

## Ampney Crucis Conservation Area Appraisal FAQs

### **Ampney Crucis Conservation Area Appraisal: Consultation**

In recognition of its special character, much of Ampney Crucis was designated as a conservation area in 1980. Whilst the designation was reviewed in 1990 and a boundary map produced, the Ampney Crucis conservation area has never had a conservation area character appraisal which would provide a consistent assessment of what makes the area special. This means there is no consistent framework for informed planning decisions.

This consultation is about the production of an appraisal for Ampney Crucis, co-sponsored by the Parish Council and Residents' Action Group. It is long established good practice to engage the local community in the preparation of an appraisal. Doing so increases the relevance and weight of the appraisal in future planning activity. It also increases awareness of the character and importance of the conservation area in the community, and, perhaps most importantly, enables local knowledge and experience to inform the appraisal and its articulation of the character of the area.

Two drop-in consultation events are proposed, at the Village Hall:

- Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April from 2.00 - 4.30pm
- Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April from 7.00 - 9.30pm.

At these events you can discuss the conservation area work with the consultants appointed to undertake the work, learn more about the conservation area and the appraisal, and share your views: we are keen to hear from residents, community groups, businesses, and others with an interest in the area. We want to understand what you think contributes to the character and appearance of the village, what you consider might be a threat, and whether you consider the current protected areas to be the right ones.

Queries and responses can also be submitted to us by email (to [Natalie.fenner@ampneycrucis-pc.gov.uk](mailto:Natalie.fenner@ampneycrucis-pc.gov.uk)) by the end of April 2026. The consultation material will also be posted on the website for those unable to attend the in-person events.

Set out below are answers to some frequently asked questions which we hope you will find helpful.

### **Where is the Ampney Crucis conservation area?**

The Ampney Crucis conservation area boundary is shown in [this map](#) on the Cotswold District Council (CDC) website. Unusually, the conservation area is in three discrete parts.

### **What is a conservation area?**

An area of 'special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance' – in other words, conservation areas exist to protect the features and the characteristics that make a historic place unique

and distinctive. Cotswold District Council has a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area. In addition to statutory controls, both national and Local Plan policies help preserve the special character and appearance of conservation areas and their setting where it contributes to its significance. CDC has the largest number of conservation areas anywhere in England (144), and Ampney Crucis' conservation area was first identified by CDC in 1980 as being an area of special architectural and historic interest, worthy of protection.

### **What is happening?**

Since its designation, Ampney Crucis has never had a conservation area character appraisal. Whilst it has a map which defines its boundary, there is no accompanying document which provides a consistent assessment of what makes the area special, which means there is no consistent framework for informed planning decisions. The Parish Council and the Residents Action Group, together motivated by the threat of 660 houses being suggested by CDC to be added to the northern fringe of the village in their 2025 'Preferred Options' local plan consultation, have therefore commissioned a new conservation area character appraisal to be put together by consultants, which will provide the clear assessment of character and appearance which the village sorely lacks.

## **Why would a conservation area character appraisal be helpful?**

The appraisal will identify and analyse what is special about Ampney Crucis in order to help homeowners, landowners and businesses with an interest in the village to be better aware of and involved in the protection and management of the conservation area. By providing a consistent basis for planning decisions affecting the conservation area, this should help to guide controlled and positive change, minimising harm and encouraging high quality design which responds to the sensitive surroundings. In addition, the appraisal will provide useful evidence to help in the fight against the next stage of CDC's local plan process, due to commence in Summer 2026.

## **Who is undertaking this work?**

Ampney Crucis Parish Council and Residents Action Group have jointly commissioned the character appraisal, to be prepared by experienced and suitably qualified heritage consultants. Its preparation adheres to national legislation, policy, guidance and best practice, and will be subject to public consultation as well as sign-off by both organisations.

## **How is the work being undertaken?**

The appointed consultants are following the rules for conservation areas set out in legislation, policy, guidance, and Historic England's published advice. This involves archival research, detailed site visits, the methodical assessment of the area's qualities against defined criteria, engagement with the local community, and the writing up of the information gathered in the appraisal itself, in a clear and accessible way. The final draft will be signed off by the Parish Council and Residents Action Group, before being submitted to the District Council for their use and potential adoption.

## **Why is there not already an appraisal for the Ampney Crucis conservation area?**

Cotswold District has 144 conservation areas, the highest number in England. Only 14 of these conservation areas have adopted appraisals (or 'conservation area statements') with two more (Kemble and Blockley) having appraisals which are not yet formally adopted. A 2015/16 CDC report suggests that there may have been some form of appraisal for Ampney Crucis in 1971 (a 'conservation area proposal policy statement'), and in the 1980s (a 'conservation area policy statement'), but there is nothing currently available for the Ampney Crucis conservation area apart from the boundary map.

In 2015/16, CDC noted that producing appraisals for its many conservation areas was an area which should be prioritised – albeit also noting that the work would have to be delivered in the context of limited resources. Rather than having to undertake all the work itself, CDC has explored formally adopting appraisals prepared by parish councils and communities, or publishing such appraisals on their website without adopting them, so the principle of this approach has been accepted.

With regard to the current project, CDC has advised that its limited resources are currently directed towards local plan preparation.

### **How are conservation areas designated?**

Conservation areas are generally designated by the local planning authority (in Ampney Crucis, Cotswold District Council is responsible for designation). Under the relevant legislation, local planning authorities are required, 'from time to time', to determine which parts of their area are of 'special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance', and then designate them. Government guidance states that 'undertaking a conservation area appraisal may help a local planning authority to make this judgment'.

The area as a whole must be of special architectural or historic interest, and there are formal procedures to go through to confirm the designation. The local planning authority does not have to consult the local community when designating a conservation area, but it is advisable to do so.

Around 10,000 conservation areas have been designated in England, 144 of which are in Cotswold District.

### **Can conservation area boundaries be altered once they have been designated?**

Yes. Local planning authorities are in fact required under the relevant legislation to review their conservation areas 'from time to time', and amend them as needed. Historic England suggests that, resources permitting, a review should ideally take place every five years, but that the frequency of reviews will vary according to the development pressures in the local area.

The same procedures must be followed for conservation area boundary changes as for the original designation. As Cotswold District Council notes on its website, boundary reviews are normally undertaken during the preparation of a character appraisal for the area.

### **Will the appraisal currently being produced result in a change to the conservation area boundary?**

No, not directly: any boundary change needs to be actioned by the local planning authority and they have made clear they do not currently have the resource to do this. However, the appraisal work is being undertaken in line with national legislation, policy, guidance, and good practice, and could be used by Cotswold District Council to take forward boundary changes in future. A note of suggested boundary changes, with the requisite evidence and arguments, will be produced alongside the appraisal to support that possibility. If the conservation area is extended, only minor changes to the appraisal would be needed, as the proposed extension is intended to recognise the wider area which embodies the special character of Ampney Crucis.

It is important to note that the Ampney Crucis conservation area already exists. The appraisal will not change its status, but will help with a clear and consistent

understanding of its character and importance. This will help the conservation area to be better understood by all, and the various planning rules relating to conservation areas to be properly applied.

### **Will the appraisal be adopted by Cotswold District Council?**

We don't know. The appraisal is being prepared in line with the relevant legislation, policy, guidance and good practice, which maximises its chances for adoption in future. The Parish Council and Residents Action Group have invited CDC to participate in the preparation of the appraisal, and CDC can adopt it later, even if they do not participate now.

Even if the appraisal is not formally adopted, it will still have relevance in planning activity. This is acknowledged in a 2016 report on heritage by CDC, which states that local communities and parish councils would be encouraged to prepare or commission appraisals. These 'would not be formally endorsed by the District Council but would be available on the Council's web-site with a statement explaining the weight that should be given to them, for example that they were prepared by a suitably qualified person, that they had been subject to public consultation.... This will ensure that communities are engaged in helping to protect their local area and that the efforts made by communities are acknowledged and widely shared'.

Beyond this, the appraisal is entirely eligible to be regarded as a 'material consideration' in planning activity, that is, a relevant consideration to which weight should be given in decision-making. As it is being prepared in line with legislation, policy, guidance and good practice (as noted above), with the Parish Council's support, and evidence of public consultation, and as CDC has not itself undertaken this work as legislation and policy require, the appraisal should be recognised by both CDC and the Planning Inspectorate (the body which deals with planning appeals on planning applications and with local plan examinations) as a significant and valuable resource.

### **What does conservation area designation mean for me?**

If your house is in a conservation area then it is subject to some additional planning controls and protections. These do not mean that nothing can change, but that proposals for change need to be considered carefully to take account of the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

If your home is within the conservation area and you are considering making any changes to your property, it is always worth seeking advice from the council or from an external adviser. A few key issues affecting conservation areas are set out below:

- Planning permission is generally needed more frequently than is the case outside conservation areas. For example: demolishing buildings, structures or walls, replacing windows, or installing satellite dishes may all need permission in a conservation area.
- Where planning permission is needed, a heritage statement or heritage impact assessment may be required in support of the application for permission.
- Works to trees are more closely controlled, and the local planning authority must be notified before works are carried out.

The requirement for planning permission to be obtained does not however indicate that proposals will be refused: Historic England research suggests that 91% of planning applications with a heritage dimension (such as the development site being located within a conservation area) are granted planning permission.

### **Does conservation area designation affect property value?**

Yes. Research reported by Historic England reveals that conservation area designation generally results in increased property values:

- Houses in conservation areas have a price around 10% to 23% higher than houses elsewhere (the premium depends on a number of variables, including how close to the heart of the conservation area the house is, how long the area has been designated, whether the conservation area is at risk, and the property itself).
- Houses immediately outside a conservation area also experience a premium, of around 5%.

### **What does the local planning authority have to consider when dealing with proposals in or affecting the setting of conservation areas?**

Planning legislation includes a statutory duty in relation to conservation areas. This requires local planning authorities to pay 'special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas' when undertaking planning activity, such as the consideration of planning applications and the preparation of local plans.

National planning policy (reinforced by local planning policy) requires applicants for planning permission in or near conservation areas to describe the 'significance' of the conservation area (i.e., what makes it special), including the contribution of the conservation area's setting to that significance. The local planning authority should then identify and assess the particular significance of the affected conservation area, and take that into account when considering the impact of a proposal upon it. 'Great weight' is to be given to the conservation of the area in question.

Additionally, local planning authorities are required to look for opportunities for development within conservation areas 'to enhance or better reveal their significance'.

### **What will the appraisal achieve?**

Conservation area appraisals make clear a conservation area's special qualities, and enable the proper application of the rules set out in legislation and national and local planning policy. Accordingly, the appraisal will ensure that the heritage of Ampney Crucis can be properly considered in the preparation of the new local plan for Cotswold District, something that is required but which has not yet been possible, given the lack of heritage evidence gathered to date. The appraisal will also assist the District and Parish Councils in understanding the impact of future applications for planning permission, and assist those thinking about submitting planning applications in understanding what is likely to be regarded as acceptable, thereby

saving wasted money and effort. It is hoped that the appraisal will also be of general interest to the people of Ampney Crucis.

### **What can be included in a conservation area?**

Conservation areas are not just about buildings. Features which can contribute to a conservation area's special interest – and which are being assessed in Ampney Crucis – include history, built structures (including their detail and their relationship to each other and the space around them), the overall form of the settlement, open space and trees, views, setting and more.

### **Can the conservation area be extended to cover the whole of the proposed local plan development area?**

No. Conservation areas must demonstrate special architectural or historic interest, and the entirety of the indicated development area is very unlikely to be able to do that. Even if it could, conservation area designation does not itself automatically preclude development, although it does significantly raise the bar for what would be regarded as acceptable, and ensure that any development that is allowed properly considers, conserves, and ideally enhances the character of the area.

### **Does everything within the conservation area have to be of special architectural or historic interest?**

No. Whilst the area overall must have those qualities, it is however appropriate for small parts of the conservation area to not meet that standard: by including such sites, provision is made for their future improvement, when opportunities allow.

### **How are the most important parts of a conservation area protected?**

Some parts of the Ampney Crucis conservation area have their own, additional protections, most notably the two scheduled monuments and many listed buildings: nearly all works to scheduled monuments require scheduled monument consent from the Secretary of State, whilst any works to listed buildings that would affect their character as buildings of special architectural or historic interest require listed building consent from the local planning authority. For both, it is a criminal offence to carry out works without the necessary consent.

Appraisals provide an opportunity to identify other features which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, such as particular buildings or open spaces. National planning policy contains specific provisions for addressing the proposed loss of such features.

When prepared by the District Council, an appraisal also provides a mechanism for the identification of 'non-designated heritage assets'. The Parish Council is also able to identify non-designated heritage assets when preparing a neighbourhood plan. Non-designated heritage assets are defined as 'buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified by plan-making bodies as having a degree of heritage significance meriting consideration in planning decisions but which do not meet the criteria for designated heritage assets' (such as scheduled monuments or listed

buildings). National planning policy also contains specific provisions for the protection of these heritage assets. Whilst the current appraisal cannot formally identify non-designated heritage assets, recommendations will be included within the note which will accompany the appraisal for the local planning authority's future consideration (which will also cover possible boundary changes).

### **What will happen to the Ampney Crucis conservation area when local government is reorganised in Gloucestershire?**

The conservation area is formally designated under planning legislation, and will remain so under local government reorganisation, along with any appraisal which has been formally adopted (the current appraisal will remain in the care of the Parish Council and Residents Action Group, irrespective of changes in local government at district and county level).

The current or future authorities can extend the conservation area. They can also de-designate it, in whole or in part (requiring adherence to the same formal process used for the initial designation), but that would be a very unusual step, reserved for circumstances where the quality has been so badly eroded that special architectural or historic interest is not retained.

### **Next steps**

It is hoped to conclude work on the appraisal in late May/early June, in readiness for the parish responding to the next CDC local plan consultation which is scheduled for this summer ('Regulation 19' stage).

### **How do I find out more about conservation areas?**

The consultants appointed by the Parish Council and Residents Action Group will be present at the two consultation events to explain more about the work being undertaken, with the consultation material also available on the Parish Council website.

The map of the Ampney Crucis conservation area is available [here](#). The full list of conservation areas in Cotswold District is provided [here](#), and some Cotswold District Council advice on conservation areas [here](#).

Further useful information on conservation areas is contained in Historic England's published advice, available [here](#).