INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION OF THE SOUTH LENCHES NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:
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To Wychavon District Council and South Lenches Parish Council

By email to Christopher Parkes, Planning Policy Officer, Wychavon District Council, and Cllr Carolyn Hodges, South Lenches Parish Council.

cc. Andrew Ford, WDC; and Kate Lee, Clerk SLPC

Dated 26 October 2026

Dear Carolyn and Chris

South Lenches Neighbourhood Development Plan Independent Examination – Examiner letter seeking clarification of matters

Further to my initial letter of 1 October 2026, I am writing to seek clarification of matters as part of my consideration whether the Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions. The draft Neighbourhood Plan contains 19 policies. I am satisfied most of those policies will meet the Basic Conditions, in some cases following modification that I intend to recommend. I am seeking clarification of matters in respect of 5 policies as follows:

Policy 1 South Lenches Development Boundaries

The development boundary for Church Lench appears to vary in the north, west and south, from the boundary included in the SWDPR. Does the evidence base include any greater detail of explanation than that set out in paragraph 3 of the text supporting the policy? I also invite comment with respect to the Basic Condition "Consideration whether the making of the neighbourhood development plan would not result in the development plan for the area of the authority proposing that less housing is provided by means of development taking place in that area than if the neighbourhood development plan were not to be made."

Policy 7 Protection of Historic Environment

I am satisfied the following heritage assets are identified as non-designated heritage assets for their importance to local distinctiveness, character, and sense of place:

- School Building Church Lench;
- The Old Manse, Atch Lench;
- The Observatory Sheriffs Lench

Paragraph 46 of the Neighbourhood Plan refers to "Ridge and Furrow earthworks". For these to be referred to in Policy 7 they must be clearly identified. Does the evidence base include a map showing the locations of the Ridge and Furrow earthworks?

Paragraph 46 of the Neighbourhood Plan also refers to “Areas of archaeological and historic interest south of Atch Lench, south of Church Lench and west of Farm Lane, Ab Lench, and Sheriffs Lench”. Is this a reference to 4 locations? For these to be referred to in Policy 7 they must be clearly identified. Does the evidence base include a map showing the locations of the areas of archaeological and historic interest?

Policy 13 Local Green Spaces

I am unable to reconcile Policies Maps 6 and 7 with the areas of land for each LGS in the Table below the maps. For example, the Church Lench Orchard at Low Road is stated to have an area more than double that of the Church Lench Cricket Ground, but this does not appear to be the case on Map 6. Please confirm the boundaries of the proposed LGSs are accurately identified on Maps 6 and 7, and confirm the area of land included within each of the 8 proposed Local Green Spaces.

Policy 14 Valued Landscapes

Planning policy must operate in the public interest. Please confirm the location from which each of the valued views listed in Table 5 of the Neighbourhood Plan (the origin of each arrow shown on Maps 8, 9 and 10 of the Neighbourhood Plan) is a public location, that is freely accessible to the public.

Policy 15 Flood Mitigation

Paragraphs 170 to 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024 version applies to this Independent Examination) set out a comprehensive policy approach to planning and flood risk including the sequential test and the exception test. Paragraph 181 of the Framework refers to the need to ensure development does not increase flood risk elsewhere, and that development in areas at risk of flooding in the light of flood risk assessment should inter alia incorporate sustainable drainage systems, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate. Paragraph 182 of the Framework states applications which could affect drainage on or around the site should incorporate sustainable drainage systems to control flow rates and reduce volumes of runoff, and which are proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal. Specific requirements are stated for sustainable drainage systems as part of proposals for major development sites.

Policy 15 duplicates aspects of national policy which it should not. The term “priority must be given” in part 2 of the policy and “are advised” in part 7 of the policy do not provide a basis for the determination of development proposals. Parts 2 ,4, 5, 6 and 8 of the policy overlap and are inconsistent. I invite comment on a possible modification to delete Policy 15 from the Neighbourhood Plan.

This request for clarification of matters and any response should be published on the District Council website. I request any response to these matters is agreed as a joint response of the Parish Council and the District Council wherever possible. To maintain the momentum of the Independent Examination I would be grateful if a reply could be sent to me by Noon on Monday 2 November 2026. I should be

grateful if the District Council and the Parish Council could acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Best regards

Chris Collison
Independent Examiner
Planning and Management Ltd