



ASSINGTON

Suffolk

Neighbourhood Plan Design
Guidelines

DRAFT FINAL

September 2019

Quality information

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A photograph of a vast field of yellow flowers, likely rapeseed, stretching to the horizon under a cloudy sky. The flowers are in full bloom, and the field is densely packed. The sky is filled with soft, grey clouds, with a hint of light breaking through near the horizon. The overall scene is a natural, agricultural landscape.

Introduction

01

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Through the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government's Neighbourhood Planning Programme, led by Locality, AECOM has been commissioned to provide design support to Assington Parish Council.

The support is intended to provide design guidelines, based on the character and special qualities of the parish, that can be applied to influence the appearance of new development.

1.2. Process

The following steps were undertaken to produce the Guidelines:

- Initial meeting and site visit;
- Urban design analysis;
- Desktop research, including review of work undertaken to inform the emerging Neighbourhood Plan and community engagement;
- Preparation of draft design guidelines;
- Preparation of a draft report, subsequently revised in response to feedback provided by the Assington Neighbourhood Group; and
- Submission of a final report.

1.3. The importance of good design

As the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) notes, 'good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities' (paragraph 124).

Research, such as for the Government's Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (now part of the Design Council; see, for example, The Value of Good Design at <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/asset/document/the-value-of-good-design.pdf>) has shown that good design of buildings and places can:

- Improve health and well-being;
- Increase civic pride and cultural activity;
- Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour; and
- Reduce pollution.

The NPPF goes on to root neighbourhood planning at the heart of the drive for quality development: "Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development" (paragraph 125).

This document helps to do just that for Assington, where recent consultation, summarised in section 3, shows that residents appreciate high quality building environment where new development blends with the existing houses in the village. A good proportion also believe that sustainability should be encouraged into the design from the outset.

1.4. The area of study

Assington is a parish of 402¹ people in Suffolk. It is situated approximately 5 miles from Sudbury, 10 miles from Colchester and it is also close to Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The main village is just off the A134, developed along The Street, where the Pub, the Farm Shop and the Tea Room are located, as well as the Village Hall and the Playing Field. The church is located further to the north, away from the heart of the village. It is a Grade 1 listed building that dates from the 14th century, restored and rebuilt in the 19th century.

The settlement, which dates from Saxon times, is surrounded by agricultural land. The Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment classes Assington as a 'hinterland village'; settlement and landscape of the Ancient Rolling Farmlands and Rolling Valley Farmland character type².

1. Parish population 2011, Office for National Statistics. Retrieved 2015-10-23

2. Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment, Suffolk County Council.

KEY

-  Adjacent Parishes Boundaries
-  Neighbourhood Plan Area
-  Road network
-  Woodland
-  Water Feature

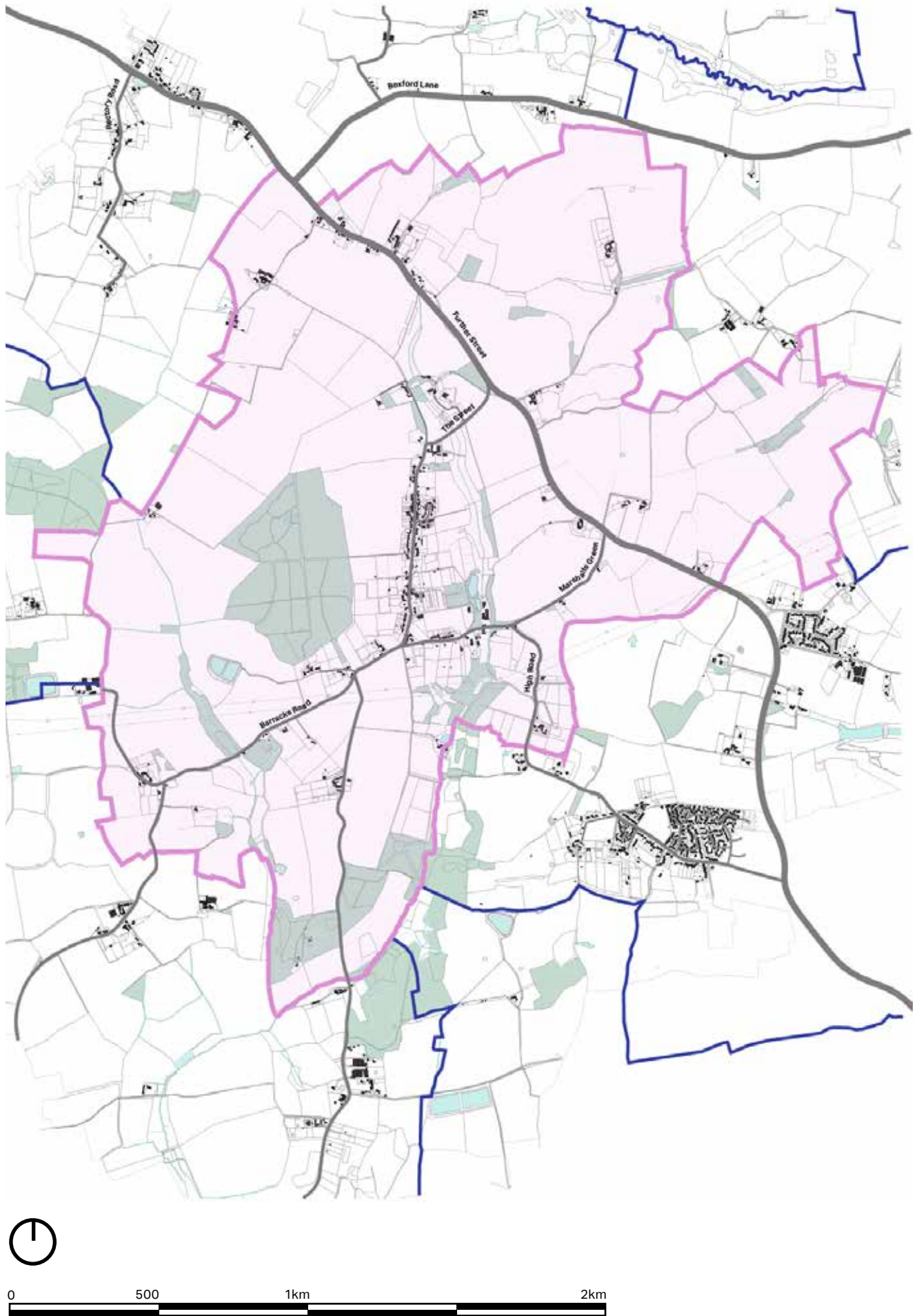


Figure 1: Assington Neighbourhood Plan Area





Baseline

02

2. Baseline

2.1. Introduction

This section outlines the broad physical, historical and contextual characteristics of Assington. It analyses the landscape, the pattern and layout of buildings, green infrastructure and land uses. Images and drawings in this section have been used to portray the character of Assington and emphasise its characteristics. The features outlined in this section are used as the basis for the design guidance.

2.2. Settlement pattern and landscape

Assington village has a ribbon development creating a linear settlement along the main road, The Street, with outlying clusters at Further Street and Dorking Tye.

The Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment notes that 'Assington has a ribbon form of development broken up by orchards and farmland, concentrated along the Street, providing a quite and tranquil atmosphere (Suffolk County Council, 2015).

Concerning the landscape, as mentioned above, the used definition is Ancient Rolling Farmlands (figure 2). Some key characteristics¹ of this type of landscape are:

- Rolling arable landscape of chalky clays and loams, with blocks of ancient woodland;
- Dissected widely and often deeply, by river valleys;
- Hedges of hawthorn and elm with oak ash and field maple as hedgerow trees; and
- Network of winding lanes and paths often associated with hedges, creating visual intimacy.



KEY

- Neighbourhood Plan Area
- Assington Settlement Boundary
- Road network¹
- Woodland
- Water Feature

Figure 2: Map showing the landscape typologies. Reference: <http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/landscapes/Ancient-rolling-farmlands.aspx>

1. Suffolk County Council website (<http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/landscapes/Ancient-rolling-farmlands.aspx>)

1. Please see Fig.25 for Rights of way.

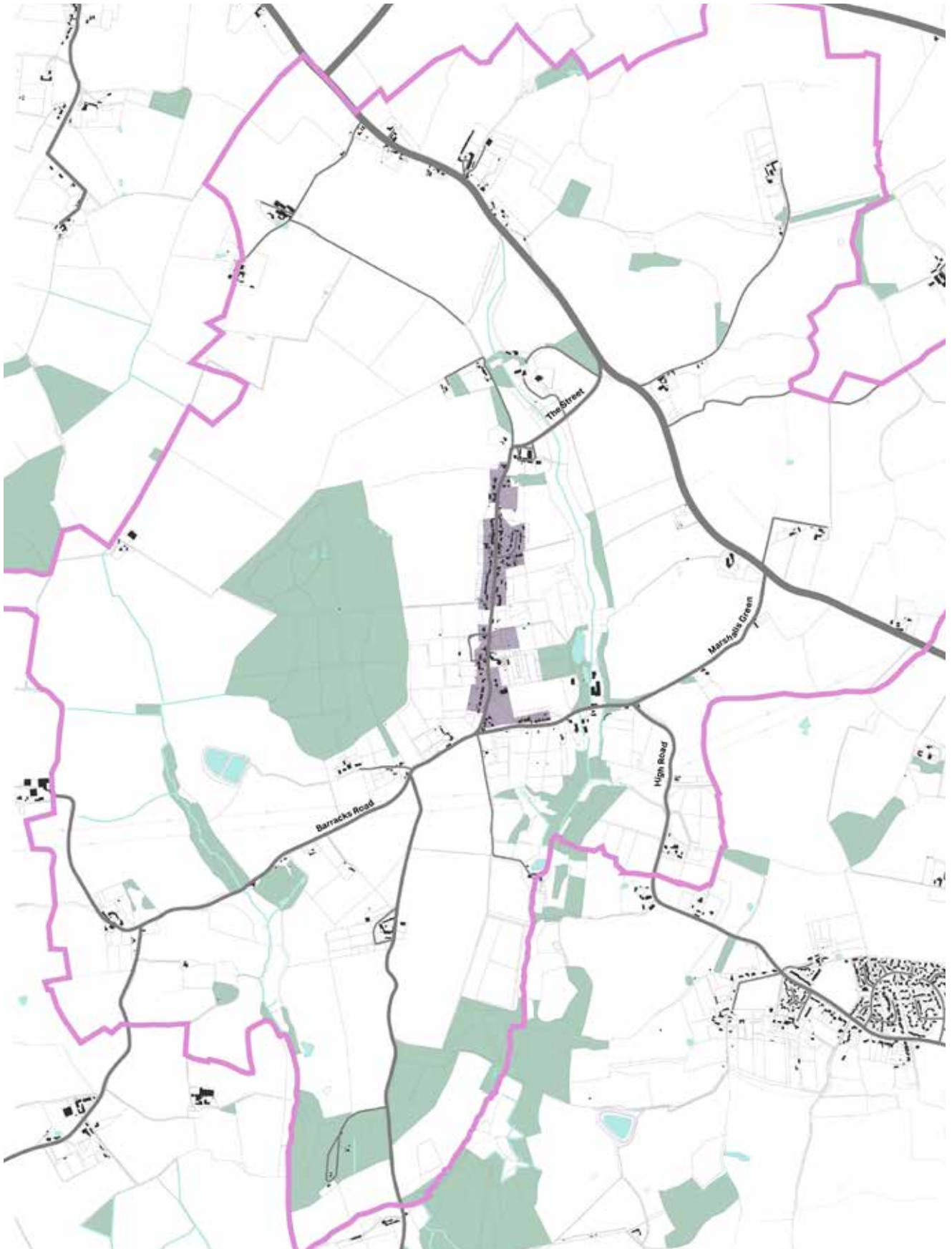


Figure 3: Map showing the settlement pattern and the countryside

2.3. Informal rural character

Assington village is representative of a typical small and traditional Suffolk village, creating an impression of quiet seclusion and a degree of self-sufficiency.

The atmosphere of rural informality is enhanced by the lack of pedestrian pavements or footways and the prevalence of footpaths which give access to the countryside around the village.

The images on the next page have been chosen to show this informality and the great views to the countryside that the footpaths give access to. The parish has key 'big sky' viewpoints, across to distant woods.

An important recurring feature that defines Assington's special character for residents is the direct uninterrupted views that many houses have to the countryside behind. This is the result of the linear nature of the village. This feature is related to figure 4, which shows heritage views to be preserved in any future housing proposed by the Assington Neighbourhood Plan Group.

Another defining feature - and one that is at risk of being lost - is the fields interspersed with housing along the Street.



Figure 4: Map showing important countryside views near the village centre, from Questionnaire responses.



Figure 5: No separate footpaths in front of the houses



Figure 6: No pavement along the street



Figure 7: Picturesque views to the countryside



Figure 8: Picturesque views to the countryside

2.4. Character areas and other land-based designations

The character areas shown on figure 9 are identified by the Assington NP Group. They include the village centre, which includes the main settlement, and three others based on circular walks. Each area has a distinct character:

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 clay land, 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 is flat land, while the latter is cut through by deep steep-sided valleys.

Village Centre

The Street is on level horizon land, while Barracks Road dips across the Brook. West of The Street is level clay land 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 the small play space at the village hall. The streetscape also includes areas of field and hedge.

Designations

Designations such as the Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB), the Stour Valley Project Area, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and statutory Nature Reserve (figure 10) cover the southern part of the parish.

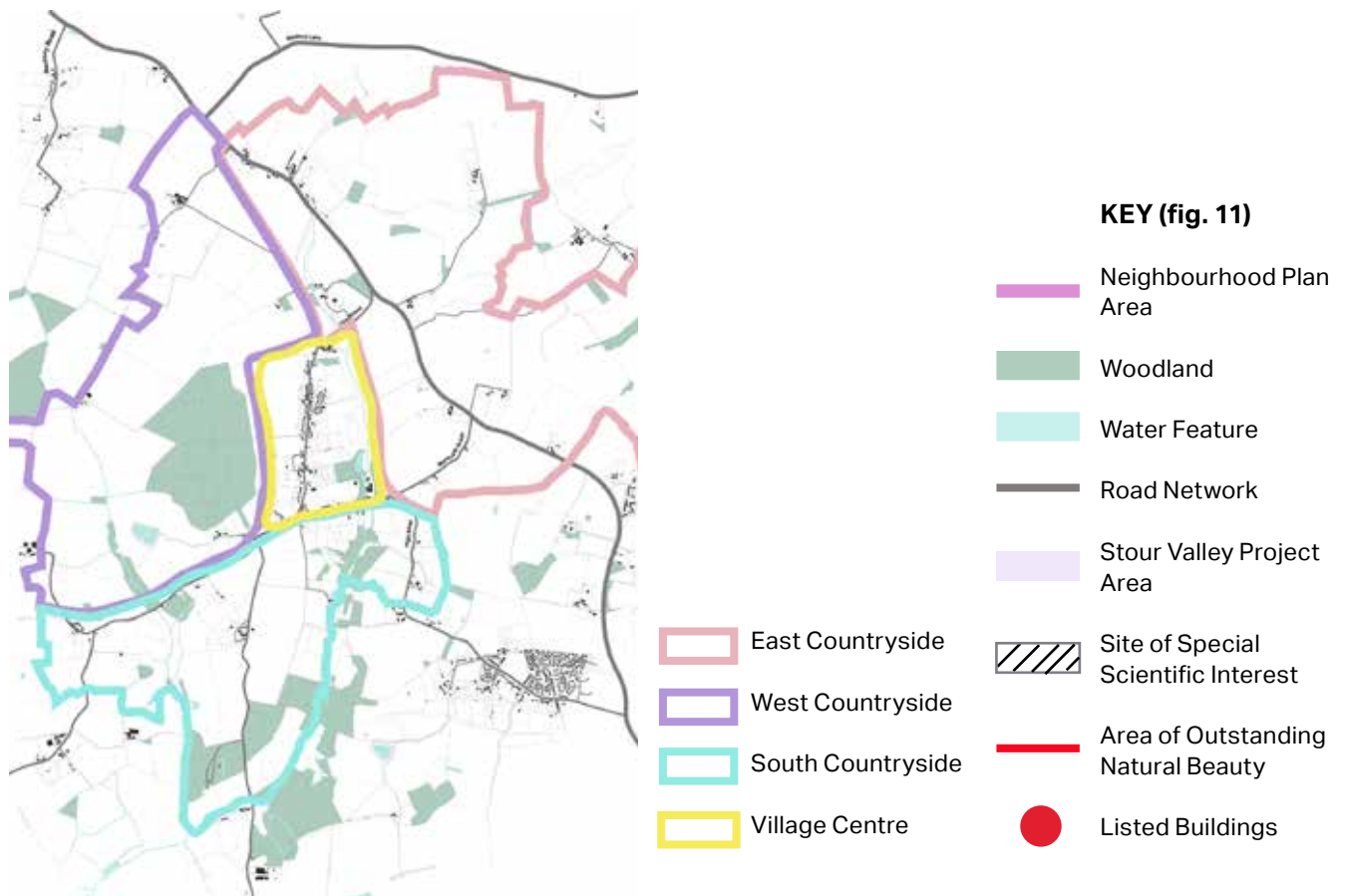


Figure 9: Character areas around Assington

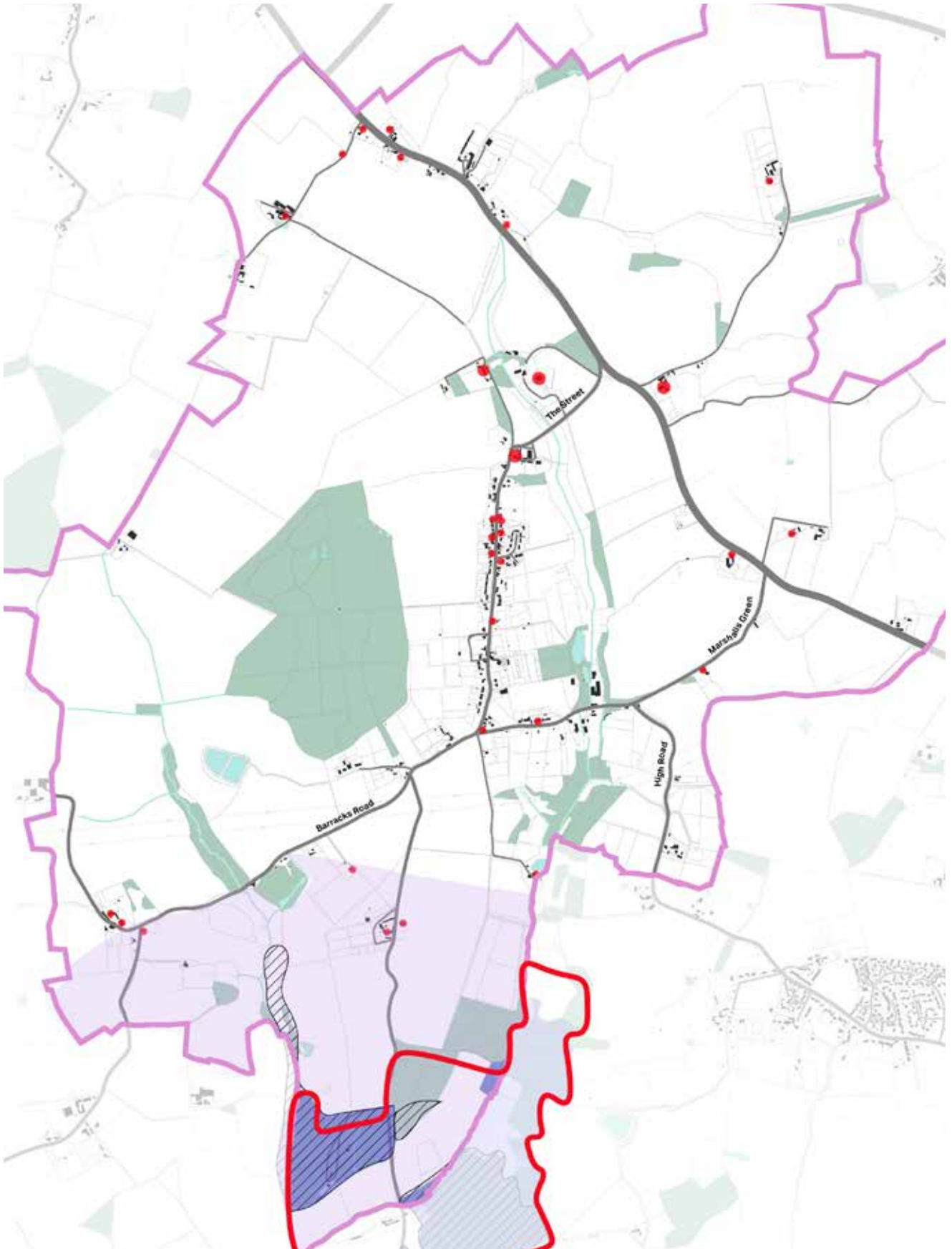


Figure 10: Land-based designations and Listed buildings

2.5. Land use

Assington village has a good range of transport, facilities and business in relation to its size and population. In the village, one can find a church, located further north from the settlement, shops, a pub, a village hall, employment land. The sports pitch is the only publicly accessible land in the village, with too little space for play equipment; all being located close to each other maintaining an unbroken and unspoilt country setting.



Figure 11: Assington Village Hall



Figure 12: Farm Shop and Tea Room

KEY

-  Neighbourhood Plan Area
-  Woodland
-  Water Feature
-  Road Network
-  Church
-  Hotel
-  Shops
-  Sports field
-  Public house
-  Community building
-  Employment

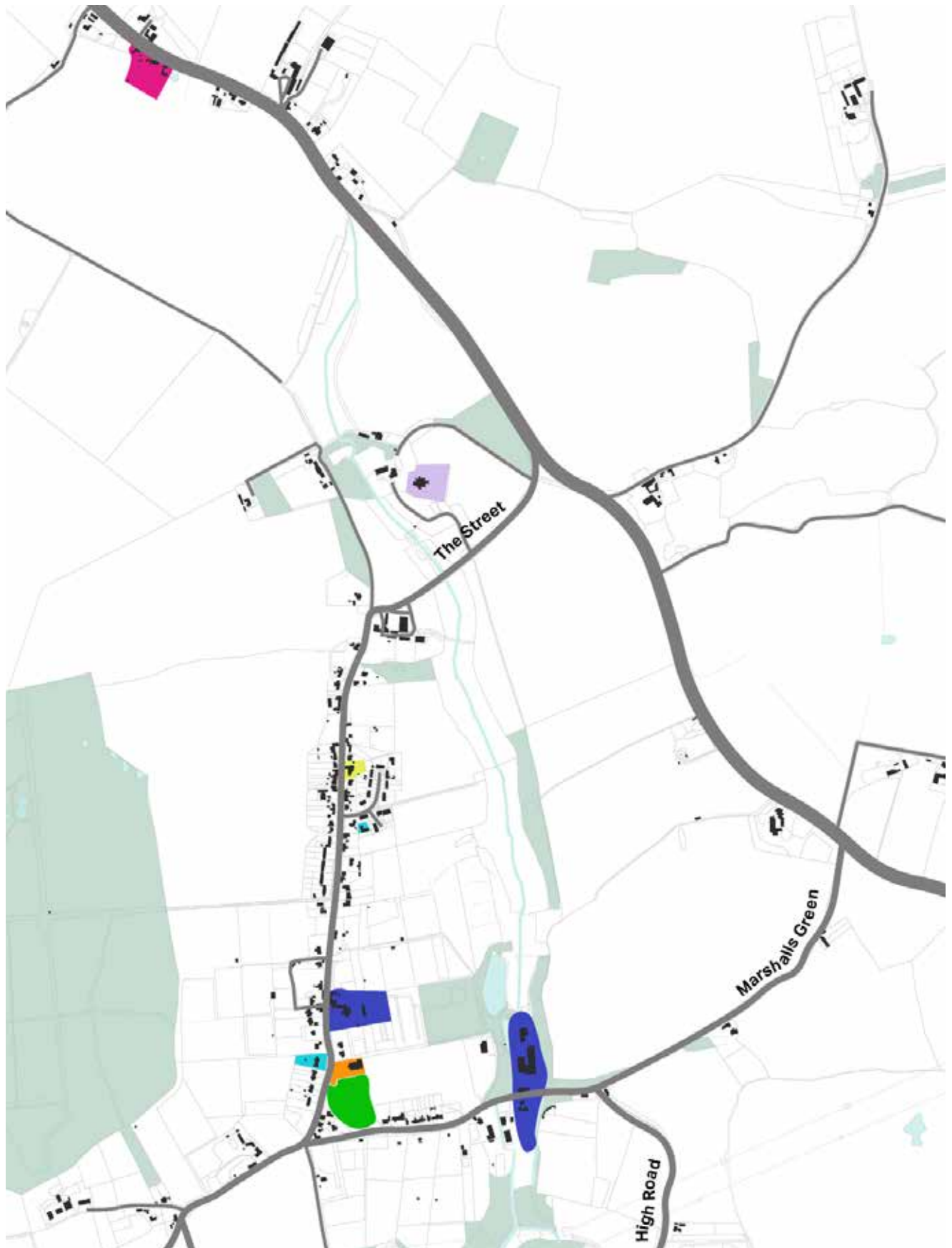


Figure 13: Existing facilities

2.6. Green infrastructure

There is an abundance of green and natural features throughout the parish. Along the Street is a variety of orchards, hedges and verges. Each of Assington’s four character areas has key biodiversity habitats, and very high count of scarce species. The West area has a prevalence of ponds, and close to the village centre includes Assington Thicks, which, at 52 hectares is one of Suffolk’s largest ancient woods; access there is permissive only. The East area has an Ancient Rolling Farmlands landscape type and includes the churchyard with its scarce flowers. There are several County Wildlife sites, and Babergh’s Speacil Landscape Area includes the parish south from the Churchyard and the Thicks.
















Figure 14: Pedestrian road on a higher level than the vehicle road



Figure 15: Hedges along the Street

KEY

-  Neighbourhood Plan Area
-  Woodland
-  Water Feature
-  Road Network
-  Special Landscape Area, designated by Babergh Council
-  Assington NP extended Special Landscape Area (proposed)
-  Assington NP Local Green Area (proposed)
-  Tree Preservation Order (TPO)
-  Tree Preservation Order (proposed)
-  Wildlife Sites
-  Trees
-  Hedges
-  Flood risk zone

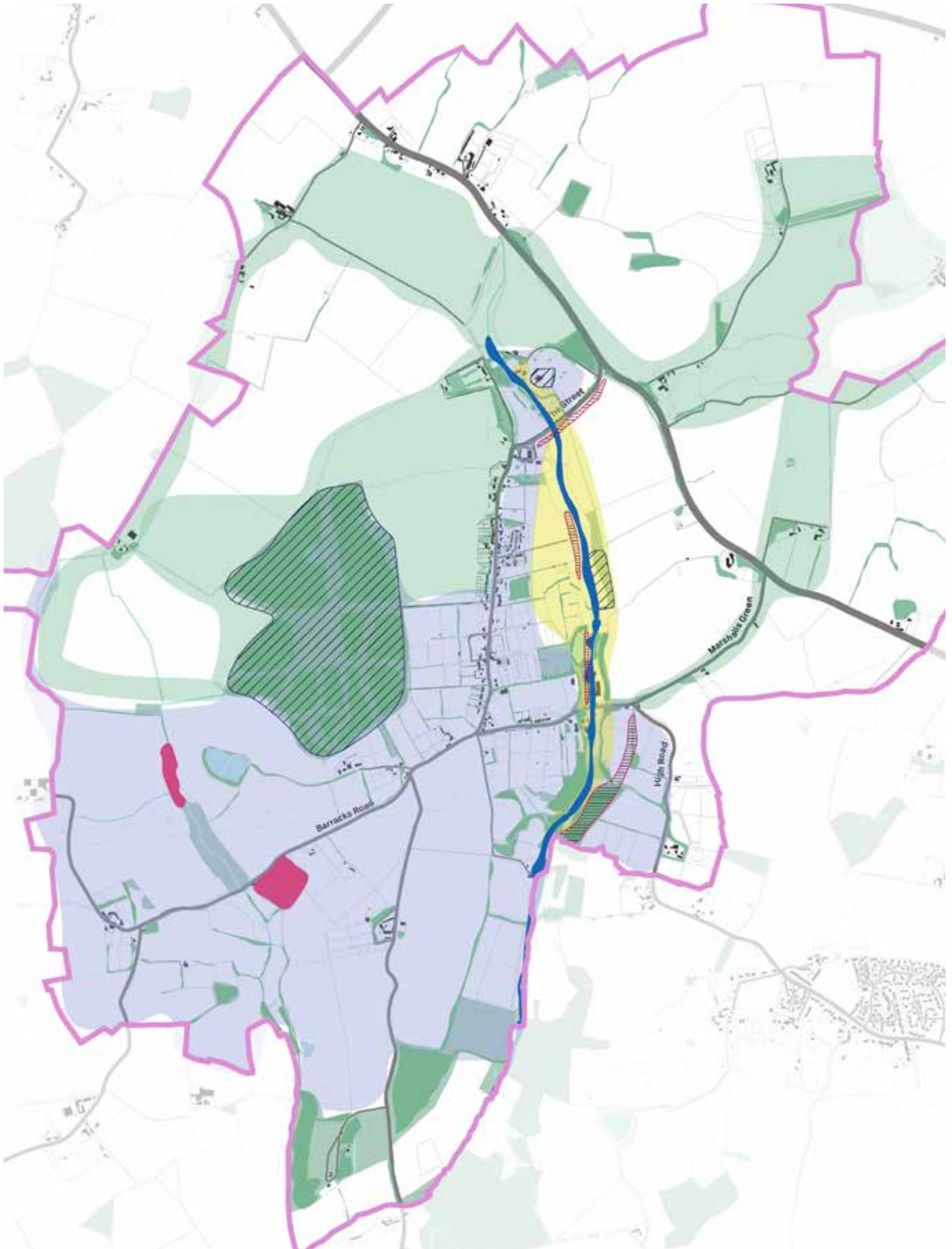


Figure 16: Green Infrastructure

2.7. Housing

Assington village has a mix of housing types, spread as ribbon development along The Street and Barracks Road, with dispersed clusters and farms throughout the parish.

2.7.1. Density

There are different ways to measure housing density. A standard measure, used in this document, is simply the number of units (dwellings) per hectare (dph).

Figure 19 illustrates a range of densities found across Assington. It can be seen that there are low densities - below 15 dph and often below 10 dph - throughout the village with no large discrepancies. This density is driven by - and provides the opportunity for - the sizable back gardens that form part of the village character.



Figure 17: Exemplar of density 9 dph



Figure 18: Exemplar of density 13 dph

KEY

- under 10 dph
- 11 dph - 13 dph



0 250 500 750m

Figure 19: Selected housing densities in Assington

2.7.2. Typology

The map opposite shows that the most frequent typologies include a typical mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses.

Detached and semi-detached houses predominate along the Street, with terraced houses on Barracks Road.






Figure 20: Detached house on the Street



Figure 21: Semi-detached house on the Street

KEY

-  detached houses
-  semi-detached houses
-  terraced houses



0 250 500 750m

Figure 22: Housing typologies in Assington

2.8. Streetscape and footpaths

Assington's character is enhanced by an informal streetscape and network of footpaths. Their role is important for various reasons:

- A good network of public footpaths facilitates the connectivity around the village;
- Footpaths provide great wide views to the countryside and to the valleys;
- Footpaths enhances public access to green spaces and nature, whether that is formal or informal though better circular walks could be achieved by completing some 'missing links', and a safer A134 crossing; and
- The Street is increasingly congested, and all routes from the village bar one are winding, single-track 'rat-run' lanes.

Figure 25 shows the area's footpaths and connectivity between the village and the countryside.



Figure 23: Top view of the footpath west of the Main Road



Figure 24: Top view of the footpath east of the Main Road

KEY

- Neighbourhood Plan Area
- Green Space
- Water Feature
- Road Network
- Footpaths
- Restricted byway
- Bridleway
- Other tracks

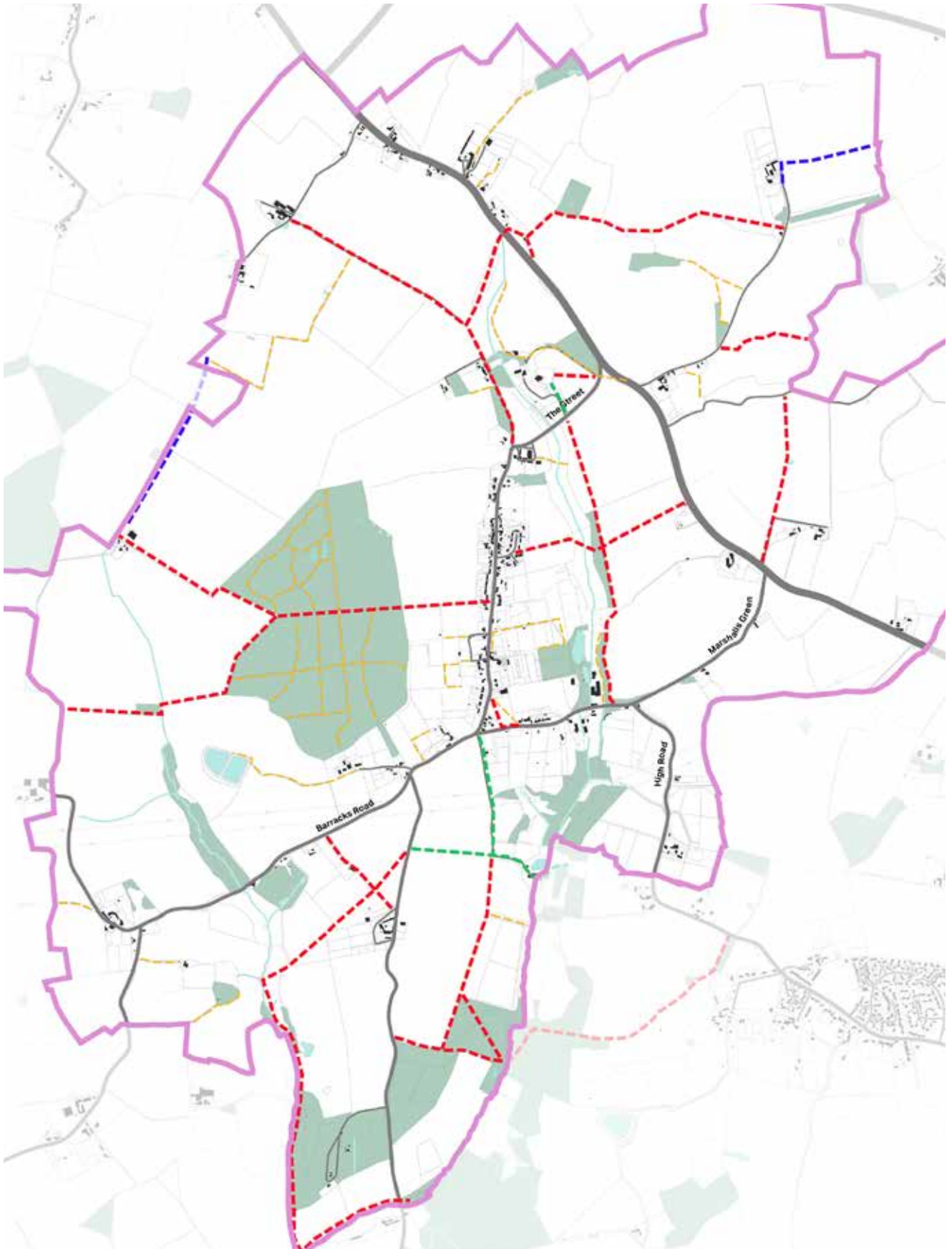


Figure 25: Rights of Way





Engagement

03

3. Engagement

In December 2018, the Assington Neighbourhood Group delivered a questionnaire to every household in the parish. In total, 174 of those were completed, representing 52% of the population.

Here, some of the results of the survey are set out graphically to give an understanding of what is people’s views on important issues concerning development and design, including architectural style, the type of housing, the landscape and biodiversity and the community provisions.

These results are presented to demonstrate the design guidance that follows is informed by local sentiment.

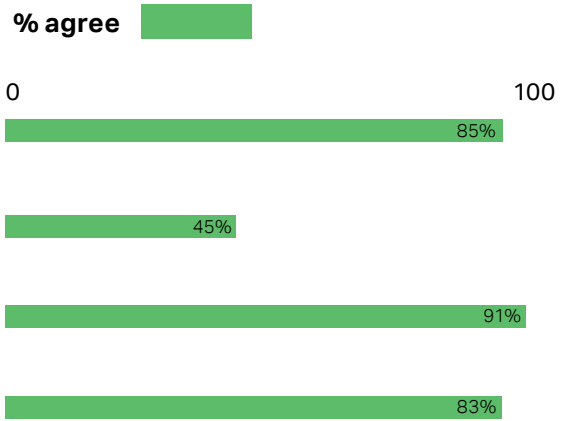
HOUSING - Architectural style

New houses should be of a style which blends with existing older houses in the village

New houses should include modern and architecturally innovative design

New houses should be encouraged to include ‘eco’ credentials

Any new housing development should include affordable housing



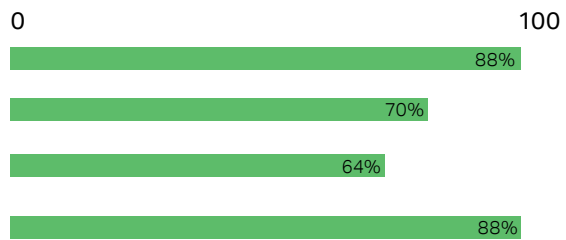
HOUSING - Occupancy

New houses should be mostly for first-time buyers

New houses should be mostly social housing

New houses should be mostly shared ownership

New houses should be mostly privately owned



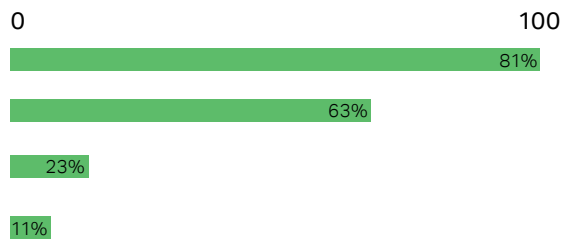
DEVELOPMENT - Settlement pattern

New development should in-fill the road

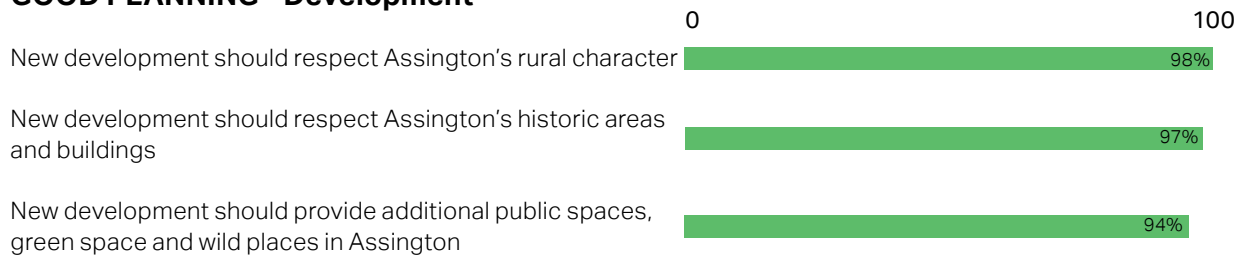
Several small developments of up to 5 dwellings

Several small developments of 6-20 dwellings

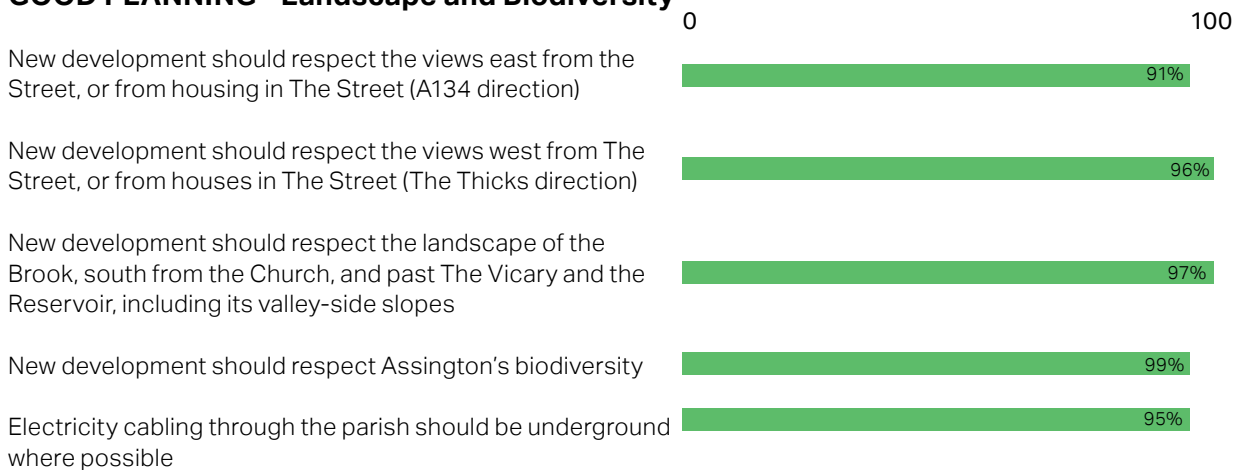
1 or 2 larger developments (10+ dwellings)



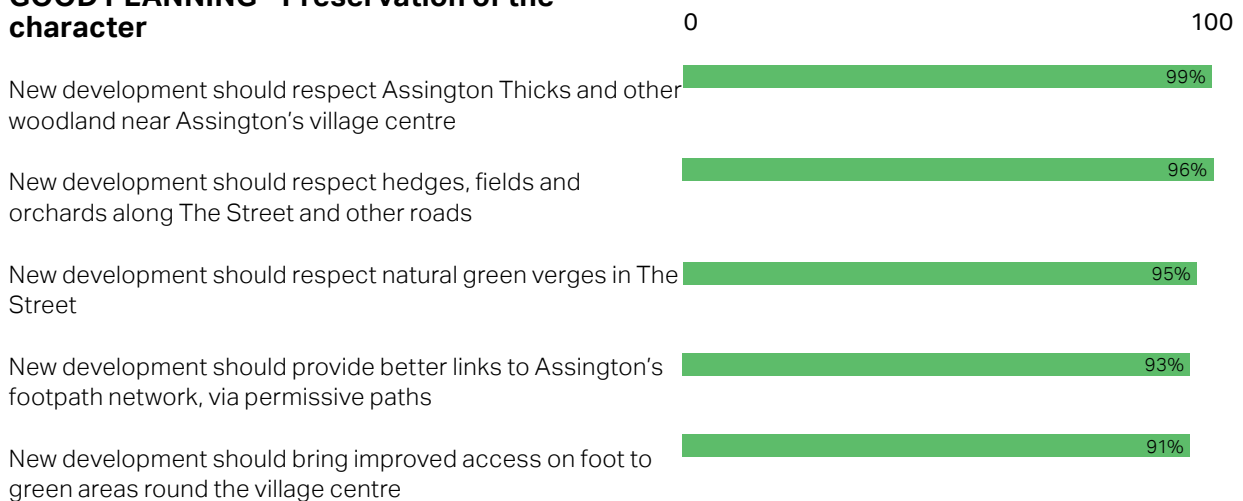
GOOD PLANNING - Development



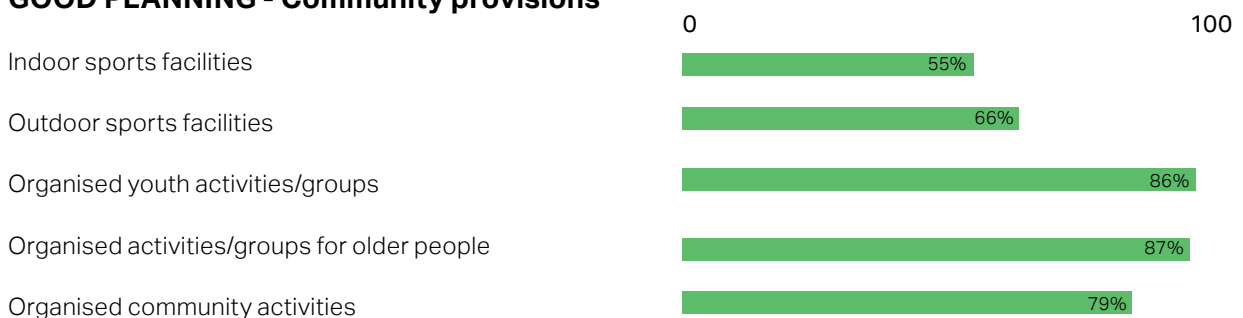
GOOD PLANNING - Landscape and Biodiversity



GOOD PLANNING - Preservation of the character



GOOD PLANNING - Community provisions





A photograph of a brick building corner. A black downspout runs vertically down the wall. At the base of the downspout, there is a black pipe fitting. Wisteria plants with purple flowers are growing against the brick wall, partially obscuring the downspout and pipe fitting. The brickwork is a mix of red and brown tones.

Design Guidance

04

4. Design Guidance

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this Design Guidance is to ensure that future developments consider local character and can enhance local distinctiveness by creating good quality developments, thriving communities and prosperous places to live.

This chapter provides a set of solid principles that can be applied to all new development. They supplement existing design guidance, most notably the Joint Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council Landcape Guidance (August 2015), which applicants will be expected to make reference to alongside this document.

The place-making principles that are considered to be fundamentally important to guide any development in Assington are listed below:

- Pattern of growth
- Housing mix
- Legibility and wayfinding
- Building lines and boundary treatment
- Enclosure
- Views and landmarks
- Biodiversity and landscape
- Materials and building design
- Eco-design
- Dark skies
- Housing extensions
- Servicing
- Bicycle parking

4.2. Pattern of growth

New development should respect the existing settlement pattern in order to preserve its character. Suburbanisation should be avoided. Thus, any proposal that would adversely affect the physical appearance of a rural lane, or give rise to an unacceptable increase in the amount of traffic, noise or disturbance would be inappropriate.

Assington is a ribbon development (fig. 26) which should be respected. Thus, the future development should take an in-filling form along the road instead of having small or large developments spread around the village. However, such in-filling must not be at the expense of all of the fields and hedges that border the Street.

Other issues that should be taken into account when planning for future growth are the provision of additional public access, green spaces, wild places; all to enhance the rural character of the village.

New development should be avoided close to remote, tranquil places. Development that is likely to generate unacceptable levels of traffic on minor roads should be avoided.

In general, any isolated rural development (that adheres to planning policies) should be in inconspicuous locations, such as close to existing buildings or woodlands or in the corner of fields. It should also be sited near to the point of access in order to minimise the need for access tracks to be created across open fields.



Figure 26: Existing settlement pattern in Assington and its relationship with the countryside

4.3. Housing mix

It is important that all newly developed areas should provide a mixture of housing to allow for a variety of options that enhances flexibility to its users and meets all housing need.

There could be a mixture of first-time buyers homes, social housing, shared ownership, social enterprise and privately owned houses. In addition, concerning the type of housing, again, the new houses should offer a variety of one, two and three bedrooms, so they can attract a range of people between single, couples or families.

Affordable housing is another key factor that should be considered when planning for new development.



Figure 27: Semi-detached house, built as Council housing



Figure 28: Example of a detached house in Assington

4.4. Legibility and wayfinding

When places are legible and well signposted, they are easier for the public to comprehend and likely to both function well and be pleasant to live in or visit. People feel safer when they can easily memorise places and navigate around them. It is easier for people to orientate themselves when the routes are direct, and visual articulations and landmarks clearly emphasise the hierarchy of the place.

In Assington village, the pub or the Farm Shop clearly play this role, as they act as landmarks helping people to navigate themselves along the main road, The Street.

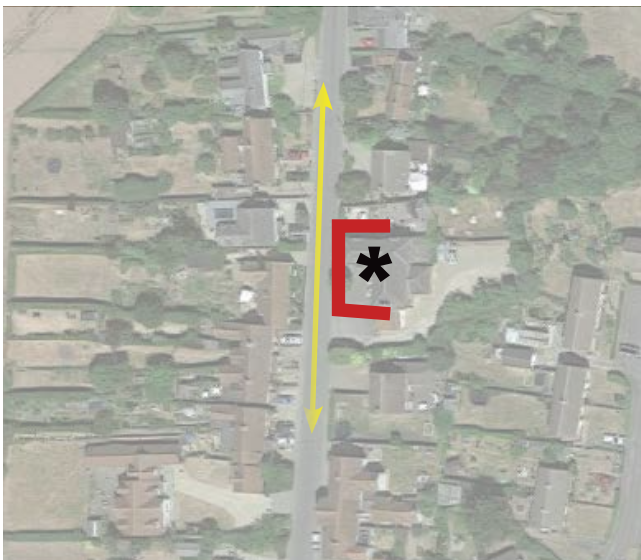


Figure 29: The pub situated on the Street helps in navigation



Figure 30: View of the Pub on the Street

4.5. Building lines and boundary treatment

The use of continuous building lines and setbacks contribute to the overall character of the area and the sense of enclosure of the streets and public spaces.

A special feature of the main road, The Street, is the houses that are mostly set back behind large front gardens, which are embellished with flowers and natural hedges. Maintaining their condition would also improve the legibility and give an idea of openness minimising the impact of traffic and noise in the area.

To design in context, both the building and the boundary feature should align with neighbouring properties.

Existing hedges, hedgerows trees and walls should always be retained to contribute to this feeling of enclosure, and replacement and additional planting of hedges and hedgerow trees will often also be needed to provide continuity of hedge and hedgerow tree cover.

On the other hand, close-boarded fencing, ranch style fencing and over- ornate metal fences and gates should be avoided, since they create an urban effect that is inappropriate for the countryside character.



Figure 31: An illustration for an edge alignment responding to the context of the landscape



Figure 32: Good quality of boundary treatment

4.6. Enclosure

Focal points and public spaces in new developments should be designed in good proportions and provide continuous walls. Clearly defined spaces help in achieving cohesive and attractive urban form, and help in creating an appropriate sense of enclosure.

The following principles serve as general guidelines that should be considered towards achieving satisfactory sense of enclosure:

- In case of building set back, façades should have an appropriate ratio between the width of the street and the building height (see diagram opposite).
- Buildings should be designed to turn corners and terminate views.
- Generally, building façades should front onto streets. Variation to the building line can be introduced to create an informal character.
- In case of terraced buildings, it is recommended that a variety of plot widths, land use and façade depth should be considered during the design process to create an attractive townscape.

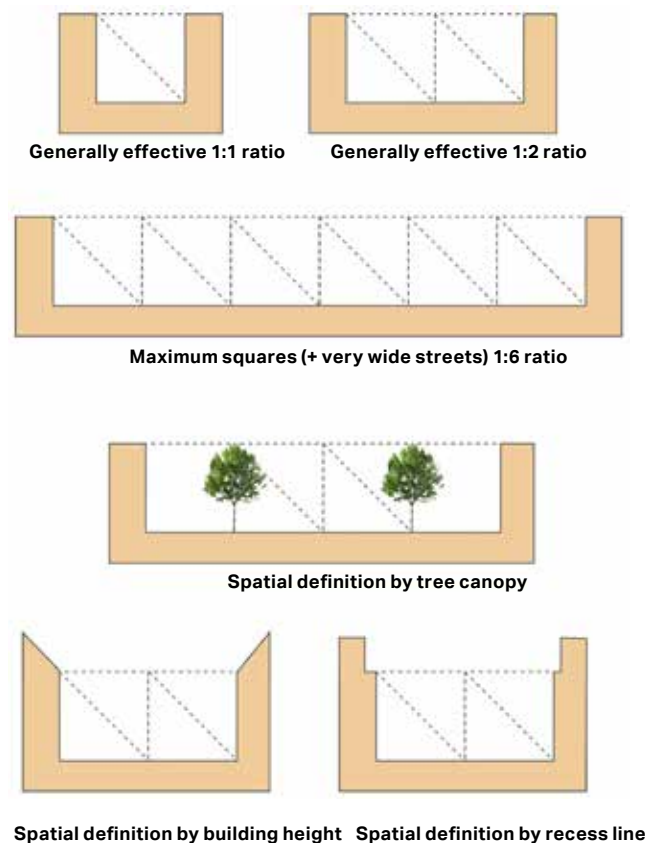


Figure 33: Images from Urban Design Compendium (Homes England)

4.7. Views and landmarks

Well-designed streets, open spaces and public realm together with building forms are crucial for places to create their own stories in people’s minds. Landmarks, vistas and focal points are the tools to achieve places that are easy to read and allow users to easily orientate themselves.

Vistas

Creating short-distance views broken by buildings, trees or landmarks helps to create memorable routes. Creating views and vistas allows easily usable links between places.

The unbroken views to the countryside is a characteristic of Assington village (see figure 34). New houses should aim to maximise the opportunities for those views to the rear and also preserve the existing ones from the back of houses.

Development should be located away from ridge tops, upper valley slopes or prominent locations.

Public footpaths, official and unofficial, also play an important role in enhancing Assington’s picturesque views.



Figure 34: View to the countryside

4.8. Biodiversity and landscape

When planning for any new development it is important to preserve the parish’s treasured landscape. Assington has a variety of areas with landscape interest as for example the area of the Brook, Assington Thicks, the area south from the Church and past the Vicary and the reservoir including its valley slopes.

Biodiversity and woodlands should be protected and enhanced where possible. Hedges, fields, orchards along The Street and other roads, the natural green verges in the streets should be protected when planning for new development.

Apart from preserving it, the landscape can be also enhanced if opportunities are identified. The footpath network has a potential of improving the links and therefore the connectivity around the village. In addition, the quality of the existing pavements could be improved to enhance walkability and safety in a way that does not alter the rural character of the village.

Wildlife friendly environment

- New developments and building extensions should aim to strengthen biodiversity and the natural environment;
- Existing habitats and biodiversity;
- New development proposals should include the creation of new habitats and wildlife corridors. This could be by aligning back and front gardens or installing bird boxes or bricks in walls. Wildlife corridors should be included to enable wildlife to travel to and from foraging areas and their dwelling areas.

East Countryside



Figure 36: Wildlife in the East Countryside

Reference: Assington Character Zones by the Assington NP Group

East Countryside



Figure 35: View at the Avenue in East Countryside

West Countryside



Figure 37: View at the West Countryside



Figure 38: Wildlife in the West Countryside

South Countryside



Figure 39: Wildlife in the South Countryside



Figure 40: View at the South Countryside

4.9. Materials and building design

This section showcases the architecture detailing and building materials that contribute to the local distinctive character of Assington.

New development can draw inspiration from the varied details of the parish's existing architecture that is presented on the next pages.

It is important that any new development reflects the characteristics of existing traditional buildings. This need is more urgent in the case of small villages like Assington, where the historic assets are prevalent and characteristic of the place. The idea of welcoming new development at the same time with preserving the architectural style can be challenging. New development should avoid dominating other buildings or landscape features around it or detract from views of listed buildings or heritage assets.

New housing should be of a style which blends with existing older houses in the village and any use of inappropriate building materials that affect the local distinctiveness should be avoided.

In addition, there is also the need to include more innovative and modern design in the newly-structured buildings, so that new houses will be also equipped with eco-credentials. The latter should be also achieved in a way that the existing architectural style is highly respected.



Figure 41: Modern architecture fits in the surroundings, inspired by barn typology



Figure 42: New development in traditional form



Figure 43: Vernacular brick and wood (or wood effect) details on new housing



Figure 44: New development in traditional form



RED BRICK



WINDOW DETAILS



CLAY TILES



BRICK WALL



OFF-ROAD FOOTPATHS



STREET-FRONTING HEDGE



THATCH



VIEWS AND VISTAS



COLOUR (E.G. SUFFOLK PINK)



TIMBER



FLINT WALL WITH RED BRICK CAP



PLANTED, WELL KEPT BOUNDARIES

4.10. Eco design

Energy efficient or eco design combine all around energy efficient construction, appliances, and lighting with commercially available renewable energy systems, such as solar water heating and solar electricity.

Starting from the design stage there are strategies that can be incorporated towards passive solar heating, cooling and energy efficient landscaping which are determined by local climate and site conditions.

The aim of these interventions is to reduce overall home energy use as cost effectively as the circumstances allow for. Whereas, the final step towards a high performance building would consist of other on site measures towards renewable energy systems.

New development in Assington should aim for innovative design and eco friendly buildings, respecting at the same time the existing traditional ones and therefore the heritage of the village.

Rainwater Harvesting

Rainwater harvesting refers to the systems allowing to capture and store rainwater as well as those enabling the reuse in-situ of grey water. These systems involve pipes and storage devices that could be unsightly if added without an integral vision for design. Therefore some design recommendation would be to:

- Conceal tanks by cladding them in complementary materials;
- Use attractive materials or finishing for pipes;
- Combine landscape/planters with water capture systems;
- Underground tanks;
- Utilise water bodies for storage.



Figure 45: Examples of ecological housing using traditional and contemporary materials

Solar Roof Panels

The aesthetics of solar panels over a rooftop can be a matter of concern for many homeowners. Some hesitate to incorporate them because they believe these diminish the home aesthetics in a context where looks are often a matter of pride among the owners. This is especially acute in the case of historic buildings and conservation areas, where there has been a lot of objection for setting up solar panels on visible roof areas. Thus some solutions are suggested as follows:

On new builds:

- Design solar panel features from the start, forming part of the design concept. Some attractive options are solar shingles and photovoltaic slates; and
- Use the solar panels as a material in their own right.

On retrofits:

- Analyse the proportions of the building and roof surface in order to identify the best location and sizing of panels;
- Aim to conceal wiring and other necessary installations;
- Consider introducing other tile or slate colours to create a composition with the solar panel materials; and
- Conversely, aim to introduce contrast and boldness with proportion. For example, there has been increased interest in black panels due to their more attractive appearance. Black solar panels with black mounting systems and frames can be an appealing alternative to blue panels.



Figure 46: Examples of concealed tanks used for rainwater harvesting

4.11. Dark skies

The dark skies character of the countryside should be protected.

Dark skies benefit both people and wildlife. Evidence shows that in the last few decades the character of much of England has changed as dark skies have gradually brightened as urban development and population grows.

New lighting should not adversely degrade the sky quality beyond the immediate area to be lit.

New development should aim for an unobstructed sky full of stars. The landscape is predominately affected by sky glow from the street lights of the larger urban environment, but can also be significantly affected by over-bright single sources at the local domestic level.

Every effort should be made to consider external lighting and internal light spill that does not affect both the upward and downward dark landscapes.

4.12. Housing extensions

There are a number of principles that residential extensions should follow to maintain character:

- The original building should remain the dominant element of the property regardless the amount of extensions. The newly built extension should not overwhelm the building from any given point.
- Extensions should not result in a significant loss to the private amenity area of the dwelling.
- Designs that wrap around the existing building and involve overly complicated roof forms should be avoided.
- The pitch and form of the roof used on the building adds to its character and extensions should respond to this where appropriate.
- Extensions should consider the materials, architectural features, window sizes, and proportions of the existing building and recreate this style to design an extension that matches and complements the existing building.
- In case of side extensions, the new part should be set back from the front of the main building and retain the proportions of the original building. This is in order to reduce any visual impact of the join between existing and new.
- In case of rear extensions, the new part should not have a harmful effect on neighbouring properties in terms of overshadowing, overbearing or privacy issues.

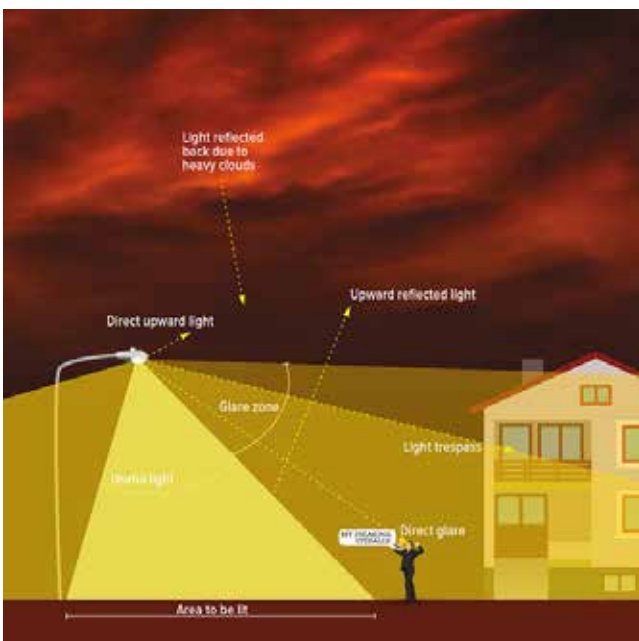
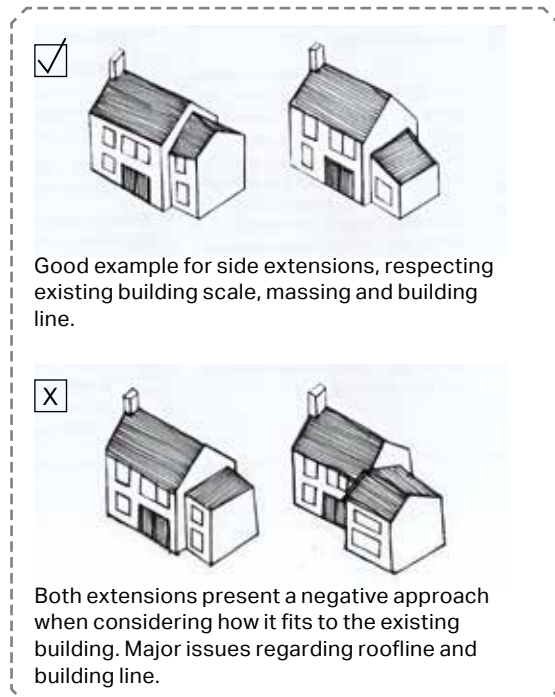


Figure 47: Illustration of the different components of light pollution and what 'good' lighting looks like (Reference: https://www.darksky.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Light_Pollution_Diagram_680px.jpg.)



Good example for side extensions, respecting existing building scale, massing and building line.

Both extensions present a negative approach when considering how it fits to the existing building. Major issues regarding roofline and building line.

Design treatment in case of loft conversion:



Loft conversion incorporating skylights.



Loft conversion incorporating gabled dormers.



Loft conversion incorporating a long shed dormer which is out of scale with the original building.



Original roofline of an existing building.



Loft conversion incorporating gabled dormers.



Loft conversion incorporating gabled dormers which are out of scale and do not consider existing window rhythm nor frequency.

4.13. Servicing

With modern requirements for waste separation and recycling, the number of household bins quantum and size have increased. The issue poses a problem in relation to the aesthetics of the property if bins are left without a design solution.

Waste and cycle storage, if placed on the property boundary, must be integrated with the overall design of the boundary design. A range of hard and soft landscaping treatments such as hedges, trees, flower beds, low walls, and high quality paving materials could be used to minimise the visual impact of bins and recycling containers.

The images on this page illustrate design solutions for servicing units within the plot.



Figure 48: Examples of bin storage

4.14. Bicycle parking

A straightforward way to encourage cycling is to provide secured covered cycle parking within all new residential developments and publicly available cycle parking in the public realm.

For residential units, where there is no garage on plot, covered and secured cycle parking should be provided within the domestic curtilage. The use of planting and smaller trees alongside cycle parking can be used to mitigate any visual impact on adjacent spaces or buildings.



Figure 49: On-plot bicycle storage space



Figure 50: Example of public cycle parking (left) and sheltered cycle parking garage (right) in Cambridge

4.15. General questions to ask and issues to consider when presented with a development proposal

Because the design guidelines of this chapter cannot cover all design eventualities, this section provides a number of questions based on established good practice against which the design proposal should be evaluated. The aim is to assess all proposals by objectively answering the questions below. Not all the questions will apply to every development. The relevant ones, however, should provide an assessment as to whether the design proposal has taken into account the context and provided an adequate design solution.

As a first step there are a number of ideas or principles that should be present in the proposals. The proposals or design should:

1. Integrate with existing paths, streets, circulation networks and patterns of activity;
2. Reinforce or enhance the established village and rural character of streets, greens, and other spaces;
3. Respect the rural character of views and gaps;
4. Harmonise and enhance existing settlement in terms of physical form, architecture and land use;
5. Relate well to local topography and landscape features, including prominent ridge lines and long distance views;
6. Reflect, respect, and reinforce local architecture and historic distinctiveness;
7. Retain and incorporate important existing features into the development;
8. Respect surrounding buildings in terms of scale, height, form and massing;
9. Adopt contextually appropriate materials and details;
10. Provide adequate open space for the development in terms of both quantity and quality;
11. Incorporate necessary services and drainage infrastructure without causing unacceptable harm to retained features;
12. Ensure all components e.g. buildings, landscape, access routes, parking and open space are well related to each other;
13. 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; and

14. Positively integrate energy efficient technologies.

Following these ideas and principles, there are number of questions that can be asked of all development proposals.

Street Grid and Layout

- 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 character and tranquillity of the area been fully considered?
- Is there adequate amenity space for the development?
- Does the new development respect and enhance existing amenity space?
- 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 settlements?
- 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?
- Have the need of wheelchair users been considered?

Architectural Details and Contemporary Design

- If the proposal is within a conservation area, how are the characteristics reflected in the 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?





Implementation

05

5. Implementation

5.1. Delivery

The design guidelines will be a valuable tool for securing context-driven, high quality development in Assington. They will be used in different ways by different actors in the planning and development process, as summarised in the table below:

| Actor | How they will use the design guidelines |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Applicants, developers and landowners | As a guide to the community and Local Planning Authority expectations on design, allowing a degree of certainty – they will be expected to follow the Guidelines as planning consent is sought. Where planning applications require a Design and Access Statement, the Statement should explain how the Design Guidelines have been followed. |
| Local Planning Authority | As a reference point, embedded in policy, against which to assess planning applications. The Design Guidelines should be discussed with applicants during any pre-application discussions. |
| Parish Council | As a guide when commenting on planning applications, ensuring that the Design Guidelines are followed including relevant sections of the Babergh 'Landscape Guidance, August 2015 and the Suffolk Design Guide (for Residential Areas), revised 2000. |
| Community organisations | As a tool to promote community-backed development and to inform comments on planning applications. |
| Statutory consultees | As a reference point when commenting on planning applications |

5.2. Deliverability

The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 35) emphasises that a proportionate evidence base should inform plans. Based on a 'positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings' (see paragraph 15). Policies should be 'underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence. This should be adequate and proportionate, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned, and take into account relevant market signals' (paragraph 31). Crucially planning policies 'should not undermine the deliverability of the plan' (paragraph 34).

Neighbourhood Plans need to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the corresponding Local Plan. Where new policy requirements are introduced (that carry costs to development) over and above Local Plan and national standards it is necessary to assess whether development will remain deliverable. The principles and guidance set out in this document and within the Neighbourhood Plan's policies are aligned with national policy and non-statutory best practice on design.

The values and costs of construction between new developments and within new developments will vary based on location, situation, product type, design (architecture, placemaking etc.) and finish; and the state of the market at the point of marketing the properties. The guidelines herein constitute place making principles and guidance to help interpret and apply the statutory policies within the Neighbourhood Plan. Good design is not an additional cost to development and good placemaking can result in uplifts in value.

