



Acton Neighbourhood Plan

2022-2037



Referendum Version
Summer 2024

Contents

	Page
Foreword by the Steering Group	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Acton	7
3. National and Local Context	25
4. How the Plan was Prepared	28
5. Vision and Objectives	33
6. Policies	36
7. Housing	38
8. Environment	54
9. Access and Community	76
10. Business and Employment	88
11. Implementation and Monitoring	92
Appendix	
A: Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Members	94
B: Non-designated Heritage Assets Justification	95
C: Local Green Space Assessments	101
D: Glossary	116
E: Policies Map/Inset Maps	121
F: Acton Design Guidelines and Codes	124

Foreword by the Steering Group

Keen to ensure that Acton's community had the strongest possible voice in future planning decisions, we came together as a group of volunteers in spring 2021 to consider the possibility of creating a Neighbourhood Plan. The broad local support shown by residents and Councillors encouraged a core group of us to take the plunge and we were formally 'adopted' as the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, under the umbrella of Acton Parish Council, in autumn of that year.

Since then, we have worked together to drive the project forwards through the repeating challenges of Covid, consulting with the rest of the community at each stage and keeping in touch throughout. We have taken on board opinion, both local and expert, on the wide range of subjects which a Neighbourhood Plan can cover and believe that we have brought together a Plan which has properly assessed both the future development needs and the protections required to retain the rural nature and historic features of our area.

We would like to thank all the volunteers who have helped us over this time, including the many individuals who have assisted in collating information, helping out at the community events and delivering leaflets, as well as those on the Parish Council, without whose ongoing support and approval, the plan could not progress. Andrea Long, our planning consultant, also deserves special mention for keeping us on the path and providing support and drive when we needed it. Finally, but importantly, thanks to the people of Acton and surrounds, who have taken the time to provide the feedback and comments which have informed this Plan. It has been a true community effort.

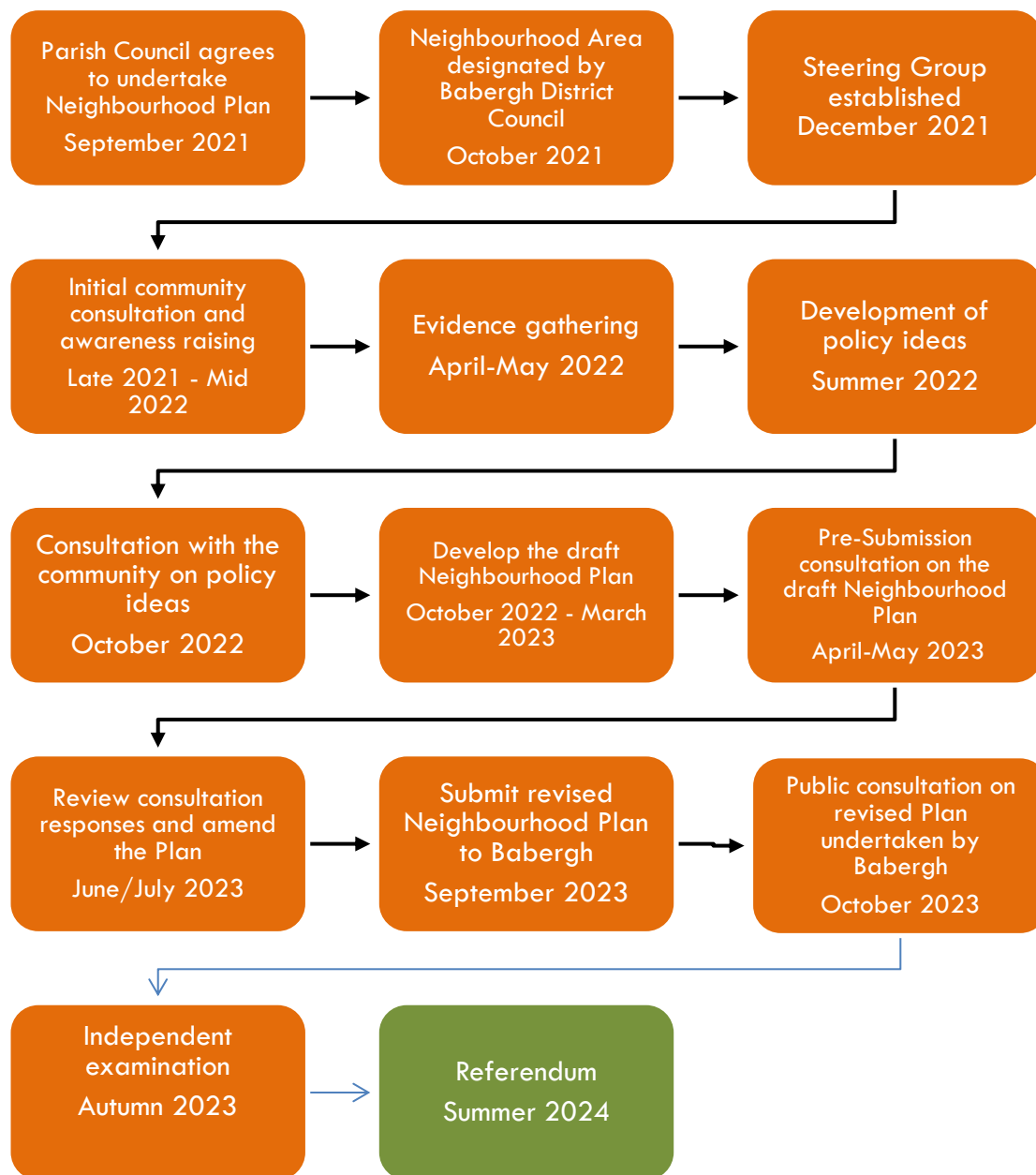
The Plan aims to reflect the relevant concerns and wishes of those in the neighbourhood as closely as can be achieved within its remit. It is designed to cover the period up to 2037 but will need to be updated over this time to remain consistent with changing national and local legislation.

Once approved by the authorities and the community, this Neighbourhood Plan will be given equal weight to the Local Plan produced by Babergh District Council in future planning decisions.

The Steering Group

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Acton Neighbourhood Development Plan will provide the first ever statutory planning policy document specifically for the parish of Acton. Neighbourhood Plans such as this were made possible by powers contained within the 2011 Localism Act which sought to decentralise policy making to the local level and give more powers and the right to shape future development to local communities.
- 1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is a community-led document for guiding the future development of the parish. It is about the use and development of land between 2022 and 2037. Once the Plan is made and adopted, Babergh District Council will use it to determine planning applications. Acton Parish Council will use the Plan to respond to planning applications.
- 1.3 The Acton Neighbourhood Plan complements existing national and local planning policy by providing a specifically local level of detail attained through consultation with the local community and further research. Commissioned by Acton Parish Council, the Neighbourhood Plan has been developed by a Steering Group of local residents and Parish Councillors. (See **Appendix A** for Steering Group members)
- 1.4 By undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan, the Steering Group aims to:
 - Give a voice to local residents to manage and shape development to the benefit of the whole community.
 - Ensure that new development is sensitive to the local character, heritage and environment.
 - Maintain the existing sense of rural community.
 - Help Identify the community's priorities for developer contributions.
- 1.5 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with the statutory requirements and processes set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). The flow chart below (**Figure 1**) outlines the stages in the Neighbourhood Plan process.



Key

Completed stage

Current stage

Future stage

Figure 1: Neighbourhood Plan process and progress

- 1.6 The Acton Neighbourhood Plan is not a mechanism for stopping development. It is there to ensure that development takes place in an appropriate way for the parish. It has been positively prepared with the purpose of supporting and managing growth, not preventing it. In practice, higher level planning documents such as the Joint Local Plan for Babergh and Mid Suffolk (JLP) cannot feasibly deal with all of the issues particular to every town and village across both districts, whereas the Neighbourhood Plan can by providing additional details which reflect specific local circumstances and conditions.

- 1.7 The Neighbourhood Plan provides clarity on what will be expected from development proposals, gives prospective investors confidence in how the area will change in the future, and ensures that the impact of development is anticipated and planned for in Acton. A Neighbourhood Plan is a significant document and will carry legal weight so that developers have to take note when considering future developments in the parish.
- 1.8 The Neighbourhood Plan Area covers the entire parish of Acton and was formally designated by Babergh District Council in October 2021.

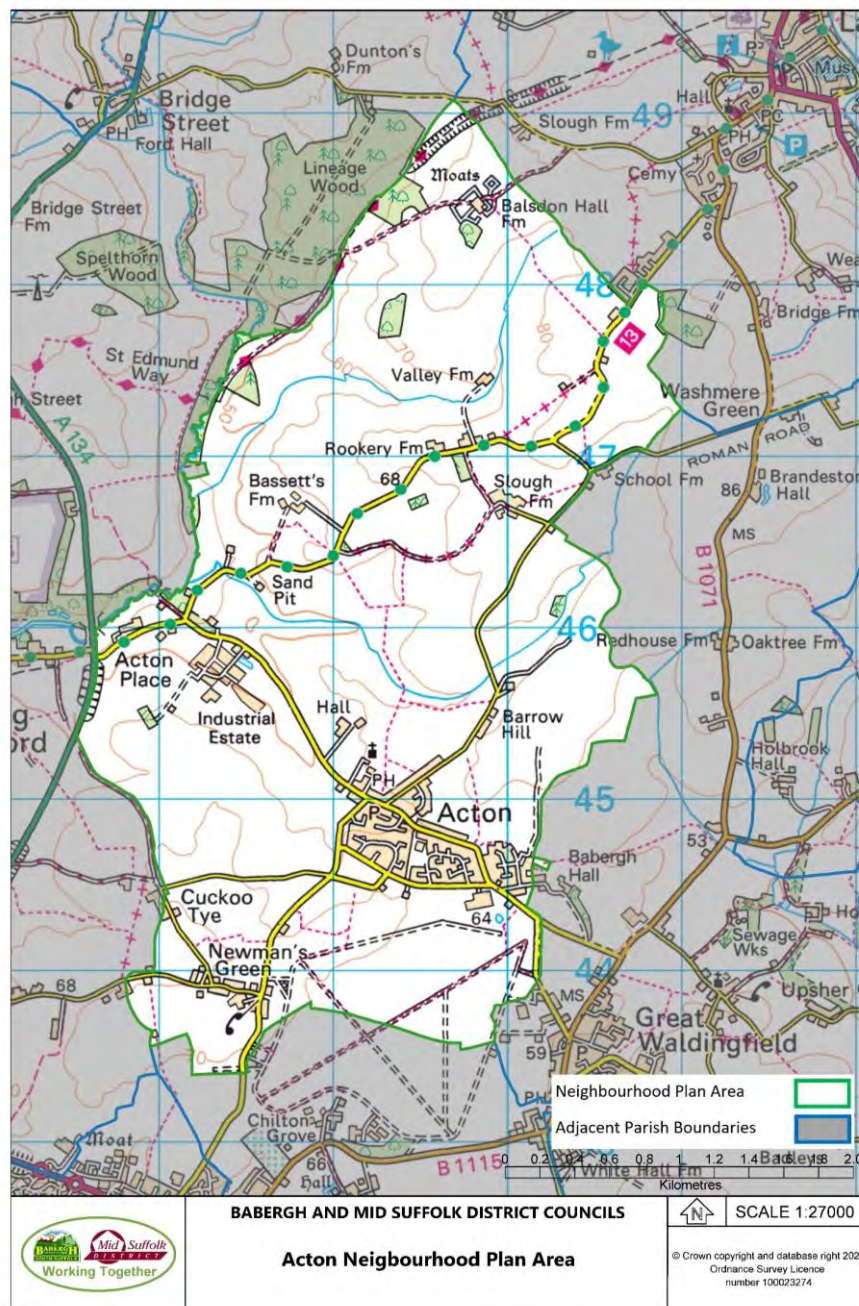


Figure 2: Acton Neighbourhood Plan Area

Consultation and Examination

1.9 This is the Referendum Version of the Acton Neighbourhood Plan. As set out in Figure 1 above, this Plan has been the subject of consultation with local residents, businesses and statutory agencies. The Plan was amended in a number of ways as a consequence. The Plan has also been independently examined by a qualified person. Following the conclusion of the Examination, the Plan as modified by the Examiner, proceeded to Referendum.

Referendum

1.10 At referendum, every resident of Acton who is entitled to vote in the Council elections has the opportunity to vote on whether or not they agree with the Neighbourhood Plan. At referendum, residents will be asked: *Do you want Babergh District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Acton to help it decide planning applications in the Neighbourhood area?* If the Plan gets at least 50% support from those who vote in the referendum, Babergh will **make** (adopt) the Neighbourhood Plan as part of the statutory development plan.

Accompanying Supporting Documents

1.11 The Acton Neighbourhood Plan is supported by the following documents:

- Acton Housing Needs Assessment - undertaken by consultants AECOM and completed in October 2022.
- Acton Design Guidelines and Code - undertaken by consultants AECOM and completed in October 2022. Updated following the Examination in March 2024
- Acton Data Profile - undertaken in July 2022 and updated to June 2023 following the Pre-Submission consultation.

2. Acton



- 2.1 Acton is a rural civil parish located in south Suffolk within the administrative District of Babergh. Built settlement in the parish comprises the main built-up area of Acton village, which is located in the south of the parish and the separate hamlet of Newman's Green, located approximately 1 km to the south-west. There is also an employment area at Bull Lane between Acton village and Long Melford. The remainder of the parish is rural farmland, and the area of the whole parish is 1162.52 hectares.
- 2.2 The nearest town is Sudbury, which is approximately 6 km south of Acton. Other larger settlements in the wider area include Ipswich, Colchester and Bury St Edmunds. The A134 is located just outside the parish boundary and provides connections to Bury St Edmunds and Colchester. Surrounding parishes consist of Long Melford to the west, Great Waldingfield to the south and east, Sudbury and Chilton to the south, Little Waldingfield to the east and Lavenham to the north.

History and Evolution of Acton

- 2.3 The name *Acton* (also historically referred to as Aketon) is believed to be derived from the description *village by the oaks*. The Domesday Book records the population of Acton in 1086 to be 83 households along with 50 acres for farming, wood for 40 pigs, 1 mill, 11 horses at hall, 31 cattle, 160 pigs, 423 sheep, and 7 beehives. The land was held by Ranulf Peverel before the Norman Conquest.

- 2.4 The oldest building is believed to be All Saints Church (Grade I listed), which dates from approximately 1250 AD. The chancel seems to have been added in the 13th century and the south aisle was added in the 14th century with the porch being added in the 15th century and the south aisle extended in the 18th century to form the Jennens Chapel, which is used as the vestry.
- 2.5 The historic core of the village is centred on the High Street, which runs broadly east from the church. A small cluster of listed buildings can be found close to the junction of High Street and Sudbury Road, with others sporadically positioned along the High Street to the east. The Vicarage, the only other substantial listed building (now known as The Old Vicarage) is located to the south off Vicarage Lane. Much of the land outside of the main historic core is agricultural land with associated scattered farmsteads, the majority of which are located north of the main settlement. Over time, the village has grown from the historic spine of the High Street, first along Barrow Hill and then with a large post-war development to the south. This development, based around cul-de-sacs, changed the pattern of the village. The 20th century development has quiet and safe residential streets, linked by a network of paths.



Figure 3a: Listed Buildings in Acton Village. Source: Parish Online: [Grade 1](#), [Grade 2](#)

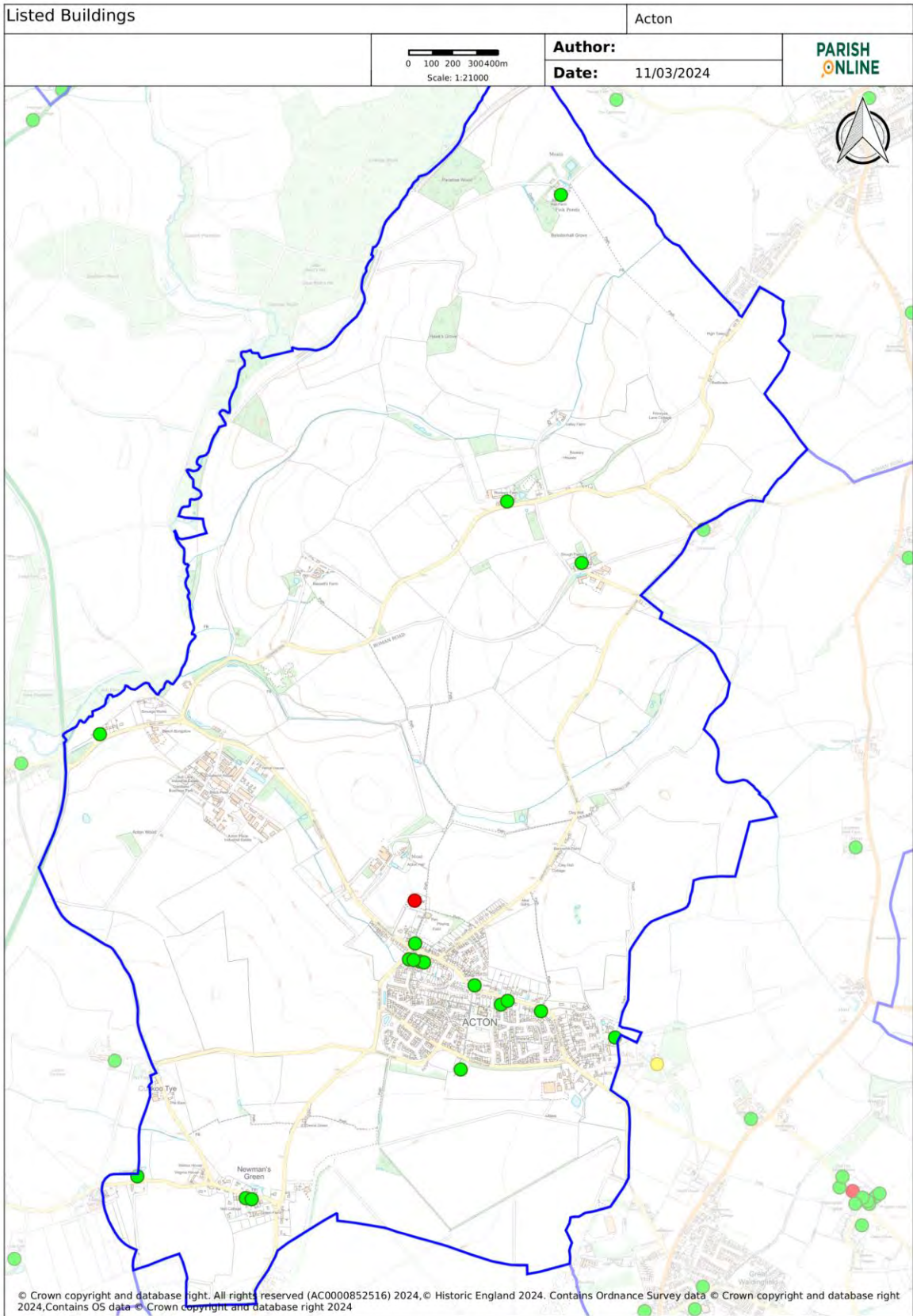


Figure 3b: Listed Buildings in Acton Parish. Source: Parish Online: (Grade 1 shown in red; Grade 2* in yellow and Grade 2 in green. Blue denoted parish boundary)

- 2.6 Notable former residents of Acton include William Jennens, who was known as *William the Miser* and the *Acton Miser*. Jennens made his money through business in London, loaning money to gamblers. He was Britain's richest man at the time of his death in 1798, but aged 97, he had outlived the nominated executors and beneficiaries under his will. The later case of *Jennens v Jennens* formed part of the inspiration for the *Jarndyce and Jarndyce* case at the centre of the plot of *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens.
- 2.7 Two notable buildings in the parish's history are Acton Hall and Acton Place. Acton Place was a great house with parkland located to the west of Bull Lane, which, in 1674 was listed as having 20-29 hearths.¹ It was bought by Robert Jennens, William's father, in the early 1700s, who began to rebuild it as a mansion house. It remained unfinished at his death and was inherited by William. Whilst the house was demolished in 1960, historical records indicate that it comprised a substantial building and included a servants' wing nine bays wide with a central three-bay pediment. The house was red brick with a two-storey hipped roof. The centre of the house, according to a painting of the 18th century, was eleven bays wide and four storeys high with a three-bay pediment and a hipped roof. It was connected with the wings by single storey quadrant arcades. Some vestiges of the walls or garden walls are still intact.
- 2.8 Acton Hall,² located east of Bull Lane and north of the church, was accompanied by an elliptical moat in the shape of a horseshoe and was owned by the de Bures family from 1311, the Lordship of the Manor of Acton having been granted to Sir Robert de Bures under King Edward II. The site of Acton Hall is now occupied by a more modern farmhouse and gardens. Very little is known about the original structure of the hall itself, but records of life within the hall in the early 15th century have survived. The daybook of household accounts compiled by Dame Alice de Bryene³ of Acton, descendent of Robert de Bures and widow of Guy de Bryene, details her management of the household for a year over 1412-13, and is regarded as an important social history source. The house ceased to be the home of the Lord of the Manor in the mid-15th century.

¹ <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/monument/MSF14583>

² <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/monument/MSF746>

³ <https://thehundredyearswar.co.uk/dame-alice-de-bryene-of-acton-hall/>



Figure 4: Map from 1896 showing Acton Place and Acton Hall—Reproduced by kind permission of the National Library of Scotland

- 2.9 Another Acton resident, Catherine Foster, was the last woman to be hanged at Bury St Edmunds in 1847. At the age of 17, she poisoned her husband, John Foster, by putting arsenic in his dumplings. The propriety of this case was discussed in the House of Lords and reported in Hansard. Ronald Blythe, writer, essayist and editor, best known for his work *Akenfield: Portrait of an English Village*, was born in the village.
- 2.10 During World War II, land to the south-east of the parish and parts of neighbouring Great Waldingfield parish were used as an airfield. An existing farmhouse known as Gad's Lane Farm was demolished and the airfield established. At its height, the area included temporary accommodation for some 3,000 men. The first group operating there was in late March 1944. The airfield was built to *Class A* specifications for American bomber aircraft and was provided with three concrete runways with fifty hardstanding and two aircraft hangars (Type T2). Temporary barrack accommodation was dispersed to the east away from the main flying field around the village of Great Waldingfield. Today, the area has reverted to agriculture with some hardstanding remaining.
- 2.11 The majority of settlement in Acton parish dates from the 20th century with significant residential development taking place from 1950 onwards. Much of this post war development was undertaken by Melford Rural District Council built to house some of the many homeless people who were squatting in the former army huts at Acton Place 40 dwellings were built at Queensway, believed locally to have been completed in 1954 not long after the coronation, hence the name. Developments on Barrow Hill (23 dwellings) and Vicarage Road (6 dwellings) were built around the same time and were followed by developments such as Coblers Way (29 dwellings) and Gotsfield Close (25 dwellings) during the 1960s. Clay Hall Place (37 dwellings) followed between 1973 and 1981, constructed by the private sector firm Truegate Builders.

- 2.12 The largest single development is the Lime Tree Park Estate (350 dwellings), which was built in six phases over about 10 years, starting on Waldingfield Road in 1973 and ending at Marsh Walk. The general design concept is vehicle parking and garages at the rear of the dwellings. Jennens Way, Lime Walk and Cedar Walk provide pleasant pedestrian routes to link the developments. The developments were built on two fields either side of an avenue of trees, now called Jennens Way. The avenue belonged to the Vicarage (now The Old Vicarage), and when the diocese built a new vicarage and put the house and avenue up for sale around 1974, Alan Reason Homes Ltd, the estate developers, bought both the house and the drive. They then sold the house but kept the drive to retain access. The last vicar to live in the Old Vicarage, who was also a District and Parish councillor, enabled a Tree Preservation Order to be placed on the lime trees, which saved them from being felled. The Parish Council subsequently bought the avenue, at minimal cost, from Alan Reason Homes at the same time as they bought Lime Tree Green.
- 2.13 Numerous smaller developments followed during the 1980s and 1990s and into the early 2000s, some of which were small infill plots, conversions or reuse of previously developed land. However, the next development south of Tamage Road was more significant at 100 dwellings, with construction beginning in 2020 and still ongoing in late 2022.

Population and Demographics

- 2.14 The usual resident population of Acton was 1900 in the 2021 census, up from 1811 in 2011. Of this figure, 51.5% are female and 48.5% are male, compared with 50.08% female and 49.91% male in 2011.
- 2.15 In common with the rest of Babergh and Suffolk, Acton does have a population bulge in older adults, aged from 50 to 79. However, it has a smaller proportion of over 80s and a substantially larger proportion of 30-44 year olds than Babergh. The age profile of the residents of Acton parish compared to Babergh and Suffolk can be seen in **Figure 5** below.

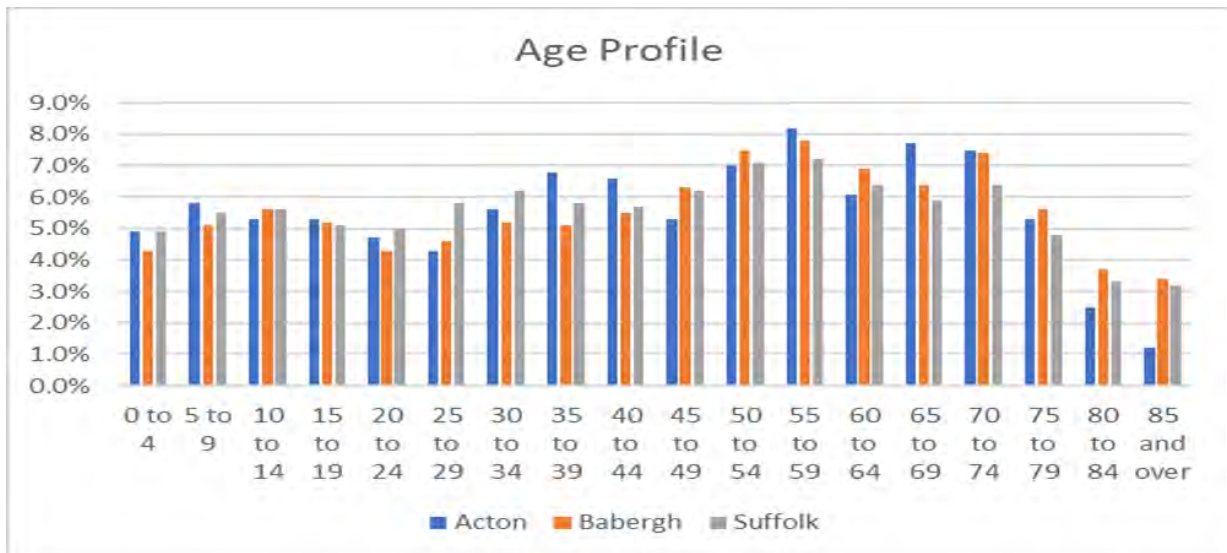


Figure 5: Age structure of the population of Acton, Babergh and Suffolk from 2021 census

Health and Wellbeing

2.16 In the 2021 (and the 2011) census, a higher percentage of residents of Acton reported good health compared to residents on average across Babergh and Suffolk. In 2021, the percentage reporting *very good* health was slightly lower than for Babergh and Suffolk. The percentage of residents in Acton who reported *bad* or *very bad* health was broadly comparable to Babergh and Suffolk, whereas in 2011, a higher percentage of residents in Acton reported *very bad* health compared to residents in Babergh and Suffolk.

Qualifications

2.17 Data from the 2021 census shows that 16.7% of the residents of Acton have no qualifications, which is an improvement on the 2011 figure of 24.5%. This compares to 17.4% for Babergh and 19.7% for Suffolk, which are both improvements on the 2011 figures of 22.8% for Babergh and 24.3% for Suffolk.

Community Services and Facilities

2.18 Acton parish has a **village hall** with an adjacent recreational field. There are two further green areas with play equipment for children. Children between the ages of 2 to 4 can attend **Acton Playgroup** for childcare. **Acton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School** caters for children between the ages of 4 and 11, At age 11 pupils continue secondary school outside of the village; this is often at Thomas Gainsborough School in Great Cornard or Ormiston Sudbury Academy in Sudbury town. Suffolk County Council confirmed in August 2022 that the school has a capacity of 210 pupils, with 166 pupils registered for 2021-2022. In January 2023, as the Tamage Road development is nearing completion, additional pupils have joined the school. However, in response to the pre-submission consultation, Suffolk County

Council indicated in May 2023 that Ormiston Sudbury Academy will close its sixth form to new students from September 2023, which will impact on available places.

- 2.19 There is no medical practice or other healthcare provision in the parish. Medical and healthcare practices which serve Acton are located in Long Melford (including its outpost at Lavenham), Sudbury and Chilton. The nearest accident and emergency facility is in Bury St Edmunds.
- 2.20 Most dwellings in Acton village have access to mains gas, those in the rural areas of the parish rely mostly on oil.
- 2.21 The village also has **All Saints Church** and **The Crown Public House**. There is a small convenience store called **Costcutter**, which also offers some post office services which are limited both in terms of availability (post office services not available all the time the shop is open) and of services provided (not all post office services available). To the north of the village along Barrow Hill there is a **nature reserve** and **allotments**.

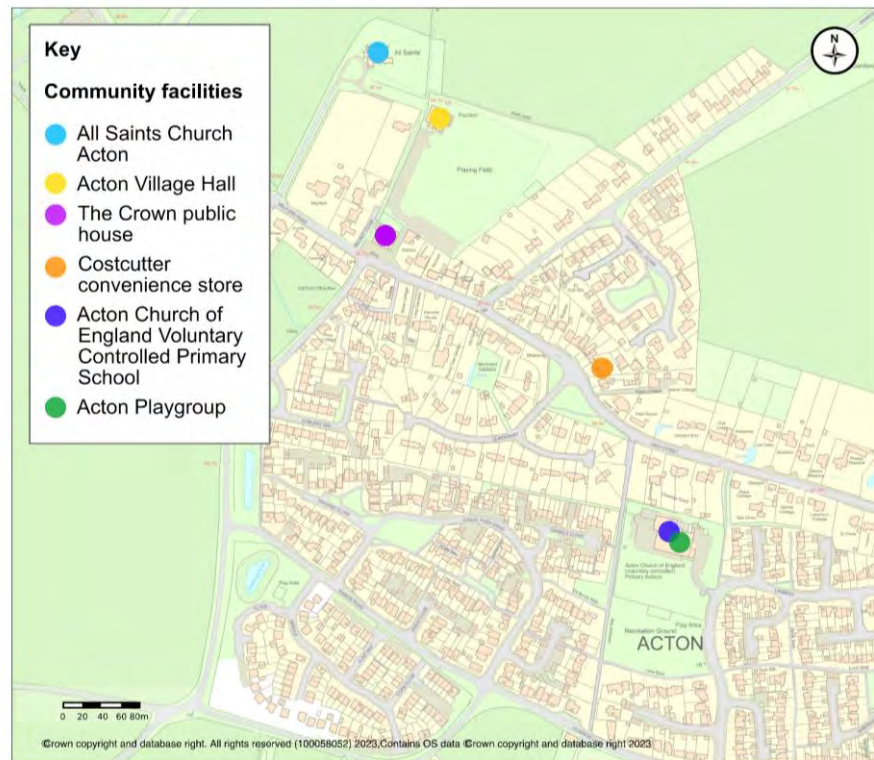


Figure 6: Community Facilities

- 2.22 The parish enjoys good mobile phone coverage. Some areas of the parish have fast broadband available, although it is not always reliable. There are recycling facilities located in the village hall car park for paper, card, glass, and clothing. There are no public electric vehicle charging points in Acton. National Grid has identified that the Gas Transmission Pipeline route Stowmarket to Braintree crosses through the parish.⁴

⁴ <https://www.nationalgas.com/land-and-assets/network-route-maps>

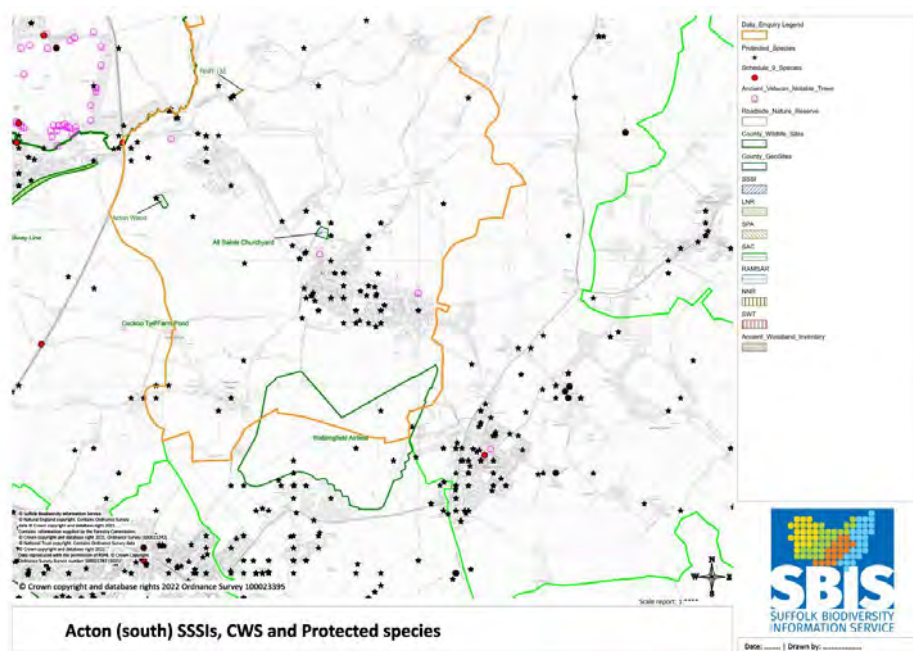
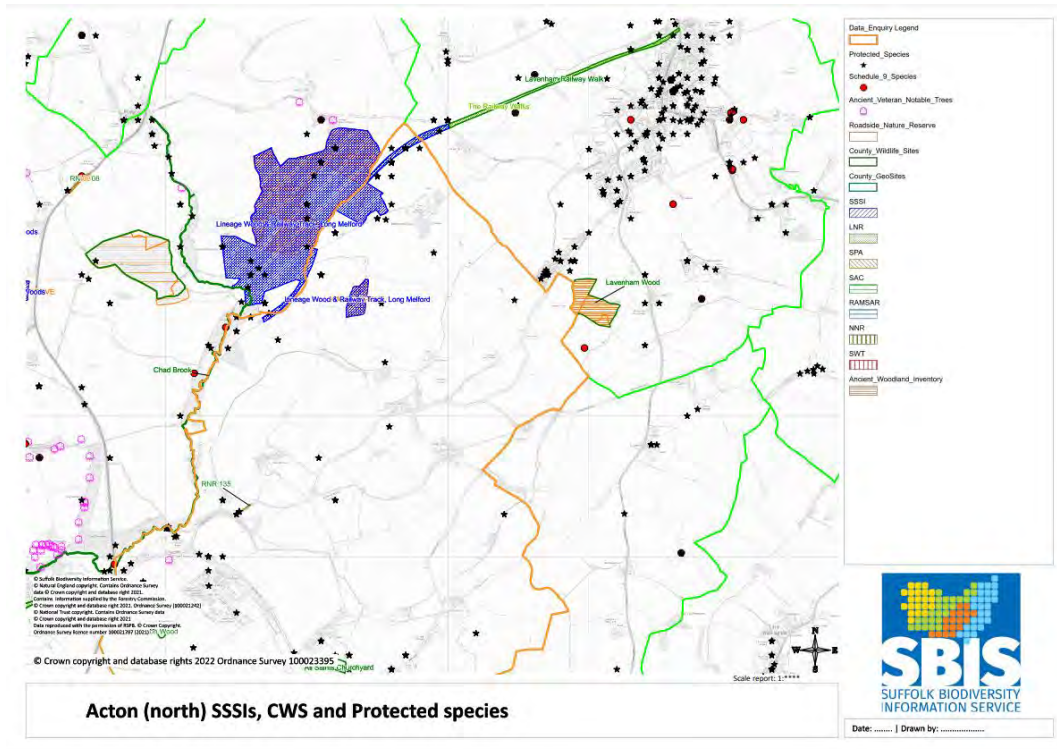
- 2.23 There are a wide range of active clubs and groups in Acton. Groups and clubs held at the village hall include Baby Ballet, Jo Jingles, karate, zumba, yoga, The Acton Crafters, dog training, a games club, Beavers and ballroom dancing. There are other clubs and groups in Acton, including The Acton Amblers, Community Speed Watch, Nature Reserve Volunteers and The Litter Pickers.
- 2.24 There are services held at **All Saints Church** as well as activities and events such as a book sale and an annual art exhibition. Acton has a cricket team that plays its home matches on the recreation area adjacent to the village hall. The recreational area has a cricket pitch as well as a bowling/batting practice net. The area was formerly shared with the football team but there are no formal 11 a-side football pitches in the village. The village hall has changing room facilities for home and away teams, as well as a small referee changing area. Acton has no library, the nearest in Long Melford has recently closed. However, a weekly mobile library service exists, which parks near to the shop, and there is a book swap and a puzzle library.

Landscape

- 2.25 Acton is located within the *Ancient Rolling Farmlands* landscape character area. The key characteristics of this landscape are medium clay soils studded with blocks of ancient woodland and far-reaching views. The settlement pattern mainly consists of dispersed farmsteads of mediaeval origin with some larger hamlets and smaller villages that complement the rural landform and landscape. Acton has a clustered settlement pattern set amongst rolling farmland. Settlement was significantly built up throughout the 20th century, with only a few listed buildings on the edges of the village, forming a generally isolated setting. There are no specific national landscape designations within the parish.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 2.26 Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service holds records of a number of Priority Species in Acton. These are species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity covered under Section 41 (England) of the NERC Act (2006), and therefore need to be taken into consideration by a public body when performing any of its functions. The designated sites and species records in Acton parish are shown below. The priority species observed include mammals such as water voles, hedgehogs, bats and otters; reptiles and amphibians, including common lizards, slow worms, grass snakes and great crested newts; many birds, including yellowhammers, skylarks, buntings and thrushes; and a range of insects and plants detailed further below. These are in addition to other local wildlife such as roe and muntjac deer, badgers, foxes and birds of prey.



Figures 7a and 7b: Maps showing protected species in Acton parish.

2.27 There is one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in Acton parish at Lineage Wood & Railway Track, which runs along the northwest perimeter of the parish and continues into the adjacent parish of Long Melford. This site was formerly known as Lavenham and Acton Woods and Old Railway Track. The SSSI also includes Hawk's Grove and Paradise Wood a little further into the parish, covering a total area of 81.23 hectares. The disused railway line also has floristically rich grassland, but the soil is more

alkaline. Lineage Wood is private land with no public access, but the St Edmund Way footpath runs along the disused railway line.

- 2.28 Lineage Wood is one of the largest (59 ha.) remaining ancient woods in West Suffolk. Despite coniferization, the wood has retained a good system of floristically rich unimproved neutral grassland rides. Small remnants of the original wet ash, wych elm, lineage elm variant, are found in nearby Hawk's Grove, and alongside the disused railway track, unimproved calcareous grassland is also found on chalky boulder clay of the railway track. The grass rides within Lineage Wood support a very rich flora, containing a large variety of neutral grassland herbs, especially orchids such as early purple orchid, common spotted orchid, bee orchid, greater butterfly orchid and fly orchid. Other plants characteristic of ancient woodland are also found on the rides, and these include sweet woodruff, hairy woodrush, pendulous sedge, hairy St John's wort, yellow pimpernel, green hellebore wood spurge, and oxlip. The rich flora of the railway cutting is, by nature of the more alkaline soil, quite different. The calcareous grassland is dominated by sheep's fescue and bent grasses with occasional quaking grass, crested dog's-tail and carnation grass. Calcicolous species such as felwort, yellow wort, purging flax, cowslip, woolly thistle, burnet saxifrage and wild parsnip occur there. Both types of grassland are excellent for butterflies, with 22 species recorded in Lineage Wood alone.
- 2.29 There are five County Wildlife Sites in Acton parish. These sites are Waldingfield Airfield, Lavenham Wood, Chad Brook, All Saints Churchyard and Acton Wood. The airfield is also home to two endangered species – Spreading Hedge Parsley and Shepherd's Needle. The first is the subject of a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)⁵ and the second is critically endangered.
- 2.30 Acton has one Roadside Nature Reserve at the southerly end of Lavenham Road, with an area of 0.02 hectares. The RNR is specifically designated as it contains sulphur clover and wild liquorice.
- 2.31 **Acton Wildlife Reserve on Barrow Hill** is an area of 0.41 hectares. It was originally allotment land, before becoming redundant and being overtaken by bramble and blackthorn. In recent years, it has undergone sensitive remodelling, including the installation of a pond, and now supports a far richer biodiversity of flora and fauna. Notably, **great crested newts** have been observed nearby, whilst slow worms, grass snakes and common lizards have been observed on the reserve. There is evidence of mammalian life, including hedgehogs, badgers, muntjac deer, bats, mice, voles, shrews, rabbits and squirrels. A great variety of birds have been observed at the reserve, including, most recently in April 2022, a melanistic blue tit.

⁵<https://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/species/SpreadinghedgeParsley.pdf>
<https://hub.jncc.gov.uk/assets/98fb6dab-13ae-470d-884b-7816afce42d4#UKBAP-priority-birds.pdf>



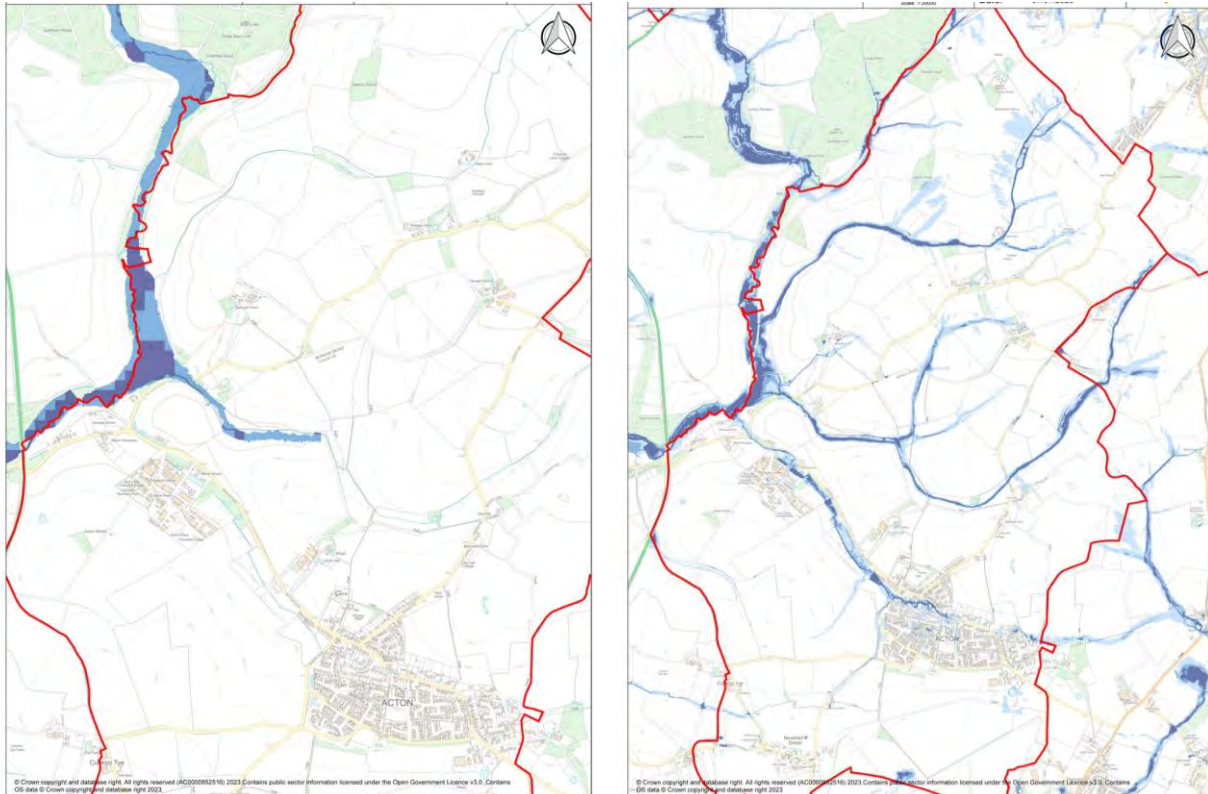
Figure 8: Acton Wildlife Reserve at Barrow Hill

2.32 Acton parish has three ancient/veteran/notable trees, two of which are found in the main settlement area with a further single tree near Acton Place. There are numerous trees with Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) within the parish. These include the two avenues of lime trees, which line Jennens Way from the Old Vicarage to Pool Cottage, and along the drive to the church. There are also stretches of trees with TPOs at Acton Place, Acton Hall, land west of New Farm, Clay Hall Lane, Clay Hall Place, the corner of Waldingfield Road/High Street, as well as many single TPOs located around the Old School buildings, the Old Vicarage and along the rear boundaries of properties on the northern side of the High Street.⁶

Rivers and Flooding

2.33 The vast majority of Action parish is in Flood Zone 1 (low probability), with land having less than 1 in 1000 annual probability of river or sea flooding. One area along the tributary to Chad Brook is in Flood Zone 3a, with land having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding. This can be seen in the map in **Figures 9a and b** below.

⁶ Source: <http://maps.midsuffolk.gov.uk/> (accessed 22/04/2022)



Figures 9a and 9b: Environment Agency Flood Zones and Surface Water Flooding. Source: Parish Online. Parish boundary shown in red.

2.34 The majority of Acton parish is at very low risk of flooding from surface water, meaning that each year, this area has a chance of flooding of less than 0.1%. Flooding from surface water is difficult to predict as rainfall location and volume are difficult to forecast. In addition, local features can greatly affect the chance and severity of flooding. As seen on the map in **Figures 9a and 9b**, there are small areas at a high risk of surface water flooding, shown in dark blue. This means that each year, this area has a chance of flooding of greater than 3.3%. These areas include the Chad Brook tributaries and along the High Street through to Melford Road. There are small areas at a medium risk of surface water flooding, with a chance of flooding between 1% and 3.3%. These are indicated in medium blue. Areas denoted in light blue are at a low risk of surface water flooding, this means that each year the area has a chance of flooding of between 0.1% and 1%.

Transport

2.35 The nearest railway station is in Sudbury. It has hourly departures to Marks Tey. Here, passengers can board connecting trains towards Colchester, Ipswich and London Liverpool Street. In terms of more localised public transport, there are hourly daytime buses from Monday to Saturday. These stop on the High Street and provide routes to both Sudbury and Bury St Edmunds.

- 2.36 The parish of Acton has no A or B class roads, only C class roads or smaller. Some of these lanes, such as Kings Lane and School Lane, are narrow in the extreme. There are no pavements on most roads and the settlement of Acton has limited pavements. There is a lack of pavements on some roads, such as Melford Road, where the national speed limit applies before becoming a 30 mph limit at settlement edge, which is a common safety concern. The longest section of pavements is a loop around the main settlement which is 2.2 km long. The rest of the country lanes are narrow and have limited verge space with a ditch and hedge adjacent. At present, there does not exist a safe paved walking route to Sudbury or any other settlements.
- 2.37 Acton has one main through route which is a C class road. This runs in an east - west direction between Long Melford and Great Waldingfield. The two other roads that run in a north and a south direction are small country lanes of restricted width. The road to the north, Barrow Hill, is effectively a single-track country lane that connects to various farms and on to Lavenham. Barrow Hill changes into Slough Lane and then into School Lane. School Lane is the remains of an old Roman Road that is narrow in the extreme. The road to the south is Sudbury Road, which changes into Acton Lane and transits towards Sudbury. This, again, is a small lane with room wide enough for two cars to pass safely on most, but not all sections. Two lorries struggle to pass at any point.

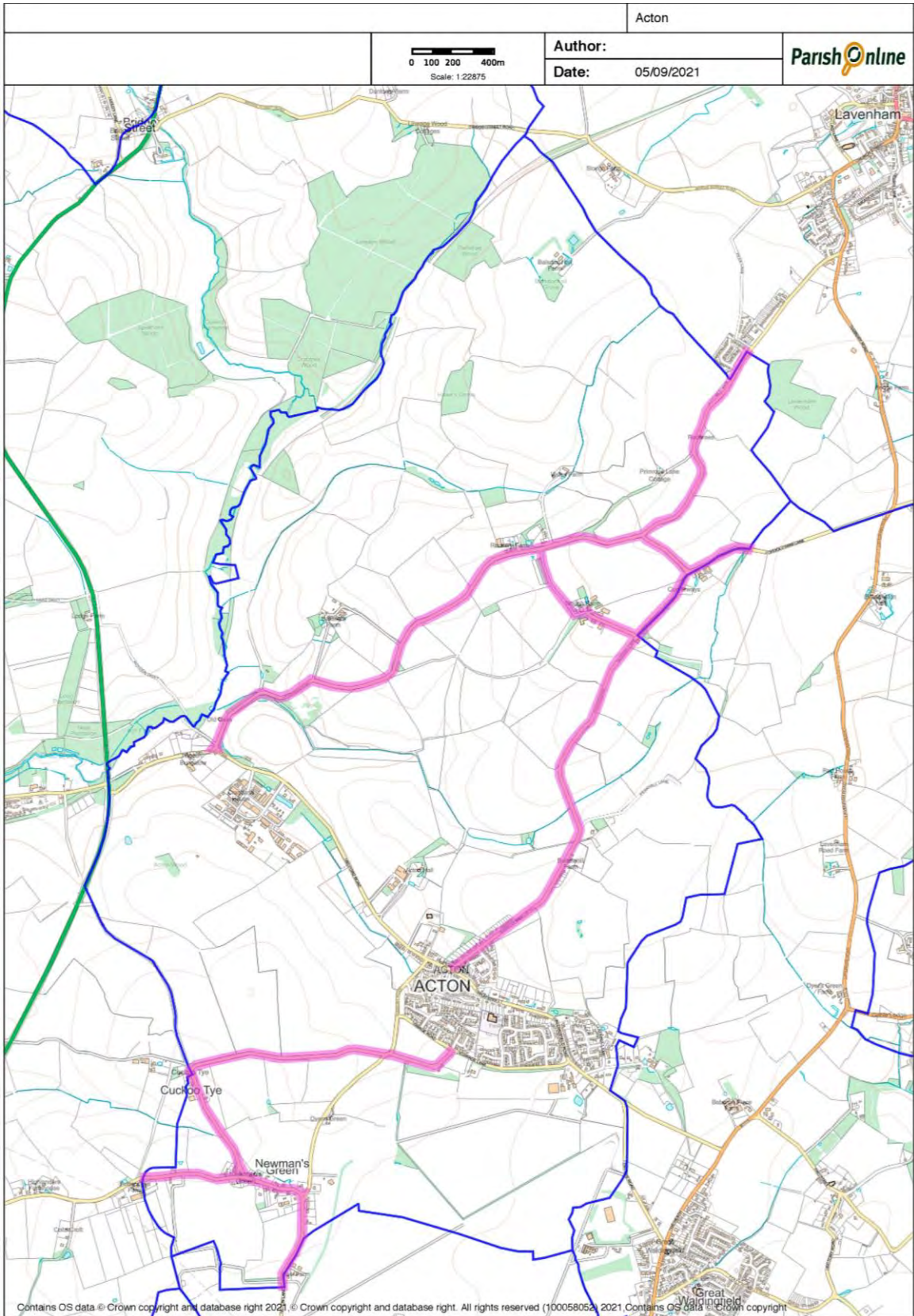


Figure 10: Restricted width or single-track roads in Acton (shown purple)

2.38 Cyclists are a common sight in Acton. The National Cycle Route, Suffolk Cycle Route A and National Cycle Route 13 traverse through the parish of Acton.

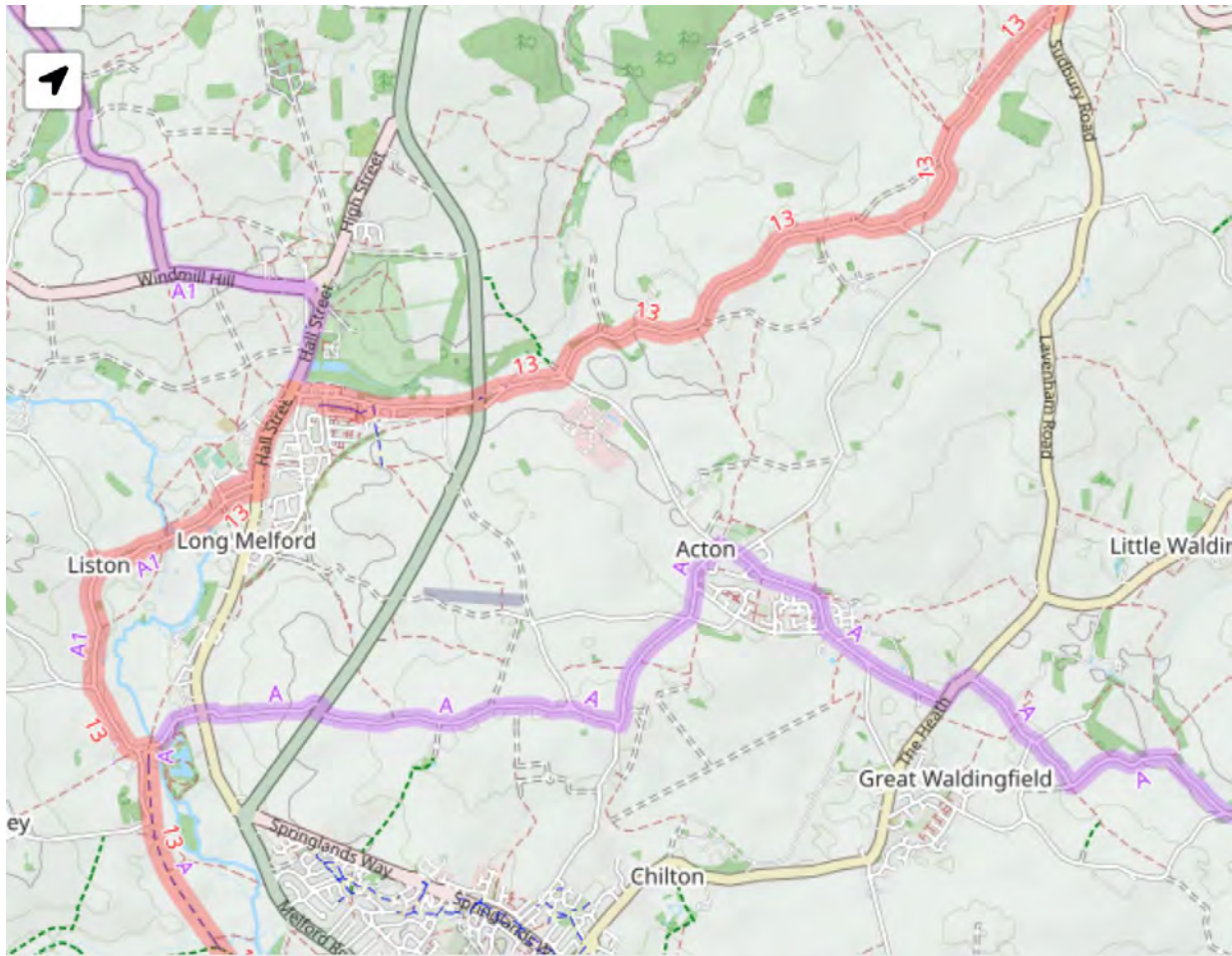


Figure 11: Cycle Routes in Acton: National Cycle Route 13 and South Suffolk Route A.

2.39 There are several Public Rights of Way (PROW) and permissive footpaths in the parish. Some of these footpaths in the hamlet of Newman's Green, such as Kings Lane, are old country lanes that have now been declassified. Some PROWs, such as in the vicinity of the disused airfield, are occasionally maintained by volunteers, supplementing Suffolk County Council's formal responsibilities. There is a very active ramblers group called the Acton Amblers, which meets most weeks. A series of printed leaflets showing the PROW is planned. A selection of suggested walking routes following public-rights-of-way are now available on the Acton Parish Council website.

<https://actonparishcouncil.gov.uk/local-walks>

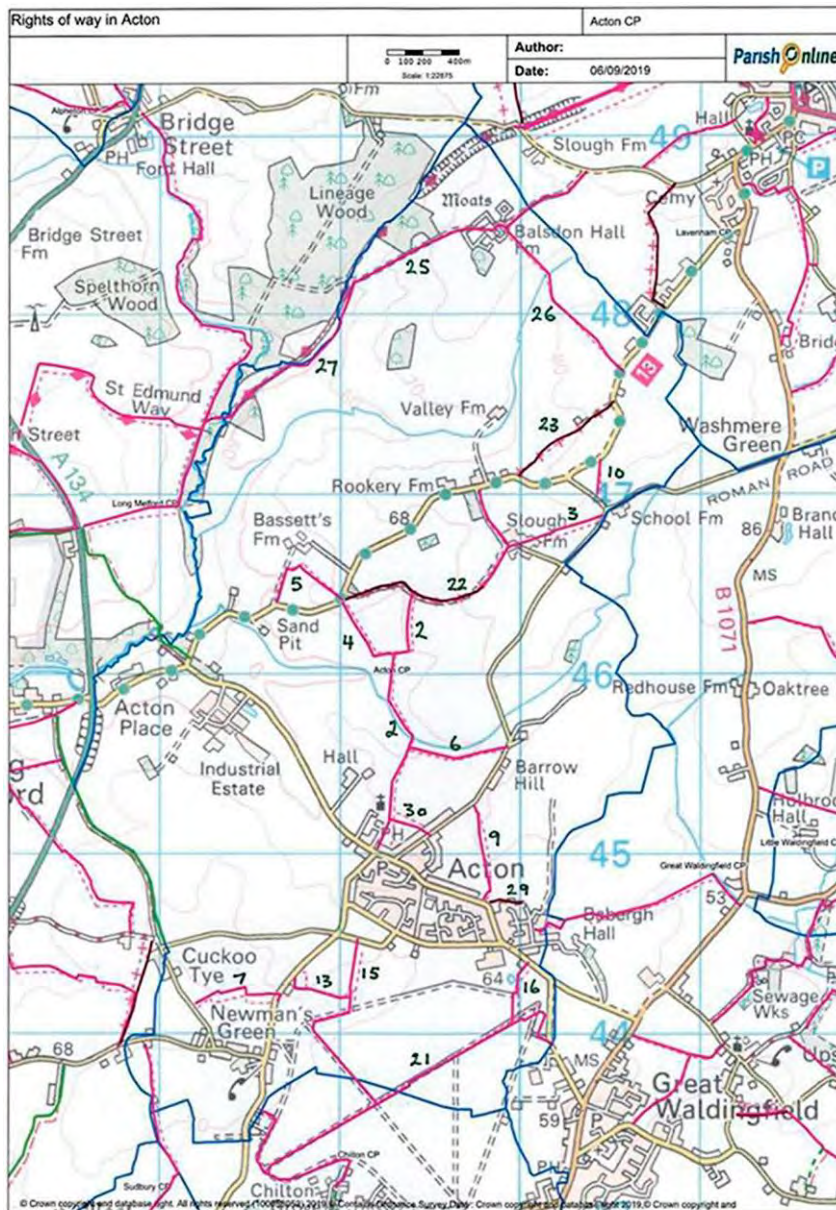


Figure 12: Public Rights of Way: Source: Parish Online

Quiet Lanes

2.40 On 30th July 2021, Acton Parish Council voted to proceed with the application to the Suffolk County Council (SCC) programme to create a network of quiet lanes across Suffolk. The designated Quiet Lanes are Cuckoo Tye Lane, Kings Lane to Newman's Green and Mills Lane from Acton Lane to the A134. These came into force in September 2022. A map of the Quiet Lanes is shown below:



Figure 13: Quiet Lanes

Business

- 2.41 There is an employment area known locally as the Acton Industrial Estate, which includes the Crestland Business Park, Inca Business Park, Acton Place and the Bull Lane Industrial Estate. The employment area is located 1.8 km to the west of the main built-up part of the village along Melford Road. This employment area comprises approximately 79 businesses. The close proximity of the A134 to the industrial estate provides good transport links. HGV and other goods traffic on Melford Road service this industrial estate. It is sizeable, with approximately 402 people employed, of which 37 are residents of Acton. This site cannot be accessed safely on foot. There is no pavement, limited rough verge, and the narrow C class road where the national speed limit applies and is used by a high number of cars and HGV vehicles transiting the village.
- 2.42 Of the businesses at the industrial estate, 85% are single-site businesses. A wide range of business uses are represented on the estate; these include car repairs, sales, storage and cleaning, dog grooming, pet food production, agricultural engineers, window manufacturers, builders, kitchens, plumbers and joiners, training and retail, café, property management, and architectural salvage.
- 2.43 It is also noted that elsewhere in the parish, there will be a significant number of residents who work from home, whether as employees or self-employed. There is also significant farming and agricultural activity in the parish.

3. National and Local Context

- 3.1 Development is defined as: *‘The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land’*. Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 emphasises that the planning system continues to be a ‘plan-led’ system and restates the requirement that: ‘determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise’.

National Planning Policy

- 3.2 Neighbourhood Plans are prepared in the context of the existing national and local planning policy that is in force at the time that the Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared. National planning policy is found in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); the most recent version of which was published in December 2023. This sets out the government’s broad intentions in terms of the purposes of the planning system and their expectations in terms of the delivery of sustainable development. National planning policy is not part of the **‘development plan’** that is used to determine planning applications but is a material consideration, which is given due weight depending upon the age of the various components of the development plan in force for the area. Local planning policies are required to be in general conformity with national planning policies as set out in the NPPF.

Local Planning Policy

- 3.3 Every local planning authority in England is required to prepare a Local Plan. Local Plans include all of the planning policies for the district’s area and identify how land is used, determining what will be built and where. Babergh District Council is currently working with Mid Suffolk District Council on replacing the existing local plan policies by producing a Joint Local Plan for the area known as the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan (JLP), which has a plan period that looks to 2037. Part 1 of the Joint Local Plan was adopted by both Councils in November 2023. It was agreed that Part 1 of the Local Plan will contain the strategic policies and development management policies for the two districts except for the spatial distribution/settlement hierarchy, open spaces, and site-specific allocations. Part 2 of the Joint Local Plan will contain those other elements and is expected to be concluded in 2025. The JLP, along with any Neighbourhood Plan, provides the basis for determining planning applications and future development in the local area and should be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 3.4 During the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, the statutory development plan for the area consisted of the Babergh Core Strategy (adopted in 2014) and the saved policies in the Babergh Local Plan (adopted in 2006). The Plan period for the Core Strategy ran to 2031 and the now adopted Joint Local Plan looks to 2037. As referred to above, Babergh District Council has replaced those documents with the new Part 1 Joint Local Plan.

3.5 The Acton Neighbourhood Plan, once 'made' (adopted), will form part of the statutory Development Plan for the area, and future planning applications for new development will be determined using its policies. In addition, it should be noted that the Adopted Development Plan for the area also includes the Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2020.

NB: The settlement is located within the Suffolk County Council 'Minerals Consultation Area' within which proposals in excess of five hectares will be referred to the County Council in order that they can be satisfied that, in accordance with paragraph 216 of the NPPF, minerals resources of local and national importance are not needlessly sterilised by non-mineral development.

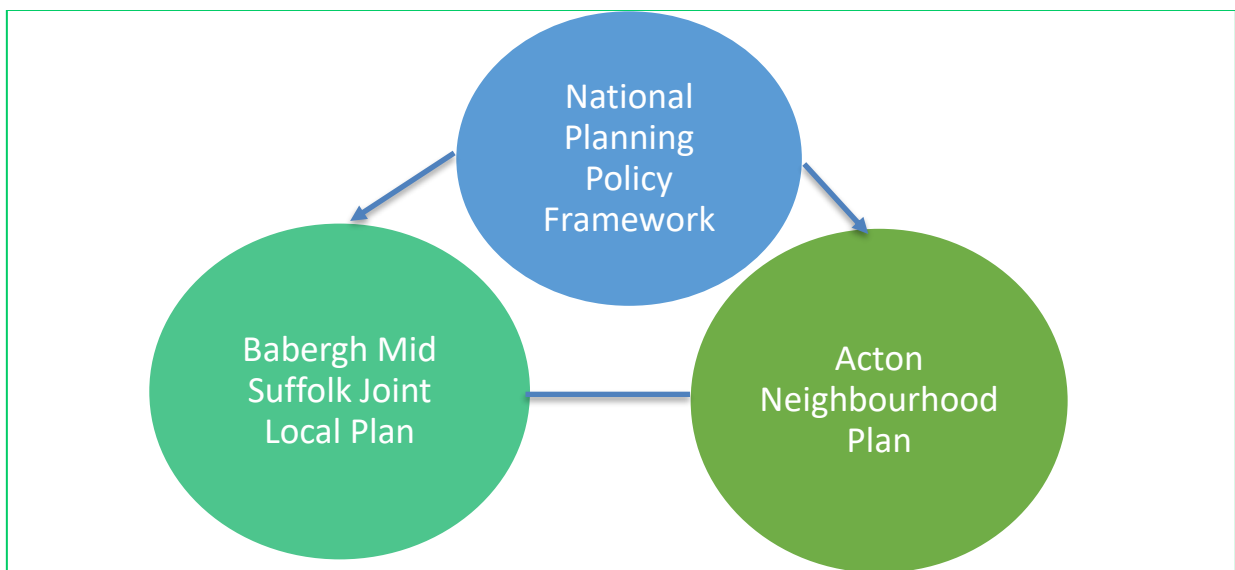


Figure 14: Spatial and strategic policy context: Relationship between the NPPF, and JLP, and the Acton Neighbourhood Plan. Own diagram.

Policy Framework for Acton Neighbourhood Plan

Local Planning Policy Pre-2023

3.6 Acton was identified as a *hinterland village* in the settlement hierarchy of the now superseded Core Strategy under Policy CS2. The Core Strategy approach to development in hinterland villages was that most new development (including employment, housing, and retail, etc.) in Babergh will be directed to the towns/urban areas in preference to the *core villages* and then *hinterland villages*. No settlement hierarchy is identified in the adopted JLP Part 1, and housing distribution will be addressed in the Part 2 document. In all cases, the scale and location of development will depend upon the local housing need, the role of settlements as employment providers and retail/service centres, the capacity of existing physical and social infrastructure to meet forecast demands and the provision of new/enhanced infrastructure, as well as having regard to environmental constraints and the views of local communities as expressed in parish, community, and neighbourhood plans.

Hinterland villages are only required to provide for development that meets their own identified needs.

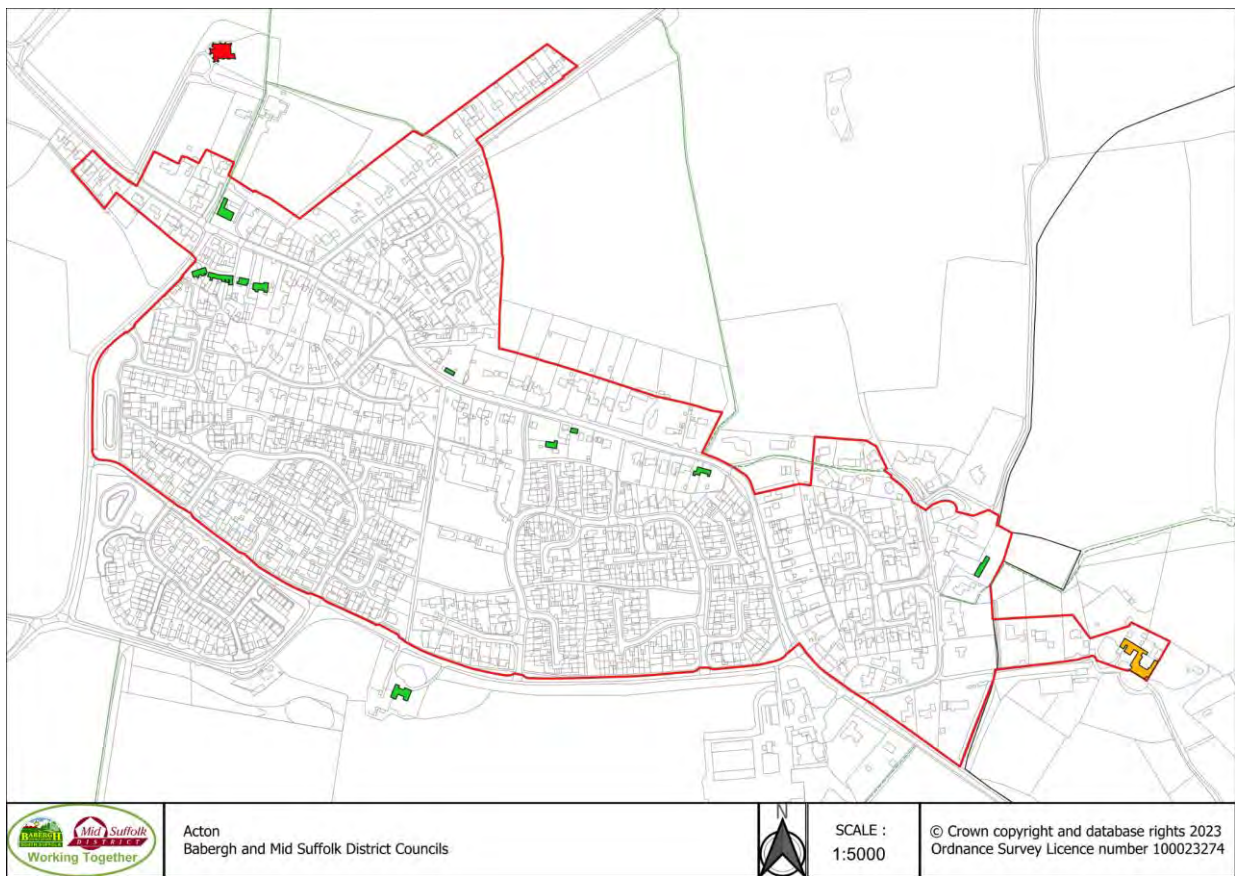


Figure 15: Acton Built Up Area (now known as settlement boundary) as defined in the Adopted Babergh Local Plan 2006. Built-up-area/settlement boundary shown in red. Listed Buildings shown as red (Grade 1), orange (Grade 2*) and green (Grade 2) Please note: this boundary may be superseded in the new JLP Part 2 once adopted.)

Current Local Planning Policy

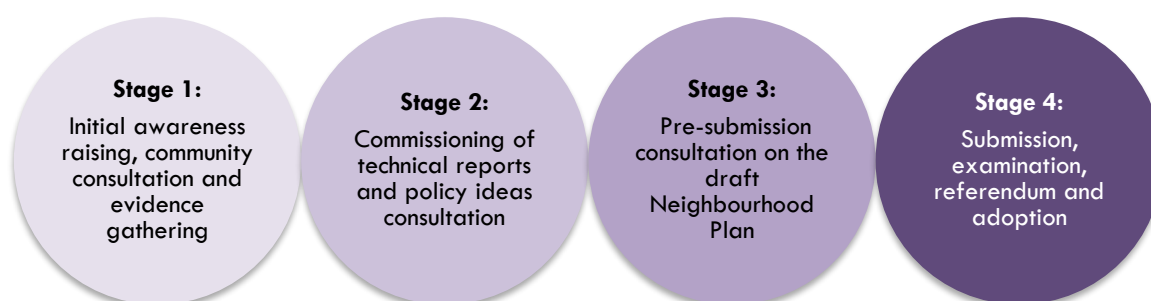
3.7 The submitted draft JLP (November 2020) identified Acton as a **core village**, i.e. further up the settlement hierarchy than previous plans. The draft JLP also indicated that core villages were expected to account for 28% of planned growth over the Plan period (April 2018 to March 2037). However, all settlements within each category are not equal and there will be some variance in the level of growth dependent upon a number of factors including the availability of suitable development sites and considerations for the built and natural environment. The submitted JLP (November 2020) did not include a specific housing requirement figure for Acton due to the Neighbourhood Plan area having been designated after submission. However, evidence submitted to the Joint Local Plan Inspectors in September 2021 indicated that a figure of 213 should be taken for Acton. This figure comprised committed sites that had the benefit of planning permission at the base date of the submitted JLP (November 2020) and are discussed in more detail in the *housing* chapter.

4. How the Plan was Prepared

- 4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has prepared the Plan with support from an independent consultant. The formal process began in October 2021 when the Neighbourhood Area was designated. Babergh's Neighbourhood Plan co-ordinator attended a meeting in the parish to provide guidance on the process to be followed.
- 4.2 The Plan has been commissioned by Acton Parish Council. The initial funding came from Acton Parish Council to kickstart the project and subsequent funding has been provided by central government Locality grants.

Community Engagement and Consultation

- 4.3 The Acton Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken with community engagement and consultation. The Steering Group have been innovative in their approach, using a range of engagement methods such as in person stakeholder meetings, a business survey, a short household survey, online surveys, public meetings and face-to-face drop-in exhibitions. Details of the consultation were outlined in the Consultation Statement, which accompanied the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4.4 Below is a summary of each of the main community engagement and consultation stages.



Stage 1: Initial awareness raising, community consultation and evidence gathering (September 2021- July 2022)

- **Initial Awareness Raising of the Neighbourhood Plan:** A drop-in style exhibition held at the village hall on 25th September 2021. The purpose of the exhibition was to raise the profile of the Neighbourhood Plan process, explain what it can achieve and establish whether there was support for a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish. Over 70 people attended the exhibition.
- **Evidence Gathering (January to June 2022):** Steering Group members undertook conversations with local groups, local businesses and began to collect statistical evidence about the characteristics of the parish.

- **Data Profile for Acton (Completed in October 2022):** Document containing key data for the parish to inform policy writing.
- **Communication:** Neighbourhood Plan website and Facebook page established.
- **Neighbourhood Plan Issues Survey:** Survey launched with a *Have Your Say Day* on March 19th, 2022. Survey delivered to every household in hard copy and available on the website. Forms were also available for primary school children. Over 200 surveys returned, of which 90 were online and 110 in person, with a further 47 from the school.

Figure 16: Poster/flyer for drop-in exhibition, school survey returns, drop-in attendees, survey launch day



Stage 2: Commissioning of technical reports and policy ideas consultation (summer 2022 to December 2022)

- **Housing Needs Assessment (Completed November 2022):** An independent assessment of housing needs for the parish, undertaken by AECOM. The report identifies suitable tenure, affordability and the need for affordable housing, type and size of housing need, and specialist housing for older people. Used to inform policy writing.
- **Acton Design Guidelines and Codes (Completed December 2022):** Design Codes for the parish covering the built-up parts of Acton. Undertaken by AECOM to support the Neighbourhood Plan policies.

- Policy Ideas Consultation:** Drop-in, exhibition-style public consultation held at the village hall on 2nd October 2022. 101 people attended the exhibition, together with 10 online responses which sought feedback on draft objectives and policy ideas established by the Steering Group following community feedback and empirical evidence collected to date.

Figure 17: Acton Housing Needs Assessment (top left) and Acton Design Guidelines and Code (bottom right). Photos from the Policy Ideas Exhibition.



Stage 3: Policy drafting and pre-submission consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan (regulation 14) (October 2022- March 2023)

- Policy drafting began in October 2022 and took place over the winter of 2022/23.
- Draft Neighbourhood Plan was out for pre-submission consultation from April to May 2023. Plan sent to statutory agencies and available for residents to comment.
- The documents and response form were available online, on the Neighbourhood Plan website, and in hard copy.
- 15 responses were received from individuals, three on behalf of landowners, and nine from statutory consultees. 168 separate comments were received in total.
- All comments were collated and analysed. (See *Consultation Statement*)

Summary of Responses to the Pre-submission Consultation:

- General support for the plan and its policies
- Concerns raised in respect of Policy ACT1 and the identification of *buffers*
- Additions suggested for design criteria in Policy ACT2
- Clarification sought over Housing Mix Policy ACT3, and Rural Exception Sites
- Support for biodiversity issues
- Support for, and objection to, identified important views (Policy ACT5)
- Comments in respect of identified Non-Designated Heritage Assets (Policy ACT7)
- Objection to the identification of 3 Local Green Spaces (Policy ACT11)
- Suggested wording amendments to Policy ACT12
- Other minor wording suggestions

As a result of the comments received during the Pre-Submission Consultation, the following amendments have been made to the Plan:

- Amended wording to Policy ACT1 to reinforce the need to prevent coalescence and removal of identified buffers and associated maps
- Additional criteria included in Policy ACT2
- Amendments to the wording of Policy ACT3 to aid clarity
- Inclusion of specific justification for each identified important view (Policy ACT5).
- Inclusion of additional view at Waldingfield Road
- Inclusion of two further NDHA
- Removal of 3 Local Green Spaces from Policy ACT11
- Minor wording changes to Policy ACT12

Stage 4: Submission, examination, referendum and adoption—autumn 2023 to winter 2023/24

- Modifications have been made to the Neighbourhood Plan following pre-submission consultation.
- Submission of the Neighbourhood Plan to Babergh District Council with supporting documents in early autumn 2023 with Regulation 16 consultation to be carried out by Babergh in autumn 2023.
- Examination December 2023 to February 2024.
- Referendum and adoption Summer 2024.

Communication

- 4.5 Communicating with residents and businesses through the development of the Neighbourhood Plan was particularly important during the initial stages of forming an evidence base and establishing key issues and themes.
- 4.6 A dedicated Neighbourhood Plan website was established giving easy access to information about the developing plan throughout its preparation.
- 4.7 Neighbourhood Plan updates and progress were regularly communicated to local residents through a dedicated Neighbourhood Plan Facebook page and those of the existing community and the Parish Council. Neighbourhood Plan articles were also included in the school newsletter and the playgroup newsletter.
- 4.8 Facebook, posters, flyers, were used to promote the work of the Neighbourhood Plan. An update for the Parish Council on the Neighbourhood Plan progress was presented at monthly meetings.
- 4.9 A summary of the results of the household survey, policy ideas exhibition and details of all events were made available on the Neighbourhood Plan website.



Figure 18: Photographs from policy ideas exhibition held in October 2022

5. Vision and Objectives

VISION	<p>By 2037, Acton will be a multi-generational parish of rural character with geographically distinct settlements which remain well-connected to the ancient rolling farmland in which they sit.</p> <p>Green spaces, heritage and landscape features of importance are protected and enhanced, and wildlife flourishes because its conservation is influential in local decision-making.</p> <p>New development in the parish is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community-led and shaped to meet identified needs • well-connected and safe • of a scale and form that respects the character of the parish <p>Residents enjoy accessible community facilities which support their local needs as well as good connections to next level services in neighbouring settlements.</p>
--------	---

- 5.1 It is important that any Neighbourhood Plan contains a short and simple vision statement which sums up the community’s aim for the future of the parish. The Neighbourhood Plan vision is an overarching statement describing what Acton should be like at the end of the Plan period, i.e. 2037. It has been developed with local people and has been refined and adapted through consultation. The result is a vision statement which captures the overarching spirit and ambition of the local community and the Neighbourhood Plan. Over 90% of those attending the Policy Ideas Exhibition in October 2022 agreed with the vision.
- 5.2 The vision underpins the objective and policies of the Acton Neighbourhood Plan and is referred to throughout.
- 5.3 From the vision flows the different objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan, and from there, the policies. **Figure 19** below outlines this relationship.



Figure 19: Structure of the Acton Neighbourhood Plan.

5.4 The objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan are broad statements of intent which are there to help deliver the vision and link to the issues that Acton is seeking to address. They have been drafted using themes picked up at an early stage and have been refined through the community consultation exercises.

5.5 The overarching aim of the Acton Neighbourhood Plan is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as outlined in the NPPF. Sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Achieving sustainable development through planning requires the balancing of three interdependent and overarching objectives:

a. An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive, competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity, and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.

b. A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations, and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being.

c. An environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, protecting the natural and built environment, enhancing biodiversity, including moving to a low carbon economy.

These broad, high-level objectives, along with the ten specific objectives set out below, are reflected throughout the Plan. The policies in this Neighbourhood Plan guide development proposals and decisions, taking account of these objectives and local circumstances and reflect the character, needs and opportunities of the area. The approach supports the delivery of sustainable development in a positive way so that opportunities to secure net gains across each objective can be taken.

Housing

Objective A: To maintain the distinct and separate rural identity of Acton and prevent its physical coalescence with neighbouring settlements.

Objective B: To ensure that new development is of a high quality and is well designed to be in keeping with the form, character, and landscape setting of the village.

Objective C: To provide homes of an appropriate size and type which meet the current and future needs of all sectors of the Acton community.

Environment

Objective D: To ensure that new development adequately protects, maintains and enhances the wide diversity of wildlife habitats, features and species resident in the parish.

Objective E: To preserve and enhance the landscape setting of the parish by identifying important views that contribute to the character of the parish and protect them from development.

Objective F: To safeguard the future of the parish through the promotion of environmentally sustainable measures within all new developments.

Objective G: To ensure that new development respects and protects Acton's built heritage and historic environment.

Access and Community

Objective H: To ensure that Acton residents have good access and safe connections to services both within the village and to those in nearby settlements.

Objective I: To protect the existing important community services and facilities in the parish and support their improvement and enhancement.

Business

Objective J: To support the appropriate development and expansion of new and existing business within the designated industrial area.



6. Policies

Introduction to Policies

- 6.1 The vision and objectives have provided the framework to develop the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Each policy relates to a particular objective under the following four themes: *Housing, Environment, Access and Community, and Business.*
- 6.2 The Neighbourhood Plan is first and foremost a land-use document for planning purposes. All policies in the Plan have been derived from a series of consultation exercises, stakeholder engagement and desk research, which provide the justification and evidence base for their selection.
- 6.3 The Neighbourhood Plan policies follow the government’s guidance. They exist to:
- Set out locally led requirements in advance for new development in the parish.
 - Inform and guide decisions on planning applications.
 - Ensure that the multitude of individual decisions add up to something coherent for the area as a whole⁷.
- 6.4 To aid interpretation for decision makers and planning applicants, each policy is accompanied by supporting text, which includes context for the theme, the views of residents, guidelines and reference to strategic plans. This is set out before each of the policies.

Acton Neighbourhood Plan policies:

Housing POLICIES

ACT1: New Housing Development
ACT2: Design and Character
ACT3: Housing Mix

Environment POLICIES

ACT4: Biodiversity
ACT5: Landscape Character, Important Public Views and Village Gateways
ACT6: Environmental Sustainability
ACT7: Heritage Assets

Access & Community POLICIES

ACT8: Accessibility and Connectivity
ACT9 Traffic Management and Safety
ACT10: Community Facilities
ACT11: Local Green Spaces

⁷ Tony Burton, Writing Planning Policies, Locality.

Potential Community Projects

- 6.5 The Neighbourhood Plan is principally concerned with land-use planning matters. However, it is inevitable that through public consultation and discussion with local stakeholders, issues will emerge that are not land-use planning matters and therefore not within the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan but are of legitimate concern to local people. It is important that such issues, when raised, are acknowledged and that the most appropriate mechanism to deal with them is identified. Where non-Neighbourhood Plan issues have been raised, these issues can be dealt with separately by the Parish Council as *projects* or community aspirations.
- 6.6 Non-planning issues raised by the community during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan included the following:
- Pedestrian safety in relation to a lack of footpaths, particularly for those with a mobility impairment
 - Footpaths/pavements required for Sudbury Road and Melford Road
 - A pavement connection between Waldingfield Road, Acton, and the pavement network in Gt Waldingfield
 - A safe pedestrian and cycle connection between the village and the remote employment area at Bull Lane
 - HGV traffic
 - Weight limits for some roads within the parish
 - Consideration to be given to health and wellbeing projects
 - Return of the post box
 - Speed restrictions on the High Street
 - On-street parking in the village centre
 - Condition of pavements
 - Gym trail
- 6.7 The Parish Council regularly consults with residents regarding infrastructure improvements, and this feeds into the Council's Action Plan. The Parish Council then works with both District and County Councils to bring forward the Acton Action Plan (AAP) projects. During the Neighbourhood Plan evidence gathering process and early community consultations, a number of issues which fell outside the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan were raised. These were subsequently integrated into the AAP; for example, a gym trail for the village was identified and is now under way. The current AAP can be viewed <https://actonparishcouncil.gov.uk/projects>



7. Housing

Housing in Acton

Objective A: To maintain the distinct and separate rural identity of Acton and to prevent physical coalescence with neighbouring settlements.

- 7.1 The scale and location of future housing growth within a parish is often one of the key drivers for local communities deciding to embark upon the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. This Neighbourhood Plan is no exception, and the issue is one of the most commonly raised through community consultation exercises.
- 7.2 Government guidance contained in the NPPF advises that Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in any development plan that covers the Neighbourhood Area. The adopted strategic policies for the Acton Neighbourhood Area are those outlined in **Chapter 3**. However, the delays experienced in the Local Plan process and the consequent decision by the districts to divorce the spatial strategy from the remaining policies has complicated the policy context for emerging Neighbourhood Plans and made the landscape for progressing them considerably less certain.
- 7.3 The *indicative* local housing requirement figure for Acton parish up to 2037 was identified by the District Council in September 2021 as 213 dwellings. This was entirely a commitments figure made up largely of two sites with extant planning permissions:
1. Land south-east of Barrow Hill (DC/17/02751) – outline permission granted on 22nd December 2017 for 100 dwellings; further outline application submitted in December 2020 (DC/20/05361) and granted on 1st June 2021. The site lies outside of the adopted settlement boundary for Acton, as shown in Figure 15 . The site was (and remains) undeveloped.

2. Land south of Tamage Road (DC/19/03126) – permission granted for 100 dwellings on 30th July 2020. This site lies outside of the adopted settlement boundary for Acton, as shown in Figure 15. This site is now substantially completed.

The remaining 13 dwellings were committed through a number of other smaller permissions across the parish, and there have been further dwellings granted permission since, including a site of four dwellings off Clay Hall Lane and one of two in Newman’s Green, giving an overall figure of 219. (See also 7.4 and 7.7e below)

- 7.4 The position was further complicated by the fact that permission DC/20/05361 at Barrow Hill required the submission of a reserved matters application within 18 months of the date of decision. No such application was received by Babergh meaning that the site could only be developed should a fresh application be submitted—either in outline or in full—but not by a reserved matters application. The site, therefore, is no longer a *committed site*, as the relevant planning permission has expired.

AECOM Housing Needs Assessment

- 7.5 In 2022, the ANPSG commissioned consultants AECOM through the Locality technical support package to produce a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for the parish. The focus of most studies produced under this technical package is on identifying the likely future housing mix in terms of size, type, tenure, together with identifying any specific housing needs that may be required by the Acton population, e.g. older people, housing with care, sheltered housing, etc. The final HNA (October 2022) is a supporting document to the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 7.6 At the time, it was felt that there was a high degree of uncertainty about the robustness of the indicative *local housing requirement* figure for Acton. AECOM were asked to look into this objectively and in addition to the other elements. Babergh consented to this and a copy of the HNA has been shared with them.

- 7.7 The uncertainty was caused by a combination of the following:
- a) The fact that the Neighbourhood Area was designated after the JLP was submitted for examination, meaning that Acton did not feature in the table in the draft plan, which set out the housing figures for the designated Neighbourhood Areas.
 - b) That the *indicative figure* of 213 appeared later, in September 2021, as part of the Local Plan examination evidence. Furthermore, and given that this *indicative figure* for Acton was made up of committed sites, it was unclear whether there was a detailed assessment and methodology behind the figure, which meant that the level of housing in the parish required to meet the housing need was, in fact, 213, or whether the fact that two large sites were already committed had negated the need for further detailed analysis in the Local Plan.
 - c) Other factors adding to the uncertainty included the inconsistency between the way that the two committed sites were treated in the emerging JLP (November 2020) : The Tamage Road site was proposed as an allocation, whilst the Barrow

Hill site was not. However, the latter had been included within the proposed revised settlement boundary.

- d) The JLP inspectors subsequently requested (in December 2021) that the Council remove the site allocation policies from the emerging JLP (November 2020) and that they reappraise the position in the Part 2 document.
- e) Doubt at the time over the deliverability of the site located south-east of Barrow Hill and the subsequent decision by the Trustees of the land, to work with Acton Parish Council to ensure that the land be held in perpetuity for the benefit of wildlife and the wellbeing of the local community.

NB: The land south-east of Barrow Hill has now legally passed to a new charity known as Acton Field Trust. The Parish Council is the trustee of the charity. The field to be known as Acton Field will be managed by a Management Committee. The objects of the charity shall be for the benefit of the inhabitants of the parish of Acton in the County of Suffolk and the neighbourhood thereof and of those working studying or otherwise for the time being located within the said area to promote all or any of the following charitable purposes:

- *To maintain a public open space and to provide in the interests of social welfare facilities for recreation and other leisure-time occupation for the use of the public with the object of improving the conditions of the life of such persons; and/or*
- *To promote the protection of wildlife and the protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment; and/or*
- *To advance education, skills and capacity among such persons.*

- f) Issues relating to Acton's position in the settlement hierarchy. Identified as a hinterland village in the 2014 Core Strategy and then as a Core Village in the emerging JLP (November 2020). The JLP inspectors subsequently advised the Councils in December 2021, that the settlement hierarchy set out in the November 2020 Plan be withdrawn and that an up to date settlement hierarchy should form part of the matters to be addressed in Part 2 of the JLP . Therefore Acton's position in any final settlement hierarchy, remains unclear, which has implications for the level of growth that might be expected to be accommodated within the parish.

7.8 AECOM applied the standard method⁸ for calculating local housing need and produced a figure of 418 dwellings per annum (dpa) for Babergh District as whole. When Acton's proportion of the district's population and its projected role in the settlement hierarchy are taken into consideration, a housing need figure of five dpa is calculated for Acton or 75 dwellings over the Acton Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) period (2022-2037). Based on the evidence, the HNA considers that once the dwellings currently being constructed at Tamage Road are complete, there will be a surplus to assessed need of 31 dwellings up to 2037. If the originally proposed Barrow Hill development were to go ahead, there would effectively be a surplus of 131 dwellings by the end of the plan period.

⁸ [How is a minimum annual local housing need figure calculated using the standard method \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Community Consultation

- 7.9 The number of new homes being built in the parish and the loss of land to development was the biggest concern raised by the community in the Neighbourhood Plan issues survey, with 168 mentions in total. The majority of respondents stated it as a concern or something that required improvement. The Policy Ideas Exhibition results indicated that residents were concerned by the scale of recent growth in the parish, that the scale of future development should only be at a level that could be supported by the existing infrastructure (67 responses), that the scale should be proportionate the size and form of the settlement (71 responses), and that coalescence between parts of Acton and with neighbouring settlements, specifically Chilton and Great Waldingfield, should be avoided (79 responses).
- 7.10 The ANPSG have been conscious that, throughout the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Tamage Road development has been under construction and has acted as a daily visual reminder of new development which has meant the issue has remained consistently high on the local agenda. In addition, immediately south of the parish boundary with Chilton, on the northern edge of Sudbury, lies Chilton Woods - a large, mixed-use strategic development - which when completed will comprise approximately 1,150 dwellings and 15 hectares of mixed-use employment development. The northern edge of the development extends just into Acton parish. Both the adopted JLP, (Policy LP01) and saved Policy CS4 in the Core Strategy (2014) make reference to the need to ensure that new development does not result in the visual or physical coalescence of settlements.
- 7.11 Parts of Newman's Green are only 250m from the location of the Chilton Woods development. The distance between the last house in Acton Village and the industrial estate—as the crow flies—is just over 500m. Furthermore, there is already continuous-built development extending from Acton Parish into neighbouring Great Waldingfield parish along Clay Hall Lane. It is therefore imperative that the distinct and separate identity of various parts of the existing built settlement of Acton and Newman's Green is not lost or eroded by development taking place, particularly where this would be outside of the defined settlement boundaries.
- 7.12 Whilst not compelled to make allocations for housing, Neighbourhood Plans may make further allocations above and beyond the '*local housing requirement*' figure should they so wish and if supported by local evidence. Neighbourhood Plans should not promote less development than set out in (adopted) strategic policies for the area, nor should they undermine those policies. Instead, they should shape and direct development by responding to specific local circumstances and evidence.
- 7.13 Taking all of the above into account, the ANPSG has concluded that it will not make specific allocations for new housing in the Neighbourhood Plan as it believes the housing requirement has been met by virtue of the Tamage Road development. The Neighbourhood Plan proposes a new settlement boundary for the main built-up area of the parish (see Policies Map), which is substantially based on the existing adopted settlement boundary of the Core Strategy, and amended to reflect dwellings approved

since the Core Strategy was adopted, including the most recent developments at Tamage Road and Clay Hall Place, which are substantially complete. The boundary excludes the Barrow Hill site, which is considered to be undeliverable, without a valid permission, and not required to meet any identified housing need. **Policy ACT1** has therefore been developed.

Policy
ACT1

New Housing Development

Over the plan period, new development in Acton will be focused within the existing defined settlement boundaries for Acton and Newman’s Green, as shown on the Policies Maps in **Appendix E**.

New development within the Neighbourhood Area will only be supported where it satisfies identified local needs and is of a scale that is compatible with the level of services and facilities in the village.

New residential development outside of the defined settlement boundaries will only be supported where it meets the criteria set out in paragraph 84 of the NPPF or is a rural exception site for affordable housing to meet identified local needs in accordance with **Policy ACT3**.

The local distinctiveness and separate identity of the different parts of Acton parish—the village, Bull Lane Employment Area and Newman’s Green—should be maintained. Individually or cumulatively, new development proposals that would result in reducing the visual and/or physical separation of these distinct areas from each other or from developments in neighbouring parishes will not be permitted.

The Design of New Development

Objective B: To ensure that new development is of a high quality and is well designed to be in keeping with the form, character and landscape setting of the village.

- 7.14 A key determinant of whether any new development will be well received by the local community will be dependent upon how well it is considered to integrate with its surroundings. Matters such as design, impact on local character, layout, scale and parking are the most common design issues that will cause the local community concerns about any proposed new development. If a community believes that it has been involved in and been able to influence the design of a development at an early stage, the higher the likelihood that the development will be considered to be acceptable.
- 7.15 Whilst to an extent design and impact on local character are subjective judgments, these can be influenced by breaking design elements down into component parts and attempting to address them. Whether a proposed new development is *in keeping* with

what is already there is one of the most common judgments to be made, yet there is often very little evidence or guidance to assist local people in making that judgement.

- 7.16. A key purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is not only to help influence the designers and proposers of development at an early stage of formulating their proposals, but also to help promote an understanding of what elements make up the character of the area and what constitutes good design that respects local character.
- 7.17 Government guidance places considerable emphasis on achieving well-designed places. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF describes it as fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development proposals acceptable to communities. Effective engagement between applicants, communities and local planning authorities is essential.
- 7.18 Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states: *Design policies should be developed with local communities so that they reflect local aspirations and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics.* Neighbourhood Plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of an area and how they should be reflected in development.
- 7.19 To make a decision as to whether something is *in keeping* with the existing development is subjective. However, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group commissioned consultants AECOM to produce a Design Guidelines and Code for Acton to assist with this judgement. The report was completed in December 2022 and updated in March 2024, is shown in **Appendix F** in this Neighbourhood Plan and has been used to inform **Policy ACT2** below.
- 7.20 The Design Code was guided by the Steering Group and seeks to devise Design Guidelines and Codes that will assist with the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. The AECOM report undertook a detailed analysis of the local character of Acton, developed some design principles, some distinct character areas and identified a palette of materials which should influence the design of future development. The document did not just focus on new residential development but also provides guidance for new employment development (**See Policies ACT12 and 13**). In addition, the report provides specific guidance to be used by the Parish Council when assessing and responding to consultation in future planning applications for new development.
- 7.21 The report also identifies four distinct character areas for Acton as follows:
- Area 1: High Street and historic core
 - Area 2: Post war estates
 - Area 3: Rural fringe
 - Area 4: Bull Lane industrial estate

The Design Code notes seven general design themes as follows: movement; landscape, nature and open space; built form; identity; public space and homes and buildings. A further design theme relates specifically to employment.

7.22 The development principles identified in the Design Guidelines and Codes indicate that development should reflect the scale and character of the area within which it is located and should be of a high quality. This general design aim is included as an overarching element in **Policy ACT2** below and the policy reflects the content of the Design Code with policy requirements set under three main headings: Movement, Landscape and Open Space and Built Form and Layout. More detail and specific guidance is set out in the Design Code which should be referred to in conjunction with **Policy ACT2** below.

Community Views on Design

7.23 Consultation carried out with the local community both through the Neighbourhood Plan Issues Survey and the Policy Ideas Exhibition revealed the design of new development to be an important issue for local people. The fact that the Tamage Road site was under construction for a large part of the early Neighbourhood Plan evidence gathering meant that there was a very visible example of new development in the village which prompted a range of views to be expressed. Comments such as the following were typical:

- *Don't just copy existing design; new and modern to be considered. New house near shop is a great design and should inspire.*
- *The new housing development does not reflect the character of the village and the surroundings.*
- *Most of our estate houses, such as Lime Tree Estate, could be anywhere.*
- *We do need to be forward thinking and allow more **green** homes and architectural designed. We don't want every house the same.*
- *Be bold where appropriate. New modern design should be supported.*

7.24 The key design elements that local people felt ought to be addressed in a design policy were as follows: garden size, materials, density, boundary treatments, parking and storage, e.g. for bins. **Policy ACT2** below has been formulated to reflect both the issues identified by the community and the guidance in the Design Code.

Policy ACT2	<p>Design and Character</p> <p>Proposals for all new development in Acton should be of a scale and design appropriate to the character of the immediate surrounding area.</p> <p>Development proposals should have regard to the guidance laid out in the Acton Design Guidelines and Codes (March 2024). See Appendix F</p> <p>Proposals for new residential development should ensure that new development is well designed, is of good quality and <i>fits in</i> with the existing rural character of the parish. Proposals should reflect Acton's local distinctiveness and character and seek to enhance its quality. This will be achieved through:</p> <p>Movement</p>
--------------------	---

- a) **Connectivity:** New development should be planned to be permeable and provide good vehicular and non-vehicular routes which connect with existing public rights of way, village services and the wider countryside.
- b) **Orientation:** Proposals should create places that have a clear identity and that are easy to navigate, using both buildings and landscape features as elements that provide visual attractiveness to the area and a feeling of safety.
- c) **Parking:** Car parking should be well designed, safe and not undermine the visual attractiveness of the development. Car parking should be provided off street, using garages, car ports or on plot parking but should not compromise the amount of garden space. On street parking should be used for visitors and kept to a minimum. Cycle parking should be integrated into all new residential developments. All parking provisions should have regard to guidance in the Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2019) and any successor documents.
- d) **Storage:** Adequate provision for secure cycle and refuse storage, including all bins and containers, should be provided within the domestic curtilage of all new dwellings.

Landscaping and Open Space

- e) **Green Spaces:** Where these are to be provided, careful consideration should be given to their function, location and connections both to existing and new development. Provision of public open space should have regard to the Fields in Trust guidance.⁹
- f) **Sustainable Drainage Systems:** These should be integrated into development to manage drainage but also to provide gains for amenity and biodiversity value, having regard to guidance in the Suffolk SuDS guide.¹⁰
- g) **Surfaces:** New surfaces should use permeable materials to minimise incidence of pollution and flood risk.
- h) **New Planting:** This should preferably use native species, although it is acknowledged that climate change may influence the future choice of species and maximise the use of soft boundary treatments such as trees and hedgerows, particularly at the edges of development to assist with the assimilation of the development into the wider landscape. Hedgerows should be used as boundary features to create soft edges where the new development is most visible particularly where it is adjacent to public footpaths and existing development. All new development should include tree-lined streets unless in specific cases there are clear justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate

Built Form and Layout:

- i) **Density:** Proposals should provide for a density that is compatible with the overall pattern of development in the relevant character area.
- j) **Building Height and Line:** Proposals should be compatible with the prevailing height of buildings in the relevant character area and respect the existing building lines and setbacks of the immediate surroundings.

⁹ <https://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/2023-sf3967-scc-suffolk-flood-risk-appendix-a2.pdf>

- k) **Design:** The design of the development should create visual interest and variation and respect the local vernacular by incorporating local design details.
- l) **Materials:** Local materials such as render, stone and brick should be used in colours and finishes that reflect Acton’s local distinctiveness.
- m) **Safety:** Proposals should design out crime and design in community safety, having regard to the latest guidance.¹¹
- n) **Gardens:** New residential properties should include front and rear gardens, the size and design of which should reflect their location and character area, and which should be delineated with appropriate soft landscape elements.
- o) **Electric Charging Points:** Provision should be made in both residential and non-residential developments to accommodate electric vehicles and where public charging points are to be provided these should be fast charging.¹²

Proposals of 10 dwellings or more should be accompanied by a **Building for a Healthy Life** Assessment.¹³

Housing Size, Type and Tenure

Objective C: To provide homes of an appropriate size and type which meet the current and future needs of all sectors of the Acton community.

- 7.25 In addition to the issues of housing numbers (the overall scale of new development) and the design of new housing, the size, type and tenure of any new housing is also a key issue for local communities. The specific mix of housing will clearly have an impact on the existing community and therefore careful thought needs to be applied to determining that mix.
- 7.26 Delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes is essential to support a sustainable, vibrant, and mixed community. If new housing is to take place in the parish it should be of an appropriate size and type which meets the current needs of all sectors of the community as well as those in the future. Given the level of development in Acton in recent years and the proximity of the Chilton development just outside the parish boundary, community consultation revealed that residents were sceptical about further housing development. Many responses to questions on what size or type of housing might be required were caveated with the phrase: *“If new development must take place...”*. However, there was interest in having a range of types of accommodation within the parish to meet changing needs and to cater for any needs that are currently not being met. A preference was expressed for starter homes and bungalows.

¹¹ Secured by Design Homes 2019.

¹² Electric Charging Points should accord with Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2019), and Building Regs Part S, and should be in accordance with SCC’s policy for electric vehicle charging points.

¹³ https://www.udg.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/files/14JULY20%20BFL%202020%20Brochure_3.pdf

7.27 To provide some evidence for a housing mix policy, the Steering Group commissioned a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for Acton to explore the issues in more detail. The work was undertaken by consultants AECOM and the final report completed in October 2022, is a supporting document for this Neighbourhood Plan.

Housing Needs Assessment Key Findings

7.28 The HNA revealed that there is a higher-than-average level of home ownership within the parish (81%) when compared to district and national figures. There is also a corresponding lower than average figure for private and social rented housing. Over 75% of the housing stock in the parish is either detached or semi-detached properties.

7.29 The average household income in Acton is £44,800, and the lower quartile income (per person) was £17,534 in 2020. It was found that households would need an income comfortably above the average (or a very large deposit) to qualify for a mortgage on an entry level home in Acton. Market housing, even with the benefit of a higher-than-average income, is likely to remain out of reach to most. The median house price would require an annual income 60% higher than the current average. Private renting is only affordable to higher than average earners, with only entry-level market rents being affordable to average income households.

7.30 Households made up of two lower quartile earners cannot afford the given entry-level rental thresholds and would have to rely on affordable rents or social rents. Affordability is improved if households are able or willing to dedicate a larger proportion of their incomes to rental costs, although this has repercussions for other quality of life aspects and cannot be assumed to suit all individuals' circumstances. Social rents are the only affordable option for single households. There is a relatively large group of households in Acton who may be able to afford to rent privately but cannot afford home ownership. They are typically earning between around £37,000 per year (at which point, entry-level rents become affordable) and £58,629 (at which point, entry-level market sale homes become affordable). This *can rent, can't buy* cohort may benefit from the range of affordable home ownership products such as First Homes and shared ownership. All of these products would be valuable to different segments of the local population, with shared ownership at a lower than 25% equity share, potentially allowing lower earning households to get a foot on the housing ladder, while rent to buy offers poorer long-term prospects but is helpful to those with little or no savings for a deposit. First Homes at a 50% discount provides the best long-term support to those with slightly higher incomes. Although it is recognised that the 50% discount presents more challenges in terms of viability, since the quantitative projected need will be met by homes already under construction, prioritising affordability over quantity would help ensure that any further housing development would extend the home-ownership opportunity to lower earners within the area.

7.31 Neighbourhood plan qualifying bodies (in this case, Acton Parish Council) have discretion to increase the discount on the new First Homes product from 30% to 40%

or 50% where there is evidence to suggest this is appropriate. The HNA finds that a 40% discount would be required to make First Homes affordable to average income households in Acton. However, the higher discount level of 50% would extend this option to dual lower earning households. On this basis, a 50% discount would extend affordable ownership options to the widest number of households and may be a suitable option for the parish.

- 7.32 Affordable rented housing is generally affordable to households with two lower earners, depending on household size; average earning households are unlikely to be eligible. However, households with a single lower earner would be unable to afford any of the tenures considered, including the smallest socially rented units. Many such individuals will, if unable to secure a social rented dwelling, require additional subsidy through housing benefit to access housing. The evidence suggests that the affordable rented sector performs a vital function in Acton as the only option for a large segment of those in the greatest need. Social rents are cheaper and would therefore leave households on lower earnings better off and better able to afford their other living costs, such as food and fuel, etc. Where households are supported by housing benefit, the difference in the cost of affordable and social rents may be irrelevant as the level of housing benefit flexes according to the rent. This means that households supported by housing benefit may be no better off in social rented accommodation because they receive a lower rate of housing benefit to cover their rent.
- 7.33 Pro-rating figures for Acton based on its fair share of the population (2% of Babergh District's population) gives 1.14 social/affordable rented dwellings and 1.16 affordable ownership tenures per annum, equivalent to a total of 17 affordable rented homes and 17 affordable ownership tenures over the Neighbourhood Plan period 2022-2037. However, pro-rating District level estimates of affordable housing need to rural areas is not straight forward and presents problems in practice. District level figures are likely to be elevated by higher needs in the more urban areas of the District where there is a large social housing stock and larger numbers of households living on housing benefit, since both of these factors tend to disproportionately generate affordable housing need. In rural villages like Acton, the very limited stock of social housing means there is less need generated from households already living in the area. Conversely, need originating in the area can be masked by households who may need social housing, often moving away to areas where their needs are more likely to be met, either because there is social housing available or more private rented housing. Simple pro-rating does not take into consideration factors such as access to services, transport and other infrastructure, which are more likely to be available in the towns and larger settlements in the District. This means it is difficult to identify need for social/affordable rented housing within Acton. Although the affordable housing need might be difficult to reliably assess in terms of volume, the acuteness of the need is clear, with the HNA pointing out that even Acton parish households made up of two lower quartile earners cannot afford the given entry-level private rental thresholds and would have to rely on Affordable or Social rents. The HNA gives a potential need figure of up to 34 affordable units for the plan period, without adjustment for the balance of these opposing factors referred to above.

- 7.34 The HNA projection is based on proportionate allocation by population from the District figures, without adjustment for the Neighbourhood Area's settlements' position in the strategic settlement hierarchy. Depending upon Acton Village's position in the settlement hierarchy in Part 2 of the JLP, the sufficiency of Affordable Homes in the Neighbourhood Area might be confirmed or there may be a need to provide more to help accommodate the broader district's need, subject to the identification of suitable and deliverable sites. The Neighbourhood Plan acknowledges this scenario and allows for suitable Rural Exception sites covered in paragraph 7.44.
- 7.35 Babergh's adopted policy on Affordable Housing Policy SP02 requires at least 35% of all new housing on larger sites, i.e. 10 or more dwellings, to be affordable. Given that most of the housing completed over the last decade has been on small sites, just under 6% of housing delivered has been *affordable housing*. However, the Tamage Road scheme currently under construction will deliver 35 affordable homes when complete. Therefore, taking this into consideration, affordable housing delivery equates to around 30% of all new housing in Acton since 2012, according to Babergh's completions figures.
- 7.36 The AECOM study recommends that where affordable housing is to be provided in Acton, roughly 50% of new units should be offered as rented tenures with the remaining 50% brought forward as affordable home ownership products. The rationale for this is that it aligns with the priorities suggested by the data for Acton, namely that there is likely to be sufficient provision of affordable housing once the current scheme at Tamage Road is completed and there will likely be a surplus if the Barrow Hill site goes ahead. Furthermore, it should be noted that there will be significant affordable housing provision in the Chilton Woods strategic site (131 ha) just south of the parish which will provide up to 1,150 new dwellings including around 288 affordable homes.
- 7.37 The HNA provides an indication of the likely need for different types and sizes of homes based on demographic change. It is important to remember that other factors should be considered in determining the dwelling mix that is desirable in the parish or on any particular site. These include the specific characteristics of the nearby stock of housing, such as its condition and design, the role of the Neighbourhood Area or site within the wider housing market area (linked to any Local Authority strategies or plans), and site-specific factors which may justify a particular dwelling mix.

Housing Needs Assessment Conclusions

- 7.38 Acton's housing stock is dominated by detached (39% including bungalows) and semi-detached (35%) housing, followed by terraced housing (24%). In terms of dwelling size, Acton's housing stock is characterised by the prevalence of 3-bedroom homes (47%), followed by 2-bedroom homes (25%). Larger 4-bedroom plus dwellings make up 2%. Overall, the size mix in the parish is relatively well-balanced, with a majority of 3-bedroom homes, as is the case nationwide, and nearly equal proportions of homes that have fewer and more bedrooms.

- 7.39 The age structure of the population is a key indicator of the future need for housing. The Neighbourhood Area had a generally older population profile than Babergh and England in 2011. The 65-84 and 85plus cohorts have grown the fastest between the 2011 census and the latest ONS¹⁴ estimates for 2020. Currently just over 51% of the population are aged over 45 and around 23% are aged over 65. There is a clear trend toward ageing, and current estimates also suggest that younger age groups are either flatlining or declining, which may reflect a lack of suitable housing options for newly forming households and young families. Applying the ONS household projections for Babergh to Acton's population suggests that population growth can be expected to be driven by the oldest households (65 and over age group), with a projected 73% growth rate for the oldest households while the youngest age group and the 35-54 group are expected to decline by 7% and 6% respectively with the remaining groups being relatively stable. The number of households aged over 65 is expected to increase by 154 to become the largest demographic group at 41% of the total by 2037. It is clear that ageing will be a major driver of housing need in the parish going forward, whether older households intend to occupy the same dwellings they currently live in, or perhaps move within the community to homes better suited to the size of their households or their evolving needs. The above points relate to data about the existing population of Acton, but it is important to emphasise that the evolution of the community in future years will be as much a function of in-migration than simply the ageing of current residents, and in-migration will depend to a large extent on the housing offer.
- 7.40 Acton has fewer single person households than the wider district and the national average. However, the proportion of family households aged 65 and over is higher in Acton and Babergh than the national average. Notably, Acton has more households living with grown-up, non-dependent children than in the wider geographies. In summary there are comparatively fewer people living alone in Acton but there are proportionately more older couples, couples without children and couples with grown up, non-dependent children. The proportion of *other household types*, i.e. those in multiple household groups such as multigenerational families, housing in multiple occupation (HMOs) and other house share situations, is relatively low in Acton compared to the national average, though this category has grown by 74% since the 2001 Census, indicating an increase in these forms of living.
- 7.41 Acton has a high rate of under-occupancy, with 86% of households living in a home with at least one bedroom more than they would be expected to need, and 46% have two or more extra bedrooms. Only 2% of households have too few. Underoccupancy is particularly prevalent in 65 plus family households, 69% of whom live in homes with at least two extra bedrooms. The strong correlation between underoccupancy and older households might suggest that larger housing isn't being occupied by households with the most family members but by the people with the most wealth or by older people who have not chosen or are able to move to smaller properties.
- 7.42 AECOM undertook a modelling exercise to look at the sizes of dwelling occupied by households at different life stages and project the growth and decline of those

¹⁴ Office for National Statistics

household age groups over the plan period. The results suggest that the future dwelling mix should be focused on smaller 1-to 2-bedroom homes. The modelling suggests that where new development is to occur it should seek to boost the supply of smaller homes from its current low base, where this type of development is considered appropriate in terms of character and density. There will remain to be a need for larger homes but too many additional large homes should be avoided because there are already more than the population is expected to need, not even accounting for the extensions to existing properties that are not included in the data. Smaller homes would improve affordability as well as the parish's offering for younger households who have few options for their next step on the property ladder. It may also enable older households currently under-occupying larger homes to downsize and in doing so, potentially create churn in the market, although it is acknowledged that many of the larger historic properties may be too expensive to be taken up by younger local families. In terms of dwelling type, the HNA was not prescriptive about what types are *needed*, but indicated that a balance be struck between, improving choice in the market and affordability by encouraging flats and terraces, and preserving the features that residents like about Acton at present.

- 7.43 As the population ages over the plan period, it will be necessary to consider the needs of residents who are living with dementia in the community, and the potential for making Acton a "Dementia-Friendly community. The Royal Town Planning Institute has guidance on Town Planning and Dementia:
<https://www.dementiafriends.org.uk/WEBArticle?page=dementia-friendly-communities#.ZBr4w8LP3ql>
<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/practice/2020/september/dementia-and-town-planning/>

Exception Sites

- 7.44 The HNA found there to be robust evidence of need for Affordable Housing in the parish and that every effort should be made to maximise delivery where viable. This should include the option of affordable housing derived from exceptions sites either through a registered social housing provider or via a community-led development rather than just a focus on delivery from wider development sites. Community-led development sites should be adjacent to existing settlements and proportionate in size to them. Where exception sites are proposed, justification must be given that demonstrates an identified housing need within the parish and that the proposed site is suitable to meet. Proposals should contain one or more types of affordable housing and should reflect the mix set out in Policy ACT3 below. This housing must also remain available to meet identified housing need in perpetuity. If open market housing is proposed as part of a community-led development, clear justification for the need for the open market housing should be given and the proposal should contain the minimum number of open market units that are essential to deliver the affordable units. However, all other usual planning criteria—e.g. impact on landscape, heritage and highways, layout, design, etc—are still applicable. Part 1 of the BMSJLP Local Plan supports such proposals as community-led and rural exceptions sites, where it can be demonstrated that they are fulfilling a genuine identified housing need. Proposals for the former should be able to demonstrate that the proposed scheme meets the

definition of a community-led development as set out in Annex 2 of the NPPF and that there is evidence of community support and participation in the proposal.

Local Connection Criteria for Exception Sites

- 7.45 Evidence such as the Housing Needs Assessment above, which is used to support housing policies in Neighbourhood Plans, can also be used to support local connection criteria within Neighbourhood Plans, which is applicable to affordable housing proposals within the Neighbourhood Area. Feedback from community consultation indicated strongly that new housing proposed within the parish should be aimed at meeting identified local housing needs of residents within the parish or for those with a close connection to it. This is applicable to affordable housing that may be delivered in the parish through exception sites over the Plan period and that this housing should remain available to meet identified housing needs in perpetuity and should be secured through a legal agreement. Exception sites would deliver such housing where local connection criteria are more easily applied.
- 7.46 Based on the evidence in the AECOM Housing Needs Assessment, and following feedback from the local community, the following local connection criteria for Acton has been established to be used when considering the future inhabitants of affordable housing in the parish. The following criteria, which are consistent with Babergh's Housing Allocations Policy (2022), should be used employing a *cascade* mechanism:
- Currently live in the parish
 - A demonstrable family connection to the parish e.g. historical connection— i.e. the person has previously lived in the parish or current family members are resident in the parish, children are in school in the parish, or there is an ongoing caring responsibility within the parish
 - An employment connection to the parish
 - A member of the armed forces
- 7.47 Taking all of the above into account, the following policy has been devised:

Policy ACT3	<p>Housing Mix</p> <p>Where new housing development is proposed in the parish, it should provide a mix of housing that meets local needs and contributes to retaining Acton's existing sense of community and ensure that Acton remains an attractive place to live.</p> <p>Size:</p> <p>Proposals for new housing should ensure that the current broad balance of housing sizes and types in the parish is maintained. Proposals that provide for smaller homes (1-2 bedrooms) that are adaptable and accessible (meaning built to optional M4(2) standards) including bungalows will be particularly supported.¹⁵</p>
------------------------	--

¹⁵ Proposals will need to comply with all other policies in the plan.

Affordable Housing (see Glossary for definitions)

Where Affordable Housing is to be provided in the parish as part of a wider scheme it should comprise the following:

- At least 50% rented tenures¹⁶
- The remainder to be Affordable Routes to Home ownership, including 25% of the total amount to be First Homes¹⁷ at a discount of 50%¹⁸

Exception Sites Housing¹⁹

Where affordable housing is to be provided in the parish on the basis of meeting a proven identified need, on an exception site, the proposal should meet all of the following criteria:

- a) For community-led developments, the site is adjacent to the existing settlement boundary and is proportionate in size to that settlement in accordance with footnote 37 of the NPPF December 2023.
- b) For community-led developments, the proposer of the scheme meets the organisational definition as set out in Annex 2 of the NPPF.
- c) For community-led developments, there is evidence of community support and participation in the proposal.
- d) The type of housing proposed meets an identified housing need in the parish (as evidenced by a detailed housing needs assessment) and contains one or more types of affordable housing in accordance with the housing mix identified above.
- e) The proposed housing will remain affordable and available in perpetuity
- f) Where open market housing is proposed clear justification for the need for the open market housing is given and the number of open market units proposed will be the minimum number that is essential to deliver the affordable homes.
- g) The housing is offered in the first instance to people with a demonstrated local connection to the parish, as outlined in the Babergh Housing Allocations Policy 2022, or successor document, and
- h) the proposed development is consistent with policies in this and other relevant plans governing design, appearance, layout, amenity, impacts on the natural and historic environment and highway safety.

¹⁷As set out in Annex 2 of the NPPF.

¹⁷ First Homes is another form of discounted market housing which will provide a discount of at least 30% on the price of new homes, introduced in 2021. These homes are available to first time buyers as a priority but other households will be eligible depending on agreed criteria. New developments will be required to provide 25% of Affordable Housing as First Homes. A more detailed explanation of First Homes and its implications is provided in the main body of the HNA.

¹⁸ This 50% discount level also applies on First Homes exception sites

¹⁹ This exception site policy does not replace the First Homes exception policy set out in the Affordable Homes Update Written Ministerial Statement, dated 24 May 2021, which remains extant policy.



8. Environment

Objective D: To ensure that new development adequately protects, maintains and enhances the wide diversity of wildlife habitats, features and species resident in the parish.

Biodiversity

- 8.1 The NPPF indicates that planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity or geological value and minimising impacts on and providing measurable net gains for biodiversity. Recent reports at both a national and international level recognise that nature is in crisis and that positive action through mechanisms such as Local and Neighbourhood Plans is vital.²⁰
- 8.2 The Environment Act 2021 received Royal Assent in autumn 2021 and introduces a new system for the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). In simple terms, BNG is an approach to development which aims to leave the natural environment in a *measurably* better state than it was beforehand. Planning policy that seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity is not new, but this latest approach focuses in more on the *measurability* aspect. Planning applications will need to quantify the different habitat types on site both before and after the proposed development using the latest Biodiversity Metric. Opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design to secure a minimum of 10% net gain firstly onsite, or if not, locally. Where this cannot be achieved, a developer can secure the shortfall by securing a site for biodiversity uplift elsewhere. BNG is now mandatory and its importance in the planning process has been elevated by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act. Measures are included that allow planning authorities to recognise any habitat degradation since 30th January 2020 and to take the earlier habitat state as the baseline for the purposes of biodiversity net gain.

²⁰ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/04/attenborough-people-s-plan-nature-uk/>

- 8.3 Many Districts have begun to embed BNG as a policy requirement in their Local Plans, which is the level at which a consistent and districtwide policy will apply. Neighbourhood Plans therefore need not repeat or duplicate such matters unless there is clear, robust local evidence for doing so. The JLP policies already require that development proposals create, protect, and enhance ecological networks, and seek to ensure that all new development secures high standards of design and green infrastructure which creates attractive and sustainable places where people want to live and spend time. Networks of green infrastructure should be provided across new developments, linking with existing networks of open space.
- 8.4 In terms of designated nature conservation sites, the parish contains one nationally designated nature conservation site—the SSSI at Lineage Wood and Railway Track. The site is also an Ancient Woodland. The parish also lies outside the overall Zone of Influence (ZOI) for the Stour and Orwell Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA) and therefore is not covered by or subject to the Suffolk Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS). As outlined in **Chapter 2** there are 5 County Wildlife Sites in the parish. These sites are Waldingfield Airfield, Lavenham Wood, Chad Brook, All Saints churchyard and Acton Wood. There is one roadside nature reserve (RNR) Acton 135 at Lavenham Road). The RNR is classified as **red** by Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service, meaning it is not safe to visit. **(See figures 7a and 7b in Chapter 2)**
- 8.5 In addition, the parish is fortunate to have **Acton Wildlife**, a nature Reserve at Barrow Hill, which, whilst not formally designated is a significant wildlife site in the parish, is actively managed by its volunteers for the benefit of wildlife, and as demonstrated by the feedback from community consultation, is widely valued within the parish. Nature conservation activity within the parish is high, with the Steering Group members keen to work collaboratively with adjacent neighbourhood plan groups to protect, enhance and join-up ecological corridors for wildlife.

Ecological Corridors

- 8.6 Corridors of trees, hedgerows and watercourses can all provide wildlife with the connected environments they need to survive, with up to 75% of an arable field's biodiversity in its margins²¹. They link farmland habitats, provide nesting sites, hunting areas for birds of prey and places for invertebrates to overwinter. Although they exist throughout the parish and should be maintained, this plan has focused on identifying the key **green and blue wildlife corridors** in the area with the most development in order to encourage their protection and enhancement. Specific wildlife/ecological corridors have been identified for protection and enhancement. These are:
- a) As shown in yellow in **Figure 20**, the **airfield green corridor** identifies a connected circuit around the northerly section of the airfield and along Vicarage Lane. This encompasses the shelterbelt of trees on the border of the County Wildlife Site (CWS)

²¹ Suffolk Wildlife Trust

on the airfield, and the connected hedgerows. It also connects with the green corridors identified in Great Waldingfield parish.

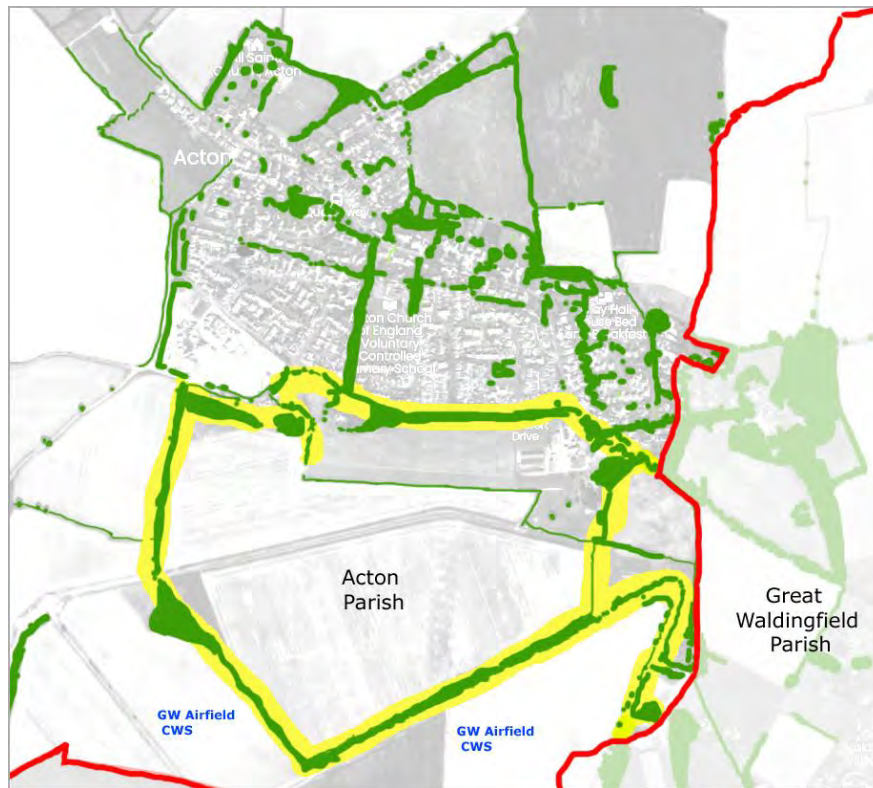


Figure 20: Airfield green corridor highlighted in yellow. Base map data from OpenStreetMap.org

Several priority species have been observed on the airfield including yellowhammers, song thrushes, corn and reed buntings plus skylarks and lapwings.²² The Green Corridor trees offer shelter to these and the hedgerows also provide a great food source for insects and many other animals as well as birds. They form foraging lines for bats and shelter for small mammals and amphibians that are moving through the landscape.

In addition, **Figure 21** shows the **north-south green corridors** which extend from the airfield green corridor which touches the Airfield CWS, connecting through Acton Village to the Acton Wildlife nature reserve, the All Saints churchyard CWS and countryside north of the village.

²² SBIS



Figure 21: Adding in north-south green corridors highlighted in yellow. Base map data from OpenStreetMap.org

- b) This plan also identifies a **blue corridor** from **Acton Village to Chad Brook** as shown in **Figure 22**. This is a connected series of ponds and ditches stretching along the north side of Acton High Street, through the **sheep field** south of Melford Road towards the Bull Lane industrial estate and shortly after to join Chad Brook in the far west of the parish.



Figure 22: Acton Village to Chad Brook blue corridor

This is not a fully *open water* corridor, and in parts, the water bodies are linked by land drains and flow via culverts under roads and housing. The evidence of wild otters in the garden ponds in the village demonstrates that water-reliant wildlife use this as a corridor, which ultimately connects through to the Stour River via Chad Brook.

Further north, there are two other minor tributaries to Chad Brook, as well as the brook itself; one passing Valley Farm and the other crossing Slough Lane from the east. Being entirely in open countryside, these are considered unlikely to be affected by development and have therefore not been mapped as blue corridors in this plan.

Water voles, otters and great crested newts are examples of priority species which have all been observed and recorded along this corridor.²³ Protecting the blue corridor as well as the watercourses in more rural parts of the area is important for biodiversity. Enhancements such as toad crossings might be a consideration subject to further surveying and volunteer support.

- 8.7 Whilst nationally designated nature conservation sites already have the benefit of protection by virtue of the statutory designation, more locally important sites such as the CWS and RNR are reliant on protection in development plan policies. The same applies to any locally created wildlife areas.
- 8.8 It is clear from consultation undertaken that local residents attribute a high level of importance to the wildlife present within the parish and that policies in the Neighbourhood Plan should seek to protect and enhance existing areas of habitats and species as well as using opportunities afforded by new development to create new areas and incorporate wildlife friendly features into development irrespective of scale. The following policy has been devised to meet these aims:

Policy ACT4	Biodiversity Proposals for new development will be expected to protect and enhance existing ecological networks, wildlife corridors and priority species. Existing features of biodiversity value within the parish should be retained. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• County Wildlife Sites• Roadside Nature Reserve• Identified green and blue ecological corridors such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Between All Saints Graveyard (CWS) to Great Waldingfield Airfield (CWS) via Barrow Hill Nature Reserve○ The network of water bodies which begin at Clay Hall Lane and run along the north side of the High Street and Waldingfield Road to Bull Lane and Long Melford
------------------------	--

²³ SBIS, Ecology report for Planning Application DC/21/05652 plus residents' reports and photographic and video evidence.

- Hedgerows
- Trees (including veteran trees)
- Woodlands
- Streams
- Wood pasture and parkland
- Any other semi natural habitats

Development proposals must seek to retain and enhance existing features and avoid loss or damage of biodiversity. Where loss or damage is unavoidable, the benefits of the development must clearly outweigh the impacts and the development shall provide for mitigation in the form of appropriate replacement or replanting or appropriate natural features on site together with a method statement for the ongoing care and maintenance of that planting or feature, or, as a last resort, compensation measures will be sought. If suitable mitigation or compensation measures cannot be provided, planning permission will be refused.

Otherwise acceptable development proposals will be supported where they provide a minimum net gain²⁴ of 10% in biodiversity, delivered on-site in the first instance through, for example:

- a) the creation of new and the restoration and enhancement of existing natural habitats, e.g. ponds, hedgerows, wildflower meadows, new woodlands.
- b) the planting of additional trees and hedgerows; and
- c) the incorporation of wildlife-friendly measures in new development, which would benefit locally resident species such as otters, water voles, badgers, reptiles and newts.

Where biodiversity net gain is to be delivered via off-site habitat creation, these should be targeted at the Priority Habitats along Chad Brook, including deciduous woodland, wet woodland, hedgerows, and ponds, forming a green corridor connecting with habitats within the Lineage Wood SSSI.

Proposals for development on sites where important habitats or species are known or suspected to be present should be accompanied by appropriate ecological surveys that identify and record the relevant species/habitats, together with proposals to accommodate them within the development and any relevant mitigation measures.

Acton Wildlife Nature Reserve

The existing nature reserve on Barrow Hill will be protected from development that would adversely affect its value for biodiversity. (See **Figure 8**)

²⁴ Certain types of development are exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain, these are: permitted development rights; householder applications; development which only has a 'de minimis' impact on habitats; developments undertaken for the purpose of fulfilling the BNG planning condition for another development; high-speed railway network; and certain self-build and custom build developments

Landscape Character

Objective E: To preserve and enhance the landscape setting of the parish by identifying important views that contribute to the character of the parish and protect them from development.

- 8.9 As mentioned in earlier chapters, the parish of Acton consists of a central village settlement located in the south of the parish with the church located at the western end. The remainder of the parish, largely to the north, is punctuated by individual farmsteads.
- 8.10 The parish landscape is characterised by a mosaic of regular and small fields linked with blocks of ancient woodland. The area has a network of winding lanes and paths often associated with hedges, which, together with the rolling countryside, can give a feeling of intimacy, as well as providing some wider rural views. Acton as a village is set in a landscape that has a relatively flat or gently undulating topography, which makes it an ideal location for farming. The settlement is surrounded by fields, which are used and have been used for arable farming for centuries. These fields often have a boundary defined by trees and hedgerows, which is positive in terms of enhancing local wildlife. Furthermore, there are areas of deciduous woodland scattered throughout the parish.
- 8.11 The Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk Landscape Guidance (BMSLG) produced in August 2015 identifies Acton as falling within the '*ancient rolling farmlands*' landscape character type.²⁵
- 8.12 The key characteristics of this landscape are medium clay soils studded with blocks of ancient woodland. The settlement pattern mainly consists of dispersed farmsteads of mediaeval origin with some larger hamlets and smaller villages that complement the rural landform and landscape. Acton has a clustered settlement pattern set amongst rolling farmland. Significantly built up throughout the 20th century with only a few listed buildings on the edges of the village, this is an isolated setting.
- 8.13 The Aim in the Landscape Guidance for the Ancient Rolling Farmlands landscape is:
- to retain, enhance and restore the distinctive landscape and settlement character; in particular, safeguarding the influences of the area.
- 8.14 The Objectives in the Landscape Guidance for the Ancient Rolling Farmlands landscape are:
- To maintain and enhance the landscape and the settlement pattern, ensuring the sense of separation between settlements is maintained.
 - To reinforce hedgerows of locally native species and retain the existing field boundaries.
 - To safeguard the ancient hedgerow and woodland areas.
 - To safeguard the orchard areas.

²⁵ [Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landscape Guidance](#)

8.15 The Key Design Principles in the Landscape Guidance for the Ancient Rolling Farmlands are:

- i) There are significant sized areas of open landscape providing wide panoramic views, with the potential of any form of development to be visibility intrusive if it has been designed without sufficient screening, appropriate landscape design plan or appropriate siting.
- ii) Maintain the distinctive settlement pattern, ensuring the sense of separation between settlements is maintained.
- iii) Retain rural character of the small settlements by avoiding the use of standardised and intrusive urban materials and features; conservation areas and areas that fall within the AONB are particularly sensitive in this respect.
- iv) Minimise the cumulative visual impact of equine development and ancillary equipment within this landscape character.
- v) Restore, maintain and enhance greens and tyes, orchards and woodland areas.
- vi) Hedging for boundaries will be designed to reflect the local character of existing planting to minimise the landscape and visual impacts on the distinctive character of the area.

8.16 The Policy Ideas Exhibition results reflected the great value that local residents place on the rural setting and landscape of the parish (72 responses). Attendees to the exhibition were invited to suggest areas of landscape value and important views in the parish that the Neighbourhood Plan might seek to identify. It was made clear that these views could be looking towards the settlement or looking out of the settlement but that they must be public views, i.e. viewable from a road, a footpath or a gap between buildings and should not be private views to the rear of residential dwellings. Over 14 different views were suggested by attendees.

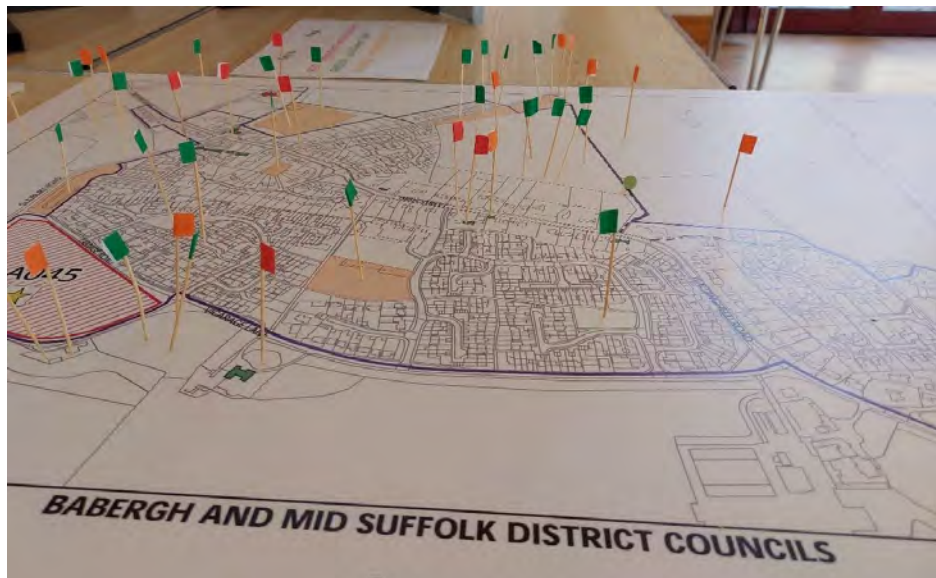


Figure 23: Policy Ideas Exhibition Mapping

8.17. The Steering Group have been mindful that any policy which sought to protect views should focus on those that are *important* to the overall landscape character of the parish and should also be enjoyed from publicly accessible locations e.g. footpaths,

public highway, an existing open space or through a gap between buildings. Some rationalisation of the original list has therefore been undertaken and the following have been identified:

Figure 24 (1- 15)

1. (Left) View towards All Saints Church, Acton, from Barrow Hill: This view is at an elevated position along Barrow Hill. It provides an uninterrupted south-westerly panoramic view across open countryside, which contributes to the setting of the Grade 1 Listed parish church.



2. (Right) View of Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford, looking west from Barrow Hill: This view is again from an elevated position along Barrow Hill. It provides a long westerly view across countryside punctuated by blocks of woodland towards Long Melford, the church tower of which provides a focal point.

3. Views in and out of the settlement: Left, a) looking west over the Sheep field:

This view is taken from Sudbury Road looking west out of the settlement over rolling countryside typical of the *Ancient Rolling Farmlands* landscape character type. The view, which is relatively intimate, includes features characteristic of this landscape type such as clearly defined field boundaries comprising mature hedgerows of native species and small wooded areas.



(Right) b) Looking northeast from Cuckoo Tye towards the historic core of Acton: This view is a typical wide panoramic view across gently undulating topography. It provides the setting and first glance of Acton set behind a mature hedge line across the fields. The backdrop to the settlement is provided by significant blocks of woodland beyond.

4. (Left) View looking west over Barn Owl Field towards Cuckoo Tye over village rooftops from Footpath 9. This view looking back towards the village from Footpath 9 provides an attractive view over arable land and village rooftops towards Cuckoo Tye, dotted with individual trees and framed by mature hedge lines.



5. **(Right) View from western part of Vicarage Lane towards the Old Vicarage.** This is a short, enclosed and intimate view which provides the setting of the Grade II Listed former Vicarage.

6. **(Left) View south from Slough Lane.** This is a long panoramic view across rolling countryside looking south back towards the village. The view is typical of this landscape and is gently undulating, with a winding road and with distinctive tree belts and blocks of woodland which frame the edge of the built settlement.



7. **(Right) View towards Valley Farm from Footpath 23.** This is a wide panoramic view across open countryside towards the dispersed farmstead of Valley Farm, which nestles in a gap between distinctive tree lines with rolling farmland in the background.

8. **(Left) View towards Balsdon Hall, looking northwest from Footpath 26.** Another typically wide view across rural farmland towards the dispersed farmstead of Balsdon Hall set behind a mature hedge and tree line.



9. **(Right) View looking south along tributary of Chad Brook from Footpath 4.** This view looks down and across the valley. The view includes typical features characteristic of this landscape with clearly defined and mature field boundaries, rolling arable fields and scattered blocks of deciduous woodland.

10. (Left) View towards All Saints Church from Melford Road. A shorter, intimate view of the Grade I Listed parish church and its historic rural setting, nestling amongst a varied and mature treeline.



11. (Right) View from Footpath 16 looking east towards Great Waldingfield. This view is from the public footpath looking east towards the neighbouring parish of Great Waldingfield. It provides the route with an immediate connection to the countryside, presenting an outlook over gently undulating farmland towards St Lawrence Church, which is partially hidden by blocks of mature woodland.

Village Gateways:

12. Village Gateway: Melford Road. This photograph captures the soft, green gateway edge of the settlement when entering from the west. This gateway provides a significant green entrance to the village, which marks the transition from countryside to the edge of the built development beyond.



13. Village Gateway: Waldingfield Road. This photograph depicts the existing soft, green, tree and hedge-lined edge to the settlement when entering from the east.



14. Village Gateway: Sudbury Road. This photograph illustrates the significantly green and rural character of this southern entrance to the village.



15. Village Gateway: entrance to village from Barrow Hill, looking south. This photograph shows the undeveloped, mature hedge-line to the east, whilst to the west, development is gradually introduced into view from behind a mature hedgerow.



8.18 Taking the above into account, **Policy ACT5** below has been developed, which covers the distinct related elements of landscape character and the protection of important public views.

Landscape Character, Important Views and Village Gateways

Development proposals that would have adverse impacts on the visual scenic value of the landscape and countryside within the parish outside of the defined settlement boundaries will be resisted.

The existing clear landscape breaks that physically separates the distinct areas of built settlement within the parish shall be maintained in order to prevent coalescence and loss of individual settlement identity and distinctiveness. **(See Policy ACT1)**

Important Public Local Views

The following views and vistas as shown in **Figures 24 and 25** are identified as important public local views:

- 1) View towards All Saints Church, Acton, from Barrow Hill
2. View of Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford, looking west from Barrow Hill
- 3.Views both in and out of the settlement: a) from Sudbury Road looking west over the *Sheep field*, and b) Looking north from Cuckoo Tye back towards Acton
4. View looking west over *Barn Owl Field* towards Cuckoo Tye over village rooftops from Footpath 9
5. View from western part of Vicarage Lane towards the Old Vicarage
6. View south from Slough Lane
7. View towards Valley Farm from Footpath 23
8. View towards Balsdon Hall looking north-west from Footpath 26
9. View looking south along tributary of Chad Brook from Footpath 4
10. View towards All Saints Church from Melford Road
11. View from Footpath 16, looking east towards Great Waldingfield

Inside the parish, development proposals within, or that would otherwise affect, an important public local view or village gateway should be accompanied by a statement, appropriate to the scale of the proposal, that demonstrates how the view has been taken into consideration. Any proposal that would have a significant adverse impact on the landscape or character of the view concerned will not be supported.

Village Gateways:

12. Village Gateways at Melford Road
13. Village Gateways at Waldingfield Road
14. Village Gateways at Sudbury Road
15. Village Gateways at Barrow Hill

Where new development is proposed at the entrance to an area of built settlement or identified village gateway, careful consideration should be given to the visual appearance of that development. Entrances should remain *soft*, e.g. green, or landscaped, to assist with the transition from countryside to built-up area and to ensure assimilation into the wider landscape.

Development at the main four village gateways (Melford Road, Sudbury Road, Barrow Hill and Waldingfield Road) which would result in further linear development ribboning along these routes will not be supported.

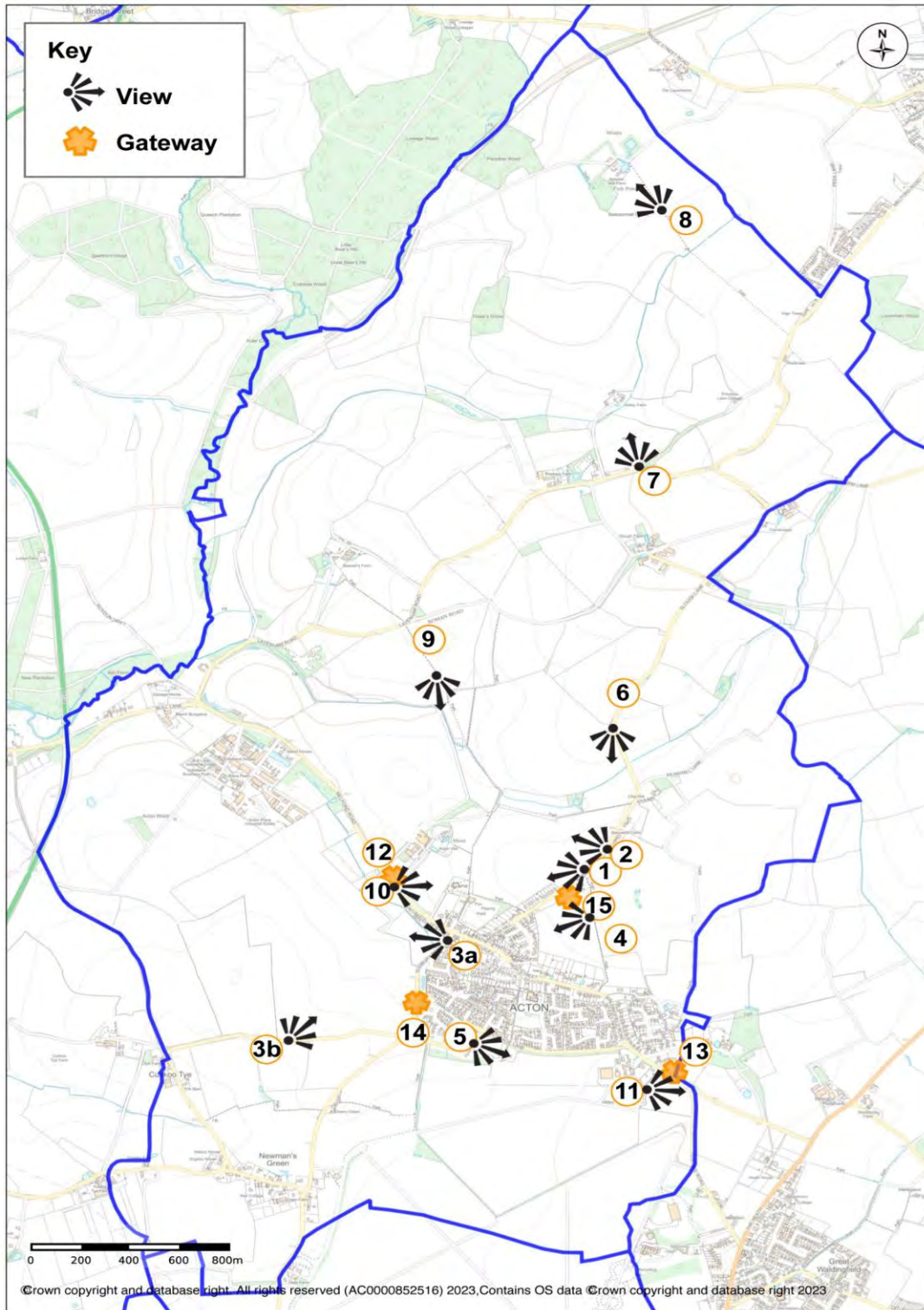


Figure 25: Important Public Local Views and Village Gateways. Source: Parish online.

Environmental Sustainability

Objective F: To safeguard the future of the parish through the promotion of environmentally sustainable measures within all new developments.

- 8.19 The plan period for this Neighbourhood Plan looks ahead to 2037. When looking into the future, it is difficult not to consider the issues of climate change and future sustainability taking account of flood risk. The UK parliament declared an environment and climate change emergency in 2019, and the government has set a target to reduce carbon emissions by 80% (compared to 1990 levels) by 2050. Government guidance encourages the planning system to support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate. It should help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience, encourage the re-use of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings and support renewable and low carbon energy.
- 8.20 Unsurprisingly, given the prominence of low carbon and the future sustainability of the planet in the media, the length of the plan period of the Neighbourhood Plan and the likelihood of significant technological improvements during that period, many neighbourhood plans include planning policies that seek to reduce green-house gas emissions by controlling the location, orientation and design of new development. Some also include policies to increase the supply and use of renewable low carbon energy and heat. Feedback from the community indicated that there was broad support for neighbourhood plan policies that would seek to manage flooding (65 responses), promote energy efficiency measures (50 responses) and minimise light pollution (60 responses). The community indicated support for domestic scale energy efficiency and renewable energy measures although views on larger schemes was less tangible to discern.
- 8.21 Consultants AECOM were commissioned to produce a Design Code for Acton. The report contains specific design codes relating to Low Carbon (SU.01) which specifically addresses energy efficient homes that emphasise water management such as more ambitious water efficiency standards. Given the pressing need to conserve precious water supplies, there is support for policies that require greater water efficiency standards in areas of serious water stress. The Government's Environment Improvement Plan sets ten actions in the Roadmap to Water Efficiency in new developments including consideration of a new standard for new homes in England of 100 l/p/d where there is a clear local need, such as in areas of serious water stress. Whilst this provides a strong indication that such measures are likely to be introduced; Policy ACT6 below seeks to encourage such measures. Code SU.02 which contains guidance on insulation, SU.03 on solar panels, SU.04 on green roofs and LA.03 on Sustainable Drainage Systems See paragraph 8.23). Use of the Design Codes is encouraged in order to contribute towards a more sustainable environment.

Flood Risk

- 8.22 With climate change already bringing much more frequent, intense rainfall, this and the previous channel works may not be sufficient in the longer term to prevent a repeat of flooding in the village. The areas of past flooding should be taken into consideration when proposing further development in the Neighbourhood Plan. For this the Environment Agency surface water and river flood risk map is an invaluable source of data. (<https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/long-term-flood-risk>). Given the above, the need for developers to liaise with Anglian Water regarding any potential upgrades or improvements to the sewer network required to resolve these issues is essential.
- 8.23 The term SuDS stands for Sustainable Drainage Systems. It covers a range of approaches to managing surface water in a more sustainable way to reduce flood risk and improve water quality whilst improving amenity benefits. SuDS work by reducing the amount and rate at which surface water reaches a waterway or combined sewer system. Usually, the most sustainable option is collecting this water for reuse such as in a water butt or rainwater harvesting system, as this has the added benefit of reducing pressure on important water sources. SuDS must be designed sensitively to augment the landscape and provide biodiversity and amenity benefits.
- 8.24 Suffolk County Council have indicated that the use of SuDS and water attenuation for developments is absolutely critical due to the topography of the parish. Whilst the majority of the parish is in flood zone 1 there are some areas that are known to flood. These are the Chad Brook tributaries and along the High Street through to Melford Road. There are small areas at a medium risk of surface water flooding, with a chance of flooding between 1% and 3.3%. These are indicated on **Figures 9a and 9b** in **Chapter 2**.

Light Pollution

- 8.25 The NPPF indicates that development proposals should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes, and nature conservation.
- 8.26 According to the CPRE light pollution maps,²⁶ the majority of the parish falls within the medium categories of the darkest skies e.g. 0.5-1 and 1-2 nano watts/cm² (categories 3 and 4 of 9 with 9 being the most polluted). The areas with the highest levels of lighting are Acton Village and the Bull Lane employment area. High levels of lighting can affect the health, wellbeing and amenity of adjacent residents but also have impacts for natural habitats and species.

²⁶ [England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies \(cpre.org.uk\)](https://www.cpre.org.uk)

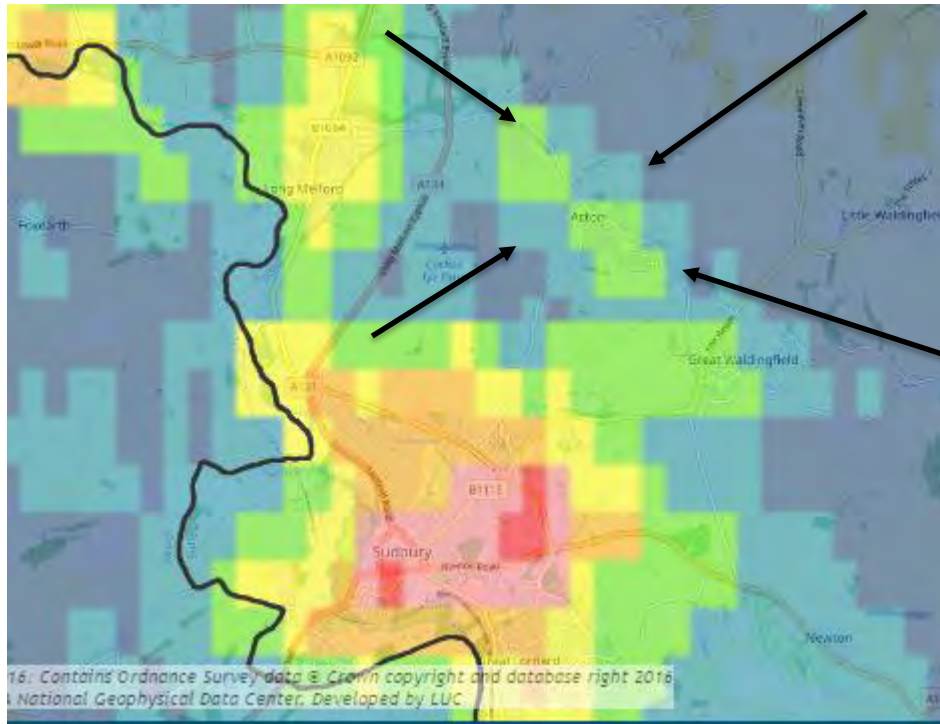


Figure 26: CPRE light pollution map showing Acton as between 0.5 and 2 nanowatts cm²/sr

- 8.27 Nil or low levels of light pollution are an important aspect of tranquillity which was also an important characteristic of the parish that people valued. Light pollution comes in many forms such as sky glow as a consequence of water droplets in the air and illumination from artificial light and glare. Artificial light is not detrimental in all cases and the solution to light pollution is not turning off all lighting. Light pollution is where light is excessive or intrudes where it is not wanted or expected. Well-designed lighting sends light only where it is needed and without scattering it elsewhere. The NPPF advises that by encouraging good design in planning policies this should limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes, and nature conservation.
- 8.28 Not all lighting schemes require planning permission for example those on domestic dwellings. However, where lighting forms part of a proposal or relates to a non-residential building, it is reasonable to seek to control.
- 8.29. Policy ACT6 below has been prepared as a policy that seeks to address a number of environmental issues with the aim of safeguarding the environmental future of the parish through the promotion of environmentally sustainable measures in new development and seeking to control and mitigate the harmful effects of development be it from flooding or light pollution.

Environmental Sustainability

Proposals for otherwise acceptable new development which provides for the future environmental sustainability of the parish at an appropriate scale will be supported in principle.

Energy and Water Efficiency

Whilst this policy does not require development proposals to incorporate energy efficiency measures beyond current building regulations requirements, where new development is proposed, provision should be made for the incorporation of low carbon/sustainability measures, such as encouraging air/ground source heat pumps, solar panels and water management measures within new developments, including residential and other uses, such as agricultural or industrial buildings. Where planning permission is required for the installation of energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both residential and non-residential, significant weight will be given to the support of such proposals.

Flood Risk

All new development, including minor development, is required to use appropriate sustainable drainage systems, including SuDS and drainage lagoons, and wetland and water features in order, to protect against pollution, drainage and wider amenity, and to provide recreational and biodiversity benefits.

All development will be expected to demonstrate how it can mitigate its own flooding and drainage impacts, avoid increase of flooding elsewhere and seek to achieve lower than greenfield runoff rates. New development should not exacerbate existing surface water or foul drainage problems.²⁷ **(See also Policy ACT2)**

Light Pollution

The existing intrinsically dark skies of the parish will be maintained and new development that includes proposals for new lighting will be carefully considered. Proposals will be expected to address light spillage and glare and ensure good lighting management and design, including down lighting and environmentally efficient lighting, particularly where adjacent to the countryside, biodiversity habitats and species.

Where planning permission is required, all new outdoor lighting schemes, including street-lighting, should be designed to minimise the overall impact on the environment, including through making use of energy efficient technologies and using technologies that minimise adverse impacts on wildlife.

²⁷ <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/2023-sf3967-scc-suffolk-flood-risk-appendix-a2.pdf>

Where appropriate to the development proposal, planning applications should include a detailed lighting scheme/strategy that demonstrates how the proposal addresses both energy and environmental concerns without comprising safety.

Historic Environment

Objective G: To ensure that new development respects and protects Acton's built heritage and historic environment.

- 8.30 As described in **Chapter 2**, Acton is a parish which is rich in historic buildings, the oldest of which is All Saints Church which was initially constructed in the 12th century. The church has a historically significant bronze of Sir Robert de Bures, which is said to be the finest medieval memorial brass in the world. It also displays a bomb that was dropped by a zeppelin in World War 1.
- 8.31 As well as the Grade I listed church, there are over 15 Grade II listed buildings scattered throughout the parish. The majority of these are along the High Street. There are also notable heritage features around the parish such as the cluster of buildings and boundary walls using flint facings, including the old schoolhouse. There is no Conservation Area in the village.



Figure 27: All Saints Church. Acton

- 8.32 The policy ideas exhibition sought to gauge support for a policy that reinforces the importance of heritage assets within the parish, both designated (e.g. Listed Buildings) and non-designated. There was a high level of support for this (52 responses) and also for a policy that identifies the important contribution to the overall character of the

area made by the Listed Buildings. Attendees to the Policy Ideas Exhibition were also asked to nominate potential candidates for Non-Designated heritage assets. These were buildings or structures that are not nationally listed but contribute to the historic character of the parish.



Figure 28: Policy Ideas Exhibition: NDHA flags

8.33 A number of suggestions were made by members of the public. Steering Group members assisted by a local resident assessed the nominations in detail. The list was rationalised and then supplemented by additional survey work. The final list identifies 16 potential Non-Designated Heritage Assets.

8.34 Each proposed Non-Designated Heritage Asset has been assessed against the criteria in the Historic England Listing: Historic England Advice Note 7, January 2021. The results of these assessments are included in **Appendix B**. The assessments seek to collectively identify the heritage significance of identified assets through their categorisation against the following criteria: age, rarity, architectural and artistic interest, group value, archaeological interest, historic interest and landmark status.

8.35 **Policy ACT7** below has been informed by this work and a map of the proposed NDHA is shown below.

Note: Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) advise that there should be early consultations of the Historic Environment Record (HER) and assessment of the archaeological potential of any prospective development site at an appropriate stage in the design stage in order that the requirements of NPPF and Local Plan are met. SCCAS, as advisors to Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, would be happy to advise on the level of archaeological assessment and appropriate stages to be undertaken.

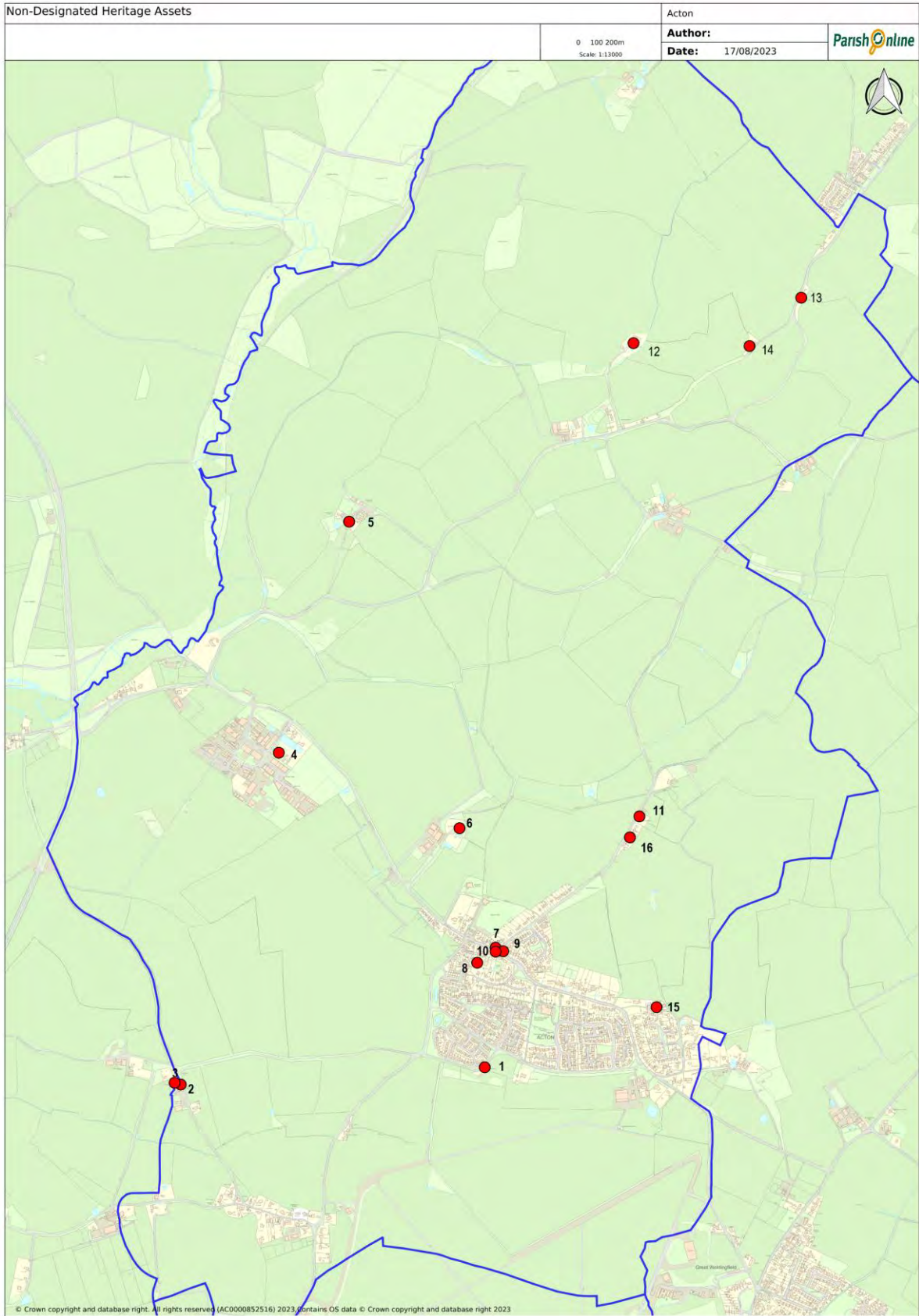


Figure 29: Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Heritage Assets

The historic significance of existing heritage assets—both designated and non-designated—within the parish will be protected.

New development should ensure that the design of new development complements the shape and form of the settlement and the relationship between heritage assets and the spaces around them.

Non-Designated Heritage Assets

The following buildings (shown in **Figure 29**) are identified as Non-Designated Heritage Assets due to their locally important character and historic features:

- 1) Higher Ground, Vicarage Lane
- 2) Cuckoo Tye Farm Cottage
- 3) Cuckoo Tye Barn
- 4) WW II buildings at Acton Place, off Melford Road
- 5) Bassetts Farm, off Lavenham Road
- 6) Acton Hall, off Melford Road
- 7) 1 & 2 Orchard Cottages
- 8) 1 & 2 Elder Cottages
- 9) Former village school and teacher's house, High Street
- 10) Hill View & Ivy Cottages
- 11) Barrow Hill Farm
- 12) Valley Farmhouse and Barn
- 13) Redbraes, Lavenham Road
- 14) Primrose Lane Cottage
- 15) Clay Hall House
- 16) The Cottage, Barrow Hill

Development proposals should avoid harm to these heritage assets having regard to their character, important features, setting and relationship with surrounding buildings or uses.

Proposals should demonstrate that consideration has been given to retaining:

- a) the important asset or historic feature itself
- b) its most distinctive and important features
- c) the positive elements of its setting and its relationship to its immediate surroundings
- d) the contribution that the building or historic feature and its setting makes to the character of the local area



9. Access and Community

Accessibility

Objective H: To ensure that Acton residents have good access and safe connections to services both within the village and to those in other settlements.

- 9.1 Government guidance in respect of plan making and transport issues tends to focus on promoting sustainable transport. Plans are urged to consider at an early stage the impacts of development on transport networks, realise opportunities for improvement and, promote walking and cycling and public transport use and ensure that any adverse impacts of traffic are mitigated. It is acknowledged that when designing new development, the pattern of movements, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes and contribute to creating high quality places. See also **Policy ACT2 and the Acton Design Guidelines and Codes.**
- 9.2 There are public transport services available in the parish such as the 753 service between Bury and Sudbury which stops at Bull Lane industrial estate. Service 750 is essentially a circular service operating four times a day, stopping at Acton Crown, Tesco (outskirts of Sudbury) and Sudbury (central).
- 9.3 National planning guidance encourages development proposals to provide for high quality walking and cycling networks and supporting facilities such as cycle parking. Such networks should be comprehensive and provide not only for recreational routes but also for meaningful routes that can be realistically used for commuting to work or school. In addition, new routes should connect to the existing network and be suitable for use by people with disabilities and reduced mobility. New cycling and pedestrian routes should be safe, secure and attractive, minimise the scope for conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, and respond to the character of the area and any relevant design standards. Encouraging and facilitating active and sustainable travel can reduce vehicles on the road, and therefore pollution and poor air quality, and can help to improve mental and physical health and create a stronger sense of place.

- 9.4 As shown earlier the parish is relatively well served by formal public rights of way although there are some gaps which can usefully be bridged. The results of the community consultation exercises, including the Policy Ideas Exhibition revealed support from local people for protecting and enhancing the existing rights of way network (68 responses), joining up existing routes in the parish and beyond (54 responses) and promoting new pedestrian and cycling routes (59 responses). Comments expressed by attendees at the Policy Ideas Exhibition included:
- *We need a footpath out of the village to connect us to Great Waldingfield and Sudbury as a safe walking route.*
 - *Footpaths to Bull Lane, Acton Lane Industrial Estate, and also to Waldingfield.*
- 9.5 This need is also captured and supported by the Babergh District Council Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan,²⁸ which has assessed the Bun Meadow PROW improvement scheme as a short-term priority for walking, and the need for a segregated cycle and footpath alongside Acton Lane towards Sudbury as a medium-term priority for both cycling and walking.
- 9.6 The Suffolk Green Access Strategy (2020-2030) promotes the importance and the growing relevance of the public rights of way and green access network. The network provides the means for encouraging sustainable travel choices, such as walking or cycling to work, and enables people to live healthier lives by using the countryside for leisure. The Strategy details the reasons green access is so relevant to Suffolk's population and its visitors. It focuses on how green access can benefit the quality of life of residents and encourages initiatives that positively impact on people's physical and mental health. Where new routes are proposed and where appropriate frequent benches should be sited to aide those with mobility difficulties to walk more easily between places. This could include *chatty benches*,²⁹ which could help to make an elderly population feel more included as part of the community and reduce isolation of vulnerable groups.
- 9.7 Public Rights of Way 13,15,16 and 21 are all on the old airfield in the south of Acton parish, which is in large part a designated County Wildlife Site. To enable walkers to access these routes from the settlements, avoiding hazardous stretches of roads with no footways, new links onto the network are needed from both Newman's Green and Great Waldingfield. The Steering Group understands that both Acton and Great Waldingfield Parish Councils have explored such routes, and these have been agreed in principle by the landowner, Suffolk County Council, as public rights of way. The sections within Acton parish are shown in **Figure 30** below in purple, with the existing PROW in green.

²⁸ <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/sustainable-travel>

²⁹ <https://healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/news/are-you-happy-to-chat-it-starts-with-hello>



Figure 30: New paths providing entrances onto the airfield avoiding roads.

9.8 Some residents have indicated a wish to be able to walk to Great Waldingfield without walking along Ten Trees Road. A paved footpath alongside the road has been suggested and would be supported by this Plan, but considerations of the availability and accessibility of the land, as well as the cost, could mean that this might not be achievable in the short term. However, the newly agreed permissive footpath route from Great Waldingfield onto the airfield, which exits by the bowling club at the bottom of Ten Trees Road (shown in **Figure 31** below) would establish a cross-country route using FP16 from Waldingfield Road Acton to Great Waldingfield village.



Figure 31: Proposed path in purple from Acton Village to Great Waldingfield Village.

9.9 In the north-east of the parish, there is no east-west connectivity from Acton parish through Great Waldingfield parish to the village of Little Waldingfield. Great Waldingfield's draft Neighbourhood Plan has indicated an aspiration to connect these areas by identifying *missing links* in its own network for consideration. To complete the connection, a short section of new route is required within the Acton Neighbourhood Area. This would create new inter-settlement walks, benefitting the residents of Acton parish and other walkers, as well as pub patronage at either end. It would also encourage use of at least one footpath (outside the Acton Neighbourhood Area), which currently ends abruptly at a national speed limit road. In line with public support for adding missing links in footpath networks (54 responses), Acton NPSG supports these introductions.

- 9.10 The essential section required would start from the point at which Barrow Hill changes to Slough Lane, taking a route north-east along Peakhall Lane to connect up as shown in **Figure 32a** to the Great Waldingfield parish area. This proposed route is based on use of established field tracks.
- 9.11 Finally, there is an opportunity to extend the route from Little Waldingfield down to the village of Acton, providing a fully off-road connection. This would mean adding a route, which also follows farm tracks and has previously been an informal footpath, although closed off in recent years. It would turn off in a southerly direction from Peakhall Lane, connecting with the village at the eastern end beside the new development east of Clay Hall Lane to connect with PROW 29 as shown in **Figure 32b**. This route would also substantially enhance the possibilities for circular walks, manageable for many, from Acton Village.
- 9.12 For the creation of any new routes, landowner permission would be necessary to add these suggested routes as permissive paths in the first instance. The principle of greater connectivity between parishes is supported by this Neighbourhood Plan.

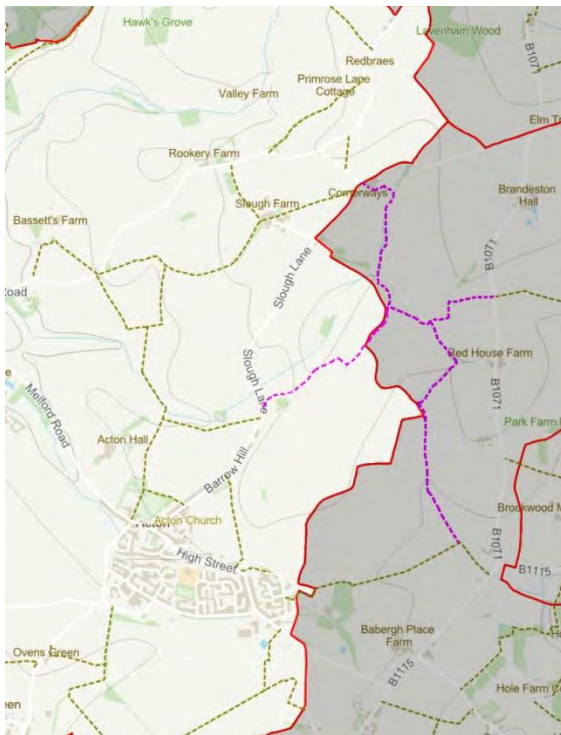


Figure 32a: Essential link to complete connection with Little Waldingfield

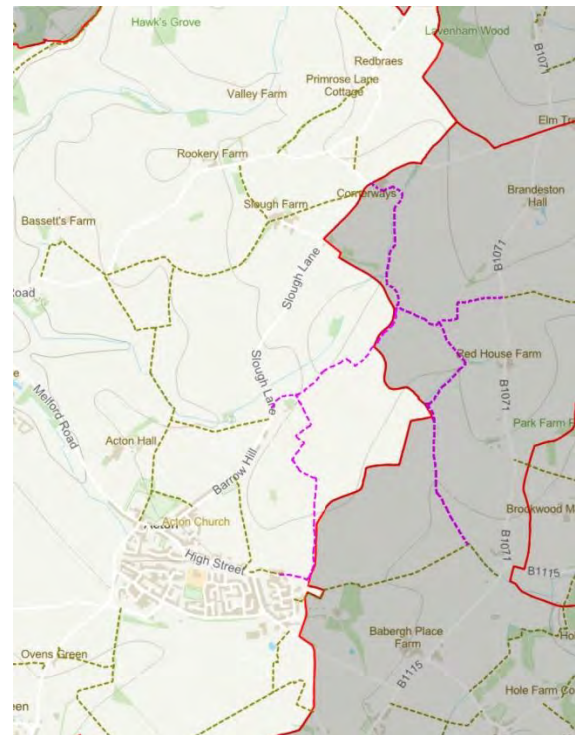


Figure 32b: Completing a proposed off-road link between Little Waldingfield and Acton Village

New Routes within the Parish

9.13 Introducing a footpath along the field side of the allotments and Acton Wildlife nature reserve, would connect FP9 with FP30 and so avoid walkers having to negotiate traffic on that part of Barrow Hill, which has no path and multiple driveways. This path was put forward as a new PRoW by Suffolk County Council when anticipating increased footfall due to further development.³⁰ However, the route is walked throughout the day already, and has been for many years now. Since SCC's involvement, although the development in question has not come forward, Acton's population has increased through the 100 plus new homes under construction or built. As this is likely to result in an increase to the current footpath usage, this Plan recommends the introduction of the link.

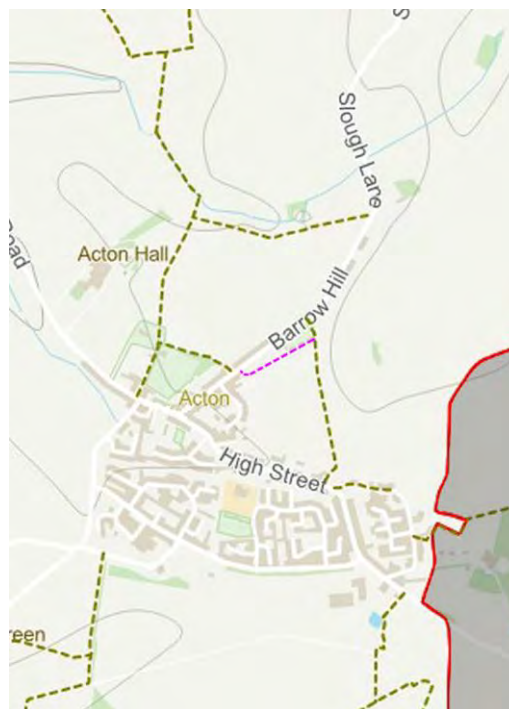


Figure 33: Proposed new footpath connecting FP9 and FP30

Policy ACT8	Accessibility and Connectivity Where appropriate, all new developments should contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents by encouraging increasing levels of walking and cycling through the provision of safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes and crossings, which are suitable for all users, including those with wheelchairs/mobility scooters and child buggies and should be in accordance with LTN1/20. ³¹ New routes should form a cohesive network for users and allow for access both within the built-up area, between the main part of the village and the Bull Lane Employment Area but also to the wider countryside and adjoining parishes,
--------------------	--

³⁰ SCC response to DC/20/05361. Ref SCC/CON/4862/20

³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120>

where opportunities should be taken to maintain, join up and connect to existing routes in order to provide a comprehensive and connected network.

Public Rights of Way

Where development proposals are likely to affect an existing Public Right of Way, these should take account of its route and incorporate it into the overall layout of the scheme. Where this is not considered possible, this will need to be justified. Where Public Rights of Way may be unavoidably impacted or lost, appropriate diversions or new routes should be provided that are safe, equally accessible, and convenient for users.

Existing Public Rights of Way which are incorporated into new developments, including bridleways and footpaths, should be protected and enhanced. Enhancement can take the form of new routes, connections, improved surfaces and/or signage increasing access to the countryside and connectivity between communities.

Proposals that would result in better connectivity for pedestrian and cyclists between the village and the employment area will be supported.

Traffic Management and Safety

- 9.14 The main route through Acton is a C class road that runs in an East - West direction. This road is for the most part wide enough for two cars to pass side by side but difficult for HGVs. This road has a large number of commercial goods vans that transit the settlement many of which service the industrial estate at Bull Lane and the various farm estates in the area. There is also a small amount of heavy farm machinery traffic that transits through the village centre to the various farms surrounding the settlement.
- 9.15 In recent years, local people have noticed that Acton appears to have become a rat-run for traffic on the A134 transiting between Colchester through to Bury St Edmunds. Traffic using this route avoids Sudbury and five relatively small roundabouts and may therefore be attractive to larger vehicles. This has created an increase in traffic on Acton's small C class roads. This increase in traffic has been consistently highlighted by residents through the consultation exercises as a safety concern. A traffic survey was conducted for Melford Road and Sudbury Road in May 2022, at various times and days of the week to discover the type of traffic transiting the settlement and revealed a relatively high level of commercial vehicles using the junction.

Location - The Crown Pub Car Park Acton		Car	Commercial	HGV	Motorbike	Bicycle
Sunday 1st May 2022 2-3pm	Melford Road	269	33	0	15	12
	Sudbury Road	62	20	0	0	3
Tuesday 3rd May 2022 7-8am	Melford Road	298	135	0	3	1
	Sudbury Road	61	27	0	0	1
Thursday 5th May 2022 11-12am	Melford Road	247	86	14	2	5
	Sudbury Road	58	24	4	0	3
Saturday 14th May 2022 12:50-13:50	Melford Road	270	39	1	17	6
	Sudbury Road	88	15	0	7	2
Wednesday 18th May 2022 16:30-17:30	Melford Road	425	125	7	11	3
	Sudbury Road	99	29	1	2	2

Figure 34: Snapshot of the different types of vehicles using the Melford Road – Sudbury Road Junction 1st May – 18th May 2022

- 9.16 In early 2022, Suffolk County Council, undertook a review of HGV delivery transport routes through the county. The review involved two parts: one a technical review, and one community-led review used by the County Council to review the County Council’s existing lorry route network plan. Acton is not on any lorry route network.
- 9.17 Within the confines of the main built-up area of the village, there is a 30 mph speed limit. There is an active Speed Watch team who regularly monitor five locations in the village. Consultations with the local speed watch team has confirmed that Acton has a speeding problem with motorists regularly exceeding 50 mph. Speeds of excess of 60 mph have been recorded by the village speed meter. The highest speed readings (70 mph) that have been recorded are to the west of Acton along Melford Road, which is a 30 mph limited C-class road.
- 9.18 The subject of road safety was a common topic raised by residents through consultation exercises although it is recognised that addressing existing speeding issue lies outside of the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan. Neighbourhood plans have little power to introduce highway improvements, as most schemes will not require planning permission. Improvements are therefore reliant on the County Council’s Highways Department for investment in projects or improvements required as part of the mitigation of the impact of development proposals.
- 9.19 However the Steering Group, supported by consultation responses consider that the Neighbourhood Plan policies should prioritise the need to ensure that any new development does adequately address any traffic or highway safety issues likely to arise from its implementation and does not exacerbate any existing problems.
- 9.20 Government guidance indicates that in considering proposals for development, it is essential to ensure that safe and suitable access to the development can be achieved for all users and that any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion) and on highway safety, should be mitigated to an acceptable degree. Furthermore, government guidance indicates that development that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan and the application should be supported by a transport statement or transport assessment so the likely impacts of the proposal can be adequately addressed. Given the highway safety issues in the parish outlined above,

including the increasing rat-running, use of narrow lanes by commercial vehicles and speeding, it is considered that proposals for new development in Acton should be supported by transport information proportionate to the scale of the proposed development, which will enable adequate assessment of highway safety, capacity and congestion impacts on the transport network.

Policy
ACT9

Traffic Management and Safety

Proposals for new development should maximise opportunities for sustainable transport, including public transport provision, walking and cycling.

The design of any new roads and streets should have regard to guidance in the Suffolk Design: Streets Guide 2022, or any successor documents. All parking provisions within new developments should have regard to guidance within the Suffolk Guidance for Parking 2019, or any successor documents.

Proposals should be supported by sufficient information proportionate to the scale of the development, which will allow adequate assessment of potential transport impacts.

Where development is likely to result in increased traffic generation, consideration should be given both to the levels of traffic generated by the proposal and the wider impacts of this traffic including noise, pollution and the routing of traffic. Proposals for development should include measures to address and mitigate potential impacts upon highway and pedestrian safety, as well as those on traffic flows elsewhere in the parish.

Development impacts that cannot be mitigated to an acceptable level, and which would result in an unacceptable increase in traffic generation, or traffic using the narrow rural lanes of the parish, or which would be detrimental to highway safety, will not be supported.

Quiet Lanes

Development proposals should take into consideration the purpose and location of the existing Quiet Lanes of the parish which will be respected.

Community Facilities

Objective I: To protect the existing important community services and facilities in the parish and support their improvement or expansion.

- 9.21 The overarching social objective for the planning system, as set out in the NPPF, is to support strong, vibrant, and healthy communities by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and supports the health, social and cultural well-being of communities.
- 9.22 To achieve this, new development needs to be planned hand in hand with community services and facilities and a range of cultural facilities to support that new development. This includes transport, education, green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, public rights of way, cycleways, allotments, health and social care facilities. These are often collectively referred to as community infrastructure.
- 9.23 Housing and other development will be expected to pay towards improving local services and infrastructure through either, the payment of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), planning obligations (via a Section 106 agreement/Section 278 agreement) or through the use of planning conditions.
- 9.24 Parish councils receive 15% of CIL monies collected from development within their parish. This figure rises to 25% once a *made* Neighbourhood Plan is in place. Where development is expected to take place within a parish, the Parish Council will often have a key list of projects that the community has identified as priorities for spending the CIL income. **Chapter 6** provides more detail on Acton Parish Council's approach to CIL spending.

Existing Community Facilities

- 9.25 A key strand to the assessment of a settlement within the overall Local Plan spatial hierarchy is the provision of community services and facilities such as school, village hall, playing field, shops, public house, allotments, etc. The settlement classification is derived by the Districts using a number of criteria including those relating to the number of services and community facilities available in the parish. The parish contains a church, village hall, primary school and pre-school/nursery. There is also a playing field and children's play area, a shop, a pub and employment provision within the Neighbourhood Area, although there are no medical facilities or secondary education. See **Figure 6** in **Chapter 2** for the location of existing community facilities.
- 9.26 Those residents that responded to the community consultations clearly value their existing community facilities and wish to see them retained (71 responses). It is also clear that there is an active range of community groups that make regular use of the village hall.

9.27 The policy ideas exhibition revealed support from attendees for a policy that would safeguard the existing community facilities in the parish particularly in terms of resisting their loss or change of use. In addition, support was also expressed for the enhancement of the existing facilities to make them more attractive and useable for wider community uses which in turn would underpin their future sustainability.

Policy ACT10	<p>Community Facilities</p> <p>Proposals including changes of use that would involve the potential loss of an existing community facility (church, school, village hall, shop, public house) will not be supported except where an improved or equivalent facility can be located elsewhere in the parish in an equally convenient, safe, and accessible location or where there is absolutely no reasonable prospect of continued viable use where this can be sufficiently demonstrated.</p> <p>Support is given for maintaining, developing, and enhancing the services offered by the existing community facilities (see Figure 6) including alterations and extensions that would enable wider community usage and integration and provide a benefit to the environment such as electric charging points.</p>
-----------------	--

Local Green Spaces

9.28 The National Planning Policy Framework 2023, at paragraphs 105-107, introduces the concept of Local Green Spaces which can be identified through Neighbourhood Plans by local communities and allows green areas identified as being of particular importance to be protected. Paragraph 106, sets out three broad criteria for identifying and designating such spaces as follows:

The Local Green Space designation should only be used when the green space is:

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- b) 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 and richness of its wildlife; and*
- c) local in character and not an extensive tract of land.*

9.29 The NPPF at paragraph 107 goes on to state that *policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for green belts* and therefore affords them a very high level of protection. The NPPF at paragraph 142 outlines the importance that the Government attaches to Green Belts, the fundamental aim of which is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of green belts are their openness and their permanence. It is also clear that the designation of Local Green Spaces should not be used as a mechanism to try to block or resist development on agricultural land immediately adjacent to village development boundaries and that a successful

designation must meet the criteria outlined above. Furthermore, Government Guidance contained in the Planning Practice Guidance³² Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land has planning permission for development. Exceptions could be where the development would be compatible with the reasons for designation or where planning permission is no longer capable of being implemented.

- 9.30 Such spaces can be viewed locally as equally as important as the landscape setting of an area. Such spaces are green spaces found within the built-up area that contribute to the character of a settlement. These can vary in size, shape, location, ownership and use but such spaces will have some form of value to the community particularly for benefits to mental and physical health and wellbeing giving opportunities for social interaction, space for recreation, habitat for wildlife and help define what makes that specific settlement what it is.
- 9.31 Areas of open space in the parish include the allotments, amenity green areas within existing residential areas and the recreation area adjacent to the village hall.
- 9.32 Attendees at the policy ideas exhibition were asked to identify potential Local Green Spaces and there was support for such a policy (70 responses). The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group identified a number of spaces and asked for feedback from the local community at the policy ideas exhibitions. Following that feedback and the assessments of the candidate spaces against the NPPF criteria, this list has now been rationalised. Each space that meets the criteria should be protected because of their value to the local community. The result is the 15 spaces shown in **Figure 34** below and listed within **Policy ACT11**. Assessments for each one against the criteria set out in the NPPF have been carried out and these are shown in **Appendix C**.

Policy ACT11	<p>Local Green Spaces</p> <p>The following areas are designated as Local Green Spaces for special protection (as shown on Figure 34):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lime Tree Green 2. Queensway – Village Green 3. Acton Wildlife/Nature Reserve 4. Allotments, Barrow Hill 5. Sports Field 6. Babergh Close/Lime Walk 7. Tamage Estate 8. Marsh Walk 9. Canon Pugh Drive 10. De Bures Walk 11. Coblers Way 12. Browns Close
---------------------	---

³² [Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

- 13. Lime Walk/Jubilee Way
- 14. Gotsfield Close
- 15. Newman's Green

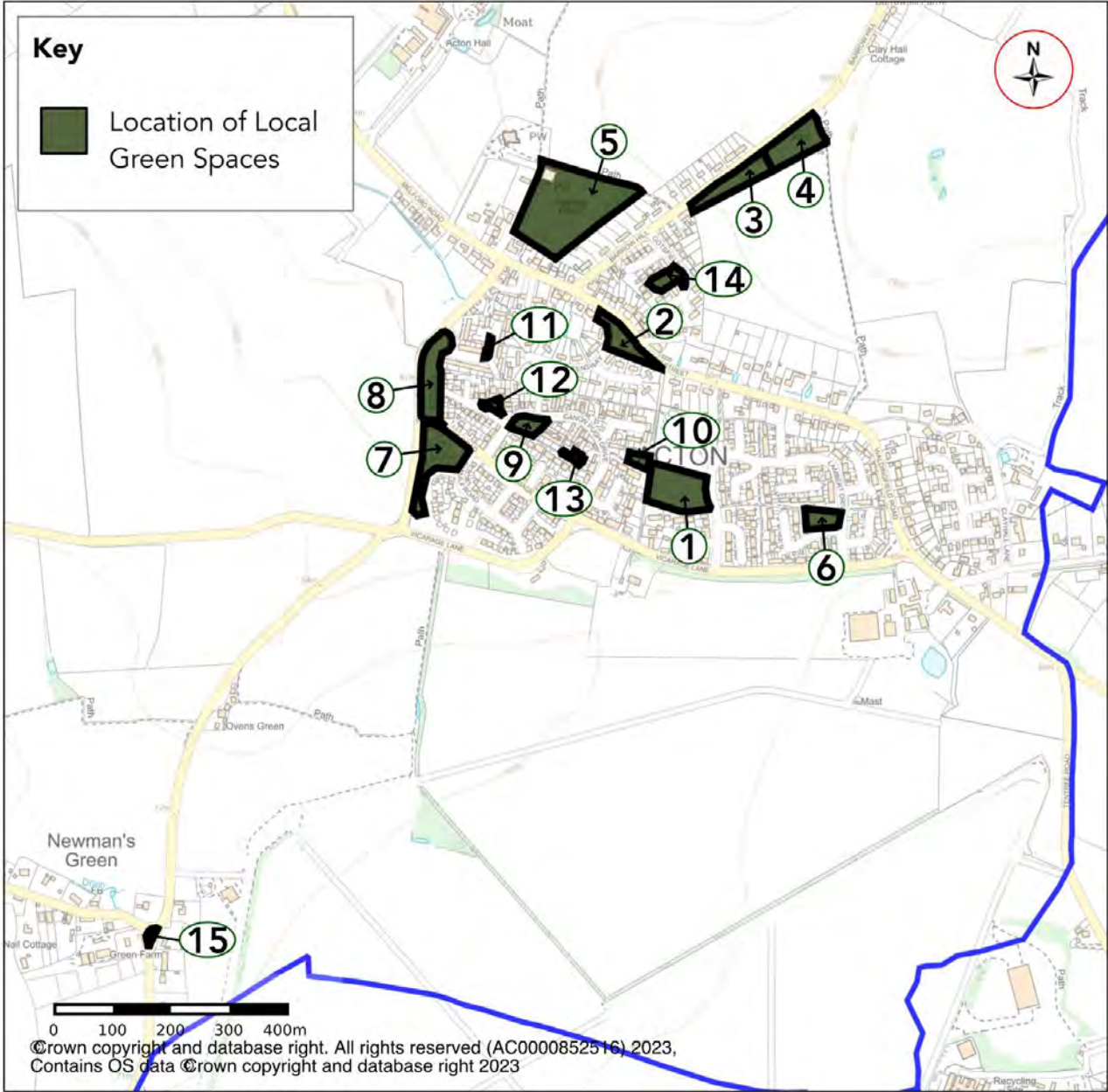


Figure 34: Local Green Spaces
 Please see Inset Maps for details of the extent of each Local Green Space which are shown in Appendix C



10. Business

Objective J: To support the appropriate development and expansion of suitable new and existing businesses in the parish.

- 10.1 The role of Neighbourhood Plans within the planning system is not just about housing growth or environmental protection. They also have a role to play in delivering the economic objectives related to sustainable development as set out in the NPPF. National planning policy supports a prosperous rural economy and specifically encourages planning policies to enable sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas both through the conversion of existing buildings but also well-designed new buildings. Policies should also support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside and enable the diversification of agriculture.
- 10.2 The NPPF, however, does recognise that new employment or economic development should be sensitive to its surroundings and does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads. Planning policies and decisions should mitigate and reduce potential adverse impacts of developments such as noise, dust, light and air pollution.

Bull Lane Employment Area (Acton Industrial Estate)

- 10.3 The JLP under Policy SP05 identifies the existing industrial estate at Bull Lane as a *strategic employment site*. The policy seeks to support and encourage sustainable economic growth and ensure a continuous range and diversity of sites and premises are available to meet current and potential future economic needs. The strategic employment sites which includes Bull Lane are to be protected by the Local Plan policies and their proposed expansion supported in principle. The Bull Lane site is located some distance from the main built-up area of Acton Village along Melford Road and takes advantage of links to the A134. However, there are no dedicated

footpaths/pavements between the village and the industrial estate making access to it by local people reliant on the private car. There is no formal bus stop at the estate, although one of the local bus services is anecdotally reported to stop there. Traffic from the estate (commercial and commuting) can head west towards Long Melford and then onto Bury St Edmunds. However, traffic heading in the opposite direction towards Sudbury or to the east is more likely to be drawn through the main built-up part of the village and/or use the Melford Road/Sudbury Road junction.

- 10.4 As part of the evidence gathering and data collection exercise undertaken in early 2022 to support the development of the Acton Neighbourhood Plan, the businesses located on the industrial estate were contacted. There are approximately 79 businesses listed with a physical premises on the estate who between them employ over 400 people of which approximately 37 are Acton residents. The businesses represented cover a wide range of business sectors including manufacturing, sales, services, retail and repairs and they vary in size and scale.
- 10.5 Community consultation reveals that there is some limited support (24 responses) for further expansion of the employment activity at Bull Lane with a clear preference for that expansion to take place to the west and away from Acton village (57 responses) to maintain a clear landscape break between the employment area and the village (54 responses). The key local concerns about further expansion here relate to HGV movements (63 responses) with a clear preference to ensure that HGVs are routed away from the village. There was also support for measures that might improve the sustainability of the site both in terms of the provision of electric charging points but also to improve the transport options for workers such as improved public transport, cycle/walking route to Acton Village and cycle parking.
- 10.6 Community feedback also highlighted the need to ensure that good use of the land within the site was made for new development, that the landscape and visual impact of any new buildings would be carefully considered together with the issue of external lighting. **Policy ACT12** below has been developed to reflect these issues.

**Policy
ACT12**

Bull Lane Employment Area (Acton Industrial Estate)

The future expansion of the Bull Lane employment area, as shown on the **Policies Maps in Appendix E**, will be directed to the west in order to retain the existing landscape break between the main built-up area of Acton and the employment area. New development should be set back from the road to reflect the pattern of existing development and to retain the established character of the area. This would minimise the level of traffic, including commercial vehicles particularly HGVs and delivery vehicles, needing to use existing narrow rural lanes or pass through the village.

The expansion of existing businesses on the employment area which would encourage the better use of land within the site will be supported. Increased business activity on the site created through the development of new or the

expansion of existing, small and medium enterprises (SME) is preferred to the introduction of new large-scale users.

Proposals should include provision for the transport needs of employees, such as public transport, bus stops, adequate parking, cycle parking, footpaths and electric charging points. Proposals should also provide for the amenity needs of employees through the use of hard and soft landscaping and seating areas.

Where new buildings are proposed, consideration should be given to the topography of the site together with the height, massing, lighting form and siting of the building to ensure that the building is located to minimise visual and landscape impact.

See also the specific detailed guidance in the **Acton Design Guidelines and Codes**.

Business and Employment in Other Areas of the Parish

- 10.7 It is acknowledged that post-Covid19 pandemic, people's employment and transport needs have changed. Considerably more people are working from home now than ever before. This does not usually require the benefit of planning permission and therefore is a matter outside of the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan. Other changes are also happening particularly in the agricultural sector with considerable changes in how farming is supported likely in the next few years.
- 10.8 Changes in farming subsidies, a move towards environmental schemes and changes in farming practices and costs are likely to have some impact on rural areas. Some farmers will continue to diversify and may seek permission for new uses to operate alongside the existing agricultural activity, e.g. tourism uses for outbuildings and the potential for glamping and camping sites. Others may find themselves with larger buildings they no longer require permanently for agricultural use although they may need them for part of the year, and which may be suitable for other uses such as light industry or storage. Not all uses of farm buildings will necessarily require full planning permission, many may be suitably dealt with under the Prior Notification regime. However, where permission is required for a new use for an existing building or where a new building is proposed, the Neighbourhood Plan will need to consider the merits and implications of such proposals.
- 10.9 Policy LP09 in the JLP supports the change of use within a residential curtilage to small scale employment. Policy LP22 supports the development of new agricultural buildings. Both policies contain similar criteria which seek to limit the impacts on adjoining residential uses. The Neighbourhood Plan, whilst supporting economic development, similarly seeks to protect the amenity of adjoining uses and residents and protect the beauty and enjoyment of the countryside for those walking from the local settlements and those visiting from wider afield.
- 10.10 The NPPF advises that planning policies and decisions should create the conditions in which business can invest, expand, and adapt. Weight should be given to the need to

support economic growth and productivity, taking into consideration local business needs and the impact upon the local character of the area.

- 10.11 Community consultation revealed two main concerns on this issue. The first being the impacts of increased traffic if a farm building is to change its use to a more commercial enterprise. The second concern related to the potential for new buildings to be sought for agricultural purposes only then to change to residential using the prior notification process. Whilst there are some built-in safeguards to prevent this, it is still very much a concern that new dwellings would be created in some isolated locations.
- 10.12 Furthermore, whilst Government guidance encourages the use of previously developed land and buildings on sites that are well related to existing settlements it is recognised that the juxtaposition of business and employment generating uses in rural areas is not without impacts which can take the form of traffic generation, HGV use and noise, pollution and other environmental impacts. It is therefore important to ensure that the character of the area is protected, and the amenity of local residents safeguarded when considering proposals for new or expanded business or employment uses. **Policy ACT13** has been developed with these issues in mind.

Policy
ACT13

Business and Employment Uses Outside of Defined Employment Areas

New small-scale businesses appropriate to a rural area, particularly those that result in the re-use of redundant or unused historic or farm buildings will be supported only where all of the following criteria can be satisfied:

- a) It can be demonstrated that the proposed building is no longer required for agricultural use.
- b) The overall non-agricultural activities on the site remain ancillary (in terms of scale and operation) to the main agricultural/farming uses.
- c) The proposal would not have a significant adverse impact upon the character or landscape of the area.
- d) The proposal would not have a significant adverse impact upon the amenity of adjoining residents.
- e) The proposal would not result in an unacceptable increase in traffic generation or the likelihood of increased HGV, service or delivery traffic travelling through the narrow lanes in the parish.

Where new business and employment development is proposed including through the conversion of an existing building, provision should be made to accommodate the transport needs of workers. Any new parking provision should be well screened to minimise its visual impact.

See also the specific detailed guidance in the **Acton Design Guidelines and Codes**.

11. Implementation and Monitoring

Implementation

- 11.1 The Acton Neighbourhood Plan has been developed to assist with the planning of sustainable growth across the parish for a period up to 2037. The implementation of the Acton Neighbourhood Plan will require the co-ordinated input and co-operation of relevant statutory and non-statutory agencies, private sector organisations and the local community.
- 11.2 The policies in this document shape the way in which development happens within the parish of Acton. Where development over a certain scale is proposed, it may be required to deliver other uses on site in order for that development to be considered to be acceptable, e.g. new open space or biodiversity enhancements. Where this occurs, these will be delivered through *planning obligations*, often referred to as section 106 agreements, which are legal agreements negotiated between the District Council and a developer or landowner (usually in the context of a planning application). Planning obligations are typically used to ensure that new developments:
- comply with planning policy—for instance, by requiring affordable housing or public open space to be provided; and
 - do not impose undue burdens on existing facilities—for instance, by requiring financial contributions to increase/improve local services such as schools, libraries or transport.
- 11.3 In order to see delivery realised, it will require the Parish Council and partner organisations to be proactive in getting the best results for the parish of Acton.
- 11.4 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008, to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of the area. Babergh District Council has an adopted CIL Policy in place for the District and once the Neighbourhood Plan is *made*, Acton Parish Council will benefit from 25% of the levy revenues arising from development that takes place in the parish. This revenue will be used to fund projects identified in the Neighbourhood Plan as well as other community priorities that may be identified during the plan period.

Monitoring

- 11.5 There is no formal requirement or timetable for the review of neighbourhood plans. However, it is good practice to report on the use of the Neighbourhood Plan and monitor the use of its policies, ideally on an annual basis through a report to the Parish Council. This information would be used to identify the need for any formal reviews – either partial or in full. Any review process would need to be undertaken in consultation with the local community and Babergh District Council and should be

undertaken by the Parish Council to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan is still current and remains a positive planning tool to deliver sustainable growth. In order to determine when a review is necessary, the Parish Council will monitor development in the parish along with local and national planning policy and the appropriate legislative context. It is anticipated the Acton Neighbourhood Plan will require review during its life and that it will be the role of the Parish Council to update the Neighbourhood Plan at the appropriate time.

- 11.6 Any review will provide an opportunity to reassess the parish's housing and economic markets and to resolve some of the bigger issues surrounding development in and around the parish.



Appendix A: Steering Group Members

The Acton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group included the following members:

- Lee Adams, local resident, Chairman, Steering Group
- Eleanor Clark, local resident, Secretary, Steering Group
- Shawn Clark, local resident
- Anita Coe, local resident, Vice-chair, Steering Group
- (Until April 2023) Steve Le Grys, local resident and Parish Councillor
- Katie McSweeney, local resident and Parish Councillor
- Brian McSweeney, local resident
- Graham Round, local resident and Chairman of Acton Parish Council

Photos taken and supplied by Steering Group members

Supported by:

- Andrea Long – Compasspoint Planning, Independent Consultant



Appendix B: Non-Designated Heritage Assets Justification

The table below outlined the justification for the inclusion of important character buildings and historic features. The criteria is based on the *Local Heritage Listing: Historic England Advice Note 7*, page 9.

Age: The age of an asset may be an important criterion, and the age range can be adjusted to take into consideration distinctive local characteristics or building traditions.

Rarity: Appropriate for all assets, as judged against local characteristics.

Architectural and Artistic Interest: The intrinsic design and aesthetic value of an asset relating to local and/or national styles, materials, construction and craft techniques, or any other distinctive characteristics.

Group Value: Groupings of assets with a clear visual design or historic relationship.

Archaeological Interest: The local heritage asset may provide evidence about past human activity in the locality, which may be in the form of buried remains, but may also be revealed in the structure of buildings or in a designed landscape, for instance. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are primary sources of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.

Historic Interest: A significant historical association of local or national note, including links to important local figures, may enhance the significance of a heritage asset. Blue Plaque and similar schemes may be relevant.

Social and Communal Interest: These may be regarded as a sub-set of historic interest but has special value in local listing. As noted in the PPG, 'Heritage assets can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity'. It therefore relates to places perceived as a source of local identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence, contributing to the 'collective memory' of a place.


Landmark Status: An asset with strong communal or historical associations, or because it has especially striking aesthetic value, may be singled out as a landmark within the local scene.

Property Details	Property Photograph
<p>01] Higher Ground, Vicarage Lane. Timber frame and rendered lath. Originally Glebe Cottage, built sometime in the 1700s, opposite Acton's glebe fields. Has been used as servants' quarters for the Old Vicarage. Sold by the Church Commissioners in the 1950s, subsequently much rebuilt/extended. The garden incorporates a former brickworks, which became a village rubbish dump and is now a private orchard. <i>(age, rarity, architectural and artistic interest, group value (with Old Vicarage) archaeological interest, landmark status)</i></p>	
<p>02] Tye Farmhouse Dated 1842 with flint finish, many extension phases. <i>(age, architectural and artistic interest)</i></p>	
<p>03] The Granary Dated 1842, Granary and cart-shed - flint built, early Victorian. Cart shed recently converted to dwelling. <i>(age, architectural and artistic interest, group value (with cart shed), historic interest)</i></p>	
<p>04] Acton Place WW II Buildings Various Nissen huts still in use, e.g. Wally's Café, vehicle repairs and single dwelling. <i>(age, rarity, architectural and artistic interest, group value, historic interest)</i></p>	



Property Details	Property Photograph
<p>05] Bassetts Farm Timbered with lath and plaster, of great age (possibly 1400s) but modified pre-WWII with a large extension. Adjacent Victorian brick farm buildings, one of which is converted to a dwelling. <i>(age, rarity, architectural and artistic interest, historic interest)</i></p>	
<p>06] Acton Hall, off Melford Road Associated with adjacent Acton Hall Farm. Victorian with adjacent brick farm buildings. The setting incorporates the remains of a moat indicating far older foundations. <i>(age, rarity, architectural and artistic interest, group value (with farm and adjacent buildings), archaeological interest, historic interest, landmark status)</i></p>	
<p>07] 1 & 2 Orchard Cottages Brick/slate. Late Victorian. <i>(age, historic interest, group value (as a pair))</i></p>	
<p>08] 1 & 2 Elder Cottages Pair of old, renovated cottages off High Street adjacent to Mondice. <i>(age, architectural and artistic interest, group value (as a pair), historic interest)</i></p>	



Property Details	Property Photograph
<p>09] The Old School Hall & School House Former village school and teacher's house, built in flint. <i>(age, rarity, architectural and artistic interest, group value (when taken together), historic interest, landmark status)</i></p>	
<p>10] Hill View & Ivy Cottage Old brick/flint front boundary walls opposite the old school, where similar style exists. <i>(age, architectural and artistic interest, group value (as a pair), historic interest)</i></p>	
<p>11] Barrow Hill Farm Rendered farmhouse and adjacent flint farm building and wall – believed to be 17th century timber framed with plaster farmhouse with brock built Georgian extension to the rear. Has an adjacent barn and cart lodge. <i>(age, architectural and artistic interest, group value (with farm buildings and wall), historic interest, landmark status)</i></p>	
<p>12] Valley Farmhouse and Barn Noted as part of the Suffolk Farmsteads Project. Valley Farm is a farmstead visible on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map and dates from the 19th century. The farmstead, which sits alongside a private track in an isolated location, is laid out in a loose courtyard plan with the farmhouse detached and set at right angles to the barn, side onto the yard. The farmhouse is rendered.</p>	



Property Details	Property Photograph
<p>Although the Farmsteads Project reports that there has been a loss of working buildings with the remaining converted for residential use, the distinctive and impressively large barn remains. <i>(age, architectural and artistic interest, group value (farmhouse and barn), historic interest, landmark status)</i></p>	
<p>13] Old Stamp House (Redbraes) Formerly the old <i>Stamp Collectors House</i>, probably 19th century timber frame with lath and plaster, extensively renovated and extended at least 25 years ago. <i>(age, historic interest)</i></p>	
<p>14] Primrose Lane Cottage Timber frame with lath and plaster, probably over 150 years old, extensively renovated and extended over last 30 years. <i>(age, historic interest, landmark status)</i></p>	
<p>15] Clay Hall House The core of the house is a former working farmhouse built in c1520, with later additions and a timber frame. In the courtyard is one of the original village pumps (it is believed there were 2 or 3 in total), where local people could come for clean water drawn from the well; this pump is now located in a neighbour's garden. The deeds of the house stipulate that the owner of Clay Hall House must provide 2d worth of bread each week to those living in the village and who are most in need. <i>(age, historic interest, architectural and artistic interest, group value, historic interest, social and communal value)</i></p>	



Property Details	Property Photograph
<p>16] The Cottage, Barrow Hill Believed to have been built around the same time as Barrow Hill Farm (see 11 above), therefore it could be as early as 17th century. Timber framed but now rendered and extended. <i>(age, architectural and artistic interest, group value (with nearby farm, wall and farm buildings, historic interest)</i></p>	 A photograph of a white, two-story cottage with a brown roof and a chimney. The house has several windows, some with white frames, and a central wooden door. It is surrounded by a gravel driveway and some landscaping, including bushes and a small white bench. The sky is overcast.

Appendix C: Local Green Spaces justification



GS01: Lime Tree Green	
Description: Open grassed amenity area with for children. Includes fenced play area for younger children.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located within the built-up area of Acton Village, surrounded by residential development and adjacent to the school.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature contributes to the character of the area and its connection with Jennens Way. Has significant amenity and communal value by virtue of its use as a play area.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 1.7 acres (0.68 hectares).
	

GS02: Queensway – Village Green	
Description: Open grassed amenity area with mature trees, seating and bus shelter, creating a pleasant central area in the village. Opposite the village shop and post office.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located within the built-up area of Acton Village. Acts as a pleasant central amenity and focal point.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its pleasant central nature contributes to the character of the area and has high amenity and community value due to its location and the facilities it provides e.g. seating.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 0.5 acres (0.2 hectares).
	



GS03: Acton Wildlife Reserve, Barrow Hill	
Description: Parish Council owned wildlife area.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located on the edge of the settlement with residential development adjacent.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its rural nature and tranquillity contribute to the setting of the parish and the character of the area. Currently maintained and nurtured by volunteers for the specific benefit of wildlife, the site has significant biodiversity and community value.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 1.5 acres (0.4 hectares).
	



GS04: Allotments, Barrow Hill	
Description: Parish Council owned allotment site.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located on the edge of the settlement with residential development opposite.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature and location contribute to the setting of the settlement, and it acts as a quiet and peaceful oasis for residents. Provides excellent views across farmland to Long Melford and is actively in allotment use. Site has high community value due to its use as allotment land.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 1.3 acres (0.52 hectares).
	



GS05: Sports Field	
Description: Open, grassed amenity area and sports field linked to village hall with parking.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located within the main built-up area of Acton Village, adjacent to the village hall and close to the public house. Surrounded by residential development.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature and location contribute to the character of the area, and it is in active community use by the cricket club and other groups. Acts as a green oasis within the village settlement area and has high community and amenity value due to its active community use.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 4 acres (1.61 hectares).
	



GS06: Babergh Close/Lime Walk	
Description: Open, grassed amenity area with mature trees.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located within the main built-up area of Acton Village and surrounded by residential development.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature and location contribute to the character of the area within a substantially built-up area. Has community and amenity value.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 0.5 acres (0.2 hectares).
	



GS07: Green space at Tamage Road Estate	
Description: Open, grassed amenity area with attenuation basin.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located within the main built-up area of Acton Village and surrounded by residential development.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature and location contribute to the character of the area. Forms part of the open space of the new residential development and contributes to its character by retaining a connection to the countryside.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 2.3 acres (0.9 hectares).
	



GS08: Marsh Walk	
Description: Open, grassed informal amenity area with mature trees.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located at the edge of the main built-up area of Acton Village and adjacent to residential development.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature and location contribute to the character of the area. Acts as a green oasis within a substantially built-up area and has community and amenity value. Helps to retain the connection to the open countryside.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 1.2 acres (0.48 hectares).
	



GS09: Canon Pugh	
Description: Open, grassed amenity area with mature trees.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located within the main built-up area of Acton Village and surrounded by residential development.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature and location contribute to the character of the area. Acts as a green oasis within a substantially built-up area and has community and amenity value.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 0.4 acres (0.2 hectares).
	



GS10: De Bures Walk	
Description: Open, grassed amenity area with mature trees.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located within the main built-up area of Acton Village and surrounded by residential development.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature and location contribute to the character of the area. Acts as a green oasis within a substantially built-up area and has community and amenity value.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 0.2 acres (0.1 hectares).
	

GS11: Coblers Way	
Description: Open, grassed amenity area with mature trees.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located at the edge of the main built-up area of Acton Village and helps to define the edge of the built-up area and its interface with open countryside. Adjacent to residential dwellings.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature and location contribute to the character of the area and softens the impact of development on open countryside. Has high community and amenity value.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 1 acres (0.4 hectares).
	

GS12: Browns Close	
Description: Open, grassed, landscaped amenity area with mature trees.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located within the main built-up area of Acton Village and surrounded by residential development.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature and location contribute to the character of the area, and it acts as a green oasis within an otherwise substantially built-up area. Has community and amenity value.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 0.2 acres (0.08 hectares).
	

GS13: Lime Walk/Jubilee Way	
Description: Open, grassed, strip of landscaped amenity area with mature trees	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located within the main built-up area of Acton Village and surrounded by residential development.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature and location contribute to the character of the area, and it acts as a green oasis within an otherwise substantially built-up area. Has community and amenity value.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 0.2 acres (0.08 hectares).
	

GS14: Gotsfield Close	
Description: Open, grassed, landscaped amenity area with mature trees.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located within the main built-up area of Acton Village and surrounded by residential development.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Its open nature and location contribute to the character of the area, and it acts as a green oasis within an otherwise substantially built-up area. Has community and amenity value.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 0.3 acres (0.12 hectares).
	

GS15: Land at Newman's Green and junction of Sudbury Road	
Description: Triangle strip of grassed land at Sudbury road junction.	
In reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	Located on the edge of the built-up area of Newman's Green hamlet and adjacent to residential development.
Demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance	Triangle area laid to grass with mature trees. It provides a rural green area which contributes to the character and setting of the area. Has amenity value.
Local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	Not an extensive tract of land given the overall scale of the village. Approximately 0.1 acres (0.04 hectares).
	

Appendix D: Glossary

Glossary of terms used and/or relevant to the Acton Neighbourhood Plan and supporting submission documents. Definitions are taken directly from the glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework December 2023, except where stated.

Affordable Housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

- a) **Affordable housing for rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents, including service charges where applicable; (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme, in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision, and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent.
- b) **Starter homes:** is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of Plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.
- c) **Discounted market sales housing:** is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.
- d) **Other affordable routes to home ownership:** is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

Ancient or veteran tree: A tree which, because of its age, size and condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient but are old relative to other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.

Archaeological interest: There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Build to Rent: Purpose built housing that is typically 100% rented out. It can form part of a wider multi-tenure development comprising either flats or houses but should be on the same site and/or contiguous with the main development. Schemes will usually offer longer tenancy agreements of three years or more and will typically be professionally managed stock in single ownership and management control.

Climate change adaptation: Adjustments made to natural or human systems in response to the actual or anticipated impacts of climate change to mitigate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

Climate change mitigation: Action to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate system, primarily through reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Community-led developments: A development instigated and taken forward by a not-for-profit organisation set up and run primarily for the purpose of meeting the housing needs of its members and the wider local community, rather than being a primarily commercial enterprise. The organisation is created, managed and democratically controlled by its members. It may take any one of various legal forms including a community land trust, housing co-operative and community benefit society. Membership of the organisation is open to all beneficiaries and prospective beneficiaries of that organisation. The organisation should own, manage or steward the homes in a manner consistent with its purpose, for example through a mutually supported arrangement with a Registered Provider of Social Housing. The benefits of the development to the specified community should be clearly defined and consideration given to how these benefits can be protected over time, including in the event of the organisation being wound up.

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

Deliverable: To be considered deliverable, sites for housing should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years. Sites that are not major development, and sites with detailed planning permission, should be considered deliverable until permission expires, unless there is clear evidence that homes will not be delivered within five years (e.g. they are no longer viable, there is no longer a demand for the type of units or sites have long term phasing plans). Sites with outline planning permission, permission in principle, allocated in the development plan or identified on a brownfield register should only be considered deliverable where there is clear evidence that housing completions will begin on site within five years.

Design Code: A set of illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area. The graphic and written components of the code should build upon a design vision, such as a masterplan or other design and development framework for a site or area.

Designated Heritage Asset: A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

Development Plan: Is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It includes adopted local plans, neighbourhood plans that have been made and published spatial development strategies, together with any regional strategy policies that remain in force. Neighbourhood plans that have been approved at referendum are also part of the development plan, unless the local planning authority decides that the neighbourhood plan should not be made.

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.

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.

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.

International, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity: All international sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and Ramsar sites), national sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and locally designated sites including Local Wildlife Sites.

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 planning authority: The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. All references to local planning authority include the district council, London borough council, county council, Broads Authority, National Park Authority, the Mayor of London and a development corporation, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities.

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.

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 floor space of 1,000m² or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more, or as otherwise provided in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

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.

Non-designated Heritage Asset: Local planning authorities may identify non-designated Heritage Assets. These are buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, but which are not formally designated heritage assets. In some areas, local authorities identify some non-designated heritage assets as *locally listed*. A substantial majority of buildings have little or no heritage significance and thus do not constitute heritage assets. Only a minority have enough heritage interest for their significance to be a material consideration in the planning process. (Definition from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment#non-designated-heritage-assets>)

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

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.

Priority habitats and species: Species and Habitats of Principal Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

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).

Self-build and custom-build housing: Housing built by an individual, a group of individuals, or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual. Such housing can be either market or affordable housing. A legal definition, for the purpose of applying the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended), is contained in section 1(A1) and (A2) of that Act.

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

Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting. For World Heritage Sites, the cultural value described within each site's Statement of Outstanding Universal Value forms part of its significance.

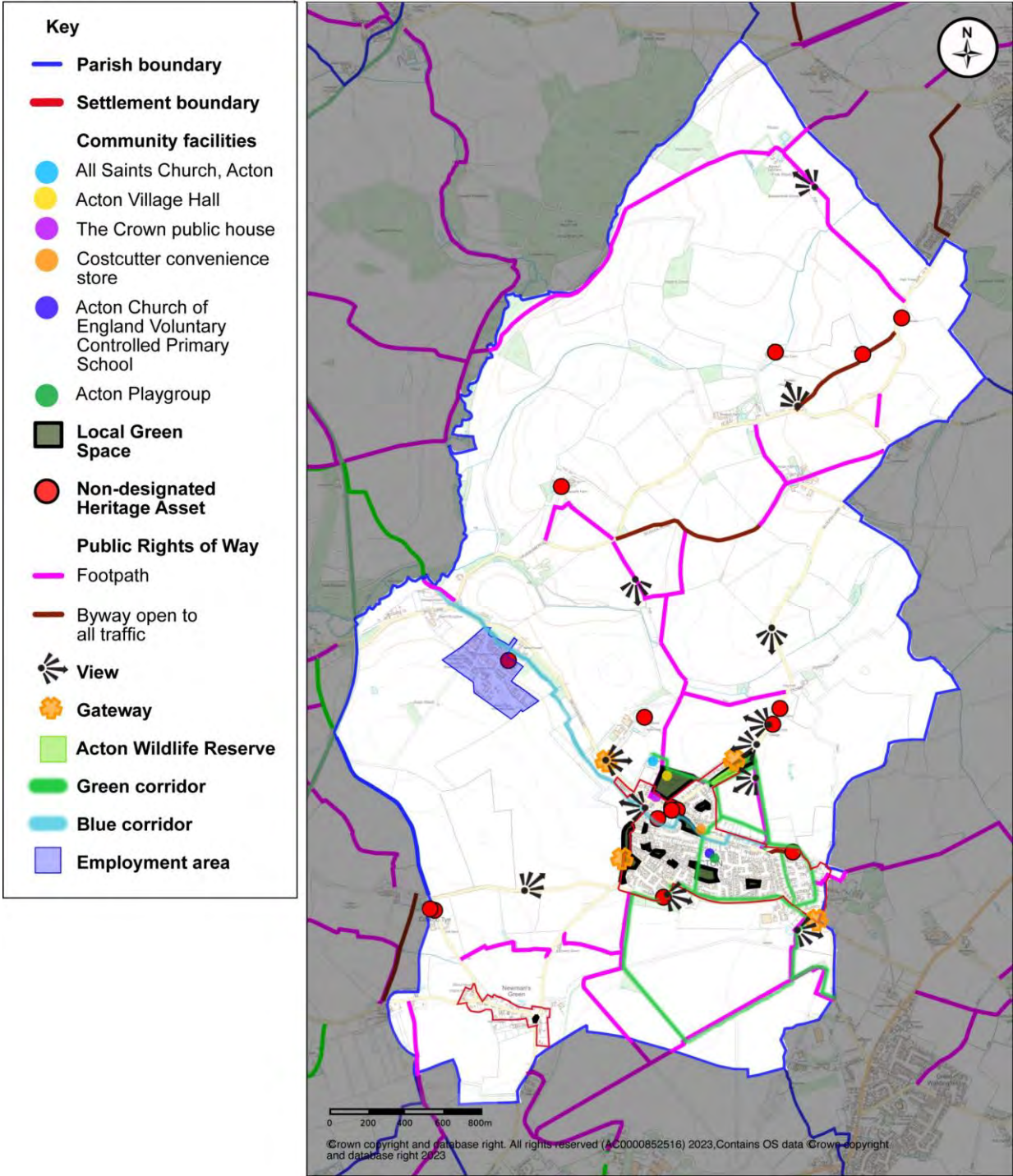
Strategic policies: Policies and site allocations, which address strategic priorities in line with the requirements of Section 19 (1B-E) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Strategic policy-making authorities: Those authorities responsible for producing strategic policies (local planning authorities, and elected Mayors or combined authorities, where this power has been conferred). This definition applies whether the authority is in the process of producing strategic policies or not.

Sustainable transport modes: Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.

Transport assessment: A comprehensive and systematic process that sets out transport issues relating to a proposed development. It identifies measures required to improve accessibility and safety for all modes of travel, particularly for alternatives to the car such as walking, cycling and public transport, and measures that will be needed to deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the development.

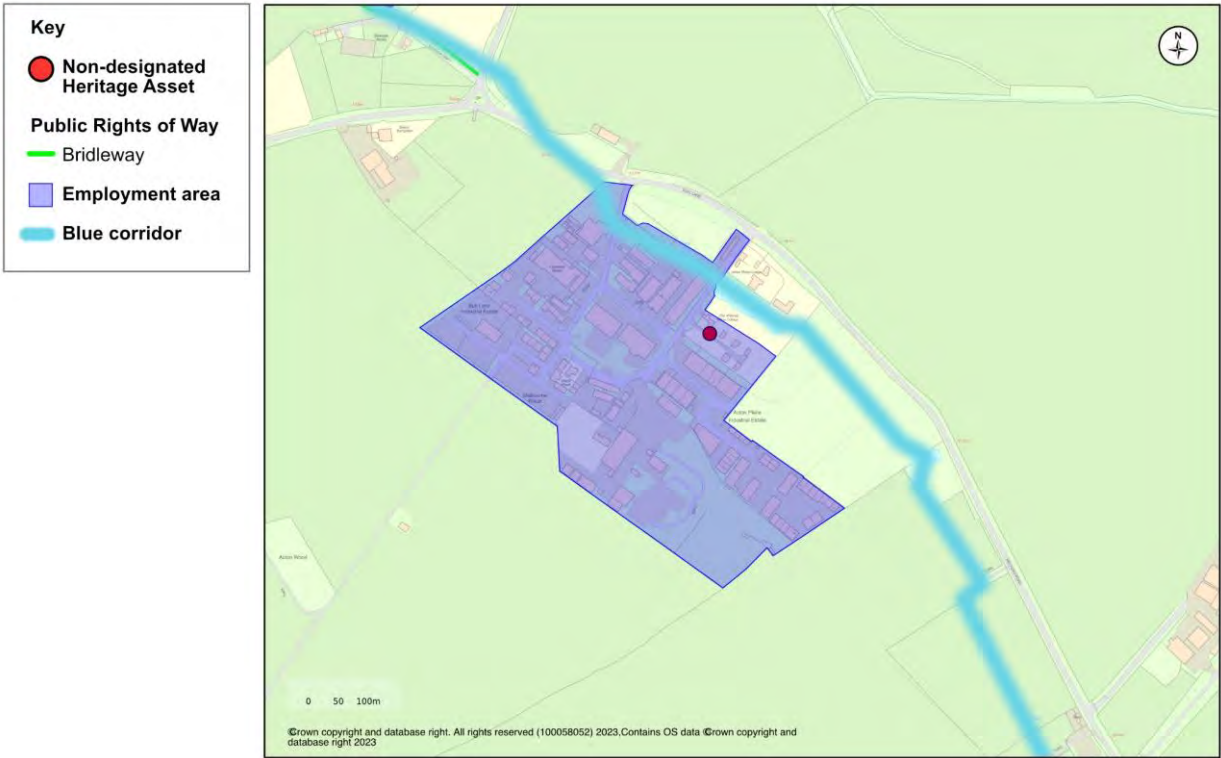
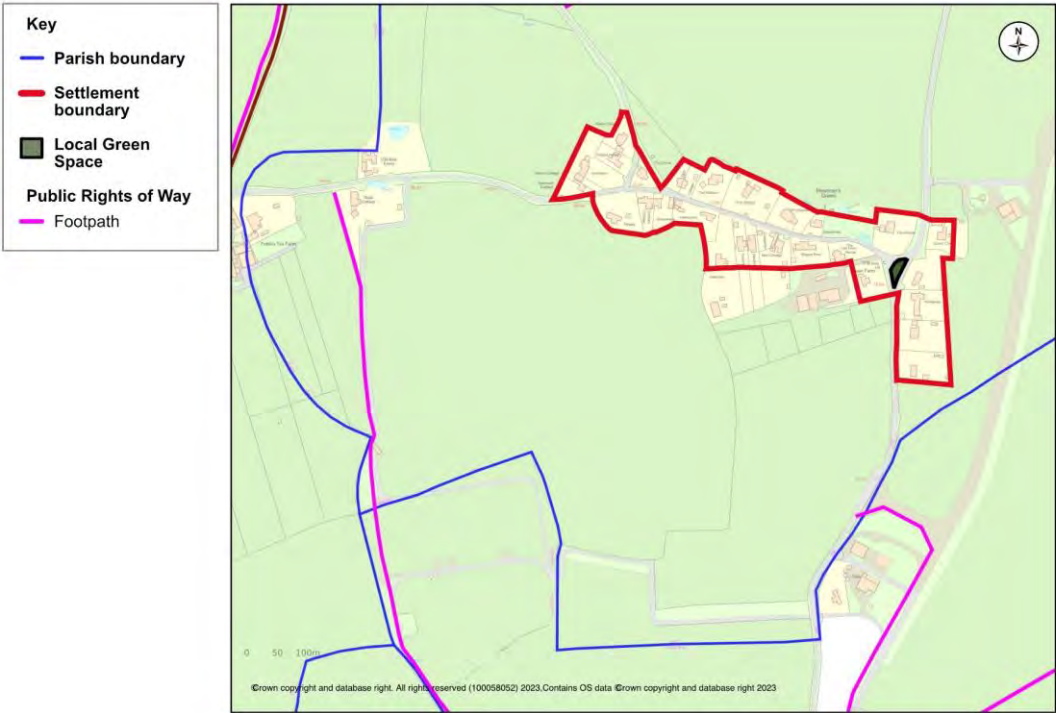
Appendix E: Policies Maps - Map 1: Whole Parish Policies Map (See also separate inset maps)



Inset Map 2: Acton Village Map



Inset Map 3: Newman’s Green and Inset Map 4: Bull Lane Employment Area



Appendix F: Acton Design Guidelines and Codes (March 2024)

(HYPERLINK)

