



WEST ASHTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018-2026

Made - June 2021





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1. Introduction

The West Ashton Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) covers the whole of the Parish of West Ashton which is a rural community located adjacent to the county town of Trowbridge.

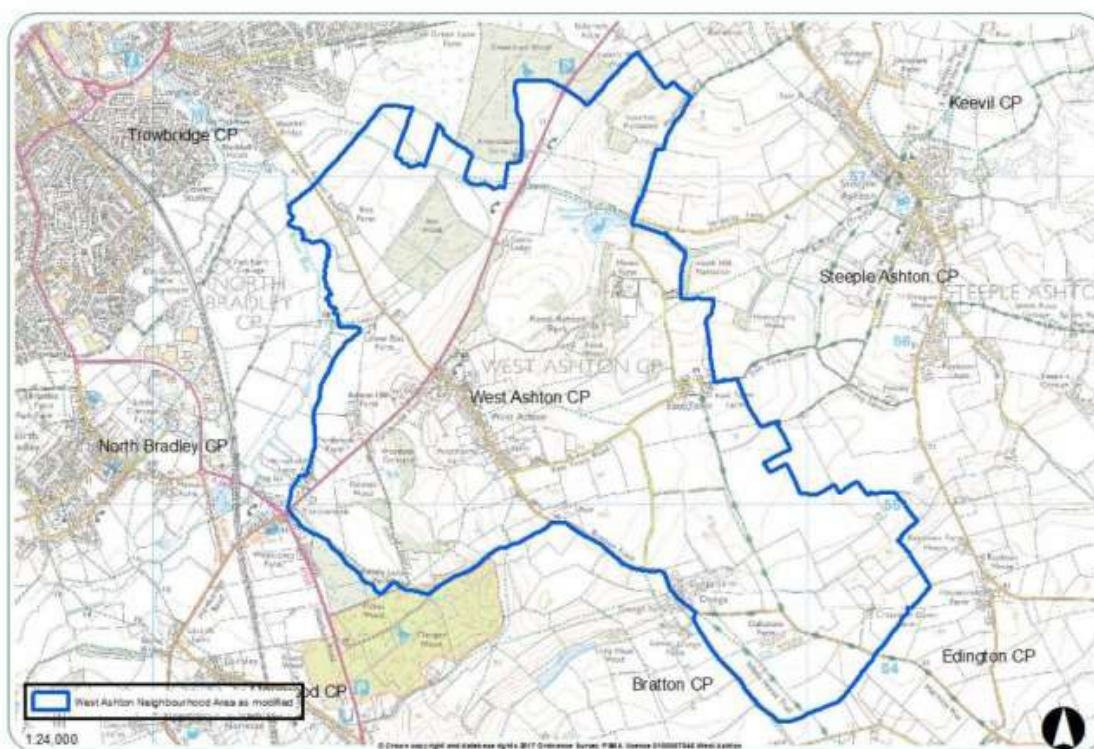
- 1.1. West Ashton Parish Council resolved to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) on 21st July 2015. Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions by Wiltshire Council as part of the statutory development plan.
- 1.2. In 2016, West Ashton Parish Council appointed a Steering Group to engage with the whole of the community and produce this NDP with the assistance of consultants. Throughout the preparation of the NDP the needs of the Parish have been researched, considered and the representations raised by the community about its future have been taken into account. The responses from the initial questionnaire informed the issues the community considered were important, but also identified areas where further community engagement was needed.
- 1.3. The West Ashton Neighbourhood Plan period looks ahead to 2026. This timeframe was chosen to coincide with the plan period of the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 and because it offers a reasonably long span of time for the policies to take effect. The NDP will be reviewed following adoption of the Wiltshire Local Plan Review to ensure continued consistency with higher tier strategic policies and to reflect the updated evidence-base.
- 1.4. In the period to 2026, the Wiltshire Core Strategy does not envisage anything except limited development at the village of West Ashton, however more significant changes are proposed for the west of our Parish adjoining Trowbridge through the Ashton Park Urban Extension. While it is recognised that Ashton Park would bring some benefits to the community, a pattern emerged from consultations to highlight the importance for the NDP to consider the impacts of this substantial expansion extending the urban area into the open land between West Ashton and Trowbridge.
- 1.5. The early stages of the draft NDP explored the allocation of land for housing at West Ashton as was informed by a Housing Needs Survey (HNS) and a Site Selection Report. The Steering Group resolved to discontinue the inclusion of housing allocations within the Neighbourhood Plan following initial screening for both Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) by Wiltshire Council due to potential impacts on the nearby Special Area of Conservation. A future review of the Plan could re-evaluate the need for allocating land for housing. The Updated SEA Screening Determination for the NDP of December 2019 concluded the NDP is not likely to have significant environmental effects and accordingly a SEA is not required. The draft NDP has incorporated recommendations following initial HRA screening.



The Plan Area

- 1.6. The Neighbourhood Plan area (as modified) was approved by Wiltshire Council on 20th September 2017 and covers the Parish of West Ashton, as amended following the Local Government Boundary Review of 1st April 2017 that had the effect of transferring 104 properties to Trowbridge Town Council. A map defining the extents of the Designated Neighbourhood Area is provided at Appendix 2. The Parish is an outlying part of the Trowbridge Community Area covered by the Trowbridge Area Board, which includes neighbouring parishes, some of which are preparing their own neighbourhood plans. Other studies and experiences from neighbouring parishes in the community area have informed the preparation of this Plan.
- 1.7. The Scoping Report has been reviewed after the boundary review and modified to note and reflect the change to the designated neighbourhood area where appropriate.

Figure 1 - Extent of the West Ashton designated neighbourhood area



Planning Context

- 1.8. The **National Planning Policy Framework**¹ (NPPF) confirms the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching economic, social and environmental objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>



different objectives). These objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area. The following paragraphs of the NPPF are especially relevant to West Ashton NDP:

- Paragraph 78 that confirms to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.
- Paragraphs 83 and 84 that seek to support a prosperous rural economy.
- Paragraph 91 that aims to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible, and enable and support healthy lifestyles.
- Paragraphs 102 to 104 that establish the objectives so that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth.
- Paragraph 124 that confirms the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.
- Paragraph 148 which confirms the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate.
- Paragraph 170 that confirms planning policies should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

- 1.9. Within the context of a presumption in favour of sustainable development, **neighbourhood plans** should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies. The NDP also needs to be in general conformity with the relevant Development Plan Policies of Wiltshire Council.
- 1.10. **Wiltshire Core Strategy 2006-2026** (WCS) identifies the village of West Ashton as a 'small village' where a limited level of development will be supported in order to help retain the vitality of these communities. The Parish is located within the Trowbridge Community Area where the spatial strategy is further defined by Policy CP29. The WCS allocates a strategically important site of Ashton Park south east of Trowbridge for 2,500 dwellings and 15 hectares of employment land, which is partly within the Parish. The WCS includes a variety of decision-making policies in Section 6.
- 1.11. **West Wiltshire Local Plan First Alteration (2004)** (WWLP) some of which policies are saved and remain following the adoption of the WCS and have informed the NDP.
- 1.12. **West Wiltshire Leisure and Recreation DPD** (WWLR) policies are saved and remain following the adoption of the WCS and have informed the NDP.
- 1.13. **Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (WHSAP)** was adopted 25th February 2020. There are no new allocated sites identified by the WHSAP within the designated neighbourhood



area. The **Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD** was adopted 25th February 2020 to support the delivery of the WHSAP.

- 1.14. In terms of emerging plans, the preparation of the neighbourhood plan has had regard to the preparation of the **Wiltshire Local Plan Review 2016-2036** (LPR).

NDP Evidence Base

- 1.15. The evidence base for the NDP includes four supporting documents: a Scoping Report, Landscape and Visual Setting Analysis Report, a Housing Needs Survey and the Consultation Statement. The evidence base also included a Site Selection Report however this is now background information as the NDP no longer takes forward any proposal for housing allocations.
- 1.16. The **Scoping Report** (September 2018) provides a record of some of the detailed research undertaken to:
- Identify Issues and problems;
 - Take account of other plans, programmes and policies and understand the context they provide to West Ashton;
 - Consider the actions needed to correct the problems; and
 - Suggest Vision, Objectives and Policy from the evidence.
- 1.17. The preparation of the Scoping Report was led by the topic areas used in the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal.
- 1.18. In order to secure a better understanding of the landscape setting issue of the village (as identified in both the WCS and community engagement) a **Landscape and Visual Setting Analysis Report** (LVSA) was commissioned from Landscape Architects Indigo Landscapes.
- 1.19. A separate **Consultation Statement** (CS) to support the Submission version of this NDP will describe how the community engagement responses, both from an initial questionnaire and from a follow-up workshop and second questionnaire helped generate and identify issues that concerned the community and suggest ideas for policies.
- 1.20. Further evidence is contained in the **Housing Needs Survey** (an appendix in the Scoping Report) that was undertaken by Wiltshire Council and the **Site Selection Report** (SSR). The latter draws on the SHELAA and HNS as well as inputs from the community. Wiltshire Council provided advice through their Link Officer as well as via the HRA and SEA Screening process.
- 1.21. The Consultation Statement, in addition to describing what community engagement was carried out, also shows how these inputs - the wishes of the community - led to policy choices.
- 1.22. Both types of evidence – objective research and more subjective opinion - fed into final creation of Vision, Objectives and Policies and how that happened is described in this document – the NDP itself. A bibliography of source material is given as Appendix 1.



2. Portrait of West Ashton

- 2.1. This Section provides a summary of the physical and social context of West Ashton with an overview of the environment and development constraints in the designated Neighbourhood Area. These contextual factors and issues are further explained within the accompanying Scoping Report.

Landscape Setting

- 2.2. West Ashton is a small village, located some 2 miles (3.2km) south-east of Trowbridge, one of the 'Principal Settlements' of Wiltshire. It is sited on 'rolling clay lowland', a rural landscape which comprises an undulating topography, a mixture of field sizes bounded by hedges, remnant single specimen landscape trees and a generally scattered settlement pattern linked by rural lanes and footpaths. One of the most dramatic features in the landscape is the A350 – which cuts across the Parish on a broadly east-west line. For much of its length however this is well screened by hedges, trees and the up-and-down nature of the ground.
- 2.3. The parish has a number of scattered farms and hamlets including Dunge, East Town, Heath Hill and Rood Ashton; however, the main village is located on a ridge above the Biss Valley. From the village edge and certainly from the cross roads the West Ashton Road and A350 there is a wide view down and across the plain, with the built form of Trowbridge in the far distance and the 400kv Overhead Transmission Line route running south west to north east.
- 2.4. The greatest intrusion into the space between the parish and built-up Trowbridge will be the proposed Ashton Park Urban Extension, together with associated road improvements to the A350. Nevertheless, a belt of land will remain. While not of high landscape value it will still contain traditional rural elements such as woods and fields. There is a strong desire by the community to preserve what will remain.
- 2.5. Landscape is also important because it forms the rural setting of West Ashton as a village, distinct from the urban form of Trowbridge. The community sees itself as completely distinct from Trowbridge and wishes to retain this by clear landscape demarcation. The remaining rural land following completion of Ashton Park will provide a rural setting for the village of West Ashton and it also functions as a separator, preventing coalescence and maintaining separate character. The Wiltshire Core Strategy Paragraph 5.150 invites the neighbourhood plan team to consider this issue.

Land and Soil

- 2.6. Soils to the east of the A350 are generally better than those to the west, which are mainly Grade 3. Nevertheless, the green fields around the village are much valued by local farmers, with land rarely appearing on the market. Within and around the main village there is very little brownfield land available for development.

Heritage

- 2.7. The main village of West Ashton is a chiefly linear form, clinging to Bratton Road, east of Yarnbrook Road (the A350). The origins of its present buildings are relatively recent, it having just eight listed buildings. The Church of St John the Evangelist being constructed in 1846.



An earlier mediaeval settlement once existed but this was forcibly moved during the early 19th Century to construct the manor house 'Rood Ashton House' and replaced with the parkland of which isolated specimen trees remain.

Water and Flooding

- 2.8. The West Ashton NDP has been informed by the Wiltshire Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) published 2019 and the UK Climate Projections (2018). The largest body of water in the Parish is Stourton Water. There are also a number of smaller ponds. The River Biss abuts the north-western boundary. For most of the parish, fluvial flood risk is low being in flood zone 1. Only two areas have higher risk; to the north a swathe of flood zone 3a runs from Stourton Water westwards to Blackball Bridge. The cause of this tendency to flood is a tiny stream – a minor tributary of the Biss. To the west, the Biss itself, bordering the parish, is prone to flood and is also within flood zone 3a. In the Parish, this risk is present in the fields roughly from Lower Biss Farm (to the west of the West Ashton Road), north to just west of Blackball Hatch. In neither of these areas are many properties at risk. There are various linear features of surface water flooding within the parish. The most notable is on Bratton Road which is largely within a medium surface water flood risk extending from East Town Road north west to the A350 and reflects the topography of the land.



Biodiversity

- 2.9. As a rural parish, there is a substantial biodiversity resource in West Ashton. The NDP was fully screened under EU Regulations. In terms of what the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) identifies as 'Priority Habitats' present. These include ancient woodland, hedgerows, rivers and standing water, farmland habitat and urban habitat.
- 2.10. The parish is a roosting and foraging area for bats (including the rare Bechstein's Bat) from the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Special Area for Conservation (SAC), a Natura 2000 site. The issue of the bats has become a major constraint on development near Trowbridge. The Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD (TBMS) adopted February 2020 includes a 'bat consultation area' which covers part of the parish of West Ashton. Development has the potential to affect the bats in various ways, for example in terms of disturbance from human recreation and lighting.



2.11. Additionally, the TBMS creates a series of zones of varying levels of restriction on new development. (See Appendix 7a in CS). On advice from Wiltshire Council (see SSR), this issue has effectively prevented allocation of two identified sites, limiting new housing to infill development as permitted through WCS policy CP 1 and 2, and leaving affordable housing to be delivered through the Ashton Park scheme. The NDP Steering group also decided to create a bespoke bat protection policy. In terms of overall issues and problems for biodiversity:

- New housing and employment development will increase pressure on all habitats including the SAC – although good design and mitigation can alleviate this to a degree.
- Neglect or lack of management and investment will harm hedgerows
- Farming can lead to nitrate and other run-off into water courses.
- Potential impacts on bats have implications for both location and scale of development locally.



Air Quality and Environmental Pollution

2.12. West Ashton is well clear of traffic related pollution from Trowbridge but may suffer marginally from traffic congestion on the A350 which runs through the Parish. This may be improved by the new road proposed as part of the Ashton Park development which may move traffic further from the main village. There are no major sources of air or water pollution in the parish, with the low-risk exception of agriculture.

Climate Change

2.13. West Ashton is going to suffer the consequences of climate change along with everyone else. These include:

- Flash flooding of roads and low-lying ground;
- Possible soil erosion;
- Increased risk of injuries due to increased number of storms;



- Reduced risk of hypothermia for the elderly;
- Increased incidence of heat related illnesses;
- Potentially greater risk of fires – especially in woodland;
- Increased incidence of illnesses related to sunlight (e.g. skin cancer, cataracts); and
- Increased incidence of insect borne diseases.

Population and Housing

- 2.14. Trowbridge Community Area has a population density of 996 persons per square kilometre, 123 more persons per square kilometre than in 2001. The population density in West Ashton is of course, much lower. In the 2011 census the population of West Ashton was 737. This will have reduced somewhat following the loss of 104 properties to Trowbridge following the Boundary review which came into effect on 1st April 2017. The average age of people in West Ashton is 44 and Life expectancy is 83.5 yrs. for females and 79.5 yrs. for males. The number of persons of a retirement age in the Community Area is projected to rise by 35% from 9370 (2016) to 12,070 in 2026. However, the population of West Ashton parish may experience the opposite due to the large number of family homes being provided by the Ashton Park strategic site.
- 2.15. The major element of outward growth of Trowbridge of relevance to West Ashton is the major south-easterly urban extension of Trowbridge known as Ashton Park. This is a substantial development of up to 2,500 homes, employment uses, two schools and a small community centre with shops and is part located within the Parish. It is a Strategic Site in the Wiltshire Core Strategy and represents a complete urban extension of the principal settlement of Trowbridge under WCS Policy CP29. The strategic allocation will be brought forward through a master planning process agreed between the community, local planning authority and the developer and should deliver any requirements as set out in the development templates as shown by WCS Appendix A. An application for outline planning permission benefits from a Wiltshire Council resolution to approve subject to satisfactory completion of a legal agreement ('S106 agreement'), (reference 15/04736/OUT). There have been delays in bringing forward the urban extension meaning not all 2,500 homes at Ashton Park will be completed by 2026. This has resulted in a choice of additional sites within the WHSAP, although none are within West Ashton Parish.
- 2.16. In addition to the strategic sites, the WCS identifies an indicative requirement for 165 new homes across the entire community area remainder to 2026. That requirement had been met by 2015. Given that there is no need for additional homes to meet strategic needs, there is no over-riding policy requirement for the West Ashton NDP to allocate housing sites. The policy need would in any case have been relatively small given the position of West Ashton in the Settlement Hierarchy established in Policies CP1 and CP2. This position does not anticipate housing development in the parish other than to meet local needs.
- 2.17. The Housing Needs Survey carried out by Wiltshire Council in March 2017 (See Appendix in accompanying Scoping Report) showed a relatively low level of affordable housing need. The parish does not suffer from a high incidence of deprivation. Nevertheless, there is some local need and the NDP does respond to this in a positive way, although in practice this is more likely to be met through the Ashton Park strategic scheme which is partly located within the



parish. Section 8 below explains the housing site allocation process and a sustainable housing policy (Policy 7) encourages self- build homes. The latter are substantially cheaper to create than houses built by developers and provide an additional route to achieving housing affordable by more people.



Health and Wellbeing

- 2.18. Trowbridge Community Area has the highest morbidity rate for cancer (rank 20 out of 20 community areas). Ranked 19 out of 20 for alcohol-related admissions to hospital and 18 out of 20 for cardiovascular disease. It is the least active CA in Wiltshire. 57.1% of people in the Trowbridge Community Area would like to do more physical exercise. This is significantly higher than the Wiltshire average of 48.8%.

Education

- 2.19. Current pre-school provision includes 10 pre-school / nurseries within 2 miles, offering free entitlement of up to 15 hours per week for 2, 3 and 4-year olds but none in West Ashton. Future housing development and the expansion of Free Entitlement from 15 hours to 30 hours in 2017 will mean that more Early Years provision will be needed.
- 2.20. In terms of primary education, the pressure on school places since 2009 has been high and will continue so for the next 7 years as the peak 2005 to 2011 birth years feed through. West Ashton Primary School has 76 pupils currently on roll. The school was placed in special measures due to poor Ofsted results in early 2016. As part of the development of Paxcroft Mead, the Mead Community Primary School opened in September 2001. Castle Mead School, is a recent new school in addition to The Mead and has 210 places.
- 2.21. There has never been a secondary school facility within the Parish. Currently, the nearest secondary schools are located to the east side of Trowbridge, creating considerable cross-town traffic and congestion. The expected provision of a secondary school in the West Ashton area (out of the village - part of the Ashton Park scheme) will alleviate this problem but will give rise to more traffic locally overall.



- 2.22. In respect of higher and adult education, Wiltshire Collage has a campus nearby in Trowbridge and there is an adult education centre in Trowbridge based at County Hall and managed by Wiltshire Council.



Economy and Employment

- 2.23. West Ashton has a high percentage of its population in employment and very low unemployment. Of those in employment most commute in and out of the village. In 2011 only 8 were employed in agriculture. There is no dominant employment sector, but most residents are in professional, managerial or other similar work. Only 13% were self-employed. There are few businesses operating in the parish. It would be possible to expand tourism and micro-businesses.
- 2.24. The creation of 15 hectares of employment land as part of Ashton Park is interesting as this could clearly reduce the need to travel far for work. However, it would be even better from a sustainability point of view if foot, cycle and bus transport were to have good links provided from West Ashton village to the new site.

Transport and Infrastructure

- 2.25. West Ashton is a small village with limited local transport options. However, if the few miles separating the village from Trowbridge or Westbury can be overcome, then residents do have access to a good rail service – providing they can catch the bus or drive to the stations in the towns. There is no real bus service, other than what amounts to a bookable taxi service under the Connect 2 Wiltshire scheme.
- 2.26. The village has a network of footpaths and bridleways – see map in Appendix 7. However, this network could do with extending and upgrading. For example, there is only an indirect connection to Yarnbrook (where there is a shop), and none completely to Trowbridge. Cycling, though enjoyed, has its dangers on present roads, and proper cycle-paths would therefore be welcome. The physical condition of some of the existing footpaths also needs improvement. The implementation of the master plan for the Ashton Park Strategically Important site will play an important role in improving connectivity. This includes various ‘primary on and off street foot/cycle route’ including the downgrading of the A350 that will provide an opportunity for a higher quality cycle / foot route south west towards Yarnbrook. In addition a new designated footway is proposed running parallel to West Ashton Road between the Leap Gate roundabout and the existing West Ashton crossroads.



2.27. Other transport issues facing West Ashton are speeding vehicles in Bratton Road, the number of HGV vehicles passing through the village, and inappropriate parking around the village school, causing congestion at peak periods. The A350 to the west of the village is part of the Wiltshire Council's Strategic Road Network and is a source of some frustration due to congestion and traffic fumes. The road is due to be upgraded during the Ashton Park scheme.



Services and Facilities

- 2.28. In a sense, West Ashton's provision of services has suffered due to its proximity to Trowbridge, where much is located. Many people also use the services at other towns like Westbury and Melksham. While the Village Hall does provide a centre, facilities are limited.
- 2.29. The nearest Doctor's Surgery and Post Office are about 2.2 miles away. There are no shopping facilities in the village itself; the nearest pub is a mile distant – with poor access except by car. There is no cycle-path to link West Ashton to the main facilities and services. The recreation area at Shepherds' Drove however is a much-used asset.





3. Vision and Objectives

Developing the Plan

- 3.1. An Initial Questionnaire was designed by the Steering Group and hand delivered to all the houses in the Parish in June 2016. The results are discussed in detail in the analysis given as Appendix 2 of the Consultation Statement.
- 3.2. The Questionnaire revealed a number of themes focusing on why respondents enjoy living in West Ashton and valued the rural nature of the village, including its buildings and setting. Residents also value a sense of community and the community facilities such as the school, children's playing areas and village hall, however there was a strong desire for better facilities within the village. Respondents also cared for the natural environment and demonstrated an awareness of renewable energy. Attitudes were mixed towards new development. Transport issues were mentioned often – ranging from tackling speeding and congestion to improving public transport and foot / cycle paths.
- 3.3. A follow-up Workshop was then held in October 2016 which broadly confirmed similar views and priorities to those expressed in the Questionnaire.
- 3.4. These themes were taken forward into indications for a draft vision and objectives leading towards the development of possible policies, including the possible allocation of land for housing. Continued community engagement then focused on the production of a draft Site Selection Report that identified two possible sites.
- 3.5. There followed drop-in events in February 2018 and responses highlighting a range of site-focused replies and general comments concerning these proposals. It is important to note that the support for allocating the sites was very negligible and a range of significant issues were identified by respondents, including questioning the need for the homes mindful that the WCS does not require any residual development and the likelihood that the small need for 5 affordable homes would be met at the Ashton Park Strategically Important Site.
- 3.6. Consultation also included early engagement with Wiltshire Council. This highlighted problematic issues in terms of any proposals for the allocation of greenfield land for housing and the redevelopment of Larkrise Farm for economic uses due to the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Special Area for Conservation (SAC). The Steering Group were mindful of the impacts and the need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) so a decision was taken in early 2019 to delete any proposal to allocate specific sites for housing or to include a specific policy relating to Larkrise Farm.



NDP Vision

- 3.7. The consultation with the community has led to the development of the following vision for the Parish for the period to 2026.

West Ashton will remain a largely rural parish, absorbing a well-screened and designed Ashton-Park urban extension into a landscape that remains predominantly green and still retaining fine, open views. The main village will still be a friendly welcoming community with its own separate identity from Trowbridge.

However, while maintaining and if possible enhancing the best of the village; its heritage, school, church, nature habitats, and frequent social events, West Ashton will gain improved local facilities including recreation for younger people. Sustainable transport links to Trowbridge and to shops, schools and employment opportunities in Ashton Park will be created or enhanced to reduce the need to travel by car and improve access. Community action such as Community Speed watch will help tackle speeding vehicles and the routing of HGV's. Broadband connections will be improved to facilitate working from home.

Development in the main village will be limited to small scale infilling sufficient to meet local needs. While being generally in keeping with the scale and materials used in existing buildings, any new houses should feature innovative design to reduce environmental impacts. One-off self-build homes of up to 3 bedrooms on appropriate sites will be encouraged.

Objectives

- 3.8. The Vision and the feedback from the community were incorporated into a set of Objectives for the Neighbourhood Development Plan. These state what the NDP is aiming to achieve through its overall strategy and policies.
- 1) To maintain the rural setting of the Parish, especially around the main village of West Ashton and the hamlets of Dunge, East Town, Heath Hill and Rood Ashton but also in terms of far-reaching views towards Trowbridge.
 - 2) To improve sustainable transport links in the parish, especially those to Trowbridge, Westbury & Melksham.
 - 3) To improve local facilities including those for recreation, a local shop and / or Post Office.
 - 4) To protect valued Local Green Space.



- 5) To encourage limited housing growth for local needs via modest scale development such as infill, especially self-build and housing of a high environmental standard.
 - 6) To use good design to protect heritage, improve local habitats, preserve rural character that makes West Ashton special and encourage sustainable buildings.
 - 7) To tackle local highway issues such as speeding and non-farm HGV traffic.
 - 8) To conserve and enhance local nature and their habitats including bats.
 - 9) To protect and enhance the Village Hall and Church.
 - 10) To tackle climate change and its effects through design and maintenance of drainage.
- 3.9. The Objectives reflect the informed views of local people and are likely to help deliver sustainable development. Where matters do not fall within the sphere of land-use planning, they will be taken forward through community actions such as lobbying, Community Speed Watch and activities coordinated by the parish council in conjunction with other key stakeholders such as the Church and village school as appropriate. These are set out in Section 5 below.



4. NDP Policies

Landscape Setting of West Ashton

- 4.1. West Ashton is located within the Trowbridge Rolling Clay Lowland Landscape Character Area. This is a gently undulating, largely rural area of mixed arable and pasture land. Medium to large rectangular fields are bounded by thick hedgerows with mature hedgerow trees. Combined with scattered woodland blocks (some ancient) and rich riparian vegetation along the stream lines, the hedgerows make this a semi-enclosed landscape allowing intermittent views to the steep scarp of the Chalk uplands. Settlement is sparse to the east of the area with scattered nucleated and linear villages and farmsteads. To the west there is more settlement including the southern part of Trowbridge with some large-scale industrial buildings and modern housing estates tending to extend along roads south towards North Bradley, Southwick and Westbury. This western section of the area, which also contains the A350 trunk road and a concentration of railway lines, is considerably less rural and tranquil than the east of the area.
- 4.2. Trowbridge is a Principal Settlement in Wiltshire and WCS Policy CP29 seeks to grow Trowbridge to strengthen its role and deliver improved infrastructure and facilities in the town. The impact of growth will change the surrounding landscape and this impact is recognised as a specific issue to be addressed in planning for the Trowbridge Community Area, stating:

'It is recognised that the villages surrounding Trowbridge, particularly Hilperton, Southwick, North Bradley and West Ashton, have separate and distinct identities as villages. Open countryside should be maintained to protect the character and identity of these villages as separate communities. The local communities may wish to consider this matter in more detail in any future community-led neighbourhood planning'
- 4.3. The community has considered this and its wish is to preserve both: a physical separation of West Ashton village from Trowbridge; and a rural landscape setting that helps define West Ashton as a rural village of distinct and separate character from the suburban form of the Trowbridge edge.
- 4.4. Any attempt to successfully do so however has to take account of the Ashton Park Urban Extension. This will be a significant intrusion into the Biss Valley and major change in the present open, rural view enjoyed from West Ashton and on the approaches to the village from Trowbridge. Additionally, the Ashton Park scheme is accompanied by proposals for revisions to the A350. The revised road layout will also be a significant new element in the landscape between West Ashton and the Ashton Park scheme and there is an aspiration for enhancement of the area around the road ends when it is blocked off and the new A350 moved further south and west.
- 4.5. The community has explored this issue through a Landscape and Visual Setting Analysis Report. This concluded that:



- West Ashton occupies an elevated position with its north-western edge largely defined by the A350 road corridor. It enjoys panoramic view towards Trowbridge.
- The study area including the landscape gap is a well-defined slice of countryside
- The landscape is not of especially high quality but does include an area of small-medium sized fields along the River Biss corridor - part of a traditional field pattern, hedgerows, trees and Biss Wood also form important rural features in the landscape. There will remain areas of relative tranquillity even after the Ashton park scheme is constructed. However, the landscape separation between what will then be the outward edge of Trowbridge and West Ashton will be reduced to as little as 400-600 metres.
- The reduced landscape gap, while not of high quality will nevertheless still represents a meaningful rural landscape setting, helping to define the rural character of West Ashton. It will become even more important to retain as a result of the reduction in size.
- The remaining gap will retain the desirable planning function of separating West Ashton from Trowbridge, retaining its distinctiveness and preventing coalescence. Traditionally West Ashton has always been more remote than other outlying villages such as North Bradley or Hilperton.
- Despite the Landscape and Visual Assessments and Environmental Assessment carried out in relation to the Ashton Park development, residents of West Ashton still have concerns about the visual impact of the development. The Landscape Gap is also multi-functional and works on a number of levels including providing land for agriculture, green infrastructure, access, visual amenity and recreation. It is recognised that the provision of significant green infrastructure offers important recreational, health and landscape benefits to local communities as well as potentially valuable habitat and biodiversity benefits.
- The Ashton Park development proposes a buffer zone along its southern edge set back from the river corridor providing opportunities for further mitigation / enhancement along the corridor. This is welcome.
- The relief road proposals show proposed native structure planting associated with the proposed route itself, however, additional and more substantial copse / woodland planting on adjoining land should be considered to achieve effective visual mitigation. A significant part of the Study Area was covered in woodland until post World War II (Carter's Wood'). The scale of larger blocks of woodland planting would be appropriate in terms of landscape character (Biss Wood, Green Lane Wood etc).
- Similarly, there are some obvious potential benefits to the community associated with the relief road as a result of the A350 diversion. A section north of the existing junction with West Ashton Road would be broken out and landscaped to create what could be a 'rural lane' with potential pedestrian / cycle access.
- Providing some important factors are taken into consideration (covered in Section 5 of the Report) the retention of a landscape gap, together with the relief road



proposals and edge of development treatment proposed for the West Ashton Scheme could result in a satisfactory outcome; accommodating necessary development while conserving the rural character of West Ashton and its setting.

- 4.6. The study area of the Landscape and Visual Setting Analysis Report followed logically the local landscape cues on the ground rather than the administrative boundary of the parish (the NDP Area). This results in a study area that extends outside and beyond the NDP's area, including North Bradley and Southwick parishes. Since NDP policies can only apply within the plan area however, Figure 2 below differentiates between the actual area covered by the policy (entirely within the parish / NP area) and the larger extent of the study area.

Policy 1a – Landscape Setting Gap

The area shown on Figure 2 is designated as the West Ashton Landscape Setting Gap. “The purpose of the designation is to protect the landscape setting of West Ashton village (the open areas between the village and the Ashton Park Urban Extension which make up the visual separation between these two locations), to prevent coalescence between Trowbridge and West Ashton village and to preserve a separate identity for the village. This area will be maintained and where possible also enhanced for biodiversity and recreation in accordance with the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD. No development will be permitted in the West Ashton Landscape Setting Gap unless it is in accordance with policies in the development plan.

Where development is permitted, it must ensure that the functions, openness and landscape value of the Landscape Setting Gap is not harmed.

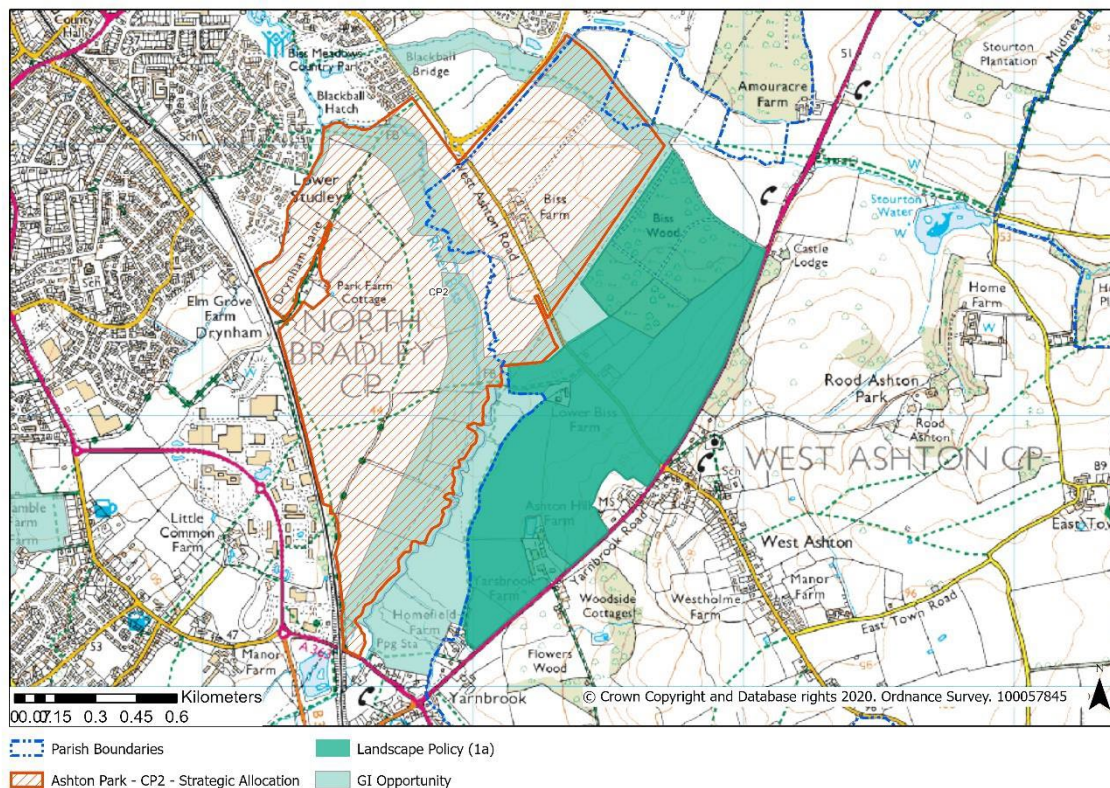
Any development must result in a net gain for biodiversity.

Supports NDP Objectives 1 and 6

The following development plan policies support: WCS Policies CP2: ‘Delivery Strategy – Strategically Important Sites’; CP29: ‘Trowbridge Community Area’; CP50 ‘Biodiversity and Geodiversity’; CP51 ‘Landscape’.



Figure 2 - Extent of the Policy 1a and Policy 1b Landscape Setting Gap designation



4.7. Views from the east of the A350 in West Ashton are characterized by open land between the site of the Ashton Park Scheme and the A350. The openness of this space, which is defined at Figure 2 above, is essential in order to preserve the separate character and identity of West Ashton as set out in WCS Paragraph 5.150. The buildings of Larkrise Farm can just be seen in the mid-ground.



View from the A350 looking west towards Ashton Park



- 4.8. The Ashton Park scheme will be very large, and will have a significant effect on West Ashton, due to the uninterrupted views provide by the elevated position of the village and openness of the landscape. The policy seeks to accommodate the strategic site at Ashton Park, including its relief road, but ensure that this major development takes account of the needs and wishes of the West Ashton community and respects the legitimate planning aim of preserving distinctiveness and local character, both by retaining a rural setting (albeit a reduced one) and by preserving a physical gap to prevent coalescence. No detailed landscaping scheme for Ashton Park has been submitted. The current illustrative master plan and accompanying parameter plans do not provide sufficient detail to address the objectives (i.e. planting plans), however the master plan offers scope to accord with Policy 1b due to the presence of ‘major open space and nature park extension’, ‘100m ecological buffer’ and ‘informal recreation / landscaping’ along the eastern boundary of the development parcels.
- 4.9. The NDP therefore seeks to reduce adverse impacts on West Ashton in terms of visual impact, damage to rural views, preservation of biodiversity (including the rare (and protected) Bechstein’s Bat) and light pollution at night. The policy is informed by a professional landscape report and takes forward and adds detail to existing Core Strategy Policy, especially paragraph 5.150 of Core Policy 29. It responds to NPPF paragraph 170 in seeking to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, it reflects NDP Objectives 1 and 8 and is likely to help take forward the Vision of the Neighbourhood Plan. Reference should also be made to Policy 8.



Policy 1b – Landscape Setting of Ashton Park

Detailed schemes for the development of Ashton Park should demonstrate that the matters identified in Section 5 of the Landscape and Visual Setting Analysis Report have been positively responded to, in particular:

- Impact of the proposals on West Ashton Village, especially the preservation of the elevated views from the village including mitigation of the visual impact of roofs (for example by choosing colours that blend with the surrounding countryside). This is particularly relevant for the larger buildings of the proposed employment elements of any scheme. Landscape enhancement and appropriate tree planting should be considered as part of associated proposals to modify the A350, especially at the point where the new junction is formed to achieve successful integration and minimise visual impact.
- Proposed development adjoining the Ashton Park buffer zone (defined as Major Open Space / Nature Park Extension' on the Ashton Park master plan A.0223_77- 01 REV: AC) should be of a lower density and address the proposed Landscape Gap in a positive way with appropriate landscape.
- Building design / height / scale must be carefully considered especially in respect of the proposed Employment area) to minimise its visual intrusion
- Proposals need to be carefully considered to achieve the successful integration of the highway works to minimize visual impact and disturbance.

Supports NDP Objectives 1 and 6

The following development plan policies support: WCS Policies CP2: 'Delivery Strategy – Strategically Important Sites'; CP29: 'Trowbridge Community Area'; CP50 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity'; CP51 'Landscape'; CP57 'Ensuring High Quality Design and Place Shaping'

Sustainable Transport

- 4.10. West Ashton has a reasonable network of footpaths, but no foot or cycle path links to Trowbridge. Regular timetabled bus services are infrequent. There are few facilities and no shops or post office in the village, so improvements in sustainable transport links to Trowbridge would greatly help to reduce dependence of the car for local journeys especially frequent trips to and from town where there are a range of sustainable transport choices.
- 4.11. The creation of the mixed-use development at Ashton Park opens up good employment opportunities for residents of West Ashton. However, unless sustainable transport links, including a crossing over or under the A350 are provided, then many work journeys will be made by car, which, considering that these will be short trips will result in poor fuel consumption and higher emissions.



- 4.12. Appendix A of the WCS requires the Ashton Park development to incorporate transport infrastructure in accordance with the Trowbridge Transport Strategy. One of the aims of this strategy is delivering local employment opportunities which can be accessed by sustainable modes.
- 4.13. West Ashton residents already rely heavily on the car for many short journeys. While nearby employment in the Ashton Park development would no doubt appeal to some residents (the community engagement having suggested that more local employment was wanted) this would exacerbate existing unsustainable travel patterns unless better sustainable links were provided. The requirement is in line with Government Policy, the WCS and Trowbridge Transport Strategy. The need to protect the local bats and the habitat of the SAC was highlighted by the HRA for the emerging WHSAP and in the emerging Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy. Protection of biodiversity is a key aim of the NPPF (see especially paragraphs 174, 176), as is the expansion of sustainable transport (e.g. paragraphs 102, 103 and especially 104 (d)).

Policy 2 – Sustainable Transport

The Ashton Park development insofar as it affects the Plan area, should take every available opportunity to deliver sustainable transport connections, whether by foot, cycle or bus from the employment and residential facilities in the scheme to both Trowbridge and West Ashton village. This must include a safe and direct means of crossing the A350. All footpaths and crossings must consider the matter of lighting carefully. Low level lighting, in accordance with the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD, should be employed where appropriate. Developers or those responsible for providing paths, crossings and other elements of sustainable transport in the parish are encouraged to consult directly with the county ecologist while working up designs for schemes.

Supports NDP Objectives 2, 8 and 10

The following development plan policies support: WCS Policies CP2: 'Delivery Strategy – Strategically Important Sites'; CP3: 'Infrastructure Requirements'; CP29: 'Trowbridge Community Area'; CP60 'Sustainable Transport'; CP61 'Transport and Development'; CP63 'Transport Strategies'; CP66 'Strategic Transport Network'.

Design

- 4.14. The National Design Guide² (NDG) published 2019 sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. The NDG indicates that context and local identity are important when considering new development. Concerning the nature, appearance and functionality of development, WCS Policy CP57 aims to improve design quality of new development.
- 4.15. West Ashton lacks a strong architectural character and appearance, whereby there is no designated conservation area within the village. The character of the village is one of buildings which are generally of smaller scale and appropriate in a rural setting, which is very distinct from the Trowbridge urban area. Local features such as hedgerows and

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>



Cornbrash stone walls are valued, as are the remaining larger trees. These features also contribute to local urban habitat.

- 4.16. Historic buildings are treasured by the community, especially the Grade II Listed Church of St John the Evangelist and the West Ashton CofE Primary School. However, non-listed but important historic buildings deserve special consideration due to their importance as landmarks in establishing local identity and in improving overall design quality and local character.



- 4.17. While landscape and impact on neighbours are important considerations, there is an interest in the village in exploring micro-generation of renewable energy. This policy attempts to provide clarity for developers, and ensure that renewables are considered in the design of schemes where possible in order to raise the profile of renewables locally over that achieved by the WCS and indicate to developers that the community values appropriate renewables and would like to see them in developments.



Policy 3 – Design

- a) All new development should be appropriate in scale and form to ensure it respects both the rural setting of the village and its immediate local context.
- b) All new development must consider the principles of the National Design Guide and any local design guidance or any successor documents and reflect and where possible enhance the rural character of West Ashton.
- c) Whilst recognising and respecting the heritage of the village, innovative house designs which feature high levels of sustainability, low environmental impact and renewable energy will be supported subject to compliance with other development plan policies.
- d) Developments which incorporate the small-scale generation of renewable energy, either individually or as a group scheme will be considered favourably subject to other policies of the plan.
- e) Designs for any development involving renewable energy must seek to minimise negative impacts on neighbouring properties, and the wider landscape setting.
- f) Development must demonstrate how it links into and supports existing networks of sustainable transport.
- g) All new development should incorporate trees and hedgerows as integral elements of the design proposals and as boundary treatments where appropriate.

Supports NDP Objectives 1, 6, 8, 9 and 10

The following development plan policies support: WCS Policies CP2: 'Delivery Strategy – Strategically Important Sites'; CP3: 'Infrastructure Requirements'; CP29: 'Trowbridge Community Area'; CP41 'Sustainable Construction and Low-carbon Energy'; CP51: 'Landscape'; CP57 'Ensure High Quality Design and Place Shaping'; CP58: 'Ensuring the Conservation of the Historic Environment'.

Economy

- 4.18. Residents have long depended on Trowbridge as the main source of employment and facilities. The presence of a further 15 hectares of employment land at Ashton Park would be welcome, subject to improvement in the foot and cycle path network to connect West Ashton, including a means of crossing the A350 as achieved in Policy 2 above.
- 4.19. In terms of employment, there are no formal sites allocated in West Ashton by the WCS. However, the WCS Policies 34, 38, 39, 40 and 48 already provide some flexibility and are broadly supportive of expanding tourism, local business expansion, farm diversification, rural businesses and improving the retail offer of villages.
- 4.20. Community engagement expressed a desire for more local employment and also for a shop / post office/ public house or similar facility. This would assist with social cohesion and reduce the need to travel for residents and would enhance the vitality of this rural community. WCS Policy CP48 seeks to promote only new shops in villages where they are small in scale and



would not threaten the viability of nearby centres, however the community consider a new public house would also support rural life.

- 4.21. This policy seeks to facilitate new community facilities of these types but there is limited scope for new businesses to locate within the parish. A more realistic way of generating sustainable local employment would be for villagers to obtain work in the new facilities in Ashton Park, but to travel the short distance there by sustainable transport. Improvement to the sustainable transport network is the subject of a separate policy.

Policy 4 – Economy

Proposals for a village shop, post office and or public house will be supported within the built-up area of the village, either as conversion or as new-build, where they are small in scale, provide adequate space for facilities and parking and do not adversely affect neighbouring amenities in terms of overlooking, noise and nuisance. This policy should be read carefully in conjunction with Policy 8.

Supports NDP Objectives 2 and 3

The following development plan policies support: WCS Policies CP2: 'Delivery Strategy – Strategically Important Sites'; CP3: 'Infrastructure Requirements'; CP29: 'Trowbridge Community Area'; CP48: 'Supporting Rural Life'; CP49: 'Protection of Rural Services and Community Facilities'.

Local Green Space

- 4.22. Paragraph 99 of the NPPF allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them as Local Green Space. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period. The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

(a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

(b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and

(c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

- 4.23. There was no formal recreation area in the village until the redevelopment of Manor Farm (now Shepherds Drove housing estate), which enabled that provision as a planning obligation using a Section 106 legal agreement. The agreement also included a sum of money to cover the cost of maintaining the site for the next 25 years. The ownership of the Recreation Area was registered to the Parish Council by the Land Registry in 2012.
- 4.24. When the site was taken over by the Parish Council it was still in a very basic condition and contained only minimal low-level play equipment which had been installed by the developer. Two community events were organized to carry out work on the site - one to remove the



large number of stones from the surface, and the other to plant tree saplings around the perimeter. These events also provided the ideal opportunity to introduce the recreation area to the local community and seek their views on how it should be enhanced. The shape of the site lent itself to being informally divided into two sections, one half containing children's play equipment, and the other half left just as grass, to encourage creative play, and offer space for family picnics etc.

- 4.25. Following further consultation with the village school and local children, some of the maintenance money was then used by the Parish Council to re-configure the existing play equipment, and install four new items – climbing wall, rotating rocker, slide/climbing unit and 'witches hat' roundabout. Since then new gates and a covered waste bin have been installed, and improvements made to the boundary fencing. Recently, following requests from the local community a double swing unit has also been installed. Whilst there are no specific plans, the Parish Council continues to monitor the recreation area and make improvements where they are felt to be beneficial.
- 4.26. The Recreation Area has provided an invaluable green space within the village for the whole community to access and enjoy – meeting criteria (a). It provides a safe enclosed environment for children to play in, with the provision of stimulating and varied play equipment – meeting criteria (b). It is well used by the families from the adjacent Shepherds Drove housing estate, as well as those living throughout the village. This is a special place for the community, located close to the people of all ages it serves – meeting criteria (a). The area is compact and does not include a large tract of land – meeting criteria (c).
- 4.27. Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts. Amongst other things, the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is regarded as inappropriate development. One of a number of exceptions set out in national policy to this, is the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, are not inappropriate development; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Local Green Space and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

Policy 5 – Local Green Space

The area designated as Local Green Space (identified on the map, Figure 3, is Recreation Area (rear of Shepherds Drove)

Development in the designated Local Greenspace will be consistent with national policy for Green Belts.

Supports NDP Objectives 3 and 4

The following development plan policies support: WCS Policies CP51 'Landscape'; CP52 'Green Infrastructure'



Figure 3 – Extent of the Local Green Space designation



Sustainable Housing

- 4.28. In accordance with the adopted Core Strategy, the principle of infill development is supported within the built-up area of the village of West Ashton, a Small Village in the settlement hierarchy. There is no settlement boundary at West Ashton and appropriate infill development will be assessed on a case-by-case basis having regard to the criteria in Policy CP2, which is not restated. Outside of the built-up area, land is treated as open countryside and there are already strict controls over new housing as defined within the Core Strategy and paragraph 79 of the NPPF. Locating development within the built-up area of West Ashton accords with the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD.
- 4.29. Community engagement indicated an interest in reducing use of fossil fuels and encouraging sustainable building design in the parish. There was also a willingness to provide limited housing for modest development in accordance with the WCS and, if possible, to make this more affordable to those wishing to purchase their home.
- 4.30. In terms of the need for affordable housing, as defined by the NPPF, the local needs for at least 5 affordable homes which were identified within the Housing Needs Survey published March 2017 (based on data obtained Autumn 2016) will be delivered in the locality as part of the Ashton Park development, which is partly within the parish (see Appendix 3). This urban extension will deliver a significant number of affordable homes and as a result, no additional allocations are to be made in the Neighbourhood Plan.



- 4.31. The community survey and evidence base indicate there is a clear need for smaller houses (3 bedrooms or less). The NDP therefore supports infill windfall sites within the built-up area of West Ashton village which respond to this local need, while complying with other policies of the development plan. Great weight will therefore be afforded to the benefit of using suitable sites within the settlement for 1 to 3 bedroom homes when applying paragraph 68(c) of the NPPF.
- 4.32. One way that market housing can be more affordable is via one-off self-build – something that is popular in parts of Europe, such as Germany, Finland and Scandinavia. Even in the UK the industry is worth £3.6 Billion a year. Self-build homes can be significantly cheaper than buying ‘off the peg’, and research quoted by the Government³ suggests that one in two people would consider building their own home if they could. In 2010, around 13,800 self-build homes were completed – around the same as those turned out by all the volume house builders combined. Nevertheless, this is still a low level by international standards. Self-build or ‘Custom-build’ is part of the Government’s Housing Strategy to deliver more, better and more affordable homes and local authorities are encouraged in Planning Practice Guidance to create policies to facilitate this. The plan therefore encourages such projects within the built-up area of West Ashton when they are for owner-occupation and up to a maximum of 3 bedrooms. The intention is not to create ‘Grand Design’ mansions, but to provide an alternative path to help create smaller and affordable homes for local people who otherwise would not be able to get on the housing ladder.
- 4.33. All new housing in the Plan area will lead to recreational impacts on core bat roosts in woodlands to the south of Trowbridge in combination with other developments. Any development in the Plan area should refer to the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy (TBMS) that outlines the assessment process and mitigation strategy.

Policy 6a – Housing

Outside of the Ashton Park Strategically Important Allocation, all new residential development will be limited to infill within the built-up area of West Ashton village as defined by Core Policies 1 and 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and in accordance with the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy.

Planning applications for small-scale infill within the built-up area of West Ashton will be supported for new dwellings, including self-build homes subject to acceptable impacts on neighbouring amenity and compliance with other development plan policies.

Great weight will be afforded to the benefits of using suitable sites within the built-up area of West Ashton village for developments of 1-3 bedroom homes.

Supports NDP Objectives 5 and 8

The following development plan policies support: WCS Policies CP2: ‘Delivery Strategy – Strategically Important Sites’; CP3: ‘Infrastructure Requirements’; CP29: ‘Trowbridge Community Area’; CP50 ‘Biodiversity and Geodiversity’

³ Housing Strategy for England 2011



- 4.34. Paragraph 149 of the NPPF confirms that plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. New development should be planned for in ways that avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change and can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design. WCS Policy 41 encourages new development to incorporate design measures to reduce energy demand. Development will be well insulated and designed to take advantage of natural light and heat from the sun and use natural air movement for ventilation, whilst maximising cooling in the summer.
- 4.35. In Ashton Park, West Ashton village and the rest of the parish, there is scope for development to deliver locally significant amounts of renewable energy. This is implied in the requirement under the WCS for Ashton Park to include a Sustainable Energy Strategy under WCS Policy CP41 outlining the low-carbon strategy for the proposal.

Policy 6b – Renewable Energy

Proposals for new residential development should maximise opportunities for energy efficiency in terms of passive and active design approaches to sustainable development, including the installation of renewable energy that is designed to take account of the rural character and appearance of the area.

Supports NDP Objectives 5, 6, 8 and 10

The following development plan policies support: WCS Policies CP29: 'Trowbridge Community Area'; CP41 'Sustainable Construction and Low-carbon Energy'; CP50 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity'; CP51: 'Landscape'; CP57 'Ensure High Quality Design and Place Shaping';

Infrastructure Priorities

- 4.36. WCS Policy CP3 establishes the framework for development meeting infrastructure needs through planning obligations or the Wiltshire Community Infrastructure Levy. The purpose of this policy to add detail to higher level policy and provide certainty for residents and developers through the provision of a list of agreed local priorities for infrastructure investment. The items below were specifically requested by the local community and help deliver both the Vision and Objectives of the Plan. The Scheme at Ashton Park is expected to contribute to infrastructure that will benefit the whole parish (such as links from footpaths and cycle ways into the wider parish), although it is accepted that a proportion of infrastructure will serve the needs of Trowbridge also.



Policy 7 – Infrastructure Priorities

All new housing and employment development proposals in the area will be expected to contribute towards local infrastructure in proportion to their scale and in accordance with National and Wilshire Core Strategy policy. New infrastructure should also accord with the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD. Local priorities (not in order of importance) are:

- Foot and Cycle Path enhancement and upgrading. Especially connection to Trowbridge and safe and direct crossing of A350.
- Recreation equipment and facility improvement
- Bus service improvement including, but not limited to a new bus stop and shelter.
- Village car park / parking improvements
- Equipment for the village school
- Habitat enhancement including tree and hedgerow planting
- Maintenance of the village including trees, hedges, litter clearance, Village Church and Hall.

Care must be taken when creating new infrastructure not to impact adversely on the bats of the nearby SAC – for example through the effects of the lighting of footpaths or cycle ways.

Supports NDP Objectives 2, 3, 8 and 9

The following development plan policies support: WCS Policies CP2 'Delivery Strategy'; CP3 Infrastructure Requirements'; CP29: 'Trowbridge Community Area'

Bat Conservation

- 4.37. Woodland sites to the south east of Trowbridge support a breeding population of Bechstein bats, associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The network of significant roosts for the species of bat associated with the SAC includes sites that are not covered by any statutory designation, including the breeding colonies of Bechstein's bats associated with the Trowbridge woods. The landscape surrounding all significant roost sites is critical to maintain the populations. Foraging areas used by bats vary between species and throughout the year, and include a wide range of habitats which support their invertebrate prey. Suitable semi-natural habitats such as woodlands, mature hedgerows, grazed pasture, rough grassland, watercourses and wetlands closest to bat roosts are most likely to be important to the bat populations, particularly for juveniles; however some species are highly mobile and may forage several kilometres from their roosts on a regular basis.
- 4.38. All development will be required not to adversely affect this designation and to ensure that connectivity with the SAC is maintained. The Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy (TBMS) has been prepared and is a strategy for considering the impacts of development in the area on the SAC and sets out an approach for mitigation to avoid significant adverse impacts. Windfall sites have the potential to add to the cumulative pressures on the local bat populations. Greenfield development sites may contribute to both habitat and recreational



pressures while pressures from brownfield housing sites are most likely to be restricted to recreational pressures alone. Therefore, new sites, including those identified through an emerging NDP, must be catered for in the mitigation specified in the TBMS. Development of commercial, employment and other non-residential schemes may also be subject to bespoke assessments. The principles established in this strategy for mitigating habitat loss will apply equally to such schemes but, depending on the nature of the scheme, their effects on recreational pressure are expected to be less significant.

- 4.39. The TBMS defines zones where development of new greenfield sites would cause a high or medium risk of negative impact on the bat populations associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC (Bechstein's bat, lesser and greater horseshoe bats). The Bat Sensitivity Zones are divided into 3 levels, which accommodate two factors: the likely importance of the habitat for the bat SAC populations; and the potential for impacts due to increased recreational pressure on key woodland sites. The TBMS identifies the Parish of West Ashton to be located within high and medium risk bat habitat sensitivity zones. This includes some parts of West Ashton village that are within 600 metres of identified woodlands containing core roosts. Table 2 of the TBMS defines the type of impact / risk for each zone and the implications for development. Developers are therefore advised to consider the implications of the TBMS when preparing proposals for development in the NDP area and provide the necessary evidence for planning applications.
- 4.40. The purpose of this policy is therefore to properly recognise the importance of the SAC on development within the NDP so that the potential impacts are properly understood by new development proposals in the NDP area.

Policy 8 – Bat Conservation

The entire NDP area falls within zones of sensitivity for those species of bats which are features of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC. All Planning applications will therefore need to comply with guidance on survey and mitigation contained in the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Strategy SPD. Development is unlikely to be permitted in areas identified as being of high sensitivity for bats.

Supports NDP Objectives 1, 6, 8 and 9

The following development plan policies support: WCS Policies CP29: 'Trowbridge Community Area'; CP50: 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity'



5. Informal Aspirations

- 5.1. Very often the scoping research and community engagement throws up many good ideas that do not fit well within the planning system. This is mainly because the planning system exists only to control the use and development of land. However, such good ideas do not have to go to waste. The following policies, while not part of the formal land-use planning policies of the Neighbourhood Plan, help set the agenda for future community action. They could for example be used to set the spending priorities for income from the Community Infrastructure Levy. They have however, no legal status.
- 5.2. The background and justification for these informal policies is the West Ashton Neighbourhood Plan Scoping Report and the community engagement responses.
- 5.3. Informal Policy A – Trees: The parish council will work with community volunteers and landowners to support the maintenance and preservation of important trees and where suitable the planting of new trees throughout the Parish, including Pendunculate oak, field maple, hornbeam, hazel, silver birch and wild cherry.
- 5.4. Informal Policy B – Maintenance: The parish council will work with landowners, the Highway Authority (Wiltshire Council) and other interested groups to encourage the proper maintenance of ditches, drainage and hedges in the Parish, especially where these affect roads and paths.
- 5.5. Informal Policy C – Traffic Speed: The parish council will work with Community Speed Watch, residents, the police and the Highway Authority (Wiltshire Council) to help tackle the issues of inappropriate parking, vehicle routing and speeding in the Parish.
- 5.6. Informal Policy D – Village Maintenance: The parish council will work with volunteers and stakeholders to improve village maintenance.
- 5.7. Informal Policy E – Habitats: The parish council will support and encourage the community, to improve local habitats where possible.
- 5.8. Informal Policy F – Community Events: The parish council will support the community in organising community events based in the Village Hall and church.
- 5.9. Informal Policy G – Flooding: The parish council will consider climate change adaptation measures with regards flood risk. The community will prepare a flood plan, or will identify a nominated contact in the event of weather or other emergency and consider developing an emergency plan.



6. Monitoring and Review

- 6.1. Monitoring of development plan documents is required by law. Wiltshire Council currently produces an annual monitoring report (AMR) and will assess the overall performance of the Development Plan in Wiltshire. This will meet the main requirements for monitoring.
- 6.2. The Parish Council will also be carrying out monitoring which is intended to:
 - Monitor the predicted significant effects of the plan
 - Track whether the plan has had any unforeseen effects
 - Ensure action can be taken to reduce / offset the significant effects of the plan.
 - Ensure that the evidence base is kept up-to-date
- 6.3. Keep policies and emerging data under review, especially in relation to future housing need and the desirability of allocating housing sites to meet local housing needs as part of this the parish council will produce a Local Monitoring Report (LMR) on an annual basis and this will be supplied to the Local Planning Authority. It will also be made available to the community via the parish website and parish magazine. The LMR will take the form of a simple table plus a few paragraphs of explanatory and advisory text.
- 6.4. The written summary and conclusion of the LMR will allow the parish council to identify not only whether the policies are working, but also what other issues are emerging. It will also enable the Council to judge the effectiveness of mitigation measures proposed. In some cases, monitoring may identify the need for a policy to be amended or deleted, which could trigger a review of the Neighbourhood Plan.



Appendix 1: Evidence Base

An Air Quality Strategy for Wiltshire 2006

CABE Design in Neighbourhood Planning (2013)

Consultation Responses (public and statutory consultees – see Consultation Statement) CPRE
'Planning and Localism: Choices and Choosing

County SMR and GIS System

DCLG, Neighbourhood Planning – 2013

DEFRA "Neighbourhood Planning, The rural frontrunners: research and case studies', April 2013
Defra (2009) Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England [online]

Design Council, The, Design in Neighbourhood Planning English Indices of Deprivation 2015

Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

European Commission (2011) 'Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020' {online}

Fixing our Broken Housing Market (Government White Paper) 2017 Flood Risk Maps – Environment Agency website

Habitat Regulations Assessment dated 04/03/19, Wiltshire Council

Hampshire Avon, The, Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy for Wiltshire 2006 How to write planning policies, Planning Aid

Laying the Foundations: a Housing Strategy for England DCLG, 2011 Localism Act 2011

Locality, Neighbourhood Plan, Roadmap

Locality, the Quick Guide to Neighbourhood Planning My Community – online resource

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, 40

National Planning Policy Framework (Revised 2019)

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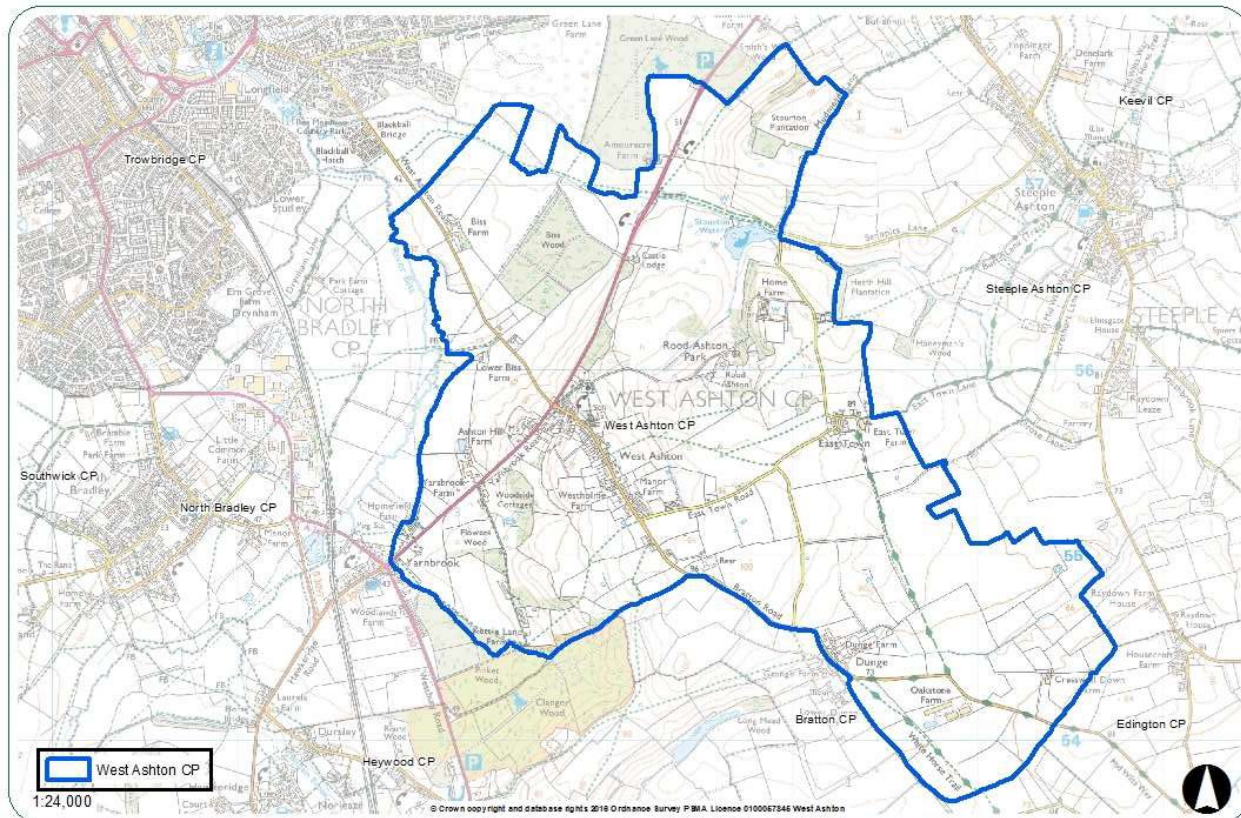
Wiltshire and Swindon Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group (2013) Landscape Biodiversity Areas: A landscape-scale framework for conservation in Wiltshire and Swindon

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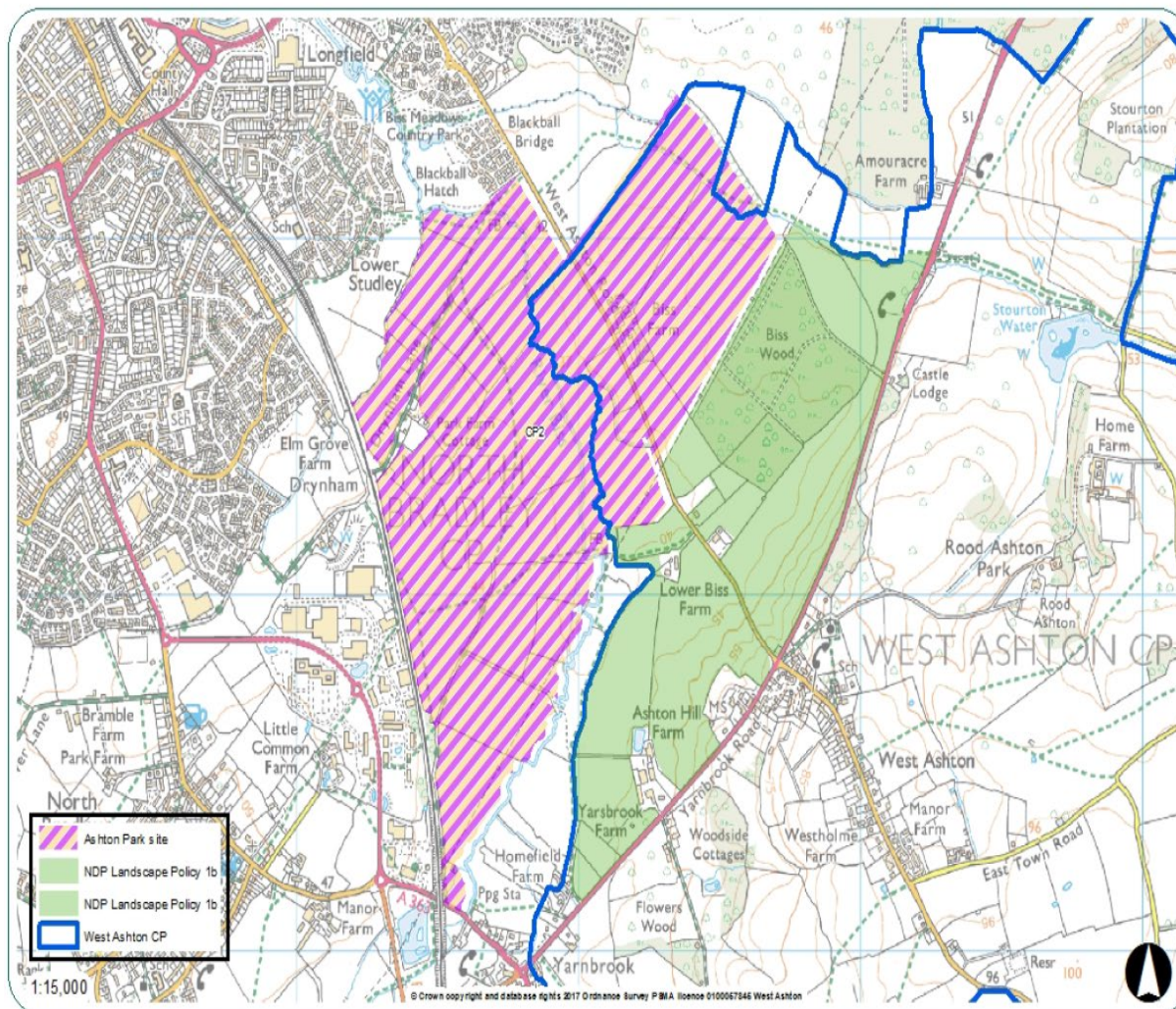
Appendix 2: The Neighbourhood Area and Parish of West Ashton

West Ashton Neighbourhood Area



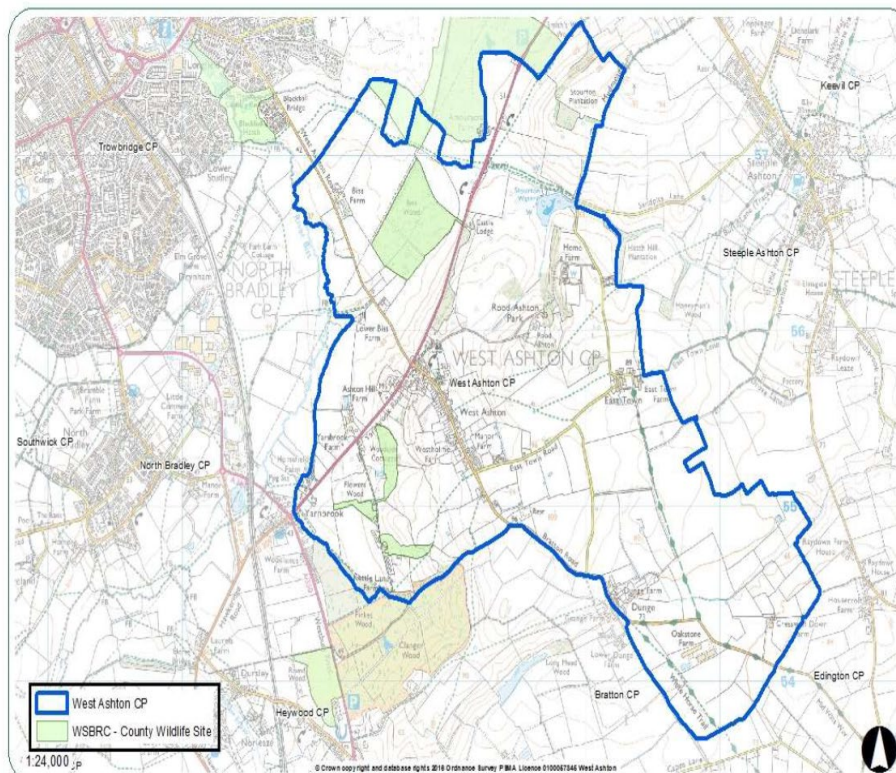
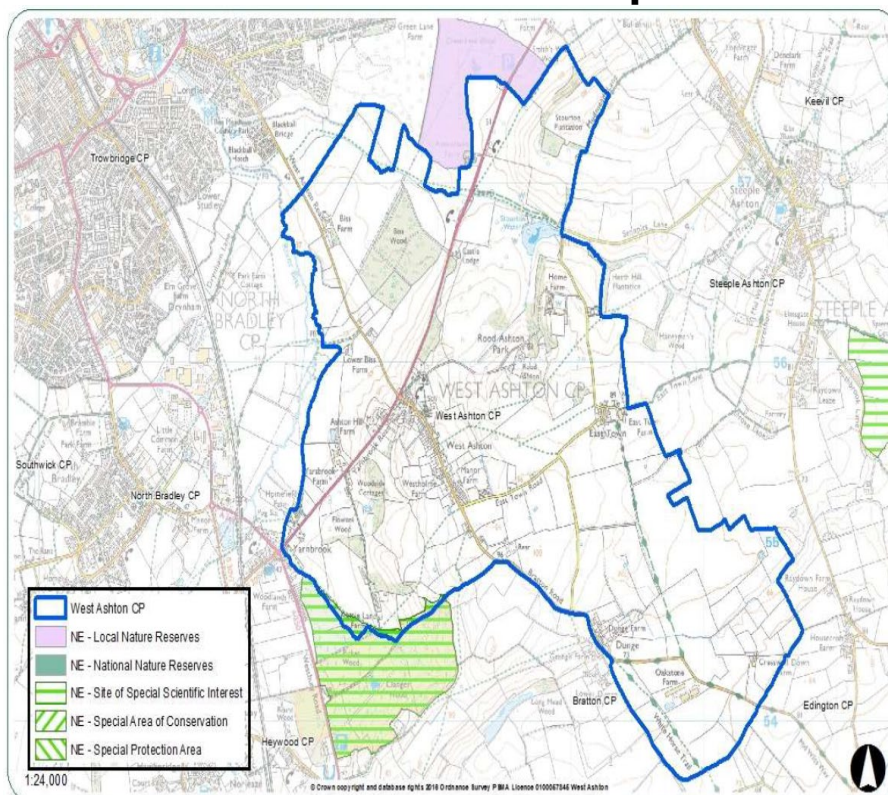


Appendix 3: West Ashton and Ashton Park



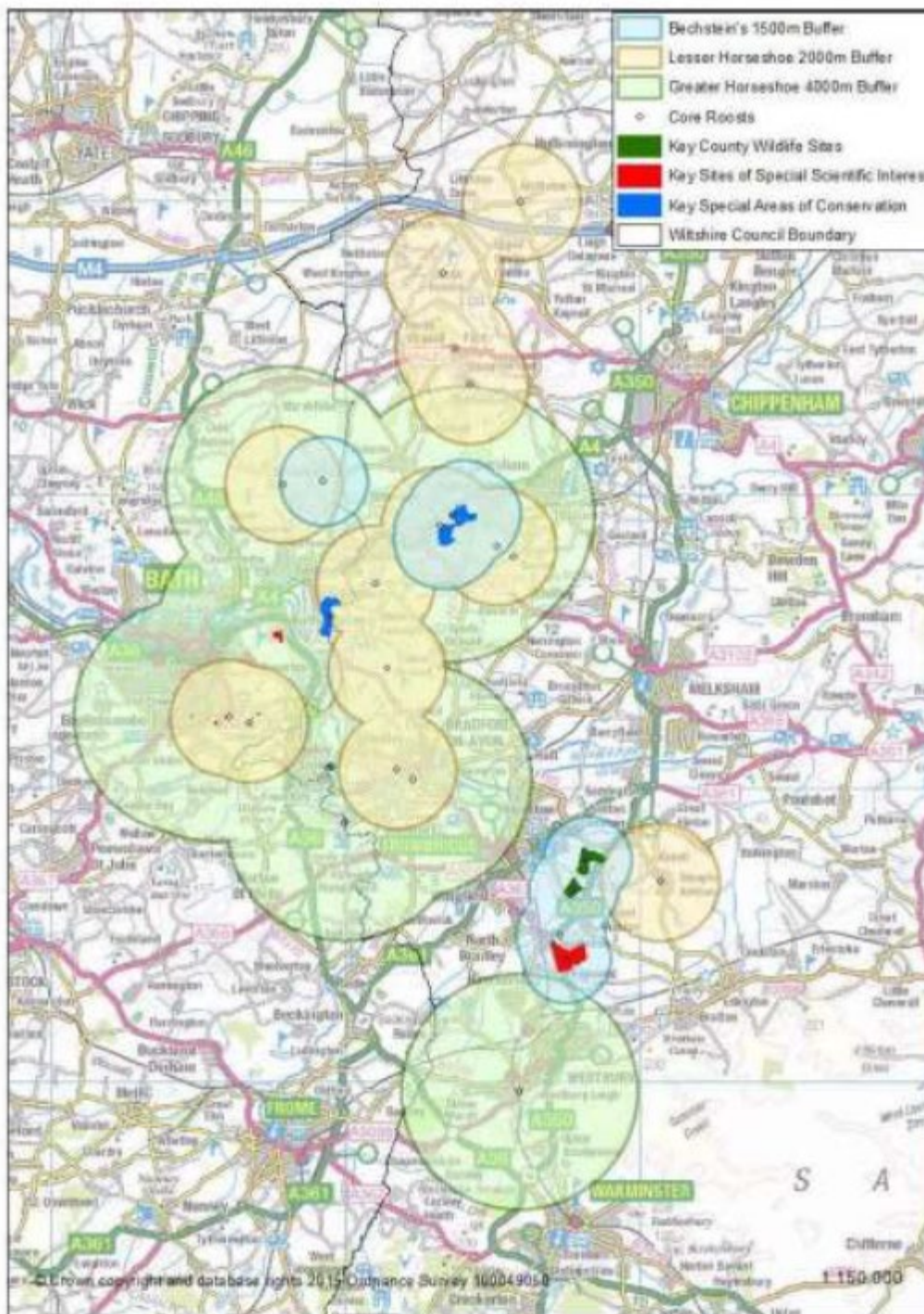


Appendix 4: West Ashton: Landscape and Biodiversity



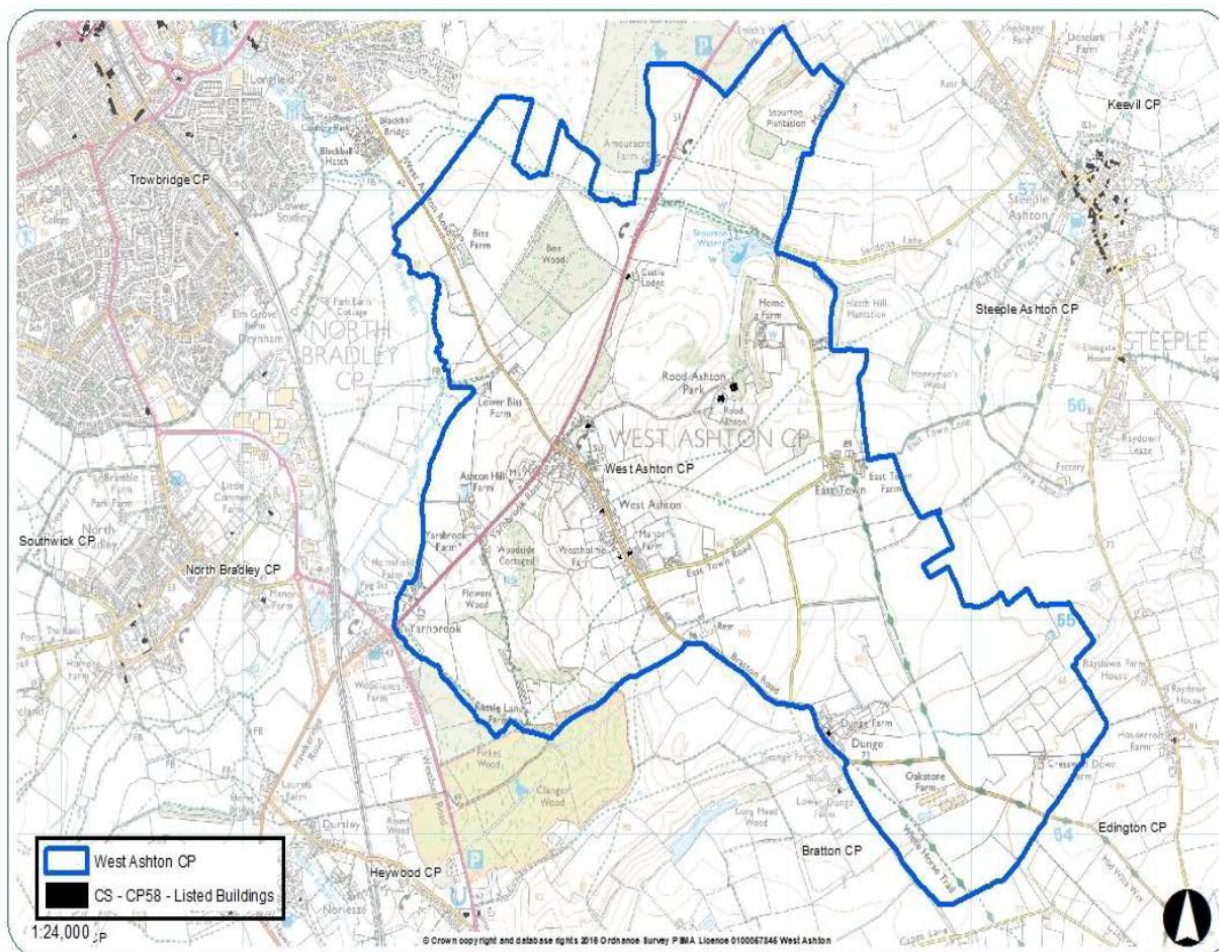


Plan 2 Inset map of the Bradford-on-Avon Bat SAC Core Roosts showing Core Areas (i.e. buffers) for each species





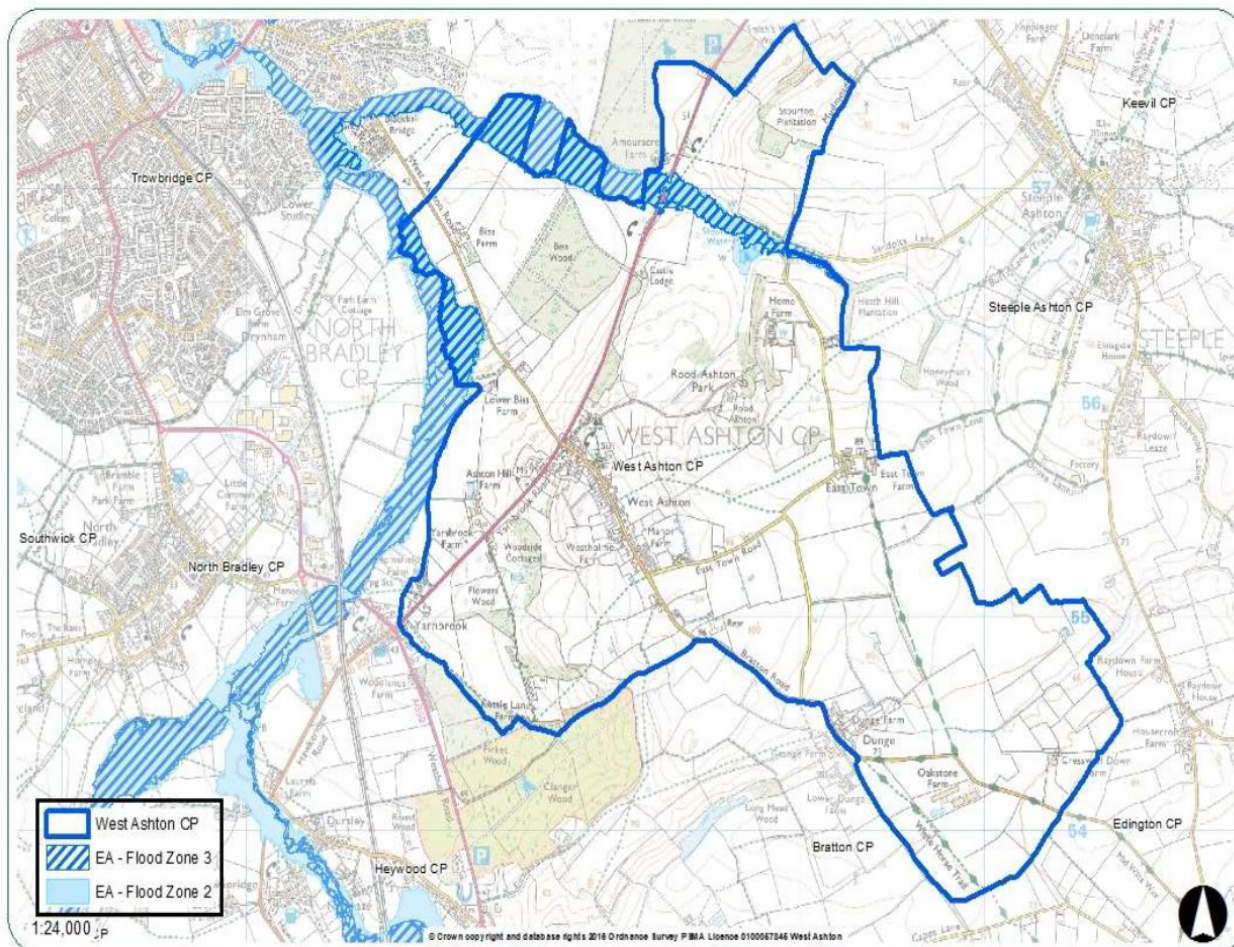
Appendix 5: West Ashton and Heritage



The information in this appendix is correct at the time of writing the Plan. Up to date information on heritage assets should always be sought from Historic England or other reliable sources of information.”



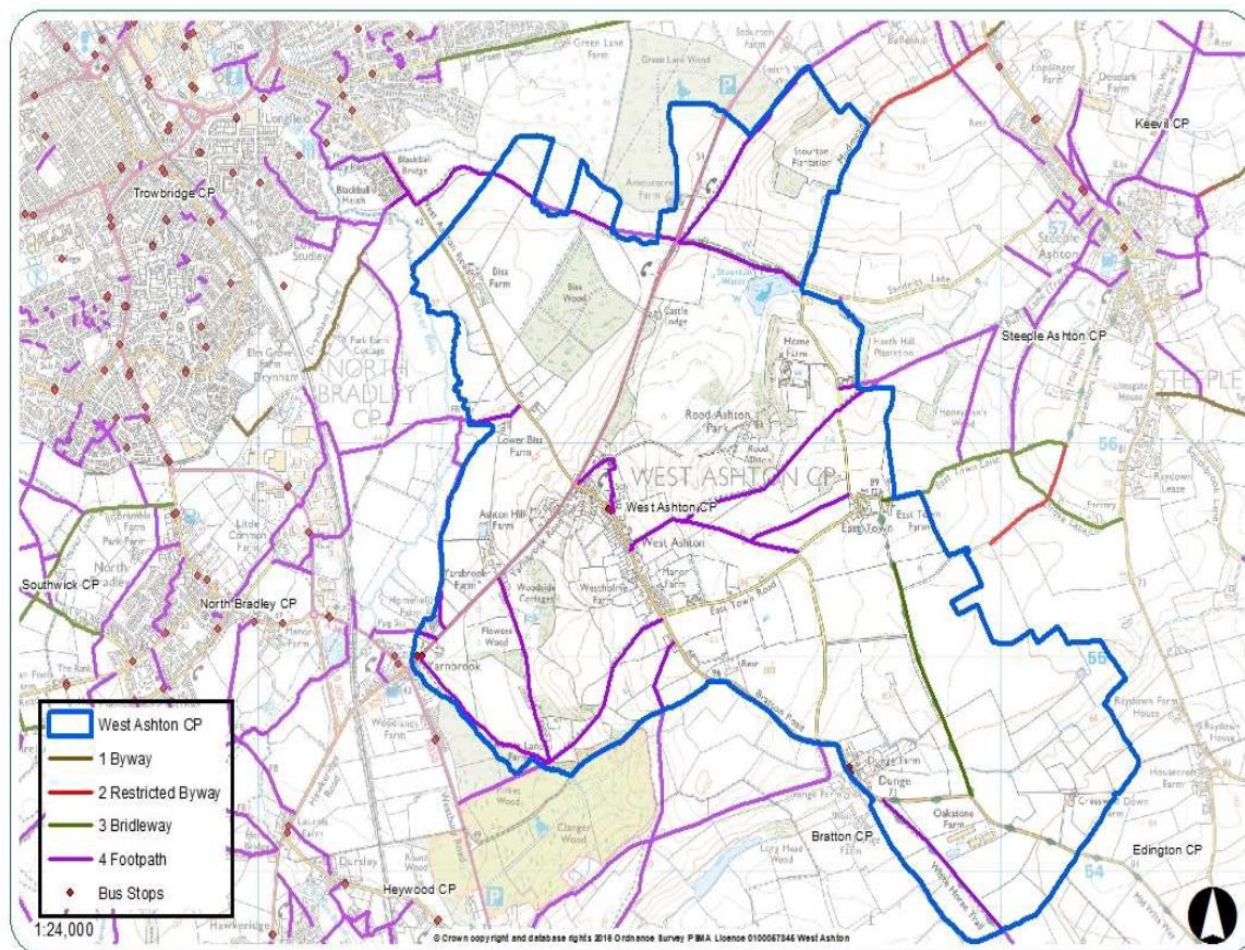
Appendix 6: West Ashton and Flood Risk



The information in this appendix is correct at the time of writing the Plan. Up to date information on flood risk should always be sought from the Environment Agency or other reliable sources of information.



Appendix 7: West Ashton and Sustainable Transport





Appendix 8: West Ashton Researchers

The neighbourhood plan is being led by the parish council but produced with and by the local community via a Steering Group.

The following local people contributed to the research for the West Ashton Neighbourhood Plan.
From the Community:

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Horace Prickett

Ron Pybus

Margaret Workman

Richard Covington

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