

RUSCOMBE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2019 - 2038

Submission Plan



1 Historic Milestone in Ruscombe, Source: Ruscombe Village Design Statement December 2020

PUBLISHED BY



for Pre-Submission consultation under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

MARCH 2023

GUIDE TO READING THIS PLAN

Of necessity, this Neighbourhood Plan is a detailed technical document. The purpose of this page is to explain the structure and help you find your way around the plan.

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

This section explains the background to this Neighbourhood Plan and how you can take part in and respond to the consultation.

2. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

This section details many of the features of the designated area.

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

This rather technical section relates this Plan to the National Planning Policy Framework and the planning policies of Wokingham Borough Council.

4. COMMUNITY VIEWS ON PLANNING ISSUES

This section explains the community involvement that has taken place.

5. VISION, OBJECTIVES & LAND USE POLICIES

This key section firstly provides a statement on the Neighbourhood Plan Vision and Objectives. It then details Policies which are proposed to address the issues outlined in the Foreword and in Section 4. These Policies are listed in Table 1. There are Policy Maps at the back of the plan and additional information in the Appendices to which the policies cross reference.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

This section explains how the Plan will be implemented and future development guided and managed. It suggests projects which might be supported by the Community Infrastructure Levy which the Parish Council will have some influence over. Finally, it deals with a number of issues which although relevant are outside the scope of a Neighbourhood Plan.

FOREWORD

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FOREWORD

The Localism Act 2011 introduced Neighbourhood Planning into legislation. Neighbourhood Plans are a result of the Government's decision to give local communities closer involvement in the planning decisions that would affect them. The Ruscombe Parish Neighbourhood Plan builds upon the Ruscombe Parish Village Design Statement (which is a material planning consideration adopted by Wokingham Borough Council in 2010) and has policies encompassing transportation, infrastructure, heritage, protecting the rural environment and housing. Once adopted the Ruscombe Parish Neighbourhood Plan will become a statutory document and therefore form part of the development plan for the borough. Parishes with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan benefit from an additional 10% Community Infrastructure Levy funding to spend on local projects, so 25% in total as opposed to 15% available to Parish Councils where there is no neighbourhood plan in place.

The aims of the Ruscombe Parish Neighbourhood Plan are:

- 1) To protect the Greenbelt areas within the Parish from unsuitable development.
- 2) To protect the green and leafy appearance of the neighbourhood area, the distinct character of our Parish and minimise the impact of development on the natural and built environment.
- 3) To preserve and enhance the character of the St. James' Church Conservation Area and its setting.
- 4) To ensure high quality design and construction in both residential and non residential development.
- 5) To ensure adequate parking is provided for all new developments
- 6) To retain the sites in our area which currently provide jobs in their present use and provide sustainable employment opportunities for those who live within it.

With support from Ruscombe Parish Council, volunteers from Ruscombe and neighbouring parishes formed The Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan Steering and Volunteer Groups in 2018. From the Volunteers Group, individuals and teams were tasked with exploring the following categories: 1) Homes and Community Facilities, 2) Environment, Heritage and Recreation, 3) Local Employment and Business Support and 4) Transport and Infrastructure. Their remit was to understand what currently exists in each of the categories and what future requirements may arise. From this evidence, evidence gathered at our public meetings / consultations and through a comprehensive public survey, a list of planning policies has evolved. This list forms the basis of this revised Regulation 14 Ruscombe Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

A big thank you to the Steering Group and Working Group members, and above all the residents of Ruscombe for completing our surveys, attending our public meetings and for giving us feedback throughout our Neighbourhood Plan journey.

On behalf of your Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Team, Justin May, Chair

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1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.1. Ruscombe Parish Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the area designated by the local planning authority, Wokingham Borough Council, on 25th January 2018. The area coincides with the parish boundary (see Plan A on page 4). The plan is being prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations of 2012 (as amended).

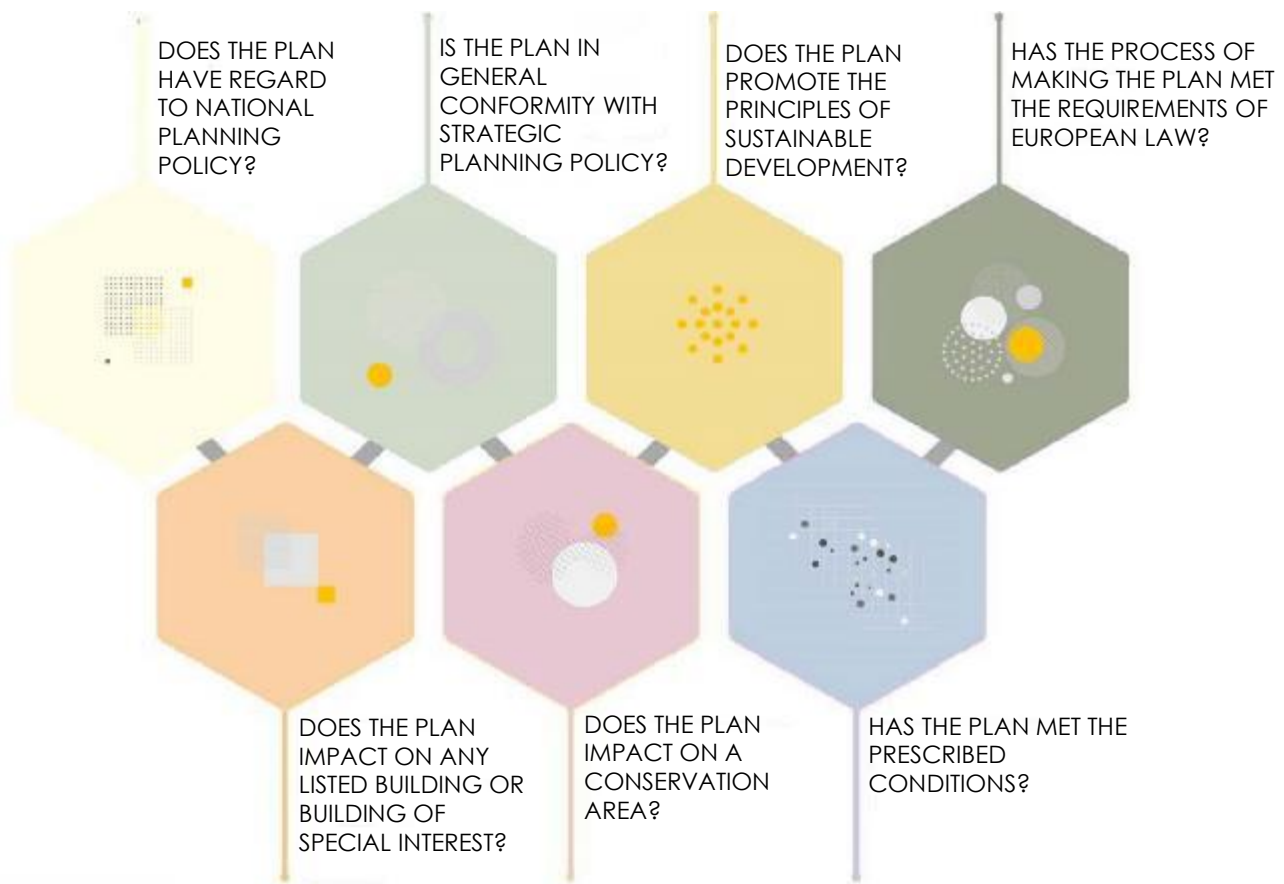
1.2. The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to set out a series of planning policies that will be used to determine planning applications in the area in the period to 2038. The Plan will form part of the development plan for the Wokingham Borough, alongside the adopted Wokingham Borough Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan 2014, which will eventually be replaced by the Wokingham Borough Draft Local Plan 2038 and will cover the same period.

1.3. Neighbourhood Plans provide local communities, like Ruscombe, with the chance to manage the quality of development of their areas. Once approved at a referendum, the Plan becomes part of the Council's statutory development plan and will carry significant weight in how planning applications are decided in the neighbourhood area. Plans must therefore contain only land use planning policies that can be used for this purpose. This often means that there are important issues of interest to the local community that cannot be addressed in a Plan if they are not directly related to planning. Although there is scope for the local community to decide on its planning policies, Neighbourhood Plans must meet all of the relevant basic conditions (see Figure 2 overleaf).

1.4. In addition, the Parish Council will need to demonstrate to an independent examiner that it has successfully engaged with the local community and stakeholders in preparing the Plan. If the examiner is satisfied that it has, and considers the Plan meets the above conditions, then the Plan will go to a referendum of the local electorate. If a simple majority (over 50%) of the turnout votes in favour of the Plan, then it becomes adopted as formal planning policy for the Wokingham Borough.

THE LEVELLING UP & INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

1.5. During the preparation of the plan the Government published for consultation its proposed Levelling Up & Infrastructure Bill with some helpful changes to both the development plan and management system. It indicates that there is a positive future for neighbourhood planning in that system. The expectation is that the Bill will be enacted during the later part of 2023 and therefore likely after the examination of this Neighbourhood Plan.



2 Neighbourhood Plan Basic Conditions

THE PRE-SUBMISSION PLAN

1.6. A draft ('Pre-Submission') Plan was published for consultation in February 2021 in line with the Regulations. The Parish Council has reviewed the comments received from the local community and other interested parties and has made changes to this final version. They have also updated some of the other reports published in the evidence base.

THE SUBMISSION PLAN OCTOBER 2021

1.7. The Parish Council submitted a Submission version of the Plan in October 2021 having responded to the comments received at the Regulation 14 consultation in February 2021. Wokingham Borough Council Wokingham Borough Council undertook a six-week consultation between February and March 2022.

1.8. An independent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan, supporting documentation and representations received during the consultation commenced in April 2022, and Wokingham Borough Council and Ruscombe Parish Council has received a fact-check report from the examiner. The examiner has not issued a final report.

1.9. Concerns were raised by Wokingham Borough Council with regards to the way in which the examination had been conducted. As a result, Wokingham Borough Council

commissioned and received legal advice which confirmed that the way in which the examination had been conducted to date did not comply with the relevant legal requirements.

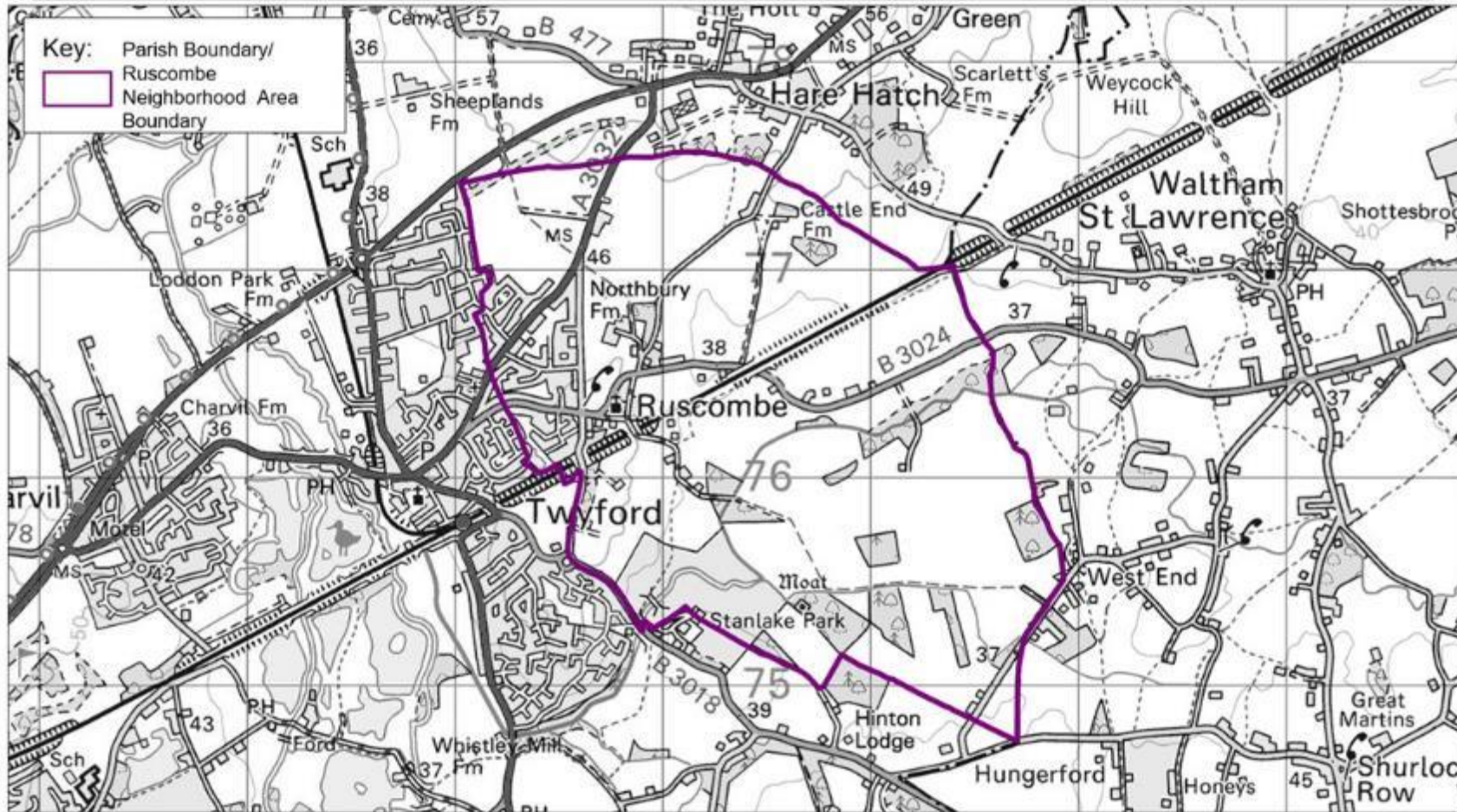
1.10. The Parish Council has therefore withdrawn the October 2021 submitted version of the Plan. This document is the March 2023 version following a joint working approach with Wokingham Borough Council. Changes have been limited to responding to the Borough Council's recommendations for minor modifications and additional evidence to the policies of the Plan and making other non-consequential updates to the document.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT & THE HABITATS REGULATIONS

1.11. Wokingham Borough Council's screening opinion of 4 June 2020 has confirmed that the provisions of the Plan are not likely to have any significant environmental effects and the preparation of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will therefore not be required in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004, having consulted the relevant statutory bodies. The Basic Conditions Statement which accompanies the Submission Plan sets out how the Plan contributes to achieving sustainable development.

1.12. The screening opinion also concluded that the Plan will not need to be subject to a Habitat Regulations Assessment in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Ruscombe Neighbourhood Area Boundary



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Plan A: Designated Neighbourhood Area

2. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA

2.1 Ruscombe is located in the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council. It lies east of Twyford in the Thames Valley on the A4 between Reading and Maidenhead. The village benefits from its proximity to these major business and retail areas, served by good public transport (buses to Wokingham, Reading, High Wycombe and Henley) and ease of access to national road and rail networks. Both Heathrow airport (less than 25 minutes by car) and Paddington station (less than 35 minutes by train at peak commuting times) are easily accessible. Twyford Station forms part of the new Crossrail project currently under construction, although the station is not considered to require any major work to be undertaken to become operational as part of the Elizabeth Line services. It is expected that the Crossrail project will improve accessibility and reduce travel times into central London.

2.2 The 2011 Census highlighted the housing stock to be 479 dwellings made up of the varying types with the population of Ruscombe recorded as approximately 1,094 (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04001233>). There has been no substantial residential development in subsequent years, with development in the parish mostly comprising replacement dwellings and sub-division of existing dwellings, and as a result the 2011 Census data is considered to be reasonably reflective of the current situation.

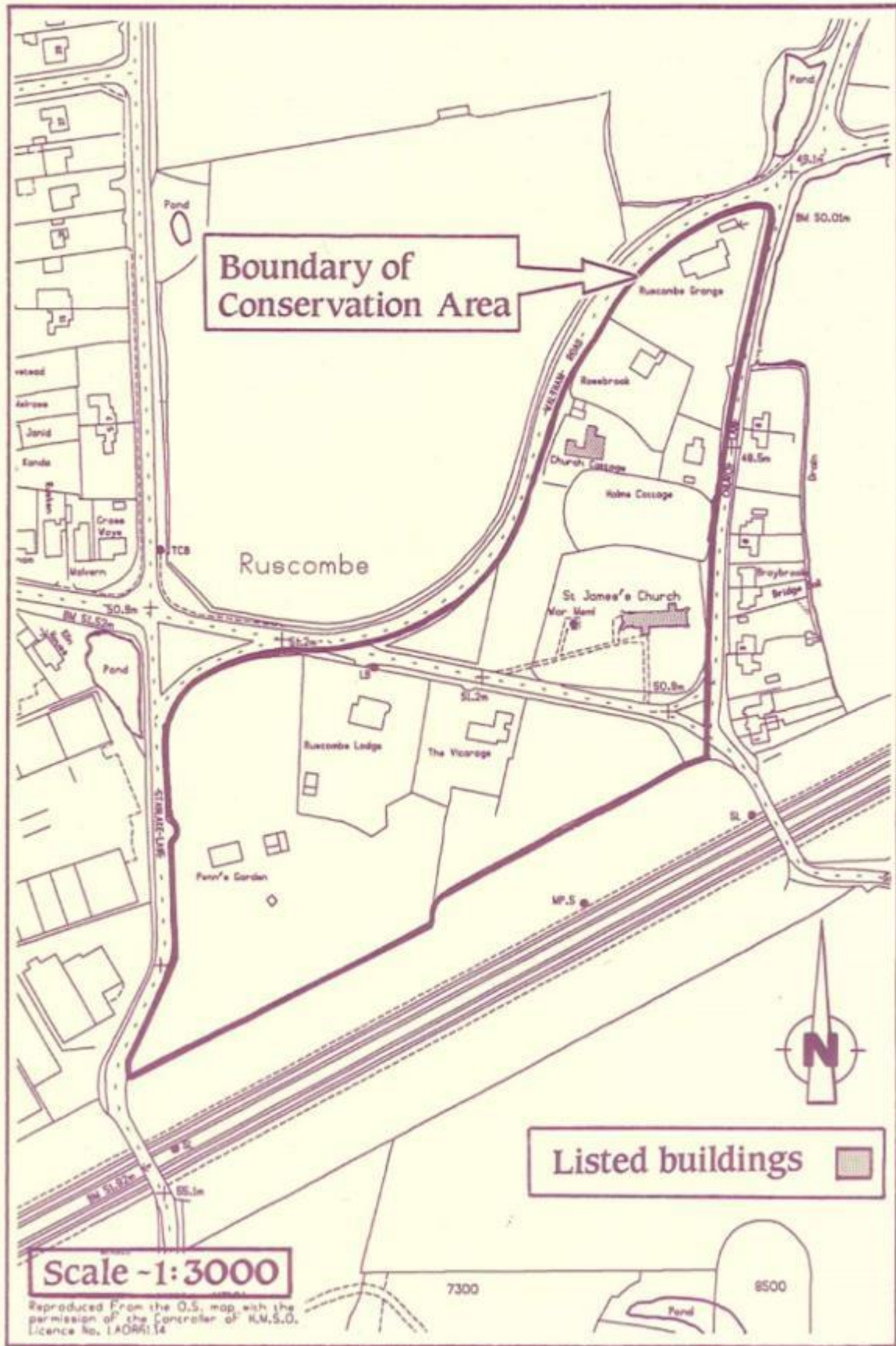
2.3 The housing stock in the Ruscombe neighbourhood area is in the main of a high quality attracting higher than average house prices, ranging from £450,000 to £1.2m+. It is unlikely to provide affordable housing for people wishing to move into the Parish unless they have a similar property to sell elsewhere, but there are opportunities for residents to downsize. The demographics of Ruscombe residents showed a mean age of 43.3 and a median of 45 reflecting on an older than average population where 61% of the population being in the 30 to 75 age range.

2.4 The majority of the built-up area is contained in the west of the parish providing an existing settlement boundary with the large area of Green Belt land, which comprises over 90% of the land that makes up the parish of Ruscombe, in the east. The green belt includes large areas of quality agricultural grade 1 and 2 land, which is rarely found elsewhere in the Borough of Wokingham and is used for farming. It is this open, rural landscape that sets Ruscombe apart and makes the village such an attractive place in which to live. Ruscombe Business Park is a small industrial area located at the south east of the settlement boundary and consisting mainly of offices and light industry.

2.5 Ruscombe is fortunate to have a Conservation Area which has long been established around the 11th Century church of St James the Great. Designated 10 June 1971 (see Plan B on page 7), the area sits in the Green Belt and extends beyond the church land to include the village green, which covers an area much smaller than in earlier times, and also contains some attractive cottages. In addition, the area boasts two of the famous Ruscombe Ponds; one an old Drovers' Pond at Castle End, the other the Village Pond at the crossroads. The Conservation Area is the original heart of the Parish and one which still retains its truly rural, almost bygone character.



3 Ruscombe Conservation Area. Source: Ruscombe Village Design Statement December 2020



Plan B: Ruscombe Conservation Area

2.6 St James the Great Church is Grade I listed. The oldest part of the present church is the chancel, which dates from the late 12th century, the nave and tower having been rebuilt in 1638. The church was restored in 1859–60, when the old high pews were taken out, and again in 1870–80, when the organ chamber was added. There is also a scheduled monument in the parish (see paragraph 2.24) and part of the historic (visible on the 1882 OS map) estate and parkland of Stanlake Park lie within Ruscombe. Grade II listed properties include:

- Church Cottage, Waltham Road - 17th century cottage
- Twyford & Ruscombe Church Hall - formerly a school. c1870-80.
- Ferryman's Cottage, Southbury Lane - 16th century cottage.
- Granary at Northbury Farm – 18th century
- Northbury Farm - Late 16th century manor house
- The Thatch Cottage, Southbury Lane - Late 16th century cottage.
- The Lakes, Waltham Road - Early 17th century cottage.
- 5 Waltham Road - 17th century cottage
- Milestone on London Road, Ruscombe
- 5 tombs at St James Church
- Southbury Lane Bridge - A triple-arch overbridge erected in c.1837-9, set in a cutting.

2.7 The majority of the parish lies within Flood Zone 1, an area with a low probability of flooding. However, a large part in the south of the parish (see Plan C on page 10), lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3, areas with a high probability of flooding. The latest Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the Wokingham Borough was published in February 2020 and records some land in the Parish is vulnerable to surface water flooding.

2.8 Ruscombe has a varied landscape of fields with hedges, rough grassland patches, ponds, and small woods, all of which help the movement of plants and animals through the countryside. Today, the parish still retains many natural features and habitats that date from a time when people were reliant on the land for a living. The parish has some small, but isolated woodlands located across the neighbourhood area, one of which is a traditional coppice site and historically provided materials for local basket making and the nearby nurseries. The small woods are distinct landscape features and are important for wildlife. The woodland edges are the most important part for wildlife such as birds, butterflies and flowers.

2.9 The Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019) identifies that Ruscombe's varied landscape includes multiple National Forest inventory sites, two semi natural ancient woodlands, two planted ancient woodland sites, two wildlife sites and part of the only area of Grade 1 agricultural land for the Wokingham Borough is in Ruscombe. The Gov.uk website defines Grade 1 agricultural land as:
"Land with no or very minor limitations. A very wide range of agricultural and horticultural crops can be grown and commonly includes:

- top fruit, for example tree fruit such as apples and pears

- soft fruit, such as raspberries and blackberries
- salad crops
- winter harvested vegetables

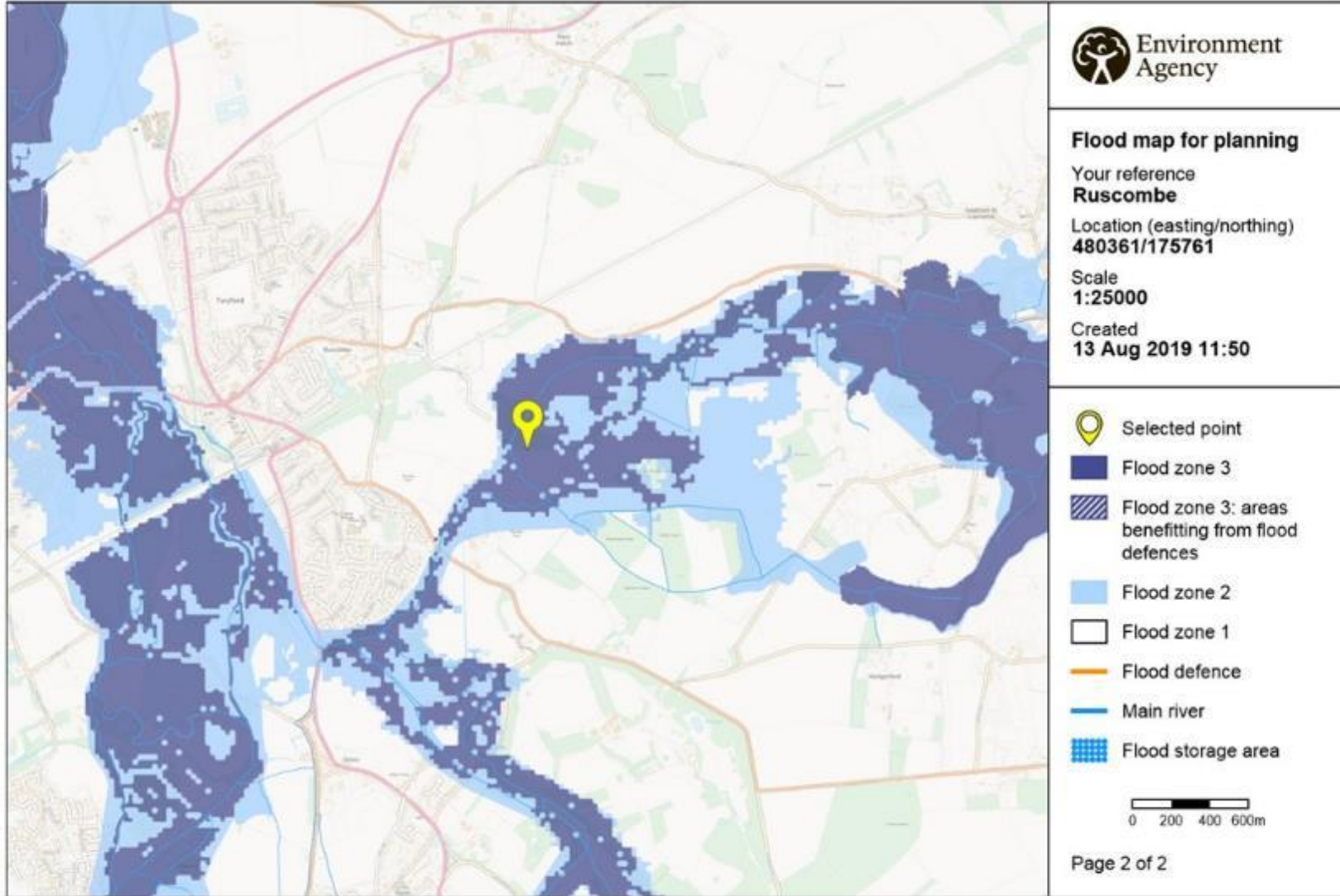
Yields are high and less variable than on land of lower quality.”

2.10 There is a network of old ponds that were probably originally used by drovers moving their flocks and herds through the village and also serving the local osier industry that ceased after the Second World War. The amphibians that inhabit the ponds require rough grass, logs and scattered trees around the pond edges. Another freshwater environment is provided by the Broadwater stream, which may have the potential to support water voles.

2.11 There are very few opportunities for housing and commercial business development in Ruscombe given that all non-green belt land has been used for housing and its small industrial development area, leaving the only areas for development being on a couple of brown field sites (as promoted in the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update) or through redevelopment. Given the Crossrail project in the adjacent parish of Twyford, and open, rural landscape of Ruscombe, it is likely that the attractiveness of Ruscombe to development investment and residential intensification will continue. The Neighbourhood Plan will therefore be especially important in guiding and shaping how future development comes forward within the existing built-up area.



4 Ruscombe Listed Buildings. Source: British Listed Buildings



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Plan C: Fluvial Flood Risk in Ruscombe

GEOGRAPHY

2.12 Ruscombe is in the north-west corner of the ancient Windsor Forest, and 33 miles from London on the old Bath Road. Ruscombe is low-lying: the highest point, around the Church, is 170 feet above sea level; the lowest, in the south-east, 121 feet.

2.13 The Parish covers 1294 acres (just over 2 square miles). The soil is mostly gravel, with a subsoil of gravel and clay, however the northern part is on chalk, and here there is a disused chalk pit, and in the south-east is a tract of alluvial land. To the east of the church once stood Ruscombe Lake covering about 3000 acres between Southbury Lane and Waltham St Lawrence and famed for its abundance of fish. It was drained in 1820 when the Bray Cut was made and subsequently cultivated, however, it still keeps its name.

2.14 Before the London Road, the principal route through Ruscombe was the narrow winding lane from Waltham, through Twyford, to Sonning (now the B3024 back road to Windsor). From this, near the Church, another lane branched off to Castle End and Hare Hatch; and another down to the Lake (Southbury Lane). Along these old lanes, largely coinciding with the courses of water springs, most of the houses were built.

2.15 From the 18th century, the London to Bath Turnpike (now the A3032 London Road) became a very busy coaching route across the north of the parish. In the mid-19th century, this was overtaken by the Great Western Railway through the centre; and in the early 20th century by the A4 bypass across the northern apex. However, the growth of the Village around the London Road, up Pennfields, and down New Road to the Stanlake crossroads and on to Ruscombe Turn did not take place until well after the Second World War.

ORIGINS OF THE NAME

2.16 The name "Ruscombe" seems to have evolved from "Rothescamp". The ending is from the Latin "campus": an open, unenclosed field. "Rothesc" may be from an Anglo-Saxon personal name (such as Hroth), the Celtic word "rhos" (Latin "rus") for undrained moorland (with rushes), or the Teutonic "Royd/Roth", meaning land cleared of trees. The latter derivations would apply well to Ruscombe Lake, or to the chalkland de-forested by the Romans, respectively.

HISTORY

2.17 The first mention of Ruscombe is in 1091 in the foundation charter of the cathedral of Old Sarum (Salisbury in Wiltshire). This records the endowment of the cathedral with the church and tithes of Sonning, along with "ten hides of land in Rothescamp". Ruscombe Church was probably first built as a field chapel to the mother church of Sonning. South and west of the churchyard was the green over which the parishioners had rights of pasture (vastly bigger than the present village green). Beyond the green, over the open country across the (future) London Road and round by Castle End to the Waltham Lane, were the common fields cultivated according to the old manorial system by the lords of the manor and their tenants. The Lake was a swampy waste from which the parishioners gathered rushes and firewood and pastured their flocks of geese and perhaps cattle. The numerous pools of water also produced fish and wildfowl in abundance. In the 14th century, Windsor Forest spread as far as Ruscombe and its bounties were a great temptation to the locals.

2.18 In 1535, Ruscombe was divided into two small manors, Northbury and Southbury. The Ruscombe Enclosure Award, completed in 1832, finally enclosed, consolidated and reallocated all

the land in the Parish, including the land (half the area in total) which until that point had remained open fields and commons.

2.19 There was supposed to have been a Civil War skirmish in the village at which Lieut. Mynd of Sonning was killed, and the parish register records the burial of thirteen soldiers in the first three months of 1642. The villagers were so scared, they deserted their homes and hid in Ruscombe Lake (it was still full of water then). The 'mysterious' tunnels in the area may have been used as their escape route.

2.20 William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, lived in Ruscombe from 1710 until he died in 1718 but his house was torn down in 1830. There were relatively few large houses as the majority of the population were craftsmen or agricultural workers. The population of the Parish in 1811 was 160, by 1901 it had risen to 323, and in 2011 the population had reached 1094.

INDUSTRY

2.21 The industrial history of Ruscombe is virtually all related to agriculture. There used to be a rodyard at the corner of New Road and Ruscombe Lane, stripping rods for making baskets and hurdles. In the 16th century a brickworks was established in Ruscombe Lane, making the distinctive local 'cherry-red' bricks, to provide additional housing due to the increase in the population in the area. Later an iron foundry was established which mainly repaired agricultural machinery. All three industries lasted until the middle of the 20th century. They have been succeeded by a modern business park in Ruscombe Lane on the site of the brickworks, and a second across the Parish at Castle End.

STANLAKE MANOR – SITE OF SCHEDULED MONUMENT

2.22 Part of Stanlake Park lies in Ruscombe. In 1166 Patrick, Earl of Salisbury owned the Hinton Pipard estate, now known as Stanlake Park and lived in a timber framed building which was replaced by the current brick manor house. The original manor house of Hinton Pipard was located to the northern most edge of the estate near Botany Bay Copse where the quadrangular moat can still be seen.

2.23 The Elizabethan manor house (circa 1590) was built by the Aldworth family who were to become the Baron Braybrookes and later moved to Billingbear House. They supported the King during the Civil War. In 1646 Richard Aldworth founded Reading Bluecoat School.

2.24 The monument includes a small quadrilateral moated site and an associated sub-rectangular fishpond within, and at the westernmost end of Botany Bay Copse. Although the moat is seasonally water-filled, the pond contains water all year round. The moat has straight regular arms around 2m in depth and bordered by an outer bank which still survives to a depth of 0.3m. The moat has overall dimensions of 60m NNE-SSW and 57m NW-SE while the moat island is 35m square. The pond is 40m in length and runs WNW from the south-west corner of the moat with which it is considered to be contemporary. It may have acted as a reservoir for the moat thus making it an important example of an early water-management complex. Although a large number of moated sites are known, relatively few survive in Berkshire. This example is of particular importance as it has survived so well.

NATURAL HABITATS

2.25 Ruscombe Wood is situated just off the Ruscombe to Hare Hatch road, with a public access bridleway leading through it. The 6-acre site includes a range of habitats, from open grassland to the

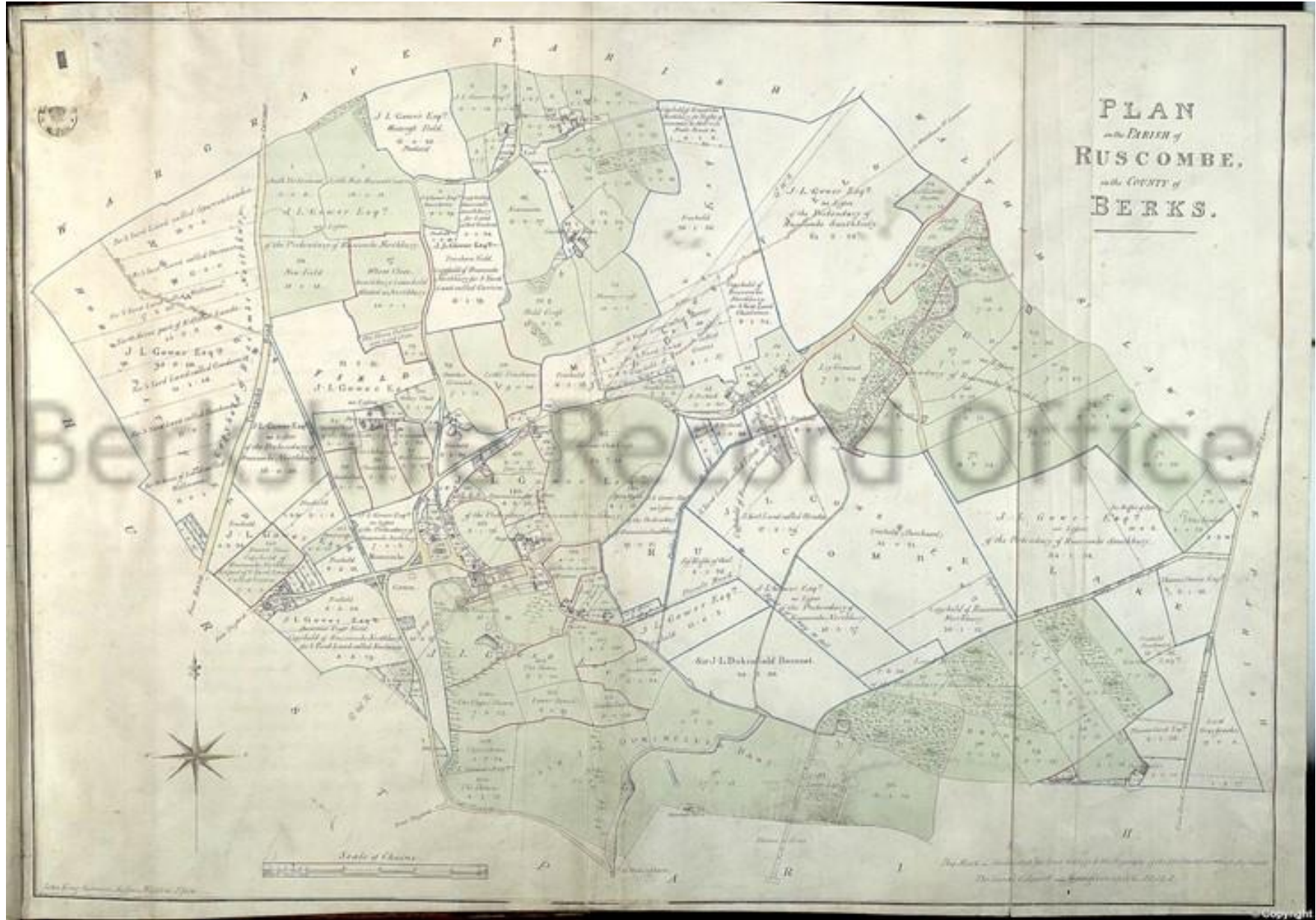
ponded wetland, and a hazel coppice, surrounded by an ash coppice on the perimeter. An extract from the 1830s enclosure map shows that the wood was an important contribution to the 'industry' of the area (see Plan D overleaf). In the mid 19th century, a start was made on growing willows, used for basket making. A feature of the willow growing area was the large number of ponds - there were several in the area of New Road, Ruscombe. Many of these had probably originated as watering places for the drovers' routes (which tended to by-pass village centres, to keep the livestock away from houses). There is also a pond in Ruscombe Wood, which may also have been a 'watering place', or possibly a test clay dig, associated with the brick making industry locally.

2.26 The whole area relied on the willow trade. In the Ruscombe area, there was a lot of employment for willow strippers, who would remove the bark from the rods. Willow growing with the associated coppicing continued until the 1950s, when plastics started to replace willow. As a result, Ruscombe Wood fell into a state of decay. The woodland buttercup flowers just before the bluebells and is an indicator that this is an ancient woodland site. Four species of orchids are found in Ruscombe Wood, the twayblade being the first to flower, in the early summer. Forget-me-not, elder, common bramble, and cow parsley also appear at this time. A woodpile here gives a habitat for stag beetle larvae, which take 7 years to mature, and after a week or two to find a mate and lay eggs, they die. Conservation was started in the 1990s. The undisturbed woodland was found to include many flowers varieties dating from Victorian times. For them to survive, however, coppicing is needed, so that they do not get overwhelmed by other plants or are in too much shadow.

2.27 There are some fine specimens of veteran trees around the parish. These old trees are of high ecological and historical significance supporting many more species than much younger trees. They are likely to be survivors from when the Windsor Great Forest extended as far as Ruscombe. Dead and dying trees should be left standing wherever possible for the habitat they provide to birds, bats and invertebrates. The farmland environment in the parish provides good wildlife habitat in that there are fields on set-aside and relatively small field areas surrounded by traditional enclosure hedges and ditches. Some open fields that were once orchards are characterized by boundary hedgerows and pollarded poplar, that were originally planned to provide windbreaks and assist pollination for the fruit trees.



5 Northbury Farm from the South-east, Source: British History Online



Plan D: Historical Map of Ruscombe

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The parish lies within the Wokingham Borough area in the county of Berkshire.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

3.2 The latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published by the Government in 2021, must be taken into account in the preparation of development plan documents including neighbourhood plans. The following paragraphs of the NPPF 2021 are considered especially relevant:

- Neighbourhood planning (§28 - §30)
- Supporting a prosperous rural economy (§83)
- Community facilities (§93)
- Local Green Spaces (§101 - §103)
- Promoting sustainable transport (§104)
- High quality design (§129)
- Protecting Green Belt land (§147)
- The natural environment (§174)
- The historic environment (§190)

3.3 The Government has also set out a requirement for the provision of First Homes in a Written Ministerial Statement on 24 May 2021. These requirements were subsequently incorporated into National Planning Practice Guidance, and it is noted that the Wokingham Local Plan Revised Growth Strategy (RGS) requires the provision of First Homes in the mix of homes coming forward. A First Homes Interim Policy Statement was published by Wokingham Borough Council in January 2022. For those parts of the Parish which lie within the Green Belt, First Homes Exception Sites are unable to come forward.

3.4 The Government is consulting on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill (LURB) is currently passing through Parliament. It expects to publish the new NPPF and enact the LURB in spring 2023, but there are further changes to the NPPF proposed by the end of the year in relation to the LURB.

STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY

3.5 The Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of Wokingham Borough. The development plan primarily comprises the Core Strategy adopted in 2010, the Managing Delivery (MDD) and local plan adopted in 2014. Core Strategy key policies applying to the designated neighbourhood area are:

- General Principles of Development (CP3) – requiring high quality design
- Managing Travel Demand (CP6) – encouraging a modal shift
- Biodiversity (CP7) – protecting designated nature conservation sites
- Scale and Location of development (CP9) – defines Ruscombe as a “modest development location”
- Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network (CP10) – lists the Twyford Eastern Relief Road as an improvement

- Proposals outside Development Limits (CP11) – to protect the separate identity of settlements
- Green Belt (CP12) – protecting the Metropolitan Green Belt from inappropriate development
- Employment Development (CP15) – designating Ruscombe Business Park as a Core Employment Area
- Housing Delivery (CP17) – committing to the release of allocated sites through subsequent DPD

3.6 These policies predate the publication of the NPPF (2021), originally in 2012, hence the provisions of the NPPF are especially important in shaping how Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan will consider its policies, until the emerging Wokingham Borough Local Plan 2038 advances towards adoption and replaces current policies. Its reasoning and evidence base have therefore been taken into consideration during the preparation of this neighbourhood plan.

3.7 The Managing Development Delivery plan supplements and provides additional detail to the policies of the Core Strategy and was adopted in 2014. Its key policies applying to the designated neighbourhood area are:

- Development limits (CC02) – defines the development limit for Ruscombe (the built-up area boundary)
- Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure (CC08) – protecting routes for the improvement of the Strategic Transport Network
- Development within the Green Belt (TB01) – protecting the Metropolitan Green Belt from inappropriate development
- Development adjoining the Green Belt (TB02) – protecting the visual amenity of the Green Belt
- Core Employment Areas (TB11) – defining Ruscombe Business Park as a Core Employment Area
- Landscape Character (TB21) – requiring the retention or enhancement of landscape character
- Biodiversity and Development (TB23) – protecting designated nature conservation sites
- Designated Heritage Assets etc (TB24) – protecting designated heritage assets
- Archaeology (TB25) – requiring appropriate level of archaeological evaluation and appropriate measures to protect and preserve remains are undertaken in areas of high archaeological potential, there are four areas in Ruscombe
- Allocated Housing Development Sites (SAL02) - Land at 146 London Road, Ruscombe for the delivery of around 15 dwellings

3.8 A Draft Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2036 was published in February 2020 and the consultation period ending on 20 April 2020. Ruscombe Village continues to be defined as a Tier 2 settlement and therefore a 'modest development location' in Draft Policy SS2. Draft Policy ER1 identifies Ruscombe Business Park as a Core Employment Area and safeguards its use as such. The plan also proposes to allocate the promoted sites listed

in paragraph 3.11 above in its Draft Policy H2 totalling approximately 20 new homes for Ruscombe (see Plans F and G overleaf), although this is subject to change as the Local Plan Update develops.

3.9 A consultation on the emerging Wokingham Local Plan Revised Growth Strategy (RGS) concluded in January 2022. The RGS makes significant changes to the Draft Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2036 (DLP) published in February 2020 including:

- Removal of the proposed garden town at Grazeley;
- A new proposed garden village at Hall Farm/Loddon Valley;
- Additional allocations for housing across the Borough;
- Additional Local Green Space designations across the Borough; and it
- Extends the plan period to 2038.

3.10 In Ruscombe, the RGS proposes to pursue a higher density than that sought in the previous iteration of the Draft Plan at the retained proposed allocations of Land to the rear of 9-17 Northbury Lane, from 7 new homes to 12 new homes (see Plan F) and Land between 39-53 New Road, from 13 new homes to 20 new homes (see Plan G) and sets some general development guidelines. The RGS also proposes to designate five Local Green Spaces in Ruscombe, including:

- Ruscombe Wood and Pond
- Ruscombe Ponds (A)
- Ruscombe Ponds (B)
- Church Green, Southbury Lane
- Pennfields Park

3.11 Land is also being promoted at land to the east of Twyford and Ruscombe – Twyford Gardens – as an alternative growth strategy to that proposed by WBC and the Parish Council continues to engage with these processes.

3.12 While acknowledging the requirement for housing development, given that Neighbourhood Plans are not obliged to allocate land for housing, there remain opportunities within the settlement boundary for sites to come forward (promoted sites 5RU007 – Land to the rear of 5 -17 Northbury Avenue, on Northbury Lane, Ruscombe, RG10 9LH and 5RU008 – Land between 39-53 New Road, Ruscombe, RG10 9LQ, see plan E overleaf), and given existing Green Belt policy constraints, this Neighbourhood Plan has focussed its attention in preparing other development management policies. The emerging Local Plan policies will address the types of housing and affordability, as well as any Green Belt policy constraints, and this will be adequately addressed by strategic policies at the Local Plan level. The Parish Council will continue to engage with this process and has also confirmed that it will commit to a review of the Neighbourhood Plan should this position change.

3.13 There are other development plans that apply in the Parish such as the Replacement Minerals Local Plan (Incorporating the Alterations Adopted in December

1997 and May 2001) and the Waste Local Plan for Berkshire (adopted December 1998). These documents are proposed to be replaced by the Joint Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan which has now been found sound subject to the proposed Main Modifications being made.

3.14 Parts of Ruscombe Business Park has been identified as part of the Preferred Waste Areas within the plan. Almost the entire parish is identified as a safeguarded resource for sand and gravel and land outside of the built-up area falls within the Area of Search for Sand and Gravel. As minerals and waste matters are defined as 'excluded development' for Neighbourhood Plans, the Parish Council will continue to engage in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

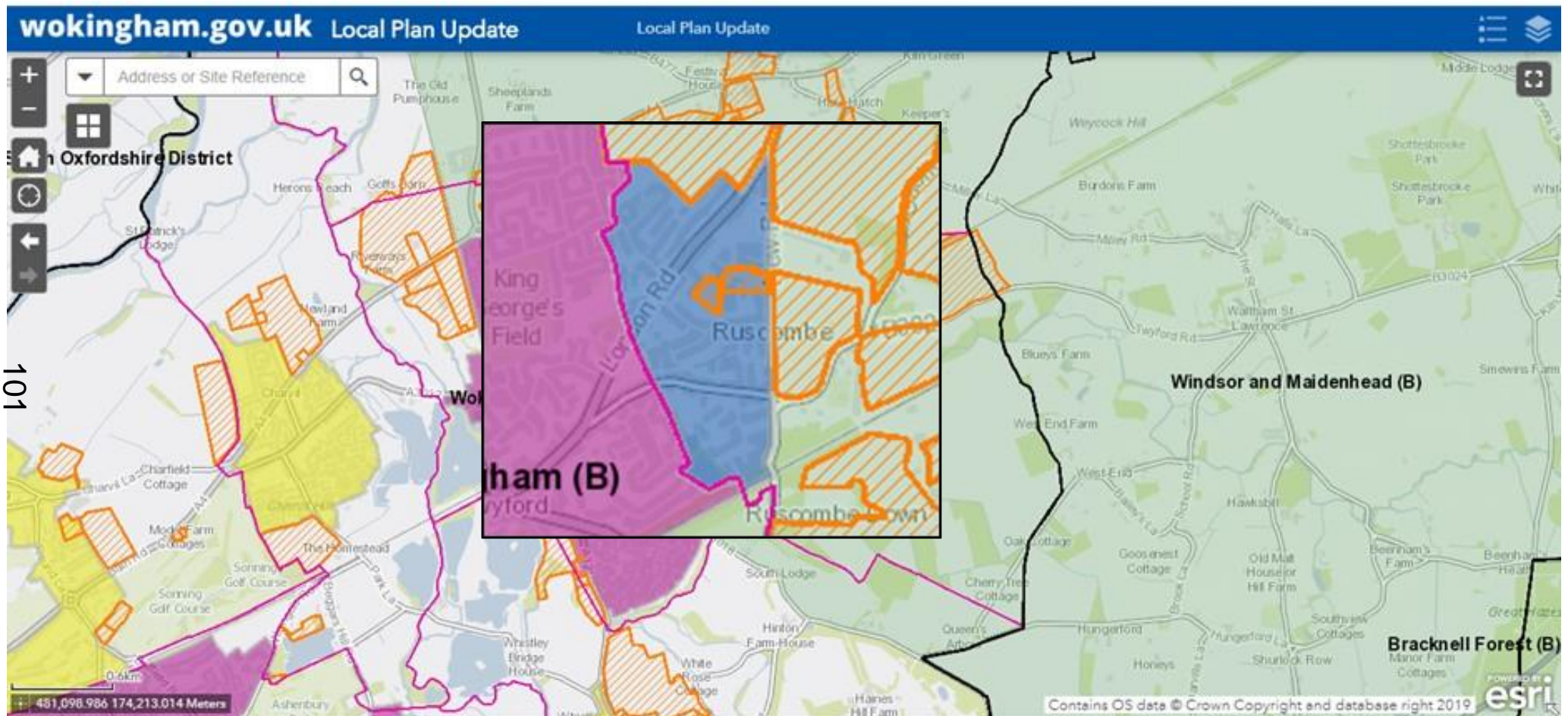
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING POLICY

3.15 The neighbouring Parish of Waltham St Lawrence have a made Neighbourhood Plan and adjacent parishes of Twyford and Hurst are also in the process of preparing Neighbourhood Plans.

RUSCOMBE CONSERVATION AREA

3.16 As set out in Section 2, the Conservation Area was designated 10 June 1971 (see Plan B on page 7). Conservation Areas were introduced by the Civic Amenities Act of 1967, to protect areas of special interest as opposed to individual buildings. Since 1967 some 8,000 conservation areas have been designated in England. Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 local authorities have a duty to designate conservation areas and from time to time to review the boundaries. Such areas are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

3.17 The main attributes that define the special character of an area are its physical appearance and history, i.e. the form and features of buildings and the spaces between them, their former uses and historical development. Where there are a number of periods of historical development, the character of individual parts of the conservation area may differ. Contrasts between the appearance of areas and the combination of buildings of various ages, materials and styles may contribute to its special character.



Plan E: Promoted sites in Ruscombe Built-Up Area Boundary

Source: Wokingham Borough Council Interactive Mapping System of suggested development sites

Land to the rear of 9-17 Northbury Lane, Ruscombe

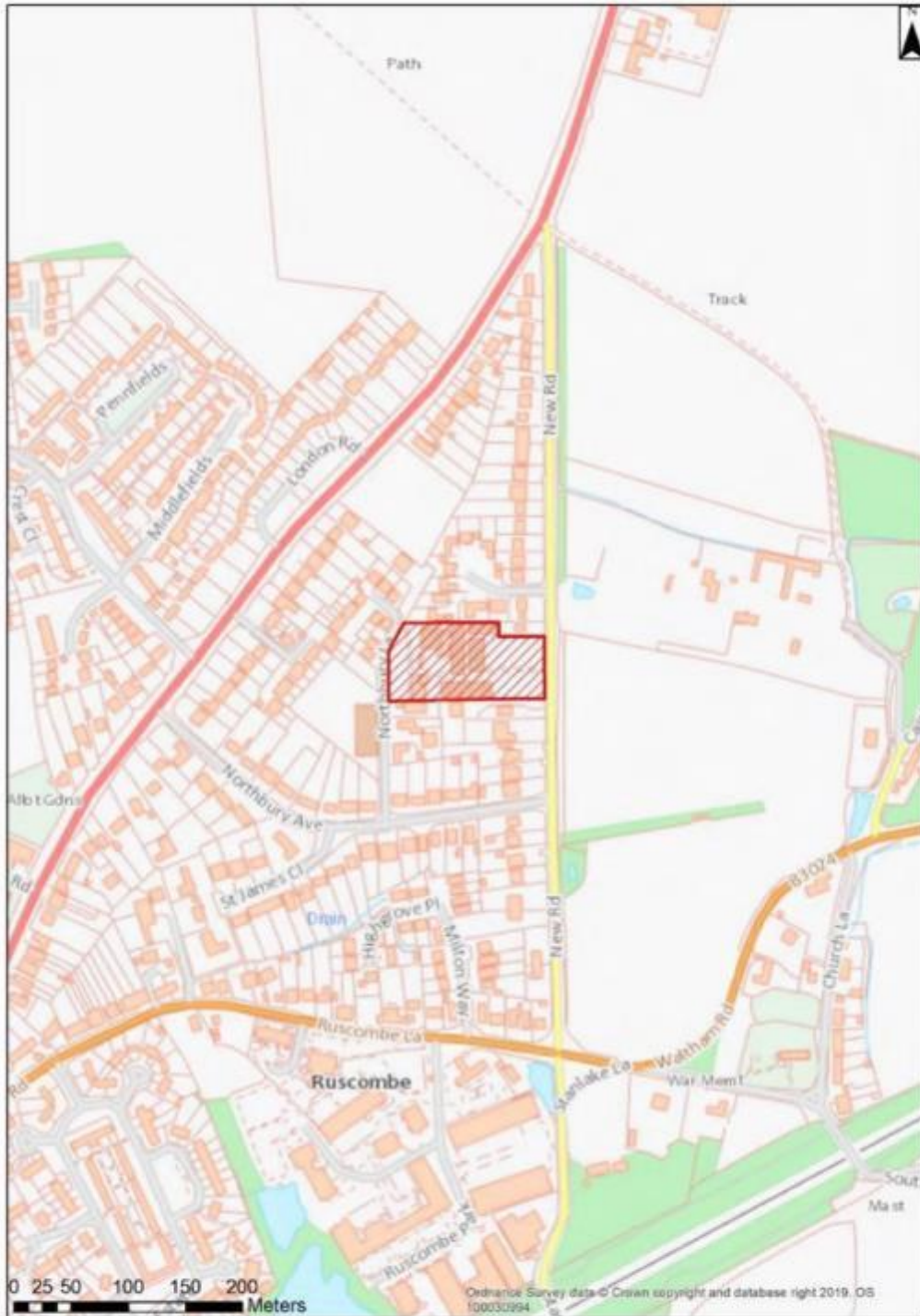


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Plan F: Proposed allocation in Ruscombe, Draft Wokingham Borough Local Plan 2036 and retained as such in the emerging Wokingham Local Plan Revised Growth Strategy 2038

Note: The site address is Land to the rear of **5**-17 Northbury Avenue, on Northbury Lane, Ruscombe

Land between 39-53 New Road, Ruscombe



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Plan G: Proposed allocation in Ruscombe, Draft Wokingham Borough Local Plan 2036 and retained as such in the emerging Wokingham Local Plan Revised Growth Strategy 2038

4. COMMUNITY VIEWS ON PLANNING ISSUES

4.1 This Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared because of residents' desire to have a say in what development takes place in Ruscombe over the next 15 years. Ruscombe is a rural parish and many residents choose to live in Ruscombe because of the open green spaces and it is important to residents to maintain this lifestyle. The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared through consultation with residents and a full account will be detailed in the Consultation Statement which will accompany the Submission Plan in due course.

4.2 The latest engagement, during March 2019, in which a survey was distributed to houses in Ruscombe parish and also made available online, 33% of households responded and the themes that emerged are shown in Image 6 below. The majority of respondents wished to see housing demand being met in a way that is sympathetic to the area and accompanied by adequate infrastructure. In addition, the survey showed little evidence that residents have had to move away or remain in their current housing due to the lack of alternative housing in Ruscombe.

4.3 The Neighbourhood Plan has therefore sought to respond to these main themes and the work undertaken since has informed the policies of this Plan. Where it has not been possible to accommodate matters in planning policies, it has been dealt with in Section 6.

MAINTAIN THE IDENTITY OF RUSCOMBE

PROTECT IMPORTANT GREEN SPACES AND MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE. PROTECTING AND ENHANCING LOCAL BIODIVERSITY AND TREES.

PRESERVING OR ENHANCING THE DISTINCT CHARACTER OF LOCAL AREAS, INCLUDING THE ST JAMES' CHURCH CONSERVATION AREA AND ITS SETTING.

RE-USE OF BROWN-FIELD AS PRIORITY FOR HOUSING

RETAINING SITES WHICH PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY WITH SPECIFIC SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND AVOIDING LARGE SCALE INDUSTRY AND HEAVY TRANSPORT AND DISTRIBUTION. AVOIDING AN INCREASE IN ROAD TRAFFIC POLLUTION.

PROTECTING IMPORTANT COMMUNITY FACILITIES INCLUDING NEW OR EXPANDED GP FACILITIES.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGH-QUALITY DESIGN WHEN CONSIDERING NEW DEVELOPMENT.

6: Community Engagement Themes, Source: Ruscombe Parish Council

VISION

“To remain a busy and vibrant community with access to a wide range of facilities.

Growth will be through sustainable infill and brown field developments of homes contained within the existing fabric of the village whilst protecting the Green Belt.

The many significant historic buildings and landscape will be preserved for future generations.

Design of new buildings will reflect the rural character of the village.”

OBJECTIVES

- To retain the present Green Belt boundaries.
- Ensure high quality design & construction in both residential & commercial development.
- To preserve or enhance the character of the St. James' Church Conservation Area and its setting.
- To protect & enhance the biodiversity of our area, our local wildlife & its habitat & our trees.
- To enhance & protect all existing green spaces, including roadside verges, to ensure they remain for the benefit of the community.
- Encourage walking & cycling in the neighbourhood plan area & to better manage the harmful effects of traffic & parking.
- To sustain community facilities, shops & businesses that are essential to community life.
- Encourage ecologically sound development that minimises the environmental footprint of development proposals.

5.1 The purpose of these policies is both to encourage planning applications for proposals that the local community would like to support, and to discourage applications for development that the community does not consider represent sustainable development in the Parish.

5.2 The planning framework for the Parish will continue to rely on national and local policies in addition to the policies introduced under the Neighbourhood Plan. In this respect, the local community is content that it is unlikely that the spatial strategy of the emerging Local Plan will require the release of Green Belt land, and the Parish Council will continue to engage with this process.

5.3 Set out below are the proposed land use policies. Each policy is numbered and titled, and it is shown in bold italics for ease of reference. Where necessary, the area to which it will apply is shown on the Policies Map attached to the document. After each policy is some supporting text that explains the purpose of the policy, how it will be applied and, where helpful, how it relates to other development plan policies.

POLICY RU1: DEVELOPMENT LIMIT FOR RUSCOMBE

The development limit for Ruscombe is shown on the Policies Map. Within this area proposals for development will normally be acceptable provided they accord with the policies of the development plan.

The land outside the settlement boundary is considered to be part of the open countryside. All this area lies within the Green Belt and accordingly new development will be strictly controlled in line with national Green Belt policies.

Development proposals between Ruscombe and Hare Hatch should conserve and enhance the open and tranquil landscape character. Proposals which would either individually or cumulatively result in unacceptable harm or detract from the separation between Ruscombe and Hare Hatch will not be supported.

5.4 The policy distinguishes between the built-up area of Ruscombe with the surrounding countryside in order to manage development proposals accordingly. The policy accords with Core Strategy (CS) Policy CP9 which defines Ruscombe as a modest development location where modest development would be acceptable within the development limits and refines Managing Development Local Plan (MDLP) Policy CC02 by identifying the character of the Parish through the built-up area of Ruscombe and the surrounding countryside, enhanced by the role of the countryside as Green Belt. Throughout

consultation with the community, it was clear that there was a majority support for the character of the Parish to continue to be defined by its two principal components, the built-up area of Ruscombe village and the countryside that surrounds it. The significance of the Green Belt at Ruscombe is also recognised in WBC's Green Belt Review June 2016:

'Specification of finer-grained parcels substantiates the conclusions of the strategic review of Green Belt purposes, where land to the east of Wargrave and Twyford is identified as making a contribution to Green Belt purposes, this being significant in relation to land in the vicinity of Ruscombe which protects the setting of the village, and for land to the east of Twyford (east of the B3018 Waltham Road).'

This distinction between Ruscombe village and the surrounding countryside, enhanced by the role of the countryside as Green Belt, is fundamental to the character of the area and is reflected in the policies of the Plan and the way in which development proposals should be managed.

5.5 The final paragraph of the policy seeks to ensure that the separation of Ruscombe and Hare Hatch is maintained within the Plan period. WBC's Landscape Character Assessment November 2019 recognises that development pressures for expansion, infill and densification within existing settlements, especially at Twyford/Ruscombe, could lead to the loss of individual settlement identity. There are also commercial development pressures along the A4 (which lies outside of the parish) extending along the A3032 (which lies within the parish). The document also recognises that there is need to conserve the rural setting and gaps between settlements and 'avoid linear development between Hare Hatch and Twyford along the A4'. The policy therefore seeks to conserve the rural character and settlement form of this part of the parish by highlighting its significance in addition to the two principal components that define the character of the Parish.

5.6 Sites for new housing will continue to become available within the built-up area of the Parish. In the event that the Borough's current housing supply strategy changes before the end of the plan period, then the implications will be considered by the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan may be reviewed to plan for that eventuality.

POLICY RU2: RUSCOMBE HOUSING DESIGN CODE

Development proposals in Ruscombe will be supported provided they have full regard to the essential design considerations, where applicable relevant to the area typologies and site-specific design briefs within which they are located, and general design principles set out in the Ruscombe Housing Design Code attached as Appendix A.

5.7 The NPPF contains a heightened emphasis on design standards in new developments. Paragraphs 124 states:

'The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.'

and paragraph 130 confirms that:

'permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.'

5.8 The policy therefore establishes the importance of high-quality design and the need for new development to reflect the special qualities and local distinctiveness of the Parish. Adopting such an approach is intended to ensure that new development is well grounded and creates a 'positive sense of place' (National Design Guide paragraph 38) and more likely to be acceptable to the community. The Wokingham Borough Design Guide provides "guidance on how development can be delivered in accordance with good design practice" as defined in the National Design Guide. The policy therefore places additional local emphasis to the design quality principles of the Wokingham Borough Design Guide by providing "detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area" in the form of a Design Code as defined by the National Design Guide. In turn, it complements, but does not replace, CS Policy CP3 by highlighting the particular characteristics of the Parish.

5.9 The Ruscombe Housing Design Code attached at Appendix A complements the Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD and establishes the principles of essential design considerations within each distinct area typologies of the Parish as well as setting out general design principles and is intended to replace the existing Ruscombe Village Design Statement. These design considerations and principles set out the features of each typology that make it distinctive from others, and the extent of each typology is defined in the Design Code. It requires that development proposals demonstrate, where relevant to the nature and location of the proposal, that full regard has been paid to these principles. The policy does not advocate pastiche or historic solution; however, it is important that any new development demonstrates a connection with local character and place making.

POLICY RU3: RUSCOMBE CONSERVATION AREA

Development proposals should and, where possible, enhance the historic environment, particularly the special architectural and historic significance interest of the designated Ruscombe Conservation Area and its setting. Features identified as positive characteristics of the Conservation Area and its immediate setting are defined in the Ruscombe Housing Design Code attached as Appendix A, to which all proposals must have full regard.

5.10 The policy complements the provisions of the NPPF and the adopted policies MDLP Policy TB24 and CS Policy CP3 by drawing attention to guidance specific to this Conservation Area and its setting as set out in the Ruscombe Housing Design Code attached as Appendix A.

5.11 The Ruscombe Housing Design Code attached at Appendix A establishes the principles of essential design considerations within each distinct area typologies of the Parish, including the Conservation Area and its setting, as well as setting out general design principles and is intended to replace the existing Ruscombe Village Design Statement. Not every characteristic will be relevant to an application and the policy does not set out a prescriptive list of design features that must be slavishly incorporated into every scheme. Rather, applicants are expected to acknowledge, understand and respond to the characteristics that are relevant in justifying their proposals.

POLICY RU4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING

Applicants should demonstrate early, proactive, and effective engagement with the community particularly with regard to design issues.

Proposals for 10 or more dwellings more than a 1000m² of new floor space or where the site is greater than a hectare in size, applicants should demonstrate in the Statement of Community Involvement how they have engaged in a meaningful way with local residents and other stakeholders prior to submitting a planning application.

Where appropriate, the Statement should describe how the knowledge and opinions of the local community have been sought, positively considered and responded to in formulating the proposals set out in the separate Design and Access Statement, where a proposal has not accommodated that knowledge or opinion, then the Statement should explain the reasons for not doing so.

5.12 The policy refines the way in which the process of engaging the local community in the design of major development proposals is carried out. Importantly, it uses established means within the Council's established Local Validation Requirements process to achieve its aims, rather than to create an additional process.

5.13 The NPPF also encourages 'any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community...before submitting their applications.' (§40). The National Design Guide highlights the vital role that communities play in the design process of proposals. The intent is therefore to lead to a higher standard of local community engagement in the design process.

5.14 The identity of Ruscombe and the importance of high quality design was raised as important issues by the local community and it is therefore vital that their knowledge of how the area functions, their understanding of the essential features of local character, and their views on the merits of emerging proposals are given proper weight in the consideration of planning applications.

POLICY RU5: BUILDINGS OF TRADITIONAL LOCAL CHARACTER

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following buildings and structures, as shown in the policies map, as Buildings of Traditional Local Character by way of their local architectural or historic interest:

- i. Ruscombe Cottage, Ruscombe Lane;**
- ii. The Royal Oak, Ruscombe Lane;**
- iii. Kiln House, Ruscombe Lane;**
- iv. Penn's Garden, Stanlake Lane;**
- v. Ruscombe Lodge, Southbury Lane;**
- vi. Ruscombe Grange, Church Lane;**
- vii. Holme Cottage, Ruscombe Lane;**
- viii. Rosebrook, Waltham Road;**
- ix. Southbury Farm, Southbury Lane;**
- x. Lake Cottage, Southbury Lane;**
- xi. Willow Vale, Waltham Road;**
- xii. Castle End Farm, Castle End Road;**
- xiii. Keeper's Cottage, Waltham Road;**
- xiv. Lake Farm, Waltham Road.**

Development proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets, including Buildings of Traditional Local Character listed above, will be supported where they can demonstrate that they retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special significance of the building or structure and its setting.

In weighing applications that directly affect non-designated heritage assets, including Buildings of Traditional Local Character, a balanced judgement will be taken having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

5.15 The policy designates certain buildings or structures as Buildings of Traditional Local Character in order to give them additional protection as heritage assets, in recognition of the important contribution that they make to the special character of the Parish, for application of MDLP Policy TB26. This is in addition to, but separate from, those properties which are Grade I or Grade II listed, and which are designated by Historic England. This Neighbourhood Plan can add no more protection to these properties.

5.16 In analysing the Village Design Statement, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group identified candidate buildings for designating as Buildings of Traditional Local Character by way of their local architectural or historic interest. A criteria-based assessment of candidate buildings, using WBC's Buildings of Traditional Local Character Policy, was undertaken. The reason for designating each building or structure have been summarised in the Buildings of Traditional Local Character report attached as Appendix B.

POLICY RU6: EMPLOYMENT

Development proposals that will result in the loss of employment floor space at Ruscombe Business Park, as shown on the Policies Map, will be resisted, unless it can be demonstrated that it is in accordance with other employment related policies of the development plan, or that there will be an increase in jobs as a result of the proposals enabling a higher employment density to be achieved.

5.17 The policy seeks to avoid the loss of employment floor space at its defined Core Employment Area at Ruscombe Business Park in accordance with CS Policy CP15.

5.18 The Central Berkshire FEMA Economic Development Needs Assessment, Oct 2016 recognises that each Local Planning Authority will need to take a view on the replacement of employment space lost in the future and Wokingham Borough Council has already recognised that there is a need for additional floorspace for new jobs and there have been some losses of employment floor space though the implementation of permitted development rights.

5.19 The latest evidence shows that the majority of demand in Ruscombe Business Park is from professional services looking for space in or near Twyford and that it generally attracts more local occupiers WBC's Employment Land Needs Survey, February 2020.

5.20 It is acknowledged that the new Use Classes Order defines Commercial, Business and Services Uses by combining previous retail, financial services, café/restaurant, offices and other social uses.

5.21 Additionally, prior Approval Consent for the change of use of an existing office building to 12 residential apartments at Spitfire House, Ruscombe Business Park has recently been secured and the policy therefore seeks to avoid further loss of employment space as do other policies of the development plan.

POLICY RU7: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following properties as community facilities, as shown on the Policies Maps:

- i. Buratta's at the Royal Oak restaurant and bar;**
- ii. St James Church.**

Proposals that will lead to the unnecessary loss of a community facility will be resisted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the use of the building and ancillary land is no longer viable or that the use can be satisfactorily re-located for the ongoing benefit of the local community.

Proposals to improve the viability of an established community use of buildings and ancillary land by way of its extension or partial redevelopment will be supported, provided the design of the scheme and the resulting increase in use are appropriate, will not harm the amenities of adjoining residential properties, and will not undermine the viability of the primary community use.

5.22 The policy identifies two community facilities (buildings and land) in the Parish that will be protected from a change of use in line with CS Policy CP3. It also encourages proposals to enable the facilities to remain viable community assets. The Use Class Order of September 2020 now deems such uses as either Class F2 ('Local Community Uses') or in the case of the church, F1 ('Religious institutions'). Pubs are now deemed 'sui generis' (i.e. not included in any class of uses).

5.23 Buratta's, an independently run restaurant and bar, is a very important part of Ruscombe life, 82% of survey responders agreed that a local pub is an important part of community life. Buratta's is sustainable and should be protected from unnecessary loss because it provides an excellent location for social, family, business and political functions related to the area, as well as usual restaurant and bar facilities including children's play equipment in the garden.

5.24 St James Church plays an important part of life for followers of the Christian religion and has well attended services and is a very popular choice for those wanting a church wedding, Christening or funeral. It is Grade I listed and is the central part of Ruscombe Conservation Area.

5.25 These community facilities within the Parish are therefore valued by the local community and offer a valuable resource to support community life. The policy therefore identifies these on the Policies Map, and seeks to avoid their loss. In demonstrating that an existing use is not viable, applicants must produce evidence that genuine and sustained efforts to promote, improve and market the facility at a reasonable value have been undertaken. The policy also recognises that improvements or extensions to some may be

necessary to ensure they remain viable. In these cases, other planning policies will still need to be addressed e.g. heritage.

5.26 Other than these two community facilities, Ruscombe is largely served by facilities in the neighbouring Parish of Twyford.

7 Burratta's at The Royal Oak, Source: Google Street View



8 St James Church, Source: Google Street View

POLICY RU8: LOCAL GREEN SPACES

The Neighbourhood Plan designates Local Green Spaces, as shown on the Policies Map, as follows:

- i. Ruscombe Wood and Pond, Castle End Road;**
- ii. Castle End Road Pond, Castle End Road;**
- iii. Crossroads Pond;**
- iv. New Road Pond;**
- v. Church Lane Allotments;**
- vi. Church Green, Southbury Lane;**
- vii. Crossroads Land – Stanlake Lane, New Road, Waltham Road, Ruscombe Lane;**
- viii. Pennfields Park;**
- ix. Land at London Road;**
- x. Pennfields Orchard.**

Proposals for inappropriate development in a Local Green Space will only be supported in very special circumstances.

5.27 The policy designates a series of Local Green Spaces in accordance with the tests of NPPF §100. A designation has the policy effect of the equivalence of the Green Belt when determining planning applications located within a designated Green Space. Hence, the policy resists all development proposals that will undermine the essential character of a Green Space, unless there are very special circumstances to justify why consent should be granted.

5.28 A number of sites that are proposed for designation already carry the same level of protection as they lie within the Green Belt. However, their designation as Local Green Spaces are an expression of open spaces that are particularly valued by the local community as demonstrated in the Local Green Space report attached as Appendix C.

POLICY RU9: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & BIODIVERSITY

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a Green Infrastructure Network as shown on the Green Infrastructure Plan, for the purpose of promoting sustainable movement and ecological connectivity through the village and surrounding countryside and for mitigating climate change. The Network comprises a variety of open spaces, local green spaces, woodlands, trees, ponds, assets of biodiversity value, footpaths, bridleways and cycleways.

Development proposals on land that lies within or adjoining the Network will be required to demonstrate how they maintain or enhance its visual characteristics and biodiversity; and to ensure their landscape schemes, layouts, public open space provision and other amenity requirements (such as pedestrian, cycle and horse-riding connections) contribute to improving the connectivity and maintenance of the Network, including delivering a net gain to general biodiversity assets.

Proposals that will lead to the loss of land lying within the Network and that will undermine its integrity will be resisted. Proposals which enhance/maintain the existing Green Infrastructure Network will be supported. Proposals to create new Green Infrastructure, including pedestrian and cycle routes, will also be supported, provided they are consistent with all other relevant policies of the development plan.

5.29 The policy supports MDLP Policy CC03 by defining a network of green infrastructure assets in Ruscombe parish as a means of increasing connectivity and of improving local biodiversity through connecting habitats. In doing so it is in line with CS Policy CP6 in terms of enhancing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists to encourage safe walking and cycling access through the Parish and CS Policy CP7 on biodiversity. It requires that all development proposals that lie within the network, or that adjoin it, should consider how they may improve it, or at the very least do not undermine its integrity of connecting spaces and habitats. This may mean that development layouts are designed to contribute to the network's effectiveness.

5.30 The Parish is home to a variety of wildlife species, including the European Protected Great Crested Newts and Water Vole for example. It also hosts a range of species of birds such as Cuckoo. The Ruscombe Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Elements report, attached as Appendix D, summarises the extent of the habitats and species that exist within the Parish. It also identifies opportunities for better management of existing habitats.

5.31 Aspirations identified have been listed in the Table 1 overleaf, where applicable these have been demonstrated on the Green Infrastructure Network Map and Inset at the end of this document. For further details on the majority of the aspirations identified below, please see the Ruscombe Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Elements report attached at Appendix D.

Ref	Green Infrastructure Network Aspiration
1	Improved hedgerow management (location of hedges shown on map)
2	Increase number of young trees in Parkland habitat (location of Parkland habitat shown on map)
3	Encourage and facilitate landowners to enter a Countryside Stewardship Scheme (add project to Section 6 paragraph 5)
4	Enhance natural corridors (location of Castle End Business Park natural corridor shown on map)
5	Enhance natural corridors (location of Castle End Road natural corridor shown on map)
6	Promote appropriate maintenance of ditches across the parish to benefit Water Voles (location of watercourses shown on map)
7	Promote a 'wildlife friendly gardening scheme' to residents (add project to Section 6 paragraph 5)
8	Enhance wildlife value of ponds across the parish (innumerable ponds across the parish – project to include mapping of significant ponds)
9	Promote appropriate management of woodlands (location of woodland shown on map)
10	Monitor the quality of priority grassland habitats and provide advice to landowners (location of Lowland Meadows shown on map)
11	Manage the verges and communal spaces to benefit pollinators and other species (location of a proposed London Road wildflower verge shown on map and new bin on Southbury Lane shown on Inset)
12	Promote greater understanding of biodiversity of Ruscombe to residents (location of proposed information boards for ponds shown on Inset)
13	Creation of a community orchard (location shown on Inset)

Table 1: Green Infrastructure Aspirations

POLICY RU10: MANAGING TRAFFIC

Development proposals will be supported, provided that, where appropriate to their location, they deliver or contribute towards measures to mitigate the impact on the highway network, such as through traffic calming measures and active travel improvements.

5.32 CS Policy CP6 recognises that the Borough has one of the highest car ownership rates of any English local authority (§4.36). Transport and traffic issues have been identified as a priority topic during consultation. 74% of questionnaire respondents said speed of traffic was a problem in the area they live. Ruscombe has a good network of paths in most residential areas and a large network of footpaths and bridleways connecting it to the countryside. There are no roadway cycle paths in Ruscombe but Castle End Road and Stanlake Lane are classed as Quiet Routes (see Plan G overleaf). The policy is therefore aimed at preserving the roads of the Parish as safe havens for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders and encourages the Highway Authority to consider introducing traffic calming measures in the Parish.

5.33 Ruscombe's traffic issues are not created by its own residents but by traffic passing through the parish to (and from) Twyford to Hare Hatch (and beyond) and Waltham St. Lawrence (and beyond). The Parish has two classified roads passing through; the A3032 and the B3024. A link road (New Road) joins the two roads in the Parish for north & south traffic flow. Other roads in the Parish are generally local roads for access to residential, industrial and agricultural sites, and some (Pennfields, Northbury Avenue & New Road) are unfortunately used inappropriately as 'short cuts'.

5.34 The Crossrail project is likely to add yet more pressure to the community and the issue of roads and cars, and although there has been a long-standing commitment from the Borough Council to secure a Twyford Eastern Relief Road the scheme remains less developed than others identified in existing policy. This means that Ruscombe must be part of a solution, and the Neighbourhood Plan therefore seeks to encourage drivers to respect the environment that they are driving through by making it perfectly obvious that these roads are used by residents for walking, cycling and horse riding through the Parish. To that end, although the scale of change provided for in the Plan must be modest, there may be opportunities through a combination of small scale, infill housing schemes to secure some proportionate traffic management measures.

5.35 Such measures may include the opportunities to create new, and link existing pathways, to encourage safe walking routes as outlined in Policy RU8 above. New cycling paths will be encouraged; however, many roads are narrow (including the B3024) and such schemes should be carefully designed and located to avoid urbanising highways infrastructure into the street-scene. Careful connections with the existing road network will also be necessary to avoid creating new traffic short cuts.

My Journey Wokingham is a behaviour change campaign promoting active and sustainable travel

Cycling is a low impact exercise, which can be built into a daily routine, saves you money, improves your health and helps the local environment. A 30 minute ride a day, 3 days a week, is the best way to build your cardiovascular fitness, reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke.



Keep yourself safe when cycling:

- Follow the highway code that applies to you as a cyclist
- Be predictable, be visible and well seen at all times
- Cycle training is a good option if you're new or returning to cycling - see <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/cycling>
- Consider wearing a helmet
- Keep your bike roadworthy
- Don't forget lights are necessary when dark and bells or calling out to road users will help you be seen
- Never drink and ride, especially your own product

Signs for cyclists



Shared-use paths
A sign that tells users that the path is shared by cyclists, runners, dog walkers, pushchairs, etc.



Cycle route
For information



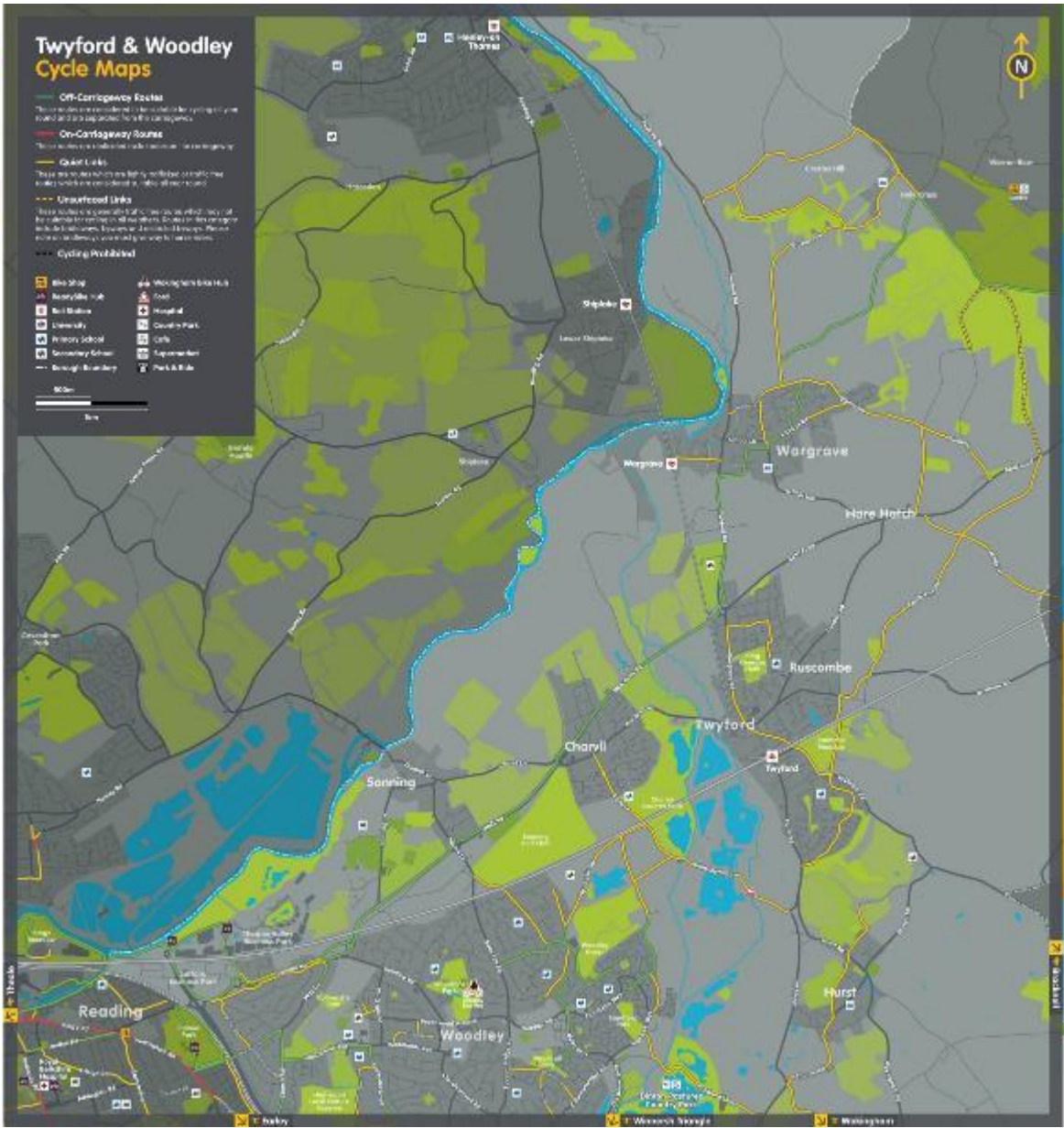
Signage at shared-use paths
A sign that tells users that the path is shared by cyclists, runners, dog walkers, pushchairs, etc.



Recommended for cyclists
This sign is recommended for cyclists



No cycling
Cycling is not permitted on the path or on the road beyond by these signs



Cycle Training
Cycle training is a good option if you're new or returning to cycling. It's a great way to learn the basics of cycling, including how to use your bike, how to ride safely, and how to maintain your bike. You can find cycle training courses in Wokingham and Twyford.

Cycle Maintenance
Regular maintenance is essential for a safe and enjoyable cycling experience. It's important to check your bike regularly, including the tires, brakes, and chain. You can find cycle maintenance courses in Wokingham and Twyford.

Useful Links
Wokingham Borough Council
My Journey Wokingham
Wokingham Leisure Centre
Wokingham Sports Centre
Wokingham Youth Centre
Wokingham Community Centre
Wokingham Sports Club
Wokingham Golf Club
Wokingham Cricket Club
Wokingham Football Club
Wokingham Rugby Club
Wokingham Hockey Club
Wokingham Netball Club
Wokingham Badminton Club
Wokingham Table Tennis Club
Wokingham Chess Club
Wokingham Darts Club
Wokingham Snooker Club
Wokingham Bowls Club
Wokingham Archery Club
Wokingham Fencing Club
Wokingham Judo Club
Wokingham Karate Club
Wokingham Taekwondo Club
Wokingham Judo Club
Wokingham Karate Club
Wokingham Taekwondo Club

Cycle Map TWYFORD & WOODLEY 2019

- Charvil
- Hurst
- Ruscombe
- Sonning
- Wargrave

WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

my journey

Plan H: WBC My Journey Cycles Map Twyford and Woodley 2019

POLICY RU11: CAR PARKING

Development proposals must provide and retain appropriate levels of parking (including people with disabilities, visitors and electric charging facilities) in accordance with adopted parking standards and having regard to the Borough's Highways Design Guide.

All new parking should be provided off-street, unless an essential justification can be demonstrated.

The use of garages for car parking will be supported where sufficient internal space has been provided on the plot to park a car and would not result in the loss of an active frontage to the street.

5.36 The policy seeks to address car parking challenges affecting many residents of the village by ensuring development proposals can demonstrate they will include adequate off-street car parking spaces within their schemes. This can include using residential frontages to create new car parking spaces providing there is no negative impact on the existing boundary treatment.

5.37 Even with car travel being the dominant form of transport in the parish there is a lack of parking facilities within the parish. In addition to this, a lack of sufficient car parking at Twyford Railway Station encourages rail users to park their cars in neighbouring roads which is sprawling into the Ruscombe parish, specifically at Ruscombe Lane and Milton Way. 68% of questionnaire respondents thought parking vehicles around the Parish was a problem. The Crossrail project is likely to add yet more pressure and demand for car parking.

5.38 MDLP Policy CC07 highlights the importance of retaining an acceptable level of off-street parking and draws attention to the Borough Design Guide SPD which provides further detail on parking. An analysis for on-street and off-street car parking space in Ruscombe demonstrates where demand outstrips supply – Pennfields suffers from problems with residents parking due to an undersupply when these homes were built; Ruscombe Lane and Milton Way is used for parking to access Twyford train station; the area around St James Church suffers from problems, mainly when events, which are frequent, occur; and the recent development on London Road for retirement apartments have relied on on-street parking being available to visitors and residents owning more than one car. While on-street parking can restrict vehicle speeds through the village, it also increases the risk of an accident when overtaking parked vehicles, particularly on routes that are used by local people to access services and facilities.

5.39 The design of new development must therefore recognise car travel being the dominant form of transport and the impact of a lack of facilities at Twyford Station on residents ensuring adequate off-street parking in schemes.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 The Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented through Wokingham Borough consideration and determination of planning applications for development in the parish.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

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

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

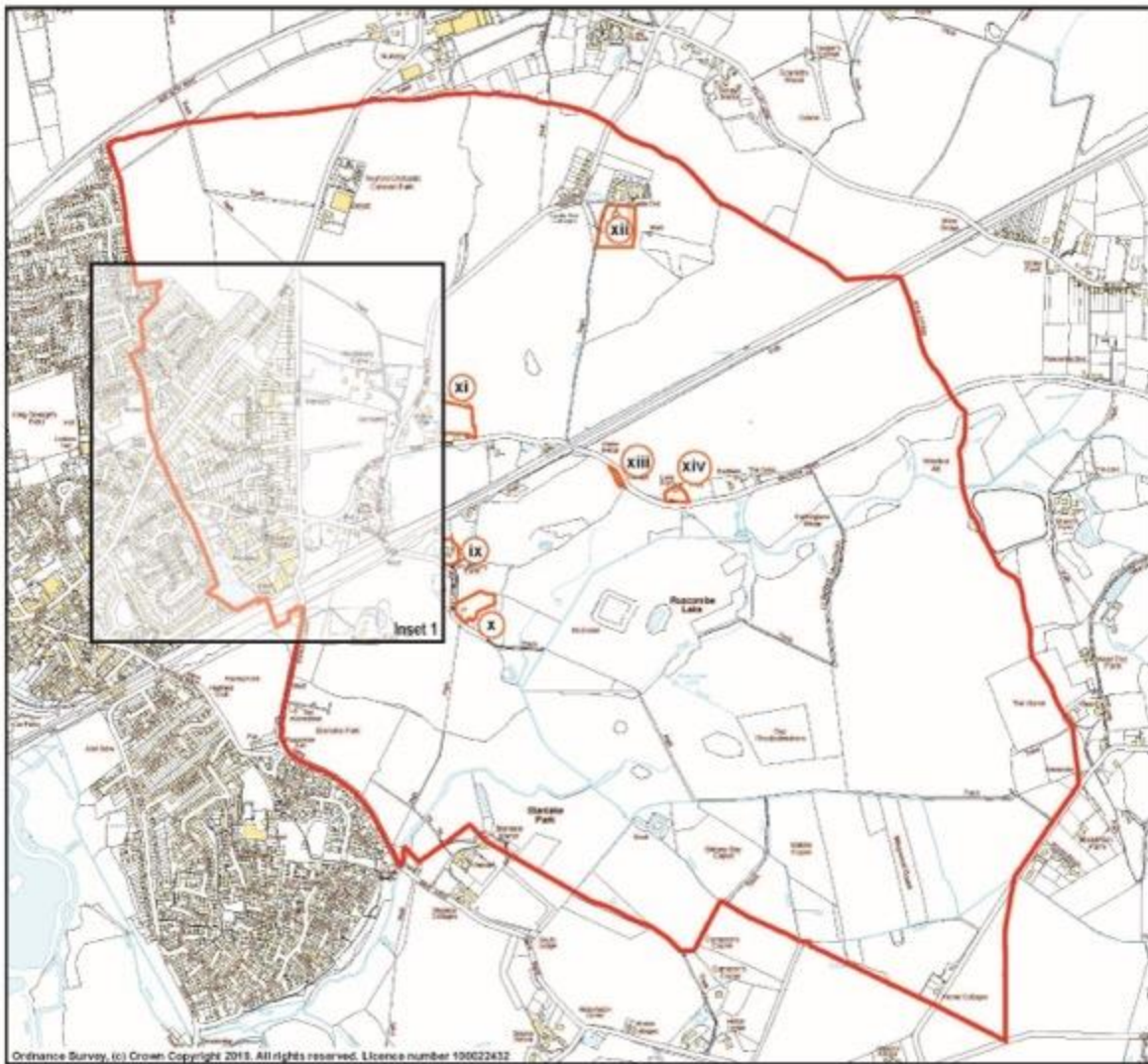
LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

6.4 Where opportunities arise through Section 106 agreements (or through the Community Infrastructure Levy) to secure financial contributions to invest in improving local infrastructure, the Parish Council will review the evidence base and community consultations for the Neighbourhood Plan to inform its view in liaising with the local planning authorities.

OTHER NON-PLANNING MATTERS

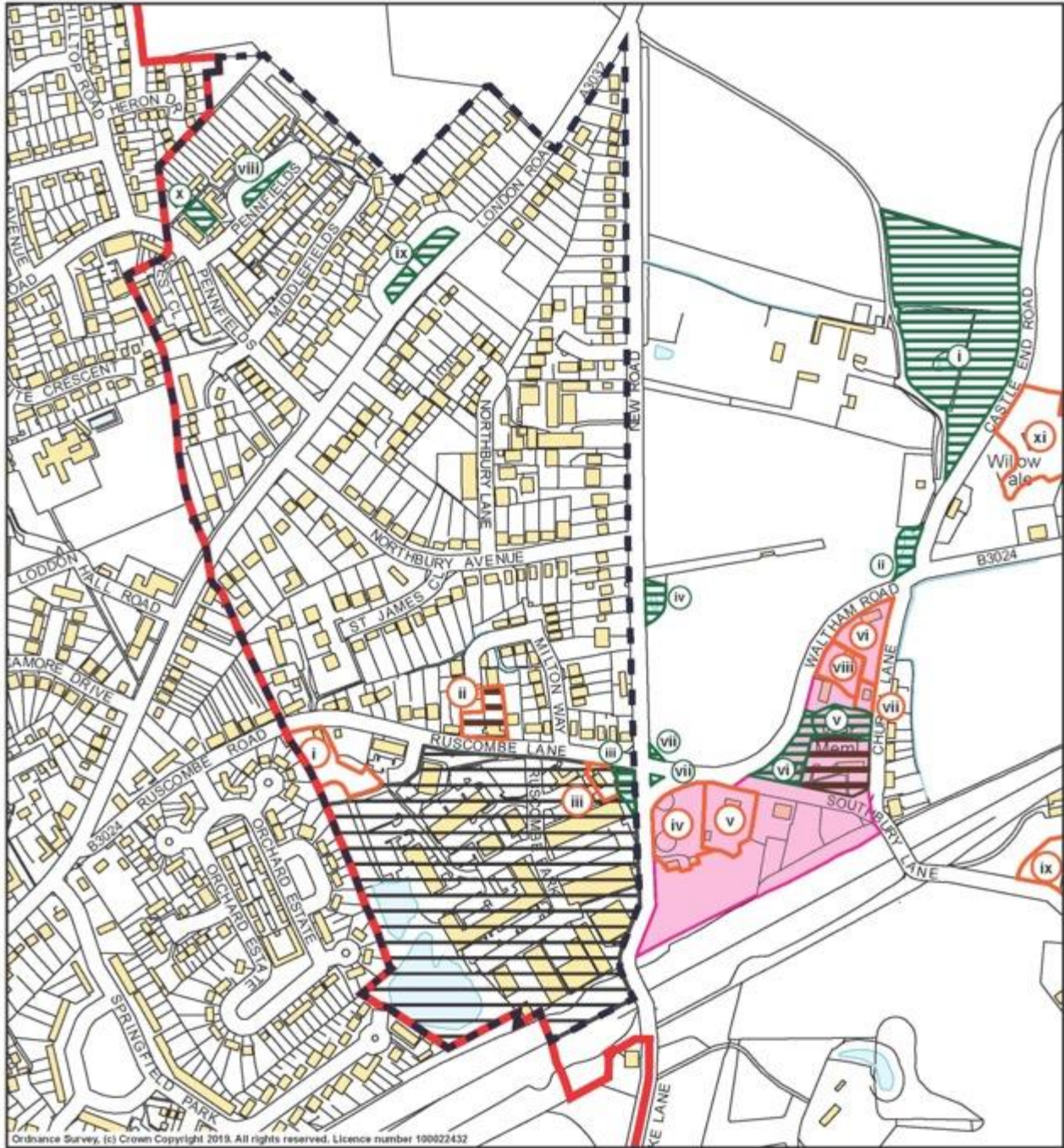
6.5 During the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, there have been many ideas for improving or addressing current problems in the parish that lie outside the scope of the land use planning system to control. The Parish Council has noted these issues and will take them forward through its day-to-day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

- Purchasing a speed indicator device to locate in and around the Parish to encourage lower driving speed;
- Parking restrictions on roads currently experiencing overflow parking from Twyford station users.



**Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan
Policies Map October 2021**

-  Parish Boundary
-  RUS Building of Traditional Local Character
 - ix. Southbury Farm, Southbury Lane;
 - x. Lake Cottage, Southbury Lane;
 - xi. Willow Vale, Waltham Road;
 - xii. Castle End Farm, Castle End Road;
 - xiii. Keeper's Cottage, Waltham Road;
 - xiv. Lake Farm, Waltham Road.



**Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan
Inset 1 October 2021**

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parish Boundary RU1 Development Limit RU3 Ruscombe Conservation Area RU5 Building of Traditional Local Character <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ruscombe Cottage, Ruscombe Lane; ii. The Royal Oak, Ruscombe Lane; iii. Kiln House, Ruscombe Lane; iv. Penn's Garden, Stanlake Lane; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v. Ruscombe Lodge, Southbury Lane; vi. Ruscombe Grange, Church Lane; vii. Holme Cottage, Ruscombe Lane; viii. Rosebrook, Waltham Road; ix. Southbury Farm, Southbury Lane; xi. Willow Vale, Waltham Road; RU8 Ruscombe Business Park RU7 Community Facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RU8 Local Green Space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ruscombe Wood and Pond, Castle End Road ii. Castle End Road Pond, Castle End Road iii. Crossroads Pond iv. New Road Pond v. Church Lane Allotments vi. Church Green, Southbury Lane vii. Crossroads Land - Stanlake Lane, New Road, Waltham Road, Ruscombe Lane viii. Pennfields Park ix. Land at London Road x. Pennfields Orchard |
|---|--|---|

**Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan
Green Infrastructure Network June 2021**





Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan Green Infrastructure Network June 2021 Inset 1

-  Parish Boundary
- Rights of Way Network**
 -  Bridleways
 -  Footpaths
 -  Scenic Walking Route
- Existing Green Infrastructure**
 -  Woodland
 -  Local Green Spaces
- Aspirations**
 -  1. Improved hedgerow management
 -  11. Proposed bin on Southbury Lane
 -  12. Proposed information boards
 -  13. Proposed Community Orchard

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – RUSCOMBE HOUSING DESIGN CODE

APPENDIX B – BUILDINGS OF LOCAL HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

APPENDIX C – LOCAL GREEN SPACE REPORT

APPENDIX D – RUSCOMBE BIODIVERSITY & GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENTS

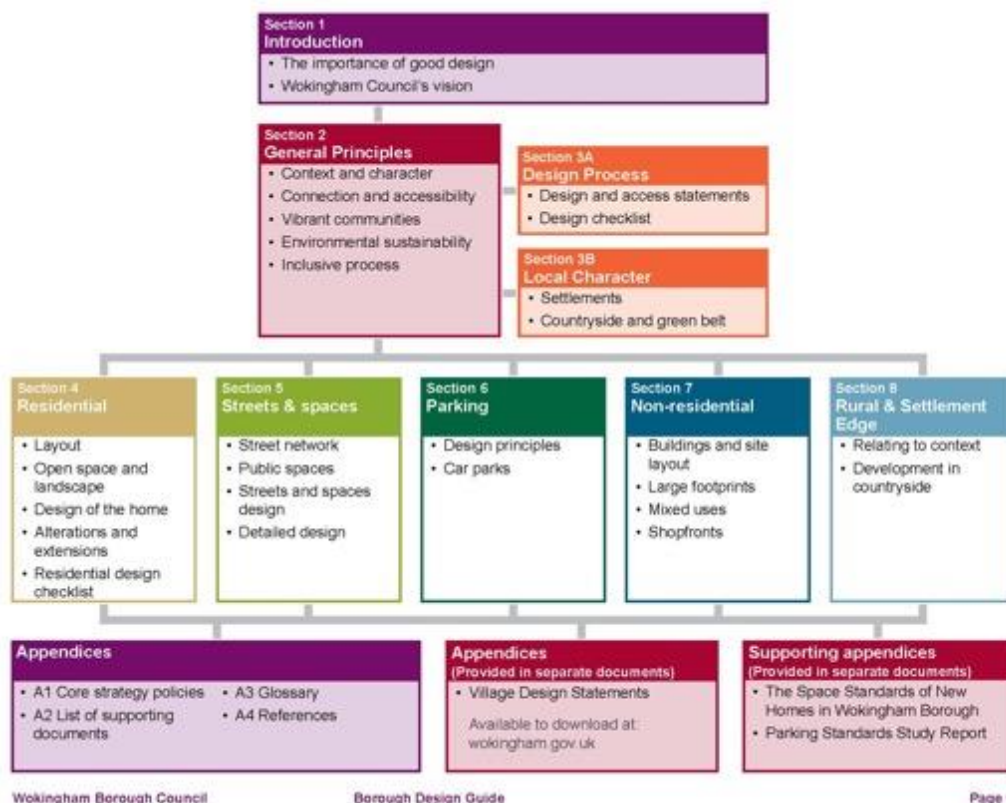
RUSCOMBE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

HOUSING DESIGN CODE

The Design Code of Policy RU2 of the Neighbourhood Plan is intended to encourage high standards of design in that part of the village that is inset from the Green Belt to ensure that its essential character is conserved. It applies to all schemes for infill housing development and plot redevelopment. Policy RU3 applies to the Conservation Area and its setting, which lies entirely within the Green Belt.

The Code will be implemented through the determination of planning applications by the District Council for the duration of the plan period. Over that period, it is possible that there will be changes in market conditions, in Government policy (especially in mitigating climate change) and in the planning system. The effectiveness and operation of the Code will be monitored by the Parish Council and future reviews of the Neighbourhood Plan may make proposals for changes if necessary.

The Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD sets out general design principles followed by specific topic areas (see below). Some of those standards are generic and apply to all development proposals in the Borough and some relate to the design process itself. The Ruscombe Housing Design Code relates those standards that can be applied specifically to different parts of the Neighbourhood Area in a way that reflects the distinct characteristics of the Area.



THE CODE

The Code establishes the principles of essential design considerations: plot design, dwelling design, boundary design, access/parking and landscaping. The character of the different parts of the existing village is sufficiently strong as a context for new proposals that it justifies reasonably prescriptive guidance in these respects. This is set out through a combination of area typologies (see Design Code Typology Plan), general principles and site-specific design briefs.

For each character area and specific sites, the Code translates the principles from the Wokingham Borough Design Guide into specific requirements. For ease of reference, the Code matches the Character Area or Site-specific code to the Design SPD standard number, e.g. R7, R11 etc.

Beyond these considerations, there remain other design matters where the Code does not need to be prescriptive, as there is variation in the existing character, e.g. building materials.

Applicants preparing development proposals should be familiar with the Design SPD and then relate the proposed development location to the correct part of the Neighbourhood Area. The Borough Council will apply the generic and process principles of the Design SPD and the specific requirements of this Code as relevant to the location and nature of the proposal. The Parish Council will use both the Design SPD and the Code to inform their judgment of proposals in making their representations to the Borough Council when it is consulted on planning applications.

As with all design guidance, the standards and requirements should be regarded as setting the design brief for a proposal, but the applicant may depart from them where it can be justified in the circumstances. Given the Green Belt status of most the Neighbourhood Area, for which full regards needs to be paid to national policy, the scope for change in character will remain very limited. There may be scope for greater design innovation in that part of the Area that is inset from the Green Belt, or on brownfield land in the Green Belt. However, in all cases, the burden will be on the applicant to demonstrate that the Design SPD and Code have been acknowledged, understood and responded to in a way that is appropriate to the location and nature of the proposal.

TYPOLOGY 1: NEW ROAD	
CODE NO.	DESIGN STANDARD
R7	<p>CREATING PLACE</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: For each street, building frontages must define the street space with a coherent building line that relates to existing building lines where they form a positive characteristic of the area.</i></p>
R7.1	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Minimum 20 m building line south of Walnut Tree Close and minimum 7 - 12m building line north of Walnut Tree Close tapering towards London Road junction.</p>
R7.2	<p>1-2m gap between buildings.</p>
R11	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.</i></p>
R11.1	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Plot widths 13 – 17m.</p>
R11.2	<p>Detached buildings of two storey or chalet bungalow fronting on to the road.</p>
R11.3	<p>Roof forms either open and cross gable ends on or double fronted with hipped.</p>
R11.4	<p>Variety in materials but brick and clay tiles most common.</p>
R12	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.</i></p>
R12.1	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Front hedge and trees and/or 1 m high timber post and rail fence with 1-2m grass verge to highway</p>
P2	<p>PARKING</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Parking in residential development should aim to accommodate car ownership in a manner that is compatible with local character and creating a high quality environment that functions well. It must also include cycle and motorcycle parking.</i></p>
P2.1	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Parking area within front garden area</p>

TYPOLOGY 1: NEW ROAD PHOTOS



TYPOLOGY 2: LONDON ROAD (NORTH)	
CODE NO.	DESIGN STANDARD
R7	CREATING PLACE <i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: For each street, building frontages must define the street space with a coherent building line that relates to existing building lines where they form a positive characteristic of the area.</i>
R7.3	<u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u> Minimum 15m (on the slip road) or 35m building line.
R7.4	3m gap between buildings.
R11	<i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.</i>
R11.5	<u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u> Plot widths of 10m.
R11.6	Semi-detached, two storey, double-fronted, buildings fronting on to the road.
R11.7	Common for ancillary garden buildings.
R11.8	Roof forms of hipped with central chimney and occasional cross hip.
R11.9	Dark orange facing brick and dark clay roof tile.
R12	<i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.</i>
R12.2	<u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u> Low front hedge and and/or brick wall and occasional trees with 1-2m grass verge to highway.
P2	PARKING <i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Parking in residential development should aim to accommodate car ownership in a manner that is compatible with local character and creating a high quality environment that functions well. It must also include cycle and motorcycle parking.</i>
P2.2	<u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u> Parking area within front garden area.

TYPOLOGY 2: LONDON ROAD (NORTH) PHOTOS



TYPOLOGY 3: LONDON ROAD (SOUTH) PHOTOS



TYPOLOGY 3: LONDON ROAD (SOUTH)

CODE NO.	DESIGN STANDARD
R7	<p>CREATING PLACE</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: For each street, building frontages must define the street space with a coherent building line that relates to existing building lines where they form a positive characteristic of the area.</i></p>
R7.5	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Minimum 8 - 12 m building line north of Russett Gardens and 20 - 25 m building line south of Russett Gardens.</p>
R7.6	<p>1-2m gap between buildings.</p>
R11	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.</i></p>
R11.10	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Plot widths of 13 – 17m.</p>
R11.11	<p>Variety of two storey, detached building forms fronting on to the road.</p>
R11.12	<p>Common for ancillary garden buildings.</p>
R11.13	<p>Variety in materials.</p>
R12	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.</i></p>
R12.3	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Front hedge and trees and/or 1m high timber post and rail fence or brick wall with 2 - 4m grass verge to highway.</p>
P2	<p>PARKING</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Parking in residential development should aim to accommodate car ownership in a manner that is compatible with local character and creating a high quality environment that functions well. It must also include cycle and motorcycle parking.</i></p>
P2.3	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Parking area within front garden area.</p>

TYPOLOGY 4: NORTHBURY AVENUE, ST. JAMES CLOSE, MILTON WAY AND RUSCOMBE LANE (FROM NEW ROAD TO THE ROYAL OAK)

CODE NO.	DESIGN STANDARD
R7	<p>CREATING PLACE</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: For each street, building frontages must define the street space with a coherent building line that relates to existing building lines where they form a positive characteristic of the area.</i></p>
R7.7	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Minimum 6 - 7m building line.</p>
R7.8	<p>2 – 3m gap between buildings.</p>
R11	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.</i></p>
R11.14	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Plot widths of 12 – 15m with very occasional 20m.</p>
R11.15	<p>Detached bungalows fronting on to the road.</p>
R11.16	<p>Roof forms of open gable side or end on.</p>
R11.17	<p>Variety in materials.</p>
R12	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.</i></p>
R12.4	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Low front hedge and trees or brick wall.</p>
P2	<p>PARKING</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Parking in residential development should aim to accommodate car ownership in a manner that is compatible with local character and creating a high quality environment that functions well. It must also include cycle and motorcycle parking.</i></p>
P2.4	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Parking area within front garden area.</p>

TYPOLOGY 4: NORTHBURY AVENUE, ST. JAMES CLOSE, MILTON WAY AND RUSCOMBE LANE (FROM NEW ROAD TO THE ROYAL OAK) PHOTOS



TYPOLOGY 5: PENNFIELDS, MIDDLEFIELDS AND CREST CLOSE

CODE NO.	DESIGN STANDARD
R7	<p>CREATING PLACE</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: For each street, building frontages must define the street space with a coherent building line that relates to existing building lines where they form a positive characteristic of the area.</i></p>
R7.9	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Minimum 6 - 7m building line.</p>
R7.10	<p>2 – 3m gap between buildings.</p>
R11	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.</i></p>
R11.18	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Very regular groups of two storey detached, semi-detached or short terraces or bungalow building forms in plots of identical specification (width, depth and orientation) for that group.</p>
R11.19	<p>Materials also specific to the group.</p>
R12	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.</i></p>
R12.5	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Much modified front garden areas with some remaining medium hedge or timber fence boundaries and the remainder removed for parking spaces.</p>
R14	<p>OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Development proposals should provide space for and include well designed hard and soft landscape to create a high quality setting for new housing that is appropriate to the character of the local area.</i></p>
R14.1	<p>Wide gaps between and within some building groups to reveal mature trees in spaces beyond (notably south of Crest Close, north of Pennfields and north of St. Michael's Court).</p>

TYPOLOGY 5: PENNFIELDS, MIDDLEFIELDS AND CREST CLOSE PHOTOS



TYPOLOGY 6: RUSCOMBE LANE PHOTOS



TYPOLOGY 6: RUSCOMBE LANE

CODE NO.	DESIGN STANDARD
R7	<p>CREATING PLACE</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: For each street, building frontages must define the street space with a coherent building line that relates to existing building lines where they form a positive characteristic of the area.</i></p>
R7.11	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Buildings lines at different lengths but the Royal Oak and Fern Villas prominent in streetscene as they are forward of the common building line.</p>
R11	<p>CREATING PLACE</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.</i></p>
R11.20	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Variety of primarily detached, two storey building forms on north side.</p>
R11.21	<p>Variety of plot widths and shapes but front hedges and trees common.</p>
R12	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.</i></p>
R12.6	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Variety of larger plan, taller, commercial buildings on south side set back behind taller hedges.</p>

TYPOLOGY 7: HIGHGROVE PLACE, RUSSETT GARDENS, WALNUT TREE CLOSE, GARRAWAY CLOSE AND ST. MICHAEL'S COURT

CODE NO.	DESIGN STANDARD
R7	<p>CREATING PLACE</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: For each street, building frontages must define the street space with a coherent building line that relates to existing building lines where they form a positive characteristic of the area.</i></p>
R7.12	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Minimum 6 - 7m building line.</p>
R7.13	<p>2 – 3m gap between buildings.</p>
R11	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.</i></p>
R11.22	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Cul-de-sac of a variety of layout forms; inward looking with high surveillance but no permeability to wider area.</p>
R11.23	<p>Mix of detached and semi-detached, two storey buildings.</p>
R11.24	<p>Variety in plot sizes and shapes though regular building orientation.</p>
R11.25	<p>Very small rear gardens.</p>
R11.26	<p>Common palate of building materials distinct to each location.</p>
R12	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.</i></p>
R12.7	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Very small or no front gardens primarily used for off-street parking.</p>
R14	<p>OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Development proposals should provide space for and include well designed hard and soft landscape to create a high quality setting for new housing that is appropriate to the character of the local area.</i></p>
R14.2	<p>Little public realm landscaping.</p>

TYPOLOGY 7: HIGHGROVE PLACE, RUSSETT GARDENS, WALNUT TREE CLOSE, GARRAWAY CLOSE AND ST. MICHAEL'S COURT PHOTOS



TYPOLOGY 8: THE CONSERVATION AREA & CHURCH LANE

CODE NO.	DESIGN STANDARD
R7	<p>CREATING PLACE</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: For each street, building frontages must define the street space with a coherent building line that relates to existing building lines where they form a positive characteristic of the area.</i></p>
R7.14	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Church Lane plots generally regular rectangular of a minimum 10m width with clear gaps between buildings, often with mature landscaping forming the boundary.</p>
R11	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.</i></p>
R11.27	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Within Conservation Area, only large, two story detached buildings of rural vernacular form set in large plots of a variety of orientations and building lines.</p>
R11.28	<p>Roof forms have a combination of cross, open gabling with tall chimneys and very occasional half hips and full dormers.</p>
R11.29	<p>Ancillary buildings and structures clearly subordinate to main house to the side or rear with matching materials and building/roof forms either attached or in close proximity to that building.</p>
R11.30	<p>Predominantly soft orange/red bricks building materials and plain clay tile roofing materials.</p>
R11.31	<p>Church Lane buildings a mix of smaller, two-storey detached and semi-detached houses with commonly hipped roofs and small chimneys and occasional cross, open gabling.</p>
R11.32	<p>Church Lane either soft orange/red bricks or white render building materials and either plain clay tile or Welsh slate roofing materials.</p>
R12	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.</i></p>
R12.8	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Plots contained significant mature landscape – trees and hedging - to separate buildings and on plot frontages.</p>
R12.9	<p>Church Lane front boundaries commonly with either low brick walls or post and rail timber fencing and shrubbery or hedging.</p>
R14	<p>OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE</p>

Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Development proposals should provide space for and include well designed hard and soft landscape to create a high quality setting for new housing that is appropriate to the character of the local area.

R14.3 Uninterrupted view of St James the Great Church from remaining village green formed by Waltham Road, Southbury Lane and Church Lane.

TYPOLOGY 8: THE CONSERVATION AREA & CHURCH LANE PHOTOS



Uninterrupted View of the Church from the Church Green



SITE SPECIFIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES SITE 1 (OFF NEW ROAD):

CODE NO.	DESIGN STANDARD
R11	<i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.</i>
R11.33	Four plots of 13m width fronting onto New Road with building forms as per New Road code.
R11.34	Plot arrangement and depths as per Walnut Tree Close but narrower widths of 5 – 6m for a mix of two storey, 2/3 bed detached and semi-detached houses.
R14	OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE <i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Development proposals should provide space for and include well designed hard and soft landscape to create a high quality setting for new housing that is appropriate to the character of the local area.</i>
R14.4	Retain mature cluster of trees on Northbury Lane boundary and mature trees on site 1, retain and bolster northern boundary hedging and create new hedging to southern boundary.

SITE SPECIFIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES SITE 2 (OFF NORTHBURY LANE):

CODE NO.	DESIGN STANDARD
R11	<i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: New housing should be designed to create street scenes with a coherent character, that relates well to, or enhances, existing street scenes (in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion, height, materials and colour), particularly in areas where built form contributes significantly to the local character.</i>
R11.35	Five plots of 12m width preferably backing on to Northbury Lane with bungalows as per Northbury Avenue code retaining the existing hedge for the rear boundaries with tapered rear garden widths to allow for cul-de-sac on the front of the site.
R11.36	Cul-de-sac access at the northern end of the site.
R11.37	Plot arrangement and depths as per Walnut Tree Close with minimum separation distances to maintain privacy as set out in the adopted Wokingham Borough Design Guide but narrower widths of 5 – 6m for a mix of one and two storey, 2/3 bed detached and semi-detached houses. Any property adjoining the southern boundary should be bungalows.
R14	OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE <i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Development proposals should provide space for and include well designed hard and soft landscape to create a high quality setting for new housing that is appropriate to the character of the local area.</i>

R14.4 Retain hedging on northern and southern boundaries.

Trees to be retained on the Southern boundary of Site 1



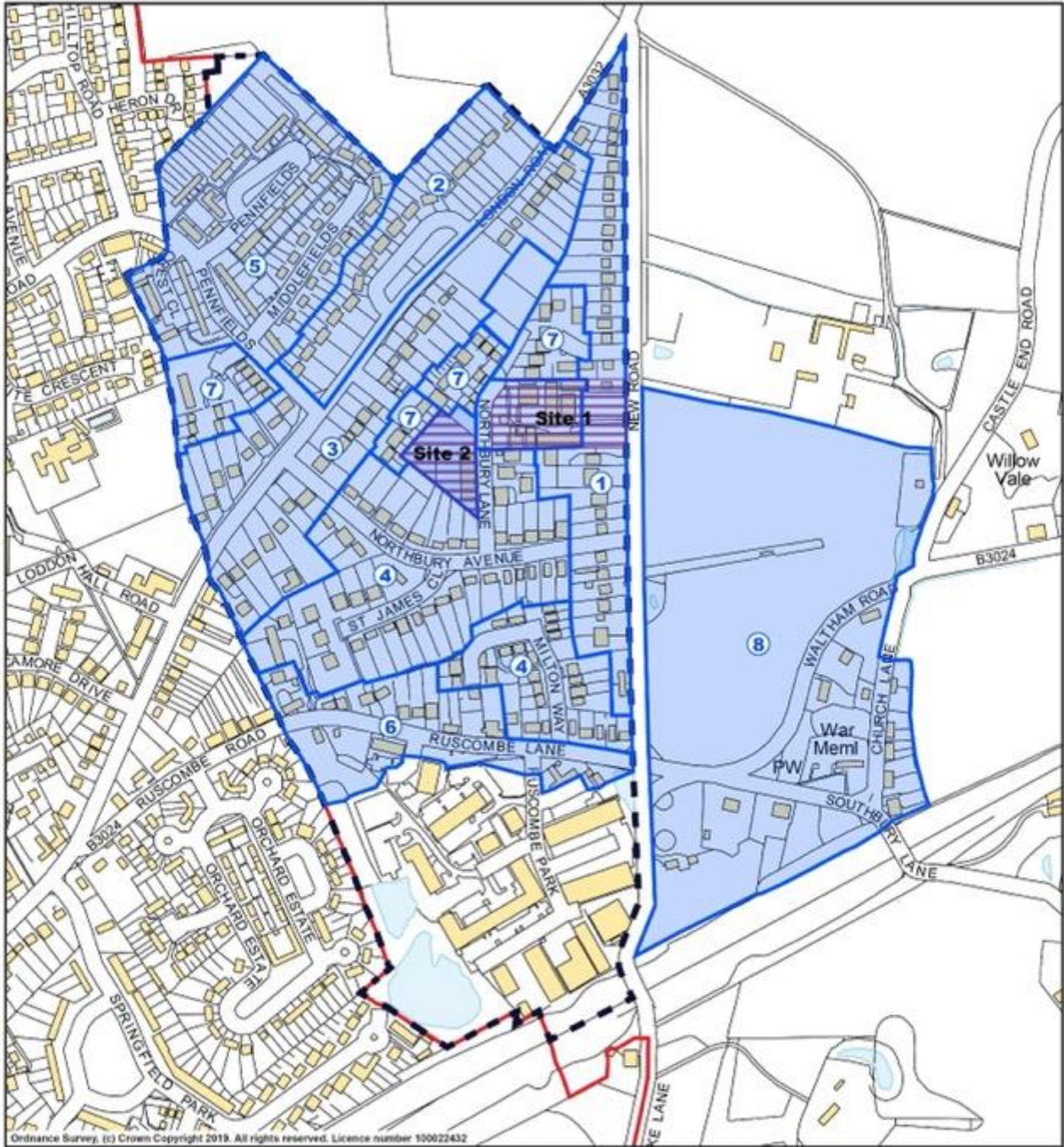
Trees to be retained on the Northern boundary of Site 2



GENERAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

CODE NO.	DESIGN STANDARD
G1	<p>CONTEXT AND CHARACTER</p> <p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Development must respond positively to its site and local context, including;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topography and orientation of the site; • Existing natural and landscape features of value, including the countryside, the Green Belt, mature trees, hedges and field patterns, ponds, rivers and wetlands etc; • Heritage assets and their settings, for instance archaeological features, listed buildings, historic parks and gardens and conservation areas; • The local settlement pattern and network of routes; and • Neighbouring properties.
G1.1	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Any upper-floor window located in a wall forming a side elevation of the building and facing a boundary with a neighbouring building should be obscure-glazed and non-opening unless the window is more than 1.7m above the floor of the room in which the window is installed.</p>
G1.2	<p>Front and rear garden side boundaries should be of timber fencing and/or hedging.</p>
G2	<p><i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Development must create a sense of place that responds positively to the character of the local area in terms of urban design, architecture, landscape and public realm qualities.</i></p>
G2.1	<p><u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u></p> <p>Refuse storage for 3 x wheelie bins should be provided to the side or rear of the building only.</p>
G2.2	<p>Chalet bungalow building forms should have a dormer roof with either full or half dormer windows (with only one window per dormer) that shall be subordinate in scale to the roof form and to the ground floor windows.</p>
G2.3	<p>Frontages should comprise turfed or ornamental gardens and any hard surface must either be made of porous materials, or provision made to direct run-off water from the hard surface to a permeable or porous area or surface within the plot.</p>
G2.4	<p>Garage buildings may be integral to the building form or detached but must be subordinate in scale, located behind the main building line and be of the same built and roof form and materials as the main building.</p>
G2.5	<p>The redevelopment or subdivision of a plot shall not result in a plot frontage width that is less than the minimum prescribed in the Area code nor in a building that does not front on to a road.</p>

G3	CONNECTION AND ACCESSIBILITY <i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Development proposals should where possible create, or add to, a connected network for movement that is easy to navigate, safe and comfortable to use, for all modes of transport. In particular, design should promote walking and cycling, and public transport access.</i>
G3.1	<u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u> Each home shall have two secure cycle spaces/storage unit provided within the plot at the front or to the side of the dwelling.
G3.2	New roads shall incorporate a new footway of 2m width on at least one side of the road and to allow for the continuation of any existing footpath or cycle way.
G8	ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY <i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: Development proposals should minimise their environmental impact and, where mitigation is necessary, this should be designed into proposals as a positive feature, wherever possible.</i>
G8.1	<u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u> The height of any external chimney, flue, soil or vent pipe, or other structure for renewable energy generation, should not exceed the highest part of the roof of the building by more than 1 metre.
G9	<i>Wokingham Borough Design Guide: The layout and design of development proposals should contribute towards climate change mitigation, in particular by minimising energy and water consumption.</i>
G9.1	<u>Ruscombe Housing Design Code Requirements:</u> All new trees (except Fruit trees) shall be of a species and shall be properly planted and maintained to reach a minimum of 15m height within 25 years.
G9.2	In determining if a development will lead to the loss of any mature trees or hedges, the presence of any mature trees or hedges that have been removed within five years prior to the application will be taken into account.
G9.3	Where the loss of any existing mature trees or hedges is unavoidable then the landscape scheme shall provide for a like for like replacement within the plot.
G9.4	Each home shall have at least one electric vehicle charging point.



**Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan
Design Code Typology Submission Plan June 2021**

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Parish Boundary |  Design Code Typology |
|  RU1 Development Limit | 1. New Road |
|  Site Specific Design Principles | 2. London Road (South) |
| | 3. London Road (North) |
| | 4. Northbury Avenue, St. James, Milton Way and Ruscombe Lane (from New Road to the Royal Oak) |
| | 5. Pennfields, Middlefields and Crest Close |
| | 6. Ruscombe Lane |
| | 7. Highgrove Place, Russett Gardens, Walnut Tree Close, Garraway Close and St. Michael's Court |
| | 8. The Conservation Area and Church Lane |
| | Site 1. Off New Road |
| | Site 2. Off Northbury Lane |

APPENDIX B – BUILDINGS OF LOCAL HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

This list identifies candidate buildings worthy of local listing by virtue of their historical / architectural character (including position in the street scene). The list does not include buildings which have statutory listing.

Criteria taken from Wokingham Borough Councils Buildings of Traditional Local Character Policy.

Key	Criterion	Description
A	Age	The age of a building may be an important criterion and the age range can be adjusted to take into account distinctive local characteristics
R	Rarity	Appropriate for all buildings, as judged against local characteristics
AV	Aesthetic Value	The intrinsic design value of a building relating to local styles, materials or any other distinctive local characteristics
GV	Group Value	Groupings of buildings with a clear visual, design or historic relationship
EV	Evidential Value	The significance of a local building of any kind may be enhanced by a significant contemporary or historic written record
HA	Historic Association	The significance of a local building of any kind may be enhanced by a significant historical association of local or national note, including links to important local figures
AI	Archaeological Interest	This may be an appropriate reason to designate a locally significant building on the grounds of archaeological interest if the evidence base is sufficiently compelling and if a distinct area can be identified
DI	Designed Landscapes	Relating to the interest attached to locally important designed landscapes, parks and gardens
LS	Landmark Status	A building with strong communal or historical associations, or because it has especially striking aesthetic value, may be singled out as a landmark within the local scene
SCV	Social and Communal Value	Relating to places perceived as a source of local identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence; often residing in intangible aspects of heritage contributing to the "collective memory" of a place

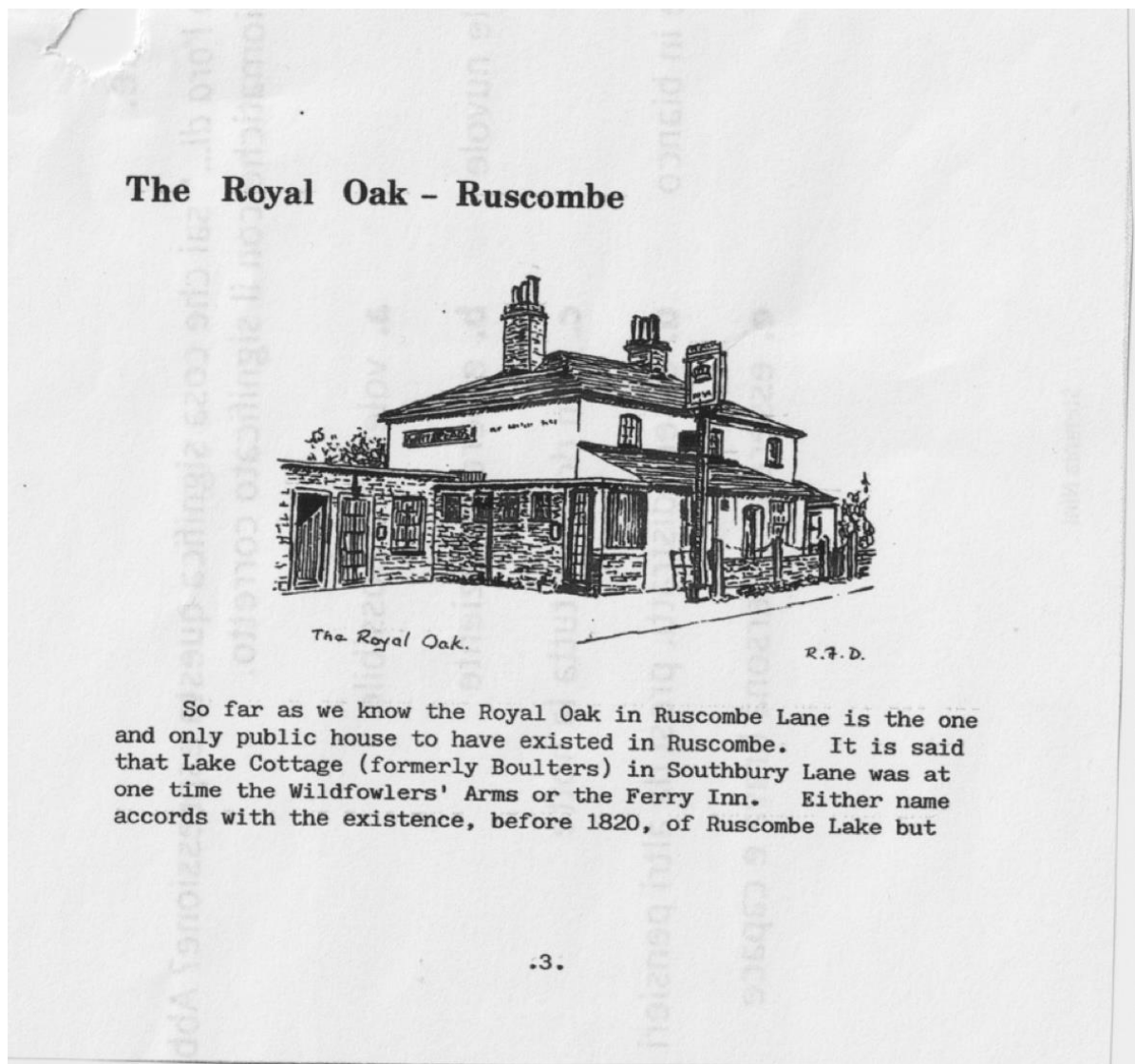
- i. Ruscombe Cottage, Ruscombe Lane: previously named Elm Cottage, dates from around 1760, this double fronted timber and brick built detached house with hipped roof and segmented arched windows is set just back from the road and is just inside the boundary of Ruscombe using traditional red bricks and plain clay tiles. This property was once owned by Gilbert Welch Barker (1906 – 66) an art historian and novelist, young brother of Miss Effie Barker (1912 – 97) Master or joint Master of the Garth Hunt for thirty years, the Barkers were a notable local family and once owned Stanlake House and Park. Source: <https://landedfamilies.blogspot.com/2019/08/388-barker-of-stanlake-park.html>).



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, AV, HA, & SCV.

- ii. The Royal Oak, Ruscombe Lane: dates from around 1840. This double fronted, whitewashed, detached property with a hipped roof and double chimneys is a public house and set very close to the road. This property is listed as a Public House as far back as 1881 and remains as a Public House to the current day. This property was owned by the Johnson family, a notable local family. See extracts from the Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society Journals below.

Its (Ruscombe's) only public house, the Royal Oak, was built around 1840 and is one of only a few free houses in Berkshire. (Page 132 Twyford and Ruscombe through the Ages (2017) by Audrey Curtis)



Source: 1985 Issue 18 Journal

we have no proof of this local belief. It is possibly true because the property was sold in 1711 to Thomas Darby, Victualler of Twyford - but not, be it noted, a Licensed Victualler.

The Royal Oak - at one time known as the Top Oak to distinguish it from its now demolished namesake in London Road, Twyford and nicknamed the Bottom Oak - is one of three public houses in Berkshire not owned by a brewery. In fact, it has been in the possession of the Johnsons of Ruscombe for nearly 150 years. In the 1820s and 1830s Henry Johnson was recorded in Directories as the landlord of the Bottom Oak, and in 1847 Kelly's Directory showed John Johnson as the landlord of the Top Oak. John was the younger brother of Henry on whose behalf it is supposed that he was acting, Henry then being 66.

The Top Oak is not shown on the Ruscombe Tithe Map of 1830 nor on the Enclosure Map of 1840 and one can suppose that it was built between 1840 and 1847, Henry having purchased an acre of land for that purpose. We assume that Henry named his house the Royal Oak for sentimental reasons after the house kept in Twyford. Henry died in 1849 and, having no heir, left the property to his nephew, John's son, who was also named Henry. This Henry had been born at Medmenham in 1809 and later married Prudence Leonard, a lady from Abingdon. He died in 1862 at the age of 53 and his widow married George Major who then became the next landlord of the Oak and remained as such until his wife's death in 1876. The new owner was George Walter Johnson, Henry's nephew, born in 1855. His father was another George and his mother Harriet Leonard. George Walter was 21 and was to become the longest serving landlord keeping the Royal Oak for over 33 years. He was a member of Ruscombe Parish Council (1894-1911) and an Overseer of the Poor from 1900 until his death in 1911. Smith's Directory of Reading carried an advertisement from 1900 to 1906 reading:

'Johnson G W, Royal Oak. Noted for first class Ales, Beers, Wines, Spirits, Tobacco and Cigars'.

In common with most inns and public houses of this period the Royal Oak had its own stables. These were situated on the site of the present car park. In 1898, George Walter altered the frontage of the building when he erected the lean-to extension. George Walter was the last Johnson to hold the licence of the Royal Oak because after his death in 1911 the property came to his eldest son, Harry Walter, a carpenter by trade who promptly let it on a seven year lease to Thomas Wethered the Marlow brewer. The Royal Oak had been a free

house and from the 'Spirit Book' we learn that from 1882 to 1885 all the spirits were supplied by A Ive and Co of Henley-on-Thames. From 1885 to 1907 there were several suppliers - Ive, Wethered, Blackiston and Son, Wellman, and Butler and Sons, the last three coming from Reading. After 1907 practically all the spirits came from Wethered.

In 1913, A Ball was the licensee and presumably Wethered's first landlord. He stayed about two years before making way in 1915 for Henry Portsmouth who had been in the service of the Rev Gresley Barker, Vicar of Sherfield-on-Loddon and came to Twyford when the Vicar came into possession of Stanlake Park.

After the expiry, in 1919, of the lease held by Wethered's the house was let to James Euston, a former gardener from Stanlake Park. He held the lease for 14 years. In 1933, Wethered's once more took over the lease. The property was held in trust for members of the Johnson family, the trustees appointed by Harry Johnson being Frank Burton, a Twyford wheelwright, and Sidney Briscoe, a Wargrave estate agent. Frank Burton, whose wheelwright's shop was behind the Bottom Oak, was the brother of Bill Burton, Twyford's village blacksmith who worked the forge next to St Mary's Church. Their sister, Emily Searle, was the landlady at the Bottom Oak for 27 years.

The first Wethered landlord under the 1933 lease was J Burton succeeded in 1938 by Thomas Yates who kept the house during the war years when trade was undoubtedly boosted by the American servicemen stationed in Stanlake Park. Thomas Yates died in 1943 and the licence was transferred to his wife who continued until 1950. In that year L Haines became the licensee but the former landlady remained for she became Mrs Haines. After their departure in 1956 R Pauffley took over but he died suddenly the following year and the Royal Oak passed to another long-stay landlord, E W Tubey. During his stay alterations were made to the public house in 1958 and 1965. In 1979, after 20 years Bill Tubey and his wife, Pat, retired. They were succeeded by L A Hughes, by J Taylor in 1983, and by the present keepers, John and Elaine Cram, in 1985.

Sheila & John Rudd

Sources:

- Mr Alan Johnson, Ruscombe.
- Mr G H Palmer, Marlow Brewery.
- Smith's and Kelly's Directories.
- Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society.



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, AV, HA, LS & SCV.

- iii. Kiln House, Ruscombe Lane: This double fronted, cherry red brick house built in 1893 stands near the entrance to Ruscombe Business Park which is on the site of a former brickyard and this house was built with the bricks from the brickyard and has segmental arch windows. "*Ruscombe brickyard, known as Prior's pit or Cotterell's pit was worked from the 1880's onwards and produced numerous palaeoliths.*" Source: https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=MWK1249&resourceID=1028

The house was built for the brickyard manager, Mr Powell. This property is written about in *Twyford and Ruscombe through the Ages* (2017) by Audrey Curtis (see extract below).



The brickworks

A thriving industry grew up in 1881 when Mr Lowden Cotterell of Castle End Farm, Ruscombe, decided to make one of the paddocks that he rented from Squire Garth of Haines Hill into a brickyard.

This was on land behind 4 Waltham Road. Work commenced, but soon the clay began to run out on this site and the brickyard was moved to the corner of Ruscombe crossroads, where he built Kiln House for the manager. For 50 years the brickyard was a thriving concern and provided work for many local people, producing cherry red bricks that were used for the building of many local houses at the turn of the century, including Ruscombe House. In addition to the hand-made bricks, wire-cuts, special moulded bricks, machine-made tiles and pipes for land drainage were produced. Gravel was dug and sold from pits adjoining the yard behind Orchard Estate. The clay was dug out in the winter and left to weather until the summer, when



Kiln House

brickmaking started. The yard housed two round and four square kilns 18 feet high, a boiler house, a chimney and rows of weathering boards. The bricks were burnt in open kilns and the tiles in the closed round kilns.



Brickyard workers

The yard closed at the beginning of the Second World War and was taken over by the Government as a coal depot for the whole of the south of England. Immediately after the war, children used it as a playground until it was bought by the Tilbury Construction Company in 1945. The Ruscombe Business Park now stands on the site of the old brickworks.

- iv. Penn's Garden, Stanlake Lane: This house is named after William Penn, (founder of Pennsylvania, who lived in Ruscombe Manor House from 1710 to 1718, Ruscombe Manor House was demolished in 1830). This large, detached house is set in the middle of a large plot in the Greenbelt and within Ruscombe Conservation area, which is situated in one corner of a crossroads and borders Stanlake Lane and Waltham Road. Forms part of the *“tightly knit cottages which cluster around the church (and) are built in the traditional soft orange/red bricks and plain clay tiles.”* Ruscombe Conservation Area leaflet, 1994



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: R, AV, HA, LS & SCV.

- v. Ruscombe Lodge, Southbury Lane; Ruscombe & Twyford's former vicarage, built in 1868. This is a large, detached house set in the Ruscombe Conservation Area and Greenbelt. The house features segmented arch windows and pointed arch porchway to the front door. Forms part of the "tightly knit cottages which cluster around the church (and) are built in the traditional soft orange/red bricks and plain clay tiles." Ruscombe Conservation Area leaflet, 1994. See also extract from the Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society Journals below.

THE REV. SYDNEY MACARTNEY, M. A.

In the list of vicars in Ruscombe Church - dating back hundreds of years - there is the name of Sydney P Macartney, a missionary who came back to England after completing his work abroad. He lived in Ruscombe for many more years than the six during which he was the incumbent.

Appointed Vicar in 1907 he lived in the old vicarage (near the Ruscombe cross-roads) which had been built in 1868 on two acres given by Squire Garth, although plans for its erection originated four years earlier. As he was nearing retirement age he bought a piece of derelict land lying between Ruscombe Church and the junction of Waltham Road with Castle End Road. People who lived around here at the time say there was a pond with ducks on it at the end of that land - but that's not the pond that is hidden there today! On this land Macartney had three houses built; Rostrevor (now Ruscombe Grange), Rosebrook, and the gardener's cottage, now Holme Cottage. [The Vicar was born in Rostrevor, Co. Down, and his father's home was in Rosebrook, Co. Armagh]. The houses were designed by the Vicar's brother, Mervyn (later Sir Mervyn) who was architect to the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's Cathedral. The builder was my grandfather, Joseph R. Wigmore, whose firm is still building around the area, and the bricklayer was Isaac Hunt whose family is still in the neighbourhood.

Upon retiring from the living in 1913 at the age of 70, Macartney moved into Rostrevor where he and his son

19

Source: 1988 Issue 23 Journal



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, AV, HA, LS & SCV.

- vi. Ruscombe Grange, Church Lane: originally named Rostrevor, built for the Rev. Sidney Macartney the Vicar of Ruscombe, in 1905. Rostrevor was designed by Rev. Macartneys brother, Sir Meryn Macartney, Principal Architect for St Pauls Cathedral. Ruscombe Grange has row lock window arches is set in the long-established Conservation area of the village around the medieval church of St James the Great and is in the Greenbelt. Forms part of the "tightly knit cottages which cluster around the church (and) are built in the traditional soft orange/red bricks and plain clay tiles." Ruscombe Conservation Area leaflet, 1994. See also extract from the Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society Journals below.

Mervyn lived for many years, his niece Dora Gilman acting as housekeeper. His brother-in-law George A. Gilman, with his daughter, moved into Rosebrook. George was an exquisite carver and between them the two families did much good work for Ruscombe. The gardener's cottage was occupied by the late Mr. Austin, whose daughter still lives in Twyford.

St. James' Day - 25 July - was always celebrated by Macartney as a feast day, usually with a party on the vicarage lawn (where the present vicarage stands).

He was apparently a popular Vicar, if such a description could properly be applied to a man of the cloth at that time. He was fond of travel, especially to Switzerland, and often came back with ideas for buildings, as witness the chimneys on Ruscombe Grange and Rosebrook. He made many gifts to Ruscombe Church, including a cross which he brought back from Italy. A priestly man, he was often to be seen around the village dressed in his cassock carrying out such duties as visiting the sick. On these excursions he would invariably be accompanied by his faithful cross-bearer, Foley, who lived in the Old School House in Ruscombe Road. Sunday School was held in the old Ruscombe school - always early in the morning, before 11 o'clock Matins - and was presided over by Miss Pearce (of Ruscombe Cottage) and Miss Gilman.

He was also known as an artist and many of his paintings may be seen today. The Church Magazine of 1909 reported the reconstruction of the organ; the two figures of angels on it being painted by the Vicar. Among his other works are two angels painted on window splays in the chancel and the crucifixion on the tympanum at the east end of the nave. Incidentally, it was George Gilman who, in 1912, did the carving on the oak door to the vestry.

There are still people living here (including me) who remember this priestly figure walking around the village during the sixteen years of his retirement. His tombstone in Ruscombe Churchyard reads:-

SYDNEY PARKYNS MACARTNEY
Born 16 September 1843
Died 3 March 1929
sometime Rector of Ruscombe
and his son
MERVYN EDWARD MACARTNEY
Born 1 November 1883
Died 18 January 1957

Sybil Stephenson

Source: 1988 Issue 23 Journal

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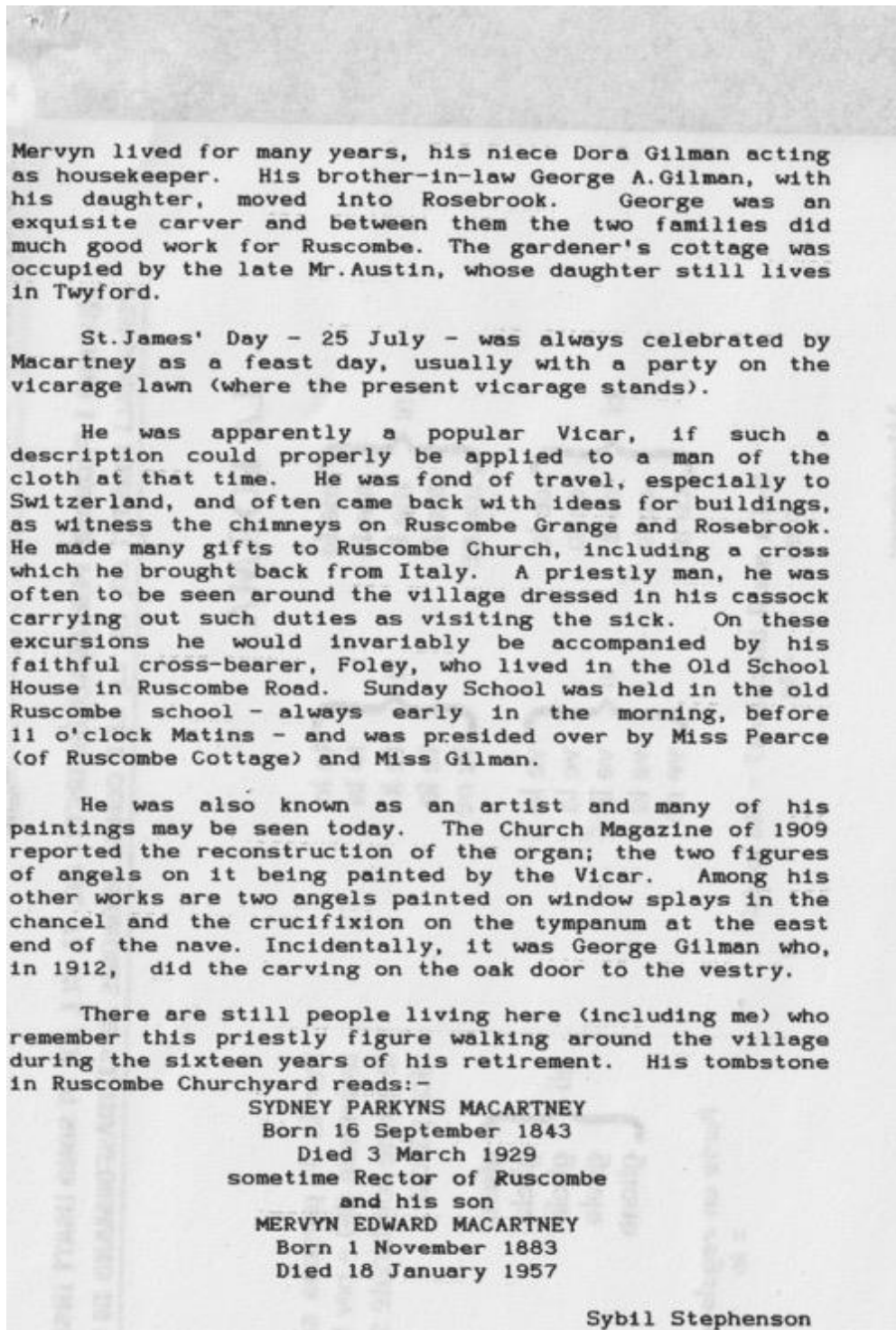
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Source: 1988 Issue 23 Journal



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, AV, HA, LS & SCV.

- vii. Holme Cottage, Ruscombe Lane: This property originally built for Rev. Macartney's gardener in 1905. This house features row lock arch windows and has been extended many times and is now a large detached house with double open gabled roof and is set close to the road in the Ruscombe Conservation area and Greenbelt. Forms part of the "*tightly knit cottages which cluster around the church (and) are built in the traditional soft orange/red bricks and plain clay tiles.*" Ruscombe Conservation Area leaflet, 1994. See also extract from the Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society Journals below.



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Source: 1988 Issue 23 Journal



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, AV, HA, LS & SCV.

- viii. Rosebrook, Waltham Road: built in 1910 for Rev. Macartney's brother-in-law. This large house with row lock arch windows is set back from the road and is in the Ruscombe Conservation area and Greenbelt. Forms part of the *"tightly knit cottages which cluster around the church (and) are built in the traditional soft orange/red bricks and plain clay tiles."* Ruscombe Conservation Area leaflet, 1994. See also extract from the Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society Journals below.

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Source: 1988 Issue 23 Journal



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, AV, HA, LS & SCV.

- ix. Southbury Farm, Southbury Lane. This double fronted house with segmented arch windows and double open gabled roof is set back from the road, in the Greenbelt. *"The estate of Ruscombe had belonged to the cathedral of old Sarum in 1091, in 1535 the estate was divided into Ruscombe Northbury and Ruscombe Southbury. Northbury farmhouse just north of the conservation area, has been the former manor house and is of sixteenth century origin. There had also been a manor house at Southbury, but this was demolished in the nineteenth century. The name Southbury has been retained at Southbury Farm."* Ruscombe Conservation Area leaflet, 1994.



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, AV, LS & SCV.

- x. Lake Cottage, Southbury Lane: This property was built in 1496, it was originally a coaching inn where horses were changed and rested, and travellers to London took a ferry across the lake (hence the house name) to the Ferrymans Cottage next door. This house is in the Greenbelt.

The 1987 survey by the East Berkshire Archaeological Society discovered settlements in the ground to the east of Twyford and prior to that in 1960, Roman coins had been found by Mr Oxlade in the garden of his home at Lake Cottage, Southbury Lane in Ruscombe. (Page 3 Twyford and Ruscombe through the Ages (2017) by Audrey Curtis)



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, AV, LS & SCV.

- xi. Willow Vale, Castle End Road: This house was once a farmhouse and in 1856 it became a dame school. This property features a thatched turret and hipped roof to the main house. Willow Vale is located in the Greenbelt.



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, AV, HA, LS & SCV.

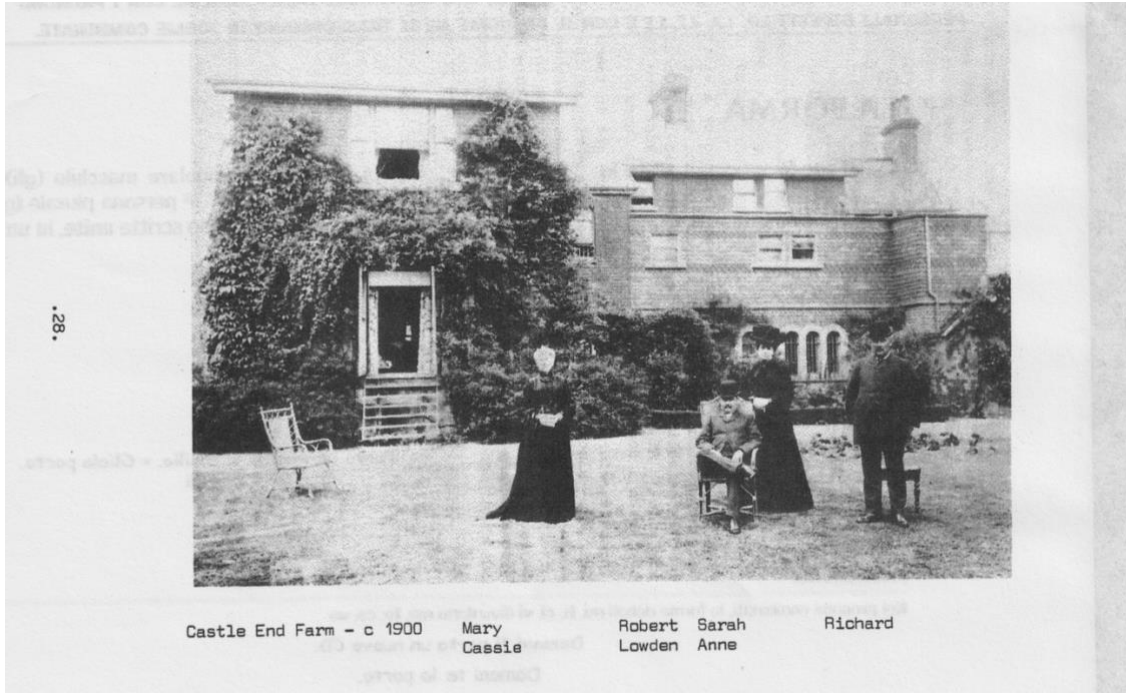
xii. Castle End Farm, Castle End Road.

Castle End Farm is now separated into business and residential premises, this is in the green belt and is mentioned in planning as being refused the erection of a mast, refused because of the greenbelt. Located near an area of high archaeological potential. See also extract from the Twyford and Ruscombe Local History Society Journals below. Mr Louden Cottrell who used town and run the brickworks lived here. Source:

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/adlib/Details/collect/12288>



Source: 1983 Issue 13 Journal



Source: 1983 Issue 14 Journal



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, EV, AI, LS & SCV.

- xiii. Keeper's Cottage, Waltham Road: This double fronted, open gabled roof property was formerly home to the gamekeeper on the Haines Hill estate and was built in the 16th century. It is located in the Greenbelt.



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, AV, HA, LS & SCV.

xiv. Lake Farm, Waltham Road: This timber framed with brick infilled property with a hipped roof was built mid-16th Century. This property is located in the Greenbelt and was originally owned by farmworkers who harvested thatching reeds from the nearby lake.

"Lake Farm is a lovely period house dating from the mid-1600s. Usefully unlisted, the property was originally occupied by farmworkers who harvested thatching reeds on a nearby lake."

Source: https://assets.savills.com/properties/GBHERSHES180017/HES180017_HES18003245.PDF



Criteria applicable and evidenced above: A, R, AV, HA, LS & SCV.

APPENDIX C – LOCAL GREEN SPACE REPORT

The ten spaces included in this appendix have been assessed using the following four tests

TEST 1. DOES THE SITE ALREADY HAVE PLANNING PERMISSION, OR HAS IT BEEN ALLOCATED FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE SWDP?

- The first stage in the assessment will be to review the planning history of each site to ensure that it is not subject to an extant planning permission and that it has not been allocated for development under the Wokingham Local Plan (WLP).
- The Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land already has planning permission for development, or where it has been allocated for development under the WLP.
- An exception to this may be where it can be demonstrated that the Local Green Space designation would be compatible with the planning permission / WLP allocation, or where the planning permission / WLP allocation is no longer capable of being implemented.

TEST 2. IS THE SITE REASONABLY CLOSE TO THE COMMUNITY IT SERVES?

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that to be designated as a Local Green Space an area should be in reasonably close proximity to the community which it serves. Sites which are entirely isolated from the community will not be considered.
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) requires that if public access is a key factor, then the Local Green Space should normally be within easy walking distance of the community served. As a guide, the Parish Council has defined 'easy walking distance' as being within 5 minutes' walking time of the nearest settlement boundary.
- It is recognised that some discretion may be needed depending on the topography of the area, the mobility and size of the community, and the size and function of the Local Green Space itself.

TEST 3. IS IT LOCAL IN CHARACTER AND NOT AN EXTENSIVE TRACT OF LAND?

- The NPPF makes clear that the area to be designated should be local in character and not an extensive tract of land.
- PPG states that blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements is not appropriate.
- Whilst there is no size threshold proposed for an area of Local Green Space, the Parish Council considers that any site of more than 10 hectares might reasonably be interpreted as 'extensive' or 'blanket'.

TEST 4. IS THE SITE DEMONSTRABLY SPECIAL TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY?

- The designation of Local Green Space must be based on evidence which demonstrates why the area is demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance. To pass this test, an area must be demonstrably special and locally significant in one of the following categories.
- Beauty – This relates to the visual attractiveness and aesthetic value of the site, and its contribution to the streetscape, landscape, character or setting of a settlement. To qualify, the site should

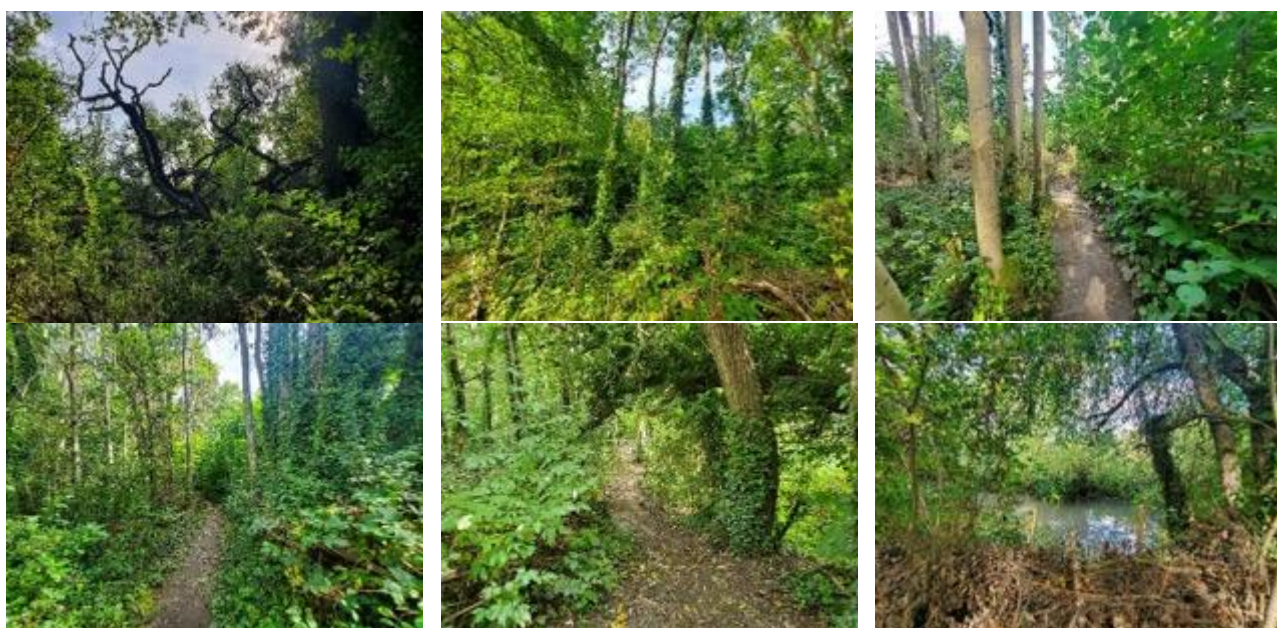
contribute significantly to local character, for example by defining a sense of place, or by helping to define the physical form of a settlement.

- **Historic significance** – This relates to the historic importance a site holds for the local community. This could be because it contributes to the setting of a heritage asset or some other locally valued landmark. It might be because the site holds cultural associations which are of particular significance to the local community. Where the site is already protected by a designation (e.g. AONB), consideration should be given as to whether any additional benefit would result from designation as Local Green Space.
- **Recreational value** – Sites would need to hold local significance for recreation and be important to the community for particular recreation activity or range of activities. These could be formal or informal activities.
- **Tranquillity** – In order to qualify, the site would need to be viewed by local people as important for the tranquillity it provided, offering a place for reflection and peaceful enjoyment.
- **Richness of wildlife** – A site would need to be locally significant for wildlife in a way that could be demonstrated. It might, for example, home to species or habitats of principal importance, veteran trees, or locally characteristic plants and animals such as mistletoe. Where the site is already protected by a designation (e.g. SSSI), consideration should be given as to whether any additional benefit would result from designation as Local Green Space.
- **Other reason** – Sites might be special and locally significant for reasons other than those identified above. For example, a site might make a particular contribution to defining the individual character of a settlement, or it might be an asset of community value.

Ruscombe Wood and Pond

Map	i
Location	Castle End Road
Designation	Greenbelt
Current use	Ruscombe Wood and pond is a very old wood and pond
Test 1: existing planning permission or WBC LP allocation	No
Test 2: distance to edge of nearest settlement	Outskirts of Conservation area
Test 3: Local in character or extensive tract of land?	Local 222,490ft ² /5.11 acre
Test 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other)	<p>Beauty – Ruscombe Wood and pond is very beautiful and very much provides character to the area. The network of small ponds is a fine feature of the Ruscombe landscape.</p> <p>Historic Significance – This wood and pond are very old, they are clearly visible on the 1910 OS Map.</p> <p>Recreational value – Ruscombe wood is enjoyed by many people of all ages for informal activities. The wood and pond are looked after by a group of volunteers.</p> <p>Tranquillity – The wood offers a very important space for reflection and peaceful enjoyment, it is very tranquil.</p>

	<p>Richness of wildlife – Ruscombe wood is home to many different species of wildlife including Stag Beetles and Great Crested Newt and some important and rare species of orchid, the Common Spotted Orchid, the Twayblade and the Helleborine.</p> <p>See also Ruscombe Parish short wildlife walks (link).</p>
Landowner Consultation	Yes
Landowner support/objection	No objection
Recommendation	Recommend for designation



Castle End Road Pond

Map	ii
Location	Castle End Road
Designation	Greenbelt
Current use	Castle End Road Pond is a natural pond
Test 1: existing planning permission or WBC LP allocation	No
Test 2: distance to edge of nearest settlement	Outskirts of the Conservation area
Test 3: Local in character or extensive tract of land?	Local 7252ft2/0.17 acre
Test 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other)	<p>Beauty – It is very beautiful and very much provides character to the area. The network of small ponds is a fine feature of the Ruscombe landscape.</p> <p>Historic Significance – This pond is visible on the historical Map of Ruscombe on page 15.</p>

	<p>Recreational Value – This pond is maintained by an organised group of volunteers (link).</p> <p>Richness of wildlife – The Great Crested Newts live in the Ruscombe ponds along with many other species of wildlife. See also Sundew Ecology Reports Appendix D.</p> <p>See also Ruscombe Parish short wildlife walks (link).</p>
Landowner Consultation	Yes
Landowner support/objection	No objection
Recommendation	Recommend for designation



Crossroads pond


Map	iii
Location	At the crossroads of Stanlake Lane and Waltham Road
Designation	None
Current use	This is a natural pond
Test 1: existing planning permission or WBC LP allocation	No
Test 2: distance to edge of nearest settlement	In a residential area
Test 3: Local in character or extensive tract of land?	Local 5,029ft ² /0.12 acre
Test 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other)	<p>Beauty – It is very beautiful and very much provides character to the area. The network of small ponds is a fine feature of the Ruscombe landscape.</p> <p>Historic Significance – This pond is visible on the Historic map of Ruscombe on page 15.</p> <p>Recreational Value – This pond is maintained by an organised group of volunteers (link).</p> <p>Richness of wildlife – The Great Crested Newts live in the Ruscombe ponds along with many other species of wildlife.</p>

	See also Ruscombe Parish short wildlife walks (link).
Landowner Consultation	Yes
Landowner support/objection	No objection
Recommendation	Recommend for designation



New Road Pond

Map	iv
Location	New Road
Designation	Greenbelt
Current use	Natural pond
Test 1: existing planning permission or WBC LP allocation	Yes, suggested site but not yet allocated
Test 2: distance to edge of nearest settlement	Opposite a Residential area adjacent to New Road
Test 3: Local in character or extensive tract of land?	Local 8,974ft ² /0.21 acre
Test 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other)	<p>Beauty – It is very beautiful and very much provides character to the area. The network of small ponds is a fine feature of the Ruscombe landscape.</p> <p>Recreational Value – This pond is maintained by an organised group of volunteers (link).</p> <p>Richness of wildlife – The Great Crested Newts live in the Ruscombe ponds along with many other species of wildlife. In July 2021 local volunteers transformed an area previously covered with bramble into a wildflower bank teeming with butterflies and other insects.</p>

	 <p>© Dave Barks (link) <i>"Species records show a historical presence of some now-uncommon farmland birds, and plants associated with woodland and wet-grassland. Species are likely to be significantly under-recorded.... Woodland will be home to a considerable variety of wildlife. Birds will find plenty of opportunities to nest in hollow trees and dense scrub, butterflies will flit along open, flower-rich rides, and spring flowers will carpet the ground – taking advantage of clearings in the wood."</i> See Sundew Ecology Reports Appendix D.</p> <p>Historical significance – The pond forms part of a network of old ponds in the parish that were probably used by drovers moving their flocks and herds through the village and also serving the local osier industry that ceased after the Second World War. The amphibians that inhabit the ponds require rough grass, logs and scattered trees around the pond edges. Source: link</p>
Landowner Consultation	Yes
Landowner support/objection	No objection
Recommendation	Recommend for designation

Church Lane Allotments

Map	v
Location	Church Lane
Designation	Greenbelt and Conservation area
Current use	Allotments
Test 1: existing planning permission or WBC LP allocation	No
Test 2: distance to edge of nearest settlement	Next to the church in the conservation area
Test 3: Local in character or extensive tract of land?	Local 14,477 ft ² /0.33 acre
Test 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic	Recreational Value – Allotments are very important for the people who hire them.

significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other)	See also Ruscombe Parish short wildlife walks (link).
Landowner Consultation	Yes
Landowner support/objection	No objection
Recommendation	Recommend for designation



Church Green

Map	vi
Location	Between Southbury Lane and Waltham Road
Designation	Greenbelt and conservation area
Current use	Open Space
Test 1: existing planning permission or WBC LP allocation	No
Test 2: distance to edge of nearest settlement	Next to the church in the conservation area
Test 3: Local in character or extensive tract of land?	Local 25,695ft2/0.59 acre
Test 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other)	<p>Beauty – This land is very beautiful, it contributes to the openness, beauty and character of the area.</p> <p>Recreational value – This space is very important for informal and formal activities, it is used for relaxation and reflection as well as organised exercise classes.</p> <p>Tranquillity – This space is very tranquil and very important for reflection and relaxation</p> <p>Richness of Wildlife – The land has some large and well established trees, home to many wildlife species</p> <p>Historical significance – This land dates back to the 16th Century known as Ruscombe Green, this land was used for social events and is clearly visible on the Historical map of Ruscombe on page 15.</p> <p>See also Ruscombe Parish short wildlife walks (link).</p>
Landowner Consultation	Yes

Landowner support/objection	No objection
Recommendation	Recommend for designation



Crossroads land

Map	vii
Location	Crossroads of Stanlake Lane, Waltham Road, Ruscombe Lane and New Road
Designation	Greenbelt
Current use	Open Space
Test 1: existing planning permission or WBC LP allocation	No
Test 2: distance to edge of nearest settlement	In the residential area
Test 3: Local in character or extensive tract of land?	Local 4,437ft2/0.1 acre and publicly accessible
Test 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other)	<p>Beauty – This land contributes to the openness of this area.</p> <p>Recreational value – The area continues to act as a meeting place for local people with the Parish Council notice board, planter and bench installed in this location.</p> <p>Historical Significance – This area was historically used for community gatherings and is clearly visible on the Historical Map of Ruscombe on page 15.</p>

	See also Ruscombe Parish short wildlife walks (link).
Landowner Consultation	Yes
Landowner support/objection	No objection
Recommendation	Recommend for designation



Pennfields Park

Map	viii
Location	Pennfields
Designation	None
Current use	Play area
Test 1: existing planning permission or WBC LP allocation	No
Test 2: distance to edge of nearest settlement	In the residential area
Test 3: Local in character or extensive tract of land?	Local 11,073ft ² /0.25 acre
Test 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other)	Recreational Value – This park is important to the families and children in the Neighbourhood.
Landowner Consultation	Yes
Landowner support/objection	No objection
Recommendation	Recommend for designation



London Road Land

Map	ix
Location	London Road
Designation	None
Current use	Open Space
Test 1: existing planning permission or WBC LP allocation	No
Test 2: distance to edge of nearest settlement	In the residential area
Test 3: Local in character or extensive tract of land?	Local 16,609ft ² /0.39 acre and publicly accessible
Test 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other)	<p>Recreational value – An informal orchard has been planted on this land.</p> <p>Richness of Wildlife – “There are approximately 17km of hedges in Ruscombe Parish. These are likely to be of varying quality, with the best ones being continuous, bushy and allowed to grow flowers and fruit. Although seemingly less important for wildlife than undeveloped areas, urban habitats like gardens and parks can provide important spaces for wildlife, often better than intensively farmed agricultural land. If allowed to have wilder areas, parks can provide niches for wildlife that may be absent from the wider countryside. Many of the road verges and</p>

	<p>green open spaces will be dominated by long, flower-rich vegetation for much of the year. This creates a network of wildlife 'corridors' linking hedgerows, woodlands and other natural areas and allowing plants and animals to spread across the parish. These areas will be attractive to the residents and will be sited to not cause a danger to road users." See Sundew Ecology Reports in Appendix D.</p> <p>Other reason – This land provides space and a feeling of separation along a very busy road.</p>
Landowner Consultation	Yes
Landowner support/objection	No objection
Recommendation	Recommend for designation



Pennfields Orchard

Map	x
Location	Pennfields, opposite 63 to 67
Designation	None
Current use	Community Orchard
Test 1: existing planning permission or WBC LP allocation	No
Test 2: distance to edge of nearest settlement	In the residential area
Test 3: Local in character or extensive tract of land?	Local 3,901ft2/0.09 acre

Test 4: demonstrably special & holds a particular local significance (beauty, historic significance, recreation value, tranquillity, richness of wildlife, other)	Other reasons – Ruscombe Parish Council have recently created a community orchard on this land.
Landowner Consultation	Yes
Landowner support/objection	No objection
Recommendation	Recommend for designation



Ruscombe Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure elements

Client: Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan Group

Ref RNPG1 (1.0)

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1 Summary

Ruscombe Parish is a predominantly rural parish with arable and livestock farming. A number of areas of woodland are present, and a stream crosses the parish.

Some of these habitats are considered to be 'priority habitats' and four areas are designated as Local Wildlife Sites.

Species records show a historical presence of some now-uncommon farmland birds, and plants associated with woodland and wet-grassland. Species are likely to be significantly under-recorded.

2 Introduction

This document provides information about the biodiversity of Ruscombe Parish, for the production of a Neighbourhood Plan.

The following were undertaken to compile this report:

- A desktop study to identify biodiversity data relevant to Ruscombe Parish in the public domain.
- Mapping of relevant features (hedges and woodland) visible on aerial photography.
- A standard Neighbourhood Plan data request from the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre.
- Interpretation of the collated data.

3 Description of Ruscombe Parish's Biodiversity

3.1 General

The protection of biodiversity in the UK is based upon the statutory designation of areas of land (sites) and the identification of vulnerable species, both of which are subject to certain restrictions.

In addition, certain habitats (areas of land with similar vegetation types, and therefore similar fauna) are identified as 'Priority Habitats'. These are not necessarily given any protection, but more effort and resources may be devoted to them.

Biodiversity can also be protected indirectly by other legislation aimed at controlling planning, such as regulations associated with Green Belt.

The parish's geology is diverse. The north of the parish is chalk; the centre, east and south are clay, silt, sand and gravels; and, to the west, the chalk is overlain with riverine sands and gravel.

Ruscombe is a rural parish, with approximately 40 hectares of the 520-hectare parish having been developed. The remainder is predominantly farmland – mostly arable but with pasture on either side of the Twyford Brook.

A number of blocks of woodland are present in the parish. These are mostly relatively recent planting or natural generation, but some woodland is considered ‘ancient’.

The Twyford Brook flows across Ruscombe Parish, adding further potential biodiversity interest.

3.2 Protected sites

See appendix 1 for a plan showing protected sites.

Ruscombe Parish does not contain any statutory designated sites (**Sites of Special Scientific Interest** (SSSI) or **European Designated Sites**), which would offer legal protection to the area.

The nearest SSSI is ‘Lodge Wood & Sandford Mill’, approximately two kilometres to the southwest.

The nearest European designated site is ‘Windsor Forest and Great Park Special Area of Conservation’ some eight kilometres to the east.

There are no **National Nature Reserves** or **Local Nature Reserves** within the Parish. The nearest Local Nature Reserves are ‘Lavell’s Lake’ and ‘Alder Moors’, two and a half kilometres to the south west.

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are a local designation, identified and surveyed by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC). Although there is no statutory protect for these sites, there may be an assumption against development in the local plan, and resources may be available for proactive habitat management. More detail is available in the TVERC report. There are four LWSs in Ruscombe Parish, covering 17ha of land.

Much of the Parish is included in the ‘Waltham to Binfield Woodland and Parklands’ **Biodiversity Opportunity Area** (BOA). BOAs are landscape scale areas that have been identified as supporting high concentrations of priority habitats and species populations, and have the potential for habitat restoration at a landscape scale. These areas act as a focus for targeting resources into habitat management and restoration.

The whole of the Parish, except the urban area to the west of New Road is designated as **Green Belt**. This is primarily a planning tool, which has little impact on biodiversity apart from influencing the location and scale of development.

3.3 Habitats

See appendix 2 for a plan showing relevant habitats.

There are 62 areas of 'Priority Habitat' totalling 45.6ha in Ruscombe Parish. All but two of these are 'Broadleaved Woodland', the remainder being 'Lowland Meadow'. The following habitats are found in Ruscombe Parish:

3.3.1 Farmed land

Arable

Growing crops is the biggest land use (c50%) in Ruscombe Parish. This is likely to be poor for wildlife. The fields are likely to be plant monocultures with few resources to support a diverse flora or fauna. Arable land can be improved for wildlife with good quality margins and hedgerows.

Pasture

Grassland for animal pasture covers approximately 40% of the Parish, mostly each side of the Twyford Brook, presumably on the areas that are prone to waterlogging. Good pasture management can be beneficial for wildlife, with a species-rich sward supporting a diverse fauna.

One field within the Parish has been identified as a Priority Habitat: Lowland Meadow. It is likely that this field has not received as many inputs (fertiliser and herbicide) or been ploughed for many years, resulting in a species-rich grassland. This field is also designated as a Local Wildlife Site (Grassland Opposite Blackthorn Farm)

Hedgerows

Good quality hedges provide a wide range of resources for wildlife throughout the year: cover for nesting and moving through an otherwise open landscape; food in the form of pollen, nectar, berries and foliage; shade and shelter from the wind.

There are approximately 17km of hedges in Ruscombe Parish. These are likely to be of varying quality, with the best ones being continuous, bushy and allowed to grow flowers and fruit.

Funding is available to encourage landowners to manage their land to benefit the environment. The primary scheme for this is Environmental Stewardship (ES). There are currently no ES schemes running in Ruscombe Parish.

3.3.2 Streams

Watercourses can be valuable places for wildlife, depending on their 'naturalness', water quality and adjacent land management.

The Twyford Brook is the main watercourse in Ruscombe Parish, with a length of 3700m within the boundary. This watercourse is likely to be affected by runoff of pollution from nearby urban and arable landscapes, but it appears

to be 'buffered' by pasture and scrub land, which can act to reduce the impact.

3.3.3 Parkland

Stanlake Park, in the south west of the Parish has been identified as Parkland on the 'Wood Pasture and Parkland' register. Parkland an area that is managed by grazing but allowing the survival of multiple generations of trees, with at least some veteran trees or shrubs, and being associated with a stately home and 'designed' landscape.

This habitat is normally associated with veteran trees and may have species-rich grassland. There is 30.6ha of registered parkland in Ruscombe Parish.

3.3.4 Woodland

Ancient Woodland

Good-quality woodlands are likely to support more wildlife than any other habitat, and Ancient Woodland (older than 1600) being the most diverse, is likely to support a significant variety of fungi, birds, wild flowers and mammals.

There are four areas of Ancient Woodland, mapped on the national register, within Ruscombe Parish, totalling 14ha. They are Botany Bay Copse, Middle Copse and Wingwood Copse to the south of the Parish and an unnamed wood on Castle End Farm to the north.

Plantation and recent woodland

The remainder of the woodland in the Parish is likely to be more recent than 1600, having been either planted or allowed to generate naturally since then. This woodland is unlikely to be as species-rich as the Ancient Woodland.

There are about 35 blocks of non-ancient woodland within the Parish, covering an area of 53ha. Some of these are considered Priority Habitat, as they are broadleaved woodland.

Urban habitats

Approximately 40ha of Ruscombe Parish is taken with urban land, a combination of residential, industrial and farm units.

Although seemingly less important for wildlife than undeveloped areas, urban habitats like gardens and parks can provide important spaces for wildlife, often better than intensively farmed agricultural land.

Gardens and parks can be home to widespread, but increasingly uncommon mammals like hedgehogs and shrews, amphibians and reptiles like slow worms and frogs, and garden birds. If allowed to have wilder areas, parks can provide niches for wildlife that may be absent from the wider countryside.

Summary of habitats in Ruscombe Parish:

	Count	Area or length
Ruscombe Parish	1	523 ha
Ancient Woodland	4	14ha
Agriculture – arable		Approx. 250ha
Agriculture – pasture		Approx 200ha
Non-ancient woodland	35	53ha
Watercourses	1	3700m
Priority Habitat – Broadleaved Woodland (includes ancient and non-ancient)	61	45ha
Priority Habitat – Lowland Meadow	1	1ha
Hedgerow	Approx. 70	1700m
Parkland	1	30ha
Urban area		Approx 40ha

3.4 Species

See the separate report from TVERC for complete species records.

The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) collects and distributes records of wild species in the area. Its records are by no means exhaustive, but they do provide an indication of the types of plant and animal that are present in an area.

Four species of amphibian and two species of reptiles have been recorded, of a possible seven amphibians and six reptiles native to the UK. Those recorded in Ruscombe are considered to be 'widespread' (although suffering national declines in recent years) except the Great Crested Newt, which is a European Protected Species.

48 species of bird have been recorded, although this is likely to be considerably higher in actuality. TVERC do not provide an indication of whether the birds were breeding or not, so it is difficult to specify the significance of a sighting. Of particular note, because of their recent declines, are Cuckoo (most recent sighting 2005), Grey Partridge (1984), Tree Sparrow (1984) and Turtle Dove (2005). The latter three are considered 'farmland birds' and have suffered considerable declines through changes to farming practices.

15 species of higher plant have been recorded which, again, is a gross underestimate of the likely number of species. The plants that have been recorded

are mostly either woodland plants, such as Bluebell, or wet grassland plants like Ragged Robin.

Three species of invertebrate are recorded, including the UK's largest species of beetle, the Stag Beetle.

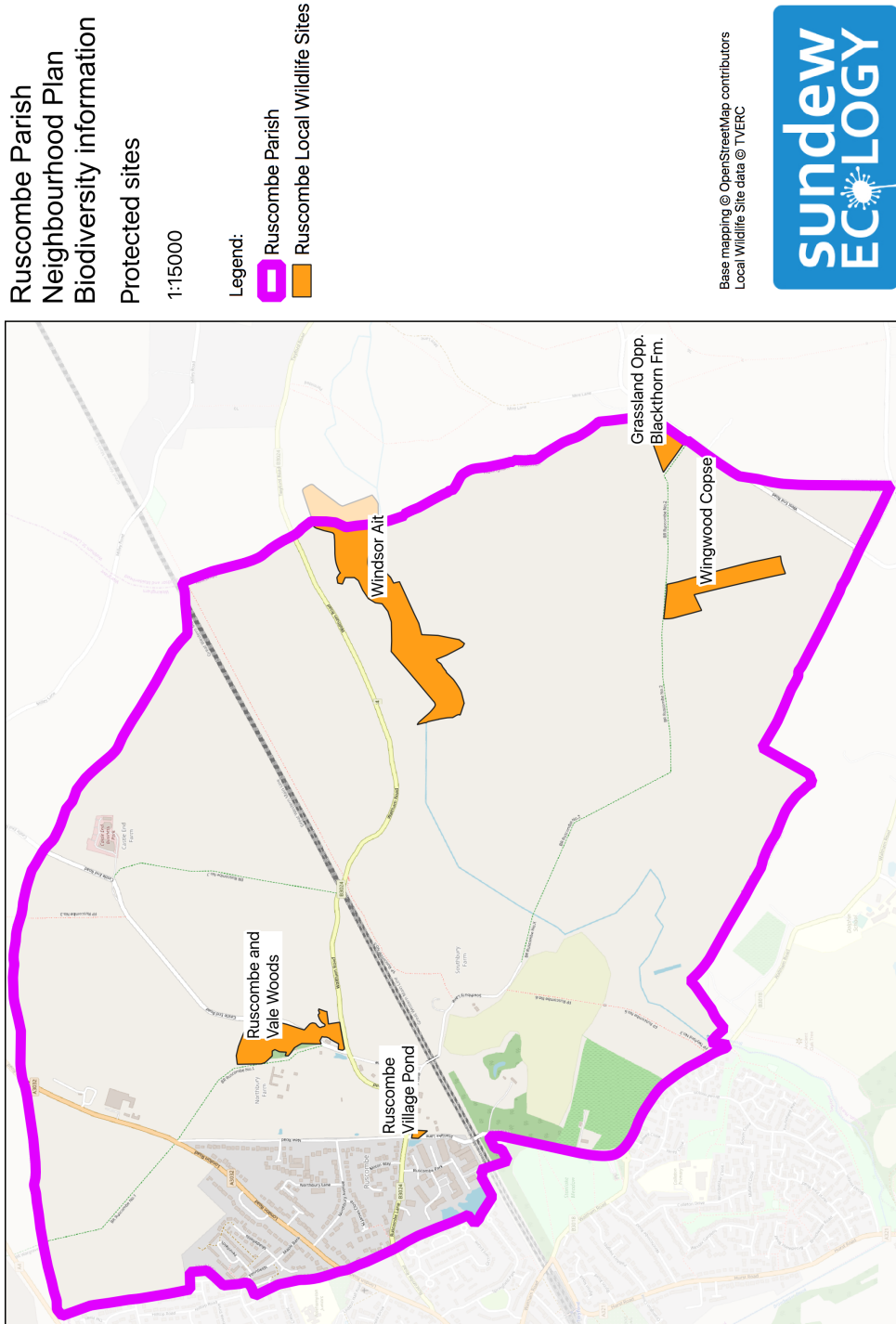
7 species of bat have been recorded in the parish, out of a possible 17 UK species. All of the species in Ruscombe are relatively widespread.

There are records of four species of mammal, including the heavily protected Badger and the European protected Water Vole (last recorded in 2003).

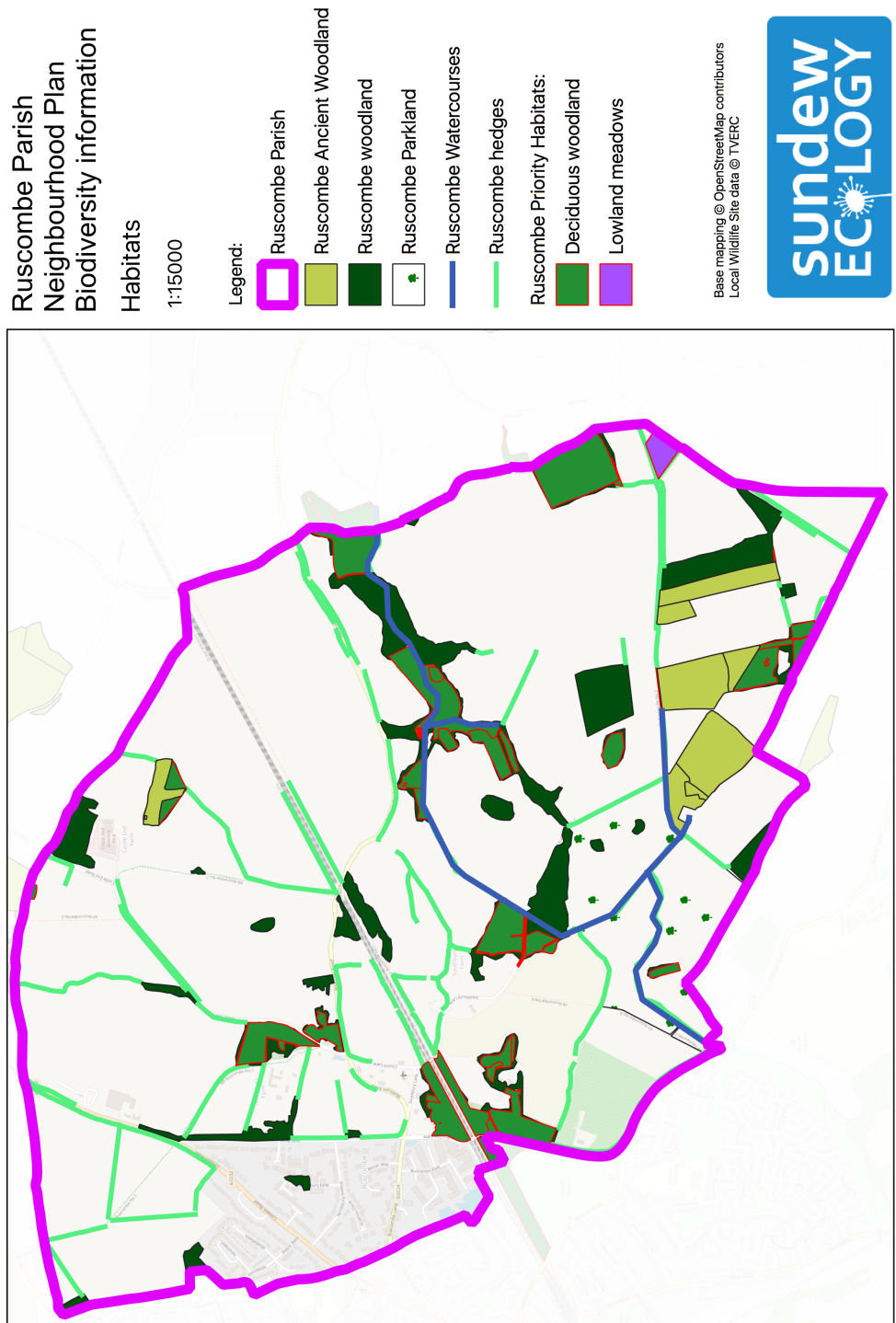
In summary, the TVERC records show a fairly standard rural flora and fauna, with a few exceptional records – Water Vole and Turtle Dove, especially. If these species, and others, are present and breeding then their conservation will be a positive contribution to the biodiversity of the UK.

4 Appendices

4.1 Plan of Protected Sites



4.2 Plan of Habitats



Ruscombe Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Phase 2: Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure enhancement opportunities.

Client: Ruscombe Neighbourhood Plan Group

Ref RNPG1 (2.1), December 2020

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1 Summary

Thirteen projects that will enhance the biodiversity of Ruscombe Parish by making existing wildlife sites 'bigger, better and more joined' are identified, and a description of each potential project provided.

These descriptions follow the format of a simple management plan with a vision stating the desired state; an evaluation describing the current state; and objectives and prescription explaining how the vision might be achieved.

2 Introduction

Ruscombe is a very rural parish adjacent to the urban area of Twyford and just three kilometres from the outskirts of Reading. Its rural nature means that the parish has a high potential for supporting lots of wildlife but its proximity to Reading, Maidenhead and ultimately London, puts it at risk from development that could damage the wildlife interest.

This document uses information obtained in the previous report (Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure elements) to identify a number of projects that will enhance the biodiversity in Ruscombe Parish.

A walkover survey of the key habitats across the parish was undertaken, and further information about the Local Wildlife Sites was obtained from the Thames Valley Records Centre.

3 General principles

Biodiversity is a measure of the variety of plants, animals and other species that are found in an area. High biodiversity normally means that the wildlife is resilient and more able to cope with potentially damaging external influences.

Regular reports by the State of Nature Partnership indicate a dramatic decline in the United Kingdom's biodiversity in recent years. (SoNP, 2019)

The Government's review of England's wildlife sites in 2010, titled 'Making Space for Nature' recommended that, in order to halt and reverse the decline in the country's biodiversity, wildlife sites need to be 'bigger, better and joined'. (Lawton, 2010)

This means that areas that are already good for wildlife need to be managed to make them even better, opportunities should be sought to increase their size, and wildlife 'corridors' or 'stepping stones' should be created to allow wildlife to migrate between them.

These measures should allow wildlife to better cope with the human impacts of habitat loss, pollution, disturbance and climate change.

In Ruscombe Parish, the areas that are likely to support the most wildlife have been designated as Local Wildlife Sites; a non-statutory designation that offers some protection against development.

Any projects that are recommended to benefit biodiversity should focus on these Local Wildlife Sites, or other areas of high biodiversity that are identified, and should aim to:

- improve them for wildlife through appropriate management,
- make them bigger by improving surrounding land for wildlife,
- and join them together with linear features that are good for wildlife.

4 Sites of high wildlife value

The previous report, (Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure elements) identified a number of areas with the potential to support a relatively high biodiversity:

	Area or length
Ancient Woodland	14ha
Non-ancient woodland	53ha
Watercourses	3700m
Priority Habitat – Broadleaved Woodland (includes ancient and non-ancient)	45ha
Priority Habitat – Lowland Meadow	1ha
Hedgerow	1700m
Parkland	30ha
Urban area	Approx. 40ha
Ruscombe Parish - total	523 ha

Of these areas, five have been designated as Local Wildlife Sites. It is likely that they are the most important sites in Ruscombe Parish for wildlife.

They are:

- Ruscombe and Vale Woods
- Ruscombe Village Pond
- Windsor Ait
- Wingwood Copse
- Grassland Opposite Blackthorn Farm

5 Recommended projects to enhance biodiversity

Using the above information and following a site visit with a local expert to the areas with the most potential, the following projects have been identified to deliver the principles (better, bigger and joined) in the 'Making Space for Nature' report.

5.1 Promote improved hedgerow management across the parish.

5.1.1 Vision

The hedgerows in Ruscombe Parish will provide a wide range of resources for wildlife throughout the year: cover for nesting and moving through an otherwise open landscape; food in the form of pollen, nectar, berries and foliage; shade and shelter from the wind.

A good quality hedgerow:

- Is linked to other hedges and woodland across the landscape
- Is part of a structurally diverse system of hedges
- Is varied in species composition
- Is dense and wide
- Is covered in flowers and fruit
- Includes some taller trees along its length
- Has 'outgrowths' – sections where a clump of scrub has grown out into the field
- Has dense, tussocky, grassy vegetation directly adjacent to it
- Has flower-rich margins surrounding it.

5.1.2 Evaluation

Many of the hedges seen during the walkover survey do not show the features listed above and therefore their potential for supporting wildlife is not fully realised.

Hedges are often 'over-managed' by severe annual cutting. This can lead to a loss of plant species and the creation of an 'open', 'leggy' structure that is not optimal for wildlife. Very few in-hedgerow trees were seen.

Some hedges had been recently laid; an excellent, traditional method of producing a wildlife-rich hedge.

5.1.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 1.1 Make information about best-practise hedgerow management available to landowners.

Lots of information on good hedgerow management is available for landowners. Hedgeline (www.hedgeline.org.uk) for example provides a useful website.

All of the qualities of a good hedgerow can be encouraged by managing them on an approximately 20-year cycle, following guidance in The Complete Hedge Good Management Guide from Hedgeline:

www.hedgeline.org.uk/cms/cms_content/files/30_complete_good_hedge_management_guide_leaflet.pdf

All work on hedges should take place in the winter.

The cycle starts with coppicing, laying or replanting then progresses to a rotational cutting regime in which a third of the length of all the hedges are cut each year, but allowing the hedge to increase in size by about 10cm each cut.

Finally, as the cycle nears its end and the hedge begins to get 'gappy', the hedge should be left to grow for a couple of years and then laid again.

This management regime can save money over time by reducing the amount of cutting required.

Relevant leaflets could be purchased or printed by the Parish Council and provided to landowners or details of the website made available. Individuals providing advice should do so with an understanding of the landowner's situation so that advice can be tailored.

Objective 1.2 Facilitate the traditional management on select hedgerows.

The traditional management of hedges requires skill and experience, and is labour-intensive, but it produces a more attractive and wildlife-friendly hedgerow.

Conservation volunteer groups often include individuals who have the skills and experience required. They could, with the landowner's approval, undertake hedge laying in appropriate locations.

5.2 Promote the recruitment of young trees in parkland habitat.

5.2.1 Vision

Areas of parkland in Ruscombe will have a large number of veteran trees that are home to all sorts of beetles and other insects. The pasture below them will be flower-rich. There will be patches of scrub through which young trees – the future veterans – will grow.

5.2.2 Evaluation

Although rich in veteran trees, many areas of parkland suffer from a lack of recruitment of younger trees. As the veterans die from disease or drought, younger trees are required to ensure the continuity of suitable habitat.

5.2.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 2.1 Increase the number of young trees in parkland.

If trees in an area of parkland are of a similar age and there are few younger trees growing to take their place in the future, management can be carried out to provide replacements.

In a natural situation, trees tend to grow up protected from grazing by stands of thorny scrub. This could be tolerated in areas of parkland but not at the expense of the loss of too much grassland.

In order to ensure the recruitment of trees, new saplings should be encouraged to mature. Ideally these should be trees that have set seed naturally and are already growing. If suitable specimens can be found, scattered across the parkland, they should be protected from grazing or mowing by fencing, designed to last at least ten years. Appropriate species would be Oak, Beech, Field Maple or Hawthorn.

Alternatively, if no suitable specimens can be located, trees can be planted. These should be sourced from local, native stock to ensure that they are disease free and suited to the local environment. Smaller individual trees tend to grow better, but will need protective fencing.

5.3 Encourage and facilitate landowners to enter a Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

5.3.1 Vision

Landowners in Ruscombe Parish will be paid to provide public benefits, including increased biodiversity, natural flood management and improved access to the countryside. At least one significant landowner in the parish will have entered a government grant scheme.

5.3.2 Evaluation

There are currently no landowners in environmental stewardship schemes within the parish.

These schemes pay landowners, normally farmers, to manage their land in a way that will benefit the environment. Most of this money comes from the European Union, but the Government has made some assurances that a similar scheme will continue after Brexit.

Many landowners already provide substantial benefits to the environment by looking after their land with wildlife in mind. As the profile of biodiversity loss and climate change are raised, and the concept of Natural Capital gains popularity, it is likely that increased funding will be made available to landowners to offset any loss of income caused by their delivery of 'ecosystem services'.

Environmental Stewardship schemes can provide funding for improved hedgerow management, provision of wildlife-friendly areas within the farm, tree planting and woodland management, for example.

5.3.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 3.1 One significant landowner in an environmental stewardship scheme.

The complexity of the application process and the five-year commitment often discourage landowners from entering the scheme.

Assistance from an experienced consultant to help choose options and complete the application process is often welcomed by the landowner. Advice is available from organisations like the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, FWAG South East, or independent consultants like the author.

5.4 Enhance the natural corridor to the south of Castle End Business Park.

5.4.1 Vision

The land adjacent to the bridleway heading south from Castle End Business Park will provide a wildlife corridor linking up nearby hedgerows and areas of woodland. The pond will be maintained to encourage dragonflies and frogs and areas of grassland will become wildflower-rich.

This will create a pleasant lunchtime walk for people from the business park.

5.4.2 Evaluation

This bridleway passes through arable fields with a parallel shallow ditch along much of its length. A hedge follows about one third of the route, and there is a

small copse containing a pond about halfway along. At the northern end there is a patch of scrubby grassland and a few trees.

It is assumed that the Business Park has control over the grassy area to the north, and the farmer is responsible for the land over which the bridleway passes. This will need to be confirmed and approval sought from each before progressing.

5.4.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 4.1 Obtain approval for the project from the relevant organisation or individuals.

Members of the parish council are likely to know the relevant landowners, but otherwise land registry will be able to provide details.

Objective 4.2 Plant a hedge along the length of the bridleway, and maintain it appropriately.

The existing hedge can have its gaps filled and extended to link the road to the south and the business park to the north. Appropriate species should be selected to reflect the plants found in nearby hedges with hawthorn, Blackthorn, Elder, Field Maple and Hazel are likely to be suitable.

There is lots of advice for planting hedgerows here:

http://www.hedgeline.org.uk/cms/cms_content/files/75_ne_hedgerow_planting.pdf

Objective 4.3 Increase the variety of wild flowers in the grassy area.

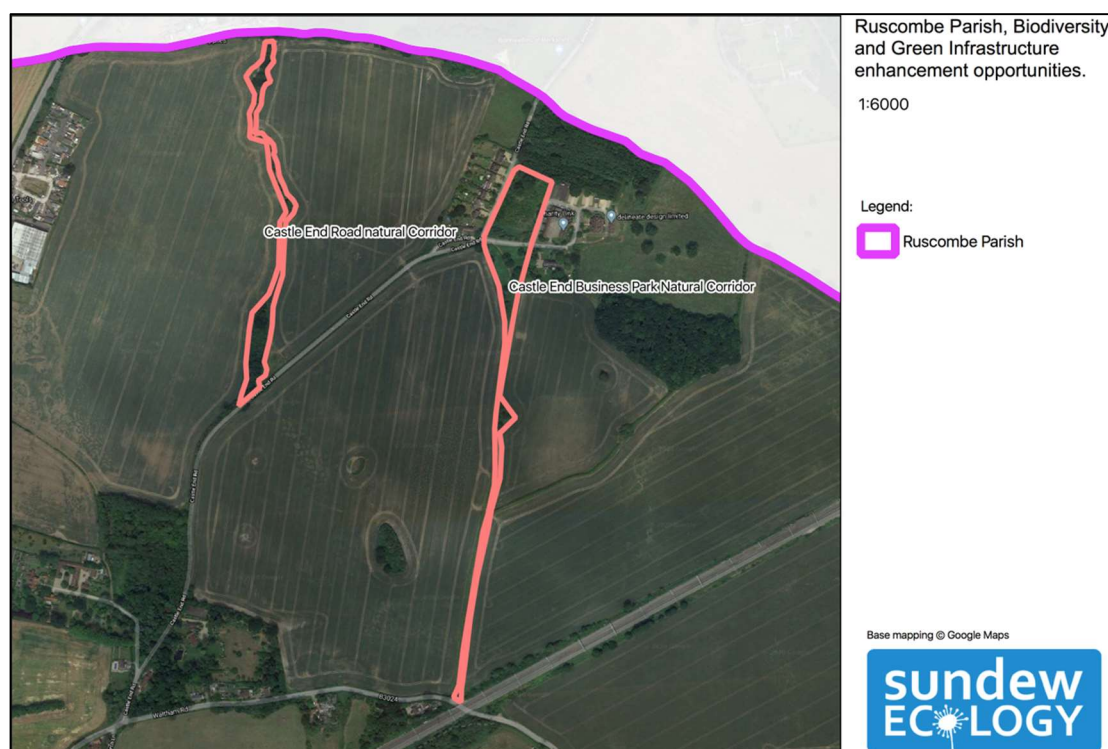
A similar prescription to Objective 2.2 should be followed here.

Where areas of bramble are considered to be too extensive, they can be reduced in extent through frequent mowing, although bramble is an important resource for wildlife and provides an easy introduction to wild foraging.

Objective 4.4 Increase the diversity in the pond and surrounding copse through appropriate management.

In order to increase the diversity of the vegetation surrounding the pond it can be coppiced on rotation, approximately one tenth each year in blocks. This will allow more light into the pond, encouraging increased floating and emergent vegetation that will, in turn, encourage more aquatic animal species to use the pond.

5.4.4 Map



5.5 Enhance the natural corridor heading north from Castle End Road.

5.5.1 Vision

The small strip of woodland to the north of Castle End Road will be carpeted with woodland flowers that will begin to spread along the hedges parallel to road and the newly planted hedgerow across the fields to the north. The ancient Field Maple coppice stools will thrive and the wood will be a refuge for a host of wildlife.

5.5.2 Evaluation

There is currently a small strip of woodland immediately to the north Castle End Road. This is evidently an old trackway heading north: the ground is raised, and a row of veteran coppiced Field Maple trees denotes the former route. A belt of scrubby Hazel adjacent to the Field Maples has Bluebells growing beneath it.

The meandering former hedge to the north of this woodland is now a row of young trees, offering reduced cover to the wildlife that may want to move between areas of woodland to the north and south.

5.5.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 5.1 Obtain approval for the project from the relevant organisation or individuals.

It is likely that the woodland and hedgerow are owned by the farmer of the surrounding fields. Members of the parish council are likely to know the relevant landowners, but otherwise land registry will be able to provide details.

Objective 5.2 Manage the strip of woodland to maximise its potential for wildlife.

Careful, rotational coppicing of small coupes is likely to be beneficial to this diminutive woodland. Protection against deer and rabbit browsing will be essential to ensure successful regrowth.

Objective 5.3 Implement a suitable restoration programme for the hedgerow to the north of the woodland strip.

It is likely that this line of trees will require coppicing, gapping-up and protection from browsing in order to restore its condition. More information can be found here:

http://www.hedgeline.org.uk/cms/cms_content/files/78_hedgeline_a5_12pp_leaflet_7.pdf

5.5.4 Map – see map for Project 5.

5.6 Promote the appropriate maintenance of ditches across the parish to benefit Water Voles.

5.6.1 Vision

A network of the ditches across the parish will be suitable for a Water Vole reintroduction programme.

They will have species-rich, tall emergent and bankside vegetation. The American Mink population will be reduced and disturbance through inappropriate management will be kept to a minimum.

5.6.2 Evaluation

There is an extensive network of ditches and streams across the parish. Some of these are a remnant of the huge Ruscombe Lake that was drained in 1820. The wetlands surrounding Windsor Ait may also offer restoration potential.

Water Voles are likely to have become extinct from the Parish before 2012 when they were last recorded in nearby Hurst. They require tall vegetation on which to feed, plenty of water in the ditches and banks suitable for burrowing.

American Mink, now common across the wetlands of England, are a major predator of Water Voles, so some control may be desirable.

The vegetation adjacent to many of the ditches seen in Ruscombe Parish was closely mown making them unsuitable for Water Voles, although the area was visited in winter and mowing may have been recently undertaken.

5.6.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 6.1 Increase the extent of vegetation suitable for Water Voles.

Water Voles feed on vegetation adjacent to slow-moving waterways. They need tall vegetation in which to hide and dig their burrows. Leaving a strip of unmown vegetation along ditches may encourage Water Voles to increase their extent if they are still present, or produce conditions suitable for reintroduction. Such management will also benefit other water-loving species.

More advice can be found here:

<https://ptes.org/campaigns/water-voles/helping-water-voles-on-your-land/>

Objective 6.2 Implement a Mink control programme.

Mink have a significant impact on Water Vole populations. Control efforts are undertaken in nearby wetlands, and it would be beneficial to extend this to Ruscombe. Such measures would need to be undertaken in a structured programme to ensure success.

5.7 Promote a 'wildlife friendly gardening scheme' to residents.

5.7.1 Vision

At least ten per cent of the area of residential gardens, playing fields and other green spaces will be maintained to maximise their potential for wildlife.

Grass will be left to grow tall, pollinator-friendly flowers will be encouraged and some gardens will contain wildlife ponds.

Advice will be available and gardeners will be encouraged by friendly competition or an award scheme.

5.7.2 Evaluation

Gardens are an increasingly important resource for wildlife in England. Together they cover more land than all of the National Nature Reserves, and they have a great potential for enhancement.

A small area of the lawn left unmown will encourage grasshoppers, beetles and slow worms to visit; a suitable pond is probably the best way of accommodating wildlife in a garden; and nectar and pollen-rich flowers will

attract butterflies and bees. Feeding birds and providing nest boxes provides much-needed resources, now often scarce in the wider countryside.

5.7.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 7.1 Deliver a 'gardening for wildlife' promotion scheme.

A number of organisations and local authorities promote wildlife gardening through schemes ranging from the simple provision of advice to presenting awards for wildlife gardening. Wild Maidenhead organises the 'Wild About Gardens Award Scheme' (www.wildmaidenhead.org.uk/waga-offline) and the Royal Horticultural Society and Wildlife Trusts have a web site with lots of useful information (wildaboutgardens.org.uk/).

5.8 Enhance the wildlife value of the many ponds across the parish.

5.8.1 Vision

All of the ponds across the parish will be maintained with wildlife in mind. They will have clean water, some of which will be free of vegetation. Floating, emergent and bankside vegetation will be varied in both species composition and structure. This will provide lots of resources that attract a wide range of wildlife including amphibians, aquatic insects, birds and bats that feed on the insects over the water.

5.8.2 Evaluation

The author visited three ponds in February 2020, although there are innumerable ponds across the parish.

The village pond, a Local Wildlife Site primarily because of the presence of Great Crested Newts, is well looked after. It has all of the qualities mentioned in the vision, above.

The other two ponds seen were dominated by tall, scrubby vegetation that, while it has its value for visiting and nesting birds and some aquatic insects prefer shaded ponds, they are likely to benefit from some vegetation management.

5.8.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 8.1 Gain a better understanding of the number and condition of ponds in the parish

A study of detailed maps will identify the significant ponds. They will need to be visited to undertake a simple survey of their condition. This could consist of a quick species survey (for example see <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/get-involved-2/big-pond-dip/>) or a more detailed habitat survey

(<https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/HABITAT-MANUAL-FINAL.pdf>).

These surveys will identify priorities for management. Ponds that should be prioritised are those that are assessed as being in poor condition, especially those that are isolated and provide a relatively rare resource in the landscape.

Objective 8.2 Improve the condition of two or more ponds in the parish.

For the ponds that have been identified as being a priority for habitat management, the landowners approval should be sought to undertake appropriate management, as determined by the survey.

This may include management of the vegetation surrounding the pond or within it, or efforts to improve the quality of the water entering the pond from road or agricultural run off.

5.9 Promote appropriate management of the woodlands, especially ancient woodland, across the parish.

5.9.1 Vision

Woodland will be home to a considerable variety of wildlife. Birds will find plenty of opportunities to nest in hollow trees and dense scrub, butterflies will flit along open, flower-rich rides, and spring flowers will carpet the ground – taking advantage of clearings in the wood.

5.9.2 Evaluation

Approximately 67 hectares (10%) of Ruscombe Parish is covered in woodland. Two block of woodland have been designated as Local Wildlife Sites (see citation document, appended) and so may be assumed to be in good condition. The condition of the other woodlands is not known. Many small woods suffer from a lack of appropriate maintenance, leaving them dark, uniform and lacking in wildlife.

One of the Local Wildlife Sites, Ruscombe and Vale Woods is under positive management by a local wildlife conservation group and it would be beneficial to either encourage landowners to undertake positive management or facilitate the volunteer group to undertake management in nearby woods.

Woodland in good condition will have a vibrant ground flora, a well-developed understorey and areas of open habitat. There will be plenty of dead wood and a diverse mix of tree species and sizes.

5.9.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 9.1 Gain an understanding of the condition of woodland in the parish

After obtaining consent from the landowner, the woodlands can be visited and their condition assessed using a standard survey method (eg <https://woodlandwildlifetoolkit.sylva.org.uk/assess>).

This will identify which woodlands are in need of management to achieve good condition, and what management is required.

Objective 9.2 Achieve good condition for at least one woodland currently in poor condition.

In order to maximise wildlife diversity, management such as coppicing, ride creation, removal of exotic species and in-fill planting are often required. The type and extent of the management required will be informed by the results of the survey work.

The products of the management, such as firewood or hazel stakes, can often be used to offset the cost of management.

5.10 Monitor the quality of priority grassland habitats and provide advice to landowners if required.

5.10.1 Vision

Grassland identified as 'priority habitat' will be recognised as important by its owner and will be managed sympathetically to maximise its value to wildlife.

5.10.2 Evaluation

There is currently one patch of grassland mapped as 'lowland meadow'; a priority habitat, in Ruscombe Parish. This small field has been designated a Local Wildlife Site (see citation document, appended), and is currently used as a horse paddock.

The Local Wildlife Designation does not impose any obligations on the landowner, but should offer it some protection against development.

5.10.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 10.1 Ensure that the owner is aware of the importance of their field and has access to suitable advice.

Although landowners often do not like being told what to do with their land, they are normally receptive to friendly, helpful advice. A letter explaining the significance of their land and some pointers to appropriate advice can be sent to the owner or tenant.

5.11 Manage the verges and communal green spaces to benefit pollinators and other species.

5.11.1 Vision

Many of the road verges and green open spaces will be dominated by long, flower-rich vegetation for much of the year. This creates a network of wildlife 'corridors' linking hedgerows, woodlands and other natural areas and allowing plants and animals to spread across the parish.

These areas will be attractive to the residents and will be sited to not cause a danger to road users.

5.11.2 Evaluation

Across the UK many of the verges and green open spaces are kept mown short, and free from wildflowers. They look neat to the casual passer-by but are often devoid of wildlife.

Added together, all of the road verges and other green spaces form a significant potential space for wildlife.

Leaving the verges left uncut for the summer will encourage all sorts of wildlife and can save time and money on reduced mowing.

5.11.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 11.1 Manage as many verges for wildlife as practical

Working with the highways authority, verges that can be managed with wildlife in mind should be identified and guidance (eg <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/managing-land-wildlife/how-manage-road-verge-wildlife>) followed. This can include a change in mowing regime and introducing wildflowers.

Part of this guidance advises that local people know and understand the reasons for the change in management routine. This is crucial to ensure that the changes have the support of local residents and councillors.

5.12 Promote a greater understanding of the biodiversity of Ruscombe Parish to its residents.

5.12.1 Vision

The residents will have a good understanding of the natural environment across the parish. They will value the green spaces and will campaign for enhancement and against inappropriate development.

More residents will be involved in conservation volunteering and will visit the countryside frequently to enjoy their surroundings.

5.12.2 Evaluation

There is currently an active group of conservation volunteers with an inspirational and knowledgeable leader. This group could deliver more of the projects identified in this report if it were boosted by more members.

This part of Berkshire is under constant threat from development. One effective argument against development is the presence of protected species and habitats. If more people are involved in enhancing their environment, recording wildlife sightings and enjoying green spaces then the argument against development becomes more powerful.

5.12.3 Objectives and prescription

Objective 12.1 Design a self-guided walk around the parish, highlighting and interpreting the important environmental features.

People are more likely to value the countryside if they are able to access it and understand what makes it special. A route, taking people around the main highlights, could be designed and a supporting leaflet or website produced. This could include a GIS route so that mobile devices can be used for navigation. The leaflet, or website, could explain the wildlife present in the different habitats throughout the year.

Objective 12.2 Encourage more people to get involved in looking after or protecting the natural habitats found in Ruscombe.

An organisation with similar aims and activities to Wild Maidenhead (<https://www.wildmaidenhead.org.uk/>) could be set up to promote engagement with the natural environment. A representative from Wild Maidenhead will be happy to meet and help set up such a body.

If enthusiastic individuals are identified they could be recruited as volunteer work party leaders. TCV (<https://www.tcv.org.uk/>) has lots of advice on forming and running such groups.

6 References

SoNP, 2019:

<https://nbn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf>

Lawton, 2010:

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130402154501/http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf>

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