

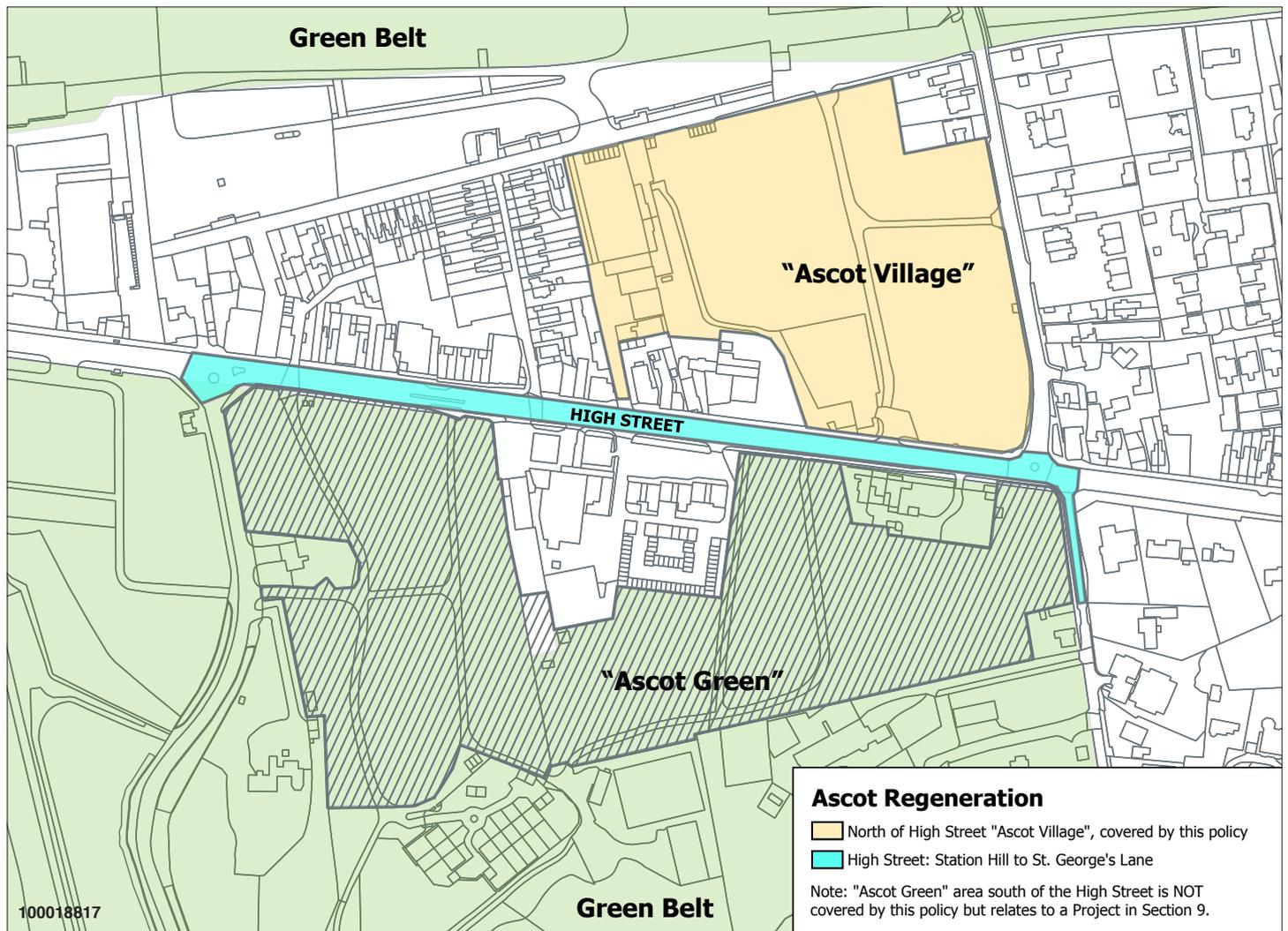
9. Projects

These Projects are not policies and will not constitute part of the Development Plan. They are initiatives identified by the local community and the Neighbourhood Plan team which we propose to drive forward over the coming years through community action in partnership with the Borough, the Parish Councils and/or other appropriate partners.

9.1 Project – Ascot Centre/High Street Rejuvenation and “Ascot Green”

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As part of the vision for how Ascot Centre can be rejuvenated, the area south of the High Street, which currently lies in Green Belt, was identified as a potential strategic site.



Map 24: Area south of Ascot High Street as potential strategic site “Ascot Green”

It is not within the remit of a Neighbourhood Plan to redraw Green Belt boundaries – only the Borough Local Plan can do this, which is why this area is not included in the Neighbourhood Plan as a policy.

Development on this land – which was supported by the majority of the community in consultation – is important to delivering the overall vision for Ascot:

- It includes the area where we would like to see a community centre and public open space – a landscaped square or piazza, with seating and space for the community to gather

- It will allow the development of the High Street on both sides to happen, with additional retail outlets and cafes/restaurants, helping to create a more prosperous, vibrant centre
- It will allow for residential development here on “Ascot Green” is envisaged which should be in keeping with the Key Characteristics and Description of RBWM’s Townscape Assessment classification “Leafy Residential Suburbs” and/or “Late 20th Century Suburbs”. Any development should include vehicle access that is not off the High Street and sufficient parking on-site for residents and visitors such that there is no reliance on any on-street parking or the main public car parks. It is expected that approximately 25% of the total area will be retained as green spaces
- It will allow development that can, and must, then also help fund the desired and needed improvements to the road infrastructure in the centre of Ascot, as well as better pedestrian crossings and wider pavements

PROJECT – ASCOT CENTRE / HIGH STREET REJUVENATION & “ASCOT GREEN”

To work closely with the Borough and encourage the re-drawing of the Green Belt boundaries to allow this area to come forward for future development, in a way that will deliver the community’s aspirations for it.

When considering Green Belt boundaries, we would also like to encourage the Borough to consider the rationalisation of Green Belt boundaries at Ascot Racecourse to facilitate the improved operational efficiency of this world-renowned asset and major economic contributor to our area.

Note: If development were to come forward for Ascot Centre/High Street – “Ascot Green”, it would be subject to our policy NP/H1 and require a Development Brief. This would ensure the community would be fully consulted on the detailed proposals.

9.2 Project - Ascot Station site

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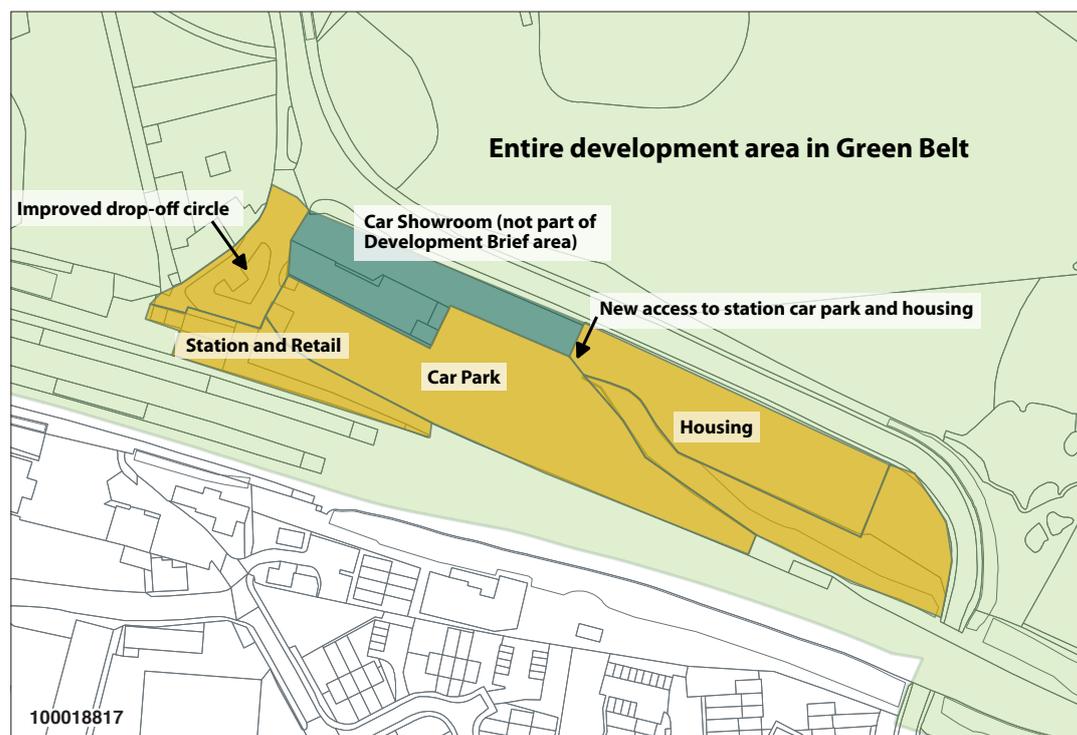
Ascot Station is an important transport hub and a gateway to Ascot. It is used by commuters into and out of Ascot and the surrounding area (on the main Waterloo to Reading line; link also to Aldershot), school children, raceday and other visitors.

Vehicle access to the station for dropping off is fairly restricted and suffers from congestion. The station car park is currently single level only, with some station users parking on Station Hill and in other free car parks near Ascot centre so they don’t have to pay.

All the area around the station is Green Belt, but this is low amenity value Green Belt and there is widespread support within the community for new development to take place here. Part of the area referred to in this section is previously developed Green Belt and is currently owned by a car dealership, Jardine Motors Group (traded as Cloverleaf). They have recently obtained planning permission to redevelop the old garage to a prestigious car showroom. We would also welcome their participation in these proposals for the redevelopment of Ascot station site, should they be interested.

There is significant support from the community (62% in favour in the Options consultation) for the redevelopment of the entire area around Ascot station, to include improvements to the station itself to better reflect its role as gateway to Ascot, provide better access, increased parking and some small scale retail offering. There is the potential to also include residential development and this is one of the sites where flatted development is considered appropriate and sustainable.

Map 25: Ascot Station, potential site for development



It is not within the remit of a Neighbourhood Plan to redraw Green Belt boundaries – only the Borough Local Plan can do this, which is why this site is not included in the Neighbourhood Plan as a strategic site policy.

PROJECT – ASCOT STATION SITE

To work closely with the Borough and encourage the re-drawing of the Green Belt boundaries to allow this area to come forward for future development, in a way that will deliver the community's aspirations for it – which include:

- Design proposals which demonstrate design excellence that reflects the station's position as gateway to Ascot, and design considerations which include how it will look from both the road and the railway
- An improved, safer pedestrian walkway under the adjacent railway bridge
- Improvements to the drop-off circle in front of the station
- Improved access for the public car park and new housing on the site
- Safe and accessible pedestrian and cycle routes to link Ascot station with Ascot High Street and South Ascot
- An increase to the parking capacity that is currently available in the station car park

We expect these aspirations to be delivered by having new mixed development that includes:

- Housing, in the form of houses and/or flats
- Modest size retail units appropriate for serving the needs of commuters and passing visitors
- Potentially, also other commercial or other development, such as office space for small or micro businesses and/or new medical/health facilities

Note: If development were to come forward for the Ascot Station site, it would be subject to our policy NP/H1 and require a Development Brief. This would ensure the community would be fully consulted on the detailed proposals.

9.3 Project – Village Hopper Bus Service

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Feedback from our Vision consultation showed that many people would like to see more frequent bus services and a greater choice of routes to/from local towns. One particular idea arose through the Ascot consultations to gain considerable support and is one which the community would like to pursue further – a bus service that works a circular route around the villages.

NB. For this to be operationally viable, it is likely that it will require a parking and/or servicing site somewhere in the neighbourhood for these buses. When approached, Ascot Racecourse indicated that they may be able to make suitable land available for this purpose.

PROJECT – VILLAGE HOPPER BUS SERVICE

To work with local bus companies, the Parish Councils, RBWM and any other interested stakeholders to establish a “Village Hopper Bus” service, using smaller buses to work a circular route around all our village centres – Ascot and South Ascot, Sunningdale, Sunninghill, Cheapside and North Ascot, also stopping off at Ascot and Sunningdale stations.

To run at regular, frequent times throughout the day and early evening, to enable its use by shoppers, workers and commuters.

9.4 Project – Potential SANG sites

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We are in the influence zone of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. As such, the number of houses that can be built in our Plan area is constrained by the requirement to provide an appropriate SANG. We would therefore like to take the initiative to encourage consideration of potential SANG sites.

Approximately half of the Heatherwood site is Green Belt which has not been previously developed and therefore, in accordance with GB policy, is not available for new development. It is on a slope and partly wooded and would be an ideal site to be set aside to be created as a new SANG.

Another site that came forward through our pre-submission consultation is the wood to the south of the waste transfer station in Wells Lane, while other sites may also come forward in the future.

PROJECT – POTENTIAL SANG SITES

To work with relevant landowners, Natural England and the Borough to encourage and facilitate the designation of one or more new SANGs, to help meet the strategic housing numbers required by the Borough from our Neighbourhood Plan area.

9.5 Project – Protecting and improving biodiversity

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While we recognise that it is unreasonable and unrealistic to prohibit development on non-designated biodiversity habitats that run through build up areas and people's gardens, there is nonetheless a real desire to protect biodiversity in our area and to establish and maintain green corridors.

The purpose of this project is to engage with the local community and other stakeholders and encourage greater awareness of the importance of our wildlife and its habitat and the enjoyment and other benefits that can come from appreciating it.

PROJECT – PROTECTING AND IMPROVING BIODIVERSITY

To encourage and support the aims and activities of the Wildlife in Ascot group which include to:

- Work with SPAE (Society for the Protection of Ascot and its Environs), Sunninghill & Ascot Parish Council's Voluntary Biodiversity Officer and the Borough to consider how best to include greater focus on biodiversity in the planning process
- Collect data about the biodiversity of our area and what exists that needs to be protected, including surveys of breeding House Sparrows, Swifts and ancient trees and the potential for creating "Pocket Parks"
- Organise social events, walks, talks and demonstrations to engage local residents more in our natural habitat and wildlife
- Direct action such as:
 - Conservation work
 - Working with landowners who have green corridors going through their land with a view to trying to get these listed as nature reserves in the future
 - Working with homeowners to encourage them to use their gardens as stepping stones for wildlife

9.6 Project – Additional primary school places

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Feedback from all our community consultations raised the availability of school places as a key issue of concern currently, with the prospect of new development likely to further exacerbate the situation.

Our current primary schools are essentially full. Only two of them – South Ascot Village School and Holy Trinity CE Primary in Sunningdale – have the capacity to potentially expand by going to 2-form entry. South Ascot Village School introduced 2-form entry in 2012, for what was initially projected to be a one-year blip in numbers.

However, the indicators are that this blip will continue. Interviews with Head Teachers in the area indicate that this view is shared by them.

With considerable new development being projected in our NP area over the Plan period, there is concern that the limited expansion options that exist with current schools will not suffice and the local community would like to see provision made for a site to either re-locating one of the schools to a larger site or for a new primary school.

Some ideas for consideration include:

- St. Michael's school in Sunninghill moving to a new building on the Gasholder site with room to expand
- South Ascot and/or Holy Trinity going to 2-form entry throughout
- Locating a new school on Ascot Racecourse land adjacent to Ascot station (put forward by Ascot Racecourse)
- Locating a new school at Sunningdale Park
- Locating a new school on Shorts site in Ascot

PROJECT – ADDITIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES

To work with RBWM, the Head Teachers, School Governors and other interested stakeholders to identify one or more suitable options to deliver the required additional primary school places and, if necessary, seek ways of bringing these forward through the planning process.

9.7 Project – Better transport management

9.7 Project – Better transport management

Traffic congestion and issues with parking were recurring themes in feedback from community consultations. Much of this we can do relatively little to influence or improve through a spatial Neighbourhood Plan.

We believe that better joined up thinking could help address some of these issues. By way of just one example, if we can set up the Village Hopper Bus service (see Project 9.3 above), this will help alleviate some of the congestion and parking pressure in the village centres.

PROJECT – BETTER TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

To work with RBWM highways management department, the Parish Councils and any other interested stakeholders to find ways of improving traffic congestion and parking availability in our area.