

# South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2040



Regulation 14 Pre-submission  
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# Introduction

- a. This document represents the Neighbourhood Plan for South Lenches Parish. It represents one part of the development plan for the parish over the period 2015 to 2040, the other part being the emerging South Worcestershire Development Plan (examination 2025) <sup>1</sup> and the Wychavon District Council Local Development Scheme 2021-2024 (September 2021 Update) and South Worcestershire Local Development Scheme 2023-2026 (September 2023).
- b. Wychavon District Council, as the local planning authority, designated a Neighbourhood Area for the whole of the South Lenches Parish on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015 to enable South Lenches Parish Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. <sup>2</sup>The Plan has been prepared by the community through the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (“the Steering Group”).
- c. The South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan (referred to hereafter as the Neighbourhood Plan) is being prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). The Steering Group has prepared the Neighbourhood Plan to establish a vision for the future of the parish and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning land use and development change over the plan period 2015 to 2040. The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development within the parish and provide guidance to any interested parties wishing to submit planning applications for development within the parish. The process of producing a plan has sought to involve the community as widely as possible and the different topic areas are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance to South Lenches, its residents, businesses, and community groups. The Government’s intention in introducing Neighbourhood Planning is to enable communities to:
  - choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built
  - have their say on what those new buildings should look like
  - grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead.
- d. Each section of the Neighbourhood Plan covers a different topic. These headings are:
  - Housing
  - Historic
  - Environment
  - Social
- e. Under each heading there is the justification for the policies presented which explains what the plan is seeking to achieve. The policies themselves are presented in coloured boxes. It is advisable that, in order to understand the full context for any individual policy, it is read in conjunction with the supporting text.
- f. The map on page 7 shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area, which is the same as the boundary of South Lenches Parish.

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<sup>1</sup> South Worcestershire Development Plan Review Regulation 19

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/south-lenches-neighbourhood-plan>

- g. The Steering Group has prepared the Neighbourhood Plan to provide a vision for the future of the parish. It sets out clear policies and objectives to realise these visions through planning and controlling land use and development change over the Plan period 2015 to 2040.
- h. These policies accord with higher level planning policy, principally the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, updated December 2024) <sup>3</sup> and the existing South Worcestershire Development Plan (adopted February 2016) the Wychavon District Council Local Development Scheme 2021-2024 (September 2021 Update) and the South Worcestershire Local Development Scheme 2023-2026 (September 2023), as required by the Localism Act.
- i. The Neighbourhood Plan is a living document. It gives the community of South Lenches the opportunity to take some control over how the area will evolve over the next 16 years, by introducing policies that are specific to South Lenches and supplement and expand upon the policies contained in the emerging South Worcestershire Development Plan.
- j. Although deciding where possible future housing could come forward is an important part of the Neighbourhood Plan, the community engagement and local research undertaken offers the opportunity to investigate a wider range of issues and opportunities, including:
- How to protect business areas to support the local economy
  - How to help determine where housing should be built for the period up to 2040, and what it should look like
  - How travel routes and movement around the parish could be improved
  - How to protect, enhance and invest in the natural and built environment, its amenities and its surroundings
  - How to build on the sense of community and ensure a healthy environment for people to live in
  - How health and education could be improved for a growing community, both young and old
  - How the heritage assets of the South Lenches can be preserved and maintained
  - How to protect existing, and propose new community land uses such as allotments, open spaces, playing fields, community orchards.
- k. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to answer two questions:
- What are the problems and concerns that the Neighbourhood Plan should address?
  - What opportunities are there that the Neighbourhood Plan could make the most of?

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<sup>3</sup> National Planning Policy Framework Agreement - updated December 2024

<https://www.swdevelopmentplan.org/component/fileman/file/Documents/SWDPR%20Reg%2019%20Docs/Accessible%20SWDP%20Review%20Regulation%2019%20%281%29.pdf?routed=1&con>

## The Plan Preparation Process

- l. The Neighbourhood Plan has emerged from major, sustained community consultation. Consultation details and survey reports can be viewed on the Neighbourhood Plan website at: [www.southlenchesparishcouncil.org/neighbourhood-plan](http://www.southlenchesparishcouncil.org/neighbourhood-plan)

## Sustainable Development

- m. The NPPF encourages the re-use of land that has been developed (brownfield land) provided it is, “*not land of high environmental value*”. The objective of the Neighbourhood Plan and resultant policies is to:
  - protect the environment.
  - protect the historic built and natural environmental assets of the parish.
  - increase or, as a minimum, maintain biodiversity, soil, water, air, climatic factors, architectural and archaeological heritage as well as landscape setting.
- n. As such, the Neighbourhood Plan will help to achieve sustainable development by ensuring that its development policies and proposals will meet the needs of people living and working in the parish, whilst at the same time helping to ensure that any adverse environmental impact is minimised.

## Evidence base

- o. There is a substantial and significant amount of background information that has helped in producing the Neighbourhood Plan (this is known as the ‘Evidence Base’). This is available on the Neighbourhood Plan website.

## National policy

- p. The NPPF 2024 states:

*“Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies”* (para.30).

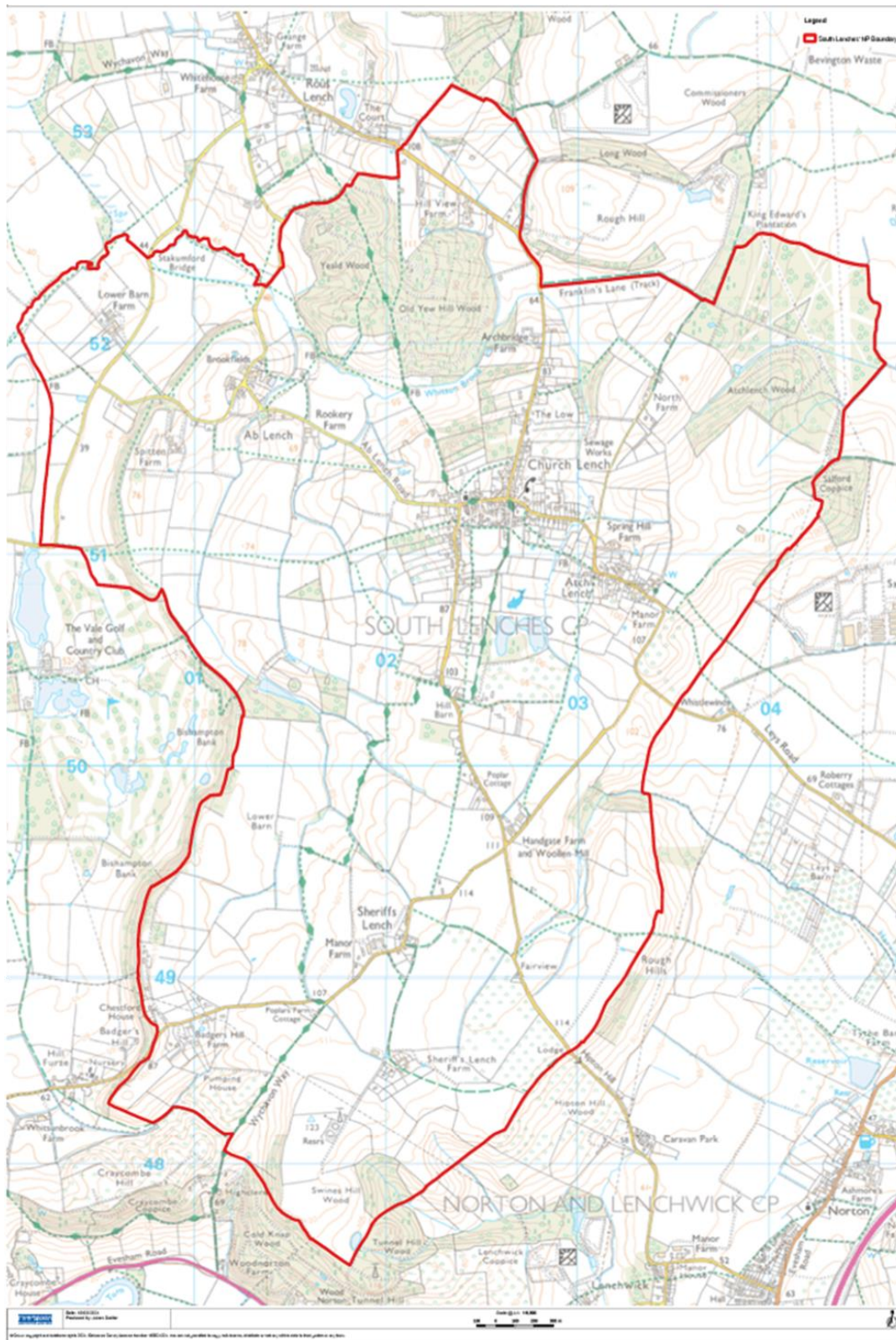
- q. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they obtain the right types of development for their community. The ambitions of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. To facilitate this, local planning authorities should set out clearly their strategic policies for the area and ensure that an up-to-date Local Plan is in place as quickly as possible. Neighbourhood plans should reflect these policies and neighbourhoods should plan positively to support them. “.....*Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies*” (NPPF, para.13).

## Consultation

- r. The Steering Group has developed the Neighbourhood Plan through extensive engagement with the community.
- s. A wide-spread programme of engagement has also been undertaken to identify further issues, develop policy options and seek feedback on the emerging plan. This has included:
  - Public exhibitions and drop-in events
  - Questionnaires distributed to all households
  - Regular updates in parish newsletters

## Monitoring of the Plan

- t. The Neighbourhood Plan has been developed to assist with the planning of sustainable growth across the Neighbourhood Plan Area for a period up to 2040.
- u. As the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Development Plan for Wychavon District Council, it will be subject to the Council's Local Plan Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) regime. This report provides many of the monitoring and review mechanisms relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan policies, as they nest within the wider strategic policies of the local plan.
- v. South Lenches Parish Council, as the Neighbourhood Plan authority, will be responsible for maintaining and periodically revisiting the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure relevance and monitor delivery. The ongoing development of the South Worcestershire Local Plan means that the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be reviewed within five years of being made.
- w. As a result, it is considered that the existing monitoring arrangements for the strategic policies and the detailed policies will be sufficient for most of the Neighbourhood Plan policies.
- x. This is particularly relevant since the NPPF, para 34 requires local authorities to review and update their local plan every five years.
- y. In all cases, South Lenches Parish Council and its partners should consider undertaking a partial review of the Neighbourhood Plan in five to six years after adoption in line with the Local Plan Review, with a full review no later than 2030.
- z. In order to determine when a review is necessary, the Parish Council will monitor development in South Lenches along with the local and national policy and legislative context. It may be that this policy is reviewed at other times because of changes to relevant local policies, national policies and legislation.



# Local Context

## History of South Lenches<sup>4</sup>

The Lenches is the term used to describe the five settlements of Ab Lench, Atch Lench, Church Lench, Sherriffs Lench and Rous Lench, which includes Radford. The latter is not included in the current South Lenches Parish. These are relatively modern divisions, and the history of the area was not neatly divided in the same way; so in order to understand something of the history of South Lenches (which did not, in fact, exist as a geographical place name, other than as the title of the parish) it is necessary to consider the whole area.

### Origins of the place names

The word Lench is derived from an old English word meaning a ridge or area of high ground.

The Ab in Ab Lench comes from the name of an individual such as Aebba. For a period in the 16th and 17th centuries Ab Lench was known as Hob Lench. The alternative name Abbots Lench was an attempt in the late 18th century, by the then Lord of the Manor to make the area sound up market. Later attempts to revert to Ab Lench have met with limited success since the Post Office has chosen to stick with Abbots Lench.

The 'Atch' in Atch Lench either means East, describing its geographical position, or it comes from a personal name Aecci.

The name Church Lench denotes the first church in the area, in the 12th century or earlier (although there was also a church in Rous Lench, then known as Bishops Lench, from the same period). For a time during the 13th century Church Lench was known as Lench Roculf, after the family who owned the manor.

Sheriff's Lench is so-called because it was held, from 1077 by Urse d'Abitot, the Sheriff of Worcestershire, and subsequently by his heirs the Beauchamp family, who inherited the office of Sheriff.

The earliest written references to settlements in the area related to the seventh century A.D. when the region of which Worcestershire forms part ceased to be an Anglo Saxon kingdom and became part of the Kingdom of Mercia. There are entries in the Domesday Book for Ab Lench and Rous Lench, both of which were part of the manor of Fladbury. There are also entries for Atch Lench (Worcester Church), Church Lench (Evesham Church) and Sherriffs Lench (Urso the Sheriff from the Bishop of Bayeux who seized the land from Evesham Church).

### Church Lench

Originally Church Lench Manor was held by Evesham Abbey until the 13th century. In the 14th century the manor was leased by the Beauchamps and under them to the Roculfs (who also owned land in Harvington). Some of the land was also granted to the Abbey and Convent of Halesowen.

The land was surrendered by the last Abbott to King Henry VIII in 1558 who granted it in the same year to Sir John Dudley. He sold it on to Sir William Scudamore of Holme Lacy,

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<sup>4</sup> Parish Character Assessment – 2018 Appendix B

Herefordshire and it remained in that family (which acquired the title Viscount Sligo) until it was sold again in 1627.

In 1627 the manor was bought by William Keyt. His descendant, Sir William Keyt of Ebrington, Gloucestershire burned to death having been supposed to be a lunatic and setting fire to his own house in Norton, Gloucestershire in September 1791. In the same year the manor was sold to Sir Dudley Ryder who was later created Earl of Harrowby. In 1793 John Callow and his wife, Ellen, conveyed the land to John Clarke. After this the manor seems to have fragmented.

The Revd William Chafy purchased part of the land in 1825. In the mid-19th century the main land owner was Sir W. E. Rouse Boughton. More land was acquired by The Revd William K. W. Chafy when he came to live at Rouse Lench. About a third of the land was purchased by the Duc d'Aumale and on his death it passed to the Duc d'Orleans. This part was sold in 1912 to Sir Charles Swinfen Eady.

#### Atch Lench

Until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539, Atch Lench Manor belonged to Evesham Abbey. In 1542 Henry VIII granted the manor to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

In 1553 Queen Mary re-founded the Abbey of Westminster re-endowing it with the Manor of Atch Lench and other lands. In 1559, Westminster Abbey was dissolved under Queen Elizabeth I and the manor was returned to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

During the Commonwealth the lands were sequestrated and sold in 1652 to Sir Cheney Culpepper of Hollingbourne, Kent. After the Restoration in 1660, the lands were returned to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

By 1770 Heming Bomford was the major copyhold tenant (holding his land by copy of the Court Roll). In 1828 at Heming Bomford's death, his sons, Joseph, Thomas and Benjamin became joint tenants of their fathers lands, living at Manor Farm, Court Farm and Firs Farm respectively. In the 1860s as the Dean and Chapter of Westminster ceased to be the Lords of the Manor, the Bomfords enfranchised their farms and less than 20 years later sold them to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Some of the Bomford family continued to occupy the land as tenants.

#### Ab Lench

By the early 20th century, probably triggered by the social changes and economic depression consequent upon the First World War, it had become increasingly difficult for individual owners to maintain great estates. Following Dr Chafy's death in 1916 the eldest son Hugh Edward Chafy tried to keep the manor intact but was eventually forced to sell the various parts of the manor.

The various properties were sold to private owners. In Ab Lench the four principal farms, Easter Hill (then known as Easter Hall) in 1923, Lower Farm (then known as 'Ob Lench Bottom') in 1924, Spitten Farm in 1933 and Manor Farm in 1938, were all sold. Four were sold as working farms but only one of the four remains as such today. The manor house itself, Rous Lench Court, was sold to the Burn family in 1926.

#### Sherriffs Lench

The Chafy family already owned, since the 1820s, half of Sheriffs Lench and parts of Church Lench. In order to inherit, W. K. W. Chafy appended a second 'Chafy' to his name, becoming

W. K. W. Chafy - Chafy in accordance with a loosely worded clause in his grandfathers will. Dr Chafy-Chafy had also purchased the other half of Sheriffs Lench in 1873.

## Modern South Lenches

Characterised by open green spaces, the South Lenches are highlighted by woodland and wildlife areas sitting between each of the inter-dependent village and three hamlets. The communities have good access to vibrant and competitive local economies in the near-by town of Evesham and cities of Worcester and Birmingham. Rural businesses (such as horse livery yards and camping and caravan sites) supporting small scale trade and enterprise are proportionate to the size of the small settlements. Historic buildings combine with views from the numerous rolling hills. Sitting in relative isolation from larger settlements; the South Lenches has a strong sense of community.

The South Lenches comprise one village and three hamlets: Ab Lench is small and quiet with farm houses and detached houses; Atch Lench is dominated by a plum orchard and features old, black and white, half-timbered cottages; Sheriffs Lench is the most rural and isolated of the hamlets with houses each of individual character; and Church Lench is the life and soul of the settlements with the church, school, sports facilities and social club at its heart.

The built environment moves from detached houses with wide, open garden space to smaller semi-detached and terraced housing in Church Lench, which is the largest village. In support of limited and sympathetic housing development, the South Lenches preserves the individual character of each village settlement. Each village boasts homes of an individual character and design. Our community aspiration continues to focus on how we provide growth for our community in proportion with our existing landscape.

The South Lenches communities deliver high quality of living and lifestyle - working and social - with a balanced mix of residents. Families and children both young and older; working individuals in local and rural professions; working from home alongside travel to urban centres and diversification of farms to meet the needs of the local, rural community. The high standard of living is supported by the green infrastructure in the area and promotes good health through the provision of walking, running, riding, and cycling along multiple public pathways, bridleways and the narrow country roads connecting our villages together.

The South Lenches communities take pride in their sense of community through the centres of village social life. Church Lench supports the church and village hall activities and sporting facilities of the South Lenches Social Club. The high standard of local education is widely recognised in the thriving primary school. The management and growth of our rural village life promotes an attractive and secure environment for all with road safety for walkers, riders, runners and cyclists of particular importance.

The South Lenches residents value the diversity of the community which supports the older generations as well as the young, children and families as well as single households. This dynamic community combined with access to housing with a variety of tenure types and sizes has produced a traditional English countryside community focused around local services.

# Profile of the community today

Key Facts (Census data 2021)	South Lenches
Area (ha)	1,397
Total Population*	710
Density	0.5 persons per hectare
Households*	320
*to the nearest 10	

## Population

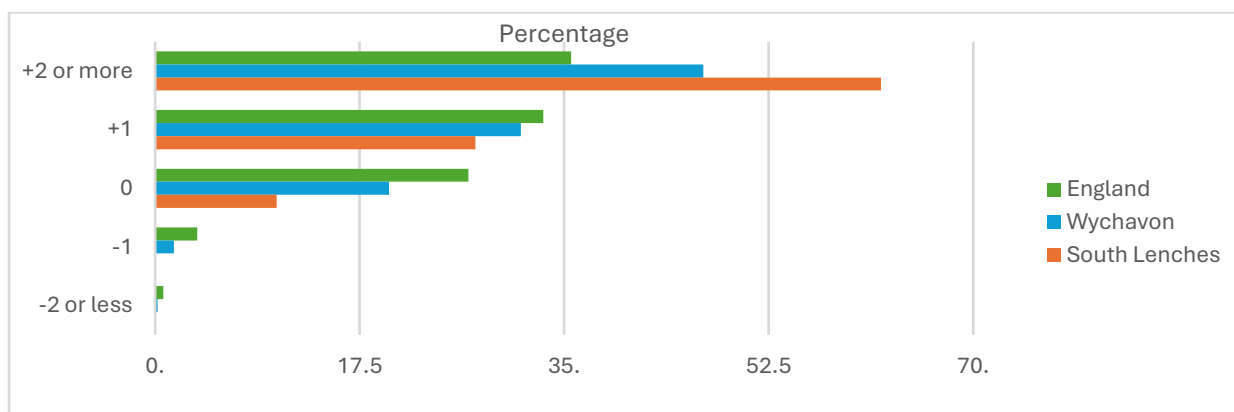
As mentioned above, South Lenches is within Wychavon District. The overall population size of 710 equates to 0.53% of the population of Wychavon (132,500). According to the 2011 census data, the population was then 675, which shows just over a 5% increase in 10 years.

## Housing

There were 320 households in South Lenches at the time of the 2021 census (0.55% of the 57,400 households across the district).

Less than 20% of homes had 2 bedrooms or less.

The 2021 census measured 'occupancy rating'. This determines whether a home has more or fewer bedrooms than necessary according to the Bedroom Standard. A rating of 0 suggests a household has the ideal number of bedrooms. Any number with a '+' suggests under-occupancy and any number with a '-' suggests over-occupancy.



The Parish was in the lowest 10% for income deprivation but in the highest 10% for barriers to housing and services domain. The percentage of two person households in South Lenches was 46.7%, compared to Worcestershire 49.8% and England 34%.

## Employment

In 2021, 51.9% of South Lenches residents were economically active and in employment, 1.7% were unemployed and 46.3% were economically inactive (retired or not seeking employment). Wychavon figures were 57.4%, 3.5% and 39.1% respectively.

49.8% of residents worked 31 to 48 hours per week and 15.3% worked 49 hours or more per week. This is in comparison to the England figures of 59.1% and 11.1% and Wychavon figures of 57.2% and 12.9% respectively.

### KEY

L1, L2 and L3: Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations

L4, L5 and L6: Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations

L7: Intermediate occupations

L8 and L9: Small employers and own account workers

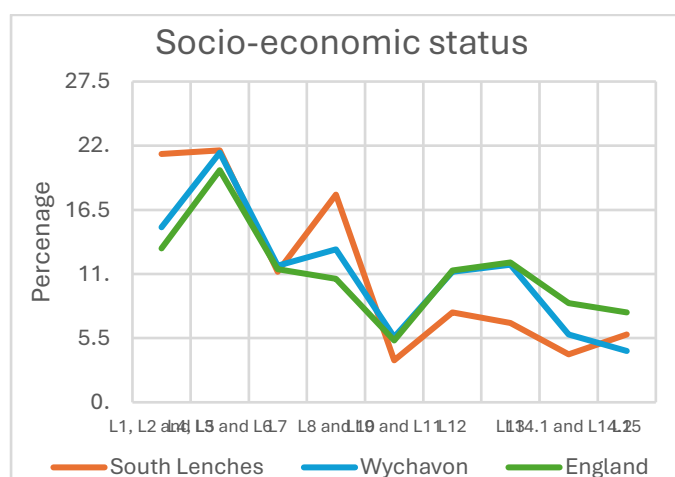
L10 and L11: Lower supervisory and technical occupations

L12: Semi-routine occupations

L13: Routine occupations

L14.1 and L14.2: Never worked and long-term unemployed

L15: Full-time students



# Local Infrastructure

## Local Plan

The South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP), known also as the Local Plan, is a planning framework that aims to ensure development has a positive impact on the environment. The SWDP is the principal document for planning policies that applies at a regional level and sits alongside the NPPF. It has been jointly prepared by the three authorities of Malvern Hills, Wychavon and Worcester City and it forms the heart of the new Local Development Framework.

This Local Plan sets out a vision and policies for future development, including housing, employment, and retail up to 2041. Adopted in 2016, the SWDP provides a framework for sustainable development and since 2017 has been subject to an extensive review. The review aims to update it with new policies and the allocation of land for development to meet government targets and local needs. The SWDP also seeks to deliver details of its 5 year housing supply.

It is the Regulation 19 Review version of the SWDP to which the Neighbourhood Plan for the South Lenches adheres with its policies as detailed in this document.

# Vision and Objectives

## Challenges for South Lenches

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address, as far as is possible, the challenges that face the community of South Lenches Parish.<sup>5</sup>In summary these challenges are:

- Ensuring that any new development meets the Objectively Assessed Housing Need for the community and is of high-quality design, and at an appropriate density reflecting the local character.
- The limited number of residential properties that are affordable to local residents and those who work in the local area.
- South Lenches' increasingly elderly population.
- Provision of dwellings suitable for and affordable by younger people and families, enabling a wider range of people of all ages to live in the village.
- The increasing traffic through the village, causing unsafe walking and cycling conditions and damage to road surfaces.
- Protecting existing community services and providing for changing needs, including new community services for an ageing population.
- Protecting the sensitive natural environment for the benefit of residents and future generations.
- Ensuring the growth in population arising from new development does not put an unacceptable strain on existing infrastructure; including (but not limited to) sewage and water infrastructure overload.
- Protecting the significant green spaces, views and biodiversity assets in the parish, increasing habitat for wildlife and biodiversity and providing new accessible green space for the growing population.

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<sup>5</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2016

## Vision for South Lenches

In consultation with the community,<sup>6</sup> the established vision for South Lenches is as follows:

*Characterised by open green spaces, in 2041 the South Lenches are typified by woodland and wildlife areas sitting between each of four small inter-dependent villages: Ab Lench is small and quiet, with farmhouses and detached houses; Atch Lench is dominated by a plum orchard and features old, black and white, half-timbered cottages; Sheriffs Lench is the most rural and isolated of the villages with houses each of individual character. Church Lench is the largest of the settlements with the church, school, sports facilities, and social club and acts as the focal point for the social life of the villages.*

*The high quality of living is supported by the green infrastructure in the area and promotes good health through provision of walking, running, riding, and cycling along multiple public pathways, bridleways and the narrow country roads laced through the agricultural land and connecting our villages together.*

*Through appropriate and sympathetic development of housing with a variety of tenure types and sizes, the South Lenches delivers a high quality of living for both young and old, creating a dynamic and lively community and promotes an attractive and secure environment for all.*

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<sup>6</sup> Vision and Objectives Community Survey March 2024

# Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

The objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan, as identified through engagement with the community<sup>7</sup> address the following topics:

Objective 1	Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings
Objective 2	Ensure all new development includes an appropriate mix of housing in terms of design and affordability to meet the objectively assessed housing need findings
Objective 3	Promote high levels of sustainability and energy efficiency, including renewable energy systems
Objective 4	Ensure appropriate infrastructure is in place to deal with surface water and sewerage within any new development

Objective 5	Preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches
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Objective 6	Prevent coalescence between villages to maintain each village's own identity
Objective 7	Protect woodland areas, wildlife sites, natural and historic conservation areas
Objective 8	To protect and enhance the villages open spaces and to conserve local green space
Objective 9	Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land
Objective 10	Protect valued landscapes and views
Objective 11	Recognise and respect the limitations of small, rural roads in relation to development needs
Objective 12	Protect and maintain the dark skies between our villages

Objective 13	Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area
Objective 14	Encourage increased access to the open countryside by maintaining and improving footpaths, especially between settlements

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<sup>7</sup> Vision and Objectives Community Survey March 2024

# Policies Map

This matrix shows how the Neighbourhood Plan objectives are to be delivered through the policies

		OBJECTIVES													
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
POLICIES	1	X					X			X					
	2	X	X	X			X		X		X	X			
	3	X					X								
	4		X												
	5		X												
	6					X		X							
	7					X									
	8			X	X										
	9	X								X					
	10					X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X
	11	X						X	X	X					X
	12											X		X	X
	13	X							X					X	
	14					X	X	X			X		X		
	15				X										
	16												X		
	17									X		X		X	X
	18									X		X		X	
	19									X				X	

# Policies Development

## Introduction to the Policies

The policies have been written to explain how development in South Lenches should be approached, designed and built, in order to support the objectives identified by the community.

There are a total of 19 policies addressing four topic areas. These are: Housing, Environment, Historic and Social.

Each of the four policy sections is introduced by explaining the background to that particular issue as it relates to South Lenches and by setting out the local context and circumstances in which the policy area has been approached. This includes the problems, issues, concerns, objectives and aspirations of the local community.

Each of the individual policies then forms two parts:

- 1) the policy itself, which provides the wording which should be understood and followed by developers when proposing new development, and by the local planning authority when considering proposals
- 2) an explanatory section to provide an understanding of the reasons behind the policy, the issue that the policy seeks to address, more detail on the outcome(s) the policy is intended to achieve, and how the policy is expected to be implemented.

Not all the policies will be relevant to every type of development, but anyone proposing development in South Lenches will be expected to ensure that they consider and address the policies that are relevant to their proposals, so that the plan is implemented successfully to achieve the local community's objectives.

# Policies

## Housing section covers Policies 1 to 6

In 2015 the South Lenches Parish Council asked the community to identify the issues which they felt were most important to them as residents of the parish. The questionnaire was wide-ranging in its topics and it is this source of information from which all other surveys and our policies have been drawn. Importantly the Vision and Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan have been written as a direct result of the views expressed by our parish residents. The policies seek to explain how the objectives can be delivered.

The intention of this initial questionnaire in 2015 was to obtain first hand feedback as the basis for a more detailed questionnaire to follow. Subsequently the Parish Council has conducted a further three independent surveys of residents, focusing on housing development and planning, and two independent housing assessments.

Each survey has highlighted the desire to have housing growth that is sensitive to the fact that we are a rural community with four distinct villages, and that keeps the location, size and quantity of new houses in balance with our existing villages' scale and proportion. Our community aspires to recognise the need to provide new housing alongside the preservation of our rural life and small-scale villages.

Objective 1: Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings

Objective 2: Ensure all new development includes an appropriate mix of housing in terms of design and affordability to meet the objectively assessed housing need findings

Objective 3: Promote high levels of sustainability and energy efficiency, including renewable energy systems

Objective 5: Preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches

Objective 6: Prevent coalescence between villages to maintain each village's own identity

Objective 7: Protect woodland areas, wildlife sites, natural and historic conservation areas

Objective 8: To protect and enhance the villages' open spaces and to conserve local green space

Objective 9: Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land

Objective 11: Recognise and respect the limitations of small, rural roads in relation to development needs

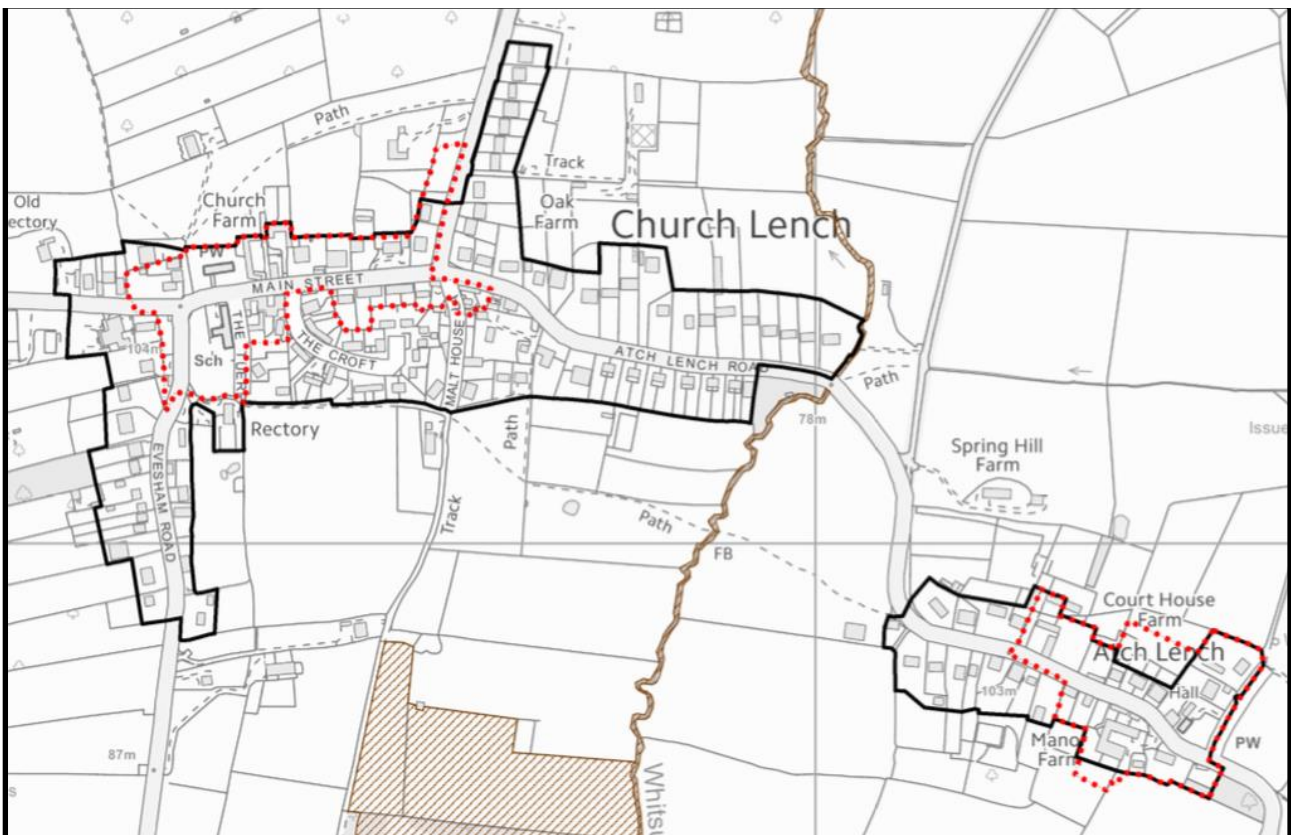
## Policy 1 South Lenches Development Boundaries

The Neighbourhood Plan defines Settlement Boundaries at Church Lench and Atch Lench.

Proposals for infill development within the settlement boundaries will be supported, provided they accord with the other policies of this plan.

Proposals for development outside the boundaries should be limited to Rural Exception Sites, replacement dwellings and dwellings essential for rural workers and will only be supported if they accord with the other policies of this plan.

# CHURCH LENCH AND ATCH LENCH DEVELOPMENT (OR SETTLEMENT) AND CONSERVATION BOUNDARIES



Development (Settlement) Boundary shown in black  
Conservation area shown in red

## Policy 1 Evidence

This policy is intended to maintain the distinction between the built-up areas of each of the four settlements in South Lenches and their surrounding countryside. The policy requires that development proposals outside the defined settlement boundaries are appropriate to a countryside location and are consistent with the relevant policies of the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan in respect of retaining the physical extent of the gaps between the villages and protecting the local landscape and character of the natural environment.

This policy recognises the valued function of the countryside and working farmland in shaping rural character and contributing to the identity of the main village settlements. The policy does not seek to prevent the improvement and extension of such uses. It requires development proposals to demonstrate that they acknowledge the importance to the four settlements of their setting within, and proximity to, countryside and working farmland.

When they were asked in 2016, 91% of respondents wanted to ‘Ensure that any development is in harmony with the rural character of our neighbourhood and sits well in the landscape’.<sup>8</sup> In response to the same 2016 survey, 96% of respondents said ‘we need to protect the open countryside between Ab Lench, Church Lench, and Atch Lench’<sup>9</sup> and 81% identified ‘Define and preserve the boundaries of the village’ as a priority of the Neighbourhood Plan.<sup>10</sup> A survey in 2021 found that 89% of respondents wanted to preserve a clear and distinct separation between the villages; 75% felt that this was very important and 14% quite important.<sup>11</sup> 69% of respondents to the same 2021 survey supported the development of new housing within the existing development boundaries but did not support filling in the spaces between the villages.<sup>12</sup>

99% of respondents to community engagement in 2024 strongly agreed (90%) or agreed (9%) with the objective ‘Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings’.<sup>13</sup> The same 2024 survey found that 91% of respondents agreed (72% strongly) with the objective ‘Prevent coalescence between villages to maintain each village’s own identity’.<sup>14</sup> 96% of respondents to the 2024 survey supported the objective ‘Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land’.<sup>15</sup>

## Policy 2 Housing Growth, Infill and Design

Limited infilling within the settlement boundary areas of South Lenches and limited affordable housing for local community needs will be supported where those developments:

- Do not severely impact on the free and safe flow of traffic on the local highway network
- Do not cause an unacceptable impact on the residential amenities of adjacent residential properties
- Cause the loss of important open space of public environmental or ecological value, nor spoil an important public view
- Reflect the character of their immediate area in terms of their height, scale, design, materials and linear layout
- Provide appropriate access, appropriate car parking provision and green space/garden provision.
- Contribute towards a balanced mix of housing in the Plan area

<sup>8</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 9

<sup>9</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 16

<sup>10</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 7

<sup>11</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 6

<sup>12</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 6

<sup>13</sup> V&O Survey results, objective 1

<sup>14</sup> V&O Survey results, objective 4

<sup>15</sup> V&O Survey results, objective 7

## Policy 2 Evidence

The Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity to address the likelihood that infill and windfall developments will be proposed on sites within the existing built-up form of South Lenches. This may make an effective and appropriate use of brownfield land. It may also provide an opportunity for sensitive small-scale residential units to contribute to addressing specialist housing needs of the Plan area.

The Neighbourhood Plan does not make any housing site allocations as to do so would be inconsistent with adopted and emerging strategic policies, given the status of the settlements in the District settlement hierarchy. However, the local community recognises the potential value that small scale, infill housing development and entry-level homes may have in enabling access to homes in the parish suited to younger people and ‘downsizers’. Policy 2 aims to ensure that new housing development conserves the open countryside and green spaces that characterise the rural nature of the South Lenches villages. In response to the 2024 survey of the community, 99% of respondents supported the objective ‘Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings’.<sup>16</sup> In 2016, 91% of respondents wanted the Neighbourhood Plan to ‘Ensure that any development is in harmony with the rural character of our neighbourhood and sits well in the landscape’.<sup>17</sup> The 2024 survey also addressed the protection of open spaces: 97% of respondents agreed with the objective ‘To protect and enhance the villages’ open spaces and to conserve local green space’.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, 97% of respondents in 2024 agreed with the objective ‘Protect valued landscapes and views’.<sup>19</sup> In 2016, 85% of respondents to the survey thought it was important to preserve the views from the village.<sup>20</sup> Policy 2 emphasizes good quality design features and a housing mix appropriate to the area. In this it is supported by the findings of the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan surveys of 2016, 2021 and 2024.

85% of respondents to the 2021 survey thought it was very important that new housing should be in keeping with the rural character and appearance of the area.<sup>21</sup> 88% of respondents said it was very important that the design of any new building respected the scale of the existing village.<sup>22</sup> The 2016 survey found that 91% of respondents wanted to ensure that any development was in harmony with the rural character of the neighbourhood.<sup>23</sup> 82% of respondents in 2016 thought that the design of new buildings should be in keeping with the scale, location and appearance of existing buildings,<sup>24</sup> and 88% wanted the Plan to promote design that respected the scale of the existing village.<sup>25</sup> 60% of respondents in 2021 supported the use of materials that were in keeping with the village.<sup>26</sup> 69% of respondents to the 2016 survey thought it should be a priority to use traditional local building materials where appropriate.<sup>27</sup>

Respondents wanted to restrict the scale of any new developments. 86% of respondents in 2021 opposed developments of 10 to 25 houses, 77% opposed a mixture of small and medium developments, and 61% opposed several small developments of fewer than 10 houses.<sup>28</sup> The 2016 survey found that 96% of

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<sup>16</sup> V&O Survey results, objective 1

<sup>17</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 7

<sup>18</sup> V&O Survey results, objective 6

<sup>19</sup> V&O Survey results, objective 8

<sup>20</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 7

<sup>21</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 12

<sup>22</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 13

<sup>23</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 7

<sup>24</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 7

<sup>25</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 8

<sup>26</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 13

<sup>27</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 7

<sup>28</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 5

respondents opposed developments of over 20 properties, 92% opposed developments of 11 to 20 properties, and 73% opposed developments of 6 to 10 properties.<sup>29</sup> In 2021, 79% of respondents thought that individual plots, as opposed to larger sized developments, would be very or fairly suitable for development.<sup>30</sup>

Asked about different property types in any new developments, 68% of respondents in 2021 supported three-bedroomed houses, 68% supported bungalows, and 67% supported two-bedroomed houses.<sup>31</sup> In 2016, 74% of respondents thought that three-bedroomed houses would be the most suitable.<sup>32</sup>

Half the respondents to the Neighbourhood Plan survey of the community in 2016 agreed that more homes should be built to suit the needs of the older generations.<sup>33</sup> 67% of respondents in 2016 thought that, to suit everyone's needs, a variety of different properties were required to fit different levels of mobility.<sup>34</sup> When the community was asked in 2021, 58% of respondents thought it was very or quite important to provide housing designed for people with reduced mobility, 55% felt this way about homes aimed at young families, and 54% thought this about supported accommodation.<sup>35</sup>

The provision of green spaces, gardens, and car parking in any new development is important to the community. 74% of respondents to the 2021 survey thought that adequate green space and gardens were very important,<sup>36</sup> while 83% said it was very important to have adequate parking.<sup>37</sup> In 2016, 85% of respondents thought that the Plan should promote green space and gardens,<sup>38</sup> and 71% rated the provision of adequate parking on premises as very important.<sup>39</sup>

Energy efficiency is valued as a design feature. 94% of respondents in 2024 thought that new development should promote high levels of sustainability and energy efficiency, including renewable energy systems.<sup>40</sup> In 2021, 96% of respondents supported the importance of energy efficiency in new building design,<sup>41</sup> and 97% supported high levels of energy conservation in new buildings.<sup>42</sup> 69% of respondents in 2016 thought that the Plan should promote high levels of energy conservation in new buildings.<sup>43</sup>

In 2016, 88% of respondents to the survey thought that it was very important (71%) or important (17%) to preserve the existing linear development patterns of the South Lenches villages.<sup>44</sup> 69% of respondents said that development should be limited to infill on sites within the existing built-up area.<sup>45</sup> As regards the impact of development on the free and safe flow of traffic, engagement with the community in 2024 showed that 96% of those who responded to this question agreed (86% strongly) with the objective 'Recognise and respect the limitations of small, rural roads in relation to development needs'.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 11

<sup>30</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 5

<sup>31</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 6

<sup>32</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 14

<sup>33</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 17

<sup>34</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 17

<sup>35</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Housing Survey 2021, page 8

<sup>36</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 13

<sup>37</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 12

<sup>38</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 8

<sup>39</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 13

<sup>40</sup> V&O Survey results, objective 2

<sup>41</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 12

<sup>42</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 13

<sup>43</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 8

<sup>44</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 9

<sup>45</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 12

<sup>46</sup> V&O Survey results, objective 9

## Policy 3 Density of Development

Development proposals located within South Lenches should have regard to the following essential characteristics as appropriate to their scale, nature and location within these low-density areas:

- Reflecting the small-scale and fragmented building patterns, including maintaining visual gaps between buildings
- Ensuring soft boundary treatments (such as low walls, hedges and native species planting) are used on the boundaries with the public realm to avoid hard, urban edges and create a green transition between the built and open areas
- Ensuring that new driveways and accesses are no wider than is essential, and constructed in surface and eroding materials to complement the rural feel and character
- Avoiding siting vehicle parking provision and ancillary buildings, such as bin stores and cycle shelters, so that they intrude into the streetscene

## Policy 3 Evidence

Policy 3 is supported by the surveys of the community which were carried out in 2016, 2021 and 2024.

In response to the 2024 survey, 99% of respondents supported the objective ‘Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings’.<sup>47</sup> 85% of respondents in 2021 thought it was very important that new housing should be in keeping with the rural character and appearance of the area.<sup>48</sup> The 2016 survey found that 91% of respondents wanted to ensure that any development was in harmony with the rural character of the neighbourhood and sat well in the landscape.<sup>49</sup>

In 2021, 88% of respondents said it was very important that the design of any new building respected the scale of the existing village, and a further 9% thought this was quite important.<sup>50</sup> 82% of respondents in 2016 thought that the design of new buildings should be in keeping with the scale, location and appearance of existing buildings,<sup>51</sup> and 88% wanted the Neighbourhood Plan to promote design that respected the scale of the existing village.<sup>52</sup>

The community has repeatedly expressed the view that any development should be on a small scale. In 2021, 86% of respondents opposed developments of 10 to 25 houses, 77% opposed a mixture of small and medium developments, and 61% opposed several small developments of fewer than 10 houses.<sup>53</sup> The 2016 survey found that 96% of respondents opposed developments of over 20 properties, 92% opposed developments of 11 to 20 properties, and 73% opposed developments of 6 to 10 properties.<sup>54</sup> In 2021, 79% of respondents thought that individual plots, as opposed to larger sized developments, would be very or fairly suitable for development.<sup>55</sup>

In 2021, 92% of respondents supported the continuity of lower-than-average housing density; 71% thought this was very important and 21% quite important.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> V&O Survey results, objective 1

<sup>48</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 12

<sup>49</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 7

<sup>50</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 13

<sup>51</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 7

<sup>52</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 8

<sup>53</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 5

<sup>54</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 11

<sup>55</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 5

<sup>56</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 12

The 2016 and 2021 surveys asked about design and layout features which would be consistent with policy 3. The provision of adequate car parking was rated as very important by 71% of respondents in 2016,<sup>57</sup> and 83% of respondents in 2021.<sup>58</sup> In 2021, 95% of respondents supported adequate green space and gardens as very important (74%) or quite important (21%).<sup>59</sup> 90% of respondents supported landscaping as very important (56%) or quite important (34%).<sup>60</sup> 82% of respondents thought that communal greens, play areas, and open spaces were very important (55%) or quite important (27%).<sup>61</sup> In 2016, 85% of respondents thought that the Plan should promote green space and gardens.<sup>62</sup> In 2024 97% of respondents agreed with the objective 'To protect and enhance the villages' open spaces and to conserve local green space'.<sup>63</sup>

Policy 3 is also promoted by the preservation of the existing linear development patterns of the villages. In 2016, 88% of respondents supported preservation as very important (71%) or important (17%).<sup>64</sup>

## Policy 4 Affordable Housing Mix

Proposals for small scale local affordable housing sites or exception sites will be supported where they are accompanied by an up-to-date housing needs survey that justifies the need for the houses needed in the neighbourhood area.

Proposals for new residential development comprising a net increase of 11 units or more in South Lenches must include a proportion of affordable housing in accordance with the policies set out in the Local Plan.

Any affordable housing must be:

- of a size and type which meets the requirements of those in housing need;
- indistinguishable in appearance from the market housing on site; and
- distributed evenly across the site.

Proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites outside the settlement boundary, where housing would not normally be permitted by other policies, will be supported where there is a proven local need.

## Policy 4 Evidence

Policy 4 is intended to support the strategic policies of the Local Plan which assess and address the need for affordable housing. In 2017 and 2023 the independent charity Warwickshire Rural Community Council carried out Housing Needs surveys of the parish. The surveys identified a need for smaller homes that are affordable for younger and older people who wish to remain within the villages and for whom many properties on the open market are currently unaffordable.

The Housing Needs Survey carried out in 2023 identified a need for three owner-occupier homes: two bungalows with two bedrooms and one three-bedroom house or two-bedroom bungalow.<sup>65</sup> Each of these households comprised people aged over 60 who wanted to downsize.<sup>66</sup> The Housing Needs Survey carried out in 2017 had found different needs at that point: eight households with ages ranging from 19 to over 75 required

<sup>57</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 13

<sup>58</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 12

<sup>59</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 13

<sup>60</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 12

<sup>61</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 12

<sup>62</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 8

<sup>63</sup> V&O Survey results, objective 6

<sup>64</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 9

<sup>65</sup> Housing Needs Survey (WRCC), March 2023, page 6

<sup>66</sup> Housing Needs Survey (WRCC), March 2023 page 4

homes ranging in size from one-bedroom flats to a three-bedroom house and differing tenures (owner-occupier, housing association rent, or housing association shared ownership).<sup>67</sup>

Community engagement in 2024 showed strong support for the objective 'Ensure all new development includes an appropriate mix of housing in terms of design and affordability to meet the objectively assessed housing need findings. 88% of those who answered this question strongly agreed or agreed <sup>68</sup>

## Policy 5 Market Housing Mix

This policy directs that new development should favour smaller dwellings.

Overall, up to 10% of new homes on developments of nine or more new residential units should have one bedroom,

40% should have two bedrooms,

40% should have three bedrooms, unless viability or other material considerations show a robust justification for a different mix.

Developments of between four and eight new units should provide a mix comprising predominantly one-to-three-bedroom dwellings, in general accordance with the proportions specified herein.

## Policy 5 Evidence

Policy 5 reflects the local community's recognition that small scale, infill development and entry-level houses may be valuable in enabling younger people and 'downsizers' to access homes in the parish. The Housing Needs Survey of the South Lenches carried out in 2023 identified a need for three owner-occupier homes: two bungalows with two bedrooms and one three-bedroom house or two-bedroom bungalow.<sup>69</sup> The previous Housing Needs Survey of 2017 had found at that point there was a need for eight homes ranging in size from one-bedroom flats to a three-bedroom house.<sup>70</sup>

Community engagement has consistently shown support for smaller new dwellings. In response to the Plan survey carried out in 2021, when they were asked about different property types in any new developments, 68% of respondents supported three-bedroomed houses, 68% supported bungalows, and 67% supported two-bedroomed houses.<sup>71</sup> In the 2016 survey, 74% of respondents thought that three-bedroomed houses would be the most suitable.<sup>72</sup>

## Policy 6 Design Guide and Local Character

Development proposals should respond positively to the setting of the surrounding area, having regard to the character of adjacent buildings and spaces, including scale, orientation, height and massing. In particular, development proposals should:

- Have regard to the South Lenches Design Guide (Appendix A)
- Be compatible with the distinctive character of the area, respecting the local settlement pattern, building styles and materials,
- Be of a density that is in keeping with the character of the surrounding development and landscape,
- Preserve or enhance the heritage assets such as listed buildings,

<sup>67</sup> Housing Needs Survey (WRCC), February 2017, page 6

<sup>68</sup> V&O Survey results objective 2

<sup>69</sup> Housing Needs Survey (WRCC), March 2023, page 6

<sup>70</sup> Housing Needs Survey (WRCC), February 2017, page 6

<sup>71</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey 2021, page 6

<sup>72</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey Results 2016, page 14

- Protect or enhance landscape and biodiversity by incorporating high quality native landscaping,
- Be consistent with Wychavon’s Landscape Character Assessment and its guidance<sup>73</sup>;
- All proposals will be expected to demonstrate how the principles of ‘Secured by Design’ have been taken into account to achieve the objective of delivering safe places.

## Policy 6 Evidence

The South Lenches Character Assessment assesses the character of all streets including the conservation areas to identify their significance to the built heritage of the settlements. This means that careful consideration may be given to the impacts of any new development on heritage assets.

To further categorise the individual characteristics of each of the four villages and hamlets which make up the South Lenches, the creation of a Design Guide was undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan to identify the specific elements which make each area recognisable. These characteristics will be preserved and enhanced by the implementation of the South Lenches Design Guide, presented in Appendix A.

Developers will be expected to demonstrate in their applications that the design and layout of the proposed development is sympathetic to the character of its immediate surroundings, because South Lenches is a parish that has a rich heritage of quality residential development and wishes this tradition to be maintained. The Vision and Objectives Survey of 2024 found that 96% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the objective ‘Preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches.’<sup>74</sup>

## Historic section covers Policy 7

### Policy 7 Protection of Historic Environment

The history of the Lenches villages goes back to the Domesday book and there are many examples of houses and buildings which reflect our historic traditions. Within the context of our future development, the local community wants to ensure our historic past is not lost.

Any designated historic heritage assets in the Parish and their settings, both above and below ground, will be conserved or enhanced for their historic and architectural significance and their importance to local distinctiveness, character, and sense of place. These include, but are not limited to:

Ridge & Furrow earthworks<sup>75</sup>:

South of Atch Lench

South of Church Lench and West of Farm Lane

Ab Lench

Sheriffs Lench

The Old Manse, Atch Lench

Church Lench School building

The Observatory, Sheriffs Lench

Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage assets.

<sup>73</sup> [landscape character assessment](#)

<sup>74</sup> V&O Survey results objective 11

<sup>75</sup> [Archaeological Evaluation 2015](#) Mayfield, Church Lench

## Policy 7 Evidence

Communities cohere and thrive through an awareness of their shared endeavours, past and present and it is important that any new development respects the historical past of the area.

This policy reflects the South Lenches Character Assessment which records the character of streets which are within the development boundaries, and yet outside of the conservation areas.

The South Lenches villages are fortunate in retaining many traditional timber-framed and black and white and thatched houses, and other important historical buildings, including Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian structures. Balancing historic characteristics of ancient, half-timbered dwellings and new dwelling design plays an important role in maintaining the special qualities of the South Lenches.

In addition, 61% of respondents to the South Lenches NDP Housing Survey 2021<sup>76</sup> believe a stronger management of the Conservation areas is the best way of maintaining the historic and rural character of the villages.

## Environmental section covers Policies 8 to 12

The local community values the rural setting of our villages; the peace and quiet; open spaces between our villages and the many surrounding views of our open countryside. It is these aspects of our environment that these policies aim to address.

## Policy 8 Small-Scale Sustainable and Renewable Energy

Small-scale, on-site renewable energy development and proposals for micro-renewable energy schemes, either mounted on buildings or on the ground, will be supported, provided that the overall requirements for development, are met.

- ‘Small-scale’ means of a size designed to directly meet the needs of the occupants of the site and not designed primarily for export to the National Grid for use elsewhere. Renewables include thermal and photo-voltaic, solar, ground- and air-source heat pumps, biomass and anaerobic digestion, where these meet the definition of small-scale above.
- In particular, new domestic development proposals are encouraged, where possible and practical, to incorporate and accommodate:
  - electric charging points for vehicles
  - ground and air source heat pumps
  - biomass and anaerobic digestion systems
  - thermal and photo-voltaic solar energy systems
  - alternative energy systems such as solar panels and geothermic heating systems.
  - Any other innovative solution for providing renewable energy which could be incorporated into the development.
- Electric vehicle charging points are expected to be installed alongside any off-road parking that is provided for educational facilities.
- Renewable energy proposals in new developments must be in accordance with Wychavon's Intelligently Green Plan 2020-2030<sup>77</sup> (or updated version).

## Policy 8 Evidence

<sup>76</sup> Housing Needs Survey 2021, page 11

<sup>77</sup> [Intelligently Green Plan](#)

Renewable energy and the transition to a low carbon economy is supported through the NPPF, para 161:

*“...encourage the reuse of existing resources...and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.”*

Paragraphs 164 to 168 of the NPPF builds on this to encourage new development to plan positively for using renewable energy.

*‘Local planning authorities should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights).’ (paragraph 167)*

*‘When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities should not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal’s contribution to a net zero future;’ (para 168)*

Currently, renewable energy comes from a variety of different sources such as:

- Solar thermal (solar hot water systems)
- Active photovoltaic energy (PV)
- Geothermal water heating
- Wind turbines
- Energy crops and biomass
- Energy from human sewage and agricultural plant and animal waste, but not energy from domestic or industrial waste except methane from existing landfill sites
- Ground source heat pumps or
- Combined heat and power plants.

Under Permitted Development Rights, it is possible to install low carbon and micro-regeneration renewables without the need for an application for planning permission subject to specified limits on size, height and location.

Therefore, developments should not only seek to incorporate low carbon and renewable energy systems into their design but should actively plan to enable homeowners to incorporate additional measures. These could include a range of systems such as these below:

- Solar photovoltaic
- Biomass boilers
- Domestic wind turbines
- Solar thermal (solar hot water systems)
- Geothermal water heating
- Ground source and air source heat pumps
- Combined heat and power plants.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and as new and innovative solutions to renewable energy become available, it is expected these will be considered for inclusion.

The Neighbourhood Plan supports energy efficiency and renewable/low carbon energy generation projects which are local and help existing residents and businesses make a transition to alternative technologies, where these also follow the wider design aspirations of the Plan.

Greater use of renewable energy is an important aspect of sustainable development. The Neighbourhood Plan supports proposals for small-scale, domestic renewable energy production subject to acceptable impact on the local environment.

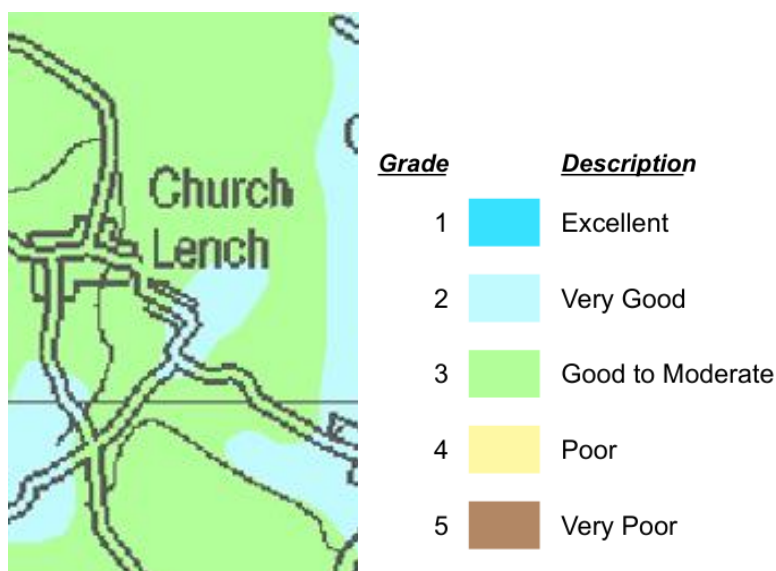
96% of residents support high energy efficiency in the build of new dwellings.<sup>78</sup>

## Policy 9 High Quality Agricultural land

Proposals for development on land outside the built-up part of the Plan area graded as Excellent (Grade 1) or Very Good (Grade 2) in Natural England Agricultural Land Classification system will not be supported, unless the development is necessary or suitable for a countryside location.

## Policy 9 Evidence

Agricultural Land Classifications are published by Natural England. Much of the open land in the parish which lies outside the flood plain is High Grade Agricultural Land. Such land is assessed as Very Good (Grade 2) or Good to Moderate (Grade 3).



National policy (NPPF, para 187) requires planning policies to take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

NPPF para 187 (b) ...*'recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland'*.

Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

The Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy to safeguard the best and most versatile agricultural land in the parish. This approach has regard to both national planning policy (NPPF, para 187) and the SWDPR. Its effect will be to safeguard an important and non-renewable land resource and to assist in agricultural related employment opportunities.

This policy is supported by the results of the Neighbourhood Plan Survey which reveal that 82% of respondents think that high grade agricultural land should be protected from development.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Housing Needs Survey 2021, page 13

<sup>79</sup> Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2016, page 7

## Policy 10 Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Where development is permitted, the following standards must be met:

New development should reflect the character of South Lenches and take account of its rural setting.

Where practical and possible, developments should retain the existing hedgerows and trees.

Where it is not possible to retain existing hedgerows and trees, replacement planting of native species is required in mitigation.

Where mitigation of tree removal is required, replacements will be native species of similar final expected size to the tree being removed.

Native broadleaved trees should be used as default to provide maximum benefit to climate and wildlife.

The partial or complete loss of orchards or remnant orchards through development proposals will be strongly resisted, in particular the fruit trees in Atch Lench Community Orchard and the Yates Community Orchard in Church Lench.

## Policy 10 Evidence

All hedgerows surrounding proposed development sites should be retained in situ wherever possible. In certain circumstances, it is understood that some hedgerow realignment may be necessary in order to ensure safe and suitable access. However, in such cases there will be an expectation that any hedgerow lost is replanted with a native species mix to promote local biodiversity and also that new or realigned hedgerows are reintegrated into any existing adjacent hedgerows. Hedgerows provide important habitats for many species of flora and fauna and are important to biodiversity.

Orchards and fruit trees are a particular feature of the village landscapes which dominate here and opportunities should be sought to retain and re/create them; new planting should consider traditional local varieties.

The fruit trees in Atch Lench Community Orchard and the Yates Community Orchard in Church Lench in particular are of particular importance both historically and ecologically and every effort needs to be made to preserve and protect these old trees from potential development.

The main characteristic of the South Lenches is the wide-open countryside, woodland areas and greens spaces in between our villages. 96% of our respondents wish to protect our open countryside, trees and hedgerows with more than 90% of respondents, wanting to conserve the rural nature of our neighbourhood.

The lanes connecting each of the South Lenches villages are lined with long-established trees and hedgerows.

## Policy 11 Wildlife and Biodiversity

Development proposals will aim to retain and enhance existing on-site biodiversity assets, delivering 'net gain' [*in line with the SWDP*] and provide for wildlife needs on site.

Where appropriate, on-site biodiversity enhancements such as roosting features for bats or nesting features for birds should be incorporated into the fabric of the development. Where ecologically relevant, fences, walls or hedges should be designed to incorporate features that allow dispersal of wildlife through areas of green space and gardens.

Fragmentation of habitats should be avoided.

Development proposals affecting the network of wildlife corridors as shown in Appendix B throughout the parish should seek to support and enhance their operation as a corridor for the movement of wildlife and the provision

of ecosystem services. Development proposals that assist active travel, or ecological, connections within these corridors will be supported.

## Policy 11 Evidence

Green spaces within South Lenches are highly valued by the community and also form networks and corridors, which perform multiple functions ranging from informal recreation to wildlife havens. The Plan seeks to ensure that future development respects, and where possible enhance the parish's green and blue (rivers, ponds and streams) infrastructure.

The open green spaces between the South Lenches villages are full of wildlife with local, anecdotal reports of foxes, hedgehogs and plentiful deer. The wildlife corridor we are designating as part of the Neighbourhood Plan is specifically for deer.

There are three different species of deer regularly seen across the land between Church Lench and Sheriffs Lench / Atch Lench. Fallow, roe and muntjac form a herd of approximately 30 deer and they roam in the land surrounding Lenches Lakes. The corridor as shown on the map (Appendix B) is a natural route for the herd to travel from the Lakes for food; often aiming for the community orchard in Atch Lench and the surrounding fields. The evidence we have is reports of visual sightings from local residents of deer along the hedgerows; gaps in the hedgerows leading onto the road with hoof marks and gaps leading into the Orchard area. Local residents regularly see deer crossing Leys Road (leading from Harvington to Atch Lench) and sadly, there have been fatalities where deer have been hit by cars on Handgate Lane as well as Leys Road. There are many regular sightings at night of the flock of deer in the fields between Handgate Lane and Leys Road.

Our local community values conservation of wildlife in the South Lenches and we are keen to preserve these natural routes for our local deer herd.

Our countryside is fragmented by buildings, tracks and roads so it can be difficult for people and wildlife to move through it. Green corridors are corridors that allow people and wildlife to move through the landscape. They are important both in connecting patches of habitat to allow wildlife to find food, homes and mates, and in helping people to access the countryside and to experience wildlife first hand.

Biodiversity can help manage environmental risk and improve resilience to climate change.

Green infrastructure is the whole network of grasslands, woodlands, hedges, lanes, rivers, ponds, streams that together form a network across the area. Some of these green spaces provide vital stepping stones for wildlife through the centre of the villages.

The network performs multiple functions, including providing opportunities for informal recreation; a haven and routes and corridors for wildlife; a recreation area; and, overall, contributing to the village's settings; and contributing to residents' health and well-being.

In response to the question 'What priorities should the Neighbourhood Plan have in protecting the natural environment?'<sup>80</sup> the following were given a high rating

- Preserve the local landscape: 89%
- Preserve the views from the village: 85%
- Promote the protection of existing mature or important trees and hedgerows, groups of trees or woodland: 83%

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<sup>80</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2016, page 7

- Promote the preservation and restoration of key local habitats and wildlife diversity: 80%
- 99% of respondents to the 2024 survey agreed with the objective ‘Protect woodland areas, wildlife sites, natural and historic conservation areas’.<sup>81</sup>

## Policy 12 Public Rights of Way

Developers will be expected to seek opportunities to develop, extend and improve the existing footpath and cycleway networks (shown on map Appendix C) to provide better connectivity within the village and to the surrounding countryside.

New development will be expected to contribute towards the provision of cycle and pedestrian links that connect the different areas of South Lenches.

Movement routes which provide non-vehicular access to natural greenspace- e.g., woodland or fields should be strongly safeguarded. Any opportunity to enhance these will be supported.

All new movement routes are expected to be appropriate for wheelchair users and those with limited ability for walking.

Such opportunities include where planning permission is granted for development near to the existing networks.

Where new developments may severely impact upon movement routes appropriate mitigation measures will be expected.

## Policy 12 Evidence

This policy seeks to minimise the need for vehicular travel and create connectivity to neighbouring parishes, towns and other areas.

New developments should ensure provision of safe, accessible and convenient walking access to local services and facilities and to bus stops for pedestrians, pushchairs, wheelchair and other forms of mobility vehicle users.

Developers must demonstrate that all access routes, including all highways, should be preserved and protected, unless there is compelling evidence to remove them. In such circumstances these must be reinstated in the vicinity of the development, prior to the removal of the old movement route, without loss to the community of its character, setting, accessibility, quality, and amenity value.

In the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan survey 2016, 64% of respondents valued footpaths and bridleways, and 48% would like to see more accessible walks.<sup>82</sup>

## Social section covers Policies 13 to 19

There are several social organisations that provide a recognised focal and meeting point for our Parish. Our original Parish Questionnaire in 2015 has highlighted the value to the community of the Sports and Social Club, the Church, the Village Hall, the School and Pre-school, and the community orchards. The policies in our Social section are intended to provide a way for these organisations to be maintained and help to preserve the value of community spirit to our residents.

<sup>81</sup> V&O Survey results objective 5

<sup>82</sup> South Lenches Parish Plan Survey, 2014 (report 2015, page 7)

## Policy 13 Local Green Spaces

Development that results in the loss of local green spaces identified below and on maps below, or results in adversely affecting their character, setting, accessibility, appearance, general quality or amenity value will not be supported:

Church Lench:

1 Orchard - Low Road

~~2 TAKEN OUT~~

3 Church Lench C of E First School grounds

4 Village Pond

5 Cricket Ground / Lenches Sports and Recreation Club

6 Yates Community Orchard

7 Church and Church yard

Atch Lench:

1 Atch Lench Heritage Orchard

~~2 TAKEN OUT~~

3 Atch Lench Graveyard

b) Proposals for development on these Local Green Spaces will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that it is required to enhance the role and function of an identified Local Green Space

c) Where permission for development can be demonstrated to be required, developers will be expected to demonstrate how the existing flora and fauna will be protected or be subject to mitigation measures

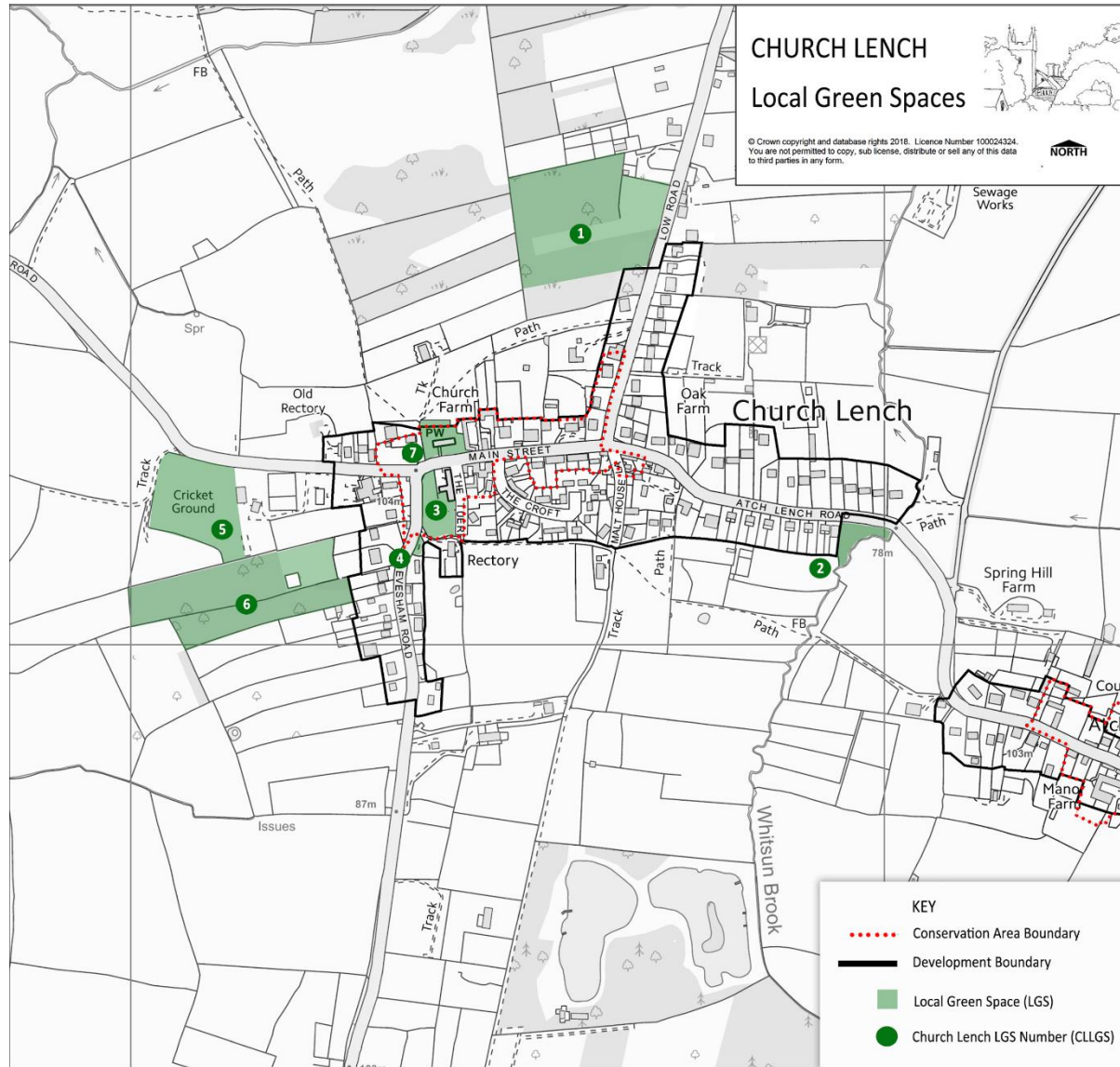
d) Any new development of 10 or more dwellings will be expected to provide areas of green space.

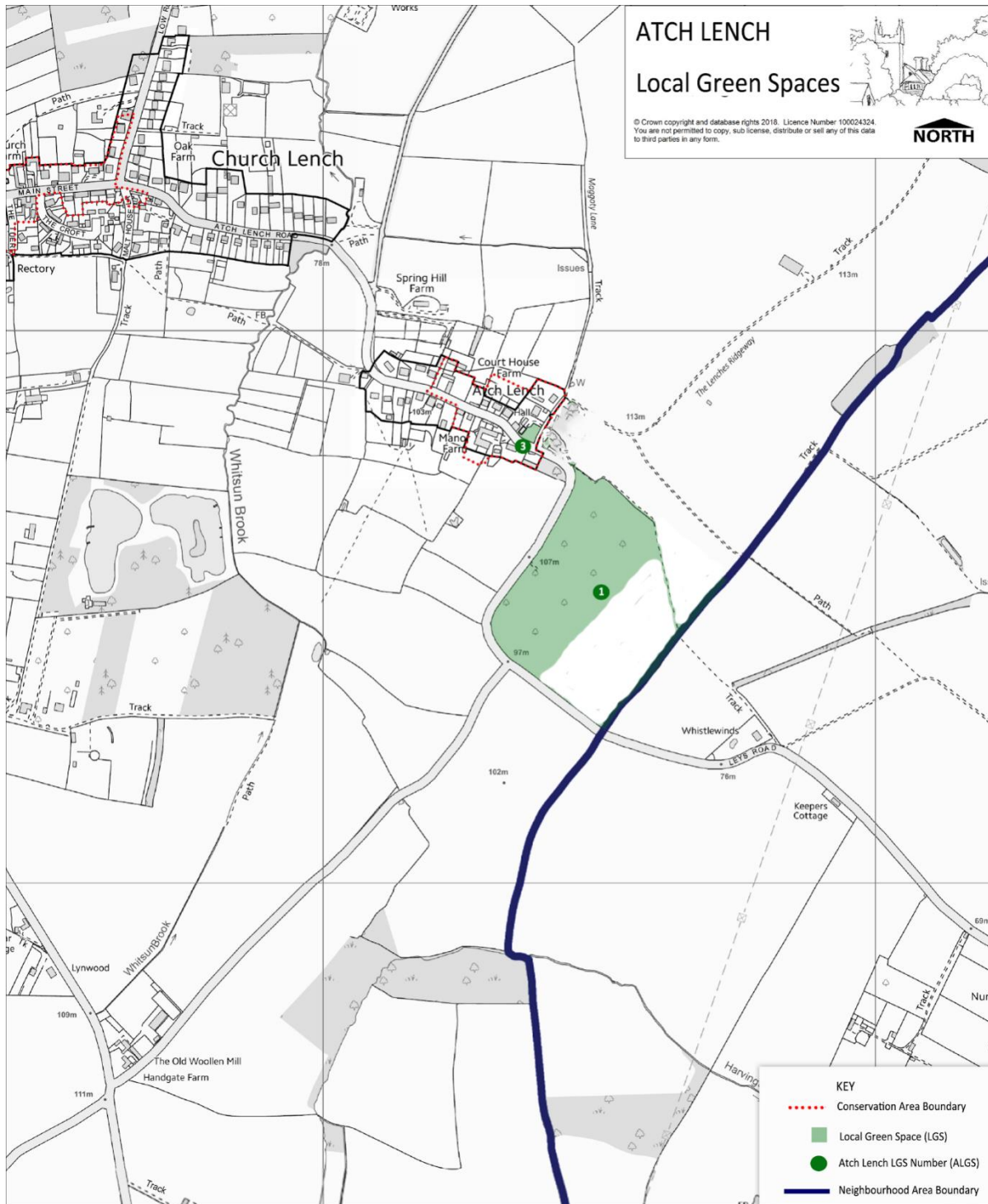
*NB There are 2 green spaces that have been removed from the policy, but because they are in the current maps, they have a strikethrough in the policy wording to ensure the map numbering makes sense. When the maps are updated, the policy wording will be updated to exclude the 2 LGS sites.*

## Policy 13 Evidence

The rural nature and aspects of the parish are much valued. Individually and collectively a number of important spaces make a vital contribution to the character and appearance of the village and are valued by the community, be it for recreation, leisure or learning about the local history and heritage, as well as providing visual breaks, wildlife habitats and green lungs for the village.

The lack of a village centre, village green or virtually any public open space means that green areas are highly valued.

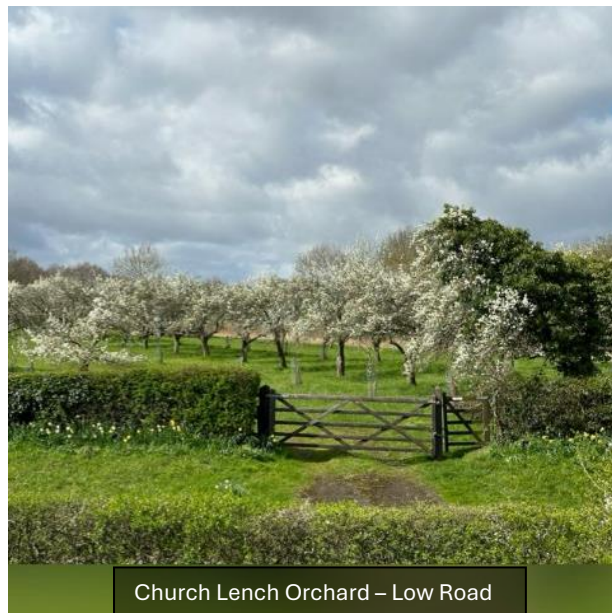




Under the NPPF, Neighbourhood Plans have the opportunity to designate Local Green Spaces which are of particular importance to the local community. This will afford protection from development other than in very special circumstances. Paragraph 107 of the NPPF says that Local Green Spaces should only be designated where the green space is:

- *in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- *demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquility or richness of its wildlife; and*
- *local in character and not an extensive tract of land.”*

Area 1 Church Lench Orchard-Low Road	
“in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”	It is marked Area 1 on the Church Lench Green Space Map
“demonstrably special to a local community”	This old apple orchard sits on the edge of Church Lench and is visible to all walkers and travellers through Church Lench. The orchard is part of the Blossom Trail - a 45-mile AA-signposted route of old apple, plum and pear orchards through the Vale of Evesham frequented by many tourists.
“local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”	The site is on the edge of the Church Lench development boundary and has homes on 3 sides.  The whole area covers approx. 2.74ha.



Area 2 Church Lench School grounds	
“in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”	It is marked Area 3 on the Church Lench Green Space Map
“demonstrably special to a local community”	The school is located at the very heart of the Church Lench community in a Victorian school building dating back to the establishment of the school in 1864. The school is supported with children from many local families, and our local orchards and play areas adjacent to the Cricket Ground are used by the children.

<p>“local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”</p>	<p>The site is surrounded by homes and by native trees.</p> <p>The whole area covers approx. 0.34ha.</p>
<p>Area 3 Church Lench Village Pool</p>	
<p>“in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”</p>	<p>It is marked Area 4 on the Church Lench Green Space Map</p>
<p>“demonstrably special to a local community”</p>	<p>A quiet area, planted with flowering shrubs, and is the start of the Jubilee Walk, a popular walk round the Lenches. The original pool area, although used now for car parking, is featured in many Victorian and early 20th Century photographs of rural village life.</p>
<p>“local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”</p>	<p>The site is adjacent to Church Lench First School and is surrounded by homes and by native trees.</p> <p>The whole area covers approx. 0.4ha.</p>
<p>Area 4 Church Lench Cricket Ground</p>	
<p>“in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”</p>	<p>It is marked Area 5 on the Church Lench Green Space Map</p>
<p>“demonstrably special to a local community”</p>	<p>The thriving cricket club, and neighbouring tennis club represents an important sporting and social focus for the local community. The southern perimeter of the pitch also has a well-used footpath, leading to Yates Orchard.</p>
<p>“local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”</p>	<p>The site on the edge of Church Lench and is surrounded by native trees.</p> <p>The whole area covers approx. 1.3ha.</p>
<p>Area 5 Church Lench The Yates Community Orchard</p>	
<p>“in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”</p>	<p>It is marked Area 6 on the Church Lench Green Space Map</p>
<p>“demonstrably special to a local community”</p>	<p>Yates community orchard is primarily old apple and plum trees. The orchard is given open access to our community and is used for local events by the school and the Church.</p>

<p>“local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”</p>	<p>The site on the edge of Church Lench, is bordered by homes and is surrounded by native trees.</p> <p>The whole area covers approx. 2.27ha.</p>
<p>Area 6 Church Lench Church and Church Yard</p>	
<p>“in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”</p>	<p>It is marked Area 7 on the Church Lench Green Space Map</p>
<p>“demonstrably special to a local community”</p>	<p>The public green space remains a simple, atmospheric site that both reflects its history and offers sanctuary for the future</p>
<p>“local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”</p>	<p>All Saints Church and its church yard are located in the centre of Church Lench</p> <p>The whole area covers approx. 0.22ha.</p>
<p>Area 7 Atch Lench Heritage Orchard</p>	
<p>“in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”</p>	<p>It is marked Area 1 on the Atch Lench Green Space Map</p>
<p>“demonstrably special to a local community”</p>	<p>The Lenches Heritage Orchard is one of the largest surviving early 20th century orchards within the Vale of Evesham with over 1000 plum, gage and damson trees. The orchard was bought by investors from the local community in 1999 and since then, significant work has been carried out to restore and lay new hedgerows.</p>
<p>“local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”</p>	<p>Many of the veteran trees are over a hundred years old. Worcestershire County Council provided funding to replant the depleted gage tree section with 60 new trees, and the intention is to replenish other parts of the orchard through grafting from existing trees. Vale Heritage Landscape Trust bought in 2024.</p> <p>The whole area covers approx. 5.5ha.</p>
<p>Area 8 Atch Lench Churchyard</p>	
<p>“in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”</p>	<p>It is marked Area 3 on the Atch Lench Green Space Map</p>

“demonstrably special to a local community”	This small, peaceful burial ground has been a place of solemnity and tranquility for the local community and visitors for almost two centuries.
“local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”	The site is surrounded by homes and by native trees. The whole area covers approx. 0.11 ha.

## Policy 14 Valued Landscapes

New development will be supported where it would not have an adverse impact on the landscape setting in particular the distinctive views shown in the table and on the map below.

a) An assessment of views to and from a new development within the distinctive view areas as defined on the proposals map should accompany a planning application wherever relevant.

b) Re-modelling of the local topography, through cut and fill, could adversely impact on the landscape character. Therefore, where acceptable, development should be adapted to the site contours rather than the site adapted to the development.

## Policy 14 Evidence

Community engagement showed the importance residents attach to living within an attractive rural area. Many of those residents who responded during community engagement commented on how they valued the rural character of the parish and expressed concerns over threats to it.

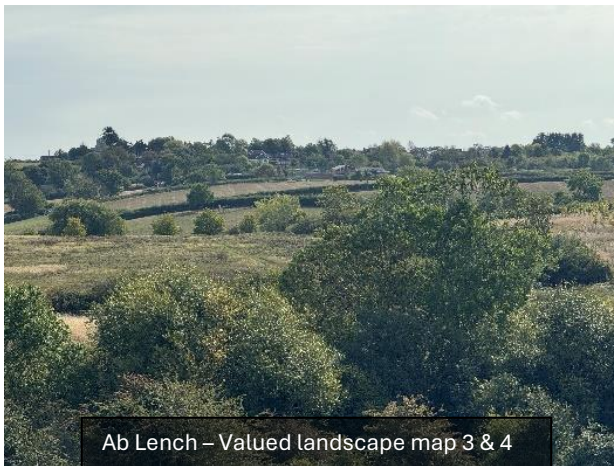
89% of respondents to the South Lenches Survey (2016) state their top priority is to preserve the local landscape with 85% stating the preservation of views from local villages is very important.<sup>83</sup> In 2024, 97% of respondents to the Vision and Objectives Survey agreed with the objective ‘Protect valued landscapes and views’.<sup>84</sup>

Location	Map Ref	View Name	Description
Ab Lench	1 & 2	Ab Lench south	Ab Lench to the Parish south boundary, Spitten Farm and ridge and furrow ancient development
Ab Lench	3 & 4	East Ab Lench to Church Lench	North facing view across to the south facing side of Church Lench, All Saints Church, community Orchard and linear development
Ab Lench	5	Ab Lench ‘Brookfields’ footpath to Church Lench	Ab Lench view upwards to All Saints Church, Church Lench showing ridge and furrow environment
Atch Lench	1 & 2	Atch Lench Farm Lane to east facing Church Lench	Farm Lane view to Church Lench shows east side of Atch Lench Road and Low Road; linear development with the development boundary and open countryside / pasture land

<sup>83</sup> South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Survey 2016, page 7

<sup>84</sup> V&O Survey results, objective 8

Atch Lench	3 & 4	Atch Lench to west facing Church Lench	Footpath to Church Lench shows the 'Lenches' characteristic and the west side linear development of Church Lench
Atch Lench	5,6 & 7	Atch Lench ridge footpath to Atch Lench orchard	Footpath on the top of Atch Lench west to encompass the whole of Atch Lench orchard; east to show the north side of Atch Lench linear development 6 - South east to Atch Lench Community Orchard 7 - North side Atch Lench and village linear development 5 - North side Atch Lench and north west across the Lenches to the Parish Boundary
Church Lench	1	Church Lench to Ab Lench	Public footpath view south and east across the open countryside; Ab Lench seen as a hamlet from the hill top
Church Lench	2 & 3	Church Lench view south towards the Malvern Hills	Panoramic views south towards the Malvern Hills showing the open spaces of the South Lenches' Parish and village separation
Church Lench	4	Church Lench south side	South facing side of Church Lench detailing the Church and 'Lench' or 'Hill' characteristic ; showing strong linear development and ridge and furrow environment
Church Lench	5 & 6	Church Lench to Atch Lench	End of Malthouse Lane up to Atch Lench across the valley, showing the 'Lench' or 'Hill' characteristic and green space separation between villages



Ab Lench – Valued landscape map 3 & 4

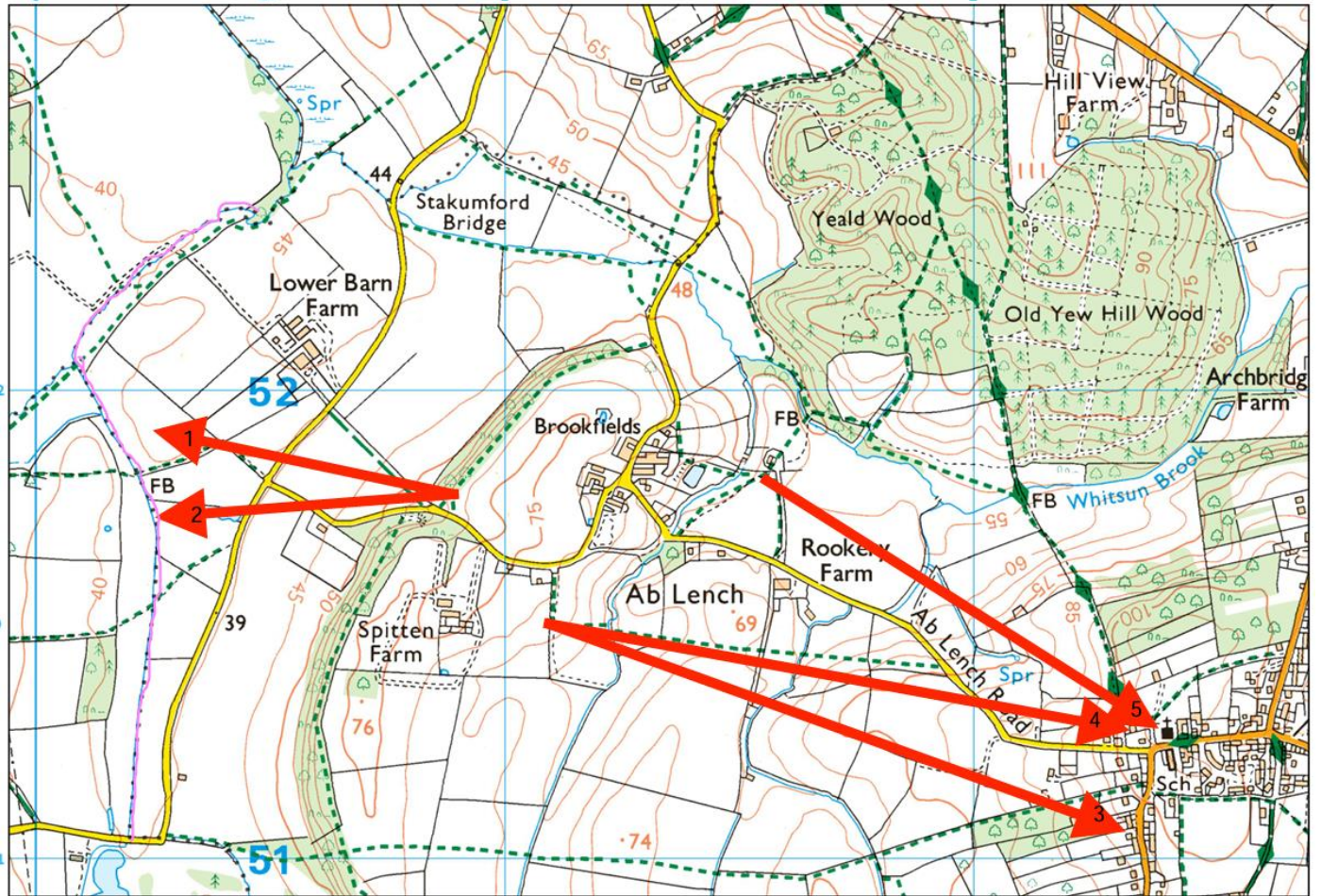


Atch Lench – Valued landscape map 3 & 4

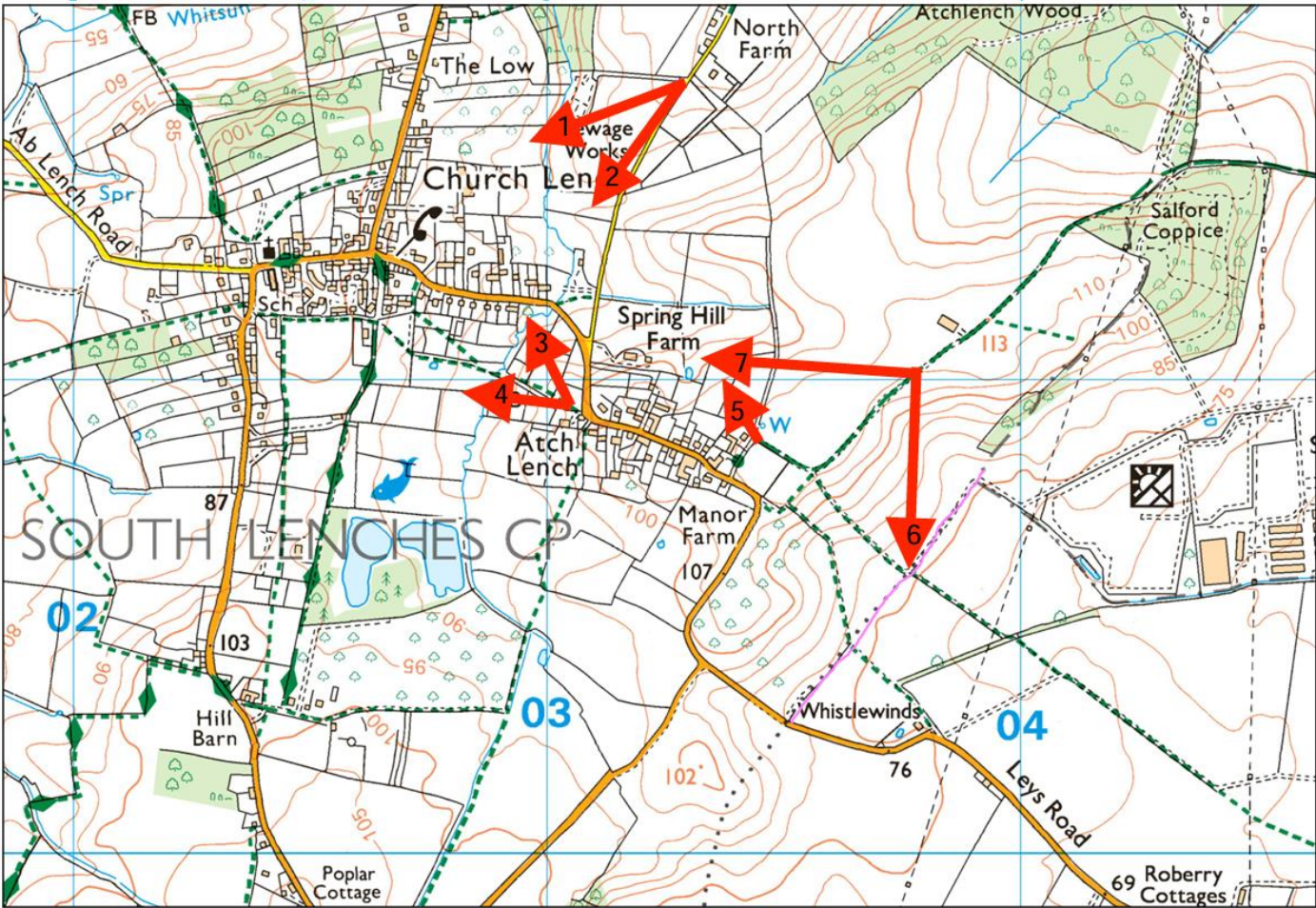


Church Lench – Valued landscape map 4

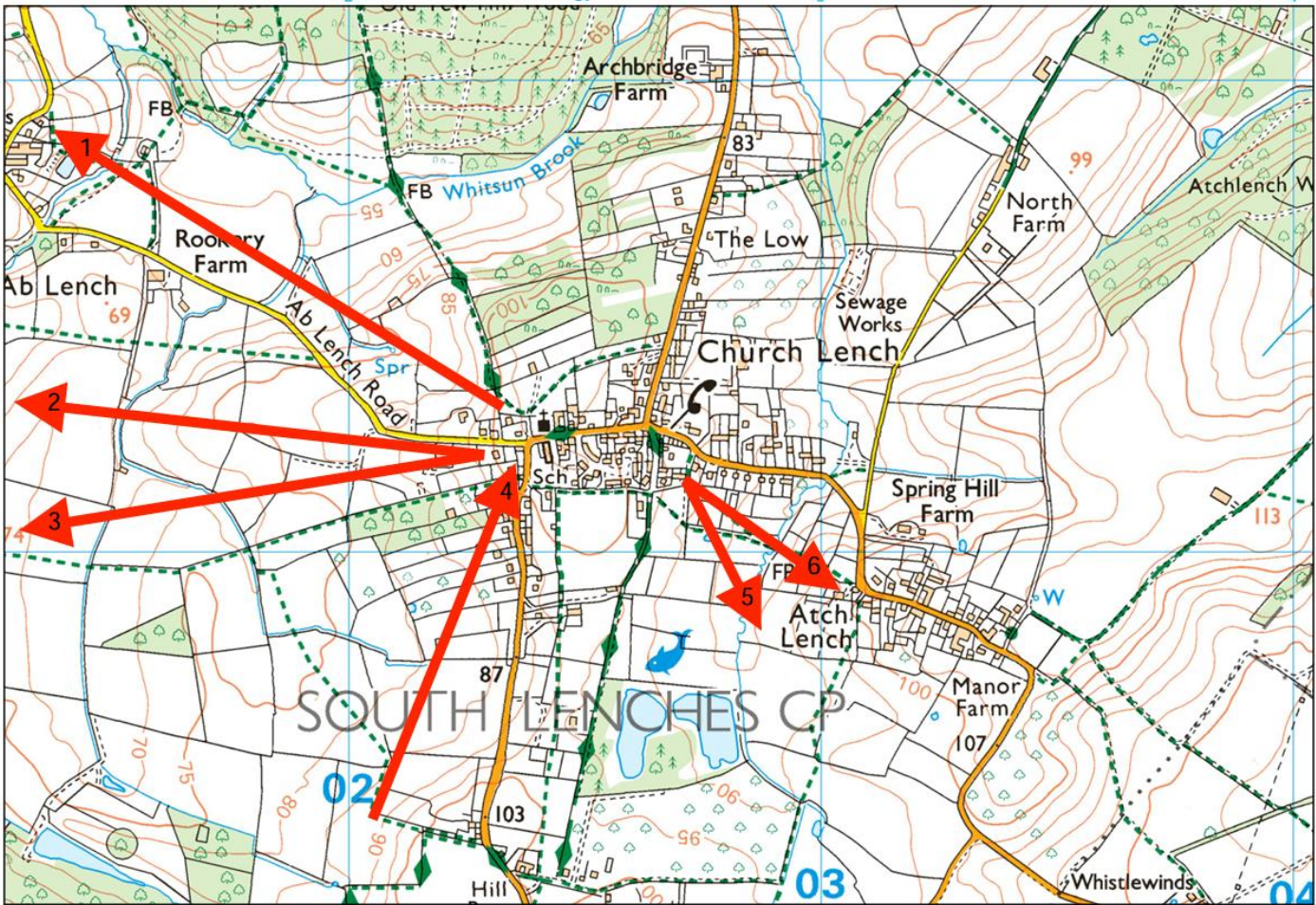
# Ab Lench Valued Landscapes



Atch Lench  
Valued Landscapes



Church Lench  
Valued Landscapes



## Policy 15 Flood Mitigation

New development, excluding extensions to dwellings and changes of use, will only be permitted if it incorporates Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).<sup>85</sup>

When selecting the means of surface water disposal, priority must be given to the use of SuDS.

New development proposals will be required to incorporate SuDS as part of the design of new housing and commercial development and indicate how such schemes will be managed and maintained.

New development proposals will be required to provide appropriate design statements showing the method of discharge of surface water flows.

Flood risk from surface water flows should be managed using SuDS and the method of discharge should be as high up the following hierarchy of drainage options as is possible, particularly where other options have been proved not to be viable:

infiltration into the ground

drainage to a surface water body

drainage to a surface water sewer

highway drain

another drainage system.

Development is expected to take opportunities to reduce flood risk and create betterment.

Geo-technical investigations are advised prior to developing a drainage strategy and if any uncertainty exists, adequate space for attenuation and storage systems to restrict the rate of surface water run-off must be provided.

Surface water will not be permitted to drain to foul or combined sewer network in order to mitigate the risk of pollution from foul flooding.

## Policy 15 Evidence

Paragraph 170 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

All new development within the Neighbourhood Plan area must consider the impact of surface water drainage. This is to ensure that new development is as safe from flooding as it can be and that it does not increase flood risk to other areas.

SuDS are an approach to managing rainwater falling on roofs and other surfaces through a sequence of actions. The key objectives are to manage the flow rate and volume of surface run-off to reduce the risk of flooding and water pollution. Also, these systems reduce pressure on the sewerage network and can improve biodiversity and local amenity.

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<sup>85</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-standards-for-sustainable-drainage-systems/national-standards-for-sustainable-drainage-systems-suds>

Currently, properties at the bottom of Atch Lench Road, Church Lench experience surface water flooding after heavy rain, where surface water run-off, including sewage, overwhelms the existing foul pipes and runs into gardens, and adjoining pony paddocks (picture insert)

Where applicable, development proposals must demonstrate, that pluvial and fluvial flood risk has been taken into account with particular regard to the flood plain of the Whitsun Brook.

Whitsun Brook flows through Church Lench (on the east side of the village), and through Ab Lench (on the east and north sides of the village). These areas lie in Flood Zones that have a medium to high risk of flooding each year.<sup>86</sup>

The requirements set out above apply to any proposals for new housing, though are not applied to applications for householder development. New and improved utility infrastructure for surface water drainage and foul water will be encouraged and supported to meet the identified needs of the community.

In February 2025, the South Lenches Parish Council wrote a direct letter to Severn Trent Water asking for information regarding their plans for improving and updating the dated infrastructure and highlighting that Evesham Road had been closed over 30 times in the previous two years due to surface flooding.<sup>87</sup>

## Policy 16 Dark Skies

Development proposals should be designed to minimise the occurrence of light pollution by:

- a) Meeting or exceeding the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance or successor guidance; and
- b) avoiding unnecessarily visible lighting in designated wildlife sites or the surrounding landscape; and
- c) having regard to the following hierarchy:
  - i. avoiding the installation of additional external lighting
  - ii. installing lighting necessary for its intended purpose or use at the lowest practical lumens value and avoid adverse impacts where possible
  - iii. appropriate mitigation of adverse impacts
  - iv. avoiding unnecessarily visible lighting in designated wildlife sites or the surrounding landscape. Particular care should be taken in ecologically sensitive areas such as near ponds, lakes, rivers, areas of high conservation value; sites supporting particularly light-sensitive species of conservation significance and habitat used by protected species. In these situations, installation of appropriate lighting should be guided by the nature of the species found on or close to the site.
  - v. avoiding building designs that result in increased light spill from internal lighting without suitable mitigation.

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<sup>86</sup> <https://check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk/map>

<sup>87</sup> South Lenches Parish Council letter to Severn Trent water authority

## Policy 16 Evidence

The invention of artificial light has done much to safeguard and enhance the night-time environment but, if not properly controlled, obtrusive light (or ‘light pollution’) can present both physiological and ecological problems. Given the large amount of countryside and ecologically valuable land surrounding South Lenches it is desirable that as far as possible these natural areas enjoy dark skies at night and that the bleed of light from built areas and roads is minimised, for the benefit of wildlife, residents and visitors.

Sky glow, the brightening of the night sky, glare, and the spilling of light beyond the boundary of the area being lit, are all forms of obtrusive light which may cause nuisance to others and waste money and energy. It is a form of pollution, which can be substantially reduced without detriment to the lighting task. Over lighting is a major cause of obtrusive light and is a waste of energy. There are published standards for most lighting tasks, adherence to which will help minimise over lighting and the upward reflection of light. There is no reason these should not be set as a minimum standard for all new developments and light replacements in the Plan area.

The Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) has produced guidance on obtrusive light which sets out specific constraints for lighting within environmental zones. Within each zone, targets are applied for skyglow, light intrusion, luminaire intensity and building luminance. The Dark Sky Organisation is also working towards standards in dark skies. <https://darksky.org/what-we-do/darksky-approved/> Planners and developers are asked to consider this guidance as a minimum requirement and to seek to reduce general light levels and over-lighting wherever possible to reflect the rural nature of our area.

### *Environmental zones for control of obtrusive light*

Zone	Surrounding	Lighting Environment	Examples
E0	> Protected	Dark SQM* 30.5+	Astronomical Observable Dark Skies, UNESCO Starlight Reserves, IDA Dark Sky Places
E1	> Natural	Dark SQM 20-20.5	Relatively uninhabited rural areas, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, IDA buffer zones etc
E2	> Rural	Low district brightness SQM ~15- 20	Sparsely inhabited rural areas, village or relatively dark outer suburban locations
E3	> Suburban	Medium district brightness	Well inhabited rural and urban settlements, small town centres or suburban locations
E4	> Urban	High district brightness	Town/city centres with high levels of night time activity

*Source: Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Note GN01/2020 Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light.\*SQM = Sky Quality Measurement referenced by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA).*

Artificial lighting has been shown to have an adverse effect on native wildlife, particularly on nocturnal species. These detrimental effects are seen most clearly in bats where artificial light can disturb bats at the roost, affect feeding behaviour and use of commuting routes. In

invertebrates, artificial light significantly disrupts natural patterns of light and dark, disturbing feeding, breeding and movement which may reduce and fragment populations. Many UK bird species are particularly sensitive to artificial lighting including long-eared owls, black-tailed godwit and stone curlew. Other examples include changed behaviour in migratory fish, amphibians, and some flowering plants among others. Guidance on understanding and minimising the effects of artificial light on wildlife is available from various sources including The Institute of Lighting Professionals, (as above) The Bat Conservation Trust, <https://www.bats.org.uk/> Buglife and [The Netherlands Institute of Ecology](#).

The Neighbourhood Plan wishes to prevent further light encroachment into undeveloped areas and whenever possible reduce existing light encroachment at times when renewal or replacement of any private or public lighting or lighting of new developments occurs.

It is intended that all areas outside any settlement boundary should seek to deliver to level E1 (table x above) unless there are clear and specific reasons why it may be dangerous to do so. In all other areas, within the settlement boundary, a minimum of the E2 standard should be used.

## Policy 17 Community Facilities

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following community facilities.

- a) Lenches Sports and Recreation Club (Church Lench)
- b) Children's Play Area (Church Lench)
- c) Church Lench Village Hall
- d) Church Lench First School (including preschool)
- e) Atch Lench Community Orchard
- f) Yates' Community Orchard (Church Lench)

Proposals that help to sustain the viability of a community facility will be supported, provided they conform to other land use policies. Proposals that will result in either the loss of, or significant harm to an identified community facility, will not be supported, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the operation of the facility, or of another community use of the facility or land, is no longer economically viable, or that there is an alternative, accessible location within or adjoining the Settlement Boundary.

## Policy 17 Evidence

This policy seeks to prevent the unnecessary loss of valued local community facilities. It identifies a number of facilities in the parish that form an essential part of community life. Given the remote and small nature of the settlements, the loss of any of these facilities would be significantly detrimental, so even though a specific type of community use may no longer be viable, the opportunity to retain the premises or land in this use cannot be lost.

The facilities in South Lenches provide the shared infrastructure that brings the community together. The South Lenches are a considerable journey from other settlements with facilities, and particularly with a large elderly population, local facilities are essential to the wellbeing of the residents and the social cohesion of the population. Usage of the community facilities in South Lenches is popular and increasing over time.

The Church Lench village hall and the Lenches Social Club and Sports Club were the most used facilities at the time of the 2014 survey. 76% of parishioners felt a strong sense of community spirit with the combined facilities of Church Lench Primary School, All Saints Church, the Sports Club and the Social club valued, used and providing the parish focal point.<sup>88</sup>

More recently, Yates Community Orchard has been developed as a venue for Forest School, for the school and the pre-school pupils - <https://ltl.org.uk/forest-school-ideas/>

Also, Atch Lench Community Orchard has recently been acquired by the Vale Heritage Landscape Trust whose aim is to conserve local landscapes for the local community to enjoy- <https://valetrust.weebly.com/>

The 2024 survey found that 82% of respondents agreed with the objective 'Increase activities, amenities and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area'.<sup>89</sup>

Expansion of the Church Lench village school to meet future needs will be supported in, provided there are adequate facilities for the safe drop-off and collection of schoolchildren. Alterations to the school building will be supported provided:

- the historic façade is conserved and protected, and its existing character is respected
- any alterations or extensions are sympathetic to the existing building

## Policy 18 Business and Employment

Support will be given for proposals that strengthen the rural economy where the range, scale and nature of provision does not detract from the rural character of the area and historic assets and their setting; and where it does not significantly increase traffic through the settlements.

Strong support will be given for proposals that:

Improve the agricultural activities already being undertaken on the land; and / or

Propose a small-scale development that provides employment opportunities through the re-use of agricultural buildings.

Applications will be particularly encouraged if:

They offer employment opportunities to local people.

They provide space for small start-up businesses.

Proposals involving the loss of existing business sites must demonstrate clear evidence that is no longer viable to use that site for business or employment and that the site has been actively marketed for a minimum period of 12 months prior to support being given for any proposal for a change of use.

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<sup>88</sup> South Lenches Parish Plan survey, 2014, page 5

<sup>89</sup> V&O Survey results objective 12

## Policy 18 Evidence

This policy supports the expansion of small business in The Lenches where there is a demonstrated economic imperative to do so. Equally, the policy provides provision for change of use where a reasonable, sincere and sustained attempt to keep the occupying business viable has been made. Where sites are identified that are viable for new small businesses to start, this policy provides support for such endeavours.

The parish wants to take an active role in understanding the needs of any local business, in order to facilitate their viability and sustainability. The Neighbourhood Plan wants to actively encourage new businesses to the area.

One of the main objectives of the NPPF is to build a strong, competitive economy. In more rural areas, the aim is equally to support a prosperous economy as part of that. It states that, planning policies and decisions should:

*“support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings.”<sup>90</sup>*

In particular, such sites can offer opportunities for commercial uses which may be more difficult to accommodate within the settlement area due to the lack of suitable premises or sites, and potential impacts on neighbouring residents and other uses. The reuse of rural buildings or re-development of land in commercial use in the open countryside needs to be sensitive to its rural location. It should not have significant harmful impacts on the surrounding rural landscape and should provide facilities that are needed by the local community.

It is recognised that in some circumstances, agricultural buildings can be converted to residential use under permitted development rights<sup>91</sup>.

However, use of redundant rural buildings for small businesses (including tourism accommodation), or community facilities such as a farm shop is encouraged, if the character and location of the redundant building is suitable and appropriate.

Development would not be supported if it would cause a negative impact (such as traffic problems, damage to hedgerows, noise and disturbance) on the rural character of the area or the living conditions of nearby residents.

The sensitive re-development of historic farm buildings not only serves to improve the appearance of what might otherwise become derelict buildings but provides much-needed space for those seeking to set up their own business and remain in local premises.

Premises for businesses should blend in with the local character and ideally should help enhance local facilities to support other local businesses.

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<sup>90</sup> NPPF para 88, a

<sup>91</sup> [Part 3 of Schedule 2, General Permitted Development Order 2015](#)

## Policy 19 Camping and Caravan Sites

New camping or caravanning sites to provide tourist accommodation or extensions to existing sites should meet all of the following criteria:

Comprise sensitive, small-scale sites that would not be intrusive in the landscape

Have good road access, avoiding routes through residential or other sensitive areas where significant traffic movements would be severely detrimental to the living conditions of residents or cause harm to designated heritage or other environmental assets, and

Not generate noise or other effects which would cause harm to the living conditions of nearby residents or harm the enjoyment of public areas including rights of way.

## Policy 19 Evidence

Within the South Lenches, there are two major caravan and camp sites which are popular and well-used.

- a) The Lenches Lakes <https://lencheslakes.co.uk/> in Church Lench has been a camping and caravan site for many years, whilst the Lakes themselves are now a very popular venue for open water swimming.
- b) Lenchwood Christian Centre <https://lenchwood.org.uk/> located at Spitten Farm, Ab Lench offers a range of camping and caravan options, including camping pods and log cabins/lodges.

This policy aims to ensure that any increase in the size or nature of the existing camp sites is sympathetic to the nature of the parish while ensuring use of the sites is solely for temporary visitors.

Camping and caravan sites should be well located in relation to existing facilities or make appropriate provision for facilities on site and avoid significant adverse impact on the distinctive characteristics of the area's landscape, heritage or built environment.