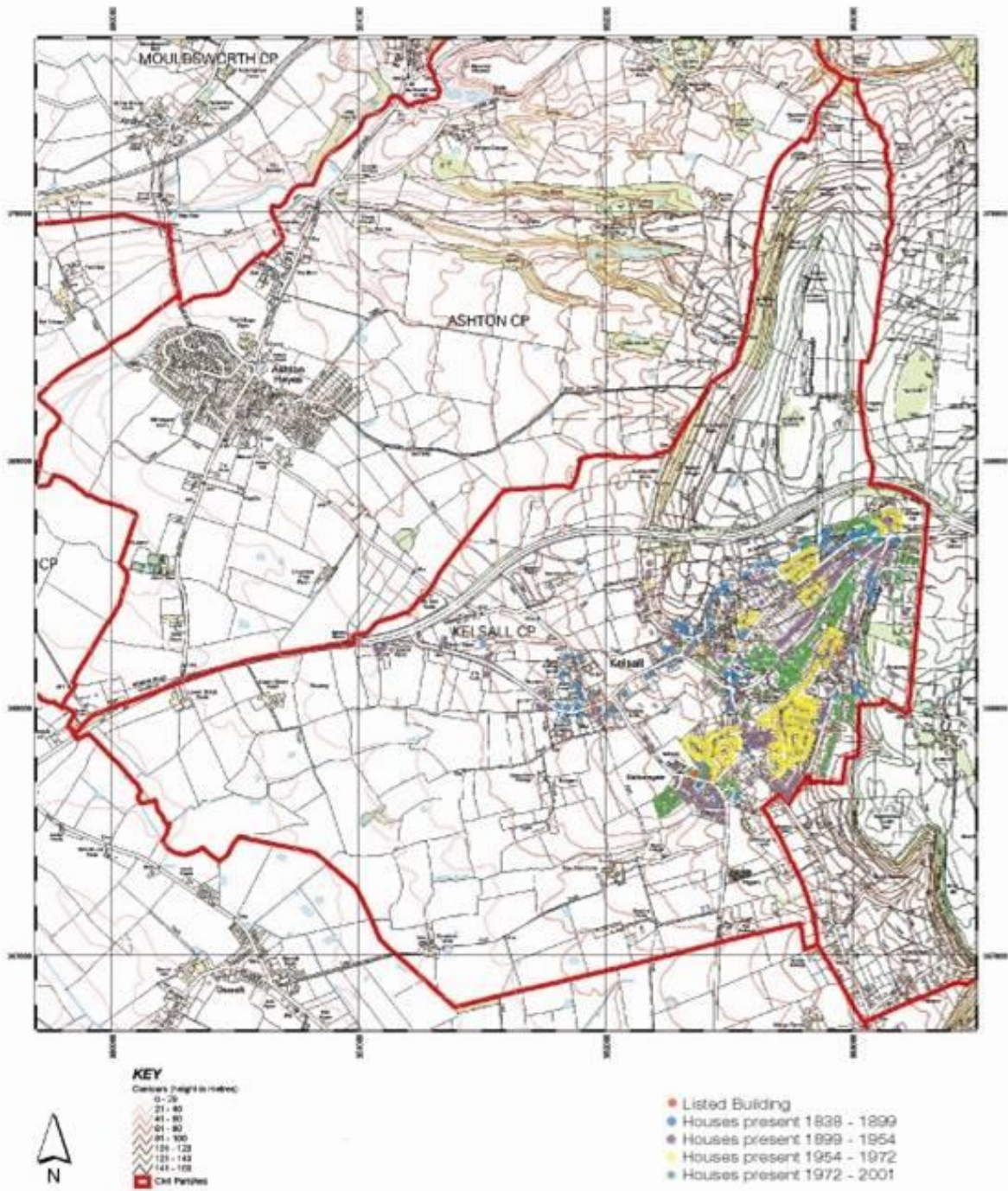


## 5. A Diverse Community with a Long History

- 5.1 Just as the development of Kelsall has been influenced by the character of its landscape, so too has its position on an important east/west trading route, since Roman times, has helped to shape the village settlement. Access to water, salt, stone, timber and good farming land have all played a part. Many older properties began as small holdings and grander houses are graced with large gardens. Today few residents are actively engaged in food production and areas previously cropped for fruit or grazed are occupied by a steadily increasing density of housing. Map 3 demonstrates four phases of expansion from the 100 residents in 1838 to the 3000 of 2004.
- 5.2 Within the built-up area there are three distinct zones:
- a) **Lower Kelsall**, very slightly separated from the rest of the village, and designated a Rural Conservation Area, was the heart of the earlier settlement with characteristic houses and farmsteads in Cheshire brick. Here the imposing Royal Oak Hotel, built as a late coaching inn has had a renaissance with extensive new dining facilities as 'The Oak'.
  - b) The **present village centre**, with the main public buildings and amenities includes shops, churches, school, medical practices, a modern community centre and the central public house and restaurant, called the Morris Dancer, loosely grouped around a remaining valuable open space.
  - c) **The valley**, where tiers of buildings on opposite slopes face each other across the hardly visible brook. Three roads dominate the valley; Quarry Lane on the southern side, Old Coach Road on the northern side and the detrunked Chester Road down the middle. Building heights and densities vary in the degree of harmony and discord.

Map3: Kelsall Village Phases of Development



5.3 The history of Kelsall can be traced back as follows:

**1838 Tithe map:** Shows several well-separated hamlets scattered along the old trading routes. Lower Kelsall developed at the foot of the steep pass. Other groups of small holdings were established above Grub Lane, known as Mount Pleasant and at Hallowsgate on Salter's Brook. The settlement at Kelsall Hill grew at the point where the Brook rises and the old road crests the hill. Between and beyond these clusters were isolated farms, cottages and inns to serve travellers. Many of the surviving buildings from this period are of locally quarried sandstone or locally-made brick



**Late Victorian period:** With the break up of estates the development of local industries and the growth of national prosperity, Kelsall grew too. New building took place in linear fashion along the routes which linked the early hamlets. Substantial brick-built houses, terraces and even a few mansions were built along Quarry Lane, Old Coach Road and the new Chester Road.



**Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century:** Linear development continued: typically the houses of this period were small houses and bungalows occupying large plots. Many householders supplemented their income with garden produce. The character of the village remained essentially rural with pasture and orchards occupying much of the valley between Quarry Lane and St Philips Church.



**1953 – 1972:** the population of Kelsall almost doubled. This was the period of estate development including the extensive housing on and around Kelsborrow Way. Small houses and bungalows, often uniform in style replaced the orchards and pastures and filled in spaces between earlier developments. Several individually-designed houses, built high on the scarp slopes to enjoy the spectacular views increased further the diversity of housing styles.



**Late twentieth century:** Estates filled the remaining spaces with larger, more densely-packed homes. With little remaining land, houses were extended, barns converted and old plots subdivided. With vastly increasing property prices an exception site was brought forward to build starter homes in Pasture Close. However the demand for affordable homes is now significant as is the desire of older residents to find manageable retirement homes in the village where they have spent much of their lives.



### **Recommendations for sustaining housing diversity**

- 5.4 Residents value the intimate mixture of houses of different ages and sizes. It is important that new development complements and enhances Kelsall's diversity and rural character and does not mimic urban and suburban styles.
- 5.5 Many properties have been extended and the Chester City Council Supplementary Planning Document for House extensions is particularly welcome.
- 5.6 The relationship between height of buildings and topography is critical in the valley since views are paramount in the Kelsall setting and contribute to local distinctiveness.
- 5.7 Whilst recognising the need to make efficient use of land and meet density requirements, it is important to retain existing and potential garden space where this makes an important contribution to the landscape, biodiversity or to self sufficiency.
- 5.8 The roofscape across the Kelsall Valley is highly visible from a considerable distance. Larger properties benefit from the softening of extensive maturing gardens. Larger properties on small plots which do not benefit from natural screening should not be permitted because they are over dominant in the street scene.
- 5.9 Many properties in Kelsall have the benefit of solar gain. Any future development should maximise solar and energy efficiency and incorporate sustainable construction measures.