

South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2041



Regulation 15
Submission Copy
May 2026

Contents

Appendices, Policies Maps and Tables	4
1 Introduction	5
2 Local Context	10
History of South Lenches	10
Modern South Lenches	12
3 Profile of the community today	13
Population	13
Housing	13
Employment	14
4 Strategic Context	14
Development Plan Framework	14
South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) 2021–2041	15
Implications for South Lenches	15
5 Vision and Objectives	16
Challenges for South Lenches	16
Vision for South Lenches	17
Neighbourhood Plan Objectives	18
6 Objectives and Policies Matrix	19
7 Policies	20
Introduction to the Policies	20
Section One Housing Policies	21
Policy 1 South Lenches Development Boundaries	21
Policy 2 Housing Growth, Infill and Design	23
Policy 3 Density of Development	24
Policy 4 Affordable Housing Mix	25
Policy 5 Market Housing Mix	25
Policy 6 Design Guide & Local Character	26
Section Two History and Heritage Policies	28
Policy 7 Protection of Historic Environment	28
Section Three Environment Policies	30
Policy 8 Small-Scale Sustainable and Renewable Energy	30
Policy 9 High Quality Agricultural land	31
Policy 10 Trees, Hedges and Woodland	33
Policy 11 Wildlife and Biodiversity	34

Policy 12 Public Rights of Way	36
Policy 13 Local Green Spaces	39
Policy 14 Valued Landscapes.....	44
Policy 15 Flood Mitigation.....	49
Policy 16 Dark Skies	51
Section Four Social Policies.....	53
Policy 17 Community Facilities	53
Policy 18 Business & Employment	54
Policy 19 Camping & Caravan Sites	56
8 Community Aspirations	57
Community Aspiration 1 – Church Lench Village School	57
9 Conclusion	59

Appendices, Policies Maps and Tables

Appendices

Appendix A	South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide
Appendix B	South Lenches Parish Character Assessment
Appendix C	Equalities Impact Assessment
Appendix D	Basic Conditions Statement
Appendix E	Heritage Assets

Maps

Policies Map 1	South Lenches Parish Council Area
Policies Map 2a & 2b	South Lenches Development Boundaries
Policies Map 3	Agricultural Land Classification
Policies Map 4	Wildlife Corridors
Policies Map 5	South Lenches Public Rights of Way
Policies Map 6	Church Lench Local Green Spaces
Policies Map 7	Atch Lench Local Green Spaces
Policies Map 8	Ab Lench Valued Landscapes
Policies Map 9	Atch Lench Valued Landscapes
Policies Map 10	Church Lench Valued Landscapes

Tables

Table 1	Profile of the Community Today
Table 2a	Households
Table 2b	Occupancy
Table 3	Socio Economic Status
Table 4	Policy / Objectives Matrix
Table 5	Valued Views

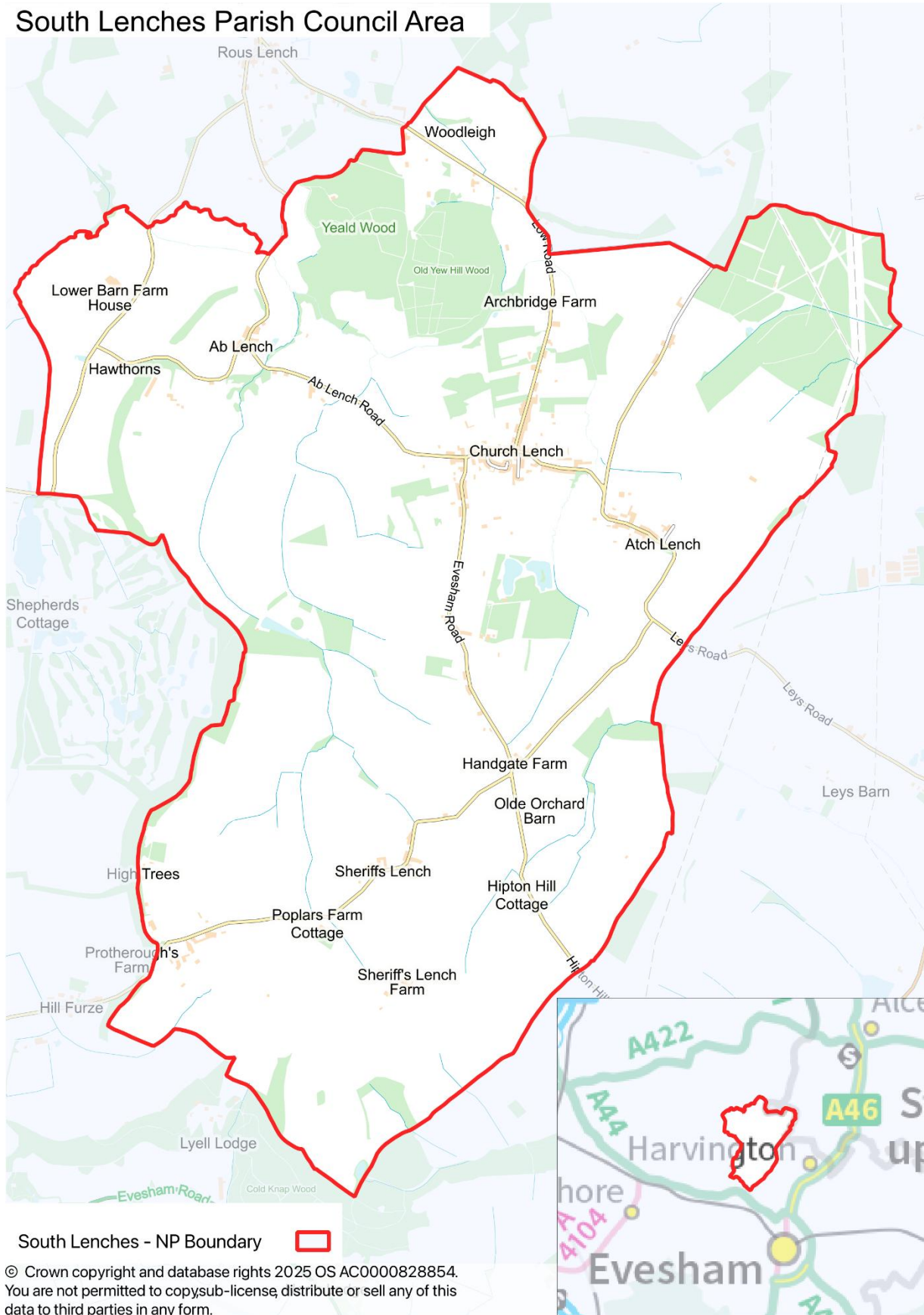
Introduction

- a. This document represents the Neighbourhood Plan for South Lenches Parish. It represents one part of the development plan for the Parish over the period 2015 to 2041, the other part being the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (adoption March 2026).
- b. Wychavon District Council, as the local planning authority, 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 by the community through the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (SLNPSG).
- c. The South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan (referred to hereafter as the Plan or SLNP) is being prepared in accordance with the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). The SLNPSG has prepared the plan to establish a vision for the future of the parish and to set out how that vision will be realised through planning land use and development change over the plan period 2015 to 2041. The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development within the parish and provide guidance to any interested parties wishing to submit planning applications for development within the parish. The process of producing a plan has sought to involve the community as widely as possible and the different topic areas are reflective of matters that are of considerable importance to South Lenches, its residents, businesses, and community groups. The Government's intention in introducing Neighbourhood Planning is to enable communities to:
 - choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built
 - have their say on what those new buildings should look like
 - grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead.
- d. Each section of the plan covers a different topic. These headings are:
 - Housing
 - Environment
 - Historic
 - Social
- e. Under each heading there is the justification for the policies presented which explains what the plan is seeking to achieve. The policies themselves are presented in coloured boxes, alongside the development plan and national guidance, against which planning applications will be assessed. It is advisable that, in order to understand the full context for any individual policy, it is read in conjunction with the supporting text.
- f. The map overleaf shows the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan area, which is the same as with the boundary of South Lenches Parish.
- g. The SLNPSG has prepared the Plan to provide a vision for the future of the parish. It sets out clear policies and objectives to realise these visions through planning and controlling land use and development change over the Plan period 2015 to 2041.
- h. These policies accord with higher level planning policy, principally the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, updated Dec 2024) and the existing South Worcestershire Development Plan Review, the Wychavon District Council Local Development Scheme 2021-2024 (Sept 2021 Update) and the South Worcestershire Local Development Scheme 2023-2026 (Sept 2023), as required by the Localism Act.

The Plan is a living document. It gives the community of South Lenches the opportunity to take some control over how the area will evolve over the years, by introducing policies that are specific to South Lenches and supplement and expand upon the policies contained in the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDPR).

- i. Although deciding where possible future housing could come forward is an important part of the Plan, the community engagement and local research undertaken offers the opportunity to investigate a wider range of issues and opportunities, including:
 - How to protect business areas to support the local economy
 - How to help determine where housing should be built for the period up to 2041, and what it should look like
 - How travel routes and movement around the parish could be improved
 - To protect, enhance and invest in the natural and built environment, its amenities and its surroundings
 - How to build on the sense of community and ensure a healthy environment for people to live in
 - How health and education could be improved for a growing community, both young and old
 - How the heritage assets of the South Lenches can be preserved and maintained
 - How to protect existing, and propose new community land uses such as allotments, open spaces, playing fields, community orchards.
- j. The Plan seeks to answer two questions:
 - What are the problems and concerns the Plan should address?
 - What opportunities are there that the Plan could make the most of?

South Lenches Parish Council Area



The Plan Preparation Process

- k. This Neighbourhood Plan has emerged from major, sustained community consultation. Consultation details and survey reports can be viewed on the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan website at: www.southlenchesparishcouncil.org/neighbourhood-plan

Sustainable Development

- l. The NPPF encourages the re-use of land that has been developed (brownfield land) provided it is, “*not land of high environmental value*”. The objective of the Neighbourhood Plan and resultant policies is to:
- protect the environment.
 - protect the historic built and natural environmental assets of the parish.
 - increase or, as a minimum, maintain biodiversity, soil, water, air, climatic factors, architectural and archaeological heritage as well as landscape setting.
- m. As such, the Plan will help to achieve sustainable development by ensuring that its development policies and proposals will meet the needs of people living and working in the parish, whilst at the same time helping to ensure that any adverse environmental impact is minimised.

Evidence base

- n. There is a substantial and significant amount of background information that has helped in producing the Plan (this is known as the ‘Evidence Base’). This is available on the South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan website.

National policy

- o. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The latest iteration of the NPPF was published in December 2024 with minor updates in February 2025. The government published a new NPPF for consultation in December 2025 which is expected to be published and brought into effect later in 2026. The NPPF 2024 states:
- “Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies” (para.30).*
- p. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they obtain the right types of development for their community. The ambitions of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. To facilitate this, local planning authorities should set out clearly their strategic policies for the area and ensure that an up-to-date Local Plan is in place as quickly as possible. Neighbourhood plans should reflect these policies and neighbourhoods should plan positively to support them.
- “.....Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies” (para.13).*

Consultation

- q. The SLNPSG has developed the Neighbourhood Plan through extensive engagement with the community.
 - A wide-spread programme of engagement has also been undertaken to identify further issues, develop policy options and seek feedback on the emerging plan. This has included: Public exhibitions and drop-in events
 - Questionnaires distributed to all households
 - Regular updates in Parish Newsletters

Monitoring of the Plan

- r. The South Lenches Neighbourhood Plan has been developed to assist with the planning of sustainable growth across the Neighbourhood Plan Area for a period up to 2041.
- s. As the Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the Development Plan for Wychavon District Council, it will be subject to the Council's Local Plan Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) regime. This report provides many of the monitoring and review mechanisms relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan policies, as they nest within the wider strategic policies of the local plan.
- t. South Lenches Parish Council, as the neighbourhood plan authority, will be responsible for maintaining and periodically revisiting the Plan to ensure relevance and monitor delivery. The ongoing development of the South Worcestershire Local Plan means that the Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be reviewed within five years of being made.
- u. As a result, it is considered that the existing monitoring arrangements for the strategic policies and the detailed policies will be sufficient for most of the Neighbourhood Plan policies.
- v. This is particularly relevant since the updating of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) requires local authorities to review and update their local plan every five years.
- w. In all cases, South Lenches Parish Council and its partners should consider undertaking a partial review of the Plan in five to six years after adoption in line with the Local Plan Review, with a full review no later than 2031.
- x. In order to determine when a review is necessary, the Parish Council will monitor development in South Lenches along with the local and national policy and legislative context. It may be that this policy is reviewed at other times because of changes to relevant local policies, national policies and legislation.

2 Local Context

History of South Lenches

'The Lenches' is the term used to describe the five settlements of Ab Lench, Atch Lench, Church Lench, Sheriffs Lench and Rous Lench, which includes Radford. Rous Lench is not included in the current South Lenches Parish. These are relatively modern divisions, and the history of the area was not neatly divided in the same way; and in order to understand something of the history of South Lenches (which did not, in fact, exist as a geographical place name, other than as the title of the parish) it is necessary to consider the whole area.

ORIGINS OF THE PLACE NAMES

The word Lench is derived from an Old English word meaning a ridge or area of high ground that can be ploughed. The area was settled by the Angles who had migrated from South Lincolnshire at some point in the 7th Century CE. The settlers established cottages and farmsteads in the folds of the hills, mostly close to the principal watercourse, Whitsun Brook. The name "Whitsun" is a corruption of "Wixan" the sub group of Angles who occupied the land. These early settlers established their villages in a linear fashion on either side of the tracks that linked them together. This settlement pattern is still the dominant feature today.

The Ab in Ab Lench is derived from the Old English name Aebba, one of the earliest settlers in the area. For a period in the 16th and 17th centuries Ab Lench was known as Hob Lench. The alternative name 'Abbots Lench' was a mistake in an Enclosure Act document of 1794 and this mistake was repeated in subsequent documents and maps. Later attempts to revert to 'Ab Lench' have met with limited success.

First documented in 708CE, Atch Lench is derived from the Old English personal name Aecci, another early settler.

The name 'Church Lench' denotes the first church in the area, in the 12th century or earlier (there was also a church in Rous Lench, then known as Bishops Lench, from the same period). For a time during the 13th century Church Lench was known as Lench Roculf, after the family who held the manor.

Sheriffs Lench is so-called because it was held, from 1077, by Urse d' Abitot, the Sheriff of Worcestershire who took it from the Bishops of Worcester. Before the Conquest it was names variously Lench Bernardi and Lench Alnoth, both the names of early Anglo-Saxon settlers

The earliest written references to settlements in the area relate to the 8th Century CE when the region of Worcestershire ceased to be West Saxon and became part of the Kingdom of Mercia. There are entries in the Domesday Book for each of the Lenches villages.

Church Lench



Church Lench Manor was held directly by Evesham Abbey until the 13th Century. In the 14th Century the manor was leased from the Abbey by the Beauchamps and under them, to the Roculfs (who also owned land in Harvington). Some of the land was also granted to the Abbey and Convent of Halesowen

The land was surrendered by the last Abbott to King Henry VIII in 1538 who granted it in the same year to Sir John Dudley.

He sold it on to Sir William Scudamore of Holme Lacy, Herefordshire and it remained in that family (which acquired the title Viscount Sligo) until it was sold again in 1627. In 1627 the manor was bought by William Keyt. His descendant, Sir William Keyt of Ebrington, Gloucestershire burned to death having been supposed to be a lunatic and setting fire to his own house in Norton, Gloucestershire in September 1791. In the same year the manor was sold to Sir Dudley Ryder who was later created Earl of Harrowby. In 1793 John Callow and his wife, Ellen, conveyed the land to John Clarke. After this the manor seems to have fragmented.

In the mid-19th Century, the main land owner was Sir W. E. Rouse Boughton of Rous Lench Court. However the manor continued to fragment in the latter half of the 19th Century. Part owners included the Duc d'Orleans and Reverend William Chafey of Rous Lench

Atch Lench



Until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539, Atch Lench Manor belonged to Evesham Abbey. In 1542 Henry VIII granted the manor to the Dean and Chapter of Westminster and with short interruptions during the reign of Elizabeth I and the Commonwealth, it remained in their hands until c1860. The manor records from 1542 to 1800 are still held in the Muniment Room at Westminster Abbey.

By 1770 Heming Bomford was the major copyhold tenant (holding his land by copy of the Court Roll). In 1828 at Heming Bomford's death, his sons, Joseph, Thomas and Benjamin became joint tenants of their father's lands (living at Manor Farm, Court Farm and Firs Farm respectively). In the 1860s as the Dean and Chapter of Westminster ceased to be the Lords of the Manor, the Bomfords enfranchised their farms and less than 20 years later sold them to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Some of the Bomford family continued to occupy the land as tenant farmers.

Ab Lench



By the early 20th century, probably triggered by the social changes and economic depression consequent upon the First World War, it had become increasingly difficult for individual owners to maintain great Estates. Following Dr Chafy's death in 1916 the eldest son Hugh Edward Chafy tried to keep the manor intact but was eventually forced to sell the various parts of the manor.

The various properties were sold to private owners. In Ab Lench the four principal farms were sold as follows:

- Easter Hill (Then known as Easter Hall) in 1923.
- Lower Farm (then known as 'Ob Lench Bottom') in 1924.
- Spitten Farm in 1933.
- Manor Farm in 1938.

All four were sold as working farms but only one of the four remains as such today. The manor house itself, Rous Lench Court, was sold to the Burn family in 1926.

Sheriffs Lench



The Chafy family already owned, since the 1820s, half of Sheriffs Lench and parts of Church Lench. To inherit, W. K. W. Chafy appended a second 'Chafy' to his name, becoming W. K. W. Chafy - Chafy in accordance with a loosely worded clause in his grandfathers will. Dr Chafy-Chafy had also purchased the other half of Sheriffs Lench in 1873.

Modern South Lenches

Characterised by open green spaces, the South Lenches are highlighted by woodland and wildlife areas sitting between each of the South Lenches inter-dependent villages. The communities have good access to its vibrant and competitive local economies in near-by towns of Evesham and cities of Worcester and Birmingham. Rural businesses (such as horse livery yards and camping and caravan sites) supporting small scale trade and enterprise are proportionate to the size of its small villages. Historic buildings combine with views from the numerous rolling hills and sitting in relative isolation from larger settlements; the South Lenches has a strong sense of community.

The South Lenches comprises four small villages: Ab Lench is small and quiet with farm houses and detached houses; Atch Lench is dominated by a plum orchard and features old, black and white, half-timbered cottages; Sheriffs Lench is the most rural and isolated of the settlements with houses each of individual character and Church Lench is the life and soul of the settlements with the church, school, sports facilities and social club at its heart.

The built environment moves from detached houses with wide, open garden space to smaller semi-detached and terraced housing in Church Lench, which is the largest village. In support of limited and sympathetic housing development, the South Lenches preserves the individual character of each settlement. Each settlement boasts homes of an individual character and design. Our community aspiration continues to focus on how we provide growth for our community in proportion with our existing landscape.

The South Lenches communities deliver high quality of living and lifestyle - working and social - with a balanced mix of residents. Families and children both young and older; working individuals in local and rural professions; working from home alongside travel to urban centres and diversification of farms to meet the needs of the local, rural community. The high standard of living is supported by the green infrastructure in the area and promotes good health through provision of walking, running, riding, and cycling along multiple public pathways; bridleways and the narrow country roads connecting our villages together.

There is pride in the sense of community through the centres of village social life and the high standard of local education is widely recognised in the thriving primary school. The management and growth of our rural village life promote an attractive and secure environment for all with road safety for walkers, riders, runners and cyclists of particular importance. The residents value the diversity of the community which supports the older generations and families as well as single households. This dynamic community combined with access to housing with a variety of tenure types and sizes has produced a traditional English countryside community focused on local people and local needs.

3 Profile of the community today

Key Facts (Census data 2021 ¹)	South Lenches
Area (ha)	1,397
Total Population*	710
Density	0.5 persons per hectare
Households*	320
*to the nearest 10	

Table 1

Population

As mentioned above, South Lenches is within Wychavon District. The overall population size of 710 equates to 0.53% of the population of Wychavon (132,500), according to the 2011 census data, the population was 675, which shows just over a 5% increase in 10 years.

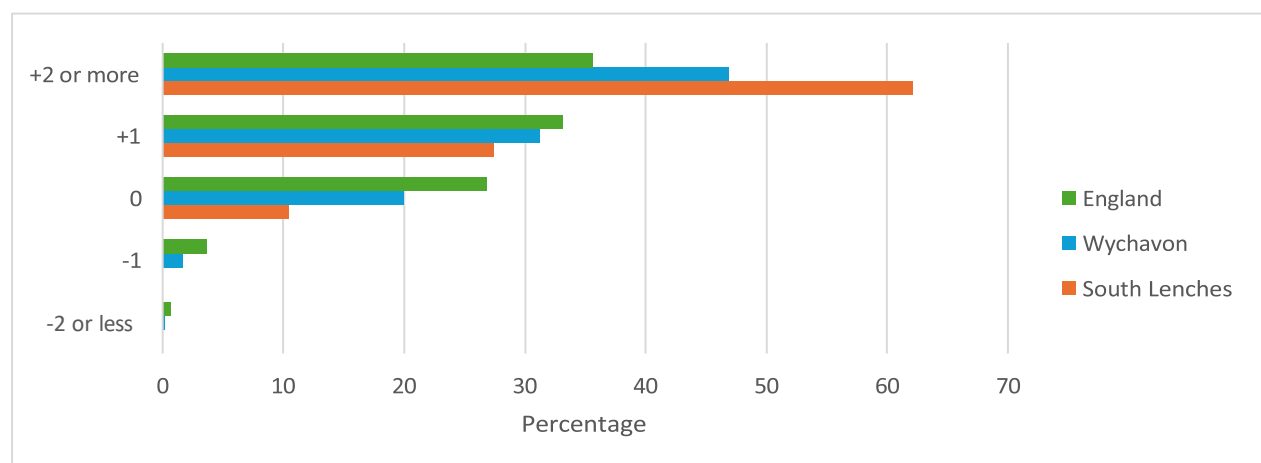
Housing

There were 320 households in South Lenches at the time of the 2021 census (0.55% of the 57,400 households across the district).

Less than 20% of homes had 2 bedrooms or less.

The 2021 census measured 'occupancy rating'. The

determines whether a home has more or less bedrooms than necessary according to the Bedroom Standard. A rating of 0 suggests a household has the ideal number of bedrooms. Any number with a '+' suggests under occupancy and any number with a '-' suggests over occupancy. (Tables 2 a and 2b)



¹ [ONS Census 2021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census)

The Parish was in the lowest 10% for income deprivation but in the highest 10% for 'barriers to housing and services' domain. The percentage of two person households in South Lenches was 46.7%, Worcestershire 49.8% and England 34%.

Employment

In 2021, 51.9% of people were economically active and in employment, 1.7% were unemployed. 46.3% were economically inactive (retired or not seeking employment). Wychavon figures were 57.4%, 3.5% and 39.1% respectively.

49.8% worked 31-48 hours/week and 15.3% worked 49 hours or more/week. This is in comparison to the England figures of 59.1% and 11.1% and Wychavon figures of 57.2% and 12.9% respectively.

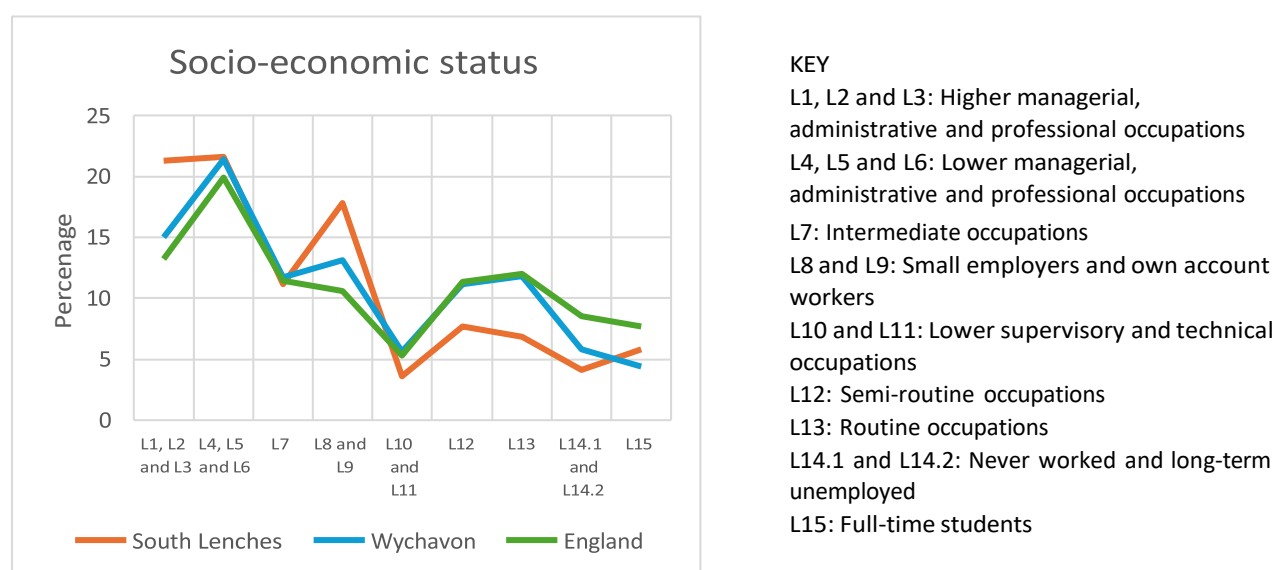


Table 3

4 Strategic Context

Development Plan Framework

The statutory development plan for South Lenches is currently the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) 2016 which extends the 2016 South Worcestershire Development Plan's period to 2041. Therefore, the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan are in general conformity with the SWDPR.

South Worcestershire Development Plan Review (SWDPR) 2021–2041

The SWDPR increases the overall housing requirement across South Worcestershire while retaining the settlement hierarchy approach.

Growth is focused on Worcester, the main towns and strategic sites in sustainable locations.

South Lenches is not identified for strategic housing growth.

The SWDPR strengthens policies relating to:

- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Biodiversity net gain
- Sustainable design and infrastructure delivery

The Plan seeks to maintain a robust five-year housing land supply.

Implications for South Lenches

Within the adopted framework:

- South Lenches is not a strategic growth location.
- Development should be small-scale, proportionate and sustainable.
- Infill within settlement boundaries is the primary mechanism for housing delivery.
- Strong protection applies to landscape, heritage and biodiversity.
- Development must appropriately address flood risk and infrastructure requirements.

The Neighbourhood Plan operates within this strategic framework and is required to remain in general conformity with these strategic policies.

5 Vision and Objectives

Challenges for South Lenches

The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address, as far as is possible, the challenges that face the community of South Lenches Parish. In summary these challenges are:

- Ensuring that any new development meets the Objectively Assessed Housing Need for the community and is of high-quality design, and at an appropriate density reflecting the local character.
- The limited number of residential properties that are affordable to local residents and those who work in the local area.
- South Lenches increasingly elderly population.
- Provision of dwellings suitable and affordable for younger people and families, enabling a wider range of people of all ages to live in the village.
- The increasing traffic through the villages, causing unsafe walking / cycling conditions and damage to road surfaces.
- Protecting existing community services and providing for their changing needs, as well as providing for new community services for an aging population.
- Protecting the sensitive natural environment for the benefit of residents and future generations.
- Ensuring the growth in population arising from new development does not put an unacceptable strain on existing infrastructure, including (but not limited to) sewage and water infrastructure overload.
- Protecting the significant green spaces, views and biodiversity assets in the parish, increase habitat for wildlife and biodiversity and provide new accessible green space for the growing population.

Vision for South Lenches

In consultation with the community, the established vision for South Lenches is as follows:

Characterised by open green spaces, in 2041 the South Lenches are typified by woodland and wildlife areas sitting between each of four small inter-dependent villages: Ab Lench is small and quiet, with farmhouses and detached houses; Atch Lench is dominated by a plum orchard and features old, black and white, half-timbered cottages; Sheriffs Lench is the most rural and isolated of the villages with houses each of individual character. Church Lench is the largest of the settlements with the church, school, sports facilities, and social club and acts as the focal point for the social life of the villages.

The high quality of living is supported by the green infrastructure in the area and promotes good health through provision of walking, running, riding, and cycling along multiple public pathways, bridleways and the narrow country roads laced through the agricultural land and connecting our villages together.

Through appropriate and sympathetic development of housing with a variety of tenure types and sizes, the South Lenches delivers a high quality of living for both young and old, creating a dynamic and lively community and promotes an attractive and secure environment for all.

Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

The objectives of the South Lenches neighbourhood plan, as identified through engagement with the community address the following topics:

Housing Objectives

Objective 1	Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings
Objective 2	Ensure all new development includes an appropriate mix of housing in terms of design and affordability to meet the objectively assessed housing need findings
Objective 3	Promote high levels of sustainability and energy efficiency, including renewable energy systems
Objective 4	Ensure appropriate infrastructure is in place to deal with surface water and sewerage within any new development

History and Heritage Objectives

Objective 5	Preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches
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Environmental Objectives

Objective 6	Prevent coalescence between villages to maintain each village's own identity
Objective 7	Protect woodland areas, wildlife sites, natural and historic conservation areas
Objective 8	To protect and enhance the villages open spaces and to conserve local green space
Objective 9	Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land
Objective 10	Protect valued landscapes and views
Objective 11	Recognise and respect the limitations of small, rural roads in relation to development needs
Objective 12	Protect and maintain the dark skies between and within our villages

Social and Economic Objectives

Objective 13	Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area
Objective 14	Encourage increased access to the open countryside by maintaining and improving footpaths, especially between settlements

6 Objectives and Policies Matrix

The table below demonstrates which objectives are met by which policies

		OBJECTIVES													
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
POLICIES	1	X					X		X						
	2	X	X								X				
	3	X	X												
	4		X												
	5		X												
	6					X									
	7					X									
	8			X											
	9									X					
	10								X						
	11							X						X	X
	12											X		X	X
	13	X							X					X	
	14					X	X				X				
	15				X										
	16												X		
	17					X								X	
	18									X				X	
	19							X		X				X	

Table 4

7 Policies

Introduction to the Policies

The planning policies in this Neighbourhood Plan 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.

There are a total of 19 policies addressing four topic areas. These are: Housing, Environment, Historic and Social.

Each of the individual policies then forms two parts:

- 1) the policy itself, which provides the wording which should be understood and followed by developers when proposing new development, and by the local planning authority when considering proposals
- 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.

Not all the policies will be relevant to every type of development, but anyone proposing development in South Lenches will be expected to ensure that they consider and address the policies that are relevant to their proposals, so that the plan is implemented successfully to achieve the local community's objectives.

Section One Housing Policies

Policy 1 South Lenches Development Boundaries

1. The Neighbourhood Plan defines Settlement Boundaries for South Lenches Parish at Church Lench and Atch Lench, as shown on the Policies Maps 2a & 2b
2. Proposals for infill development within the Settlement Boundaries will be supported, provided they accord with the other policies of this plan.
3. 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.

Objectives met by Policy One:

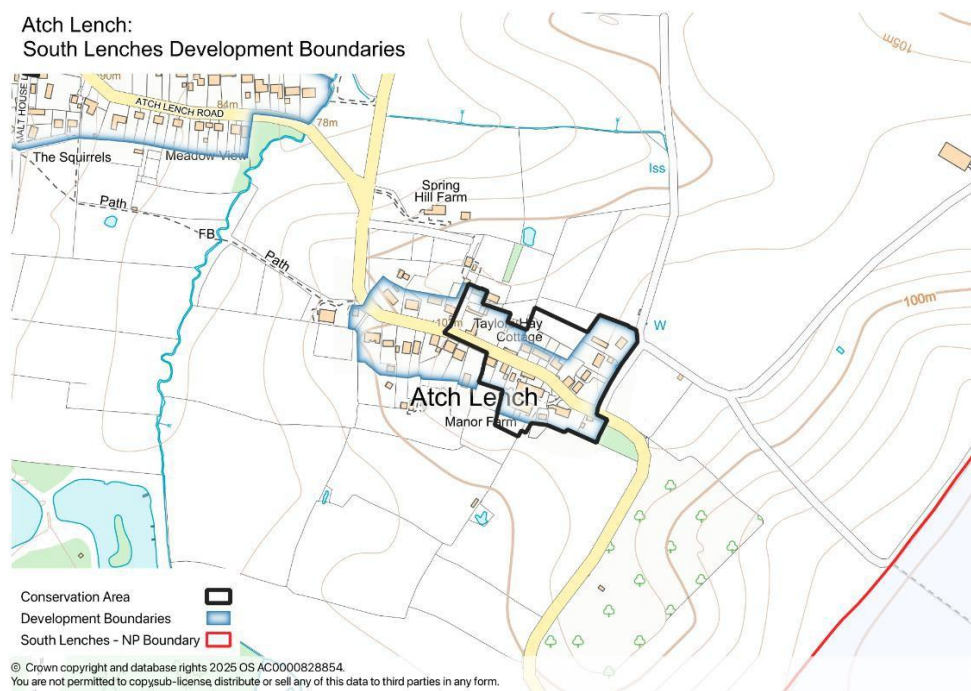
- Objective 1:** Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings
- Objective 6:** Prevent coalescence between villages to maintain each village's own identity
- Objective 8:** To protect and enhance the villages open spaces and to conserve local green space
-

Policy 1 Evidence

1. Neighbourhood plans can indicate where the settlements are in their parish and show that they are considered appropriate for smaller scale, organic growth of open market housing by defining a development boundary in their NP.
2. The purpose of defining Settlement Boundaries for Church Lench and Atch Lench is to provide a clear and locally appropriate framework for managing future development. The Lenches are small rural settlements 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.
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.
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.
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 rural area. 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.
6. Overall, this approach ensures that change is managed positively while safeguarding the distinct identity, landscape setting and historic character of the Lenches throughout the Plan period.
7. The South Lenches Housing Survey² clearly indicated that development boundaries are important to the community to help prevent coalescence between villages to maintain the identity of each village.

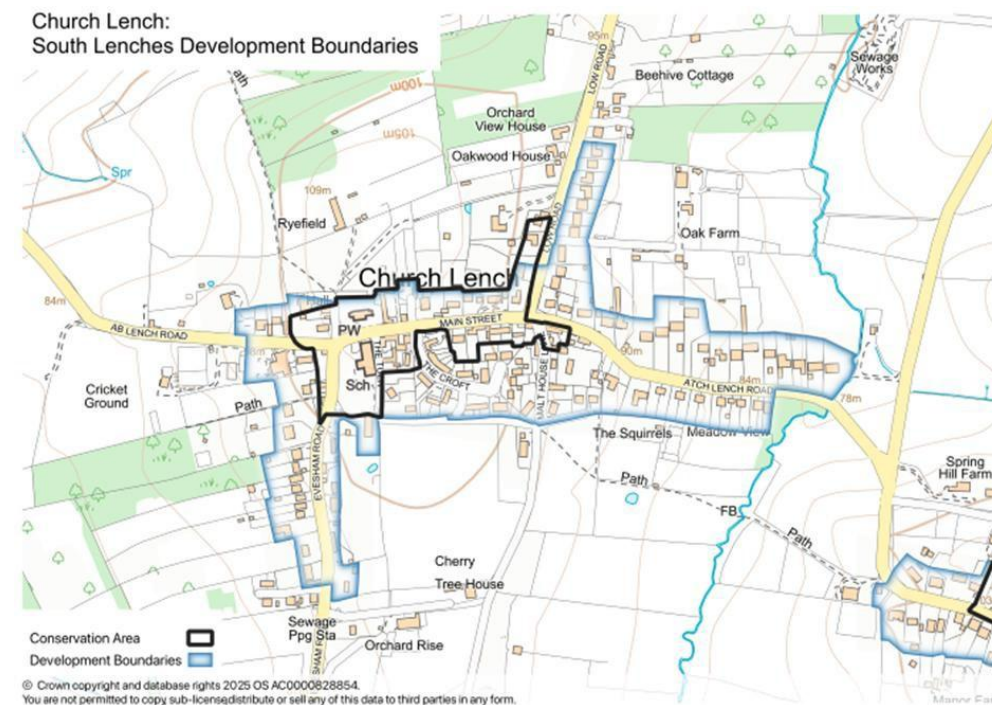
² South Lenches Housing Survey Feb 2017

Atch Lench: South Lenches Development Boundaries



Policies Map 2a

Church Lench: South Lenches Development Boundaries



Policies Map 2b

Policy 2 Housing Growth, Infill and Design

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)	Do not severely impact on the free and safe flow of traffic on the local highway network.
ii)	Do not cause an unacceptable impact on the residential amenities of adjacent residential properties.
lii)	Do not cause the loss of important open space of public environmental or ecological value, nor spoil an important public view.
iv)	Reflect the character of their immediate area in terms of their height, scale, design, materials and linear layout.
v)	Provide appropriate access, appropriate car parking provision and green space/garden provision.
vi)	Contribute towards a balanced mix of housing in the Plan area

Objectives Met by Policy 2

- Objective 1:** Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings
- Objective 2:** Ensure all new development includes an appropriate mix of housing in terms of design and affordability to meet the objectively assessed housing need findings
- Objective 10:** Protect valued landscapes and views

Policy 2 Evidence

- 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 at Atch Lench and Church Lench. 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.
- 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.
- 15 The Plan does not allocate housing sites. Planning Practice Guidance³ 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 Review⁴ and the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework⁵, including securing well-designed places and protecting the natural environment.
- 16 Community engagement, including the South Lenches Housing Survey⁶ 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.

³ [Planning Practice Guidance 41-041-20140306](#)

⁴ [South Worcestershire Development Plan Review Adopted March 2026](#)

⁵ [National Planning Policy Framework 2024](#)

⁶ [South Lenches Housing Survey 2023](#)

Policy 3 Density of Development

- 1 Development proposals located within South Lenches are required to have regard to the following essential characteristics as appropriate to their scale, nature and location within these low-density areas:
 - i) Reflecting the small-scale and fragmented building patterns, including maintaining visual gaps between buildings
 - ii) Ensuring soft boundary treatments (such as low walls, hedges and native species planting) are used on the boundaries with the public realm to avoid hard, urban edges and create a green transition between the built and open areas
 - iii) Ensuring that new driveways and accesses are no wider than is essential and constructed in surface and curbing materials to complement the rural feel and character.
 - iv) Avoiding siting vehicle parking provision and ancillary buildings, such as bin stores and cycle shelters, so that they intrude into the street scene.

Objectives met by Policy 3

- Objective 1:** Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings
- Objective 2:** Ensure all new development includes an appropriate mix of housing in terms of design and affordability to meet the objectively assessed housing need findings

Policy 3 Evidence

- 17 The design principles set out in this Policy are aligned with the National Planning Policy Framework⁷ (NPPF 2024), which at Chapter 12 emphasises that development should respond positively to local character, reflect the identity of place and integrate landscape features. The predominance of low-density and fragmented building patterns in the plan area reflects existing context and avoids development that would be wholly out of character with its surrounding
- 18 The South Lenches Character Assessment⁸ 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.
- 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.
- 20 Minimizing driveway width and using appropriate surfacing reduces visual intrusion, complements the rural streetscape, and avoids suburbanising the area.
- 21 Visible parking areas, bin stores, and cycle shelters disrupt the streetscape and introduce an urban character into the village. Discreet siting or screening preserves the rural aesthetic.
- 22 Implementing this policy will ensure new development reinforces the village's distinctive character while supporting biodiversity and visual amenity.
- 23 South Lenches community consultation strongly supports this approach

⁷ [NPPF 2024 Chapter 12](#)

⁸ [South Lenches Character Assessment 2018](#)

Policy 4 Affordable Housing Mix

- 1 Proposals for small scale local affordable housing sites or exception sites will be supported where they are accompanied by an up-to-date housing needs survey that justifies the need for the houses needed in the neighbourhood area.
- 2 Proposals for new residential development comprising a net increase of 11 units or more in South Lenches must include a proportion of affordable housing in accordance with the policies set out in the Local Plan.
- 3 Any affordable housing must:
 - i) be of a size and type which meets the requirements of those in housing need;
 - ii) be indistinguishable in appearance from the market housing on site; and
 - iii) be distributed evenly across the site.
- 4 Proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites outside the settlement boundary, where housing would not normally be permitted by other policies, will be supported where there is a proven local need.

Objectives met by Policy 4

- Objective 2:** Ensure all new development includes an appropriate mix of housing in terms of design and affordability to meet the objectively assessed housing need findings

Policy 4 Evidence

- 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.
- 25 South Lenches is a rural parish with limited recent housing delivery and a demonstrable need for smaller, affordable homes for local people. Without specific policy support, the delivery of affordable housing within the neighbourhood area would be unlikely, particularly given the scale of development typically coming forward.
- 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.
- 27 It also helps ensure that the scale and type of development remain proportionate to the settlement.
- 28 The requirement for affordable housing on schemes of 11 or more dwellings ensures alignment with strategic Local Plan policies and national policy expectations for major development.
- 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.'*

Policy 5 Market Housing Mix

This policy directs that new development should favour smaller dwellings.

- 1 Overall, up to 10% of new homes on developments of nine or more new residential units should have one bedroom,
 - i) 40% should have two bedrooms,
 - ii) 40% should have three bedrooms,unless viability or other material considerations show a robust justification for a different mix.
- 2 Developments of between four and eight new units should provide a mix comprising predominantly one-to-three-bedroom dwellings, in general accordance with the proportions specified herein.

Objectives met by Policy 5

Objective 2: Ensure all new development includes an appropriate mix of housing in terms of design and affordability to meet the objectively assessed housing need findings

Policy 5 Evidence

- 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.
- 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.
- 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
- 33 South Lenches has an ageing population profile, alongside a need to retain younger households and economically active residents within the community.
- 34 This policy seeks to reverse market delivery 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 & Local Character

- 1 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:
 - i) Be in accordance with the guidance and development principles in the south Lenches Design guide (**Appendix A**)
 - ii) be compatible with the distinctive character of the area, respecting the local settlement pattern, building styles and materials;
 - iii) be of a density that is in keeping with the character of the surrounding development and landscape;
 - iv) preserve or enhance the heritage assets such as listed buildings;
 - v) protect or enhance landscape and biodiversity by incorporating high quality native landscaping;
- 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.

Objectives met by Policy 6

Objective 5: Preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches

⁹ [Landscape Character Assessment](#)

Policy 6 Evidence

- 36 This policy seeks to ensure that all development proposals respond positively 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.
- 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 (a) ensures that development proposals have regard to this locally prepared guidance, consistent with NPPF support for neighbourhood-level design codes and guides.
- 38 The parish is characterised by relatively low-density development, dispersed rural lanes, historic farmsteads and 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.
- 39 The parish contains designated heritage assets including listed buildings, alongside non-designated heritage features that contribute to local character. (These assets are listed as Appendix 5). The policy ensures that proposals preserve or enhance the significance and setting of such assets.
- 40 The South Lenches area sits within a sensitive rural landscape identified within Wychavon District's Landscape Character Assessment. Criterion (f) ensures development aligns with this strategic guidance. Criterion (e) promotes high-quality native landscaping and biodiversity enhancement, consistent with national requirements for biodiversity net gain and landscape-led design.
- 41 Criterion (g) ensures that proposals demonstrate consideration of 'Secured by Design' 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 is sympathetic to the character of its immediate surroundings.
- 42 South Lenches is a parish that has a rich heritage of quality residential development and wishes this tradition to be maintained.

Section Two History and Heritage Policies

Policy 7 Protection of Historic Environment

- 1 Any designated historic heritage assets in the Parish and their settings, both above and below ground, will be conserved or enhanced for their historic and architectural significance and their importance to local distinctiveness, character, and sense of place. These include, but are not limited to:
 - i) Ridge & Furrow earthworks
 - ii) South of Atch Lench
 - iii) South of Church Lench and West of Farm Lane
 - iv) Ab Lench
 - v) Sheriffs Lench
 - vi) The Old Manse, Atch Lench
 - vii) Church Lench School building
 - viii) The Observatory, Sheriffs Lench
- 2 Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage assets.

Objectives met by Policy 7

Objective 5: Preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches

Policy 7 Evidence

- 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.
- 44 The conservation and enhancement of these assets is fundamental to maintaining the parish's identity and ensuring that change is managed in a sensitive and sustainable manner.
- 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) Act¹⁰ 1990, which require special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings.
- 46 The parish contains a number of significant heritage features including:
 - 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.
 - Areas of archaeological and historic interest south of Atch Lench, south of Church Lench and west of Farm Lane, Ab Lench, and Sheriffs Lench, which contribute to the historic landscape character of the parish.
 - 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.
- 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.
- 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.

¹⁰ [Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#)

- 49 National policy (NPPF Chapter 16) requires that the effect of development on the significance of non-designated heritage assets is taken into account, having 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.

Section Three Environment Policies

Policy 8 Small-Scale Sustainable and Renewable Energy

- 1 Proposals for small-scale, on-site renewable and low carbon energy generation, including micro-generation schemes mounted on buildings or installed at ground level, will be supported where they comply with other relevant development plan policies.
(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 photo-voltaic, solar, ground- and air-source heat pumps, biomass and anaerobic digestion, provided they meet the definition of small-scale above.)
- 2 New domestic development proposals must demonstrate, where possible and practical, how renewable and low carbon energy generation and energy efficiency measures have been incorporated into the design of the development unless it can be clearly demonstrated this would be impractical or unviable. Measures may include
 - i) electric charging points for vehicles
 - ii) ground and air source heat pumps
 - iii) biomass and anaerobic digestion systems
 - iv) thermal and photo-voltaic solar energy systems
 - v) alternative energy systems such as solar panels and geothermic heating systems.
 - vi) other emerging or innovative renewable energy technologies capable of being incorporated into the development
- 3 Electric vehicle charging points are expected to be installed alongside any off-road parking that is provided for educational facilities.
- 4 Renewable energy proposals in new developments must be in accordance with Wychavon’s Intelligently Green Plan 2020-2030¹¹ (or updated version).

Objectives met by Policy 8

- Objective 3:** Promote high levels of sustainability and energy efficiency, including renewable energy systems

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 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.
- 51 The policy aligns with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024), 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.
- 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

¹¹ [Intelligently Green Plan 2020-2030 \(Wychavon\)](#)

distinction ensures that the policy supports domestic, community and building-integrated solutions that are proportionate to the scale and rural character of the parish.

- 53 By focusing on on-site generation, the policy:
- Encourages energy self-sufficiency;
 - Reduces reliance on fossil fuels;
 - Minimises landscape and visual impacts associated with larger commercial energy schemes;
 - Ensures renewable technologies are integrated sensitively within the built and rural environment.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Policy 9 High Quality Agricultural land

- 1 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.

Objectives met by Policy 9

Objective 9: Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land

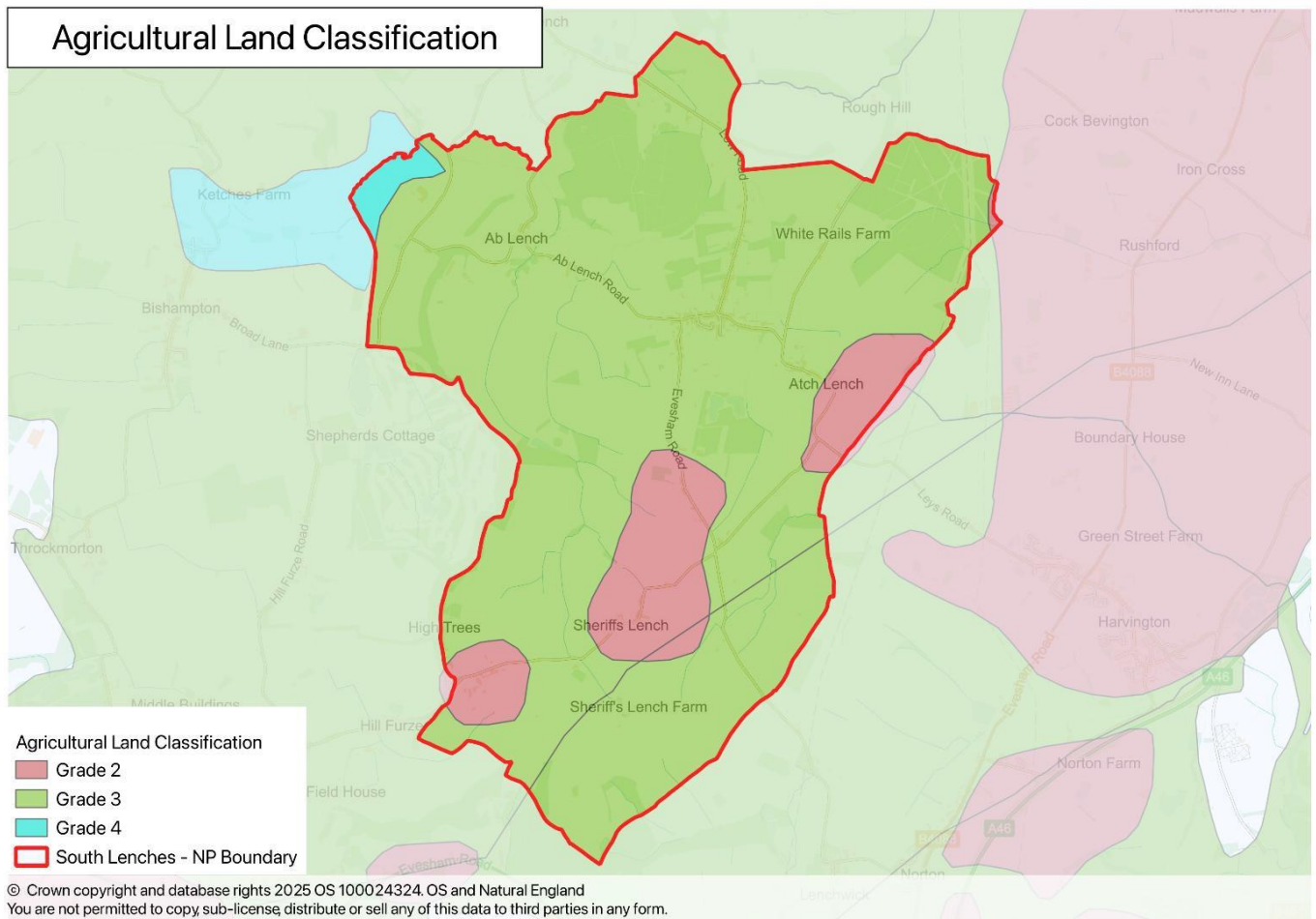
Policy 9 Evidence

- 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.
- 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.
- 60 The policy has regard to the National Planning Policy Framework ¹²(NPPF), which:
- *"recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.*
 - *states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment.*

¹² [National Planning Policy Framework \(2024\) paras 187-201](#)

- *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. Restricting unnecessary development on high-quality agricultural land, this policy:
- Encourages the efficient use of previously developed or lower quality land;
 - Protects the rural setting and open landscape that define the parish’s character;
 - Maintains the agricultural function and economic viability of the countryside.
- 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.



Policies Map 3

Policy 10 Trees, Hedges and Woodland

- 1 Where development is permitted, the following standards must be met:
 - i) New development must reflect the character of South Lenches and take account of its rural setting.
 - ii) Where practical and possible, developments must retain the existing hedgerows and trees.
 - iii) Where it is not possible to retain existing hedgerows and trees, replacement planting of native species is required in mitigation.
 - iv) Where mitigation of tree removal is required, replacements will be native species of similar final expected size to the tree being removed.
 - v) Native broadleaved trees must be used as default to provide maximum benefit to climate and wildlife.
- 2 The partial or complete loss of orchards or remnant orchards through development proposals, will be strongly resisted, in particular the fruit trees in Atch Lench Community Orchard and the Yates Community Orchard in Church Lench.

Objectives met by Policy 10

Objective 7: Protect woodland areas, wildlife sites, natural and historic conservation areas

Policy 10 Evidence

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 a 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 the parish's ecological character.
- 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.
- 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 and aesthetic value for future generations.

Policy 11 Wildlife and Biodiversity

- 1 Development proposals must retain and enhance existing on-site biodiversity assets, delivering measurable 'net gain' [*in line with adopted strategic policy and national requirements¹³*]
- 2 Proposals must make provision for wildlife needs on site.
- 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.
- 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.
- 4 Development proposals must avoid the fragmentation of habitats.
- 5 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 corridor for the movement of wildlife and the provision of ecosystem services.
- 6 Development proposals that improve active travel, or ecological connectivity within these corridors will be supported.

Objectives met by Policy 11

Objective 7: Protect woodland areas, wildlife sites, natural and historic conservation areas

Objective 13: Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area

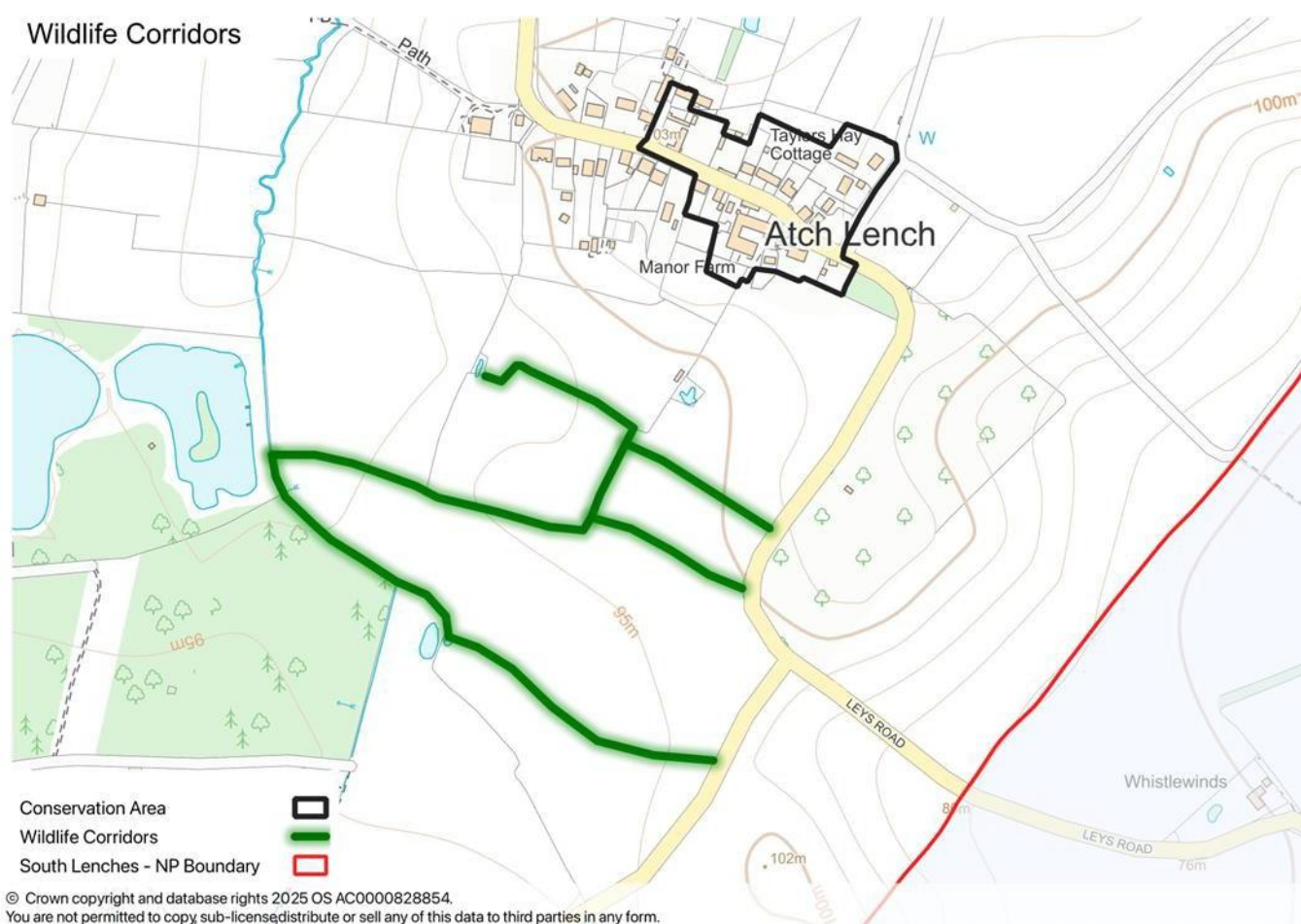
Objective 14: Encourage increased access to the open countryside by maintaining and improving footpaths, especially between settlements

Policy 11 Evidence

- 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.
- 71 The open green spaces between the Lenches villages support rich and varied wildlife, with local 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, 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 unfortunate road fatalities along Handgate Lane and Leys Road. Protecting these corridors is therefore essential for species conservation and public safety.
- 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.

¹³ [Environment Act 2021 \(Schedule 7a of Town and Country Planning Act 1990\)](#)

- 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.
- 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 (2024), which requires planning to protect and enhance valued landscapes, ecosystems, and biodiversity, and to achieve measurable net gains. It also aligns with the Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy¹.
- 75 The community has expressed strong support for the protection of these 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.



Policies Map 4

¹ [Worcestershire Local nature Recovery Strategy \(LNRS\) Adopted 2026](#)

Policy 12 Public Rights of Way

Where proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposals will be expected to:

- 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.
- ii) contribute towards the provision of cycle and pedestrian links that connect the different areas of South Lenches.
- 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.
- iv) ensure new movement routes are appropriate for wheelchair users and those with limited ability for walking.
- v) Link to existing networks where planning permission is granted for development
- vi) provide appropriate mitigation where development would impact upon movement routes

Objectives met by Policy 12

Objective 11: Recognise and respect the limitations of small, rural roads in relation to development needs

Objective 13: Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area

Objective 14: Encourage increased access to the open countryside by maintaining and improving footpaths, especially between settlements

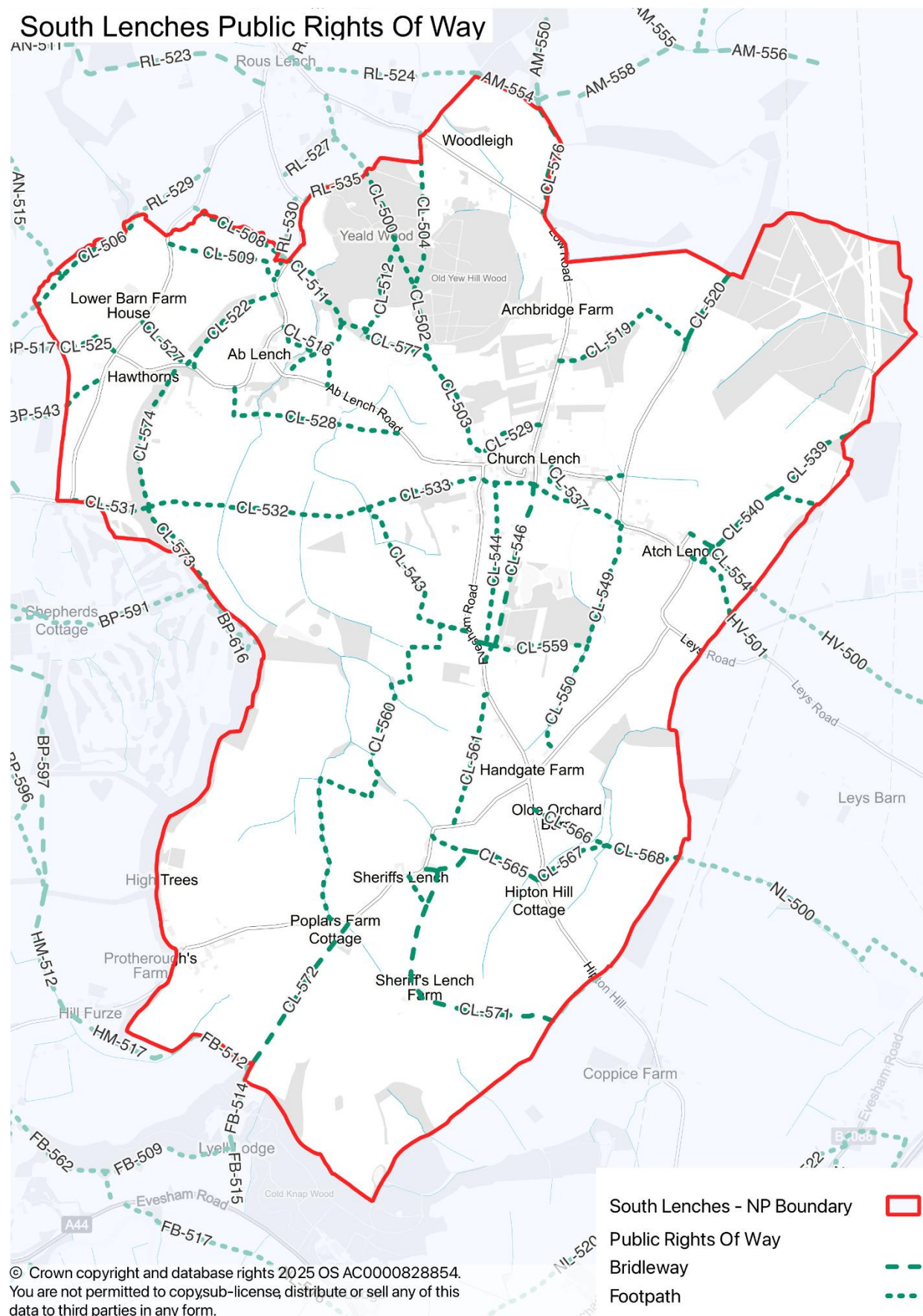
Policy 12 Evidence

- 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 vehicles. By prioritising accessible movement, the policy ensures that all residents, regardless of ability, can safely navigate the parish and enjoy its green spaces.
- 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.
- 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 developers to integrate new routes into the network, the policy reflects c
- 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.

- 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 without diminishing the community's accessibility, amenity, or environmental value.

South Lenches Public Rights Of Way



Policies Map 5

Policy 13 Local Green Spaces

- 1 Development that results in the loss of Local Green Spaces identified below and on Policies maps 6 & 7 below, or results in adversely affecting their character, setting, accessibility, appearance, general quality or amenity value will not be supported:
Church Lench:
 - A Orchard - Low Road
 - B Church Lench School grounds
 - C Site of the Old Village Pond
 - D Cricket Ground
 - E Yates Community Orchard
 - F Church and Church Yard**Atch Lench:**
 - G Atch Lench Orchard
 - H Atch Lench Graveyard
- 2 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
- 3 Where development is demonstrated to be essential and permission is granted, proposals must be accompanied by a proportionate ecological assessment. This must clearly demonstrate how existing habitats, flora and fauna will be:
 - i) avoided and protected in situ wherever possible;
 - ii) safeguarded during construction through appropriate management measures; and
 - iii) mitigated and, where necessary, compensated for through habitat enhancement or replacement of equal or greater ecological value.
- 4 Development proposals must deliver no net loss of biodiversity and must secure appropriate long-term management of retained and created habitats.
- 5 Any new development of 10 or more dwellings will be expected to provide areas of green space.

Objectives met by Policy 13

- Objective 1:** Ensure development is in keeping with the local area and does not detract from the rural nature of its surroundings
- Objective 8:** To protect and enhance the villages open spaces and to conserve local green space
- Objective 13:** Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area

Policy 13 Evidence

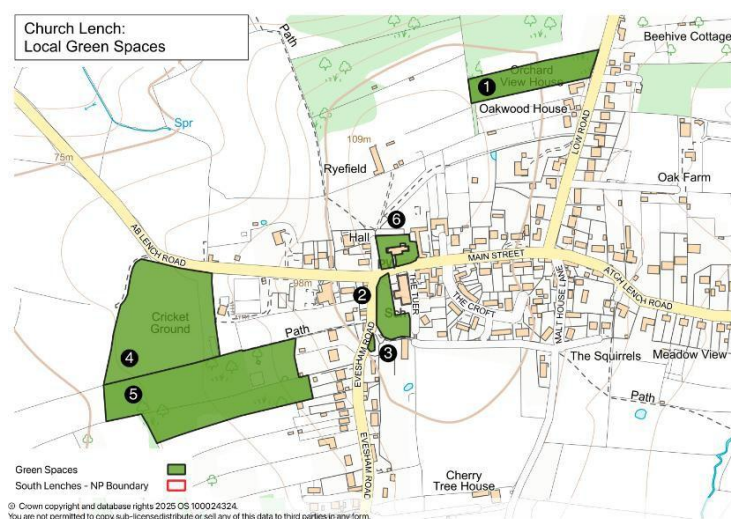
- 82 This policy is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024¹⁴), which allows communities to designate land as Local Green Space (*paragraphs 106-108*). The NPPF recognizes that Local Green Spaces should be protected from development except in very special circumstances and 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.
- 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

¹⁴ [National Planning Policy Framework 2024 \(para 106-108\)](#)

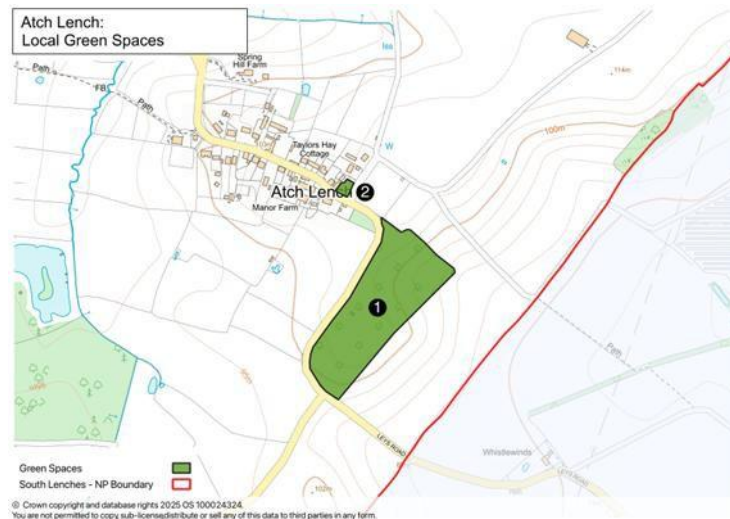
in supporting local biodiversity, offering habitats for a variety of plant and animal species, and forming part of the parish's wider green infrastructure network.

- 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 — including changes to their character, accessibility, appearance, quality, or amenity value — would undermine the parish's natural and social environment.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 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."*

Policies



Policies Map 6



Policies Map 7

Area 1 Church Lench Orchard-Low Road	
“in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”	It is marked Area 1 on the Church Lench Green Space Map
“demonstrably special to a local community”	This old Apple Orchard sits on the edge of Church Lench and is visible by all walkers and travellers through Church Lench. The orchard is part of the Blossom Trail - a 45-mile AA-signposted route of old Apple, Plum and Pear orchards through the Vale of Evesham frequented by many tourists.
“local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”	The site is on the edge of the Church Lench development boundary and has homes on 3 sides.
	The whole area covers approx. 2.74ha.

Area 2 Church Lench School grounds	
“in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”	It is marked Area 3 on the Church Lench Green Space Map
“demonstrably special to a local community”	The school is located at the very heart of the Church Lench community in a Victorian school building dating back to the establishment of the school in 1864. The school is supported with children from many local families, and our local orchards and play areas adjacent to the Cricket Ground are used by the children.
“local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”	The site is surrounded by homes and by native trees.
	The whole area covers approx. 0.34ha.

Area 3 Church Lench Village Pool	
“in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves”	It is marked Area 4 on the Church Lench Green Space Map
“demonstrably special to a local community”	A quiet area, planted with flowering shrubs, and is the start of the Jubilee Walk, a popular walk round the Lenches. The original pool area, although used now for car parking, is featured in many Victorian and early 20th Century photographs of rural village life.
“local in character and is not an extensive tract of land”	The site is adjacent to Church Lench First School and is surrounded by homes and by native trees.
	The whole area covers approx. 0.4ha.

Area 4 Church Lench Cricket Ground	
"in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves"	It is marked Area 5 on the Church Lench Green Space Map
"demonstrably special to a local community"	The thriving cricket club, and neighbouring tennis club represents an important sporting and social focus for the local community. The southern perimeter of the pitch also has a well-used footpath, leading to Yates Orchard.
"local in character and is not an extensive tract of land"	The site on the edge of Church Lench and is surrounded by native trees.
	The whole area covers approx. 1.3ha.

Area 5 Church Lench The Yates Community Orchard	
"in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves"	It is marked Area 6 on the Church Lench Green Space Map
"demonstrably special to a local community"	Yates community orchard is primarily old apple and plum trees. The orchard is given open access to our community and is used for local events by the school and the Church.
"local in character and is not an extensive tract of land"	The site on the edge of Church Lench, is bordered by homes and is surrounded by native trees.
	The whole area covers approx. 2.27ha.

Area 6 Church Lench Church and Church Yard	
"in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves"	It is marked Area 7 on the Church Lench Green Space Map
"demonstrably special to a local community"	The public green space remains a simple, atmospheric site that both reflects its history and offers sanctuary for the future
"local in character and is not an extensive tract of land"	All Saints Church and its church yard are located in the centre of Church Lench
	The whole area covers approx. 0.22ha.

Area 7 Atch Lenches Heritage Orchard	
"in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves"	It is marked Area 1 on the Atch Lench Green Space Map
"demonstrably special to a local community"	The Lenches Heritage Orchard is one of the largest surviving early 20th century orchards within the Vale of Evesham with over 1000 plum, gage and damson trees. The orchard was bought by investors from the local community in 1999 and since then, significant work has been carried out to restore and lay new hedgerows.
"local in character and is not an extensive tract of land"	Many of the veteran trees are over a hundred years old. Worcestershire County Council provided funding to replant the depleted gage tree section with 60 new trees, and the intention is to replenish other parts of the orchard through grafting from existing trees. Vale Heritage Landscape Trust bought in 2024.
	The whole area covers approx. 5.5ha.

Area 8 Atch Lench Churchyard	
"in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves"	It is marked Area 3 on the Atch Lench Green Space Map
"demonstrably special to a local community"	This small, peaceful burial ground has been a place of solemnity and tranquility for the local community and visitors for almost two centuries.
"local in character and is not an extensive tract of land"	The site is surrounded by homes and by native trees.
	The whole area covers approx. 0.11ha.

Policy 14 Valued Landscapes

- 1 New development will be supported where it would not have an adverse impact on the landscape setting, in particular the distinctive views shown in the table 5 and on Policies maps 7/8/9 below.
- a) An assessment of views to and from all a new development within the distinctive view areas as defined on proposals map should accompany a planning application wherever relevant.
 - b) Re-modelling of the local topography, through cut and fill, that would adversely impact on the landscape 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

Objectives met by Policy 14:

Objective 5: Preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches

Objective 6: Prevent coalescence between villages to maintain each village's own identity

Objective 10: Protect valued landscapes and views

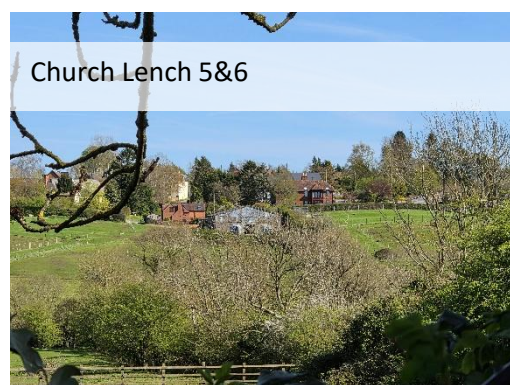
Policy 14 Evidence

- 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.
- 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. 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.
- 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.
- 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 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.

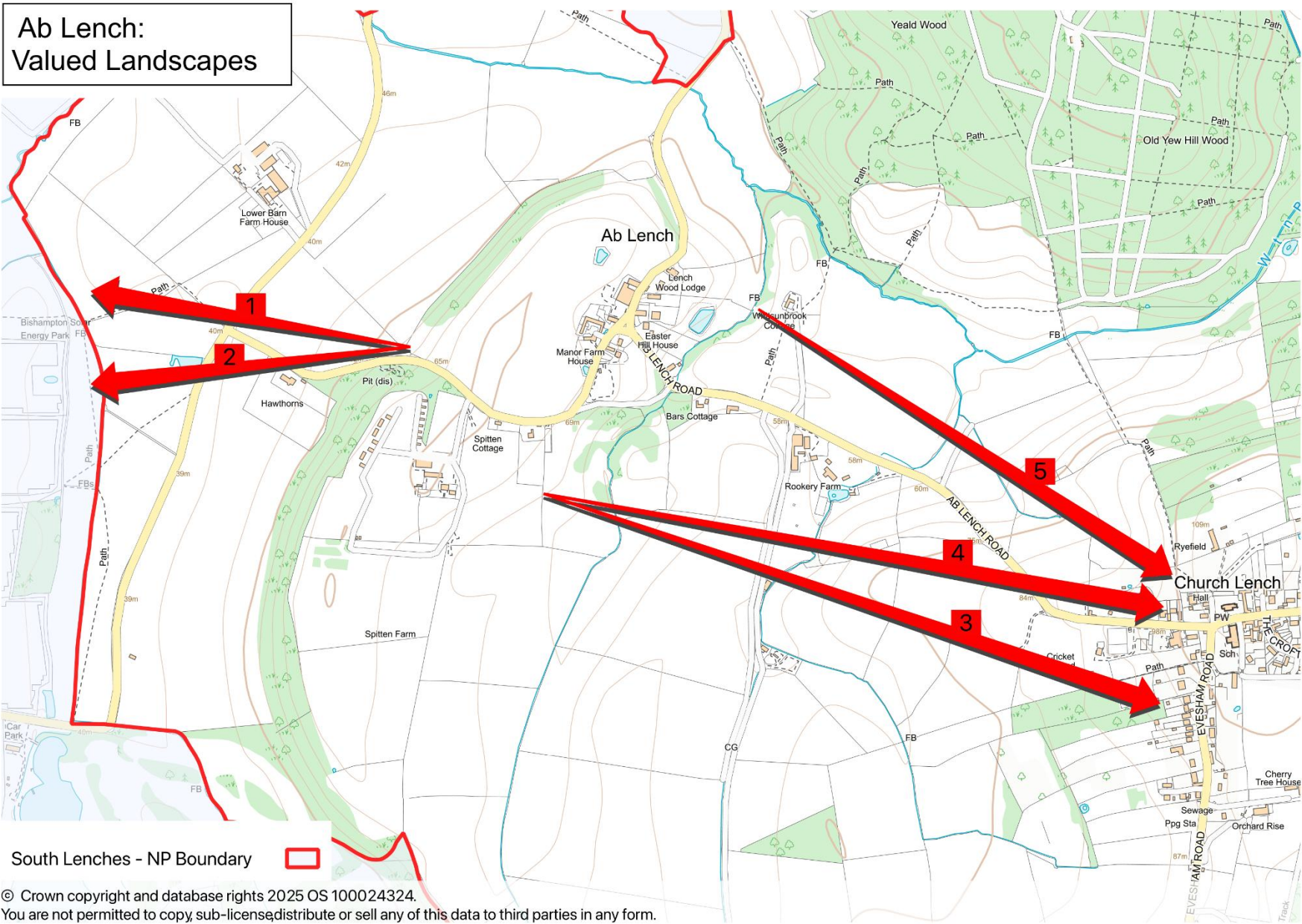
Location	Map Ref	View Name	Description
Ab Lench	1 & 2	Ab Lench south	Ab Lench to the Parish south boundary, Spitten Farm and ridge and furrow ancient development
Ab Lench	3 & 4	East Ab Lench to Church Lench	North facing view across to the south facing side of Church Lench, All Saints Church, community Orchard and linear development

Ab Lench	5	Ab Lench 'Brookfields' footpath to Church Lench	Ab Lench view upwards to All Saints Church, Church Lench showing ridge and furrow environment
Atch Lench	1 & 2	Atch Lench Farm Lane to east facing Church Lench	Farm Lane view to Church Lench shows east side of Atch Lench Road and Low Road; linear development with the development boundary and open countryside / pastureland
Atch Lench	3 & 4	Atch Lench to west facing Church Lench	Footpath to Church Lench shows the 'Lenches' characteristic and the west side linear development of Church Lench
Atch Lench	5,6 & 7	Atch Lench ridge footpath to Atch Lench orchard	Footpath on the top of Atch Lench west to encompass the whole of Atch Lench orchard; east to show the north side of Atch Lench linear development 5 - West to Atch Lench Community Orchard 7 - North side Atch Lench and linear development 6 - North side Atch Lench and north across the Lenches to the Parish Boundary
Church Lench	1	Church Lench to Ab Lench	Public footpath view south and east across the open countryside; Ab Lench seen as a hamlet from the hill top
Church Lench	2 & 3	Church Lench view south towards the Malvern Hills	Panoramic views south towards the Malvern Hills showing the open spaces of the South Lenches' Parish and village separation
Church Lench	4	Church Lench south side	South facing side of Church Lench detailing the Church and 'Lench' or 'Hill' characteristic ; showing strong linear development and ridge and furrow environment
Church Lench	5 & 6	Church Lench to Atch Lench	End of Malthouse Lane up to Atch Lench across the valley, showing the 'Lench' or 'Hill' characteristic and green space separation between villages

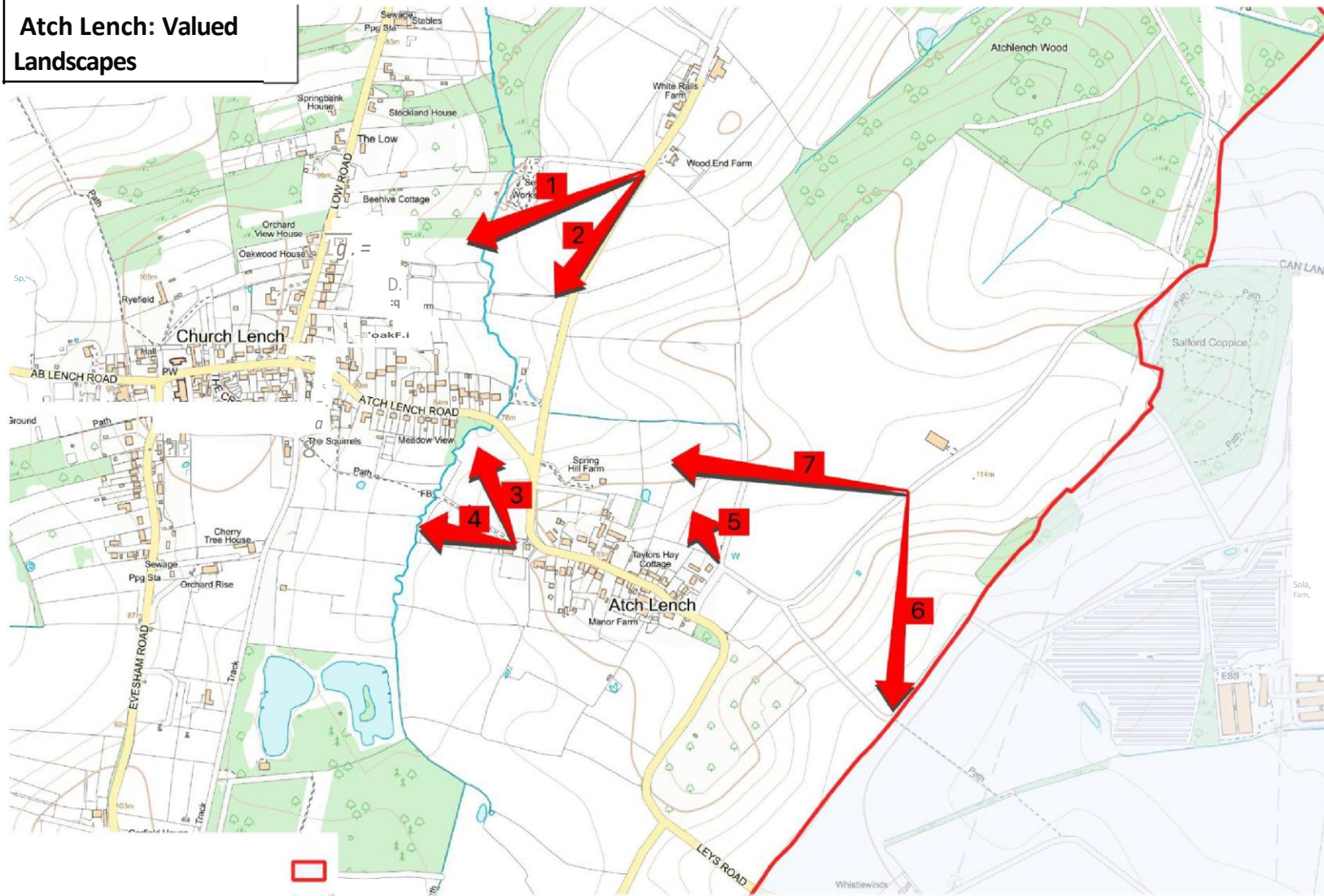
Table 5 Valued views



Ab Lench: Valued Landscapes



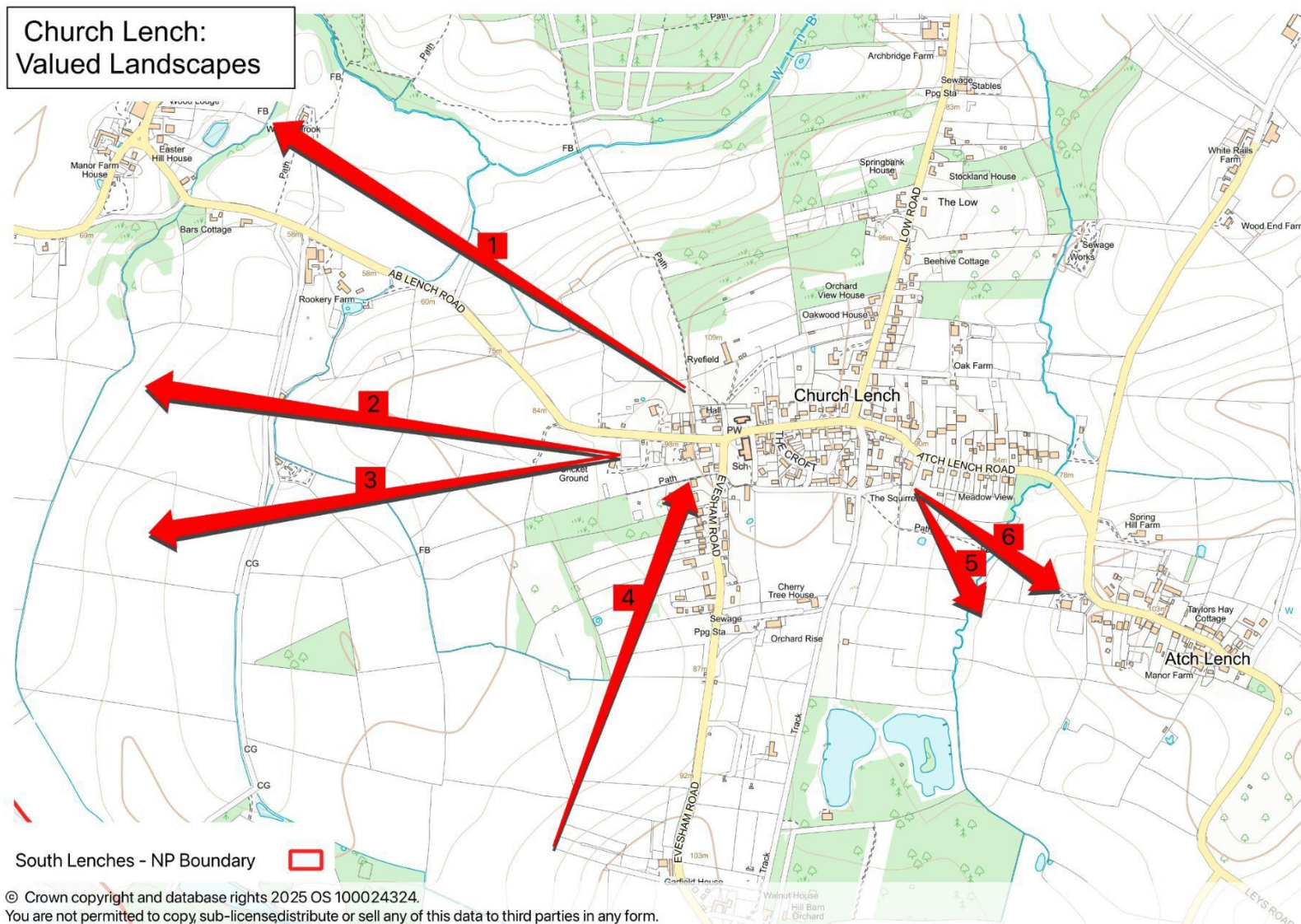
Atch Lench: Valued Landscapes



South Lenches - NP Boundary

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Policy 15 Flood Mitigation

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.
2	When selecting the means of surface water disposal, priority must be given to the use of SuDS.
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.
4	New development proposals will be required to provide appropriate design statements showing the method of discharge of surface water flows.
5	Surface water drainage proposals must accord with the following hierarchy of drainage options, with priority given to options higher up the hierarchy: i) infiltration into the ground ii) drainage to a surface water body iii) drainage to a surface water sewer iv) highway drain v) another drainage system. Lower priority options must only be used where it has been clearly demonstrated that higher priority options are not viable.
6	Planning applications must be accompanied by a proportionate drainage strategy demonstrating: vi) the method of surface water discharge; vii) how run-off rates and volumes will be controlled to greenfield or equivalent rates; viii) how flood risk on-site and elsewhere will be avoided; and 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.
7	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.
8	Development 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.

Objectives met by Policy 15

Objective 4: Ensure appropriate infrastructure is in place to deal with surface water and sewerage within any new development

Policy 15 Evidence

- 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.
- 94 All new development within the Plan area must consider the impact of surface water drainage. This 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.
- 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.
- 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 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 maintains more natural hydrological processes and reduce pressure on engineered networks.
- 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.
- 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.

¹⁵ [*National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems \(SuDS\) July 2025*](#)

¹⁶ [*South Worcestershire Flooding Plans, Policies and Strategies*](#)

Policy 16 Dark Skies

- 1 Development proposals must be designed to minimise the occurrence of light pollution by:
 - a) Meeting or exceeding the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance or successor guidance; and
 - b) Avoiding unnecessarily visible lighting in designated wildlife sites or the surrounding landscape; and
 - c) Having regard to the following hierarchy:
- 2 Proposals for development should avoid the installation of additional external lighting
- 3 Lighting should only be installed where absolutely necessary for its intended purpose for use at the lowest practical lumens value and should avoid adverse impacts where possible.
- 4 Developments should identify appropriate mitigation measures of adverse impacts.
- 5 New development must avoid unnecessarily visible lighting in designated wildlife sites or the surrounding landscape. Particular care should be taken in ecologically sensitive areas such as near ponds, lakes, rivers, areas of high conservation value; sites supporting particularly light-sensitive species of conservation significance and habitat used by protected species. In these situations, installation of appropriate lighting should be guided by the nature of the species found on or close to the site.
- 6 Development should avoid building designs that result in increased light spill from internal lighting without suitable mitigation.

Objectives met by Policy 16

Objective 12: Protect and maintain the dark skies between and within our villages

Policy 16 Evidence

- 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.
- 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 further encroachment into undeveloped areas.
- 104 The Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Note GN01/2020 ¹⁷provides 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 GN01/2020*](#)

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.

- 105 There is substantial evidence that artificial light 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.
- 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 policy ensures that lighting remains functional and proportionate while safeguarding amenity, landscape character and ecological integrity.
- 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.

Section Four Social Policies

Policy 17 Community Facilities

1	The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following community facilities: The Lenches Sports and Recreation Club
i)	(Church Lench) Children’s Play Area
ii)	Church Lench Village Hall
iii)	Church Lench First School (inc preschool)
iv)	Atch Lench Community Orchard
v)	Yates’ Community Orchard (Church Lench)
vi)	Development proposals that support, enhance or improve the viability and ongoing use of these Community Facilities will be supported, subject to compliance with other relevant development plan policies.
2	Proposals that will result in either the loss of, or significant harm to an identified community facility, will not be supported, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that
3	
	i) the facility is no longer economically viable and has been subject to a robust and proportionate marketing exercise for an appropriate period at a realistic price; or
	ii) the facility will be replaced by alternative provision of equivalent or better quality, accessibility and community value within or adjoining the Settlement Boundary, and the replacement facility is available for use prior to the loss of the existing facility.

Objectives met by Policy 17

Objective 5 Preserve the historic environment and other heritage assets within the South Lenches

Objective 13: Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area

Policy 17 Evidence

- 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 as focal points for parish life and play a fundamental role in maintaining community cohesion.
- 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.
- 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, 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.
- 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.
- 111 Overall, the policy provides a proportionate and locally justified framework to safeguard essential community infrastructure and sustain the social fabric of South Lenches for present and future generations.

Policy 18 Business & Employment

1	Support will be given for proposals that strengthen the rural economy where the range, scale and nature of provision does not detract from the rural character of the area and historic assets and their setting; and where it does not significantly increase traffic through the settlements.
2	Strong support will be given for proposals that: i) improve the agricultural activities already being undertaken on the land; and / or ii) propose a small-scale development that provides employment opportunities through the re-use of agricultural buildings.
3	Applications will be particularly encouraged if: iii) they offer employment opportunities to local people. iv) they provide space for small start-up businesses.
4	Proposals involving the loss of existing business sites must demonstrate clear evidence that the site is no longer viable to use that site for business or employment and that the site has been actively marketed for a minimum period of 12 months prior to support being given for any proposal for a change of use.

Objectives met by Policy 18

- Objective 9:** Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land
- Objective 13:** Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area

Policy 18 Evidence

- 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.
- 113 The policy responds directly to this objective by supporting proposals that improve agricultural productivity, facilitate the 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.
- 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.
- 115 At the same time, the policy safeguards rural 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).
- 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.
- 117 Overall, the policy provides a balanced framework: actively encouraging appropriate 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.

¹⁸ [National Planning Policy Framework 2024 Section 6](#)

Policy 19 Camping & Caravan Sites

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | New camping or caravanning sites to provide tourist accommodation or extensions to existing sites should meet all of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i) comprise sensitive, small-scale sites that would not be intrusive in the landscapeii) have good road access, avoiding routes through residential or other sensitive areas where significant traffic movements would be severely detrimental to the living conditions of residents or cause harm to designated heritage or other environmental assets, andiii) not generate noise or other effects which would cause harm to the living conditions of nearby residents or harm the enjoyment of public areas including rights of way. |
|---|--|

Objectives met by Policy 19

- Objective 7:** Protect woodland areas, wildlife sites, natural and historic conservation areas
- Objective 9:** Use land efficiently to preserve high quality agricultural land
- Objective 13:** Increase activities, amenities, and facilities for residents of a scale commensurate with the surrounding area

Policy 19 Evidence

- 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.
- 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 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.
- 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.

8 Community Aspirations

- 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 principles, or other locally important issues.
- 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.
- 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).
- 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

Community Aspiration 1 – Church Lench Village School



- 1 Expansion of Church Lench Village School to meet future needs will be supported in, provided there is adequate facilities for the safe drop-off and collection of schoolchildren.
- 2 Alterations to the school building will be supported provided:
 - a. the historic façade is conserved and protected, and its existing character is respected.
 - b. Any alterations or extensions are sympathetic to the existing building.

Justification for Community Aspiration

- 125 The expansion and improvement of Church Lench Village School has 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.
- 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).

¹⁹ [National Planning Policy Framework Para 29 \(2024\)](#)

9 Conclusion

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 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, balancing visitor opportunities with the preservation of the local environment.

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.

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.