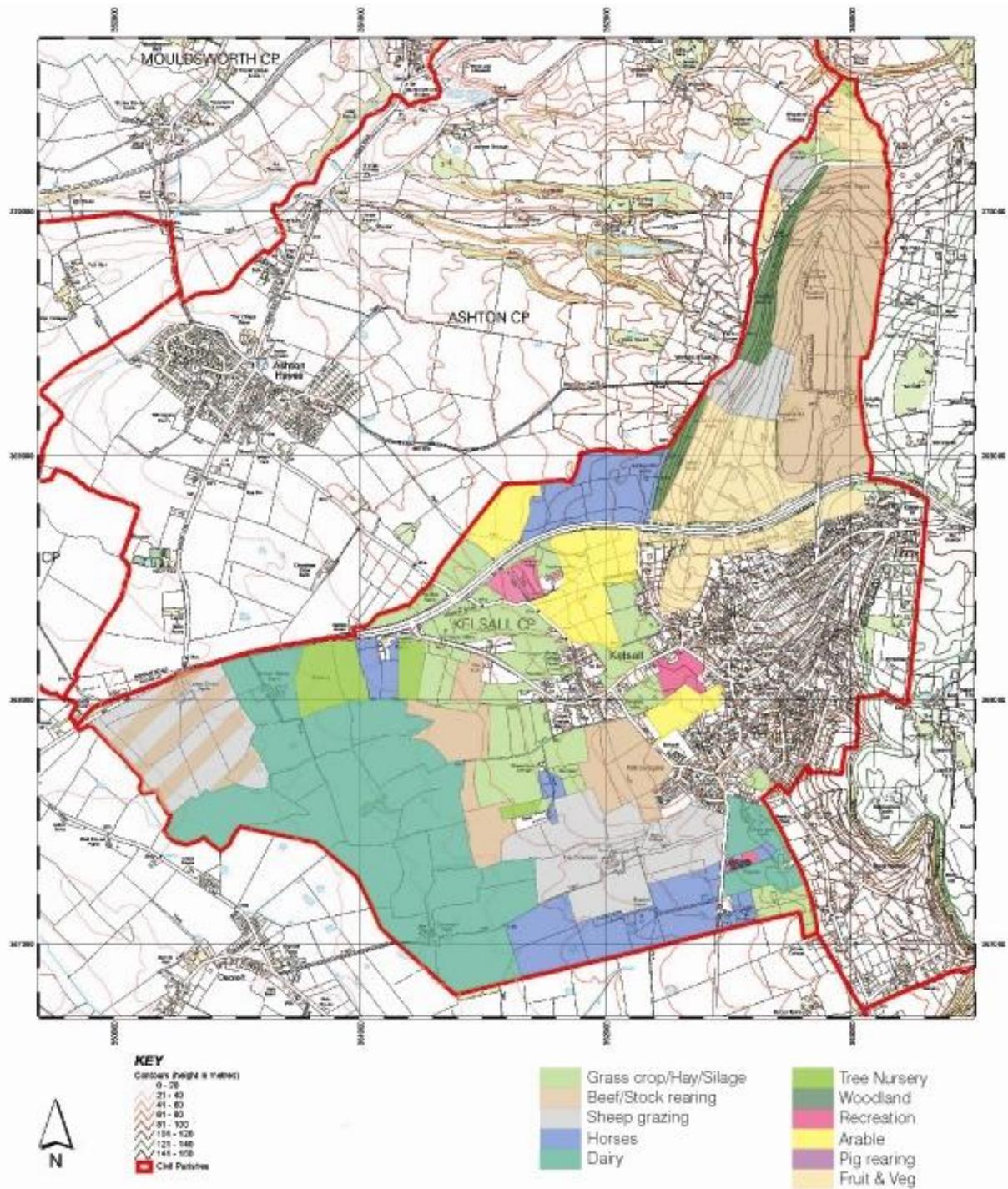


7. A Green Parish

a) Land Use

- 7.1 The remarkable variety of land use across the parish is demonstrated in Map 5. The diversity of crops relate strongly to the distribution of soils and aspect and, of course, ownership and market trends. Fruit farming benefits from the lighter soils on sloping ground whilst pasture predominates on the heavier soils of the plain. The parish has ancient links with Delamere Forest and significant areas remain dedicated to commercial tree nursery. The level of recreational equestrian activity is growing and is a significant influence locally.
- 7.2 The decline in dairy farming is as dramatic as elsewhere across Cheshire. Only three dairy farms remain in the parish. Meanwhile there is an increasing demand for equestrian activities. Many earlier farms have already provided buildings for conversion to residential use: at Hallowsgate, Longley Farm, Lower Grange Farm and more recently at Kelsall Hall and The Commons. These attractive buildings were no longer fit for purpose and have benefited from restoration/conversion to residential use, not least by bringing people back into contact with the increasingly isolated farming community.
- 7.3 Local produce is available through farm shops at Willington and Grey's Gate just beyond the edges of the Parish. There may be further potential to promote local produce, not least through the active uptake of allotments.
- 7.4 Historic woodland is now limited to the scarp at Dodd's Rough (Site of Biological importance and Site of Nature Conservation Value) and Longley Wood. There is no economic production from local woods, although woodland planting is encouraged to counter climate change through Environmental Stewardship. Further information on Environmental Stewardship is contained in the *Environmental Stewardship Targeting Statement 2005 – JCA062 'The Cheshire Sandstone Ridge'* and *JCA061 'the Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain'*, produced by the Rural Development Service.
- 7.5 Agriculture is at a low point such that dairy farming is uneconomic unless on a major scale. Equally timber production has been unable to compete with imports of virgin timber from eastern Europe. Cheshire has yet to contribute significantly to renewable energy generation. There may be potential for a community scale wind generator and crops with bioenergy value could become an important contribution to reducing dependence upon fossil fuels. Further support for local produce can be promoted through local pubs and local shops. The adjacent community in Ashton Hayes may be able to provide valuable evidence for sustainable land use through the carbon neutral project.

Map 5: Land use across Kelsall Parish in 2005/6



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b) Valued Habitat

7.6 The only site of designated nature conservation value within the Parish is Dodd's Rough – a Site of Biological Importance and Site of Nature Conservation Value. However the wider agricultural landscape is supported by ponds, hedgerows and extensive mature native hedgerow trees, which are integral components of the ecological network best illustrated in an aerial picture.

Aerial Photograph demonstrating tree cover (Green) and distribution of ponds (Blue)
(Source: Chester City Council)



7.7 The aerial photograph above shows enhanced water features to identify remaining ponds. The water course through Kelsall valley is Salters' Brook, culverted through much of the valley, with sections supporting regenerating elm and alder, before emerging as a small

stream behind Brookside in the Wynd. The condition of the riparian habitat is poor and a cause of some concern, particularly in lower Kelsall, due to intermittent sewage inundation.

- 7.8 The extensive Cupressus hedging on the scarp creates considerable shelter. However there are locations where mature native trees and ponds are over-shaded by these rapidly growing shelterbelts.
- 7.9 On the plain several ponds and hedgerows have disappeared during the period of agricultural intensification. This is the most rural part of the parish with considerable potential for Environmental Stewardship. Sustaining the hedgerow tree character of this area and retaining the remaining ponds is the minimum requirement.