



Ickleford

Neighbourhood Plan

2022-2035

Submission
Version
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Prepared by the The Ickleford
Neighbourhood Plan
Steering Group © 2023

Our Parish • Our Future • Our Say

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Foreword

The village of Ickleford and its surrounding countryside form a beautiful, and much loved, parish. With its leafy central green surrounded by the school, church and shop, this rural village has a strong identity and sense of community. Its rivers, commons and footpaths are enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

The prospect of significant development, as proposed in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, is a concern for many. Residents fear losing what makes Ickleford special, in particular, its small village feel and unique identity.

The village has grown before and will continue to evolve. The Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan was developed in the context of continuing change. It aims to protect the Parish's special character and make any changes as positive as possible.

The Neighbourhood Plan arose from the Localism Act, which aims to give residents a voice in the issues that affect them. If accepted, its policies will form part of the planning guidance for the area, integrating into the district planning process.

The plan was developed by a steering group of local residents on behalf of Ickleford Parish Council. The group's role was to gather the views of residents and create a plan that mirrors their wishes and priorities. Local residents' love of the parish and their engagement with this process has been a source of great encouragement to the group.

Our thanks go to all the people who have given their time to share their views, to members of the Parish Council, past and present, to Judith Crosier, Colin Kendall, Sally Chapman, AECOM and our fellow committee members, both current and former, especially Louise Peace, Robert Overett, Mike Willoughby, Pauline Gardiner, Mike Jones, Bruce Parker and Sam Zalin-Miller.

Ruth Bryer and James Tizzard
Co-Chairs of the Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In 2011, the Localism Act introduced a new opportunity for local communities to shape their future formally as part of the planning system. Neighbourhood Plans can be produced by Parish Councils and when they have gone through all the required steps and processes, they become part of the development plan for the area. This means that any planning applications will have to take account of policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan. It also provides local people with a say on how land use and buildings can develop over time, such as protecting open spaces and improving local character.
- 1.2. Producing a Neighbourhood Plan is a formal process involving several stages, governed by the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012, but critically important is that the Plan is developed with continuing community involvement. In order to rigorously test the policies of a Neighbourhood Plan, an independent examination is carried out. The Neighbourhood Plan must conform to the following 'basic conditions':
 - have regard to national policy;
 - be in general conformity with strategic local policy;
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
 - be compatible with EU obligations; and
 - meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.
- 1.3. Once the Plan has passed Examination, it is voted upon in a referendum by Parish residents and if a simple majority 'yes' vote is achieved, then the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' by North Hertfordshire District Council and comes into force as a planning document with legal weight in decision-making.
- 1.4. Ickleford Parish Council resolved in June 2014 to proceed with making a Neighbourhood Plan and the Neighbourhood Area was approved as being the whole of the Parish on 23rd September 2014.



Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Area - Designated September 2014



Scale: 1:20000
Date: 20/09/14

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2. The Strategic Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2021 and sets out the Government's approach to sustainable development. At the heart of the NPPF is the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Essentially, it is about positive growth with economic, social and environmental gains being sought simultaneously through the planning system. Neighbourhood planning forms part of the NPPF approach to planning, to allow local communities to shape sustainable development within their area and to enable local communities to address their strategic needs and priorities. The NPPF states that Neighbourhood Plans should set out a positive vision for the future of the local area with planning policies to determine decisions on planning applications, including policies which set out the quality of development that should be expected for the area, based on stated objectives for the area's future and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. However, a Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and plan positively to support these policies.

Sustainable Development

- 2.2. The Neighbourhood Plan must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF states that pursuing sustainable development helps to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, ensuring a sufficient number and range of homes is provided in a well-designed, beautiful and safe built environment with accessible services and open spaces and to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.
- 2.3. Therefore, the aims, objectives, policies and proposals of the Neighbourhood Plan should be assessed against their ability to achieve sustainable development. Wherever possible the Neighbourhood Plan should actively promote the achievement of sustainable development.

Local Planning Documents

- 2.4. Ickleford Parish lies within the local planning authority of North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC). The current development plan is the Local Plan 2011 – 2031 which was adopted by NHDC in November 2022.
- 2.5. Ickleford is identified as a village in the Local Plan and 199 dwellings on 3 sites are proposed. A fourth site for 120 houses in the north of the Parish adjacent to Lower Stondon (LS) was also proposed and the development of 144 houses on the site is almost complete.
- 2.6. The adopted Minerals and Waste Local Plan documents form part of the Development Plan for the area. The current adopted Minerals and Waste Local Plan documents consist of the following:
 - The Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2011-2026 (adopted July 2014)
 - The Waste Core Strategy & Development Management Policies Development Plan Document 2011-2026 (adopted November 2012)
 - The Minerals Local Plan 2002-2016 (adopted March 2007)

3. Parish Description

- 3.1. Ickleford is a village and a civil parish in Hertfordshire, extending northwards towards Bedfordshire. It is located close to the outskirts of Hitchin along the bank of the River Hiz. It is a medium sized

village with a range of facilities and the population of the Parish was 1,833 residents recorded at the 2011 census which was relatively unchanged from the 2001 census.

History and Heritage

- 3.2. Ickleford lies in the 'Hitchin Gap' just north of that town, placed in the valley of the River Hiz between the high land of Offley on one side and close to Wilbury Hill on the other. It grew up around a ford in the river where it is crossed by the Icknield Way Path/Trail, and so for several thousand years travellers passed along this route between Dorset and the Wash. Many Iron Age and other artefacts have been recovered from the site of a fort on Wilbury Hill, together with coins and pieces of pottery left there during the Roman occupation in Ickleford itself. Of the later Saxon occupation there is little evidence.
- 3.3. In the Domesday Book of 1086, Ickleford was not mentioned, probably because it was, with Ramerick, part of the manor of Pirton. However, at the beginning of the 12th century 'Iclesfort' was part of an agreement between a Reginald de Argentein and the Abbot of St Albans, appearing in a document that gives the village the earliest known version of its present name.
- 3.4. The church was built in around 1150, with the tower added in the 13th century. In 1859 a south aisle was added, designed by Sir Gilbert Scott one of the most distinguished architects of the time, completely changing the building's appearance.
- 3.5. The dissolution of the monasteries led to new owners of their extensive lands, with obligations to regulate and care for their communities. As head of its wealthiest family, Thomas Ansell became Lord of the Manor in 1587. The family grew richer over the decades, and was noted for its charitable work.
- 3.6. Although milling has recently ceased, Ickleford's four watermills were an important aspect of Ickleford life for many centuries
- 3.7. The Midland Railway line from Hitchin to Bedford and Leicester came and went, with lasting influence on the shape of the village. It opened in 1857 and closed in 1962, with the bridge over Arlesey Road removed in 1966.
- 3.8. An arts and crafts industry was brought to the village by Walter and Marie Witter who moved to the village in 1900. Marie taught embroidery to local girls, while Walter taught boys brass-, copper- and ironwork. This a developed into a business, The Ickleford Industries of Applied Art, which had customers from around the country.
- 3.9. Historically, most residents would have been employed in agriculture. However, new forms of transport helped make Ickleford an attractive base for people working elsewhere.
- 3.10. More information is available here:
<https://northhertsmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-origins-of-Ickleford.pdf>



St. Katharine's Church, Ickleford

Landscape

3.11. The majority of the Parish of Ickleford is relatively flat farmland. The village itself lies at the southern end of the Parish, with the River Oughton at its southern boundary. This joins the River Hiz, which then runs north along the village's



Sheep grazing on Ickleford Common

eastern edge through meadows and commons. These rivers are rare chalk streams, celebrated for their high biodiversity. A stretch of the East Coast Mainline runs to the east of the River Hiz, and beyond this the land rises up Wilbury Hill towards Letchworth. The fields of Hitchin Lavender lie on these slopes, which are also traversed by some of the many popular footpaths and bridleways in the Parish. The busy A600 forms much of the Parish boundary to the East.

Education

3.12. The village has a primary school catering for around 200 children located on Arlesey Road. The present school was built in 1848 although the first record of a school in Ickleford was in 1839. The front of the school is a Grade 2 listed building and behind it are classrooms which were built in the 1960s and 1970s.

Recreation/Community Facilities

3.13. Ickleford Village Hall on Arlesey Road celebrated its 90th anniversary in 2015 and serves as a venue for local activities.

3.14. There is a large recreation ground which contains a playground and the Sports and Recreation Club with its sports facilities and licensed bar. The Club caters for several sports, including cricket, football, squash and pétanque, and is home to the Ickleford Cricket Club. There is also an equestrian centre with a Pony Club in the village.

3.15. Ickleford also has numerous clubs and groups including Scouts, Beavers, Cubs and Brownies, the Women's Institute, Karate, Pilates, Keep Fit, Line Dancing, Senior Fitness, Ballroom Dancing, Danse Herts and Ickledrama (a drama club for local children), Toddler Tales, Sing and Sign, and Phonics for Robots.

Local Business, Services and Employment

3.16. Ickleford has a number of typical local businesses, such as the shop, pubs and hairdresser. It also has some small



Lavender fields at Hitchin Lavender, Ickleford

business units housed in the old manor building and a large industrial flour mill, which may become a site for new housing. At the other end of the village lies an equestrian centre and the popular tourist attraction of Hitchin Lavender.

Population and Household Data

- 3.17. In the 2011 Census the Parish had a total of 1,833 residents, formed into 812 households and occupying 844 dwellings. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produces mid-year population estimates for parishes and wards throughout the country. The mid-2019 population estimate for Ickleford is 1,835 – indicating population growth of around two individuals since 2011.
- 3.18. In the North Hertfordshire Annual Monitoring Data, it notes that since 2016 there has been a net increase of 34 dwellings in Ickleford; however, this may not have been reflected in the ONS information on population, as noted above, as the majority of these completions (32 units) were completed between 2018 and 2020. Therefore, it should be assumed that the population would have increased slightly since the mid-2019 population estimate.
- 3.19. A development of 144 houses in the north of the parish is nearing completion, with further large allocations proposed in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan. These could significantly increase the population of the parish.

Preparing the Neighbourhood Plan and the Design Codes Document

- 3.20. As part of the Neighbourhood Plan development process, the Parish Council asked for support from the government agency, Locality, and were awarded a technical assistance package to be provided by AECOM for Design and Masterplanning advice and guidance. This work has been of great value to the team. The Design Codes report contains a large amount of guidance, best practice, and future insight, including a chapter on design guidance, the first part of which (AECOM report Section 2) provides Design Codes for the Neighbourhood Plan and is published as a separate document. Part 3 of the Design Codes document provides masterplanning for the 3 sites allocated in the Local Plan. In order to illustrate the concepts described, AECOM created nominal site layouts and access indications. These do not define or describe the ultimate layouts or access proposals, which will be submitted by the developers concerned, and will be subject to all of the usual planning processes and consultations. Other parts of the AECOM report are individually quoted or referenced in this document
- 3.21. AECOM also produced an up-to-date Housing Needs Assessment.

4. Consultation

4.1. The consultation process aimed to involve as much of the community as possible so the Plan would represent their views and priorities. It used a variety of communication approaches, with results and updates being fed back to residents. Approaches used included:

- Regular committee meetings, which were advertised to the public
- A standing item at the monthly Parish Council meetings and annual updates presented at the Annual Parish Meetings
- The Parish Council Village News email
- The Parish Council website
- The Parish Council Facebook page
- The Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan website
- The Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Facebook page
- The Ickleford Life Facebook page (a key discussion forum in the village)
- The Ickleford Primary School email system for parents, Parentmail
- Local Parish Council Noticeboards (and others)
- Articles in the St Katharine's Wheel, the Church and Parish Council magazine
- Stalls at local events, including Summer, Halloween and Christmas Fairs
- Leaflet drops
- Posters, banners and estate agent style signboards
- Questionnaire information session at the Village Hall
- Word of mouth and engagement with local groups

4.2. Early engagement included using a widely promoted information/feedback form that was delivered to all households and businesses in the parish. This introduced the neighbourhood plan and asked for feedback on the following questions:

- What do you like about Ickleford?
- How could it be improved?
- What would you like to see in any new development that may come?



Summer Fair (2018). Publicity, discussion and model building



Website home page with link to online feedback form and paper version of form (2018)

4.3. Early feedback identified key areas that were developed further through a household questionnaire. Both an online and paper version were created to encourage completion by as many residents as possible. While online publicity with direct links to the questionnaire was

important, there was also a need to reach those who were not online. A very visual publicity campaign was planned and there was a particular focus on how to engage potentially more vulnerable residents and encourage their voices to be heard.



Halloween on the Green (2018)



St Katharine's Christmas Fayre (2018). Transport of the future designs and green stickers marking favourite spots

4.4. COVID-19 restrictions led a greater emphasis on online completion than originally planned, with plans for house-to-house collections scaled back. At the same time, ways to increase accessibility by the vulnerable and those shielding were explored. This included approaching the local helping hands group to deliver and collect questionnaires, a telephone delivery and collection service and an even greater appreciation of the need for bold publicity across the village.

This included:

- Posters on village noticeboards, shops and elsewhere
- Estate agent style sign boards throughout the area
- Banners at key routes around the village
- Drop boxes
- A leaflet drop to every household in the parish
- Prominent display of questionnaires in the village store
- Online publicity and emails to local groups

4.5. A summary and full report of the results were shared online and via a drop-in information session at Ickleford Village Hall. This well-attended event also provided details of the project along with old and new photos from around the Parish, and information about the local natural environment.



Publicity poster for questionnaire (October 2020)



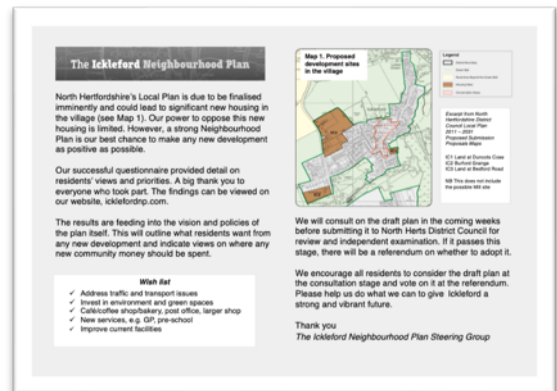
Questionnaire publicity poster and extracts from the paper and online versions (October 2020).



Extracts from the Questionnaire Results Summary (August 2021)



Poster for and photos from drop-in information session (November 2021)



St Katharine's Wheel article (December 2021)

4.6. The Regulation 14 Pre-Submission consultation ran from 28 Sept to 14 Nov 2022. Consultation documents and photos were shared with statutory consultees, residents, and other local stakeholders. Publicity included a parish-wide leaflet drop, a St Katharine's Wheel article, posters, Facebook posts, emails, and an information session at the Village Hall. Documents were made available on the website, at the information session, at the telephone box book exchange and by requesting delivery by phone. People could respond using an online Survey Monkey form, by email or via a paper feedback sheet placed in a drop box at village shop. Twenty-six sets of comments were received. These are outlined in the consultation statement, along with responses and details of any subsequent changes to the Plan.

5. Vision and Aims

- 5.1. The Vision and Aims of this Neighbourhood Plan have been carefully developed and refined by the Steering Group to reflect the priorities of the community and help set the future of the village. The Vision is the overall aim of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Aims are more detailed, allowing the development of policies which in turn will be used to comment on and determine planning applications.

Vision

Ickleford will thrive as a strong community retaining its own rural village identity and strong central hub, while maintaining excellent links with surrounding towns for employment and essential services. The needs of the village and parish population will be met, including local facilities, access to the countryside and sustainable transport, while protecting and enhancing the distinct natural and historical heritage in the Parish.

Future development will be carried out sensitively to maintain the character of the village, with new housing that is built to high quality standards and meets local need.

Neighbourhood Plan Aims

Environment

1. The countryside setting of the village will be protected and enhanced, by ensuring separation from the urban edge of Hitchin whilst retaining access to the countryside. Green spaces, views and local wildlife habitats, including rare chalk streams will be maintained and enhanced.
2. Parish heritage assets and key public spaces will be protected and enhanced, ensuring that any future development enhances the existing character of the village.

Sustainable Development

3. High quality design will be secured in all new development reflecting the character of Ickleford and its rural setting and complying with Ickleford Design Codes.
4. Future housing will respond to local housing needs, be of a high standard of design and construction, and fit well into the context of the village in terms of type, mix, scale and character.
5. New build housing should be constructed to high energy saving standards and be resource efficient in ways which are appropriate to the existing rural environment.

Traffic and Transport

6. The roads in Ickleford will be safe and accessible for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. Improvements to the road network to increase safety and reduce the impact of congestion will be required alongside new development. Beneficial sustainable transport links (including pavements, footpaths, cycle routes and public transport) will be provided and appropriate parking solutions required.

Community

7. Existing community facilities, such as the school, village hall, and sports and recreation centre, will be maintained and improved. Their wider use, and development to meet changing needs will be encouraged.
8. The range of commercial activities and services in the village will be sustained and enhanced. Economic activity such as working from home and provision of small-scale business units will be encouraged.
9. The leisure and recreation opportunities for residents of all ages will be improved by encouraging community activities, and increasing the provision of open spaces and children's play facilities.

6. Sustainable Development Principles

Introduction

- 6.1. Reflecting the NPPF and the consideration of locations for new development by North Hertfordshire District Council through the Local Plan, new development must be sustainable, achieve high design & environmental standards, reflect local preferences in terms of location and especially important, deliver new community infrastructure.
- 6.2. The Parish has a distinctive character and new development should protect, reflect and enhance that character. There is a need for development to contribute to the quality of life for residents, including healthy lifestyles, access to local services, green open spaces, safe places for active play, and to be accessible by walking and cycling and public transport.
- 6.3. While it is generally accepted that some new development is inevitable, many residents feel that the level proposed in the Local Plan is inappropriate for the village, with allocations reflecting wider housing need rather than simply those of the parish. There is a strong feeling that any housing development should meet the needs of local people - existing and future generations, applying the principles of sustainable development to reflect environmental, economic and social needs. The policies reflect the issues facing the Parish, the Vision and the Aims.

“Keeping the village’s essence /character whilst also trying to future-proof it, is a delicate balancing act. However, it is important to try to keep its history and character. Far too many lovely villages have been swamped by towns such as Stevenage and Luton. Homogenisation of Ickleford into a suburb of Hitchin must be avoided at all costs.”

- 6.4. For Ickleford Parish, the meaning of sustainable development is set out below.

Sustainable Development Principles

Sustainable development for Ickleford means that development should be:

- *Proportionate and in locations where it would support the community,*
- *Of a high standard of design, reflecting the character of the surroundings,*
- *Contributing towards community infrastructure,*
- *Providing superfast broadband connections,*
- *Suitable electric vehicle charging infrastructure*
- *Ensuring that there is no increase in the risk of flooding, to new and existing properties*
- *Meeting contemporary construction, energy efficiency and water management standards,*
- *Located and designed to enable safe walking and cycling to local services and facilities.*

The following adverse impacts must be avoided:

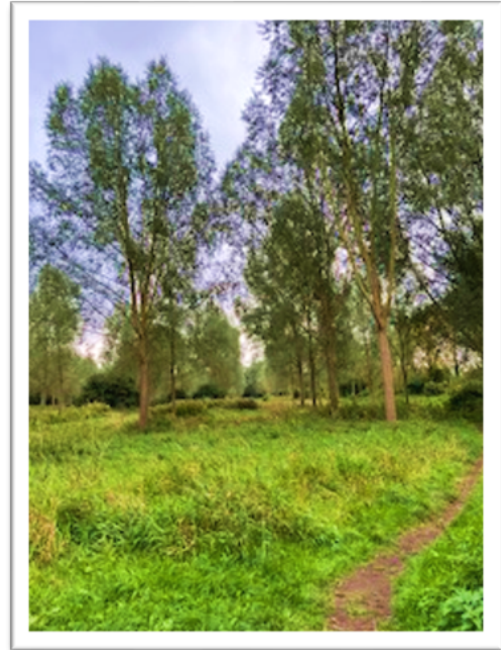
- *The loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land,*
- *The loss or inappropriate diversion of public rights of way,*
- *Avoidable intrusion into open countryside and Green Belt,*
- *The loss of or damage to wildlife habitats, including delicate chalk streams, hedgerows and trees*
- *A loss of amenity for existing residential properties and reduced efficiency for nearby businesses,*
- *Overloading existing utilities and services (water, drainage, sewage and waste),*
- *Reducing gap between Ickleford and Hitchin.*

7. Environment

- 7.1. The village environment, particularly the open spaces and natural habitats, and its identity is well supported and highly regarded by village residents. In many cases, this was a significant factor for moving to, living in and remaining in Ickleford. The Questionnaire included 4 questions on the natural environment which generated a total of 924 responses, with many free text comments.
- 7.2. Residents consider that it is very important (82%) or fairly important (15%) that Ickleford maintains its own separate identity from that of Hitchin, Letchworth and neighbouring villages, with a similar quota supporting Ickleford's historic buildings and conservation area (Annex 1), and keeping development within this area to a minimum.
- 7.3. The identity of the village however is not just defined by its separation from other conurbations. The majority of respondents consider the natural environment and its wildlife, the rivers, common land and the agricultural landscape as not only important to conserve but are an intrinsic part of the

Ickleford's identity and culture. When asked about the places that were important to them, 229 respondents took the trouble to collectively identify through 719 observations, all the areas of 'natural beauty' from the "Discover Ickleford – Walk the Parish" map as being of significance for walking and cycling, and enjoyment of the countryside views.

- 7.4. Many respondents thought that the 2020 Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns had raised the importance of Ickleford's open spaces as essential to the mental and general health of village residents, both young and old; an appreciation that is almost certain to continue well after the current health crisis has passed since the habit has been established. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the village open space environment is also enjoyed by those walking and cycling in from the surrounding areas.



One of many valued footpaths in Ickleford

"We love and use all of the village and surrounding countryside paths and walks. Our whole family would love to see these green areas protected as they are so important to the character of the village not to mention for teaching our children about the environment and for our mental health. There is also an abundance of wildlife surrounding our village including barn owls, foxes, badgers, moles and deer and it is so important that we protect them."

Separation from Hitchin

- 7.5. Residents of Ickleford depend upon the proximity of Hitchin for employment, retail, services and education. However, the visual and functional separation of the two settlements is very important to residents. The Green Belt designation around Ickleford Village should ensure that this separation and distinct identity is retained. The Local Plan has changed the Green Belt boundary by allocating land for development and removing them from the Green Belt designation but it has also set the Green Belt and settlement boundaries for the coming years, through Policies SP2 (Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution) and SP5 (Countryside and Green Belt). Those boundaries will only be reviewed by the Local Plan in the future in accordance with the criteria set out in the NPPF.
- 7.6. The Local Plan is also able to allocate development sites in the Green Belt, removing the Green Belt designation. The proposed allocations for Ickleford (referred to later in this Neighbourhood Plan) have substantially enlarged the settlement boundary. It is noted that two of the allocations do not contribute towards the merging of the two settlements of Ickleford and Hitchin, but IC2 (Burford Grange) does and it is therefore very important that this separation is not further 'nibbled away' through piecemeal development.

- 7.7. It is noted that planning permission for five new houses behind Manor Close and off Turnpike Lane has recently been granted and the land status changed from Green Belt. A planning application for 53 houses (22/03040/FP) has recently been submitted to NHDC at land off Bedford Road Hitchin in the Green Belt. These developments have been met with concern by residents as they both appear to reduce the gap between the settlements, despite being designated Green Belt.
- 7.8. The NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in 'very special circumstances'. It also sets out the exceptions where the construction of new buildings may be allowed, including for example, buildings for agriculture, replacements or modest extensions to existing buildings, limited affordable housing for local community needs and redevelopment of previously developed land. Policy E1 seeks to bring to the attention of developers and NHDC that the area of Green Belt between Ickleford and Hitchin is particularly important for the separation of the two settlements, and if not designated as Green Belt (which is seen as the highest form of protection that planning legislation and policy gives), the Neighbourhood Plan would have designated this gap as a strategic gap.

Policy E1: Maintaining Separation

The undeveloped gap within the designated Green Belt between Ickleford and Hitchin shall be maintained. New development which would encroach visually and/or functionally on this gap should be refused unless it is in line with NPPF policy which allows very limited development under very special circumstances or development which is not deemed inappropriate. .

Landscape

- 7.9. The Parish of Ickleford is relatively flat, particularly in the northern half, and is mostly farmland. The village itself lies at the southern end of the Parish. The boundary to the south is formed by the River Oughton, which rises to the west at Oughtonhead (Oughtonhead Common Nature Reserve is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)). The River Oughton joins the River Hiz south of the village. The Hiz runs north from here forming a major element of the landscape and much of the eastern border of the Parish. These rivers are rare chalk streams, celebrated for their high biodiversity and habitats supporting vulnerable species. A series of commons and other publicly accessible land adjoins the river, both within the Parish going north, and to the south of the Parish, linking up with Burymead Springs Nature Reserve on the edge of Hitchin.
- 7.10. Railways form another important feature of the landscape. A stretch of the East Coast Mainline runs a little to the east of the river Hiz, forming a clear barrier between the land beyond it and the bulk of the Parish to the west. There are two crossing points: a foot and cycle bridge to the south, and a road going under the railway to the north. The decommissioned Hitchin to Bedford line still influences the landscape in the embankment that runs through the village.
- 7.11. The busy A600 is a further feature. This forms much of the Parish boundary to the East, with its traffic audible across much of the open landscape. Arlesey Road is another key route through the Parish, winding through the village, then passing under the railway bridge, past the lavender farm, to the fields beyond. These roads are closely entwined in the lives of residents, whether being used for transport or negotiated as pedestrians. The volume and speed of traffic is a concern to many, with future development both inside and outside the Parish likely to increase their use.

- 7.12. This landscape is also experienced by residents through recreation. A series of footpaths and bridleways make the countryside very accessible. Routes include the ancient Icknield Way which runs from west to east through the village across the river and up Wilbury hill towards Letchworth. To the northwest of the village another ancient path, known as Hambridge Way, leads to Pirton across open fields. A further route, the Hicca Way, follows the commons and meadows north alongside the river Hiz. Other footpaths and bridleways form a network of routes that provide numerous circular walks around the Parish (Annex 2).
- 7.13. The North Herts District Council Landscape Character Assessment (2011) reviewed the many landscape types across the district. It undertook to systematically divide the countryside into discrete and relatively homogenous units where physical, biological, historical and cultural elements occur in repeating patterns and share certain aesthetic characteristics. In this assessment the Parish fell within two defined character areas: Pirton Lowlands (Area 218) and River Oughton and Purwell Valleys (Area 217). Descriptions of these character areas and some of the recommendations for their management from the Assessment are given below.

7.14. Pirton Lowlands (Area 218)

- Large scale open, flat farming landscape given over predominantly to arable production. Long distance views of features such as water towers, churches and the chalk scarp. Remnant hedges, gappy and predominantly hawthorn but with occasional mature trees. Hedges generally well trimmed. Very little woodland cover except adjacent to settlements. Settlement pattern is nucleated with older settlements maintaining the use of local vernacular materials. Occasional farmsteads are less well integrated in terms of materials and general scale of farm buildings. Additionally the A600, Bedford Road, is quite prominent in the east.



The Pirton Lowlands viewed from the Wilbury Hills

- The landscape is of moderate sensitivity particularly to the introduction of urbanizing features and larger scale development. The landscape and built development guidelines for this include conservation of the traditional character of settlements ensuring that edge development uses vernacular materials and features to avoid inappropriate visual intrusion; protect and preserve the pattern of rural lanes and associated hedgerows; encourage broadleaved planting, hedgerow restoration and shelter belts; maintain the distinctiveness of river corridors from adjacent arable land; and conserve the open chalk landscape with its expansive views.
- 7.15. River Oughton and Purwell Valleys (Area 217) (This includes the River Hiz valley)
- Traditionally cattle grazed water meadows with poplar, willow and ash trees along the watercourses. Self seeded mature hawthorn also randomly distributed. Mature landscape character well defined by urban development (Hitchin). General change of land use adjacent to Ickleford where land is predominantly used for horse grazing and stabling. Paddocks are defined by post and barbed wire fencing.

- This Character Area is characterised by a series of river valleys and associated wetland communities. The wetland habitats associated with the Rivers Hiz and Oughton are highlighted as being of high biodiversity status and ecological importance by the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan. Ickleford Common is a rare example of an unimproved and traditionally managed grassland and is important for great crested newts. It is recognised as a key neutral grassland habitat by the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan.



River Hiz, flowing past Ickleford Common

- While the built development in Hitchin heavily influences the wider character area, the valleys are moderately sensitive to development, the reduction of the water meadows and removal of vegetation being the main threats. Development capacity is low partly because of the flood plain.
- 7.16. The ecologically important chalk streams and their management needs are discussed in the Biodiversity section below
- 7.17. New development should seek to respond to the landscape setting of the village and the proposed development site, by carefully siting and arranging buildings so that they do not introduce a jarring element into the Parish landscape. Planting schemes will be required and would be particularly encouraged where hedgerows can be planted or reinstated. Existing water features, including the rivers must be considered. The rare chalk stream ecosystem requires careful management, following advice and guidance from specialists (e.g. the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust).
- 7.18. Some change that occurs in the landscape is outside planning control, but where planning permission is required for development, landscape features should be considered in a systematic way. Proposals for new development should include an appropriate landscape analysis either as a freestanding report or as part of a design and access statement.

Policy E2: Protecting the Landscape

Any proposals for development which will have an impact on the landscape should recognise and seek to protect and enhance the historic and natural landscape and local character of the Parish, including the delicate chalk rivers and their valleys, field ponds, mature trees and hedgerows. Such features should be protected and where appropriate, incorporated into any landscape design schemes and their long-term maintenance ensured.

Planting of hedgerows and trees, and enhancement of the existing vegetation will be supported and encouraged 'with careful management of the rare chalk stream ecosystem'.

Rural Character

7.19. Although close to Hitchin, the village of Ickleford remains rural in character with a clear separate identity. Several factors contribute to this distinct rural character. These include a central village green, many other green spaces, numerous trees, space around buildings, rural lanes, a mixture of low-rise housing styles, and extensive well-used footpaths linking the settlement with the surrounding countryside.



Upper Green, Ickleford

7.20. The village centres on Upper Green, an expansive and attractive green space at the heart of the village, surrounded by houses and



One of several attractive cottages in the village, an intrinsic element of Ickleford's identity

amenities, such as 12th century Grade 1 listed St Katharine's church, the school, the village shop and country pubs. The Grade II listed school buildings are set back from the green behind more green space enclosed by a Grade II listed wall. There are numerous trees in this area, including many on the green. The large cedars in the adjacent churchyard are particularly striking. The high level of planting generally in residential properties throughout the village, and in the grounds of the church and school, contributes to the continuous green character of the village. With iconic views of the church and school, for many people Upper Green is strongly tied to Ickleford's identity and sense of community.

7.21. As elsewhere in the settlement, footpaths from the surrounding countryside come out into the centre of the village. The Icknield and Hicca Way are major walking routes that can be reached from just south of the green near the village shop. A footpath from the north of the green provides access to popular walking routes across the fields, the burial ground, play area and recreation ground. The edges of the village here, and elsewhere, open into green countryside. These spaces are important recreational areas and give the village its identity of a settlement set within fields. Many properties have views out over them. Easy access to the extensive commons, with the rare chalk stream of the River Hiz, connects residents to a beautiful and diverse natural environment.

7.22. At the north end of the village is Lower Green, another expansive green space with many mature trees and adjacent historic buildings. It is often traversed by walkers and horse riders from the nearby equestrian centre accessing the numerous footpaths and bridleways nearby. Throughout the

village numerous green spaces around and between buildings also have an important role in giving the village a spacious and open feel, an intrinsic element of the character of Ickleford.

7.23. Snailswell Lane is a no through road country lane that skirts Lower Green before heading a short way west. It ends in an unpaved Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) with fields on one side and highly spaced-out bungalows and houses on the other in a mix of styles. Footpaths lead off from this route, including popular walks back towards the centre of the village. This highly rural part of the settlement is therefore familiar to many residents.



Horses grazing, a familiar sight to local residents

7.24. Arlesey Road and Turnpike Lane are the primary routes through the village. They converge at a triangle in the centre,

where some of the oldest and most historic buildings can be found, many within the village's conservation area. Fronting the south end of Turnpike Lane, a row of 17th century buildings has a distinctive assortment of sizes. This includes a combination of elongated low single storey ranges, one and a half storey stable blocks, two storey gatehouses and an elevated clock tower. Steeply pitched roofs create an attractive group of varied roofscapes. These buildings are highly visible and situated close to the street frontage, presenting an impressive facade upon entering the village along Turnpike Lane. Arlesey Road itself is fronted by several historic buildings including Ivy Cottage, Rose Cottage and Orchard Cottage as well as the listed Ickleford school. These older buildings are interspersed with well-spaced modern housing, most of which are well set back from the roadside, effectively varying the road frontage throughout its length.

7.25. Chambers Lane and Greenfield Lane in the north-western corner of Ickleford, are narrow lanes with greener margins. Here, the buildings and tree coverage front directly onto the lanes, creating a sense of enclosure and, with proximity to the recreation ground with its green areas and mature trees, conveys a distinct rural setting to this area.

7.26. Leaving the core of the village east, west or south there are residential areas of varying ages. Even where the housing has a higher density, spaces around the buildings are retained, maintaining the rural feel.

7.27. The Ickleford Design Codes document divides the village into two main areas, the historic core and the settlement area. Guidance for new development in these areas is set out in the Design Codes. The intrinsic rural character of the village must be retained through reinforcing the eclectic nature of existing development whilst respecting the visual impact of new buildings and their mass, bulk and materials. It is considered fundamental that any development within the village is sympathetic with or enhances the character of the village. An example of where this ideal has perhaps not been achieved is the three storey flats situated in Icknield Close, built in the late 1970s. The height and lack of private gardens makes them feel very different to the rest of the village and rather incongruous. It is generally considered that future development should maintain a maximum two storey design unless in context with its surroundings, or its design in the case of the redevelopment of existing buildings.

Boundary Treatments and Frontages

- 7.28. The village style of frontage boundary treatment tends to be a mix of hedgerows, low brick walls or open frontages. White posts are a distinctive feature of the central village green, marking the edges of this space and of driveways. Whilst there is not a predominant style of the street frontages across the village, the open frontages tend to associate more with the more modern housing, however, this adds to the interesting character of the village. Where there are hedgerows and low walls, new development should seek to retain and recreate this style of boundary treatment, for example by avoiding the use of close boarded fences more suitable to the urban environment. A recently completed development installed iron railing boundary frontages which, being unique in the village, is not considered sympathetic to the village character, perhaps being more suited to a neo-Georgian/Victorian urban style development.
- 7.29. The village roads are lined with grass verges adding to its rural feel, as well as the biodiversity of wildlife. The planting of native hedgerows and trees also add to the rural character and should be retained.

Views

- 7.30. A key element of character comprises the views which connect publicly accessible points with the wider countryside, back towards the village and within the historic centre of the village allowing residents and visitors to enjoy all aspects of the Parish. Three types of view are identified in the Ickleford Design Code:
- Conservation area views: 4 views identified in the Conservation Area Character Statement 2019
 - Rural to urban approach views: 3 views as seen from along the main road approaches to the village
 - Natural Views: a further 9 views from public viewpoints which are important landscape views
- 7.31. All the views should be respected by new development, minimising the impact on them and maximising their enhancement.



Viewed from the Wilbury Hills, wheat growing in late Spring

Policy E3: Rural Character

The rural character of the village and its surroundings should be respected through new development by ensuring that:

- ***proposals take advantage of the local topography, landscape and water features, trees and plants in the vicinity and on the site.***
- ***the scale and character of new buildings are in keeping with the rural setting,***
- ***the variable sense of space between and around existing buildings is retained where appropriate, particularly in the green heart of the village and where views of the countryside beyond the village are available. The design of new buildings should ensure that adequate space is provided around them to compliment the rural character of the village,***
- ***boundary treatment and landscaping schemes are carefully designed so as to maintain the rural character of the area,***
- ***Views of particular importance as defined on the Policies Map should be protected and not be obstructed by new development (Annex 3).***

Biodiversity

- 7.32. Protection of the natural environment, which is highly valued by local people, is critical, with reference to the important habitats and landscape identified in the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2006, the Landscape Character Assessment (2011) and the Design Codes. In particular, the chalk streams, valuable marshland and fen habitats along the riverbanks and Ickleford Common, which is a rare example of an unimproved and traditionally managed neutral grassland habitat, should be preserved.
- 7.33. There are only 200 chalk streams in the world with 85% found in South and East England. The streams are fed by springs in the chalk rock, with the clean mineral rich water supporting a variety of wildlife and habitats, including some of the UK's most vulnerable species in a fragile, highly specialised ecosystem. The specific plants (e.g. water-crowfoot) that grow in the riverbed create channels for the shallow clear water to flow. This in turn cleans the sandy riverbed and this provides important spawning grounds for brown trout and other fish that are particularly found in Chalk Streams.
- 7.34. Chalk streams are under extreme pressure from low water flows and pollution. The problems faced and potential solutions are outlined in the 'The Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy' (2021), whose authors include environmental organisations and Defra. The River Hiz Conservation Group is working with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to improve and maintain the River Hiz in Ickleford, which includes management practices specific to the needs of these chalk streams. The report on the River (River Hiz Restoration Plan 2019) outlines local practices to help improve the river. Particular challenges faced by this stretch of river include sewage overflows from Hitchin and polluted runoff from roads and local industry.



River Hiz as it flows through Ickleford

7.35. While the river is beautiful and much loved, public access into the river itself should be carefully managed and potentially avoided in places due to the fragile nature of the ecosystem.

7.36. Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre have conducted an audit for Ickleford Parish and there are 2 veteran willow trees and a number of identified Local Wildlife Sites in the Parish (Ickleford Common North, Lower Green, River Hiz (Ickleford and Cadwell), Cadwell Grove Meadows, Cadwell Crossing, Icknield Way (Wilbury), Westmill Lane and Wilbury Hill), and two sites adjacent to the Parish (Oughton Head, and Cadwell Marsh & Burymead Springs) (See Annex 4). Many of these have important fauna such as water voles, water shrew, grass snakes and hares. River Otters have also been seen. Some of the recorded important plants include cowslips, meadowsweet, knapweed, scabious and buttercup species. These features should be protected and where possible enhanced as supported by NPPF policy 174 and Local Plan policies SP12 and NE4.

- 7.37. The south western part of Ickleford falls within a 2km radius of the Oughtonhead Lane Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and therefore planning applications within this impact Risk Zone would need to consider any potential impacts and risks posed to the SSSI.
- 7.38. All proposals for new development will be required to demonstrate how the design has taken into account its potential impact on local habitats and species. This will include the sites and features that are locally important in Ickleford, including the river valleys, trees, hedges and woodland and unimproved grassland. Development should be planned to avoid habitat loss and fragmentation, and opportunities should be sought to improve ecological connectivity, including through the creation, restoration and enhancement of linking habitats and 'stepping stones' through the landscape. Developers will be required to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place to protect wildlife and take every available opportunity to enhance biodiversity, wildlife corridors and important habitats. Where ecological surveys are required, submitted information must be consistent with British Standard 42020 2013.
- 7.39. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a concept proposed in the Governments 25 Year Environment Plan and mandated as a condition of planning permission in the 2021 Environment Act. Biodiversity Net Gain requires a minimum 10% increase in biodiversity after development, compared to the level of biodiversity prior to the development taking place. In locations such as Ickleford where all new development will be close to the countryside, it is really important that this principle is adopted to mitigate the impact of losing biodiversity value of undeveloped land to development. In order to objectively assess net ecological impacts and therefore achieve net gains in biodiversity, as required by the NPPF, it is vital that a fair robust mechanism for measuring these impacts is applied. To ensure they are consistently quantified, when required, applications must be accompanied by a Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculation using the Natural England Biodiversity Metric. The application of this

"Ickleford Common and its beautiful views and its wildlife is a true gem."

metric (which may be periodically updated) will be required for all development with negative impacts on biodiversity.

7.40. All new development should seek to increase biodiversity for example by habitat creation or enhancement, whether or not significant harm to species or habitats is anticipated. Examples of how enhancements could be achieved include:

- Planting native trees and species rich shrubs and hedgerows of local provenance
- Creation of orchards, wildflower grasslands and nature reserves
- Connecting existing habitats and enhancing migratory routes with additional planting (including green roofs and walls and hedgerows)
- Creation of ponds
- Provision of integrated roosting opportunities for bats and birds
- River or stream restoration following guidance and advice from specialists, (e.g. the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust) who can share best management practices.
- Incorporating bat boxes etc into new buildings, particularly at the edges of the settlement.

7.41. Where Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDS) are required to serve new developments, every opportunity to design them for wildlife gain and link them into existing habitats should be taken.

Policy E4: Biodiversity

New development will be required to protect and enhance existing natural features of sites, habitats and provide at least 10% net gain in biodiversity.

Provision of appropriate species-related measures will be required, including, for example, swift bricks, bat and owl boxes and the incorporation of appropriate native species into landscaping schemes.

Opportunities should also be taken by developers and landowners to link with existing wildlife corridors and sustainable drainage solutions in new development to complement nature conservation objectives.

8. Historic Environment

- 8.1. 88% of respondents to the questionnaire thought it very important to minimise the impact of development on historic buildings and the conservation area to conserve the Parish's historical past and heritage for the future.
- 8.2. Archaeology in the Parish is widespread and there are several designated archaeological areas. These historic assets are sufficiently protected by Policy HE4 of the Local Plan.

Conservation Area and Listed Buildings

- 8.3. The village has a great variety of historic buildings in style, age and building materials. The Parish has over 30 Grade I and Grade II listed structures and a conservation area located in the centre, covering an area across Arlesey Road, Turnpike Lane and Chambers Lane. Most of the Parish's listed heritage can be found within the conservation area, with some farmhouses and barns extending to the north and south of the area. Many of these structures are cottages and farmhouses of significant architectural and historical value built between the 16th and 18th century. A key landmark in the

village is the Grade I listed Church of St Katharine, which was first built in the 12th century and was restored by the Parish in 1859. Photographs of each building can be found in the Ickleford Design Codes document.

- 8.4. The centre of the village was designated as a Conservation Area in 1979 with an updated Conservation Area Statement being published in 2019 by NHDC. The Conservation Area Statement sets out a number of important historic features and buildings within the Conservation Area including green spaces and trees which need to be respected.
- 8.5. These assets are protected from harmful development by the NPPF paragraphs 189 – 196 which require that great weight is attached to the asset’s conservation and that clear and convincing exceptional justification would be needed to justify any loss or harm to the asset. Local Plan Policy HE1 also protects listed buildings from harmful development.
- 8.6. It is expected that new buildings will be designed so as to respect the bulk, massing, height and orientation of listed buildings in close proximity to the site, but can be designed in such a manner as to add to the varied character of the parish.

Local Heritage Assets

8.7. Neighbourhood Plans may identify important heritage assets which are not already protected by listing. These are known as non-designated heritage assets. The buildings and features identified which may not be of sufficient architectural or historic merit to justify listing, are an important part of the character of the Parish. The policy will help to ensure they are retained and respected if new development takes place which may affect them or their setting.

8.8. The non-designated heritage assets included in this plan are:

- The Icknield Way Path/Trail, the best-known iron-age track across England, which forded the river at Ickleford;
- The Village Hall, a striking building that has been an important focus for village activities since 1925;
- The bus shelter on Upper Green, built to commemorate the jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary, with the historic title ‘Lord of the Manor’ on its inscription.

8.9. Applicants must explain, in a Design and Access Statement and/or Heritage Statement, how the proposal will address these requirements.



The rest shelter gifted to the village in commemoration of the 25th Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary - 1935

Policy HE1: Protecting and Enhancing Local Heritage Assets

All development proposals affecting identified local heritage assets will be required to take into account the character, context and setting of the assets. Development should be designed taking account of local styles, materials and detail. The loss of, or substantial harm, to a local asset, will be resisted unless exceptional circumstance is demonstrated.

Identified Heritage Assets include:

- ***Icknield Way Path/Trail (Annex 5)***
- ***The Village Hall (Annex 6)***
- ***The commemorative bus shelter on Upper Green, and its inscription (Annex 6)***

9. Sustainable Development

- 9.1. Sustainable development means ‘meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF expands on what this means in practice and the Neighbourhood Plan must support sustainable development. For Ickleford, this means developing the Local Plan allocations in a sustainable way plus small-scale development over time which integrates well into the village without damaging the natural and historic environment.
- 9.2. Housing development in the Parish of Ickleford has become an emotive subject with residents in recent years. The parish has seen the relatively large development delivering 144 dwellings, north of Ramerick Farm, commence building in 2020, and large developments in the surrounding areas of Lower Stondon, Henlow, Stotfold and Fairfield and recently with the decommissioned RAF Henlow staff housing now in construction. More locally, apart from the recently completed Ickleford Manor site at the south corner of Turnpike Lane and Bedford Road, the prospective developments of the Bowmans Mill brownfield site, and the three sites allocated in the Local Plan are a source of concern and are reflected in the comments from respondents to the Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire. Free text comments were mostly about concern over infrastructure, that the level of development proposed in the Local Plan was too high for the size of the village, concern over loss of Green Belt, that development should not be permitted anywhere in the Parish or that there are no suitable sites.
- 9.3. Notwithstanding this, there is generally an appreciation that some development is inevitable and, in a few cases, welcomed in order to keep the village ‘alive’ and functioning as a community. 45% of respondents said that small infill developments of up to 10 houses may be appropriate, 50% said that that brownfield sites should be considered for development, 66% wanted to limit any development beyond that outlined in the Local Plan. In the main, residents want development to be well controlled, affordable for local residents especially younger families, brownfield locations were preferred and that building design must be empathetic to the character of the village and not ‘box type’ and ‘executive’ home styles. There was mention that green technologies and sustainable resources should be employed in the construction, with the provision of gardens and sufficient resident and visitor parking stated as essential to any housing development.

- 9.4. A Housing Needs Assessment was commissioned in 2021 and is a background technical document to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Development within the Settlement Boundary

- 9.5. Opportunities for new small scale housing development are likely to continue to arise in the village throughout the plan period. The settlement boundary for the village is defined in the Local Plan and separates the village from the surrounding countryside which is covered by the Green Belt designation. Within the settlement boundary, development will be accepted for infill development, small-scale employment uses, and community facilities in principle.
- 9.6. New homes may be built on redeveloped sites or through infill development. Infill sites are defined as spaces between existing houses where new housing will repeat or respect the surrounding pattern of development. Generally, 'infill' sites can be acceptable for 1 to 2 new houses, provided that the amenities of the adjacent properties are not adversely affected and that the street scene and pattern of development remains appropriate to the rural character of the village.

Policy SD1: Development within the Settlement Boundary

New development, including housing, small scale employment uses and community facilities will be supported on infill or redevelopment sites inside the settlement boundary where there is no adverse impact on existing residential, employment and community uses.

All development proposed should have no significant adverse impact on the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties through loss of privacy; overshadowing; overbearing by a building or structure; car parking; removal of mature vegetation or landscaping and additional traffic resulting from the development.

New Housing

- 9.7. Ickleford is an attractive village comprising a mixture of house types of various types and ages. It is acknowledged that the NPPF promotes sustainable development and encourages consolidation of rural settlements where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. In terms of the Local Plan, Ickleford is identified as one of 5 villages which will support a higher level of new housing allocations. These villages are considered to have some provision of key services and facilities such as a primary school, making them moderately sustainable locations for development. The Local Plan defines the settlement boundary within which development will be allowed. In addition, three sites are allocated around the edge of Ickleford village for an estimated 199 new homes (shown in Annex 7). These are
- IC1: 9 homes at Duncot Close,
 - IC2:40 homes at Burford Grange, Bedford Road
 - IC3: 150 homes plus reserve land for a new primary school on Land at Bedford Road
- 9.8. Within the Parish, although adjoining the village of Lower Stondon which lies in Central Bedfordshire, an additional 120 homes have been allocated (LS1 Land at Bedford Road, Annex 7). This development has been completed providing 144 dwellings including 37 dwellings in affordable rented tenure and 20 units as affordable housing for sale. These will satisfy the identified need in the Housing Needs Survey.
- 9.9. No allocations are therefore proposed in this Neighbourhood Plan.

Size and Mix of Homes

- 9.10. AECOM was commissioned by the Parish Council to produce a Housing Needs Survey in 2021 as background evidence to the Neighbourhood Plan. This looked at existing housing stock and age profiles of residents, affordability and tenure. Primarily, dwellings in Ickleford are made up of 3 or 4 or more bedrooms, with a smaller proportion of smaller dwellings with 1 or 2 bedrooms. This corresponds with the larger proportion of detached and semi-detached dwellings that tend to be larger than terraced houses and flats. Ickleford has a high proportion of bungalows when compared to district and national levels, while it has a lower proportion of flats and terraced houses which may be representative of the rural nature of the Parish.
- 9.11. Regarding housing for purchase on the open market, local households on average incomes are unable to access even entry-level homes unless they have the advantage of a very large deposit. Market housing, even with the benefit of a higher than average income, is likely to remain out of reach to most. The average house price would require an annual income 100% higher than the current average income. There is a relatively large group of households in Ickleford who may be able to afford to rent privately but cannot afford home ownership. They are typically earning between around £39,240 per year (at which point entry-level rents become affordable) and £83,314 (at which point entry-level market sale homes become affordable). This ‘can rent, can’t buy’ cohort may benefit from the range of affordable home ownership products such as First Homes and shared ownership. This type of affordable housing is likely to be provided on the housing sites allocated in the emerging Local Plan.
- 9.12. Ickleford has a lower proportion of residents aged under 44 and a higher proportion of those aged over 44 than in both North Hertfordshire and England more generally. This may be a reflection of the general lack of affordability, resulting in fewer young adults and families living or moving to the area. It is therefore important for new development to prioritise housing that is appropriate both to young families with children and older households.
- 9.13. The results of a life-stage modelling exercise, which looks at the sizes of dwelling occupied by different age groups and projects the growth and decline of those age groups over the Plan period in order to understand what should be built, demonstrates that in Ickleford an appropriate response would be to prioritise the supply of smaller to mid-sized dwellings (1, 2 and 3 bedrooms).
- 9.14. Market housing for sale (as opposed to market housing for rent and all types of affordable housing) is increasingly unaffordable and those on median incomes are unable to afford to buy a home in the Parish. While affordable housing should be well balanced in terms of size to cater for all circumstances, the provision of smaller and mid-sized homes for sale and rent should make an important contribution to improving affordability more widely. If older households wishing to ‘rightsize’ and younger ones seeking to form their own independent households are to be able to afford to live in Ickleford, increasing the provision of small and mid-size homes (i.e., less expensive) will be crucial.

*“The style of buildings should be sympathetic to the village style”
“Empathetic, workable, infrastructure, a sustainable plan for all to enjoy the very thing that living in a village entails. Ickleford is a village not a small town.”*

“Affordable down-size accommodation for single and elderly people”

- 9.15. The allocated sites on Bedford Road and Burford Grange will ensure that a mix of sizes and a supply of affordable homes are available because Local Plan policy requires a proportion of new housing developments to be affordable. However, supporting text to Policy HS3: Housing Mix states that on suburban and edge of settlement sites, there is an assumption of 60% larger homes (3 or more bedrooms) and 40% 1 and 2 bedroom homes. However, for Ickleford, the size of dwellings on those sites (and other sites that may arise during the Neighbourhood Plan period) should prioritise the provision of smaller 1-3 bedroom homes (and therefore less expensive) homes. This means that the suggested percentages set out in the Local Plan is not appropriate. The Housing Needs Survey suggests that up to 2031 34% or more of homes provided on a site should be 1-2 bedroom homes, with 60% 3 bedroom and the remaining 6% should be 5 bedrooms.
- 9.16. The Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire shows that 15% of residents think that one bedroom homes will be required over the next 10 years, 44% think that two bedroom homes will be required, 43% three bedrooms and 30% think that larger homes (of more than 3 bedrooms) will be required. This confirms that small to midsized homes are likely to be most needed. In order to have a pragmatic policy for housing mix for market homes only (the HNS suggests 94% of new dwellings should be 3 bedroomed or less) a sensible compromise is considered to require at least 33% 1-2 bedroom homes and then a further 33% 3 bedroom homes, meaning that on a site of 3 houses, 1 would be 1-2 bedrooms, 1 would be 3 bedroomed and one larger.
- 9.17. The provision of quantity and tenure of affordable homes on new sites where affordable housing must be provided, including the allocated sites IC2 & IC3 will be determined by NHDC.

Policy SD2: New Housing Development

On all developments of 3 – 10 dwellings and sites not required to provide affordable housing, including the allocated site IC1 in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, the sizes of dwelling should be mixed, with at least 33% of smaller, (from 1-2 bedrooms) provided to enable younger people and older people wishing to downsize to access appropriate housing. At least 33% should be 3 bedroomed dwellings unless there is local up to date evidence that larger dwellings are needed.

High Quality Design

- 9.18. The NPPF and the proposals for planning reform recognise that well-designed buildings and places improve the quality of life and that it is a core planning principle to secure good design. Good design is not just about appearance, but also functionality and the relationship to surroundings and it is not

about copying past styles or preventing innovative modern design. The aim is to create site-specific creative design, which is contextual by referencing form and materials to surroundings.

9.19. The village has a wide variety of density, building date and materials, testifying to its historic past. It is important that this variety is carried through in new development whilst respecting the immediate surroundings. A Design Codes document for the Parish has been prepared and is a separate technical background document to the Neighbourhood Plan. It includes numerous examples of traditional features of Ickleford and includes guidance on how to design new buildings to compliment the surrounding street scene or landscape in an appropriate and sympathetic manner.



Typical construction features in the village, from years past.

Settlement Pattern

9.20. The Ickleford Design Codes document identifies 5 area types within the Parish as set out below. A map showing the location of these is at Annex 8:

- Area Type A: Historic Core: The area contains a large proportion of listed and historic buildings. Dwellings are predominantly detached and present traditional building systems, contributing positively to the character of Ickleford.
- Area Type B: Settlement: These areas comprise the bulk of the built areas, ranging from the expansions of the post-war period to recent developments. They tend to lack listed or locally listed buildings. Dwellings are predominantly semi-detached and terraced.
- Area Type C: Rural Countryside: A number of arable fields to the north of the neighbourhood plan area are not included under the Green Belt designation and are more susceptible to development as a result. The proximity of this area to Stondon makes a joint approach between NHDC and Central Bedfordshire Council advisable.
- Area Type D: Green Belt: The built areas in Ickleford are surrounded by Green Belt designated land. This area constitutes the underlying landscape base, essential to the character of the Parish.
- Area Type E: New Development: An additional area, not specifically linked to a specific location, will be used in the Design Codes to refer to new developments in any of the previous areas.

9.21. The identification of area types and their attributes can help understand the nature of the Design Codes in the Neighbourhood Plan area, to identify challenges and specific issues common to a number of locations that the Design Codes need to target. The Design Codes themselves can be applied to the relevant Area. The summary of these codes is set out in Annex 8 and the full details of how they can be applied are set out in the Design Codes document.

9.22. A summary of the issues the Design Codes cover is set out below:

Movement

9.23. Well designed places have a network of streets, footpaths, junctions and crossings and parking and servicing. New development needs to allow connections with services and facilities. In such a small settlement, it is possible to walk to all facilities and new development should provide for such opportunities.

Nature

9.24. New developments should mitigate any detrimental effects that they impose on the natural environment, while enhancing the existing landscape features and promoting habitat creation. (covered in Policy E4)

Built Form

9.25. Built form refers to the three-dimensional arrangement of buildings, and blocks. The layouts, forms, types, scales and heights constitute the fundamental elements of the built environment that define what a particular area is. These characteristics will vary considerably in each Design Codes area type and new buildings must respect the surrounding buildings or setting.

Identity

9.26. The character of a place is made of many different elements that come together to create a unique sense of identity. New developments will need to respect the existing character as well as create attractive and authentic places that contribute positively to the townscape, public realm and setting of the Area. (Covered in Policies E3 and SD3)



Ickleford Village Hall (Ickleford Parish Council)

Public Space

9.27. Streets are the main component of the public space and are defined primarily by their degree of enclosure with buildings and trees, and will vary considerably by Design Codes area type. The protection of valued public space is important in existing settlements such as the Greens in Ickleford and should not be compromised by new development.

Uses

9.28. Sustainable places include a mix of uses that support everyday activities for users to live, work and play. Ickleford has a number of valued services, mainly located in the historic core of the village which need to be retained where possible. (Covered in Policy C1). The proposed new development may be of such a scale as to provide additional functions to residential use, to satisfy the needs of residents.

Homes and Buildings

9.29. Well-designed homes and buildings are functional and accessible. They allow for change over time and provide sufficient amenity space within them for users to thrive. Alterations and extensions as well as individual new buildings should respect their adjacent buildings, provide a healthy living

environment for their occupiers and not detract unacceptably from the amenity of existing neighbours.

Energy and Sustainability

- 9.30. New proposals should balance out the negative environmental impact of development by use of better design, higher efficiency in the consumption of energy and materials in the entire life cycle of buildings and adequate management of waste. (Covered in Policy SD4).
- 9.31. Development proposals should include a Design and Access Statement, or other written statement related to the scale and complexity of the scheme, which shows that the development has been designed to specifically relate to its setting and incorporates the Design Codes. This is essential to ensure that the special character of the village is protected and its local distinctiveness is enhanced and reinforced.

Policy SD3: High Quality Design

Proposals for good quality new development (including new buildings and extensions to existing buildings) will be supported, where they are in accordance with the guidelines and design principles set out in the Ickleford Design Codes.

All new development must (where relevant to the proposal):

- ***Relate to the existing development pattern in terms of enclosure and definition of streets/spaces;***
- ***Be of an appropriate scale and density in relation to its setting;***
- ***Use materials appropriate to the development's context;***
- ***Be of a design with a locally inspired or distinctive character;***
- ***New dwellings should not be more than 2 storeys in height unless the context is appropriate;***
- ***Be well integrated with the community and facilities by reinforcing pedestrian connections and taking opportunities to provide new ones;***
- ***Integrate car parking within landscaping so that it does not dominate the street;***
- ***Incorporate Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) as the preferred method of surface water drainage for all development;***
- ***Provide facilities for secure cycle storage; and***
- ***Make provision for electric vehicle charging infrastructure.***

Sustainable Buildings and Construction

- 9.32. The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) encourages neighbourhood plans to include policies on mitigation and adaption to climate change. The UK government needs help to meet its commitments under the Climate Change Act, to reduce global warming. One of the commitments made by the Government is to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.
- 9.33. The reality is that the homes built today will still be in use in 2050. Therefore, to achieve the UK carbon reduction targets cost effectively, new housing built today must be built to zero carbon standards as soon as possible. However, even if all new housing were to be carbon neutral from tomorrow, this would still not be enough to achieve the carbon emission reductions, as around 70% of buildings that will be in use in the 2050s already exist. If carbon reduction targets are to be met,

and if fuel poverty is to be tackled, it is essential that the energy efficiency of existing buildings, including historic and listed buildings is also improved.

9.34. Further detail and suggestions can be found in the Design Codes SU.01 to SU.04.

Policy SD4: Provision of Energy Efficient Buildings

The design and standard of any new building should meet a high level of sustainable design and construction and be optimised for energy efficiency, targeting zero carbon emissions. This includes:

- *Siting and orientation to optimise passive solar gain,*
- *The use of high quality, thermally efficient building materials,*
- *Installation of energy efficiency measures such as loft and wall insulation and double glazing.*
- *Any new development should incorporate on-site energy generation from renewable sources such as solar panels.*

The retrofit of existing buildings including heritage properties, is encouraged to reduce energy demand and to generate renewable energy where appropriate, providing it safeguards historic characteristics.

Alterations to existing buildings must be designed with energy reduction in mind and comply with sustainable design and construction standards.

Water Management

9.35. Climate change is resulting in more extreme weather events in the UK with heavier rainfall and increased risk of flash flooding. Changing rainfall patterns will also affect water supplies. Too much rainfall in some areas and not enough in others will contribute to both flood and drought conditions. North Hertfordshire is in an area of water stress. This means it has poor overall water quality and quantity of water resources.

9.36. Local Plan Policies NE7, NE8, NE9 and NE10 require new development to take account of flood risk, incorporate appropriate drainage (including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems), protect water quality and water courses. Whilst waste water is an issue for residents in Ickleford, statutory undertakers are required to provide new developments, including housing with appropriate sewage and waste water management.

9.37. The National Framework for Water Resources (2020) suggests that individual consumption of water should be reduced to 110 litres per person per day. This can be achieved by requiring improved efficiency in water provision infrastructure in homes. As Hertfordshire is a chalk-based catchment, 60-95% of domestic water (depending on supplier, in the Affinity region it is 95%) is abstracted from the groundwater which also supplies rivers via springs and bed flow. Therefore, there is a direct correlation between domestic water use and river levels. Accordingly, water efficient design and technology is important for ensuring both the sustainability of the water supply system and ensuring flow sustainability in our rivers into the future.

- 9.38. A small local contribution to improved water supply can be made by requiring that all new homes are provided with water butts for harvesting and storage of water for garden use and with other measures designed to reduce water consumption.

Policy SD5: Water Management

All developments must be designed taking into account best practice in water efficiency, such as using water efficient fittings and appliances, water harvesting, grey water recycling, and providing water storage features.

All development should demonstrate that the estimated consumption of wholesome water per dwelling is calculated in accordance with the methodology in the water efficiency calculator and should not exceed 110 litres/person/day. Conditions will be applied to planning permissions where relevant to ensure that this is achieved.

10. Community

Community Facilities

- 10.1. Ickleford has a number of facilities for residents. However, for main shopping needs such as groceries and clothes, residents tend to travel by car into Hitchin or further afield. The NPPF and the Local Plan recognize it is important that these facilities are situated within local communities so that they are accessible, help to reduce the need to travel and provide opportunities for people to participate in activities within their own community.
- 10.2. The village centre has a number of amenities and facilities close together, which has been recognised as an important aspect of the village's character.
- 10.3. The Questionnaire sought residents' views on both current and potential new amenities. When asked how the centre could be improved and on their priorities for investment, it was clear that traffic issues, parking and pedestrian safety were important issues.
- 10.4. In terms of amenities, it was striking how many people would welcome somewhere in the centre serving refreshments that was not a pub, such as a café/coffee shop or bakery. A large number of respondents would also welcome the return of a post office. Improvements to the shop, or another shop, would also be popular.
- 10.5. Several people highlighted how much they like the village centre as it was and would be uncomfortable with any changes that affected its character. Some suggested the area could be improved through maintenance and additions, such as flowers or more seating.

"Everything is within a very small walking distance which is hugely advantageous. Possibly a few more benches between facilities for people with lesser mobility to rest."

10.6. Ickleford's main retail facility is Ickleford Stores which provides services such as groceries, newspapers and magazines, sandwiches, hot food and drinks, an off-licence, garden plants, Paypoint, cash machine and parcel delivery and collection. Situated opposite the church on Arlesey Road, this small but busy shop receives trade from through traffic as well as residents.



Ickleford Stores

10.7. The three pubs in the village all have their own parking facilities, parking in the Old George is supplemented by additional parking set aside for St. Katharine's Church.

- The Old George
- The Plume of Feathers
- The Cricketers



The Plume of Feathers pub

10.8. St Katharine's Church is the only place of worship in the village. The recently completed 'St Katharine's New Room' will provide a community space at the church. This is likely to host the previously running Mums and Tots group and over sixties group as well as being available to other community groups. The church also hosts the popular Ickleford Community Larder, offering both larder basics and rescued food.

10.9. The Village Hall is the main venue for a number of groups and clubs in the parish. These include, The Parish Council, Beavers Cubs and Scouts, Brownies, The Women's Institute, Pilates, Keep Fit, Line Dancing, Senior Fitness, Ballroom Dancing, Danse Herts and Ickledrama (a drama club for local children), Toddler Tales, Sing and Sign, and Phonics for Robots. It has a large main hall with a stage, a smaller secondary hall and a spacious well-equipped kitchen. It is regularly hired out for events such as plays, birthday parties and craft fairs. Ickledrama students are collected from the school gate and walked over to their drama classes.

10.10. The Ickleford Sports and Recreation Club sits as part of the recreation ground. It offers organised football, cricket, pétanque and squash to adults and youths in Ickleford and surrounding areas. During the winter, there are football leagues for both youth and adults. These consist of Hitchin COMETS (youth boys) and Hitchin ladies (adult). There are also darts and pool leagues. During summer there is the adult cricket league, plus the 'All Stars' cricket club, providing the opportunity for the youth to try out cricket. Pétanque have leagues in



Ickleford Sports and Recreation Club

the summer and the two squash courts run leagues throughout the year. The club room looks out over the recreation ground and fields beyond, and is equipped with a bar, pool table, darts and TV sports. There is an independent food trailer (Icklecafe) available at weekends that provides coffee/tea/burgers to members and the community that use the recreation field.

10.11. The village play area is set within trees next to the recreation ground.

10.12. Little Park is a further green space behind St Katherine's Close. It contains a grassy area and 18 allotments.

10.13. The village Primary School is a single form entry school for infants and juniors, with places for 210 pupils. It is oversubscribed most years with approximately half the children attending from outside the Parish. It sits adjacent to the village green and is a key driver of foot traffic in the area. Parents and carers congregate on the green beneath the trees at pick up and drop off times. As a Church of England school, it maintains close links with St Katharine's Church across the green, with children attending services there. While COVID restrictions temporarily reduced the ability of the school to host events, these are returning. They include school events such as plays, assemblies, sports days and parent evenings, and PTA activities such as quiz nights and children's discos. The school also hosts community events such as the St Katharine's Christmas Fayre, exhibitions and meetings. The school makes its facilities available for hire, e.g. for birthday parties. The Shotokan Karate club also holds its Wednesday evening classes for adults and children in the main hall and dining room. In addition to its role in educating the parish's children, the school is a focal point for social interaction between residents. Friendships built up at the school gate link people and form part of the fabric of village life. Community events in the central spaces of the green and the school add to this. Many residents have lived in Ickleford for a long time. This has allowed successive generations to attend the school, further deepening connections between people. It also provides an important way for new families with young children just starting school to integrate into the community.

10.14. A red telephone box library was installed in its original position on the Village Green in September 2021 with books for residents to borrow and return.



Telephone Box Book Exchange

- 10.15. Hairdressers: CLHair is a hair, beauty and skincare salon located in the heart of the village.
- 10.16. Ickleford Equestrian Centre is a riding school and Pony Club centre. It offers riding for children and adults, hacking, Saturday pony club, school holiday activities, horse care courses and livery for horse owners.
- 10.17. Fast Food Outlets: The Happy Plaice fish and chip van visits the village on alternate Monday evenings.
- 10.18. There is an independent food trailer (Icklecafe) available at weekends that provides coffee/tea/burgers to users the recreation field. It has also attended other events.
- 10.19. Funeral Directors: The Co-operative Funeral Director (Formerly Jennings undertakers) is located on Arlesey Road close to the centre of the village.
- 10.20. Alleyfield burial ground. Alleyfield is a non-denominational burial ground for present and former Ickleford residents and anyone having connections with the village. It is managed by a group of local Trustees.
- 10.21. Bus shelter in village centre commemorating the Silver Jubilee of King George the V and Queen Mary
- 10.22. The policy is intended to retain these facilities and services to maintain Ickleford as a sustainable village. For the facilities listed in Policy C1, proposals which result in the loss or permanent change of use of Classes E (including retail, offices, cafes), F1 (learning and non-residential institutions) and F2 (Local community uses) to other uses will only be supported where the applicant has demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of the site or premises being used for ongoing retail or community uses.
- 10.23. Conversion, demolition or change of use to a use which is not for the community will be resisted unless a replacement would prove more suitable for the needs of the community. The applicant will need to put forward evidence that the existing use is no longer commercially viable and prove that a genuine attempt has been made to market the enterprise as a going concern for at least a year.
- 10.24. Local Plan policy ECT7 also restricts the loss of such facilities, it does allow for loss if there is another shop service or facility of a similar use within an 800m walking distance. Whilst the context for this approach is understood, in a village such as Ickleford where the facilities are concentrated in the centre, this policy could potentially result in the loss of 2 or 3 of the local facilities which would drastically reduce the range of facilities available to residents without car travel. Accordingly, all proposals to all the facilities listed in the Policy C1 which would result in their loss will be required to provide evidence of viability and marketing.

"We enjoy living in Ickleford, it maintains a village 'feel' because of the Upper Green hub - church, school, pubs and shop"

- 10.25. New facilities and improvements to existing facilities will be encouraged and supported, including new community facilities and services adjoining the settlement boundary as set out in Policy CGB2b of the Local Plan.

Policy C1: Community Facilities

The provision of new community facilities will be supported.

Proposals to improve the viability of a community facility by way of the extension or partial replacement or redevelopment of buildings, structures and land, will be supported, provided the design of the scheme respects the village character in general, and the resulting increase in use is appropriate in design terms and will not have negative impact on the amenities of adjoining residential properties.

The following community facilities will be retained and planning applications which result in either the loss of or significant harm to, will be resisted

- ***The Village Hall***
- ***Ickleford Stores***
- ***The Sport and Recreation Club***
- ***The Old George Public House and carpark***
- ***The Plume of Feathers Public House and car park***
- ***The Cricketers Public House and carpark***
- ***Bus shelters***

Conversion, demolition or change to other uses will only be supported if it can be clearly demonstrated that:

- ***the facilities continued use is no longer viable, and evidence has been provided that the property has been actively marketed, commensurate with its use at an open market value for a period of at least 12 months, or***
- ***an alternative or new facility is provided that is equivalent in use and scale and in an appropriate location.***

Recreation and Green Spaces

10.26. The Parish has a reasonable number of greenspaces of different types, they range from formal equipped recreation grounds to sites that are protected by wildlife and/or common land designations. They include:

- Ickleford Recreation Ground with its children's play area, football, cricket, pétanque pitch
- The enclosed green space of Little Park (behind St Katherine's Close)
- Natural open areas including Christmas Common (natural flower meadow), Whitsun Common and Ickleford Common
- Upper Green and Lower Green
- Other areas of registered common land around the village (see Annex 9)
- Numerous footpaths and bridleways including the Icknield Way, Hicca Way, Hambridge Way and many other popular routes around the Parish used by walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Some of these routes traverse the lavender farm (see Annex 2).

10.27. The Parish Council owns Upper Green (the central village green). Herts County Council leases the recreation grounds to the Parish Council who in turn lease them to Ickleford Sports and Recreation Club.

10.28. Allotments are well used and located at Little Park behind St Katherine's Close. They are owned by North Herts District Council and managed by Ickleford Parish Council.

10.29. Within new development, the requirement for new open spaces for sport and recreation alongside new development is included in the Local Plan and these standards will continue to apply.



Ickleford Cricket Club at the ISRC (Ickleford Cricket Club)

10.30. Open spaces can always be improved, through management plans, improvements to access and boundary treatments.

Policy C2: Recreation and Green Spaces

Existing open spaces and recreation facilities as set out below, will be protected from development. Proposals which would reduce the quality or quantity of these facilities will only be permitted where the existing facilities are re-provided to a better quality or quantity in an appropriate location.

- ***Upper Green (The Village Green) (Annex 10)***
- ***Ickleford Recreation Ground and play area***
- ***Alleyfield Burial Ground***
- ***Little Park green space, behind St Katherines Close***
- ***Ryder Way and Little Park Allotments***
- ***The commons (see Annex 9)***

The improvement of existing and provision of additional recreational facilities and green spaces will be encouraged and supported.

Ickleford Primary School and Local Plan Allocated Site IC3 (Land at Bedford Road)

10.31. Hertfordshire County Council has a statutory duty to plan school places. Allocated housing site IC3 (Land at Bedford Road) in the NHDC Local Plan contains a reserve site for a new primary school should that be needed in the future. It will also be developed for 150 homes, so is an important development in the Parish. The Local Plan sets out the following criteria for its planning and development:

- Transport Assessment to consider the cumulative impacts of sites IC2, IC3 and LS1 on the junction of the A600 and Turnpike Lane for all users and secure necessary mitigation or improvement measures;
- Approximately two hectares of land secured as a reserve site for a primary school;
- Appropriate junction access arrangements to Bedford Road;
- Sensitive incorporation of Footpaths Ickleford 013 & 014 as green routes around the edge of the site including appropriate measures to reinforce the new Green Belt boundary along their alignment;

- Integration of Bridleway Ickleford 015 as a green corridor through the site;
- Sensitive treatment of priority deciduous woodland habitat or, where this cannot be (fully) retained, compensatory provision elsewhere within or adjoining the site;
- Development proposals to be informed by site-specific landscape assessment;
- Sensitive integration into existing village, particularly in terms of design, building orientation and opportunities for cycle and pedestrian access;
- Archaeological survey to be completed prior to development;
- Detailed drainage strategy identifying water infrastructure required and mechanism(s) for delivery; and
- Development should prevent unnecessary mineral sterilisation by taking into account the mineral resource block and any subsequent mineral safeguarding mechanism.

10.32. Consultation has shown that the village school has an important role in village life. As the population of Ickleford and the surrounding towns and villages grows, there may become a need for more primary school places.

10.33. The large majority of residents (76%) considered it very important that the school remains in its current position. If more school places were required in the future, most (81%) would prefer development of the current site, rather than a new school east of the Bedford Road. The possibility of change at the school was clearly an emotive subject. Residents provided many detailed comments and often used expressive language to convey their views. The position of the school in the heart of the village was seen by many as integral to the village's character and sense of community. The building itself was also often highlighted as an important visual feature.

10.34. Discussing the school and its possible expansion highlighted concerns around parking and safety. Many felt parking was currently a problem and would need careful consideration before any expansion. A number of people thought more walking and cycling should be encouraged. Use of a new site off the Bedford Road was also seen as problematic by many. There were serious fears around pedestrian safety and of further congestion on a very busy road. Accordingly, any transport assessment for the allocation site must acknowledge the cumulative impacts of new extensive development in Stotfold and Henlow in Central Bedfordshire.

10.35. More details of the responses are available in the Consultation Statement.

10.36. The school is a Grade 2 listed building and together with its frontage wall and gateway arch with the date of 1848 are key features in the heart of the conservation area. Any expansion must not adversely affect this historic aspect of the school building and its green frontage setting.

10.37. The option of expanding the school should be investigated as an alternative to the provision of a new primary school at the north-western edge of the village on allocated site IC3.

10.38. Should Hertfordshire County Council decide that the provision of a new school on site IC3 is necessary, a masterplan should be prepared in consultation with the local community for the site. Similarly, any proposals for the current school buildings and grounds must be consulted



Ickleford Primary School

upon prior to any planning applications being submitted. Ickleford Parish Council will work with NHDC and Hertfordshire County Council to achieve the best outcome for the siting of additional primary school accommodation if needed to meet the needs of children in the village.

Policy C3: Primary School and Site at Bedford Road

Provision of new primary education facilities, either through the expansion of the existing primary school or the construction of a new school, should be designed to facilitate the joint use of spaces and equipment by the school and by the wider community.

The requirement for a new primary school identified on IC3 Bedford Road in the Local Plan should be safeguarded at least until 2031 or until the school is built.

If a school is to be built on IC3, the following criteria will apply

a. The building of a school on this site should be thoroughly justified including assurances that there is no better alternative;

b. A Transport assessment must be carried out to consider not only the cumulative impacts of Sites IC2, IC3 and LS1, but also other sites beyond the parish in Stondon and Henlow, on the junction of the A600 and Turnpike Lane for all users, and necessary mitigation and improvement measures will be carried out prior to development of the new school;

c. There should also be an assessment of the impact of school traffic on residential housing inside and outside IC3.

In addition to the usual planning requirements such as appropriate access, landscaping, archaeological assessment and other criteria set out in Local Plan Policy IC3, a detailed masterplan for the site should be prepared in consultation with the local community prior to the submission of any planning application.

Local Businesses and Agriculture

10.39. A number of companies have their registered office in Ickleford. These include larger companies with their own dedicated premises and smaller businesses run from home. Businesses with premises in the Parish include:

- 'The Old Manor House' [commercial and office space], currently used by:
 - MoveAssist International Limited. A global mobility technology company
 - MJM Data Recovery Ltd. Data recovery services for all types of storage media
 - W.J Rendall Ltd. Letting
 - WJF Cars. Car Dealer
- Hitchin Lavender (see below)
- Holme Farm Turkeys. Family farm rearing seasonal turkeys

10.40. Hitchin Lavender. The Lavender farm at the north of the village is a popular local attraction. During the flowering season thousands of visitors from a wide area come to see and pick the lavender, including coaches of overseas visitors from London. The lavender and sunflower fields are situated in attractive countryside on the side of a hill with open green space and refreshment kiosks at their



Hitchin Lavender

base. There are also lavender display gardens, a small museum and a popular tearoom set in a 400-year-old barn. Lavender products are sold in a cabin by the field and in the barn. The farm also hosts numerous workshops led by local people across the site. These include yoga, photography, flower arranging, storytelling and movement for pre-schoolers. The owners host various fundraising events, such as band nights and barn dances. In the summer months the farm is a major employer of young people in the village.

10.41. The fields are accessible via local footpaths and bridleways. However, direct pedestrian access from the village involves walking underneath a railway bridge without a footway, just before a sharp bend in the road. This is considered highly dangerous and puts some residents off walking to the site. Visitors using the bus to reach the farm cannot, however, avoid this route.

10.42. The business section of the questionnaire looked at the general economic health of the village and the possible future options for sustaining the community. Over 80% of respondents looked favourably towards the community's social aspect; the opportunity to act together to contribute to the village with projects whilst also having the chance to meet and engage socially. Similarly, as might be expected from other areas of the questionnaire, the agricultural landscape and natural environment scored highly in respondent's views, the village having already lost much of its horticulture enterprises some years ago but still very much embedded in agricultural farming culture.



Farming on the Wilbury Hills

10.43. The Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire, which took place during COVID restrictions, found 32% of working people were 'working from home' at this time and 19% were 'working from home and elsewhere'. While these proportions are likely to have decreased with the removal of restrictions, full or partial homeworking is likely to remain important for many residents.

10.44. The Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate employment sites, but it supports the viability of local businesses and their expansion, where this is proportionate and appropriate in the individual circumstances. Home working is also seen as a means of encouraging business and creating a

sustainable community with less commuting and a more sustainable lifestyle, saving individuals the cost of travel and increasing their leisure time.

10.45. The diversification of agriculture and agricultural buildings is supported in principle. However, development must be of a scale and intensity appropriate to its context, must not impact detrimentally on residential amenity, and must have an acceptable impact on the character and scale of the village and its rural hinterland.

10.46. The provision of high speed broadband is particularly important in rural areas and in supporting the viability and sustainability of rural enterprise and homeworking

Policy C4: Supporting Local Employment and Agriculture

Proposals for the development of new small businesses and for the expansion or diversification of existing businesses, including farm based operations, will be encouraged, providing that:

- ***it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse impact from increased traffic, lighting, noise or other emissions or activities arising from the proposed development;***
- ***it would have an acceptable impact on the character and scale of the village, its rural hinterland and landscape; and***
- ***where relevant, opportunities are taken to secure the re-use of vacant or redundant historic buildings as part of the development.***

Applications for extensions or part change of use of dwellings to enable flexible or home working will be supported, subject to there being appropriate parking and that the residential amenity of neighbouring properties is maintained.

In each instance, the provision of effective high speed broadband services will be encouraged and appropriate measures should be incorporated into the design of workplaces.

11. Movement, Traffic and Transport

11.1. Transport is historically an issue that is of concern and debate in Ickleford. Results of all Neighbourhood Plan consultations showed there was concern over the volume and speed of traffic passing through the village. Two specific potential accident 'black spots' were also identified; Cadwell Bridge and the roundabout at the junction of Turnpike Lane, Westmill Lane and Bedford Road. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that the free response questions in this section generated over 500 individual comments.

11.2. The car dominates transport in the village. Less than 3.0% of the respondents reported that their household had no car and 98.3% use a car at least once a week. Concerns about transport, almost exclusively issues relating to roads and traffic, produced more respondents (287) than issues relating to public transport (101) and the promotion of walking and cycling (99).

11.3. Cycle routes were requested to specific locations including Hitchin, along the A600, Stevenage and Letchworth.

Provision for Pedestrians, Cyclists and Horseriders

Rights of Way

- 11.4. There are numerous footpaths and bridleways in the Parish. Public Footpaths and Bridleways are in the majority although there are several Byways Open to All Traffic. Public Rights of Way are highways that are purposed for active travel modes (Footpaths – on foot: Bridleways/Byways – on foot, horse and cycle). They provide for short journeys within the parish and also between the surrounding villages and towns. They also provide an excellent recreational facility. The Icknield Way Path/Trail are long-distance routes following rights of way through a historic landscape. The Path is available to walkers and the trail for use by those on horse-back or off-road cycle. Heading to the east of the village it provides a scenic route to Letchworth Garden City (see Annex 2. The Hicca Way is a walking route that follows the River Hiz Valley from Hitchin, through Ickleford, to Arlesey.
- 11.5. Bridleways in the Parish are well used by horseriders and cyclists
- 11.6. The Parish Council recognises the importance placed on the footpaths, open spaces and the associated other factors have on the character and historical value of Ickleford, and the reason that many residents chose, or choose, to live in the village and a large proportion of residents (74%) walk local Rights of Way every day.
- 11.7. Residents when responding to the questionnaire identified as being of importance to them: all footways and bridlepaths, and general green open



Ickleford has an extensive rural footpath network

"I regularly walk all of the footpaths, bridleways, and byways, and did so before the coronavirus lockdown. For me, they are what make Ickleford special."

spaces. (244 comments) and also value is placed on the footpaths and open spaces having a significant effect on the well-being and health of the village and its residents, particularly during 2020/21 for recreation, as well as physical and mental health benefits. (45 comments)

- 11.8. Improvements to the network will always be encouraged, in particular provision of footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways, permissive footpaths & established village walks such as the Barn Owl walks (Holwell, Ickleford, Pirton)

Paved Footways

- 11.9. The questionnaire also highlighted concerns regarding the lack of paved footways around the village. This is increasingly important in a village where there are several well supported local community facilities and villagers who regularly walk around the village for exercise
- 11.10. The challenges for paved footway provision in this village are as follows:
- The footway is not complete for several roads including Chambers Lane
 - The central historic part of the village is characterized by narrow lanes with no footways
 - Walking access to the village school
 - Parking is restricted outside the facilities and where there is no footway, parked cars often block access for pedestrians.
 - The absence of a walkthrough footway at Cadwell Bridge is dangerous
- 11.11. A partnership approach between the Parish Council, NHDC, Hertfordshire County Council and developers will be required to improve highway safety and minimise conflicts between road traffic, cyclists and pedestrians. It is intended to support new ways of managing the traffic throughout the parish by promoting pedestrian and cyclist safety and resident well-being through lower traffic speeds and traffic volumes.
- 11.12. Where new development is proposed, the footway network should be improved to assist in encouraging pedestrians.

Policy MTT1: Provision for Pedestrians, Cyclists and Horseriders

Proposals for new development should not lead to the loss of Public Rights of Way. Where development is proposed it is expected that the network will be added to, upgraded (Footpath to Bridleway) and surface improved to enable short, everyday journeys on foot or cycle and enhance the opportunity for recreational use. The strategic principles of the Hertfordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan should be adopted where development is being considered.

Footpaths, bridleways and byways outlined in the Discover Ickleford footpaths map (Annex 2), including the Icknield Way Path/Trail, the Hicca Way and the Hambridge Way will be retained. New links both within the village, to neighbouring villages and to the wider countryside will be encouraged.

New development should include measures that that keep traffic speeds low and improve the provision of footways and access for pedestrians and cyclists and horseriders. Where they are proposed, new roads, junctions, footways and traffic management measures should be designed to complement the rural character of the village and reflect local heritage.

Public Transport

- 11.13. Public transport is not well used – 64% of the respondents to the questionnaire rarely or never take the bus. Reasons for not using the bus included that it was not frequent enough, too expensive and that other routes were required. Of the 54 responses suggesting new routes, the most popular were to Hitchin station (22), Letchworth (21) or to any station (not specified) (17) suggesting that the

current public transport offering is not integrated enough. This is also shown by the comments on the lack of a bus service timed to allow students in the village to reach secondary schools in Hitchin.

Car Use and Parking

- 11.14. As set out above, many concerned residents through the questionnaire made comments regarding road safety in relation to traffic speeds and narrow roads and raised concerns about inconsiderate parking and current lack of parking provision.
- 11.15. Unfortunately, measures to slow traffic and motorists speed and behaviour cannot be within the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan because behaviour does not directly translate into land use, but the Parish Council will consider how these issues can be addressed separately.
- 11.16. The questionnaire highlighted challenges for parking within the village. This includes parking issues at local facilities in the centre of the village such as at the shop, during school drop off and pick up times and around the recreation ground. None of the available spaces should be reduced as it would exacerbate these difficulties.
- 11.17. With the demise of a suitable public transport system, the village relies heavily on private vehicles for access to workplaces, retail facilities, for secondary schooling, medical facilities and post office access. Whilst the village questionnaire highlighted that many villagers enjoyed walking around the village on a daily basis, or used the village shop frequently, frequent trips outside of the village are a necessity. Such trips require households to own vehicles, many with multiple vehicles requiring parking.
- 11.18. Adherence to NHD Council's parking standards will ensure that new dwellings have sufficient parking spaces. There is no need for specific requirements to be set out in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 11.19. Electric vehicles are a broadly sustainable mode of travel that is increasing market penetration and national guidelines require that new developments of more than 10 houses shall provide electric charging points. However, in a village like Ickleford, where residents rely on cars to reach local services and shops, every new house should provide a charging point for electric cars.



Bus service between Bedford and Hitchin

“More and more traffic seems to be going through the village, made worse by massive housing developments to the north.”

Policy MTT2: Car Parking

Proposals for new housing developments will provide parking in line with NHDC's parking standards and have adequate on-site parking to meet current and future needs, unless alternative and accessible car parking arrangements can be made which do not add to on-street congestion.

Electric charging points for cars should be incorporated in new housing development for each house.

New development should not result in the loss of publicly accessible off-street car parking. Developments which propose to remove off-road parking spaces will only be supported where alternative provision is made which increases or maintains the number of accessible parking spaces available on or within the immediate vicinity of the site.

Proposals for new development that provide additional off-road car parking spaces, to alleviate parking congestion will be encouraged.

12. Aspirations, Implementation and Monitoring

Aspirations

- 12.1. The questionnaire asked residents their priorities for investment should money become available because of new development. The top four priorities all related to traffic and transport, or the environment and green spaces.
- 12.2. Traffic and transport aspirations related to speed calming, pedestrian safety (especially Cadwell Bridge and Turnpike Lane roundabout), parking, cyclepaths and bus routes. Potential projects include:
- Improved safety at Cadwell Bridge with safer access routes / paths to Hitchin Lavender
 - Addressing safety concerns at Turnpike Lane roundabout
 - Speed calming measures
 - A footway along Chambers Lane
 - Improved parking to provide better access to village facilities – school, shop etc.
 - Cycle path access to the north of the parish (LS1)
 - Cycle path access to Cadwell Lane industrial area Hitchin
 - Cycle path access to Hitchin train station



Cadwell Bridge - a major pedestrian safety issue

- More, and better linked, bus routes, especially to stations
- 12.3. Investment in the environment and green spaces could include:
- Maintenance of footpaths and care of the river
 - Information boards by the river
 - More benches
 - A possible development of a forest school
- 12.4. In terms of retail, there was popular support for a café/coffee shop or bakery. A Post office and larger shop would also be welcome. Possible projects include:
- A larger or expanded village shop, to include a Post Office
 - A central meeting place other than pubs and church, e.g. a café
 - A pharmacy
- 12.5. A desire to maintain, improve and make better use of current facilities was also highlighted, e.g. the school (on its current site), sporting facilities and the Village Hall. Possible improvement and extension of facilities could include:
- The retention and development of Ickleford Primary School on its existing site
 - A purpose built pre-school (as part of the existing school development)
 - Improved facilities for young people, youth club facilities
 - A skate park
 - Activities for young children and carers, older people and young people
 - GP services
 - Community events

Implementation & Working in Partnership

- 12.6. Ickleford Parish Council is committed to Localism and locally informed influence over planning decisions and it will be the key organisation in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Council will build upon its excellent track record in engaging in planning decisions (reactively through consultation and proactively through promoting the policies of this plan) and by delivering related projects for the local community.
- 12.7. The Plan will be used by the Parish Council to:
- guide comments on planning applications,
 - negotiate with landowners and developers to achieve the best possible outcomes from new development,
 - direct financial resources to the Parish in a structured way,
 - bring together groups or working parties to improve the village environment,
 - lobby local authorities to support the parishioners' wishes and aspirations.
- 12.8. It is recognised that partnership working is needed for the potential of the plan to be realised. Partnership and joint working will be key elements in the successful implementation of the plan. The main organisations and the roles that they can play are summarised below.
- **North Hertfordshire District Council** - Planning Policy, Development Control, Housing Management and Improvement, Economic Development, Open Spaces, Recreation and Community Facilities
 - **Hertfordshire County Council** - Drainage, Highways and Transport, Education, Landscape, Minerals and Waste and Social Services.
 - **Adjoining Parish Councils** – Assessing impact of large scale planning applications and discussing local facilities.

- **Environment Agency** The planning, design and delivery of development, taking account of: Flood risk management; Water quality and water resources, Waste management, Land contamination and soil and other regulation.
- **Site owners and developers** will need to liaise with the Parish Council as well as the other agencies involved in development.

Funding and Implementation Mechanisms

- 12.9. Financial contributions will be sought from developers through Section 106 and other legal agreements. In the future, NHDC may work on introducing the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which provides a legal framework to raise funds to provide the infrastructure needed to cope with new developments based on pounds per square metre of floorspace.
- 12.10. The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations of the 2011 Localism Act enable areas with a Neighbourhood Plan in place to receive at least 25% of the CIL raised in their area to direct to their own local infrastructure priorities. These contributions will be targeted on the priority need to deliver new community infrastructure.
- 12.11. In addition, the Parish Council will seek to influence annual and other budget decisions by NHDC on housing, open space and recreation, economic development, community facilities and transport, through the Local Transport Plan.
- 12.12. The Parish Council will also work with the appropriate agencies and organisations to develop funding bids to help to achieve Neighbourhood Plan policies and objectives. This might include: The Lottery; UK Government programmes; land fill tax credits, and Local Economic Partnership funding.
- 12.13. The Neighbourhood Plan will be used by the Parish Council to:
- guide comments on planning applications
 - negotiate with landowners and developers to achieve the best possible outcomes from new development
 - direct financial resources to the village in a structured way
 - bring together groups or working parties to improve the village environment
 - lobby local authorities to support the parishioners wishes and aspirations

Monitoring and Review

- 12.14. It is important to check that progress is made towards meeting the objectives and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council will report on the implementation of the Plan every 5 years and consider
- if progress is being made to achieve the vision and the objectives of the Plan
 - if progress is being made towards the implementation of the policies in the Plan
 - if financial contributions available to the community arising from development is being targeted towards the identified plans and projects
 - if the Plan remains based on the most up to date information
 - if the Plan is being taken into account by NHDC when determining planning applications
- 12.15. However, it may prove necessary to formally review the Plan prior to 2035, for example following a future review of the Local Plan or changes in national policy. The Parish Council will conclude whether a review is required. If so, it will commence the review at an appropriate time and secure opinions of residents and stakeholders to update the Plan.

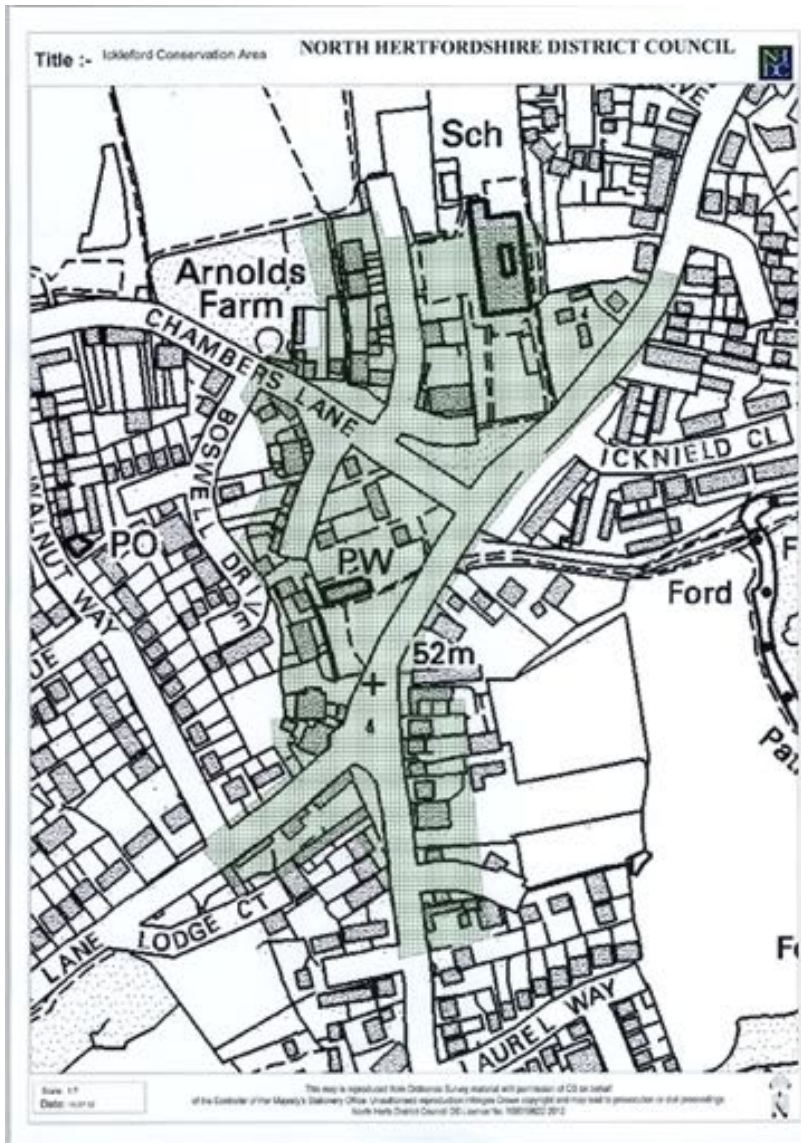


Ickleford Upper Green, early 1900s (left) and in 2022. The focal point of many village activities and meeting place for school children and their parents.



13. Annexes

Annex 1: Ickleford Conservation Area



Annex 3: Viewpoints

Reproduced from Ickleford Design Codes. AECOM May 2022



Viewpoints

The Conservation Area Character Statement issued in November 2019 by the District Council identifies the following key views within Ickleford Conservation Area:

- 1) View north up Turnpike Lane from southern boundary of Conservation Area.
- 2) View of village green from junction of Arlesey Road and Chambers Lane, looking west.
- 3) View from Chambers Lane, looking south-east from exit of Conservation Area.
- 4) View looking north along Arlesey Road from the junction of Arlesey Road and Turnpike Lane.

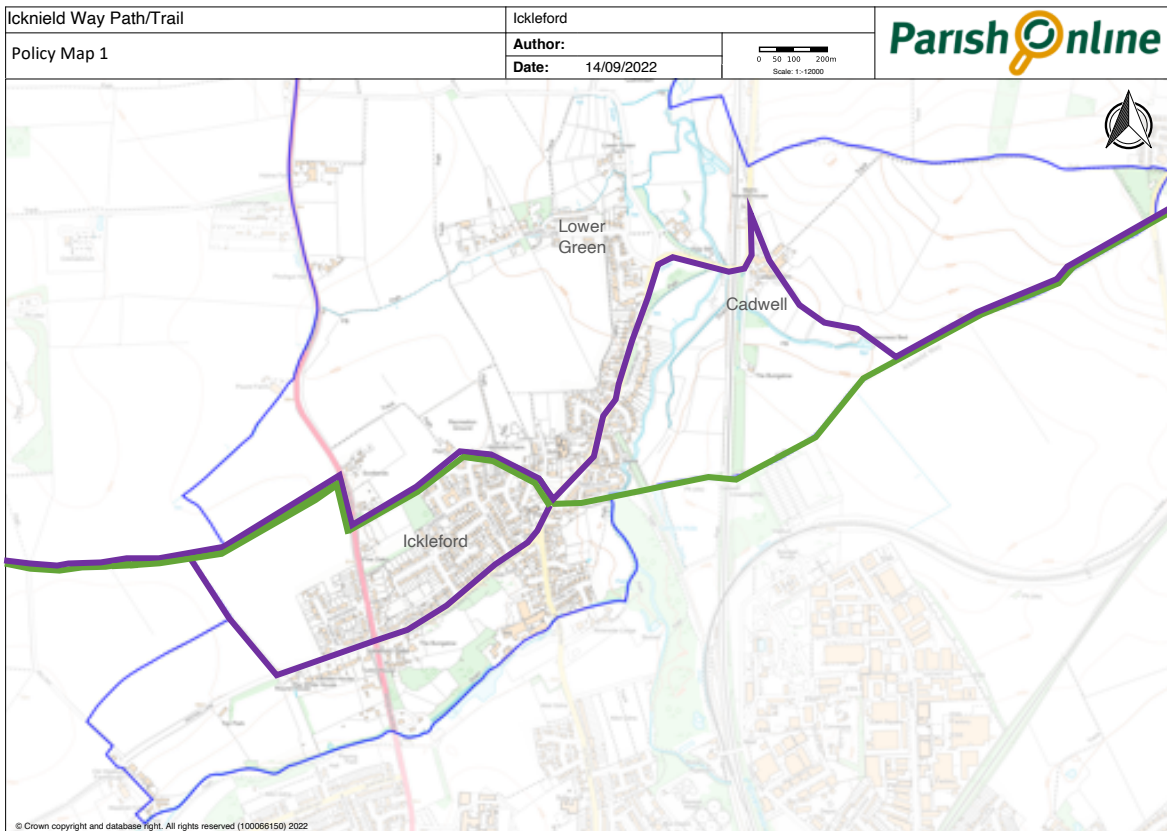
A number of additional views, views 6 to 8, have been considered of value, they relate to the perception of the village when approaching it from the surrounding countryside. Some additional views, views 9 to 17, have been considered of value in relation to the perception of nature, water and village when observed from paths in the surrounding landscape




Annex 4: Important Nature Conservation Sites

Site Name & code	Area (ha)	Description
Oughton Head 11/001	25.26	Oughton Head consists of the main area of common in the south-east and the Wildlife Trust nature reserve to the north. The common supports marshy grassland with fen but with drier areas of neutral grassland, scrub and woodland. An unusual geology has resulted in a very diverse flora. Mixed wet woodland forms a belt of varying width along the north bank of the River Oughton which has its source at the western end. The site is one of the larger fen woodlands in Hertfordshire and has a long history of being managed as a fen. The western sections are dominated by mature Alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>) carr (an unusual habitat in Hertfordshire). The river itself supports aquatic plants of note, the remnant fen components are notable within the county and the area is important for a range of invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, with Grass Snake (<i>Natrix natrix</i>), Harvest Mouse (<i>Micromys minutus</i>), European Hare (<i>Lepus europaeus</i>) and Water Voles (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>) recorded. Wildlife Site criteria: Grassland indicators; fen & swamp indicators.
Ickleford Common North 11/010/01	14.49	Traditionally grazed pastures supporting unimproved neutral and wet acid grasslands, and a stretch of the River Hiz. The rich flora (over 100 species) includes Spiny Rest-harrow (<i>Ononis spinosa</i>), Pepper-saxifrage (<i>Silaum silaus</i>), Salad Burnet (<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>), Cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>), Marsh Bedstraw (<i>Galium palustre</i>), Fen Bedstraw (<i>Galium uliginosum</i>) and Marsh Valerian (<i>Valeriana dioica</i>). The common is also important for its fauna with Water Vole (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>), Water Shrew (<i>Neomys fodiens</i>), and ant hills in abundance in the old pasture. Many breeding, passage and wintering birds also use the site. Wildlife Site criteria: Grassland indicators.
Lower Green, Ickleford 11/012/01	1.91	An area of moderately diverse rough grassland dissected by a road. Species recorded in the grassland include Agrimony (<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>), Bird's-foot Trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>), Common Knapweed (<i>Centaurea nigra</i>), Greater Knapweed (<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>), Common Rest-harrow (<i>Ononis repens</i>), Meadow Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus acris</i>), Field Scabious (<i>Knautia arvensis</i>) and sedges (<i>Carex</i> spp.) and rushes (<i>Juncus</i> spp.) in the damper areas. Ditches, some planted trees, and a pond in the north corner add to the habitat diversity. Wildlife Site criteria: Grassland indicators.
River Hiz, Ickleford North 11/013	0.46	Stretch of River Hiz important for Water Vole (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>). Wildlife Site criteria: Species.
Cadwell Grove Meadows 11/015	4.52	Old damp meadows adjacent to the River Hiz supporting neutral marshy grassland. A ditch cuts through the meadows. Species recorded in the grassland includes Bird's-foot Trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>), Common Sorrel (<i>Rumex acetosa</i>), Cowslip (<i>Primula veris</i>), Common Knapweed (<i>Centaurea</i>

		nigra), Oxeye Daisy (<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>), Meadow Vetchling (<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>), Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil (<i>Lotus pedunculatus</i>), Lady's Smock (<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>), Meadowsweet (<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>) and Ragged Robin (<i>Lychnis flos-cuculi</i>). Several species of sedge (<i>Carex</i> spp.) have also been noted. Wildlife Site criteria: Grassland indicators.
Cadwell Crossing 11/017	0.00	Scrubby railway banks by Icknield Way with records for Great Pignut (<i>Bunium bulbocastanum</i>), a possible Herts Vulnerable species. Wildlife Site criteria: Species.
Icknield Way, Wilbury 11/021	0.55	Grass track running through arable fields with records for Great Pignut (<i>Bunium bulbocastanum</i>), a possible Herts Vulnerable species. Wildlife Site criteria: Species.
Cadwell Marsh & Burymead Springs 11/023/01	11.89	A mosaic site supporting a variety of habitats including derelict marshy meadows, scrub, reed beds, Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>) coppice, willow (<i>Salix</i> sp.) plantation, a dismantled railway embankment, an old hedge (along the Icknield Way) and spring-fed pools (old borrow pits). The site is bordered by the Rivers Hiz and Purwell. Water Voles (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>) have been recorded beside the Purwell and Harvest Mice (<i>Micromys minutus</i>) within Burymead Springs. Wildlife Site criteria: Fen & swamp indicators; species.
Westmill Lane, Ickleford 11/038	0.00	Buildings and environs important for protected species. Wildlife site criteria: Species.
River Hiz, Cadwell 11/039	0.24	Stretch of river with tall herbs, grassland and scattered trees. Habitat important for Water Vole (<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>). Wildlife Site criteria: Species.
Wilbury Hill 12/003	1.18	Chalk hills capped with sand and gravel glacial deposits comprising varied soils that support acid, neutral and chalk grassland. There are prominent Scots Pines (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>). The site supports a nationally notable species and county rarities including Purple-stem Cat's-tail (<i>Phleum phleoides</i>) and Large Yellow-faced Bee (<i>Hylaeus signatus</i>). Some nationally scarce species of moss have also been recorded and the site is important for its fauna with protected species present. Wildlife Site criteria: Grassland indicators; species.

Annex 5: Icknield Way Path/Trail



- Key**
-  Parish border
 -  Icknield Way Path
 -  Icknield Way Trail (showing alternative routes through Ickleford)

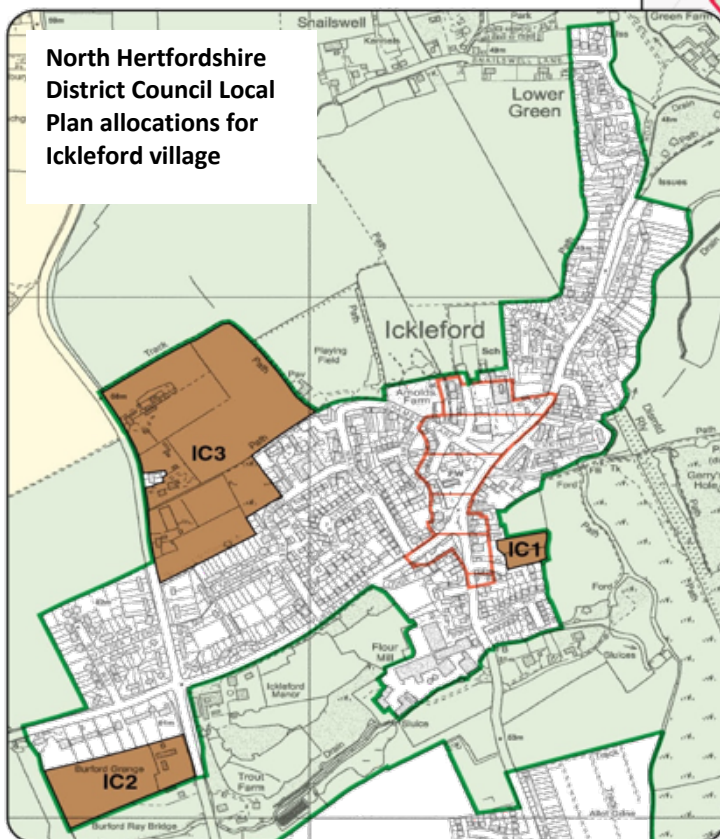
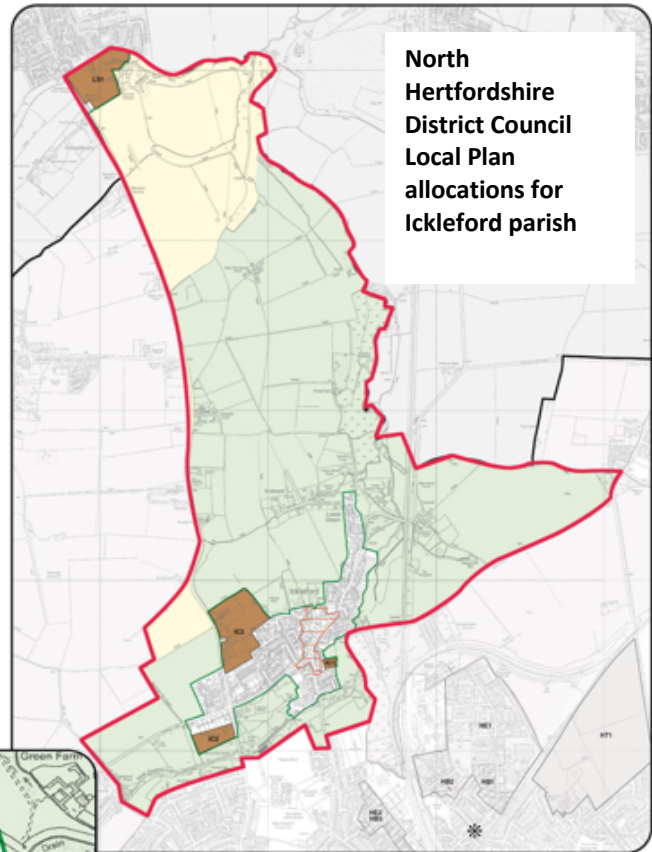
Annex 6: Additional Heritage Assets



Annex 7: Proposed Development Sites in North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan

The North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan proposes the following site allocations in Ickleford.

- IC1 - Land at Duncots Close
- IC2 - Burford Grange
- IC3 - Land at Bedford Road
- LS1 - Land at Bedford Road, Lower Stondon



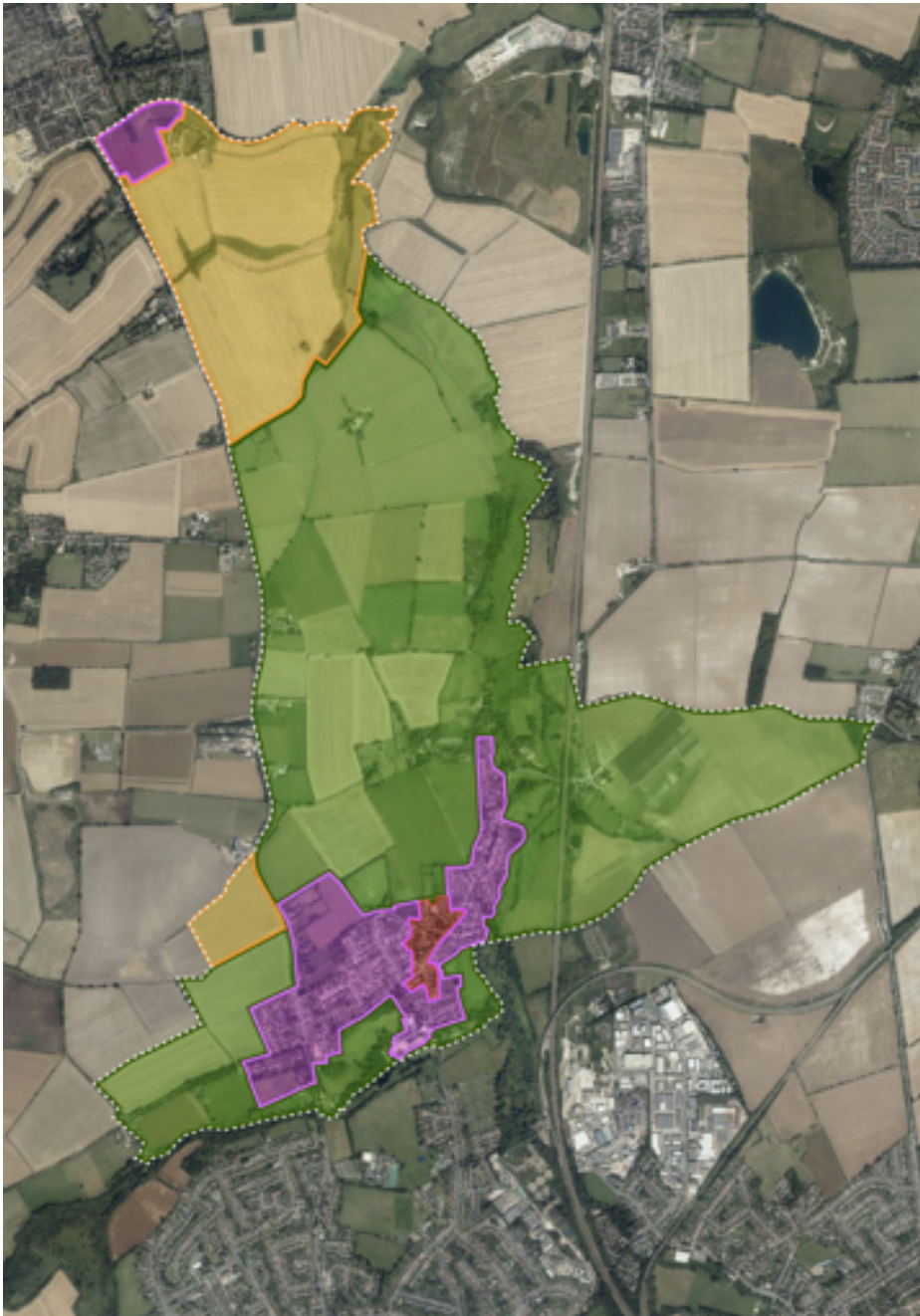
Legend






- Green Belt
- Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
- Housing Sites
- Conservation Area

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Annex 8: Design Codes and Area Types

Reproduced from Ickleford Design Codes. AECOM May 2022

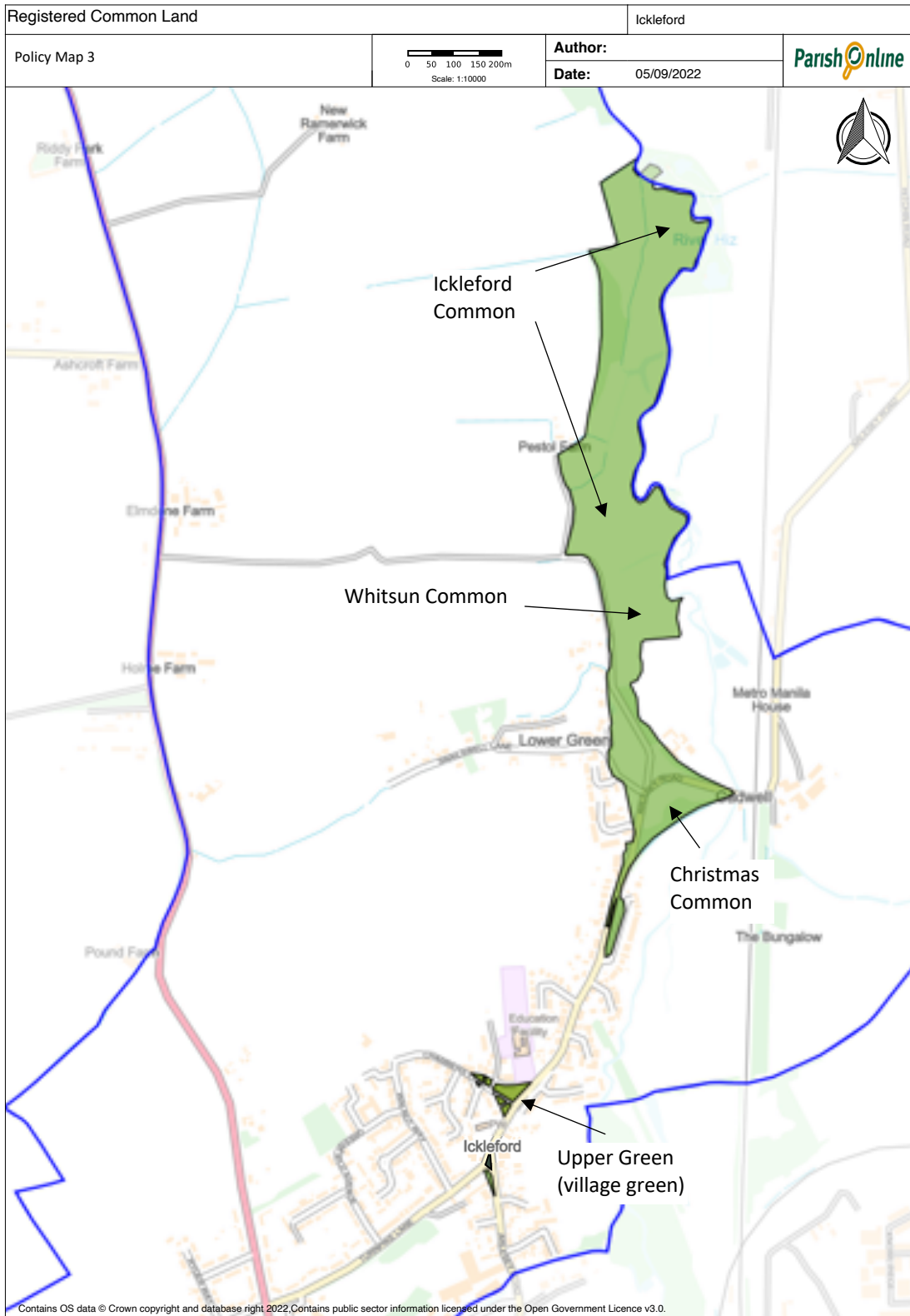


KEY	
	Area Type A: Historic Core
	Area Type B: Settlement
	Area Type C: Rural countryside
	Area Type D: Green Belt
	Area Type E: New Development
X	Design code applicable to character area
-	Design code not applicable to character area

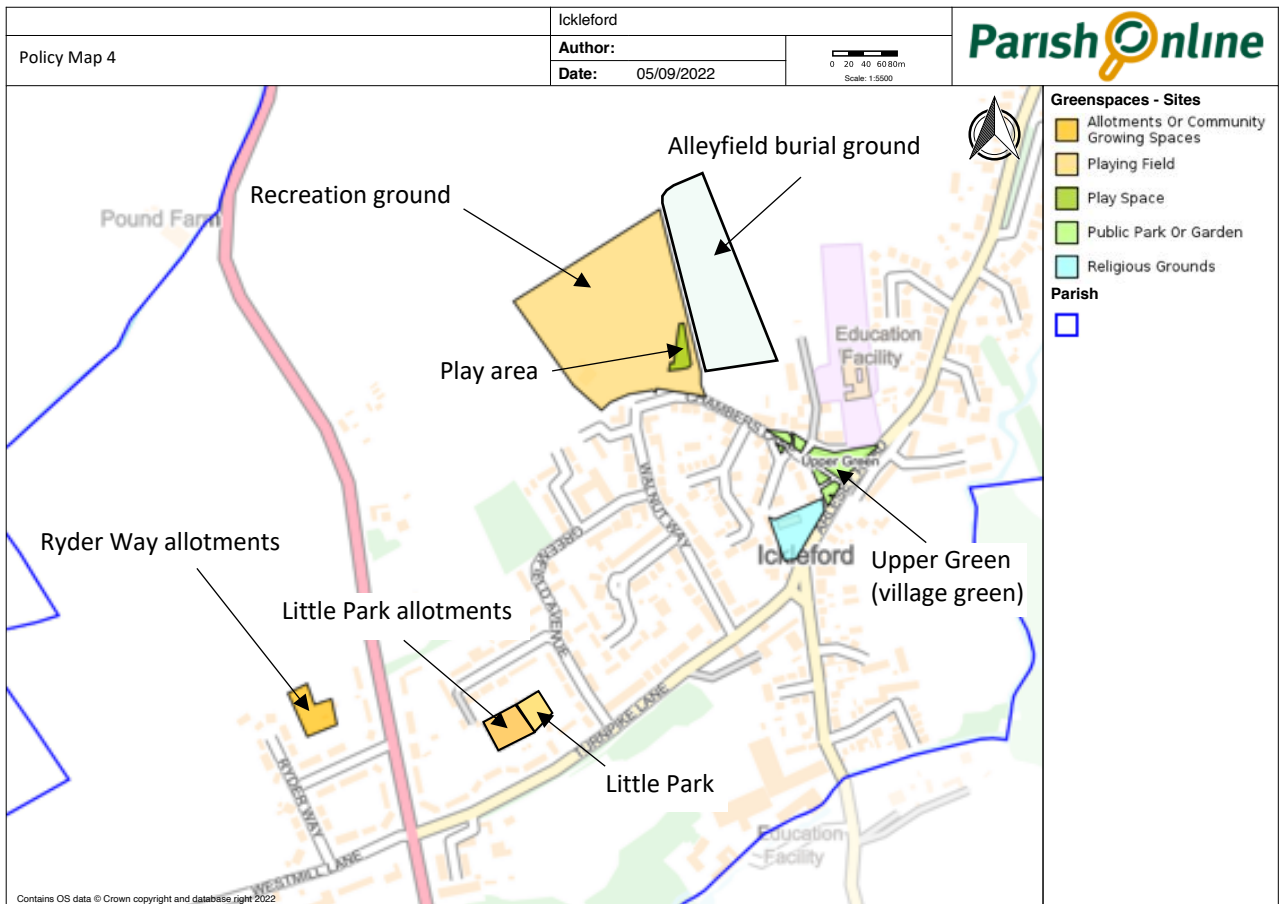
		A	B	C	D	E
Code	Description					
MO.01	Connectivity	X	X	X	X	X
MO.02	Public transport	X	X	-	-	X
MO.03	Wayfinding	X	X	X	-	X
MO.04	Junctions	-	-	X	-	X
MO.05	Inclusive streets	-	-	X	-	X
MO.06	Car parking	-	-	X	-	X
MO.07	Cycle & refuse storage	-	-	X	-	X
NA.01	Green Belt	-	-	-	X	-
NA.02	Green Networks	X	X	X	X	X
NA.03	Design with water	X	X	X	X	X
NA.04	SuDS	X	X	X	X	X
NA.05	Net gain	-	-	X	-	X
NA.06	Biodiversity	X	X	X	X	X
NA.07	Street planting	X	X	X	-	X
NA.08	New woodland	-	-	X	X	X
BF.01	Density	X	X	X	X	X
BF.02	Types & forms	X	X	X	X	X
BF.03	Heights	X	X	X	X	X
BF.04	Building line	-	-	X	-	X
ID.01	Local character	X	X	X	X	X
ID.02	Legibility	X	X	X	X	X
ID.03	Heritage Assets	X	X	X	X	X
ID.04	Plots & blocks	-	-	X	-	X
PS.01	Access street	-	-	X	-	X
PS.02	Residential street	-	-	X	-	X
PS.03	Tertiary street	-	-	X	-	X
PS.04	Secured by design	X	X	X	-	X
US.01	Schools	-	-	-	-	X
US.02	Shops	-	-	-	-	X
US.03	Community uses	-	-	-	-	X
HO.01	Space standards	-	-	X	-	X
HO.02	Accessibility	-	-	X	-	X
HO.03	Gardens	X	X	X	X	X
HO.04	Extensions	X	X	X	X	X

SU.01	Low carbon	-	-	X	-	X
SU.02	Insulation	-	-	X	-	X
SU.03	Solar panels	X	X	X	X	X
SU.04	Green roofs	X	X	X	X	X

Annex 9: Common Land



Annex 10: Open Spaces



Annex 11: Table of Aims and Policies

Table of Neighbourhood Plan Aims and Policies	
Aims	Policies
Environment	
1. The countryside setting of the village will be protected and enhanced, by ensuring separation from the urban edge of Hitchin whilst retaining access to the countryside. Green spaces, views and local wildlife habitats, including rare chalk streams will be maintained and enhanced.	E1: Maintaining Separation, E2: Protecting the Landscape, SD5: Water Management E3: Rural Character, E4: Biodiversity
2. Parish heritage assets and key public spaces will be protected and enhanced, ensuring that any future development enhances the existing character of the village.	E3: Rural Character, HE1: Protecting and enhancing Local Heritage Assets, C2: Recreation and Green Spaces
Sustainable Development	
3. High quality design will be secured in all new development reflecting the character of Ickleford and its rural setting and complying with Ickleford Design Code.	E3: Rural Character, SD3: High Quality Design
4. Future housing will respond to local housing needs, be of a high standard of design and construction, and fit well into the context of the village in terms of type, mix, scale and character.	SD2: New Housing Development, SD3: High Quality Design
5. New build housing should be constructed to high energy saving standards and be resource efficient in ways which are appropriate to the existing rural environment.	SD3: High Quality Design, SD4: Provision of energy Efficient buildings, SD5: Water management
Traffic and Transport	
6. The roads in Ickleford will be safe and accessible for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. Improvements to the road network to increase safety and reduce the impact of congestion will be required alongside new development.	MTT1: Provision for pedestrians, cyclists and horseriders, MTT2: Car Parking

<p>Beneficial sustainable transport links (including pavements, footpaths, cycle routes and public transport) will be provided and appropriate parking solutions required.</p>	
<p>Community</p>	
<p>7. Existing community facilities, such as the school, village hall, and sports and recreation centre, will be maintained and improved. Their wider use, and development to meet changing needs will be encouraged.</p>	<p>C1: Community facilities, C2: Recreation and Green Spaces, C3: Primary School</p>
<p>8. The range of commercial activities and services in the village will be sustained and enhanced. Economic activity such as working from home and provision of small-scale business units will be encouraged.</p>	<p>C4: Supporting Local Employment and Agriculture</p>
<p>9. The leisure and recreation opportunities for residents of all ages will be improved by encouraging community activities, and increasing the provision of open spaces and children’s play facilities.</p>	<p>C2: Recreation and Green Spaces</p>

Annex 12: Glossary

Term	Abbreviation	Explanation
Adoption		The procedure by which a plan becomes formal council responsibility. The Neighbourhood Planning Regulations also call this stage 'made' for the purposes of a Neighbourhood Plan.
Affordable housing		Housing, provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Affordable housing should include provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision
Allocation		A piece of land that has had a particular use earmarked via a Neighbourhood Plan or Local Plan. This might be for housing, employment or another use such as open space.
Amenity		A positive element or elements that contribute to the overall character or enjoyment of an area. For example, open land, trees, historic buildings and the interrelationship between them, or less tangible factors such as tranquillity.
Biodiversity		The whole variety of life encompassing variations, including plants and animals.
Brownfield		Land that has been previously developed on (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings and residential gardens)
Conservation Area	CA	An area designated under Section 69 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as being of 'special architectural or historical interest' the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance.
Consultation Statement		A document which details when, where and how the public and stakeholders have been consulted, issues that were raised and how they were addressed.
Countryside		Land not within settlement boundaries
Community Infrastructure Levy	CIL	An amount of money payable to the Council on new housing and other development which is used for infrastructure and community facilities and services
Design Code		A document containing a set of design principles for a specific location or site.

Developer Contributions/Planning Obligations/Section 106		Developer contributions, also known as planning obligations, can be secured via a section 106 legal agreement or planning condition attached to a planning permission. They help mitigate any adverse impacts generated by new development on infrastructure and facilities.
Employment Land		Land that is used or is proposed to be used for offices, industry and/or storage and distribution – covered by the B Class in the Use Classes Order
Evidence Base		The information and data gathered by local authorities and other plan makers to inform and support the policy approaches to be set out in a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan
Examination		For neighbourhood planning, an independent assessment carried out by an examiner to determine whether your plan meets the Basic Conditions
Flood risk		The combination of probability of a particular flood event and its corresponding hazard and is used to refer to the scale of flood effect, combining hazard and probability, upon a particular site. Flood Zones 1-3b describes land with a specific probability of flooding with 1 being the least affected. Development may be restricted by Flood Zones.
General Permitted Development Order	GPDO	A statutory document that allows development (such as small house extensions) to be undertaken without planning permission.
Greenfield		Land where there has been no previous development.
Green Belt	GB	Designated areas around major built up areas which can only be developed under very special circumstances set out in the NPPF
Green Infrastructure	GI	A network of multi-functional green space and other environmental features, urban and rural, including both established and new sites - which support natural and ecological processes, and are capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
Habitats Regulation Assessment	HRA	Tests the impacts of a plan or project on nature conservation sites of European importance and is required under EU legislation.
Heritage asset		A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and

		undesigned heritage assets identified by the local planning authority or Neighbourhood Plan (sometimes called local listing).
Infrastructure		Refers to the fundamental facilities and systems serving an area, including the services and facilities necessary for its residents and economy to function, including transport.
Local Nature Reserve	LNR	A site of importance for wildlife, geology, education or public enjoyment, declared by district, borough and county councils.
Local Plan		The main planning document in an area which sets out what type and how much development will occur across the area for the next 15 years or so. It also provides a suite of policies that help manage development including for design, access and amenity etc.
Local Wildlife Site (some areas County Wildlife Site)	LWS/CWS	Non statutory sites of substantive nature conservation interest determined locally according to national, regional and local biodiversity needs.
National Planning Policy Framework	NPPF	Sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.
National Planning Practice Guidance	NPPG	A web-based resource, provides more detailed guidance on the contents of the NPPF
Neighbourhood Area		This is the area that the Neighbourhood Plan will focus on. For town or parish councils, the designated area is usually the boundary. Sometimes Parishes will combine to form one area.
Neighbourhood Development Plan or Neighbourhood plan	NDP/NP	Will set out the vision for a neighbourhood area and the planning policies for the use and development of land. These policies will be at a local level to support the strategic policies within the Local Plan. Plans should guide development rather than stop it. If adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan will become a statutory plan carrying equal weight with adopted local plan policies
Policy		A concise statement of the principles that a particular kind of development proposal should satisfy in order to obtain planning permission.
Parish Plan		A Parish Plan or community led plan can include planning related issues but they can focus purely on areas other than development. Parish Plans will not have the same legal status in planning terms as a Neighbourhood Plan
Policies Map (s)		Illustrates the spatial extent of the planning policies and designated areas.

Qualifying Body		Either a parish/town council or neighbourhood forum, which can initiate the process of neighbourhood planning.
Referendum		A vote by the eligible population of an electoral area who may decide on a matter of public policy. Neighbourhood Plans are subject to a referendum of the eligible voters within a neighbourhood area. There is a specific question set in Regulations which has a yes or no answer.
Settlement Hierarchy		Many Local Plans set out a hierarchy of settlements according to their population and facilities. Different levels of growth may be attributed to each tier.
Site of Special Scientific Interest	SSSI	Designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 by Natural England they are a protected area designated as being of special interest by virtue of its flora, fauna, geological or geomorphological features.
Strategic Environmental Assessment	SEA	European requirement assesses the significant environmental impacts of plans and programmes.
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	SFRA	An assessment of the probability of flooding within a particular area.
Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment	SHLAA	Assesses the suitability, availability and deliverability of land that have been promoted as sites for housing development
Strategic Housing Market Assessment	SHMA	Assessment of the local housing market, which studies the supply and demand of housing, the need for affordable housing and the affordability of the local housing market
Supplementary Planning Document	SPD	A document which elaborates upon a policy (ies) of the Local Plan to provide additional guidance for a particular topic or type of development.
Sustainability Appraisal	SA	An assessment of the environmental, social, and economic impacts of a Local Plan to check that the plan accords with the principles of sustainable development.
Sustainable Development		An approach to development that aims to allow economic growth without damaging the environment of natural resources thereby development which 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'
Sustainable Drainage System	SuDS	An artificial drainage solution which reduces and slows the quantity and rate of surface water run off from new development, dealing with it as close to the source as possible

Tree Preservation Order	TPO	An order made by a local planning authority to protect a specific tree, a group of trees or woodland. TPOs prevent the felling, lopping, topping, uprooting or other deliberate damage of trees without the permission of the local planning authority.
Use Classes Order	UCO	The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) defines the categories of use of buildings or land for the purposes of planning legislation. In most cases, planning permission must be obtained to change the use of a building or land to another use class
Windfall Site		Sites which have not been identified as available in the Local Plan. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available.