



ASHWELL

NEIGHBOURHOOD

PLAN



Regulation 16 submission

January 2021

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Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan

Regulation 16 Submission

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All hyperlinks to external documents correct as at 27-Dec-2020.

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6A Back Street, Ashwell SG7 5PE

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OUR PARISH – OUR FUTURE – OUR SAY

Foreword from the Chair of Ashwell Parish Council

The Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan ('the ANP') has been produced to make Ashwell a great place to live, now and for future generations. It covers the whole area of the Parish for the period to 2031.

The Localism Act, which came into being in November 2011, devolved greater powers to councils and neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood Plans came out of the Government's determination to ensure that local communities are closely involved in the decisions that affect them, hence the theme adopted for the ANP: Our Parish - Our Future - Our Say.

The ANP has been produced by a Working Group, acting on behalf of the Parish Council, incorporating the views of the residents of the Parish of Ashwell. This Working Group has consulted and listened to the community on a wide range of issues that will influence the wellbeing, sustainability and long-term preservation of our small rural community. Every effort has been made to make sure that the views and policies contained in the ANP reflect those of the majority of the residents of the Parish.

I am grateful, and wish to extend my sincere thanks, to the members of this Working Group who have worked tremendously hard over the past six years as well as others who have played a part in the development and production of the ANP:

Graham Lee (Group Leader), Norton Mahy (Deputy Leader), David Short, Madeleine Legg, Margaret Budgen, Ken Coyne, Will Fletcher, John Hare, Paul Harrison, Mel Hodson, John Humphries, Dave Linsley and Marcia Taylor. Also Greg Campbell, Dan Mathews, Jill Powell and Phillida Shaw all of whom, for a variety of reasons, could participate in only part of the project.

The members of the sub-groups were as follows:

- Spatial Strategy and Housing: Graham Lee, John Hare, Paul Harrison, Dave Linsley, and Marcia Taylor.
- Design and Heritage: David Short, Fergus Moynihan and Adrian Mallett.
- Natural Environment: Will Fletcher.
- Business and Economy: Graham Lee, Madeleine Legg, Greg Campbell.
- Sport, Leisure and Recreation: Mel Hodson, Michael Baldwin, Louise Bruning, Hugh Carling, Tim Moynihan, Ed Strickland.
- Health: Margaret Budgen, Madeleine Legg, Marcia Taylor.
- Education: Paul Harrison, David Short.
- Transport and Movement: Ken Coyne.

Thanks for the photos of our beautiful village must go to many people, including Roger Pritchard, David Short, Margaret Budgen, Peter John Gates and David Sims.

David Grech, who has read the text and commented upon it, has also made a valuable contribution.

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There are others within the Ashwell community who should also be thanked but are too numerous to mention. Thank you for your participation in all our surveys and also in our consultations.

By consulting with North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) and other key stakeholders, we have ensured that the ANP conforms to the objectives of the Localism Act 2011.

Once the ANP has been made, following a favourable local referendum, it will sit alongside the NHDC Local Plan. Both of these will be used when deciding where development should take place and the type and quality of that development.

Graham Lee
Chair, Ashwell Parish Council,
January 2021

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Executive summary

The Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan ('the ANP') has been developed in response to Government legislation.

Consultation via three surveys has been carried out to ensure the ANP reflects collective views on how Ashwell should develop. Moreover, the community of Ashwell has been further consulted throughout the development of the Plan to ensure their views are reflected and that the Plan can be said to have been agreed to, and adopted by, the community.

This Vision for the ANP has been agreed.

Our vision is to ensure Ashwell continues to thrive and grow as a community, whilst safeguarding the village's character. We want to ensure that growth is sustainable and the village continues to meet the needs of its people.

We want to enhance the facilities of the village to meet the challenges and changing needs of the community, to ensure that the parish remains sustainable and cohesive. Our village also needs a strong local economy and well-maintained infrastructure that supports its needs and connects the parish to the wider community.

The Plan has the following 10 Objectives to achieve this Vision:

- 1 To encourage sustainable development that reflects the needs of the village and ensures that the community can develop and evolve in an appropriate way.
- 2 To support sustainable local businesses and encourage the development of a strong local economy.
- 3 To provide recreation and sporting facilities that meet the needs of the community and reflect changing requirements.
- 4 To promote healthy communities.
- 5 To safeguard against the loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs.
- 6 To provide high quality education facilities for local children.
- 7 To ensure that the village can support the changing needs of the residents by providing improved accessibility and enhancements to key village facilities.
- 8 To conserve and enhance the historic character of the village and its rural setting.
- 9 To conserve and enhance the natural environment of the parish, its flora and its fauna.
- 10 To reduce greenhouse gas emissions by using renewable and low carbon energy technologies in new housing and infrastructure developments.

The Plan lays out 22 Policies to ensure all aspects of life within Ashwell remain in line with the Vision and these Objectives:

- POLICY ASH1 *Location of development:* Inside the village settlement boundary development that is consistent with all relevant policies and that meets Ashwell Design Statement guidelines will normally be allowed.

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Building on land that has already had some form of development, before exploiting greenfield sites, is preferred, but also subject to relevant policies and design guidelines .

Proposals to build outside the boundary are subject to rules similar to those that protect the Green Belt...

- POLICY ASH2 *Housing mix*: In the neighbourhood area there is a demand for a greater number of smaller one, two and three-bedroom dwellings at lower quartile cost (as indicated by ONS Housing datasets for the district of North Hertfordshire). The demand comes from single people, young couples, small families and older people who also need developments to be in suitable locations, close to public transport, the village centre and other amenities.

Therefore, planning applications should be for smaller dwellings (up to three bedrooms) at a cost or at a rent that is financially within the reach of these demographic categories.

Every planning application should include an explanation of how the development meets the housing needs of our parish, as defined in this section.

NHDC's rules relating to providing what is officially termed 'Affordable Housing' must be followed.

- POLICY ASH3 *Character of development*: A large part of Ashwell village lies inside a Conservation Area and it has five Local Character Areas. Development must preserve and complement the features that make this place special. Subject to that, innovative design will be supported where it clearly enhances its surroundings.
- POLICY ASH4 *Design of development*: As well as integrating with its surroundings, construction is expected to be of good quality. It should conform to the standards of design in the Ashwell Village Design Statement 2000, as amended in 2018 (Appendix E) and to other standards defined by Government or professional bodies, including the ones relating to the needs of older people.

- 1.1 POLICY ASH5 *Flood risk*: Parts of Ashwell are liable to flooding. Planning applications are expected to observe standards that help manage this.
- POLICY ASH6 *Sustainable water supply*: Water resources in the area are limited and vulnerable to over-exploitation. New builds should have low water consumption needs. Reducing demand for water extraction may also help to protect flow rates at Ashwell Springs.
- POLICY ASH7 *Environmentally sustainable design*: New construction should have low energy needs in line with current best practice. Alterations to existing buildings should aim to reduce resource requirements when this is compatible with their historic character.
- POLICY ASH8 *Protecting historic assets*: Development will not normally be allowed if it eliminates or damages historic structures, buildings or structures of local interest or their immediate setting.
- POLICY ASH9 *Locally significant views*: Ashwell has significant views that make an important contribution to the area's attractive rural character. Developments may not have a detrimental impact on them.
- POLICY ASH10 *Natural landscape and rural character*: Other than single householder applications developments should fit into the landscape, minimize damaging impacts on its

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ecology and protect existing natural features, e.g. trees and hedgerows. Development should also provide open space, accessible to the general public.

- POLICY ASH11 *Natural wildlife assets, wildlife corridors and green infrastructure*: Planning applications should take account of the need to manage wildlife assets, wildlife corridors and green infrastructure, and must demonstrate a net biodiversity gain using the DEFRA/Natural England metric. The proposals must have no adverse effect on Ashwell Springs.
 - POLICY ASH12 *Local Green Spaces*: The Foresters Allotments is a site proposed for designation as a Local Green Space. In planning terms it would then be treated in a similar way to Green Belt land.
 - POLICY ASH13 *Incubator/flexible start-up business space*: The ANP will encourage planning applications to provide new business space.
 - POLICY ASH14 *Broadband provision*: Where possible, network providers are expected to install superfast broadband in new properties.
 - POLICY ASH15 *Retail and services in Ashwell village centre*: Planning applications to change the use of current retail and service premises will only be supported if these businesses can no longer remain viable.
 - POLICY ASH16 *Provision of leisure and recreation facilities*: The ANP will favour planning proposals that add to or enhance leisure facilities for Ashwell residents. The Parish's share of statutory contributions from developers will be used to enhance facilities.
- 1.2 POLICY ASH17 *Protection of public houses*: Planning applications to change the use of public houses will only be supported if they can no longer remain viable. Proposals to expand their use will be supported if it is to provide a similar community resource (e.g. restaurant).
- POLICY ASH18 *Maintaining existing health services*: The ANP will support proposals that maintain or enhance existing health facilities and encourage regular liaison between local health services and the Parish Council to improve provision.
 - POLICY ASH19 *Education provision*: Planning applications should provide solutions to their impact on education provision. The ANP will support proposals that do this if they maintain or, preferably, enhance the quality of provision.
- The Parish's share of statutory contributions from developers will be used to enhance facilities.
- POLICY ASH20 *Accessible paths in the village and rural areas*: The ANP expects existing bridleways and footpaths to be preserved and kept in good condition. All new developments must provide footways that link with the existing network. The ANP will support proposals that improve cycling or walking, separated from vehicles.
 - POLICY ASH21 *Bus services and community transport*: Development proposals that help improve public and community transport will be supported, as will those reducing the impact of traffic and parking. The Parish's share of statutory contributions from developers will be used to enhance facilities.
 - POLICY ASH22 *Residential and public car parking*: Planning applications should not include proposals that create more demand for on-street car parking.

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In short, the ANP envisages that Ashwell, a rural and vibrant village with strong historical links, will continue to grow and thrive as a community, whilst safeguarding the village's character. Moreover, any growth should be sustainable. Any development must respect the values and needs of the people who live here in relation to the environment they enjoy.

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2 Purpose of The Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.1 This document presents The Neighbourhood Plan ('the ANP') for the parish of Ashwell. It represents one part of the development plan for the parish over the period 2021 to 2031, the other parts being saved policies from the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations (April 1996). North Hertfordshire is well advanced in the process of developing a new Local Plan, which sets out a development strategy for the district up to 2031.
- 2.2 North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), as the local planning authority, designated a Neighbourhood Area encompassing the parish on 24 March 2014 to enable the Parish Council to initiate the ANP.
- 2.3 The ANP is being prepared in accordance with The Town and Country Planning Act 1990, The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, The Localism Act 2011 and The Neighbourhood Development Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended). A Working Group, comprising local residents and councillors, has prepared the ANP to establish a vision and framework for the future of the parish and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning land use and development change over the plan period 2021 to 2031.
- 2.4 The purpose of the ANP is to structure development within the parish and provide guidance to any interested parties wishing to submit planning applications for development within the parish. In some cases it mirrors policies in the planning authority's Emerging Local Plan because that plan has not yet been 'made' and the village supports those policies. The ANP also provides a local context, clarifying how policies at a national and district level can operate at a parish level.
- 2.5 The process of producing the ANP has sought to involve the community as widely as possible and the different topic areas reflect matters that are of considerable importance to the parish, its residents, businesses and community groups.
- 2.6 Each section of the ANP covers a different topic. Under each heading there is the justification for the policies presented, which provides the necessary understanding of the policy and what it is seeking to achieve. The policies themselves are presented in the blue/grey boxes. NHDC will assess planning applications against both its own Local Plan and these policies. Supporting text and evidence documents have been compiled to underpin the ANP and each policy must be read in conjunction with them in order to understand its full meaning.
- 2.7 In addition to the policies, the ANP identifies a number of local needs and community aspirations that are not met through the planning system but which are important to the well-being of the community. It is proposed that these projects will be met through community action supported by other organisations.
- 2.8 Figure 2.1 below shows the boundary of the ANP designated area, which shares its boundary with the Parish of Ashwell.

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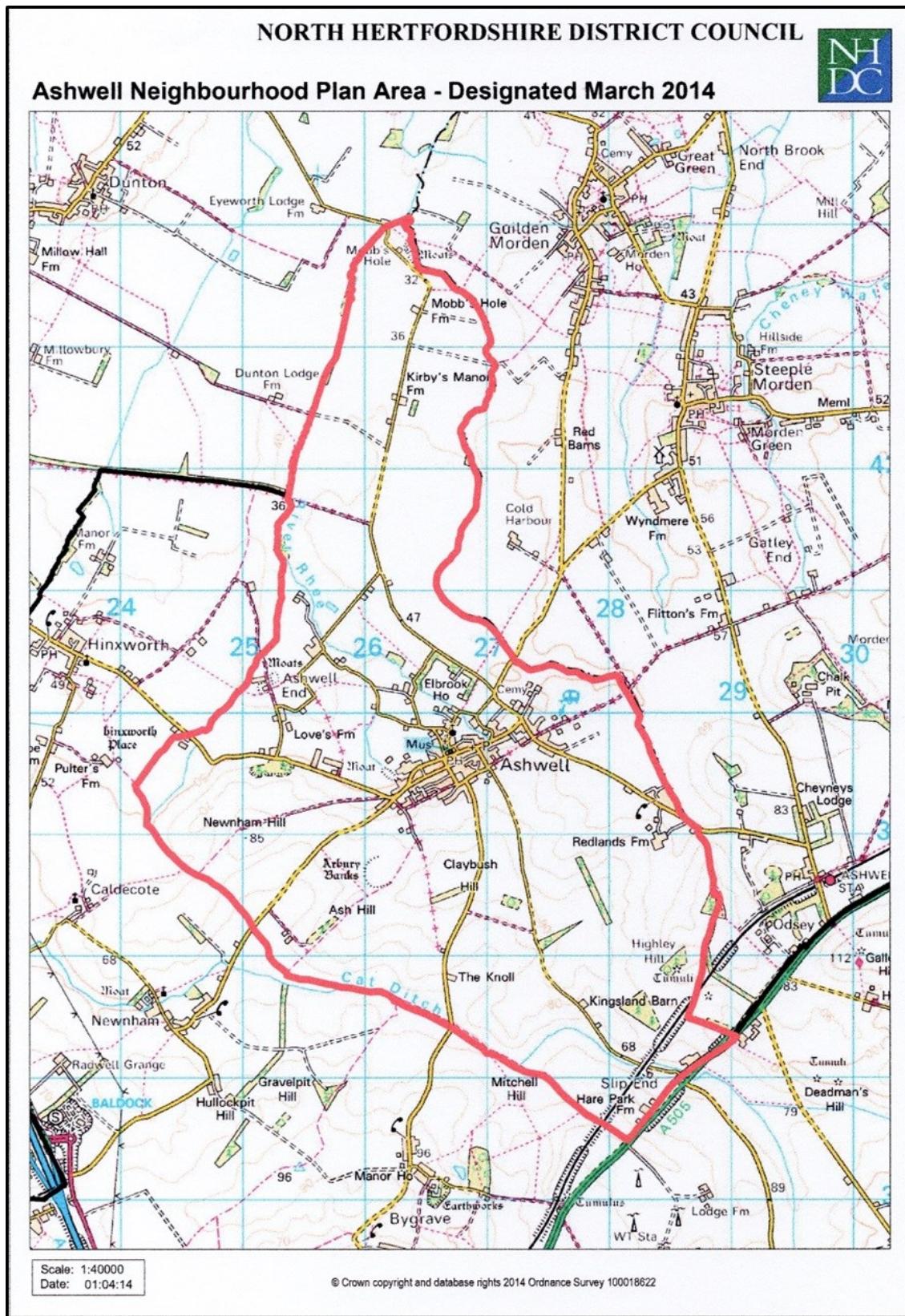


Figure 2.1 The ANP designated area

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National policy

- 2.9 The ANP must have regard to the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 2.10 The NPPF states:
- "Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies. (para 29)*
- Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in a local plan covering the neighbourhood area, where they are in conflict; unless they are superseded by strategic or non-strategic policies that are adopted subsequently". (para 30)*
- 2.11 This Regulation 16 version of the ANP has been prepared and submitted to NHDC in accordance with the revised NPPF published in February 2019.

Local policy

- 2.12 The North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2 With Alterations¹ (the Saved Plan 1996) was adopted in 1996 and sets out the planning policies for the District. Under The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, many of the policies in this plan expired on 27 September 2007, with the exception of those which were given permission from the Secretary of State to endure beyond this date. That permission has been granted in respect of [33 of the policies](#).
- 2.13 An updated Local Plan for NHDC to 2031 is currently being developed which will supersede the current documents. The pre-submission consultation (Regulation 19) for the Emerging Local Plan has taken place and it was submitted for examination on 9 June 2017; the examination process is ongoing.
- 2.14 The Emerging Local Plan is seeking to deliver a minimum of 15,950 new homes, and at least 30.5 hectares of B-class employment space and associated sui-generis uses, across the district over the period to 2031. Approximately 80% of housing delivery will be focussed on the larger settlements, 11% on villages identified for growth and the remainder on smaller villages, including Ashwell.
- 2.15 The ANP must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan. It must conform to the saved strategic policies in the Saved Plan 1996 and the Emerging Local Plan. Whilst the Emerging Local Plan is not yet adopted, it has reached the examination stage, and the NPPF (2019) para 48 states that "*Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans*" according to a set of criteria including what stage it has reached. The 'Emerging Local Plan' is therefore a material consideration and has provided much of the strategic context for the ANP.

¹ https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/north_hertfordshire_district_local_plan_no2_with_alterations_april_1996.pdf (27/12)

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Consultation

- 2.16 The ANP has been produced by a Working Group comprising local residents and parish councillors, on behalf of the Parish Council. They have consulted within the community by means of village surveys, consultation events and direct discussion with a number of special interest groups. The Working Group has taken into consideration previous community consultations such as the village appraisals done in 1976 and 1994, the Ashwell Village Design Statement 2000, as amended in 2018 (Appendix E) and the 2007 Ashwell Parish Plan (see Figure 2.2).
- 2.17 The ANP encompasses those matters that are of most concern to the community, including:
- Housing and development.
 - Design.
 - The local economy.
 - Sport, leisure and recreation.
 - Health.
 - Education.
 - The natural and historic environment.
 - Traffic and transport.
- 2.18 The emerging document has been shared with the local community at regular stages in the development allowing the parishioners to be included in the ANP's direction and progress. The policies that have been developed are influenced by the results of three village surveys undertaken in 2015, 2016 and 2017. The ANP represents the views of parishioners, as expressed in these surveys.
- 2.19 Regular meetings and close liaison with North Hertfordshire District Council have taken place on each of the topic areas covered by the ANP. In addition, regular updates have been provided to the parishes bordering the neighbourhood area.
- 2.20 The Consultation Statement is part of the ANP submitted documentation.

Year	Nationally	Locally
1976		Ashwell Village Appraisal
1986		North Hertfordshire Rural Settlements Study
1990	The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ('the Act'),	
1994		Ashwell Village Appraisal
2000		Ashwell Village Design Statement, revised 2018.
2007		Ashwell Parish Plan

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Year	Nationally	Locally
2012	The Localism Act (2011) passed into law	
2012	The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).	
2012	The Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012	
2013		Creation of the ANP Working Group
2015		Housing survey for the ANP
2016		Business survey for the ANP
2017		General survey for the ANP
2018		First village consultation on the ANP
2019		Submission of the ANP to NHDC Regulation 14 v1
2020		Second village consultation for the ANP Submission of the ANP to NHDC Regulation 14 v2
2021		Submission of the ANP to NHDC Regulation 16
2021		Submission of the ANP to the Inspector
2021		NHDC consultation on the ANP

Figure 2.2 Dates relevant to the ANP

Sustainability of the ANP

- 2.21 The ANP has been screened to determine whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment and/or a Habitats Regulation Assessment are required. Three statutory bodies were consulted – Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. They determined that the ANP did not need an SEA or HRA.

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3 Local context

A brief history of Ashwell

- 3.1 The village of Ashwell lies at the centre of a large parish of over 1,800 hectares (4,000 acres). The parish is the most northerly in Hertfordshire and borders both Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. The settlement we know today lies to the north-west of a shallow chalk escarpment, near springs surrounded by ash trees from which the village derives its name.
- 3.2 A Neolithic (c.2,700 to 2,000 BC) henge was discovered in a field south of Ashwell Street and close to the village in 2015. It may have been related to the Springs and might have had a religious function. There are numerous Bronze Age (c.2,000 to c.800 BC) barrows in the area such as Highly Hill and the site of the Neolithic henge. Arbury Banks is an Iron Age (c.800 BC to c.100 AD) hillfort which was probably used only when an attack was imminent or underway. The Iron Age settlement was probably in the area of Buttway Cottages, i.e. to the west of the road going from the village to Ashwell End.
- 3.3 Roman material found in 2002 at Ashwell End indicates that there had been a religious site there in honour of Senuna, a goddess not found anywhere else in the Roman Empire. Near a site of religious pilgrimages such as this, there would have been places to satisfy the needs of visiting pilgrims although, to date, nothing has been found. There was a villa in a neighbouring field. There was also a villa on the south facing side of Partridge Hill and aerial photographs show Roman fields not far from it.
- 3.4 To the north of Ashwell Street in Hunts Close archaeological excavations have found items from Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods such as coins, pottery items, a bow brooch, an elaborately decorated copper alloy sword scabbard chape, and a decorated silver gilt handle from a Romano-British priest's ritual rattle. It is probable that this was a Roman religious site as well.
- 3.5 A three-field system of agriculture was probably in existence in the southern part of the parish in the late ninth century or early tenth century but could have been much older. The northern, low-lying and flatter part of the parish had mixed use. The section closest to the present village, which is intersected by the River Rhee, was probably pasture. The land further north, bounded by the Rhee and its tributary the Ruddery, seems to have been mainly pasture and woodland, with a section on the eastern side being meadow. Most of this land was slowly incorporated into the arable three field system in the early medieval period.
- 3.6 The village of Ashwell dates from the early tenth century (c. 917) when the framework of the present road structure was laid out (see Fig 2.1). The Anglo-Saxon new town, as it was then, was formed around a large marketplace which stretched from the Springs to Gardiners Lane, with one boundary on High Street and another on a combination of Swan Street, Hodwell and the path from the Lock-up to the Springs. The area close to the church and enclosed by the present day roads of Swan Street, Church Lane, High Street and Gardiners Lane, would have been the market for goods. The area from Church Lane to the Lock-up and beyond to the Springs would have been the stock market, the Springs and river providing water for the animals.

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- 3.7 The three-field system of agriculture was created so that the farmers of the parish had strips scattered throughout the three fields. It was most convenient, therefore, to have the farmhouses and yards in the centre of the parish i.e. within the town. Some of these farm houses/yards, including Westbury, Farrows, Dixies, Bear, Kirby Manor, Whitby, Brassknocker, Jessamine, Ducklake and the Bury, are still discernible. Today there are a few pieces of agricultural land in the village, such as Dixies Meadow and Church Mead, which are remnants of this system.

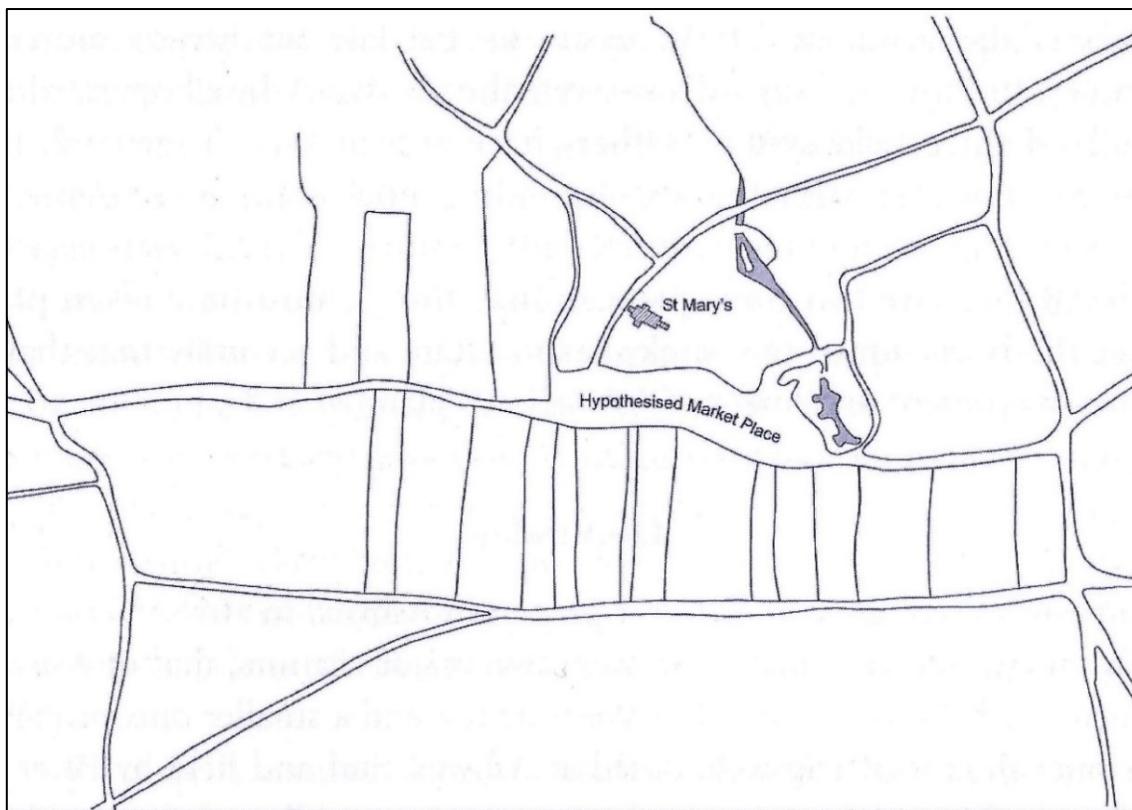


Figure 3.1 Hypothesised Anglo-Saxon market place (© David Short)

- 3.8 Ashwell is mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086, when it was one of the most important settlements in Hertfordshire.
- 3.9 Some enclosure of the open fields happened over time. An assizes court case in 1333 suggests that the Abbot of Westminster, who was Lord of the Manor of Ashwell, set about enclosing some of the manorial lands. The field structure and the hedges in the fields just to the north of the village on either side of the Rhee and around the Bury, which was the home of the Lord's bailiff, suggest that this was the area that was enclosed.
- 3.10 Although some piecemeal enclosure took place in the rest of the parish during the centuries it was not until 1863 that enclosure, under a general act of Parliament, took place. As part of the enclosure process the strips in the open fields disappeared. However, as the land remained arable, few new hedges were planted. This means that the landscape we see today is not all that dissimilar to that of the medieval landscape or, as mentioned above, of a much earlier landscape that existed in the southern half of the parish.

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- 3.11 No buildings from the Anglo-Saxon period have survived although a number from the medieval period still exist. The Old Cottage on the High Street, has a wall that was constructed in the mid-thirteenth century. The parish church of St Mary was built during the fourteenth century, at a time when Ashwell was a thriving market town. The first brick building in the village was the Merchant Taylors' School in Mill Street, which was built in 1681. Today there is little evidence of houses being built between the late seventeenth century and the early nineteenth century, although a few might have been built and are now unrecognisable as being from that period. The only known dwelling that was built in this time is the Old Rectory which was built c. 1812. After a devastating fire in 1850 a number of houses had to be rebuilt especially in Silver Street. A growing population required a number of new houses to be built quickly in the second half of the nineteenth century.
- 3.12 After the First World War, new social housing was built in Station Road, in the Arts and Crafts style that was influenced by the work of Parker and Unwin in Letchworth. In the 1920s a number of farm houses were built in the area of Ashwell End on the new allotment farms. Each of these farms was of around 70 acres, and they were created by Hertfordshire County Council to give returning war veterans and others the opportunity to become farmers.
- 3.13 Since the Second World War the number of houses in Ashwell has more than doubled. The local council started building houses in the late 1940s and continued into the 1960s. From the 1970s onwards private estates such as Woodforde Close, The Rickyard, Fordham Close and Angell's Meadow were built. More recently, Colbron Close and John Sale Close were built, see Figure 3.2
- 3.14 In the last 15 years significant housing developments have been added with the building of Walkdens (27 units in two phases), and Philosophers Gate (19 units), both off Station Road on the East side of Ashwell. Both of these developments include affordable or starter homes with some rental provision included in the former. Figure 3.2 shows the units built since 1945 and 2019, which is shown as a graphic in Figure 3.3 .

Decade	Location	Units	Location	Units	Location	Units
1945-50	Dixies Close	44			Total	44
1951-60	Ashwell Street	11	Toppers, Ashwell St.	1	Bear Lane	7
	2-12 Lucas Lane	5	Station Rd.	3	West End	1
					Total	28
1961-70	Ashwell St.	12	41-49 Back St.	5	60-70 Back St.	6
	89,91,93 Back St.	3	Dairy	1	8,10 Green La.	2
	52,54 High St.	3	Hinxworth Road	1	9-17 Lucas La.	6
	Brewery, Mill St.	4	Newnham Way	5	Sunnymead	17
	Westbury Farm Cottages	2	West End	1		

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Decade	Location	Units	Location	Units	Location	Units
					Total	68
1971-80	Angell's Meadow	46	Ashwell St.	4	Bear Farm	12
	Fordham Close	7	1-3 Green La.	2	1 High St.	1
	4 High St.	1	46,48 High St.	2	47,49 High St.	2
	51,51A,51B High St.	3	95 High St.	1	Hinxworth Rd.	1
	The Mill	1	Rickyard	8	28,30 Silver St.	2
	38 Silver St.	1	Springhead	1	Station Rd.	2
	3,5 Swan St.	2	15 Swan St.	1	Wolverley House	23
	Woodforde Close	22	Gate House, Mill Street	1		
					Total	146
1981-90	Ashwell End	1	7 Ashwell St.	1	85 Back St.	2
	Bacons Yard	16	Dixies Farm	11	Dovecote	6
	Maltings	22	Partridge Hill	1	Sales Acre	1
	37 Silver St.	3	Sunnymead	10	Westbury Barns	7
	Wolverley House	8			Total	89
1991-00	Ashwell End	1	3 Ashwell St.	1	5 Ashwell St.	1
	Ashwell End	1	Colbron Close	16	Ducklake	4
	Gardiners La.	1	22 High St.	2	John Sale Close	10
	Merchant Taylors	5	Moules Yard	4	Silver Court	4
	Westbury Farm	1			Total	51
2001-10	59 Ashwell St.	1	Farrows Farm	3	Newnham Way	2
	Newnham Way	1	37 Silver St.	3	Small Gains	1
	Walkdens	12			Total	23
2011-20	Broadchalke Close	3	Hodwell	1	The Limes (Cooke)	7
	Moules Yard Extn.	2	Newnham Way	1	Philosopher's Gate	19
	Shire End	6	Walkdens Extn.	15	Whitby Farm	5
	22 Lucas La.	1	94 Ashwell St.	1	Old Stables, Mill St.	1

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Decade	Location	Units	Location	Units	Location	Units
	48 Ashwell St.	1	15 High St.	1	35 High St.	1
	22,24 Hodwell	2	15 Kingsland Way	1	17 High St.	1
	Lucas La., opp Rec.	4	East, 25 Ashwell St.	1	Dixie's Close /Back St.	2
	Adj. 2 Ashwell St.	1	Townsend Field, Station Rd	9	Rear 4-14 Claybush Hill	30
					Total	116

Figure 3.2 Number of units built by decade since 1945

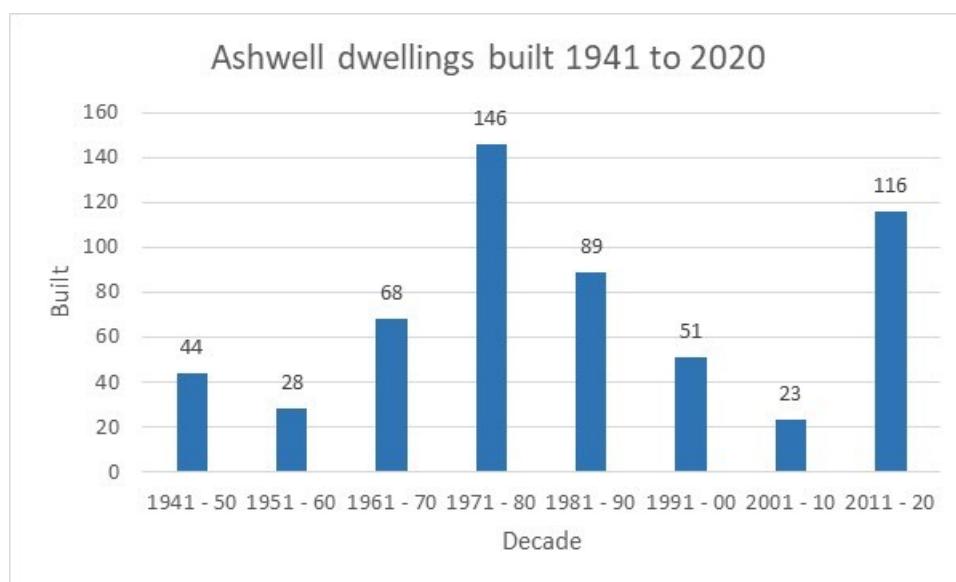


Figure 3.3 Housing growth in Ashwell 1941 to 2020

Profile of the community today and key challenges

- 3.15 A detailed profile of the parish is provided in Appendix A. In summary, the key aspects of the profile of the neighbourhood area, as they relate to the ANP, are as follows²:
- The rural nature of the parish is treasured among locals and has evolved over time. There is a need to protect Ashwell from overdevelopment that would change the nature and setting of the parish.
 - The parish is rich in designated environmental and historic assets and any growth must be undertaken sympathetically, maximising the preservation of such assets while enabling people to enjoy them.

² Based on Census 2011 unless otherwise specified

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- Ashwell parish has an ageing population, with a high number of those being in the two oldest age brackets: 45 to 64 and over 65. These age brackets grew significantly between 2001 and 2011.
- There are few adults aged between 25 and 44 years old, an age bracket that dropped considerably between 2001 and 2011.
- There is a fairly high number of children (and teenagers) in the parish when compared to the district as a whole. This may be due to the attractiveness of the parish and the presence of a good primary school.
- The parish has a high proportion of larger, detached homes. The vast majority of homes are owned. There is a trend toward under-occupancy in the parish (i.e. houses with more rooms than deemed useable given the number of occupants), which might suggest that there are insufficient numbers of houses to downsize to. The village needs smaller homes, including affordable ones that are suited to young couples and families, and to those wishing to downsize. Enabling those who want to downsize will free up larger, under-occupied homes for growing families. Measures like this would help to bring younger people to the parish, which in turn may help to sustain local services and facilities.
- Affordability of housing is an issue locally, where average incomes put even affordable market housing out of reach. The percentage of social and private rental properties is low when compared to the district, restricting options for those on modest or median incomes to move to the parish. Two developments that have taken place since the 2011 Census have made a start on redressing this imbalance.
- There is a need to ensure that the village centre continues to provide the services required by the local community, including sustaining the school, local health facilities and shops.
- A key priority for residents is continued access to healthcare, and there is a keenness among residents to maintain the existing provision of the surgery, pharmacy and dental services.
- Equally, the viability of the primary school is important and links very much to the need to provide the type of housing that will enable families to continue to move to the area.
- The nearest railway station (Ashwell and Morden) is four kilometres distant and safely accessible only by car owing to the lack of a footway, a dangerous bend along the road with a 60mph speed limit and absence of street lighting. Other stations are also a drive away at Baldock, Royston and Letchworth Garden City. The parish has bus links to several major employment centres, however off-peak services, and those to the more rural parts are infrequent.
- The parish has higher than UK average levels of car ownership, with an average of 1.6 cars per household across the area compared to 1.2 at the national level. Higher car ownership is not unexpected in more rural areas, however it will be important to ensure that public transport is adequate for those with limited access, particularly given that 11% of residents have no access to a car at all.

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- High levels of car ownership mean that congestion is a problem, particularly in the more historic parts of the village where roads are narrower and houses have been built without off-street parking. The situation is exacerbated by the limited bus service.

Parking generally is in short supply and off-street parking particularly so.
- Unemployment is low with many people working from home and levels of home working are likely to increase in the future. Whilst a few people work in the Parish or nearby, the majority travel between 10km and 40km to work, suggesting high levels of out-commuting. It will be important to safeguard employment in the Parish and to help those who work from home, given the high numbers in this category.
- The resident population is well-qualified. It will be important to consider ways to provide additional higher paid jobs locally or improve links to neighbouring settlements that are less reliant on the use of the car. Providing the necessary infrastructure for home-workers is important.

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4 Vision and objectives

Our vision

4.1 Our village is a vibrant and diverse community; its sense of pride owes much to its rural aspect and long history. These elements make a considerable contribution to character and setting.

4.2 In consultation with the community, the following vision for the ANP has been agreed:

Our vision is to ensure Ashwell continues to thrive and grow as a community, whilst safeguarding the village's character. We want to ensure that growth is sustainable and the village continues to meet the needs of its people.

We want to enhance the facilities of the village to meet the challenges and changing needs of the community, to ensure that the parish remains sustainable and cohesive. Our village also needs a strong local economy and well-maintained infrastructure that supports its needs and connects the parish to the wider community.

Our objectives

4.3 The ANP has the following objectives to achieve the Vision:

- *Objective 1:* To encourage sustainable development that reflects the needs of the village and ensures that the community can develop and evolve in an appropriate way.
- *Objective 2:* To support sustainable local businesses and encourage the development of a strong local economy.
- *Objective 3:* To provide recreation and sporting facilities that meet the needs of the community and reflect changing requirements.
- *Objective 4:* To promote healthy communities.
- *Objective 5:* To safeguard against the loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs.
- *Objective 6:* To provide high quality education facilities for local children.
- *Objective 7:* To ensure that the village can support the changing needs of the residents by providing improved accessibility and enhancements to key village facilities.
- *Objective 8:* To conserve and enhance the historic character of the village and its rural setting.
- *Objective 9:* To conserve and enhance the natural environment of the parish, its flora and its fauna.
- *Objective 10:* To reduce greenhouse gas emissions by using renewable and low carbon energy technologies in new housing and infrastructure developments, as the NPPF (2019) recommends in paras 150 and 151.

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5 Spatial strategy

- 5.1 The Emerging Local Plan classifies Ashwell as a 'Category A village'. Together with Category B and C villages, these settlements are expected to make provision for 9% of the housing need across the district. Since 2011, 86 homes have been built in Ashwell. The Emerging Local Plan seeks to allocate one site in the parish (Claybush) for an estimated 33 homes, though in September 2019 NHDC granted planning permission for 30, bringing the total since 2011 up to 116.
- 5.2 Ashwell is a rural parish with one central village, which has a high proportion of nationally listed buildings. It is important that any development reflects the size and character of the settlement in terms of density and form and character. It is also important that development is directed to appropriate locations, principally locations within the village where development can be conveniently located to access local services and facilities. Sprawl is to be avoided.. This is best achieved by defining a development boundary, within which development is deemed appropriate.
- 5.3 The Emerging Local Plan redefines the settlement boundary for Ashwell to indicate the area within which further development will be allowed thereby enabling Ashwell's development needs during the Local Plan period to be met. It is also a realistic limit beyond which expansion would compromise the sustainability of the village, according to the three NPPF objectives: economic, social and environmental. Both the Saved Plan 1996 (current) boundary and the Emerging Local Plan (proposed extension) boundary are shown in Figure 4.1.

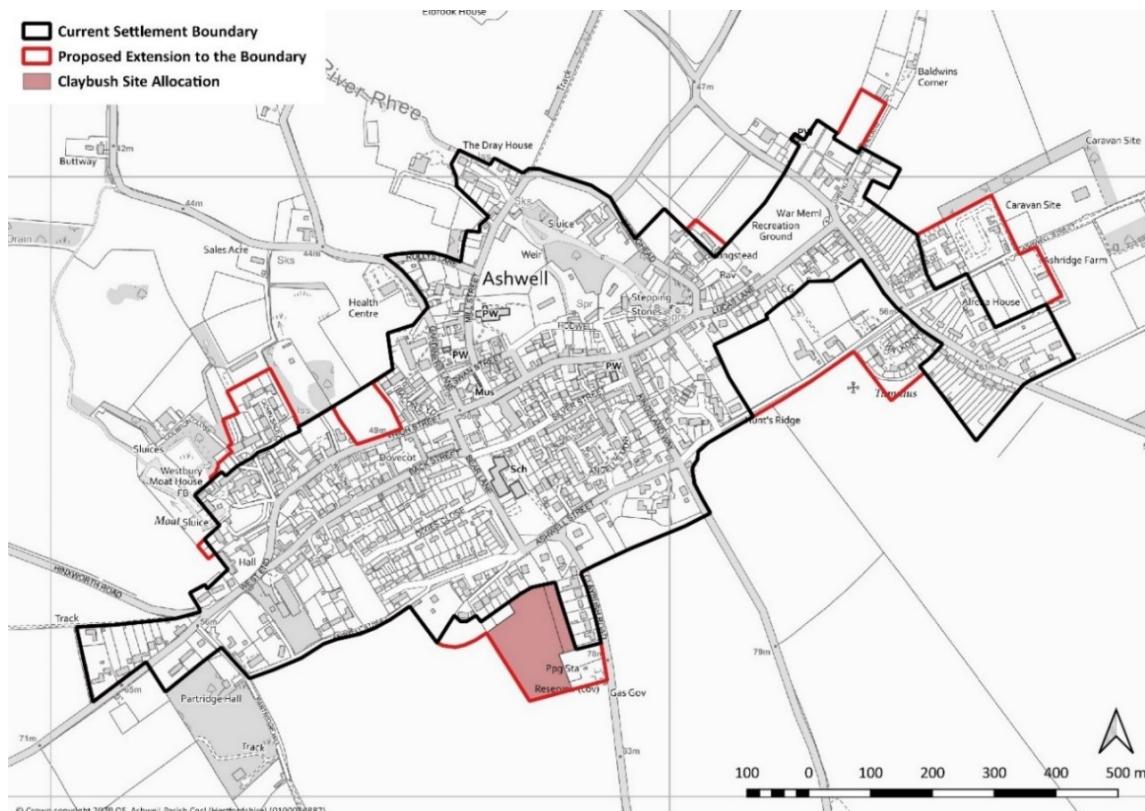


Figure 5.1 Ashwell Settlement Boundary (green line: Saved Plan 1996, red line: Emerging Local Plan)

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- 5.4 Responses to the 2015 Housing Survey conducted for the ANP indicated an overwhelming preference for infill in the village and brownfield development across the Parish before any open spaces in the village or across the Parish are exploited. Within the development boundary, the Emerging Local Plan allows general development (subject to it conforming to other policies) so infill can only be a preference. However, outside the boundary, brownfield status should be a requirement, subject to the Emerging Local Plan policies relating to Land Beyond the Green Belt: CGB1 Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt; CGB2b Community facilities, services and affordable housing in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt; and Policy CGB4: Existing buildings in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.

Policy ASH1 Location of development

Summary

- 5.5 Inside the village settlement boundary development that is consistent with all relevant policies and that meets Ashwell Design Statement guidelines will normally be allowed. Building on land that has already had some form of development, before exploiting greenfield sites, is preferred, but also subject to relevant policies and design guidelines . Proposals to build outside the boundary are subject to rules similar to those that protect the Green Belt...

Full policy

POLICY ASH1 LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT

- A Development in the ANP area will be focused within the proposed extension to the settlement boundary shown in Figure 5.1 , subject to all relevant policies in the ANP, Emerging Local Plan and NPPF (February 2019).
- B Within the proposed extension to the settlement boundary, proposals that make use of brownfield land will be supported. Development on greenfield land while there is available brownfield land will not be supported.
- C Development proposals outside the proposed extension to the settlement boundary shown in Figure 5.1 will not be supported unless:
 - (i) it is in accordance with Saved Plan (1996) and Emerging Local Plan policies in respect of appropriate uses in the countryside; or the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area; or
 - (ii) where relevant, the development brings redundant or vacant historic buildings back into beneficial re-use; or
 - (iii) it relates to necessary utilities infrastructure and where no reasonable alternative location is available; or
 - (iv) it is on sites allocated for those uses in the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan or its successor.

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Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 1; Saved Plan 1996: 7, 25, 26, 29 Emerging Local Plan SP1, SP2, D2; NPPF (2019): 8, 16, 17, 24, 28, 117, 118

6 Housing

Housing requirement

- 6.1 A key objective of the Emerging Local Plan is to provide a range of housing developments across the district that delivers the target number of new homes, respects the scale of existing places and caters for the needs of all residents, including the delivery of a range of housing sizes and types including affordable housing. This last point is important because planning for development is not just about numbers: housing must also be of a type, size and tenure that meets local needs. There is a finite supply of land, so building that does not closely match needs will not only fail to address the issues we have now but will crowd out future development that might deal with them.
- 6.2 In the foreword to the June 2017 Institute for Public Policy Research report, 'What more can be done to build the homes we need?', Sir Michael Lyons said, "*We would stress that it is not just the number built but also the balance of tenures and affordability which need to be thought through for an effective housing strategy.*"
- 6.3 The NPPF (2019) requires development to match local needs. In para 61 it says, "*Within this context [i.e. the local housing need figure], the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes).*"
- 6.4 Policies SP2 and SP8 of the Emerging Local Plan set out a requirement for a minimum of 15,950 dwellings to be delivered across the entire district. Whilst the majority of this new housing is directed to the larger settlements, there is an expectation that all villages will contribute to the housing number, including through Neighbourhood Plans. The Emerging Local Plan allocates an estimated 33 new dwellings to Ashwell parish at land west of Claybush Road (Policy AS1) though, as stated above, permission has been granted for 30.
- 6.5 Figure 6.1 details the residential dwellings that are either complete or have received planning permission in Ashwell Parish between the notional start date of the Emerging Local Plan (2011) and December 2019.

New Housing in Ashwell 2011 – 2019	Units	Date*	Planning ref
Built			
East Lodge, 22 Lucas Lane	1	2010	10/02608/1
Moules Yard extension	2	2012	12/01356/1
94 Ashwell Street	1	2012	12/02767/1
Broadchalke Close/40 Kingsland Way	3	2012	12/01617/1

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New Housing in Ashwell 2011 – 2019	Units	Date*	Planning ref
Hodwell, land rear of 28 High Street	1	2014	14/00969/1
Old Stables, Mill Street	1	2015	15/00436/1
Land behind 18 Newnham Way	1	2015	15/01712/1
Whitby Farm, Silver Street	5	2012	12/00812/1
Philosophers Gate/61 Station Road	19	2012	12/02079/1
Shire End Close (turkey farm site)	6	2014	14/02932/1
Walkdens extension, Station Road	15	2014	14/00336/1
Chalk Bank Close (Cooke's engineering site)	7	2016	16/02154/1
Sub-total	62		
Various additions including previously derelict/unoccupied brought back into use			
48 Ashwell Street (adjacent Moules Yard)	1		
15 High Street (Jessamine House)	1		
35 High Street (Whitby Farm House)	1		
22-24 Hodwell (Dove Cottages)	2		
15 Kingsland Way (x1 house returned to x2)	1	2016	16/03047/1
17 High Street/former PO (plus new x1 bed flat)	1	2015	15/02116/1
Sub-total	7		
Under construction in 2019			
Lucas Lane (in front of Townsend House)	4	2019	19/01377/FP
Sub-total	4		
Planning permission granted but not yet progressed			
Land east of 35 Ashwell Street	1	2017	17/02200/1
Land off Dixies Close/rear of 1-11 Back Street	2	2019	19/01515/FP
Land adjacent no.2 Ashwell Street	1	2019	19/01809/1
Townsend Meadow, at the junction of Ashwell Street and Station Road	9	2019	19/02691/1
Land rear of 4-14 Claybush Road	30	2016	16/01797/1
Sub-total	43		
Total	116		

Figure 6.1 Additions to Ashwell's housing stock 2011 to December 2019. Sources: NHDC Planning consents, local Parish records

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- 6.6 The total number of dwellings that have been built, brought back into use, have planning permission or are allocated in the Emerging Local Plan is 116 units in the last decade.
- 6.7 To put the 116 units into context, this is the second highest number to be built in a 10 year period in Ashwell since 1945, exceeded only by the period 1971 to 1980 when 145 units were built. By comparison, in the 20 year period from 1991 to 2010 a total number of 74 units were built, as shown in Figure 6.2 .

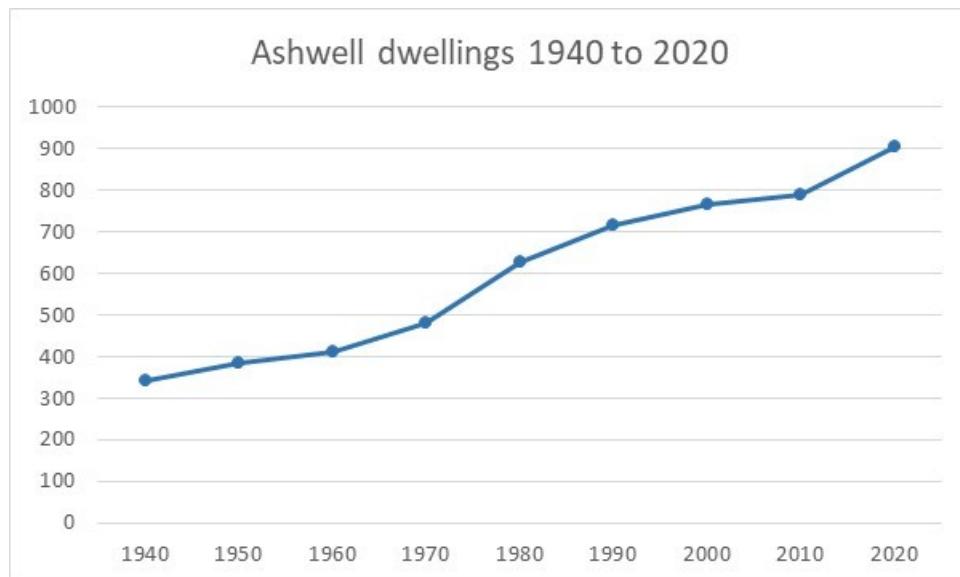


Figure 6.2 Housing growth in Ashwell, including where planning permission has been granted. Sources: Census 2011, NHDC Council Tax Base Calculation and planning consents

- 6.8 NHDC considers that, on a strict pro-rata basis, Ashwell's contribution to the government's target for dwellings could be 200 homes using the 2011 population and household figures or around 170 - 180 using its latest data. Although these fluctuating estimates are greater than the 116 delivered to date, Ashwell has already delivered a greater proportion to the overall housing numbers when compared with other parts of the District.

During the period 2011 to 2019, housing stock in Ashwell grew by 9.2%, significantly greater than in North Hertfordshire as a whole where the increase was 8.3% .

In addition:

- North Hertfordshire District Council's Emerging Local Plan policy SP2 states that most of the required development is to be focused on six towns and five villages (not including Ashwell) and only 9% would be outside these areas; Therefore calculating on a strict pro-rata basis is misleading.
- The Emerging Local Plan's strategic allocation AS1 and the amendment to the settlement boundary it proposes has already delivered a fair share of new development.

- 6.9 Therefore, the ANP does not seek to allocate additional sites for development nor does it consider that the requirement to contribute to the District's five-year housing land supply should take priority over other policies in the case of planning decisions in Ashwell Parish.

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Housing mix

6.10 At the parish level, the Ashwell Housing Survey, undertaken in 2015, provides further understanding about the views of the community on the types of housing that might be required to meet local needs. Whilst the survey clearly provides a 'snapshot' of views, the findings revealed that on the whole, the local community accepted the need for the village to grow slightly and that the following should be prioritised:

- *Older people:* Providing for the needs of the ageing part of the community is becoming increasingly important. This is part of a significant national trend. The Local Government Association in its report 'Housing our Ageing Population' in September 2017 stated that, "*Many retirees want to 'rightsize' and live-in retirement housing in later life, but there is a chronic under-supply of high quality, affordable or desirable accommodation in the right locations*".
- *Affordable and low-cost housing:* There is a real need for development that includes a mix of housing, with an emphasis on affordable and low-cost housing options both social and private.
- *Young people:* Homes should be of the type that would bring young couples and families to the village and/or allow them to stay.

Second homes are considered to be unacceptable. Unfortunately, determining whether or not a development is for a second home is, like as not, impossible when an application is submitted. Therefore a policy that does not support second homes could not be applied and the ANP does not include one.

6.11 It could be argued that the Housing Survey 2015 represents the opinions of residents rather than being an objective assessment of the issues confronting the Parish. Appendix A 'A profile of Ashwell' looks at the situation using data published by the Census and the Office of National Statistics. To a significant extent, this data confirms the views expressed by respondents to the Housing Survey 2015 that compared with North Hertfordshire as a whole Ashwell has issues with accommodating older people, housing under-occupancy and affordability in its wider sense.

Older people

6.12 Providing for the needs of the older members of the community is becoming increasingly important, particularly in light of the ageing profile of the parish. Of those residents responding to the Housing Survey 2015, 32% said that they would like to downsize and move to a more manageable home. This was further evidenced by the high number of under-occupied homes in the parish, see Appendix A 'A profile of Ashwell' for the relevant data.

6.13 There were messages from the Housing Survey 2015 to the effect that new housing units should be equally suitable for both older residents and the young (singles, couples and new families). This would allow the older ones to downsize, freeing up property for growing families to 'move up the ladder' and enable younger people to get into the housing market in Ashwell.

These Parishioner responses revealed an awareness of the need for accommodation suited to the needs of older people. For the more able this would take the form of smaller units

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designed to make living for older people easier but should equally suit young occupants. Such accommodation should also follow good design principles for that age group and be sited on terrain that enables easy access to and from the dwellings. Proximity to the village centre is important as this is where facilities and services can most easily be accessed.

- 6.14 For the less able, who are likely to increase in number, there should be supported social housing with a range of tenure options. Although there is supported social housing at Wolverley House, these flats are for rent only and there is no guarantee that Ashwell residents would be given preference. Not all Ashwell residents would be eligible in any case. For instance, means testing prevents Ashwell residents who still own a home from gaining access. The Housing Survey 2015 indicated a need for this type of accommodation to be available for purchase and for private rental.
- 6.15 There is accommodation for older people on low income in six small housing units run by the Moss Cottages charity located in the centre of the village. The trust was primarily set up to provide single unit housing for single or widowed older people of the Parish of Ashwell. If there is a vacancy and no one qualifies from the Parish, then an older person (with preference for a widow) from outside the Parish and the district of North Hertfordshire may apply provided that the applicant has a family connection currently residing in Ashwell or that the applicant has previously lived in Ashwell.



Figure 6.3 Moss Cottages

- 6.16 To reflect the above factors and the evidence provided from the Housing Survey 2015, priority for future housing development in Ashwell should be given to applications providing housing that is suitable for older people. That is:
- On sites geographically close to the central village amenities.
 - On sites that are reasonably flat and capable of providing safe and sustainable access for all to the central village amenities and access to local transport.

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- Comprising mostly one or two bedroom bungalows or low rise apartments (with lifts) that are suitable for older people or those with restricted mobility.
 - For sale or rent at a cost within the means of the average person seeking accommodation within the Parish. This does not just mean those meeting the eligibility criteria for affordable housing defined in the NPPF (2019) Appendix 2, but a wider category of individuals on median incomes or below.
- 6.17 Applications for supported accommodation up to the point that it meets local needs should be encouraged.

Affordable and low-cost housing

- 6.18 Affordable housing includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, which is provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and house prices.
- 6.19 There is a real need for development that includes a mix of housing, with an emphasis on affordable and low-cost housing options, both social and private in the parish, where average house prices are out of reach of many.
- 6.20 The ANP therefore seeks to increase the net number of affordable housing units available in the Parish. It supports the Emerging Local Plan strategic policy (SP8: Housing) that sets a target of 33% of all homes over the plan period to be Affordable Housing for local needs with targets to deliver up to 40% Affordable Housing where viable. The ANP supports the notion that affordable housing should be provided on the site of a proposed development and fully integrated with the market housing throughout the development. Affordable housing must be visually indistinguishable from the market housing.

Young people

- 6.21 A relatively small proportion of those completing the Housing Survey 2015 answered the question about their children's intentions to find homes in Ashwell as, at any given moment, the majority of households are unlikely to have children looking for a home. Of those able to answer the question (32% of respondents), 59% did not consider this feasible on cost grounds and 19% did not think there was suitable property available.
- 6.22 Homes should be of the type that would bring young couples and families to the village and/or allow them to stay, which in turn may help to maintain local services and facilities.
- 6.23 Despite providing 'affordable' housing, the ANP recognises that younger people looking for accommodation in Ashwell will find it difficult to find something that is within their means. These people may not necessarily be eligible for affordable housing according to the NPPF definition but still need access to relatively low cost housing. The Parish wants to encourage this in order to re-balance its age profile and keep it a vibrant place to live.
- 6.24 Mortgage lenders' multiples of salary for couples taking out a mortgage typically range from four to six times earnings with the higher multiple only available to low risk applicants³. So a

³ www.onlinemortgageadvisor.co.uk (27/12)

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sensible multiple target for new home pricing could be at least five times average local earnings in the sub-40 year age group, assuming that buyers would contribute a 10% deposit.

- 6.25 Given this multiple, Figure 2.4 ‘Year-on-year average cost of housing...’ of Appendix A shows that for housing to be accessible to people of average income, developments should be smaller units of up to three bedrooms that can be sold at prices well within the lower quartile of the market, or rented at comparable cost.

Self Build

- 6.26 The Self Build and Custom House Building Act 2015⁴ requires NHDC to keep a register of individuals and associations of individuals who are seeking to acquire serviced plots of land within the District for Self Build and custom house building. The ANP seeks to meet this need by supporting development of this type on sites within the built-up area boundary.

Policy ASH2 Housing mix

Summary

- 6.27 In the neighbourhood area there is a demand for a greater number of smaller one, two and three-bedroom dwellings at lower quartile cost (as indicated by ONS Housing datasets for the district of North Hertfordshire). The demand comes from single people, young couples, small families and older people who also need developments to be in suitable locations, close to public transport, the village centre and other amenities.

Therefore, planning applications should be for smaller dwellings (up to three bedrooms) at a cost or at a rent that is financially within the reach of these demographic categories.

Every planning application should include an explanation of how the development meets the housing needs of our parish, as defined in this section.

NHDC’s rules relating to providing what is officially termed ‘Affordable Housing’ must be followed.

Full policy

POLICY ASH2 HOUSING MIX

- A Proposals should include a high proportion of one, two and three bedroom dwellings within the neighbourhood area for sale or rent within the lower quartile of local cost, and follow the standards defined in POLICY ASH4 Design of Development of the ANP.
- B Housing development must contribute to meeting the existing and future housing needs of the neighbourhood area. Developers of major developments are required to submit a neighbourhood area-specific Affordable Housing and Dwellings Mix Strategy with any planning application. The strategy must clearly set out identified housing needs within the neighbourhood area, accepting and taking account of Housing Survey 2015 conclusions or any future local survey that supersedes it (for example, a survey

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/17/contents/enacted> (27/12)

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by Community Development Action Herts.). It must demonstrate how the proposed development addresses those needs. In particular it must show how it:

- (i) meets the needs of older residents (aged 60+) and younger people entering the housing market; and
 - (ii) helps to address housing under-occupancy in the Parish (e.g. by facilitating downsizing).
- C Residential development proposals in the neighbourhood area that provide affordable housing as required by policy H29A of the Saved Plan 1996, or its successor, will be supported. Applications that offer affordable housing substantially in excess of the ratios required in the Local Plan will be supported, in particular for small developments.
- D The type and size of affordable homes should meet the specific needs identified for the neighbourhood area.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 1; Saved Plan 1996: 29, 29A; Emerging Local Plan: SP8; NPPF (2019): 61, 62, 64

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7 Design and heritage

Character of development

- 7.1 Throughout the engagement on the ANP, the community has stressed that new development should reflect the character of the parish and that the design of development should look and feel like local properties. The ANP requires high-quality design standards that integrate with the area and reflect and reinforce, without overwhelming, the rural character of the parish.
- 7.2 NHDC published a Design Supplementary Planning document in 2011⁵, which describes Ashwell as a large village set in open countryside in the north of the district at the foot of the scarp slope of the chalk ridge. Alongside the Conservation Area, which covers much of the village, it identifies distinct character areas, such as West End, Station Road, Angell's Meadow and Woodforde Close. In addition, it identifies five Visual Character Areas:
- V1: *The "Church and Environs"* preserves the open nature of the church and surrounding farmsteads and meadows to the North of the village.
 - V2: The *"Eastern Area"* protects the ribbon development east of the recreation area and treats it as part of the countryside.
 - V3: *"Dixies Meadow / West End"* protects farmstead buildings and extensive views of the countryside fields.
 - V4: The *"South West Area"* protects against further extension of the village in this area, which would appear to be visually sensitive and located on rising ground.
 - V5: The *"Southern Edge"* protects the low density, ribbon development from further consolidation.
- When complete, a new version of the Design Supplementary Planning Document and the NHDC's Local Plan 2011-2031 are likely to replace this document. However they are not expected to alter materially its conclusions or recommendations.
- 7.3 NHDC has also issued an Ashwell Conservation Area Character Statement⁶ that describes what makes the area special and identifies key assets and views within it. In response, The ANP recognises that these require special consideration when any development or change is proposed.
- 7.4 Figure 7.1 shows the Conservation and Character Areas in Ashwell village.

⁵ www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/files/design_spd_july_2011a-2.pdf (27/12)

⁶ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Ashwell%20Conservation%20Area%20Character%20Statement.pdf> (27/12)

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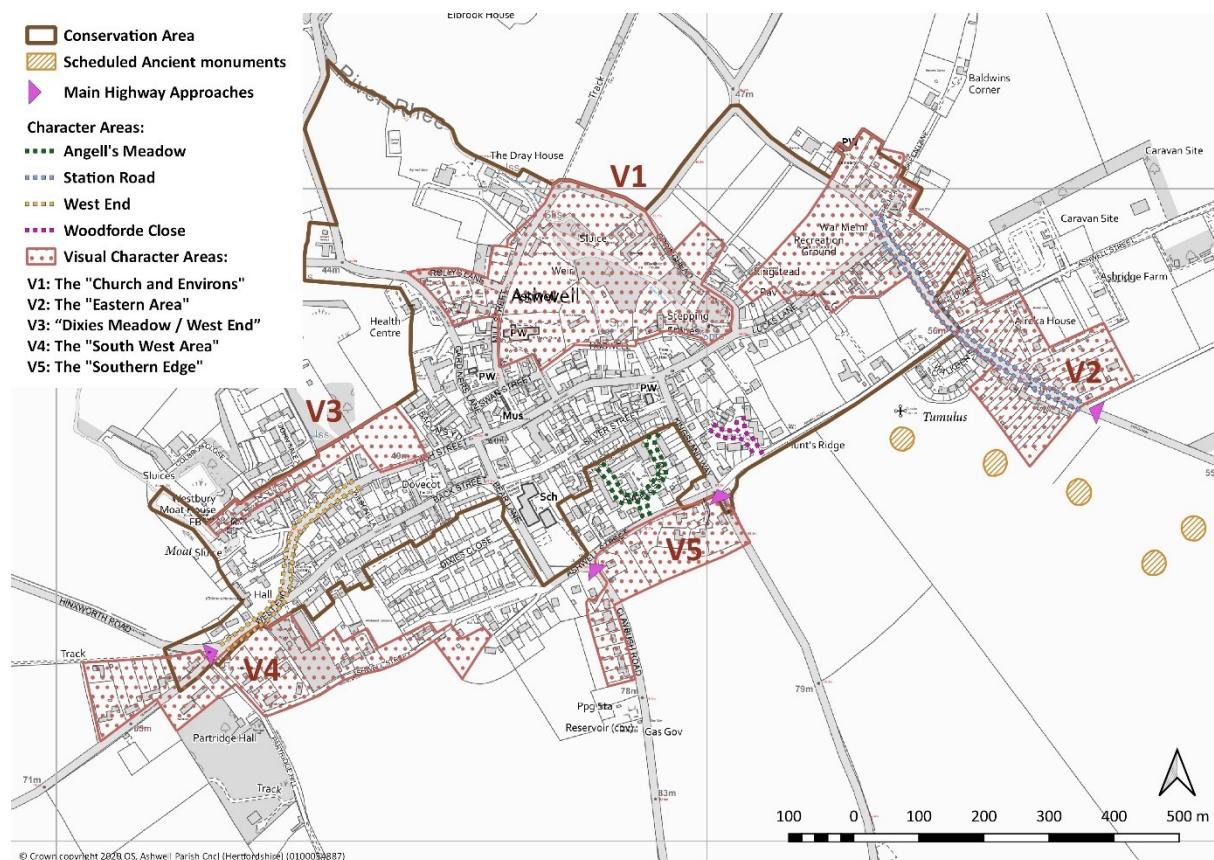


Figure 7.1 Conservation and Character Areas in Ashwell village

- 7.5 The Ashwell Village Design Statement⁷ 2000 set out additional detail about the character of the village and the parameters that should be considered for development. The document was revised in 2018 and a copy of this revision is in Appendix E. Both describe the built character across the parish as ranging in style, age, size and housing densities. For each area to maintain its character, a balance needs to be struck between the scale, bulk, density and height of the built form and that of open green spaces and, where relevant, the countryside.
- 7.6 All development should be designed to a high quality and reinforce and enhance local character, heritage assets and the rural setting of the area. The density of development should create a character that is appropriate to the site's context, including the landscape in which it is set, whilst making best use of the land available. Lower density housing should be located towards the outer edges of the settlement where it abuts open countryside, to maintain views from and into the individual settlements.
- 7.7 Development should have regard to both the character of the area in which it is set and to the character of the area overall.

⁷ https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/files/spg18_ashwell_village_design_statement_oct_2000-2.pdf (27/12)

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Policy ASH3 Character of development

Summary

- 7.8 A large part of Ashwell village lies inside a Conservation Area and it has five Local Character Areas. Development must preserve and complement the features that make this place special. Subject to that, innovative design⁸ will be supported where it clearly enhances its surroundings.

Full policy

POLICY ASH3 CHARACTER OF DEVELOPMENT

- A Development should conserve and enhance the Conservation Area, the Character Areas V1 to V5 as shown in Figure 7.1 , and key views and assets identified in the Conservation Area Character Statement 2019.
- B The design of new development should demonstrate how it has taken account of the local context and reflected the character and vernacular of the area, using architectural variety in form and materials, in order to avoid building design that is inappropriate to the ANP area. For example: clusters of large, similar houses (in excess of three bedrooms) are not a characteristic of the village.
However, innovation in design will be supported where this demonstrably enhances the quality of the built form in a character area.
- C As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should address the following criteria:
 - (i) make a positive contribution to the visual impact of the village from the highway and footpath approaches; and
 - (ii) not have a significantly detrimental impact on the local views as set out in POLICY ASH9 Locally significant views.
- D Development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets (either directly or via a change in their settings), will be expected to respect, conserve and enhance the significance of those assets.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 8; Saved Plan 1996: 7; Emerging Local Plan: SP8, SP9, SP13; NPPF (2019): 125, 127

⁸ What is considered ‘innovative’ would depend on the circumstances of the case and cannot be defined exactly to suit all cases. However, as an example, it could be taken to mean new materials, methods or approaches that improve on conventional solutions, or the beneficial adoption of existing materials, methods or approaches not normally used in the situation under consideration.

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Design of development

- 7.9 Good quality housing design can improve social wellbeing and the quality of life by improving the built environment, reducing crime, improving public health, easing transport problems and enabling greater access to green space.
- 7.10 In October 2019, a new National Design Guide⁹ was launched, forming part of the Government's collection of Planning Practice Guidance. It forms a material consideration in the decision-making process, particularly in the absence of local design guidance. The document sets out the ten characteristics necessary for creating a well-designed place, contributing to its physical character, a sense of community and addressing environmental issues affecting climate.
- 7.11 The guide Building for a Healthy Life, 2020¹⁰ is the Government-endorsed industry standard for the design of new housing developments. Building for a Healthy Life is a tool for assessing the design quality of homes and neighbourhoods. Its criteria also link to other standards for housing design, including the Housing Quality Indicators¹¹ (HQI) standards and Secured by Design¹². It provides a framework that stakeholders should use for development along with other policies contained within this plan for the neighbourhood area to achieve the industry standard's 'Built for Life' quality mark.
- 7.12 When these building standards and design guides are updated or superseded, the ANP should apply the updated standards for good quality, well-designed homes and neighbourhoods.
- 7.13 The Ashwell Village Design Statement 2000, as amended in 2018, (see Appendix E), elements of which were adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) by NHDC in 2000, includes general design guidelines for the village as well as guidelines that are specific to the Character Areas (as described in 7.2). In August 2018 the ANP Working Group revised sections of the Design Statement relating to the settlement pattern (6) and buildings (7) for the purposes of the ANP. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. It is expected that the entirety of the guidance contained in the revised Design Statement is adhered to, not only that which has been adopted as SPG.
- 7.14 The Housing Survey 2015 undertaken for the ANP revealed a series of further points felt to be important to incorporate into any future housing design:
- *Small clusters of housing:* The positioning and layout of houses is an important contributory factor to overall good design. Small, informally laid out clusters of dwellings give a feeling of space, compared with repetitive layouts of larger numbers of dwellings often observed in 'dense' developments.
- The pictures below show housing layouts in Ashwell that the community cited as good examples.

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide> (27/12)

¹⁰ <https://www.udg.org.uk/publications/othermanuals/building-healthy-life> (27/12)

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-quality-indicators> (27/12)

¹² <https://www.securedbydesign.com/> (27/12)

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Figure 7.2 The Bear Farm housing development and the scale of the houses themselves reflect the character of their surroundings, in this case in a high density part of the village characterised by short terraces containing small numbers of dwellings (Bear Lane/Back Street)



Figure 7.3 The Rickyard is a courtyard style and not a sprawling Close-style development. It is in keeping with its surroundings yet still provides adequate parking spaces

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Figure 7.4 Whitby Farm is another courtyard style development: another moderately sized cluster that reflects its origins (i.e. it was a farm) and is well integrated into the pattern of the village

Of those responding to the Community survey, 47% considered bringing dwellings back into use by renovation and developments of up to ten dwellings acceptable. The proportion fell to 8% for up to twenty dwellings, an understandable response since, as a single development, that alone would represent growth of 2.3% in a well-established and historic village.

Whilst sites of fewer than 11 units would not be obliged to provide any affordable housing within the NPPF definition, they will be expected to meet local housing needs as will be required in Policy HS3 in the Emerging Local Plan and in the ANP POLICY ASH2 Housing mix, with the aim to ensure the sustainability of the village and give the opportunity for younger single people and families to remain in the village. The ANP would also strongly encourage offers from developers prepared to provide affordable accommodation in excess of the levels stipulated in the Emerging Local Plan.

- *Mixed and integrated:* Development should follow the traditional street pattern with a variety of housing types that are closely integrated with community services and businesses. There should be an emphasis on safe access on foot and connectivity with the village centre without using a vehicle. This should apply to all ages, especially families with young children, older residents and those with restricted mobility.

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Figure 7.5 The development also reflects its past use as a farmhouse and outbuildings in style and layout and seamlessly integrates business premises and residential units. It is well connected with the rest of the village and can be accessed from two sides of the site (Dixies Barn)

- *Appropriate density:* New units should not be automatically "crammed together", but reflect densities in the immediate neighbourhood, though in parts of the village centre it is fairly high. This is consistent with the Emerging Local Plan's requirement in policy HS3 that "the scheme would provide a density, scale and character of development appropriate to its location and surroundings." and in para 8.21 which states, "Development on the periphery of settlements should generally be at a lower density to mark the transition to the rural area beyond."



Figure 7.6 As development approaches the settlement boundary the housing density falls considerably (Ashwell Street/Moules Yard)

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- *Infill or development of vacant / brownfield sites:* This acceptable as long as the density for that site does not exceed that of neighbouring plots and also contributes to a significant fall in building density with increasing distance from the centre of Ashwell village.

7.15 To a great extent, the points above reflect concerns about the sustainability of development that the ANP intends to manage with all its policies.

Policy ASH4 Design of development

Summary

7.16 As well as integrating with its surroundings, construction is expected to be of good quality. It should conform to the standards of design in the Ashwell Village Design Statement 2000, as amended in 2018 (Appendix E) and to other standards defined by Government or professional bodies, including the ones relating to the needs of older people.

Full policy

POLICY ASH4 DESIGN OF DEVELOPMENT

A Development will be supported where it demonstrates a high quality of design, which responds and integrates well with its surroundings, and meets the changing needs of residents. It should also minimise its impact on the natural and historic environment, respecting the topography and the issues that it may create with, for example, access and open views.

Development proposals should demonstrate how they have sought to address the following matters:

- (i) being guided by the National Design Guide and the principles of Building for a Healthy Life unless alternative principles would otherwise result in a higher quality of design. Development proposals will be supported where they achieve the relevant quality mark; and
- (ii) dwellings designed to be suitable for older residents (aged 60 and over) - particularly bungalows. Such dwellings should also be suitable for younger residents and are not intended to be restricted in use; and
- (iii) adherence to the space and access standards in Technical Housing Standards¹³ and Building Regulations (Part M)¹⁴ and the Hertfordshire Sustainable Design Toolkit¹⁵; and

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard> (27/12)

¹⁴ https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200135/approved_documents/80/part_m_-_access_to_and_use_of_buildings (27/12)

¹⁵ <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/building-futures/a-sustainable-design-toolkit/sustainable-design-toolkit.aspx#:~:text=The%20Sustainable%20Design%20Toolkit%20aids,stages%20for%20development%20in%20Hertfordshire.> (27/12)

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- (iv) the guidance contained within the [Ashwell Village Design Statement 2000](#), as amended in 2018 (Appendix E of the ANP); and
- (v) the creation of variety through the use of a range of housing designs, provided that the predominant type of design reflects the character of the area; and
- (vi) to design layouts of safe and secure dwellings that meet the requirements of '[Secured by Design](#)' and minimise the likelihood and fear of crime; and
- (vii) provide off-road parking for residents, visitors and service vehicles, in accordance with NHDC's Car Parking Standards¹⁶ or their successor in either Appendix 4 of the Emerging Local Plan¹⁷ (once adopted), or for non-residential building, the New Development Supplementary Planning Document September 2011¹⁸; and
- (viii) traffic generation and parking does not adversely affect vehicular and pedestrian safety; and
- (ix) ensure that areas requiring service and maintenance, including watercourses, are accessible at all times.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 1, 10; Saved Plan 1996: 21, 28, 55, 57; Emerging Local Plan: SP8, SP13; NPPF (2019): 124, 126, 127, 149

Flood risk

- ^{7.17} Surface water flooding is an issue for the village, principally around the western part of the High Street and in West End, though other parts of the High Street, Back Street, Bear Lane, Church Lane and Hodwell have also been affected. The Environment Agency's flood map (see Figure 7.7 and Figure 7.8) highlights this risk and the Agency has advised the inclusion of a policy in the ANP to help manage it. Note that the flooding related maps are periodically updated by the Environment Agency and the most up-to-date mapping should be used¹⁹. The Environment Agency has also highlighted in its comments that the village settlement boundary extends into flood zones 2 and 3, as identified in North Hertfordshire District Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2008).

¹⁶ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan-current-policy/district-local-plan-no2-alterations/saved-local> Policy 55 (27/12)

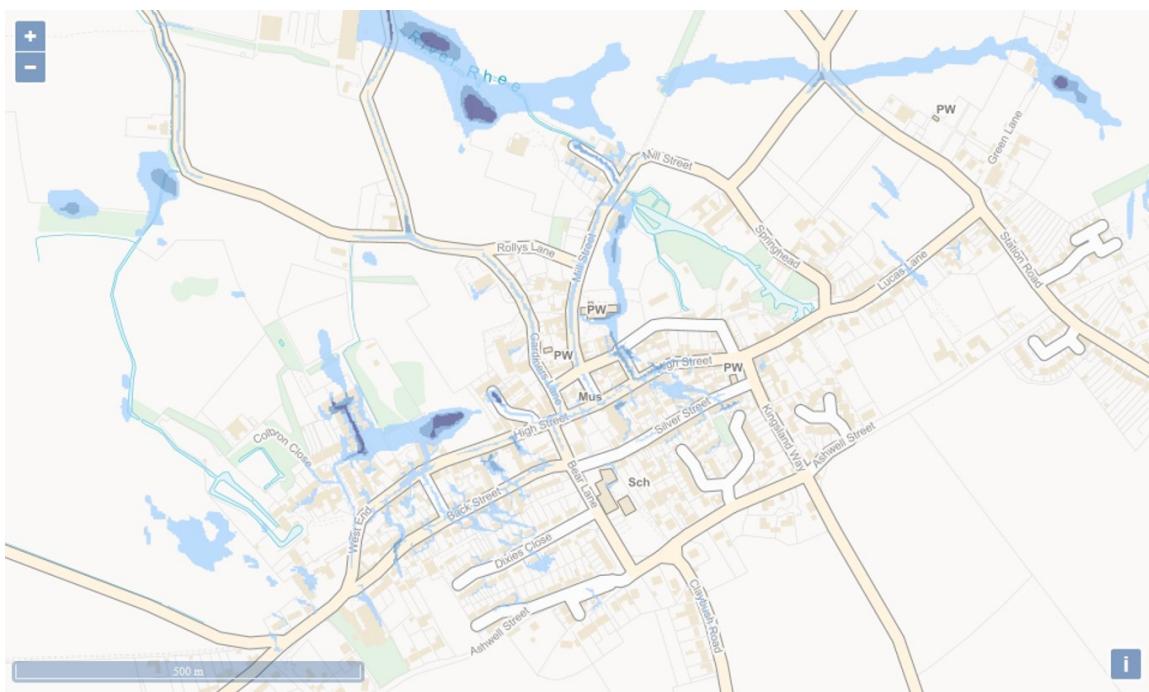
¹⁷ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Proposed%20Submission%20Local%20Plan.pdf> (27/12)

¹⁸ https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/files/vehicle_parking_at_new_development_spd_sept_2011.pdf, Section 5 (27/12)

¹⁹ <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/long-term-flood-risk/map>, surface water (27/12)

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Extent of flooding from surface water

High Medium Low Very low

Figure 7.7 Surface water flood risk map of Ashwell village (Source: Environment Agency)

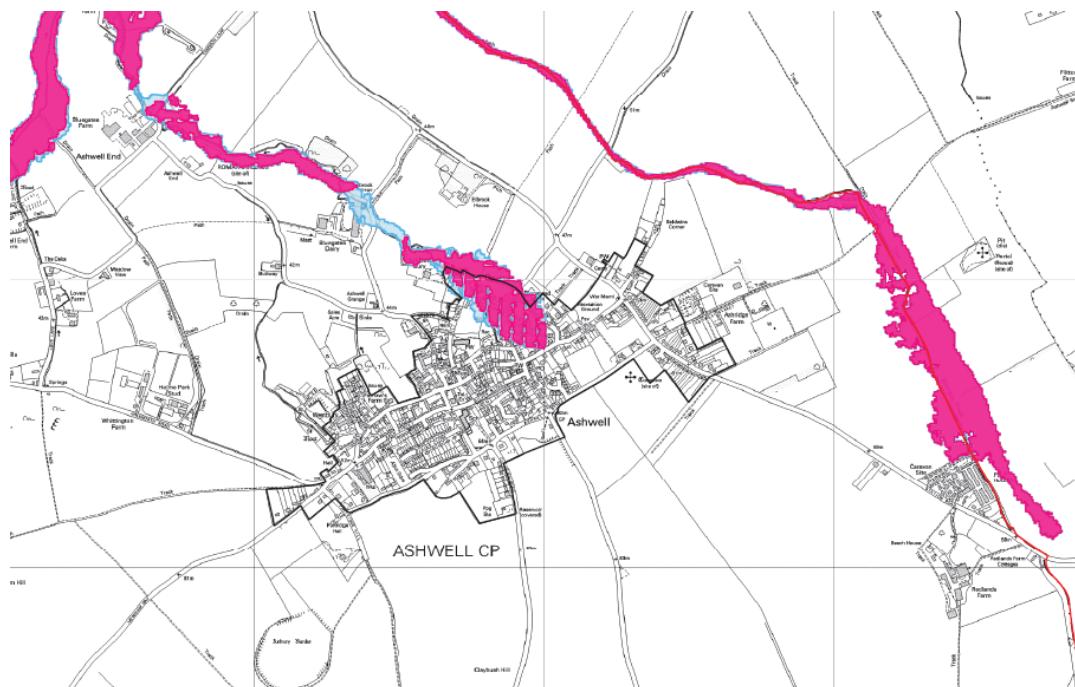


Figure 7.8 Ashwell flood zones 2 (blue) and 3 (pink) (Source: North Hertfordshire District Council SFRA 2008)

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- 7.18 There is serious concern about run-off from the scarp face that lies to the south of the village. This is a problem because not only has it created flash flooding but it also silts up drains, making the impact worse. In 2011 the Department for Food, the Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) established Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) standards to manage run-off volumes and flow rates from hard surfaces in a sustainable way, reducing the impact of development. They were updated in March 2015²⁰. The ANP expects proposals for development within the village settlement boundary to comply with the standards.
- 7.19 To ensure that flooding and drainage matters are not made worse in the future, it is essential that any new development fully takes into account its possible impact on flooding and drainage not only within the site itself but its off-site effects within the village and surrounding areas. Whilst flooding issues are generally dealt with at the strategic level, the ANP presents an opportunity to encourage effective solutions that can add additional capacity and flexibility to water drainage systems in cost effective ways.

Policy ASH5 Flood risk

Summary

- 7.20 Parts of Ashwell are liable to flooding. Planning applications are expected to observe standards that help manage this.

Full policy

POLICY ASH5 FLOOD RISK	
A	<p>Site development should use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Such systems should comply with "Sustainable Drainage Systems Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems" March 2015 (or any that replace them) and the relevant NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance to which it refers.</p> <p>Such development should demonstrate the use of a wide range of creative SuDS solutions, for example through the provision of SuDS as part of green spaces, green roofs, permeable surfaces and rain gardens. Only where it is demonstrably unfeasible will an absence of any on-site SuDS provision be supported in such developments.</p> <p>If a non-SuDS solution is justified it must nonetheless perform at least as well as a design complying with SuDS (or replacement standards).</p>
B	<p>SuDS provision must demonstrate how its design will enhance wildlife and biodiversity as well as minimise the impacts of flooding, including fluvial.</p>

²⁰

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415773/sustainable-drainage-technical-standards.pdf (27/12)

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- C All developments are expected to comply with the drainage authority's (currently Anglian Water, as at January 2020) current Surface Water Drainage policy²¹.
- D Major development proposals (i.e. 10 dwellings or more) should be supported by a drainage scheme maintenance plan which demonstrates a schedule of activities, access points, outfalls and any biodiversity considerations. The maintenance plan should also include an indication of the adopting or maintaining authority or organisation and may require inclusion within a register of drainage features.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 1, 9, 10; Emerging Local Plan: SP11(b), D1(b)(ii), NE7, NE8; NPPF (2019): 20, 34, 148-150, 155-165

Sustainable water supply

- 7.21 Ashwell Springs SSSI (which forms the source of the River Rhee) is an environmental asset, being a chalk water spring with a unique habitat of flora and fauna. Chalk streams are particularly vulnerable to drier weather. Only 200 are known globally, 85% of which are found in the UK in southern and eastern England. These streams emerge from the chalk aquifer, so the very pure water is rich in minerals and remains at a fairly constant temperature year-round. This good water quality supports many invertebrate and fish species making them an important haven for wildlife. They are also highly valued culturally.
- 7.22 The Environment Agency is taking action to protect chalk streams by reducing the amount of water abstracted. Water is taken from rivers primarily by the water sector, the energy sector, and for use by industry and agriculture. Any of these abstractions over 20 cubic metres per day require a licence from the Environment Agency.
- 7.23 Ashwell Springs is protected within Affinity Water's Drought Management Plan²² because it is imperative that water resources are managed sustainably. When consulted, the Environment Agency confirmed this view and recommended the inclusion of a policy to protect Ashwell Springs SSSI and chalk streams. For this reason all new homes should achieve total mains water consumption of no more than 110 litres per person per day. This target is equivalent to that proposed, when the need arises, in para. 14 of the Housing: optional technical standards 2015²³.

Policy ASH6 Sustainable water supply

Summary

- 7.24 Water resources in the area are limited and vulnerable to over-exploitation. New builds should have low water consumption needs. Reducing demand for water extraction may also help to protect flow rates at Ashwell Springs.

²¹ <https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/developers/drainage-services/sustainable-drainage-systems/surface-water-policy/> (27/12)

²² <https://www.affinitywater.co.uk/docs/corporate/plans/dmp/DMP-Nov-18.pdf> (27/12)

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-optional-technical-standards#introduction>, derived from 2015 Approved Document G, Building Regulations 'Sanitation, hot water safety and water efficiency', March 2015, pp.15 G2(3) (27/12)

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Full policy

POLICY ASH6 SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLY

- A All residential development proposals will be required to achieve the water consumption standard set out below unless it can be demonstrated that doing so is not technically feasible or would make the scheme unviable.
Residential: total mains consumption of no more than 110 litres per person per day.
- B All major development proposals should be approved by the water supplier (Affinity Water, as at January 2020) in respect that they would not threaten the current achievement of minimum acceptable flow rates at Ashwell Springs and feeder chalk streams as committed within Affinity Water's Drought Management Plan.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 1, 9; Emerging Local Plan: SP11(c), D1(d), NE10(a), NE10(b); NPPF (2019): 20, 34, 149

Environmentally sustainable design

- 7.25 On 12 June 2019 the Government voted to amend the Climate Change Act 2008 by introducing a new target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the UK to zero by 2050 (known as a 'net zero' target). This is a challenge that will require everyone to be engaged: from households and communities, to businesses and local and national government.
- 7.26 Being 2050 ready will require new build to have minimal energy use and net carbon emissions over the year. They should be highly insulated, have low water demand and be fitted with or directly connected to renewable energy systems.
- 7.27 Notwithstanding current building regulations, standards for ecologically sustainable homes and developments are optional, but planners and developers are strongly encouraged to make use of energy efficient, sustainable materials and to consider high-efficiency alternative systems and facilities for development sites. In this context, the orientation of buildings can be important in order to make best use of available sunlight.
- 7.28 The Code for Sustainable Homes was withdrawn by the Government in 2015 and this has been replaced by new national technical standards which include new additional optional building regulations regarding water and access as well as a new national space standard (this is in addition to the existing mandatory building regulations). In addition, the 'Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method' **BREEAM** is a widely recognised, accredited, independent method for assessing environmental performance of non-residential buildings. Until superseded by nationally prescribed standards, the BREEAM standards for non-residential and multi-residential buildings by nationally recognised certification bodies may also be accepted.
- 7.29 There is an opportunity to improve and promote sustainability in Ashwell by:

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- Following basic passive environmental design in a 'fabric first'²⁴ approach.
- Integrating renewable energy systems into new development, including existing and new public buildings.
- Reducing water consumption through grey water systems.
- Promoting sustainable forms of transport through priority systems for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Community energy schemes.
- Promoting public transport.

7.30 The ANP seeks to encourage energy efficient and sustainable well-designed development.

Policy ASH7 Environmentally sustainable design

Summary

7.31 New construction should have low energy needs in line with current best practice. Alterations to existing buildings should aim to reduce resource requirements when this is compatible with their historic character.

Full policy

POLICY ASH7 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

- A Development proposals which seek to maximise design principles for energy efficiency and sustainability will be supported, in order to reduce energy consumption and climate effects. Proposals which incorporate the following energy design principles as appropriate to their scale and nature will be particularly supported:
- (i) the principles established in the Hertfordshire Sustainable Design Toolkit, including updates; and
 - (ii) the achievement of a fully integrated energy efficiency design which will achieve an EPC rating of 'A'; and
 - (iii) siting and orientation of buildings to optimise passive solar gain; and
 - (iv) the use of high quality, thermally efficient building materials; and
 - (v) the use of low carbon and renewable energy sources consistent with achieving sustainability and an EPC 'A' rating; and
 - (vi) reducing water consumption through the use of grey water systems; and

²⁴ A 'fabric first' approach to building design involves maximising the performance of the components and materials that make up the building fabric itself, before considering the use of mechanical or electrical building services systems

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- (vii) non-residential developments should aim to meet the Buildings Research Establishments BREEAM building standard 'excellent'.
- B Alterations to existing buildings (where planning permission is required), including the sensitive retrofitting of historic buildings, should be designed with energy reduction in mind and comply with current sustainable design and construction standards.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 10; Saved Plan 1996: 21, 57; Emerging Local Plan: SP11, D1, D4; NPPF (2019): 149, 150(b), 151

Protecting historic assets

- 7.32 Ashwell has 78 listed building of which one, St Mary's Church, is listed Grade I, eight are Grade II* and 69 are Grade II. There are seven scheduled monuments in the Parish, including Arbury Banks, and numerous assets of local historic interest. The historic core of Ashwell was first designated a Conservation Area in 1968, the boundary being revised in 1978 and again in 1986. Appendix B provides a full list of the nationally listed sites.
- 7.33 The best way to ensure heritage is protected is through good design, in particular with regard to build scale, form, massing, setback and materials. There is already legislation, borne out in national and local planning policies, which seeks to protect the character of listed buildings from inappropriate development.
- 7.34 The village, however, has several non-designated heritage assets that are considered to make an important contribution to the distinctive local character of the parish. Details of these assets is contained in the document, 'Ashwell Buildings and Antiquities', the 2nd Edition of which was published in 2020 and which is contained in Appendix C. This is the culmination of a project undertaken by a working party that was set up by the Parish Council in response to a request from the District Council to recommend revisions to the list of Listed Buildings which was originally prepared by the former Ministry of Housing and Local Government in the 1950s.
- 7.35 POLICY ASH8 extends protection to non-listed heritage assets of local importance. It seeks to protect them from detrimental impacts of development. There will be a strong presumption against the loss of those structures appearing in the associated document and developments which result in this will be refused.
- 7.36 In parallel with this policy, the Parish Council proposes that these buildings and structures are considered by North Herts District Council for inclusion in a Local List. There are precedents for this: lists already exist for Letchworth, Hitchin, Baldock, Newnham, Knebworth and Royston. However, the inclusion of any building or structure on a Local List is not necessary for the application of this policy. Note that the policy does not confer listed building status (a national designation) on any non-designated heritage assets. Works to buildings and structures listed in Appendix C will not require listed building consent.
- 7.37 There are currently three assets on Historic England's 'The Heritage at Risk Register': Church of St Mary, Roman Villa northeast of Ashwell village (archaeological site) and Town House (Ashwell Museum). An associated action in the ANP will be for the Parish Council to work with Historic England and NHDC to monitor heritage assets and to devise a strategy for bringing them back to their former glory.

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Policy ASH8 Protecting historic assets

Summary

- 7.38 Development will not normally be allowed if it eliminates or damages historic structures, buildings or structures of local interest or their immediate setting.

Full policy

POLICY ASH8 PROTECTING HISTORIC ASSETS	
A	New development should seek to avoid harm to the heritage assets (designated and non-designated) within the ANP area.
B	Development proposals that conserve or enhance the historic environment will be supported. Proposals that could affect the significance of the buildings or structures of character as set out in Appendix C of the ANP will be supported if they preserve, sustain and enhance the special character, significance, appearance and locally distinctive features of the asset/s affected, particularly in terms of scale, form, proportion, design, materials and the retention of features.
C	Planning permission will not normally be granted for development that would result in the loss of these assets and will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the scheme outweigh the scale of any harm or loss, having regard to their significance.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 8; Saved Plan 1996: 16; Emerging Local Plan: SP13, HE1, HE2, HE3; NPPF (2019): 189, 190, 192 - 197

Locally significant views

- 7.39 With a well-established population, views contribute to tradition, memory and sense of place. They are equally important for residents and for visitors. The Ashwell Village Design Statement 2000, as amended in 2018, (Appendix E) includes a reference to the importance of views, noting that "*important vistas must be protected, particularly those which allow views of the countryside from within the village.*"
- 7.40 In addition to views out from within the village, there are many views towards the village, or within the village itself, which are intrinsic to Ashwell's sense of place. Many of these views focus on the tower of St Mary's Church, a grade I listed medieval building. Indeed, In 'The Spectator' of July 1956 Sir John Betjeman²⁵ comments on Ashwell's church thus:
- "So I went to Ashwell. We first saw its gigantic fourteenth century church tower... dominating all, this magnificent church tower. And the church inside, white and spacious and East Anglian, with arcades like a Cathedral, clear glass everywhere, uneven floors and splendid chancel, was worthy of the best of English villages."*

²⁵ <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/13th-july-1956/12/city-and-suburban> (subscription) (27/12)

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- 7.41 Figure 7.9 below sets out the important views of the village that have been gathered from the Design Statement and also from local consultation as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process. It should be noted that while some views or vistas are experienced from a single viewpoint, there is often a dynamic component to many views that changes and evolves as one moves along a street or path. It should also be noted that some views may be more apparent in winter when the leaves are off the trees. New developments should explore opportunities to create new views or vistas.
- 7.42 This policy seeks to ensure that adequate weight is given to the conservation and enhancement of views significant for local people and visitors.

Ref	Description of the view	Photograph
SV1	To the South West – from Cow Lane - St. Mary's Church with well-maintained field hedge in the foreground. Cow Lane is a historically significant access route to the village and the Church from the Mordens. This open countryside approach provides a clear view of the Church and a valued visual transition from countryside landscape to the village's structures.	
SV2	To the South West - Mill Street. An archetypal English village scene showcasing listed buildings, with the mill in the foreground and St. Mary's behind, set among the many mature trees.	

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Ref	Description of the view	Photograph
SV3	<p>To the South East - from ground off Rollys Lane, purchased by the Merchant Taylors Company with funds from Henry Colbron's bequest.</p> <p>St. Mary's Church with rear of Merchant Taylors in the foreground. This view of St Mary's is seen within the heart of the historical centre of the village and is sensitive to roof heights to avoid obscuring the church.</p>	
SV4	<p>To the South – from Coldharbour Lane.</p> <p>This view provides context for the Ashwell settlement which nestles in the valley to the north of Slip End and Claybush Hill which is visible in the distance with open countryside in both foreground and background.</p>	
SV5	<p>To the East – from Gardiners Lane.</p> <p>Fine view of St. Marys Church through Bushel and Strike car park. Another view of the church from within the heart of the historical centre of the village which would be sensitive to being obscured by additional buildings.</p>	

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Ref	Description of the view	Photograph
SV6	<p>To the North East and also to the North (not pictured) – from the High Street.</p> <p>St Mary's Church tower viewed across Dixies Meadow, the only green space, bordering High Street, and close to the village centre.</p> <p>It is the combination of a green space and a view of the church's position in the village directly visible from the main road which makes this piece of land sensitive to development.</p>	
SV7	<p>To the North East – from West End.</p> <p>A more distant view of St. Mary's Church.</p> <p>This is an iconic main route into the heart of historical Ashwell with a variety of housing styles and ages built right up to the pavements, including nationally listed buildings..</p>	
SV8	<p>To the North – from High Street and Church Lane.</p> <p>St Mary's Church with densely sited historic housing bordering the narrow Church Lane in the foreground. This view forms part of the important central area of the village and would be highly sensitive to development.</p>	

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Ref	Description of the view	Photograph
SV9	<p>To the East – from Newham Hill. This view is from a path popular with walkers.</p> <p>The picture shows how well the village is contained by good greenery.</p> <p>It is a classic view of open countryside, punctuated by the Grade I listed St Marys church</p>	
SV10	<p>To the North – from Claybush Road</p> <p>Significant view of St Mary's Church tower as a village focal point from open countryside bordering Claybush Road which is the main access route from the South.</p>	
SV11	<p>To the North – from Claybush Road</p> <p>St Mary's Church tower clearly visible from high ground.</p> <p>For road users this is a striking introduction to the village, and this southern edge's sensitivity to development is mentioned in the Landscape Character Area Assessment 224.</p>	

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Ref	Description of the view	Photograph
SV12	<p>To the North – from Ashwell St (also known as The Ruddery). An important distant view through Hunts Close pasture land across Lucas Lane housing and beyond to open countryside in the North towards Wrestlingworth.</p> <p>The view projects a strong feeling of space and rural tranquillity.</p>	
SV13	<p>To the West – from the corner of Station Road and Lucas Lane. The grade II listed memorial by Lutyens is a commanding presence here.</p> <p>The recreation ground, playground and pavilion provide a setting for traditional village green sport and children's play. Within the village Settlement Boundary it is the largest green open space and has historical significance as a recreation area.</p> <p>It also provides a visual transition from built forms to countryside at the North East corner of the village.</p>	

Figure 7.9 important views, with descriptions and an indication of their significance

- 7.43 The map in Figure 7.10 shows the location of the views and their orientation. It includes dynamic views ('Other important views') referred to in paragraph 7.41 but not illustrated in Figure 7.9

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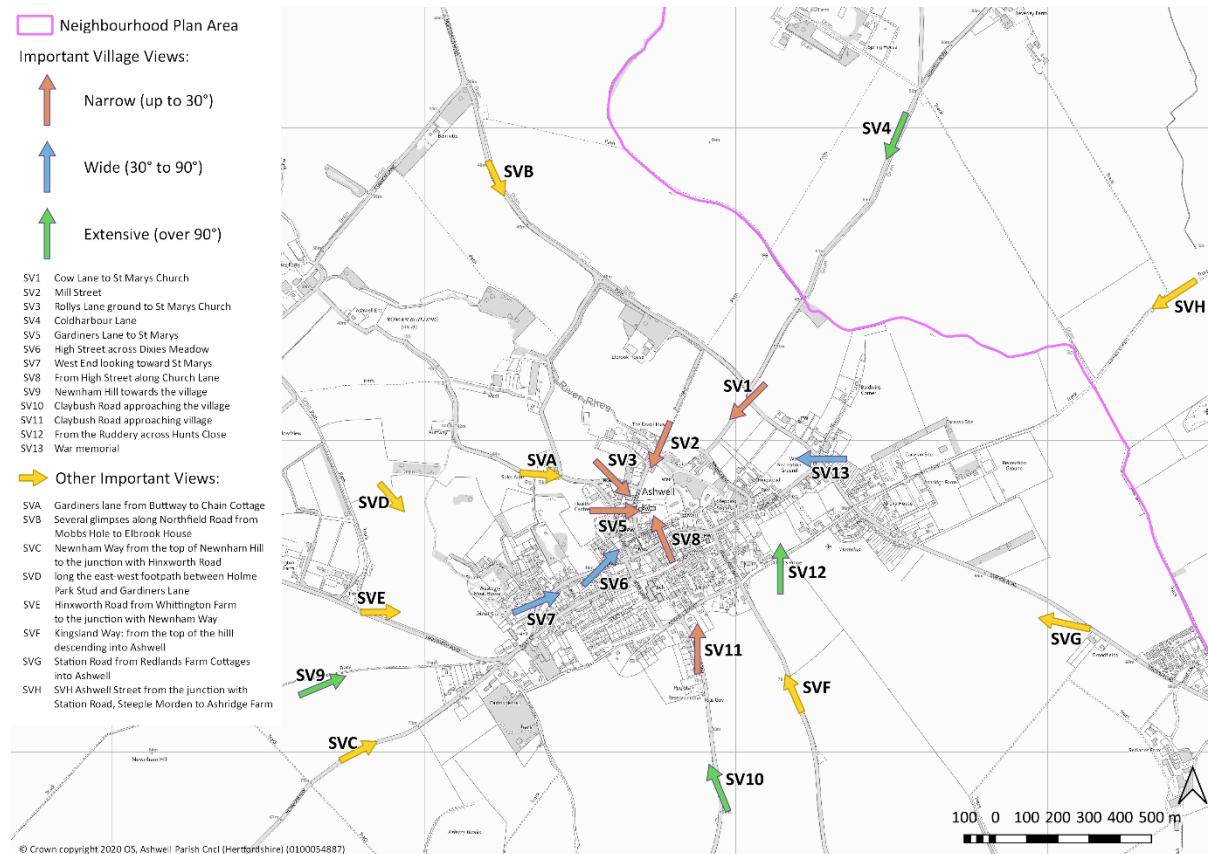


Figure 7.10 map showing locally significant views

Preserving the character of the village landscape

7.44 Maintaining the visual character in and around the village was identified as an important aim in the NHDC commissioned Landscape Character Area Assessment 224²⁶, which it adopted in 2005, and updated in 2011. Its purpose was to:

- Advise on development control matters for both NHDC and Stevenage Borough Council.
- Develop policy for future development plans.
- Provide a framework for other landscape planning.
- Inform countryside conservation and management activities, access and recreation projects.
- Support grant applications.

7.45 To achieve its purpose the report identified a number of features of the North Baldock Chalk Uplands in and around Ashwell that need preserving and/or enhancing. The ANP acknowledges this need, noting the following comment about the village's built form:

²⁶ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/CG16a%20NHerts%20Landscape%20Study%202011%20-%20Part%202.pdf>, page 146 – 151c (27/12)

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"There are many fine traditional buildings particularly in and around the nucleated settlement of Ashwell. This village has more architecturally worthwhile houses than many others in the county. Nearly all are timber framed or gabled brick type and some are of medieval origin."

7.46 The Assessment found that the setting of these structures and the local views are important to the preservation of their character as well as the settings and views being important in themselves, commenting that:

- In visual terms North Baldock Chalk Uplands is considered to be of moderate to high sensitivity. Open views and skylines throughout the Character Area are particularly sensitive to development.
- The southern edge of Ashwell is self contained and would be sensitive to further development.
- St Mary's Church in Ashwell forms a landmark feature in many views within the Character Area.

7.47 Built development guidelines were to:

- *"Retain the rural character of the Character Area ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to the Character Area."*
- *"Conserve the traditional character of Ashwell, particularly the approaches to the village from the south and west. Ensuring that any development within or located on the edge of the village uses appropriate vernacular materials and features."*

Policy ASH9 Locally significant views

Summary

7.48 Ashwell has significant views that make an important contribution to the area's attractive rural character. Developments may not have a detrimental impact on them.

Full policy

POLICY ASH9 LOCALLY SIGNIFICANT VIEWS

- A The Plan identifies twenty one locally-significant views, described and mapped in Figures 6.9 and 6.10. As appropriate to their scale and nature, development proposals within the arcs of the various views as shown on Figure 7.10 should be designed in a way that safeguards the locally-significant view or views concerned.
- B Development proposals are required to ensure that they do not have a significantly detrimental impact on the locally significant views shown in Figure 7.9 and mapped in Figure 7.10 and the policy maps, Figure 16.1 and Figure 16.2
- C Development proposals are to comply with the findings and guidelines in Character Area Assessment 224 referred to in paras 7.44 to 7.47 of the ANP.

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Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 8; Saved Plan 1996: 21; Emerging Local Plan: NE1, HE1; NPPF (2019):
124, 125, 127; 170(a); 170(b); 171

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8 Natural environment

Natural landscape and rural character

- 8.1 The character of the village is influenced by the natural environment and draws on the traits of the local soils, aspect and geographic location. The village is positioned just beyond the eastern end of the Chiltern Hills, to the north of the Western Hills and west of Therfield Heath. It is underlain by Calcareous chalk, which produces alkaline soils with the potential for rare and uncommon chalk loving plant communities. This is a rolling landscape of high quality farmland, with large open fields and big skies.
- 8.2 Ashwell is typical of what Natural England considers as the East Anglian Chalk National Character Area (NCA No. 87):
"...the narrow continuation of the chalk ridge that runs south-west/north-east across southern England. The underlying geology is Upper Cretaceous Chalk, which is covered in a surface deposit of ice and river-deposited material laid down during the last ice age. This creates a visually simple and uninterrupted landscape of smooth, rolling chalkland hills with large regular fields enclosed by low hawthorn hedges, with few trees, straight roads and expansive views to the north."
- 8.3 Enclosure came late to the area and was never extensive. As a consequence, the landscape has few hedges, trees and woods, and the biodiversity of the land that surrounds the village is less diverse with fewer species. Hares and skylarks thrive and rare chalky plant communities, with species such as thyme and marjoram, can survive on unimproved, or semi-improved pasture and areas of lowland calcareous grassland. These are, however, rare habitats and there are a number of important surviving grassland habitats in the parish.
- 8.4 The wide open fields that characterise the outer parts of the parish play an important role in its character. The parish strides over the chalk scarp and views, especially of the church, can be seen from places like Partridge Hill, Station Road and Newnham Way. The views of the village from the main approaches need to be recognised and protected (See Figure 7.9 and map in Figure 7.10).
- 8.5 Natural England has prepared a number of Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) for the East Anglian chalkland character area. These statements are designed to identify the important environmental functions of the landscapes and the ways in which the main characteristics of these areas can be balanced with landscape and land-use planning, community engagement and education, including the Local Plan making process. These are:
- *SEO 1: Maintain sustainable, but productive, agricultural land use while expanding and connecting the chalkland assemblage of semi-natural grasslands, for example by sensitive management of road verges and extending buffer strips along field margins, to benefit soil and water quality, reduce soil erosion, strengthen landscape character and enhance biodiversity and pollinator networks.*
 - *SEO 2: Conserve the regionally important East Anglian Chalk groundwater resource, by working in partnership to ensure that an integrated catchment-scale approach is secured for its enhanced long-term management, including the chalk streams, for the benefit of biodiversity, landscape character and recreational experience.*

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- *SEO 3: Conserve and promote the landscape character, geodiversity, historic environment and historical assets of the chalklands, including the open views of undulating chalkland, large rectilinear field pattern and linear ditches, strong equine association and the Icknield Way prehistoric route. Improve opportunities to enhance people's enjoyment of the area while protecting levels of tranquillity.*
 - *SEO 4: Conserve the settlement character and create or enhance sustainable urban drainage systems and green infrastructure within existing and new developments, particularly in relation to the urban fringe and growth areas such as south-east Cambridge, to provide recreation opportunities, increase soil and water quality and enhance landscape character.*
- 8.6 POLICY ASH10 seeks to ensure that development enhances the natural environment and, to that end, developments should include an appropriate landscape and ecological management plan. This includes a list of trees and shrubs to be planted to ensure the rural and green character of the neighbourhood area is enhanced. The plan should involve the planting of new trees and hedgerows of native species in gardens, communal areas or verges where practical. However, this requires a carefully considered approach. Planting and management should maintain the land's existing character which is one of open fields, reflecting the limited impact of enclosure in the area (see para. 3.10).

Policy ASH10 Natural landscape and rural character

Summary

- 8.7 Other than single householder applications developments should fit into the landscape, minimize damaging impacts on its ecology and protect existing natural features, e.g. trees and hedgerows. Development should also provide open space, accessible to the general public.

Full policy

POLICY ASH10 NATURAL LANDSCAPE AND RURAL CHARACTER	
A	Development proposals should maintain and enhance the natural environment, and retain landscape features, in accordance with Natural England's Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) for the East Anglian chalkland character area and enhance the rural character and setting of Ashwell.
B	Development proposals should demonstrate that they have addressed the following matters: <ol style="list-style-type: none">(i) respecting the natural topography of a site, preserving and sensitively incorporating existing natural features such as trees, hedgerows and ponds within the site; and(ii) being integrated into the landscape according to native ecological principles and including new landscape buffers between existing development and the

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	<p>countryside adjacent to development sites, particularly when seen from the village boundary; and</p> <p>(iii) ensuring adequate protection for trees and hedgerows during all phases of development to avoid damage, including activities causing soil compaction or severance of roots. Trees of arboreal significance should only be removed if diseased in which case they should be replaced with trees of a similar potential size and native species elsewhere on the site, unless this is clearly not possible.</p>
C	<p>As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals should provide open space that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Is in usable parcels of land and not fragmented; and(ii) Is safe, easily accessible and not severed by any physical barrier; and(iii) Is accessible to the general public; and(iv) creates a safe environment regarding lighting and layout; and(v) is complemented by landscaping.
D	<p>Landscaping associated with construction and open space designs should be along ecological principles where possible using native species, (wildflower meadows), rain gardens (SuDS) and community orchards, to encourage species like bees and seed eating birds. Open spaces should provide an educational opportunity for people interested in the natural environment.</p>
E	<p>Development proposals that provide for an appropriate legal agreement to ensure proper management of the open space over the lifetime of the development will be supported.</p>

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 8, 9; Saved Plan 1996: 14; Emerging Local Plan: SP12; NPPF (2019): 170 - 171, 174 – 175; 177

Natural wildlife assets

- 8.8 In terms of wildlife, Ashwell Springs, in the centre of the village, is a rare chalk stream wildlife habitat of 0.48 hectares. It has SSSI status and is managed by the Parish Council. The spring issues from the chalk to form one of the main sources of the River Rhee which flows into the River Cam and then into the Great Ouse. The water is at a constant temperature of around 10°C. The cold temperature and clear water over gravel and chalk substrates are important for the survival of rare flatworms (*Crenobia alpina* and *Polyclelis felina*), freshwater shrimps (*Gammarus sp.*) and fish such as Bullhead (*Cottus gobio*). The Springs are a valued and well visited local resource and village amenity with a natural paddling pool used for recreation.
- 8.9 Although not classed as 'main river' within the parish, the Rhee and its minor tributaries including Ashwell Quarry Springs and those at Westbury are all important chalk stream habitats and should be protected from damage caused by agricultural fertiliser and pesticide run-off or building development, with enhancement being a future aim wherever possible.

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Environment Agency guidance suggests providing buffer zones of 8m each side of water courses within which no development should be permitted.

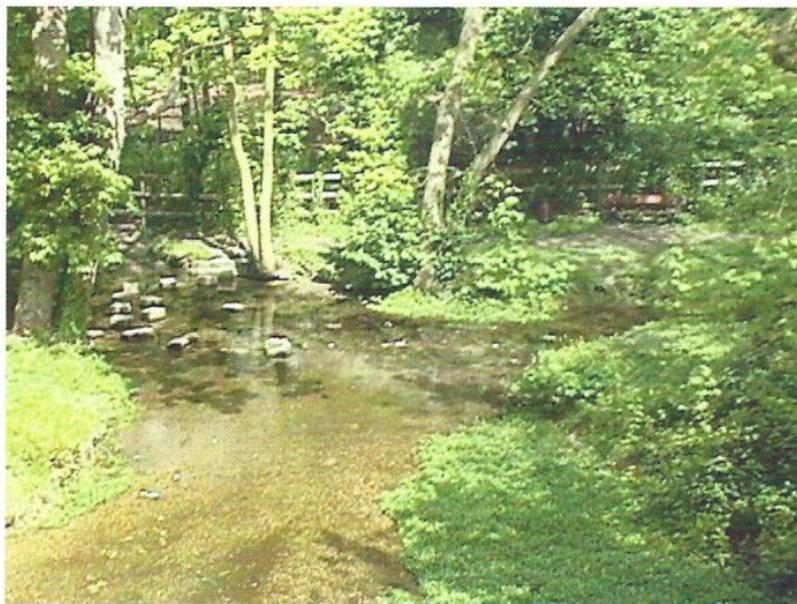


Figure 8.1 Ashwell Springs

- 8.10 Ashwell Quarry and Quarry Springs Nature Reserves are located west of the village. Although in private ownership, the former chalk quarry is leased to the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and managed by a local warden and volunteers. Possibly quarried from Roman times, the Totternhoe stone (a hard chalk rock) was used in Mediaeval times to repair St Mary's parish church. The poorer quality rock known as 'clunch' continued to be dug for use in local walls until the late 1800s but its main importance after the hard stone could no longer be extracted was as a source of lime for soil improvement, especially on the clay lands in the north of the parish. Extraction ceased in the early 1900s.
- 8.11 The chalky soil of the quarry now supports a wide range of flowering species such as Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), Small Scabious (*Scabiosa columbaria*) and Clustered Bellflower (*Campanula glomerata*). The reserve also has important associated fauna such as the Chalkhill Blue butterfly (*Lysandra coridon*) and many species of small mammal including the rare Yellow-necked Mouse (*Apodemus flavicollis*). Nearby to the north is the clear spring, also part of the reserve. It feeds the River Rhee and is another important home to flat worms and other scarce wildlife.
- 8.12 St Mary's Church supports several species of bat including the uncommon Natterer's Bat. Roosts and maternity colonies can be found in several other locations such as roof spaces and suitable trees with cavities. All bats are protected by law and any disturbance to roof spaces or the removal of old trees without the appropriate mitigation in place can have a serious impact on their populations..
- 8.13 A wide variety of bird species can still be found in the parish, although some are declining in numbers in common with other areas. Ashwell remains important in a county context for its farmland birds including skylarks, corn buntings and yellowhammers. Other small birds include summer breeding species such as blackcaps and whitethroats, swallows and swifts whilst

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common buzzards and red kites can be seen patrolling the area almost every day. Tawny, little and barn owls occur locally as do grey wagtails and mistle thrushes both of which are currently included on the Birds of Conservation Concern Red List.

- 8.14 The village supports a range of habitats comprising large and small gardens, allotments, orchards, small grass fields, hedges, walls, garden ponds and many trees both native and planted. Many of the longer-established field hedges contain fruiting trees such as cherry plum, crab apple and wild damson.

Wildlife corridors

- 8.15 Wildlife corridors are important features connecting wildlife populations otherwise separated by human activities. Hedges with botanically stable and diverse field margins, healthy rivers and streams, semi-natural and planted woodlands and tree belts are all wildlife corridors which are vital for allowing the movement of animals and the continuation of viable populations. Many such features occur in the parish but some are not as well-connected with other habitats or as sympathetically managed for wildlife as they could be.

Figure 8.2 and Figure 8.3 show significant wildlife corridors within the parish. It illustrates the importance of watercourses and paths. All of the features mentioned above have a role to play though, and should be maintained so that wildlife can move freely and safely.

- 8.16 The proposed Environmental Land Management Scheme coming into operation following the end of the Common Agricultural Policy in the UK may encourage local landowners to take advantage of new initiatives to enhance and strengthen wildlife corridors throughout the ANP area. The ANP aims to prepare the ground for this sort of scheme.

Green infrastructure

- 8.17 Preceding paragraphs look at the Parish's natural assets from a wildlife perspective. 'Green Infrastructure' is a term that focuses on the contribution that these and other aspects of the environment make to the well-being of people living in the area and visitors alike. The human impact is what makes good quality green infrastructure important. Its two key characteristics are: that it is a network of integrated spaces and features, and that it is 'multi-functional', providing multiple benefits simultaneously. These can be to:

- Support people's mental and physical health.
- Encourage active travel.
- Cool urban areas during heat waves.
- Attract investment.
- Reduce water run-off during flash flooding.
- Provide carbon storage.
- Provide sustainable drainage.

- 8.18 ANP policy intends to exploit these multiple benefits. They are not just about providing critical spaces as wildlife refuges or stepping stones that prevent species becoming isolated, they are essential for health and well-being.

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- 8.19 The extent to which green infrastructure provides these benefits depends on how it is designed and maintained, and the maturity and health of the elements that form it (such as trees). The green infrastructure assets of the Neighbourhood area – including gardens, fields, woodland, ponds - should be maximised and should facilitate the passage of wildlife. Development that provides accessible public space and improves the connectivity between wildlife areas and green spaces used by the community will be encouraged.
- 8.20 Development is also expected to play its part in enhancing biodiversity and the ANP accepts the need for an objective way of assessing this to enable real, measurable net biodiversity gain, as required by the NPPF.
- At the time of writing the DEFRA and Natural England Biodiversity Metric 2.0²⁷ had just completed beta testing and, on its release in December 2020, would be the best available tool for assessing gain.

²⁷ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5850908674228224> (27/12)

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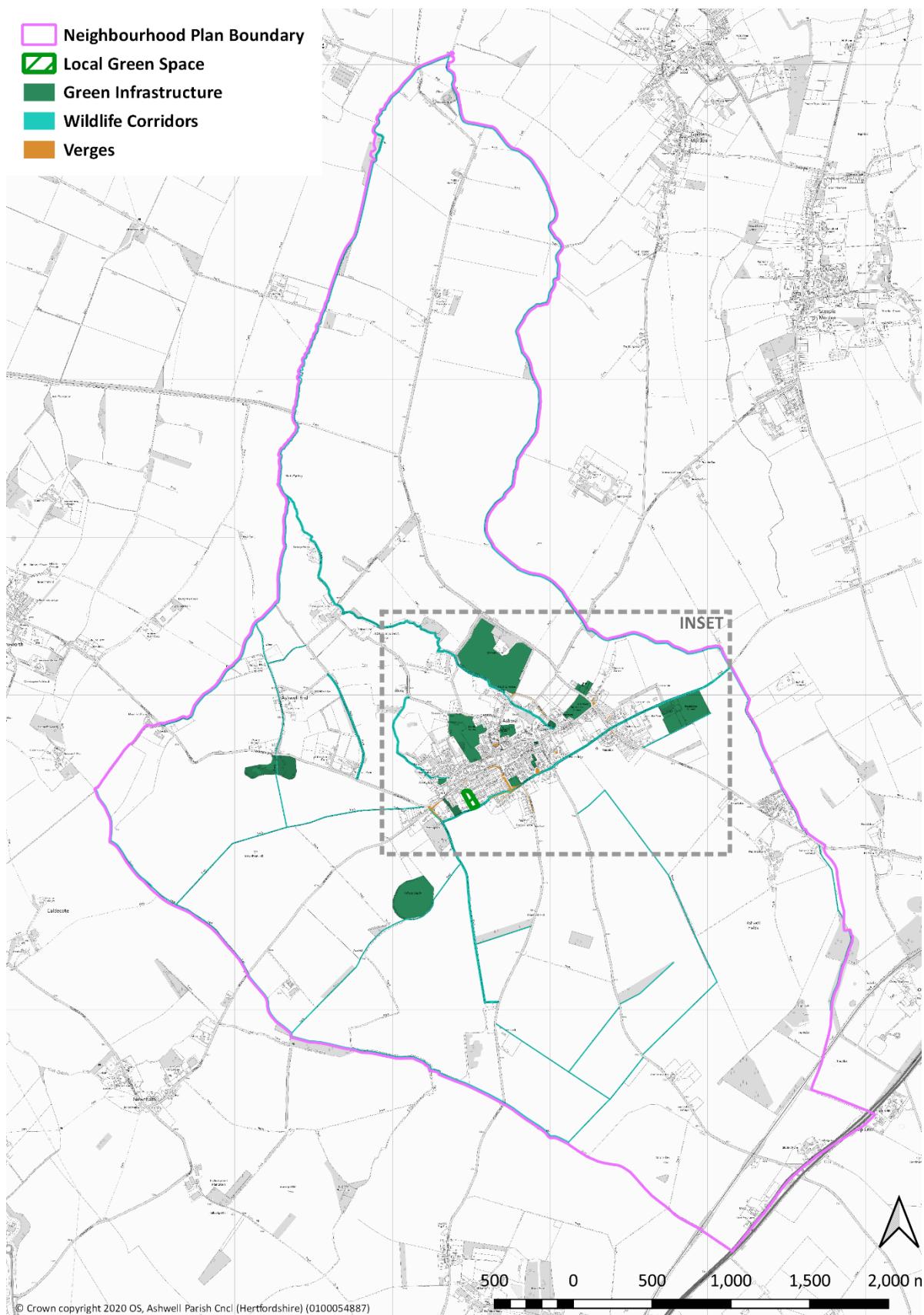


Figure 8.2 Network of the main green infrastructure elements in Ashwell Parish, including wildlife corridors

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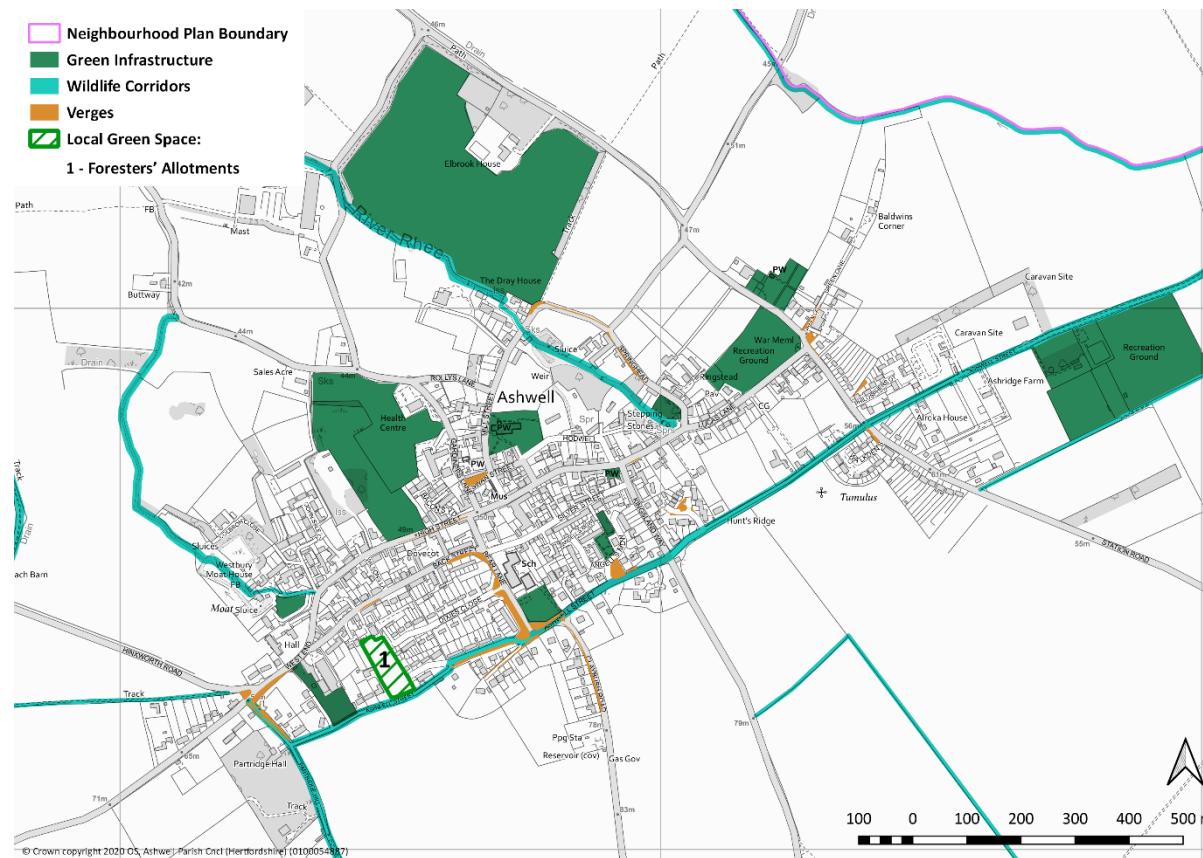


Figure 8.3 Network of the main green infrastructure elements in Ashwell Parish, including wildlife corridors (detail)

PolicyASH11 Natural wildlife assets, wildlife corridors and green infrastructure

Summary

- 8.21 Planning applications should take account of the need to manage wildlife assets, wildlife corridors and green infrastructure, and must demonstrate a net biodiversity gain using the DEFRA/Natural England metric. The proposals must have no adverse effect on Ashwell Springs.

Full policy

POLICY ASH11 NATURAL WILDLIFE ASSETS, WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

- A As appropriate to their scale, nature and location development proposals are expected to demonstrate net biodiversity gain as calculated by the most up to date version of the DEFRA and Natural England biodiversity metric.
Proposals should also include provision for maintaining biodiversity gain in the future.
- B Proposals should be designed from inception to create, conserve, enhance and manage the network of green infrastructure – including the wildlife corridors shown

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on the policy maps, Figure 16.1 and Figure 16.2 - with the aim of delivering a net environmental benefit for local people and wildlife.

Proposals that seek to improve the connectivity between wildlife areas and green spaces will be supported in order to enhance the green infrastructure of Ashwell parish. In addition:

- (i) Future development should aim to include features such as swift and owl nesting boxes wherever appropriate; and
 - (ii) New development should include fruiting trees in their planting mixes wherever possible.
- C Watercourses in the parish should be left with a development-free 8 metre buffer zone on each side of the channel.
- D Development will not normally be supported if it has an adverse effect on the Ashwell Springs Site of Special Scientific Interest unless it meets the NPPF criterion in para 175(b): "*where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest*".

Conformity Reference: NP Objectives: 9; Saved Plan 1996: 14; Emerging Local Plan: SP12; NPPF (2019): 170, 171; 175; 177

Local Green Spaces (LGS)

8.22 Under the NPPF, neighbourhood plans have the opportunity to designate Local Green Spaces which are of particular importance to the local community. This will afford protection from development other than in very special circumstances. Para 100 of the NPPF (2019) says that Local Green Spaces should only be designated:

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

8.23 When designating Local Green Spaces, it is important to consider what protection is already afforded to an area and whether or not the designation will provide any further safeguard. Appendix D: Local Green Spaces, sets out a review of the green spaces in Ashwell to determine which might be appropriate for designation.

8.24 The review identified the Foresters' Allotments as an area of value to the community and in need of protection from inappropriate development. Figure 8.4 shows its location in the village. A more detailed map of this space appears in the 'Shortlisted Local Green Spaces' section of Appendix D, with an explanation of how it fulfils the Local Green Space criteria.

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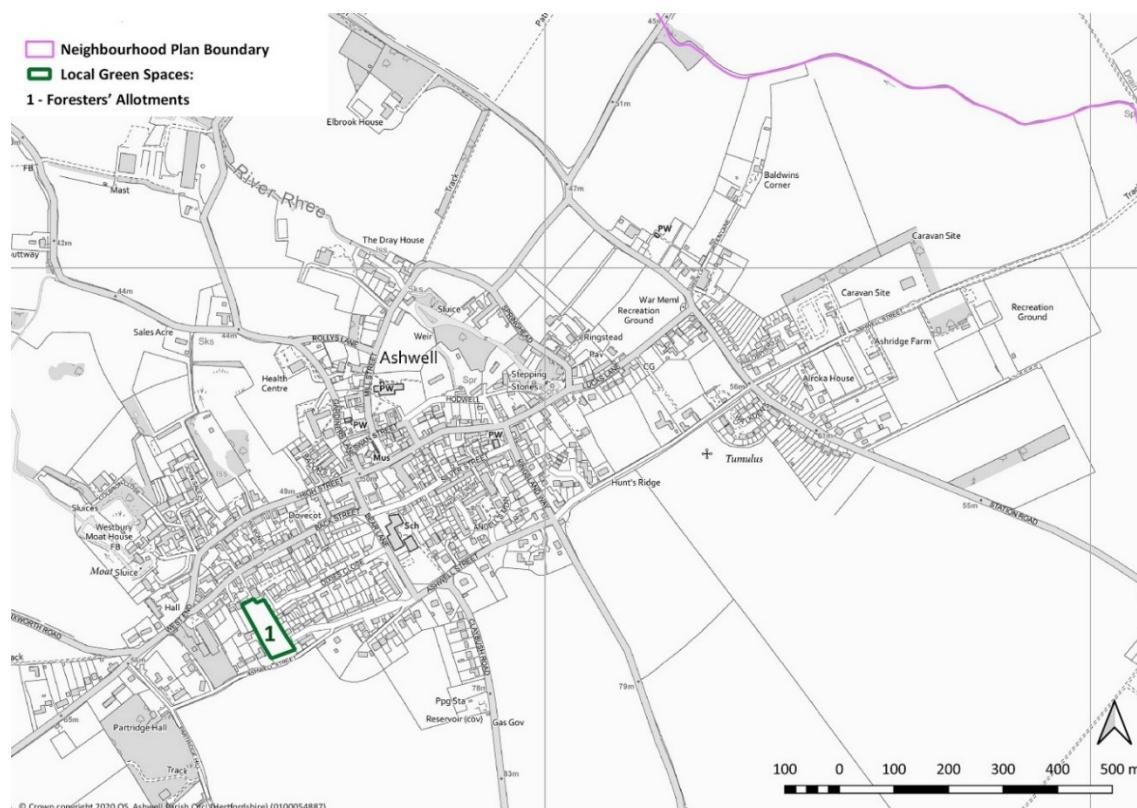


Figure 8.4 Local Green Space selected for registration: Foresters' Allotments (highlighted in green)

Policy ASH12 Local green spaces

Summary

8.25 The Foresters Allotments is a site proposed for designation as a Local Green Space. In planning terms it would then be treated in a similar way to Green Belt land.

Full policy

POLICY ASH12 LOCAL GREEN SPACES

- A The Ancient Order of Foresters' Allotments, as defined on the Policies Map, is designated as Local Green Space.
- B Local policy for managing development on a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts (NPPF 145); proposals for built development will not be supported unless it can be clearly demonstrated that it is required to enhance the role and function of that Local Green Space.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 9; Saved Plan 1996: 14; Emerging Local Plan: SP12; NPPF (2019): 99 - 101, 145; 146

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9 Business and economy

- 9.1 The early prosperity of Ashwell came from farming and, in the medieval period, from twice-weekly markets and quarterly fairs. From the sixteenth century growing barley for malting became increasingly important. The Maltings fed two breweries in the village, both of which have now closed. The period from the late eighteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century saw the rise and fall of straw-plaiting for hat making, and then coprolite digging for the fertiliser industry was an important local industry from 1850 to 1890.
- 9.2 Agriculture is an important part of the local environment and rural character but now provides less employment than in previous generations. Changes in agricultural practices have meant that some farm buildings have been converted to business premises or housing, while small areas of farmland are used as caravan parks or in association with the husbandry of horses. The village still retains a dairy herd which is one of only two that survive in Hertfordshire.
- 9.3 In the last 30 years, the increased use of private cars has meant that people can now travel further afield for work and can also visit shops elsewhere. As a result, a number of shops in the village have closed and some traditional industries have disappeared.

Incubator/flexible start-up business space

- 9.4 A rising number of people commute to Cambridge, London and further afield. Surveys have shown that only 16% of the population still work in the village and, of these, two-thirds are self-employed. 18% work in nearby towns, but 20% work further afield. Records show that the village has always had a spread of occupations that would normally be associated with a small town rather than a village. Ashwell today is still remarkable for the number of shops, trades, businesses and services it continues to support.
- 9.5 To remain a viable centre for business and an attractive place to live, Ashwell needs to sustain a healthy and thriving community. Support and encouragement are needed to ensure that local businesses and employment are sustainable. A Working Group should be established to explore ways in which additional support can be provided to attract local businesses and help all businesses to survive and flourish.
- 9.6 The ANP Working Group undertook a survey of local businesses in 2016, which revealed the following:
- One third of businesses employ no-one apart from the owner. On average each business employs 1.8 people apart from the owner, but fewer than one person (0.7) from the village.
 - Ashwell residents provide only a small proportion (29%) of total trade. One quarter of businesses supply, or are supplied, by other Ashwell businesses. There is no clear evidence that an increase in housing or population would directly benefit local traders.
 - Trade appears stable but is not growing. Ten per cent of businesses do not believe their business is viable at its current level.
 - Although Ashwell is considered a place that attracts tourism, only one quarter of businesses claim to derive any benefit from this. Of the events run in Ashwell, those

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that are considered to benefit businesses most are: Ashwell at Home, Ashwell at Christmas, and the Ashwell Show.

- 55% of businesses believe greater promotion of tourism would not benefit their trade.

9.7 The factors that businesses considered would be most helpful to improve them were:

- Improved public parking provision.
- Ensuring adequate broadband speeds are available.
- Access to a more local workforce.
- Lower business rates.

9.8 For the retail sector, there is a risk of retail outlets becoming less financially viable. An additional concern is that premises are considered to have a greater value as residential rather than retail properties and there is a risk that more retail premises may be converted to residential.

9.9 Residents have strongly indicated that they would prefer to work locally, with many choosing to work from home. This has the added benefit of reducing the level of out-commuting necessary. Support for small and start-up businesses fits well into the existing local economy and social fabric and can provide the best strategy for increasing local employment within an existing and growing skills base.

9.10 In order to provide flexible start-up space, it is necessary to find appropriate buildings which can be rented out at sufficiently low rents to attract their use by business start-ups and existing home workers. A potential source of such space is vacant units within the village centre, which could either be converted on a permanent basis if they are no longer viable for retail use or on a temporary basis; similarly, the refurbishment of old B1 class space (E use class from September 2020) and redundant agricultural buildings.

Policy ASH13 Incubator/flexible start-up business space

Summary

9.11 The ANP will encourage planning applications to provide new business space.

Full policy

POLICY ASH13 INCUBATOR/FLEXIBLE START-UP BUSINESS SPACE

- A Proposals to provide incubator/start-up business space on flexible terms will be supported through:
- (i) conversion of existing buildings across the Parish; or
 - (ii) provision of new buildings or conversion of existing buildings within the settlement boundary.

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- B As appropriate to their scale, nature and location proposals for new workspaces should demonstrate the way in which they can be incorporated within their immediate locality without generating any unacceptable impact on the amenity of residential properties and on the capacity and safety of the local highways network.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 2; Saved Plan 1996: 36, 37; Emerging Local Plan: SP4; NPPF (2019): 83, 84

Broadband provision

- 9.12 The modern economy is changing and increasingly needs good communications infrastructure as a basic requirement. Ashwell has a significant number of self-employed people, many of whom work from home and these people require computer access to a good broadband connection.
- 9.13 Broadband provision in Ashwell was improved during 2018 and 2019 due to the installation of fibre optic cabling to a number of new cabinet boxes sited in the village. However, the final supply to homes is still via traditional copper cabling between the street cabinet and homes. This technology is termed Fibre To The Cabinet (FTTC). This has typically increased speeds to between 20 - 80 mbps depending on proximity to a cabinet. This is still well below the Government's 'full fibre to home broadband' trial, which can provide data at speeds close to one gigabit per second (Gbps).
- 9.14 BT has an obligation to provide a landline to every household in the UK and developers want to facilitate high speed broadband provision as a marketable feature. But there have been instances where developers have not contacted BT early enough for fibre and ducting to be laid. Again, they may have a national agreement with a cable provider but one that is not active in this area, and fail to deal with this - leaving new housing developments with poor connections.
- 9.15 A joined up approach between different authorities and providers is essential. The ANP supports a coordinated approach.

Policy ASH14 Broadband provision

Summary

- 9.16 Where possible, network providers are expected to install superfast broadband in new properties.

Full policy

POLICY ASH14 BROADBAND PROVISION

- A All new residential, commercial and community properties within the ANP area should be served by a superfast broadband (fibre-optic) connection.
The only exception will be where it can be demonstrated, through consultation with Next Generation Access (NGA) Network providers, that this would not be either

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possible, practical or economically viable. In such circumstances, sufficient and suitable ducting should be provided within the site and to the property to facilitate ease of installation at a future date on an open access basis.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 2, 4; Saved Plan 1996: 36, 57; Emerging Local Plan: SP10; NPPF (2019): 80; 81(c); 81(d), 112

Ashwell village centre

- 9.17 Ashwell village centre lies on level ground within approximately 200 metres of St Mary's Church, and reflects the historical residential centre of Ashwell. It includes the main retail services (butcher, baker, village store, pharmacy, hairdressers and pubs) plus key buildings that have historically provided meeting places (Church, Parish Rooms, School, Museum, URC Hall) for the community. The village centre is also within easy walking distance of the Springs which formed a key natural attraction to human settlement in Ashwell from pre-historic times and since.
- 9.18 As the population of the village grew in the nineteenth century additional housing radiated out from the centre, but mainly to the East and West with the main through-road of High Street, plus Lucas Lane and West End (respectively forming easterly and westerly extensions of High Street) forming the principal axis of development. The village centre with its shops and meeting places still provides a vital focus for both spontaneous pedestrian interaction, as well as organised community events, all of which contribute to the pleasure of living in a thriving and historically significant rural village.
- 9.19 The local engagement process indicated that there is real concern among parishioners about a decline in support for local shops and services. In the last few years, the village has lost its permanent post office and a takeaway food outlet. Local people are concerned if further shops close this will result in the diminishing of other services, for example the pharmacy. The pharmacy supplies many over-the-counter medicines and goods and is an important source of advice and support to local residents. Its closure would represent a considerable loss to the community.
- 9.20 The policies in this section seek to reinforce the shopping offer while seeking to support retail in the village centre as part of a wider mix of uses so it remains a place for community interaction.

Policy ASH15 Ashwell village centre

Summary

- 9.21 Planning applications to change the use of current retail and service premises will only be supported if these businesses can no longer remain viable.

Full policy

POLICY ASH15 ASHWELL VILLAGE CENTRE

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- A Development proposals that provide a balance of uses - retail, leisure and community, commercial and residential - will be supported subject to compliance with all relevant development plan policies.
- B Proposals which result in the permanent change of use of Classes E, F1 and F2 to other uses will only be supported where the applicant has demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of the site or premises being used for ongoing retail or community uses. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that the existing use is no longer viable and that the site has been marketed for a reasonable period of time - 12 months - for alternative retail or community uses.
- C The reuse of historic buildings within Ashwell village centre for activities that will enhance its vitality and viability is supported. Any alterations to historic buildings will need to be sympathetic to the historic and architectural significance and character of the building.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 2, 4, 5, 7; Saved Plan 1996: 36, 37, 38, 42; Emerging Local Plan: SP4, SP10; NPPF (2019): 83, 91, 92

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10 Sport, leisure and recreation

Sports facilities

- 10.1 Neighbourhoods that benefit from sport and recreation facilities build stronger, healthier, happier and safer communities. It is important that younger residents are encouraged to play sport. It is equally important that older people continue to participate in sport and other recreational activities. In order to fully address the needs of this age group, in addition to forming part of the strategic plan for sports facilities in the parish, there is a need to promote other non-competitive forms of exercise such as walking groups, pilates, yoga, horse riding, leisure cycling, bowls and an outdoor gym.
- 10.2 With an ever-increasing number of Ashwell residents engaging in sport, it is apparent from the 2016 general survey, and from local engagement, that improved facilities are required in the village. Current facilities within the parish are described below.

The Recreation Ground

- 10.3 The Recreation Ground is used by many clubs especially the cricket club with its senior and junior sections (a membership of 135 in 2018), the Ashwell Academicals (Accies) football club and the senior football team. Other activities on the recreation ground include Mums Fit, Village Sports day, Beavers, Scouts, Brownies and Cubs. The children's playground is also well used and incorporates a small skateboard facility.



Figure 10.1 The Recreation Ground in summer 1991: a view that is unchanged in 2020, apart from the lack of cricket due to covid19 restrictions.

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Figure 10.2 The Recreation Ground in winter

- 10.4 The small size of the Recreation Ground creates problems for many of the teams, with pitches that are both small and overlapping. It is constrained by busy roads and the playground for small children is adjacent to the cricket pitch, which creates a potential conflict during some sports events. However, its location and green space within the main body of the village is appreciated. It should be preserved and supplemented by additional facilities elsewhere in the wider parish area. Situated at one end of the recreation ground is a wooden pavilion built originally for the cricket club. This facility is now not fit for the range of clubs which use it and will need replacing. At each end of the wooden pavilion there are brick toilets that are open to the public all year round. These are out of date and are unsuitable for those with mobility issues. A Section 106 application has been made in September 2019 in relation to a Planning Application to provide funding towards the replacement of this pavilion.

Small Gains Lane

- 10.5 This area is a complex of privately owned land with tennis courts and a cycling facility that local clubs use and Parish Council owned football pitches and allotments. The pitches are used by the junior football teams and the cricket club makes use of an all-weather square. Due to lack of space the football pitch is undersized by several metres and there is no capacity for an under-15 pitch or for the regulation run-off area.

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Figure 10.3 Football pitch at Small Gains Lane

- 10.6 The cycling club had 280 members in 2018, 75 of whom were children. In the summer the track is used twice a week for formal sessions. There are also a few informal training rides and usually two or three open events. In the winter there is less usage, usually once a week, with again two or three open mountain bike type events on a specially created terrain track around the perimeter of the field. There are two grass tracks one inside the other. The outer track has a periphery of 333m and the periphery of the inner track is about 250m.
- 10.7 In 2018 the tennis club had 250 members. The courts can be booked and there are club events, with training sessions both for adults and children. It is thought that the courts are used around 30 hours a week between April and October and half as much during the rest of the year.
- 10.8 There are 20 allotments at Small Gains, managed by the Parish Council. There is a water tank supplying the allotments so they do not suffer from drought. They are well used for growing vegetables and also providing social interaction between gardeners.
- 10.9 There are also allotments between Ashwell Street and Back Street, owned and managed by the Ancient Order of Foresters. These are also very popular despite the lack of mains water.

Future needs

- 10.10 The 2016 general survey identified that users of Small Gains expressed a need for better changing facilities and that the tennis and cycling clubs required toilet facilities. Many villagers would like to establish other clubs such as rugby and badminton, but the current facilities are not suitable. The cost of a pavilion at Small Gains with storage, home and away changing rooms, communal space, kitchen and servery is estimated to be in the range of £75,000 - £100,000. No plans for a pavilion at Small Gains have been prepared to date.
- 10.11 The most pressing requirement is for a football pitch suitable for the U13/U14 age group. The under-13s are currently playing outside Ashwell, which clearly is not satisfactory for an Ashwell

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team. Although the Recreation Ground is not ideal for adult football and cricket, due to its small size, health and safety issues and conflicts with other users, users like the location. There is a clear need for a larger ground, but preference would be for an extension to the current Ground if land became available.

Policy ASH16 Provision of leisure and recreation facilities

Summary

- 10.12 The ANP will favour planning proposals that add to or enhance leisure facilities for Ashwell residents. The Parish's share of statutory contributions from developers will be used to enhance facilities.

Full policy

POLICY ASH16 PROVISION OF LEISURE AND RECREATION FACILITIES

A In order to provide for the increased need for leisure provision to support the growing population of Ashwell, development proposals which deliver the following will be supported:

- (i) new play areas and sports facilities or improvements to existing ones, which conform to Sport England design guidance²⁸; or
- (ii) the extension of the existing Recreation Ground or providing additional recreation space elsewhere, where:
 - (a) the proposal would not have significant harmful impacts on the amenities of surrounding residents and the local environment; and
 - (b) the proposal would not have significant adverse impacts upon the local road network.

B The delivery of new facilities or improvements to existing facilities, including the provision of accessible toilets, changing rooms and communal space - will be secured through Section 106 contributions or Community Infrastructure Levy funding, once adopted by North Hertfordshire District Council.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 3, 4; Saved Plan 1996: 39; Emerging Local Plan: SP10; NPPF (2019): 91, 92, 96,97

Public houses

- 10.13 Opportunities for social interaction, including the combatting of isolation among older members of the community, are important. The three public houses in Ashwell (Bushel and Strike, Rose and Crown, and Three Tuns) are not only valued local businesses but they also act as community assets. They have social or cultural value for particular groups in the community and provide employment opportunities.

²⁸ <https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance> (27/12)

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- 10.14 It is important that the community continues to be served by public houses or similar licensed premises but there is a concern locally about the possible change of their use, particularly to private dwellings.
- 10.15 Section 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 directs the removal of permitted development rights for the change of use of public houses to other types of use. This means that a planning application will be required in all cases where an owner wishes to change an existing public house to another use.
- 10.16 This policy seeks to increase the viability of all public houses within Ashwell by encouraging them to improve and expand suitable community facilities.

Policy ASH17 Protection of public houses

Summary

- 10.17 Planning applications to change the use of public houses will only be supported if they can no longer remain viable. Proposals to expand their use will be supported if it is to provide a similar community resource (e.g. restaurant).

Full policy

POLICY ASH17 PROTECTION OF PUBLIC HOUSES

- A Development proposals to change the use of public houses (Class sui generis) will only be supported if such a use is demonstrably unviable. In order to demonstrate this, evidence will be required to show that the existing public house has been actively marketed as for use as such for a period of not less than 12 months at a reasonable market value for drinking establishment floorspace, that are comparable to the market values for drinking establishment floorspace in that general locality.
- B Proposals for the expansion of existing public houses in the neighbourhood area to develop appropriate community-based activities, such as a restaurant will be supported, subject to complying with other policies within the plan and provided the scale, design and materials are in keeping with the local character and reinforce the local distinctiveness of the surroundings.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 2, 5; Saved Plan 1996: 39; Emerging Local Plan: SP4, SP10; NPPF (2019): 91, 92

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11 Healthcare and education

11.1 Building a confident and socially connected community is an important part of health and wellbeing for Ashwell's residents, especially for those who are less mobile and need more support in accessing resources. In addition, retaining educational facilities, and supporting and growing these as necessary, will help to attract families to Ashwell.

Maintaining existing health services

11.2 Easy access to community health is an important consideration for all members of the community. Surveys conducted by Ipsos MORI and published in 2016 on behalf of NHS England indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the services provided at Ashwell Surgery and Ashwell Dental Surgery. The survey also showed that parishioners were, on the whole, satisfied with these care services as well as those provided for physiotherapy, osteopathy, and other general care services.

11.3 However, more recent anecdotal comments from residents suggest that, with the exception of emergencies, it is proving difficult to obtain an appointment with a GP at Ashwell Surgery in less than three weeks. This is a significant deterioration in service level, and one which can represent a cause of stress and / or frustration and / or a deterioration of health for the patient.



Figure 11.1 Pharmacy, High Street Ashwell

11.4 The major point that emerged from the 2016 General Survey was the overwhelming support for the pharmacy in the village. Two thirds of survey respondents said they always used the pharmacy and a further one third sometimes used it. Virtually everyone said they wanted to keep the pharmacy.

11.5 There was concern that the declining support for local retail shops will mean that the pharmacy may come under threat. This would be tragic for the community because the

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pharmacy not only supplies many over-the-counter medicines and goods, but it is a very important source of reliable health advice.

- 11.6 When asked if the care services in Ashwell showed respect, dignity and compassion (the accepted criteria for judging care), the vast majority of respondents replied positively about all the services available in, or accessible from, Ashwell. Survey respondents also mentioned other support services they would like, including leisure activities for older people, specialist nursing, mental health support groups, neighbourhood care groups, bereavement groups and loneliness support groups.

Policy ASH18 Maintaining existing health services

Summary

- 11.7 The ANP will support proposals that maintain or enhance existing health facilities and encourage regular liaison between local health services and the Parish Council to improve provision.

Full policy

POLICY ASH18 MAINTAINING EXISTING HEALTH SERVICES

- A Proposals which provide, enhance and facilitate the continued delivery of health facilities (Use Class E(e)) on the following sites, as shown on the Policies Map, will be supported. Health facilities being:
- (i) Ashwell Surgery; and
 - (ii) Ashwell dental surgery; and
 - (iii) Ashwell pharmacy.
- B Proposals for the expansion, including relocation locally if required, of these services will be supported subject to the following criteria:
- (i) the proposal would not have significant harmful impacts on the amenities of surrounding residents and the local environment; and
 - (ii) the proposal would not have unacceptable impacts on the local road network; and
 - (iii) the proposal is located within or immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary as defined in Policy ASH1.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 5, 7; Saved Plan 1996: 43, 51; Emerging Local Plan: SP10; NPPF (2019): 91, 92

Education provision

- 11.8 The supply of adequate education provision - for education and community purposes - was also a key issue for the local community, again bearing in mind the growing community across the neighbourhood area.

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- 11.9 Within Ashwell there are three educational establishments: two pre-schools and a primary school. Other educational facilities can also be found in neighbouring villages. Secondary and tertiary education is provided out of the parish.
- 11.10 The two pre-schools are the Playgroup, which is run by a community group, and Gloria's Day Nursery, which is privately run. Both of the pre-schools have a close relationship with Ashwell Primary School and work together to ensure a smooth transition from one to another.



Figure 11.2 An original drawing of Ashwell School by Henry Geo. Luff, architect. 1876

- 11.11 Ashwell Primary School is a state funded non-denominational mixed primary school. The School is managed by the school leadership team which includes the Board of Governors.
- 11.12 The school's Published Admission Number (PAN) was reduced from 38 to 30 in September 2016 and the size of the classes was capped depending on the size of the class at that time. The new PAN, which started in 2016 with the Reception class, has to work its way through the School. This means that it will take seven years for the size of all classes in the school to be capped at 30 pupils.
- 11.13 Ashwell School is generally well regarded by the local community, and especially by parents, as indicated by the annual parent survey conducted by the school. It is also supported through parent engagement and fund-raising activities arranged by the Parent Teacher Association. Other fundraising activities also support the school in providing additional resources and facilities. The School makes a positive contribution to the local community and, when possible, makes its facilities available for local events.
- 11.14 Hertfordshire County Secondary schools are the default choice for many Ashwell school leavers. Ashwell School is a feeder school to The Knights Templar School in Baldock. Some children are also accepted into secondary schools out of county, such as Bassingbourn Village College in Cambridgeshire. Sixth form facilities are available as part of these secondary schools, but other separate facilities and sixth form colleges exist in the wider area.

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11.15 It should be noted and recognised that the Primary School in Ashwell has little or no suitable land on its site to accommodate the building of additional classrooms or educational resources. Resolving this issue is not just a question of funding.

The School is already at maximum pupil capacity within its PAN. So these matters should be carefully considered when assessing the ability of the County Council to provide additional education provision and the acceptability of a planning application in respect of its impact on satisfactory education provision.

11.16 In its Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), para 14.8, the Emerging Local Plan emphasises the need to provide solutions to the demands that development makes on education provision:
"... the IDP has identified a number of areas where significant interventions will be required to support the delivery of the plan:

*School Places – The County Council believe that, in many areas, existing schools are reaching, or at, capacity. ... **Schemes will need to demonstrate acceptable education solutions in order to gain planning permission;**"*

11.17 Taking into account the circumstances peculiar to Ashwell, developers, in partnership with NHDC and HCC, are expected to provide clear, detailed, funded and deliverable plans for providing sufficient school places in response to the increase in demand that each planning decision may cause.

Policy ASH19 Education provision

Summary

11.18 Planning applications should provide solutions to their impact on education provision. The ANP will support proposals that do this if they maintain or, preferably, enhance the quality of provision.

The Parish's share of statutory contributions from developers will be used to enhance facilities.

Full policy

POLICY ASH19 EDUCATION PROVISION

- A Proposals which maintain, enhance or facilitate the continued delivery of good quality education taking into account the impact of the proposed development, will be supported, subject to demonstrating the following:
- (i) acceptable mitigation measures are offered to overcome access and unacceptable highway impact caused by the proposed enhancement; and
 - (ii) the proposed enhancement would not result in a significant loss of amenity to local residents or other nearby activities; and
 - (iii) the proposed enhancement does not conflict with other Plan policies or proposals.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 6; Saved Plan 1996: 51; Emerging Local Plan: SP1, SP7, SP10, AS1; NPPF (2019): 91, 92, 94

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12 Transport and movement

- 12.1 Ashwell's ancient origins continue to be reflected in the settlement pattern seen today, with a network of roads that radiate out from the former marketplace. These routes include some much older trackways in and around the village, the most important of which is Ashwell Street which is thought to be Roman and part of Icknield Way. These trackways make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the village.
- 12.2 The current layout does not, however, easily accommodate modern traffic requirements, especially larger vehicles such as buses and delivery vehicles. This is made worse at peak times by commuters; many residents travelling out of the village for work and parents taking children to school.
- 12.3 Typical of most rural communities, the majority of residents have their own transport, with many households having two or more cars. The main routes are in regular use. Traffic counts show that 300-500 vehicles can pass through the village on an average day. The narrow nature of most of these roads around the village (4.95m is a typical width) can cause problems, not only when larger vehicles are encountered, but also when cars try to pass each other.
- 12.4 A range of traffic studies has been carried out over a number of years. Problems identified include:
- *Speeding*: Particularly in the High Street, Station Road, and West End. This is thought to be mostly by through traffic although the Baldock bypass, which opened in 2006, has had little discernible impact. A 20mph limit was introduced in the village in late 2019 and this too has had only a slight effect on traffic and speed.
 - *On-street parking*: Particularly on narrow roads in the older parts of the village, leading to increased congestion and difficulties for larger vehicles such as those making deliveries. The High Street is frequently reduced to a single carriageway by parked cars; though this does act as an informal traffic calming measure.
 - *Inadequate road maintenance* undertaken by the County Council
- 12.5 All of the above problems could be exacerbated by further development outside the parish. Proposals for new developments should include sufficient provisions, and where necessary include off-site works, to adequately mitigate any adverse traffic impacts.
- 12.6 Whilst the ANP cannot prevent people from using their cars for short journeys, improvements to key routes will encourage short, local journeys to be made by foot, bicycle or public transport. Indeed 11% of households in the parish have no access to a car so this will benefit those people too. Not only should this alleviate congestion and associated air pollution (particularly outside the school and at the main junctions), but will provide regular healthy exercise. Linking both existing and new development areas into the network of existing routes is vital to encourage more walking and less use of the car but also to connect these areas and their residents to the key destinations within the area.

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Accessible footpaths

- 12.7 Staying active is important to all in the community. This includes those with mobility issues who need to use wheelchairs, mobility scooters and other walking aids. It is also relevant to those with young children, using pushchairs.
- 12.8 The built village is served by a network of seven footways (the 'twitchels'). These form well-used linking routes for pedestrians, particularly between the southern part of the village and the centre. However, some of these are not suitable for people with reduced mobility because of steep gradients. Use of the footways reduces vehicular traffic within the village while also providing an opportunity for exercise. They also perform an important social function by providing informal meeting places.
- Many of the pavements in the village, however, are not easy to negotiate because of their age, narrowness, and camber. This is often exacerbated by cars parked in the narrow streets. The provision of handrails on paths with steps or uneven surfaces would assist the people with mobility issues. Access to footpaths leading into the open countryside around the village is also an issue for those with mobility problems.
- 12.9 It is possible to do circular walks to the west, north and east of the village and walking is a popular activity. The footpath network is, therefore, an important recreational and social asset for the village.
- 12.10 The Parish Council should work with Hertfordshire County Council to enhance the footpath provision in line with appropriate policies set out in its Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2017/18 – 2027/28. This plan recognises that rights of way are important for getting about in a sustainable way and provide an opportunity for healthy recreation.
- Where necessary the Parish Council could consider the use of developer contributions to help deliver improvements to popular paths. Any works to upgrade footpaths will need to be carefully balanced with the impact on the natural environment, including the retention of hedgerows adjacent to paths.

Policy ASH20 Accessible paths in the village and rural areas

Summary

- 12.11 The ANP expects existing bridleways and footpaths to be preserved and kept in good condition. All new developments must provide footways that link with the existing network. The ANP will support proposals that improve cycling or walking, separated from vehicles.

Full policy

POLICY ASH20 ACCESSIBLE PATHS IN THE VILLAGE AND RURAL AREAS

- A Development proposals to improve cycling and walking will be supported. In particular, provision of additional routes that provide or complete circular walks / rides and are physically separated from vehicular traffic and from one another will be supported. Such routes should also ensure that access by disabled users and users of

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- mobility scooters is secured. Permissive agreements with landowners should be sought as appropriate.
- B To ensure that residents can access public transport facilities, the village centre, the school and pre-schools, leisure and other important facilities serving the community, all new developments should ensure safe pedestrian access for all, including those with restricted mobility, to link up with existing footways, see Hertfordshire County Council's Rights of Way map²⁹.
- C Development proposals which include highway solutions that mitigate the impact of traffic through the village centre will be supported.
- D Public bridleways and footpaths should only be removed where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh the loss and where suitable alternatives are provided.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 7, 10; Saved Plan 1996: 51; Emerging Local Plan: SP6, SP7; NPPF (2019): 98; 102 - 104,127(e); 127(f)

Bus services and community transport

- 12.12 On first inspection, and in proportion to its size, Ashwell might be considered to have adequate public transport with its local buses, a nearby railway station and a taxibus service.
- 12.13 Three bus routes connect Ashwell village with Ashwell and Morden station, Baldock and Royston. Trains that stop at Ashwell and Morden Station provide a service to London, Cambridge and intermediate stations. Most households have access to private transport but with an ageing population it is important that public transport links to neighbouring villages, towns and cities are retained.
- 12.14 However, while the rail service may be considered reasonable, the local bus services are considered to have deteriorated recently. Because of the difficult access to the station (four kilometres outside the village), travellers have to drive. The existing car park at the station is inadequate and a significant number of cars park on the road verges leading to it.
- 12.15 The Parish Council is working, and will continue to work, with Hertfordshire County Council to improve services in line with appropriate policies in its Rural Transport Strategy July 2019 – 2031³⁰.
- 12.16 Funding from development that goes towards improving public bus services comes through the developer contributions. As such, the focus of direct provision from development will be on the supporting infrastructure, e.g. bus priority measures, real time passenger information and bus shelters.
- 12.17 It should also be noted that community transport services are often seen as effective alternatives where there are gaps in public bus services. These could also be provided or contributions used to support these services.

²⁹ [http://webmaps.hertfordshire.gov.uk/row/row.htm?layers=\[1:0,1,2,3,4\]](http://webmaps.hertfordshire.gov.uk/row/row.htm?layers=[1:0,1,2,3,4]) (27/12)

³⁰ <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/environment-and-planning/planning/rural-transport-strategy.pdf> (27/12)

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Policy ASH21 Bus services and community transport

Summary

- 12.18 Development proposals that help improve public and community transport will be supported, as will those reducing the impact of traffic and parking. The Parish's share of statutory contributions from developers will be used to enhance facilities.

Full policy

POLICY ASH21 BUS SERVICES AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

- A New development proposals that contribute towards physical improvements in the quality of public and community transport services and/or supporting infrastructure, including bus shelters, serving the ANP area will be supported. These contributions will be collected through Section 106 Agreements or the Community Infrastructure Levy mechanism, when adopted.
- B Proposals that lead to a reduction in the number of private vehicles being used to link to Ashwell and Morden station and other local stations will be supported.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 7; Saved Plan 1996: 51; Emerging Local Plan: SP6, SP7, SP10; NPPF (2019): 102 - 104, 108, 110; 111

Public car parking

- 12.19 Not surprisingly given its rural location, Ashwell is in an area of high car ownership recorded at 1.6 vehicles per household in the 2011 Census compared to 1.4 across the district.
- 12.20 It will be important to retain, manage and improve the quality of publicly accessible car parking areas in the village. This is important for the continued economic prosperity of the settlements as well as the convenience of residents, workers and visitors.

Policy ASH22 Residential and public car parking

Summary

- 12.21 Planning applications should not include proposals that create more demand for on-street car parking.

Full policy

POLICY ASH22 RESIDENTIAL AND PUBLIC CAR PARKING

- A Proposals that add new dwellings or business space should include the provision of adequate, sensitively-designed off-street parking in accordance with the standards defined in:

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- (i) NHDC's Car Parking Standards³¹ or their successor in Appendix 4 of the Local Plan³² (once adopted) for residential development; and
 - (ii) NHDC's Vehicle Parking at New Development Supplementary Planning Document (September 2011), for non-residential development³³..
- B In appropriate cases planning approval for such uses may be subject to conditions preventing change of use, where this could result in inadequate car parking provision being available.
- C There will be a presumption against the loss of any publicly accessible off-street car parking in the neighbourhood area.
- D Proposals for new development that provides additional public off-road car parking spaces, in particular next to businesses and at transport hubs, will be supported. Alongside any new public car parking provision, appropriate levels of bicycle parking facilities and electric vehicle charging points will be required.
- E The design of all new parking should be of sustainable construction to ensure minimal impact on the drainage system, and incorporate native hedging and tree planting where practical.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 7; Saved Plan 1996: 55; Emerging Local Plan: SP6; NPPF (2019): 105; 106

³¹ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan-current-policy/district-local-plan-no2-alterations/saved-local> Policy 55 (27/12)

³² <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Proposed%20Submission%20Local%20Plan.pdf> (27/12)

³³ https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/files/vehicle_parking_at_new_development_spd_sept_2011.pdf, Section 5 (27/12)

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13 Infrastructure improvements and provision

- 13.1 Going forward, the Parish Council is keen to influence the way in which developer contributions are spent in the neighbourhood area to the full extent of its powers under national legislation and planning guidance.
- 13.2 There are different types of contributions arising from section 106 agreements, section 278 agreements and The Community Infrastructure Levy.
- a section 106 agreement (based on that section of The 1990 Town and Country Planning Act) or planning obligation is a private agreement made between local authorities and developers and can be attached to a planning permission to make acceptable development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms
 - a section 278 agreement refers to a section of The Highways Act 1980 that allows developers to enter into a legal agreement with the local authority to make alterations or improvements to a public highway as part of a planning application
 - The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a non-negotiable charge on development based on a fixed rate per square metre of net additional development on a site. Different charge rates apply for different types of uses and in different areas. The levy is intended to fund the provision, improvement, replacement or maintenance of infrastructure required to support development in an area as set out in its local plan. This could include new roads and transport, local amenities such as parks, community centres, schools and health facilities
- 13.3 NHDC has no immediate plans to introduce the CIL but is keeping the situation under review and may choose to prepare a CIL in future if circumstances change.
- 13.4 Following the publication of the ANP, the Parish Council will set out a Spending Priority Schedule for developer contributions to be spent on. This will apply to monies raised from development by e.g. section 106 agreements or other planning obligations. It would also apply to any CIL money should that levy be adopted by NHDC.
- 13.5 The Parish Council intends to regularly review its spending priorities. Any proposed changes will be published for comment by the community and other interested parties. Once finalised, any updated list will be published on the ANP section of the Parish Council website and in relevant literature.

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14 Implementation and plan review

14.1 The Parish Council is the official body responsible for the ANP. It established a Working Group – comprising councillors and residents - to lead on the development of the ANP. Once it has been ‘made’, the work of the Working Group effectively comes to an end. There are, however, a series of actions that will need to be undertaken. For this reason, the Parish Council might consider extending the role of the Working Group, which could include the same members or provide an opportunity for new members to join.

14.2 Specific actions that will need to be undertaken are as follows:

- reviewing the ANP once the Emerging Local Plan has been made or if the planning authority changes it, once it is made
- pursuing the Non-Policy Actions detailed in Section 15 of this document
- commenting on planning applications or consultations relating to the ANP area
- monitoring the application of the ANP policies to ensure they have been applied consistently and interpreted correctly in response to planning applications, and
- maintaining a dialogue with North Hertfordshire District Council regarding the timing and content of the Emerging Local Plan

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15 Non policy actions

Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partner
Housing		
The Local Plan is currently under review and the ANP will need to reflect the strategic context once it is made.	Monitor progress and consider implications for the ANP	PC, NHDC
Review available information so that it continues to accurately reflect the views of local people	Repeat the Ashwell Village Survey 2015 at regular intervals	PC
Design and heritage		
Need to identify and protect buildings that are not listed, but which are important assets.	Work with partners to identify and catalogue relevant non-designated heritage assets, with a view to adding these to the Local List.	PC, NHDC, local heritage groups, Historic England
Some historic assets are at risk, or may become at risk.	Monitor the Heritage at Risk Register. The Parish Council to work in partnership with others to develop an action plan to support the improvement of assets at risk and seek funding for this.	PC, NHDC, Ashwell Museum, Historic England
Enabling better access to Arbury Banks, while ensuring it is appropriately conserved.	Encourage appropriate access and seek opportunities to monitor and improve the conservation of Arbury Banks.	PC, landowner, local heritage groups, Historic England
Extend the Ashwell Conservation Area	Look into whether extending the Ashwell Conservation Area is appropriate and possible	PC, NHDC
Natural environment		
Desire to maintain and expand local biodiversity opportunities.	Commission a regular audit of wildlife and seek opportunities to improve diversity within Parish Council-owned land holdings. An Environmental Audit of the village should be conducted to identify the strengths, weaknesses and threats to the Green Infrastructure. An improvement scheme should be	PC, NHDC, local landowners, school/pre-schools, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust

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Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partner
	<p>implemented to address any actions necessary.</p> <p>Seek opportunities to acquire additional land for the benefit of improving biodiversity for the benefit of the parish.</p> <p>Work to encourage greater wildlife awareness within the local community and promote the parish's natural diversity.</p> <p>Seek opportunities to support and encourage farmers, land owners and residents to look at ways of helping and supporting wildlife.</p>	
Enabling better access to Ashwell Springs, while ensuring it is appropriately conserved.	Continue to monitor Ashwell Springs to ensure that public use does not have a detrimental effect on this delicate habitat.	PC
Lack of maintenance of grass verges and banks and infiltration of non-native plant species.	<p>Adopt mowing regimes for verges and banks designed to conserve wild flowers (in particular on the chalkier soils over Newnham Hill, along Claybush Road, Hinxworth Road, Kingsland Way and Slip End Road).</p> <p>Discourage garden plants being introduced onto these verges.</p>	PC, HCC
Business and economy		
Lack of local business support group in the village.	<p>Establish a mechanism by which to maintain a dialogue with local businesses for the purpose of providing support.</p> <p>Investigate, and consult on, additional strategies to support commercially struggling retailers.</p>	Local businesses, supported by PC
Need to maintain a thriving village centre and enable other employment opportunities in the parish.	Commission a report to investigate ways to attract new businesses to Ashwell and encourage local business initiatives.	PC
Maintain community involvement in community life.	Explore ways of increasing awareness of parish events and parish-based services.	PC

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Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partner
The post office does not offer a full range of services.	Support the relocation of the part-time post office to a permanent location where it could provide a full range of services, provided this is in an appropriate and accessible location that is suited to the needs of all parishioners.	PC, local businesses
Sport, Leisure and recreation		
Need to ensure that existing provision for sports and recreation is accessible and of a high quality.	Undertake a periodic review of recreation and sports facilities and meeting places to ensure they are accessible to older and less mobile people	PC, NHDC, Sport England
As the community grows, need to ensure that adequate facilities are available to them.	Consult on a strategic plan for better sporting facilities in the parish. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ identifying land suitable for new pitches; ■ considering a new pavilion and /or a multi-functional hall for indoor sports; ■ encouraging integrated use of all sporting facilities, especially between the school and the community; ■ ensuring the facilities cater for an active older age group. 	PC
Loss of public houses and other valued space/buildings	Consider listing important, locally valued buildings and spaces as Assets of Community Value.	PC, local community groups
Health and education		
Maintain and improve existing service levels at the doctors surgery	Regular liaison between the Parish Council and local health services	PC, patients group, doctors surgery
Support Ashwell School in delivering its educational objectives.	s.106 Contributions from new major development in the neighbourhood area will be used to provide additional educational provision in the parish.	PC, school, local community
	Continue to work with the school to embed it into community life.	PC, school, local community

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Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partner
	<p>Take the School into consideration when making Parish decisions and ensure that school related issues are given due weight in the planning process.</p> <p>Be aware of issues affecting the School and to provide appropriate support where needed.</p>	
Transport and movement		
Need to ensure that the parish is well-served by public transport.	Seek opportunities to work with the providers of public transport to retain, and where possible, improve levels of service.	PC, local transport providers
Address concern about increased congestion, and associated air pollution, in the village centre relating to developments both within and beyond the parish.	<p>Work with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to undertake an up-to-date traffic census of key roads in and around the village in order to have a clear and independent baseline on which to model the impact of new development proposals.</p> <p>Work with HCC to identify physical measures, for instance planting, that would reduce congestion and ease traffic movement in the village at peak times.</p> <p>Develop projects to encourage walking and cycling within and around the village, for instance walking maps, signposting etc.</p>	PC, HCC
Application of design policy to all structures, including bus shelters.	Ensure that new bus shelters erected in the village are appropriate to their setting, especially if sited within the Conservation Area.	PC, NHDC (as planning authority), local transport providers
Roads, footpaths and bridleways need to be well maintained and accessible.	Undertake a periodic review of local footpaths and bridleways to ensure they are properly maintained, signposted and accessible. Footpaths should be well maintained and signposted and should be managed in a wildlife friendly way (encourage	PC, local walking group, Greening Ashwell. NHDC, HCC

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Issue	Possible actions	Lead agencies and partner
	wildflowers / no weed killers) to increase and encourage residents to exercise more.	
New routes should be identified and developed where this would encourage walking and cycling.	<p>Seek opportunities to create new footpaths and permissive paths to improve the footpath network, create more circular routes around the village, and enhance access, tourism and leisure activity.</p> <p>Work with HCC to ensure the adopted roads within the parish are properly maintained and that defects are identified and addressed in a timely manner.</p>	PC, local walking group, NHDC, HCC
Complete a footpath / Cycle path between Ashwell and the Station	Consultation with HCC, Cambridgeshire Council and relevant landowner(s)	PC, HCC, Cambridgeshire CC, relevant landowner(s)
Inconsiderate parking on pavements.	<p>Discourage cars and delivery vehicles from parking on pavements. This will make them safe for all, including the less mobile and wheelchair/ mobility scooter users.</p> <p>Investigate options for off-street parking in the centre of the village to reduce on-street parking in areas suffering the greatest congestion.</p>	PC, NHDC
Lack of public electric car charging points	Explore suitable ways of providing charging points and locations	PC, HCC

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16 Policies maps

16.1 Summary of geographic references in ANP Policies

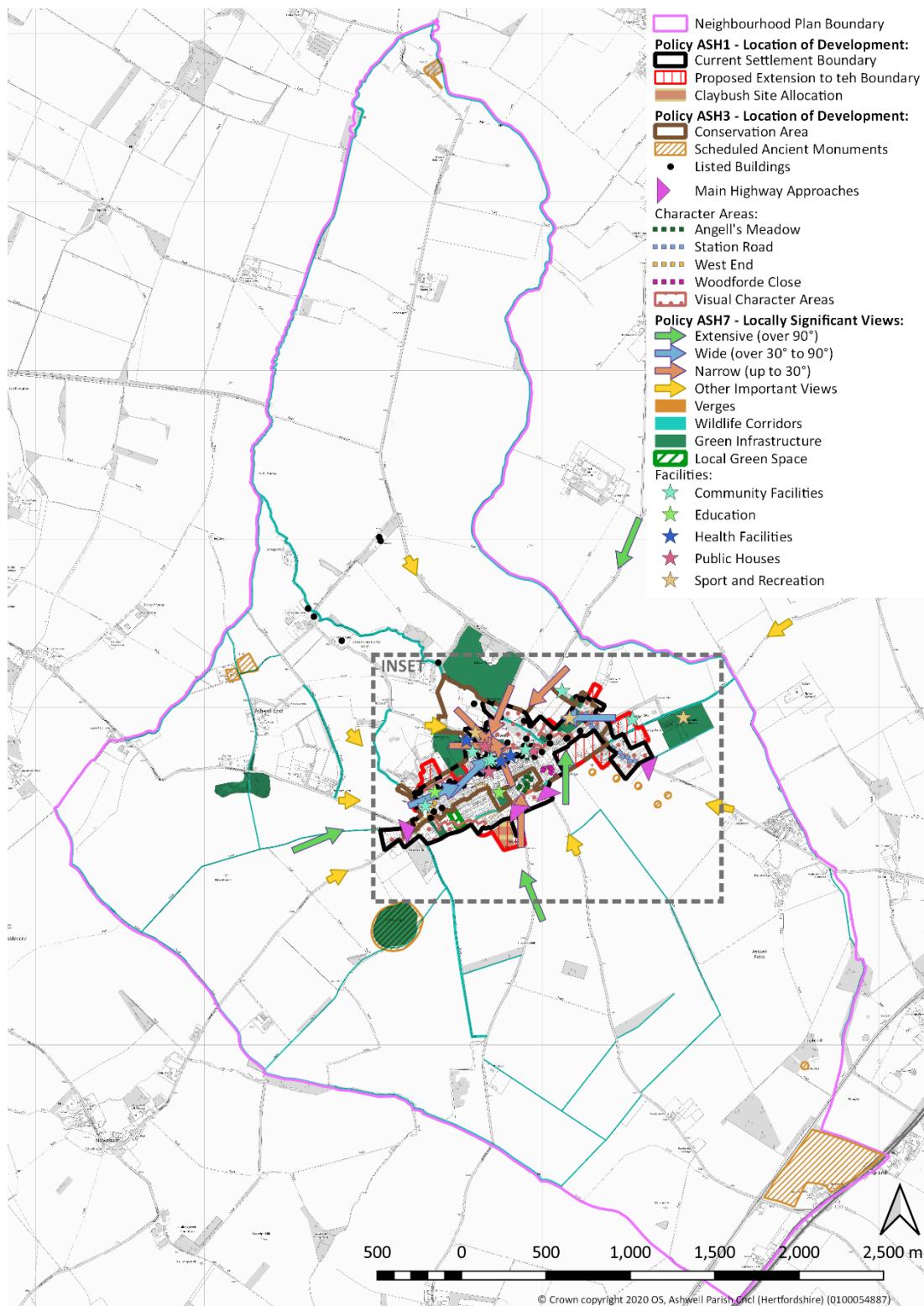


Figure 16.1 Areas referenced in ANP Policies in the Parish

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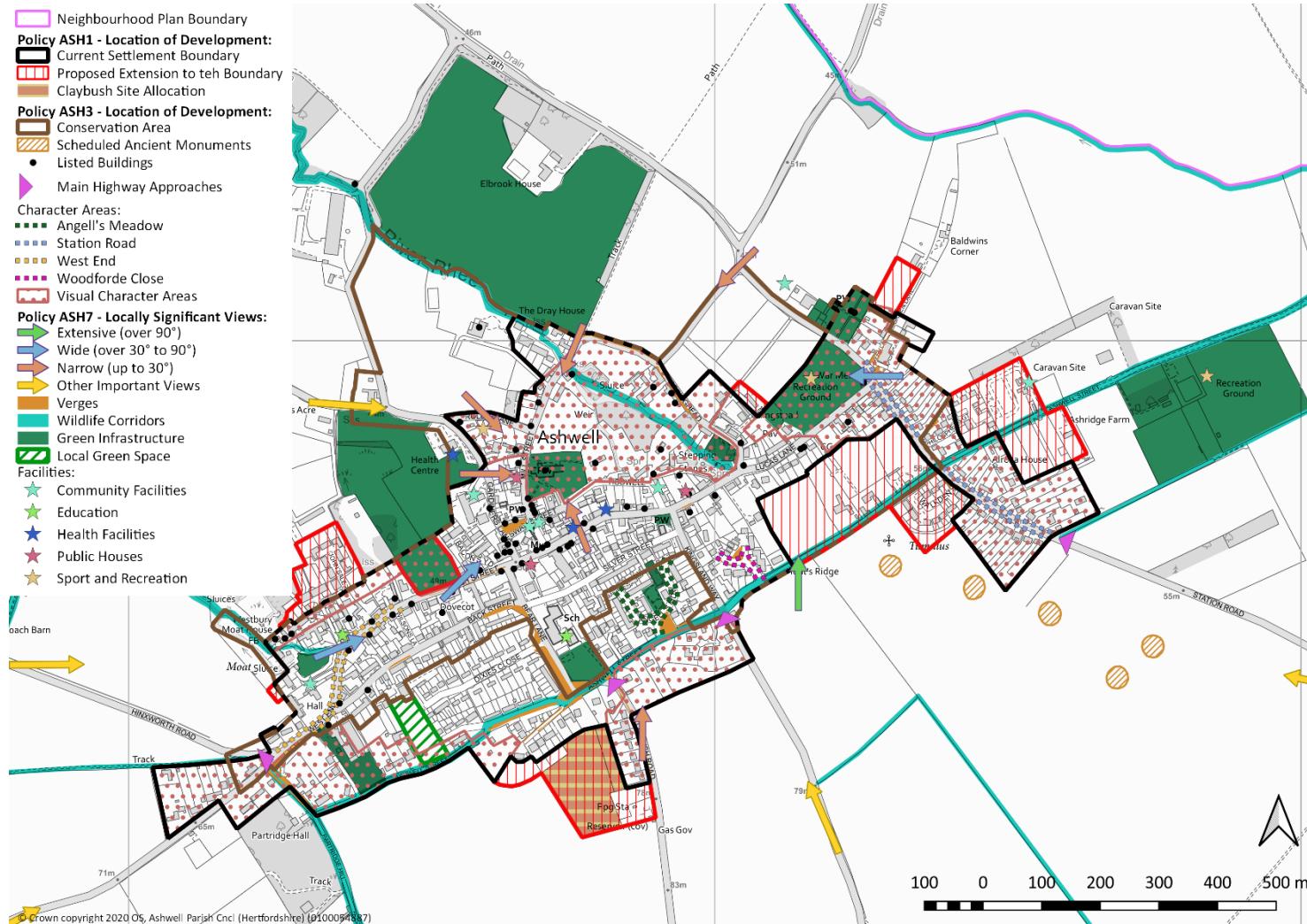


Figure 16.2 Areas referenced in ANP Policies around and within Ashwell village settlement boundary

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17 Evidence based documents

17.1 All background evidence can be found as follows:

- Background material
 - How the ANP fits into the Planning System: see file SUPP_How the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan fits into the Planning System.pdf.
 - The Submitting Body: see file SUPP_Ashwell parish area Neighbourhood Plan application 18 Dec 13.pdf.
 - The Area covered by the ANP i.e. the ‘Neighbourhood’: see Figure 2.1 of this document.
 - ANP Period, Monitoring and Review: see paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3 and section 13 of this document.
- ANP Development Process
 - The Development of the ANP: refer to the Consultation Statement.
 - Aims and Objectives: see file SUPP_NP Vision Aug 2015.pdf.
 - Ashwell Village Design Statement 2000, as amended in 2018: refer to Appendix E of this document.
 - Gathering the Evidence Base: refer to the Consultation Statement.
- About the ‘Neighbourhood’
 - Ashwell Parish characteristics: refer to Appendix A of this document.
 - Landscape Character Assessment see file: SUPP_CG16a NHerts Landscape Study 2011 - Part 2.pdf, paragraphs 146 to 151c.
- Previous surveys, plans and appraisals
 - Ashwell Village Appraisal 1976, see file: SUPP_Ashwell_appraisal_1976.pdf
 - North Hertfordshire Rural Settlements Study 1986: Ashwell Village Extract, North Hertfordshire District Council, 1986 (Parish Council can supply if required)
 - Ashwell Village Appraisal 1994/5 Ashwell Parish Council, 1995 (Parish Council can supply if required)
 - Ashwell Village Design Statement, Ashwell Parish Council, 2000, see file SUPP_AshwellVillageDesignStatement2000.pdf, or via this [link](#)
 - Ashwell Parish Plan Ashwell Parish Council, 2007, see file SUPP_AshwellParishPlan2007.pdf
- Housing Survey 2015, refer to the Consultation Statement for further details regarding:
 - Questionnaire
 - Results and analysis

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- Free text responses
- General Survey 2017, refer to the Consultation Statement for further details regarding:
 - Questionnaire
 - Results and analysis
 - Free text responses
- Business Survey 2016, refer to the Consultation Statement for further details regarding:
 - Questionnaire
 - Results

Other evidence documents

- 17.2 In addition to the appendices of the ANP and materials on the Parish website listed above, the following documents and resources have been drawn on as part of the development of the ANP.
- [Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method \(BREEAM\)](#) (27/12)
 - [Building for a Healthy Life, 2020](#) (27/12)
 - [Census, 2011](#) (27/12)
 - [Climate Change Act 2008](#) (27/12)
 - [Design Supplementary Planning Document \(SPD\), NHDC, 2011](#) (27/12)
 - [Heritage at Risk Register, Historic England](#) (27/12)
 - [‘Housing our Ageing Population’, Local Government Association, 2017](#) (27/12)
 - [Housing Quality Indicators \(HQI\) standards, 2011](#) (27/12)
 - [NHDC Emerging Local Plan 2011 to 2031](#) (27/12)
 - [Localism Act 2011](#) (27/12)
 - [National Character Area profiles: data for local decision making, Natural England, 2014](#) (27/12)
 - [National Planning Policy Framework, amended 2019](#) (27/12)
 - [Neighbourhood Development Planning \(General\) Regulations 2012 \(as amended\)](#) (27/12)
 - [North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 With Alterations \(April 1996\) Saved Policies, NHDC](#) (27/12)
 - [North Hertfordshire District Council Parking Strategy 2019-2031](#) (27/12)
 - [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004](#) (27/12)
 - [Town and County Planning Act, 1990](#) (27/12)
 - [Secured by Design](#) (27/12)
 - [Self-build and Custom House Building Act 2015](#) (27/12)

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- 'What more can be done to build the homes we need?' Institute for Public Policy Research report, 2017 (27/12)

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Glossary

Affordable housing: Social rented, affordable rented, shared equity and intermediate housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market.

Ancient woodland: An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

Brownfield land (or previously developed land): The National Planning Policy Framework (Feb 2019) defines this as land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.

Brownfield land registers: Registers of previously developed land that local planning authorities consider to be appropriate for residential development, having regard to criteria in the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Registers) Regulations 2017. Local planning authorities will be able to trigger a grant of permission in principle for residential development on suitable sites in their registers where they follow the required procedures.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): A fixed, non-negotiable contribution that must be made by new development. It is chargeable on each net additional square metre of development built and is set by the District Council. A proportion accrues to the Parish Council.

Community Right to Build Order: An Order made by the local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) that grants planning permission for a site-specific development proposal or classes of development.

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.

Conservation area: An area of notable environmental or historical interest or importance which is protected by law against undesirable changes.

Geodiversity: The range of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils and landforms.

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. It includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands and street trees, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and soils. It includes features sometimes called 'blue infrastructure', namely: rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies.

Habitats site: Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.

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Heritage asset: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

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.

Local housing need: The number of homes identified as being needed through the application of the standard method set out in national planning guidance, or a justified alternative approach.

Local plan: A plan for the future development of a local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. A local plan can consist of either strategic or non-strategic policies, or a combination of the two.

Main river: Main rivers are usually larger rivers and streams, designated by the Environment Agency and shown on its Main River Map. The Agency carries out maintenance, improvement or construction work on main rivers to manage flood risk.

Major development: For housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more. For non-residential development it means additional floorspace of 1,000m² or more, or a site of one hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): The national planning policy document which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

Neighbourhood plan: A plan prepared by a Parish Council or neighbourhood forum for a designated neighbourhood area. In law this is described as a neighbourhood development plan in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Non-strategic policies: Policies contained in a neighbourhood plan, or those policies in a local plan that are not strategic policies.

Older people: People over or approaching retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to the very frail elderly; and whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing through to the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.

People with disabilities: People have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and that impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These persons include, but are not limited to, people with ambulatory difficulties, blindness, learning difficulties, autism and mental health needs.

Planning condition: A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Playing field: The whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

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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: Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. A proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local planning authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

Section 106 agreement: A mechanism under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which makes a development proposal acceptable in planning terms that would not otherwise be acceptable.

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.

Starter Homes: Homes targeted at first time buyers who would otherwise be priced out of the market. Like shared ownership homes, these should be available to households that need them most, with an income of less than £80,000 (£90,000 for London). Eligible first time buyers will also be required to have a mortgage in order to buy starter homes and to stop cash buyers.

Supplementary planning documents: Documents which add further detail to the policies in the development plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

Use Class Order: The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (As amended in 1995, 2005, 2013 and 2020) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories. Planning Permission is not needed for changes of use within the same use class.

Wildlife corridor: Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations. Hedgerows, field margins, wetlands and woodland are all 'wildlife corridors' and act as a link from one environment to another. They connect individual - and sometimes isolated - habitats, allowing wildlife to move freely and safely between them, without threat from predators or traffic.

Windfall sites: Sites not specifically identified in the development plan.