

6. Landscape Context

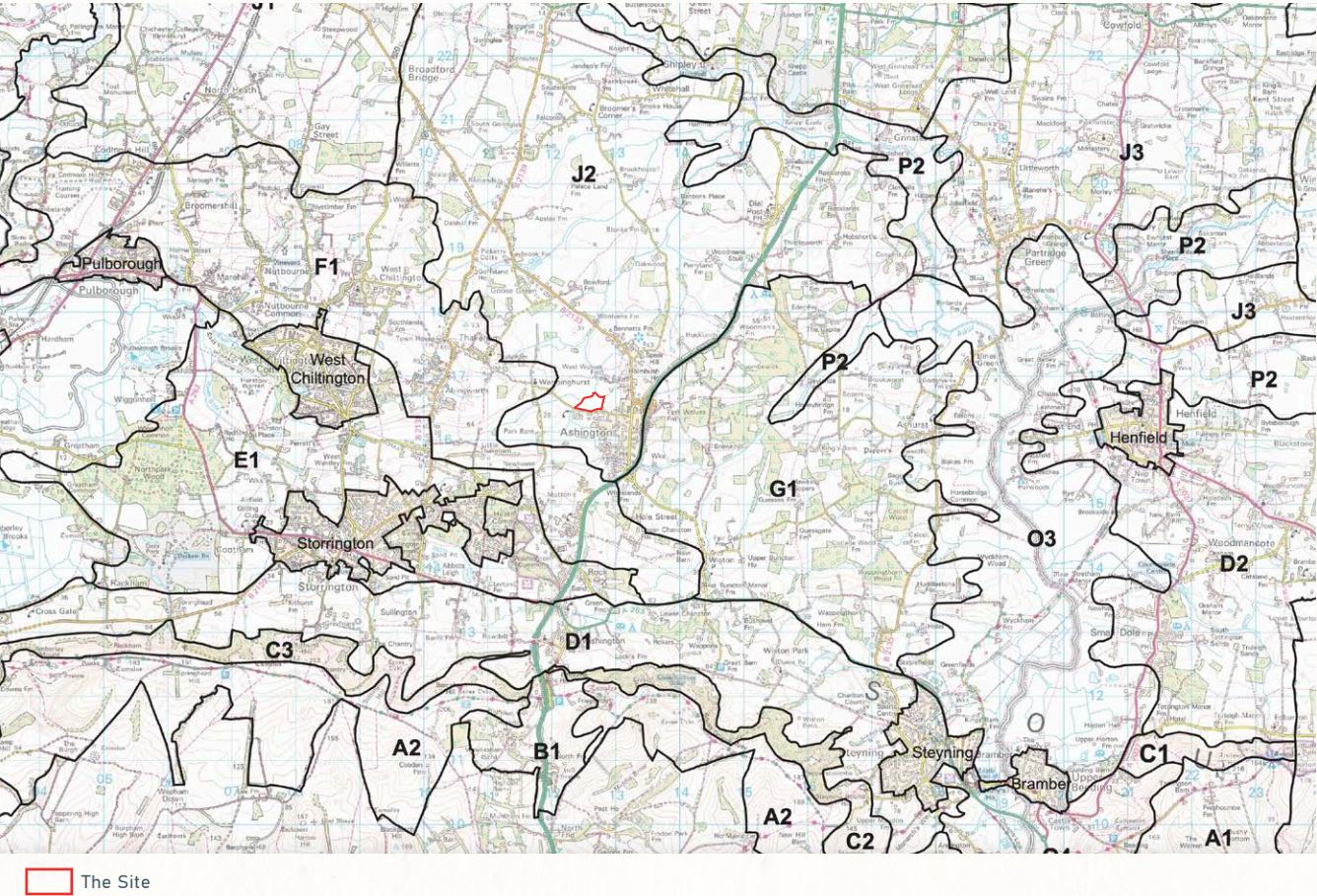
Landscape and Visual Impact

6.1 CSA Environmental have prepared a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA') which assesses the likely landscape and visual effects resulting from the proposed development at the Site. The baseline conditions for the study area were established using a combination of desk-based research and Site surveys. The extent of the study area was informed by the desktop Zone of Theoretical Visibility ('ZTV').

6.2 The Site does not carry any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality. The South Downs National Park is located to the south and west of Ashington, with the park boundary located approximately 2km to the south west of the Site at Washington Common, at its nearest point.

6.3 The Site lies within the LCT J – Broad Clay Vale Farmlands, and within LCA J2 Broadford Bridge to Billingham Farmlands as described in the Horsham Landscape Character Assessment. LCA J2 is described as a flat to gently undulating landscape, with a mostly small scale field pattern, strong sense of enclosure and predominantly rural character except for some suburban influences near Ashington. The LCA has a mainly strong network of hedgerows containing mature oak standards, with many scattered woods and copses.

Figure 6. Horsham District Council Landscape Character Types



6.4 The Horsham District Landscape Capacity Assessment (2021) locates the Site in Landscape Study Area AS3. The Assessment concludes that AS3 has a moderate landscape character sensitivity, moderate visual sensitivity and low-moderate landscape value. The assessment notes that the visual sensitivity is variable due to the enclosure by hedgerows and as a result of the land rising to the settlement edge. It concludes that overall, this area has a moderate visual sensitivity to housing. In terms of landscape value, the assessment identifies that the area has some ecological interest due to the presence of hedgerows and woodland, and that the area has moderate tranquillity due to the influence of the existing settlement edge / modern buildings to the north, but more natural qualities in the south.

6.5 It comprises three arable fields, bound by dense treed hedgerows. The two lines of mature trees which form the internal field boundaries, are of high landscape quality and value. The Site is not publicly accessible and it does not contain any designated heritage assets.

6.6 The undulating nature of the surrounding topography and the highly contained nature of the Site, due to the existing surrounding dense vegetation, restrict opportunities for views. Views from Rectory Lane are filtered by existing boundary vegetation. Views from public footpath ASH 2490 to the north and north west are limited to boundary vegetation by intervening field boundaries and the slope of the topography. Views from the higher ground at Warminghurst to the west are for the most part prevented by intervening vegetation.

6.7 Mitigation measures to minimise the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development have been incorporated into the design through an iterative design process. The development parcels will be sited within the existing field boundaries. Retained mature landscape features will provide a landscape framework and setting for the adjacent housing areas. Landscape, recreation and biodiversity enhancements will be provided within the open space in the north of the Site.



View west through field gate on Rectory Lane



View west through gap in the westernmost tree group across the Site



View north towards new homes on Rectory Lane



View west across both belts of trees towards the Lancing Brook

7. Village character and settlement growth

Village History

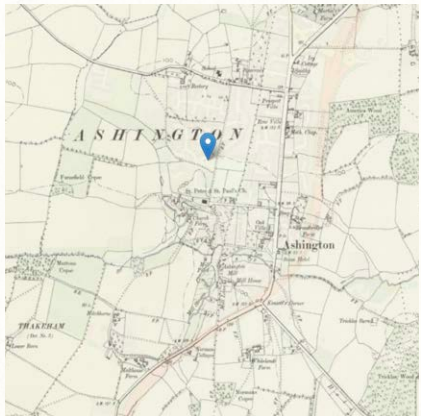
- 7.1** Ashington village is located in the southern part of Horsham district in West Sussex.
- 7.2** The South Downs National Park begins approximately 1.8km south of the village, where land rises towards Chanctonbury Ring, one of the most prominent landmarks along the South Downs Way and where from views of the village can be obtained.
- 7.3** The village itself lacks a distinct centre, but the parish church of Sts Peter and Paul, dates back to the 15th century and is a consistent feature on early mapping.
- 7.4** In 1801, the village was limited to just 28 houses and a population of 173 persons.
- 7.5** The A24 bypass was first suggested in 1939 but not completed until 1995. The construction of the bypass enabled significant growth in the village, growing by some 700 new homes, and complemented by the primary school in 2000, and the community centre in 2003.
- 7.6** The 2001 Census recorded a population of 2,351 persons, growing to 2,526 in 2011 and 2,688 in 2021.



Ordnance Survey (1805-1845)

Settlement Morphology

- 7.7** Despite the lack of a defined centre, the village has grown up around two nodes. The first of these is the ‘community cluster’ (a local priority identified in the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan), which focuses on the parish church, community centre and primary school, The second defined node is at the junction of Hole Street and the London Road, which features a collection of local shops, village pharmacy and the Red Lion Pub.
- 7.8** London Road connects these and other areas, and the majority of the village ‘hangs’ off the main road corridor in a conventional strip form development.
- 7.9** Growth has incrementally filled in the curtilage between London Road and the A24, and now spreads westwards, enveloping the primary school with a push to the north and west of the Billingshurst Road, with new growth focused away from the South Downs National Park.
- 7.10** Rectory Lane is the primary only east-west link in the settlement highway layout. This is now becoming the focus for the current stage of settlement growth, with 2 parcels, each of 74 homes currently under construction or in planning, alongside development by Bellway Homes for 150 homes, west of the primary school.

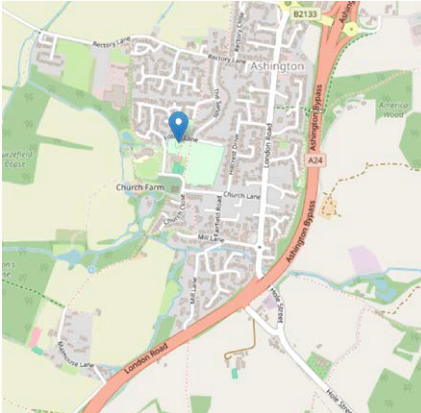


Ordnance Survey (1888-1913)

- 7.11** With these parcels already allocated for development in the Neighbourhood Plan and the HDC Local Plan, growth to the north of Rectory Lane is the next logical step in the settlement pattern.

Listed Buildings

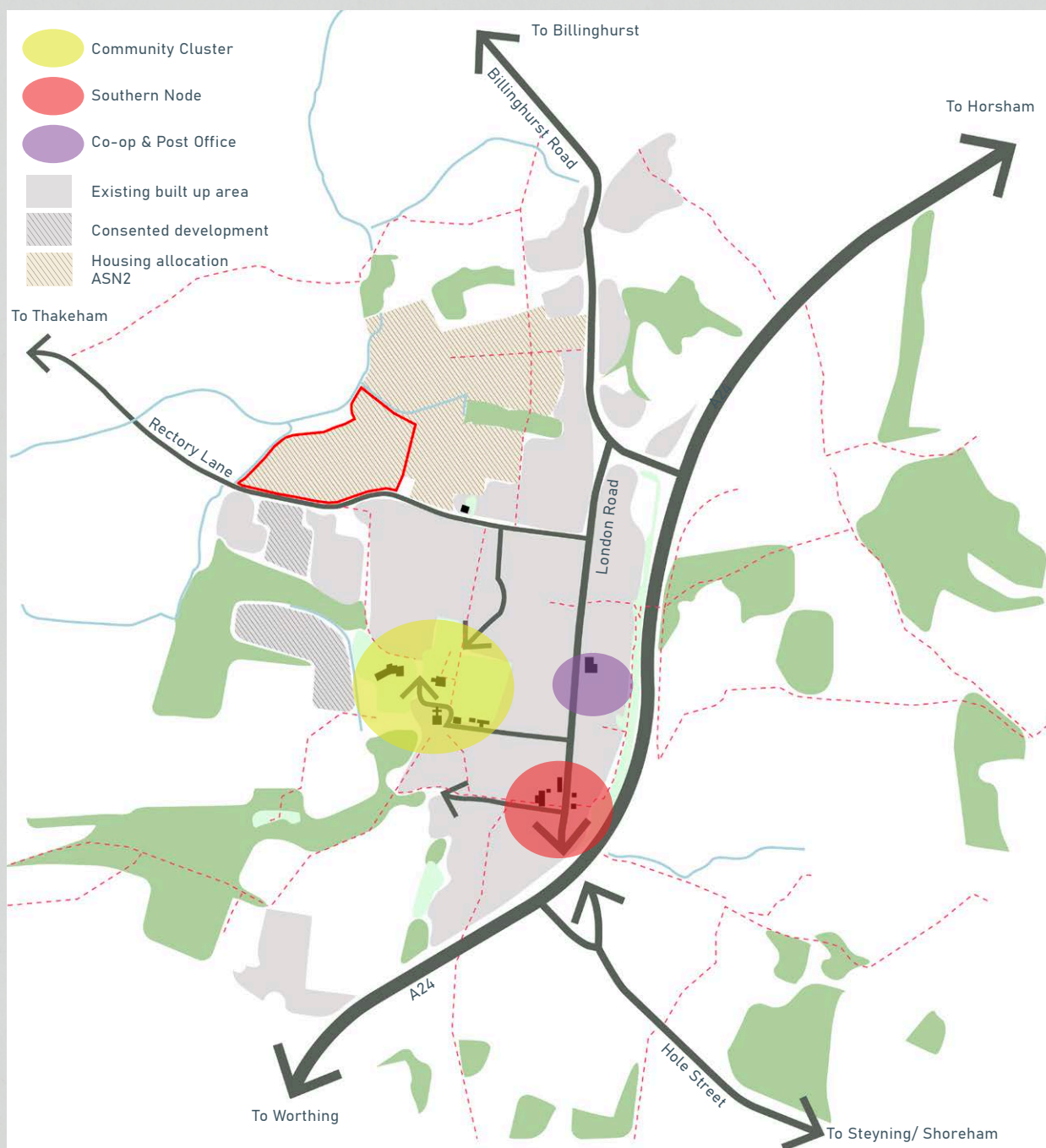
- 7.12** Beyond the 2 listed buildings close to the Site (see para 5.12), there are a further 9 listed buildings within the settlement. All of these are grade II, save for the Parish Church which has a Grade II* listing, with the northern aisle dating to the 15th Century. Five of these listed buildings are located around Mill Lane to the south, and four (including the church) in the wider area of Church Lane.
- 7.13** There is no conservation area in the village and there are no areas of defined remarkable character, with much of the village comprising a diverse mix of modern styles.



Current Ordnance Survey Map (2026)



Ordnance Survey (1955-1961)



The Red Lion Public House



Parish Church



Ashington Co-op

Figure 7. Settlement Morphology



Figure 8. Figure-ground and layout characteristics

Urban Typologies and Local Character

7.14 The form of the village is dominated by the London Road, although this does not present a continuous frontage along its length.

7.15 In several areas, e.g. opposite the Co-op supermarket, ‘Chanctonbury’, and ‘Greenacres’, development turns its back or presents significantly set back elevation to the main street, interrupting the frontage and experience of London Road as a High Street.

7.16 Indeed, by admission in the ANP, the village lacks a defined centre, and seeks the establishment of an area of community focus (the community cluster) as one of the ANP’s objectives.

7.17 Aside from Mill Lane, Church Lane and Rectory Lane, development off the main alignment of London Road is mainly backland infill and of cul-de-sac nature. This appears to have been initially focused to the west, and later in-filled to the east of London Road following the advent of the A24 Bypass.

7.18 Infill development takes many forms in the village, ranging from garden suburb/Parker Unwin style layouts at ‘The Sands’, to curiosities, such as the contemporary bungalows in geometric patten at ‘Greenacres’ or on Windmill Close.

7.19 Elsewhere, more conventional cul-de-sac layouts are applied as evidenced at Willard Way and Cricketers’ Close.

Building Materials

7.20 No single palette defines the village as a whole.

7.21 Typically, listed buildings in the village are brick-faced with flint used in older properties. More sensitive developments have applied these materials successfully to modern house styles.

7.22 Elsewhere there is a varied palette. A number of bungalows feature timber (or timber-effect) cladding, hung tile or painted brick. Indeed, painted brick is popular throughout the village alongside brick render as a facing material.

7.23 As with most Sussex villages, brick predominates, although there is a varied range of brickwork colours and styles.

7.24 Tile roofs predominate, with far fewer examples of slate.

7.25 Property inclosure is frequently via hedging. This is a notable characteristic along London Road itself, and in areas such as Mill Lane and the Sands. Other streets (e.g. Rectory Close, contrast this characteristic with open mown frontages. Also see Greenacres for a similar treatment.



Sympathetic modern housing



Parish Church



Contemporary flint-clad homes



Traditional houses on London Road



Bungalow on ‘Greenacres’



3-storey villa on Rectory Lane

8. Planning Policy Context

8.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

8.2 The Development Plan consists primarily of:

- Horsham District Planning Framework to 2031 (adopted November 2015)
- Ashington Neighbourhood Plan (made 23 June 2021)

8.3 Within the context of a national housing crisis, the Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024. This document sets out that where the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination (paragraph 11d).

8.4 The adopted Horsham District Planning Framework is more than five years old and as such, the housing need in Horsham has to be calculated using a standard methodology also introduced in December 2024. Currently, the Council can only demonstrate 1.7 years of housing supply (when it needs at least 5 years). As such, the adopted policies which are most important for determining housing applications are out-of-date.

8.5 The Ashington Neighbourhood Plan is now more than five years old. As the Neighbourhood Plan policies are intrinsically linked to, and indivisible from, the HDPF's development strategy established more than five years ago, and does not contain policies and allocations to meet the significant current housing requirement, that Plan too is also considered to be out-of-date. See Section 4 of the Planning statement for more detail.

Shaping Development in Horsham Planning Advice Note (September 2025) (SDHPAN)

8.6 In light of the Council's inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply and delays to the progression of the emerging Local Plan, the Council has published the Shaping Development in Horsham District Planning Advice Note ("SDPAN") which was endorsed at Cabinet in September 2025.

8.7 The purpose of the SDHPAN is to provide clarity on the Council's approach to determining planning applications for non-allocated sites located outside built up area, in light of an out of date plan, a lack of five year housing land supply and poor performance against the Housing Delivery Test ("HDT").

8.8 The SDHPAN represents a material consideration in determining planning applications. As this is the most recent published planning policy document, however, this application seeks to meet the Council's approach set out in that document.

8.9 Paragraph 5.12 of the SDHPAN, which is a material consideration,

states that planning applications that meet the following criteria will be considered positively, each of which is met by this proposal:

- The Site adjoins the existing settlement edge as defined by the BUAB (Built Up Area Boundary)
- The level of expansion is appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement the proposal relates to
- The proposal demonstrates that it meets local housing needs or will assist the retention and enhancement of community facilities and services
- The impact of the development individually or cumulatively does not prejudice comprehensive long-term development; and
- The development is contained within an existing defensible boundary and the landscape character features are maintained and enhanced."

8.10 Land north of Rectory Lane, Ashington meets these criteria.

Horsham District Planning Framework 2015.

8.11 Although the HDPF is considered out of date in terms of the housing requirement, the expansion of settlements and development outside the built up areas of settlements, the following policies are still relevant to design as they still align with national policy.

Policy 25 -	Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
Policy 30 -	Protected Landscapes
Policy 31 -	Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
Policy 32 -	Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
Policy 33 -	Development Principles
Policy 35 -	Strategic Policy: Climate Change
Policy 36 -	Strategic Policy: Appropriate Energy Use
Policy 39 -	Infrastructure Provision
Policy 40 -	Sustainable Transport
Policy 41 -	Parking
Policy 42 -	Strategic Policy: Inclusive Communities
Policy 43 -	Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

Table 1. Local Policy Summary

**Horsham District Council
Schedule of Proposed
Main Modifications to the
Regulation 19 Local Plan**

8.12 On 13 July 2026, Horsham District Council published a Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the emerging Local Plan for public consultation. This is part of the on-going examination of the Plan by an independent Planning Inspector.

8.13 The Schedule increases the total housing requirement in the district over the plan period to 2040, and allocates additional new sites to meet this new figure.

8.14 One such proposed additional allocation is ASN2, which is part Strategic Policy HA5: Ashington Housing Allocations.

Draft Allocation ASN2

8.15 ASN2: Ashington Norther Cluster allocates 450 homes to the north of Rectory Lane. The Taylor Wimpey Site forms the south west part.

8.16 The draft policy states: “In addition to meeting national, and Local and Neighbourhood Plan requirements, development will be supported where proposals demonstrate:

a) That development is in accordance with a comprehensive site wide masterplan. The masterplan must ensure a co-ordinated approach to development across the entirety of the allocation and deliver an integrated and sustainable settlement form.

b) The masterplan must demonstrate that separate development phases / parcels will not prejudice the development of adjoining land or infrastructure within the allocation. This should include facilitating connections between separate land parcels or clearly demonstrate how connections to future phases can be achieved.

c) The masterplan must be landscape led, and inform site layout, capacity, enhance existing boundary treatments, and promote high-quality design for the site as a whole.

d) That development must demonstrate delivery of the supporting infrastructure, services and facilities necessary to meet the needs of the allocation as a whole.

e) There is provision of formal and informal open space, sport and recreation provision to meet the needs of the development in accordance with standards and the respective recommendations in the Open Space, Sport & Recreation Review 2021;

f) That appropriate regard is had to the impact on local listed heritage assets including the Grade I listed Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Grade II Listed West Wolves Farmhouse and Grade II listed Orchard Cottage Laurel Cottage; and

g) The design and setting takes account of the areas of the site affected by surface water flooding and appropriate mitigation is applied in line with Strategic Policy 10.”

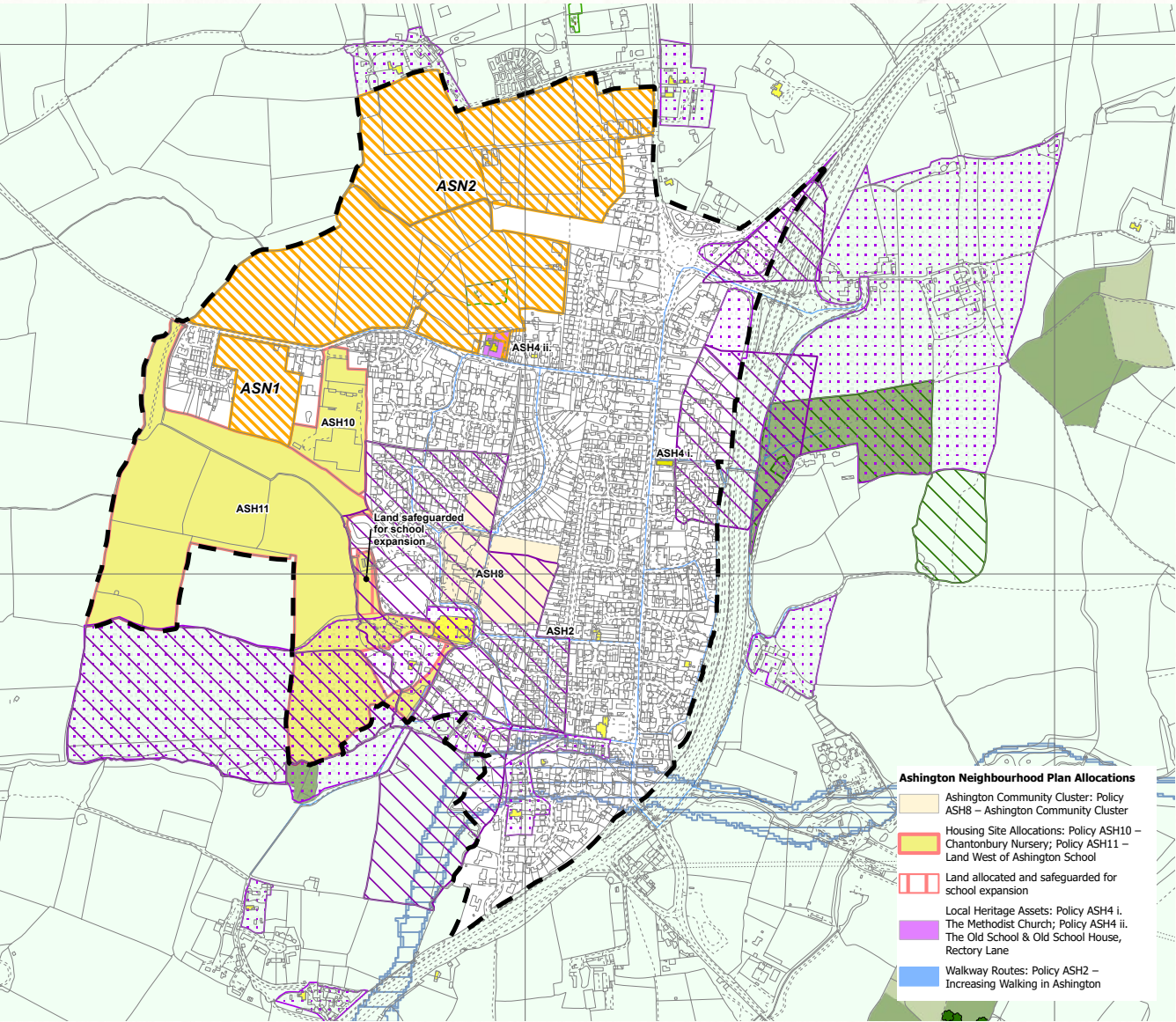


Figure 9. Draft site allocation map

Creating a Comprehensive Masterplan

8.17 A comprehensive masterplan for the whole site was submitted during various stages of the preparation of the Local Plan. This has now been updated and the Taylor Wimpey scheme, along with the Devine Homes current application, are shown within this wider development framework. It can be seen that these proposals do not prejudice the whole site coming forward in any way.

8.18 Figure 10 below, indicates how active travel movement through the Site has been designed to provide connectivity to the Community Cluster in the centre of Ashington village, and how this benefits and aligns with adjacent sites and policy objectives for walkable routes in the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan.

8.19 Flexibility has been built into the masterplan, via the provision of open space as a buffer between sites, avoiding the need to formally

align parcels and streets at the outline stage, and providing a green edge, along which choices for future connectivity can be easily accommodated.

8.20 The site therefore functions as both a standalone application, fully self sufficient for all land uses and criteria, yet also meets policy requirements of ASN2.

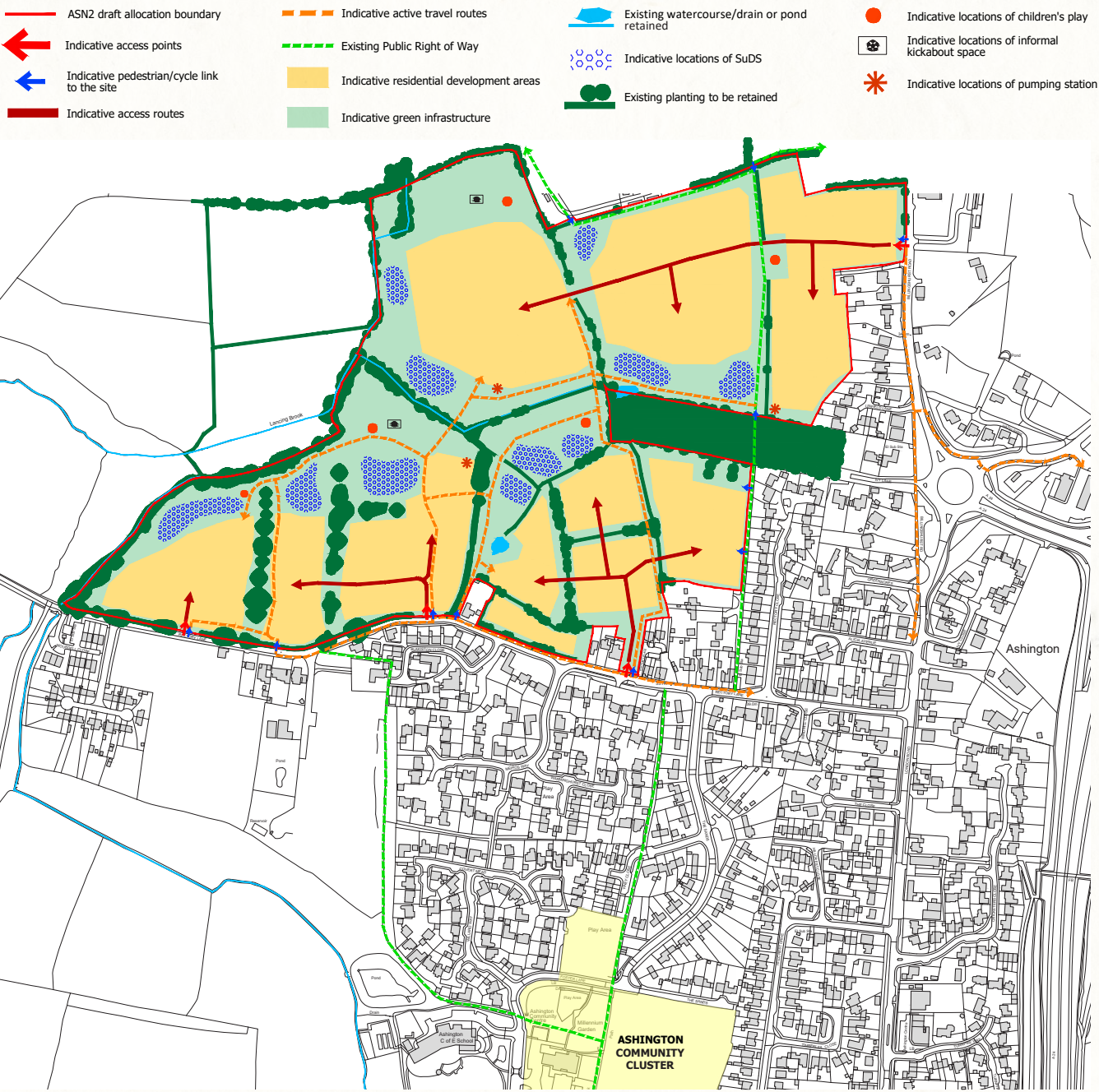


Figure 10. ASN2 draft allocation concept masterplan

Ashington Neighbourhood Plan

8.21 The referendum version of the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) was adopted (made) in 2021. It covers the whole of the Parish of Ashington which is the only settlement in the plan area.

8.22 Although created to run in parallel with the HDC Local Plan until 2031, the ANP acknowledges the need for review to keep pace with the Local Plan if this itself is renewed or updated.

8.23 With a new Local Plan under consideration by HDC, it can be argued that the growth identified within the ANP should also be subject to review, and that further growth to meet nationally defined housing need, as well as growth from neighbouring areas including Crawley and Shoreham should be considered.

8.24 Nevertheless, the strong level of community participation exhibited through the creation of the ANP, suggests that the policies and priorities therein should be given due and serious consideration as part of the planning context for Land at Rectory Lane.

8.25 The ANP is a pragmatic and comprehensive local planning document that acknowledges at paragraph 1.9 that the parish is *expected to make a contribution towards growth in line with its role in the settlement hierarchy.*

8.26 The document notes the pattern and pace of growth of the village, and the role that political reforms, such as the 1816 Enclosure Act have had on influencing growth of the village on land that was previously green space.

8.27 The bypass in particular is identified as a driver for growth, but singled out as constraint to active travel movement and community connectivity.

8.28 Demographics in the ANP (based on the 2011 Census) focus on the decline in younger families and co-respondent growth in those of retirement age, suggesting a need for homes for younger families.

Key themes

8.29 There is a consistent focus throughout the document on a number of key themes which include:

Supporting the Community Cluster

- the notion of focusing the benefits from new development (spatial and economic) on the creation and expansion of community facilities in cluster around the village primary school, parish church and community centre.

Promoting Active Travel -

acknowledging that there is an above average level of car ownership in the parish and that investment needs to be directed to improving movement by non-vehicular means and ensuring safe and convenient links to the community cluster.

Ensuring a respectful and appropriate relationship with the countryside -

noting the parish's position of the edge of the South Downs National Park and visibility of parts of the settlement from Chanctonbury Ring, leading to landscape design requirements for the edges of development and the need to provide buffers containing open space, SuDS and play (policy ASH5)

Allocated Sites

8.30 Site specific policies are given for two allocated development sites within the ANP. The first of these, the former nursery on Rectory Lane is situated opposite the subject Site of this application as is acknowledged in the ANP as being *"well located to access the heart of the village"* (ANP para 8.7).

8.31 Both this site, and the site to the west of the existing primary school are required to demonstrate a positive interface with the landscape. This includes the provision of items identified as forming part of the community cluster (landscape buffer and outdoor gym equipment for the nursery site, and sports/playing/MUGA facilities and a changing facility for the smaller nursery site).

8.32 In a similar manner the current application Site could help generate contributions towards the priorities set out in table 7.1 of the ANP, as well as meet the landscape and open space objectives of creating a landscape buffer for development, containing areas of play, recreational space and scope of natural and sustainable drainage.

8.33 Beyond this, the design of the Site will ensure a layout that is respectful of the wider landscape context, carefully considering the height and layout of properties on the landscape. The proposed development will endeavour to contribute towards the further enhancement of active travel routes and networks around the village to meet the ANP's requirement for reduction in car travel and move towards sustainable transport modes.

8.34 It is noted that the PROW link from Rectory Lane east of the Nursery development is identified for improvement in the ANP as part of proposals for this site. However, it is noted that this particular route does not feature on the Inset Policy Map on page 46 of the ANP, and that the quality of the route was identified through community consultation as remaining in need of upgrade.

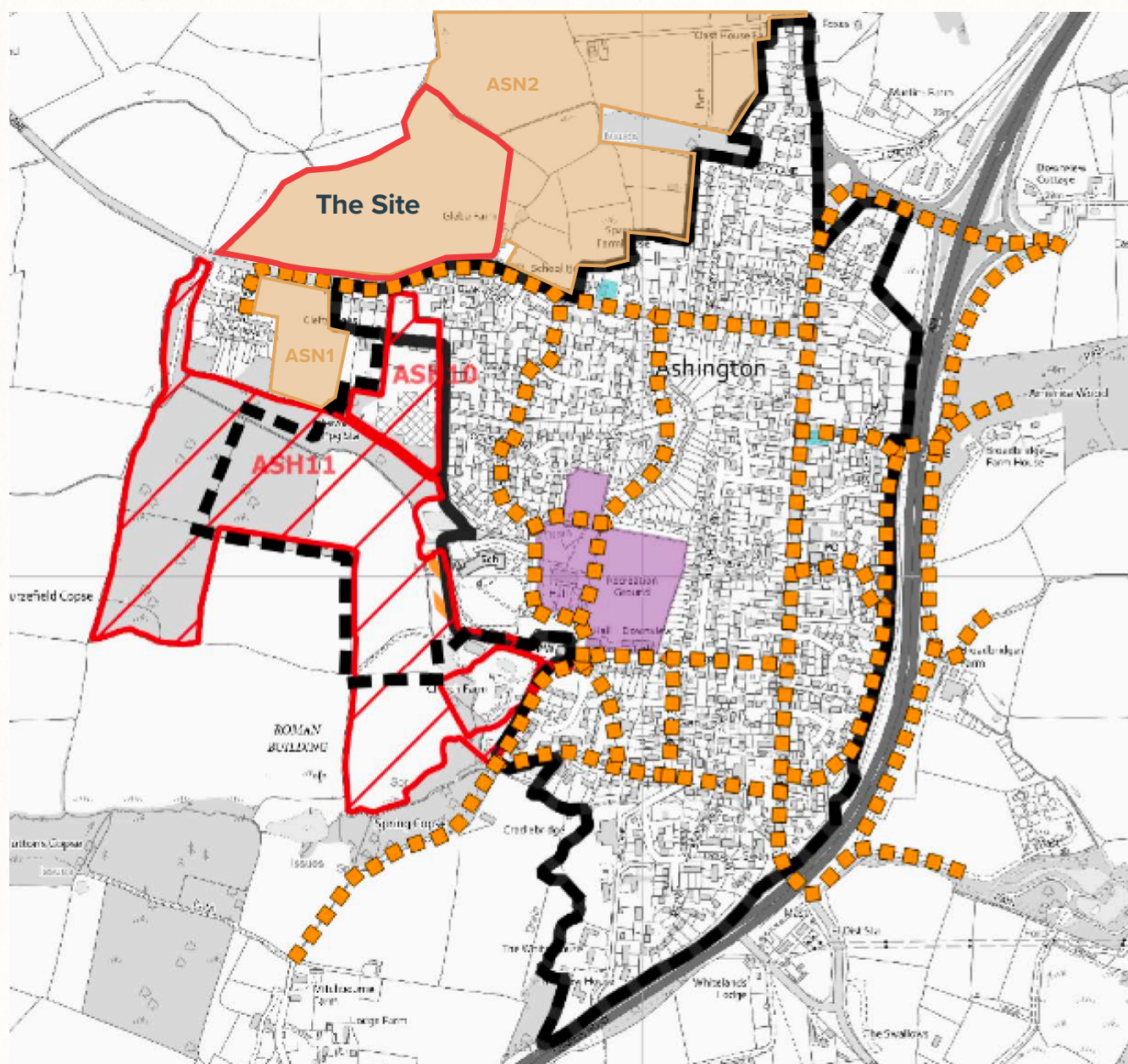


Figure 11. Inset Map from ANP with the Site added for context

- Parish boundary
- Existing Built-Up Area Boundary (ASH1)
- Proposed amendment to the Built-Up Area Boundary (ASH1)
- Walkway routes (ASH2)
- Local Heritage Assets (ASH4)
- Ashington Community Cluster (ASH8/ASH9)
- Land allocated and safeguarded for school expansion
- Site allocations:
 - Chanctonbury Nursery (ASH10)
 - Land west of Ashington School (ASH11)
- Draft site allocations (ASN1, ASN2)

9. Community Engagement

Community Consultation

9.1 Consultation with the community is a critical component of any planning promotion.

9.2 The project team has engaged with the community through a combination of methods.

9.3 Initial engagement took place on the 27th April 2026 through an online community webinar, which was made available for members of the public to canvas views on the development for a periods of 14 days thereafter,

9.4 The webinar was attended by some 20+ members of the public and featured a presentation on proposals which elicited the following comments and suggestions from the community:

Concerns

- Lack of infrastructure and pressure on public services
- Over-development and loss of village character
- Traffic congestion and road safety
- Environmental impact and loss of green spaces
- Disruption from construction

Positive sentiment

9.5 Not all opinions of the Site and opportunities presented by development were negative. Additional views (as part of a total of 131 comments received, including those after the event) included:

- Support for sustainability measures
- Importance of biodiversity and wildlife protection
- Desire for improved walking and cycling routes
- Need for affordable and adaptable housing

9.6 Further details can be found in the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

Parish Meeting

9.7 Supplementary to the online webinar, an in-person session was held in-public with Ashington Parish Council on 26th May 2026 at Ashington Community Centre on Foster Lane in the area of the proposed community cluster.

9.8 The meeting saw the same presentation delivered at the webinar, provided to Parish Councillors and the attending members of the public.

9.9 Much of the meeting focused on the needs of the community and the role of the Neighbourhood Plan in capturing these objectives (see Figure 9 opposite for details). Further discussion focused on the cumulative impact of growth, improvements to walking and cycling, the capacity of Rectory Lane and debate over accurate measurements from the Site to public services such as bus stops on London Road and the Coop and Post Office.

Pre-Application with HDC

9.10 A request for pre-application advice was submitted to the Council in May 2026. A formal written response was received on 13 July 2026, but it addressed the draft allocation, not the pre-application advice request for this particular site.

