



# Ashington Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2017 to 2031 STATE OF THE PARISH REPORT

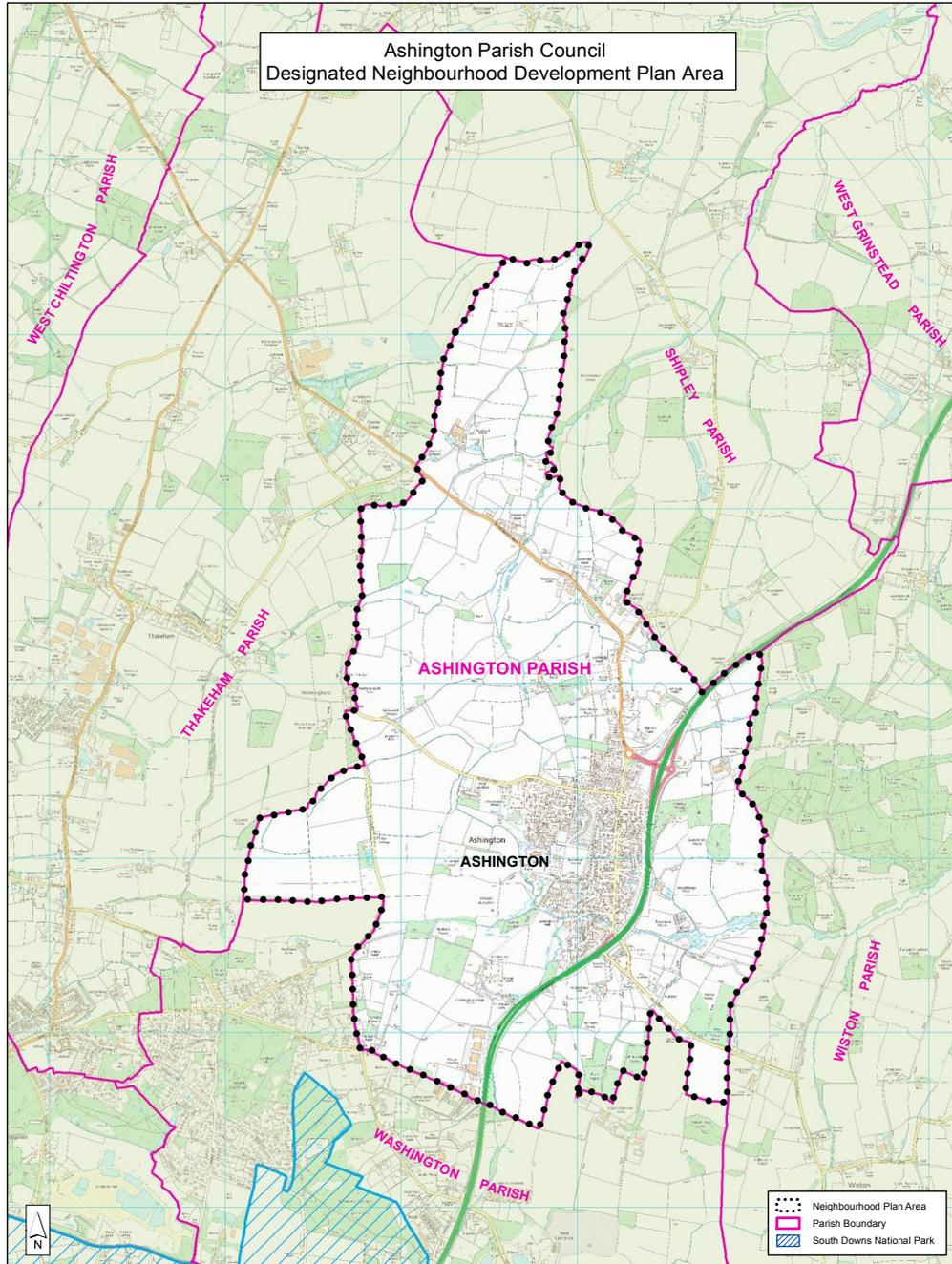


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Under the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (Part 5 s15)

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## 1. Introduction

### Purpose

- 1.1 Ashington Parish Council applied for a Neighbourhood Area Designation on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2013 and this was approved on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014 by Horsham District Council (HDC) for the purpose of enabling the preparation of the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan. The map above shows the boundary of the designated Ashington Neighbourhood Area.
- 1.2 The Ashington Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2015 (as amended), the Localism Act 2011 and the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to summarise the evidence base to date and the context within which the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan will be prepared and by which the draft and final versions of the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan will be assessed and refined.
- 1.4 A Screening Opinion has been requested from HDC and, if this considers that the plan could have significant environmental impacts, then it will inform the Parish Council as to the possible nature of these effects which will, in turn, inform the Scoping exercise and subsequent SA.
- 1.5 In summarising the evidence base, this report will provide the local community with a key starting point from which to embark on formulating the draft Ashington Neighbourhood Plan.

### Neighbourhood Development Plans

- 1.6 The National Planning Policy Framework states:

*"... neighbourhoods should develop plans that support the strategic development needs set out in Local Plans, including policies for housing and economic development; plan positively to support local development, shaping and directing development in their area that is outside the strategic elements of the Local Plan; and identify opportunities to use Neighbourhood Development Orders to enable developments that are consistent with their neighbourhood plan to proceed. (para 16)*

*Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need. Parishes ... can use neighbourhood planning to set planning policies through neighbourhood plans to determine decisions on planning applications; and grant planning permission through Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders for specific development which complies with the order (para.183).*

*Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community. The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.*

*Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. To facilitate this, local planning authorities should set out clearly their strategic policies for the area and ensure that an up-to-date Local Plan is in place as quickly as possible. Neighbourhood plans should reflect these policies and neighbourhoods should plan positively to support them. Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies (para.184).*

*Outside these strategic elements, neighbourhood plans will be able to shape and direct sustainable development in their area. Once a neighbourhood plan has demonstrated its general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and is brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the Local Plan for that neighbourhood, where they are in conflict. Local planning authorities should avoid duplicating planning processes for non-strategic policies where a neighbourhood plan is in preparation (para.185)”.*

### The Plan Preparation Process

1.7 The process of preparing and seeking final adoption of the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan is in accordance with the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2015 (as amended) and has been agreed by Ashington Parish Council. The intention of the Parish Council is to submit the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan to HDC for approval and then for independent examination by the end of 2017/early 2018.

1.8 The process up to submission comprises four main stages:

- State of the Parish Report – this report summarises all the evidence on which the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan will be based.
- Development of the plan through ongoing engagement with the community and gathering of other evidence
- Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) Ashington Neighbourhood Plan – this report will comprise the vision, objectives, policies, proposals and map of the plan for a statutory six week public consultation period.
- Submission (Regulation 16) Ashington Neighbourhood Plan – this report will take into account the representations received on the draft plan during the public consultation period and will amend as necessary its content for submission to the local planning authority.

1.9 If required, the SA/SEA will be produced alongside the plan, firstly as a draft with the Pre-Submission Plan and later as a final report along with the Submission Plan.

1.10 HDC will be asked to check whether the right documents have been submitted and then commence the Regulation 16 consultation. If the Plan is considered by an Independent Examiner to meet the Basic Conditions, then it can proceed to referendum, subject to any modifications recommended by the Examiner being made. If supported by a majority vote at the referendum (with no minimum turnout required and the vote restricted to those living in the Parish), the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan

will be 'made' by HDC and becomes part of the development plan used to determine planning applications in the Parish.

1.11 This is a 'live' document and may be revised, if appropriate, during the Neighbourhood Plan process.

## **2. Parish Character and Statistics**

2.1 The Parish of Ashington is located in the central southern portion of Horsham District in West Sussex and is immediately to the west of the main north-south A24 road which connects Worthing on the coast to Horsham and Dorking in the north.

2.2 Archaeological evidence proved that there was activity in Ashington about 900 BC, late Bronze Age. To the South of the village runs the "Green Sand Way" which is a roman road. Just over 1/2 a mile to the north of the Roman Road is a Roman villa site.

2.3 Ashington is also mentioned in Domesday Book under the name Essingetune where it proudly boasts two house-holders and six labourers. Most of Ashington's history revolves around agriculture.

2.4 In 1801 the population was 173 with 28 houses. Some twenty years later, this had grown to 41 houses. In 1802 a toll road was put across the common and a regular stagecoach service from London to Worthing and back, stopped at Ashington. This finally faded out in about 1848 when the Southern railway opened and it was easier to get to and from London and Worthing by train. The main enclosure act in 1816 meant houses could be built up to the road's edge, which had formerly been part of the common.

2.5 By 1939 an Ashington bypass was spoken of but it was not until 1995 that the bypass was completed. A new school (opened in 2002), a new community centre (opened in 2003) and approximately 700 new houses have recently been built in the village since the bypass was completed.

2.6 Major centres of employment such as Horsham (10 miles to the north) and Worthing (10 miles to the south) are both within commuting distance by road. These locations are also centres for additional shops and services. Rail connections to London and the south coast are provided via the nearby towns of Pulborough and Billingshurst, although parking at these stations is difficult and they are not served by convenient public transport from Ashington.

### Selected Parish Statistics

2.7 A Rural Place Profile for Ashington Parish was produced in November 2013 by Action in Rural Sussex, commissioned by Ashington Parish Council. A full copy of this report is published on the Neighbourhood Plan website. The statistics shown below are a summary of the most relevant and interesting indicators, i.e. it doesn't present the full dataset in each case.

### Demographics

2.8 The usual resident population of the Parish is 2,525 people (50% male, 50% female). Of these:

- 510 People aged under 16 (20.2% of Parish population compared to 18.9% across England)
- 1600 Working age adults (63.5% of Parish population compared to 64.7% across England)
- 415 People aged 65 and over (16.4% of Parish population compared to 16.3% across England)

### Economic status of residents

2.9 Of the 2,525 usual residents of the Parish, 1,864 were aged between 16 and 74.

- 1,398 (75.0%) of whom were economically active:
  - 782 were Employed full-time (42% compared to 38.6% across England)
  - 283 were Employed part-time (15.2% compared to 13.7% across England)
  - 241 were Self-employed (12.9% compared to 9.8% across England)
  - 100 worked from home (5.5% compared to 3.5% across England)
- 466 (25.0%) of whom were economically inactive:
  - 19 were claiming Jobseekers Allowance (1.2% compared to 3.8% across England)
  - 41 were claiming Employment Support Allowance/Incapacity Benefit (2.6% compared to 6.1% across England)

### Occupations

2.10 Of the 1,360 residents in the Parish in employment and aged between 16 and 74:

- 235 were Managers, Directors and Senior Officials (17.5% compared to 12.2% across England)
- 445 were Professional Occupations (33% compared to 30.3% across England)
- 140 were Administrative and Secretarial Occupations (10.4% compared to 11.5% across England)
- 150 were Skilled Trades Occupations (11.1% compared to 11.4% across England)
- 105 were Elementary Occupations (7.5% compared to 11.1% across England)

### Qualifications & Skills

2.11 Of the 1,865 usual residents in the Parish aged 16 and over:

- 345 possessed no qualifications (17.2% compared to 22.5% across England)
- 290 possessed up to Level 1 qualifications (14.4% compared to 13.3% across England)
- 360 possessed up to Level 2 qualifications (17.9% compared to 15.2% across England).
- 265 possessed up to Level 3 qualifications (13.1% compared to 12.4% across England).
- 605 possessed up to Level 4 qualifications (30.1% compared to 27.4% across England).

### Industry of employment

2.12 Of the 1,360 residents in the Parish in employment and aged between 16 and 74:

- 240 were employed in the Retail sector
- 125 were employed in the Manufacturing sector

- 115 were employed in the Health and Social work sector

### Housing

2.13 There are 985 households located within the Parish. Of these:

- 828 were owner-occupier households (83.9% compared to 64.1% across England)
- 64 were Social Rented households (6.5% compared to 17.7% across England)
- 71 Private Rented households (7.2% compared to 15.4% across England)
- 24 Other Rented households (2.4% compared to 2.8% across England)

2.14 There are 985 dwellings located within the Parish. Of these:

- 529 households were living in Detached housing (52.4% compared to 22.3% across England)
- 316 households were living in Semi-detached housing (31.3% compared to 30.7% across England)
- 96 households were living in Terraced housing (9.5% compared to 24.5% across England)
- 33 households were living in purpose-built Flats/apartments (3.3% compared to 16.7% across England)
- 18 households were living in other Flats (1.8% compared to 5.4% across England)
- 18 households were living in Caravans or other Mobile or Temporary Structures (1.8% compared to 0.4% across England).

### Transport

2.15 Of 990 households:

- 50 households had no car or van (4.9% compared to 25.8% across England)
- 290 households had one car/van (29.3% compared to 42.2% across England)
- 450 households had 2 cars or vans (45.6% compared to 24.7% across England)
- 135 households had 3 cars or vans (13.9% compared to 5.5% across England)
- 65 households had 4 or more cars or vans (6.4% compared to 1.9% across England)

2.16 Travel to work:

- 5.5% of people work from home
- 6.5% of people travel less than 2km to work
- 12.1% of people travel 40+ km to work

2.17 Travel by Public Transport:

- Average travel time to nearest Hospital = 61minutes (County average = 35minutes)
- Average travel time to nearest town centre = 24minutes (County average = 17minutes)
- 3% of people travel to work by Public Transport compared to 11% across England

### Health

2.18 2,515 of residents of the Parish were in the lowest 20% of Health Deprivation categories. Child deprivation is lower than national averages.

2.19 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has produced a report entitled Assets and Treasures May 2017 that details information about the Parish, including the following aspects of the Parish and should be read in conjunction with this report:

- Listed Buildings & Heritage Assets
- Footpaths, Bridleways & Green Links
- Woodlands, Natural & Green Spaces, TPO's
- Ponds, Watercourses & Drainage Ditches
- Play Areas, Open Space, Community & Recreation Facilities
- Employment Space, Business & Retail
- Medical Facilities
- Education Facilities
- Transport Infrastructure

### **3. Community Views on Planning Issues**

3.1 Ashington Parish Council approved the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan in October 2013 and, after some initial groundwork, rearranged its resources and appointed a Neighbourhood Plan Clerk in October 2015 to provide the necessary administrative/management skills to move it through the necessary steps to completion.

3.2 A Steering Group was formed comprised of 3 Parish Council members and 6 members of the public, all of whom are Ashington residents.

3.3 Focus groups were set up, under the topics (chosen to broadly follow the emerging HDPF from HDC):

- Community Facilities
- Economy and Business
- Planning and Infrastructure
- Environment, Heritage and Local Issues
- Transport and Accessibility

3.4 Full details of the various Community Consultation/Steering/Focus Group activities will be available in the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan Community Consultation document.

3.5 The Steering Group provided ample opportunity for everyone in the NP designated area to be involved, even those who were unable or unwilling to attend formal meetings and details are provided in a Community Consultation document..

#### Previous Community Consultations

3.6 The Ashington Community Action Plan 2010 was reviewed by the Steering Group and, although quite dated, contained some useful information under 4 broad headings:

- A Better Place to Live
- Opportunities for All
- Better Health for All
- Staying and Feeling Safe

This information was used to inform the Steering Group consultation activities.

3.7 The Ashington Housing Needs Survey 2012, prepared by Action in Rural Sussex was considered by HDC to be out of date and information in it was excluded from the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan. Housing Needs Surveys are generally regarded as having a 5 year lifespan.

#### Housing Needs Assessment

3.8 Ashington Parish Council commissioned Navigus Planning to carry out an up-to-date Housing Needs Assessment in April 2017. The draft report was sent to HDC for formal comment on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2017. A copy of the report is available on the Parish Council website. The purpose of the Housing Needs Assessment is to establish the appropriate level of housing to plan for in order to address the needs of Ashington and to make an appropriate contribution to addressing the objectively assessed housing needs of Horsham District. The approach followed has been based upon the relevant parts of the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) advice<sup>1</sup> as endorsed by the NPPG itself<sup>2</sup>, and described in the 'toolkit' for neighbourhood planners<sup>3</sup> that was published by Locality. An important provision is that the methodology intended for Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) undertaken by local authorities should be applied at neighbourhood plan level in a way that is proportionate<sup>4</sup>.

#### Community Surveys

3.9 As part of the process of consulting with residents over the development of the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan, the Steering Group developed and undertook a number of surveys between May 2016 and March 2017 in order to gather opinions and views on the issues that the document should prioritise.

3.10 The Parish Council(s) have published the outcome of the surveys in separate documents but a summary of the key findings are included here:

3.11 Business Survey (December 2016)

22 businesses received Surveys, 12 responded representing a response rate of 54%. Responses were received from retail units, horticulture nurseries, motor trades, hairdressers, estate agents and animal welfare units.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments/>

<sup>2</sup> See NPPG Paragraph 006 Reference ID: 2a-006-20140306

<sup>3</sup> AECOM (2015) *Housing Needs Assessment at Neighbourhood Plan Level – A toolkit for neighbourhood planners*, for Locality

<sup>4</sup> NPPG Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 2a-006-20140306. Although the NPPG does not specifically define 'proportionate', see NPPG Paragraph 014 Reference ID: 2a-014-20140306 for examples of work considered disproportionate.

We asked how long each business had been trading in Ashington and 25% responded with between 1 and 5 years, 17% between 6 and 10 years, 25% between 11 and 15 years and 33% over 20 years

We asked the approximate size of each business's workforce and 42% have between 1 and 5 employees, 25% have between 6 and 11 employees, 8% have between 12 and 18 employees, 17% have between 19 and 24 employees and 8% have over 24 employees

We asked for the approximate turnover of employees and there were 33% of opportunities for trainees, managerial and school leavers, with 25% of opportunities for apprenticeships and 8% for general administration opportunities.

We asked how many of their employees lived locally and 92% lived locally with just 8% outside the local area.

We asked some questions on what would most benefit their business. 42% would like more parking, 25% would like a local business directory, 25% faster broadband and 25% better public transport for their employees, 8% would like more space.

Finally, we asked how they anticipated their workspace changing over the next 5 years. 58% said their current premises would be suitable, 33% were already improving their premises, 25% were looking for alternatives within Ashington and 8% were looking for alternatives outside of Ashington. Notably, Sussex Caravan Centre is seeking larger premises within Ashington and Monza Sports is looking for alternative premises either within or outside of Ashington.

### 3.12 Young Persons Survey March 2017

- A total of 31 youngsters aged 11-21 fully completed the Survey
- 20 were in the 11-14 age category
- 18 had lived in the Parish 10+ years
- Only 4 respondents did not want to live in Ashington in the future
- 9 respondents did not think they could afford to live in Ashington
- 28 respondents attended Youth Club
- The 'top 5' spare time activities are: Youth Club, Xbox/gadgets, Music, Sport & Skatepark
- Most liked Ashington's friendly/safe environment, their friends, Youth Club & play areas
- Dislikes were varied including lack of things to do, smoking in skatepark, condition of Youth Club, gangs, drugs
- 24 were happy with broadband speed, 22 were happy with mobile phone coverage
- There was mixed response to questions about the bus service, frequency & cost. Some respondents want a bus service to Storrington (5) & Steyning (4).
- Respondents were generally happy with footpaths, cycle routes & bridleways although cycle/walk access to other villages was less well supported

### 3.13 Residents Detailed Village Survey March 2017

- A total of 1090 surveys were hand delivered or posted to households within Ashington Parish. Residents were asked to return their forms to various collection points throughout the Parish. Additional help was offered to residents that needed assistance in filling out the Survey. A Helpline phone number was also made available. A deadline of 23<sup>rd</sup> March was set for Surveys to be returned, although Surveys received after the deadline were not rejected as Survey analysis was a lengthy process.
- A total of 328 responses were received to the survey. This represents a response rate of 30.1%.

#### A Shared Vision for Ashington Parish

- Residents were asked how they feel about the village now. The top 10 answers were: linked to countryside, village, friendly, rural, accessible, attractive, small, safe isolated, medium, thriving.
- Residents were asked how they would like Ashington Parish to feel in 15 years time. The top 10 answers were: friendly, village, linked to countryside, rural, accessible, attractive, small, affordable, safe isolated, thriving.
- Residents identified that the top 10 main benefits that new developments could bring are: medical & care facilities, shops & services, facilities/services for the elderly, facilities/services for young people, leisure facilities, investment in infrastructure, transport links, funding for village projects, local jobs and businesses, protecting the countryside
- Residents identified that the top 10 potential problems associated with new developments are: increased traffic in village, parking problems, no medical facilities, loss of countryside/green space, overstretched local amenities, lack of school/childcare places or school/childcare overcrowding, overloaded sewerage/drainage system, more of a town than a village, no village feel, reduction in green space.
- 84 respondents identified the provision of a medical facility as the single change that would most improve their quality of life.

#### Planning & Infrastructure

- Respondents indicated that total sustainable development for the next 15 years should be: none (54), up to 10 homes (21), up to 25 homes (57), up to 50 homes (88), up to 75 homes (22), up to 100 homes (54), more than 150 homes (10), don't know (19)
- If new homes were to be built 77% supported the re-use of Brownfield sites immediately adjacent to the Built Up Area Boundary (BUAB), whilst 87% did not agree that the priority in house building should be the use of greenfield sites adjacent to the BUAB. The BUAB is open countryside generally not considered suitable in planning policy terms for new development.
- The type of housing identified by the greatest numbers of respondents as the format they would support for future development was houses (109) and bungalows (67). There was no real preference for house sizes (range 2-5 bedrooms)
- Most support was for open market homes (110) but retirement/sheltered/care/nursing homes was second choice (48)
- With regard to the form of any new development, those identified as acceptable now were: Several small developments (up to 10 homes) (98), individual homes (35), a few medium sized developments (10-25 homes) (104) and large development (more than 25 homes) (23).

- 60 respondents indicated that a family member would be in need of affordable/social housing within the next 5 years, although only 8 respondents are currently on the HDC Housing Register, 41 are currently living in the Parish, 53 are aged 18+, 39 need to set up an independent home, 23 are unlikely to be living in the Parish in 5 years time while 24 are likely to stay in Ashington Parish, 14 didn't answer this question.
- 35 respondents indicated that affordable/social homes should be included in new developments, 33 wanted retirement/sheltered housing
- 35 respondents indicated that the largest (4+ bedroom) homes should be excluded from new developments and 24 indicated that flats & high rise properties should be excluded.
- 95% of respondents felt that it is important that new developments are 'in keeping' with existing developments.
- 275 respondents were likely or very likely to still be living in Ashington in 5 years time.
- With regard to infrastructure, if money were available then residents consider it should be spent on: roads (176), pavements (148), sewerage/drainage (140), broadband (131) and mobile phone coverage (81). These comments matched with the top 5 'poorest' infrastructure selections by residents.

#### Transport and Access

- An overwhelming majority of those responding (305) indicated that they used a motor vehicle as their primary means of transport, whilst 52 walked, 23 used the bus and 8 cycled.
- 291 respondents indicated that new developments should have increased parking provision and throughout the survey there were comments regarding pavement and on-street parking being a problem around the village, with Rectory Lane, London Road, Mill Lane and Hillcrest Drive being hotspots.
- Speeding hotspots are London Road (105), Hole Street (74), Billingshurst Road (114) and Rectory Lane (from Meiros Way to Warminghurst Church) (85)
- Rectory Lane (from Meiros Way to Warminghurst Church) is identified as a very narrow road (149) with overgrown vegetation (53)
- 136 respondents would like to use the bus more. Respondents would use the bus more if frequency, schedules and destinations were improved.
- 168 respondents would use the National Express bus to London if it stopped in Ashington.
- 154 respondents think it is important to have public transport to railway stations and 139 would use it if it were available.
- 254 respondents think the Neighbourhood Plan should support the creation of better bridleways and 276 support the creation of better public footpaths. There were many comments about the poor state of existing bridleways & public footpaths
- New bridleways (and public footpaths) suggested were:
  - Ashington village to Malthouse Lane and beyond to Storrington
  - Ashington village to Penn Gardens to Park Lane and onwards to Thakeham
  - Ashington village to Wiston/Spithandle Lane/Upper Chancton Farm and beyond to Steyning
  - Ashington village north to Spear Hill and beyond

#### Economy & Business

- 288 respondents wanted the Neighbourhood Plan to protect existing retail/service outlets

- Café (176), farm shop (134), butchers (111), bakers (103), greengrocers (76) were the 'top 5' most wanted new retail/service outlets
- 136 respondents would support new retail units as part of any new developments, 107 respondents did not support this.
- Horsham is the favoured place to shop (104), with Ashington second (89) and Online third (48)
- There is some support for the Neighbourhood Plan to allocate some land for business use: shops & retail (116), food & restaurants (81), light industrial units (63), starter units (57).
- 279 respondents said that these new businesses should be located nearer the A24 rather than within the village citing reasons as noise (223), parking (214), road access (143) and pollution (135).
- 205 respondents were in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan allocating land for a business centre providing low-cost, flexible workspaces, meeting rooms and managed services for local start-ups, small enterprises, freelancers and home workers.

#### Community Facilities

- 282 respondents visit either Steyning or Storrington for the Doctors, the vast majority of journeys are by car
- Dentist locations are Storrington, Steyning, Horsham, Worthing and Henfield. Opticians are in mainly Horsham, Hospital is Worthing and the vast majority of journeys are by car.
- 192 respondents said that the Neighbourhood Plan should support the provision of better healthcare facilities (eg outreach clinics) in the village as part of new developments
- Existing play areas (playparks, skatepark and multisports court) are needed but generally do not require improvements
- The Community Centre, Parish Church, Millennium Garden, Chanctonbury Playschool (in the Old School), Social Club and Recreation Ground are all needed and do not require improvement
- Youth Club, Sports Pavilion and Scout Hall are all very much needed but are in need of improvement
- Residents were asked to 'vote' for a number of community projects that had been identified throughout the Neighbourhood Plan consultation process. The 'top 10' projects are:
  - Cycle route to Storrington (150)
  - Project to recruit & equip more Community First Responders (150)
  - Coffee shop/café facilities on London Road using Parish Council land (148)
  - Outdoor gym/exercise equipment (128)
  - Equipment for Ashington Rangers to keep footpaths and Rights of Way clear (128)
  - Portable floodlights for sports pitches so they can be used in the winter (120)
  - Astroturf/artificial grass on the existing Multisports court (120)
  - Creation of an additional all weather sports court for tennis, netball, basketball (107)
  - Improved drainage on the recreation ground (98)
  - Improved play areas (94)

A clear trend is the need to review, improve and possibly provide new sports facilities.

- Residents generally did not support in significant numbers the development of greenfield land to fund the 'top 10' community projects detailed above.
  - 139 respondents supported the need for a new Youth Club building, whereas 67 suggested improvements to the existing building.
  - 115 respondents supported the need for a new sports pavilion, whereas 82 suggested improvements to the existing building.
  - The situation with the Scout hall is less clear with equal numbers (103) suggesting a new building/improvements to the existing building
  - The Survey asked if a relatively small piece of community-owned land could be sold for private housing if all of the sale proceeds were used to provide new community buildings and facilities:
    - Youth Club – Yes 136, No 102
    - Sports pavilion – Yes 123, No 111
    - Scout Hall – Yes 119, No 115
- There is community support for this but the spending priority would be Youth Club, Sports pavilion and finally Scout Hall. Consideration should be given to whether separate or a combined facility is the best option.
- 54 respondents think there will not be enough capacity at Ashington Primary School in the future. It is known that the school is full for September 2017.

#### Environment, Local Issues & Heritage

- Respondents agreed that the Neighbourhood Plan should aim to protect the following areas:
  - Agricultural roots (284)
  - Allotments (266)
  - Trees (308)
  - Bridleways (301)
  - Cycle routes (292)
  - Flora/fauna (305)
  - Green and open spaces (310)
  - Network of footpaths (308)
  - Recreation Ground (306)
  - Rural aspect (305)
  - Stopping invasive species (292)
  - Sports fields (302)
  - Views to/from the South Downs (300)
  - Ancient woodlands (308)
  - Ponds (306)
  - Ditches and drainage channels (309)
  - Hedgerows and green corridors (310)
- 248 respondents agreed that the Neighbourhood Plan should support projects, developments or land purchase that would reduce the risk of flooding in the Mill Lane area of Ashington.
- 232 respondents feel that allotments are an important part of any new developments
- 235 respondents reported that their home is affected in some way by noise from the A24 with 6 respondents reporting it as 'unbearable'.
- 167 respondents would support the Parish Council commissioning a 'noise survey' to identify hotspots and propose solutions.

- Concerns about the built environment include:
  - Inappropriate design of new developments (265)
  - Light pollution (223)
  - Litter/fly tipping/dog fouling (301)
  - Location of new developments (289)
  - Recycling provision/rubbish collection (258)
  - Sewerage (244)
  - Surface water drainage (266)
- Speed bumps around the village cause residents some concerns and are not well supported.
- 134 respondents would like to see solar panels used as a form of renewable energy
- The following publicly accessible natural features and green spaces were identified as important:
  - Recreation Ground (293)
  - One acre field, Foster Lane (176)
  - Millennium Garden (216)
  - East side nature trail (251)
  - Western tree boundary (237)
  - Willard Way pond (241)
  - Church Close pond (237)
  - Turnpike Way pond (209)
  - Broadbridge Farm duck pond (246)
  - 'Dry' balancing pond (172)
- The following 'community interest' buildings were identified by respondents as being worthy of designation as a Local Heritage Asset:
  - Methodist Church (224)
  - Old School, Rectory Lane (240)
  - The Orchard, Hole Street (156)
- The situation with the Old Village Hall was less clear-cut with only 121 respondents voting in favour, 85 against and 91 unsure. The Hall was originally constructed in 1947 from parts of old Sands Farm buildings that were constructed between 1818 and 1849. Therefore, only small parts of the building are historic, possibly reflecting the mixed views of respondents.
- Other buildings were deemed worthy of a Local Heritage Asset designation and the list can be seen in the Assets and Treasures May 2017 report.
- Respondents agreed that any modifications to Local Heritage Assets should be: in keeping with the buildings style and appearance (244) rather than modern and contrasting (69); that no removal/demolition should take place (175) and that there should be no new building nearby that affects the Asset or its setting (197)
- The majority of respondents would like to see a Blue Plaque (187), Village trail/map (254) or promotion on website/booklet (247) of Local Heritage Assets.

### 3.14 Contributions from the Neighbourhood Plan Focus Groups

#### Community Facilities Focus Group

- The Parish is well served with Community Facilities, although some are dated and in need of significant upgrade or replacement. There are opportunities to improve Community Facilities and add new facilities.

- The Parish has a good choice of clubs/societies/social activities
- There are no medical facilities and the local Pharmacy is vulnerable as new medical centres in Storrington and Steyning have in-house Pharmacies.
- There is one Primary school with one-form entry. Additional development will mean that local children may not get places at their local school.

#### Economy and Business Focus Group

- A very basic level of services is available in the Parish but residents are reliant upon larger villages/towns for most of their needs
- Road links are good but public transport is poor and residents are reliant upon the private car
- There is no central shopping area and retail units are dotted along London Road
- There are few employment opportunities and local roads do not provide good access to employment sites within the village. Sustainable transport routes to nearby business parks are poor.
- Broadband and mobile phone coverage is generally good enabling working from home to be a viable option for residents
- There are no medical facilities
- There is no tourist accommodation

#### Environment, Heritage and Local Issues Focus Group

- The Parish has a good basic level of services, a rich history and pleasant environment.
- Surface water flooding is a significant issue on Mill Lane involving the flooding of a Grade II Listed building, a locally historic house and isolation of 70-80 properties.
- The Parish has no public allotments
- The historic infrastructure is important but not well publicized or documented. Opportunities exist to increase the profile of the historic element of the Parish
- Historic infrastructure is under threat from new developments in terms of proximity, destruction of historic landscapes/curtilages
- The environment could be improved by improving sustainable transport links, creating wildlife areas and corridors
- The rural, countryside nature of the village is vulnerable to large scale development around the periphery.

#### Transport and Accessibility Focus Group

- Residents recognise the contribution the proximity of the A24 has on road connections to the wider area, however, background noise from the dual carriageway is a community nuisance.
- Speed tables reduce speeding in the village, however, some are in a poor state of repair and are causing vehicle damage, vibration damage to nearby homes and noise nuisance. Speeding issues are prevalent on routes into and out of the village eg Billingshurst Road and Hole Street.
- There are parking issues near the Parish Church, shopping centre, Rectory Lane, parts of London Road and pavement parking is prevalent throughout the village.
- Sustainable transport opportunities do exist in the Parish (public footpaths, bridleways, pavements etc). However, these are often disjointed. The A24 can form a barrier to the

use of sustainable transport. The A24 'footbridge' serves as a bridleway but is considered too dangerous to ride a horse over so WSCC installed mounting blocks at both ends some years ago. Opportunities exist to create new routes that link up existing routes and that allow access to the wider geographical area, whilst avoiding the A24.

- Bus services are poor and getting worse.
- Transport options to medical facilities are extremely limited.
- Unadopted roads used by the public are deteriorating badly (Fairfield Road/Mill Lane) and could cause long-term issues (Foster Lane outside the School)
- The state of various pavements is bad and several are causing problems for residents with mobility issues.

#### Planning and Infrastructure Focus Group

- Community Facilities could be reviewed in terms of ownership, management, location as there may be better ways to maximize their usage
- The Primary School is full and additional homes will have an impact on pupil numbers. There is no Secondary School.
- Local village roads may limit the suitability of certain areas of the village for new developments (narrow road, poor condition, on-street parking, poor junction layout etc)
- New developments will place additional burdens on existing infrastructure and additional infrastructure may be needed.
- The built up area of the village nestles well within the countryside and landscape and linkages to the natural environment should be preserved
- The village is well served by larger 4+ bedroom homes but there is possibly a need for smaller homes for young adults/downsizing. There is a need for accommodation for the elderly.
- Public transport is extremely limited
- There are good sustainable transport routes but many opportunities to improve the network by creating linkages.
- There are few employment opportunities
- There are no medical facilities
- Flooding is an issue at Mill Lane and there are potential sewerage capacity issues elsewhere
- The countryside around the village is vulnerable to large-scale developments (as happened in the late 1990's), village feel and atmosphere would be lost
- There is an established 'Travelling Showpeople' site on Hole Street and this should be protected.

3.15 The Focus Groups undertook a SWOT analysis in September/October 2016 and the results are summarised here:

#### Strengths

Description of community feeling, clubs and organisations

Existing commercial centres – pharmacy, post office, shops, food outlet plus business parks

Surrounding Countryside and Agriculture

Garages

Utilities, fast broadband some mobile coverage

Community Centre & play facilities eg skatepark, court, play areas  
Primary School  
Church  
Broad spread of house types & sizes  
Access to mainline rail networks & road links  
Views into and out of the village  
Pre-school provision – two playgroups, one nursery  
Access to countryside  
Heritage – many Listed and historic buildings

#### Weaknesses

Vulnerability of village – what will happen if it grows too big  
Shortage of Lower cost housing/downsizing opportunities  
Shortage of playing fields etc  
Flooding problems  
Parking issues  
Lack of Village focal point/centre  
Ageing population  
Low number of younger adults  
Lack of provision for young people  
Speeding traffic  
Noise from A24  
Lack of local employment opportunities  
Street car parking  
Size of sewers  
Limited retail opportunities  
Patchy mobile reception  
No medical facilities  
Some old community buildings  
Reliant on private cars – limited transport options (public and sustainable)  
No homes for elderly – care, sheltered  
Flooding at Mill Lane

#### Opportunities

Improve recreational pursuits – multi-sports court, green gym  
Improve community buildings – youth club, sports pavilion, scout hall  
Improve public transport and roadways  
Improve parking/cycle and bridleways  
Develop new businesses – retail, employment  
Develop Brownfield sites  
Retain green corridors  
Tourism  
Mobile coverage  
Protect locally historic buildings  
Prepare for increased future need

#### Threats

Vulnerable to large scale developments  
Infrastructure not keeping pace with housing  
Infill of green spaces and loss of agricultural land  
Loss of village atmosphere  
Lack of parking  
Loss of trees, hedgerow  
Increase in noise and pollution  
Further cuts to public transport  
Loss of community facilities to private sector  
Loss of business/retail sites to residential use  
Unadopted roads – poor future maintenance

3.16 Consultation with Community Groups was undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Clerk in June 2016. All groups were contacted and asked for their 'wish list' of projects for the future. Responses were:

- History Group – new small hall
- Ashington Playgroup – new small hall with cloakroom/toilets/kitchen/storage with fenced outdoor play area
- Junior Football club – storage for goals; new sports pavilion with changing rooms/toilets/kitchen; better drainage of existing pitches; more good quality pitches; improved training facilities eg 3G surface on multi-sports court or new, larger 3G/4G pitch; floodlights for the Recreation Ground to allow winter training.
- Youth Club – a dedicated purpose built youth club building and outdoor space
- Community Centre Trust – rebranding of facility; new cctv system; swimming pool & changing rooms; new small hall; new sports pavilion; new scout hall; new Youth Club building; makeover of existing community centre to include underfloor heating; better football facilities; update Millennium Garden; new astro surfacing & fencing on multi-sports court; coffee shop/restaurant.

The majority of these projects were included in the Residents Detailed Survey in order to understand how much wider community support there was and the results are detailed in 3.13.

#### **4. Summary**

A large amount of public consultation has been undertaken since the Neighbourhood Plan Area was designated in January 2014. All residents have been given many opportunities to take part in the evidence gathering stage of Plan preparation and the data gathered is robust.

The Challenges facing Ashington are considered to be:

##### Transport

- Reduce reliance on private car by enhancing sustainable transport options – better public transport, improvements/new PROW, 'green' linkages, safe A24 crossings.
- Limited parking infrastructure in residential areas, retail units and at community facilities creates road safety issues for pedestrians and road users, possibly affects the trade of local businesses and the use of community facilities

### Community

- Lack of existing community infrastructure – need for improvement and enhancement of facilities including Youth Club, Sports provision (pitches, buildings & courts), Scout Hall, play areas, halls. Currently very disjointed - agree a village strategy so different organisations work together for the benefit of all.
- Lack of healthcare provision/access.
- Infrastructure is to keep pace with new developments and to fit with village strategy, including education and highways provision

### Economy

- No village 'centre' – retail units are scattered with poor parking provision, visibility and choice. There is limited opportunity to provide new retail units along London Road.
- Derelict/under-used business sites (Chanctonbury Nurseries, Ashington Mill)
- Few employment opportunities therefore a 'commuter village'
- No tourist infrastructure
- No provision of land/space for business centre (for start-ups, homeworkers, freelancers, small enterprises)

### Environment

- Loss of countryside/green space/natural features/recreation space to new development, access to countryside to be protected/enhanced
- Important Heritage assets – protect existing, acknowledge importance of local heritage assets, increase profile of heritage within the Area
- Flooding issue at Mill Lane
- A24 noise issue – can this be reduced

### Planning

- Lack of Affordable homes for young people
- Lack of housing provision for an ageing population – retirement properties, downsizing opportunities, sheltered/care homes
- Control of development – risk of high levels of development due to large amounts of land being available. Match housing numbers to needs for Ashington, identify the most suitable locations.

## **5. Next Steps**

- 5.1 The Steering Committee will use the information above and in supporting documents to form a Vision for Ashington Parish to 2031. In addition, a series of Neighbourhood Plan Objectives and Policies will be drafted.
- 5.2 Feedback from the Community will be sought on the draft Vision and Objectives and, following any necessary amendments, the detailed content of the Neighbourhood Plan will be begun.
- 5.3 Once the Vision, Objectives and Policies have been agreed then these will be communicated to Developers/landowners/agents and will enable the 'Call for Sites' work to be progressed.

5.4 Ashington Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group began its 'Call for Sites' work in April 2016. A total of 26 sites had been submitted for consideration by the deadline of 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016. After extensive research the Steering Group agreed a two-part Site Assessment process and Part 1 deadline for submissions was 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016 with decisions on 'Progress to Part 2' or 'Reject' being made by the Steering Group on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

**Sites were rejected at Part 1 Site Assessment if they were:**

Housing proposals on greenfield or brownfield sites isolated from the BUAB unless they are for a house/houses at that location in order to support an existing, viable rural business on the site (ie essential to the particular countryside location).

**The criteria necessary to pass to Part 2 Site Assessment were:**

- Within the BUAB (greenfield or brownfield) – priority will be given to these sites
- Abutting the BUAB (greenfield or brownfield) – Part 2 proposals should meet an identified community need and be appropriate in size to a Medium Village (as defined in HDPF). Priority will be given to brownfield sites.
- Employment proposals (linked to an existing rural business, enabling development for existing business)

5.2 All of the Developers/owners/agents of Sites progressing to Part 2 Site Assessment will be asked to submit detailed proposals for development of their sites. They should have due regard to:

- This State of the Parish report (May 2017)
- Ashington Housing Needs Assessment (May 2017)
- Ashington Rural Place Profile (November 2013)
- Ashington Assets and Treasures (May 2017)
- Ashington Neighbourhood Plan Vision, Objectives & Policies
- The Horsham District Planning Framework (November 2015) and all supporting documents
- The NPPF

5.3 All proposals must include details of: housing (or business/employment) numbers, mix, size and tenure; landscaping; transport & highways; potential impacts and mitigation measures; utilities and foul drainage; flood risk; archaeology; how the proposed development will meet the Vision and Objectives of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. The information is expected to build on that already submitted at Part 1 Site Assessment stage.

5.4 The deadline for submission of Part 2 proposals is 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017

5.5 All of the proposals will be scrutinized by the Steering Group, the Parish Council's Planning Consultant and residents of the Parish. A Planning Workshop will be held where Developers will be required to present their proposals and face questions from residents, Steering Group members and any other interested parties.

5.6 Full details of Site Selection work done to date is available on the Ashington Parish Council website [www.ashingtonpc.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan](http://www.ashingtonpc.org.uk/neighbourhood-plan)