ASH PARISH COUNCIL

ASH PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2025 - 2045

ADOPTED VERSION



Table of Contents

List of Land Use Policies 3
1. INTRODUCTION 4
2. BACKGROUND 6
History 6
Profile 7
Strategic Planning Policy 9
National Planning Policy 10
Project Progress 10
3. VISION, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES 11
Policy ASH1: SPATIAL STRATEGY 12
Policy ASH2: DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ASH 13
Policy ASH3: DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ASH VALE 14
Policy ASH4: DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ASH GREEN VILLAGE 15
Policy ASH5: DISTRICT AND LOCAL CENTRES AND DISPERSED LOCAL SHOPS 19
Policy ASH6: EMPLOYMENT LOCATIONS 21
Policy ASH7: REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS 23
Policy ASH8: ENERGY EFFICIENCY 24
Policy ASH9: EXISTING AND NEW COMMUNITY ASSETS 26
Policy ASH10: GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE 27
Policy ASH11: LOCAL GREEN SPACES 30
Policy ASH12: THAMES BASIN HEATH SPA 31
Policy ASH13: ACTIVE TRAVEL 32
ASH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES MAP 34
4. INFORMATION 40
5. APPENDICES 40
Appendix B: Existing Community Facilities (Policy ASH9) 41
Appendix D: Housing mix, type and tenure 42
Appendix E: Local Gap Report (Policy ASH4) 43

List of Land Use Policies

ASH1	Spatial Strategy
ASH2	Design Principles in Ash
ASH3	Design Principles in Ash Vale
ASH4	Design Principles in Ash Green Village
ASH5	District and Local Centres and Dispersed local shops.
ASH6	Employment Locations
ASH7	Replacement Dwellings
ASH8	Energy Efficiency
ASH9	Existing and New Local Community Assets
ASH10	Green and Blue Infrastructure
ASH11	Local Green Spaces
ASH12	Thames Basin Heath SPA
ASH13	Active Travel

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ash Parish Council has prepared a Neighbourhood Plan for the area designated by the local planning authority Guildford Borough Council (GBC), on the 30th April 2024, under the provisions of the Localism Act of 2011, and of the Neighbourhood Planning General Regulations 2012. The designated area coincides with the Parish boundary, shown in Figure1 below.

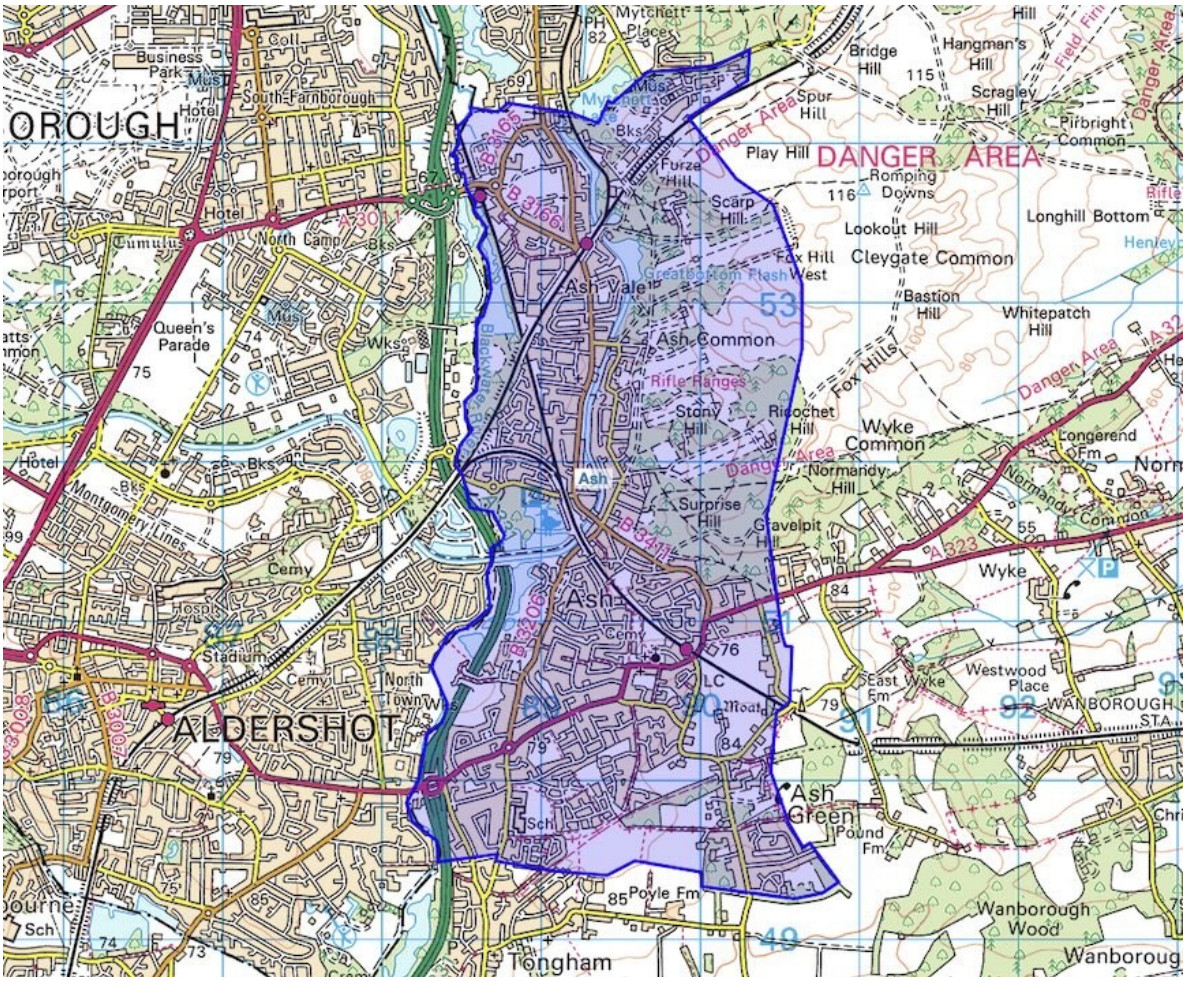


Figure 1 – Ash Neighbourhood Plan Area

1.2 The purpose of the plan is to set out local planning policies that can be used to help determine planning applications in the area covered by the plan. Its policies will encourage development proposals for the benefit of the local community and will aim to protect the special character of the settlements within Ash, including the village of Ash Green.

1.3 Neighbourhood plans provide local communities with the chance to shape the future development of their areas. Upon passing through examination following by referendum, the Plan will be 'made' and become a statutory part of the development plan for the area. As such, it will carry significant weight in how planning applications are decided. Plans can therefore only contain land use planning policies that can be used for this purpose. This often means that there are more important issues of interest to the local community that cannot be addressed in a plan if they are not directly relating to planning.

1.4 Although there is considerable scope for the local community to decide on its planning policies, neighbourhood plans must meet a number of 'basic conditions'. These are:

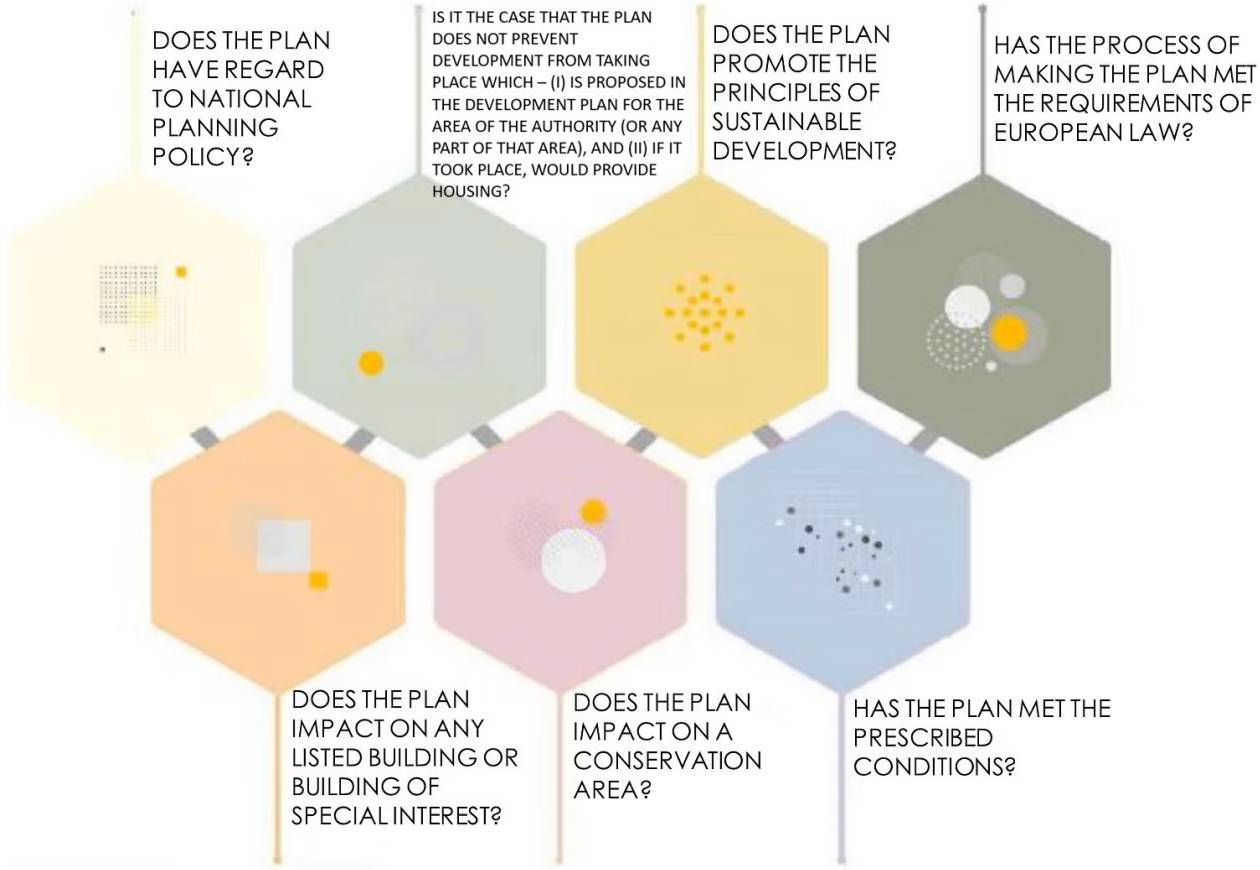


Figure 2: Basic Conditions.

1.5 In addition, the Parish Council has to demonstrate to an Independent Examiner that it has successfully engaged with the local community and stakeholders in preparing the Plan.

Strategic Environmental Assessment & Habitat Regulations Assessment

1.6 Once the proposed scope of the Neighbourhood Plan Review had been agreed, GBC indicated that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA, under the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004) would be required. It formalised this view in its 'screening opinion' of December 2024, having consulted the statutory bodies, as required. The SEA is published as a separate document to accompany the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.7 That same document also screened for the potential of the Plan to have any significant effect on a European-designated nature site, in accordance with the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC ('the habitats directive'). GBC and Natural England concluded that a Habitats Regulations Assessment under the directive would be necessary. The HRA is also published as a separate document to accompany the Plan.

1.8 The Neighbourhood Plan contains policies for determining planning applications for the use and development of land within Ash during the Neighbourhood Plan period. In doing so it operates alongside other policies of the GBC development plans that relate to Ash. This version of the plan is the final, referendum version that incorporates the changes recommended by the neighbourhood plan examiner and agreed by GBC.

2. BACKGROUND

History

2.1 The parish of Ash lies between Aldershot and Guildford. Immediately to the west of the built-up area is the natural boundary of the Blackwater Valley. The A331 Blackwater Valley Relief Road connecting Ash Vale to Ash runs north south more or less in parallel with the Basingstoke Canal.

2.2 The place name Ash is derived from 'Aesc' which meant 'At the Ash tree', given by its Saxon owners to the Monks of Chertsey Abbey and grew from a rural village on the road between Guildford and Aldershot. The village of Ash grew up along Ash Street between the cross-roads (now the Greyhound roundabout) and the Moated Manor House which looked out over Ash Green towards the Hog's Back. By the 18th century Ash and Ash Vale and Ash Green to the south were still small rural villages. St Peter's Church at Ash is the original village church, which has early medieval origins. Another early building in Ash village is Hartshorn Cottage dating to 1350.

2.3 The Basingstoke Canal was opened in 1796 to connect Basingstoke to the Wey at Byfleet, as a way of supporting agriculture in the area by connecting the area of North East Hampshire with the London markets. The canal runs in a north-south direction, parallel to the River Blackwater, before turning west to cross the Blackwater valley on an aqueduct and embankment.

2.4 In the 19th century a shingle spire was added to St Peter's Church, and this now forms a prominent landmark. Ash remained a farming community until the mid-19th century, with meadow and pasture alongside the Blackwater River and along the various streams leading to it. A number of the farmhouses have survived until today as residential properties or pubs.

2.5 The village grew rapidly after 1849 when the railways arrived with Ash Station opening in August of that year, followed by Ash Green Station two months later. The Army established a camp in Aldershot just over the border in Hampshire in 1853 and enclosed most of the Ash Common to use for training and rifle ranges. North Camp Station opened in 1858 with Ash Vale Station opening in 1870. Ash Vale quickly developed as people moved into the area, local businesses flourished and houses were built to accommodate retired Army officers. The arrival of the railway resulted in a reduction in the use of the Basingstoke Canal.

2.6 The new stations formed a focus for new settlement and houses were built along the main approaches to the stations in a linear formation. These linear developments are still visible in the townscape today, although they have been subject to infill with more modern housing. These 'Victorian/Edwardian Villages' have landmark buildings such as Ash Common National School, opened in 1860, St Paul's Church in Tongham, built 1866, and Victoria Hall on Ash Hill Road, built in 1897 to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Ash Vale became a boat centre in the late 1890s when A. J. Harmsworth, working as a carpenter for the canal company, built a boathouse at Ash Vale. It became a major barge building and repair centre from 1923 until 1947. After this time the canal suffered a number of setbacks and changes in ownership. After a period of disuse the Canal was rescued and officially re-opened in 1991and is one of the most pleasant leisure features of Ash which meanders through the parish on its way from Basingstoke to join the River Wey Navigation near Byfleet, Surrey, linking it with the inland water network.

2.7 The population of the area continued to rise with the building of inter-war and post- war estates and in the early 1950s Ash's village green was turned into an asphalted roundabout. By 1981 the population of Ash had grown to 15,748 (601 in 1801, and 3,074 in 1901)

2.8 Ash has 16 Listed buildings, all Grade II with Ash Manor and Old Manor Cottage and the Church of St Peter being Grade II*. All of the buildings are located within the southern half of the parish. There are also a notable number of Locally Listed Buildings. The Basingstoke Canal is designated as a Conservation Area.

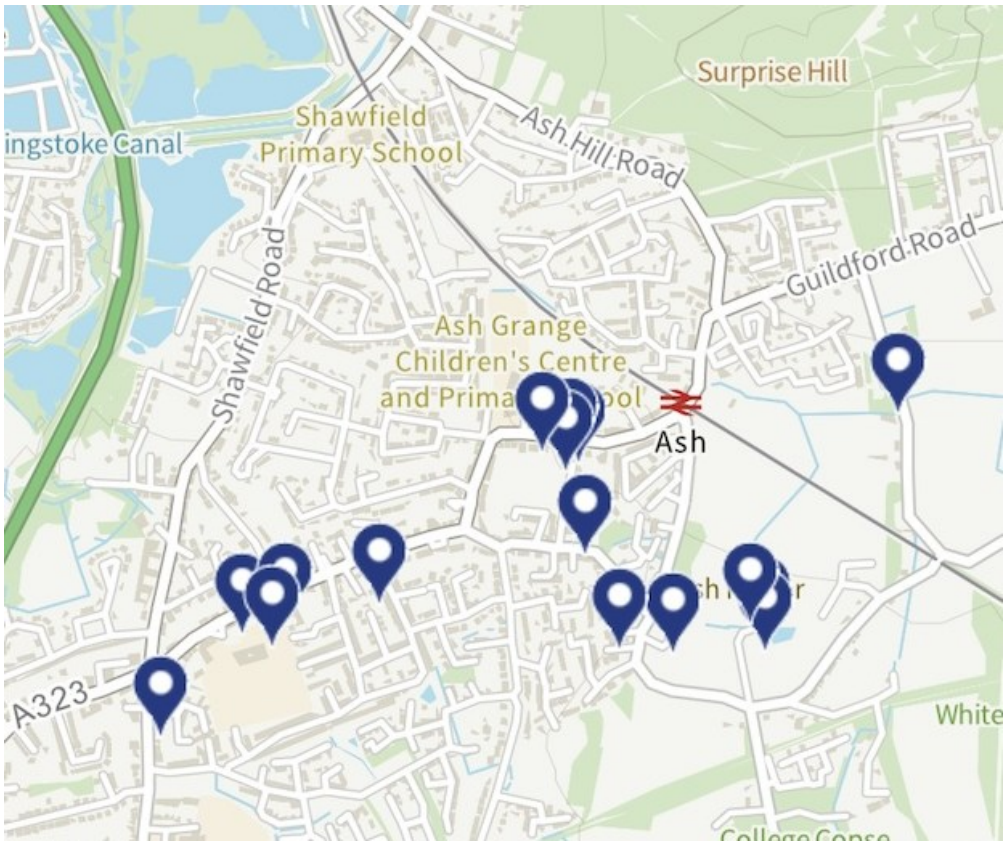
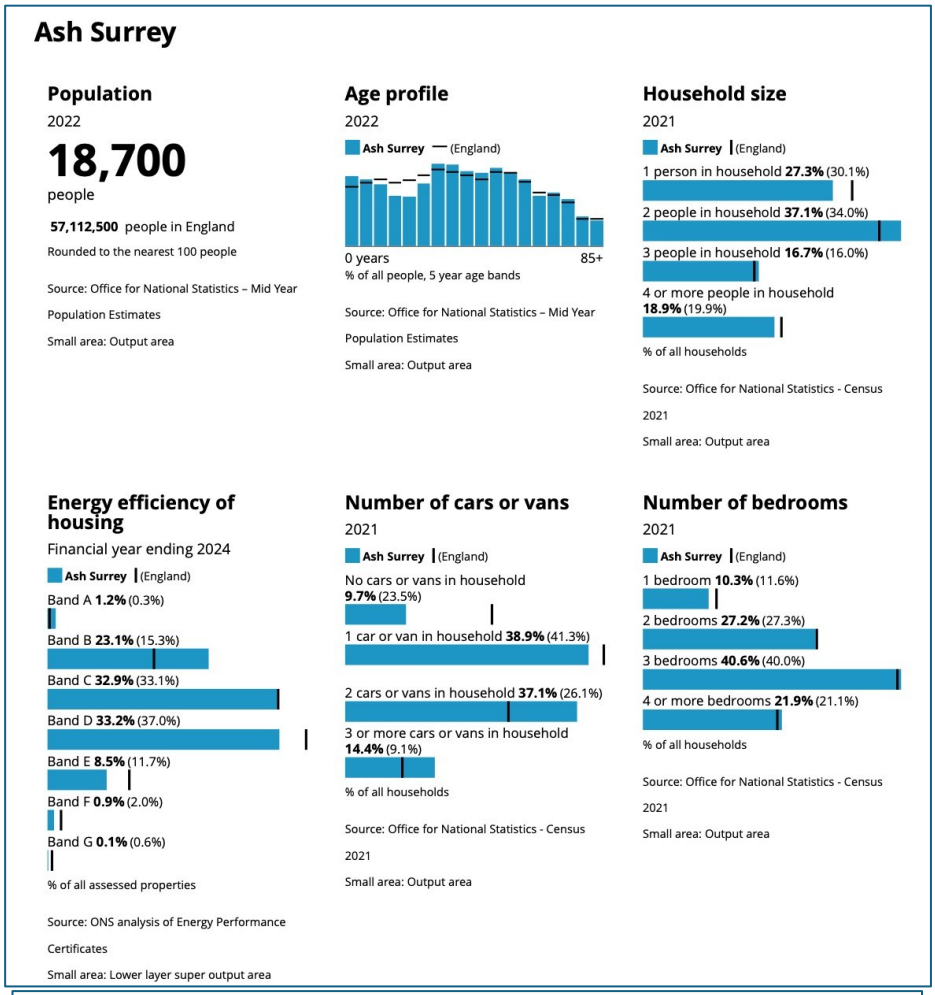


Figure 3 Location of Listed Buildings in Ash.

Profile

2.9 The Ash vision has an overarching ambition to preserve the parish as a group of distinct individual settlements, retaining and enhancing the character of each. Unusually for a parish of its size, there is no "town" centre within the parish which provides the opportunity for the villages to retain elements of their own identity. However, to be resilient and sustainable, the parish recognises that large scale development in the parish over the past few decades has eroded the individuality of some areas and as such, to thrive going forward, each area needs to provide its respective settlements with the facilities and services to help reinforce and strengthen the sense of community cohesion in each.



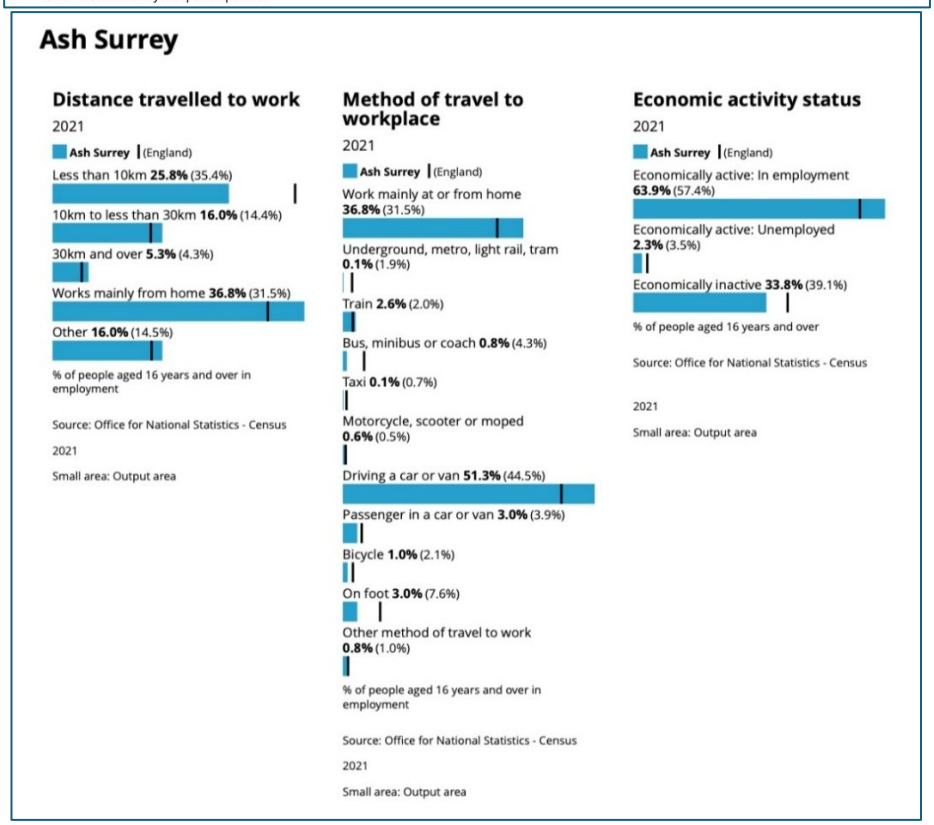


Figure 4 Ash Census Profile 2021 – Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021 Crown Copyright used under open government licence OGL.

2.10 The Census parish profile illustrates that due to its excellent access to larger towns including Aldershot, Farnborough, Farnham and Guildford, the national road network including the A331 which links to the M3 and A31 to A3 and the three railway stations, the parish returns a higher than average percentage of economically active residents, the majority of whom drive to work, if they are not working from home. The data shows the population of the parish containing more working age residents in the 30 – 60 age groups and slightly lower than average in the younger and older demographics. The amount of new build properties over recent years may explain the parish returning a higher-than-average energy efficiency of homes.

Strategic Planning Policy

2.11 The ANP has been prepared to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the GBC Local Plan Strategy and Sites 2015 - 2034 (part 1) adopted in 2019 and the Local Plan: Development Management Policies (part 2) adopted in 2023.

2.12 In February 2024 GBC announced a review of the Local Plan Strategy and Sites for a new plan period up to 2045. It may also include local DM policies where justified and consistent with the suite of National Development Management Policies to be published and replace the residual policies in the Local Plan 2003.

2.13 A fuller explanation is set out in the Basic Conditions Statement as part of the submission but the key policies affecting Ash are:

Local Plan 2003

R7 Built Facilities for Recreational Use.

Local Plan Strategy and Sites 2015 - 2034 (part 1) adopted in 2019 (D2 updated 2023)

S1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
S2: Planning for the borough – our spatial development strategy
H1: Homes for all
E8: – E9: District centres, local centres, neighbourhood parades and isolated retail units
E3: Maintaining employment capacity
D1:- D3: Place shaping, Sustainable design and Historic environment
ID3:Sustainable transport for new developments.
ID4: Green and blue infrastructure
A31: Ash and Tongham Strategic Site

Local Plan: Development Management Policies (part 2) adopted in 2023.

P6 & P7: Biodiversity and Protecting important habitats and species.
D4: Design and Local Distinctiveness
D8: Residential infill development
D15: Climate Change Adaptation
ID5 to ID8: Protection of open spaces, community facilities, and public houses.
P5: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

2.14 The GBC Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan was adopted in August 2024 and updates local plan policy ID9 as the primary framework (ID9 clause 5) for cycling and walking in the Borough.

2.15 The Surrey Local Transport Plan LTP4 adopted in July 2022. The Neighbourhood Plan supports LTP4 Policy Areas 1 (Planning for Place), 2 (Digital Connectivity), 3 (Active Travel / Personal Mobility), 4 (Public / Shared Transport), 5 (Demand Management for Cars), 7 (Efficient Network Management), 8 (Promoting Zero Emission Vehicles) and 9 (Supporting Behaviour Change), which together promote local living, active travel and low-carbon, well-connected neighbourhoods in Ash.

National Planning Policy

2.16 The ANP has also has regard for national planning policy and guidance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024). The Basic Conditions Statement contains further details but the key policies are:

§30 - neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area, which can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions

§74- giving consideration to allocating small and medium sized sites suitable for housing in the area.

§98a – planning should provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship)

§98c/d – planning should also guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs and should ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community

§105 – protect and enhance public rights of way, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities by adding links to existing rights of way networks.

§109e- identifying and pursuing opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use.

2.17 The ANP must demonstrate how its policies contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and how they will not cause any harm to important ecological areas (in respect of the Habitats Regulations). A Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment have been prepared to accompany the modified ANP. These matters are also addressed in the Basic Conditions Statement.

Project Progress

2.18 Following the decision to prepare a NP for Ash in February 2024, a Neighbourhood Plan Committee (NPC) was formed and a visioning and scoping exercise undertaken. This identified a number of key areas which it felt were of concern to the community, principally

the concern over loss of community identity resulting from continued growth of the parish and loss of physical features which defined each settlement within the parish. There was a desire to focus the plan on protecting local assets, both physical and environmental and ensuring that the spaces in between residential areas such as the open spaces, the walking routes, the shops and local facilities and the social infrastructure we protected and enhanced to strengthen the sense of living locally rather than as part of a wider, less defined parish. The plan also sought to respond to climate change, place more emphasis on green and blue infrastructure and safeguarding smaller industrial employment sites and local shops.

2.19 This was tested with the community in autumn 2024. Research and evidence gathering was then carried out over the next 6 months including the commissioning of two technical support packages, a Housing Needs Assessment and Design Guidance and Codes for Ash. An informal engagement exercise was carried out in early April 2025 on the proposed policy intents and the Design Code.

2.20 Following this informal engagement, the Pre-Submission version of the Plan was prepared and approved by Full Council ready for the Regulation 14 Consultation which was carried out between 16th June and 31st July 2025.

2.21 The results of the engagement exercises and Regulation 14 consultation can be found in the Consultation Statement which is published as part of the submission documents. This summarises the nature and outcome of engagement and statutory consultation activities and how they have informed the ANP.

3. VISION, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

3.1 The vision of Ash in 2045 is for the Parish to maintain its strong identity on Surrey's western border. The Parish of Ash is made up of three areas, Ash Vale to the north, Ash in the centre and Ash Green village in the southeast. Over the next twenty years of this document's life span, the intention is for the Parish of Ash to remain a vibrant, sustainable community featuring housing, employment, retail and leisure facilities, and improved infrastructure for its residents and the residents of the neighbouring towns and villages. The vision also seeks to retain Ash Green's identity as an independent village, separate from the Ash and Tongham built-up area that contains Ash and Ash Vale.

3.2 These steps will be done by protecting the existing green spaces and recreational facilities, identifying land for new community facilities to be created and focus on a development policy that targets balanced redevelopment over new constructions on greenfield land. The intention of the Neighbourhood Plan is to both protect and guide Ash in that manner as it continues to develop towards 2045.

3.3 To achieve this vision, the following plan objectives have been agreed:

- To retain and enhance the individual identify of each settlement in the parish and prevent coalescence between Ash Green and Ash
- To protect and enhance the natural environment,
- To increase the number of commuting trips by rail, bus, cycling and walking

- To increase the capacity of social infrastructure, protect local facilities, promote local employment opportunities, shops and services.

- To increase the health and wellbeing of residents through provision of more recreational activities and making it easier to get around the parish on foot and by cycle.

3.4 The Neighbourhood Plan contains thirteen policies, each of which is intended to contribute to one or more of these objectives. Each policy has a code number and title and the policy wording is in **Bold** text. Below this, supporting text explains the intent of the policy and how it should be understood by applicants and applied by GBC to planning applications. The justification of each policy will be contained in the Basic Conditions Statement. Where a policy applies to specific land or sites in Ash this is shown on the Policies Map.

Policy ASH1: SPATIAL STRATEGY

The Neighbourhood Plan directs all significant residential, employment, commercial and cultural development to the defined built-up areas of Ash, Ash Vale and Ash Green, as set out in the GBC Local Plan Ash and Tongham Urban Area and shown on the Policies Map, with a focus on reusing brownfield land to reinforce and sustain the two communities and support local facilities, shops and services to continue to meet the day-to-day needs of the local community in line with 'walkable neighbourhood' principles. New residential development may only be located outside of the 400m SPA buffer zone.

Development outside of these areas, as shown on the Policies Map[1], will only be supported if it accords with the development plan policies relating to the countryside, with a focus on enhancing the natural environment, or the Green Belt, as relevant.

3.5 This policy establishes the essential spatial principles for development across the designated Neighbourhood Area, which comprises two distinct parts:

- The built-up areas of Ash and Ash Vale (urban) and Ash Green (village)
- the countryside areas located along the western side of Ash Vale and Ash, to the west and north of Ash Green and along the eastern side of the parish which lies in the Green Belt.

3.6 In doing so, it provides a policy bridge between the vision and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan and all its other policies.

3.7 As the second largest settlement in the District, Ash has undergone a significant period of expansion in recent years including delivery of the strategic allocation to the south and east of Ash in the current Local Plan (Policy A31 for a total of 1,750 new homes of which 1,481 homes are completed or with planning permission (as at April 2024) leaving an outstanding capacity figure of 269 homes expected to be delivered within the next 10 – 15 years. As a result, there is very little opportunity for further outward development. The environmental constraints of the Thames Basin Heath SPA and 400m exclusion zone, also limit future residential densification to the north and east of the parish.

[1] The Ash Policy Map layers are to be hosted on the Guildford Borough Council or successor authority's planning policies map.

3.8 Ash Green is a distinct community lying to the south of the parish and has a population of just under 1,000 residents. Local Plan Policies A29 (Warren Farm, White Lane) and A30 (Land to the east of White Lane) propose approximately 58 new homes and 62 new homes respectively. The Neighbourhood Plan has had to reconcile the concept of the village of Ash Green, which is not considered a sustainable location with few opportunities for anything other than infill schemes, and is defined in the settlement hierarchy as a small village, with the wider boundary of Ash Green outside of the village, which includes the location of the strategic allocation (GBC Site A31) for up to 1,750 homes.

3.9 To meet basic conditions, it is acknowledged that the defined "built-up" area of Ash Green has to acknowledge and include the land allocated to deliver site A31, which will, by definition fall under the definition of urban once completed. However, ASH4 introduces a Local Gap between Ash Green village and the A31 development to prevent Ash Green village being subsumed into the wider urban areas within the parish through both visual and physical coalescence.

3.10 Outside of the defined built-up areas, the remaining undeveloped land is designated as countryside in the Local Plan. It is therefore only suited to the types of development that are consistent in countryside locations. The eastern boundary of the Parish, comprising mostly Ash Ranges and the Thames Basin Heath SPA, lies in the Green Belt, and is therefore subject to national planning policy constraints. Policy P5 of the Local Plan protects the ecological integrity of Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). It explains that there is an "exclusion zone" set at 400m linear distance from the SPA boundary where permission for development resulting in a net increase in residential units will not be permitted.

Policy ASH2: DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ASH

A. All development should achieve high quality design that contributes positively to local distinctiveness, quality of life and enhances the character of Ash. To achieve this development proposals are required to have full regard for the Ash Design Guidance and Codes attached as Appendix A, as relevant to their location, scale and nature.

B. Where a proposal does not seek to follow the requirements of the Code then the applicant will be obliged to justify why an exception should be made.

3.11 The purpose of the design policies in ASH2, ASH3 and ASH4 is to ensure that development creates pleasant, healthy and sustainable places to live.

3.12 There are distinctive features of the respective settlements within Ash that shapes it character. The Design Guidance and Codes is an integral part of the policy but is extensive and the document is therefore attached as an Appendix for representational purposes only. It carries the full weight of the development plan in decision making and is not subordinate or supplementary guidance carrying lesser weight.

3.13 The Neighbourhood Plan requires high quality in design of all new development that contributes positively to the private and public realm (including streets and open spaces), protects and enhances heritage assets, and creates accessible and healthy environments rich in biodiversity. It also takes the opportunity to continue to encourage housing typologies suited to a wider demographic and how new development should be as energy efficient as possible.

3.14 This policy defines the essential characteristics of the Ash Character area which is distinctive from the other settlements within the parish. It is the historic core of the parish and comprises some of the oldest surviving buildings in the parish. The area is defined by swathes of 20th century suburban housing estates that were built during the post-war expansion of the parish. In the recent decades, Ash has experienced significant expansion in the southern and eastern parts of the area.

3.15 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that developers acknowledge and understand the characteristics which define Ash in determining their design proposals. It does not require a slavish adherence to every single characteristic in every design proposal, but it does require developers to explain why they have chosen not to follow a characteristic.

Policy ASH3: DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ASH VALE

A. All development should achieve high quality design that contributes positively to local distinctiveness, quality of life and enhances the character of Ash Vale. To achieve this development proposals are required to have full regard for the Ash Design Guidance and Codes attached as Appendix A, as relevant to their location, scale and nature.

B. Where a proposal does not seek to follow the requirements of the Code then the applicant will be obliged to justify why an exception should be made.

C. Proposals within the Conservation Area or its setting which demonstrate that they preserve or enhance the special historic interest of the Area, complying with the Ash Design Guidance and Codes as relevant to location, nature and scale of the scheme, will be supported.

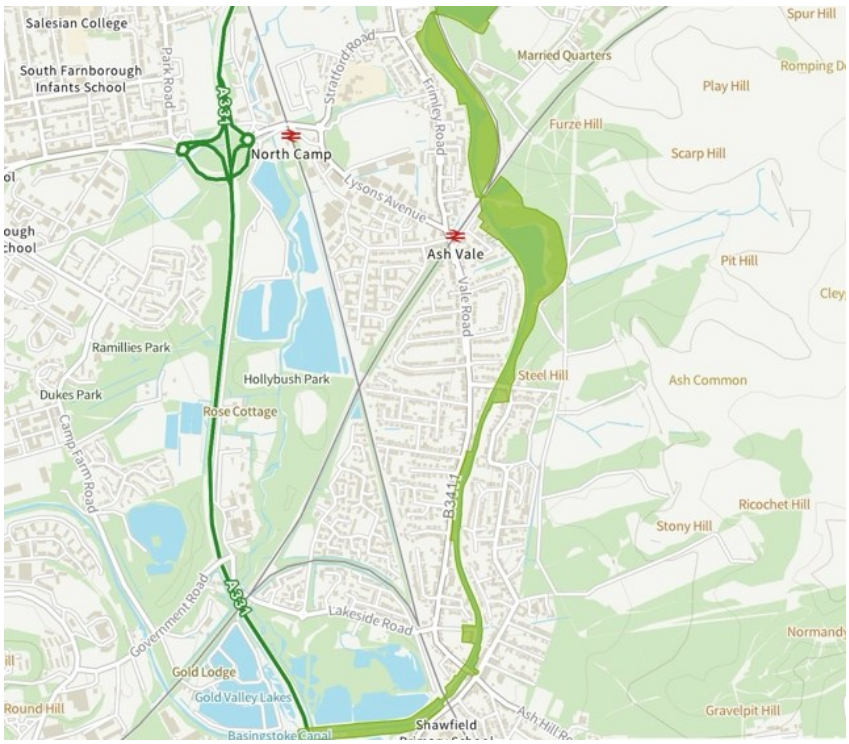


Figure 5 Ash Conservation Area

3.16 Located to the north of the parish, Ash Vale is defined by a tight-knit residential development pattern with most of its housing stock built during the late 20th century urban expansion to

the area. The area is served by a cluster of retail and services around Ash Vale Station which acts as a local centre to the neighbourhood. Ash Vale is also a key employment hub for parish, with a number of light industrial services clustering around Lyons Avenue. The Basingstoke Canal conservation area traverses Ash Vale and is integral to the setting of Ash Vale. The canal is designated as a SSSI with significant ecological value and serves as an attractive green corridor for recreation and leisure uses.

3.17 New development within the setting of the conservation area should be carefully managed as it has the potential to detract from its character and special interest. There are a number of key positive characteristics of the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area:

- The Basingstoke Canal represents one of the inland waterways constructed in England in the late 18th century representing an engineering achievement of great historic significance and a significant example of human impact on the environment;
- The canal's construction contributed towards the development of the Aldershot Military
- Garrison;
- The Canal provides an attractive green corridor and is designated as such in the Ash Neighbourhood Plan
- The Canalside including the tow path is used for leisure and recreation as a route for cycling, walking, pleasure boats, canoeing and angling, providing an attractive green route avoiding busy roads;
- The Canal has considerable value to the ecology of the borough and has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Policy ASH4: DESIGN PRINCIPLES IN ASH GREEN VILLAGE

A. All development should achieve high quality design that contributes positively to local distinctiveness, quality of life and enhances the character of Ash Green. To achieve this development proposals are required to have full regard for the Ash Design Guidance and Codes attached as Appendix A, as relevant to their location, scale and nature.

B. Developments within Ash Green are expected to conserve, and where appropriate, enhance the significance of its heritage assets and their settings. Proposals must be informed by a proportionate, site-specific heritage assessment that:

i) Identifies all designated and non-designated heritage assets affected by the proposal.
ii) Assesses the significance of those assets, including their contribution to the landscape and rural character of Ash Green.
iii) Evaluates the potential impacts of the development on that significance and on the setting of the assets.
iv) Demonstrates how the proposal's design, layout, materials, and landscaping have been shaped to avoid or minimise harm.

Any residual harm must be clearly and convincingly justified in accordance with national policy. For designated heritage assets, harm will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal; for non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be applied. Views to and from the Ash Manor complex should be safeguarded where they contribute to the significance of the listed buildings, with any important views identified, evidenced and assessed.

C. In addition, development proposals should have full regard to:

i) Ensuring the provision of a green buffer that maintains visual separation between new development and the existing properties fronting onto Ash Green Road and This will also help soften the edges of the strategic development location and reinforce the transition between the defined built-up area and the countryside beyond.
ii) Ensuring links to the active travel network are safe and accessible, improving identified routes principally to Ash Station and to local services and facilities as well as public footpaths and bridleways that lead to the wider countryside.
iii) Creating opportunities to enhance the character of the defined urban edge, for example new native woodland planting or the creation of new 'greens' and 'commons' and connected green corridors.
iv) Conserving and enhancing the hedgerow network and hedgerow trees particularly in proximity to the defined urban edge where hedgerows can provide a strong landscape pattern and framework. New planting must be native species only. Where existing hedgerows include non-native or invasive species, these should ideally be replaced with native species.

D. The Neighbourhood Plan defines a Local Gap between Ash and Ash Green as shown on the Proposals Map for the purpose of preventing the coalescence of the settlements. Development will not be permitted in this area if it would result in the joining of the two settlements, or the erosion of their separate identities by virtue of their closer proximity.

E. Development proposals will be assessed in terms of their potential impact upon the visual setting and landscape features of the site and its surroundings, and the potential impact upon the biodiversity of the area and other relevant planning considerations, such as the impact of traffic and noise, and air quality. Proposals which fail to demonstrate that these impacts can be satisfactorily addressed will not be supported.

3.18 Ash Green village is a small community, with its core area lying to the south of the parish. The area is nestled within open fields and countryside hinterlands with the old disused railway line cutting through the parish forming a popular walking route in the area towards Wanborough, a part of the Christmas Pie Trail.

3.19 The village is characterised by a series of dispersed properties and farmhouses. The main built-up area of Ash comprises of detached houses and bungalows built around the mid-late 20th century. Older housing can be found along Ash Green Road with long narrow plots. There are currently no local services or facilities in Ash Green, residents have to rely on services in the main settlement of Ash or other nearby centres.

3.20 An Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) runs below the village of Ash Green. A 22 hectare SANG is located to the south of the disused railway line.

3.21 To the north of the disused railway line is the Local Plan Strategic Site Allocations (A29, A30 and A31). Just under 1,500 homes have already been consented out of a total allocation of up to 1,750. Part of the remaining land is considered necessary to support the buffer zone between Ash Green and Ash/Tongham urban areas as well as to protect the setting of the grade II* Listed buildings at Ash Manor.

3.22 The local community in Ash Green have been heavily involved in the evolution of this policy, and as such wish to ensure that future development proposals are assessed in terms of their potential impact upon the rural character of the area, its countryside setting and its heritage and ensuring that the village retains its own identify and does not become absorbed by the wider urban areas.

3.23 In respect of Clause B, the Local Plan Policy A31 was not informed by a heritage study. This was addressed at the Ash Manor appeal decision (see 3.28 below) "*the allocation was not informed by any detailed heritage assessment during the local plan process and that this was expected to be undertaken when detailed proposals came forward. This means that any assessment of acceptability will be highly case-specific*." As such, Clause B recognises this omission and requires a site-specific heritage assessment for any development proposals in Ash Green.

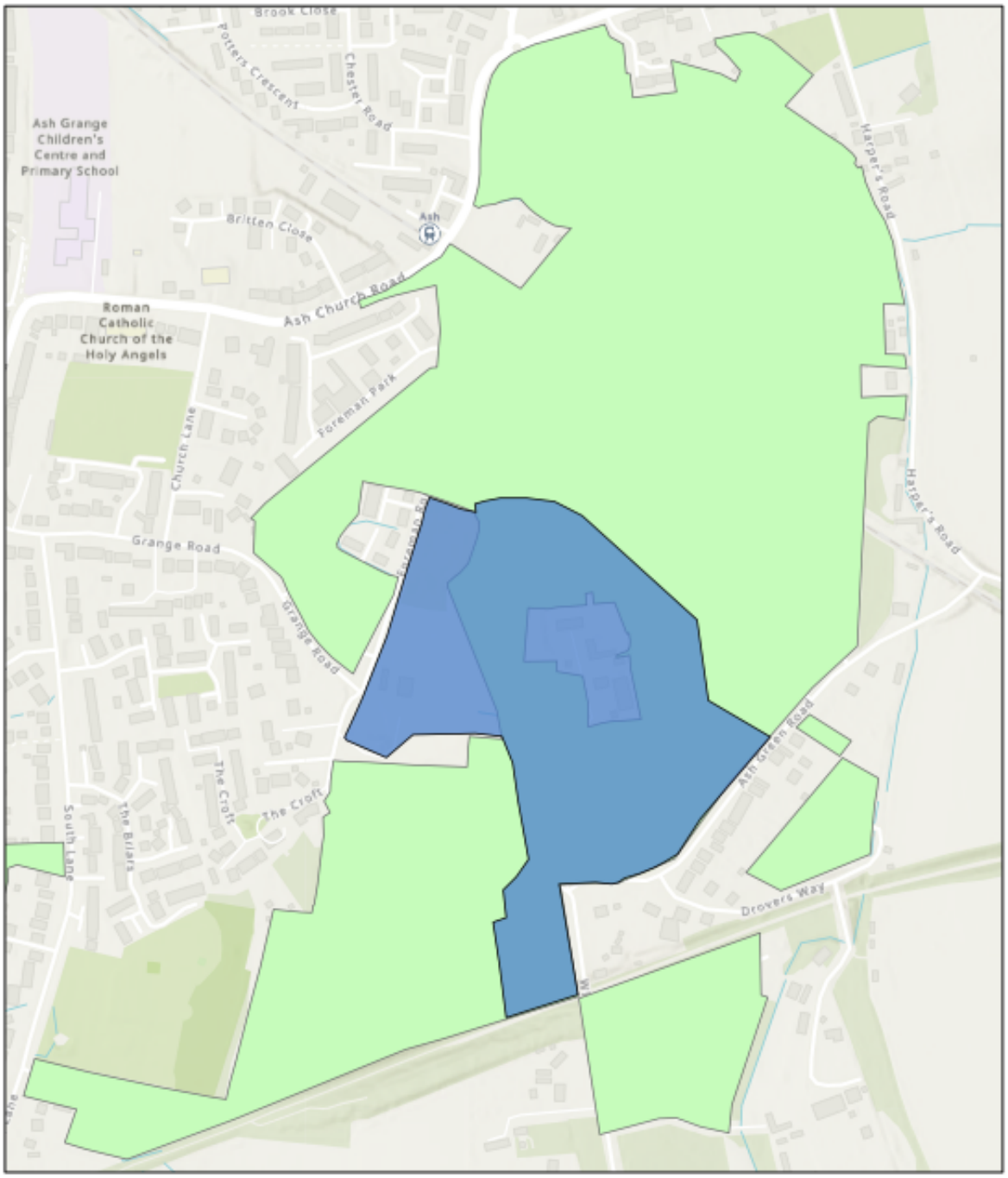
3.24 Local Plan Policy A31 requires that "*Proposals for the land west of this road must respect the historical context of this area by preventing the coalescence of Ash, Tongham and Ash Green*" and a green buffer to maintain "*separation between any proposed new development and the properties fronting onto Ash Green Road*", however there is no clear definition as to what is meant by a buffer in terms of its size and composition, although it is assumed from the SPD parameter plan that no development takes place within the buffer and so it forms a defensible boundary between two areas.

3.25 In respect of Clause D, due to the lack of clarity that the wording "green buffer" provides in Policy A31, the Neighbourhood Plans defines a Local Gap. The local community would like to see the gap defined to the fullest extent possible, including the areas marked 1 and 2 on Figure 6 below. However, aware that the creation of the gap cannot be used as a way to restrict development of sites already allocated within the Local Plan, otherwise the Neighbourhood Plan would fail basic conditions for not being in conformity with the strategic plan. However, the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to strengthen the coalescence requirements of Policy A31 through the designation of the gap, as defined on the Polices Map (and figure 6 below) and agreed with GBC.

3.26 Figure 6 shows the location of the Local Gap, south and east of the main built-up area of Ash, and north of Ash Green, and its relationship to the sites allocated for new development in Policy A31 of the Local Plan.

3.27 It therefore does not conflict with the principle of development which has been established through the allocation of strategic site A31, which is partially located within the proposed gap (principally between Ash Manor and Ash Green Road and to the west of White Lane) However, it seeks to ensure than any development within the defined area is appropriate, responds to the purpose of the gap and uses its design, scale and layout to prevent visual or physical coalescence between settlements.

Policy A31 with AHS4 Local Gap overlay



4/9/2026

1:8,756

0 0.04 0.09 0.18 mi

0 0.07 0.15 0.3 km

ASH4 Ash Green Local Gap

Site Allocations Ash

World_Hillshade

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Esri, Intermap, NASA, NGA, USGS

Figure 6 – Boundary of Guildford Local Plan site allocations A30 and A31 overlayed with the neighbourhood plan policy ASH4 Local Gap.

3.28 There is also evidence from appeal decisions which illustrates the complexities of developing within this area from both a landscape impact perspective and in consideration of the setting of local heritage. Most recently in 2022, APP/Y3615/W/21/3273305 (Land at Ash Manor, Ash Green Road, Ash) describes "*the sense of rurality and isolation that can still be experienced when approaching the Ash Manor complex [within the proposed gap] from White Lane*". Policy A31(8) also requires that views to and from the Ash Manor complex, including their approach from White Lane, must be protected, to prevent erosion of the rural setting of the grade II* listed buildings, The overall rural setting of the proposed gap is therefore intrinsic to the character of Ash Green. The same decision states that "*Coalescence is a spatial concept and would normally require a significant area of land to be effective in separating one settlement from another."*

3.29 Further evidence comes from the appeal decisions in the local area of Badshot Lea and Weybourne, in the neighbouring Waverley Borough, where a similar Local Gap is defined. APP/R3650/W/20/3262641 describes "*The proposal would lead to increased coalescence between Badshot Lea and Weybourne contrary to [plan policy] and I afford this harm moderate weight*." And "*the loss of open land between the two settlements and the physical distance on the ground between built development in Badshot Lea and Weybourne would be reduced, and as such would conflict with Policy FNP11, and this matter carried significant weight against the proposal*."

3.30 There is a clear change in the landscape character on the fringe between Ash Green to Ash from pastoral to urban. The former is defined by the GBC Landscape Character Assessment with field patterns and woodland, with the latter being an urban townscape. The entrances to Ash Green are all bounded by fields on both sides of the approach to the village, emphasising the rural nature of its setting.

3.31 Ash Green is formed predominately by detached houses, mostly chalet style bungalows along White Lane and Ash Green Lane, with the occasional two storey dwelling. The Old Cross Tree Way estate has its own identity of chalet style house and bungalows, with pitched roofs, white cladding and open frontages. Ash Green Road forms the older part of the village with villa style houses dating from the 1890s/1900s, all of which have long narrow gardens at the rear with smaller frontages to the road.

Policy ASH5: DISTRICT AND LOCAL CENTRES AND DISPERSED LOCAL SHOPS

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the existing District Centre at Wharf Road, the existing Local Centre at Ash Vale parade, dispersed local shops at Longfield Road, Aldershot Road, Guildford Road and Oxenden Road and designates a new local centre at Ash Street/Star Lane, as shown on the Policies Map.

A. **In the identified district and local centres, proposals comprising of Class E(a) retail, Class E(b) cafes and Class F2(a) shops selling essential goods no exceeding 280m2, will be supported in principle where it complies with §97 of the NPPF.**

B. Proposals defined in Clause A may be delivered as ground floor units in a scheme with housing on upper floors if designed to manage any potential for conflicts in amenity between those uses.

C. Proposals that will result in the partial or total loss of a local centre or shops within it will be resisted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that:

   i. all reasonable efforts have been made to actively market the premises for its existing use for a minimum of 12 months and no other potential occupier can be found; and
   ii. all reasonable efforts have been made to improve the operation and management of the business or facility; or
   iii. the land is no longer a suitable location for a retail uses and suitable alternative shops exist to meet the needs of the local community.

   Dispersed local shops at Longfield Road, Aldershot Road, Guildford Road and Oxenden Road seeking closure are also encouraged to follow the above process (beginning with a minimum 12-month marketing period).

D. The Neighbourhood Plan also identifies 800-metre walking catchments around the District and Local Centres as shown on the Policies Map. Proposals for a new local centre or dispersed local shops outside of these catchments, within the defined urban area (ASH1) and comprised of uses as set out in A, will be supported where the proposal provides a mix of small-scale facilities intended to meet day-to-day needs of nearby neighbourhoods, is safely and conveniently accessible on foot and by cycle and the proposal satisfies the sequential test in national and local planning policy.

3.32 This policy is intended to protect the essential local shopping and service facilities, across the parish. The ANP has identified that there are a number of existing local shops around the parish which play a play a vital role in providing the local communities with convenience and local services that reduce their dependence on travelling further afield, being within walking distance for many parts of the parish. As such, this policy will seek to safeguard these local shops from change of use where planning permission is required by identifying the importance of their existing use (Class E and/or community uses) to prevent their loss to other uses.

3.33 The GBC Local Plan identifies the cluster of retails uses around Wharf Road as the Ash District Centre. It also defines the cluster around Ash Vale Station as a Local Centre.

3.34 No other areas with retail uses are identified within the Local Plan. Given the levels of development towards the south of the parish which is where historically the main retail functions were situated, along Ash Street, the ANP has identified the area around the junction of Star Lane as a Local Centre. Local community engagement has also identified this area as supported for traffic calming measures to facilitate safe active travel to the shops and facilities located there.

3.35 Given the responses to early engagement indicated that many residents value having a convenience shop located within walking distance of their home, this policy seeks not only to protect the existing local shops in the parish, given the function they serve, promoting walkable neighbourhoods but to encourage the creation of a new shops in those parts of the parish that lie beyond an 800m walk from the defined District and Local centres to promote walkable communities.

3.36 Such proposals would need to demonstrate that the site is located and accessible by walking, cycling and/or public transport to provide local residents with a choice to access them without having to resort to use of a car. When shops are within this distance, walking becomes the natural choice for day-to-day errands, households without cars are not disadvantaged and where short local trips do not require driving, this helps to reduce congestion. Additionally shops within walking distance provide "incidental meeting points" that support social cohesion and help support the Neighbourhood Plan aim to strengthen the identity of each settlement within the parish.

3.37 For this policy the definition of 'convenience shops and local services' would comprise only uses Class E(a) retail sale of goods; Class E(b) café; and/or a Class F2(a) convenience food retail for up to a total of 280 sq.m. floorspace. In relation to Clause A, in accordance with §97 of the National Planning Policy Framework Local planning authorities should refuse applications for hot food takeaways and fast food outlets within walking distance of within walking distance of schools and other places where children and young people congregate or in locations where there is evidence that a concentration of such uses is having an adverse impact on local health, pollution or anti-social-behaviour.

3.38 For the purpose of applying the sequential test, applicants should demonstrate that no suitable or available site exists within or adjacent to the existing District Centre, Local Centres or proposed Local Centre, and that the proposed location is the most accessible to the community it is intended to serve.

3.39 It is recognised that some changes of use do not now require planning permission and new permitted development rights has enabled changes of use from what are now Class E uses to residential uses. The Parish Council will monitor the loss of such uses to residential uses in partnership with GBC. Should monitoring indicate that such uses are being lost to residential uses at a rate that harms the ability of the local communities' day-to-day needs being met the Parish Council will discuss the opportunity of GBC initiating an Article 4 Direction application with the Secretary of State. An Article 4 Direction can remove permitted development rights, enabling such changes to remain in planning control.

Policy ASH6: EMPLOYMENT LOCATIONS

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the Strategic Employment Location at North and South of Lysons Avenue and designates a Locally Important Employment Location at Land at Ash Station, as shown on the Policies Map.

These industrial complexes are of economic value to the parish and fundamental to the maintenance of a well-balanced mix of land uses which should include opportunities for locally owned and managed small businesses serving the local community.

A. Proposals for the intensification of employment uses on the Strategic or Locally Important Employment Location for new Class E(g) and B2 uses, will be supported, provided they will not cause significant harm to the amenity of existing adjoining residential areas.

B. Proposals for the change of use of land or premises on the Locally Important Employment Location to a non-Class B2 use (including residential led proposals) will only be acceptable where schemes comprise a mix of uses that retains commercial units within the site and avoids the net loss of employment opportunities.

C. Redevelopment or change of use to a non-employment use will only be acceptable if evidence is provided of active and comprehensive marketing of the site for its current use, other Class B uses or for alternative employment generating uses, for a continuous period of at least 18 months prior to submission of a planning application.

3.40 The long-term future of Ash as a modern, vibrant and sustainable parish serving an economically active population depends on it sustaining its economic base to prevent it becoming a dormitory community. Its proximity to larger centres of population and businesses in Aldershot, Farnborough and Guildford and its high-quality connections to the national road network make it an attractive location for business.

3.41 In maintaining a vibrant local economy it is important that we seek to retain smaller, locally important employment locations to encourage local smaller businesses alongside the larger strategic employment spaces to provide a variety of job opportunities in a wide area, which provide a range of industries including self-employment options. These sites support a number of locally owned and run small and medium sized manufacturing and "cottage industries".

3.42 Town centres and strategic employment sites are defined in Policy E2 of the Guildford Local Plan as the focus for new employment. Ash station is not so designated. Policy E2, restricting expansion of existing offices outside town centres and strategic employment sites to 25% of existing office and Research & Development floorspace, therefore applies to the station site in Policy ASH6. Policy ASH6 identifies the established employment location at Ash Station as locally important to protect it from a change of use to non-employment uses, a protection already afforded to the strategic site, as well as to support the intensification of both strategic and locally important employment sites. Intensification can include both the gentle densification of buildings on the existing footprint or the extension of the footprint buildings within the sites. This should be through reuse and repurposing of the current units, however this may include replacement buildings where justified.

3.43 Whilst supporting the brownfield approach to development, this policy shows how not all brownfield sites are suitable for redevelopment to residential by protecting local employment land in the right places.

3.44 The Local Plan Policy E3 identifies north and south of Lysons Avenue, Ash Vale as a strategic employment site for industrial uses (B1c, B2 and B8). As such it will be protected for use in line with its designation, with employment floorspace loss strongly resisted.

3.45 In respect of locally important employment sites, the Local Plan defines these as sites in excess of 1.5ha. Whilst the site at Ash Station is smaller than this at 0.72ha with around 986sqm of employment floorspace, it is the only industrial estate in Ash (the strategic site being located within Ash Vale) and given the significant and on-going residential development to the South of Ash Station, it is important that the location at Ash Station is included within this definition to retain local employment opportunities in this accessible location.

Policy ASH7: REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS

A. Development proposals for replacement dwellings should have full regard to the provisions of the Ash Design Guidance and Codes (May 2025) and evidence the following criteria:

   i. they maintain, or where possible enhance, the prevailing character and appearance of buildings in the immediate area;
   ii. they have due regard to the scale, mass, design and layout of existing residential dwellings in the surrounding area;
   iii. they safeguard the amenities of adjacent residential dwellings and their curtilages;
   iv. any loss of biodiversity value on the site will be fully mitigated, and measures to create an ecological net gain through habitat creation and enhancement are incorporated as part of the proposal.

B. Replacement building proposals must evidence that alternative options including refurbishment, retrofitting, extending or conversion have been fully explored prior to pursuing a demolition and rebuild development.

3.46 Ash has a very few brownfield redevelopment opportunities for residential development, principally due to existing policy constraints in terms of land designations and very few underused or vacant commercial sites in areas suitable for a change of use (i.e outside of the SPA 400m buffer zone). However, there has been an increase in the number of replacement dwelling applications (knock down and rebuild). These applications can be popular for self-build opportunities and can seek to maximise the efficient use of land where there is a net increase in the number of dwellings resulting from the development, resulting in a social sustainability benefit by providing new homes.

3.47 Such applications should evidence how they have responded to the Ash Design Guidance and Codes in ensuring they respond positively to the existing character and setting of the local area in their proposals.

3.48 It is noted that in relation to Clause A (iv) the policy is not seeking to apply the national/local minimum 10%/20% BNG requirement to exempt development such as Custom and Self Build (CSB) but it is expected that the proposals should leave the application site in a better ecological position as a result of development, not worse.

3.49 Replacement building proposals also provide the opportunity to reduce both operational and embodied carbon emissions, seeking to achieve high levels of sustainability to mitigate for the demolition of the original building which will have a sustainability impact. As such, alternative options such as refurbishment, retrofitting, extending or conversion must be fully explored and evidenced prior to pursuing a knock down and rebuild proposal as these options may enable a building to achieve the same level of building performance and energy efficiency as a replacement dwelling but with a lower waste and embodied carbon impact. If a building is structurally unsound, then demolition and replacement may be the only way to bring the previously developed site back into use and as such this should also be evidenced.

3.50 Where an application includes a demolition, the resulting building should achieve high levels of sustainability (e.g. low embodied carbon in the build, low operational energy use, strong site waste reduction measures etc) in order to overcome the sustainability deficit and “pay back” the disbenefits of demolition.

3.51 Where there is a net increase in the number of dwellings resulting from the demolition and rebuild approach, this can weigh against the environmental harm of demolition and construction.

Policy ASH8: ENERGY EFFICIENCY

A. New and replacement dwellings should be 'zero carbon ready' by design to minimise the amount of energy needed to heat and cool buildings through landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping. Consideration should be given to resource efficiency at the outset and applications should evidence whether existing buildings can be re-used as part of the scheme to capture their embodied carbon.

B. New and replacement dwellings proposed to be certified to a Passivhaus or equivalent standard with a space heating demand of less than 15KWh/m2/year will not be subject to the provisions of Clause C. Schemes that maximise their potential to meet this standard by proposing the use of modern methods of construction and the use of terraced and/or apartment building forms with plot size, plot coverage and layout that are different to those of the character area within which the proposal is located, will be supported, provided it can be demonstrated that the scheme will not have a significant harmful effect on the character area.

C. All planning applications for new and replacement buildings should demonstrate that they will be tested to ensure the buildings will perform as predicted. Submission of test results will be secured through appropriate planning conditions.

D. All planning applications for major development are also required to be accompanied by a full Lifecycle Carbon Analysis (LCA), using a recognised methodology, to demonstrate actions taken to reduce embodied carbon resulting from the construction and use of the building over its entire life.

E. Climate Change Statement will be submitted to demonstrate compliance with the policy. The statement will include a passive design capacity assessment to demonstrate how opportunities to reduce the energy use intensity (EUI) of the building(s) over the plan period have been maximised in accordance with the energy hierarchy. Designers shall evaluate the operational energy use using realistic information on the intended use, occupancy and operation of the building to minimise any performance gap.

3.52 The policy is in five parts, the combination of which is intended to deliver a step change in the energy performance of all new developments in Ash and, in doing so, encourage and incentivise the use of the Passivhaus or equivalent standard of building design. The policy has been informed by the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan Policy R11 which has recently been made and clarification has been given by The Court of Appeal (25 July 2025) R (Rights: Community Action Ltd) v Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government [2025] EWVA Civ 990 which held the 2023 Written Ministerial Statement doesn't prevent LPAs from setting higher standards than National policy which is only guidance and can be departed from in local circumstances. Whilst this policy does not set a higher standard, it is intended to incentivise, not require, higher standards, by releasing such schemes from a post-occupancy evaluation. The post-occupancy clause of the policy is intended to try to deal with the performance gap, not set a particular standard. Schemes can continue to choose whichever energy efficiency standard they see fit. Post-occupancy evaluation simply provides a procedure for schemes to demonstrate that their schemes are performing the way in which they anticipated at the design stage.

3.53 Clause A of the policy requires developers to ensure they address the Government's climate change targets and energy performance at the very initial stages of design. 'Zero Carbon Ready' by design means making spatial decisions on layout and orientation of buildings at the outset to maximise the passive design benefits ('free heat') of a site and avoids leaving this to technical choices and assessment at the Building Regulation stage, by which time the opportunity may have been lost. Applicants are directed to the Net-Zero Carbon Toolkit created by Cotswold District Council and two partner councils, WODC and Forest of Dean District Council. The toolkit is available as a resource for private and public sector organisations to use and adopt.

3.54 Proposals seeking to apply the Passivhaus Planning Package (PHPP) must be able to demonstrate that the Passivhaus standard can be achieved. Prior to commencement a 'pre-construction compliance check' completed by a Passivhaus Designer accredited by the Passive House Institute (PHI) will be required and secured by condition. Upon completion a Quality Approved Passivhaus certificate for each building will be required prior to occupation, again secured by condition.

3.55 There is a growing evidence base to suggest that buildings do not perform as well as anticipated at design stage. Findings demonstrate that actual energy consumption in buildings will usually be twice as much as predicted. This passes on expensive running and retrofitting costs to future occupants. Clause C of the policy therefore requires that every building design type in a consented development scheme of new or replacement dwellings enables maximum energy efficiency.

3.56 Clause D requires all development proposals that are not householder applications to be accompanied by a full Life-Cycle Carbon Analysis, RICS methodology is preferred. The assessment will enable the design team to understand and respond to the lifetime consequences of their design decisions and to design for adaptability, longevity and disassembly; contributing to resource efficiency and contributing to the 'circular economy'.

3.57 This requirement will be added to the GBC Council Validation Checklist for outline and full planning applications applying to proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan area until such a time that there is a district-wide requirement.

3.58 Clause E requires the Climate Change Statement for applications already required to be submitted, to cover the following:

- an assessment of the proposal to minimise regulated and unregulated emissions, the embodied emissions and the emissions associated with maintenance, repair and replacement of the new building(s), as well as its dismantling, demolition and eventual material disposal.
- the proposal to reduce carbon emissions beyond the Future Homes Standard and Building Regulations through the energy efficient design of the site, buildings and services
- the proposal to further reduce carbon emissions through the use of zero or low emission decentralised energy where feasible.
- the proposal to further reduce carbon emissions by maximising opportunities to produce and use renewable energy on-site, utilising storage technologies where appropriate.
- the proposal for a demand-side response, specifically through installation of smart meters, minimising peak energy demand and promoting short-term energy storage.

- an analysis of the expected cost to occupants associated with the proposed energy strategy.

3.59 Every new build or redevelopment project in the Neighbourhood Plan area provides an opportunity to make a difference and a contribution towards meeting our climate change targets for 2050 and supports the various commitment made by GBC through its Climate Change Action Plan, which states "*GBC is committed to reducing carbon emissions within the wider setting through leading by example*" (page 21) This new information requirement need not be an unreasonable expectation of even the smallest schemes for new or replacement buildings.

Policy ASH9: EXISTING AND NEW COMMUNITY ASSETS

A. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies existing community facilities on the Policies Map and listed in Appendix B.

   i) Proposals that will result in either the loss of, or cause significant harm to, a defined facility will be resisted, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that either the operation of the facility is no longer financially viable or adequate alternative provision exists or a replacement facility of an equivalent or better standard is to be provided in a location equally or more accessible to the facility's catchment area.
   ii) Proposals to sustain or extend the viable use of existing community facilities and the development of new facilities, to ensure local residents have sufficient good quality social infrastructure will be supported, provided the location of the site is in accordance with the sequential test outlined in the NPPF for main town centre uses (where applicable).

B. Proposals to extend, diversify, improve and introduce new school place capacity, day nursery or other early years settings will be supported provided:

   i) the scale of the buildings and structures minimise the effect of the scheme on local residential amenity by way of traffic, on-street car parking and outdoor noise and lighting pollution; and
   ii) there is adequate provision to encourage walking and/or cycling to and from the facility.

C. The Neighbourhood Plan designates 0.27 ha of land at Ash Lodge Drive, as shown on the Policies Maps for Class C2 use with ancillary Class F2 Local Community Uses. Development proposals in this location should where possible include the creation of community facilities to serve the immediate neighbourhood as well as wider parish for social, recreational, cultural or health and wellbeing purposes.

3.60 Where healthcare facilities are formally declared surplus to the operational healthcare requirements of the NHS, or identified as surplus as part of a published estates strategy or service transformation plan, this will be considered to meet the requirement under Part A(i) of Policy ASH9.

3.61 Clause B reflects the Surrey County Council School Organisation Plan which identifies changing trends in demand for education over the coming decade. As such, ASH9 takes a flexible approach to enabling educational facilities to adapt, diversify and extend, where needed in order to respond to local need and ensure they remain viable and able to meet the needs of the parish, whilst ensuring that any proposals take account of the impact on local traffic and households in the vicinity and they are managed effectively.

3.62 Clause C identifies a specific piece of land which was previously safeguarded as part of the Ash Lodge Drive development, intended for use as a medical facility, but with an alternative use as community use land, should no provider be secured to develop out a medical facility. Despite best endeavours, a provider was unable to be secured and the S106 agreement "timed out" before the LPA could invoke the agreement for the fall-back community use of the land. As such, given the social infrastructure community benefit which was intended for the land, the parish are keen to ensure part of the site is safeguarded for community use.

3.63 The Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Plan proposed to designate the whole of the site for community use with the intention of the Parish Council seeking the transfer of the land in order to secure it, with future proposals to be determined subject to community consultation and in response to funding opportunities.

3.64 Over the last 6 months engagement with the landowner has made the Parish Council aware that the site has been optioned to a care home provider and as such there is no opportunity to transfer the land to the Parish Council. Given the need for care homes, as set out in the Ash Housing Needs Assessment, the neighbourhood plan considers that the designation of the land for such a purpose is acceptable in principle, so long as any subsequent proposals for the site include provision of facilities that are accessible to the wider community, such as a community café within the site, community garden or other shared social community space, and/or a hireable space for meetings or community functions and activities, which would be secured through a S106 agreement and/or Community Use Agreement. There is a strong belief that notwithstanding making the most efficient use of land within the parish, there is a longstanding expectation that this location was intended to deliver community infrastructure and as such, it has a role to play in delivering on this expectation.

3.65 In addition, in seeking to ensure that the parish promotes an integrated community, which given the substantial amount of development in recent years has been challenging; this site provides a rare opportunity to encourage new and existing residents of various ages to come together in a shared community space. So often, care homes appear isolated from the rest of the community; this use of land seeks to encourage better community cohesion.

3.66. Where provision of a Class C2 use on land at Ash Lodge Drive with ancillary F2 local community uses is demonstrated to be financially unviable, the need for care homes could make a Class 2 only development acceptable.

Note - Class F2 comprises recreational uses such as outdoor sports facilities and community halls. It can also include shops under 280 square metres selling essential goods which are over 1km from another similar shop.

Policy ASH10: GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

A. Development proposals that lie within or adjoining the Green and Blue Infrastructure Network, as shown on the Policies Map, are required to have full regard to creating, maintaining and improving the functionality of the Network in the design of their layouts, landscaping schemes and public open space provisions. Proposals that will harm the functionality or connectivity of the Network, will not be supported.

B. Development proposals should align with and contribute to the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, to maximise nature recovery in the local area.

C. Proposals for new development requiring the provision of on-site open space will be supported where the design of open space is integral to the scheme and is effectively connected to any adjoining green infrastructure assets. Where appropriate, developers will be expected to enter into a planning obligation to secure satisfactory arrangements for the long-term management of this open space. Proposals for smaller infill schemes should also create opportunities to connect their landscape schemes (where relevant) with adjoining green infrastructure assets.

D. New development will also be required to retain trees and native hedgerows, wherever possible and to secure opportunities to create connected habitats suitable for species adaptation to climate change. Where they are unavoidably lost, replacement trees and hedgerows using indigenous species, resilient to climate change, must be planted (two trees should be planted for every one lost, where possible). All proposals for development in the Plan area must ensure that any potential impacts upon rare and threatened species and habitats are fully assessed, and that, where necessary, mitigation measures are incorporated to safeguard and protect those species and habitats.

E. Save for householder applications, development proposals on sites of 0.5ha or above, are required as a minimum to achieve a future canopy cover of 20% of the site area principally through the retention of existing trees and the planting of new trees. Where it can be demonstrated that this is impracticable, the use of other green infrastructure (e.g. green roofs and walls) can be used where they are capable of offering similar benefits to trees.

F. Development proposals on sites below 0.5 Ha, are required to maximise the opportunities available for canopy cover, including tree retention and planting or the provision of other green infrastructure (e.g. green roofs, walls and rain gardens).

3.67 The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a Green and Blue Infrastructure Network, as shown on the Policies Map, for the purpose of increasing biodiversity, promoting ecological connectivity, providing outdoor recreation, sustainable movement through the town and into its surrounding countryside, and helping mitigate and adapt to climate change. The Network comprises assets of high nature conservation value including rare and threatened heathland habitats, other priority habitats, wildflower-rich meadows, ancient semi-natural and secondary woodland, trees, hedgerows and water bodies - all assets of high biodiversity value. Also included are those areas of recreation and amenity value including children's play areas, allotments, recreational playing fields, and off-street footways, cycleways, and bridleways in and around Ash. In most cases assets have multi-functional, nature conservation, recreational and amenity value.

3.68 The network has been mapped using publicly available data, primarily that produced by Natural England.

3.69 The Priority Habitats layer is a Natural England spatial dataset that maps priority habitats identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and listed as being of principal importance for the purpose of conserving or enhancing biodiversity, under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). In Ash, these are deciduous woodland and lowland heathland.

3.70 The extensive area of open dry lowland heathland owned by the MoD at Ash Ranges is a haven for numerous rare heathland plant, invertebrate and reptile species such as sundews and the green tiger beetle. It is also home to the rare sand lizard, smooth snake and heath tiger beetle which are only found on a handful of heathland sites in the UK. The Basingstoke Canal is also a notable wildlife habitat. The alkaline water from the chalk springs at Greywell

and the acid water content eastward where the canal passes through heathland, has given rise to one of the largest varieties of aquatic plants and invertebrates along the length of a single UK waterway. As many as 25 of Britain's 39 species of dragonflies and damselflies inhabit the canal. Recognising the unique ecological importance of the canal, English Nature (now Natural England) designated the entire waterway, as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1995.

3.71 Several protected species can be found in the area, including breeding Red Kites, Buzzards, Barn Owls and Tawny Owls. Further, starlings and house sparrows are present, all of which are on the Birds of Conservation Concern Red List. Sparrowhawk, wren, song thrush, redwings, grey wagtails and bullfinches (BoCC Amberlist) are all present. Hedgehogs and dormice (listed as "vulnerable" on the Red List for Britain's Mammals) are also present, as are slow worms and adders. Deer, foxes and badgers are also found in the area. A variety of bats roost or forage in the area including the Near Threatened Barbastelle bat. There are also rare fungi in the trees around Ash Manor. The pond at Ash Manor also has an abundance of wildlife including toads, great crested newts, duck and geese.

3.72 In areas such as Ash, mapping this rich ecological value does not just illustrate where it is currently located, but also points to where the network may be improved to be better connected if or when land is developed or redeveloped. It also requires new development to maximise the opportunities available for tree canopy cover including tree retention and planting or the provision of other Green Infrastructure (e.g. green roofs, walls, rain gardens, ponds, inter-connected wildflower strips and hedgerows).

3.73 In respect of clause D, creating connected habitats is essential for enabling species to adapt to the impacts of climate change. As climate patterns shift, many species need to move to new areas to find suitable conditions, so joining up "corridors" of green infrastructure can help provide space for species to move, as can buffers in development or measures such as hedgehog highways (gaps in fencing), using green roofs and walls as stepping stones for pollinators so that they can be resilient to the impacts of climate change.

3.74 Also, in relation to D, the retention of trees and native hedgerows allows for the removal of non-native or invasive hedging Surrey has a particular problem with non-native and invasive species frequently used as hedging such as Cherry and Laurel for example. Such hedges should not be conserved or enhanced (increased) and should ideally be replaced with native hedgerows. The wording "*where they are unavoidably lost*" would also allow for removal which may be due to health, safety, quality as well as appropriateness.

3.75 In relation to clauses E and F, canopy cover is the layer of leaves, branches and tree stems that cover the ground. Trees help mitigate the environmental and social challenges our built-up areas, face in a quantifiable way. This is supported by the Government's NetZero Strategy: Build Back Greener October 2021 which recognises the role of green and blue infrastructure, including trees, in providing an opportunity to benefit local economies and bring about long-term improvements in people's health and wellbeing.

3.76 The policy therefore draws inspiration from others, like Wycombe District Council and Cornwall Council who are operating planning policies which require new development (excluding householder applications) to achieve a quantifiable future canopy cover, with many others in the process of developing this type of policy. The London Plan operates a similar approach with its Urban Greening Factor. In implementing the policy, a wide range of benefits are expected including storing carbon, reducing the urban heat island effect and improving air quality. The policy has been designed to be applied in a flexible way. In specific

terms it acknowledges that issues such as commercial viability, site layouts and design may make the expectations of the policy impracticable on a site by-site basis.

3.77 This will be a matter for GBC to consider based in the evidence provided with each development proposal. In addition, matters such as site layout and commercial viability may also be affected where development proposals also need to provide open space and landscaping to meet other policies. The evidence should include the submission of a "Canopy Cover Statement" as part of the Landscape Strategy at the application stage including:

- An existing tree survey & constraints plan (such as BS5837)
- Existing canopy cover calculation (as % of site area)
- Proposed canopy cover at Year 15–25 (using typical mature crown spreads)
- Plan clearly showing retained trees, new trees, and any green roofs/walls being counted

Additionally, this could be secured by condition: eg The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved Tree Retention Plan, Soft Landscape Proposals and Canopy Cover Plan, which together demonstrate a minimum future canopy cover of 20% of the site area

3.78 As GBC does not currently have guidance for applicants to calculate canopy cover, the adopted Wycombe Tree Canopy Cover Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides a Canopy Cover calculator, developed in partnership with Treeconomics Forest Research and Wycombe District Council (link). This guidance will assist applicants in calculating how their proposed scheme should seek to meet the requirements of the policy, until such a time that GBC adopts its own guidance.

3.79 Developers of large sites are advised to engage with Thames Water at the earliest opportunity to establish :

- The development's demand for water supply infrastructure;
- The development's demand for sewage/wastewater treatment and network infrastructure; and
- The surface water drainage requirements and any flood risk on or off the site.

Thames Water provides a pre-planning service at: https://developers.thameswater.co.uk/Developing-a-large-site.

Policy ASH11: LOCAL GREEN SPACES

The Neighbourhood Plan designates Local Green Spaces in the following locations, as shown on the Policies Map and listed below.

Ash Vale
1) Carrington Recreation Ground
2) Snaky Lane Local Nature Reserve
3) Lakeside Nature Reserve Play Area
4) Cody Close Playground and Vickers Road Open Space
5) Sopwith Close Playground and Open Space
6) Avondale Playground
7) Old Farm Place Play Area.
8) Shackleton Close Playground and Open Space

Ash
9) Ash Common Recreation Ground
10) Coronation Gardens
11) Coronation Extension Gardens
12) Harpers Recreation Ground
13) Open space adjacent to Ash United Football Club (Shawfield Rec)
14) Open space off Old School Close (formerly Heathcote School Field)
15) Heathcote Play Area (Parson's Nose)
16) Rowan Field
17) Harpers Road Allotments
18) Shawfield Road Allotments

Ash South
19) Manfield Open Space
20) The Briars Playground and open space east of South Lane and Dan's Meadow
21) Ashley Park Play Area (Blackwater Close)
22) Parish Close Play Area and open space
23) Hop Garden Way Play Area
24) Hop Garden Way Sports Court Playground and Open Space
25) Minleys Close Playground
26) Holme Close Play Area
27) Yalden Gardens Play Area
28) Alden Copse Play Area
29) Parsons Way Play Area
30) Wanborough Way Playground
31) Compass Rose Road Play Area
32) Green Space South of Hazel Road
33) Green Spaces West of White Lane

New development will not be permitted on land designated as Local Green Space except in very special circumstances or where it is ancillary to the use of the land for public recreational purposes.

3.80 The green and blue infrastructure network includes some land that qualifies as a Local Green Space. These spaces are particularly special and cherished by the local community. They would be especially missed if they were to be lost to development. The policy designates Local Green Spaces in the area, which, once designated are afforded a high level of protection from development. Full details of each location are set out in Appendix C describe why it is special.

3.81 The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:
a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and
c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land. (NPPF §106)

Policy ASH12: THAMES BASIN HEATH SPA

Residential schemes will be required to include proposals for mitigating their effects on the ecological integrity of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area. This could be through on-site provision or off-site financial contributions in accordance with the requirements of the development plan,

including compliance with the principles set out in adopted Development Plan policies in the Local Plan and with Guildford Borough Council's Thames Basin Heath SPA SPD

3.82 Natural England designated the SPA on 9 March 2005. The SPA is a protected area of lowland heath and woodland that is home to three rare and internationally protected bird species that nest on or near the ground, the woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler. These birds nest on or near the ground and, as a result, are very susceptible to predation by cats, rats and crows, and to disturbance from informal recreational use, especially walking and dog walking.

3.83 The SPA is protected from adverse effects under European and UK law. New residential development within the vicinity of the SPA increases visitor pressure which has negative impacts on the bird populations and habitats.

3.84 The GBC Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy SPD 2017 sets out an approach that enables GBC to grant permission for residential developments that would otherwise conflict with legislation and regional and local planning policies that protect the SPA habitats and birds. Where net new residential development is proposed within the zone of influence, avoidance measures must be provided in the form of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM).

3.85 The Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) has been prepared for the Ash Neighbourhood Plan and is provided as part of the submission documents.

3.86 The ANP notes the land allocated for new allotments to be delivered at Ash Lodge Park, will shortly be subject to a change of use application to create additional SANG land for the Parish including potentially a secure dog walking facility as the land is unsuitable for allotments given its location and access issues.

Policy ASH13: ACTIVE TRAVEL

A. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies a Walking and Cycling Network, as shown on the Policies Map, with the purpose of supporting healthy and safe active travel opportunities.

B. Proposals which create opportunities to improve this network, including the addition of new walking and cycling routes to connect the existing and new residential areas of the parish with local shops, community facilities, schools and the railway stations, will be supported.

C. Development proposals requiring the preparation and agreement of travel plans as planning conditions or obligations, should prioritise the making of financial contributions to footway, footpath and cycleway improvement projects connecting their schemes local services and facilities, including strategic allocations in the Local Plan (Strategy and Sites (2015-2034) or subsequent version)

D. Development proposals that will result in the unnecessary loss or obstruction of a section of footway, footpath or cycleway, that cannot be satisfactorily mitigated, will be resisted.

3.87 APC identified active travel as a key area of focus to improve accessibility across the parish (i.e. how easy it is for people to move around.) Improving how residents and visitors move through the area and in particular access facilities and services, requires understanding the options and opportunities for active travel. This policy has therefore mapped the existing

active travel network (walking, cycling, bus routes, train routes) to draw to the attention of developers where this network is so that they can take it into account in designing their proposals, and especially how their schemes are accessed if they are located next to the network. The main evidence base for this is the Guildford Borough Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

3.88 At a minimum future development should not harm the functioning of the walking and cycling network but should, where practicable, enhance the functionality of the network through layout, means of access and landscape treatments.

3.89 Early engagement indicated that the old railway track, Ash Green Meadows, Rowan Field and the canal towpath are all very popular for leisure walking and cycling. Ash Ranges is also popular but as part of the Thames Basin Heath SPA, new development should seek to provide connections to Lakeside Nature Reserve SANG and Ash Lodge Drive SANG for dog walking and other recreational activities as a priority.

3.90 Identified areas for improvement include:

1) Foreman Road and Harpers Road which currently have no footways and should be upgraded.
2) The disused railway track floods every year to a depth of at least 2 feet. It is unlit and frequently overgrown. This route is the recommended route for travel to and from Ash Manor school for the developments in Ash South and Ash Green. Development should enhance this route to make it a safe and attractive route.
3) Sustainable travel connections from the eastern parts of Ash and Ash Green to the wider bus and rail transport network and the Wharf Road District Centre. Either through the promotion of a new bus route or expanded Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) service to the rest of the Parish.

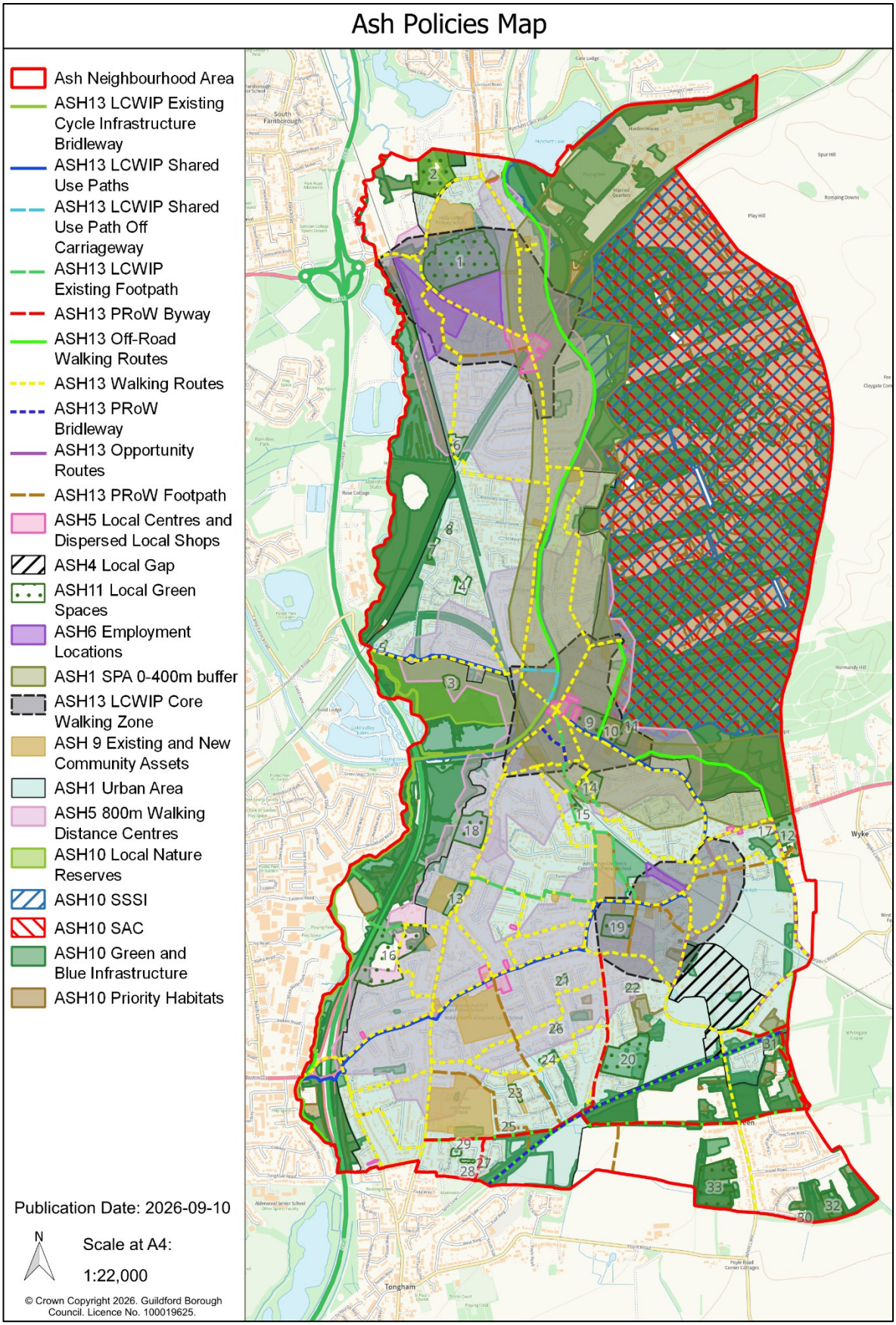
3.91 Developers and those involved in improving and enhancing active travel routes are directed to use the Healthy Streets Indicators Assessment tool to ensure that the whole community are able to access and enjoy the network. The tool includes planning safe routes which avoid severance including the removal physical barriers wherever possible, making crossings easy and considering the appropriate placement of new street furniture as well as providing adequate spaces to rest or shelter.



Figure 3 Healthy Street Indicators.

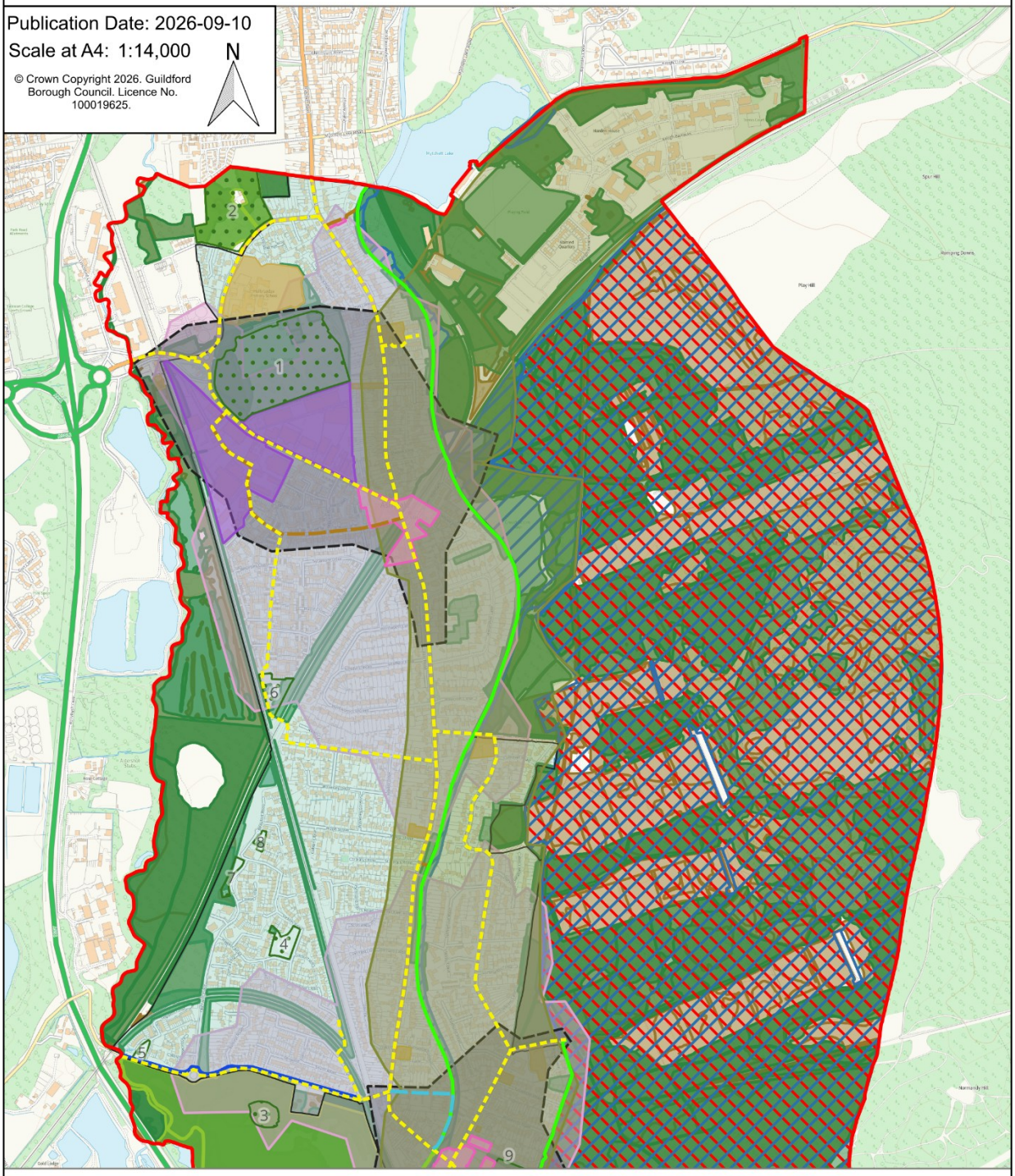
ASH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN POLICIES MAP

3.92 Below are the Policies Maps for the Ash Neighbourhood Plan. For ease of reading, the Green and Blue Infrastructure and Active Travel mapping layers are reproduced separately. For an interactive higher resolution version containing all mapping layers with the ability to turn layers off and on please click here. An A3 version of the map can be seen in Appendix F.



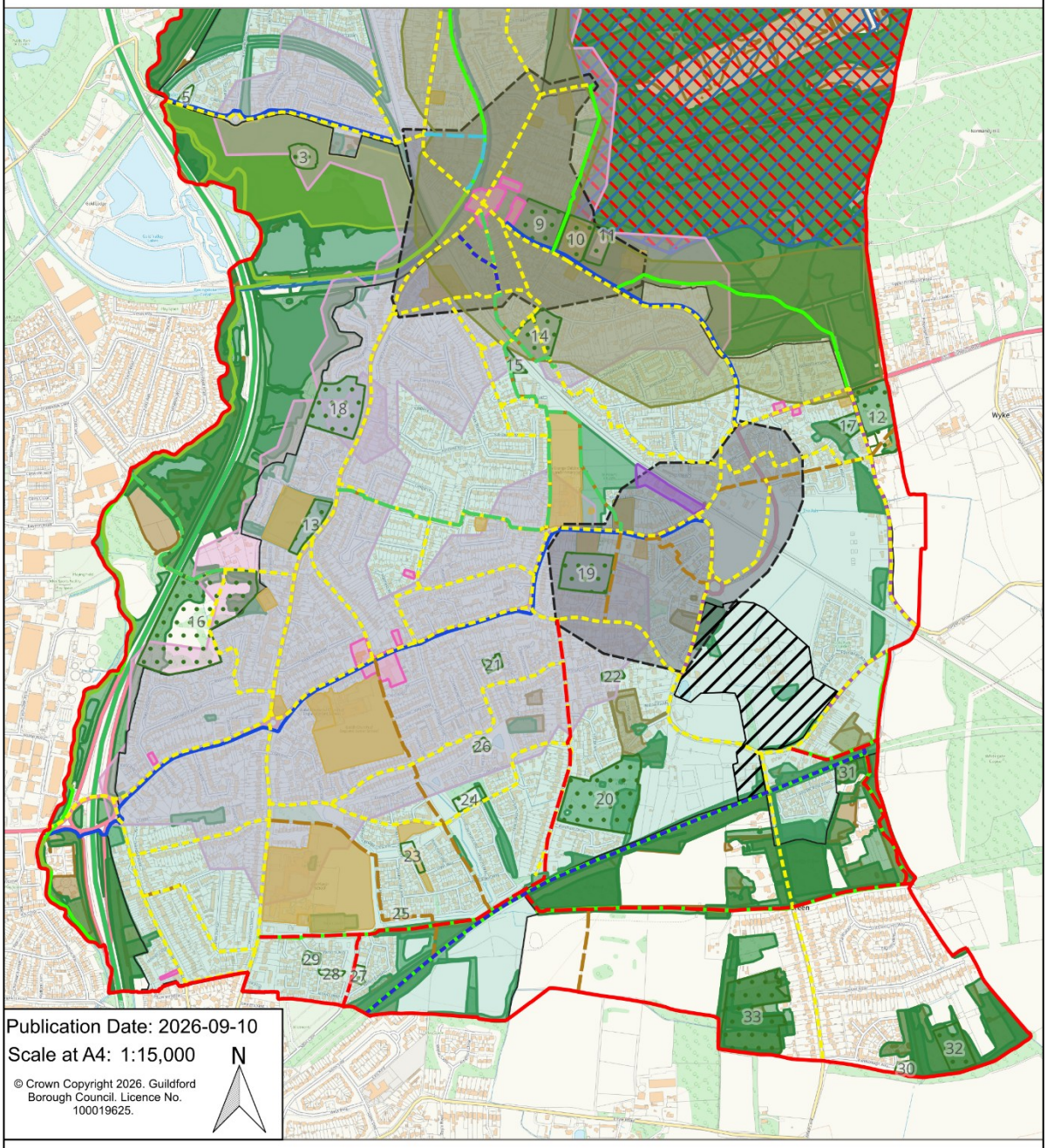
* The Ash Policy Map layers are to be hosted on the Guildford Borough Council or successor authority's planning policies map.

Inset Map North

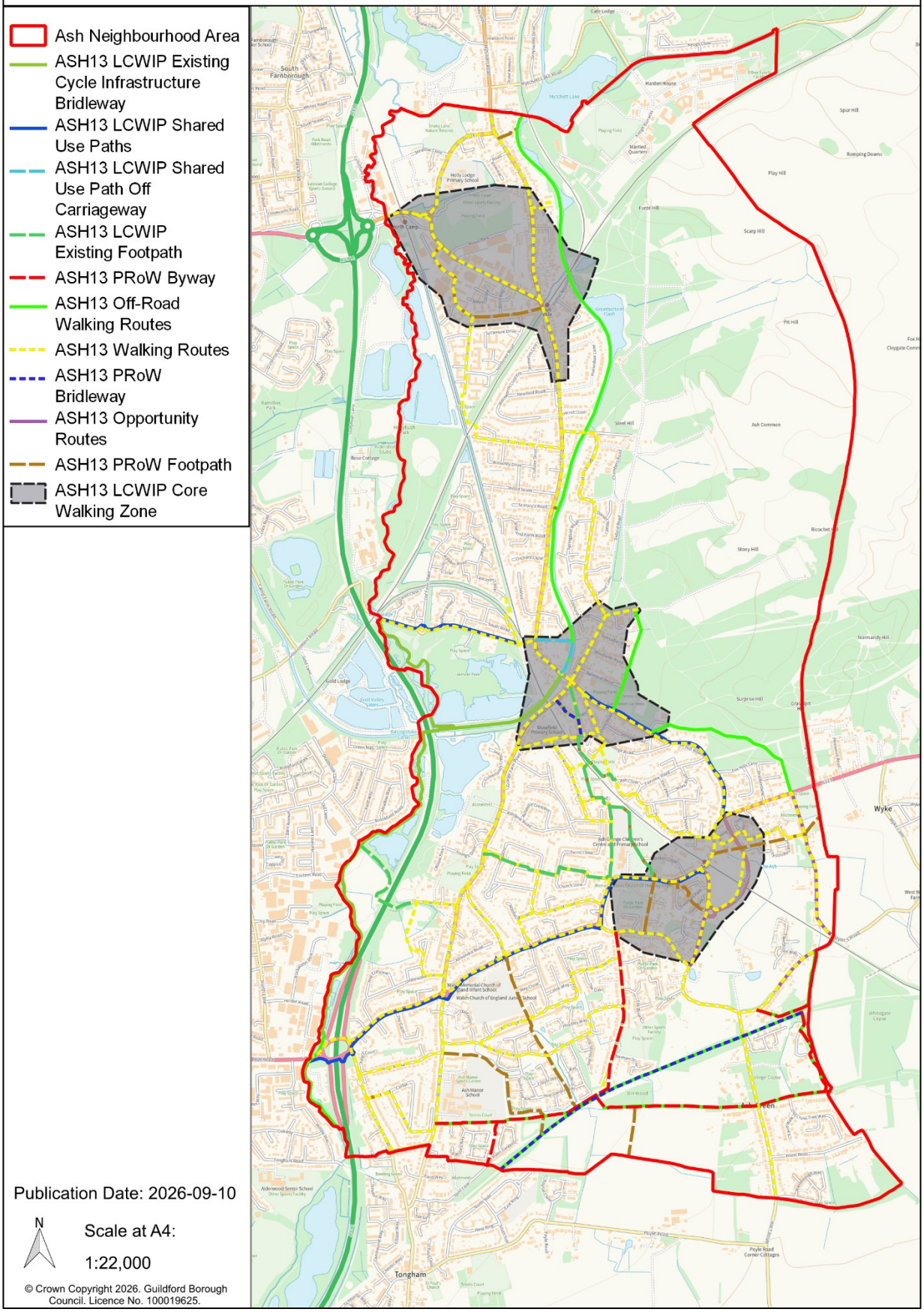


- Ash Neighbourhood Area
- ASH13 LCWIP Existing Cycle Infrastructure Bridleway
- ASH13 LCWIP Shared Use Paths
- ASH13 LCWIP Shared Use Path Off Carriageway
- ASH13 LCWIP Existing Footpath
- ASH13 Off-Road Walking Routes
- ASH13 Walking Routes
- ASH13 PRoW Footpath
- ASH5 Local Centres and Dispersed Local Shops
- ASH11 Local Green Spaces
- ASH6 Employment Locations
- ASH1 SPA 0-400m buffer
- ASH13 LCWIP Core Walking Zone
- ASH 9 Existing and New Community Assets
- ASH1 Urban Area
- ASH5 800m Walking Distance Centres
- ASH10 Local Nature Reserves
- ASH10 SSSI
- ASH10 SAC
- ASH10 Green and Blue Infrastructure
- ASH10 Priority Habitats

Inset Map South



Walking and Cycling Network



Publication Date: 2026-09-10

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Scale at A4:

1:22,000

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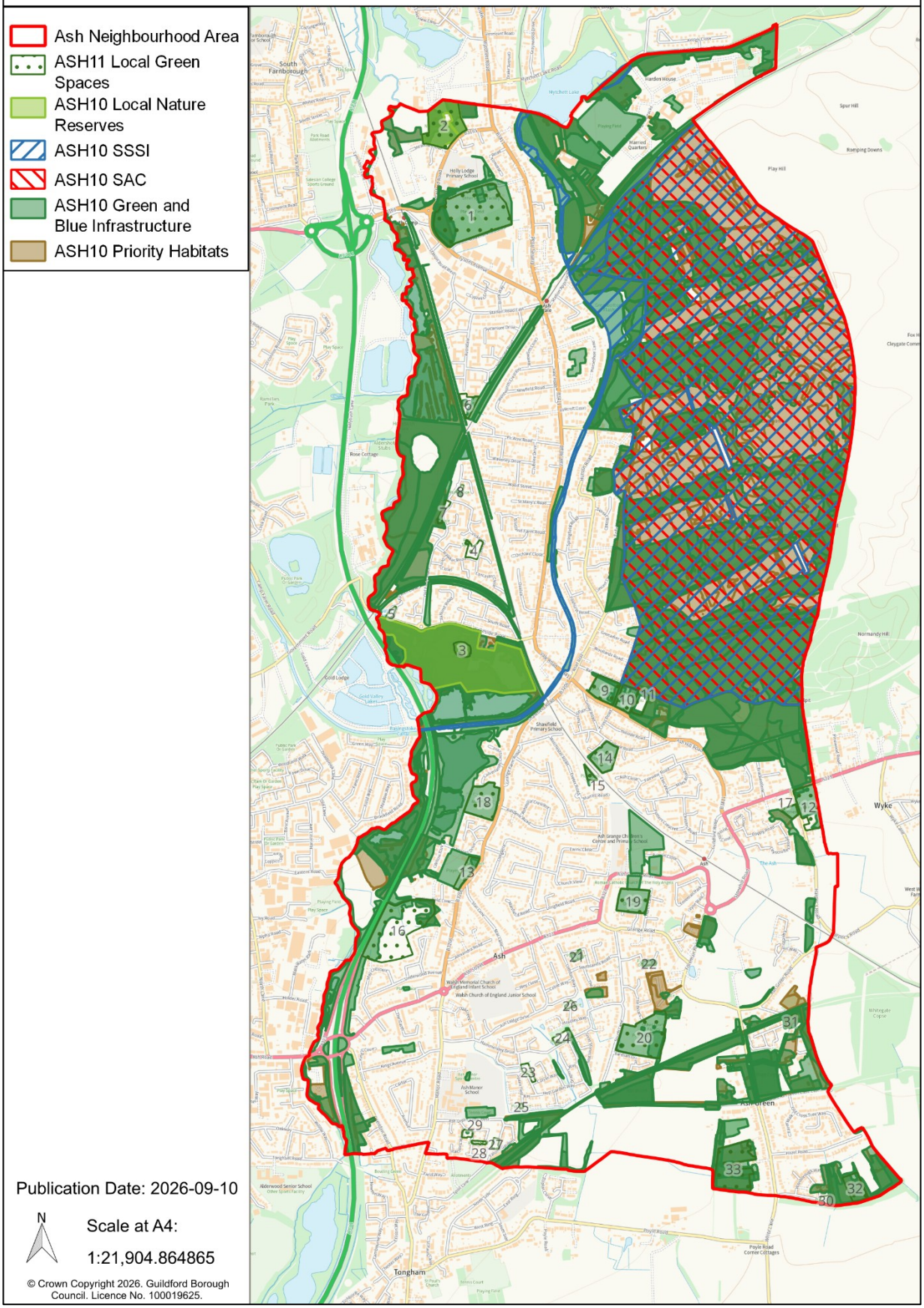
Green and Blue Infrastructure



4. INFORMATION

4.1 The Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented through Guildford Borough Council through its consideration and determination of planning applications for development in the parish. The Parish Council will monitor the effectiveness of the policies through the development management process and through steering public and private investment into infrastructure improvements contained in the Plan. In addition, Guildford Borough Council will monitor the implementation of Neighbourhood Plan policies, once adopted, through the Authority Monitoring Report which is published annually. This report is prepared in consultation with relevant parish council each year.

4.2 The Parish Council will use a combination of the Local Plan and this Neighbourhood Plan policies to inform and comment on planning applications. The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications made in the parish and it will be made aware of any future planning applications or alterations to those applications by the planning authorities. It will seek to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan policies have been identified and applied correctly by applicants and by officers in their decision reports.

4.3 Opportunities may arise through S106 agreements or through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to secure financial contributions to invest in improving local infrastructure. Once the Neighbourhood Plan is "made" the Parish Council will be able to determine how and where 25% of the CIL collected from schemes in the Parish is spent in accordance with the CIL Regulations.

4.4 The Parish will prioritise the following in spending planning gain (S106/CIL) funds:

a) Facilities and Resources for the Ash Youth Club, and/or young people in the Parish
b) Additional Sporting and Leisure Facilities at various green spaces (including but not limited to Carrington Recreation Ground, Harpers Recreation Ground or Coronation Gardens)
c) Active Travel improvements as detailed in ASH13

4.5 APC kindly acknowledges the help of the following in the production of the ANP:

- Ash Neighbourhood Plan Committee
- Guildford Borough Council
- Locality
- ONH Planning for Good

5. APPENDICES

5.1 APC has referred to the following documents as its evidence to support the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Appendix A – Ash Design Code (provided separately due to size)
- Appendix B – Existing Community Facilities.
- Appendix C – Local Green Spaces (Provided separately due to size)
- Appendix D – Housing mix, type and tenure
- Appendix E – ASH4 Local Gap Report
- Appendix F – A3 Policies Map (Provided separately due to size)

Appendix B: Existing Community Facilities (Policy ASH9)

Pubs
1) The Swan Public House
2) The Admiral Public House
3) The Greyhound Public House
4) The Old Ford Public House
5) The Lion Brewery Public House

Schools
6) Cherryvale Nursery
7) Holly Lodge County Primary School
8) Ash Grange Children's Centre and Primary School
9) Walsh Memorial C of E Junior School
10) Walsh Memorial C of E Infant School
11) Ash Manor Secondary School & Sports Centre
12) Friends Forest Nursery
13) Shawfield County Primary School and Jack & Jill Nursery Group

Community Buildings
14) Ash Centre
15) Ash Vale Health Centre
16) Victoria Hall
17) St Peter's Centre
18) Ash Youth and Community Centre
19) St Mary's Church and Community Centre
20) Ash Library
21) Ash Museum
22) Shawfield Day Centre
23) Nepali Christian Church
24) The Chapel, Ash Vale
25) St Peters Church, Ash and Little Fishes Preschool
26) Holy Angels Church

Other
27) Ash Tennis Club
28) Designated Community Use Space
29) Ash Skatepark.
30) Shawfield Stadium
31) Tiny Tots Daycare
32) Pippa's House Nursery
33) Primrose Hall and Happy Days Preschool
34) Harpers Scout Hut and Totterdown Preschool

Appendix D: Housing mix, type and tenure

Proposals for all residential development should seek to include in their housing mix a type and tenure suitable for first time buyers, those looking to rent their first home and downsizers.

Housing developments of 11 or more dwellings must deliver 40% affordable housing on site - Local Plan Policy H2 requires 40% affordable homes where more than 10 homes are proposed on a site. This is of such importance that the community will expect to see this requirement included within the Neighbourhood Plan, recognising that Ash is to continue the role of providing more smaller and mid-sized homes than the surrounding villages and countryside which provide a higher percentage of larger properties. As such, the future housing mix should continue to increase the delivery of 2–3-bedroom dwellings and limit the delivery of larger 4+ bedroom dwellings.

Proposals for residential development should provide a mix of dwelling types and sizes to address the nature of local needs and contribute to the objective of creating a mixed and balanced community. To achieve this objective, provision should be made for 2 & 3 bedroom dwellings which should comprise 70% or more of the total in schemes of five or more dwellings.

The community would like to see affordable housing delivered in the form of:

- 30% affordable home ownership
- 70% affordable rent and social rent, with the mix to be determined on a site-by-site basis at the planning application stage

The neighbourhood plan also recognises that with an ageing population there is a need to provide accessible and adaptable dwellings to reduce the need for age restricted housing. Developers are encouraged to build to at least M4(2) standard. This ensures new builds provide options for buyers to remain in their home in later years, rather than moving out into care facilities, helping to maintain a balanced mix of demographics within any given neighbourhood.

The community would like all development proposals to be delivered as accessible and adaptable dwellings in accordance with Building Regulations M4(2), unless evidence can be provided to demonstrate that such provision would be impracticable or render the scheme unviable. The provision of homes constructed to Building Regulations Part M4(3) for wheelchair accessible homes will also be supported by the community.

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) published the report ‘A Home for the Ages: Planning for the Future with Age-Friendly Design’ in July 2019 which makes the case for how policymakers focusing on increasingly age friendly housing provision could play an important role in tackling the extensive issues in both housing and social care.

The Neighbourhood Plan includes this information in order to improve accessibility and assist in allowing people to remain in their own home throughout their life, adapting as necessary, a situation which also help maintain long term connections to a community. Whilst M4(2) and M4(3) are not mandatory as building regulations, it has been adopted through planning policy in a number of locations, including the London Plan, where M4(2) is a required standard. The government consulted on extending M4(2) to all new homes in July 2022 and the impact assessment and other background documents for this consultation provide additional support for this provision.

Appendix E: Local Gap Report (Policy ASH4)

1. Purpose of the Report

This report provides the evidence-based justification for defining a Local Gap between Ash and Ash Green in Policy ASH4.

This Appendix incorporates findings from:

- The Strategic Development Framework SPD (2020) (GBC)
- The Ash Manor appeal decision APP/Y3615/W/21/3273305
- The Badshot Lea / Weybourne appeal APP/R3650/W/20/3262641
- Guildford BC Landscape Character Assessment (2007)
- Local Plan Policy A31 evidence and associated decisions

to provide a consolidated, evidence-led justification for the definition and function of the Local Gap between Ash and Ash Green.
The purpose of the Local Gap is to:

- **Prevent coalescence** between Ash and Ash Green;
- **Maintain distinct settlement identities**; and
- **Safeguard the rural and historic setting of Ash Green**, including the Grade II* and II listed assets at Ash Manor.

The Local Gap is a design-led, non-strategic Neighbourhood Plan designation**,** consistent with the NPPF and fully acknowledging the strategic primacy of Local Plan Policy A31**.**

2. Policy and Evidence Context

2.1 Local Plan Policy A31

Key elements relevant to the Local Gap include:

- Protecting the historic identity of Ash Green;
- Preventing the coalescence of Ash, Tongham and Ash Green (A31(6));
- Ensuring development does not detract from the rural landscape character (A31(7));
- Providing a green buffer that maintains separation between new development and Ash Green Road;
- Protecting views to and from the Ash Manor complex, including approaches from White Lane (A31(8)).

2.2 Guildford Strategic Development Framework SPD (2020)

- Illustrative masterplans show no development within the strategic buffer behind Ash Green Road.
- The SPD confirms the requirement for structurally significant green infrastructure at sensitive rural edges.

2.3 Guildford Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

The LCA confirms:

- A clear transition from PASTORAL RURAL LANDSCAPE at Ash Green to URBAN TOWNSCAPE at Ash;
- The Tongham Urban–Rural Fringe retains a **rural ambience** with open fields, hedgerows, tree belts, and a landscape typical of the wider countryside;
- The Ash Manor pond and historic farmstead strongly contribute to this rural character.

2.4 Appeal Decision APP/Y3615/W/21/3273305 (Ash Manor)

The Inspector concluded:

- The land south of Ash Manor (within the proposed Gap) forms part of its **essential rural setting**;
- The area retains a "sense of rurality and isolation" when approached from White Lane;
- Development would cause "less than substantial harm towards the upper end of mid-range" to heritage significance—even with mitigation;
- Narrow strips of landscaping behind garden fences **cannot function** as an effective green buffer;
- The A31 allocation is not homogeneous: some parcels, including around Ash Manor, remain **especially sensitive**.

2.5 Appeal Decision APP/R3650/W/20/3262641 (Badshot Lea / Weybourne)

The Inspector confirmed that:

- Loss of open land between settlements results in increased coalescence;
- Coalescence harm carries **significant weight;**
- Local Gaps are justified where open land is necessary to protect settlement identity.

2.6 GBC Advice (Regulation 14 and Post-Regulation 14)

GBC's Regulation 14 and follow-up advice confirms that:

- A Local Gap **cannot be used to reduce housing delivery** from A31;
- ASH4 must **explicitly acknowledge** that A31 will be delivered;
- A gap can be supported where it is clearly **evidence-led**, focused on **separation, character and design**, and **compatible with the allocation boundary**.

Policy ASH4 and its supporting text adopt this approach.

3. Local Gap Assessment – Application of the Tests

The following sections apply three Local Gap tests to the land between Ash and Ash Green.

Test 1. Does any land in the proposed Local Gap already have planning permission, or has it been allocated for development in the GBC Local Plan?

• The first stage in the assessment will be to review the planning history of each part of the proposed gap to ensure that it is not subject to an extant planning permission, and that it has not been allocated for development under a local plan.
• A Local Gap designation will rarely be appropriate where land already has planning permission, or where it has been allocated for development under the local plan.

• An exception to this may be where it can be demonstrated that the Local Gap designation would be compatible with the planning permission / local plan allocation, or where the planning permission / local plan allocation is no longer capable of being implemented.

3.1 Strategic Allocation and Permissions

The A31 allocation extends across the open land north of Ash Green Road. Just under 1,500 dwellings have planning permission or are built, leaving around 250 still to come forward.
A31 itself includes **landscape and separation requirements**:

- **Prevent coalescence** between Ash/Tongham and Ash Green;
- Ensure development "as a whole" is not of a size and scale that **detracts from the rural landscape**;
- Provide a **green buffer** retaining separation to Ash Green Road;
- Respond sensitively at **urban–rural transition** boundaries and around **Ash Manor**.

The Ash Manor appeal confirms that:

- The LPSS Examining Inspector required A31 to protect both the **setting of Ash Manor** and the **identity of Ash Green**;
- The A31 allocation is **not homogeneous**: some parts (including the land around Ash Manor) retain a **rural ambience** and are especially sensitive;
- A31(6) and (7) are **landscape and separation provisions**, not automatic justification for full built coverage;
- The **green buffer** is a "landscape requirement with a spatial purpose" to secure separation between Ash Green and new development.

The Local Gap:

- **Implements and spatially clarifies** the A31 "green buffer" and anti-coalescence requirements;
- Accepts that some A31 land will be developed but requires **layout, height, landscape structure and open space** to preserve a meaningful visual break;
- Does not reduce overall housing numbers foreseen by A31 and is drafted **not to conflict with the principle of development** within the allocation.

Test 1 conclusion: The Local Gap is **compatible with A31** and provides the finer-grain spatial and design framework necessary to implement its separation and landscape requirements, rather than undermining the strategic allocation.

Test 2 – Does the area play an essential role as a buffer preventing coalescence?

• An area could qualify for designation as a Local Gap if it played an important role as a buffer preventing coalescence between settlements.

• Coalescence is the growing together of settlements. This frequently takes the form of ribbon development along main roads between neighbouring settlements. The merging of settlements is often accompanied by a loss of individual identity: instead of being experienced as a community in its own right, a settlement may be regarded as a neighbourhood or suburb of a larger combined entity.

• In evaluating the importance of an area's role as a buffer, consideration should be given as to how much open space currently exists between settlements. Where little open space remains between settlements, its designation should be prioritised.

• Consideration should also be given to the quality of the remaining open space. A significant stretch of undeveloped land will be more effective at preventing coalescence than land punctuated by built forms.

• Account should also be taken of the fact that large settlements tend to exert greater effects on their hinterlands than small ones. The impacts of noise, litter, light pollution, traffic and incidental development tend to extend further from large settlements than from small ones. Larger settlements may therefore require larger buffers than smaller ones in order to prevent a sense of coalescence.

4.1 Settlement Pattern and Remaining Open Land

Ash Green remains a small rural village with dispersed development, long gardens and farmhouse plots, and no defined centre, whereas Ash is a significant urban settlement.
Only a limited band of largely undeveloped land now separates the built-up edge of Ash (and the A31 sites) from Ash Green.

4.2 LCA Evidence – Urban–Rural Fringe and Rural Ambience

The Guildford LCA identifies this area within the **Tongham Urban–Rural Fringe** character area. It recognises:

- Influence from the urban edge and fringe land uses (such as horse paddocks);
- But a continuing **rural structure** characterised by open fields, hedgerows and tree belts;
- That there is a **"rural ambience"** derived from open fields and boundary vegetation typical of the wider countryside, with the pond and Ash Manor complex contributing strongly to this character.

The Neighbourhood Plan draws directly on this, recording a **distinct change in landscape character** at the fringe between Ash and Ash Green, from pastoral (fields and woodland) to urban townscape.
Entrances to Ash Green remain bounded by fields on both sides, emphasising the rural approach and the gap.

4.3 Coalescence as a Spatial and Landscape Concept

The appeal decision reiterates that **coalescence is a spatial concept** and "would normally require a significant area of land to be effective in separating one settlement from another."
This is precisely what the Local Gap is doing: it defines the **continuous tract of landscape** that remains capable of functioning as a meaningful buffer, rather than relying on narrow strips behind garden fences, which the Inspector considered insufficient to form an effective green buffer.

Without a clearly defined Local Gap:

- Incremental development of A31 parcels and other sites could erode the remaining open land**;**
- The landscape experienced along Ash Green Road and White Lane could quickly become one of **continuous urban frontage**;
- Ash Green would be perceived as a **neighbourhood of Ash/Tongham**, rather than a separate village, directly contrary to the ANP's core objective.

Test 2 conclusion: Supported by the Guildford LCA and the Ash Manor appeal reasoning, the land within the Local Gap **functions as the essential buffer** preventing spatial and perceptual coalescence between Ash and Ash Green.

Test 3 – Does the area make an important contribution to rural/landscape character and settlement setting?

• An area could qualify for designation if it made an important contribution to the character or rural settling of a settlement, and if that contribution could be significantly harmed by inappropriate development.
• Contributions to character or rural setting might include helping to create an attractive rural backdrop for a key approach to the settlement or providing important views into or out of the settlement or its environs.
• Harms might include the interruption of views, or a reduction in the sense of rural isolation.
• In determining harms to the character or rural setting of a settlement, account should be taken of how even low levels of development can bring about changes in the way an area is experienced in certain contexts. For example, a single dwelling, modern agricultural barn or equine complex on open land can fragment a sense of rural isolation deriving from uninterrupted countryside.
• Account should also be taken of the effects of incidental development such as gardens, lighting, vehicle splays and signage. For example, the planting of alien coniferous trees or shrubs around new dwellings can have a powerfully suburbanising effect in a rural location

5.1 Rural Character and Settlement Setting

ASH4's supporting text describes Ash Green as:

- "Nestled within open fields and countryside hinterlands";
- With the **disused railway line and surrounding fields** forming an important recreational and landscape corridor;
- A settlement whose identity is strongly linked to its **rural setting and historical relationship** with Ash Manor.

The Guildford LCA corroborates this, identifying the Ash fringe as **pastoral countryside with field patterns and woodland**, in contrast to Ash's **urban townscape**.

5.2 Heritage-Landscape Relationship (Ash Manor)

The Ash Manor appeal confirms that the open fields south of the Manor (within the proposed gap):

- Form part of the **wider rural setting** of the Grade II* and II listed buildings and associated moat;
- Provide a **visual, historical and functional context** within which the complex is understood as a historic manorial estate;
- Retain a **"sense of rurality and isolation" when approaching from White Lane**, a key experience that A31(8) seeks to protect.

The Inspector concluded that residential development on this land would result in **less than substantial harm towards the upper end of mid-range** to the heritage assets' significance, even with mitigation. This is strong, independent confirmation of the land's **high landscape-heritage sensitivity**.

5.3 Landscape Features and Green Infrastructure

The land within the gap:

- Contains **open fields, hedgerow networks, tree belts and the historic pond**;

- Provides a **rural backdrop** to approaches into Ash Green;
- Connects to the wider **green infrastructure network**, including the disused railway and areas of strategic green space and SANG to the south;
- Offers **key views** to and from Ash Manor and across Ash Green's rural edge.

5.4 Sensitivity to Incremental Change

Erosion of the gap can:

- Fragment the perception of uninterrupted countryside;
- Introduce a **suburban character**;
- Reduce the sense of **rural isolation** that currently defines the Ash Green–Ash fringe and the setting of Ash Manor.

The Inspector's criticism of the narrow green buffer behind rear gardens (in the Bewley scheme) underlines how easily this landscape function can be compromised and why a **larger, clearly defined open area** is necessary to maintain character.

Test 3 conclusion: On the combined evidence of the Guildford LCA, the Neighbourhood Plan and the Ash Manor appeal, the land within the Local Gap is **integral to Ash Green's rural character and to the setting of Ash Manor**.

6. Overall Conclusion

Using the three Local Gap tests, and **explicitly incorporating the Guildford Landscape Character Assessment evidence**, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. **Strategic compatibility:**
    - The Local Gap is **aligned with and implements** A31's requirements for a green buffer, rural landscape protection and separation from Ash Green. It does **not** undermine housing delivery from A31.
2. **Essential buffer role:**
    - The Guildford LCA and appeal evidence confirm a **transition from pastoral landscape (fields and woodland) at Ash Green to urban townscape at Ash**, with the remaining open land forming the **only effective buffer** preventing coalescence.
3. **Critical landscape and heritage function:**
    - The same evidence shows that this land is **fundamental to Ash Green's rural identity and to the wider setting of Ash Manor**, where inappropriate development would cause notable heritage and landscape harm.

On this basis, the Local Gap defined in Policy ASH4 is robustly justified**,** proportionate, and meets the basic conditions for neighbourhood planning, including general conformity with strategic policy and regard to the NPPF.

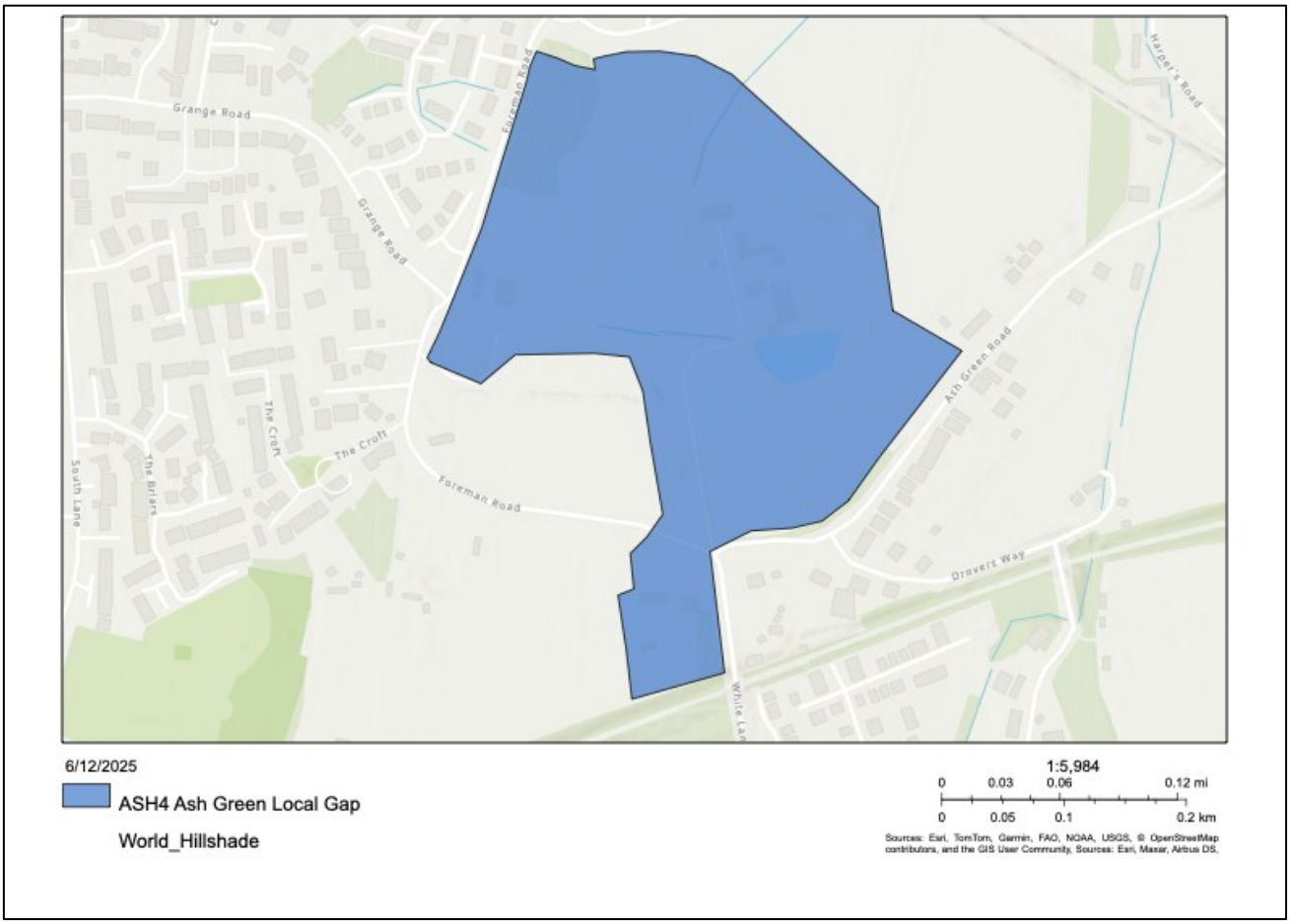


Figure 1 Proposed Local Gap (ASH4)

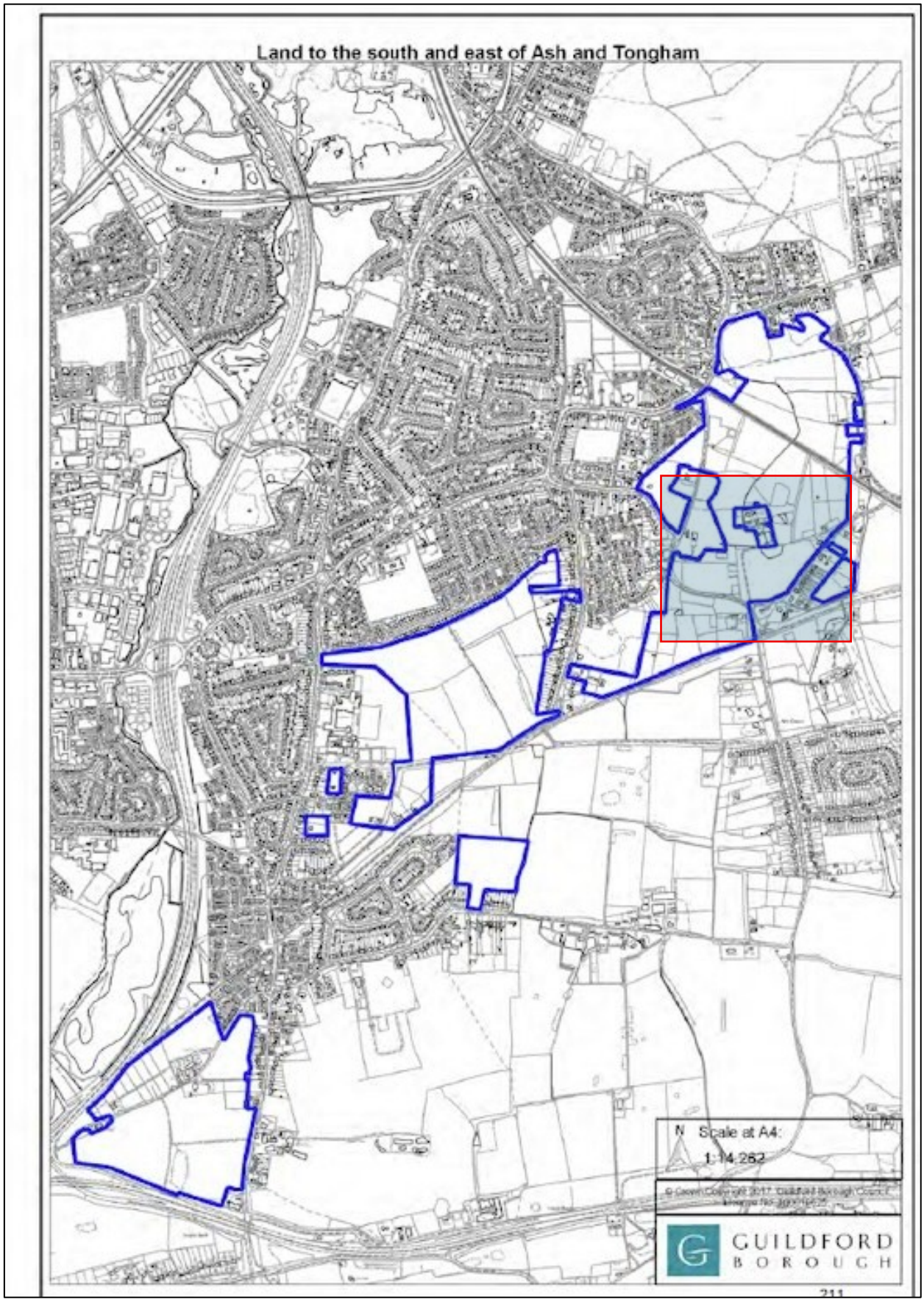
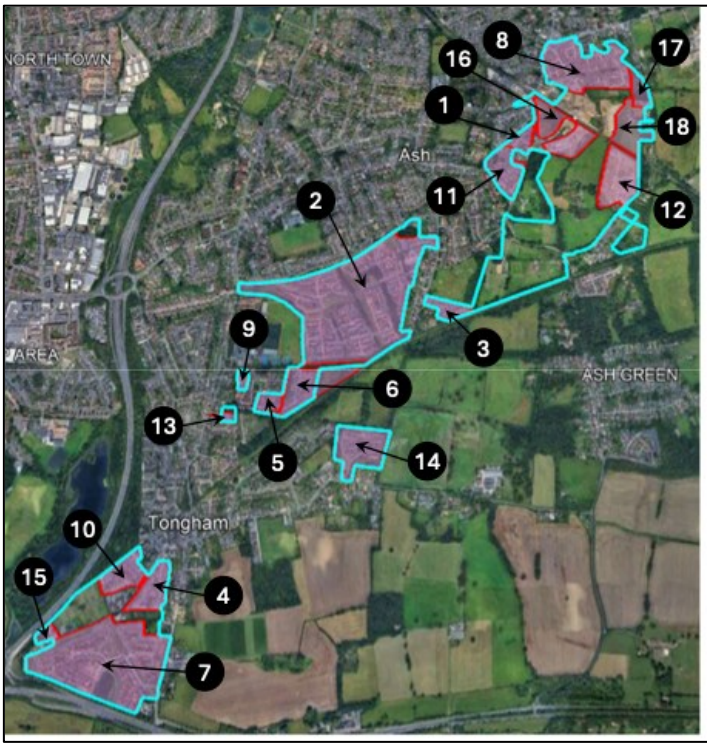


Figure 2 GBC POLICY A31: LAND TO THE SOUTH AND EAST OF ASH AND TONGHAM – WITH LOCAL GAP AREA HIGHLIGHTED.



Reference	Application Number	Location	Vol
1	12/P/01534	South of Foreman Park	26
2	12/P/01973	Land south of, Ash Lodge Drive, Ash, Guildford	481
3	14/P/01637	South Lane	21
4	14/P/02398	Grange Farm, Tongham	50
5	15/P/00167	Spoil Lane	26
6	15/P/00293	Minley Nursery	55
7	16/P/00222	Manor Farm	254
8	16/P/01679	Guildford Road (Wildflower Meadows)	154
9	16/P/01913	57, Manor Road	9
10	17/P/00529	The Granary, Grange Road, Tongham	50
11	17/P/02158	North of Grange Road, Ash	60
12	18/P/02308	May & Juniper Cottage	93
13	18/P/02310	33 Manor Road	5
14	21/P/01456	Land at, Poyle Road, Tongham	38
15	21/P/02155	Springfield Cottages	10
16	22/P/00477	Land at Foreman Road	68
17	23/P/01965	Streamside, Harpers Road	24
18	22/P/01083	Land at Orchard Farm, Harpers Road	51
			1475

Figure 3 Planning permissions granted for Policy A31 to date (as at October 2025)- Image courtesy of Cllr Wythe Price.

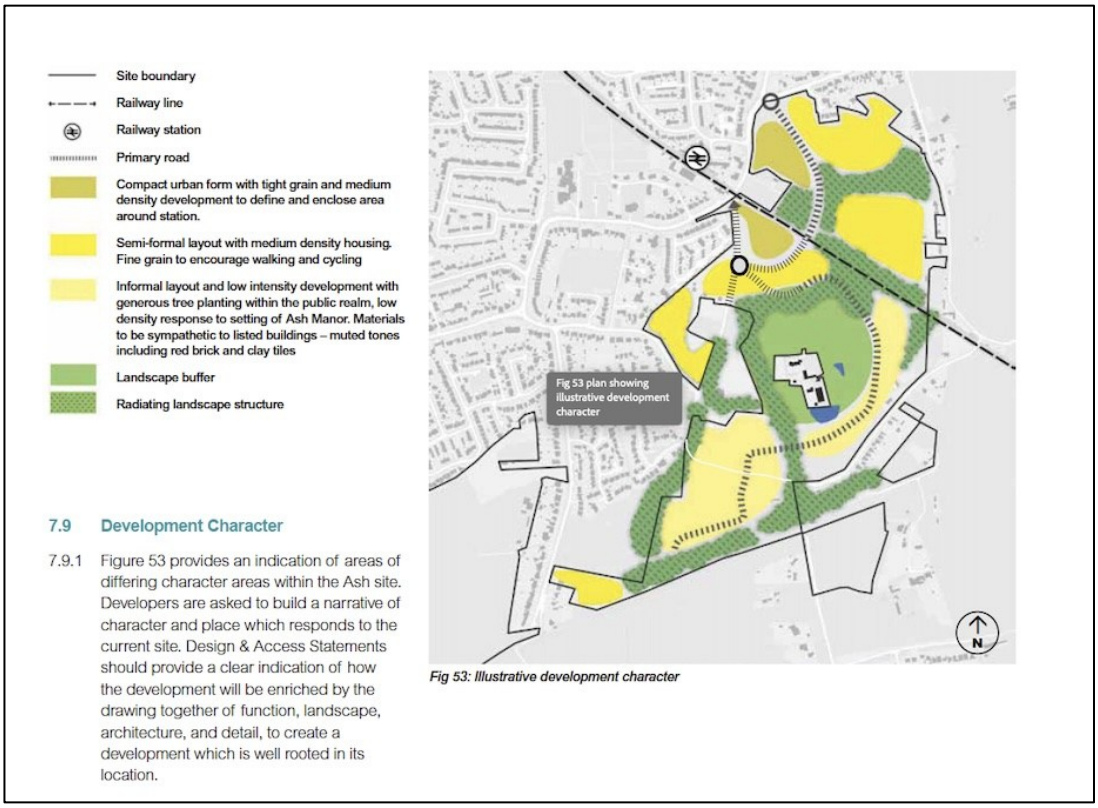


Fig 53: Illustrative development character

Figure 4 - The Strategic Development Framework SPD for Policy A31 Image courtesy of GBC.