

Askerswell Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2028



Produced by
Askerswell Neighbourhood Forum

Askerswell Neighbourhood Plan

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Principal accompanying documents

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Details of the Neighbourhood Area
Strategic Environment Assessment Screening Report
Heritage Planning Assessment
Ecological Survey

This Plan and its accompanying evidence base and all supporting documents can be viewed and downloaded from the Parish website:
(<http://www.askerswellparish.org/forum/index.html>)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Askerswell Neighbourhood Plan has been developed for the area of Askerswell Parish all of which lies in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Dorset AONB) in the upper part of the Asker Valley, east of Bridport in West Dorset. The village of Askerswell is listed in the Domesday Book. The Parish has 184 residents according to the 2011 Census, and 138 people are on the electoral register (2017).
- 1.2 West Dorset District Council (WDDC) as the Local Planning Authority designated the Askerswell Forum as the group to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for this area on 10th February 2015.
- 1.3 The Neighbourhood Plan has been written to be compatible with the strategic policies of the Local Plan for West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland, as adopted in 2015. Together with the Minerals and Waste Plans, these documents describe what types of development will generally be allowed within the defined area of the Parish of Askerswell. They also provide and justify protection within the area to the natural and built environment. Planning applications should be decided in accordance with these plans, unless material considerations suggest otherwise.
- 1.4 The Askerswell Neighbourhood Plan has a **vision statement** that takes full cognisance of residents' appreciation of living in an exceptional part of the Dorset AONB and the values of the small but cohesive community that is centred on its village. Its distinctive character and level of community pride is evidenced by receiving the Best Small Village in Dorset award four times since 1993 including in 2016. The community envisages only incremental change that perturbs neither the current character of the settlement nor its surrounding landscape.
- 1.5 The plan defines a number of objectives each underpinned by policies to assure they are achieved. Its **Environmental Objective** commits to conservation of wildlife in the neighbourhood area, favours enhancing its historic and natural features and envisages that new-build dwellings should respect the scale of those already present including use of traditional materials to harmonise with the current built environment. The environmental policies have been finalised after consultation with the community, the Local Planning Authority, the Dorset AONB team, Natural England, Historic England, the Environment Agency and others. The Plan's **Community Objective** is to retain, enhance and support all its essential facilities. They are well used by the community and underpinned by support from an active cohort of volunteers. The **Business Objective** is to support locally based businesses, comprising of farms, small enterprises (including workshops) plus those employed elsewhere often working from home. Developments of new or existing businesses are supported providing they do not have a detrimental impact on the Dorset AONB or cause undue traffic problems, noise or other disturbance. The **Housing Objective** aims to conserve the positive nature of the community and favour its continued vibrancy while protecting the historic and natural landscape. The plan does not envisage significant growth, but has defined a development boundary that could accommodate some limited development (estimated around 4-5 new open market dwellings) to take place over the next 10 years to the end of the plan period (2028). Further guidance is provided to ensure such development is in keeping with local character, respects the local heritage, landscape and wildlife features.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The area encompassed by the Askerswell Neighbourhood Area is the Parish of Askerswell. West Dorset District Council (WDDC) designated the Askerswell Forum as the group to develop a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for this area on 10th February 2015. A Neighbourhood Forum was required to take the lead in the absence of a Parish Council (Askerswell has a Parish Meeting) that would otherwise develop the Plan. Details of Forum membership, its Constitution and a record of its meetings are among the submitted documents.

Purpose

- 2.2 The Localism Act of 2011 provides that planning policy developed by communities be adopted (“made”) by the Local Planning Authority. First a Neighbourhood Plan must pass independent examination and gain majority support in a local referendum. The policies detailed in this document provide a basis for residents to influence new building developments that would require planning consent in the Neighbourhood Area over its life of 10 years from 2018 to 2028.
- 2.3 The Askerswell Neighbourhood Plan is prepared within the context set by the National Planning Policy Framework. It is credible, justifiable and achievable. It envisages a moderate level of development that is marginally higher than that envisaged in the adopted West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan. Recognising the difficulties of living in areas with few facilities, the approach taken in the adopted Local Plan is to control strictly development in rural areas, having particular regard to the need for the protection of the environment and environmental constraints. However the Local Plan does accept that some limited development may be appropriate to meet local needs, and encourages local communities to address specific issues through Neighbourhood Planning.
- 2.4 This Neighbourhood Plan is designed to be fully compliant with the Local Plan’s strategic objectives and policies. It has also considered the adjoining Neighbourhood Plan for Loders, to ensure that there is a reasonably consistent approach for the rural length of the Asker valley.
- 2.5 The main basis for the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan was gained from a survey of all in the Parish aged 11 or more in the summer of 2015. The survey had a return rate of 83%. The objectives and policy ideas taken from this survey were then tested in a community drop-in event on 11th June 2016. Those objectives and policies that were clearly supported by at least 75% of the community have been incorporated into this Plan, where possible.

Accompanying documentation

- 2.6 The following is provided as part of the evidence base for this Neighbourhood Plan:

Basic Conditions Statement

This document is a requirement to appraise the extent to which the Neighbourhood Plan Policy:

- has due regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other national planning policy and guidance;

- conforms with the strategic policies of the Development Plan for the area (which is the West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan and the Dorset Minerals and Waste plans); and
- does not breach or conflict, and must be compatible with, EU obligations, and contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

Consultation Summary

This details the community and wider consultation events and processes that led up to the submission version of the plan. It includes the analysis and key conclusions emerging from the Survey of our community, and the issues raised during the pre-submission stage consultation.

The Forum, its Constitution, Agendas and Minutes of its meetings.

It also includes a summary of the activity of its Steering Group.

Details of the Neighbourhood Area

This provides additional detail and evidence on environmental, economic and social indicators for the area underpinning the Neighbourhood Plan.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment screening determination.

This is a Screening Report that concludes that the Askerswell Neighbourhood Plan was unlikely to have significant environmental impacts and therefore a full SEA was not required. It was drafted with the support of West Dorset District Council, and the conclusions were confirmed by the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England as the statutory consultees.

3. OVERVIEW

3.1 Location and Description of the Askerswell Neighbourhood Area

3.1 The Neighbourhood Area is the Parish of Askerswell. It lies between the A35 and Eggardon Hill with the main settlement, Askerswell village, centred at OS grid reference SY529927 (Fig 1).

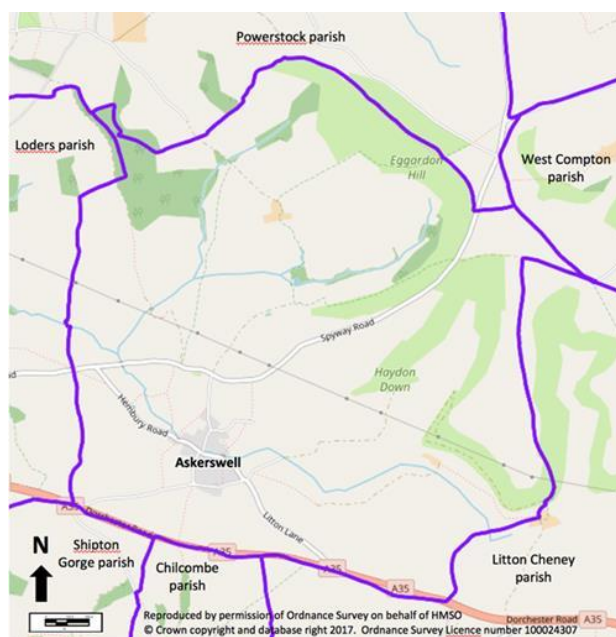


Figure 1: The Parish of Askerswell - the Neighbourhood Plan area. Published as a sub-license of WDW&P Licence No. 100024307/100019690.

- 3.2 Askerswell village is the only sizeable community in the Neighbourhood Plan area (Fig 2). Responses to the survey indicated 88% have their primary home in the Parish with a further 9% indicating that their primary residence is elsewhere. There are a few outlying farms with up to three dwellings each and they offer most of the relatively few holiday homes in the Parish.
- 3.3 The Village has a crossroads at its centre. School Lane runs to the North connecting to Spyway Road and then on to Barrowland Lane and through to Toller Porcorum and the A356, and to the South the road is Burrywells becoming the principal road that runs out of the valley along the Portway to the A35 above the village. The other road from the crossroads follows the Asker valley. To the south-east it turns to become a steeply ascending, narrow lane to the A35. To the north-west, it leads from the village (Hembury Road) branching outside of the Parish to the A35 and connecting to settlements further down the Asker valley in Loders Parish and beyond. Some of the dwellings in Askerswell village are close to the fast flowing stream (River Asker), with additional developments around the Church and along School Lane. It has won the Best Small village competition in Dorset 4 times since 1993 including 2016.
- 3.4 The A35 from Southampton to Honiton passes above the village along the southern edge of the Parish. It is a trunk road between Dorchester and Bridport that is maintained by Highways England and it carries heavy traffic particularly during holiday periods. Askerswell is 12 miles from Dorchester and 4.2 miles from Bridport. There is an hourly bus route (X51) in both directions along the A35 at 0.6 miles from the village centre.



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Figure 2: Details of Askerswell Village showing the river course, a leat and the locations of a finger post, the Pound, verges and grassed triangles, mature trees, hedge lines and dry stone walls. Listed buildings are shown (see also Fig 3). A second finger post (not shown) is at the junction of Hembury Road and The Spyway.

History

- 3.5 The area of Askerswell Parish has a history of settlement spanning over 4,000 years. There are a number of scheduled monuments - earthworks on Askerswell Down on either side of the A35, a dyke on Haydon Down, a bowl barrow and earthworks to the north of the village on Spyway Road (both of these are on the national 'at risk' register), three barrows near Two Gates to the north east of the parish, and the dramatic Eggardon Hillfort to the north.
- 3.6 The village dates from before or during the early Medieval Period. There are the remains of a post-medieval, shrunken settlement to the West of Burrywells, and historically the village appears to have supported a larger population - the former School opened in 1857 and was enlarged in 1901 to cater for seventy children. It closed in 1965.
- 3.7 The Neighbourhood Area includes two Grade II* and 14 Grade II listed buildings and four listed tombs in the churchyard. In addition, a number of older buildings, many dating from the c19, have been identified by the community as contributing to the character of the village (Fig 3).
- 3.8 The most iconic view is of the Parish Church of St Michael & All Angels from public footpaths, on higher ground either side of the valley, also from the A35 and the approaches from Eggardon and beyond.

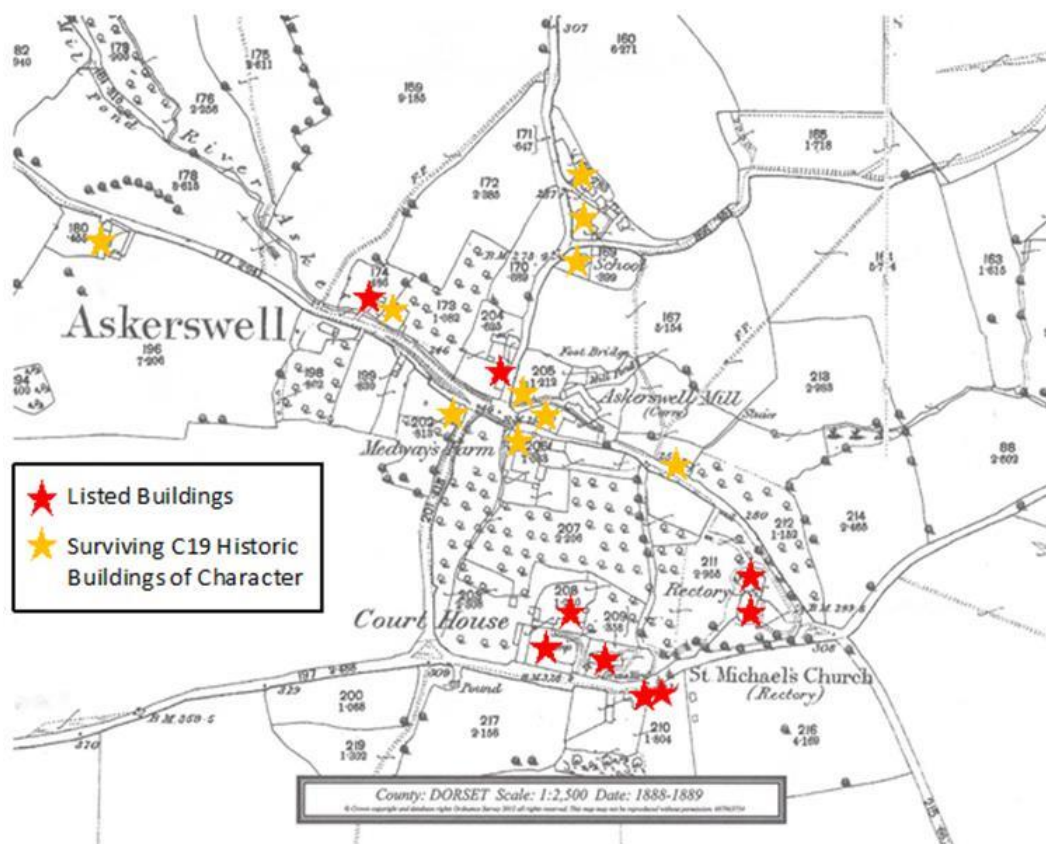


Figure 3: 1888/9 historic map with interesting historic buildings shown. Published as a sub-license of WDW&P Licence No. 100024307/100019690.

Environment

- 3.9 Most of survey respondents agreed that the unspoilt countryside (Fig.4) was important to them (92%) and they appreciated the peaceful and safe environment (98%). Many of our residents have environmental interests and seek to protect our environment within the Dorset AONB.
- 3.10 Much of the area lies within a Wooded Hills landscape character area known as the the Powerstock Woods, changing to Chalk Ridge / Escarpment (West Dorset) on the higher ground to the east (Fig 5). The following descriptions are taken from *Landscape Character Assessment & Management Guidance for the Dorset AONB* published by the Dorset AONB partnership in 2008.
- 3.11 “Along the valley bottoms, dense hedgerows and small scale regular pastures are surrounded by small damp neutral meadows and patches of rush with small wet woodlands. Clustered settlement patterns of stone villages (golden limestone and thatch) are connected by a network of narrow winding lanes, with an intimate and tranquil quality confined by the surrounding steep hills”.
- 3.12 “The slopes around Askerswell are noted as being particularly steep with extensive open grasslands south of Eggardon Hill. Along the top of the ridge views are extensive, particularly from the imposing Eggardon Iron Age hillfort. Along the slopes, the rounded spurs and deep coombes, textured soil creep, patches of scrub and unimproved grasslands add to the ecological interest. Towards the lower slopes, the ridge becomes more intimate with irregular field patterns leading towards a series of wooded springline villages and intimate, winding rural lanes”.

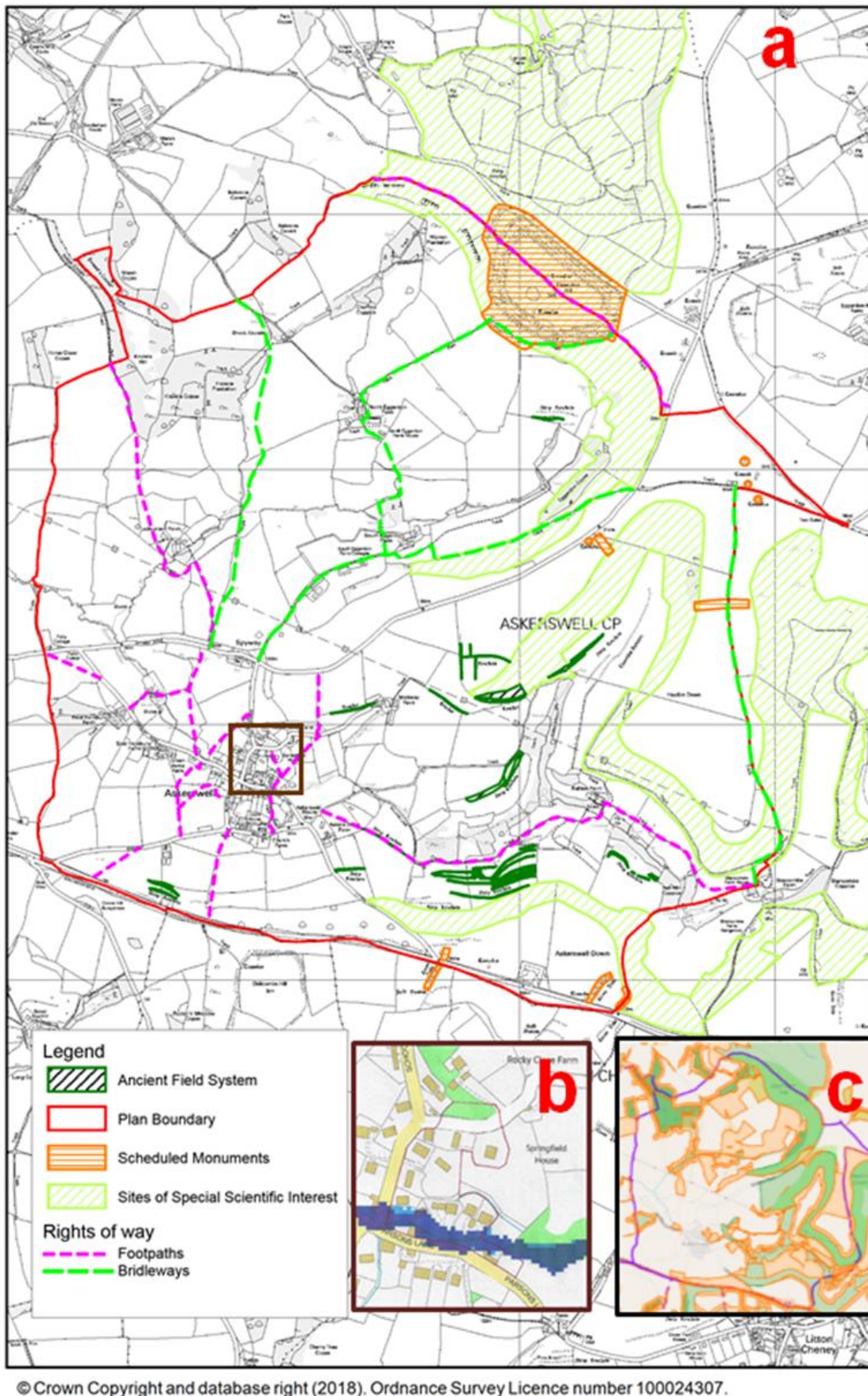


Figure 4 Main environmental constraints. **a)** scheduled monuments, ancient field systems and public rights of way within the Plan area; **b)** details of the two flood zones in the regions of the defined development boundary (a red line). The perimeter of **b)** is shown on **a)** in brown; **c)** Ecological networks, existing (green shading) and potential (orange shading) within the Neighbourhood Area (purple border). Published as a sub-license of WDW&P Licence No. 100024307/100019690

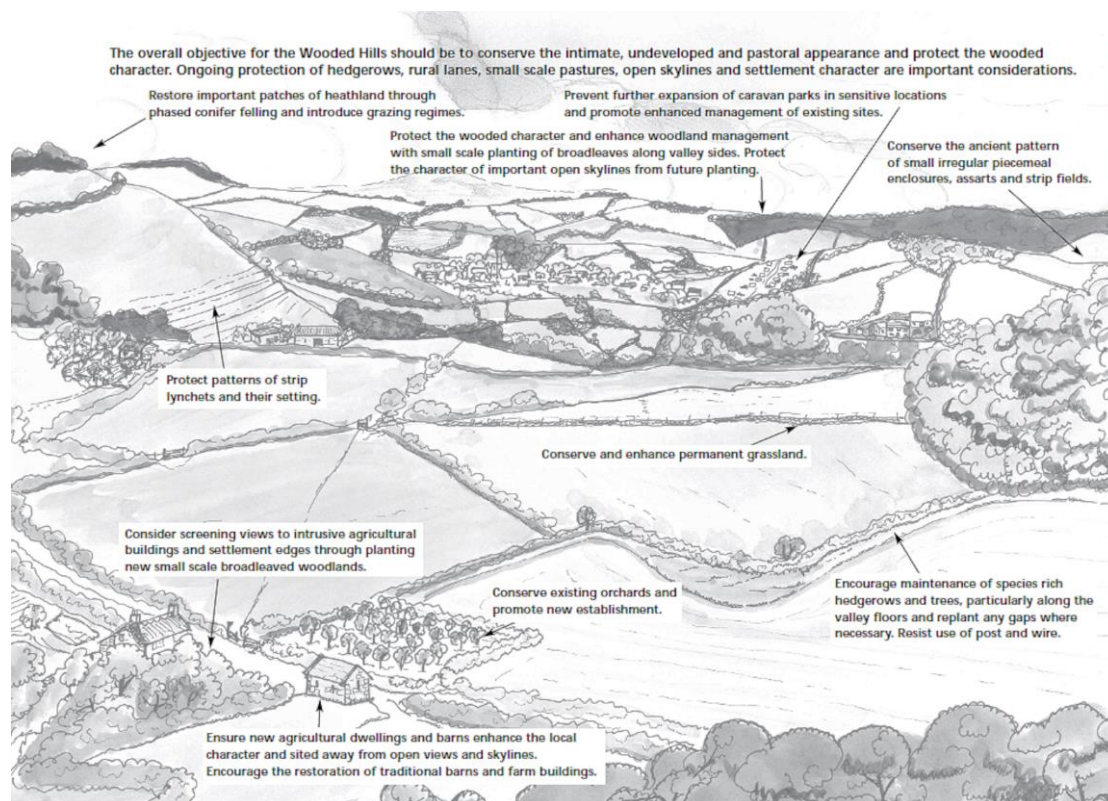


Figure 5: Extract from Landscape Character Assessment & Management Guidance for Powerstock Woods area (2008).

Summary of Key Social and Economic Characteristics

3.13 Askerswell had 184 residents according to the 2011 Census. A total of 138 are on the current electoral register with 27 below voting age and the remainder either not registered to vote or registered elsewhere. Demographic analysis of the 2011 Census data suggests that Askerswell Parish has slightly fewer children (under 19 years of age) and fewer adults in their 20s and 30s than characteristic of West Dorset as a whole, with a correspondingly higher proportion of adults in their 50s and 60s.

Business activity

3.14 The main activity is agriculture with 7 working farms, additional land rented out and some diversification including equine-based activities and the provision of self-catering accommodation. There are also three wood working businesses and the Spyway Inn. Several owners of local business live within the Parish and others work often on a part-time basis from home providing professional, scientific and technical services.

Housing

3.15 In 2011 the Census recorded 71 households living in 79 properties, most (83%) of which were owner occupied. 11% were second homes, and the average house price (median Land Registry based on sales 2011 - 2017) was £365,000,

significantly above local and national averages. There have been no new dwellings permitted or built during the last 15 years.

- 3.16 Some 71% of dwellings are detached houses or bungalows (this is significantly higher than the West Dorset average of 37%) and nearly 2 in 5 (37%) of all homes had 4 or more bedrooms (again higher than West Dorset average of 23%).
- 3.17 At the time of writing this plan (2017) there were no households registered for affordable housing with a local connection to the parish. This does not necessarily indicate that there is no need for affordable housing, as it could be that there is no expectation of affordable housing becoming available, or that people in housing need have looked to nearby Bridport (with its wider range of facilities and employment opportunities and affordable housing stock) as their first choice.

Community Facilities

- 3.18 The main community facilities within the parish are Askerswell Village Hall and St Michael & All Angels Church. The Spyway Inn is an important meeting place that also organises a range of events for the community. Volunteers maintain two main public spaces; i) Washingpool playing field, pond and wildlife area and ii) the Village Hall Grounds. There is a community notice board, post box and telephone box at the crossroads.

Services and Utilities

- 3.19 Most properties in the Parish have mains sewers, water and electricity. Mains gas is not available but most properties have oil and a few liquid propane gas. Several properties have renewable energy sources particularly solar panels.
- 3.20 Askerswell was added to the Superfast Dorset roll-out plans for broadband in 2017 and “fibre to the home” became available to many dwellings from late August 2018.

Crime

- 3.21 Few incidents are reported from the community which has a Homewatch representative who reports to all Parish Meetings. The Police also provide information to the Clerk of the Parish Meeting.

Transport and Travel Patterns

- 3.22 The responses of 122 local residents who replied on transport in the survey establish 75% of residents' journeys from the village to work or for other purposes are by car, van or motorcycle, 7% by public transport or taxi with a further 11% working from home or walking to work. The 2011 Census indicated that only 1 household was without a car or van. Most households (61%) had 2 or more cars - significantly higher than the West Dorset average (39%).

4. VISION, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Vision Statement

- 4.1 The following vision statement is derived from community views including those expressed in response to the Parish Survey and the drop-in consultation meeting (11th June 2016). The Forum also considered insights gained from an open question and answer evening with two planning experts (25th November, 2015), advice from three landscape architects from West Dorset District Council and the Dorset AONB and the Dorset county archaeologist.
- 4.2 The survey of local residents established that over 90% of the responders agree or strongly agree that the unspoilt countryside and the peaceful and safe environment were important to them. In addition 86% also value having a say in Parish matters.
- 4.3 The Forum is committed to delivering a Neighbourhood Plan that is consistent with the opinions of the majority in the community.

Vision statement

The residents of Askerswell Parish value living in an outstanding part of the Dorset AONB and appreciate the small but cohesive community centred on its village. The community envisages only incremental change that has neither any significant adverse effect upon the current character of the settlement nor its surrounding landscape. It seeks development for a limited number of additional residents that wish to share the current benefits of the settlement and the nature of its environment.

The community has the ambition to encourage young families into the village whilst ensuring negligible impact on the important landscape, heritage designations and considerable biodiversity.

5. ENVIRONMENT: OBJECTIVE AND POLICIES

Environmental Objective

Askerswell Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect all of our countryside, which is fully within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Dorset AONB). The plan is committed to conservation of wildlife in the Neighbourhood Area. In addition, it favours enhancing our historic and natural features. It envisages that new-build dwellings should respect the scale of those already present and use traditional materials to harmonise with our current built environment.

Parish and Planning Context

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012) values “*protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity*”.

- 5.2 The Neighbourhood Plan has also taken consideration of the Environment Policies in the Local Plan. In drawing up a tightly defined development boundary and providing design guidance, it has ensured that development is located and designed so that it does not detract from the local landscape character. The Neighbourhood Plan does not include any proposals that would have any significant adverse effect upon the two Sites of Special Scientific Interest or other locally designated wildlife sites or priority habitats in West Dorset (e.g. Alder woodland). In defining this plan, the Forum has taken full note of the wishes of a sizeable majority of our community to conserve the special nature of the Parish set in an outstanding part of the Dorset AONB. The plan therefore envisages a level of development consistent with protecting that environment and not likely to harm the heritage context of the concentration of listed buildings near the Church or elsewhere in the Parish.

Environmental Policies

Protection of Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 5.3 Policy E1 seeks to ensure any development is without detriment to the Dorset AONB. In particular it seeks to ensure that new development is not visually intrusive by avoiding locations that are likely to be highly visible within the landscape.
- 5.4 The policy also encourages the use of landscaping (which should be appropriate to the landscape character of the area) and the potential to co-locate development alongside existing buildings, to further reduce the impact of new development in what is a very rural landscape.

Policy E1: Protection of Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

E1.1 Development should conserve the intrinsic qualities and landscape features of the Dorset AONB and make provision for any landscaping sufficient to mitigate harm. Isolated and elevated locations should be avoided, by siting development alongside roads and close to other existing buildings.

Protection of Special Landscape and Historic Features

- 5.5 Policy E2 seeks to ensure any development has no detrimental impact on the distinctive landscape of the neighbourhood plan area and underpins protection of its key features that have been identified from the various appraisals and public consultations. Historic features by their very nature are unlikely to be replaceable, and their loss should therefore be avoided. Other landscape features such as trees should be retained where possible, and replacement planting secured if retention is not feasible.

Policy E2: Protection of Special Landscape and Historic Features

E2.1. Development that allows for the retention and enjoyment of the following features and their settings will be supported:

- a) The attractive river course with its mill leats and tributaries
- b) The distinctive landscape formed by Eggardon Hill and its southern slopes, and the downs within the Neighbourhood Area

- c) The ancient field systems and medieval strip lynchets
 - d) The Bronze and Iron Age earthworks, sites with remnants of Roman occupation and all scheduled monuments in the area
 - e) The historic dry stone walls, including their vegetation where present
 - f) The network of rural paths (that are part of the public rights of way network) and rural character of the lanes - with their distinctive banks and hedges, traditional wooden fingerposts, and the grassed triangles and verges at road junctions
 - g) The Pound
 - h) The dense native hedgerows, small damp meadows and irregular pastures, unimproved grasslands, orchards, wet woodlands and mature broad-leaved trees. Development resulting in the loss of irreplaceable features should be avoided. Mitigation to minimize the degree of any loss or harm should be secured if retention is not feasible.
- E2.2.** The benefits of removing or screening existing detrimental features, such as modern unsightly design elements and overhead wires, are to be taken into account in assessing any development proposals.

Protection of Wildlife Habitats

- 5.6 Many in our community have an interest in the rich biodiversity present in the Neighbourhood Plan area and seek to ensure this is conserved and when possible enhanced as guided by the Dorset Biodiversity Appraisal Protocol. The dense hedgerows, mature trees, stream corridors, wet woodlands and unimproved grassland, compost heaps and old barns are all habitats that can support a range of protected species. As a matter of course the Local Planning Authority requires a biodiversity appraisal by a suitably qualified ecologist for all development on sites over 0.1ha in size, and for the conversion or demolition of rural barns / farm buildings and other derelict structures. However we would encourage developers to take advice from a suitably qualified ecologist on sites below this threshold, where there is reasonable possibility that there may be some biodiversity interest on or close to the site. Early knowledge of potential nature conservation interests can ensure that development proposals include suitable avoidance or mitigation measures, rather than having to revise plans because a protected species is first noticed when construction is about to start.

Policy E3: Protection of Wildlife Habitats

- E3.1.** Development proposals should seek to protect, and where appropriate enhance, local biodiversity. The provision of wildlife corridors and buffer areas to protect habitats, and the provision of new biodiversity features such as the erection of boxes in suitable locations for barn owl, little owl, kestrel, bats and passerine birds, will be supported.
- E3.2.** On sites below the standard thresholds for a biodiversity appraisal, applicants will submit (as a minimum) an initial scoping / feasibility appraisal that identifies ecological aspects or considerations, where the proposed development site includes or is adjoining
- a large, mature garden
 - mature trees
 - woodland
 - field or roadside hedgerows
 - river floodplain

- meadow / species-rich grassland
- orchard
- agricultural barns and similar rural buildings.

Protection and Enhancement of the Character and Appearance of the Area

- 5.7 The Neighbourhood Plan area is exceptionally attractive and the community is highly committed to maintaining this status. The older buildings, both Listed and unlisted, provide a strong local identity and interest. The localities of four areas (A-D) of such key buildings are shown in Figure 6. They include the following buildings: 1, Stonebridge*; 2, Sherwood Cottage; 3, Knapp Cottages; 4, Askers House*; 5, Fir tree cottage; 6, The Old School House; 7, Candida; 8, Rose Cottage; 9, Medway House; 10, Millstream Cottage and 11, Grey Cottage (* Grade II listed buildings). These have been specifically identified to assist in the understanding of the form and type of buildings that reflect the distinctive local character of the Neighbourhood Area.
- 5.8 Part of the distinctive character of Askerswell Village is the range of architectural styles evident among its older buildings including those that are listed. This character can be potentially enhanced by new buildings which reflect the scale, materials, fenestration pattern and detailing of these older buildings, through high quality traditional or contemporary designs appropriate to this rural location.
- 5.9 Table 1 captures the key characteristics that form the basis of more detailed design guidance. The Neighbourhood Plan favours all current or future technologies that support sustainable energy production that would be compatible with the general policy requirements.



Figure 6. Map showing four clusters (A-D) of 11 older buildings identified to assist in the understanding of the form and type of buildings that reflect the distinctive local character of the Neighbourhood Area. Published as a sub-license of WDW&P Licence No. 100024307/100019690.

Table 1: Key characteristics that form the basis of more detailed design guidance

Layout	Buildings are generally built fronting onto and parallel with the street, in a variety of irregular plot sizes. Clearly visible estate layouts (off a cul-de-sac type layout) and other forms of suburban-style development should be avoided.
Scale and form	Variety of building forms reflecting modest farm cottages, grander houses and farmsteads
Materials and finishes:	Local limestone or brick walls are prevalent and should match materials used historically (based on the sample of older buildings). There are local examples of coursed and rubble work, with some Hamstone dressings, more commonly brick quoins and gauged arch brick heads to windows and doors under thatch, slate and clay tile roofs with stone gable copings evident on grander houses. Pointing should be lime rich, contrasting with the surrounding masonry and finished flush with the wall surface and fully pointed to random rubble walling. Where render is appropriate, as at Spyway Cottage, this should be self-coloured, lime rich, and reflect the 'soft, warm' naturally occurring pigments for example yellow ochre or raw umber.
Roofs	Thatch, clay tiles and natural indigenous slate roofs are preferred. A maximum roof span of 6 metres between external walls is recommended. The pitch of slate between 30 - 43 degrees, clay tiles 40 degrees and both can be laid much shallower, but where thatch is used, a steeper pitch of not less than 50 degrees is standard. Flat roofs, imported slates or bright terracotta roof tiles would not be appropriate.
Chimneys	As most properties in the neighbourhood area have chimney stacks, the Neighbourhood Plan does not oppose their inclusion in any new dwelling. New buildings of traditional design should include a conventional, well proportioned chimney stack, constructed of red brick with terracotta pots. Stainless steel flues should not be visible from public viewpoints, but where these appear on the principal frontage they should be painted black.
Doors and Porches	Timber doors are generally appropriate, of a size in keeping with the scale and period of the building. Porches, open or enclosed, should be in keeping with the style and proportions of the building. Most porches are either of thatch or simple timber structures with slate.
Windows	Arrangement of openings will depend on a number of criteria including orientation, energy efficiency and security. New windows shall be compatible with the proportions of the building, simple casements with central glazing bars are common in new buildings. On older properties, two types of window survive; multi-paned timber or iron casements and timber vertical sliding sashes. With casement windows the opening and fixed lights should be of equal proportions. The non-opening light glass should be inset in the same style as the opening light glass. Sash windows should have slender moulded glazing bars and panes of glass which are rectangular rather than square. The use of UPVC is discouraged on older buildings, since timber windows have proven longevity. Care should be taken to select a design in harmony with the established fenestration pattern. It is generally more appropriate to paint window frames (or UPVC) in preference to leaving timber untreated, varnished or stained. There are relatively few dormer windows built into roofs in the village and they are considered generally inappropriate. Rooflights can be inserted into the rear roof pitches of buildings, provided they lay flush with the plane of the roof.
Gates and boundaries	Apart from those on farms, gates are predominately a 20 th century feature. If used appropriately they can positively contribute to the appearance of individual properties and in the wider context the appearance of the village. Traditional limestone walls and indigenous hedging is the predominant boundary treatment. There are good examples of stone walls, with copings or with cock & hen detailing.

Policy E4: To Protect and Enhance the Character and Appearance of the Area

E4.1 All proposals for built development (including new buildings and extensions / alterations to existing buildings) are to be sensitive to adjacent buildings and reflect and contribute positively to the distinctive local character of the Neighbourhood Area. Particular regard, where feasible and practical, should be paid to the key characteristics set out in Table 1 and the buildings identified in Figure 6 that provide a strong local identity and interest.

However, exceptionally high quality and innovative design will not be discouraged, for example where it would add interest and enhance the character of the area.

- 5.10 The aims of all these environmental policies are to guard against harmful effects on our environment and its biodiversity. The Forum will raise awareness through the Parish Website and meetings of the need to maintain the landscape and historic features that are such an important part of the area's heritage. If the Forum identifies that key features are likely to be lost or degraded, advice will be sought from relevant organisations such as Dorset AONB, Dorset Wildlife Trust and Dorset County Council's Historic Environment team. Projects, such as replacement tree planting, may be feasible and potentially provide compensatory measures elsewhere.

6. COMMUNITY: OBJECTIVE AND POLICY

Community Objective

Askerswell Neighbourhood Plan prioritises ensuring our facilities are retained, enhanced and supported. The wide range of our activities testifies to the vibrancy of our community and their value to us and others from the surrounding areas. We have an active cohort of volunteers who support our facilities and activities.

Safeguarding Community Assets

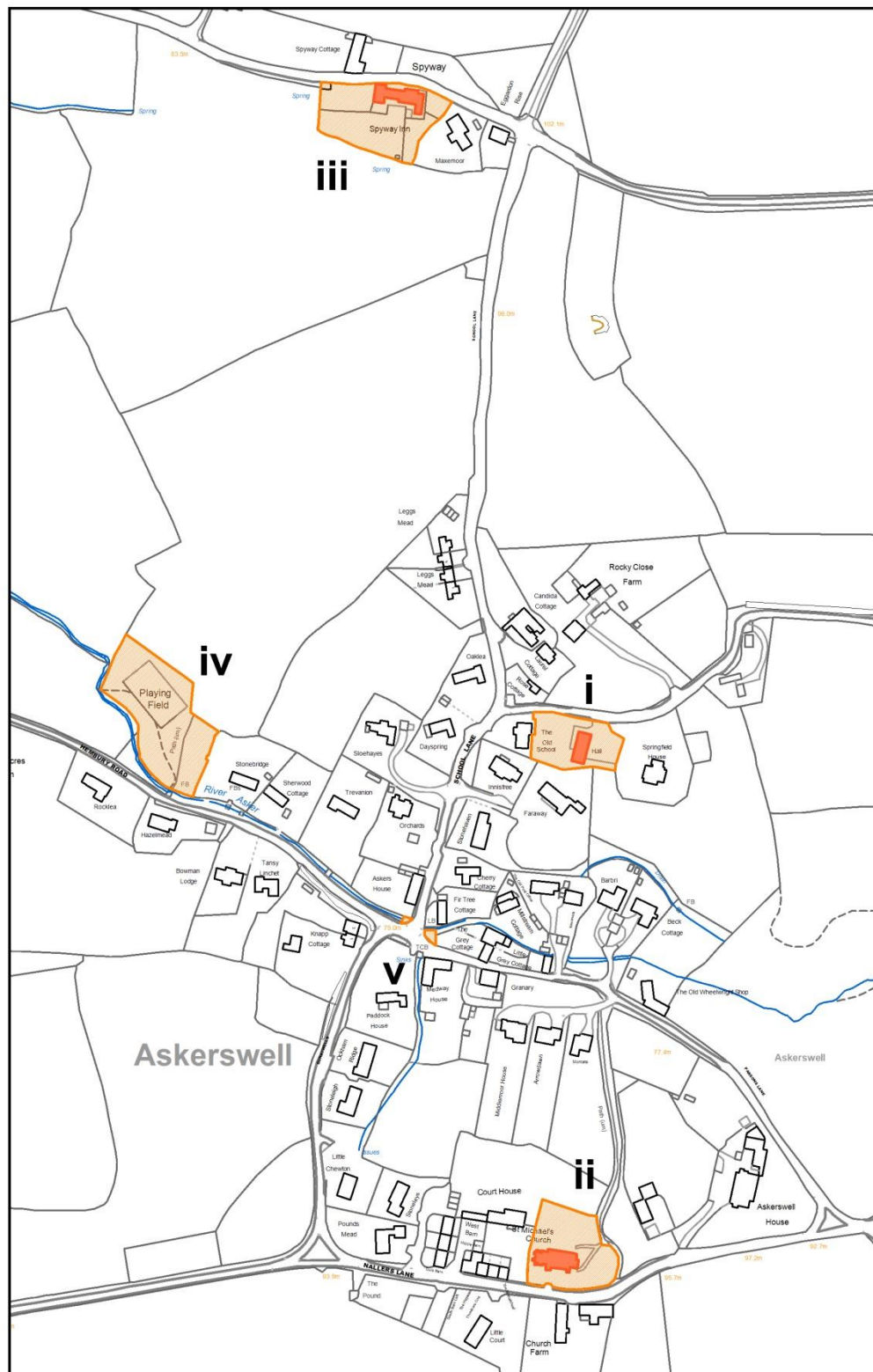
- 6.1 The community is extremely friendly and sociable, with much voluntary effort to enhance the living experience of all residents. Our facilities are essential to maintain this level of interaction and co-operation. The location of the main facilities are shown on Figure 7.

Policy C1: Safeguarding Community Assets

Community assets (listed below) are to be retained where possible, and every effort is to be made by all involved to investigate potential solutions to avoid any unnecessary loss of these valued assets. Development proposals that allow such facilities to modernise and adapt for future needs are encouraged.

Community assets are:

- i** Askerswell Village Hall, including its grounds and associated parking spaces
- ii** St Michael & All Angels Church and church yard
- iii** Spyway Inn
- iv** Washingpool playing field, pond and wildlife area
- v** The grassed areas located on the main crossroads within the village (known as The Square) which contain a seating area, the community notice board, telephone kiosk and post box.



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Figure 7: Community Assets Map (outlined in orange), see Policy C1 for details. Published as a sub-license of WDW&P Licence No. 100024307/100019690.

7. BUSINESS: OBJECTIVE AND POLICY

Business Objective

Askerswell Neighbourhood Plan seeks to support our locally-based businesses and workforce, including farms, small enterprises (including workshops and those working from home). Key to this is community demand for improvements to communications and services (e.g. Broadband and mobile phone reception). Business developments are supported providing they do not cause undue traffic problems, noise or other disturbance.

Local Employment and Business

- 7.1 The main economic activity in the area is agriculture with seven working farms, and some equine-based activities. There are also three wood working businesses, some self-catering holiday accommodation, and the Spyway Inn. Several owners of local businesses live within the Parish, and others work often on a part-time basis from home providing professional, scientific and technical services.
- 7.2 Our community is supportive of all our rurally-based businesses and their further development. This may include the modernisation of existing or redundant premises, to provide suitably flexible or bespoke workspaces with better access to any necessary infrastructure such as Superfast Broadband connection that is important for business development. However the economic benefits will need to be balanced against possible harm to the area, taking into account its landscape character and importance, the inadequacy of local roads to cater for significant volumes of traffic (particularly HGVs) and the generally quiet amenity enjoyed by local residents. The following policy should be read in conjunction with the Local Plan policies for employment in the countryside.

Policy B1: Local Employment and Business

B1.1. The sustainable growth and expansion of existing local businesses and the establishment of new businesses is supported providing such development would not harm;

- the Dorset AONB or the distinctive rural character of the area, or
- the living conditions and amenities of residents, or
- the character and safety of our narrow roads through increased traffic.

8. HOUSING: OBJECTIVE AND POLICIES

Housing Objective

Askerswell Neighbourhood Plan aims to conserve the positive nature of our community and values limited new dwellings to underpin its continued vibrancy providing they are consistent with continued protection of our landscape.

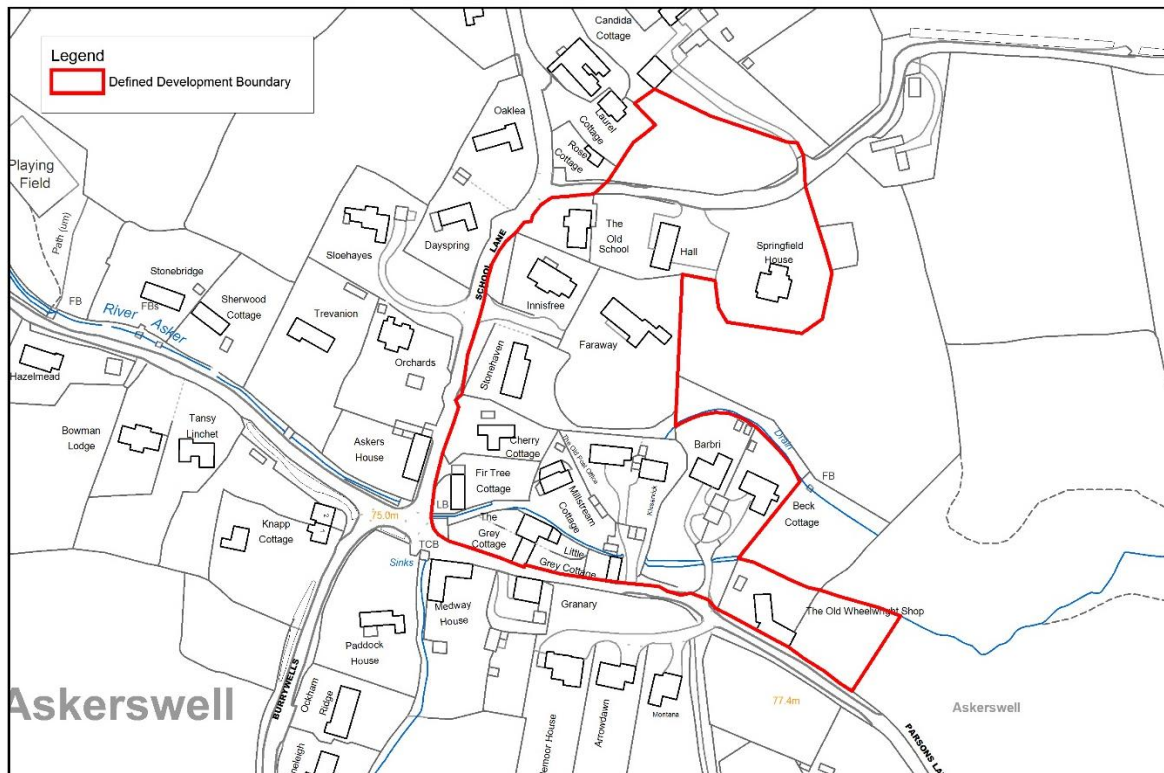
Context

- 8.1 The community view of the extent of new home development that this plan envisages was established by a community survey in the summer of 2015 and a drop-in event in June 2016. It established that 67% of respondents favoured new dwellings within the village or on land adjacent to its current houses. To some extent there is unlimited demand for housing, given that West Dorset attracts many people to the area, and Askerswell is a beautiful rural location close to the shops and services found in the nearby town of Bridport. The housing market remains buoyant (although largely unaffordable to many) and there are few vacant properties. However, whilst additional residents should help sustain the community spirit, unlimited growth would ultimately change the rural nature of the village and perpetuate less sustainable patterns of living.
- 8.2 In Askerswell the Local Plan allows for new housing through the subdivision of existing homes, the re-use of rural buildings (subject to certain restrictions) and new-built affordable housing to meet a demonstrated local need. At the time this plan was prepared, there was little prospect of these possible sources bringing forward any new housing. If a modest number of additional homes was to be encouraged (and feedback from local residents suggests that an increase of around 4-5 new dwellings would be supported, ideally of a modest size and affordability that would off-set the predominance of large and less affordable open market homes), then this Neighbourhood Plan had to consider relaxing the current restrictions in some way. In the adjoining community, Loders Neighbourhood Plan had introduced a defined development boundary to enable a limited amount of new development, and such an approach seemed equally suitable for Askerswell.
- 8.3 There is no definite number to the total of new dwellings to be built in Askerswell set in this plan or the Local Plan. The following policy should enable around 4-5 new open market dwellings to be built in addition to conversions and affordable housing that could otherwise come forward, and that this level of growth is something that most local Residents would support (although inevitably some would prefer less change, and others would prefer to see more change). Such an increase would not place appreciable added demand on local infrastructure, can be accommodated without harming the environment, and would enable our long-standing settlement to continue to thrive.

Location of Housing

- 8.4 In establishing the most appropriate location for development within or adjoining the village, the area along Nallers Lane close to St Michael and All Angels church was ruled out at an early stage, because of the likely adverse impact on the many heritage assets. Another key factor was the need to avoid harm to the landscape character, and therefore locations visible in long-distance views were also ruled out on the advice of Dorset AONB and West Dorset District Council landscape experts. Flooding was another factor that needed careful consideration. The River Asker flows through the village and the local topography can give rise to surface water / sheet flooding. Consequently, surface water connections will not be permitted to the foul system to avoid sewer flooding to downstream property. Any sites being promoted must provide a satisfactory outfall through infiltration arrangements or disposal to local land drainage systems.

- 8.5 A defined development boundary (DDB, Fig 8) is a well-recognised planning tool which is used to establish the general area within which development is likely to be acceptable in principle, although the acceptability of any proposal will still depend upon details design and layout, and site-specific issues. This was considered to be the most effective means of allowing the limited desired development in the community without compromise to our wider environment. Outside of the DDB, the more restrictive policies aimed at avoiding isolated development in the countryside, will continue to apply, although a slight relaxation in the current restriction on the re-use of rural buildings (that stops such conversions from being sold separately on the open market) is also included, that will mean that it would be possible for the holiday home restrictions to be lifted, allowing such homes to be occupied by local residents year-round. The Neighbourhood Plan supports application of those with current holiday let restrictions on 12 month occupancy but it is for current or future owners to re-negotiate section 106 agreements.
- 8.6 Initially, a development boundary was suggested which would potentially allow a much larger number of new dwellings than the community supported and result in harm to the AONB and the character of the village. It was therefore refined to a smaller area. The revised boundary would allow some new development to come forward, potentially providing around 4-5 new dwellings to be built in addition to that which would be permitted through the adopted West Dorset, Weymouth and Portland Local Plan policies (for example through rural exception sites for the provision of affordable housing or the re-use of existing buildings).



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Figure 8: Defined Development Boundary (red line). Its southern and western edge runs along Parsons Lane and School Lane respectively. Published as a sub-license of WDW&P Licence No. 100024307/100019690.

- 8.7 It should be noted that the following policy does not over-ride other policies that seek to safeguard the special characteristics of the area or avoid potential harm, including those relating to landscape, heritage, ecology, flood risk, road safety and residential amenity.

Policy H1: Location of housing

H1.1. Within the defined development boundary (shown on Figure 8), residential, employment and other development to meet the needs of the local area will normally be permitted.

H1.2. The adaptation and re-use of rural buildings for open market housing outside of the defined development boundary will be permitted where all of the following apply:

- the building adjoins an existing road and is not in an isolated location where substantial new infrastructure would be required
- the existing building is of permanent and substantial construction and was in existence in 2011, and
- the building and any alterations proposed make a positive contribution to the character of the area and would not be substantially rebuilt or extended.

Size of new open market dwellings

- 8.8 Our community-wide survey identified the ambition for limited further development, with an emphasis on more modest homes (such as a pair of semi-detached cottages) that would make efficient use of land and provide a more balanced housing mix and help adjust our demographic profile closer to that which characterises West Dorset as a whole. A large detached house, on a site which could readily accommodate 2 modest-sized starter or family homes, would not be appropriate.
- 8.9 Affordable homes - which could include starter homes, shared ownership as well as affordable and social rented accommodation to meet a demonstrated local need will also be supported, and could come forward as an affordable housing exception site on land adjoining the settlement (i.e. outside of the defined development boundary but within the context of the wider village environs).

Policy H2: Size of new open market dwellings

H2.1 Where feasible, the provision of 2 to 3 bedroom semi-detached cottages should be supported as a dwelling type and size appropriate to the intended shift in the demographic profile of the community. The size of new open market housing will need to respect the character of the area and amenity of adjoining buildings, whilst making efficient use of land.

9. MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 9.1 This Neighbourhood Plan provides a planning policy basis for decisions for the period of 10 years after it is “made”, up to 2028.
- 9.2 Askerswell Neighbourhood Forum is constituted for five years from its designation date of 10th February 2015. Before the end of this period, it may seek an extension

for a monitoring role from the Local Planning Authority. If or when the Forum ceases, any local monitoring will be transferred to Askerswell Parish Meeting.

- 9.3 Once this Neighbourhood Plan comes into effect, Parish Meetings will be held to assess and comment on planning applications made within the Parish in terms of their consistency with this Neighbourhood Plan. Developers are encouraged to undertake pre-application consultation and can contact the Forum (or in its absence, the Parish Meeting) for advice on how best to engage with the local community.
- 9.4 The Neighbourhood Plan will be reviewed annually to consider whether it is achieving its objectives and to take account of changes to either national or local authority planning policies that impact on the Neighbourhood Plan. An update report will be prepared by the Forum Chair, reviewed by its members before presentation to a Parish Meeting and placement on the Neighbourhood Plan section of the Parish Website. The main aims of this annual monitoring will be:
1. To review whether planning decisions are being made consistent with the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan, and understand what material considerations may be giving rise to a different decision;
 2. Identify if there is a need for re-assessment and/or review ANP's objectives and policies;
 3. Liaise with statutory bodies with interest in our built or natural environment if mitigation measures need to be identified;
 4. Ensure the community remains appreciative of relevant issues covered by the Plan.

*Askerswell Neighbourhood Forum, 12/02/2018
Amended Post Examination 30/08/2018*