



Public Document Pack

Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Peter Holt

SUPPLEMENTARY PACK

Cabinet

Date: Thursday, 1st September, 2022

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber - Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden,
CB11 4ER

Chair: Councillor P Lees

Members: Councillors A Coote, M Sutton, A Armstrong, J Evans, R Freeman,
N Hargreaves, L Pepper and N Reeve

ITEMS WITH SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION PART 1

Open to Public and Press

8 Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

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To consider the Independent Examiner's recommended modifications to the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan in full and note the recommendation that the amended Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to a Referendum of voters within the Parish of Ashdon to establish whether the plan should form part of the Development Plan for Uttlesford District Council.

To consider the holding of a referendum relating to the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan and, whether it would include all the registered electors in Ashdon Parish.



Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Peter Holt

For information about this meeting please contact Democratic Services

Telephone: 01799 510369, 510410 or 510548

Email: Committee@uttlesford.gov.uk

General Enquiries

Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 4ER

Telephone: 01799 510510

Fax: 01799 510550

Email: uconnect@uttlesford.gov.uk

Website: www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Agenda Item 8

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 01/09/2022

Title: Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan to Proceed to Referendum

Portfolio Holder: Cllr John Evans

Report Author: Demetria Macdonald
dmacdonald@uttlesford.gov.uk

Key decision: No

Summary

1. The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan has been successful at examination. The Examiner's Report ([Appendix 1](#)) received on 13 July 2022 recommends that the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan proceed to referendum subject to the recommended modifications being made to the Plan. A schedule of the recommended modifications is presented in [Appendix 2](#). The Ashdon Neighbourhood Referendum Plan with modifications is appended at [Appendix 3](#).

Recommendations

2. That Cabinet accepts the Independent Examiner's recommended modifications to the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan in full as set out in the Schedule at Appendix 2 and note the recommendation that the amended Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to a Referendum of voters within the Parish of Ashdon to establish whether the plan should form part of the Development Plan for Uttlesford District Council.
3. That Cabinet approves the holding of a referendum relating to the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan and, that it will include all the registered electors in Ashdon Parish.

Financial Implications

4. Uttlesford District Council has funded the examination cost of £5,060.16. The referendum will initially be funded by Uttlesford District Council. However, after the referendum UDC will be able to claim £20,000 funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities which will cover the cost of both the examination and the referendum.

Background Papers

5. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None

Impact

6.

Communication/Consultation	The plan has undergone significant community involvement in its preparation.
Community Safety	The plan deals with community safety and will have a generally positive effect on residents' health and wellbeing through its objectives and policies.
Equalities	The Plan aims to meet the needs of all residents in the Parish. The Examiner considered this Basic Condition and concluded that the Plan does not breach and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.
Health and Safety	The Plan and policies promote the health and well-being of the residents.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	This matter has been considered by the Examiner and he has considered the Basic Conditions and concludes that the NDP does not breach and is otherwise compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements.
Sustainability	The plan deals with sustainability of the parish and the Examiner has confirmed the sustainability of this Plan.
Ward-specific impacts	Ashdon Parish
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

7. The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan was submitted for examination commencing 01 June 2022 following a six-week consultation period 17 September 2021 to 31 October 2021
8. The examination was conducted via written representations (the examiner decided that a public hearing would not be required).
9. On 6 June 2022 the Examiner issued a Note on Examination Arrangements setting out the basis on which the examination would be undertaken. An Examiner's Clarification Note was issued on 7 June 2022.

10. The Examiner's Report, detailing recommendations was received on 13 July 2022. (See Appendix 1).

11. Ashdon Parish Council and Uttlesford District Council have worked together and agreed on the recommended modifications and produced a modified Draft Ashdon Neighbourhood Referendum Plan (see Appendix 3).

Risk Analysis

12.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>Potential intervention by the Secretary of State under Reg 31A(1) Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regs 2012; this must be requested in writing and with reasons by the Qualifying Body, i.e. Ashdon Parish Council, since the Council has failed to take a decision to send a plan to referendum within 5 weeks of the receipt of the Examiner's Report on 13 July 2022.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p>Based on the current Cabinet submission timetable a decision is likely to be made at the Cabinet Meeting scheduled for 01 September 2022.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>Delay in holding a Referendum and the consequential implications (in particular judicial review from interested parties other than Ashdon Parish Council) regarding the lesser weight thereby attributable to the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan in the context of applications to be determined by the Council and/or Planning Inspectorate.</p>	<p>Ashdon Parish Council agreed in writing 28/07/2022 to an extension of time for the Council to make a Decision by 2/09/2022.</p>

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Ashdon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020-2036

**A report to Uttlesford District Council on the Ashdon
Neighbourhood Development Plan**

**Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
BA (Hons) MA, DMS, MRTPI**

Director – Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited

Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by Uttlesford District Council in April 2022 to carry out the independent examination of the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by way of written representations. I visited the neighbourhood area on 1 June 2022.
- 3 The Plan is an exceptionally good example of a neighbourhood plan. It is beautifully written and presented. It has also been produced in a timely fashion. It includes a variety of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. It adds value to the policies in the adopted Local Plan.
- 4 The Plan has been underpinned by community support and engagement. It is clear that all sections of the community have been engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report, I have concluded that the Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum should be held within the neighbourhood area.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
13 July 2022

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Ashdon Neighbourhood Development Plan 2020-2036 ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan was submitted to Uttlesford District Council (UDC) by Ashdon Parish Council (APC) in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They aim to allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012, 2018, 2019 and 2021. The NPPF continues to be the principal element of national planning policy.
- 1.4 The role of an independent examiner is clearly defined in the legislation. I have been appointed to examine whether or not the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions and Convention Rights and other statutory requirements. It is not within my remit to examine or to propose an alternative plan, or a potentially more sustainable plan except where this arises as a result of my recommended modifications to ensure that the plan meets the basic conditions and the other relevant requirements.
- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan can be narrow or broad in scope. Any plan can include whatever range of policies it sees as appropriate to its designated neighbourhood area. The submitted Plan has been designed to be distinctive in general terms, and to be complementary to the development plan in particular. It seeks to provide a context in which the neighbourhood area can maintain its attractive character and appearance.
- 1.6 Within the context set out above, this report assesses whether the Plan is legally compliant and meets the basic conditions that apply to neighbourhood plans. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends changes to its policies and supporting text.
- 1.7 This report also provides a recommendation as to whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. If this is the case and that referendum results in a positive outcome the Plan would then be used to determine planning applications within the neighbourhood area and will sit as part of the wider development plan.

2 The Role of the Independent Examiner

- 2.1 The examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the relevant legislative and procedural requirements.
- 2.2 I was appointed by UDC, with the consent of APC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both UDC and APC. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.
- 2.3 I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I am a Director of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited. In previous roles, I have over 35 years' experience in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level. I am a chartered town planner and have significant experience of undertaking other neighbourhood plan examinations and health checks. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral System.

Examination Outcomes

- 2.4 In my role as the independent examiner of the Plan I am required to recommend one of the following outcomes of the examination:
- (a) that the Plan as submitted should proceed to a referendum; or
 - (b) that the Plan should proceed to referendum as modified (based on my recommendations); or
 - (c) that the Plan does not proceed to referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 2.5 The outcome of the examination is set out in Section 8 of this report.

Other examination matters

- 2.6 In examining the Plan I am required to check whether:
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area; and
 - the Plan meets the requirements of Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Plan must specify the period to which it has effect, must not include provision about development that is excluded development, and must not relate to more than one neighbourhood area); and
 - the Plan has been prepared for an area that has been designated under Section 61G of the Localism Act and has been developed and submitted for examination by a qualifying body.
- 2.7 Having addressed the matters identified in paragraph 2.6 of this report I am satisfied that all of the points have been met.

3 Procedural Matters

3.1 In undertaking this examination I have considered the following documents:

- the submitted Plan.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Consultation Statement.
- the SEA/HRA Screening report.
- the Design Code.
- the Housing Needs Survey.
- the Assessment of Important Views.
- the Character Assessment.
- the Local Green Spaces Assessment.
- the Landscape Appraisal.
- the representations made to the Plan.
- APC's responses to the clarification note.
- the adopted Uttlesford Local Plan 2005.
- the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021).
- Planning Practice Guidance.
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 1 June 2022. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular.

3.3 It is a general rule that neighbourhood plan examinations should be held by written representations only. Having considered all the information before me, including the representations made to the submitted plan, I concluded that the Plan could be examined by way of written representations. I was assisted in this process by the comprehensive nature of the representations and the professional way in which the Plan has been developed.

4 Consultation

Consultation Process

- 4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such the regulations require neighbourhood plans to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, APC prepared a Consultation Statement. It is proportionate to the neighbourhood area and its policies. It is a very good example of a document of this type. In particular, it sets out its key findings in a concise report which is underpinned by a series of more detailed tables and appendices.
- 4.3 The Statement records the various activities which were held to engage the local community and the feedback from each event. It also provides specific details on the consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (September to October 2021). It provides the details of the responses to that version of the Plan in Appendix 7. This analysis contributes significantly to the legibility of the relevant information and helps to describe how the Plan has progressed to the submission stage (as set out in Appendix 8 of the Statement).
- 4.4 The Statement sets out details of the range of consultation events that were carried out in relation to the initial stages of the Plan. They included:
- the stall at the Church open day (September 2019);
 - the publicity about the Plan at the Safari Supper (September 2019);
 - the launch event (October 2019);
 - the survey of schools, community spaces and local businesses (October 2019 to 2020);
 - the focus group meetings (March 2020);
 - the questionnaire delivered to every house in the parish (Winter 2020/21); and
 - the ongoing use of the dedicated website, the Parish Council's website and Facebook to raise and maintain awareness about the Plan.
- 4.5 It is clear that consultation has been an important element of the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation. From all the evidence provided to me as part of the examination, I can see that the Plan has promoted an inclusive approach to seeking the opinions of all concerned throughout the process. UDC has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

Consultation Responses

- 4.6 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by UDC. It ended on 30 May 2022. This exercise generated representations from the following organisations:

- Essex County Council
- Natural England
- National Highways
- Saffron Walden Town Council
- National Grid
- UDC
- Historic England
- Bidwell and Son
- Essex Bridleways Association

4.7 I have taken account of all the representations in preparing this report. Where it is appropriate to do so, I refer to specific representations in the assessment of the Plan against the basic conditions.

5 The Neighbourhood Area and the Development Plan Context

The Neighbourhood Area

- 5.1 The neighbourhood area is the parish of Ashdon. Its population in 2011 was 893 persons living in 373 households. The parish is located in the north-west corner of Essex, closely bordered by the counties of Cambridgeshire to the north and Suffolk to the east. Ashdon is located about four miles to the northeast of Saffron Walden. The parish was designated as a neighbourhood area on 1 May 2019.
- 5.2 The built part of the parish is made up of several historic settlements in a rural landscape setting. The settlement is concentrated in Ashdon village core and in Church End. There are also a series of historic 'Ends' some of which have been incorporated into the Ashdon village core (Rogers End and Holden End) and some of which retain their distinct identity – Water End, Steventon End and Knox End. Throughout the Parish there are several historic sunken lanes, some adjoining Ashdon village core (Kates Lane, Rectory Lane and Dorvis Lane), one adjoining the Church End settlement (Fallowden Lane) and some further afield (Puddlewharf Lane and New House Lane). There are also scattered farmsteads and other dwellings on the main road into the Parish from Saffron Walden (the Walden Road).
- 5.3 The remainder of the parish is attractive open countryside. The wider landscape is influenced by the topography which consists of rounded hills and slopes and steep in places where the River Bourne has incised the valley over time. Ashdon village and Water End are located on the steeper valley sides along the River Bourne. Holden End and Rogers End are located in a wide valley floor with gentle valley sides.

Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The development plan for the neighbourhood area is affected by the current progress which UDC is making in pursuing an up-to-date local plan. The adopted plan is the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005. In April 2021 UDC decided to withdraw the draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2019. UDC is now working to deliver a new Local Plan by summer 2024.
- 5.5 The Basic Conditions Statement helpfully lists the strategic policies of the 2005 Local Plan and identifies the extent to which policies in the submitted neighbourhood plan relate to those policies. This is a good way of identifying the extent to which APC has responded to the existing development plan in preparing its own Plan. The following policies in the Local Plan have been particularly important in underpinning the policies in the submitted Plan:

- S3 Other Development Limits
- S7 The Countryside
- GEN2 Design
- GEN7 Good Neighbourliness
- GEN7 Nature Conservation
- ENV1 Development within Conservation Areas
- H3 New houses within development limits

- 5.6 Plainly the dated nature of the development plan and the withdrawal of the emerging 2019 Local Plan has created specific challenges for APC in preparing a neighbourhood plan. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that it has taken a practical approach to this issue. In particular, it has taken care to ensure that the Plan has regard to the most recent version of the NPPF (2021).
- 5.7 Within this wider context I am satisfied that the submitted Plan seeks to add value to the development plan in general terms and to give a local dimension to the delivery of its policies. This is captured in the Basic Conditions Statement.
- 5.8 In the round, the Plan has been carefully prepared to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan and to provide distinctive parish-based policies to complement the established strategic approach.

Visit to the neighbourhood area

- 5.9 I visited the neighbourhood area on 1 June 2022. I approached it from the north via the A1307 and Bartlow. This helped me to understand its position in the wider landscape in general, and its accessibility to the strategic road network in particular.
- 5.10 I spent time in each of the separate built up parts of the parish. As part of the visit, I spent particular time looking at the following elements of the Plan:
- the proposed important views;
 - the proposed local green spaces; and
 - the conservation areas.

6 The Neighbourhood Plan and the Basic Conditions

- 6.1 This section of the report deals with the submitted neighbourhood plan as a whole and the extent to which it meets the basic conditions. The submitted Basic Conditions Statement has helped in the preparation of this section of the report. It is an informative and well-presented document.
- 6.2 As part of this process I must consider whether the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. To comply with the basic conditions, the Plan must:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in the area;
 - be compatible European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); and
 - not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

I assess the Plan against the basic conditions under the following headings.

National Planning Policies and Guidance

- 6.3 For the purposes of this examination the key elements of national policy relating to planning matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF).
- 6.4 The NPPF sets out a range of land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are of particular relevance to the Ashdon Neighbourhood Development Plan:
- a plan-led system - in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005);
 - building a strong, competitive economy;
 - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving local communities;
 - taking account of the different roles and characters of different areas;
 - highlighting the importance of high-quality design and good standards of amenity for all future occupants of land and buildings; and
 - conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.
- 6.5 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally, and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 13 of the NPPF indicates that neighbourhoods should both develop plans that support the strategic needs set out in local plans and plan positively to support local development that is outside the strategic elements of the development plan.

- 6.6 In addition to the NPPF, I have also taken account of other elements of national planning policy including Planning Practice Guidance and the recent ministerial statements.
- 6.7 Having considered all the evidence and representations available as part of the examination, I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance subject to the recommended modifications in this report. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the neighbourhood area. It includes a series of policies that address a range of development and environmental matters. It proposes the designation of a series of local green spaces and a package of policies to safeguard the character and appearance of the built and the natural environment of the parish. The Basic Conditions Statement maps the policies in the Plan against the appropriate sections of the NPPF.
- 6.8 At a more practical level, the NPPF indicates that plans should provide a clear framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made and that they should give a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a development proposal (paragraph 16d). This was reinforced with the publication of Planning Practice Guidance. Paragraph ID:41-041-20140306 indicates that policies in neighbourhood plans should be drafted with sufficient clarity so that a decision-maker can apply them consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. Policies should also be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.
- 6.9 As submitted, the Plan does not fully accord with this range of practical issues. The majority of my recommended modifications in Section 7 relate to matters of clarity and precision. They are designed to ensure that the Plan fully accords with national policy.

Contributing to sustainable development

- 6.10 There are clear overlaps between national policy and the contribution that the submitted Plan makes to achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development has three principal dimensions – economic, social and environmental. It is clear that the submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. In the economic dimension, the Plan sets out a spatial strategy (Policy ASH1) and includes a policy for farm diversification (Policy ASH16). In the social role, it includes a policy on village services and facilities (Policy ASH12) and on housing mix (Policy ASH2). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built and historic environment. It has policies on landscape character (Policy ASH4), settlement gaps (Policy ASH5), the conservation areas (Policy ASH6) and design (Policy ASH7). This assessment overlaps with the details on this matter in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan

- 6.11 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in the wider Uttlesford District in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.

- 6.12 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context and supplements the detail already included in the adopted development plan. Subject to the recommended modifications in this report, I am satisfied that the submitted Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 6.13 The Neighbourhood Plan General Regulations 2015 require a qualifying body either to submit an environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 or a statement of reasons why an environmental report is not required. In order to comply with this requirement, UDC/APC undertook a screening exercise on the need or otherwise for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be prepared for the Plan.
- 6.14 The resulting report (January 2022) is thorough and well-constructed. It concludes that it will be unlikely that any significant environmental effects will arise from the implementation of the Plan. It reaches this conclusion given that the key thrust of the Plan is focused on protecting historic assets and landscape quality. In addition, it acknowledges that the Plan does not make site allocations but supports development within and adjacent to development limits and in the countryside in line with Local Plan and NPPF policies.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 6.15 The screening exercise also undertook a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan. It concludes that the submitted Plan is unlikely to have significant effects on a European site. The report is very thorough and comprehensive. In particular, it assesses the likely effects of the implementation of the policies in the Plan on protected sites within or in close proximity to the neighbourhood area as follows:
- Eversden and Wimpole Woods Special Area of Conservation (19.6 km away); and
 - Devil's Dyke Special Area of Conservation (26.3km away).
- 6.16 The HRA concludes that the neighbourhood plan will not give rise to likely significant effects on European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and that Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- 6.17 Having reviewed the information provided to me as part of the examination, I am satisfied that a proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. None of the statutory consultees have raised any concerns with regard to either neighbourhood plan or to European obligations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of European obligations (as now transposed into national legislation).

Human Rights

- 6.18 In a similar fashion I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and that it complies with the Human Rights Act. There is no

evidence that has been submitted to me to suggest otherwise. There has been full and adequate opportunity for all interested parties to take part in the preparation of the Plan and to make their comments known. On this basis, I conclude that the submitted Plan does not breach, nor is in any way incompatible with the ECHR

Summary

- 6.19 On the basis of my assessment of the Plan in this section of my report, I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions subject to the incorporation of the recommended modifications contained in this report.

7 The Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 7.1 This section of the report comments on the policies in the Plan. In particular, it makes a series of recommended modifications to ensure that the various policies have the necessary precision to meet the basic conditions.
- 7.2 My recommendations focus on the policies themselves given that the basic conditions relate primarily to this aspect of neighbourhood plans. In some cases, I have also recommended changes to the associated supporting text.
- 7.3 I am satisfied that the content and the form of the Plan is fit for purpose. It is distinctive and proportionate to the neighbourhood area. The wider community and APC have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in their Plan. This sits at the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (Section 41-004-20190509) which indicates that neighbourhood plans must address the development and use of land. A series of Community Actions supplement the land use policies.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted Plan.
- 7.6 For clarity, this section of the report comments on all policies whether or not I have recommended modifications in order to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.7 Where modifications are recommended to policies they are highlighted in bold print. Any associated or free-standing changes to the text of the Plan are set out in italic print.

The initial parts of the Plan (Sections 1 to 5)

- 7.8 The Plan as a whole is very well-organised and presented. It is supported by a series of excellent photographs. It is clear that the Plan has been prepared with much attention to detail and local pride. It makes an appropriate distinction between the policies and their supporting text. The combination of the supporting text in the Plan, and the various supporting documents provide an extensive range of information to justify the approach taken in the policies. In summary it is a first-class example of a neighbourhood plan. If it is eventually made, it will comfortably sit within the wider development plan context.
- 7.9 The initial elements of the Plan set the scene for the policies. They are proportionate to the neighbourhood area and the subsequent policies. The Introduction is well-considered. In particular it identifies the way in which a neighbourhood plan empowers a local community on planning matters. The table in paragraph 1.8 very clearly summarises the key milestones in the plan preparation process in the parish.
- 7.10 Paragraph 1.6 properly identifies the neighbourhood area (Map 1). Whilst the front cover of the Plan provides details about the Plan period, it would be appropriate if it was also captured in the text of the Plan

At the end of paragraph 1.6 add: 'The Plan period is 2020 to 2036'

- 7.11 Section 2 provides information about the neighbourhood area and its history. It provides interesting and comprehensive details which help to set the scene for the eventual policies. Map 2 is particularly informative in the way in which it sets out a contour profile for the parish.
- 7.12 Section 3 comments about the key issues which have been addressed in the Plan. They include:
- Housing;
 - Community and Community Spaces and Facilities;
 - Traffic and Sustainable Transport; and
 - Flooding.
- 7.13 Section 4 sets out the broader planning policy context within which the Plan has been prepared. It comments about both national policy (the NPPF) and local policy.
- 7.14 Section 5 sets out a SWOT analysis for the parish. This analysis then translates into the vision, and objectives for the Plan. It makes a strong functional relationship between these various matters. The vision for the Plan is:
- ‘Over the Plan period Ashdon will evolve whilst retaining and enhancing its natural and historic rural environment and continue to be inhabited by a vibrant sustainable community’*
- 7.15 The remainder of this section of the report addresses each policy in turn in the context set out in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.7 of this report.

Policy ASH1 Spatial Strategy

- 7.16 This policy sets out a spatial strategy for the parish. It establishes development limits to identify the extent of land needed to meet the development requirements of the parish. Development outside the development limits will only be supported where it meets national and local planning policies.
- 7.17 The policy will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development by concentrating new development where it is most closely related to the economic and community facilities in the parish. The development limits are identified in a sensitive way and reflect the existing concentrations of built development in the parish. The policy meets the basic conditions.

Policy ASH2 Housing Mix

- 7.18 This policy comments that housing development must contribute to meeting the existing and future needs of the village. It adds that a mix in the size and type of housing is desired, and should take account of the 2015 West Essex and Herts Strategic Housing Market Assessment needs for Uttlesford or any later published data. The current Assessment seeks a majority of 2- and 3-bedroom homes.
- 7.19 The policy is underpinned by data and is non-prescriptive in its nature. It will contribute towards delivering the social dimension of sustainable development. It meets the basic conditions.

Policy ASH3 Affordable housing on rural exception sites

- 7.20 Section 7 of the Plan comments about affordability issues in the parish and APC's wish to allow people to secure access to local housing. This detail translates into a bespoke policy about affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites.
- 7.21 The policy comments that proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes, including entry level homes for purchase and starter homes (as defined by paragraph 72 of the NPPF) on rural exception sites outside the Development Limits will be supported where there is a proven local need. Other elements of the policy provide more practical guidance on how it would be applied in the development management process.
- 7.22 I am satisfied that the policy takes an appropriate approach to this important matter. In particular it takes a balanced approach towards the demonstration of need and provides a degree of flexibility for market housing to be included in such proposals where such an approach is required to ensure that affordable housing schemes are commercially viable.
- 7.23 I recommend a detailed modification to the wording in the penultimate paragraph of the policy so that the wording used is consistent throughout the policy. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the delivery of the social dimension of sustainable development.

In the penultimate paragraph of the policy replace 'permitted' with 'supported'

Policy ASH4 Protecting Ashdon's Landscape Character

- 7.24 This policy seeks to ensure that development proposals take account of the close functional and physical relationship between the wider landscape and built development. The Assessment of Important Views identifies important views in the parish. They consist of important views from public vantage points, either within the built-up area or into or out of the surrounding countryside. They are appropriately identified on the Policies Map.
- 7.25 The policy comments that proposals must demonstrate how the landscape characteristics of the site and its vicinity have been considered in preparing development proposals. It also comments that proposed development should not detract from and look to enhance the key landscape and built development features of those views as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan Assessment of Important Views document. The policy also makes an appropriate distinction between the impact of development on views both within and outside the defined Development Limits.
- 7.26 The policy captures the nature of the landscape in the parish in a detailed and sensitive fashion. The Assessment of Important Views is an excellent document in its own right and provides a healthy evidence base to the approach taken in the policy. I looked at several of the views during the visit and their importance was self-evident. The views from the Windmill (View 25) were well-worth the exercise involved in the walk from the village.

- 7.27 I recommend a modification to the title of the policy so that it more fully captures the detailed approach taken. Otherwise, it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the delivery of the environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development.

Replace the title of the policy with: 'Protecting Ashdon's Landscape Setting and Important Views'

Policy ASH5 Settlement Gaps

- 7.28 The Plan identifies a series of settlement gaps. They are proposed in the Plan in order to retain the separation between the various elements of built development in the parish (and known locally as Ends). They are shown on the Policies Map.
- 7.29 The policy comments that development proposals should demonstrate how they would not result in the erosion of the identified settlement gaps.
- 7.30 In general terms, I am satisfied that the policy takes an appropriate approach to this matter. The different elements of the built parts of the parish are clear and distinctive. In addition, they reflect the wider character of the parish and the retention of the gaps will be an important element of the planning of the village within the Plan period. However, I recommend that the policy is reconfigured so that it more clearly defines the settlement gaps and then sets out a policy to ensure that development proposals have regard to their scale and nature. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the delivery of the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

Replace the policy with:

'The Plan identifies settlement gaps which separate the distinct settlements (the Ends). They are shown on the Policies Map.

Development proposals shall, where appropriate, demonstrate how they would safeguard the settlement gaps and not cause their erosion.'

Policy ASH6 Conservation Areas

- 7.31 This policy sets out a comprehensive approach towards development proposals which may affect the two conservation areas in the parish (Ashdon and Church End). It makes a healthy link with the Ashdon Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals (2013). The policy has two related parts. The first comments generally about development proposals in the two conservation areas. It includes five distinctive criteria with which development proposals are expected to comply. The second relates to proposals relating to the demolition of non-listed buildings in the conservation areas.
- 7.32 The policy takes a very positive approach to this issue. I am satisfied that it has regard to national policy. I recommend a detailed modification to the wording used in the penultimate paragraph of the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the delivery of the environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development.

In the penultimate paragraph of the policy replace ‘will be expected to’ with ‘should’

Policy ASH7 Design Considerations

- 7.33 This policy sets out the Plan’s approach to design. It takes a distinctive approach and is underpinned by the work undertaken on the Ashdon Design Code.
- 7.34 The policy has two related elements. The first comments that proposals for new development must reflect the local characteristics and circumstances and create and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment. The second comments that planning applications should demonstrate how they satisfy the requirements of the design principles in the Ashdon Design Code, as appropriate to the proposal. The policy also includes a series of specific considerations which must be met by development proposals.
- 7.35 The policy is an excellent local response to Section 12 of the NPPF. The local community has developed a detailed and distinctive approach to design.
- 7.36 I am satisfied that the criteria are distinctive to the parish. I recommend a modification to the wording of the part of the policy which addresses this matter so that it can be applied in a proportionate way. Plainly not all of the criteria will be relevant to every development proposal. I also recommend detailed modifications to some of the criteria to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the delivery of the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

Replace ‘In addition, proposals will be supported where’ with ‘In addition, and as appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals will be supported where’

In b delete ‘and where appropriate enhancement’

In f delete ‘as appropriate’

Policy ASH8 Light Pollution

- 7.37 This policy celebrates the dark skies environment of the parish and the positive feedback on this aspect of local life from residents.
- 7.38 The policy comments that any future outdoor lighting systems should have a minimum impact on the environment, minimising light pollution and adverse effects on wildlife, subject to highway safety, the needs of particular individuals or groups, and security. It also comments that development proposals should reduce the consumption of energy by promoting efficient outdoor lighting technologies, keeping the night-time skies dark and reducing glare.
- 7.39 I recommend that the first sentence of the policy is deleted and repositioned into the supporting text. This will make a better distinction between the wider policy and its supporting text. This approach takes account of APC’s response to the clarification

note. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the delivery of the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

Delete the first sentence of the policy

Reposition the deleted first sentence of the policy to the end of penultimate sentence of paragraph 8.32

Policy ASH9 Flood Risk

- 7.40 The policy addresses flood risks in the village. As the Plan comments, there is a long history of flooding in Ashdon, mainly associated with the River Bourne as it flows through the village. Flood Zones 2 and 3 run through the centre of Ashdon. The Plan comments that the topography of the river valley is such that surface water run-off and ground water saturation run directly into the watercourse in the base of the valley. There are numerous springs, some running all year and others flowing as the water table rises.
- 7.41 The policy itself has two principal parts. The first comments that proposals for new development, or the intensification of existing development, in Flood Zones 2 and 3 should be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment and will not be permitted, unless the applicant has satisfied the safety requirements in the Flood Risk National Planning Policy Guidance (and any successor). The second comments that proposals for all new development will be required to submit schemes appropriate to the scale of the proposal detailing how on-site drainage and water resources will be managed so as not to cause or exacerbate surface water and fluvial flooding elsewhere. The policy also comments that proposals should, as appropriate, include the use of above-ground open sustainable drainage systems.
- 7.42 The policy takes a proportionate approach to this matter. It is properly underpinned by the Uttlesford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2016. In general terms I am satisfied that the policy has regard to national policy. However, I recommend that some elements of the policy are relocated to the supporting text. This will ensure a better relationship between the policy itself and the explanation about the details required for planning applications and how the policy would be used on a day-to-day basis. Otherwise, it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the delivery of the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

In the first paragraph delete ‘These include.... sewer flooding’

Delete the second paragraph

At the end of paragraph 9.5 add:

‘Policy ASH9 addresses these important matters. It comments that development proposals will not be permitted, unless the applicant has satisfied the safety requirements in the Flood Risk National Planning Policy Guidance (and any successor). These include the ‘sequential test’; where needed the ‘exception test’ and also a site-specific flood risk assessment that addresses the characteristics of flooding and has tested an appropriate range of flood event scenarios (taking climate change

into consideration). This should address as a minimum: finished floor levels; safe access and egress; an emergency flood plan; identification and provision of surface water exceedance routes; flood resilience/resistance measures; any increase in built or surfaced area; and any impact on flooding elsewhere, including sewer flooding. In a more general sense development proposals should exhibit the three main principles of flood risk, in that, they should be safe, resilient and should not increase flood risk elsewhere.'

Policy ASH10 Biodiversity and Habitats

- 7.43 This policy celebrates the rich biodiversity in the parish. It is helpfully described in Section 9 and shown on Map 14.
- 7.44 The policy sets out a comprehensive approach to biodiversity and habitats. Its overall approach is that development proposals should avoid the loss of, or substantial harm to, important trees, hedgerows, wildlife corridors and other natural features including the chalk stream and ponds. It includes detailed commentary about mitigation and improvements to biodiversity which will secure a measurable net gain as part of the wider design of the development proposal.
- 7.45 The policy is a first-class local response to national policy on this matter. I recommend a detailed modification to the third paragraph of the policy to bring the clarity needed by the NPPF. Otherwise, it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the delivery of the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

In the third paragraph of the policy replace 'It is expected that the mitigation proposals will form' with 'Mitigation proposals should form'

Policy ASH11 Chalk Streams Protection

- 7.46 This policy comments about the chalk streams (the River Bourne and its tributaries) in the parish. It is a very specific policy which has been designed to safeguard a distinctive and important feature of the parish.
- 7.47 The policy comments that proposals that would result in additional surface water run-off into the chalk streams will not be supported unless accompanied by a watercourse and surface water drainage appraisal and commensurate measures which will avoid and mitigate contamination of the watercourse.
- 7.48 I am satisfied that the policy is both appropriate and distinctive to the parish. I recommend a detailed modification to ensure that there is a difference between the approach towards the avoidance of any contamination to the watercourse and any mitigation which may be required as an outcome of the drainage appraisal. Otherwise, it meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the delivery of the environmental dimension of sustainable development.

Replace 'which will avoid and mitigate contamination of the watercourse' with 'which will avoid and/or mitigate contamination of the watercourse'

Policy ASH12 Village Services and Protection

- 7.49 This policy celebrates the various village services. I saw their significance during the visit to the parish.
- 7.50 The policy has two related parts. The first part comments that proposals that would result in the loss of services and facilities (or premises last used for such purposes) and which support the local community will only be permitted where they meet a series of criteria. It takes account of changing circumstances and viability considerations. The second part comments that proposals for the enhancement of the existing services and facilities will generally be supported subject to there being no significant adverse impact on the natural and historic environment, infrastructure and the amenity of residents.
- 7.51 I am satisfied that the policy is appropriate and distinctive to the parish. In particular, the first part acknowledges that circumstances may change within the Plan period both generally and in relation to the viability of community facilities in particular. I recommend two modifications to the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. The first ensures that the two elements of the policy use the same language. The second deletes the unnecessary use of 'generally' in the second part of the policy. In any event that part of the policy identifies a series of considerations which would be assessed in determining proposals for the enhancement of existing community facilities. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute towards the delivery of the social dimension of sustainable development.

In the first part of the policy replace 'permitted' with 'supported'

In the second part of the policy delete 'generally'

Policy ASH13 Local Green Spaces

- 7.52 This policy proposes the designation of a series of local green spaces (LGSs). They are shown on the Policies Map. The proposed LGSs reflect the character and the nature of the parish and the way in which green spaces form important parts of the local environment. In most cases, they are either traditional open recreation areas or incidental green spaces within the built-up elements of the parish. The policy is underpinned by the excellent Local Green Spaces Assessment Report.
- 7.53 The supporting text comments about the tests in the NPPF for the designation of LGSs. The LGS Assessment Report provides detailed commentary on the way in which APC considers that the various proposed LGSs meet the criteria for such designation in the NPPF. I looked at the proposed LGSs when I visited the neighbourhood area.
- 7.54 A detailed representation was received to the proposed designation of Donkey Field as a LGS by Bidwell and Son. It is a field in agricultural use in the southern part of Ashdon village. A footpath runs through the proposed LGS. The representation comments that the field is in private ownership and its current use as a meadow is part of a DEFRA Countryside Agreement which runs until January 2026.

- 7.55 I looked carefully at this proposed LGS during the visit. I saw the attractive way in which it sat between Church Hill and Radwinter Road and provided an open and attractive green space on the edge of the village. I also saw the use of the attractive footpath.
- 7.56 I have taken account of the representation by Bidwell and Son. However, I am satisfied that the proposed LGS has been appropriately identified and designated. In particular Planning Practice Guidance comments that LGSs can be in private ownership (ID: 37-019-20140306) and that the designation of land as LGS neither places any obligations on the owner concerned (ID: 37-020-20140306) nor requires that their management is altered (ID: 37-021-20140306).
- 7.57 On the basis of all the information available to me, including my own observations, I am satisfied that the proposed LGSs comply with the three tests in the NPPF. In several cases they are precisely the types of green spaces which the authors of the NPPF would have had in mind in preparing national policy.
- 7.58 In addition, I am satisfied that their proposed designation would accord with the more general elements of paragraph 101 of the NPPF. Firstly, I am satisfied that their designation is consistent with the local planning of sustainable development. They do not otherwise prevent sustainable development coming forward in the neighbourhood area and no such development has been promoted or suggested. Secondly, I am satisfied that the LGSs are capable of enduring beyond the end of the Plan period. Indeed, they are an established element of the local environment and, in most cases, have existed in their current format for many years. In addition, no evidence was brought forward during the examination that would suggest that the proposed local green spaces would not endure beyond the end of the Plan period.
- 7.59 The policy lists the proposed LGSs. The national policy implications of LGS designation are set out in paragraph 10.11 of the supporting text of the Plan. I have considered this approach carefully. On the one hand, the approach towards proposed development in LGS is now well-established. On the other hand, it is important that every neighbourhood plan is self-contained in terms of its policies. As such, I recommend a modification so that the policy directly explains the policy implications of LGS designation and in doing so takes the matter-of-fact approach in the NPPF.
- 7.60 I also recommend that the supporting text is expanded so that it sets out the way in which development proposals affecting the designated LGSs would be assessed on a case-by-case basis by UDC. In particular UDC will be able to make an informed judgement on the extent to which the proposal concerned demonstrates the 'very special circumstances' required by the policy.
- 7.61 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will do much to contribute to the delivery of the environmental and the social dimensions of sustainable development. In many cases the proposed LGS help to define the character of the neighbourhood area.

**Insert an additional paragraph at the end of the policy to read:
‘Development proposals within the designated local green spaces will only be supported in very special circumstances’**

At the end of paragraph 10.11 add: ‘Policy ASH13 follows the matter-of-fact approach in the NPPF. In the event that development proposals come forward on the local green spaces within the Plan period, they can be assessed on a case-by-case basis by Uttlesford District Council. In particular, it will be able to make an informed judgement on the extent to which the proposal concerned demonstrates the ‘very special circumstances’ required by the policy’

Policy ASH14 Public Rights of Way

- 7.62 This policy sets out to safeguard and, where practicable, to enhance the rights of way network in the parish. I saw the importance of the existing network during the visit in general, and the recreational opportunities which it provided in particular.
- 7.63 The policy itself has two related parts. The first comments that any new development on or adjacent to an existing Public Right of Way or which is clearly visible from a Public Right of Way must consider the appearance of the proposal from the Right of Way and incorporate green landscaping to reduce any visual impacts. The second comments that enhancements or extensions to the network, for example through improving accessibility or connectivity, will be supported and may be required where a scheme is likely to increase usage.
- 7.64 I am satisfied that the approach taken in the policy is appropriate to the parish. The importance of the footpath network is self-evident. I have taken account of UDC’s comment on the policy and APC’s response on this matter in the clarification note. On the balance of the evidence, I recommend that the first part of the policy is modified so that it requires that any landscaping responds to the specific relationship between the development itself and the right of way concerned. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will do much to contribute to the delivery of the environmental and the social dimensions of sustainable development.

In the first part of the policy replace ‘and incorporate green landscaping to reduce any visual impacts’ with ‘and, as appropriate to the relationship between the development and the Public Right of Way, incorporate green landscaping to reduce any visual impacts’

Policy ASH15 Protected Lanes

- 7.65 The policy takes account of protected lanes in the parish. Their scale and nature are described in the supporting text (Section 11).
- 7.66 The policy comments that proposals that would have an adverse environmental impact upon protected lanes including eroding their character will not be supported. It also comments that proposals which would give rise to a material increase in the amount of traffic using the protected lanes will not be permitted.

- 7.67 I am satisfied that the approach taken in the policy is appropriate. It reflects the rural character of the parish. I recommend a detailed modification to the policy so that the wording used is internally consistent. Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will do much to contribute to the delivery of the environmental and the social dimensions of sustainable development.

In the final sentence replace ‘permitted’ with ‘supported’

Policy ASH16 Farm Diversification

- 7.68 This policy seeks to allow the diversification of farms and farm buildings. It comments that proposals for new business development in redundant farm buildings will be supported where the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on residential amenity, heritage assets and the highways network.
- 7.69 The policy has regards to national planning policy (Section 6 of the NPPF). It meets the basic conditions.

Community Aspirations

- 7.70 The Plan includes a series of Community Aspirations. They are non-land use issues which have naturally arisen as the Plan was prepared.
- 7.71 National policy indicates that such matters should be incorporated within a separate section of the Plan so that they are clearly distinguished from the land use policies. In this case, they are included within the thematic parts of the Plan.
- 7.72 I have considered this matter very carefully. On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that the approach taken is appropriate. I have reached this view for three related reasons. The first is that the approach taken generates a natural flow and structure both for the Plan and for the lay reader. The second is that the Aspirations generally supplement the approach taken where there is an associated land use policy. The third is that the Aspirations are shown in different coloured boxes to the policies.
- 7.73 I am satisfied that the Aspirations are both appropriate and distinctive to the parish. The following are particularly noteworthy:
- CA3 – Verge Management
 - CA7 – Village Shop
 - CA8 – Reopening the pub
 - CA12 – Increase the protection of Lanes

Other Matters – General

- 7.74 This report has recommended a series of modifications both to the policies and to the supporting text in the submitted Plan. Where consequential changes to the text are required directly as a result of the recommended modification to the policy concerned, I have highlighted them in this report. However other changes to the general text may be required elsewhere in the Plan as a result of the recommended modifications to the policies. Similarly, changes may be necessary to paragraph numbers in the Plan or to accommodate other administrative matters. It will be appropriate for UDC and APC to

have the flexibility to make any necessary consequential changes to the general text. I recommend accordingly.

Modification of general text (where necessary) to achieve consistency with the modified policies and to accommodate any administrative and technical changes.

Other Matters – Specific

- 7.75 Essex County Council has made a series of helpful comments on the Plan. APC has also helpfully provided its responses to the comments.
- 7.76 The incorporation of the matters raised by the County Council into the Plan would extend its coverage to good effect. Nevertheless, the matters raised are not necessary to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. Neighbourhood plan legislation has given considerable flexibility to qualifying bodies to include the issues which they see fit to feature in their plans. As such it is beyond my remit to recommend modifications to the Plan so that it is expanded beyond the scope as chosen by APC.

8 Summary and Conclusions

Summary

- 8.1 The Plan sets out a range of policies to guide and direct development proposals in the period up to 2036. It is distinctive in addressing a specific set of issues that have been identified and refined by the wider community to safeguard the character and setting of the neighbourhood area.
- 8.2 Following the examination of the Plan, I have concluded that the Ashdon Neighbourhood Development Plan meets the basic conditions for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan subject to a series of recommended modifications.

Conclusion

- 8.3 On the basis of the findings in this report, I recommend to Uttlesford District Council that subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report the Ashdon Neighbourhood Development Plan should proceed to referendum.

Other Matters

- 8.4 I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the neighbourhood area. In my view, the neighbourhood area is entirely appropriate for this purpose and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the neighbourhood area as approved by Uttlesford District Council on 1 May 2019.
- 8.5 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth manner.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
13 July 2022

APPENDIX 2 : Schedule of Examiner's Recommendations

Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan

DOCUMENT PAGE/POLICY	EXAMINER'S RECOMMENDATION	EXAMINER'S REASON/S	OFFICER RECOMMENDATION AND REASON
Ashdon NP Page 6: Para 1.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the end of paragraph 1.6 add: 'The Plan period is 2020 to 2036' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst the front cover of the Plan provides details about the Plan period, it would be appropriate if it was also captured in the text of the Plan 	<p style="text-align: center;">Agree</p> <p>Insertion of plan period in text reinforces requirement to provide a clear plan period as required in the Regulations.</p>
Ashdon NP: page 25: Policy ASH1 Spatial Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No comment because policy meets Basic Conditions, and no modifications are rerecommended. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy meets the basic conditions. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Agree</p> <p>No modifications required because policy as worded meets Basic Conditions</p>
Ashdon NP: page 28: Policy ASH2 Policy Housing Mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It meets the basic conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy is underpinned by data and is non-prescriptive in its nature. It will contribute towards delivering the social dimension of sustainable development. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Agree</p> <p>Policy is underpinned by appropriate evidence and contributes the social element of sustainability thereby meeting Basic Conditions.</p>
Ashdon NP: page 31 Policy ASH3 Affordable Housing on rural exception sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the penultimate paragraph of the policy replace 'permitted' with 'supported' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I recommend a detailed modification to the wording in the penultimate paragraph of the policy. so that the wording used is consistent throughout the policy. Otherwise, the 	<p style="text-align: center;">Agree</p> <p>Modification ensures that the Policy is provides sufficient clarity in accordance with NPPG Paragraph 41-041-20140306.</p>

		policy meets the basic conditions.	
Ashdon NP: page 37 POLICY ASH4 - PROTECTING ASHDON'S LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Replace the title of the policy with: 'Protecting Ashdon's Landscape Setting and Important Views'</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend a modification to the title of the policy so that it more fully captures the detailed approach taken. Otherwise, it meets the basic conditions. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Agree</p> <p>The recommended modification is a more accurate reflection of the aim of the policy which is to protect functional and physical relationship between the wider landscape and built environment.</p>
Ashdon NP: page 38 POLICY ASH5 - SETTLEMENT GAPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace the policy with: 'The Plan identifies settlement gaps which separate the distinct settlements (the Ends). They are shown on the Policies Map. Development proposals shall, where appropriate, demonstrate how they would safeguard the settlement gaps and not cause their erosion.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend that the policy is reconfigured so that it more clearly defines the settlement gaps and then sets out a policy to ensure that development proposals have regard to their scale and nature. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Agree</p> <p>Recommended modification ensures sufficient clarity as per the requirements of NPPG Paragraph 41-041-20140306.</p>
Ashdon NP: page 41 POLICY ASH6 – CONSERVATION AREAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the penultimate paragraph of the policy replace 'will be expected to' with 'should' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I recommend a detailed modification to the wording used in the penultimate paragraph of the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Agree</p> <p>Recommended modification ensures sufficient clarity as required by NPPG Paragraph 41-041-20140306.</p>

<p>Ashdon NP: page 45 POLICY ASH7 – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace ‘In addition, proposals will be supported where’ with ‘In addition, and as appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals will be supported where’ <p>In b delete ‘and where appropriate enhancement’</p> <p>In f delete ‘as appropriate’</p>	<p>I recommend a modification to the wording of the part of the policy which addresses this matter so that it can be applied in a proportionate way. Plainly not all of the criteria will be relevant to every development proposal.</p> <p>I also recommend detailed modifications to some of the criteria to bring the clarity required by the NPPF.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Recommended modification ensures sufficient clarity as per the requirements by NPPG Paragraph 41-041-20140306.</p>
<p>Ashdon NP: page 46 POLICY ASH8 - LIGHT POLLUTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delete the first sentence of the policy <p><i>Reposition the deleted first sentence of the policy to the end of penultimate sentence of paragraph 8.32</i></p>	<p>I recommend that the first sentence of the policy is deleted and repositioned into the supporting text. This will make a better distinction between the wider policy and its supporting text.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Recommended insertion into supporting text ensures that the policy is clearly expressed and evidenced as required by NPPG Paragraph 41-041-20140306.</p>
<p>Ashdon NP: page 48 POLICY ASH9 – FLOOD RISK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the first paragraph delete ‘These include.... sewer flooding’ • Delete the second paragraph 	<p>I recommend that some elements of the policy are relocated to the supporting text. This will ensure a better relationship between the policy itself and the explanation about the details required for planning applications and how the policy would be used on a day-to-day basis.</p>	<p>Agree</p> <p>Recommended modification ensures that the policy has sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications.</p>

	<p><i>At the end of paragraph 9.5 add: ‘Policy ASH9 addresses these important matters. It comments that development proposals will not be permitted, unless the applicant has satisfied the safety requirements in the Flood Risk National Planning Policy Guidance (and any successor). These include the ‘sequential test’; where needed the ‘exception test’ and also a site-specific flood risk assessment that addresses the characteristics of flooding and has tested an appropriate range of flood event scenarios (taking climate change into consideration). This should address as a minimum: finished floor levels; safe access and egress; an emergency flood plan; identification and provision of surface water exceedance routes; flood resilience/resistance measures; any increase in built or surfaced area; and any impact on flooding elsewhere, including sewer flooding. In a more general sense development proposals should exhibit the three main principles of flood risk, in that, they should be safe, resilient and should not increase flood risk elsewhere.’</i></p>		
<p>Ashdon NP: page 52 POLICY ASH10 – BIODIVERSITY and HABITATS</p>	<p>In the third paragraph of the policy replace ‘It is expected that the mitigation proposals will form’ with ‘Mitigation proposals should form’</p>	<p>I recommend a detailed modification to the third paragraph of the policy to bring the clarity needed by the NPPF.</p>	<p>Agree Modification to policy provides sufficient clarity to ensure that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with</p>

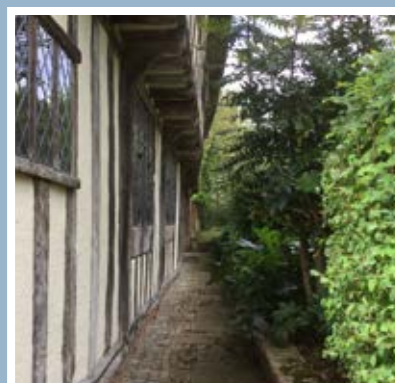
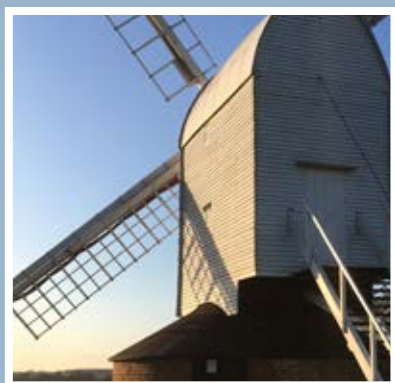
			confidence when determining planning applications.
Ashdon NP: page 53 POLICY ASH11 – CHALK STREAMS PROTECTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace ‘which will avoid and mitigate contamination of the watercourse’ with ‘which will avoid and/or mitigate contamination of the watercourse’ 	I recommend a detailed modification to ensure that there is a difference between the approach towards the avoidance of any contamination to the watercourse and any mitigation which may be required as an outcome of the drainage appraisal. Otherwise, it meets the basic conditions.	Agree Modification provides clarity and flexibility to the policy to ensure that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications.
Ashdon NP: page 56 POLICY ASH12 – VILLAGE SERVICES and FACILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the first part of the policy replace ‘permitted’ with ‘supported’ • In the second part of the policy delete ‘generally’ 	<p>I recommend two modifications to the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF.</p> <p>The first ensures that the two elements of the policy use the same language.</p> <p>The second deletes the unnecessary use of ‘generally’ in the second part of the policy.</p>	Agree Modification provides clarity and flexibility to the policy to ensure that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications..
Ashdon NP: page 57 POLICY ASH 13 – LOCAL GREEN SPACES	Insert an additional paragraph at the end of the policy to read: ‘Development proposals within the designated local green spaces will only be supported in very special circumstances’	I recommend a modification so that the policy directly explains the policy implications of LGS designation and in doing so	Agree Modification to provides clarity and flexibility to the policy as required by NPPG Paragraph 41-041-20140306.

	<p><i>At the end of paragraph 10.11 add: ‘Policy ASH13 follows the matter-of-fact approach in the NPPF. In the event that development proposals come forward on the local green spaces within the Plan period, they can be assessed on a case-by-case basis by Uttlesford District Council. In particular, it will be able to make an informed judgement on the extent to which the proposal concerned demonstrates the ‘very special circumstances’ required by the policy’</i></p>	<p>takes the matter-of-fact approach in the NPPF.</p> <p>I also recommend that the supporting text is expanded so that it sets out the way in which development proposals affecting the designated LGSs would be assessed on a case-by-case basis by UDC. In particular UDC will be able to make an informed judgement on the extent to which the proposal concerned demonstrates the ‘very special circumstances’ required by the policy.</p>	<p>Addition to supporting text provides sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications.</p>
<p>Ashdon NP: page 60 POLICY ASH 14 – PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY</p>	<p>In the first part of the policy replace ‘and incorporate green landscaping to reduce any visual impacts’ with ‘and, as appropriate to the relationship between the development and the Public Right of Way, incorporate green landscaping to reduce any visual impacts’</p>	<p>I recommend that the first part of the policy is modified so that it requires that any landscaping responds to the specific relationship between the development itself and the right of way concerned.</p>	<p>Agree Modification to provides clarity to the policy renders the policy wording clear and unambiguous as required by NPPG Paragraph 41-041-20140306.</p>

<p>Ashdon NP: page 61 POLICY ASH 15 – PROTECTED LANES</p>	<p>In the final sentence replace ‘permitted’ with ‘supported’</p>	<p>I recommend a detailed modification to the policy so that the wording used is internally consistent.</p>	<p>Agree Modification provides clarity to the policy ensuring that, “a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications”. (NPPG Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 41-041-20140306).</p>
<p>Ashdon NP: page 63 POLICY ASH 16 – FARM DIVERSIFICATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy has regards to national planning policy (Section 6 of the NPPF). 	<p>It meets the basic conditions.</p>	<p>Agree Policy meets basic conditions and no modification required.</p>

Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036

Referendum Plan



Ashdon Parish Council
July 2022




**ASHDON
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**



Ashdon Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group supported by Modicum Planning and Places4People Planning

ASHDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Referendum Neighbourhood Plan - July 2022

The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan was commissioned by the Parish Council in 2019, who then created a separate Steering Group to project manage and facilitate the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan for Ashdon.

The Steering Group comprised one Parish Council member and five local residents. It has received professional planning support from Modicum Planning and Places4People Planning Consultancy.

Funding was provided by the Parish Council, Uttlesford District Council and Locality Grant funding.

Invaluable guidance on drafting the Plan was provided by Rachel Hogger (Modicum Planning) working with Uttlesford District Council and Ian Poole (Places4People) who critically reviewed our draft plan and helped us to finalise the Plan and guide us through the final consultation process.

Advice and feedback were provided by Planning Policy Officers at Uttlesford District Council.

The Ashdon Landscape Appraisal was undertaken by Alison Farmer of Alison Farmer Associates. The Housing Needs Assessment was conducted by the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE). The Ashdon Design Code was produced in conjunction with BEAMS Limited building on the invaluable work done by our army of Streetscape volunteers.

On behalf of the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group we thank all who have contributed to bringing this plan to fruition not least the community of Ashdon for participation in the creation of this important document for the Parish.

Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

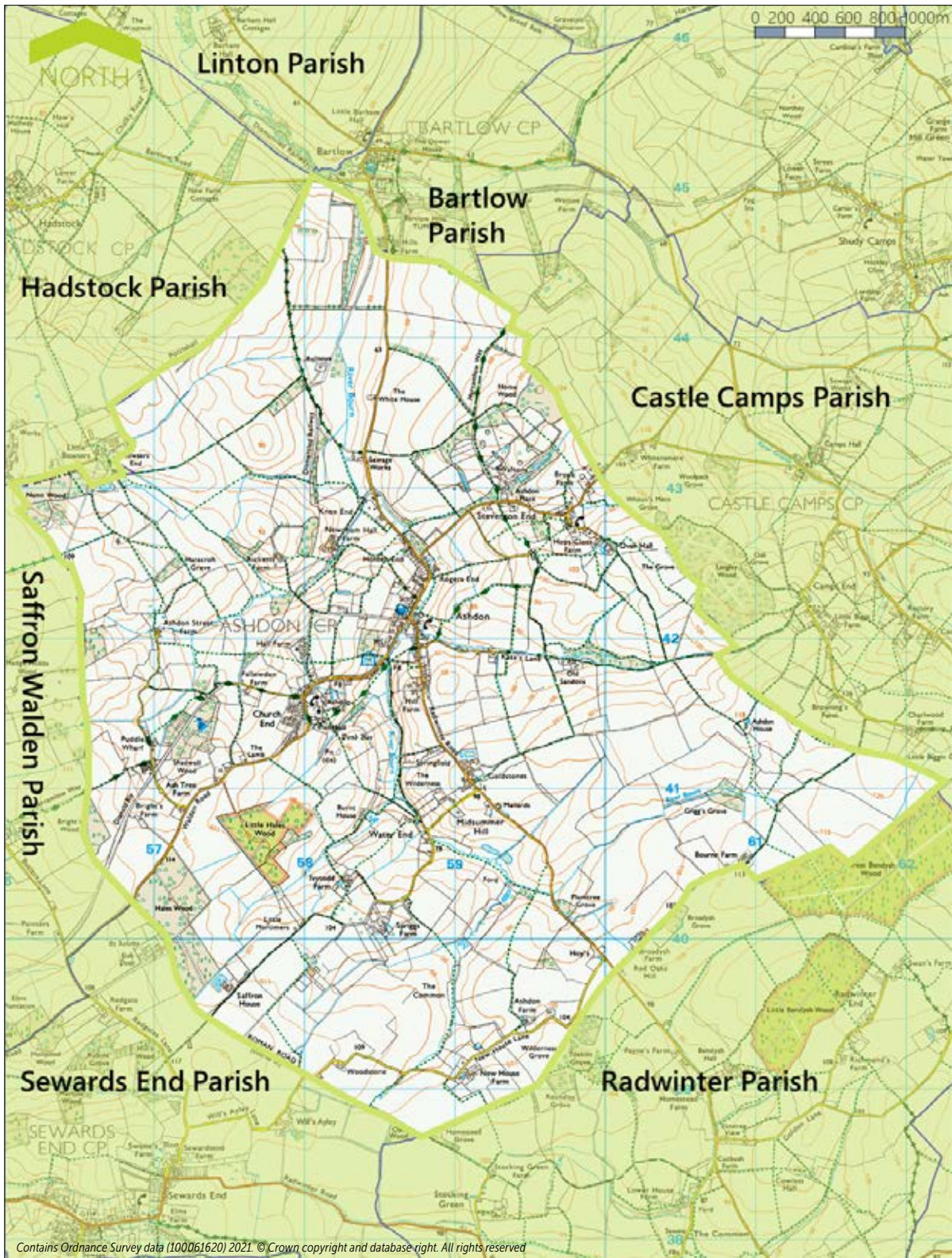


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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans, which establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in the neighbourhood. These Plans, when properly “made”, become part of the legal planning framework for the designated area.
- 1.2** A Neighbourhood Plan is, therefore, a community-led planning framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. It is about the use and development of land and contains a vision statement, aims, planning policies, proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, or allocation of key sites for specific kinds of development.
- 1.3** Town and Parish Councils are encouraged to produce their own Neighbourhood Plans enabling local people to have a say as to how their neighbourhood grows and develops. In a designated Neighbourhood Plan Area, which contains all or part of the administrative area of a town or parish council, that council is responsible for the preparation of the Plan. Neighbourhood Plans cannot contradict the main government planning policies or the strategic policies in the Local Plan for the area. For example, they cannot propose less development than is planned for in the adopted Local Plan.
- 1.4** A Neighbourhood Plan for Ashdon:
- gives us the opportunity to provide an Ashdon-specific context to inform Uttlesford’s planning decisions;
 - becomes even more important in informing planning decisions;
 - provides the opportunity for the local community to decide where housing should be built.
- 1.5** Taking on board what we heard from the first consultation with residents, Ashdon community:
- wants a say in what any new housing should look like and how it fits into our historic and natural environment;
 - has its own housing needs to address;
 - wants to ensure sufficient village services and amenities remain to support our community;
 - wants to protect what our community values most about our Parish;
 - wants our children and grandchildren to inherit what we enjoy today!
- 1.6** In 2019 the Parish Council made the decision to produce a Neighbourhood Plan and a small group of volunteers was formed to prepare it. On 1 May 2019 the Neighbourhood Plan Area, following the Parish boundary, was designated by Uttlesford District Council. The area is illustrated on **Map 1**. The Plan period is 2020 to 2036.



Map 1 - The Neighbourhood Plan Area

Community Engagement

- 1.7 During the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan we used lots of different ways to engage and stay engaged with our community, even during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-21. As well as our comprehensive website, we:
- held public consultation events;
 - carried out resident surveys;
 - held streetscape training and walkabouts;
 - had a stall at All Saints Church open day and the village Safari Supper event;
 - published quarterly articles in the village magazine;
 - created a Facebook group;
 - distributed door-to-door fliers;
 - published posters and banners;
 - invited adjacent Parish Councils to our consultations, and;
 - made phone calls with local groups.

A separate Consultation Statement identifying the details of the engagement we've undertaken and how it's shaped the Plan has been published as part of the submission of the Plan to Uttlesford District Council.

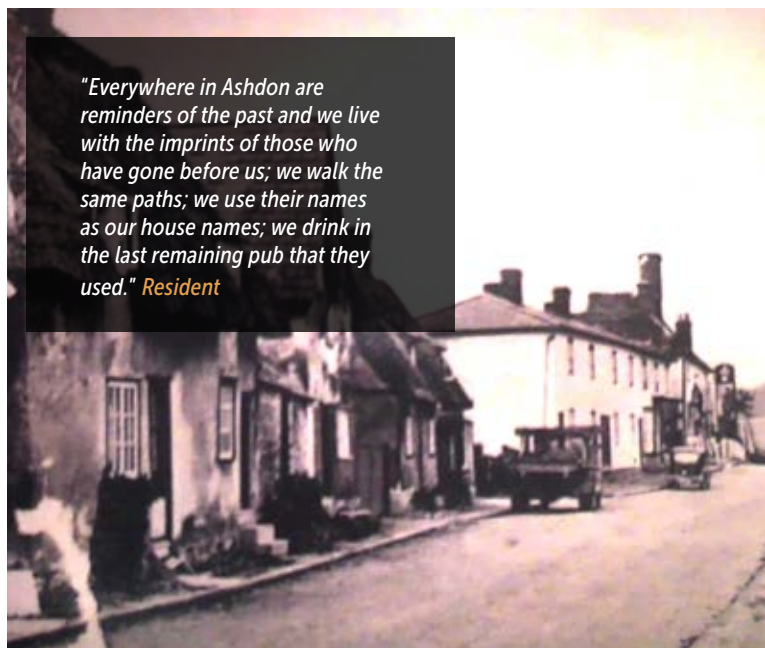
- 1.8 The key milestones of our process are summarised in the table below:



2. ASHDON PAST AND PRESENT

Ashdon past

- 2.1 The name Ashdon probably derives from the original words meaning 'hill overgrown with ash trees'. *"An ancient landscape with subtle qualities. Wide views from open roads on high plateau contrasts with the enclosed nature of wooded areas in valley bottoms."* Chris Blandford, Landscape Assessment of Uttlesford District 2006.
- 2.2 Ascenduna (Ashdon) has an entry in the Domesday Book as a manor held by Ailid. In 1016 it was the probable site of the Battle of Assandun, fought between Canute and Edward Ironside, arguably a more important battle than the Battle of Hastings fifty years later. In the meadow below All Saints Church are the buried remains of the medieval village, which was relocated further down the river valley and out into the Ends when the Plague decimated the population.
- 2.3 Ashdon was primarily an agricultural village, self-contained with services and crafts that were supported by the land and its workers. Ashdon Railway Halt was opened in 1911 along Fallowden Lane at Church End, some distance from the main village. The line was closed in December 1964 and thereafter quickly dismantled.
- 2.4 The village was at the forefront of social housing and has four developments, Carters Croft bungalows, Tredgetts, Churchfields and All Saints Close. In all 47 affordable homes for those with local connections have been built in the village for rental or shared ownership, a proud record for a small village.
- 2.5 There have been several books written about Ashdon, 'Annals of Ashdon' by Robert Gibson, 'Ashdon' by Angela Green, Spike May's 'Reuben's Corner' and 'Five Miles From Bunkum', a no-holds-barred account of the village from the viewpoint of a lad growing up here in the first half of the last century, in a time now lost.



"Everywhere in Ashdon are reminders of the past and we live with the imprints of those who have gone before us; we walk the same paths; we use their names as our house names; we drink in the last remaining pub that they used." Resident



Ashdon present

2.6 To understand Ashdon Parish is to understand its topography and hydrology. Ashdon has a very close relationship between built form, topography and watercourses which form a distinctive setting to its built-form. Ashdon is a small rural community set in rolling open countryside tucked into the north-west corner of Essex, closely bordered by the counties of South Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. The Parish covers 21 square kilometres of mainly agricultural land.

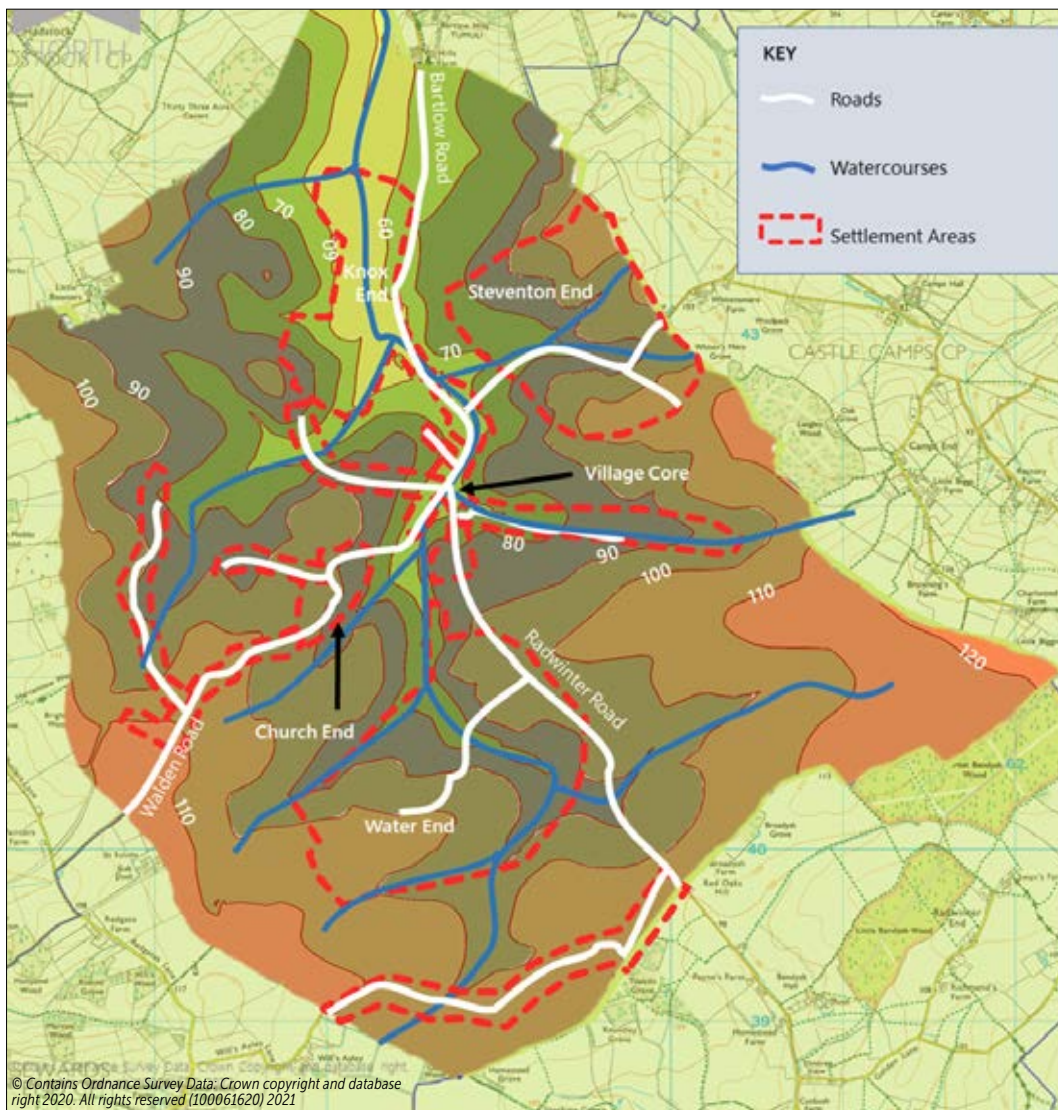
2.7 Ashdon is remarkably hilly for Essex. Ashdon village is folded into a river valley and the main settlement is strung out along the River Bourne with outlying settlements or Ends and scattered farms reflecting its agricultural heritage. With the steep valley sides, there are issues with flooding from the River Bourne and

surface water run-off, exacerbated in recent years by extreme weather events due to climate change. The network of springs in the Parish can also cause localised groundwater flooding issues.

2.8 As the main village drops towards the river, the tree screening is very apparent with housing hidden in the valley. The major historic landmarks of All Saints Church and the Windmill sit proud on high ground and can be clearly viewed from many locations in the Parish. The topographical map (**Map 2**) shows the location of Ashdon in the valley of the River Bourne. The locations of the 'Ends', the lanes of the village, and the watercourses, are all shown.



Ashdon Museum (set up and run by voluntary enthusiasts) contains a valued local collection that provides a fascinating representation of Ashdon's crucial agricultural and social history. Further social history is represented by the remains of Ashdon Halt on the former route of the railway from Saffron Walden to Bartlow found at the end of Fallowden Lane, and the presence of up to six pubs in the village (now only one recently reopened).



Map 2 - Contour Profile of the Parish

Settlement form and character

2.9 Ashdon Parish has a rich built heritage. It has two Conservation Areas, 66 listed buildings and Uttlesford District Council has designated five local heritage assets. Of the listed buildings, 21 are to be found in the two Conservation Areas of which about a third have thatched roofs. Whilst the village is still surrounded by agricultural land, it is now owned by fewer farmers, who care for and look after the countryside. There has been organic growth over the centuries.

2.10 The historic landscape features include a number of ancient woodlands, copses and coverts. Ashdon Parish has about 64 hectares of ancient woodland and three Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)- Hales and Shadwell Wood, Nunn Wood and Ashdon Meadows (locally known as Ryelands and located in Water End). There are green wildlife corridors that feed right into the middle of the village which is



surrounded by ancient hedges and trees. The oak tree at Ashdon Hall is reputed to have been spared felling when timber was needed to build the roof at King’s College Chapel in Cambridge.

2.11 The views from the valley tops are far-reaching with wide East Anglian skies and “*the horizon joins the sky in a rare state of freedom.*” Green spaces are treasured such as the Donkey Field in the middle of the village and the grassed area at Guildhall Way, where the children play on summer evenings. Footpaths and bridleways are a key feature with 63km of Public Rights of Way and by-ways. They provide a much-welcomed source of rural recreation for residents of the Parish and beyond.

The residents of Ashdon

2.12 The most recent estimate of Ashdon’s population was 929 in mid-2019, a 4% increase over that recorded at the time of the 2011 Census. The age breakdown of residents compared with Uttlesford District is illustrated in Figure 1.

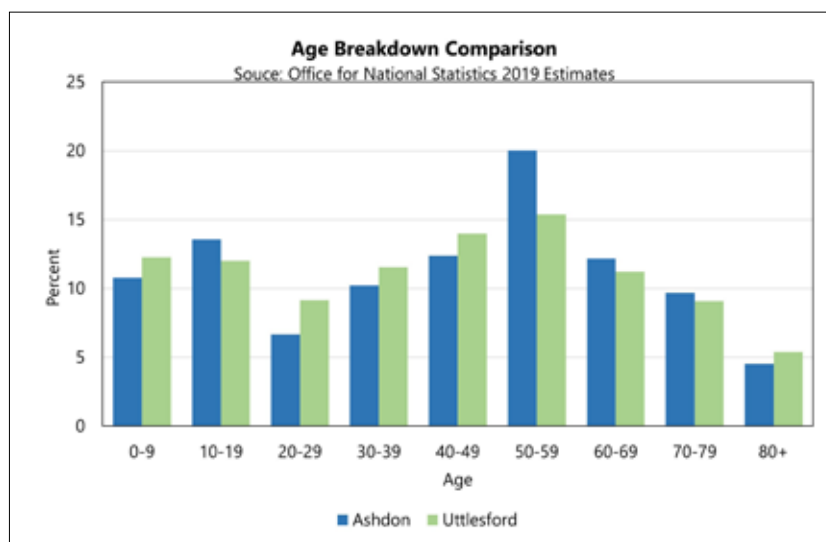


Figure 1 - 2019 Age Breakdown Comparison

2.13 The housing tenure of the Parish, compared with Uttlesford and Essex, based on the now dated 2011 Census, is illustrated in Figure 2. It demonstrates a lower proportion of homes in Ashdon are owner-occupied when compared with the District and County.

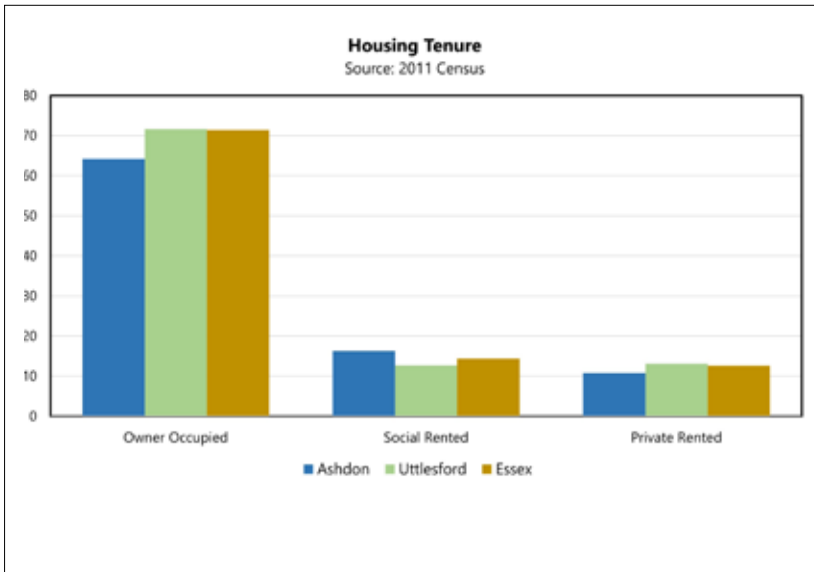


Figure 2 - 2011 Housing Tenure Comparison

Community and services

- 2.14 Community spirit is still strong in Ashdon and there are many clubs and societies. Village events such as Open Gardens, the Safari Supper, amateur dramatics and the Fun Run are very popular and well attended.
- 2.15 The village is fortunate to have the Ashdon primary school for 4-11 year olds, and the village hall and the village museum, although the village shop has now gone and the last pub in the village (the Rose and Crown) has recently reopened. All Saints Church and the Baptist Church provide important pastoral care to the community. Marpa House, a Buddhist retreat and meditation centre is valued by the community. The play areas and allotments are important village facilities.
- 2.16 There is an excellent plant nursery - Beeches- in the village which is popular with gardeners far and wide.
- 2.17 The nearest towns are Saffron Walden (5 miles), Linton (4.3 miles) and Haverhill (9 miles) for access to doctors' surgeries, libraries, banks, and shops etc.

Employment

- 2.18 Various businesses are run in redundant farm buildings and the old National School building; others work from home or outdoors such as farmers and agricultural workers, tree surgeons and landscape gardeners.

Transport

- 2.19 Ashdon is relatively rurally isolated with a virtually non-existent bus service so residents are effectively 100% dependent on the car for transport to access necessary facilities. The nearest train station is Audley End, just over 5.5 miles distant. Ashdon is suffering from the increase in magnitude and speed of traffic in recent years.
- 2.20 The Parish is unfortunately overflowed by aircraft from Stansted Airport, day and night, and this causes noise nuisance and pollution. The residents have been acutely aware of the difference during the Covid pandemic, the skies and the views are clear, they can hear the birds and the river is running sparkling clean.



3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 The key issues facing Ashdon Parish have been identified from the first public consultation with the Ashdon community in October 2019 and from the documentary evidence collated by the community. It is these key issues which form the themes and the basis of the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.

3.2 Some of the priorities identified as important for residents are not actually achievable through land-based planning policies or are not directly within the remit of the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan. Ashdon Parish Council, with the help of the community, aims to address these wider priorities as free-standing projects, separate to but informed by the Neighbourhood Plan. These are highlighted as Community Aspirations under each theme in the Plan.

Key issues highlighted from the October 2019 consultation

3.3 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's aim throughout has been to be merely facilitators and enablers in making the Plan 100% community led. Therefore, everything has been built on the comments, views, concerns and wishes of everyone who has participated in the process.

3.4 At the first consultation event in the village hall in October 2019, residents were asked what they liked about Ashdon, what they disliked and what they would like to change. The following themes were highlighted by the Community:

Natural and Historic Environment

- retaining the rural character of Ashdon with its historic landscape and buildings and unique hilly landscape and openness of the village;
- the extensive network of footpaths and bridleways are well used and highly valued;
- the footpaths and bridleways, along with the clean air and great views, contribute greatly to the health and wellbeing of the community;

- policies to protect biodiversity and reduce the impact of global warming are important to the community.

The distinctiveness of Ashdon can be protected by:

- paying particular attention to views to and from Ashdon Parish settlements and footpaths,
- ensuring that the Development Limits of settlements are respected,
- preserving the distinctiveness of the Ends,
- protecting the rural lanes,
- preserving and enhancing green corridors which lead into the centre of settlements,
- preserving and enhancing the open spaces in the centre of settlements.



"Growing up in Ashdon I loved the open fields and rural spaces. I particularly loved the Donkey Field in the middle of the village where I remember playing with other kids in the village when it snowed. Overall, however, the most amazing part of Ashdon was the amazing rural views that give the village character and made it an amazing place to live." Resident

Housing

We identified:

- a need for small housing units to enable young people to stay in Ashdon;
- a need for affordable housing units for single-person households and growing families;
- a need for bungalows or adaptable housing units to allow older residents to downsize from family homes;
- a desire to ensure that new housing and extensions are in keeping with their setting;
- a need for tree and hedgerow screening and use of traditional materials;
- a need to improve on safe pedestrian connectivity between Church End and Ashdon village core;
- a desire for low impact/sustainable development.



Community and Community Spaces and Facilities

We identified:

- the loss of village facilities in recent years, most notably the closures of the village shop and the Rose and Crown, the last remaining pub (now reopened!);
- the need to encourage young families to the village was expressed in the support for the village primary school, a key part of the local community;
- the loss of some outdoor sports clubs;
- the need for possible increased capacity at the village hall in the future as the village grows;
- strong support for the village allotments and the adjoining meadow area to be used as community space.



Traffic and Sustainable Transport

We identified:

- the need to address the increased volume and speed of traffic in Ashdon village core and Church End.
- Ashdon being used increasingly as a 'rat-run' for traffic to and from Haverhill, Stansted Airport, Cambridge and Saffron Walden.
- heavy lorries are increasingly using the unsuitable small rural roads which result in erosion and damage to the verges and sunken historic lanes.
- pedestrian safety is a key issue on some of the busier roads where pavements are lacking and speeding drivers are putting pedestrian lives at risk.
- even where pavements are in place some are in poor repair due to traffic mounting the pavement to pass traffic coming in the opposite direction.
- parking is highlighted as an issue, particularly around the school at school drop off/pick-up times with the resulting implications for pedestrian safety and traffic congestion.
- the extensive footpath network is valued as a key asset for the community for recreational and well-being purposes.
- in wetter months this footpath network is impractical as a means of getting around the village for any purpose other than recreation.
- very limited bus service to or from the village making it effectively 100% car dependent for access to facilities.
- a cycle path to Saffron Walden was suggested as a possible means of reducing the carbon footprint, although a suitable route would need to be found and this may be problematic.
- the provision of more local employment opportunities could help to reduce the carbon footprint of the residents, although due to the rural nature of Ashdon Parish, this would not have a significant impact.



Flooding Issues

We identified:

- the River Bourne makes the village of Ashdon vulnerable to flooding;
- unfortunately, this river floods more frequently than would be expected for a river of this size and this is often exacerbated by surface water flooding;
- networks of springs in the area also lead to localised groundwater flooding even on the top of hills;
- it is important that any new developments should not exacerbate flooding issues;
- desire for the Ashdon Flood Group to be re-established (now back up and running!) and more active river management undertaken, and for flooding to be viewed in the context of global warming.



Further work undertaken to build on key issues raised at the first consultation

3.5 In response to the issues raised at the first consultation, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group commissioned several key pieces of work to gather more information to inform the appropriate direction of the Plan. Though our findings are dealt with in more detail in the relevant sections of the Plan, an overview is given in **Table 1**.

Table 1 - Neighbourhood Plan evidence summary

Key Piece of Evidence	Purpose of the Work	Key Findings
Housing Needs Survey (Rural Community Council of Essex)	To establish present and future housing needs of householders with connections to the Parish.	<p>41% response rate (147 households):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for a small development (4-8 homes) of affordable housing prioritised for local people; • support dropped considerably for development of purely open market properties with comments around sustainability especially with regard to poor public transport and local facilities; • concerns around development not respecting local vernacular and environment; • acknowledgement that some new housing could support sustainability of primary school.
Ashdon Landscape Appraisal (Alison Farmer Associates)	To provide a robust evidence base to support the development of policy within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. To assess the sensitivity and capacity of the Parish to accommodate housing/ employment development. To provide a robust understanding of the character and qualities of the Parish to enable sound judgements as to the sensitivity and capacity of land to accommodate housing/ employment development. To provide guidance on opportunities for landscape enhancement and green infrastructure which collectively help shape a vision for the Parish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the settlements within the Ashdon Parish have limited capacity to accommodate housing development; • a number of sites may be able to accommodate appropriately designed housing; • due to the area's special qualities, appropriate development is most likely to comprise small scale schemes rather than a single larger development; • employment opportunities are limited. There may be some scope for live/work units associated with redundant farm buildings at Church End or possibly within the wider Parish; • any employment development of this kind would need to carefully consider the visibility of development from the wider landscape and indirect characterising effects on rural lanes as a result of access and traffic.

Key Piece of Evidence	Purpose of the Work	Key Findings
<p>Ashdon Character Assessments (Streetscape assessment volunteer working party) (including village walkabouts)</p>	<p>To describe the distinctive character of Ashdon and those aspects of its built and natural environment that the community most value. It focuses on the built environment of Ashdon.</p> <p>To inform good design in the Parish and to inform the emerging Neighbourhood Plan by describing the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development.</p> <p>Identification / recording of the key features that combine to give the built area of the Parish its local distinctiveness and unique identity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the special environment of the Parish, both natural and built, are rated highly by residents; the public views are extremely highly valued; only a few eyesores and negatives were recorded.
<p>Ashdon Footpath Survey (Hugh V Feldman - Ashdon resident)</p>	<p>To provide a comprehensive description of the extensive network of footpaths, bridleways and byways which make up the 64km of Public Rights of Way in the Parish.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unique historical network of Public Rights of Way enjoyed by the Ashdon residents and the wider community; a natural green space environment essential for outdoor recreation and well-being.
<p>Second Community Consultation Questionnaire</p>	<p>Following cancellation of the second face-to-face consultation due to the Covid pandemic, this questionnaire checked if the community's views from the first consultation had been interpreted correctly, gathered views on how our lives have changed in the pandemic and sought clarification on the draft Neighbourhood Plan Vision and Objectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 166 questionnaires were returned; 98% of residents agreed with the draft Vision with very strong support for all the draft objectives too.
<p>Various group specific surveys- School, community facilities and business</p>	<p>To gather further specific information on issues identified at the first consultation.</p>	<p>Additional detail gathered which has informed planning policy and/or community actions.</p>

Key Piece of Evidence	Purpose of the Work	Key Findings
Ashdon Design Code (with Beams Limited)	To build on the detailed results of the Character Assessments to help planners, architects and developers respond to the policy context of this Neighbourhood Plan. This will enable them to put forward designs appropriate to the natural and historic environment setting of Ashdon Parish.	A proactive planning tool providing detailed design guidance based on the Neighbourhood Plan Vision for Ashdon and thus the aspirations of the Ashdon community.
Flooding in the Parish of Ashdon (The Ashdon Flood Group)	To summarise topography features, flood events, current and proposed mitigation measures, and District and National flooding guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashdon is prone to flooding • fluvial, surface and groundwater flooding more frequent in recent years; • extreme weather events more common increasing frequency of flooding; • amelioration measures proposed to reduce flooding incidents.

3.6 In addition to evidence-based work driven by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, other existing technical evidence is also relevant in terms of informing the direction of the Plan including:

- Ashdon Conservation Appraisal, Uttlesford District Council, 2013
- Uttlesford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Final Report, JBA Consulting 2016
- Flood Mapping Study of River Bourne in Ashdon, JBA Consulting for Uttlesford District Council, 2018.
- Local Wildlife Site Review, Uttlesford District Council, 2007



4. CONTEXT FROM NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in the context of the content of the July 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Plan documents relevant to Ashdon. The Plan must be appropriate having regard to national policy and be in broad conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan. The paragraphs below identify how these are relevant to the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's high-level planning policies which must be considered in the preparation of development plan documents and when deciding planning applications. In July 2021, the Government published a Revised NPPF. The Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

4.3 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that 'plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development' but that this presumption does not hold if the adverse impact demonstrably outweighs the benefits of any development.

4.4 The NPPF requires that communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans: -

- should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and
- should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.

The Local Plan

4.5 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in the context of the current status of the Uttlesford Local Plan. At the time of preparation, the adopted 'local plan document' for the Neighbourhood Plan Area is the 2005 Uttlesford Local Plan. Although significantly out-of-date it does, together with the more recent NPPF, provide the starting point for considering planning applications across the District. It contains policies relating to the location of development and protection of environmental features.

4.6 The draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2019 was withdrawn in April 2020 following its rejection by the Government Inspectorate. In March 2020, the government announced that all authorities will be required to have up-to-date Local Plans in place by December 2023. Uttlesford District Council has commenced the preparation of a new Local Plan which will cover the period to 2040. An Issues and Options consultation took place between November 2020 and April 2021. Consultation on the draft Plan is anticipated in Spring 2022 followed by the final draft a year later. The Neighbourhood Plan is expected to have been completed before the Spring 2022 draft Local Plan is published.

4.7 At the time of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan there is every indication that Ashdon will remain low in the settlement hierarchy due to its reliance on the car for transportation and the loss of further facilities, most notably the shop, in the last few years.

The Essex Minerals Local Plan (2014)

4.8 The Essex Minerals Local Plan (MLP) identifies sites and locations for mineral development within Essex up to 2029 and introduces policies to manage this type of development. Areas in the north and south of the Neighbourhood Plan Area are within a Mineral Safeguarding Area due to the presence of either chalk, sand and gravel deposits beneath the ground. These areas are subject to a minerals safeguarding policy (Policy S8 of the Minerals Local Plan), which seeks to prevent mineral deposits being unnecessarily sterilised by non-mineral development.

Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan 2017

4.9 The Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan (WLP) sets out how Essex and Southend-on-Sea aim to manage waste up to 2032 and introduces policies to guide waste management. It seeks to deal with waste more sustainably by guiding the development of waste management facilities, encouraging recycling and reducing reliance on landfill.

5. ASHDON FUTURE

Ashdon Parish Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)

5.1 In March 2020, a Focus Group consisting of eight volunteers, recruited at the first consultation event, met for a Focus Group training session led by Uttlesford District Council officers. The Group concentrated on all the data gathered by the Neighbourhood Plan process to date to produce a SWOT analysis and then a draft Vision and Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A friendly and active community with many clubs and societies. <p>Amenities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A good range of community facilities; Good opportunities for outdoor recreation; Extensive network of footpaths and bridleways, and key green spaces. <p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good broadband with further improvement expected soon. <p>Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of housing reflecting historic and organic growth of the village; 3 affordable housing developments. <p>Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinct and unique strong built historic environment within an undulating topography with attractive rural landscape and uninterrupted views in and out of village; Housing hidden in valley fold and well screened by small woods, native trees and hedgerows; Two historic village cores with historic Ends and many historic landmarks and sunken lanes; Mature trees and established hedgerows throughout the Parish; Boundaries to properties are often hedged helping to anchor properties in the wider landscape setting. <p>Pollution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean air and low levels of light pollution. <p>Wildlife:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rich abundance of wildlife with wildlife corridors feeding into centre of village. 	<p>Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ageing population. <p>Amenities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of shop and facilities for younger people and teens. <p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlying parts of the village/Parish not connected to mains sewer; Poor mobile phone reception in parts of village. <p>Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High cost of housing and still a shortage of affordable housing for local people. <p>Isolation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural isolation from services and facilities. <p>Getting around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns regarding pedestrian safety and speeding traffic; Heavy traffic damaging verges; Limited opportunities for safe on-street parking; Limited, and non-existent after 3pm, bus service. <p>Flooding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High risk of surface water flooding and river flooding. <p>Employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to work outside village without a car.

Opportunities	Threats
<p>Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Design statement/policies for the village to preserve its unique setting in the landscape-any new housing should be sensitively landscaped and located; • Designate and protect key green spaces in the village; • Remove intrusive road signage and trench overhead cables. <p>Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build small number of sustainable, affordable housing for local people to maintain a balanced community;. • Include home working space. <p>Getting around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify solutions for improving pedestrian safety, safe parking and speeding traffic. <p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of superfast broadband to whole village. <p>Flooding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Flood Group to find solutions to alleviate risk of flooding and surface water run-off. <p>Amenities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more facilities for older children and young people; • Creation of a village shop/café. <p>Employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage more rural businesses to locate in village to provide sustainable employment; • Promote more home working. <p>Climate Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address challenge through planting and sustainable carbon neutral buildings; • Encourage more children to walk to school. <p>Tourism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and promote more local amenities and outdoor recreation. 	<p>Character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to road verges and character of narrow sunken rural lanes caused by large, heavy vehicles; • Concerns over threat of speculative development and insensitive development out of character with existing village houses - particularly outside the existing Development Limits and that which may compromise the setting of the two Conservation Areas. <p>Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing house prices forcing out local people; • Conversion of bungalows to houses depriving older residents of opportunity to downsize. <p>Getting around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further cuts to already very limited public transport services. <p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houses vulnerable to power cuts due to overhead wire cables. <p>Flooding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of climate change on flood risk from river and surface water runoff; exacerbated by development and hard landscaping. <p>Amenities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns regarding viability of school and closure of clubs and societies run by an ageing population. <p>Pollution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased light pollution and loss of night skies from development. • Noise and pollution from airport expansion and traffic.

Vision

5.2 Using the SWOT analysis, the Focus Group then went on to debate and produce the following Vision for Ashdon:

VISION

Over the Plan period Ashdon will evolve whilst retaining and enhancing its natural and historic rural environment and continue to be inhabited by a vibrant sustainable community

This was tested in December 2020 in the Parish wide public consultation questionnaire when 98% of respondents agreed with this Vision statement.

Objectives

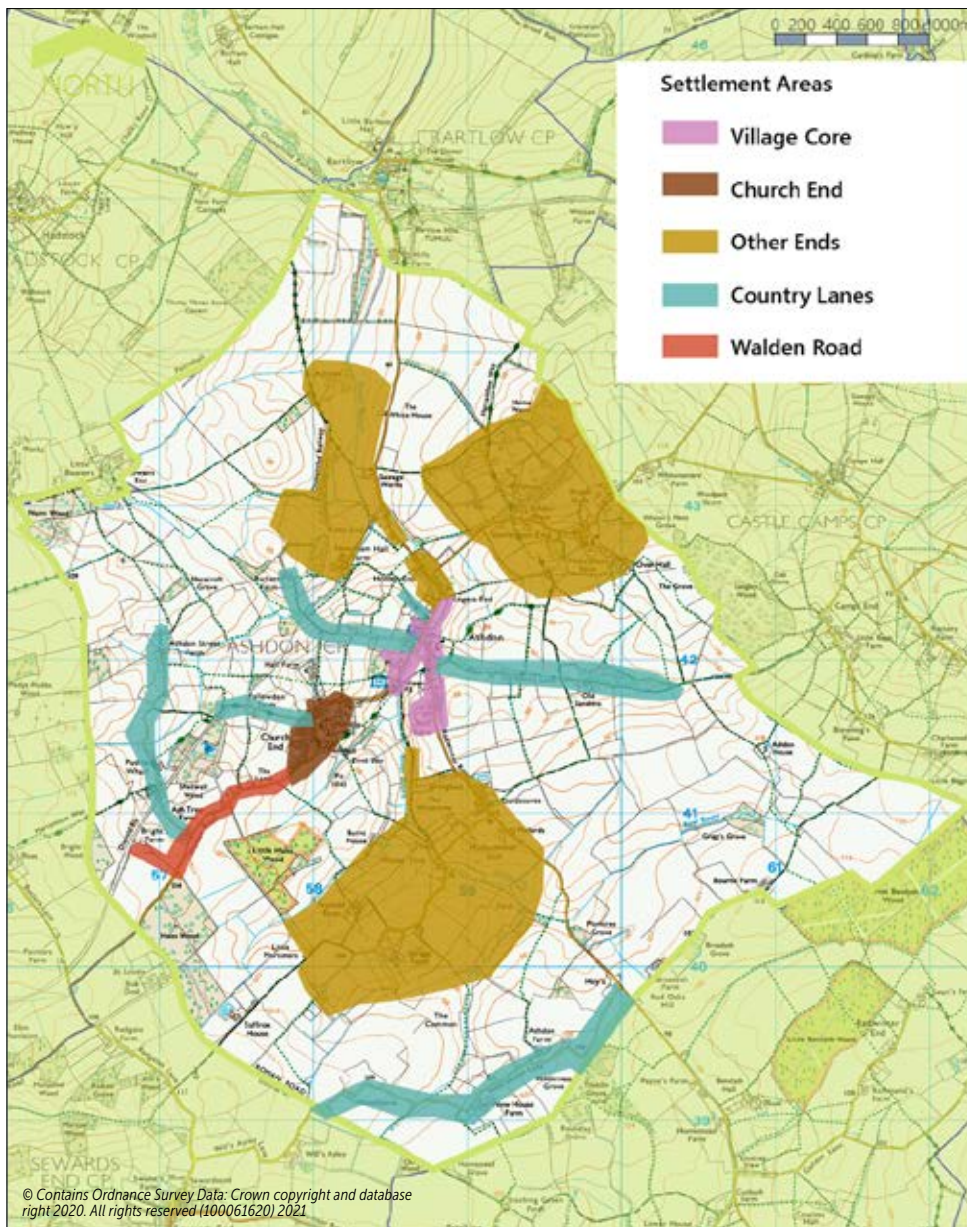
5.3 Underpinning this Vision are eleven objectives addressing the key issues facing Ashdon Parish during the life of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

Village character objectives
Any new development in the Parish will be modest in scale and appropriate to meeting village needs.
Any new development will deliver high quality design and be appropriate and sensitive to neighbouring buildings and landscape setting.
The unique hilly landscape and openness of the village with its close connection to the rural landscape will be protected; this includes key views.
Climate change and biodiversity objectives
The NP will address the challenge of climate change at our Parish level. As part of this it will anticipate the impact of increased frequency of heavy rainfall when planning for flood management solutions for the village.
The NP will aim for new development to have a low carbon footprint (covering energy demand, building materials, construction process etc) and support innovative solutions.
The NP will plan to maintain and promote local ecosystems to protect wildlife, trees and hedgerows.
Vibrant community and 'getting around' objectives
Affordable housing should be available to meet the needs of local people.
Promote a vibrant community in which it is easier to get around – both within the community and in and out of the village.
Promote health and wellbeing of the community by protecting and improving opportunities for outdoor recreational activities.
Promote maintenance and enhancement of local facilities, clubs and societies.
Employment objectives
Promote and enhance local employment opportunities.

5.4 Individual policies and community aspirations have been developed within the components of the Plan underlying each objective. Unlike the planning policies, the community aspirations have no statutory status and will not be used in the determination of planning applications.

6. SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND SPATIAL POLICY

6.1 The settlement in Ashdon Parish is made up of several historic settlements in a rural landscape setting. The settlement is concentrated in Ashdon village core and in Church End. There are also a series of historic 'Ends' some of which have been incorporated into Ashdon village core (Rogers End and Holden End) and some of which retain their distinct identity – Water End, Steventon End and Knox End. Throughout the Parish there are several historic sunken lanes, some adjoining Ashdon village core (Kates Lane, Rectory Lane and Dorvis Lane), one adjoining the Church End settlement (Fallowden Lane) one in Water End (Spriggs Lane), two in Steventon End (Overhall Lane and Mill Lane) and some further afield (Puddlewharf Lane and New House Lane). There are also scattered farmsteads and other dwellings on the main road into the Parish from Saffron Walden (the Walden Road). The above settlement areas are illustrated on Map 3.



Map 3 - Ashdon Settlement Pattern

6.2 The Ashdon Landscape Appraisal included an assessment of the sensitivity and capacity of land surrounding the settlements of Ashdon village core and Church End to accommodate housing/ employment development. The Appraisal revealed that these settlements have limited capacity to accommodate such development “due to the area’s special qualities, appropriate development is most likely to comprise small scale schemes rather than a single larger development.” More widely, the “Ends” have a distinct quality where, for example, the Appraisal noted for Water End that “The buildings sit down within the folds of the landscape (closely associated with the river) and are not widely visible except from adjoining valley slopes. Overall, this end has a rural backwater quality.”

6.3 The adopted Local Plan (2005) defines Development Limits around the two main built-up areas of the Parish. Given that there is no requirement to make provision for significant growth in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, the Development Limits, as illustrated on Maps 4 and 5, are those in the adopted Local Plan. The principle of development within the Development Limits is accepted where its impact on the built and natural environment, services, infrastructure (including flooding impact) and highways is acceptable.

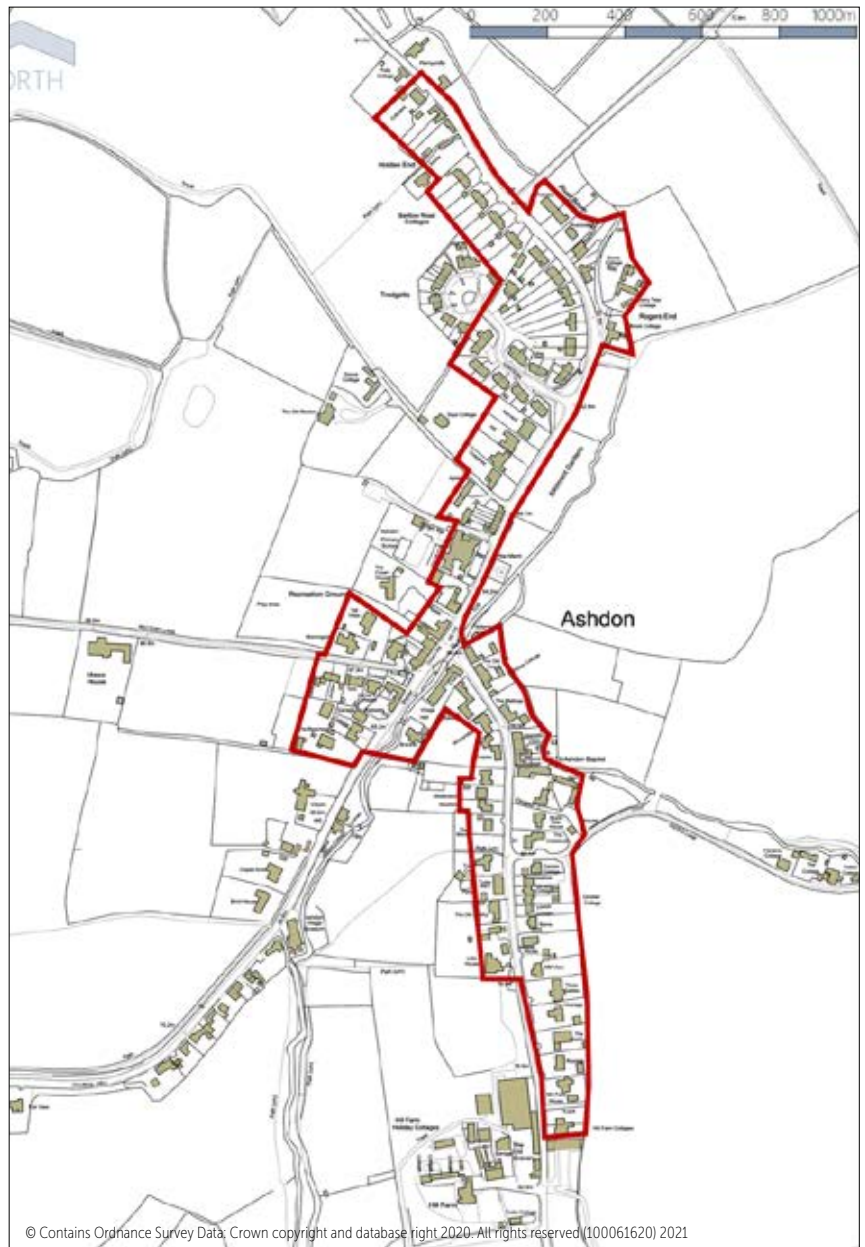
6.4 Development proposals coming forward outside the Development Limits will be regarded as countryside locations and proposals will only be supported where there is a demonstrated need for the development in line with policies in the NPPF.

POLICY ASH1- A SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR ASHDON

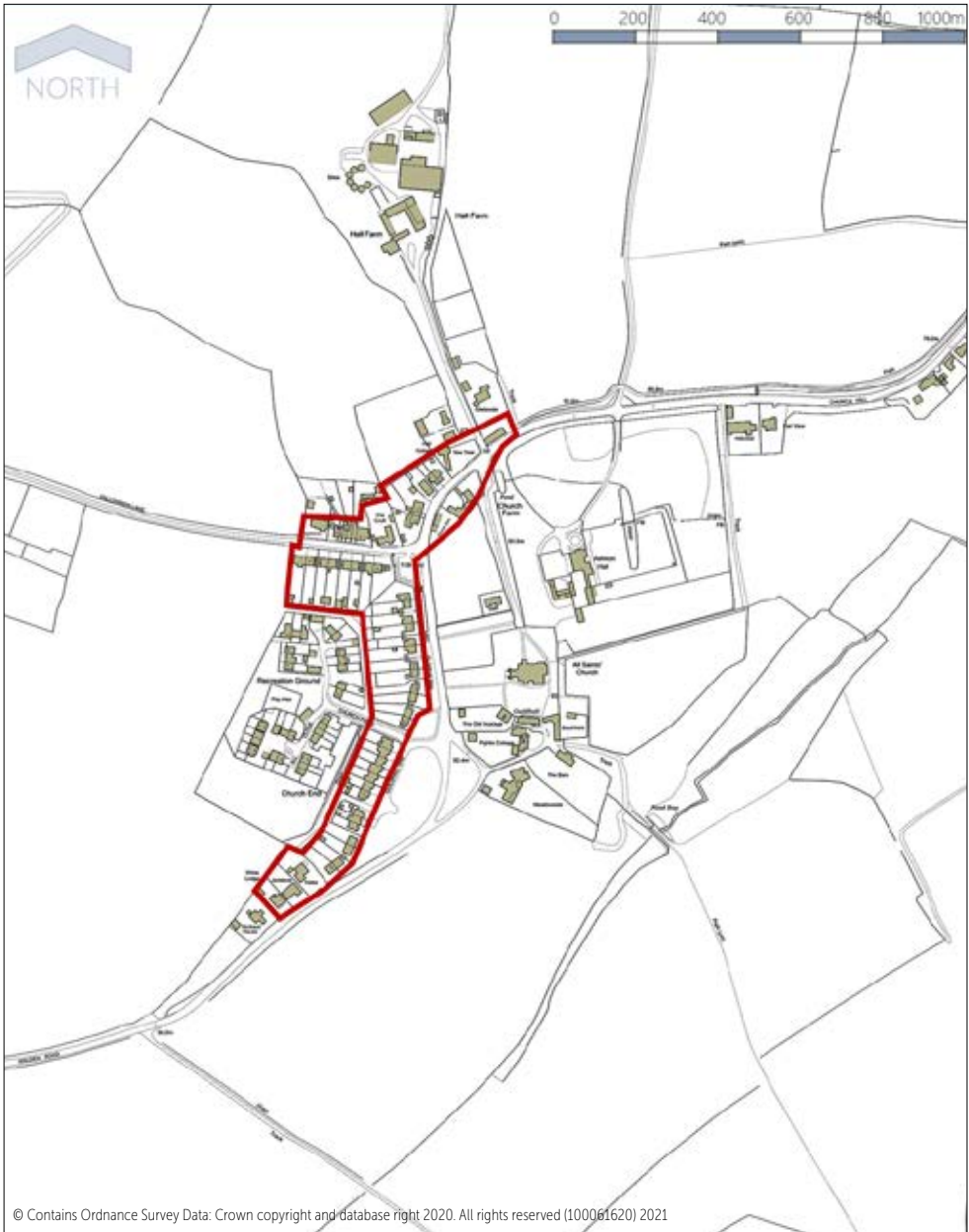
The Neighbourhood Plan area will accommodate development commensurate with Ashdon’s position in the District’s Settlement Hierarchy.

Development Limits, as defined on the Policies Map, identify the extent of land which is required to meet the development needs of the Parish.

Proposals for development located outside the Development Limits will only be permitted where they are in accordance with National and District level policies.



Map 4 - Ashdon village core Development Limits



Map 5 - Church End Development Limits



7. HOUSING

Objective

Affordable housing should be available to meet the needs of local people

Ashdon's housing requirement

- 7.1 The 2005 adopted Local Plan for Uttlesford District Council does not allocate any housing sites in the Parish. It identifies Ashdon as an 'Other Village' (with defined Development Limits drawn tightly around the built-up parts of Ashdon village and Church End) and support, in principle, infill development within these boundaries "if the development would be compatible with the character of the settlement and depending on the location of the site, its countryside setting." It allows for affordable housing on rural exception sites outside the Development Limits, if it would meet all the following criteria: -
- 100% of the dwellings are to be affordable and provided through a Registered Social Landlord;
 - the development will meet a particular local need that cannot be met in any other way;
 - the development is of a scale appropriate to the size, facilities and character of the settlement; and
 - the site adjoins the settlement.
- 7.2 In more recent years, the policies specific to housing delivery in the 2005 Local Plan have been found to be out of date, with houses outside Ashdon's Development Limits (eg on Radwinter Road) being approved as the District Council could not demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. Between 2011 and March 2020 there were 13 new homes completed in the Parish.
- 7.3 In accordance with Paragraph 66 of the NPPF, the Parish Council requested an indicative housing requirement for the Neighbourhood Plan Area from Uttlesford District Council. In June 2021 the District Council indicated that, having regard to the Ashdon Housing Needs Survey, the minimum requirement between 2020 and 2036 is 15 dwellings. The District

Council also indicated that there were planning permissions in 2020 for 15 additional dwellings and that the minimum requirement has been met.

- 7.4 Given the village's position in the Local Plan settlement hierarchy and that the indicated minimum housing requirement has been met, the Neighbourhood Plan does not identify new housing allocations but recognises that additional dwellings are likely to come forward during the period to 2036 that are compliant with planning policies.

Future housing opportunities

- 7.5 Notwithstanding existing planning permissions, it is likely that there will be opportunities for additional housing in the Neighbourhood Plan Area during the lifetime of the Plan. Although it is not always apparent, from time-to-time opportunities arise within the Development Limits for infill plots or the redevelopment of houses, perhaps to demolish buildings to create a suitable plot. The principle of developing new housing within the Development Limits is supported by **Policy ASH1** but all such proposals will need to be in accordance with the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan, especially in terms of impact and design. While there is a presumption against the development of new housing outside the Development Limits, there may be opportunities for the conversion of redundant farm buildings to residential uses across the Parish. In most instances, these conversions do not require planning permission subject to meeting certain limitations and conditions. However, conversions can result in a detrimental impact on the landscape where external paraphernalia that comes with residential uses is introduced, in particular excessive outdoor lighting. Careful consideration should be given to the potential impact of conversions on the landscape, including the impact on the key features of important views identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. Conversion of barns and outbuildings can result in a loss of breeding sites for birds and bats.

Housing mix

- 7.6 The 2019 first public consultation highlighted the following factors with regard to housing mix:-
- There is a need to continue to ensure that Ashdon has a balanced housing stock with smaller houses.
 - Housing suitable for older people should continue to be available to enable downsizing within the Parish. The conversion of existing bungalows is seen as a worrying trend.
 - Housing should be provided at a scale which is appropriate to the character of the Parish and will enable new residents to integrate easily into village life.
 - New development must be small and be integrated into the community rather than creating communities within the community.

7.7 Ashdon needs more young people and families for the community to be sustainable and to support the local school. However, the current shortage of affordable housing is seen as denying some young people and families the opportunity to live in the village. The village also needs homes for elderly villagers wishing to downsize and remain in Ashdon and universally accessible homes.

7.8 New housing developments coming forward in the Neighbourhood Plan Area should be specifically aimed at meeting Parish needs at the time (Policy ASH2). This will help enable local people to stay in the Parish at different stages of their lifetime and for older residents to downsize to smaller properties if desired. It is particularly important that the stock of smaller homes is increased in the Parish. The provision of housing choice will assist in ensuring a range of needs are met.



POLICY ASH2 - HOUSING MIX - MEETING LOCAL NEEDS

Housing development must contribute to meeting the existing and future needs of the village. A mix in the size and type of housing is desired, taking into account the content of the 2015 West Essex and Herts Strategic Housing Market Assessment needs for Uttlesford or any later published data, which seeks a majority of 2 and 3 bedroom homes.

Affordable housing

- 7.9 Affordability of housing remains a significant barrier for many seeking their own homes. Government figures indicate that, in Uttlesford, average house prices are more than 11 times the average household income, meaning that many newly-formed households are excluded from the housing market. Recent statistics from Zoopla, the house price aggregator, suggests that the average price paid for a home in Ashdon for the 12 months to August 2021 is £626,875; the average for Essex is £391,912.

7.10 One way that the planning system can address this problem is through the provision of affordable housing as defined by the NPPF and set out in the Glossary. Affordable housing schemes can primarily be delivered through a percentage of a larger development of more than 10 dwellings or on a site of 0.5 hectares, or, as an exception, small-scale schemes, including entry level homes for purchase on rural exception sites outside the Development Limits where housing would not normally be permitted.

7.11 The Government's Affordable Homes definition includes social rented and shared ownership provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the open market. The definition also includes First Homes which the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (August 2021) defines as:

"discounted market sale units which:

- a) *must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the market value;*
- b) *are sold to a person or persons meeting the First Homes eligibility criteria (see below);*
- c) *on their first sale, will have a restriction registered on the title at HM Land Registry to ensure this discount (as a percentage of current market value) and certain other restrictions are passed on at each subsequent title transfer; and,*
- d) *after the discount has been applied, the first sale must be at a price no higher than £250,000 (or £420,000 in Greater London)."*

7.12 The Local Plan policy for the delivery of affordable housing as part of larger schemes is now significantly out-of-date, but given that the Neighbourhood Plan does not make provision for developments of 10 or more homes in Ashdon, there is no need to address this matter in the Plan.

7.13 The 2019 first public consultation highlighted that, whilst Ashdon already has 4 affordable housing schemes, there is still a need for more affordable housing to meet the needs of residents. In October



2019, the Rural Community Council for Essex (RCCE) were engaged by the Parish Council to establish present and future housing needs of householders within the Parish. The survey had a 41% response rate, which is well above the county average of 25%.

7.14 There was good support for a small development, with 88% stating they would be supportive of a small development (4 - 8 homes) of affordable housing for local people. 71% would remain supportive if one or two open market houses were to be included in the development. Support dropped considerably when asked about developing a site for purely open market properties with only 40% being in favour. There was also a notable amount of comment around the sustainability and suitability of any development in the Parish, especially with regards to public transport and local facilities. Some felt that the village had "done enough" with regards to providing affordable housing yet some welcomed it. There were concerns around development that does not respect the local vernacular and environment as well as an acknowledgement by some that new housing could give the village a boost, in particular with regards to sustaining the primary school. There were large amounts of comments around the desire for housing to be prioritised for local people (including the existing schemes in the Parish) specifying that there is a need for housing for the elderly as well as for families.

7.15 Twenty-two respondents completed the RCCE questionnaire fully expressing a housing need and providing appropriate financial data. There was also evidence of a younger generation coming through, whose needs were hard to identify at this time due to their age. Three households were considered capable of accessing open market housing, which left 16 households seeking affordable housing, the majority of which are required within the next 5 years.

7.16 The main reason respondents had a desire to move to alternative accommodation was to set up their first/independent home, with 11 out of the 22 (50%) households citing this option. Two-bedroom households were the most preferred property size. Only two households confirmed they are on the local authority housing register and four respondents stated they had additional specific housing requirements. Following general planning guidance, and as a result of RCCE's analysis of the 2019 data provided, RCCE suggested an affordable rented recommendation of up to 7 units of mixed size. Two respondents answered that they have special housing needs, leading to a recommendation that bungalows or ground floor properties be considered for two of the affordable rented homes.

7.17 There was also a strong desire from those in need to own their own property. Upon reviewing the financial situation of those aspiring to open market and shared ownership properties, RCCE assessed potentially 8 would be suitable for the shared ownership tenure which leads to a recommendation of 4 units. Residents of Ashdon Parish need to be on the Uttlesford District Council Housing Register in order for them to be considered for local needs affordable housing schemes in the future. Surveys like that undertaken by the RCCE in 2019 will need to be up-to-date when considering the development of an affordable housing scheme as the data can soon become inaccurate.

7.18 Paragraph 78 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs. To deliver affordable housing through exception sites the following would be required:

- A need established; and
- A willing landowner prepared to sell land at a price significantly below the market value for housing land; and

- A registered social landlord (housing association) willing to work with the Parish Council and District Council to fund and manage a scheme.

7.19 In the Public Consultation process it was felt that if further affordable housing is to be provided in Ashdon then there should be provision for those with a strong local connection to have preferential access to such housing. For the purposes of determining proposals under Policy ASH3, the following definition, adapted from the Uttlesford Choice Based Lettings Scheme, shall be used:

An applicant must meet at least one of the following criteria a-e below

- a. *Have lived in the Parish for either:*
 - *Six out of the last 12 months or*
 - *Three out of the last five years;*
- b. *Have permanent paid work in the Parish*
- c. *Have an immediate family member who has lived in the Parish for at least five years. Immediate family members include:*
 - *Parents;*
 - *Adult children;*
 - *Brothers or sisters;*
 - *Other family members who are providing on-going support.*

If immediate family members live in the Parish but have been here for less than 5 years and are able to provide evidence that the applicant needs to live near them for support, then this residence requirement for family members may be reduced.

- d. *Need to be near special medical or support services, which are only available in the District.*
- e. *Other special circumstances as agreed by a Housing Services Manager*

7.20 Affordable housing has to address the requirement for starter and family homes with adequate gardens and shared green space. The properties may be for rent, to buy or shared ownership. In order to ensure a cohesive community in Ashdon it is important that affordable housing units are integrated fully into the village as a whole by providing good connectivity to Ashdon village centre.

7.21 Policy ASH3 provides an enabling policy for the consideration of exception site affordable housing proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan area and sets out the criteria that will need to be taken into account in making decisions for such applications.

POLICY ASH3 - AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON RURAL EXCEPTION SITES

Proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes, including entry level homes for purchase and starter homes (as defined by paragraph 72 of the NPPF) on rural exception sites outside the Development Limits, where housing would not normally be permitted by other policies, will be supported where there is a proven local need and provided that the housing:

- i. remains affordable in perpetuity; and
- ii. is for people that are in housing need because they are unable to buy or rent properties in the Parish at open-market prices; and
- iii. is offered, in the first instance, to people with a demonstrated connection to Ashdon, as defined in paragraph 7.19 of the Neighbourhood Plan. Where there is no need, a property should then be offered to those with a demonstrated need for affordable housing in neighbouring villages.

These restrictions should be delivered through a legal agreement attached to the planning consent for the housing. Applications for such development will be considered in relation to the appearance and character of the surrounding area, the potential impact on residential amenity and highway safety.

To be acceptable, proposals should demonstrate that a local need exists which cannot be met by applying normal planning policy for the provision of affordable homes in association with market housing.

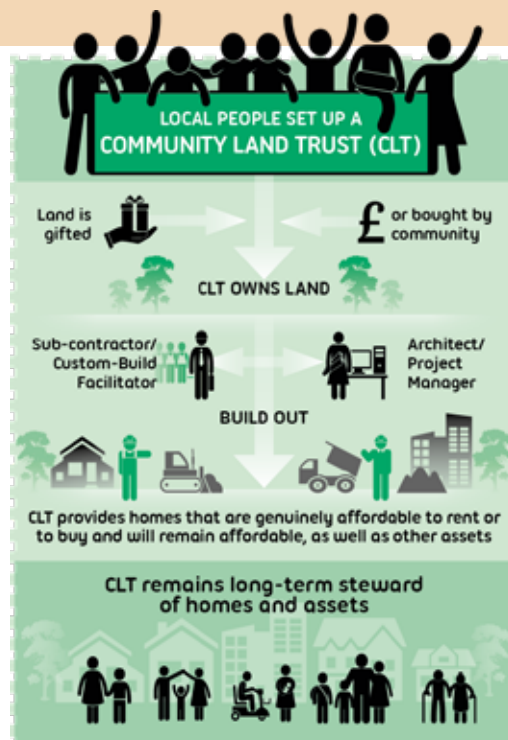
Any application for affordable housing in respect of this policy should be accompanied by a detailed need and the accommodation proposed should contribute to meeting this proven need.

In exceptional circumstances, a small number of market homes will be supported where it can be demonstrated:

- a. that no other means of funding the construction of the affordable homes is available; and
- b. the market housing is subsidiary to the affordable housing element of the proposal and the amount of market housing required is, as demonstrated through a viability assessment, the minimum required to deliver the affordable housing.

Where sites for affordable housing in the countryside are brought forward with an element of market housing, both housing tenures should be built to the same design standards and contribute towards the character of the area.

7.22 One option for securing affordable housing that remains available for the local community for all time is through the establishment of a Community Land Trust (CLT). These are a form of community-led housing, set up and run by local people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets. CLTs act as long-term stewards of housing, ensuring that it remains genuinely affordable, based on what people actually earn in their area, not just for now but for every future occupier.



SOURCE: National Community Land Trust Network



8. PARISH CHARACTER - NATURAL LANDSCAPE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Objectives

The unique hilly landscape and openness of the village with its close connection to the rural landscape will be protected; this includes key views

Any new development will deliver high quality design and be appropriate and sensitive to neighbouring buildings and landscape setting

Any new development in the Parish will be modest in scale and appropriate to meeting village needs

NATURAL LANDSCAPE

Landscape setting

8.1 Ashdon is a rural Parish, where the changing texture of the landscape is visible in the contrasts of its verges, fields, woodland and hedges; the boulder clay plateau is cut through in many areas by secret chalk streams hidden below the vegetation. The landscape is influenced by the underlying chalk geology and drainage patterns characteristic of northwest Essex and separate from those found in nearby South Cambridgeshire. The principal valley is that of the River Bourne (tributary of the Rivers Granta/Cam). The landscape diversity is reflected in the variety of materials and colour used in its buildings. Overall, this is a character area with a strong sense of place, and a strong sense of tranquillity. The main area of settlement today is nestled in the river valley around Crown Hill at the confluence of several tributaries of the river resulting in a widening of the valley floor. Viewed from the higher plateau areas which surround Ashdon the settlement is largely hidden, folded into the valley and well populated with trees.

8.2 The 2006 Landscape Character Appraisal for Uttlesford prepared by Chris Blandford Associates noted for the area including Ashdon that *"This strongly rolling landform rises to a broad, open plateau, dissected by small streams whose valleys give great variety to the countryside. This produces a landscape character of upland with wide-open vistas on the ridge tops, and also enclosed wooded areas*

in the valley bottoms. Patches of ancient woodland remain. The tree cover is mainly deciduous, with blocks of trees and hedgerows framing channelled views. The land appears in good condition, with many strong hedgerows and verges well maintained, although large-scale arable farming has left a legacy of many broken hedges on field boundaries."

8.3 The Ashdon Landscape Appraisal (2020) provides an understanding of the sensitivity and capacity of the Parish to accommodate new growth; it identifies special qualities to be conserved and enhanced; and includes a detailed settlement and landscape analysis which is useful in informing an appropriate approach for the Neighbourhood Plan.

8.4 The Ashdon Landscape Appraisal noted that the distinctive landscape of the Parish falls into three character areas according to the topography:

- **River valleys** where there is extensive tree growth as the land was not considered suitable for agriculture, and the trees prosper with adequate water. Ancient routes and lanes follow the valleys.
- **Valley sides** which do support arable agriculture, but where the gradients are steep; to the south and west of Ashdon village the ancient field patterns and hedgerows form an intimate setting and are largely preserved. To the north of the village, where the valley widens, the arable fields are larger with some loss of hedgerows evident.
- **Higher plateau** areas that surround the main settlement on three sides. These are characterized by intense arable agriculture and scattered settlements originating in long established clusters of farm buildings. Areas of ancient woodland survive.

8.5 The settlement in Ashdon village core, and in the strongly incised valley landscape of the central north-south axis of the Parish, is almost exclusively and unobtrusively located in the valley bottoms or on the lower slopes of the valley sides, resulting in a very close connection between the settlement and the landscape.

8.6 Locating any new development at an appropriate height within the topography of the valley is one of the most important factors determining the appropriate locations for additional building in Ashdon. At present, most building is either located in the valley bottoms or on the surrounding plateau areas, examples from the 20th Century illustrate the visual impact of building on valley sides.

8.7 The nature of the landscape is such that the Neighbourhood Plan Area is particularly vulnerable to inappropriately located or unscreened development on high ground. The Ashdon Landscape Appraisal specifies the range of contour heights appropriate for development in each area of the village in order to avoid intrusive visual impact. In addition, there are examples of 21st Century developments in elevated positions in Church End and on Walden Road which illustrate the impact of full 2 storey height buildings in such a location.

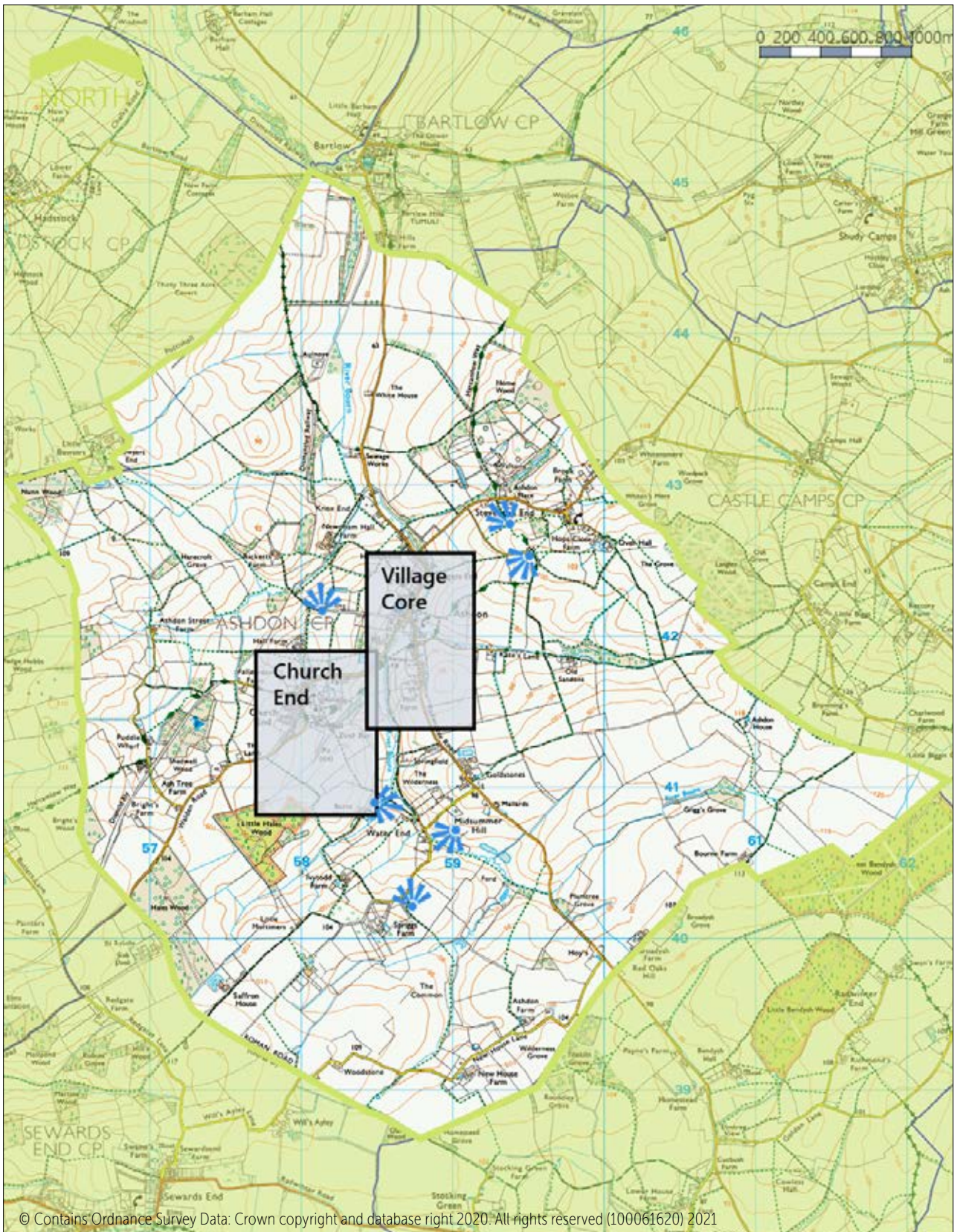
8.8 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should be "*...sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape.*" The Framework also states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, inter alia, "*protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...*" The Ashdon Landscape Appraisal provides robust evidence that demonstrates the importance of the landscape and should be referred to where a proposal is likely to have an impact on it.



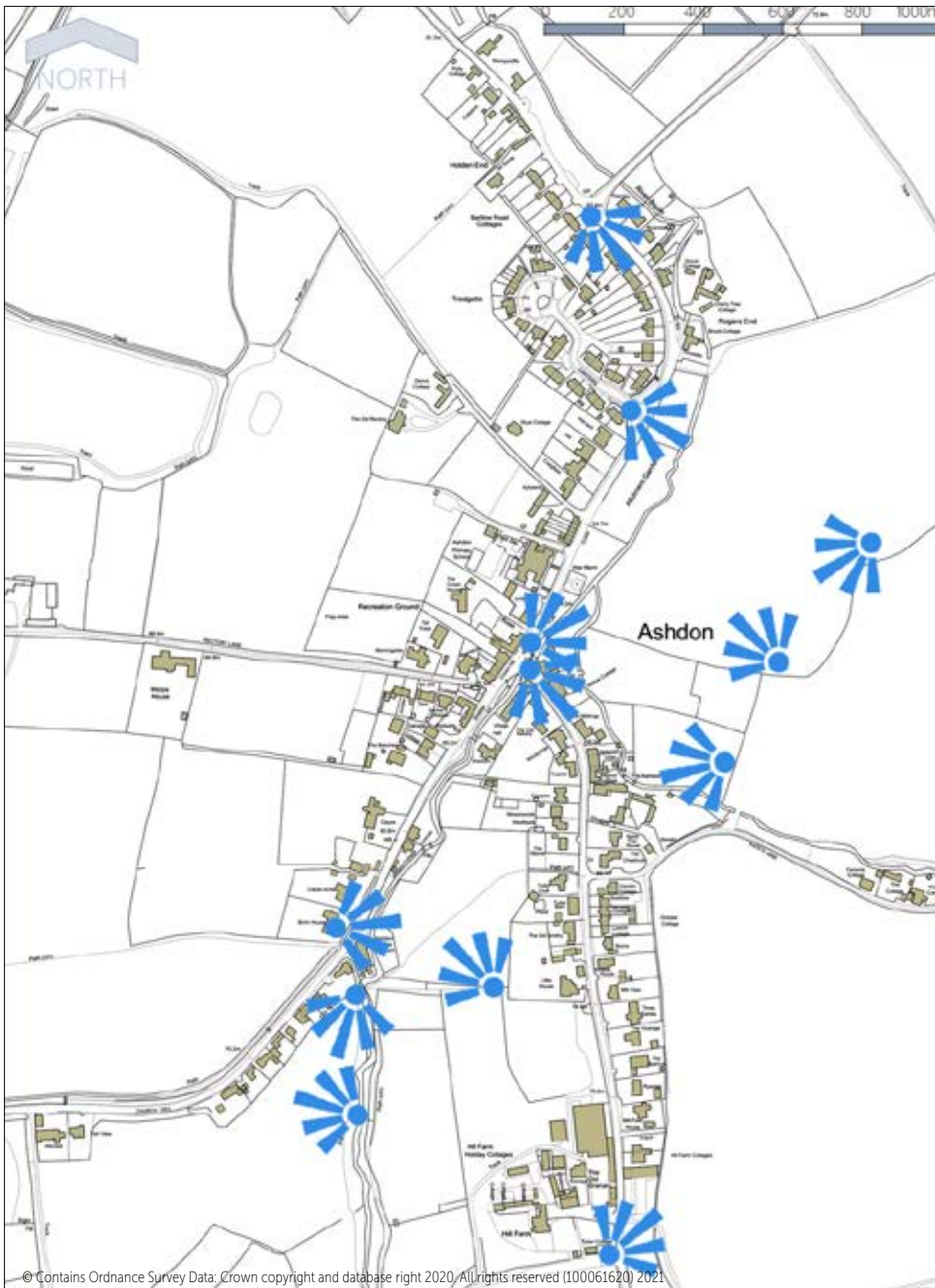
Important views

8.9 The topography of the Ashdon landscape is such that it lends itself to creating several views into, out of and within the built-up areas of the Parish, as identified in the separate Assessment of Important Views and illustrated on **Maps 6, 7 and 8**. Development that does not have regard to these views and their significance can have a major impact on the built heritage and landscape of the wider area. To minimise the potential for such impacts, development proposals inside and outside the Development Limits should identify how they take account of the potential impact on the key features of identified important views which are identified in the assessment referred to above. They should be accompanied by a Landscape Visual Impact Appraisal or other appropriate and proportionate evidence which demonstrates how the proposal can be accommodated without having a detrimental impact, by reason of the building's scale, materials and location, on the character and appearance of the countryside and its distinction from the built-up area.



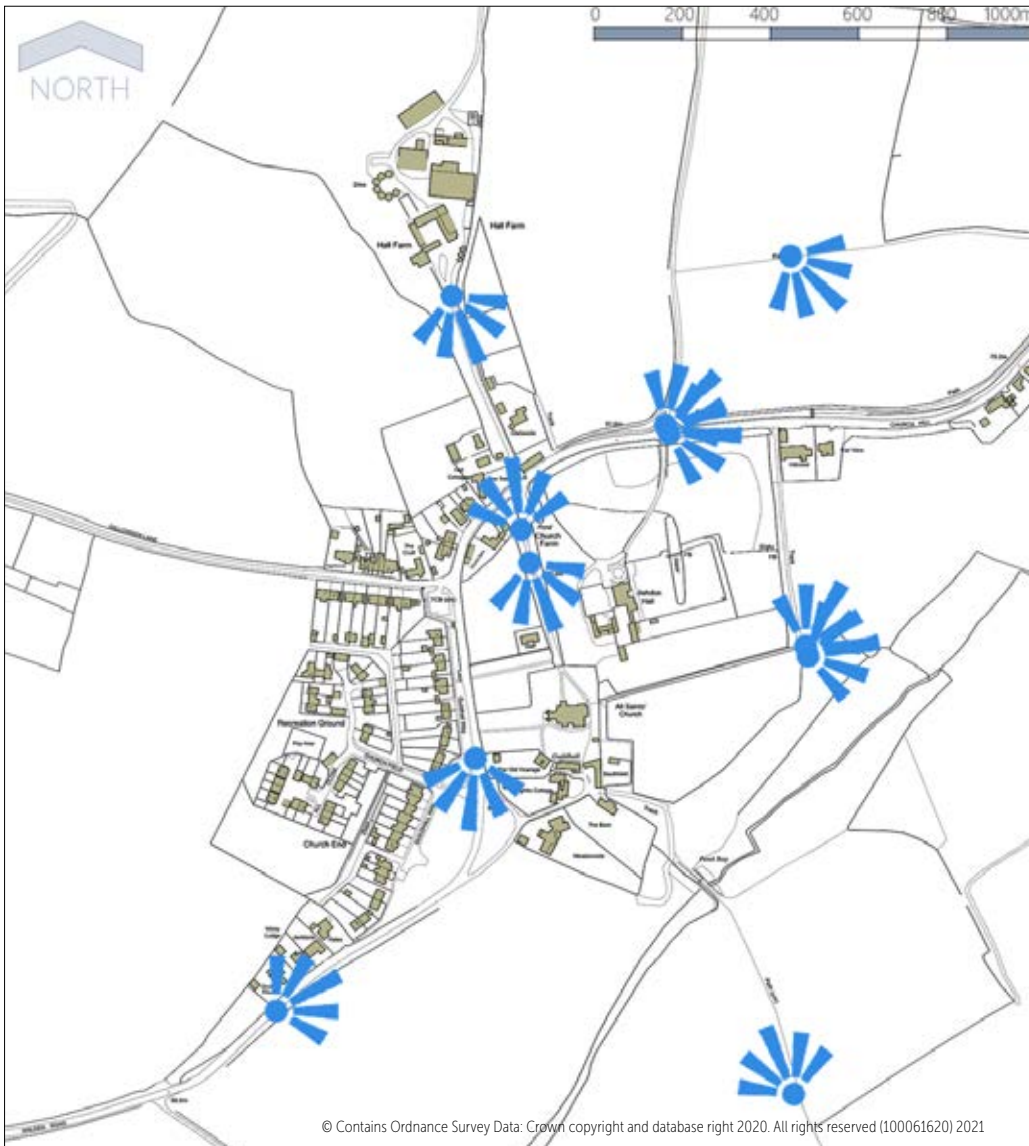


Map 6 - Important Views in the wider Parish (detail on inset areas in Maps 7 and 8)



Map 7 - Important Views, Village Core





Map 8 - Important Views, Church End

POLICY ASH4 - PROTECTING ASHDON'S LANDSCAPE SETTING AND IMPORTANT VIEWS

Proposals must, proportionate to the development, demonstrate how the landscape characteristics of the site and its vicinity have been considered in preparing the scheme.

Important views from public vantage points, either within the built-up area or into or out of the surrounding countryside, are identified on the Policies Map. Any proposed development should not detract from and look to enhance the key landscape and built development features of those views as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan Assessment of Important Views document.

Proposals outside the Development Limits, and proportionate to the scale of development, must demonstrate, through a Landscape Visual Impact Appraisal or other appropriate and proportionate evidence, how the proposal can be accommodated in the countryside, for example by reason of the building's scale, materials and location, without having a detrimental impact on the landscape characteristics of the site and its setting.

Proposals that result in an unacceptable impact on the wider landscape setting of the area will not be supported unless it can be satisfactorily demonstrated, through a project level Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, that the resultant impact on the landscape character, referenced to the Ashdon Landscape Appraisal, can be mitigated.

Settlement gaps

- 8.10** As identified earlier, the Parish is defined by a number of "Ends" and their importance was confirmed in the December 2020 Public Consultation questionnaire when 81.3% of respondents thought that the historic distinctiveness of the Ends should be preserved. Each of these Ends has a distinctive feel and position within the landscape that is valued by the residents. All the Ends have a significant number of listed and historic buildings and origins as medieval halls or farm-based hamlets that appear on old maps (1777, 1880); detailed information on the character, buildings and layout of each of the Ends is given in the Ashdon Character Assessment 2020.
- 8.11** Importantly the Ends are physically separated from the adjoining parts of the village enhancing the feel of entering a new and distinctive part of the settlement. Clear settlement gaps exist as shown on the Policies Map. Church End is in an elevated position and the first part of the village entered from Saffron Walden after crossing the agricultural plateau. There remains a distinct and important settlement gap with adjacent trees and fields as the road (Church Hill) drops downhill from Church End through a green 'tunnel' and open fields into the valley, and the village core.
- 8.12** Settlement gaps are also clear between Steventon End and the junction of Camps Road with Bartlow Road, between Knox End and Holden End, and between Midsummer Hill and Hill Farm on Radwinter Road, and between Midsummer Hill and Water End in the valley.
- 8.13** Protecting these settlement gaps are key to keeping and reinforcing the distinctive character of Ashdon. In the past, development (20th Century) has been permitted which has resulted in the blurring of the separation between Holden and Rogers Ends and between Rogers End and the Conservation Area of the village core. The allotment field, allotments, and the river itself still preserve where the separation once occurred and allow views to the wider landscape.

POLICY ASH5 - SETTLEMENT GAPS

The Plan identifies settlement gaps which separate the distinct settlements (the Ends). They are shown on the Policies Map.

Development proposals shall, where appropriate, demonstrate how they would safeguard the settlement gaps and not cause their erosion.



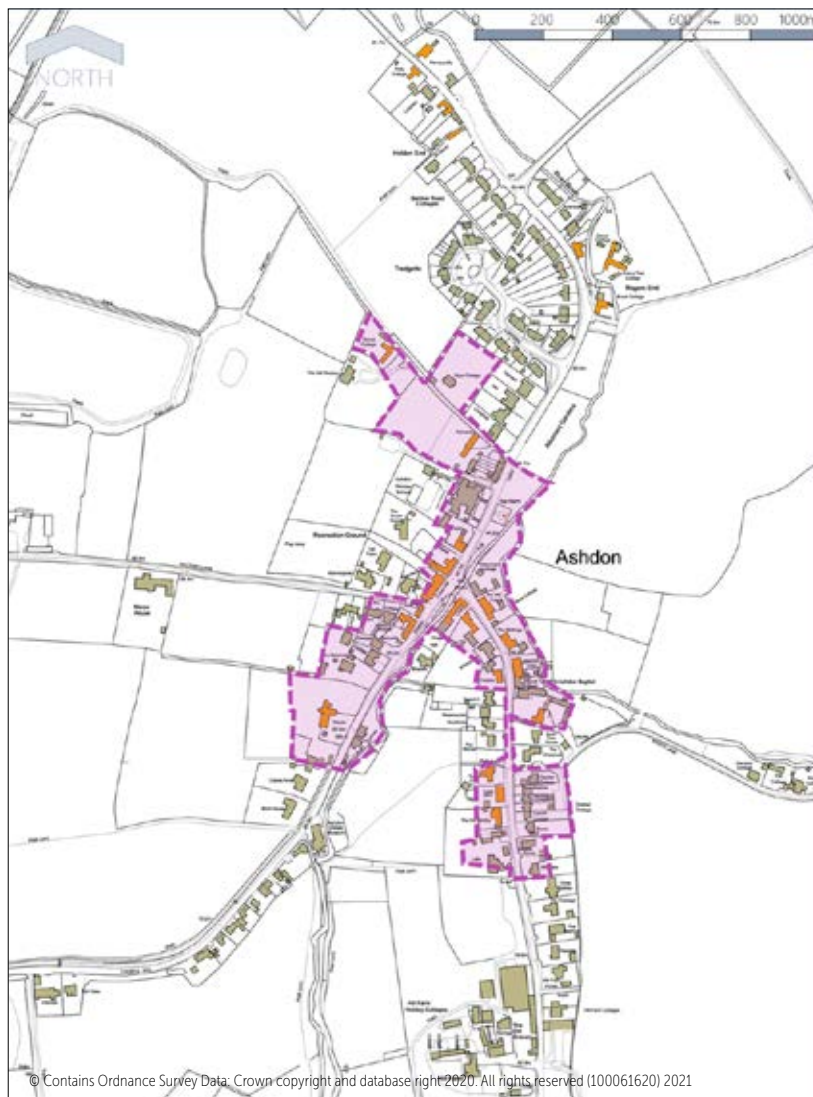
BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Heritage assets

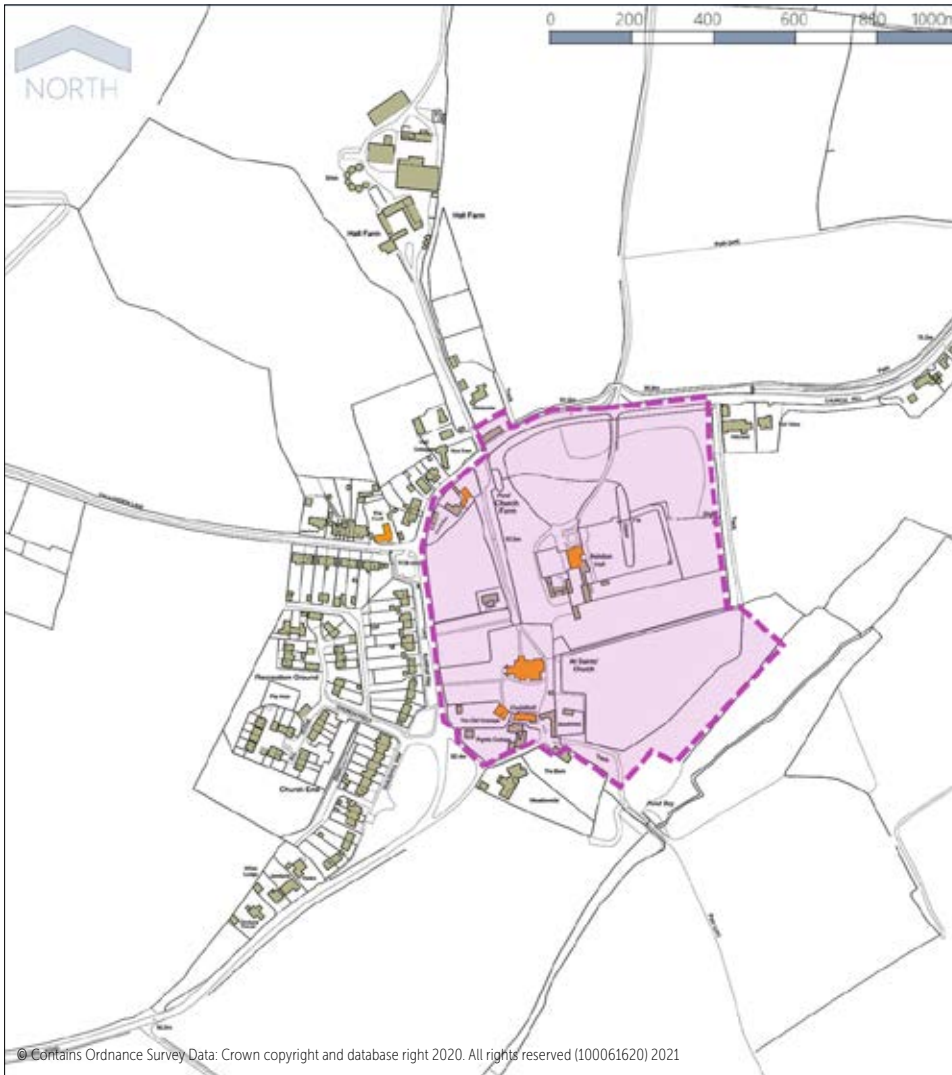
- 8.14** The rich heritage of Ashdon is one of the key elements in the quality of the local environment. Listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments are collectively known as “*heritage assets*” and are protected from harm by Government legislation. It is important that the development pressures on Ashdon are managed in ways that enable the built environment to be protected and enhanced and inappropriate development avoided.
- 8.15** Ashdon has two Conservation Areas (Ashdon village core and Church End) and 66 listed buildings scattered throughout the Parish; 21 listed buildings are within the Conservation Areas (about a third of these have thatched roofs) (See current list in **Appendix 1**). The majority of the built form in each of the

Conservation Areas is Listed; this includes iconic community buildings such as All Saints’ Church (Grade I), the former Guildhall (Grade II*), and the old part of the village hall (previously the Conservative Club). There is also the Scheduled Monument southeast of All Saints’ Church, comprising the former site of the medieval village. An appraisal of the Conservation Areas was made by Uttlesford District Council (Ashdon Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals - 2013) and is available to download on their website.

- 8.16** Ashdon village Conservation Area is focussed in the valley on Crown Hill, the present centre of the village, and dominated by listed residential buildings. Church End Conservation Area sits above the valley on the upper slopes, historically centred around All Saints Church and graveyard surrounded by listed buildings and open spaces and the mature trees associated with Ashdon Hall and its landscaped grounds. The two Conservation Areas are linked by tree-lined Church Hill. The setting of the Conservation Areas is key to the look and preservation of these historic areas.



Map 9 - Village Core Conservation Area and Listed Buildings



**Map 10 –
Church End Conservation Area
and Listed Buildings**

- 8.17** Additionally, as noted in **Appendix 1**, there is a strong representation of listed buildings in the wider village, in Ends and Lanes (see Ashdon Character Assessment). Often these have origins in the farms and estates of the agricultural past, or in the structures that served them, such as the Windmill.
- 8.18** The historic environment is also enhanced by many buildings or structures without an Historic England Listing. At the time of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, Ashdon has nine non-designated heritage assets on Uttlesford District Council’s Local Heritage List, details in **Appendix 1**. The NPPF explains that the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in the determination of any planning application. A balanced judgement will be needed, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.
- 8.19** The character and construction of the heritage assets, both designated and non-designated, are quite variable. Many follow the traditional construction methods used for farmhouses and farm buildings

which are often of a timber construction using materials available from the coppiced woodlands surrounding the village.

- 8.20** In terms of vernacular buildings within the Parish, some date from the 16th Century, comprising timber framed and plastered construction with thatched, tiled or slate roofs. There is a high preponderance of old thatched cottages within the valley locations of Knox End, Holden End, Rogers End, Water End and Ashdon village core. There is an attractive terrace of brightly painted cottages, known as Collier Row. A prominent feature building located at Church End, is the flint knapped former National School with brick detailing and bell tower.
- 8.21** Other buildings that make an important contribution to the character are the current Primary School on Crown Hill, a late 19th Century red brick construction with decorative blue brick banding, and the Baptist Church on Radwinter Road constructed of red brick with arch detailing and slate roof. Also, on Radwinter Road are black timber-boarded barns reflecting the rural character of the village. Across the village there

are also numerous buildings or structures within the curtilages of Listed Buildings that are important features and contribute to built character. Similarly, the tall front boundary wall [red brick] of Claves is a defining feature of the street scene along with a stone marker, highway directional signs, and Grade II Listed telephone kiosk all of which are key features.

8.22 Heritage assets are invaluable and irreplaceable; they are a resource that is both fragile and finite. Key built landmarks, some of which are designated heritage assets which contribute to sense of place and orientation, were identified in the Ashdon Landscape Appraisal. They include the following:

- a) Thatched cottages*, Holden End and Water End
- b) The Old Rectory*, Rectory Lane, Ashdon
- c) Terraced Cottages (Collier Row) on the main street, Ashdon

- d) Ashdon primary school on the main street, Ashdon
- e) Rose and Crown pub* on Crown Hill, Ashdon
- f) Village museum, Church Hill, Ashdon
- g) Flint knapped Former National School*, Church End
- h) Ashdon Hall*, Church End
- i) All Saints Church*, Church End
- j) Ashdon Windmill (the Windmill), Steventon End
- k) Waltons, Place Farm* and stable complex*, Steventon End

* buildings with Historic England or Local Heritage Listing

8.23 Whilst Local Heritage Listing provides no additional planning controls, the fact that a building or site is on a local list means that its conservation as a heritage asset is an objective of the NPPF and a material consideration when determining the outcome of a planning application.

POLICY ASH6 - CONSERVATION AREAS

Development within, or which has potential to affect the setting of, the Conservation Areas as identified on the Policies Map will be assessed against the content of the Ashdon Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals (2013) and any subsequent adopted Appraisal.

Proposals for development within a Conservation Area should:

- a. Demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the Conservation Area alongside an assessment of the potential impact of the proposal on that significance;
- b. Preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area;
- c. Be of an appropriate design, scale, form, height, massing and position;
- d. Retain features important to settlement form and pattern such as open spaces, plot divisions, position of dwellings, hierarchy of routes, hierarchy of buildings, and their uses, boundary treatments and gardens; and
- e. Use high quality materials and methods of construction which complement the character of the area.

Proposals for development which affect the setting of a Conservation Area should be considered against criteria a), c) and e) above.

Proposals which involve the demolition of non-listed buildings that make a positive contribution to a Conservation Area, including those identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, should demonstrate:

- i. The building is structurally unsound and beyond technically feasible and economically viable repair (for reasons other than deliberate damage or neglect); or
- ii. All measures to sustain the existing use or find an alternative use/user have been exhausted.

In all cases, proposals for demolition should include comprehensive and detailed plans for redevelopment of the site.

8.24 The 20th Century white railings supported on concrete posts, many erected as safety features relating to the River Bourne, are a feature of Ashdon. Although not of particular historic interest or merit they do add to Ashdon's overall quality. If the railings or posts are not maintained the visual qualities of the centre of the Conservation Area would be eroded.

Community Aspiration 1 - White Railings

The white railings supported on concrete posts should be kept in good condition and painted on a regular basis.

Settlement character and design

8.25 It is important that new buildings and extensions are well thought through in terms of design and delivery of high-quality places (**Policy ASH 7**), to ensure a high level of residential amenity and successful community cohesion over the Plan period. It is very important that the design and layout of new development facilitates the creation of a cohesive, safe and pleasant environment where new occupants feel comfortable integrating with their immediate neighbourhood as well as Ashdon as a whole.

8.26 It is clearly evident from the community consultation undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan that many residents are concerned about the potential scale of the housing growth in Ashdon and the impact of the growth on the existing character of the settlements. In the December 2020 public consultation questionnaire 97% of respondents agreed that development proposals should not result in unacceptable loss of, or damage to, significant trees, woodlands or hedgerows during, or because of development (other than in exceptional circumstances where a community benefit outweighs their loss).

8.27 The Ashdon Landscape Appraisal provides a useful analysis of existing character across all settlements in the Parish, with section 6.1 listing the "*Special Qualities to Conserve and Enhance*" and section 6.2 the "*Changes to Avoid*."

Village Gateways

8.28 In the December 2020 public consultation questionnaire, 86.1% of respondents agreed that the four road entrances into the main settlement areas of Ashdon village core and Church End should be important as "*first impressions*" and determine the sense of arrival, setting the scene coming into the built-up areas.

8.29 The entry by vehicle into the settlement areas of the village is an important aspect of the 'feel' of the village. In Ashdon it marks the transition from open countryside, with fields, hedgerow, woodland, and extensive views, to the intimate and historic environment of the village centre. The gateways are detailed in the Ashdon Landscape Appraisal **figures 3 and 4** and are classified as "*an initial gateway, where there is a sense of approaching a settlement and where development is sporadic or on one side of the road only, and a main gateway where there is a definite sense of arrival reinforced by a road junction or development occurring on both sides of the road.*" See **Maps 11 and 12**.

8.30 In Ashdon the appearance of the gateways has remained largely unchanged. They are dominated by mature trees and vegetation, older properties which may be set back from the road, and simple signage.





Map 11 – Village Core Gateways



Map 12 - Church End Gateways

POLICY ASH7 - DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Proposals for new development must reflect the local characteristics and circumstances in the Neighbourhood Plan Area and create and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment.

Planning applications should demonstrate how they satisfy the requirements of the design principles in the **Ashdon Design Code**, as appropriate to the proposal.

In addition, and as appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals will be supported where:

- a. the key features, characteristics, landscape/building character, local distinctiveness and special qualities of the area, including gateways as defined on the Policies Map, are maintained and enhanced, having particular regard to the Conservation Area Appraisal and Neighbourhood Plan Character Assessments;
- b. there is no loss of open, green or landscaped areas, which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of that part of the Neighbourhood Plan Area;
- c. taking mitigation measures into account, important landscape characteristics including trees and ancient hedgerows and other prominent topographical features identified in the Ashdon Landscape Appraisal are not adversely affected;
- d. the design and materials have regard to the **Ashdon Design Code** and do not adversely change the character of the site or its setting;
- e. designs, in accordance with standards, maintain or enhance the safety of the highway network ensuring that all vehicle parking is provided within the plot;
- f. they make adequate provision for the covered storage of all wheelie bins and cycle storage in accordance with adopted cycle parking standards;
- g. suitable ducting capable of accepting fibre to enable superfast broadband is included;
- h. one electric vehicle charging point per new off-street parking place created is provided;
- i. they are located so that users and nearby residents will not be significantly and adversely affected by noise, smell, vibration, overlooking, light or other forms of pollution unless adequate mitigation can be incorporated as part of the proposal;
- j. include tree-lined streets unless in specific cases there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate, and include trees elsewhere within developments where the opportunity arises.

Overhead wires

8.31 Ten out of the 15 Character Areas in the Ashdon Character Assessments 2020 reported "*Overhead cables on poles detract significantly from historic rural setting in some locations.*" This includes the Conservation Areas, and in several Lanes and Ends. This is especially true at Crown Hill where, apart from this, the built form is unchanged since pre-utility times. (Also highlighted by Ashdon Conservation Area Appraisal 2013)

Community Aspiration 2 - Overhead Wires

Seek opportunities to route overhead wires underground to improve streetscape where feasible; this might be particularly relevant where new development is proposed or if significant repair is required.

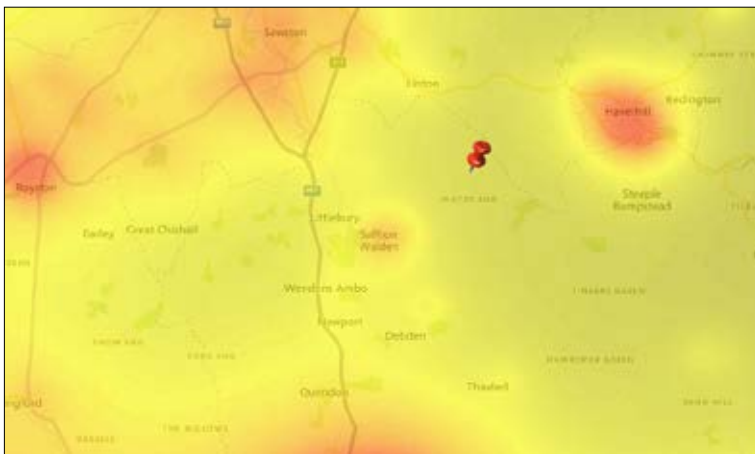


Light pollution

8.32 Many residents want to maintain the rural nature of the village and prevent light pollution and increasing urbanisation. In the December 2020 public consultation questionnaire 87.9% of respondents felt that unnecessary light pollution should be avoided in order to preserve the dark skies of Ashdon. Any new dwelling or alteration to an existing dwelling should ensure that lighting is kept to a minimum to avoid light spillage. While ensuring that new developments are secure in terms of occupier and vehicle safety, dark skies are to be preferred over lighting. This is particularly sensitive in elevated positions.



Source: 2016 New World Atlas of Sky Brightness (www.lightpollution.info)



Light pollution data for Ashdon (marked by pin). Zenith sky brightness info (2015)
 Coordinates 52.05642, 0.31252
 SQM 21.14 mag./arc sec²
 Brightness 0.378 mcd/m² Artif. bright.
 207 μcd/m² Ratio 1.21 Bortle class 4
 Elevation 72 meters

8.33 Paragraph 185 (c) of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should: *"limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation."* Artificial lighting of development, while increasing security, can also impact upon residential amenity, the character and appearance of an area (particularly rural locations) and the environment. Aspects such as poor design, location or the expulsion of unnecessarily high levels of light can also have a harmful impact. Proposals for lighting in developments will only be supported where they have been designed to minimise wider light pollution and its impact on residential amenity and the wider "dark skies" environment.

POLICY ASH8 - LIGHT POLLUTION

Any future outdoor lighting systems should have a minimum impact on the environment, minimising light pollution and adverse effects on wildlife, subject to highway safety, the needs of particular individuals or groups, and security. Schemes should reduce the consumption of energy by promoting efficient outdoor lighting technologies, keeping the night-time skies dark and reducing glare.

Excessive glazing in elevated positions should be avoided if this results in light spillage beyond the site.

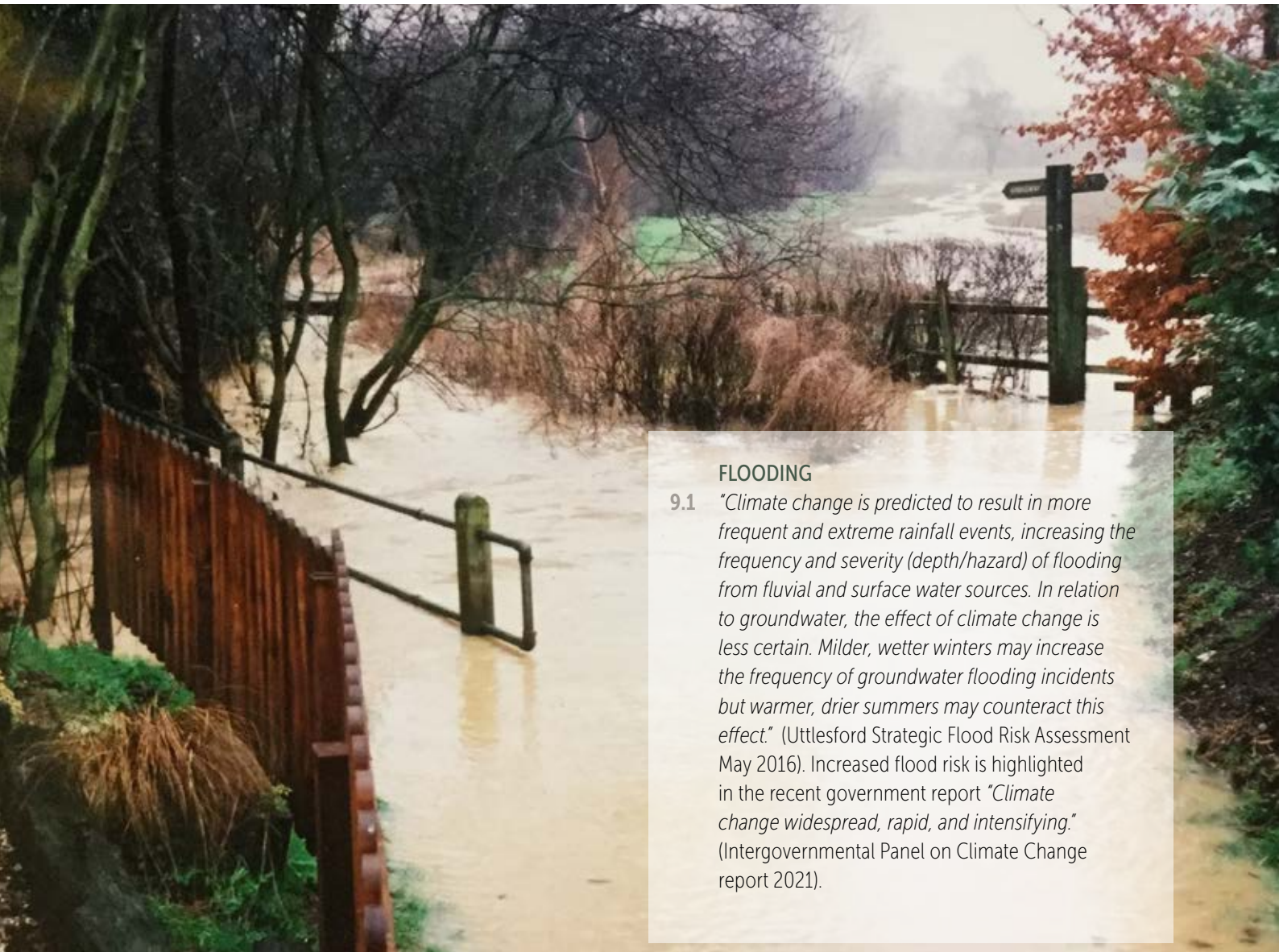
9. CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY

Objectives

The Neighbourhood Plan (NP) will address the challenge of climate change at our Parish level. As part of this it will anticipate the impact of increased frequency of heavy rainfall when planning for flood management solutions for the village.

The NP will aim for new development to have a low carbon footprint (covering energy demand, building materials, construction process etc) and support innovative solutions.

The NP will plan to maintain and promote local ecosystems to protect wildlife, trees and hedgerows



FLOODING

9.1 *“Climate change is predicted to result in more frequent and extreme rainfall events, increasing the frequency and severity (depth/hazard) of flooding from fluvial and surface water sources. In relation to groundwater, the effect of climate change is less certain. Milder, wetter winters may increase the frequency of groundwater flooding incidents but warmer, drier summers may counteract this effect.”* (Uttlesford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment May 2016). Increased flood risk is highlighted in the recent government report *“Climate change widespread, rapid, and intensifying.”* (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report 2021).

- 9.2 There is a long history of flooding in Ashdon, mainly associated with the River Bourne as the river flows through the village. Flood Zones 2 and 3 run through the centre of Ashdon as illustrated on **Map 13**. The topography of the river valley means that surface water run-off and ground water saturation run directly into the watercourse in the base of the valley. There are numerous springs, some running all year and others flowing as the water table rises. Ground water seepage combines with blocked drains to exacerbate the issues. There are regular surface water flow routes, such as Church Hill and the Radwinter Road, which cause damage to the road surface.
- 9.3 Over the years residents have had to evacuate their homes for months at a time and vehicles have been written off due to the damage caused by flood events. The village is regularly cut off by flooded roads.
- 9.4 Uttlesford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2016 states that *"the downstream impact of developing Ashdon has the potential to impact flows entering River Bourne"*. This, combined with the Assessment's view that climate change will *"result in more frequent and extreme rainfall events"*, gives Ashdon residents cause for alarm. This was evidenced at the public consultation when 86.7% of residents thought that the following objective was very important: *"The NP will address the challenge of climate change at our Parish level. As part of this, it will anticipate the impact of increased frequency of heavy rainfall when planning for flood management solutions for the village."*
- 9.5 New development is only required to mitigate for any impact that it might cause and cannot be asked to rectify pre-existing flooding issues. The NPPF provides a sequential approach that should be considered when proposing the location for new development, especially housing. Generally, development in Flood Zones 2 and 3 will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. **Policy ASH9** addresses these important matters. It comments that development proposals will not be permitted, unless the applicant has satisfied the safety requirements in the Flood Risk National Planning Policy Guidance (and any successor). These include

the 'sequential test'; where needed the 'exception test' and also a site-specific flood risk assessment that addresses the characteristics of flooding and has tested an appropriate range of flood event scenarios (taking climate change into consideration). This should address as a minimum: finished floor levels; safe access and egress; an emergency flood plan; identification and provision of surface water exceedance routes; flood resilience/resistance measures; any increase in built or surfaced area; and any impact on flooding elsewhere, including sewer flooding. In a more general sense development proposals should exhibit the three main principles of flood risk, in that, they should be safe, resilient and should not increase flood risk elsewhere.

POLICY ASH9 - FLOOD RISK

Proposals for new development, or the intensification of existing development, in Flood Zones 2 and 3 should be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment and will not be permitted, unless the applicant has satisfied the safety requirements in the Flood Risk National Planning Policy Guidance (and any successor).

Proposals for all new development will be required to submit schemes appropriate to the scale of the proposal detailing how on-site drainage and water resources will be managed so as not to cause or exacerbate surface water and fluvial flooding elsewhere. Proposals should, as appropriate include the use of above-ground open Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). These could include:

- wetland and other water features, which can help reduce flood risk whilst offering other benefits including water quality, amenity/recreational areas, and biodiversity benefits; and
- rainwater and stormwater harvesting and recycling; and
- other natural drainage systems where easily accessible maintenance can be achieved.



Map 13 – Flood Zones in Ashdon

BIODIVERSITY

Protecting and enhancing our existing natural environment assets

9.6 The important wildlife habitats within the area comprise ancient woodland, semi-natural chalk grassland and the chalk stream valleys. Ancient woodland is the most biodiverse terrestrial habitat in the UK, and chalk streams are globally rare (in the UK they are concentrated in the east and south). The protection and enhancement of these natural environment assets is in accordance with Essex County Council Green Infrastructure Strategy.

9.7 There are a total of 13 wildlife sites in the Parish that are recognised to be important for nature conservation because of the specific species present and the habitat that is represented. They are:

Sites of Special Scientific Interest:

Shadwell Wood (Essex Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve) with part of Hales Wood (National Nature Reserve) SSSI, Ashdon Meadows SSSI, and Nunn Wood SSSI;

County Wildlife Sites (Local Wildlife Sites):

Bright's Wood
Hales Wood South
Little Hales Wood
Shadwell Wood West
Burnt House Meadow
Home Wood
Grigg's Grove

These County/ Wildlife Sites are designated by Uttlesford District Council (Local Wildlife Site Review, 2007)

Special Verges

One along Walden Road and two in Sprigg's Lane, Water End (all designated by Uttlesford District Council, Essex Wildlife Trust and Essex County Council).

The location of these is illustrated on **Map 14**.

Habitat protection

9.8 Paragraph 174 of the NPPF states that "*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: ... minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.*" The "*Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystems*



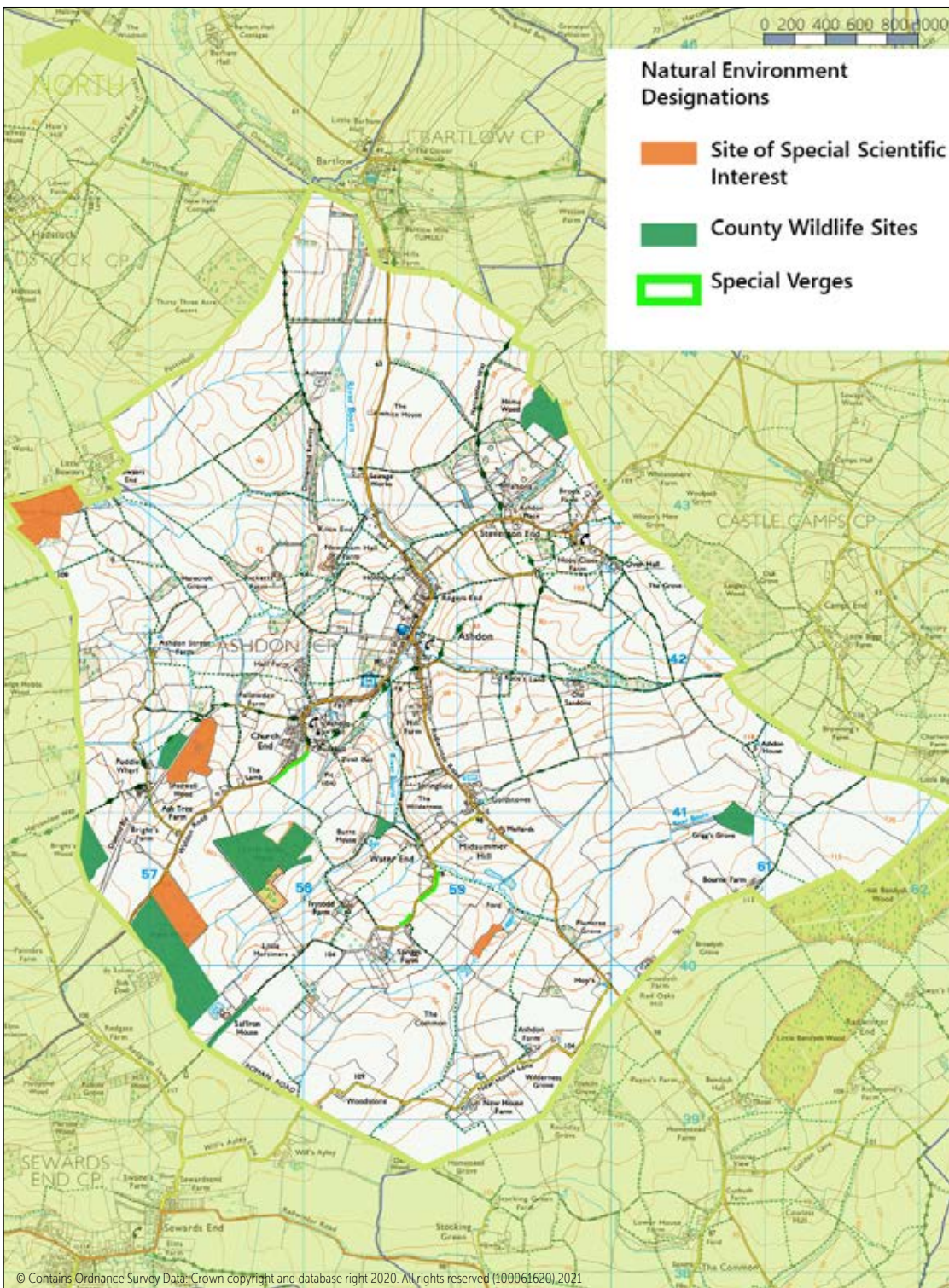
services" strategy mandates a 10% biodiversity net gain requirement on new development.

9.9 Loss of natural habitats can have a significant detrimental impact on the wider landscape and on opportunities for maintaining and improving the biodiversity of the area. Any loss of features such as trees, hedgerows or ponds as part of a development will therefore be resisted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the resultant benefits of the development outweigh such a loss. In such circumstances, a mitigation scheme will be required as part of the proposal that provides the equivalent or better features on site.

Green corridors

9.10 In the second public consultation 96.9% of respondents thought that the Neighbourhood Plan should seek to maintain and enhance the connectivity of all green corridors (providing a means of travel and a breeding ground for wildlife). Wildlife green corridors include all linear features, such as verges, grassland, hedgerows and woodland, that provide wildlife with connectivity and a relief from the highly managed, species-poor agricultural landscape.

9.11 Vital to the rural landscape of Ashdon is the sinuous vegetation of the valley of the River Bourne and its tributaries which penetrates deep into the settlement providing corridors of green for the enjoyment of wildlife and residents alike. In the agricultural landscape ancient trees and hedgerows are scattered between the patches of woodland, dividing the fields, lining the Rights of Way and the river valleys, and reinforcing the feeling of a rural and unspoilt landscape.



Map 14 – Designated Natural Environment Assets

9.12 There are unbroken green corridors from the Museum south along the river to Water End and beyond, along Kate's Lane and its stream, and along Rectory and Dorvis Lanes. These, and the ancient hedgerows with regular mature trees, provide areas easily accessed for recreation, and benefit wildlife.

dispersal and mixing with neighbouring populations; this is essential for a healthy and sustainable ecosystem. The bridleway which follows the valley of the Bourne underneath the trees to Water End (Rock Lane) is one of the most ancient and well used Rights of Way in the Parish.

9.13 It is essential that the biodiversity of the Parish is able to spread along wildlife-friendly corridors to allow for



9.14 Uttlesford District Council's Wildlife Review (2007), together with Essex Wildlife Trust, identified chains of semi-natural habitat where the dispersal of species is likely to occur more freely than in other parts of the District. One of the chains identified included Shadwell to Hales Wood where a 'bridge' could be created to link the woodlands with belts of new planting or the strengthening of existing hedgerows, and the creation of permanent grassland headlands adjacent to important road verge grassland strips. As noted above, a 'Special Verge' is already designated along the Walden Road on this side of Ashdon.

9.15 Wildlife corridors and ecosystems can be enhanced by improving recognition and management of these areas, and by new planting to widen the corridor and provide vegetation of varying types and ages. The Bourne valley sides have been sown with grass to mitigate river pollution and flooding; this has widened the corridor and had noticeable benefits for barn owls and hares.

Fragments of Chalk Grassland

9.16 Verges are chalk grassland remnants. They are managed for wildlife and also act as wildlife corridors. Lowland meadows of chalk grassland once covered much of the landscape. Sadly, now only remnants of chalk grassland remain in the Parish, although it is perhaps the habitat that has a genuine chance of being recreated with the correct management. Burnt House meadow is a recognised local wildlife site which is also chalk grassland.

POLICY ASH10 – BIODIVERSITY AND HABITATS

Development proposals should avoid the loss of, or substantial harm to, important trees, hedgerows, wildlife corridors and other natural features including the chalk stream and ponds.

Where such losses or harm is unavoidable:

- i. the benefits of the development proposal must be demonstrated to clearly outweigh any impacts; and
- ii. suitable mitigation measures, that may include equivalent or better replacement of the lost features, will be required.

Mitigation proposals should form an integral part of the design and layout of any proposal, and that development will be landscape-led having appropriate regard to its setting, context and ongoing management.

Where new access is created, or an existing access widened through an existing hedgerow, a new hedgerow of native species shall be planted on the splay returns into the site to maintain the appearance and continuity of hedgerows in the vicinity.

Proposals will be supported where they integrate improvements to biodiversity which will secure a measurable net gain as part of the design through, for example,

- a) the creation of new natural habitats including ponds;
- b) the planting of additional native trees and hedgerows (reflecting the character of Ashdon's traditional trees and hedgerows);
- c) the installation of bird and bat boxes; and
- d) restoring and repairing fragmented wildlife networks.

Community Aspiration 3 - Verge Management

Encourage Essex County Council (Essex Highways) to mow all verges after flowers and grasses have seeded (unless considered a road safety risk), thereby promoting development of new flora-rich verges and increasing biodiversity during the growing season.

Community Aspiration 4 - Tree Preservation Orders

To extend the number of Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) to more of the important trees in the Parish.

Community Aspiration 5 - New Hedgerows

Encourage the planting of new native hedges



POLICY ASH11 - CHALK STREAMS PROTECTION

Proposals that would result in additional surface water run-off into the chalk streams (River Bourne and its tributaries) will not be supported unless accompanied by a watercourse and surface water drainage appraisal and commensurate measures which will avoid and/or mitigate contamination of the watercourse.

Community Aspiration 6 - Chalk Streams

The Parish Council to connect with the Cam Valley Forum and with landowners to monitor and improve the quality of the spring-fed River Bourne.



Development and run-off into the River Bourne

9.17 Chalk streams are a rare habitat noted for the clarity of the water and the populations of aquatic plants, fish and invertebrates. The River Bourne is a chalk stream and sensitive to contamination from runoff. Any development proposals should be mindful of this. It is a tributary of the River Granta/Cam and is fed from a spring line and from runoff. In Ashdon the streams are not always in the best condition due to agricultural runoff and other pollutants, but there are good populations of small fish, and current and historical records of the declining brown trout. Poor irregular management of adjacent woodland is not helpful as too much shade and debris are counter indicated.

9.18 The watercourse ecosystem supports specialized birds and mammals, most notably kingfishers are a regular and exciting sight, and the recently resurgent otter may also be in the valleys.

9.19 The importance of the chalk streams in the wider local area is now being recognized – in 2021 the Government created a Chalk Streams Working Group following pressure from our neighbours – South Cambridgeshire MP, Water Resources East (<https://wre.org.uk/>) and the Cam Valley Forum (<https://camvalleyforum.uk/>).



10. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Objectives

Promote health and wellbeing of the community by protecting and improving opportunities for outdoor recreational activities

Promote maintenance and enhancement of local facilities, clubs and societies.



10.1 Ashdon is a vibrant community with clubs, community groups, and various organizations and individuals creating a village calendar containing a wide variety of events and activities. Many of these rely on the provision of services and indoor spaces that are maintained in the village and, indeed, on a healthy supply of volunteers. The main issues for groups that operate in community buildings is difficulty in finding available times that suit (especially in buildings that have a separate 'main' function), inadequate size of the space and lack of adequate storage for equipment. Loss of facilities and inadequate provision for young people were also mentioned in the public consultation responses.

Assets of Community Value

10.2 There are the following community assets in Ashdon Parish:-

1. Rose and Crown Public House
2. Ashdon Windmill
3. Allotment gardens

Indoor community spaces

10.3 The Trustees or management committee of the various venues were asked to complete a short consultation questionnaire (December 2020). The results of this consultation are summarised in the Indoor Community Space Consultation Questionnaire document, which records the average usage of each space, a summary of the management structure and funding support for the venue, and an indication of their aims with respect to enhanced provision of community space in the future.

10.4 In summary, although there are several significant indoor community spaces in Ashdon, some historic and others much newer, most are quite constrained in the service that can be offered to the village. A major issue which was highlighted is the limited capacity and the absence of adequate storage space, mainly for sports equipment and catering needs (furniture and tableware).



Local Services

10.5 Concern and comments about essential local facilities were expressed by many residents. Particularly the village shop (now closed) and the pub (recently closed). The village does have a thriving commercial plant nursery, a limited mobile Post Office service (1 hour per week) and two service garages. Currently plans for a new shop/hub are underway and the pub has recently reopened.

POLICY ASH12 – VILLAGE SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Proposals that would result in the loss of services and facilities (or premises last used for such purposes) and which support the local community will only be supported where:

- a. it can be demonstrated that the current use is not economically viable and is not likely to become viable. Supporting financial evidence should be provided including any efforts to advertise the premises for sale for a minimum of 12 months; and
- b. it can be demonstrated, through evidenced research, that there is no local demand for the use and that the building/site is not needed for any alternative social, community or leisure use; or
- c. alternative facilities and services are available, or replacement provision is made, of at least equivalent standard, in a location that is accessible to the community it serves with good access by public transport or by cycling or walking.

Proposals for the enhancement of the existing services and facilities will be supported subject to there being no significant adverse impact on the natural and historic environment, infrastructure and the amenity of residents.

Community Aspiration 7 - Village Shop

To secure the relocation and re-opening of a village shop/village hub

Community Aspiration 8 - Reopening the Pub

To support viable plans for the Pub that protect the Listed Building and continue to maintain its function as the village pub.

Open green spaces

- 10.6** Green spaces in the village are an important part of Ashdon's character and should continue to be valued and protected. 98.8% of respondents regarded this objective as very important or fairly important, with 83.6% regarding it as very important. The open green spaces in Ashdon are highly valued by the community and form a vital part of the amenities available for the leisure time and well-being of the residents.

- 10.7** In the December 2020 public consultation questionnaire 61.9% of respondents thought that there is a lack of facilities for children and young people in the Parish. Other comments suggested in the context of playing fields that there wasn't sufficient provision for older children - tennis and/or basketball court.

- 10.8** There are two play areas in the village:

- Rectory Lane - play equipment for under 16s. Open space for ball games (football nets and a basketball net are provided).
- All Saints' - playground equipment for young children, an outdoor gym, picnic area, and basketball net

In addition, there is a football field and cricket pitch, both on privately owned land, available to local clubs.

Community Aspiration 9 - Rectory Lane Playing Field

Improved access to Rectory Lane Playing field to allow step-free access for push chairs and wheelchairs. This is of particular importance to allow equality of access for the physically disadvantaged.

Community Aspiration 10 - Outdoor Community Spaces

To encourage use and enhancement of existing outdoor community spaces, and support creation of additional outdoor spaces.





Local Green Spaces

10.9 The NPPF enables the designation and protection of land of particular importance to local communities as Local Green Spaces ('LGS') in neighbourhood plans. Such designations rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Paragraph 102 of the NPPF states that the designation should only be used where the green space is:

- in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
- 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
- local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

It is recognised that the designation of Local Green Space should not be used simply to block development.

10.10 A separate Local Green Space Appraisal has been undertaken as part of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, which demonstrates how certain local spaces meet the criteria in paragraph 102 of the NPPF. The spaces that meet the criteria are identified in **Policy ASH13** and are illustrated on the Policies Map.

10.11 The identification of these spaces as LGS means that development is restricted to that which has to be demonstrated as being essential for the site, in line with the Green Belt policies defined by the NPPF. Permitted development rights, including the operational requirements of infrastructure providers, are not affected by this designation. **Policy ASH13** follows the matter-of-fact approach in the NPPF. In the event that development proposals come forward on the local green spaces within the Plan period, they can be assessed on a case-by-case basis by Uttlesford District Council. In particular, it will be able to make an informed judgement on the extent to which the proposal concerned demonstrates the 'very special circumstances' required by the policy'

POLICY ASH13 – LOCAL GREEN SPACES

The following Local Green Spaces are designated in this Plan and identified on the Policies Map.

Village Core, Rectory Lane and Radwinter Road

1. Children's play area with equipment, green space and picnic area off Rectory Lane
2. Wildflower meadow - Beeches Nursery
3. War memorial and picnic area with trees and benches
4. Allotments
5. Banks and flat, entrance to Carters Croft
6. Donkey Field /Bidwells meadow with Millennium Oak

Church End

7. Children's play area with equipment
8. Picnic area and amenity space
9. Green space with fitness trail and multi-use games area (MUGA)
10. Church End Green, Guildhall Way verges and bus shelter triangle
11. Churchyard

Steventon End

12. Steventon End Green
13. Curtilage of windmill

Development proposals within the designated local green spaces will only be supported in very special circumstances.

(the numbers in the Policy relate to the numbers on the Policies Map).

11. HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY

Objective

Promote a vibrant community in which it is easier to get around - both within the community and in and out of the village

11.1 The Neighbourhood Plan can do little to influence public transport provision or speeding traffic, but we can lobby for improvements. However, we continue to be supportive of any initiative that encourages sustainable transport. We can support some specific initiatives.

Traffic, pavements and connectivity

11.2 65% of questionnaires from the first public consultation listed traffic as an issue for Ashdon with traffic being mentioned as a particular issue by all age groups. The following issues were highlighted:

Traffic:

- Speeding traffic- particularly Radwinter Road, Church End and Church Hill- the need for some form of traffic calming measures to ensure that the 20mph and 30mph speed limits are adhered to.

- Ashdon has become a rat-run for traffic to and from Stansted airport, Haverhill and Cambridge.
- Large lorries using our narrow country roads are contributing to the erosion of our verges and sunken lanes.
- Traffic around the school at school drop off and pick up is problematic due to lack of parking facilities at the school.

Pavements and lighting:

- Lack of pavements - specifically pavements are needed outside Clayes, Church Hill to connect Church End with Ashdon village core, Bartlow Road and Radwinter Road
- Poor repair of existing pavements – notably Radwinter Road
- Poor street lighting at the exit to Carters Croft and at Collier Row.

Map 15 highlights the current speed limits in the village and the traffic speeding black spots where current speed limits are frequently ignored, and pedestrians feel unsafe.

11.3 Requests were made for additional pavements in areas of the village where speeding traffic was felt



to be particularly bad, and pedestrians felt most vulnerable. This makes walking on the road, often with young children and prams, extremely dangerous.

Churchfields and All Saints development to the Ashdon village core including the school)

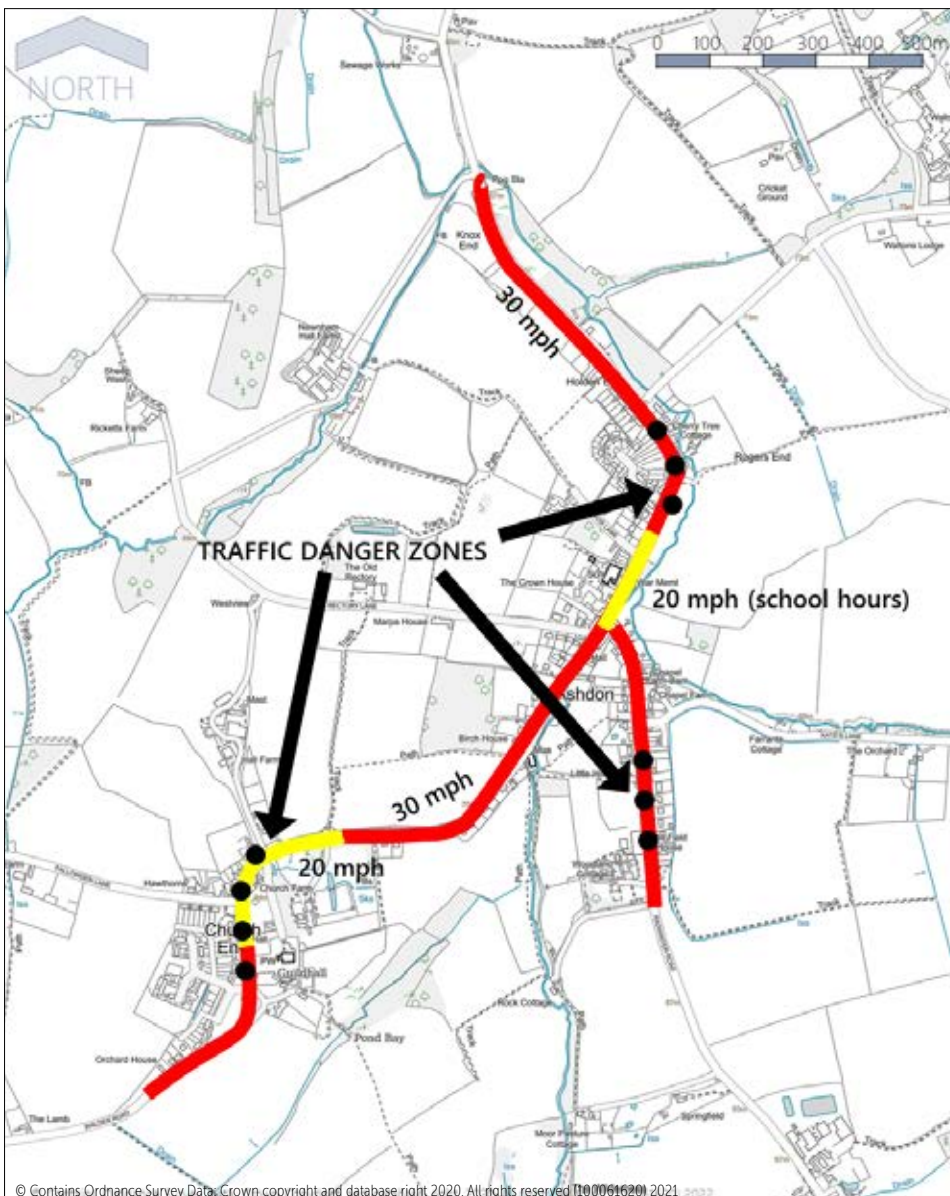
- 87.4% of respondents were in favour of a new pavement outside Clays.

11.4 As part of the second public consultation, a specific question was asked on areas mentioned most often in the first public consultation as needing a pavement :-

- 95.1% of respondents were in favour of a path that connects Church End and Church Hill avoiding the dangerous bend by the All Saints Church (the provision of such a pavement would improve the connectivity of the

11.5 In addition the following areas were mentioned by respondents as areas where a safe pavement is needed due to volume, speed and size of traffic:-

1. Radwinter Road up to the children’s nursery
2. Bartlow Road- Rogers End towards Camps Road (to Steventon End)
3. Bartlow Road- opposite old Bricklayers Arms – Holden End
4. Steventon End to the village



Map 15 - Current speed limits and traffic danger zones

11.6 However, comments were also made on not 'urbanising' the rural environment with too many pavements. Traffic calming measures may be more appropriate where pavements are not possible (Radwinter Road) or where pavements may create a too 'urbanising' effect (road to Steventon End).

Community Aspiration 11 - Traffic and movement around the village

Parish Council to seek to work with the County Council to:-

- increase the pavement links in the village
- install sensitively designed traffic calming measures on Church Hill blind bend, Crown Hill, Radwinter Road, Holden and Rogers End and road to Steventon End in consultation with residents and local farmers and businesses
- seek to repair pavements on Radwinter Road

Public Rights of Way

11.7 Ashdon Parish has a very extensive network of footpaths and bridleways. In our public consultations there was very strong support for this access to the countryside; the paths were widely mentioned as being a key aspect of the pleasure of living in Ashdon with 40% of respondents specifically mentioning this network. Whilst it is extensive, its use for 'the daily



POLICY ASH14 - PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Any new development on or adjacent to an existing Public Right of Way or which is clearly visible from a Public Right of Way must consider the appearance of the proposal from the Right of Way and, as appropriate to the relationship between the development and the Public Right of Way, incorporate green landscaping to reduce any visual impacts.

Enhancements or extensions to the network, for example through improving accessibility or connectivity, will be supported and may be required where a scheme is likely to increase usage.

commute' or to access services is limited due to the rural nature of these routes some of which are impassable in the wetter months without the correct footwear and change of footwear when reaching the destination!

11.8 The paths are very well used, and generally well maintained, although on occasion widths become restricted due to overgrown vegetation. During the Pandemic the use of the footpaths increased substantially, and many residents have emphasised how important this has been for their health and mental well-being. There are numerous studies of the psychological benefits on mental health of spending time in a green space. Social prescribing is a relatively new idea in which working in woodlands and the green landscape is prescribed by doctors to combat depression and loneliness. In addition, studies show that trees accelerate patient recovery (<https://nhsforest.org/evidencebenefits>), promote community health, and can be used in healthcare prevention.

The Lanes, including Protected Lanes

11.9 The 2005 Local Plan identified and protected certain byways and narrow enclosed high-banked lanes across the District as they are important elements in the character of the countryside. Currently, New House Lane is the only lane in Ashdon that was reconfirmed with protected status at the last review by Uttlesford District Council in 2012. It is a narrow winding lane with verges of wildflowers and wide-



ranging views due to its elevated position on the edge of the Parish.

- 11.10** Radwinter Road previously had Protected Status but, despite scoring highly on historic/settlement/aesthetic features and on biodiversity, it lost historic integrity (loss of hedgerows) in the 2012 review illustrating the vulnerability of even Protected lanes.
- 11.11** The sunken and historic lanes are single track and form valued features of the Parish and may be vulnerable to change as a result of new development, particularly as some of them start from the village core. They are all dead ends (apart from New House Lane) which can result in problems from vehicles passing each other and for large vehicles turning. The biodiversity (flora) on the verges in Water End Lane has been recognised by Essex Wildlife Trust with two substantial lengths of verge designated 'Special' due to the presence of nationally important flora (see the report Natural Environment and Biodiversity in the Parish of Ashdon (2021) www.ashdonplan.co.uk)
- 11.12** The Ashdon Landscape Appraisal noted that *"Protected Lane status may not in itself be enough to secure the long-term future of these important historic landscape features. Future management considerations should therefore be given to exploring options and partnerships for influencing user behaviour and applying intelligent and positive measures of highway management that will serve to encourage local journeys to be made on bicycle or foot, and for recreation, and reduce the impact of vehicles on the historic fabric of lanes, whilst maintaining their local character."*
- 11.13** In the December 2020 public consultation questionnaire specific questions were asked about the Lanes and 93.3% of respondents supported designating Rectory Lane and Dorvis Lane as Protected Lanes. These two lanes start from the village core and their integrity as historic lanes is largely intact with high banking and ancient hedgerows and mature trees.

POLICY ASH15 – PROTECTED LANES

Proposals that would have an adverse environmental impact upon Protected Lanes, as defined on the Proposals Map, including eroding their character will not be supported. Any proposals which would give rise to a material increase in the amount of traffic using Protected Lanes will not be supported.

- 11.14** Residents were also asked if other lanes should be protected and the response was overwhelming, basically such that all lanes in the Parish were mentioned. Clearly to designate all lanes would water-down the meaning and purpose of designation but, notwithstanding this, it is essential that their rural character is not diminished through the loss of hedgerows and an over-engineered solution to highways problems.
- 11.15** The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect the specific lanes and byways by preserving, as far as possible, the trees and hedgerows, banks, ditches and verges which contribute to their character, and by resisting development proposals which have a detrimental effect upon them.

Community Aspiration 12 - Increase the Protection of the Lanes

The Parish Council will:

- i. seek the appropriate management of verges from erosion through increased traffic and large vehicles;
- ii. where possible protect verges from erosion by vehicles and, enhance biodiversity with season appropriate mowing and management (also helps wildlife in hedges);
- iii. seek extensions to the Special Verge designation with Essex County Council;
- iv. consider installing regular posts to prevent vehicles riding up the banks;
- v. seek to increase the number of protected lanes.



Public transport

11.16 79.5% of respondents to the first public consultation questionnaire raised sustainable transport matters for Ashdon. 19.2% mentioned the lack of sustainable transport options with the reliance on the car to get to work, college and local facilities. The lack of an effective bus service is a key issue for the Parish. In the second public consultation questionnaire, specific questions were asked to assess the usage of the current bus service. The results confirmed that the current bus service did not provide an effective means of transport to and from the Parish. No respondent used the current bus service every day; only 4.3% used it weekly and a staggering 95.7% have never used the service.

- 11.17** The following reasons were cited as enablers to use the service more often:-
1. Needs to be more frequent and reliable
 2. Needs to cover commuting hours to Saffron Walden, Audley End and Cambridge
 3. More services to Saffron Walden in the middle of the day to allow a 2 or 3 hour trip
 4. Affordability needs to be improved
 5. More bus stops
 6. Better timetable
 7. New service to Cambridge Park and Ride or to Linton to connect with Bus 13 to Cambridge/ Haverhill

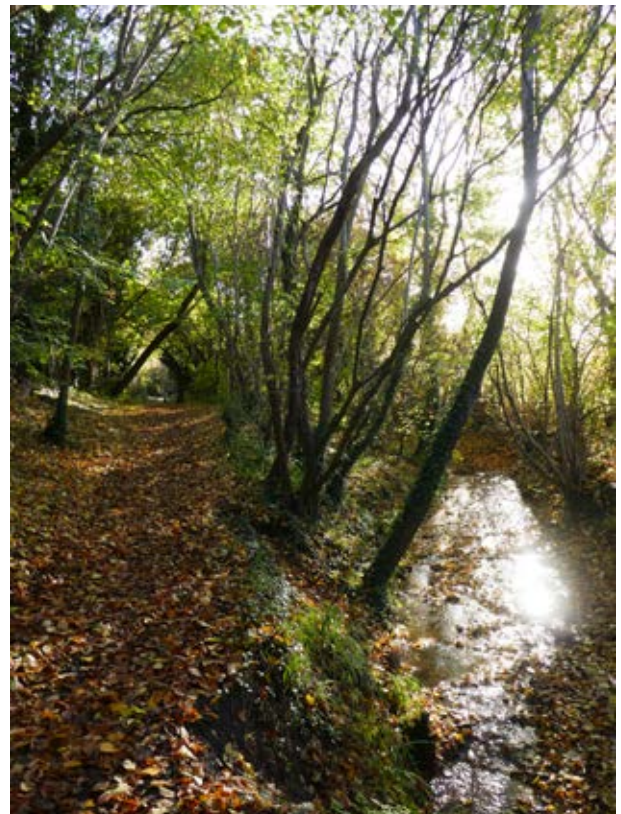
11.18 Ashdon is, in effect, a Parish which has 100% car dependency for access to public services and facilities. Smaller buses were suggested to make a service more economical to run. But until such a service is deemed economically viable Ashdon will continue to remain rurally isolated as far as public transport is concerned.

Cycle routes

11.19 In the second public consultation 87.1% of respondents were supportive of an off-road cycle route from Ashdon to Saffron Walden with 63.6% saying they would actually use the route for the following purposes:-

Commuting to work	5.7%
Shopping	35.2%
Social and Leisure	21.3%
Fitness	37.7%

11.20 The Harcamlow Way may be a possible route for such a cycle route in the future but a lot of work will be needed to bring such a route to fruition. In particular, the views of local landowners need to be gathered and considered as well as those of potential users.



12. EMPLOYMENT

Objective

Promote and enhance local employment opportunities

- 12.1** At the first public consultation it was flagged that working locally would reduce traffic and carbon footprint. In the second consultation 84% of respondents were supportive of encouraging more local employment opportunities.
- 12.2** There are very few employers within the Parish. Community engagement during the preparation of the Plan shows that only 9.4% residents work within Ashdon and 16.9% within ten minutes of Ashdon. However, a growing number of people are working from home at least for some of the time with around 50% of those responding saying that this will continue post COVID-19 Pandemic. The installation of superfast broadband to the rest of the Parish should continue to make homeworking more feasible going forward. Some farms have diversified over time and no longer focus solely on agricultural enterprise.
- 12.3** There may be some scope for further commercial development utilising and converting agricultural buildings. However, where new buildings are proposed, it is important that they reflect the rural and agricultural building styles typically found in the area.
- 12.4** Such change of use can change the character of the landscape, especially where floodlighting is required. Where such proposals require planning permission, careful consideration will be given to the potential impact of the development on the wider landscape and the potential for light pollution in the countryside.



POLICY ASH16 - FARM DIVERSIFICATION

Proposals for new business development in redundant farm buildings will be supported where the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on residential amenity, heritage assets and the highways network.













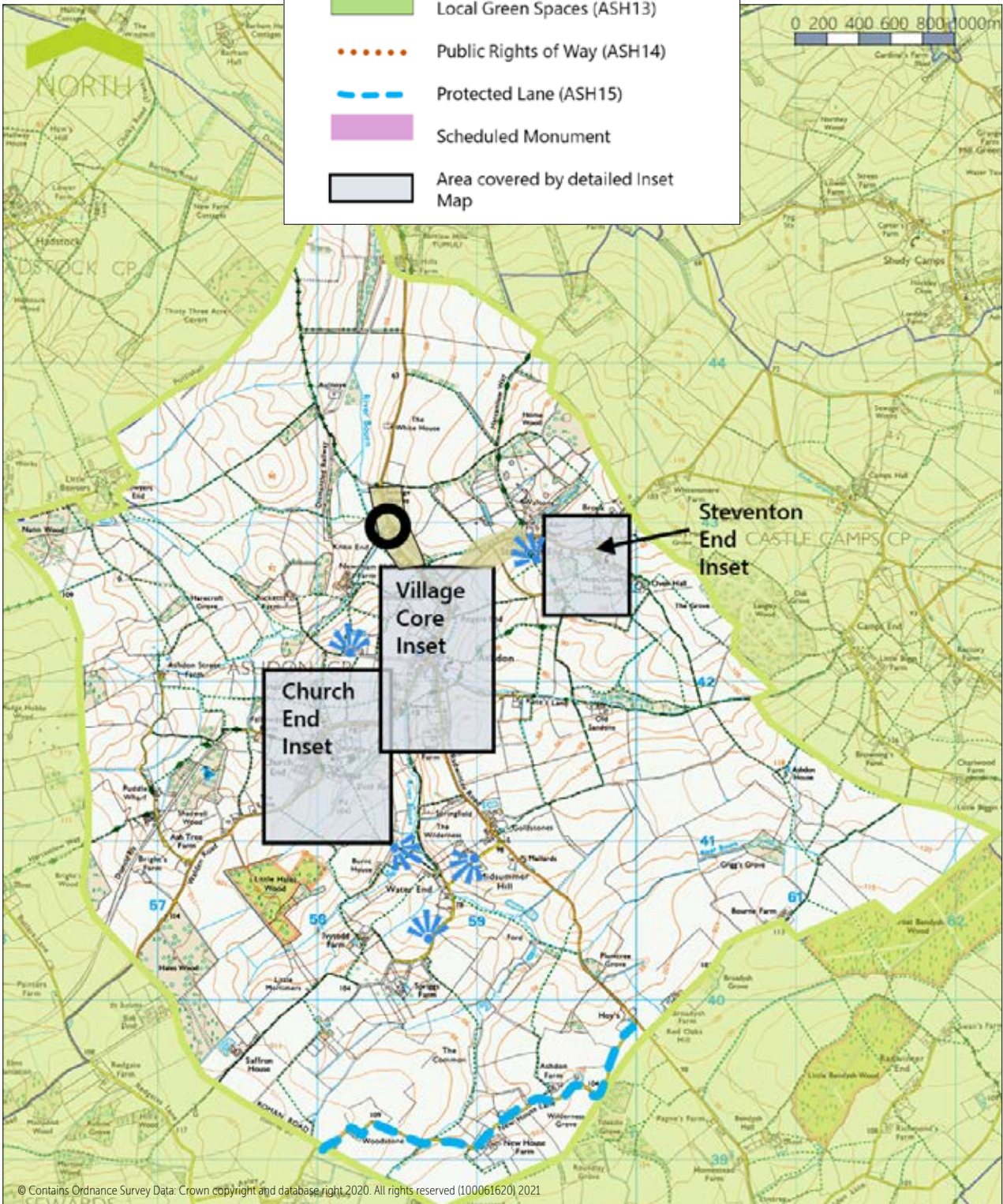
Tourism

- 12.5** The extensive network of footpaths and bridleways across the Parish encourages an increasing number of walkers/riders/tourists into the Parish. The excellent plant nursery, the village museum and the windmill all attract visitors. Passing cyclists also are frequent visitors to the Parish. The village features in various books on local history and is now being seriously regarded as the site of the Battle of Assandun 1016. The Harcamlow Way passes through the Parish and Shadwell Wood is open as a Nature Reserve. Ashdon events such as open gardens attract many visitors annually. Additional service employment could be provided if visitors could help to support local facilities such as a village hub and the village pub.
- 12.6** Some 74% of respondents to the second consultation were supportive of promoting Ashdon Parish as a destination for visitors if this might help local businesses and provide more facilities for residents and visitors.

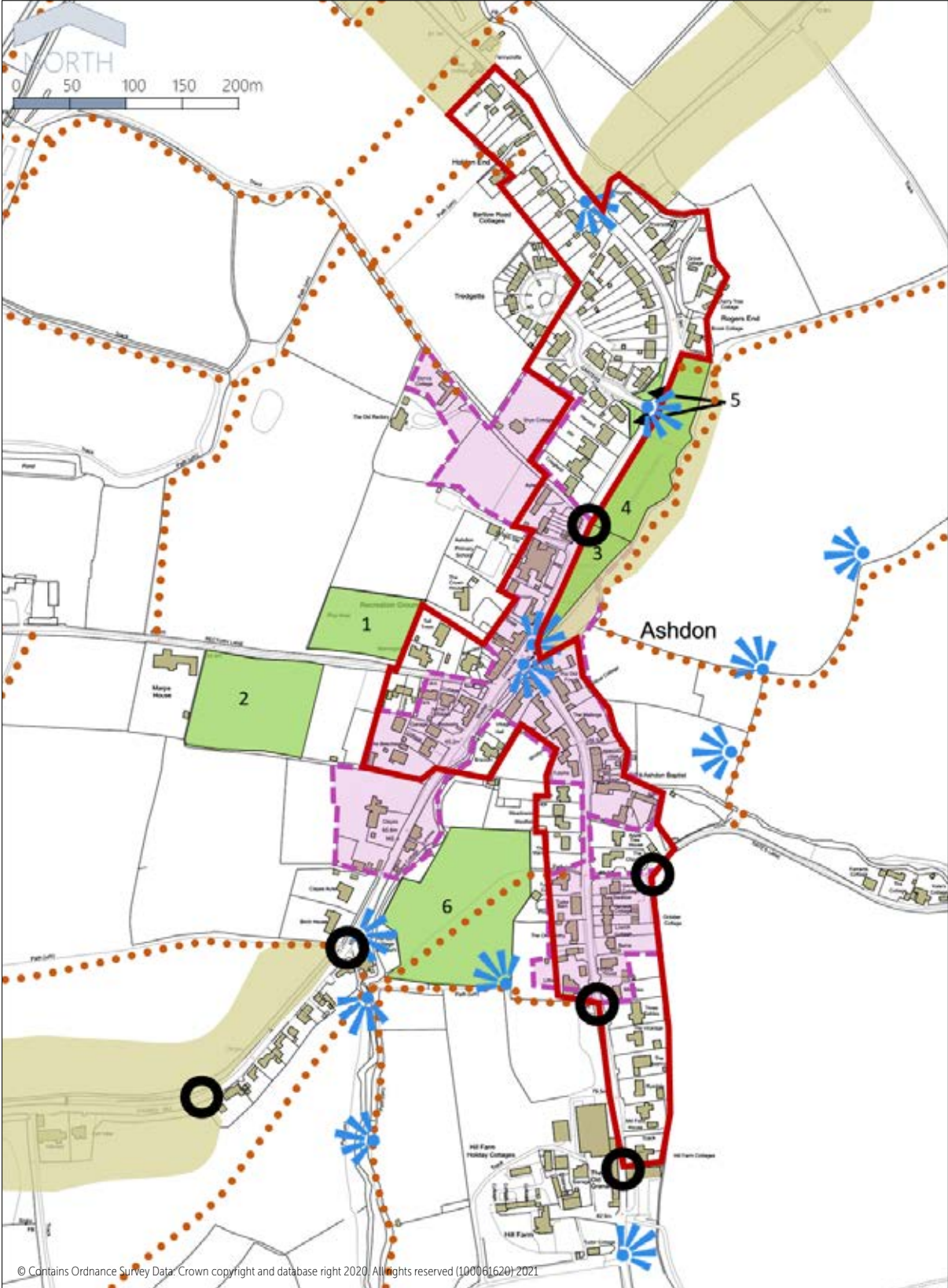
POLICIES MAP

Policies & Inset Maps Key

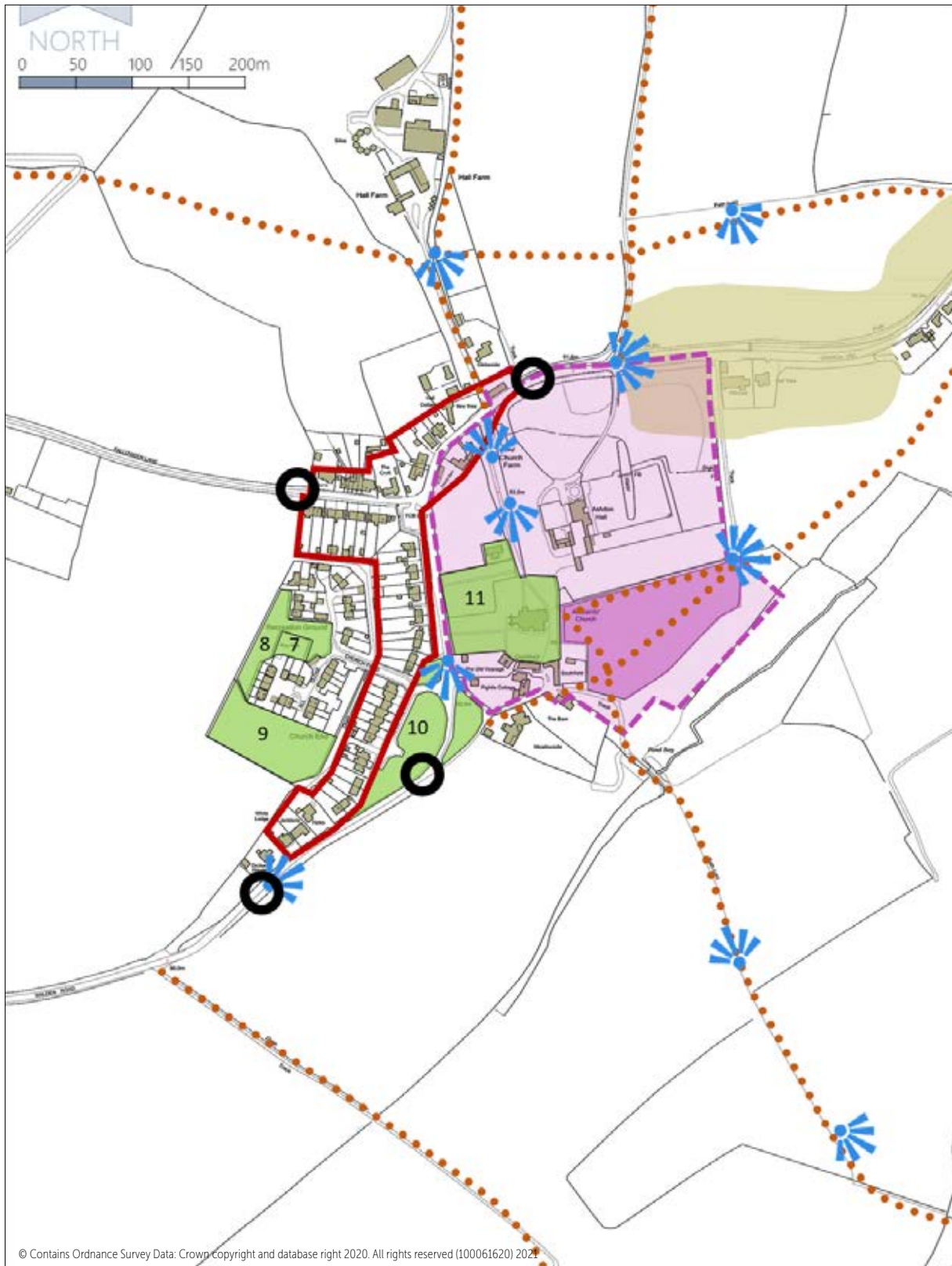
-  Development Limits (ASH1)
-  Important Views (ASH4, ASH7)
-  Settlement Gaps (ASH5, ASH7)
-  Conservation Area (ASH6)
-  Gateways (ASH7)
-  Local Green Spaces (ASH13)
-  Public Rights of Way (ASH14)
-  Protected Lane (ASH15)
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Area covered by detailed Inset Map



VILLAGE CORE INSET MAP



CHURCH END INSET MAP



STEVENTON END INSET MAP



APPENDIX 1: LISTED HERITAGE BUILDINGS, LOCAL HERITAGE LISTING AND ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE

Statutory Listed Buildings in Ashdon (www.historicengland.co.uk) The entries below are as they appear in the Historic England list; Steventon End is the correct spelling of the location of some buildings, not Stevington. Several properties are now known by different names from those used in this list.

Grading	Location
I	Church of All Saints, Church End
II*	Guildhall, Church End
II	The Rectory, Rectory Lane
II	Deans Cottage, Rock Lane, Water End
II	Bridge Cottages, Rock Lane, Water End
II	Springs, Rock Lane, Water End
II	Walts Cottage, Stevington End
II	Keepers Cottage, Stevington End
II	Place Farm farmhouse, Stevington End
II	Barn to south west of Place Farm armhouse fronting road, Stevington End
II	Stable block to south of new house, Waltons Park, Stevington End
II	Stable to south west of the New House and the flat to south west of the new house, 3 Stevington End
II	Newnham Hall
II	Barn to south west of Newham Hall
II	Spriggs Farmhouse
II	Juniper, Bartlow Road
II	Penny Crofts, Bartlow Road, Holden End
II	Grove Cottage, Bartlow Road, Rogers End
II	Thristalls, Bartlow Road
II	Aylwards, Dorvis Lane
II	The Cottage, Kates Lane
II	Ashdon Post Office, 5 Main Road Crown Hill Cottages 1 2 and 4 Main Road
II	The Clayes, Main Road
II	Abercorn Villas, 3 Radwinter Road
II	Goldstones, Radwinter Road
II	Tudor Croft, Radwinter Road
II	Former Hoys Farmhouse to west of Redoaks, Radwinter Road
II	Ashdon Street Farmhouse
II	All Saints Cottage, Bartlow Road, Holden End
II	Polly Cottage, Bartlow Road, Holden End
II	Mansard, Bartlow Road, Knox End
II	Cherry Tree Cottage, Bartlow Road, Rogers End
II	Old Vicarage, Church End

Grading	Location
II	Church Farmhouse, Church End
II	Dorvis Cottage, Dorvis Lane
II	Ashdon Conservative Club, Main Road
II	Redwells, Main Road
II	The Old Fox, Radwinter Road
II	Abercorn Villas, 1 And 2 Radwinter Road
II	Turpins, Radwinter Road
II	Barn to south of Tudor Croft fronting road, Radwinter Road
II	Summer Hill, Radwinter Road
II	Walton's Cottages 1 And 2, Waltons Park, Stevington End
II	Wall and archway linking Numbers 1 and 2 Walton's Cottages and Stable Block to south of the new house, Waltons Park, Stevington End
II	Barn To north west of Woodstone, Newhouse Lane
II	New House Farm, New House Farm Lane
II	Springfield, Radwinter Road
II	K6 Telephone Kiosk, Crown Hill
II	The Croft, Fallowden Road, Church End
II	Barn 35 metres south west of Goldstones, Radwinter Road
II	Windmill, Stevington End
II	Chapel Farmhouse, Radwinter Road
II	The Bricklayers Arms Public House, Bartlow Road, Rogers End
II	Archers, Main Road
II	Thatchings, Radwinter Road
II	The Old Smithy, Radwinter Road
II	Ricketts Farmhouse, Rectory Lane
II	Rectory barn to east of The Rectory, Rectory Lane
II	Ivytodd Farmhouse, Water End
II	4 And 5 Bartlow Road, Holden End
II	Knox Cottage, Bartlow Road, Knox End
II	Ashdon Hall, Church End
II	Rose and Crown Inn, Main Road
II	Archers Cottages, 1 And 2 Main Road
II	The Maltings, Radwinter Road
II	Ashdon War Memorial, Village Green, Church Hill

Local Heritage List (UDC 2018)

Ashdon Baptist Church and Railings, Radwinter Road Ref: 005

Ashdon primary school, Bartlow Road Ref: 006

Skye Cottage, Dorvis Lane Ref: 007

Former National School Building, now Lucy King Curtains, Church Hill Ref: 008

Additions to Local Heritage List (UDC 2nd Edition 2021)

Village Pump, Crown Hill Ref:406

The Moor Pasture Cottage (former watermill), Radwinter Road Ref: 407

Ashdon Halt, Fallowden Lane, Church End Ref: 408

Bartlow Station marker stone, Walden Road Ref: 409

Directional signpost, Walden Road/Radwinter Road Ref: 410

Unlisted building of note – the old railway bridge (OS 581 435) remains in good condition in Knox End where it carries the access lane to Lang Meadows (formerly Aulnoye).

Assets of Community Value

All Assets are in the Parish of Ashdon and are listed because 'The current use furthers the social wellbeing or interests of the local community' (Officer Comment)

Rose and Crown Public House, Crown Hill	Public House
Ashdon Windmill and car park, Steventon End	Windmill and car park (tourist attraction)
Allotment Gardens	Allotments

GLOSSARY

Affordable housing: The NPPF defines affordable housing as “*housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:*” Definitions are set out for a) affordable housing for rent; b) starter homes; c) discounted market sales housing; and d) other affordable routes to home ownership.

Archaeological interest: There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.

Asset of Community Value: Land and/or property of importance to a local community which is subject to additional protection from development under the Localism Act 2011. The District Council holds the Register and local communities. A building or piece of land is an asset of community value if it is at least partly within Uttlesford district and its main use has recently been to further the social wellbeing or social interest of the local community and it could do so in the future.

Best and most versatile agricultural land: Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.

Biodiversity: Describes the range and variety of living organisms within an ecosystem. It can include all living organisms, plants, animals, fungi and bacteria and is often used to indicate the richness or number of species in an area. Such an area can be defined at different levels across the globe or be limited to a local area such as a parish.

Buildings of local significance: Locally important building valued for its contribution to the local scene or for local historical situations but not meriting listed status.

Conservation (for heritage policy): The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

Development Limits: These are defined in the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005. . Development Limits are a planning term and the Limits do not necessarily include all buildings within the boundary.

Development Plan: This includes adopted Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans as defined in Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Habitat: The natural home of an animal or plant often designated as an area of nature conservation interest.

Heritage asset: A term that includes designated heritage assets (for example, listed buildings, Conservation Areas, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens and battlefields) and non-designated assets identified by the local planning authority. Non-designated heritage assets include sites of archaeological interest, buildings, structures or features of local heritage interest listed by, or fulfilling criteria for listing by, the local planning authority.

Historic environment: All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

Infrastructure: The basic physical and organisational structures and facilities (for example, buildings, roads and power supplies) necessary for development to take place.

Local planning authority: The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area which in this case is Uttlesford District Council.

Local Plan: The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community.

Neighbourhood Plans: A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Open space: All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

Renewable and low carbon energy: Includes energy for heating and cooling as well as generating electricity. Renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass and deep geothermal heat. Low carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels).

Rural exception sites for affordable housing: Sites for affordable housing development in rural locations where market housing would not normally be acceptable because of planning policy constraints. Homes can be brought forward on these sites only if there is a proven unmet local need for affordable housing and a legal planning agreement is in place to ensure that the homes will always remain affordable, will be for people in housing need, and prioritised for those with a strong local connection to the Parish.

Setting of a heritage asset: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Strategic Environmental Assessment: A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) that requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Use Classes: The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as 'Use Classes'.

Wildlife corridor: A wildlife corridor is a link of wildlife habitat, generally native vegetation, which joins two or more larger areas of similar wildlife habitat, Corridors are critical for the maintenance of ecological processes including allowing for the movement of animals and the continuation of viable populations of plants and animals

Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036

Referendum Draft Plan

Ashdon Parish Council
July 2022




**ASHDON
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**