



Cossington Neighbourhood Plan

2021 – 2037

PRE-SUBMISSION VERSION, MARCH 2022





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Foreword

from the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee

Welcome to the Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Cossington.

The current Neighbourhood Plan process was originated by Cossington at a Council meeting in 2020 when it was decided to set up a joint Parish Council/Community Advisory Committee.

The impetus for producing a Neighbourhood Plan was not to prevent development, but to ensure that it is of an appropriate scale and character. We are fortunate to live in an area of great beauty both in terms of the natural landscape and the built environment.

As the Neighbourhood Plan was being written, the new Local Plan for Charnwood was being finalised.

The underlying premise of the Plan is to seek to ensure sustainable development within the parish that meets the needs of current and future generations, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment. These goals are mutually dependent. Conserving and enhancing the natural and built environment will not only improve the lives of people but can further strengthen the economy through tourism activities.

As the Neighbourhood Plan was being finalised, the Government introduced a ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution. We have sought to embrace this commitment where we can within the Neighbourhood Plan so that development in the Parish has appropriate regard for the living conditions of future generations.

Alongside the Policies included in this NP are a range of Community Actions. These are not planning policies and are not subject to Examination but are a reflection of work that the Parish Council intends to take forward in support of NP Policies where it is appropriate to do so.

I would like to thank the members of the Advisory Committee, other Parish Councillors and the many other individuals and bodies for their support as we have undertaken this work, and for the grant funding received from Locality without which the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan would not have been possible.

Councillor Penny Weston-Webb

Chair, Cossington Parish Council.

1. Introduction

The Cossington Neighbourhood Plan (the NP) has been prepared by the Cossington NP Advisory Committee, which brings together members of the local community and Parish Councillors.

A key part of the Government's Localism agenda, a NP is a new type of planning document that gives local people greater control and say over how their community develops, now and in the future. This includes, for example, where new homes, shops, etc. should be built, what new buildings and extensions should look like, and which areas of land should be protected from development.

As the Plain English Guide to the Localism Act 2011 states, "Instead of local people being told what to do, the Government thinks that local communities should have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live".

The NP covers the whole of the Parish of Cossington (Figure 1). It sits alongside Charnwood's Local Plan (LP) to provide more detailed development 'planning' related policies to help achieve locally identified aims and objectives.

The NP sets out a long-term approach for the development of Cossington, and clear development related policies to realise this.

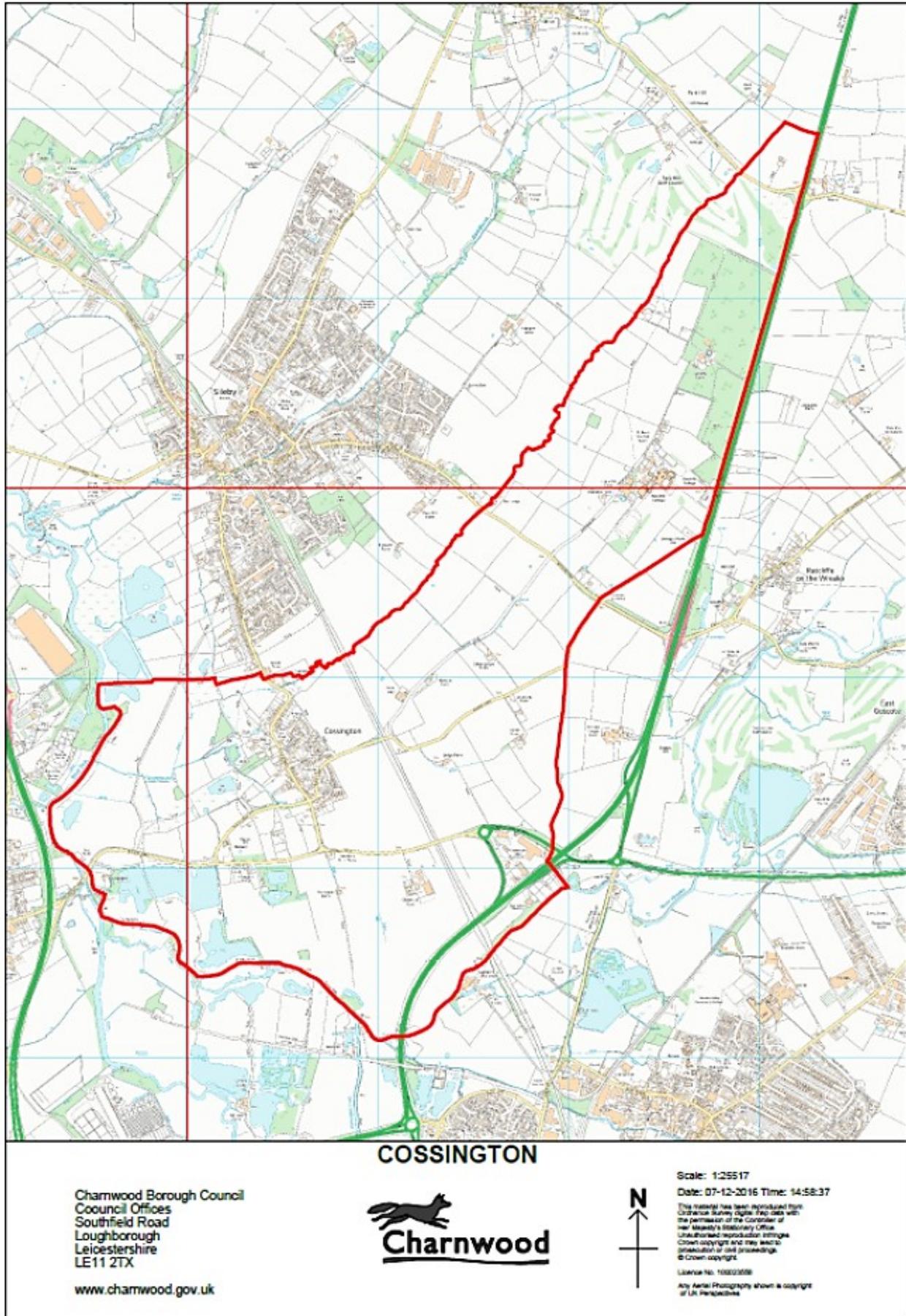
In preparing a NP, a community is not working from 'a blank piece of paper'. Legislation requires that the NP, and the policies it contains, must be prepared in a certain manner; in particular, the policies must be in general conformity with relevant national and local (i.e. Charnwood) planning policies.

The NP is now at the formal pre-submission stage. All comments received from a wide range of stakeholders will be recorded and responded to, indicating where the NP has changed, as appropriate.

It will then be submitted to Charnwood Borough Council who will undertake further statutory consultation before being subject to an Independent Examination. Once all recommendations have been incorporated into the NP, it will be brought back to Cossington where a referendum will be held. It will pass if it achieves over 50% of the votes cast.

Once made, the NP will form part of the Statutory Development Plan for Charnwood. This means that it must be taken into account when considering planning applications affecting Cossington.

Figure 1 Cossington Neighbourhood Area (Charnwood Borough Council)

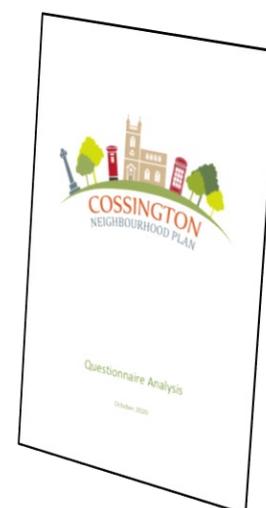


2. How the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared

The Cossington Neighbourhood Area was formally designated by Charnwood Borough Council on 17 April 2020.

The NP has been prepared by the Cossington NP Advisory Committee comprising members of the local community and local parish councillors, with the support of Charnwood Borough Council and consultants YourLocale, and under the direction of Cossington Parish Council (the Accountable Body for the NP).

Effective and extensive consultation have been at the heart of its preparation in the most challenging of circumstances. This is key to ensuring that the NP fully reflects local needs and priorities. There have been a variety of consultation exercises, at which many local people have taken part.



A questionnaire was sent to all the households in the Parish in the autumn 2020, to help define the priorities for the NP. There was an excellent response rate amounting to 41% of adults and up to 78% of households (171 actual responses) and the findings were used as the basis for three 'Theme Groups' involving members of the local community meeting throughout 2020 and into 2021 to consider in detail

issues such as housing, the environment and sustainability (community facilities, employment and transport).

An open event was held in July 2021 to share the emerging policies. 40 people attended and there was a high level of support for the policies on display.

Further details regarding community consultation are provided in the Consultation Statement (to be made available with the submission version of the NP).



3. How the NP fits into the planning system

The right for communities to prepare NPs was established through the Localism Act 2011, which set out the general rules governing their preparation.

A NP forms part of the Statutory Development Plan for the area in which it is prepared. This statutory status means that it must be taken into account when considering planning decisions affecting that area.

A NP is required to meet a set of basic conditions if it is to proceed to referendum. Firstly, it must not breach, and be otherwise compatible with EU obligations, including the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive and European Habitats Directive. Although Britain has formally left the EU, its laws still apply.

It also needs to be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan. In the case of Cossington, this is the Charnwood LP.

A NP must also have regard to national planning policy and advice. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF requires the planning system (including NPs) to encourage sustainable development and details three dimensions to that development:

An economic dimension – they should contribute to economic development;

A social dimension – they should support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by providing the right supply of housing and creating a high-quality built environment with accessible local services; and

An environmental dimension – they should contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

4. The NP, its purpose and what we want it to achieve

The NP area encompasses the whole of the Parish of Cossington and covers the period up to 2037, a timescale which deliberately mirrors that for the Charnwood Local Plan.

A vision statement has been prepared by the Advisory Committee based on community input. When asked in the community questionnaire, 96% of respondents agreed with the vision.

The parish of Cossington is located within the Soar valley. It lies between Rothley, Sileby, Ratcliffe-on-the-Wreake, Seagrave, Mountsorrel, Quorn and Syston. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure Cossington remains a peaceful and safe place to live. The Plan will inform and shape new and future development proposals in such a way that by the end of the Plan period, 2037, Cossington will have retained its independent identity and locality, distinct from adjoining towns and villages. Cossington will continue to thrive as a vibrant and distinct village with a balanced and diverse community.

Essential to the plan is the proposition that by supporting measured, proportionate, timely and sustainable development in a gradual phased manner, the character of the village and parish can be retained for future generations. To do this any development activity has to be consistent with:

- Local need.
- Preserving the distinct areas of separation between the villages.
- Being sympathetic to the history and heritage of the village, retaining and enhancing the character and appeal of the existing conservation area.
- Protecting the open spaces, the high-quality natural environment and wildlife, community and recreational facilities.
- Containing environmental and sustainability policies that contribute positively to flood risk, mitigate climate change and minimise traffic volumes by encouraging home working to flourish in the modern digital age.

The main purpose of the NP is not to duplicate national or district-wide (i.e. Charnwood) planning policies, but to sit alongside these, to add additional or more detailed policies specific to Cossington. Where there are national and district-wide planning policies that meet the needs and requirements of the Parish they are not repeated here. Instead, the NP focuses on those planning issues which consultation shows matter most to the community, and to which the NP can add the greatest additional value.

5. Sustainable Development

According to the key national planning document; the NPPF, the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to sustainable development.

The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people to satisfy their basic needs and to enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own social, economic and environmental needs.

The NPPF carries a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It states that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: social, environmental and economic, all of which are important and interrelated. In accordance with this, the NP's aims and policies are centred on the achievement of sustainable development, including by, for example:

Social

- To safeguard existing open space for the enjoyment of residents;
- To protect existing community facilities; and
- To deliver a mix of housing types, so that it can meet the needs of present and future generations.

Environmental

- To ensure that housing development is of the right quantity and type in the right location, so that it does not harm but instead positively reflects the existing and historic character of the area;
- To protect important open spaces from development;
- To ensure that the design of development protects the distinctive local character and identity;
- To conserve and, where possible, improve biodiversity and important habitats; and
- To make provision for improved pedestrian and cycling facilities.

Economic

- To protect existing employment uses;
- To support appropriate small-scale business development and expansion; and
- To encourage appropriate start-up businesses and home working

It is important to note that when using the NP to form a view on a development proposal or a policy issue the whole document and the policies contained in it must be considered together.

While every effort has been made to make the main parts of this NP easy to read and understand, the wording of the actual policies is necessarily more formal, so that it complies with statutory requirements.

The NP will be kept under review and may change over time in response to new and changing needs and requirements.

6. About Cossington

Set within the confluence of the two rivers Wreake and Soar, the village of Cossington and its parish has been a place of human habitation since the Bronze Age, with archaeological evidence found of bronze age, iron age, Saxon, Roman, and medieval settlement.

First recorded as 'Cosintone' (meaning 'Cossa's settlement') in the Domesday Book in 1086 as a farmstead of 77 villagers belonging to the Manor owned by Earl Hugh of Chester, Cossington Manor then changed hands many times until 1549, when it was bought by a member of the Rothley branch of the Babington family, beginning a long stabilising connection. The Babingtons were



responsible for starting the piecemeal enclosure of the three open fields to the east of the village during the seventeenth century and several of their family served as rectors for the parish.

Main buildings in the village are situated on medieval sites, including the village pond, the original manor house, the church, the rectory, and the water mill. The church dates from the thirteenth century with additions in later centuries. Following a major Victorian renovation in the late nineteenth century, linen fold pew panelling, an effigy of a young priest and a celebrated sedilia still survive. The early twentieth century-stained glass window by Strachan is a rare example within a parish church. The rectory, recognised as one of the finest examples within the country, is a complex of various buildings some dating from the fourteenth century while the water mill, known as one of the earliest in Leicestershire, dates from the thirteenth century and produced paper, fulled wool and milled corn over 800 years.

In the late eighteenth century both rivers were canalised, with the River Soar eventually linking with the Grand Union Canal bringing trade to the area. To the east of the village the Midland Counties Railway was opened with Cossington having its own stop until 1873.

Education and social care improved in the parish during the nineteenth century. Having had its own private workhouse, the village became part of the Barrow upon Soar Poor Union in 1834. A separate vestry was built to provide a Sunday School in 1835 while Ratcliffe College, a Catholic school was built to the north of the village in 1847. The Dame school was replaced by a purpose-built National school in 1873 with spaces for sixty pupils. For thirty years a private boarding school for girls was run on by two sisters on Main Street offering French lessons and European governesses.

The village played its part in both wars, losing local inhabitants in service, and providing homes for Belgian refugees in WWI and refugees from Yorkshire in WWII. The Hall was used as an ATS base

and Ratcliffe Aerodrome (a privately owned airfield) was used as a hub for the movement of military aircraft.

The updating of the local road links with the building of the A6 Quorn/ Mountsorrel and the A46 western Leicester bypass in the 1990s left the village peacefully between the two. Cossington had often been described as an example of a typical beautiful Leicestershire village in the mid twentieth century, having a high proportion of thatched cruck cottages, a post office, shop, blacksmith, veterinary practice, and market gardens. Since then, mains water, electricity, gas, and drains have been installed but the village has lost many of its facilities. Having survived the local gravel extractions of the 1980s and 90s, frequent flooding, and successfully fought off proposed housing development in the 1990s it is now predominantly a residential village, growing only in population from 77 inhabitants in 1086 to 598 in 2011.

There are several notable individuals with which Cossington is associated. In 1882 Lord Kitchener's father came to live at The Manor House until his death in 1894 whereupon he was buried in the village churchyard. In the twentieth century Colonel Abel Smith came to live at The Grove following his residence at Ratcliffe Hall. Lady Isobel Barnett, a radio and television personality famous for her role in 'What's My Line?' during the mid-1900s also lived in the village at the White House and Barnett Close is named in her memory.

Moving forward to the present day, at the time of the 2011 Census, the Cossington Parish was home to around 598 residents living in 218 households. Analysis of the Census suggests that between 2001 and 2011, the population in the local area grew by around 3% (15 people). During this period, it is estimated the number of dwellings increased by 11% (22).

There is evidence of an ageing population with the number of over 65 year olds rising by 9% and up from 20% of total population in 2001 to 22% in 2011. In line with national trends the local population is likely to get older as average life expectancy continues to rise.

Home ownership levels are very high with around 80% of households owning their homes outright or with a mortgage or loan and at 7% the share of households living in social rented accommodation is very low when compared with regional and national rates.

There is evidence of under occupancy suggesting a need for smaller homes of one to two bedrooms which would be suitable for residents needing to downsize, small families and those entering the housing market. Providing suitable accommodation for elderly residents will enable them to remain in the local community and release under-occupied larger properties onto the market which would be suitable for growing families.

There is a predominance of large detached and an under representation of housing for single people with just 3% of dwellings having one bedroom.

Land Registry data indicates there has a small number of new build housing market activity over recent years, but this has been exclusively high value detached housing.

Deprivation is not a significant issue in the local area, but IMD domain data suggests that some residents may find it difficult to access owner-occupation or access the private rental market.

7. Policies

Housing and the Built Environment

Introduction

Ways in which the planning system can ensure sustainable development is to direct residential and employment growth to the most sustainable locations and to shape the key characteristics of that development.

This is a core principle of the NPPF, which promotes “guiding development towards sustainable solutions” whilst recognising that in doing so it “should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area”. It is also at the heart of the Charnwood Local Plan which seeks to direct growth to the most sustainable settlements based on a Settlement Hierarchy.

Charnwood Borough Council (CBC) is preparing a new Local Plan from 2021 to 2037. It is expected to be adopted in 2022. Its strategic aim for housing is to deliver “urban concentration and intensification” to ensure sustainability. A central element of the Plan’s development has been the completion of a settlement hierarchy review that targets residential growth at the urban centres of Loughborough, the sustainable urban extensions adjoining Leicester City and in the four designated urban settlements at Shepshed, Birstall, Syston and Thurmaston. The next category of settlement in the hierarchy are service centres.

The consultation draft has confirmed the Local Plan hierarchy that Cossington is classified as one of 14 “other settlements” where opportunities for development will be responded to positively within a defined settlement boundary.

Results from a Questionnaire completed in October 2020 revealed that the community do not wish to see significant housing growth in the Parish but are generally sympathetic to small-scale developments within the settlement boundary.

Residential Allocation

Through the Neighbourhood Plan, the opportunity has been taken positively to plan for development within Cossington to help meet local need and help to support local services. The Settlement Boundary has therefore been reinforced and updated in order to accommodate the potential for housing growth up to 2037 and to direct development to the most suitable locations.

An assessment of the limited options for residential development in the Parish was undertaken by the members of the Housing Theme Group. A total of x sites were put forward for consideration through a site assessment process which was independently lead. A single site is put forward in this Neighbourhood Plan as an allocation for around 10 units. The Cossington Settlement Boundary

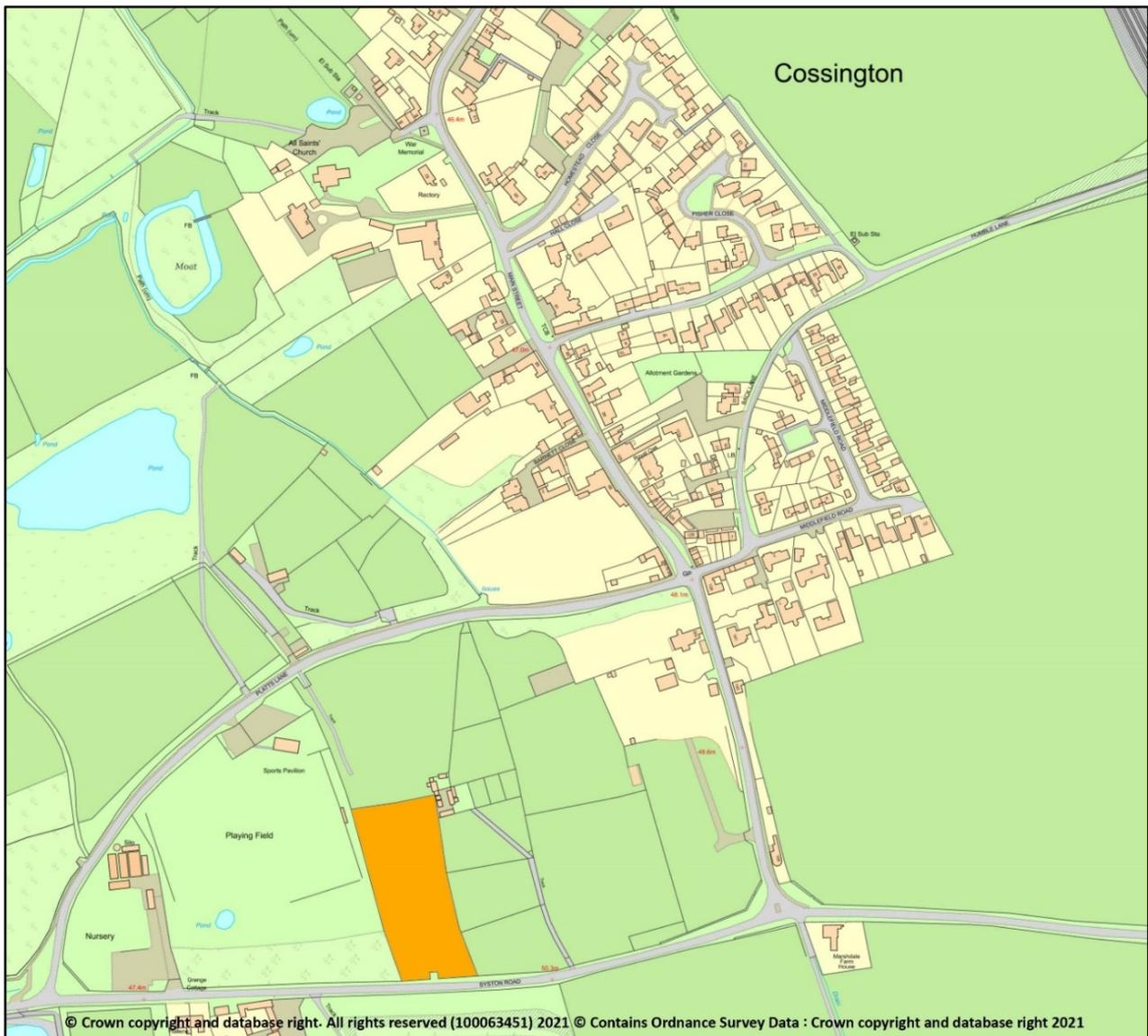
has therefore been redrawn in order to include this site. The site selection process is described in Appendix C.

The landowner has agreed the planning conditions attached to this policy.

POLICY H1: RESIDENTIAL SITE ALLOCATION - land is allocated for residential development at the site shown at figure 2. Development will be supported subject to the following requirements being achieved:

- a) The development will provide for up to twelve dwellings.
- b) At least five of the dwellings will be Affordable Housing.
- c) At least one unit will be constructed to a full physical access standard meeting part M Part 4 section 3 of the building regulations (2016).
- d) The existing planting will be retained as far as is possible within a sensitive design solution, with an arboricultural survey to be undertaken and its recommendations implemented.
- e) The elevational treatment to the units will be of a high quality so as not to undermine the integrity of the setting.

Figure 2: Residential allocation



Settlement Boundary

The parish is predominately rural in nature with the built-up area of Cossington surrounded by open and attractive, countryside.

In planning terms, land outside a defined Settlement Boundary, including any small groups of buildings or small settlements, is treated as countryside. This includes any small groups of buildings or small settlements that may be found there.

The purpose of Settlement Boundary is to ensure that sufficient housing and employment land is available in appropriate locations that can be supported by existing infrastructure and avoid impinging into the local countryside.

It is national and local planning policy that development in the countryside should be carefully controlled. Supporting “the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside” is identified as a key element in the NPPF. This approach is also supported by this Plan, in particular, because it will help ensure that development is focused in more sustainable locations with a greater range of services and facilities and infrastructure that has capacity for expansion, as well as helping to maintain the special landscape character of the Parish and protecting the countryside for its own sake as an attractive, accessible and non-renewable natural resource.

Settlement Boundaries were established by Charnwood Borough Council in order to clarify where new development activity is best located.

The Neighbourhood Plan supports the retention of the Settlement Boundary for the built-up part of Cossington. The Settlement Boundary that was drawn up by Charnwood Borough Council for inclusion within the Part 2 Local Plan has been reviewed through the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. The settlement boundary within the draft Charnwood Local Plan 2021-2037 has been incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan with the addition of the site allocated for residential development.

Within the defined Settlement Boundary an appropriate amount of suitably designed and located development will be acceptable in principle, although all development will be required to take into account the policies within this Plan.

POLICY H1: SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY – Development proposals on sites within the Settlement Boundary as identified in Figure 3, will be supported where it complies with the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan.

Land outside the defined Settlement Boundary will be treated as open countryside, where development will be carefully managed.

Figure 3: Settlement Boundary for Cossington



Housing Mix

Neighbourhood Plans offer the opportunity to include a policy on housing mix. This can enable a policy to be written that helps to balance the housing stock locally to ensure a wide range of accommodation is available to address local issues.

The Charnwood Core Strategy says that it expects ‘new housing developments to take account of local housing needs and the current mix of homes available in the local area’. The draft Local Plan

seeks to provide ‘a mix of house types, tenures and sizes having regard to housing needs, market conditions, economic viability and site-specific circumstances’.

In the Community Questionnaire, there was significant support for smaller houses of 2-3 bedrooms (63.36% of respondents saying they ‘agree or strongly agree’ with encouraging this form of housing). There was strong support for bungalows with 44% of respondents encouraging this type of housing.

A housing needs report is available as Appendix B.

The Census profile from 2011 identifies a high proportion of 4/5 bedroomed properties in the Parish (34% of the 174 dwellings compared to a Borough-wide average of 23.2%) whilst there are also more detached houses (60.5% compared to 30.4% across Charnwood Borough).

There is an over representation of older people (aged 65+) at 21.7% of residents compared to a Borough-wide figure of 16.4%. There is also evidence of an ageing population with the number of people aged 65 and over increasing by 9% (11 people) between 2001 and 2011. Over 65s represented 20% of total population in 2001 compared with 22% by 2011.

Policy H2: HOUSING MIX - New development should provide for a mixture of housing types having regard to identified local housing needs. The provision of bungalows suitable for elderly people and dwellings of up to three bedrooms will be particularly supported.

The inclusion of four-bedroom or larger houses in housing developments will be supported where they are subservient in number to one, two and three-bedroom accommodation and where there is a proven housing need.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is defined in the NPPF (2019 - annex 2) as “housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market”.

The Charnwood Local Plan 2011 – 2028 references Affordable Housing throughout the document:

Cossington is specifically mentioned on page 30 where the development strategy highlights the need to ‘respond positively to affordable housing developments in accordance with Policy CS3’.

A specific section on the amount of affordable housing starts on page 36. It describes the issue of high house prices and identifies the need to increase amounts of affordable homes being delivered without compromising scheme viability.

This section goes on to identify the types of affordable housing required. It suggests that the greatest need is for 2 and 3 bed houses, and that 80% should be an affordable or social rent.

There is an expectation that affordable housing should be delivered alongside market housing to create mixed and balanced communities, and ‘rural exception sites’ are promoted in rural communities where a need for affordable housing can be demonstrated.

Policy CS3 requires 40% affordable housing (sites of 10 dwellings or more).

Draft Policy LP5 supports the provision of small-scale developments in rural areas for Affordable Housing outside settlement Limits to Development as an exception where:

- the housing is demonstrated to meet an identified local need for affordable housing; and
- development is well related to a rural settlement and respects the character and scale of the settlement and its landscape setting.

Planning permission for rural exception sites will be subject to conditions, or a planning obligation will be sought, to ensure that all initial and subsequent occupiers of the affordable dwellings will be local people in housing need and benefit from the status of the dwellings as affordable housing in perpetuity.

Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in general conformity with adopted strategic local policies. It is good practice that they take emerging Local Plans into account when finalising their Plans.

Just 7% of households live in Affordable Housing which is lower than the borough (12.6%), regional (16.5%) and national (18.5%) rates. There was no Affordable Housing for Sale in the Parish at the time of the Census in 2011.

An Assessment of Affordable Housing for Sale is available as Appendix D

POLICY H3 - AFFORDABLE HOUSING – Development proposals which include affordable housing including through an Exception Site should provide a mix of housing types and sizes to help meet the identified needs of the Parish. The provision of smaller homes, especially for young families and young people and for older people who wish to downsize, will be supported.

Planning obligations will be used to ensure that the market and affordable housing is available in perpetuity for people with a local connection to the Plan area.

Developments should be ‘tenure blind’, where affordable housing is indistinguishable from market dwellings and is spread throughout the development.

Windfall sites

A windfall site is defined in the NPPF as one which has not been specifically identified as available through the local or neighbourhood plan process. Such sites normally comprise previously developed land that has unexpectedly become available. To help protect the character of the Cossington parish, development beyond the housing allocation described above will be restricted to windfall sites within the Settlement Boundary, other than in exceptional circumstances.

The Core Strategy defines windfall sites as ‘Sites which have not been specifically identified for housing development through the planning process but which may come forward over the course of the plan. They normally comprise previously developed sites that have unexpectedly become available’.

Policy H4 applies to all forms of development. Given the nature of the policies in this Plan and the wider development plan it is anticipated that any new development proposals which may come forward within the Plan period will be of a residential nature.

POLICY H4: WINDFALL SITES – Development of infill and/or redevelopment sites comprising individual dwellings or small groups of dwellings within the Settlement Boundary will be supported where it:

- a) provide protection and integration for natural features such as trees, hedges and streams;
- b) provides for a safe vehicular and pedestrian access to the site;
- c) does not reduce garden space to an extent where it adversely impacts on the character of the area, the amenity of neighbours and the occupiers of the dwelling or has a significant detrimental heritage or environmental impact;
- d) is of an appropriate scale which reflects the size, character and level of service provision within the Parish;
- e) ensures that any traffic generation and parking impact including mitigation measures do not result in a severe adverse impact on, road and pedestrian safety: and
- f) does not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity for neighbouring occupiers by reason of loss of privacy, loss of daylight, visual intrusion or noise.

Design and the built environment

The Parish of Cossington has a long and interesting history, resulting in a wide array of heritage assets, attractive landscapes and a distinctive local character. This is reflected in the designation of a Conservation Area which is substantively within Cossington village.

The biggest challenge facing the future of the Parish is to balance the desire to protect the character of the built-up area with the need for it to grow and evolve in a sensitive and proportionate manner in order to sustain the community and its facilities.

The policy and design guide highlighted in this section seek to reflect the design principles which the community believes will help to achieve this aim. They reflect the outcome of work undertaken by a small group of people within the Housing Theme Group. The overall aim is to protect the settlement of Cossington to retain its character within a unique and distinctive Parish. This can be achieved by the use of the planning system to respond sensitively to the wide range of historic buildings, structures, landscapes and archaeology situated within the Parish. These assets form many of the key characteristics of the Parish, and future development should seek to enhance, reinforce and preserve this distinctive historic environment.

New development proposals should be designed sensitively to sit within the distinctive settlement patterns of the Cossington village. Existing settlement patterns have grown incrementally over time. The buildings date from many different periods, providing a richness and variety of styles and materials. This traditional rural character should be enhanced by new development and schemes should be designed to ensure that new buildings sit comfortably within the existing settlement pattern and are respectful of their surroundings.

The community consider it to be important that new residential development is of the highest standard to ensure that it is in keeping with the residential properties already in the village. It is not considered necessary to have a uniform series of properties that all look the same, rather to

ensure that new developments respect the features of buildings which make the Parish a desirable place in which to live.

New development proposals should be designed sensitively to ensure that the high-quality built environment is maintained and enhanced, particularly where schemes are located within or in close proximity to the Conservation Area. New designs should respond in a positive way to the local character through careful and appropriate use of high-quality materials and detail. Proposals should also demonstrate consideration of height, scale and massing, to ensure that new development delivers a positive contribution to the street scene and adds value to the distinctive character of the area.

The Government's ten-point plan for a Green Industrial Revolution includes the need to make homes greener, warmer and more energy efficient. The Design Guide (Appendix E) requires development to incorporate sustainable design and construction techniques to meet high standards for water and energy efficiency.

The proposed location of any development should not adversely affect any of the Local Green Spaces or community-defined open spaces within the parish and show concern for bio-diversity features that make a strong contribution to the overall character and physical form of the Parish.

A design guide has been produced (Appendix E) to help shape appropriate design within the parish.

POLICY H5: HOUSING DESIGN – Development proposals should demonstrate a high quality of design, layout and use of materials in order to make a positive contribution to the special character of the Parish and are encouraged to have regard to the building design principles and requirements as stated in the Design Guide in Appendix E to a degree that is proportionate to the development. In particular:

- a) Cossington's rural character should be enhanced by new development and should be designed to ensure that new buildings sit comfortably within the existing settlement pattern and are respectful of their surroundings.
- b) All new development proposals of one or more houses, replacement dwellings and extensions should have regard for the following building design principles to a degree that is proportionate to the development:
- c) Care should be taken to ensure that the development does not disrupt the visual amenities of the street scene and impact negatively on any significant wider landscape views.
- d) New buildings should follow a consistent design approach in the use of materials, fenestration and the roofline to the building. Materials should be chosen to complement the design of the development and add to the quality of character of the surrounding environment and of the Conservation area.
- e) All new housing should reflect the character and historic context of the existing developments within the Parish, however, contemporary and innovative materials and

design will be supported where positive improvement can be robustly demonstrated without detracting from the historic context. Development should enhance biodiversity and relate well to the topography of the area, with existing trees, boundaries and hedges preserved whenever possible.

- f) Development should incorporate sustainable design and construction techniques to meet high standards for energy and water efficiency, including the use of renewable and low carbon energy technology, as appropriate.
- g) Roof and wall construction following technical best- practice recommendations for integral bird nest boxes and bat breeding and roosting sites.
- h) Hedges (or fences with ground level gaps) for property boundaries that maintain connectivity of habitat for hedgehogs

The Natural, Historical and Social Environment

Introduction

This chapter of the Neighbourhood Plan deals mainly with the *environmental* agenda of *sustainable development*, together with open spaces of community value in the *social* agenda, as described in the *National Planning Policy Framework* (2019), page 5. The chapter aims to balance the requirement for appropriate development in the Plan Area against the value of environmental and other features that are both *special* – appreciated, in their own right and as community assets, by local people - and *significant* for their wildlife and history. It also deals with broader environmental issues of concern to the community, including protection and enhancement of biodiversity, planning for resilience to climate change, and approaches to renewable energy generation.

Care was taken during preparation of the Plan to ensure that the policies (and the sites and areas of environmental significance covered by them) were not unduly restrictive on development during the Plan’s lifetime. Even taking into account the large size of Cossington Meadows nature reserve, only 16% by area of all the open and currently undeveloped land in the parish is protected through the Neighbourhood Plan’s policies, and the planning system generally, from potential environmentally damaging development:

1. Total area of Neighbourhood Plan Area	c.616 ha
2. Open and undeveloped land	c.592 ha
3. Area designated or recognised in this Plan for <i>environmental</i> protection (including Cossington Meadows nature reserve, 57 ha)	c.97 ha

Landscape, geology and setting

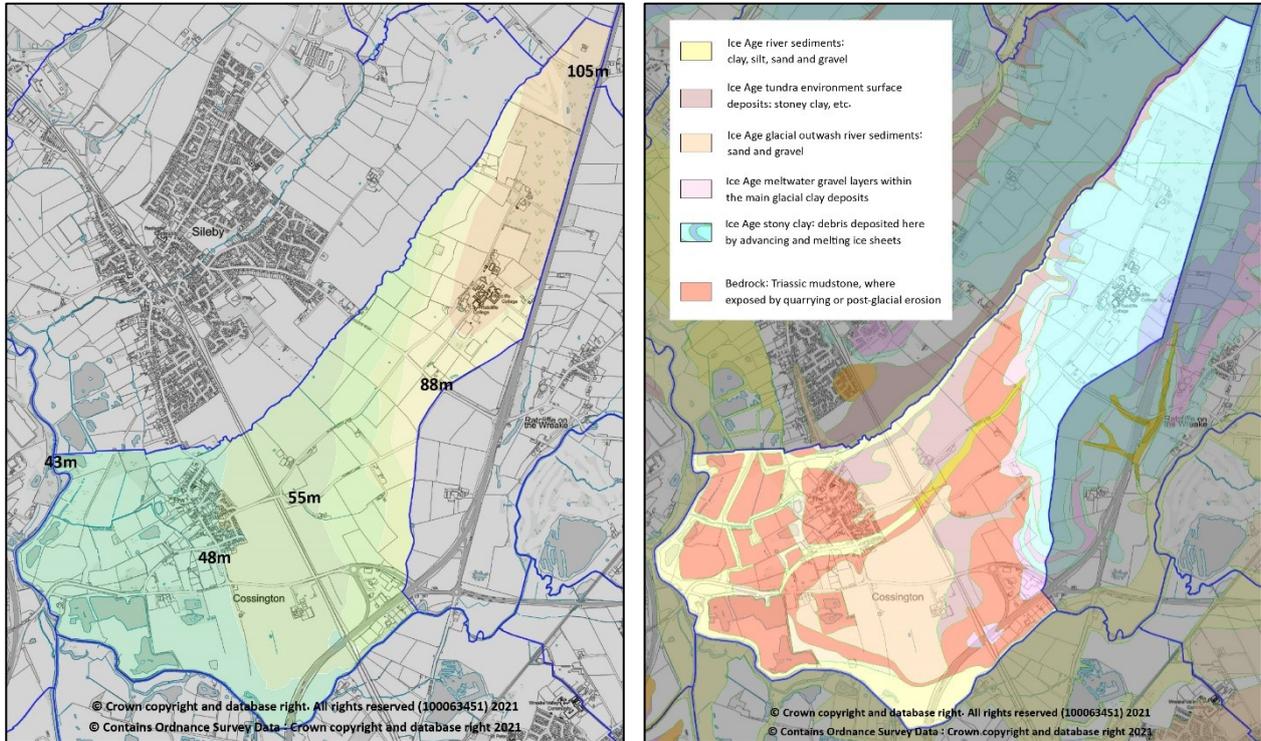
The Plan Area occupies a wedge of land formed by the confluence of the Soar and Wreake valleys, a brook flowing southwest along the boundary with Sileby parish, and the course of Roman Fosse Way to the east. The wedge is also a ridge of high ground whose spine rises from southwest to northeast. Cossington village itself lies just to the south of a small brook, on slightly elevated river terraces and just above the natural flood limit of the Wreake/Soar floodplain; its location was evidently chosen by its first occupiers as providing enough water to drink but dry land for all other aspects of village life. The lowest point in the whole Area is at 43m, where the river Soar flows into Sileby parish, the highest is on Fosse Way (A46) at the top of the ridge known historically as ‘the wolds’; although modest this difference is enough to give good views west and south and to set the Plan Area in the wider Leicestershire landscape.

The Soar and Wreake valleys, which form the west and south boundaries of the Plan Area, are much wider than their present-day rivers could have created. Their present breadth and flatness is the result of their being shaped by torrents of meltwater released by ice sheets during the several phases of the Quaternary Ice Ages, starting about 2 million years ago. The area would have looked like the tundra of Siberia today, with the valleys being part of wide, gravel-strewn, braided drainage

systems. This Ice Age gravel was quarried extensively in the 20th century – the restored pits are now a landscape feature with biodiversity and recreational value in their own right.

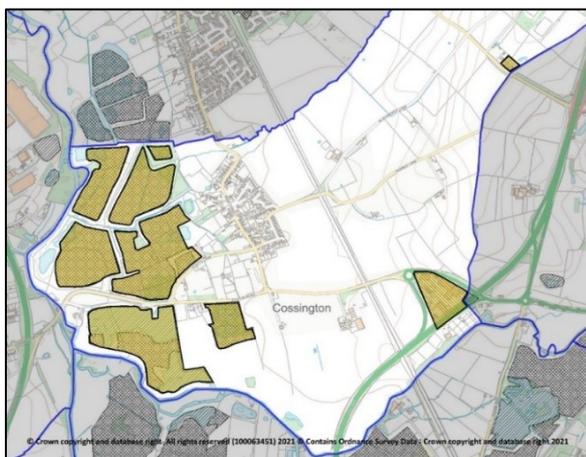
Figures 4.1 and 4.2: Topography (left) and geology of the Plan Area.

Geological map adapted from British Geological Survey online mapping. Both © Crown copyright and database rights. All rights reserved (100063451) 2021.



The Plan Area’s bedrock is Triassic (225 million years old) red siltstone. This is only visible on the river terraces mentioned above, or at the bottom of the gravel pits. Everywhere else has a covering of Ice Age deposits of two types: the sand and gravel in the valleys and on river terraces, and ‘boulder clay’ – the pulverised rock debris, clay and stones dumped here by advancing and retreating ice sheets – on higher ground (figure 4.2).

Quarrying



The extensive sand and gravel beds (see above) now forming the floor of the Soar and Wreake valleys were quarried on a small scale historically for local use – for surfacing muddy tracks and for building – but on a large scale in the mid-20th century for the national construction industry. Almost all the available gravel was removed (figure 5) down to the bedrock, to a depth up to 4 metres.

Figure 5: Locations of old quarries as mapped by British Geological Survey

After extraction of the gravel, the pits were backfilled, either with unused ‘overburden’ or inert landfill, or left to fill naturally as open water as part of planned biodiversity enhancement

measures. Almost all the old gravel pits are in the natural ‘functional’ floodplain, the remainder of which retains the heterogenous hydrological and lithological characteristics of the braided and channelled sand/gravel/clay deposits. Development proposals in the Plan Area should pay particular attention to this situation and take these conditions into account, both in measures for flood risk mitigation and when planning for ground conditions.

Historical environment

People have been here for five millennia: archaeological finds and excavations of prehistoric dates show occupation in the Bronze Age and through the Iron Age and Romano-British centuries.

Cossington

'Farm/settlement connected with Cusa/*Cosa' or 'Cusa's/Cosa's farm/settlement'.

Elements and their meanings

- Cusa (Old English) Personal name
- -ing- (Old English) Connective particle, linking a first element to a final element.
- tūn (Old English) An enclosure; a farmstead; a village; an estate.

Source: Key to English Place-Names (Nottingham University)

The Old English placename (left) suggests a date in the 5th century for the foundation of the present settlement, whose first documentary evidence is in Domesday Book as ‘Cosintone’. Archaeological records confirm occupation through Anglo-Saxon and early medieval times, as do the historical records of the medieval ridge and furrow earthworks (almost all lost since WW2)

that were the ploughlands of the medieval open field system. The basic village layout also dates from the medieval period, with a number of building plots and closes (small fields), the mill, village pound, manor house grounds, rectory and church all occupying their original sites.

At the time of Domesday (1087) Cossington was a community of 77 villagers owned by Earl Hugh of Chester; the manor changed hands many times until 1549, when it was bought by the Babington family. The Babingtons began the enclosure of the medieval open fields in the 17th century, converting arable to pasture, a process that was completed by an Act of Parliament integrating the remainder into the system in 1846. Later changes more generally included the slow expansion of the village and, in the 20th century, the establishment of Ratcliffe airfield and (significantly for the landscape and local economy) large-scale exploitation of the sand and gravel deposits in the Wreake and Soar valleys. Despite 21st century traffic (exacerbated by extensive new housing in surrounding parishes and ‘rat-run’ driving) and its proximity to Leicester and Loughborough, the village retains its rural character, layout and a number of surviving buildings of historical significance.

Natural environment

Like other parishes in Leicestershire, Cossington’s more or less continuous occupation and agriculture for two millennia means that no ‘wild’ natural habitats survive here. Until recently, however, wildlife has been able to adapt, with some species co-existing with and even taking advantage of human activity. This means that among the buildings and arable fields there are still locally important patches of semi-natural habitat in the Plan Area, including species-rich grassland, woodland, wetland and watercourses. Rewilding of much of the area of 20th-century sand and

gravel extraction as Cossington Meadows nature reserve is a regionally-important example of this, and will enhance local biodiversity more widely but acting as a centre from which plant and animal species established there can spread into suitable habitat areas beyond the nature reserve itself. Generally, there is a lack of woodland habitat here, but other ‘artificial’ areas, like gardens, allotments, churchyards and plantations, have biodiversity value. Pressure from intensive agriculture and development on these remaining semi-natural places outside Cossington Meadows means that they are highly valued by the community, while they make an essential local contribution to preserving England’s biodiversity and for carbon sequestration; they should be protected wherever possible by the planning system as a vital component of sustainable development.

Existing environmental designations

The Plan Area is located in National Character Area (NCA) 94 *Leicestershire Vales*. NCAs are landscape areas defined by Natural England for Planning purposes. It is also located in Charnwood Borough Council Landscape Character Area (LCA) Soar Valley. In the natural environment there are 23 areas of *Priority Habitat* and national *Forest Inventory* (as defined by Natural England), together with nine Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) in the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre database. Cossington Meadows, the largest Wildlife Trust nature reserve in Leicestershire, lies partly in the Plan Area and includes important areas of floodplain grassland, wetland habitats and open water.

In the historical environment there are 19 Listed Buildings and 30 further sites and features of historical environment significance (Leicestershire & Rutland Historic Environment Records), of which six are of relevance to Neighbourhood Plan policies.

Environmental inventory

An environmental inventory (Appendix F) of Cossington was compiled in support of the environmental designations and policies in this Plan between January and June 2021. The work comprised two elements:

- Review of all existing designations and other available information in the public domain and
- Fieldwork to identify and confirm environmentally significant (in the context of the Plan Area) sites and features.

The review compiled information from many sources, including DEFRA, Natural England, Historic England, Leicestershire Historic Environment Records, Leicestershire Environmental Record Centre (habitats, species and designations), Charnwood Borough Council, Environment Agency, British Geological Survey, old maps (Ordnance Survey, archive), local history and archaeology, publications and local knowledge.

Fieldwork was combined with local desk studies to review all open and currently undeveloped land in the Plan Area. Significant species, habitats, public open spaces, landscape characteristics, earthworks and other extant heritage features, views and viewpoints were checked and recorded.

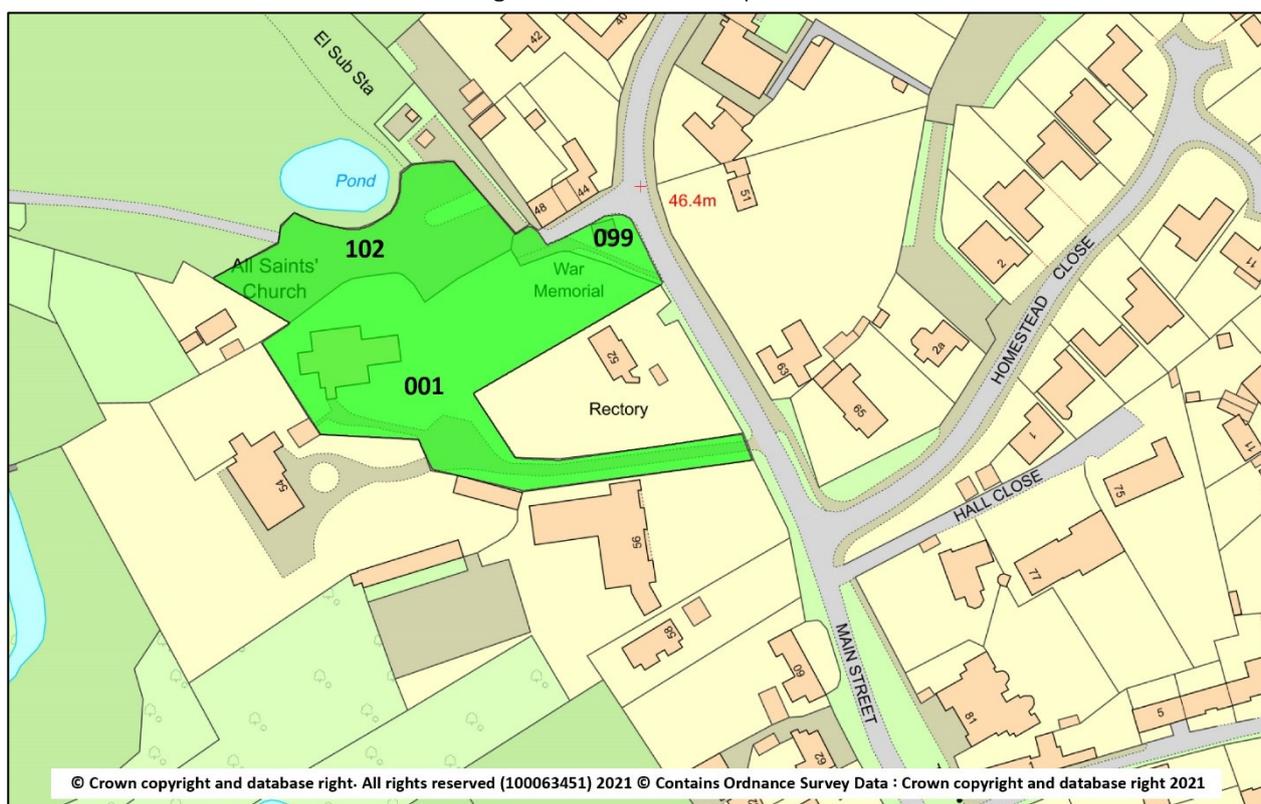
These data, along with all relevant site-specific information from the existing information review, were mapped and tabulated, and every site of local environmental significance was evaluated using a system based on the seven criteria for Local Green Space selection in the *National Planning Policy Framework 2019*.

Local Green Space

Of the approximately 108 inventoried parcels of open land in the parish, 43 were identified as having notable environmental (natural, historical and/or social) features. As described above, these sites were scored, using the seven criteria for Local Green Space designation noted in the *National Planning Policy Framework 2019* (see Appendix F for the criteria and scoring system used in this Plan).

One composite site (figure 6) scores highly under all relevant criteria in the inventory (Appendix F) and meets the essential requirements for designation as Local Green Space as outlined in National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 100. Its statutory protection will ensure its use for future generations.

Figure 6: Local Green Space



POLICY ENV 1: LOCAL GREEN SPACE – Development proposals that would result in the loss of, or have an adverse effect on, the *All Saints Churchyard, war memorial green and car park* Local Green Space (details Appendix G; location figure 6) will not be supported other than in very special circumstances.

Important Open Spaces

A group of sites scored highly in the inventory for their outstanding community value. They have been identified in fieldwork, community consultations and in Parish records; some are recognised as Open Space, Sport & Recreation sites in the supporting documentation for the emerging Charnwood Borough Council Local Plan (2019-36).

All these sites' value as open space within and close to the built-up areas and/or their actual or potential value as community resources are recognised in Policy ENV 2. The policy is in conformity with, and adds local detail to, Charnwood Borough *Local Plan (2011-2028) Policy CS15* and *Draft Local Plan (2021-2037) Policy LP25*.

The need for effective, continuous maintenance arrangements for publicly accessible open spaces, irrespective of their public/private rights of access status, is recognised in Community Action ENV 1. NOTE: If Policy ENV 1 passes Examination, sites 001, 099 and 102 will be removed from Policy ENV 2 and figure 7 to avoid duplication.

POLICY ENV 2: IMPORTANT OPEN SPACES - The following open spaces (locations, figure 5) are of high local value for recreation, beauty, amenity, or tranquillity, within or close to the built-up area. Development proposals that result in their loss, or have a significant adverse effect on them, will not be supported unless the open space is replaced by at least equivalent provision in an equally suitable location, or unless it can be demonstrated that the open space is no longer required by the community.

All Saint's churchyard (inventory reference 001); CBC Open Spaces typology *Cemeteries and churchyards*

Platt's Lane Recreation Ground (019.1 / 019.2); CBC-recognised OSSR *Outdoor Sports/Playing pitches*

Cossington Primary School grounds (031); CBC-recognised OSSR *Outdoor Sports/Playing pitches*

Polly Peggs open space, Main Street (098); CBC Open Spaces typology *Amenity green space*

Memorial Green, Main Street (099); CBC Open Spaces typology *Parks and gardens (memorial gardens)*

Main Street east side verges and commemorative trees (100); CBC Open Spaces typology *Amenity green space*

Fisher Close Green (101); CBC Open Spaces typology *Amenity green space*

Church car park (102)

Bennett's Lane/Crab Tree Lane verge (103); CBC Open Spaces typology *Amenity green space*

Cossington allotments (104); CBC Open Spaces typology *Allotments*

Middlefield Road open space 1 (105); CBC Open Spaces typology *Amenity green space*

Polly Peggs (106); CBC Open Spaces typology *Green Corridors*

Main Street west side verges (108) CBC Open Spaces typology *Amenity green space*

Main Street allotments (110), CBC Open Spaces typology *Allotments*

Middlefield Road open space 2 (111); CBC Open Spaces typology *Amenity green space*

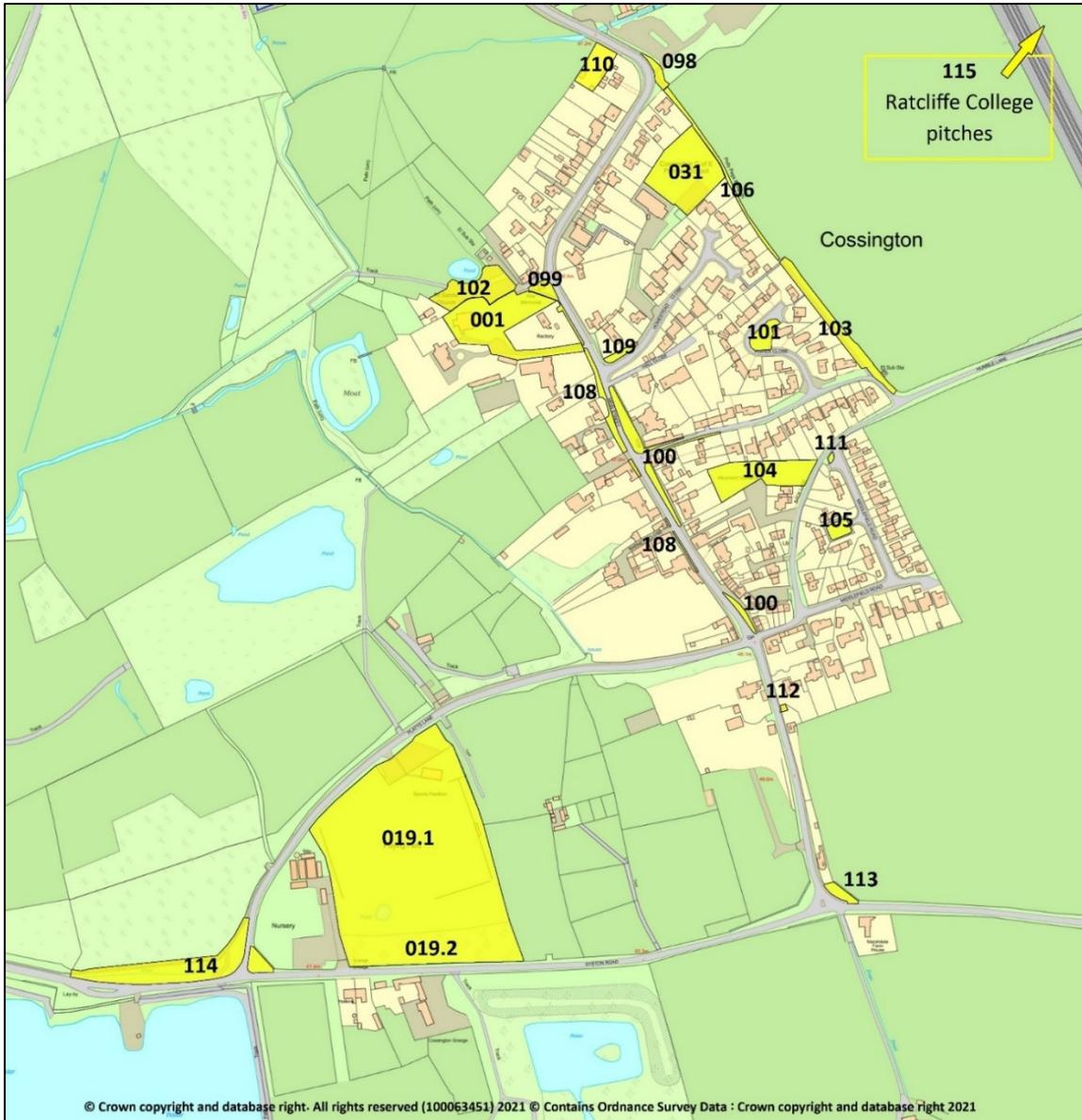
The Pound, Main Street (112); CBC Open Spaces typology *Amenity green space*

Main Street / Syston Road triangle (113); CBC Open Spaces typology *Amenity green space*

Platts Lane junction verges (114); CBC Open Spaces typology *Amenity green space*

Ratcliffe College pitches and outdoor sports facilities (115); CBC Open Spaces typology *Outdoor Sports/Playing pitches*

Figure 7: Important Open Spaces



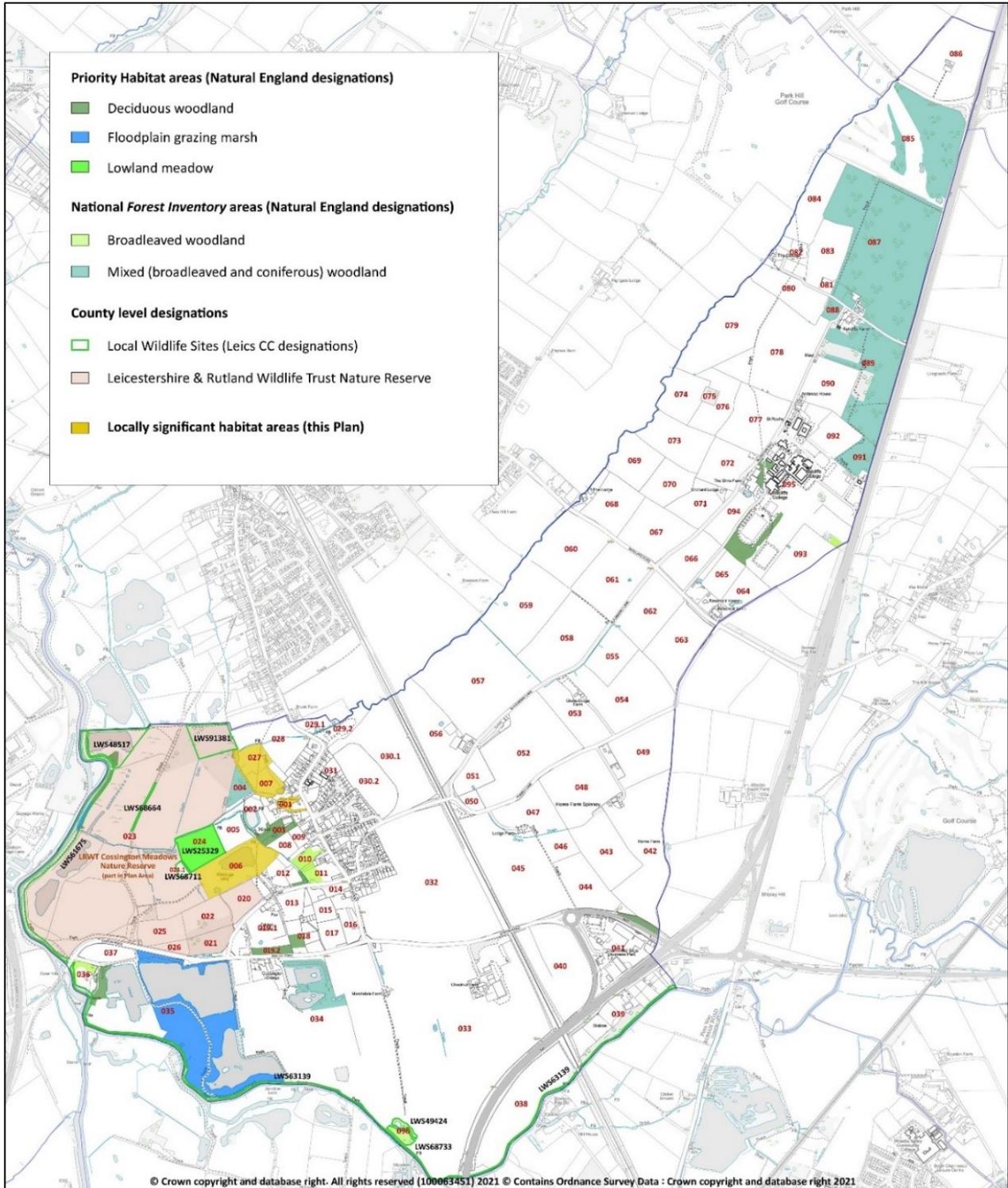
COMMUNITY ACTION ENV 1: MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF IMPORTANT OPEN SPACES – The Cossington community expects all public open spaces mapped in figure 7 to be managed effectively to maintain or enhance their amenities, features or biodiversity, and to comply with public liability standards for safety, for as long as they continue to function as publicly-accessible open spaces.

Sites and features of natural environment significance

A group of inventory sites scores highly for ‘wildlife’ (scoring at least 3/5 under this criterion). The features and designations for which the identified sites have been selected are identified in the

environmental inventory (Appendix F). They comprise a) statutorily protected sites, if any, b) those where *priority habitats* and *National Forest Inventory* sites occur (Natural England mapping) or where *biodiversity action plan (BAP) species* have been recorded; c) sites identified as ecologically significant by Leicestershire County Council, including Local Wildlife Sites, and d) sites identified during the inventory process as being of high biodiversity significance in the context of the Plan Area. The map (figure 7) shows their locations.

Figure 7: Sites of natural environment significance



Policy ENV 3 delivers site-level compliance in the Plan Area with the relevant Charnwood Borough Council policies, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and the European Habitats and Species Directives, any Transitional legislation in the Withdrawal Act 2018 and/or the Draft Environment Bill 2019.

POLICY ENV 3: SITES AND FEATURES OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENT SIGNIFICANCE – The sites and features mapped here (figure 7) have been identified as being of at least local significance for their natural environment significance. They are ecologically important in their own right, make a local contribution to carbon sequestration, and are locally valued. The significance of the species, habitats or features present should be balanced against the local benefit of any development that would adversely affect them.

Woodland, notable trees and hedges



The wooded appearance of Cossington village as seen from the south, June 2021

The village of Cossington is surrounded by and interspersed with trees, mature wooded gardens and small woods, adding to its rural character and attractive appearance. But for historical reasons the open farmed countryside beyond the settlement boundary has very little woodland. Exceptions are some notable hedgerow trees, a few copses and small, naturally regenerated woodland areas, and one larger area of mixed (deciduous and coniferous) plantation and ornamental mixed woods in the far north of the Plan Area. The recognised importance of trees for carbon sequestration, and their biodiversity, landscape and amenity values, mean that new development will be required to result in no further loss and wherever possible to provide a net gain.

COMMUNITY ACTION ENV 2: INCREASING WOODLAND, TREES AND HEDGEROWS – initiatives for tree and hedgerow planting and woodland creation by planting or re-wilding in the Plan Area will be strongly supported.

POLICY ENV 4: WOODLAND NOTABLE TREES AND HEDGES – Woodland (Figure 8.1), notable trees (Figure 8.2; Appendix H) and hedges of arboricultural, biodiversity and landscape importance should be protected from loss or damage in development proposals and integrated into their design. Proposals which use trees and hedges to enhance their appearance, amenity and biodiversity value will be supported. Development proposals should be accompanied by a tree survey (BS5837 standard or its equivalent) to establish the health and longevity of trees and hedges on the site. Where damage or loss is unavoidable, the developer should provide or arrange for replacement trees and/or hedges of at least equivalent quantity, type and/or scale to ensure a net gain in biodiversity and amenity.

Figure 8.1: Woodland and notable trees in the Plan Area

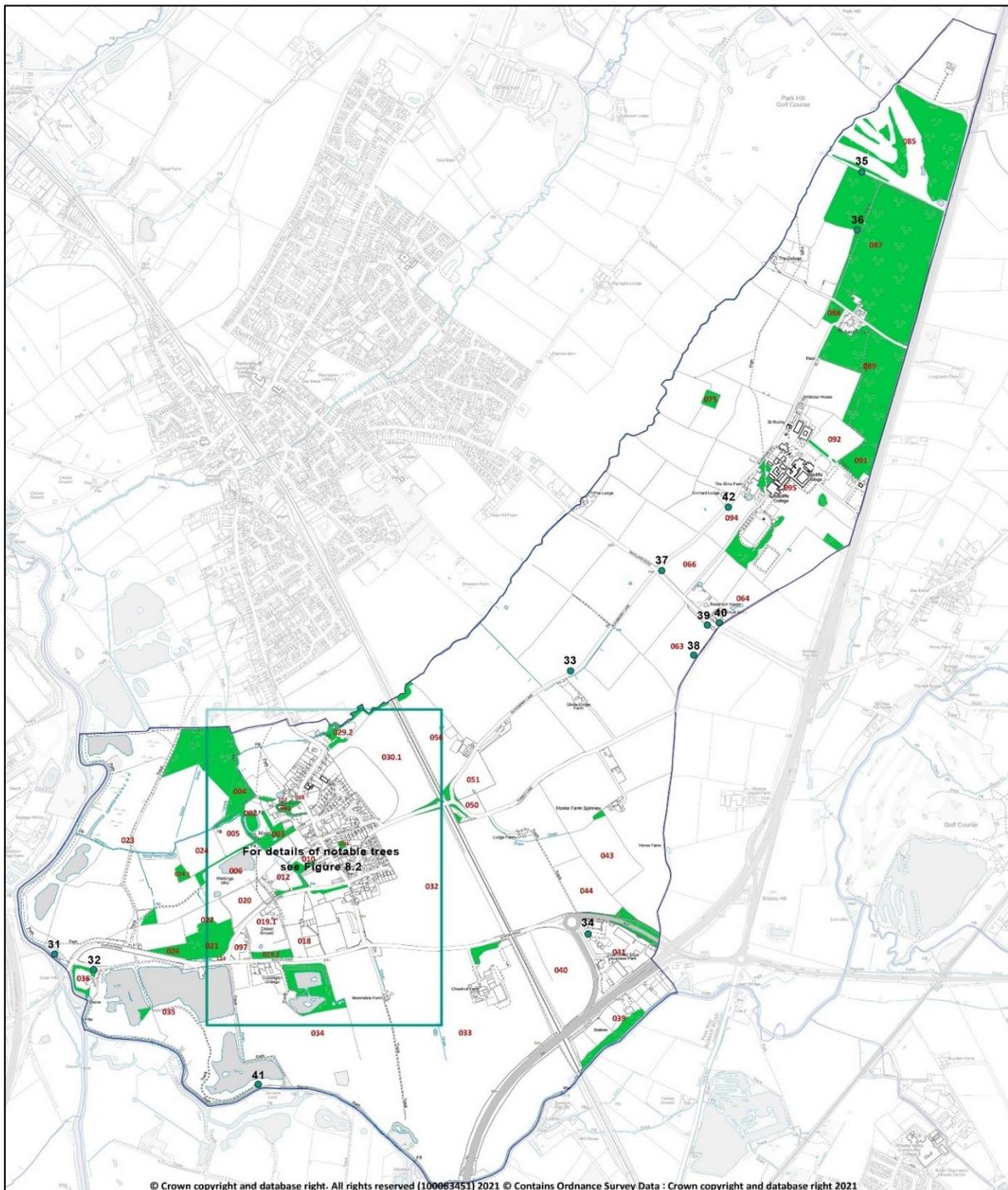
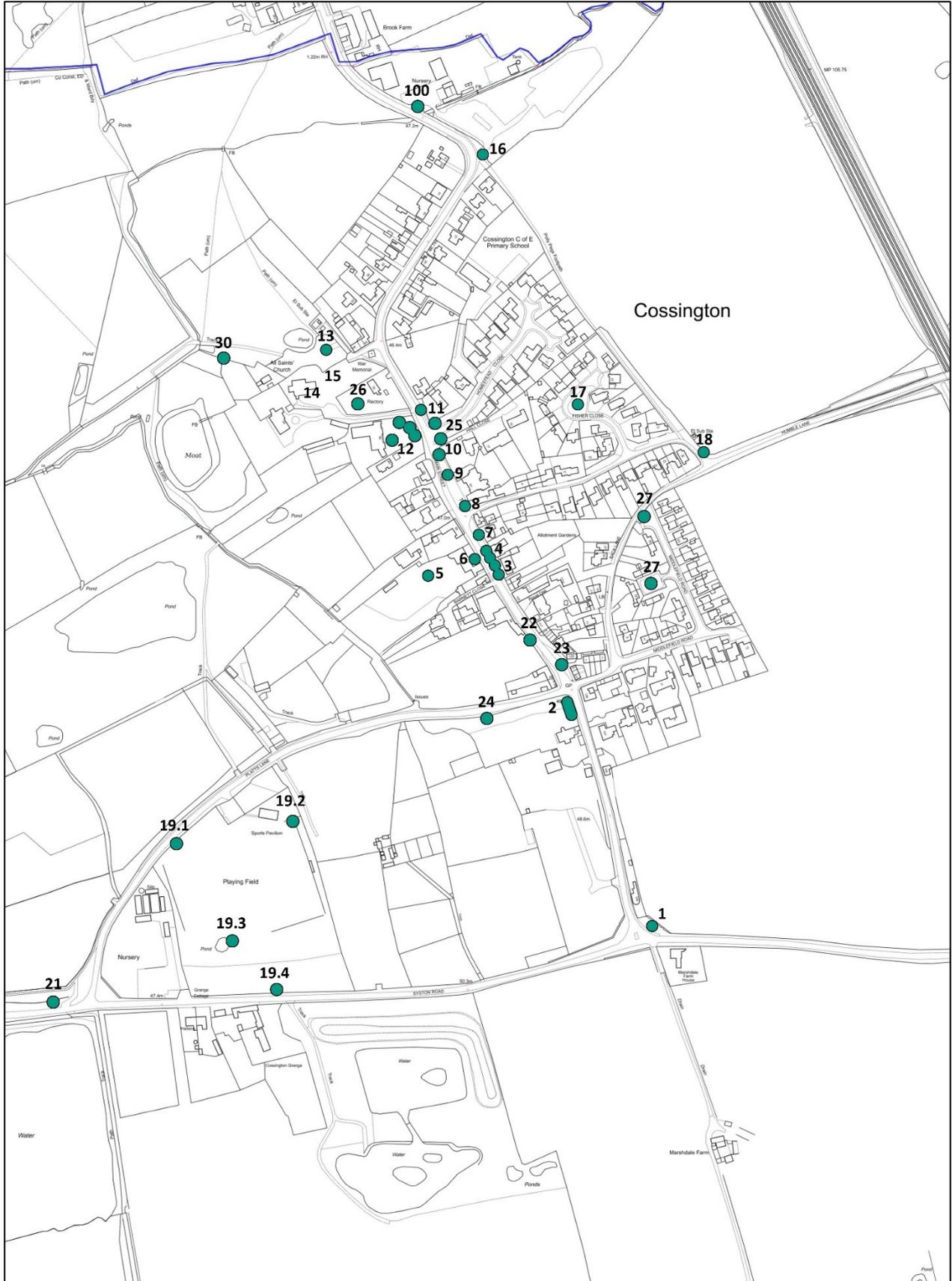


Figure 8.2: Notable trees in the village. For details see Appendix G



Biodiversity and habitat connectivity across the Plan Area

It might be said that Cossington is a ‘typical’ area of English Midlands countryside because it has no nationally important wildlife hotspots, and thus that it has little or no biodiversity significance to be taken into account in the Planning system. This would be a misunderstanding of the concept of biodiversity. England’s biodiversity is entirely and only the sum of the wildlife in all of its individual parishes: Cossington is as important in this regard as every other parish, and residents want it to play its essential part in protecting what remains of England’s threatened and diminishing biodiversity.

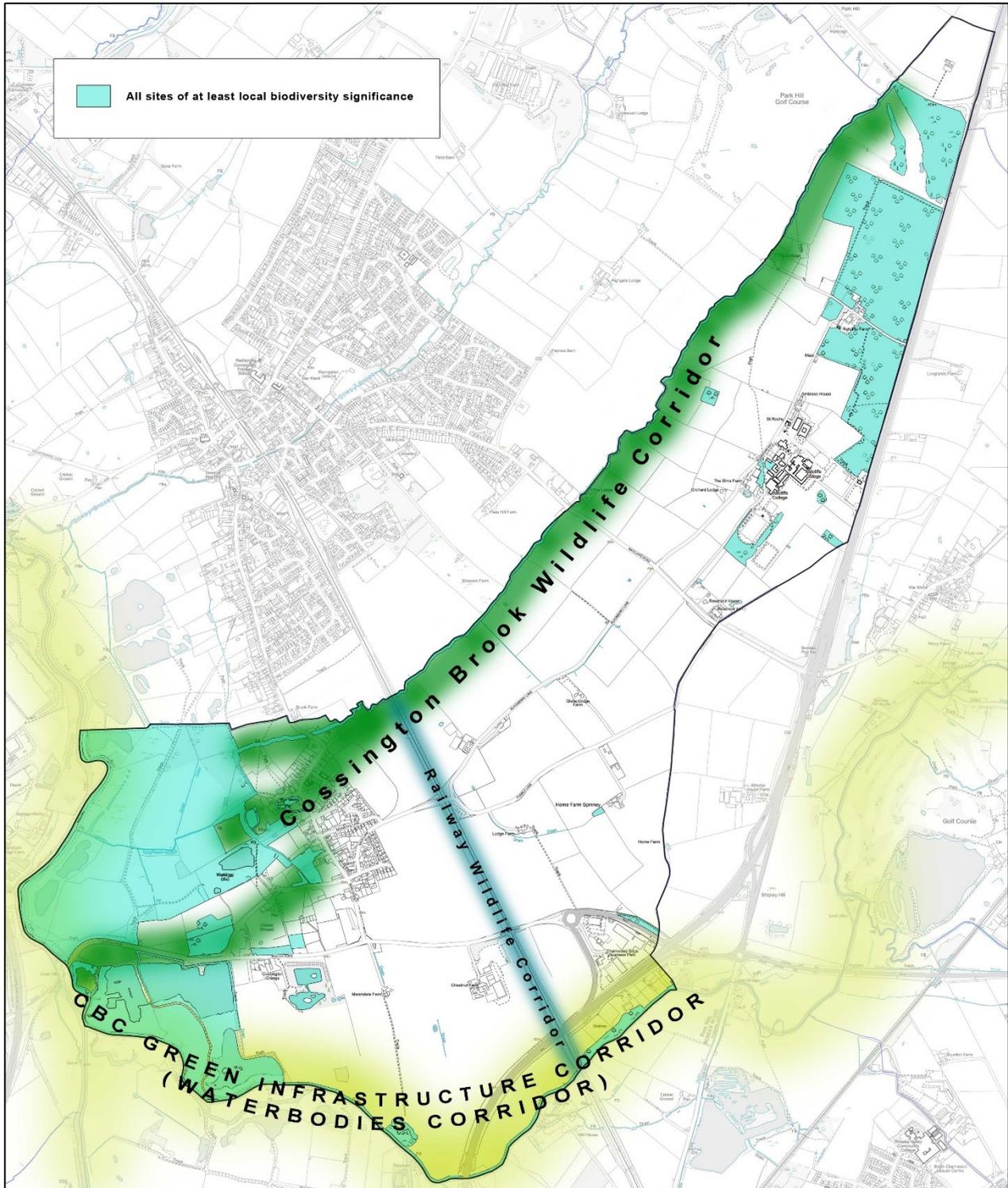
While Policy ENV 3 delivers site-specific compliance, this policy is about general compliance across the Plan Area with the relevant Charnwood Borough Council biodiversity protection policies, the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and (as applicable) the European Habitats and Species Directives, transitional legislation in the Withdrawal Act 2018 and the measures in the Draft (Principles and governance) Environment Bill 2019.

Connectivity is an essential component of biodiversity. Isolated populations of animals and plants are at risk of destruction or of simply ‘dying out’. Wildlife Corridors aim to re-connect populations and habitats within parishes and more widely. A wildlife corridor along Cossington Brook (itself a natural green corridor) providing connectivity between the main groups of biodiversity sites in the Plan Area around Ratcliffe College and in the Soar Valley and passing through the most important green areas in the village, is mapped (indicatively) in figure 9; it also connects into the Charnwood Borough Council *Waterbodies Corridor* of the Soar and Wreake Valleys, part of the Borough’s *Green Infrastructure*. It should be taken into account in the planning system.

POLICY ENV 5: BIODIVERSITY AND HABITAT CONNECTIVITY– All new development proposals will be expected to safeguard habitats and species, including those of local significance. If significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided (through relocating to an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or compensated for, planning permission should be refused, in conformity with paragraph 175 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Development proposals should not damage or adversely affect the habitat connectivity provided by the wildlife corridors identified in figure 9.

Figure 9: Cossington Brook Wildlife corridor



Statutorily protected heritage assets

Cossington is situated along a relatively flat stretch of land and the architectural forms and elements of the street scene are relied on to create interest rather than changes to the topography. Although the Conservation Area primarily follows the buildings along a single road, distinct areas can be discerned as you move along the road.

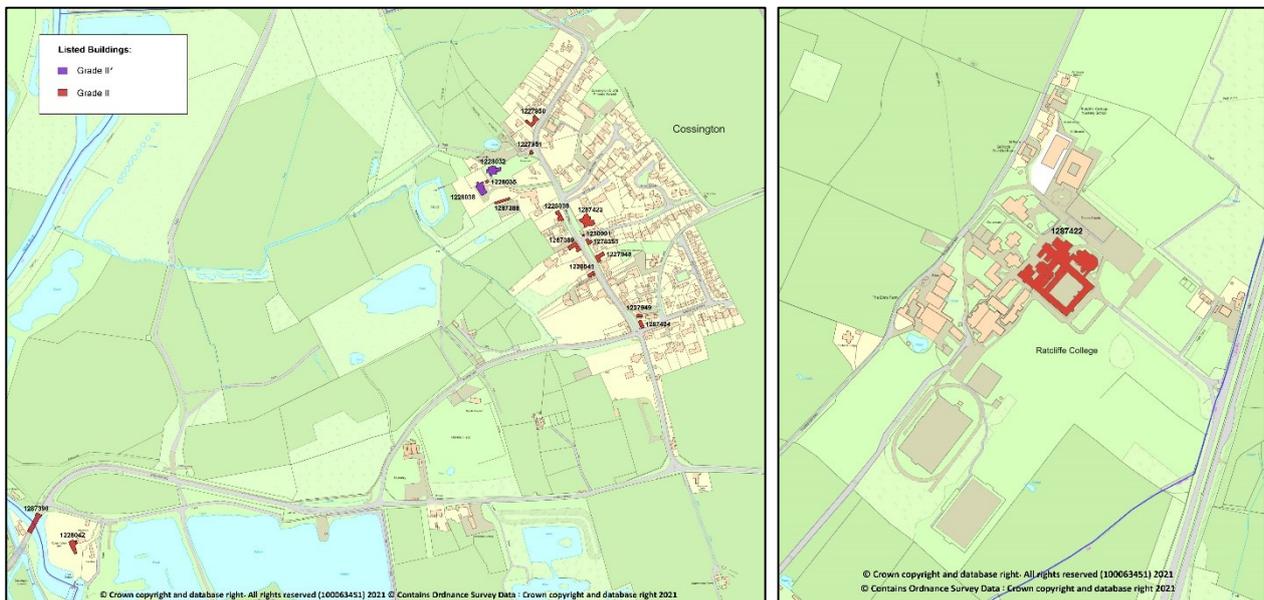
The first is the stretch from the north of the area to the junction with Homestead Close where Main Street curves before straightening out. There is a relaxed feel to this part of the Conservation Area with houses occupying larger plots and generally set back from the road with front gardens and driveways. The timber framing of Magpie Cottage is a prominent feature and the open space, the War Memorial and the trees surrounding the churchyard contribute to the open feel of this area. Front boundaries are generally low and formed of either red brick or granite and slate rubble stone. This ensures that the houses are generally very exposed within the street scene and this characteristic continues throughout the Conservation Area.

From Homestead Close to Back Lane the road appears to widen thanks to the wide verge to the east of the road. Houses are generally closer together here and there is a pleasing variety of architectural styles. Although there are a number of eye-catching buildings no single one dominates the space. The established commemorative oaks complement the wide verges and open aspects of the properties. Along the west buildings are located closer to the street and there is a wide variety of scales and proportions with the prominent half hipped roof of The Manor House juxtaposed with the delicate proportions of Christmas Cottage. Low-level front walls, hedges or estate style fencing continue along the street and this bestows an open nature to the space.

The final part of the Conservation Area is from the crossroads of Main Street with Platts Lane and Back Lane to the southern boundary edge. The houses become more widely spaced with larger plot sizes and there is more variety in the placement of the buildings with several set back from the road. Chine House and The Grove are both set within their own grounds with their main elevations perpendicular to Main Street. Platts Lane is undeveloped but the dense vegetation, established trees and the red brick and granite rubble stone wall reflect the characteristics found elsewhere within the Conservation Area.

Nineteen buildings and structures in the Plan Area have statutory protection through Listing at Grade II* or II. New development will be required to take into account their *settings*, as defined on a case-by-case basis by Historic England.

Figure 10: Statutory heritage assets – noted for protection of their *settings*

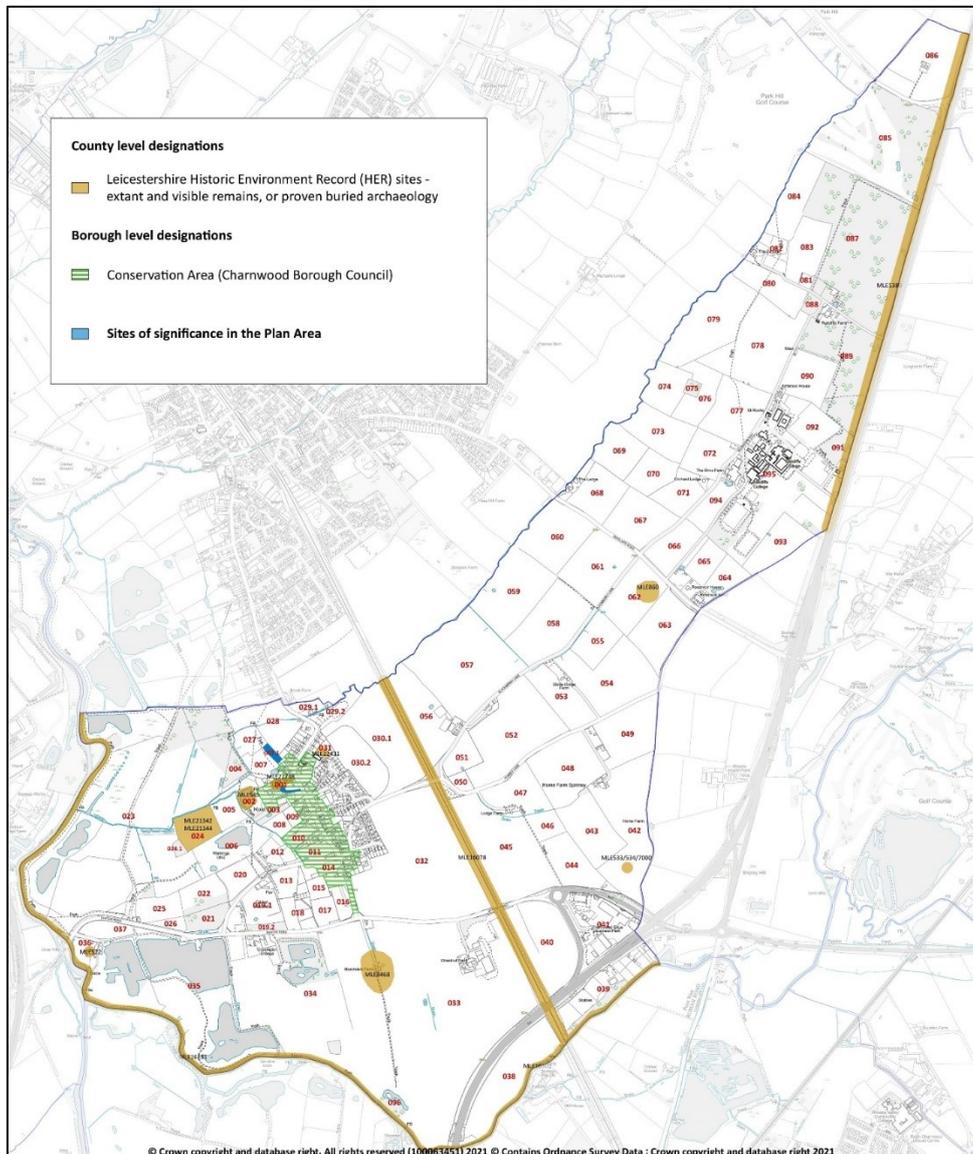


Sites of historical environment significance

A group of inventory sites scores highly for ‘history’ (scoring at least 3/5 under this criterion). The features for which the identified sites have been selected and notified are listed in the environmental inventory (Appendix F). The map (figure 11) shows their locations.

These historic environment sites comprise a) sites with *extant and visible* archaeological or historical features or proven buried archaeology, as recorded in the Historic England and Leicestershire *Historic Environment Records* (HER) databases, b) surviving ridge and furrow earthworks recorded in the *Turning the Plough* surveys (see below) by Historic England, and c) other sites of historical and social significance recorded as non-designated heritage assets by Leicestershire CC. A large number of archaeological sites in the Leicestershire HER are known from a programme of investigation, excavation and publication in the 1990s, but these sites were all destroyed by subsequent gravel extraction and nothing remains on the ground to be protected.

Figure 11: Sites of historical environment significance



POLICY ENV 6: SITES OF HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SIGNIFICANCE - The sites mapped in figure 11 (details in Appendix F) have been identified as being of at least local significance for history. The features are extant and have visible expression or there is proven buried archaeology on the site, and they are locally valued. The significance of the features present should be balanced against the local benefit of any development that would affect or damage them.

Local Heritage Assets

Leicestershire County Council recognises 8 buildings or structures of local historic significance in the Historic Environment Record (HER). In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan identifies 21 other buildings, groups or structures in the built environment of Cossington that are considered to be of local significance for architectural, historical or social reasons.

The evidence for their inclusion (details in Appendix I) has been based on Historic England *Advice Note 7*, 2016. The inclusion of both sets in the Neighbourhood Plan records them in the planning system as *non-designated heritage assets* in order that they can be afforded protection at the appropriate level, as described in footnote (63) to NPPF 2019 paragraph 194.

POLICY ENV 7: LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS – The buildings listed here (locations figure 12, as numbered here, details Appendix I) are non-designated local heritage assets. They are important for their contribution to the layout and characteristic mix of architectural styles in the village and Plan Area, and their features and settings will be protected wherever possible. The local benefits of a development proposal, or of a change of land use requiring planning approval, will need to be balanced against their significance as heritage assets.

Assets in the Leicestershire Historic Environment Record (HER) as Historic non-Listed buildings: 1 Cossington C of E Primary School, 40 Main Street (MLE21772)

2. Village pinfold (pound), Main Street (MLE548)

17. Temple Cottages, nos. 6, 8 and 10 Main Street (MLE23560)

23. WW2 pillbox northwest of The Farm (MLE15987) [NB no evidence found, 05/21]

24. WW2 pillbox east of Ratcliffe College (MLE15996) [NB probably hidden in A46 road embankment, 05/21]

25. Prefabricated WW2 pillbox, Ratcliffe Farm (MLE24820)

26. Cossington Grange (MLE23562)

Assets recorded for this Plan, 2021

3. Royal Oak public house

4. Jubilee Hall, Main Street (within primary school grounds)

5. Grove Cottage, 145 Main Street

6. The Grove, Main Street

7. Chine House, Main Street

8. The White House

9. No. 125 Main Street

10. Nos. 101 and 103 Main Street

11. The Manor House, Main Street

12. Stone wall between nos. 99 and 101 Main Street

- 13. No. 63 Main Street (Mayfield Villa)
- 14. Rose Cottage
- 15. Barn behind nos. 28/30 Main Street
- 16. Warden House (formerly The Beeches), 39 Main Street
- 18. Memorial trees
- 19. Reservoir House
- 20. Barn Lodge Farm
- 21. Wall along Crab Tree Lane
- 22. Wooden building (boathouse), Grand Union Canal

Figure 12.1: Local heritage assets in the Plan Area

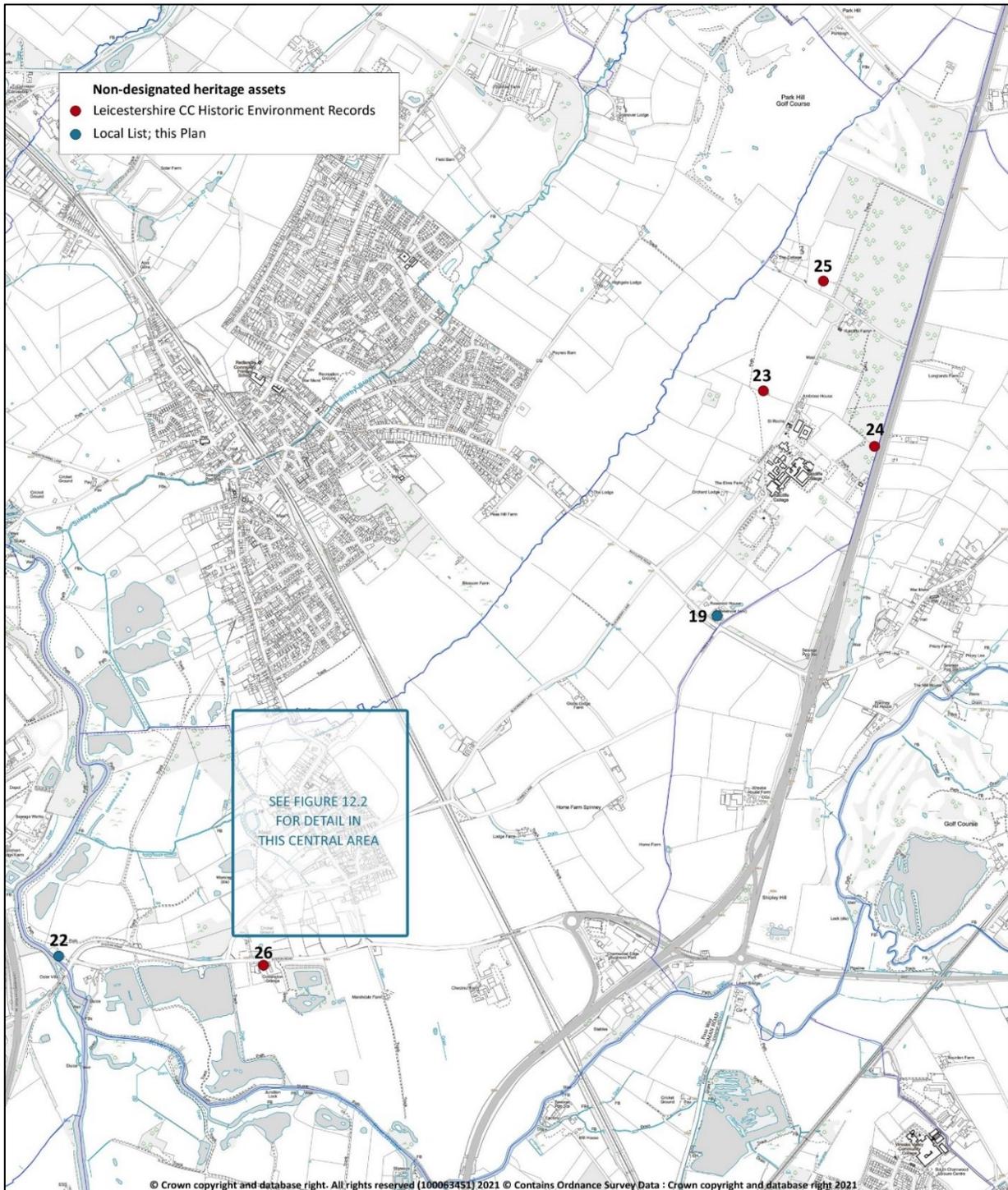


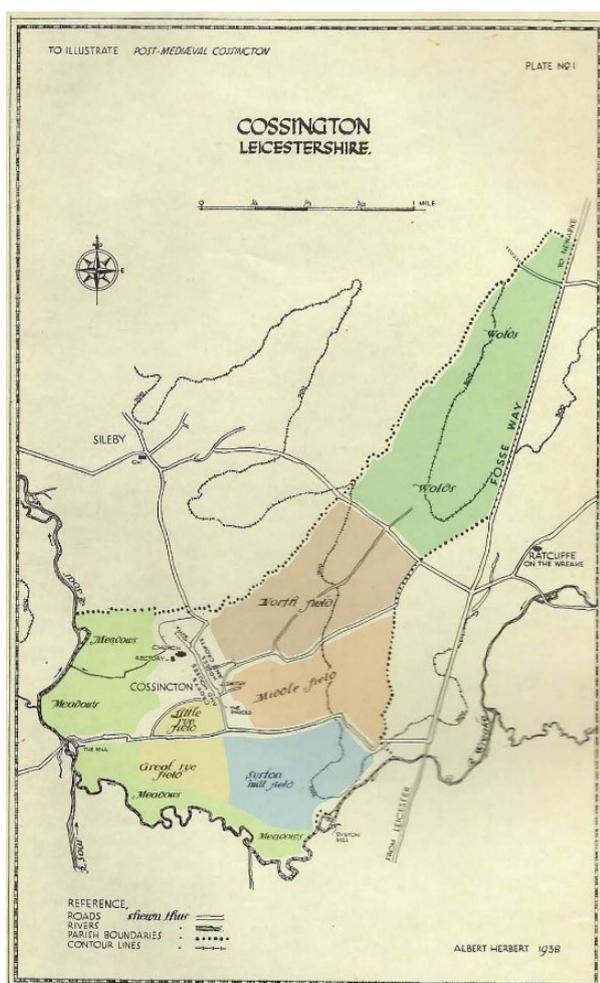
Figure 12.2: Local heritage assets in the village (detail)



Ridge and furrow

The medieval township of Cossington (with only minor changes, the present parish and Plan Area) was primarily agricultural and, beginning in the 8th or 9th century AD, was farmed using the *Open Field* system. Most of the open land, other than small fields (closes) backing onto the houses, the seasonally flooded grazing land in the two river floodplains and a few patches of woodland or

Late medieval open fields, water meadows and the wolds. Modified from Herbert, 1938



waste, was worked in a seasonal and yearly rotation of arable crops (cereals, beans), grazing and fallow, on four or five main open fields. Medieval ploughs were pulled by oxen and, because they were not reversible, the soil was always turned rightwards as the plough team progressed up and down the furlongs, to produce a corrugated pattern of ridges and furrows whose dimensions increased with every season.

The open field system was practised for most of the medieval period until changes in land ownership and use gave rise to a change across almost the whole parish from arable to pastoral (livestock) farming. The land in Cossington was converted in this way in several phases, beginning in the Tudor period with the introduction of sheep-farming on the Wolds and ending in the Parliamentary Enclosures in the mid- to late-18th century.

The result of Enclosure, although socially disruptive, was to ‘fossilise’ the ridges and furrows under grass and hedgerows, and this situation persisted until the mid-20th century, when a second agricultural revolution after the

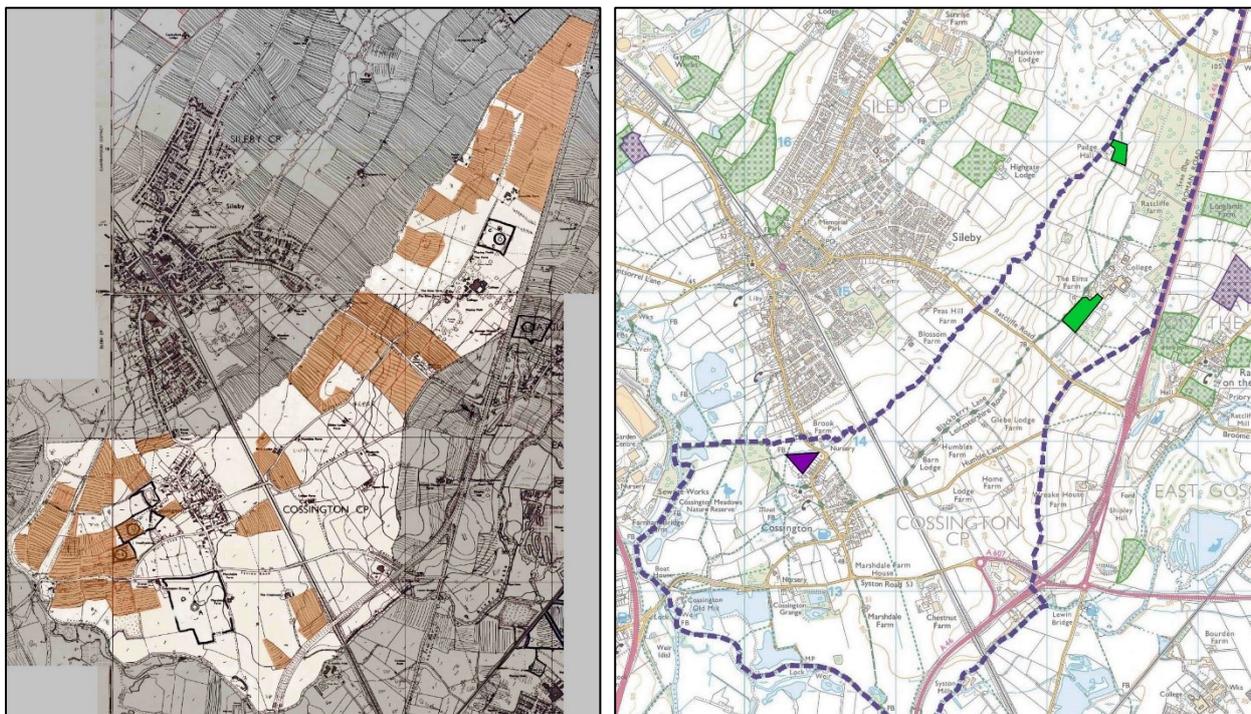
Second World War effectively reversed the first one. British governments, later the European Union, encouraged farmers, mainly through subsidies, to plough the pastures and turn them over to intensive arable production. Wherever this happened, modern reversible ploughs quickly obliterated the ridge and furrow. Cossington also lost ridge and furrow to quarrying in the 20th century. In most English open field Parishes, the loss of ridge and furrow since 1950 has been over 90%. In the 1990s, English Heritage (now Historic England), realising the scale of this destruction, undertook the first of a series of surveys (*Turning the Plough*) across the Midlands, including Leicestershire, and made recommendations for protection and management.

The extent of ridge and furrow in Cossington in the mid-20th century was mapped using aerial photographs and fieldwork by Hartley (Leicestershire County Council) in the 1980s (figure 13.1) and again in the late 1990s for the Historic England *Turning the Plough* survey (figure 13.2). The latter

provided the baseline for a new survey undertaken as part of the inventory for this Plan in 2021. The findings were mixed: two further fields have lost their ridge and furrow, but a pair of small fields east of the village has been found to still have faint remains while field 028, north of the church on the Plan Area boundary with Sileby was confirmed as faint to good ridge and furrow.

Figure 13.1 (left): Ridge and furrow in Cossington about 1947 Reconstructed by RF Hartley (Leicestershire County Archaeology Unit) in c.1985

Figure 13.2 (right) Ridge and furrow in Cossington, c.1999 (*Turning the Plough* survey, Historic England)



The summary results show the decline since World War II; the situation is now as follows:

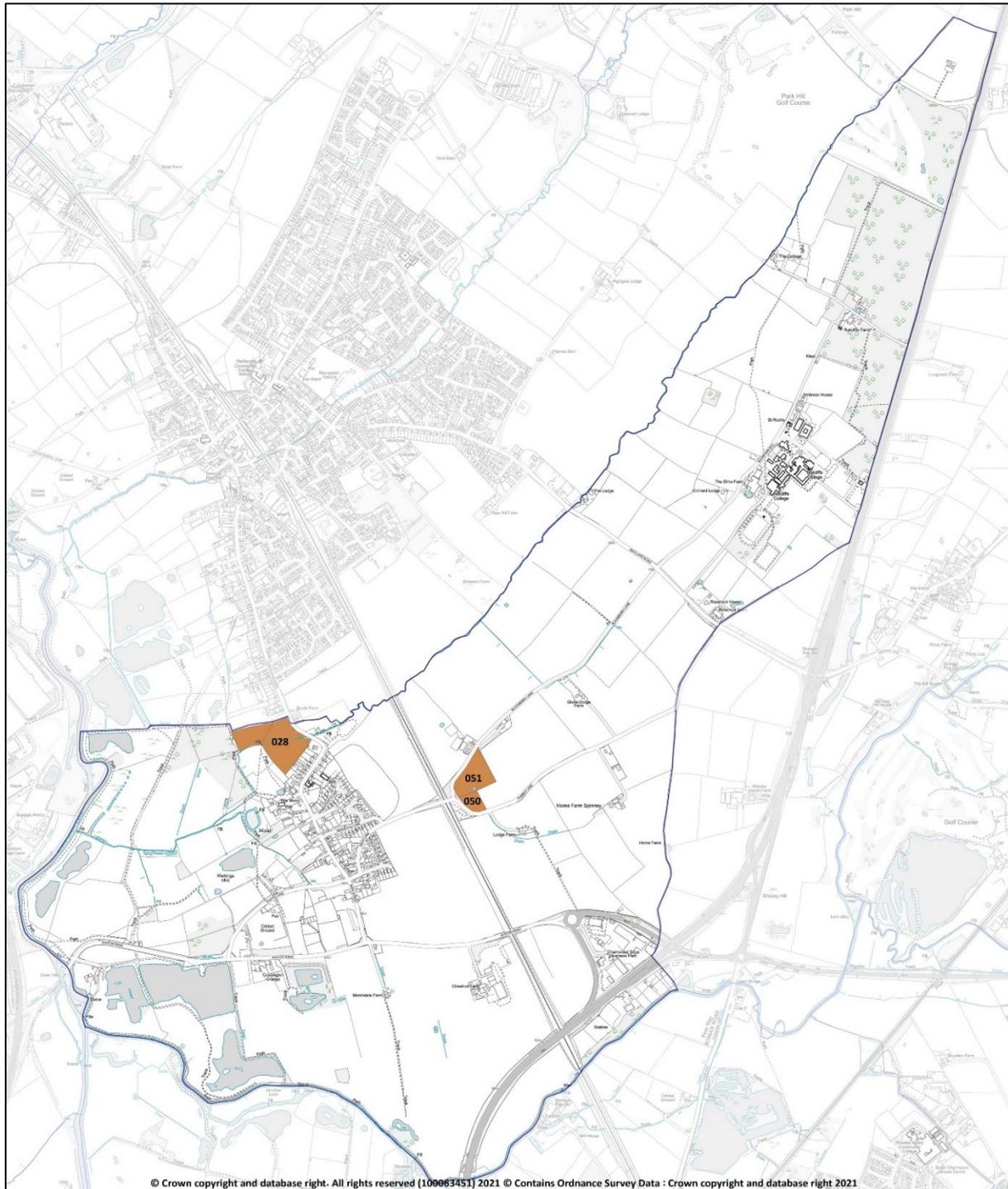
1947	190 ha	
1999	6 ha	
2021	6.7 ha	

In English legislation ridge and furrow fields (except for the few that are Scheduled Monuments) are not statutorily protected, despite recognition that “as the open field system was once commonplace in NW Europe, these [surviving] sites take on an international importance” (English Heritage, 2001).

While the nine individual fields with surviving ridge and furrow in Cossington are not claimed to be of international importance, their rarity across the Midlands and their relationship with the other important medieval heritage assets in the Plan Area means that any further, avoidable, loss would be irreversibly detrimental. In conformity with paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework (including footnote 63) and following the recommendation of Historic England all surviving ridge and furrow in the Plan Area should now be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset and taken into account in the planning system as the visible evidence of a component of national heritage comparable in significance to that of surviving medieval buildings. In future, and whenever possible, increased local housing need or new targets required at a higher level in the

planning system should be fulfilled by allocating development to available sites with no surviving ridge and furrow.

Figure 13.3 Ridge and furrow surviving in 2021



POLICY ENV 8: RIDGE AND FURROW – The areas of ridge and furrow earthworks mapped in figure 13.3 are non-designated local heritage assets.

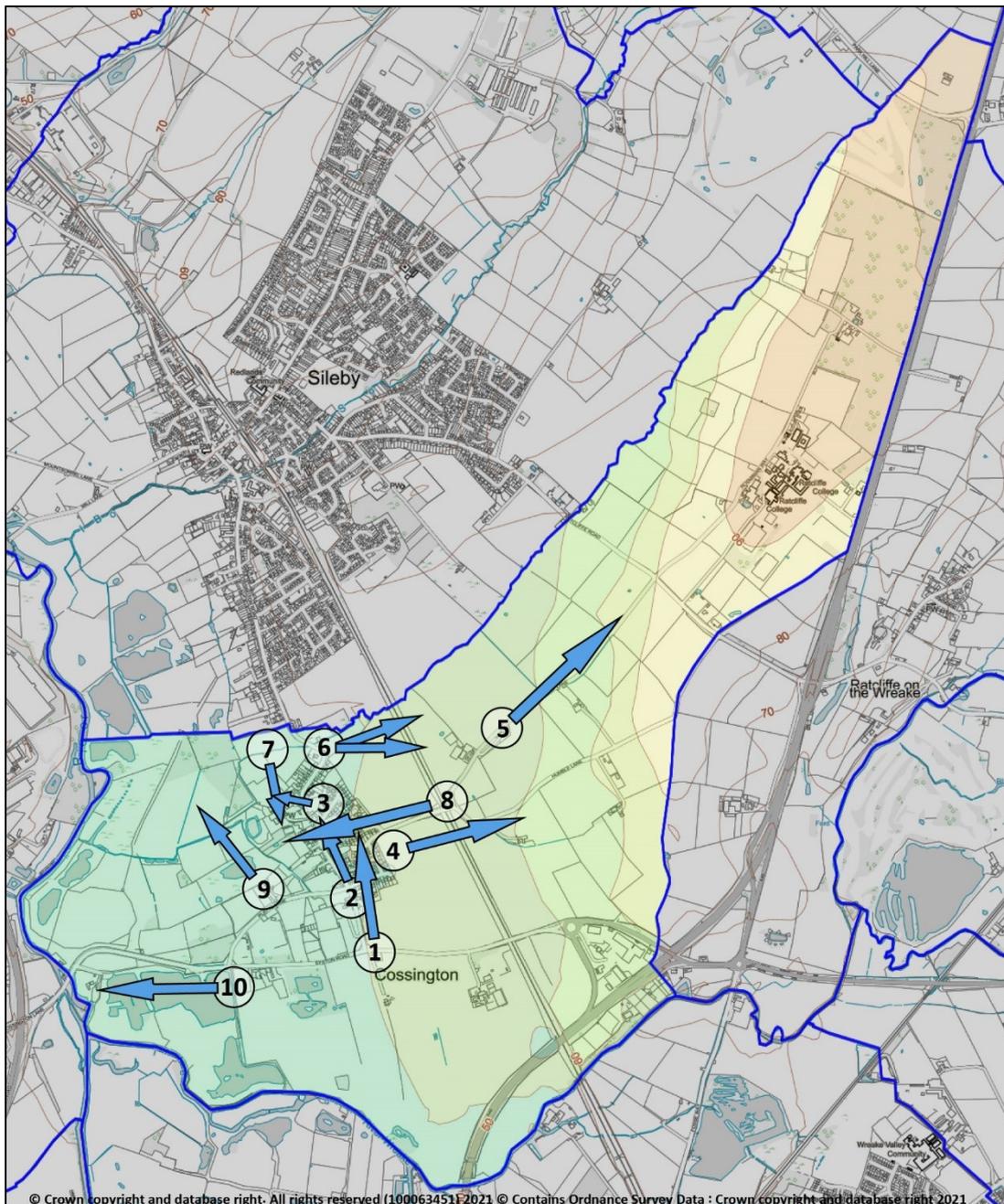
Any loss or damage arising from a development proposal (or a change of land use requiring planning permission) is to be avoided; the local benefits of such development must be balanced against the significance of the ridge and furrow features as heritage assets.

Important views

Consultation during the Neighbourhood Plan’s preparation identified a widely held wish to protect Cossington’s rural setting, in particular its visual relationship with the surrounding landscape, high ground and river valleys, all characteristic of its location in Natural England National Character Area 94 *Leicestershire Vales*.

One of the main ways in which residents expressed this wish was by describing several highly valued views within the village, at its ‘gateways’ and toward the surrounding countryside. These consultation findings were further defined by the environmental inventory, which although principally aimed at identifying sites of environmental significance also confirmed the sightlines of the suggested views and mapped them (figure 14).

Figure 14: Important views



POLICY ENV 9: IMPORTANT VIEWS – The following views (map figure 14, details Appendix I) are important to the setting and character of the village. Development proposals should respect and whenever possible protect them. Development which would have an adverse impact on the identified views will not be supported.

1. Gateway view into the village from the south
2. Main Street, both directions
3. War Memorial Green and surroundings
4. East out of the village from the end of Middlefield Road and along Humble Lane
5. Northeast along Blackberry Lane
6. From Polly Peggs corner east and northeast
7. Village duckpond and the church from the watermeadows
8. Gateway view west into the village from Humble Lane railway bridge
9. Fishing Lake and Cossington Meadows
10. From the large fishing lakes westward to the Plan Area boundary (hills of Charnwood Forest in the background)

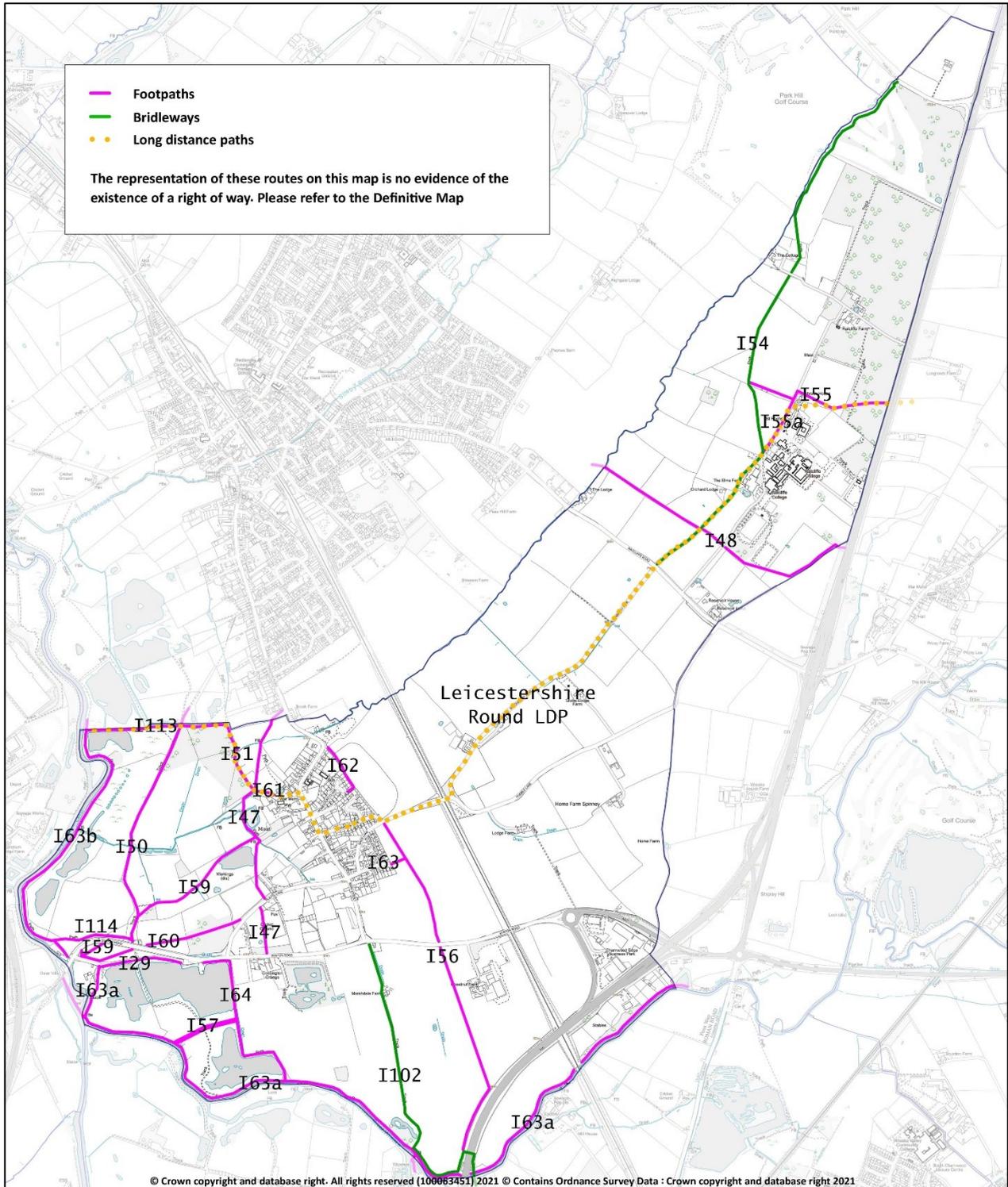
Footpaths and other walking routes

The network of footpaths and other rights of way in the Plan Area is not extensive compared with other parishes in north Leicestershire. Because walking routes everywhere tend to be survivors from before the 18th century Enclosure of the farmed landscape and from before the development of paved motor roads, there are good historical reasons for this, including in the case of Cossington the way some medieval tracks were converted to roads (now public highways), the wide area of seasonally flooded water meadows of the Rivers Wreake and Soar, the impact of quarrying, and the development of Cossington airfield. However, with modern recognition of the value of walking routes for health and wellbeing, the lack is unfortunate and any erosion of the network's extent and character will be resisted.

In the Neighbourhood Plan's consultation questionnaire (September 2020) 90% of respondents supported 'access to the countryside' as a highly valued part of the Plan Area's character.

POLICY ENV 10: FOOTPATHS AND OTHER WALKING ROUTES – Development proposals that result in the loss of, or have a significant adverse effect on, the existing network of footpaths (figure 15) will not be supported without appropriate mitigation.

Figure 15: Footpaths and other walking routes



Flood risk resilience



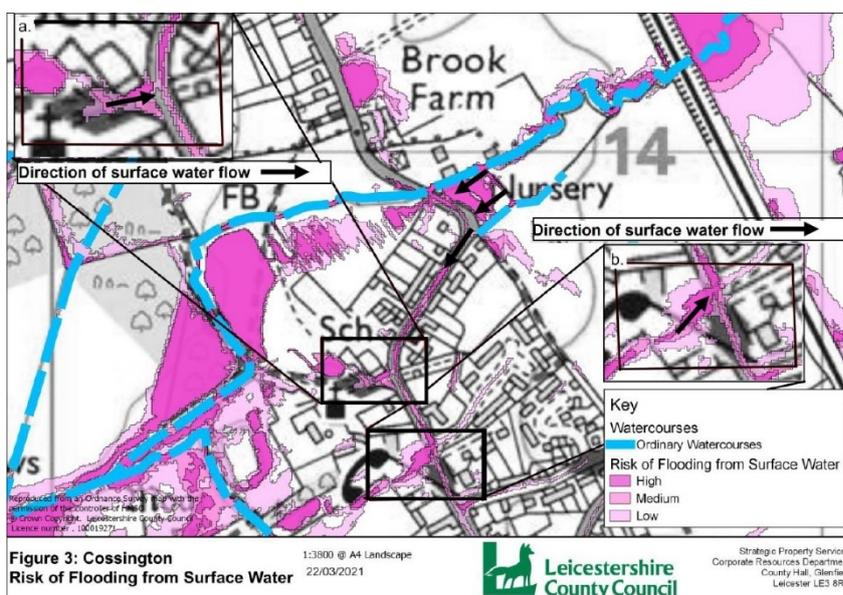
Flooding of infrastructure and properties, Main Street, 2019

Even if international cooperation and national strategies and policies eventually succeed in halting the human and industrial contributions towards climate change, the effects of recent and current warming on weather events will likely persist for decades. It is therefore desirable to plan for at least a medium-term future, in which weather events will continue to become more extreme, by putting in place measures that mitigate the challenge of climate change for the lifetime of this Plan and beyond. This objective is explicitly supported by the Environment Agency (EA) draft *National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England* (2019), in which the strategic emphasis for the EA shifts from mitigation to resilience; in other words from requiring new development to reduce its adverse effects on flood risk and to avoiding creating or adding to flood risk at all.

In light of this, it is particularly important that the location and technical standards of all new development proposals in the Plan Area should in future be judged not only on their immediate adverse effects but on their likely contribution to flooding in a climate change world. To complement this, the community will support proposals to improve the infrastructure within the built-up areas for managing flooding from the rivers and from surface water run-off events, providing this is not unduly detrimental to the historic built environment, biodiversity sites, or open and green spaces.

Local experience over recent years provides evidence for this need for stronger controls on the location of, as well as the standards applicable to, new development in the Plan Area. In 2019 and 2020 a previously unrecorded (by Leicestershire CC, the Lead Local Flood Authority) of 'Ordinary Watercourse 2' caused flooding of properties at the northern end of Main Street (Figure 16.1, from LCC *Flood Investigation Report #50*, 2021).

Figure 16.1: Pluvial (surface water) event, 2019, and locations (boxes) of property flooding attributable to rapid overwhelming of Ordinary Watercourses, primarily #2 to south of 'Nursery'



This policy is in general conformity with the Charnwood Borough Council *Climate Change Strategy* 2018, and with Charnwood Borough Council *Draft Local Plan 2021-2037* Policy LP31 (there are no relevant policies in the current (2011-2028) Local Plan).

POLICY ENV 11: FLOOD RISK RESILIENCE – Development proposals within the areas of flood risk mapped in Figures 16.1 and 16.2 will be required to demonstrate that the benefit of development outweighs the harm in relation to its adverse impact on climate change targets, and on the likelihood of it conflicting with locally applicable flood mitigation strategies and infrastructure.

Proposals to construct new (or modify existing) floodwater management infrastructure (ditches, roadside gullies, retention pools, etc.), including within or close to the built-up area, will be supported on condition that they reduce flood risk for residents and do not unnecessarily and adversely affect historical sites, biodiversity or important open spaces.

Development proposals of one or more dwellings and/or for employment/agricultural development should demonstrate that:

- a. if in a location susceptible to flooding from rivers or surface water, no alternative site to meet the local residential development need is available;
- b. its location and design respect the geology, flood risk and natural drainage characteristics of the immediate area and is accompanied by a hydrological study whose findings must be complied with in respect of design, groundworks and construction;
- c. it includes a Surface Water Drainage Strategy which demonstrates that the proposed drainage scheme, and site layout and design, will prevent properties from flooding from surface water, including allowing for climate change effects, and that flood risk elsewhere will not be exacerbated by increased levels of surface water runoff and will not threaten other natural habitats and water systems;
- d. its design includes, as appropriate, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) with ongoing maintenance provision, other surface water management measures and permeable surfaces;
- e. it does not increase the risk of flooding to third parties;
- f. proposed SuDS infrastructure includes, where practicable, habitat creation comprising e.g. landscaping, access and egress for aquatic and terrestrial animals, and native species planting; and
- g. it takes the future effects of climate change on flood risk into account.

Figure 16.2: Areas susceptible to flooding from rivers and surface water (Plan Area)
Based on combined Environment Agency flood risk maps

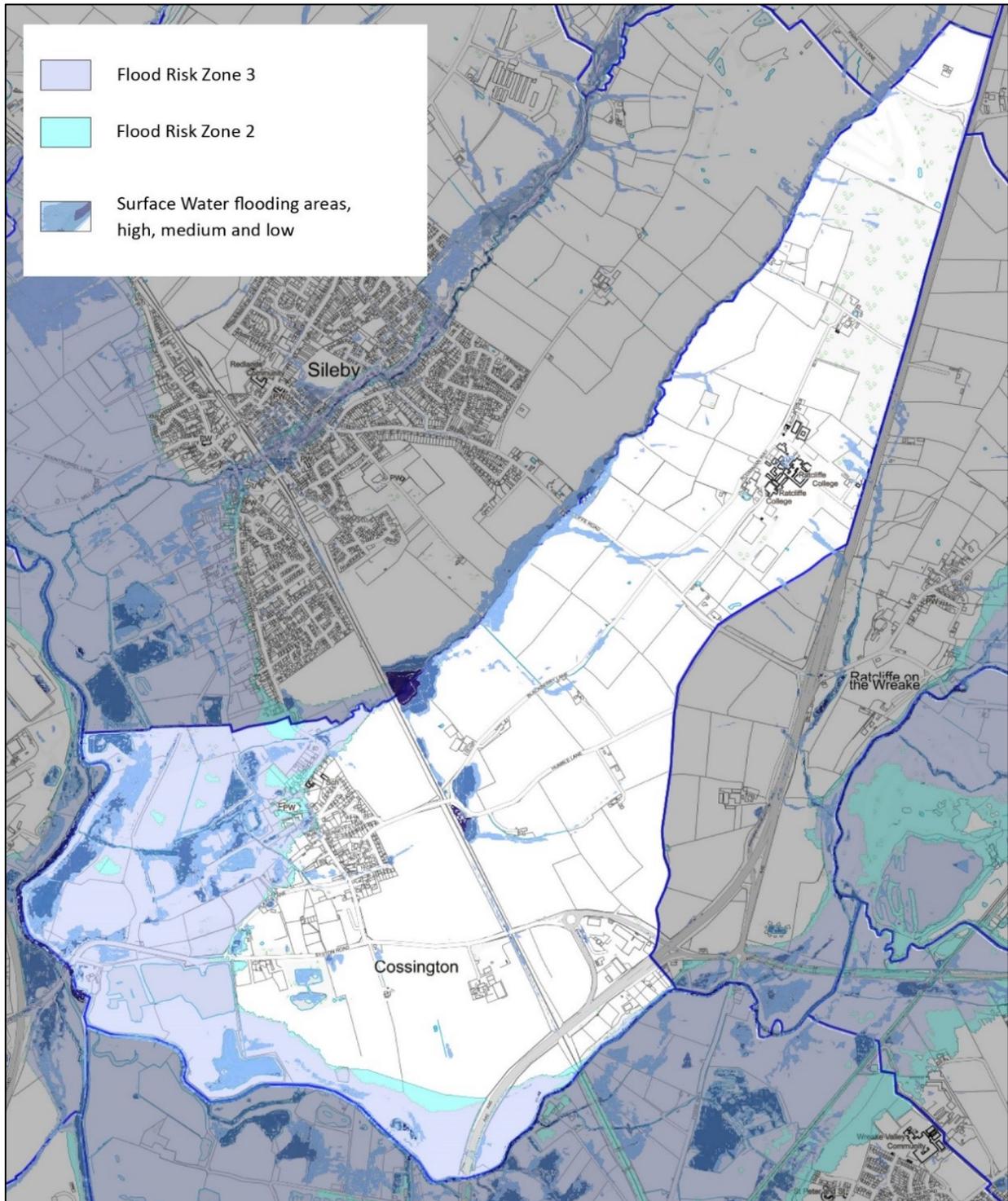
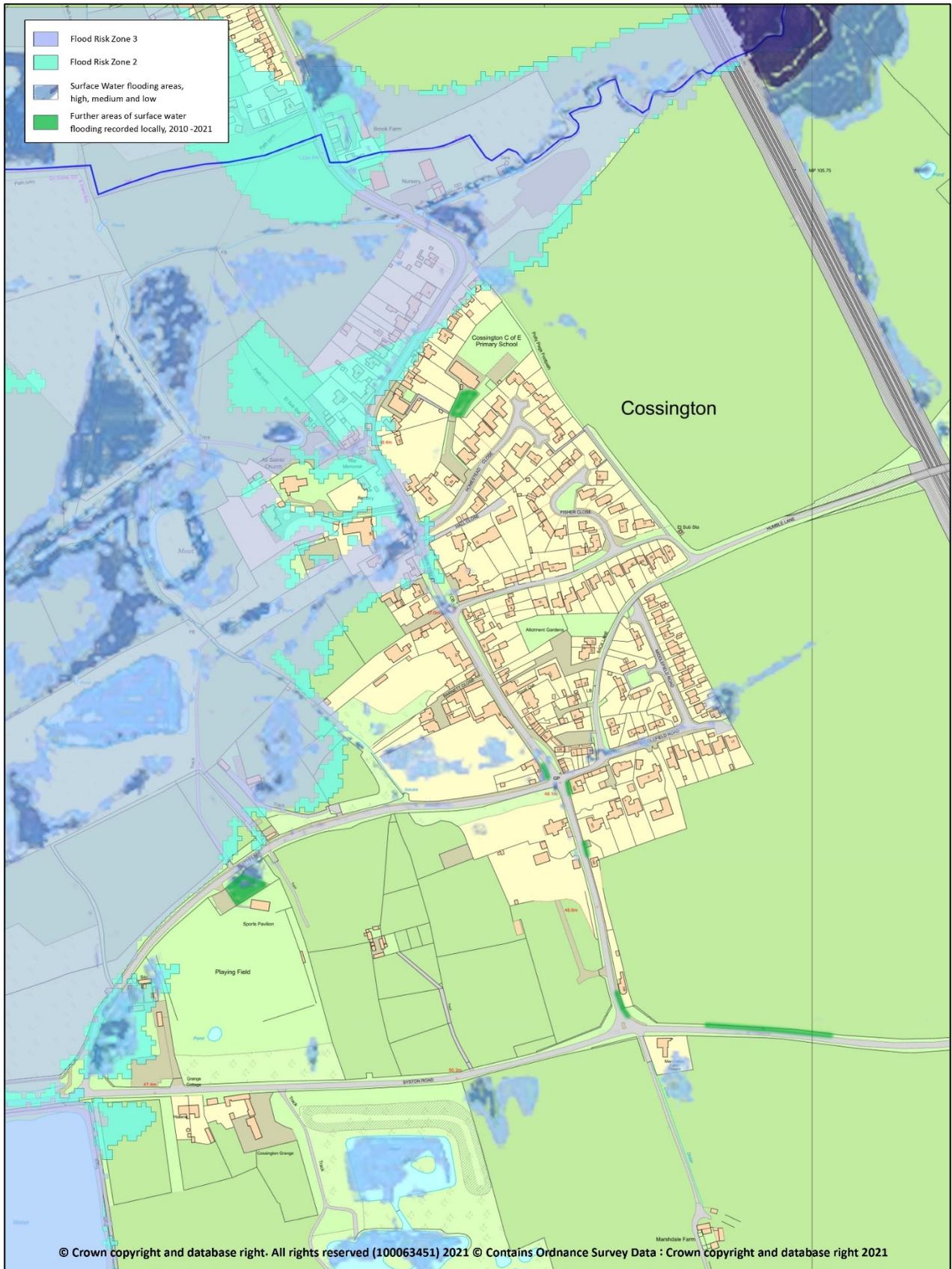


Figure 16.3: Areas susceptible to flooding from rivers and surface water (central area detail)
Based on combined Environment Agency flood risk maps and local observations, 2010 – 2021



Area of Local Separation

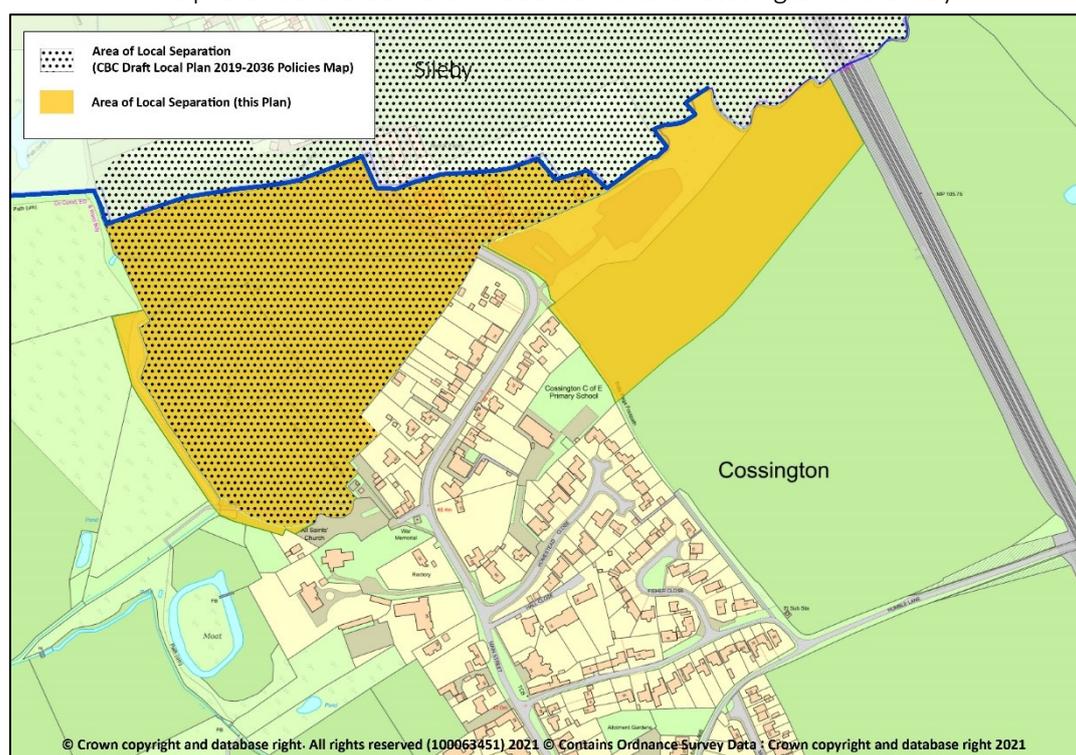
As described above, Cossington retains its essentially rural and tranquil character despite its relative proximity to Leicester and its actual proximity to Sibley. There is a narrow wedge of open countryside between Cossington and Sibley, and this is reinforced by designation of Area of Local Separation ALS4 in the *Charnwood Local Plan 2021-2037* Policy LP19, which residents of Cossington support. This Neighbourhood Plan extends the Area of Local Separation within Cossington, to take account of:

- land parcel boundaries on the west side of the ALS (adjoining Cossington Meadows nature reserve), and
- allocation in the CBC Local Plan of part of the open countryside east of Cossington village and west of the railway line for residential development.

In the case of a), the adjustment is for consistency and completeness; however the Local Plan development site allocation in b) extends the built-up area of Cossington eastwards to mirror the eastward-extending settlement envelope of Sibley. It is therefore necessary to protect the surviving open countryside wedge east of the presently defined ALS within Cossington Neighbourhood Plan Area to prevent coalescence of the two settlements as they grow in line with CBC Local Plan proposals. The extension also takes flood risk into account that the newly identified Ordinary Watercourse 2 (LCC *Flood Investigation Report #50*, 2021) originates in this area and is the cause of recent pluvial flooding; any development (impermeable infrastructure, etc.) here would exacerbate the problem.

This policy is in conformity with, and adds local detail to, CBC Local Plan policy LP19.

Figure 17: Area of Local separation within the Plan Area
- to prevent coalescence of the settlements of Cossington and Sibley



POLICY ENV 12: AREA OF LOCAL SEPARATION – To prevent the physical and visual coalescence of Cossington and Sibley, an Area of Local Separation, as shown in figure 17, is designated. Development within this area will only be supported if it is located and designed to maintain and where possible enhance the separation of the two settlements.

Renewable energy generation infrastructure

National Planning Policy Framework 2019 paragraphs 152-154 make it clear that all communities are responsible for reducing emissions as part of the necessary approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. Residents of Cossington wish to play their part in this, but at a scale appropriate to the sensitive landscape of the Plan Area. The impact of wind generation infrastructure on local communities has been recognised by the government: a Ministerial statement made on the 18th June 2015 notes that suitable areas for wind energy development must be identified in Local Plans (as has been done by Charnwood Council, see below) and crucially that any such developments must have the support of affected local communities.

Figure 17: Areas identified as ‘suitable’ for wind and solar generation in the Plan Area.

Adapted from Charnwood BC *Draft Local Plan 2019-2037* policies map. © Crown Copyright 100023558

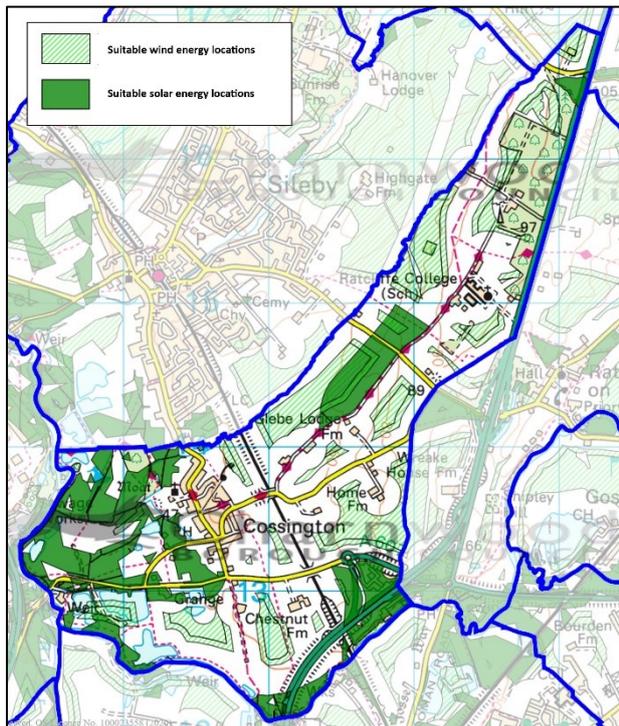


Figure 17 is from the Charnwood BC draft Local Plan 2019-2037 policies map. It shows areas technically ‘suitable’ for wind and solar generation in the Plan Area without taking other factors into account – these factors include the mapping of much of Cossington Meadows nature reserve as suitable for solar PV generation and the likelihood of community resistance to renewables infrastructure in such close proximity to the settlement.

Cossington Plan Area is located in CBC Landscape Character Area *Soar Valley*. Its sensitivity to turbines of different heights and solar arrays of different sizes was assessed as part of the background evidence for the CBC *Local Plan 2021 – 2037*. The recommendations, on which the application of Charnwood Borough policy to relevant development proposals will be based, are shown in figures 18 and 19.

Figure 18 Landscape sensitivity to turbines in Cossington Plan Area
(*Wind and Solar PV Energy Landscape Sensitivity Assessment*, CBC 2019)

Landscape Character Area	Landscape sensitivity to different height categories of wind turbines	
Soar Valley	Small-scale turbines (<40 metres)	L-M
	Medium-scale turbines (40-80 metres)	L-M
	Large-scale turbines (80-120 metres)	M-H
	Very-large scale turbines (120-160 metres)	H

Figure 19 Landscape sensitivity to solar PV arrays in Soar Valley LCA (Cossington Plan Area)
(Wind and Solar PV Energy Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, CBC 2019)

Development scenario					
Very small solar installation (<1 hectare)		L-M			
Small solar installation (>1-5 hectares)			M		
Medium solar installation (>5-10 hectares)			M		
Large solar installation (>10-15 hectares)				M-H	
Very large solar installation (>15-20 hectares)					H

Policy ENV 12 is in general conformity with NPPF 2019 paragraphs 152-154, and applies the Ministerial Statement of 2015; it is also in general conformity with Adopted Charnwood Borough Council Local Plan 2011-28 Policy CS 16 and draft Local Plan 2019-36 Policy LP29 while adding local detail to them.

POLICY ENV 13: RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION INFRASTRUCTURE – Proposals for small-scale local, resident, business, amenity or community-initiated, wind and solar (turbines 30m tip height or less; solar arrays 5 ha area or less) generation infrastructure will be supported, subject to avoidance or mitigation of the following harmful amenity and environmental effects:

- adverse impact (noise, reflections, glare, shadow, flicker, other visual impact, water pollution, smell, air quality impairment, gaseous or particulate emissions) on the health, wellbeing or amenities of residents and third parties
- adverse impact on identified views or the character of the landscape
- adverse effect on footpaths and other recreational and amenity walking, cycling and riding routes
- adverse effect on biodiversity, or identified species and habitat sites
- adverse effect on statutory historic environment features or sites, non-designated heritage assets or ridge and furrow

In the case of solar PV arrays, proposals should also be supported by appropriate and relevant assessments and documentation in respect of transport, heritage, archaeology, landscape impact, environmental impact, flood impact, ecology, arboriculture (impact and method) and tree protection.

Community Sustainability

Community Assets – *Drawing the community together*

Community assets are premises and activities, which make a significant contribution to the life of Cossington Parish. They encourage social interaction, friendships and learning, and also facilitate new opportunities. It is essential to the ongoing wellbeing of the community that Cossington retains and continues to build on these assets.

Community Spirit

Cossington is a sustainable and vibrant parish with a strong sense of community. There are regular events and activities, including: - open gardens, quizzes, the W.I. and regular ad hoc events organised by the Parish Council, the church and local parishioners.

A strong community enables social links to be made, which reduces loneliness and isolation, thus improving mental health and wellbeing. Good facilities also have the potential to reduce the need to travel outside the village to meet needs, which can reduce the journeys people make.

Cossington's community spirit would be immeasurably improved by the provision of a much larger and better-equipped community space. The Jubilee Hall has done sterling service but it is too small, has no kitchen and is inconveniently positioned. The development of the Village Centre is vital to foster Cossington's community spirit. This is especially necessary if there is to be more housing built in the parish.

The assets

The village school

Cossington Church of England School was built in 1873 at a cost of £451.6s.6d, it was enlarged in 1902 and a second school building was built in 2015 on the edge of the school field to replace mobile classrooms that had been in use for numerous years.

The maintenance and running of the school was eventually taken over by Leicestershire County Council as a primary school for the education of children up to the age of eleven. Leicestershire County Council and the Diocese of Leicester are still responsible for the school.

The school mission statement is 'Care, Significance, Purpose' and this is rooted in a foundation of distinctly Christian Values. At the OFSTED 2018 inspection and SIAMS (statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) 2016 inspection, both rated the school as 'Good'.

Presently it has a planned admission of 15 pupils each year and the number on roll is 105. Currently, 20 children attend from within the school's catchment with the majority of children attending from the neighbouring village of Sileby.

Children start in the reception class at age 4 in September of each year, and generally transfer to Humphrey Perkins School in Barrow upon Soar or Rawlins Academy, Quorn, at the age of eleven years.

All Saints church

A Grade II* listed building built of local Mountsorrel granite with limestone dressings and timber from Charnwood forest oak trees. The Chancel and South Porch roof are of Swithland Slate with the remainder of the building having leaded and parapetted roofs. The oldest parts of the church namely the Nave and North Aisle date from the 12th century. The 13th century saw the addition of the tower and in the 14th century the South Aisle and the Chancel were constructed. The roof was raised to its present level with the addition of the Clerestory in the 15th century. The building then remained largely unchanged until the substantial restoration and refurbishment initiated by the rector, Joseph Mayor, 1864-5 by H Goddard & Son. The fine stained glass east window is by Douglas Strachan and was donated to the church by the Astill family in 1917.

The open churchyard is of ecological importance as it is grassed on all sides of the church building and contains many trees, one of which is a rare English Elm tree. An investigation by Natural England revealed that the Church site is home to three species of bats (Pipistrelle, Long-eared and Natterers). Notable graves include Colonel Kitchener, father of Lord Kitchener, who is buried below the East window. Also there is a significant double tomb just outside the south porch of the Rev. & Mrs John Fisher.

Unfortunately, the church has fallen into disrepair primarily due to dampness as identified in successive statutory quinquennial inspections provided by specialist conservation architects. The clay tiles on the main nave floor are particularly damp, uneven and notably sunken in places. Medieval pews are rotting where they rest on the floor and the north aisle floor has been cordoned off where joists have collapsed. Large areas of plaster have fallen off the walls in several places whilst the ancient carved oak choir stalls have become disjointed, however, thankfully the various pieces are all accounted for. Sadly, the ancient stone font, which has featured in the social history of Cossington's inhabitants for 800 years, regardless of their rank or status, has suffered almost irreversible harm - again caused by the relentless rising damp seeping up through the floor.

The building however has been completely re-roofed. The tower and both aisle roofs were renewed in 1998 and the nave and chancel roofs were replaced and insulated in 2016. Nevertheless Historic England has become increasingly concerned and added All Saints Church to the national Heritage At Risk register in January 2020, its 800th anniversary year.

Church vestry

The Grade II* listed vestry is situated between the Old Rectory and the south entrance of the church. It was built in the 1830s by the Rev. John Babington and is unusual because it is discretely separate from the church. It has a back door accessible from the Old Rectory with a front door opening in front of the south porch of the church thus it provided a through-route for the rector. It has served as a school room for the village and has had various other uses over the year.

The Royal Oak pub

In the mid 19th century Pump Cottage served as a pub to the village, known as the Anchor Inn. When it closed to make way for the village school the Hudson family opened the Royal Oak where it now stands. It had 3 steps leading to the front door on Main Street and an entry led to a side door. There were three small rooms, the Tap Room, the Snug and the Best Room. The open cellar was in the Tap Room with about six steps down to it. Each order was fetched from the cellar.

In 1937 Everards Brewery bought the Royal Oak and it underwent a major reconstruction. In October 1992 a fire partially destroyed it to be followed by another fire in November 1992, which left only the walls standing. Eventually after a rebuilding project the pub reopened, still owned by the Everards Brewery it continues to serve the community today.

The pub is currently utilised mostly by locals, but could be developed further with the right investment, to attract visitors or those from neighbouring villages.

Cossington Meadows

The Cossington Meadow Nature Reserve was opened on 21 July 2008 by Sir David Attenborough to celebrate the Trust's 50th Anniversary year.

Lying along the river Soar, it is the largest of Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust's five nature reserves in the Soar Valley (215 acres). The area was quarried for gravel in the 1980s and 90s and the wetland site containing lakes, ponds, reed beds, ditches and tall hedges is now a vital habitat for thousands of breeding, over-wintering and migrating birds and many other species as well as wetland plants. The area is subject to flooding and is currently grazed by Welsh Black cattle, to control the growth of willow scrub and coarse vegetation.

Jubilee Hall

The Jubilee Hall was opened in 1977 the year of Queen Elizabeth's II Silver Jubilee. The original hall was no more than a wooden hut, which stood on some land donated to the village by Peter Astill. It was used for the parish council meetings and other village groups used it as a venue for their activities.

With the expansion of the village the hut became too small, the parish council were able to negotiate for some extra land from the owners of Rose Cottage. With the aid of grants, the new hall was constructed. Unfortunately the money ran out before it had been decorated or furnished. After a lot of hard work and fundraising by the management committee the hall was finished.

It is 16m x 6m and can accommodate approximately 50 people seated as an audience. There are toilets and a kitchen area but no cooking facilities. As Cossington's only community meeting place it is used for bridge clubs, women's institute, parish council, birthday celebrations, tai chi and much more. It has no car parking access. It is situated on the school grounds and can only be accessed through the playground. This presents safeguarding issues for the school and this has been referenced in OSTED reports. As was common 44 years ago it is partly constructed of asbestos. This is safe as long as it is not disturbed. Funds exist to enable it to be dismantled correctly. As

mentioned in the 2006 Parish Plan it is too small, inappropriately sited and not well enough equipped for Cossington. The Village Centre is much needed as a replacement.

For over twenty years the parish has been trying to build a replacement within the church building and many fundraising events have been held. The Cossington Project Group have been coordinating this task. The plan has been split into 2 phases. The first is to adapt the church into an open community space with new heating, a level, dry floor, moveable pews and a toilet. The second phase is to build an adjoining annexe, which will contain meeting rooms and kitchen facilities. All this has received planning permission and tenders have gone out. Future progress on this vital village project is close at hand.

Babington's charity

Reverend John Babington first set up the charity (Reg. No.220069) in 1881.

It is administered by a board of 6 trustees who, through residence, occupation or employment have special knowledge of the Parish of Cossington.

The charity owns several properties and parcels of land, some used as allotments, within Cossington. The rents received are used in the first instance to maintain these properties. Remaining income is then used for several purposes:

- Assisting the local Cossington C of E School with benefits not normally provided by the local education authority.
- For relief of hardship either generally or individually for persons resident in the parish of Cossington.
- Providing grants to persons under the age of 25 years, resident in Cossington, who are studying or undertaking an apprenticeship to promote their education.
- Excess income may be applied for the general or individual benefit of the inhabitants of the parish.

Platt's charity

Founded by decree on 10th February 1668 this one of the oldest charities in the world still to be functioning to the present day.

The Trustees manage land comprising the playing fields on Platts Lane and, previously, fields which were given over to gravel extraction and which are now a nature reserve.

Cossington allotments

The allotments are situated on two sites, a smaller plot behind the Babington cottages at the Northern end of the village and a larger plot in the heart of the village situated off Back Lane.

They form part of the legacy left to the village by the Rev. John Babington rector of Cossington from 1830 to 1839. In 1861 he made a charitable gift of five cottages and an area of allotment land ‘for the benefit of the labouring classes and artisans’.

In total there are 15 Allotments; they are all occupied presently and there is a thriving community tending their allotment. A waiting list of people is maintained for when a plot becomes free.

Cossington recreation field

Early in the twentieth century the Parish Council rented an eight-acre field from Platts Charity for use as a recreation ground for the village, latterly the recreation ground has been rented to the Sileby Vikings Rugby Club. Situated off Platts Lane it is on the edge of the village.

There is a cricket pitch, rugby and football pitch at present along with a modern changing and function room and a car park. The pitches are hired for use by local teams and the function room is available for hire. In recent years some outdoor gym equipment has been placed at the northern end of the ground

The war memorial

Unveiled in December 1920 by Colonel Toller DSO and dedicated by Reverend HS Mathias. It consists of a Derbyshire stone square pedestal with inscription, on plinth forming 2 steps all round. From pedestal rises a tapering shaft, which becomes a cross with arms joined by curving pieces of stone carved as wreath. Reversed sword carved on front. It stands on the bend on Main Street and has a small gravel surround with a chain link fence around.

Originally, the memorial did not bear any names (names are recorded in the adjacent church), but following local requests, names of casualties from WW1 and WW2 were added in 1999. Due to its location it is prone to flooding.

Village car parks

There are two designated sites for car parking in the village.

The memorial car park situated to the north of the churchyard accessed by a drive to the side of the war memorial, this can accommodate approximately 20 Cars and is used mainly by a few residents of the nearby cottages, walkers visiting the Meadows, church goers and some school parents at pick up and drop off times. Lighting has been added in the past few years.

The Village car park is a small plot owned by the Parish Council, accessed via a small drive between the houses at the Southern end of Back Lane, there is also a pedestrian access from Main Street. It lies behind the row of terraced properties at the junction of Back Lane and Main Street. It can accommodate approximately 12 cars and is used predominately by the local residents who don't have their own parking space.

The Royal Oak Trees and other tree planting

Passing along Main Street is an impressive row of oak trees in the centre of the village. These, along with the greens on which they stand, create an attractive and rural feel to the village.

Trees commemorate four coronations and a silver jubilee. The King Edward VII tree stands opposite the Old Manor House, the King George V tree is opposite the Manor House and immediately in front of the Hall is the King George VI tree. The Queen Elizabeth II tree is opposite the Rectory drive. The tree commemorating the 1977 Silver Jubilee is near to the entrance of Hall Close. At the northern end of the village near Polly Peggs stile is a tree planted in memory of the wartime leader Sir Winston Churchill this was planted after his death in 1966.

The Parish Council planted twelve English Oak trees on the Syston Road grass verge near to Platts Lane junction. These were to commemorate the signing of the Single European Market Treaty, which came into existence on midnight 31st December 1992.

Polly Peggs

This is a footpath that runs from the north end of Main Street to Crabtree Lane. It is so called after a village girl named Polly Pegg. She had become pregnant out of wedlock, this at the time was considered a sin and her father disowned her.

It was reputed that as part of her penance she had to spend the night in the church covered by a white sheet. In the morning it was still dark when she left, feeling she had nothing to live for she ran along the edge of a field and threw herself into a deep pond and drowned herself. The path she took became known as Polly Peggs and eventually became a public right of way.

Telephone kiosk

The type K6 telephone kiosk is a designated listed building and is situated in the centre of the conservation area, at the junction of Main Street and Bennett's Lane.

Designed in 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott and made by various contractors, the cast iron, Square kiosk with domed roof has un-perforated crowns to top panels and margin glazing to the windows and door. It is maintained in the iconic 'Pillar Box Red' livery. It has now become home to a defibrillator.

The village pound

The Village Pound is situated at the Southern end of the village on Main Street. Village Pounds are Saxon in origin and would have been used in earlier times to impound villagers' animals or goods if they got into debt.

In 1985 it underwent a makeover after previously falling into a state of disrepair. The Parish Council along with the help of villagers and the Manpower Commission cleared the rubbish, rebuilt the granite walls and included a flowerbed and placed a plaque on the wall. A time capsule was placed under the slab floor, which consisted of a plastic box containing contemporary coins of the realm,

current newspapers and articles relating to the pound. A village family kindly donated a seat; passing walkers and locals now uses the space.

Derry's nursery

A family run nursery standing by Cossington Brook at the north end of Main Street which was established in 1979, originally Derry's Roses. It is now a supplier of plants, trees, hedging, garden supplies and firewood and landscaping services. In 2019 it established an online business to respond to the diverse needs of a wider customer base.

Goscote nurseries

Situated on Syston Road, the nursery has been growing and sourcing hardy plants, trees and shrubs from all corners of the world for 50 years. On the same site is the Goscote Design Practice, which has been designing bespoke gardens for 35 years, and the Kowhai café.

Willows Farm fishing

This a carp syndicate consists of a series of mature gravel pits covering 34 acres of water including Cossington Lake, Davis's Lake and Mill Lake. The lakes were securely otter fenced in 2018/19 and contain several 30lb+ carp. The area is rich in bird wildlife and is subject to flooding. Footpaths surround the whole of the external boundary.

Ratcliffe College

An independent day and boarding co-educational catholic school for pupils aged 3-18, it lies to the north of the parish on a site known as Ratcliffe Hills. Established by the Institute of Charity in 1847, it served as a Roman Catholic training college. A major reconstruction took place after a fire in 1979, which destroyed most of the south wing. It became a fully co-educational college in 1984. Students come from far and wide, some from overseas; there is an increasing number of day students, some of whom come from the parish.

The College has 'Victorian Gothic' buildings designed by Augustus Welby Pugin who collaborated with Sir Charles Barry on the design of the Houses of Parliament. During WWII, boy evacuees from Sheffield were sent to Cossington and were housed at Ratcliffe College, girls were housed in the village.

Bronze Age barrows

In 1976 two early Bronze Age round barrows were excavated (within gravel workings) just south of Syston Road, near the Grange. Leicestershire Museums Archaeological Unit undertook excavations. In 1999 a third Barrow was excavated (also within gravel workings) just north of Platts Lane, by University of Leicester archaeologists. This was a particularly well-preserved monument.

The Barrows were used and re-used over a period of 2,500 years. Barrow 3 showed possible Neolithic remains, Iron Age and Roman occupation and was latterly the site of an Anglo Saxon cemetery. Charnwood museum has a display entitled 'Cossington Boy', with a model of one of the

Barrow occupants re-constructed to show what he was buried with. A monograph entitled 'Monument, Memory and Myth' by John Thomas gives great detail regarding the finds across this broad spread of history.

The Village Butts

From Medieval times an area of ground was set aside for archery practice in most villages and towns to contribute towards readiness for various wars. The site is referenced in Skillington's 'History of Cossington'. Cossington's butts were sited next to the Church. The boundary of the area is still clearly identifiable today, by hedges along three sides of a narrow strip of land, to the eastern side of Church Yard field. The strip is approximately 30 metres wide and extends around 160m back from the frontages of the cottages facing the War Memorial for many years this land was in the same ownership as Magpie Cottage, forming part of a small holding.

POLICY CF1: RETENTION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES, AMENITIES AND ASSETS - Development leading to the loss of an existing community facility, including the conservation area, village school, All Saints church, the Royal Oak pub, the Jubilee Hall, Allotments, Platts Lane recreation ground, Car Parks, Polly Peggs, Crabtree Lane and the village pound, the war memorial, will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that:

- a) There is no longer any need or demand for the existing community facility; or
- b) The existing community facility is, demonstrably, not economically viable or able to be supported by the community – such viability and support includes fundraising and volunteering by parishioners and others; or
- c) The proposal makes alternative provision for the relocation of the existing community facility to an equally or more appropriate and accessible location within the Parish which complies with the other general policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

New or Improved Community Facilities and Amenities

The parish encourages the provision of new and improved facilities so long as they serve to enhance Cossington as a place to live for all. Specifically, we are interested in acquiring a replacement village hall facility that could be regularly utilised as a community centre and enjoyed by a large proportion of the residents of Cossington.

POLICY CF2: NEW OR IMPROVED COMMUNITY FACILITIES - Proposals that improve the quality and/or range of community facilities, will be supported provided that the development:

- a) Meets the design criteria stated in Policy H5;
- b) Will not result in unacceptable traffic movements or other disturbance to residential properties;
- c) Will not generate a need for parking that cannot be adequately catered for;
- d) Is of a scale appropriate to the needs of the locality and conveniently accessible for residents of the village wishing to walk or cycle; and
- e) Takes into full account the needs of people with disabilities.

Parish Communications – *keeping connected*

Broadband and mobile infrastructure

The modern economy increasingly depends on high-quality communications infrastructure to reap maximum benefit from technological advances. High-speed internet connectivity drives business innovation and growth and creates business and employment opportunities as well as reducing social exclusion. Online searching and transactions facilitate access to information and services, also providing new and easier opportunities for education and learning. The standard of broadband and mobile infrastructure is particularly important in rural settings such as Cossington Parish. Equally, good mobile signal availability is crucial to achieve good communication for each of the above reasons.

BT Open Reach has completed their installation of 'fibre to the cabinet'. We are at the furthest point from the Sileby exchange, which slows the Internet down in peak periods. Although we have a fibre cable in the village this is not connected to any of the houses.

Every house uses the old existing telephone lines, which are copper to the houses from the local cabinet. 'Fibre to the premises', is not yet available in Cossington. This is more common in areas such as urban towns and city communities.

The mobile telephone signal in the village is variable and is poor in some parts of the village.

The increased number of people home working has focussed the issues of connectivity. We need to ensure that we maintain or improve the service going forwards.

POLICY PC1: BROADBAND AND MOBILE INFRASTRUCTURE - Proposals to provide improved access to faster broadband for all businesses and households in Cossington Parish will be supported.

Improvements to the mobile telecommunication network that serves all businesses and households within the Parish will be supported. If a new mast is installed, this should be shared, where possible, by more than one provider.

Any infrastructure improvements requiring above ground network installations, must be sympathetically located, designed to integrate into the local area, and not be in or near to open landscapes.

Transport and Road Safety – *a safe and connected parish*

Transport issues within the parish will be considered in the context of environmental sustainability. The Government's ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution reinforces this. The parish is therefore very keen to integrate and extend public transport to all local villages; improve local safe cycling facilities with separate cycle paths, integration with the national network in adjacent communities, cycle storage at the train station and buses that accommodate cycles; improve local footpaths and improve local roadside pavements; work on traffic calming measures; off road parking for all new developments and consider road safety; work to support initiatives for zero emission vehicles, and install car charging points in the Cossington car parks.

Traffic flow

Main Street is the main road through the village of Cossington where the church, the village pub (the Royal Oak), the local school and war memorial can be found. It carries an increasing number and range of vehicular transport destined for domestic and industrial sites in both Sibley and Barrow-on-Soar.

Nearly all other roads comprising the village lead off Main Street. Cossington lies on an access route from Sibley and Barrow-upon-Soar to the A46 and A6. All traffic through the village increases dramatically when surrounding roads are closed due to flooding (Slash Lane, Mountsorrel Lane, Syston Road), and many pavement widths in Cossington are not designed to keep pedestrians safe as large HGVs pass so close by. The properties along main street do not all have off street parking, resulting in some hazards when the volume of traffic is high.

There is a strong desire from villagers for an official and authoritative traffic survey to be undertaken along Main Street using appropriate data monitoring equipment in order to establish; the volume of traffic and the type of vehicles passing through. The last time an official survey was undertaken was in 2018 but regrettably the equipment being used was incorrectly placed so the data collected gave false readings/was inaccurate. Villagers explicitly want consideration to be given to reducing the speed limit through the village. In a recent survey, 97% of respondents expressed particular concern about speeding traffic while 94% expressed great concern about the volume of traffic especially the number of HGVs passing through the village. The Parish Plan of 2006 had also identified these as major issues for the village and recommended discussions should take place about 'traffic calming measures' along with appropriate action to 'enforce speed limits' neither of which has happened.

Other traffic calming possibilities discussed within the group included reducing the size and weight of HGVs; a 20mph speed limit, along with a range of possible traffic calming measures, though preferably not speed bumps but possibly chicanes which reduce speed by allowing one-way preferences particularly at strategic points along Main Street or perhaps speed cameras. The 2006

Parish Plan proposed exploring weight limits that could be put in place, to stop the largest HGVs passing through. This action remains unaddressed.

The Plan also expressed concern about safety around the vicinity of the school and the bend outside Derry's Nursery. Both are positioned at the narrowest section of Main Street. Yet despite the passing of time along with the expansion of domestic and industrial estates in Sileby and beyond as well as an expansion of the local school these problems remain unresolved and the situation has deteriorated noticeably in the intervening time.

School parking

The 'school run' inevitably causes problems for the free flow of traffic along Main Street as well as the safety of parents and children walking to school. Additionally such a concentration of traffic causes increased pollution especially around the school gates. Back in 2006 the Parish Plan identified a high level of concern about 'the inconsiderate and dangerous parking of parents when dropping off/picking up their children from school'.

With a larger school the issue of parking and safety has become even more acute even though the accident rate involving casualties is low. Most pupils live within 0.7 miles of the school, so introducing measures to encourage walking, cycling and scooting to school particularly from Sileby could have a significant impact both on the amount of pollution created as well as be a partial resolution to the traffic issues at school drop off and collection times. On a more positive note, during these key times drivers have to slow/stop in order to allow other vehicles to pass resulting in a reduction in speeding.

The village Memorial car park (owned by the Parish Council) is situated almost opposite the school and is only used by a small number of parents during pick up/drop off times. If parents are to be encouraged to use the car park instead of the street it must be made easier for them to cross Main Street either via a zebra crossing or the appointment of a school crossing/lollipop person.

The County Council Highways department in collaboration with the Parish Council should give priority consideration to undertaking an assessment of these or other safe methods of crossing Main Street. An additional issue for pedestrians walking/scooting to school is the poor visibility for some drivers when exiting from some properties. There are 16 properties along Main Street who have to reverse out of their driveways, which increases the potential for an accident. If the footpaths at the back of the school were to be paved, parents/children on foot could be encouraged to access the school this way thus avoiding Main Street.

General parking

The community questionnaire identified that almost 64% of villagers were very concerned about on street parking.

Potentially chicanes would create some space for on street parking in addition to reducing the speed of vehicles. There are no 'yellow lines' on any roads within Cossington. The installing of them could alleviate some specific parking issues though it must be remembered that many residents

have nowhere else to park their cars other than on the road, with some even parking on the grass verge.

A second parish car park, accessed via Back Lane is well used by a number of residents, but does not have sufficient space for all the cars currently using the street to park. However, the number of available spaces could be increased if the facility was appropriately refurbished. 18 houses in Cossington do not have off road parking available to them. In some instances those that do have a tendency to, still park on the road.

Cars are regularly parked immediately by the junction of Main Street, Platts Lane and Back Lane. This creates impaired visibility for drivers at this junction resulting in an increased risk of collisions.

Works' vehicles can often be seen parked partially on the road and partially on the pedestrian pavement area. Delivery vans can also cause major problems from inconsiderate parking if only for a short time. All of these issues present obstacles for people with disabilities, wheelchairs, pushchairs and pedestrians when needing to social distance. Over 76% of villagers expressed concern about the obstacles presented by pavement parking during the recent survey.

Bennett's Lane and Back Lane have particular problems for motorists that could be resolved by introducing a one-way system (as identified in the recent survey) coupled with some marked spaces exclusively for the parking of vehicles or indeed yellow lines on Main Street at its junction with Bennetts and Back Lanes. However, installing yellow lines must not act to simply displace the problem inconsiderate parking causes for drivers exiting those junctions and may cause further problems for those without off street parking.

The village recreation ground is located along Platts Lane. There is a small care park but no additional designated parking places on Platts Lane itself or any crossing points for those arriving on foot. The footpath is extremely narrow and with no nominated crossing points again this causes safety issues. Platts Lane is a 50 mph zone.

POLICY T1: TRANSPORT AND ROAD SAFETY - With particular regard to the rural highway network of the Parish and the need to minimise any increase in vehicular traffic, all new housing and commercial development must:

- Be designed to minimize additional traffic generation and movement through the village;
- Incorporate sufficient off-road parking in line with housing policy H6;
- Not remove or compromise the use of any existing off-road parking areas unless a suitable equivalent alternative is provided;
- Provide any necessary improvements to site access, communal parking and the highway network either directly or by financial contributions;
- Explore the possibility of introducing appropriate traffic calming; and
- Consider, where appropriate, the improvement and where possible the creation of, footpaths and cycle ways.

COMMUNITY ACTION T1: TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT - The Parish Council will develop a coherent action plan to address traffic and parking issues that have been identified through the Neighbourhood Plan including:

- a) Undertake an ongoing awareness exercise to make explicit the negative impact on residents of inconsiderate parking
- b) Work to achieve improvement of car parking provision for the Parish for residents and visitors.
- c) Develop appropriate traffic management/calming measures for the Parish
- d) Introduce community speed reduction actions
- e) Work with the school to resolve parking issues at drop off and pick up times for example creating a new pedestrian access point via Polly Peggs and school field.

Electric vehicles

There is a growing popularity for electric vehicles underpinned by the Governments recently announced intention to ban sales of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030,

Currently residential charging is the most prevalent method of recharging an electric vehicle with the norm tending to be where off road parking is available. It is important that more publicly available rapid charging points are created. These could be installed at various locations within the village; for example the proposed community centre development; the car park at the Royal Oak or a refurbished parish car park in Back Lane.

Recent innovations include street lighting posts could be dual purposed to provide charging points and other methods of providing charging infrastructure through the provision of other street furniture.

Central Government strategy aimed at reducing atmospheric pollution recommends that 25% of all car parks should have charging points by 2025. The ten-point plan seeks to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles. The Parish Council therefore must explore all opportunities to support this pressing aspiration.

POLICY T2: ELECTRIC VEHICLES

- a) Residential development of one dwelling or more should provide 7kW cabling, or better if feasible, to the most practical point in the home to facilitate subsequent installation of a home electric vehicle charging point.
- b) The provision of communal vehicular charging points within the Parish will be encouraged so long as there is universal access and they do not impact negatively on the availability of existing parking within the Parish.
- c) Any addition of street furniture to facilitate charging should not negatively impact on pedestrian movements or safety due to cable placement or infrastructure. It should also be in keeping with the look and feel of the Parish.

Bus service

The village is serviced by Kinch No 2 bus travelling between Loughborough town centre and Leicester. It travels through the village every 30 mins with journey time to Loughborough being around 45 mins as the bus calls at several stops in Sileby Barrow-on-Soar and Quorn on the way. The journey to Leicester takes around 22 minutes. The frequency of this service reduces to an hourly service after 6 pm, with last bus leaving the village at 10.40pm (to Leicester) and at 11.22 (to Loughborough).

There are four stops along Main Street (two in each direction) none having a shelter. Designated bus stops should have protection from the elements along with special high kerb structures to allow easier access from the pavement onto public transport for wheelchairs or those with mobility problems. Villagers who are dependent on this particular public transport service (38% according to the recent survey) rate it highly for its overall range of destinations/routes. It is therefore important to retain the service but consideration has to be given to an expansion of destinations along with a more direct route to Loughborough and Melton Mowbray. The Parish Plan (2006) identified that a service to Syston for example would offer a greater range of local shops as well as 'enable access to the Health Centre'.

Villagers want to encourage as many 'green methods of travel' as possible but there has to be both an expansion of bus journeys/destinations and an integration of these with train networks. An increase of cycle routes would also lead towards creating low traffic neighbourhoods. The result would be an improvement to air pollution and an increase in well being for villagers. Improving or increasing bus and rail networks may involve reinstating Cossington rail station alongside Humble Bridge a suggestion, which gained support in the recent survey.

Better coordination of public transport systems would also enable commuters to have greater confidence when planning their travel arrangements. Both buses and train stations must provide facilities for passengers who wish to cycle as part of their overall journey.

COMMUNITY ACTION T2: PUBLIC TRANSPORT - The Parish Council will lobby for more integrated public transport and a greater selection of destinations so that public transport better meets the needs of parishioners.

The Parish Council will also lobby for bus shelters and for Raised kerbs for ease of access to the bus.

Pedestrian footpaths, pavements and cycleways

Cycling

The Parish and surrounding areas are very popular with cyclists. However there are no designated cycle-lanes either in or through the village, so certain roads can cause safety issues for both residents' and cyclists such as Back Lane, Bennett's Lane and The Humbles where there are no pavements or road markings. Safety issues arise in Platts Lane where the footpath is particularly

narrow. Main Street can be particularly problematic as cyclists have to negotiate parked and moving vehicles in a 30mph zone or faster moving traffic along Platts Lane, which is a 50mph zone.

National Cycle Network route 6 leads from Cossington (at the junction of Syston Road and Platts Lane) in to Leicester and beyond, along the river Soar. This provides a level, traffic-free route to Syston, Thurmaston, Birstall and Leicester and is used for leisure purposes, healthy commuting to work or to attend Wreake Valley College.

Accessibility and safety for cyclists would be improved significantly by better traffic management and a calmer flow through the village, particularly along Platts Lane. This would then safely link Main Street with Leicester and could be part of a greener, safer, healthier future, less reliant on ICE vehicles. There is also potential for linking up with the cycle path from Barrow-on-Soar to Loughborough.

Overall there should be greater access to cycle lanes in order to facilitate cycling and walking whether to school or work or for pleasure which would result in encouraging a more active lifestyle. This would be in keeping with the cycling and walking investment strategy document (Department for Transport 2019) which recommended doubling cycling provision by 2025.

Footpaths

Back Lane and Bennetts Lane have no pavements and can therefore be a dangerous location for villagers to traverse as can certain sections of Main Street, where there is also no pavement (or the path is very narrow). The village has public footpaths leading to Cossington Meadows as well as towards the canal towpath (which is also a designated cycleway) and eventually onto Syston or Watermead Country Park. Cossington Meadows is particularly difficult to access from the village during wetter months, due to the boggy nature of the footpaths which lead from the village Memorial car park alongside the church onto the nature reserve and which could be resolved by laying a more weatherproof pathway.

Polly Pegg and Crab Tree Lanes border the village and as with the aforementioned is part of a national footpath network. However, while Polly Pegg Lane does not have a hard surface, dog walkers nevertheless use it regularly.

The 2006 Village Plan noted that 21% of respondents experienced access difficulties within the village (footpaths, stiles etc.). More detailed work needs to be undertaken to enable access for all. The Government's ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution seeks to make cycling and walking more attractive.

Disability issues

The external environment of Cossington disenfranchises many people with disabilities as it denies them the opportunity to independently gain access to and enjoy both the village and surrounding countryside.

There are a number of inconsistencies in the external environment of Cossington (varying footpath widths for example) all of which can be useful orientation points for visually impaired people using guide dogs or long canes. However different environmental inconsistencies (such as erratic traffic speed and inconsiderate parking) can cause issues for all travellers including sensory overloads for people with autism resulting in increased anxiety and unpredictable behaviour.

The footpath along Platts Lane is extremely narrow and dangerous for people with disabilities. There is no designated safe crossing point along Main Street which there should be given there is no footpath along one part. Dropped kerbs have been installed at some side roads leading off Main Street but there is no textured paving to lead visually impaired walkers to a safe crossing point. Roads without designated footpaths are dangerous for all pedestrians but particularly ambulant disabled people; wheelchair users or people using other mobility aids (walking frames) or indeed parents with buggies/prams/pushchairs as they all need to dodge (speeding/inconsiderate) traffic. Cossington Meadows discriminates against people with disabilities not only because of the boggy nature of the designated footpaths (during inclement weather) but the kissing gates prevent people in wheelchairs or families with pushchairs gaining access to the Meadows. This could be improved by laying level hard paths from the Memorial car park to the edge of the Nature Reserve and within parts of the Reserve itself. Additionally by replacing some existing kissing gates with wider models they would enable buggies and wheelchairs to also gain access.

The 2006 Village Plan noted that 65% of respondents (to the Village survey) were aware that footpath access in Cossington did not favour people with disabilities or people who were infirm. It was noted that changes were in hand and would be enacted shortly. However, any action taken needs to be audited against current legislation.

POLICY T3: PEDESTRIAN FOOTPATHS, PAVEMENTS AND CYCLE WAYS - The maintenance, upgrading and, where appropriate, extension of the footpath and cycle network in the parish will be supported in order to:

- Service new developments and connect them to the existing network;
- Encourage walking or cycling over car use for journeys within the Parish;
- Provide an improved and more extensive foot/cycle path network to support exercise and leisure activities for residents and visitors; and
- Work towards providing footpaths and cycleways alongside roads between local parishes, to support commuting, exercise and leisure activities.

COMMUNITY ACTION T3: PEDESTRIAN FOOTPATHS, PAVEMENTS AND CYCLE WAYS - The Parish Council will work with neighbouring Parish Councils and other relevant stakeholders to create an improved and sustainable network of cycleways and footpaths accessible for all including those using pushchairs, wheelchairs and walking aids.

Business and Employment – *helping the community to thrive*

Cossington is a rural parish and close to several significant employment centres, such as Loughborough and Leicester as well as more local employment within the villages of Sileby, Barrow on Soar, Quorn and Rothley. There is no train station in Cossington, but there are regular buses to the surrounding villages and Loughborough and Leicester.

Support for existing businesses and employment

There are few employment opportunities in Cossington currently and it felt important for the community to maintain the opportunities currently available and further grow employment opportunities as well as support the growth in home working.

Cossington is a rural parish and close to several significant employment centres, such as Loughborough and Leicester as well as more local employment within the villages of Sileby, Barrow on Soar, Quorn and Rothley. There is no train station in Cossington; there is a linear bus service between Loughborough and Leicester. Other routes are non-existent. Employment opportunities within the Parish are however relatively limited in scale.

The school, Royal Oak pub, Derry's Nursery and Goscote Nurseries are the major employers in the village. Other employment opportunities include farming and sole traders offering services such as physiotherapy and driving instruction. In addition, Chestnut Farm and Charnwood Edge are both within the Parish. These are small industrial areas, which are home to a variety of businesses such as commercial vehicle servicing, cycle manufacture and construction companies. A recent parish survey (Feb 2020) suggests that around 8% of Cossington residents are homeworkers but is likely to be higher now.

POLICY BE1: SUPPORT FOR EXISTING BUSINESSES & EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

There will be a strong presumption against the loss of commercial premises or land that provides employment or future potential employment opportunities. Applications for a change of use to an activity that does not provide employment opportunities will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that:

- a) The commercial premises or land in question has not been in active use for at least 12 months; and
- b) The commercial premises or land in question has no potential for either reoccupation or redevelopment for employment generating uses and as demonstrated through the results both of a full valuation report and a marketing campaign lasting for a continuous period of at least 6 months.

Support for new businesses and employment

New employment initiatives can help to boost and diversify the local economy, thus providing more local employment opportunities.

However, parishioners have been clear that any new employment initiatives should be small scale and sensitive to the character of the Parish. Employment proposals should only be approved if they avoid harmful impacts on other matters agreed to be locally important such as increased traffic flows, parking, residential amenity, the preservation of historic/heritage assets and the local environment and also serve the community.

For those working outside the parish, further opportunities within the parish could be helpful, reduce car traffic and carbon emissions. Re-opening of the train station at Cossington would support those working in Leicester and Loughborough. Currently public transport is limited (regular but infrequent buses) and the nearest park and ride is at Birstall. Further cycle routes would also be a benefit.

Being able to encourage new business start-ups, and more homeworking with local meeting facilities would be welcome to the community. However, there are no meeting room facilities anywhere within the village and it may not be possible for individuals to develop their homes to accommodate such spaces, and in any case may be inappropriate and insecure to use space such as upstairs spare bedrooms as meeting facilities. This may discourage potential home-workers, or those with ideas for business start-ups.

Businesses will be more readily encouraged that will foster the sense of community and work towards carbon neutral environment reducing the need to travel outside the village.

POLICY BE2: SUPPORT FOR NEW BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYMENT - In supporting additional employment opportunities, new development will be required to:

- Fall within the boundary of planned settlement boundary for the Cossington Parish, unless it relates to small scale leisure or tourism activities, or other forms of commercial/employment related development appropriate to a countryside location
- Where possible, development should be sited in existing buildings or on areas of previously developed land
- Be of a size and scale not adversely affecting the character, infrastructure and environment of the village itself and the Neighbourhood Plan area, including the countryside
- Not generally involve the loss of dwellings or existing businesses
- Not increase noise levels or light pollution or introduce any pollution to an extent that they would unacceptably disturb occupants of nearby residential property
- Not generate unacceptable levels of traffic movement and on road parking, provide off road parking

- Contribute to the character, the design of the local built environment and the vitality of the local area
- Be well integrated into and complement existing businesses.

COMMUNITY ACTION BE1: MEETING SPACE FOR BUSINESSES - There is an identified need for meeting space and facilities and it is proposed that this be included within the new Village Centre amenity to support small businesses and home workers

a) Visitors could utilise the village car park, utilising existing space

b) The provision of high-speed broadband and free Wi-Fi

c) Consideration should be given to providing video conferencing facilities

Home working

Although a recent survey identified 8% of the parish as homeworkers, there is an increasing trend for parishioners to work from home, whether this is for part of the working week or entirely. The Coronavirus pandemic has accelerated this trend and it is likely to become a more acceptable and common working pattern and practice for parishioners in the future. With improving Internet connectivity locally and the changing employment patterns nationally, homeworking is unlikely to be limited to the self-employed and a greater percentage of the population will be spending their time within the parish. This has the potential to create opportunities within the community for joint working and mutual support.

There are no shops within Cossington, with the nearest being in Sileby, which is not within walking distance for most people. Cossington would benefit from a small shop/café/delicatessen to buy essentials as well as a meeting space with Internet access/free Wi-Fi – potentially in the planned community centre annexe (see above identified need within the business and employment policy).

It is recognised that people may not have a suitable space within their home from which to work comfortably, and they may wish to distinctly and deliberately separate their work and living spaces. The construction of extensions, the conversion of outbuildings, and the development of new freestanding buildings in gardens from which homeworkers or small businesses can operate will be supported. This is intended to maximise the opportunities for entrepreneurial activity and homeworking in Cossington.

In addition, it is important that Broadband is available within the village and to any new dwellings. The current mobile phone signal within the Parish is poor and needs improving to support homeworkers, businesses and the community in general.

There is also a strong desire for new housing to contain a small office/study space to accommodate home working.

POLICY BE3: HOME WORKING - Proposals for the use of part of a dwelling for office, and for small-scale free-standing buildings within its boundaries, extensions to the dwelling or conversion of outbuildings for those uses, will be supported where:

- Such development will not result in unacceptable traffic movements and that appropriate parking provision is made
- No significant and adverse impact arises to nearby residents or other sensitive land uses from noise, fumes, light pollution, or other nuisance associated with the work activity; and
- Any extension or free-standing building shall be designed having regard to policies in this Plan and should not detract from the quality and character of the building to which they must be subservient by reason of height, scale, massing, location or the facing materials used in their construction.

Farm diversification

Farming plays a small role in the Parish in employment terms. Few parishioners are therefore employed in agriculture. The village does have agricultural land and rare breed cattle.

The agricultural land around the village provides access to the countryside and enhances the environment.

POLICY BE4: FARM DIVERSIFICATION - The major use of land within the parish is agricultural. The maintenance of this land as agriculture and for biodiversity of wildlife is strongly supported. In recognition of farms that wish to diversify and the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses, the conversion of existing agricultural and commercial buildings will be supported subject to:

- The use proposed is appropriate to the rural location
- The conversion/adaptation works respect the local character of the surrounding area
- The development will not have an adverse impact on any archaeological, architectural, historic or environmental features
- The local road system is capable of accommodating the traffic generated by the proposed new use and adequate parking can be accommodated within the site
- There is no significant adverse impact on neighbours through noise, light or other pollution, increased traffic levels or increased flood risk.
- The change of use will not adversely impact the soil quality of the surrounding farmland

Tourism

Cossington is an attractive rural parish to which walkers and cyclists are attracted. The Parish already has off road cycle tracks leading to Watermead Park. The Meadows is also popular for walkers. However, it is subject to flooding, as are the paths to the Canal and Watermead Park, which makes local walking difficult in the winter months.

The Parish is keen to extend a welcome to visitors whilst ensuring that their visit does not have a negative impact on parishioners - for example, in the context of traffic.

The offer to visitors may be enhanced over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan through the development of activities, places to eat, in addition to infrastructure such as signage, seating, parking and other provision to welcome visitors.

The development of the village centre would provide an attraction and resource for visitors and residents alike. Not only would it provide much needed community space it would also give Cossington the opportunity to showcase many aspects of its rich heritage. The Village Centre would give us a place to present displays, artefacts and information about Cossington's history and culture. Technology could be harnessed; apps for smartphones would lead visitors around the 800-year-old church allowing visitors and residents to access Cossington's historical, cultural and natural heritage.

Local tourism attractions include: The Meadows, the canal footpath and the recreation ground on Platts Lane (all are subject to flooding). These attractions could be further enhanced with additional parking, widening of the paths, increased paths on the Meadows and flood prevention measures. The development of public toilets, near the Church area, would be a benefit. The pub is currently utilised by locals, walkers and cyclists. This could be developed further to attract tourists and visitors from further afield.

POLICY BE4: TOURISM - Support will be given to facilities to enhance tourism as follows:

- Within or adjoining Cossington village, on a scale appropriate to the settlement
- Does not have a detrimental effect on the distinctive rural character of the Parish
- Does not adversely affect the surrounding infrastructure, particularly local road networks
- Does not result in more on road parking
- Benefits the local community, through for instance, provision of local employment opportunities and improvements to local service provision, and is proportionate to the size of settlement in which it is located; and
- Where feasible, the development involves the re-use of existing buildings

8 Infrastructure

All development has the potential to impact on the environment and place pressure on local infrastructure and services. It is recognised that the planning system should be used to ensure that new development contributes positively to the local environment and helps to mitigate against any adverse impacts on infrastructure.

The Local Plan says ‘We expect all of our communities to benefit from a wide range of infrastructure, at the right time and in the right place. We want developments to create places that residents can be proud of’.

This is not only to ensure that the new development is properly served in respect of essential day-to-day infrastructure required by the occupants of any new development but also to minimise the impact upon existing infrastructure.

However, the NPPF stresses that the need for infrastructure accompanying development must have regard for the viability of that development. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG 46) also recognises the ability of Neighbourhood Plans to identify the need for new or enhanced infrastructure but requires the Plan to prioritise the infrastructure requirements.

Provision of the necessary physical and community infrastructure arising from proposed development is therefore a critical component of the Plan, which has identified a wide range of potential infrastructure requirements through its production.

Funding for new infrastructure is currently provided through a legal agreement (often referred to as a Section 106 Agreement) between the Borough Council and the applicant, along with other parties involved in the delivery of the specific infrastructure improvement. CBC is considering the introduction of what is known as a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) where charges will be applied according to the scale and type of development, and these funds used to pay for the infrastructure requirements, subject to CIL tests.

POLICY INF1: INFRASTRUCTURE - Where policies in this Plan require contributions to community infrastructure, they will be made through contributions through Section 106 agreements or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) where applicable.

The highest priority infrastructure requirement identified by the community is the provision of a replacement village hall that is fit for purpose.

9 Monitoring and Review

The Neighbourhood Plan covers the period up to 2037. During this time, it is likely that the circumstances which the Plan seeks to address will change.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be regularly monitored. This will be led by Cossington Parish Council on at least an annual basis. The policies and measures contained in the Neighbourhood Plan will form the core of the monitoring activity, but other data collected and reported at the Parish level relevant to the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan will also be included.

The Parish Council proposes to formally review the Neighbourhood Plan in 2026 or to coincide with the review of the Charnwood Local Plan if this cycle is different.