

# **VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT**

FOR THE PARISH OF THE CHAPEL ALLERTON,  
SEDGEMOOR DISTRICT, SOMERSET

Should formal maps of the Allertons Parish be required, these can be obtained on request from Sedgemoor District Council.

This document has been produced by the Village Design Statement Working Group, comprising Sonya Bedford, Andrew Cook, Tracey Crosby, David Dixon, Liz Friend, Dave Nevitt, Stephen Reading, Fiona Torrens-Spence and Margret Wallach. Sincere thanks are due to all on the Group, as well as all in our community who contributed to surveys and feedback sessions. We also thank those who provided photographs and Stephen Reading for the excellent line drawings.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION and PROCESS FOLLOWED

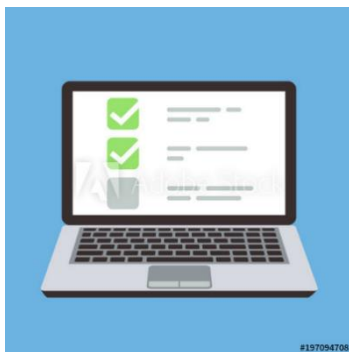
## What is the Village Design Statement (VDS)?

The VDS is a planning tool for our Parish. The Sedgemoor Local Plan defines the principles of development, with the VDS being used to assess the more detailed and/or locality-specific matters around design, material, fit with local character etc. It gives local communities the opportunity to have a say in the planning process. It should be used by anyone intending to undertake any development such that designs can incorporate the required features at an early stage. It provides documented local criteria against which Chapel Allerton Parish Council, Sedgemoor District Council and other stakeholders can assess the detailed suitability of applications for development. It is also an opportunity for the community to have its say on areas other than the built form that affect the Parish such as Landscape, Community Infrastructure and Environmental issues.

The previous version of The Allerton Village Design Statement (VDS) was published in 2004. Since that time, many things have changed such that the document required updating to remain relevant to today's world.

### The Process followed:

Volunteers were sought by the Parish Council and a Working Group established to undertake the task.



A key element of the Village Design Statement is that it represents the views of the people of the Parish. To this end, the Working Group designed and created an **online survey** to canvas the views of our community. It covered all the topics in this VDS. The Working Group would like to express their grateful thanks to SurveyMonkey for providing us with a complimentary account for us to be able to undertake our online survey. Participation in the survey was much better than could reasonably be expected with a population heavily represented by more mature age-groups. A total of 84 online survey responses were received, representing almost half the households in

the Parish. The pertinent survey results will be seen throughout this document to provide evidence of the views stated.



The Working Group acknowledged that not all parishioners would be either willing or able to complete an online survey. Therefore, two Community Consultation Events were held to give all the opportunity to have their say. These covered both weekend and mid-week, evening and morning in order to give all ease of access. Both Events were well attended, and views were gathered on Post-It notes for each of the areas. After the Events, the results were collated and logged before being amalgamated with the online survey results.

## 2. HISTORY OF THE PARISH

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Allerton has a rich archeological and historical heritage and there is some evidence to suggest occupation dating back to Roman times. Chapel Allerton was mentioned in the Domesday book as Alwarditone and was the meeting place of the Bempstone Hundred in Saxon times.



Until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the majority of the population were tenants and were predominantly engaged in small scale agriculture or in businesses providing the range of goods and services to support that.



The farmhouses and cottages were built in vernacular style and constructed from local material, usually stone, with thatch or locally sourced roof tiles. There were no foundations and interior walls were made with wattle and daub. There were also a number of barns, outbuildings and cider houses.



By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century most of the trades had disappeared but the villages retained their farming tradition especially in Chapel Allerton. Today, very few people derive their main income from farming but there are a number of part time farmers and some residents working in allied occupations such as equestrian or veterinary medicine.

The latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen considerable changes. What had once been poor agricultural self-sufficient communities have now become largely residential ones with many retirees, people travelling out of the village to work or working from home. Many of the old houses have been substantially extended, some old houses have been demolished and/or replaced with new houses and bungalows and several barns, outbuildings and cider houses have been converted into homes. The result is that from the 1970's onwards the average house price has increased substantially leaving few houses affordable for people on modest incomes or within the budget of the children of local people.

The overall rural character of the villages, however, remains and this was recognized when the Somerset District Council designated the main part of Stone Allerton as a conservation area. Neither Chapel Allerton nor Ashton were similarly designated but they do contain some of the oldest buildings in the villages including the Church, Ashton Windmill and Manor Farm.

Residents of the villages are justifiably proud of their historical inheritance and there is an excellent community spirit exemplified in the many clubs and societies.

## Heritage Assets.

There are specific features that contribute to the uniqueness of our Parish and as such are especially valued by our community.

- The church, graveyard and market cross outside the church.
- Ashton Windmill and Mill House in Stone Allerton
- The Old Schoolroom in Stone Allerton now used as a village hall



*Allerton Church*

- The stream (Berries brook) running through Stone Allerton  
The site of the public well and the stream running through Chapel Allerton, situated at the top of Main Street.
- The preponderance of local stone in the houses and walls adjoining the highways in both villages.
- The pound in Chapel Allerton next to Manor Farm



*Berries Brook*  
© Neil Owen  
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- **Listed buildings:**  
Manor Farm, Chapel Allerton

Ashton Farmhouse

Ashton Gate Farmhouse

Ashton House

Underhill Cottage including the roadside stone wall.

plus Fallowdene and Greenfield House in Stone Allerton (in the Parish of Weare)

- Grade 2 listed finger post



*grade 2 listed finger post*  
©HER

- Sites of historic interest listed on the Somerset Historic Environment Record.

Pillow mound at Poolhayes

Sites of medieval pottery finds

Evidence of Roman salt-making

Hundred Stone

## POLICIES

2.1	Any proposal that looks to demolish, deface, or otherwise negatively affect any of these heritage assets will be actively discouraged.
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### 3. CLIMATE CHANGE & SUSTAINABILITY

Climate change has been universally acknowledged and accepted as an emergency at all levels – national, regional and local. Chapel Allerton Parish Council and the Allerton community supports measures to address this.

Whilst this issue now forms an integral part of national and regional planning policy, action at the local level is paramount especially because, as a rural community, we have an over dependence on carbon-based fuels for transport and heating.

#### SUSTAINABILITY

Ensuring the sustainability of development, or at least reducing its unsustainability, now forms a significant part of our regional Local Plan. Our community supports this philosophy and any measures that can be taken to achieve it. We endorse this commitment with the following policies:

#### POLICIES:

<b>3.1</b>	The design of extensions should aim for the highest level of energy efficiency. In parallel, any opportunity to increase energy efficiency of existing buildings will be encouraged.
<b>3.2</b>	The design and standard of any new building should aim to meet a high level of sustainable design and construction and be optimised for energy efficiency targeting low carbon emissions.
<b>3.3</b>	New builds and new garages should include an electric car charger.
<b>3.4</b>	All development proposals should be as close to net zero carbon as possible.
<b>3.5</b>	Our community relies heavily on cars as there is currently no public transport locally. Measures to reduce the dependency on cars will be encouraged, including applications which allow for people to work/study at home.
<b>3.6</b>	The siting and orientation of developments should optimise passive solar gain.

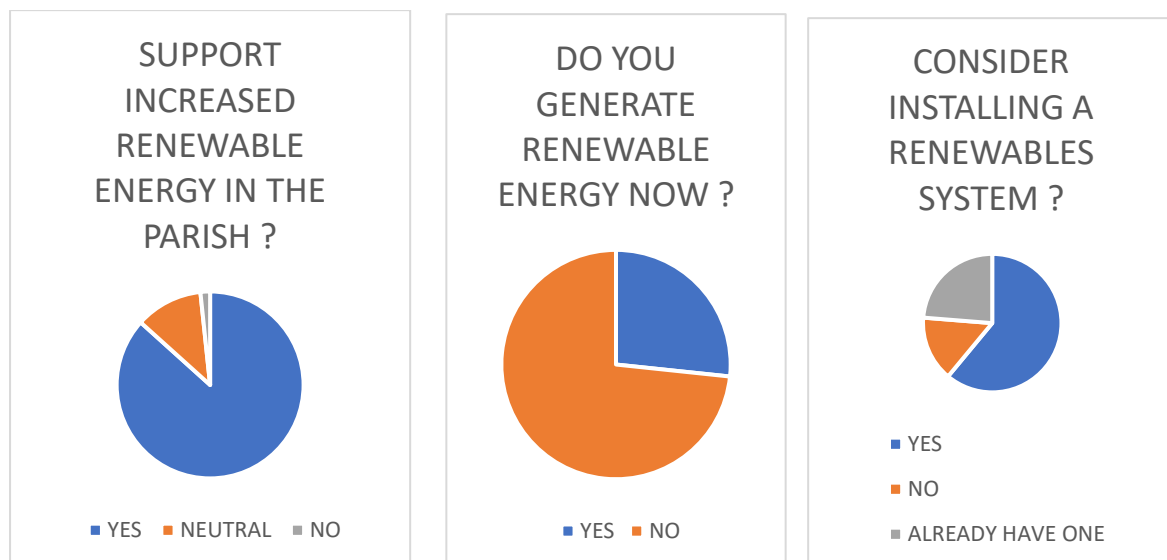


*Solar panels on Old Milking Shed, Sleepy Hollow, Stone Allerton*



## RENEWABLE ENERGY

Our community strives to reduce its dependency on oil, wood and coal for domestic use.  
What our Community said :



## POLICIES:

<b>3.7</b>	Proposals for individual or small scale domestic energy generation will be supported subject to the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The siting and scale of the proposed development is appropriate to its setting and position in the wider landscape; and</li> <li>• The proposed development does not create an unacceptable impact on the amenities of local residents; and</li> <li>• The proposed development does not have an unacceptable impact on a feature of natural or biodiversity importance.</li> </ul>
<b>3.8</b>	The use of domestic renewable energy sources will be encouraged but their scale and position should not cause noise intrusion or detract from the setting of the building within the village scene.
<b>3.9</b>	Some of the older houses in the village were built with minimal foundations, are not insulated to current standards and have low energy efficiency. Sensitive retro-fitting to reduce energy demand will be encouraged, as will proposals to generate renewable energy where appropriate, providing it safeguards historic characteristics and development is done with engagement and permissions of relevant organisations.
<b>3.10</b>	Many houses are dependent on oil, coal and wood for heating and cooking. Applications to provide alternative energy sources will be encouraged provided that they are of a scale appropriate to their surroundings.

## WATER

One of the significant impacts of climate change has been the large increase in rainfall, coupled with a change in its seasonality that causes greater winter flooding and summer droughts. Flooding is an issue both within our Parish as well as water from our Parish eventually ending up elsewhere.

Conversely, we must place greater emphasis on conserving water to better cope with times of summer drought that are predicted to become more frequent and more severe in future.

### POLICIES:

<b>3.11</b>	Promote water efficiency by incorporating rainwater harvesting technology in new developments and retro-fitting for existing buildings and extensions.
<b>3.12</b>	Encourage the planting of native trees in appropriate locations to increase water infiltration and reduce carbon.
<b>3.13</b>	Proposals which incorporate permeable driveways will be encouraged to reduce rainwater run-off.
<b>3.14</b>	Promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems that aim to reduce the need for hard, engineered drainage systems, manage water at or near the surface and maximise infiltration into the water table.
<b>3.15</b>	Proposals must incorporate analysis of the impact of any waste water and rainwater run-off in order to ensure neighbouring properties are not adversely affected by flooding.



## 4. BUILDINGS & ARCHITECTURE

### THE BUILT FORM

The Parish of Chapel Allerton and its surroundings contain a range of building styles and the character of the main concentrations of built form is created by the materials used and the distinctive local detailing.

Most of the older buildings that remain were once farmhouses, farm buildings or cottages of simple form and construction and these were built of locally sourced limestone. This was sometimes colour washed or rendered with some examples of dressed stone which may have been brought from further afield.

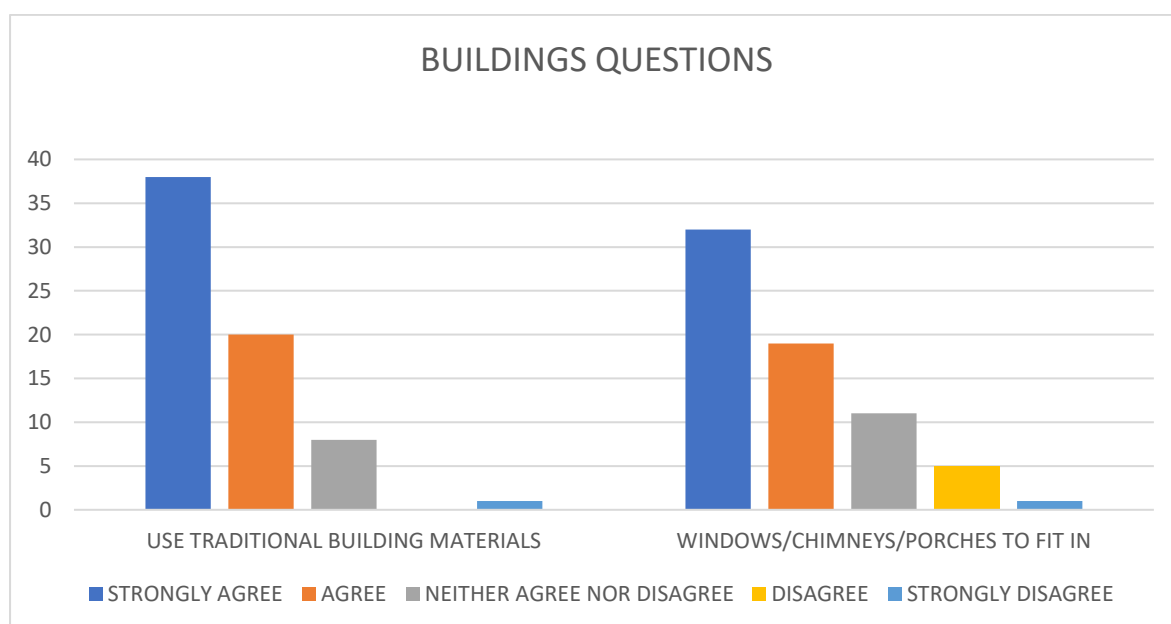
Roof tiles are generally clay double roman and/or pantiles for outbuildings with some properties sporting slate roofs.

Most of the older buildings have been gradually altered and renovated over the years but, on the whole, and especially in the Stone Allerton Conservation Area, have retained their original form. It is this, along with the preponderance of stone boundary walling with its distinctive “cock and hen” coping detail that provides the character of the Allertons.

This Village Design Statement seeks to maintain the character of the villages whilst recognising that times change and, with it, building materials and technology. The use of local materials will always be a requirement as at least part of the palette of both new buildings and extensions.

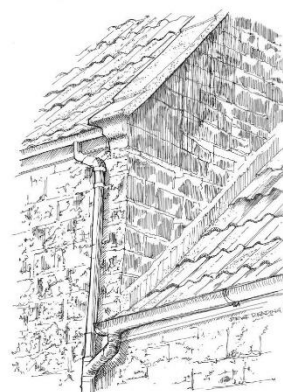
There is a case to be heard for contemporary design in the right context and proposals that add to and complement the character of the Allertons will be supported where appropriate.

What our Community Survey said :



## SETTLEMENT POLICIES:

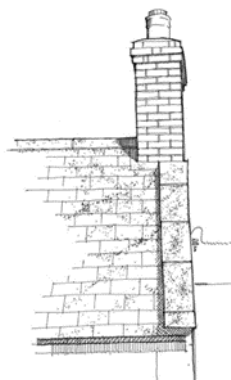
<b>4.1</b>	The spacious and open character of the villages is to be retained; any development that will encroach on this will be opposed.
<b>4.2</b>	New housing will be expected to respect the linear layout of the villages.
<b>4.3</b>	Subdivisions of plots will be discouraged, as this detracts from the open character of the village scene.
<b>4.4</b>	New development with frontages on to the main village streets will be expected to retain existing hedging and traditional stone walls as much as possible.



## BUILDING POLICIES:

<b>4.5</b>	New houses should be homes which can be afforded by people earning average incomes in the local area, rather than executive housing. To maintain a stock of this type of housing we would like to see restrictions placed on ambitious future extensions when planning permission for a new build is granted.
<b>4.6</b>	Preference will be given to new housing which has a low carbon impact.
<b>4.7</b>	The overall design of new dwellings will be sympathetic to the existing built environment in the Parish. New infill development will take account of the character, scale, design and siting of neighbouring properties in order to retain and enhance the visual character of the street scene.
<b>4.8</b>	The height of new houses is a critical factor in their acceptability. New houses which have higher roof ridges than neighbouring properties will be discouraged.

<b>4.9</b>	Domestic buildings will normally be built in natural stone and/or render to reflect the traditional materials of this area.
<b>4.10</b>	Natural clay tiles or slates for roofs will be used in preference to concrete tiles. Roofs will conform to traditional roof pitches and overhangs.
<b>4.11</b>	Chimneys should be in brick or stone and incorporated within gable apexes and not project outside the gable wall.
<b>4.12</b>	New or replacement windows and doors will reflect the character and materials of good examples in the conservation area, particularly where they can be seen from a road or footpath. Reduction of heat loss will also be a consideration; the use of state of the art materials will be considered if it can be proven to improve insulation.
<b>4.13</b>	Porches of a scale and design similar to those used traditionally will be encouraged.
<b>4.14</b>	New garage blocks should reflect the character and size of the dwelling with which they are associated. Inclusion of an upper storey will be discouraged where this makes the garage visually dominant in relation to the associated dwelling. Garages should not be positioned in such a way that they are visually intrusive from the street, neighbouring properties or footpaths. A free standing garage should remain ancillary to the dwelling to which it belongs.
<b>4.15</b>	Sewage treatment plants should not have soakaways or other drainage grounds which have negative impacts on neighbouring properties or create run-off issues on public highways. Appropriate professional evidence will be expected to support this.
<b>4.16</b>	Permission will not normally be given for equine facilities for applicants living outside the Parish because of concerns over animal welfare.
<b>4.17</b>	New builds are expected to incorporate full disabled access, particularly as most of the housing in the parish is not disabled-friendly and retrospective alterations are often difficult or impossible. Extensions should include full disabled access wherever practicable.



## 5. LANDSCAPE



*A view across Allerton Moor.*

Chapel Allerton is a rural Parish characterised by small villages and hamlets together with some more isolated dwellings. This is set amongst generally low intensity, principally grazing farmland around the villages, with the western half of the Parish descending to low-lying moors of wet grazing fields with some extensive uncut hedges.

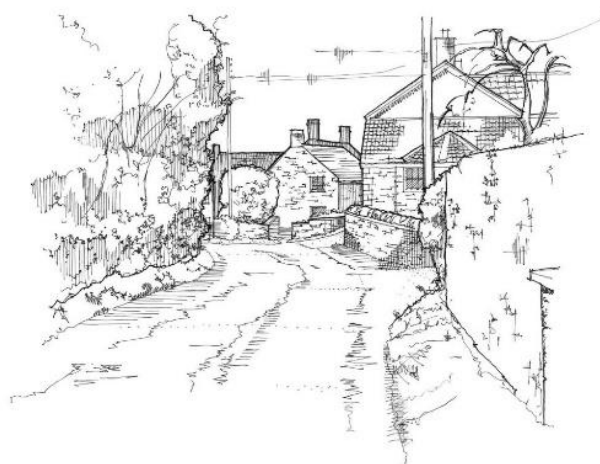
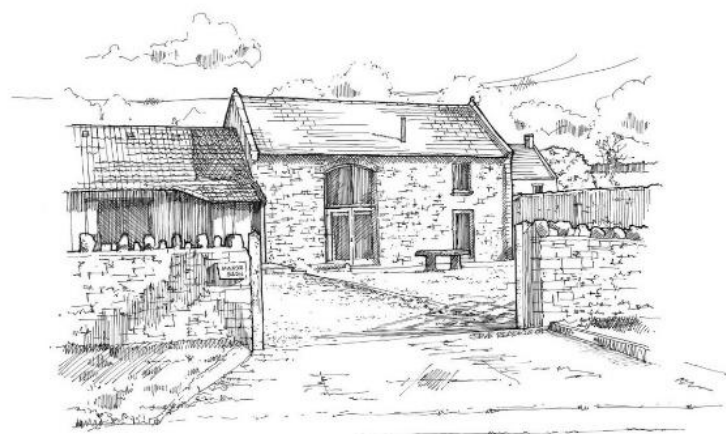
The resulting landscape is one of life in the quiet countryside; our surveys revealed that this is a significant factor in our community wanting to live here and the support to look after our cherished landscape was overwhelming. One quote sums up this desire “future development should respect the existing landscape and not detract from it”.

### POLICIES:

<b>5.1</b>	Development that will be visually intrusive in the landscape setting of the village will be opposed unless adequate screening or landscaping measures can be guaranteed.
<b>5.2</b>	New development and extensions will be expected to provide appropriate landscaping measures, including the planting of native trees and hedgerows.
<b>5.3</b>	Agricultural buildings and stables should avoid isolated and prominent locations and instead should be well related to existing hedgerows, trees or buildings and be accompanied by additional tree planting if this is necessary to achieve better integration with the landscape.



<b>5.4</b>	New development will be expected to provide parking and access in a way which minimises visual impact on the village.
<b>5.5</b>	The size and choice of colour of new agricultural buildings should fit in with the surrounding landscape.
<b>5.6</b>	New boundaries will be native species hedge or natural stone if possible. New walls will be built using natural stone, random laid and will incorporate capping stones in the style and character of traditional walls within the area. Demolition of curtilage walls will be opposed, particularly at the front of properties.
<b>5.7</b>	Entrance gates which are open and rural in appearance are recommended, in order to maintain the open aspect of the village. Wooden 5 bar gates are appropriate whereas solid security gates are inappropriate and will be opposed.
<b>5.8</b>	The opening up of the network of public footpaths in and around the villages will be encouraged. Circular routes which provide an appreciation of the landscape setting of the villages will be welcomed. Appropriate maintenance of public footpaths will also be encouraged.



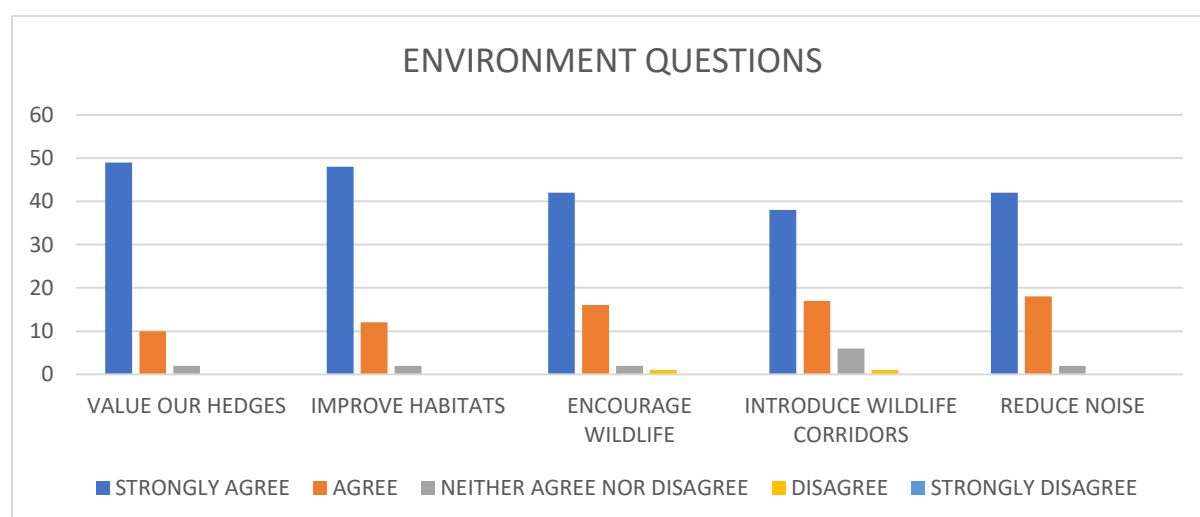
## 6. ENVIRONMENT

In recent years, there has been ever-increasing acknowledgement of man's negative impact on the Environment, and agreement that steps must be taken to mitigate this. This has now reached the point that it is at the top of the agenda for many governments, as well as Sedgemoor District Council regionally.

For national action to succeed, each community must play its part with local action. This was fully acknowledged by our community who responded in the online survey:



What our Community said :



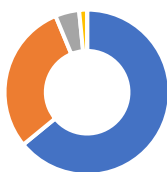
*Little Egret © Gary Thoburn*



*Four-spotted Chaser dragonfly © Gary Thoburn*



## ENCOURAGE WILD FLOWERS THROUGHOUT THE PARISH



- STRONGLY AGREE
- AGREE
- NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
- DISAGREE
- STRONGLY DISAGREE



*Common Red Soldier Beetle*

In order to be effective, actions need to be specific and tangible. Many respondents commented that our Environment is largely unrepresented in the Parish and that we need to do more to safeguard it. The following Policies flow from the expressed views of our community:

### POLICIES:

<b>6.1</b>	Proposals to retain existing native hedges will be encouraged.
<b>6.2</b>	Proposals to establish new native hedges will be encouraged.
<b>6.3</b>	Proposals which are proven to be positive for wildlife will be encouraged. Conversely, proposals detrimental to wildlife will be actively discouraged.
<b>6.4</b>	Proposals assessed as improving existing or creating new wildlife habitat will be encouraged.
<b>6.5</b>	Proposals to create wildlife corridors will be encouraged.
<b>6.6</b>	The establishment of a designated Nature Reserve or Community Woodland within our Parish will be encouraged.
<b>6.7</b>	Proposals from members of our Parish community, or from external organisations, that specifically target improving our Environment will be encouraged.
<b>6.8</b>	Proposals to include a new Nature Trail in the parish will be encouraged.
<b>6.9</b>	Proposals which incorporate permeable driveways will be encouraged to reduce rainwater run-off.

## 7. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE



Our Parish is a rural one, containing two villages, various other hamlets and some isolated properties. As such, facilities are understandably limited.

### Community Assets

- **Village Hall** (Old School Room) Stone Allerton: Maximum capacity 50 with toilet and basic kitchenette. There is no disabled access. This building is used by the Parish Council and by village groups and clubs and for occasional social events. It has a small outside area to the front and rear.
- **Church** : with toilet and kitchenette and graveyard (open) – used for church services and village meetings of more than 50 people. Max capacity 120.
- **Wheatsheaf Pub**, shop and smokery, commercially run. The Wheatsheaf hosts a defibrillator.
- **Cricket Pitch and Pavilion**: Used by Allerton CC and other local cricket clubs. It also provides a venue for the annual Harvest Home and is a venue for occasional large marquee events such as days of National Celebration. The cricket pavilion is sometimes used by the youth club.
- **Memorial Cross area**, Stone Allerton used at Christmas for an outdoor village carol service.



Since the original Allerton Village Design Statement was produced the village Post Office has closed. The community would support the re-instating of Post Office facilities in the village which provides a vital service to the community and reduces the need for the use of cars, the nearest Post offices being Wedmore or Axbridge.

## SURVEY RESULTS



During the consultation process several other issues were raised by residents which have generated the following policies :

## POLICIES:

7.1	Proposals for appropriately designed and located facilities that benefit the community such as a modern village meeting place will be encouraged, the provision of disabled access being of importance.
7.2	Enhancement of community spaces and the establishment of new community spaces will be encouraged wherever possible. To support a community led initiative for a play area for small children
7.3	To support the re-introduction of Post Office facilities
7.4	To support measures to provide community transport, allowing residents to reduce reliance on motor cars
7.5	To oppose the introduction of street lighting
7.6	To support the active maintenance of OS marked footpaths and bridleways to ensure continued public access will be encouraged
7.7	Proposal from telecoms companies to keep broadband performance of a high and competitive standard will be encouraged to help those working and studying from home.

## 8. ALLERTON AND BINHAM MOORS

### An Environmentally Sensitive Wetland Area

Allerton and Binham moors make up more than half of Chapel Allerton Parish (see map).



These moors are at or below sea level and are intersected by rhynes, droves and tall hedgerows which are rarely flailed. Until they were enclosed and drained in the nineteenth century they were common land.

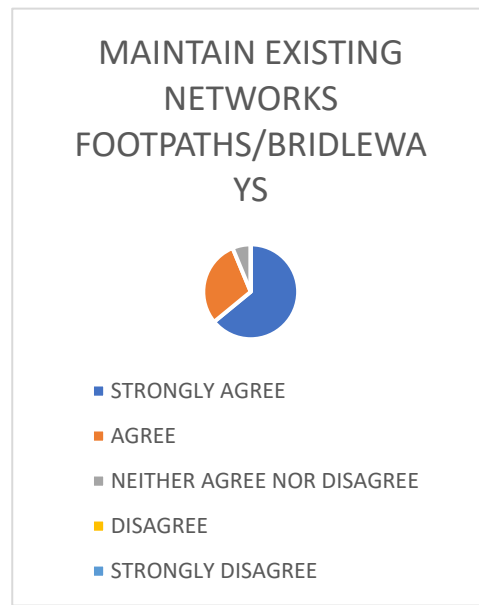
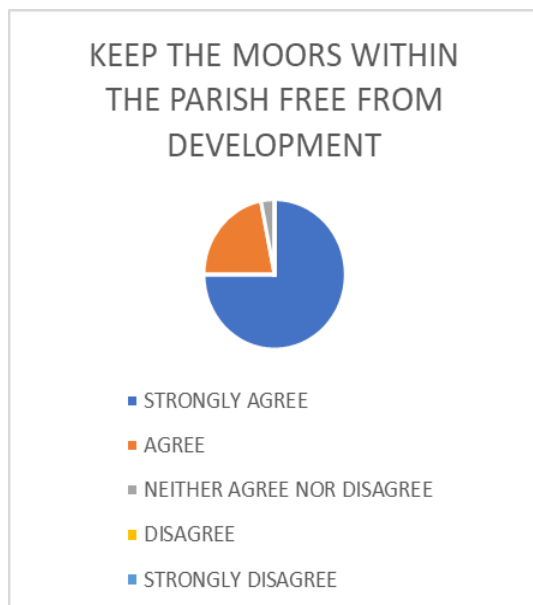
They have remained an “unbuilt” area of low intensity, low input farming with little human activity particularly during winter months. As a result they provide an excellent wetland habitat

for all types of wildlife and are particularly rich in aquatic species, wetland birds and rare species of bats.

To protect this very special environment which provides a stepping stone between the SSSIs of Heath House and Shapwick and coastal wetlands, we would like to maintain this part of the Parish as an “unbuilt” natural environment which is suited to carbon reduction projects



What our community said :



## POLICIES:

<b>8.1</b>	Within the Moors, as delineated on the map below, there should be no: - i) residential development; ii) commercial, storage or containers; iii) new stable blocks or riding arenas; iv) new chalets or permanent caravans; v) new agricultural buildings with concrete floors for over-wintering livestock, or agricultural buildings of a height or size which makes them visually intrusive; vi) new lighting.
<b>8.2</b>	There should be no external lighting on new dwellings, buildings or riding arenas on the periphery of the moors.
<b>8.3</b>	The removal of hedges and native species trees on more than one side of a rhine whilst it is being dug/cleaned will be opposed.
<b>8.4</b>	The introduction of new utility pylons on the Moors will be opposed. Appropriate undergrounding will be encouraged.
<b>8.5</b>	Environmental measures outlined in the Policies in section 6 (the Environment) will be strongly encouraged on the moors, as will measures which help improve and increase biodiversity and wetland habitats.

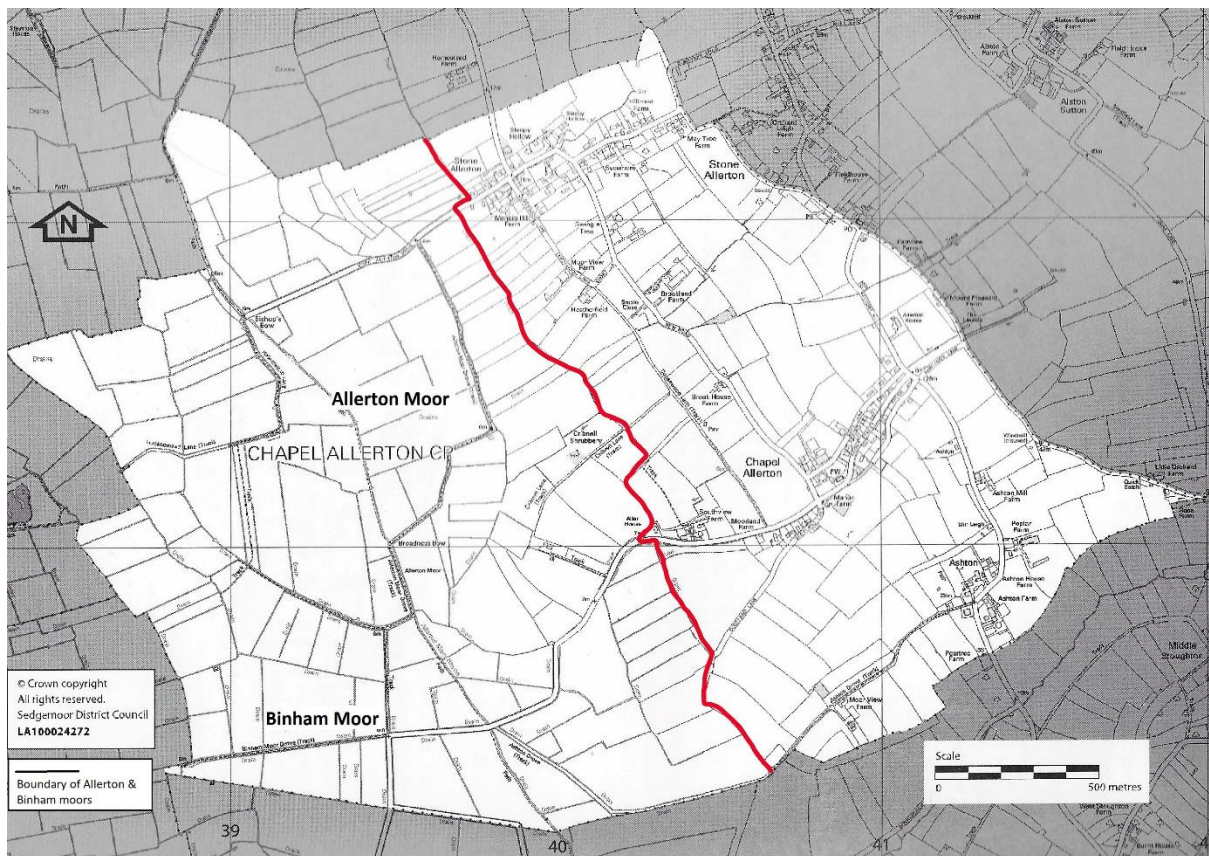


*Binham Moor*

Feedback from our Community sessions also expressed interest in the following topics :

- Planting appropriate native species trees (see Shapwick SSS1 for examples)
- Improving biodiversity by promoting species rich meadows/native wildflowers
- Keeping footpaths, droves and bridleways and stiles in good repair
- Creating new ponds or wildlife areas
- Community projects for observing and recording flora and fauna, and clearing plastic waste from rhines, droves and footpaths.





*Chapel Allerton parish, showing the area comprising Allerton & Binham Moors, to the west (left) of the delineating red line.*

## **APPENDIX – REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

The National Planning Policy Framework is available at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

The Sedgemoor District Council Local Plan is available at [www.sedgemoor.gov.uk](http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk)

Information on Conservation Areas in Sedgemoor is available at [www.sedgemoor.gov.uk](http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk)

Climate Emergency information is available at [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk) and [www.sedgemoor.gov.uk](http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk)