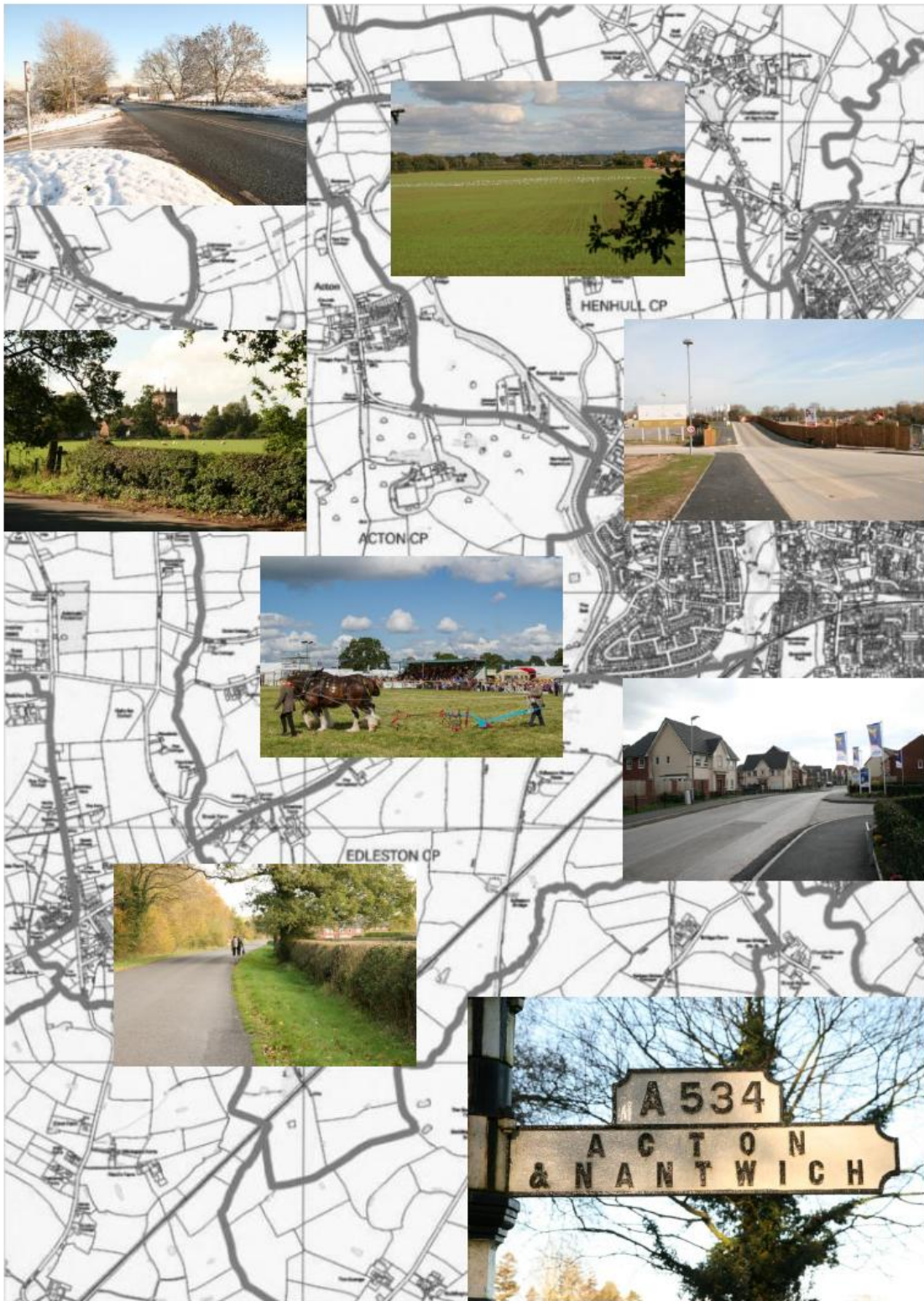


DRAFT ACTON, EDLESTON AND HENHULL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2019-2030

REGULATION 14 VERSION FOR CONSULTATION

FEBRUARY 2019



ACTON EDLESTON AND HENHULL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



Foreword

This draft Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared as a vision for the future of the parishes of Acton, Edleston and Henhull with the benefit of the earlier publication of a Parish Plan which was followed by government legislation (The Localism Act 2011) aimed at giving communities a voice in the future of their localities.

The draft has been produced by a local group working with the Parish Council following a questionnaire survey of parish households and public meetings. The Parish Council is publishing this draft for further consultation in accordance with legislation and will carefully consider all representations.

After any modifications considered necessary the Plan will be submitted to Cheshire East Council who will arrange for its public examination followed by an examiner's report. The Plan will be subject to a referendum within the Parishes and to final adoption by the Borough Council to become a statutory part of the Development Plan for Cheshire East.

The Parish Council wishes to record its thanks to all those who have helped and participated in the preparation of the Plan and looks forward to its future consideration by the public, examination and subsequent approval.

Michael Houlston
Chairman Acton, Edleston and Henhull Parish Council

February 2019

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Background
- 1.2. Planning Powers
- 1.3. Our Approach

2. Process in developing the Neighbourhood Plan

3. The Neighbourhood Plan Area

4. Description of Acton, Edleston and Henhull

- 4.1. Acton, Edleston and Henhull – Then and Now
- 4.2. Natural Environment and Character
- 4.3. Community Profile

5. Consultation

- 5.1. Introduction
- 5.2. The Household Questionnaire
- 5.3. Parish Plan Projects

6. Vision and Objectives

- 6.1. Vision
- 6.2. Objectives

7. Policies

- 7.1. Environment
 - ENV1: Landscape Character and Setting
 - ENV2: Views
 - ENV3: Open Countryside
 - ENV4: Acton Local Green Gap
 - ENV5: Habitats and Wildlife Corridors
 - ENV6: Protecting, Replacing and Planting Trees, Hedgerows and Vegetation
 - ENV7: Dark Skies
- 7.2. Heritage
 - HER1: Heritage Assets
 - HER2: Acton Conservation Area
 - HER3: Chester Canal Conservation Area
- 7.3. Development: Design
 - DEV1: Design for New Development
 - DEV2: Eco-design and Energy Saving
- 7.4. Development: Housing
 - DEV3: Location of Housing
 - DEV4: Type and Mix of Housing
 - DEV5: Working from Home
- 7.5. Development: Economy
 - DEV6: Employment Development
 - DEV7: Rural Economy
- 7.6. Community Infrastructure
 - COMM1: Broadband and Telecommunications Infrastructure
 - COMM2: Community Facilities
- 7.7. Travel, Traffic and Movement
 - TRA1: Improved Pedestrian, Cycle and Public Transport Access
 - TRA2: Acton Gateways, Car Park and Chester Road Environmental Improvements

FIGURES

- Figure A: Local Plan Policy showing Strategic Site LPS46, Kingsbourne (known as Kingsley Fields in the Local Plan Strategy) in the Context of Key Settlement of Nantwich
- Figure B: Acton, Edleston and Henhull Designated Neighbourhood Plan Area
- Figure C: Representation, Non-preferred and Permitted Housing Development Sites in the Parishes and Elsewhere in and around Nantwich
- Figure D: Important and Key Long Distance Views
- Figure E: Proposed Acton Local Green Gap
- Figure F: Habitat Distinctiveness
- Figure G: Indicative Wildlife Corridor Network
- Figure H: Tree Protection and Preservation Orders
- Figure I: Street Lighting in the Parishes
- Figure J: Conservation Areas in the Parishes and Surroundings
- Figure K: Historical Assets
- Figure L: The Energy Hierarchy
- Figure M: Acton Infill Boundary as Proposed in the Cheshire East Consultation SADPD Evidence Base: Settlement and Infill Boundaries Review Document FD06.
- Figure N: Existing Public Rights of Way
- Figure O: Proposed Footpath Projects
- Figure P: Gateways to Acton Village and Employment Site at Basin End

APPENDICES (www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/)

- Appendix 1: Community Profile Information
- Appendix 2: Breakdown of the Housing Range for the Parishes, from the 2019 Cheshire East Housing Needs Advice Note
- Appendix 3: Views
- Appendix 4: Local Green Gap Justifications
- Appendix 5: Relevant Sections from 2018 Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment
- Appendix 6: Relevant Cheshire East Design Guide Cues

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS (www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/)

1. Biodiversity and Natural Environment Assessment (Protecting and Enhancing Acton Edleston and Henhull's Natural Environment) (the CWT Report)
2. Acton Edleston and Henhull Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment
3. Listed Buildings and Ancient Monuments List
4. Cheshire East Housing Needs Advice Report
5. Statistics from Recent Constructed and Committed Housing Schemes
6. Rural Community profiles (for Edleston and Acton and Henhull)
7. Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire
8. Parish Plan
9. Relevant Parish Plan Projects
10. Acton Conservation Area Character Appraisal Management Plan
11. Chester Canal Conservation Area Character Appraisal

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 It is now 14 years since Acton, Edleston and Henhull Parish Council (AEHPC), with its Parish Plan Group completed the Acton, Edleston and Henhull Parish Plan (the Parish Plan) (Background Document 8) www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/ which was written in response to the feelings, aspirations and views of the residents of all three Parishes. The Parish Plan is a comprehensive document which took over two years to complete and covered aspects of village life and its dreams and aspirations for the future.

1.1.2 AEHPC, with the help and support of residents in all three Parishes initiated the preparation of its Acton, Edleston and Henhull Neighbourhood Plan (AEHNP). It was anticipated that some of the issues which were identified during the Parish Plan would be the same as those raised by local residents now in consultation for the AEHNP. Neighbourhood plans provide an opportunity for communities to set out a positive vision for how they want their community to develop over the next 10, 15 and 20 years in ways that meet identified local need and make sense for the local people. Neighbourhood Plans can address any issues relevant to land usage.

1.2 PLANNING POWERS

1.2.1 The legal basis for the planning system is the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The Localism Act 2011 introduced more powers to the local community through Neighbourhood Planning. The Localism Act also allows local views to be represented in a Neighbourhood Development Plan. The definition of a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) in the Act is as follows: *“neighbourhood development plan’ is a plan which sets out policies (however expressed) in relation to development and use of land in the whole or any part of a particular neighbourhood area specified in the plan.”*

1.2.2 While the Localism Act provides a formal role for NPs, it also sets out basic conditions that the NPs must meet. One is that all NPs must align with higher level planning policy (i.e. the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)) and be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan. It should be noted that the Localism Act allows a NP to provide more than the number of houses and employment land in the Strategic Plan but not less. Cheshire East’s Local Plan Strategy was adopted in July 2017. It published a consultation draft of its Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Policies document (SADPD) in August 2018.

1.2.3 A NP cannot stop development but it can be used to guide it. Before a NP can be adopted it is subject to an independent examination and to a referendum held within the community where it must receive over 50% of supportive votes. If adopted it becomes part of the development plan with legal weight and will be used as a reference in the decision making process of planning applications.

1.2.4 Of relevance from the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy is:

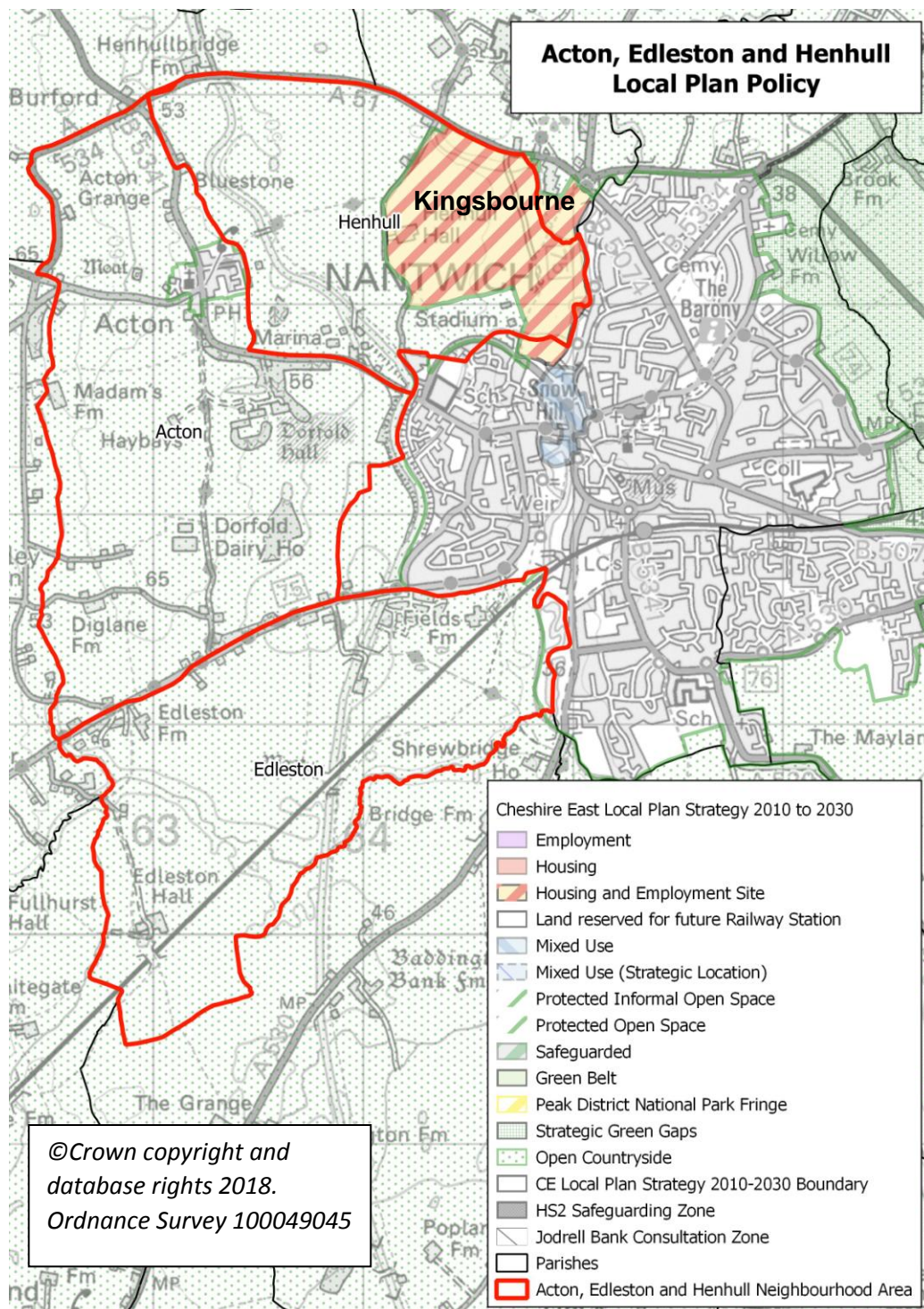
- the village of Acton is a *“village with a defined settlement boundary”*, where there are no plans to amend the settlement boundary to accommodate Local Plan Strategic sites.
- Acton is one of the settlements which it is intended will have an ‘infill boundary’ in the emerging (SADPD). This would supersede the current settlement boundary.
- Acton counts as *“other settlements and rural villages”* (OSRV) in the Local Plan settlement hierarchy. The abutting town of Nantwich is included as a key service centre.
- Strategic Site LPS46, Kingsley Fields, Nantwich (now referred to as Kingsbourne) - a development of up to 1,100 new homes, a new mixed-use local centre for local needs including a convenience store, retail units, B1 office uses; public house; and community hall, provision of a site for a new primary school or a financial contribution, a new highway link to Waterlode, the re-alignment of the A51 through the site, up to 2 hectares of B1 uses (business) and the incorporation of green infrastructure. Figure A shows

ACTON EDLESTON AND HENHULL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Kingsbourne in the context of the key service centre of Nantwich. The site lies in the Parish of Henhull, but due to its close proximity to Nantwich, Cheshire East has attributed the housing numbers to the figures for Nantwich, rather than the Parishes. In practice such development will provide local homes for any demand from the Parishes and for homes in the Parishes.

- Other permitted sites set out in the SADPD Nantwich Settlement Report FD38 are: land at Greenbank Cottage, and Malbank Waters (NPS14 and Sub 2135) (Figure C).
- The vast majority of the Parishes are designated as 'open countryside'.

Figure A: Local Plan Policy showing Strategic Site LPS46, Kingsbourne (known as Kingsley Fields in the Local Plan Strategy) in the context of Key Settlement of Nantwich



1.3 OUR APPROACH

- 1.3.1 The AEHNP has been led by a small NP steering committee taking its lead from the Parish Council and the views of members of the public who live and work in the Parishes. The process has been in progress for about three years. The key activities are set out in Chapter 2.
- 1.3.2 A strong message emerging from the consultation process was that the local people are proud of the village character and have a very strong desire to retain the Parishes' natural and historical environment. However the Parish Council is also mindful that it represents and will represent people who have and will move into new homes on two housing developments which have been permitted on greenfield sites within the Parishes boundaries adjacent to the edges of the market town of Nantwich.
- 1.3.3 In preparing the AEHNP background information has been gathered from consultations with local residents, community groups, professional bodies, Cheshire East Council and its partnerships. The development of the AEHNP has also drawn on the AEH Parish Plan which was published in March 2005.
- 1.3.4 AEHPC felt a NP would give it the opportunity to:
- establish a vision for the future of the area, write policies to deliver this vision such as choosing where they want, or if they want, new homes, shops, businesses etc. to be built;
 - have its say on what buildings should look like;
 - influence and better new buildings and any other changes proposed for the area subject to acceptance by Cheshire East's planning policies;
 - identify and take account of the settlements' history, features, environment and demographics and the changing settlement pattern resulting from the permitted new housing developments;
 - identify projects which are of importance to the local community, which could be delivered as part of the Neighbourhood Plan;
 - take into account the impact of recent and proposed planning decisions.
- 1.3.5 AEHPC took account of the feedback from local people in preparing its vision, which then led to the setting of objectives, which in turn determined the policies which should be included in the NP. The key areas which arose from the consultations, research and baseline evidence that was commissioned are as follows:
- the importance of the landscape character and views, setting and environment including habitats;
 - the richness of heritage assets and their future sustainability and interpretation;
 - the impact of traffic and transport on the area, and the importance of sustainable means of transport including the significance of footpath and cyclepath linkages and other environmental improvements;
 - the current wide variation in access to strong mobile signals and high speed broadband communications;
 - community facilities;
 - location, type and design of any new development whether it be residential, employment or agricultural.
- 1.3.6 This AEHNP sets out a series of policies, which must be considered in guiding any development, preparation and assessment of planning applications for the Neighbourhood Area for the period from 2019 to 2030. It is a local document put together by volunteers from our community with input from technical experts and is based on local consultation. The objective is to shape the locality in terms of quality and location of development and in terms of aspirations for community facilities in the future.

2. PROCESS IN DEVELOPING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2.1.1 The steps taken developing the Plan were as follows:

- February 2016: issued a questionnaire to the households of the Parishes;
- April 2016: designation of the AEHNP area;
- May 2016: held an annual parish meeting, which referred to the AEHNP;
- April – to October 2016 analysing the results of the questionnaire;
- October 2016: held an open Neighbourhood Plan meeting;
- October 2016 to November 2017: regular updates of progress to Parish Council, liaison with Cheshire East, gathering information, commissioning studies and Plan drafting;
- April 2017: receipt of Rural Place Reports from Cheshire Community Action (CCA) (Background Documents 6A and 6B)
- April 2017: commissioned Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT) to undertake a biodiversity report;
- August 2017: receipt of draft AEH Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (AEHLSCA) (Background Document 2);
- December 2017: issued brief for assisting completion of first draft AEHNP;
- December 2017: applied for funding to assist finalising the draft AEHNP;
- December 2017: circulation for comment of draft AEHNP and supporting evidence documents to all Parish Councillors and steering group;
- January 2018: notified of successful funding application;
- January 2018: receipt of draft 'Protecting and Enhancing Acton Edleston and Henhull's Natural Environment' (CWT Report) (Background Document 1);
- February 2018: incorporation of CWT Report evidence and comments on Plan;
- February 2018: appointed CCA to undertake work to help complete draft AEHNP;
- March 2018: receipt of final AEHLSCA;
- April 2018: receipt of updated CWT Report;
- April 2018: first draft Plan circulated to Cheshire East for comment and for SEA screening;
- July 2018 applied for funding to undertake proposed plan amendments and assist with consultation;
- July 2018 – January 2019 amendments including those in response to Historic England's comments on SEA screening;
- February 2019: final draft Plan for Regulation 14 consultation completed.

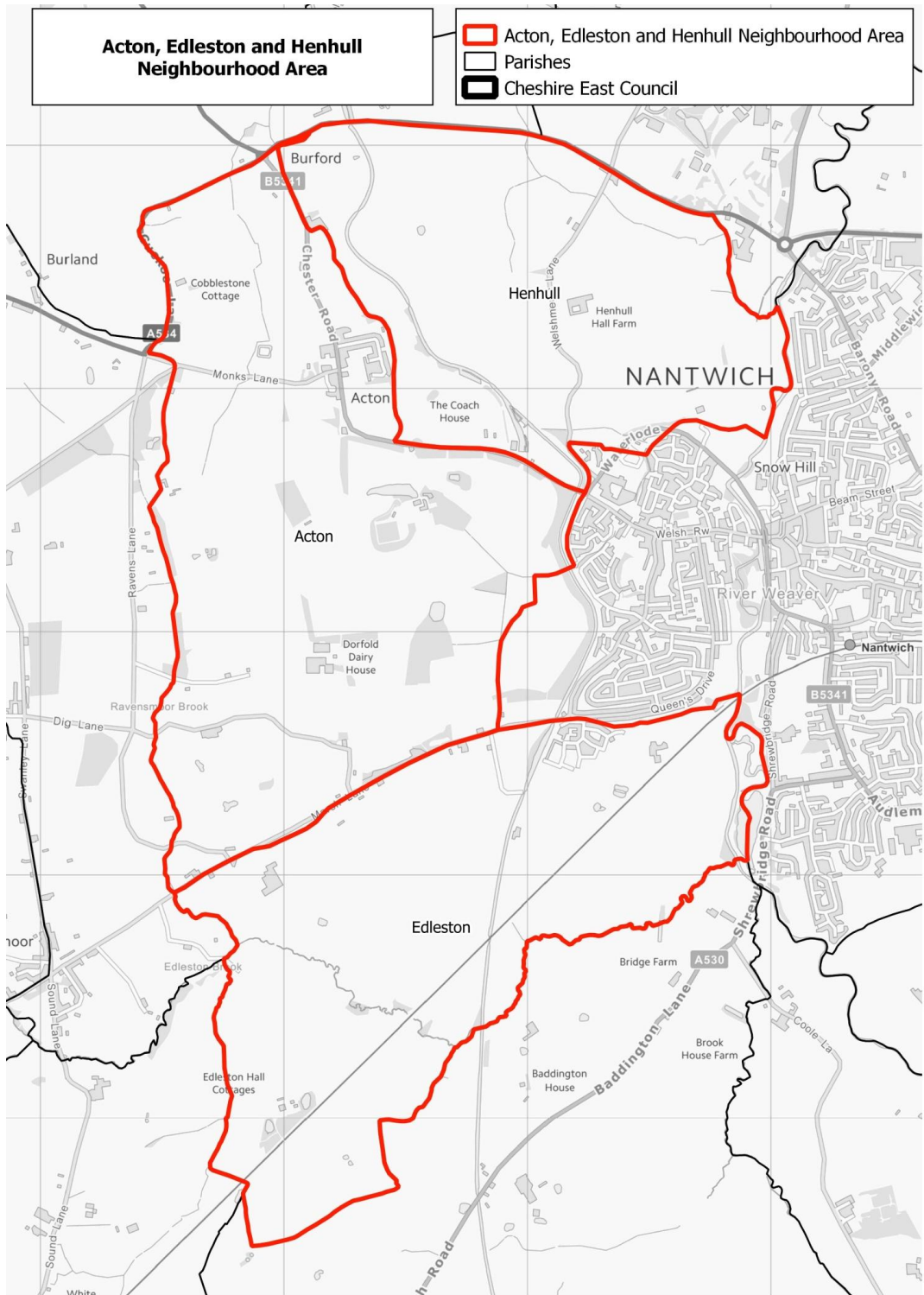
2.1.2 Future steps to be undertaken are;

- Consult the community, statutory bodies and stakeholders on the draft AEHNP;
- Make any amendments to the AEHNP following consultation;
- Submit the plan to Cheshire East for examination;
- Consider and incorporate the examiner's recommendations;
- Publication of the referendum information statement
- Referendum;
- Publication and making of the AEHNP.

3. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

3.1.1 Cheshire East Borough Council designated the neighbourhood area as applied for by AEHPC, as the Acton, Edleston and Henhull Neighbourhood Area pursuant to section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 on 8 April 2016. The boundary of the designated area is shown on the map below. The Neighbourhood Area is consistent with the Parishes of Acton, Edleston and Henhull.

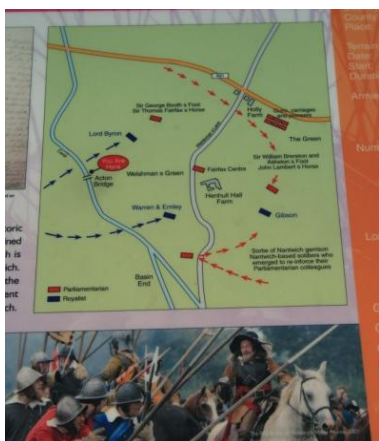
Figure B: Acton, Edleston and Henhull Neighbourhood Plan Designated Area



4. DESCRIPTION OF ACTON, EDLESTON AND HENHULL

4.1 ACTON, EDLESTON AND HENHULL – THEN AND NOW

- 4.1.1 The Parishes are in the heart of the South Cheshire plain and lie between the Peckforton Hills (the Sandstone Ridge) in the west and the foothills of the Peak District in the east.
- 4.1.2 The civil parish of Acton was on the eastern edge of the Forest of Mondrem in the Bronze Age, giving rise to the name Actune, meaning 'oak town', from the predominant pedunculate oaks. An area north of Acton village was enclosed in the 8th and 9th centuries, and ancient field systems can be discerned elsewhere in this and the adjacent modern civil parishes. The Ancient Parish of Acton can be traced back to the 11th century, being one of the largest in the "Nantwich Hundred" consisting of 17 townships, which are said to have been created between 1086 and 1260.
- 4.1.3 Most of the villages within the Parishes have names that can be traced back to pre-Conquest times although the spelling changes from century to century. Acton itself (Actune) means "Oak Town" whilst Henhull or Henhill was a place for Woodhens or other wildfowl. The Parish of Henhull was the seat of the family of that name and in recent years has yielded a rich collection of artefacts through metal detecting.
- 4.1.4 Early land usage was mainly agricultural and forestry, with wood being used as fuel for salt production in Nantwich. As deforestation continued throughout the Middle Ages, animal husbandry and cereal production grew in importance and by the end of the 16th century, the forest had largely been cleared. Acton appears in the Domesday Book of 1086. It was one of the largest and wealthiest townships in the Nantwich Hundred. There is evidence of some related industries such as wheelwrights but the villages remained small and compact.
- 4.1.5 Part of the 17th century civil wars, including the Battle of Nantwich in 1644, took place adjacent to the village. The Royalists' headquarters were at Acton, with its artillery massed in Acton churchyard and regiments quartered in a circle around Nantwich. Parliamentarians supported by a garrison from Nantwich broke through the Royalist centre, and many Royalist soldiers defected to the Parliamentarians, the remainder surrendered or fled. Many of the officers took refuge in Acton Church, and were also taken prisoner after surrendering on terms. There is an annual re-enactment of the battle by The Sealed Knot each January.
- 4.1.6 The registered battlefield extends north from Chester Road to north of the A51 (Figure K). In the west it skirts round the centre of Acton village, running west of the main road through the village, and in the east the boundary of the registered battlefield is Welshman's Lane, although the battle extended further east.



Battlefield interpretation



Acton Church and stone cross

- 4.1.7 The tower at Acton Church dates originally from the 12th or 13th century, and is one of the earliest in Cheshire. Much of the remainder of the church dates from the 15th century, although the chantry and the north aisle windows are 14th century. There is evidence of an earlier church because the church at Acton and its subsidiary chapels together with some plough land, were given to the abbot of the Cistercian Combermere Abbey at its foundation in 1133.
- 4.1.8 Dorfold Estate covers much of the civil parish of Acton, and includes farmhouses, farmland, woodland and historic parkland. Dorfold Estate extends over 125 hectares and comprises the Hall, the gardens associated with the Hall and the wider parkland. Dorfold or Deofold means "cattle enclosure" or "deer park". It does not appear in the Domesday survey, but according to some sources Edwin, Earl of Mercia, brother-in-law to Harold II, had a hall there before the Conquest and a manor at Dorfold is recorded in Henry III's reign.
- 4.1.9 The Hall is open to the public on Tuesdays. Dorfold Hall has recently become a venue for high class weddings and receptions. The owners have plans for the areas close to the Hall and walled gardens to accommodate this use in a more permanent building and for other low key business uses as part of an overall strategy for the sustainability of the Estate.
- 4.1.10 Historically, agriculture was the major employment sector for the Parishes. In 1831, for example, 64% of men over 20 in Acton parish were farmers or agricultural labourers. By the 2001 census, however, agriculture had been replaced by the service industries as the largest employer.
- 4.1.11 Heritage assets are abundant across the Parishes. More detail is set out in the AEHLSCA (Background Document 2) which was undertaken to help inform policies for the Neighbourhood Plan, and the information on listed buildings (Background Document 3) , which form part of the evidence base for this AEHNP.
- 4.1.12 The centre of Acton village has been designated a conservation area. Apart from the church, the oldest buildings are a pair of Grade II listed red-brick almshouses in the churchyard which were built in 1613.
- 4.1.13 The parish hall in Acton village was built in 1909 and has been updated and extended. Having two reasonably sized halls, it forms a venue for local theatrical and operatic performances and provides a meeting place for many local organisations.



Acton Parish Hall



Gates to Dorfold Hall

- 4.1.14 Council houses were built in the late 1940s, which represented much improved living conditions for local people. The council development of over 30 red brick semi-detached houses along Wilbraham Road was extended to include 16 bungalows. Some is under private ownership; others are managed by Cheshire East's social housing provider.

ACTON EDLESTON AND HENHULL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Detached and semi-detached properties were built in the early 1990s at St. Mary's Court, backing onto the car park. At the end of the 20th and start of 21st centuries small scale infill developments in the village which have included barn conversions and new buildings at Church Farm, Village Farm and The Star have been built.



- 4.1.15 The village is bisected by the Chester Road, formerly an A-road. The Chester Road is a busy route for traffic passing to and from Nantwich. It is described as follows: *“Chester Road has a significant negative impact on the village, both physically, with its scale and the speeds at which vehicles can travel along the road acting as a barrier to movement, and perceptually, as the road presents an engineered, hard furrow through the centre of the village, separating facilities such as the Church and Village pub from the main residential area, the car park and the School.”*¹
- 4.1.16 The car park opposite the former pub (The Star) is an important hub, used extensively for services at the Church, by parents dropping off children to the primary school (although a little distance away with a walk along a narrow footpath on the main road) and by walkers, those catching the bus and for functions at the parish hall.
- 4.1.17 In the 1770s the Chester Canal, from the River Dee to Nantwich, was built wide to enable river boats such as the 14ft Mersey Flats to use it. The odd angle between Nantwich Basin and the next stretch is because the southern section is a newer (completed in 1835), narrow canal. The canal runs through the Parishes in Henhull from the north west to the south east. The southern part is raised on the Nantwich Embankment, incorporating the Thomas Telford 1826 single-arched cast iron aqueduct, which is a Grade II* listed structure and spans the Chester Road carrying the canal. Sculptures alongside the canal in this area form part of a community art project, including the 'Nantwich Horse', constructed from recycled lock gates, hinges and bolts.



¹ Acton Edleston and Henhull Environmental Improvements Report, Martin Stockley Associates, 2009

- 4.1.18 Basin End Marina or Nantwich Canal Centre, provides a focus for canal activity in the Parishes, where there are moorings for up to 40 boats and canal-related businesses including a boatyard, boat hire and shop, cafe and launderette.
- 4.1.19 The Chester Canal Conservation Area covers the section of canal from the north of the Neighbourhood Area to and including Basin End Marina.
- 4.1.20 Footpaths or pavements along roads tend to be narrow and easily become over-run with vegetation. There are narrow footpaths along the south side of Chester Road from the aqueduct through the village to Bluestones cross roads and along the north side through the village and along the north side of Monks Lane. The Parishes are reasonably well served by north-south rural footpaths and a well-used route runs west from Acton village to Swanley. There is a connection from the village to the Shropshire Union Canal towpath on the east of the canal. The towpath, from Acton to the aqueduct forms part of the long distance Two Saints Way (a 92-mile pilgrimage route between the cathedral cities of Chester and Lichfield), which passes through the Parishes (Figure N).
- 4.1.21 The westernmost part of the Crewe and Nantwich 29-mile circular walk passes through the Parishes. From south to north, it crosses fields west of Nantwich Lake, along Marsh Lane, north along the track through Dorfold registered park and garden, through the village of Acton, across the canal linking to Welshmans Lane and the A51.
- 4.1.22 Specific cycle provision in the Parishes comprises short lengths of cycle lanes on highway and cycle track under the aqueduct connecting to the toucan crossings on three arms of the Chester Road/ Waterlode road junction, the footway/ cycle track on town side of Waterlode linked to toucan crossings at the Football ground traffic lights and the central refuge crossing of the A51 at Welshmans Lane junction.

Recent and Proposed Development

- 4.1.23 Newly built and consented housing developments in the Parishes have changed and will further change the settlement pattern. As changes from farming and shifting land ownership occur, greenfield sites have been consented mainly for housing development. There are two main locations, where this has occurred.
- 4.1.24 Malbank Waters is a development of just under 400 houses which has been consented in two phases, the first of which (in January 2019) is completed and the second under construction. It is located to the south of Queen's Drive which previously was the southern edge to the built up area of Nantwich, and east of the Shropshire Union Canal. The Canal has now become a strong western boundary of the town of Nantwich.



Malbank Waters



ACTON EDLESTON AND HENHULL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 4.1.25 Kingsbourne is a consented scheme of up to 1,100 houses with some employment, community facilities and a possible primary school. It will extend the western edge of Nantwich's built up area beyond the River Weaver westwards to Welshmans Lane, north to the A51 and south to Waterlode and the Nantwich Football Club ground and stadium. There is also a smaller consented scheme for 19 houses on the east side of Welshman's Lane (land at Greenbank Cottage), close to the allotments.
- 4.1.26 There are concerns about the impact these developments will have on traffic generally in the area and specifically through Acton village. There is already traffic build-up morning and evening along the A51, which will be added to from new households. Although schemes to improve traffic management are included in both developments, there is concern that they will not ensure traffic movement does not deteriorate. A short road link south of the canal (Taylor Drive/ Edmund Wright Way link) has been completed (February 2019).
- 4.1.27 Barn conversions and a small development in the village of Acton have been approved. The barn conversions have been implemented. The remainder of the scheme was re-submitted, with a different design, and with removal of any affordable element to the development based on a confidential viability assessment. It is under construction.
- 4.1.28 The landowner of the Dorfold Estate is in the process of preparing an application for housing on land it owns opposite the Church and behind the former Star pub and Village Farm barn conversions. This will be brought forward as development relating to the long-term sustainability of Dorfold Hall. In preparation for this planning application, Dorfold Estate's planning consultants ran a three-day design charrette in June 2017. The application may also propose a rearranged car park with a pub with rooms on the current car park site. Further consultation discussions with the Parish Council have taken place, a further public event was held in May 2018 and the applicant engaged with a community group on design codes in late 2018. The planning application is anticipated early in 2019.
- 4.1.29 The Parish Council is very mindful that it should consider the needs and aspirations of a wider group of residents who live in less rural and more suburban surroundings from now on. Acton used to be the largest settlement and therefore the parish with the greatest number of households. However the 2017 numbers provided by Cheshire East (Acton 143, Edleston 266, Henhull 26) demonstrate that there are a greater number of households now in Malbank Waters (Edleston). Some 50 houses are already occupied in Kingsbourne (Henhull) (February 2019).



Thomas Telford Aqueduct



Kingsbourne (January 2019)

4.2 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND CHARACTER

- 4.2.1 The area is relatively flat, with an average elevation of around 50 to 60 metres. The high point is 61m at Acton village; with low points of 43m at Nantwich Aqueduct and below 50m along Edleston Brook. The geology is Keuper marl, with glacial sand deposit underlying Acton village. Glacial boulders originating in Cumbria, such as the Bluestone are occasionally uncovered. One such boulder was unearthed during road building near the location of the Burford cross roads of the A51 and A534 – which is referred to locally as ‘Bluestones cross roads’.
- 4.2.2 Outside Acton village and the new developments, settlement is sparse, and over 90% of the Neighbourhood Area of 765 hectares was open land. The predominant land usage is agricultural, mainly dairy with some arable, predominantly fodder crops and cereals. Recent permissions for large housing developments where the Parishes abut the town of Nantwich have and will change the rural character of those parts of the Parishes, creating suburban-type settlements.
- 4.2.3 The importance of the landscape character, important local views, and the natural environment has been recognised by the commissioning of a Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (AEHLSCA) and the CWT Report ‘Protecting and Enhancing Acton, Edleston and Henhull’s Natural Environment’ to help inform the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/



Open countryside in Acton



River Weaver across to Malbank Waters

4.3 COMMUNITY PROFILE

- 4.3.1 The Neighbourhood Area comprises rural Parishes to the west of Nantwich that have had sizeable new developments permitted on greenfield land where the Parishes border the market town of Nantwich. Historically settlement was dispersed rural farms and houses. The only settlement was centred on the village of Acton.
- 4.3.2 The community profile analysis presents a picture of AEH from data from the 2011 census, which have been compiled into Rural Community Profiles (Background Documents 6A and 6B) www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/. It is recognised that the data represent aspects of the community prior to the more recent permitted housing developments which have been built in Edleston at Malbank Waters and at Church Farm in Acton. Whilst there will already have been changes in housing stock and community characteristics, further change is happening as the Kingsbourne development delivers up to 1,100 new houses and some employment growth in Henhull.
- 4.3.3 In the absence of more recent data, the community profile has been based on the 2011 census data. It is considered that whilst these profiles will probably remain true for the rural areas and Acton village; it is anticipated that profiles for the new communities at Malbank Waters and Kingsbourne will differ and may more closely resemble the averages for England, against which the AEH data are compared below.
- 4.3.4 A more detailed description of the community profile is contained in AEHNP Appendix 1: Community Profile Information. Important considerations for the NP include:
- The number of people over the age of 65 and the number of single pensioner households was higher than the average for England;
 - The percentage of economically active residents is higher than the England average and the percentage of self-employed and people working from home is much higher than the England average;
 - The percentage of housing which is social rented in the Parishes is lower than that for Cheshire East and England;
 - The percentage of households without a car is less than that for Cheshire East and about a third that for England. The percentage of households with one to more than four cars is higher than for both Cheshire East and England.



Newly occupied houses and houses under construction on Kingsbourne development

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1.1 The NP is a community plan and must derive its vision, objectives and policies from the community. From the outset the Parish Council was determined that residents should be kept informed and given every opportunity to inform the steering group of their views.
- 5.1.2 To engage with residents it was considered essential to hold public meetings to explain the NP process, ask for views and give updates on progress; to ask residents their views through a questionnaire; and to consult on draft policies.

5.2 THE HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE

- 5.2.1 The Neighbourhood Plan consultation questionnaire (Background Document 7) www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/ was undertaken in the early part of 2016. 211 questionnaires were issued and 78 returned, giving approximately a 37% return rate.
- 5.2.2 The questionnaire focussed on why people live in the Parishes, what they feel are important issues, whether they are satisfied with infrastructure and transport and what they feel about the possibility of more housing and/ or other development. At the time of issuing the questionnaire only a limited number of households in Malbank Waters were occupied and therefore had the opportunity to complete a questionnaire. The findings therefore should be read in the context that they do not necessarily represent the views of residents new to the area. However it should be noted that a number of occupants of Malbank Waters did attend an early open meeting.
- 5.2.3 The most commonly cited reason for living or moving to the Parishes was 'open countryside'. This was followed closely by 'village/ rural life and 'tranquillity'. One factor which came through strongly in the written responses is the passion that people feel about protecting the rural feel to the Parishes and the view that too many housing developments in the vicinity have ignored local characteristics of the market town of Nantwich in their design and layout and do not focus on creating communities with open space and amenities. The desirability of maintaining open space between Acton and Nantwich was mentioned.
- 5.2.4 People were asked about the infrastructure where they lived. Most people felt that main utilities were good or acceptable. Over half the respondents stated that mobile phone coverage was poor. Of those who responded on the quality of broadband, 24% thought it was good, 44% unacceptable and 32% thought it was poor. This divergence of views represented geographic different broadband speeds across the Parishes. Comments also referred to the very poor mobile phone and broadband reception. Since the questionnaire, fibre optic cable has been installed in some areas, improving broadband speeds – but there are also areas which still suffer from very slow speeds and poor mobile coverage. 40% of people responding felt that roads and pavements are poor.
- 5.2.5 People were asked to score the importance of identified local issues on a scale of 1 to 10. The issues ranked in order of importance were: 'the natural environment', 'the historic environment', 'transport and roads', 'infrastructure', 'leisure and recreation', 'jobs and economy' and 'housing'. People were asked how important it is to maintain, protect and improve the natural environment and rural character of the Parishes. No-one said it was 'not important'. 86% said it was 'very important' and 13% said it was 'important'.
- 5.2.6 People were asked to choose up to three characteristics that they would want the area to be in 15 years time. In order of stated preferences these were: 'rural', 'safe', 'attractive', 'good local amenities', 'tranquil', 'traditional', 'accessible', 'prosperous', and 'vibrant'. Respondents were also asked about any other issues which should be covered in the

AEHNP. Suggested topics included the need to preserve the valuable rural and countryside feel, heritage asset identification and retention, a robust design policy for any development, and infrastructure improvements including better mobile and broadband.

- 5.2.7 Information was given about planning permissions for new homes in the Parishes and people were asked to think about the housing needs for the Parishes in the period 2015 to 2030 and consider how many houses could be sustainably built. Of those who responded, 50% said less than 100 houses, 34% said no houses and 16% said more than 100 houses. When asked *“Would you be in favour of consideration being given to small scale housing development where there are wider public benefits?”* 61% said ‘yes’ and 37% said ‘no’.
- 5.2.8 People were asked what type of housing they consider to be most appropriate, with the option to choose three types listed and/or suggest other types. The order ranked from highest to lowest was: ‘affordable housing’, ‘1-2 bedroom properties’, ‘3-4 bedroom properties’ ranked equal with ‘eco-friendly homes’, ‘retirement housing’, ‘no houses at all’, ‘bungalows’, ‘5+ bed houses’, ‘community housing’.
- 5.2.9 People were asked what, if any, other type of development would be supported in the Parishes. People could choose up to three. The order ranked from highest to lowest was: ‘doctors’, ‘public house’, ‘no development’, ‘school(s)’, ‘retail’, ‘small employment workshops’, and ‘community centre’. There was most support for a new primary school to be located in the Kingsbourne development rather than expanding in Acton or building a new school in Acton. Additional comments included the desirability of schools being near where homes are built and parking issues associated with Acton School. A number of people mentioned the lack of open space and a playground for children in Acton.
- 5.2.10 Grave concerns were expressed by many respondents about the current congestion on roads and the likely worsening of the situation which will result from additional traffic generated by new housing developments. Residents were asked which transport they used most frequently. Car was by far the most frequently used, followed by walking, then bus. Comments about satisfaction with provision of transport included the need for bus and train services to continue and for bus services to be supported. There were many comments about footpath quality and the need for more footpaths to encourage walking. People also mentioned the need for more cycle lanes.
- 5.2.11 People also commented about speeding through the Parishes, the desire for improved traffic calming, restrictions on HGV use and the need for better road repairs such as potholes.

5.3 PARISH PLAN PROJECTS

- 5.3.1 The AEH Parish Plan was completed and launched in 2005 (Background Document 8) www.acton-parish-council-org.uk/ Many of the projects in the Parish Plan have been delivered or progress made. There are some projects listed that have not been delivered, which are still important to local people. Some are beyond the remit of a NP, as they may not be land based, or be aspirational. Where issues are land use based it was felt that these should be included within the AEHNP after further consultation with residents. Being mindful of the time span since the Parish Plan and the potentially different aspirations of people living in the new suburban developments at Malbank Waters, the NP also sought views on what other initiatives local people might want.
- 5.3.2 The relevant Parish Plan projects and their links to Neighbourhood Plan policies are described in AEHNP Background Document 9 and covered in Neighbourhood Plan policies ENV5, ENV6, DEV1, COMM2, TRA1 and TRA2.

6. VISION AND OBJECTIVES

6.1 VISION

6.1.1 The vision for the Parishes of Acton, Edleston and Henhull is drawn from the core themes and issues which have arisen during consultation and baseline research for this Neighbourhood Plan.

In 2030 Acton, Edleston and Henhull will have:

- **Residents who retain a close relationship with the open countryside and wildlife.**
- **An economically viable landscape with wider field margins, mature specimen trees, a range of habitats and biodiversity with no obvious horsiculture.**
- **Preserved, protected and enhanced heritage assets.**
- **An improved sense of place and vitality for Acton village.**
- **Any new development of agriculture, employment, housing or recreation will be in keeping with the local character and be of good design making a positive contribution to the surroundings.**
- **Communities which are well connected to the existing settlement and countryside by improved footpaths and cycle ways.**
- **More use of sustainable transport.**
- **Traffic management which is sensitive to the needs of local residents.**
- **A thriving canal business at Basin End.**
- **High speed broadband across the Parishes.**

6.2 OBJECTIVES

6.2.1 These objectives set out more detail from the vision. They are organised under topics, which then follow through in the policies in Chapter 7.

6.2.2 Environment

- To protect and maintain the natural and rural character of the Parishes.
- To retain the views over open countryside and distant hills as a valuable asset of the local landscape character and especially to retain the long and middle distance views of St. Mary's Acton Church and its tower.
- To preserve and enhance the existing wildlife corridors, biodiversity and habitats.
- To restore or create more wildlife-friendly habitat especially where connectivity with other areas of valuable habitat can be achieved or where valuable sites can be buffered.
- To ensure the protection of significant trees, especially the native oak, from which Acton receives its ancient name.
- To ensure an economically viable farming landscape with wide field margins, mature specimen trees, a range of habitats and biodiversity; and with no obvious adverse effects of 'horsiculture'.

6.2.3 Heritage

- To ensure that development does not cause unacceptable harm to the registered battlefield including views across it.
- To ensure that development does not cause unacceptable harm to heritage assets nor to ancient woodland and hedgerows.
- To support the conservation and enhancement of the Parishes' heritage assets and their setting.
- To support a sustainable business model which facilitates the future viability of the Dorfold Estate; and ensures that the benefits derived centre on the Grade I Listed Building.

6.2.4 Development

- To prevent further coalescence between the village of Acton and the western edge of Nantwich.
- To support residential development where it meets identified local need and type.
- To support development for new, small scale, rural based businesses, particularly on brownfield sites and to support the diversification of farms and existing rural businesses.
- To ensure that any new development will be of a very high standard of design, whether it be agricultural, employment, housing or recreational and that architecture and building materials are sympathetic to the surroundings and compatible with other buildings in the vicinity.
- To ensure that new extensions and conversions should also be of a quality and form appropriate to their local context.
- To ensure any new development embraces sustainability and foreseeable future technology including energy efficiency, sustainable water management, and to support proposals which adapt existing development for improved energy efficiency.
- To support the provision for home-working either by conversion, extension or new build within the curtilage of existing homes, provided it is not disproportionate to the existing building(s) and that there is no adverse impact on residential amenity.

6.2.5 Community Infrastructure

- To support proposals which would protect and enhance existing community facilities.
- To support proposals that would allow for the development of new community facilities, such as a pub, post office and community shop, and the conversion of existing buildings to community use.
- To support the provision of high speed broadband and increased connectivity for all properties, providing any necessary equipment is sensitively located.

6.2.6 Transport, traffic, travel, movement and communications

- To link the new communities at Malbank Waters and Kingsbourne with high quality footpaths and cycleways, which will also function well as wildlife corridors, connecting them to the rural parts of the Parishes and to Nantwich.
- To encourage a modal shift towards public transport, cycling, and walking.
- To create an improved sense of place in the village of Acton, to include traffic calming, streetscape and village entrance improvements, safe road crossings and improved footpath, cycleway and pavement connections.
- To implement sustainable transport projects including the off-road connection on Marsh Lane for the Crewe and Nantwich circular walk.
- To ensure traffic management schemes for the wider area consider the sensitivity of the Parishes to excessive traffic movements and prioritise the safety of residents.
- To ensure that any new development in the Parishes which could result in traffic congestion should contribute towards traffic and safety management improvements and that any new roads or streets are designed with clarity of function.
- To ensure the residual cumulative traffic impacts of any proposed development are properly assessed and to refuse consent where adverse impacts are shown to be severe.
- To ensure that signage and street-side infrastructure do not lead to roadside clutter.
- To ensure the long-term provision of convenient car-parking in Acton village.

7. THE POLICIES

7.1 ENVIRONMENT POLICIES

POLICY ENV1: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND SETTING

The landscape character and rural setting of the villages and settlements in Acton, Edleston and Henhull Parishes must be protected and enhanced. To ensure that development is representative of the landscape and settlement character of the Parishes, development proposals should:

- a) respect and enhance the relationship between the built environment and the ‘open countryside’;
- b) maintain long-ranging views (see ENV2)
- c) retain Acton’s character as distinctive from that of Nantwich (see ENV4)
- d) ensure that any development creates a sense of place which is locally inspired and integrates with surroundings;
- e) respect and utilise ‘South Cheshire’ vernacular (see DEV1);
- f) protect significant oak trees and their setting (see ENV6);
- g) ensure adequate provision of useable community open space;
- h) maintain and enhance the heritage assets in the Parishes (see HER1);
- i) mitigate against farming practices which result in narrow field margins, hedgerow removal, pond filling and reduced biodiversity (see ENV5).

All development which impacts on landscape character and setting must demonstrate how it has respected and reinforced existing and historic landscapes. Applications, which lead to the unacceptable fragmentation or loss of important landscape features, open space or particular settlement features, will not normally be permitted.

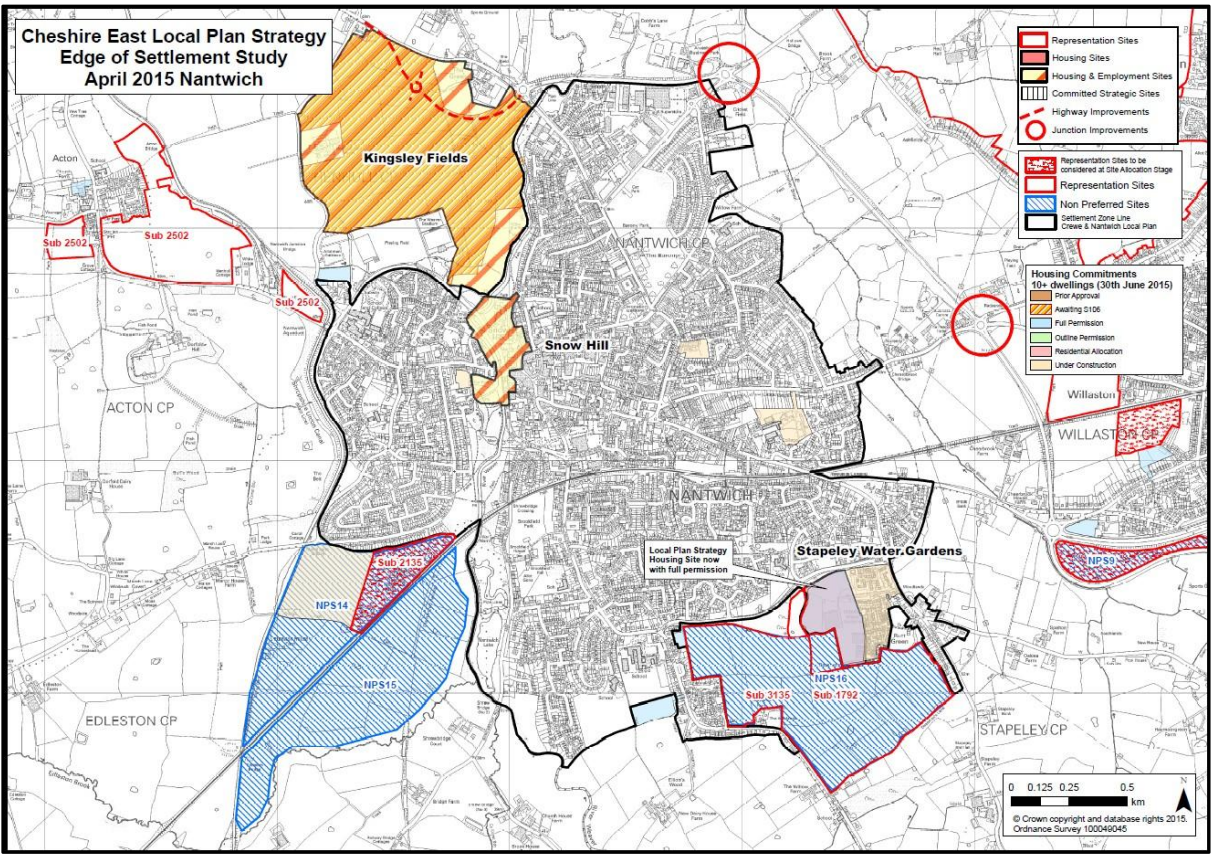
New development should therefore be prioritised on brownfield sites and/ or within the Acton infill boundary (see Figure C and DEV3). Where exceptions in ‘open countryside’ are proposed, Policy ENV3 must be followed.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.1.1 One of the main results from the Neighbourhood Plan consultations was how highly valued the open countryside and rural nature of the Parishes is to residents. The Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (AEHLSCA) (Background Document 2) was undertaken to inform appropriate policies for the Neighbourhood Plan. Additionally, Cheshire Wildlife Trust was commissioned to undertake a study of Acton, Edleston and Henhull’s natural environment (Background Document 1) (CWT Report). Both documents can be viewed at www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/.
- 7.1.2 The 2018 [Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment](#) provides an objective description of the landscape and a strategy for managing the landscape and guiding landscape change in the Borough. It provides an evidence base to inform policies and proposals in the Local Plan. In this 2018 document, the Parishes fall in the Ravensmoor Landscape Character Type 4b. As well as describing the character of the area, it sets out guidance for landscape management and built development, which is provided in AEHNP Appendix 5. It states that the strong rural character should be retained.
- 7.1.3 The AEHLSCA describes in finer detail the Landscape Character Parts of the Parishes. The key features of each Landscape Character Part are mapped and described. The AEHLSCA concludes with a list which, from the assessment undertaken, is deemed to be the key matters for consideration in the Neighbourhood Plan. Points a) to i) in Policy ENV1 above are derived from those key matters. These also accord with the guidance set out in the 2018 Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment.

7.1.4 The NPPF highlights that planning policies should ensure that developments respond to local character and history, the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. The Cheshire East Local Plan Policy SE 4: ‘The Landscape’ requires that all *“development should conserve the landscape character and quality and should where possible, enhance and effectively manage the historic, natural and man-made landscape features that contribute to local distinctiveness of both rural and urban landscapes.”*

Figure C: Representation, Non-preferred and Permitted Housing Development sites in the Parishes and elsewhere in and around Nantwich



Housing at Malbank Waters creates Nantwich's new western built edge fronting the Shropshire Union Canal

POLICY ENV2: VIEWS

Proposed new development must not significantly harm views to local landmarks and those from sensitive receptors in the Neighbourhood Area.

In particular, the visual prominence of Acton's St. Mary's Church and tower, and views across and to the registered battlefield, should not be significantly compromised by new development.

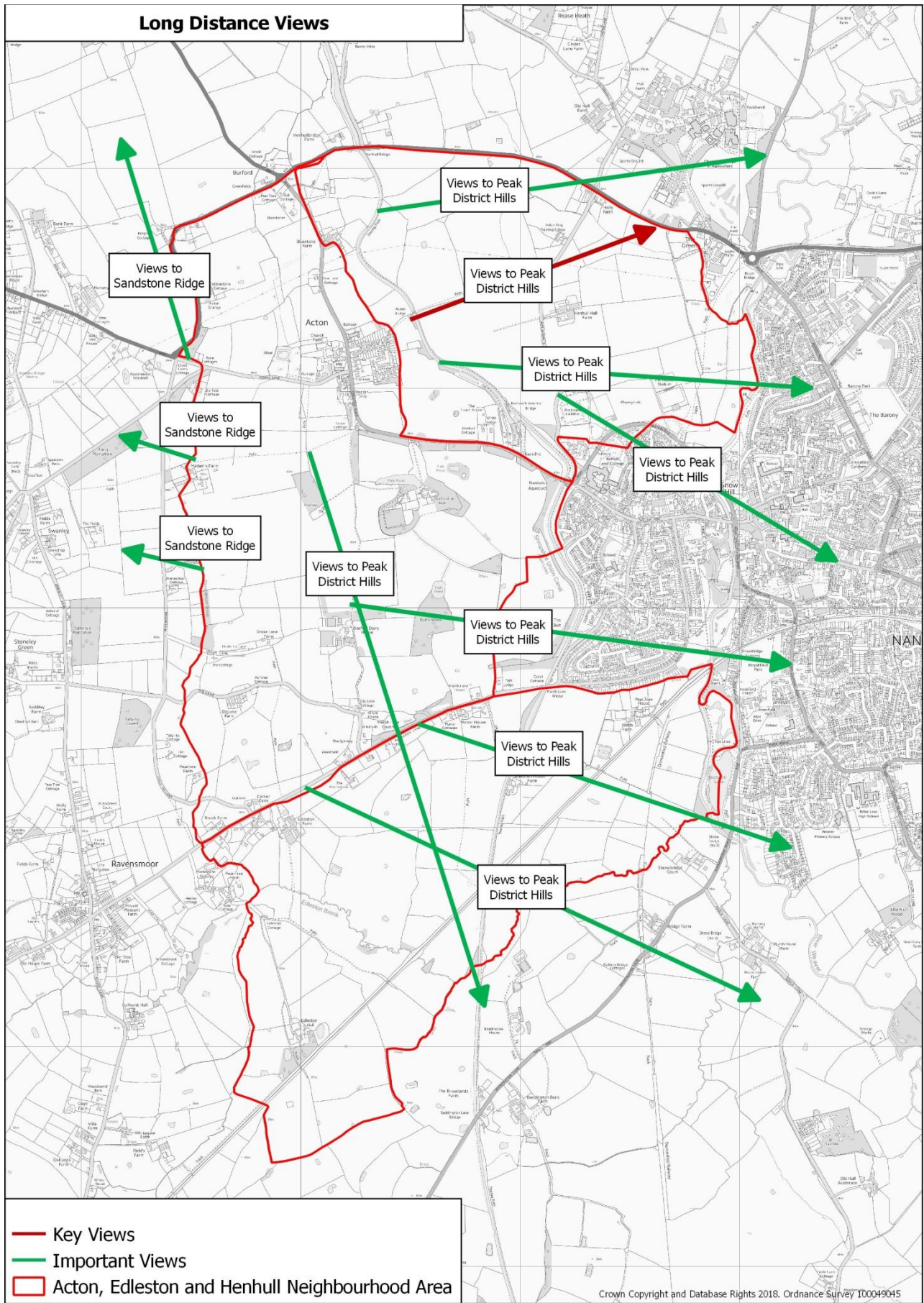
New development should seek to:

- **reinforce and/ or maintain relevant key and important views identified on Figure D;**
- **retain and frame views of the wider countryside, landscape features and distant landforms.**

Evidence and Justification

- 7.1.5 The rural setting of Acton, Edleston and Henhull within the landscape is important to the local community, and in particular there are specific views which should, where possible, be preserved. One of the recommendations of the AEHLSCA was to include a policy within the NP to protect long ranging views, particularly in the Northern Farmland Landscape Character Part as these provide visual interest for views from the area and are visible from elsewhere. Additionally, views of Acton Church tower should be recognised and not compromised by future development - a point which has already been recognised in the setting of urban design principles for the Kingsbourne site.
- 7.1.6 Historic England, during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, has highlighted the need to ensure that views of and across the historic battlefield are protected, and that these sightlines are preserved in development schemes. The key and important views from the Parishes are identified in Figure D.
- 7.1.7 The general topography round Acton village is relatively flat, with some gentle undulations. The slightly elevated position of the village means long-ranging views from the village are available when vegetation or buildings do not eliminate views. This means that peripheral areas of the village and the Church tower are visible from afar. Views of the tower and the Church are also visible from within the village of Acton between the clusters of buildings. The Church is a visible landmark at night as well, with its amber-coloured floodlighting. The Acton Conservation Area Character Appraisal Management Plan (Background Document 10) highlights the importance of views of the Church, which is not only a landmark for long distances, but which demonstrates the connectivity between the Church, Conservation Area and the countryside.
- 7.1.8 The Chester Canal Conservation Area Character Appraisal 2018 (Background Document 11) highlights views of Acton Church tower as a positive element from within and close to the canal corridor.
- 7.1.9 Key views along with photographs and a description of the view can be seen in AEHNP Appendix 3. The NPPF highlights that planning policies and developments should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Policy SE4 – 'The Landscape' written justification highlights that the impacts of proposed developments upon existing landscape and views of the surrounding area should be assessed as part of the planning process.

Figure D: Important and Key Long Distance Views



POLICY ENV3: OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

Development proposals for horsiculture in the ‘open countryside’ will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that there would be no negative visual, landscape and ecological impact and proposals are of a scale and design appropriate for the site. The design of any new building must be appropriate to its intended function and must not be designed to be easily converted or extended to any non-horsiculture use in the future.

New development in the ‘open countryside’ should neither significantly nor cumulatively harm the character of the landscape.

Development in the ‘open countryside’ must demonstrate consideration of the Parishes’ Landscape Character and Settlement Assessment, should be appropriate to its location and in keeping with its surroundings.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.1.10 The high value that local residents place on the open countryside and rural nature of the Parishes was a theme that came across strongly in all consultations in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. The AEHLSCA (Background Document 2) www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/ highlights the important contribution that the open countryside setting makes to the character of the Parishes, and gives design principles that new development should follow.
- 7.1.11 ‘Open countryside’ is defined in the Cheshire East Local Plan Part 1 as the area outside of any settlement with a defined settlement boundary. Acton is currently a village with a defined settlement boundary. Outside of the settlement boundary and the new developments, the rest of the Parishes are classed as ‘open countryside’. However, in the draft Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (August 2018) (SADPD) Policy PG10 it is proposed that the settlement limit at Acton is removed and that Acton is instead defined as an infill village, which does not have a settlement boundary (rather it has an infill boundary within which limited infilling will be supported) and is defined as being in ‘open countryside’.
- 7.1.12 The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy is clear that the preservation of the ‘open countryside’ is a key objective in Policy PG6 – Open Countryside. The Local Plan makes clear that development in the ‘open countryside’ will normally be unacceptable unless it can be shown to be essential to local needs and the rural economy and cannot be accommodated within existing settlements. The NPPF highlights the importance of protecting and enhancing the natural environment.



Rolling countryside of the southern part of Acton Parish

POLICY ENV4: ACTON LOCAL GREEN GAP

The land shown on Figure E is designated as a Local Green Gap in order to prevent coalescence between the western edge of the permitted Kingsbourne development (Welshmans Lane) and the eastern edge of Acton village and to ensure that the openness which is an important element of the Acton village setting is maintained or enhanced and not harmed.

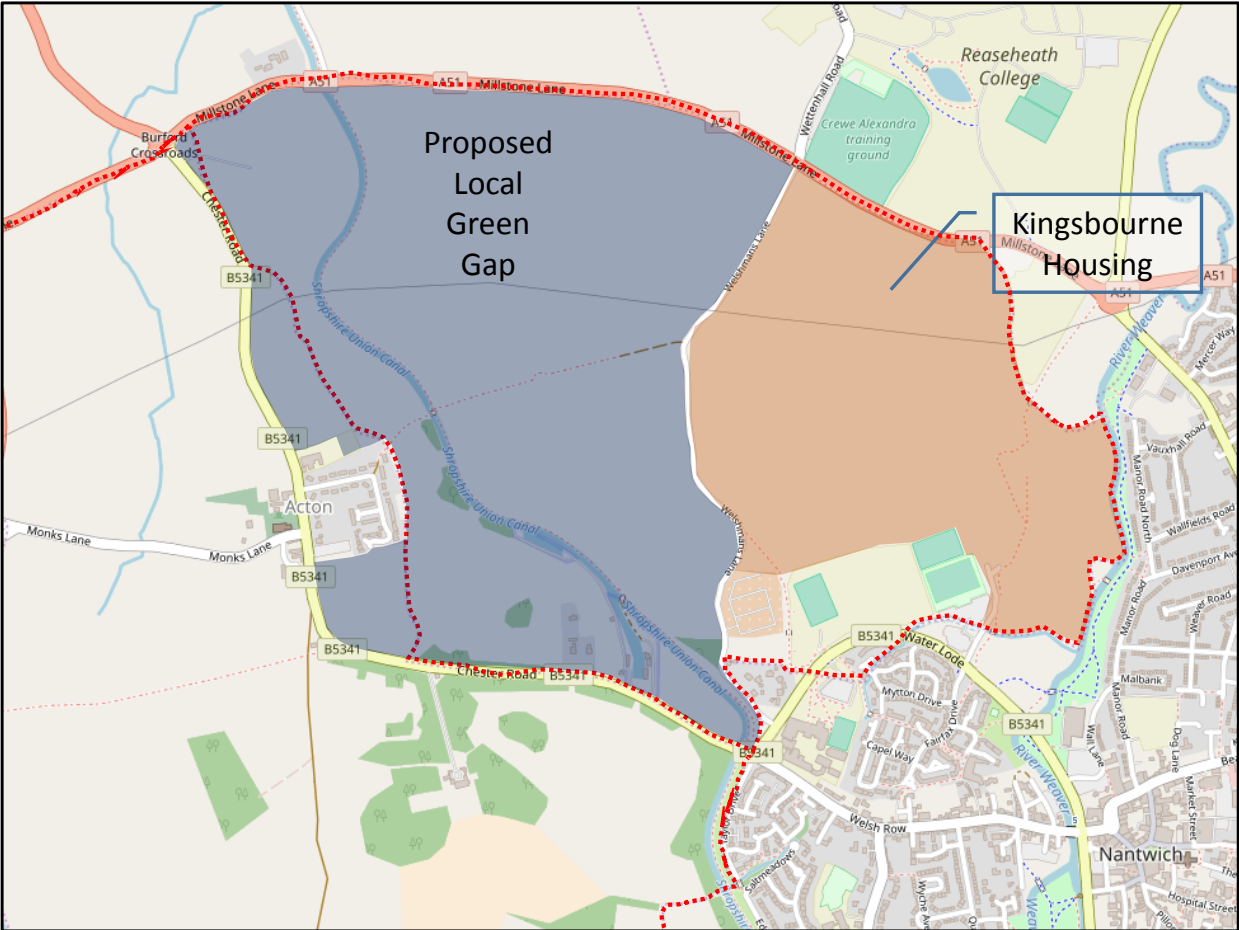
Within the Acton Local Green Gap Cheshire East ‘Open Countryside’ Policy PG6 will apply. In addition planning permission will not be granted for the construction of new buildings or the change of use of existing buildings or land which would:

- a) result in erosion of the physical gap identified in this policy;
- b) adversely affect the visual character of the landscape;
- c) significantly affect the undeveloped character of the Acton Local Green Gap, or lead to coalescence between Acton and nearby development.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.1.13 One of the Neighbourhood Plan’s objectives is to prevent further coalescence between the village of Acton and the western edge of Nantwich. Local Plan Policy PG6 – Open Countryside states that *“the retention of gaps between settlements is important, in order to maintain the definition and separation of existing communities and the individual characters of such settlements”*. The written justification highlights that the protection of gaps will make sure that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside will be recognised and protected.
- 7.1.14 The importance of the Acton’s setting and separate identity is set out in a number of places in the Acton Conservation Area Character Appraisal Management Plan (Background Document 10).
- 7.1.15 The Chester Canal Conservation Area Character Appraisal (Background Document 11) mentions the flat nature of the landscape allowing far reaching views in expressing positive elements of the canal. There are also specific mentions of views in the vicinity of Acton.
- 7.1.16 The AEHLSCA (Background Document 2) highlights the importance of retaining Acton’s character as distinctive from Nantwich, not allowing coalescence between the settlements to take place, and proposed that the land should be designated in the Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Gap.
- 7.1.17 In commenting on an earlier draft of this Neighbourhood Plan, Historic England made the case for ensuring that development does not cause unacceptable harm to the registered battlefield including views across it, which adds weight to the justification for maintaining the openness set out in this policy.
- 7.1.18 The Acton Local Green Gap is designated following advice on local green gaps provided by Cheshire East Council for Neighbourhood Plans. It is considered to align with the approach underpinning Cheshire East’s emerging Local Green Gap policy which will be part of the Local Plan Part 2, and which supports the identification of localised separation policies and Local Green Gaps in Neighbourhood Plans. In particular, in line with advice, the policy will:
- provide long term protection against coalescence;
 - protect the setting and separate identity of the settlement;
 - retain the existing settlement pattern by maintaining openness of land.
- 7.1.19 Further justification of these matters and for the specific boundaries of the Acton Local Green Gap is contained in AEHNP Appendix 4.

Figure E: Local Green Gap



©Crown copyright and database rights 2018. Ordnance Survey 100049045



View looking east across the proposed Acton Local Green Gap to Henhull Farm on Welshmans Lane and Peak District Hills beyond

POLICY ENV5: HABITATS AND WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

Development which will have a significant negative impact on wildlife habitats, green infrastructure in the Parishes, and the areas of high distinctiveness and wildlife corridors identified in Figure F will not be supported. In exceptional circumstances, where the reasons for proposed development clearly outweigh the value of the ecological feature adversely affected and there are no appropriate alternatives, suitable mitigation and/ or compensation must be provided to address the adverse impacts of the proposed development.

The enhancement of wildlife habitats, green infrastructure, and the areas of high distinctiveness and wildlife corridors identified in Figure F will be supported.

Small scale development which would meet the other policy requirements of this Neighbourhood Plan and would preserve or enhance existing wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors and green infrastructure around the Parishes, and allow for the creation of new ones, will be supported.

New developments must not create divisions between existing wildlife corridors (Figure G) and where possible should contribute to the creation of new or improved links.

Development proposals which are adjacent to the areas of medium habitat distinctiveness identified on Figure F must identify these areas in the application and where feasible include proposals for connections to restore and/ or create wildlife-friendly habitat connections to the wildlife corridors.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.1.20 The conservation and enhancement of the natural environment is one of the core objectives of the planning system. The residents of Acton, Edleston and Henhull are keen to protect wildlife and nature conservation interests. One of the key ways to achieve this is to ensure that new developments are appropriately located and do not cause a net loss of biodiversity. Knowing the importance of the countryside to local residents, the Neighbourhood Plan steering group commissioned Cheshire Wildlife Trust to inform and produce appropriate evidence for policies for the Neighbourhood Plan. The CWT Report 'Protecting and Enhancing Acton, Edleston and Henhull's Natural Environment' was published in April 2018 www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/
- 7.1.21 The CWT Report identified the core, high ecological value sites (high distinctiveness) for nature conservation in the Parishes, which are recommended for protection, and medium value sites (semi natural habitat) which should be considered as biodiversity opportunity areas and which should be subject to a full evaluation should they be proposed for future development. Additionally, the report identified key local and regional ecological networks within the NP area that should be protected and enhanced through NP policies.
- 7.1.22 The study identified several areas of high value (distinctiveness) habitat in the Acton, Edleston and Henhull Neighbourhood Area. The habitat distinctiveness map Figure F highlights both areas of high and medium distinctiveness. There are two main parcels of land categorised as 'high distinctiveness' habitat of Principal Importance 1 (priority habitat). One is Bull's Wood and the other is Bridge Farm flushes which is a Local Wildlife Site which immediately abuts the Neighbourhood Planning area.
- 7.1.23 Additionally, there are a large number of land parcels which are designated as 'medium distinctiveness' habitat (displayed as orange on Figure F). Medium distinctiveness habitat represents areas of semi-natural habitat which are usually wildlife-rich but can also act as ecological stepping stones and wildlife corridors.
- 7.1.24 There are also significant areas of woodland, the most significant of which is Bull's Wood in the Dorfold Estate. Ancient woodlands (and plantations on ancient woodland sites) are considered irreplaceable habitats due to the time taken for them to acquire their flora and fauna.

- 7.1.25 The riparian and aquatic habitats in the Parishes of Acton, Edleston and Henhull are probably the most significant habitats for wildlife in the Neighbourhood Area. These habitats not only provide ecological connectivity across the Parishes enabling wildlife to disperse, but also provide foraging/breeding habitat for a large number of species including water voles, otters, dragonflies, damselflies, grey wagtails and kingfishers. There are also a number of field ponds which help contribute to the permeability of the landscape for wildlife. A particularly high density of ponds is found either side of Marsh lane in the south of the Neighbourhood Area. It is highly likely that a proportion of these ponds support great crested newts, a species of Principal Importance also European Protected Species. Ponds have been highlighted as habitat of medium distinctiveness in Figure F and should always be retained where possible if land is developed.
- 7.1.26 Wildlife corridors, such as hedgerows are a key component of wider ecological networks as they provide connectivity between core areas of high wildlife value/distinctiveness enabling mammals, invertebrates, birds and amphibians to move between them to feed, disperse, migrate or reproduce. The CWT Report identified a wildlife corridor network (Figure G) with ecological connectivity within and beyond the Neighbourhood Plan area.
- 7.1.27 The corridor closely follows the River Weaver, Edleston and Ravensmoor Brooks and the canal, incorporating connecting woodlands, hedgerows, ponds and areas of semi-natural grassland. It has good ecological connectivity along most of its length. Figure G incorporates an indicative boundary for the wildlife corridor network. The corridor should be wide enough to protect the valuable habitats identified in Figure F and for this reason a 15 metre buffer zone has been incorporated around any 'high distinctiveness' habitat. The buffer is necessary to help protect vulnerable habitat from factors such as light pollution, ground water pollution, predation by domestic pets and invasive garden species, if adjacent land is developed. Potential development proposals adjacent to a 'high distinctiveness' habitat or the wildlife corridor should incorporate substantial mitigation and avoidance measures to lessen impacts on wildlife.
- 7.1.28 Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is central to the NPPF and sustainable development. Policy SE4 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy seeks to ensure that all development should conserve the landscape character and quality and should, where possible, enhance and effectively manage the historic, natural and man-made features that contribute to local distinctiveness of rural and urban landscapes. Development should preserve local distinctiveness and avoid the loss of habitats of significant landscape importance. Policy SE3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity, part 4, highlights that development proposals which are likely to have a significant adverse impact on habitats, species or on sites including Local Nature Reserves; Sites of Biological Importance (SBI), Local Wildlife Sites; Designated Wildlife Corridors; Areas of Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland; and Nature Improvement Areas will not be permitted except where the reasons for or benefits of the proposed development outweigh the impact of the development.



Nantwich Lake, Edleston

Figure F: Map of Habitat Distinctiveness

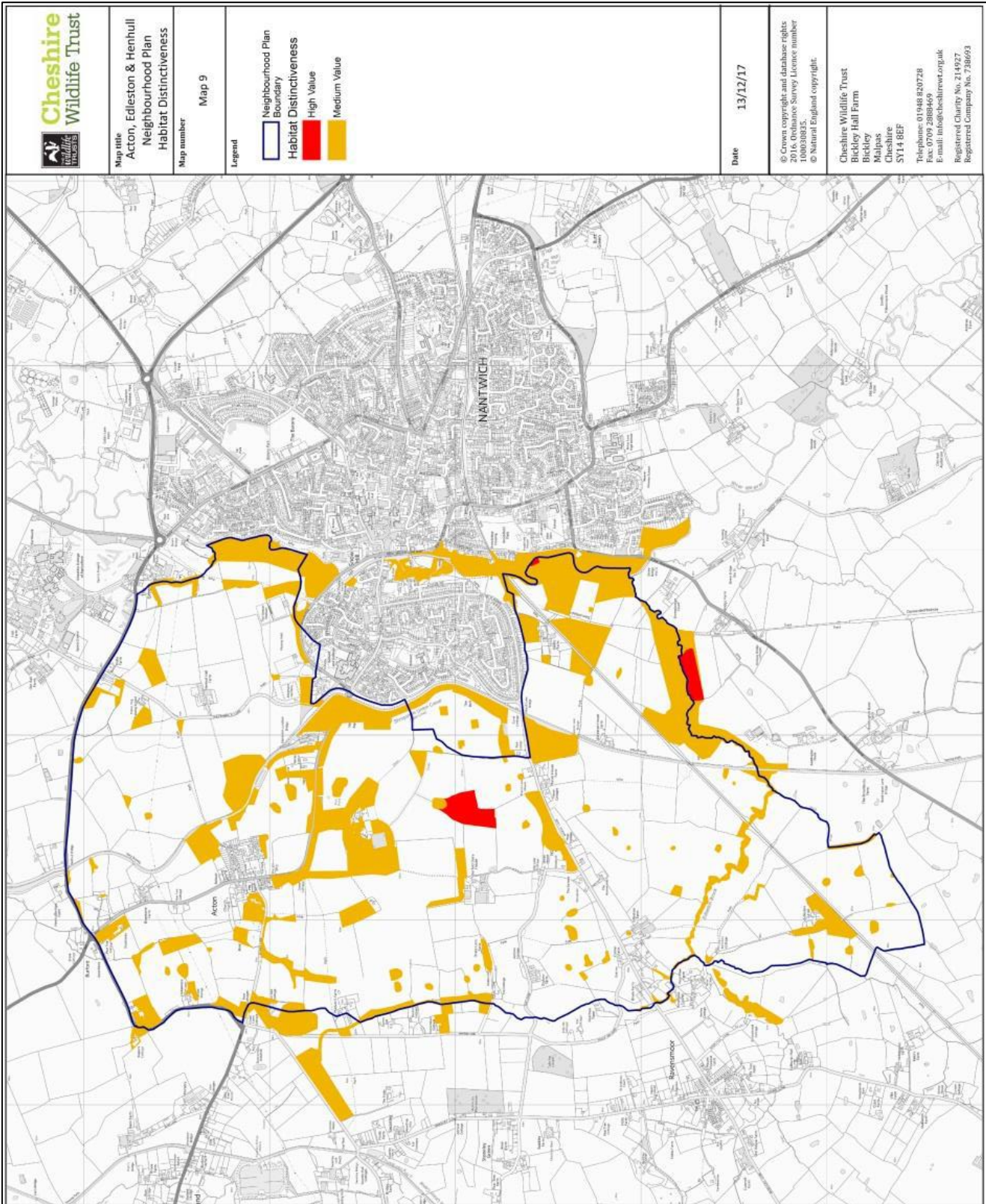
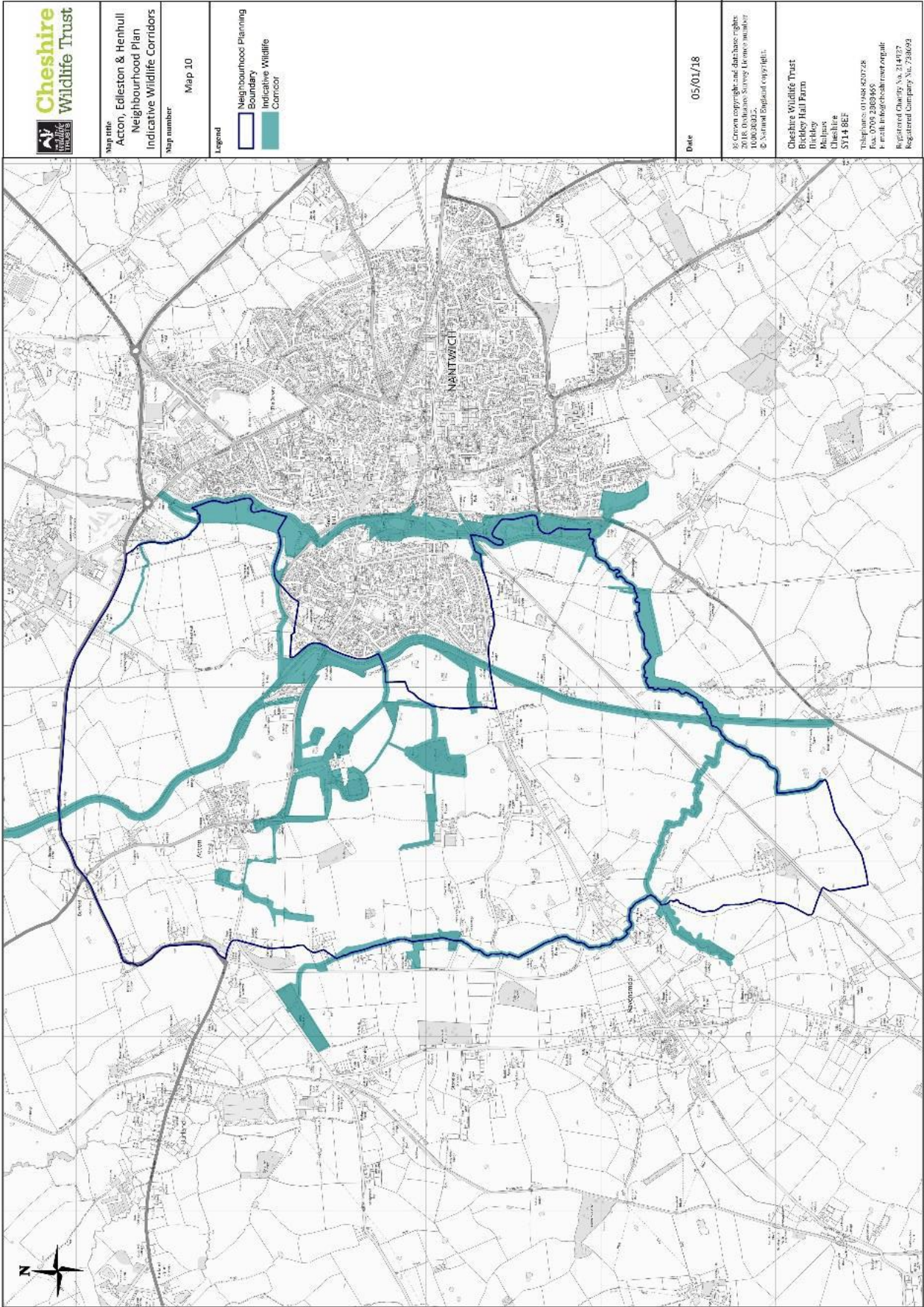


Figure G: Indicative Wildlife Corridor Network



POLICY ENV6: PROTECTING, REPLACING AND PLANTING TREES HEDGEROWS AND VEGETATION

Trees, hedgerows, watercourses and other vegetation which makes a significant contribution to the amenity, biodiversity and landscape character of the surrounding area must be preserved, and development which would adversely impact upon them will not normally be permitted. In exceptional circumstances, where the benefits of development are considered to outweigh the benefit of preserving trees, hedgerows, watercourses and other vegetation, development will only be permitted subject to appropriate mitigation. Their retention in situ will always be preferable.

Hedgerow replacement must be more than the linear length removed. For 'high value hedges' as detailed in the Cheshire Wildlife Trust report 'Protecting and Enhancing Acton, Edleston and Henhull's Natural Environment' (Background Document 1) it should be in a ratio of 3:1.

New buildings, structures or hard surfaces must be located a sufficient distance away from significant existing trees to protect them from damage during construction in accordance with BS5837 (or any updated, equivalent standard).

Layouts must make provision to safeguard the long term preservation of existing trees shown for retention, such as locating them in open space rather than in private gardens.

Any replacement trees, hedgerow or other vegetation must be of native species in character with those existing in the Parishes. Details of species, spacing, location for replacement planting must be submitted for approval.

Landscape plans must be submitted with planning applications and should demonstrate how proposals have included appropriately sized specimens in planting schemes to support local character. Hedgerow planting should give sufficient space/ width to allow for management as a 'Cheshire hedge'.

All landscape proposals must include details for long term management and maintenance.

Evidence and Justification

7.1.29 Both the CWT Report (Background Document 1) and the AEHLSCA (Background Document 2) highlight the importance of trees and hedgerows to the Parishes.

7.1.30 The CWT Report highlights that within the Parishes there are significant areas of woodland, which are important wildlife habitats, and also scattered farmland and parkland trees which together with the hedgerow network are fundamental to landscape permeability and provide habitat for numerous species. Many invertebrates and small mammals also inhabit hedgerows, particularly those with adjacent wide field margins or those which lie adjacent to semi-natural grassland.

7.1.31 The hedgerow network in the Neighbourhood Area is relatively poor compared with the rest of Cheshire, due to enlargement of fields through hedgerow removal. The best of the remaining hedgerow networks (although not necessarily good in a Cheshire context) are to be found in the Dig Lane, Tally Ho Lane, March Lane area (Edleston), a second in the area between the Shropshire Union canal-side wood 'The Belt' and Dorfold Hall's Bull Wood (Acton) and a third next to the Weaver flood plain (Henhull) at Kingsbourne – although plans indicate hedgerows will be retained in the housing layout.

7.1.32 The Cheshire East [Landscape Character Assessment](#) classifies the Parishes as being within Landscape Character Type 7, 'East Lowland Plain'. The key characteristics of this landscape character type include hawthorn hedges with some hedgerow trees and riparian ancient woodland and field sized coverts. The Assessment states that one of the issues for the East Lowland Plain classification is an ongoing decline in traditional woodland management practices, leading to general deterioration and a reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of habitats such as loss of ponds through drainage and

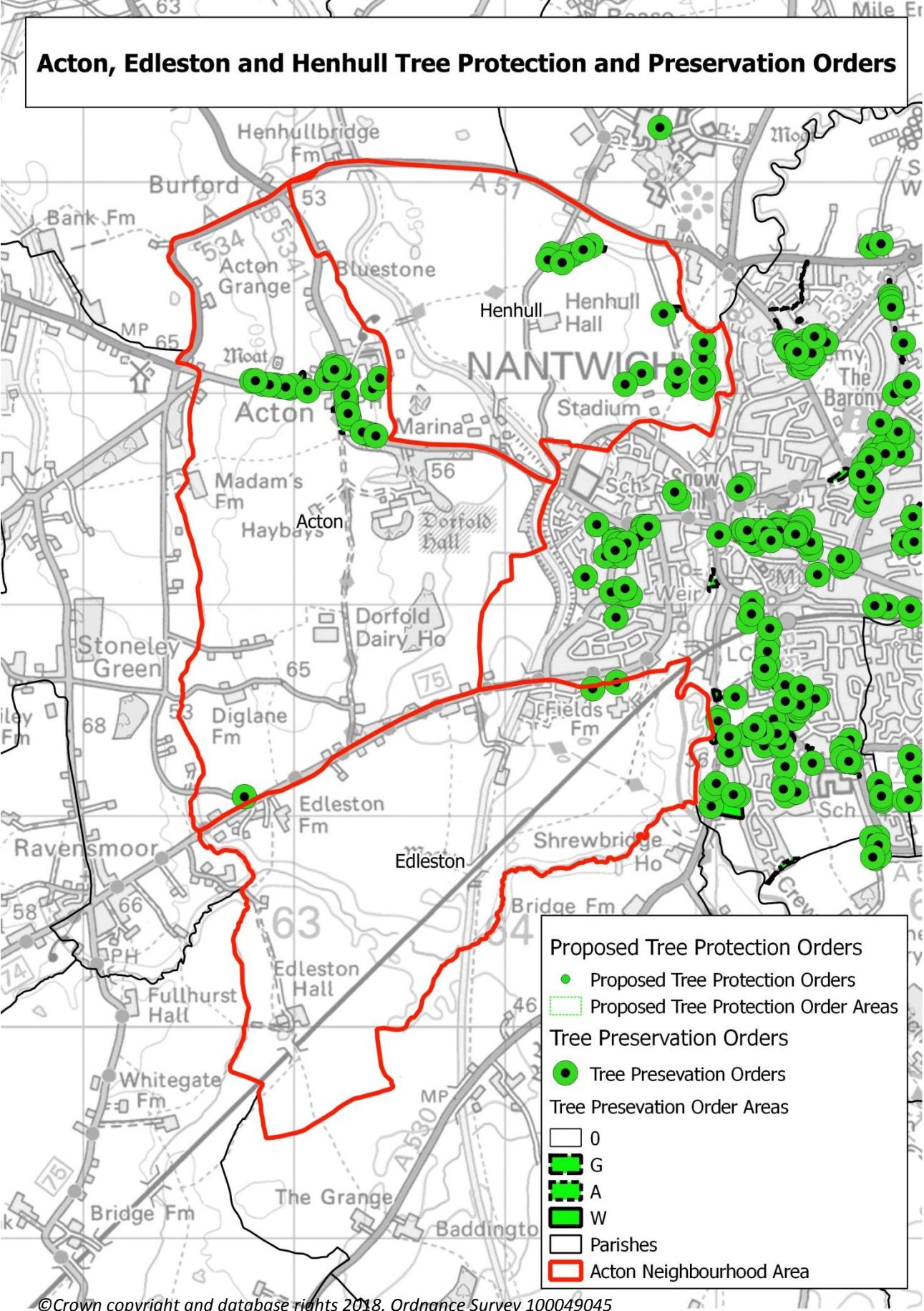
infill, nutrient run-off from farmland, a decline in species-rich hedgerows and a loss of historic field patterns due to decline in hedgerow management.

- 7.1.33 The AEHLSCA stresses the importance which the hedgerows and many mature oak trees make to both the street scene, as gateways to the settlements, and to the whole setting and character of the Parishes. Acton in fact derives its name from 'oak', such are the importance of the oak trees in an historical, architectural and landscape context. The Parishes contain large field systems marked by hedgerows and trees, and individual trees feature regularly across the landscape. One of the recommendations of the report was to include a policy in the Neighbourhood Plan to protect vegetation and enhance hedgerows including new plantings.
- 7.1.34 The Chester Canal Conservation Area Character Appraisal (Background Document 11) states that the wildlife corridor of the canal should continue to be protected and enhanced and that towpath hedgerows should be retained and reinstated by replanting with suitable species, and laying where necessary, as part of canal heritage tradition.
- 7.1.35 Trees and hedgerows also make an important contribution to the setting of Acton Conservation Area, with the line of trees and copse framing the Chester Road cottages making an important entrance when approaching from the south east. The surrounding open land is characterised by intermittent tree cover and hedges and is critical to the setting of the conservation area because of the perspective from which the settlement is viewed and because of their historical and archaeological associations. Approaching Acton along Monks Lane, the oak trees make an important contribution to the western gateway.
- 7.1.36 The contribution that trees and hedgerows make to the character of the Parishes is therefore of much importance. This policy seeks to ensure that valued trees and hedgerows are protected, and that further appropriate coverage will be forthcoming. The policy helps to deliver one of the aims of the NPPF of conserving and enhancing the natural environment. The NPPF highlights that planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.



Recent hedgerow planting on the Dorfold Estate alongside a public footpath

Figure H: Tree Protection and Preservation



POLICY ENV7: DARK SKIES

Dark skies are to be preferred over street lights. Any future outdoor lighting systems should have a minimum impact on the environment, that is consistent with fulfilling its intended purpose; minimising light pollution and adverse effects on wildlife. Schemes should reduce the consumption of energy by promoting efficient outdoor lighting technologies, keeping the night-time skies dark and reducing glare.

Evidence and Justification

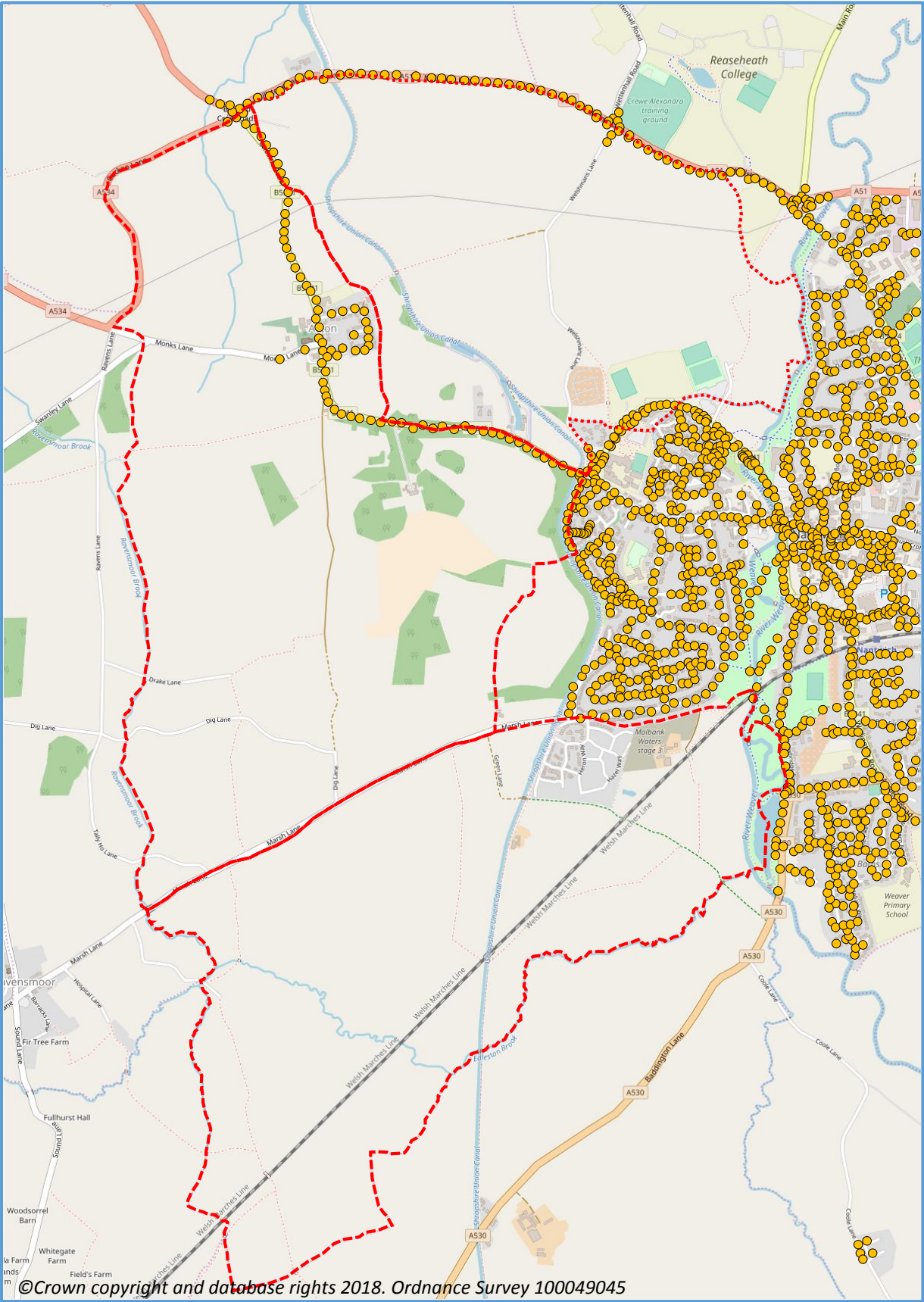
7.1.37 Figure I shows the low number of street lights in the Parishes (away from the B5341 and the A51) particularly away from nearby Nantwich. This lack of street lighting and resultant dark skies, add to the rural character and sense of place of the Parishes. The CWT Report (Background Document 1) www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/ stresses that potential development proposals adjacent to a high distinctiveness habitat or the wildlife corridor should incorporate low spillage (bat/otter sensitive) lighting on the outside of buildings or in car-parks and along pathways and watercourses.

7.1.38 The NPPF highlights that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation. Paragraph 13.133 of the Cheshire East Local Plan states that the Council is aware of the increasing issues arising from artificial lighting, which can often impact upon residential amenity, the character and appearance of an area (particularly rural locations) and the environment. Aspects such as poor design, location, the expulsion of unnecessarily high levels of light can have a harmful impact. The Council will, where appropriate, seek to influence light pollution that would have a harmful impact upon the natural/ built environment and amenity.



Trees with TPOs on the Chester Road approach to Acton

Figure I: Street Lighting in the Parishes



7.2 HERITAGE POLICIES

POLICY HER1: HERITAGE ASSETS

Planning applications will be required to demonstrate how development proposals impact on heritage assets including how they respond positively to them including promoting opportunities for enhancement. Reference should be made to the list of designated assets (Background Document 3).

Applications which would support a sustainable business model which facilitated the future viability of the Dorfold Estate must ensure that the benefits derived centre on the Grade I listed building.

Proposals which affect the historic designed landscape of the Grade II Dorfold Registered Park and Garden should seek to enhance the significance of the asset, through appropriate landscape strategies including the potential reinforcement of lost hedgerows or other features.

Applications which affect or are in the vicinity of the registered battlefield should incorporate proposals for increasing interpretation about the battlefield for the public. Key views of and across the battlefield should be preserved.

Development proposals which seek to sustain and enhance the Seventeenth Century almshouses in Acton will be supported.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.2.1 Heritage assets are abundant across the Parishes. There are 33 Listed Buildings in the Parishes, a sizeable amount for such small communities. 26 are listed at Grade II, 5 at Grade II*, and two of the Listed Buildings are Grade I listed. These are Dorfold Hall and the Church of Saint Mary the Virgin at Acton. Additionally, there is a registered battlefield site, three Ancient Monuments, and a Registered Park and Garden at Dorfold. There is a Conservation Area at Acton, part of the Chester Canal Conservation Area passes through the Parishes and the north east corner of the Neighbourhood Plan Area is covered by the Reaseheath Conservation Area (Figure J). The historical assets of the Parishes are shown on Figure K.
- 7.2.2 The registered battlefield extends north from Chester Road to north of the A51. In the west it skirts round the centre of Acton village, running west of the main road through the village, and in the east the boundary is Welshman's Lane, although the battle extended further east towards Nantwich. Henhull Parish and parts of Acton have been found to be particularly plentiful with civil war artefact finds.
- 7.2.3 The Grade I listed Church of St. Mary in Acton is built in red sandstone with a lead roof. The tower, built about 1180, is within the body of the church with arches leading into the nave and the side aisles. The early date is rare for towers in Cheshire; it is said to be the oldest in the county. The upper parts of the tower, which were built after it collapsed in 1757, are in early Gothic Revival style.
- 7.2.4 In the churchyard there is a tall sandstone sundial over 4m high, originally a medieval cross made into a sundial in the late 17th century. It is a designated scheduled Ancient Monument. Also in the churchyard is a pair of Grade II listed, early 17th century almshouses constructed of red brick with stone dressing and tiled roof. Apart from the Church, they are the oldest buildings in the village.
- 7.2.5 Dorfold Registered Park and Garden extends over approximately 125 hectares and is Grade II listed. The park consists of the Hall, the gardens associated with the Hall and the wider parkland. The principal building is Dorfold Hall, Grade I listed, built in 1616 of red brick. There is a brick clock tower and carriage house to the north west of the Hall. The main garden lies to the south of the Hall, laid out to lawn with borders and overlooking the parkland beyond, separated by a ha-ha. There is a kitchen garden to

the west of the South Lawn with an early nineteenth century orangery or greenhouse. To the east of the South Lawn there is a nineteenth century woodland garden in a shallow valley, which also hosts remnants of an earlier rockery garden.



Dorfold Hall and gardens



- 7.2.6 These heritage assets are part of Acton, Edleston and Henhull’s character and are valued by the community. It is important that they are protected from inappropriate development and, where possible, enhanced. Increased interpretation about the registered battlefield was an action in the Parish Plan and is a continued aspiration for the community. One of the aims of the NPPF is to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

POLICY HER2: ACTON CONSERVATION AREA

Development proposals in the Acton Conservation Area (Figure J) must demonstrate how they have considered the Acton Conservation Area Character Appraisal Management Plan (Background Document 10), and should take account of the following:

- the obvious change between ‘open countryside’ and built form at the northern end of the village, with a strong gateway provided by the Old School House and Village Farm;
- the strong visual links between Dorfold Hall Lodge and main entrance, and Acton, with the intervening field and line of trees making an important contribution to the setting of Acton;
- the line of trees and copse framing the Chester Road cottages which make an important entrance when approaching from the south east;
- the rear elevations of the converted Village Farm barns and Glebe House which mark the change between ‘open countryside’ and settlement when approaching from the west;
- the surrounding open land characterised by intermittent tree cover and hedges, which is critical to the setting of the conservation area because of the perspective from which the settlement is viewed and because of their historical and archaeological associations;
- approaching Acton along Monks Lane, the oak trees make an important contribution to the western gateway;
- principal architectural characteristics are of overall harmony and a strong sense of grouping;
- strong architectural elements are complemented by mature trees throughout and around the settlement, forming a backdrop and creating a strong sense of enclosure.

Evidence and Justification

7.2.7 Acton Conservation Area Character Appraisal Management Plan (Background Document 10) sets out that the boundary is drawn widely to include some of the surrounding fields to reflect the high historical value of the village and its setting. It extends much wider than the built up part of the village. The conservation area is shown on Figure J. The Conservation Area Character Appraisal Management Plan identifies the points of importance to the conservation area which are set out in the AEHLSCA and should be considered with any development proposal.



View across Acton Conservation Area to cluster of buildings around St. Mary's Church

POLICY HER3: CHESTER CANAL CONSERVATION AREA

Development proposals in the Chester Canal Conservation Area (Figure J) must demonstrate how they have considered the Chester Canal Conservation Area Appraisal (Background Document 11) and should take account of the following:

- development should preserve and enhance the canal and its wider setting in terms of architectural expression, heritage features and views;
- development and conservation should be of the highest possible standard and sensitive to the historic and environmental character of the canal and its environs;
- where views of Acton Church tower from the canal are visible they should be retained;
- applications which are in the vicinity of Basin End should incorporate proposals for interpretation explaining the origin of the Chester Canal.
- the wildlife corridor of the canal should be protected and enhanced;
- towpath hedgerows should be protected.

Evidence and Justification

7.2.8 The Chester Canal Conservation Area was designated in 2018. The canal makes an important contribution to the character of the parishes, both visually and as a heritage and recreational asset. The Conservation Area boundary covers the canal, towpath, hedges and boundaries together with buildings associated with the canal. The setting of the canal is important and key views from and to the canal should be retained, and the setting conserved and enhanced. A character appraisal has been produced and the

ACTON EDLESTON AND HENHULL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

part of the canal which lies within the Neighbourhood Plan designated area falls under Character Area I – Rural Cheshire East.

- 7.2.9 The Chester Canal Conservation Area Appraisal recommends that development should preserve and enhance the canal and its wider settings in terms of architectural expression, views and its important communal value, based on a clear understanding of the significance of the canal and associated structures. The Appraisal highlights that Basin End should have interpretation boards showing that it is the end of the original Chester Canal, and explaining its significance. The appraisal should be considered with any development proposals along the canal.



Acton Church from the Canal (looking south west)



(looking north west)

Figure J: Conservation Areas in the Parishes and surroundings

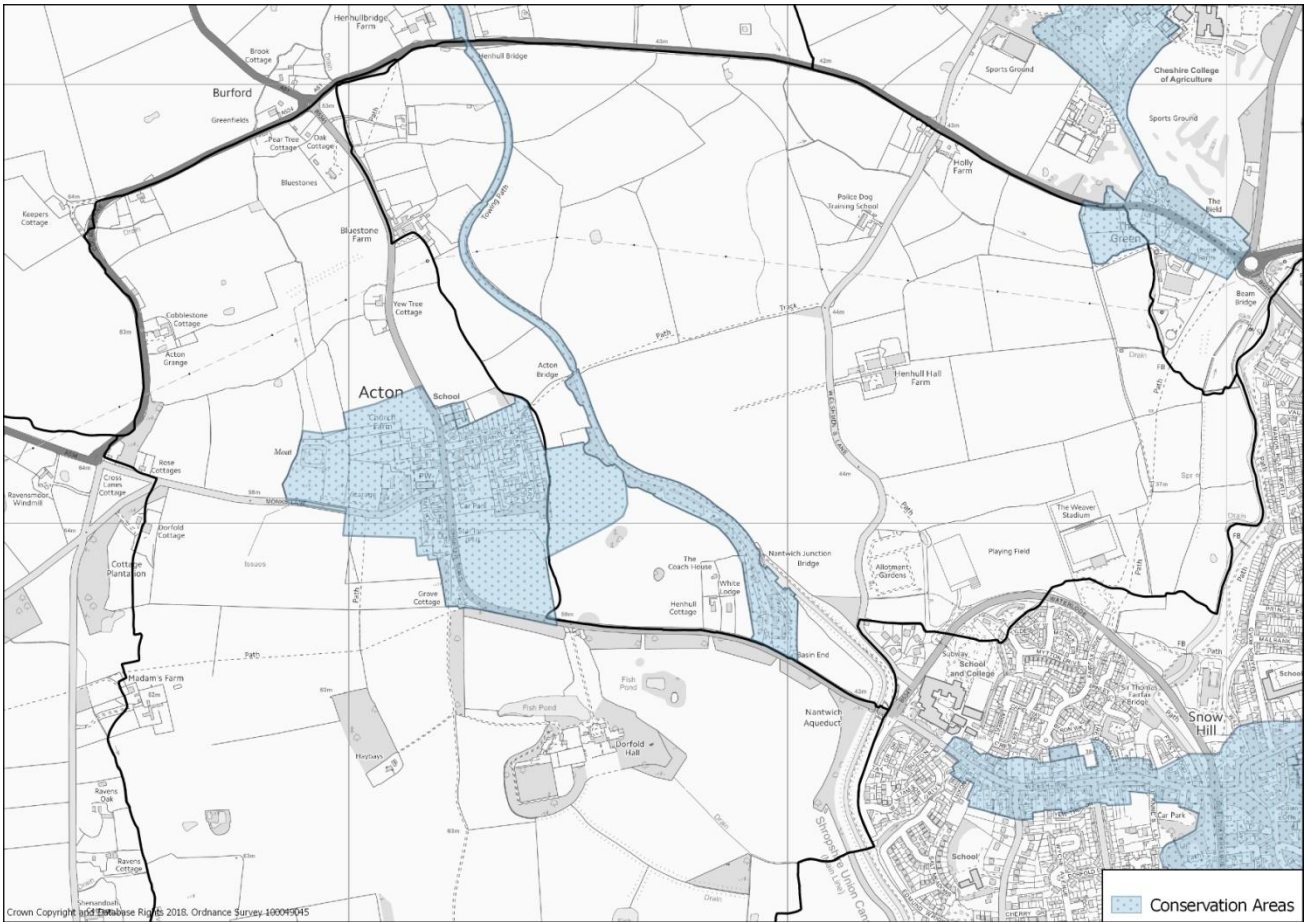
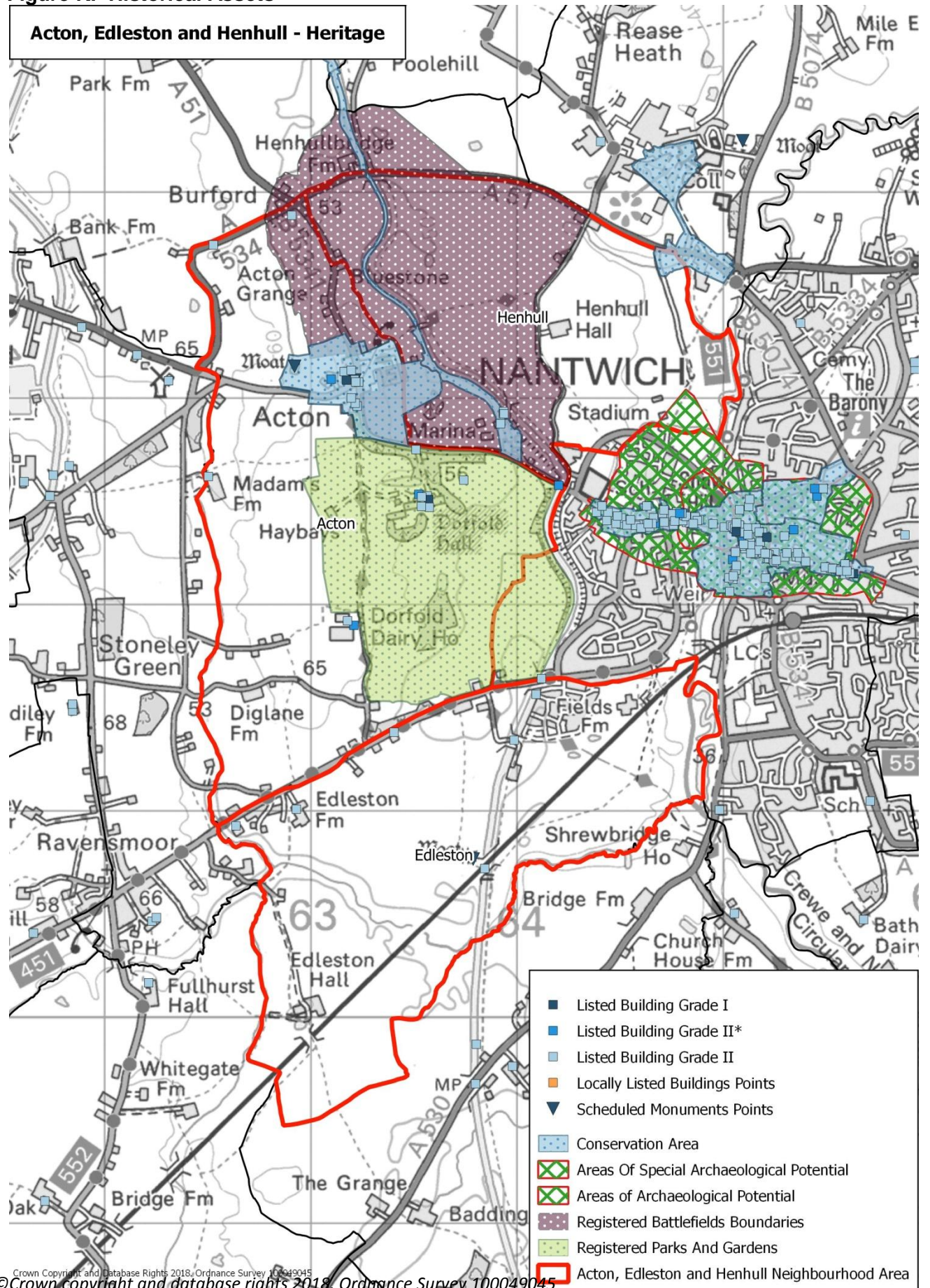


Figure K: Historical Assets



7.3 DEVELOPMENT POLICIES: DESIGN

POLICY DEV1: DESIGN FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

All new development, regardless of use, should demonstrate the principles of good design, and must demonstrate consideration of the Cheshire East Design Guide (2016) and the Acton, Edleston and Henhull Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2018) or any updated versions. Where appropriate, applications should be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement.

Proposed extensions and new builds (including redevelopment) must be of a high quality design, incorporating local materials and detailing. Where proposed for Acton village they must complement the built character of Acton village. The proposals must relate closely to the form, scale and styles in the immediate vicinity of the proposed site.

New development should, where appropriate:

- a) reinforce character and identity through locally distinctive design and locally characteristic features (as described in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment), without precluding innovative contemporary architectural design where appropriate;
- b) ensure that developments recognise the importance of the 'South Cheshire' vernacular, such as black and white railings and finger posts, stone kerbs, red brick vernacular, estate paled fences, gable end round 'porthole' openings in brick buildings and the lack of uniformity of adjacent buildings in height, mass, roofscape and materials;
- c) deliver appropriate densities and plot sizes commensurate with the surroundings and need;
- d) present a layout for new development which integrates well with surroundings;
- e) establish a clear hierarchy of streets and spaces that sets out unequivocal function for streets and roads and includes the prioritisation of pedestrian-friendly routes where it is safe and practicable to do so;
- f) ensure that boundary treatments are consistent with and appropriate to local conditions, using locally consistent materials and treatments, including height;
- g) protect and enhance wildlife corridors, ponds and watercourses enhancing biodiversity and retaining important trees and hedgerows and appropriate public and private spaces, including recreation and community spaces;
- h) when adjoining 'open countryside', provide a sympathetic transition between the rural and village landscapes, through appropriate landscape design and boundary treatments;
- i) take account of the topography and natural features of the site to maximise the views from the site to the surrounding areas of countryside and to minimise impact on the skyline;
- j) ensure that views to the important local landmark of the Church of Saint Mary in Acton and to and across the battlefield are maintained;
- k) ensure that the orientation of new buildings is arranged to maintain as far as it is possible the views from existing buildings;
- l) ensure that new development is positioned such that it seeks to maximise the amenity for future occupiers, whilst not prejudicing the occupiers of adjacent property by reason of overshadowing, overlooking, visual intrusion, noise and disturbance, odour, or in any other way;
- m) support features beneficial to wildlife, such as bat and bird boxes, hedgehog friendly fencing and bee bricks.
- n) support eco and environmentally sustainable technology and materials.

None of the above should preclude contemporary design in appropriate locations.

The cumulative impact of small changes should be assessed and considered to ensure that they are not detrimental to the character of the area.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.3.1 The rural setting of Acton, Edleston and Henhull within the landscape is important to the community. The AEHLSCA (Background Document 2) has been prepared and assesses the spatial character of the Parishes, including local design, vernacular, elements of the landscape and significant local features.

- 7.3.2 It is important that new development is of high quality design, enhancing the local character of the Parishes which largely consist of attractive buildings set within a rural landscape which is valued by the community. Every effort needs to be adopted to ensure that new developments respect this. The NPPF states that developments should respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

- 7.3.3 The AEHLSCA gives an overview of the Parishes, noting that until recently, the established settlement pattern was low density scattered farms, halls and houses mainly located along the roads with one village at Acton, and Dorfold Hall located between Acton and Nantwich. However, as changes from farming and changing land ownership occur, greenfield sites have been consented mainly for housing development. There are two main locations, where this has occurred. Malbank Waters is a development of approximately 390 houses. A second phase of Kingsley Fields (now known as Kingsbourne) is a consented scheme of up to 1,100 houses with some employment, community facilities and a possible primary school (Strategic Site LPS 46 in the Local Plan).

- 7.3.4 The Assessment highlights that local character is influenced by and made up of elements within the local landscape and vernacular which are noticeable and distinctive to the area and should be considered in all development proposals. In Acton, Edleston and Henhull these include oak trees; Cheshire black and white fencing; timber pale estate fencing; Cheshire hedges; black and white finger posts; porthole shaped openings on gable ends of traditional and new buildings; red brick vernacular; and natural stone kerbs.

- 7.3.5 Additionally, Cheshire East Council has recently prepared a **design guide**. The guide highlights that the character and attractiveness of Cheshire East underpins the quality of life enjoyed by the Borough and its residents. Acton, Edleston, Henhull falls within the 'Market Towns and Estate Villages' of the Cheshire East Design Guide; cues from which are set out in AEHNP Appendix 6.

- 7.3.6 In order to reflect and enhance the character of the Parishes, the Cheshire East Design Guide and the AEHLCSA should be consulted on all new development proposals.

- 7.3.7 The CWT Report states that low spillage (bat/otter sensitive) lighting should be used on the outside of buildings or in car-parks and along pathways and watercourses, and that hedgehog-friendly fencing, purposely designed to allow the passage of hedgehogs from one area to another should be installed on new developments, as should the incorporation of bee bricks and bat/bird boxes into the design of buildings, ideally made of highly durable material such as woodcrete.

- 7.3.8 One of the aims of the NPPF is to secure well designed places. Developments should establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive places to live, work and visit. Developments should respond to local character and history, whilst not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation.

POLICY DEV2: ECO-DESIGN AND ENERGY SAVING

Subject to other policies within the Neighbourhood Plan, development proposals will be supported which:

- a) demonstrate that they exceed minimum standards in terms of reducing carbon emissions through orientation and design and the use of sustainable construction techniques, reuse of materials and promotion of integrated renewable and low energy design solutions;
- b) make provision for future foreseeable technologies, such as electric charging points;
- c) use sustainable urban drainage and on-site water management, to avoid increasing surface water runoff into watercourses, subject to meeting other design criteria and being integrated into the overall site design solution.

All schemes must demonstrate a careful consideration of design that responds to its context in compliance with Policy DEV1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

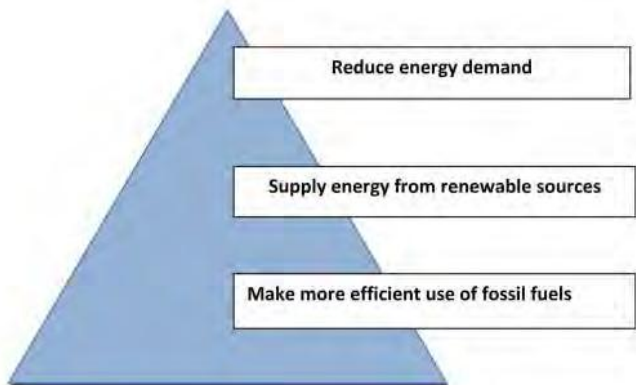
Evidence and Justification

7.3.9 The feedback from the Neighbourhood Plan consultations highlighted the importance to the community of high quality environmental design and the importance of energy efficiency to residents. The questionnaire responses indicated that ‘eco-friendly’ homes was the joint third type of housing preferred by those who responded to the questions about what type of housing they considered most appropriate, if they felt more housing should be considered in the Parishes.

7.3.10 The CWT Report (Background Document 1) stressed that surface drainage water from developed areas should always be directed away from sensitive areas due to the risk of pollution unless the source of the water is clean, such as rainwater collected from roofs. The report noted that sustainable drainage schemes (SuDS) are useful in providing additional wildlife habitat and preventing flooding, but they may still hold polluted water so should not drain directly into existing wildlife habitat unless the filtration system is particularly extensive.

7.3.11 One of the aims of the NPPF is to support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, and encourage the use of existing resources and supporting renewable energy). Policy SE9 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Energy Efficient Development states that the Council will look favourably upon development that follows the principles of the Energy Hierarchy (see Figure L below), and seeks to achieve a high rating under schemes such as BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method), and Building for Life.

Figure L: The Energy Hierarchy



7.4 DEVELOPMENT POLICIES: HOUSING

POLICY DEV3: LOCATION OF HOUSING

Housing infill development will be supported within the Acton village infill boundary as defined in the Local Plan Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (see Figure M).

Other than the permitted housing sites that abut Nantwich (Figure C) the whole of the Parishes are designated as 'open countryside', and outside of these permitted sites and the Acton infill boundary, new housing will be permitted that accords with Policy PG6 of the Cheshire East Local Plan.

Proposals for agricultural workers dwellings, or residential properties which support a rural business, must be well related to existing buildings and not have an adverse impact on the openness of the landscape.

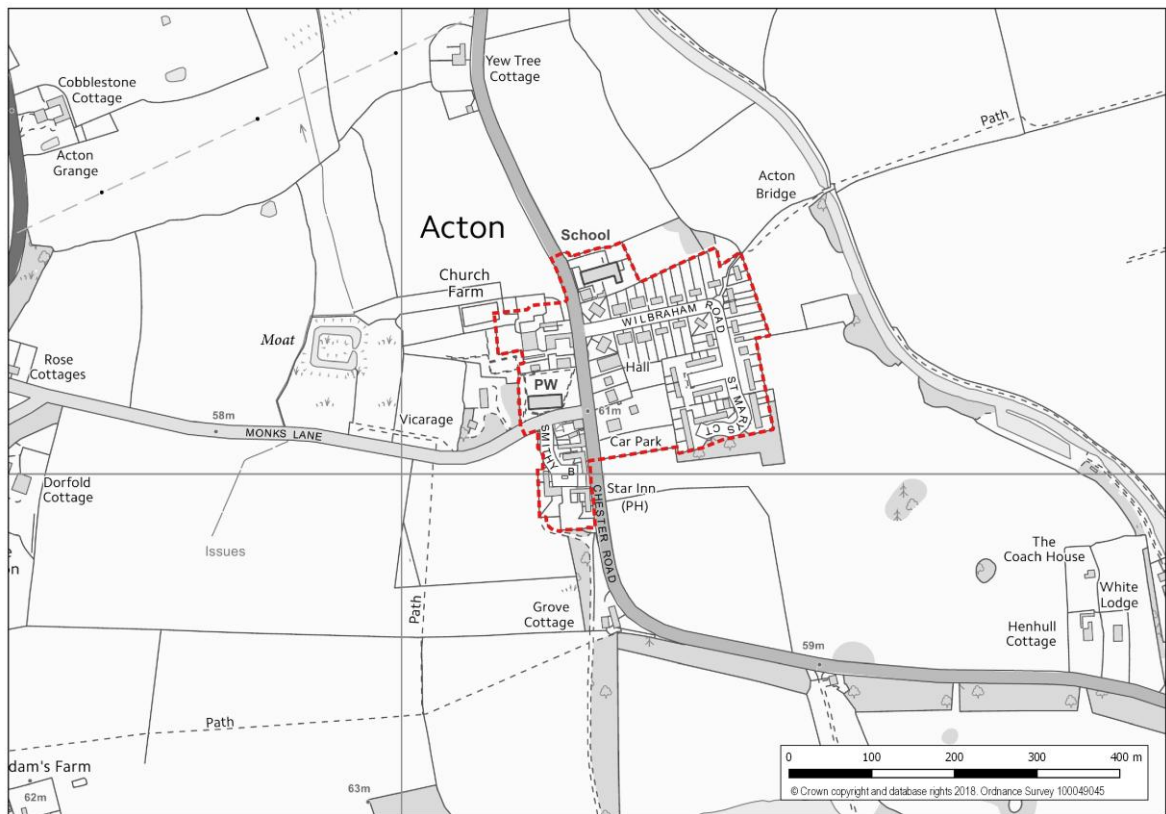
The conversions of farm buildings to residential properties will be supported if the building is well-located and worthy of retention and must ensure that any important characteristics and features of the original buildings are retained, that the urbanisation of the development is kept to a minimum, and that the development is kept to the footprint of the original buildings as far as possible.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.4.1 Development in the Parishes has historically been at a slow and steady rate. The rural feel and open countryside are greatly valued by the local community, and large scale development at the heart of the Parishes would be out of character with Acton village. Whilst a number of larger housing sites have had permission on the periphery of the Parishes, these are more closely aligned with Nantwich, and indeed are counted towards the housing figures for this larger key service centre, rather than the rural area of Acton, Edleston and Henhull.
- 7.4.2 The permissions that have been granted for new housing that abuts Nantwich are Strategic Site LPS 46 Kingsbourne, land at Greenbank Cottage, and housing at Malbank Waters (NPS14 and Sub 2135 in the SADPD Nantwich Settlement Report FD38). Other than this no strategic need has been identified to deliver housing beyond local needs in the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy. Acton, Edleston and Henhull Parishes have rural settlement patterns, other than these new housing areas. This Neighbourhood Plan recognises that in order to maintain a sustainable and flourishing community, some infill housing development may be appropriate to meet local housing needs. However, one of the main responses from the consultations was that people value the open countryside setting of the Parishes, and it is the aim of the Neighbourhood Plan that new housing development will remain of a scale and in locations appropriate to the rural setting.
- 7.4.3 The draft Cheshire East Local Plan SADPD has designated Acton as an 'infill village' (Figure M). Whilst the SADPD has not yet been finally adopted the evidence used to draft the SADPD is the most up to date housing evidence and so has been considered in the drafting of the Neighbourhood Plan. Furthermore, it makes sense to align with Cheshire East's strategic policy direction. 'Infill villages' do not have a settlement boundary, have no allocated sites and are within the 'open countryside'. Limited infilling is supported within the village infill boundaries and defined as the development of a relatively small gap between existing buildings. Infilling must be in keeping with the scale, character and appearance of its surroundings and the local area. The Neighbourhood Plan welcomes and supports the designation of Acton as an 'infill village', and the whole of the Parishes, other than allocated and permitted sites being defined as 'open countryside'.

- 7.4.4 The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy includes a Full Objectively Assessed Needs figure of 36,000 homes to be delivered during the Plan period, 2010-2030. A 10% flexibility factor is built into the Strategy to allow further development above and beyond the 36,000 base. Policy PG2 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy sets out the distribution of development across four tiers of a settlement hierarchy, focusing most development in the Principal Towns and Key Service Centres and a lower level of development in the Local Service Centres and Other Settlements and Rural Villages (OSRV).
- 7.4.5 The OSRV, of which Acton, Edleston and Henhull is part, has 3,378 homes attributed to it. Within this figure is a 14.5 % flexibility factor. Completions, commitments and strategic site allocations in the OSRV at 31st March 2017 were 2,762 leaving a need to deliver 616 homes to 2030 throughout the whole of this tier of the settlement hierarchy. Delivery of the residual site allocations (616 dwellings) is expected to be achieved through a combination of site allocations in the Part 2 Local Plan, site allocations in Neighbourhood Plans and windfall sites.
- 7.4.6 Cheshire East Council has produced a Housing Need Advice Note for Acton, Edleston and Henhull (Background Document 4) www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/ which has indicated the likely housing need for the Parishes and helped inform the Neighbourhood Plan policies. The Housing Need Advice Note was prepared in April 2018 and updated in February 2019 to reflect latest housing figures, using methodology endorsed by Planning Practice Guidance and best practice. The Advice Note looked at evidence such as household projections, census data, dwelling completion rates and the local plan strategy to give an appropriate quantum of housing for the Parishes, along with characteristics of the housing need.
- 7.4.7 The Housing Need Advice Note indicates that the potential housing range for Acton, Edleston and Henhull could be 20-60 dwellings (2010-2030). When the completions and commitments from April 2010 to March 2017 are considered, it is noted that there have been 6 residential completions with 23 dwellings committed, taking the completions and commitments up to March 31st 2017 to 29. The completions and commitment figure of 29 can be deducted from the potential range of 20-60 units, making a requirement for between 0-31 dwellings for the remainder of the plan period up to 2030. A breakdown of the housing range can be seen in more detail in AEHNP Appendix 2. The Housing Need Advice Note was originally prepared prior to the draft SADPD, which has designated Acton as an 'infill village', with the vast majority of the Parishes designated as 'open countryside'.
- 7.4.8 It is not therefore considered necessary to allocate further sites for residential development, a view which is reflected by the designation in policy PG10 of the draft SADPD of Acton as an infill village with the Parishes outside of the strategic site and permitted sites abutting Nantwich being designated as 'open countryside'. The housing policies will allow for appropriate small scale infill developments within Acton village, or that which Local Plan policy PG6 deems appropriate in the 'open countryside', to meet the identified need.

**Figure M: Acton Infill Boundary as proposed in the Cheshire East consultation
SADPD evidence base: Settlement and Infill Boundaries Review Document FD06**



POLICY DEV4: TYPE AND MIX OF HOUSING

In order to meet the identified housing needs of Acton, Edleston and Henhull and secure a sustainable and mixed community, new homes should have a mix of dwelling types and tenures.

In particular, new development should provide a mix which includes smaller dwellings and family homes suitable for first time buyers or those wishing to downsize, unless viability or other material considerations show a robust justification for a different mix of house size and type.

Provision of dwellings which specifically serve those with additional mobility or other needs will also be favoured as part of this mix.

Affordable homes will be supported, and once approved, applications to vary conditions to remove the element of affordable housing will not be supported without exceptionally robust justification.

Applications that seek the conversion or subdivision of larger dwellings to provide smaller units, which meet the needs identified above, will be permitted where they do not result in the substantial expansion or alteration of the original building.

Evidence and Justification

7.4.9 There have been permissions for two large developments in the Parishes at the edges of Nantwich: Strategic Site Kingsbourne (formerly Kingsley Fields) and Malbank Waters off Queens Drive as well as a smaller site at land at Greenbank Cottage. Although these count towards the housing figures for Nantwich, rather than Acton, Edleston and Henhull, these will nevertheless provide a wide range of housing types, tenures and sizes for local people to rent or buy. It is considered important that any further new

development in the Parish also provides a wide range of house types, sizes and tenures.

- 7.4.10 The Housing Need Advice Note for Acton, Edleston and Henhull www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/ (Background Document 4) prepared by Cheshire East Council, details that the Parishes' housing stock is dominated by detached and semi-detached housing, accounting for almost 70% of household accommodation, which is higher than the national averages. It states that there are also fewer smaller terraced properties. This lack of smaller market homes may limit the opportunities for first time buyers to either locate or remain in the Parishes, compounding the demographic profile of an ageing population and lower proportions of younger age groups. It also does not give much opportunity for people to downsize, freeing up family homes. The Housing Need Advice Note recommends that developments should provide for a range of housing types, tenures and sizes, with a particular emphasis on smaller, more affordable market housing to balance the housing stock profile, which would provide more opportunities for younger residents including first time buyers as well as some downsizing opportunities.
- 7.4.11 The Housing Advice Note highlights that there is a large proportion of households, where residents will become elderly over the Plan period. It states that the ageing population is more acute than Borough trends in the 'very elderly' age group category and the 65-74 age groups. However, it is recognised that whilst there is a need to consider carefully the provision of specialist housing for the elderly, the viability of such provision and the need to ensure that sheltered/ retirement provision is close to services and facilities, may lead to such accommodation being better provided for in larger settlements. A demand for specialist housing for the elderly did not emerge from the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire. Recent additional accommodation of this nature located in Nantwich addresses the point made regarding the suitability of this type of accommodation being located closer to services in a larger service centre.
- 7.4.12 Additionally, indicators on overcrowding, concealed and sharing households demonstrate an un-met need for smaller housing. The Parishes had a slightly higher proportion of concealed families and a higher proportion of households with two or more rooms than they require, meaning they are theoretically under-occupied.
- 7.4.13 The number of young children in the Parishes ages 0-4 decreased between the last two censuses of 2001-2011 by around 37%, compared with Cheshire East reduction of 4%. The reduction in children is notable, especially when considered with the limited population increase and ageing population. If this trend continues it could exacerbate the effects of an ageing population. Any housing mix should also therefore include family homes, in order to help to rebalance the community and provide a more varied housing stock, as recommended in the Housing Advice Note.
- 7.4.14 Acton Edleston and Henhull Parishes fall within the Acton, Edleston and Henhull and sub-area for the purposes of affordable housing need identified in the Cheshire East Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The sub-area is not coterminous with the Neighbourhood Area and therefore represents a need calculated on a larger geography than the NP covers. Consequently the need detailed is not expected to be entirely met within the Neighbourhood Area. There is an affordable housing need in the sub-area, largely consistent with other rural areas in this part of the Borough. Information taken from Cheshire Homechoice shows in January 2018 that there were 38 applicants registered who had selected the Acton sub-lettings area as their first choice. The most demand is for one and two bedroom properties. However the number of affordable properties to be provided at Kingsbourne and Malbank Waters has some bearing on any other provision, although these will also relate to Nantwich's need.
- 7.4.15 Feedback from the Neighbourhood Plan consultations highlighted that the type of housing that residents considered to be most appropriate was affordable housing and

one and two-bedroom properties. Affordable units on housing developments is therefore welcomed and supported. Recent housing permissions in the Parishes, despite the recognised need for affordable housing throughout the Borough, have successfully applied for the affordable housing provision element to be overturned. There is evidenced need for affordable housing which is supported by the community, and therefore any applications to vary conditions to remove the element of affordable housing will not be supported without exceptionally robust justification.

- 7.4.16 This policy reflects the outcome and recommendations of the Housing Need Advice Note, and is also in line with the NPPF which strives to deliver a wide choice of homes for the needs of different groups in the community, with a range of sizes, types, tenures to reflect local need, and Policy SC4 (Residential Mix) of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy.

POLICY DEV5: WORKING FROM HOME

Proposals to provide facilities for home working either by conversion, extension or new build within the curtilage of existing homes, will be supported provided that it is not disproportionate to the existing building. Where planning permission is required to facilitate home working this will be permitted subject to ensuring that the final use proposed does not impinge on the amenity of the existing property or neighbouring properties, including consideration of any increase in vehicular comings and goings from the property.

Care should be taken to ensure that the intensification of use over time does not result in impact on nearby amenity. Appropriate conditions may be used to ensure that this is achieved through limiting the approved use, the number of vehicular comings and goings or the hours of operation.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.4.17 Census data from 2011 highlights that Acton and Henhull have a higher than average proportion of people aged 16-74 who work from home (8.2% compared to the average in England of 3.5%). Edleston also has a significantly higher percentage, at 19.3%. Additionally, information from the Department of Transport 2011 indicates that it takes much longer on foot or by public transport to the nearest employment centre than the county average. There is limited public transport, reflected in the Department of Transport statistics that only 2.7% of residents of Acton and Henhull, and nobody from Edleston commutes to work by public transport, as compared to the average in England of 11% of commuters.
- 7.4.18 The Parishes also have a high level of car ownership, which is likely in part to their relative remoteness from services and employment areas. Only 1.3% of households in Edleston, and 13.7% of households in Acton and Henhull are without a car, far lower than the average in England of 25.8%. The ability to work from home and reduce travel on the roads would therefore be welcomed.
- 7.4.19 With potential improvements in broadband and telecommunications, it is likely that the demand and the ability of people to work from home will grow. Working from home will help the rural economy, allow local businesses to start up and grow, help allay traffic problems, and may provide services at a local level to the benefit of the community. Developments that support home working whilst not negatively impacting on residential amenity are therefore supported.
- 7.4.20 One of the aims of the NPPF is to support a prosperous rural economy. Planning policies should support sustainable growth in rural areas. Cheshire East Local Plan Policy CO1: Sustainable Travel and Transport highlights that to reduce the need to travel, developments should encourage flexible working patterns and working from home.

7.5 DEVELOPMENT POLICIES: ECONOMY

Policy DEV6: EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT

Small scale development which creates new employment uses, (use classes A2 and B1 only), will be permitted on sites within the Acton infill boundary, on previously developed sites elsewhere within the Parishes, within the Kingsbourne development area and as part of Dorfold Hall's vision for its long term sustainability (the latter subject to other national, Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies regarding heritage assets).

Subject to meeting the criteria above, support will be given to the expansion and modernisation of the existing employment site at Basin End, Nantwich Marina in order to retain a range of employment opportunities within the Parishes.

Where appropriate, all new employment development as outlined above should:-

- not impact adversely on nearby residential amenity as a result of noise, vibration, odour, traffic and other bad neighbour issues;
- not result in a net loss of significant green infrastructure, including hedgerows and trees;
- provide suitable parking and access arrangements;
- be designed to the highest quality, taking account of local character, and avoiding development that is out-of-scale with the village character and rural environment.

Any development proposals that are unable to meet the above criteria will not normally be supported.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.5.1 Acton, Edleston and Henhull has a higher than average proportion of people in employment who work more than 49 hours a week (24.6% in Acton and Henhull, and 28.7% in Edleston, compared to the England average of 13.3%). There is also a noticeably higher percentage of 16-74 year olds who are self-employed (17.2% in Acton and Henhull and 21.4% in Edleston compared to the England average of 9.8%) (2011 Census). Additionally, the average time it takes to walk or get public transport to the nearest employment centre is greater than the average in Cheshire. The rural economy and existing small businesses are a vital part of village life, and any opportunities to develop either existing businesses, or that would enable the start-up of new small businesses appropriate to the rural area would be supported.
- 7.5.2 Although the Parishes are rural, there is a small existing employment site at Basin End, Nantwich Marina (see Figure P) and some new employment development is proposed at the Strategic Site at Kingsbourne designated in the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (see Figure A). In order to respect the rural character, whilst providing for employment opportunities within the Parishes, new employment enterprises will be more appropriately directed to these employment areas, brownfield sites, and sites within the Acton infill boundary, rather than within the rural remainder of the Parishes.
- 7.5.3 The Dorfold Estate is preparing proposals for its long term sustainability, considering ways to diversify and adapt in order to provide the necessary income streams required to maintain these significant historic buildings, and their grounds. This may include a small element of employment development. Any proposals must demonstrate how the proposals form part of the overall vision for the area surrounding the Hall and the wider historic designed landscape, and will be subject to national, Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies regarding heritage assets.
- 7.5.4 The above policy will help to ensure that Acton, Edleston and Henhull's economy can grow sustainability over the Plan period and beyond, and that support can be given for both existing businesses and for new businesses and enterprises within the Parishes.

- 7.5.5 Policy EG2 (Rural Economy) of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy highlights that appropriate employment development in the rural areas will be supported where it is consistent in scale with its location and does not adversely affect nearby buildings and the surrounding area or detract from residential amenity, and is well sited and designed in order to conserve and where possible enhance the character and quality of the landscape and built form. This Neighbourhood Plan policy helps with the Cheshire East Strategy of ensuring that growth and development is appropriate to the scale of each area and that it has a positive impact upon the landscape and the historic environment.

POLICY DEV7: RURAL ECONOMY

Subject to respecting Acton, Edleston and Henhull's built and landscape character, and environmental and residential amenity impacts being acceptable, support will be given for the development of small rural businesses which complement and enhance the rural landscape, particularly on brownfield sites and with low traffic generation.

The diversification of farms and rural businesses will be supported, where proposals meet the other relevant policies in this Neighbourhood Plan.

New tourism initiatives and visitor accommodation will be supported which are appropriate in scale and location for the development, and which would create no significant harm to the existing character of the local area or residential amenity.

The design of new buildings for rural businesses must meet the same landscape and design criteria set out in policies in this Neighbourhood Plan. They must be appropriate to their intended function and must not be designed to be easily converted to any non-rural business use in the future.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.5.6 This policy recognises the dispersed nature of the rural and agricultural businesses in Acton, Edleston and Henhull, balanced against the need for sustainable development and protection for the landscape.
- 7.5.7 As highlighted in paragraph 7.5.1 above, the rural economy and existing small businesses are a vital part of village and rural life, and any opportunities to develop either existing rural businesses, or that would enable the start-up of new small rural businesses appropriate to the area would be supported.
- 7.5.8 Additionally, there are some farmsteads in the rural area of Acton, Edleston and Henhull which offer an opportunity for rural economic development, should they choose to diversify. Agricultural buildings can have a major impact on the landscape, and any conversions, or new buildings must be well designed so as not to impact the Parishes' landscape setting and character negatively, nor introduce an urban, suburban or industrial feel to the area.
- 7.5.9 One of the aims of the NPPF is to support a prosperous rural economy. Planning policies should support sustainable growth in rural areas. The Neighbourhood Area includes a number of farms and the NPPF supports the conversion of existing rural buildings, and promotes the development and diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.

7.6 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE POLICIES

POLICY COMM1: BROADBAND AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

The development of high speed broadband infrastructure and other telecommunications infrastructure throughout the Parishes will be supported, to facilitate home-working and to reduce the need to travel. Development must be sympathetic to its surroundings and camouflaged where appropriate.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.6.1 The Parishes of Acton, Edleston and Henhull are fairly isolated, and further away than average from services such as a GP or Post Office (Commission for Rural Communities). Accessing public transport at a necessary or convenient time is not always achievable, and this can be a real problem for people without the use of a car.
- 7.6.2 It is therefore considered important that Acton, Edleston and Henhull has high quality communications infrastructure. Superfast broadband is encouraged so that everyone, particularly the elderly and people with disabilities, can have greater access to opportunities and services which are available on the world wide web.
- 7.6.3 Additionally, as detailed in Policy DEV5, a larger than average percentage of residents work from home. The 2011 census information indicates that in Acton and Henhull 8.25 and in Edleston 19.3% of 16-74 year olds work from home, which is higher than the average in England of 3.5%. Having a high quality communications infrastructure is therefore important to help sustain and develop the businesses of these residents.
- 7.6.4 The adequacy of the telecommunications network and broadband was raised through the NP consultations. Over half of respondents to the questionnaire stated that mobile phone coverage is poor. Of those who responded on the quality of broadband, 24% think it is good, 44% think it is acceptable and 32% think it is poor. This divergence of views represents geographic differences across the Parishes in terms of broadband speeds that are achieved. Even with recent fibre optic upgrading, properties which are further away from the BT 'green boxes' in some cases still achieve a maximum speed of less than 1Mb. Additional comments in response to the NP questionnaire referred to the very poor mobile phone and broadband reception and the complete absence of fibre optic cable to more rural places.
- 7.6.5 One of the aims of the NPPF is to support high quality communications infrastructure. The NPPF highlights that supporting high quality communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social wellbeing.

POLICY COMM2: COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Proposals for the refurbishment and improvement of community buildings and car parks will be supported. New community facilities and the conversion of existing buildings to community use will be supported, subject to other policies within the Neighbourhood Plan.

Where appropriate, new development should help to rectify the absence of publically accessible open space in Acton village through financial contributions or the provision of land and/ or facilities within the development, or in a suitable village location.

Changes of use of community facilities which require planning permission will not normally be permitted, unless the proposed use will provide equal or greater benefits to the community, the facility is replaced elsewhere, or it is demonstrated that the facility is no longer required.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.6.6 Consultation events have highlighted the value that local residents place on community facilities and the car park in Acton. Additionally, the Dorfold Estate plans for the development on land that it owns within the Parishes to include the provision of a pub. There is an opportunity therefore to establish the potential for the pub to be a hub for additional community uses such as a community shop. The outline planning application for the development at Malbank Waters on the Shropshire Union Canal included provision for a canal-side shop and cafe, which has not been delivered. There are no outdoor recreational facilities in the Parishes and no safe informal play areas for children, other than those being delivered in the large new housing estates. Any opportunity for new community facilities would be supported.
- 7.6.7 In order to ensure the continued vibrancy and vitality of Acton, Edleston and Henhull, and that the Parishes remain an attractive place in which to live and work and to visit, it is essential that the loss of facilities is resisted where possible, and that the improvement, enhancement and provision of facilities is supported.
- 7.6.8 The NPPF highlights that Neighbourhood Plans should guard against the loss of valued local facilities and services and plan positively for community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, open spaces, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.



Chester Road and Acton car park entrance

7.7 TRAFFIC, TRAVEL AND MOVEMENT POLICIES

POLICY TRA1: IMPROVED PEDESTRIAN, CYCLE AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESS

Access to the countryside will be promoted through protection and maintenance of the existing Public Right of Way (PROW) network (see Figure N), its enhancement where possible, and the safety of users of rural roads and lanes.

Any development that leads to the loss or degradation of any PROW, canal towpath, or any cycleway, will not be permitted in other than very special circumstances, and then only if a suitable alternative can be provided. Proposals to divert PROWs or cycleways should provide clear and demonstrable benefits for the wider community.

Any new development must provide easy, accessible traffic-free routes for non-motorised users (to include pedestrians, disabled people, people with prams or baby-buggies, cyclists and where appropriate equestrians) to shops, parks and open spaces, and nearby countryside. The provision of any such additional routes will be supported.

The needs of non-motorised users (as described above) must be taken into account in all traffic planning, but especially in relation to rural lanes and roads. Hazards arising from an increase in vehicle numbers where agricultural buildings are converted to residential or commercial use will need to be taken into consideration. Measures to be taken to ensure this may include, for example, separation of pedestrians/cyclists from vehicular traffic where possible, improvements to signage, or means of speed reduction.

Any proposed development that is likely to generate significant amounts of movement should provide a Travel Plan in accordance with the relevant policies of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy.

In the following areas where developments require contributions to community infrastructure, contributions towards or delivery of the following long-term local sustainable transport projects will be required (Figure O).

Acton to Nantwich cycle lane;

Kingsbourne to Canal footpath improvement;

Footpath along Marsh Lane (for the Crewe and Nantwich Circular route);

Footpath along Cuckoo Lane.

Evidence and Justification

- 7.7.1 In Acton, Edleston and Henhull private car ownership and usage constitute the predominant method of transport; with approximately 43%% of all homes in Acton and Henhull and 61% of homes in Edleston owning at least two or more cars (Census 2011). Whilst cars are essential for many people, the provision of public transport and the encouragement of walking and cycling routes are vital in order to help to address the issues of climate change, reduce congestion and parking problems, and provide equality of opportunity.
- 7.7.2 The speed and volume of traffic through the Parishes has long been a concern of residents, and one which was raised consistently in comments throughout the Neighbourhood Plan consultations. The policy seeks to improve safety on the Parishes' rural lanes and roads. Additionally, comments were received regarding the need for more footpaths and cycle lanes to encourage more walking and cycling, and the provision of new footpaths and cycle lanes was a project raised in the Parish Plan. A footpath along Welshmans Lane was suggested in the NP consultation responses.
- 7.7.3 The AEHLSCA (Background Document 2) www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/ states the importance of establishing a clear vision for the function of any roads or streets which are proposed as part of the development proposals, such that the design of the road or street is fit for purpose and does not form a barrier for the community. It also highlights the popularity and significance of the Crewe and Nantwich circular footpath and the aspiration for a footpath to be created along Marsh Lane to link to the route.

Additionally, the Cheshire East Countryside Access Forum supports measures which encourage residents and visitors to walk, cycle or ride in the countryside. The chair of the Forum has stated that *‘the proposal of creating a pavement, where currently there is none, along the part of Marsh Lane where the Crewe and Nantwich Circular walk runs would appear to be such a measure. The Forum is happy to support the proposal in principle.’*

- 7.7.4 The Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment sets out guidance which includes: *“Promote, maintain and seek to link up existing rights of way including the South Cheshire Way, the Crewe and Nantwich Circular Walk and various canal towpaths.”* (AEHNP Appendix 5).
- 7.7.5 Transport-related relevant Parish Plan projects are listed in Background Document 9.
- 7.7.6 The promotion of sustainable transport is highlighted in the NPPF which stresses that developments should be sustainably located, limiting the need to travel, and that walking, cycling and public transport should be promoted. The NPPF also highlights that policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and that opportunities should be sought to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing public rights of way networks. Cheshire East Local Plan Policy CO1: Sustainable Travel and Transport states that development should reduce the need to travel by private vehicles ensuring that development gives priority to walking, cycling and public transport within its design.
- 7.7.7 The issue of increased traffic and highway safety has been raised by residents at all the Neighbourhood Plan consultations, and it is therefore important that traffic assessments on developments that are likely to generate significant amounts of traffic, such as the strategic site allocation at Kingsbourne, are undertaken and mitigation measures proposed in order to help ensure that traffic problems are not unacceptably exacerbated.
- 7.7.8 The NPPF has an aim to promote sustainable transport. The NPPF therefore highlights that all developments that generate significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment. Policy CO 4 of the Cheshire East Local Plan - Travel Plans and Transport Assessments stresses the importance that for any new development, it is important to encourage sustainable travel options from day one of occupation before car-based travel habits become established.



Figure N: Existing Public Rights of Way

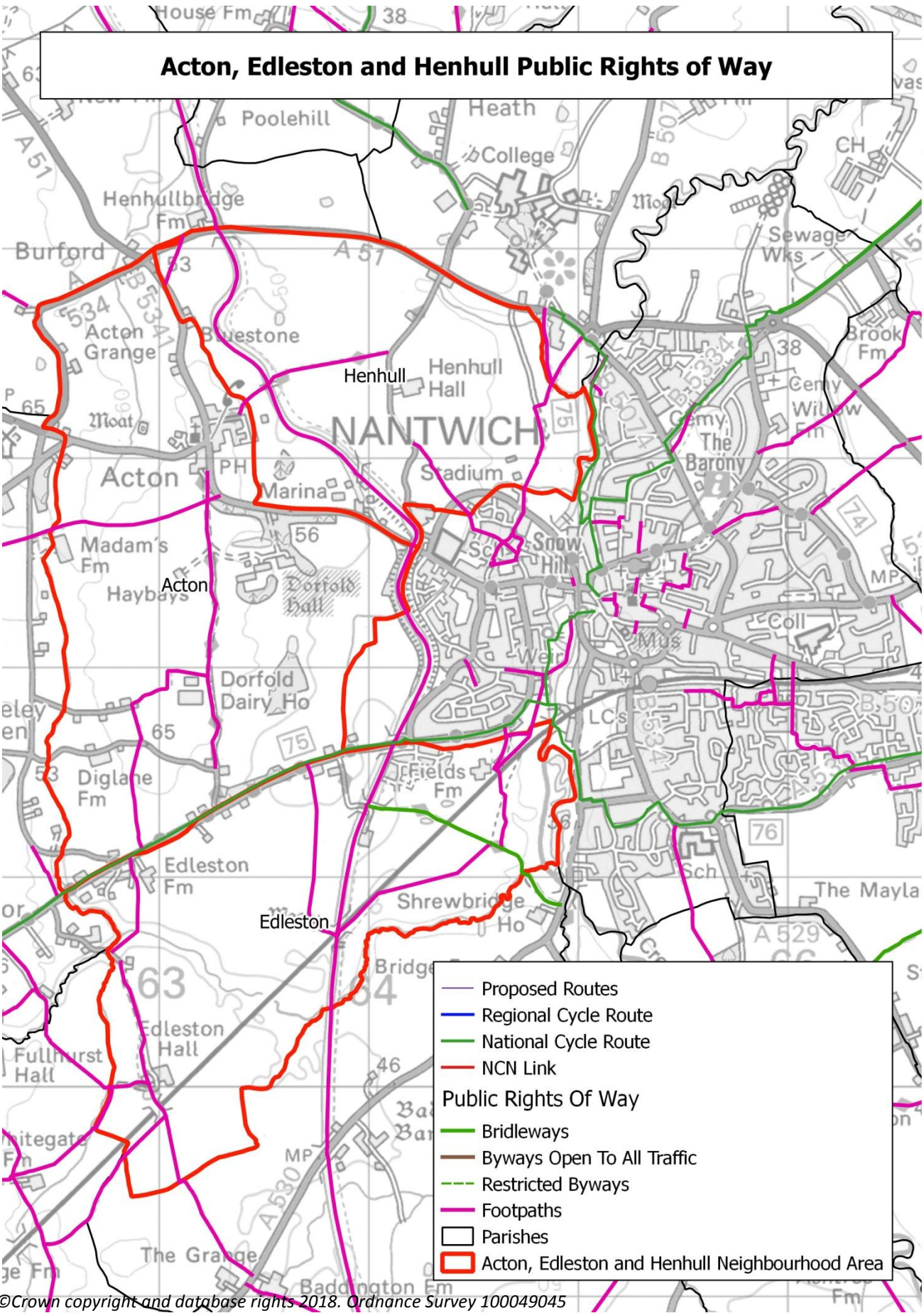
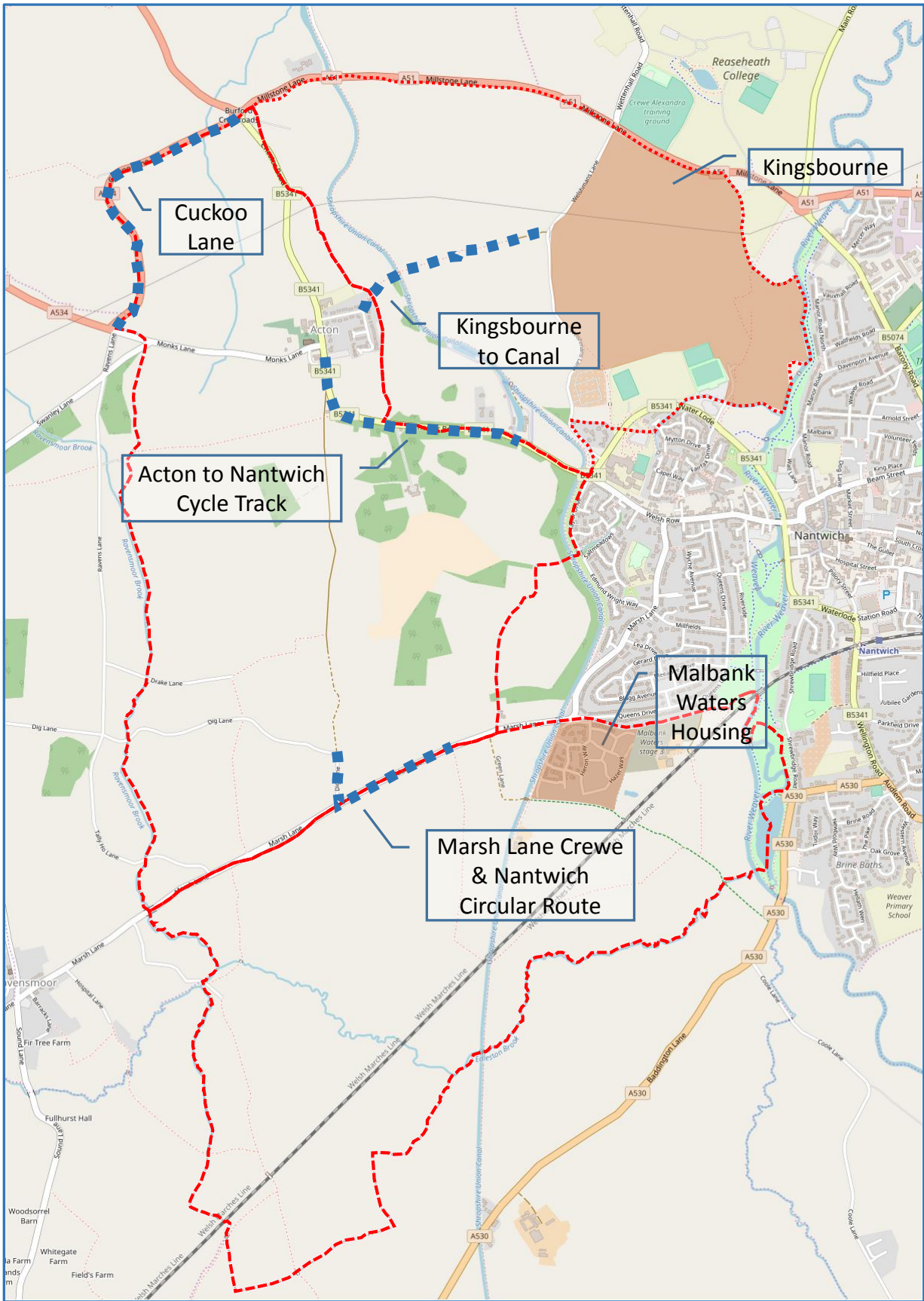


Figure O: Proposed Footpath Projects



©Crown copyright and database rights 2018. Ordnance Survey 100049045

POLICY TRA2: ACTON 'GATEWAYS', CAR PARK AND THE CHESTER ROAD ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

Any proposed development within or close to the three vehicular gateways to Acton village (Figure P) or which would generate additional traffic along Monks Lane and/ or Chester Road through Acton village must respect the plans for traffic calming and environmental improvements for the village and ensure that these proposals are not compromised; and are enhanced or augmented if appropriate.

Where appropriate, developers must demonstrate how they will protect and enhance settlement character at gateways and/ or areas for environmental enhancement as part of their development proposals.

Where appropriate, financial contributions towards enhancing or extending the planned traffic calming and environmental improvements will be sought.

Development proposals which would effect a reduction of the capacity of the Acton village car park must make alternative suitable provision for the same number or more parking spaces in a similarly convenient village location.

Evidence and Justification

7.7.9 There are s106 monies from the Kingsbourne development to deliver traffic calming and environmental improvements in the village of Acton. New development proposals in the village provide new opportunities and constraints to the conceived traffic calming plans. This is of great importance to residents, as the speed and number of vehicles coming through the Parishes was highlighted throughout the Neighbourhood Plan consultations. It is therefore essential that new development does not compromise traffic calming and environmental proposals, and where appropriate, enhances them.

7.7.10 The AEHLSCA (Background Document 2) www.acton-parish-council.org.uk/ stresses the desirability of creating a more distinctive place for Acton, especially at its gateways, to signal the entrance to the settlement and to a place where people might be walking and crossing the road. New development must ensure that the settlement character at the gateways is protected and enhanced, to retain the sense of place for Acton along with the feel that the village is being approached with the transition from the 'open countryside' to the built environs of the village.

7.7.11 Transport-related relevant Parish Plan projects are listed in Background Document 9.

7.7.12 The importance of the car park at Acton was raised at consultation events, and it contributes to the continuing vibrancy and vitality of the village. The AEHLSCA highlights the crucial role that the car park makes as a community asset. It is important that any development proposals which would effect a reduction of the capacity of the Acton village car park must make alternative suitable provision for the same number or more parking spaces in a similarly convenient village location, in order that the asset is not lost.

7.7.13 This policy seeks to ensure the safety of the community, whilst also protecting the landscape and character of the settlement of Acton and its continued success as a vibrant, attractive village. Policy CO1 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy states that development should support the priority of pedestrians at the top of the road user hierarchy and make sure that in settlements the public realm environment reflects this priority.

Figure P: Acton Village Gateways and location of Basin End Marina



©Crown copyright and database rights 2018. Ordnance Survey 100049045



Monks Lane Gateway

