

ASHWELL Neighbourhood Plan

Our Parish - Our Future - Our Say
Planning the development of
Ashwell up to 2031



Pre-submission Consultation Version September 2018

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ASHWELL PARISH COUNCIL

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Executive Summary

1. The Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (for simplicity, referred to as the Plan) has been developed in response to Government legislation.
2. Three surveys have been carried out to ensure the Plan reflects collective views on how Ashwell should develop. Further, the community of Ashwell has been 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.
3. The Plan is divided into the following sections:
 - Purpose, Process, Vision and Objectives
 - Housing Development
 - Design Considerations
 - Business and Economy
 - Sport, Leisure and Recreation
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Education
 - Natural and Historic Environment
 - Traffic and Transport
4. Within each section, the Plan summarises the relevant background information on all these issues.
5. Within each section, the Plan lays out several policies to ensure all aspects of life within Ashwell remain in line with the Visions and Objectives that have guided this Plan.
6. The Plan 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.

Foreword from the Chair of Ashwell Parish Council

In a relatively short timescale for such a huge body of work, the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan 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 time 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 Plan: Our Parish - Our Future - Our Say.

The plan 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 our Plan 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 five years as well as others who have played a part in the development and production of the Plan:

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

The members of the sub-groups were as follows:

Business and Tourism: Graham Lee, Madeleine Legg, Greg Campbell

Housing: Graham Lee, John Hare, Paul Harrison, Dave Linsley, Marcia Taylor

Sport and Recreation: Mel Hodson, Michael Baldwin Louise Bruning, Hugh Carling, Tim Moynihan, Ed Strickland

Health and Wellbeing: Margaret Budgen, Madeleine Legg, Marcia Taylor

Education: Paul Harrison, David Short

Transport and Roads: Ken Coyne

Natural and Historic Environment: Will Fletcher and David Short

Ashwell Village Design Statement: David Short, Fergus Moynihan, the late Adrian Mallett, Jack Quense

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

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

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 and other key stakeholders, we have ensured that the Neighbourhood Plan conforms to the objectives of the Localism Act 2011. Once the Plan 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.

Mark White
Chair, Ashwell Parish Council,
September 2018

What is the purpose of a Neighbourhood Plan?

- In April 2012 the Localism Act (2011) passed into law. It included an amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ('the Act'), which introduced new powers to allow local communities to shape development in their locality through the completion of a Neighbourhood Plan.
- A Neighbourhood Plan must be prepared using the preparation and adoption process in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012 and must be agreed with the Parish Council. It must represent the collective view of the community regarding how the parish should develop.
- A well-informed plan enables local people to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in the neighbourhood. It is a recognised part of the planning process that governs future local decision making and is considered an essential element of that process.
- Other policies can be included within the plan so that it can support the development of the village to meet the needs of the residents and to ensure the community thrives.
- In 2012 the Government also introduced the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This sets out the idea of sustainable development and establishes the policies that a development would need to meet to comply with this concept. The aim of the NPPF is "to allow people and communities back into planning". Neighbourhood Plans, therefore, need to have regard for, and be consistent with, the NPPF.

How has the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan been produced?

- The Neighbourhood Plan for Ashwell (the Plan) has been produced by a group of local residents, the Working Group, for 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 Plan covers the administrative area of the Parish of Ashwell (See Figure 1). It is recognised that the vast majority of housing and other development will take place within the development boundary of the village of Ashwell.
- The Plan 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, and traffic and transport.
- It takes into consideration previous community consultations such as the Village Appraisals done in 1976 and 1994, the Village Design Statement (2000) and the 2007 Ashwell Parish Plan (see Table 1).
- It has been shared with the local community at regular stages in the development allowing the parishioners to be included in the Plan's direction and progress.
- The Policies that have been developed are strongly influenced by the results of three village surveys undertaken in 2015 and 2016. The Plan represents the views of parishioners, as expressed in these surveys.
- The final published version of the Plan has been approved and adopted by the community.

- The Plan is designed to serve alongside the North Hertfordshire District Council's (NHDC) Local Plan and will assist decision making within the village until 2031.
- A review of the Plan should be undertaken in 2025 to help inform the next iteration of the NHDC Local Plan.

Date	Nationally	Locally
1976		Ashwell Village Appraisal
1990	Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ('the Act'),	
1986		North Hertfordshire Rural Settlements Study
1994		Ashwell Village Appraisal
2000		Ashwell Village Design Statement
2007		Ashwell Parish Plan
2012	Localism Act (2011) passed into law	
2012	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).	
2012	Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012	
2013		Creation of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Working Group
2015		Housing survey for the Plan
2016		General survey for the Plan
2016		Business survey for the Plan
2018		Village consultation on the Plan
2018		<i>Submission of the Plan to the Inspector</i>
2019		<i>Submission of the Plan to NHDC</i>
2019		<i>NHDC consultation on the Plan</i>
2019		<i>Referendum on the Plan organised by NHDC</i>

Table 1: Dates relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan

Our Vision

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.

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 the community needs and connects the parish to the wider community.

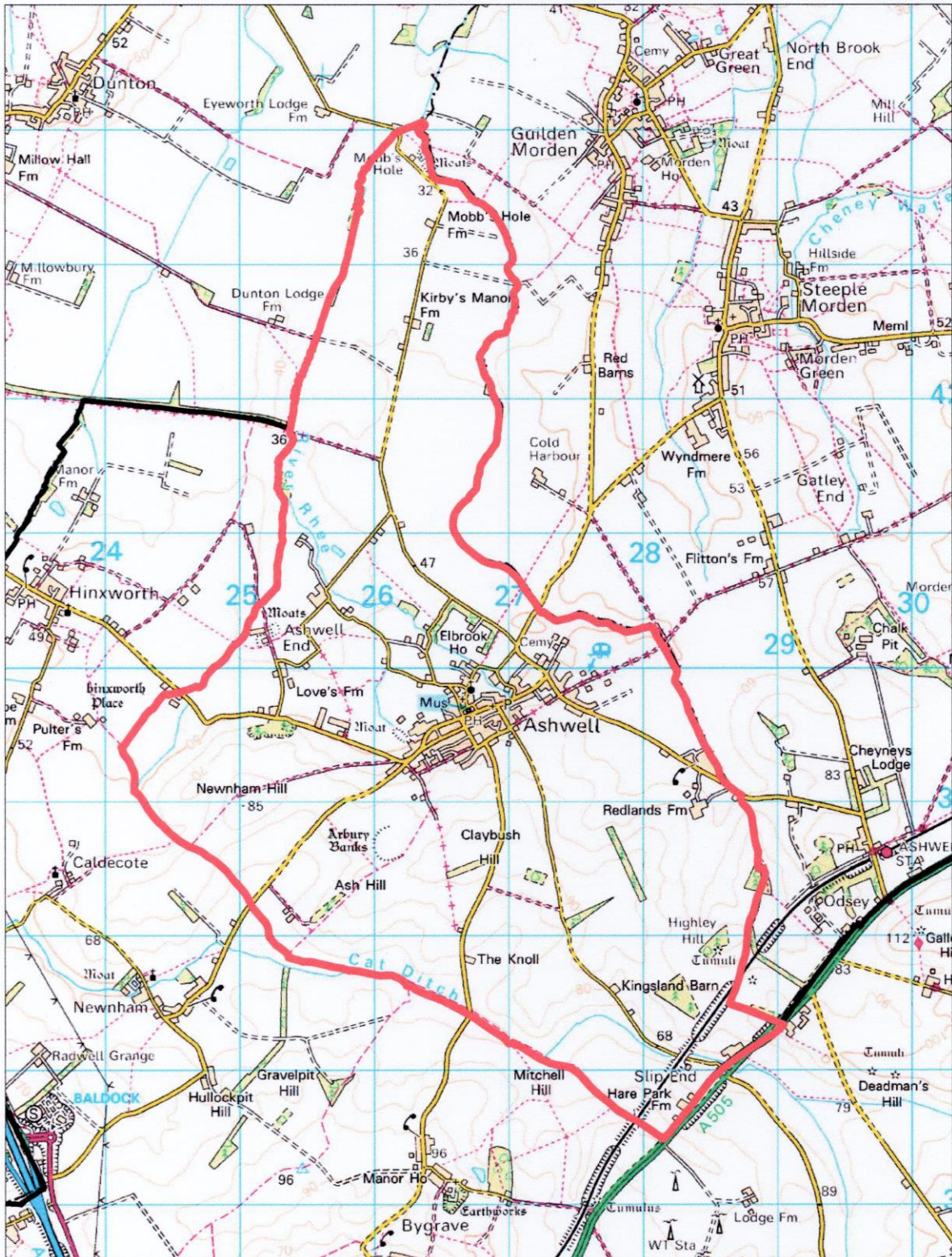
Our Objectives

- To encourage sustainable development that reflects the needs of the village and ensures that the community can develop and evolve in an appropriate way that meets village needs.
- To support sustainable local businesses and encourage the development of a strong local economy.
- To provide recreation and sporting facilities that meet the needs of the community and reflect changing requirements.
- To promote healthy communities.
- 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.
- To provide high quality education facilities for local children.
- To ensure that the village can support the changing needs of the residents by providing improved accessibility and enhancements to key village facilities.
- To conserve and enhance the historic character of the village and its rural setting.
- To conserve and enhance the natural environment of the parish, its flora and its fauna.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Area - Designated March 2014



Scale: 1:40000
Date: 01:04:14

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Fig. 1: Area covered by the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan

Glossary

Ashwell Village – this refers to the people and places within the village boundary.

Ashwell Parish – this extends to the wider area that surrounds the village and is the area also referred to in this document as the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Abbreviations

CIL – Community Infrastructure Levy

HCC – Hertfordshire County Council

NHDC – North Hertfordshire District Council

NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework

SEO – Statement of Environmental Opportunity

SSSI – Site of Specific Scientific Interest

WG – Working Group, compilers of the Neighbourhood Plan

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Table 1: Dates relevant to the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan

Table 2: Assessment criteria for new developments

Ashwell Development Timeline						
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 Road	3	West End	1
					Total	28
1961-70	Ashwell Street	12	41 - 49 Back Street	5	60 - 70 Back Street	6
	89, 91, 93 Back Street	3	Dairy	1	8, 10 Green Lane	2
	52, 54 High Street	3	Hinxworth Road	1	9 - 17 Lucas Lane	6
	Brewery, Mill Street	4	Newnham Way	5	Sunnymead	17
	Westbury Farm Cottages	2	West End	1		
					Total	68
1971-80	Angell's Meadow	46	Ashwell Street	4	Bear Farm	12
	Fordham Close	7	1, 3 Green Lane	2	1 High Street	1
	4 High Street	1	46, 48 High Street	2	47, 49 High Street	2
	51, 51A, 51B High St	3	95 High Street	1	Hinxworth Road	1
	The Mill	1	Rickyard	8	28, 30 Silver Street	2
	38 Silver Street	1	Springhead	1	Station Road	2
	3, 5 Swan Street	2	15 Swan Street	1	Wolverley House	23
	Woodforde Close	22			Total	145
1981-90	Ashwell End	1	7 Ashwell Street	1	85 Back Street	2
	Bacons Yard	16	Dixies Farm	11	Dovecot	6
	Maltings	22	Partridge Hill	1	Sales Acre	1
	37 Silver Street	3	Sunnymead	10	Westbury Barns	7
	Wolverley House	8			Total	89
1991-2000	Ashwell End	1	3 Ashwell Street	1	5 Ashwell Street	1
	Ashwell End	1	Colbron Close	16	Ducklake	4
	Gardiners Lane	1	22 High Street	2	John Sale Close	10
	Merchant Taylors	5	Moules Yard	4	Silver Court	4
	Westbury Farm	1			Total	51
2001-10	59 Ashwell Street	1	Farrows Farm	3	Newnham Way	2
	Newnham Way	1	37 Silver Street	3	Small Gains	1
	Walkdens	12			Total	23
2011-2018	Broadchalke	3	Hodwell	1	The Limes, Ashwell St	7
	Moule's Yard Extension	2	Newnham Way	1	Philosopher's Gate	19
	Shire End	6	Walkdens Extension	15	Whitby Farm	5
					Total	59
Grand total						507

Fig. 2: Number of units built in the Plan area from 1945 to 2018

The number of units as at 1945 was c.330

1 Housing

The purpose of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan is to enable the people of Ashwell to have more control over what is built in their parish so that village needs are met regarding the numbers, types and design of buildings.

1.1 Housing Numbers

The Government has set the target for the numbers of houses that need to be built in each region between 2011 and 2031. NHDC has proposed that a total of 69 units would need to be built in Ashwell parish during this period.

At the start of 2017 there were about 850 dwellings in the parish, more than half of which have been built since 1945 (see Fig. 2). Since April 2011, 73 units have already been built or have been granted planning permission (see Fig. 3). At the time of writing, July 2018, planning permission for a further 70+ dwellings is being sought.

Built (2011 to 2018)	
Ashwell Street adjacent to Moules Yard	2
48 Ashwell Street	1
94 Ashwell Street	1
Broadchalke Close	3
Land off Dixies Close	2
15 High Street (Jessamine House)	1
35 High Street (Whitby Farm House)	1
Hodwell, rear of 28 High Street	1
24 Lucas Lane	1
Land behind 18 Newnham Way	1
Redland Farm	1
Whitby Farm, Silver Street	5
61 Station Road/Philosophers Gate	19
Shire End Close, Station Road	6
Walkdens, Station Road	15
Total	60
Being built in 2018	
Cooke's engineering site, Ashwell Street	7
Old Stables, Mill Street	1
Planning permission obtained (2017-18)	
Lucas Lane (in front of Townsend House)	4
33 Ashwell Street	1
Grand Total	73

Fig. 3: Number of units built since 2011 and those with planning permission (to be built).

The 2015 housing survey showed that 90% of Ashwell residents preferred to see developments of between one and five dwellings. Larger developments of more than ten dwellings were rated as unacceptable by 90% of respondents unless that development was intended specifically to address the needs of older people or those with mobility issues currently living within the parish.

1.2 Sustainability

The NPPF (Paragraph 7) introduces the concept of sustainable development. In particular, it states that Sustainable Development has ‘*three dimensions*’ :

- ***an economic role*** – *contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*
- ***a social role*** – *supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- ***an environmental role*** – *contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.*

Sites that are not in the right place, are not accessible to local services, that do not reflect the community’s needs, or would result in harm to the natural, built or historic environment, are very unlikely to be considered to meet the criteria. Such sites would not be supported by the Plan unless it could clearly be demonstrated that more suitable sites were not available, and that the local need clearly and demonstrably outweighed the resulting harm.

The concept of sustainable development and the policies within the NPPF are also important to the development of the Plan, and the Plan needs to be compliant with national and local planning policies. However, the 2016 general survey also highlighted a number of relevant concerns among the parishioners. In particular the need to maintain a strong local economy and support the changing needs of the community, but at the same time safeguarding the historic village and the rural environment. The drafting of policies in the Plan has taken account of these concerns.

1.3 Criteria for Identifying and Assessing Sites for Housing Development

The responses to the 2015 housing survey indicated that the scale of development within the parish is important to the residents. The WG also made judgements concerning the overall numbers in line with Central Government and NHDC guidelines.

As a result, a number of criteria for assessing the suitability of residential planning applications have been produced. These criteria are shown in Table 2:

1.	Development of the site would address a housing need, as identified in the 2015 housing survey, or any subsequent Housing Need Survey undertaken during the life of the Plan, and which is not being met elsewhere
2.	The site lies within the Ashwell village boundary. In exceptional circumstances, and where it is clear that no alternative suitable site exists within the village boundary, sites immediately adjacent to the boundary may be considered
3.	The site has a suitable and safe vehicular and pedestrian access, as set out by the County Highways Department;
4.	The size of the development is limited to a maximum of 10 units, if appropriate to needs
5.	The site is available for development and, if planning permission is granted, then development is likely to commence within the three-year life of the planning permission
6.	Development is unlikely to result in harm to the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset
7.	Development would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Ashwell Conservation Area and the setting of the historic village.
8.	Development would not have a detrimental impact on key views into/out of Ashwell as identified on the map in Fig. 3.

Table 2: Criteria for assessing the suitability of residential planning applications.

Policy

1.a To assess proposals for new housing sites in accordance with the criteria in Table 2.

1.4 Provision of Affordable Homes for Local People

As the existing population living in Ashwell's affordable housing gets older, there is likely to be a growing need for affordable housing that is suited to the changing needs of these residents. Making this possible would then make existing social/affordable family housing available to others within the community.

Policy

1.b To identify further suitable sites (in accordance with the criteria) for social/affordable housing of appropriate housing types and size, as the need is identified, and, where appropriate, including provision for older people.

1.5 Provision of Retirement Housing (both Open Market and Affordable)

Housing for older people needs to be on relatively level land, convenient for services and close to the centre of the village making it possible to meet with people of all ages. The steep incline up to Ashwell Street away from the centre of the village means that housing sites on, or to the south of Ashwell Street, are unlikely to be suitable for retirement housing.

Policy

- 1.c To identify suitable level sites, close to the centre of the village and services (in line with the criteria) for both open market and social/affordable housing restricted to older people, and for those with mobility issues.

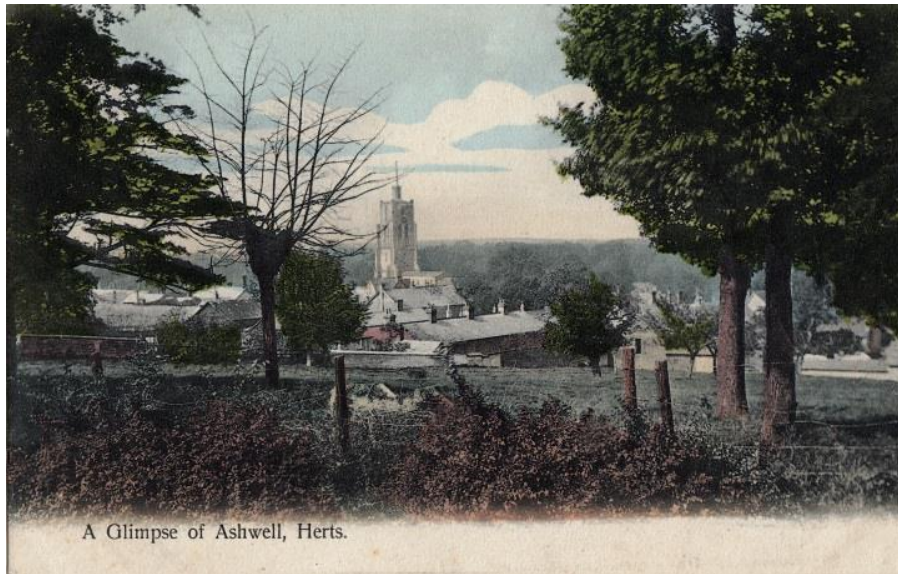


Fig. 4: Ashwell from over Angell's Meadow, before 1970

1.6 Sites Considered to Have Potential for Housing Development

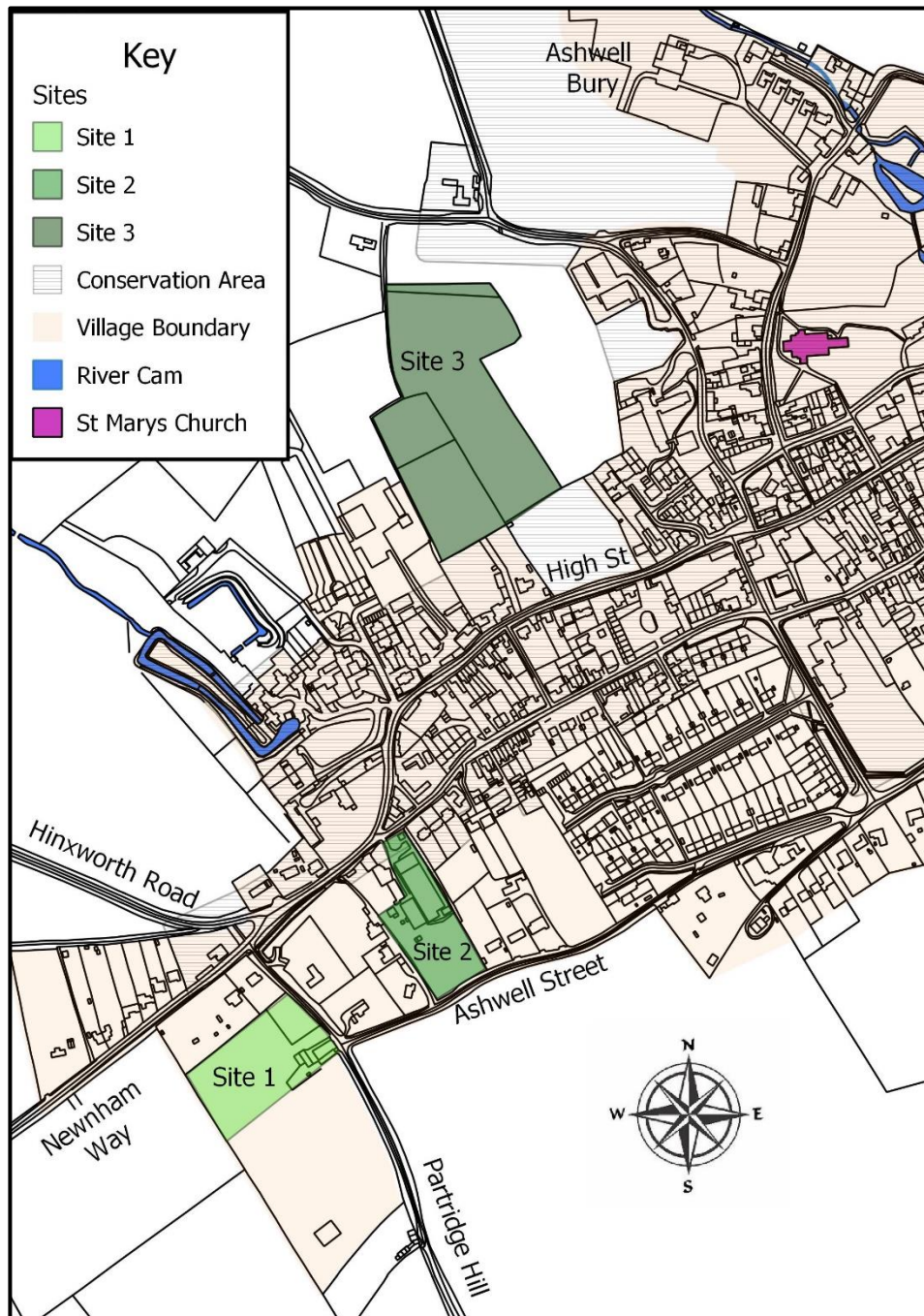


Fig. 5: Sites considered to have potential for development

Site 1: Land Adjacent to Partridge Hill

This brownfield site incorporates the house known as Partridge Hall which was occupied until the early 1980s. The original house represents a renovation opportunity and the land has scope for further development. Although outside the present village boundary, it meets a number of criteria set out in the Table 2 but would be less appropriate for older residents or those with mobility issues as it is some distance from the village centre (see 1.5).

Policy:

- 1.d To consider development proposals for mixed housing, addressing identified local housing need, on Site 1 (the land adjacent to Partridge Hill) provided that the proposals also accommodate the retention and renovation of Partridge Hall.

Site 2: Land of Former Factory Adjacent to 41 West End

This brown field site is now a partly unoccupied factory and a listed building (41 West End). The remainder of the site is an old orchard which would once have been associated with the listed building. This site is considered to meet a number of the criteria set out in Table 2 and would be suitable for mixed housing, although again it is less appropriate for older residents or those with mobility issues

Policy:

- 1.e To consider development proposals for mixed housing on Site 2 provided that they also seek to minimise any harm to the listed building at 41 West End. Any residual harm would need to be balanced against the wider public benefit of delivering housing that addressed an identified local need.

Site 3: Land West of Gardiners Lane and North of the High Street

This site is both relatively flat and close to all local facilities including the doctors' surgery. Site 3 has the potential for the development of much needed housing for older residents and/or those with mobility issues. Given the lack of alternative sites close to local facilities for this type of accommodation, sensitive development of Site 3, with access from the High Street, might meet the wider public interest of addressing an identified local housing need.

Policy

- 1.f To consider development proposals for Site 3 which include a high proportion of housing for older residents and/or those with mobility issues. Before any planning application can be considered, a detailed master-plan for the development should be prepared and subjected to a village-wide consultation.

2 Design Considerations for New Developments

2.1 General aspects of the Village Design Statement

The Ashwell Village Design Statement was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by the NHDC in 2000. It was intended to act as a guide for the design and appearance of new homes. It would thereby reduce the visual impact of new development, while at the same time ensuring new developments are of a high standard of design, using appropriate materials. Further it would ensure that new buildings make a positive contribution to the setting and appearance of the village.

In order to ensure that due weight continues to be given to design when considering planning applications for developments in Ashwell, key components of the Design Statement have been incorporated into this Neighbourhood Plan (see paragraphs 2.2 to 2.4 inclusive).

Policy

2.a To consider design issues and how the key components of the Ashwell Village Design Statement have been addressed when submitting planning applications.

2.2 Specific aspects of the Village Design Statement

2.2.1 Settlement Pattern

Until recently Ashwell was largely a farming community with a number of farms based in the centre of the village. The farmhouses had yards to the side and rear, with outbuildings running along the boundaries behind. Labourers lived in cottages which were usually terraced, either directly fronting the main road or in Back Street and Silver Street. The village has expanded substantially in the twentieth century, with many new houses and ribbon development formed along Claybush Road and Newnham Hill.

The local authority has built houses in Station Road, Ashwell Street and Dixies Close and there have been many residential developments on agricultural land within the village. The two maltings have also been converted to residential use.

The density of building in the village core is high and has become higher as old buildings have been extended and open spaces filled in. Houses in the centre mostly front directly onto the street and this adds to the feeling of closeness. Away from the centre, houses are generally set back from the street and are less densely packed. There is also a tendency for the height of buildings to decrease away from the village core.

Most buildings in the village are of two storeys, although there are some of three storeys in the centre. There are some single storey and dormer bungalows in Lucas Lane and on the roads

leading out of the village. Only the two former maltings, now converted to residential use, exceed three storeys in height.

Different parts of Ashwell exhibit distinctively different characteristics. New development, and improvements or extensions to existing buildings, should take these differences into account.

- The scale of the new development should be in keeping with existing buildings;
- There should be a good balance between buildings and open or green spaces, including gardens;
- The density of new development should be carefully considered and should reflect the density of development that surrounds the development area;
- The development should respect the characteristics of the area of the village where it is taking place.

2.2.2 Street pattern

Ashwell is a relatively long, narrow village built either side of a main street running roughly south-west to north-east. The current settlement pattern reflects Ashwell's history. In the Middle Ages it was an important market town and the buildings in the centre of the village are densely packed and fronting the main road.

- New streets should reflect the characteristics of the existing street pattern: basically rectilinear although with a few streets which are rigidly straight;
- New developments should be integrated with the village style and form part of a linked pattern;
- Ribbon development is difficult to integrate with the rest of the village and should be avoided;
- Large cul-de-sacs should be avoided, but small courtyard developments, or closes of terraced houses, would be acceptable. Separate pedestrian access should be provided for such developments wherever possible;
- Building density should decrease away from the centre of the village.

2.2.3 Buildings

Ashwell is an attractive village with a rich variety of building styles and materials. No single style predominates. The old and the new generally intermingle harmoniously. The variety of shapes and styles in the High Street represents the way the village has developed over time. The buildings are diverse but are comfortable together.

- Storey height for new developments should be varied to reflect the historic building form of the particular part of the village where the site is located;
- Uniformity of design in smaller developments can be acceptable if it reflects a particular feature of the village, such as terraced houses;
- Houses that front directly onto the road or pavement are a significant feature of the village;
- New development should be discreetly sited and should not intrude upon the landscape.

2.2.3.1 Walls

Within the village there are some good examples of authentic exposed timber framing and other, less convincing, examples of applied timber framing. There is some red brick in the village and a number of nineteenth-century houses were built of Arlesey or Cambridgeshire white bricks. In the twentieth century a wide variety of brick types has been used as availability and fashions have changed. Some buildings have decorative brickwork below the eaves, or above windows and doorways. Others have decorative details in contrasting colours.

Many walls are rendered and painted and there is some pebbledash. There are a few examples of pargetting and other decorative renderings. Pale colours predominate, including white, cream, beige and pink. There is also some dark-stained weatherboarding. Reclaimed materials have been used successfully in a number of recently built houses.

Appropriate finishes for walls include:

- Render; painted in pale colours;
- Brick; pale mixtures, second-hand stocks, hand cut of rustic nature. Where used, red brick should be confined to detail courses. A pale painted finish to common brickwork is acceptable. Wire-cut and engineering bricks should be avoided;
- Dark-stained feather-edged boarding; this is not a traditional finish for domestic buildings, historically being confined to agricultural and out-buildings, but it has been used successfully in conversions and some new houses and may be used to add variety and 'soften' developments (e.g. cladding to garages).

2.2.3.2 Roofs

Roofs are generally finished with either plain clay tiles or natural slates in the historic core of the village. Interlocking tiles have been used on many post-war developments. Some thatching remains. There is a variety of gables, the pitch varying with the roofing material. There are some hipped roofs but few half hips. Gables with scalloped bargeboards are a feature of the village, particularly at the western end. There are many dormer windows throughout the village.

Appropriate finishes for roofs include:

- For steeper pitched roofs; Brown Mixture plain clay tiles (40 degree pitch or steeper) or thatch (50 degree pitch or steeper);
- For shallower pitched roofs; Blue/black (Welsh) slate, yellow or red mixture clay pantiles (30 degree pitch or steeper);
- Existing thatched roofs should be retained and, where necessary, repaired. Long straw is the preferred thatching material.

Note: Since the preparation of the Village Design Statement the use of solar panels on roofs has become much more widespread. The use of solar panels on new houses is encouraged, but consideration should be given to the visual impact and, where possible, they should be sited on a roof other than the main building.

2.2.3.3 Doors and Porches

Domestic buildings generally have doors and porches typical of the period in which they were built. Doors are generally plain, some are partly glazed and others have fanlights over them. Porches, where present, are usually small and simple. Canopies over doors, rather than full porches, are also a feature. There is a wide range of doors and porches on modern houses, some of them based on traditional forms. Some older properties have had doors made from modern materials fitted to them, with varying degrees of success.

Porches and canopies should be in keeping with the style and construction of the building to which they are fitted. In addition:

Designers of new property, and those improving existing buildings, should recognise and respect that:

- Doors are traditionally panelled, sometimes including glazing;
- Framed, ledged and braced doors are common on older vernacular buildings, and are also found on some modern developments;
- Mass-produced doors are often not appropriate, particularly when used to 'improve' older properties. For example, fanlights should be part of the door frame and not included in the door itself.

2.2.3.4 Windows

In Ashwell both vertical sash and casement windows are in evidence. These windows are generally small-paned and in wooden frames. Panes are generally taller than they are wide. Most window frames are painted but, in a few older buildings and many new ones, stain finishes are also seen. UPVC windows incorporating sealed double-glazed units are found in many new buildings and used as replacements in some older buildings.

Windows are the 'eyes' of a building and window detailing and proportion is therefore critical to the overall design and appearance of the building.

The design of windows for both new buildings and alterations/extensions should take the following into account:

- The proportions of glazing within a window should be vertical, with panes taller than they are wide. Wider windows should therefore be made up of pairs or triptychs of smaller, vertically proportioned casements, rather than a single large pane of plate glass. Privacy for windows directly on the street can be improved by using windows sub-divided into small panes;
- On new buildings, the material for the frame is often of less importance than the style of window, although timber windows are preferred in the historic parts of the village. Where frames are made of UPVC, the frame and glazing bars should not be too thick. False glazing bars should be avoided, but where they are essential, applied or bonded bars are preferable to glazing bars sandwiched within sealed units. Aluminium windows should preferably be powder-coated rather than untreated;
- In older buildings, the traditional style and materials of the windows should be

retained wherever possible.

2.2.3.5 Chimneys

Ornamental chimneys are a feature of some older houses. However, chimneys on modern houses, where present, tend to be more utilitarian. Where appropriate, the use of chimneys on new developments will be encouraged. Their design should reflect their context and the building on which they are placed. It is also desirable to retain existing chimneys, especially those visible from the street.

2.2.4 Views

The Ashwell Village Design Statement 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'*. However, it is acknowledged that in addition to views from out of the village there are many views towards the village, or within the village, which are also intrinsic to Ashwell's sense of place. Many of these views focus on the tower of St Mary's church. The importance of views has been incorporated into the criteria for assessing new development sites, set out in the Table 2 and Policy 1a above. Figure 6 is a map of the village identifying the most important views. It should be noted that while some views or vistas are experienced from a single point, 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.

Policy

- 2.b To encourage high quality contemporary design solutions that demonstrably respond positively to a site's context and to discourage design solutions that fail to respond to context, and risk appearing alien in their setting.

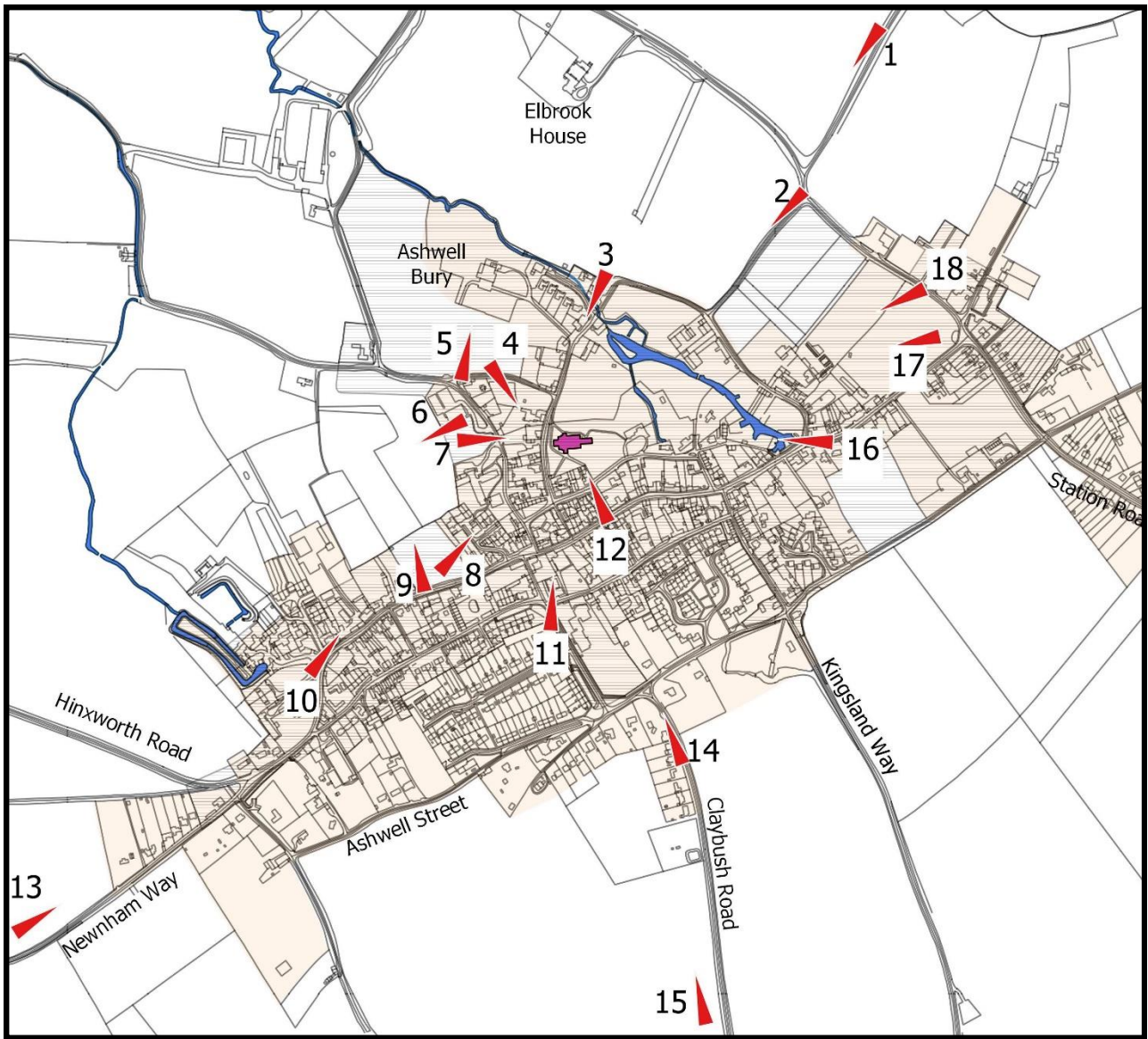


Fig. 6 Ashwell Conservation Area and Key Views



View 1



View 2



View 3



View 4



View 5



View 6



View 7



View 8



View 9



View 10



View 11



View 12



View 13



View 14



View 15



View 16



View 17



View 18

3 Business and Economy

3.1 The local economy

The early prosperity of Ashwell came from farming, and by the mid-nineteenth century growing barley for malting was particularly important. The maltings fed two breweries in the village, both of which have now closed. This period also saw the rise and fall of straw-plaiting for hat making, and coprolite digging for the fertiliser industry.

Agriculture remains an important part of the local economy but now provides less employment than in previous generations. Agriculture also contributes to the significance of the village and provides its rural setting. Changes in agricultural practices have meant that some farm buildings have been converted to business premises or housing, while some farmland is used as a caravan park or in association with the husbandry of horses. The village still retains a dairy which is one of only two that survive in Hertfordshire.

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.

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. 40% of the population of Ashwell is retired, which is also higher than the national average. 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.

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 is needed to ensure that local businesses and employment are sustainable.

The purpose of the 2016 survey of businesses physically based in Ashwell was to identify:

- the number and range of services provided by local businesses;
- local employment provided by local businesses;
- the dependency of local businesses on local vs. external customers (including tourism);
- perceived levels of sustainability of local businesses;
- whether tourism does, or could, contribute to the viability of business in Ashwell;
- what community-based resources or initiatives local businesses feel might improve their sustainability.

Businesses' response indicated a range of employment opportunities from self-employed sole traders serving customers or clients outside the village, to retail outlets and to service providers and special crafts. Little manufacturing/production takes place in the village today.

Results from the 2016 business survey indicate that:

- 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 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.
- The factors considered most helpful to improve the business climate in the village are:
 - Improved parking provision
 - Adequate broadband speeds
 - More local employment
 - Lower business rates

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 more retail premises may be converted to residential.

Policies

- 3.a To establish a mechanism by which to maintain a dialogue with local businesses for the purpose of providing support.
- 3.b To commission a report to investigate ways to attract new businesses to Ashwell and encourage local business initiatives.
- 3c To ensure that broadband speeds are as fast as possible

3.2 Retail

The surveys show that there is real concern among parishioners about a decline in support for local shops and services. In particular, there is a concern that loss of shops will result in the diminishing of other services. In the last two years the village has lost the Post Office and a take away food outlet. Further closures could bring other services, for example the pharmacy, under threat. 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.

Policies

- 3.d To investigate, and consult on, additional strategies to support commercially struggling retailers.
- 3.e To 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.
- 3.f To explore ways to improve parking in the village to support local shops and businesses.
- 3.g To explore ways of increasing awareness of parish events and parish-based services.

3.3 Business Guidelines

It is important to strengthen Ashwell as a working village that offers a variety of services and employment opportunities. New small-scale enterprises will therefore be encouraged and made welcome. When such proposals are being planned, these policies should be borne in mind.

Policies

- 3.h To encourage support for existing and new retail and service outlets in the village so as to give local people a measure of independence and to reduce car use.
- 3.i To encourage, where appropriate, new, mixed use developments, providing small-scale retail, commercial and/or office premises in addition to residential.
- 3.j To support the retention of existing retail and service outlets and discourage the change of use of such premises to residential.

4 Sport, Leisure and Recreation

4.1 Sports Facilities

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.

4.1.1 The Recreation Ground

The Recreation Ground is used by many clubs: the cricket club has senior and junior sections (with a membership of 135). Other groups include the Ashwell Academicals (Accies) football club, the senior football team, Mums Fit, Village Sports day, Beavers, Scouts, Brownies and Cubs. The children's playground is also well used and incorporates a small skateboard facility.

The small size of the Recreation Ground creates problems for many of the teams, with pitches that are both small and overlap. 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.

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.



Fig. 7: Cricket on the Recreation Ground, 1991

4.1.2 Other Facilities

The Small Gains Lane area has a complex of football pitches, tennis courts and a cycling facility. The pitches are used by the junior football teams and the cricket club makes use of an all-weather square. The football pitch is undersized by several metres and there is no capacity for an U15 pitch or for the regulation run-off area.

The cycling club has 280 members, 75 of whom are 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.

The tennis club has 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.

4.1.3 Future Needs

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 new pavilion have been prepared to date.

The most pressing requirement is for a football pitch suitable for the U13/U14 age group. The U13s are currently playing outside Ashwell, which clearly is not satisfactory for an Ashwell team. In addition, the Recreation Ground is considered too small for adult football and cricket, due to health and safety issues and conflicts with other users. There is a clear need for a larger ground.

Policies

- 4.a To consult on a strategic plan for better sporting facilities in the parish. This will include:
 - identifying land suitable for new pitches;
 - considering a new pavilion and /or of 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.
- 4.b To consider the use of funds from the CIL, received from new housing developments in the parish, towards the cost of delivering this strategic plan.
- 4.c To undertake a periodic review of recreation and sports facilities and meeting places to ensure they are accessible to older and less mobile people.

4.2 Leisure and Recreation Opportunities

As the population of Ashwell gets older it is important that people maintain a healthy life style. Therefore, while 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.

Opportunities for social interaction to combat isolation in this age group are equally important. It is essential that clubs and societies have space to meet, that choirs have suitable space to rehearse and perform, and that places for informal social interaction, such as pubs, continue to exist in the village.

4.2.1 Open and Connecting Spaces

Open spaces provide opportunities for social interaction and informal recreation, and also contribute greatly to the visual character of Ashwell. The most well-known of these is the Springs, which is valued by local people and visitors alike. The recreation ground provides a safe play area for children, as well as football and cricket pitches. The village garden in Swan Street offers a quiet area with seating. However, much of the open space within the village is privately owned and public areas are limited, particularly at the western end of the village.

The village is served by a network of footways (the 'twitchels'). These form well-used linking routes for pedestrians, particularly between the southern part of the village and the centre. Use of the footways reduces vehicular traffic within the village and provides an opportunity for exercise. They also perform an important social function by providing informal meeting places. The few existing circular walks are greatly appreciated, and the footpath network is, therefore, an important recreational and social asset for the village.

The Parish Council should work with Hertfordshire County Council to enhance the footpath provision in line with appropriate policies set out in their Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2017/18 – 2027/28. Where necessary the Parish Council could consider the use of CIL funds 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.

4.2.2. Public Houses

The Public Houses are to be treated as community assets. There is concern about the possible change of their use to private dwellings. This must be discouraged unless it can be clearly demonstrated that continued use as a public house is not financially viable. Pubs should be marketed at a fair and reasonable price on the open market for a minimum of 12 months.

Policies

- 4.d To undertake a periodic review of local footpaths and bridleways to ensure they are properly maintained, signposted and accessible.
- 4e To 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.
- 4.f To seek opportunities to provide additional public open space within the village, particularly in the vicinity of West End.
- 4.g To discourage the change of use of existing public houses to private dwellings and support their listing as Assets of Community Value

5 Health and Wellbeing

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.

5.1 Housing in Relation to Health and Wellbeing

The 2016 general survey (and other similar local surveys published since 1976 (see Appendix XXX) identified that a third of residents would consider down-sizing to smaller properties at some time in the future. There was also an indication that residents would like properties that were easier to manage, i.e. bungalows or ground floor apartments.

Although there is supported social housing at Wolverley House, these flats are for rent only and there is no guarantee that an Ashwell resident would be given preference and not all Ashwell residents would be eligible. The surveys have indicated a need for this type of accommodation to be available for purchase and for private rental. Policies concerning the provision of housing, including housing for older people, are included in Section 2.



Fig. 8: Moss Cottages

There is rental accommodation for older people 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 a widowed older inhabitant of from outside the parish may apply.

5.2 Access to Community Health Services

Easy access to community health is an important consideration to those residents wishing to continue living into old age within the community in which they have lived for some time. 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.

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.

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

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 access to, including leisure activities for older people, specialist nursing, mental health support groups, neighbourhood care groups, bereavement groups and loneliness support groups.

Policies

- 5.a To support the local pharmacy service.
- 5.b To support Ashwell Surgeries and look for opportunities to extend other community health resources to address the changing needs of an ageing community.



Fig. 9: Ashwell Pharmacy

5.3 Accessibility

Staying active and being able to use local facilities is important to all in the community. This includes those with mobility issues who need to use wheelchairs, mobility scooters and other walking aids. Many pavements in the village are not easy to negotiate, while parked cars in narrow streets also hamper their movement around the village. 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 (see Policy 4d).

Policies

- 5.c To improve pavements and to 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. Consideration will be given to using CIL funding.
- 5.d To provide appropriately sited restricted parking for use by Blue Badge holders in the High Street.
- 5.e To provide handrails adjacent to steps and in areas with uneven surfaces. Consideration will be given to using CIL funding.

6 Education

6.1 Pre-schools

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.

6.2 Primary School

The two pre-schools are the Playgroup, which is run by a community group, and Gloria's Day Nursery, which is privately run. These facilities have different admission policies which can be found on their own or supporting websites. 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.



Fig. 10: An original drawing of Ashwell School by Henry Geo. Luff, architect. 1876

Ashwell Primary School is a state funded non-denomination mixed primary school. The School is managed by the school leadership team which includes the Board of Governors. Their admission policy is governed by Hertfordshire County Council and can be found on the HCC website.

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.

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 strongly 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.

6.2 Secondary Schools

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.

Policies

- 6.a To support Ashwell School in delivering its educational objectives.
- 6.b To take the School into consideration when making Parish decisions and ensure that school related issues are given due weight in the planning process.
- 6.c To be aware of issues affecting the School and to provide appropriate support where needed.

7 Natural and Historic Environment

7.1 The Natural Environment

The character of the village is strongly influenced by the natural environment and draws on the traits of the local soils, aspect and geographic location. The village is positioned at the eastern end of the Chilterns to the north of the Western Hills and west of Royston Common. 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 farm land, with large open fields and big skies. Ashwell is typical of what Natural England considers as the East Anglian Chalk National Character Area (NCA No. 87¹):

“...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.”

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.

As a consequence the village itself has a more varied and extensive vegetation and the hedged small village fields and green spaces have a wider range of wildlife than the surrounding landscape. Much of this relates to homes and gardens, however the older hedgerows around the village are well-known and recognised for the large number of fruit species including crab apples, damson, cherry plum and sloe.



Fig. 11: Ashwell Springs

In terms of wildlife, Ashwell Springs, in the centre of the village, is a SSSI (0.3htr) where the natural spring issues from the chalk and forms the source of the River Rhee (becoming the Cam). Managed by the Parish Council, the constantly cold temperatures (below 10 °C) mean it is an important habitat for rare flatworms and small freshwater shrimps (*Crenobia alpine* and *Polycelis felina*) which inhabit the clear gravel of this shady green open space. It is also an important and well visited local resource and village amenity with a natural paddling pool for recreation.

¹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6417815967891456?category=587130>

To the west of the village is the Ashwell Quarry and Quarry Springs. This former chalk quarry is a nature reserve which, although on private land, is leased and managed by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, supported by local volunteers. Quarried from early Roman times, the Tottenhoe Clunch (a hard chalk rock) may have been used to build St Mary's church, as well as parts of a number of other buildings in the village. The chalk soils of the quarry have been colonised by a wide range of calcareous species such as pyramidal orchid, small scabious and clustered bellflower (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*, *Scabiosa Columbaria* and *Campanula Glomerata*) and the site has important associated fauna including the Holly Blue butterfly (*Celastrina arigiolus*). To the north is the Quarry Springs Nature Reserve. This is a clear spring which feeds the River Rhee and is another important home to flat worms and other scarce wildlife.

St. Mary's Church, as well as being famous for its medieval graffiti, is the home to several species of bats, including the uncommon Natterers Bat. Roosts and maternity colonies can be found in many other buildings, trees and other natural features. All bats are protected and any disturbance can have a detrimental effect on their population numbers. The village is also a haven for many passerines, such as warblers, sparrows and tits. Buzzards are a common sight over the open fields and the area is frequently patrolled by red kites. Little owls and woodpeckers are often seen in Ashwell, as are grey wagtails which are on the RSPB red list.

As a consequence the wide open fields that characterise the outer parts of parish play an important role in its character. The parish strides over the chalk scarp and views, especially the church, can be seen from places like Slip End, Partridge Hill, Station Road and Newnham Road. The views of the village from the main approaches need to be recognised and protected (See Figure 6).

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.

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.

Policies

- 7.a To require planning applications for new developments to:
- incorporate appropriate benefits for wildlife and enhancements to the biodiversity of Ashwell and the surrounding environment;
 - provide sustainable surface water drainage;
 - help conserve the natural character of the village and its surrounding areas through appropriate landscape treatments, including the use of native species for all new hedgerows and tree planting, and the use of soft boundary treatment between the development and the open countryside;
 - retain and incorporate existing hedgerows and significant native tree species and ensure exiting wildlife corridors are not severed by the development.
- 7.b To commission a regular audit of wildlife and will seek opportunities to improve diversity within its own land holdings.
To seek opportunities to acquire additional land for the benefit of improving biodiversity for the benefit of the parish.
To work to encourage greater wildlife awareness within the local community and promote the parish's natural diversity.
- 7.c To seek opportunities to support and encourage farmers, land owners and residents to look at ways of helping and supporting wildlife.
To increase biodiversity in keeping with the SEO objectives.
- 7.d To continue to monitor Ashwell Springs to ensure that public use does not have a detrimental effect on this delicate habitat.
To consider opportunities for enhancing the biodiversity of Ashwell Springs in keeping with the SEO objectives.
- 7.e. To retain existing significant trees that contribute positively to the character or appearance of the Ashwell Conservation Area (except in exceptional circumstances, such as when a tree is nearing the end of its natural life).
- 7.f To 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 and Slip End Road). To discourage garden plants being introduced onto these verges.

7.2 The Historic Environment

The village of Ashwell lies at the centre of a large parish of over 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.

A Neolithic (c.2 700 to 2 000 BC) henge was discovered in a field close to the village in 2015. It may have been related to the Springs and might have had a religious function.

The Iron Age Hillfort at Arbury Banks provides evidence of settlement in the 7th or 8th century BC. The trees and scrub on the rolling hills in the southern half of the parish were first cleared for arable land and the large prairie fields created that are seen today.

Roman material found in 2002 at Ashwell End indicates that there had been a religious site there in honour of the goddess Senuna. Near a site of religious pilgrimages, such as this, there would have been places to satisfy the needs of visiting pilgrims. As yet we do not know precisely where this was. There was also a Roman villa on the south facing side of Partridge Hill and aerial photographs show Roman fields not far from it.

The Anglo-Saxon three field system was probably introduced into the southern part of the parish in the late ninth century or early tenth century. 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.

The village of Ashwell dates from the early tenth century (maybe the year 917?) when the framework of the present road structure was laid out (see Figure 12). The Anglo-Saxon new town (as it was then) was formed around a large market place which stretched from the Springs to Gardiners Lane, with one boundary on the High Street and another on a combination of Swan St, 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 providing water for the animals.

As the three-field system of agriculture resulted in the strips belonging to the various farmers being scattered throughout the three fields, it was most convenient if the farm houses and yards were in the centre of the parish i.e. within the town. Some of these farms 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, such as Dixies Meadow, which are remnants of this system.

Ashwell is mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086, when it was one of the most important settlements in Hertfordshire.

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 this area that was enclosed.

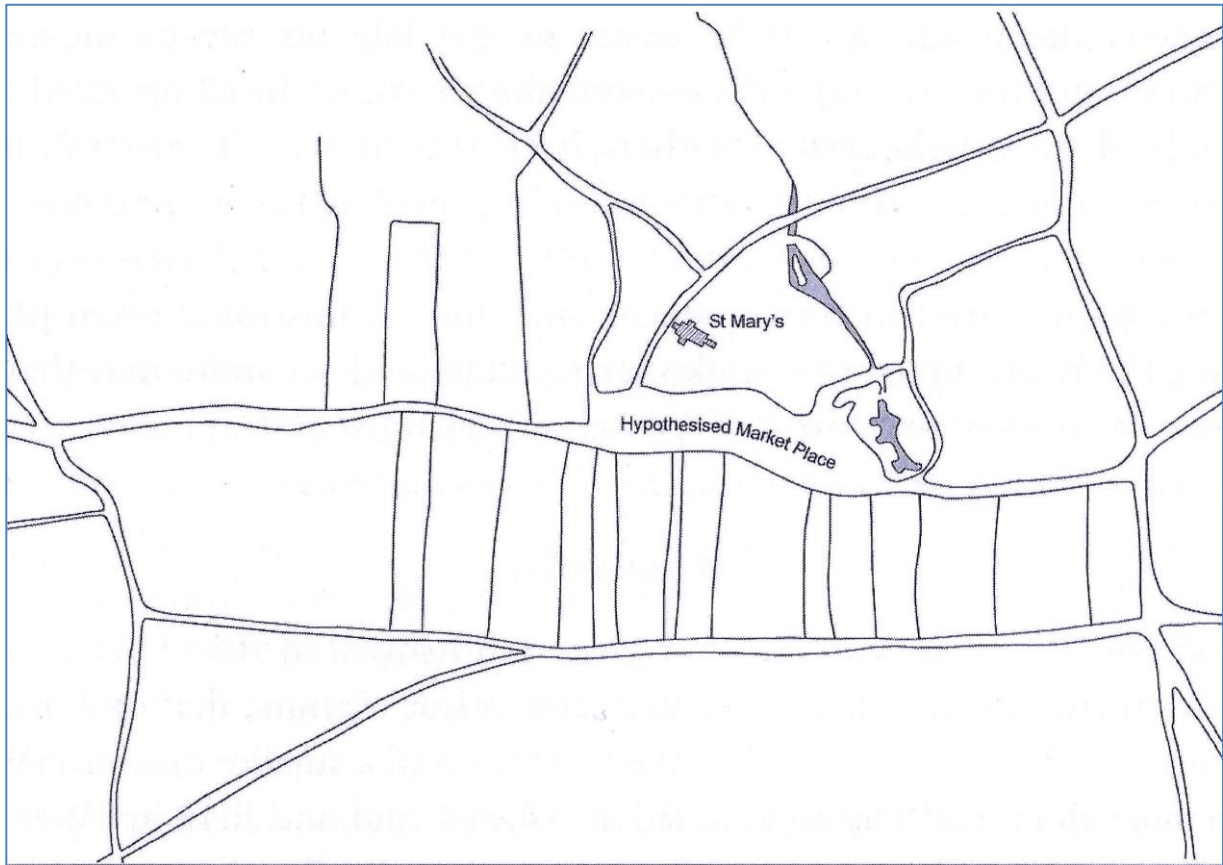


Fig. 12: Hypothesised Anglo-Saxon market place (© David Short)

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.

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 house 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 during the period up to the Ashwell fire of 1850 is the Old Rectory, c1812. After the fire a number of houses had to be rebuilt, together with new houses to accommodate the quickly growing population. New houses continued to be built in the later part of the nineteenth century and into early years of the twentieth century.

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.

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. More recently, Colbron Close and John Sale Close were built (see Figure 2).

Ashwell has 78 listed building of which one, St Mary's Church, is listed Grade I, eight are Grade II* and 69 at Grade II. There are four scheduled monuments, 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.

The village has several non-designated heritage assets such as moated sites, buildings of local interest and other structures or historic sites that contribute to the character or appearance of the area. These assets must be considered in the determination of planning applications.

Policies

- 7.g To encourage appropriate access and seek opportunities to monitor and improve the conservation of Arbury Banks.
- 7.h To work with NHDC and local amenity groups to identify and catalogue relevant non-designated heritage assets.

8.0 Traffic and Transport

8.1 Roads

Ashwell's ancient origins, as outlined in section 7.2, continue to be reflected in the settlement pattern seen today, with a network of roads that radiate out from the former market place. These routes include some much older trackways in and around the village, the most important of which is Ashwell Street which is part of Icknield Way. These trackways make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the village.

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.

Typical of most rural communities, the majority of residents have their own transport, with many households having two or more cars. Therefore 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.

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. The Baldock bypass, which opened in 2006, has had little discernible impact on the traffic driving through in the village. On-street parking is a problem, particularly on narrow roads in the older parts of the village. In particular, the High Street is reduced to a single carriageway by parked cars; however this does act as an informal traffic calming measure. A further issue is inadequate road maintenance undertaken by the County Council.

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.

Policies

- 8.a To work with the 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.
To discourage, except in exceptional circumstances, new developments that exceed the identified level of growth for Ashwell and that result in adverse impacts on the existing transport infrastructure.
- 8.b To work with HCC to identify measures that would reduce congestion and ease traffic movement in the village at peak times.
To ensure these measures carefully balance the requirements of all highway users, including pedestrians and cyclists.
To consider contributing Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds towards the cost of implementing those measures, if appropriate.

- 8.c To investigate options for off-street parking in the centre of the village to reduce on-street parking in areas suffering the greatest congestion.
To ensure easy access to local services.
- 8.d To work with HCC to consider the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit for all or part of the village.
- 8.e To investigate measures that encourage walking and cycling within and around the village.
To consider using CIL funds to implement such measures where appropriate.
- 8.f To discourage proposals that would require a trackway to be surfaced, or upgraded to a road.
- 8.g To require new roads to be of such a design that they should reflect the rural nature of the village and be finished in tarmacadam or bound gravel rather than a modular surface.
To require any new street lighting to minimise light pollution.
To incorporate poles with a swan-neck design and with a green paint finish.
- 8 h To work with HCC to ensure the adopted roads within the parish are properly maintained.
To ensure that defects are identified and addressed in a timely manner.

8.2 Public Transport

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.

Three bus routes serve Baldock and Royston, and some include the station. Trains that stop at Ashwell and Morden Station provide a good service to London, Cambridge and intermediate stations, while the taxibus allows rail commuters to gain access to and from the village. 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.

However, while the rail service and taxibus service may be considered reasonable, the local bus services are considered poor. The recent reduction in the number of stopping trains may have affected the satisfaction level for the train service. Due to the remote location of the station (2.5 miles outside the village), travellers have to use other means to access the train service, and, rather than park in the existing station car park, a significant number of cars are parked on the verges leading to the station.

Policies

- 8.i To seek opportunities to work with the providers of public transport to retain, and where possible, improve levels of service.
- 8.j To ensure that new bus shelters erected in the village are appropriate to their setting, especially if sited within the Conservation Area.
- 8.k To undertake a review of transport needs and local transport links, both within the parish and to destinations outside the parish.

Evidence Base Documents

Appendix 1 Background material

- Ap 1.1 How the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan fits into the Planning System
- Ap 1.2 The Submitting Body
- Ap 1.3 The Area covered by the Plan i.e. the 'neighbourhood'
- Ap 1.4 Plan Period, Monitoring and Review

Appendix 2 Plan Development Process

- Ap 2.1 Surveys
- Ap 2.2 The Development of Ashwell's Neighbourhood Plan
- Ap 2.3 Aims and Objectives
 - Ap 2.3.1 Ashwell Village Design Statement
 - Ap 2.3.2 Business and Tourism
 - Ap 2.3.3 Housing and development
 - Ap 2.3.4 Sport and Recreation
 - Ap 2.3.5 Education
 - Ap 2.3.6 Health and wellbeing
 - Ap 2.3.7 Natural Environment
- Ap 2.4 Development Process
- Ap 2.5 Gathering the Evidence Base

Appendix 3 About the 'Neighbourhood'

- Ap 3.1 Landscape Character Assessment

Appendix 4 Previous surveys, plans and appraisals

- Ap 4.1 Ashwell Village Appraisal 1976
- Ap 4.2 North Hertfordshire Rural Settlements Study 1986: Ashwell Village Extract, North Hertfordshire District Council, 1986
- Ap 4.3 Ashwell Village Appraisal 1994/5 Ashwell Parish Council, 1995
- Ap 4.4 Ashwell Village Design Statement, Ashwell Parish Council, 2000
- Ap 4.5 Ashwell Parish Plan Ashwell Parish Council, 2007

Appendix 5 Housing survey 2015

Ap 5.1 Questionnaire

Ap 5.2 Analysis

Ap 5.3 Free text responses

Appendix 6 General survey 2016

Ap 6.1 Questionnaire

Ap 6.2 Analysis

Ap 6.3 Free text responses

Appendix 7 Business survey 2016

Ap 7.1 Questionnaire

Ap 7.2 Analysis