

**ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
2016-2031**



**PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION DRAFT
OCTOBER 2015**



FOREWARD

In 2013, the Town Council of Ashby de la Zouch made the decision to commence the process of undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan.

A Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was established with the aim of preparing a Plan that will deliver the long term goals of a balanced and vibrant neighbourhood.

Since becoming established, we have held many public meetings, both general open events and specific discussions with groups of stakeholders; established Focus Groups on the key issues comprising local residents; professionals and representatives of local businesses and voluntary groups.

In preparing this Neighbourhood Plan we have listened very carefully to all the feedback received through all these consultations and have worked hard to ensure that the Plan incorporates and reflects the views of the community.

We are grateful to Officers at North West Leicestershire District Council, Leicestershire County Council, Town Councillors and the wider community for their involvement in the development of this Plan.

We hope that the final document will help to shape development across the Neighbourhood Plan area.

Leader

Ashby de la Zouch Town Council

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This document has been prepared by the Ashby de la Zouch Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, which has been led by Ashby de la Zouch Town Council.

A Neighbourhood Plan is a community led framework for guiding the future development and growth of an area; it provides an opportunity for local people to directly shape and influence planning policy on matters that affect them.

The Plan provides a vision for the future of the community, and sets out clear policies to realise this vision. These policies must accord with higher level planning policy, at a local and national level, as required by the Localism Act. The Plan has been developed through extensive consultation with the people of Ashby de la Zouch and with others with an interest in the community.

The Plan adds local detail to broader planning policy and once it has been passed through a Referendum the Planning Policies within the Plan will become part of the decision making process for planning applications.

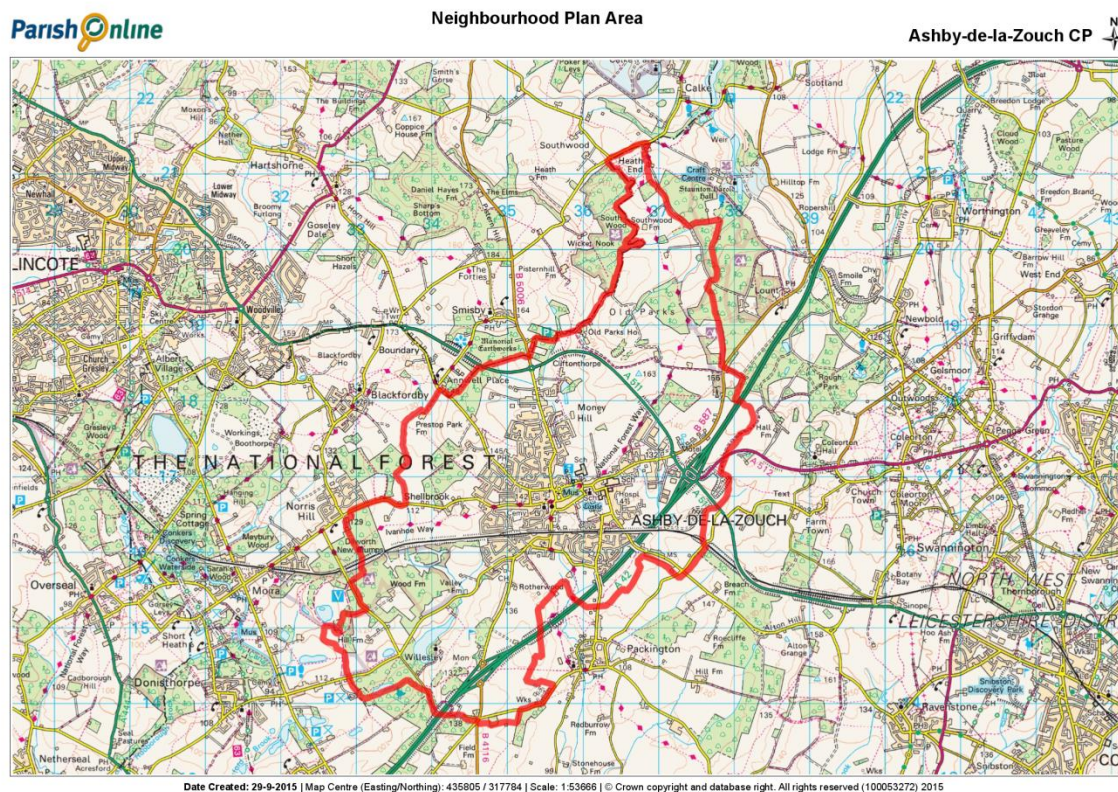
This Draft Neighbourhood Plan is a consultation document, and your comments and opinions are invited until 24th November 2015. Please use the Representation Form that accompanies this document, and return completed forms to Ashby de la Zouch Town Council, Legion House, South Street, Ashby de la Zouch, LE65 2QY. Copies of this document and the representation form are also available on the website:

<http://www.ashbydelazouch.info/Planning.aspx>

1.2 ASHBY DE LA ZOUCHE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

The Ashby de la Zouch Neighbourhood Plan covers a designated area (the Plan area), comprising the Council wards of Ashby Holywell, Ashby Money Hill, Ashby Ivanhoe, Ashby Castle and Ashby Willesley, which covers the town of Ashby de la Zouch and excludes Blackfordby. Designated status was achieved in February 2014.

Figure 1 – Neighbourhood Plan area



1.3 HOW A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FITS IN TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM

A Neighbourhood Plan is an opportunity for local people to create a framework for delivering a sustainable future for the benefit of all who live, work or visit our area.

The right for communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans was established through the Localism Act 2011 and the rules governing their preparation were published in 2012. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that a Neighbourhood Plan gives the community “direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need” (NPPF para 183). It enables us to ensure we get the right types of development in the right locations; and to set planning policies that will be used in determining decisions on planning applications throughout the designated area of Ashby de la Zouch.

A Neighbourhood Plan is part of the statutory Development Plan for the area and this statutory status gives Neighbourhood Plans far more weight than other local documents such as parish plans or village design statements. But a Plan must also comply with European and National legislation and be in general conformity with existing strategic planning policy. Whilst every effort has been made to make the main body of this Plan easy to read and understand, the wording of the actual

policies is necessarily more formal so that they comply with these statutory requirements.

Robust evidence is the foundation on which a Neighbourhood Plan has to be based. This includes evidence of community engagement and consultation and how the views, aspirations, wants and needs of local people have been taken into account alongside stakeholder comment and statistical information to justify the policies contained within the Plan. A detailed Statement of Consultation and a comprehensive Evidence Pack have been produced to support this Neighbourhood Plan.

1.4 WHAT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WILL COVER

The Ashby de la Zouch Neighbourhood Plan will cover the timeframe 2016-2031; this will ensure alignment with the Local Plan being prepared by North West Leicestershire District Council.

A vision for the future of Ashby will be set out and the following themes will be included in the Plan:

- General principles
- Housing and the built environment
- Town Centre
- Transport and Accessibility
- The Natural Environment
- Employment and Economic Growth
- Infrastructure Investment Priorities

This is the pre-submission draft plan that is being consulted on prior to submission to North West Leicestershire District Council as the local planning authority.

1.5 HOW THE PLAN HAS BEEN PREPARED

The Neighbourhood Planning process has been overseen by a Steering Group consisting of 4 Town Councillors, a representative from Ashby Civic Society, a representative from Ashby Town Team, the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk.

The Neighbourhood Plan was launched in April 2013 with a series of drop-ins and workshops for members of the local community and other interested parties, where participants were asked:

- What they like about Ashby
- What they do not like about Ashby
- What would they want that Ashby doesn't have

From the launch events key issues for the town were identified and these were grouped together in to the following themes:

- Town Centre Vitality
- Economic Growth
- Housing and the built environment
- Accessibility and Transport
- Education and leisure

Five focus groups, consisting of volunteers from the local community and officers from the District and County Councils looked in detail at the issues and prepared emerging objectives and policies. A Reference Group consisting of the Chairs of each Focus Group reviewed the objectives and policies coming from the Focus Groups and agreed the objectives and policies which have formed the basis of the draft plan.

A Consultation Statement detailing the consultation process to date has been produced to accompany the Neighbourhood Plan; and is included as an appendix.

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SECTION 2: ABOUT ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH

Ashby de la Zouch is a historic market town of 12,530 people (2011 census) at the heart of the National Forest and on the borders of Leicestershire and Derbyshire.

Ashby de la Zouch has a vibrant Town Centre that forms the heart of the local community providing the principal focus for the Town’s economic, social and leisure activity.

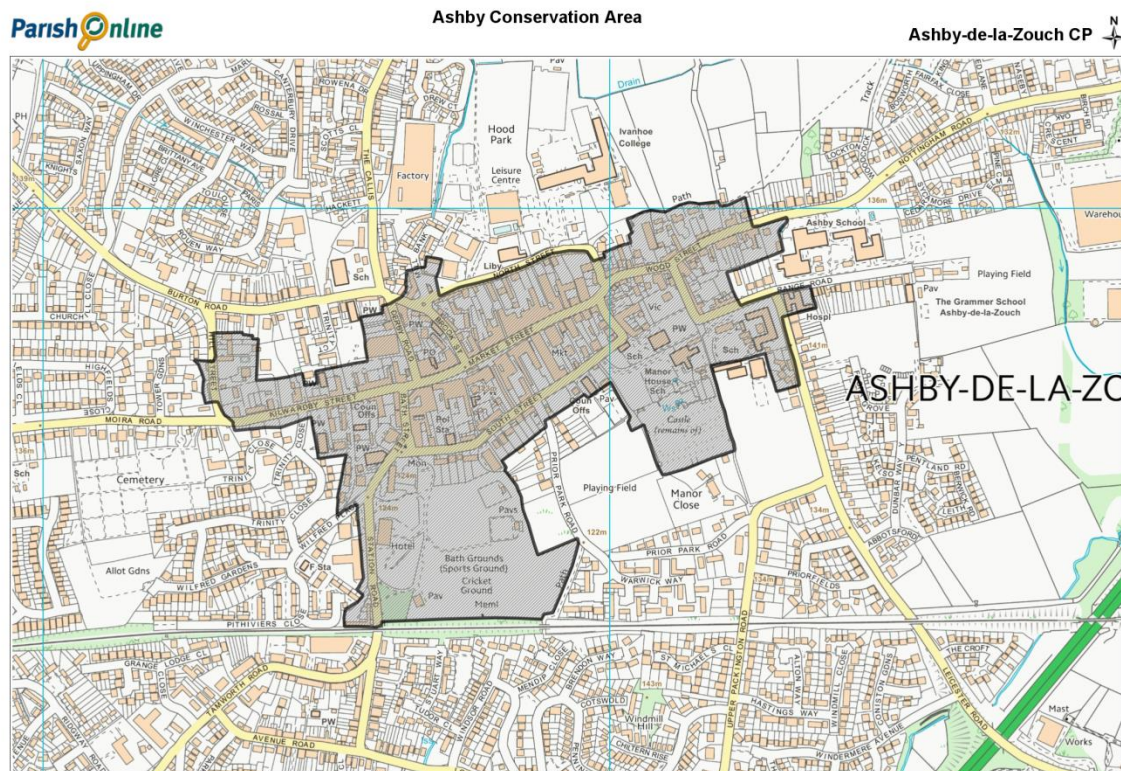
Ashby stands at the intersection of the roads between Nottingham and Tamworth/ Birmingham (A42) and between Leicester and Burton upon Trent (A511).

The first documented record of the town is in the Domesday Book of 1086/87 and the town takes the second part of its name from the La Zouch family whom held the castle and manor from circa 1160 to 1399. Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area was first designated in November 1972.

During the medieval period Ashby Castle was one of the chief influences on the town’s development. The castle was slighted (partial demolition) by parliamentarian troops in March 1646. The character of the Conservation Area (Figure 2) is predominantly Georgian/ early Victorian townscape.

The current conservation area boundaries are:

Figure 2 – Conservation boundary map



A review of 2011 census data shows that:

- There is a high level of home ownership (70.8%), but this is lower than the average in the district (72.5%).
- There are a larger proportion of detached properties (42.6%) than on average district, regionally and in England (22.4% in England) and fewer terraced properties (14.9%).
- There are more 4 & 5 bedroom properties (30.4%) than in the district, region and in England (19% in England).
- There is a high level of car ownership 43.9% of households having two or more cars.
- Over half of households (50.4%) are not deprived in any dimension, compared with 46.2% in the district.
- The proportion of residents aged 16-64 (61.9%) is lower than the proportion in the district, region or England (64.8% in England).
- The majority of residents enjoy good health (82.5%).
- Educational attainment is high with 33.8% of residents over 16 having a level 4 qualification or above, this compares with 27.4% in England.

Note: Census figures based upon the Neighbourhood Plan Area, consisting of the wards Ashby Holywell, Ashby Ivanhoe and Ashby Castle.



SECTION 3: WHAT IS THE PLAN TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

3.1 Key issues the Plan will address

- Protecting and enhancing the towns heritage
- Town Centre sustainability
- Designating settlement development limits
- Housing site allocations and housing mix
- Provision of and protection of green spaces
- Protecting community assets
- Traffic management and road infrastructure
- Promoting walking and cycling
- Promoting employment, business growth and encouraging tourism
- Need for a new community centre
- Priorities for section 106 funding

It is important to note that when using the draft Neighbourhood Plan to form a view on a proposed development all of the policies contained in the plan must be considered together when forming a view.

3.2 The Vision

“Ashby de la Zouch is a prosperous attractive and historic market town at the heart of the National Forest. Our vision is to build on that uniqueness and create a town that meets the needs of local people whilst making the most of its special qualities to attract visitors and shoppers from further afield.

This will be achieved by creating a safe, clean, accessible and attractive town in which people can shop, work, live and pursues their leisure activities. The town should offer something for everyone regardless of their age, lifestyle or status”.

Section 4 Neighbourhood Plan Policies

1. Towards a Sustainable Ashby de la Zouch

1.1 Introduction

Ashby de la Zouch Town Council describes the Town on its website as an ‘ancient market town on the borders of Leicestershire and Derbyshire (which) has always been well placed in the centre of a web of roads leading to most of the principal towns and cities in the Midlands’.

Having developed over several centuries, Ashby de la Zouch is an attractive and historic settlement which retains many of its original features and is characterised by a bustling Town Centre with many independent shops.

There are many significant buildings of great importance within the Plan area including the castle, several churches, Rawdon Terrace and a Water Tower. Its economy is varied with a range of employers being based on the employment sites within the Town and recent years has seen a growth in out-of-town retail outlets which pose a threat to the traditional shopping patterns of the Town.

Ashby de la Zouch boasts a good range of recreation facilities including tennis, Hood Park Swimming Pool, football, rugby, cricket and golf as well as parks and play areas.

Ashby de la Zouch is well located being within 9 miles of the East Midlands Airport; having a bypass to serve traffic passing from Birmingham to Nottingham or Leicester to Stoke and frequent bus services to Coalville and Burton-upon-Trent. However the transport system has failed to keep pace with the requirements of a modern Town and there is congestion at peak times and pressure on car parking spaces which can make the roads within the Town Centre difficult to navigate and can diminish the shopping experience for visitors.

1.2 A Presumption In Favour Of Sustainable Development

The purpose of the UK Planning System as set out in the NPPF is to achieve sustainable development.

This is defined as ensuring that providing for the needs of the current generation does not make life worse for future generations.

This Neighbourhood Plan is a key part of securing sustainable development. It is at its heart. This includes how much new development is required, where it should go and how it should be designed. This encompasses all proposals for development from the very smallest, such as a minor extension to a house, to major housing and employment developments.

The Town Council will take a positive approach to the consideration of development proposals that contribute to sustainable development. This includes working with the District Council, County Council, the local community, developers and other partners to encourage the formulation of development proposals which clearly demonstrate how sustainable development has been considered and addressed, and can be approved without delay.

POLICY S1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT -
When considering development proposals the Plan will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF and North West Leicestershire Local Plan. The Town Council will work proactively with developers to find solutions which mean that sustainable proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the Plan area.

Planning applications or other land-use related decisions that accord with the policies in this Plan should be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies in the Neighbourhood Plan relevant to a planning application or other land-use related decision, the policies contained in the NPPF and North West Leicestershire Local Plan apply.

1.3 Directing Development to the most Sustainable Locations

One of the key ways to achieve sustainable development is to direct development to the most appropriate and sustainable locations.

The area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan comprises the primary urban area of Ashby Town and smaller Villages and Hamlets interspersed with large areas of open countryside. Outside of the primary urban area it is mainly open and rural in nature.

North West Leicestershire has defined a settlement hierarchy to “distinguish between the roles and functions of different settlements and to guide the location of future development”. The general principle being that further up the hierarchy a settlement comes, the more sustainable it is and therefore the more suitable it is for development. As the draft Local Plan states “with the general principle being that those settlements higher up the hierarchy will take more growth than those lower down and that the type of development proposed is appropriate to the scale and character of the settlement and its place in the hierarchy”.

Ashby de la Zouch (with Castle Donnington) is categorised as a ‘Key Service Centre’ in the draft North West Leicestershire Local Plan. This is the second highest in hierarchy (after Coalville which is classed as a Principal Town).

The draft Local Plan describes Key Service Centres as being “Smaller than the Principal Town in terms of population and also the range of services and facilities they provide, they play an important role providing services and facilities to the surrounding area and are accessible by some public transport. A significant amount of development will take place in these settlements but less than that in the Principal Town”.

The Plan has some concerns and reservations with regard to the scale of development envisaged for Ashby De La Zouch as set out in the draft Local Plan. The consultation shows that people are not opposed to new development. They recognise the benefits it brings in terms of creating and supporting jobs and meeting the needs of the community for more affordable housing, for example. There is concern however that too much development will damage the countryside, encourage more (already very high) levels of journeys by car and place additional pressures on already stretched services such as schools and health care as well as local roads. It is also noted that Ashby De La Zouch has been the focus of considerable new development especially housing and employment related, and that there are further commitments in the pipeline.

A key aspect of the Neighbourhood Plan (and draft Local Plan) is to identify the amount of new development (including the provision of new sites) needed in the Plan area and ensure that it is proportionate, sustainable and meets local and district needs and requirements, in support of the draft Local Plan.

1.4. Limits to Development

The purpose of Limits to Development is to ensure that sufficient sites for new homes and economic activity are available in appropriate locations that will avoid overloading the transport infrastructure and impinging into the local countryside.

Limits to Development were established by North West Leicestershire District Council in 2002 and they made it clear that such a measure was important to clarify where new development activity was best located. They are used to define the extent of a built up part of a settlement. They distinguish between areas where, in planning terms, development would be acceptable in principle, such as in the main settlements, and where it would not be acceptable, generally in the least sustainable locations such as in the open countryside. Such growth would risk ribbon development and the merging of hamlets to the detriment of the community and visual amenity of the Plan area’s surroundings.

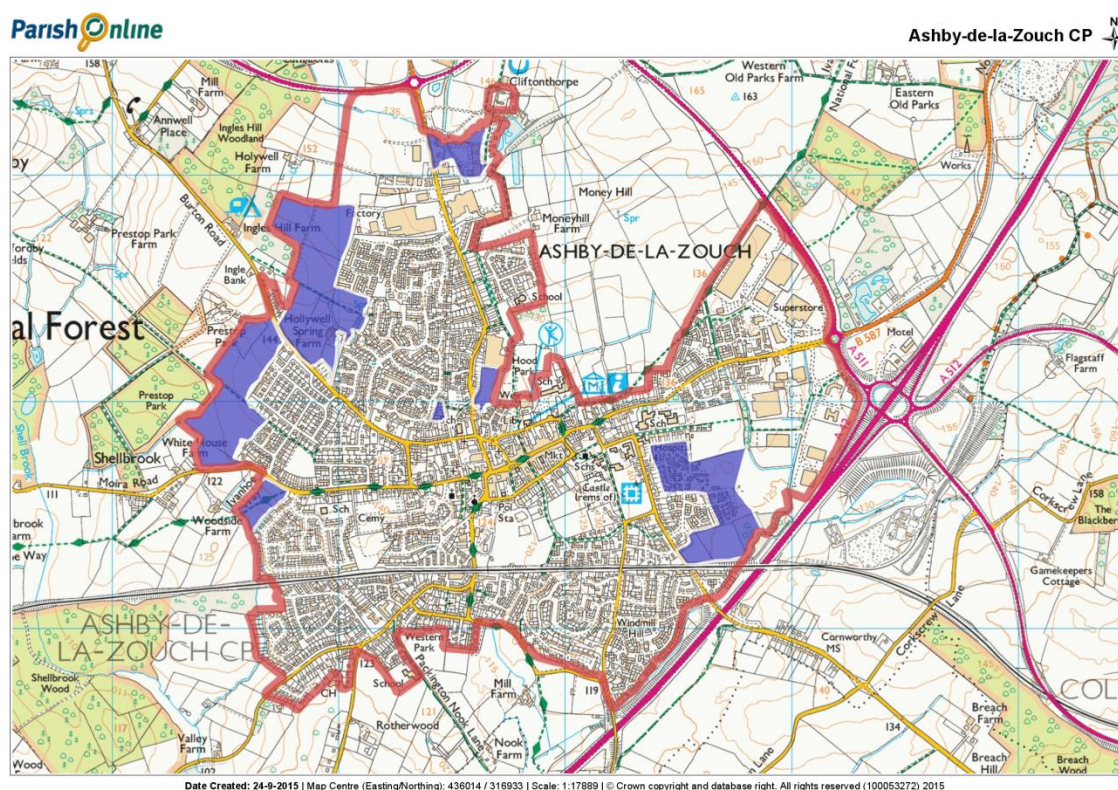
The Neighbourhood Plan proposes to designate Limits to Development for the built up part of the Plan area. This will update and supersede the existing Limits to Development previously used by North West Leicestershire District Council.

Within the defined Limits to Development an appropriate amount of suitably designed and located development will be acceptable in principle.

Focusing development within the agreed Limits to Development will help to support existing services and facilities within the Town Centre and help to protect the countryside and the remainder of the Plan area from inappropriate development.

Their introduction is also in accordance with the draft Local Plan for North West Leicestershire, which recommends that Limits to Development are in place for all the main towns and villages in the District.

Figure 2 Ashby De La Zouch Limits to Development



POLICY S2: LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT – Development proposals within the Plan area will be permitted on sites and other land within the Limits To Development as identified in Figure 2 where it complies with the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan; meets a local need and subject to transport, design and amenity considerations.

1.5 Development outside the Built-Up part of the Plan area

In planning terms, land outside of defined Limits to Development is treated as open countryside. This includes the small villages and hamlets within the Plan area.

It is national and local planning policy that development in the open countryside (and outside of the Limits to Development) will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances. This approach is also supported by this Plan in order to prevent urban sprawl and less sustainable form of development, and also to protect the open countryside for its own sake as an attractive, accessible and non-renewable natural resource.

POLICY S3: DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS OUTSIDE OF THE LIMITS TO DEVELOPMENT- Development proposals in countryside locations outside the Limits to Development will only be approved in exceptional circumstances where it conforms to relevant national and district planning policies.

In all cases, where development is considered acceptable, it will be required to respect the form, scale, character and amenity of the landscape and the surrounding area through careful siting, design and use of materials.

1.6 – Design

This Plan seeks to ensure that new building in the Plan area benefits from high quality design so that it blends sympathetically with existing architecture, has a low carbon footprint, avoids excessive use of other resources both during building and operation, and suffers neither from flood risk nor increases the flood risk to other premises. Innovative means of reducing water run-off will be encouraged.

Ashby de la Zouch has always upheld high standards of architectural design, since the Georgian period and its days as a Spa Town. It is apparent that sustainability is increasingly becoming a key criterion in determining planning policy. It is crucial for its future success that Ashby de la Zouch stays ahead of the curve, rather than struggling to catch up as sustainability takes centre stage.

POLICY S4: DESIGN - Developers must demonstrate in a Design and Access Statement how their development proposal reinforces Ashby de la Zouch's character and heritage. The statement must set out how the proposals follow the policies and guidance in relevant national and local documents as well as this Plan. The Design and Access Statement must address the following:

a) Context;

- b) **Historic character;**
- c) **Connection with the countryside and the Town Centre;**
- d) **Quality for pedestrians, cyclists and the physically disadvantaged;**
- e) **Development density and build quality;**
- f) **Car Parking;**
- g) **Landscaping and access to open and green space;**
- h) **Occupier controlled access to fibre, copper and other home office services;**
- i) **Environmental footprint;**
- j) **Play provision;**
- k) **Flood risk concerns and**
- l) **Impact on amenity of neighbouring properties**

The Town Council reserves the right to require an individual architectural review on any development of 25 houses or more or any single building of more than 3000sqm outside Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area. Within the Conservation Area it reserves the right to require an individual architectural review on any development of 1 house or any single building or extension of more than 100sqm. Such reviews should be carried out by an appropriately qualified independent body and conducted within the design review guidelines established by RIBA or CABE.

1.7 Prioritising Development on Brownfield sites

Derelict sites and empty buildings remain across the Plan area and these often create a drag on its vibrancy and attractiveness. The consultation shows that redevelopment of derelict and redundant 'brownfield sites' instead of building on greenfield sites should be a priority.

This is also a core principle of the NPPF (paragraph 17) which is to "encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that is it not of high environmental value".

Policy E36 of the NWLDC Local Plan supports redevelopment on derelict land where it has limited environmental or ecological value.

Development that addresses these issues therefore must be prioritised before other development sites are considered.

POLICY S5: PRIORITY TO BE GIVEN TO BROWNFIELD SITES – Development Proposals for the redevelopment or change of use of redundant land or buildings should be prioritised.

2. Housing

2.1 Introduction

According to the 2011 Census, Ashby de la Zouch had a population of 12,530 and 5,422 homes. This represents 13.4% of the dwellings in North West Leicestershire.

Ashby de la Zouch has been the focus of much new house building, and it is reasonable to expect this trend to continue, providing this housing expansion can be sustained by adequate new and improved infrastructure.

This chapter, along with the other chapters in the Plan, sets out the strategy and policies by which the housing needs within the Plan area over the Plan period will be met in a sustainable manner with due attention to good design, appropriate mix, preservation and improvement of the environment and sensitivity to the wider needs of the community. Provision of a high proportion of good quality affordable housing targeted to local demand is a priority.

2.2 Sustainable Housing Growth

The draft Local Plan for North West Leicestershire set outs a need for at least 10,700 new dwellings over the plan period for the District as a whole, a 26% increase.

This overall target is not apportioned to the various communities that make up North West Leicestershire. The draft Local Plan does make it clear however, that as one of the identified Key Service Centres, Ashby de La Zouch will be required to take “a significant amount of development”

In the absence of a District-wide apportionment methodology, a target of 1,434 new homes has been developed. This has been established on a pro-rata split of the 10,700 allocation for the District as a whole and based on the number of dwellings in the Parish. It is reasonable to expect that Ashby de la Zouch should grow proportionately (1,434 new homes).

This target acknowledges the requirement that the Plan should make provision for the needs of its residents and contribute to the overall housing target for North West Leicestershire. This will include the need to meet local housing demand and provide affordable housing opportunities especially for young people as well as considering the growing housing requirements for older people.

Whilst it may be argued that as a Key Service Centre, Ashby de la Zouch should take a higher proportion of development, this needs to be balanced against the consultation findings that have revealed that the growth ambitions of the residents of the Plan area are not significant. People value the historic and compact nature of the Plan area and have been concerned by the increasing amount of development which has occurred over recent years that has reduced the level of open space and

placed pressure on the already overburdened transport network as well as other key services such as Schools and health care, leading also to unsustainable levels of commuting by car. It is also noted that Ashby de la Zouch is expected to take a greater degree of development than Coalville, which is above it in the settlement hierarchy. However, limited housing and employment land would be acceptable in the right location to provide houses and jobs for local people and to help support the vitality of the Town Centre, with associated improvements in infrastructure.

A sufficient supply of suitable land will therefore be designated for new housing to ensure an adequate provision and mix of high quality sustainable homes is available to meet the needs of the community as its size, economic activity and aspirations grow during the period of this Plan.

There have been 1,376 new homes built, permitted or allocated for Ashby de la Zouch between April 2011 and April 2015. This indicates a minimum need of 58 more homes over the period to 2031 to meet the identified growth target of 1,434 new homes.

This target will be more than met by the allocation of a housing site in Policy H2. It is also important to bear in mind here that there has also been a steady supply of 'windfall sites' in the Plan area. Windfall sites are typically small housing sites for less than five dwellings, which have not been specifically identified as available in a planning document, and have unexpectedly become available. This supply can reasonably be expected to continue through the Plan period, potentially providing up to another 100 dwellings.

Also, it must be noted that the Money Hill Site is the subject of a major planning application which if approved would provide another 605 homes. This planning application was refused by the District Council but an appeal has been lodged with the Secretary of State seeking to reverse this refusal. This decision is outside the control of the Town Council, but the planning application if approved would have a significant impact on housing provision in the Plan area.

POLICY H1: HOUSING PROVISION - Having regard to dwellings already constructed and existing commitments, the remaining housing provision for the Plan area will be a target of a minimum of 58 new dwellings over the period 2011 - 2031, which will be met by the allocation of the housing site in Policy H2.

Site A22 (the former Arla dairy on Smisby Road) is identified in the 2014 SHLAA as being allocated for housing. This has an estimated capacity of 154 homes. Development on this site will be supported subject to specific conditions being met.

POLICY H2: SUSTAINABLE HOUSING GROWTH – This Neighbourhood Plan recognises the need to provide new housing to meet the identified needs of the Plan area and contribute to the District wide housing target. Having regard to homes already constructed and existing commitments, the remaining housing provision for the Plan area will be a target of a minimum of 58 houses over the period to 2031 which will be met by development on the former Arla dairy site which will be supported if:

- (a) A satisfactory scheme to prevent flooding is implemented;**
- (b) A water vole survey is undertaken and its findings and recommendations are adequately incorporated into the design;**
- (c) The stream corridor through the site is retained as natural public open space with a 10m buffer either side. This should be managed as open space, to ensure habitat continuity and to retain connectivity;**
- (d) A scheme to provide a shared use footway/cycle track from the site to the Town centre via Hood Park is provided.**

The Plan acknowledges that the level of housing growth set out in the Neighbourhood Plan is less than that envisaged in the draft Local Plan. In particular, the draft Plan proposes allocating 1,750 homes, plus employment land and other uses on land north of Ashby de La Zouch on the Money Hill site adjacent to the Arla site allocated above. It must be recognised however that this is a proposal which the District Council is currently consulting on. The Local Plan is still a draft. It has not yet been independently examined and formally approved. This proposed allocation may be reduced in scale or indeed removed altogether from the final Local Plan. Whatever the Local Plan finally determines for the former Arla Dairy and Money Hill site the Neighbourhood Plan will acknowledge and reflects this.

It also recognises that the Money Hill site is also the subject of a planning appeal following the refusal by the North West Leicestershire District Council of a planning application for 605 homes on the site. Again, should this appeal be successful (a decision is expected shortly) the Neighbourhood Plan will be amended to reflect this.

The NPPF, paragraph 6 promotes the need for sustainable development and the foreword describes the purpose of planning as being to help achieve sustainable

development. This presumption in favour of sustainable development is reinforced within the draft North West Leicestershire Local Plan policy S1 which sets policies to achieve this. This includes a requirement for Ashby, as a Key Service Centre, to take what is referred to as a ‘significant amount of development’. The draft Local Plan identifies the former Arla Dairy site as an appropriate location for new housing.

2.3 Housing Mix

Recent housing development in Ashby de la Zouch has been primarily larger homes which meet the needs of a limited section of the community. In order to offer a greater and more balanced range of different housing types, especially smaller homes that meet the present and future housing needs of Ashby de la Zouch, it is necessary to ensure that future housing development should contain a mixture of housing types that maintain the needs of a broad range of the community.

The emerging Local Plan recommends the following housing mix to meet the needs of residents of the District over the Plan period:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Market	5-10%	35-40%	45-50%	10-15%
Affordable	33.3%	35.2%	28.9%	2.5%

The emerging Local Plan also allows for local variation allowing for ‘population profiles, location, balancing recent local delivery, rebalancing the current mix and the turnover of properties at the local level as well as the nature of the development site and the character of the area’.

In Ashby, the housing mix since 2011 where approvals are known is as follows:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Market		16 (4.6%)	92 (26.5%)	239 (68.9%)
Affordable	29 (19.6%)	81 (54.7%)	36 (24.3%)	2 (1.3%)

The 2011 Census identified the housing mix in Ashby as being as follows:

	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Ashby	370 (6.2%)	1222 (20.5%)	2448 (41.1%)	1404 (23.6%)
NWLDC	2210 (5.5%)	9119 (22.5%)	18533 (45.8%)	7419 (18.3%)

This shows that as at 2011 Ashby de la Zouch had a greater proportion of 4 bed houses than the District as a whole. In the approvals since 2011 the proportion of 4

bed homes has increased further, which demonstrates that there is a need for smaller house types (primarily 2 and 3 bed) within future housing developments across Ashby de la Zouch to ensure that the mix of housing across the Neighbourhood Plan area remains appropriate to the needs of the community into the future.

Census data also reveals that Ashby de la Zouch's population is generally older than that across North West Leicestershire as a whole. The proportion of residents aged 65-74 in Ashby, at 9.8%, is only marginally bigger than that of the District as a whole (9.6%). However, in the 75-84 (6.4% Ashby/5.5% District) and 90+ brackets (0.85% Ashby de la Zouch and 0.72% District), the difference is greater and indicates a need for more age-appropriate accommodation to meet the needs of the ageing population within Ashby de la Zouch.

The emerging Local Plan emphasises in policy H6 the need for a mixed and balanced range of accommodation. The NPPF supports this approach. Paragraph 50 promotes a mix of housing based on demographic data and reflecting local demand.

POLICY H2: HOUSING MIX – In order to meet the future needs of the residents of the Plan area, new housing development proposals must:

- a) Provide a range of housing suited to local need and appropriate to their location;**
- b) Submit justification for the proposed housing mix in a report accompanying any planning application;**
- c) Ensure that at least 60% of new market housing in developments of 5 or more shall comprise 2 and/or 3 bedroom properties; and**
- d) Provide a balance of accommodation, including bungalows, which meets the needs of people of all ages, including older people.**

2.4 Affordable Housing

The 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) indicates a potential need for 60% of the new housing required across the District to be affordable, however the current District Policy is for a minimum of 30% of new homes in Ashby de la Zouch in developments of 15 or more to be affordable. Continuing this policy would see an increasing gap between need and delivery.

Current District Council policy provides a precedent for requiring affordable homes on developments of 5 or more homes, this being the policy for Measham, Ibstock and Kegworth.

The SHMA indicates that, for the District as a whole, 30-35% of affordable housing need will be for 1 bedroom properties. However for Ashby de la Zouch, there are currently 171 households on the affordable homes waiting list, 86 (50%) of which require 1 bedroom properties.

Analysis shows that in recent years of 148 affordable homes currently negotiated on Ashby de la Zouch sites with planning permission only 29 or 19.6% are 1 bedroom. If this trend continues, it can therefore be expected that there will be a large shortfall in affordable 1 bedroom homes in Ashby over the plan period.

This reflects current District Council Policy for a housing site developed “purely to meet an identified local housing need” and has been applied recently in Ashby de la Zouch for Discounted Open Market Properties.

This policy is aimed at redressing the historic under provision and disproportionate demand for affordable housing in Ashby de la Zouch. 25% of the current social housing waiting list across North West Leicestershire is for homes in Ashby de la Zouch. The objective is to offer more, and a greater range of, affordable housing that meets the present and future needs of Ashby and prioritise the needs of the Town and its residents.

The need for this policy is evidenced by the NPPF, paragraph 50, which requires local authorities to identify the required tenure of housing in specific locations and to plan for meeting this need. Policy H6 in the emerging Local Plan for North West Leicestershire District Council sets specific targets for the delivery of affordable housing across the District, but allows for variations according to locally identified need.

POLICY H3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING – To support the provision of mixed, sustainable communities and meet an identified need within the community:

- a) At least 40% of homes on developments comprising 5 or more dwellings shall be high quality affordable homes. Only in highly exceptional circumstances will commuted sums be acceptable and any such commuted sums shall be used to provide suitable affordable housing in Ashby de la Zouch;**
- b) At least 50% of the affordable homes provided shall be 1 bedroom properties; and**

c) Development housing proposals will be expected to contribute to the provision of affordable homes that are suited to the needs of older people and those with disabilities.

Where possible, affordable housing within the Plan area shall be allocated to eligible households with an Ashby connection defined as follows:

- a) Was born in Ashby de la Zouch or;
- b) Presently reside in the plan area and has, immediately prior to occupation, been lawfully and ordinarily resident within the plan area for a continuous period of not less than twelve months; or
- c) Was ordinarily resident within Ashby de la Zouch for a continuous period of not less than three years but has been forced to move away because of the lack of affordable housing; or
- d) Is presently employed or self-employed on a full time basis in Ashby de la Zouch and whose main occupation has been in Ashby de la Zouch for a continuous period of not less than twelve months immediately prior to occupation; or
- f) Has a need to move to Ashby de la Zouch to be close to a relative or other person in order to provide or receive significant amounts of care and support.
- e) Has a close family member who is lawfully and ordinarily resident within Ashby de la Zouch and who has been lawfully and ordinarily resident within the Plan area for a continuous period of not less than three years immediately prior to occupation and for the purposes of this clause a “close family member” shall mean a mother, father, brother or sister.

Only where no households can be found that meet any of the above criteria shall affordable housing within the plan area be allocated to otherwise eligible households from the wider District.

2.5 Promoting Self-Build

The NPPF calls for ‘custom build’ opportunities to be included in local plans as part of the housing mix. This is accommodated within the Neighbourhood Plan and referred to as ‘self-build’ opportunities which offer benefits in terms of affordability, local engagement and encouraging bespoke design appropriate to the area. This will ensure the fit within the overall design of the scheme and provide flexibility to meet a range of different needs.

In this type of development, new homes are built either by the future homeowner themselves (self-build), or to their specification by a small developer or local builder (custom build). The Neighbourhood Plan promotes this approach and encourages self-build opportunities to be incorporated into new housing developments.

The national self-build website - <http://www.nasba.org.uk/> - identifies a number of benefits to this type of development model when compared to conventional development:

- Better quality homes.
- More individual and contemporary architecture (but the style must still in accordance with local planning policy).
- Cheaper to build than to buy the equivalent.
- More likely to be undertaken by local residents – thereby enhancing a sense of community.
- More likely to include sustainable and green technology.
- Homes that are tailored to the needs of their owners.
- More likely to involve local tradespeople in the construction.

POLICY H4: PROMOTING SELF-BUILD – Development proposals for self-build or custom build schemes will be supported where

Individuals who wish to purchase a self-build plot must:

- a) Demonstrate that they have a local connection (definition as per policy H3) and**
- b) Demonstrate that they intend to live in the property once it is complete and**
- c) Complete the building of the dwelling within 2 years of purchase.**

Plots may be sold to individuals without a local connection if a lack of local need has been demonstrated. This will be deemed to be the case if the plot has been on the open market at a fair market price for more than 6 months without being sold.

3. Employment and Economic Growth

3.1 Introduction

Employment and economic growth are key to sustainable, vibrant and prosperous communities.

Ashby de la Zouch has a strong and competitive economy and work force as evidenced in the high and growing number of companies based in the Plan area as well as the sustained levels of investment in its economy and low levels of unemployment.

Ashby de la Zouch is a very attractive and supportive location for businesses to be based and grow. It enjoys a strategic location with excellent road, rail and air network. It also benefits from a high quality business infrastructure including a number of purpose built and modern industrial estates. Its distinctive, historic and attractive built and natural environment set within the heart of the National Forest is also a major plus.

As a consequence, it is home to many hundreds of businesses and offers employment and business opportunities not only for the Parish but the wider area. It is also close to key economic growth areas such as East Midlands Airport and Donnington Park. These growth areas provide opportunities for jobs, trade and investment for Ashby de la Zouch residents and businesses, which the Plan seeks to maximise.

The population is skilled with significantly more people, for example, holding higher level qualifications than the District and national averages. The population is also entrepreneurial as reflected in the high number of people self-employed and business start-ups. Many residents, however, who wish work in the Parish struggle to do so - many have been unable to find work and some that have found work have to travel long distances, often by car, to their work place.

Consultation shows that residents, businesses and other stakeholders wish to see Ashby de la Zouch continue to offer a high quality and sustainable business environment and infrastructure that allows business to form, grow and prosper. There should also be a focus on supporting residents to benefit from the employment and investment opportunities, including through self-employment.

The Plan also considers that one of the most effective ways it can support and nurture businesses are to make the planning system more efficient and accessible. It aims therefore to simplify and streamline economic development related planning policies and processes wherever possible, including by reducing their number.

3.2 Existing Employment Land and Buildings

The Plan area is home to many hundreds of businesses spanning a wide and diverse range of sectors including the services sector, manufacturing and a growing number in the warehousing sector. The vast majority of these are small, employing less than ten people, but include some very large employers.

These businesses are generally to be found scattered across the Parish. There are, however, some groupings of business including on purpose built industrial estates such as the Ivanhoe and Ashby Business Parks. Planning permission has also recently been granted for a major (26 hectares) employment area at the site of the former Lounge disposal point.

To make sure that Ashby de la Zouch continues to provide sustainable, accessible job opportunities and to benefit from economic growth, it is important to ensure the continuing availability of a choice of sites and premises. To achieve this we will protect existing viable employment sites.

The Plan adopts the standard definition of employment use (B1, B2 & B8) as set out in planning legislation.

POLICY E1: EXISTING EMPLOYMENT LAND AND BUILDINGS – Land and buildings in the existing employment use will continue to be used for employment purposes unless it can be shown that it is no longer viable or suitable for the site or building to remain in employment use.

3.3 Small and Start-Up Businesses

Within the Parish there is a small and growing number of small businesses. They are key to a sustainable, diverse and vibrant economy and community, and the Plan is keen to encourage their establishment and growth in appropriate locations.

Often these can operate in residential areas without causing nuisance or detriment to the environment.

In special circumstances, this could include the conversion of existing or redundant buildings outside of the defined Limits to Development for uses such as agriculture, tourism, and home-working uses that are appropriate to a rural location.

POLICY E2: SMALL AND START UP BUSINESSES - Outside of the main employment areas, small scale employment related development proposals (including homeworking) will be supported subject to transport, environmental, and amenity considerations.

POLICY E3: SMALL AND START UP BUSINESSES - The Plan will encourage developments and initiatives, which support small and start-up businesses.

3.4 Connecting Local People to the new Job Opportunities

In addition to supporting businesses to create jobs and investment, there is a need to ensure that all local people have the opportunities needed to access jobs and meet the needs of employers. This is key to a sustainable economy and a vibrant community.

To support this, the Plan encourages actions aimed at connecting local people to the new job opportunities and preventing the barriers such as training or transport that restricts them doing so. This benefits both businesses and local people.

POLICY E4: CONNECTING LOCAL PEOPLE TO THE NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES - The Town Council will work with partners with the objective that all local people shall have the opportunities needed to access jobs and meet the needs of employers including by

- a) Seeking that major new employment related developments contribute to the provision of education and training;
- b) Promoting local employment opportunities and initiatives aimed at the residents of the Parish;
- c) Developing tailored interventions such as Travel Plans and improved public transport provision to the main employment areas in and near to the Parish and
- d) Developing links between the business community and education providers.

4. Ashby de la Zouch Town Centre

4.1 Introduction

A strong Town Centre is vital for vibrant, sustainable and thriving communities. It is at the heart of a community.

It provides a valuable service in meeting the day to day shopping, social and other important needs of residents as well as providing opportunities for investment and local employment, close to where people live. It also reduces the need to travel, and acts as a focal point for local life and interaction.

The NPPF states that “town centres should be seen as the heart of communities” and that policies should “support their viability and vitality”.

Ashby de la Zouch has a historic, vibrant and attractive Town Centre. It is where the majority of the shops in the Plan area are concentrated, and has a good range of other facilities with a leisure centre, library, museum and very popular primary and secondary schools. These cater well for the everyday needs of local residents as well as making the Town Centre an attractive venue for visitors.

Over the years, the town has retained its traditional character and street pattern. This is reflected in much of it being designated as a Conservation Area reflecting its historic and architectural interest.

In 2015, North West Leicestershire District Council as part of the development of the Local Plan commissioned independent experts to undertake an assessment of the vitality and viability of the main centres in the District, including Ashby de la Zouch. The conclusions were that “Ashby was shown to be performing well, with a low vacancy rate, a well maintained town centre and a good variety of retailers with a mix of national multiples and specialist independents”. This emerging Local Plan has Ashby, alongside Coalville, at the top of the retail hierarchy in the District.

Consultation reveals that ensuring that Ashby de la Zouch Town Centre remains an attractive, vibrant and sustainable place in which to work, live and shop remains a top priority.

Residents, however, have expressed concern over the appearance of new or rebranded shop fronts, which are out of keeping, and transport issues, in particular car parking and congestion. They are also concerned that core shops are being replaced with other uses such as office accommodation and hot food takeaways, and this is having an adverse impact on the role and attractiveness of the Town Centre.

4.2 Maintaining and Enhancing the Attractiveness of the Town Centre

Town Centre boundaries are important, because they help to define the character of an area and control the uses within and outside of the boundary.

Their use is encouraged in the NPPF as well as local planning Policy, including the Draft Local Plan, which proposes that a Town Centre boundary be defined for Ashby de la Zouch to reinforce and protect its key Town Centre role and function.

The existing Town Centre boundary is out of date, having been established over 20 years ago.

The Town Council, in conjunction with the District Council, has reviewed this boundary and a new one is proposed that better reflects the extent of the Town Centre.

The Plan will also support other complementary uses such as food and drinking establishment where they would not adversely affect the key role and function of the Town Centre and the amenities of residents and other people visiting the Town Centre. This includes evening and night time uses. Care however needs to be taken that this would not lead to an over concentration of such uses. The consultation shows that there is a concern that there is already an over concentration of hot food take-aways and this is having an adverse impact on the amenity of the Town Centre.

POLICY TC1: TOWN CENTRE ATTRACTIVENESS – Ashby de la Zouch is and will remain a primary retail, leisure and service Town Centre.

Proposals for shops, financial and professional services, restaurants and cafes, hot food take aways, arts, culture and tourism development will be expected to be located within the Town Centre, as defined on the Town Centre map. They will be expected to:

- a) Be of a scale appropriate to the character of Ashby de la Zouch and the role and function of its Town Centre;**
- b) Conserve and enhance the character and distinctiveness of Ashby de la Zouch in terms of design;**
- c) Protect and enhance its built and historic assets, and its wider setting; and**

d) Not lead to an over concentration of a particular use such as hot food take-aways that would have a significant adverse impact on the role and amenity of the Town Centre and adjoining and nearby uses.

e) Generally would not have an adverse impact on crime and anti-social behaviour, and the amenities of residents and visitors to the Town Centre

Such uses outside of the defined Town Centre will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances in accordance with national and district planning policies.

4.3 Establish a Primary Shopping Area for the Town Centre

The NPPF promotes the separation of Shopping Areas within Town Centre Boundaries through their identification as Primary Shopping Areas.

This is an area where core (A1) shopping uses such as greengrocers; bakers etc. will be principally concentrated.

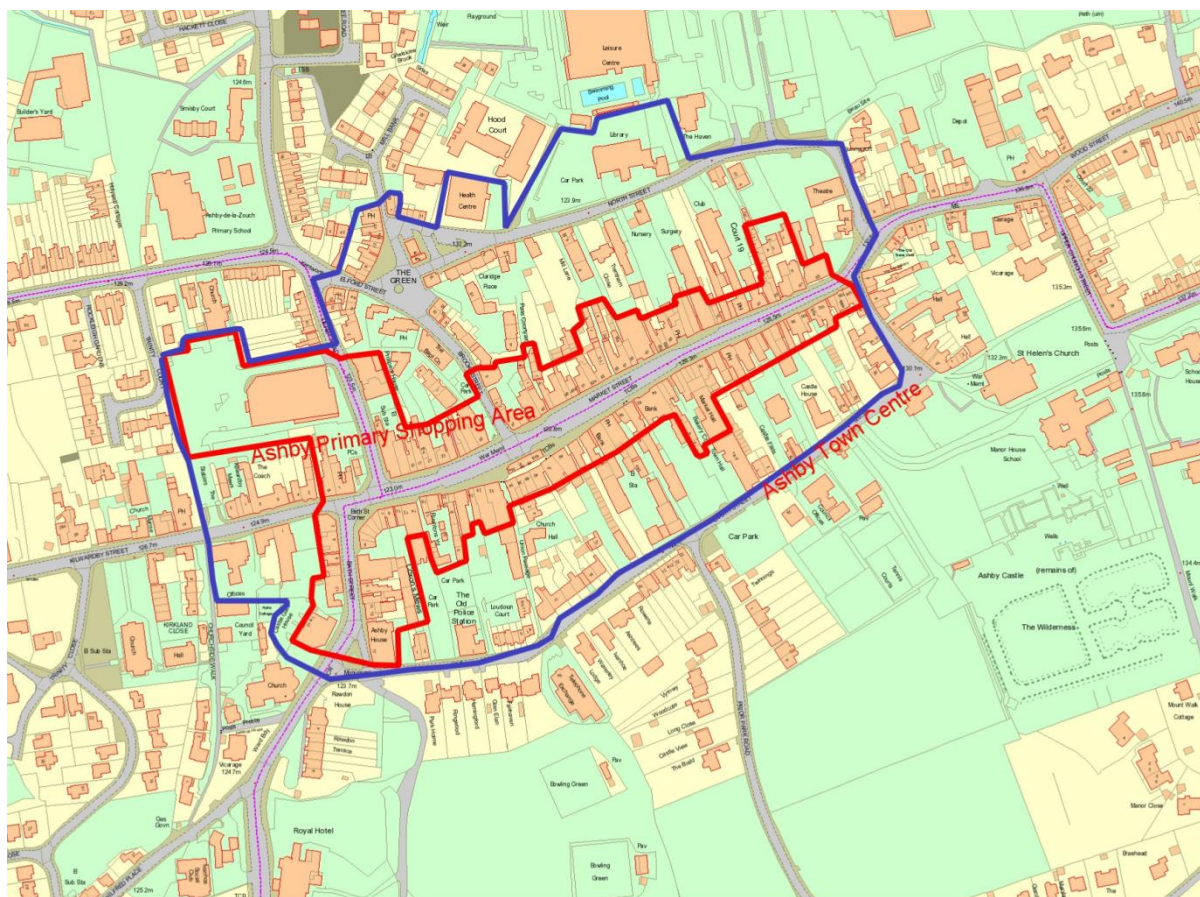
In Ashby de la Zouch Town Centre, the concentration of retail shopping frontages is along Market Street, in the Market Hall, along Bath Street, Bath Corner and parts of Derby Road and Brook Street.

POLICY TC2: PRIMARY SHOPPING AREA – The Neighbourhood Plan designates a Primary Shopping Area within the Town Centre Boundary within which it will:

a) Be supportive of proposals for new (A1) development;

b) Resist proposals for change of use of existing retail (A1) premises in the Primary Shopping Area to any other use.

Figure 3 Town Centre and Primary Shopping Area



Date Created: 11-9-2015 | Map Centre (Easting/Northing): 435746 / 316732 | Scale: 1:3578 | © Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100053272) 2015

4.4 Shop Fronts in the Town Centre

Concern has been expressed that the visual appearance of shops and businesses in the Town Centre has declined, resulting in a less attractive street scene and diminishing the impact of the traditional buildings within it.

Well-designed shopfronts make an important contribution to the character of the Town Centre as well as to individual buildings across it. The retention of historic shopfronts, is particularly important. Alongside high quality contemporary design, they make an important contribution to the special architectural and historic interest of the retail area.

Where existing shopfronts are of indifferent or poor quality design, replacement with shopfronts of high quality design and materials which complement the design and proportions of the host building will be encouraged.

Run down or broken shopfronts should be repaired rather than replaced where they make an important contribution to the distinctiveness of the building or area.

Signage is also an important feature of the Town Centre. All signage should be kept to a minimum and must be designed to fit sympathetically with the local character. Internally illuminated signs are not in keeping and will not be supported.

POLICY TC3: SHOP FRONTS – Development proposals to alter or replace existing shopfronts, or create new shopfronts within the defined Town Centre will be supported where they:

a) Conserve and enhance the special qualities and significance of the building and area; and

b) Relate well to their context in terms of design, scale, material and colour.

Development proposals that remove, replace or substantially harm shop fronts by poor or indifferent design, including internally illuminated signage, will not be supported.

4.5 Residential Development in the Town Centre

The Plan also recognises the importance of residential development within the Town Centre to ensure its vitality and promote sustainable living.

Many people already live within the Town Centre, and the Plan wishes to encourage more people to do so.

It is considered that residential accommodation on the upper floors of retail, commercial and other uses in the Town Centre could make an important contribution. Vacant space over shops and other uses in the Town Centre is common place within Ashby de la Zouch. Their re-use would prove a cost-effective means of creating additional housing in the Town Centre. There would also be wider benefits to sustainability and the vitality of the Town Centre whilst complementing its core role and function. These benefits would however need to be balanced against other considerations such as the amenity of the proposed residential property and adjoining properties, as well as design, access and parking issues.

POLICY TC4: RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT – Development proposals to develop an upper floor of premises within the Town Centre for residential use will be supported subject to access, parking, design and amenity considerations and within the Primary Shopping Area it would not result in the loss of, or adversely, affect an existing retail use.

4.6 Promoting Tourism in the Town Centre

Ashby Town Centre has a shortage of tourist facilities to attract visitors to the rich heritage of the Town. In particular it has a deficiency of hotels to accommodate visitors.

The development of new tourism facilities will help to promote the Town Centre and increase footfall to the shops, strengthening the business community and the Town itself.

This is also in accordance with Section 3 of the NPPF which encourages planning policies that support sustainable rural tourism and section 10 of the emerging NWLDC Local Plan that recognises the role that planning can play in promoting tourism and makes a link between tourism and economic development of an area.

POLICY TC5: TOURISM - Development proposals for tourism facilities in the Town Centre will be supported provided that:

- a) The siting, scale and design has strong regard to the local character, historic and natural assets of the surrounding area;**
- b) The design and materials are in keeping with the local style and reinforce local distinctiveness and a strong sense of place and**
- c) The development is outside the Primary Shopping Area**

The loss of tourism facilities in the Town Centre will not be supported unless they are no longer viable or alternative provision is made available.

4.7 Legible Signage

Signage within the Town has developed in a piecemeal fashion.

As a consequence, it is cluttered and uncoordinated. This means that visitors to the Town Centre often do not understand how to best get around it.

Some of the signage is also unattractive and detracts from the special character of the Town.

A number of towns and cities have introduced 'Legible Signage Policies' to help to reduce the amount of street clutter and better understand how to get between

places; an approach this Plan supports, as well as a general improvement in signage in the Town Centre.

POLICY TC6: LEGIBLE SIGNAGE – Development proposals should include clear and attractive signage that is in keeping with the local style. The Town Council will work with the District Council, County Council as well as businesses and residents in the Town Centre to introduce a ‘Legible Signage’ Strategy for the Town.

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5. Transport

5.1 Introduction

Transport is primarily a means to an end, and the fundamental purpose of all modes of transport (by foot, cycle, car etc.) is to enable people to access those locations, goods and activities they want or need.

Good quality, accessible and sustainable transport is key to supporting the vitality and viability of a community and of achieving a good quality of life.

The Plan area is relatively well served by transport opportunities. It is strategically and conveniently located on the main transport network with good road connections including to the M1, M5, M42 and M6 motorways. It is also less than 10 miles away from a major airport – East Midlands. It has a good network of footpaths and cycle ways as well as being well served by public transport. Levels of car ownership are relatively high and growing fast.

The traffic situation has, however, been identified as a significant issue for many involved in the development of the Plan, not only residents, but also employers and agencies. In particular, despite significant improvements and investment, the transport infrastructure has failed to keep up with the growth of the Plan area. This has aggravated a transport situation, which was already difficult. The most obvious manifestation of this is the main road network, which is overloaded during peak hours. In addition, further development, if not properly managed and planned, will put the transport infrastructure, especially the road system, under even greater pressure.

It is also noted that HS2 is a national strategic project that the Neighbourhood Plan cannot influence, but if the current proposed route for Phase 2 of HS2 is implemented it will have an impact on the Parish as it will cut through the Plan area adjacent to the A42.

5.2 Ensuring New Development Takes Place in the Most Accessible Locations

The planning of development offers substantial opportunities for ensuring that it is built in the most sustainable locations that reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and are accessible by a range of forms of transport.

National and Local planning policy places considerable emphasis upon ensuring that new development is “located where the need to travel is minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised”. (NPPF paragraph 34)

In planning for development, the Plan will require that priority should be given to locations, such as the built-up part of Ashby de la Zouch, that are capable of

providing or being well integrated into effective public transport, walking and cycling networks.

This also accords with the policies contained in the Sustainable Ashby de la Zouch Section which seeks to reduce the need to travel by locating development in the most sustainable locations.

POLICY T 1: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – The Plan will require that new development takes place in the most sustainable and accessible locations that are capable of providing or being well integrated into effective public transport, walking and cycling networks.

5.3 Promoting Travel Plans

Travel Plans are a proven means to reduce travel by car and promote more sustainable means of travel especially by public transport.

They are a package of actions specifically designed by, and tailored to, a particular workplace, school or location such as a new housing development.

It is considered that the particular characteristics of the Plan area including higher levels of congestion at peak times mean that it is especially suited to a Travel Plan based approach to help achieve a shift to walking, cycling and public transport

Travel Plans generally include measures to promote walking, cycling and public transport, but can include car sharing schemes; cycling facilities; a dedicated bus service or restricted car parking allocations.

POLICY T2: TRAVEL PLANS – The Plan will support and encourage a comprehensive programme of Travel Plans, including School Travel Plans, employer Travel Plans and new housing development Travel Plans. All new major developments which would generate significant amount of travel will be required to be supported by a Travel Plan that is tailored to the specific needs of that development and the wider needs of Ashby de la Zouch including where appropriate a reduction in Town Centre traffic.

5.4 Safer Routes to Schools Scheme

The consultation identified a particular need for school pupils to be encouraged to walk, cycle or use bus services to get to school.

This would help reduce the peak traffic volumes arising at the start and end of the school day and minimise the environmental, safety and transport issues arising from the high numbers of cars parking near schools, including at and close to the school gates.

This could include initiatives such as Safer Routes to Schools Schemes, or similar, which brings together a package of measures such as 20 mph zone, safer crossing points, cycle storage facilities and enhanced signing, lining and lighting in an area.

POLICY T3: SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOLS SCHEMES – The Plan will support and encourage ‘Safe routes to schools’ schemes and similar initiatives. Where a Safer Route to School would help to address a known traffic problem the Town Council will seek their use. All proposals for new and expanded schools facilities should be accompanied by a Safer Routes to Schools Scheme

5.5 Promoting Walking and Cycling

The reliance on the car in the Plan area is very high, and the majority of the journeys (even short ones) made are by car.

Cycling and walking provide great potential to reduce reliance on the car for trips. The Plan area is relatively compact and has a good network of footpaths and cycle ways. There is some evidence that more people are taking up cycling and walking for leisure and other purposes.

The draft Ashby De La Zouch cycling strategy has been developed in partnership with Leicestershire County Council, North West Leicestershire District Council and the Heart of the Forest Forum ‘Access and Connectivity sub-group’. This sets out proposals for promoting and supporting cycling in Ashby De La Zouch and the wider area; the findings of which this Plan supports.

Further work and analysis have been undertaken as part of the development of the Plan. From this work, gaps in the network have become apparent. In particular, this

has identified the desire for a dedicated footpath/cycle way that circumnavigates the Parish, linking much prized schools, employment, shopping and recreational uses.

POLICY T4: WALKING AND CYCLING – Support will be given to proposals which would increase or improve the network of cycle ways and footpaths and their use. This includes the provision of a new cycleway/footpath that circumnavigates the Parish. New developments should be well-linked to and by footpaths and cycle ways.

5.6 Supporting use of the National Forest Railway Line for passenger transport

The National Forest Railway Line is an important train line, part of which runs through the Plan area. It currently serves freight trains and has not carried passengers for many years. However the reintroduction of passenger services would make an important contribution to a reduction in motor vehicle usage and would enhance Ashby's position as a transport hub. This plan seeks to protect the line and its infrastructure so that it can be re-opened for passenger use in the future.

However, it has been suggested that should the line close its route along the Valley adjacent to a number of towns, villages and employment areas, it could make an ideal route for a walking and cycling.

The Plan does not support its closure for rail purposes, but, should it close, would support its use as a footpath, cycleway or for some form of public transport development proposal.

POLICY T5: NATIONAL FOREST RAILWAY LINE – Proposals that threaten the integrity of the National Forest line and its infrastructure for potential re-use for passenger services will not be supported. However, should the line completely cease being used for rail purposes the Plan supports its possible use as a footpath, cycleway or for some form of public transport development proposal.

5.7 Public Transport

Public transport, such as buses and taxis, provides a much needed valued service for many residents especially those without access to a car.

The Town is generally well served by public transport, including regular services to the many towns and cities that surround the Parish.

However, consultation suggests that public transport provision is not sufficiently attractive on some routes to persuade especially car owners to make use of public transport. Also it does not meet the needs of all of the community – in particular many of the Plan area’s rural settlements which often have infrequent bus services and people with disabilities. More effective publicity of the services available and better coordination of these services was a major theme here.

POLICY T6: PUBLIC TRANSPORT – The Town Council will liaise with Leicestershire Highway Authority, East Midlands Airport, Network Rail, the bus operators and other relevant bodies to encourage the better planning, and improved provision, of public transport.

5.8 Local Car Parking

Car parking in the Plan area has become a serious problem. Increased car use and more residents and visitors have led to a shortage of available spaces. This is particularly so in the Town Centre but it has become an issue of major concern across the Plan area.

A wide and diverse range of views and ideas have been put forward on how this might be best addressed. There was, however, no emerging consensus.

In addition, some of the issues raised are not best addressed through policies in this document which is essentially concerned with the development of land - for example, car parking charging policy or how long free on-street parking should be limited to.

The Town Council recognises that car parking is a serious issue, and that responses to it need to be explored and developed.

POLICY T7: CAR PARKING – The Plan will encourage development and other proposals that provide opportunities for improvement in car parking.

The Plan supports a major review of car parking provision and policies in Ashby, especially in the Town Centre, and the Town Council will work with the

Leicestershire Highway Authority, Leicestershire County Council, North West Leicestershire District Council, the local business community and other relevant bodies to ensure this.

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6. Education, Leisure and Well Being

6.1 Introduction

Education, leisure and wellbeing are major issues both locally and nationally. They are also closely related. Good education and leisure opportunities are strongly associated with good wellbeing, for example. Good wellbeing is also about living in an attractive, healthy and safe environment that encourages pride, physical activity and community interaction.

Residents of the Plan area enjoy better education, leisure and wellbeing than across the country. Levels of ill health are also below the national average.

The Plan area has a rich and attractive built and natural environment. This includes a number of sites and buildings that have been highlighted as being of national significance.

6.2 Important Local Green Spaces

The Plan area has a diverse mix of green spaces that exist around, within and between the Town and the other settlements that make up the Parish.

As well as formal public green space such as parks, recreation and children's playgrounds, the term 'Local Green Space' includes other important open spaces such as woodlands, allotments, and grassed areas.

Collectively, these areas make a significant contribution to the special and attractive character of the Parish and deserve protection for the benefit both of the residents and visitors to the Plan area as well as its wildlife.

In 2008 a study was undertaken by North West Leicestershire District Council looking at the provision of open space such as parks and recreation grounds across the District. This identified that Ashby De La Zouch has a good range of open spaces scattered across the Plan area much of which was popular and well used, such as Western Park. However, the total amount of open space in the Plan area was below recognised national and district standards. The evidence suggests that this relative lack of open space has worsened since 2008 as new provision has not kept pace with new development.

Other studies such as the Ashby De La Zouch Conservation Area Appraisal and Study undertaken in 2001 have also underlined the important and unique contribution green spaces make to the Townscape of Ashby De La Zouch.

The NPPF enables a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan to identify for protection green areas of particular local importance, where they meet specified criteria. The designation should only be used where the green space is in reasonably close

proximity to the community it serves, is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, and where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.

Based on the criteria set out in the NPPF and following consultation with the local community, a number of important Local Green Spaces have been identified as being especially special to the local community and requiring special protection from development. This includes The Bath Grounds Playing Fields; The Hastings Garden; “Bullen’s Field”; The Memorial Field; Manor House School Playing Field; Ashby Castle Grounds; Hood Park; Western Park; Ashby School Playing Fields and Bath Grounds Green Corridor. Other sites will be identified as part of the consultation process.

POLICY ELWB 1: EXISTING GREEN SPACES WILL BE PROTECTED - Their development for non-green space purposes will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances in accordance with national and district planning policies.

6.3 Open Space in New Housing Developments

Ensuring that there is sufficient open space to meet a variety of local needs is a key objective of the Neighbourhood Plan.

This is especially important as studies such as the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Assessment (2008) by North West Leicestershire District Council show that there is a general lack of open spaces in the Plan area especially in regard to recreation ground, allotments and children’s play areas.

Where new housing is developed, providing open space on-site is often the best way to cater for the immediate recreational needs of new residents that could not be met by existing open space and to ensure that the needs of the new residents do not worsen the existing provision. There are also wider benefits, for example, ensuring that open spaces are close to where people live.

Where open space is provided as part of a development, it is important that its provision reflects the local context, needs and priorities. Traditionally the focus has been on provision for children and young people. This remains important.

Recent years however have seen major changes in the population profile within the Plan area. It is important that any open space provision reflects these changes. In

particular, there has been a distinct ‘greying’ in the population with the proportion of the population aged over 50, for example, being about half again the national average.

It is important that any open space provision and associated infrastructure is designed and provided to encourage all age groups to take part in recreation and exercise.

There is evidence that ‘trim trails’ and community gardens are particularly effective in promoting activity and recreation in people across all age groups, and the Plan supports and encourages the provision of these facilities.

POLICY ELWB 2: OPEN SPACE IN NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - All new housing developments of five or more dwellings will be required to include adequate green space provision. This will include fitness facilities for all ages not just children, as part of this open space requirement.

Committed sums will be required to cover the costs of the maintenance of open space for a period of 10 years from the date of their hand over to the Town Council. Alternatively, if an existing open space is located within reasonable walking distance, then a committed sum may be accepted for the enhancement of that area.

6.4 Allotments

The primary purpose of allotments is to provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce.

There are, however wider benefits, for example, bringing people together and providing a source of recreation and exercise.

Under the Small Holdings and Allotment Act of 1908, a Parish or Town Council has a duty to provide sufficient allotments, where there is evidence of demand. There are currently approximately 100 allotment plots in across Ashby de la Zouch. This represents a shortfall of 29 plots based on national guidelines.

Despite efforts to increase supply with demand by splitting existing plots as they become available, the waiting list has remained stable in recent years.

New development provides an opportunity to meet this demand for allotments by requiring the provision of allotments as part of the development. It is important though that any land brought forward for allotment use meets certain criteria, in terms of suitability for cultivation, convenient access, availability of basic services and potential to be secure against theft or vandalism.

Such criteria are best met by identifying suitable locations rather than relying on piecemeal use of residual or unsatisfactory corners of larger development sites. Sufficient plots should be available on any site to make site acquisition and management viable.

POLICY ELWB 3: ALLOTMENT PROVISION IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS – Appropriate and suitable allotment provision will be required to be incorporated into new housing developments of five or more homes either through direct provision or via an equivalent commuted sum.

6.5 Biodiversity

Biodiversity includes all kinds of species and plants, from the commonplace to the critically endangered, as well as the habitat, which supports them.

Nationally important bio-diversity sites are protected under national legislation, notably through their designation as Sites of Scientific Interest. There are no Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the Parish though that part of the river Mease and its tributaries which lie within the Plan Area are designated as a Special Area of Conservation

There are however a number of sites of local bio-diversity interest. This is evidenced by studies such as North West Leicestershire Habitat Survey and Report (2006 – 2009).

These are important to the beauty and distinctiveness of the Plan area as well as to the wildflowers and wildlife they support.

Planning policy enables a Neighbourhood Plan to protect and enhance such locally important sites of bio-diversity.

POLICY ELWB 4: BIODIVERSITY - All new development will be expected to enhance and protect sites of biodiversity or ecological importance.

6.6 Trees and Woodlands

Trees and woodlands form an important part of Ashby De La Zouch's distinctive and attractive character and landscape.

They are also important for promoting relaxation and community activity, as well as supporting wildlife and wild flowers.

Many of the trees and woodlands in the Parish are protected through Tree Preservation Orders and other national designations; but many are not.

New development provides a particular opportunity to extend the provision of trees by requiring their provision as part of the development.

Ashby De La Zouch lies at the heart of the National Forest. This National Forest and the National Forest Partnership, of public, private and voluntary sector bodies provides a focus and opportunity for tree planting and wider environmental regeneration. This includes working with the community on tree planting schemes.

POLICY ELWB 5: TREES AND WOODLANDS – Development proposals that damage or result in the loss of trees and hedges of good arboricultural, ecological and amenity value will not normally be permitted. Proposals should be designed to retain trees and hedges of arboricultural, ecological and amenity value. Proposals should be accompanied by a tree survey that establishes the health and longevity of any affected trees.

6.7 Historic Buildings and Structures

Ashby De La Zouch has a rich and diverse historic environment. It contains numerous buildings of architectural and historic interest dating from the 12th Century onwards. This environment is highly valued by residents and visitors and makes a major contribution to Ashby De La Zouch's unique and special character

There are over 120 'Listed' buildings within the Parish that have been identified as being of national significance and importance. This includes the 12th Century Ashby de la Zouch Castle (and through which the origins of the built development of the Parish can be traced) which is 'Listed' at Grade I as a building of exceptional interest, as well as being designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument as well as six Grade II* listed properties - buildings of particular importance - including three buildings along Station Road associated with the early nineteenth century spa

development of the Parish. The 'Listing' of these buildings gives them special legal protection and underlines the need to protect and enhance these valuable assets.

In addition, to the Listed Buildings there are also a large number of unlisted buildings and structures of some architectural or historic merit which are considered to make a positive contribution to the character of the Parish. These are known as Locally Listed Buildings. Following an assessment undertaken in 2001 as part of the Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area Appraisal and Study a number of such buildings were identified in the Town Centre. These include the substantial brick built (former) Vicarage to St Helen's Church and the Saline Baths Infirmary of 1854 as well as the former Police Station/Magistrates Court all of which are situated along South Street. Other Locally Listed Buildings may come forward over the life time of the Plan.

POLICY ELWB 6: BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES OF LOCAL HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST - Development proposals that will impact on an identified building of local historical or architectural interest will be required to conserve and enhance the character, integrity and setting of that building or structure.

6.8 Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area

Ashby de la Zouch's historic assets are concentrated in the Town Centre.

Studies and consultation acknowledge the attractive and prevailing character within the Conservation Area as deriving essentially from the nineteenth century - late Georgian from the Spa era with later Victorian additions.

The special built heritage and character of Ashby de la Zouch Town Centre is underlined and reinforced by much of the Town Centre being designated as a Conservation area.

A Conservation Area is an area defined by law as "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance".

As part of its responsibility to keep conservation areas under review, the District Council approved a Conservation Area Appraisal in 2001 and adopted it as supplementary planning guidance.

POLICY ELWB 7: ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH CONSERVATION AREA –
Development proposals will be expected to conserve and enhance the character, integrity and setting of Ashby de la Zouch Conservation Area in accordance with the Conservation Area Appraisal and national and district planning policies.

6.9 Archaeological Sites

Ashby de la Zouch's richness in heritage assets also encompasses archaeological remains.

Important remains within the Parish are likely to range in date from the medieval period to the industrial period.

The best known archaeological site is Ashby de la Zouch Castle and its associated formal garden area 'The Wilderness' to the south. This is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Scheduled Monuments are those sites recognised as being nationally important, and having the highest priority for protection.

As bodies such as English Heritage have highlighted, there is potential for the survival of other important archaeology to be found in Ashby de la Zouch particularly in the Conservation Area, around the Castle site and in the vicinity of St. Helen's Church, especially in view of the level of rebuilding that occurred along the principal streets of the town in the Georgian and early Victorian periods.

POLICY ELWB 8: AREA OF HIGH ARCHEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL - The Neighbourhood Plan identifies an ALERT zone which is coterminous with the conservation area boundary where archaeological remains are likely to be present. All major developments should consider their impact upon archaeology but where any proposal falls within the boundaries of the zone, developers or their agents should seek guidance at the pre-application stage and where necessary engage in discussions about what material should be submitted with a planning application in the 'Heritage Statement'.

6.10 Important Community Facilities

The Plan area has a good range of community facilities including a post office, Town Council offices, churches, schools and sporting facilities. These generally meet the day to day needs of the community.

However, some of these facilities such as schools and medical facilities are under pressure. The Parish has also seen a gradual decline in such facilities.

Also, with a growing and ageing population and reductions in public transport access to such locally based services will become increasingly important.

Consultation shows that these are highly valued and prized by the local community. They are a key ingredient in the generally high quality of life in the Parish and its strong sense of community and identity. The community wishes to see them protected and, wherever possible, enhanced.

POLICY CF1 IMPORTANT COMMUNITY FACILITIES – Important community facilities should be retained and wherever possible enhanced. Development proposals involving the loss of or adversely affecting, important community facilities will be resisted unless an appropriate alternative is provided, or there is demonstrable evidence that the facility is no longer required and/or viable and that suitable alternative community uses have been considered. Proposals for new or enhanced community facilities, including medical facilities, will be supported where it meets an identified need, is in the Limits to Development Limit and subject to transport, design and amenity considerations.

6.11 Assets of Community Value

The designation of a community facility as an Asset of Community Value provides an important means to protect important buildings and land, that are important to the local community and which they wish to protect from inappropriate development.

If an asset is 'Listed' the Town Council or other community organisations will then be given the opportunity to bid to purchase the asset on behalf of the local community, if it comes up for sale on the open market.

Whilst there is no requirement to have a policy relating to Community Assets in a Neighbourhood Plan, its inclusion gives any 'Listed' Asset greater protection through the planning system. It also sends out a clear message that the community wishes to protect and retain important buildings and land that are important to them.

A number of assets have already been 'Listed' in the Parish such as the Bath Grounds and the cottage hospital and other designations may come during the lifetime of the Plan.

POLICY ELWB 10: ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE - Development proposals that will result in either the loss of a designated Asset of Community Value or in significant harm to a designated Asset of Community Value will not be permitted unless in special circumstances such as the Asset is replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in an equally suitable location or it can be clearly demonstrated that it is unviable or no longer needed by the community.

6.12 Provision of a New Arts/Community Centre

Studies and consultation have identified the need for a new purpose built multifunctional community centre with the focus on the arts to meet the community and arts needs of the Parish and the wider area. This would then provide a hub and focus for community and civic activity.

The Parish lacks such a facility, which is surprising for a community of its size. Work is underway to take this forward.

POLICY ELWB 11: NEW ARTS/COMMUNITY CENTRE - The development of an appropriately located new Arts/Community Centre will be supported.

6.13 Education

During the consultation process education provision arose as a major concern.

The Plan Area is home to a range of good and popular secondary and primary schools, which cater for the needs of children from the Parish and the wider area.

There is currently a shortfall in education provision with demand for places outstripping supply. There is concern that this shortfall will worsen as the school provision fails to keep pace with an increase in children requiring school places

arising from the new family homes being built, or planned to be built, in the Parish and the wider area.

There is also concern about the design and quality of some of the existing schools, which were not designed, nor can be easily adapted, to modern educational needs.

The Plan recognises the urgent need to support local schools and plan for their future.

The Town Council, as part of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, has started this process. It will continue to work with the County Council and other relevant authorities and bodies to address the issue of education provision and capacity and work in partnership to develop solutions in response to these.

POLICY ELWB 12: EDUCATION – The Town Council will work with the County Council and other education providers, especially in response to new housing and other trends and pressures, to promote education provision that reflects changing needs and the population profile of the Parish, is fit for purpose and of a modern standard. New developments will be required to provide adequate financial contributions to provide sufficient good educational provision for the additional demand they generate.

7. Developer Contributions

7.1 Introduction

All development has the potential to impact on the environment, and place pressure on local infrastructure and services. It is recognised that the planning system should be used to ensure that new development contributes positively to the local environment, and helps to mitigate against any adverse impacts on infrastructure.

The draft Local Plan confirms that ‘Infrastructure is critical to support the provision of all development ... supporting infrastructure must be in place for new development. This is not only to ensure that the new development is properly served in respect of essential day-to-day infrastructure required by the occupants of any new development ... but also to minimise the impact upon existing infrastructure’.

However, the NPPF stresses that the need for infrastructure accompanying development must have regard for the viability of that development. Planning Policy Guidance (PPG 46) also recognises the ability of Neighbourhood Plans to identify the need for new or enhanced infrastructure, but requires the Plan to prioritise the infrastructure requirements.

7.2 Infrastructure requirements

There are a number of infrastructure requirements that have been identified through the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan.

These include:

- Enhanced requirements for affordable housing;
- Travel Plans;
- Improvements to footpaths and cycle ways;
- Open Space contributions;
- Contribution to the provision of allotments;
- Transport improvements.

POLICY DC1: Prioritisation of infrastructure requirements – The infrastructure requirements accompanying new development will be refined and prioritised through the statutory consultation phase of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and will be set out in order of priority in the final Plan.

SECTION 8: MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Neighbourhood Plan will last for a period of 15 years. During this time it is likely that the circumstances which the Plan seeks to address will change.

Ashby de la Zouch Town Council will review the Plan on a regular basis, at least on a five year basis commencing (2021) to make sure that it takes into account changes in National and District Planning Policy and generally ensure that it fit for purpose. If it is considered by the Town Council that changes are necessary to the Neighbourhood Plan it will commence a formal review in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority.

A further review will be undertaken in 2027, at which point consideration will be given, and if necessary processes commenced, to develop a further Neighbourhood Plan for the benefit of the residents of Ashby de la Zouch.

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