

South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan 2015- 2041



Consultation Statement

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In April 2013, the Parish Council requested the formation of a Steering Group to create a Parish Plan and Village Design Statement. The Parish Council had spent time reviewing the value and differences between Parish Plans and Neighbourhood Plans, deciding at the time that a Parish Plan would be of most benefit. A Steering Group was formed; they created a Parish Plan questionnaire and by May 2014, the Parish Plan questionnaire was distributed to some 310 households in the 4 villages which make up the South Lenches.

More than 100 households returned a completed questionnaire. The results of the Parish Plan questionnaire showed that the local community wanted a specific focus on appropriate housing development - given the rural nature of the community. Therefore, the Parish Council decided that a Neighbourhood Plan would better suit these identified needs and requested a Neighbourhood Plan designation from Wychavon District Council.

Following Statutory Consultation, South Lenches parish was designated a Neighbourhood Plan Area by Wychavon District Council in September 2015.

2. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

- 1) This Consultation Statement has been prepared to fulfil the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012. Section 15(2), part 5 of the Regulations sets out what a Consultation Statement should contain:
 - (a) Contains details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan;
 - (b) Explains how they were consulted;
 - (c) Summarises the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted;
 - (d) Describes how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.
- 2) Community consultation has been a key priority for the NP Steering Group even before its inception in July 2015. South Lenches is a small Parish with a population of just over 700 within the parish. Consultation was undertaken in a variety of ways to try and maximise responses.
- 3) Through the consultation process, many different aspects of importance to the community were raised and the Steering Group tried hard to ensure all these views and concerns were captured, regardless of whether they could be addressed through the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4) The dedicated webpage on the Parish Council website was set up at the inception to keep people up-to-date with information regarding what was happening with the Neighbourhood Plan. This contained minutes from Steering Group meetings, detailed information regarding consultation for the Neighbourhood Plan and reports from the surveys undertaken.

3. CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES 2015-2020: AWARENESS RAISING.

Community survey December 2016

- 1) The Steering Group changed their focus to the Neighbourhood Plan using the data gathered from the Parish Plan questionnaire. In December 2016, a further survey was circulated to each household with a focus on Planning, Development and Parish character. The survey results were analysed and a final report produced by the independent Consultation and Insight Unit, Stratford upon Avon District Council. The survey was open to residents in the South Lenches

Parish over the age of 16. 136 households returned questionnaires and 227 individuals responded. Copies of the report were made available to the community online at the Lenches website.

Housing needs survey January 2017

- 2) Warwickshire Rural Community Council (WRCC) carried out an independent Housing Needs Survey for the Parish Council in January 2017. 350 households received a questionnaire; spare copies of the questionnaire were available from Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk. Unlike previous surveys, the Steering Group asked for responses only if there was an identified housing need. 8 households responded - a response rate of 2.29% which WRCC stated as an average response rate.

Walk-in parish open day and neighbourhood plan exhibition 19 May 2018

- 3) The Steering Group used the village hall to stage an exhibition on display boards of the Neighbourhood Document. A feedback form was created for this Community Communications exercise, asking specifically for opinions on the Plan's recommendations, important views and green space. 58 responses were gathered across the day with approximately 60 people in attendance.
- 4) In 2019 the Chair of the Steering Group left the South Lenches community and as Covid took hold, no further progress to the Neighbourhood Plan took place.
- 5) By 2021, 2 new Parish Councillors took the helm of the Steering Group and the Steering Group was refreshed with new people.

4. CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES 2021-2024: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Community survey July 2021

- 6) The Parish Council agreed that since it had been over 4 years since the last survey of the stated aims, objectives and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan, a survey should be done across the whole community to confirm our understanding of the community's views.

Housing needs survey March 2023

- 7) The Steering Group and Parish Council agreed to update the specific housing needs of the community using Warwickshire Rural Community Council (WRCC) to independently obtain details of those with specific housing needs. 320 households had a survey delivered to them; 8 forms were returned with 5 being discounted due to insufficient data and no identified housing need. This response of less than 1% was lower than the typical average of 2% housing need identified in rural parishes.

Vision and objectives survey March 2024

- 8) By March 2024, the Vision and Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan had largely been rewritten by the Steering Group to consider feedback from the surveys since 2020. The Steering Group delivered a Survey document to 350 households in the Parish; provided the ability for both online and paper questionnaires to be returned and held an open event and a walk-in-exhibition on 23rd and 24th March at the Lenches Sports and Recreation Club. As this open event focused only on the NP's Vision and Objectives, we combined face-to-face discussions of the Vision and Objectives with an exhibition of the old photographs highlighting

the historic nature of our community. More than 80 people attended the event across the 2 days. Survey responses were 108 representing a 31% response rate, consistent with response rates for previous surveys.

Local green space owners' consultation May 2025

- 9) In May 2025, letters were sent to every owner of identified Local Green Spaces in the Neighbourhood Plan, informing them their land was being considered for identification as a Local Green Space within the Neighbourhood Plan.

5. CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES 2025: SCREENING / EVIDENCE GATHERING.

- 10) The Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to SWDC in February 2025 for screening.
- 11) In May 2025, SWDC confirmed that no SEA or HRA were required.
- 12) The remainder of 2025 was spent updating and revising the Neighbourhood Plan for Regulation 14 Consultation.

6. CONTINUOUS CONSULTATION

- 12) The website has been constantly updated and regularly promoted
- 13) An email list has been built up of subscribers who receive monthly updates
- 14) Social media channels (ARCH Messenger and Facebook) provide updates on the plan progress and also information about upcoming engagements.

7. REGULATION 14 PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION 2025

- 15) The six-week consultation period required under Regulation 14 ran from 11th November to 23rd December 2025. To encourage as many local people as possible to engage in the consultation, various methods of communication were used. These included:
 - 16) Produced a colour Executive Summary of the Plan, vision, objectives and policies
 - 17) Produced a feedback form and covering letter for the consultation.
 - 18) Produced 6 fully printed copies of the Neighbourhood Plan document for review by anyone who requested it.
- 19) The 'executive summary' of the Regulation 14 neighbourhood plan including a feedback form and links to digital feedback methods, which was delivered to every house in the parish. Printed paper copies of the full plan were available to read at the Lenches Sports and Recreation Club (the bar); All Saints Church, Church Lench; Ellenden Farm Shop, Harvington. Information about the consultation, links to the neighbourhood plan website and digital feedback websites were also available on the Parish Council website.
- 20) Articles highlighting the importance of the Regulation 14 consultation and directing people to where to find more information about the Neighbourhood Plan were posted on social media directing people to the parish council website and SurveyMonkey feedback form.
- 21) In addition, the Steering Group held an open walk-in exhibition of key aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan - namely Local Green Spaces, valued landscapes, vision and objectives and maps. Two further copies of the full Neighbourhood Plan document were available in folders at these events for members of the community to read.
- 22) In accordance with requirements of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, relevant statutory consultees were notified by letter. In addition, a range of parties that the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group considered were likely to have an interest in the

plan were also written to. All parties were advised to download a copy of the plan but were advised that hard copies could be issued on request. The list of Consultees can be found in Appendix CS1.

- 23) As Appendix CS2 shows, while there were a few negative comments, the people who responded to the consultation were supportive of the NP policies. Appendix CS4 shows the detailed comments by the local planning authority. These have been studied and changes made to satisfy the Basic Conditions criteria and improve clarity. The tables detail the working group responses to the comments received and actions and/or text changes made.

8. CONCLUSION

Consultation has played a prominent role in shaping the preparation of the SLNP, and every effort has been made to engage with the widest possible audience within the community. Interest in the plan increased over the years it has taken to prepare the NP. A visible presence of the Neighbourhood Plan at key, well attended village events each year has helped maintain the profile of the plan's preparation, along with regular updates on the Parish Council website.