

South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan

2015-2041



Consultation Statement Appendix CS2

Regulation 14 Responses

Whole Plan	Natural England	Natural England does not have any specific comments on this draft neighbourhood plan.	noted	noted
Whole Plan	Environment Agency	We previously provided comments at the SEA and HRA Screening Opinion stage (copy attached) and referred you to the pro forma guidance. On the basis that the current submission is similar and proposes no sites in Flood Zone 2 or 3 we would have no further comments to offer at this time.	noted	noted

ref	Name	Details of grounds for supporting or objecting	SG response	NP action
Policies: 2; 4; 8 and 19	Michael Rixon	Objecting on various grounds: otherwise, I support the plan. i)POLICY 2: The planning permission for 19 developments in Low Road clash with the aims of Policy 2. Is there a ceiling for the number of proposed developments to 2040? It is important for the village community to retain local character and green spaces which would be fundamentally compromised by any future development.	i)noted	i)this permission is already granted therefore outside the scope of the NP

		ii)POLICY 4: Before any future development of the Lenches I believe the following measures must be implemented for benefit of the existing residents. Mains Water Supply: The current mains water supply to Church Lench is failing on a regular basis due to the age and poor condition of the supply pipe. With repairs being carried out at least 1 per month, any additional dwellings would put intolerable strain on an already fragile service. A mains water upgrade is imperative to the sustainable future of the village. Drainage: There are reports of sewage backing up into properties in Evesham Road when there has been heavy rain and in Whitsun Brook. Any additional properties would put intolerable strain on an already fragile service. A sewerage upgrade is imperative to the sustainable future of the village. iii)POLICY 8: Electricity supply: To adhere to the Neighbourhood Plan of renewable energy any new / existing properties will require electrical heating (no gas boilers of fires) and 22KW of electrical supply for 2 car charging points per property. With regular power cuts in the Lenches this would put intolerable strain on an already fragile service. An electrical power distribution upgrade would be required to meet these increase demands. iv)POLICY 19: Traffic Increase / Limited Facilities / Infrastructure There are poor local transport links within the village and no shop. The local community rely on cars and therefore any growth in local traffic will create increased noise, pollution and impact on pedestrian safety. Traffic calming measures would certainly help in controlling the flow and speed within the Lenches (this last sentence in italics). v)Suggestions about changes in the detailed answer to number 5.	ii)noted iii)noted iv)noted v)noted	ii)this is outside the scope of the existing Neighbourhood Plan iii)this is outside the scope of the existing Neighbourhood Plan iv)this is outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan v)noted
Policies 2, 4 and 5 of the executive summary booklet	Mr, Derek Ferguson	i)Policy 2 - the word 'infill' is mentioned with some qualifying factors. I understand residents are generally supportive of infill while maintaining visual gaps between buildings (Policy 3). However, I could not find mention of 'backfill', something I understand a significant (vast?) majority of residents are strongly opposed to (maintain historical linear development). I would have liked to have seen a specific objection to backfill in the text, in line with the view of the majority of residents. ii)Policies 4&5 - I read several references to development size ("net increase of 11 units", "nine or more units", "four to eight units"). It is my understanding that a	i)noted ii)noted	i)noted ii)noted

		significant majority of residents (again, vast majority?) have strong objections to ‘step changes’ in the size of the villages (large multi-unit developments, as opposed to single/small scale development). I would like to have seen perhaps a limit to the allowed number of units per development to reflect the strongly held view among residents. iii)Suggested additions to policies in answer to question 5 above.	iii)noted	iii)noted
All	Jon and Di Richardson	Seems like a reasonable plan	noted	noted
All	David and Josephine Edge	Hand-written form - no comment		
All	Mr David Chambers	Seems that all the planning necessary has gone into the document	noted	noted
All	Mr and Mrs Christina and James Bacon	Hand-written form, no comment		
Policy 5 Market Housing Mix or anywhere related to. Policy 6 Design	Mrs Karen Spence	Supporting. i)To maintain the character of the villages. ii)Housing Mix or anywhere related to. Policy 6 Design Guide and Local character etc. Is it possible to state that new development shall be constructed using permanent materials (e.g. brick and mortar). Temporary structures, including mobile homes, temporary dwellings, and timber buildings, will not be permitted, particularly where they would be visible from public roads or adjoining properties.	i)noted ii)noted	i)noted ii)noted

Guide and Local character etc.				
Policy12	Mr Jonathan Hazelwood	Improved footpath access in Church Lench	noted	noted
Vision and Objectives: Challenges Policy 7 - Policy 16 - Policy 17 - Community facilities	Richard and Janet Fellows	Commenting with proposed word changes and clarification questions i)Policy 7 - reference to 'historic heritage assets... below ground' Policy 16 - Dark skies reference not only between villages but within villages ii)page 27, first sentence - to what does 'heritage assets below ground' refer? At the Open Day we discussed reference to the local graveyard. iii)Policy 17 - Community facilities , a) needs to clarify what the Lenches Sports and Recreation Club means. There are 2 separate entities 'The Lenches Club' and then 'The Lenches Sports and Recreation Club' which includes the amphitheatre. iv)Page 14 - Point 4 'village' should be plural ie 'villages' v)Neighbourhood Plan Objectives, Page 16, Objective 12 -can the objective reference dark skies 'within' villages as well as between villages? Prevention of large bright lights and spotlights in gardens. point 4 should say 'villages' plural	i)noted ii)noted iii)noted iv)noted v)noted	i)noted ii)noted iii) iv)village changed to villages v)village changed to villages. Objective now reads”...<i>between and within</i>...”
All of the Plan	Julia Tyrrell	It is well presented and well researched and represents the view of the parishioners.	noted	noted
All of it	Lyndall Bagnall	The comm. (committee - ed) has provided such a full survey - with the best interests of the community in mind.	noted	noted

All the Plan	Hilary Bond	Very comprehensive report which addresses issues	noted	noted
ALL	Celia Hall	It has taken in points I made in the questionnaire.	noted	noted
All	Mrs Mandy Latham	A good-measured development of the plan overall. As a whole I feel the plan is a good, measured approach to the meet the needs of and protect the integrity of our community. No specific comments on individual policies which have been developed well to reflect the movement to date on the original plan.	noted	noted
The whole plan	Jonathan Fletcher	The plan is a well-constructed, positive document.	noted	noted
All	Mr Peter Burleigh	I believe the Neighbourhood Plan as presented is fit for purpose. I do not propose further changes.	noted	noted
Policy 5 - Market Housing Mix	Mrs Janet Tonks	i)I can't really see the point in one-bedroom dwellings. I bought my own 2 bed house when I was 22 and took in a lodger to help with the cost of running the house. Also, I was able to sell it quicker and move up the housing ladder because it had 2 bedrooms. I would prefer to see affordable 2 bed houses. Policy 19 Camping and Caravan Sites ii)Maybe a definition of what is a caravan, I would personally like static caravans excluded, personally I think they are a blot on the landscape. In addition, any site I think should have provision for the correct removal of chemical toilet waste from caravans. Maybe a limit on the number of caravans and whether or not clarify whether caravan storage is allowed. Policy 8 Small Scale Sustainable and Renewable Energy iii)Not sure this is relevant but thought I would comment.....I would love to get solar power panels put on my garage but because permitted development rights were removed on our property, we will have to seek planning for this, but no problem if I want to put up a satellite dish or Alarm system, doesn't seem very consistent	i)noted Policy 19 ii)noted Policy 8 iii)noted	i)noted Policy 19 ii)outside the scope of the NP Policy 8 iii)noted

Density and development	Mr, Tim Phillips	i)With the continued expected development leading to higher traffic density, there should be more active traffic calming and management. The continued growth of the villages leads to increasing volumes of commuter, and business traffic, often driven with speed. There is little or no pavements in most of the Lenches, so active traffic slowing, with road off-sets, potentially gentle ramps or other calming measures should be considered. We regularly here the screeching of tyres in Atch Lench for example. ii)More traffic calming to offset growing volumes of local cars, commuters and business drivers.	i)noted ii)noted	i)outside the scope of the NP ii)Responsibility of Highways Authority through the Parish Council
Pages 1,3 and 5	Mrs Carolyn Hodges	i)Supports the community feedback ii)Maps should be updated to take into account changes for the Orchard on Low Road, Church Lench Map needs to show precise boundaries for the orchard as planning application has been submitted and accepted for the front part of the Orchard.	i)noted ii)noted	i)noted ii)maps have been updated
Whole Plan	Richard Fellows	i)I support the production of the Plan and largely agree with the current draft which, on the whole is very good. Whilst I appreciate the amount of work that has been done it is disappointing that it has taken ten years to get to this point. Please contact me by email if you want to discuss my comments or if you need any help updating any of the files. Suggested changes: I have made a large number of suggestions and comments. These should be reviewed and the plan updated before it is submitted to the District Council for Review. Please see attached file with details of all the changes I am suggesting and a few comments where I do not understand. COMMENTS on the DRAFT from Richard Fellows 21 December 2025 (See also the completed feedback form attached)	i)noted	i)noted corrections made where names were inaccurate and grammatical changes made where appropriate

Yellow highlighted text are my comments. Green highlighted text is new or revised

Text without highlights is unchanged but may have been moved

Please contact me by email if you want to discuss my comments or if you need help updating any of the files.

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Appendix A South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide

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Introduction

I have suggested amendments to the introduction to simplify the wording, significantly remove duplication and importantly move the statements into a more logical order to ease understanding.

- a **Replace** “This document represents the Neighbourhood Plan for South Lenches Parish.”
with “This document **is** the Neighbourhood Plan for **the** South Lenches Parish.”
Replace “the other part being” **with** “the other **parts** being”
- b **Replace** “designated a Neighbourhood Area for the whole of the South Lenches Parish on 10th September 2015 to enable South Lenches Parish Council to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has been prepared.”
with “**designated the whole of the South Lenches Parish a Neighbourhood Area** on 10th September 2015 to enable South Lenches Parish Council to prepare the **South Lenches** Neighbourhood Plan (referred to hereafter as the Neighbourhood Plan). **It** has been prepared”
- c **Replace in the first sentence** “The South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan (referred to hereafter as the Neighbourhood Plan)”
with “**The Neighbourhood Plan**”
Replace the rest starting “The Steering Group has prepared...”
with “The Neighbourhood plan seeks to answer two questions
 - What are the problems and concerns that the neighbourhood Plan should address?**See Challenges**

		- What opportunities are there that the Neighbourhood Plan could make the most of? See Objectives” d Replace the wording in its entirety with “Whilst producing the Neighbourhood Plan, the Steering Group has sought the involvement of the community as widely as possible to ensure the neighbourhood Vision and Objectives defined in the plan reflect matters that are of considerable importance to South Lenches residents, businesses and community groups. This has included: - Public exhibitions and drop-in events - Questionnaires distributed to all households - Regular updates in parish newsletters Further details may be viewed at www.southlenchesparishcouncil.org/neighbourhood-plan” e Replace the wording in its entirety with “The Neighbourhood Plan is a living document. It gives the South Lenches community the opportunity to take some control over how the neighbourhood evolves over the next 14 years by defining a number of neighbourhood specific policies to supplement those in the emerging South Worcestershire Development Plan to ensure the realisation of the Vision and Objectives. The policies will guide anyone wishing to submit planning applications and also guide the sustainable growth planning, land use and development decisions over the plan period 2015 to 2040.” f Replace the wording in its entirety with “Each policy is supported by evidence to justify the need for such a policy. It is advisable, that in order to understand the full context for any individual policy, it is read in conjunction with its supporting text. There is also 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.” g Replace the wording in its entirety with “The policies are presented in coloured boxes and are grouped under the following headings: - Housing - Environmental - Social h No changes		
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		i Delete. Now incorporated in e j Delete. Not required. See Challenges, Vision and Objectives k Delete. Now incorporated in c l Delete. Now incorporated in d m Delete. Not appropriate to the neighbourhood plan. But see objectives. n Delete. Now incorporated in f o Delete. Now incorporated in f p Delete. Not appropriate to the neighbourhood plan q Delete. Not appropriate to the neighbourhood plan r Delete. Repetition of d s Delete. Now incorporated in d t Delete. Now incorporated in e u No change. Now will become i v No change. Now will become j w Delete. See y x Delete. See y y Delete in its entirety and replace with “South Lenches Parish Council and its partners shall undertake a partial review of the Neighbourhood Plan five years, and again 10 years, after adoption in line with the South Worcestershire Development Plan reviews. A full review to be conducted no later than 2039 to extend the Neighbourhood plan to 2065.” Additional interim reviews may be necessary due to changes to relevant local policies, national policies and legislation. In all cases the local community shall be consulted as appropriate.” Now will become k z Delete. Now incorporated in k Local Context Add the following new first sub heading South Lenches Parish Map (Shows boundary of the neighbourhood plan) Paste in map from Appendix A for consistency (It has a far greater resolution and a better key. It also includes development boundaries and conservation areas). Delete the map on previous page. History of South Lenches First para Replace “The latter” with “Rous Lench” this will prevent it being misinterpreted as Radford.		
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		Comment: Most of this section is a duplicate of what is in section 4 of Appendix B Consideration should be given to amalgamating these in one place and then cross referencing from the other. Modern South Lenches Replace heading with South Lenches Today This section cannot decide how many villages there are. Terminology needs to be clarified. Eg replace “interdependent village and three hamlets” with “interdependent four settlements” this can later be followed by “the largest of which is the village of Church Lench” but many other minor changes will be required throughout the whole document. It cannot say “The largest village”, “each village” or “the villages” when there is only one. Perhaps use “communities”. An alternative to this approach is to add a comment that all four settlements are referred to as villages even though only Church Lench (and possibly Atch Lench now) has full village status and the other 3 are hamlets in open countryside. Having now reviewed the full document and its appendices I believe this is the preferred solution. Profile of the community today Remove this unnecessary heading Local Infrastructure Remove the contents of page 13 in its entirety. It is not helpful here. Vision and Objectives Remove the unnecessary heading Challenges for South Lenches Challenge 5 Replace “village” with “villages” Consider adding a new challenge The increase of criminal activity (Including but not limited to Fly-Tipping, Burglary, Vehicle Crime Theft from Farms, Antisocial Behaviour, Scams) Vision for South Lenches After “social club” insert “all thriving and adequately funded” Neighbourhood Plan Objectives Remove “address the following topics:” Make a single list by removing the boxes and colours which are now confusing. The matrix shows the relationship to policies Objective 12 After “between” insert “and within” Consider adding 3 new objectives – Improve water quality in Whitsun Brook and reduce sewage spills from Church Lench Sewage Treatment Works – To encourage measures to deter, detect, report and prosecute crime. (To include but not be limited to: Fly-Tipping, Burglary, Car Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour)		
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		– Improve electronic communication (To include satisfactory 4G mobile network signal indoor reception and make available broadband fibre to the premises.) Add a note “The following Matrix shows how the objectives will be delivered through the policies” Policies Map Remove the heading On the Matrix Colour the policies: 1-6 Housing - Brown 7-16 Environmental - Green 17-19 Social - Blue Policies Development Remove the heading Introduction to the Policies Move this section to become the first sub section under Policies Policies Note: I have not reviewed in any detail the Evidence sections Introduction to the Policies Delete everything apart from the last paragraph Housing Policies Insert this as a new subheading Delete “Housing section covers policies 1 to 6” Delete the list of objectives The matrix shows the relationship to policies Policy 1 Delete “South Lenches” from the title First Sentence Replace “Settlement” with “Development” Title of Map Replace “(OR SETTLEMENT) AND CONSERVATION BOUNDARIES” with “AND CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARIES” Notes below the map Replace “(Settlement) Boundary” with “Boundaries” and “area” with “Areas” Policy 2 First Paragraph Replace “within the settlement boundary areas of South Lenches” with “within a defined development boundary” Policy 4 Second Paragraph Replace “Local Plan” with “South Worcestershire Development Plan” Last Paragraph Replace “outside the settlement boundary” with “not inside a defined development boundary” Policy 5 First Paragraph I think there is an error. “up to” perhaps should be “at least” Second Paragraph I don’t see how these proportions can work with such low numbers of units.		
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		Policy 6 Last Paragraph I think using the word “objective” may be confusing as there are no defined objectives that mention safe places Historic section covers Policy 7 Delete Heading Policy 7 Protection of Historic Environment Move to Environmental Policies Section Add to the list: Grade 2 Listed buildings Church Lench and Atch Lench Conservation Areas (Maps at Policy 1) Policy 8 Last but one bullet “educational facilities”? I can only think of one in our neighbourhood - Church Lench Primary School. If this is what it is intended to mean Replace “educational facilities” with “Church Lench Primary School” Policy 10 Last bullet Delete “which” Policy 11 Last paragraph Replace “Appendix B” with “Appendix D” Perhaps we should explain what active travel is I assume it means on foot or by cycling Policy 12 First paragraph Replace “village” with “villages” Policy 13 Local Green Spaces Rename “Village Pond” and “Village Pool” as “Site of old village pond” Policy 15 Flood Mitigation The last requirement shown in this policy should apply to all applications including extensions and change of use. Policy 16 Dark Skies First Line Change “should” to “shall” Last bullet Replace “rivers” with “watercourses” Policy 17 Community Facilities Different names are used for Sports and Recreation Club sometimes Social Club Sometimes Sports Club This should be resolved. I suggest changes to facility a). Change “Club” to “Clubs” and add “(Includes: Social Club, Cricket Club, Tennis Club and Amphitheatre)” I suggest changes to facility b) After “Play Area” insert “, Boules Court and Telephone Box Book Exchange”		
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		Last Sentence Replace “Settlement boundary” with “defined development boundary” Policy 18 Business and Employment Last Paragraph after “clear evidence that” insert “it” Appendix A Section 1 Paragraph 2 Remove “Parish” from “South Lenches Parish Neighbourhood Plan” Section 2 133 line 4 Remove erroneous space Section 6 DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR ALL DEVELOPMENT Error in title should be section 7 Section 7 GUIDELINES FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT Error in title should be section 8 OTHER DESIGN DETAILS Add new requirements All new services to be supplied underground (Including Mains Electricity and Broadband Service) Gardens to be at least the same area as the building footprint For developments of more than 5 units provision to be made for some open green space Appendix B Section 3 Comment: Says that Atch Lench is designated as a village in SWDP 2016 Map B Change title to “Aerial Map Church Lench, Atch Lench and Ab Lench” Map C Correct the position of the map below the complete title Section 5 Comment There are a number of instances where the titles of the photos have been separated from the photo itself. This section could be better formatted to integrate the photos with the text and avoid all the cross referencing from text on one page to photos on another. Appendix C Public rights of way Comments: Formatting is poor. No Appendix title or page numbers Page margins set incorrectly causing page overruns to next page. Keys to the maps are blank Appendix D Wildlife Corridors		
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		Comments: This Appendix is only a first draft and needs a lot of work		
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OTHER SIGNIFICANT CHANGES MADE TO WORDING IN PLAN				
Prev Page	Section	Original text	Updated text	Reason
		New page 4	List of appendices/policies maps and tables	clarity
3	Introduction	Plan period 2015 - 2040	Plan period 2016- 2041	To align with the SWDPR
3	a	the other part being the emerging South Worcestershire Development Plan (examination 2024).	the other part being the emerging South Worcestershire Development Plan Review.	To be commensurate with the SWDPR
13	Local Infrastructure (ref DET1)	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.	Strategic Context Development Plan Framework <i>The statutory development plan for South Lenches comprises the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR), together with the Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan and the Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy.</i> <i>The SWDPR replaces the former South Worcestershire</i>	For clarity and to recognise the SWDPR rather than the SWDP 2016 Local Plan

			<i>Development Plan 2016 and extends the plan period to 2041. The South Lenches Parish Neighbourhood Plan is required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Development Plan and will be examined against the strategic policies of the SWDPR.</i> <i>South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) 2021–2041 Spatial Strategy</i> <i>The SWDPR directs the majority of growth to Worcester, the main towns and identified strategic growth locations in sustainable locations. The settlement hierarchy is retained, with smaller rural settlements expected to accommodate limited and proportionate development appropriate to their scale, character and level of services. South Lenches is not identified as a strategic growth location within the SWDPR.</i> <i>Windfall and infill development within defined settlement boundaries is supported where it is sustainable and consistent</i>	
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			<i>with other relevant policies of the Development Plan.</i> Key Strategic Themes <i>The SWDPR requires:</i> <i>•Delivery of an appropriate mix of housing types and affordable housing provision, where viable</i> <i>•High-quality design that responds positively to local character and distinctiveness</i> <i>•Protection and enhancement of landscape character and heritage assets</i> <i>•Measurable biodiversity net gain and strengthening of ecological networks</i> <i>•Climate change mitigation and adaptation measures</i> <i>•Appropriate management of flood risk, sustainable drainage and infrastructure delivery</i> <i>•Support for sustainable rural enterprise and the retention and enhancement of community facilities</i> <i>The SWDPR also seeks to maintain a robust five-year housing land supply and ensure that development is supported by necessary infrastructure.</i>	
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			Main Modifications <i>The Main Modifications to the SWDPR confirm the overall spatial strategy, clarify housing delivery and infrastructure requirements, and strengthen environmental and climate-related policies. They do not alter the role of South Lenches within the settlement hierarchy or identify it for strategic-scale development.</i> Implications for South Lenches <i>Within the Development Plan framework:</i> •<i>South Lenches is not identified as a strategic growth location.</i> •<i>Development is expected to be small-scale, proportionate and sustainable.</i> •<i>Infill and appropriate development within defined settlement boundaries represent the principal mechanism for housing delivery.</i> •<i>Strong protection applies to landscape character, heritage assets and biodiversity.</i> •<i>Development must appropriately address flood</i>	
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			<i>risk, sustainable drainage and infrastructure requirements.</i> <i>The South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan operates within this strategic framework and has been prepared to remain in general conformity with the strategic policies of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review.</i>	
19	Policies	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.	<i>Introduction to the Policies</i> <i>The planning 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.</i> <i>There are a total of 19 policies addressing four topic areas. These are: Housing, Environment, Historic Environment and Social.</i> <i>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</i>	For clarity

			<i>and aspirations of the local community.</i> <i>Each of the individual policies has two parts:</i> <i>1) the policy itself, which provides the wording that should be understood and followed by developers when proposing new development, and by the local planning authority when considering proposals.</i> <i>2) an explanatory section to provide an understanding of the reasons behind the policy, the background of the particular 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.</i> <i>Not all policies will be relevant to every type of development, but anyone proposing development in South Lenches will be expected to consider and address the policies relevant to their proposals, so that the Plan is implemented successfully to achieve the local community's objectives.</i>	
19	Policy 1	The Neighbourhood Plan defines Settlement Boundaries at Church Lench and Atch Lench.	<i>1.The Neighbourhood Plan defines Settlement Boundaries at Sherriffs</i>	To clarify wording

		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.	<i>Lench, Ab Lench and Atch Lench, as shown on the Policies Maps 2a and 2b.</i> <i>2. Proposals for infill development within the settlement boundaries will be supported, provided they accord with the other policies of this plan.</i> <i>3. Proposals for development outside the settlement 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.</i>	
21	Evidence for Policy 1	Policy 1 Evidence This policy is intended to maintain the distinction between the built-up areas of each of the four settlements in South Lench 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’.⁸ 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’⁹ and 81% identified ‘Define and preserve the boundaries of the	Policy 1 Evidence <i>1. Neighbourhood plans can indicate where the settlements are located in within the parish and demonstrate that they are appropriate for smaller scale, organic growth of open market housing by defining a Settlement Boundary in their NP. The SWDPR retains a settlement hierarchy and directs the majority of development to the most sustainable locations, whilst allowing for limited and proportionate growth in rural settlements.</i>	To tighten up the evidence base to support the policy and for clarification

	village’ as a priority of the Neighbourhood Plan.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.¹² 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’.¹³ 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’.¹⁴ 96% of respondents to the 2024 survey supported the objective ‘Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land’.¹⁵	<i>2.The purpose of defining Settlement Boundaries for Sheriffs Lench, Ab Lench and Atch Lench is to provide a clear and locally appropriate framework for managing future development in accordance with the SWDPR spatial strategy. The Lenches are small rural villages with a strong historic character, a sensitive landscape setting and limited services. It is therefore important that growth is carefully directed to the most sustainable locations and remains proportionate to the size and function of each settlement.</i> <i>3.The defined boundaries reflect the existing built form of the villages and distinguish the compact settlement areas from the surrounding open countryside. This approach provides clarity and certainty for residents, landowners and decision-makers about where development is acceptable in principle. It also helps to prevent sporadic or piecemeal development that could erode rural character, harm important views, or lead to the gradual coalescence of the villages.</i>	
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			<i>4. Focusing development within the existing built-up areas supports the efficient use of land and makes best use of existing infrastructure and community facilities. Small-scale infill can contribute to maintaining a balanced and sustainable community, helping to support local services while respecting the established pattern of development.</i> <i>5. Outside the defined settlement areas, the countryside forms an essential part of the parish's character and setting. Strict control of development in these areas is necessary to protect landscape quality, heritage assets and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Limited exceptions are appropriate where they support identified local needs or the functioning of the rural economy, provided that proposals remain consistent with the wider objectives of the Plan.</i> <i>6 Overall, this approach ensures that change is managed positively while safeguarding the distinct identity, landscape setting and historic character of the</i>	
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			<i>South Lenches throughout the Plan period.</i> <i>7.The South Lenches Housing Survey clearly indicated that development boundaries are important to the community to help prevent coalescence between villages to maintain the identity of each village.</i>	
21	Policy 2	Limited infilling within the settlement boundary areas of South Lenches and limited affordable housing for local community needs will be supported where those developments:	<i>1 Appropriate, small-scale infilling within the Settlement Boundary areas of South Lenches and limited affordable housing for local community needs will be supported where those developments:</i>	Clearer policy wording for defining limitations
22/23	Policy 2 evidence	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’.Policy2 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’.16 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’.17 The 2024 survey	Policy 2 Evidence <i>13 This policy establishes a clear, criteria-based approach to managing small-scale infill and limited affordable housing within the Settlement Boundaries of South Lenches. As small rural villages with a linear form, sensitive landscape setting and locally constrained highway network, it is important that new development remains proportionate and carefully designed so that it does not adversely affect highway safety, residential amenity, important open spaces or valued public views.</i>	For clarity and precision and appropriateness to Policy

		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’.¹⁸ Furthermore, 97% of respondents in 2024 agreed with the objective ‘Protect valued landscapes and views’.¹⁹ In 2016, 85% of respondents to the survey thought it was important to preserve the views from the village.²⁰ 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.²¹ 88% of respondents said it was very important that the design of any new building respected the scale of the existing village.²² The 2016 survey found that 91% of respondents wanted to ensure that any development was in harmony with the rural character of the neighbourhood.²³ 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,²⁴ and 88% wanted the Plan to promote design that respected the scale of the existing village.²⁵ 60% of respondents in 2021 supported the use of materials that were in keeping with the village.²⁶ 69% of respondents to the 2016 survey thought it should be a priority to use traditional local building materials where appropriate.²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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.²⁹ In 2021, 79% of respondents thought that individual plots, as opposed to larger sized developments, would be very or fairly suitable for development.³⁰ 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.³¹ In 2016, 74% of respondents thought that three-bedroomed houses would be the most suitable.³² 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.³³ 67% of respondents in 2016 thought that, to suit everyone’s	<i>14 The Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity to guide the windfall and infill development that is likely to come forward within the existing built-up area. Such development can make effective use of brownfield or underused land and deliver sensitively designed small-scale homes that respond to identified local needs. In particular, smaller and entry-level dwellings can assist first-time buyers and downsizers, contributing to a more balanced housing mix within the parish.</i> <i>15 The Plan does not allocate housing sites. Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) confirms that neighbourhood plans are not required to allocate sites to meet strategic housing requirements. Instead, this policy ensures that proposals are assessed against locally defined design, amenity and infrastructure criteria, in alignment with the strategic policies of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review and the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), including</i>	
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		needs, a variety of different properties were required to fit different levels of mobility.³⁴ 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.³⁵ 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,³⁶ while 83% said it was very important to have adequate parking.³⁷ In 2016, 85% of respondents thought that the Plan should promote green space and gardens,³⁸ and 71% rated the provision of adequate parking on premises as very important.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ In 2021, 96% of respondents supported the importance of energy efficiency in new building design,⁴¹ and 97% supported high levels of energy conservation in new buildings.⁴² 69% of respondents in 2016 thought that the Plan should promote high levels of energy conservation in new buildings.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ 69% of respondents said that development should be limited to infill on sites within the existing built-up area.⁴⁵ 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’.⁴⁶	<i>securing well-designed places and protecting the natural environment.</i> <i>16 Community engagement, including the South Lenches Housing Survey demonstrates strong local support for modest infill development that respects village character and addresses local housing needs. This policy therefore provides a proportionate and locally supported framework for managing future housing proposals in South Lenches.</i>	
24	Policy 3 evidence	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’.⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹	Policy 3 Evidence <i>17 The design principles set out in this Policy are aligned with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which at Chapter 12 emphasises that development should respond positively to local character, reflect the identity of place and integrate</i>	Stronger evidence to support the policy

		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.⁵⁰ 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,⁵¹ and 88% wanted the Neighbourhood Plan to promote design that respected the scale of the existing village.⁵² 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.⁵³ 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.⁵⁴ In 2021, 79% of respondents thought that individual plots, as opposed to larger sized developments, would be very or fairly suitable for development.⁵⁵ In 2021, 92% of respondents supported the continuity of lower-than-average housing density; 71% thought this was very important and 21% quite important.⁵⁶ 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 2016,⁵⁷ and 83% of respondents in 2021.⁵⁸ In 2021, 95% of respondents supported adequate green space and gardens as very important (74%) or quite important (21%).⁵⁹ 90% of respondents supported landscaping as very important (56%) or quite important (34%).⁶⁰ 82% of respondents thought that communal greens, play areas, and open spaces were very important (55%) or quite important (27%).⁶¹ In 2016, 85% of respondents thought that the Plan should promote green space and gardens.⁶² In 2024 97% of respondents agreed with the objective ‘To protect and enhance the villages’ open spaces and to conserve local green space’.⁶³ 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%).⁶⁴	<i>landscape features. The predominance of low-density and fragmented building patterns in the Neighbourhood Plan Area reflects existing context and avoids development that would be wholly out of character with its surroundings.</i> <i>18 The South Lenches Character Assessment identifies that South Lenches consists of dispersed cottages, farmsteads, and small clusters, rather than continuous urban frontage. Preserving visual gaps between buildings maintains the perception of openness and prevents overdevelopment.</i> <i>19 Low walls, hedges, and native planting currently provide a gentle transition between private and public spaces, avoiding hard urban edges and supporting local biodiversity.</i> <i>20 Minimizing driveway width and using appropriate surfacing reduces visual intrusion, complements the rural streetscape, and avoids suburbanising the area.</i> <i>21 Visible parking areas, bin stores, and cycle shelters disrupt the streetscape and</i>	
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			<i>introduce an urban character into the village. Discreet siting or screening preserves the rural aesthetic.</i> <i>22 Implementing this policy will ensure new development reinforces the village's distinctive character while supporting biodiversity and visual amenity.</i> <i>23 South Lenches community consultation strongly supports this approach.</i>	
25	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.⁶⁵ Each of these households comprised people aged over 60 who wanted to downsize.⁶⁶ 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 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).⁶⁷ 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 ⁶⁸	Policy 4 Evidence <i>24 This policy seeks to ensure that new residential development within South Lenches contributes positively to meeting identified local housing needs, particularly the need for affordable housing, while remaining consistent with national and local planning policy.</i> <i>25 South Lenches is a rural parish with limited recent housing delivery and a demonstrable need for smaller, affordable homes for local people, including younger households and those wishing to downsize. Without specific policy support, the delivery of affordable housing within the</i>	Clearer more precise evidence

			<i>neighbourhood area would be unlikely, particularly given the small scale of development typically coming forward.</i> <i>26 Requiring an up-to-date housing needs survey ensures that small-scale affordable housing schemes respond directly to identified local need and provides robust evidence to justify rural exception sites.</i> <i>27 This also helps ensure that the scale and type of development remain proportionate to the settlement.</i> <i>28 The requirement for affordable housing on schemes of 11 or more dwellings ensures alignment with strategic policies in the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) and national policy expectations for major development.</i> <i>29 Community engagement 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.'</i>	
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26	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.⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹ In the 2016 survey, 74% of respondents thought that three-bedroomed houses would be the most suitable.⁷²	Policy 5 Evidence <i>30 This policy seeks to ensure that new residential development within the Neighbourhood Area delivers a housing mix that responds to identified local needs and supports the creation of a balanced and sustainable community.</i> <i>31 Evidence prepared to inform the Neighbourhood Plan, including local housing needs data and demographic trends, indicates a clear requirement for smaller dwellings, particularly one-, two- and three-bedroom homes.</i> <i>32 Evidence prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan demonstrates a high proportion of larger detached properties within the existing housing stock and a limited availability of smaller homes suitable for first-time buyers, single person households and downsizers.</i> <i>33 South Lenches has an ageing population profile and needs to retain younger households and economically active residents within the community.</i> <i>34 This policy seeks to reverse market delivery</i>	For better support to the policy
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			trends which indicate that new development would likely continue to favour larger dwellings. This would fail to address identified imbalances in the housing stock and would not adequately respond to locally evidenced needs. 35 Requiring up to 10% one-bedroom homes, 40% two-bedroom homes, and 40% three-bedroom homes on schemes of nine or more dwellings ensures that larger sites make a meaningful contribution towards rebalancing the local housing stock. For smaller schemes of between four and eight units, requiring predominantly one- to three-bedroom dwellings ensures proportionality while recognising site constraints and market delivery realities.	
		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,	Policy 6 Design Guide & Local Character1 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:	To clarify the policies intent

		• Protect or enhance landscape and biodiversity by incorporating high quality native landscaping, • Be consistent with Wychavon's Landscape Character Assessment and its guidance⁷³; • 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.	<i>i) have regard to the South Lench Design Guide; (Appendix A)</i> <i>ii) be compatible with the distinctive character of the area, respecting the local settlement pattern, building styles and materials;</i> <i>iii) be of a density that is in keeping with the character of the surrounding development and landscape;</i> <i>iv) preserve or enhance the heritage assets such as listed buildings;</i> <i>iv) protect or enhance landscape and biodiversity by incorporating high quality native landscaping;</i> <i>v) be consistent with Wychavon's Landscape Character Assessment and its guidance;</i> <i>2 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.</i>	
27	Policy 6 Evidence	Policy 6 Evidence The South Lench Character Assessment assesses the character of all streets including the conservation areas to identify their significance to the built heritage	Policy 6 Evidence 36 This policy seeks to ensure that all development proposals respond positively	To better support the intentions of the Policy

		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.’⁷⁴	<i>to the distinctive character, landscape setting and heritage assets of the South Lenches area. The rural settlements within the parish are characterised by historic linear and clustered patterns, vernacular materials, varied building forms, and a strong relationship with the surrounding countryside. Without clear locally specific design guidance, incremental development risks eroding this established character.</i> <i>37 The South Lenches Design Guide (Appendix A) forms part of the evidence base and provides detailed analysis of settlement form, building typologies, materials, boundary treatments, views and landscape features. Criterion (i) ensures that development proposals have regard to this locally prepared guidance, consistent with NPPF support for neighbourhood-level design codes and guides.</i> <i>38 The parish is characterised by relatively low-density development, dispersed rural lanes, historic farmsteads and</i>	
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			<i>traditional materials such as brick, timber framing and clay tile. Maintaining appropriate density and scale ensures new development integrates successfully without suburbanising the rural environment.</i> <i>39 The parish contains designated heritage assets including listed buildings, alongside non-designated heritage features that contribute to local character. The policy ensures that proposals preserve or enhance the significance and setting of such assets.</i> <i>40 The South Lenches area sits within a sensitive rural landscape identified within Wychavon District Council's Landscape Character Assessment. Criterion (vi) ensures development aligns with this strategic guidance. Criterion (v) promotes high-quality native landscaping and biodiversity enhancement, consistent with national requirements for biodiversity net gain and landscape-led design.</i> <i>41 Paragraph 2 of the Policy ensures that proposals demonstrate consideration of 'Secured by Design'</i>	
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			<i>principles. This supports the creation of safe, inclusive environments and aligns with national policy objectives to promote safe communities through good design and developers will be expected to demonstrate in their applications that the design and layout of the proposed development are sympathetic to the character of its immediate surroundings.</i> <i>42 South Lenches is a parish that has a rich heritage of quality residential development and wishes this tradition to be maintained.</i>	
27	Policy 7 evidence	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 202176 believe a stronger management of the Conservation areas is the best way of maintaining the historic and rural character of the villages.	Policy 7 Evidence <i>43 The parish contains a rich and varied historic environment that makes a significant contribution to its local distinctiveness, rural character and sense of place. This includes designated heritage assets, non-designated heritage assets, and archaeological features both above and below ground.</i> <i>44 The conservation and enhancement of these assets is fundamental to maintaining the parish's identity and ensuring that</i>	To strengthen the evidence required to support this policy

			<i>change is managed in a sensitive and sustainable manner.</i> <i>45 The policy seeks to ensure that designated heritage assets and their settings are conserved or enhanced in accordance with their historic and architectural significance. This approach reflects statutory duties under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which require special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings.</i> <i>46 The parish contains a number of significant heritage features including:</i> <i>• Ridge and Furrow earthworks, which are important surviving archaeological features reflecting the area's medieval agricultural history. These earthworks are often subtle and vulnerable to damage from development, landscaping or ground disturbance.</i> <i>• Areas of archaeological and historic interest south of Atch Lench, south of Church Lench and west of Farm Lane; Ab Lench; and Sheriffs Lench,</i>	
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			<i>which contribute to the historic landscape character of the parish.</i> <i>• Notable listed and locally important buildings including The Old Manse (Atch Lench), Church Lench School building, and The Observatory (Sheriffs Lench), each of which contributes to the architectural quality and historic narrative of the settlements.</i> <i>47 The significance of these assets derives not only from their individual architectural or archaeological value, but also from their relationship with the surrounding rural landscape and settlement pattern. The protection of their setting is therefore integral to conserving their overall significance.</i> <i>48 In addition to designated assets, the parish contains non-designated heritage assets which, while not statutorily protected, are valued locally for their historic, architectural or cultural contribution.</i> <i>49 National policy requires that the effect of development on the significance of non-designated heritage assets is taken into account, having</i>	
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			<i>regard to the scale of harm and the significance of the asset. This policy reflects this requirement by ensuring that proposals affecting such assets are assessed proportionately.</i>	
28	Introduction to environmental policies	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.	Removed	
28	Policy 8	‘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.	<i>(For the purpose of this policy: ‘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, but are not restricted to, thermal and photovoltaic, solar, ground- and air-source heat pumps, biomass and anaerobic digestion, provided they meet the definition of small-scale above.)</i>	Clarification of “small scale”
29	Evidence for Policy 8	Policy 8 Evidence 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	Policy 8 Evidence 50 This policy supports the transition to a low carbon and climate-resilient future by encouraging small-scale, on-site renewable and low carbon energy generation within the parish. It recognises that	To con

		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.	<i>neighbourhood planning has an important role in facilitating local action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve energy efficiency and increase resilience to rising energy costs.</i> <i>51 The policy aligns with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) , Chapter 14, which supports renewable and low carbon energy development and requires the planning system to help shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. It also supports the objective of achieving sustainable development by addressing climate change mitigation at a local level.</i> <i>52 The policy defines ‘small-scale’ renewable energy as development designed primarily to meet the needs of the occupants of the site rather than for commercial export to the National Grid. This distinction ensures that the policy supports domestic, community and building-integrated solutions that are proportionate to the scale and rural character of the parish.</i>	
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		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.⁷⁸	<i>53 By focusing on on-site generation, the policy:</i> <i>• Encourages energy self-sufficiency;</i> <i>• Reduces reliance on fossil fuels;</i> <i>• Minimises landscape and visual impacts associated with larger commercial energy schemes;</i> <i>• Ensures renewable technologies are integrated sensitively within the built and rural environment.</i> <i>54 All proposals must also continue to comply with wider development plan policies relating to design quality, heritage conservation, landscape character, residential amenity and environmental protection.</i> <i>55 This policy positively encourages new domestic development to incorporate renewable and low carbon infrastructure wherever possible and practical. Embedding such technologies at the design stage improves viability, avoids costly retrofitting, and ensures that development contributes to long-term environmental sustainability.</i>	
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			<i>56 The requirement for electric vehicle charging points alongside off-road parking at educational facilities reflects the increasing transition to electric vehicles and supports sustainable travel patterns. Providing infrastructure at key community destinations ensures that development contributes to wider decarbonisation objectives and supports behavioural change.</i> <i>57 The policy requires renewable energy proposals in new developments to accord with Wychavon District Council's Intelligently Green Plan 2020–2030 (or its successor). This ensures general conformity with strategic local policy and aligns neighbourhood-level ambition with district-wide climate and sustainability objectives.</i>	
30	Policy 9	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.	<i>1Proposals for development on land outside the settlement boundary graded as Excellent (Grade 1) or Very Good (Grade 2) in Natural England's Agricultural Land Classification system will not be supported, unless the</i>	Minor wording changes for clarity

			<i>development is necessary or suitable for a countryside location.</i>	
30	Policy 9 evidence	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.⁷⁹	Policy 9 Evidence <i>58 This policy seeks to protect land outside the built-up area that is classified as Grade 1 (Excellent) or Grade 2 (Very Good) under Natural England’s Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system. Such land forms part of the nation’s “Best and Most Versatile” (BMV) agricultural land, which is a finite and irreplaceable resource essential for long-term food production and rural sustainability.</i> <i>59 The parish contains areas of high-quality agricultural land that contribute significantly to the local rural economy, landscape character, and historic settlement pattern. Incremental loss of such land to unnecessary development would undermine its long-term productive capacity and erode the intrinsic character of the countryside.</i> <i>60 The policy has regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which:</i>	Stronger evidence to support policy

			• “recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside;” • states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment;” • “requires that, where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of higher quality.” 61 By seeking to resist development on Grade 1 and Grade 2 land unless it is necessary for a countryside location, the policy directly reflects national policy objectives to protect high-quality agricultural land and promote sustainable patterns of development. 62 The policy supports a plan-led approach that directs most new development to appropriate built-up areas, consistent with sustainable development principles. By restricting unnecessary development on high-quality agricultural land, this policy: • Encourages the efficient use of previously	
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			<i>developed or lower quality land;</i> <i>Protects the rural setting and open landscape that define the parish's character;</i> <i>Maintains the agricultural function and economic viability of the countryside.</i> <i>63 The policy does not impose an absolute prohibition. It allows development where it is genuinely necessary or suitable for a countryside location, such as agricultural, forestry, rural enterprise or other uses that require a rural setting. This ensures flexibility and proportionality. The policy simply safeguards high quality agricultural land, which aligns with the SWDPR's countryside protection approach and does not impede delivery of identified strategic sites.</i>	
31	Policy 10	i).....New development should reflect the character of South Lenches and take account of its rural setting. ii) Where mitigation of tree removal is required, replacements will be native species of similar final expected size to the tree being removed.	<i>i) New development should demonstrate how it reflects the character of South Lenches and take account of their rural setting.</i> <i>ii) Where mitigation of tree removal is required, replacements will be</i>	Minor wording changes for clarification

			<i>native species of a similar final expected mature size where circumstances allow.</i>	
31	Policy 10 Evidence	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 10 Evidence <i>64 This policy ensures that new development reflects the established character of South Lenches and responds positively to its rural setting. The parish is defined by wide-open countryside, woodland areas, traditional orchards, mature trees, and extensive hedgerows, which collectively form a key part of the local landscape and settlement pattern. The lanes connecting the South Lenches villages are lined with long-established trees and hedgerows, reinforcing the visual and ecological cohesion of the area.</i> <i>65 The importance of these features is strongly supported by local opinion: surveys indicate that 96% of residents wish to protect the open countryside, trees, and hedgerows, with more than 90% wishing to conserve the rural nature of the neighbourhood. Protecting these features maintains the distinctive sense of place and community identity of the parish.</i>	Stronger evidence to support policy

			<i>66 Hedgerows and mature trees are critical components of the South Lenches' rural landscape, providing ecological, visual, and cultural benefits. These elements form part of the parish's green infrastructure network, offering connectivity between habitats, supporting wildlife, and defining the settlement pattern and open countryside character. The retention and appropriate replacement of hedgerows and trees is therefore essential for maintaining these functions.</i> <i>67 Hedgerows and trees support a wide range of flora and fauna, including priority species protected under national biodiversity strategies. Requiring that any lost hedgerow is replaced with an appropriate native species mix ensures that habitat value is maintained or enhanced, promotes local wildlife diversity, and strengthens ecological resilience. Native species are better adapted to local conditions, provide food and shelter for indigenous wildlife, and help maintain</i>	
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			<i>the parish's ecological character.</i> <i>68 Hedgerows serve not only as individual habitats but also as linear corridors connecting larger habitats, allowing species to move, feed, and reproduce. Where hedgerows are realigned or new hedgerows are created, integrating them with existing adjacent hedgerows preserves the continuity of these ecological corridors. This mitigates the potential fragmentation of habitats, protects biodiversity, and ensures that the rural landscape retains its visual coherence and historic field patterns.</i> <i>69 Mature trees contribute to landscape structure, local character, microclimate regulation, carbon storage, and wildlife habitat. Where tree removal is unavoidable, requiring replacement with native broadleaved species of similar expected final size ensures that over time the landscape structure, canopy cover, and ecological functions are restored. This approach safeguards the long-term integrity of the parish's landscape and maintains its environmental</i>	
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			<i>and aesthetic value for future generations.</i>	
31	Policy 11	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 Wildlife and Biodiversity <i>Development proposals must retain and enhance existing on-site biodiversity assets, delivering measurable ‘net gain’ (in line with adopted strategic policy and national requirements)</i> <i>2 Proposals must make provision for wildlife needs on site.</i> <i>3 Development proposals shall incorporate on-site biodiversity enhancements such as roosting features for bats or nesting features for birds into the fabric of the development.</i> <i>4 Where relevant to the site’s ecological context, fences, walls or hedges should be designed to incorporate features that allow dispersal of wildlife through areas of green space and private gardens.</i> <i>5 Development proposals must avoid the fragmentation of habitats.</i> <i>6 Development proposals affecting the network of wildlife corridors as shown on Policies Map 4 throughout the parish must support and enhance their operation as a</i>	For clarity

			<i>corridor for the movement of wildlife and the provision of ecosystem services.</i> <i>7 Development proposals that improve active travel, or ecological connectivity within these corridors will be supported.</i>	
31	Policy 11 Evidence	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.	Policy 11 Evidence <i>70 Green spaces within South Lenches are highly valued by the local community and form a network of corridors that provide multiple functions, from informal recreation to wildlife habitats. These spaces include woodlands, grasslands, hedgerows, lanes, rivers, ponds, and streams, collectively forming the parish's green and blue infrastructure. This network is critical for maintaining the rural character, ecological connectivity, and visual quality of the area. This policy seeks to ensure that future development respects and, where possible, enhances these assets, maintaining their ecological, recreational, and aesthetic value.</i> <i>71 The open green spaces between the Lenches villages support rich and varied wildlife, with local</i>	Stronger and more referenced evidence

		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?'⁸⁰ 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% ⁸⁰ 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'.⁸¹	<i>observations of foxes, hedgehogs, and deer. In particular, the wildlife corridor identified in Policies Map 4 is an important route for the local deer population, which includes fallow, roe, and muntjac deer. The herd, currently estimated at around 30 individuals, relies on the corridor to travel from Lenches Fishing Lakes to surrounding fields, including the Atch Lench Community Orchard. Evidence includes resident sightings, hoof marks in hedgerows, and road crossing observations, including recorded road fatalities along Handgate Lane and Leys Road. Protecting these corridors is therefore essential for species conservation and public safety.</i> <i>⁷² Wildlife corridors are vital for maintaining ecological connectivity, allowing species to move safely across the landscape to find food, shelter, and mates. At the same time, they provide opportunities for residents to experience wildlife firsthand, supporting health, well-being, and engagement with nature.</i>	
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			<i>73 The parish's green and blue infrastructure contributes to biodiversity, ecosystem services, and climate resilience. Maintaining habitat connectivity reduces fragmentation caused by buildings, roads, and tracks, while native planting and habitat retention support species diversity. Healthy ecological networks can also help manage environmental risks, such as flooding, and enhance the landscape's resilience to climate change.</i> <i>74 By encouraging on-site biodiversity enhancements — including bat roosts, bird nesting features, and hedges designed to allow wildlife movement — development can actively contribute to ecological networks rather than diminish them. This approach aligns with national planning guidance, including the NPPF which requires planning to protect and enhance valued landscapes, ecosystems, and biodiversity, and to achieve measurable net gains.</i> <i>75 The community has expressed strong support for the protection of these</i>	
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			<i>spaces, particularly in maintaining the natural routes of the local deer herd and other wildlife. This demonstrates a clear local need and expectation that development should safeguard biodiversity and the integrity of the parish's green infrastructure network.</i>	
33	Policy 12 Public Right of Way	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 Public Rights of Way <i>Where proportionate to the scale and nature of the development, proposals will be expected to:</i> <i>i) seek opportunities to develop, extend and improve the existing footpath and cycleway networks (shown on Policies Map 5) to provide better connectivity within the village and to the surrounding countryside.</i> <i>ii) contribute towards the provision of cycle and pedestrian links that connect the different areas of South Lenches.</i> <i>iii) Safeguard movement routes which provide non-vehicular access to natural greenspace, e.g. woodland or fields and any opportunity to enhance these will be supported.</i> <i>iv) ensure new movement routes are appropriate for</i>	Minor wording and layout changes to clarify policy requirements

			wheelchair users and those with limited mobility. v) link to existing networks where planning permission is granted for development vi) provide appropriate mitigation where development would impact upon movement routes.	
33	Policy 12 Evidence	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 reinstalled 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. 82	Policy 12 Evidence 76 This policy seeks to minimise the need for vehicular travel by encouraging safe and convenient walking and cycling, while also improving connectivity within the parish and to neighbouring parishes, towns, and surrounding areas. Enhancing these networks supports sustainable transport, reduces carbon emissions, and contributes to healthier, more active communities. 77 New developments are expected to ensure the provision of safe, accessible, and convenient walking access to local services, facilities, and public transport stops, accommodating pedestrians, pushchairs, wheelchair users, and other mobility aids. By prioritising accessible movement, the	To provide stronger evidence to support this policy

			<i>policy ensures that all residents, regardless of ability, can safely navigate the parish and enjoy its green spaces.</i> <i>78 The South Lenches parish contains a well-established network of footpaths, bridleways, and cycleways, which are highly valued by the local community and form an integral part of the parish's rural character, green infrastructure, and connectivity. These routes provide essential access for residents to local services, recreational spaces, and the surrounding countryside, and support sustainable travel options that reduce reliance on private vehicles.</i> <i>79 The 2016 South Lenches Parish Survey highlights this importance: 64% of respondents valued footpaths and bridleways, and 48% wished to see more accessible walks. This demonstrates strong local support for maintaining and enhancing movement routes, particularly those accessible to pedestrians, wheelchair users, pushchairs, and other forms of mobility assistance. By safeguarding existing routes and requiring</i>	
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			<i>developers to integrate new routes into the network, the policy reflects community priorities and supports sustainable connectivity objectives.</i> <i>80 Maintaining and enhancing movement routes is also critical for environmental and ecological connectivity. The open spaces, hedgerows, woodlands, and fields between villages serve as wildlife corridors, supporting species movement and biodiversity. Preserving non-vehicular access to these areas helps prevent habitat fragmentation, strengthens ecological networks, and contributes to the overall resilience of the parish's green and blue infrastructure.</i> <i>81 Furthermore, these routes provide social, health, and recreational benefits, allowing residents to enjoy informal exercise, engage with nature, and experience the parish's distinctive rural character. By requiring developers to avoid the loss of routes or to replace them in the same vicinity, the policy ensures that new development can proceed</i>	
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			<i>without diminishing the community's accessibility, amenity, or environmental value.</i>	
33	Social	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.	Section removed	Not required
34	Policy 13	i) list of greenspaces 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 ii) 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.	i) list of greenspaces Church Lench: <i>A Orchard - Low Road</i> <i>B Church Lench School grounds</i> <i>C Village Pond</i> <i>D Cricket Ground</i> <i>E Yates Community Orchard</i> <i>F Church and Church Yard</i> Atch Lench: <i>G Atch Lench Orchard</i> <i>H Atch Lench Graveyard</i> ii) <i>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</i> <i>3 Where development is demonstrated to be essential and permission is granted, proposals must be</i>	i) List updated to reflect removal of greenspaces ii) clarification of communities wishes

			<i>accompanied by a proportionate ecological assessment. This must clearly demonstrate how existing habitats, flora and fauna will be:</i> <i>i) avoided and protected in situ wherever possible;</i> <i>ii) safeguarded during construction through appropriate management measures; and</i> <i>iii) mitigated and, where necessary, compensated for through habitat enhancement or replacement of equal or greater ecological value.</i> <i>4 Development proposals must deliver no net loss of biodiversity and must secure appropriate long-term management of retained and created habitats.</i> <i>5 Any new development of 10 or more dwellings will be expected to provide areas of green space.</i>	
34	Policy 13 Evidence	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	Policy 13 Evidence <i>82 This policy is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework , which allows communities to designate land as Local Green Space (paragraphs 105–107). The NPPF</i>	Stronger evidence with strategic references

		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.”	<i>recognizes that Local Green Spaces should be protected from development except in very special circumstances and emphasizes their value for recreation, wildlife, and community well-being. By aligning with national policy, this policy ensures that designated green spaces are retained for the benefit of the community and the environment.</i> <i>83 Local green spaces are an essential component of the parish’s environmental, social, and cultural character. They provide residents with recreational opportunities, amenity value, and access to nature, and contribute to the visual quality and identity of the villages. These areas also play an important role in supporting local biodiversity, offering habitats for a variety of plant and animal species, and forming part of the parish’s wider green infrastructure network.</i> <i>84 The protection of these spaces is therefore vital to maintaining the well-being of residents, the rural character of the parish, and ecological connectivity. Loss or adverse impacts on these areas —</i>	
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			<i>including changes to their character, accessibility, appearance, quality, or amenity value — would undermine the parish’s natural and social environment.</i> <i>85 While the policy generally seeks to prevent development that would harm Local Green Spaces, it provides a mechanism for appropriate development that enhances the role and function of these spaces. This ensures that Local Green Spaces can continue to serve the needs of the community and be adapted or improved where necessary, without compromising their essential qualities.</i> <i>86 Where development is permitted, developers are required to demonstrate measures to protect existing flora and fauna or provide suitable mitigation. This ensures that Local Green Spaces continue to support biodiversity, ecological connectivity, and ecosystem services, in line with national and local policy promoting the protection and enhancement of natural habitats.</i>	
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			87 The policy also promotes the provision of green space in larger new developments. By requiring developments of 10 or more dwellings to incorporate green areas, the policy ensures that new residents have access to recreational and amenity spaces, supporting health, well-being, and social cohesion. It also helps maintain the parish's rural character and sense of place, even as new development occurs. 88 Paragraph 105-107 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), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and • local in character and not an extensive tract of land.	
40	Policy 14 Valued Landscapes	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	b) Re-modelling of the local topography, through cut and fill, that would adversely impact on the landscape	Minor rewording for clarity

			<i>character, or the identified views will not be supported. Therefore, development should be designed to respond to the existing contours rather than altering the landform to accommodate development, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that such alterations would not result in landscape harm</i>	
40	Policy 14 Evidence	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.⁸³ In 2024, 97% of respondents to the Vision and Objectives Survey agreed with the objective ‘Protect valued landscapes and views’.⁸⁴	Policy 14 Evidence <i>89 The Parish is characterised by its distinctive rural landscape, with open fields, hedgerows, woodlands, and rolling topography that define its sense of place and visual identity. These features create a series of key views and vistas that are highly valued by the local community, contribute to the character of the area, and form an important part of the Parish’s cultural and natural heritage.</i> <i>90 New development, if poorly located or designed, has the potential to adversely affect the landscape setting, disrupt valued views, and diminish the openness and character that contribute to the Parish’s distinctive identity.</i>	Stronger evidence to support this policy

			<i>By requiring consideration of landscape impacts on identified views, the policy ensures that development proposals respond sensitively to the local environment and protect the visual amenity of both residents and visitors.</i> <i>91 Within the defined distinctive view areas, it is important that the impact of development proposals on views to and from the site is properly understood and assessed. This assessment will demonstrate how proposals minimise visual intrusion, maintain openness, and retain the character and quality of the landscape. It also allows the local planning authority to consider the cumulative effects of multiple developments on the setting of the parish.</i> <i>92 The local topography is a key element of landscape character. Re-modelling the land through cut and fill can have a significant adverse impact, disrupting natural landform, creating unnatural contours, and affecting drainage, biodiversity, and the appearance of development in the</i>	
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			<i>landscape. This policy encourages developers to adapt development layouts to the natural site contours wherever feasible, rather than altering the land to suit development. This approach ensures that new development integrates harmoniously with the landscape, preserves local character, and maintains long-term visual and environmental quality.</i>	
45	Policy 15 Flood Mitigation	Policy 15 Flood Mitigation I New development, excluding extensions to dwellings and changes of use, will only be permitted if it incorporates Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).⁸⁵ 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.	Policy 15 Flood Mitigation <i>1 All new development, excluding extensions to dwellings and changes of use, must incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) unless it can be clearly demonstrated that it would be inappropriate or unfeasible.</i> <i>2 When selecting the means of surface water disposal, priority must be given to the use of SuDS.</i> <i>3 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.</i>	Policy wording strengthened to incorporate references and technical terms

		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.	<i>4 New development proposals will be required to provide appropriate design statements showing the method of discharge of surface water flows.</i> <i>5 Surface water drainage proposals must accord with the following hierarchy of drainage options, with priority given to options higher up the hierarchy:</i> <i>i) infiltration into the ground</i> <i>ii) drainage to a surface water body</i> <i>iii) drainage to a surface water sewer</i> <i>iv) highway drain</i> <i>v) another drainage system.</i> <i>Lower priority options must only be used where it has been clearly demonstrated that higher priority options are not viable.</i> <i>6 Planning applications must be accompanied by a proportionate drainage strategy demonstrating:</i> <i>vi) the method of surface water discharge;</i> <i>vii) how run-off rates and volumes will be controlled to greenfield or equivalent rates;</i> <i>viii) how flood risk on-site and elsewhere will be avoided;</i> <i>and</i>	
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			<i>ix)arrangements for the long-term management and maintenance of the SuDS.Development is expected to take opportunities to reduce flood risk and create betterment.</i> <i>7Geo-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.</i> <i>8Development proposals must not discharge surface water into the foul or combined sewer network unless there are exceptional circumstances and it can be demonstrated that no reasonable alternative exists.</i>	
45	Policy 15 evidence	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.	Policy 15 Evidence <i>93 The policy requires priority to be given to SuDS15 when selecting surface water disposal methods. This reflects the national drainage hierarchy and the principle that surface water should be managed through natural processes wherever feasible.</i> <i>94 All new development within the Plan area must consider the impact of surface water drainage. This</i>	Stronger more technical and referenced evidence

		85 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.⁸⁶ 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. ⁸⁷	<i>is essential to ensure that new development is as safe from flooding as possible and does not increase flood risk to surrounding areas. Flooding can result in damage to property, disruption of transport networks, and environmental harm, making it critical that surface water is managed effectively from the outset of any development.</i> <i>95 The Parish has experienced increasing pressures from surface water flooding, reflecting national trends associated with climate change, more intense rainfall events and incremental urbanisation. Even relatively small-scale developments can cumulatively increase impermeable surfaces, accelerate surface water run-off and overwhelm existing drainage infrastructure.</i> <i>96 Requiring Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in new development (excluding minor extensions and changes of use) ensures that development does not exacerbate local flood risk and that surface water is managed as close to its</i>	
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			source as possible. This approach is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which seeks to ensure that development does not increase flood risk elsewhere and that appropriate SuDS are incorporated in major developments unless there is clear evidence they would be inappropriate. 97 For SuDS to function effectively over the long term, clear arrangements for management and maintenance are essential. 98 Requiring drainage design statements ensures transparency and technical robustness. Such statements allow the Local Planning Authority and statutory consultees to assess existing site conditions and ensures that drainage strategies are evidence-based and appropriate to site-specific constraints. 99 Reinforcing the established drainage hierarchy reflects sustainable water management principles and national planning policy. Infiltration and discharge to natural water bodies	
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			<i>maintains more natural hydrological processes and reduce pressure on engineered networks.</i> <i>100 Effective management of surface water is a critical issue for the Neighbourhood Plan Area. Evidence from South Worcestershire Strategic Flood Risk Assessments¹⁶ and local experience demonstrates that surface water flooding — rather than fluvial flooding alone — presents a significant and growing risk. Increased frequency of intense rainfall events associated with climate change, and the loss of permeable surfaces, has heightened pressure on existing drainage infrastructure.</i> <i>101 By embedding sustainable drainage principles into new development, the policy ensures that growth within the Neighbourhood Plan Area is resilient, environmentally responsible and aligned with best practice in water management.</i>	
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46	Policy 16 Evidence	i) 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. 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.	i) Policy 16 Evidence <i>102 Artificial lighting plays an important role in ensuring safety and usability at night. However, where poorly designed or excessive, it can give rise to obtrusive light (light pollution), including sky glow, glare and light spill beyond the area intended to be illuminated. Such impacts can harm residential amenity, erode rural character, disturb wildlife and result in unnecessary energy consumption.</i> <i>103 South Lenches is characterised by its rural setting, extensive surrounding countryside and ecologically valuable habitats. Dark skies contribute to the area’s tranquillity, landscape quality and sense of place. Incremental increases in lighting, particularly at settlement edges and in open countryside, can cumulatively urbanise the night-time environment and diminish these qualities. It is therefore appropriate that development proposals carefully control external and internal lighting to prevent</i>	
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		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.	<i>further encroachment into undeveloped areas.</i> <i>104 The Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Note GN01/2020 17 provides nationally recognised standards for controlling obtrusive light through defined environmental zones (E0–E4) and measurable limits on sky glow, light intrusion and 17 The institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance note GNo1/2020 luminaire intensity. Requiring development to meet or exceed this guidance ensures that lighting proposals are assessed against established professional benchmarks. Given the predominantly rural character of the Neighbourhood Area, it is reasonable that land outside settlement boundaries seeks to achieve standards equivalent to Environmental Zone E1 (Dark/Natural), with a minimum of E2 (Rural) within settlement boundaries, unless site-specific safety considerations justify otherwise.</i> <i>105 There is substantial evidence that artificial light</i>	
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			<i>can adversely affect biodiversity. Nocturnal species, including bats and invertebrates, are particularly sensitive, with lighting known to disrupt feeding, commuting routes and breeding behaviour. Artificial illumination can fragment habitats by creating barriers to movement and can affect species associated with watercourses, hedgerows and woodland edges — features common within and around South Lenches. National guidance from bodies such as the ILP, Bat Conservation Trust and Buglife supports the careful design and control of lighting in ecologically sensitive areas.</i> <i>106 The policy adopts a precautionary approach consistent with national planning objectives to protect valued landscapes, minimise impacts on biodiversity and secure high-quality design. By prioritising avoidance of unnecessary lighting, minimising light levels to the lowest practical output, and requiring mitigation where impacts cannot be fully avoided, the</i>	
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		ii) Environmental zones for control of obtrusive light	<i>policy ensures that lighting remains functional and proportionate while safeguarding amenity, landscape character and ecological integrity.</i> <i>107 Overall, the approach is locally distinctive, evidence-based and proportionate to the rural context of South Lenches, while relying on recognised national technical guidance to ensure clarity and deliverability.</i> ii) this table has been removed and incorporated within the text of the evidence where appropriate	
48	Policy 17 Evidence	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	Policy 17 Evidence <i>107 This policy seeks to prevent the unnecessary loss of valued local community facilities that form an essential part of life in South Lenches. The facilities identified in the policy (including the sports club, play area, village hall, first school and community orchards) provide the shared infrastructure that supports recreation, education, social interaction and community events. Collectively, they act</i>	To strengthen the evidence for this policy and to add appropriate references

		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.⁸⁸ 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’.⁸⁹ 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	<i>as focal points for parish life and play a fundamental role in maintaining community cohesion.</i> <i>108 Given the small size and relative remoteness of the settlements, the loss of any of these facilities would be significantly detrimental. The Lenches are a considerable distance from larger settlements offering comparable services. For many residents — particularly the parish’s notably large elderly population — access to local facilities is essential to wellbeing, independence and social inclusion. Once lost, community premises and land are rarely replaced due to viability constraints and the limited availability of suitable sites. Even where a specific community use may no longer be viable, the opportunity to retain the premises or land for alternative community purposes should not be lost.</i> <i>109 Evidence from community engagement reinforces the importance of these assets. Survey results indicated that 76% of parishioners feel a strong sense of community spirit,</i>	
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			<i>with facilities such as Church Lench First School, All Saints Church, the Sports and Social Club, and the Village Hall identified as particularly valued and well used. The Village Hall and Lenches Social and Sports Club were the most frequently used facilities at the time of the survey, and overall usage of community facilities is reported to be strong and increasing.</i> <i>110 National planning policy supports the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities and seeks to guard against their unnecessary loss. This policy aligns with that objective while allowing flexibility where robust evidence demonstrates that continued community use is no longer economically viable, or where an alternative accessible facility within or adjoining the settlement boundary is secured.</i> <i>111 Overall, the policy provides a proportionate and locally justified framework to safeguard essential community infrastructure and sustain the social fabric</i>	
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			<i>of South Lenches for present and future generations.</i>	
50	Policy 18 Evidence	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.” 90 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 rights⁹¹. 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.	Policy 18 Evidence <i>112 This policy supports the sustainable growth of the rural economy in South Lenches, recognising that small-scale enterprise plays an important role in maintaining a prosperous and resilient rural community. National planning policy identifies building a strong, competitive economy as a core objective and states that local and neighbourhood plans 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” (NPPF, Section 618). It further supports the reuse of farm and rural buildings and development of land already in commercial use as a means of strengthening local economies.</i> <i>113 The policy responds directly to this objective by supporting proposals that improve agricultural productivity, facilitate the</i>	Evidence updated to strengthen support for the policy

		Premises for businesses should blend in with the local character and ideally should help enhance local facilities to support other local businesses.	<i>reuse of agricultural buildings, and provide opportunities for small-scale employment development. In rural areas such as South Lenches, such sites can offer opportunities for commercial uses that may be difficult to accommodate within settlement boundaries due to limited premises, site availability or potential impacts on neighbouring residents. Providing suitable space locally reduces the need for businesses to locate further afield and supports more sustainable patterns of employment.</i> <i>114 The sensitive reuse of historic farm buildings can prevent deterioration and enhance the appearance of traditional rural structures, while creating space for start-up enterprises and enabling residents to work locally. Encouraging small-scale business premises, including tourism-related uses or farm diversification such as farm shops, supports economic vitality provided development remains proportionate and respects its rural setting.</i> <i>115 At the same time, the policy safeguards rural</i>	
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			<i>character, historic assets and residential amenity. Proposals must not generate significant traffic increases through the settlements, nor result in harmful impacts such as noise, disturbance, or damage to hedgerows and landscape features. This reflects national policy requirements to support economic growth while ensuring development is well-designed and appropriate to its context (NPPF Sections 6, 12 and 16).</i> <i>116 The requirement for robust evidence, including active marketing over a minimum 12-month period, before the loss of existing employment sites is supported ensures that viable business land is not prematurely lost. This approach reflects the objective of maintaining a diverse and sustainable local economy and aligns with national policy which seeks to retain and support employment opportunities in rural areas.</i> <i>117 Overall, the policy provides a balanced framework: actively encouraging appropriate</i>	
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			<i>rural enterprise and start-up opportunities, supporting agricultural improvement and diversification, and safeguarding existing employment sites, while ensuring that development remains sensitive to the rural character and environmental qualities that define South Lenches.</i>	
51	Policy 19 Evidence	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.	Policy 19 Evidence <i>118 Tourism is an important contributor to the rural economy of South Lenches, with two major caravan and camping sites already well-used. This policy aims to enable the sustainable growth of such accommodation while protecting the parish's rural character, landscape, heritage, and residential amenity.</i> <i>119 Small, unobtrusive sites are more likely to integrate into the countryside and minimise visual impact, while careful siting and design, reduce traffic through residential areas and other sensitive locations. Managing potential noise, disturbance, and impacts on public rights of way ensures</i>	

			<i>that tourism does not compromise the enjoyment of the local environment. Provision of on-site facilities supports visitor needs and limits pressure on local infrastructure, maintaining a balance between economic opportunity and the protection of the parish's character and amenity.</i> <i>120 The policy reflects national planning guidance on rural tourism, which supports the sustainable growth of businesses in rural areas while ensuring development is well-designed and appropriate to its context (NPPF, Sections 6, 12, 15). By applying these criteria, the Plan balances economic benefits from tourism with the protection of the parish's distinctive environmental and community qualities.</i>	
		no previous section	8 Community Aspirations <i>121 The National Planning Policy Framework explains that neighbourhood plans may include non-strategic policies to set out detailed matters for specific areas, such as local infrastructure, community facilities, design</i>	To ensure that community aspirations are captured for action by the relevant bodies via the Parish Council

			<i>principles, or other locally important issues.</i> <i>122 These are distinct from formal planning policies used in development management and decision-making. Paragraph 29 of the NPPF 19states that non-strategic policies should be used to provide local detail at neighbourhood level appropriate to the area's needs.</i> <i>123 A community aspiration is included outside the policy section because it reflects an issue that has been highlighted by local residents as important, but it does not meet the formal tests for a planning policy (e.g. it cannot be used to guide planning decisions).</i> <i>124 Recording such aspirations ensures that the community's priorities are formally acknowledged and can be taken forward by the Parish Council or other relevant bodies through appropriate</i> Community Aspiration <i>Expansion of Church Lench Village School to meet future needs will be supported in, provided there is adequate</i>	
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			<i>facilities for the safe drop-off and collection of schoolchildren.</i> <i>Alterations to the school building will be supported provided:</i> <i>a. the historic façade is conserved and protected, and its existing character is respected.</i> <i>b. Any alterations or extensions are sympathetic to the existing building</i> <i>Justification for Community Aspiration</i> <i>125 The expansion and improvement of Church Lench Village School have been identified by the community as an important local priority to meet future educational needs. While the aspiration seeks to support extensions and alterations that respect the historic façade and character of the building and ensure safe drop-off and collection arrangements, it does not constitute a formal planning policy that can be applied in development management decisions.</i>	
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			<i>126 Including this aspiration in the Neighbourhood Plan ensures that the Parish Council and other relevant bodies are aware of community support for sensitive school development and can take appropriate action, without creating statutory planning obligations. This approach is consistent with the 2024 NPPF, which states that neighbourhood plans may include non-strategic policies or local aspirations to address issues important to the community, even if they are not formal development management policies (NPPF, 2024, paragraph 29).</i>	
		No previous conclusion	9 Conclusion <i>The South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan provides a clear, locally tailored framework to guide sustainable development, protect the distinctive rural character of the parish, and support the needs of its community. The Plan balances environmental, social, and economic objectives, ensuring that new development respects the</i>	Added to pull the document together and give an overall view

			<i>landscape, historic features, and biodiversity while contributing positively to the quality of life for residents. Key policies safeguard valued landscapes and views, require sensitive design, and promote the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems to manage flood risk. Dark skies are protected through careful control of artificial lighting, supporting both wildlife and the rural character of the area. The Plan also identifies and protects essential community facilities, including schools, village halls, sports clubs, and community orchards, recognising their critical role in fostering social cohesion and local well-being. Economic vitality is supported through policies encouraging small-scale rural businesses, agricultural improvement, and the sensitive reuse of historic buildings, while ensuring that development does not harm the parish's heritage, landscape, or traffic conditions. Sustainable tourism is promoted through controlled expansion of camping and caravan sites,</i>	
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			<i>balancing visitor opportunities with the preservation of the local environment.</i> <i>Finally, the Plan includes community aspirations, such as the sensitive expansion of Church Lench Village School, reflecting locally identified priorities that, while non-statutory, guide future parish initiatives and reinforce community engagement.</i> <i>Overall, the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan provides a robust, evidence-based, and proportionate approach to guiding development, conserving the parish's distinctive character, and enhancing the social, environmental, and economic resilience of the area for current and future generations.</i>	
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