

Examination of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031)
Examination hearing sessions
Statement of North Hertfordshire District Council

Matter 11 – The housing allocations and the settlement boundaries: the Category A villages – Ashwell AS1

11.1 Is the proposed housing allocation deliverable? In particular, is it:

a) confirmed by all of the landowners involved as being available for the use proposed?

1. The developer of the site confirms that they support the allocation and their deliverability for housing in their representation to the Regulation 19 consultation on the plan (ED3, p14 [appendix 1]). A planning application (16/01797/1) was submitted in July 2016.

b) supported by evidence to demonstrate that safe and appropriate access for vehicles and pedestrians can be provided?

2. Vehicular access is available off Claybush Road, pedestrian access is being resolved as part of the planning application. Two options for securing pedestrian access to the village from the site are currently being explored by the developer. One is along Claybush Road and the other is via a separate piece of land onto Ashwell Street.

c) deliverable, having regard to the provision of the necessary infrastructure and services, and any environmental or other constraints?

3. Yes. The site has been considered through the SHLAA and is considered to be a suitable location for development having regard to potential constraints (HOU9, site ref AS1. See Appendix 3, p.24 and Appendix 4, p.28).
4. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (TI1) and Local Plan Viability Assessment Update (TI2) show that this development is deliverable in infrastructure planning terms. The likely significant environmental effects of allocating the site have been considered through the Sustainability Appraisal (LP4, Appendix 6, pp.529-530).
5. Site-specific criteria for the site have been identified in the plan (LP1, Section Four – Communities p.135.) These will be supplemented by the generic development management policy requirements that apply to all sites in relation to issues including (but not limited to) affordable housing, housing mix, transport, design and heritage. No fundamental constraints to development have been identified. However, the site is close to, but not within, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Arbury Banks) and Archaeological Areas.

11.2 Is the proposed housing allocation justified and appropriate in terms of the likely impacts of the development?

6. Yes. The proposed housing allocation in Ashwell is justified and appropriate. The appropriateness of the allocation is discussed below.
7. In broad terms, each allocation in the plan is justified by (see the Council's Statements on Matters 5, 7 and 9):
 - The need to seek to meet the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing as far as is consistent with the policies set out in the NPPF in a district that is currently highly constrained by Green Belt and other considerations;
 - The 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' and plan-making requirements set out in Paragraph 14 of the NPPF. Potential adverse impacts and specific policies in the Framework which indicate development should be restricted have been properly considered. Mitigation measures have been identified to address key issues. A balanced planning judgement has been made on the benefits and impacts of each individual site.
 - The significant majority of the deliverable and developable sites identified in the SHLAA (HOU9) being required for allocation if the District is to be able to meet the OAN;
 - No preferable, deliverable alternative sites existing which would allow OAN to be met over the plan period in a substantively different way;
 - There being no reasonable prospect of other authorities in shared housing market areas being in a position to assist under the Duty to Co-operate should North Hertfordshire have resolved not to meet its OAN in full.

Site AS1

8. Ashwell is a category A village within the district settlement hierarchy where Policy SP2 (as amended) allows general development within the defined settlement boundaries.
9. The site AS1 lies to the south of Ashwell in an area currently designated as Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. The site provides an opportunity to contribute to the District's five year supply.
10. The site comprises Grade 3 Agricultural Land and is currently well bounded with some existing vegetation. It adjoins existing residential development to the north and east with agricultural land to the west and south. The land slopes downwards towards the village from south to north. In terms of landscape impact the site will need to address the topography and setting in the landscape, as well as providing additional planting for screening and views.

11. Potential impacts upon heritage assets include the setting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Arbury Banks) and the adjacent Archaeological Areas as well as views of nearby Listed Buildings. The site specific criteria require a Heritage Impact Assessment.
12. The Housing and Green Belt Background Paper summarises the reasons for the selection of site AS1 (HOU1, Appendix 2, p.53). The allocation of site AS1 will contribute to overall housing numbers that are achievable through the plan. On balance, positive opportunities afforded by this site are considered to outweigh the potential harms of its development.

11.3 Is the proposed allocation the most appropriate option given the reasonable alternatives?

13. The proposed allocation of site AS1 represents the most appropriate option for the expansion of Ashwell. HOU1 (Appendix 2, pp.53) shows two other potential sites in Ashwell were considered but not allocated. They are located within the curtilage of existing plots and they have been brought within the proposed village boundary where development is supported in principle on unallocated sites.

11.4 Is the proposed settlement boundary:

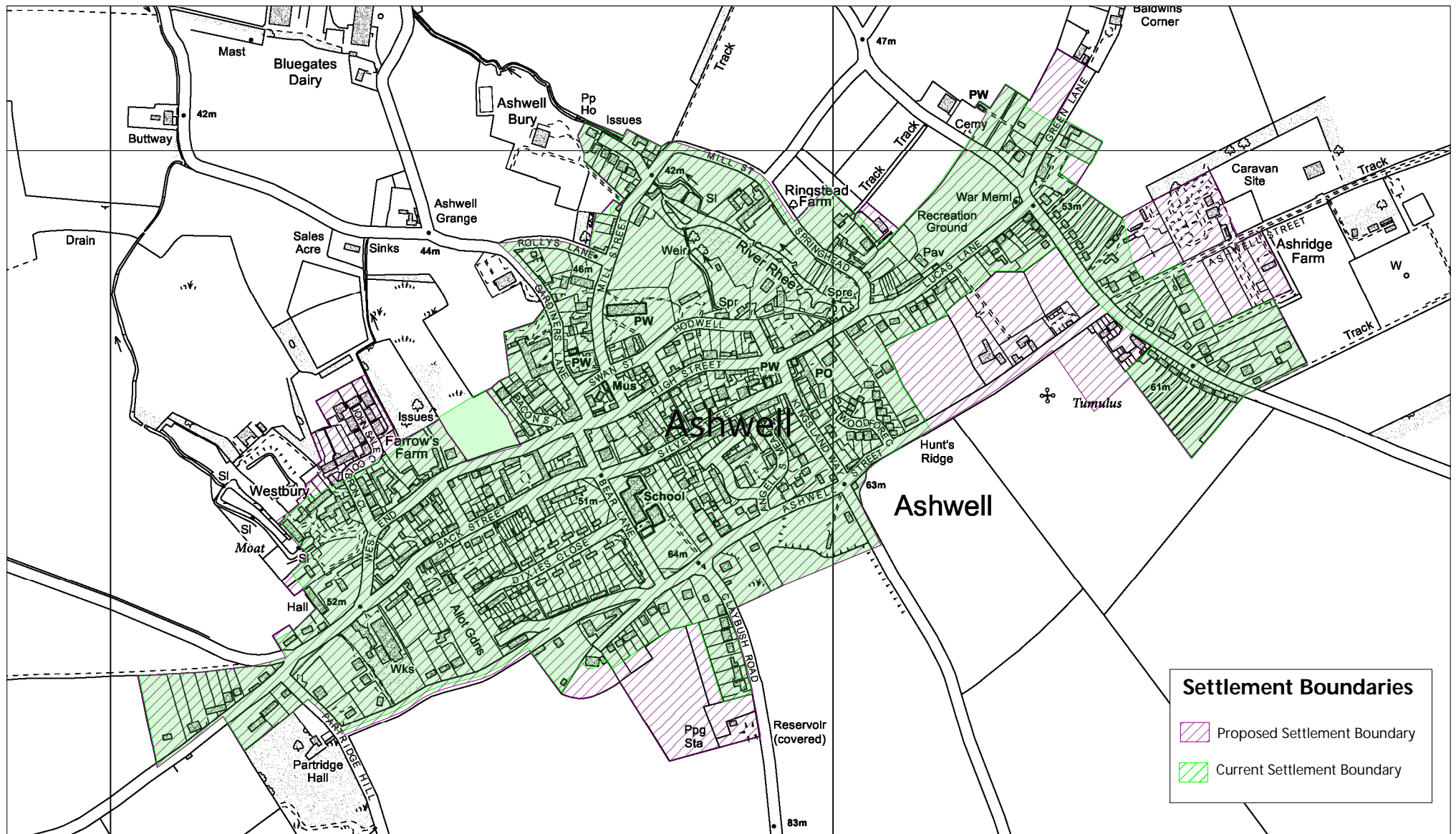
- a) consistent with the methodology for identifying the settlement boundaries?***
- b) appropriate and justified?***

14. The Council's proposed amendment to the supporting text of Policy SP2 (LP3, amendment to paragraph 4.13, p.2) makes clear that settlements are those areas excluded from the prevailing policy designation of the surrounding rural area.
15. The settlement boundary has been drawn to encompass the existing developed extent and the allocated site. It provides the opportunity for future development within the built core and is justified by consistency with policy SP2 Settlement Hierarchy.
16. A map showing the existing and proposed settlement boundaries for Ashwell is attached to this Statement as Appendix 1 to aid interpretation.

Appendix 1: Current and proposed settlement extent of Ashwell
Plan overleaf.



Ashwell



Settlement Boundaries

- Proposed Settlement Boundary
- Current Settlement Boundary

Scale: 1:7500
Date: 11:01:18

