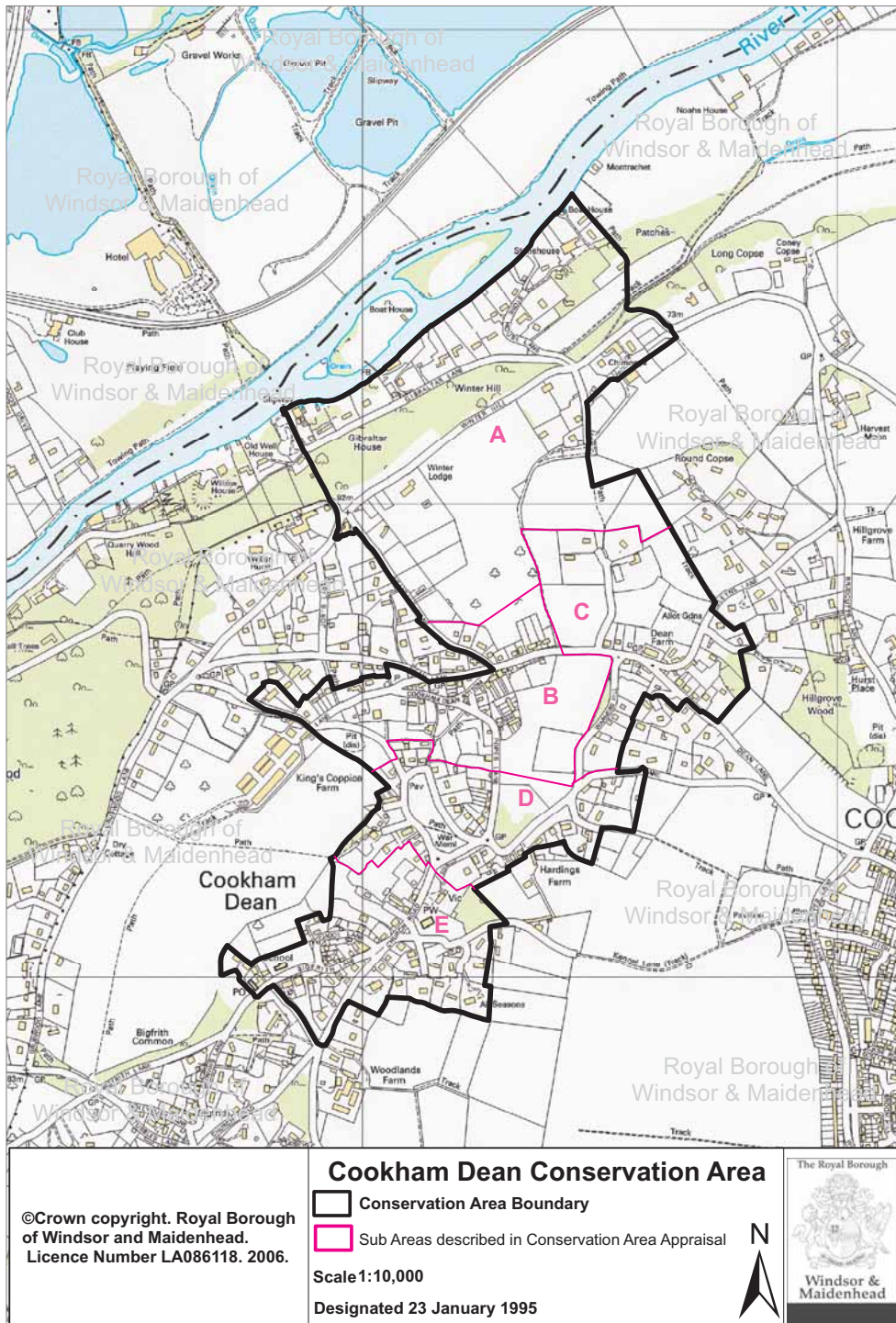


Figure 6: Cookham Dean Conservation Area



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