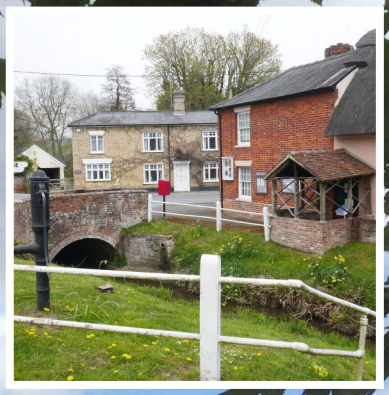
ASHDON DESIGN CODE

March 2022



ASHDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

ASHDON

CONTENTS

BUILT ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY AND MANAGEMENT SERVICE

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

1.1 Ashdon is in rural northwest Essex and has a close association with the valley of the River Bourne. It is an attractive and well-conserved historic village in a countryside setting with a strong sense of community and a good quality of life that is highly valued by its 893 residents (Census 2011).

1.2 In 2019, the Parish of Ashdon was designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area and work commenced on the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. The residents' aspirations for the future of Ashdon, together with the village's strong sense of heritage and identity, are captured in the vision statement for the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan:

> **Ashdon will evolve whilst retaining and enhancing its natural and historic rural environment and continue to be inhabited by a vibrant sustainable community**

1.3 The Ashdon Design Code has been compiled in association with BEAMS Ltd as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process. The Ashdon Design Code is important supporting evidence accompanying the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan and will be adopted as a key document by Uttlesford District Council and used as a material consideration in determining planning applications for Ashdon. This will ensure that the views of the local community are taken into consideration when assessing planning applications for the Parish.

PURPOSE

The Ashdon Design Code covers the Parish of Ashdon and all its settlements from the village core, rural lanes, the 'Ends' (settlements which are separated from the village) and isolated farmsteads.

Its aims are:

- **to present the historic, landscape, hydrological and environmental context in order to encourage sensitive and sustainable development which takes account of the building design and materials prevalent in the Parish;**
- **to assist developers of new development proposals, including infill and extensions, to understand what is acceptable to the local community in terms of design and sensitivity. This should minimize the potential for conflict in the planning process.**

1.4 The Ashdon Design Code seeks to identify the main design characteristics of the Parish and will guide the character, appearance, and topographical location of development in the future. It has drawn on the invaluable work already undertaken by the Community as part of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Ashdon Character Assessments, the public consultation feedback, and the Ashdon Landscape Appraisal (Alison Farmer Associates 2020) (for all documents see www.ashdonplan.co.uk)

1.5 The Ashdon Design Code considers the elements and characteristics of good design as described in the National Design Guide and how these can be applied to the Parish of Ashdon. The Ashdon Design Code supports and builds on the objectives of the building and environmental policies of Uttlesford District as laid out in the Uttlesford Local Plan (2005), the Essex Design Guide (2018) and the National Design Guide (NDG 2021). The principles of the NDG which identifies '10 characteristics of a well-designed place' have been incorporated into the Ashdon Design Code; they are expanded in the National

Model Design Code (NMDC 2021). The Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk June 2021 has also been taken into account.

1.6 In Ashdon some development is inevitable and necessary if the village is to continue being the thriving community that it is today. The feedback received as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process shows that residents want this to be achieved in a way that is sensitive to the historic and landscape character and context. They greatly value the quality of the surrounding countryside and the way that the built areas are immersed in it with views in many directions. The aim of the Neighbourhood Plan, and the supporting Design Code, is to ensure that the historic and landscape context is both preserved and enhanced, and that new development provides benefits to the local community where possible in terms of community infrastructure and open space.

SUMMARY

The Ashdon Design Code will:

- actively influence change and development in the Parish of Ashdon to meet the future needs of the Community;
- assist those who bring forward proposals for development to ensure that they are acceptable to the expressed wishes of the Community and in keeping with the village character;
- respect and respond to the heritage, community and countryside of Ashdon and so identify and help to protect key buildings, settings, landscape, open spaces and views;
- promote the use of appropriate designs and materials;
- assist Uttlesford District Council in their determination of planning applications;
- promote and improve the connection between the Community and the green infrastructure and rich biodiversity of the Parish.

Components of the Ashdon Design Code which seek sustainable development for the village:

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

by encouraging development that:

- reflects the rural character of the wider Parish;
- works with and within the restrictions imposed by the built environment of the historic conservation areas;
- preserves the best of the past;
- has design that complements the vernacular and uses appropriate materials;
- seeks to create the "heritage buildings of the future";
- aims for high standards;
- has minimal impact on the natural environment; encourages biodiversity;
- uses land and natural resources carefully;
- minimises the probability of flooding and pollution of the River Bourne;
- plans for the impact of climate change.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

by supporting well-designed development that:

- creates a safe and healthy environment with easy access to open spaces, services and facilities;
- fosters a strong and healthy community;
- provides homes that meet the needs of individuals, families, and older residents, and which are adaptable to changing needs.

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

by favouring small scale development that:

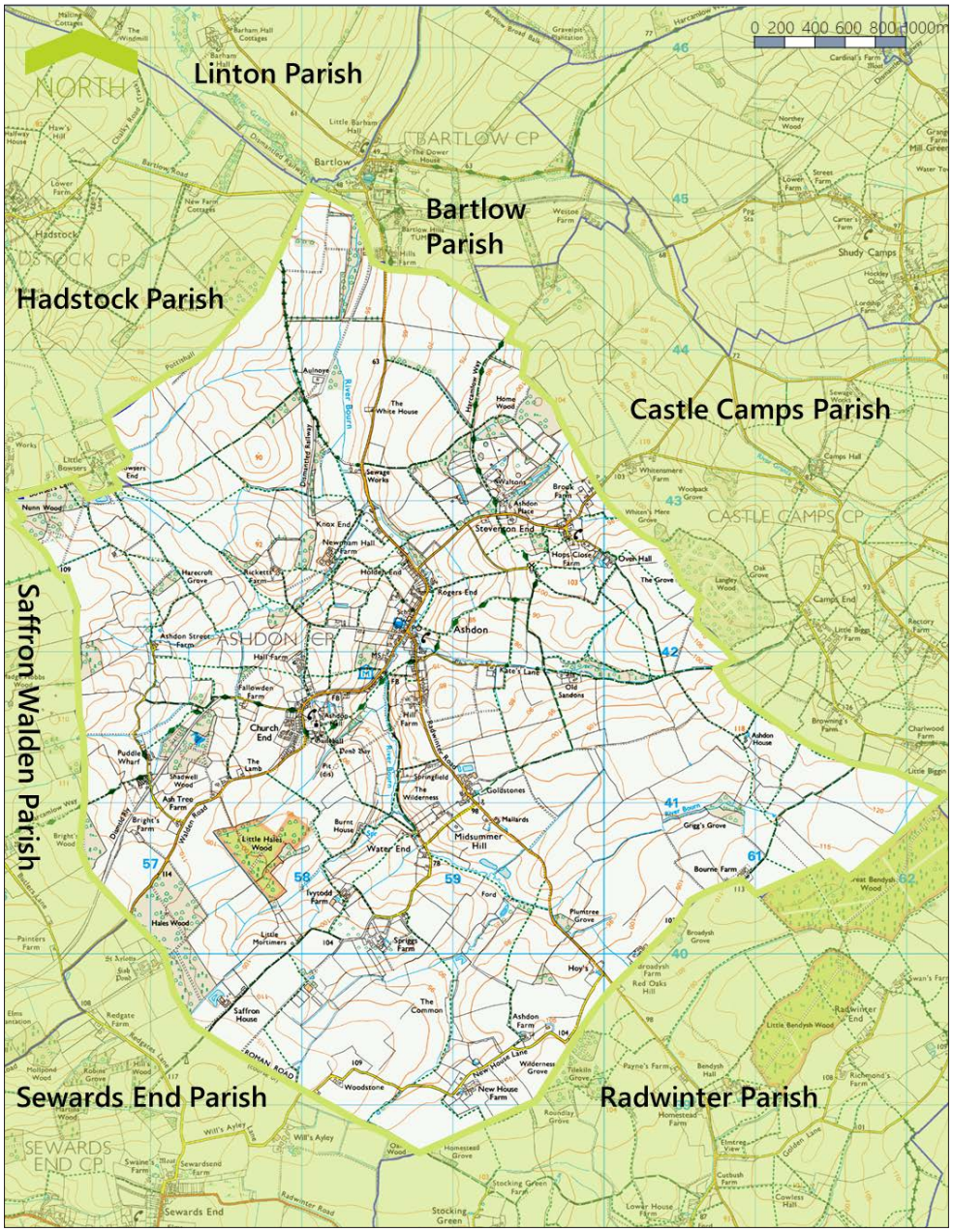
- supports economic growth by providing facilities and accommodation that will enable small businesses to grow;
- makes best use of existing infrastructure while encouraging the use of active travel as an alternative to car use.

2. ASHDON PARISH OVERVIEW

2.1 It is vital that any new development, whatever its scale, responds to the context in which it is located. The Essex Design Guide sets out a list of criteria that need to be considered when analysing context. This section lays out the context for any development in terms of

1. historical (including built form)
2. landscape
3. hydrological and
4. biodiversity and Parish habitats

Each section gives a summary box of the main points of each contextual theme.



Map 1 - Parish of Ashdon, showing the location of the main settlements.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT INCLUDING BUILT FORM

Summary of Parish History

- Site of the Battle of Assandun between the Anglo Saxons and the Danes.
- Historic area of settlement stretching back to Roman period.
- Original medieval settlement was at Church End.
- Little change in agrarian community until the arrival of the railway in 1866.
- Network of ancient lanes, bridleways and footpaths following the topography.
- Scattered farmsteads, smaller settlements (Ends) and two larger areas of settlement - Ashdon Village core and Church End.
- During the 20th Century small-scale developments of social housing were introduced altering the historic agrarian character and in some cases the distinction between settlements.

2.2 The summary of the Parish history described in the box above has resulted in the complex settlement pattern found in Ashdon today:

- The original settlement was close to the church at Church End; located in the area to the south of the church, now a Scheduled Monument.

- The church (rebuilt 14th Century) and the adjacent Guildhall (15th Century) are the oldest buildings to survive in their original form in Ashdon.

- Outside of the main settlements were outlying settlements known as 'Ends'; Church End, Water End, Steventon End, Rogers End, Holden End and Knox End. Settlements were connected by a network of small, ancient lanes, footpaths, and bridleways, and separated by distinct settlement gaps. There were large estates such as Newnham Hall, Waltons and Ashdon Hall.

- By the mid 19th Century the economy of the area was still focused on agriculture. The first school and the Baptist Chapel were built in the 1830s and five public houses existed at this time, the existing school (1877) was built in the village centre. Mechanisation reduced agricultural employment and the population began to seek work outside the village. There was a railway between 1911 and 1964. Now most people work outside Ashdon.

- In the interwar and post war period new housing (social housing and infill) appeared at Rogers End merging Holden End, Rogers End and Ashdon Village core. More recently there has been new affordable housing at Churchfields and All Saints Close in Church End as well as infill development. This has been broadly successful in creating new housing while preserving the existing historic character.

- Today the Parish is rich in historic buildings, there are two conservation areas, 66 listed structures, and nine locally listed structures. Many of the timber framed buildings, both large and small, have their origins in the 16th and 17th Centuries. This strong survival of earlier settlement dating back to the 15th Century, is overlayed by 20th Century development and is a key characteristic of Ashdon village core, Church End, and the scattered 'Ends'. Elsewhere in the Parish there are historic farmsteads.

- The way that the built environment interacts with the landscape is rooted in the past and

remains a defining characteristic of the Parish. The landscape forms the setting and backdrop for the buildings. At times views are fleeting and restricted between the buildings, at others they are wide and open and provide long views to landmarks such as the Windmill and the church.

Original village hall with plaster walls and thatch, and hall extension at the far end, built 1997. At the near end is the old red brick White Horse pub, long closed. Old and new fit seamlessly together.

LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

Landscape - Summary of Key Features

- Gently undulating farmland plateau dissected by the River Bourne and its tributaries forming interlocking valleys.
- Geology of chalk with North Essex clay soils and sand and gravel on the valley sides.
- Field pattern of large common fields in north and small irregular fields with hedgerows in south.
- Scattered woodland on plateau with more heavily wooded valleys.
- Wide open views across countryside from the plateau; views are more enclosed and intermittent in the valleys.
- Key built landmarks of the Windmill and All Saints Church feature in views.
- Historically many houses had small orchards to the rear which acted as a buffer between the settlement and the countryside.

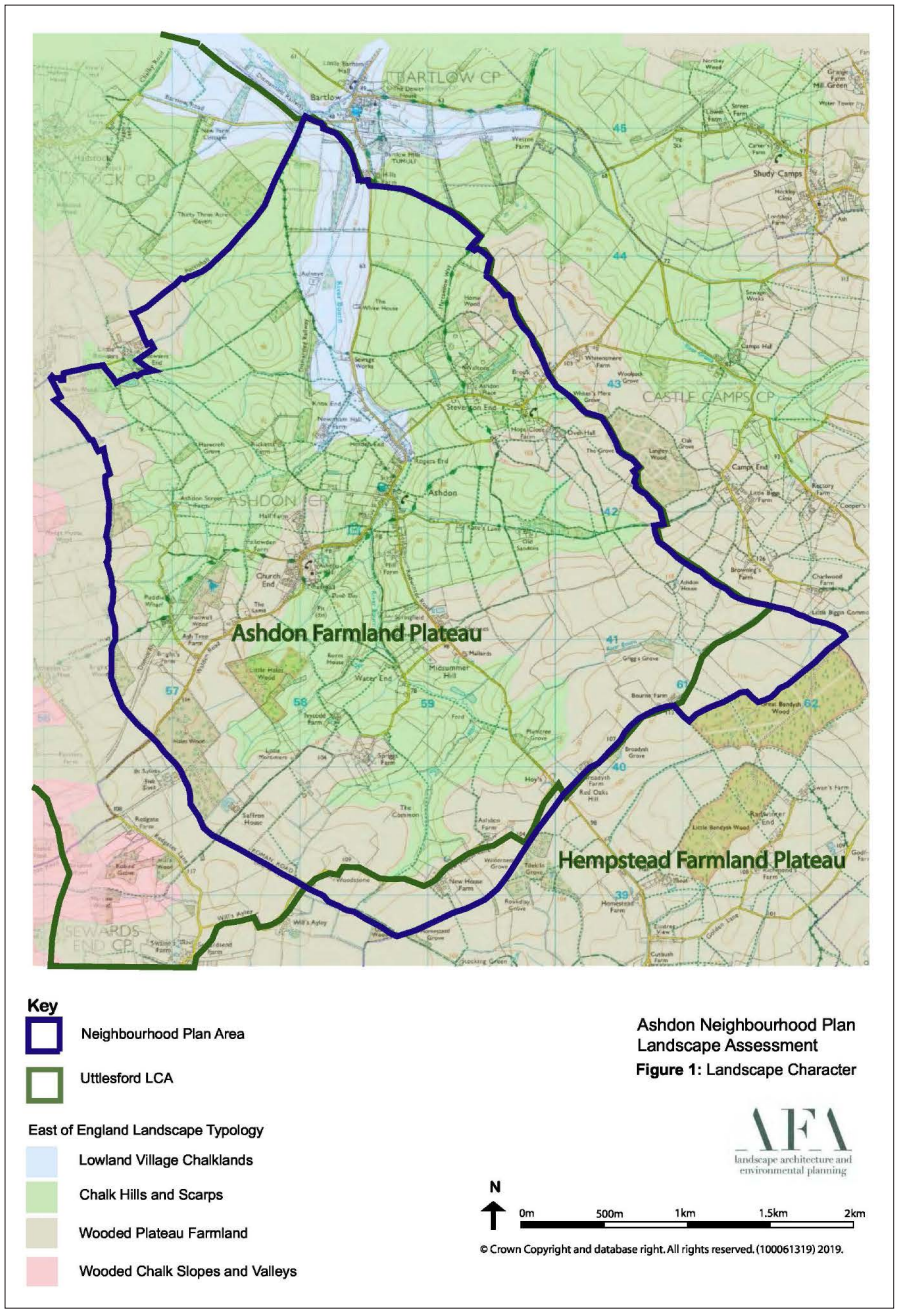
- The majority of the Parish is characterized by a gently undulating farmland plateau dissected by the small river valleys. The main valley of the River Bourne runs on a north/south axis across the Parish with smaller tributaries feeding into it. The valley slopes are relatively steep close to Ashdon village core and Rogers End but open out further north.

- The underlying geology of the area is chalk. It comprises Lewes Nodular Chalk Formation and Seaford Chalk Formation with superficial deposits of sand and gravel on the valley slopes and alluvium on the valley floor. There are spurs of higher land rising to 115m AOD in the south of the Parish.

- Excerpts from three area landscape character assessments (National, East Region and District) and the Ashdon Landscape Appraisal are referred to below. Most of the Parish falls within National Character Area 86 South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland with the soil of the plateau area described as North Essex clay.

- The East of England Landscape Character Typology (2011 http://landscape-east.org.uk/) defines landscape types; the Parish of Ashdon is covered by three-character types 'Lowland Village Chalklands', Chalk Hills and Scarps' and 'Wooded Plateau Farmland' (See Map 2 - Figure 1 from Ashdon Landscape Appraisal).

- Views are an essential part of defining a sense of place. The rolling topography of the area ensures that the views are both interesting and distinctive. There are numerous landmarks, built examples are the Windmill and tower of All Saints Church and natural ones are the River Bourne itself, ancient woodlands, and landmark trees. Twenty-nine views are particularly singled out in the Neighbourhood Plan Assessment of Important Views document (also referred to in the Ashdon Landscape Appraisal, Alison Farmer Associates 2020). The proximity of the countryside to the pattern of settlement is a key characteristic of the Parish.



Map 2 - Landscape Character

THE RIVER BOURNE AND HYDROLOGICAL CONTEXT

Hydrology - Summary

- The River Bourne is the defining natural feature of the Parish contributing greatly to the character of the area.
- It is a chalk stream with specialised biodiversity and a rare UK habitat.
- It is prone to flooding more than is the norm for a river of its size.
- There are particular locations where flooding (fluvial, surface and/or groundwater) is a recurrent problem.
- Climate change has increased the frequency of flooding.

- The Bourne is a chalk stream river with high quality water filtered through the geology and a unique ecosystem. It is a tributary of the Granta (which it joins in Bartlow) and which flows into the River Cam.

- The village of Ashdon is strung in a linear pattern along the valley of the River Bourne making it vulnerable to flooding. In 2008 The Flood Mapping Study of the River Bourne showed that it floods more frequently than would be expected for a river of this size (2008 JBA consulting for Uttlesford District Council). The Uttlesford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2016 JBA consulting) shows that the frequency of serious flooding has increased greatly since the late 1980s with a particularly bad flood in 2007 and 2014.

- Flooding occurs on the narrow valley floor at Water End and there are larger flood areas to the north in Rogers End (including the allotments) and Knox End where the valley widens. Surface water and groundwater issues also create flooding risk especially if combined with poor drains maintenance. There are locations where flooding can occur following a downpour - the junction of Radwinter Road and Crown Hill, the Bartlow Road at Knox End, the centre of Steventon End and at Water End.

Road flooding in Steventon End

River Bourne, chalk stream

BIODIVERSITY AND PARISH HABITATS CONTEXT

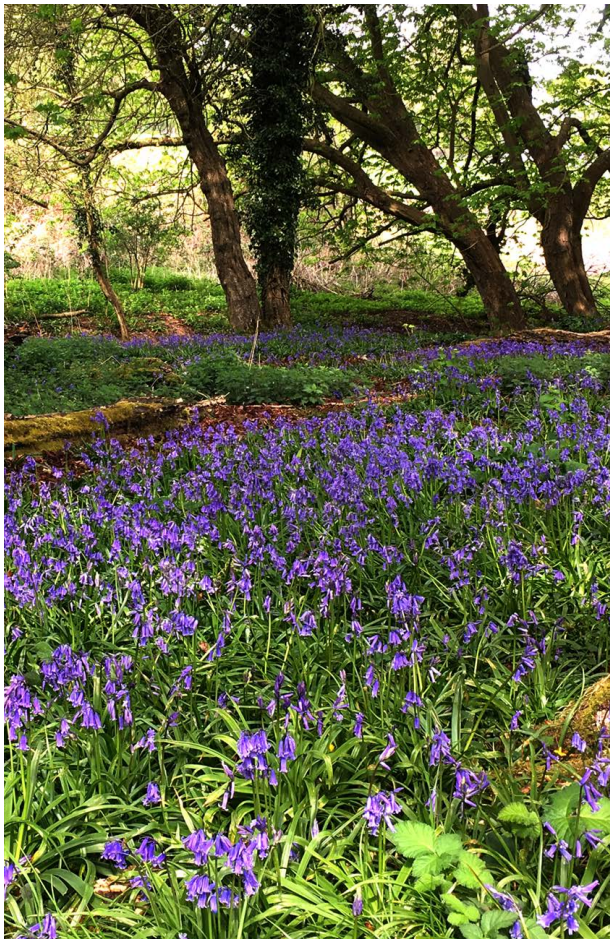
Biodiversity and Parish habitats – Summary

- The habitat and biodiversity are locally and nationally significant, especially the ancient woodlands. They are valued by the residents.
- Throughout the Parish there are many mature trees, some form landmarks, and ancient hedgerows.
- The majority of the trees are native species; sadly, the large population of ash trees is being depleted by ash dieback.
- There are extensive green corridors following the river valleys and linking to the woodlands, often these extend into the heart of the settlements.
- Verges in the Parish are an important habitat for flora and are remnants of chalk grassland habitat.

- The landscape and natural environment of Ashdon is rich and diverse; ranging from ancient woodlands and scattered copses to arable farmland on the plateau areas and valley sides, all dissected by wooded valleys with chalk streams.

- The wooded valleys make effective wildlife corridors, often penetrating the heart of the settlements. In some cases, landowners have enhanced these with wide field headlands.

- The settlements contain important habitat as well, all houses have gardens and the majority have medium to large gardens surrounded by hedges and adjoining the countryside. Other habitats within the settlements exist in the sunken lanes, remnant chalk grassland on the verges, areas of scrub, the churchyard, and other green spaces. These areas support a variety of flora and fauna from orchids to humble grasses and buzzards to butterflies.



Bluebell woodland

3. PARISH WIDE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

GUIDE TO THE ASHDON DESIGN CODE IN TERMS OF THE NATIONAL DESIGN CODE AND THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES OF 'BUILDING FOR A HEALTHY LIFE'.

3.1 Section 3 sets out the Parish wide design principles based on the 10 characteristics of the National Design Code. New design guidance was adopted by Uttlesford District Council in 2021. The guidance is based on 'Building for a Healthy Life', a government-endorsed industry standard, and will be used to inform decisions on planning applications.
Table 1 explains how the design principles contained in 'Building for a Healthy Life' and in the 'National Design Code' relate to those described here for Ashdon.

Clustered village core Conservation Area viewed from the Donkey Field. Well treed, with land rising behind.

Table 1 - Guide to National and District Design Principles

Building for a Healthy Life Section	Ashdon Design Code Section	National Design Code Section
Natural Connections	Ashdon Parish overview	B3; M1; M2; N1; R3
Walking, cycling, public transport	Parish wide design principles (Built form, movement, and resources) Character area design principles	B1; B3; M1; R3
Facilities and services	Parish wide design principles (Built form, nature, public spaces, and uses) Character area design principles	B1; B3; N1; P3; U1; U3
Homes for everyone	Parish wide design principles (Built form, uses, homes and buildings) Character area design principles Details of built form	B1; B2; U2; U3; B1; B2; U2; U3
Making the most of what's there	Ashdon Parish overview	C1; C2; I1; B2; R3
A memorable character	Parish wide design principles (Context, identity, built form) Character area design principles Details of built form	C2; I1; I2; I3; B3
Well defined streets and places	Parish wide design principles (Built form, movement, nature, public spaces, homes and buildings, life span) Character area design principles	B2; M2; N2; N3; P1; P2; H2; L3

Building for a Healthy Life Section	Ashdon Design Code Section	National Design Code Section
Easy to find your way around	Parish wide design principles (Identity, movement, uses) Character area design principles	I1; M1; M2; U1
Healthy streets	Parish wide design principles (Built form and Movement, nature, public spaces, homes and buildings) Character area design principles	M1; M2; N3; P1; P2; P3; H1; H2
Cycle and car parking	Parish wide design principles (Built form, movement) Character area design principles	B2; M1; M3
Green and blue infrastructure	Parish wide design principles (Context, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, homes and buildings, resources, lifespan) Character area design principles	C1; B3; M1; N1; N2, N3; P1; P3; H1; R3; L1
Back of pavement, front of home	Parish wide design principles (Movement, homes and buildings, lifespan) Character area design principles Details of built form	M3; H3; L3

BUILDING STYLE AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT

3.2 Ashdon is an historic village set in a unique landscape setting where the topography, green infrastructure and local hydrology are fundamental and integrated into the character and sense of place, as such sensitive and complimentary design is key to any successful development in Ashdon.

3.3 Good design is a combination of different and varied components and is not solely about buildings; it involves attention to the context and should be proportional to the technical infrastructure – transport, utilities, services such as drainage, and social infrastructure – social, commercial, leisure uses and activities. Looking to the future, and the forecast for more extreme weather events, buildings should incorporate features that will help them become less vulnerable and more resilient to climate change and thus future proofed.

3.4 The ways in which to achieve the design principles for all development in Ashdon are laid out below following the National Design Guide.

The design principles are that any building modification or new development should:

- Respect and respond to the heritage, community and countryside of Ashdon.
- Create and maintain a place of distinctiveness.
- Respond to the existing landscape character and sensitivities of the Ashdon settlements and surroundings.
- Connect people to their habitats to enrich biodiversity and green infrastructure links, walkable communities and liveable streets.
- Create a multi-functional landscape which, recognises the needs of all (food, water and energy) whilst providing effective protections for the environment and prudent use of natural resources.

Context – Local character and built heritage

- Parish with strong sense of historic integrity which should be preserved and enhanced. A high concentration of local vernacular buildings (two Conservation Areas) and a historic settlement pattern comprising dispersed settlements which are connected by a series of winding lanes;
- deeply rural, tranquil countryside sensitive to development;
- scenic quality derived from undulating topography, patchwork of fields, ancient woodlands, and a network of mature hedgerows, intimate pastoral valleys and open elevated higher plateau;
- close relationship between built form, topography and watercourses makes flood risk management essential;
- the steep sided, well vegetated valley setting for the village results in built form which is largely hidden from the wider landscape; perception of Ashdon and Water End nestling within the valley with a backdrop of fields or mature woodland;
- the open skyline of the ridge tops is visually sensitive to new development which may be visible within panoramic views to and from the wider area;
- key built landmarks include All Saints Church, the Windmill and Rose and Crown pub, which reinforces local distinctiveness and provide orientation, and are part of key views into and out of the settlements;
- new buildings should harmonise well with the historic village and other existing buildings when built with traditional roof forms, sensitive in scale, and which sit within existing settlement grain of the development;
- development proposals should conserve and enhance the character, appearance and function of heritage assets and their settings and respect the significance of the historic environment;
- distinctive open spaces within settlements, highly valued for local sense of place and amenity;
- natural green infrastructure connected by an extensive network of footpaths and bridleways valued by Ashdon residents, and the wider community, for social and mental well-being and environmental benefit.

Identity – Character of buildings

- architectural approach should be influenced by the Ashdon settlement pattern and its built form and respect its close relationship to the rural landscape. The contextual layout should be respected, whether village core, clustered settlement ('Ends'), rural lane or isolated farmstead;
- the spacing of development should reflect the character (historic core or outlying settlement) and allow for long distance views of the countryside from the public realm;
- trees and landscaping should be incorporated into the building design to ensure they sit comfortably 'in the wider rural setting' making a positive contribution to the Parish landscape;
- new development should preserve key views within the Parish as identified in the Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan; avoid development siting in prominent positions that might compromise existing views, a reduced height of building roofline is appropriate in elevated locations; pay particular attention to how the building meets the sky;
- landmarks such as All Saints Church and the Windmill should be included in views from and to new developments to enhance the sense of identity and belonging;
- buildings should be no more than two storeys high and be proportionate in height to surrounding buildings roads and paths; buildings should not change the distinctive visual characteristics of Ashdon in relation to the height in the plot.
- 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 should be avoided.
- urban or suburban styles or detailing should be avoided, although a contemporary design in traditional materials can work if it fits with the wider setting;

continued

- style and materials should reflect the vernacular, with materials that are generally found in adjacent dwellings responding to the colour, form and texture of adjacent brickwork or finish. Buildings with rendered walls that allow traditional paintwork or red brick walls will blend successfully. Some flint and brick structures are desirable;
- the materials used are particularly important in more remote rural locations and should blend with the existing buildings;
- roof materials should be similar to neighbouring properties, historic buildings have thatch, old red tile or slate. More recent properties are tiled or with slate roofs;
- roofs should have chimneys to help punctuate roof lines and create visual interest (Essex Design Guide (EDG) (2018)) and a pitched style, although hipped roofs would also be acceptable. Chimneys, with brick detailing are encouraged;
- Materials for hard landscaping of front gardens and parking areas should be good quality and have a time-less feel: macadam with rolled in aggregate, natural stone flags and granite kerbs or high-quality concrete paving with stone aggregate finish.

Built Form – density, built form and design

- development proposals should respect the existing fine grain and building line, and immediate density of surrounding buildings; particular care should be taken to ensure new build is of the appropriate scale, height and immediate density compared with adjacent buildings, and not overcrowd neighbouring properties; See also Essex Design Guide for criteria above and below 20 dwellings/hectare;
- extensions should be proportionate and sympathetic in size, design and materials and not overdevelop their site;
- avoid growth of Ends and Ashdon village along roads resulting in merging of separate Ends and loss of settlement pattern and village form;
- new or extended streets should reflect the topography so that buildings do the same and are embedded in the landscape;
- development should be consistent with the prevailing built style of the road. Design should avoid uniform exterior materials (especially when several new buildings are planned) to avoid urban appearance and enhance 'acceptance' in the environment;
- respect and preserve the 'gateway' entrances to the village of Ashdon; boundaries to new development at village gateways should be considered with particular sensitivity and consist of characteristic native hedgerows and trees.
- all houses should have gardens.

Movement – design of the street network, active travel, public transport and utilities

- to a large extent, residents are dependent on car use and parking provision is an important part of any development. It should be off road, and if, exceptionally, on road parking is permitted, it must not impede pedestrian and other vehicle access;
- for buildings with garages and/or dedicated off-street parking, each new dwelling should be fitted with an electric car chargepoint;
- for buildings with no off-street parking, provision of electric car charging points is essential and additional community needs could be addressed through provision of an active chargepoints in unallocated parking bays;
- developers should carefully consider accessibility to all road users. The main routes through the village are busy, many vehicles are speeding, and are hazardous to pedestrians where pavements limited.
- in the event of larger developments, the frequency of bus services will need to be improved;
- if new roads are needed, they should create an interconnected network as this is the key to encouraging walking and cycling. Cul de sacs should have provision for onward pedestrian and cycle paths;
- cycleways and footpaths are encouraged that link to the existing settlements to help avoid conflict with other road users and to promote healthy lifestyles. Links to Ashdon's extensive network of Public Rights of Way (footpaths and bridleways) should be created (Active Design Principles – Sport England);
- protect and preserve historic narrow lanes and verges; development should consider the indirect characterising effects on rural lanes because of access and traffic;
- groundworks to the banks and verges of the sunken lanes should be minimised. Avoid urbanisation through inappropriate planting e.g. non-native hedging/plants or other structures e.g. stone gabions and concrete kerb stones;
- Ashdon has a combined sewerage system. For new development surface water runoff should not be connected to combined sewers as Essex County Council have concerns with the additional demand and cost associated to treat surface water from combined sewers;
- before more development, upgrades may be needed to the local Water Recycling Centre because the Environment Agency has advised that it is close to capacity.

Nature – Design of green infrastructure, sustainable drainage and the protection of biodiversity

- avoid destruction of mature trees, hedgerows and historic flower-rich verges. Development should not remove more hedges and trees than is necessary for the build. Existing trees, walls and hedges which contribute to the street scene should be preserved and maintained;
- trees with a Tree Preservation Order must not be removed before applying for and receiving permission from Uttlesford District Council with planning permission only being given in exceptional circumstances; fines apply and replanting will be required for unauthorised removal;
- replanting of lost green infrastructure is essential, and planting of new screening and boundaries must be incorporated into development plans;
- new planting of trees and hedges should be of native species where possible. Non-native species which should be avoided are laurel and conifer hedging other than yew; where space is limited ornamental trees could be used. Detailed advice on planting in different village character areas is detailed in Section 4 (see also Royal Horticultural Society lists);
- development should include trees, a minimum 30% tree canopy cover target for new development land is recommended (Emergency Tree Plan, Woodland Trust 2020). The majority of tree cover expansion should be delivered with native woods and trees, due to the importance of tackling the biodiversity and climate crises together.
- impacts on locally important wildlife, and ancient woodland and hedgerows should be avoided. Opportunities to create small areas of woodland or wider strip of trees should be seized and provide a buffer between the settlement and the wider landscape, as well as enhanced carbon capture;
- replanting can maximise future wildlife value by creating wildlife corridors, shade during higher temperatures and mitigation of flooding and air pollution;
- wildflower meadows are encouraged but must be accompanied by effective management plans. The proliferation of wildflower meadows within planning applications is in a way concerning, as it gives an impression of care for the habitat without adequate provision for correct installation and management;
- boundary structures are to be permeable to wildlife; solid structures such as fences and walls should include ground level holes to allow the passage of small animals such as hedgehogs. Gardens are a preferred habitat for hedgehogs due to predation by badgers in the arable fields;
- habitats for birds and bats, such as nest and roost boxes and access to dedicated roof spaces, should be built into the fabric of new homes;
- River Bourne is a chalk stream and new developments should take the fragility of the river into account and adapt drainage schemes appropriately;
- Ashdon is prone to flooding - fluvial, surface water runoff and groundwater seepage – all development should take into consideration flood risk and the increased frequency of extreme rainstorms in Ashdon;
- flooding can be alleviated by planting of permanent grassland and new woodland. The course of the River Bourne should not be straightened nor its banks cleared of vegetation, although debris in the river must be removed;
- incorporation of sustainable drainage solutions (SuDS) in development schemes is essential (National Design Guide, Essex Design Guide). Particularly important to Ashdon is the mitigation of greenfield run-off and enhanced flood risk protection. Other benefits of SuDS are improvements to green spaces and biodiversity, and design for water scarcity.

Public space – design of streets and public spaces

- valued green spaces in the Parish should be preserved and opportunities taken to create identity and focus through the creation of new green areas; Multifunctional high-quality green spaces and other environmental features (such as street trees, footpaths, play parks) foster community cohesion (see Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy 2020 (Essex County Council));
- development adjoining public open spaces and important gaps should enhance the character of these spaces by either providing a positive interface (i.e. properties facing onto them to improve natural surveillance) or a soft, low landscaped edge;

continued

- public spaces should be safe and accessible. Community participation should be encouraged by designs incorporating sport and recreation as well as benches and walkways (Active Design Principles and Health and Well-being);
- the existing quiet and peaceful atmosphere of areas away from the main vehicle routes should be preserved.

The 'Donkey Field' open space provides setting to the village core Conservation Area.

Contemporary housing at All Saints, Church End, around open play space with positive interface and a soft, low landscaped edge.

Uses – mix of uses and integrated

- houses in Ashdon are detached, semi-detached or terraced. If flats are built in future developments, they should be limited to 2 storey;
- there should be a mix of housing, there is a particular need for housing for the elderly and suitably sized housing for families, as well as ensuring that there is affordable housing to suit the needs of the local community;
- a mix of uses and services for the community to access need to be provided, with improved access to existing services and additional provision if a substantial number of houses are built;
- maximise the potential for social integration in the layout, form and appearance of types of development; provide a consistent level of design quality across tenures.
- low boundaries and front gardens are encouraged to foster social interaction and a sense of community.

Homes and Buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable

- to promote health and wellbeing, new houses should have adequate natural lighting, good quality ventilation and privacy from overlooking with access to a garden;
- buildings should be carefully integrated with their surrounding external space. External spaces should respond to local character and efficiently provide Green Infrastructure and recreation through 'borrowed' views and connections to Ashdon's extensive Public Rights of Way network;
- buildings should include discreet, accessible storage for all types of refuse collection.

Resources – efficient, environmental design, and renewable energy provision

Use of all types of resources is impacted by climate change – energy, land use, water use, materials. The UK Government's Climate Change Commission reported in 2021 saying the UK is not on target to reach the 78% reduction in emissions planned for by 2035 (just within the Neighbourhood Plan period (2036)) and an acceleration of strategies is required.

- new development should be energy efficient to meet the net zero emission targets of 2050. Materials, construction, and orientation should take this into consideration;
- solar orientation is encouraged for pleasant living and passive heat gain, and is helpful for installation of solar PV panels, and dual aspect is encouraged (Essex Design Guide). Simple and compact form minimises heat loss through surfaces. However, climate change now necessitates provision for solar shading (Climate Change Commission, 2021);
- move towards carbon neutral heating of buildings. Heat pumps should be installed in well insulated new homes. For larger schemes maximise use of renewable energy through decentralised sources, including on-site generation;
- exterior lighting on buildings should be LED and on infra-red sensors to minimise energy consumption. If for security low powered lights should be used and shielding used to reduce light spill from the site and increase efficiency;
- land should be used efficiently for building and brown field sites should always be used in preference to green field sites;
- development should incorporate land to enable screening with new vegetation and green landscaping. This will aid carbon capture;
- Essex has a low annual rainfall and conservation of water is vital to help reduce primary water use. New development should provide for rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling and allow water to fall on permeable surfaces and soak into the ground replenishing ground water and irrigating gardens;
- The reuse and recycling of existing materials is strongly encouraged. Timber should be from a proven sustainable source. The FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certification scheme is currently regarded as the best indicator of sustainable timber production.

Life span – made to last

- new development should be well designed to ensure flexibility of use and sustainability.
- when selecting design materials and design elements, it is necessary to consider how they stand the test of time both in terms of longevity of use and style; Ashdon is rich in heritage assets. New build should create the 'heritage assets of tomorrow' by design ensuring that buildings 'age gracefully'.
- stewardship plans for maintenance of community areas, private roads, landscaping, green infrastructure, including wildflower meadows, should be clearly defined.

4. DETAILED DESIGN GUIDANCE FOR SPECIFIC CHARACTER AREAS OF PARISH

4.1 The settlement has expanded over the years producing several distinct areas, each with characteristics which are an important consideration when planning development.

4.2 These distinct areas have been defined to:

- identify and describe the character and key features of each area;
- ensure any new development is designed in a manner that respects and enhances its setting;
- assist those charged with commenting on the appropriateness of new development.

The areas fall into two categories, settlement character areas (SCA) and wooded plateau farmland character areas (WPFCA).

SCA1 - Ashdon Village Core, including Conservation Area, Crown Hill, Church Hill, Radwinter Rd., Bartlow Rd., Rogers End and Holden End

SCA2 - Church End, including Conservation Area and Fallowden Lane

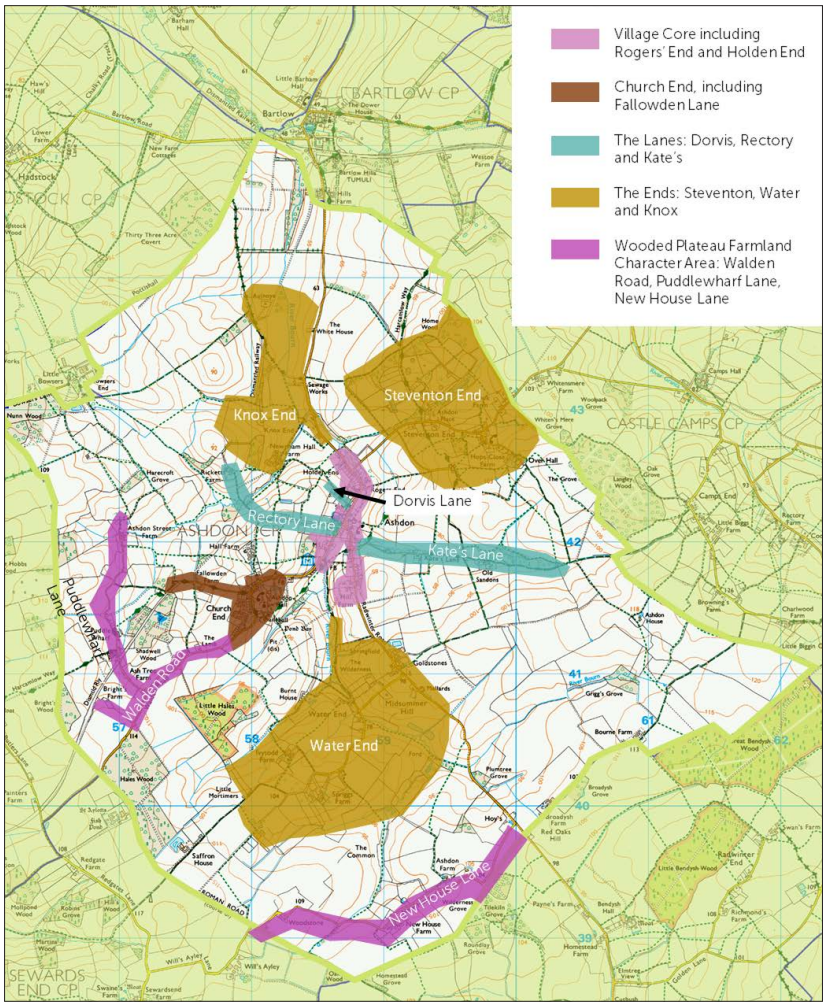
SCA3 - The Lanes: Dorvis Lane, Rectory Lane and Kate's Lane

SCA4 - The Ends: Steventon End, Water End and Knox End

WPFCA 5 - Walden Road

WPFCA 6 - Puddlewharf Lane and New House Lane

The location of each area is shown in **Map 3**



Map 3 - Character Areas

SETTLEMENT CHARACTER AREAS (SCA)

Overview

4.3 This character area comprises two of the landscape types found in the Parish - the Lowland Village Chalklands and Chalk Hills and Scarps see Map 2 and described in the Ashdon Landscape Appraisal 2020. It is characterised by nucleated settlements on the valley floors which are often wooded, and fields are small scale pastures or arable. The valleys become narrower and more incised as the land rises and settlements are completely hidden, folded into the valley bottom. Generally, there is an absence of settlement on the steeper slopes.

4.4 A large part of Church End is on a finger of higher ground of the Wooded Plateau Farmland; however we have dealt with it here as it is one of the two main settlements in the Parish. Its high elevation in the landscape makes it particularly sensitive to the visual impact of development in the wider landscape.

SCA 1: Ashdon Village Core – Crown Hill, Radwinter Road, Church Hill, Bartlow Road (Rogers End and Holden End)

Design Guidelines for the Village Core SCA1 - Crown Hill, Radwinter Road, Church Hill, Bartlow Road (Rogers End and Holden End).

Layout and Form

- in the historic Village Core dwellings should be set against the road edge, typically one plot deep.
- further out from the historic Village Core, buildings should be located at the front of deep plots with narrow frontages and front gardens;
- development up the valley sides above the 75m contour in Rogers End, Holden End and the Village Core will be prominent and should be avoided;
- new buildings should not impact the rural setting due to the rising valley topography, the course of the River Bourne and the open gaps in built form which provide strong visual and physical connections to the wider rural valley landscape;
- parking should be off street, possibly to the rear of properties; there is no capacity for additional on-street parking. Building in gardens should be discouraged where this may impact on existing parking provision. Development in the vicinity of the village school should take note not to add further pressure to parking issues in this area;

Building Style

- within the Conservation Area the highest level of design sympathetic to the historic environment should be employed;
- residential dwellings should reflect local vernacular styles reinforcing rural context of village;

Public realm and mitigation

- all new development should retain the perceptions of development sitting down within the valley topography;
- stone thresholds are preferable, especially where buildings adjoin the pavement;
- development should recognise the lack of pavements in Rogers End, Holden End and Radwinter Road
- road markings and signage should be kept to a minimum; if unavoidable, the only type of yellow line marking should be the 50mm width 'primrose' yellow type, suited to Conservation Areas.

Boundary treatments

- if boundary treatments are required in the historic Village Core they should comprise walls that follow adjacent building lines and detailing; materials should be brick and/or flint;
- in more open areas, managed hedges, low fences (on road boundaries) and railings are appropriate, particularly where enclosing areas of open space or gardens;

Flooding and the River Bourne

- the narrow and steep sided valley results in regular flooding of the strip meadows alongside the river and of dwellings that sit tightly alongside it. These areas are not appropriate for development due to risk to properties but also because of loss of flood alleviation land;
- development must consider & minimise non-permeable surface areas running downhill which increase surface water run-off. Run-off down the steep roads and directly into the river can exacerbate flooding and contaminate the chalk stream habitat, for example, down Radwinter Road to Crown Hill.

Planting

- new or replacement planting of hedgerows should be of native species. Occasional new landmark trees may be appropriate, these should be a native species, including Scots pine.
- in the semi-rural settlement smaller, ornamental trees that are related to native species are appropriate such as cherry, crab apple and others (see **Planting in Settlement Character Areas** Page 33).
- in very small front gardens climbers are encouraged, where possible, as they provide greenness while retaining the characteristic building line, and shade houses from heat exacerbated by climate change;
- small areas of planting can be useful to provide relief and interest within generally hard areas.

4.5 Ashdon village core is the main settlement in the Parish. It grew up at the junction of Radwinter Road and Crown Hill and the crossing of the River Bourne. The historic centre retains its rural setting, especially to the south and west. The river valley and surrounding agricultural land contribute significantly to the character and landscape setting of the village core and Conservation Area.

Village core Conservation Area, Crown Hill looking up Radwinter Road. Old, red brick White Horse (long closed pub) on the right. Many timber and plaster buildings.

4.6 The views into and out of the village core often include the key landmarks of All Saints Church or the Windmill. The settlement developed at Crown Hill, and along adjoining roads, is one plot deep, allowing for countryside views between the buildings, particularly where the valley slopes rise behind the houses. There are attractive views both into and out of the allotments on Crown Hill, especially to the Windmill on the hillside.

4.7 The green verdant setting of the village is complimented by the green spaces within. These include the gardens and hedges that surround most houses here. The Donkey Field is the main green open space; it adjoins the Conservation Area on three sides and is crossed by the Harcamlow Way long-distance footpath. Between the River Bourne and the lower section of Church Hill are green verges and trees along the riverbank which widen out at Crown Hill into larger areas of green space which include the war memorial and the village sign, eventually becoming the allotments. There are a few landmark trees such as the Millenium Oak (in the Donkey Field, see below) and specimen trees adjacent to the war memorial.

Approach to Rogers End and the village core showing there are open views to the rising fields from the heart of the village

View from busy Church Hill past the museum to the Donkey field and rear of Radwinter Road.

4.8 The historic settlement has a high degree of surviving structures, there are many listed buildings with a particularly high density around the junction of Radwinter Road and Crown Hill. Notable examples are the Rose and Crown, the Old Fox and the Village Hall. Three main routes radiate out from Crown Hill: Radwinter Road, Church Hill and the road through Rogers and Holden Ends, becoming the Bartlow Road.

4.9 Radwinter Road (west side): there is a cluster of early and listed buildings (several thatched). In the post-war period infill was developed in a piecemeal fashion with mostly two storey detached houses. Almost all properties, old or contemporary, are set back from the road.

4.10 Radwinter Road (east side): from Crown Hill to Chapel farmhouse is rich in listed structures which are mainly built directly onto the pavement. South from here piecemeal development has occurred resulting in a variety of housing types.

4.11 Church Hill (east side): Further up the hill, development occurred by the late 19th Century, these small cottages are now much altered, rebuilt, or infilled. As Church Hill rises towards Church End, through a green tunnel of trees, the historic settlement gap is preserved with fields sweeping down to the river below.

4.12 Church Hill (west side): The open hillside of fields forming the settlement gap on the west side is preserved, with Church End starting near the top of Church Hill.

Collier Row, terraced cottages fronting the street in the village core Conservation Area.

View from Crown Hill looking north with the open areas of the War Memorial, allotments and open countryside on the right.

View to the Windmill and the rear of Radwinter Road properties demonstrates the immersion in the wooded countryside.

4.13 Crown Hill: from Rectory Lane to Dorvis Lane remains little altered since 1900 with a run of listed buildings on or close to the pavement. Continuing through Rogers and Holden Ends/Bartlow Road the area reflects the contemporary social development of Ashdon.

4.14 Mid 20th Century development overlays earlier historic buildings, these are generally one plot deep and some sit on the road edge **Rogers End**. In **Holden End** there are early clusters of houses, most are listed and many are wholly or partially thatched. Flint and red brick are represented here.

4.15 *'The historic separation between Ashdon and the **Rogers and Holden Ends** has been undermined by small 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.'* (Ashdon Landscape Appraisal 2020). It includes Carters Croft and Tredgetts designed for accessibility and/or affordable housing.

4.16 Bartlow (west side): There are 12 ex local authority post-war rendered semi-detached houses with a mixture of hipped and gabled roofs. These are followed by eight red brick semi-detached houses built by Thurlow Estates with pedimented Georgian style front doors. All have large gardens with hedged front boundaries.

4.17 Bartlow Road (east side): There are 1980's semi-detached houses next to the Bricklayers Cottages, and beyond this are three 1960s chalet style homes set back in large gardens. Houses on the river side of the road in this area and at Rogers End are vulnerable to flooding.

View from the Windmill showing how the settlement winds along the valley bottom largely screened by trees.

View of accessible accommodation at Carter's Croft with the allotments in the foreground and footpath to the right.

SCA2: Church End – including Fallowden Lane

Design Guidelines for SCA2 - Church End including Fallowden Lane.

Layout and form

- all development should be sensitive to the setting of the Conservation Area and allow for wide views across the countryside to woodland on the skyline;
- development above 95m contour at Church End will be more visually prominent and form and layout should be sensitive to this;
- proposals should make better use of open areas, for example, by creating communal seating/ meeting points and improved planting/landscape enhancement. This approach has been started in the Churchfields/All Saints development;
- linear development along Fallowden Lane is to be avoided, as are impacts on the open countryside views along the lane. The lane is single track with no mains sewage for most of its length;

Building style

- within the Conservation Area the highest level of design sympathetic to the historic environment should be employed;
- in the other areas the style should reflect the period and era of building in the area and look to respond to the highest levels of sustainability and encourage greater variety;
- materials should be sympathetic to the existing new developments and adjacent older buildings, typically walls are rendered and painted, painted weatherboard or red brick;

Public realm and mitigation

- in the Conservation Area care should be taken to avoid impacting views both in and out of the area, especially of All Saints Church and the Windmill;
- development in these elevated parts of the village can be especially prominent in views. Considerable effort should be made to keep the height of ridges to an acceptable height compared with surrounding buildings. In elevated positions 1 ½ to 1 ¾ storey is more appropriate than 2 storey;
- away from the Conservation Area macadam footpaths, road and standard roadside kerbs are found but porous macadam and gravel dressing or rolled-in gravel surfaces are desirable; include grass verges where possible;
- development affecting the village gateway should be sensitive to the visual impact; building height should reflect adjacent, existing buildings and native planting used to soften high walls or roof lines.

Boundary treatments

- low brick walls or hedges are suitable boundary treatments to front gardens where they exist;

(CONTINUED)

Planting

- native trees and hedgerows should form the main focus to help reinforce the rural character and connection with the wooded countryside;
- new or replacement planting of hedgerows should be of native species. Occasional new landmark trees may be appropriate, these should be a native species, including Scots pine;
- in more dense developments semi-rural planting using smaller, ornamental trees that are related to native species are appropriate, such as cherry, crab apple and others (see **Planting in Settlement Character Areas** Page 33).
- in very small front gardens climbers are encouraged, where possible, as they provide greenness while retaining the characteristic building line, and shade houses from heat exacerbated by climate change;
- small areas of planting can be useful to provide relief and interest within generally hard areas.

4.18 Church End is built on the highest point in the immediate area with the land sloping gently down to the River Bourne. It is surrounded arable land edged by hedgerows with ancient woodlands and small copses.

4.19 When approaching from Saffron Walden, there are sweeping views to open countryside to the south east. The church takes centre stage in several key views. These views are identified in the Neighbourhood Plan Assessment of Important Views document. There are also views from the scheduled ancient monument area down towards the River Bourne and up towards the Windmill. Fallowden Lane has far-reaching open views to either side.

4.20 The historic buildings are focused in the Conservation Area surrounding the Church, including the Old Vicarage and the magnificent medieval Guildhall. More recent infill development has occurred but the impact on the historic buildings is limited.

4.21 To the north of the Church is Ashdon Hall, one of the original manors, is surrounded by gardens, parkland, and an arboretum.

4.22 Opposite the Conservation Area are red brick and timber-framed cottages and the flint and brick Old School building. In the 1970s, Glebeside was built behind the Old School where its former outbuildings had stood.

4.23 Church End has seen extensive development since the 1950s. The first social housing to be built was Guildhall Way these are two storey, red brick terraces. A number of bungalows were also built in this area and some extended along Walden Road.

The Guildhall, Church End Conservation Area

View into Church End showing 20th Century house (Glebeside) with tree planting softening the built form and view through to All Saints Church.

4.24 Behind Guildhall Way lies Churchfields and All Saints Close. These were built to provide affordable housing for the local community. Thirteen houses were built in 2000 at Churchfields followed by 19 houses at All Saints Close. These are a mixture of red brick, painted weatherboard, and white-rendered houses and are generally complimentary to the vernacular style. However, built on high ground they are visible in long distance views from the south.

4.25 Fallowden Lane is single track and without mains sewage for most of its length. At the end of the lane after open fields is a group of four houses. Springmead (a contemporary detached house has been built down into the slope replacing an existing bungalow) ensuring that the roof height is not dominant in the landscape. The course of the old railway line and the original Ashdon Halt are found here.

Mixed housing from different periods line Fallowden Lane, along with the blight of overhead wires.

4.26 One of the key characteristics of Church End is the amount of green open space. Details of these can be found in the Neighbourhood Plan Open Green Spaces document.

SCA3: The Lanes - Dorvis Lane, Rectory Lane, Kates Lane

Design Guidelines for the Lanes SCA3 - Dorvis Lane, Rectory Lane, Kates Lane

Layout and form

- the setting provided by the wider countryside is an important influence on the character of this area, and views across the surrounding fields should be maintained;
- it is important that the rural, agricultural character and layout of buildings and the visual separation is maintained and reinforced. Further incremental growth along the lanes risks eroding the identity of the historic properties at the end of the lane;
- buildings should be set well back from the lane;
- all new development should include provision for parking. There is no possibility of on-street parking as all lanes are single track.

Building style

- the layout of buildings should recognise the separate/detached rural character, fronting the lane and overlooking countryside, and therefore opportunities to reinforce distinctiveness can be explored.

Public realm and mitigation

- housing should always be sparse as the single-track lanes and banked verges are vulnerable to increased traffic;
- the nature and setting of the green open spaces (a wildflower meadow and playground) on Rectory Lane should be protected and enhanced;
- design and density should respond to the rural lane character, where pedestrians take priority on shared surfaces. Kate's Lane is long, and residents will likely use a car to access all facilities, including the bus stop;
- issues with flooding from runof, for example down Rectory Lane; avoid exacerbating runoff by adding hard landscaping or changing field boundaries.

(CONTINUED)

Boundary treatments

- to be sympathetic to the character of the sunken lanes and avoid unnecessary destruction of ancient banking and flower-rich verges;
- native hedging will generally be most appropriate;

Planting

- replacement native planting and screening should be planned for in order to maintain the 'green tunnel' effect along large parts of these lanes;
- native trees and hedgerows, extending to small woodlands where appropriate (see **Planting in Settlement Character Areas** Page 33).

4.27 Dorvis Lane leads off to the west of Bartlow Road within Ashdon village Conservation Area. It is a short sunken dead end which rises steeply with wooded banks typical of an ancient lane to either side, the tarmac road ends with a gate and a footpath leading to Newnham Hall Farm. There are four houses all built prior to 1900: timber framed and thatched cottages (listed), the red and white brick Victorian Skye Cottage (locally listed), and the 19th Century Old Rectory.

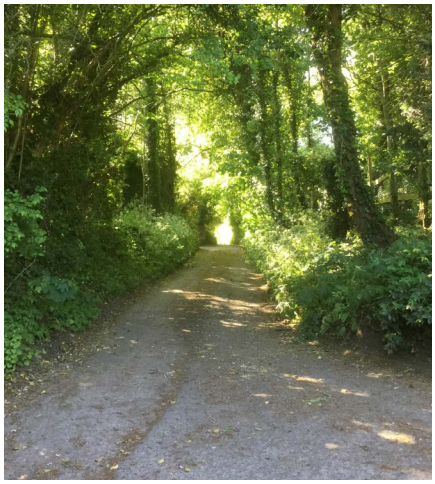
4.28 Rectory Lane leads off to the west from Church Hill within Ashdon village core. It preserves sections where it remains sunken, has commanding views as it reaches the higher ground, has well preserved hedgerows and fine specimen trees, and leads to several footpaths. The road ends at the grade II listed Ricketts Farm.

4.29 The lane commences with a variety of 20th Century properties along both sides as it rises to the imposing grade II listed Old Rectory, not to be confused with the Old Rectory in Dorvis Lane. All are set back in their own garden plots.

4.30 Kate's Lane is a picturesque rural lane commencing off Radwinter Road within Ashdon village core and leading east along a tributary of the River Bourne. It is surrounded by countryside and has good views out to surrounding farmland as well as to the northeast up to the Windmill. There are only a few houses but those that do exist are a mixture of ancient and contemporary.

4.31 These three lanes all lack a mains sewer for most of their length.

Patterned brick on the Local Heritage Asset, Skye Cottage, in Dorvis Lane.



Sunken, green-lined Dorvis lane.

Traditional weatherboarded outbuilding and native hedging at the village end of Rectory Lane.

Design Guidelines for the The Ends - Water End, Steventon End, Knox End

Layout and form

- development should be located nestled in the valley bottoms and bedded into the landscape. In the case of Water End and Knox End due regard should be paid to flood risk;
- in all areas, development rising up the valley sides would be highly visible and should be avoided. In Steventon End this is above the 95m contour and in Water End above the 80m contour;
- the setting provided by the wider countryside is an important influence on the character of this area, and views across the surrounding fields should be maintained, particularly around the landmark Windmill;
- significant historic settlement gaps exist between all these areas and the rest of the settlement, and these should be preserved, and visual separation maintained and reinforced. There may be scope for some limited individual bespoke dwellings on infill sites within the settlements;
- avoid infill development which results in new access drives and further fragmentation of the narrow, sunken lanes.

Building style

- the layout of buildings and style should recognise the separate/detached settlement character, fronting the road and overlooking countryside, and therefore could explore opportunities to reinforce distinctiveness and a contemporary response in keeping with the settlement and its context.

Public realm and mitigation

- housing should always be sparse as the rural lanes and banked verges are vulnerable to increased traffic;
- Developers should avoid any unnecessary destruction of the historic banks and hedgerows;
- Avoid adverse effects on rural lanes and erosion of their rural, narrow character and those which cause urbanisation through inappropriate planting e.g. non-native hedging/plants or other structures e.g. stone gabions;
- Respond to the rural lane character, where pedestrians take priority on shared surfaces.

Boundary treatments

- Native hedging is the boundary of choice;

Flooding

- avoid changes to land use or increased hard landscaping which cause flooding downstream or onto the rural lanes.

Planting

- Native trees and hedgerows, extending to small woodlands where appropriate (see **Planting in Settlement Character Areas** (see Page 33)

- In Water End above the valley bottom wider spacing of buildings allows for planting of forest-scale trees and the landmark trees of the future.

4.32 Water End is the name of a settlement in the valley of the River Bourne south of Ashdon. It is accessed off the Radwinter Road. The area is rural and isolated with scattered cottages and farmsteads accessed along single-track lanes. It is a rolling landscape of farmland edged by ancient hedgerows, small woods, and notable trees with far reaching views. This character area also includes Rock End, a tiny group of houses south of Hill Farm in Ashdon, Midsummer Hill clustered around Goldstones, and individual isolated houses to the west of Water End. All properties are set in large gardens with off road parking; hedges are used as boundaries throughout.

4.33 The buildings at Water End are nestled by the River Bourne. Many are listed, thatched houses with origins in the 17th Century. Two 19th Century cottages sit either side of the river and are prone to flooding. *'Properties are associated with large grounds and in some cases the watercourse forms part of the garden. The prevalence of thatched rooves, and place/lane names and willow trees reinforce the 'watery' sense of place. 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'* (Ashdon Landscape Appraisal 2020).

4.34 The single-track lane travels south from Water End passing a new build, Spriggs House and a bungalow, Pippins, verges here are protected as 'Important'. The narrow, banked track continues to several isolated farmhouses, two are listed, and several barns have been converted for residential use.

4.35 The significant cluster of buildings at Midsummer Hill is focused on the grade II listed Goldstones and fine barn and listed Midsummer Hill Cottages beyond. The houses are rendered and have hipped roofs of old red tiles. This group has long been a significant landmark on the Radwinter Road. Opposite Goldstones is the 19th Century red brick house, The Vales. There have been several 20th Century properties added without serious impact on the setting of the historic group, but a 21st Century conversion of a double Dutch barn is dominant when approaching from Ashdon village core.

4.36 The pre 20th Century properties are mainly wood framed with light coloured render and/or weather boarding, which may be painted or black. There are some fine farmhouses. Outbuildings and cart lodges are invariably black weather board. Roofs are thatch, red clay tile or slate. Three 20th Century buildings on Stallentines Lane are highly visible in the landscape and highlight the issue of building on the valley sides.

Plaster, timber and thatch is characteristic of the heritage centre of Water End, most of which is hidden in the steep-sided valley. Single track Spriggs Lane is shown.

Cluster of buildings of different periods around Goldstones farmhouse on Midsummer Hill, Water End.

4.37 **Steventon End** is located to the northeast of Ashdon village core accessed up a country lane, with a dead-end lane known as Overhall Lane adjoining. The settlement consists of the historic group of dwellings around the country house and estate of Waltons Park, further along the lane is the separate settlement of Steventon End. Both are surrounded by open rural countryside of agricultural fields and small woods. Views take in the notable landmark of the Windmill dating from 1757 on the hilltop to the south of the settlement and estate, and the woodland and copses of the surrounding areas.

4.38 Waltons Park is a grand country house set back within its parkland and gardens, its origins are ancient, but it was rebuilt in the 20th Century following a devastating fire. Closer to the road are its earlier stables, outbuildings, walls, cottage, and barn, all are listed and date from the 16th Century onwards.

Heritage buildings at Waltons estate include 16th Century stables and Place Farm farmhouse (now Ashdon Place).'

Historic cottages in Steventon End, two timber-framed and thatched and another of flint and brick with a slate roof

Contemporary house in Steventon End in a low setting among trees and with a low ridge height and dormer windows.

4.39 On the approach into the settlement of Steventon End are two listed thatched cottages, Keepers Cottage and Walts Cottage followed by flint with red brick 'Flint' cottage. These houses are all set close to the road where it narrows. The road here is prone to surface water flooding.

4.40 The houses up Overhall Lane are generally contemporary, mainly detached and become larger the higher the lane climbs.

4.41 **Knox End** is situated on the Bartlow Road to the north of Holden End following a clear settlement gap. There are only a few buildings, these are grouped close to the turning for Newnham Hall Farm which is also where the Bartlow Road crosses the River Bourne. It is surrounded by sparsely populated countryside of mostly arable land with cattle-farming at Newnham Hall Farm and dotted with copses and woodlands creating a wonderful panoramic view from the road. Close to the junction are Knox Cottage and Knox End, a listed pair of timber framed cottages with part-thatched roofs. Newnham Hall Farm is the site of one of the original manors of Ashdon. The current house has 16th Century origins and is listed, along with a barn. The houses all sit in their own gardens.

4.42 The historic houses of Steventon and Knox Ends are typically old red brick or light-coloured render and are characteristic of the area. Flint and brick is represented too. Old roofs are red tile or thatch.

Planting within settlement character areas

- Trees planted within the built envelope should have local provenance to the area, be slow-growing, and have a long-life expectancy. Occasional 'landmark trees' that break the settlements' rooflines are encouraged;
- Native planting, such as hedgerows, screening or wider 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.

Species for hedging include hawthorn, hornbeam, field maple, where additional, evergreen screening is required, yew or common holly can be used or included in the hedge mix.

Suitable trees include silver birch, rowan, hawthorn, hazel, field maple, and occasional oak and Scots pine.

(CONTINUED)

- Trees should be planted in 'family groups' to enable them to thrive. Planting, even small areas to accommodate a climbing plant on a building façade, should be incorporated into new developments and to soften hard landscaping;
- Scots pine are an unusual native addition to the green landscape of the built areas of Ashdon and the mature specimens there are now landmarks, removal should be avoided and new planting is encouraged;
- Where space is limited or in gardens, appropriate medium and small-sized ornamental trees, including varieties of Prunus (cherry), Malus (crab apple) and Ilex (holly), can be used. A Judas tree (Cercis siliquastrum), is found on Crown Hill near the War Memorial and may be considered;
- https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/types/trees/native-tree-shrubs gives more advice on species of native trees and shrubs, height of growth and suitable uses and soil;
- The Parish's existing species-rich, chalk grassland and roadside verges are aesthetically pleasing as well as ecologically rich. Neutral, calcareous or wetland species-rich grasslands are all appropriate for new meadows, depending on local ground conditions.

WOODED PLATEAU FARMLAND CHARACTER AREA (WPFCA)

Overview

4.43 The elevated plateau landscape 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 the Windmill. The chalky boulder clay, overlying chalk creating a relatively flat and open landscape has views to wooded horizons and arable farmland. Many of the woodlands are ancient. e.g., Little Hales Wood, Hales Wood, and Shadwell Wood. Settlement is sparse, with scattered farmsteads and Halls. Occasional contemporary 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.

Design Guidelines for Wooded Plateau Farmland WPFCA 5 and 6 – Walden Road, Puddlewharf Lane and New House Lane

Layout and form

- isolated farmsteads and their barns and outbuildings predominate. It is important that the rural, agricultural character and layout of buildings and the visual separation is maintained and reinforced;
- buildings should be set well back from the road or lane;
- the setting provided by the wider countryside is an important influence on the character of this area, and views across the surrounding fields should be maintained, particularly including woods on the skyline;
- significant historic settlement gaps exist between all these areas and the other parts of the settlement, and these should be preserved, and visual separation maintained and reinforced. There may be scope for some limited individual bespoke dwellings on infill sites;
- avoid infill development which results in new access drives and further fragmentation of the lanes;
- all new development should include provision for parking. There is no possibility of on-street parking as Walden Road is a fast, busy road and the two lanes are single track.

Building style

- the layout of buildings and style should recognise the historic isolated farmstead character, fronting the road/lane and overlooking countryside, and therefore could explore opportunities to reinforce distinctiveness and a contemporary response in keeping with the isolated context;
- materials used are particularly important in these rural locations and should be typical of the vernacular and blend with the existing buildings

Public realm and mitigation

- avoid unscreened development, unconnected with existing buildings, which will be visually prominent in wider views;
- housing should always be sparse as the roads and verges are vulnerable to increased traffic;
- respond to the rural lane character, where pedestrians take priority on shared surfaces.

Boundary treatments

- native hedging is the boundary of choice, post and rail fences are acceptable around paddocks;
- to be sympathetic to flower-rich verges and reinstate or create new where possible

Planting

- Native trees and hedgerows, extending to small woodlands where appropriate (**Planting in Wooded Plateau Farmland Character Areas** Page 37);
- Wider spacing of buildings allows for planting of forest-scale trees and the landmark trees of the future.

WPFCA 5 Walden Road

4.44 Walden Road is the main approach into Church End from the south and has housing on its north west side with far reaching views across open countryside opposite. The area begins south east of Puddle Wharf (...wart) Lane and finishes at the village 30mph speed limit.

4.45 At the corner where the lane joins with the Walden Road is Ash Tree Farm, formerly known as Nutts Farm. The buildings are contemporary, an existing bungalow has been extended to two storeys and there is a barn conversion. Across the field to the rear and visible from the lane is Brights. Nutts Farm and Brights both date back to the 1500s although the buildings now bear little resemblance to their ancient origins.

4.46 On the west side of Walden Road there are a group of three contemporary houses set behind hedges, a small bungalow, Barleycroft, a larger two storey detached house, Woodlands, and a new build on the site of a bungalow, Ashdon Lodge.

4.47 Further along is an 18th Century red brick former public house directly on the road which has been extended, known as The Lamb.

WPFCA 6 Puddlewharf (Puddlewart) Lane and New House Lane

4.48 Puddlewharf is a rural, single track lane leading west through undulating farmland to Ashdon Street Farm. Ashdon Street Farm is a grade II listed 17th Century farmhouse in an isolated position. The adjacent barns have been converted in recent years.

4.49 Between this and the Walden Road is Puddle Wart Farm also dating from the 17th Century with some low outbuildings, close by on the other side of the lane are the glasshouses of Pinewood Nursery.

4.50 The only facility is the Shadwell Wood Nature Reserve, this is also one of the area's green spaces. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and open, tree-free 'rides' are laid out through the ancient, coppiced woodland. On the opposite side of the Walden Road there is Little Hales Wood with public access.

Sparse housing on the tree-lined side of Walden Road and passing traffic.

View of All Saints Church and open landscape on the approach to Ashdon from Saffron Walden past the former Lamb public house.

Single track Puddlewharf Lane among the arable fields of the plateau landscape.

4.51 New House Lane, a Protected Lane (reassessed and confirmed in 2012), leads west off Radwinter Road well to the south of the village on the 'Farmland Plateau'. It meanders through open countryside with a few well-spaced houses; it is the only through lane in the Parish. There are three grade II listed buildings with their origins as early farmsteads but now much altered, all are detached and set in large gardens.

4.52 There are several barn conversions, including the 16th Century Barn Owls, as well as the recent conversion of a contemporary Dutch barn.

Sparse housing located around original farmsteads along New House Lane with paddock fencing.

Single track New House Lane winding over the plateau landscape of arable fields and ancient hedgerows and copses.

Planting in Wooded Plateau Farmland Character Areas

- Trees planted within the built envelope should have local provenance to the area, be slow-growing, and have a long-life expectancy. Occasional 'landmark trees' that break the settlements' rooflines are encouraged;
- Native planting, such as hedgerows, screening or wider 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. Such planting can form new wildlife corridors, especially if it links with existing areas of biodiversity and help to counteract climate change;

  Species for hedging include hawthorn, hornbeam, field maple, where additional, evergreen screening is required, yew or common holly can be used or included in the hedge mix.

  Suitable trees include silver birch, rowan, hawthorn, hazel, field maple, alder, oak, small leaved lime, goat willow and Scots pine.

- Layering is an appropriate local technique for managing hedges;
- https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/types/trees/native-tree-shrubs gives advice on species of native trees and shrubs, height of growth and suitable uses and soil;
- The Parish's existing species-rich, chalk grassland and roadside verges are aesthetically pleasing as well as ecologically rich. Neutral, calcareous or wetland specie-rich grasslands are all appropriate, depending on local ground conditions.

5. DETAIL OF BUILT FORM IN ASHDON WITH SPECIFIC DESIGN EXAMPLES

5.1 There is strong support in the local community to ensure that new development should reflect the height and scale of existing buildings and that the historic distinctiveness of the Parish is preserved. Development should respond sensitively to the surrounding architectural context, in the quality of design, scale, and massing, in order to compliment the vernacular styles prevalent within the Parish. This section sets out the vernacular styles giving specific guidance for:

- walls
- roof and chimneys
- doors and windows
- garages, cart lodges and outbuildings
- ancillary architectural elements
- boundary treatments and paving
- utility provision

This section then gives pictorial examples of successful and less successful developments.

WALLS

5.2 Traditional materials help to connect a new place with the form and feel of the settlement to which it relates; they tend to improve with time and add to rather than detract from the character. The oldest buildings are constructed with timber frames and wattle and daub infill with lime plastered finish. From the 18th and 19th Century there are examples of red Essex brick-built buildings and flint buildings. The 20th and 21st Century buildings are a mixture of brick or rendered elevations. On balance a painted plaster or render finish dominates. This section draws on the Essex Design Guide (2018)(EDG).

- Developments should draw inspiration from the local materials, contemporary design can fit in well if interpreted in local materials;
- if more than one facing material is used, its use should appear logical, so on different floors or to articulate different parts of the structure.

A variety of materials are used in the Radwinter Road Conservation Area.

The Vales - Victorian red-brick house in Midsummer Hill, Water End.

20th Century at All Saints, Church End, good use of mixed, external materials avoiding a uniform appearance and enhancing its ' acceptance' in the village environment. Brick chimney adds visual interest. Car parking provided in communal cart lodges.

Render/Plaster

5.3 There are many examples of lime plaster finishes among the listed buildings, for instance the Maltings. Successful contemporary houses have painted rendered finishes as Apple Tree House and at All Saints Close where it is used to contrast with other brick elevations and introduce variety.

Brick

5.4 The older brick buildings use traditional Essex red bricks. Red bricks are also used as dressings to flint buildings.

Traditional timber construction with plaster walls and old red tiled roof, Malting. Single storey side extension blends seamlessly with old building. Red-brick boundary wall.

Brook Cottage, 20th Century extension of original small cottage. Colour of render very 'natural' making it blend successfully with wider landscape. Pargetting detail and the varying ridge heights adds interest..

Red brick 19th Century roadside cottage in the village core Conservation Area.

Contemporary, affordable and mixed housing at All Saints, Church End. A successful combination of red-brick, painted render and white-painted weatherboard.

Flint

5.5 There are not many examples of flint buildings or structures, but they are distinctive where they occur and contribute to the variety of materials in the area. Where it is used more recently is on small structures such as garden walls.

Traditional flint and brick cottage.

Flint and brick boundary wall, one of several found in the village.

Contemporary Dutch barn conversion using a contemporary interpretation of weatherboarding.

Successful 21st Century house in traditional 'farmhouse' style with 1¾ height ridge, dormer windows and white weatherboarding historically white painted weatherboarding was used on dwellings.

Weatherboard

5.6 There are many older barns and outbuildings that have horizontal dark weatherboarding, historically white painted weatherboarding was used on dwellings. Contemporary conversions have continued to use similar materials. Some contemporary houses have used painted or dark weatherboarding on their elevations.

ROOFS AND CHIMNEYS

- Almost all roofs are pitched whether old or new. There are a few examples of hipped roofs and a couple of notable mansard roofs.
- The EDG states that plain clay tiles should be used on roofs with a pitch of 50° and slates for a pitch of 35-40° and clay pantiles limited to single storey ancillary buildings.
- Chimneys should be preserved and incorporated into the new build, where new they should have Class I flues and chimneys.
- New developments should include chimneys stacks, where possible, to help punctuate rooflines and provide visual interest.
- Vent pipes should be grouped and installed in chimneys or positioned discreetly on rear roof slopes.

Farm cottage with traditional brick chimneys and red tiled roof.

Old Rectory in Rectory Lane with majestic, traditional chimneys.

Listed terrace of thatched cottages with simple brick chimneys.

Slate roof with pale weatherboarding and brick detailing on chimney.

5.7 The Parish has many examples of thatched roofs; however, these are confined to historic buildings. Elsewhere the older roofs tend to use flat red clay, several 19th Century buildings use slates while the contemporary houses have a mixture of clay and slate.

Dormers and rooflights

5.8 There are many examples of dormers on both historic and newer properties. These break up the roof lines, allowing an upper floor within the roof slope ensuring that the scale of buildings remains modest. However, they should not be over dominant and they should not be located close to verges or hips (EDG).

5.9 Rooflights should be used sparingly; they can be appropriate in good barn conversions. Rooflight position and size are important considerations. The rooflight may disrupt the visual line of the roof and limit siting of solar panels. They should appear on rear elevations only and not in conjunction with dormers (EDG).

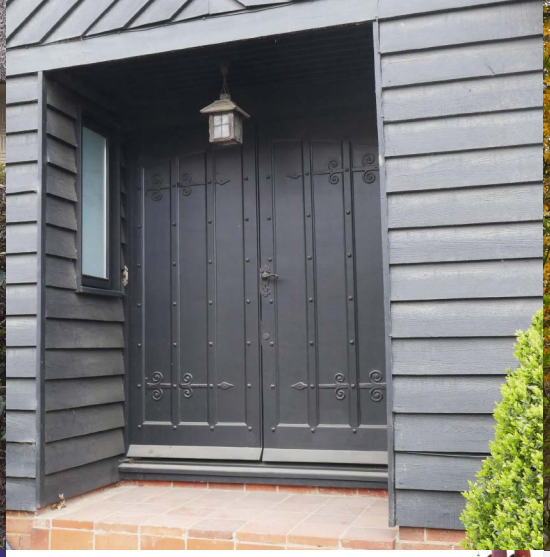
Contemporary Apple Tree House adjoins the Conservation Area and is in keeping with its heritage setting: painted render walls and plain red tiled roof. The dormer windows allow the ridge height to be kept low (1¾ storey).

DOORS AND WINDOWS

5.10 The size, shape, and proportion of windows and their panes in relation to the elevation is critical to the success of the overall design of a building. How windows are made and used reflects not just the tradition locally but also the climatic conditions and the orientation of the building. Doors and porches, just as with windows, are very important in creating good streets and places.

5.11 Currently, there are a wide variety of doors and windows from the early painted timber examples on historic buildings, to sensitive replacements and less sensitive UPVc examples. The architectural styles of door run from cottage plank doors to panelled (mock) Georgian and more contemporary styling. There are early sash windows, casements, sliding sash windows and contemporary examples that reflect these earlier styles. Owners should exercise caution in the replacement of existing windows and where replacement is necessary avoid UPVc.

- in general, doors and windows should be balanced in composition. In barn conversions an asymmetrical arrangement of windows can be more appropriate. Refer to EDG for guidance.
- windows should be proportionate - especially bay windows which should be substantial elements, preferably of storey-height, and dormers which should not be over large (see paragraph 5.8).
- windows should be set in by at least half a brick in depth, they should have sills and lintels, possibly in another material. Refer to EDG
- all windows and doors should be of painted timber, in keeping with the building traditions of Essex. The drab effect produced by stained joinery is to be avoided. Microporous paints, where used, should be of high build quality.
- French windows should be no more than 1.5 metres wide, where wider they should be clearly subdivided to avoid large expanses of glass.
- the design of windows and doors should reflect the pattern of the existing property for extensions and alterations. There should be consistency in larger developments.
- insensitive use of UPVc doors and windows is discouraged.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ALLGOOD
COTTAGE




REDWELLS


GARAGES, CART LODGES AND OUTBUILDINGS

5.12 These subordinate buildings are important in terms both of place-making and function.

- garages and cart lodges should have open fronts and be uninsulated to encourage Encourage use for off-street parking.
- subordinate buildings will usually be of black weatherboard, or occasionally painted render, with pitched roofs of red tile or slate.
- the provision of fast-charging points will encourage the use of garages and cart lodges for parking.
- maximise opportunities on subordinate buildings for photovoltaic panels and rainwater collection.

Examples of appropriate black weather boarded garages/outbuildings with red tiled roofs

ANCILLARY ELEMENTS

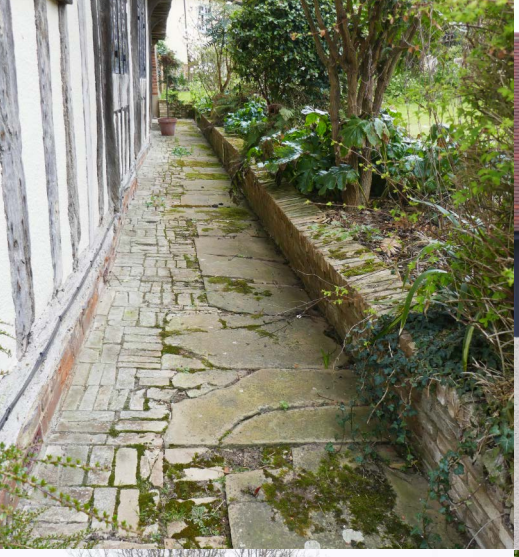
- "skin-deep" architectural details should be avoided such as applied gables and oriel windows.
- balconies should be substantial rather than applied clip-on balconies.
- soil and waste plumbing should be internal and not appear on the outside of buildings.
- meter cupboards should be located discreetly on flank elevations, if on the front they should be screened by plants or boxed in with purpose made joinery.
- rainwater goods should be black, grey should be avoided.

BOUNDARY TREATMENTS AND PAVING

5.13 Boundary treatments vary within the different Character Areas of the village (see Section 4), soft green boundary treatment predominates. In Ashdon the boundaries fronting the properties are mainly native hedges with some examples of low brick walls or fences. Tall, sometimes historic, brick walls are also found. There are also examples without any boundary treatment where lawns reach the pavement, Carters Croft in Rogers End is a good example. In areas at the edge of settlements, and further out, hedging and trees are much taller and tend to form the foreground to the wider landscape. There is painted and unpainted picket fencing, and wooden rails around some larger plots or paddocks.

5.14 Most houses, whether old or new, have off street parking without gates giving an open airy feel. Hard boundary treatments and paving material should reference the adjacent materials and the vernacular for the area (for example, there is no limestone in the Parish).

- with any future development there should be a presumption towards low hedging to the front elevation although low brick walls or low fencing would also be acceptable. depending on character area (historic core or remote lane, see Section 4)'
- the boundaries for any development at the edge of the village should be considered with particular sensitivity and should consist of characteristic native hedgerows and trees, avoid uncharacteristic planting such as conifer or laurel hedges
- surburban and uncharacteristic boundary treatments, such as new brick piers and gated entrances, should be avoided as these can appear to be too urban
- planting hedgerows is encouraged as they provide good habitats and are permeable for hedgehogs. Natural beauty, wildlife corridors, carbon sequestration and shade are other benefits of hedges
- electronic gates, if needed, should be of traditional wooden style, for example the entrance to Waltons Park





GLEBESIDE





Please do not park here


UTILITIES PROVISION

- many of the houses outlying from the village centre are not on the main sewer but rely on septic tanks. New developments of more than 1 house need to assess capacity of existing sewerage system
- seek opportunities to place overhead wires and telephone poles underground to improve the streetscape
- provide fibre optic communication to new premises
- ensure levels of lighting associated with new development are kept to a minimum to avoid night-time light spill pollution - it is important generally, and for the benefit of nocturnal species
- refuse bins should have a designated screened storage space to prevent detracting from design and cluttering of outside spaces

SUCCESSFUL NEW DEVELOPMENTS

5.15 Materials in all examples follow those typical to the village.

Extension to blend with existing terrace of listed cottages.

New build in an elevated position has an interesting façade with setbacks, varying roof height and building materials, reflecting the local farmhouse style. Windows are in proportion

New build barn conversion in unstained weatherboarding, asymmetrical window layout works well for barn style.

20th Century build (L) next to public house (now residential) blends seamlessly with the grain and height of adjacent buildings

21st Century build with low roofline and appropriate materials allowing for contemporary design.

Simple but effective 21st Century build in village core but tucked in with ridge height reflecting adjacent properties.

SOME ELEMENTS OF BUILT FORM TO AVOID.

Roof, windows and bay window not in proportion with height or bulk of the building (refer to EDG). Suburban detailing is inappropriate.

Uncharacteristic boundary treatment

Incorrect proportion for bay window and other windows

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The community questionnaires have proved invaluable for identifying what is important to the community in the future development of the area. This Design Code could not have been put together without the enormous amount of work that the local community put into drawing up the area Character Assessments and illustrating these reports. The Ashdon Landscape Appraisal (2020) by Alison Farmer has also been key to identifying ways to minimize the impact of new development on the landscape setting.

REFERENCES

Ashdon Landscape Appraisal (2020) by Alison Farmer Associates see www.ashdonplan.co.uk

Ashdon Character Assessments:
Summary and Character Area reports for:
Ashdon Village Centre-Radwinter Road
Ashdon Village Centre-Church Hill
Ashdon Village Centre-Crown Hill
Bartlow Road, Holden End and Rogers End
Dorvis Lane
Rectory Lane
Kates Lane
Church End-Conservation Area
Church End-Non-Conservation Area
Water End
Steventon End
Knox End
PuddleWharf Lane and Walden Road
New House Lane
see www.ashdonplan.co.uk

Ashdon Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals (2013) UDC

Ashdon Neighbourhood Plan Assessment of important views see www.ashdonplan.co.uk

(EECOS) https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/4937/Environment

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Uttlesford District Landscape Assessments (2006) by Chris Blandford: www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/4937/Environment

Uttlesford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2016) by JBA consulting for UDC






CHURCH
FARM














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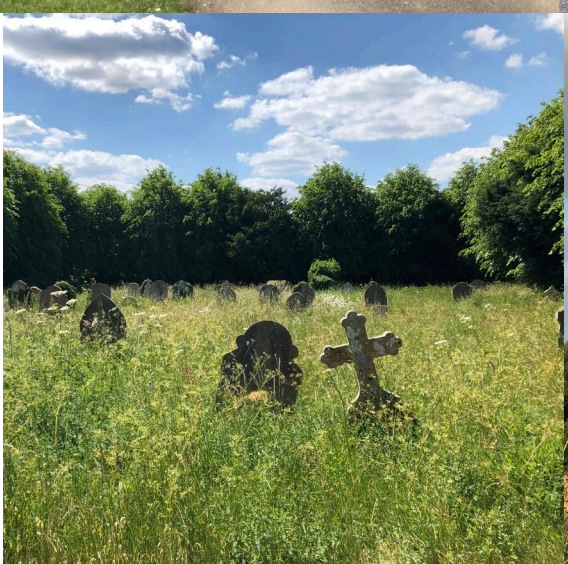
ASHDON
Reduce
your speed



ASHDON DESIGN CODE

MARCH 2022