

Appendix B - Parish Character Assessment 2018

Index

1. Purpose	2
2. Assessment Process	3
3. Assessment Boundaries	4
Map A. Church Lench and Atch Lench layout with new Development Boundary	6
Map B. Aerial Map of Church Lench and Atch Lench	7
Map C. Aerial Map of Sheriffs Lench including Badgers Bend.	7
4. Historical Development of South Lenches Parish	8
5. Character Area assessments	10
5.1 Church Lench.	10
5.1.1 Evesham Road	11
5.1.2 Ab Lench Road	16
5.1.3 Main Street, The Croft and Malthouse Lane	20
5.1.4 Low Road.	27
5.1.5 Atch Lench Road, Church Lench.	30
5.2 Atch Lench	38
5.3 Ab Lench	42
5.4 Sheriffs Lench	45

1. Purpose

This Parish Character Assessment was completed in 2018 and makes reference to some external maps which may have been updated. The document has been updated to reference the current Policies in the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 Pre-submission draft.

Parish Character Assessments (PCA) serve a number of purposes to assist planning decisions and the management of parish villages and environments. It should be noted that South Lenches Parish:

- a) does not have an extant Parish Plan and
- b) has no Conservation Area Appraisals for Church Lench and Atch Lench
- c) falls within the Lenches Ridge Environment Character Area (LR_ECA)

Policy **6** says that:

“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.”

The main objective of this assessment is to identify and record those distinct features of South Lenches Parish Villages which combine to create the unique character of the parish, with the aim of reflecting the community’s goal of ensuring development is in keeping with the local area, being sensitive to the rural nature of our surroundings and preserve the historic environment of the South Lenches.

- will be within the Development Boundary where one exists and
- will comply with the NPPF requirements for Timberland Plateau settlements.

2. Assessment Process

In 2018, a large group of members of the community worked with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the Parish Council to identify the broad character areas of our parish. On-site fieldwork was carried out and each volunteer completed proforma documents (as recommended by Locality). These were then used together with local knowledge and historical documentation, to produce the Parish Character Assessment.

Members of the Steering Group, supported by resident volunteers carried out all of the initial on-site fieldwork. All participants had been briefed by the Steering Group, each of whom accompanied one or more of the groups.

The body of this document uses the walk-through information to provide street-by-street descriptions of the four parish villages within development boundaries where they exist or within the recognised building spread.

The larger village of Church Lench is divided into sectors branching out from the heart of the village around the conservation area and along the main routes into and out of the village.

There are no groupings outside the conservation areas which share a character per-se and the linear developments away from the village core have produced an eclectic mix of old and new dwellings which in their totality make up the distinctive character of Church Lench. Similarly, with Atch Lench, but on a much smaller scale and with no distinctive nucleus but a core of old/ancient buildings in the conservation area itself.

3 Assessment Boundaries

This character assessment concentrates on the four villages within the Parish - within the development boundaries of Church Lench and Atch Lench and within the primary developed areas of Ab Lench and Sheriffs Lench. Exceptions have been:

1. Dwellings along Farm Lane which are outside the development boundary
2. Properties beyond the main building lines of Sheriffs Lench including the Sheriffs Lench Farm location and the cluster around Badgers Hill.

The Conservation Areas in Church Lench and Atch Lench are inextricably linked with non - protected dwellings and so those streets which include Conservation Areas have been included in the determination of the overall character of the two villages.

The South Lenches Parish covers the ancient villages of Church Lench, Atch Lench, Ab Lench and Sheriffs Lench of which the only two designated as 'villages' in the South Worcestershire Development Plan 2016 (SWDP) and South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (Reg 19 Publication document) are Church Lench and Atch Lench. Church Lench is designated Category 3 and Atch Lench, Ab Lench and Sheriffs Lench can reasonably be regarded as open countryside¹. Church Lench and Atch Lench lie approximately 7 km north of Evesham Town centre and 2 km north west of Harvington.

¹ Link to South Lenches Parish Council website

Atch Lench lies to the east of Church Lench on the adjoining small plateau called the Lenches Ridgeway and the parish boundary meets Harvington parish boundary a few hundred metres beyond the Lenches Ridgeway.

Ab Lench is a small settlement one mile downhill on the western slopes of Bishampton Bank.

Sheriffs Lench is another small dispersed settlement 2.6 km south of Church Lench.

In terms of landscape character, the four South Lenches Parish villages all fall within the Timbered Plateau Farmlands Landscape Type (LT) defined within the County Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)².

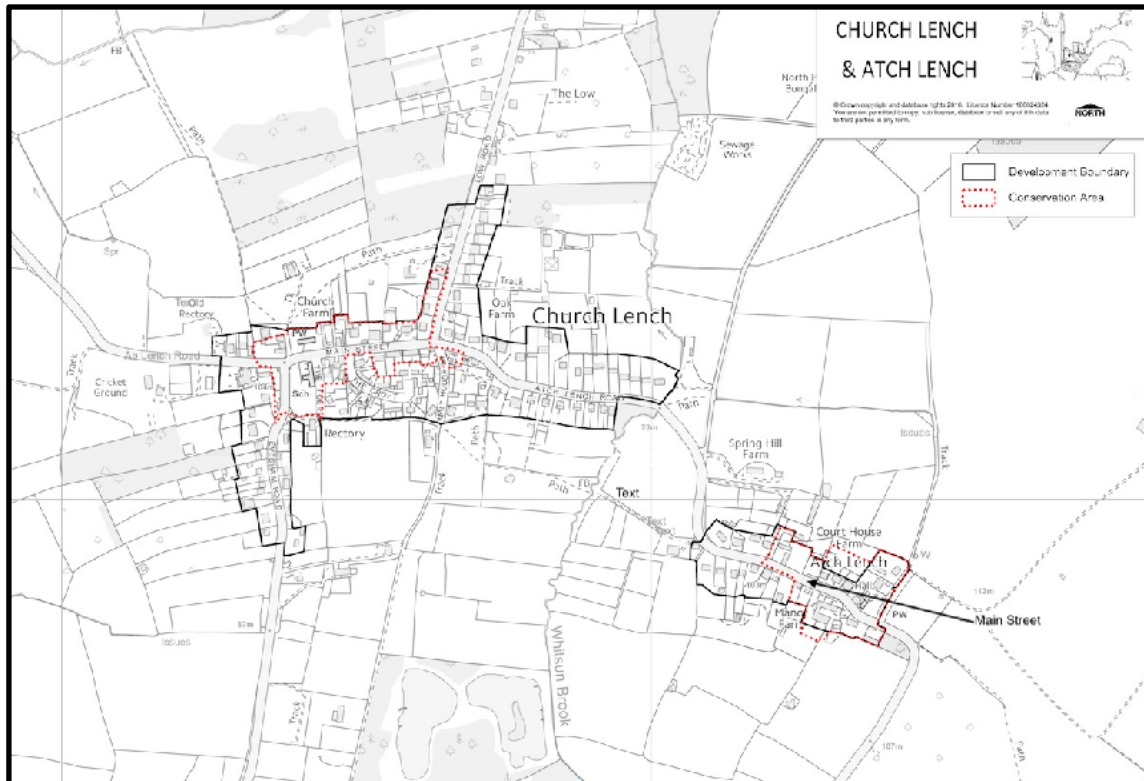
For this LT key characteristics identified include 'dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets' and the Landscape Guidelines for the LT include the (need to) 'maintain the characteristic dispersed settlement pattern, avoiding the formation of pronounced settlement nuclei.'

Looking at the street Map A and Google aerial Map B Church Lench and Atch Lench and Map C Sheriffs Lench below, it can be clearly seen that dwellings are generally in a linear arrangement along the arterial roads with most dwellings facing the road with garden areas to the rear.

In Church Lench, to the south of Main Street there is a mid-20th Century cul-de-sac called 'The Croft' and further down Atch Lench Road is Malt House Lane where there is some increase in the depth of development away from the main road. We believe that it is officially accepted that these developments do not distort the nucleation of the overall linear settlement pattern.

² <https://goo.gl/fi7tQ1>.

Map A. Church Lench and Atch Lench layout with Development Boundary



Map B. Aerial Map of Church Lench and Atch Lench



- For a period in the 16th & 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 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. There was also a church in Rous Lench from the same period, known firstly as Bishops Lench and later as Lench Randolph.
- For a time during the 13th Century, Church Lench was known as Lench Roculf, after the family who owned the Manor.
- Neighbouring Rous Lench is named after the Rous family who were Lords of the Manor for nearly 500 years from the late 14th Century to the late 19th Century.
- Sheriffs Lench is so called because it was held, from 1077, by Urse d'Abbott, the Sheriff of Worcester, and subsequently by his heirs, the Beauchamp family, who inherited the office of Sheriff.

Early settlements

The earliest written references to settlements in the area related to the seventh Century A.D., when the region, of which Worcestershire forms a part, ceased to be west Saxon and became part of the Kingdom of Mercia. The people were known as the Hwiccae.

Much of the area seems to have belonged to the church from early times, the kingdom of Mercia having converted to Christianity around the year 656 A.D.

So recorded examples of land transfers involving the church are:

- In 708 A.D. land at Church Lench and Atch Lench was given to the Abbey of Evesham by Kenned, son of Wulfhere, King of Mercia.
- In 716 A.D. land at Sheriff's Lench was given to the Abbey of Evesham by Ethelbald of Mercia.
- In 983 A.D. land at Ab Lench was given by Oswald, Bishop of Worcester to his kinsman Garduff.

The Hwiccian kingdom was split up into the three counties of Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Gloucestershire in the 11th Century. The diocesan boundary remains unchanged to this day.

There are entries in the Domesday book (1086) for Atch Lench (Worcester Church), Church Lench (Evesham Church) and Sheriffs Lench (Urso the Sheriff from Bishop of Bayeux) who seized the land from Evesham Church.

In 1381 the tenancy of Lench Randolph was bought by John Rous and in 1546 his brothers great-great-grandson (also John) bought the Manor of Ab Lench. The Rous family owned Rous Lench, parts of Church Lench and Ab Lench and Radford until they sold it in 1876 to Dr Chafy-Chafy (a contrived name for inheritance purposes).

He had also bought the other half of Sheriffs Lench and so became Lord of the Manor for all except Atch Lench. Atch Lench belonged to the Bomford family from the late 18th Century.

In 1857 the last of the Rouse family started a programme of rebuilding farmhouses, barns and cottages which Dr Chafy-Chafy continued and these can be recognised by invariably having a prominent date stone showing the year of construction and the relevant initials (CHRB or WKWCC).

Around 1920 Dr. Chafy-Chafy's son sold off Manor Farm in Sheriffs Lench to its tenants and also the four principal farms in Ab Lench: Easter Hill (Hall) 1923; Lower Farm (Ob Lench Bottom) 1924; Spitten Farm 1933 and Manor Farm 1938.

All were working farms but only one remains so today. The existing Brookfields Farm ceased dairy production some years ago.

5. Character Area assessments

For ease of exploration we split the field observations into the four villages and split the larger Church Lench into three sections along the three main arterial roads, namely Atch Lench Road (including The Croft, Low Road), Evesham Road (including the top of Ab Lench Road), and Main Street, including Malthouse Lane.

5.1 Church Lench.

The largest village in the parish is Church Lench. This is a small rural village with a long history, some 188 dwellings and a population of around 330. It is located on rising ground around the junctions of several roads.

The historic core of the village is located around All Saints Church on Main Street, with a 20th Century development located to the south of Main Street (The Croft) and further modern development spreading north, east and south along Low Road, Atch Lench Road and Evesham Road.

The Church Lench Conservation Area covers the village's historic core. This includes a number of listed buildings⁴ and several historic unlisted buildings that are considered non designated heritage assets (effectively locally listed buildings) including, for example, Church Farm House, Pilgrims Cottage, Pilgrims Rest and Bank House.

The village and Conservation Area have a strongly rural character that is derived from the interaction between the surrounding countryside, which directly adjoins the historic core of the village to the north of Main Street, extensive planting of trees and hedges along the lanes within the village, private gardens and views between buildings and through the village.

There is an eclectic mix of housing around the centre ranging from ancient timber framed black and white cottages to 19th and 20th Century dwellings as per the examples overleaf on the Evesham Road.

During the last Century there has been slow, mostly linear expansion along the north, east and southerly arterial roads, namely: Low Road, Atch Lench Road and Evesham Road. There has been very little expansion along Ab Lench Road.

The general trend over the last sixty years really has been for a variety of houses and bungalows of varying styles and sizes, most with large rear gardens and many along Atch Lench Road set well back with large front gardens.

5.1.1 Evesham Road

Evesham Road runs south from the centre of Church Lench towards Lenchwick and Evesham. After one mile there is a crossroads (at Handgate Farm) with turnings to Sheriffs Lench and Harvington. It is a narrow undulating metalled road subject to a 30mph speed limit within the village boundaries (Fig 1, page 11).

The first homes seen on entering the 30mph area on the west side are recently built with a modern design. Further along the road is a mix of 20th Century houses and bungalows on the west side with front gardens, hedges and trees and with rear gardens having views south-west to the Malvern Hills (Figs 2 & 3, page 11).

On the East side are a mix of houses - some large dwellings set well back from the road with a lot of greenery evident. Some have post and rail fencing reflecting their earlier agricultural/horticultural heritage and have paddocks and agricultural land attached.

⁴ Fig: Listed buildings

The Conservation area on Evesham Road starts with The Butts (a Grade II listed house) which is set higher up the eastern side of the hill (Fig 4, page 12) and directly opposite is an ancient timber framed black and white Grade II listed cottage which used to be the original Post Office in the 19th and early 20th Centuries (Fig 5, page 12).

The road continues into Main Street, Church Lench, with a left turning to Ab Lench Road. Just before the school playing fields there is a parking area on the east side which used to be the old village pond (Fig 4, page 12). This has historical value as well as providing useful parking space and is proposed as a Local Green Space ⁵

To the west side of All Saints Church is an unmade track (heading in a northerly direction) and leads to the Village Hall car park and Village Hall (Fig 6, page 12).

On the west side of this track are two Grade II listed houses - the 15th Century Tudor Cottage and The Old Bakehouse (Fig 7, page 12).

Evesham Road Church Lench

Fig 1 Evesham Rd looking north

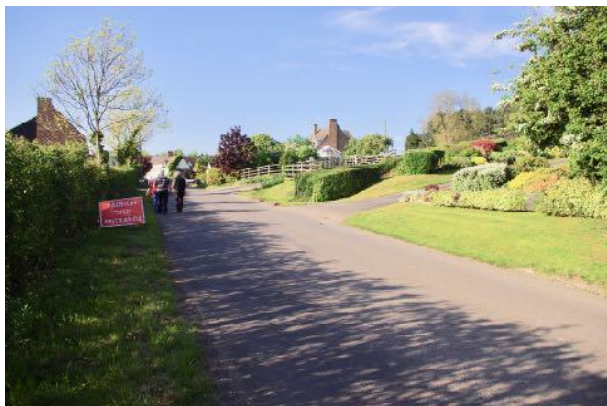


Fig 2 Typical views to south west



⁵ Policy 13 Local Green Space 3

Fig 3 Evesham Rd looking south



Fig 4 The Butts- conservation area



Fig 5 The Old Post House



Fig 6 Junction of Evesham Road, Main Street and Ab Lench Road



Fig 7 Tudor Cottage and Old Bakehouse (Conservation area)



5.1.2 Ab Lench Road

At the junction of Evesham Rd and Main Street is Ab Lench Road (Fig 12, page 15) which is a narrow country road running down the western slope of the hill to the small hamlet of Ab Lench (approximately 1.5 km west from the boundary of Church Lench). The road is undulating as it follows the topography of the surrounding countryside.

The properties on Ab Lench Road consist of barn conversions/newer houses (Fig 13, page 15), a post war bungalow and The Old Rectory set back from the road behind trees and hedging at the edge of the village.

On the south side is a modern house with black and white facade (Fig 15, page 15) and then the Lenches Club (Fig 16, page 15). The Club has been here since 1948 when a local landowner provided a site in Church Lench for the development of a private club. It now serves as the Lenches' only fully licensed establishment and host to many social activities.

The Lenches Club is run for the members by the members and boasts a large games room with television, pool tables, darts and a skittle alley. This room also doubles as a sizeable function room, complete with permanent, raised staging area and dance floor. The Club also has a quiet, comfortable Members Lounge, Bar and Terrace, with exceptional sweeping and unspoiled views over the Worcestershire countryside towards the Malvern Hills (Fig 17, page 15)

There is a large car park and a children's playground maintained by the Parish Council. The Club is a very valued amenity for the whole of the Lenches but also attracts members and customers from all around the Vale.

Ab Lench Road

Fig 12 Entry to Ab Lench Road



Fig 15 Looking west towards the Lenches Club



Fig 13 Ab Lench Road Barn conversions



Fig 16 The Lenches Club



Fig 17 Views from the Club car park towards The Malverns



Fig 14 Removed

To the west of the Lenches Club are the Lenches Sport & Recreation Club facilities with floodlit Tennis courts (Fig 18, page 17) small tennis pavilion, a Boules court and a large sports field for cricket, football and netball with a wooden fronted traditional sports pavilion. This field is often used for larger village functions and is a regular haunt of local dog walkers. The sports pavilion is in the course of being expanded, and an amphitheatre has been built and is now fully operational as an entertainment venue.

Accessible from the Sports Club field is Yates' Community Orchard (Fig 19, page 17). This Orchard lies on the western slope of the village behind houses on Evesham Road. It was donated to the Lenches Sports and Recreation Club for the benefit of the community by local residents David & Carol Yates. It was opened in 2008 by HRH the Duke of Kent. There is now a gazebo for shelter and shade.

The orchard is used during term time by the children of Church Lench First School for their 'forest school' activity and is kept in good order by volunteers. People are welcome to have picnics in the orchard, and to pick any fruit that is ready for picking. It is a popular spot for visitors and children and it is also favoured by local beekeepers. It is a valuable local green space to be protected for future generations to enjoy.

It should be noted that leaving Church Lench along Ab Lench Road there are a few isolated properties including Rookery Farm and Brookfield Holiday Cottages. There are outstanding landscape views from Ab Lench Road (Fig 20, page 17) with rolling open countryside, mixed hedging and copses, and with the ancient woodlands of Old Yew Hill Wood and Yeald Wood half a kilometre to the north.

Ab Lench Road (continued)

Fig 18 Tennis Courts and playing fields



Fig 19 Yates Community Orchard



Fig 20 Road to Ab Lench



5.1.3 Main Street, The Croft and Malthouse Lane

Main Street continues from the Evesham Road junction by the Church and School and slopes gently downhill in an easterly direction towards the T junction with Atch Lench Road and Low Road. On Main Street itself there is a mix of old and new, two and three story dwellings, with a number of half-timbered traditional medieval buildings typical of many houses in the Wychavon area (Fig 21, page 19). This is the oldest part of the village and includes most of the Conservation Area and a number of listed buildings.

On the north side of Main Street at the highest point of the village is All Saints Church (Fig 22, page 19) which is the defining feature of Church Lench.

The graveyard surrounds the church on 3 sides with a yew hedge to the west, a War Memorial and a very large and distinctive old cedar tree dominates the church front (Fig 23, page 19). The porch is another distinctive feature of the Church as is the War Memorial (Fig 24, page 19).

Across the road from the church to the south is Church Lench First School, a fine Victorian building (Fig 25, page 19). This is a small primary school, with 68 pupils on the roll. The school frontage has metal railings on top of an old red brick wall; the school playing field is grassed, with mature trees on the boundary (Fig 26, page 19).

Main Street and Conservation Area

**Fig 21 Main Street
(Conservation Area)**



Fig 24 All Saints Church Porch



Fig 22 All Saints Church

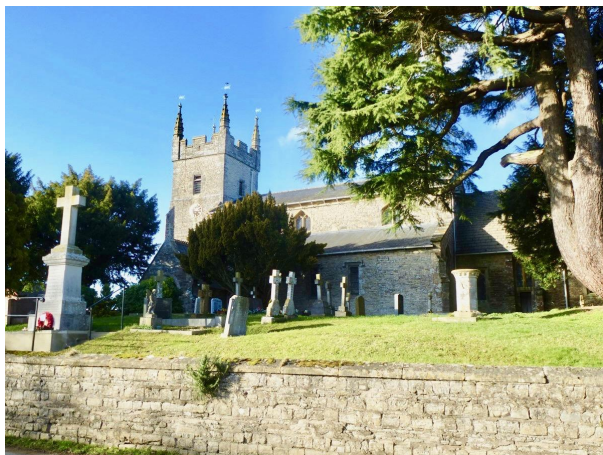


Fig 25 Church Lench First School



Fig 23 All Saints Cedar Tree



Fig 26 School playing fields



On the east side of the school boundary is 'The Tuer' which is an unmade track leading down to two houses and a public footpath bordering open fields along the southern edge of the village.

Progressing down Main Street takes you past a mix on both sides of some distinctive listed and unlisted old timber black and white and timber framed cottages and a few large 19th and 20th Century houses, all in the Conservation Area (Figs 27 - 31, page 21).

On the corner of Main Street and The Croft (see below) there is a large white-rendered house which was once the village shop and Post Office (Fig 32, page 23). The shop & Post Office closed in the 1990s, after which the property was fully converted into a dwelling house.

Moving east, down Main Street there continues to be a mix of large old houses and black and white cottages (Figs 33 & 34, page 22) as well as old timber framed cottages, and 1970s houses on the right. A large redbrick house (Bank House - Fig 35, page 22) can be seen on the left approaching Low Road.

Around the junction of Main Street with Malthouse Lane on the right (Fig 36, page 22) there are a number of old black and white, timber framed workers' cottages.

Main Street and Conservation Area continued

Fig 33 Manor House Main Street



Fig 34 Main Street - new & old mix



Fig 35 Bank House Main Street



Fig 36 Old Black & White Cottages at entrance to Malthouse Lane



Malthouse Lane, Church Lench

Malthouse Lane is a narrow lane and mostly within the Conservation area. There are some traditional old timber framed workers cottages and some Victorian terraced properties, as well as Toy Cottage (Fig 38 below) which is black and white and retains its thatched roof. This is reputedly the smallest timber-framed house in Worcestershire, hence the name.

Further down Malthouse Lane is the old 'Malt House' itself, a large cream house which has been extended in the past, and a few more modern detached houses, and dormer bungalows (Figs 39,40 below).

Malthouse Lane

**Fig 38 Toy Cottage
(The Malthouse behind)**

**Fig 40 early 20th Century Orchard
Cottage**



Fig 39 Old Victorian terraced houses



The Croft, Church Lench

The Croft is a ribbon development cul-de-sac consisting of detached and semi-detached houses and also terraced, semi-detached and detached bungalows built mostly in the fifties/sixties (Figs 41-43 below). Most of these are privately owned and some are low cost/affordable properties.

The Croft is of a pleasant uniform design and open layout with communal lawned areas and good footpaths fronting many of the properties. Gardens tend to be small front lawns and manageable rear plots with well kept grass verges. The road is level and has a left hand curve which slopes gently down and east-wards.

The Croft

Fig 41 The Croft – entrance



Fig 43 Bungalows in the Croft



Fig 42 Houses in The Croft



5.1.4 Low Road.

Opposite Malthouse Lane running north is Low Road. This road leads to the neighbouring small village of Rous Lench (c3 km). Housing development on Low Road follows the linear settlement pattern of Church Lench with mixed dwellings flanking both sides.

The road is a narrow metalled road rising gently upwards into the village. There are no pavements or street lighting along the whole length of this road and the road side edges simply join the gardens and some green verges.

The road is controlled by 30 mph limit signs starting at the entrance to the village and 30 mph warnings are also painted on the road just past these signs.

The road is bounded along most of its length by hedges of varying heights and large native trees which give it a very rural and green appearance and open fields and woodland can be seen between many houses.

Approaching the entrance to the village from open countryside before the development boundaries begin there are a number of traditionally built houses constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Fig 43, page 29).

In addition to domestic homes there is a commercial livery yard/riding stables to the north, a small-holding and a kennels just beyond the village boundaries.

Moving south down Low Road, the buildings are a mix of styles and designs ranging from 20th Century houses built of traditional red brick and slate, to a few older cottages several hundred years old - one black and white with a thatched roof and others altered and extended over the years (Figs 44, 45, page 29).

Close by on the western side is a large well tended orchard which is one of the few remaining orchards in the parish. Some 30+ years ago the whole of the land behind Low Road and the village was down to orchards and Church Lench was on the AA 'Blossom Trail'. We propose this orchard as local green space 1⁶.

The only 'backfill' along this road is on the eastern side behind Brock House halfway down where a dwelling has been built by a local Farrier.

There are and a number of newly built large modern houses with typical values over £450k (Fig 46, page 29). Unfortunately, some of these houses filled in green and rural gaps between existing homes. The Parish Survey 2016 included critical comments about the loss of rural character resulting from loss of green views between houses.

providing increased i Further along are a number of fairly modern (1950+) bungalows along the east of the road approaching the village proper (Fig 47, page 29)

Most houses can be seen from the road and the preponderance is for smaller front gardens but extensive rear gardens. Behind the eastern side houses is open countryside falling downhill and across the shallow valley. Some important views can still be seen between houses in places.

The western side houses closer to the village centre are built on sloping land going up to the crest of the Lenches hill. Some large new houses have been built close to the end of Low Road in the last 10 to 15 years which have again closed green gaps between houses. The building work along Low Road caused significant disruption from noise and mud for several years. The large end house (Fig 48, page 29) was built on a rather untidy paddock and while large it has improved the visual appearance of the junction with Main Street and Atch Lench Road.

Approaching the village centre Low Road stops at a T junction, with Main Street to the right running westerly into the village centre and Atch Lench

⁶ Policy 13 Local Green Spaces 1

Road to the left running easterly. Almost directly opposite the junction and offset to the right is Malthouse Lane. The houses facing the Low Road exit are distinctive traditional old farm workers black and white buildings which are part of the Church Lench Conservation Area. (See Main Street comments earlier).

On the grass verge on the corner of Low Road and Atch Lench Road is a large green BT/Open Reach control unit which may be ugly but it is evidence that fibre optic broadband is now in the village and internet speeds for a greater number of people than previously.

Low Road Church Lench

**Fig 43 Village entrance
looking North**



**Fig 46 New homes (2015)
built as infill**



Fig 44 The Cottage



**Fig 47 Typical 20th century
bungalows**



**Fig 45 Grade II listed
Beehive Cottage**



Fig 48 1990s modern house



5.1.5 Atch Lench Road, Church Lench.

From the junction with Main Street and Low Road, Atch Lench Road is a fairly narrow road sloping downhill. It runs from west to east down the a shallow valley to Whitsun Brook at the bottom of the hill before rising up a steep hill, up to the small village of Atch Lench.

Whitsun Brook runs around the village boundaries and has been a home to great crested newts in the past. An Iron Age skeleton was discovered in the banks to the north of the village some years ago.

Atch Lench Road has experienced linear development throughout the 19th and 20th Century and has an eclectic mix of residential properties including bungalows and extended bungalows, dormer style 1970s houses and some larger red brick/rendered houses.

Most dwellings on the northern side of the road are set back from the road with some long garden frontages and large rear gardens which mostly back onto extant medieval ridge and furrow fields on the hillside behind (Fig 56, page 30).

On the south side of Atch Lench Road, moving downhill, there a large number of white rendered, semi-detached houses originally designed as social housing/ Council houses but now a mixture of privately owned & Housing Association residential properties. The frontages vary from open views of the properties to a mix of hedging and brick walls of various heights.

There are no pavements on the northern side of the road, only grass verges.

Many driveways have had brick edging inserted by the Council to prevent run off of rain water from the road into gardens. The south side is paved from the bend down to the bridge over Whitsun Brook at the bottom of the hill and the end of the village (fig 57, page 30).

It should be noted that because of the steady incline down the length of Atch Lench Road it is subject to significant rainwater run-off and a few times has overwhelmed the drainage system.

Atch Lench Road continues out of the village steeply uphill towards Atch Lench and the narrow road is bounded by natural roadside hedging on both sides (Fig 58, page 30).

Atch Lench Road Church Lench (continued)

Fig 56 Bungalow set back N-side



Fig 58 Road up to Atch Lench



Fig 57 Looking uphill to Atch Lench



Fig 59 Eastern entrance to Church Lench from Atch Lench



Farm Lane forks off to the north at this sharp bend where there is a grass island with a medium sized sycamore tree in the centre (Figs 58, 59, page 30). The land between Church Lench and Atch Lench is mixed arable and livestock (horses and sheep) with traditional hedged fields. This land forms the natural gap between Atch Lench and Church Lench.

Farm Lane, Atch Lench

Farm Lane is a narrow country lane (Fig 60, page 32) running north from its junction with Atch Lench Road. It runs for about 1.0 km along the bottom of the valley between Church Lench and Atch Lench. It is a popular bridleway and walking/cycling route to the Ragley Hall Estate (<https://www.ragley.co.uk/>)

Farm Lane is bounded by natural mixed hedges and trees along most of its length. After approx 600m, there are two farmhouses (Fig 61, page 32) and a small settlement of barn conversions where it becomes unadopted farm track closed to unauthorised traffic through a locked gate with access for walkers and riders. This track leads through private woodland (Salford Coppice) belonging to a pheasant shoot business and leading eventually onto the Ragley Estate land. The ancient Atch Lench Wood lies to north east of the farm track.

Farm Lane, Atch Lench

Fig 60 Farm Lane



Fig 61 White Rails Farmhouse and barn conversions in background



5.2 Atch Lench

Atch Lench is an ancient settlement sitting on the top of a hill (height 105 m above sea level) overlooking Harvington, the Vale of Evesham and the Cotswolds to the east and the Malvern Hills to the west.

Atch Lench was part of the land which belonged to the Church from early times and earliest written references date back to the 7th Century AD.

The village is a typical Timbered Plateau settlement with linear development and in the heart of the village there is a small Conservation Area of older houses and cottages. The village is residential with the exception of Manor Farm. Atch Lench is separated from Church Lench by a distance of c.300m.

The approach to Atch Lench from Harvington, about 2.5 km to the east, is via a narrow country road, lined with established mixed hedgerows and some native trees.

Before entering the village, from Harvington is a community owned orchard of about 11 acres. This is proposed as a Local Green Space (Atch Lench 1). The orchard has a frontage to the road of about 500m (Fig 62, page 35).

On entering the village, on the right is the Atch Lench Baptist Chapel, built in the 1850s (Fig 69, page 41). The chapel is now privately owned, and has been converted into commercial premises. An unmade track runs north along the side of the Baptist Chapel graveyard and serves two houses, one of which is an old three storey brick built farmhouse (Firs Farmhouse - Fig 63, page 35). The track and bridleway leads to open countryside and arable fields and runs along the crest of a hill, called the 'Lenches Ridgeway' with panoramic views to the east, of Harvington and the Cotswolds (Fig 68, page 37).

The Atch Lench Conservation Area includes most of the Eastern half of the hamlet from The Firs and Manor Cottage in the east to Court House in the west.

Atch Lench

Fig 62 Lenches Community Orchard



Fig 66 Firs Farmhouse



**Fig 63
Manor Farm Cottage Atch Lench**



Continuing along the main street of Atch Lench, on the left (south side) there is a large old farmhouse (Manor Farm) with a high walled frontage and a post box embedded in the wall. Farm buildings can be seen to the rear. The farm is mainly livestock and some arable.

Moving west towards Church Lench the road narrows to a left hand bend between a red brick, barn conversion and The Old Manse - on the north side (Figs 69 & 70, page 37). Continuing along the main street there are a number of old timber-framed, thatched cottages and some Victorian red brick tiled (Figs 70, 71, page 41),

Half way down the main street, on the south side, there is an ancient cruck frame black and white thatched cottage on the left (Manor Farm Cottage - Fig 63, page 35) which was apparently built before the Domesday Book and is still occupied today. This is the start of the extensive Conservation Area which runs from here to the far side of Court House Farm over half way through the village.

There are no pavements in the village beyond the Chapel and frontages tend to be either directly onto the roadside or with small front gardens - some with parking space and hedges or small stone walls.

Leaving the Conservation area there is an eclectic mix of more modern houses and bungalows of differing sizes and with larger front gardens and large rear gardens. Most of these are set higher than the road on both sides (Figs 72, 73, page 37). There are a number of large trees in gardens and most front gardens are hedged or walled.

There are defined Development Boundaries protecting the village following the usual pattern along the rear of the property gardens and there is no obvious space for further infill development.

Atch Lench continued

Fig 68 SE views from Ridgeway



Fig 71 Willow & Taylors Hay cottages



Fig 69 Baptist Chapel & Old Manse behind



Fig 72 High street looking East



Fig 70 Looking back to Old Manse on left and listed B&W cottages



Fig 73 Typical 1930s bungalow



5.3 Ab Lench

Ab Lench is small hamlet just over 1 km east of Church Lench with a dozen scattered dwellings and farms along Ab Lench Road, Bishampton Road and Rous Lench Road either side of the central T junction of all three roads. There were five working farms of which four were sold off in the twenties and thirties. It is in open countryside at the bottom of Bishampton Bank down the western slopes of the Lenches plateau (Fig 74, page 43). There are one or two older farm buildings on the way down the road built of red brick and tiled such as Rookery Farm (Fig 75, page 43). There is a large and active Lenchwood Christian Centre at Spitten Farm (Fig 76, page 43).

Entering the hamlet there are a few red brick houses - some with a farming history (Fig 77, page 43) and then farm buildings on the cross roads. Brookfield Farm (197 acres of arable and dairy land) has sold its cows as keeping livestock becomes less attractive and is now converting barns into private dwellings (Fig 78, page 43).

Ten small holiday cottages in the centre of Ab Lench have been converted back into private dwellings (2017/18) and have added significantly to the stock of affordable small homes in the parish (Fig 79, page 43). This change after several decades is a result of increased business rates making the venture unprofitable.

Ab Lench has been part of the old Rous Lench Manorial properties for centuries. Buildings are mainly red brick and tile with one or two more modern buildings. Some of the older ones were rebuilt in the mid 1800s in the so called 'Great Rebuilding'.

Those buildings are easily recognised today as they invariably include a prominent date-stone, showing the year of construction and the relevant initials (ChRB or WKWCC) (see below).

CHRB name and date stone 1870



Ab Lench

Fig 74 Going down to Ab Lench



Fig 77 Entering Ab Lench



Fig 75 Rookery Farm



**Fig 78
Farm buildings, Rous Lench Road**



**Fig 76 Lenchwood Christian
Centre - Spitten Farm**



Fig 79 Converted holiday cottages



5.4 Sheriffs Lench

A scattered settlement in the open countryside with a long agricultural history sitting approximately 3.4 km south of Church Lench and approached from the west (from Bishampton road) along a narrow country road (Hill Furze Road). The road is bounded by natural mixed hedging with occasional glimpses of open country.

The village is set in a linear pattern in the middle of open countryside with mixed farming of arable and livestock and hedged fields with Bishampton Bank and Church Lench to the north, Hipton Hill to the east and Craycombe to the south and south east. There are no facilities in Sheriffs Lench, although there is a bus-stop at Handgate Farm, just to the north of the village.

Heading south-west from Handgate Farm, towards Sheriffs Lench, the first buildings on the right hand side are those of the old Observatory⁷ (behind barbed wire) which are Grade II listed and have been abandoned since the 1960s. Early in the second world war 2.25 acres of land at O.S. field number 2943 were requisitioned by the Air Ministry and a VHF wireless station to serve RAF Pershore was established which later became a ballistic missile and satellite tracking station. All activity ceased in 1990. The Wychavon Way footpath forms one side of the site boundary.

The first cottages in the village on the right are traditional old black and white timber framed cottages of probably similar age (17th/18th century) and (Figs 81, 82, page 46).

Behind these cottages, there is a medieval site in the field behind (Fig 80, page 46).

The next cottages (Forge Cottage and Amber Cottage) (Fig 83, page 46) were built of the local blue lias stone in 1740 and 1760. Further along on the left are two semi detached red brick houses which carry the marker stone (WKWCC 1867) showing they were part of Chafy-Chafy's mid-19th century rebuilding programme in the parish⁸(Fig 84, page 46).

⁷ <https://www.28dayslater.co.uk/threads/sheriffs-lench-observatory-worcestershire>

⁸ See A3 above p5 - Historical Development of South Lenches Parish

Sheriffs Lench

Fig 80 Entry to Sheriffs Lench



Fig 83 Forge and Amber Cottages



**Fig 81
17th Century black & white
cottages**



**Fig 84 Rebuilt 1867
(WKWCC marker)**



**Fig 82 Willow Cottage
with local blue lias stone footing**



Fig 85a
Well stacked tudor style house



Fig 85b with religious message



Here the road forks with a narrow lane off to the left which takes you out of the main village to Sheriffs Lench Farm and The Pantiles. On the far corner we find an imposing large 18th Century house with red brick lower walls and mock Tudor black and white timber framed upper floor with slate tiles and sash windows. The tall, imposing chimney stacks are a very distinctive feature which can be found on many old houses in the area. The words: "HERE HAVE WE NO CONTINUING CITY BUT WE SEEK ONE TO COME" are printed in large white letters along the sill of the upper floor frame of this house (Figs 85a, 85b, above). Turning left down this lane we find a few modern terraced redbrick houses (Fig 86) set close to the road with hedge and post and rail fencing. Just past these houses, are open fields with sweeping views (Fig 87) south-east to the Cotswold escarpment.

Fig 86 Redbrick modern houses



Fig 87 Views east and south



These fields have been fenced off and have been planted with trees as part of the Heart of England's objective of replanting missing woodland the same as they are doing on the western side of the village. There is one last bungalow on the right (Fig 88) and the next properties are Sheriffs Lench Farm (Fig 89) some 600m further along in open countryside.

Fig 88 Last bungalow on track



**Fig 89
Team passing Sheriffs Lench
Farm**



**Fig 90 Sheriffs Lench Manor
Farm House**

Fig 91 Sheriffs Lench Court



Fig 92 Manor Farm



Returning back to the main road and continuing through the village we reach Grade II listed Sheriffs Lench Manor Farm house (Fig 90) followed by Sheriffs Lench Court - a range of mainly terraced/mews style barn conversions of red brick and slate tiles (Fig 91) and Manor Farm House of traditional old red brick design alongside Barns and other farm buildings (Fig 92).

After passing the exit sign for Sheriffs Lench heading east along Hill Furze Road into open countryside, after some 250m there is a sharp right hand bend with a very large old Farm House and other farm buildings set back from the road (Poplars farm Cottage Fig 93). Along this road is traditional hedging with a few glimpses of the open countryside which were more clearly seen from the track taken earlier.

A further 250m along the road there is a small group of well separated large redbrick properties with Badgers Set on the right.(Fig 94, page 51). There is the old well visible on the edge of the garden. Treetops and Five Oaks Farm (Figs 95, 96, page 51) and and Badgers Hill Farm are to the left at the top of Badgers Hill (Fig 97, page 51)

On the right hand northern side of the road opposite Badgers Hill Farm are large old traditionally built redbrick and slate roof houses set back along a narrow track. Following this track will take you north along Bishampton Bank to the Badgers Hill nature reserve. There are several semi industrial barns/ units along this track with one more large old house. Looking east from Badgers Set track we can see views stretching out towards Sheriffs Lench and north easterly to Church Lench.

Fig 94 Badgers sett & well



Fig 96 Five Oaks Farm entrance



Fig 95 Treetops



Fig 97 The top of Badgers hill passing Five Oaks Farm



Very extensive planting of thousands of saplings is evident in nearby fields which now belong to the Heart of England organisation which is dedicated to replacing traditional old woods. Villagers were involved in helping with this and assurances have been given to reopen and extend many of the footpaths in this area as part of the replanting exercise.