



**ASTWOOD
& HARDMEAD**
Please Drive Carefully

Neighbourhood Plan

2020 - 2030



Site Assessment Report

Introduction

This document has been prepared to summarise the site assessment process that has informed the allocation of one site in the Astwood & Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan for one or two dwellings. The report should be read alongside the draft plan and other associated documents.

As outlined in the accompanying Consultation Statement, the Neighbourhood Plan steering group wrote to all landowners twice during the Neighbourhood Plan process; firstly to ascertain ownership, and secondly to ascertain what sites were actively available for development.

Early on in the process it was agreed that in order to contribute to sustainable development to be in general conformity with more strategic policy, only sites that adjoined the existing settlement boundary of Astwood should be considered. Therefore the 'call for sites' exercise was restricted to those sites in such locations.

As a result of this process, 11 sites in total were identified. All landowners were encouraged to promote landholdings of any size on the understanding that sites could be allocated wholly or in part. As such, given the plan's intention to allocate land for only one or two dwellings, the site assessment exercise also doubled as a means of identifying the most appropriate proportion of sites that would otherwise be too large to deliver the small level of development identified.

A site assessment template was consulted on during the second drop-in session held in the Parish, and landowners were advised of the assessment criteria that would be applied to sites. Each site has been considered against seven criteria that each affect suitability for development. These are its relationship to existing development, whether it is previously-developed or occupied by existing buildings, whether access can be safely achieved, effects on landscape, flooding/drainage, impacts on heritage, and ecology.

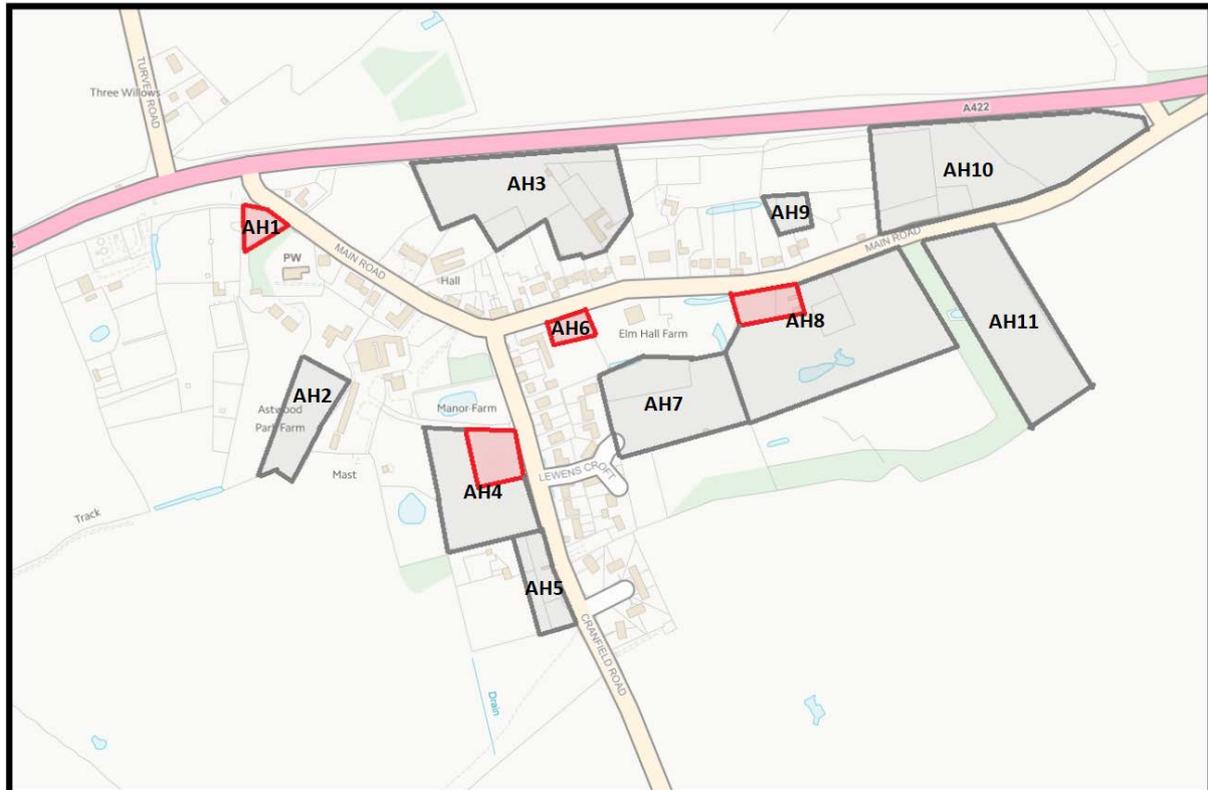
In each instance a qualitative assessment was provided rather than a quantitative one, as the small nature of Astwood makes it difficult to distinguish sites from one another other than in respect of these high-level criteria.

Following the site assessment criteria, four sites (or parts of sites) were identified as being generally suitable for development. In the absence of any means to further 'rank' or select these sites, the Steering Group decided to canvas public opinion on the site assessments to establish which (if any) would benefit from the most support locally.

The results of this exercise are contained in the accompanying Consultation Statement. In summary, site AH1 (land north-west of St Peter's Church), was clearly the most supported development with over 80% of respondents supporting development in principle on that site. As detailed in the site assessments contained overleaf, the only constraint potentially affecting the site is its proximity to the listed former Church. However, the assessment

exercise concluded that this could be mitigated through sensible design (secured by policy) and that the opportunity of securing a high-quality development at the western entrance to Astwood that preserved glimpses of the Church counted in favour of development.

The location and reference number for each site considered is shown below, with shortlisted sites (or parts) shown in red, and discounted sites shown in grey:

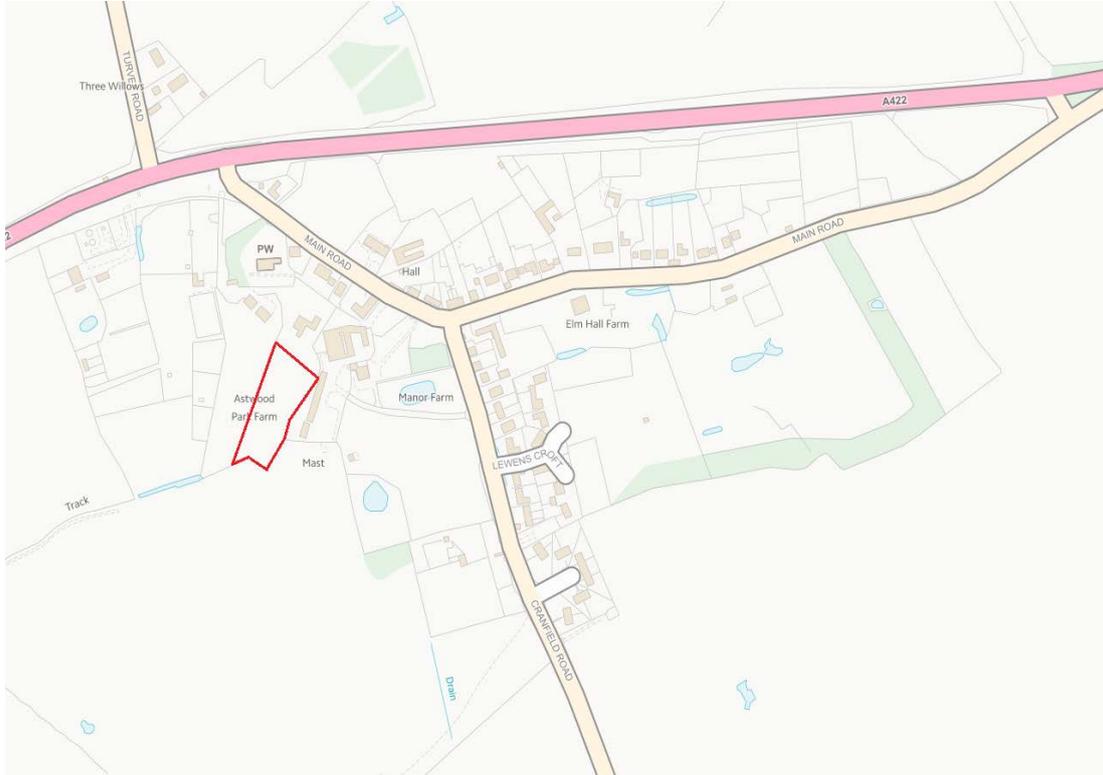


The completed site assessments for each individual site are included overleaf.



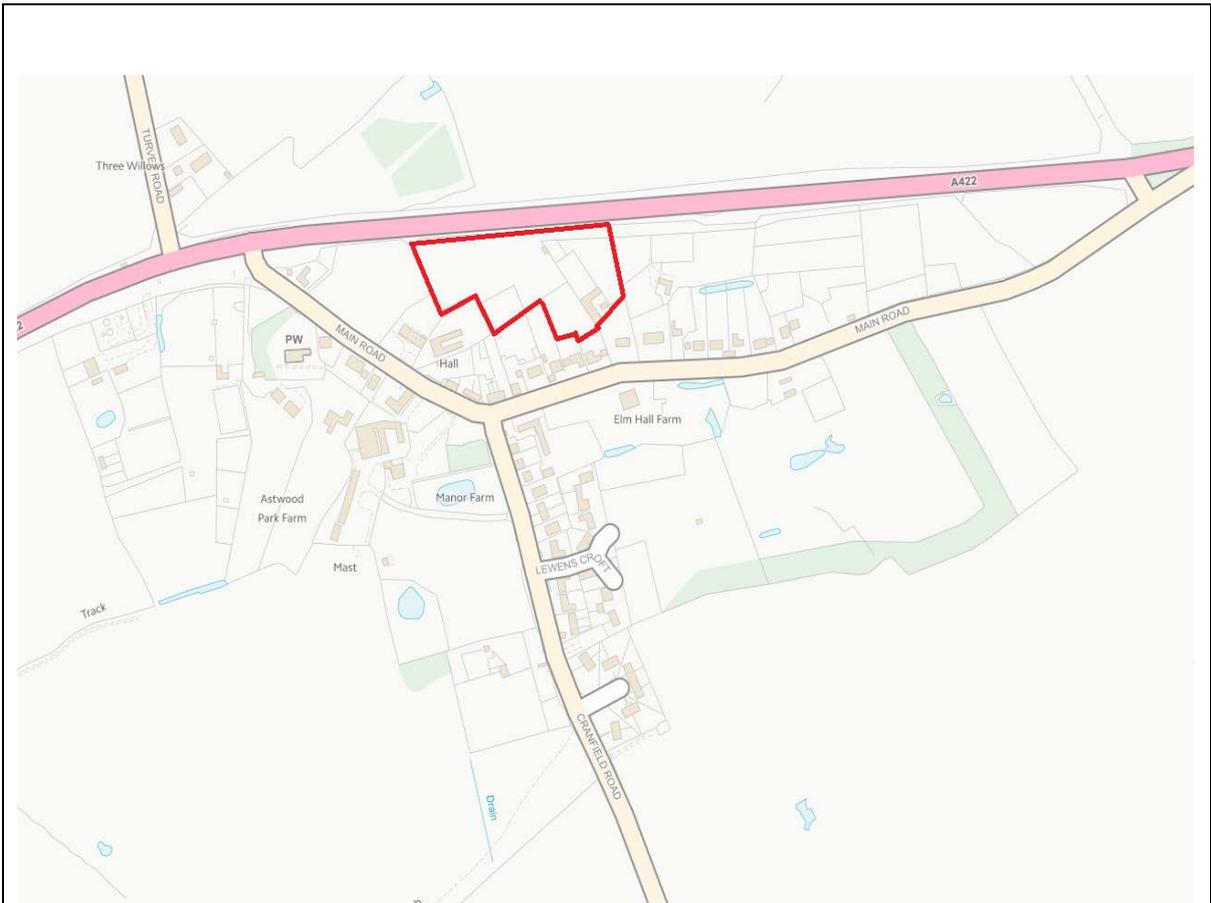
Description	<p>The site comprises a small triangular parcel of land around 0.09Ha in size, located towards the western entrance to Astwood. It is a flat and grassed area of land, understood to have been used for grazing but without any notable features.</p>
Reference	<p>AH1</p>
Name	<p>Land to the north-west of St Peter’s Church</p>
Size and capacity	<p>0.09Ha / 1-2 dwellings</p>
Relationship to existing development	<p>The site immediately adjoins the existing settlement boundary and to some extent would represent a logical ‘rounding-off’ of the settlement. There is an existing dwelling opposite to the north (which lies outside the settlement boundary) and the village church to the south-east.</p>
Previously developed/existing buildings?	<p>The site is a greenfield site with no existing dwellings.</p>

Access	Access is available via road frontage onto Main Road.
Landscape	The site is small and screened from the surrounding countryside by existing vegetation and also demarcated by an existing access track. Development is unlikely to result in landscape harm.
Flooding/drainage	There are no known constraints in respect of flooding or drainage.
Heritage	The site is within the setting of St Peter's Church, a Grade II* listed building. The church can be glimpsed over the site upon entering the village and therefore development of the site is likely to result in some degree of harm to the setting of the listed building. Depending on design this harm could be less than substantial and outweighed by the benefits of a small housing development.
Ecology	The site is unlikely to support any habitats of note.
Conclusion	<p>The site represents a logical rounding off of Astwood and presents an opportunity to achieve a small high-quality development at the western entrance to the village. However, depending on overall scale and design, development could result in harm to the setting of a listed building.</p> <p>The site should be considered further for allocation.</p>



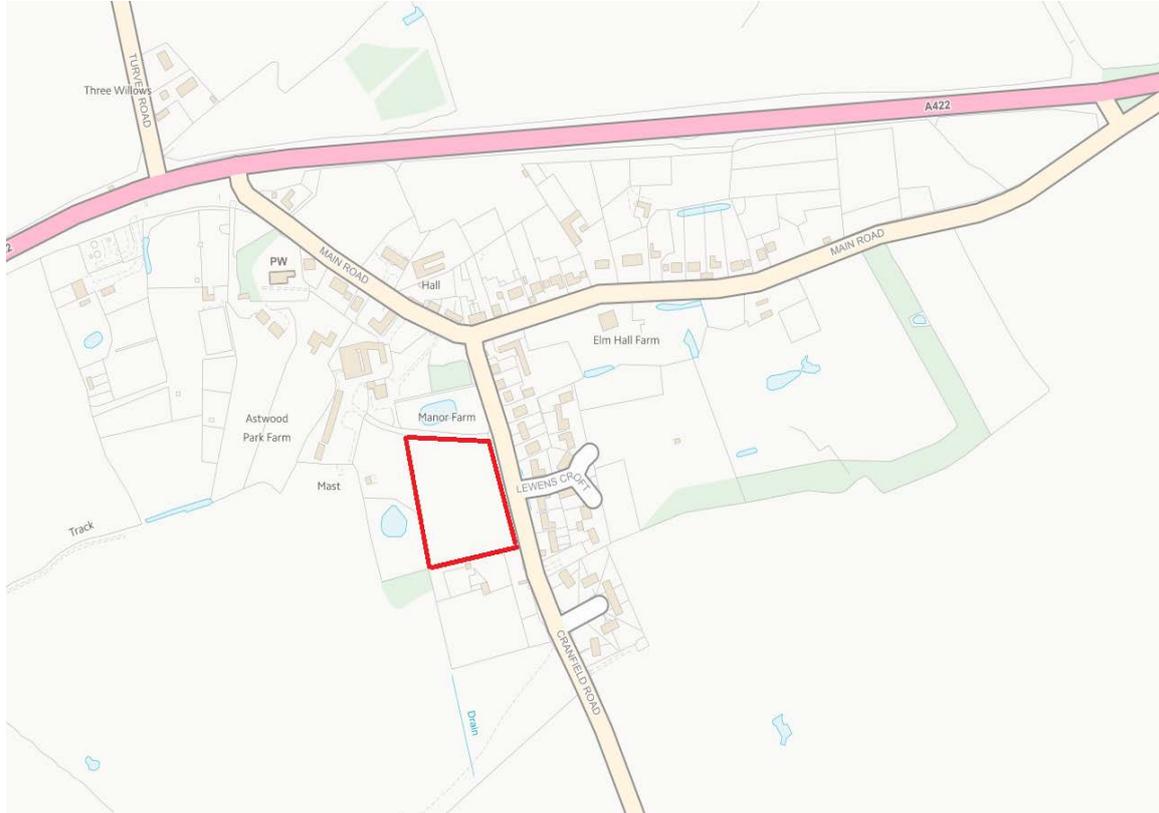
Description	The land comprises the gardens and paddocks of Quince House, which is a dwelling set back behind other development on Main Road towards the western end of Astwood. It is flat without any discernible features of note.
Reference	AH2
Name	Land at Quince House
Size and capacity	0.47Ha / circa 14 dwellings (NB. land promoted for single dwelling only)
Relationship to existing development	The site is part of the grounds of an existing dwelling with an office complex to the immediate east. As such the site is bordered by the settlement boundary to the north and east. However, the site has no road frontage and would effectively be 'backland' development.
Previously developed/existing buildings?	The site is part of the grounds of an existing dwelling and as such could technically be considered previously-developed. There are no

	structures on the site currently though and it retains the appearance of a greenfield site.
Access	Access would have to be taken via the existing dwelling, which is already shared with other properties. It is also not clear whether these could be taken through to the application site without demolition or reconfiguration.
Landscape	The site is somewhat open and exposed. Development is likely to be appreciable from within the wider landscape.
Flooding/drainage	There are no known flooding or drainage issues affecting the site.
Heritage	Development would not adversely affect any designated heritage assets.
Ecology	The site does not appear to support any particular habitats.
Conclusion	<p>The site is well related to the existing settlement boundary but development would alter the pattern of development in Astwood with questionable access arrangements too.</p> <p>It is not recommended to allocate this site for development.</p>



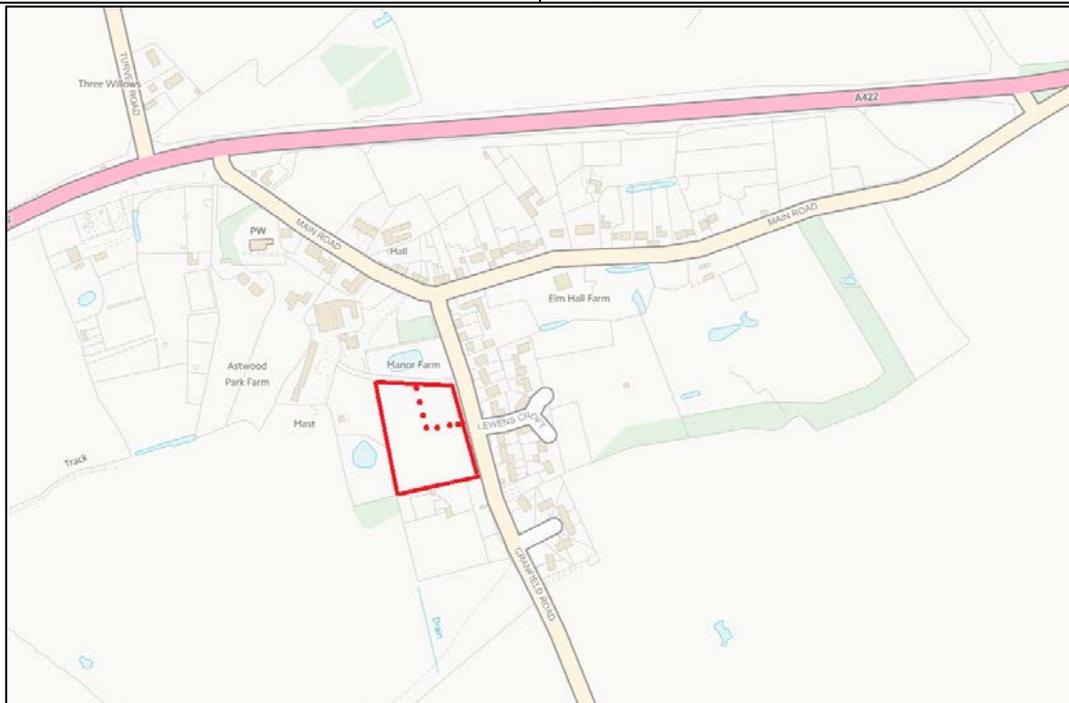
<p>Description</p>	<p>The site comprises paddocks and equestrian buildings to the rear of existing dwellings on Main Road, adjacent to the A422. It is generally flat with small fields demarcated by fencing.</p>
<p>Reference</p>	<p>AH3</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>Land between Main Road and A422</p>
<p>Size and capacity</p>	<p>1.2Ha / (capacity not shown as far in excess of Neighbourhood Plan requirements)</p>
<p>Relationship to existing development</p>	<p>The site lies to the rear of existing dwellings on main road without any road frontage other than onto the A422 itself. Development of any part of the site would therefore comprise backland development that would not be in-keeping with the linear nature of the existing village.</p>
<p>Previously developed/existing buildings?</p>	<p>The site is used for equestrian purposes and is therefore previously developed. There are some existing buildings on the site.</p>

Access	Access would have to be taken either directly from the A422 or via existing dwellings on Main Road.
Landscape	Despite lying outside the settlement boundary The site is not part of the wider countryside as it is cut off from this by the A422.
Flooding/drainage	There are no known flooding or drainage issues associated with the site.
Heritage	Development would not adversely affect any designated heritage assets.
Ecology	There are no known ecological issues associated with the site.
Conclusion	<p>The site represents a 'backland' form of development that would not be in keeping with the existing nature of Astwood. Access would need to be taken either from the A422 or between existing dwellings on Main Road.</p> <p>It is not recommended that the site is allocated for development.</p>

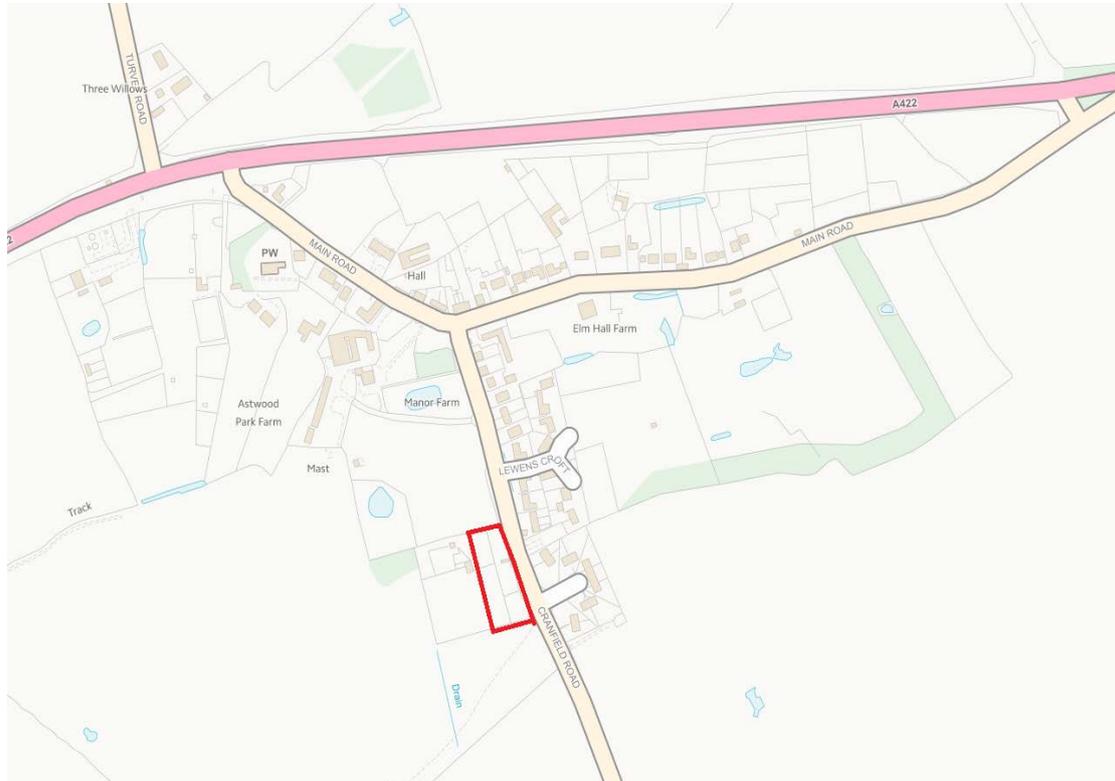


Description	The site comprises a rectangular shaped field to the west of Cranfield Road, just to the south of the access to Manor Farm Business Park. It is flat with out notable features other than telegraph poles running through the rear of the site.
Reference	AH4
Name	Land West of Cranfield Road (“Parcel B”)
Size and capacity	0.95Ha (capacity not shown as far in excess of Neighbourhood Plan requirements)
Relationship to existing development	The site is well-related to the existing settlement and is directly opposite the most recent development in the village; Lewens Croft. The site has good road frontage as well as an existing access to the north to Manor Farm Business Park. There are presently no dwellings on the western side of Cranfield Road, however.
Previously developed/existing buildings?	The site is not previously developed and has no built form.

Access	The site can be accessed directly from Cranfield Road or from the north via a potentially improved Manor Farm access.
Landscape	The site lies on the edge of the village although views into/out of the site are screened by vegetation and buildings at Manor Farm. It could be developed without any significant landscape harm.
Flooding/drainage	There are no known flooding or drainage issues associated with the site.
Heritage	Development of the site would not adversely affect any designated heritage assets.
Ecology	There are no known ecological constraints affecting the site, although it is noted there are ponds to the immediate west and north of the site, which would need to be surveyed for newts or any application subject to the District Licensing Scheme.
Conclusion	<p>The site is well related to the existing village, is unconstrained, and benefits from good access. However, it would establish development to the west of Cranfield Road.</p> <p>It should nevertheless be considered further for allocation, which should be in a form restricted to the portion of site with road frontage – see map below.</p>

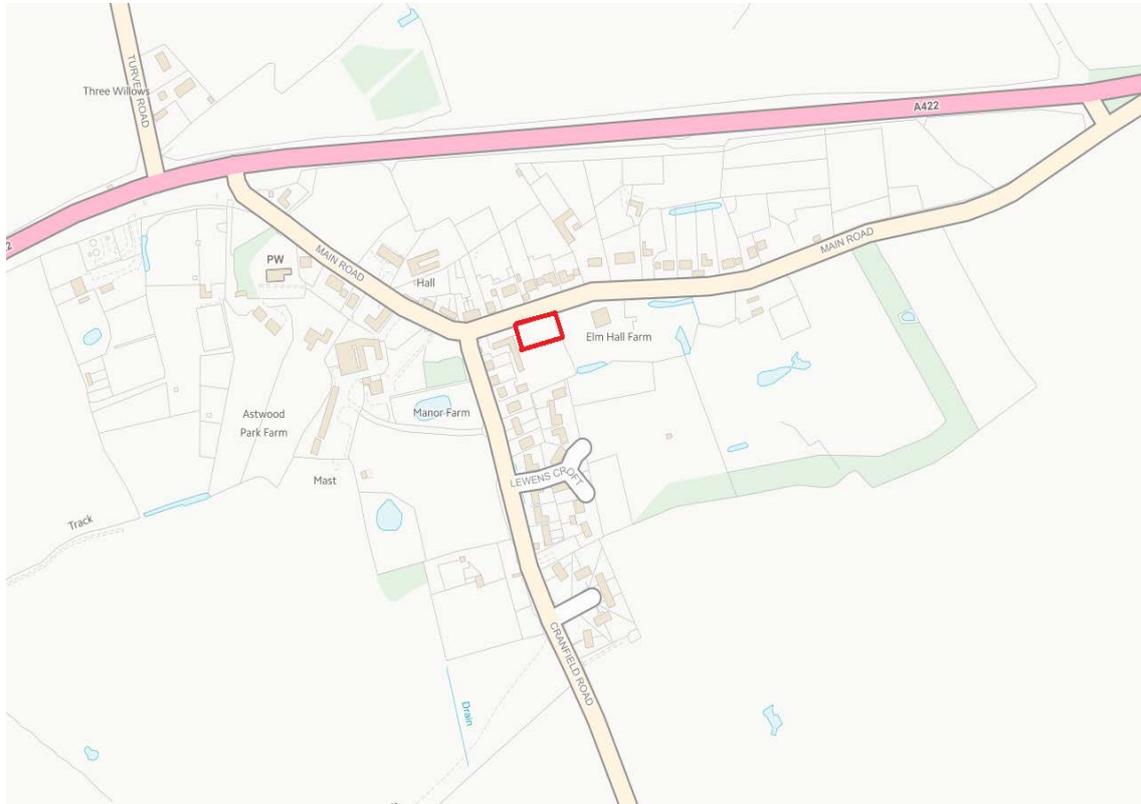


Area within dotted line suitable for further consideration



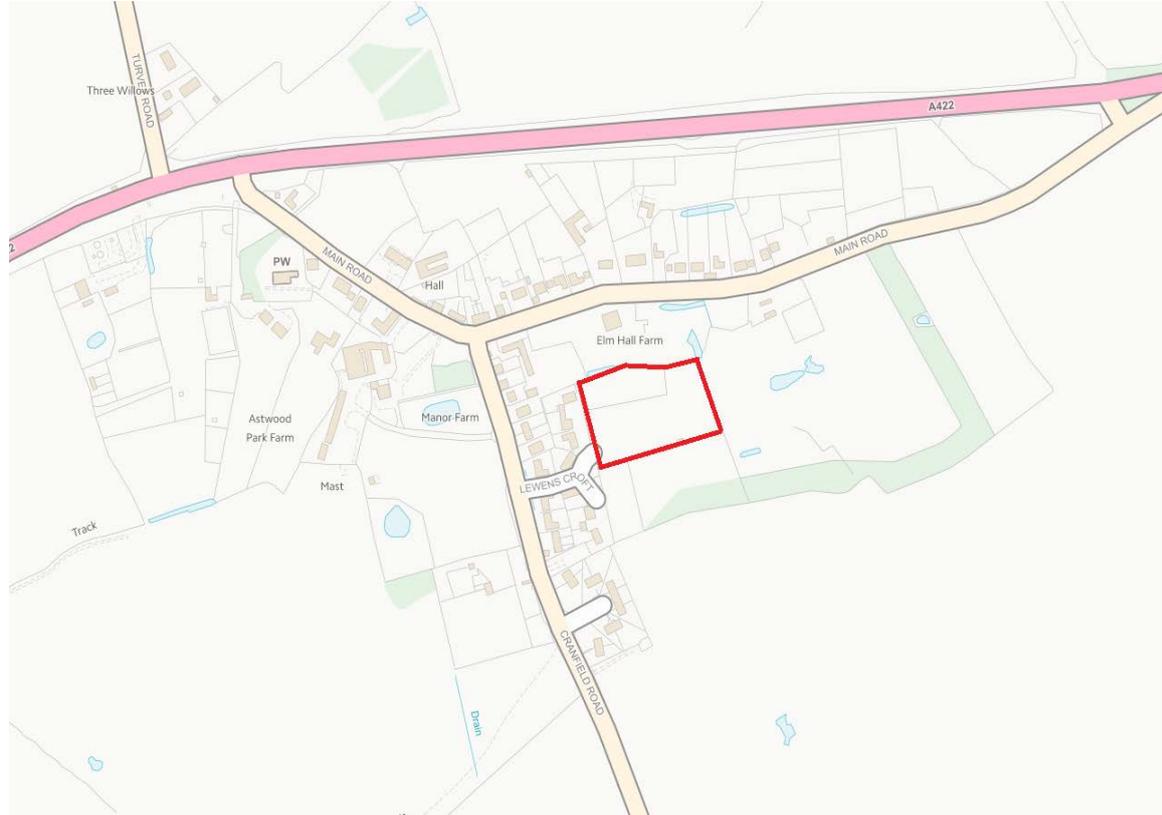
Description	The site comprises a rectangular shaped field to the west of Cranfield Road, to the further south of 'parcel B'. It is flat with scrub-like vegetation and some informal buildings located on it.
Reference	AH5
Name	Land West of Cranfield Road ("Parcel A")
Size and capacity	0.3Ha / 9 dwellings (if wholly developed)
Relationship to existing development	The site is relatively well-related to the existing village although in isolation from Parcel B would be a more isolated form of development. There are no existing dwellings to the west of Cranfield Road.
Previously developed/existing buildings?	The site's prior use is unclear but it has characteristics of previously-developed land with some buildings on the site.
Access	The site can be accessed directly from Cranfield Road.

Landscape	The site lies on the edge of the village although views into/out of the site are screened by vegetation. It could be developed without any significant landscape harm.
Flooding/drainage	There are no known flooding or drainage issues associated with the site.
Heritage	Development of the site would not adversely affect any designated heritage assets.
Ecology	There are no known ecological constraints affecting the site.
Conclusion	<p>The site in isolation represents a form of development that would be disjointed from most of the village and establish dwellings to the west of Cranfield Road.</p> <p>It should not be considered for allocation unless incorporated into Parcel B, which is considered unnecessary as Parcel B is already of sufficient size.</p>



Description	<p>The site comprises a small rectangular parcel of land that is heavily vegetated and has road frontage along Main Road. It formed part of an application to convert buildings at Elm Hall Farm to the east and is shown on approved plans for that development as a ‘spinney’.</p>
Reference	<p>AH6</p>
Name	<p>Land to the west of Elm Hall Farm</p>
Size and capacity	<p>0.12Ha / 1-2 dwellings</p>
Relationship to existing development	<p>The site is very well-related to the existing village and essentially comprises an in-fill plot surrounded on three-and-a-half sides by the existing settlement boundary.</p>
Previously developed/existing buildings?	<p>The site is not previously developed although is/will be within the curtilage of buildings to the east.</p>

Access	Access is achievable directly from Main Road.
Landscape	The site is surrounded by existing development and would not have any impact on the surrounding countryside.
Flooding/drainage	The site is not subject to any known flooding or drainage issues.
Heritage	The site could be developed without adversely affecting any designated heritage asset.
Ecology	The site has no known ecological value although is heavily vegetated and would need to be surveyed for habitats prior to development.
Conclusion	<p>The site is well-related to the existing settlement and could provide a suitable small in-fill plot. Impacts on dwellings to the west and east would need to be carefully mitigated in design.</p> <p>The site should be considered further for allocation.</p>



Description	The site comprises a small field to the immediate east of Lewens Croft and south of Elm Hall Farm. It is relatively flat and without feature.
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Reference	AH7
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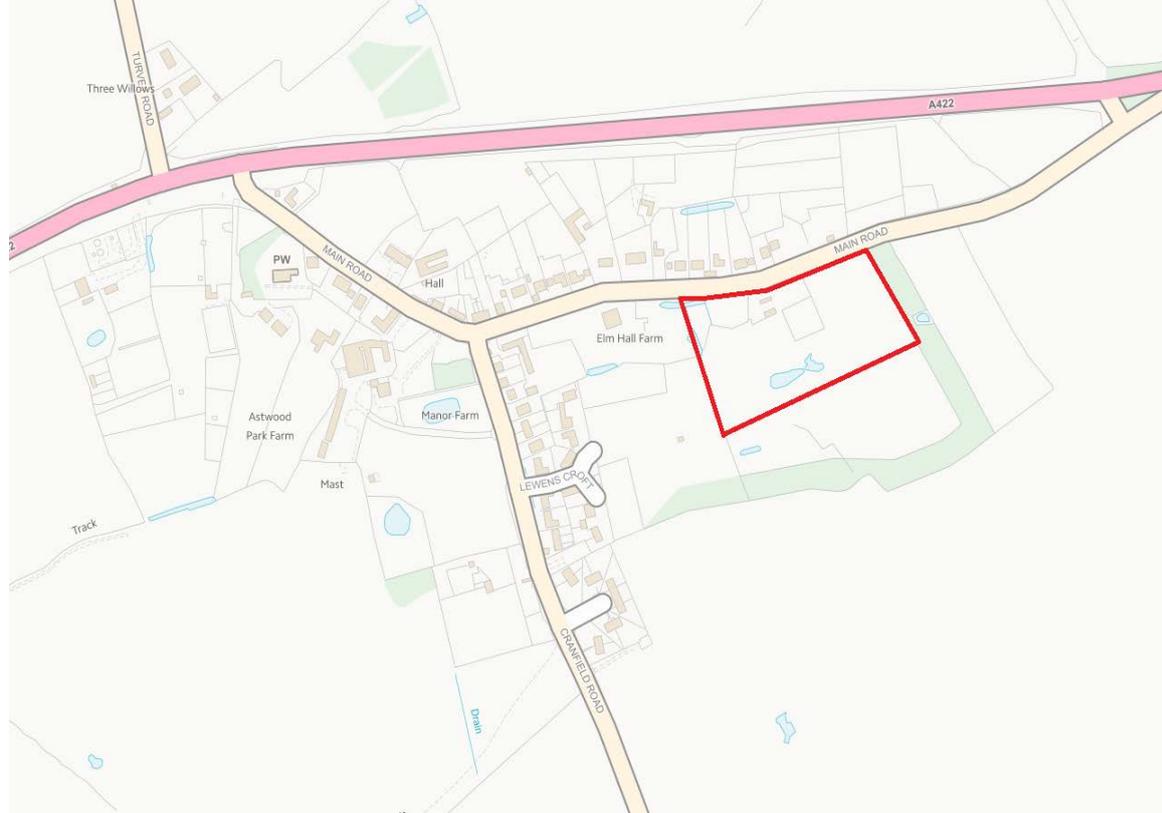
Name	Land east of Lewens Croft
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Size and capacity	0.93Ha (capacity not shown as far in excess of Neighbourhood Plan requirements)
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Relationship to existing development	The site is located to the immediate east of Lewens Croft. It is, however, an open expanse of land that is more associated with the open countryside to the east. It would represent a 'bolt-on' addition to the village.
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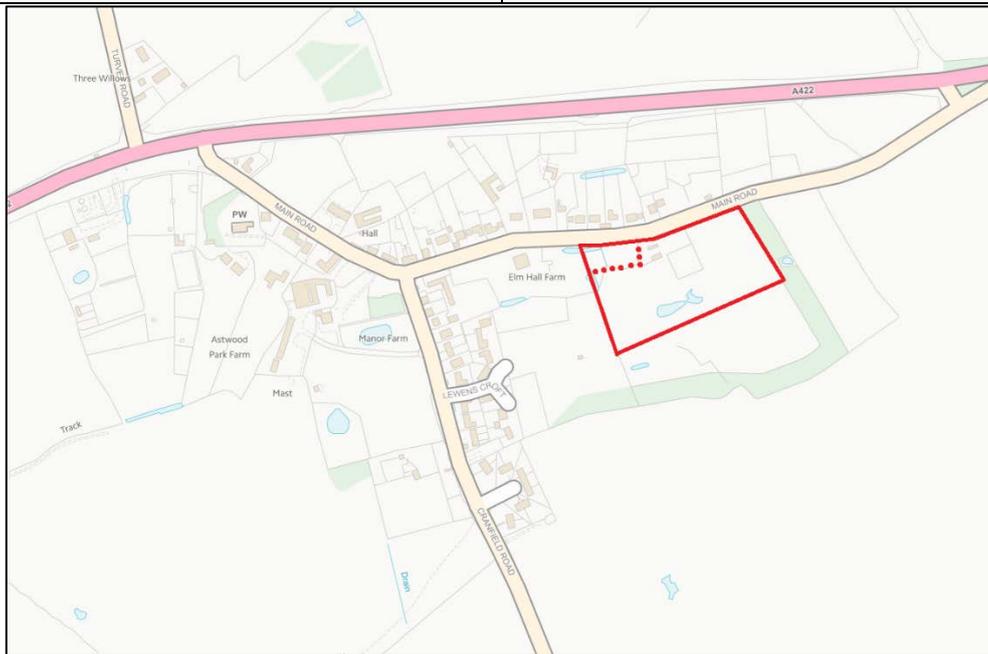
Previously developed/existing buildings?	The site is not previously-developed and has no existing buildings.
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Access	The site has an existing field access from Lewens Croft.
Landscape	The site is an open expanse of land that is not screened from the wider countryside. Development would be likely to have a localised impact on landscape.
Flooding/drainage	The site is not known to be subject to any flooding or drainage issues.
Heritage	Development of the site would not adversely affect any designated heritage assets.
Ecology	The site is not known to support any habitats of value.
Conclusion	Development of the site would represent a poor form of development that would not be in keeping with the existing character of the village. It should not be considered for allocation.



<p>Description</p>	<p>The site comprises a large field area to the south of Main Road. It is flat and featureless other than some small informal buildings and vegetation.</p>
<p>Reference</p>	<p>AH8</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>Land to the south of Main Road ("Parcel E")</p>
<p>Size and capacity</p>	<p>2.2Ha – (capacity not shown as well in excess of Neighbourhood Plan requirements)</p>
<p>Relationship to existing development</p>	<p>The north-west corner of the site that has road frontage opposite existing dwellings on Main Road and to the immediate east of Elm Hall Farm is relatively well-related to the existing settlement. Development in-depth into the site would be out-of-character with the village though.</p>
<p>Previously developed/existing buildings?</p>	<p>The site is not previously developed and has only informal agricultural buildings on it.</p>

Access	The site can be accessed directly off Main Road
Landscape	Parts of the site could be developed without any adverse impact on the surrounding landscape. However, development in depth would likely result in an unacceptable intrusion into the countryside to the south, resulting in landscape harm.
Flooding/drainage	The site is not subject to any known flooding or drainage problems.
Heritage	Development of the site would not adversely affect any designated heritage asset.
Ecology	The site does not have any known habitat value although it is noted it contains ponds that should be surveyed for newts or any application subject to the District Licensing process.
Conclusion	The portion of the site on Main Road immediately adjacent to existing buildings should be considered further for allocation with the remainder of the site discounted. See map below for area to be considered further.

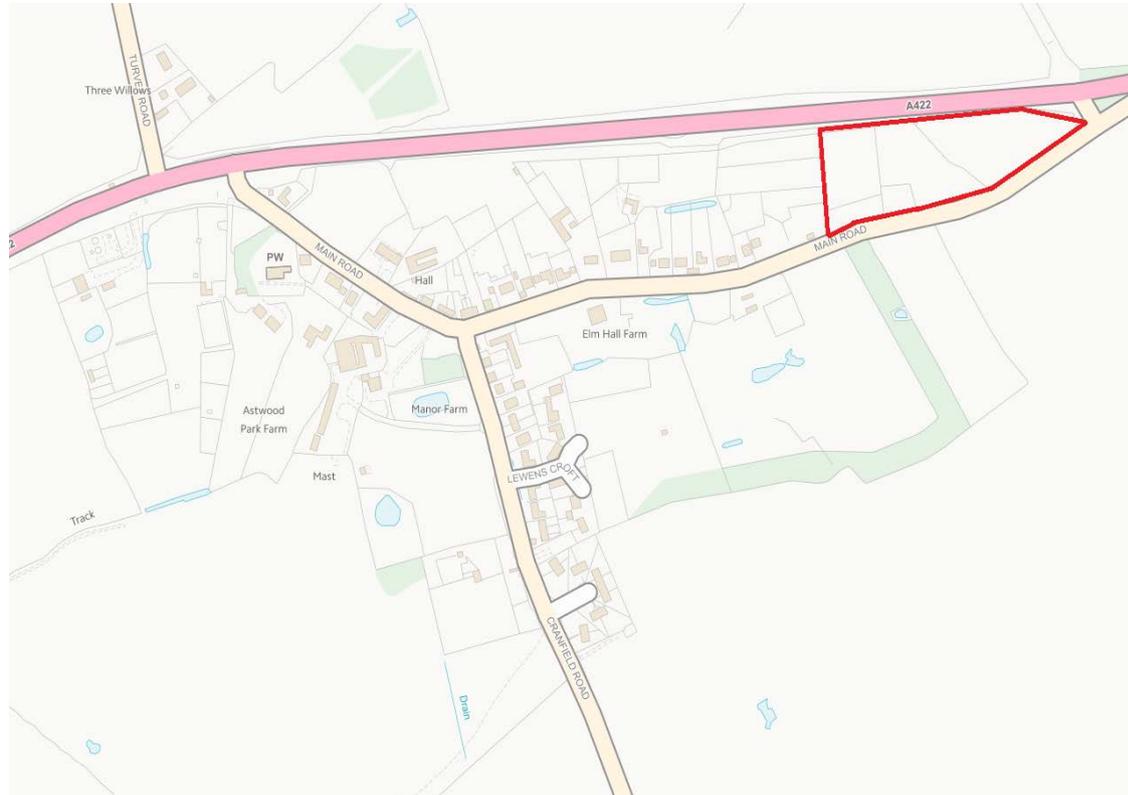


Area within dotted line to be considered further



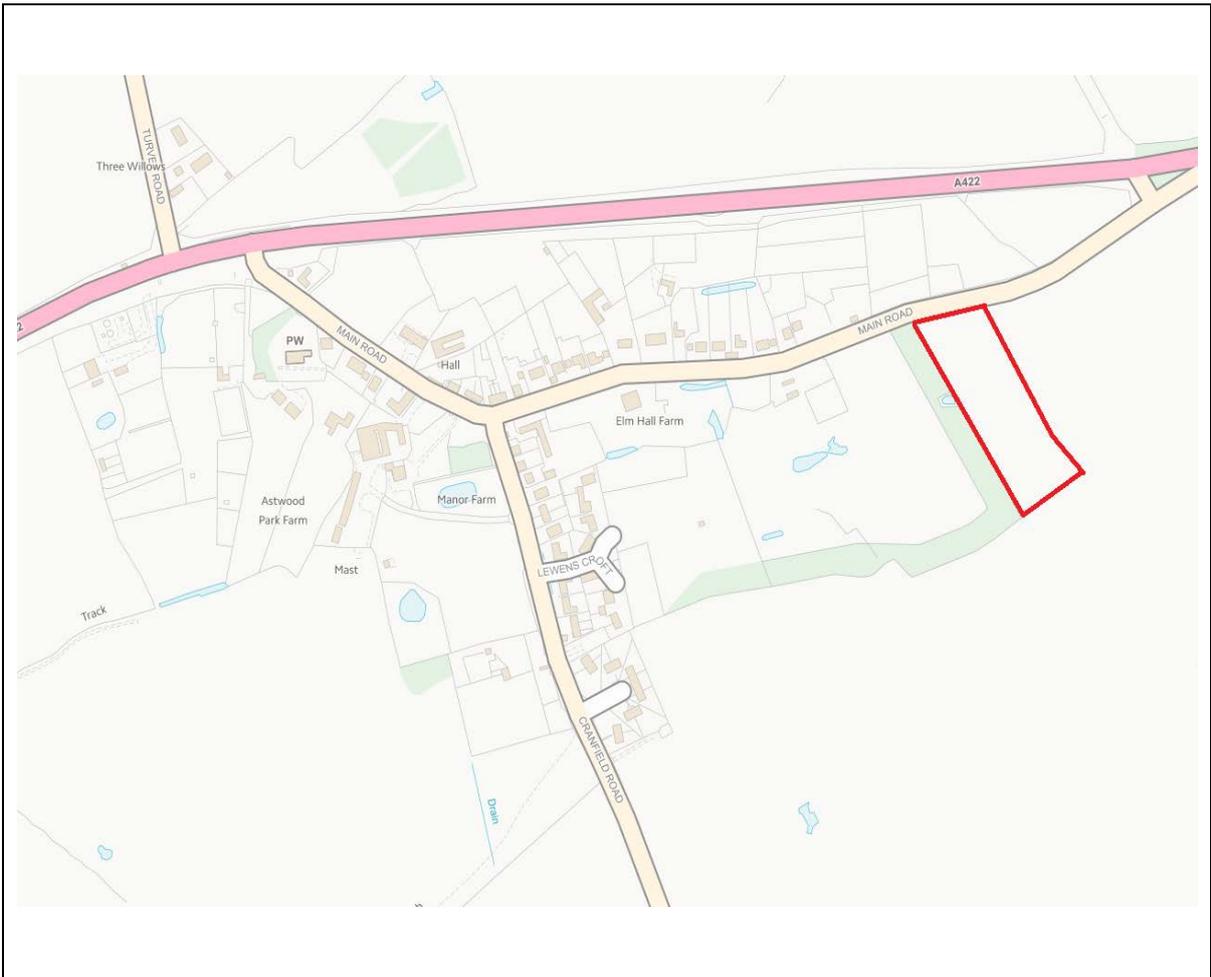
Description	The site comprises a small paddock area to the north of an existing dwelling. It is flat without any notable feature other than an existing outbuilding.
Reference	AH9
Name	Land to rear of Field House
Size and capacity	0.2Ha / promoted for single dwelling
Relationship to existing development	The site is to the immediate rear of an existing dwelling. Development would represent a 'backland' form of development that it is out of keeping with the rest of the village.
Previously developed/existing buildings?	The site is not previously-developed. There is an existing outbuilding.
Access	The site would be accessed onto Main Road to the side of existing dwellings.
Landscape	The site is not part of the wider open countryside. It could be developed without any wider landscape impacts.

Flooding/drainage	The site is not known to have any flooding/drainage constraints.
Heritage	Development of the site would not harm any designated heritage assets.
Ecology	The site is not known to support any habitats of value.
Conclusion	Development of the site would represent a form of development that is out-of-keeping with the linear nature of the village. It is not recommended that the site is considered for allocation.



Description	The site comprises a set of small fields at the extreme eastern edge of Astwood near where the A422 joins Main Road. It is flat and grassed without any notable feature.
Reference	AH10
Name	Land North of Main Road
Size and capacity	1.7Ha (capacity not shown as far in excess of Neighbourhood Plan requirements)
Relationship to existing development	The site is divorced from the existing village and is not adjoined by any other dwellings. Development at its extreme south-west corner would be closest to the village but still somewhat distant.
Previously developed/existing buildings?	The site is not previously-developed with no existing buildings.
Access	Access may be taken directly from Main Road.

Landscape	The site is not part of the wider countryside as it is severed by the A422. Nevertheless, the site large and open and development could potentially result in some localised landscape harm.
Flooding/drainage	The site is not known to be subject to any flooding or drainage constraints.
Heritage	Development of the site would not result in any harm to designated heritage assets.
Ecology	The site is not known to support any habitats of value.
Conclusion	Development of the site would be divorced from the rest of Astwood. It should not be considered for allocation.



<p>Description</p>	<p>The site is a rectangular field that extends south-eastwards away from Main Road at the extreme eastern edge of Astwood. It is flat and without any features.</p>
<p>Reference</p>	<p>AH11</p>
<p>Name</p>	<p>Land south of Main Road ("Parcel F")</p>
<p>Size and capacity</p>	<p>1.26Ha (capacity not shown as far exceeds Neighbourhood Plan requirement)</p>
<p>Relationship to existing development</p>	<p>The site is not well-related to existing development. It would be divorced from the village with development in-depth in particular being out of keeping with the linear nature of the village.</p>
<p>Previously developed/existing buildings?</p>	<p>The site is not previously developed and has no existing buildings.</p>

Access	The site can be accessed directly from Main Road.
Landscape	The site is well-related to the surrounding countryside and it is likely that development would result in harm to this.
Flooding/drainage	The site is not subject to any known flooding or drainage constraints.
Heritage	Development of the site would not result in harm to designated heritage assets.
Ecology	The site is not known to support any habitats of value.
Conclusion	<p>The site is well-divorced from the rest of the village and could not be developed without landscape harm or in a form that was out of keeping with the village.</p> <p>It is not recommended that the site is considered for allocation.</p>