



**CRANAGE
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
2025 – 2035**





CRANAGE PARISH COUNCIL



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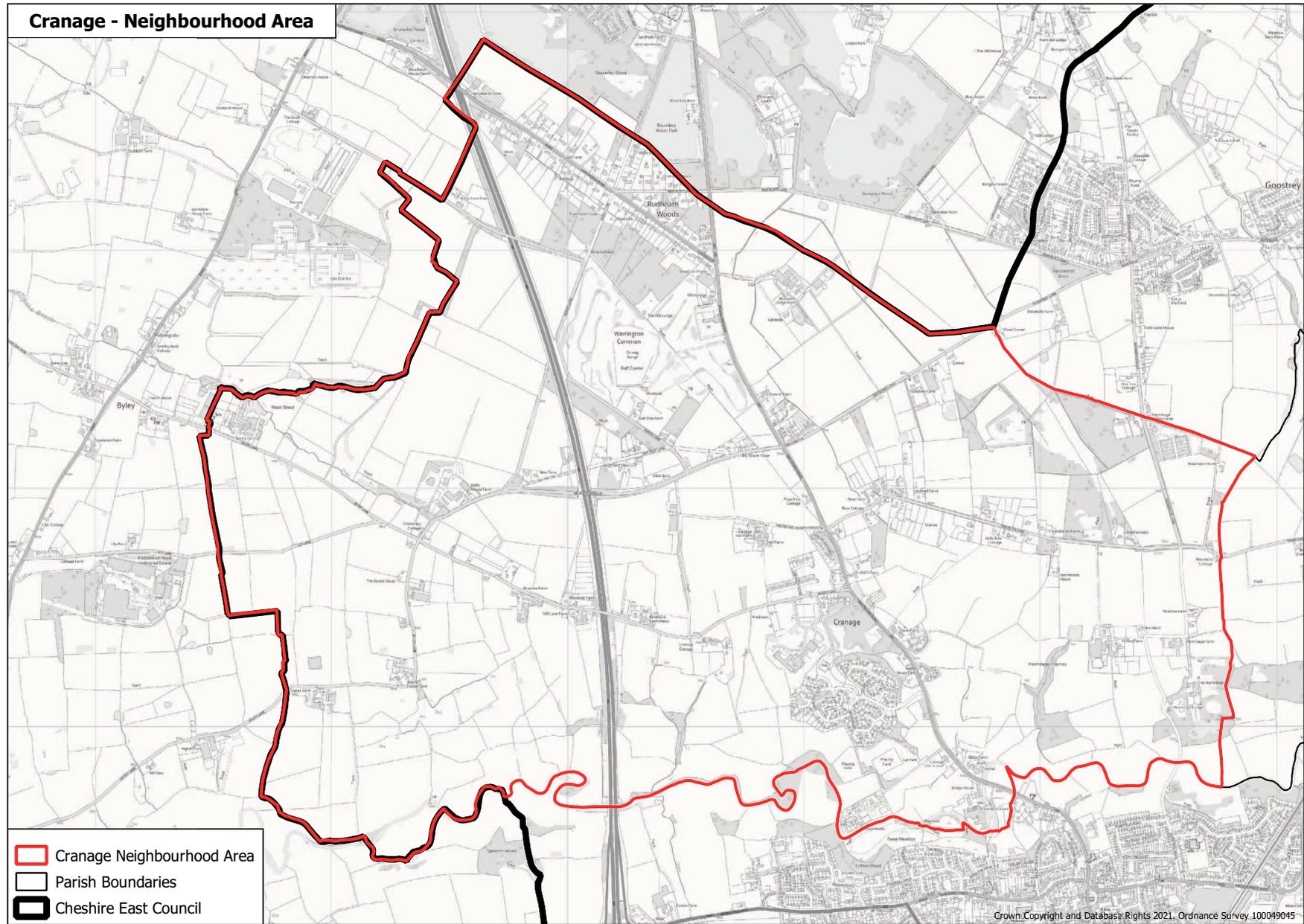
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1. Foreword

- 1.1 The Localism Act of 2011 gave new rights and powers to communities. It introduced Neighbourhood Planning into the hierarchy of spatial planning in England, giving communities the right to shape their future development at a local level. It is a powerful tool, in that it has statutory weight and must be taken as a material consideration in planning decision making. Neighbourhood Plans allow a community to set out a vision for an area and planning policies for the use and development of land.
- 1.2 In March 2012 the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with immediate effect, which was updated in July 2018, July 2021 and was last amended in 2024. This legislation replaced the former planning regulations with a new planning rulebook which puts localism at the heart of future planning. In April 2012 regulations governing Neighbourhood Planning came into force.
- 1.3 All Neighbourhood Plans must:
 - **Have appropriate regard to national planning policy;**
 - **Contribute to sustainable development;**
 - **Be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area;**
 - **Be compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.**
- 1.4 A Neighbourhood Plan must be compatible with national policies and with the policies in the authority's local plan. The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Part One was adopted in 2017, and will guide development up to 2035.
- 1.5 The Local Plan was prepared in two stages with the part two plan, the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD) being adopted in December 2022. The document establishes a development framework for the Local Service Centres and Other Settlements and Rural Areas (where Cranage is located) in addition to detailed development management policies. Cranage is classed as being an infill village in the open countryside. Infill villages have a defined village infill boundary but are within the open countryside and do not have a settlement boundary. Limited infilling will be supported within the village infill boundaries subject to certain criteria. No strategic need for housing has been identified in Cranage. As Cheshire East has an adopted Local Plan with strategic and detailed policies, with Cranage designated as an infill village within open countryside where only limited development would be supported, the Neighbourhood Plan has concentrated on just a small number of policies, which focus on adding local detail relevant to Cranage.
- 1.6 The proposed Neighbourhood Area was officially designated on 3rd July 2018. The designated area covers the area of Cranage Parish. The designation recommendation report can be viewed at the following link:
<https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-plans/neighbourhood-plans-a-f/cranage-neighbourhood-plan.aspx>

Figure A – NEIGHBOURHOOD DESIGNATED AREA





2. Introduction

2.1 CRANAGE – AN OVERVIEW

- 2.1.1 Cranage is a rural parish and a ramblers' delight, with many public footpaths through pretty countryside. Most facilities are found in nearby Holmes Chapel, but Cranage has a well-used parish hall, two rural shopping areas – Lowe's farm shop and Goostrey Home & Leisure. Each of these enterprises contains a number of retail outlets and a café. There is also a 9 hole golf course with a driving range in the parish.
- 2.1.2 The establishment of a community in Cranage is mentioned in the Domesday Book. The name derives from the Old English of *Crāwena-læcc*, which means "crows stream". The manor of Cranage, unlike many estates, has not remained in one family but has changed hands many times. Historically, Cranage was an agricultural area which had a wide variety of farming activities.
- 2.1.3 Cranage Hall was one of the principal dwellings in the area. It is believed that it was built in the 17th century incorporating elements of an earlier hall. Lawrence Armistead had the Hall demolished in the 19th century and the current Cranage Hall built in 1829, to a design by Lewis Wyatt. The Hall remained in possession of the Armistead family until 1920. Subsequently, it was converted into part of the Cranage hospital, and on the hospital's closure became a conference centre.
- 2.1.4 According to the 2021 Official UK Census, the population of the parish was 1288, an increase of 100 since the last census in 2011. Around 80% of the population are below the age of 65.
- 2.1.5 Cranage is fortunate to have a rich and varied history, and there are 13 listed buildings within the parish. Listed buildings include farmhouses, Cranage Hall, a milepost, and cottages. All the listed buildings are Grade II, bar Swan Farmhouse which is Grade II* and dates from the late seventeenth century.
- 2.1.6 Although Cranage is situated in rural Cheshire and much of its area comprises farmland, it is close to the M6 at J18. Manchester International Airport is about 45 minutes' drive and there is a rail link from nearby Holmes Chapel to the airport, to Manchester and to Crewe mainline station. There is also a railway station in nearby Goostrey.



2.2 LANDSCAPE

2.2.1 Cranage lies within National Character Area 61 – Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain, a pastoral area of rolling plain which is particularly important for dairy farming. The Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment 2018 www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/cheshire_east_local_plan/site-allocations-and-policies/sadpd-examination/documents/examination-library/ed10-cheshire-east-lca.pdf classifies the parish as lying within four landscape character types: River Valleys; Woodland, Heath Meres and Mosses; Cheshire Plain East; and Lower Wooded Farmland.

2.2.2 The key characteristics of the River Valley Character Type include:

- **Steep sided river valleys.**
- **Meandering river courses.**
- **High levels of woodland along the river and tributary valleys, of which a significant proportion is ancient woodland.**
- **Tributaries in wooded cloughs.**
- **Grassy banks – including acidic grassland.**
- **Bridges and viaducts.**
- **Isolated halls and farms.**



2.2.3 The key characteristics of the Woodland, Heaths, Meres and Mosses Type include:

- **Flat to gently undulating topography.**
- **Numerous small ponds plus meres and mosses formed in glacial hollows now hidden within dense woodland.**
- **Extensive blocks of mixed woodland, planted on former sandy heathland.**
- **Active and inactive sand and gravel quarries mostly screened by low earthworks and dense tree belts.**
- **Around the water bodies and woodland is a pattern of large (over 8ha) arable fields defined by straight-sided hedgerows or post and wire fences with some smaller pastoral fields. There are also remnant areas of 19th century field enclosure from waste heathland.**
- **Isolated halls and farms.**
- **The sandy soils support species-rich lowland heath, such as the relict heathland at Goostrey Heath.**
- **Areas of relict parkland and estate farmland are a typical feature with designed features and veteran trees.**
- **Settlement is sparse due to the late enclosure of the sandy heath. Dispersed farms and properties characteristically built of red brick with clay or slate tiles. These are generally linked by narrow roads with some busier arterial roads.**



2.2.4 A further part of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area falls within the Cheshire Plain East character type. The key characteristics include:

- **Riparian ancient woodlands and field coverts. Frequent hedgerow trees create the perception of a well-treed landscape despite the lack of significant woodland coverage**
- **Small to medium sized fields of medieval and post-medieval origin which are used for a mix of pasture and arable farming, mainly divided by hawthorn hedgerows with hedgerow trees**
- **Halls and granges are scattered throughout the landscape**
- **Low density settlement which mostly comprises dispersed historic hamlets and farms**
- **Narrow country lanes provide access to the more remote areas and can be winding or very straight**
- **Much of the farmed landscape is accessible via public rights of way**
- **The plain is a working, farmed landscape, with a traditional rural feel**

2.2.5 The characteristics of the Lower Wooded Farmland Type include:

- **A relatively high density of coniferous, mixed and deciduous woodland found in blocks, coverts and along streams and rivers**
- **Mature trees (often oak, beech and sycamore) within fields and within hedgerows**
- **Semi-natural habitats scattered amongst the farmland include unimproved grasslands and remnant heath, which has seen major losses in the past**
- **Historic estate landscapes are occasional features and include a number of Registered Parks and Gardens**
- **The plain is a working, farmed landscape, with a traditional rural feel**
- **Roads are a mix of major arterial routes, including the A50, and winding narrow lanes. The M6 motorway also crosses through a number of the areas within this character area type.**
- **An intact network of rights of way provides access to the countryside. A number of promoted routes cross the landscape.**

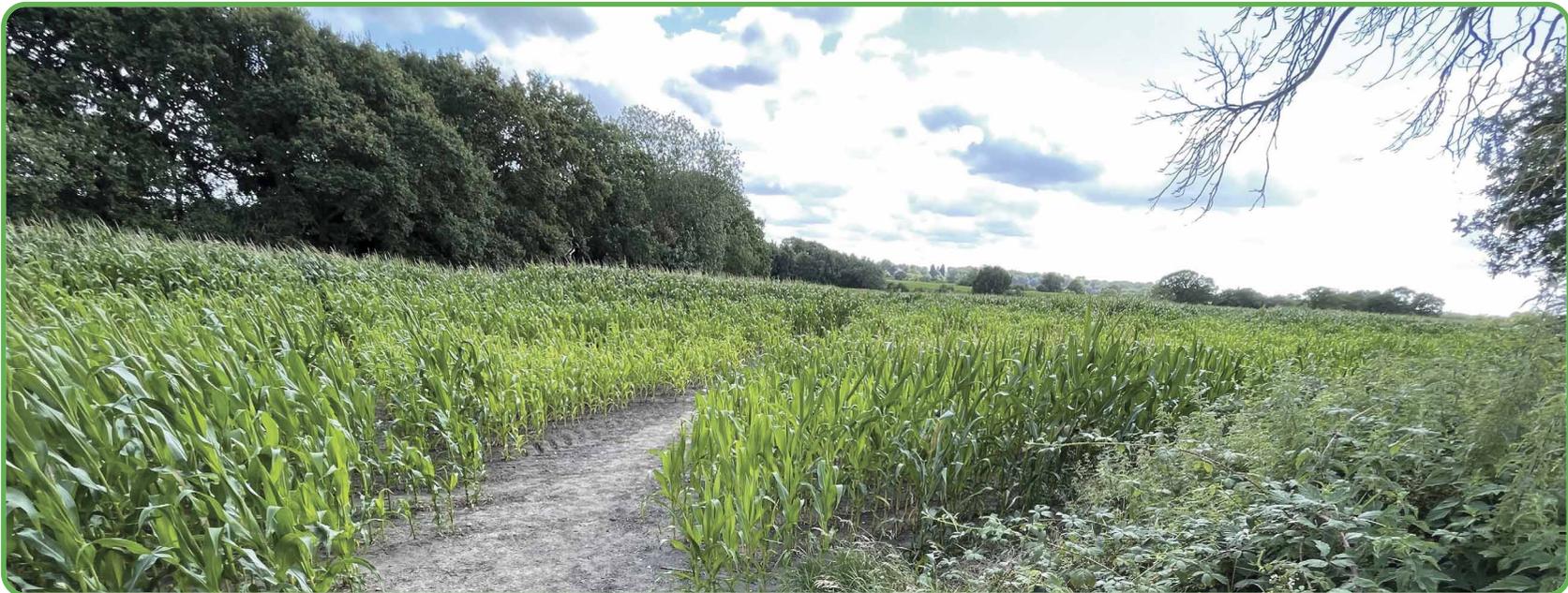


2.3 CRANAGE TODAY

2.3.1 Cranage Parish has around 1288 people, living in approximately 502 households.

Based on the 2021 census, we know that:

- **The population is slightly older than the average in England, with Cranage having fewer children under the age of 15 than the national average (17.62% as compared to 18.56% in England). Cranage has more people over the age of 65 than the England average (19.88% compared to the England average of 18.41%).**
- **The community is far less ethnically diverse than the England average, with only 4.89% of the community in Cranage identifying as white non-British or other minority ethnic, compared to 18.95% in England.**
- **In Cranage 7.59% of people on average are living with a limiting long term illness, more than the England average of 6.83%.**
- **There is a higher-than-average number of residents who are self-employed (14.76%, than the average for England – 9.54%) and there are more that work 49 + hours per week (17.62%), and who work from home than the average for England (11.08%).**
- **The parish has a far larger proportion of detached homes (69.60%) than the England average of 22.91%. The parish has fewer terraced properties (6.80%), semi-detached properties (22.6%) or flats (0%). The parish also has a higher proportion of owner-occupied homes than average, with 87.2% of properties being owner occupied compared to the England average of 62.32%.**
- **The national average of economically active people using public transport to get to work is 8.15%, but in Cranage the figure is only 0.23%, with 20.79% of people in Cranage using a car or van to travel to work.**





3. Consultation

- 3.1 The Cranage Neighbourhood Plan is a community plan and must derive its vision, objectives and policies from the community. From the outset the Parish Council was determined that the residents should be kept informed and given every opportunity to inform the Steering Group of their views. Communication and consultation, in various forms, have played a major role in formulating the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.2 It was therefore considered important to:
 - **Promote a high degree of awareness of the project**
 - **Encourage everyone to contribute to the development of the Neighbourhood Plan**
 - **Promote consultation events and provide regular updates on the status of the Neighbourhood Plan and its development**
- 3.3 Key to this programme was publicity to gain residents engagement. This was gained via public meetings, surveys and electronic media via the Parish Council website at cranageparishcouncil.co.uk The early stages of the plan were undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, so meetings were held on zoom, and information and surveys delivered to households, with information available online.
- 3.4 Further information on consultation methods and the results from the consultations can be found in more detail in the Consultation Statement that will accompany the submitted version of the Cranage Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.5 An initial survey which included brief information on Neighbourhood Planning was posted to all households in Cranage on February 7th 2021. The survey required responses from as many local people as possible, and information on the survey and Neighbourhood Planning, along with a reminder as the closing date approached, was placed on the village website www.cranageparishcouncil.co.uk The deadline for responses was 8th March, so that individuals had a month to respond.
- 3.6 A total of 165 surveys were returned out of the 477 distributed. This gave a very good overall response rate of 34.6%. This was a particularly good response, as the survey was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. The questionnaire was used as a basis on which to develop the objectives and policies. The results and comments were analysed and used to help determine what issues to focus on and what further evidence might be required to help prepare the Neighbourhood Plan policies.
- 3.7 The survey asked residents what they liked most about Cranage, what they disliked, how they would like to see Cranage in the future, and asked residents to choose which three (out of a list of eleven options) they thought were the most important issues for Cranage. Residents were also asked if they felt any green spaces should be particularly protected, and whether anything else should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

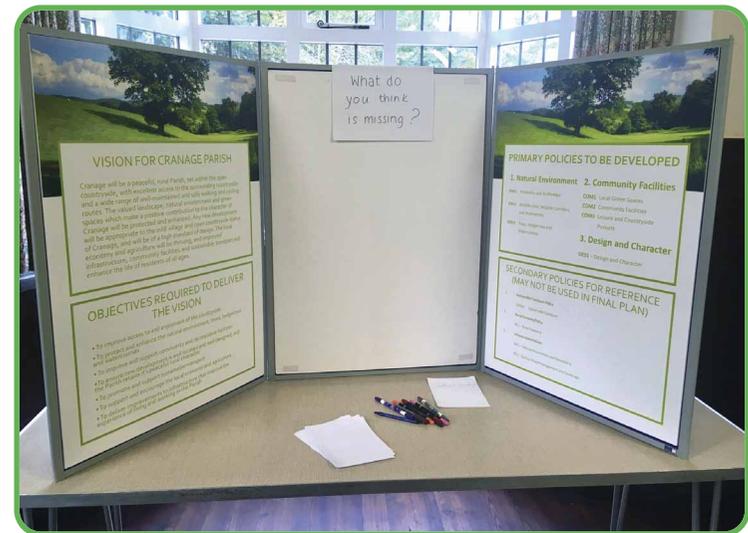
3.8 Residents felt that the most important issues for Cranage (in order) were:

- I. **Access to the countryside**
- II. **The natural environment**
- III. **Community facilities**
- IV. **Design of new developments**
- V. **Sustainable transport**
- VI. **The local economy**
- VII. **Recreation**
- VIII. **Heritage**
- IX. **Climate Change**
- X. **Housing**
- XI. **Tourism**



3.9 Following on from the survey, analysis was undertaken of the results, which were discussed at the Annual Parish Council meeting. The meeting had to be held on zoom, but information from the survey results was detailed, and questions regarding the Neighbourhood Plan were answered.

3.10 In November 2021 two public events were held in order to update the community about the Neighbourhood Plan, and ask for comments on progress made so far. The events were held over a weekend at Cranage Estate Hotel and the Village Hall, and were well-attended. The events were advertised in the village newsletter, which is delivered to every household in the Parish, and gave residents the opportunity to ask questions, give their views on the Cheshire Wildlife Trust report and draft policies, and sign up to take part in one of the working groups.



3.11 In November 2022, a survey gathering evidence of the Needham Drive green space was delivered to each household on the Needham Estate and other dwellings in close proximity to it. 81 completed forms were received, giving a strong base of evidence of how this green space is valued.

3.12 The Cranage Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to the list of statutory and other bodies provided by Cheshire East Council as required under Regulation 14, Town and Country Planning, England Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (General) 2012.



4. Visions & Objectives

- 4.1 The vision and objectives are based on the key issues raised by local people during the initial stages of the consultation process. They have been summarised and refined by the Steering Group to form the basis of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.2 The vision for Cranage is:

Cranage will be a peaceful, rural parish, set within the open countryside, with excellent access to the surrounding countryside and a wide range of well-maintained and safe walking and cycling routes. The valued landscape, natural environment and green spaces which make a positive contribution to the character of Cranage will be protected and enhanced. Any new development will be appropriate to the infill village and open countryside status of Cranage. The design of new developments will be in keeping with the existing design and character of the parish. The local economy and agriculture will be encouraged and thrive. Any opportunity to improve community facilities and sustainable transport that will enhance the life of residents of all ages will be supported.

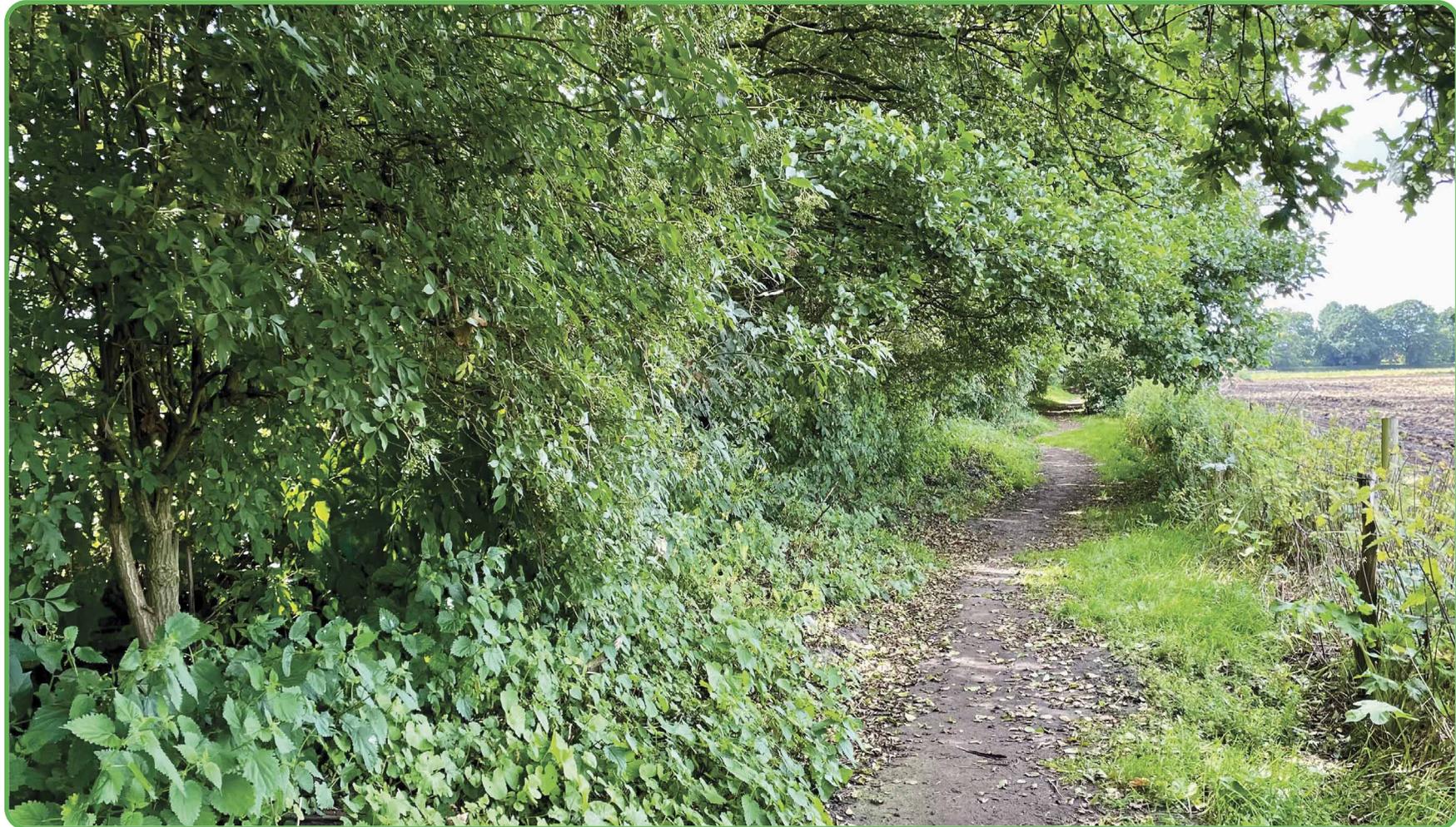


- 4.3 Following on from the vision, the following objectives have been identified, and the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan seek to deliver these objectives:

- **To improve access to and enjoyment of the countryside**
- **To protect and enhance the biodiversity of the natural environment, including trees, hedgerows and watercourses.**
- **To improve and support community and recreational facilities and infrastructure**
- **To support and encourage the local economy and agriculture**
- **To ensure new development is well located and well designed, and the parish retains its peaceful, rural character**

4.4 In order to deliver the vision and objectives, it was decided that the Cranage Neighbourhood Plan policies would concentrate on these main areas:

- I. **Rural values and green sustainability**
- II. **The natural environment;**
- III. **Community facilities;**
- IV. **Supporting a vibrant community;**
- V. **Design and character.**





5. Rural Values, Green Infrastructure and Sustainability Strategy

This is a strategic policy to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan for Cranage Parish supports the priorities defined by its residents. The following objectives will be promoted:

- Define and deliver initiatives that enhance biodiversity and ecological value
- Where development is approved ensure there is no net loss of ecological value

CRANAGE'S STRATEGY – RURAL VALUES, GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY

The green, rural feel of Cranage's parish environment is enjoyed by its own residents along with those of surrounding parishes. It promotes wellbeing via the body and mind – for all ages. The Neighbourhood Plan will seek to protect the physical, ecological and visual qualities of its rural environment through the implementation of policies ENV2, ENV3 and DES1.

The Neighbourhood Plan will also seek to ensure the retention and enhancement of open green spaces, and outdoor leisure and recreational spaces. The Neighbourhood Plan will seek to enhance the accessibility of such spaces, as well as encourage modes of active travel in the Parish to support the local economy and wider community through the implementation of policies ENV1, COM1, COM2 and COM3.

5.1 Evidence and Justification

- 5.1.1 Cranage is a small parish and whilst not having the resources to build or maintain significant leisure facilities, is fortunate to be surrounded by the countryside and natural features that provide leisure opportunities for many residents and visitors. The lanes, footpaths and the countryside are used by many people for walking and rambling. During the pandemic the footpaths throughout the Neighbourhood Area were particularly well-used. Horse riders and cyclists also enjoy the rural lanes.
- 5.1.2 The natural environment and accessible countryside features were outlined by residents during consultations as being an intrinsic part of the parish, valued for their attractive visual impact and used by many. Additionally, the water features such as the River Dane and field ponds are valued by anglers and birdwatchers.
- 5.1.3 These areas make an important contribution to the valued character of Cranage, through their visual contribution, their amenity value and their wildlife habitats, and as such it is considered important that they are protected, enhanced, and sensitively developed where appropriate. The National Planning Policy Framework highlights that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and wellbeing of communities.
- 5.1.4 The Parish Council has completed a survey to establish how the green space surrounding the Needham Drive estate is utilised. This work, by way of example, shows how open spaces are utilised by Cranage and surrounding parish residents. 81 completed questionnaires were received to categorically define how the land is used. The report 'Needham Drive Green Space Evidence' demonstrates the diversity of use. See report in cranageparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan.





6. Natural Environment Policies

The Cranage Neighbourhood Plan has the following objectives with regard to the natural environment:

- To improve access to and enjoyment of the countryside
- To protect and enhance the natural environment, trees, hedgerows and watercourses

POLICY ENV1 – FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS

Access to the countryside will be promoted through the protection and maintenance of accessibility to the existing Public Right of Way (PROW) network (see Figure B - map of existing PROW), its enhancement where possible, particularly to encourage more frequent use to access local rural businesses providing food and retail, as well as to ensure the safety of users of rural roads and lanes.

Improvements and enhancements to the accessibility of the Dane Valley Way (also now included in the route of the South Cheshire Market Towns trail, a recently established circular route) will be supported, as this route is also increasingly used by visitors to the parish as part of the Harry Styles tribute route. Improvements to the accessibility and inclusivity to footpaths and PROWs through the improvement of signage and further appropriate enhancements to paths within the Neighbourhood Area which will make them easier to use for the whole community will also be supported. This may include measures such as widening, improved linkages, improvements to surfaces and access points for people with disabilities or pushchairs.

6.1 Evidence and Justification

- 6.1.1 Access to the countryside is of great importance to the residents of Cranage, and this was highlighted in the Neighbourhood Plan survey, in which residents scored it most highly when asked to rate the issues that were most important to them. In order to assess the condition of the footpaths and consider where enhancements would be welcome, a working group was set up during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The parish was divided into seven areas, which volunteers then explored to gather evidence regarding the footpaths in the parish. The seven areas are identified in Appendix 1.
- 6.1.2 Volunteers checked the existence, condition and accessibility of the rights of way within their section. This work by the volunteers confirmed the presence of the paths. The full report and photographic evidence can be viewed in the Cranage Natural Environment Evidence Study Report at cranageparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan. In general, the paths were well signed and accessible. In some areas, however, electric fences were present which could impede the use of the footpaths, and new developments at the former Cranage Hospital had led to routes being diverted. Some of the signage was faded, some routes were very muddy and could not be easily used by anyone with mobility issues or young children.
- 6.1.3 Throughout the pandemic the use of the footpath network was significant. This was evidenced by the level of path erosion and widening simply caused by the number of walkers. All paths in the Parish are inspected each month by the Footpath officer. It is a standing item at each Parish Council meeting. Any issues associated with the footpath network are reported and remedied. Through this work the extensive use of the network can be observed, and obstructions to safe-passage remedied. Since the pandemic high levels of path utilisation has continued.

6.1.4 The footpath network is not only valuable to Cranage residents but also those from the neighbouring parishes of Goostrey, Holmes Chapel and Twemlow. The paths in Cranage can be used to form a circular walk and are used to access local attractions such as Bidlea Dairy and Goostrey Home & Leisure by locals as well as visitors to the area. Dog walkers are again significant users of the footpaths. As quoted at the Neighbourhood Plan consultation events in November 2021, some of the footpaths were described as wildlife havens – “The track, nearly opposite Cranage Cottage on Byley Lane, is a great undisturbed habitat (apart from dog walkers) where I have seen woodpeckers and foxes, and a great wildlife corridor”.

6.1.5 Part of the Dane Valley Way, which runs from Buxton in Derbyshire to Northwich, runs through the Neighbourhood Area. The Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2018 highlights the importance of protecting, maintaining and seeking to link up existing rights of way, and maintaining and promoting the Dane Valley Way, providing further links to the rights of way network, where appropriate. This stretch of footpath is also now included in the South Cheshire Market Towns Trail, a walking route between Congleton, Alsager, Sandbach, Middlewich and Holmes Chapel. In addition this footpath is now attracting visitors worldwide as it forms part of the Harry Styles tribute route. As a result of all three classifications it is now in constant use.

6.1.6 The policy seeks to deliver one of the NPPF’s aims of conserving and enhancing the natural environment, and also of promoting healthy communities. The NPPF indicates that policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks. The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy policy ‘SE6 Green Infrastructure’ highlights that Cheshire East aims to deliver a good quality, and accessible network of green spaces for people to enjoy, and development should contribute to the creation of a good quality, integrated and accessible multi-functional network of green spaces.

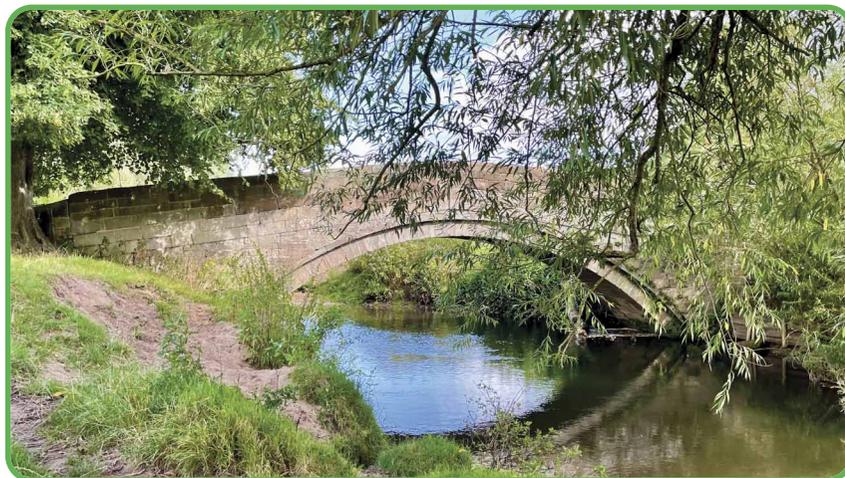
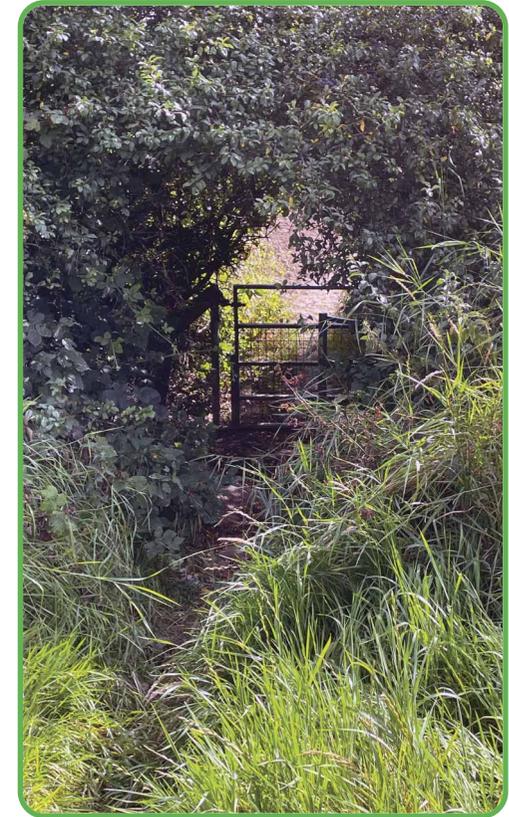
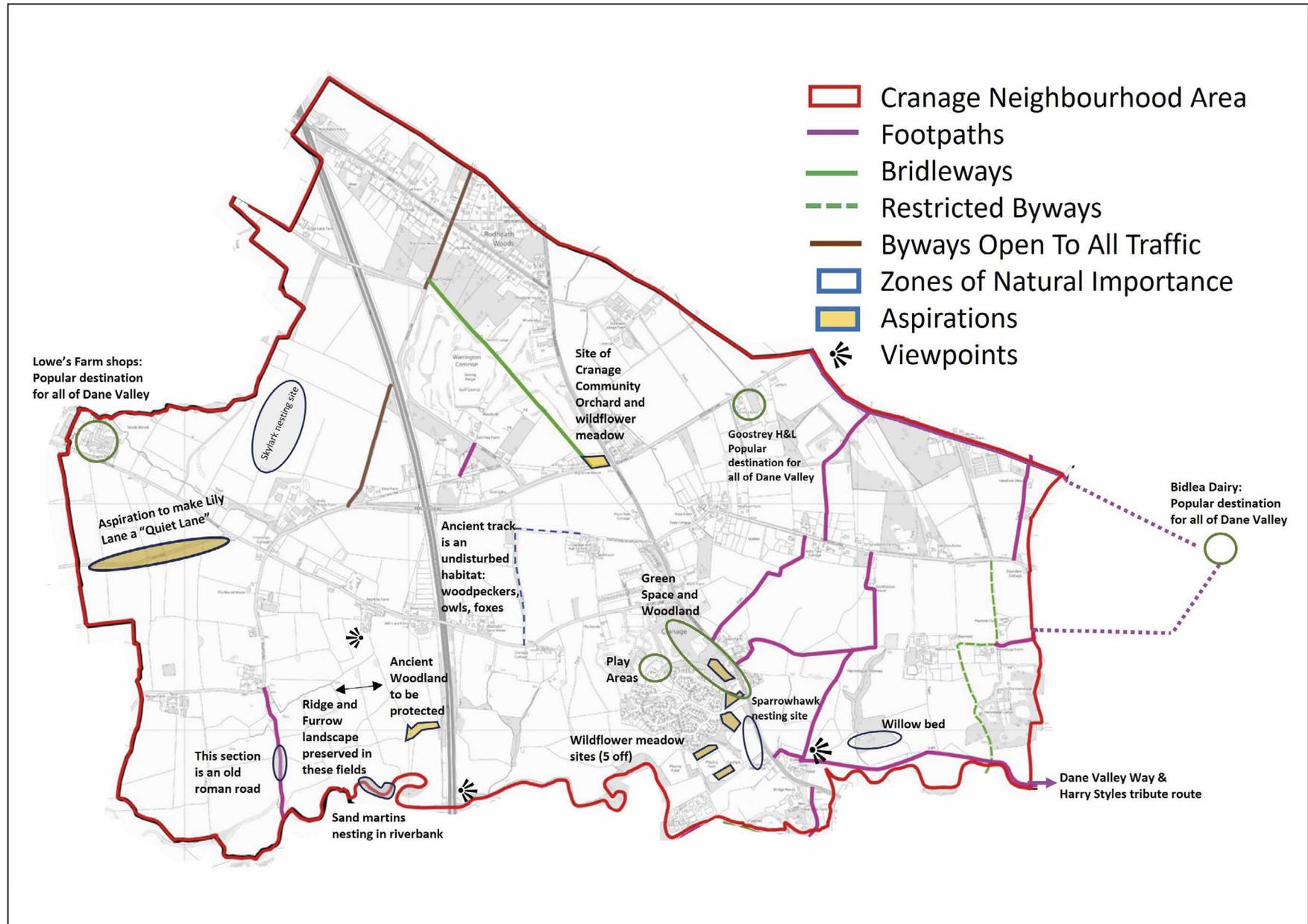


Figure B – Map of Public Rights of Way



POLICY ENV2 – WILDLIFE SITES, WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND BIODIVERSITY

The local wildlife sites and the wildlife corridor network (Figure C) and the areas of high distinctiveness habitat (Figure D) shall be protected and all proposals will be required to demonstrate that the benefits of development clearly outweigh the harm it is likely to have on the ecological network identified within figures C and D. The enhancement of these sites will be supported.

Areas identified on Figure D as supporting high distinctiveness habitat (marked in red), of which there are four areas, shall be protected by at least a 15m buffer zone. Areas identified on Figure D as supporting medium distinctiveness habitat will require a comprehensive ecological evaluation if they are put forward for development. New developments must protect existing wildlife corridors (Figure C) and where possible should contribute to the creation of new or improved links.

Development proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity will be encouraged, subject to a proposal's compliance with other relevant planning policies contained within this neighbourhood plan and the Cheshire East Local Plan.

New developments will be required to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity of 10% using appropriate evaluation methodologies and avoidance/mitigation strategies. Compensatory measures (for example biodiversity offsetting) will be required if a net loss of biodiversity is likely, and a justification for the proposed location of any off-site biodiversity provision will be required. Where it is not possible to deliver biodiversity on-site, proposals are encouraged to deliver biodiversity off-site on sites which form part of an existing wildlife corridor network within the parish, as indicated within Figure C.

6.2 Evidence and Justification

- 6.2.1 The conservation and enhancement of the natural environment is one of the core objectives of the planning system. The residents of Cranage are keen to protect wildlife and nature conservation interests, and this was one of the most supported topics raised in the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire. Knowing the importance of the surrounding countryside and the natural environment to local residents, the Neighbourhood Plan steering group commissioned the Cheshire Wildlife Trust to undertake a study of Cranage's natural environment, in order to inform and produce appropriate policies for the Neighbourhood Plan. The report 'Protecting and Enhancing Cranage's Natural Environment' was published in July 2022 and can be viewed at cranageparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan.
- 6.2.2 The report identified the core, high ecological value sites (high distinctiveness) for nature conservation in Cranage which are recommended for protection, and medium value sites (semi-natural habitat) which should be considered as biodiversity opportunity areas that would be subject to further evaluation, and a full evaluation should they be proposed for future development. Additionally, the report identified key local and regional ecological networks and wildlife corridors within the Neighbourhood Plan area that should be protected through Neighbourhood Plan policies.
- 6.2.3 The study identified four areas of high value distinctiveness habitat (see Figure D) in the Neighbourhood Plan area which are recommended for protection, including Goostrey Heath, Hermitage Thornes and a marshy gorse and silver birch coppice to the north of the parish.
- 6.2.4 The Council recognise the importance of protecting ridge and furrow fields which form part of the area's heritage of the landscape character. Whilst protections for these landscape features were initially sought as part of this policy, the Council has since removed this on the basis of difficulties related to implementation as such features could be removed without the need for planning permission.

6.2.5 Numerous undesignated areas of medium habitat distinctiveness were also identified (see Figure D) as they provide important wildlife habitats in their own right, as well as acting as ecological stepping stones. These include further woodlands and semi-natural rough grasslands which are invaluable for wildlife, supporting invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and overwintering and breeding habitats for birds. There are also numerous scattered field ponds within the Parish, contributing to the permeability of the landscape for wildlife.

6.2.6 The report also identified areas that act as a wildlife corridor network (Figure C) with high ecological connectivity within and beyond the Cranage Neighbourhood Plan area. The key areas of wildlife are along the river Dane and to the north of the parish, as well as an existing central ribbon running north to south in the centre of the parish. Two further corridors from north to south could be established by bridging some small gaps between existing sites.

6.2.7 The Cheshire Wildlife Trust report recommended that the indicative wildlife corridor network (Figure C) should be identified in the Neighbourhood Plan and protected from development, so that the guidance relating to ecological networks set out in the NPPF may be implemented at a local level. This network includes a buffer zone of 15 metres in places to protect high distinctiveness habitats. Additionally, any future development of sites which are adjacent to high distinctiveness habitats or a wildlife corridor should be able to demonstrate substantial mitigation and avoidance measures to lessen any potential harmful impacts on wildlife.

6.2.8 Providing 'net gain' for biodiversity is embedded in the guidance in the NPPF. In order to protect local natural assets, the Cheshire Wildlife Trust report has recommended that net gain policies form part of the Neighbourhood Plan. The community in Cranage is keen to protect wildlife and one of the key ways to achieve this is to ensure that new developments are appropriately located and do not cause a net loss of biodiversity. The NPPF states that planning policies should identify, map and safeguard components of the local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation. As stated in the Cheshire Wildlife Trust report, any new green infrastructure arising as a result of biodiversity net gain should take consideration of the recommendations set out in the report and define how it can contribute to the wider ecological network.



- 6.2.9 The Parish Council have also been working with the Cheshire Wildlife Trust to establish wildflower meadows in certain areas within the Needham Drive green space and a small field to the north of the parish, which is now known as Cranage Community Orchard. This will add to the rich biodiversity already present in these areas, which along with improved regimes of maintenance will allow a wider variety of species to thrive. Six wildflower meadows have been either planted or harrowed and sown. These will be maintained and supported to reach full maturity and sustainability. See Figure E.
- 6.2.10 In December 2024 the work to establish Cranage Community Orchard was completed. 25 fruit trees were planted, a mix including apple, pear, quince, damson and gage. It is hoped that these will mature sufficiently to provide fruit from 3 years hence. This will be maintained and supported to reach maturity and become a natural resource for all parish residents. The site was further enhanced by planting a native hedgerow along the eastern perimeter of the site. The remainder of the site will be maintained as wildflower meadow, this having been harrowed and sown by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust in Autumn 2024



Figure C – MAP OF LOCAL WILDLIFE SITES AND INDICATIVE WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

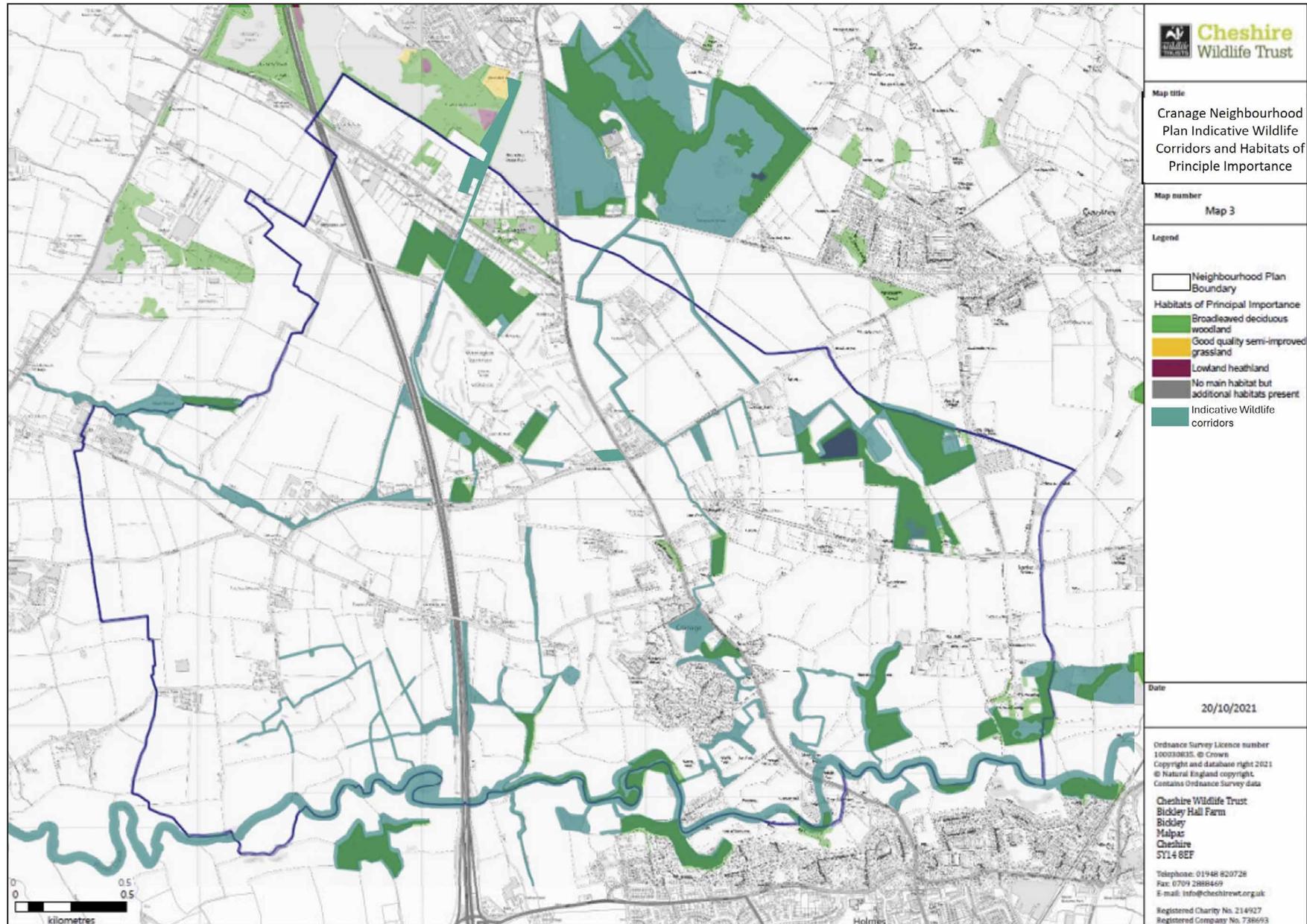


Figure D – AREAS OF HABITAT DISTINCTIVENESS

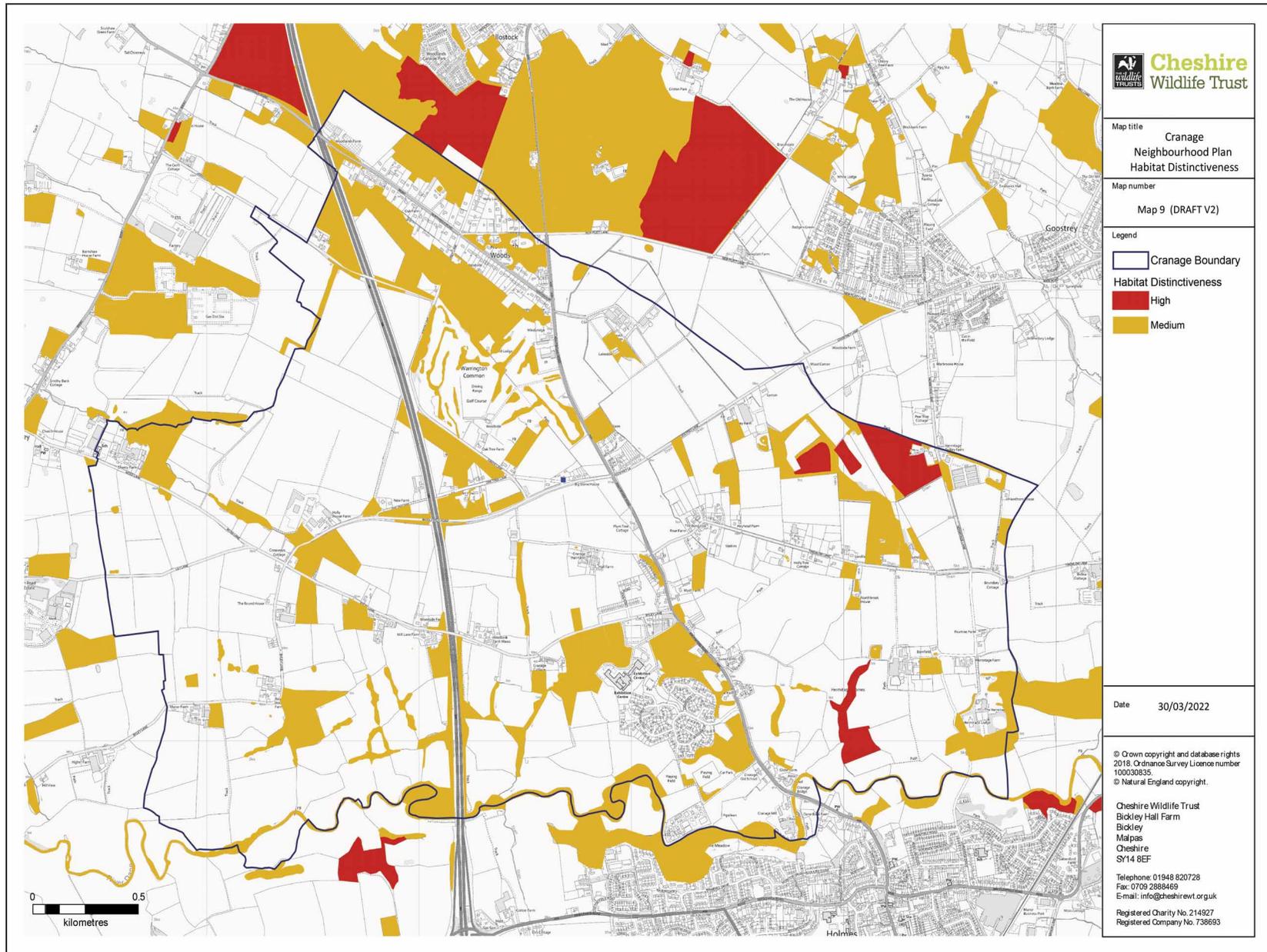


Figure E – LOCATIONS OF WILDFLOWER MEADOWS

Note: Area 1 is Cranage Community Orchard – Local Green Space 10. See Figure H (Map of local green Spaces) for location.



POLICY ENV3 – TREES, HEDGEROWS AND WATERCOURSES

Hedgerows, trees and watercourses which make a significant contribution to the amenity, biodiversity and landscape character of Cranage must be preserved, and development which would have a significant adverse impact upon them will not normally be supported. In specific circumstances where the benefits of development are considered to outweigh the benefit of preserving trees, hedgerows and watercourses, development will only be permitted subject to appropriate mitigation. The retention of trees, hedgerows and watercourses in situ will always be preferable.

Any new developments will, where appropriate, be required to include suitable plantings of trees and hedgerows. Tree planting should only occur on species-poor habitats away from existing non woodland priority or semi-natural habitats, watercourses, ditches and ponds and any other habitats of value to specific wildlife.

In the event that significant trees are to be removed prior to the submission of a planning permission, compensatory measures will be sought.

For the purposes of this policy, significant trees are all those with tree preservation orders (Figure F), trees along Oak Tree Lane, and those defined in the Cheshire Wildlife Trust report. The Parish Council has also identified tree groupings within Figure F which do not currently benefit from a Tree Preservation Order but which are considered to warrant preservation based upon their amenity and ecological value. These should also be considered significant trees

Watercourses, lakes and ponds which make a significant contribution to the Neighbourhood Area are the River Dane, its banks and riverine surroundings, and ponds at Cranage Hall.

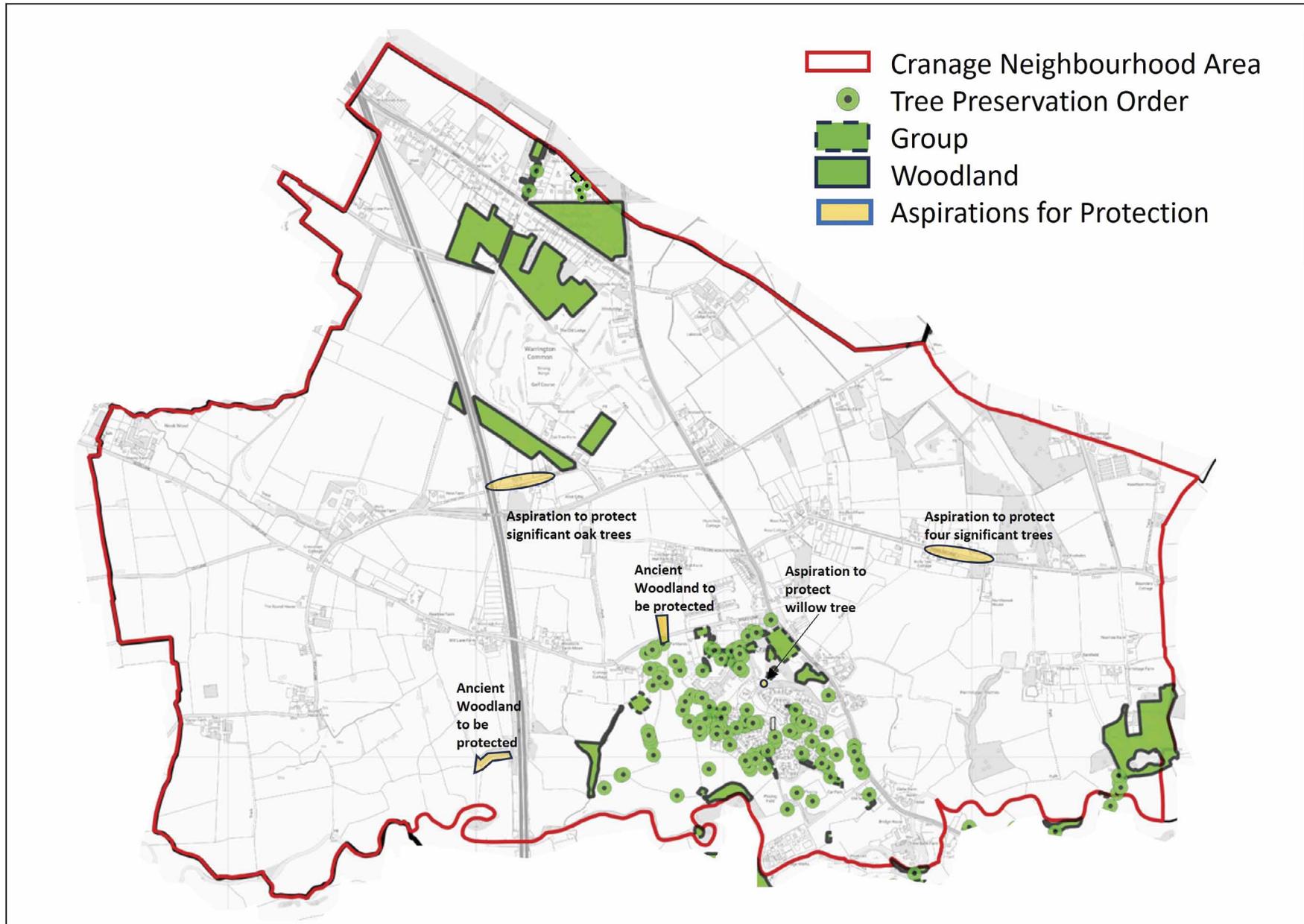
6.3 Evidence and Justification

- 6.3.1 The parish was divided into seven areas, which volunteers then explored to gather evidence regarding the trees, hedgerows and watercourses. The seven areas are identified in Appendix 1. Comparison of the seven sections clearly highlighted the biodiversity within the parish. Volunteers checked the existence and health of protected trees within their section as well as recommending additional trees for protection. The full report and accompanying photographs can be viewed in the Cranage Natural Environment Evidence Study Report at cranageparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan.
- 6.3.2 The volunteer tree study highlighted the wide range of tree species within the Neighbourhood Area, including oak and silver birch. Although many of the trees were in good condition, some sites could benefit from having areas of trees thinned, and a high number of trees were covered in ivy, which ideally should be removed. There are a number of trees on Oak Tree Lane which make an excellent contribution to the character of the area. Additionally, an avenue of well-kept trees on Middlewich Road, between the A50 and Lees Crossroads, enhance the area providing a welcoming aspect greeting visitors to the Parish. Also of note were a cedar of Lebanon by the first pond in Cranage Hall and a large weeping willow by the childrens' play area. Nesting holes for birds were viewed along the south bank of the River Dane.
- 6.3.3 The 2022 Cheshire Wildlife Trust Report cranageparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan notes the vital part these trees play in the biodiversity of the parish. Goostrey Heath Local Wildlife Site is a significant area of woodland habitat including silver birch, oak, rowan, elder and holly. Hermitage Woods Local Wildlife Site is dominated by oak, sycamore and ash and has ancient wood indicator species present. The woodlands also support bats, hedgehogs and woodland birds. The river Dane is important for woodland and wetlands and supports notable bird populations, otters, and globally endangered native white-clawed crayfish. Field ponds, scrapes, drains and watercourses are essential for the survival of aquatic invertebrates and riparian mammals and provide breeding habitats for amphibians.

- 6.3.4 Many of the field parcels within the Neighbourhood Area are bounded by a network of significant hedgerows and ditches. These are fundamental to landscape permeability and provide important corridors for wildlife, as well as adding to the landscape character value. The Cheshire Wildlife Trust report highlights the necessity of protecting the existing hedgerow network.
- 6.3.5 The Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2018 provides guidance for the landscape management of each specific landscape character type found within Cranage. The Assessment stresses the need to protect, enhance and restore wetland habitats, protect the overall wooded character of the area, maintain hedgerow boundaries and encourage replanting to maintain a continuous hedgerow network, retain infield ponds, and seek to replace non-native species of trees with native species.
- 6.3.6 There is a clear aspiration to protect existing trees with preservation orders and to expand this to include the areas identified in yellow on Figure F. The Parish Council intends to seek the imposition of Tree Preservation orders for all trees that are currently identified as 'significant trees'.



Figure F – TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS





7. Supporting A Vibrant Community

The Cranage Neighbourhood Plan has the following objectives with regard to the community:

- To improve and support community and recreational facilities and infrastructure
- To support and encourage the local economy and agriculture

POLICY COM1 – LOCAL GREEN SPACES

The areas listed below are designated as 'Local Green Spaces' which are protected from new development in accordance with Green Belt policy, or where development supports the role and function of the Local Green Space. Acceptable proposals which enhance the local green spaces and their function will be supported.

LGS1 – Cranage Playing Fields (West)

LGS2 – Cranage Playing Fields (East)

LGS3 – Needham Drive Lower Meadow

LGS4 – Needham Drive Upper Meadow

LGS5 – Needham Drive Amenity Space

LGS6 – Armistead Way Green Space

LGS7 – West Armistead Way Green Space

LGS8 – Needham Drive Amenity Area

LGS9 - Cranage Village Hall Grounds

LGS10 – Cranage Community Orchard

7.1 Evidence and Justification

7.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework highlights that local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances or as otherwise provided for by national policy. The Neighbourhood Plan survey asked residents whether there were any local green spaces that they felt were of particular importance, and a number of sites were suggested. In order to provide justification for designating particular local green spaces, Neighbourhood Plan volunteers assessed a number of local green spaces prior to their proposed designation to ascertain their compliance with the criteria given in the NPPF. The reports and accompanying photographs can be viewed in the Cranage Local Green Space Evidence Study report at cranageparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan.



7.1.2 The following Local Green Spaces are also understood as protected open spaces, protected under policy REC1 of the SADPD:

- LGS1
- LGS2
- LGS3
- LGS4
- LGS5
- LGS6
- LGS7
- LGS8

7.1.3 Local Green Space designation should only be used:

- **Where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;**
- **Where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and**
- **Where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.**

7.1.4 The table below provides information about how the Local Green Spaces meet the criteria in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Local Green Spaces are identified on Figure G and H below, with more detail about each space being provided in Appendix 2.



Figure G – TABLE OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES

Open Space	Size (ha)	Criteria 1: Proximity to Community	Criteria 2: Special Character				Criteria 3: Not being extensive Tracts of Land
			Beauty	Recreational Value	Tranquility	Rich in Wildlife	
LGS1 Cranage Playing Fields (West)	1.04	Located within the Parish, close to the Needham Drive residential estate.	Green Space surrounded by woodland.	The playing fields are the base for a number of the Holmes Chapel Hurricanes junior football teams.	Often a quiet area for walking and lack of artificial light gives good opportunity for night sky viewing.	Wildlife corridor to the Dane Valley.	This open space is clearly defined by the existing playing field is used for leisure and recreation. It is bound by the boundaries of the woods at the River Dane, the existing path to the east and the line of vegetation on the northern and southern edges. This Local Green Space has been drawn around these boundaries in order to ensure it does not form an extensive tract of land.
LGS 2 Cranage Playing Fields (East)	2.79	Located within the Parish, close to the Needham Drive residential estate.	Green Space surrounded by woodland	The playing fields are the base for a number of the Holmes Chapel Hurricanes junior football teams. This section of the playing fields is also used by dog walkers, joggers and casual footballers too.	Often a quiet area for walking and lack of artificial light gives good opportunity for night sky viewing.	Wildlife Corridor to the Dane Valley. To the north and south of the playing pitch are areas of wildflower meadow, restored in 2024 and now being managed by the Parish Council.	This open space contains a playing field which is already used for leisure and recreation. It is restricted by mature wooded vegetation on the northern and eastern edges, an existing path on the western edge and an existing road branching off of Knutsford Road on the southern edge.

Figure G – TABLE OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES cont.

Open Space	Size (ha)	Criteria 1: Proximity to Community	Criteria 2: Special Character				Criteria 3: Not being extensive Tracts of Land
			Beauty	Recreational Value	Tranquility	Rich in Wildlife	
LGS 3 Needham Drive Lower Meadow	0.47	Borders the Needham Drive residential estate, south of the entry road.	Grassy wildflower meadow, surrounded by mature shrubbery. Restored to a wildflower meadow in 2024, now managed by the Parish Council.	Cut path around and through the meadow allowing for exercise and dog walking.	Quiet area for walking, relaxing and reflection.	Wildflowers, rabbits and squirrels. Variety of species increasing due to establishing meadow areas. This site also forms part of the wildlife corridor of the Dane Valley.	This open space is bound by existing mature vegetation on all sides, as well as existing dwellings on the western edge and the immediate boundary of Needham Drive on the northern edge. The boundary for this space has been drawn tightly around these features.
LGS 4 – Needham Drive Upper Meadow	0.17	Located immediately east of the Needham Drive residential estate, and connected to the community via paved footpaths	Surrounded by mature trees to the north of the site, a grassy meadow which was restored as a wildflower meadow in 2024, now managed by the parish council.	Cut path around the meadow allowing for exercise and dog walking.	Quiet area for walking and reflection.	Wildflowers, rabbits and squirrels. Variety of species increasing due to establishing meadow area. This site also forms part of the wildlife corridor of the Dane Valley.	This open space is restricted by mature vegetation on all sides, as well as Needham Drive to the southern edge, Knutsford Road to the eastern edge and the residential estate immediately to the west.

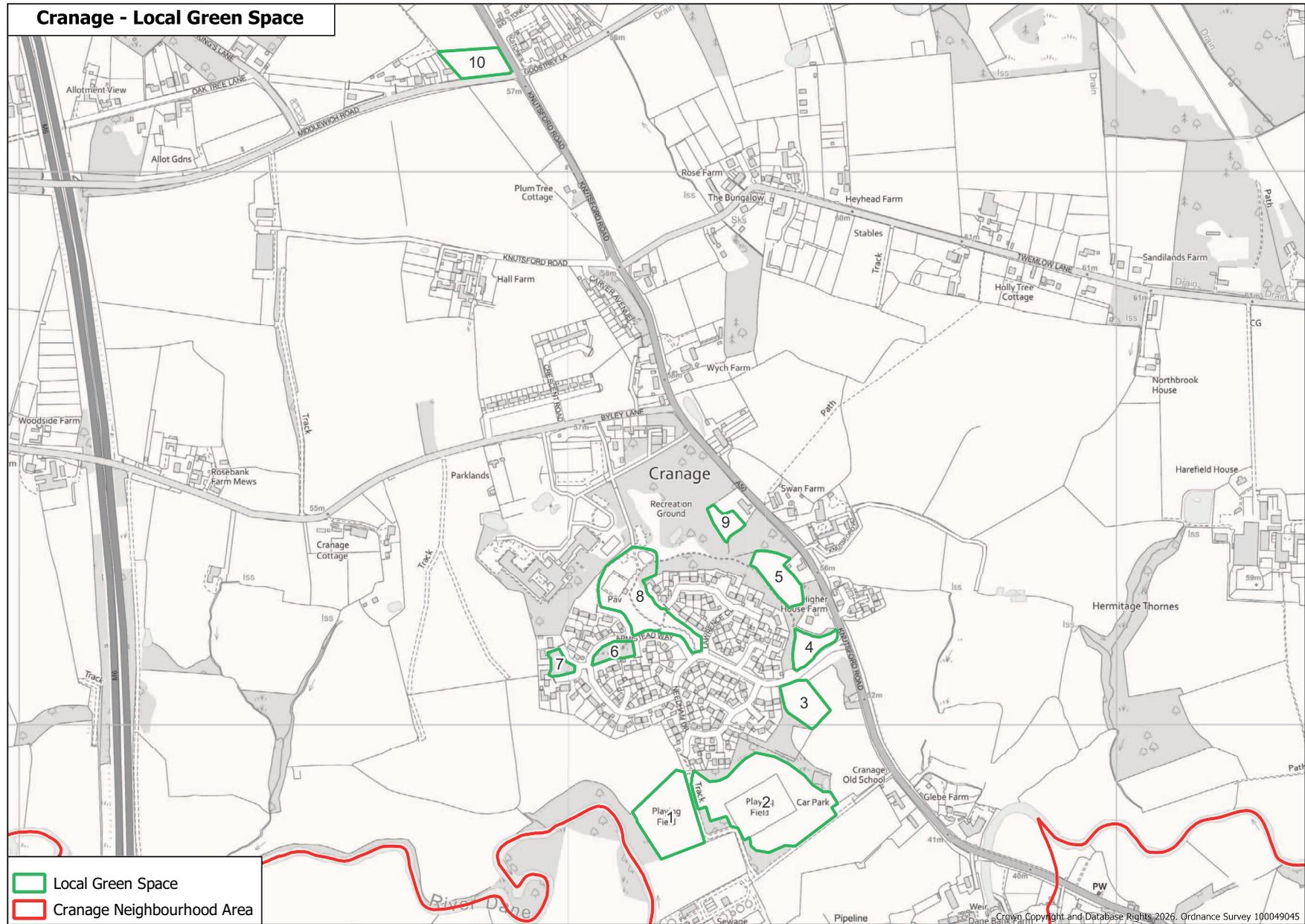
Figure G – TABLE OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES cont.

Open Space	Size (ha)	Criteria 1: Proximity to Community	Criteria 2: Special Character				Criteria 3: Not being extensive Tracts of Land
			Beauty	Recreational Value	Tranquility	Rich in Wildlife	
LGS5 – Needham Drive Amenity Space	0.41	Is located immediately east of the Needham Drive residential estate, and connected to the community via paved footpaths.	Surrounded by mature trees, this grassy meadow, which was restored as a wildflower meadow in 2024, is now rich with wildflower species and is managed by the parish council.	Cut path around and through the meadow allowing for exercise and dog walking, as well as picnicking and relaxation.	Quiet area for walking, relaxing and reflection. Lack of artificial light gives good opportunity for night sky viewing.	Wildflowers, rabbits, birdlife, nesting sites and squirrels. Raptor hunting ground. Variety of species, increasing due to establishing meadow area, provide a large source of food for wildlife. This site also forms part of the wildlife corridor of the Dane Valley.	This open space is bound by mature vegetation on all sides, and is further restricted by Knutsford Road to the east and the residential estate to the south-western edge.
LGS6 – Armistead Way Green Space	0.34	Off Armistead Way, within the Needham Drive residential estate.	Green spaces containing valued mature trees.	This area provides opportunities for informal children’s play for those who live on the estate, in addition to providing safe and quiet footpath links through the housing estate.		Habitat for squirrels and birds.	This open space is within the Needham Drive residential estate and is restricted by existing residential development on all sides, as well as Armistead Way.
LGS7 - West Armistead Way Green Space	0.16	Off Armistead Way, contained within the western side of the Needham residential estate.	Green spaces containing valued mature trees.	This area provides opportunities for informal children’s play for those who live on the estate, in addition to providing safe and quiet footpath links through the housing estate.		Habitat for squirrels and birds.	This open space is within the Needham Drive residential estate and is restricted by existing residential development on all sides, as well as by two access roads branching off of Armistead Way.

Figure G – TABLE OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES cont.

Open Space	Size (ha)	Criteria 1: Proximity to Community	Criteria 2: Special Character				Criteria 3: Not being extensive Tracts of Land
			Beauty	Recreational Value	Tranquility	Rich in Wildlife	
LGS8 - Needham Drive Amenity Area	1.33	Within the Needham Drive residential estate.	Grassy green recreational space	Meeting and recreation space for residents of Cranage and surrounding Parishes. Utilised by all age groups and includes a bowling green, junior play area, teen play area, picnic benches and adult fitness area.		Habitat for squirrels and birds.	This open space contains an existing amenity area, including a bowling club and play spaces. It is clearly defined by built form and is restricted by existing paths and the immediate boundaries of nearby residential development off Armistead Way to the southern edge and Lawrence Close to the northern edge.
LGS9 - Cranage Village Hall Grounds	0.22	Adjacent to A50	Surrounded by substantial mature trees.	Widely used by residents for exercise and those hiring the Village Hall.	A quiet haven at the rear of the Village hall. Lack of artificial light gives good opportunity for night sky viewing.	Wooded and grassy areas forming valuable natural habitat for wildlife. Part of wildlife corridor	This open space is restricted by the hard surface car park of the Village Hall to the northeast and is contained by mature woodland on all remaining edges.
LGS10 - Cranage Community Orchard	0.52	Adjacent to A50 / Middlewich Road.	Has been recently converted to a wildflower meadow and community orchard in 2024. Contains a variety of young fruit trees, with the rest of the area managed as wildflower meadow.	Community resource, with cut pathways presently allowing access through the meadow and around the fruit trees.	Provides a quiet area for relaxation, walking and reflection.	This area is abundant in wildflower species and grasses, already providing a rich biodiverse habitat, which is improving due to the new site management. A new native hedgerow is also planted and establishing at the eastern boundary of the site.	This open space is clearly defined by the vegetative boundary on the northern edge. It is situated between residential dwellings on the western edge and Knutsford Road on the eastern edge. Middlewich Road runs along the southern edge of the space.

Figure H – MAP OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES (SEE APPENDIX 4 FOR VIEWS)



POLICY COM2 – COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Development proposals should seek to retain, enhance and maintain community facilities that positively contribute to the social wellbeing and culture of the community.

Existing community facilities which will be encouraged to be refurbished and improved, subject to other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, include:

- The Village Hall
- Playing pitches
- Bowling club
- Toddler Play Area
- Teen Play Area
- Adult Fitness Area
- Kickabout space with picnic benches
- Goostrey Home and Leisure retail outlet and café with play area
- Lowes farm shop, retail outlets and café
- Devere Cranage Estate Hotel and Gym
- The Vicarage Pub
- Community Orchard
- Woodside Golf Course

Proposals to enhance existing community facilities or provide new community facilities that benefit the wider community, such as play areas for all ages and abilities, will be supported where they are in accordance with policies EG 2 and REC 5 of the Cheshire East Local Plan, in addition to the other policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.

Changes of use of community buildings currently providing a community facility to non-community buildings which require planning permission will not normally be supported, unless any replacement use will provide equal or greater benefits to the community, the facility is replaced, or it is demonstrated that the facility is no longer required.

In particular, proposals to enhance and improve the village hall will be supported.

7.2 Evidence and Justification

List of community facilities:

1. Village Hall

Used regularly by local groups (e.g. Cranage Art Club, Bridge Club, Slimming World), local residents for birthday parties and celebrations as well as groups and individuals from outside the area. See 'Cranage Village Hall Study' report and 7.2.1 and 7.2.2 for more details.

2. Playing Pitches

Used regularly by four teams from the Hurricanes Football Club and are maintained as sports pitches to a good standard by both the Local Authority and the football club. Also used as a casual kickabout space by local residents and those from Holmes Chapel and Goostrey. See report CF2 Cranage Playing Pitches for more details

3. Bowling Club

Home of the Good Companions bowling club – drawing members from Cranage, Holmes Chapel, Arclid, Goostrey and beyond. See report CF3 Bowling Club for more details.

4. Toddler Play Area

5. Teen Play Area

6. Adult Fitness Area

These three play areas are well used locally and also by residents from outside the area. The play areas are often used as a base for parent – children outings who make use of the picnic tables too. See reports 'CF4 Play Areas' and 'CF5 Adult Fitness Areas' for more details.

7. Kickabout space with picnic benches

A survey of residents completed in November 2023 highlighted just how well-loved and used this green space is. See 'Local Green Space Evidence Study' report for more details.

8. Goostrey Home and Leisure retail outlet and café with play area

A good base of craft, gift and artisan food outlets occupy the outlet, with a large café. Many residents meet here as an alternative to visiting the local service centre, Holmes Chapel.

9. Lowes farm shop, retail outlets and café

The farm shop stocks a wide range of fruit, vegetables and other groceries and is valued as the only grocery store in Cranage (besides Goostrey H&L). The location also has a large café and several other retail outlets including plants, clothing and equestrian supplies. There is also a pottery studio, which runs community classes as well as being a hub for local ceramic artists.



10. Devere Cranage Estate Hotel and Gym

Hotel with lounge space where residents can meet as well as meeting rooms, (where parish Council meetings are held) and a restaurant/bar. There is also a leisure facility with a comprehensive gym and the only swimming pool in the Dane Valley area.

11. The Vicarage – Pub with rooms

Restaurant with rooms, and bar area.

12. Community Orchard

The Parish Council has commenced converting this parish owned field to a Community Orchard and Wildflower meadow – in December 2024, twenty-five fruit trees were planted, a mix including apple, pear, quince, damson and gage. It is hoped that these will mature sufficiently to provide fruit for the community from 3 years hence. The orchard will be maintained and supported to reach maturity and become a natural resource for all parish residents.

13. Woodside Golf Course

A 9/18 hole golf course, with driving range, putting green and 9 hole par 3 course, which can also be used for footgolf. There is also a restaurant / café / bar at the site.

See Figure J for locations of facilities.

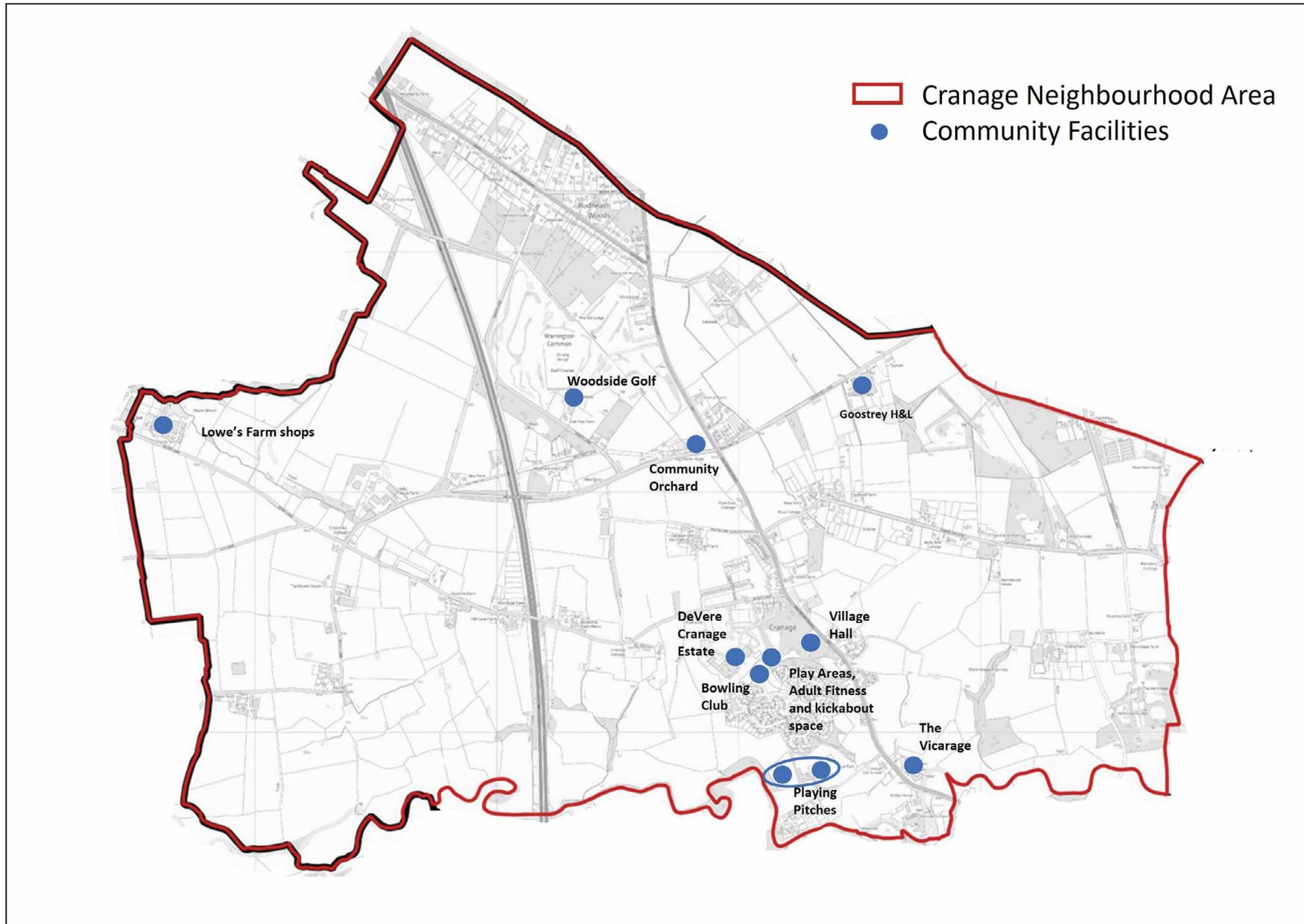
7.2.1 Cranage has few community facilities, and as such the facilities that do exist are highly valued by the community; there is no school or church. Any proposals for further community facilities which would benefit the residents of Cranage will be encouraged and supported. In addition to the playing fields, bowling green, play areas and sports pitches highlighted in Policy COM1, Cranage is fortunate to have a well-used village hall.

7.2.2 The hall was built in 1907 in the Arts and Crafts style, and is held as a charitable trust for the residents of Cranage. Its management committee are responsible for the financial well-being and upkeep of the building. Ideally, a further room would be added to the village hall. Recent improvements to the village hall have been made such as replacement windows, resurfacing of the car park and the refurbishment of the kitchen, paid for by grants from E-on through its local community fund, RG and ME Street aggregates suppliers of Cranage, WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental) and Cranage Parish Council. The grounds are maintained by Sibelco. Should the management committee be unable to maintain viable use of the building, the building must be disposed of for the benefit of Manchester YMCA. It is very well used by a number of groups, ranging from the Playgroup to the Bridge club, with bookings occupying 85% of the available diary. A thriving Art Club meets each Monday, Toddler groups meet regularly, Whist Club meets on Tuesday evening and the popular Bridge Club every Wednesday. Other evenings host Karate classes and Physiotherapy sessions. The Hall is booked most weekends for a variety of activities including both children's and grown-ups parties, wedding receptions, cycling clubs and caravan rallies. Winter quizzes and Murder Mystery evenings are very popular. It is vital that this community facility is maintained and where possible, enhanced.

7.2.3 In order to safeguard the continued vibrancy and vitality of Cranage, and to ensure that the parish remains an attractive place to live, work and to visit, it is essential that any loss of the community facilities in the parish is resisted where possible, and that the improvement and enhancement of facilities is supported.

7.2.4 In the short and medium term there is a need to improve drainage and parking at the Cranage Playing Pitches. This will enable an increase in utilisation.

Figure J – COMMUNITY FACILITIES LOCATIONS



POLICY COM3 – RURAL ECONOMY

Subject to respecting Cranage's built and landscape character, and environmental and residential amenity impacts being acceptable, the following will also be supported:

- A. The development of new small businesses and the expansion to an appropriate local scale of existing businesses, particularly on brownfield sites. This includes existing rural employers including Massey Feeds, the Devere Cranage Estate, Woodside Golf Course, the Vicarage, Lowes Farm Shop, Goostrey Home and Leisure, Hermitage Turkey Farm and Birtles Equestrian Centre;**
- B. Proposals that promote or provide facilities for home working and businesses operating from home**
- C. The sympathetic conversion of existing buildings for business and enterprise**
- D. The diversification of farms and rural businesses; and**
- E. Agricultural, horticultural and equestrian enterprises**

7.3 Evidence and Justification

7.3.1 There are limited opportunities for employment in Cranage and many villagers seek to pursue work further afield. The existing businesses and employment opportunities in Cranage therefore help the sustainability of the community. Many residents work from home, which has become even more common following the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 census highlighted that 26.3% of working age Cranage residents worked from home, compared to the national average of 31.51%. This is likely to have risen quite rapidly since the pandemic. There is also evidence that a number of small commercial businesses operating from domestic premises has risen over the past decade.

7.3.2 Cranage has a higher than average proportion of people aged 16-64 who work more than 49 hours a week (17.62% compared to the England average of 11.08%) and/or who are self-employed (14.76% compared to the England average of 9.54%) (2021 Census). Additionally, only 0.23% of working residents use public transport to get to work, and only 3.58% of people travel less than 2km to work, compared to the average in England of 10.98%. The rural economy and existing small businesses are a vital part of village life, and any opportunities to improve the capability for residents to work from home, develop existing businesses, or that would enable the start-up of new small businesses appropriate to the rural area would be supported.

7.3.3 One of the aims of the NPPF is to support a prosperous rural economy. Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. The Designated Neighbourhood Area includes a number of farms and the NPPF supports the re-use of existing rural buildings, particularly for economic purposes, and promotes the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.





8. Design & Character Policies

The design and character of Cranage Parish is consistent. It primarily consists of buildings to support agricultural operations and to provide dwellings for the residents. There is little industry and development over 2 storeys. This character is to be promoted and preserved.

POLICY DES1 – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

In order to reflect the landscape character of Cranage, the following must be considered in all new development proposals:

- A. The construction of large scale buildings which would be prominent within the landscape will not be supported, particularly where they would impact on locations in Cranage's landscape character areas which are most sensitive to change, as identified within figure L.
- B. New agricultural buildings, stables and animal field shelters must be sited in the least obtrusive location and be of a size, scale, design and appearance appropriate to their intended use and the character of the rural area.
- C. New developments should provide an appropriate level of landscaping which complements and enhances the landscape character area which may be relevant to a proposal as found within figure K. Landscaping should not encroach upon existing wildlife habitats, and new developments should incorporate features beneficial to wildlife.
- D. Existing landscape features, such as trees, hedgerows, historic field boundaries, water courses, ditches and ponds should be protected, retained and incorporated into the overall design of any development to enhance local biodiversity and preserve the landscape character.
- E. Development should be bordered by high quality boundary treatments appropriate to its location, relative to the identified landscape character areas within the parish (Figure K). Existing hedgerow boundaries should be protected wherever possible and maintained as a feature of new development.
- F. Development should not have a significant negative impact upon, nor inappropriately urbanise the rural country lanes. Within this context, inappropriate urbanisation of rural country lanes includes:
 - The intensification of lighting from new development.
 - Removal of hedging or vegetation
 - Construction of boundary treatments such as walls

8.1 Evidence and Justification

8.1.1 The Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment 2018 highlights that one of the forces of change in the area is the erosion of built environment character through incremental development which may lead to unsympathetic renovation of historic buildings and the loss of vernacular character, and the suburbanisation of rural properties, along with inappropriate infill and ribbon development. Additionally, an increase in traffic levels particularly on key arterial routes and the narrow local roads is likely to diminish levels of tranquillity and lead to pressure to widen and standardise roads, leading to an erosion of the rural character.

8.1.2 The Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment highlights that the overall vision and landscape strategy is for the area to remain as a working agricultural landscape, whilst retaining its strong rural character and conserving the valued features and attributes of the naturalistic, tranquil landscape. New agricultural infrastructure should be sensitively designed and sited within the landscape and the structure of the landscape kept intact. Hedgerows should be conserved and replaced where they have been lost in the past as a result of field enlargement and farm intensification. Where possible, semi-natural habitats should be restored or created to improve links between them. Suburban influences on the landscape area should be avoided or mitigated. Any new land uses or development should be sympathetic to the existing landscape and settlement form and character. The valued natural and cultural heritage features should be conserved, and areas enhanced where not in good condition.

8.1.3 The Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment recommends that the rural character of the landscape, with its low settlement density should be retained. The local vernacular of Cheshire brick with slate or tile roofs should be protected, and the introduction of intrusive features avoided. New developments or conversions of farm buildings should retain a rural character by utilising traditional materials and building styles where possible. The construction of large scale buildings which would be widely prominent within the landscape should be avoided. The strong rural character of the landscape should be retained and any existing intrusive features mitigated or screened where appropriate. Development should not be located in visually prominent locations. The Dane Valley Way should be promoted and maintained, and the rural character of narrow, winding roads should be retained, with the over-engineering of roads avoided, which would cause an urbanising influence in the rural landscape. The Assessment highlights the importance of ensuring that new and changing land uses do not degrade from the traditional rural character of the area, and that the high levels of tranquillity within the landscape are retained, with any visible and audible effects of intrusive features within the landscape screened where possible.

8.1.4 This policy also seeks to acknowledge that landscaping and boundary treatments are important elements of development proposals which can help integrate development into its surroundings. In this respect, the policy seeks the delivery of such features in a manner which is consistent with those most prominent within the relevant landscape character area.



Figure K – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER MAP

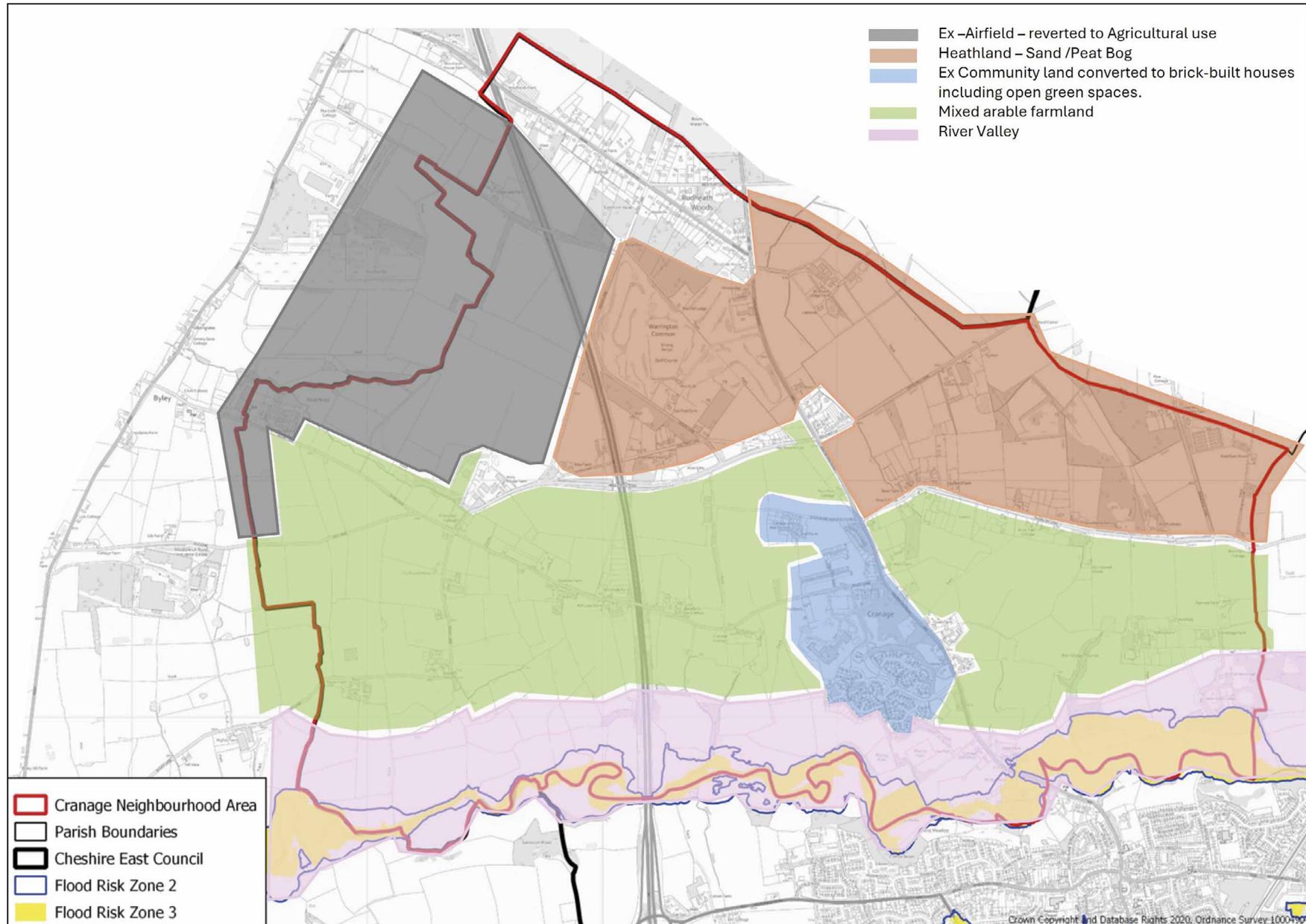
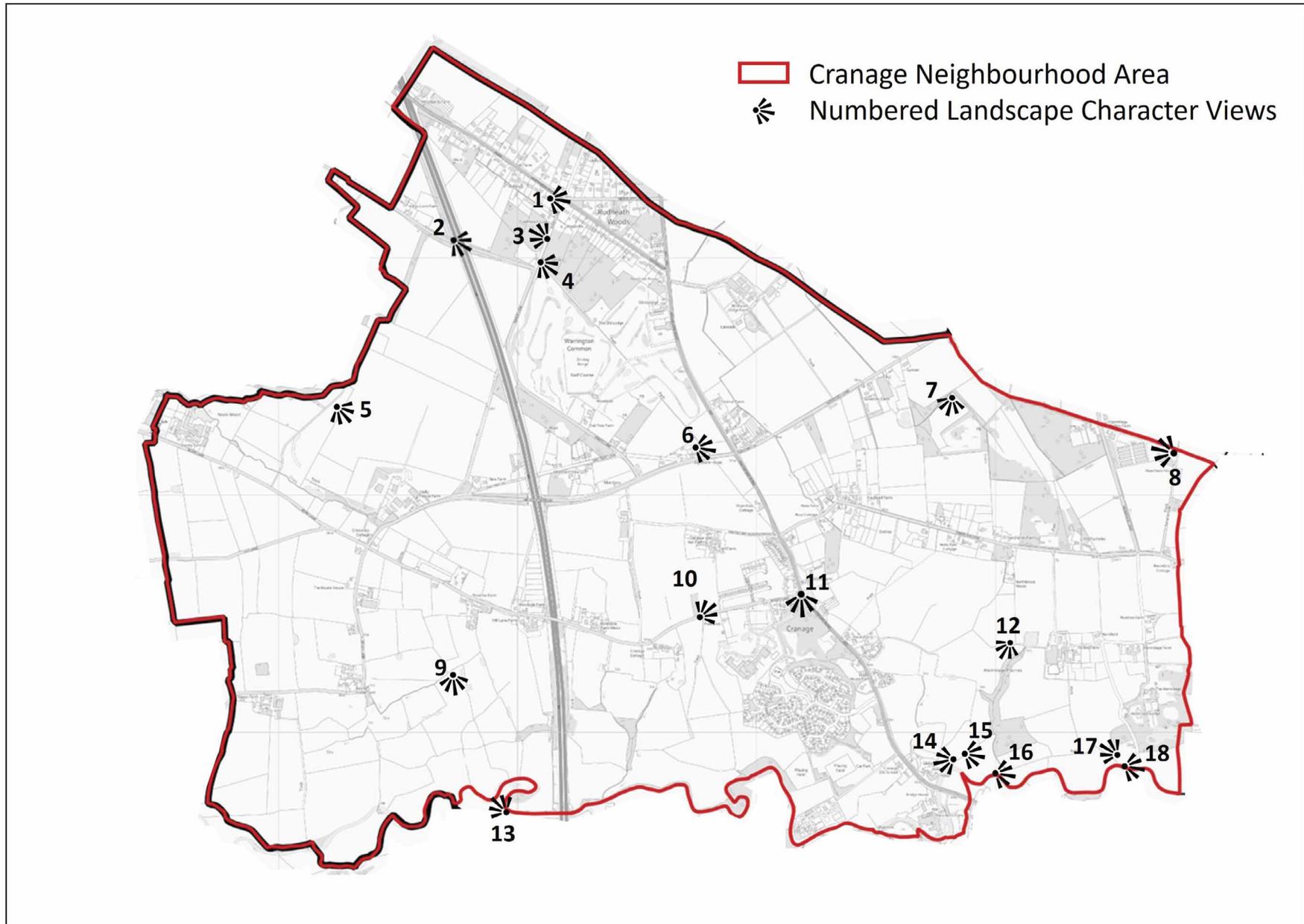


Figure L – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER VIEWS MAP (SEE APPENDIX 3 FOR VIEWS)



POLICY DES2 – DESIGN FOR NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The design of all new development proposals within Cranage should respond to the character of the immediate and wider context. Development proposals should respond to and reflect the character of surrounding buildings, landscape, topography and streetscape as part of a holistic and high quality approach to design.

As part of this approach, all new development proposals should complement and seek to respond positively to relevant character areas as illustrated within Figure M in the following ways:

- **Within Rural Cranage, all new development proposals should seek to maintain the rural environment by preserving and enhancing the rural characteristics of the Rural Cranage character area. For non-householder applications, a landscape-led approach to design evolution and justification should be demonstrated which incorporates the requirements of policy DES 1. Where a development proposal is located in an area of semi-rural development, particular consideration should be given to the characteristics of built form within that area whilst also ensuring that the relationship and visual transition between the site and wider character area is acceptable in terms of its impact.**
- **All new development proposals within the Northwich Road area should reinforce the pattern and characteristics of built form, namely through plot size, height, scale, mass, roofscape, materials and layout. Development proposals shall integrate green infrastructure by continuing the pattern of tree-lined streets, grass verges and hedgerows.**
- **It should be ensured that any new householder development remains subservient to the existing dwelling and is sited in a way that continues the roof and building lines so as to avoid any negative impact on the street scene. Projection beyond existing building lines will not be supported as this risks causing a negative impact on the balance of the street scene.**

Further characteristics of the character areas are identified within the Cranage Character Study. Development proposals must demonstrate an awareness and consideration of this document, specifically with regards to reflecting the different characteristics which are found to be prominent in each area in the design of new proposals.

More generally, all development proposed should also be in accordance with the following key principles of high quality design in Cranage:

- **All householder developments should seek to retain and continue any vernacular details, particularly where they contribute towards the character of the area or building details. Details such as original brickwork, chimneys (including stacks and pots), fascias or leadwork, verge details, window heads, sills and jambs should be continued in new developments.**
- **Development in the open countryside should provide a sympathetic visual transition between the built environment and the countryside. In particularly rural areas, this should extend to consideration of appropriate lighting strategies to avoid unnecessary light pollution.**

8.2 Evidence and Justification

- 8.2.1 As an infill village set within the open countryside, Cranage is unlikely to have a large amount of new development throughout the neighbourhood plan period. Despite this, it is acknowledged that a key priority for residents is to ensure that the design of any development which might come forward is in keeping with the existing characteristics of the surrounding area and enhances the local character of Cranage. This policy seeks to ensure that all new developments within the parish can demonstrate a response to surrounding context, whilst more generally also ensuring that they are consistent with the principles of good design.
- 8.2.2 A character study has been prepared as part of the evidence base underpinning this neighbourhood plan. The document provides detailed information on the three character areas which have been identified within the parish, including Rural Cranage, Northwich Road and Needham Drive, illustrated within Figure M. By providing a baseline assessment of the characteristics found throughout the parish, this policy builds on that study in order to ensure that the local character found within those areas is protected and enhanced through all new development which should respond positively to the key aspects of each area. The character study can be viewed at cranageparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan.



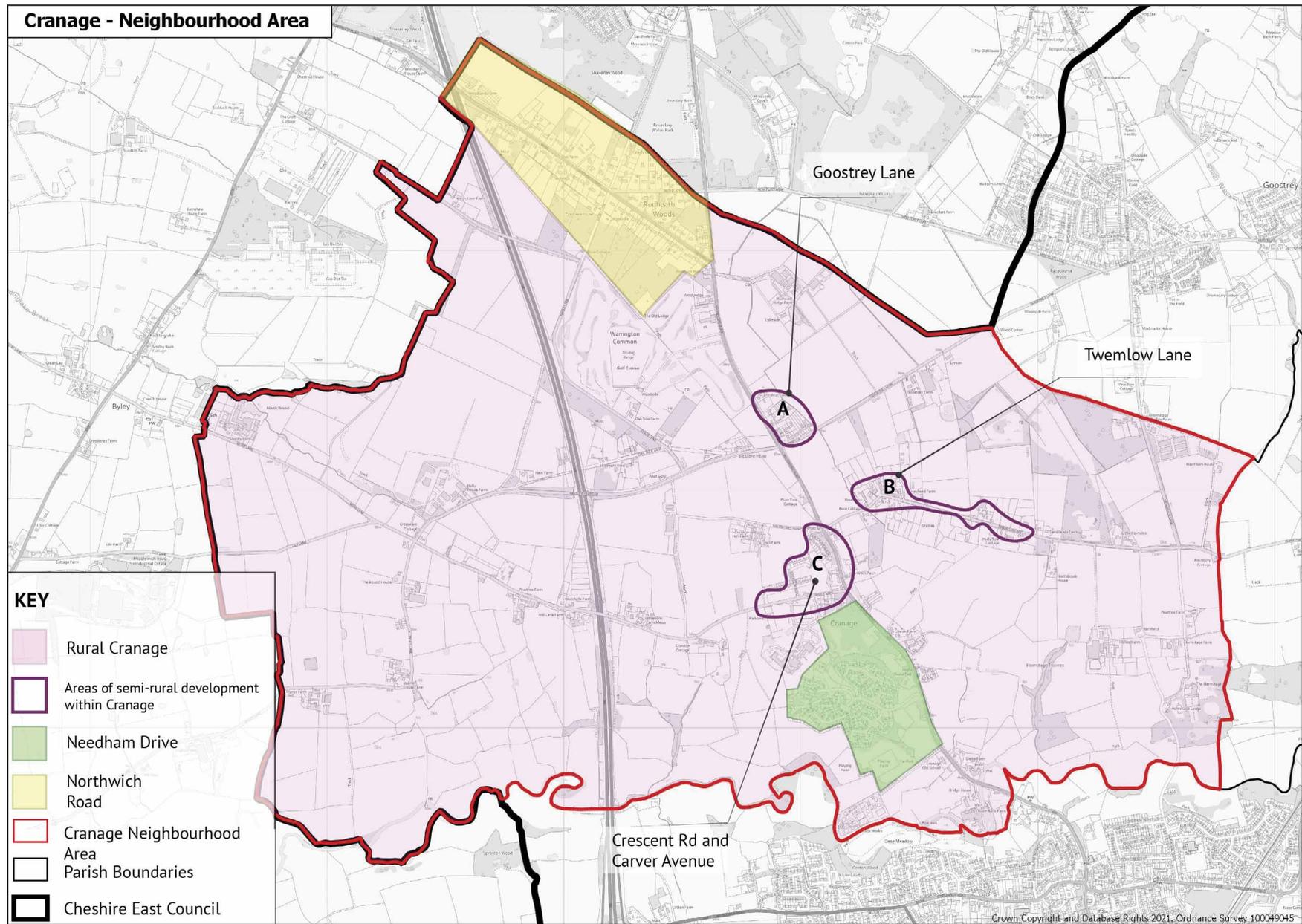
8.2.3 The Cheshire East Design Guide is also a material consideration in decision making and this policy seeks to ensure that the relevant aspects of that document are also considered. Within that document Cranage falls within the 'North Cheshire Fringe' area, with decision cues said to be as follows:

- **19th to 20th century archetypes dominate but examples remain of early domestic architecture.**
- **Varied materials, although brick is predominant. Cheshire brick often used alongside standard red engineering brick for trim detailing and coursing.**
- **Original features and detailing include sash windows, decorative barge boards, gabled dormer windows, decorative timber detailing and prominent chimney stacks.**
- **Views of surrounding countryside adds to rural character and feel of settlements.**
- **The conversion of former farm buildings to residential use adds character and acts as a reminder of early settlement origins in many cases.**

8.2.4 In requiring the above, this policy will ensure that the distinctive local character of Cranage's built environment is a key consideration in the assessment of planning applications.



Figure M – CHARACTER AREAS MAP





9. Future Actions And Aspirations

9.1 Future Actions

Through preparing the Neighbourhood Plan and listening to community feedback, the Parish Council has determined that there are a number of actions which it would like to take forward which can be done outside or along with the Neighbourhood Plan process.

1.

A project of rewilding is being undertaken at Needham Drive Green Space. Funds have been secured and advice taken from Cheshire Wildlife Trust. The initial areas commenced implementation during Autumn 2024. There are a number of sites throughout the parish that have wide verges and it is hoped these can be turned into wild flower areas at a later date. The ambition is not just to leave the areas to become wild but plant and maintain areas as wildlife meadows.

2.

The aspiration to turn the land at the Paddock into a Community Orchard is in the early stages of implementation with initial tree planting occurring during Autumn 2024. There will be a maintenance plan to ensure the orchard reaches maturity. Through a comprehensive maintenance plan with involvement of the community it is expected that this resource will be available to residents for the next 50 years.

3.

In addition to the commitment to protecting and improving existing community facilities within policy COM2, the Parish Council also hope to achieve drainage and parking improvements to the playing pitches at Cranage Playing Fields. Improvements to these facilities would result in a great benefit to the local community and the Parish Council will continue to work with local stakeholders to secure the delivery of these improvements within the neighbourhood plan period.

9.2 Aspirations

The following list comprises the main aspirations for the Parish

1. A1. Footpath at Sand Extraction Site

Specific desired improvements include a footpath along the edge of the sand extraction site beside Goostrey Lane.

2. A2. Lily Lane

Lily lane, a largely unused road in the parish, has been left to fall into a poor state of repair by the local authority in many areas. It is, however, used extensively for recreational walking. There is an aspiration for this to be given the status of a “quiet lane”. Quiet Lanes are minor rural roads, typically C or unclassified routes, which have been designated by local highway authorities to pay special attention to the needs of walkers, cyclists, horse riders and other vulnerable road users, and to offer protection from speeding traffic. Cars are not banned from Quiet Lanes and the use of Quiet Lanes is shared. Measures such as lower speed limits and discrete road signs aim to encourage drivers to slow down and be considerate to more vulnerable users who can in turn use and enjoy country lanes in greater safety, with less threat from speeding traffic. A full guide can be viewed at cranageparishcouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan.

3. A3. Hedging

Specific aspirations for new developments are to always incorporate hedging where possible instead of just a fence, ideally a double open style fence encasing native hedging would be planted and thereby encourage natural regeneration of native species which will promote tree growth ensuring multi aged forestation.

4. A4. Wildlife Corridors

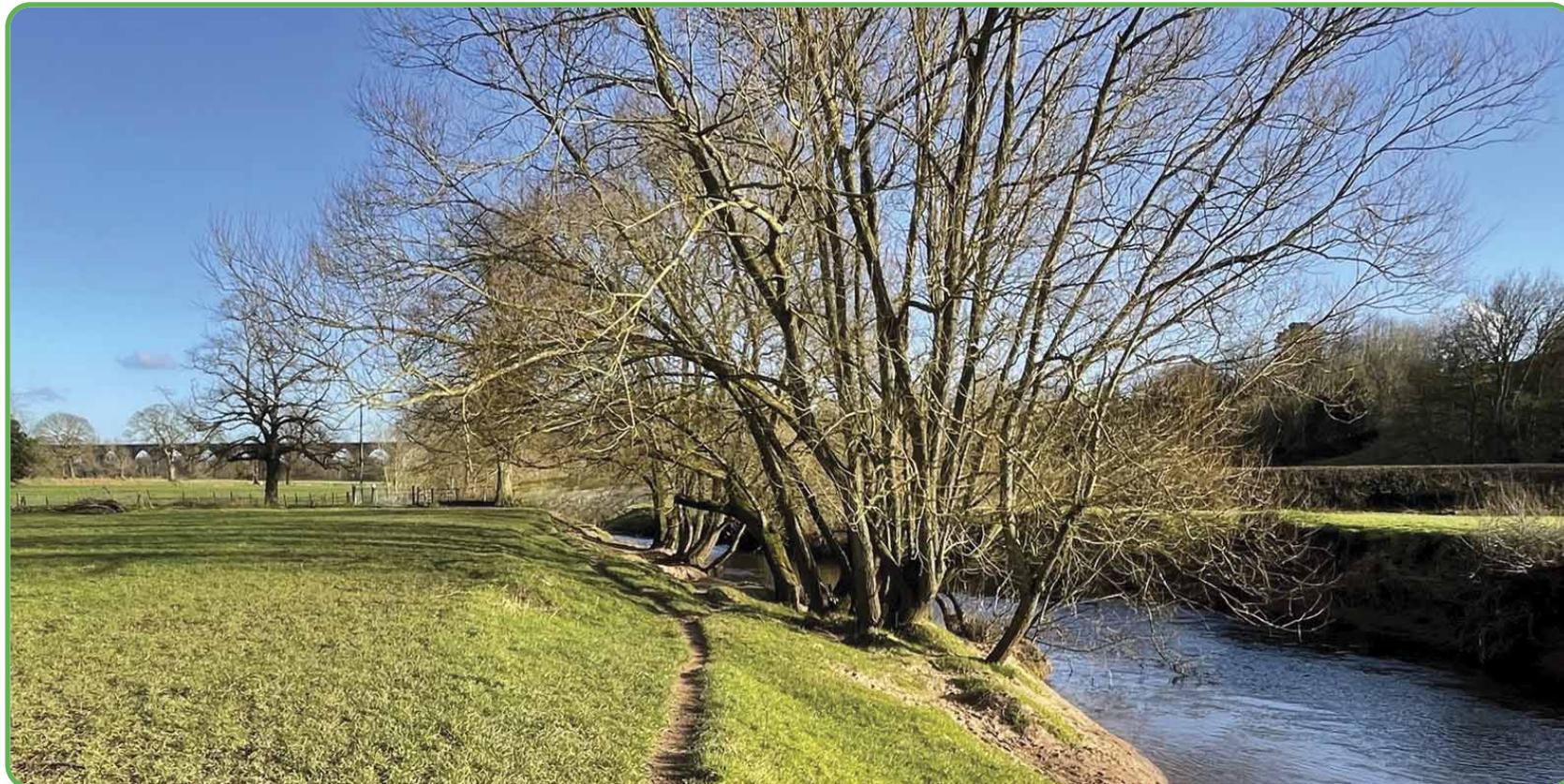
Two further wildlife corridors will be established from north to south by bridging some small gaps between existing sites.

5. A5. Tree Protection

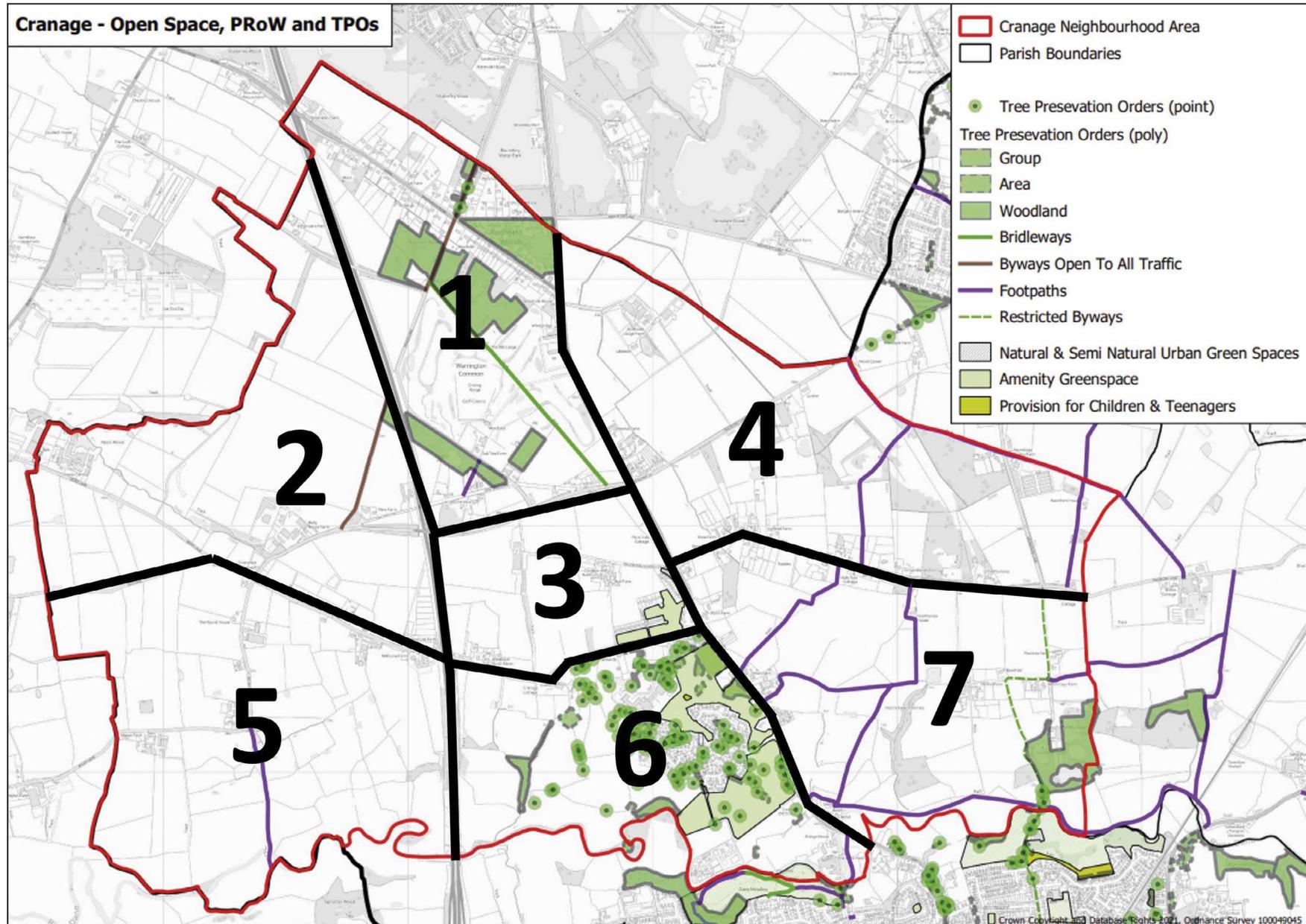
To protect existing trees with preservation orders and to expand this to include the areas identified in yellow on Figure F.

6. A6. Footpath Accessibility

To work towards ensuring that all Public Rights of Way and other footpaths in the parish are as accessible as possible, including replacing high stiles with kissing gates where practicable.



APPENDIX 1 – ALLOCATED VOLUNTEER EVIDENCE AREAS



APPENDIX 2 – ENHANCED TABLE OF LOCAL GREEN SPACES

Open Space	Size (ha)	Proximity to the Community	Demonstration of Special Value to the Local Community
LGS1 and LGS2 – Cranage Playing Fields East and West	3.83	Located within the Parish, close to the Needham Drive residential estate.	<p>The playing fields are the base for a number of the Holmes Chapel Hurricanes junior football teams, who play regularly throughout the football season. During the closed season it is used for training. The 2 football pitches (fenced in 11v11 pitch) and 9v9 pitch are highly utilized by both official Holmes Chapel Hurricanes football teams and the local community for general leisure use. For the 2021-2022 season 5 Holmes Chapel Hurricanes football teams used the Cranage pitches, 3 teams using the 11v11 pitch (U14 boys and U14/U15 girls) and two teams using the 9v9 pitch (U12 Blues and U12 Reds). In total the pitches allow approximately 80 boys and girls from Cranage and Holmes Chapel to play football, providing valuable exercise opportunities. In addition to games on a Saturday and Sunday, for three months of the year (April-May / August), the Cranage pitches are also used for football training purposes by the Hurricanes.</p> <p>Whilst the main identified purpose of the fields is for football practice and matches, they are used daily for many other activities by local residents and visitors from nearby areas.</p> <p>Throughout the spring and summer, the area is used at least once each week by ramblers meeting on Needham Drive or the playing field car park and crossing the fields or using the footpath as part of their walk. There are also many runners who use the area to run several times weekly regardless of the season or weather. On a regular but ad-hoc basis small groups use the area to set up circuits for group training; cricket is often played by groups of all ages and areas are regularly mowed by some residents to practice golf driving and putting.</p> <p>Around 30% of Cranage residents are dog-owners and therefore around 150 dogs are walked on the fields on a daily or almost daily basis. The fenced-in pitch is used for off-lead exercising and training for dogs which are normally walked on-leash and the whole area used widely by all dog owners as well as at least one Burmese cat.</p> <p>The playing fields and surrounding green space enjoy protected mature trees, with two open well managed playing fields. Large trees at the boundary edge of this space bring a sense of greenery and nature up to the main A50 carriageway.</p> <p>Two areas surrounding the football pitch have been transformed into wildflower meadow areas, with restricted maintenance to encourage wildlife and plants. It has mown pathways to enable access. The land is owned by Cheshire East Council.</p>

Open Space	Size (ha)	Proximity to the Community	Demonstration of Special Value to the Local Community
LGS3, LGS4 and LGS5 – Needham Drive Upper and Lower Meadows and Amenity Space	1.05	Borders the Needham Drive residential estate, south of the entry road.	<p>Needham Drive Meadows and Amenity Space are areas of open space adjacent to the residential estate. They provide areas of restored wildflower meadow for recreational use, via the pathways cut around and through the meadows, being enjoyed by local residents for dog walking, recreation and for their wildlife. It enhances the setting of the residential estate, ensuring that an open countryside feel is maintained. Dense wooded areas at some of the boundary edges of these spaces bring a sense of seclusion in a natural environment, even though the land borders the busy A50 trunk road.</p> <p>These areas are included in the work of the Parish Council with Cheshire Wildlife Trust, returning grassed areas within the parish to wildflower meadows, thus encouraging wildlife and biodiversity. Funding for instatement and towards ongoing maintenance for this scheme has been secured from Highways England. The land is owned by Cheshire East Council.</p>
LGS6 and LGS7 – Armistead Way and West Armistead Way Green Spaces	0.5	Off Armistead Way, within the Needham Drive residential estate.	<p>Armistead Way green spaces are two green spaces off Armistead Way, in the Needham Drive residential estate. They are home to several substantial trees with preservation orders and add much to the character and setting of the residential estate, with the eastern area enjoying a footpath through the site. They provide a green and open setting to the nearby houses, and ensure that the area retains a rural, countryside feel. They are well used by the local community for walking and informal leisure.</p> <p>The land is owned by Cheshire East Council.</p>
LGS8 - Needham Drive Amenity Area, which includes the bowling green, play area, teenage play area, picnic benches and adult fitness area.	1.33	Within the Needham Drive residential estate.	<p>Situated within the parish, the Needham Drive amenity area is within the Needham Drive residential estate, built some 25 years ago. It is also bordered on the northern edge by the Cranage Hall hotel site. This is an excellent amenity which is central to the play and recreational needs of the parish. The play areas are a much-valued meeting place for the residents of Cranage and the surrounding parishes. The green space was particularly valuable during the pandemic as an enabler for social contact to safely occur. The green space includes playground equipment, as well as large maintained grassy areas.</p> <p><i>(continued overleaf)</i></p>

Open Space	Size (ha)	Proximity to the Community	Demonstration of Special Value to the Local Community
			<p>The amenity area includes a well-loved and much used bowling green and pavilion. The land and building used as a bowling facility are owned by the local authority, Cheshire East Council. The parish council have a 21 year lease agreement with CEC. Cranage parish Council sublet the whole site to Good Companions Bowling Club, a vibrant club with 110 members. The clubhouse was rebuilt seven years ago. The bowling club have recently installed an irrigation system. The membership field teams in 7 leagues. As such it is one of the largest clubs in the region. Given the scale of the club the facilities are well-utilised with matches being played most sessions during the spring and summer seasons. This situation means the club is financially solvent and has a solid basis for continued operation. When the green is not in use by the club it is open to use by the general public. The bowling club remains a great place for members of the community to meet and engage in a healthy pursuit. Social inclusion is difficult to achieve in a small parish such as Cranage. The Good Companions Bowling club is a critical pillar to deliver social inclusion.</p> <p>There are two play areas within the green space which were built and improved during the last seven years. The junior play area is maintained by Cheshire East Council. The teenager site is maintained by the parish council. They comprise a wide range of play equipment, and between the two sites cover an age range from 3 to 16. There are two picnic tables with integral benches. These were installed in 2021 by the parish council. Since then they have been used as a social meeting place and as somewhere to rest. The parish council regard these tables as an enabler for social inclusion. The play facilities opened in 2016 and are well located away from the main road with safe walking routes from all the houses on the Needham Drive estate. For those families who live outside a safe walking route, or who have restricted mobility, there is space to park cars close by.</p> <p>The play areas are the only equipped public playgrounds in the village. The nearest alternatives are in Holmes Chapel (1.2 miles along the A50) or Goostrey (2.2 miles across the A50 and along country lanes without pavements). Neither offer adventure play for older children or adults.</p> <p>The adult fitness area, installed and maintained by the parish council, abuts the teenager play site and is a facility which can be used by all ages.</p> <p>The land is owned by Cheshire East Council.</p>

Open Space	Size (ha)	Proximity to the Community	Demonstration of Special Value to the Local Community
LGS9 – Cranage Village Hall Grounds	0.22	Adjacent to A50.	<p>Cranage Village Hall has an open, grassy area which is extensively used by residents as an exercise space and by hirers of this vital community facility, for example by wedding guests, caravan and motor home clubs and cycling societies. The grounds enhance the setting of the picturesque Arts and Crafts style Village Hall.</p> <p>It is owned by the Village Hall Trust.</p>
LGS10 – Cranage Community Orchard	0.52	Adjacent to A50 / Middlewich Road.	<p>Cranage Parish Council own this land and for many years it was rented to a local farmer for sheep grazing. The Parish Council has commenced converting it to a Community Orchard and Wildflower meadow – in December 2024, twenty-five fruit trees were planted, a mix including apple, pear, quince, damson and gage. It is hoped that these will mature sufficiently to provide fruit for the community from 3 years hence. The orchard will be maintained and supported to reach maturity and become a natural resource for all parish residents. The site was further enhanced by planting a native hedgerow along the eastern perimeter of the site. The remainder of the site will be maintained as wildflower meadow, this having been harrowed and sown by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust in Autumn 2024.</p>

APPENDIX 3 – LANDSCAPE CHARACTER VIEWS







APPENDIX 4 – LOCAL GREEN SPACES





