

Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan
Landscape Appraisal
Final Report



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Alison Farmer Associates was appointed by Ashdon Parish Council to undertake a landscape appraisal of the Parish, in order to provide a robust evidence base to support the development of policy within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan. In particular the Parish Council required land surrounding Ashdon and Church End to be assessed in detail to establish the sensitivity and capacity of these areas to accommodate housing/employment development.

1.1.2 Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan area covers the same area as the Parish. It stretches northwards to the edge of settlement at Bartlow, southwards to Stocking Green, westwards to Monk Hall and eastwards to Little Biggin Common. The River Bourn rises at Grigg's Grove, upstream of Water End, and travels northwards to join the River Granta at Bartlow. Ashdon lies 4 miles north west of Saffron Walden, closely encircled by a collection of smaller settlements or 'ends' such as Knox End, Holden End and Rogers End to the north, Steventon End to the north east, Church End to the south west, Water End to the south and Midsummer Hill to the south east.

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 The key objective of this study is to provide a robust understanding of the character and qualities of the Neighbourhood Plan Area in order to make sound judgements as to the sensitivity and capacity of land to accommodate housing/employment development. This study also presents guidance on opportunities for landscape enhancement and green infrastructure which collectively help to shape a vision for the Parish.

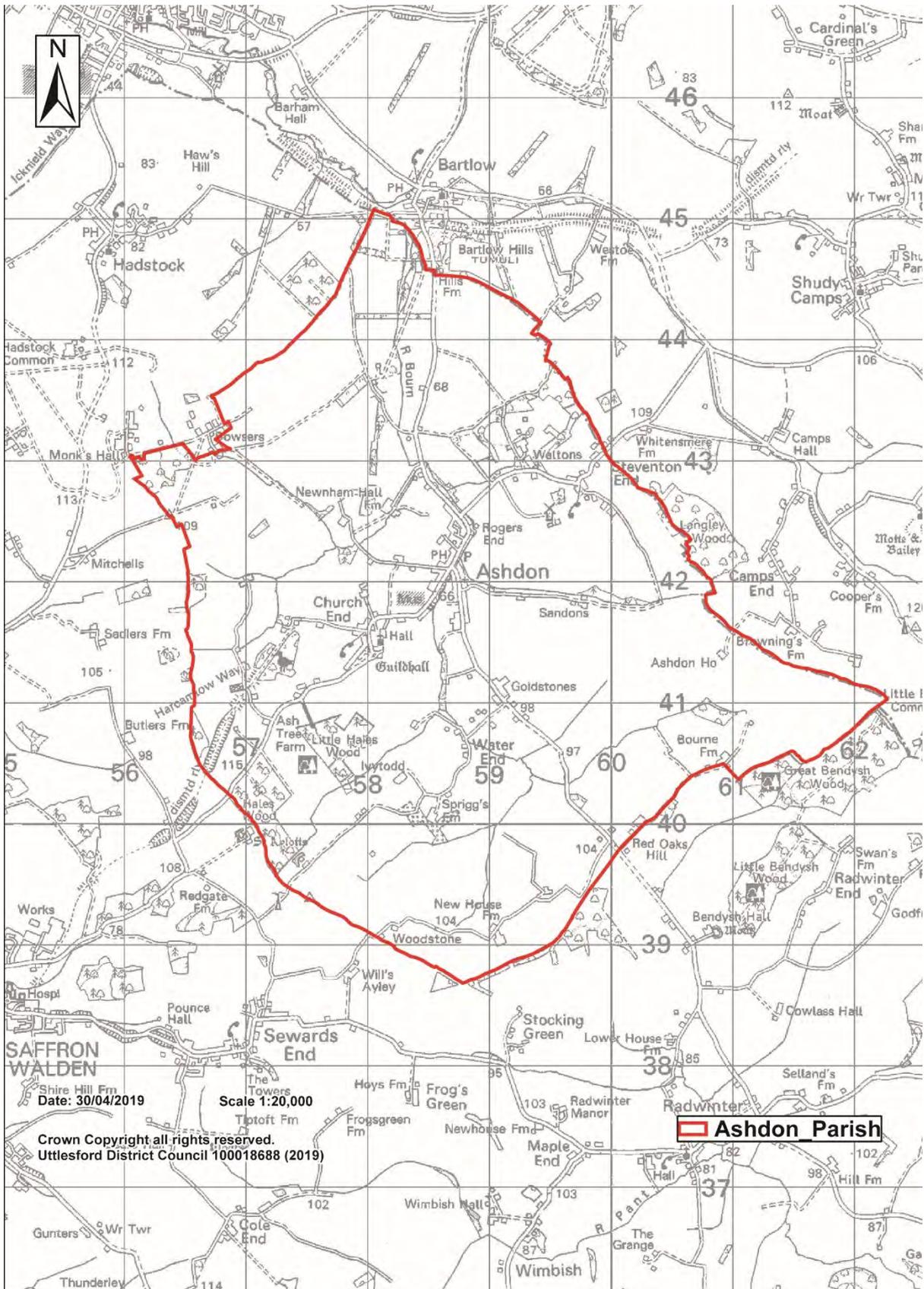
1.3 Methodology and Approach

1.3.1 This assessment has been carried out in accordance with Guidelines on Landscape Character Assessment¹, Guidelines in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment² and recently published guidance on Landscape Sensitivity³. Reference has also been made to other recent settlement sensitivity and capacity assessments which reflect best practice. The approach has included a client meeting and familiarisation site visit, desk study and further detailed site assessment during November 2019.

¹ Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (2002) The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage and An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (2014) Natural England.

² Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013 (third edition).

³ An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management, Natural England, June 2019



Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan Area (Source: Uttlesford District Council Website)

1.3.2 The appraisal reviews existing documentary evidence on the settlement and its landscape and considers the historic evolution, describes landscape setting, key views, gateways and landmarks as well as valued characteristics and spaces. Opportunities for environmental initiatives which seek to enhance local identity and settlement distinctiveness are highlighted where relevant.

1.3.3 The following definitions of terms are used in this study:

Sensitivity is defined as the ability of the landscape to accommodate a particular type of change (in this case housing or employment development) without adverse effect and is determined by consideration of local character and visual sensitivity.

Value is defined as the relative value that is attached to different landscape by society. In this study, value has been assessed with reference to Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA 3rd edition), in the context of Ashdon Parish.

Capacity of an area considers the extent and nature of development which may be accommodated and includes consideration of opportunities for enhancement or mitigation which may improve the degree of fit and increase capacity of the landscape to accommodate change.

1.3.4 Where land/sites have been assessed in terms of sensitivity and capacity it is from a landscape perspective only and no consideration has been given to matters such as access or land ownership. It is possible therefore that, land identified as suitable for development without significant adverse landscape effects, may subsequently be discounted for reasons other than landscape.

1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.4.1 Under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), Uttlesford confirmed the Neighbourhood Plan Area for Ashdon on 1st May 2019.
- 1.4.2 The Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was subsequently established, and a questionnaire survey undertaken as part of the first public consultation which sought the views of the local community. The following results are relevant to this study.
- 1.4.3 65% of respondents raised concerns regarding traffic, specifically the speed of traffic along Radwinter Road and through Church End. Many residents wished to see traffic calming measures and improved footpaths.
- 1.4.4 7.7% of respondents listed groundwater flooding as well as surface water runoff as major issues in Ashdon. Many wished to see these issues taken into account in all future development.
- 1.4.5 31% of respondents highlighted a lack of affordable homes, along with issues of previous development which the local community feel has not integrated with the existing village. People expressed a preference for small scale, appropriate development that fits with location and meets local needs.
- 1.4.6 71% of respondents mentioned environmental matters including the beautiful countryside, peace and quiet and many footpaths that connect the village with the wider hilly landscape and views. The Ends were described as having a feeling of openness and connection with the countryside on the doorstep. Donkey Field and the Allotments were noted as key community assets. People wanted to see these qualities conserved and enhanced through protection of green spaces, planting of more trees and improved habitats and protection of animals.

1.5 Potential Development Sites

- 1.5.1 The Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) (May 2018) call for sites, identified 2 sites within the Parish. Site 02Ash15 lies in the south of the Parish and site 01Ash16 in the north.
- 01Ash15 is located close to Water End. The assessment concluded: *'Radwinter Road, Ashdon. Estimated dwellings yield 5. This is a greenfield site in the open countryside, unrelated to the village of Ashdon. This site is available and development is achievable. This site is considered unsuitable as development on this site would not contribute to sustainable patterns of development'*.
 - 02Ash16 is located close to Bartlow. The assessment concluded: – *'Gibbs Field, Bartlow (Ashdon Parish). Estimated dwellings yield 20. This is a greenfield site, in the countryside. The site is separated from Bartlow by the former railway line. The site is available. Achievability of the site is uncertain due to the potential*

highway improvements needed. This site is considered unsuitable as development on this site would not contribute to sustainable patterns of development.'

- 1.5.2 Within the Uttlesford District Council Adopted Local Plan (January 2005), Ashdon is identified as an 'Other Village' with defined settlement limits. The Plan states that infilling with new houses will be permitted for Ashdon including Church End '*if the development would be compatible with the character of the settlement and, depending on the location of the site, its countryside setting*'.
- 1.5.3 The Regulation 19 Pre-submission Local Plan (March 2019) identifies the village of Ashdon as a Type 'A' village. These villages have a primary school and some local services, e.g. village hall, public house or shop. They act as a local service centre and are suitable for a scale of development that reinforces their role as a local centre. In total, up to 134 new homes will need to be accommodated across the 19 Type A villages.
- 1.5.4 The tables below set out current and approved planning applications at the time of writing (Feb 2020). These are useful to understand in terms of change which is likely to occur and where pressure is currently being experienced. These tables do not include reference to planning applications for extensions and alterations to existing buildings and should not be used to provide an assessment of housing numbers being accommodated within the Parish.

Application No	Comments
UTT/19/1989/FUL	Approved - 1 dwelling. Barn Adj Little Mortimers, Water End, Water End Road, Ashdon
UTT/14/2480/AG	Approved - 1 Agricultural Building. Sandons Farm, Kates Lane, Ashdon
UTT/19/2642/OP	Refused - Outline application, 4 detached dwellings and associated double garages, with new single access. Land South of Church Hill, Ashdon.
UTT/18/1429/OP	Approved - Outline application, 4 detached dwellings and associated double garages, with new single access. Land at Hill Farm, Radwinter Road, Ashdon.
UTT/19/1220/OP	Approved – Land adjacent to The Orchard, Kates Lane, Ashdon.
UTT/20/0141/AG	Pending – Tarmac entrance apron and access point off Church Hill, Ashdon.

- 1.5.5 The Local Plan also identifies assets of community value these include:

Reference	Comments
AOCV/18/02/001	Rose and Crown Inn, Crown Hill, Bartlow Road, Ashdon
AOCV/18/2/002	Allotments Bartlow Road, Ashdon
AOCV/19/02/001	The Windmill and car park

2: The Evolution of Ashdon Parish

2.1 Early Origins and Evolution

- 2.1.1 The early origins of settlement within the Parish have been influenced by the underlying chalk geology and drainage patterns. The geology of the area comprises the Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation laid down in the Cretaceous Period. There are superficial deposits of sand and gravel patches on valley slopes and alluvium on the valley floor associated with the River Bourn north of Ashdon. This landscape of underlying chalk has been further shaped by watercourses which have eroded a network of shallow valleys, giving rise to a relatively complex topography of interlocking valley systems and spurs of higher land which rise to a plateau landscape reaching 115m AOD in the south of the Parish. A number of the streams rising as winterbournes in winter, or at other times of year when there is heavy rainfall and increased runoff.
- 2.1.2 The Parish is divided north to south by the main valley of the River Bourn, the source rising near Griggs Grove in the south eastern corner of the Parish, and which joins the River Granta to the north at Bartlow. In summer the river is little more than a trickle and in winter can be 1m deep and up to 2m wide. Feeding into the Bourn are a series of three smaller tributaries, all un-named.
- 2.1.3 The village was historically known as "Ascenduna", being the 'place of the ash trees', potentially having a claim to the historic battle fought at Assandun in October 1016 where Cnut was victorious and confirmed King of England. Historians are still divided over where precisely this historic battle was fought.
- 2.1.4 A picture of the early settlement in Ashdon Parish can be gained from Domesday which describes Ashdon Hall (located in Church End) as the wealthiest of 3 manors, the others being Newnham (now Newnham Hall) and "Steventuna" (now Steventon End). Each of these early clusters of development were located on the upper slopes above the river valleys.
- 2.1.5 Ashdon as a settlement is thought to have originated as a church/hall complex at Church End comprising Ashdon Hall and All Saints Church. There is archaeological evidence of dwellings clustering around the church and hall immediately to the south. This area is a Scheduled Monument and is thought to have formed part of a more extensive settlement in the medieval period. The buried remains include a series of low sub-rectangular terraces and platforms extending some 100m across and descending the gentle slopes of the Bourn Valley. The platforms are thought to mark the locations of timber houses and other structures and the terraces are divided by two trackways worn into the slope and orientated north to south. The discovery of Anglo-Saxon burials in the western part of the pasture provides a significant indication of the early origin of the settlement. The church dates to the 14th and 15th centuries, although an earlier church is mentioned in a grant of 1096, which may prove to be

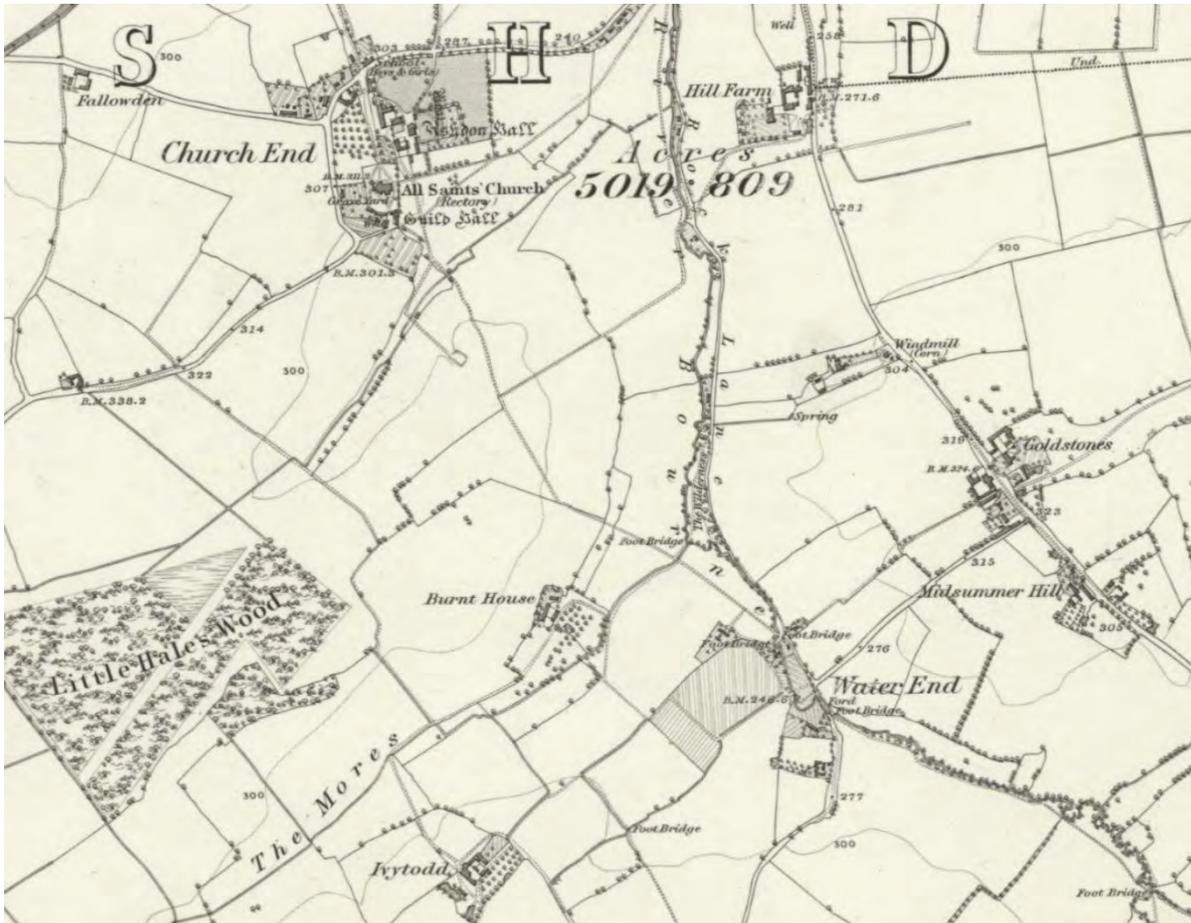
related to the foundation of the 11th century minster following the political turbulence at the beginning of King Cnut's reign.

- 2.1.6 Following the Black Death plague of the 13th century, the focus of settlement shifted from Church End to the present-day village of Ashdon, situated at the bottom of the valley alongside the River Bourn. It is centred on the crossing over the river and junction of Church Hill, Bartlow Road and Radwinter Road known as Crown Hill. Within the wider landscape beyond Church End and Ashdon the settlement pattern was dispersed comprising small clusters of development or 'Ends' such as Water End, Steventon End, Rogers End, Holden End and Knox End, each with its own distinctive character, due to its setting within the intricate topography. There were also large historic estates set within mature landscaped grounds, such as at Ashdon Hall (Church End), The Clayes (Ashdon), and Waltons Park (Steventon End).
- 2.1.7 This pattern of settlement was connected via a network of rural routes and lanes which are still evident in the landscape today.
- 2.1.8 Similarly the historic evolution of land management and enclosure patterns are also legible. Historic Landscape Character Assessment for Essex (Feb 2011) has classified Ashdon Parish into two Historic Landscape Character Areas (HLCA) namely Chesterford Ridge and North East Uttlesford.
- 2.1.9 Chesterford Ridge (HLCA 1) covers the north of the Parish, and is characterised by large common-fields, a field-type that is rare in the rest of Essex. Some of these were enclosed by agreement in the early post-medieval period with the remainder enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries. On the higher land the landscape is more typical of Essex than Cambridgeshire with winding lanes, dispersed hamlets and greens and ancient woodlands.
- 2.1.10 North East Uttlesford (HLCA 4) covers the south of the Parish and is characterised by a mixture of pre-18th century irregular fields (these are probably of medieval origin and some maybe even older) and former common fields, usually enclosed in the 18th century by piecemeal agreement. The settlement is very dispersed, comprising church/hall complexes, isolated farms or small hamlets strung out along the roads or roadside greens. Along the River Bourn are small scale linear meadows and woods forming part of the natural flood plain while on the valley slopes and higher plateau are notable areas of ancient woodland.
- 2.1.11 Overall the pattern of medieval settlement, rural lanes, enclosure patterns and woodland are still clearly evident within the Parish and make an important contribution to present day landscape character. The Historic Landscape Character Assessment noted some field boundary loss.
- 2.1.12 The sequence of maps below illustrates how settlement has evolved over the 19th and 20th centuries.



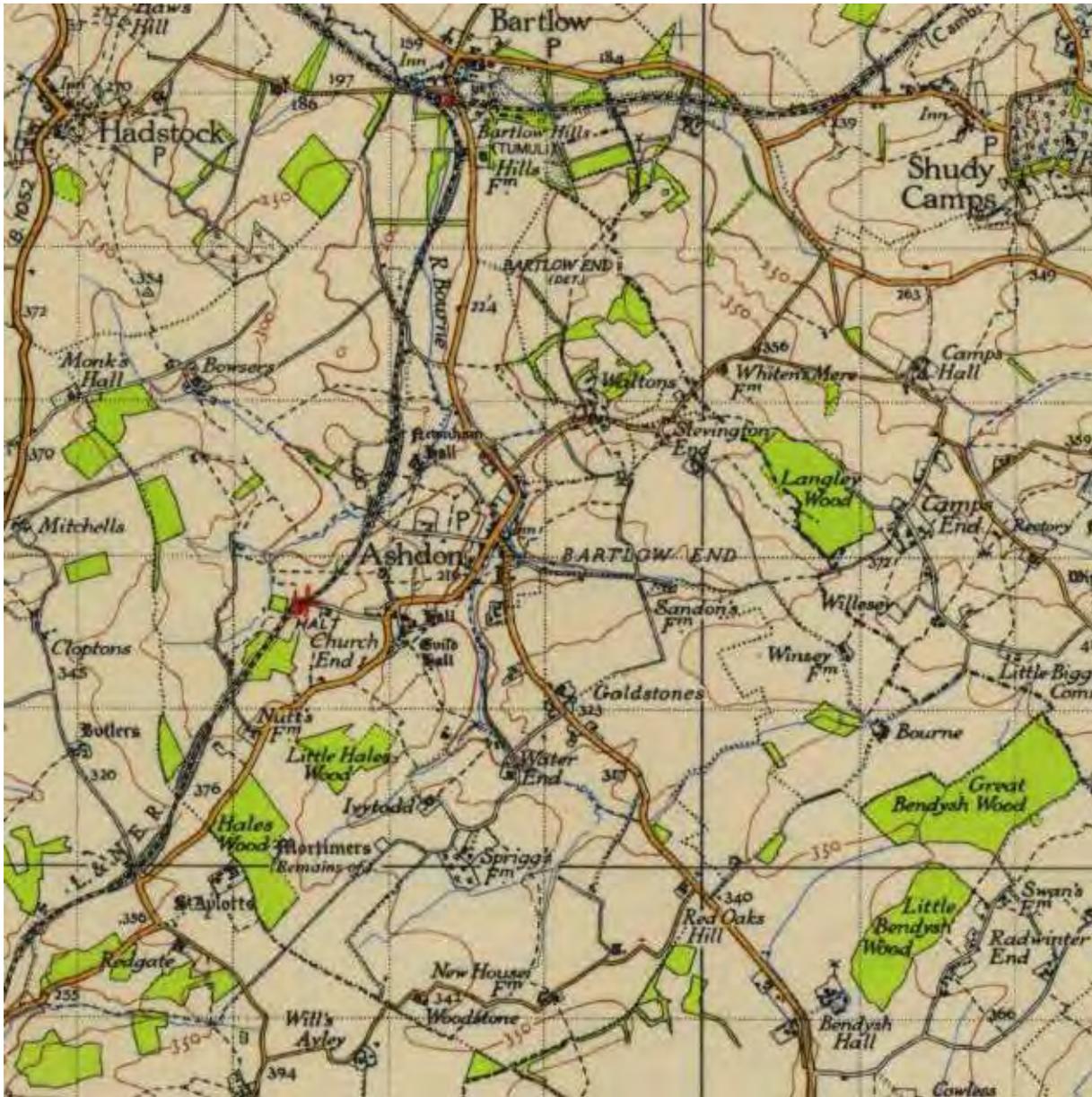
Map 1a: Extract from 1880 map, illustrating Ashdon, Roger's End and Stevington End. (source – Historic Maps Scotland)

- 2.1.13 Map 1a (above) and 1b (below) illustrate the village of Ashdon along with the 'Ends', smaller clusters of settlement, outliers to the main village, all set within the valley of the River Bourn. At this time the Ends - Nox End (later Knox), Holden End and Rogers End to the north, and Stevington End to the north east, are all discrete and separate areas of development.
- 2.1.14 Newnham Hall is just to the north west of Ashdon, with parkland landscape at Waitons Park to the north east. There are numerous windmills and smithys across the area, as well as small woodlands and copses. Braggs Mill, a Grade II post mill dating from 1757, remains to this day, directly east of Rogers End, and is maintained by the Ashdon Windmill Trust.
- 2.1.15 Orchards were commonplace and a feature of village, with many dwellings having small orchard enclosures to the rear, forming the interface between the settlement and the wider countryside. Woodmore Common, is located on the higher ground directly east of Ashdon village, the larger rectilinear pattern of enclosure reflecting its later enclosure compared to the smaller irregular fields close to the settlements.



Map 1b: Extract from 1880 map, illustrating Church End, Water End and Goldstones. (source – Historic Maps Scotland)

- 2.1.16 The Church and Guildhall along with Ashdon Hall and grounds are located to the south west of the village of Ashdon, and Water End to the south. Large farmsteads are evident, regularly spaced in the wider countryside such as Ivytodd, Burnt House and Goldstones.
- 2.1.17 Significant hedgerow trees are highlighted across the parish, reflecting historic enclosure pattern. Sinuous woodland following the River Bourn and its tributaries follow the historic enclosed meadows.



Map 2: Extract from 1946 map. (source – Historic Maps Scotland)

- 2.1.18 This map again illustrates the river and tributary valleys, the village of Ashdon and the Ends set within the valley and upper valley slopes of the River Bourn. The patterns of woodland, copses and lanes have remained intact.
- 2.1.19 The Great Eastern Railway Saffron Walden Line is to the immediate west of the village, connecting Saffron Walden to Bartlow and beyond. It opened 14 August 1911 and closed 7 September 1964. Ashdon Halt was the railway station that served Ashdon, located at the end of Fallowden Lane.



Map 3: Extract from 1960 Map. (source – Historic Maps Scotland)

2.1.20 In the second half of the 20th century housing development resulted in a gradual closing of the gaps and coalescence of Holden End, Rogers End and Ashdon village with development extending along the main road and the establishment of housing estates such as Carters Croft. A similar pattern of linear development occurred along Church Hill road extending out of Ashdon towards Church End, although to a lesser extent. At Church End linear development occurred along Fallowden Lane and estate development at Church Fields and Guildhall Way. Despite these changes the historic pattern of woodlands and rural lanes remain relatively intact.

2.1.21 Today, Ashdon consists of 893 population (2011 census), with the main village settlement centred around the river crossing at the junction of Church Hill, Bartlow Road and Radwinter Road. Local services include the church, pub, a primary school, pre-school and a museum. The historic route of the Harcamlow Way traverses the Parish, coming from Saffron Walden, passing through Church End and the medieval

settlement Scheduled Monument, through Ashdon village and on out to Steventon End, where it continues northwards, connecting with the Icknield Way further out to the north west. The disused railway line to the west of Church End is still discernible in the landscape and offers opportunities to be developed as a cycle route connection to Saffron Walden.

3: Landscape Character

3.1 Existing Character Assessments

3.1.1 The landscape of the Parish is described in three landscape character assessment. Relevant extracts from these assessments are set out below.

National Character Areas 87: East Anglian Chalk and 86: South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland

3.1.2 The Parish of Ashdon is covered by two National Character Areas. To the north, a spur of NCA 87 East Anglian Chalk extends to Steventon End, while the majority of the Parish falls within NCA 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland (refer to Figure 1). Boundaries between character areas are rarely abrupt. Assessment of the Parish has indicated that the characteristics of NCA 86 are most strongly expressed throughout the Parish even in the north. For this reason, only the key characteristics identified in the NCA Profile 86 are set out below.

3.1.3 The NCA 86 assessment notes the following:

- A gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the numerous small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. Views from the plateau are often extensive.
- There are gentle slopes in the lower, wider valleys and steeper slopes in the narrower upper parts
- Contrasts between the open plateau and the river valleys which are smaller in scale, with an intimate sense of enclosure, particularly in their upper reaches
- The area's open yet wooded character is sufficiently endowed with copses and small woods to have wooded horizons, which give a large, distantly wooded character to the landscape
- The agricultural landscape is predominantly arable, with some pasture on the valley floors. Field patterns are irregular despite some rationalisation, with much ancient countryside surviving
- Semi-natural habitats of particular importance include sparsely scattered small lowland meadows and ancient woodland remnants
- Complex network of old species-rich hedgerows, ancient woods, parklands and meadows
- Parts of the river valley floors contain pasture and willow pollards, which contribute an uncommon pastoral quality
- The strong sense of history is reinforced by the dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and small villages
- A few substantial houses and estates, some with landscaped parklands
- Intricate maze of narrow, winding, often sunken lanes with wide verges, deep ditches and strong hedgerows
- A strong network of public rights of way
- Much of the rural part of the NCA has a residual tranquillity remote from main roads

- The sense of remoteness is enhanced by the woody nature of the plateau and the deep incision of the valleys
- The variable topography of rolling hills and gentle valleys and the combination of features produce a classic English lowland character

Uttlesford District Landscape Character Assessment

3.1.4 The landscape of Ashdon Parish is described in the Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments (Sept 2006). The Uttlesford District Landscape Character Assessment identifies the Parish as falling predominately within Ashdon Farmland Plateau and only the outer southern fringes extending into Hempstead Farmland Plateau (refer Figure 1). The former is considered below.

Ashdon Farmland Plateau

3.1.5 This character area lies in the glacial till plateau landscape defined by its soil and its topography - north Essex clay that has been worked for centuries. This strongly rolling landform rises to a broad, open plateau, dissected by small streams whose valleys give great variety to the countryside. This produces a landscape character of upland with wide-open vistas on the ridge tops, and also enclosed wooded areas in the valley bottoms. Patches of ancient woodland remain. The tree cover is mainly deciduous, with blocks of trees and hedgerows framing channelled views.

3.1.6 Key characteristics include;

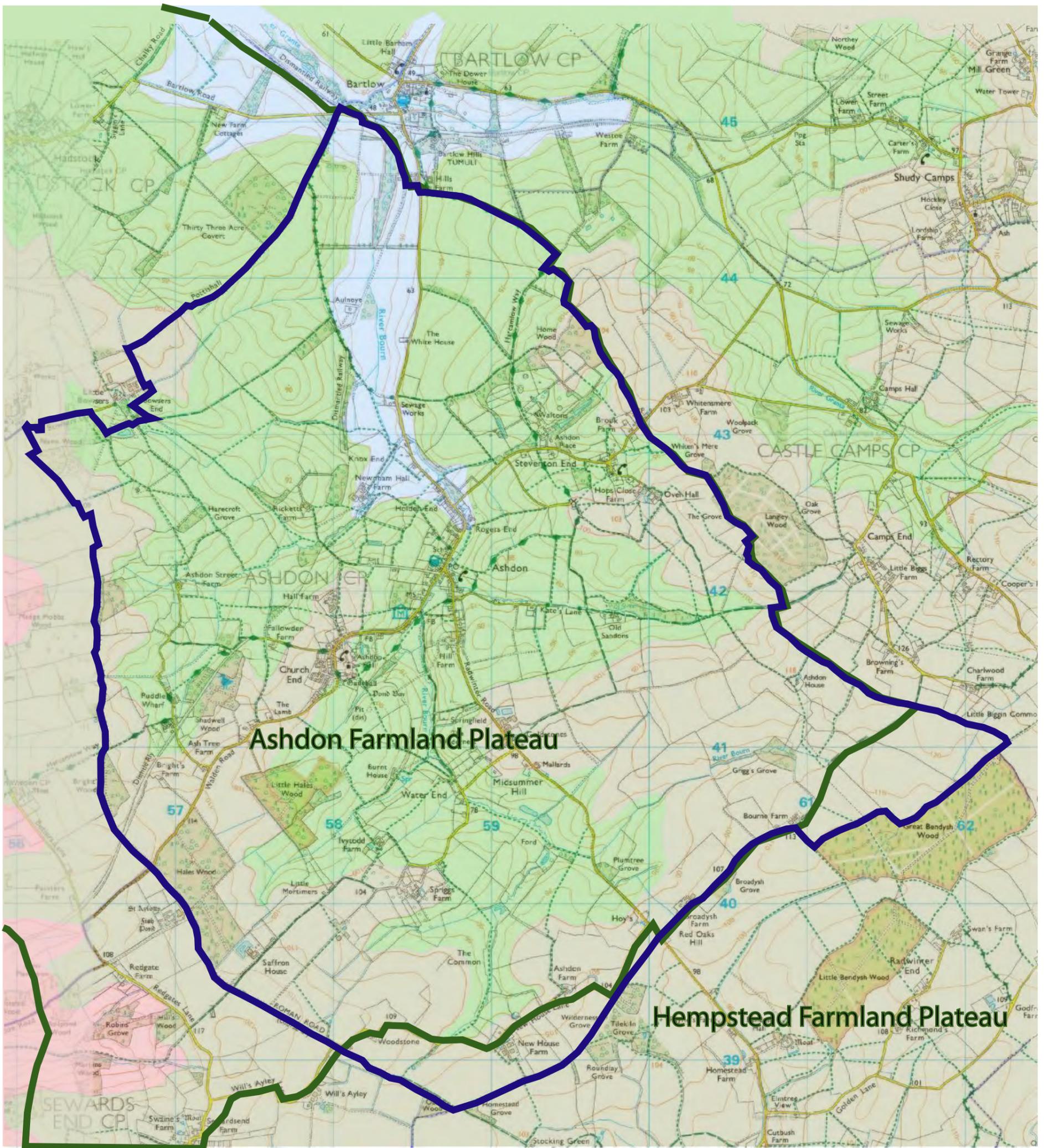
- Gently undulating glacial boulder clay (till) with broad ridges on the high ground.
- Scattered farmsteads, hamlets and a few large villages.
- Irregular field pattern follows topography.
- Roads and lanes rarely straight.
- Ancient landscape with subtle qualities.
- Wide views from open roads on high plateau contrasts with enclosed nature of wooded areas in valley bottoms.

East of England – Landscape Character Types

3.1.7 The East of England Landscape Character Typology defines landscape types and thus gives a finer grain understanding of variations in character within the Parish. The descriptions below are taken from the character assessment supplemented with local observations from site work as part of this study. The Parish of Ashdon is covered by three character types (refer to Figure 1), as set out below;

Lowland Village Chalklands

3.1.8 This landscape type forms the lower valley slopes and narrow valley floor of the River Bourn and its confluence with the River Granta at Bartlow village just beyond the Parish. The sinuous watercourses are tree lined and occasionally flanked by patches of woodland and small scale pastures. Otherwise arable farmland extends from the undulating valley slopes right up to the watercourse.



Key

 Neighbourhood Plan Area

 Uttlesford LCA

East of England Landscape Typology

 Lowland Village Chalklands

 Chalk Hills and Scarps

 Wooded Plateau Farmland

 Wooded Chalk Slopes and Valleys

**Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan
Landscape Assessment**

Figure 1: Landscape Character



- 3.1.9 Settlements comprise nucleated villages with prominent churches. This is a settled landscape yet one where tranquillity can readily be perceived.

Chalk Hills and Scarps

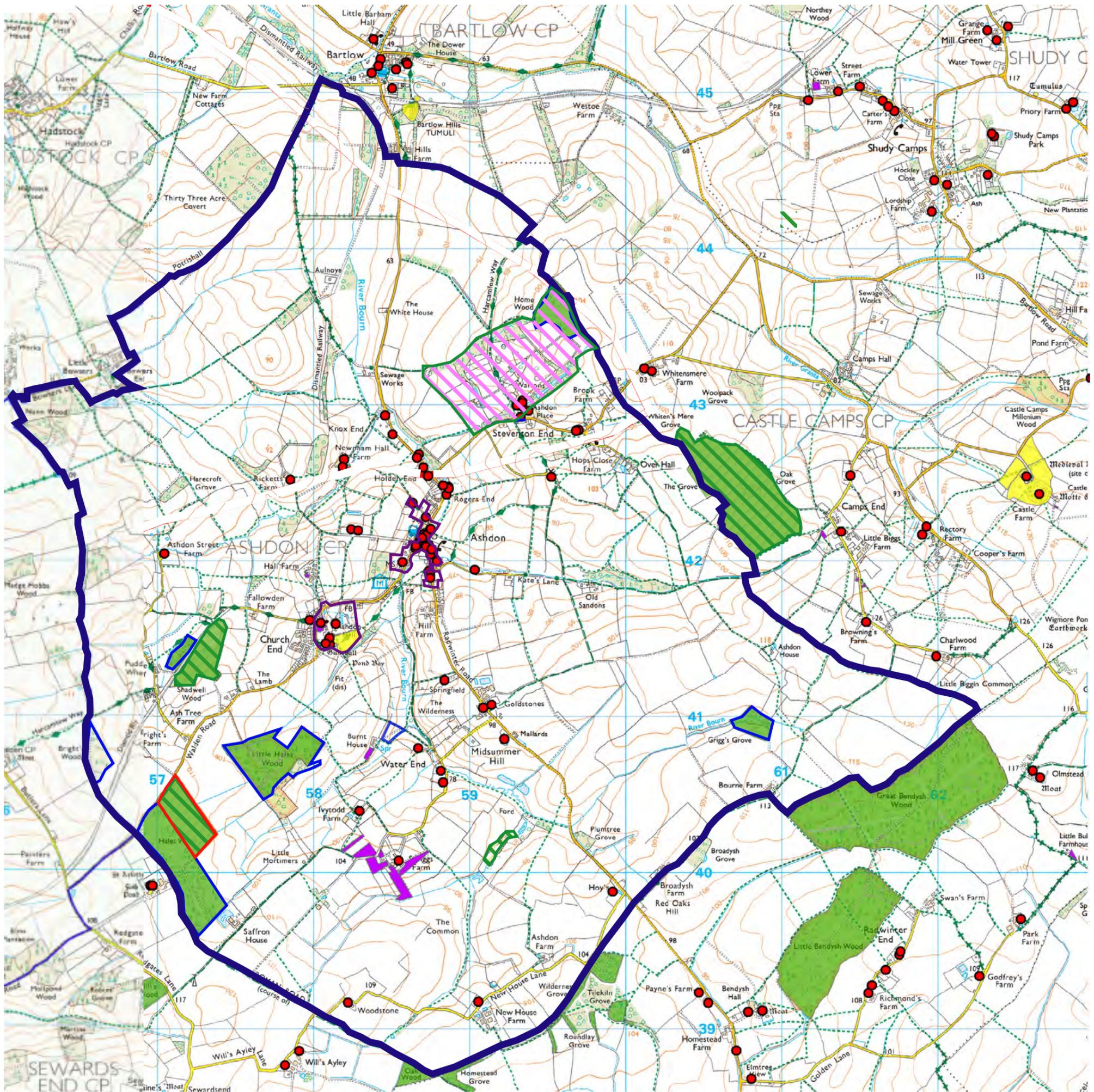
- 3.1.10 This landscape type forms the majority of the Parish of Ashdon and includes prominent chalk hills. These chalk hills are incised by dry valleys, which may contain small seasonal watercourses, and create a rounded rolling landform, with localised steep sided slopes, which are often well wooded and create a sense of intimacy. This free draining land is often well wooded with longer distance views across the valleys and contains an ordered pattern of fields and woodlands. Buildings on the upper slopes of the valleys can form local landmarks.
- 3.1.11 Settlement pattern comprises discrete historic villages, rural in character and of low density along with a scattering of large farms. Generally there is an absence of settlement on the steeper slopes. This is a rural landscape which can feel empty and unpopulated in places.
- 3.1.12 The Harcamlow Way national trail, from Saffron Walden to Bartlow, passes through this landscape type.

Wooded Plateau Farmland

- 3.1.13 This landscape forms the elevated plateau landscape which wraps around the Parish to the west, south and east, with fingers extending in towards the centre of the parish at Church End, Spriggs Farm, Goldstones and Braggs Mill windmill. It comprises chalky boulder clay, overlying chalk creating a relatively flat and open landscape with views to wooded horizons. Many of the woodlands are ancient. e.g, Little Hales Wood, Hales Wood, Shadwell Wood, Griggs Grove and Nunn Wood, with Great Bendysh Wood and Langley Wood bordering the Parish. This upland area is drained by numerous small watercourses which dissect the plateau, creating a series of shallow valleys. Field ponds are a feature in places.
- 3.1.14 Settlement is sparse, with scattered farmsteads and Halls. Occasional modern dwellings that reflect historic style barns or large farmhouses are located in the wider landscape. This is a deeply rural and tranquil landscape often affording a sense of remoteness and continuity.

3.2 Conservation Areas

- 3.2.1 Ashdon village and Church End are both covered by separate Conservation Areas both described within a single Conservation Area Appraisal which covers the majority of built form in both settlements (refer Figure 2).
- 3.2.2 In Ashdon village the steeper sided valley location means that built form is often just one plot deep resulting in a settlement form which stretches out along the main street



Key

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
|  | Neighbourhood Plan Area |  | Listed Building |
|  | Ancient Woodland |  | Scheduled Monument |
|  | Site of Special Scientific Interest |  | Conservation Area |
|  | National Nature Reserve |  | Park and Garden |
|  | County Wildlife Site | | |
|  | Traditional Orchard | | |

Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan
Landscape Assessment
Figure 2 Designations



in a linear fashion, with its centre and focal point being the road junction at Crown Hill, although many of the former facilities and activities, such as the post office and smithy, were located along Radwinter Road. Where the valley slopes become gentler in the north of the village, more recent housing estate development has occurred, altering the village form.

- 3.2.3 Church End sits above the valley on the upper slopes, historically centred around the Listed Church surrounded by Listed Buildings and open spaces and mature trees associated with Ashdon Hall and its landscaped grounds. The Conservation Area includes the Church, Guildhall, Scheduled Monument (SM), the Church and graveyard along with Ashdon Hall and its mature landscaped gardens.
- 3.2.4 Historically the Ends comprised a loose, random arrangement of dwellings, however this has been undermined where new settlement clusters associated with the more recent housing estates, confuse and distort the historic village form, such as at Rogers End and Holden End and along Walden Road at Church End. In these locations semi-detached houses and housing estates introduce regularity. Nevertheless, the historic loose arrangement of dwellings continues to allow vistas to the rural countryside beyond the settlement, creating a strong connection to the surrounding landscape.
- 3.2.5 In terms of vernacular buildings within the Parish, many date from the 16th century comprising timber framed and plastered construction with tiled or slate roof. There is a high preponderance of old thatched cottages within the valley locations of Knox End, Holden End, Rogers End, Water End and Ashdon village, along with a terrace of brightly painted cottages, known as Colliers Row. A prominent feature building located at Church End, is the flint knapped former national school with brick detailing and bell tower.
- 3.2.6 Other buildings that make an important contribution to the character are the current Primary School on Church Hill, a late 19th century red brick construction with decorative blue brick banding, and the Baptist Church on Radwinter Road constructed of red brick with arch detailing and slate roof. Also on Radwinter Road are a number of black timber boarded barns reflecting the rural character of the village. Across the village as a whole there are also numerous buildings or structures within the curtilages of Listed Buildings that are important features and contribute to built character. Similarly, the front boundary wall of The Clayes is a defining feature of the street scene along with a stone marker, highway directional signs, and Grade II Listed telephone kiosk all of which are key features.
- 3.2.7 The planned landscapes provided by the gardens and arboretums of Ashdon Hall and The Clayes, provide important groups of trees on the valley sides which form a wooded backdrop and setting to buildings.
- 3.2.8 The Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals (2013) define Important Open Space within Ashdon and Church End, (illustrated on Figures 3 and 4), namely:
- Ashdon – triangle of land extending northwards from Radwinter Road junction to southern end of the allotments

- Church End – churchyard to All Saints Church

3.3 Uttlesford Protected Lanes

3.3.1 Ashdon Parish previously contained two Protected Lanes (Local Plan 2005);

- UTT LANE 52- New House Lane, between Ashdon Road and Wills Ayley Lane
- UTT LANE 155 – Radwinter / Ashdon, Radwinter Road and Ashdon Road

3.3.2 The Uttlesford Protected Lanes Assessment (March 2012), provided a review and updating assessment of the District's Protected Lanes. It determined that a threshold score of 14, following the applied criteria, would constitute a Protected Lane. The particular criteria used to evaluate historic lanes included;

- Diversity – features / form / alignment / depth / width
- Group Value – association with historic features / settlement / assets
- Archaeological Association – association with archaeological features
- Archaeological Potential – components with potential to contain archaeological evidence
- Historic Integrity – loss / erosion of integrity of historic fabric, including loss of hedgerows
- Biodiversity – assets such as mixed species hedgerows, mature trees (including TPOs), grass verge with flowering plants, ponds, veteran pollards, Ancient Species Rich hedgerow(s)
- Aesthetic Value - variety of aesthetic features or forms/alignment and / or significant views

3.3.3 New House Lane scored a total of 17, and successfully continued through the stages to have Protected Lane status applied.

3.3.4 However, the Radwinter Road/Ashdon Road, even though it scored 16, was discounted as it only scored an Integrity value of 1, and only those scoring 2 or above, were taken forward through the next stages to meet Protected Lane status.

3.3.5 Current pressures on rural lanes which are highlighted by the Assessment include the ever-increasing rise in the number, size and diversity of motorised vehicles using minor rural roads and the need for road improvements following deterioration in their physical condition e.g. addition of concrete kerbs which can undermine rural character.

3.3.6 The Assessment highlights that Protected Lane status may not in itself be enough to secure the long-term future of these important historic landscape features. Future management considerations should therefore be given to exploring options and partnerships for influencing user behaviour and applying intelligent and positive measures of highway management that will serve to encourage local journeys to be made on bicycle or foot, and for recreation, and reduce the impact of vehicles on the historic fabric of lanes, whilst maintaining their local character. This is relevant to this

assessment in that these sunken and historic lanes form valued features of the Parish and may be vulnerable to change as a result of new development.

3.4 Uttlesford Special Roadside Verges

- 3.4.1 Important verges within Essex are designated as Special Roadside Verges. Forty-two of these sites are within Uttlesford District. The purpose of this designation is to safeguard the future of the many rare flowers that grow on these verges, which often represent the only uncultivated areas of grassland in an intensively farmed landscape. Their wildlife interest lies in the great number of plant species they support. This benefits insects, butterflies, small mammals and birds, providing them with food and shelter. The verges are also important in linking otherwise isolated areas of habitats, becoming 'wildlife corridors' allowing species to move between them.
- 3.4.2 Ashdon Parish has one such Special Roadside Verge, along the south edge of Walden Road at Church End. Local Plan (2005) Policy ENV8 (Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation), provides protection from development. The Regulation 19 Pre-submission Local Plan (March 2019), continues to recognise these Special Verges. There are also other road verges which, although not designated, nonetheless are identified by the Essex Wildlife Trust as having nature conservation value.

4: Detailed Analysis

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section builds on previous sections of this report and seeks to establish more detailed baseline data on settlement character and landscape context. In particular, consideration is given to identifying key landmarks and key views in and out of the settlement, as well as gateways. This is particularly relevant to Ashdon and Church End. In addition, areas suitable for Local Green Space are identified. The analysis of Ashdon and Church End is illustrated on Figures 3 and 4 respectively.

4.2 Importance of Topography and Hydrology

4.2.1 Ashdon Parish is heavily influenced by local topography of rounded hills and slopes, steep in places, where the River Bourn has incised the valley over time. Ashdon village along with Water End are located within the steeper valley sides, sitting tightly alongside the River Bourn.

4.2.2 Holden End and Rogers End are also located in the valley, to the north of Ashdon, where the valley floor widens with more gentle valley sides. Settlement within the valley is typically located between the 60-70m contours.

4.2.3 Steventon End and Church End are located on the upper valley slopes, along the transition between the upper valley slopes and the plateau landscape. These transition zones are typically located between the 85-100m contours. Braggs Mill windmill, near Steventon End, stands proudly on the top of the hill at 100m AOD.

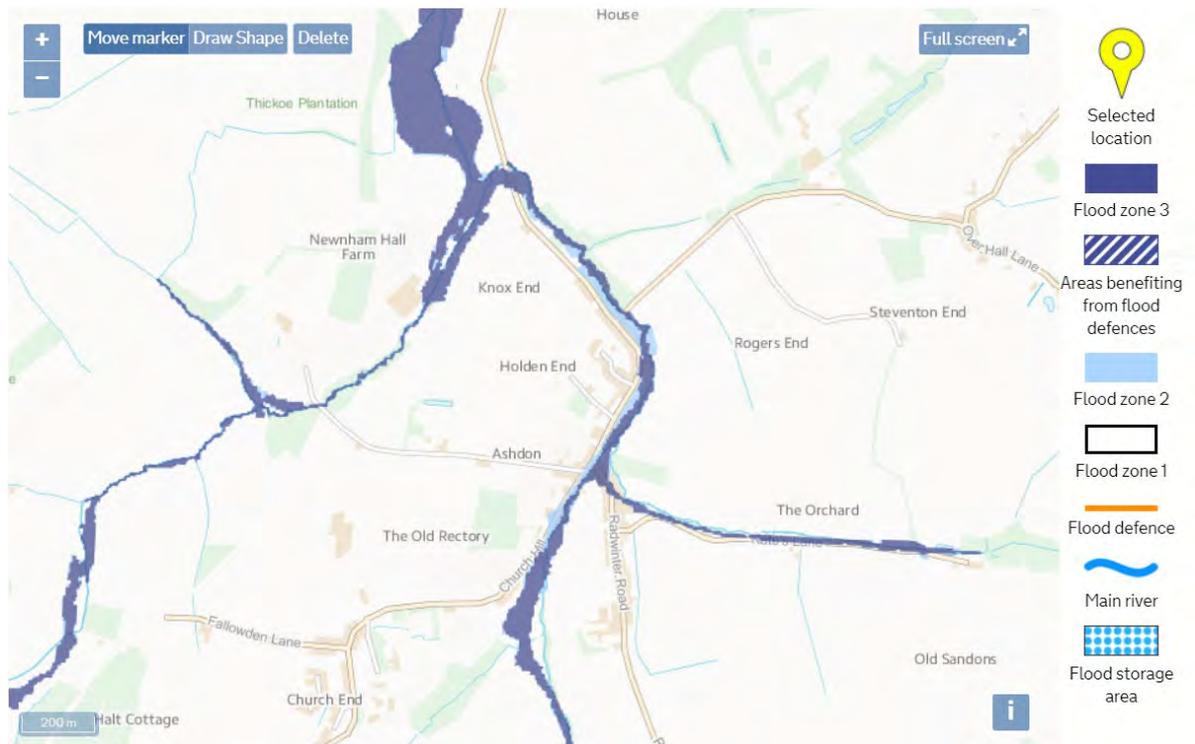
4.2.4 The curvature of these hills, areas of woodland, mature trees and dense hedgerows, the sinuous flow of the well vegetated River Bourn, all combine to provide seclusion of the settlement such that it is often not readily visible from the wider landscape or surrounding higher land.

4.2.5 Set within the incised valley of the River Bourn or its tributaries, Ashdon is liable to flooding. The Flood Mapping Study of River Bourn in Ashdon (Oct 2008), commissioned by Uttlesford District Council, highlighted a history of several flooding events. The standard of flood protection through Ashdon was at the 2-year return period flood, showing vulnerability to significantly more frequent flood events compared to other locations in England.

4.2.6 Overall the report concluded that local improvements would be economically viable to give protection of between 5 to 10 year level and would need to be considered further to include a potential storage area and a reduction in the speed of runoff, which would result in significant reductions in the frequency of flooding.

4.2.7 The current flood mapping (see extract below) indicates that much of the flooding tightly follows the route of the river and tributaries, with large flood meadow areas to

the north of the village and Holden End / Knox End, where the valley floor provides a wider flood plain (note these existed on the 1880 map shown on page 9 above). It can also be seen that there are areas of flood risk to the south of Ashdon, including: the field at the rear of dwellings off Church Hill road; the junction of Radwinter Road and Church Hill; and along the green gap provided by the allotments at Rogers End.



Extract map (Dec 2019) from website: flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk.



Flooding in fields south of Church Hill Road Dec 2019



Flooding along road at Knox End Dec 2019

4.3 Built Landmarks and Landscape Features

4.3.1 Key built landmarks which contribute to sense of place and orientation have been identified and are illustrated on Figures 3 and 4 (lettering references relate to drawings 3 and 4). They include the following:

- a) Thatched cottages, Holden End and Water End

- b) The Old Rectory, Rectory Lane, Ashdon
- c) Terraced Cottages on the main street Ashdon
- d) Ashdon Primary School, Church Hill, Ashdon
- e) Rose and Crown pub at junction of Radwinter Road and Church Hill, Ashdon
- f) Village Museum, Church Hill, Ashdon
- g) Flint knapped Former National School, Church End
- h) Ashdon Hall, Church End
- i) All Saints Church, Church Hill, Church End
- j) Braggs Mill windmill, Steventon End

4.3.2 A number of landscape features have also been identified as important elements contributing to local sense of place and are illustrated on Figures 3 and 4 (lettering references relate to the drawing). These include:

- A. River Bourn
- B. Donkey Field and Millennium oak
- C. Mature trees and grounds of The Clayes and Arboretum
- D. War memorial
- E. Valley floor woodland along the River Bourn
- F. Mature trees and grounds of Ashdon Hall and Arboretum
- G. 'Greens' and stand of pines at southern end of Church End
- H. Pasture and earthworks associated with Scheduled Monument

4.4 Important Views

4.4.1 Ashdon Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group volunteers have identified a range of views throughout the Parish which they regard as reflecting the special qualities of the Neighbourhood Plan area and which are highly valued by local residents. These are to be documented in a series of Settlement Character Area Assessments currently being collated by the community.

4.4.2 Views are critical in defining and reinforcing sense of place and local distinctiveness, connecting places where people live with the wider environment, providing opportunities to appreciate special qualities and connecting to local landmarks which can aid orientation. They also help express the relationship between settlement and wider landscape setting and on sense of arrival and gateways. This report therefore identifies a number of representative views that help articulate the character of the settlement and its relationship with the wider landscape.

4.4.3 Landscape provides an important setting to the settlement of Ashdon and the outlying Ends. In Ashdon, the undulating topography which rises above properties, anchors development providing a strong valley context for the village. Open gaps between buildings enable memorable vistas to distinctive hills and open countryside, again reinforcing sense of place. Within the settlement there are also areas of open space that define the layout of the village predominately along the lanes and reinforce the historical separation between the village and 'ends' to the north.



Viewpoint 1:

View along Bartlow Road / Rogers End. The sinuous nature of the valley and the main road is evident. Where there are gaps in the built form there are vistas to the rising topography beyond. This topographic variation anchors the settlement in the valley.



Viewpoint 2:

This view is taken from the junction of Carters Croft housing estate with Rogers End, looking eastwards to Braggs Mill windmill and cottages on the horizon at 100m AOD. The topography rises steeply here, with the River Bourn hidden in the dip in the foreground. This viewpoint reflects the importance of the valley slopes forming a setting to the settlement and the prominence of built form where it occurs on the upper slopes.



Viewpoint 3:

This view is taken from Crown Hill, looking to the north east. The view opens out where the war memorial and allotments flank the road. Views are towards the wider valley slopes with associated woodland. This gap in development enables the heart of Ashdon to still feel strongly connected to the surrounding countryside and reinforces perceptions of historical separation between Ashdon and the Ends to the north..



Viewpoint 4:

This view is taken at the heart of the village of Ashdon, at the junction of Crown Hill and Radwinter Road. Views look south east along Radwinter Road as it starts to ascend the valley sides. Dwellings are a mix of brick and coloured render, ranging from single large detached to terraced cottages. Feature buildings turn the corner facing onto both roads at the junction, with picket fencing and timber five bar gates also key elements of the local vernacular.



Viewpoint 5:

This view is taken from the bottom of Church Hill, adjacent to the village Museum. Here views open out over the River Bourn and across the open space of Donkey Field with the Millennium Oak at its centre. Dwellings that line Radwinter Road and their rear curtilage hedgerows form the eastern boundary to Donkey Field. This open space forms an important break in development within the village and an immediate setting to the Conservation Area.



Viewpoint 6:

This view is taken from the south eastern corner of Donkey Field, with Millennium Oak seen in the middle of the view. The dwellings in this view are located on Church Hill Road within the Conservation Area, Donkey Field forming an immediate setting to the Conservation Area. They appear nestled within the valley. The valley slopes in this view are well wooded with large mature forest scale trees, many of which are connected to the arboretum at The Clays.



Viewpoint 7:

Looking northwards from Rectory Lane, this view illustrates the patchwork of arable fields defined by thick hedgerows and woodland, and deeply rural landscape which surrounds Ashdon and Church End. Newnham Hall and farmstead are hidden in the dip in the middle of the view.



Viewpoint 8:

This view is taken from the Public Right of Way that connects Kates Lane to Rogers End, looking northwards to Rogers End and Holden End just beyond. In this view housing estates from the mid 20th century are evident on the gentle valley slopes. These areas of development have a notably less treed character. The distant horizon illustrates the woodland blocks typical of the higher plateau fringes.



Viewpoint 9:

This viewpoint is taken from the Public Right of Way that connects Kate's Lane to Rogers End at the allotments. Views are westwards across a small field to the rear of dwellings located on Radwinter Road. This illustrates the tightknit nature of the dwellings, one plot deep off the road and nestled within the sinuous valley. The woodland and open pastures on the valley slopes beyond form a distinctive backdrop and setting to the village.



Viewpoint 10:

This viewpoint is taken from a public right of way along the River Bourne looking northwards towards properties along Church Hill. These properties sit above the floodplain with a wooded backdrop of mature trees within the grounds of The Clayes. The rear of the properties is open - a variety of curtilage treatments creates a poorly defined and cluttered edge to the settlement.



Viewpoint 11:

This view is taken from the rear of properties on Church Hill, looking to the south east. The barns associated with Hill Farm on Radwinter Road are highly visible being located along the upper valley slopes on a promontory at c.85m AOD. The River Bourn is lined by trees and scrub in the middle of the view. The lower slopes often flood in winter.



Viewpoint 12:

This view is taken from the lane leading to the Church and Churchyard in Church End looking north down the access to Hall Farm. The building to the right of the picture is the former national school, with flint knapped walls and feature brick surrounds to doors and windows. This building defines the edge of the lane leading to Hall Farm and is a feature building marking the main gateway into Church End when approaching from Ashdon.



Viewpoint 13:

This view is taken from Walden Road, looking southwards out of Church End to the countryside beyond, with Little Hales Wood on the horizon. The stand of mature pine trees and triangular greens characterise this part of the village. To the right of this view is the Church and beyond, access to the listed Guildhall and Scheduled Monument.

This view illustrates the open edge to Church End. Here the gateway is not defined by built form or significant road junction.



Viewpoint 14:

This view is taken from the Harcamlow Way Public Right of Way, an ancient trail, looking north east to the rear of dwellings on Church Hill. The dwellings within the valley extend out along the road from the centre of Ashdon, with the rest of the village hidden amongst the well vegetated valley bottom. Dwellings to the left of the view are on the mid slopes and form the fringes of Church End. The vegetation in the middle of the view is along Church Hill and illustrates the physical gap between Ashdon and Church End.



Viewpoint 15:

This view is taken from the Public Right of Way that connects Rectory Lane to Church Hill looking southwards. IN this view the Church tower is visually prominent, with the edge of settlement presenting a simple rural context with timber post and rail enclosures and coloured rendered dwellings set amongst mature trees.



Viewpoint 16:

This view is taken from Church Hill as it descends towards Ashdon village within the valley. It illustrates the rural and sunken character of this route, its soft verges and established vegetated banks creating a tunnel effect. These characteristics reinforce the perceived separation of Ashdon and Church End as two distinct clusters of development.



Viewpoint 17:

This view is taken from the edge of the field along the banks of the River Bourn looking south west. In this view the arable valley slopes rises up to a well treed horizon on the edge of Church Hill with glimpsed views of the Church tower. To the right of the image the curtilage treatment of dwellings on Church Hill is evident.



Viewpoint 18:

This view is taken from the Public Right of Way which connects Church End to Water End, looking northwest. In this view the church tower stands above the well vegetated horizon line. The majority of Church End is screened by existing mature dense vegetation.



Viewpoint 19:

This view reflects the approach into Church End from Walden Road and illustrates the visual importance of the group of pine trees and open 'greens' at the southern end of the village. Properties are visible to the right of this view on the edge of the village.

- 4.4.4 In the case of Church End views from the east are of the Church which appears isolated, set high on the hill on the upper slopes of the valley, amongst a well vegetated landscape, (primarily mature trees in the grounds of Ashdon Hall). The majority of the settlement is not visible, located further back away from the upper valley slopes.
- 4.4.5 Key views which reflect these characteristics are set out in the photo panels below. The location of views are illustrated on Figures 3 and 4.

4.5 Gateways and Gaps

- 4.5.1 The gateways to Ashdon Village can be classified into an initial gateway, where there is a sense of approaching a settlement and where development is sporadic or on one side of the road only, and a main gateway where there is a definite sense of arrival reinforced by a road junction or development occurring on both sides of the road. These gateways are mapped on Figure 3.
- 4.5.2 The gateways to Church End are simpler although along Walden Road there is an initial gateway at Orchard House and a main gateway as the road bends to the left at the village greens and notable stand of pines. When approaching along Church Hill there is a single main gateway on reaching the former National School and when approaching along Fallowden Lane there is a main gateway on reaching built development (refer to Figure 4).
- 4.5.3 Analysis has also identified a number of important physical gaps or breaks in development which reinforce a sense of separation between Ashdon and Church End but also the historic separation between Ashdon and Roger's End. These are also illustrated on Figures 3 and 4.

4.6 Local Green Space

- 4.6.1 NPPF (2018) Section 8 enables local communities, through the development of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans, to identify green areas for special protection that are particularly important to them.
- 4.6.2 Local Green Space (LGS) designation must include land which is locally special offering unique benefits to the local community. It may not be appropriate for some areas or open space to be designated. The NPPF sets out the criteria for designating LGS Sites which can include areas which are:
- a. *in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
 - b. *demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
 - c. *local in character and is not an extensive tract of land'.*

4.6.3 Areas of Local Green Space within the Parish have been assessed in relation to these criteria, as set out below. Areas considered suitable for Local Green Space designation are illustrated on Figures 3 and 4.

Location	Proposed Local Green Space (LGS)	Justification for Designation
Ashdon		
	Triangle of land extending northwards from Radwinter Road to allotments	Highlighted within Conservation Area Appraisal. Close proximity to community near to centre of settlement. Demonstrably special to local community and local significance as the area includes the War Memorial. Forms natural part of the green gap, a particular local characteristic between the areas of settlement and is not an extensive tract of land.
	Donkey Field with Millennium Oak	Close proximity to community near to centre of settlement. Conservation Area borders the Field on 3 sides providing an open setting. Forms a green gap, with an important vista across the field from Church Hill road near Ashdon Village Museum and footpath to the east (views 5 & 6). Has significant recreational value and represents tranquil rural landscape at the centre of the village.
	Rectory Lane play area and recreation ground	Close to the heart of the village, with Primary School just to the east. Special to local community for play area and equipment and recreation ground sports area. Well vegetated boundaries of mature trees and tall dense hedgerows.
Church End		
	Churchyard to All Saints Church	Highlighted within Conservation Area Appraisal. Special to local community and holds historical significance in association with the Church and its setting. This green space influences the local landscape character of Church End. Four separate pedestrian routes access the churchyard providing connectivity through Church End.
	Play and recreation ground (including outdoor gym and MUGA-multi-use games area) at Church Field	Only play area within Church End settlement so locally very special and highly valued. This open space creates an interface between the built form and wider rural landscape and retains the open character and connection of Church End to the countryside
	Two triangular greens at southern end of Walden Road	Close proximity to the community and significant to the gateway to Church End.

		These greens form part of the wider setting to the historic cluster of Church, Guildhall and Ashdon Hall.
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5: Sensitivity Assessment

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This section of the report considers the landscape in detail and especially its sensitivity and capacity to accommodate development. General consideration is given to the smaller hamlets at Stevenson End and Water End while more detailed assessment is given to the larger villages of Ashdon and Church End. For the purposes of this study the fringes of these later two settlements are divided into three discrete evaluation areas (A,B and C) as illustrated on Figures 3 and 4. This assessment is from a landscape perspective and does not take account of other issues or constraints which will also affect an area's ability to accommodate housing/employment.
- 5.1.2 The assessment areas are described in terms of character and context followed by an assessment of sensitivity and capacity to accommodate housing/employment development in the context of the existing settlement and its setting. The assessment draws on all baseline data set out in this report.
- 5.1.3 Where it is concluded that areas have some capacity for development it should not be assumed that these areas are free of sensitivity. The detailed assessment for each area, contained in the tables below, sets out the sensitivities relating to each area and highlights opportunities for mitigation and wider landscape enhancement. In this way information is provided on how development may deliver positive environmental gain in accordance with the Government's Environment Strategy, 25 Year Plan which states the clear objective to '*embed an environmental net gain principle for development, including housing and infrastructure*'. In particular this approach avoids the consideration of individual sites in isolation but looks at a broader context within which development can deliver positive change of benefit to the wider Parish and local community and at a landscape scale.

5.2 Steventon End and Water End

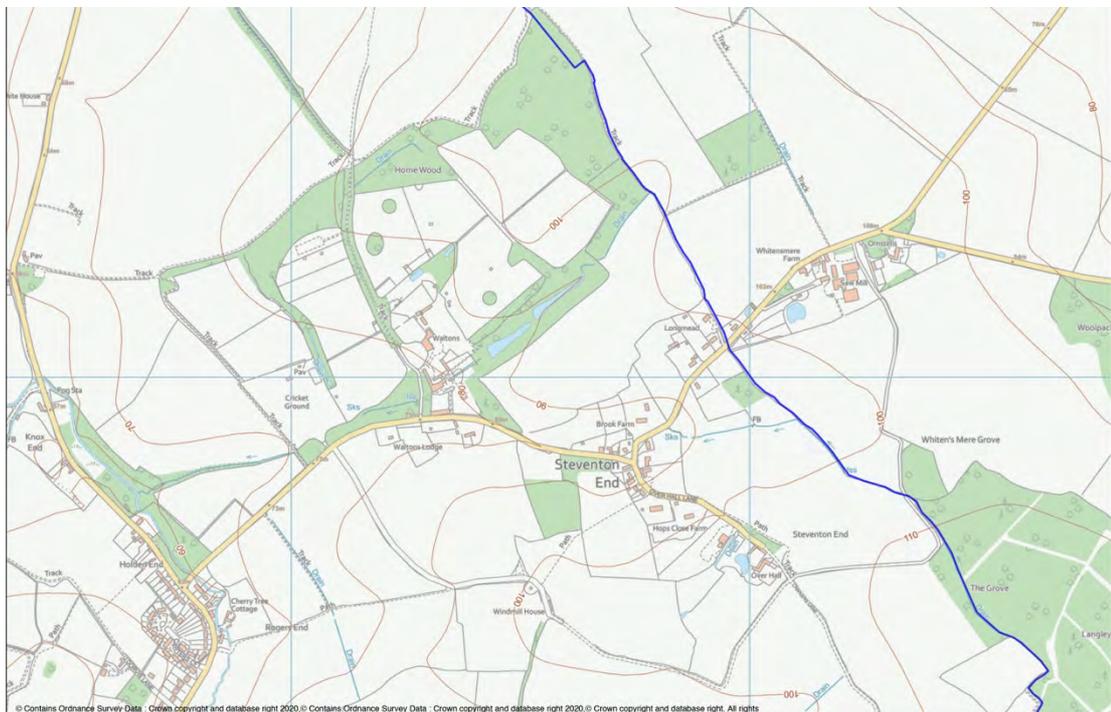
- 5.2.1 These two settlements comprise small hamlets, typical of the 'ends' settlements found within the Parish. Their small scale, loose and organic character means that the wider landscape remains dominant and tends to 'wash over' them. Despite their rural locations both have experienced some development pressure in recent years and each is considered in general terms below:

Steventon End

- 5.2.2 This settlement is located in the east of the Parish on upper slopes above the Bourne Valley between the c. 85-100m contours. Above the 100m contour the land starts to level off and at the ends of the lanes are farm complexes or halls including Whitensmere Farm and Hops Close Farm/Over Hall. Views to the settlement from the wider landscape are limited due to its relatively elevated location, position 'set back' from the main Bourne Valley, and associated vegetation.
- 5.2.3 The settlement has no clearly defined core although at the junction with Overhall Lane the northern verge widens to forms an area of open space or 'green'. Historically the

settlement comprised a loose collection of cottages and detached houses associated with small scale paddocks, many of which remain today. In the latter half of the 20th century there has been infill development comprising detached houses especially along Overhall Lane and around its junction with the main road to Ashdon. This has resulted in an eclectic mix of property styles from the historic properties on the main road (comprising a knapped flint and brick cottage and thatched cottage), to more modern bungalows or 1.5 storey houses with dormer windows.

- 5.2.4 The lanes which serve the settlement are narrow, winding and rural, with high hedges and limited grass verges. On the steeper slopes the lanes have a sunken character. Breaks in the lane hedgerows occur where there are access drives to properties. In places lane hedgerows have been removed altogether and domesticated/more urban boundary treatments intrude e.g. non-native planting and close board fencing. Development is one plot deep and views and vistas to the wider landscape are possible between dwellings. A number of the properties sit in large plots.



- 5.2.5 There may be scope for some limited individual bespoke dwellings on infill sites within this settlement. Care should be taken to avoid:

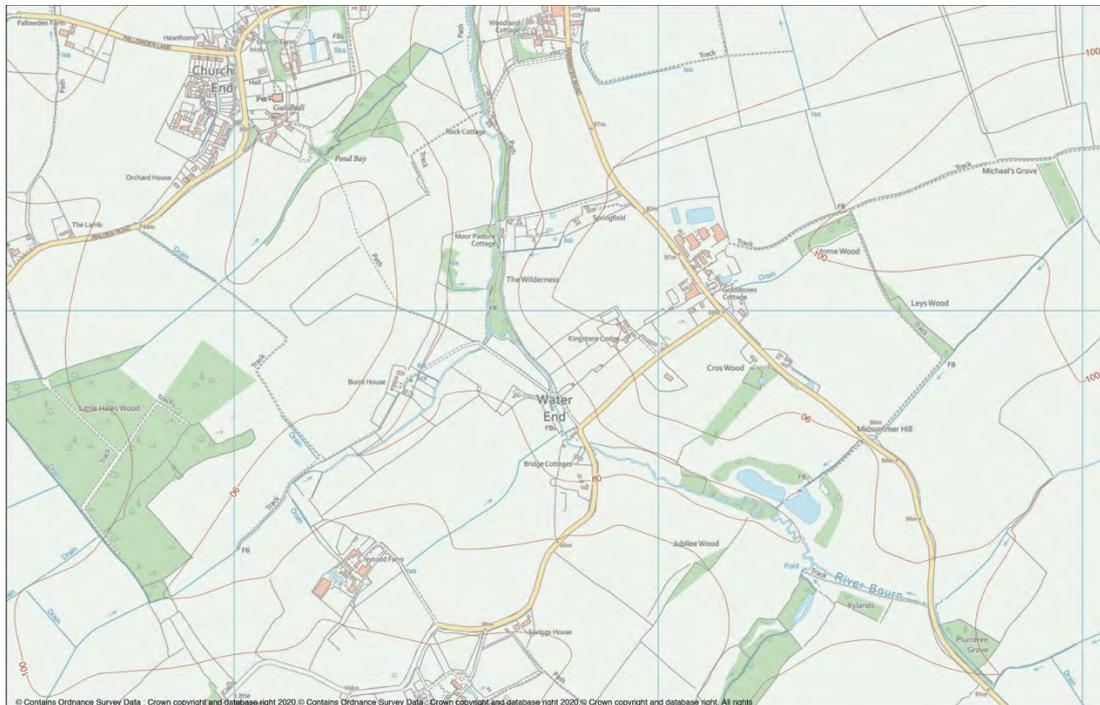
- Infill development which results in new access drives and further fragmentation of the lanes
- development which extends above the 95m contour, altering perceptions of the settlement siting down within the valley slopes and increasing visibility from the wider landscape
- development which competes with the windmill which is a local landmark located just to the southwest of the settlement

Water End

- 5.2.6 This settlement is located in the southern half of the Parish within the valley of the Boune at around the 80-75m contours. It comprised a handful of loosely arranged historic thatched cottages and associated barns, which are located down within the

valley, closely associated with the course of the river. A number of these properties are listed and accessed by narrow single-track, dead-end lanes flanked by high hedges. Properties are associated with large grounds and in some cases the watercourse forms part of the garden. The prevalence of thatched roofs, and place/lane names and trees such as willow reinforce the 'watery' sense of place of this 'end'. The buildings sit down within the folds of the landscape and are not widely visible except from adjoining valley slopes. Overall this end has a rural backwater quality.

- 5.2.7 Adjacent to the settlement, on more elevated slopes between the 90-95m contours, are a couple of 20th century bungalows which overlook the valley. The location of these properties and their light render means that they are highly visible from the surrounding countryside. Set further back, on land which becomes flatter and part of the plateau landscape, is the former farm complex of Goldstones which now accommodates a number of small-scale commercial businesses along Radwinter Road. Because this latter development is set back from the upper slopes of the valley and associated with vegetation, it is not visible from within the valley.

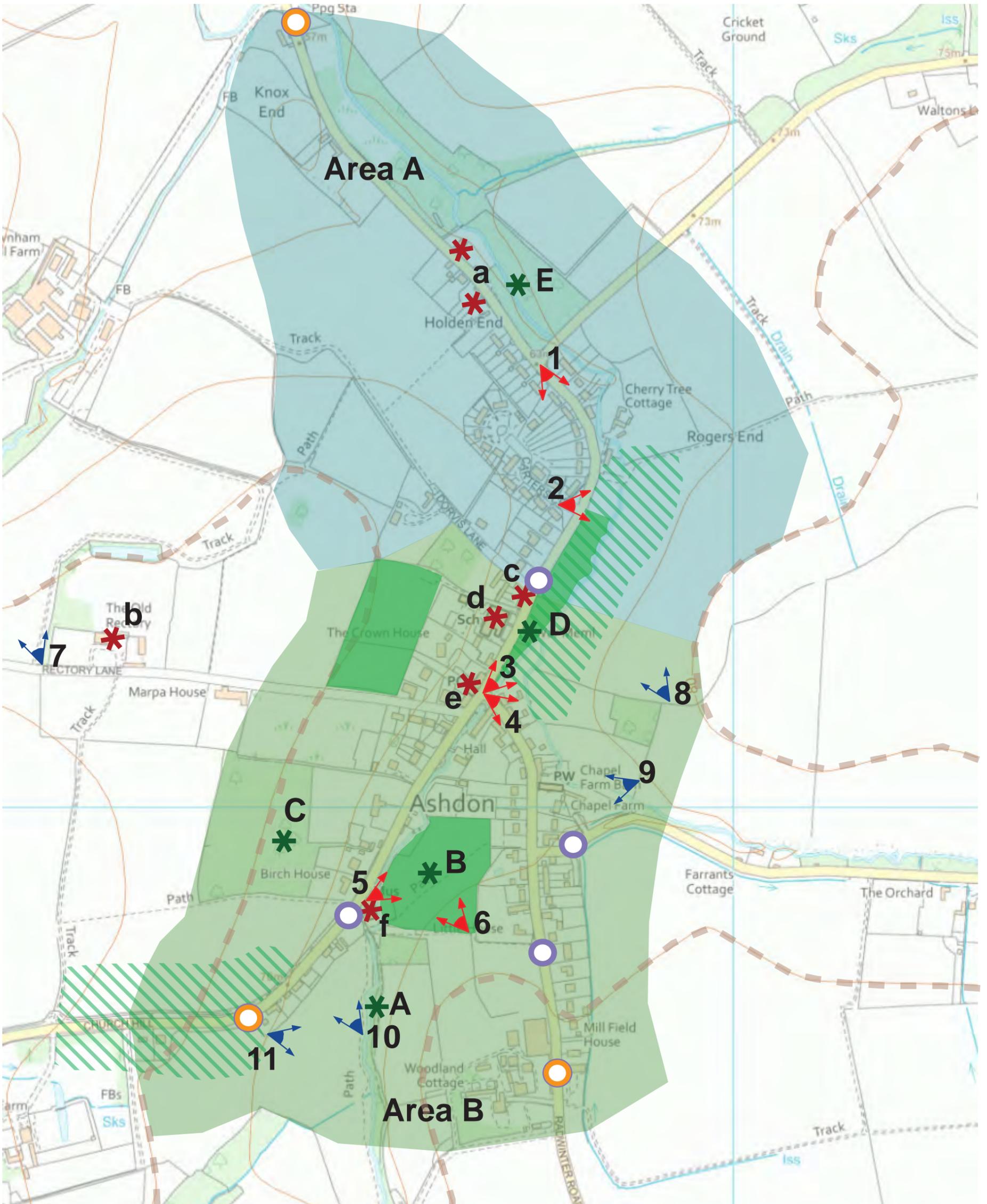


- 5.2.8 There may be scope for some limited individual bespoke dwellings on infill sites within this settlement. Care should be taken to avoid:

- Infill development which results in a loss of the settlements loose and organic character and which impacts on the setting of listed buildings
- Adverse effects on rural lanes and erosion of their rural, narrow character
- development on more elevated valley slopes where it is visually prominent in wider views
- development which does not reflect the local vernacular and association with the watercourse
- development which causes urbanisation of the rural lanes through inappropriate planting e.g. non-native hedging/plants or other structures e.g. stone gabions
- changes to land use which causes flooding downstream or onto the rural lanes

5.3 Detailed Assessment Tables for Ashdon and Church End

Assessment Area A: North Ashdon, including Rogers End and Holden End (refer to Figure 3)	
Relevant Planning Sites	None
Physical Character	Located within the Lowland Village Chalklands character type, Holden End and Rogers End sit on the lower, gentle valley slopes, where a more distinct valley floor is evident. Historic meadows follow the sinuous river course, much of which is tree lined and becomes wider and more defined to the north of the village and Holden End / Knox End. Settlement is located within the lower slopes of the valley, typically at 50-65m AOD.
Existing Settlement Character and Edge	Holden End and Rogers End were historically separate hamlets consisting of a random loose arrangement of dwellings, one plot deep with notable thatch cottages. The main road through the settlement follows the winding route of the river. The historic separation between Ashdon and the Ends has been undermined by housing estate development of the mid-20th Century, which has introduced regularity and extends settlement up the valley slopes. These mid-century housing estates comprise homogenous housing types and lack of forest scale trees. As such they are more visible from the surrounding landscape while other parts of the settlement are screened by vegetation.
Views and Visibility	Historic gaps in the built form allow vistas out to the rural arable landscape, to rounded hills and steeper valley sides that act as a distinctive backdrop, rising beyond the settlement. Braggs Mill windmill is a landmark building, prominent in views from Rogers End. The River Bourn and its tributaries are hidden from view amongst well wooded bank sides. Small historic settlement clusters of Holden and Knox End remain largely hidden within the incised valley landscape.
Designation/Condition	No local landscape designation. The juxtaposition of rounded valley slopes, small scale irregular pastures and woodlands gives rise to scenic quality and a distinctive setting to the settlement. The historic separation of Ends has been undermined by 20 th century housing development. Conifer and cotoneaster planting interrupts the flow of native hedgerows.
Perceptual Qualities	A quiet and tranquil, rural landscape with numerous historic dwellings and strong connection to surroundings. The curvature of the surrounding hills, creates a strong near horizon, enhancing the feeling of being within a valley. The housing estates are small scale and have a quietness to them although they lack mature trees and distinction.
Function	The rural valley floor to the River Bourn performs an important flood alleviation function. Knox End, with Knox Cottage mark the initial gateway to the village while the main gateway to Ashdon is much further south close to the historic core of the village. This sequence reflects the historic development of the village and merging with Holden and Rogers End. The physical gap between Brook Cottage and the gateway to the main village retains some perceptions of the historic separation between Ashdon and the Ends and enables views out to the wider rural setting. Gaps in built form along the road between Knox End and Roger End are also important in retaining the more dispersed and organic character of the 'end' settlements.
Sensitivity/Capacity	This area is sensitive to residential and employment development, particularly where it would rise up the valley slopes or fill in important physical gaps or areas which form an important flood alleviation function. This area of landscape is visually sensitive as a result of views from upper valley slopes over the valley and further cul-de-sac estate development would undermine the historic settlement pattern. The natural limits of existing settlement are defined by the River Bourn and flood



Key

-  Initial Gateway
-  Main Gateway
-  Views Towards the Settlement
(Nos refer to photo panels in report)
-  Views to Wider Landscape
(Nos refer to photo panels in report)
-  Assessment Areas A and B
(Refer to detailed sensitivity tables in report)

-  Built Landmarks
(Letters refer to Section 4.3 in report)
-  Landscape Features
(Letters refer to Section 4.3 in report)
-  Important Open Space
-  Important Gaps
-  80m Contour



0m 125m 250m 375m 500m

**Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan
Landscape Assessment**

Figure 3 Analysis - Ashdon



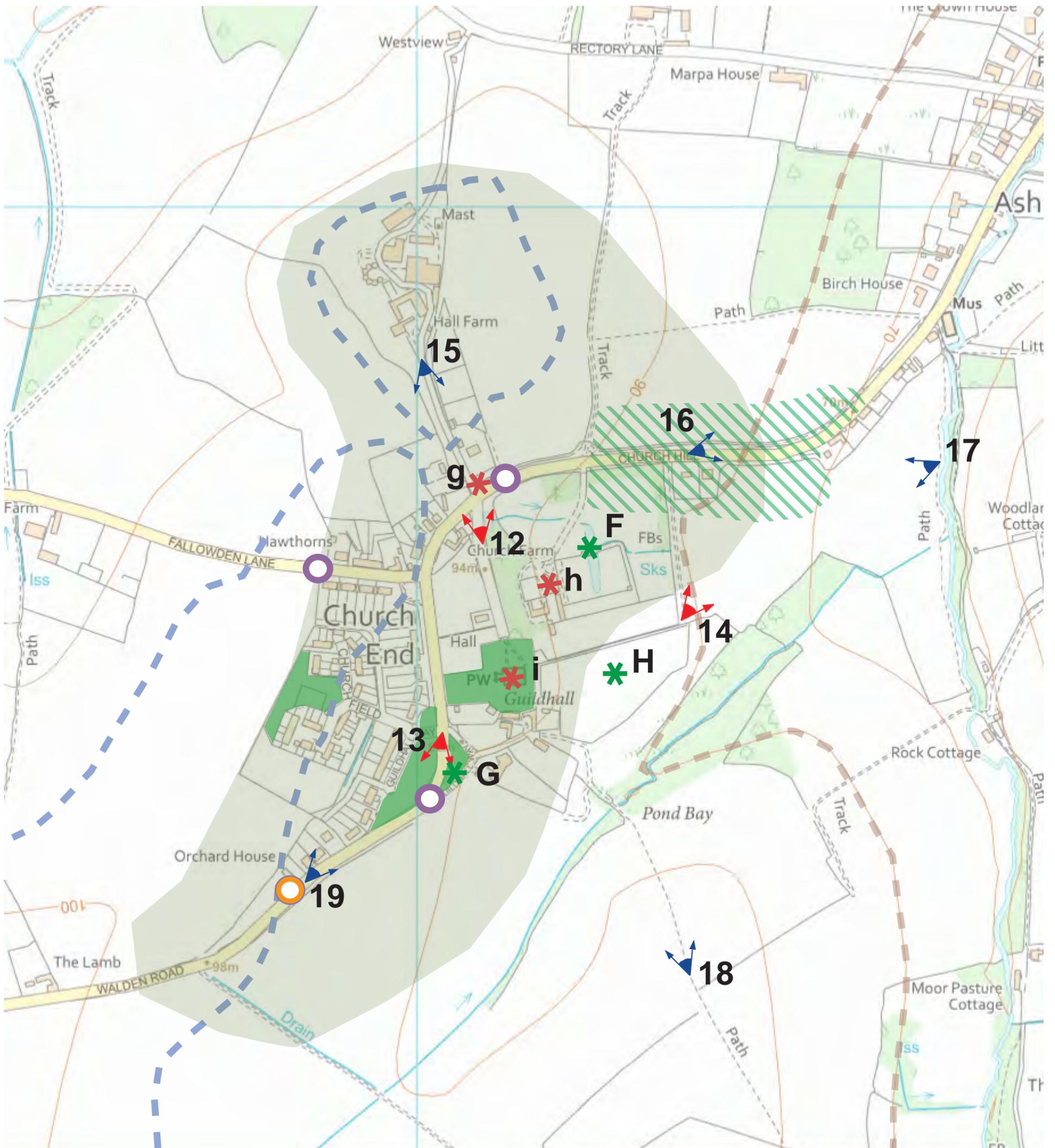
Assessment Area A: North Ashdon, including Rogers End and Holden End (refer to Figure 3)	
	plain, topography and woodland, however there may be limited opportunity for a small-scale linear development comprising 1-2 dwellings along the lane to Stevenson End between the 50-65m contours.
Mitigation	New development should reflect rural cottages or traditional farm outbuildings. Native planting such as hedgerow or linear woodlands should be associated with the edges of new development to visually anchor and provide a transition between the settlement edge and wider countryside.

Assessment Area B: South and Central Ashdon Village, including Kate's Lane, Radwinter Road and Church Hill (refer to Figure 3)	
Relevant Planning Sites	Land at Hill Farm, Radwinter Road, Ashdon (application No UTT/18/1429/OP)
Physical Character	<p>Located within the Chalk Hills and Scarps character type, Ashdon village sits within the narrow valley of the River Bourn and its tributaries. The steeper valley sides rise just beyond the settlement edge to the rounded hills above, forming the backdrop to the settlement. Mature trees, in particular oak, are scattered throughout giving a well wooded appearance.</p> <p>Settlement is located within the natural limits of the narrow valley, typically located at 60-75m AOD. Historic green gaps in the built form, such as Donkey Field with millennium oak, provide vistas to and from the settlement and to the hills that surround it, well utilised by local residents. Historic Manors and Halls within the village such as The Clayes and The Rectory, with their well wooded landscaped gardens and arboretum, provide mature skyline trees of non-native species, visible across the valley, adding to the distinctive local character.</p> <p>Roadways follow historic routes along the valleys. Kate's Lane leads out of the village to the east and almost immediately becomes a quiet rural lane with arable fields following the wooded sinuous route of a tributary.</p>
Existing Settlement Character and Edge	<p>Ashdon village sits alongside the River Bourn, where dwellings are knitted tightly together, one plot deep in a regular fashion. The majority are hard on to the roadside pavement, particularly at the village centre at the junction of Radwinter Road with Bartlow Road and Crown Hill. Dwellings are a mix of brick terraced cottages and colour rendered larger detached properties. Large historic manors are often set back and hidden amongst mature landscaped gardens such as The Clayes which also has curved brick entrance feature and long section of brick wall with some flint knapped portions. Historically there were many small enclosed orchards to the rear of dwellings, and which are now mature treed and well vegetated rear gardens, providing a soft transition from the settlement edge to the countryside. Historic green gaps within the built form provide separation between the village and Ends.</p> <p>The settlement stretches out along Radwinter Road to the south east and Church Hill to the south west, leading uphill and out of the valley, with topography historically limiting the extent of settlement. New development has occurred along Radwinter Road extending along the upper valley slopes to 85m AOD, historically there would have been some separation between Hill Farm and the village in the valley below. The loss of Protected Rural Lane status to Radwinter Road follows erosion of the integrity of the historic rural lane, with the introduction of new and uncharacteristic access points and loss of mature boundary hedgerows and trees.</p> <p>Along Church Hill some mid 20th century dwellings are located along the 70m contour line, outside of the natural limits of settlement and located within the historic green gap that separates the settlements of Ashdon village and Church End.</p>

Assessment Area B: South and Central Ashdon Village, including Kate's Lane, Radwinter Road and Church Hill (refer to Figure 3)	
Views and Visibility	<p>Views are in the majority directed along the lanes, tightly bound by the dwellings either side. Occasional green gaps such as Donkey Field, allow views out across the narrow valley to arable fields and steeply rising hills immediately beyond the settlement edge.</p> <p>Outside of the settlement, views into the village illustrate the tightly knit dwellings, within the narrow valley with small rear courtyards and various building orientations developed slowly over time. Once beyond the immediate settlement bounds the Church tower is visually prominent in views towards Church End, located on upper valley slopes and in apparent isolation, surrounded by mature trees. Views are afforded towards Hill Farm, situated on a promontory at 85m AOD, from both Church Hill road and from the Harcamlow Way, where both the farm and associated buildings and the arable upper valley slopes that surround it are highly visible, emphasising the connection to the rural countryside. Historically, Hill Farm would have had greater dominance over the hillside but this has decreased with the introduction of mid century dwellings, which become more visually prominent as they extend up the hillside beyond the natural topographical limits of the historic settlement.</p>
Designation/Condition	<p>Ashdon village is covered by a Conservation Area. It is an area valued for its historic settlement, rural lanes, mature trees and historic planned landscapes such as The Clays and its Arboretum and The Rectory. It is valued for its intact historic patterns, as evidenced by the relationship between the fields, lanes and village settlement, as well as intactness of habitat for species such as the well vegetated routes of the river and its tributaries. Narrow historic lanes, such as Radwinter Road, previously a Protected Rural Lane, are nevertheless highly valued rural lanes. White painted post and metal rail, whilst not typically rural, is particular to this village and is used throughout creating a cohesiveness.</p>
Perceptual Qualities	<p>Rural village settlement with Rose and Crown pub and Victorian primary school on Church Hill and some local services. Narrow lanes with dwellings hard against road edge, typically one plot deep following the rural lanes. Vistas out to arable fields to the immediate rear of dwelling curtilages, very rural nature.</p>
Function	<p>Steep sided valley forming the setting for rural village of Ashdon. Remains largely hidden within well vegetated incised valley landscape. Narrow and steep sided valley to River Bourn and its tributaries results in regular flooding of narrow strip meadows alongside the river but also regular flooding of dwellings that sit tightly alongside it. Initial gateway on Radwinter Road is experienced at Hill Farm and its associated buildings, with the main gateway arrival where dwellings appear on both sides of the road, both on Radwinter Road and Kate's Lane. The initial gateway on Church Hill is experienced at Armadale House, where the dwellings are only on one side of the road, with the main gateway experienced at the village Museum where dwellings appear on both sides.</p>
Sensitivity/Capacity	<p>This landscape is sensitive to residential and employment development due to the rising valley topography which forms a rural setting to the settlement, course of the River Bourn and open gaps in built form which provide strong visual and physical connections to the wider rural valley landscape.</p> <p>Nevertheless, this assessment has identified some opportunities for residential development. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 houses on the lower slopes west of Church Hill, around the 75-80m contour line. Development should retain / incorporate the existing footpath to Church End. A single access off Church Hill should be located close to the existing gateway to the village, opposite the museum. Development should comprise 1-1.5 storey cottages and be associated with improvements to the village gateway along Church Hill. Development would need to be associated with new

Assessment Area B: South and Central Ashdon Village, including Kate's Lane, Radwinter Road and Church Hill (refer to Figure 3)	
	<p>hedgerow and tree planting to the rear of any development in order to soften impacts from adjoining footpaths to the west. The loss of visual amenity to adjacent properties should be avoided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower slopes along southern edge of Kate's Lane, around the 75m contour, tucked in behind Swallow and Harvest Cottages. Opportunities to accommodate 1-2 dwellings which reflect the character and scale of rural cottages or traditional farm outbuildings. • Land north of Hill Farm, off Radwinter Road (current application). Development on this site should be located on the lower slopes below the 80m contour line and associated with a strong vegetated western edge to the site to reduce visual effects of development rising up the valley slopes or coalescing with Hall Farm, when viewed from Church End and Harcamlow Way. Single storey properties to reduce visual intrusion may be appropriate and any development will need to satisfactorily address flood risk to neighbouring properties due to variations in elevation. Similarly, care should be taken to avoid adverse effects on the visual amenity of adjoining properties and adverse effects on the adjacent Ashdon Conservation Area. • Infill development off Radwinter Road (car park for the Baptist Church and village hall) if an alternative location for the car park can be found. The street frontage and elevation of any development will need to be given careful consideration due to visibility from the junction with Kates Lane and Donkey's Field and the position within the Conservation Area. A physical connection and vista through to the Donkey Field should be retained.
Mitigation	<p>All new development should retain the perceptions of development sitting down within the valley topography. Residential dwellings should reflect local vernacular styles reinforcing rural context of village and be one plot deep reflecting the traditional settlement pattern. Access to development off rural lanes should be kept to a minimum and the rural character of lanes retained through the avoidance of urban curtilage treatments.</p> <p>To the rear of development, new native planting such as hedgerow or woodland would visually anchor and contain the settlement as well as providing a transition between settlement edge and wider countryside.</p>

Assessment Area C: Church End including the wider setting (refer to Figure 4)	
Relevant Planning Sites	Land adjacent to Church Hill (application no UTT/19/2642/OP and UTT/20/0141/AG)
Physical Character	<p>Located within the Wooded Plateau Farmland character type, these upper valley slopes form the transition to plateau landscape beyond. There is a history of orchards in the area, but predominantly this is an arable agricultural landscape with woodlands defining the higher ground. Settlement is well vegetated, typically located within c. 90-95m contours.</p> <p>Mature trees surround the Church to the south and east, with Ashdon Hall's mature landscaped gardens and arboretum also to the east of the Church.</p>
Existing Settlement Character and Edge	<p>Church End is historically separate from Ashdon village, located on the upper valley slopes. The settlement is concentrated on Walden Road and Fallowden Lane (a lane which once connected Church End with the former railway halt to the west). The historic focus of the settlement is around the church while to the west of the main street there are two housing estates -</p>



Key

-  Initial Gateway
-  Main Gateway
-  Views Towards the Settlement
(Nos refer to photo panels in report)
-  Views to Wider Landscape
(Nos refer to photo panels in report)
-  Assessment Area C
(Refer to detailed assessment labels section 5.3)
-  80m Contour
-  95m Contour

-  Built Landmarks
(letters refer to Section 4.3 of report)
-  Landscape Features
(letters refer to Section 4.3 of report)
-  Important Open Space
-  Important Gap

Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan
Landscape Assessment
Figure 4 Analysis - Church End



Assessment Area C: Church End including the wider setting (refer to Figure 4)	
	<p>Church Field and All Saints. Post war housing is located in single rows along Guildhall Way, Walden Road and Fallowden Lane. The mid 20th century saw a more rapid expansion of typically semi-detached or terraced cottages, with the occasional bungalow. The mid-century housing has a homogenous character and lacks mature trees. Church Field housing estate does replicate some of the vernacular detailing, but the overall building character and layout is uncharacteristic.</p> <p>A couple of mid 20th century dwellings are located on Church Hill, around the 80m contour and within the green gap which separates Church End from Ashdon. These dwellings are visually prominent in views from the south and east.</p>
Views and Visibility	<p>At the north of Church End, views are contained within the settlement, whereas to the south views open out towards Little Hales Wood on the horizon and down slope to the well vegetated sinuous tributaries along the valley. Views westwards to the plateau are in the majority screened by existing mature vegetation and settlement, although views out are afforded from Church Field housing estate. Views to the east are screened by the Church and mature vegetation of Ashdon Hall.</p> <p>In views from the wider landscape to the south and east, the settlement of Church End is screened by mature trees and the mature landscaped gardens and arboretum of Ashdon Hall, giving the impression that the Church stands alone in isolation at the top of the hill. The Church tower is prominent in views from the wider landscape and especially from the Harcamlow Way long distance footpath.</p> <p>Conifers associated with Hall Farm are visually prominent from the wider landscape reflecting its prominent position on higher land, while 2 storey properties on Church Fields are visually prominent from Fallowden Lane.</p>
Designation/Condition	<p>The eastern half of Church End is covered by a Conservation Area reflecting the concentration of listed buildings which cluster around the Church, the grounds of Ashdon Hall and the Scheduled Monument to the east of the Church. Other historic assets associated with the settlement include the rural narrow lanes, mature trees and hedgerows. The grass verge along Walden Road is valued for its wildflower interest and designated a Special Verge. Historic routes include New House Lane and the Harcamlow Way. There has been some loss of historic character as a result of housing estate development and conifers associated with Hall Farm which detract from the otherwise scenic and rural settlement character. Amongst the wider plateau there is a notable loss of hedgerow resulting in larger fields.</p>
Perceptual Qualities	<p>Rural and tranquil area with a strong time depth. Upper valley slopes and plateau allow wider views, opening out over the valleys and across to the hills and plateau beyond.</p>
Function	<p>Transitional landscape of upper valley slopes and plateau, all set within rural agricultural landscape. The settlement gateway on Walden Road occurs at Orchard House, where dwellings start on the northern side of the road with the southern side remaining open to wider countryside views. At the northern end of the village the gateway is reached at the former school on Church Hill where dwellings within the village are visible ahead and where the road bends round to the left. Although there are other dwellings further along Church Hill they do not form a gateway being set back from the road and filtered with mature vegetation.</p>
Sensitivity/Capacity	<p>The peripheral landscape surrounding Church End is a sensitive landscape to residential and employment development due to elevation on the upper valley slopes and junction with the wider plateau landscape. Settlement edges have the potential to be visually prominent locally and over longer distances from the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, land to the east of the settlement is sensitive as it plays a particular function in providing a gap between Church End and Ashdon and as a setting to many historic assets.</p>

Assessment Area C: Church End including the wider setting (refer to Figure 4)	
	<p>Nevertheless, this assessment has identified some limited areas where residential development may be accommodated. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small scale development to the southern end of the settlement, associated with the existing ‘greens’. Any development in this location will need to make a strong contribution to the street scene and retain views from the main street looking south to the wider rural landscape and Little Hales Wood. New development should be one plot deep and associated with a new landscape edge to the settlement which may include landscape grounds, orchards or small scale paddocks. Development should be kept close to the 85m contour and should avoid interruption of valued views to the Church from the wider landscape. It should also retain and avoid harm to the protected verge along Walden Road. Development in this location is likely to create a new gateway point into and out of the settlement – great care is therefore required in terms of detail design. • small scale development at Hall Farm, to the north of Church End. This is a visually sensitive site - the existing farm is located on a higher knoll of land. Development of this area could be achieved so long as development adopts a farm cluster courtyard arrangement with outbuildings and is associated with small scale paddocks/woodland, or comprises a larger house set within landscape grounds. Such an arrangement may offer opportunities for a small scale residential/employment development as live/work units. New development should seek to remove/reconfigure existing built structures on the site and concentrate development on the lower southern slopes closer to Church End, rather than the more elevated north facing slopes or those that form the upper slopes of the Bourn Valley. Concentrating development on the southern slopes will ensure it relates positively to the existing settlement. Setting the development within a strong landscape structure of native planting is essential given the elevated nature of this site. • Small cluster of development on the western edge of the village accessed off Church Field. This area has some capacity for residential development although its character and design should reflect the edge of settlement location e.g. a farm courtyard arrangement. Dwellings should be no more than 1-1.5 storeys forming a transition to the wider countryside and avoiding visual prominence when viewed from land to the north. Care will also be needed to create a suitable vegetated edge to development when seen from Walden Road and should seek to retain/create a vista through to the church tower.
Mitigation	<p>New development should be associated with advanced planting of native hedgerow and woodland planting and the creation of small scale pasture enclosures or landscaped grounds to provide an appropriate interface between development and the wider countryside. Where feasible, views to the Church tower should be utilised in any development layout to visually tie development with the settlement and new development should not visually compete with this important landmark. Wherever possible new development should seek to provide enhanced footpath links through the village and to the wider countryside. Within the village there are opportunities to manage the village ‘greens’ for nature conservation and in particular wildflower grassland, extending the verge habitat along Walden Road. Specifically in the area of the existing pine trees, a tree survey will inform their future management as well as opportunities/contraints regarding improved grassland habitat.</p>

6: Summary of Findings

6.1 Special Qualities to Conserve and Enhance

6.1.1 The following conclusions can be reached as to the special qualities of Ashdon Parish which, wherever possible, should be retained and enhanced. Special qualities include:

- Close relationship between built form, topography and watercourses forming distinctive setting to built-form
- Separate identity of Ashdon and Church End
- Historic network of narrow and often sunken and vegetated lanes which reinforce the rural character of the Parish
- Perception of Ashdon and Water End nestling within the valley with a backdrop of fields or mature woodland
- Distinctive open spaces within settlements, highly valued for local sense of place and amenity
- Scenic quality derived from undulating topography, patchwork of fields, ancient woodlands, parklands and network of mature hedgerows
- Deeply rural, tranquil countryside
- High concentration of local vernacular buildings
- Contrasts between intimate pastoral valley landscapes defined by rounded hills and open elevated higher arable slopes
- Key built landmarks include the church, windmill and pub, which reinforce local distinctiveness and provide orientation

6.2 Changes to Avoid

6.2.1 This detailed analysis has noted some changes which have resulted in loss of the distinctive qualities of the settlement. It is useful to highlight these as it may inform decisions regarding any future development or environmental initiatives/management of the settlement setting.

- Development of housing estates that ignore historic natural limits of settlement within local topography and ignore historic settlement patterns
- Growth of Ends and Ashdon village along roads resulting in merging of separate ends and loss of settlement pattern and village form
- Housing estates with single housing types which have resulted in a loss of one plot deep development or loss of perception of village centre through the creation of new clusters of development at the extremities of the village
- Development on upper valley slopes, above the 75m contour in Holden End, Rogers End and Ashdon village and above the 95m contour at Church End, where they are more visually prominent

- Erosion of narrow rural lanes which has resulted in urbanisation through new access points, concrete kerbs and increased traffic
- Introduction of individual dwellings or conversion of rural cottages/bungalows to two storey houses, which do not reflect the scale or detailing of traditional properties in the area and appear visually out of scale

6.3 Management and Development Guidelines

6.3.1 The Local Plan (2005), and the Regulation 19 Pre-submission Local Plan (March 2019) aim to safeguard the character of the countryside by ensuring new development integrates positively with the existing character. It provides a framework of broad principles that all development in the countryside will be required to follow.

6.3.2 Alongside the above guidance, the following management and development guidelines have been identified as a result of this detailed settlement and landscape analysis. These guidelines are provided to inform land management decisions, inspire local community initiatives and to inform the development of proposals by developers and to assist decision makers.

6.3.3 Management guidelines seek to reinforce local character and improve legibility. They include:

- Prioritise new street tree planting in housing estates such as Tredgetts and Carters Croft to enhance the street scene and reduce visual prominence of these areas from surrounding valley sides
- Establish a community nature conservation project to manage amenity green spaces as wildlife areas
- Enhance biodiversity of rural lane verges through appropriate management in collaboration with landowners and highways
- Plant/reinstate hedgerows and trees using native species to provide connected habitat corridors
- Manage existing hedgerows appropriately for birds, other wildlife and biodiversity
- Plan for the sensitive felling of conifer plantations and conifer hedges and replace with native species where required
- Seek opportunities to create new community orchards especially in areas of important green gaps within the settlement edge
- Conserve and manage areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland as important landscape, historical and nature conservation sites such as Little Hales Wood through appropriate woodland management regimes.
- Reinstate areas of meadow and wet woodland along the course of the River Bourn especially in areas prone to flooding to improve wildlife corridors and reduce flood risk.

6.3.4 Development guidelines seek to inform new development and include:

- Protect and preserve historic narrow lanes and verges; avoid fragmenting the integrity of lanes, including hedgerows and grass verges through the introduction of new access points and concrete kerb edges
- Avoid incongruous and uncharacteristic boundary treatments such as new brick piers and gated entrances as these can have an urbanising effect and avoid uncharacteristic planting such as conifer hedges
- Avoid proliferation of individual dwellings along rural lanes in the wider Parish where this leads to ribbon development
- Seek opportunities to underground overhead wires to improve streetscape where feasible
- Isolated individual development within the wider countryside should seek to reflect agricultural farm clusters, isolated rural cottages or properties set within landscape grounds. Urban style dwellings should be avoided.
- Ensure levels of lighting associated with new development are kept to a minimum to avoid night light spill
- Encourage the appropriate use of colour as well as tree planting to mitigate the visually intrusive effects of large modern farm buildings, especially where they are located on elevated prominent positions on the upper valley slopes
- Seek opportunities to develop a cycle connection along the disused railway line connecting Fallowden Lane with Saffron Walden and offering a sustainable off road route to local services and a recreational route.

6.4 Conclusions

- 6.4.1 This assessment has revealed that the settlements within Ashdon Parish have limited capacity to accommodate housing development. This assessment has identified a number of sites which may be able to accommodate appropriately designed housing. Due to the area's special qualities, appropriate development is most likely to be comprise of small scale schemes rather than a single larger development.
- 6.4.2 Employment opportunities are also limited. There may be some scope for live/work units associated with farm redevelopment at Church End or possibly within in the wider landscape. However, any development of this kind would need to carefully consider the visibility of development from the wider landscape and indirect characterising effects on rural lanes as a result of access and traffic.