

Your community, your voice

This summary gives brief details of the Neighbourhood Plan. We encourage you to read the full document which is available, along with all supporting evidence on the following website:

www.southlenchesparishcouncil.org

Paper versions of the full Neighbourhood Plan are available as a reference at the Lenches Sports and Social Club, Ellenden Farm Shop, Harvington and All Saints Church, Church Lench. Please view digitally if you can as the document is over 50 pages.

Local feedback is essential, please comment via:

- the enclosed paper feedback form
- feedback form available on our website: www.southlenchesparishcouncil.org
- on-line using this link—
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SLNPREg14>
- use the QR code



What happens next?

There is a strict process which dictates the production of a Neighbourhood Plan and ensures that the final result represents the true wishes of the community. The Formal Consultation Period for the Plan runs from 11th November to 23rd December 2025.

After this period we collate all your comments and make any necessary changes. The Plan is then submitted to Wychavon District Council who will conduct their own consultation and appoint an independent examiner. This ensures that there are no areas of the plan which contravene other local or national policies that would prevent its implementation.

Following examination Wychavon District Council conduct a local referendum allowing the community a final opportunity to either accept or reject the plan.

If the plan is accepted, it remains in force until 2040 and will be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure it remains current and up-to-date.

Johnsons
PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

Local estate agents and letting agents, Johnsons Property Consultants have been selling and letting homes in the Vale of Evesham for over 25 years. They are rooted in the communities that they serve and have supported several causes and events in The Lenches during recent years. We are grateful for their support for the Neighbourhood Plan and our open day event.

South Lenches



Your community
Your voice

Neighbourhood Plan 2025–2040 Executive Summary Pre-Submission Regulation 14 November 2025



Welcome to our Neighbourhood Plan

This plan has been produced on behalf of our community by a team of local residents. We have consulted widely in a number of different settings in order to ensure that the plan meets your needs. We have spoken with older people, younger people, families and people from all four corners of the **South Lenches** in order to gain as many different views as possible about how our rural community should develop. We hope that you will take the time to read the summary and also the full document, but, most importantly, that you will let us know what you think.

This Plan belongs to us all in the **South Lenches** and your feedback is important. The Neighbourhood Plan extends to over 50 pages and is more than 15,000 words. This summary can only serve to give a taster of what is included. We want it to show you the areas covered by the plan, but also for it to encourage you to read the full document, to ask any questions you may have about its content and to give feedback as you feel appropriate.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

On 10th September 2015, Wychavon District Council granted approval to start the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan.

The purpose of the neighbourhood plan is to sit alongside the South Worcestershire Development Plan (the Local Plan) to guide development within the Parish and provide direction to any interested parties wanting 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 a reflection of matters that are of considerable importance to the **South Lenches**, its residents, businesses and community groups.



Policy 19 Camping & Caravan Sites

Objectives :

- ⇒ **Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land**
- ⇒ **Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area**

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

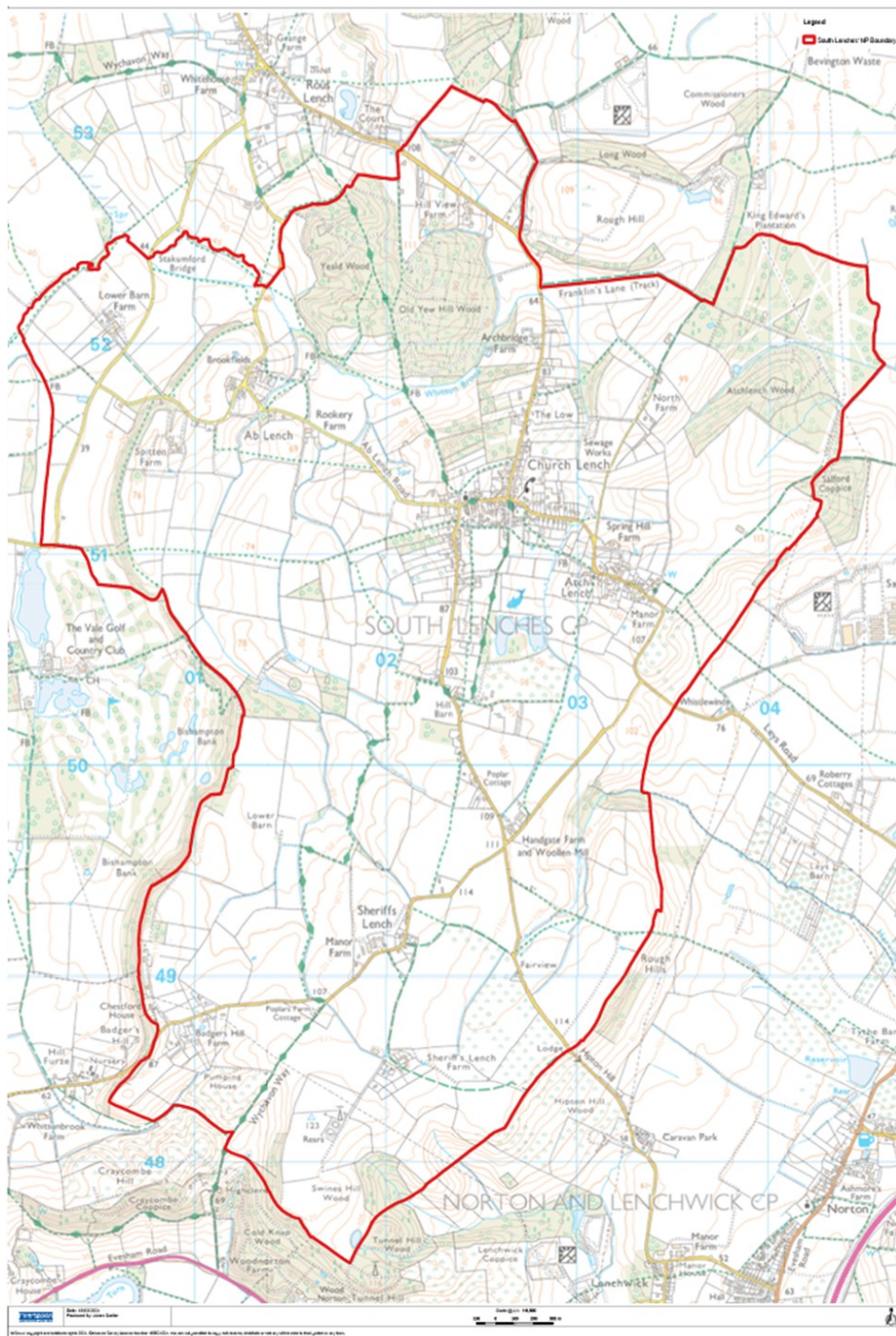
- ◆ comprise sensitive, small-scale sites that would not be intrusive in the landscape
- ◆ have good road access, avoiding routes through residential or other sensitive areas where significant traffic movements would be severely detrimental to the living conditions of residents or cause harm to designated 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.



The **South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan** has been developed by volunteers from the Parish to influence any development allocated by South Worcestershire Development Plan according to the wishes of the community; ensure that development is sympathetic to and improves the look and feel of the parish; protect the areas' history, environment, and biodiversity, so maintaining the essential character of the **South Lenches** and provide the parish with the opportunity to access 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy to improve local facilities.

Our policies have been written in the context of the current planning system. Therefore our policies are written with a positive intent about what our community would like to see (as opposed to negative statements about what we don't want). Central Government provides planning policies set out in national guidance, and the South Worcestershire Development Plan provides planning policy at a Regional level. The policies in our neighbourhood plan are there to provide guidance in addition to that set at a national and regional level, and so our policies need to provide local detail. Therefore, in planning law, the policies of our neighbourhood plan will be used alongside these other planning policies and guidance by those proposing development and those making decisions on planning applications.

From consultation and other evidence, we have developed 14 objectives under 4 themes which provide the 'direction of travel' for the neighbourhood plan. Our objectives and policies aligned suggest how we will meet the challenges identified by the Parish, between now and 2040. The objectives and themes are set out in the full document and provide the basis for the planning policies we have developed. Each policy has one or more objectives aligned to it and is clearly identified on the Policies Map.



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 18 Business & Employment

Objectives :

- ⇒ Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land
- ⇒ Recognise and respect the limitations of small, rural roads in relation to development needs
- ⇒ Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area

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 it 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.

- ◆ take appropriate mitigation of adverse impacts.
- ◆ avoid 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.
- ◆ avoid building designs that result in increased light spill from internal lighting without suitable mitigation.

Community

Policy 17 Community Facilities

Objectives:

- ⇒ Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land
- ⇒ Recognise and respect the limitations of small, rural roads in relation to development needs
- ⇒ Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area
- ⇒ Encourage increased access to the open countryside by maintaining and improving footpaths, especially between settlements

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following community facilities:

- ◆ Lenches & Sports Club (Church Lench)
- ◆ Children's Play Area (Church Lench)
- ◆ Church Lench Village Hall
- ◆ Church Lench First School (inc preschool)
- ◆ Atch Lench Community Orchard
- ◆ 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.

Challenges for the Parish of South Lenches

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address as far as possible the challenges that face the South Lenches community. We have identified these challenges as a result of an extensive Parish-wide survey in 2014 (the Parish Plan questionnaire) followed by a specific Neighbourhood Plan survey in December 2016 and updated surveys since. 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 and affordable to 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 / cycling conditions and damage to road surfaces.
- ◆ Protecting existing community services and providing for their changing needs, as well as providing for 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.

Our vision

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.

- 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 16 Dark Skies

Objective :

- ⇒ ***Protect and maintain the dark skies between our villages***

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

- ◆ meeting or exceeding the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance or successor guidance;
- ◆ avoiding unnecessarily visible lighting in designated wildlife sites or the surrounding landscape; and
- ◆ having regard to the following hierarchy:
 - avoid the installation of additional external lighting
 - install lighting necessary for its intended purpose or use at the lowest practical lumens value and avoid adverse impacts where possible.

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

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

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 15 Flood Mitigation

Objective :

- ⇒ **Ensure appropriate infrastructure is in place to deal with surface water and sewerage within any new development**

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

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:

Our policies

Housing

Policy 1 South Lenches Development Boundaries

Objectives:

- ⇒ **Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings**
- ⇒ **Prevent coalescence between villages to maintain each village's own identity**
- ⇒ **Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land**

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.

Policy 2 Housing Growth, Infill and Design

Objectives:

- ⇒ **Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings**
- ⇒ **Ensure all new development includes an appropriate mix of housing in terms of design and affordability to meet the objectively assessed housing need findings**
- ⇒ **Promote high levels of sustainability and energy**

- ⇒ **efficiency, including renewable energy systems**
- ⇒ **Prevent coalescence between villages to maintain each village's own identity**

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
- ◆ do not 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, car parking and green space/garden
- ◆ contribute towards a balanced mix of housing in the Plan area

Policy 3 Density of Development

Objective :

- ⇒ **Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings**

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:

- ◆ reflect the small-scale and fragmented building patterns, including maintaining visual gaps between buildings
- ◆ ensure soft boundary treatments (such as low walls, hedges and native species planting) are used on the

- Church Lench:
 - Orchard - Low Road
 - Church Lench School grounds
 - Village Pond
 - Cricket Ground
 - Yates Community Orchard
 - Church and Church yard
- Atch Lench:
 - Atch Lench Orchard
 - Atch Lench Graveyard

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

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

Policy 14 Valued Landscapes

Objectives :

- ⇒ **Preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches**
- ⇒ **Prevent coalescence between villages to maintain each village's own identity**
- ⇒ **Protect woodland areas, wildlife sites, natural and historic conservation areas**
- ⇒ **Protect valued landscapes and views**
- ⇒ **Protect and maintain the dark skies between our villages**

Developers will be expected to seek opportunities to develop, extend and improve the existing footpath and cycleway networks 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 13 Local Green Spaces

Objectives :

- ⇒ **Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings**
- ⇒ **Protect and enhance the villages' open spaces and conserve local green space**
- ⇒ **Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area**

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

boundaries with the public realm to avoid hard, urban edges and create a green transition between the built and open areas

- ◆ ensure that new driveways and accesses are no wider than is essential, and constructed in surface and kerbing materials to complement the rural feel and character
- ◆ avoid siting vehicle parking provision and ancillary buildings, such as bin stores and cycle shelters, so that they intrude into the street-scene

Policy 4 Affordable Housing Mix

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**

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 proposed 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;
- ◆ be indistinguishable in appearance from the market housing on site; and
- ◆ be 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 5 Market Housing Mix

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**

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 6 Design Guide & Local Character

Objectives:

- ⇒ **Preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches**
- ⇒ **Protect woodland areas, wildlife sites, natural and historic conservation**

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, full Neighbourhood Plan document)
- ◆ 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
- ◆ protect or enhance landscape and biodiversity by incorporating high quality native landscaping

agricultural land

- ⇒ **Encourage increased access to the open countryside by maintaining and improving footpaths, especially between settlements**

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 to the Neighbourhood Plan document) 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 12 Public Rights of Way

Objectives:

- ⇒ **Recognise and respect the limitations of small, rural roads in relation to development needs**
- ⇒ **Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area**
- ⇒ **Encourage increased access to the open countryside by maintaining and improving footpaths, especially between settlements**

- ⇒ **increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area**
- ⇒ **encourage increased access to the open countryside by maintaining and improving footpaths, especially between settlements**

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, which will be strongly resisted, in particular the fruit trees in Atch Lench Community Orchard and the Yates Community Orchard in Church Lench

Policy 11 Wildlife and Biodiversity

Objectives :

- ⇒ **Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings**
- ⇒ **Protect woodland areas, wildlife sites, natural and historic conservation areas**
- ⇒ **Protect and enhance the villages' open spaces and conserve local green space**
- ⇒ **Use land efficiently to preserve high quality**

- ◆ be consistent with Wychavon's Landscape Character Assessment and its guidance

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

Historic

Policy 7 Protection of Historic Environment

Objective

- ⇒ **Preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches**

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:
 - 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.

Environment

Policy 8 Small-Scale Sustainable and Renewable Energy

Objectives

- ⇒ **Promote high levels of sustainability and energy efficiency, including renewable energy systems**
- ⇒ **Ensure appropriate infrastructure is in place to deal with surface water and sewerage within any new development**

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 (or updated version)

Policy 9 High Quality Agricultural land

Objectives :

- ⇒ **Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings**
- ⇒ **Use land efficiently to preserve 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 10 Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Objectives:

- ⇒ **preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches**
- ⇒ **prevent coalescence between villages to maintain each village's own identity**
- ⇒ **protect woodland areas, wildlife sites, natural and historic conservation**
- ⇒ **protect and enhance the villages' open spaces and conserve local green space**
- ⇒ **use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land**
- ⇒ **recognise and respect the limitations of small, rural roads in relation to development needs**