



# The Cookham Society

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Spring 2026 Newsletter

## AGM

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at 7.30pm on Thursday 12th March 2026 at the Chartered Institute of Marketing. Drinks will be served after the meeting.

## SPRING ISSUE

## RE-SUBMITTED CREMATORIUM PLANS FACE FIERCE OPPOSITION

By Dick Scarff

We were delighted when the first application to build a crematorium on Long Lane was withdrawn last September.

Sadly, a new application was submitted to RBWM in December. It is almost exactly the same as the first, except for modifications to the proposed pavement on Long Lane. We are resisting this application as firmly as the first, and our detailed objections have been submitted to the Borough.

Our view of this dreadful design has been echoed in the national press. It is on an unscreened site in an important, cherished, landscape position with

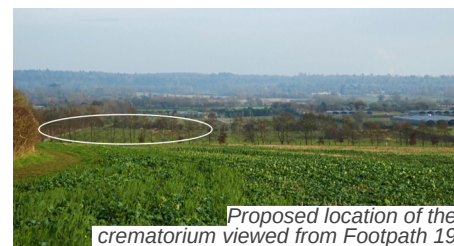
sub-standard road access, and very limited public transport.

A crematorium should be sited with great care, and the search for a suitable location for the first and only crematorium in the Borough should have covered a much wider area, not be limited to just a small corner of Cookham. This site is probably in the worst possible place to serve all residents living in the RBWM area.

Finally, because there is no mains gas



Proposed access point to the crematorium from Long Lane



Proposed location of the crematorium viewed from Footpath 19

supply to the site, the applicants are proposing to tanker in LPG. Electric furnaces are available and in the light of the need to decarbonise and move to net-zero, they should be mandatory.



View of the film studio site from Winter Hill

## GREEN LIGHT FOR MARLOW STUDIOS By Tom Denniford

Regrettably, the government has signalled its approval for the film studio development by the Marlow junction on the A404. As we had argued, this massive development, some 1.8 million square feet, will have a detrimental effect on views from Winter Hill. However, our greatest concern is the

likelihood of a serious increase in traffic on the A4094 over Cookham Bridge. Survey work carried out in support of the application failed to take account of this issue and this is another case where the full impact of traffic is ignored in planning decisions.

## THE NEW DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY PLANNING FRAMEWORK, ANOTHER THREAT TO COOKHAM?

By Tom Denniford

Just before Christmas, the government published draft revisions to the NPPF which, if implemented, will make significant changes, particularly to Green Belt policy. A key characteristic of Green Belts has been their permanence, but this is no longer the case. We have already lost an important area, AL37

at Lower Mount Farm, adjacent to Cannondown Road; now we are faced with the new designation of so-called Grey Belt, which will provide cover for developers to nibble away at land previously safeguarded.

The Society will be working hard to



View of Green Belt, alleged to be Grey Belt, viewed from Footpath 23

respond to the consultation by the 10th March deadline and we shall resist all attempts to water down long-standing protections for villages like ours.

This page is hosting two articles about one of the oldest parts of Cookham. One recounts the fascinating history of The Pound and the other outlines residents' concerns about the recently constructed barns on Poundfield.

## SOME HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE POUND

*By local historian, Pam Knight*

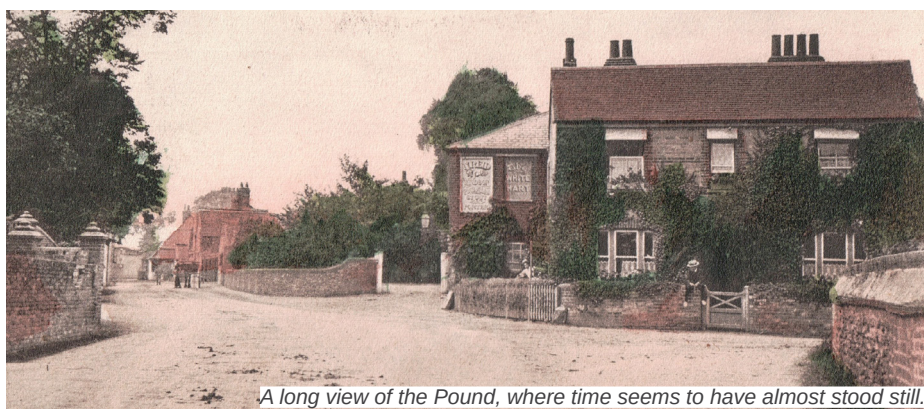
This narrow road runs between Station Hill and Cookham Moor. The Pound Farmhouse and other listed buildings along The Pound date from between the 16th and 19th centuries but unearthed fragments of early Saxon pottery suggest there was a nearby settlement, long before Queen Cynethryth presided over Cookham's riverside abbey in the 790s.

The Pound was part of a medieval pack-horse and sheep drovers' route between Gloucester and London that ran through Cookham, down to Holy Trinity church and the river crossings. It ran over the elevated causeway, the driest passage over Cookham's frequently flooded marshland.

A 19th century directory described Cookham as a village divided into two parts by the village green between. At that time, The Pound contained three pubs, a beer house, a butcher, a baker and two grocers as well as the manorial pound for straying animals. Until the railway came to Cookham in 1854, there were just open fields from the Pound to the Forge in Dean Lane.



*The Gate Hotel, as rebuilt around 1900, at the corner of The Pound where a pub had stood since the 17th century. The Anchor flats now occupy the site.*



*A long view of the Pound, where time seems to have almost stood still.*

## WAS DUE PROCESS FOLLOWED PRIOR TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW BARNs ON POUNDFIELD?

*Local residents outline their concerns*

Two new, large agricultural barns have been built on Poundfield, within the Cookham High Street Conservation Area. The land is designated Local Green Space in the BLP, provides the setting for several listed buildings, and is crossed by a well-used public foot-path, making it an important part of the village's historic landscape.

The first structure, a large hay barn, appears to have been built under Permitted Development Rights. Councils have 28 days to refuse such applications and if refusal is issued outside this period, development may proceed under 'deemed consent'. In this case, RBWM refused the

application in September 2023, a few days past the deadline, and in October 2025 the barn was built. There remain concerns as to whether the development legally qualifies as permitted development.

The second barn was granted full planning permission in October 2024 as a like-for-like replacement for the existing cattle shed. However, when construction began in October, the barn appeared larger, closer to the site entrance, and used different materials from those approved. These issues were reported to Enforcement at RBWM and remain under investigation. Many residents consider the scale of

the new barns to be disproportionate and worry that it may facilitate future development or a change of use. Given past attempts to develop housing on this sensitive land, we feel greater scrutiny is essential.

An official complaint alleging maladministration by RBWM was submitted by nearby residents on the 17th December 2025. It is supported by both the Society and the Parish Council. It is currently under consideration and calls for stronger protection of Poundfield and improvements to the prior approval process.

*Photos courtesy of Poundfield residents*



*The original barn*



*The new barns*

## RIVERSIDE NURSING HOME

By Dick Scarff

Since this application was submitted almost a year ago, there have been two sets of amendments issued. These have made only very marginal changes and have done nothing to alter our objection to this massive development. The greater part of Berries Road is in the 'Village core character area of the Conservation Area', but this site is part of the 'Riverside character area' which includes Bell Rope Meadow, the church and Paddock. The key characteristics of this area are the large amount of open space and public accessibility, and this character of openness should be preserved. We will continue to fight for a much more modest redevelopment of the site.



## GRANGE FARM OWNERS CONSULT ABOUT A CANCER CARE CENTRE

By Bill Perry

The new owners of Grange Farm have undertaken a brief consultation with residents about possible plans to replace the old farm buildings with a cancer care clinic. Their early draft shows an increase to the footprint of the current buildings and includes short-stay cabins, a café and a farm shop. An application has yet to be lodged at the RBWM Planning Portal. The Society will scrutinise any future application for this prime rural site.



## INADEQUATE SEWERAGE PROVISION AT THE AL37 SITE AT LOWER MOUNT FARM?

By Dick Scarff



Photo courtesy of Cllr Mandy Brar

The Borough Local Plan makes a specific requirement about the water supply and sewerage infrastructure servicing the new development at LMF '...that the development would not lead to problems for existing users.' We expressed our concern to the planners, that Cookham's foul drainage system is not adequate for the additional 200 houses. Thames Water initially agreed, and prior to

planning approval, stated that the system required upgrading. After permission was granted, TW changed their mind and claimed no upgrade was necessary. We challenged this and submitted our own calculations indicating that capacity is inadequate. TW have now changed their assessment once again, stating, "This site needs to be modelled for reinforcements to our networks to enable sufficient capacity." We look forward to seeing the results of this modelling.

## POSSIBLE EXPANSION AND UPGRADE FOR THE LONG LANE CEMETERY

By Bill Perry

The Parish Council's cemetery on Long Lane is running out of space. The chapel is tired, unheated, lacks a toilet and there is no parking. Last year, the PC consulted on a possible project to enlarge the cemetery and upgrade the chapel. It met a positive response, including from the Society. The PC has contacted the Church Commissioners, the owners of the Cemetery Field, to see if they would release five hectares to future-proof the site. The PC has voted to add the project to the current Neighbourhood Plan.



## WILL THEY? WON'T THEY? THE FUTURE OF ODNEY WEIR

By Bill Perry

The Environment Agency installed the new fencing by the weir in November. Now the work is complete, the Society, Borough and Parish Councillors, along with representatives from Odney Estates can't see why the EA cannot re-open access across the weir. We, along with the other interested parties will continue to push for an early re-opening.



## WORK STARTS ON THE AL37 SITE AT LOWER MOUNT FARM

By Lysette Penston

Residents will have noticed that work has begun on the AL37 site at Lower Mount Farm, now named as Astoria Park. The hedges have been cut down and heavy lorries carrying spoil have been seen leaving the field. We had pressed RBWM to ensure that Bellway Homes be required to have full lorry wheel-washing equipment on site, so that Cannondown Road doesn't end up like the quagmire on the road outside Bellway's other building project at Spencer's Farm.



## COMMITTEE CHANGES

Mark Greenland, committee member

Some years ago, Mark and his wife bought a dilapidated house in Berries Road which required complete refurbishment. Mark is a retired Chartered Surveyor who worked in London for all his working life. He is Secretary of the Berries Road Association and Chairman of the Berries Road Redevelopment Committee who are tasked with responding to the Cookham Riverside Nursing Home planning application on the behalf of the Berries Road Association Members. Mark believes that maintaining historic Cookham, preserving the beautiful setting of the Thames and protecting our Green Belt is of the utmost importance.



Mark Greenland

## BISHAM EXPERT TO SPEAK AT THE AGM

This year's AGM talk will be given by Sheila Featherstone-Clark, a local historian with a special expertise on Bisham. The talk is entitled 'Bisham Abbey, Estate to Elite Sports Centre'. The ancient abbey was occupied by the Vansittart family for 200 years prior to being sold to the nation some 62 years ago.



Sheila Featherstone-Clark

Sheila will outline the tragic history of this family and explain how Bisham Abbey became a leading national sports centre. You are warmly invited to attend the AGM, followed by drinks at 7.30pm the CIM on Thursday 12th March.

## FACEBOOK MEMBERS, YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU! *By Barry Weare*

The Society's Facebook Group started just seven years ago, now boasts a membership of 840 friends. This is a very healthy number for a small charity focussing solely on Cookham's built and rural environment. Unfortunately, just 10% of our Facebook Group are subscribing, paying members of the Society. Whilst we are delighted that we can reach such a wide audience, we would value our 'friends' becoming fully signed up, subscribing members. Not only do the subscription monies help the balance sheet and go towards funding our efforts to protect our lovely villages, but a large membership also adds weight to our voice when fighting unwanted development in Cookham.

So, all you Facebook members out there, join up and become a full member. Your Society needs you! Details on the website:

[www.cookhamsociety.org.uk/membership](http://www.cookhamsociety.org.uk/membership)

## NEW LOOK COOKHAM SOCIETY ADVERT

By Shez Courtenay-Smith

Look out for the new look Cookham Society advert which will appear in the Parish magazine and other local publications. We are also planning to place our leaflet at various locations around the village. Pick one up and show it to friends and family and encourage them to join us.

## KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH THE SOCIETY

You can keep abreast of key issues facing Cookham by staying in touch with the Society in any number of ways:

- Join the Society and get our twice-yearly newsletter
- Read our website [www.cookhamsociety.org.uk](http://www.cookhamsociety.org.uk)
- Follow us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/groups/thecookhamsociety](https://www.facebook.com/groups/thecookhamsociety) 
- Read the Poster Drum on Cookham station concourse

