

Hermitage Parish Council

Hermitage Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2039



Referendum Version

December 2023

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1 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the plan

- 1.1 This document represents the Neighbourhood Plan for Hermitage parish for the period 2022 to 2039. The Plan contains a vision for the future of Hermitage and sets out clear planning policies to realise this vision.
- 1.2 The principal purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development within the parish. It also provides guidance to anyone wishing to submit a planning application for development within the parish. The process of producing a plan has sought to involve the community as widely as possible. The different topic areas are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance to Hermitage, its residents, businesses and community groups.
- 1.3 Some of the Neighbourhood Plan policies are general and apply throughout the Plan area, whilst others are site or area-specific and apply only to the appropriate areas illustrated on the relevant map. Nevertheless, in considering proposals for development, West Berkshire District Council will apply all relevant policies of the Plan. It is therefore assumed that the Plan will be read as a whole, although some cross-referencing between Plan policies has been provided.
- 1.4 The process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan has identified a number of non-policy actions which have not been included in the policies' sections. This is because these are not specifically related to land use matters and therefore sit outside the jurisdiction of a Neighbourhood Plan. These actions will be addressed by the Parish Council outside of the Neighbourhood Plan process. They are presented in Section 9.

Policy context

- 1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan represents one part of the development plan for the neighbourhood area over the period 2022 to 2039, the other parts being the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2012), the Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (2017), ~~and~~ the saved policies of the West Berkshire District Local Plan (saved 2007) and the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2022-2037). The Core Strategy, Housing Site Allocations DPD and the 2007 saved policies collectively make up the District Local Plan.
- 1.6 West Berkshire District Council, as the local planning authority, designated the Hermitage Neighbourhood Area in April 2019 to enable Hermitage Parish Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has been prepared by the community through the Hermitage Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) Steering Group.
- 1.7 The HNP has been prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). The HNP Steering Group has prepared the plan to establish a vision for the future of the parish and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning and controlling land use and development change over the plan period.

- 1.8 The map in Figure 1.1 below shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Area, which is the same as the administrative boundary of Hermitage parish.

Figure 1.1: Hermitage Neighbourhood Area/parish boundary



Prepared under Hermitage Parish Council's Ordnance Survey Public Sector Geospatial Mapping Agreement (PSGA) no. 100055937

- 1.9 The current strategic planning context for Hermitage is provided primarily by the West Berkshire Core Strategy. This was adopted in 2012 and covers the period to 2026. As such, it has a limited time to run and the Neighbourhood Plan period runs well beyond its end date. Alongside the Core Strategy are the saved policies from the West Berkshire Local Plan 1991-2006; these are used for the purpose of determining planning applications and provide limited up-to-date guidance for how the neighbourhood plan relates to strategic plan-making matters.
- 1.10 As well as the Core Strategy and Local Plan saved policies is the West Berkshire Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) which was adopted in 2017. In addition to addressing matters relating to housing in the countryside, parking standards and accommodation for gypsy, traveller and travelling show people, this allocates two sites in Hermitage for housing development:
- HSA24 - Land off Charlotte Close - allocated for 15 dwellings but with full planning permission for 16 dwellings.
 - HSA25 - Land south-east of the Old Farmhouse - allocated for 10 dwellings but with outline planning permission for up to 21 dwellings (the difference in numbers being accounted for by the fact that a larger area than was allocated, by incorporating the Old Farmyard site, was granted permission).
- 1.11 A review of the West Berkshire Local Plan is being undertaken by West Berkshire District Council. This will cover the period to 2039, the same end date as the Neighbourhood Plan. ~~A draft of the Local Plan Review (Regulation 18) was consulted on between December 2020 and February 2021 submitted for examination in March 2023.~~ Amongst other things, this proposed a minimum housing requirement for Hermitage of 20 dwellings to 2039 (the lifetime of the emerging Local Plan). This is in addition to the two sites allocated in the existing Housing Allocations DPD and to any windfall sites that have come forward recently (including the Co-op site for 8 dwellings, the White Horse pub site for 4 dwellings and the Crown Butchers site for 3 dwellings). This figure will be kept under review until the Local Plan Review has ~~reached a more advanced stage, ie completed~~ independent examination ~~has been completed.~~ As of late-2023, it is expected that the Local Plan Review will be adopted in September 2024. Upon adoption, the current Local Plan will be superseded.
- ~~In October 2022 West Berkshire District Council published its timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan Review. The Regulation 19 Proposed Submission version of the Plan was consulted on in January and February 2023. The intention is then to submit the plan for independent examination in March 2023, with an adoption date of September 2024.~~

Monitoring the Plan

- 1.12 Hermitage Parish Council, as the qualifying body, will be responsible for maintaining and periodically revisiting the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure relevance and to monitor delivery. This may be done through the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

2 LOCAL CONTEXT

History of Hermitage

- 2.1 Hermitage has a long and rich history which has shaped the settlement and parish today.
- 2.2 **Origins** - an Iron Age hillfort called Grimsbury Castle is an important monument on high ground, overlooking two valleys in the middle of the parish. Its origins are probably between the 8th and 5th centuries BC as early Iron Age pottery was found there. There was then a strong Roman presence, with villas found in the 19th century at Wellhouse and Birch Farm as well as other features in Box Wood.
- 2.3 **13th Century** - Hermitage, part of the parish of Hamstead Norris (sic), lay within the local administrative area (or 'Hundred') of Faircross which seems to have taken its name from a spot near Hermitage, where two ancient trade routes crossed. The name Faircross is still retained in the nearby plantation and farm. These crossroads formed the original settlement nucleus of Hermitage around what is now the junction of Marlston Road and the B4009, Newbury Road.
- 2.4 **Pre-19th Century** - Little is known apart from a reference to Cromwell's army marching through Hermitage enroute to the Second Battle of Newbury in 1641 and evidence of a Quaker Meeting House and burial ground on Oare Common in 1678. Rocque's map published in 1761 showed Hermitage (and the larger settlement of Little Hungerford to the north) as being mostly rough open ground with a cluster of houses around the junctions of Marlston and Yattendon Roads with what is now known as the B4009.
- 2.5 **1830** - Farmworkers from both Hermitage and Little Hungerford took part in the Swing Riots (a widespread uprising by agricultural workers protesting at harsh working conditions and unemployment arising from the introduction of agricultural mechanisation) and won a 20% wage rise from the farm owner at Hampstead Norris.
- 2.6 **1840** - Hermitage separated from the parish of Hampstead Norris (sic) becoming an ecclesiastical parish in its own right. It was a thriving, mainly agricultural, community with a bakery, a Methodist Chapel (in Chapel Lane), a Parochial School with up to 50 pupils and three Public Houses - the Plough Inn (Hampstead Norreys Road), the White Horse and the Fox.
- 2.7 **1872** - Hermitage is recorded as having a post office, 95 houses and a population of 434.
- 2.8 **1882** - The Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway opened and ran right through Hermitage, transforming goods transport between the Midlands and the South Coast and contributing greatly to the growth of Hermitage. As wealthier city dwellers chose to migrate towards rural areas, their demand for substantial villas meant that the small local brick kilns located close to The Fox couldn't keep pace with demand.
- 2.9 **Early 1900s** - Pinewood Brickworks at the northern edge of Hermitage opened in 1908. Ribbon development along both sides of the B4009 and within the triangle of land between Hampstead Norreys and Yattendon Roads, effectively merged the settlement of Hermitage

with Little Hungerford. Housing for local workers began to appear and various businesses servicing village and farm needs sprang up along the B4009.

- 2.10 **1920** - Hermitage is recorded as 'a considerable village' with several shops, a butcher, baker, a blacksmith's workshop, carpenters, Hackney Carriage business and a police station!
- 2.11 **1960s** - The intervening years of Depression and WWII brought little, if any change until home-ownership became a wider aspiration and estate development became popular. 33 bungalows were built on the local cricket green at Briant's Piece, off Marlston Road.
- 2.12 **1970s** - Completion of the Maidenhead to Swindon section of the M4 in December 1971 fuelled further demand for housebuilding in Hermitage, just one mile from the crossroads of England! 34 dwellings built on pastureland to the south west of Marlston Road, became Lipscomb Close. Along the B4009, older houses with large grounds were demolished or large gardens sub-divided giving rise to much uncoordinated infill development and the emergence of unsympathetic house design. Widening of the B4009 to accommodate increased traffic led to considerable loss of native hedgerows, mature trees and to urbanisation of the rural street-scene. Increased car ownership, retail expansion in Newbury, only 4 miles distant, contributed to the demise of shops and businesses in the village.
- 2.13 **1980s - 1990s** - Two brownfield sites were constructed on the former Hermitage Brickworks site near the Fox Pub. These delivered a total of 44 dwellings (14 at Kiln Close and 30 at Dines Way). A further 8 dwellings were developed on pastureland at Lipscomb Close around 1990.
- 2.14 **2000s** - This saw the biggest increase in housing development in Hermitage's history. In 2007, 201 dwellings were completed at the northern end of Hermitage creating Forest Edge estate on the site of Pinewood Brick and Tile company (latterly Cementation Construction site storage) plus 28 dwellings at Blake Road. A further 70 dwellings were built beyond the southern end of the village settlement area on the former Hermitage Railway Station sidings and WWII cold storage area (latterly Arena Promotions site) - establishing Hermitage Green.
- 2.15 **2015 - now** - Along the B4009 at the southern end of Hermitage, the substantial 19th century Hermitage House and parish school (later village hall), were demolished and replaced with 10 detached houses. The large Co-op store, with 8 more dwellings on the brownfield site of a disused motor business, was completed late-2021.

Hermitage today

Socio-economic profile

- 2.16 ~~Whilst there was a~~The socio-economic profile of Hermitage is derived from the national Census undertaken in 2021,~~a comprehensive set of data was not available at parish level at the time of drafting. The data below therefore relate to the 2011 Census. This is dated and therefore needs to be considered in the context of change over the intervening period. However, its purpose is to give a high-level understanding of the broad profile of Hermitage parish.~~
- 2.17 In 2021, the population of Hermitage parish was 2,0781,943 persons, living in 766722 household spaces:

- ~~15.1%~~~~17.4%~~ of the population is aged ~~65~~~~60~~ or over, compared with ~~19.5%~~~~21.7%~~ of the population in West Berkshire district.
- ~~24.1%~~~~25.4%~~ of the population is aged ~~15~~~~4~~ or under, compared with ~~19.0%~~~~18.9%~~ of the population in West Berkshire.
 - Hermitage has a larger proportion of children and a lower proportion of retirees than the district as a whole.

2.18 In 20~~21~~~~1~~, Hermitage parish had ~~766~~~~741~~ dwellings:

- ~~55.2~~~~54.7%~~ of these dwellings were detached, compared with 33.~~18~~% in West Berkshire;
- ~~19.5~~~~20.5%~~ of dwellings were semi-detached, compared with 32.~~58~~% in West Berkshire;
- ~~76.8~~~~69.8%~~ of properties were owned, which is ~~broadly the same as~~~~higher than the figure~~ for West Berkshire (~~67.5~~%);
- only ~~8.4~~~~9.1%~~ were social rented properties, whereas the figure for West Berkshire was ~~14.0~~~~13.8~~%; and
- Hermitage has a low proportion of 1-bed properties at ~~43.9~~% (West Berkshire has ~~9.8~~%) and a high proportion of properties of at least 4 bedrooms at ~~44.4~~~~6.5~~% (West Berkshire has ~~29.8~~%)
 - Hermitage's housing stock is dominated by very large, detached properties.

2.19 ~~79.0~~~~68.4~~% of the resident population aged ~~between~~ 16 and ~~74~~ ~~over~~ was economically active, compared with ~~76.2~~~~65.4~~% of those in West Berkshire.

2.20 A large proportion of the resident population of Hermitage aged 16 ~~to~~ ~~74~~ ~~and over~~ that were in employment were in highly skilled occupations. ~~44.1~~% were employed either as managers, directors or senior officials or in professional occupations compared with ~~38.4~~~~33.3~~% in West Berkshire.

Key features

2.21 Hermitage lies less than 5 miles north-east of Newbury in the heart of the North Wessex Downs ~~National Landscape (previously known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)~~~~Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)~~. A 5-minute drive from the intersection of the main Midlands-South A34 and London-Wales M4 and surrounded by woodlands and rolling farmland it's become a highly desirable place to live. Still predominantly agricultural, the largest local employer is the village primary school. Two pubs, a motor vehicle sales and repair business, the Post Office/general store and the Coop grocery store provide additional employment. Other local employers outside the parish boundary but within a 1-mile radius are a small military base, garden retail centre, woodyard and light industrial units.

Community facilities

2.22 **Hermitage Village Hall** was built in 2014 at Furze Hill, adjacent to the Forest Edge development, on the northern edge of the village. Recently completed, it now provides two halls, a committee room, toilets with disabled facilities and catering facilities. It's the venue

for a wide range of users and activities. This includes the Hermitage Annual Parish Assembly, occasional community social events, a variety of weekly fitness classes and Horticultural Society exhibitions and meetings. Both halls are available for private hire and are in use seven days a week.

- 2.23 Also at Furze Hill, adjacent to the Village Hall, a variety of sports facilities can be found - playing field, multi-use ball courts and exercise equipment.
- 2.24 **Children's play areas** - Hermitage boasts three well-equipped children's play areas spaced throughout the settlement area, with a variety of activity equipment - Furze Hill, Pinewood [Playground Park](#) (off Chapel Lane next to the Scout Hut) and at the heart of Hermitage Green in the south of the village. All play areas are well-used but inconsiderate dog-fouling continues to create problems, despite ample provision of dog waste bins.
- 2.25 ~~**Holy Trinity Hermitage Parish Church**~~ on Marlston Road conducts regular services of worship as well as online services and also hosts fortnightly meetings of Trinity Tones, a community choir. Its adjacent Adelaide room is available for hire.
- 2.26 **Education** - Hermitage Primary School at the northern end of the village, on the B4009 caters for children from 4-11 years old. Secondary Education is provided by:
- The Downs School at Compton, roughly 5 miles north
 - Trinity School at Shaw, roughly 4 miles south-west
 - St Bartholomew's School at Newbury, about 5 miles south-west
- 2.27 A private nursery, Acres of Fun, is located just outside the parish boundary on Priors Court Road. Other pre-school provision is available at Hermitage Village Hall, close to Hermitage Primary School.
- 2.28 Two independent schools - Brockhurst and Marlston House Preparatory School and Downe House Girls Boarding School - lie within 2 miles.
- 2.29 **Children's Clubs** - Hermitage has thriving Cubs, Rainbows and Brownies sections at various locations with Guides available at Compton and Cold Ash and Scouts at Compton and Thatcham.
- 2.30 **Library** - West Berkshire Mobile Library service visits two locations in Hermitage regularly.
- 2.31 **Healthcare** - The nearest surgery and pharmacy is over 1 mile away in Chieveley, inaccessible by public transport and hazardous to walk or cycle to along the busy Priors Court Road which leads to the motorway. Nearest major hospitals are Reading, Basingstoke and Oxford. There's a limited facility community hospital at Thatcham. Dentists are in Thatcham or Newbury, each over 4 miles away.
- 2.32 **Green spaces** - Green spaces owned and maintained by the Parish Council (HPC):
- the Millennium memorial area at Lipscomb Close
 - the tree-bordered green space at Dines Way
 - part of the grassed verge on Pinewood Crescent

- Furze Hill (recreation ground and designated Local Wildlife Site) - formerly clay and sandpits for M4 construction and Pinewood Brickworks
 - Pinewood ~~Park playground~~ - near the Scout Hut on site of former Pinewood Halt Station
 - the Burial Ground off Marlston Road.
- 2.33 The Parish Council has recently negotiated to lease the children's play area at Hermitage Green.
- 2.34 Located well within the North Downs ~~National Landscape Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)~~, Hermitage is surrounded by a mix of coniferous forest and deciduous woodlands, some of which is classed as ancient woodland. The Eling Estate (part of the Gerald Palmer Eling Trust, a registered charity) forms the backdrop to the south and south-east of the settlement and includes numerous permitted paths. Complementing these, beyond the settlement area of the parish are numerous Public Rights of Way footpaths, bridleways and ancient byways. Traversing local woods and farmland they enable pleasant, healthy recreation and off-road access to neighbouring parishes.
- 2.35 Directly south of Hermitage, bordered by Marlston Road and Slanting Hill lies Grimsbury Hill Fort, a substantial Iron Age construction dating from around 100BC.
- 2.36 West of the B4009, current Ordnance Survey maps show no public rights of way through privately owned Roebuck Woods and Spring (or Meetinghouse) Copse. Clearly signposted from Doctors Lane and from several points along the B4009 are Public Rights of Way skirting the north and western edges of Spring Copse and dissecting Oare Common, the site of ancient earthworks and enclosures. The proximity of woodland and public access is highly valued by residents.
- 2.37 Eling Way, an Active Travel Route connecting Hermitage with Hampstead Norreys opened in 2019 and is extremely popular with cyclists, walkers, runners and horse riders. However, users come from further afield, creating additional parking pressures at the Village Hall and on Pinewood Crescent, especially at weekends when sports fixtures are held at the adjacent Furze Hill playing field.
- 2.38 Much of Hermitage lies within the Berks Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)'s core zone of high value for wildlife. South-west of Hermitage and increasingly vulnerable to development are several lots of rough pasture, presently outside the settlement boundary, home to local muntjac deer, other wildlife and songbirds. Red kites can frequently be seen soaring on air currents over the village and at dusk, bats can be glimpsed darting around in the vicinity of the Church. BBOWT is actively searching for ways to help offset local development and achieve 'Biodiversity Net Gain' and has declared nature recovery zones (best places to restore and create new habitats) around the Dines Way and Hermitage Green developments as well as the area bordered by Lipscomb Close, B4009 and Station Road.
- 2.39 **Hospitality** - Hermitage has two pubs that have been serving the community for over 150 years and are well-patronised today, The Fox operating as a public house from 1864 and the White Horse Inn, a public house since at least 1847.

Local businesses

- 2.40 A variety of small businesses serve the local community and surrounding villages but most residents rely on internet purchasing or travel by car to Newbury, Thatcham, Reading or Basingstoke for household needs.
- 2.41 Hermitage Garage provides auto repairs, performs MOTs and sells used vehicles.
- 2.42 Hermitage Brewery is a micro-brewery operating out of premises on Slanting Hill. Its products may be purchased at the village Post Office shop.
- 2.43 Hilliers Garden Centre, situated just outside the parish boundary is very popular with residents and nearby locals, providing plants, a wide range of gardening supplies and services as well as a very popular café and restaurant. ~~In late-2023, c~~Construction work ~~has already begun~~ to expand the retail area and parking facilities ~~was completed~~.

Shopping

- 2.44 Just to the south of Hermitage, but within the parish boundary in the Old Telephone Exchange building at the side of the B4009 is ~~Yarnfest~~Silver Clay Academy, a jewellers that also offers workshops where people can make their own jewellery, an independent supplier of yarn and associated craft supplies. It also holds informal, friendly community knitting and crochet sessions.
- 2.45 The Post Office and shop has been at the heart of Hermitage for over 120 years, supplying essential food and household supplies as well as firewood, confectionery, newspapers and journals to locals as well as a steady stream of passers-by. It also provides banking facilities, foreign currency, parcel and prescription pick-up plus the usual Post Office services.
- 2.46 In 2021, a branch of the Co-op foodstore opened further south on the B4009, next to the White Horse and has proved popular, offering a wider range of foodstuffs. Unfortunately, customer parking and delivery unloading facilities have proved inadequate, creating congestion which impacts adversely on traffic flows at an already busy section of the B4009 close to the Priors Court roundabout.

Public transport

- 2.47 Reading Buses operates the Number 6 bus service 5 times daily at two-hourly intervals for 6 days a week (not Sundays) through Hermitage into Newbury Wharf and onto the rail station. In the other direction, the number 6 travels from Hermitage via Hampstead Norreys and Compton to West Ilsley. Since the Covid pandemic, the service is not particularly well-used.
- 2.48 Contracted school buses provide transport to secondary schools at Compton, Donnington and Newbury.
- 2.49 There is no public transport to the nearest Doctors Surgery at Chieveley but Downland Patient Transport, run by volunteers can be requested. It is theoretically possible to get to West Berkshire Community Hospital and even to Thatcham or Reading via public transport with a change of bus at Shaw or Newbury, although service frequency of the Hermitage-Newbury leg proves very restrictive when attempting to arrange and attend medical appointments.

New development

2.50 As at ~~April-November 2023~~², the following developments ~~we~~^are in the planning pipeline (ie. have permission but have yet to be constructed):

- Pasture behind Charlotte Close - 16 dwellings approved October 2021, with the site being prepared for construction to commence
- Pasture behind the Old Farmhouse - 21 dwellings approved May 2021
- Pasture behind the White Horse Pub - 4 dwellings approved January 2021
- Land at Crown Butchers, 4 High Street - 3 dwellings approved November 2021, with construction close to completion.

3 VISION AND OBJECTIVES

Challenges for Hermitage

- 3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address, as far as is possible, the challenges that face the community of Hermitage. In summary these challenges are:
- maintaining heritage and feel of village;
 - lack of active travel routes/non-vehicular access outside Hermitage;
 - retention of the high-quality environment, including dark skies;
 - poor communication networks, eg mobile phones;
 - importance of retaining countryside views;
 - inadequate parking at community venues; and
 - shortage of allotments/growing spaces.

Vision for Hermitage

- 3.2 In consultation with the community, the established vision for Hermitage is as follows:

By 2039, Hermitage will be a strong and thriving community with residents from all age groups and backgrounds.

It will retain its unique character and identity both within the parish and in the surrounding ~~National Landscape~~Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The green spaces and local wildlife site that it cherishes will continue to thrive, creating a desirable location by maintaining its separation from neighbouring villages.

The village will provide an environment that supports residents of all ages to live, work and enjoy leisure with access to the surrounding ~~AONB~~National Landscape to enjoy social activities safely and remain a service village for the wider area.

Hermitage will provide a strong contribution to support and exceed local and national environmental policies for green low energy housing, striving to become a beacon of excellence.

Residents will benefit from being in as safe an environment as possible with traffic posing less of a threat and with safe links for cyclists and pedestrians both within the village and to access other villages and local transport hubs.

The effects of new development, traffic measures and car parking on the local landscape will be managed carefully and sensitively.

Neighbourhood Plan objectives

3.3 The objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan are as follows:

- ensure that new housing addresses the needs of Hermitage community;
- ensure that new development reflects the rural character of Hermitage parish;
- ensure that new development minimises its environmental impact;
- preserve the views from Hermitage village which help to make it special;
- preserve and enhance Hermitage's heritage;
- improve access to the countryside for walkers, cyclists and horse riders;
- conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity; and
- protect green spaces of value in and around Hermitage village.

Matters not covered by Neighbourhood Plan policies

3.4 The policies that follow in the Neighbourhood Plan seek to help achieve the identified objectives. When determining planning applications, these policies must be read alongside those in the West Berkshire Local Plan (i.e. the Core Strategy, Local Plan saved policies and the Housing Allocations DPD). Many of the policies in these plans already address matters that have been identified in the course of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. As such, it is not appropriate for the Neighbourhood Plan to simply duplicate these policies. This follows paragraph 30 of the NPPF which states, *"Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict."*

3.5 One example is the protection of the countryside, an issue of considerable importance to the community of Hermitage. The parish is in the North Wessex Downs [National Landscape \(previously known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty\)](#) ~~Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)~~, affording it protection at a national level. Moreover, the West Berkshire Local Plan has a number of policies which restrict development in the countryside to uses that are appropriate for that location. It is not necessary or appropriate for the Neighbourhood Plan to have a similar policy. Policy protection at a national level is also already in place covering ancient woodland and veteran trees.

3.6 Therefore, if a policy is not explicitly included within the Neighbourhood Plan, it does not mean that this is because it is not important and should not be a consideration when determining planning applications. Rather it is because it is already part of the development plan and all policies should be taken into account together in the decision-making process.

4 HOUSING

POLICY HER1: ADDRESSING HERMITAGE'S HOUSING NEEDS

- A. To address the identified housing needs in Hermitage, developments should provide a mix of dwelling sizes (market and affordable) and types that reflect the requirements of the West Berkshire Strategic Housing Needs Assessment 2022 or any successor document.**
- B. An alternative dwelling mix will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that more current evidence of need should apply or where the required mix would fundamentally compromise the viability of the development, taking into account other requirements of the development.**

- 4.1 The mix of housing in terms of dwelling size is an important issue in Hermitage. As identified in the socio-economic profile in Section 2, Hermitage parish has a high proportion of children (aged 14 and under), suggesting a large proportion of families in the parish. This is reinforced by consultation with local estate agents which suggests that Hermitage is very popular with families. As such, there is strong demand for 3- and 4-bed properties.
- 4.2 Whilst the most common type of housing in Hermitage is 4-bed properties or larger, prices are high. The median selling price of detached properties was nearly £600,000 in January 2022 (source: [home.co.uk](https://www.home.co.uk)) which is unaffordable to many, particularly young families. Therefore it is important the provision of housing sold on the open market reflects the need for it to be as affordable as possible.
- 4.3 The Hermitage Housing Needs Survey (undertaken in May 2021)¹ identified a need for a range of housing:
- in the affordable sector (eg social rented, intermediate housing, etc) there was a need, over the next five years, for a number of dwellings that exceeded the overall requirement for Hermitage established in the emerging West Berkshire Local Plan for the period to 2039. Whilst all sizes and types of dwellings were needed, there was an emphasis on bungalows for older people and 2- or 3-bed properties for growing families;
 - in the market sector, the need is similarly broad, again with a particular need for bungalows (recognising that the actual need is for homes suitable for the needs of older people, with bungalows being one possible type of provision). The survey also confirmed the need for larger family dwellings.

¹ Arc4 (2021) *Hermitage Housing Needs Survey*

4.4 The Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2016² suggested a housing mix as follows for West Berkshire:

- 1-bed – 15%
- 2-bed – 30%
- 3-bed – 35%
- 4+ bed – 20%

4.5 This was taken forward by the West Berkshire Housing Needs Assessment work, published in 2020 and updated in 2022³. This recommended the split of market and affordable housing shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Proposed housing mix

| | 1-bed | 2-bed | 3-bed | 4+ bed |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Market housing | 5-10% | 40-45% | 35-40% | 10-15% |
| Affordable home ownership | 20-25% | 45-50% | 20-25% | 5-10% |
| Affordable housing (rented) | 30-35% | 35-40% | 20-25% | 5-10% |

4.6 Policy CS6 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2012 requires the following split of market and affordable housing:

- On sites of 15+ dwellings (or 0.5 hectares or more):
 - 30% affordable housing on previously developed land
 - 40% affordable housing on greenfield land
- On sites of less than 15 dwellings:
 - 30% affordable housing on sites of 10-14 dwellings
 - 20% affordable housing on sites of 5-9 dwellings

4.7 In light of these policy requirements, the housing mix in Table 4.1 broadly reflects the need identified in the Hermitage Housing Needs Survey. Development should seek to deliver this mix of dwellings, particularly the 3-bed properties which are popular with families and should be cheaper than the 4-bed or larger properties which currently form the main stock in Hermitage.

4.8 It should be noted that other matters of importance to the community of Hermitage that were raised through the Neighbourhood Plan process were the provision of affordable housing and making homes wheelchair accessible. Both matters are addressed through the West Berkshire Local Plan and the application of the relevant policies to ensure that these matters are properly addressed by planning applications is supported.

² GL Hearn (2016) *Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment*

³ Icen (2022) *West Berkshire Housing Needs Assessment Update*, for West Berkshire District Council

5 DESIGN AND VIEWS

Design

POLICY HER2: DESIGN

- A. Development should demonstrate high quality design and layout which respects the local character of Hermitage identified in the Hermitage Design Guidelines and Codes 2022 (or any successor document).
- B. In delivering high quality design, development proposals must demonstrate the appropriate use of design, layout, materials and features. The following principles should be considered as part of design proposals:
1. Development should integrate with and enhance the form of its existing surroundings, with all connections including road patterns ensuring permeability for cyclists and pedestrians.
 2. Developments should be informed by the density guidance provided in the West Berkshire Density Pattern Book⁴. In particular, development should ensure that densities are reduced on the rural edge of Hermitage village in order to retain the open feel of the village and its relationship with the [National LandscapeAONB](#).
 3. A mix of house types (where appropriate) and plot layouts should be used.
 4. Building heights and rooflines should generally be no more than two storeys but all buildings should respect the surrounding countryside and [National LandscapeAONB-landscape](#). Taller buildings will only be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated that they can complement or enhance the local character.
 5. New development should be respectful of the architectural styles and use of materials of surrounding buildings, particularly in the case of residential development.
 6. Parking to support residential uses should generally be provided within the development and should include a proportion of well-designed on-street parking provisions, in accordance with West Berkshire District Council parking standards.
- C. All development proposals should include a proportionate statement and illustrations demonstrating how the principles and guidance in the Hermitage Design Guidelines and Codes have been addressed.

⁴ David Lock Associates (2019) *West Berkshire Density Pattern Book*, for West Berkshire District Council

- 5.1 The character of Hermitage was identified by the local community as a strong positive feature of the built environment and its surroundings. People value how attractive Hermitage is and want new development to fit in with this.

Hermitage's range of architectural styles



- 5.2 The Hermitage Design Guidelines and Codes report⁵ was commissioned in order to provide a clear understanding of the nature of design issues that new development must consider to assemble high quality schemes. This identified a series of design principles that are specific to Hermitage parish. In total, 27 design 'codes' have been identified under four themes:

⁵ AECOM (2022) *Hermitage Design Guidelines and Codes*, for Hermitage Parish Council

| Theme | Code | Title |
|---|------|---|
| DC.01 In keeping with local character | 1 | Set in rural landscape/ settlement edges |
| | 2 | Patterns of growth and layout of buildings and gardens |
| | 3 | Heritage, views and landmarks |
| DC.02 Built form | 4 | Overlooking the public space |
| | 5 | Boundary lines and boundary treatments |
| | 6 | Corner treatment |
| | 7 | Continuity and enclosure |
| | 8 | Legibility and wayfinding |
| | 9 | Building heights, density and housing mix |
| | 10 | Infill development |
| | 11 | Housing extensions and conversions |
| | 12 | Materials and architectural details |
| DC.03 Access and movement | 13 | Accessible and attractive footpath network/ Access to the countryside |
| | 14 | Prioritise walking and cycling |
| | 15 | People friendly streets |
| | 16 | Street lighting |
| | 17 | Parking and servicing |
| DC.04 Sustainable Design and Environment | 18 | Create a green network |
| | 19 | Biodiversity |
| | 20 | Water management |
| | 21 | Trees |
| | 22 | Open spaces |
| | 23 | Sustainable design |

- 5.3 Some of these matters are further addressed in other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, in respect of ensuring high quality design, it is important that development proposals – and particularly major developments (as defined by the NPPF) – actively demonstrate how they have been informed by these design codes. Their purpose is not to expect all development to slavishly adhere to all codes in all circumstances; rather it is to inform development so that what is built represents high quality development in the context of Hermitage.

Views

POLICY HER3: COUNTRYSIDE VIEWS BETWEEN PROPERTIES

In order to preserve its setting within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, development within or adjacent to the settlement boundary of Hermitage must be designed and arranged in a manner which would safeguard views of the surrounding countryside that occur between buildings.

- 5.4 Hermitage is located within the North Wessex Downs which reflects its location in a very attractive rural landscape. Its designation as [a National Landscape \(previously known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty\)AONB](#) means that it has a high level of protection provided by the NPPF at national level, complemented by the West Berkshire Local Plan.



- 5.5 However, this does not mean that all development is banned in the [National LandscapeAONB](#). Hermitage village is within the [National Landscape AONB](#) yet strategic planning policy enables this to continue, reflecting its role as a [National Landscape AONB](#)-village. In this regard it is the features of the landscape at a micro-scale where development that is permitted can have a disproportionate impact.
- 5.6 A particular feature of historic development in Hermitage has been the wide spacing of properties affording views and glimpses of the countryside behind and between properties. This has been assisted by the large number of detached residential properties in the village. Whilst the heart of the [National Landscape AONB](#) is a short distance away, it is easy when in the middle of the village to lose that connection. These views between properties help to sustain that link.



- 5.7 With a push for development to use land more efficiently, coupled with the common wish of many residents to extend properties, there is a danger that some of these views between properties will be lost. The Neighbourhood Plan includes a wish to ensure that development which requires planning permission is not only well designed and well laid out in terms of how it is used but also that it retains views and glimpses of the countryside beyond. This does not have to mean that development in a gap between existing buildings is not permitted but such development should be at a low level, particularly where the view is of a mature tree belt behind, as is commonly the case in Hermitage.

6 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT

Sustainable design

POLICY HER4: LOW ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENT DESIGN, INCLUDING SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS

- A. Proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, must demonstrate how the design of buildings and site layouts minimise consumption of energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources in order to provide resilience to the effects of climate change.**
- B. All developments must demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. The following measures shall be incorporated into development:**
- 1. wherever possible, new buildings shall be orientated to maximise the opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation and reducing exposure to wind and other elements;**
 - 2. proposals involving both new and existing buildings shall demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change for example by including measures such as solar shading, thermal mass, heating and ventilation of the building and appropriately coloured materials in areas exposed to direct sunlight, green and brown roofs, green walls, etc;**
 - 3. use of trees and other planting, where appropriate as part of a landscape scheme, to provide shading of amenity areas, buildings and streets and to help to connect habitat, designed with native plants that are carefully selected, managed and adaptable to meet the predicted changed climatic conditions; and**
 - 4. water efficiency and measures to reduce water consumption. Refurbishments and other non-domestic development will be expected to meet BREEAM water-efficiency credits. Residential development must not exceed a maximum water use of 105 litres per head per day (excluding the allowance of up to 5 litres for external water consumption).**
- C. All development must minimise surface water runoff to prevent surface water flooding through implementation of suitable sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), and where possible incorporate mitigation and resilience measures for any increases in surface water flood risk that may occur due to climate change or other factors⁶. The design of SuDS should be in accordance with best practice and national standards⁷. It should also be ensured that they are multi-functional and can deliver additional benefits where**

⁶ The WBDC Sustainable Drainage Systems Supplementary Planning Document provides guidance (<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/sudsspd>)

⁷ DEFRA Non-statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-drainage-systems-non-statutory-technical-standards>

possible, including biodiversity, environmental net gains and water quality. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaption measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure.

- 6.1 In June 2019, the UK Government made a commitment for the country to be net zero carbon by 2050. To achieve this will be a substantial feat that will require everyone to be engaged, from households and communities to businesses and local and national government.
- 6.2 In terms of the UK's change to housing stock, this means that new homes will have to be designed to minimise energy use by adopting a fabric first approach and following the Energy Hierarchy to develop net zero carbon design. This will include minimising heating and heat loss through effective insulation, installing or connecting to renewable energy systems and reducing. In this context, the orientation of buildings can be important in order to make best use of available sunlight.
- 6.3 With the UK no longer part of the European Union, the EU's Energy Performance of Buildings Directive - which required all new buildings to be nearly zero-energy by the end of 2020 - will not apply.
- 6.4 The Neighbourhood Plan aims to improve and promote sustainability in respect of minimising the emissions from built development in the parish by, for instance:
- integrating renewable energy systems into new development and retrofitting existing buildings;
 - reducing water consumption through the use of grey water systems; and
 - developing community energy schemes.
- 6.5 The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to encourage energy efficient and sustainable well-designed development.

Sustainable Drainage Systems

- 6.6 In addition it is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for surface water drainage to ground, water courses or surface water sewer. It must not be allowed to drain to the foul sewer, as this is the major contributor to sewer flooding. Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are an important mechanism to achieve this.
- 6.7 SuDS not only provide mitigation of potential flooding problems but, if designed to be multi-functional, can mitigate wider issues as well as providing extensive benefits. Mitigation could include ameliorating heating and air pollution and storing carbon and benefits could be making a contribution to biodiversity net gain targets or provision of opportunities for amenity and recreation.

Wildlife-friendly design

POLICY HER5: WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT

- A. New development should contribute towards the goal of carbon neutrality and incorporate resilience to climate change in its design. All development proposals are expected to deliver net biodiversity gains of at least 10% in addition to protecting existing habitats and species. Proposals to create or enhance existing green wildlife corridors are strongly encouraged.
- B. In particular, the incorporation of design features into new development that encourages local wildlife to thrive, is strongly encouraged. This includes new planting (see clause C).
- C. As part of its requirements to demonstrate net biodiversity gain, development should be designed to retain trees, shrubs and hedgerows of arboricultural, habitat and amenity value on-site and to conserve and enhance connectivity to the wider green infrastructure networks. Where this is accompanied by new planting, this should consist of native species of trees, shrubs and grasses acting as stepping stones for wildlife.
- D. Development proposals should respect the dark skies that are characteristic of the North Wessex Downs **National Landscape**⁸. This should ensure no adverse impact on wildlife, in particular to foraging and commuting bats. Other than householder development, development proposals are required to demonstrate that they meet or exceed the Institute of Lighting Professionals⁸ guidance and other relevant standards or guidance for lighting.

- 6.8 National planning guidance requires development to achieve net biodiversity gain. The Environment Act 2021 requires all development to deliver a minimum uplift of 10% in the amount of biodiversity. In practice this is challenging, highlighting firstly the importance of retaining the biodiversity assets on the site if at all possible.
- 6.9 The design of individual buildings and of neighbourhood scale green and open spaces, including private gardens, will help to ensure that many of the species that are present in Hermitage parish can not only survive but thrive. Examples of the simple, small scale but positive solutions that well-thought-out design can easily incorporate are:
- integral bird and bat boxes under the eaves of new or redeveloped houses, or artificial nests sited in places away from windows and doors, can create vital new roosting sites to support populations of birds and bats;

⁸ Institute of Lighting Professionals (2021) *Guidance Note 1 for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light*, GN01/21, www.theilp.org.uk/documents/obtrusive-light/.

- boundaries between dwellings can be made hedgehog friendly by including pre-cut holes for hedgehogs to more effectively move across neighbourhoods to forage; and
 - new planting schemes can support bees and other pollinators by including nectar-rich plants.
- 6.10 Good outcomes can be achieved by design following good practice guidance, for example by the NHBC Foundation⁹ and the Wildlife Trusts¹⁰.
- 6.11 The location of the parish within the North Wessex Downs [National Landscape \(previously known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty\)](#)AONB, in connection with the large extent of woodland and local bat records, means that light pollution should be minimised so as to avoid disturbance to foraging and commuting bats and to maintain dark skies.

Irreplaceable and wildlife-rich habitats and species

POLICY HER6: IRREPLACEABLE HABITATS AND LOCAL WILDLIFE-RICH HABITATS AND SPECIES

- A. Hermitage parish's irreplaceable habitats are shown on Figure 6.1 and consist of:**
- 1. ancient woodland**
 - 2. ancient and veteran trees, which may be in the identified Tree Areas**
- B. As directed by the NPPF, development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats or the loss of legally protected and priority species should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy (including its delivery and ongoing upkeep) exists.**
- C. Local Wildlife Sites are identified on Figure 6.1. These are locally designated areas of importance for biodiversity and are protected appropriately. Proposals to restore and, as necessary, improve management of these Local Wildlife Sites is supported.**

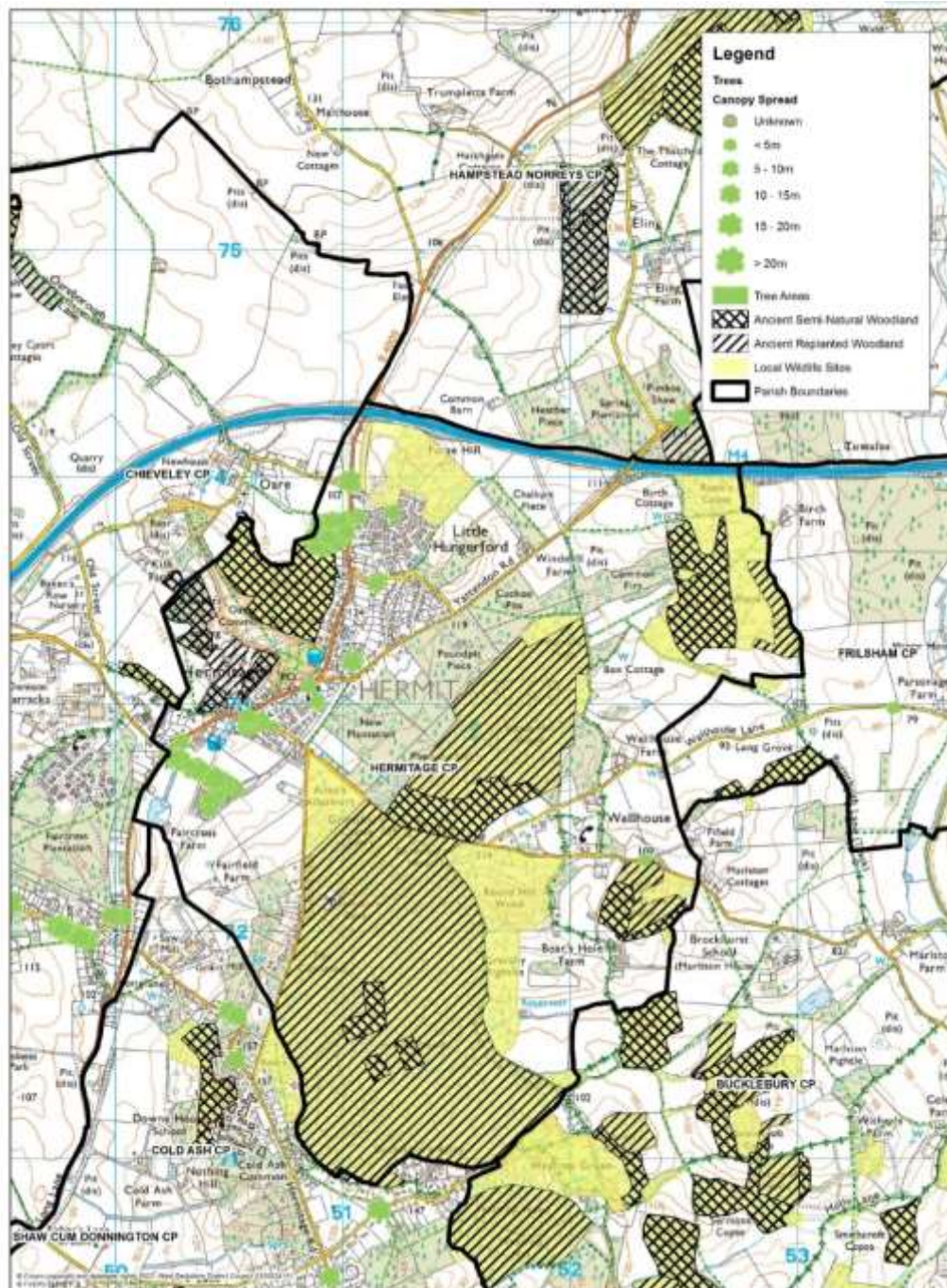
- 6.12 One of the major assets of Hermitage village is that it is surrounded by beautiful countryside. For many reasons it is becoming increasingly important and urgent that the countryside is protected, especially the areas where wildlife in all its forms can flourish. The NPPF also recognises the importance of the natural countryside and requires planning authorities to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by 'protecting and enhancing

⁹ <https://www.nhbcfoundation.org/publication/biodiversity-in-new-housing-developments-creating-wildlife-friendly-communities/>

¹⁰ https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/homes_for_people_and_wildlife_lr_-_spreads.pdf

valued landscapes' and 'minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures' (NPPF paragraph 174).

Figure 6.1: Environmental asset areas



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6.13 Hermitage parish has a large number of sizeable ecological assets which must be protected in order that wildlife can thrive. As shown in Figure 6.1 this includes ancient woodland and Local Wildlife Sites. Within the ancient woodland – which is the most extensive habitat remaining in West Berkshire – there are large numbers of ancient and veteran trees. In

addition, the tree areas shown in Figure 6.1 are likely to contain a number of veteran and possibly ancient trees. All must be protected appropriately from development.

- 6.14 Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states that, when determining planning applications “development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.”
- 6.15 Similarly, Local Wildlife Sites, as identified by the NPPF, are locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity and must be protected accordingly.
- 6.16 All planning applications for new development should be accompanied by appropriate ecological surveys and measures that seek to protect the most important biodiversity features¹¹.

Local Green Spaces

POLICY HER7: LOCAL GREEN SPACES

A. The following space as shown on Figure 6.2 are designated as Local Green Spaces:

- 1. Dines Way Green**
- 2. Hermitage Green Play Area**
- 3. Lipscomb Close Green**
- 4. Pinewood Playground**
- 5. Furze Hill Recreation Ground**
- 6. Furze Hill Local Wildlife Site**

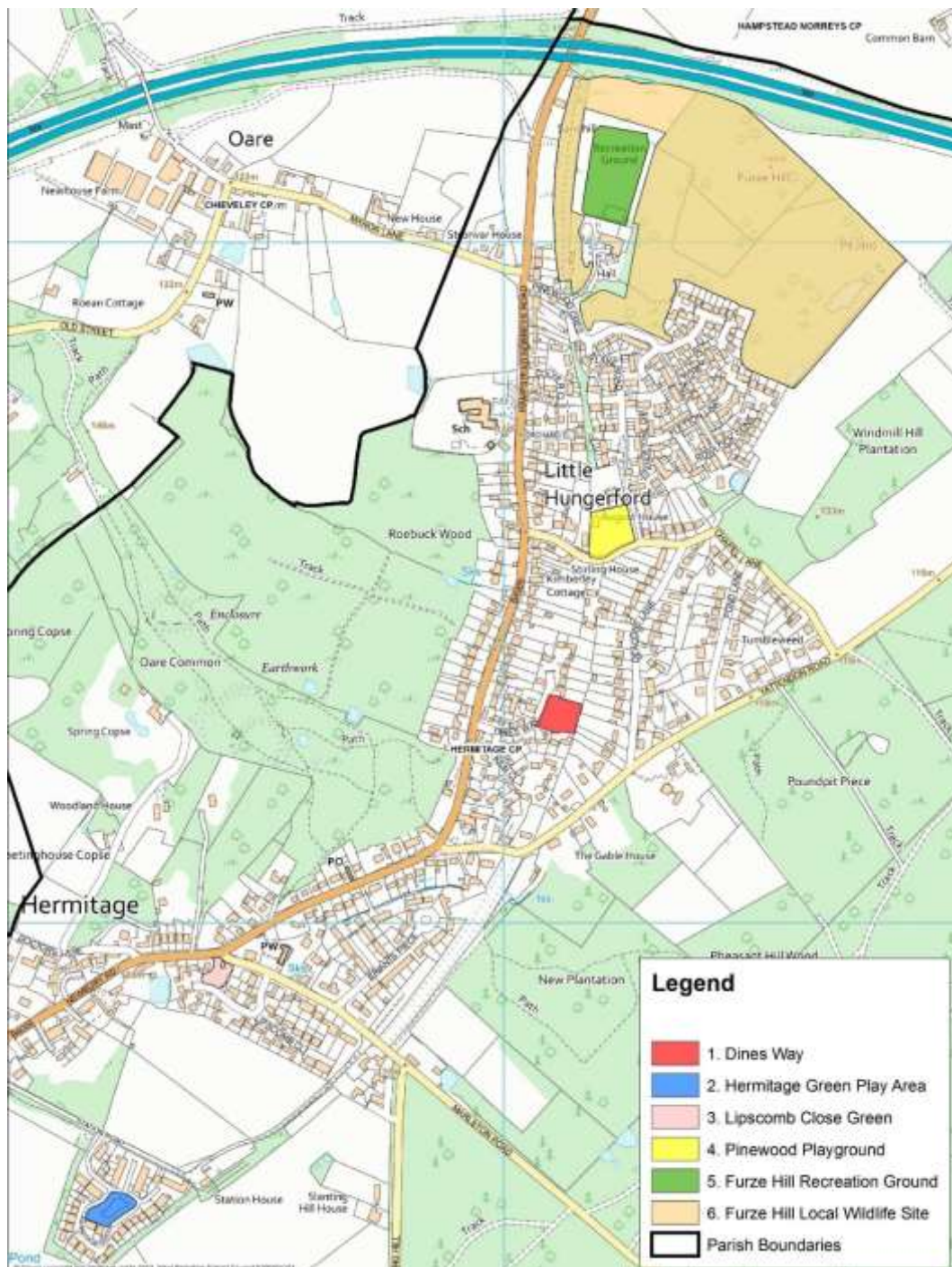
B. Proposals for built development on this Local Green Space will be permitted only in very special circumstances.

- 6.17 Under the NPPF, Neighbourhood Plans have the opportunity to designate Local Green Spaces which are of particular importance to them. This will afford protection from development other than in very special circumstances. Paragraph 102 of the NPPF says that the Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:
- 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; and
 - local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

¹¹ Guidance on the appropriate types of ecological surveys and reports and the content and standards for such reports can be found at: <https://cieem.net/resource/guidelines-for-ecological-report-writing/>

- 6.18 Through the community engagement on the Neighbourhood Plan, many of the residents of Hermitage stressed the importance of green open spaces. Whilst they recognised the value and beauty of the woodland and countryside surrounding the village, the open spaces within the village were held to be important too. This importance was not only seen as practical – for leisure, exercise and community events – but also for biodiversity.
- 6.19 The six areas (shown on Figure 6.2) are considered to fulfil all of the criteria of the NPPF:

Figure 6.2: Location of Local Green Spaces



1. Dines Way Green



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6.20 This space is used by lots of children in Dines Way to play football, run around, practise bike riding and enjoy healthy exercise in the fresh air. The green is used by local dog owners as well as for informal community events. The mature trees and brush provide a rich haven for wildlife.

2. Hermitage Green Play Area



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- 6.21 This play area is both popular and very well used by children during summer months. It consists of a number of items of play equipment securely mounted within a child-safe, fenced area with latched entrance gates. The play area itself is surrounded by a small area of

landscaping containing bushes, shrubs and some 14 young trees planted as part of the development.

3. Lipscomb Close Green



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6.22 This informal space is used by residents as a quiet, peaceful space to spend time and also for informal celebrations. Many children use it to play football. There are ancient oak trees on the green which support a myriad of wildlife.

4. Pinewood Playground



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6.23 This is a very well used play area, popular with local families and children after school and at weekends. It is also used by the local Cub Pack, offering a safe enclosed area, to run a large number of their weekly sessions and other activities.

5. Furze Hill Recreation Ground

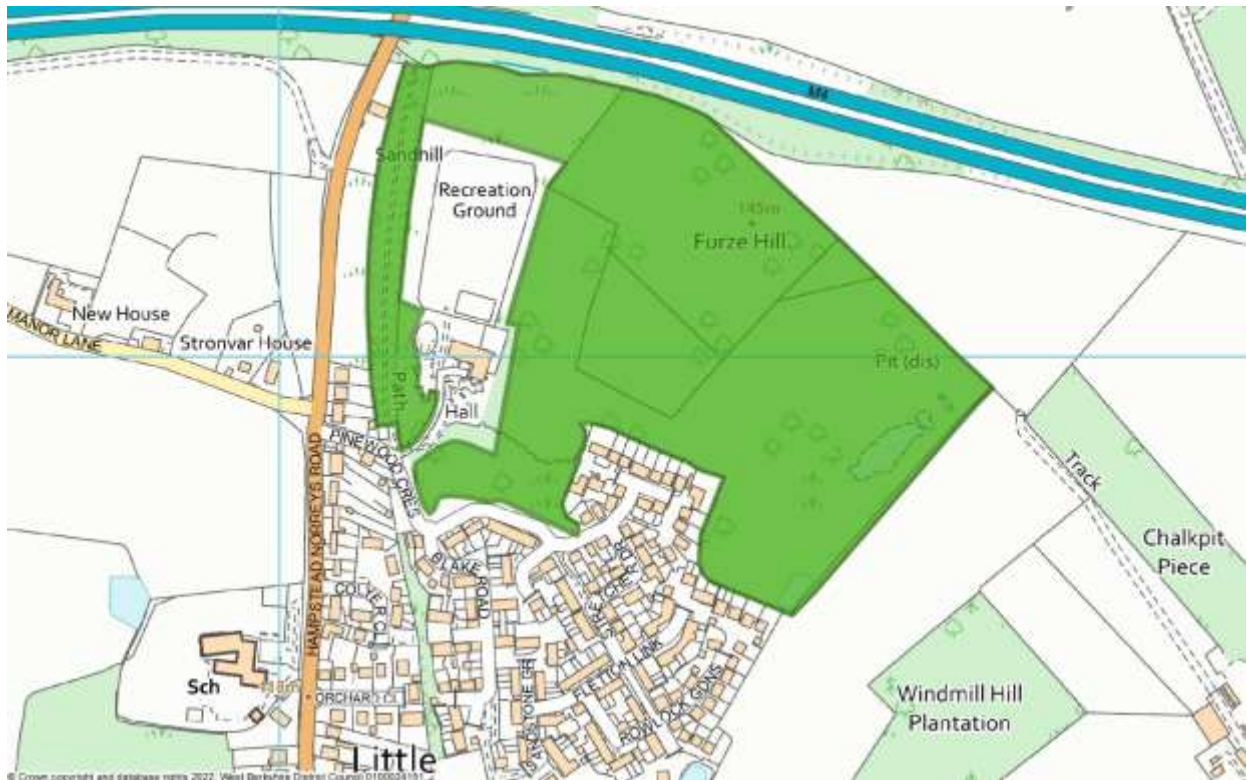


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- 6.24 This is a space that is well used for dog walking, regular junior football training and matches by a local football club, exercise classes and informal recreation. The multi-use games area is popular with local youngsters. This is a wonderful community space and ever more important when it comes to staying healthy. It is also a centre for village activities such as fetes.

6. Furze Hill Local Wildlife Site



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- 6.25 This site – a designated Local Wildlife Site - includes a butterfly meadow, woods and the Eling Way. Only some of the woods are open to the public in order to protect the safety of both humans and resident wildlife. The Eling Way is a very popular and well used active travel route. Residents enjoy walking their dogs and seeing the flora and fauna which often receive comments on local social media pages. It is even used for training the rescued birds of prey owned by a local resident.

7 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

POLICY HER8: NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

A. The following, as shown on Figure 7.1, are identified as non-designated heritage assets:

1. Vine Cottage
2. Sarnia
3. Yew Tree House
4. Hope Cottage
5. Reigate Villas
6. Hillside Villa
7. Bridge Cottage
8. Poplar Cottage
9. Fir Tree Cottage
10. Marlston Road sign
11. The Yews
12. Lynton Cottage and Fernlea
13. Honey Oak Cottage
14. Long Barn
15. Langstroth House
16. Former Police Station
17. Holy Trinity Church
18. Old Farmhouse
19. Fairlight
20. Wolverton Lodge
21. Old Cottage (site of Little Hungerford Farm)
22. Warborough Cottages
23. Pinewood Cottage
24. Simonds Plough
25. Hermitage Railway Station building

B. In considering proposals which involve the loss or alteration of a non-designated heritage asset, consideration will be given to:

1. whether the asset is structurally unsound and beyond feasible and viable repair (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect); or
2. the extent to which measures to sustain the existing use, or find an alternative use/user, have been investigated.

Where a development proposal would result in the loss of, or harm to a non-designated heritage asset, a balanced judgement will be made as to the acceptability of the proposal having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

7.1 Hermitage is part of the Snelsmore and Buckleberry Commons Historic Environment Character Area of West Berkshire. Evidence of settlement within Hermitage Parish boundary since around 750BC can be found at:

- Grimsbury Castle to the south-east, settled during the Iron-Age (Scheduled monument)
- Roman villa remains - walls and mosaics, discovered in the early 19th century around Birch Farm and Box Wood to the north east
- Wellhouse Farm - east of Hermitage village on Wellhouse Road, documented as a late 17th century farmstead. It and five associated outbuildings are all Grade II listed buildings
- Barnaby Thatch - on Newbury Road is a late 18th Century (1751) cottage, also Grade II listed.

7.2 In total there are eight nationally listed buildings or structures within the parish boundary. In addition to this, the Neighbourhood Plan has identified a number of buildings which are considered to have special local architectural, archaeological or historic interest. These are shown below.

7.3 **Vine Cottage**, Newbury Road. 18th century, two storey brick house with whitewashed front, attached to the west end of Barnaby Thatch. The property is of architectural interest substantially retaining its original design and architecture. The front centre entrance porchway, clay tiled roof with catslide roof at rear and relieving arched ground floor windows are typical of rural cottages in this area during this period. The Sivier family lived here: Mr Sivier being the local chimney sweep and village school caretaker.



7.4 **Sarnia**, High Street - Of historic interest this building was constructed in 1875 by Charles Merritt who ran a butcher's business there, having moved it from The Fox Inn. The building is of particular architectural interest being a detached red brick house ornamented with blue brick quoins, window accents and median line, with clay tiled roof topped by coxcomb/fleur de lis ornamental ridge tiles. A single-storey annexe attached to west side of building appears to be a later addition, possibly housing a small business. The small building to the left of the house



(recently demolished and replaced with Merritt Holt, a private house) was the butcher's shop and the range of buildings behind were carriage sheds and slaughter house. Cattle for beef supplies were kept in the field behind which adjoined the old Quaker meeting place.

- 7.5 **Yew Tree House**, High Street - Of architectural and historic interest, this large detached house built in approximately 1850 substantially retains its original design and architecture. The blue brick elevations with red brick quoins and window arches plus one arched stained-glass sash window on the eastern elevation are typical features of the more expensive houses of this period. The slate roof (as opposed to local clay tiles) with prominent ornamental chimney stacks and yellow clay chimney pots indicate this was built for someone of significance in the village. Before World War I it was occupied by Mr Bushell, Head Gamekeeper for Lady Wantage



- 7.6 **Hope Cottage**, High Street - Of architectural interest this property retains its original design and architecture and is one of two remaining examples in Hermitage of a modest Victorian rural dwelling. It is a rectangular house of blue Flemish bond brickwork with redbrick quoins, window recesses and window arches to ground floor. It has a clay tile roof with twin clay chimney pots at each end and a catslide roof at the rear housing a single storey extension. Shown on First Edition of Ordnance Survey map published in 1883.



- 7.7 **Reigate Villas**, Yattendon Road - Of architectural interest, this pair of semi-detached late Victorian houses are illustrative of 'company housing' providing accommodation for important managerial staff. They are brick built under a clay-tiled roof, gable-fronted with an angular bay, situated close to the old Didcot Newbury and Southampton (DNSR) railway line. They were originally



built to house workers from the Hermitage Brickworks but occupied for many years by the Deacon and Stroud families. The external appearance and boundary walls remain little changed.

- 7.8 **Hillside Villa**, Hampstead Norreys Road - The architectural interest of this imposing 1900's house on the main road through the village is that it reflects the late Victorian, early Edwardian growth in Hermitage of larger villa-style residences constructed as rural retreats for wealthier families wishing to escape congested towns and cities. The original deeper frontage was drastically cut back to permit road widening in the 1960's but the white stuccoed elevations, sliding sash windows and corrugated iron-roofed veranda over the angular double bay fronts and front elevations remain substantially unchanged. It still has the original door with stained glass above and arched first floor window above.



- 7.9 **Bridge Cottage**, Chapel Lane - Late 19th century red brick house (one of a semi-detached pair) is of architectural interest. It was built around 1880 with blue brick quoins and median lines. It has a clay tiled roof over red brick dentil course at the gable end and eaves. It has a segmental brick arched ground floor window. A curved low clay brick with flint infill boundary wall marks the front curtilage, which is unusual for this area.



- 7.10 **Poplar Cottage**, Chapel Lane - Of architectural interest, appearing on Roque's map of 1761 within a cluster of buildings in Little Hungerford, this two-storeyed thatched cottage contains a beam inscribed with the date 1779. Although subsequently significantly, sympathetically extended, its original part-timbered red brick design and architecture, with eyebrow windows to the first floor, has been retained.



- 7.11 **Fir Tree Cottage**, High Street - Of architectural interest and listed on the West Berkshire Heritage Environment Record (MWB21471), this grey brick house with red brick dressings is said to date from 1820. The grey brick, slate roof (as opposed to local clay tiles) with prominent ornamental chimney stacks and yellow clay chimney pots are design features typical of the more expensive houses of this period. It is in a prominent position at the junction of the Marlston and Newbury Roads. It was significantly extended in the 20th and 21st centuries.



- 7.12 **Marlston Road sign** - Of architectural interest this old metal road sign is attached to boundary brick wall of Crossways House. Most of the road signs in Hermitage are white lettering on a green background and bear the crest of West Berkshire District Council so this is of significant historical interest in that it predates the formation of WBDC in 1998. This metal road sign is thought to date from before the 1960s when Hermitage was part of Wantage Rural District Council (1894-1974) and is the only remaining sign of this type in the village.



- 7.13 **The Yews**, High Street - Large detached house in extensive grounds with two external workshops/garage buildings. Of particular artistic interest on the east side of the hipped porch entrance is an Arts and Crafts style entrance door. It has a brick well in the front.



- 7.14 **Lynton Cottage and Fernlea**, between The Yews and Hermitage Garage on The High Street - thought to possibly have been late 19th century workers' cottages. The decorative bargeboard and ridge tiles are of particular architectural interest. Originally called Lynton Villas, it is believed they were linked to Hermitage Farm on Newbury Road.



- 7.15 **Honey Oak Cottage**, Marlston Road (at junction with Slanting Hill) - Two-storey Victorian detached house, shown as Ivy Cottage on First edition OS map published 1883. With white stucco elevations under a clay tiled roof and a single tall chimney and clay pot at NW end, its design and architecture is characteristic of the late Victorian period. It was subject to later significant extension eastwards with whitewashed brick elevations. It has a central arched porch entrance and a single storey clay tiled catslide roof to the NW side.



- 7.16 **Long Barn**, Yattendon Road (next to The Fox pub) - From the Victorian era (shown on First Edition Ordnance Survey map published 1883), the site and building are of historic interest containing significant physical remains, including kiln ovens, of the early brickmaking industry in Hermitage. One drying barn of the former Hermitage Brickworks now forms part of the house, built with brick from the brickworks. A second, dilapidated drying barn remains.



7.17 **Langstroth House**, High Street - Of historic and architectural interest, it was built in 1896 and is shown on the Ordnance Survey map revised 1910, published 1913. It was built on land owned by William Brain, Stationmaster and subsequently sold in 1896 to William Stephen Rivers, Blacksmith, who built Myrtle Cottage. One of a pair of detached houses close to the junction with Yattendon Road, it was thought to have been built for high-ranking officials of the nearby DNS Railway. It was originally called Myrtle Cottage then Resthaven. Architecturally notable for retaining its original design, being characteristic of the period, it is constructed of local red clay brick under a slate roof with decorative ridge tiles and grey brick quoins. It also has segmental grey brick arched windows and a recessed central entrance with white decorative architrave over.



7.18 **Former Police Station**, Marlston Road ([now East House and Westham](#)) - Of historic interest due to its distinctive role in civic history as a Police Station. According to Berkshire Records Office, Hermitage Police Station was [built-completed on 28 October 1920](#) at a cost of £3,570. The Police Station is marked on the 4th Epoch Ordnance Survey mapping of 1933 on the outskirts of Hermitage. The plan form shows two wings and it would probably have contained secure accommodation for offenders pending trial. It is a substantial redbrick building with large windows. The village constable lived next door. The building has largely survived but was converted in the later 20th century to two semi-detached homes, numbers 6 and 7 Marlstone Road, [also called Westam House and East House](#).



7.19 **Holy Trinity Church**, Marlston Road – Of historic religious interest, the Church was built in 1835 under the patronage of Queen Adelaide whose private chaplain Rev J Reed was the Vicar of Hampstead Norris. It was constructed as a chapel of ease for parishioners living in Little Hungerford, Wellhouse and Bucklebury Alley. A new chancel and small vestry were added in



1887, and another extension, the Adelaide room, was built in 1971, when the original west facing entrance was demolished and the current porch and entrance, on the north side, added. The lychgate with woodcarving was erected in 1947.

7.20 **Old Farmhouse**, Newbury Road - Of historic interest having played a significant role in the agricultural history of Hermitage, Hermitage Farm is recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1872-75) as Hermitage Farm although it is thought to date from the late 18th century. Buildings at this location are clearly shown on John Roque's map of 1761. Now known as The Old Farmhouse, constructed of red brick under a clay tile roof with Georgian



style sash windows, the current building has undergone significant changes in the latter part of the 20th century and now features two clay tile-hung gables and a central roof dormer with verge. Of architectural and artistic interest, notable features are the ornamental clay ridge tiles with decorative finials and decorative bargeboards. Today, several of the original farm outbuildings remain around the farmyard edges - to the south, a prominent clay tile roofed wooden shiplap granary with double doors and to the west, cart shed, livestock housing and a two-storey white-washed brick stable with clay tiled hay loft above, topped with an interesting weathervane. The red brick farmyard wall (running along the B4009) with ornamental brick-built entrance pillars also remains.

7.21 **Fairlight**, High Street - This is only one of two remaining dwellings (the other is Grade II listed Barnaby Thatch) in the original Hermitage settlement that date from around the time of the Civil War so is of historic interest. It is also of architectural interest in that it substantially retains its original timber frame design and architecture. It is a small black and white timber framed cottage with a roof of weathered old clay tiles. It is shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey mapping (1877-78) and its appearance suggests possibly an 18th century or earlier date but it is thought to date from the mid 17th century and the Civil War. A building at this location can be seen on John Roque's map of 1761. In 1867 Holy Trinity Church purchased the cottage which was named Vicarage Cottage. In 1932 it was sold to Col West, a prominent figure in the community, who renamed it 'Fairlight' after a favourite village of his near Hastings. *(Photo courtesy of owner).*



7.22 **Wolverton Lodge**, High Street - A building of architectural interest displaying architecture characteristic of the Victorian era. It also has historic interest having been the home for many years of Col John West, a man of significant local importance within Hermitage. It is a large, imposing Victorian house featuring prominent decorative tile-hung gable ends with ornamental barge boards under a clay tiled roof. Constructed of red brick, the yellow brick quoins and median dressings to all elevations including the central chimney stack are a notable feature. Subsequently replaced windows retain the original carved stone lintels. It is first shown on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey mapping of 1899 as a relatively modest sized building within a small plot. Col West purchased additional ground when threatened with development so that by the 3rd Epoch map (1912-24), outbuildings in a courtyard and an enlarged garden were clearly identifiable.



7.23 **Old Cottage (site of Little Hungerford Farm),** Yattendon Road - Of interest

historically as the last visible remains of Little Hungerford Farm, this 19th century farm is recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map 1872-1885 but by the third epoch map 1912-24, most of the L-shaped farmyard had been demolished and redeveloped for housing. However, the smaller former farmhouse to the east was not removed, and in the early 21st century is named Old Cottage. The design and architecture of this two-storey red brick rectangular dwelling is



typical of the Victorian period, featuring a central entrance porch under a clay-tile roof with tall brick chimneys and yellow brick pots at either end. Front elevations are mainly decorative clay tile-hanging over white-washed brick. The farm's original barn and high brick wall can still be seen on Deacons Lane towards the junction with Yattendon Road.

7.24 **Warborough Cottages,** Pond Lane - Of historic

interest because of its association with nationally famous author DH Lawrence, this building probably originates from the 18th century and was formerly known as Chapel Farm cottage. It is also of architectural interest, featuring the original timber framing typical of this period. The hipped slate roof, using slate probably transported from Wales, would have been more expensive than locally produced clay tiles which would suggest a wealthy owner. A building in this location can be



seen on John Roque's map of 1761 and on the Ordnance Survey First edition map surveyed between 1877 - 1878 and published in 1883.

Also visible from Chapel Lane, it is built of red brick, under a hipped slate roof with clay ridge tiles. The original timber framing is clearly visible on the upper storey northern end wall. The present building has been extended and modified from its original L-shape and is now two cottages each featuring a small front-facing gable with black and white mock timber framing over the first storey casement window.



From early 1917 to November 1919, Chapel Farm Cottage was intermittently home to the author D.H. Lawrence and his wife. Life in Hermitage and various local characters he

met during his stay in Hermitage are reflected in his novels 'The Fox' and in a chapter of 'Aaron's Rod' both written during his stays in Hermitage.

7.25 **Pinewood Cottage**, Chapel Lane - Pinewood Cottage was located at the entrance to the site of the former Pinewood Brickworks (1908-1967). Its architectural interest lies chiefly in its unusual roofing profile. It was apparently constructed to illustrate the range of bricks and tiles manufactured at the site. During World War II the cottage was used as a guardroom when the brickworks became an RAF maintenance unit. It is uncertain when Pinewood Cottage was built since it is not shown on the 3rd epoch Ordnance Survey Map (1912-24) but is believed to date from the late 1920s or early 1930s.



7.26 **Simonds Plough**, Hampstead Norreys Road – Of local historic significance, this 19th century (shown on the OS First edition map of 1880 and the Second edition of 1899) former public house was the only public house situated in Little Hungerford. It was a social centre for local farm labourers, and latterly, Pinewood Brickworks and Didcot-Newbury-Southampton railway employees. It closed when Simonds Brewery (Reading) was ~~taken over~~ merged with Courage Barclay. Elevations of blue brick with redbrick window surrounds are typical of more expensive buildings of the Victorian era. It is known to have been in operation from at least 1891 when, according to the Census of that year, the innkeeper was James Burgess (also a wood merchant). It is now a private dwelling, displaying the red Hop Leaf trademark of Reading brewing family, H&G Simonds, on the front of the house.



7.27

Hermitage Railway Station building

- Hermitage railway station opened in 1882 as a single track but was converted to a double track during the Second World War. This building is of significant historic interest being one of only two remaining local stations serving the Didcot-Newbury-Southampton Railway (the other lies to the north just outside Compton Village)



The railway was critical to the development of Pinewood Brickworks, delivering coal for its kilns from the Midlands. During World War II it played a significant role in the transport of locally extracted sand to London for sandbags as well as for troop transportation to Southampton. Hermitage Station was where injured US servicemen returning from the war disembarked for treatment at the nearby American Military Hospital at Denison Barracks. The line closed in 1964. The station building has substantially retained its original architectural features, including decorative bargeboards, typical of the Victorian Era. It has subsequently been converted to residential use (the postal address is Station House, though a plaque shows it as The Old Station House). The platforms and the awning over the up (northbound) platform were substantially present in 2015.

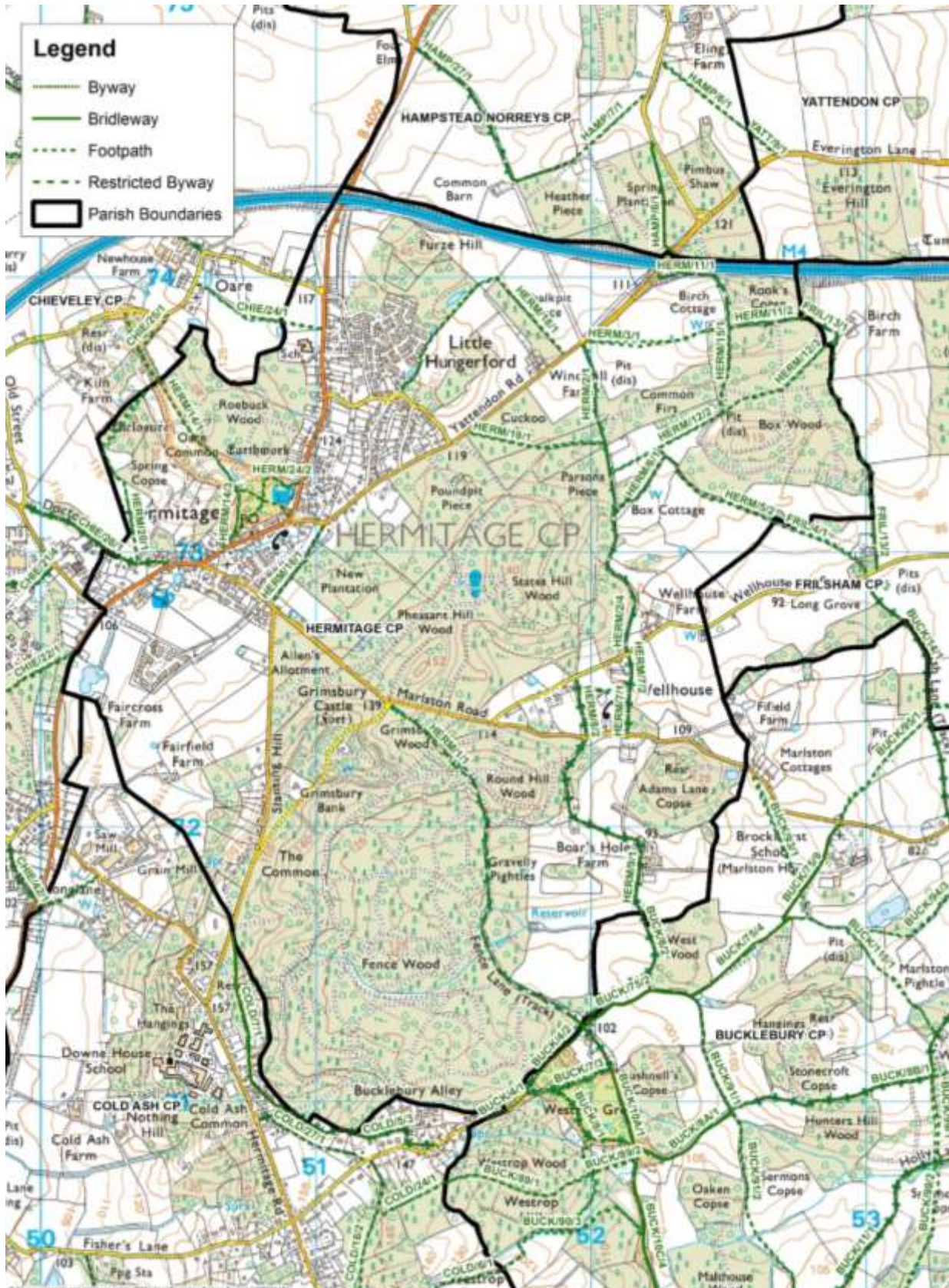
8 MOVEMENT

POLICY HER9: ACCESS FOR WALKING, CYCLING AND HORSE RIDING

- A. Access to the countryside will be promoted through protection and maintenance of the existing Public Rights of Way (PROW) network, its enhancement where possible, provision of bridleways and the safety of users of rural roads and lanes.**
- B. Any developments which leads to the loss or degradation of any PROW will not be permitted in other than very special circumstances. Proposals to divert PROWs or cycleways should provide clear and demonstrable benefits for the wider community. Where possible, development should enhance PROWs by improving existing routes and improving connectivity through the creation of new routes. In all cases it should seek to ensure that routes are suitable for those with disabilities.**
- C. Proposals to develop the Eling Way for safe off-road access by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and those with disabilities will be encouraged.**

- 8.1 Hermitage is surrounded by wonderful and accessible countryside available to walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Details of various public rights of way can be found in the online leaflet: <https://hermitage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Hermitage-Public-footpath-leaflet.pdf> and are shown on Figure 8.1. This also includes details on a number of permissive paths. In addition, Oare Common is designated as Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and therefore people are not limited to the footpaths.
- 8.2 An important literal barrier to access to the countryside is stiles and gates. It is therefore recommended that all new gates should comply with British Standard 5709 'Gaps, gates and stiles – specification' (or any subsequent update) and existing structures should be replaced where possible with ones that comply with this standard.

Figure 8.1: Public rights of way in Hermitage parish



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- 8.3 The Eling Way currently links Hermitage with Hampstead Norreys. It runs from the track to the west of the Hermitage Village Hall, under the motorway bridge, then follows the line of the old railway track up to Hampstead Norreys Village Hall. It is totally off-road. The route north of the motorway is outside Hermitage parish. This is shown on Figure 8.2.
- 8.4 The current access points to the Eling Way are:
- a. Off Pinewood Crescent (adjacent to the Village Hall entrance)
 - b. Off the B4009, either side of the M4 bridge
 - c. Off the B4009 at the junction to Eling and
 - d. Hampstead Norreys.
- 8.5 Discussions are ongoing between Hermitage Parish Council, West Berkshire District Council, local cycling groups (West Berkshire Spokes - www.westberkshirespokes.org - and the West Berkshire Cycle Forum) and the British Horse Society in order to expand this route to both Newbury and Compton and eventually, possibly all the way to Didcot. Such provision will expand the existing recreational offer to encourage sustainable travel to the urban conurbations to the north and south of Hermitage.
- 8.6 Whilst of great importance to the local community, road and traffic issues and provision of bus services are outside of the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan. Actions and lobbying to address issues and improve services will be undertaken by the Parish Council directly with the relevant authorities.

Figure 8.2: Map of Eling Way, including possible extensions



Key:

- Existing route inside Hermitage parish
- Existing route outside Hermitage parish

Prepared under Hermitage Parish Council's Ordnance Survey Public Sector Geospatial Mapping Agreement (PSGA) no. 100055937

9 NON-POLICY ACTIONS

- 9.1 It must be recognised that the Neighbourhood Plan cannot deliver the full vision; it is either beyond the scope of planning laws or requires remedial action to deal with existing shortcomings. For that to happen individuals and groups in the community as well as the Parish Council must continue their work of building and maintaining a strong community and in working with developers, landowners, businesses and other agencies to provide the facilities best targeted to meet community needs.
- 9.2 The areas in which issues to work on have arisen in the course of consultations are noted in Table 9.1. Ownership of the issues has been suggested and when agreed active action planning should follow. Inclusion in this list is not meant to signify approval or prioritisation of these issues.

Table 9.1: Non-land use issues to be addressed

| Issue | Possible actions | Lead agencies and partner |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Play facilities | Use local Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions to enhance facilities at Pinewood playground | HPC |
| Play facilities | Provide Engage with residents to consider the provision of play equipment for Lipscomb Close Green | HPC |
| Biodiversity | Improve parts of all public open spaces to enhance biodiversity through the provision of wildflower grassland/pollinator patches, more native trees and shrubs, pond/scrapes and bat/bird boxes | HPC |
| Biodiversity | Set up a working group of volunteers to increase biodiversity in all existing public open spaces | HPC Berks Bucks Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) |
| Biodiversity | Engage with local landowners to encourage the development of ecological management plans which enhance biodiversity on their land, for example the removal of invasive bracken and silver birch | HPC Berks Bucks Oxon Wildlife Trust |
| Biodiversity/community | If any further open space is provided for the parish, consider planting a community orchard or setting up allotments | HPC |
| Biodiversity/wildlife | Explore the potential to designate Furze Hill as a Local Nature Reserve | HPC BBOWT |
| Wildlife | Ensure developers assess need for licences in respect of legally protected species as appropriate | HPC WBDC |
| Public transport | Improve bus services | HPC WBDC Bus providers |
| Traffic speed | Undertake speed monitoring to understand the extent of speeding in the village | HPC |
| Communication | Work with providers to encourage improved mobile phone coverage throughout the village | HPC, WBDC, Mobile comms infrastructure providers |

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