

Minutes of a meeting of Cold Ash Parish Council held on Tuesday 11.8.2026 at 7.15pm in the Committee Room of Acland Memorial Hall

Present: Councillors McArdle (IM/Chair), Adams (PA, left 8.30pm), Murray (PM/Vice-Chair), Codling (HC), Hanks (RH, arrived 7.25pm), Riley (JR) and Maini (VM)

In Attendance: Rosie Jardine (Clerk & RFO)

Absent: Councillor Pemberton (JP)

26.120 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Pemberton (JP) and District Councillor Dick (PD)

26.121 Declarations of Interest

HC declared that they are a District Councillor, that they will act in the best interests of the Parish and set aside any interest in the District Council during this meeting.

26.122 Minutes

RESOLVED to approve and sign minutes of the meeting held on 14.7.2.2026.

26.123 Planning Matters

A Applications – there were no planning applications.

B NOTED Decision Notices

GRANTED (CAPC: object) 26/00697/CLASSR St Gabriels Farm, The Ridge - Notification of Permitted Development under Class R of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015: Change of use of part of an agricultural building to Flexible Use, falling within Class B2 (General Industrial), B8 (Storage and Distribution) and E (Commercial, Business and Service) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order.

GRANTED (CAPC: no objection) 26/00814/HOUSE Ashmore Green House, Ashmore Green - Two storey rear extension, single storey lean-to side extension and alterations to existing dwelling, including re-cladding existing house.

GRANTED (CAPC: no objection) 26/00984/HOUSE The Retreat, Gladstone Lane - Replacement single storey rear extension

REFUSED (CAPC: no objection but commented) 26/01032/PIP The New Bungalow, Cleardene Farm, Ashmore Green - Application for Permission in Principle for Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of new dwelling and outbuilding.

GRANTED (CAPC: object) 26/01147/HOUSE Ashness Lodge, Stoney Lane, Ashmore Green - Home office / sun room

C Other Planning matters

HC reported on Planning Committee Reforms: NOTED forthcoming reforms to the Planning system which will introduce a national scheme of delegation for local Planning Authorities. The reforms are intended to increase the proportion of planning applications determined under delegated powers by Officers, reserving Committee consideration for major or significant proposals. The changes are expected to take effect from 31 October 2026

NOTED an Environment Agency letter objecting to application 25/00278/FULMAJ - Land West of Heath Lane and North of Bowling Green Road, Thatcham.

PM reported further submissions by the developer to address objections raised against application 25/00278/FULMAJ including a Flood Risk Assessment. An up-dated objection to the application was presented by PM (prepared in liaison with the Volunteer Flood Warden) who sought delegation to submit the document on behalf of CAPC.

RESOLVED to delegate authority to PM to submit Appendix 1 to WBC Planning.

26.124 New West Berkshire Local Plan (WBLP) – Scoping Consultation (4.9.2026 deadline)

RESOLVE to delegate authority to IM to submit the proposed response of behalf of CAPC – Appendix 2.

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26.125 Project Updates

To receive updates from Project Leads and to consider and resolve actions, if appropriate:

A – West Berkshire Local Plan: IM & PM

IM and PM liaising regularly with WBC Leader Jeff Brooks and other local parish council representatives. The focus of these meetings is on improving consultation and engagement. PM highlighted concerns that detailed local evidence is not always being taken on board by WBC and stressed that future engagement must be meaningful if Councillors and residents are to invest their time in providing data and feedback.

B – Bringing the NDP alive: IM & PM

Plan for a refresh in response to the new emerging WB Local Plan and NE Thatcham Masterplan.

C – Data & Resource Sharing: PM

All Councillors are now accessing their CAPC emails via Outlook. PM will commence SharePoint build with the Clerk. PM will then circulate a short user guide and/or give a brief demonstration at a future meeting.

D – Traffic and Transport (road safety, 20mph, SID's, etc): VM

Traffic & Transport Survey - VM confirmed that the draft traffic and transport survey (including views on 20mph and wider issues) has been finalised following member comments. The survey will be hosted online (Microsoft Forms), with hard copies available and promoted via the parish Bulletin and at the village fete for those less able to respond online. The survey will run until the end of September, after which VM will collate the responses and present findings to council.

Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) - VM reported that WBC has loaned a SID device currently deployed on The Ridge; initial observation is that many drivers reduce their speed on seeing the display, suggesting a positive behavioural effect. The likely cost of purchasing a suitable SID (including batteries and fittings) is in the region of £4,500. The council noted available budget of £2,000 this year plus £1,000 in reserves for traffic and highway safety; Members' Bid funding is not currently available.

ACTION: VM will prepare a brief paper setting out costs, benefits, funding options (including possible external grants) and recommended next steps for consideration by F&GP/Council.

E – Anti-Social Behaviour (Hermitage Road car park, CCTV and other): ??

It was noted that DS has resigned, leaving the Hermitage Road car park / CCTV project without a lead. RH agreed to take on responsibility for progressing the CCTV/solar-powered camera system around the Recreation Ground and car park.

ACTION: Clerk to share relevant documents with RH who will review the existing camera, battery and solar configuration; ensure cameras are not left running in a way that continuously drains the batteries; consider options such as limiting operating hours and prioritising the most effective camera locations; work with the Clerk to obtain any necessary technical documentation and quotes. RH will bring recommendations and indicative costs back to council for decision.

F – Community Engagement: HC and Clerk

Village Fete Presence - it was confirmed that CAPC will have a stand at the village fete (5.9.2026) to promote the traffic survey. A table and gazebo will be needed; Councillors agreed to help staff the stand and encourage participation, particularly from residents who may have missed earlier consultations.

“Britain in Bloom” / Village Planting Initiative - HC proposed exploring a “Britain in Bloom”-style initiative to encourage residents and local groups to improve the appearance and biodiversity of front gardens and key communal spaces, with an eye to a possible formal competition entry in future years.

The emphasis would be on climate-resilient planting (e.g. drought-tolerant species) and visible care for the parish.

ACTION: HC will approach local horticultural contacts (including members of the gardening club) to gauge interest and ideas, and to explore whether small grants or guidance could be offered to support residents and community groups.

G – Sculpture Trail: IM

IM reported that (pending formal notification) the Members' Bid application to support the Sculpture Trail was unsuccessful, despite being the top local priority for the ward members. The delay has caused a loss of momentum, but it was reaffirmed that even a small number of sculptures can have a positive impact and help test community interest. CIL funds held in reserve can still be used (previously earmarked at £5,000) and

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match-funding can be sought (for example from Greenham Trust), with an initial phase of around three sculptures as a pilot.

ACTION: IM will continue to explore funding and delivery options and report back with a revised proposal.

H – Upper Stone Rise/Knights Grove play area and adjacent Waller Drive Recreation Ground: HC & IM

The Knights Grove play area is now open and in use. Some minor issues have been observed for follow-up with the developer. The council remains in principle supportive of CAPC taking on responsibility for the play area and associated land to avoid residents facing high private management charges, subject to satisfactory legal and financial arrangements. Key outstanding issues include:

- Clarification of land ownership and boundaries (including areas owned by WBC and any impact of the gas pipeline);
- Ensuring the play area meets required ROSPA and safety standards prior to adoption;
- Securing a suitable legal framework (freehold or long lease – minimum 99 years) with associated commuted sums.
- HC, IM and the Clerk have sought information from the developer and WBC but are still awaiting detailed responses.

RESOLVED to delegate authority to IM, HC and Clerk to: select and instruct a solicitor (with costs met by the developer under s106) to advise on the transfer and to progress negotiations on land transfer/lease terms.

ACTION: IM, HC and Clerk to present a final recommendation back to Council once an acceptable legal package is available.

I – Hermitage Road play area: RH & JR

RH and JR reported that work continues on preparing a formal tender for the refurbishment of the Hermitage Road play area. A draft specification has been developed with input from a play provider (Tim, Proludic) to ensure the tender is detailed enough to elicit comparable and high-quality bids, rather than open-ended designs. Progress has slowed due to summer availability; RH will chase for feedback and then test the draft tender with at least one other supplier before issue. Display/mood boards will be used at a future school or community event to share emerging design concepts and ensure the scheme caters both for younger children and teenagers.

8.30pm PA left the meeting

26.126 Councillors Reports & Questions

RECEIVED reports and questions from Parish and District Councillors.

RH: The Acland Memorial Hall Management Committee is seeking further quotes to address drainage issues believed to be causing structural damage to the building but an initial quote indicates a cost of £59,000. The Committee is likely to request support from the Council, particularly from CIL funds held in reserve.

IM: Cold Ash Countryside Volunteers would like to lay the hedge that forms a boundary between the Glebeland Cemetery and St Mark's Churchyard – no objections were raised.

26.127 Finance

A Items for Payment – APPROVED items of expenditure totalling £5,447.36.

	Supplier	Description	Net	VAT	Total	Tender	Invoice/Order No
104	Acland Memorial Hall	Venue hire	24.75	0.00	24.75	ONLINE	AMH-1878
108	Berkshire Vision	Community Grants	150.00	0.00	150.00	ONLINE	as per min. 26.115Aiii
111	Office Power t/a Newbury Office	Stationery	107.18	21.43	128.61	ONLINE	INV1111295102
112	Tactical Facilities Management Ltd	Bin emptying	479.44	95.89	575.33	ONLINE	452
113	CAPC Parish Clerk	Mileage	49.25	0.00	49.25	ONLINE	expenses claim
116	Life Education Wessex & TV	Community Grants	155.00	0.00	155.00	ONLINE	as per min. 26.115Ai
118	NJ Perry	CCTV	160.00	0.00	160.00	ONLINE	97
119	Scofell Landscapes Ltd	Grass Cutting	244.33	48.87	293.20	ONLINE	39863
120	West Berkshire Council	Community Grants	1536.00	0.00	1536.00	ONLINE	665648
121	HMRC	Payroll	524.58	0.00	524.58	ONLINE	120PW00178648
122	CAPC Parish Clerk	Payroll	1685.81	0.00	1685.81	ONLINE	Aug payroll
124	HALC	Membership subscription	-231.00	-46.20	-277.20	ONLINE	Credit inv 8468 vouch. 30

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127	ION Systems	IT Support	58.50	11.70	70.20	ONLINE	17821
128	Craig Little	Cemetery Fees	90.00	0.00	90.00	ONLINE	ref-1109
110	British Gas	Parish Office - utilities	28.15	1.40	29.55	DIRDEBIT	804176386
123	NEST	Payroll	184.30	0.00	184.30	DIRDEBIT	Aug payroll
105	Royal Mail	Postage	0.91	0.00	0.91	CARD	letter re: memorial
106	Lebara Mobile Limited	Office supplies	4.17	0.83	5.00	CARD	309336462026-07-07
107	Lebara Mobile Limited	CCTV	3.75	0.75	4.50	CARD	349734272026-07-18
109	ToolStation	Community & Civic	31.45	6.29	37.74	CARD	YWW467632438
114	Microsoft Limited	Microsoft Subs	10.08	2.02	12.10	CARD	GB-TI2603628790
115	Royal Mail	Postage	0.91	0.00	0.91	CARD	postage
117	Royal Mail	Postage	0.91	0.00	0.91	CARD	postage - VAT reclaim
125	Royal Mail	Postage	0.91	0.00	0.91	CARD	Postage - Cemetery
126	Lebara Mobile Limited	Office supplies	4.17	0.83	5.00	CARD	309336462026-08-06
			5303.55	143.81	5447.36		

B Bank Reconciliation – APPROVED the bank reconciliation to 31.7.2026 with balances:

1. Co-Operative Bank Current Account: £9,510.80
2. Co-Operative Savings Account: £68,565.67
3. Hinckley & Rugby 45-day Notice: £42,500
4. Hinckley & Rugby 90-day Notice: £42,500

C Budget – REVIEWED 2026-2027 budget spend to 31.7.2026

D Transfer of funds – APPROVED transfer of £6,000.00 by the Clerk/RFO from the savings account to the current account to facilitate budgeted expenditure until the second precept installment is paid by WBC.

E NOTED that the quarter 1 tax reclaim has been made and £1,451.24 received from HMRC.

26.128 Clerk's Report

- Following a survey initiated at the 2026 Cold Ash Annual Parish Meeting, extended Thatcham Library opening hours for Saturdays commenced on 8.8.2026 with the branch now being open 9.30am-1pm supported by CAPC funding. This annual contribution will be reviewed within the CAPC's routine budget-setting processes.
- The Clerk cleared multiple bags of fly-tipped domestic waste from the bicycle shelter of the Hermitage Road car park on 11.8.2026. Any further instances will be reported.

26.129 Play Areas

The Clerk reported that the most recent inspection reports were received on the day of this meeting so will be presented to the next CAPC meeting.

26.130 WBC Service Delivery Offers

All offers were considered. Enquiries should be made into the tree survey offering.

ACTION: Clerk to enquire through insurer as to current requirements

ACTION: Clerk to enquire about WBC service offer for surveyance only and what the obligations of Parish Councils are.

ACTION: Clerk to enquire if neighboring parishes have expressed an interest in WBC's service offer.

ACTION: Finance & General Purposes Committee to consider procurement process for hedge and tree work once above information has been gathered.

26.131 Internal Auditor

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RESOLVED to engage April Skies Accounting for Internal Audit for 2026-2027, being satisfied of their independence from CAPC.

26.132 Lawrences Lane

DISCUSSED the expiration of WBC's 2022 Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) for Lawrences Lane. The ETRO expired in Jan 2024. The window of opportunity to convert the ETRO to permanent then lapsed due to an oversight. A recent report from a landowner has resulted in the sudden recent removal of the bollards, reopening the Lane to traffic.

HC reported that it is likely that a new Traffic Regulation Order will be required to close the lane again, a process that will require public consultation and will therefore take time. The view was taken that the majority of Cold Ash residents wish for a permanent closure to traffic. It was noted that landowners should now cut back overhanging vegetation that has been allowed to grow into the lane and that the safety of non-vehicular users may be at serious risk – users will not be anticipating motor vehicles, the lane been closed for 4 years.

ACTION: Clerk to draft a submission to WBC expressing the Council's disappointment and requesting measures to address safety concerns.

26.133 CAPC Vacancies

NOTED that David Silsby recently resigned from his role as Councillor. CAPC currently has 3 Councillor vacancies in total, 2 of which we are free to co-opt for at this time.

ACTION: include appointment of a new CAPC outside body representative to the Acland Memorial Hall Management Committee on a future agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.13pm

Chair Date

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Appendix 1 – Supplementary Representation to Planning Application 25/00278/FULMAJ - Land West of Heath Lane and North of Bowling Green Road, Thatcham

Dear Ms Nutchey,

Cold Ash Parish Council (CAPC) has reviewed the applicant's revised Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), Issue 08, and associated information submitted in response to concerns raised by the Environment Agency (EA) and Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA).

CAPC recognises that substantial additional work has been undertaken and that some previously identified matters may ultimately be capable of resolution. However, the applicant's response to technical objections cannot itself demonstrate that those objections have been overcome.

CAPC therefore maintains its objection and considers that the following six matters require independent resolution before this application is determined.

1. Environment Agency objection

The EA's latest substantive response remains an objection recommending refusal because the FRA had not adequately demonstrated whether the development would increase flood risk elsewhere. The EA specifically required the detailed modelling files for review.

The revised FRA may provide information intended to address that objection. However, **CAPC asks that the application is not determined while the EA's formal objection remains outstanding and until its review of the detailed modelling has been completed and its revised position formally confirmed.**

2. LLFA objection and independent verification

The LLFA previously identified significant concerns including potential increased flood risk outside the site, internal road flooding, incomplete or inconsistent calculations, ditch and downstream connection issues, breach analysis and long-term drainage performance. It concluded that the evidence was insufficient to demonstrate that the development was safe, sustainable and policy-compliant.

The applicant has now responded to these matters and revised its modelling. This additional work is acknowledged, but applicant responses are not equivalent to independent technical acceptance.

CAPC asks that the LLFA completes its review of the revised FRA and formally confirms whether its previous objections and technical concerns have been satisfactorily addressed before determination.

3. Sequential and Exception Tests

The revised FRA acknowledges areas of the site within Flood Zones 2 and 3, states that the site passes the Sequential Test, but subsequently concludes that a Sequential Test is not required. Its concluding summary additionally states that the site is located in Flood Zone 1.

CAPC considers these statements materially different and asks WBC to reconcile them. WBC should establish clearly whether the Sequential Test has been undertaken and passed or is considered unnecessary, together with the policy and evidential basis for that conclusion. The applicability and satisfaction of the Exception Test should similarly be established where required.

4. Groundwater, aquifer protection and site-specific hydrology

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The applicant's own FRA confirms that the site is underlain by a Secondary A Bedrock Aquifer, is partially underlain by a secondary superficial aquifer, lies within a Groundwater Source Protection Zone, and that the entirety of the site lies within Zone III – Total Catchment.

These designations do not themselves demonstrate groundwater flood risk. However, they are relevant when considered alongside local evidence previously submitted regarding persistent wet areas, apparent groundwater emergence, watercourses originating within the site and water entering the existing basin during prolonged dry conditions.

Against this, the FRA concludes groundwater flood risk is low principally by reference to WBC strategic Groundwater Emergence Mapping. CAPC considers that strategic mapping should be reconciled with the observed behaviour of this specific site.

CAPC also considers that this assessment should address future climate resilience. The site has historically formed part of the wider catchment and groundwater system, and recent periods of prolonged rainfall reinforce the importance of understanding how water is stored, transmitted and discharged through the landscape. Given the intended lifetime of the development and the potential for changing rainfall patterns, the assessment should demonstrate that changes to groundwater recharge, storage and subsurface pathways will not increase or displace flood risk under future conditions, or reduce the resilience of the wider catchment

CAPC therefore asks what site-specific hydrogeological investigation has been undertaken to establish how groundwater moves beneath and through the site, to assess its contribution to groundwater recharge and storage, and to demonstrate how these functions and pathways will be affected by the development over its lifetime, including under appropriate future climate-change scenarios.

Where foundations, earthworks, roads or drainage infrastructure may intercept or alter existing subsurface pathways, the destination and consequences of any displaced groundwater flows should be demonstrated rather than assumed. The assessment should also demonstrate whether the development would alter groundwater recharge or accelerate the discharge of groundwater that would otherwise remain within the groundwater system, and what implications any such change would have for long-term catchment resilience

CAPC also understands from review of the applicant's drawings that seven watercourses are identified within the site, whereas the hydraulic modelling appears to represent only five. **We ask the EA and LLFA to confirm whether this is correct and, if so, whether the exclusion of two identified watercourses is technically justified and has no material effect upon modelled flows, flood extents or flood risk elsewhere.** This is particularly important if, as appears from the submitted material, one of those watercourses lies within a modelled 1-in-30-year flood extent.

5. Existing Flood Alleviation Scheme and claimed betterment

The applicant's own FRA describes the existing Heath Lane Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS) as two linked detention basins, including weir/spillway and downstream conveyance arrangements, and records that alterations have previously been made to facilitate future development access.

CAPC has previously submitted local evidence concerning existing watercourses, marshland, inflow pathways and the cascade/weir arrangements associated with this system. These features form part of the hydrological setting within which the FAS was designed to operate.

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The revised FRA also states that the proposed drainage strategy does not incorporate the nearby Thatcham Flood Alleviation Schemes, while other applicant material claims that the development will provide wider flood-risk "betterment".

CAPC asks whether the post-development performance of the existing FAS has been independently assessed taking account of all proposed changes to its catchment, inflow pathways, watercourses, marshland, cascades/weirs and surrounding land, and whether the complete system will continue to provide at least its existing level of protection.

CAPC further asks whether the EA and LLFA independently accept the claimed betterment and have confirmed that the development will not reduce the capacity, effectiveness or long-term resilience of the existing flood alleviation infrastructure. Demonstrating no increase in flood risk and demonstrating positive betterment are different propositions.

6. Risk of premature determination and long-term consequences

CAPC recognises that the latest submission represents substantial additional work and that some outstanding matters may ultimately be resolved.

However, the consequences of getting these assessments wrong extend beyond the proposed development and beyond the construction period. If assumptions concerning groundwater, displaced subsurface flows, surface-water routing, attenuation, basin performance or interaction with existing flood infrastructure subsequently prove incorrect, the consequences could persist for the lifetime of the development and potentially affect established downstream communities.

Those consequences could include increased or displaced flood risk, additional pressure on existing drainage and flood-management infrastructure, and long-term reliance on drainage and maintenance arrangements whose performance will be critical throughout the life of the development.

Where assessment of present and future flood risk relies upon protection provided by existing flood-alleviation infrastructure, CAPC considers it particularly important that any development affecting its catchment, inflow pathways or underlying hydrological processes is independently demonstrated not to diminish the protection that infrastructure currently provides.

CAPC therefore considers determination premature until the EA and LLFA have completed their reviews of the latest evidence, WBC has established the correct Sequential and Exception Test position, and the outstanding groundwater, groundwater-recharge and flood-alleviation questions have been satisfactorily addressed.

Conclusion

For the avoidance of doubt, Cold Ash Parish Council maintains its objection to planning application 25/00278/FULMAJ.

The July submission is a significant response by the applicant, but it is not itself evidence that the outstanding concerns have been resolved. That assessment requires proper scrutiny by the relevant independent technical consultees and the Local Planning Authority.

Given the potential long-term consequences for both future residents and existing downstream communities, CAPC considers that completing this due diligence, resolving the outstanding technical and policy questions and recording those conclusions before determination is essential.

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Appendix 2 - New West Berkshire Local Plan (WBLP) Scoping Consultation

Overall

The scope and elements of the proposed plan are pretty standard so not too much to comment on there. Our comments, therefore, relate to the focus and sequencing of the plan, and whether there will be real engagement; that is, will the views be taken into account and factored into the plan or rationale for rejection be given.

The cohesiveness of the plan is critical; that is, all the elements need to work together. This has been a stumbling block for the current Local Plan, with lots of elements still outstanding (eg. the NE Thatcham Masterplan and a strategic solution for Transport, Traffic and Travel. The migration from the 'current state' to the 'new state' is also critical. We'd expect there to be several Transition States that are cohesive in their own right. There needs to be clear correlation between the delivery solutions/plans and the strategic outcomes they aim to deliver (ie. the dots need to be joined up).

More detailed comments

- At a strategic level, we support the 'Vibrant Villages' approach. We know that many villages are at risk of becoming isolated and devoid of community facilities (schools, shops/post offices, pubs, cafes, halls) due to the lack of demand. Many wanted c40 new homes in the last planning round but were stymied by the AONB (now National Landscapes) block introduced by the previous administration. Hopefully, the current administration will be more open to what the population of West Berkshire needs and wants.
- We support the aim to develop brownfield sites, before considering green field sites.
- The suggestion that housing targets be met by a 'new settlement', as it would provide services and supporting infrastructure in a controlled way, doesn't hold water. The North-East Thatcham Development, consisting of 2,500 homes, is in effect a new settlement. The Management Plan for it is still ongoing, well beyond the point the plan was made, and there is still no date for when a realistic transport and travel strategy will be in place. This needs to be addressed for both the current and new plan.
- In line with our previous comments, the sequencing of the planning needs to be clear and logical, and needs to include any required management plans and service/infrastructure plans.
- A key focus of the plan should be the Climate Emergency, to ensure that whatever is proposed builds in community resilience (this should also aim to address considerations for the existing communities and services).
- AI needs to be a key consideration; in particular, how it's likely to impact on work and working practices over the lifetime of the plan. We need to build for future needs, rather than building for past requirements.
- Affordable housing that supports young families and critical workers must be a key focus. Also, the requirements of older residents who wish to downsize needs to be catered for (it's important that people can downsize in the area that they've lived).
- WBC needs to show that it takes NDPs seriously. These should be factored into the planning.
- The basis for decision making needs to be clear. There will inevitably be gaps in our knowledge, information and data, on which to build the plan. It's important that the gaps are identified and categorised as things we 'can't know' (eg. how AI will pan out) or 'don't know' (ie. we haven't done the work to assess these). It's important that we have clear assumptions for the things we 'can't know'. The things that we 'don't know' should either be the subject of pre-work (surveys, analysis, etc) or have clear assumptions, where the cost/effort of any work is prohibitive. All assumptions should be tested to ensure they are the most likely outcome.