

Ampney Crucis Residents Action Group (ACRAG) Newsletter — March 2026



Photographs of the fields proposed in the draft Local Plan and earmarked for 660 new houses.

Summary of Recent Activities

Many residents will be familiar with our work during the six-week consultation period on the draft Local Plan. For clarity, here is a summary of what was undertaken:

- Produced and circulated an information leaflet and a guide to writing an effective objection letter, along with a supporting Material Planning Considerations Guide
- Hosted a drop-in help session at the Village Hall
- Hand-delivered 102 letters to Cotswold District Council
- Launched a social media campaign and displayed signage across the village
- Submitted a formal representation supported by four expert-led reports addressing viability concerns, complementing the Parish Council's own submission

Since the 2 January deadline, we have maintained momentum. We have instructed solicitors to submit a legal challenge to Cotswold District Council (CDC), submitted many Freedom Of Information Act (FOIA) requests, spoken to our local Councillor Lisa Spivey, written several letters to our MP Roz Savage, continued fundraising efforts, and began researching potential next steps and response strategies.

Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA)

While many of the planning considerations affecting Ampney Crucis apply to development sites nationwide under new housing targets, it became clear early in the process that our heritage considerations distinguish us significantly.

Our Conservation Area, in particular, represents a key strength in protecting the village. The Parish Council agreed, at their EGM on 9th February, to co-sponsor with ACRAG and commission a full Conservation Area Character Appraisal (CACA) engaging specialist consultants Dr Victoria Thompson (Thompson Planning & Heritage) and Natalie Fenner (NCF Heritage).

This work will be instrumental in strengthening the village's ability to resist disproportionate and inappropriate development - not only if we progress to Regulation 19 of the Local Plan, but also in opposing any future speculative applications.

The CACA is both vital and costly. ACRAG and the Parish Council have agreed to share the financial burden with ACRAG paying in stages and the Parish Council paying their proportion once the report has been delivered, enabling NCF Heritage to commence their work without delay. By delivering leaflets and supporting with practical arrangements we aim to raise community awareness and gather valuable local insights that will strengthen NCF Heritage's proposals.

Fundraising Update

The level of support from residents, both current and past, as well as from neighbouring communities has been extraordinary. Contributions have taken many forms, and we are sincerely grateful for every expression of support.

For transparency, below is a summary of funds received and expenditure to date (including proceeds from the Auction of Promises).

Funds Received (as at 16th March 2026)

- Go Fund Me Donations: £16,109.00
- Lloyds Community Bank Account: £28,040.00
- Auction (net): £20,381.00
- Total Raised: £64,530.00

Balances are net of bank account fees and interest

Expenditure to Date

- Formal Representation and Supporting Reports £18,646.00

Please note that incidental expenses such as printing and card payment terminal costs have been personally covered by ACRAG members and are not included above.

Planned Expenditure

- Outstanding CACA Balance: £7,875.00 inc vat
- Invoice for Lawyers Letter £1,800.00 inc vat
- Ongoing legal consultation £1,800 inc vat

- Total Planned Expenditure: £11,475.00

Current Available Balance : £35,309.00

What Happens Next?

Based on our current understanding, there are three potential outcomes from the draft Section 18 Local Plan process:

1. A New Section 18 Process Begins

While we consider this unlikely, if it occurs and Ampney Crucis remains included, we would need to resubmit our comments. We would hope our existing reports could be reused, and we would again work closely with residents to support the process, however, we would need to see the new proposal and understand the revised recommendations. It is possible we would need more legal representation at the very least.

2. Progression to Section 19

This is the scenario we hope to avoid; however, given the broader political context, we must prepare for it.

We are also mindful that some of the nearby land supply around Driffield is no longer available and therefore could increase pressure on CDC to not only keep Ampney Crucis in the plan but indeed increase the proposed number of houses!

So, if the site progresses to Regulation 19, we would need to escalate our challenge, which would involve substantial additional expenditure. We are currently researching and costing the most effective approach and identifying appropriate professional advisers.

At a minimum, we expect to require:

- A King's Counsel (KC)
- A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- A full Hydrological Survey including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- A comprehensive Ecology Assessment
- Further Traffic analysis
- Political Advice
- Ongoing Planning Consultancy advice

These assessments can only be commissioned once the precise development boundary and housing numbers are confirmed, as Section 18 proposals remain high-level.

We have a provisional estimate of costs, and it is significant. At present, our remaining balance would cover approximately 20% of what may ultimately be required.

3. Removal from the Local Plan

If CDC recognises the site as unviable and unsustainable and removes Ampney Crucis from the Local Plan, we would find ourselves in the positive position of having funds remaining. However, the possibility of a speculative planning application would remain. In that event, we would deploy our remaining resources to oppose such proposals.

Funds would be held for an agreed period (two years has been suggested). If no planning threat arises during that time, we would enter discussions with the Parish Council regarding appropriate next steps. ACRAG remains firmly committed to

ensuring that funds raised specifically to oppose inappropriate development are used solely for that purpose.

Thank you

In closing, we want to thank every resident who has supported this work - through donations, time, encouragement and engagement. The strength of feeling across Ampney Crucis has been clear, and it has enabled us to act decisively and responsibly on behalf of the village.

While the months ahead may bring further challenges, ACRAG remain fully committed to protecting the character, heritage and sustainability of Ampney Crucis. We will continue to keep residents informed as matters progress and will always act transparently and in line with the purpose for which your support has been given.

The ACRAG Team

Doug Crook (Chair), Ellen Hopkins (Secretary), Sue Napier (Treasurer), Chris Fleming, Dave Hopkins, Andrew Lazenby, Anastasia O'Brien, Charlotte Pink, Sandie Sowler, Kevin Underwood and Mark Wadland.

