

The image is a composite. The top portion features a semi-transparent, light green map of the Assington area, showing property boundaries, roads, and the village layout. The map includes labels such as 'ASSINGTON', 'Acres', and '3040.938'. The bottom portion is an aerial photograph of the village, showing a mix of residential buildings, green fields, and trees. In the foreground, a large, stone church with a prominent square tower is visible. The overall scene is captured in a warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

ASSINGTON

Neighbourhood Plan
2018 - 2036

SUBMISSION DRAFT PLAN
JULY 2020

Assington Parish Council

Foreword

This is the draft Neighbourhood Plan for the parish of Assington. It has been prepared over a period of 2 years by a voluntary group of local residents in accordance with government regulations within the Localism Act 2011. Working to agreed terms of reference and in partnership with Assington Parish Council it has been developed to empower the residents of Assington to have their say in shaping the future development of this rural area. It identifies key issues of concern to the well-being, sustainability and long-term future of the parish and raises community actions and creates legal policies to allow our vision to be realised. Once it is complete and has been adopted by Babergh District Council it will form part of the development plan within the statutory town planning framework to 2036.

The working group of residents has made every effort to consult with the residents at key stages and inform them of the neighbourhood planning process, and therefore this document is designed to reflect the views of residents as a collective.

This is the second draft of the Neighbourhood Plan, known as the "Submission Plan", which has been submitted to Babergh District Council for further consultation and then examination by an independent examiner. Following the examination, and subject to the examiner and District Council's approval, a referendum of residents will be held to vote on whether the Plan should be used by Babergh District Council when deciding planning applications. If the referendum shows local support (more than 50% of those voting being in favour) then the Neighbourhood Plan will proceed to adoption and be used by the local planning authority, as part of the statutory development plan, in the determination of planning applications in Assington.

The Parish Council has engaged Places4People Planning Consultancy to help with the preparation of the Plan.



Acknowledgements

Current Working Group Membership

Helen Wallace - Chair (PC)	Andrew Hill - Treasurer (PC)
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Stephen Lustig - Secretary	Nick Miller
Nigel Finch	

Parish Councillors are annotated (PC) above.

Thank you for the continued support of all the residents who attended early meetings, spent time in the working group, and helped deliver residents questionnaires. Thanks also go to the Village Charity, Parish Church, Farm Shop and Assington News for their support.

Photographs have been kindly donated by many people and we are grateful to everyone who has contributed, with a special mention to Steve Betts for his superb panoramas of the parish.



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ANP Supporting Doc - Biodiversity
ANP Supporting Doc - Local Green Spaces
ANP Supporting Doc - Residents Comments and Feedback
ANP Supporting Doc - Residents Questionnaire Results
ANP Supporting Doc - Assington Views Appraisal
AECOM Design Guide
AECOM Site Assessment

These documents are to be found on the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the Parish Council website.



INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, which can establish local planning policies for the development and use of land in the neighbourhood. A Neighbourhood Plan is a community-led planning framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. It focuses on the use and development of land and contains planning policies which, alongside local plan and national planning policies, are used by the District Council in the determination of planning applications.
- 1.2** Parish councils are encouraged to produce their own Neighbourhood Plans enabling local people to have a say in how their neighbourhood grows and develops. In a designated "Neighbourhood Area" which contains all or part of the administrative area of a town or parish council, the town or parish council is responsible for neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood Plans cannot contradict the main government planning policies or the strategic policies in the Local Plan for the area. For example, they cannot propose less development than is planned for in the Local Plan.
- 1.3** This Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by a Working Group representing Assington Parish Council. Preparation of the Plan has been supported by Places4People Planning Consultancy and funded by the Government's Neighbourhood Planning Grant Programme. The content of the Neighbourhood Plan has been led by the community and shaped by results of questionnaires and drop-in events to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan represents the aims and aspirations of residents.
- 1.4** The Plan focuses on local planning related matters and provides the village with greater opportunities to manage future development, based upon a fair and democratic consultation process supported by Babergh District Council. It is structured to provide information about the Neighbourhood Plan process; the village's distinct character, history and geography; and the vision, objectives and Plan. The Plan itself contains planning policies and community actions. The latter do not form part of the development plan

but identify local initiatives to address issues and concerns raised during the community engagement undertaken in preparing the Plan. The planning policies appear in green boxes and are prefixed ASSN1, ASSN2 etc., and the community actions appear in orange coloured boxes and are prefixed CA1, CA2 etc.

- 1.5** The Plan covers the period from 2018 to 2036. It has been developed through extensive community consultation and is based on sound research and evidence. Once adopted, the Neighbourhood Plan will be reviewed every two years by Assington Parish Council.

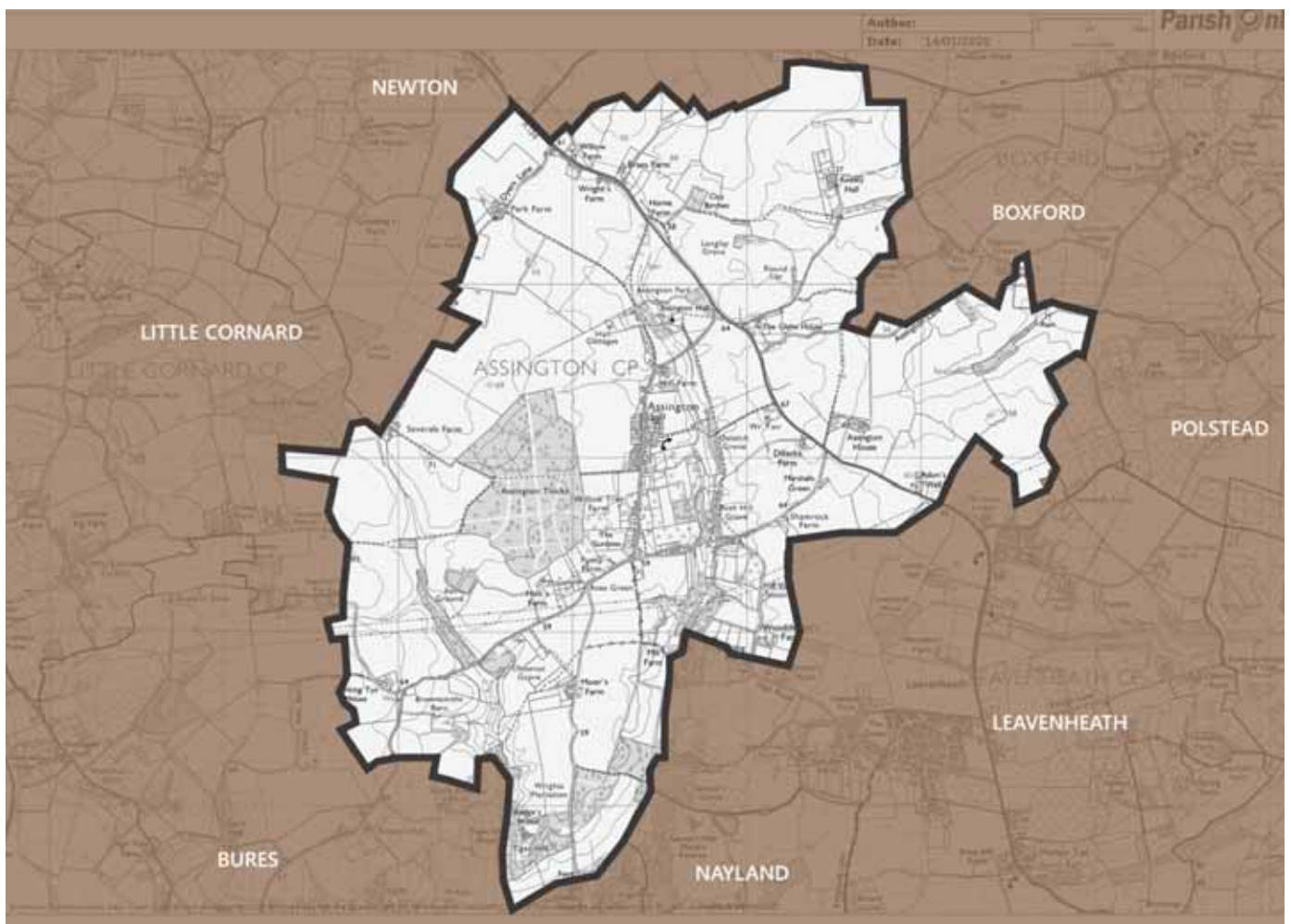
Why a Neighbourhood Plan for Assington?

- 1.6** In 2017 Assington Parish Councillors started to raise awareness of the neighbourhood planning process and increase their understanding of what it all entailed. Between June 2017 and June 2018, a number of discussions and community consultation events took place to ascertain the level of support for producing a Neighbourhood Plan. These included a full public consultation event on 14 May 2018 which was advertised in the Assington News and every home in Assington was leafleted. The aim of the event was to enable all residents to have their say and vote on the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. At the event, of those who responded and voted, there was a resounding 96% yes vote to go ahead with an application to Babergh District Council to designate Assington Parish as a Neighbourhood Plan area.



The Neighbourhood Plan Area

1.7 On 26 June 2018 Assington Parish Council, which is the “qualifying body” responsible for the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan, applied to Babergh District Council to designate the whole parish. Using the parish boundary seemed the most logical decision as it is both understandable to villagers and would conform to the electoral base which would ultimately be used for the Neighbourhood Plan Referendum. Babergh District Council designated the Assington Neighbourhood Area, as illustrated on Map 1 below, on 29 June 2018. The Neighbourhood Plan Area covers the whole parish and there is no other neighbourhood area designated in the parish. Details of the application, publication and designation can be found on the District Council website under Neighbourhood Plan for Assington.



Map 1 - The Designated Neighbourhood Area (Parish Boundary)

How the Plan was prepared

1.8 The preparation of the plan involved a number of stages which are listed below:

- a) Formation of working group
- b) Consultation events
- c) Residents questionnaire
- d) Appointment of Places4People planning consultancy
- e) AECOM studies on potential development sites and a parish character assessment

Neighbourhood Plan Stages

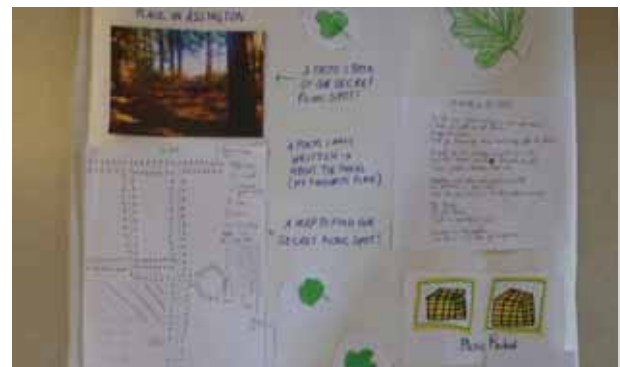
1.9 The Neighbourhood Plan has now reached the "Submission Stage" of preparation. The District Council will now undertake a further period of consultation ahead of the Plan being examined by an Independent Neighbourhood Plan Examiner. Following examination, any required changes to the Plan will be made and the District Council will call a Referendum in the parish so that those on the Electoral Register can vote whether the Neighbourhood Plan should be approved. The timing of this is subject to the government's lifting of the restriction on referendums due to the Covid-19 epidemic.



Community Engagement and Public Consultation.

1.10 The preparation of the Plan has placed a significant emphasis on involving the local community in understanding the current issues in Assington and the development of the planning policies contained in the Plan. These are summarised briefly below.

- 12 March 2018 - Informal residents evening meeting
- 14 May 2018 - Community consultation evening
- 18 June 2018 - Inaugural meeting of Working Group
- 1 September 2018 - Village Church Fete - Interactive slide show and display
- 4 November 2018 - Assington Junior Challenge
- Early December 2018 - Residents Questionnaire
- 13 April 2019 - Community Consultation - sharing questionnaire results
- 28 May 2019 - Neighbourhood Plan and playground equipment consultation with children
- 7 September 2019 - Village church fete display on forthcoming consultation
- 5 October 2019 - Community consultation on AECOM site and village design assessment
- February - March 2020 - Pre-Submission Draft Plan Consultation

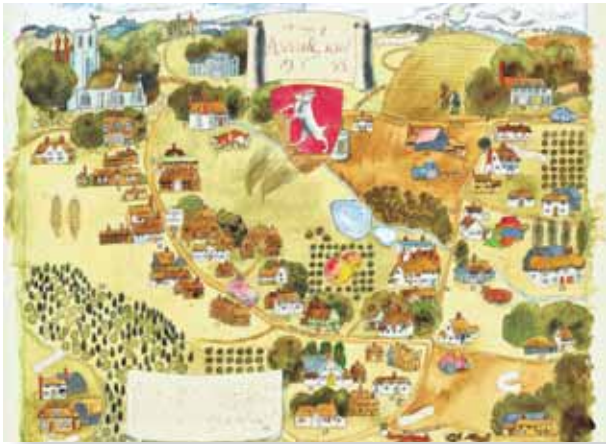


2. ASSINGTON PAST AND PRESENT

Assington's History & Characteristics

- 2.1** Assington's manors from ancient time were Assington (Asetona, meaning the homestead of Asa or Assa's kin), and Aveley (Aluenelega, meaning grove or glade of Aelfwynn (female)).
- 2.2** We have an exceptionally complete set of documentary information from before Domesday, through all the mediaeval manorial owners, some of them dramatic or notorious. From Tudor times, the Gurdon family consolidated wealth and public prominence and by land purchases united the manors & sub-manors under one ownership. The County Historic Environment Record has approximately 40 entries for the parish, many of which relate to medieval sites, including a watermill, former settlement area and a deer park.
- 2.3** In more recent times, we know of the great agricultural depressions, with old maps showing former abandoned land, and local accounts such as in Ronald Blyth's 'Akenfield' and the Trilogy of Adrian Bell. However, rural poverty was lessened by the internationally known Assington Agricultural Co-operative schemes, instituted in 1830 and 1852 by John Gurdon.
- 2.4** A 19th century window in the Church commemorates Mr Dyer of Park Farm, whose work included land arbitrations, administering charities, and building the village workhouse. We know much detail of the successive workhouses in Further Street which have been conserved, and the main building and garden have been listed. Study has shown the Assington workhouse functioned in a benevolent way.
- 2.5** Older houses in the parish were built of local timber and bricks, predating railway imports. Latterly the village had its own shops and, until recently, no public transport ever ran more than twice weekly. Assington largely sustained itself and The Hall into the post-war period. The ending of much manual farm and orchard work has since changed the pattern of life and work locally.





- 2.8 From 1950, new employment was readily available in Sudbury's former engineering and clothing factories, and Assington became one of the villages with high car ownership among its young workforce. Assington has since welcomed people from outside of the county who have come to commute or to retire, buying and also privately renting. Young people have increasingly moved to the more available accommodation in Sudbury and Great Cornard, and latterly to higher education and then further afield.
- 2.9 Between 1970 and 2018, there were forty new houses built in the central part of the village (including barn conversions), both for and by Assington people, and for open market sale. Twelve of these provided welcome social housing.

Housing and population

2.6 Much accommodation in the 19th century and before was in the lofts, wings and outbuildings of the farms, and in dilapidated, overcrowded dwellings. Over the 19th and 20th centuries, periods of great agricultural poverty led to migrations out of East Anglia to London, the industrial north, and abroad. Assington's population, as in other villages, plummeted from 1850 and didn't return to that level for a century. The great agricultural depression of the 1920s and 1930s left farms crying out for tenants and brought many farming families and farm workers from Scotland.

2.7 Assington was an estate village until 1938 when most land and houses were sold, subject to existing tenancies. In 1938, felling of nearly all timber was followed by sale of the Assington lands, farms and houses to the individual tenants. Some houses retain the 'estate' house numbers in their addresses. At the same time, new council houses in The Street gave necessary and welcome moves for village families from very overcrowded and dilapidated housing.



3. CURRENT ISSUES

3.1 A number of means have been used to identify the current and relevant issues that the Neighbourhood Plan should seek to address. These are identified below and in the appropriate topic chapters that follow later.

Residents Questionnaire

3.2 A key part of community engagement was the compilation and completion of the Residents Questionnaire. In December 2018 following the advertising of the forthcoming exercise in the Assington News a questionnaire was hand delivered by volunteers to every household in the parish for completion by all residents over 16 years of age. Arrangements were made for completed questionnaires to be collected two weeks after they were delivered or alternatively residents could post it back into a secure box within Assington farm shop. 52% of residents returned a completed questionnaire. The questionnaires were anonymous, other than a postcode.



3.3 The results were produced in visual form for use at the follow up consultation event and are also available on the Assington Neighbourhood Plan Facebook page and Assington Parish Council website.

The questionnaire covered the following topics:

- Housing Type and Need
- Countryside Character
- Road Safety
- Amenities and Services
- Local Commerce

3.4 Charts showing results from the questionnaire are shown throughout this plan, in the relevant policy sections. The main issues identified by Assington residents can be summarised as follows:

Traffic Speed and Volume - speeding traffic was considered a concern by 87% of the respondents to the Residents Questionnaire and 72% said that children did not feel safe walking in the village centre.

Affordable housing - A clear preference was stated for 2 or 3 bedroom houses or 'starter' homes for younger residents. Building of predominantly large 4 or 5 bedroom houses has contributed to a housing need in the younger population who cannot afford to buy a house in the village they grew up in. 88% of the respondents to the Residents Questionnaire said they wanted 'starter homes for first-time buyers' to be a priority for any development in Assington and 70% said they wanted more social housing available for rent.

Rural character - residents were alarmed by the large numbers of new houses (+33% since April 2018) being granted permission and their impact on the character of the village and the inevitable demands on local infrastructure.

Broadband Speed - only a proportion of the village is covered by high-speed broadband, the rest of the village relies on other providers which offer significantly lower band-width speed to high speed broadband. 90% of respondents to the Residents Questionnaire said that Broadband services need improvement and 76% said that mobile phone reception needs improvement.



3.5 Other issues identified included:

Bus Services - Assington's village centre retains only a skeletal bus service to Sudbury and Colchester. This contributes to a sense of isolation for both younger and older residents who don't drive. 60% of respondents to the Residents Questionnaire said that public transport service needs improvement.

Playground facilities - were shown to be important to some residents and in early 2020 construction of a new facility was underway.

Village Amenities - Assington has a good range of amenities including the church, pub, shop, café, post office and mobile library. Residents are keen that these should be maintained or improved in the future.

Community Activities - Although Assington has an excellent village hall, many villagers felt there was scope for it to be used for more organised activities particularly for the young and older residents.





4. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's high-level planning policies which must be taken into account in the preparation of development plan documents and when deciding planning applications. In February 2019 the Government published a Revised NPPF. It contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states:

Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For plan-making this means that:

- a) *plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;*
- b) *strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:*
 - i. *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or*
 - ii. *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole*

4.2 The NPPF requires that communities preparing Neighbourhood Plans should:

- develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development; and

- plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan.

Babergh Local Plan

4.3 At a more local level, the Plan has been prepared in the context of the current status of the Babergh Local Plan, which comprises the Core Strategy and the "saved policies" of the 2006 Babergh Local Plan. Babergh District Council adopted a Core Strategy in February 2014 which provides the current strategic planning framework for Assington which this Neighbourhood Plan has had regard to. These documents are collectively referred to as 'the local plan' in this document.

4.4 The adopted Core Strategy identifies a hierarchy of settlements ranked according to their size and the services they provide. It recognises that there are several larger villages (core villages) that provide a range of services and facilities for a cluster of villages around them. It identifies Assington as a 'hinterland village' within the 'functional cluster' of Bures although the main service centre for employment, retail and services is at Sudbury.

4.5 The saved policies of the 2006 Local Plan and the policies in the Core Strategy are those by which planning applications will be judged until replaced by a new local plan.

Emerging Joint Babergh & Mid Suffolk Local Plan

4.6 Early in 2015 the District Council announced their intention to produce a new Joint Local Plan with Mid Suffolk District Council that would provide a planning framework for the management of growth across the districts to 2036. In July 2019 the District Council consulted on the 'Preferred Options' for the draft Local Plan. The District Council published a new "Local Development Scheme" in July 2020 which stated that the Local Plan end date would now be 2037 and that it would not be adopted until Winter 2021/22, after the anticipated date for the completion of this Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, while we

have had due regard for the content of the emerging Local Plan, the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan do not have to be in general conformity with it because it carries little 'weight' in the planning process.

4.7 The Preferred Options Joint Local Plan document continues to identify a hierarchy of settlements according to their level of services and function within the District and Assington continues to be categorised as a Hinterland Village where draft Policy SP03 states that development will be permitted within settlement boundaries where:

"Design is sympathetic to its rural surrounding and demonstrates high-quality design by having regard to the relevant policies of the [local] plan;

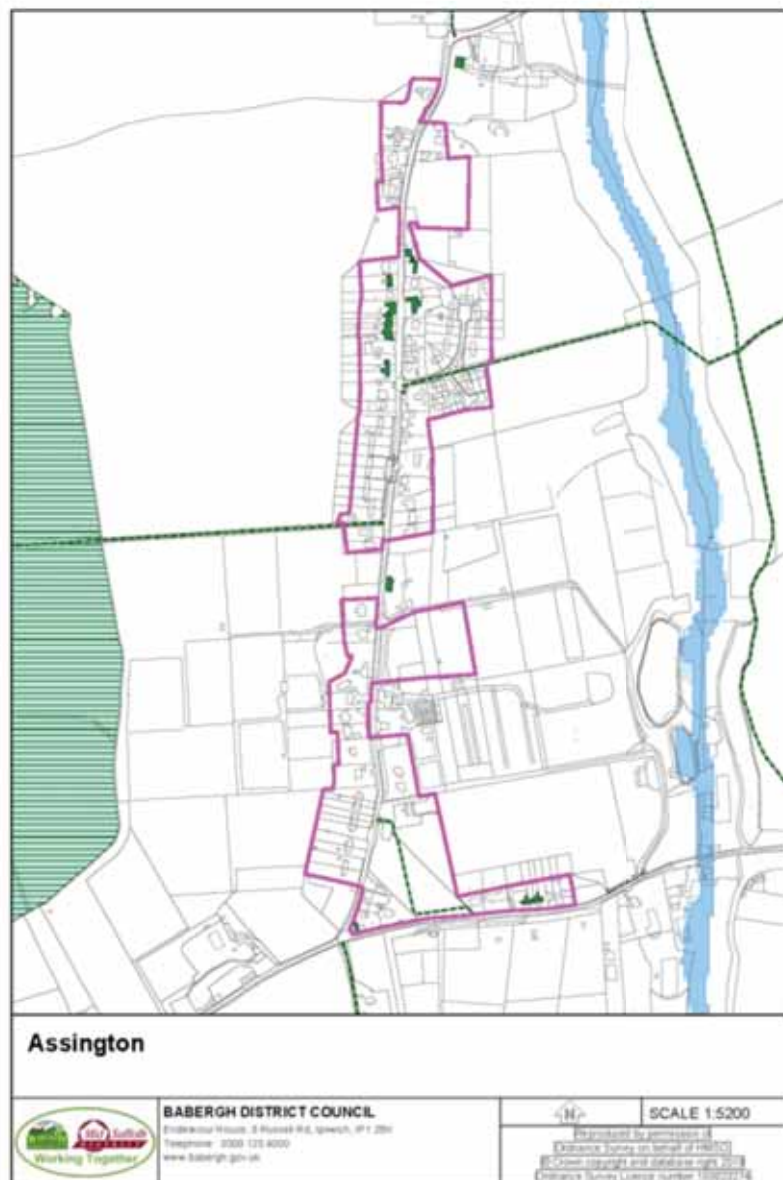
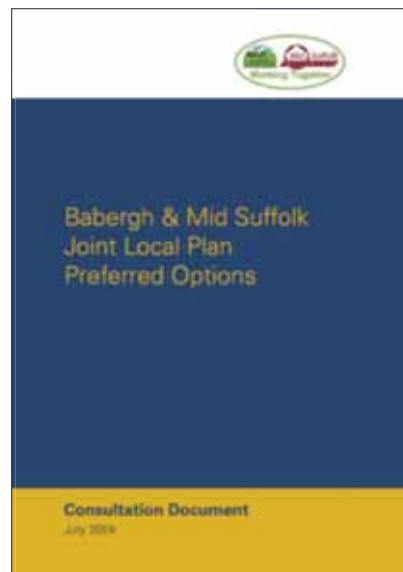
A high standard of hard and soft landscaping, appropriate for the location is used;

Hedgerows and treelines which make an important contribution to the wider context and setting are protected, particularly in edge of settlement locations; and

The cumulative impact of proposals will be a major consideration."

The precise wording of the final policy will evolve over the course of the preparation of the Local Plan and therefore carries no weight in the planning decision process at this time.

4.8 The Preferred Options consultation document also included a proposed Settlement Boundary for the village, revised from the 2006 Local Plan and illustrated opposite. We have given regard to this proposed Settlement Boundary in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.



Map 2 - The proposed settlement boundary in the Preferred Options Joint Local Plan

5. Vision and Objectives

- 5.1** The information gathered in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, as well as the context of the higher-level planning policies, has informed our vision for Assington.

In 2036 Assington will remain a rural and attractive village, having protected its countryside setting by ensuring that new development is in proportion to and respectful of the character of the village, while at the same time maintaining a thriving, vibrant and open community.

Objectives

- 5.2** The Objectives of the Plan have been developed in order to deliver the vision. Each objective has informed and guided the content of the planning policies and community actions that follow.

Housing

New development should respect the character of the village and only be brought forward where there is a demonstrable need and where there is the necessary infrastructure to properly support it. Priority should be given to smaller units and affordable housing.

Transport and Travel

The future development of the village will have regard to improving the safety of pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists, including through the use of measures to reduce vehicle speeds and volume. Wherever possible, bus services and public transport should be maintained or improved.

Natural Environment

Villagers should be able to enjoy Assington's natural environment and every opportunity should be taken to enhance this environment and access to it.

Built Environment and Design

Development should respect the rural character of the existing village and avoid unnecessary urbanisation.

Infrastructure, Business, and Services

Development should not place any unacceptable burden on infrastructure and services and should respect the natural limitations of the rural location. Wherever possible, existing services should be maintained and improved, and commercial community assets preserved.







6. Spatial Strategy

- 6.1** As noted above, the planning policy framework for Babergh is currently evolving from that which is set out in the Babergh Local Plan (2006) and the Core Strategy (2014) into a new Joint Local Plan for the Babergh and Mid Suffolk districts. The Preferred Options for the Joint Local Plan (July 2019) identifies Assington as a Hinterland Village but, given that the new Local Plan is unlikely to be adopted until Winter 2021/22, only limited regard can be had to this status at the time of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.2** In order to achieve sustainable future growth and to limit potential detrimental impact on the surrounding landscape, it is essential that development is primarily focused on the existing built-up area of the village. The Plan also recognises that the presence of heritage and landscape assets requires that development will need to be carefully designed and, where necessary, mitigate any impact on the historic and natural landscape and existing infrastructure. Elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Plan Area there are both individual and clusters of dwellings, the majority of which would have originally been associated with farm business. The most significant cluster is at Further Street on the A134 and Dyers Lane where there are 17 properties forming an informal ribbon of development along the road frontage.
- 6.3** A Settlement Boundary is defined for the main built-up area of the village in order to manage the location of future development and to protect the countryside that surrounds it from inappropriate development. The boundary is based on that contained in the 2006 Local Plan but has been reviewed to reflect changes during that 14-year period and opportunities for new development that will arise during the next 20 years. These changes include sites where permissions for new dwellings have been granted since 1 April 2018. Given that the principle of development on these sites is accepted by the District Council, some regard has also been given to the proposed Settlement Boundary in the emerging Joint Local Plan. However, it is considered that our local knowledge has produced a Settlement Boundary that more accurately reflects local circumstances and is therefore one that the Joint Local Plan should also contain.
- 6.4** In order to manage the potential impacts of growth, new development will be focused within the designated Settlement Boundary, thereby ensuring that the undeveloped rural countryside is preserved and remains largely undeveloped. Only in exceptional circumstances will it be appropriate to allow development to take place outside the Settlement Boundary, including at Further Street and Dyers Lane, which will be limited to that which is essential for the operation of agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses for which it can be demonstrated by robust evidence that the development needs to be located in the countryside.

Policy ASSN1 - Spatial Strategy

The Neighbourhood Plan area will accommodate development commensurate with Assington's designation as a Hinterland Village in the Local Plan.

The focus for any new development will be within the Settlement Boundary, as defined on the Policies Map.

Proposals for development located outside the Settlement Boundary will only be permitted for those that are essential for the operation of an existing business, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation, utility services and other exceptional uses, where:

- i) it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that there is an identified local need for the proposal; and
- ii) it cannot be satisfactorily located within the Settlement Boundary.

In exceptional circumstances, the redevelopment of existing brownfield sites that create unacceptable impacts on the local environment, highways and the amenity of residents for alternative uses, including residential, may be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that the public benefit will outweigh the loss of the existing use.

For the purposes of policy ASSN1, the exceptional uses would include development required by a utility company to fulfil their statutory obligations to their customers.





7. Housing

Housing Objective

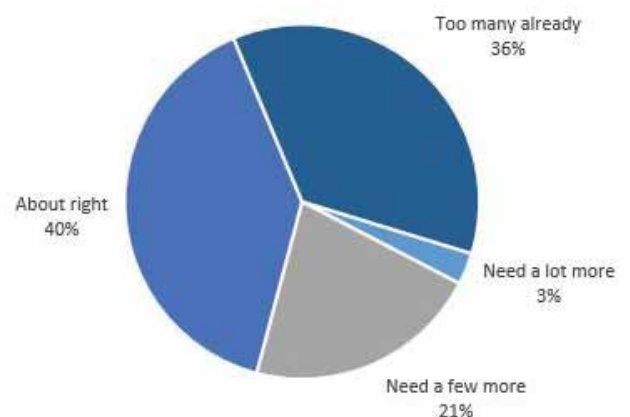
New development should respect the character of the village and only be brought forward where there is a demonstrable need and where there is the necessary infrastructure properly to support it. Priority should be given to smaller units and affordable housing.

- 7.1** A key function of the Neighbourhood Plan is to cater for the future housing requirements of Assington, in terms of the amount, type and location. In doing so it will ensure that planning applications for new housing can be considered against an up-to-date plan that provides certainty, in particular, as to the location of development.
- 7.2** At 1 April 2018 (the base date of this plan) there were approximately 180 dwellings in the parish, the great majority of which were within the main built-up area. Between 2001 and 2018 approximately 20 new homes were completed, primarily in the form of "infill" plots and small closes. At 1 April 2018 there were permissions for a further 28 new homes which had not been completed at that date.
- 7.3** The Preferred Options Joint Local Plan document identified a need to deliver at least 7,560 new homes across Babergh between 2018 and 2036 but actually makes provision for building 9,343 homes in the same period in order to ensure a wide range of sites are readily available. It proposed that 10% of the housing would be built in Hinterland Villages. Table 4 of the same document proposed a minimum of 38 new homes, including outstanding planning permissions, to be built in Assington between 2018 and 2036. As such, given the permissions at 1 April 2018 and those granted since, it is not essential for the Neighbourhood Plan to identify additional sites to meet the minimum requirement.

7.4 Since 1 April 2018 there have been further planning permissions for new housing in the village amounting to an additional 36 dwellings as at 1 November 2019. However, given that this Neighbourhood Plan makes provision for housing growth over the period to 2036, it would be appropriate to provide some direction about the amount and location of housing development in the medium to longer term in order to avoid a potentially reactive approach to considering planning applications for housing.

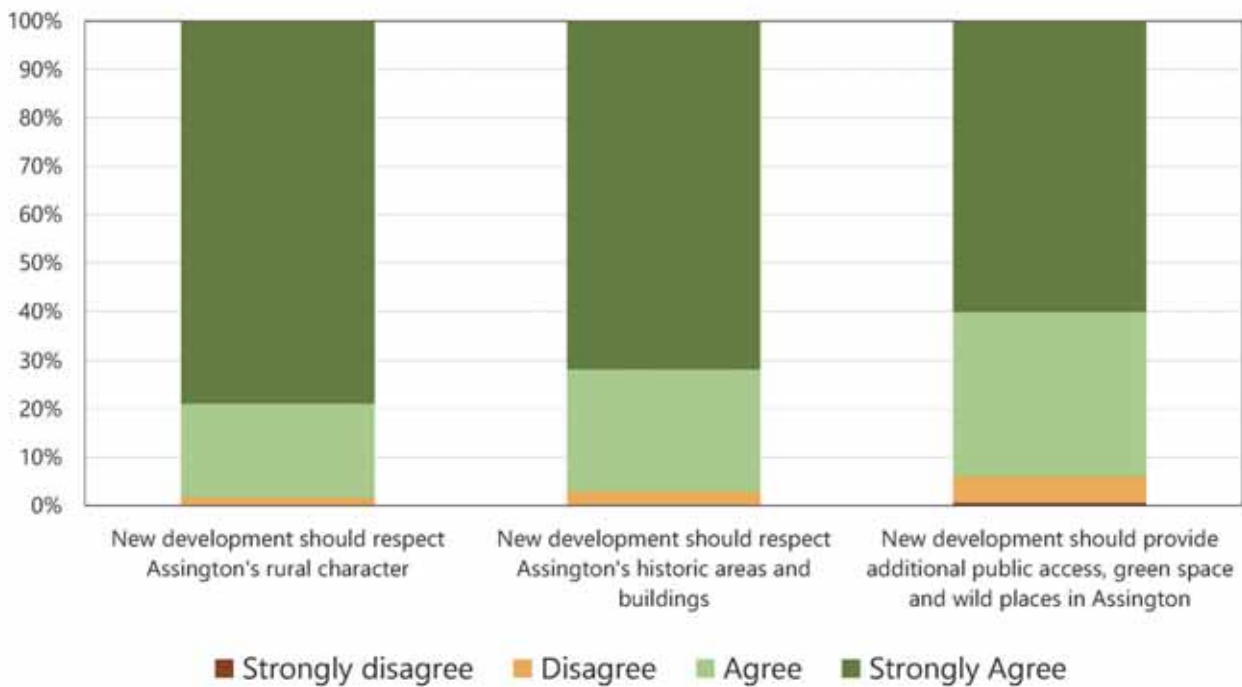
7.5 The Residents Questionnaire did not identify much support for additional housing in the village. This is understandable given the number of recent approvals for new homes that have changed the character of the village. However, it is important that we recognise that there may continue to be a need for additional housing in the wider area to cater for changing needs, such as an ageing population and household sizes becoming smaller as more people live alone.

A1) What do you think about the number of houses currently in Assington Parish?





B1) Do you agree with these comments about good planning?



7.6 The Neighbourhood Plan therefore makes provision for at least 67 new homes to be built in the village between 2018 and 2036. This provision will be made through:

- i) the construction of sites that had already been granted planning permission at 1 April 2018 that had not been completed at that date, or new permissions that have been granted since that date (64 dwellings per Appendix C)
- ii) allocating an additional site for housing in the Neighbourhood Plan - Policy ASSN8 - (3 dwellings)
- iii) allowing suitable development on infill plots within the defined Settlement Boundary where proposals do not have a detrimental impact on the character of the local area and the amenity of neighbouring residents
- iv) the conversion of redundant barns and other farm buildings, provided they meet certain criteria

- v) in very exceptional circumstances, allowing a new home outside the Settlement Boundary where it can be demonstrated that it is essential to the operation of agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation or other exceptional circumstances where it is essential that a dwelling needs to be located on site, in accordance with the criteria in Policy ASSN1.

7.7 Meeting the Joint Local Plan housing requirement for the village and allocating sites for housing ensures that the Neighbourhood Plan conforms with Paragraph 14 of the NPPF and that, as long as the Plan is kept up-to-date, speculative housing proposals that are not in accordance with the Plan can be resisted.

Policy ASSN2 - Housing Development

This Plan provides for around 67 additional dwellings in the Neighbourhood Plan area since 2018, including those allocated in this plan.

This growth will be met through

- i. the implementation of planning permissions for additional dwellings granted since 1 April 2018, including those allocated in ii below;
- ii. the site allocations as identified in Policies ASSN3 to ASSN8 in the Plan and on the Policies Map; and - small brownfield "windfall" sites within the Settlement Boundary that come forward during the plan period and are not identified in the Plan; and
- iii. in exceptional circumstances, in accordance with Policy ASSN1, outside the Settlement Boundary.

Proposals for the conversion of redundant or disused agricultural barns outside the Settlement Boundaries into dwellings will be permitted where:

- a) the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for extension, significant alteration or reconstruction; and
- b) the proposal is a high-quality design and the method of conversion retains the character and historic interest of the building; and
- c) the proposal would lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting of the building, and the creation of a residential curtilage and any associated domestic paraphernalia would not have a harmful effect on the character of the site or setting of the building, any wider group of buildings, or the surrounding area.

Proposals for new permanent dwellings outside the Settlement Boundary should, in addition to the criteria set out in Policy ASSN1, also fulfil the requirements for essential workers as described by current National Planning Practice Guidance, or in the event of there being none, the requirements as detailed in 7.8 below.

- 7.8** National Planning Practice Guidance currently states that the considerations that it may be relevant to take into account of when applying Paragraph 79a of the NPPF could include:
- *evidence of the necessity for a rural worker to live at, or in close proximity to, their place of work to ensure the effective operation of an agricultural, forestry or similar land-based rural enterprise (for instance, where farm animals or agricultural processes require on-site attention 24-hours a day and where otherwise there would be a risk to human or animal health or from crime, or to deal quickly with emergencies that could cause serious loss of crops or products);*
 - *the degree to which there is confidence that the enterprise will remain viable for the foreseeable future;*
 - *whether the provision of an additional dwelling on site is essential for the continued viability of a farming business through the farm succession process;*
 - *whether the need could be met through improvements to existing accommodation on the site, providing such improvements are appropriate taking into account their scale, appearance and the local context; and*
 - *in the case of new enterprises, whether it is appropriate to consider granting permission for a temporary dwelling for a trial period.*
- Employment on an assembly or food packing line, or the need to accommodate seasonal workers, will generally not be sufficient to justify building isolated rural dwellings.*

Housing Allocations

7.9 In order to provide certainty as to the location of new housing in the village, the Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites to be developed by 2036. Five of these sites have already been granted planning permission but, as at 1 November 2019, development had yet to commence. The remaining Meadow Way site is an additional site that does not have planning permission but is being identified in policy ASSN8 for development. The following paragraphs address all the specific sites that are being allocated.

Land at Assington Barns

7.10 A site of 1.1 hectares adjoining the Assington Barn complex has two separate planning permissions that, combined, will deliver around 15 dwellings. The site, as illustrated on Map 3 below, will require a new access to be constructed from The Street which will also create a new access to Assington Barn which would result in stopping up the existing access.

Given that the principle of development is accepted and, even though the permissions might lapse before work commences, it is allocated for housing



development in Policy ASSN3. Development is expected to take place in accordance with the planning consents in place at the time the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared, unless superseded by a subsequent planning permission for residential development on the site.

Policy ASSN3 - Site at Assington Barn

A site with an area of 1.1 hectares, as identified on Map 3 and the Policies Map, is allocated for no more than 15 dwellings. The development shall provide a new access off The Street to the development and the adjoining Assington Barns complex.

Development will be expected to take place in accordance with the current planning consents unless superseded by a subsequent planning permission for residential development.



Map 3 - Land at Assington Barns

Policy ASSN4 - Land East of St Edmund's Close

A site with an area of 0.25 hectares, as identified on Map 4 and the Policies Map, is allocated for no more than six dwellings.

Development will be expected to take place in accordance with the current planning consent unless superseded by a subsequent planning permission for residential development.

Land East of St Edmund's Close

7.11 A site to the east of St Edmund's Close, as illustrated on Map 4, was granted planning permission at appeal in 2019. The approval is for no more than six dwellings and a detailed planning permission was granted in October 2019 for the development comprising three, two storey houses and three bungalows.

Given that the principle of development is accepted and, even though the permission might lapse before work commences, it is allocated for housing development in Policy ASSN4. Development is expected to take place in accordance with the planning consent in place at the time the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared, unless superseded by a subsequent planning permission for residential development on the site.



Map 4 - Land East of St Edmund's Close

Land North Of Assington Barn

7.12 A site of 1.1 hectares to the north of Assington Barn was granted outline planning permission in 2018 for 8 dwellings of 2, 3 and 4 bedrooms. The site, as illustrated on Map 5 below, will be accessed from The Street.

Given that the principle of development is accepted and, even though the permissions might lapse before work commences, it is allocated for housing development in Policy ASSN5. Development is expected to take place in accordance with the planning consents in place at the time the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared, unless superseded by a subsequent planning permission for residential development on the site.

Policy ASSN5 - Land North of Assington Barn

A site with an area of 1.1 hectares, as identified on Map 5 and the Policies Map, is allocated for up to 8 two, three and four-bedroomed dwellings. The development shall provide a new access off The Street.

Development will be expected to take place in accordance with the current planning consent unless superseded by a subsequent planning permission for residential development.



Map 5 - Land North of Assington Barns

Land Adjacent to "Cornerways"

7.13 A site adjacent to Cornerways has been granted full planning permission for two semi-detached bungalows in 2018.

Given that the principle of development is accepted and, even though the permission might lapse before work commences, it is allocated for housing development in Policy ASSN6. Development is expected to take place in accordance with the planning consent in place at the time the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared, unless superseded by a subsequent planning permission for residential development on the site.

Policy ASSN6 - Land Adjacent to Cornerways, The Street

A site with an area of 0.05 hectares, as identified on Map 6 and the Policies Map, is allocated for no more than two semi-detached bungalows of no more than 5.8m in height (excluding chimneys).

Development will be expected to take place in accordance with the current planning consent unless superseded by a subsequent planning permission for residential development.



Map 6 - Land adjacent to Cornerways

Land South of Maxton and Russets, The Street

7.14 A single plot to the south of recently constructed dwellings known as Maxton and Russets, to the west of The Street, was granted planning permission for one dwelling in January 2019 and an amended scheme, still for one dwelling, approved in September 2019. Access to the proposal is via a new drive in front of "The Chase" to the south.

Given that the principle of development is accepted and, even though the permission might lapse before work commences, it is allocated for housing development in Policy ASSN7. Development is expected to take place in accordance with the planning consent in place at the time the Neighbourhood Plan was prepared, unless superseded by a subsequent planning permission for residential development on the site.

Policy ASSN7 - Land South of Maxton and Russets, The Street

A site with an area of 0.10 hectares, as identified on Map 7 and the Policies Map, is allocated for one one and a half storey dwelling of up to three bedrooms.

Development will be expected to take place in accordance with the current planning consent unless superseded by a subsequent planning permission for residential development.



Map 7 - Land South of Maxton and Russets, The Street

Other Sites

7.15 During the course of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan a number of sites were identified as being potentially suitable for housing development. These sites were independently assessed by consultants AECOM, funded directly by the government Neighbourhood Plan grant initiative. The Site Assessment report is available to view on the Neighbourhood Plan page of the Assington village website.

7.16 The Site Assessment report identified two sites that were considered suitable for housing development. Given the existing permissions in the village and the minimum housing requirement contained in the draft Local Plan, it is considered unnecessary to allocate both sites. The site to the north of Pump Farm is adjacent to a development of four houses currently under construction and it is considered that any additional development in that location would cause serious harm to the local amenity.

Land East of Meadow Way

7.17 In recent years an extension to Meadow Way has provided four additional dwellings and additional land to the east of these properties has been identified as being suitable for further residential development.

The site has an area of approximately 0.4 hectares and is allocated for approximately three dwellings which must be bungalows having no more than three bedrooms. Given the level of existing permissions in the village and in order to ensure a balanced supply of new housing over the Neighbourhood Plan period, development on this site will not be allowed to commence until at least 2031.

Policy ASSN8 - Land East of Meadow Way

A site with an area of 0.4 hectares, as identified on Map 8 and the Policies Map, is allocated for up to three bungalows. Each dwelling shall have no more than three bedrooms and with a maximum floorspace of 95 square metres. The development will need to provide a footway from the site to the existing footway on Vicary Way to create a safe route for the vulnerable user.

Development of the site will not be allowed to commence before 2031.



Map 8 - Land East of Meadow Way



Affordable Housing

7.18 Affordability of housing remains a significant barrier for many seeking their own homes. With government published figures indicating that, in Babergh, average house prices are over ten times the average household income, many newly-formed households will be excluded from the housing market. One way that the planning system can address this problem is through the provision of affordable housing, as defined by the NPPF and set out in the Glossary. Affordable housing schemes can primarily be delivered through a percentage of a larger development of over ten dwellings or, as an exception, small-scale schemes, including entry level homes for purchase or 'rural exception sites' outside the Settlement Boundaries where housing would not normally be permitted.

7.19 In order to deliver affordable housing through 'exception sites' the following steps would be required:

- i) a local need must be established, preferably through an up-to-date housing needs survey of residents; and
- ii) a willing landowner would need to be prepared to sell land at a price significantly below the market value for housing land; and
- iii) a registered social landlord (housing association) must be willing to work with the Parish Council and District Council to fund and manage a scheme.

7.20 The emerging Joint Local Plan (July 2019) does not contain a policy for the delivery of affordable housing on rural exception sites and, therefore, this Neighbourhood Plan addresses the matter should a local need be identified during the period up to 2036.

7.21 Where a "rural exception" site is proposed for development, it must be demonstrated that there is an identified local need in the village and its hinterland, and that the site is suitable to meet that local need. In exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate to permit an element of open market housing to facilitate the delivery of the affordable housing. This is in accordance with paragraph 77 of the NPPF which states that local authorities should consider whether

this approach would help to provide additional affordable housing. The exceptional circumstances, where a small number of market homes will be permitted could include, for example, where there is insufficient government grant available, and it is demonstrated, through financial appraisal, that the open market housing is essential to enable the delivery of the affordable housing. In these cases, the applicant would need to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the District Council, that the inclusion of open market housing is the minimum necessary to enable the delivery of the affordable housing and is not being developed to generate uplift in land values for the landowner. This could be demonstrated through the provision of affordability/profitability modelling data. Where an element of open market housing is proposed as part of an affordable housing exception site, it should be sympathetic to the form and character of the settlement and in accordance with local needs. Local needs can vary, and it could be that smaller market homes are required to meet the needs of first-time buyers or people wishing to downsize to a smaller home. This would need to be established at the time in consultation with the District Council's Housing Service.

Policy ASSN9 - Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites

Proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes, including entry level homes for purchase (as defined by paragraph 71 of the NPPF) on rural exception sites outside but adjoining the Settlement Boundary, where housing would not normally be permitted by other policies, will be supported where there is a proven local need and provided that the housing:

- i. remains affordable in perpetuity; and
- ii. is for people that are in housing need because they are unable to buy or rent properties in the village at open-market prices; and
- iii. is offered, in the first instance, to people with a demonstrated local connection, as defined by the Babergh Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Where there are no such people in Assington, a property should then be offered to those with a demonstrated need for affordable housing in neighbouring villages.

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

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

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

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

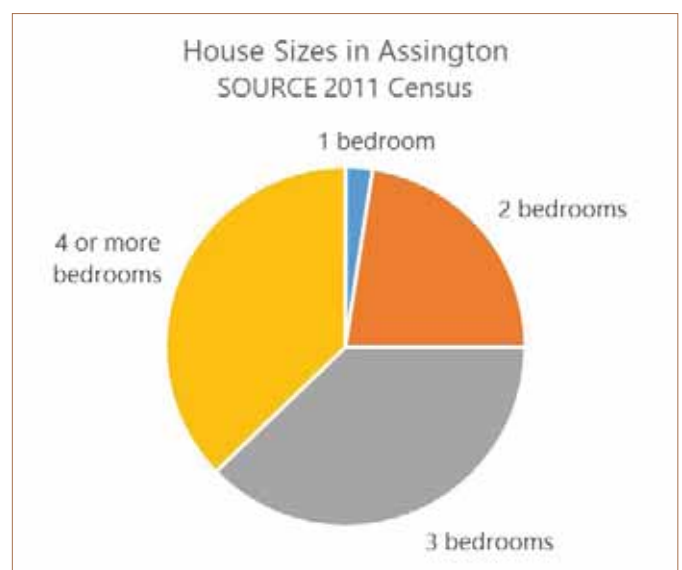
- a) that no other means of funding the construction of the affordable homes is available; and
- b) the market housing is subsidiary to the affordable housing element of the proposal and the amount of market housing required is, as demonstrated through a viability assessment, the minimum required to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

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

Housing Mix

7.22 Ensuring that the right mix of housing is available to meet demands is crucial if the future needs of residents are to be met. The Ipswich and Waveney Housing Market Areas Strategic Housing Market Assessment update (January 2019) identified that the highest need across Babergh was for two-bedroomed homes (36% of the requirement), followed by three-bedrooms (30%) and four or more bedrooms (21%), with the remainder being one-bedroomed homes.

7.23 Our residents questionnaire in December 2018 identified that most residents felt we need smaller homes, with over 90% wanting two-bedroomed homes and 87% wanting three-bedroomed homes. The questionnaire also identified a need for bungalows. At the time of the 2011 Census, Assington had an unusually high proportion of four or more-bedroomed homes, as illustrated in the graph opposite.



7.24 In order to redress the balance towards smaller homes there would need to be a significant number of new homes developed in the village, which is not appropriate given Assington's status in the Local Plan strategy. However, in proposals where there is a mix of housing proposed, it is expected that, unless the particular circumstances dictate otherwise, such as meeting an identified affordable housing requirement on a site, the highest proportion of new homes on a site should be two-bedroomed properties. This proportion could be adjusted during the lifetime of the Plan should new and relevant evidence be published.

Policy ASSN10 - Housing Mix

In all housing developments of 10 or more homes, a minimum of 66% of the development should be two and three bedroomed dwellings, unless it can be demonstrated that:

- i) the particular circumstances relating to the tenure of the housing dictate otherwise; or
- ii) such provision and other site requirements would make the development unviable; or
- iii) the latest publicly available housing needs information for the Plan area identify a need for a different mix.

The provision of bungalows will also be supported where the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the area in the vicinity of the site.

Housing Space Standards

7.25 In March 2015 the Government introduced a 'Nationally Described Space Standard' for new homes. It sets out a prescription to encourage enough space

in homes to ensure that they can be used flexibly by a range of residents. The standards also aim to ensure that sufficient storage can be integrated into dwelling units. These standards are expressed as minimum standards.

The current standard requires that:

- a. the dwelling provides at least the gross internal floor area and built-in storage area set out in the table opposite;
- b. a dwelling with two or more bedspaces has at least one double (or twin) bedroom;
- c. in order to provide one bedspace, a single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5m² and is at least 2.15m wide;
- d. in order to provide two bedspaces, a double (or twin bedroom) has a floor area of at least 11.5m²;
- e. one double (or twin bedroom) is at least 2.75m wide and every other double (or twin) bedroom is at least 2.55m wide;
- f. any area with a headroom of less than 1.5m is not counted within the Gross Internal Area unless used solely for storage (if the area under the stairs is to be used for storage, assume a general floor area of 1m² within the Gross Internal Area);
- g. any other area that is used solely for storage and has a headroom of 900- 1500mm (such as under eaves) is counted at 50% of its floor area, and any area lower than 900mm is not counted at all;
- h. a built-in wardrobe counts towards the Gross Internal Area and bedroom floor area requirements but should not reduce the effective width of the room below the minimum widths set out above. The built-in area in excess of 0.72m² in a double bedroom and 0.36m² in a single bedroom counts towards the built-in storage requirement; and
- i. the minimum floor to ceiling height is 2.3m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area.



The summary table of the national standards is provided below.

Number of bedrooms (b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
		Square metres			
1b	1p	39 (37)*			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

* Where a 1b1p dwelling has a shower room instead of a bathroom, the floor area may be reduced from 39 square metres to 37 square metres, as shown bracketed

7.26 Externally, it is also important that homes meet modern day requirements for the storage of wheelie bins and for storing bicycles. Without sufficient and appropriate space reserved for these uses, the consequences are added clutter and a deterrent to the use of bicycles as a mode of travel.

Policy ASSN11 - Measures for New Housing Development

All new dwellings shall achieve appropriate internal space through adherence to the latest Nationally Described Space Standards. Dwellings should also make adequate provision for the covered storage of all wheelie bins and cycles. Cycle parking provision shall be in accordance with the adopted cycle parking standards.





8. Natural Environment

Natural Environment Objective

Villagers should be able to enjoy Assington's natural environment and every opportunity should be taken to enhance this environment and access to it.

- 8.1** There is a high proportion of designated natural environment areas in the parish:
- the Special Landscape Area,
 - three County Wildlife Sites,
 - the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Project Area,
 - a Roadside Nature Reserve,
 - a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and
 - a Local Nature Reserve.

Context

- 8.2** The Parish has key 'big sky' viewpoints, across to distant woods, and is characterised by parkland, and winding lanes leading to ancient farmhouses. There are three picturesque valleys, of which one runs alongside the village centre.

- 8.3** The landscape is natural and varied, mingling together such features as steep slopes with hollow lanes, small fields with old hedges, natural streams & grazing meadows, fens, heathland, and ancient woods; marked by Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats, and Assington's species count is among the highest in Suffolk. For instance, along The Street and elsewhere in the Parish is a national stronghold for a beautiful plant, in exceptional abundance, the nationally rare Lesser Calamint.

These points are recognised in strong official protection in the south of the parish, but the count of nationally scarce and very scarce species is very high in each of the four character areas shown in Map 12 (see 8.15), including the village centre area.

- 8.4** There is an exceptionally high proportion of scheduled areas in the parish: the Special Landscape Area, three County Wildlife Sites, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Project Area, a Roadside Nature Reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and a Local Nature Reserve.





8.5 Three County Wildlife Sites are close to the village centre (The Thicks, the Churchyard, and the valley at Oatetch Grove). Babergh's Special Landscape Area includes the parish south from the Churchyard and the Thicks. The West area has a prevalence of ponds, and includes Assington Thicks, which, at 52 hectares is one of Suffolk's largest ancient woods. The East area has a classic Ancient Rolling Farmlands landscape type, and includes the Churchyard with its scarce flowers. Assington's scenery is classic for the Stour Valley area, where the landscapes we see today, result from the Valley being at the southern limit of the glaciers in the last Ice Age.

8.6 The Questionnaire responses and Consultations show that Assington residents value these features highly. People want:

- all parts of the central village to maintain their rural setting;
- to respect The Thicks & other woodland near Assington's village centre, and respect hedges, fields, orchards and verges, along The Street & other roads;
- to preserve outstanding views of 'big skies', meadows and woodland, especially views from key viewpoints shown in map preferences;
- to "help keep the environment thriving".

Landscape Character

8.7 Assington is in a rural setting, with a variety of landscapes, beauty spots, and biodiverse habitats. There is also a network of paths allowing excellent public access.

8.8 The majority of the village is set within 'Ancient Rolling Farmlands' as defined in the Suffolk Landscape Character Appraisal. Such a landscape is defined as 'a rolling landscape of medium clay soils studded with blocks of ancient woodland.' Typical characteristics, which are present in Assington are:

- Rolling arable landscape of chalky clays and loams
- Dissected widely, and sometimes deeply, by river valleys
- Field pattern of ancient random enclosure. Regular fields associated with areas of heathland enclosure

- Hedges of hawthorn and elm with oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees
- Scattered with ancient woodland parcels containing a mix of oak, lime, cherry, hazel, hornbeam, ash and holly
- Network of winding lanes and paths, often associated with hedges, create visual intimacy
- Farmstead buildings are predominantly timber-framed, the houses colour-washed and the barns blackened with tar. Roofs are frequently tiled, though thatched houses can be locally significant

8.9 The main threats to the Assington landscape from those noted more widely by the County Council are:

- Expansion of garden curtilage
- Change of land use to horse paddocks and other recreational uses
- Impact of deer on the condition of woodland cover
- Settlement expansion eroding the characteristic form and vernacular styles
- Conversion and expansion of farmsteads for residential uses
- Large-scale agricultural buildings in open countryside
- Replacement or additional overhead electrical infrastructure
- Unsympathetic expansion of local business premises.

8.10 In the southern part of the Plan Area a small area is identified as 'Rolling Valley Farmland' typified, in the case of Assington, by:

- Gentle valley sides with some complex and steep slopes
- Deep well drained loamy soils
- Organic pattern of fields smaller than on larger areas of flat farmland
- Distinct areas of regular field patterns
- Small ancient woodlands on the valley fringes
- Sunken lanes

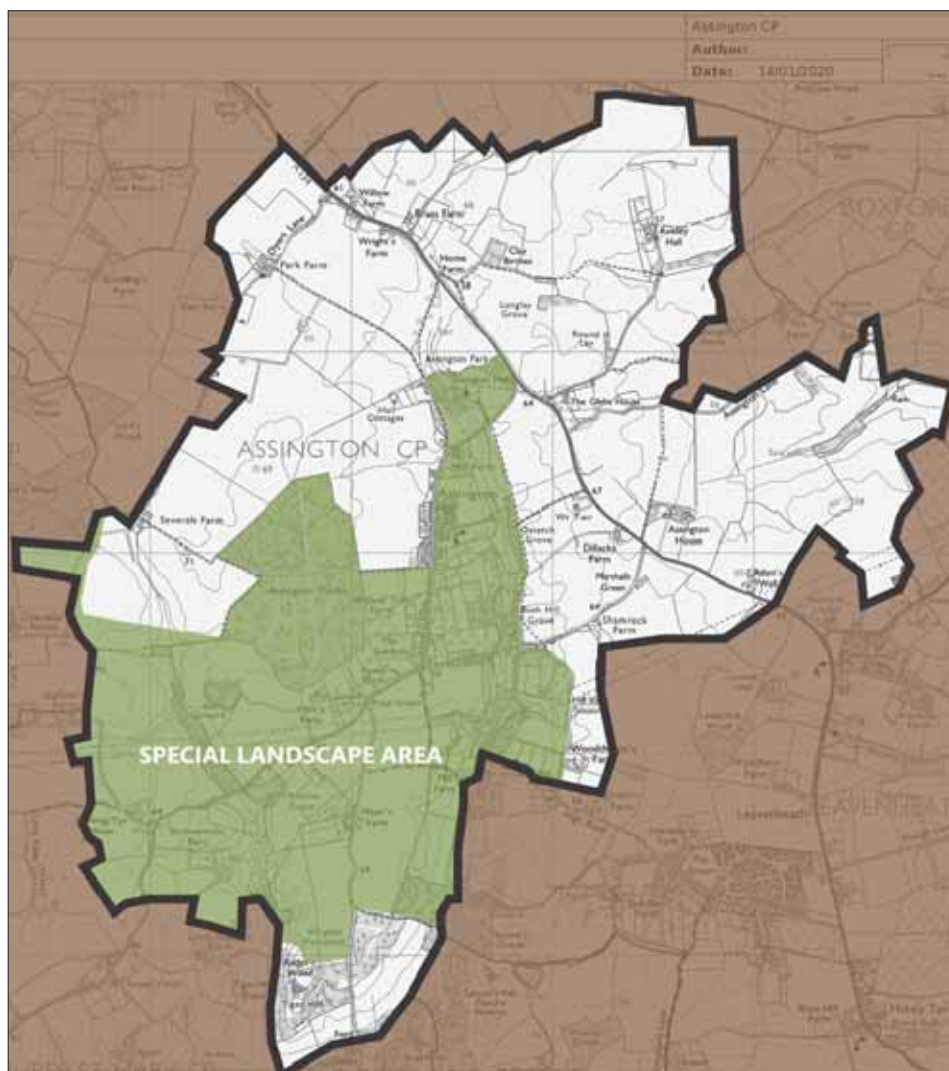
8.11 The main threats to the landscape are noted by the County Council as:

- Expansion of settlements.
- Construction of large agricultural buildings.
- Expansion of garden curtilage.
- Change of land use, especially the creation of horse paddocks.
- Impact of deer on the condition of woodland cover.
- Mineral extraction.



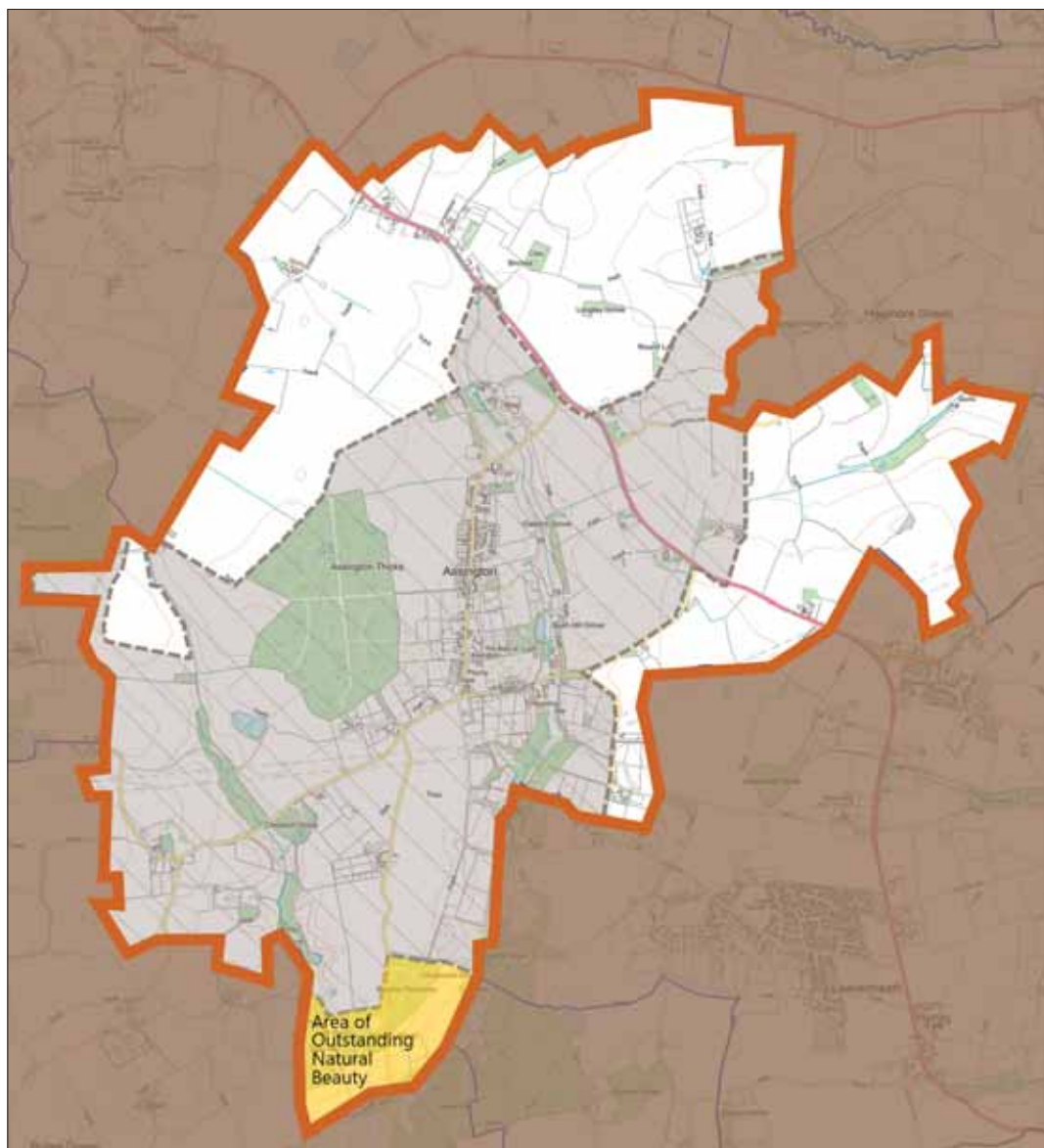
Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity

8.12 Part of the parish is currently identified as a Special Landscape Area in the adopted Babergh Core Strategy, as identified on Map 9. The designation was originally made in the 1980's Suffolk County Structure Plan and covered historic parks and river valleys or other areas of undulating topography and natural vegetation, particularly broadleaved woodland. In Assington's case it extends north from the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that extends into the parish around Tiger Hill. However, that designation is not set to be continued in the Joint Local Plan and therefore, recognising the importance of this area, an assessment of the continuing importance of this area has been undertaken including its boundaries which is available as a separate evidence document on the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the Parish Council website.



Map 9 - Current Special Landscape Area

- 8.13** A new Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity is designated in the Neighbourhood Plan. It is extended from the original Special Landscape Area to include areas of comparable landscape value. The boundaries have been drawn on the same principle of following roads and established field boundaries, as shown on Map 10. The designation does not preclude any development taking place in the area, but it does mean that proposals will need to be designed to be in harmony with the special character of the area.



Map 10 – Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity

Policy ASSN12 - Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity

Development proposals in the Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity, as identified on the Policies Map, will be permitted only where they:

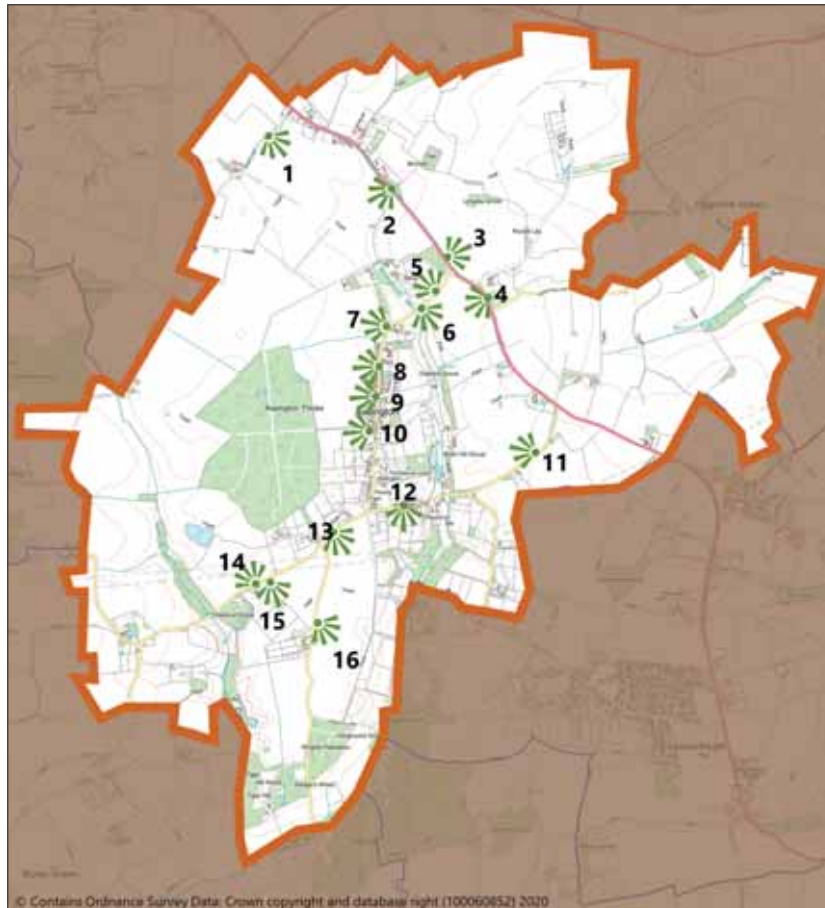
- i) protect and enhance the special landscape qualities of the area; and
- ii) are designed and sited so as to harmonise with the landscape setting.

Important Views

8.14 The views from our present houses, lanes and footpaths are essential to Assington's quality and character. The Questionnaire responses and consultations show that Assington residents value these views highly. People want:

- All parts of the central village to maintain their rural setting;
- To respect Assington Thicks & other woodland near Assington's village centre, traditional greens at Threeways and Rose Green, as well as hedges, fields, orchards and verges along The Street & other roads;
- To preserve our views of 'big skies', meadows and woodland, especially those from the most popular viewpoints as shown in Map 11.

An appraisal of views has been completed and forms supporting document "Assington Views Appraisal" which is available on the Parish Council website.



Map 11 - Protected Views

Policy ASSN13 - Protected Views

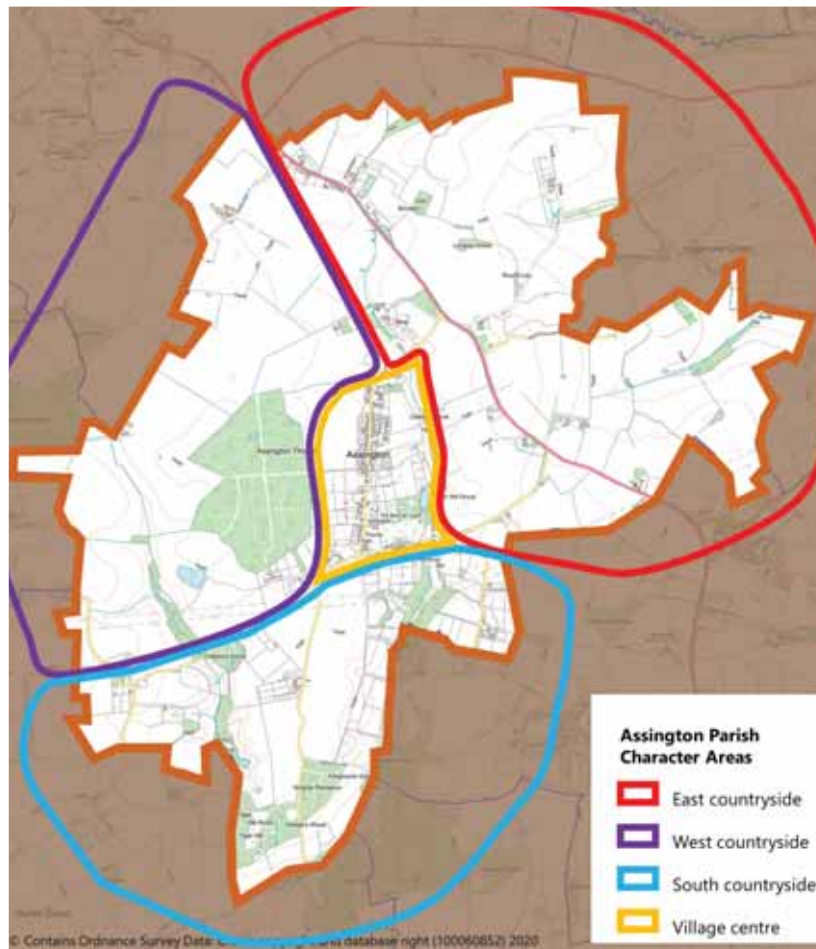
Development proposals must not have a detrimental impact on the key features of the 'protected views' identified on the Policies Map.

Community Action CA1

The Parish Council shall investigate with landowners the possibility of creating new community green spaces within the village, through either purchase or donation of areas of unproductive land. This may be done by the creation of a community land trust in which all residents will be able to participate.

Landscape Character Areas

8.15 Four character areas have been identified in Map 12 below which are based on circular walks: the village centre, and three areas of countryside. These four are each different and distinct from the others and each area equally has high value for scenery, views, wildlife, and public access.



Map 12 - Parish Character Areas

East Countryside

Clay arable land with many typical features of the Rolling Valley Farmlands landscape type. There is a linear cluster of houses on Further Street, many of which are listed. The cottages and farms are generally traditional in design and in isolated groups.

West Countryside

Generally flat clayland, though the western source of the Assington Brook creates a significant valley. There are many ponds, particularly in Assington Thicks, which can be also accessed by informal footpaths.

South Countryside

This area grades from the Ancient Rolling Farmlands landscape type to the Rolling Valley Farmlands. The former has flat land with deep, steep valley sides, while in the latter the deep, steep-sided valleys predominate.

Village Centre

The Street is on level horizon land, while Barracks Road dips across the Brook. West of The Street is level clayland to The

Thicks and the Brook provides to the east of The Street a steep-sided valley, running the length of the village. The only public open spaces in the parish are the sports pitch and small play space at the village hall. The streetscape also includes areas of fields and hedges.



Dark Skies

8.16 Artificial lighting can have a significant detrimental impact on the character and appearance of an area and adds to light pollution. Paragraph 180 (c) of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should “limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation”. Artificial lighting of development, while increasing security, can also impact upon residential amenity, the character and appearance of an area (particularly rural locations) and the environment. Aspects such as poor design, location, or the expulsion of unnecessarily high levels of light can also have a harmful impact.



Policy ASSN14 - Dark Skies

While ensuring that new developments are secure in terms of occupier and vehicle safety, dark skies are to be preferred over street lights. Any future outdoor lighting systems should have a minimum impact on the environment, minimising light pollution and adverse effects on wildlife subject to highway safety, the needs of particular individuals or groups, and security. Schemes should reduce the consumption of energy by promoting efficient outdoor lighting technologies, keeping the night-time skies dark and reducing glare. For the avoidance of doubt, no 'permanently on' external lighting should feature in new developments and security lighting should be motion activated. No uplighting features will be permitted on any new development.

Local Green Spaces

8.17 There are a number of open areas within the village that make important contributions to the character and setting of the built environment, as well as providing potential space for recreation. However, unlike many other villages across the district, the Preferred Options Joint Local Plan does not designate any important open spaces in the village.

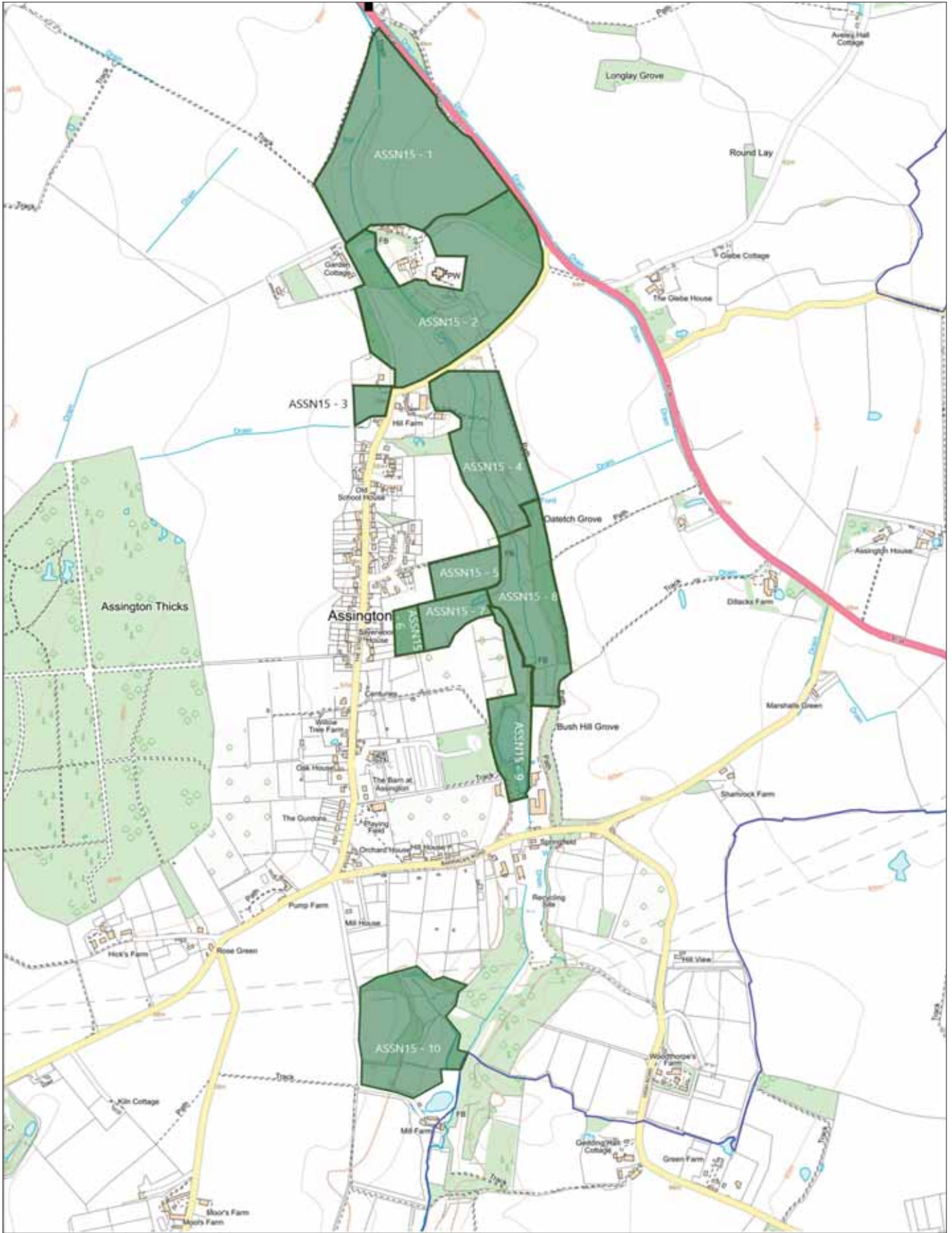
8.18 The NPPF enables the designation and preservation of land of particular importance to local communities as Local Green Spaces in Neighbourhood Plans. Such designation restricts new development other than in very special circumstances. Paragraph 100 states that the designation should only be used where the green space is:

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

The NPPF emphasises that the designation of Local Green Spaces (LGS) should not be used simply to block development.

8.19 A Local Green Space (LGS) Appraisal has been undertaken in preparing this Neighbourhood Plan in order to demonstrate how spaces meet the criteria in paragraph 100 of the NPPF. Ultimately whether a space meets the criteria is in part a judgement based decision, and the independent examiner will make the final determination. However, those spaces that are believed to meet the criteria are identified in Policy ASSN15 and illustrated on Map 13. These spaces were highlighted by residents through the consultation events as being special to them. The identification of these spaces as LGS, as with green belt land, means that development on them will be restricted to that which is essential to these sites, e.g. that required for utility service providers such as telecommunications equipment.





Map 13 - Local Green Spaces

Policy ASSN15 – Local Green Spaces

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

- 1 Assington Park, north part
- 2 Assington Park, south part
- 3 Area of the Old Vicarage
- 4 Hill Farm Land
- 5 Meadow View
- 6 Wildlife Area
- 7 The Mere
- 8 Oatetch Grove and Meadow
- 9 The Reservoir
- 10 Mill Farm Land

Development on these sites will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. Permitted development rights, including the operational requirements of infrastructure providers, are not affected by this designation.

Biodiversity

8.20 Assington has one of Suffolk's highest counts of species, and many of these are habitat-specific. Approx. 500 plants have been recorded, and many others such as 300 fungus and 100 moth species. In one Barn Owl box, 27 chicks have been ringed in ten years; and one small orchard has 21 Lichen species. Extensive details of the parish's flora and fauna are in a Supporting Document to be found on the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the Parish Council website.

8.21 Sites in the Plan Area that are currently protected for biodiversity value, include Tiger Hill Local Nature Reserve, which partly overlaps the Arger Fen Site of Special Scientific Interest, and three County Wildlife Sites close to the village centre: the Thicks, the Churchyard, and the valley at Oatetch Grove.

8.22 The National Planning Practice Guidance notes that; "The National Planning Policy Framework encourages net gains for biodiversity to be sought through planning policies and decisions. Biodiversity net gain delivers measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Biodiversity net gain can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures." In Assington, development proposals that deliver such improvements will be particularly supported. The Guidance states that examples might include creating new habitats, enhancing existing habitats, providing green roofs, green walls, street trees or sustainable drainage systems. Relatively small features can often achieve important benefits for wildlife, such as incorporating 'swift bricks' and bat boxes in developments and providing safe routes for hedgehogs between different areas of habitat, specifically hedgehog tunnels in any new development.



Policy ASSN16 - Biodiversity

Development proposals should avoid the loss of, or material harm to trees, hedgerows and other natural features such as ponds.

Where such losses or harm are unavoidable:

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

It is expected that the mitigation proposals will form an integral part of the design concept and layout of any development scheme, and that development will be landscape-led and appropriate in relation to its setting, context and ongoing management.

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

Development proposals will be supported where they provide a net gain in biodiversity through, for example,

- a) the creation of new natural habitats including ponds;
- b) the planting of additional trees and hedgerows (reflecting the character of Assington's traditional hedgerows), and;
- c) restoring and repairing fragmented biodiversity networks through, for example, including holes in fences which allow access for hedgehogs.

Public Access to the Environment

8.23 Assington in modern times lacks public access land. It has none of the 'frequent small to moderate sized greens' which Babergh lists as a key feature of the villages in the 'Rolling Valley Farmlands' Landscape type. This is acknowledged in both the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Open Space Assessment 2019, which shows Assington as deficient in amenity green space and play space and which states: "new provision should be sought, in many cases new provision will not be achievable - unless, for example, through new development".

8.24 The allotments and nearby small wildlife area are held on only a 5-year agreement from the District Council. The remaining accesses to open space near the central village are to Assington Thicks – entirely informal; and the grass area east of Meadow Way which is de facto only. Formerly valued informal accesses to the orchard areas has been closed off. A mile from the village centre, Cowlins Wood has unfettered access, and is reached by two popular new public footpaths created by the owners. Beyond the parish is the fully accessible 300 acres of Suffolk Wildlife Trust land. It is hoped that Community Actions including CA1 will achieve improvements in public accessibility.

8.25 Creating short-cut connections between paths would create valuable circular walks:

- From south-west of The Thicks, to the road near Kiln Cottage;
- Along the track south from Severalls Farm to the road;
- North from Assington House to the Hagmore Green lane.
- From north-east of The Thicks, to the Street.



9. Built Environment and Design

Built Environment and Design Objective

Development should respect the rural character of the existing village and avoid unnecessary urbanisation.

9.1 Residents highly value the appearance of Assington's central village. At the consultation events, residents' feedback forms showed clear messages, summarised here:

- We should maintain the village feel even if its size expands;
- there should be no more housing estates/large estates;
- any new build houses should retain village feel and not look out of place;
- a rural environment should be maintained even at the cost of pavement improvements, and,
- we should reduce street light usage.

9.2 The buildings here generally have a very pleasant, well integrated appearance, and the predominant buildings are still the traditional buildings and the valued council-built housing.

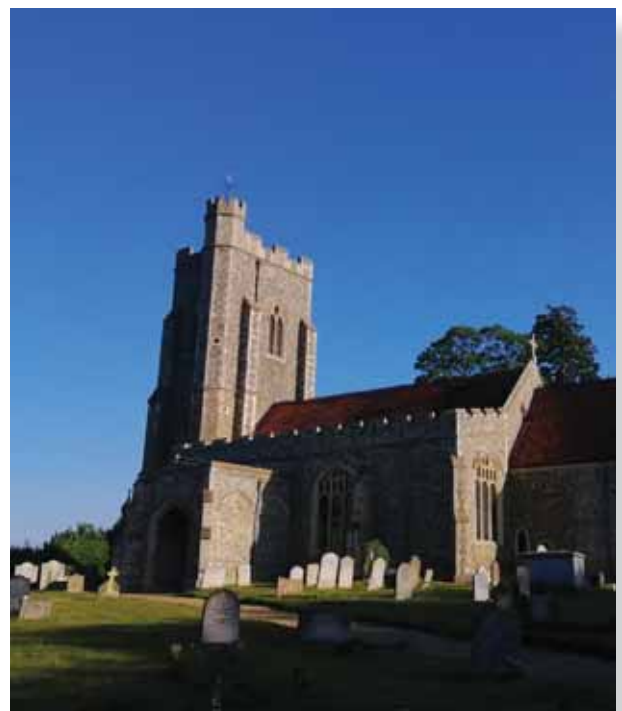
9.3 A special feature of the The Street and Barracks Road, is houses and fields alternating, it is marked by broad verges, with flowers and natural hedges throughout, and its houses are mostly set back behind large front gardens. Assington has been given as a particular example by Babergh in its 'Landscape Guidance, August 2015' page 41: "Assington has a ribbon form of development broken up by orchards and farmland, concentrated along The Street, providing a quiet and tranquil atmosphere"

Heritage Assets

9.4 Although Assington does not have a Conservation Area, there are a number of important buildings across the village that are "listed" as being of architectural and historic interest. There are currently 32 Listed Buildings in Assington parish, as detailed in Appendix A. The Church is Listed Grade I and the remainder are Grade II. In addition, the parish is known to be

rich in archaeological finds and records. Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service's Historic Environment Record provides details of finds and sites, and the Service should be consulted at the earliest possible stages of preparing a planning application. In addition to the statutory listed buildings, other buildings and features in the Plan Area which are not designated heritage assets have an important role in the character and history of Assington, including the Old School House and School. It will be important to have regards to the local heritage in considering development proposals.

9.5 The Local Plan policies for the consideration of development affecting Heritage Assets are out of date and therefore planning decisions are reliant on the high-level guidelines provided in the NPPF. A planning policy is therefore included in the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that development proposals affecting heritage assets are given appropriate consideration.



Policy ASSN17 - Heritage Assets

To ensure the conservation and enhancement of the village's heritage assets, proposals must:

- a. preserve or enhance the significance of the heritage assets of the village, their setting and the wider built environment, including views into, within and out of the Special Character Area as identified on the Policies Map;
- b. retain buildings and spaces, the loss of which would cause harm to the character or appearance of the Special Character Area;
- c. contribute to the village's local distinctiveness, built form and scale of its heritage assets, as described in the AECOM Design Guide, through the use of appropriate design and materials;
- d. be of an appropriate scale, form, height, massing, alignment and detailed design which respects the area's character, appearance and its setting, in line with the AECOM Design Guidelines for Assington;
- e. demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the asset and of the wider context in which the heritage asset sits, alongside an assessment of the potential impact of the development on the heritage asset and its context; and
- f. provide clear justification, through the submission of a heritage statement, for any works that could harm a heritage asset yet be of wider substantial public benefit, through detailed analysis of the asset and the proposal.

Proposals will not be supported where the harm caused as a result of the impact of a proposed scheme is not justified by the public benefits that would be provided.

Where a planning proposal affects a heritage asset, it must be accompanied by a Heritage Statement identifying, as a minimum, the significance of the asset, and an assessment of the impact of the proposal on heritage assets. The level of detail of the Heritage Statement should be proportionate to the importance of the asset, the works proposed and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on its significance and/or setting.

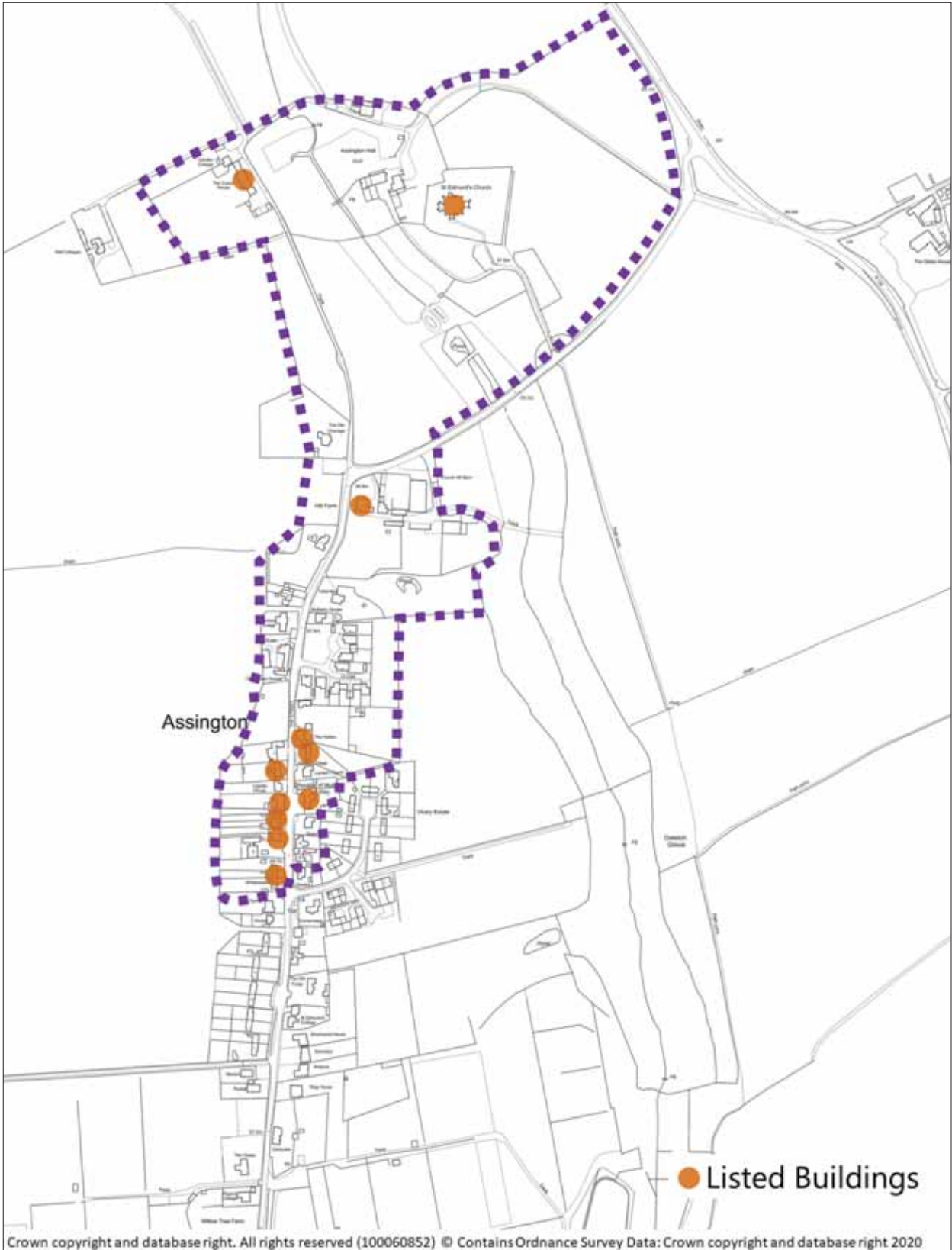
Special Character Area

9.6 The central part of the village, around the pub and heading north to Assington Hall has a number of listed buildings all of which have local significance. It also has significant unlisted buildings - such as The Old School House and School opposite St Edmunds Close. In addition, the area has a number of trees protected by preservation orders and open parkland associated with the setting of Assington Hall and the Church. This area is unique to Assington, and although it has been damaged by recent new development, it still retains character which helps to define the area and enhance the village's sense of place. These characteristics would potentially warrant the designation of the area as a conservation area and it is something that should be pursued. In the interim, the special characteristics of the area should be recognised and development proposals will need to demonstrate how they preserve and enhance the special characteristics of the area.

The listed buildings in the central village area are:

- Cootes Cottage,
- Numbers 21 to 23, The Street,
- Partridge Row, 50-55,
- Hollies Cottage,
- Centuries,
- 10 and 11, The Street,
- The Hollies,
- Telephone Kiosk,
- The Shoulder of Mutton Public House,
- The Stores (opposite Shoulder of Mutton),
- Numbers 13 to 17, The Street,
- Hill Farmhouse





Map 14 - Special Character Area

Policy ASSN18 - Assington Special Character Area

A Special Character Area is identified on the Policies Map. Within this area, as well as having regard to the need to preserve and enhance the significance of the heritage assets in or adjoining the area, consideration will be given as to how a proposal enhances the distinct characteristics of the identified area.

Where the harm caused as a result of the impact of a proposed scheme is not justified by the public benefits that would be provided, it will not be supported.

Community Action CA2

The Parish Council shall work with Babergh Council to establish a conservation area, broadly stretching from The Shoulder of Mutton public house on The Street, through to Assington Hall and the A134. This area will mirror the Special Character Area as shown on the Policies Map and Map 14.

Built Characteristics

9.7 As part of the Government-funded Neighbourhood Planning Technical Support package, Design Guidelines have been prepared for the village by AECOM Consultants. The Guidelines are published as supporting evidence to the Neighbourhood Plan. This work primarily seeks to develop design guidelines that any future development should follow to retain and protect the rural, tranquil nature and scenic beauty of the area. Supporting this overall objective are a number of principles to which development proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan area are advised to adhere, namely that they:

- integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity
- reinforce or enhance the established village character of streets, greens, and other spaces
- respect the rural character of views and gaps
- harmonise and enhance existing settlement in terms of physical form, architecture and land use
- relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long-distance views
- reflect, respect, and reinforce local architecture and historic distinctiveness
- retain and incorporate important existing features into the development
- respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing
- adopt contextually appropriate materials and details
- provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality
- incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features

- ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscapes, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other
- make sufficient provision for sustainable waste management (including facilities for kerbside collection, waste separation, and minimisation where appropriate) without adverse impact on the street scene, the local landscape or the amenities of neighbours
- positively integrate energy efficient technologies
- do not worsen, and where possible improve the known areas of the village which are susceptible to flooding, including on The Street and Barracks Road.

Parts of The Street and Barracks Road are predicted to be affected by surface water flooding according to the Government's Long-Term Flood Risk Map. There is a historical issue with draining surface water from The Street.

9.8 The Design Guidelines provide a development design checklist which development proposals should, as appropriate, seek to respond to. The checklist is attached as Appendix B of the Plan.

Policy ASSN19 - Design Considerations

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

Planning applications should, as appropriate to the proposal, demonstrate how they satisfy the requirements of the Development Design Checklist in Appendix B of this Plan and, as appropriate to the proposal.

In addition, proposals will be supported where they:

- a. recognise and address the key features, characteristics, landscape/building character, local distinctiveness and special qualities of the area and/or building and, where necessary, prepare a landscape character appraisal to demonstrate this;
- b. maintain or create the village's sense of place and/or local character avoiding, where possible, cul-de-sac developments which do not reflect the lane hierarchy and form of the settlement;
- c. do not involve the loss of gardens, important open, green or landscaped areas identified on the Policies Map, which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of that part of the village;
- d. taking mitigation measures into account, do not affect adversely:
 - i. any historic character, architectural or archaeological heritage assets of the site and its surroundings,
 - ii. important landscape characteristics including trees and hedgerows and other prominent topographical features;
 - iii. the character and appearance of the building, street scene and surroundings and reflects and respects the relationship of the site and its context setting and those of any adjoining properties;
 - iv. identified protected views into, out of, or within the village as identified on the Policies Map;
 - v. sites, habitats, species and features of ecological interest;
 - vi. the amenities of adjacent areas by reason of noise, smell, vibration, overlooking, overshadowing, loss of light, other pollution (including light pollution), or volume or type of vehicular activity generated; and/or residential amenity;
- e. not locate sensitive development where its users and nearby residents would be significantly and adversely affected by noise, smell, vibration, or other forms of pollution from existing sources, unless adequate and appropriate mitigation can be implemented;
- f. produce designs that respect the character, scale and density of the locality
- g. produce designs, in accordance with standards, that maintain or enhance the safety of the highway network ensuring that resident vehicle parking is provided within the plot and seek always to ensure that footpaths are provided through new housing areas, connecting any new development into the heart of the existing settlement, and prioritising the movement of pedestrians and cyclists;
- h. wherever possible ensure that development faces on to existing lanes, retaining the rural character and creates cross streets or new back streets in keeping with the settlement's hierarchy of routes;
- i. through incorporation of sustainable drainage systems including, where feasible, grey water recycling, and rainwater and stormwater harvesting, avoid resulting in water run-off that would add to or create surface water flooding;
- j. where appropriate, make adequate provision for the covered storage of all wheelie bins and for cycle storage in accordance with adopted cycle parking standards
- k. include suitable ducting capable of accepting fibre to enable superfast broadband; and
- l. provide one electric vehicle charging point per new off-street parking place created.



Renewable Energy

9.9 Many energy-saving initiatives can be installed on homes within permitted development rights (i.e. – planning permission is not required) but there may be occasions where schemes that do require planning permission could have a potential adverse impact on the character of the area and the amenity nearby of residents. Due to its remoteness, Assington does not have access to mains gas, and the principal fuel used for heating is oil, delivered by tanker. Oil is unsustainable and polluting in its production, shipping, distribution and use. In line with national government policy, the long-term aim should be to reduce the overall use of all fossil fuels - gas, oil and coal.



Sewage Discharge

9.10 Assington's stream runs through the centre of the village and is an important feature for both wildlife and for residents' enjoyment of the local environment. Development and agricultural discharge over the years has reduced the quality of the stream and this has a knock-on impact on wildlife. Swan mussels once featured heavily in the stream but have largely been eliminated by pollution. These mussels have a filter feeding action which naturally cleans the stream waters and therefore their return should be encouraged.

Policy ASSN20 - Sustainable Construction Practices

Proposals that incorporate current best practice in energy conservation will be supported where such measures are designed to be integral to the building design and minimise any detrimental impact on the building or its surroundings. Development proposals should demonstrate how they:

- a. maximise the benefits of solar gain in site layouts and orientation of buildings;
- b. incorporate best practice in energy conservation and are designed to achieve maximum achievable energy efficiency;
- c. avoid fossil fuel-based heating systems; and
- d. incorporate sustainable design and construction measures and energy efficiency measures including, where feasible, ground/air source heat pumps, solar panels and grey water recycling, rainwater and stormwater harvesting;



Policy ASSN21 - Discharge of Sewage

Given the relatively low flow rate of Assington's stream, any new development will not be permitted to discharge sewage outputs to the stream, even if treated. New developments will be encouraged to improve the stream quality by providing remediation through reed beds or weeper drains into the fields, or by supporting schemes to reintroduce and establish swan mussels.

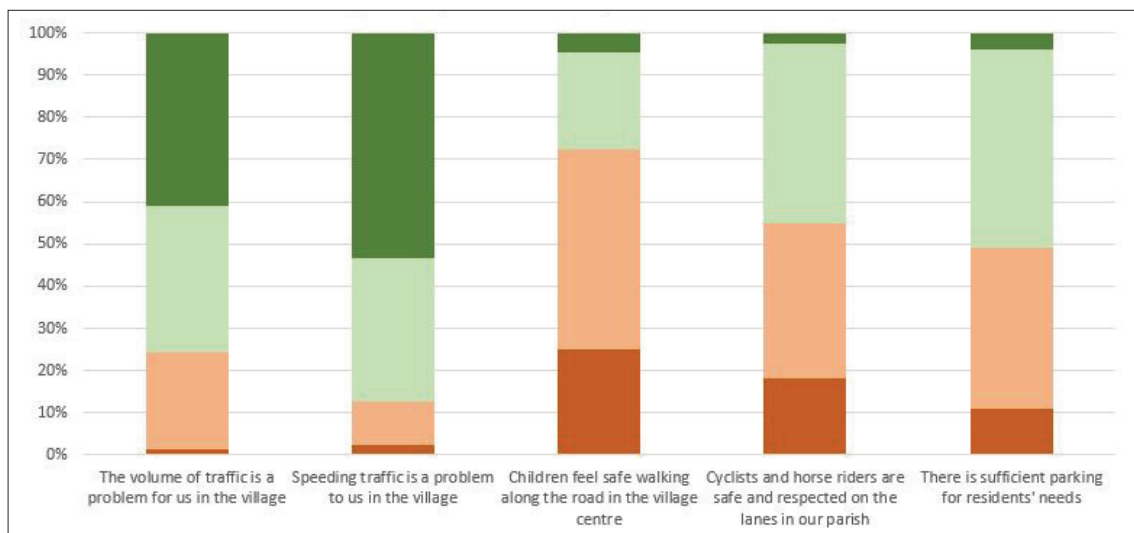
10. Highways and Movement Around the Village

Highways and Movement Objective

The future development of the village will have regard to improving the safety of pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists, including through the use of measures to reduce vehicle speeds and volume.

10.1 From the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire 87% of responders perceived there to be a problem with speeding vehicles through the village, particularly The Street. There were also concerns regarding the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders within the village.

10.3 There are limits as to what planning policies in Neighbourhood Plans can achieve in relation to highways and movement. Only where development requires planning permission can planning conditions potentially be attached to a permission to overcome a transport issue that is directly related to the proposal. Proposals do have to demonstrate that the resultant additional traffic generated from the development will not have a detrimental impact on the existing road network. For example, should the situation occur that new commercial properties are proposed then restrictions could feasibly be imposed which might restrict the use of certain areas of the village, ensure appropriate access points, control noise and light pollution.



10.2 In mid-2019 Suffolk Highways amended the speed limit on the A134 between Nayland and Sudbury. Part of this scheme comprised a reduction of the speed limit on the A134 to 40mph and 50mph within the curtilage of the Parish; it also included the reduction of the speed limit to 40mph from the A134 to the beginning of the existing 30mph limit in The Street.

10.4 The Neighbourhood Plan therefore acts as a springboard to introduce Community Actions for the Parish to undertake which will endeavour to achieve some, or all, of the issues raised above. This may be undertaken by the Parish Council or the residents themselves, either individually or as part of a working group.

Community Action CA3

The Parish Council will work with Suffolk Highways to create a 20mph zone on the Street in the area of the Special Character Area. This will be with a view to encouraging walking and cycling in the area, and in particular with a view to improving the perception of safety for pedestrians in an area where there is no pavement, nor space to create one.

Community Action CA4

The Parish Council shall work with Babergh District Council, Suffolk Highways and Suffolk Police to improve road safety and reduce traffic volume and speed within the Village and the Parish Council will commit parish funding towards road improvements where required and affordable. The three priorities, as discussed with Suffolk Highways are:

1) Traffic Calming Zone

This will mirror the area of the proposed Special Character Area and will include a 20mph speed limit. It may also include:

- Pedestrians in road or pedestrian/cyclist/horse rider priority signage
- A changed road surface colour which is sympathetic and enhancing to the rural location
- Additional pinch points using natural features (perhaps facilitating essential on-street parking)

2) Actions to reduce speeds near The Ryes school

These may include:

- "20's plenty" signage
- "School Slow" road markings
- An extension of the 30mph limit from the current location out to beyond Rose Green

3) Speed reduction measures on the straight section of The Street between the village shop and the public phone kiosk

It is essential that any traffic calming features do not urbanise the area and therefore additional pinch points should be natural in appearance and not include large signage. Adequate access for farm vehicles will also be retained

Other suggestions to help achieve improvements could include:

- i the provision of Gateway features at the extents of the existing 30mph speed limit through the village.
- ii additional signage to warn drivers of the likelihood of horses, cyclists and pedestrians, particularly around the narrow lane approaches to the village.
- iii the provision of signs informing drivers of single-track roads and the presence of passing places.
- iv establish a Community Speed Watch group in association with Suffolk Police.
- v Formalising passing places on the narrow roads into the village.



10.5 AECOM in page 24 of their report to the village identified that "the circular walks in the parish are long and mostly involve using roads. The Street is increasingly congested, and the roads from the village are winding, mostly single-track 'rat-run' lanes'. Safety improvements to the unsafe A134 crossings are needed." It is therefore proposed that the Parish Council work with landowners to establish connecting footpaths.



Community Action CA5

Existing informal footpaths, including those running alongside The Street in the vicinity of Assington Barn and Centuries, and those giving access to the reservoir, shall be protected and preserved for future use. Where practical, footpaths surfaces shall be improved but without tarmacking or any hard surfaces which result in an urbanising visual effect.

The Parish Council shall work with landowners to create connecting footpaths to allow new circular walks within the parish. While the goodwill of landowners will be needed for this to be possible, it is proposed that some concerns may be overcome by:

- The Parish Council funding new signage and improvement works to the paths
- New footpaths to be 'permissive' ones only and protected from permanence (where the landowner wishes it) by carefully created signage which is legally watertight
- Landowners therefore retaining the ability to remove access at any time or restrict it (for example during certain farming activity)



11. Infrastructure, Business and Services

Infrastructure, Business and Services Objective

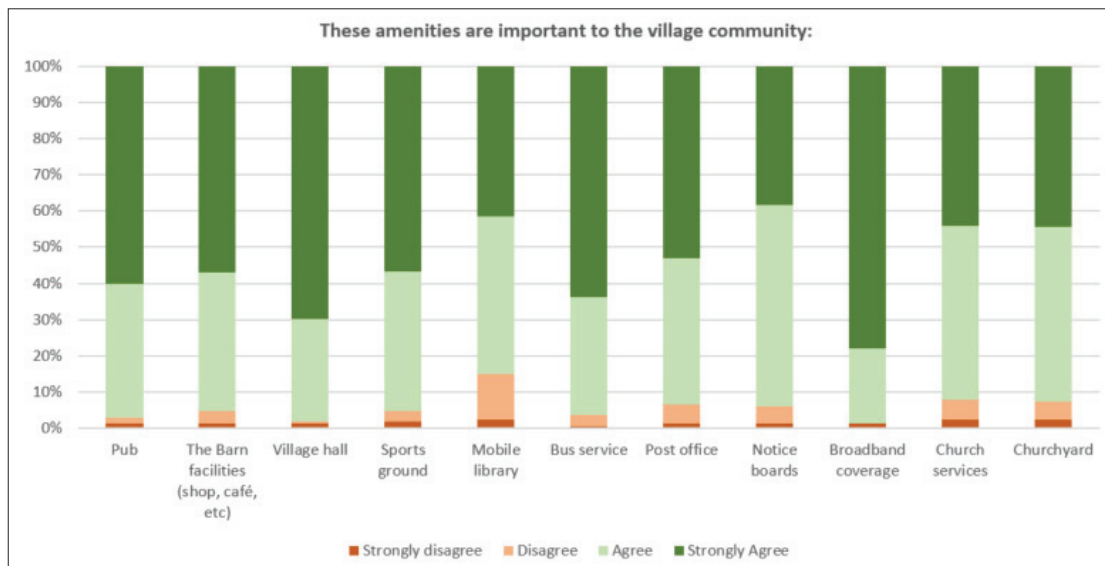
Development should not place any unacceptable burden on infrastructure and services and should respect the natural limitations of the rural location. Wherever possible, existing services should be maintained and improved, and commercial community assets preserved.

- 11.1** Assington is a relatively small village situated in a rural location, and as such it is not expected that the parish should have all the infrastructure and facilities of a town. The installation of such facilities can in fact have an urbanising effect on the environment and this should be avoided.
- 11.2** The parish does, however, have a good range of key community facilities, specifically:
 - The Shoulder of Mutton public house
 - Assington Country Kitchen, a café and restaurant at The Barn
 - Assington Farm Shop at The Barn
 - Mobile Post Office, twice a week for three hours on Mondays and Wednesdays
 - Mobile Library, once a month on Saturday



- St Edmund's Church Services at least three Sundays a month
- Playing Field, for football but also from 2020 featuring a children's play area
- Allotments
- Village Hall, used for a range of activities ranging from yoga to art classes

All of these facilities were shown in the Residents Questionnaire to be highly valued by residents, with support levels of over 90%. The village also has a fully subscribed area used for allotments.



11.3 Particularly strong support, 97%, was shown for the Shoulder of Mutton public house, which acts as a social focal point for the village. The Parish Council have registered the public house as an asset of community value (ACV) with Babergh District Council and intend to maintain this designation.

11.4 There was only mixed support for new or additional sports or community facilities, but residents consider maintaining the existing facilities to be very important to village life. The ability to access existing facilities (from the church at the north of the village to the farm shop towards the south) safely on foot, bike or horseback is the primary concern and the community actions cited in section 10 have the aim of achieving this.



Policy ASSN22 - Community Facilities

The Policies Map identifies valued facilities in the village centre:

- The Shoulder of Mutton Public House
- the allotments
- Assington Farm Shop
- the village hall

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

- a. it can be demonstrated that the current use is not economically viable nor likely to become viable. Where appropriate, supporting financial evidence should be provided including any efforts to advertise the premises for sale for a minimum of 12 months; and
- b. it can be demonstrated, through evidenced research, that there is no local demand for the use and that the building/site is not needed for any alternative social, community or leisure use; or
- c. alternative facilities and services are available, or replacement provision is made, of at least equivalent standard, in a location that is accessible to the community it serves with good access by public transport or by cycling or walking.

The provision of the following community facilities will be supported where they can be implemented such as not to adversely impact upon the rural character of the parish:

- Improved high speed broadband provision
- Improved mobile phone reception
- Increased post office facilities, mobile library provision
- Improvements to the playing field
- Healthcare provision

11.5 Opportunities for participating in exercise are important to the health residents and contribute towards reducing pressures on health services. The Neighbourhood Plan can play an important role in this by ensuring that sports and recreation facilities are provided and maintained. The village Playing Field provides an important resource capable of accommodating a football pitch as well as providing a new children's play area. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect the playing field from being lost unless equally good or better facilities are first provided in an equally accessible location in the village.



Policy ASSN23 - Open Space, Sport and Leisure Facilities

Proposals for the provision, enhancement and/or expansion of amenity, sport or recreation open space or facilities will be permitted subject to compliance with other Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Development which will result in the loss of existing amenity, sport or recreation open space or facilities will not be allowed unless:

- a. it can be demonstrated that the space or facility is surplus to requirement against the local planning authority's standards for the particular location, and the proposed loss will not result in a likely shortfall during the plan period; or
- b. replacement for the space or facilities lost is made available, of at least equivalent quantity and quality, and in a suitable location to meet the needs of users of the existing space or facility.

Any replacement provision should take account of the needs of the settlement where the development is taking place and the current standards of open space and sports facility provision adopted by the local planning authority.

Where necessary to the acceptability of the development, the local planning authority will require developers of new housing, office, retail and other commercial and mixed development to provide open space including play areas, formal sport/recreation areas, amenity areas and where appropriate, indoor sports facilities or to provide land and a financial contribution towards the cost and maintenance of existing or new facilities, as appropriate. These facilities will be secured through the use of conditions and/or planning obligations.

Clubhouses, pavilions, car parking and ancillary facilities must be of a high standard of design and internal layout. The location of such facilities must be well related and sensitive to the topography, character and uses of the surrounding area, particularly when located in or close to residential areas. Proposals which give rise to intrusive floodlighting will not be permitted.

11.6 Community infrastructure in Assington is mixed, with no mains sewerage and with high-speed broadband provision varying significantly across the parish. 90% of respondents to the Residents Questionnaire said that Assington was in need of improved broadband provision.

11.7 There are a number of additional businesses operating in Assington, which include:

- Farms
- The Case restaurant on Further Street
- Agricultural contractor
- Assington Garage on the Street
- A unisex hair salon located at The Barn
- A Dog grooming service located at The Barn
- A florist located at The Barn
- An aquatics shop located at The Barn
- A home interiors shop located at The Barn
- A vehicle dismantlers and recyclers on Barracks Road

11.8 Residents were generally supportive of existing businesses operating in the parish.

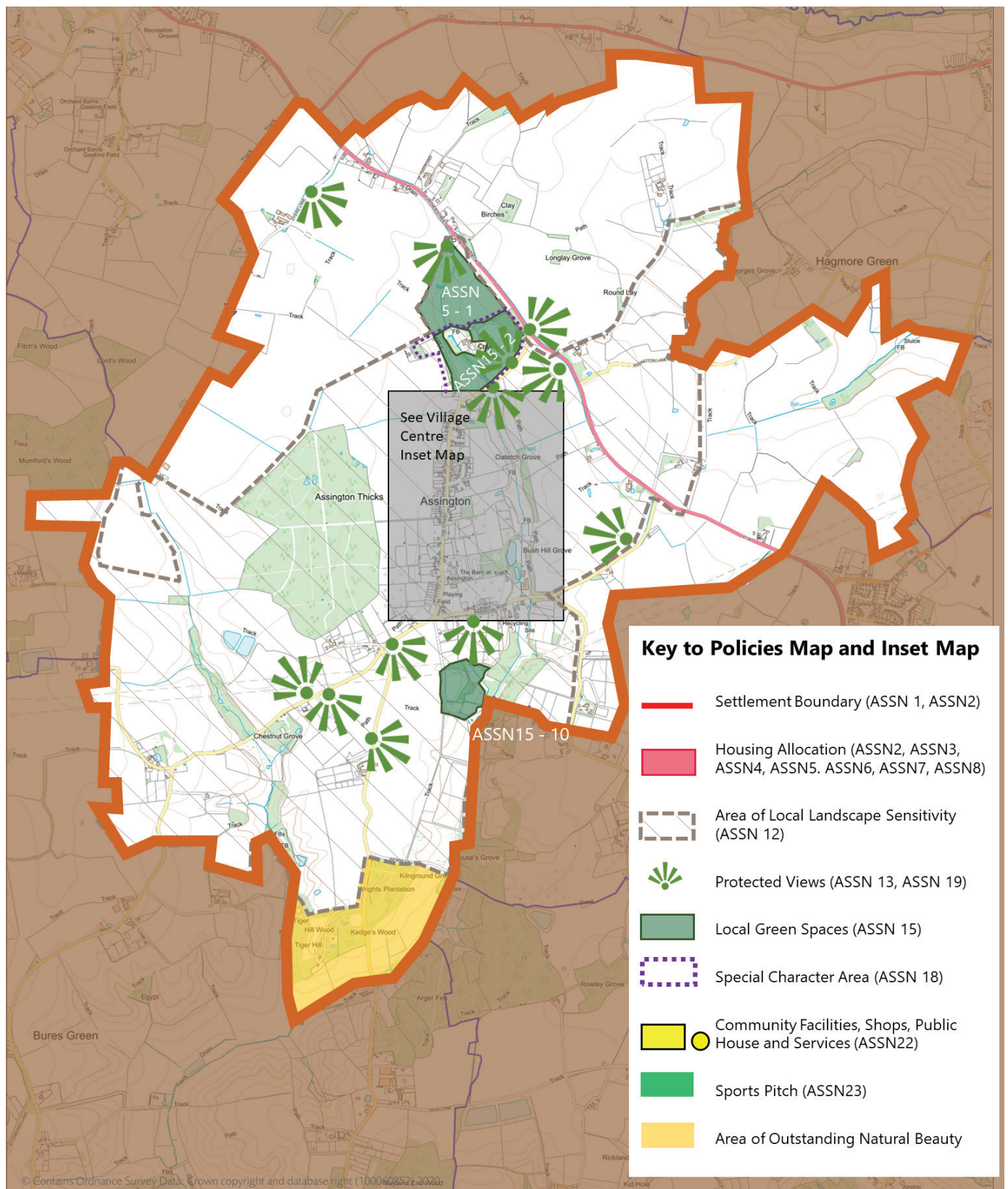


Policy ASSN24 - Local Businesses

The retention and intensification of employment premises will be supported provided that proposals do not have a detrimental impact on the local landscape character or the amenity of residents, and would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety or result in the residual cumulative impact on the road network being severe. Proposals for non-employment uses that are expected to have an adverse effect on employment generation will only be permitted where one or more of the following criteria are met:

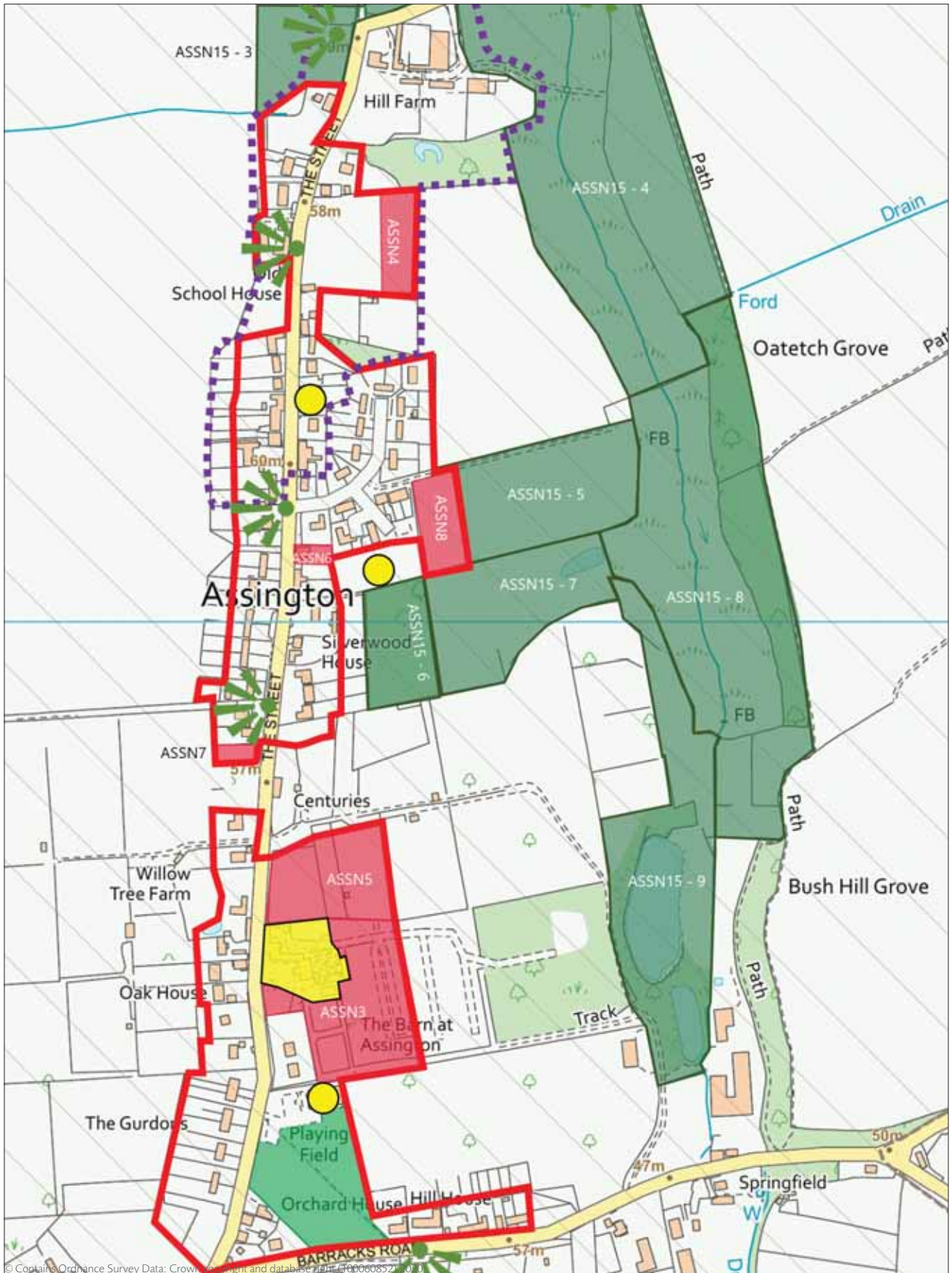
- a) evidence can be provided that genuine attempts he made to sell/let the site in its current use, and that no suitable and viable alternative employment uses can be found or are likely to be found in the foreseeable future;
- b) the existing use has created over-riding environmental problems (e.g. noise, odours or traffic) and permitting an alternative use would be a substantial environmental outweigh the loss of an employment site;
- c) an alternative use or mix of uses would assist in regeneration and offer greater benefits to the community in meeting local business and employment needs;
- d) it is for an employment related support facility such as employment training / education, workplace crèche or workplace related café;
- e) an alternative use or mix of uses would provide other sustainability benefits that would outweigh the loss of an employment site.

Policies Map



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Village Centre Inset Map



Appendix A - Listed Buildings

Grade I

Church of St Edmund

Grade 2

Assington House

Stables and coach house to former Assington Hall,

Home Farmhouse

Cootes Cottage

Dorking Tye Cottage

The Old Farmhouse

Barn to the South of Moor's Farmhouse

Moor's Farmhouse

Dorking Tye House

Barn to the North West of Dorking Tye House

No's 21 to 23, The Street

Aveley Hall

Shamrock Farmhouse

Partridge Row, 50-55

The Glebe House

81, Dyers Lane

Hollies Cottage

Kiln Cottage

Dillack's Farmhouse

Park Farmhouse

Centuries

10 and 11, The Street

The Hollies

Telephone Kiosk

Far End, Further Street

Shoulder of Mutton Public House

Hill Farmhouse

13-17, The Street

Willow Farmhouse, Further Street

Mill Farmhouse

The Stores (opposite Shoulder of Mutton)

The information in this appendix was correct at the time of writing this Plan. Up to date information should be sought from the Local Planning Authority, the Parish Council or appropriate statutory body.

Appendix B - Development Design Checklist

Source: AECOM Design Guide for Assington, September 2019, to be found on the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the Parish Council website.

Street Grid and Layout

- Does it favour accessibility and connectivity over cul-de-sac models? If not, why?
- Do the new points of access and street layout have regard for all users of the development; in particular pedestrians, cyclists, and those with disabilities?
- What are the essential characteristics of the existing street pattern? Are these reflected in the proposal?
- How will the new design or extension integrate with the existing street arrangement?
- Are the new points of access appropriate in terms of patterns of movement?
- Do the points of access conform to the statutory technical requirements?

Local Green Spaces, Views and Character

- What are the particular characteristics of this area which have been taken into account in the design; i.e. what are the landscape qualities of the area?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance any identified views or views in general?
- How does the proposal affect the trees on or adjacent to the site?
- Has the proposal been considered in its widest context?
- Has the impact on the landscape quality of the area been taken into account?
- In rural locations, has the impact of the development on the tranquillity of the area been fully considered?
- How does the proposal affect trees on or adjacent to the site?
- How does the proposal affect the character of a rural location?
- How does the proposal impact on existing views which are important to the area and how are these views incorporated in the design?
- Can any new views be created?
- Is there adequate amenity space for the development?
- Does the new development respect and enhance existing amenity space?
- Have opportunities for enhancing existing amenity spaces been explored?
- Will any communal amenity spaces be created? If so, how will this be used by the new owners and how will it be managed?

Gateway and Access Features

- What is the arrival point, how is it designed?
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing gaps between villages?
- Does the proposal affect or change the setting of a listed building or listed landscape?
- Is the landscaping to be hard or soft?

Buildings Layout and Grouping

- What are the typical groupings of buildings?
- How have the existing groupings been reflected in the proposal?
- Are proposed groups of buildings offering variety and texture to the townscape?
- What effect would the proposal have on the streetscape?
- Does the proposal maintain the character of dwelling clusters stemming from the main road?
- Does the proposal overlook any adjacent properties or gardens? How is this mitigated?

Building Line and Boundary Treatment

- What are the characteristics of the building line?
- How has the building line been respected in the proposals?
- Have the appropriateness of the boundary treatments been considered in the context of the site?

Building Heights and Roofline

- What are the characteristics of the roofline?
- Have the proposals paid careful attention to height, form, massing, and scale?
- If a higher than average building is proposed, what would be the reason for making the development higher?

Household Extensions

- Does the proposed design respect the character of the area and the immediate neighbourhood, or does it have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties in relation to privacy, overbearing, or overshadowing impact?
- Is the roof form of the extension appropriate to the original dwelling (considering angle of pitch)?
- Do the proposed materials match those of the existing dwelling?
- In case of side extension, does it retain important gaps within the street scene and avoid a 'terracing effect'?
- Are there any proposed dormer roof extensions set within the roof slope?
- Does the proposed extension respond to the existing pattern of window and door openings?
- Is the side extension set back from the front of the house?

Building Materials and Surface Treatment

- What is the distinctive material in the area, if any?
- Does the proposed material harmonise with the local material?
- Does the proposal use high quality materials?
- Have the details of the windows, doors, eaves, and roof been addressed in the context of the overall design?
- Do the new proposed materials respect or enhance the existing area or adversely change its character?

Car Parking Solutions

- What parking solutions have been considered?
- Are the car spaces located and arranged in a way that is not dominant or detrimental to the sense of place?
- Has planting been considered to soften the presence of cars?
- Does the proposed car parking compromise the amenity of adjoining properties?

Architectural Details and Contemporary Design

- Does the proposal harmonise with the adjacent properties? This means that it follows the height, massing, and general proportions of adjacent buildings and how it takes cues from materials and other physical characteristics.
- Does the proposal maintain or enhance the existing landscape features?
- Has the local architectural character and precedent been demonstrated in the proposals?
- If the proposal is a contemporary design, are the details and materials of a sufficiently high enough quality and does it relate specifically to the architectural characteristics and scale of the site?

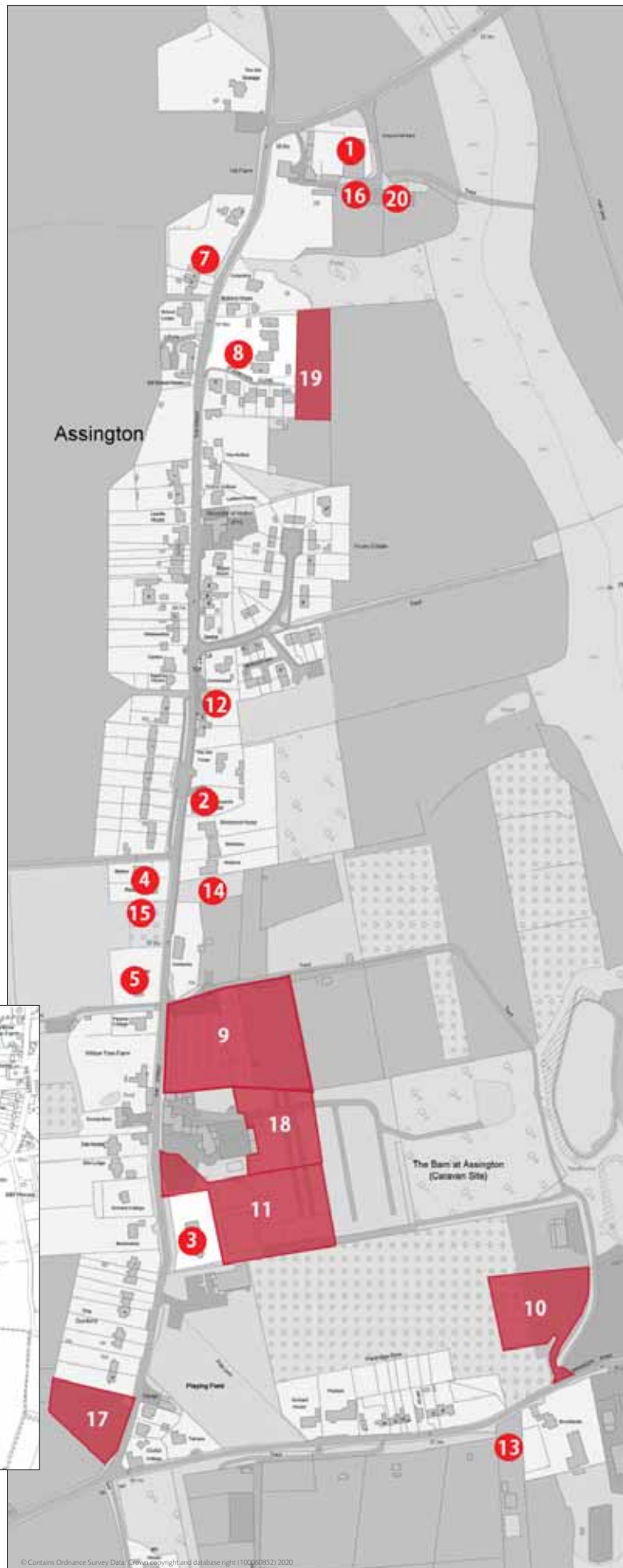
Appendix C - Residential Planning Permissions in Assington

Permissions as at 1 April 2018 – Source Babergh SHELAA Published July 2019

Map Ref.	Application Reference	Address	Planning Permission Date	Number
1	B /12/01347/FUL	Hill Farm, The Street	24/04/2013	1
2	B /14/01305/FUL	St Edmunds Cottage, The Street	04/12/2014	1
3	B /15/01393/FUL	The Barn at Assington, The Street	18/11/2015	3
4	B /16/01056/FUL	Land south of 1 Woodfield	29/09/2016	2
5	B /16/01353/FUL	Assington Fruit Farm, The Street	02/12/2016	1
6	B /16/01638/FUL	Chestnut Grove, Bures Road	01/02/2017	1
7	B /17/00430/FUL	Dale Cottage, The Street	10/05/2017	1
8	DC/17/06170/RES	Land North Of The Hollies, The Street	14/08/2017	10
9	DC/18/00188/OUT	Land To North Of Assington Barn, The Street	26/03/2018	8
			As at 01 April 2018	28

Granted Planning Permission Since 1 April 2018 – Source Babergh SHELAA and Planning Applications database

Map Ref.	Application Reference	Address	Planning Permission Date	Number
10	DC/18/01759/OUT	Land To North Of Brookfields Barracks Road	18/06/2018	1
11	DC/18/00687/OUT	Land At The Barn The Street	22/06/2018	8
12	DC/18/03392/FUL	Land North Of 25 The Street	19/10/2018	2
13	DC/18/03861/RES	Land South Of Barracks Road	23/10/2018	1
14	DC/18/01894/FUL	Land South Of Wistons The Street	04/12/2018	1
15	DC/18/04270/FUL	Land To The South Of Maxton & Russet The Street	25/01/2019	1
16	DC/18/04077/FUL	Hill Farm The Street	30/01/2019	2
17	DC/19/01570	Land South Of 10 The Gurdons 10 The Gurdons The Street	24/06/2019	4
18	DC/18/05178	Land At Assington Barns The Street	09/04/2019	7
19	DC/18/02596	East of St Edmunds Close	15/05/2019	6
20	DC/19/02753	Hill Farm	11/07/2019	3
				36



Residential Planning Permissions in Assington



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Glossary

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). It includes, affordable housing for rent, starter homes, discounted market sales housing and other affordable routes to home ownership.

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

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): Land protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act). It protects the land to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. Local authorities must make sure that all planning decisions have regard for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB.

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

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

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

County Wildlife Site: Sites which are not protected by legislation but their importance is recognised by local authorities when considering planning applications. Under current planning policy there is a presumption against granting permission for development that would have an adverse impact on a County Wildlife Site.

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

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

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

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

Hinterland Village: Defined in the Babergh Core Strategy (2014) as villages that tend to be small, with very limited facilities and so are dependent on nearby larger villages or urban areas for many of their everyday needs.

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

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

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

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

Neighbourhood Area: The Neighbourhood Area is that which the Neighbourhood Plan covers. It normally covers a whole parish and is formally designated by the local planning authority upon request of the Parish Council.

Neighbourhood Plan: A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular Neighbourhood Area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and/or the Localism Act 2011).

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

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

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

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

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

Site of Special Scientific Interest: Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

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

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

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

ASSINGTON

Neighbourhood Plan 2018 - 2036



Assington Parish Council